



Office for Health
Improvement
& Disparities

Healthy weight coach elearning programme

Development of a digital training course

#FoodActive2021 Conference.

What is being done locally to address weight stigma?

Dr Alison Feeley, Obesity and healthy weight team, Diet, Obesity and Healthy Behaviours

Background

Obesity strategy

A commitment in the government's obesity strategy (2020)¹ was to offer primary care networks the opportunity to equip staff to become Healthy weight coaches through training delivered by Public Health England.

To fulfil several commitments made in this strategy, the government announced an **additional £100 million in 2021/22** to improve the support available for adults, children and families to achieve and maintain a healthier weight.

- This funding will help to expand the availability of weight management services across the country, as well as increase signposting and referrals to weight management services.

PHE commissioned an external academic provider to undertake the development of continuing professional development module(s) for staff in primary care networks.

¹ Department for Health and Social Care: Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-obesity-government-strategy/tackling-obesity-empowering-adults-and-children-to-live-healthier-lives>



Policy paper

Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives

Published 27 July 2020

What is the role of a Healthy weight coach?

The healthy weight coach is a new, voluntary role for individuals working within primary care and primary care networks and is in addition to their substantive role.

The aim of the healthy weight coach is to engage and support adults living with overweight or obesity and where relevant, to make positive changes to their health and health behaviours.

A healthy weight coach supports adults by:

- having **conversations** about health and wellbeing
- offering appropriate **evidence-based information**
- **signposting** or, where appropriate, **referring** to appropriate health and weight management services
- offering **follow-up conversations** and support during their weight management journey.



Project overview

Aim

- To co-create elearning to supplement/enhance the skills of staff in primary care networks which will enable them to become Healthy weight coaches.

Research project team

- Dr Stuart W. Flint (Leeds University), Dr Beverley O'Hara (Leeds University), Professor Louisa Ells (Leeds Beckett University), Professor Jason Halford (Leeds University)

Healthy weight coach project steering group members

- Public Health England
- Research Project Team
- NHS England and Improvement
- Department for Health and Social Care
- Health Education England

Other stakeholders who reviewed training content

- Staff working in a primary care network
- Obesity UK and people with lived experience
- Health Education England - Public health workforce
- Public Health England

Project overview (continued)

1. Review of digital learning content
2. Consultation with Obesity UK
3. Development of training content
4. Development of supporting documentation
5. Content evaluation research proposal



1. Review of digital learning content

Healthier weight competency framework

- The Healthy weight coach elearning programme was developed in line with the Health Education England's [Healthy weight competency framework](#), with a focus on the Engage, Assess and Enable elements of the 'Competencies mapped to training sessions.



- There were 8 competencies where there is *'no available training sessions'*, and 10 competencies where *'available sessions only partially fulfil this competency or available sessions are specific to certain populations'*.
- Substantial content needed to be developed to fill these gaps.
- This new information required development from scratch, with some learning/materials available from grey literature (for example, weight stigma training sessions with healthcare professionals).

2. Consultation with Obesity UK

- To understand the perceptions of people living with obesity, Obesity UK members were asked about their experiences of weight management support, and their conversations with health care professionals.

Three key themes emerged:

1. Experiences of weight stigma in healthcare

“People living with obesity have told us that they have experienced stigma when attending healthcare. It has made people feel unwanted, like a burden and that we shouldn’t be taking up their time” (Director of Obesity UK)

2. Feeling blame and judgement

“Many of our members tell us that they do not feel comfortable speaking with healthcare professionals. They tell us that they feel judged by healthcare professionals and that they don’t feel that they really understand or empathise with the situation people find themselves in” (Director of Obesity UK)

3. Time for weight conversations with health care professionals

“I don’t feel like I have enough time to really talk about my weight. I know my GP is busy, but I feel like I need more time to talk with him so that he can understand why I find it difficult to lose weight. I am happy to talk about my weight, but a lot of others aren’t. So, if it’s difficult for me, I can’t imagine what is like for others” (Member of Obesity UK)

What would improve your conversations with health care professionals?

“I would like to feel less judged. As I said before, I feel like they think we haven’t tried. I have and I know many people who have. And we still do. All the time. But I don’t think they believe me.” (Member of Obesity UK)

3. Development of training content

The interactive training endorsed by the Personalised Care Institute consists of 8 sessions:

1. The Role of a Healthy weight coach
 2. Complexity of weight gain, obesity and weight management
 3. Measuring and assessing weight status
 4. The outcomes associated with obesity and weight management
 5. Healthy eating, drinking and physical activity
 6. Avoiding weight stigma and challenging biases
 7. Supporting behaviour change
 8. How to communicate effectively
- Knowledge checks and additional resources for further reading and/or training are included in each session
 - Accessible via the following platforms:
 - [Health Education England's \(HEE\) elearning for healthcare \(eLfh\) hub](#)
 - [Personalised Care Institute's \(PCI\) platform](#)
 - Time to complete: 160 Minutes (2.5 CPD points)



4. Supporting documentation

- **Reference guide** for primary care networks interested in training staff and individuals interested in being trained.
- It is published on FutureNHS and includes the following annexes:
 - **National and local weight management mapping template** - to support primary care networks to know what is available so they can signpost or refer people to the most appropriate support
 - **Healthy weight coach role description** – explains the purpose of the role and responsibilities
 - **Healthy weight coach checklist** - a helpful reminder of the role as a healthy weight coach when meeting with people living with overweight and obesity

Reference guide for primary care networks and staff on the healthy weight coach elearning programme

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5. Content evaluation

Project aim

- To determine if the Healthy weight coach elearning programme achieves its goal of producing confident and competent healthy weight coaches that can discuss weight sensitively with people and advise on available services and relevant information.

Work packages

WP1 to examine the impact of the Healthy weight coach elearning programme on knowledge and confidence

WP2 to explore healthy weight coaches' perceptions of training; what is missing; how the training prepared them for the role, and how the role could be improved

WP3 to gather insights from representatives of primary care networks who are involved in the management of healthy weight coaches in their organisation

WP4 to analyse meta-data collected by Health Education England and Personalised Care Institute to understand the number of people who have undertaken the training and their primary care network roles

WP5 to report on the findings and recommendations



5. Content evaluation (continued)

Recruitment of staff to take part in research

- WP1, WP2 and WP3
 - Health care professionals who plan to take the Healthy weight coach elearning invited to take part in the study
 - Representatives of primary care networks involved in the management of healthy weight coaches invited to take part in the study
 - A diverse sample of health care professionals will be recruited from across several primary care network sites, including pharmacies
 - **Those interested in being part of the study:** to contact wholesystemsobesity@phe.gov.uk

Research participation will help to:

- Influence updates to the Healthy weight coach elearning programme so that health care professionals can improve the way they have conversations with people about their weight
- Support people living with overweight or obesity to gain appropriate support throughout their weight management journey
- Understand further how the role of a healthy weight coach fits into the weight management care pathway



Thank you

We are planning to launch the training soon and then commence with the evaluation of the training content, please get in touch if you'd like to sign up for the launch webinar:

Contact:

wholesystemsobesity@phe.gov.uk

