Transcript

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Lydia Orford (BCUHB - Public Health) 0:0:1

Good morning and welcome to Public Health Network Cymru webinar series.
My name is Lydia Orford and I'm the principal public health practitioner working in Betsi Cadwaldr University Health Board Public Health Team. I lead on the whole system approach to healthy weight work in North Wales alongside my colleague Emily Woodward Esseen, with teams in place for each health board area across Wales, details of which will be shared later on.

Lydia Orford 0:0:27

I am delighted to introduce this webinar Getting to the root of the problem, a whole system approach to healthy weight in Wales and to introduce the presenters for today, Ilona Johnson and Sophia Bird from the Obesity Prevention and Nutrition team within the Health Improvement Division in Public Health Wales, who lead on the healthy weight whole system work nationally.

This webinar will provide an overview of what is meant by the term whole system approaches and how it is being used to support healthy weight in Wales. The webinar will describe the evidence, strategic context and the nine step approach to whole system approaches in Wales. The webinar will discuss why working in this way is different from more traditional partnership working.

Lydia Orford 0:1:13

Before I introduce Ilona and Sophia, just a few housekeeping notices. After the presentations, there will be a chance for you to ask questions. Please use the chat to type in your questions throughout the webinar, we welcome both English and Welsh contributions. The webinar is being recorded and will be made available on the Public Health Network Cymru website after the session, and if you experience any difficulties with the technology, please let us know through the chat and the team can contact you directly.
We are about to show two polls. Please can we ask you to rank your knowledge and confidence in whole system approaches on a scale of one to five, one being very low and five being very high. The two polls are knowledge of whole system approaches and confidence in working to achieve a whole system approach. We will then repeat the poll towards the end of the webinar. Great, the polls have just come up now, so if you could rank, that would be great.

Lydia Orford 0:2:17

While you're doing that, I would now like to introduce our two presenters for today, Ilona

Johnson and Sophia Bird from the obesity prevention and nutrition team within the Health Improvement Division in Public Health Wales. Ilona Johnson is a consultant in public health and her portfolio includes whole system approaches to healthy weight, healthy weight, healthy you, and support for the development of the all Wales weight management pathway and legislation to support healthy weight.

Sophia Bird is a principal public health practitioner who has worked in public health in Wales for over 20 years and joined the Health Improvement Division in March 2019 as part of the Healthy Weight Team, contributing to the planning, implementation and evaluation of a number of strands of the Welsh Government Healthy Weight, Healthy You strategy. Her main focus currently is the implementation of the whole system approach to healthy weight across Wales, so now over to you, Ilona and Sofia. Thank you.

Ilona Johnson (Public Health Wales) 0:3:18
Thank you so much. So I think we have some slides.

Lydia Orford
Yes, we can see those.

Ilona Johnson
Just thought I'd double check that they are visible. Thank you so much and thank you for the introduction. So we're going to go through getting to the root of the problem, a whole systems approach to healthy weight in Wales and if we advance from here.

Sophia Bird (Public Health Wales)

Apologies, just having a little technical issue here. There we go.

Ilona Johnson

There we go, okay. So what I'd like to do is start introducing the aim of the session and really what we wanted to do today was to outline whole system approaches and some of the related terminology, we wanted people to understand the strategic context of the whole system approach to healthy weight in Wales and to recognise the approach that we're using. And there's a subtle hint behind me. And also to illustrate the approaches that are being taken with some practical examples. And then what we'll do at the end is hopefully share some details for accessing further information, which hopefully will give people the opportunity to share forwards from there. So if we move forwards onto the next part, we actually have a short video. It's a new video for you and hopefully this should play.

Ilona Johnson 0:5:28
This is the first proper viewing of this video for everybody, so it's worth the wait. It's taken us a while to get this one put together.

Video 0:6:6

In Wales, over 60% of our adults are living with overweight or obesity, and this is increasing year on year.
There have been a lot of changes over the 20th century, which have contributed to increases in our weight. The jobs we do are less manual, we travel by car, work from home and use labour saving devices at home and at work, which mean we move less.
At the same time, we're eating larger portions. We prepare less of our meals from fresh at home and our busy lives see us eating more ready meals and takeaways than ever before.
People with obesity and overweight are more likely to experience long term health conditions. This has implications for our businesses, schools, economy and health and care services, as well as the individual and their family. With obesity prevalence in Wales rising, unless we address this urgently, the situation will get much worse.

It's a complicated system and there are no simple solutions. People are unlikely to respond to individual interventions. Asking them to change their diets or behaviours, particularly when it is currently inconvenient or the healthy choice is difficult. And they are surrounded by unhealthy options. Unstopped the system will reinforce current unhealthy behaviours. For example, many people travel by car to work and school. One of the reasons why people choose not to walk cycle or use more sustainable transport options is they do not feel safe or able to do so. This means more people choose to travel by car, increasing cars on the roads, making the roads and footpaths feel less safe. This pattern reinforces car travel. No single organisation can solve the issue and everyone has a role to play, including those in local authorities, businesses, the food industry, leisure providers, health boards, government, community groups and third sector organisations.
The healthy weight healthy Wales strategy from the Welsh Government has identified that a whole systems approach is the only way to make positive change. A whole systems approach looks at complex problems and works to understand the different parts of the problem, the connections and complex relationships. Taking our travel example, making changes so that walking, cycling or using public transport feels safer and is more convenient can help to reduce car usage. With fewer cars on the roads, people can feel safer, meaning they are more likely to feel able to make the active choice of walking or cycling.
A whole systems approach can help us address obesity and make changes and improve environments for all. For us, this means developing a shared understanding of the challenges around reducing obesity, interrogating the many factors and interconnections which influence what we eat and how active we are and working together to make the right changes to structures, policies and approaches to improve how things work.
In Wales we have a nine step approach to systems working. The initial steps focus on understanding obesity and the system, people and partners around them who could make a difference. The next steps involve bringing these people together, consider the bigger picture and how actions impact others within the wider system. The final stages involve putting actions into place to make system change happen to benefit us all working together, we can find opportunities to act in a way to bring about long term positive change to the system.

Join us in adopting this approach so that living healthily is easier for everyone. For more information, visit healthyweight.wales/systems.

Ilona Johnson 0:10:0
Thank you so much. That's the first outing of that video. I'm going to hand over to Sophia.

Sophia Bird 0:10:12
Sorry folks, I'm just getting my different screens sorted. Can you hear me?

Lydia Orford
Yes, we can Sophia and we can see your slides as well.

Sophia Bird
Perfect. Got that bit right then. So as you've heard a little bit systems are a collective group of individual elements and these can be concrete parts, but they can also include people, processes, policies, values, beliefs. Systems are interconnected, interdependent and relationships are really crucial within this. The way the different elements of a system interact with each other really underpins how the system works and any resulting outcomes.
So one example that's used to try and explain systems is the example of a bicycle. As a system it is made-up of lots of parts, it's quite complicated the way they're all put together, one part on its own doesn't do anything, particularly to help you ride a bike.
It tends to only work when all the parts put together in the correct order.

Sophia Bird 0:11:15
So whilst it might be a complicated system, it's actually fairly simple and it's a technical process. It can be repeated many times. There's a particular order if you've got the technical know how you can put a bicycle together. It is a system.
The complex systems that we tend to be thinking about within public health when we're using systems approaches are those systems that are adaptive, that are emerging, that are unpredictable, that have lots of different parts, that are interconnected in different ways and that are always moving and changing. Different types of systems or problems require different types of approaches. So if you've got a simple problem, for example, how to turn a light on then often the solution is fairly simple, and it's often the same solution.
If you're dealing with a complex situation, for example inequalities, there's a lot of uncertainty. We don't necessarily know whether things will directly transfer from one context to another. It's unpredictable. There's adaption, there's continuous learning that is needed as we try to work our way through a system.

Ilona Johnson 0:12:25
So what we're going to do is just very briefly sort of describe some of this, because actually you hear the word systems used a lot at the moment, and actually you'll hear a lot of language relating to systems and some of the time we're really not talking about the same thing. You'll see the system methods, whole community approaches, costs across sectoral systems, thinking whole systems, approaches, system wide approaches, lots and lots of words. But they don't always refer to the same thing.

So I think one of the things that's useful to consider is that systems thinking can be seen as a way of a user viewing a problem. It's actually about looking at things, but it's not actually a

whole systems approach. Similarly, cross sectoral working means working with partners from different sectors rather than a silo, but again, that doesn't actually require systems thinking to actually make that happen.

And a whole community approach might sort of send you in the right direction towards engaging with members in that community. But again, it doesn't necessarily require systems thinking or that kind of cross sectoral working and processes. So when we brand all these things as the systems approach, but we suggest that that's a systems approach, it doesn't necessarily reflect a whole systems approach to a particular problem.

And a lot of these ways of working can be really effective, but actually for example cross sectoral working can be very effective, but when you apply the systems thinking, it's actually really about how it all joins together. So if we kind of group all of these and say they are all the same thing when they're not, we're probably not quite sharing a whole systems approach or those opportunities to share within that. So it's useful to understand the language. So if we move to the next thank you.

Ilona Johnson 0:14:10

So I mean recognising that we are dealing with a complex system, there are some concepts to be considered. One of the concepts that people talk about a lot of times in the language you're here is things like emergence. And that's the process through which an interaction between the elements gives rise to something that's actually more than just the parts in isolation. So coming back to the bicycle, there's lots of bits, but when it comes together, it turns into something else. So, you know, none of the elements contributing to this new quality in itself are the system.

And the bike will take you from A to B, but no single part of the bike will do that. And similarly, no single part of our current society or our systems is actually causing obesity. It's all the bits together. We can't just pinpoint one thing that's causing obesity and overweight in our systems. And actually another part of this is about interconnectedness and actually, it's not just about the parts, but how they interact together, how they actually work together. And it's sometimes seems counterintuitive when you improve the importance of one bit, you don't always necessarily have the same effect on another bit, and sometimes you actually have the opposite effect on another bit because the performance doesn't always work in the way that we hope.
And another word that we use is feedback. So this is very much a circular process of influence where one element is part of a chain of course and effect that either causes a circuit or a loop, but that's actually the thing is, it's about understanding in all of this that systems are dynamic, they're complex and they're dynamic and they operate together.

Ilona Johnson 0:16:0

So one of the things about systems working and actually I'm going to describe the lens, that a systems approach is a different way of looking at the world, and actually a different way of approaching things. People most often as soon as they start talking about systems, they will dive into the doing. They'll talk about interventions, they'll talk about services, they'll talk

about what they know about because it's familiar and comfortable, but a systems approach zooms out, it looks at the overall bigger picture and actually starts to sort of see how everything connects.

As an example, nutrition and obesity, one to one interventions aren't particularly effective on a population basis at all. And even if they are successful, even if it was successful on that one to one basis, we're then sending people out into the system that caused that problem. So if we don't fix the cause and the root of the problem, we're just going to keep going back to the same problem. So zooming out and seeing the bigger picture enables you to see the different perspectives. And there are lots of perspectives in the mix.

And to have that holistic view, you need to consider the different perspectives. And one of the things is not out of my finance budget would be one that comes to mind that we often have lots of pots of funding in different places which cause things and we do need to accept and react to the adaptive nature of the system. In other words, when you change one bit, things don't always happen the way we expect, but we need to keep learning and adapting. So in other words, we're making a change in a dynamic system.

Ilona Johnson 0:17:35
We need to recognise that the context that we're working in and we need to recognise that a system also generates as part of that system, behaviour that actually the decisions in one part of the system can affect decisions and things that happen in another part of the system. Actually a lot of things that happen at the moment are in silos, so some of the foundations of a whole systems approaches, systems thinking, seeing the wood for the trees, understanding the multiple perspectives, identifying the interconnections and how they operate. Some of the behaviours reviewing that system and that dynamic adaptive nature of it and being aware of both the feedback and the unintended consequences within that system.
So I'm going to give an example of a school and I suppose it's to put it into context really more than anything else that actually this is a school and we talk about school food a lot. You'll hear it a lot, but actually if you start to take a step back and think about it and move away from that kind of silo approach, it's actually not a very simple system, nor is it actually linear. Nothing's linear in this process.

It's all quite interconnected as well, so traditional ways of working look at silos. They look at generalising, they look at individual isolated activities and I could say well, you know the food that's on the plate, we need to know about it, we've got healthier food, we've got cooking the food, we've got eating the food, you need a kitchen to prepare that food in so if a school has been designed through planning without a kitchen we're going to have a technical problem. Similarly, if there's nowhere for children to sit down and actually eat that food, that's going to be a problem, if they haven't got time to sit down in that day to sit down and eat that food. We have a problem. Similarly, how people get the transport of food and all the other component parts together, these don't all work just on their own. And then of course, there's the money side of it.

Ilona Johnson 0:19:36

So in terms of systems, we need to think about the integration of a whole system, that there is a contextual element of it, farming communities in this will have a very different connection of foods to something that's in a city, for example.

And we need to look at the system as a whole and those dynamic feedback loops and our stakeholders who are our true partners in this mix to really look at not just we need to tell people what to eat, we need to look at why and how we can make that change for healthier food.

Sophia Bird 0:20:9

So thinking about that, whenever we have an action or we make an intervention, that will make a change in the system, but that change will often affect other parts of the system. And whilst there might be an intended consequence, the outcome we're looking for, often there will be unintended or unexpected outcomes too, and some of those can be positive, some of them might be negative, but they're due to the system's ability to adapt and also the many competing goals within a system. So one of the advantages of the systems approach is that it encourages us to be aware that our actions may have unintended consequences elsewhere in the system.

And thinking about that school example, another example would be a school that was having issues with teachers being late because they couldn't find places to park easily. So when the school was redesigned, they agreed they would find some land so that teachers will be able to park. Unfortunately, they took the land from the playground. So the unintended consequence was that then those children had less of an area to be active, so their reduced playground was even smaller.

Another example, again from school, but there are examples all over our systems and all over our environments. The school that really wanted to increase active travel to school. So one of the actions they took was to cancel some of the school bus routes to encourage parents and children to walk into school. Unfortunately, they hadn't necessarily done enough of a risk assessment about the routes that children might need to go to get to school, and the result was that the number of children then had to be driven to school by their parents instead.

Sophia Bird 0:21:49
So often the actions that we identify to produce an intended consequence. There are today's solutions end up becoming tomorrow's problems.

So this next slide just really is a little bit of a showing you the feedback loop that was touched on earlier in a little bit more detail. It can be a reinforcing effect. So this slide shows we've identified poverty as being an issue and we identify that it's caused by lower education, but that's not the only cause. And there are other factors that come into play. We know that people who experience poverty often also experience poor health. Again, this can feed in can result in low education. Equally, those who experience poverty often have less access to resources, and again, that can impact on low education, which can then reinforce that cycle of low education, resulting in the likelihood of experiencing poverty.

And when that cycle continues, that loop carries on and the feedback is reinforced. We often talk about vicious cycles and we want to break those vicious cycles, because left unchecked they just continue. However, within the system, in other activities, often impacting it and encourage that system flex and adaption and bring some different balances into play.

Sophia Bird 0:23:18
System science has a long history, it really isn't new, but it is early days in terms of the evidence in public health because it's difficult to evaluate a whole system. There are so many different factors that are coming into play and it's often about the relationships within the system as well, so it's complex. It's not as simple as giving people a drug. Traditional approaches to gathering evidence of effectiveness are not necessarily fully helpful in this situation. They aren't the total solution. If this is a really long term approach, and so it's about developing evidence that shows the journey over the time.

Susan, Jebb and Caleb's published an expert consensus around system based approaches in 2021 and their key recommendations for the future, including the need to build and strengthen the evidence base around systems approaches, as well as allocating for the funding into the study of and implementation of systems approaches and a lot of the reviews and studies have been published fairly recently, which are helping us to build our understanding of what a systems approach entails.
So why are we doing a systems approach in Wales around healthy weight? Well, this is the challenge that we're dealing with. Around two thirds of our adult population currently experience overweight and obesity. These rates are rising. It's estimated that by 2030, 1.63 million of our adult population in Wales will experience overweight and obesity. We can't continue doing what we've always done, focusing on education and behaviour interventions. That's not enough anymore. We really need to address the environment so that people ar in a position to change their behaviour.

Sophia Bird, 0:25:1

This slide just gives an example of body mass index distribution. It's from 2015 and things have changed since then, particularly as a result of COVID. We know that there are more people experiencing overweight and obesity, but this data from a self-reported survey where people were asked to give their height and weight shows that the number of people in the unhealthy weight section, which we don't want, that's those with a BMI or below 18.5 is obviously very low here the healthy body mass index distribution is here 18.5 to 24.9 but we can see that the shape of the curve is very much shifting towards the overweight which is body mass index or 25 to 29.5 and obesity, classified as 30 and above.

And as this graph shows that those who are in high levels of obesity in the 40 plus, actually it ranged right up to 79. So people are really experiencing some poor quality of life as a result of their experience around overweight and obesity. BMI is a rough and ready tool. It's not perfect, but it does give us an indication.

Just a couple more facts and figures. We know that more men than women experience overweight and obesity, and we also know that it's higher in areas of deprivation. However,

even in those areas where there's least deprivation, it's still over half the population that are experiencing overweight and obesity, so this is not simply an issue which can be solved through finances.

We're very lucky in Wales that the Welsh Government published their healthy weight healthy Wales strategy in 2019. This consists of four themes and the fourth theme is about leadership and enabling change, and that's where this work using a whole systems approach to healthy weight, sits really focusing on developing that leadership and enabling change at a system level. And the reason we need that is because most of the causes around obesity tend to be related to living and working conditions and wider conditions. If you think about Dahlgren and Whitehead, getting my different systems mixed up. However, some research done by Leeds Beckett University and Public Health England on interventions for children around obesity found that actually the majority of the interventions were targeting individual lifestyle factors.

What we're keen to do is to redress the balance so that the interventions are addressing the main causes, which are these living and working conditions, so health services, work conditions, education, housing, transport and also the wider conditions, things like land use, economic climate, culture, political governance and income equality.

Sophia Bird, 0:28:7

There are many tools that can be used to support the different stages of our whole system approach and to help to identify system level action. One of the tools used is the iceberg Model Canvas, which is what this is showing, because we tend to know what we see and often interventions happen at this level, the bit that we can see. However, we aren't so good at accessing the things that we can't see, which is the system wide population change. So for example if you go supermarket shopping quite often we come out with things we hadn't necessarily planned to purchase when we went in, because there are other influences at play, advertising, placement, etc. So we're really keen to look at what those other influences are and to be explicitly harnessing them rather than it just happening pure chance.

Many of you may be familiar with this foresight map from 2008, showing the various influences on obesity. So this was a piece of work where the causes of obesity were all mapped and then they were able to be grouped by particular themes. And as you can see from the different themes here, really there's only one area that the individual has control over. All the others are outside their sphere of control and influence. These are all part of the system and the system is the source of the problem.
There were lots of different parts or subsystems within here. Anyone of these could be focused on or prioritised to influence the system to and support us all to be able to live healthier.

Sophia Bird. 0:29:44

So our whole systems approach in Wales has been defined as one that considers multifactorial drivers of overweight and obesity. We're looking to take forward a

transformative, coordinated approach across a broad range of disciplines. It's covering all levels of governance and of course throughout the life course. And as I mentioned earlier, the approach is embedded within the strategy and Welsh Government have actually provided some funding so that this can be delivered at a national and Health board region level.

We've developed our nine step approach to take this forward, which provides guidance to colleagues across the Health Board, public health teams to enable them to understand the different steps needed to take forward this approach, which is really key in terms of building strong foundations for system work. This set up and buy in and the definition of mapping and creating that narrative are all vital steps that cannot be rushed if we're going to build strong foundations for this approach. Ilona.

Ilona Johnson, 0:30:47
So and I think this is actually quite a powerful image because actually we don't often see children nowadays travelling on their own. They don't cycle to school very much as often as they used to. And this is, you know, it's about why is this happening? How has the system changed? Why is the system so different? That means these things just don't happen as often as they used to. And how do we re-shift the balance to make things different, better?

And I think one of the parts of this is about how we influence the system is very key that we need to engineer some of the changes, purposeful change, in other words, for a good reason. There's an awful lot of things that happen by people bumping into each other and having a conversation or happening upon somebody else. It kind of happens, and change happens because certain things, certain interactions happen.

But the whole systems approach is designed to actually bring together change through actually drawing people together in a purposeful way and certainly there was a NICE review in terms of a whole systems approach. About 10 core features were identified that actually said what a good system looked like, one of which was about explicit recognition of public health system, the system itself. Capacity within that system, capacity building, encouragement of some local creativity was another feature of success, innovation and developing working relationships, community engagement.

A good example of where that does or doesn't work at times. This if you think about the reaction to 20 mile an hour zones, about how we engage those communities, enhancing communication, embeddedness of policy and action, robustness and sustainability of and facilitative leadership and monitoring and evaluation. So all of these features were identified within a NICE review and if we go to the next slide, one of the things that comes with that is about we sometimes don't recognise how much of the system influences us.

Ilona Johnson, 0:32:58

A lot of systems work isn't about targeting individuals, it's about targeting what's around those individuals. We probably don't even notice the vending machines appearing and all the foods advertisers. It's become so commonplace it's almost we don't question it. My particular favourite was the cupcake vending machine, which was an absolute horror. It's almost as bad as the pizza vending machine in the streets, which will have been developed so the convenience, the ease of foods that are not so healthy for us at times and particularly

if they're not taken as part of a healthy balanced diet. That availability causes a lot of problems in terms of our choices.

And there are lots of different parts of subsystems that anyone of those subsystems has all sorts of bits underneath this that we could prioritise. But the point I'm making with this is that the current systems around us make it very difficult to make healthy choices when we're tired, we pick up foods we don't need to. There's lots of things that happen around us that nudges towards an unhealthy choice. So fundamentally, we need to make the healthy choice, the easy choice through fundamental system change and that's through purposeful change.

So thinking about that iceberg model, which we said you see things on the surface and then the stuff that happens underneath, the iceberg model we often have things that you can see, but system interventions are a lot of the things under the surface, the patterns, the structures, the mental models, the beliefs, the this is how we always do things that happens. If you think about active travel, healthier travel, making healthier choices, walking more, moving more. Do we have to think about the road design speed limits? Actually, the speed limit on the car? How our working patterns change, how we move and actually how often we move. We're sitting behind a desk today at a webinar that tells us something.

Street design, planning design, the fact that actually sometimes you have to walk a long way to cross the road or it's, you know, the streets are designed around the cars and the parking. If you look at how designs where in the past they were much more designed around people walking, now they've actually changed to, as you know, almost mall to mall design and certainly in America you actually have to drive from mall to mall, you can't even walk and even things like lighting and various things at night time, feeling safe at night that kind of sensory element as well all of these things affect what we do and some of that is actually about we don't have control of all of these bits of the system. We need to work with lots of bits of the system to make the changes that will make a difference to making these things better.

Ilona Johnson, 0:35:46

So the first part of our systems approach is very much about setup and buy-in and that's about actually firstly focusing on the set of systems approach, getting people on board with that and all of these steps happen in tandem. So understanding that system, who's who? What's happening? What's going on? Who are our partners? And actually, as you understand more of the system, you identify more partners. So you can see how it kind of generally builds and beginning to understand who's who. What happens, is it just the fact that one person knows everything and we go to them or is it actually that there's a meaningful engagement between organisations and also things like governance and policy. In terms of how those formal structures can support that system change, actually creating that, and then there's an element of system narrative, in other words, often our health narratives are our own words, but we need to understand that our partners use often quite a different set of words for the same thing. I think a good example is, we've been learning about planning and in the planning spaces, people talk about wellbeing. If we talk about obesity, nobody will come and talk to us at all. They probably will, but it just doesn't mean

as much because it doesn't connect into what they're doing, so getting those shared narratives and actually really understanding that engaging our partners is part of actually helping us move together to work out how we can work better together to enable that system change and also understanding what matters to those partners. So that actually it's not about us doing too. It's us working with, to make those changes because actually we have a lot of shared understandings and actually shared goals. We just don't necessarily work in that way at the moment, so a lot of the things we have been doing is mapping forwards and I'll hand over.

Sophia Bird, 0:37:35

So this is just a quick example for you to see what a mapping might look like. This is one of our colleagues within Powys Public Health Team who mapped their key organisations, stakeholders and partnerships around the healthy weight agenda, and this helps to identify assets and gaps, which means that we can then think about how the system can be strengthened and who needs to be connected in with who. Another example of the type of mapping that is delivered or within a systems approach is mapping the causes. So again colleagues, this time in the Betsi Cadwaladr Public Health Team held a stakeholder causal mapping workshop where they brought their key stakeholders that they'd already identified. They brought them together and got them all to think about what might be the causes of unhealthy weight. I think that group identified over 90 potential causes, but this then starts the process not only of that relationship building and developing, and the development of a shared language in a shared vision, but also people beginning to understand their role in the system and their role in the space, and helps to identify that language as llona was mentioning earlier, those shared connections.

So this is an example of Step 4 system engagement. To really highlight the number of different opportunities or bringing stakeholders, partners, colleagues together. Physical and virtual events draw people together so that people can begin to develop and build on those relationships on their language, and it's a planned, conscious, intentional step. It's a planned part of developing the system rather than chaotic or unplanned things that influence system and change. So it's not about the chance conversation over the water cooler as llona was talking about earlier. This is really intentional bringing together of people within the system to effect change.

Sophia Bird, 0:39:36

This is a quick example of Step 5, which is where we're just moving on from at the moment. So already you can see that whilst the seven health Board areas have been working with their key partners, their key stakeholders to identify what they feel are the causes of obesity and what would work best for them to prioritise in each area. Some common themes are developing across Wales already and that means we'll be able to share the learning across our national Wales system as we go through.

And that's really a starting point for influencing the system, because it's our partners who've

identified that these are areas they want to prioritise. So it's a very pragmatic approach because they've identified what will work within their local context.

And this is another image, again this is showing the teams in Betsi Cadwaladr. This is identifying their journey so far and as you can see it really is not a linear approach whilst our nine steps might suggest that you do the steps sequentially, actually you're doing them altogether at different times and they're all coming forward and they're moving to the back. So this approach shows them starting to move through the steps from step 1 right through to step 9 where they're at the moment where they've developed their action plan and as a as a partnership with all the key stakeholders involved.

But what it doesn't really illustrate, whilst it shows the story of the journey and the direction they're taking, it doesn't illustrate the amount of work behind to take that journey and this approach takes time, it is important to invest in those relationships right at the beginning. It really is a long term approach and is certainly not a quick fix for anything. Ilona.

Ilona Johnson, 0:41:30

So one of the things about a whole systems approach really, and something that sits underneath the approach that we're taking in Wales, particularly some identified factors which are very much key to a successful whole systems approach. And of course these link very much the strategies you'll see is starting with the strong leadership. So the strong leadership, consistent languages or getting that language across to partners, that shared understanding, getting it suitable for that local context that we've got that kind of purposeful meaningful engagement.

Getting those robust governance structures to really underpin those processes so that not just people are communicating, but that infrastructure of actually governance and communication exists, very much recognition of the outcomes in the influences in the system.

Embedding, learning, reflection feedback and a bit of innovation and initiative as well, all of those things are very much key features and some of these things are things we're looking at within a context of evaluation in terms of maturity matrices for our whole systems approach in Wales and these factors are based on a piece of work by Garside. So this is where some of the underpinnings of what we're trying to say when we're communicating system change, it's actually not there while we're seeing 15 patients, it's actually saying something about what we're making the changes to as well. So if we go to the next slide.

And to say very much about the nationally, how we are operating and we're very unique in Wales and what we've got, we've got area systems work in each area and then we have a national team who are helping people to develop the systems approach. We're working to enable that approach in each of the areas with the connection between all the areas together so that we have a national strategic stakeholder event, so to try and draw together all of the partners in the system.

On the more national strategic level for a starter, so that then has the connection to the local work and that enabling function and of course more strategic events. So for example, the planning system is something that's been identified through the mapping in each of the

areas. So what we've then done is said, right, we will start to draw some of the national partners together for this to try and facilitate that change on the more local level. So what we've got in Wales is very much something between the national and local, enabling approach which is very unique compared to all of the other areas and actually more than anything else, it's about how we really work together to identify the blockers at both local and national level. So that we've got that movement across. It's not easy, but that's the approach we're taking to actually improve that sort of national approach to supporting that system change.

Sophia Bird, 0:44:24

So what we're finding really is that this way of working, this Systems Working Wales is promoting a shared vision language and agenda. Working with those key stakeholders, we're able to develop those common priorities and goals, and often that's about seizing opportunities, addressing emerging problems and very much working with people from different sectors, which brings different and fresh perspectives that can encourage creativity and challenge the status quo. It enables different organisations to align their measures of success, and we're building those relationships by building trust motivation, increasing communication systems and all that helps with mutually reinforcing plans of action. And in Wales we've been lucky that Welsh Government have funded us to do this work, so we're able to deliver a coordination approach as well as doing some of the delivery of the actual work.
And what we're seeing is that the value of doing this, the question is really not, does this approach work, but how does this help alter the system? And that's the evaluation element that we're trying to get to. So we're moving from attribution to contribution, we're getting people to understand that they have a role to play in the system and that they can contribute and that their actions whether intended or not, will influence the system one way or another. It is a very far sighted and it's a very bold approach to take because it is a long term vision. It's a long term approach. It's about imagining a different future and the actions that we will need to get us there, because whatever we do or don't do, those will be a future. And it's whether we choose to try and shape that future or whether we let the system just take its own course, an example of that could be smoking.
I'm sure many of you will remember when smoking in public places was first banned and the uproar from people. I remember, particularly in pubs, people being horrified, they had to go outside and stand in the rain to smoke a cigarette. Nowadays, people I think will be really shocked if we went into a public place and it was a really smoky, foggy room. So we've had that cultural change. It has taken time, but we are very much there and I suspect that in 20-30 years time, the idea of 20 mile an hour speed limits will be equally accepted as the norm and sensible approach.

Sophia Bird, 0:46:57

So the value of the Wales approach is really for us, we're focusing on obesity, but actually the obesity system overlaps hugely with a range of other systems. For example, climate change, environmental stuff, physical activity and we're really lucky in Wales with our legislation context particularly, for example, the future generations and wellbeing act which

has its five ways of working that need for long term vision. And what we've seen already is that the mapping that our local colleagues have done is really being valued already by a range of partners who are using it, because it's increasing everyone's understanding about who or what is operating within our workspace, as it were. And it's really helping to align to systems leadership happening within other systems spaces. For example, our PSB colleagues who are looking to do some systems working around health inequalities.

I suppose for me it's really being very explicit that relationships matter. We often don't know who we don't know. This approach helps to identify all the players within the system, and it helps, then organisations and partnerships and networks to get our messages aligned so that we're all pointing in the same direction rather than having those conflicting messages that so often exists within our society.

So we've got a couple of references, if people are looking for further information and the slides will be available afterwards I think. So you'll be able to access those, but we're at the point of saying thank you for listening and any questions. We're going to show the polls again shortly, but just for those who are interested in following this up a little bit more locally with our local public health team colleagues, here's a list of the people who are leading this work within each health board public health team. Thank you very much for listening.

Lydia Orford, 0:48:59

Many thanks Sophia and llona for the excellent presentation around the healthy weight whole system work in Wales. It's really great to see the evidence, the strategic context and the nine step approach developed within Wales and from a local perspective it's great to be part of this. So many thanks. We'll now move on to the question and answer session, if you haven't already asked a question in the chat. Now is the time to do so and we'll try to answer as many of the questions as we can in the time we have left.
Conscious we've got 10 minutes left, so we had a couple of comments and then some questions come through. So firstly, Sophia, great to see the animation and I know how much hard work has gone into that. So it's great to see it. And can we just check where that will be stored for people to be able to access that? I know it might not be ready straight away with it being hot off the press, but where will it be stored for people to access?

Ilona Johnson 0:50

Yeah, we're going to upload it temporarily, we've got a page, a web address. So it will be going into that page and then moving into the Public health Wales pages, but it should just go through the same link. So the link that we provided will be operating to as a signpost through basically.

Sophia Bird, 0:50:22

And there will be a Welsh language version as well, that's just being finalised at the moment, so apologies we could only show one or the other, so apologies that we only showed the English one.

Ilona Johnson, 0:50:35
The other one will be shared, we will share these links.

Lydia Orford, 0:50:38

Right. Thank you. And also a question from Lorna Bennett around the unintended consequence and how we are seeing that with school extensions particularly at the moment. And I just wanted to really comment that we're seeing that certainly within BCU as well. And we raised those concerns when we're responding to planning applications. So just wanted to mention that as well, if I could move on to the questions, if that's OK, one from Lisa Williams, the food environment is not conducive to healthy eating. And how are the vested interests of food industry going to be tackled? So improved food literacy can support people, households, communities and populations to navigate the complex food environment.

Ilona Johnson, 0:51:24

That's a million dollar question because obviously we have that you know when we're talking commercial determinants and a lot of complexity to this. Obviously the Welsh Government consulted in September of last year on the healthy food environment. They have announced some of that, they will announce more of that. Undoubtedly they will probably consult further in different areas and it's really about our opportunities and very much you know everybody's support with making sure that we've got really robust evidence about the changes that were making at the end of the day, as you know, the advertising of, it's not just about, it's the advertising, the content that there's a whole range of things, and some of this will be through legislative change, some of it both through behavioural change. But again, this is about how we engage with each of those areas and work forwards and also put the evidence to underpin those changes.

Sophia Bird, 0:52:20

Can I just add to that quickly Lydia, just picking up on your earlier point. It's also about how we work with our planning colleagues to shape some of the built environment, particularly around the healthy food, healthy high street environment. So that's another bit of the system that we're hoping to influence and some of that work has already started.

Ilona Johnson, 0:52:39

Yeah, some of those food environments, for example, some of the planning applications for hot food environments near schools. Sorry part of that consultation, I should have said. So if they're putting a hot food takeaway, you can do wonderful food inside the school, but if you've got a whole load of takeaways outside it, the kids picking stuff up, then you're not going to get very far with making changes. So all of that has been part of those consultations and hopefully we'll see those announcements once those responses have been fully considered.

Lydia Orford, 0:53:12
Right. Thank you both. If we can move on to the next question, this is from Tamsin Spade. So thanks for a great webinar, has mental health been considered in the system and is there an opportunity for eating disorder services to be part of the coproduction?

Sophia Bird, 0:53:29

So I think yes mental health is a key part of the system because hopefully you will have seen the system is all around all of us. And how an individual feels will affect their behaviour. But what we're really trying to emphasise is that this is not about working to address individuals behaviour because so much of that is happening already. This is about how we work with organisations, partners, networks that are already in the system because at the moment we have organisations giving out conflicting messages.
One example, we have a leisure centre staff within our local authorities encouraging people to be more physically active, but the food that might be being served in the leisure centre canteen or in the Leisure centre vending machines are actually more on the unhealthy side, so that's conflicting messages coming from the same organisation. Those are the things we're looking to tackle. There's already lots of work going on for people and more is always needed to support people around mental health, particularly with their relationship to food as well, and for people with eating disorders.

Lydia Orford, 0:54:36

Right. Thank you both. Just conscious of the time, so I'm going to club the next two questions together, so if you could quickly answer them that would be helpful. Are there any sectors that have been more difficult to engage with than others in taking a whole system approach? That's one question, and then another is recognising this as a long term vision within a complex system. When do you think we'll begin to see changes as a result of a whole system approach and how will we know?

Ilona Johnson, 0:55:2

I think it's not necessarily about people not engaging, it's about us not necessarily giving the narratives right to engage, you know, and not necessarily identifying them. There are areas where people don't necessarily see their role, but generally speaking we're not getting complete push back, but sometimes it is one of the challenges is getting somebody senior enough in the room to actually do it. So often organisations send somebody who's not so senior you can't make as much decisions.
Change is happening. It's not necessarily that change isn't happening. It's the fact that how we capture and measure that change and then demonstrate that change. So I think that's our challenge, it isn't necessarily about we know that change is happening because we have case studies and we're seeing what's happening on the ground. It's how we measure and communicate that change, which is the really important bit.

Lydia Orford, 0:55:52

Right. Thank you both. I'm going to sneak in one last question and then the others we will pick up after the after the webinar, we can we can post responses into the chat. So how much is influence, power and capability to change this system considered in this approach? I would imagine most changing impact would lie in food systems, ultra processed food, etc, but very difficult to tackle on a national and local level.

Ilona Johnson, 0:56:20

I think that's actually quite, there's actually a lot of areas we can change. Often there's around the ability to be more active, there's the coming back to mental health, so putting infrastructure in place that allows you know, the policies in place around even workplaces and wider environments. I think it's actually there are significant opportunities to make changes across the whole of the food system. You know that, I mean actually there are many parts of the food system as well. There's all the way from fork to farm, you know, all of those sorts of parts of it all the way through environment and those opportunities, so I think we have a lot of opportunities. It's actually just taking everything step by step and working with our partners and recognising that it's actually going to take time for us to actually, you know, to work with each of the partners, and I mean even you know and said, why don't we do all the other areas just focusing on obesity is really helpful, you know, obesity in those areas just because otherwise we could change everything and we'd love to, but we have to start somewhere.

Lydia Orford, 0:57:28

We certainly do. So thank you both and thank you to everyone that's joined us today and for posing those questions, we will answer any remaining questions in the chat or post answers onto the website alongside the recording presentation and link to the animation. Before we finish today's webinar, we'd like to repeat the two question polls from before. The poll will appear shortly and include the two questions. So its knowledge of whole system approaches and confidence in working to achieve a whole system approach and as before please could I ask you to rank your knowledge and confidence on a scale of one to five, one being very low, five being very high.

So if you could do that, that would be great. And that is all we have time for today, but many thanks, Ilona and Sophia for the excellent presentation.

Sofia shared the slide before, including contact details for healthy weight, whole system teams for each health board area and please do make contact with the team in your area, we would love to hear from you. We would be grateful if everyone joining the webinar could complete a short evaluation and the link will be included in the chat and also be sent to you, and we hope you will join Public Health Network Cymru, if you are not already a member. Finally, if you have any thoughts on future webinar topics please let the team know at Public Health Network Cymru so diolch yn fawr iawn. Thank you and have a great day everyone.