

The NHS Digital Weight Management Programme for NHS Staff

Frequently Asked Questions

What does the NHS Digital Weight Management Programme involve?

The programme will support you to lose weight, become more active and to eat in a healthier way, with a range of digital services available on your smartphone, tablet or computer.

The amount of exercise involved is flexible according to your needs and level of fitness. There are many ways to stay active and the goal is to find an enjoyable form of physical activity that works for you.

Depending on the provider you choose, the programme will feature:

- bespoke lifestyle plans
- physical activity programmes
- in-app support
- learning modules and quizzes, podcasts, webinars, exercise videos, blogs, recipes and articles (catering to cultural dietary/exercise needs)
- health tracker/ daily planner to set, monitor and achieve goals

What if I don't have an NHS work email address?

If you do not currently have an NHS work email address but are employed by the NHS and eligible for one, please speak to your line manager or HR team to request one.

Does this offer apply to staff working in the independent sector?

This offer applies to all staff working in the NHS who have access to an NHS work email address.

Staff working solely in the independent sector will still be able to access weight management services provided by local authorities and publicly available resources such as [NHS Better Health](#). Staff may also want to enquire about weight management offers available directly from their employer.

Does this offer apply to social care workers?

Due to initial referral capacity, we are unable to extend the offer to social care workers at this time. However, we hope to be able to extend the offer to additional staff in future.

What is BMI and why is it used to determine eligibility?

Body Mass Index (BMI) is an estimate of body weight that takes into account a person's height. It is calculated by dividing a person's weight in kilograms by the square of their height in metres (weight÷height²). A BMI between 18.5 and 25 is considered healthy. Individuals with a BMI of 30 and above have been shown in particular to be at greater risk of a range of diseases such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, some of the common cancers,

liver and respiratory diseases, as well as the more severe outcomes from COVID-19 infection.

Used on its own, BMI does not identify the level of body fat or provide a full assessment of the health of a person. However, it can be used as a starting point for further discussion with a healthcare professional about a person's health.

BMI is used in healthcare as an initial measure of whether a person is living with overweight (BMI \geq 25) or obesity (BMI \geq 30). It is the most widely used method for this and no other measurement has been found to be as practical and straightforward to measure. BMI is an established way of assessing future risk of a number of diseases across populations.

You can check your BMI using the [BMI calculator](#) (you will need your height and weight measurements).

Whilst the NHS Digital Weight Management Programme is currently eligible only to staff who are living with obesity, we hope to widen eligibility to those with a lower BMI in the near future.

Why is the BMI threshold lower for certain ethnicities?

Different ethnic groups have varying body composition and risk factor thresholds for certain diseases. For example, some ethnic groups tend to have a higher level of central abdominal body fat at a lower BMI, which is associated with higher risk of type 2 diabetes. Therefore, a lower BMI threshold of 27.5 is recommended for people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups, rather than 30, representing an equivalent level of risk.

How does the triage system work?

Staff self-referrals into the NHS Digital Weight Management Programme will be managed by the front-end 'Referral Hub'. The Referral Hub acts as a single point of contact for all potential participants, facilitating their triage and allocation to the most appropriate level of intervention within the programme.

The triage system, developed utilising the extensive data and information gathered through the NHS National Diabetes Prevention Programme, provides a weighted score based on identified characteristics that suggest an individual may be less likely to complete a weight management programme (i.e. younger age, people from Black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds, male gender, and greater deprivation).

Collection of these characteristics on referral and on accessing the hub will enable stratification or triaging of people to the most appropriate level of support. At each of the levels, individuals will be able to work through programmes independently, at a time and place of their choosing. Once a level has been assigned, this cannot be changed.

Can you explain more about the three levels of support offered within the programme?

The programme features three levels of intensity for weight management support and a tailored choice of Providers.

Level 1 – access to digital content only. Intended for people with characteristics suggesting they are less likely to require coaching support and more likely to support their own health and wellbeing.

Level 2 – access to digital content, plus access to a minimum of 50 minutes of human coaching throughout the 12-week programme. Intended for people with characteristics suggesting they may be less likely to successfully complete a weight management programme and who may benefit from additional human coaching to support them to complete the programme.

Level 3 – access to digital content, plus access to a minimum of 100 minutes of human coaching throughout the 12-week programme, and additional features such as supported introduction to the programme, challenges and games. Intended for people with characteristics suggesting they may be less likely to successfully complete a weight management programme and who therefore require a more personalised and supported journey with more intensive human support.

At each of the levels, people will be provided with access to digital content that enables them to work through programmes independently, at a time and place of their choosing.

Can I change levels or service providers?

No, the level of intervention is assigned automatically in the Referral Hub based on identified characteristics that suggest an individual may be less likely to complete a weight management programme. This cannot be changed.

Within the assigned level, once you have chosen a service provider, unfortunately we will not be able to accommodate any change or moving to another provider.

Can I continue on the programme after 12 weeks?

The current delivery model will offer eligible participants one cycle of a digital weight loss programme accessed through the NHS Digital Weight Management Programme.

The programme lasts for 12 weeks, however, all of our providers have committed to providing ongoing access to the core resources available on their App and/or Web Platform to those who have completed the programme.

Will the content be available in multiple languages?

The information on the Referral Hub will only be available in English. However, the Hub interface allows a service user to tailor the information through a translation service of their own choice, such as Google Translate to support alternative language option requirements.

Where possible the Providers who deliver services as part of the NHS Digital Weight Management Programme have enabled their specific delivery interface to allow for translation services to access their pages and support alternative language option requirements.

The coaching provided at level 2 and level 3 of the NHS Digital Weight Management Programme is provided in different languages where possible and as indicated on the individual Provider information page hosted by the Referral Hub.

As the programme expands there may be the possibility to develop further the languages the coaching is provided in.

Will people with visual impairments be able to use the service?

The Referral Hub and subsequent Provider programmes are accessible via a responsive webpage and apps that meet the level AA of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 (WCAG 2.1). This means that the programme is suitable for those with a visual impairment or who use screen display software and text readers.