

# 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.

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## [Final findings from February COVID-19 REACT-1 study published](#)

- 165,456 volunteers tested in England between 4 and 23 of February 2021 as part of one of the largest COVID-19 studies
- The rate of decline in infections has slowed since the interim findings were published in February, showing it is critical everyone continues to follow the rules to help bring down infections

The final findings from the ninth report of REACT-1, one of the country's largest studies into COVID-19 infections in England, have been published

today by Imperial College London and Ipsos MORI. It follows the [interim findings published in February](#).

The data shows infections in England have fallen by two-thirds since the last REACT report published in January.

Over 165,400 volunteers were tested in England between 4 and 23 of February to examine the levels of infection in the general population.

While there has been another fall in the number of cases in England, the speed of this decline is slowing. When compared to the interim findings published in February, there has been no change in prevalence in Yorkshire and The Humber and prevalence has risen slightly in London, the South East, East Midlands and West Midlands but has fallen in all other regions.

While the vaccination programme continues at pace, it is critical everyone continues to follow the rules, stays at home, reduces contact with others and maintains social distancing – remembering hands, face, space.

The main findings from the ninth REACT study show:

- national prevalence fell by two-thirds from 1.57% to 0.49%, or 49 per 10,000 people infected, compared to the last REACT report from 6-22 January
- a halving time of 31 days for prevalence and an R number of 0.86
- when comparing the first half of the reporting period (4 to 12 February) to the second half (13 to 23 February) there were apparent falls in: North East from 0.80% to 0.58%, North West from 0.89% to 0.48%, East of England from 0.53% to 0.40% and South West from 0.27% to 0.19%, and no apparent change in Yorkshire and The Humber. There were apparent rises in London from 0.53% to 0.66%, South East from 0.33% to 0.39%, East Midlands from 0.50% to 0.69% and West Midlands from 0.34% to 0.39%
- prevalence fell by 50% across all age groups compared to the REACT report for 6 to 22 January
- a substantial reduction in prevalence, compared to the last REACT report from 6 to 22 January, among those who work in health and social care and among those with public-facing roles, including delivery, transport and hospitality. It was higher among those who worked in education, school, nursery or childcare at 0.73% compared to 0.46% in those who did not
- prevalence was highest among Pakistani participants at 2.1% compared to white participants at 0.45% and Black participants at 0.83%

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

It is encouraging to see continued evidence of cases falling overall, and I want to thank everyone for sticking to the rules and supporting each other through this pandemic.

There is some cause for concern that our hard-won progress may be slowing down, and even reversing in some regions so it is important

we remain vigilant – this is on all of us.

We have set out a cautious, but irreversible approach to easing restrictions but until we reach each milestone, we must all remember the virus is still here, and still dangerous. Please continue to stay at home – practice hands, face, space – and get your jab when you receive your invite so we can bring down infections further.

The vaccine programme continues to expand to protect as many people as possible, with over 20 million people vaccinated across the country. We are already seeing a significant impact of the vaccination programme on reducing hospitalisations and deaths, and it is vital people come forward for their vaccine when invited.

Professor Paul Elliott, director of the REACT programme from Imperial's School of Public Health, said:

The fall in infections our study has observed since January demonstrates that national public health measures are working. But these new findings showing that some areas are experiencing apparent growth reinforce the need for everyone to continue to stick to the rules and help keep infections down.

At this critical time, with lockdown soon to be eased, we need to make sure that our behaviours don't risk a rise in infections which could prolong restrictions, which we all want to avoid.

Kelly Beaver, Managing Director, Public Affairs at Ipsos MORI, said:

The 50% prevalence reduction across all age groups is very welcome and shows that we are making progress in fighting this pandemic. The potential shallowing of the decline though reinforces the message that all of us must continue to stick to the measures which are in place for as long as is necessary so that we can stay on the path set out in the Prime Minister's roadmap.

Over the coming weeks and months as we hope to progress through the roadmap milestones, the REACT study will continue to be a critical data source aiding government understanding of the virus. Thanks to those participating in the study for their important contribution.

This report is the latest from the REACT study which was commissioned by the Department for Health and Social Care and carried out by a world-class team of scientists, clinicians and researchers at Imperial College London, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust and Ipsos MORI.

Getting children back to school has been the top priority and is crucial to

their education and wellbeing. While the report demonstrates prevalence is highest among those aged 13 to 17, there are generally low levels of transmission between younger aged children and overall, the risk of the virus to children is low. As schools open, the most vulnerable adults will have received the first dose of the vaccine and developed the necessary protection from it.

With about a third of individuals with the virus showing no symptoms and potentially spreading it without knowing, targeted, regular testing of secondary school age children will mean more positive cases within households are found and prevented from entering schools and colleges, helping to keep educational settings safe.

The findings provide further evidence that COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted BAME communities. Vaccines are the best way to protect people from the virus and the government is working with faith and community leaders to provide advice and information about the benefits of vaccination and how their communities can get a vaccine. Targeted communications campaigns have helped reach BAME communities, with messaging published in over 600 publications, including those that have high proportions of ethnic minority readers, and in 13 languages, such as Punjabi and Urdu.

See [REACT-1 study results on GOV.UK](#)

This study falls under pillar 4 of the Covid-19 National Testing Programme, which focuses on mass surveillance in the general population.

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## [Jeff Halliwell appointed Chair of the Coal Authority](#)

News story

Jeff has a varied Chair and non-executive portfolio across private, public, and third sector organisations.



Jeff Halliwell has been appointed as Chair of the Coal Authority, a partner organisation of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, from 1 April 2021 replacing Stephen Dingle who has been in the role for 8 years.

The Coal Authority works to make a better future for people and the environment in mining areas. Across Great Britain it protects the public, drinking water and the environment in coal mining areas and seeks opportunity from our coal mining legacy. The Coal Authority is an operational delivery body and operates a 24/7 incident response.

As well as managing the effects of past coal mining the Coal Authority uses its information and expertise to help people make informed decisions, support the housing market, and provide skilled services to others. It is also working to make a significant contribution to delivering government policy on net-zero carbon through its innovative approach to decarbonising heat using mine water and mine assets.

This appointment has been made in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

Jeff's executive experience is in CEO roles with consumer-facing businesses such as Fox's Biscuits / Northern Foods, First Milk, and Bernard Matthews. His background is in international marketing and commercial roles with blue-chip businesses such as Mars and Colgate. He also ran a private equity backed tech SME.

Jeff now has a varied Chair and non-executive portfolio across private, public, and third sector organisations, particularly supporting organisations with a social purpose. Amongst other roles, he has been Chair of Cafedirect plc, and of Airport Coordination Ltd, and a Non-Executive Director of Working Links Ltd and of Natures Menu pet food. He has served as a Trustee of Shaw Trust and of Homestart Leicester, as a NED in a number of NHS organisations, and has sat on the Boards of 2 universities. He is currently the Chair of Transport Focus (the transport watchdog), and chairs the Customer Engagement Group in respect of Electricity North West.

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## **£30 million investment to provide Changing Places toilets**

- £30 million available from government to install life-enhancing Changing Places toilets in existing buildings in England
- Changing Places toilets are a lifeline for more than a quarter of a

million disabled people across the UK

- Government working in partnership with Muscular Dystrophy UK (MDUK) as co-chair of the Changing Places Consortium to provide support to councils
- Local authorities will soon be invited to “opt in” to receive a proportion of this funding, based on need, to install facilities in their communities

More than 250,000 disabled people in the country will benefit from greater access to life-enhancing Changing Places toilets, as the government announces a new £30 million fund to increase the number of facilities across England.

Announced today (4 March 2021) by Regional Growth Minister Luke Hall, the move follows laws that came into effect from January 2021 that made the provision of Changing Places toilets compulsory in certain new buildings.

Changing Places toilets are larger accessible toilets for people who cannot use standard disabled toilets, with equipment such as hoists, curtains, adult-sized changing benches and space for carers.

Over 250,000 people in the country need these facilities to enable them to get out and about and enjoy the day-to-day activities many of us take for granted.

The combination of the change in the law and today’s investment for existing buildings means thousands of people with complex needs will have greater access to public places.

Regional Growth Minister Luke Hall MP said:

For too long, the lack of suitable toilet facilities has meant disabled people have faced major difficulties when they shop, go out, or travel and this should not be the case.

That’s why the provision of Changing Places toilets is so important for people who cannot use standard accessible toilets.

This programme is a significant investment from government that will help bring major, life enhancing freedoms to those people who have specific needs.

Kerry Thompson, Changing Places campaigner, said:

The biggest challenge I face when going anywhere outside my home is locating a Changing Places facility. They really do make a world of difference when planning days out so today’s announcement will open up a whole new world for the hundreds of thousands of people who rely on them. This wouldn’t have been possible without support from Muscular Dystrophy UK, co-chairs of the Changing Places Consortium.

Knowing I have access to a Changing Places toilet lets me enjoy myself without having to worry about finding an accessible facility that can accommodate my needs. The additional funding from the government to improve facilities in existing buildings across England will give me and my husband the freedom that so many disabled people are desperate for.

This programme will be delivered in partnership with the charity Muscular Dystrophy UK, co-chairs of the Changing Places Consortium, who will provide advice to support councils in their delivery.

Muscular Dystrophy UK, in partnership with MHCLG and the Research Institute for Disabled Consumers, will also be undertaking a call for evidence with users in England to help develop an understanding of user needs and priorities.

Robert Burley, Director of Campaigns, Care and Support at Muscular Dystrophy UK, said:

Today's announcement of £30 million worth of funding to improve facilities in existing buildings is fantastic news for disabled people across England who need Changing Places toilets.

Everyone has the right to use a public toilet when they need to, and these accessible toilets vastly improve a person's independence and make planning days out much easier.

This is a big step towards tackling the exclusion that many disabled people, including those with muscle-wasting conditions, experience when they are out and about.

Today's announcement would not have been achieved without everyone working together, and Muscular Dystrophy UK is particularly grateful to the hard work of our extraordinary campaigners and the members of the Changing Places Consortium.

Councils will be invited to "opt in" to bid for a proportion of the £30 million funding so they can install facilities in their communities and boost the number of Changing Place toilets in existing buildings, for example leisure and sports, cinemas, and arts and tourism venues.

This will improve the geographical spread across England and ensure more disabled people can take part in everyday activities that have the greatest impact on their quality of life.

You can find your nearest registered Changing Places toilet in the UK by going to the Changing Places website and using the [location map](#).

The government has recently closed a consultation of a review of provision of toilets for men and women in municipal and private sector locations in

England.

## **Further information**

There are currently around 1,200 registered Changing Places toilets in England but provision needs to increase quickly to improve access for people who cannot use standard accessible toilets and their carers.

In the absence of Changing Places facilities, disabled people and/or carers face:

- limiting what they drink to avoid needing the toilet when they are out – risking dehydration and urinary tract infections
- sitting in soiled clothing or dirty nappies until a suitable toilet is found or they return home
- having to change a loved one on a dirty toilet floor
- manually lifting someone out of their wheelchair – risking safety
- reducing their time out of the house – restricting their social lives

## **Details for local authorities**

District and unitary authorities will receive full details of how they can access this funding soon. Authorities will be invited to complete a short expression of interest to receive a proportion of this funding. Local authorities are encouraged to consider where Changing Places toilets are most needed in their communities, and are encouraged to work in partnership with other organisations to deliver these facilities, including securing match funding wherever possible.

## **Details for organisations interested in installing Changing Places toilets**

As funding will be distributed through Local Authorities, we recommend getting in touch with your relevant local authority to register your interest in working in partnership with them to deliver a Changing Places toilet in your venue/ building.

## **Biggest consultation to date with Changing Places users**

To register an interest in participating in Muscular Dystrophy UK's consultation or focus groups please email [changingplaces@muscular dystrophyuk.org](mailto:changingplaces@muscular dystrophyuk.org)

The Changing Places Consortium launched its campaign in 2006 on behalf of the over 250,000 people across the UK who cannot use standard accessible toilets. This includes people with muscle-wasting conditions, profound and multiple learning disabilities, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, as well as older people.

There are 13.9 million disabled people in the UK. People with profound and multiple learning disabilities, as well as people with other physical disabilities often need equipment and space to allow them to use the toilets safely and comfortably. With a lack of Changing Places toilets, many people are effectively excluded from being able to do all of the things that they want to.

Regulations (from 1 Jan 2021) now require that Changing Places toilets must be provided in certain new public buildings. This will improve the long-term situation by an estimated 150 Changing Places Toilets per year, but there is no legal requirement to retrospectively fit existing buildings. The combination of building rule changes for new buildings and £30 million investment for existing buildings will substantially increase the availability of Changing Places toilets, meaning thousands of people who cannot use standard accessible toilets will have greater access to public places.

See GOV.UK for the above mentioned [changes in building rules in England](#) to help add larger accessible toilets in new buildings.

Evidence suggests social isolation and loneliness amongst disabled people can increase the risk of a variety of physical and mental conditions. Research has linked social isolation and loneliness to higher risks for: high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, a weakened immune system, anxiety, depression, cognitive decline, and Alzheimer's disease. Greater social participation arising from a greater availability of Changing Places toilets has the potential to generate some health benefits.

There is potential for the construction of the facilities to be part of the economic recovery from Covid as we expect some of the experts involved in their constructions will be small and medium enterprises (subject to local procurement decisions).

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## [Lord Frost call with European Commission Vice President Maroš Šefčovič: 3 March 2021](#)

Press release

Lord Frost spoke with European Commission Vice President Maroš Šefčovič this evening.



Lord Frost spoke to European Commission Vice President Maroš Šefčovič this evening.

This was their first meeting since Lord Frost took up the role as Minister co-chairing the Partnership Council and the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee with the EU.

He underlined, as the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster had in his letter of 2 February, that progress still needed to be urgently made to address the direct and often disproportionate impact that aspects of the Protocol are having on the citizens of Northern Ireland, contrary to its intended purpose. He acknowledged the work of the Joint Committee over the last few weeks since the Commission's triggering of Article 16 of the Protocol on 29 January, but noted that these discussions had not yet resolved the current difficulties.

Lord Frost explained that the measures announced today, following official-level notification to the Commission earlier this week, were temporary technical steps, which largely continued measures already in place, to provide more time for businesses such as supermarkets and parcel operators to adapt to and implement the new requirements in the Protocol. He underlined that these were needed for operational reasons and were the minimum necessary steps to allow time for constructive discussions in the Joint Committee to continue without the prospect of disruption to the everyday life of people in Northern Ireland in the coming weeks.

He noted that such operational measures were well precedented in other international trade arrangements, and that they were entirely consistent with our intention to discharge our obligations under the Protocol in good faith.

He and Vice President Šefčovič agreed that both parties would remain in close contact.

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