Recommendations for Northern Ireland government departments and regional-level partners considering supporting a whole systems approach to obesity

This infographic reports the six recommendations for government departments and regional-level partners in Northern Ireland interested in implementing a WSA to obesity based on findings from a process evaluation conducted between June 2024 and March 2025. A more detailed explanation of each recommendation can be found here, numbers R1-R6 under 'regional recommendations'.

All recommendations are appropriate for PHA who provide practical support for local implementation. Recommendations in red are of relevance to other government departments and organisations.

Regional recommendations	System working behaviours facilitated by corresponding recommendations (see PHE guidance pp. 23-26.)
R1. Optimally situate the WSA Embed the WSA at the highest possible strategic level for high-level ownership.	Undertaking collective action Implementing appropriate governance structures
R2. Take your time with induction Invite uptake of a WSA and then provide time and training on WSA, the PHE guidance and on involving people with lived experience/the public.	Engaging communities in a WSA
R3. Communicate and be transparent Communicate with sites regularly, including any challenges and create an internal communication strategy.	Establishing effective communication Developing a shared aspiration and vision
R4. Optimise financial and human resources Identify resource needs early; emphasise interdisciplinary requirements; include regional partners.	Creating an environment for change Having an appropriate mindset Developing a shared aspiration and vision
R5. Prepare tools, materials and processes Determine required adaptations to meet NI context, as well as support, physical resources or accessibility needs. Pilot any adaptations. Agree levels of implementation flexibility.	Implementing appropriate governance structures
R6. Capture and share learning Determine methods to capture learning and enable sharing e.g. document repository, shared learning network.	Employing strategic learning

Recommendations were formed based on data collected from three council areas that had completed up to phase 2 of the PHE implementation guidance; however some will be relevant to later phases or the entire implementation cycle.

This project is funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) [Public Health Research Programme (NIHR135393/PHIRST)]. The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care.