

Obesity Alliance Cymru

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The Obesity Alliance Cymru is a forum for organisations to collaborate, and influence policy on preventing and reducing obesity in Wales. Obesity Alliance Cymru is composed of leading national charities, medical royal colleges, campaign groups and membership bodies with an interest in obesity, health, and public health. We work together to influence policy on obesity.

Obesity Alliance Cymru can provide a unified, influential, and independent voice for action on obesity. We have over twenty members with a strong and comprehensive evidence base.

Current OAC members are: Cancer Research UK, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, Diabetes UK, British Dietetic Association and dietitians from LHB's, British Medical Association, British Heart Foundation, Royal College of Physicians, Bowel Cancer UK, Tenovus Cancer Care, Welsh NHS Confederation, Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, Royal College of Surgeons of England, Nesta, Royal College of Nursing, Royal College of Occupational Therapists, Royal College of Podiatry, British Psychological Society, Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Statistics on Obesity in Wales

Today the majority of adults in Wales – 66% of men and 56% of women – are above a healthy weight, and over a quarter have obesity (22% of men and 26% of women).¹ The problem extends to children too with 27% of children above a healthy weight.² The already high average figures hide pervasive socioeconomic inequalities: obesity among adults in the most deprived groups in Wales, for example, is 32% compared with 20% in the least deprived groups.³ Even more concerning, although childhood obesity may appear at first glance to have levelled off and even reduced in the more affluent subsections of society, prevalence has increased in deprived populations and in some minority ethnic groups. For example, in Wales, 17.2% of children aged 4-5 in the Merthyr Tydfil had obesity in 2018/19 compared to 7.8% in the Vale of Glamorgan.

At a population level, overweight and obesity are powerful risk factors for devastating diseases – including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, dementia, liver disease and many common cancers – and put strain on joints, increasing the risk

of musculoskeletal conditions Adverse consequences are also seen in children living with obesity, who have a higher risk of obesity, ill health and early death in adulthood,⁴ as well as experiencing poor psychological and social effects during childhood.⁵

The costs of obesity are experienced not only in the health, wellbeing and life chances of individuals and families, but also by the economy. It has been projected that obesity and excess weight will cost the NHS in Wales £465 million per year by 2050, with a cost to the wider economy of £2.4 billion per year.⁶

Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales

In 2019, the Welsh Government launched Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales, its first ever strategy to tackle obesity. This ten-year plan included commitments to improve the food environment, support children, schools and families, and develop a new obesity treatment pathway. Whilst we welcomed the publication of the recent Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales 2022 to 2024 delivery plan, we do have some concerns that implementation is not as far ahead as we would like. We acknowledge that the pandemic has disrupted/ had an impact on the pace of progress but given the above statistics tackling obesity now needs to be a priority.

We would be grateful if we could arrange to meet with you to discuss our thoughts on where the strategy is, and priorities for tackling obesity in Wales.

Kind regards,

Clare Williams,

Officer,

Obesity Alliance Cymru.

References

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