

Hull City Council

Survey of Parents

July 2025

Summary (1)

- ❑ The survey of parents was conducted online and by face-to-face visits to venues.
- ❑ In total, 267 responses were obtained from parents.
- ❑ Of these, 229 (86%) had at least one child who had been weighed at school in the last year. 36 respondents (14%) had a child who had been weighed over a year ago.
- ❑ Parents generally think their child is a healthy weight. Only around one-in-five think the child is overweight.
- ❑ Two-thirds (68%) of parents would describe their child's weight as 'about the same' when compared to other children of their age. 23% would say they were 'heavier' and 9% 'lighter'.
- ❑ Over a half (58%) said they had received a letter about one their children's weight in the last few months.
- ❑ Of those contacted, 4-in-10 (41%) said they were informed that their child was overweight, 58% a healthy weight and 1% underweight.
- ❑ Amongst parents who received a letter or phone call in which they were told that their child was overweight, 56% also thought that their child was overweight. 43% thought their child was a healthy weight.
- ❑ Of those who recall receiving a letter, 82% read 'all of it'. Only 3% read 'none of it'. 62% discussed the letter with someone else. This increases to 68% for parents who were told their child was overweight.

Summary (2)

- ❑ For those parents who were told their child was overweight, the words describing their immediate reaction when they read the letter were 'Upset' and 'Concerned'.
- ❑ Results suggest the letter is read and discussed, particularly by parents who were told their child was overweight.
- ❑ The letter/phone call had some impact on parents with an overweight child. For those parents who were told that their child was overweight, a half (51%) took some form of action. The highest proportion used a change in diet (30%) or a change in exercise (22%).
- ❑ Considerable interest in Henry, but less so from parents with overweight children.
- ❑ There was also interest in the Specialist Weight Management Service – slightly more so from parents with overweight children.
- ❑ Financial help with healthy food most common facilitator to Henry and SWM services.
- ❑ Main barrier to service is the perception that the child is a healthy weight – for both parents of overweight and healthy weight/underweight children.
- ❑ 'Your Dream Service' was envisaged to be one-to-one and in-person, with some differences for parents with overweight children. The best person to tell parents about the Dream Service was thought to be their GP or the school nurse.

Methodology and Respondents

- The survey of parents whose child had been weighed/measured in the last 2 years was conducted online and by face-to-face visits to venues.
- The online survey was promoted by the school nursing team using a text sent to parents after the child had been weighed/measured. It was also promoted through Hull City Council's social media.
- In total, 267 responses were obtained from parents :
 - 86% had at least one child who had been weighed at school in the last year.
 - 14% had a child who had been weighed over a year ago.
- There was a fairly even balance by gender. 53% of those weighed were girls, 47% boys.
- As expected, the distribution of those weighed by age was bi-modal, with peaks at age 5 and 11.



Source	Number of responses
Online	234
Venues	33
Total	267

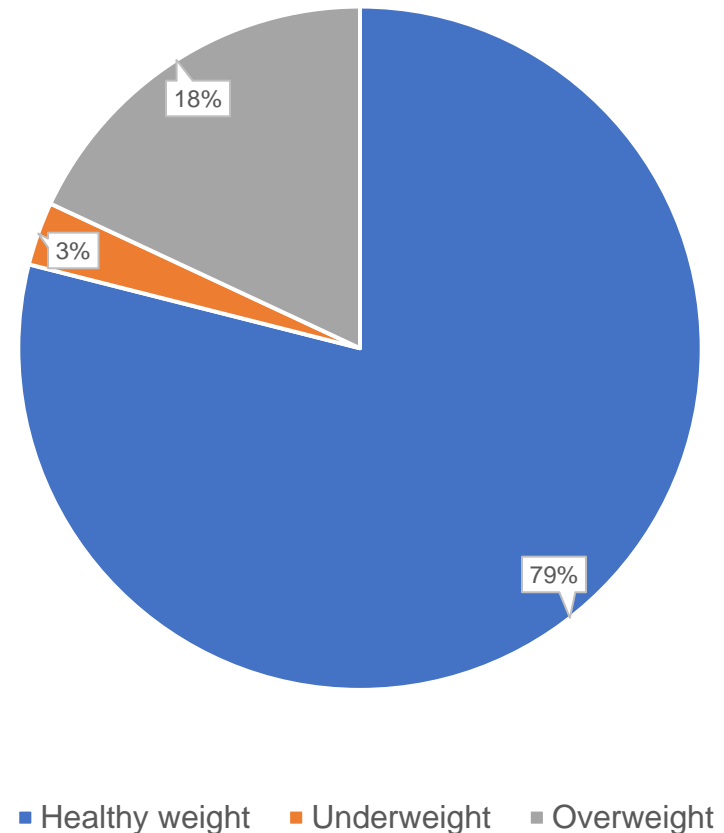
Parents generally think their child is a healthy weight. Only around one-in-five think the child is overweight.

- The majority of parents (79%) would describe their child as being a healthy weight. One-in-five (18%) would describe them as overweight.
- Two-thirds (68%) of parents would describe their child's weight as 'about the same' when compared to other children of their age. 23% would say they were 'heavier' and 9% 'lighter'.

Parents who thought their child was overweight:

- My little boy has a very beige diet were trying to encourage him to eat fruit and veg but it's difficult because he's autistic
- She is tall for her age, and I can see that she is overweight
- He's a little bigger than the kids in his year
- She is just slightly overweight by around 5kg for her age but that is not much of a concern
- Carrying some excess weight, but not lots

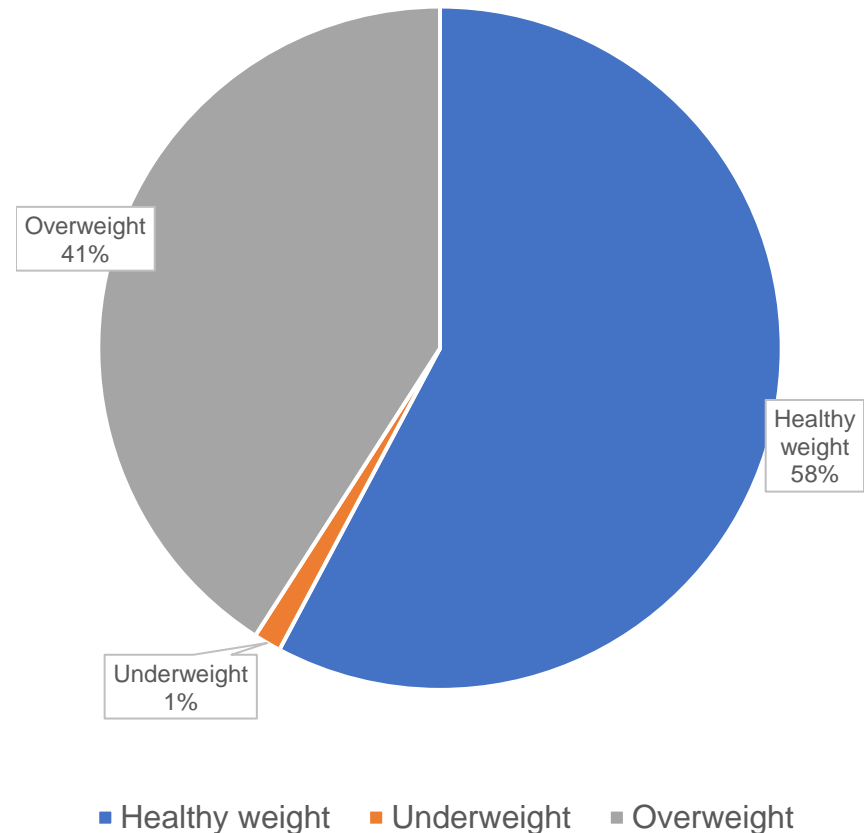
How would you personally describe that child's weight?



4-in-10 parents recall being told their child was overweight

- A quarter of parents said they had received a telephone call from the school nurse about their child's weight. 18% said they had received a text.
- Over a half (58%) said they had received a letter about one their children's weight in the last few months.
- Of those contacted, 4-in-10 (41%) said they were informed that their child was overweight, 58% a healthy weight and 1% underweight.
- The majority (75%) thought that the information they received about their child's weight was correct. 17% thought it was wrong, 8% were unsure.

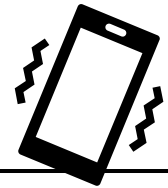
When you got the letter or phone call, did it/the nurse say that your child was:



Base: 266, Q: Did you get a telephone call or a text from the school nurse about your child's weight?

Base: 154, Q: When you got the letter or phone call, did it/the nurse say that your child was?

Base: 154, Did you think this information was right or wrong, or weren't you sure?



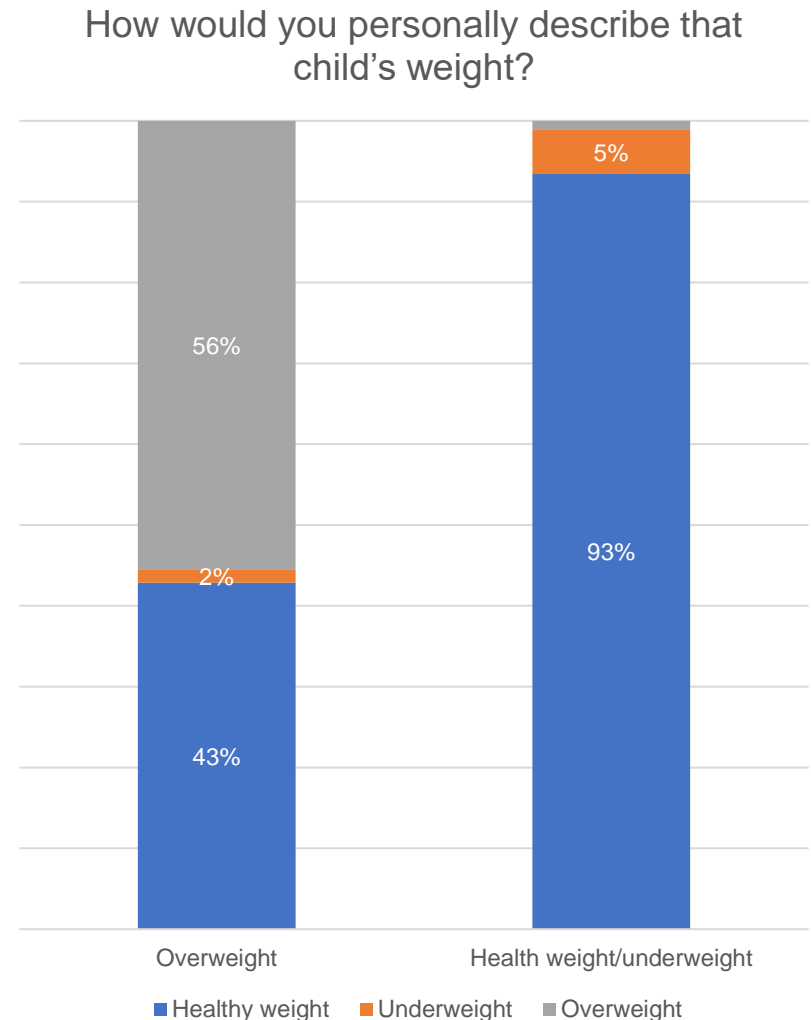
Comments on the phone call – a wide range of reactions

- ❑ Told me about healthy options if I was interested. I said no, my child has three meals a day drinks water and rarely snacks
- ❑ I was informed that my son was very slightly overweight, I was shocked and thought how ridiculous, you can clearly see he is not overweight.
- ❑ When they called me from school, I was informed about a higher BMI, asked about how physically active my son is. They also asked if his diet included fruits and vegetables. At the end of the conversation, help was offered.
- ❑ I'm absolutely fuming, shoes 6.5 despite her age 11 years, you're giving them a complex and it's wrong!!! I also have a 6 year old who is very thin, go and judge on that one.
- ❑ They offer me help. Lady was very nice I feel comfortable when I talk with her
- ❑ I personally think we shouldn't be judging children's weight as it will give them a complex and this seems an overstep of boundaries.
- ❑ Lovely lady went through his plans for future.
- ❑ I found the call invasive, ill planned and offensive. No introductions were given, I was basically just told my child was overweight. I was aware that my child was slightly overweight, he exercised very well, 4 times a week and ate a healthy diet. The communication was not conducive to getting people on board or wanting to engage in support.
- ❑ The nurse who measured my son is a top-class professional, she not only convinced him to eat healthier foods but also request some ear test. I found out that my son doesn't hear very well on one ear. I personally believe that every child should meet a nurse at least once a year.
- ❑ I felt angry. Whilst I understood the nurse was doing her job, it's disgusting to shame a child. I was offered additional support to help reduce my child's weight and declined as it is not an issue.

Q: Please write in the box anything else you can remember about the phone call and how you felt.

For those who were recall being told their child was overweight, a large proportion (>40%) think their child is a healthy weight

- Amongst parents who received a letter or phone call in which they were told that their child was overweight, 56% also thought that their child was overweight. 43% thought their child was a healthy weight.
- The pattern is different for parents who were told their child was a healthy weight or underweight¹. Here, 93% also thought their child was a healthy weight.



Base: Overweight = 63, Healthy weight/underweight = 91, Q: How would you personally describe that child's weight?

¹ The underweight group have been combined with those who were a healthy weight due to the small sample size of underweight children

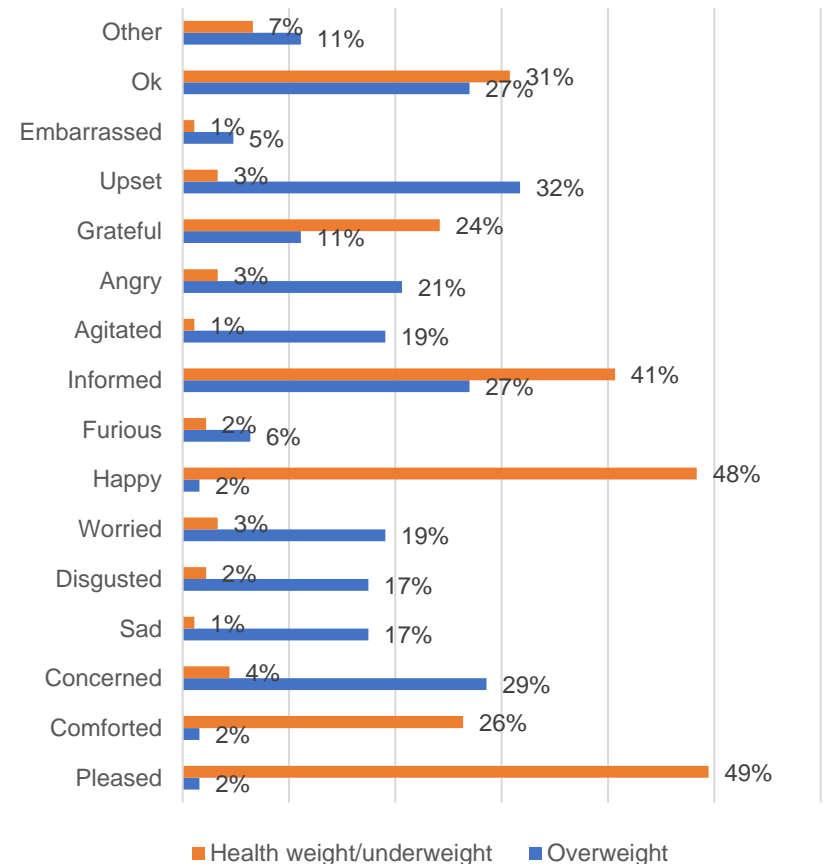
Immediate reaction to the letter very different for those with an overweight child

- When parents read the letter about their child's weight, the most common reaction was to feel informed – 35% used this word to describe their immediate reaction.
- For those parents who were told their child was overweight, the words describing their immediate reaction were different. Upset and Concerned were the most commonly used words.

Other reactions:

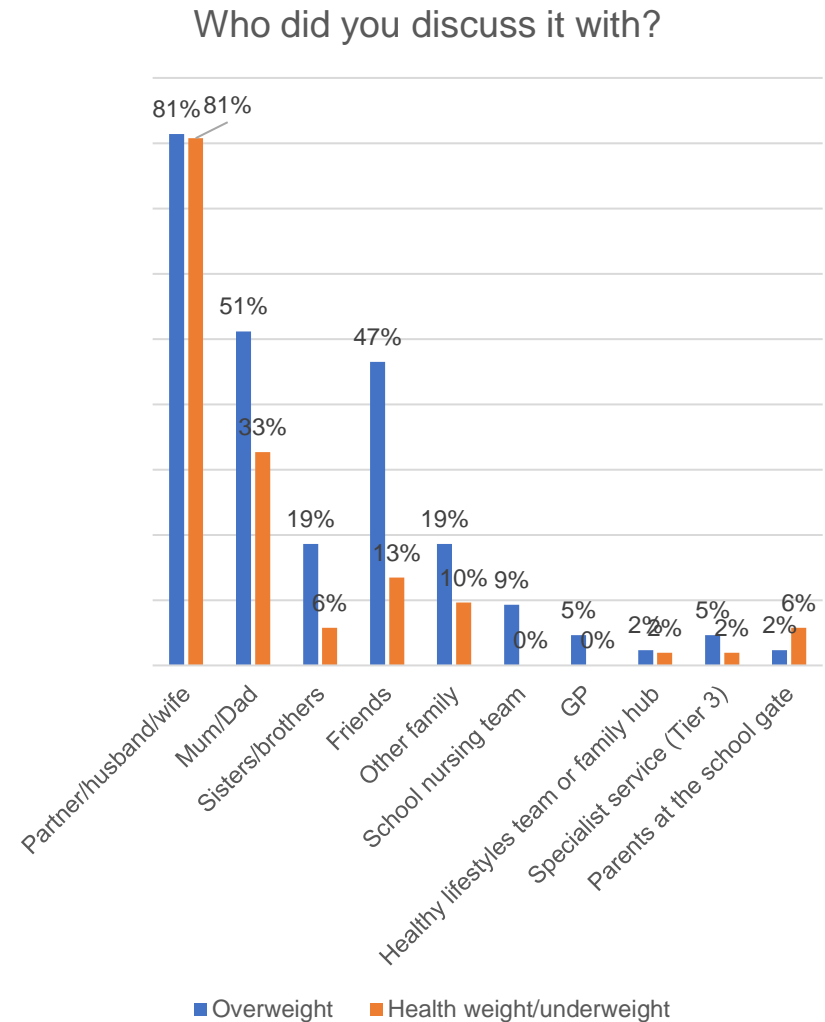
- Shocked because she doesn't look overweight, she is tall so she should be average
- Just like what this actually achieving?
- I think the BMI measuring is old fashioned and doesn't show a true representation of a healthy weight. Even the person who I spoke with on the phone said they are sometimes shocked at the reading.

Which of the following words describe your immediate reaction when you read this letter?



Results suggest the letter is read and discussed, particularly (and as might be expected) by parents who were told their child was overweight

- Of those who recall receiving a letter, 82% read 'all of it'. Only 3% read 'none of it'.
- 62% discussed the letter with someone else. This increases to 68% for parents who were told their child was overweight.
- Those who discussed the letter with someone else, most commonly did so with their partner, husband or wife. Parents who were told their child was overweight were more likely to discuss the letter with friends, parents and siblings than parents whose child was not overweight. A small proportion also discussed the letter with the school nursing team, a GP or a specialist service.



The letter/phone call had some impact on parents with an overweight child – most often, self-help by changing diet or exercise

- A quarter of parents took some action as a result of receiving the letter or phone call. Three-quarters (75%) didn't do anything.
- For those parents who were told that their child was overweight, a half (51%) took some form of action. The highest proportion used a change in diet (30%) or a change in exercise (22%).

Something else included:

- Contacted eating disorder team via CAMHS
- Agreed that he be referred to weight management
- At no point should children be weighed, it's sending out the wrong message
- Explained to my daughter that she can be whoever she wants to be and not to bow to social norms or expectations that are viewing things through a very narrow window

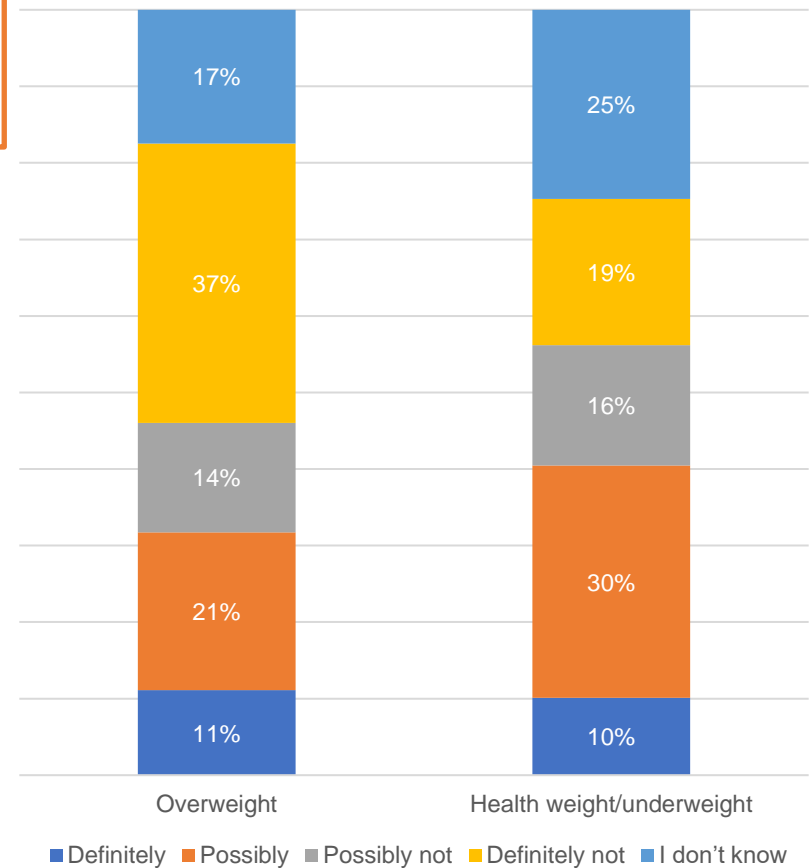
% of parents who were told that their child was overweight	
Went to see or phoned the school nurse	3%
Went to see or phoned my GP surgery	3%
Took some action to help my child reduce weight/gain weight by changing his/her/their diet on my own	30%
Took some action to help my child reduce weight/gain weight by changing his/her/their exercise on my own	22%
Something else	16%

Considerable interest in Henry, but less so from parents with overweight children

HENRY is free for you to join and helps your family develop a healthier lifestyle that works for you. It is run locally in Family Hubs (Children's Centres). It gives you ideas for physical activity for the whole family, information about what you eat and help with your lifestyle. There are 8 sessions to go to and you don't have to take your child.

- All parents included in the survey were asked if they would be interested in using Henry.
- Overall, 42% said they would be interested in going to this service, if they were offered it.
- Those who were told that their child was overweight were less likely to be interested in using Henry (32%, compared with 40% amongst those who were told their child was not overweight)

Thinking about HENRY, would you be interested in going to this service, if you were offered it?



Positive (green) and negative (red) reactions to interest to Henry

- If my child was not a healthy weight, I would find HENRY a useful tool, for tips & ideas to help me encourage my child with other activities & healthier eating. As a single parent, & a full time student I can find it difficult at times to be creative with outdoor activities.
- I would like to as I do try to offer healthy meals however cost is a big challenge when it comes to healthy eating.
- If it falls into a convenient time then we will.
- If I was offered the HENRY service, I would think that there was something wrong with my child's weight, so I would like to help her as much as possible.
- It's something I would be interested in. I like new ideas of things to do or meal planning.
- If I could get childcare for.
- I'm always willing to learn for my children's health and wellbeing.

- I already know everything there is about nutrition and exercise and I cook every meal using single fresh ingredients.
- I don't understand why the council are interfering in health of children, parents don't need parenting by local authority. The local authority is getting too involved with issues such as health, vaccines and parenting.
- Because it causes issues with children. If she was overweight I would but as I said you fixate on scales height, don't look at genetics.
- She is a child and is perfect as she is, she is not overweight at all, I think the guidelines need to be updated as over the years all children have got bigger height wise or bone structure We know what a healthy diet is. My other 2 children are fine. James has a psychological problem with food and no one will help us.
- I don't want my child to have hang ups about how she looks and her weight. On the letter I received back it stated she was overweight but the number on the scale indicated she was within normal range. Your letters are incorrect.

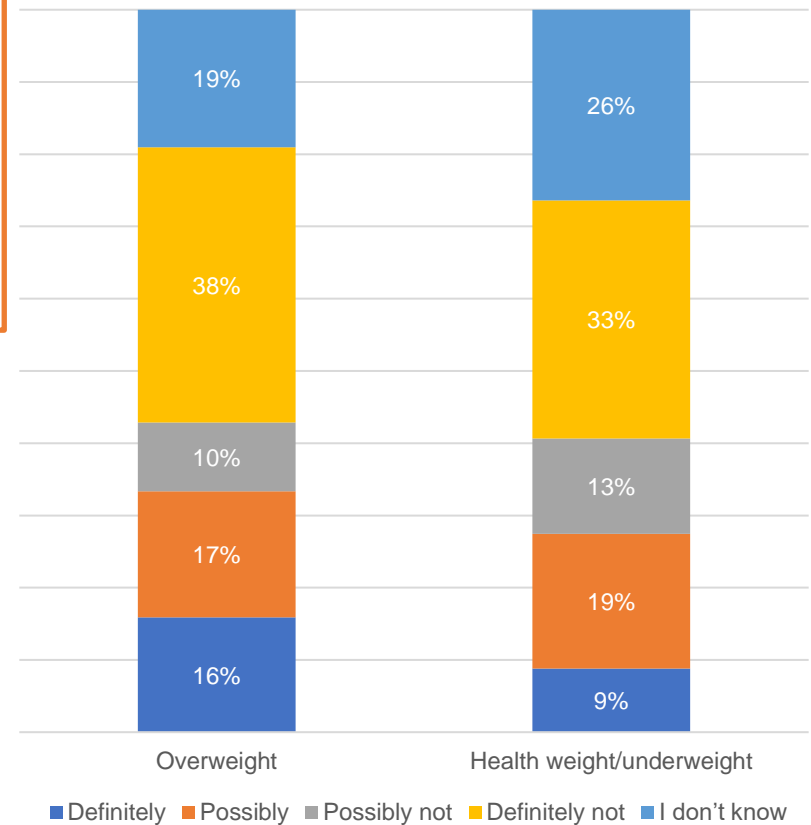
Q: Thinking about HENRY, would you be interested in going to this service, if you were offered it? Why do you say that?

There was also interest in the Specialist Weight Management Service – slightly more so from parents with overweight children

The specialist team provide support for both adults and children in Hull who are overweight and need more help. It is run by health professionals like dietitians, physiotherapists and a GP is on hand. They work with you/your child to understand your medical history and look at your diet and any exercise you do. They make sure that you and your child are fully involved in the decisions that are made. They are held at a few different venues across the city, such as the Wilberforce Centre (in town). For this service, you do have to take your child with you.

- ❑ Overall, 35% of parents included in the survey said they would be interested in going to this service, if they were offered it.
- ❑ Those who were told that their child was overweight were slightly more likely to be interested in using SWM (33%, compared with 28% amongst those who were told their child was not overweight)

Thinking about Specialist Weight Management, would you be interested in you and your child going to this service, if you were offered it?



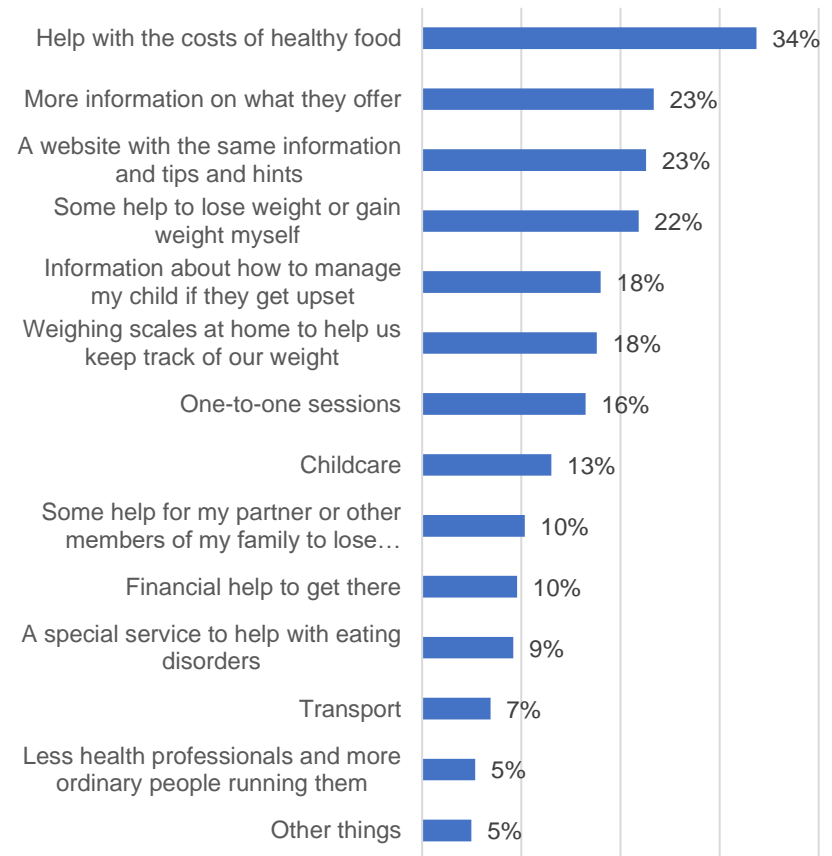
Reactions to interest to SWM service

- ❑ If me & my child had weight related issues, and we're struggling, I would most definitely appreciate any help or support to help us live a better lifestyle.
- ❑ Again, if I wanted help I would ask for it or seek health advice from specialists I don't understand why the council gets involved.
- ❑ My daughter already referred not did not find them very helpful.
- ❑ I would think that there was something wrong with my child's weight, so I would like to help her as much as possible.
- ❑ My child needs psychological help, not an exercise plan. He is very ashamed of his diet and doesn't need to be shamed about something he can't control.
- ❑ I am not worried about my child's weight and feel there too young to be worrying about this.
- ❑ We have a family history of weight problems and I'd welcome help to prevent my child having the same issues. Would depend on convenience.
- ❑ I know how to manage by child's/children's eating portions and so on. She's not a fat child she's a muscular child.
- ❑ I know how to help my child without making her worry about her weight, she is 5 years old and is not extremely overweight.
- ❑ I don't want my child to think he has a problem.

Financial help with healthy food most common facilitator to Henry and SWM services

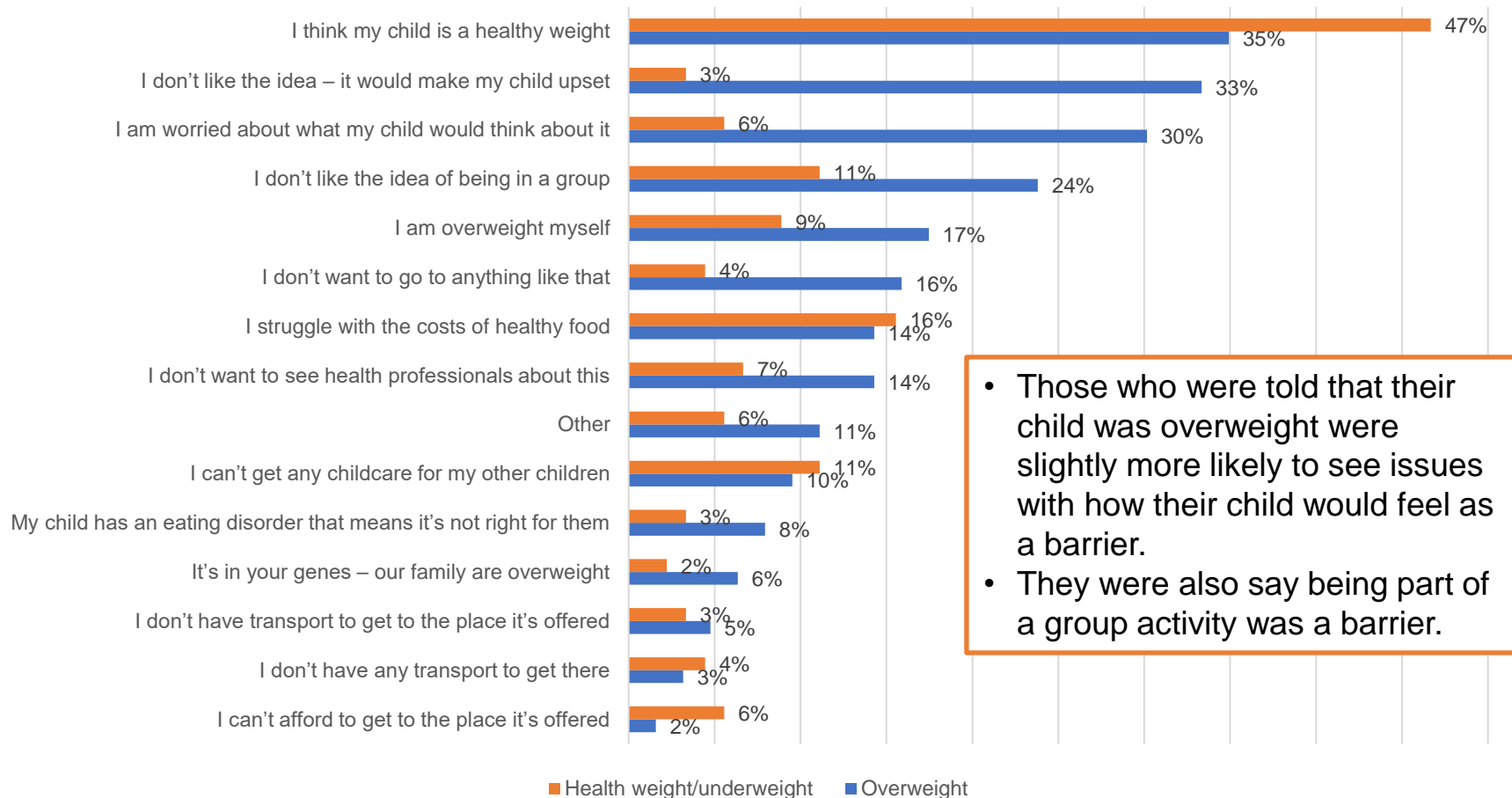
- Help with costs of healthy food most commonly given enabler to accessing services (34%).
- More information, a website with tips and hints, and help in losing weight for themselves were given by around one-in-five parents.
- Around a quarter (27%) said 'nothing would help me go to a service like that'.
- Those who were told that their child was overweight were slightly more likely to say help with eating disorders and one-to-one sessions would help them go to services including Henry and SWM.

Which of these would help you to go to a service like that, if you were invited to go?



Main barrier to service is the perception that the child is a healthy weight – for both parents of overweight and healthy weight/underweight children

Which of the following are reasons that might stop you going to a service like that, if you were invited to go?



- Those who were told that their child was overweight were slightly more likely to see issues with how their child would feel as a barrier.
- They were also say being part of a group activity was a barrier.

Your Dream Service

Now we want you to imagine there was a service to help your child to be the right weight – that you and your child would be interested in and would definitely go to. Please say in a few words what the service would look like.

- ❑ A child friendly environment that would “disguise” it as a weight management programme, so my child didn’t feel sad about their weight.
- ❑ Friendly, non-judgemental, helpful, understanding.
- ❑ It would be in a group setting, a comfortable environment. Would be allowed to bring your other children. Information on fussy eating and eating a balanced diet. Give some information on clubs that are available in their area, for example football clubs to help keep children active.
- ❑ 1-1 service so my child didn’t feel embarrassed, child friendly ways of explaining things.
- ❑ I would not take my child, but I would look at adult’s group.
- ❑ Getting to know the child and understanding their problem, individual approach to my child and my needs. The most professional help, doctor, dietician, therapist. Diet plan, possibly exercises or other physical activities if needed.
- ❑ Cooking together classes that are free or our local children’s centre offer free cooking bags in the holidays and these are a massive help and fun.
- ❑ Provide help with cooking meals on a budget, something fun and engaging to work together as a family.

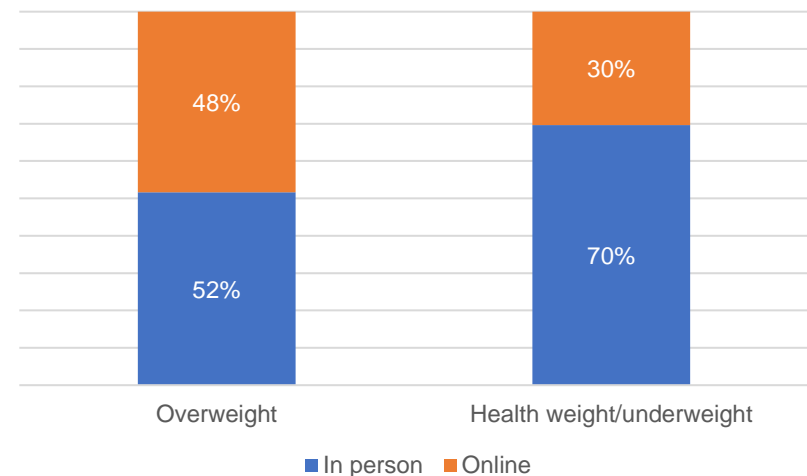
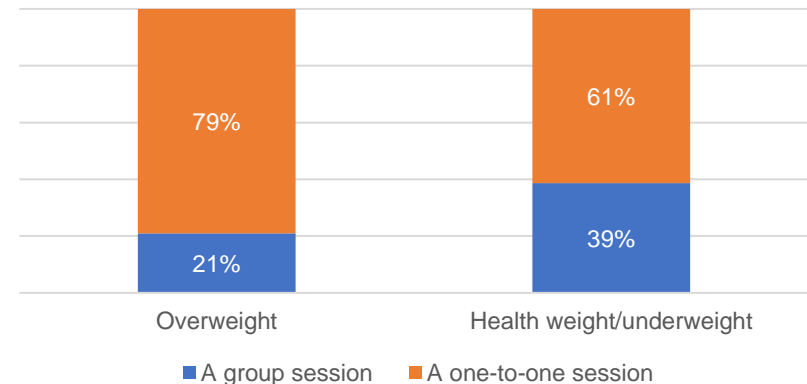
Q: Now we want you to imagine there was a service to help your child to be the right weight – that you and your child would be interested in and would definitely go to. Please say in a few words what the service would look like.

Your Dream Service – one-to-one and in-person favoured, with some differences for parents with overweight children

- Amongst all parents included in the survey, the balance was:
 - Group (30%) vs one-to-one (70%)
 - In person (61%) vs online (39%)
- Those who were told that their child was overweight were more likely to favour one-to-one. They were also fairly evenly split between in person and online.
- The best person to tell parents about the Dream Service was thought to be their GP or the school nurse.

Your GP	32%
The school nurse	28%
The local children's centre	13%
A local group near to where you live such as in a community centre or school	9%
The practice nurse at your GP Practice	8%
A local person who has experience of helping their own child with their weight (a 'community champion')	6%
Other	6%

Would the service be:



Base: Overweight = 62, Healthy weight/underweight = 88/89, Q: Would the service be:

Base: Overweight = 63, Healthy weight/underweight = 87, Q: Who would be the best person to tell you about the service?