



Public Health
England



To:

Leaders of Local Authorities in England
Chairs of Health and Wellbeing Boards in England
Chief Executives of Local Authorities in England
Directors of Public Health in England

21 October 2015

PHE gateway number: 2015-418

Dear colleague

**WHOLE SYSTEMS APPROACH TO OBESITY – INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE
IN NATIONAL PROGRAMME**

Public Health England (PHE), the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) are taking forward a major programme that aims to identify how local authorities can make greater in-roads into tackling obesity by taking a more ‘whole systems’ approach.

Leeds Beckett University has been appointed to lead the programme, and will work closely with local authorities, to understand what is working well and what the opportunities and realities are for local authorities in tackling obesity. This is an exciting opportunity to develop and test out approaches that can add value to the work already in progress. The aim is to co-create a roadmap that all local authorities will be able to use to help implement whole systems approaches based on what works for local authorities, drawing on national and international evidence, learning and practice.

We are now seeking up to **four pilot local authorities** to take part in this three-year programme. Each local authority will receive dedicated support from the Leeds Beckett team to co-develop and test approaches. Yes, it will throw up challenges; though, by working together, this programme will be at the forefront of generating and sharing new learning.

This letter invites interested local authorities to submit an expression of interest and provide us with some relatively brief information so that we can ensure that there is as far as possible a representative spread across different types of local authority (unitary and district, upper tier and London borough, for example), different geographies and those at different stages of development.

Leeds Beckett University will manage the process on behalf of PHE, LGA and ADPH, and the programme Advisory Group will make the final decision as to which local authorities are selected.

Further details of the programme, the commitment needed from local authorities and the support that each will receive is set out in **Appendix A**.

Actions invited:

1. If you wish to be considered as one of the four pilot areas, please read **Appendix A** and then complete **Appendix B**
2. Although only four local authorities can be pilots, all interested local authorities are invited to join the programme Community of Learning to share experiences and learning and receive updates on emerging findings, events and opportunities. To join in, we request that all local authorities complete **Appendix C**. You should complete Appendix C **whether or not you would like to apply to be a pilot**

Please send **all responses to Leeds Beckett University, no later than 5pm on 27 November** either by email to: wholesystemsobesity@leedsbeckett.ac.uk or by hard copy to: Maisie Coates, Whole Systems Obesity Programme, Leeds Beckett University, Carnegie Faculty, Institute for Sport, Physical Activity and Leisure, G18 Fairfax Hall, Headingley Campus, Leeds LS6 3QT.

For any queries, please contact: Jane Riley, project manager, janeriley@btinternet.com, Tel: 07565 329853.

We hope that you share our enthusiasm and excitement about this work and look forward to working with you on this programme.

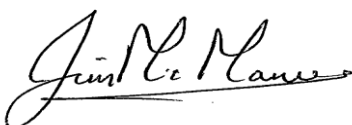
Yours sincerely



Dr Alison Tedstone
PUBLIC HEALTH ENGLAND



Councillor Izzie Seccombe, Chair,
LGA Community Wellbeing Board
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION



Jim McManus
ASSOCIATION OF DIRECTORS
OF PUBLIC HEALTH



Professor Andrew Slade, Deputy Vice
Chancellor
LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY

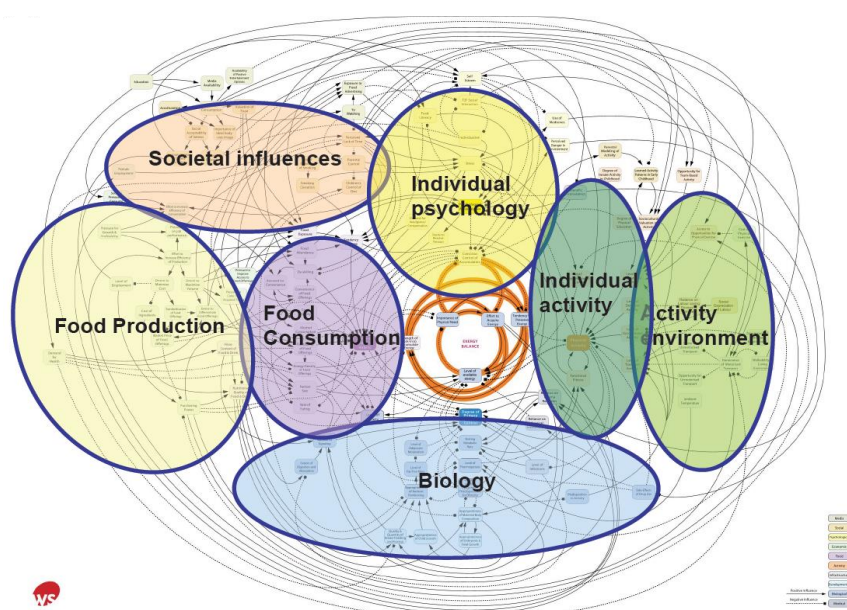
APPENDIX A

A whole systems approach to tackling obesity – programme background

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Obesity is one of our most significant and complex challenges, undermining individual and family health and wellbeing, impacting on business and education, and contributing to significant costs across health, social care and a wide range of other services. Local authorities are in a uniquely influential position to bring about a transformational change in the way that obesity is tackled.
- 1.2 As the 2007 Foresight Report¹ on Tackling Obesity has shown, obesity is the result of a very large number of determinants with many of the drivers beyond the scope of individuals to influence. There is broad consensus that preventing and tackling obesity effectively requires the development of a sustained '**whole systems approach**', with co-ordinated policies and actions across individual, environmental and societal levels involving multiple sectors (including planning, housing, transport, children's and adult's services, business and health). The leadership role of local authorities in developing a workable whole systems approach is crucial. Doing so will contribute to helping local authorities and partners meet many priorities including improving quality of life, reducing expenditure and creating stronger communities.

Foresight- Full obesity systems map with thematic clusters



¹ Foresight: Tackling Obesity: Future Choices, Government Office for Science, October 2007

- 1.3 Much effort has gone into working to tackle and prevent obesity and there are many examples of good practice. We need to develop a process to support local authorities to learn from their collective experiences and to develop a truly whole systems approach.
- 1.4 PHE has contracted Leeds Beckett University to carry out a three-year programme of work to support local authorities on systems approaches to tackling obesity. The programme is a key element of PHE's drive to strengthen our approach to tackling and preventing obesity, and is aimed at creating a roadmap that will support and enable local authorities to make a major step change in their ability to tackle this challenging issue.
- 1.5 PHE, along with partners the ADPH and the LGA, is actively supporting the programme through an Advisory Group bringing together a wide range of interests and expertise.

About Leeds Beckett University

- 1.6 The team at Leeds Beckett University has considerable expertise in the field of obesity, backed by many national and international experts on nutrition, physical activity and children's wellbeing all focusing on making a real, measurable difference in practice. The team will use its core strengths to work closely with and support local authorities through co-production to get to the heart of how health improvement can help meet their major priorities, to build on what is already in place and explore return on investment. Leeds Beckett University is also establishing an Expert Reference Group to complement the team's own experience and expertise, covering a comprehensive range of issues including public realm and spatial planning, transport, behaviour change and business, as well as including international experts on whole systems approaches.

2. About the programme

- 2.1 The programme aims to pin down the process of creating a successful whole systems approach to obesity and articulating it in such a way that it is meaningful to local authorities, will support them in delivering on their major priorities, and can be applied in practice, and within resource constraints.
- 2.2 We are seeking up to four pilot local authorities to participate in this programme.
- 2.3 The programme will last three years, so we are looking for local authorities able to make a commitment throughout this period. We recognise that all local authorities will be drawing up, implementing and reviewing activities to tackle obesity, and this programme will complement that process and help explore what can be done over the short, medium and long term, bringing in additional resources and information so

that there is co-production and added value, but also so we can learn from the processes that local authorities take.

Co-production and continuous learning: Appreciative Inquiry

- 2.4 In working with local authorities, Leeds Beckett will be using the Appreciative Inquiry process. Its focus is co-production, looking at the things that are working well in each individual local authority and building on them – experience shows that this is a positive experience for participants and is a good way of bringing about sustainable change.
- 2.5 As well as supporting local authorities in creating their plans, this collaboration will inform the programme and the roadmap by enabling the team to get a strong understanding of how local authorities make decisions, what they see as the biggest drivers and most helpful levers, and where they see opportunities and barriers.
- 2.6 In parallel, Leeds Beckett will be drawing on national and international research to understand what a whole systems approach to obesity could actually look like in practice. The university has enlisted a number of international experts so that it can access the latest thinking and practice. It will also be seeking and reviewing material from a wide range of sources to learn about others' experiences: so that it can offer local authorities any case studies or insights that they might find relevant and useful. It also has an expert group including colleagues from a range of sectors to which it can refer emerging issues where they might be able to provide additional ideas.
- 2.7 As part of the programme, Leeds Beckett will be working closely with each of the four pilot local authorities to minimise the workload for local authorities. The following table summarises the process.

<p>Year one</p>	<p>Understanding local authority perspectives by working with pilot local authorities to get a strong understanding of their perspectives, priorities and ways of working, use of systems approaches, current experience of tackling obesity, where progress is strongest, and what each local authority would like to get out of the process.</p> <p>Researching best practice and lessons through national and international networks.</p> <p>Using learning from local authorities, production of draft roadmap: this co-production between the university and the four pilot local authorities is at the heart of the process.</p> <p>Four pilot local authorities produce plans for tackling obesity drawing on best practice and lessons learnt.</p> <p>Draft materials launched and shared with other local authorities.</p>
<p>Years two and three</p>	<p>Ongoing collaboration with local authorities: continuing to work with and support the four pilot local authorities.</p> <p>Local authority feedback continues to shape process by assessing how well the process is working in reality, generating learning through the evaluation process.</p> <p>Drawing in further advice and good practice through the Community of Learning from other organisations, nationally and internationally to support local authority delivery of their plans.</p> <p>Creation of a series of guides and materials in response to priorities identified by local authorities such as return on investment, best practice on key issues.</p> <p>Identifying new lessons and what changes could be made to the roadmap, tools and process.</p> <p>Production of revised roadmap, tools and process, and launch of final products.</p>

2.8 We anticipate holding a number of events during the three years, including two major conferences in year one and year three that will showcase the work of the pilot local authorities and an event for the four pilots at the end of year two for networking.

3. What will participating local authorities need to do?

3.1 This is a major programme and commitment from local authorities is needed to ensure that the outputs help to better support local authorities. In particular, local authorities will need to be able to commit to the following:

- senior level sign up: by the leader of the council, chief executive, chair of the health and wellbeing board **and** portfolio holder for health who will be able to ensure that the project receives ongoing commitment and who can ensure that meetings and workshops are able to take place to timescales, and can engage both internal and external partners
- some time with key team members and stakeholders: so that the Leeds Beckett team can learn about the processes that local authorities go through in creating and implementing complex strategies and plans of this nature. Although all material will be treated sensitively, team will need to be willing to share their thinking, and their positive and negative experiences with the project team so that the end products are relevant, workable and really do reflect the priorities and realities for local authorities
- to identify a named individual within the local authority to whom the Leeds Beckett team can refer day to day queries and who would be able to book meeting rooms, advise on contact details for appropriate colleagues within the local authority and externally, and who can assist in ensuring that the team is able to engage the most appropriate colleagues
- time for a familiarisation phase at the start of the process where the university project team can spend some time understanding the local authority's priorities, challenges and stakeholders, and so that the university team can introduce themselves and the process in more detail including how colleagues will be engaged, and material will be collected and evaluated
- to participate in the process throughout the three years by contributing experiences, learning and ideas through workshops and one-to-one discussions: the project team wishes to understand the perspectives and experience within local authorities so that it can get a much greater understanding of the realities and opportunities, test out ideas and create materials that reflect what really works for local authorities
- to participate in three major events (one each in years 1, 2 and 3), sharing your perspectives with other local authorities and to use other opportunities to share emerging findings such as regional and national fora

4. What's in it for participating pilot local authorities?

4.1 We appreciate that this means a major commitment for participating local authorities. However, we think that each local authority will gain significantly:

- the opportunity to be a trailblazer in a high-profile national project and at the forefront of generating and sharing new learning
- support in making the case for investment in tackling obesity, such as demonstrating wider impacts and benefits
- each local authority will receive dedicated support from the Leeds Beckett team and be able to access to up to date approaches from around the UK and internationally including input from national bodies on the latest knowledge of what is working well (and what should be avoided)
- the approach is focused on creating an individualised approach for each local authority, taking account of the local authority's priorities and building on its areas of best practice (rather than trying to enforce any outside model)
- Leeds Beckett has selected techniques that are positive, participative and put the local authority at the heart of all of the decision-making

5. Expressing an interest – process and criteria

5.1 We are seeking a cross-section of local authorities that are:

- at different stages of development in tackling obesity and have different areas of interest/expertise/focus
- a mix of unitary, district, upper-tier and London boroughs so that the programme can generate learning for different types of local authority
- diverse, for instance enabling coverage of BME and inequality issues
- as far as practicable, providing geographical coverage

5.2 If your local authority would like to be one of the pilots, please complete **Appendix B** below and send to the address below.

APPENDIX B:

Expression of interest to be a pilot local authority for this programme. Please also complete Appendix C

If your local authority would like to be one of the pilots, please complete the form below and attach the documents requested. Your answers may be in bullet points if you wish.

Section A: Local authority details

Name of local authority	
Chief executive	Name: Email: Telephone:
Lead member contact for the programme	Name: Position: Email: Telephone:
Lead officer contact for the programme	Name: Position: Directorate or department: Email: Telephone:

Section B : Benefits, challenges and stakeholders

1. What value do you consider your local authority would derive from participation in this programme (maximum 500 words)
2. What would you consider to be your three biggest challenges in terms of tackling obesity? (maximum 500 words)
3. What stakeholders and partners would be engaged in the pilot (such as NHS, voluntary and community sector, business) (maximum 500 words)

Section C: Confirmations

Please confirm that participation would have agreement from the following by providing names and signatures:

- leader of the council
- chair of the health and wellbeing board
- chief executive
- portfolio holder for health

Please confirm that the council has the capacity and commitment to provide input to the programme and that you have read and understood Appendix A.

Please identify a contact person who can liaise with the team, organise meetings, advise key dates of existing committees and meetings and book rooms throughout the three year life of the project

Name:

Role:

Email:

Phone number:

Section D: Accompanying attachments

1. Please attach a copy of your most recent health and wellbeing strategy
2. Please attach a copy of your most recent director of public health annual report
3. If you have an obesity strategy please attach a copy. If you do not, please explain (maximum 250 words) what your strategic priorities on obesity are and which document or forum owns this (eg health and wellbeing board)

Please submit this form and one copy of accompanying documents either by hard copy or email to Leeds Beckett University **no later than 5pm on 27 November.**

Submission by email (with email attachments of documents) can be made to:
wholesystemsobesity@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

Submission by hard copy (with hard copy attached documents) can be made to: Maisie Coates, Whole Systems Obesity Programme, Leeds Beckett University, Carnegie Faculty, Institute for Sport, Physical Activity and Leisure, G18 Fairfax Hall, Headingley Campus, Leeds LS6 3QT

Please also complete and return Appendix C.

APPENDIX C

Keeping in touch details

As part of the project, we would like to gain the views and perspectives of as many local authorities as possible.

We are very keen to include more than one colleague from each local authority on the copy list, so if you would like to be kept in touch with the project, including events, newsletters, online consultations and discussions, please include your details below whether or not you would like to be considered to be a pilot.

Name of council:

Contact details:

Name(s):

Position:

Email:

Please return this form by email to Leeds Beckett University at wholesystemsobesity@leedsbeckett.ac.uk no later than 5pm on 27 November