



7-minute briefing: Child Obesity and Safeguarding

Addressing Obesity

- Practitioners are in a unique position to have conversations about weight with children and families where needed.
- Conversations with children and family's weight should be done at an early stage of concern, non-judgmentally.
- Focus on making healthier lifestyle habits as a family. This includes active play, healthy food, reducing screen time, improving sleep etc.
- It is important to take a whole family approach, taking every member's lifestyle into account.
- Practitioners should always consider the possibility of adverse experiences and consider all vulnerabilities when dealing with severe obesity, and take a trauma informed approach when working with families.

Greenwich Obesity Pathway:

- **Tier 1 Universal Support** – healthy eating and physical activity e.g. [Greenwich Get Active](#) and [Cookery clubs](#) for further help [Young Greenwich & Livewell Greenwich review](#) . - *practitioner signpost & self-referral*
- **Tier 2 weight management services - XPLORE** service for Greenwich children aged 4-17 with a BMI≥91st centile and no complex needs *Practitioner or self-referral within the criteria, others considered on case by case*
- **Tier 3 Family based and Clinical Services -** - specialist family-based service for Greenwich residents with complex needs and [CEW clinic](#) - *referral by practitioners only*

Further reading

- [Data and policy on obesity](#)
- [General research on obesity.](#)
- [Conversations about obesity](#)
- [Child F Safeguarding Review](#)
- [Obesity and ACE in children](#)
- [Poverty and obesity](#)

Child Alex: Local Learning Review

In 2021, the GSCP carried out a review of Alex's death Alex at 17 years of age. Alex was a happy child with a positive relationship with his school. He was diagnosed as very overweight from 2016. Though it was not his cause of death, his weight still had a bad impact on his quality of life giving him significant hip problems and pain, and there were some indicators of neglect.

Local resources

- Local information and support <https://livewellgreenwich.org.uk>
- Information about healthy eating [Eat well - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)
- 2019/24 Health and Wellbeing Strategy - [Health and Wellbeing](#)

Viner Framework (Viner et al 2010)

Framework to assess obesity as a child protection issue:

- **Child obesity alone** is not a child protection issue.
- Failure to reduce overweight alone is not a child protection concern.
- However, consistent failure to change lifestyle and **engage with outside support indicates neglect, particularly in younger children**. So, obesity may be part of wider concerns about neglect or emotional abuse.
- Assessment should include **systemic factors**

Child Alex: GSCP Local Learning Review findings

- Key points of liaison and information sharing should have taken place as part of the assessment and the step-down process leading to improvements.
- Attempts to address weight through the school e.g., using school meals for healthy meals, school nurse were not fully utilised.
- Referrals to the weight management service were made but nonattendance that was not followed up, a missed opportunity to improve engagement.
- The gravity of the concerns about Alex's obesity were not disclosed to all so there was no shared sense of risk.
- There was not enough focus on the child's voice giving a sense of lived experience.
- There was no multiagency understanding of the impact of obesity so no shared approach.
- There was no evidence that cultural needs were considered, which would have improved interventions.
- Issue of obesity should have been considered in context of neglect, so CP procedures could be used