

02 Situation Report Series

Excess Weight in Childhood

SEPTEMBER 2026



The Situation Reports series provide an overview of the current situation of a topic of concern. The reports are purposely short and focused in order to provide timely updates allowing quicker response.

Outcomes could range from informing colleagues, taking action or triggering a deep dive into the topic.

The report is produced by Thurrock Public Health Intelligence Team, after reviewing available data.

Acknowledgements: This JSNA product has been developed with input from partner organisations represented through the JSNA Steering Group. The inclusion of partner logos recognises their contribution to the JSNA programme and does not necessarily indicate formal endorsement of the content of this document.

Look out for our upcoming reports on:



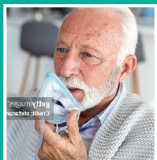
Immunisations in Thurrock



Tobacco in Thurrock



Oral Health in Thurrock



Respiratory Conditions in Thurrock



Background

Rising levels of childhood obesity remain a significant public health concern, particularly because excess weight in childhood often continues into adulthood. Adult obesity increases the risk of long-term health conditions, including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, stroke, certain cancers, and can also have a negative impact on mental wellbeing.

The National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) plays an important role in the Government's strategy to reduce childhood obesity. Each year, it measures the height and weight of more than one million children attending Reception (4–5 years) and Year 6 (10–11 years) in mainstream state-funded schools across England. Independent and special schools do not take part. Although the programme began in 2005/06, data from 2006/07 onwards are considered reliable due to improved participation rates, providing 18 years of high-quality data. The NCMP is an 'opt-in' programme which means parents can decline consent for their child/children to be measured. While the NCMP data does not include all children and so analysis needs to be used with caution, the response rates are consistently very high with only 3.3% of children not measured in 2024/25.

NCMP data is used by local authorities to support service planning, evaluate progress, and develop targeted interventions to address childhood obesity. In most areas, parents receive individual feedback on their child's weight status, alongside information, advice, and support to promote healthy weight management.

This Childhood Obesity Situation Report should be read alongside the Thurrock Physical Activity Situation Report, as physical activity is a key determinant of healthy weight and the report provides additional insight into activity levels among children and adults across the borough.

Note: In Thurrock we have adopted the terminology "excess weight" rather than "overweight" or "obese" to describe children with a higher BMI. However, this report uses data and classifications from the National Childhood Obesity Programme (NCMP) which refers to categories of "overweight", "obesity" and "severe obesity". Therefor this report uses that terminology throughout for consistency.

Data Sources

The data used in this report is primarily from the National Child Measurement Programme Enhanced data set and comparator data sourced from Fingertips. The NCMP data is submitted to NHS England (Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)/ NHS England).

The report also uses the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2025 (deciles).

Headlines

- Around 5 in 20 Reception children are overweight or obese
- This rises to 8 in 20 children in Year 6, showing a clear increase with age
- Thurrock levels are broadly in line with England, though often slightly higher
- 82% of children identified as overweight/obese in Reception remained overweight/obese in Year 6
- Children living in the 10% most deprived areas are significantly more impacted by excess weight than others by Reception year.
- Children living in the 60% most deprived areas are significantly more impacted than those in the 40% least deprived areas by Year 6.
- Boys tend to have higher overweight/obese rates, particularly in Year 6
- Severe obesity affects ~3% of Reception and ~6% of Year 6 children
- Wards of concern include Tilbury St Chads, Tilbury Riverside and Thurrock park, Grays Riverside and Belhus.

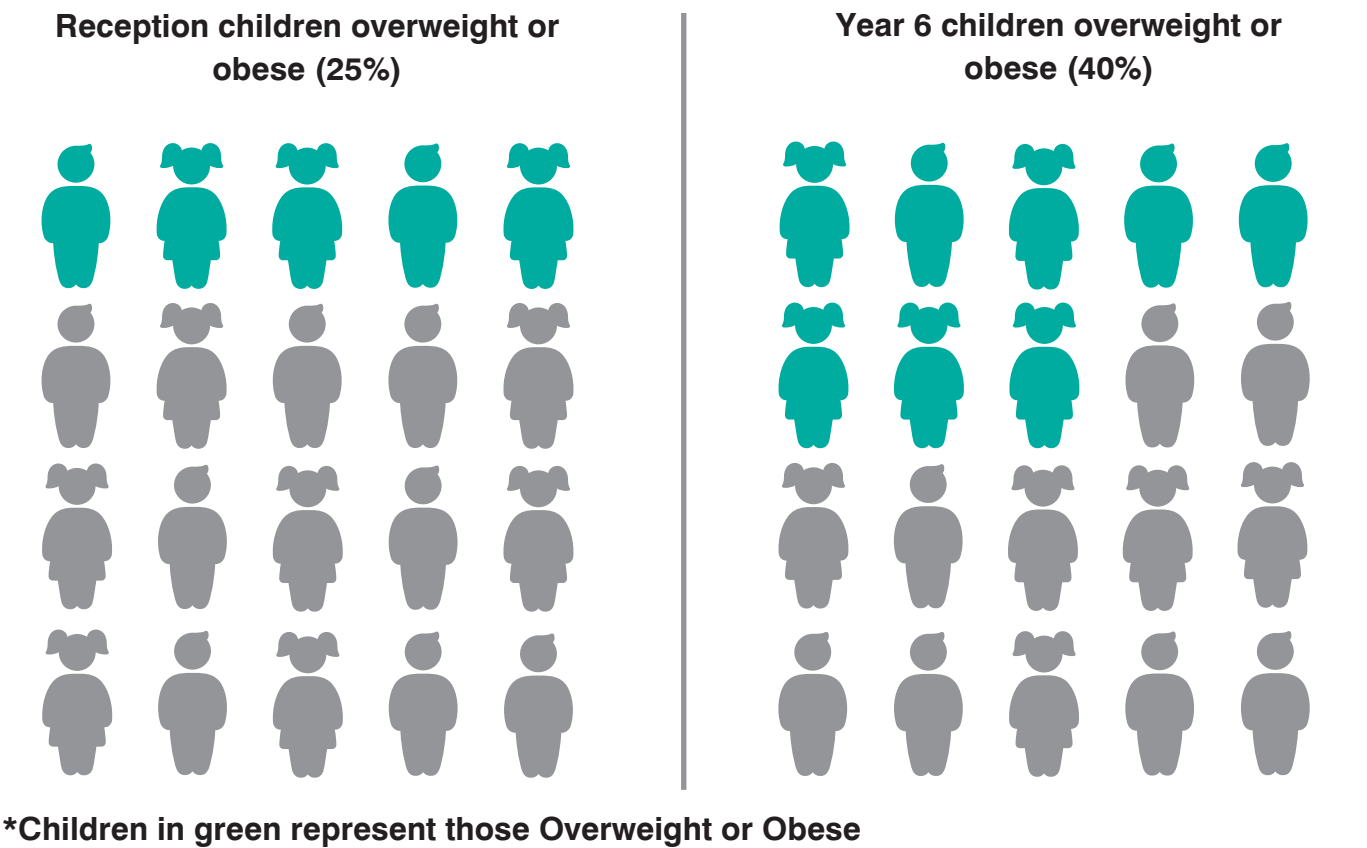
Public Health Response

Children living with excess weight (whether overweight or obese) is a key public health concern as it is a predictor of adult ill-health and significant demands on future services.

Concentrating resources and efforts to support families with healthy eating, to encourage a healthy environment, increasing activity levels and other lifestyle indicators to prevent and reverse overweight and obesity levels is one of the most long term cost effective primary prevention strategies and remains a priority.



Current Situation in Thurrock



How Thurrock compares to similar areas

In 2024/25, the prevalence of children overweight (including obese) (25% in Reception and 39% in Year 6) is broadly in line with that observed in England on average (24% in Reception and 36% in Year 6) and areas that are similar to Thurrock (statistical neighbours) (Reception 24%, Year 6 38%). [Figure 1 and Figure 2] For Reception, Thurrock levels have consistently been in line with the England average during 2012/13-2024/25 but have consistently tracked at 2-3% higher than the England average for Year 6 children (Figure 4).

Of those identified as overweight or obese in Reception, Thurrock has the highest percentage (82%) that remain overweight or obese in Year 6 when compared with statistical neighbours and this is statistically significantly higher than England (77%). [Figure 3] The percentage of children moving from healthy weight in Reception to overweight (including obese) in Year 6 in Thurrock was 23%, this is similar to England (22%) (2021/22-2023/24) (Fingertips).

Figure 1: Prevalence of Reception children overweight (including obese), Thurrock compared to statistical neighbours, 2024/25

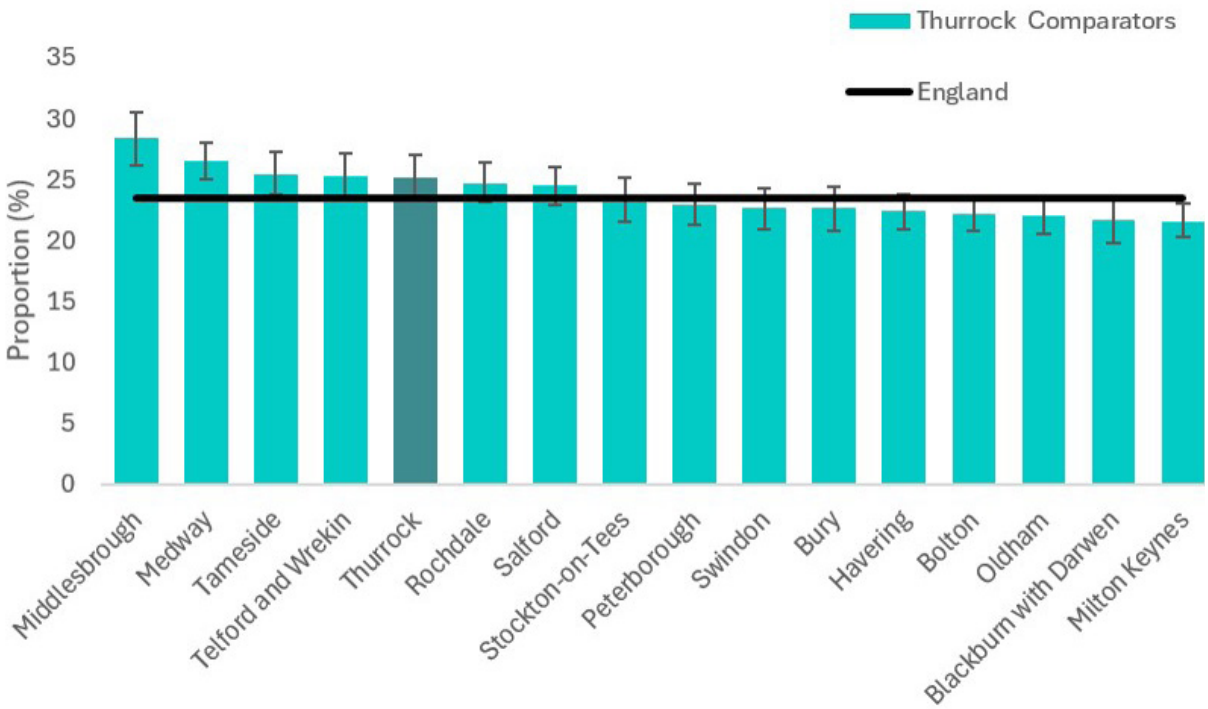


Figure 2: Prevalence of Year 6 children overweight (including obese), Thurrock compared to statistical neighbours, 2024/25

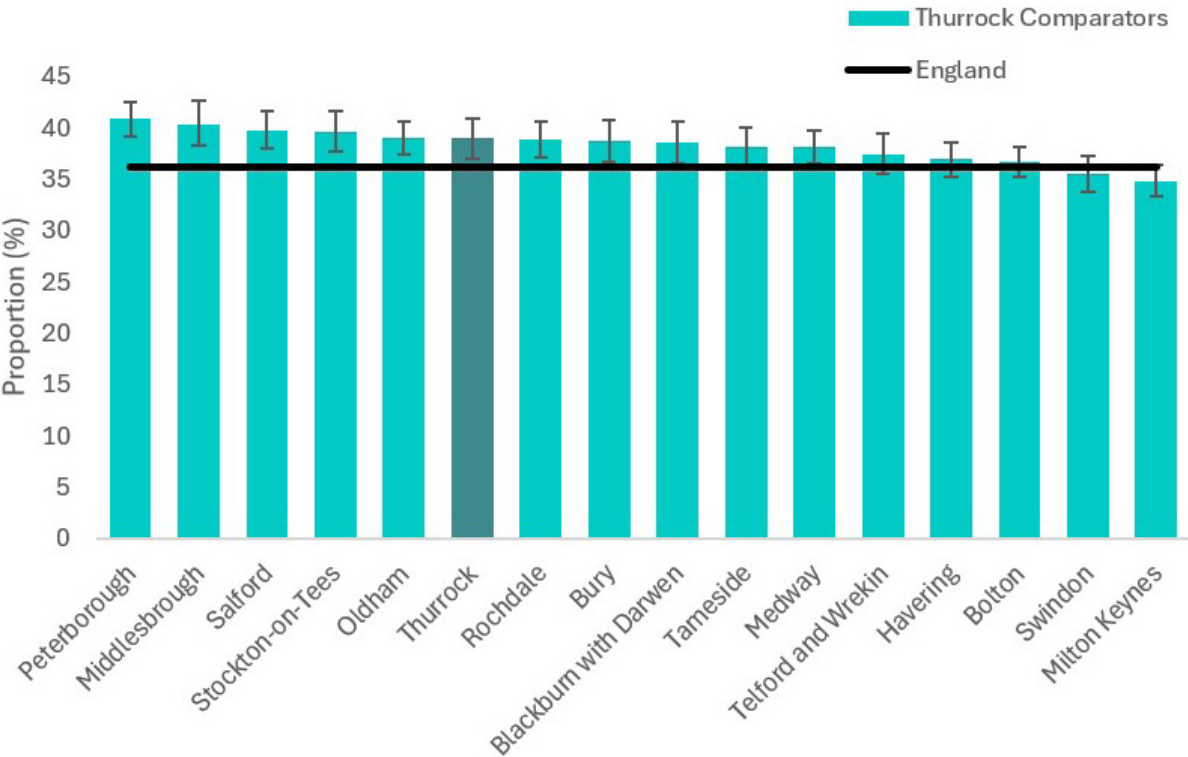
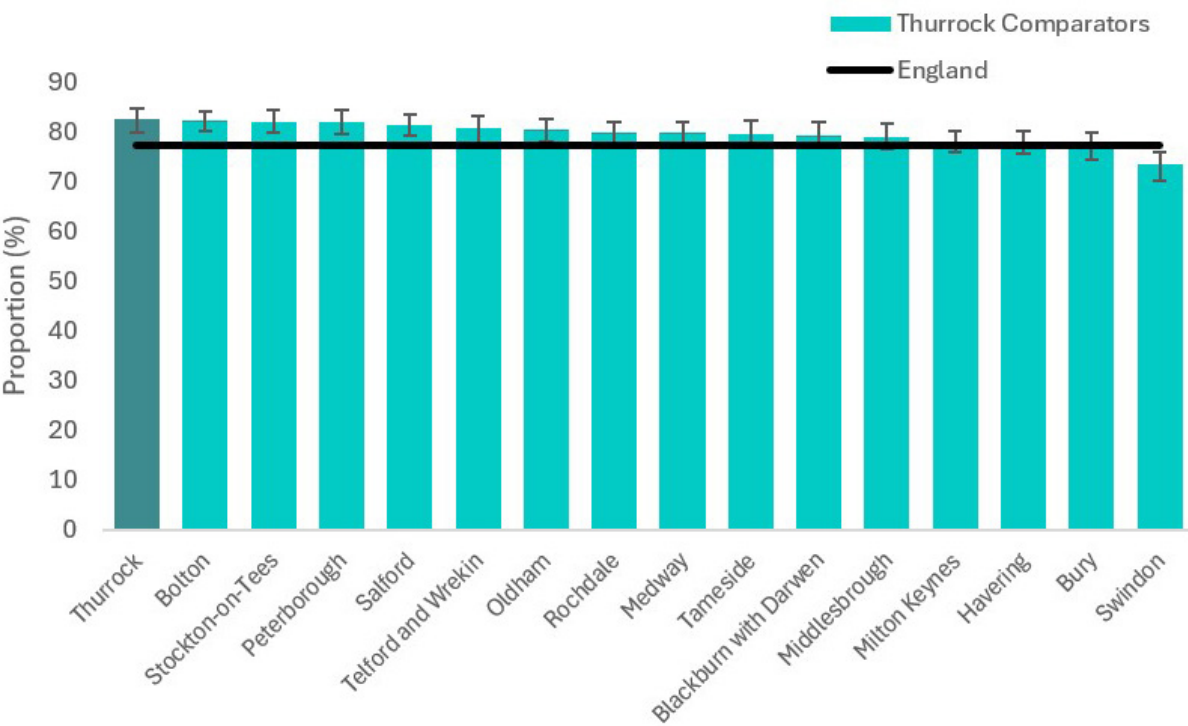


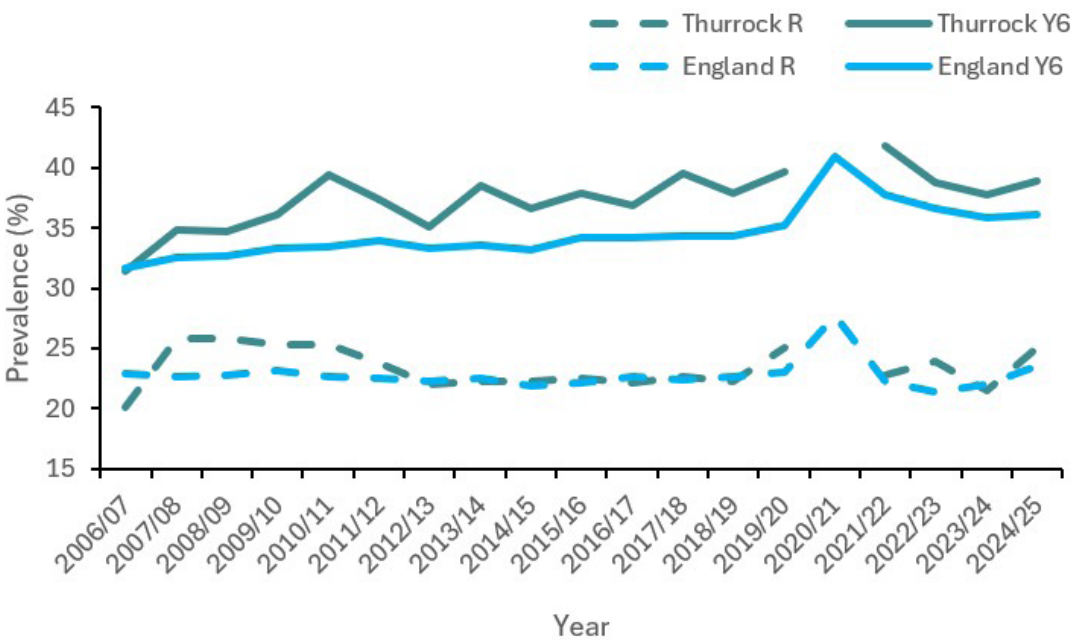
Figure 3: Percentage of Reception children remaining overweight (including obese) in Year 6, Thurrock compared to statistical neighbours, 2021/22-2023/24



Trends over time

Between 2006/07 and 2024/25 the prevalence of overweight and obesity in Reception children in Thurrock has not significantly changed, however over the same time period in Year 6 the prevalence continues to rise. [Figure 4]

Figure 4: Prevalence of overweight (including obesity), Reception and Year 6 children in Thurrock, time trend, 2006/07 to 2024/25

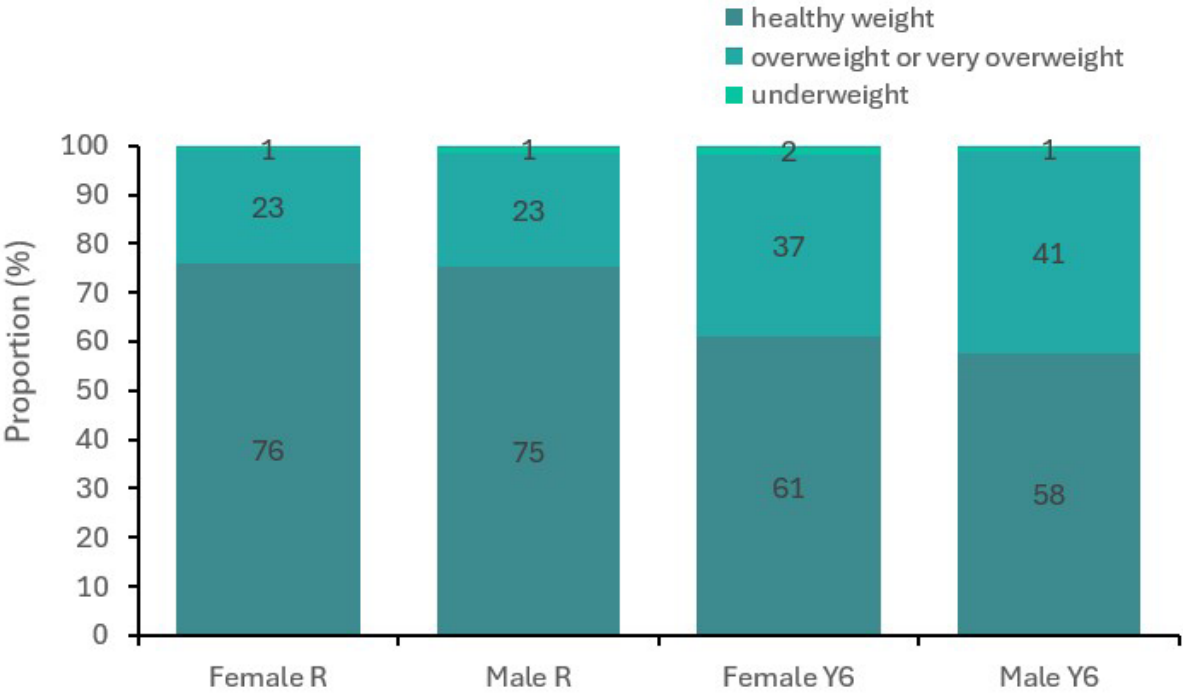


Inequalities

Overweight and obesity by sex

There is no real difference between boys and girls in the proportion living with excess weight (being overweight/obese) in Reception (23.5% in boys and 23% in girls) but in Year 6, boys have a higher rate (41%) of living with excess weight (being overweight/obese) than girls (37%).

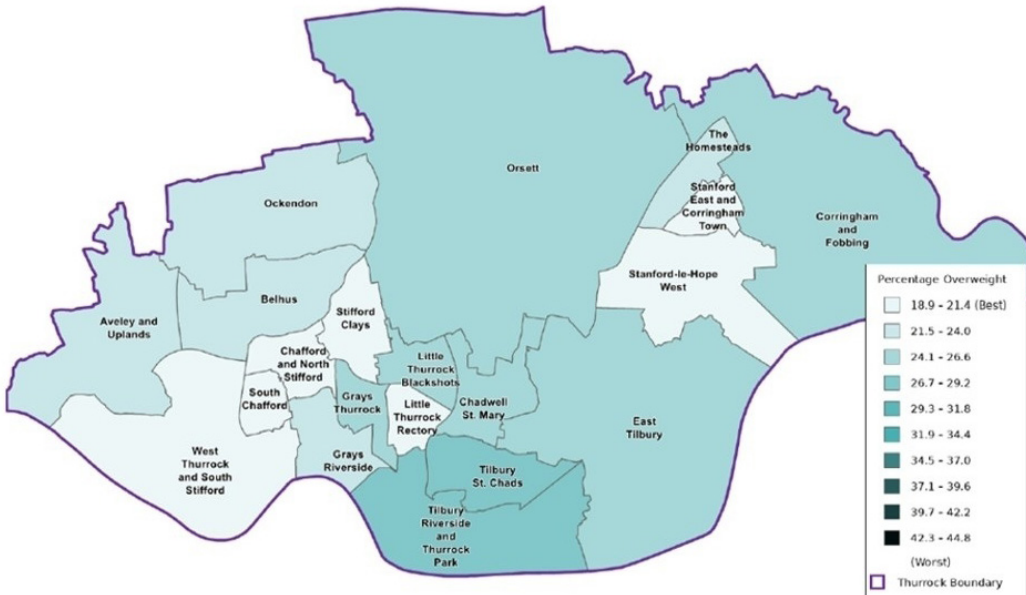
Figure 5: Weight category of children by sex 2021/22-2024/25



Overweight/obesity by ward

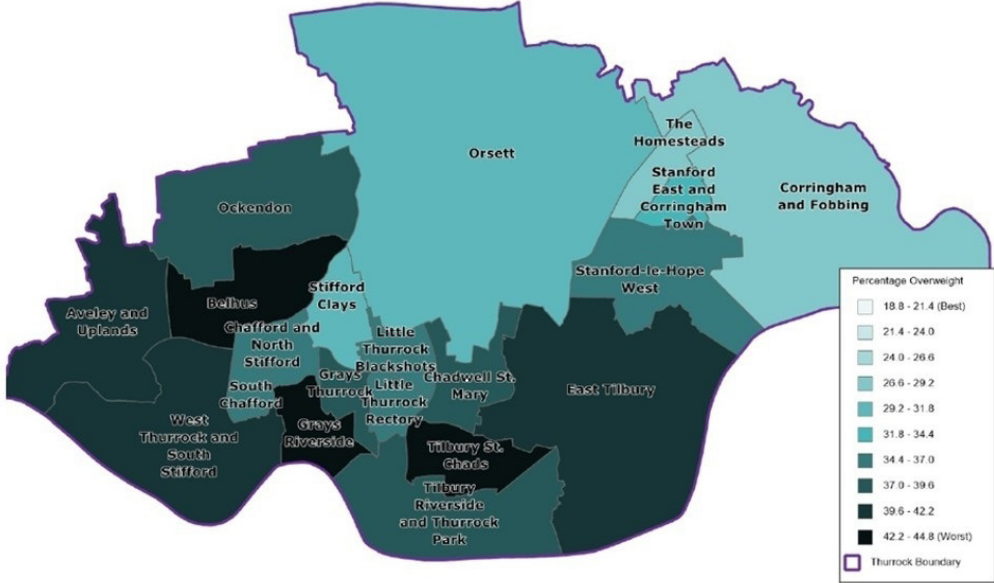
In Reception the highest rates of overweight/obese children were within the Tilbury St Chads (28%) and Tilbury Riverside and Thurrock Park wards (27%). In Year 6 the highest rates were within Tilbury St Chads (45%), Grays Riverside (44%) and Belhus wards (43%). [Figure 6 and Figure 7].

Figure 6: Percentage of all Reception children measured who are overweight/obese by ward; combined data 2021/22-2024/25



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Figure 7: Percentage of all Year 6 children measured who are overweight/obese by ward (combined data 2021/22-2024/25)



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Overweight and obesity by deprivation

Figure 8: Percentage of all Reception children measured that were overweight/obese by IMD Decile 2021/22-2024/25

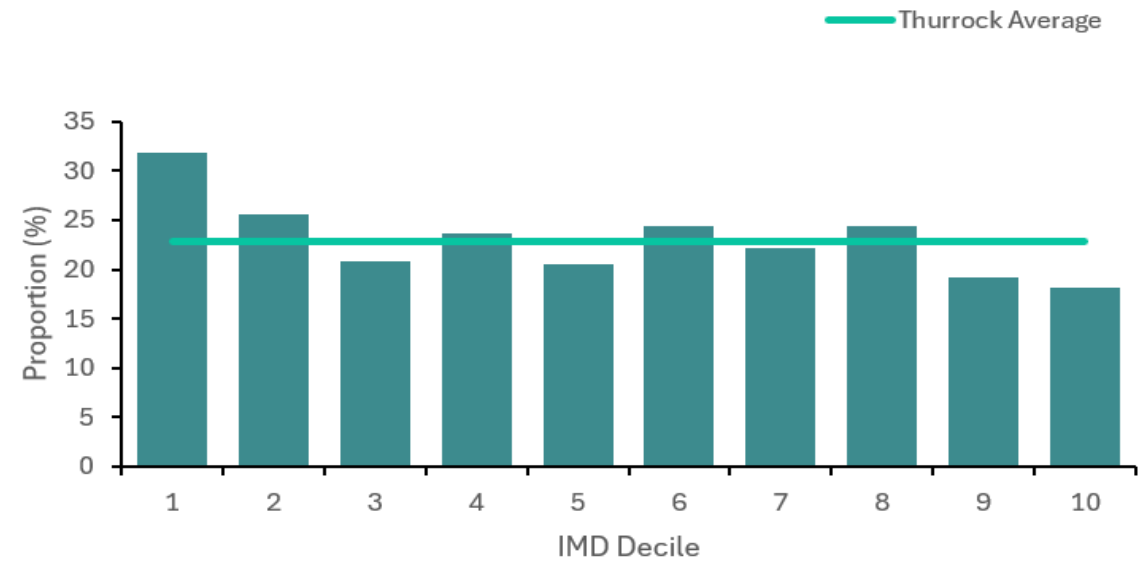
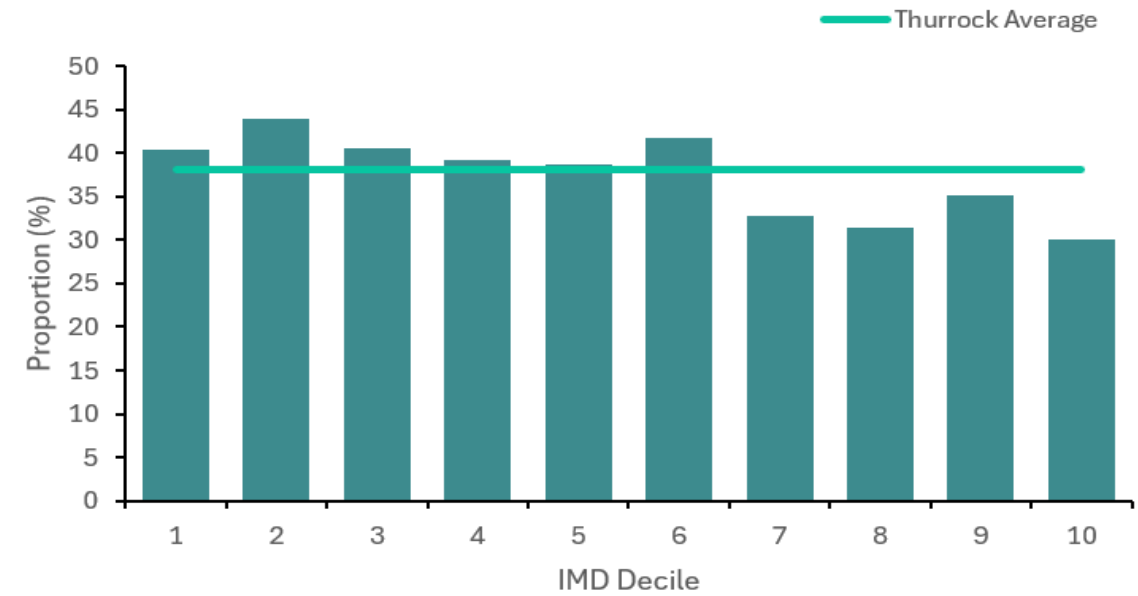


Figure 9: Percentage of all Year 6 children measured that were overweight/obese by IMD Decile 2021/22-2024/25

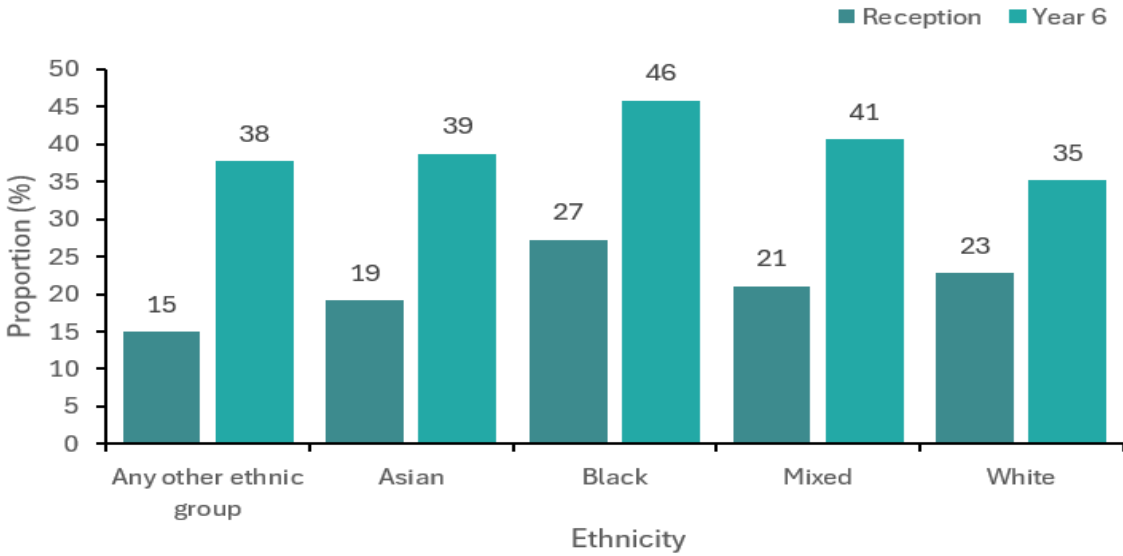


Rates of overweight and obesity in Reception children vary across IMD deciles. However, decile 1 (most deprived) does stand out as having a significantly higher proportion compared to average. For Year 6 children, the most deprived 60% have a significantly higher level of obesity compared to the lesser deprived areas. [Figure 8 and Figure 9].

Overweight and obesity by ethnicity

Black children have the highest rate in both reception and year 6 however this pattern does not follow for other ethnicities, for example white Reception children have the second highest rates but the lowest rate in Year 6 (with a 12% increase in children overweight/obese between Reception and Yr6). The greatest increase in levels of children overweight/obese between Reception and Yr 6 is in 'any other ethnic group' with an increase of 23%. [Figure 10].

Figure 10: Reception and Year 6 children that were overweight/obese by ethnic group 2021/22-2024/25



Severe obesity

In 2024/25 3% of Reception children in Thurrock were severely obese, this rose to 6% in Year 6, both very similar to England.

What are we doing in Thurrock

Thurrock has a **Healthy Weight Strategy** and delivery framework with seven strategic priorities grouped under People and Place themes, including a focus on prevention and early intervention in children and young people.

Parent and School NCMP Feedback

The NCMP supports awareness and education for parents/care givers around healthy weight, as well as providing a very strong data set to inform national and local policy. Schools and parents receive a feedback letter with the NCMP results at school or individual level and this information can support decisions and behaviours at school, family and individual level including:

- Parent feedback letters explaining child weight status, including BMI category and whether their child is classified as healthy weight, overweight, or obese.
- Guidance for parents on healthy eating and physical activity to support positive lifestyle changes.
- Follow-up support (e.g. phone calls or additional guidance) where appropriate, including referral to local weight management or family support programmes.
- Links to national campaigns such as Better Health and Change4Life.
- School-based interventions e.g. healthy eating policies, physical activity programmes.
- Use of NCMP data to inform local public health planning and strategies.

Parent and pupil resources

- **Talking to your child about weight” guide**, for parents and caregivers of children aged 4–11 years. This includes a video version.
- **Better Health Families Healthy Steps Programme**
- The free **NHS Food Scanner app**: this helps parents and pupils explore what is in food and drink, encourages swapping foods high in fat, sugar, and salt for healthier options and includes a Scan, Swipe, Swap activities toolkit

Healthy eating initiatives

In Thurrock, schools have the option to sign up to the national¹ Healthy Schools Programme, which offers support in assessing and improving nutrition education, active school travel and whole-school approaches.

Through the Thurrock 0–19 Brighter Futures Healthy Families Service, schools have access to school nursing, health improvement support, healthy lifestyle education, NCMP follow-up, and referral pathways for children identified as being at risk of unhealthy weight to offers such as HENRY².

Healthier eating in pre-school children is supported by Best Start in Life³, infant feeding and nutrition sessions in family hubs utilising the early years HENRY⁴ evidence-based programme to create educational and fun family-based sessions.

Public health supports specialised advice and guidance on infant feeding through an infant feeding specialist working in the health visiting team, promoting breast feeding amongst new mothers and babies (including breast feeding-friendly places), weaning and nutrition advice, healthy weight and general health advice for women before, whilst being pregnant and postnatally. There are further plans for a specialised midwifery function to support early conversations in pregnancy about health eating, nutrition and exercise.

Pregnant women and families experiencing low income across Thurrock are encouraged to take up the NHS digital Healthy Start Vouchers⁵ for to buy more fruit vegetables, milk and infant formula to make healthier food choices. The Council will be promoting uptake through raising awareness across family hubs, wider social care, health and voluntary settings, and financial support settings with promotional materials and support with digital applications.

Thurrock’s infant, child and family initiatives are reinforced by local strategies to improve access to healthy food and increase uptake of free school meals, helping address rising childhood obesity levels in the area.

Food Growing and Community Capacity Building

A programme to increase knowledge of food growing, promote healthy eating, and strengthen community participation is in place across six schools in Thurrock, Mollands Lane Allotments, the Flowers Estate, and Chadwell Library. Pupils, school staff, and local residents are engaged through consultations, assemblies, training sessions, and hands-on planting workshops.

By creating sustainable growing spaces and gradually transferring ownership to schools and community groups, the programme builds local skills, confidence, and capacity, supporting healthier lifestyles, stronger social connections, and environmental sustainability. Ultimately, it seeks to develop resilient, self-sustaining community assets that empower residents to take an active role in improving their health and wellbeing.

¹ Home - School Health Check | Healthy Schools
² Henry - Healthy Families: Growing Up | NELFT NHS Foundation Trust
³ Best Start in Life
⁴ Homepage HENRY
⁵ Get help to buy food and milk (Healthy Start) - How to apply

Thurrock's health and wellbeing needs
Situation Report Series