How to host a Great Weight Debate

## 1. About this toolkit

*The Great Weight Debate: a London conversation on obesity* aims to engage Londoners in the future health of their children and galvanise action to tackle childhood obesity.

This toolkit aims to support London boroughs to hold their own Great Weight Debate with their citizens.

It includes tips for how to approach each stage of designing and holding the event as well as a suggested agenda.

The toolkit includes:

* Suggested running slides for the day
* Idea cards for attendees
* Top ideas worksheet for attendees
* Preferred ideas worksheet for attendees

In addition to this toolkit, to host your own Great Weight Debate, you will need:

* A/V facilities for the running slides
* Flip charts to record the conversations happening at each table
* Answer cards for the quiz (should you choose to run the quiz)

**2. How to host your own Great Weight Debate**

The following are some points that you may want to consider when designing and hosting your own Great Weight Debate.

***Recruiting Londoners to take part***

When designing your event, it will be important to think about who you want to include on the day.

* If you are interested in hearing from a reflective sample of Londoners it might be worth setting quotas that reflect the proportion of different demographics in the city.
* However, it may also be that you want to make sure that the views of particular groups – for example, mothers of small children – are clearly heard. In that instance, you may want to set quotas that over-represent this audience. Your borough communications team will be able to advise you on how to encourage attendance from certain groups.
* It will also be important to think about whether there is anyone you would like to exclude. For example, people who work in nutrition or healthcare may have quite different views and levels of knowledge to the average Londoner, which might result in them dominating the conversation on the day. You may therefore want to consider excluding these types of people from your event
* Make sure you encourage people to RSVP so you can judge attendance on the day.

***Promoting your Great Weight Debate***

* Get your communications team involved as they can support you to promote your Great Weight Debate.
* Issue a media release to your local paper (template media release below) – and/or if you have the budget pay for an advert.
* Promote the debate on your website and through your twitter account.
* Advertise in your resident’s newsletters/e-newsletters.
* Ask your local CVS, Healthwatch and Tenants Residents Association to use their channels to promote the debate.
* Make use of local networks – tenant groups, residents groups, CCG patient public groups, GP patient groups, school newsletters.
* Ask your Mayor, councillors/MPs to spread the word – announce it in council meetings, tweet it from their twitter accounts.
* Ask local faith groups to spread the word.
* Get the message out through children’s centres and playgroups.
* Put up posters where you can.

***Designing the agenda***

Below, you will find an example agenda that you can use as a template for your Great Weight Debate.

Should you wish to adapt this, there are a few points that you may want to consider.

* Most people do not attend events like these on a regular basis and some people may be uncomfortable speaking in front of a group they do not know. It will therefore be important to start the session with introductions and an open-ended conversation that everyone can contribute to, to help people “warm up” to the event.
* Most Londoners are not familiar with the specific facts and figures relating to childhood obesity. It will be important to share these with them in order to give them context for the event. It will be vital that this information is pitched at the right level, using simple statistics that everyone can understand, and avoiding technical language.
* To ensure that the day feels coherent to participants, each session should “flow” on from the session before. A good rule of thumb is to start with a more general session, and gradually narrow the focus as the day goes on.
* Events work best when participants feel their voices have been heard. You should therefore build regular feedback sessions into your agenda. This will also help give participants a sense of what people on other tables are saying.

***Including all participants in the conversation***

To ensure that all participants take part in the conversation, consider whether you will need a moderator to run the conversation on each table.

If you do have a moderator, they should, at the start of the day, explain to participants that they will work to include everyone in the conversation and that as a result they may either ask very confident participants to allow other people to speak first, or ask someone who has not spoken for a while what they think. This will give the moderator licence to actively moderate the sessions on their table.

***Including professionals in the debate***

The agenda below assumes that you will only have members of the public at your Great Weight Debate. However, should you wish to also include professionals you may want to consider the following points.

* Professionals are likely to start with higher levels of knowledge about childhood obesity than the public. You may therefore want to have them arrive later, once the public have learnt about the issues, or to run separate sessions in the morning with professionals.
* Some members of the public may be inclined to defer to people who are positioned as professionals in the conversations. It will therefore be beneficial to explain to the public that they are attending on an equal footing, and that their views are as valid as those of the professionals.
* Due to their higher levels of knowledge, there is a risk that professionals may dominate the conversation. To prevent this from happening, you should have fewer professional participants than public participants. The moderator should also actively work to encourage members of the public to speak up.

**3. Suggested outline agenda**

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| **Section** | **Topics to cover** | **Timings** | **Materials needed** |
| *Registration* | *Participants arrive and are allocated their table* | 15 mins |  |
| *Welcome* | *Lead facilitator opens the session and explains:*   * *The aim of the day* * *Who is in the room* * *The agenda* * *Ground rules* | 15 mins | Running slides |
| *Introductions* | Table session:  *Participants introduce themselves and share a little about their home lives and their favourite food*  *Key questions for discussion:*  To what extent is the issue of living healthily something you think about in your day-to-day lives?   * For you personally? * For your family members?   To what extent does living in London make living healthily easier or more difficult?  What comes to mind when you hear the phrase “childhood obesity”? | 30 mins |  |
| *Information provision* | Plenary session:  *Session sharing information about the childhood obesity challenge, run as an interactive “quiz” (Please refer to accompanying running slides.)*  Table session:  *After learning about the childhood obesity challenge, each participant to write down the most surprising thing they have learnt on a post-it and share it with their table* | 45 mins | Quiz on childhood obesity  Answer cards    Post its |
| *Break* |  | 20 mins | Teas and coffees |
| Generating spontaneous ideas for change | Plenary session:  *Presentation providing:*   * *A recap on the information provided in the information session* * *The need to tackle childhood obesity at a national, London and borough / local community level* * *Introduction of the London ADPH framework as a tool to think about where action could be taken*   Table session:  *Each table to be allocated a category from the London ADPH framework and asked to brainstorm ideas for change under each of the 3 “levels”:*   * *Borough / local community* * *National* * *London*   *Table to generate as many ideas as possible under each level. Each idea to be recorded on an idea card* | 70 mins | Presentation  Idea cards |
| *Lunch* |  | 60 mins | Lunch |
| *Idea development* | Table session:  *Each table to be allocated a different category from the London ADPH framework to the one that they were looking at in the morning*  *Tables to be given all the completed idea cards from the morning for that category*  *Table to look at the ideas developed at each of the 3 levels in turn and identify the idea at each level that they like the most*  *Table to then look at their three top ideas and discuss them.*  *Key questions for discussion:*  How effective would this idea be at tackling childhood obesity in London?   * What are the barriers, if any? * How would we overcome these?   How, if at all, could we make this idea more effective in tackling childhood obesity?  How achievable is this idea?   * What would need to happen to make this work?   + What would we need to change?   + Who would need to be involved?   How fair is this idea?   * Are there any groups who would not benefit from this idea? * How might we adapt this idea to include them?   How expensive is this idea likely to be to implement?   * How likely is it that this money will be available? * How can we make it more cost effective?   Once implemented, how likely is it that this idea would be sustainable?   * What, if anything, would we need to change to make it more sustainable?   *Table to then complete a top ideas worksheet for their 3 top ideas* | 60 mins | Top ideas worksheet |
| *Break* |  | 15 mins | Teas and coffees |
| *Understanding which are the preferred ideas* | Plenary session:  *Each table shares their top 3 ideas with the room. As the ideas are shared, they should be recorded in the running slides, so that everyone can see them*  Table session:  *Key questions for discussion:*  What did you think of what you have just heard?  Thinking again about what you have just heard, which ideas do you think would have the biggest impact on childhood obesity in London?  And which ideas do you think would be most achievable?  And which ideas do you think should London should focus on implementing?  *Table to work together to agree which 3 ideas they want London to take forward, and fill in preferred ideas worksheet*  Plenary session:  Tables share their 3 preferred ideas with the room | 60 mins | Preferred ideas worksheet |
| Galvanising London | Table session:  *Key questions for discussion:*  How can we galvanise Londoners to demand action to tackle childhood obesity? | 20 mins |  |
| Wrap up | *Lead facilitator thanks participants for their time and closes the session* | 10 mins |  |