

New pilot to help people eat better and exercise more

- Points awarded for increasing step count and eating more fruit and veg which can be redeemed for gym passes and discounts at selected shops
- HeadUp Systems awarded contract to develop a new app with £3 million in government funding made available for rewards

A new app to help people make positive changes to their diet and physical activity will launch next year, the government has announced today.

From January 2022, a pilot will see users wear wrist-worn devices that can generate personalised health recommendations, such as increasing their step count, eating more fruit and vegetables and decreasing portion size.

Users will collect points for these healthy behaviours which will unlock rewards, which could include gym passes, clothes or food vouchers and discounts for shops, cinema or theme park tickets.

Following a competitive tender process, HeadUp has been chosen to deliver the new scheme, with £3 million also coming from the Department of Health and Social Care to provide incentives.

Evidence suggests that financial incentives can improve rates of physical activity and inspire healthier eating so HeadUp will work with a range of organisations to provide rewards such as vouchers, merchandise, discounts and gift cards.

The government is committed to helping people lead healthier, happier lives by making it easier for people to make healthy choices.

Health and Social Care Secretary, Sajid Javid said:

I want to ensure we're doing as much as we can to tackle health disparities across the country, and this new pilot will pave the way for developing innovative ways to improve the lives of individuals, and also help to reduce strain on the NHS.

The Office of Health Improvement and Disparities is driving forward our levelling up agenda for health and ensuring prevention is a vital part of everything we do.

This pilot is an excellent opportunity to find how best to inspire people to make small changes to their daily lives that will have a lasting positive impact on their health.

As part of our world-leading healthy weight strategy, the new scheme will be part of the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities' (OHID) drive to use digital technology to improve physical health and prevent health conditions before they develop.

Obesity related illnesses cost the NHS £6 billion a year and the scale of the challenge has been highlighted by COVID-19 disproportionately affecting people who are overweight. With almost two-thirds of adults in England living with excess weight or obesity the programme will focus on incentives and rewards for healthy behaviours, including increasing physical activity and eating better to support people to live healthier lives.

Public Health Minister, Maggie Throup said:

We are committed to improving the health of people across the country.

The HeadUp app pilot will help us better understand how appropriate rewards can motivate people to make positive changes to their diet and physical activity, supporting them to lead healthier lives.

Internationally there are examples of innovative incentives programme showing promising results, such as Singapore's National Steps Challenge, and the government will work closely with international partners to understand what makes these schemes successful to inform best practices in England.

Sir Keith Mills, who has pioneered reward programmes through Airmiles and Nectar points, is advising the Health Incentives Scheme and will support the government in taking advantage of the very best innovation in the public and private sector.

The new app will place user privacy and security at its core and will ensure all personal information is safe and secure at all times.

Sir Keith Mills, Health Incentives Advisor, said:

This scheme is a fantastic opportunity to explore how government, business and the third sector can work together to deliver a new and engaging way of supporting the public to make healthier choices.

Through the pilot we will have exciting and innovative partners on board will help motivate people to want to earn incentives, but also should help them overcome barriers to making healthy decisions in future. I'm looking forward to see how this scheme develops.

David Parfitt, Strategy Director at HeadUp said:

We're thrilled to be working with OHID to design and deliver a

truly innovative initiative to support the future of population health in England.

As an evidence-based, data science company focused on people's health around the world, we are immensely proud to be working with the Government and key stakeholders, people in the community, and with the Behavioural Insights Team as our design and evaluation partner, to play a part in piloting an exciting new approach to the urgent and important challenge of helping people engage with their health and improve their health behaviours.

The Health Incentives Scheme was announced as part of a £100 million package of government support to help those living with obesity to move closer towards a healthier weight and give them the tools they need to maintain this.

The pilot will launch in January 2022 and will run for 6 months in a defined location in England to be announced in due course.