

Nine Characteristics of a whole system approach

To take a whole systems approach to obesity prevention, you'll need a plan that combines all nine characteristics of good programme leadership.

Characteristic	Brief Description
#1 System thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Obesity is influenced by a complex and adaptive system.• It's necessary to explore the topic by bringing together many different, and sometimes conflicting, perspectives with data and insight.• Then prioritise preventative actions by identifying parts of the system that are both important and can be influenced by you or your partners.
#2 Learning culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To impact favourably on the systems that affect obesity rates, it's necessary to set-up a process of reflection, learning and adaption.• Be ready to share learning on what is and importantly what is not working.• Senior leadership has to creating an enabling culture for this.
#3 Facilitative and Adaptive Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build and sustain collaborative relationships across the system;• Be committed to drive change over a longer period;• Empower leadership at all levels;• Champion, test and learn from new ways of working across organisational boundaries.• Be flexible
#4 Purposeful engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commit to putting the needs of beneficiaries and communities at the heart of your work and keep a focus on local inequalities.• Use a mix of professional and community insight to understand how the system is experienced by those most at risk of obesity.• Community engagement should help to identify and prioritise opportunities for intervention; it also drives a programme's iterative improvements.
#5 Governance and resourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure that senior leadership is engaged in the approach and that your plans are incorporated into the strategies of your area's institutions and community planning infrastructure.
#6 Sustainable collaborative working	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extend your influence by reaching beyond the partners you usually work with.
#7 Shared commitment and outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish a shared vision and within your programme partnership. This will sustain your collaboration by providing you the foundation for better connection and alignment of actions.
#8 Place is important	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design a programme that meets the unique needs of your locality
#9 Creativity and innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be ready to apply evidence in a flexible way to best fit local need• Support creative and innovative actions and ways of working