

Whole Systems Approach

# Barnet Healthy Weight Survey 2018

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# Introduction

Barnet Public Health released a public survey in order to gain an insight into the public perceptions of healthy weight; including how to maintain a healthy weight, whose responsibility this is, and any challenges residents face in attempting to do so. The survey ran from November-December 2018 and was available on the Engage Barnet platform.

Alongside data analysis from Public Health England and Sport England, the findings were used to inform multiple council policies and actions, including the food security action plan and healthy weight care pathways.

It is important to note that this survey was focused on the perceptions of residents and their felt needs and findings were used in conjunction with a normative needs assessment conducted in 2018.

- **243 residents responded to the survey**
- **2/3rds of respondents identified as women**
- **56% respondents self-identified as being a healthy weight**

# Quantitative Findings: Public Perceptions of Weight Management

**75% respondents felt overweight people were responsible for their own condition whereas 55% felt the same about underweight people.**

**2x as many people blamed media for prevalence of underweight people (40%), as for prevalence of overweight people (20%).**

**73% of respondents said they were currently trying to lose weight.**

**67% of people who had previously lost weight maintained this loss for over a year.**

**75% of people had tracked their calories or followed another diet plan during the previous 6 months. 78% had tried to lose weight by exercising on their own.**

## Quantitative Findings: Perceptions of wider support to maintain healthy weight.

**49% of respondents felt that they could best be supported by the council to maintain a healthier weight by increased opportunities to walk or cycle as part of their daily routine.**

**43% felt that they lacked the time to prepare healthy food and that this was inhibiting their ability to maintain a healthy weight.**

**51% of respondents wanted cheaper healthy food options in the borough.**

**1 in 3 felt they needed more awareness of what constitutes a healthy weight.**

**44% felt that making parks and roads safer to be active in would increase the likelihood of their participation in physical activity.**

# Quantitative Findings: Public Perceptions of Food Security

More than 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of respondents felt they couldn't afford to prioritise nutritious content over cost when buying food during the last 6 months (28% sometimes and 10% most of the time).

During the last six months, 1 in 3 respondents had sometimes or often relied on only a few kinds of low-cost food to eat because there wasn't money to buy a variety

During the last 6 months 23% of respondents had worried about whether food would run out before they had money to buy more (17% sometimes, 7% most of the time).

During the last 6 months 15% of people had cut the size of their meals or skipped meals because there wasn't enough money to buy food.

# Free Text Responses: Public Perceptions

Many used to free text space to speak about how their struggles with mental health had negatively impacted their ability to exercise, eat healthily and maintain a healthy weight.

“I live in \*Barnet and we have no cycle provisions, I would be more likely to cycle if we had cycle lanes.”

“Food can provide the psychological capacity to deal with daily life-sugary foods are easy, and provide a boost of energy. Noshing is an avoidance tactic for addressing challenges.”

“The prevalence of underweight imagery can only be focused on by the media, and regulated by the government.”

## Recommendations & actions

- **Conduct a follow up focus group with weight management service users to understand specific barriers better.**
- **Share findings with frontline staff and provide guidance on appropriate weight management conversations in primary care.**
- **Ensure mental health services are integrated into weight management pathways.**
- **Work with wider council teams to ensure findings are integrated into transport strategies and catering contracts.**