

5 Example

5.1 The rise of the obesity epidemic

5.1.1 The research

An example of how research communication can be done effectively is CLOSER's work to inform the government's childhood obesity strategy.

The research was carried out using five longitudinal birth cohort studies who are CLOSER partners. The research used data on height, weight and body mass index (BMI) with the aim of tracking cohort differences in the development of overweight and obesity across the life course.

A key finding was that children born since 1990 were up to three times more likely than older generations to be overweight or obese by age 10. One in ten children born in 1946 were overweight or obese by age 11, compared to roughly one in four 11-year-olds born at the start of the new millennium.

Since 1946, every generation of children has been heavier than the previous one – and it is the most overweight people who are becoming even heavier. The heaviest 2 per cent of those born in 1946 had a BMI of around 20kg/m² by the age of 11, compared to 27kg/m² for the heaviest children born at the turn of the century.

5.1.2 Communicating the research

Having completed this analysis, the next stage is to communicate the research to a wider audience – that is, not just other academics investigating obesity and health, but also to policy and decision makers in the arena of public health and others seeking to design effective health interventions.

In order to do this, CLOSER adopted a layered 'wedding cake' approach (see section 4.4), developing different outputs and approaches for the various audiences we wanted to target and influence. In simple form, the top layer, [Taste](#), consisted of infographics and social media activity, with the main audience being the media and the public, to draw

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people in and gain attention towards the topic. [Snack](#) was a clear and concise and bespoke two-page briefing note targeted at policy and decision makers and parliamentarians, and [Feast](#) was the full academic paper, available to download or read online.

In this way, the research is communicated in parallel to different audiences using different strategies to help maximise its impact.



Taste Infographic: 'The rise of the obesity epidemic'

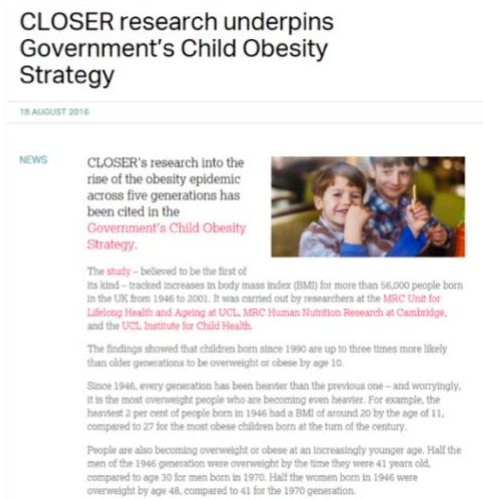
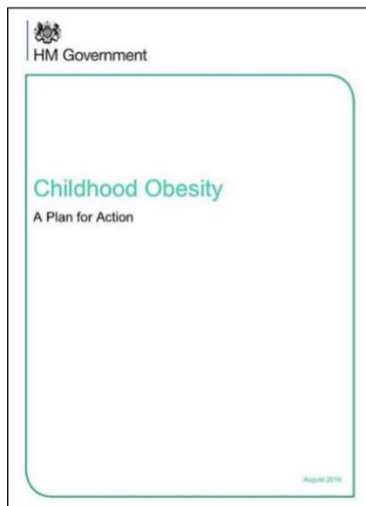
Snack Two page briefing note: 'Obesity'

Feast Academic paper: Johnson, W., Li, L., Kuh, D., & Hardy, R. (2015). **How has the age-related process of overweight or obesity development changed over time?** PLoS Med, 12(5).

5.1.3 Outcomes

CLOSER had a number of positive outcomes by taking this approach – one of which was that the work was cited as the overarching context of the UK Government's childhood obesity plan to demonstrate the rise of the obesity epidemic across five generations in the UK. The research also generated media coverage and a lot of traction on social media. Moreover, the full academic paper has been cited more than 100 times by researchers working in this area, contributing significantly to the on-going research on obesity and public health.

Suggested citation: Kaye, N., Davies, R., Blows, J. & Quadir, R. (2020). *Research communication*. CLOSER Learning Hub, London, UK: CLOSER



5.1.4 The development of a learning resource

A further positive outcome from this work involves its development as one of a number of case studies that are examples of the positive impact of longitudinal research for academic, practitioners and policy and decision makers.

It can be found here: [The rise of the obesity epidemic](#)

5.2 Other research case studies

There are a number of other Research Case Studies covering a wide range of social and biomedical science subjects available on the CLOSER Learning Hub.

Click the tab above or follow any of the links below to explore them further:

- [Social media and adolescent well-being](#)
- [Ethnic differences in unemployment](#)
- [Pre-teens' alcohol consumption](#)
- [Children of immigrants' cognitive achievement](#)
- [Britain's mobility problem](#)
- [Scarring effects of childhood bullying](#)