

Slimming World's *5-point manifesto* to support people and families living with obesity

Why is the manifesto needed?

Since the General Election in 2019, obesity policy in the UK has been subject to indecision and U-turns, linked in part to the changes in leadership in government. Despite many promises, a review of the overarching obesity strategy – which has been subject to considerable downgrading and policy reversal – failed to materialise.

By 2050, it is predicted that the number of adults in the UK who are living with obesity will rise by 73% to 26 million. As well as the emotional difficulties experienced by people living with obesity, this public health crisis is linked to many serious health conditions such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, strokes and several types of cancers.

By implementing the measures outlined in this manifesto, the new Government will commit to helping more people living with obesity, by supporting them to lose weight with a personalised, compassionate approach, improve health outcomes, and relieve the financial burden on the NHS.

The UK needs an obesity strategy that is inclusive, effective, and financially sustainable

In March 2023, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommended the use of GLP-1 weight loss medications for adults with a BMI over 35 and one weight-related health condition, such as type 2 diabetes or high blood pressure.

The new generation of GLP-1 weight loss medications may help to alleviate the upward trajectory of obesity in the short-term, but medicalising a problem that experts *and* government know requires a change of diet, alongside physical activity, and behavioural support to ensure long-term success, is not the answer.

The quality of 'wraparound' support patients receive when they are prescribed these drugs must be a priority. NICE and the Government acknowledge the huge importance that lifestyle changes, such as healthy eating and increased physical activity, will be to the success of the drug, yet there is a lack clarity on how prescribers will be monitored to make sure this happens.

It is an unrealistic expectation that the NHS can prescribe drugs to the millions of eligible patients when we already know that the total cost of prescription medicines to the NHS in England reached a new high of £17.2 billion in 2021 – 2022 before GLP-1 medications were introduced.

The stark reality remains that the only way to lose weight and keep it off in the long-term is by making sustainable healthy changes to what we eat and drink and by becoming more active.

about Slimming World

Established in 1969, Slimming World is the UK and Ireland's most advanced and effective weight management organisation. More people in the UK choose to attend a Slimming World group each week than any other weight loss programme. We support over 700,000 members each week through our community weight-loss groups, run by 3,500 highly trained self-employed Consultants, and our online service.

Slimming World's guiding principles are based on a deep understanding of the shame, guilt and societal stigma people living with overweight and obesity face. Members are supported to feel free of these emotional burdens and self-worth is raised through a powerful programme of behaviour change support.

Slimming World has the largest published evaluation of a national lifestyle weight management service in the world. Data from 1.3 million Slimming World group members showed that, on average, members lose:

- 4.4% of their body weight in three months
- 7.5% of their body weight when they attend at least nine out of 12 weekly Slimming World group sessions
- 13.2% of their body weight over 12 months when they attend 75% of their weekly group sessions

Our programme has been developed and refined in line with the latest evidence on nutrition, exercise and the psychology of behaviour change, and our innovative digital programme has been designed to support members using the latest technology.



touching hearts, changing lives

Slimming World's *calls to the* Government

Call 1:

To actively support the option of evidence-based and effective lifestyle-based weight loss programmes so that healthcare professionals have a full range of treatment choices for people without medicalising obesity as the first and only option.

Call 2:

To ensure effective and evidence-based wraparound support – comprising diet, physical activity, and behaviour change strategies – for people using weight-loss drugs, with a robust monitoring and evaluation strategy to ensure prescribers are compliant with these guiding principles of effective weight loss.

Call 3:

Publish clear guidance on healthy weight management in pregnancy with the introduction of clear guidelines on safe and healthy weight gain for all pregnant women, regardless of their starting BMI.

Call 4:

Establish a coherent, long-term strategy to recognise the link between overweight or obesity and type 2 diabetes and commit to removing the societal stigma, challenges and misconceptions that prevent people accessing diagnosis, treatment and support.

Call 5:

Introduce training for healthcare professionals to enable sensitive and skilled conversations about weight. Mandatory training should be introduced for all healthcare professionals who interact with patients living with overweight and obesity to equip them with the skills to raise the issue of obesity and weight management sensitively and effectively.

The pressure that obesity puts on the economy and the NHS needs everyone – health professionals, politicians, policymakers, industry and the NHS – to pledge to work together on a practical, effective strategy that recognises one size doesn't fit all and, crucially, stick to it.

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