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Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

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Welsh Assembly Government

## Consultation Document

# Measuring childhood heights and weights in Wales – consultation on regulations

Date of issue: **01 October 2010**

Action required: Responses by **12 November 2010**

## Overview

This consultation is about the making of regulations relating to the measurement of heights and weights of children in reception year and Year 4 of schooling, and reporting the results to parents.

## How to respond

Please send any comments, including answers on the response form included, to Sue Bowker, Health Improvement Division, Welsh Assembly Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF10 3NQ  
[Sue.Bowker@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Sue.Bowker@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

## Further information and related documents

Large print, Braille and alternate language versions of this document are available on request.

The draft regulations can be found at:

<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/healthsocialcare/?lang=en>

The feasibility study which informed the regulations can be found at:

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/888/page/46589>

## For further information contact

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Cardiff CF10 3NQ  
[Sue.Bowker@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Sue.Bowker@wales.gsi.gov.uk)  
029 2082 6105

## Data protection

How the views and information you give us will be used

Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Assembly Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about. It may also be seen by other Welsh Assembly Government staff to help them plan future consultations.

The Welsh Assembly Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. This helps to show that the consultation was carried out properly. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then blank them out.

Names or addresses we blank out might still get published later, though we do not think this would happen very often. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 allow the public to ask to see information held by many public bodies, including the Welsh Assembly Government. This includes information which has not been published. However, the law also allows us to withhold information in some circumstances. If anyone asks to see information we have withheld, we will have to decide whether to release it or not. If someone has asked for their name and address not to be published, that is an important fact we would take into account. However, there might sometimes be important reasons why we would have to reveal someone's name and address, even though they have asked for them not to be published. We would get in touch with the person and ask their views before we finally decided to reveal the information.

# Measuring Childhood Heights and Weights in Wales – Consultation on Regulations

This consultation is about the making of regulations relating to the measurement of heights and weights of children in reception year and Year 4 of schooling, and reporting the results to parents.

The draft regulations can be found at:

<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/healthsocialcare/?lang=en>

## Background

There is a background of rising levels of overweight and obesity in both children and adults. Childhood rates in Wales appear to compare poorly with many other areas in Europe. The individual adverse health consequences of overweight and obesity in adults are understood. Obesity is a risk factor in many chronic diseases and is overtaking smoking as a preventable cause of disease and premature death. Adverse health social and psychological effects of obesity are now being seen among children as well as adults.

## Current Position

We do not currently have a national programme of child height and weight measurement in Wales. Many Health Boards record height and weight but this is done at different ages with some, but not all, taking measurements at school entry and some taking measurements in Year 6. Data collected are not recorded or analysed centrally, and are not in a format in which central utilisation could be implemented. In addition, there is no quality control of these measurements, with different qualities of equipment and variation in levels of training of those taking the measurements seen across Wales.

The 2008 Children and Young People's Well-being Monitor for Wales identified some key information gaps; including 'comprehensive data on the levels of underweight, normal weight, overweight and obesity of children and young people':

<http://wales.gov.uk/about/aboutresearch/social/ocsropage/2008monitor?lang=en>

Undertaking standardised height and weight measurements would allow us to more accurately monitor childhood obesity levels in Wales, to better target services, and to provide data to inform targets e.g. in the child poverty strategy; and to contribute to the measurement of the impact of two of the priorities in Our Healthy Future - increasing participation in physical activity and reducing unhealthy eating.

The Public Health Observatory for Wales has undertaken a feasibility study and presented recommendations for the creation of a national measurement programme of childhood heights and weights in Wales.

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/888/page/46589>

The report recommends that:

- A national measurement programme should be introduced in Wales.
- As a minimum this programme must include the standardisation of height and weight measurement in at least one age group.
- The programme should allow reporting of prevalence trends of underweight, overweight and obesity that are comparable across Wales and with data produced internationally.
- The programme should include height and weight measurements to be undertaken in a standard way in reception year (age 4/5).
- The programme should include height and weight measurement in a second age group. Year 4 (age 8/9) is recommended which would contribute to the European Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative.

The feasibility study considered the views of a range of individuals, including interviews with children, parents and staff undertaking the measurements. The findings were that:

- Many children were comfortable with their experience but a similar proportion were not. This could be improved by ensuring privacy throughout the process and being accompanied by a familiar adult.
- Many parents expected that their child would be measured at school and so concern over whether consent was opt-in (i.e. where pupils are only measured if the parent's sign an agreement) or opt-out (i.e. children are measured unless parents withdraw them) was not an issue for parents.
- Both children and parents expressed an interest in knowing the results of measurements.
- Staff found the programme work intensive, especially providing results to parents.
- Forty one per cent of parents who were offered BMI results requested feedback. Parents were generally happy with the format in which feedback was provided.
- Receiving results of BMI did not appear to result in increased workload as a result of parents contacting health services.
- Using opt-out consent gave more reliable results for public health surveillance.

Paragraph 7A of Schedule 1 to the National Health Service (Wales) Act 2006 enables the Welsh Ministers to make arrangements with local authorities for the weighing and measuring of junior pupils in attendance at a school maintained by a local authority and with proprietors of schools not maintained by local authorities for the weighing and measuring of junior pupils in attendance at that school. Paragraph 7B allows the Welsh Ministers to make regulations requiring the weighing and measuring exercise to be carried out in a prescribed manner and after compliance with any prescribed requirements. It also enables the Welsh Ministers to

make regulations authorising the disclosure of the resulting information relating to a child to be communicated to a parent of a child, and make any other provision regulating the processing of information resulting from any weighing or measuring. The regulations may also require any person exercising functions in relation to such an exercise or in relation to any information resulting from such weighing and measuring to have regard to guidance given by the Welsh Ministers.

These powers were inserted in Schedule 1 of the National Health Service (Wales) Act 2006 by section 144 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008.

The Minister for Health and Social Services has agreed to the commencement of section 144 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 in relation to the measurement of children's heights and weights; and to the drafting of appropriate Regulations to deal with the proposals.

## **The Proposals**

The proposed regulations put in place the legislative framework for a National Child Measurement Programme in Wales. As the Public Health Observatory for Wales's report recommended, the Regulations provide for measurement at two different ages.

### **A. Annual Population Measurement in Reception Year**

The proposed regulations:

1. Allow LHBs to weigh and measure all children in reception year (age 4-5) who are willing and able to stand unaided on scales and under a height measure.
2. Allow parents the right to withdraw their child from any such measurement (opt-out consent).
3. Ensure privacy throughout the process.
4. Ensure arrangements are managed by an appropriate health professional (probably a school nurse).
5. Provide the potential to give parents feedback relating to their child's height and weight.
6. Provide the potential for advice to parents.
7. Allow anonymised population level information to be used for surveillance, research, monitoring or audit and planning of health services.

### **B. Biennial Sampled Measurement in Year 4**

The proposed regulations:

1. Allow the weighing and measuring of a sample of children in Year 4 (age 8-9) who are willing and able to stand unaided on scales and under a height measure.

2. Allow parents the right to withdraw their child from any such measurement (opt-out consent).
3. Ensure privacy throughout the process.
4. Ensure arrangements are managed by an appropriate professional.
5. Provide the potential to give parents feedback relating to their child's height and weight.
6. Provide the potential for advice to parents.
7. Allow anonymised population level information to be used for surveillance, research, monitoring or audit and planning of health services.
8. Enable LHBs to undertake Year 4 measurements to feed in to the national sample.

The Regulations also enable LHBs to undertake a weighing and measuring exercise separately from the purposes of the programme by providing that the powers in paragraphs 7A(1) and (2) are exercisable by the LHBs.

# Measuring Childhood Heights and Weights in Wales – Consultation on Regulations - October 2010

## Consultation Response Form

Your Name:

Job Title:

Organisation:

Email address/ telephone number:

Your address:

## Reception Year Measurements

Q1. *Do you agree that measures should be taken of all children in reception year, with opt-out consent?*

Yes

No

Q2. *Do you agree that a health professional, probably the school nurse, should manage the arrangements for measurements in reception year?*

Yes

No

Q3. *Do you agree that parents should be offered feedback only if they request it?*

Yes

No

Q4. *Do you consider that there will be implications for workload of school nurses in implementing these regulations?*

Yes

No

Please explain your response

Q5. *Do you consider that there will be significant increased costs in taking these measurements compared to the current measurement systems in place?*

Yes

No

Please explain your response

## Year 4 Measurements

Q6. *Do you agree that measures should be taken of a sample of children in Year 4, with opt-out consent?*

Yes

No

Q7. *Do you agree that parents should be offered feedback only if they request it?*

Yes

No

Q8. *In order to reduce impact on the workload of school nurses we are suggesting that the measurement in Year 4, which would be a new measurement for most LHBs, is managed independently of the LHB/school nursing service. Do you agree that a research agency should manage the arrangements for measurements by appropriately qualified and trained staff in Year 4?*

Yes

No

Q9. *If a research agency manages the arrangements for measurements, then who do you think should provide feedback to parents?*

Research agency

Local health professional, eg school nurse

## General

Q10. *Are there any comments you would like to make?*

Responses to consultations may be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to be confidential, please tick here.

**Please return to: Sue Bowker, Health Improvement Division, Welsh Assembly Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF10 3NQ or [Sue.Bowker@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Sue.Bowker@wales.gsi.gov.uk) by 12 November 2010.**