

Childhood Obesity

JSNA Factsheet

Southwark's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

Southwark Public Health Division

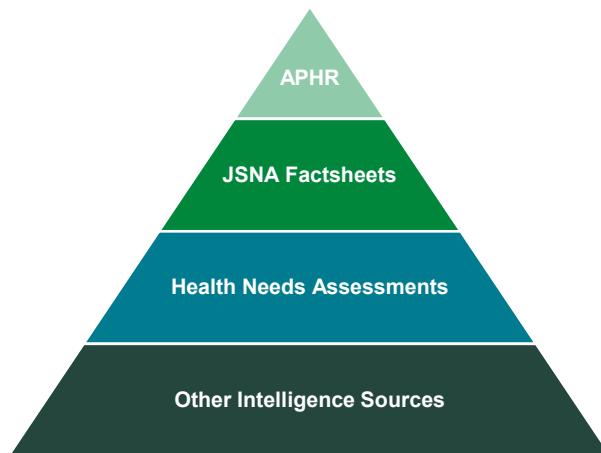
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JSNA Factsheets form part of Southwark's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment process

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is the ongoing process through which we seek to identify the current and future health and wellbeing needs of our local population.

- The purpose of the JSNA is to inform and underpin the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and other local plans that seek to improve the health of our residents.
- The JSNA is built from a range of resources that contribute to our understanding of need. In Southwark we have structured these resources around 4 tiers:



Tier I: The Annual Public Health Report provides an overview of health and wellbeing in the borough.



Tier II: JSNA Factsheets provide a short overview of health issues in the borough.



Tier III: Health Needs Assessments provide an in-depth review of specific issues.



Tier IV: Other sources of intelligence include Local Health Profiles and national Outcome Frameworks.

- This document forms part of those resources.
- All our resources are available via the following link: www.southwark.gov.uk/JSNA

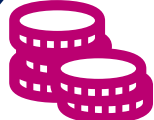
Childhood obesity significantly impacts the health and wellbeing of children in Southwark



Childhood excess weight and obesity in Southwark is consistently higher than both the London and England averages. In 2022/23, 22% of Reception children and 42% of Year 6 children in the borough were overweight or obese.



Southwark has made significant strides in combating unhealthy weight compared to other London boroughs. Reception children saw a 5% decrease in excess weight prevalence between 2012/13 and 2022/23, moving Southwark from the highest to the 8th highest ranked borough.



Socio-economic disadvantage impacts the lives of many Southwark families and children, impacting their weight status. The most disadvantaged wards in the borough have at least double the proportion of children with obesity or excess weight compared the least disadvantaged wards.



There are significant inequalities in the proportion of obese children in both Reception and Year 6 from a Black, Asian or Multi-Ethnic background. The largest disparities in obesity are seen amongst children in Reception, with Black children having an obesity prevalence twice that of their White counterparts.



Food insecurity, the limited or uncertain access to adequate food, is a major factor in the development of excess weight in children. With almost 600 takeaway food stores across Southwark and only 80 supermarkets, many families rely on the consumption of fast-food to feed their children.

Section 1: The Weight Status of Children in Southwark

Southwark had a higher proportion of children with excess weight than the regional and national averages in 2022/23

The prevalence of excess weight, defined as those overweight or obese, is greater amongst older children in Year 6 (41.5%) compared to their younger counterparts in Reception (21.7%), with prevalence being almost twice as high.

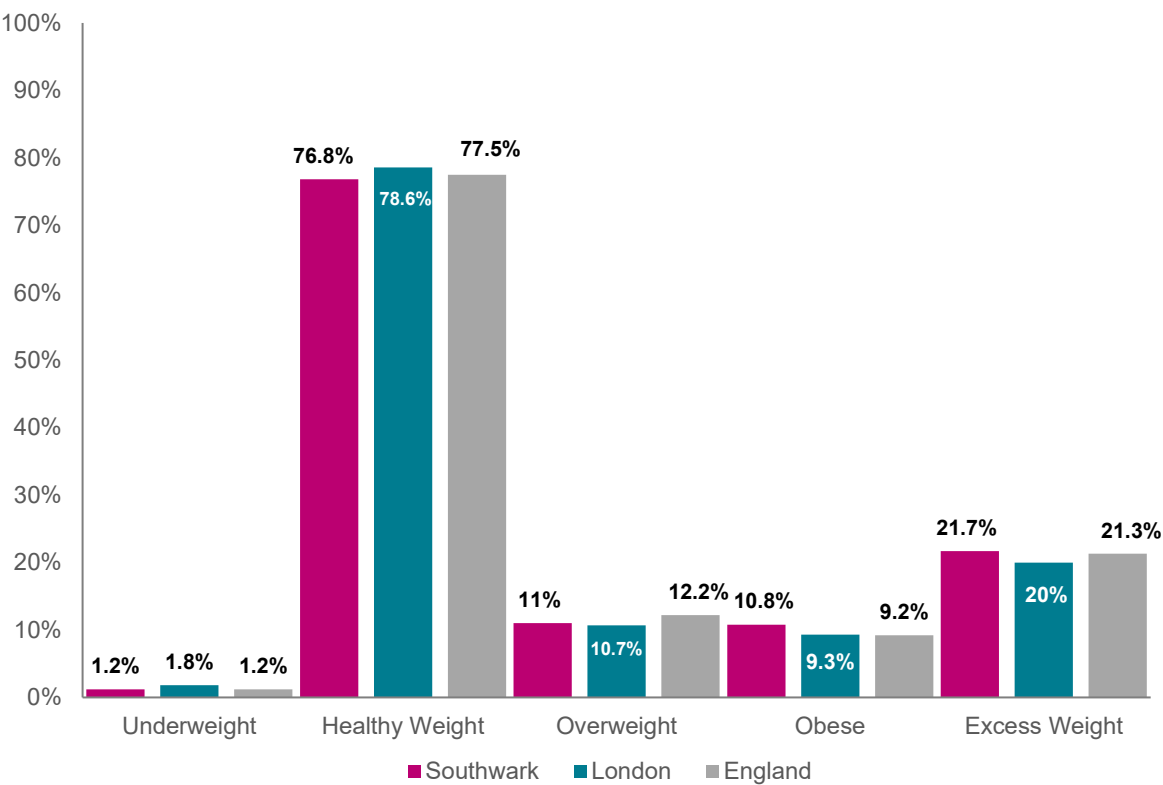


Figure 1: Weight status of children in Reception (2022/2023)

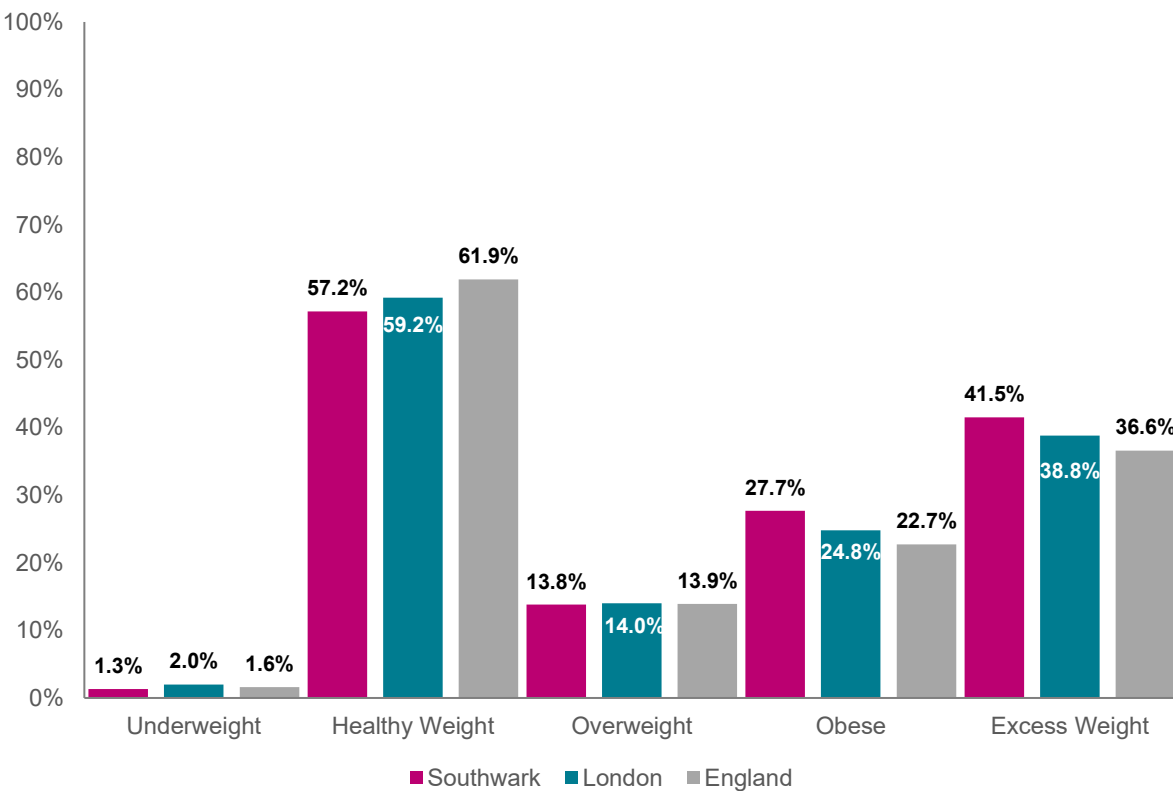


Figure 2: Weight status of children in Year 6 (2022/2023)

Child excess weight in Southwark has consistently exceeded the regional and national averages over the last decade

The prevalence of excess weight in Year 6 across Southwark has stagnated at just over 40% since 2019/2020, while excess weight in Reception has been on the decline during the same time period¹.

Key Headlines



6%

Decrease in the prevalence of children in Reception having excess weight (2013/14 to 2022/23)



5%

Higher prevalence of excess weight among Southwark children in Year 6 compared to the national average in 2022/23

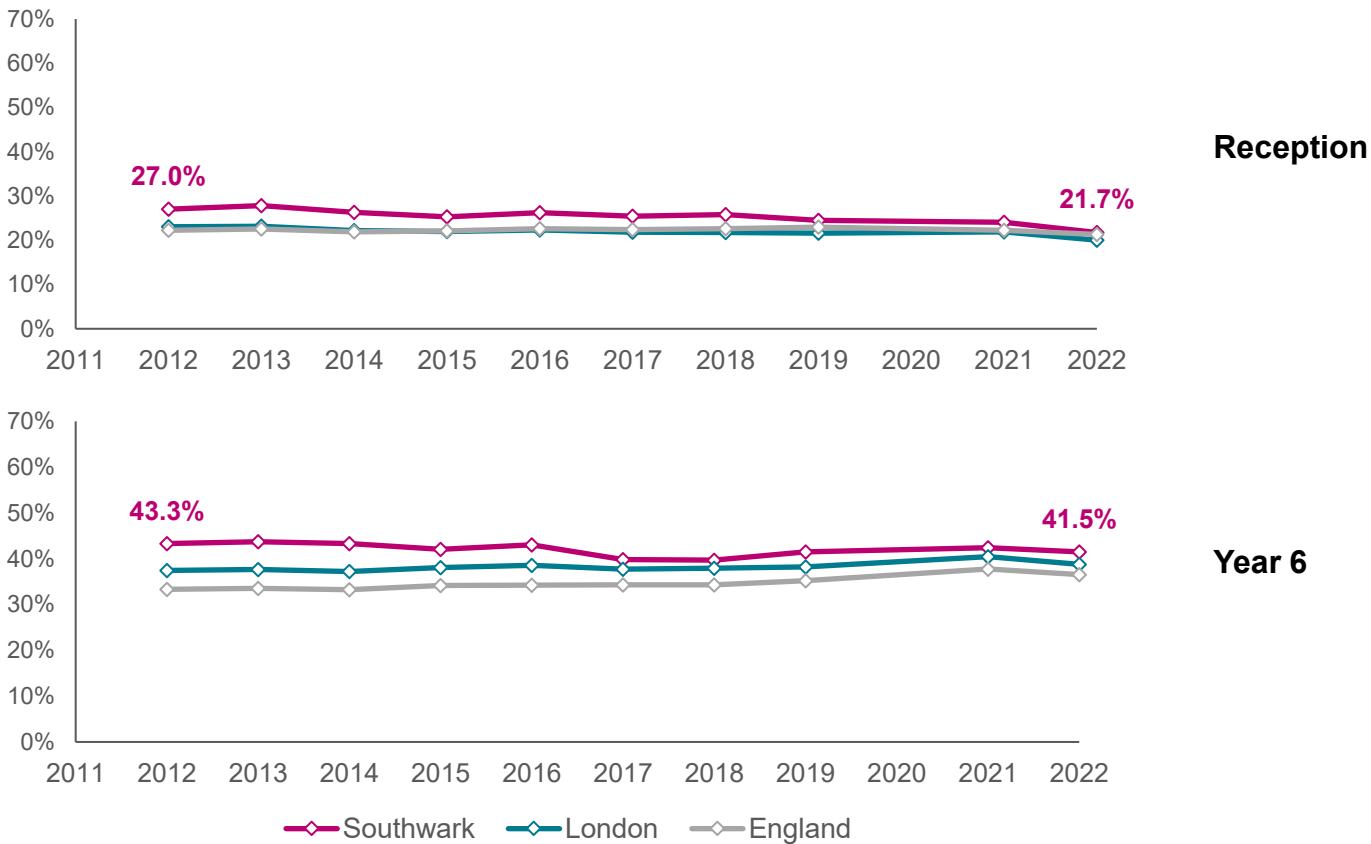



Figure 3 & Figure 4: Trends in the excess weight of children in Reception and Year 6 (2012/13 to 2022/23)

Child obesity in Southwark continues to remain above the London average over the last 10 years


The prevalence of obesity in children aged 4-5 years old, despite being higher than the London average, has shown a decrease compared to 2018/19¹.

Key Headlines




2%

Increase in the proportion of obese children in Year 6 between 2018/19 to 2022/23.



24.9%

Children in Year 6 are not meeting the Healthy Weight Strategy target for obesity.



11.3%

Children in Reception are meeting the Healthy Weight Strategy target for obesity.

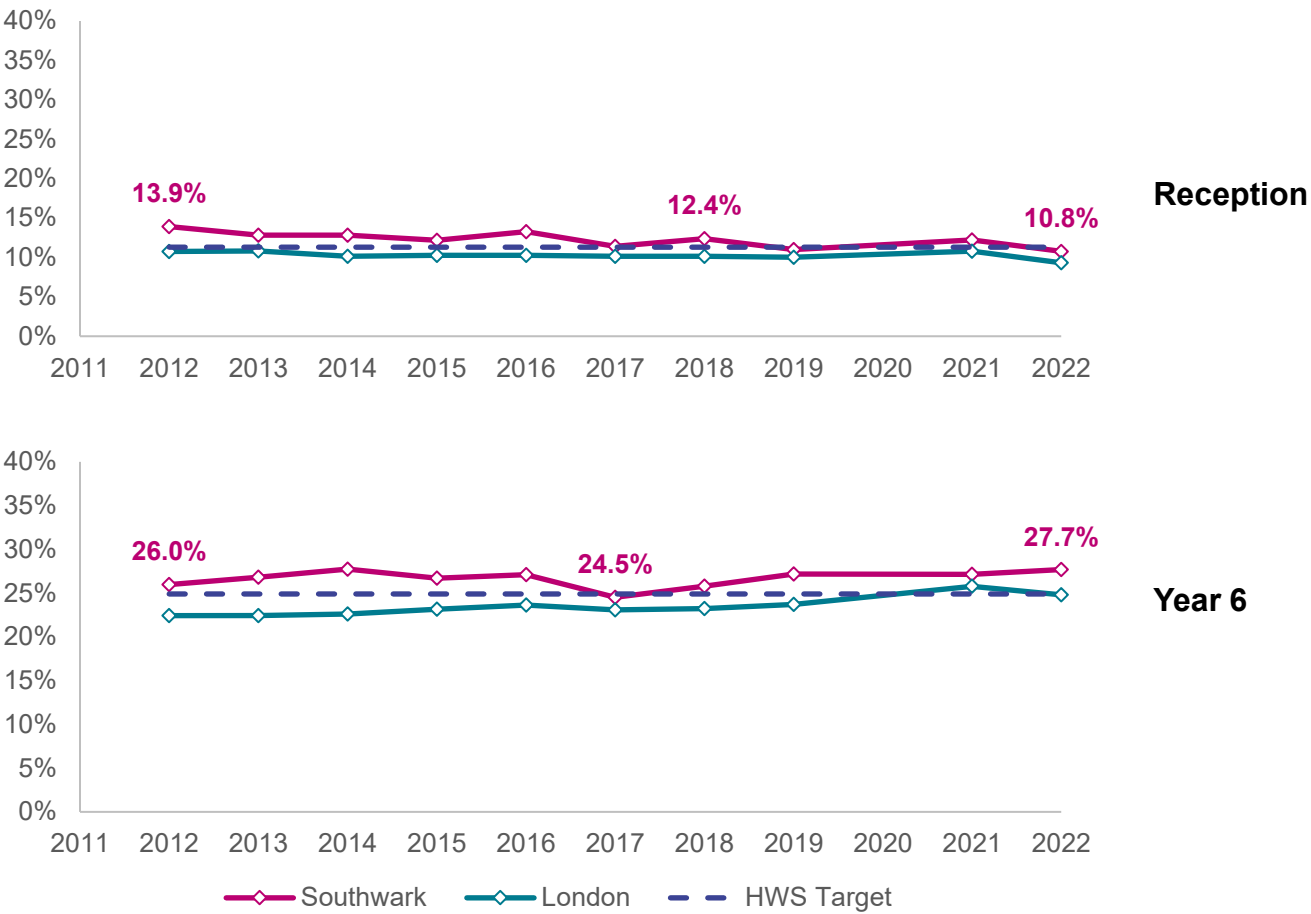


Figure 5 & Figure 6: Trends in obesity prevalence of children in Reception and Year 6 (2012/13 to 2022/23) in comparison to the Healthy Weight Strategies (HWS)

Data from the child measurement programme shows a sharp increase in the proportion of obese children between Reception and Year 6

There is a significant increase in levels of obesity between Reception and Year 6. This is particularly the case among males, where levels more than doubled from 11.6% in Reception to 29% in Year 6¹.

- There was a similar increase in obesity prevalence amongst females, conveying a doubling in the obesity proportion from 11.5% in Reception, to 24% in Year 6.
- Levels of obesity in Reception is comparable between males and females, however the gap between sexes widens by Year 6.

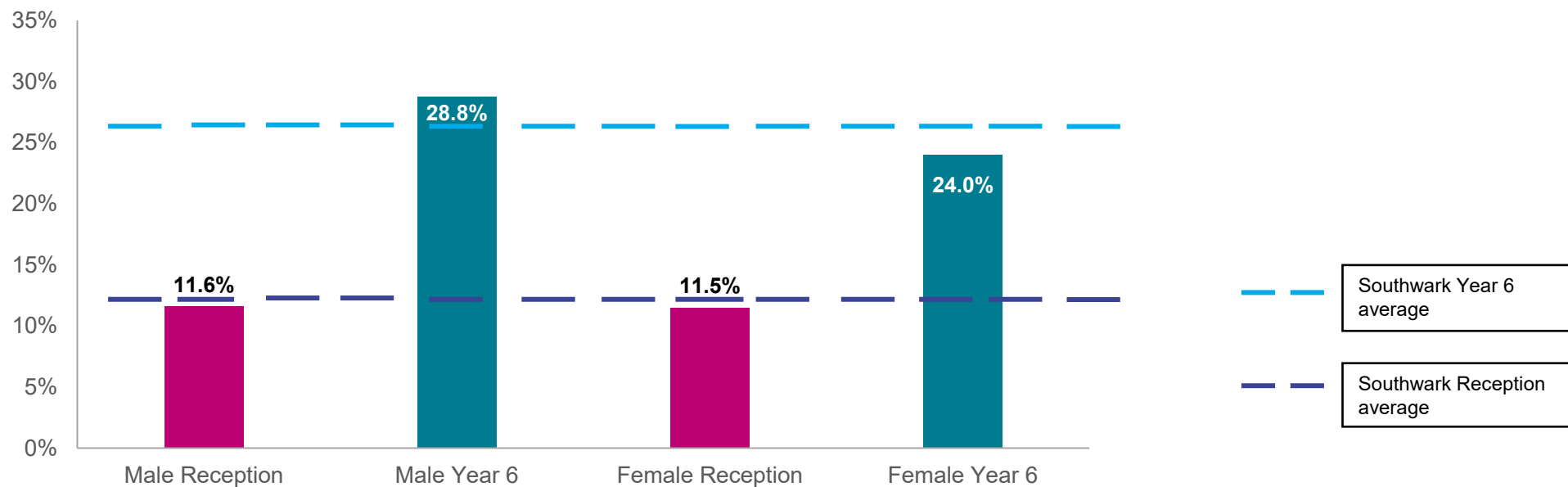


Figure 7: Prevalence of obesity amongst children in Reception and Year 6 between 2018/19 to 2022/23, by gender.

Relative to other London boroughs, Southwark has made progress in reducing childhood obesity over the past decade

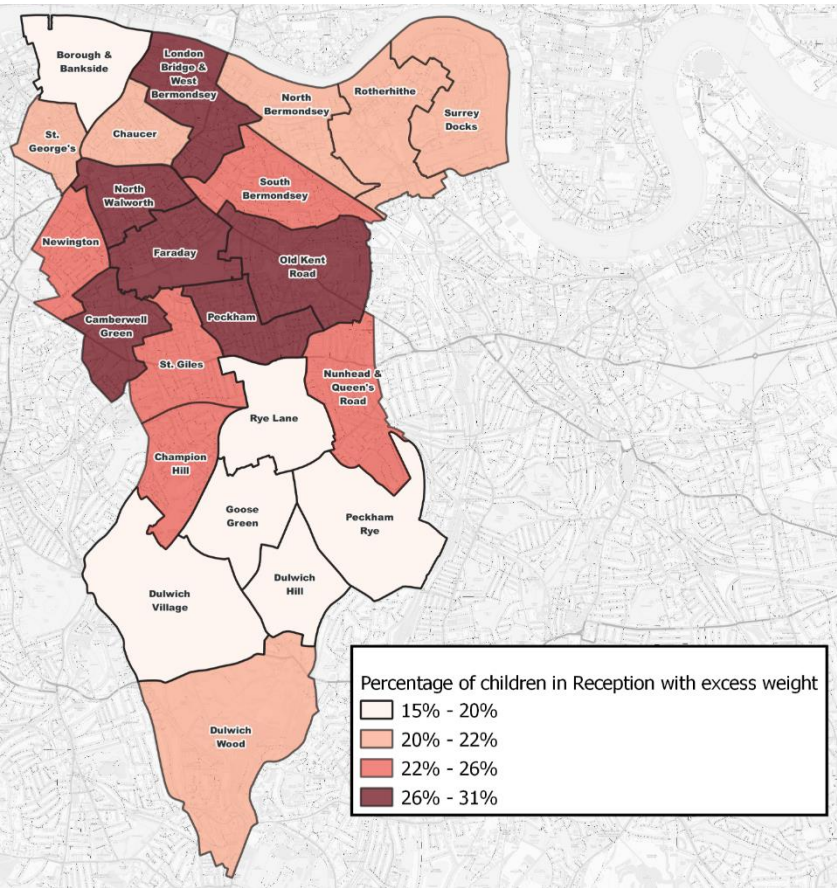
The prevalence of children in Reception with excess weight or obesity in Southwark has decreased over the last 10 years, improving its ranking compared to other London boroughs¹.

- The proportion of Southwark Reception children with excess weight has decreased from ranking the highest in London in 2012/13, to the 8th highest as of 2022/23.
- Obesity prevalence amongst children in Year 6 has remained stable over the past decade. Across all 32 London boroughs, it ranks 6th highest, moving down 4 positions.

Measure	Reception				Year 6			
	Excess Weight		Obesity		Excess Weight		Obesity	
	2012-13	2022-23	2012-13	2022-23	2012-13	2022-23	2012-13	2022-23
Prevalence	27%	21.7%	13.8%	10.8%	43%	41.5%	26%	27.7%
London Ranking (out of 32)	Highest	8 th highest	Highest	5 th highest	Highest	6 th highest	2 nd highest	6 th highest

Table 1: Ranking the weight status of children in Reception and Year 6 (2012/13 and 2022/23)

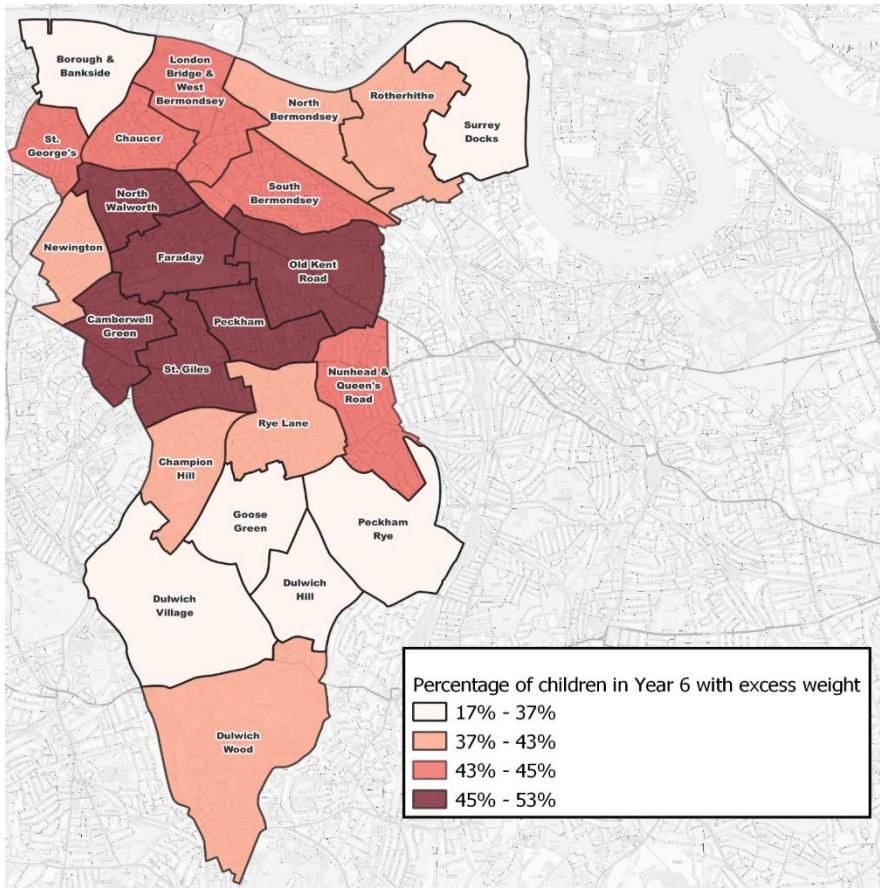
Levels of excess weight are highest across central areas of the borough, such as Old Kent Road and Peckham, mirroring patterns of disadvantage



Wards with the highest and lowest excess weight prevalence for Reception

1 Camberwell Green (31%)

23 Dulwich Village (15%)



Wards with the highest and lowest excess weight prevalence for Year 6

1 Old Kent Road (53%)

23 Dulwich Village (17%)

Figure 8: Prevalence of excess weight amongst children in Reception between 2020/21 to 2022/23, by ward.

Figure 9: Prevalence of excess weight amongst children in Year 6 between 2020/21 to 2022/23, by ward.

Levels of obesity are highest across central areas of the borough, such as Faraday, mirroring patterns of disadvantage

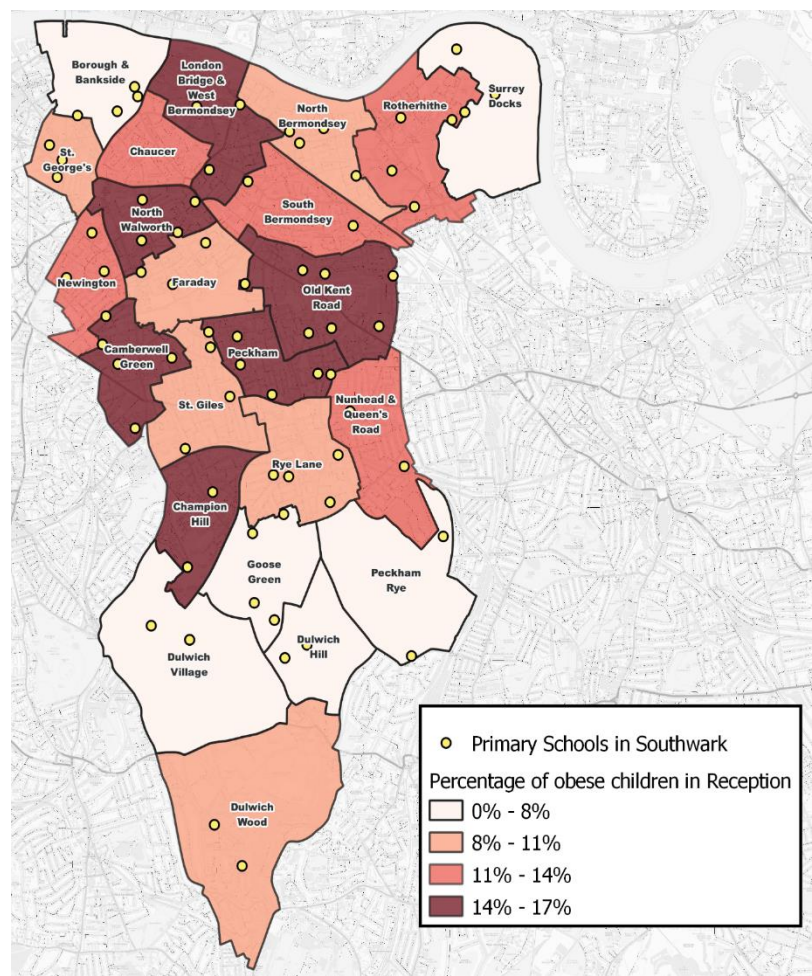
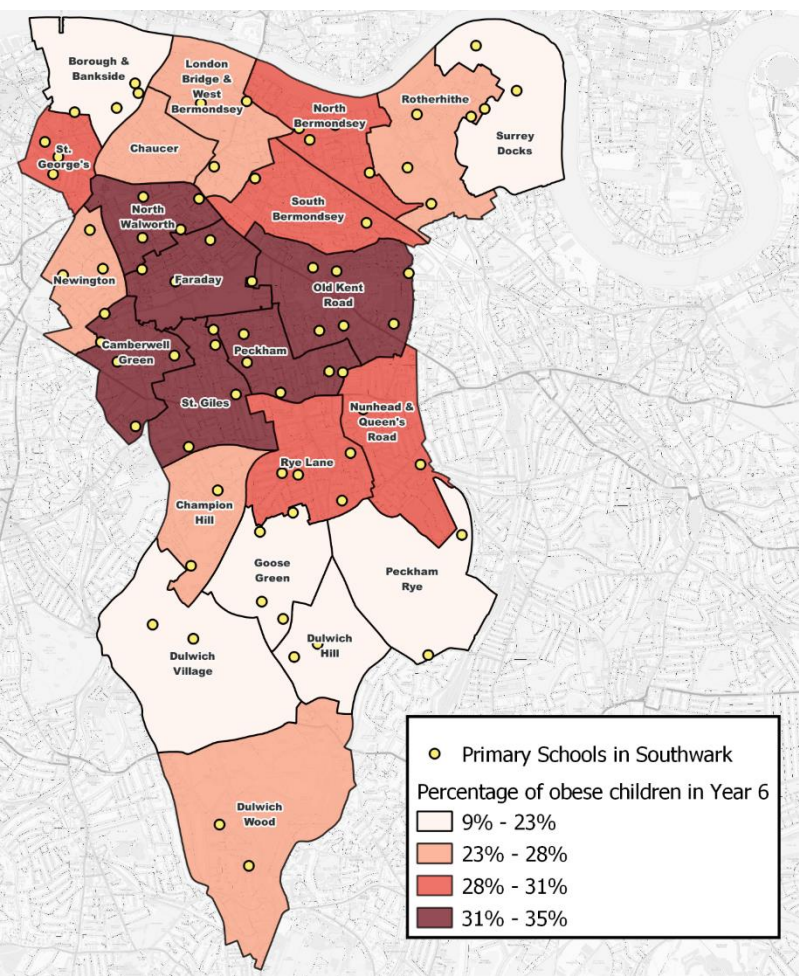


Figure 10: Prevalence of obesity amongst children in Reception between 2020/21 to 2022/23, by ward.

Reception obesity levels in the most and least deprived wards

1 Faraday (11%)

23 Goose Green* (5%)



Year 6 obesity levels in the most and least deprived wards

1 Faraday (31%)

23 Dulwich Village (9%)

Figure 11: Prevalence of obesity amongst children in Year 6 between 2020/21 to 2022/23, by ward.

*No data available for Dulwich Village for 2020/21 – 2022/23

There remain wards across Southwark where the proportion of overweight or very overweight children has increased over time

This is despite the average proportion of overweight or very overweight children in Southwark remaining static between 2017/18 to 2022/23 at 24%.

- While "obese" is a clinical classification, the NCMP uses "very overweight" to be more sensitive and reduce the stigma associated with the term.
- After combining data across children in Reception and Year 6, we can visualise improvements in the proportion of overweight or very overweight children being concentrated in the north west of the borough, as highlighted in figure 12.

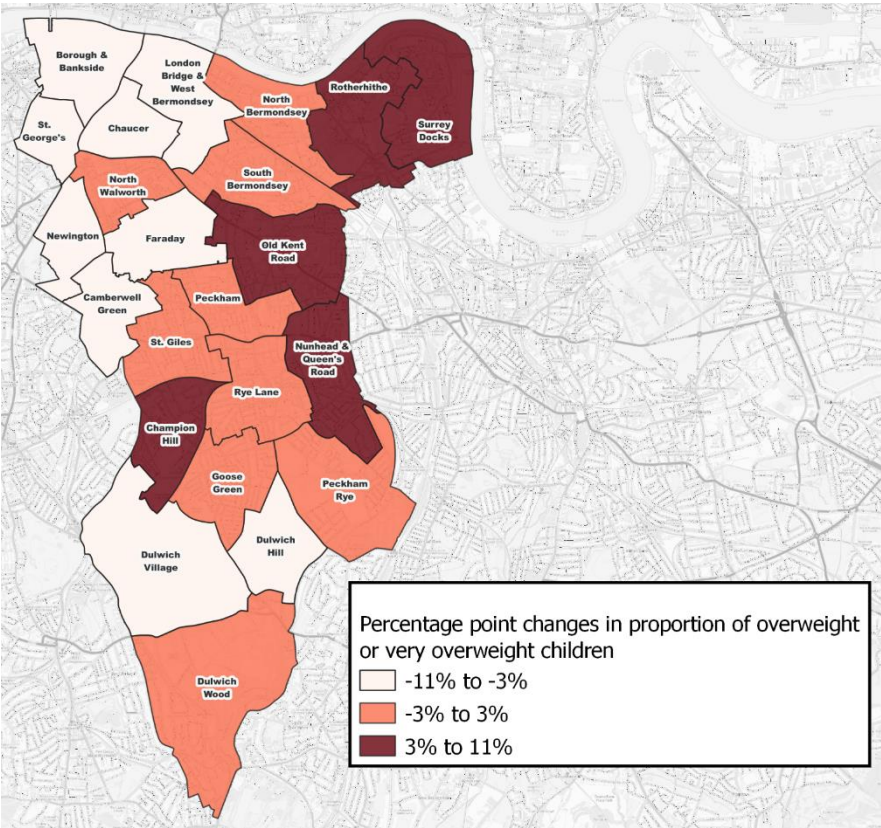
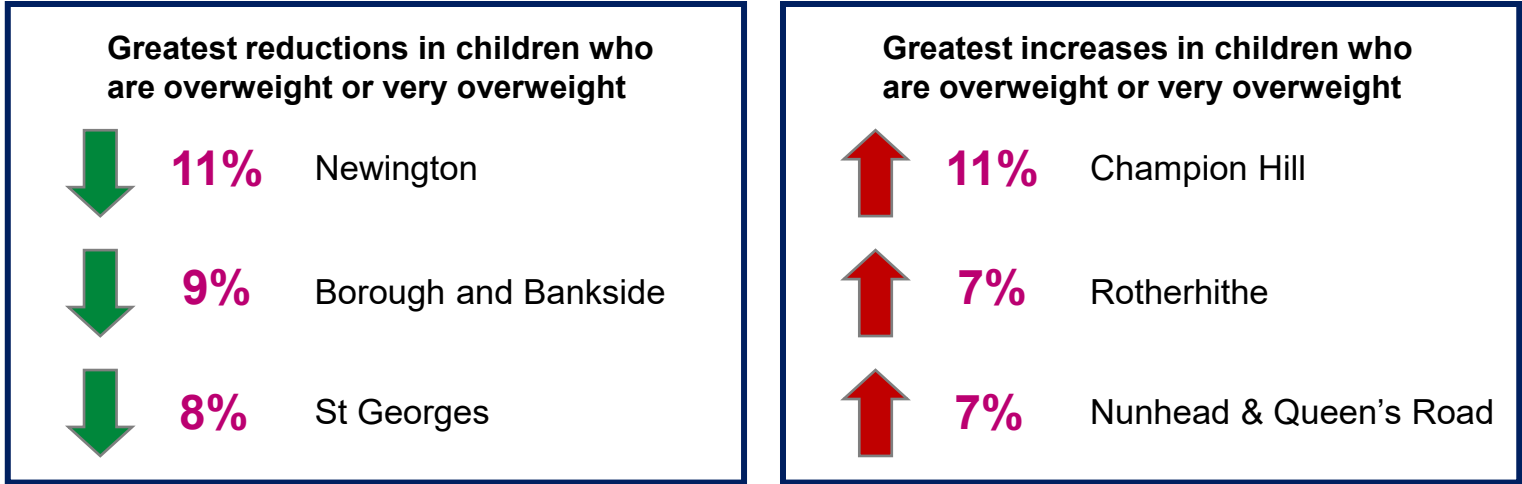


Figure 12: Percentage point changes in the proportion of overweight or very overweight children in Reception and Year 6 between 2017/18 and 2022/23, by ward.

Population density and limited safe space for children to exercise is often negatively associated with childhood obesity

Recent studies have shown that children residing in more densely populated areas with poorer access to exercise or green spaces is associated with a higher BMI³.

- Most housing estates and residential areas in Southwark are located along the north west and Central part of the borough, mirroring the population density map show in figure 13.
- With most children attending schools located close to their homes, these schools in densely populated areas are associated with an increase prevalence of children in Reception and Year 6 who are either overweight or very overweight, compared to the Southwark average.
- This pattern is particularly evident in the wards of Peckham, North Walworth, and Camberwell Green. We can also see (figure 14) that these areas of high population density and obesity are in areas with fewer green spaces.
- It is important to note that other factors can also play a role in this increase level of excess weight in these children including personal safety and economic disadvantage.

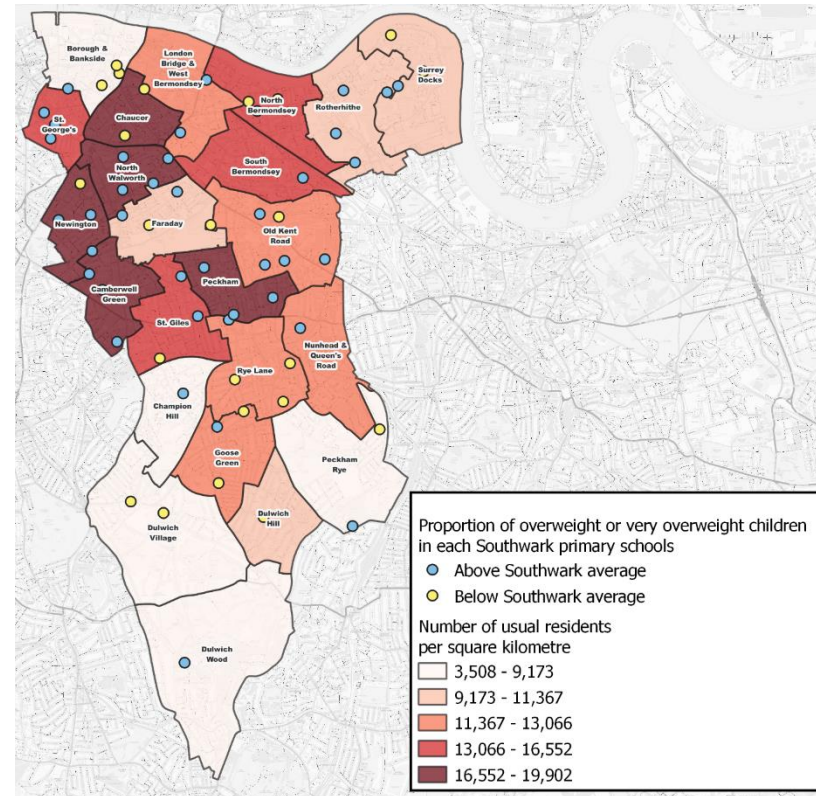


Figure 13: The proportion of overweight or very overweight children in each primary school in Southwark, by population density per square kilometre

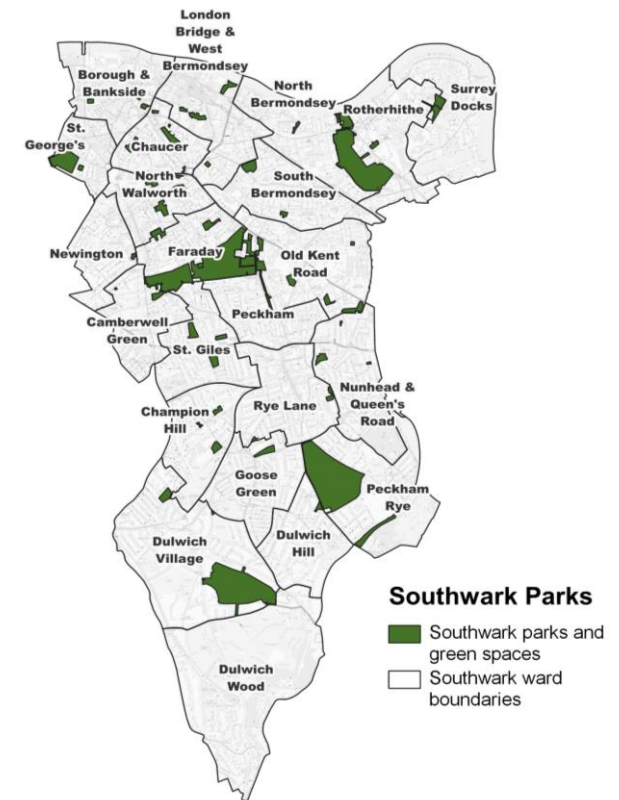


Figure 14: Public parks and gardens within Southwark

Childhood obesity is influenced by socioeconomic status, with higher levels of obesity amongst the most disadvantaged

The most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Southwark have a higher levels of childhood obesity compared to the least disadvantaged neighbourhoods. This inequality gap is larger than in London and England.

3x

The prevalence of obesity in Reception within our most disadvantaged neighbourhoods is more than 3 times that in the least disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

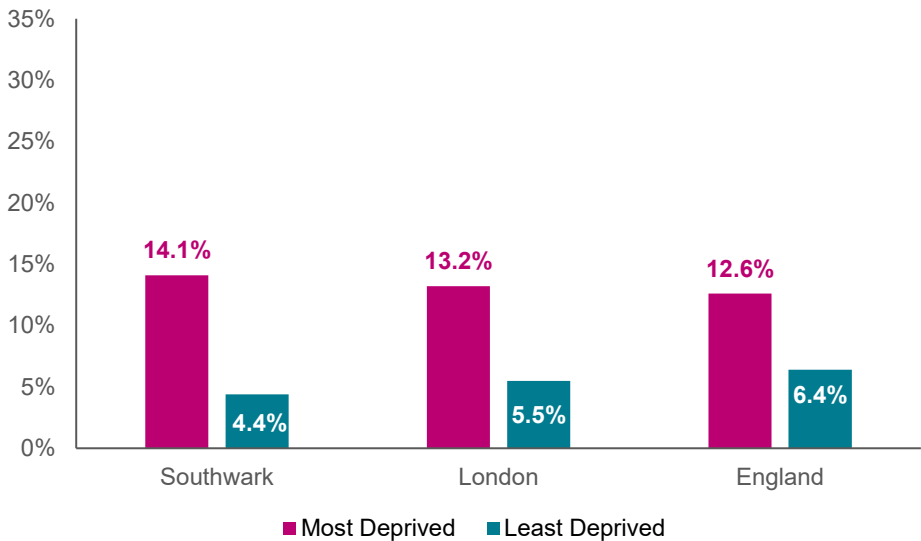


Figure 15: Prevalence of obesity amongst children in Reception between 2018/19 to 2022/23, by deprivation quintiles.

2x

The prevalence of obesity in Year 6 within our most disadvantaged neighbourhoods is more than twice that in the least disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

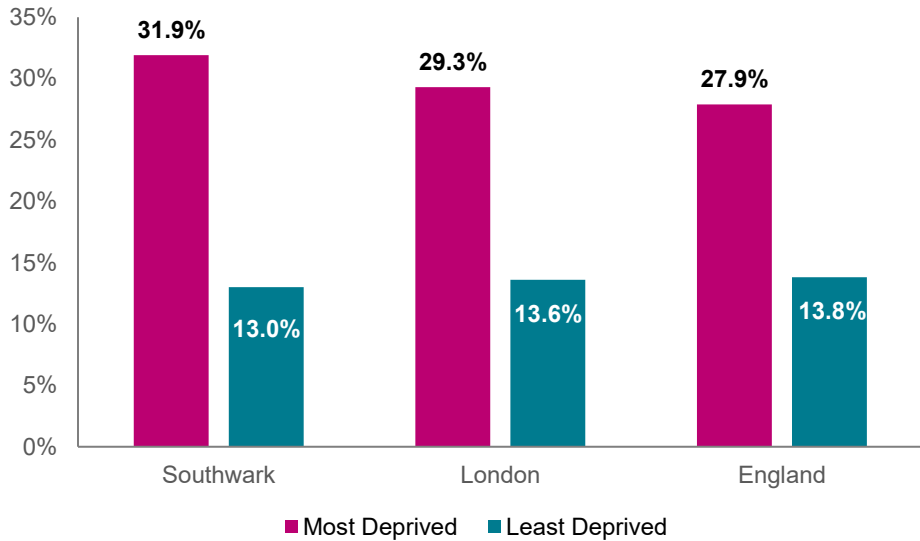


Figure 16: Prevalence of obesity amongst children in Year 6 between 2018/19 to 2022/23, by deprivation quintiles.

There are stark inequalities in the proportion of obese children in both Reception and Year 6 from a Black or Asian background

The largest inequalities in obesity are seen amongst children in Reception, with Black children having an obesity prevalence twice that of their White counterparts.

- Levels of obesity amongst Asian children more than doubled as they got older, with the proportion of children classed as obese increasing from 10% in Reception, to 25% in Year 6.

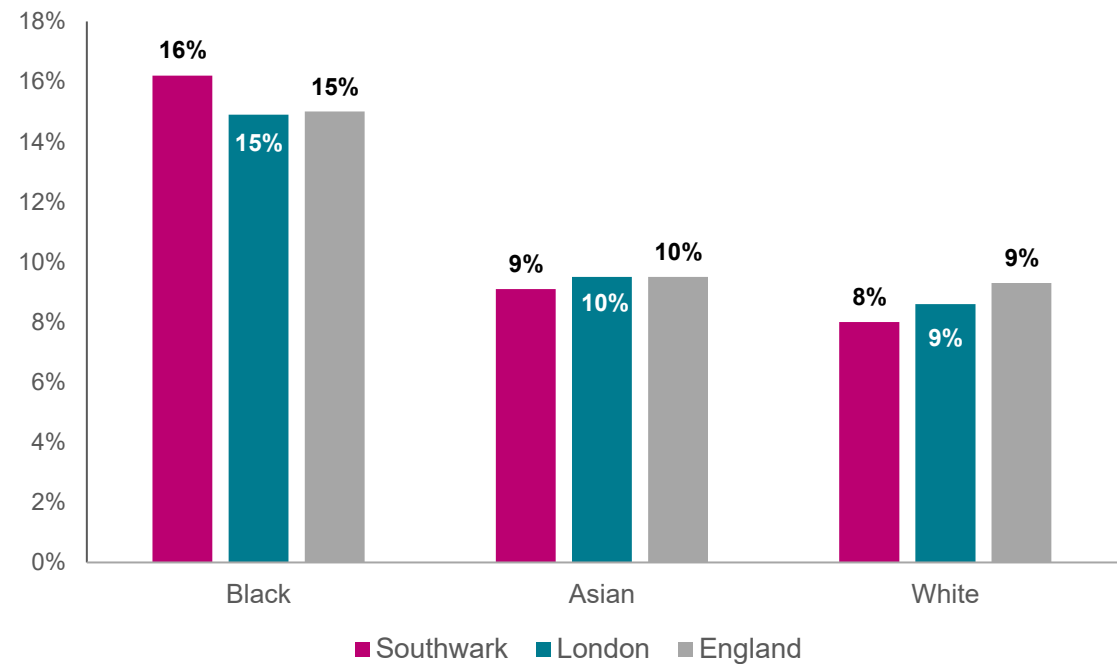


Figure 17: Prevalence of obesity amongst children in Reception between 2018/19 to 2022/23, by broad ethnic groups.

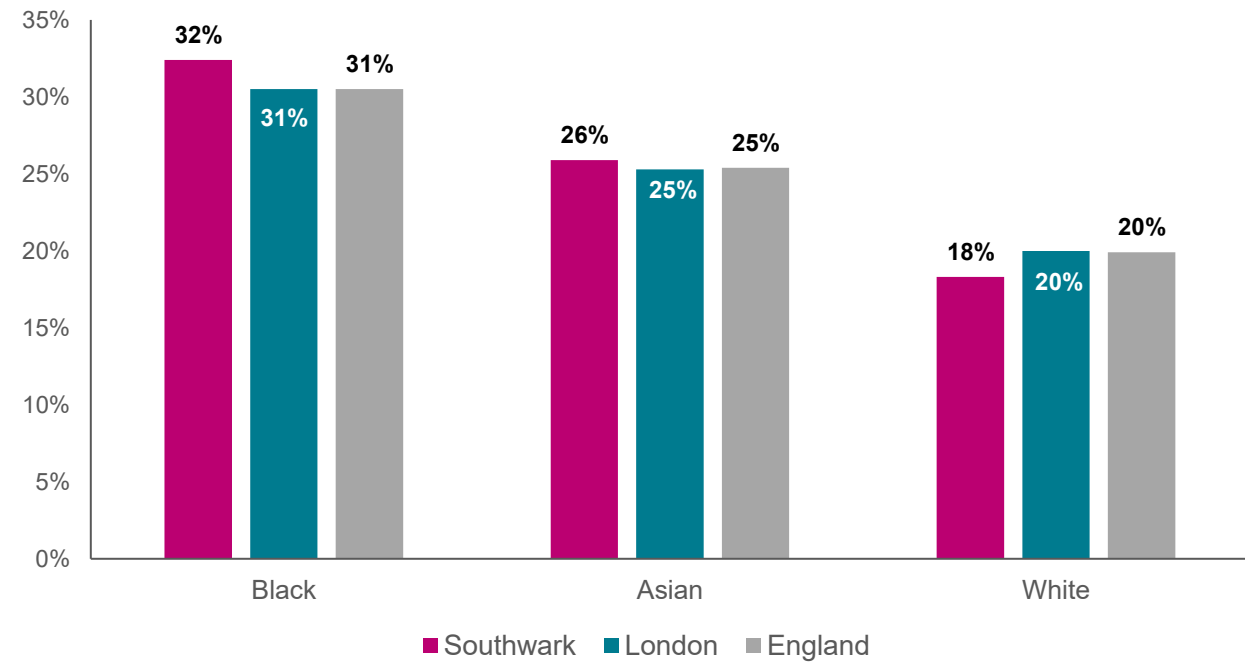


Figure 18: Prevalence of obesity amongst children in Year 6 between 2018/19 to 2022/23, by broad ethnic groups.

Section 2: Food Security

Food insecurity is a major concern across Southwark, especially amongst the most disadvantaged and ethnically diverse areas in the borough

Over 1,000 Southwark residents responded to questions on their experiences with food insecurity in a 2023 survey conducted by Impact on Urban Health (IoUH).

- Food insecurity is closely linked to a higher risk of childhood obesity through several pathways including the easier availability, pricing and storage of calorie-dense food and drinks. Conversely, food insecurity in adulthood often manifests itself with the omitting of meals^{4,5}.
- Almost 30% of respondents stated that over the last 6 months, they had smaller meals than usual or skipped meals because they couldn't afford or access food. This increased to 35% for those with children.
- For those financially getting by or struggling, 47% reported skipping meals and 25% reported not eating for an entire day due to their financial circumstances.
- A third (34%) of those from a Black ethnic background reported missing or having smaller meals during the last 6 months, 12 percentage points higher than their White counterparts.

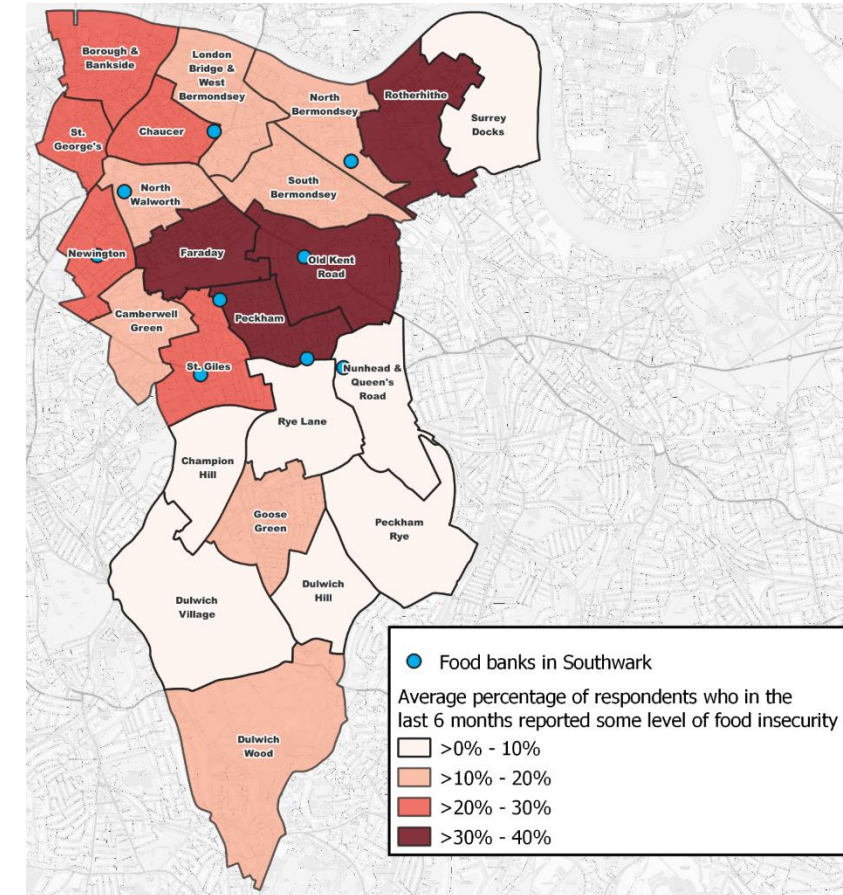


Figure 19: The average percentage of respondents in Southwark experiencing some form of food insecurity and the location of foodbanks, by ward.

The frequent consumption of fast food is associated with the development of obesity and long-term health conditions

One of two major challenges highlighted by Southwark residents to being a healthy weight was the high availability of cheap and highly processed foods.

- For Southwark residents with young children, limited time for physical activity posed the other challenge to reaching a healthy weight.
- There are higher concentrations of takeaway outlets across the north of the borough, concentrated along major transport lines, making accessibility easier. There were 586 registered takeaway stores across Southwark in 2024.
- These outlets are also located in the more disadvantaged areas of Southwark which also have the highest levels of childhood obesity. There is a social gradient between the fast-food outlet density and area level deprivation.
- There were a total of 80 supermarkets located across Southwark, with particular concentrations located near major transport links in either Borough & Bankside or North Walworth wards.

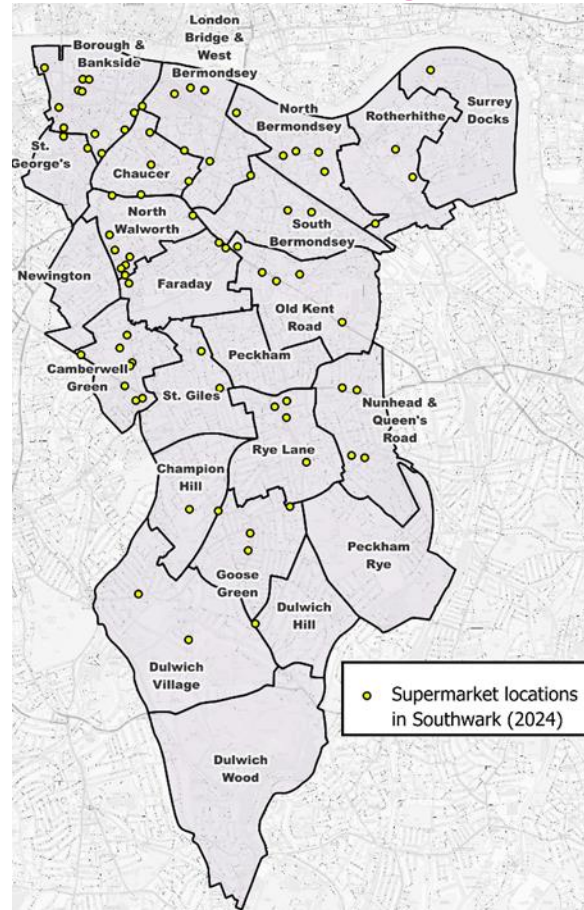


Figure 20: The locations of supermarket outlets across Southwark.

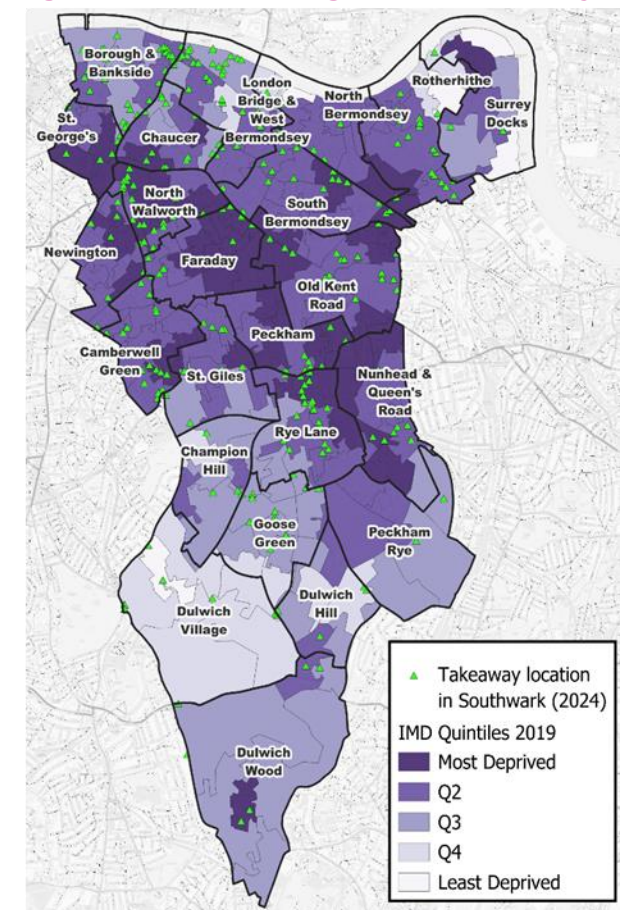


Figure 21: The locations of takeaway and sandwich outlets in Southwark.

Free School Meals and Healthy Start Vouchers are both a proxy measure for food insecurity and an approach to tackling it

A recent study suggests that receiving universal free school meals reduces prevalence of obesity by 9.3% among Reception children and 5.6% among Year 6 children on average³.

- Over a third (37%) of children attending a Southwark state school are eligible for statutory free school meal.
- Almost 50% of those eligible for a statutory free school meal in Southwark were from a Black, Black African or Black Caribbean background.
- The Old Kent Road, Peckham and South Bermondsey had the highest number of households eligible for statutory free school meals and Healthy Start Vouchers as of July 2024.

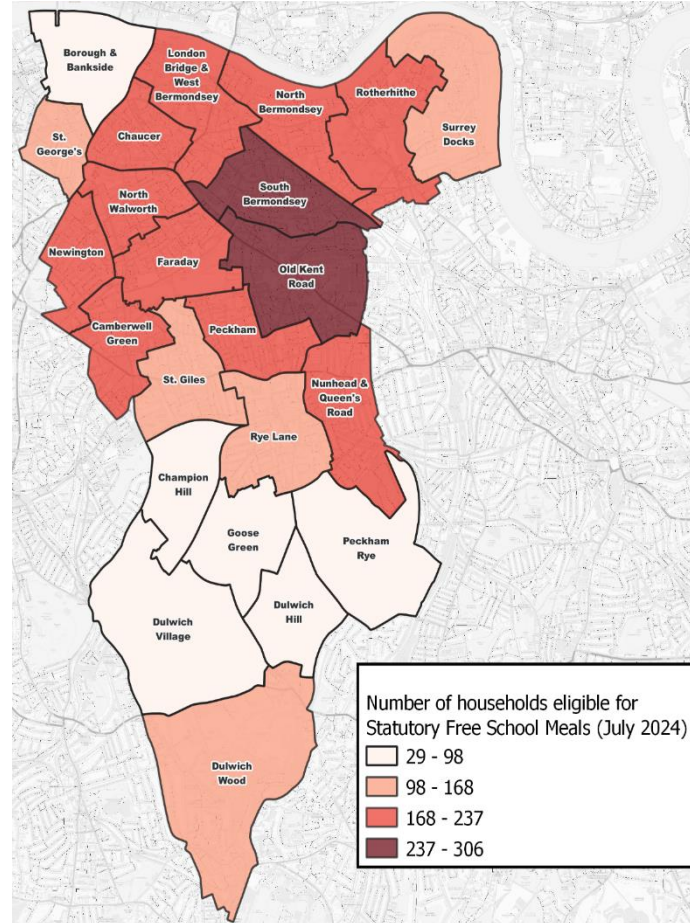


Figure 22: The number of households eligible for statutory Free School Meals as of July 2024, by ward.

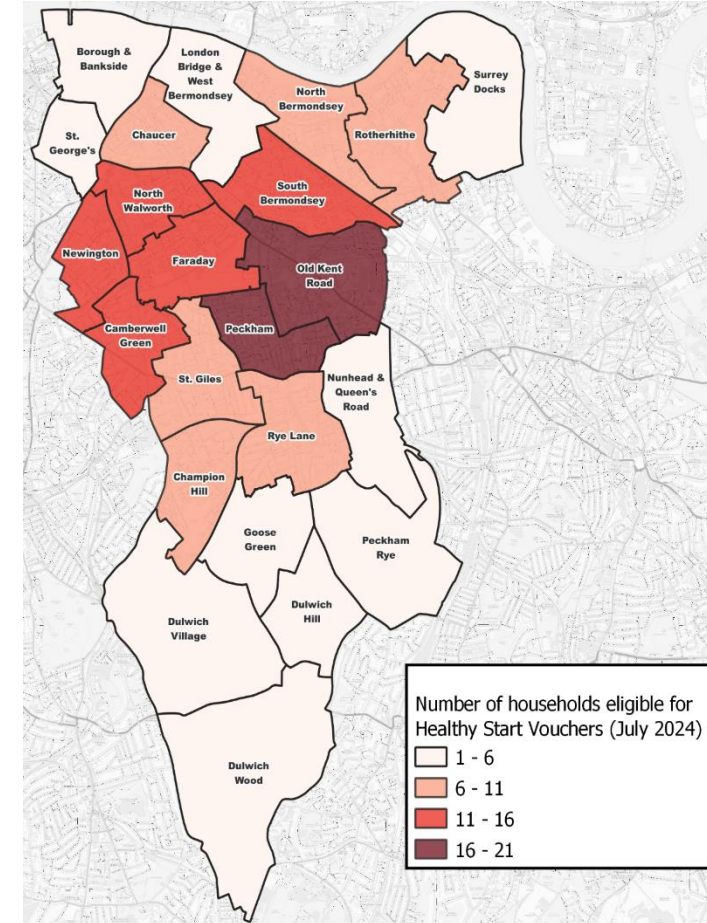


Figure 23: The number of households eligible for the Healthy Start Scheme as of July 2024, by ward.

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Find out more at:
www.southwark.gov.uk/publichealth