

Date: 13th September 2018

Classification: **General Release**

Title: Action on sugar reduction, oral health and childhood obesity

Report of: Gaynor Driscoll Head of Integrated Commissioning (Public Health)

Wards Involved: *All*

Policy Context: The need for effective action to address rising levels of sugar consumption amongst children and young people is high on the local and national agenda. A well planned and resourced approach forms a vital part of wider local strategies to improve children's oral health and prevent childhood obesity.

**Report Authors and
Contact Details:**

*Kate May: Business Partner Public Health
Debbie Arrigan: Business Partner Public Health
Ellie Lewis: Community Asset Programme Manager
Christine Mead: Community Resilience Manager
Public Health
Gaynor Driscoll: Head of Integrated Commissioning
Public Health*

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out what we know from available local data about the impact of excess sugar consumption on the health of children and young people in Westminster. It sets out action being taken at a local and national level to address rising levels of sugar consumption and associated health outcomes, and introduces future plans to integrate sugar reduction activities into a planned new Bi-Borough healthy lifestyle programme for children and young people.

2. Key Matters for the Board

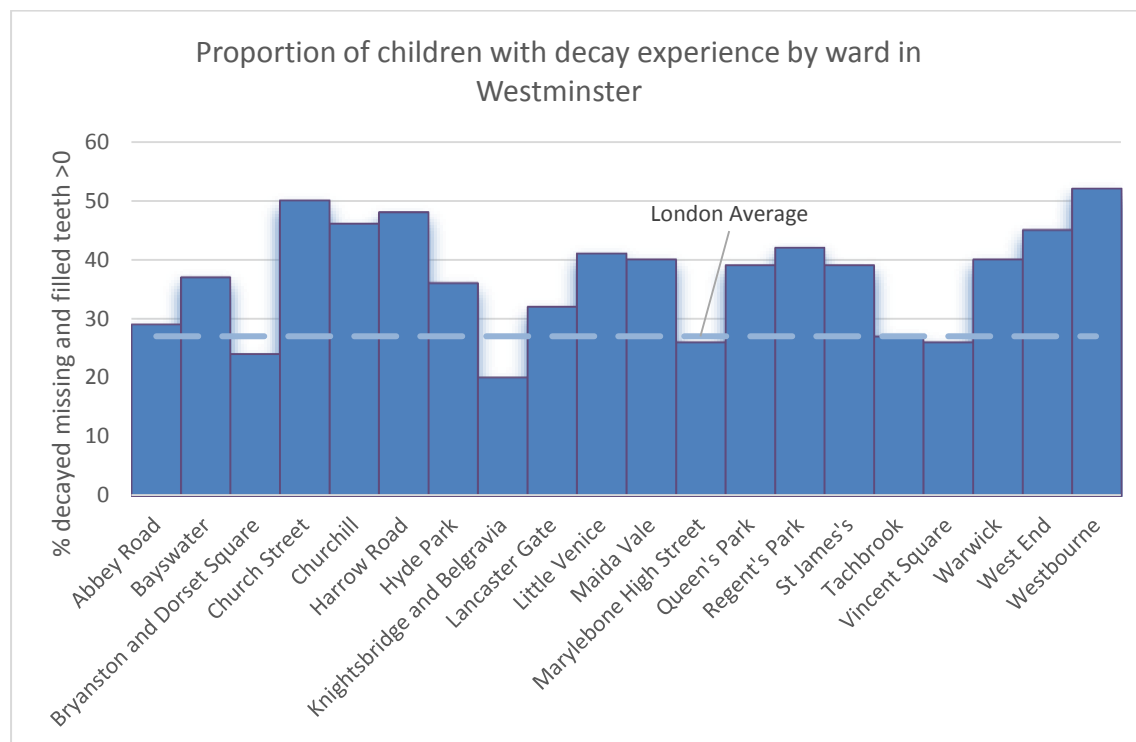
2.1 To update the board on the local issues related to sugar consumption and obesity and to discuss the proposed plans to integrate sugar reduction messages within a system wide obesity prevention approach.

3. Background and local picture

3.1 Children across the UK are eating three times more sugar than the maximum daily limit recommended by health experts. Too much sugar can lead to tooth decay and a range of health problems including diabetes, obesity, heart disease and some cancers. The biggest source of sugar in children's diets is sugary drinks, followed by sugary snacks.

3.2 In Westminster 35.1% of 5 year olds have experienced tooth decay. This is higher than the London (27.2%) and England (24.7%) averages. Higher levels of decay experience are spread across the wards of Westbourne, Church Street, Harrow Road, West End and Churchill¹.

Table 1:



3.3 Increased consumption of sugar is a key contributory factor associated with increased levels of obesity. In Westminster, 24.7% of children in reception (4-5 year olds) are

¹ Oral Health Survey of 5 year old children 2017

obese or overweight and 43.1% in year 6 (10-11 year olds). This is significantly higher than the London (38.5) and England (34.2) averages².

3.4 Of its statistical neighbours, only Brent (and Southwark for reception pupils) has a higher prevalence of overweight and obesity than Westminster.

Table 2: *Prevalence of excess weight among Reception pupils, in Westminster and its statistical neighbours.*

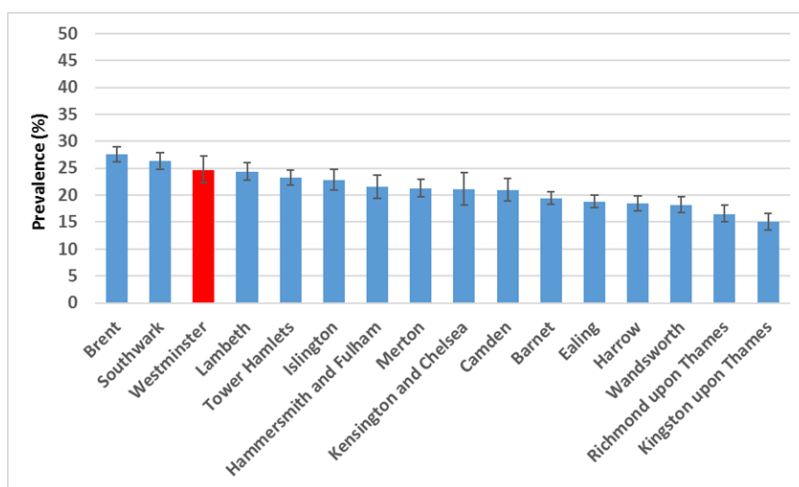
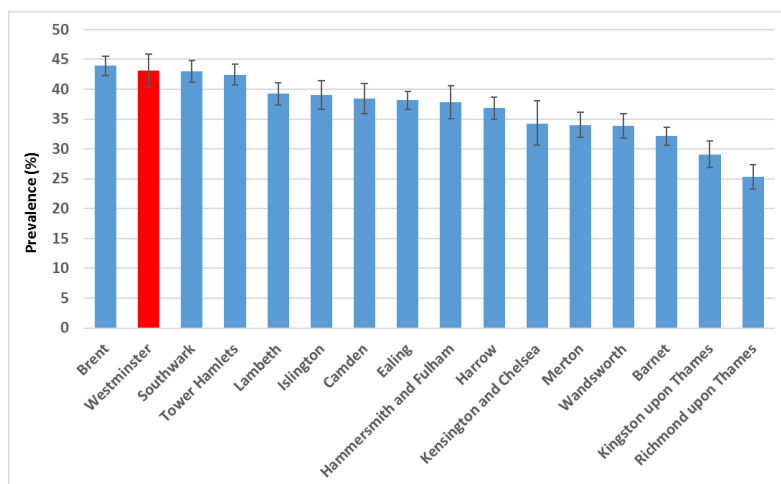


Table 3: *Prevalence of overweight (including obese) among year 6 pupils in Westminster and its statistical neighbours.*



3.5 The burden of childhood obesity and tooth decay is felt hardest in more deprived areas, with children growing up in low income households more than twice as likely to be obese than those in higher income households³. Children from black and

² NCMP 2016/17

³ NHS Digital. (2017). National Child Measurement Programme 2016/17

minority ethnic families are also more likely than children from white families to be overweight or obese and recent trend data suggests that this inequality is increasing⁴.

3.6 Consumption of sugar, and childhood obesity, have also been linked to obesity in later life, which contributes to the development of long term conditions including Type 2 Diabetes and dementia. Type 2 Diabetes is being diagnosed at younger ages, partly due to the rise in childhood obesity and sugar consumption.

4. Local action focused on sugar reduction and oral health

4.1 A number of services and programmes are being delivered across Westminster that aim to help reduce sugar consumption and associated health problems amongst children and young people. The Public Health Service commissions CLCH to deliver a comprehensive oral health promotion service that aims to make promoting good oral health everyone's business. The team provides:

- Workforce training to help enable those working with children and families to deliver consistent oral health messages (including Health Visitors, School Nurses, Children's Centres)
- Dissemination of advice and resources to improve access to dental practices
- Fluoride varnish applied on an outreach basis in targeted schools
- Tooth brushing programmes in targeted schools

4.2 Big Bites and Pearly Whites is a comprehensive, evidence-based three-year, health promotion campaign delivered in Chelsea and Westminster Hospital outpatients services and sponsored by Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, RBKC, WCC and Public Health England (PHE). The aims of the programme are to improve parents' and carers' knowledge about children's oral health, this includes dietary advice about reducing total sugar and frequency. Since 1st February 2018, 513 families have received a brief intervention.

4.3 In 2017 the council developed an oral health campaign called 'The Tale of Triumph Over Terrible Teeth' aimed at reducing tooth decay, which encourages children to brush in the morning and before bed with fluoride toothpaste, to cut down on sugary food and drinks and visit the dentist regularly. The campaign features an animation and quiz. It has been screened to children and their parents at 5 libraries and 23 schools in the borough to date. The campaign and associated resources have been commended by the Federation of Local Dental Committees (LDCs).

4.4 In addition, a local dental buddying scheme is being developed. This will build links between dental practices and local schools as part of a drive to improve oral health. One of the objectives of this work is to improve how families look after their oral

⁴ Public Health Analysis of the NHS Digital. National Child Measurement Programme 2015/16

health. This scheme will see dentists visiting schools to give talks to pupils. To date 11 dentists have expressed interest in participating in this initiative.

5. Local action to prevent childhood obesity

5.1 Action to reduce sugar consumption and promote healthy eating forms a central part of the Tackling Childhood Obesity Together (TCOT) programme which aims to halt and reverse the rising trend in childhood obesity across the bi-borough. The programme commenced in 2015 and has 3 components:

- Healthy weight services: The implementation of a family healthy weight care pathway, workforce training and family healthy lifestyle services.
- A whole systems approach in working with internal partners within WCC and external partners across Westminster to change the environment so that the healthy choice is the easy choice for residents.
- A community led healthy lifestyle pilot – Go Golborne, initially focused on the ward of Golborne in RBKC to trial activities for future replication elsewhere in the Bi-Borough.

5.2 As part of the whole-systems approach in WCC, work has been done to identify opportunities within the council and partners to make positive changes to the wider environment within the borough that contribute to reducing childhood obesity. Key highlights relating to sugar reduction include:

- Active promotion of Change4Life's 'Be Food Smart' app in partnership with the Communications team. The app shows families how much sugar, saturated fat and salt is in their food and drinks so they can make healthy choices. Westminster achieved the second highest total clicks of any UK authority (6607) and hundreds of App downloads.
- 58 businesses achieved the Healthier Catering Commitment Award, a joint initiative led by City Management colleagues working with local businesses, making it easier for residents to make healthier food choices. The criteria for meeting the healthier catering commitment includes reducing access to sugary products including drinks and snacks.
- Westminster's leisure contractor has installed water fountains in entrance foyers that are accessible to the public. The leisure contractor has also stopped price promotions on sugary drinks.

- The Growth Planning and Housing team have installed 18 new food-growing projects in nurseries, schools and housing estates to promote healthy eating and associated messages about sugar reduction.
- 5.3 Other non-food related changes introduced as part of this strand of work includes ongoing work to remove restrictive signs. To date 15 no ball games signs have been removed to encourage active play. In addition, two play streets (Church Street and Marylebone) have been introduced to encourage active play.
- 5.4 Efforts to promote sugar reduction are integral to other key services commissioned by the Council to promote healthy lifestyles amongst children, young people and families. The Health Education partnership (HEP) are commissioned to provide the Bi-borough Healthy Schools and Healthy Early Years programme. HEP have adapted the London Healthy schools tool to align more closely with local priorities - for instance all Bronze awards have to include a statement relating to the school's food policy and efforts to be more 'Sugar Smart'. Sugar reduction is also a key focus of the Healthy Early Years programme that HEP deliver in partnership with local Children's Centres, nurseries and early year's settings.
- 5.5 Locally commissioned child and family weight management services, have supported over 1341 local primary school children as part of the healthy lifestyles programme. Educating children and parents about the dangers of excessive sugar consumption and healthy alternatives is a key part of the work. Also staff from local organisations are trained in how to promote healthy lifestyles, including modules on key nutrition messages and Sugar Smart actions they can implement within their settings.

6. National action on sugar

- 6.1 Alongside local action central Government has introduced a number of significant measures in recent years to help reduce sugar consumption. The Soft Drinks Industry Levy, also known as the 'sugar tax', came into force in April 2018. Soft drinks companies pay a charge for drinks with added sugar and total sugar content of 5g or more per 100 ml. £100m of revenue has been generated from the levy, which will form the healthy pupil capital fund for schools.
- 6.2 This fund is intended to improve children's and young people's physical and mental health and wellbeing and medical conditions. This is not ring-fenced. £131,943 is available for maintained and voluntary aided schools in Westminster. The Public Health Service is working with Children's Service on plans to support schools to plan how to spend this funding, including a focus on effective activities to promote healthy eating and sugar reduction.

- 6.3 In addition the government has launched a calorie reduction campaign challenging industry to take 20% of sugar out of food most commonly eaten by children by 2020. They are also looking to update current marketing restrictions of the promotion of unhealthy food and drink on TV, online and in shops including banning price promotions such as buy one get one free and multibuy offers on unhealthy food.
- 6.3 The NHS Change4Life programme has developed a range of resources to help children and families cut down on sugar and become 'Sugar Smart' that are actively promoted directly to schools, Children's Centres and community organisations. Jamie Oliver has also launched a national Sugar Smart campaign that is delivered in partnership with the Children's Food Trust based at Sustain. In line with this approach, Westminster Council is working with internal Departments and external organisations across the Borough to encourage them to make 'Sugar Smart' pledges.

7. Next steps

- 7.1 A comprehensive range of services and programmes are in place across Westminster to help address rising levels of sugar consumption amongst children and young people and prevent associated health problems. There are, however, opportunities to better integrate and co-ordinate these activities to ensure they have maximum impact.
- 7.2 There is a need to identify how we maximise the opportunities presented by changes taking place at a national level that provide vital levers for local implementation and change e.g. soft drinks industry levy and reformulation outlined in the national childhood obesity plan.
- 7.3 There are proposals under development for the Public Health Service to develop a more integrated approach intended to promote action across all key nutrition and physical activity issues affecting children and young people across the Bi-Borough. This approach, provisionally entitled "Young and Healthy", will entail a network of schools and local organisations being formed to drive forward campaigns and activities to help children and families eat well and keep active. This approach is based on lessons learned from various initiatives and is proposed to run across the bi borough. This would maximise the use of assets in the area making changes to the local environment and provide consistent healthy lifestyle messages to children across the boroughs.
- 7.4 The proposed "Young and Healthy" programme, for example, could include borough wide campaigns on key healthy lifestyle topics, including the Sugar Smart theme. Organisations will be provided with free materials and training to support

participation in the campaigns, opportunities to access additional resources for health promotion activities, and forums to share news and best practice. Organisations will be supported to demonstrate how they are suitable for children in relation to how they ensure their services actively promote best practice approaches towards supporting children to eat well and keep active.

- 7.5 In addition to a system wide approach it is suggested that two targeted communities with a high prevalence of obesity and tooth decay will be selected to co-produce and run coordinated events and campaigns aligned with local needs. This will help ensure efforts are more intensive in areas with greatest need and delivered to have maximum sustained impact.
- 7.6 Engagement with local communities will help inform and prioritise actions taken across the council to ensure local environments make it easier for children and families to make healthy choices, and inform plans for future commissioning of relevant healthy lifestyle services.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 That the contents of the report are noted and that board members discuss the principle of taking a whole system approach through the development of the 'Young and Healthy' programme.
- 8.2 That the board supports the principle of integrating our collective efforts to reduce sugar consumption and associated health harms.