

New specialised support to help those living with obesity to lose weight

- £100m to support children, adults and families achieve and maintain a healthier weight
- Sir Keith Mills appointed to advise on a new incentives and reward approach to encourage healthy behaviours
- Measures part of landmark obesity strategy published by the Prime Minister last July

Over £70 million will be invested into weight management services – made available through the NHS and councils – enabling up to 700,000 adults to have access to support that can help them to lose weight, from access to digital apps, weight management groups or individual coaches, to specialist clinical support.

The remaining £30 million will fund initiatives to help people maintain a healthy weight, including access to the free NHS 12 week weight loss plan app and continuing the successful Better Health marketing campaign to motivate people to make healthier choices.

Part of the funding from the 30m pot will also go towards upskilling healthcare professionals to support those in early years and childhood with intervention and enhanced training packages, helping up to 6,000 children and families to lead healthy lives.

Sir Keith Mills, who has pioneered reward programmes through Airmiles and Nectar points, has been appointed to advise on developing a new “fit miles” approach that will use incentives and rewards to support people to eat better and move more.

Sir Keith will support the Government to develop innovative approaches with public and private partners that use incentives to help people make healthier choices.

This will draw on best practice from around the world, such as the national step challenge in Singapore, a nation-wide physical activity programme aimed at encouraging Singaporeans to do more physical activity as part of their daily lives with financial incentives.

The plans announced today will prioritise helping those who need the most support to achieve a healthier lifestyle, including people living in some of the most deprived areas of the country.

Living with excess weight puts people at greater risk of serious illness or death from COVID-19, with risk growing substantially as body mass index (BMI) increases.

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.

Evidence suggests weight management services can help people to adopt healthier behaviours, lose weight and improve their general wellbeing. This funding will support GPs and other health professionals to help make weight management an integral part of routine care. It will encourage clinicians to have conversations about weight with their patients and enable them to refer patients to new services.

Obesity is one of the biggest health crises the country faces. Almost two-thirds (63%) of adults in England are overweight or living with obesity – and 1 in 3 children leave primary school overweight or obese, with obesity-related illnesses costing the NHS £6 billion a year.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson, said:

Losing weight is hard, but making small changes can make a big difference.

Being overweight increases the risk of becoming ill with covid. If we all do our bit, we can reduce our own health risks – but also help take pressure off the NHS.

This funding will give extra support to people across the country who want to lose weight too.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Helping people to achieve or maintain a healthier weight is complex and can be a very hard task. We want to make it easier for people to lose weight, which is why our funding set out today ensures those across all ages have the right level of support and tools they need to make healthier lifestyle choices.

These measures will allow us to work with local authorities and optimise different areas of our healthcare services to encourage healthy behaviours for all. The urgency of tackling obesity has been brought to the fore by evidence of the link to an increased risk from COVID-19, so it's vital we take action on obesity to protect the NHS and improve our nation's health.

Professor Jonathan Valabhji, National Clinical Director for Diabetes and Obesity, said:

Obesity is associated with higher risks of type 2 diabetes, heart attacks, strokes, many of the common cancers and is now linked with more severe covid-19 outcomes, so there does indeed need to be wider action to support people to lose weight.

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

Living with obesity can have a devastating impact on people's health and wellbeing in so many ways, not least its link this year to the increased risk from Covid.

This investment will greatly boost services for adults struggling with their weight and raising the profile of our Better Health campaign will help to support more people to make healthier choices.

The £30 million will be used to fund different a range of different initiatives which aim to support people to maintain a healthy weight:

- Encouraging millions of adults to reduce their risk of a number of serious diseases by achieving and maintaining a healthy weight through the Better Health campaign. This will motivate people to adopt healthier habits and signpost to the free NHS 12 week weight loss plan app. The campaign will also reach families with children, especially those most at risk of obesity, to adopt 'whole family' healthier lifestyle behaviour changes.
- Expanding behavioural weight management services for children and families to offer them extra support they need to reach a healthy weight.
- Upskilling health care professionals in the early years to confidently assess needs, offer family advice and interventions, create advanced training packages and normalise conversations about achieving healthy growth to ensure every child gets the best start in life.
- Laying the foundations to make child height and weight measurement data collected through the National Child Measurement Programme available to health professionals through Digital Child Health records, and parents and carers through digital personal child health record.