

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE ACT 2008

EXPLANATORY NOTES

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

Part 5 – Miscellaneous

Weighing and measuring of children

47. The Foresight Report “*Tackling Obesities: Future Choices*”¹, commissioned by the Government in 2005, was published by the Government’s Chief Scientific Adviser and the Foresight Team from the Government Office for Science on 17 October 2007. The report sets out that in 2004 approximately 10% of boys and girls aged 6-10 were obese, and forecasts that these figures are likely to increase to 21% (boys) and 14% (girls) by 2025, and 35% (boys) and 20% (girls) by 2050. (These figures are based on the international standard and therefore give a lower prevalence of obesity than that currently recorded by the UK standard, which estimates that just under 17% of children aged 2-10 were obese in 2005).
48. The National Child Measurement Programme (‘NCMP’) records the height and weight of children (currently children in Reception and Year 6) in maintained primary and middle schools in England during the academic year. Some non-maintained schools also choose to participate in the programme. The Act allows for the extension of the NCMP to early years settings and to other primary school year groups.
49. The purpose of the NCMP is to gather population-level data to monitor trends in obesity and to inform local planning and delivery of services for children. It is one element of the Government’s work programme to tackle childhood obesity.
50. Under current arrangements, parents may withdraw their children from participating in the programme. Children are also able to opt-out of the programme if they indicate they do not wish to participate. These features of the NCMP will continue. At present, parents are able to request their child’s height and weight results from their PCT. The Act enables regulations to be made such that all parents whose children participate in the programme receive the results routinely.
51. Personal identifiers are stripped from the data before it is sent for analysis: the name of the child is removed; the date of birth is replaced with month of birth; and the home postcode is converted into lower super output area, which represents a larger geographic area.
52. The powers in the Act will enable regulations to be made to enable the aggregated data gathered during weighing and measuring to be used for performance management purposes, for example, as part of the new Local Government National Indicator Set, which will inform negotiation of Local Area Agreements.
53. In Wales, there is not currently a national programme of child height and weight measurement. Many NHS Trusts record height and weight at school entry, and some

¹ *“Tackling Obesities: Future Choices” Government Office for Science, Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills, published October 2007. URN 07/1184*

*These notes refer to the Health and Social Care Act 2008
(c.14) which received Royal Assent on 21 July 2008*

record it in Year 6, but this is not undertaken on a consistent organised basis, and data is not recorded or analysed centrally.

54. The National Public Health Service has been asked to undertake a feasibility study in 2007-08 for the creation of a national surveillance programme of children's height and weight. The Act will allow the Welsh Ministers to define the scope of any future national weighing and measuring programme. They will also be able to make provision by regulations regarding the manner in which children are to be weighed and measured and how any information gathered is to be made available to parents.