# School for Public Health Research

# **Public Health Evidence Briefing**

Building the evidence for cost-effective public health practice

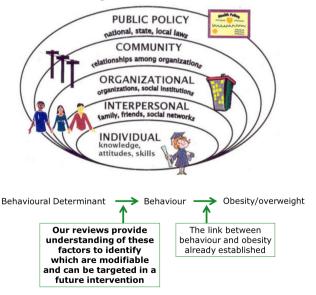
# What determines obesity-related behaviours in young children?

- Obesity is common even in young children and habits formed in early life persist.
- A literature review on factors influencing behaviour has helped identify which ones to target with interventions to change behaviour.
- Parenting practices, such as role modelling, monitoring and feeding practices, are important influences across all behaviours
- Provider training and nutrition policies are also positive influences in the early years setting.

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#### Socio-ecological model of determinants



1 in 5 children are overweight or obese when they start school and obesity tracks into later life, hence early prevention is important

#### Key issues

- Obesity is common even in young children and habits formed in early life persist.
- In order to change behaviour we need to understand the factors that influence the behaviour.
- Factors influencing children's behaviours act at multiple levels (child, parents/family, childcare/preschool, community, policy).
- The study found that parental practices and early years settings (childcare/preschool) influenced young children's behaviour.
- It found unhealthy behaviours cluster (e.g. sugar-sweetened beverage intake & TV viewing) and may be targeted together.

#### What we did

A literature review was conducted on the factors influencing:

- 1. Sugar sweetened beverage intake
- 2. Fruit & vegetable intake and
- 3. Physical activity & sedentary behaviours

in children under seven with the aim of informing interventions/ policies to change these behaviours.

## What next?

Knowledge gained from these reviews will inform early life obesity prevention interventions and guide future research.

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#### **Findings and implications**

- Multi-level interventions (child, parents, early years settings) show promise in changing obesity-related behaviours in young children.
- Parental practices and factors in the early years settings are important modifiable determinants of these behaviours and should be targeted in future interventions.
- Research in this age-group is recent (mainly since 2007) and very few community or policy-level interventions have been evaluated.
- Sustainability, scalability and impact on inequalities need to be considered in future interventions.

#### **References:**

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Mazarello Paes V, et al. Factors influencing obesogenic dietary intake in young children (0–6 years): systematic review of qualitative evidence. BMJ Open 2015;5: e007396. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2014-007396. <u>http://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/5/9/e007396.full.pdf+html</u>

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#### SPHR Contact/Find out more about this study at:

http://www.iph.cam.ac.uk/nihr-sphr/research/obesity/

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