

# New services launched to help people achieve a healthier weight and improve wellbeing

- New services to be offered both virtually and face to face across England
- Additional pilot schemes for children and families to be launched in 11 local areas
- Part of the government's world-leading obesity strategy and levelling up agenda ahead of launch of new Office for Health Promotion (OHP)

Thousands of adults and children will benefit from new services launched across England to help them achieve a healthy weight and boost their wellbeing, as part of the government's continued drive to tackle obesity.

Launching today (Thursday 1 July), the NHS Digital Weight Management Programme – backed by £12 million of government funding – will offer free online support via GP and primary care teams referrals for adults living with obesity, who also have a diagnosis of either diabetes, high blood pressure or both, to help manage their weight and improve their health.

Alongside this, the government is providing £30 million of new funding to councils across England to roll out expanded management services for adults living with obesity. Services can be delivered face to face, remotely or digitally. With 98% of councils accepting the funding, individuals will be able to sign up for this help via their primary care services or in some areas refer themselves via their local authority.

In most areas, services will include 12-week sessions, with dietary advice, physical activity guidance and support to help people start and maintain healthier habits.

An additional £4.3 million of new funding has also been allocated to 11 local authorities to support the expansion of child weight management services in 2021 to 2022. They will trial new ways to improve access to services for up to 6,000 children identified as living with excess weight or obesity.

Obesity is one of the biggest health crises the country faces. Living with obesity is a major risk for individual's health and is a leading cause of preventable illness and premature death nationally. Almost two-thirds of adults in England are living with excess weight or obesity – and 1 in 3 children leave primary school living with overweight or obesity, with obesity-related illnesses costing the NHS £6 billion a year.

Evidence suggests weight management services can help people to adopt healthier behaviours, lose weight and improve their general wellbeing.

Public Health Minister Jo Churchill said:

We want to make the healthier option the easy option, but we still know losing weight can be difficult for people. Making sure the right support is available means that we can help individuals make the most of the positive impact that reaching a healthier weight can have both physically and mentally. The benefit is theirs.

It's really important we help people access services that are convenient for them and tailored to their needs. By expanding virtual and face-to-face weight management support across the country, we're bringing improved health and wellbeing closer to home.

The OHP – launching fully later this year – will lead national efforts to level up the health of the nation by continuing to support people living with obesity, supporting mental health and promoting physical activity. The expansion of weight management services is a key example of the local and national approach to tackling health issues that will be central to the OHP.

The collaborative approach between the NHS and local authorities will ensure adults living with obesity receive the services that are right for them.

Our world-leading obesity strategy aims to halve the number of children living with obesity by 2030 through a range of initiatives, including investing in weight management services, restricting the advertising of products high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) being shown on TV before 9pm and online, restricting promotions of unhealthy food and drink in retail stores, and introducing calorie labelling in large out-of-home food businesses such as restaurants, cafes and takeaways.

Professor Jonathan Valabhji, NHS England's National Clinical Director for Diabetes and Obesity, said:

The NHS Long-Term plan committed the NHS to a stronger focus in preventing illness and reducing the serious health concerns that people living with obesity can experience, including the higher risks of more severe outcomes with COVID.

The new NHS Digital Weight Management Programme will offer online access to weight management services for tens of thousands of people living with obesity who also have diabetes or hypertension or both, with a strong focus on reducing health inequalities, improving quality of life and longer term health outcomes.

Today's announcement is part of £100 million of additional funding to support people in achieving a healthier weight – enabling up to 700,000 adults and 6000 children to have access to support that can help them to lose weight, from access to digital apps or weight management groups or individual coaches.

Dr Alison Tedstone, Chief Nutritionist at Public Health England, said:

Many of us have struggled throughout the pandemic and lockdowns to keep the pounds off and maintain a healthy weight. It's vital that everyone can get support to lose weight if they need it, so it's particularly timely and hugely welcome to see these new services opening.

The causes of obesity are linked to the places where we live, work and play, where all too often the food on offer and built environment can make it harder to choose the healthier options. That's why Public Health England are also working with local authorities to help make local environments healthier and provide weight management support as part of the government's wider national obesity strategy.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the impact that living with obesity can have on people's health and it is more important than ever to make it easier for people to move towards a healthier weight.

Cllr David Fothergill, Chairman of the Local Government Association's Community Wellbeing Board, said:

Councils across the country are playing an important role in our collective efforts with government to helping people of all ages achieve a healthier weight.

These targeted programmes, which are free to access for people who are living with overweight or obesity, can bring about significant health benefits such as reducing pressure on joints, lowering the risk of cancer, preventing type two diabetes, cutting cholesterol and easing high blood pressure.

The new weight management services announced today is a positive step and a reflection of our shared commitment with national government to tackling obesity and helping our communities live healthier and more active lives.

[Read more details on the £100 million announcement.](#)

[Further details on NHS England's digital programme](#) – which is also available to NHS staff.

[Eligible NHS staff can refer themselves onto the programme.](#)

Patients will be referred to NHS Digital's Weight Management Programme by their GP practice to a 'Referral Hub' and offered 1 of 3 levels of intervention. They then have a choice of provider offering a 12-week, digital weight management service.

[Local authority grant funding was weighted according to local authority population size, obesity prevalence, and deprivation levels](#), to ensure that it goes where the need is greatest. 149 out of 152 local authorities have now confirmed that they have accepted funding.

The 11 local authorities to receive a share of £4.3 million funding for expanded child weight management services are:

- Barking and Dagenham
  
- Brent, Enfield, Hounslow and Waltham forest
  
- Birmingham
  
- Liverpool
  
- Bradford
  
- Tameside
  
- Sandwell
  
- Kingston Upon Hull

See further details on the [Adult weight management services grant determination 2021 to 2022](#).