

Policy Extract

[Evidence for environmental interventions to prevent childhood overweight and obesity within schools](#)

This briefing paper aims to provide an overview of the best available evidence on the effectiveness of food environment interventions to prevent childhood overweight and obesity in school settings.

Key Points:

- The evidence supports the work taken forward in Scotland as part of the Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007.
- Food and drink policies within schools are most effective when they are comprehensive, addressing the whole food environment within schools.
- Adaptations to the food provided in schools such as reducing fat content, providing age-appropriate portion sizes and limiting unhealthy options have the potential to influence children and young people's consumption patterns and reduce prevalence of overweight and obesity in schools.
- Nutritional information appears to have an effect on food choices for children and young people in schools, but minimal effect on calorie intake.
- Increasing the prices of unhealthy products and decreasing the prices of healthy products has the potential to influence the purchasing/consumption behaviour of children and young people.
- Actions to improve the aesthetics of school dining areas and encourage positive social interactions may encourage pupils to eat within school, therefore reducing exposure to high fat, sugar and salt foods provided outside school gates.
- Combining environmental interventions with educational interventions enhances impact on maintaining healthy weight and helps to maintain this effect in the long term.
- Environmental interventions should be taken as part of a collection of actions to make a meaningful impact on overweight and obesity in children.