

Are We Working Together Towards Achieving the Raising Health Kids Targets? A report from a study asking nurses about their perceptions of the Before School Check.

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Childhood obesity is an issue in New Zealand with a third of our children being overweight or obese. In a move to counter this growing public health problem the Childhood Obesity Plan was introduced by the Ministry of Health in 2015. The Raising Healthy Kids Targets are part of this plan. The targets aim to refer 95% of obese children for further clinical assessment and family based nutrition, activity and lifestyle interventions

(www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/obesity/childhood-obesity-plan).

Nurses performing the already established health and development screen at age four, the Before School Check (B4SC), have been including the RHKT Screen in the check since July 2016. This research sought to examine the experience of the nurses a year into this change as it has been established that conversations with parents around overweight and obesity can be difficult to initiate.

Using Nominal Group Technique nurses were asked to discuss their perception of performing the B4Sc since the inclusion of the RHKT. Five focus groups were held across the country to ensure cover at least one group from all service providers: District Health Board, Non-Governmental Organisations, and Primary Health Organisations. Preliminary analysis of the themes that emerged from the focus groups include; the importance of clear communication with all parties, the use of BMI as a measurement tool, and parental responsiveness. The importance of collaboration with and between service users and service providers was highlighted in that many of the issues that nurses noted affecting their performance and perception of the change could be improved by ensuring optimum communication and collaboration prior to rolling out target interventions.