

# Scrutiny Board (Adults, Health & Active Lifestyles

## Statement: Leeds Tier 3 Specialist Weight Management Service

Date: 11th July 2023





# Adults, Health & Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board 2023/24



Cllr Caroline  
Anderson



Cllr Luke  
Farley



Cllr Sam  
Firth



Cllr Mahalia  
France-Mir



Cllr James  
Gibson



Cllr Conrad  
Hart-Brooke



Cllr Moham-  
med Iqbal



Cllr Wyn  
Kidger



Cllr Kevin  
Ritchie



Cllr Andrew  
Scopes



Cllr Eileen  
Taylor



Dr John Beal  
(co-opted  
member)

## Leeds Tier 3 Specialist Weight Management Service

**Background:** The Chair of the Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board requested that senior NHS and Public Health representatives meet urgently with members of the Scrutiny Board in accordance with its Health Service Developments Working Group approach to provide clarity surrounding a decision to cease referrals into the Leeds Tier 3 Specialist Weight Management Service from 1st July 2023 and to allow the Scrutiny Board to share its views regarding the implications of that decision.

**Contributors:** All Board Members were invited to attend the working group meeting, which was held on 28th June 2023. This meeting was also attended by senior representatives from Public Health, the Leeds Health and Care Partnership and the Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust.

**Conclusion:** This Statement summarises the main issues raised and sets out the key conclusions and recommendations of the Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board for the consideration of the Leeds Health and Care Partnership Executive Group (PEG).

*Adults, Health & Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board Focusing on services for adults and public health services to monitor progress towards improving health, lifestyles and quality of care across the city; and providing oversight of integration and partnership working within and between the council and health bodies. The Board will also oversee the active lifestyle related functions and activity across the city.*

# Key Conclusions

1

Tackling obesity is recognised as a huge challenge and therefore remains an issue that is regularly monitored by the Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board as a key Public Health Performance Indicator in terms of measuring adult excess weight rates.

Rates of obesity both nationally and locally are rising. It is also widely acknowledged that obesity is linked to other significant health issues such as type 2 diabetes; stroke; hypertension; some cancers; heart disease and liver disease, as well as having links with poor mental health, as both a cause and consequence. As such, the NHS is spending an estimated £6 billion annually on overweight and obesity-related ill-health, which is set to reach £9.7 billion by 2050. Having a fit and healthy population is therefore essential to reducing pressure on the NHS.

Having explored opportunities and challenges to delivering weight management support in Leeds, the Scrutiny Board learned that a business case had been developed by health partners for a minimum five-year investment and transformation programme to transform weight management services in Leeds and address the growing demand for specialist support. This was put to the Leeds Health and Care Executive Partnership Group (PEG) in March 2023. However, due to the emerging and confirmed NHS financial position in March/April 2023, this unfortunately had not been progressed at that time.

The Scrutiny Board requests that details of that business case are shared with the Board, along with a written response from the PEG to further explain the rationale for not prioritising additional investment in local weight management services at this point. This is to include a consequence analysis of not investing additional funding into local weight management services over the next five years in terms of the health implications to the local population and the associated costs of dealing with obesity related ill-health.

2

In the absence of further investment to help expand capacity, the Scrutiny Board was advised that other options had to be urgently considered to be able to protect and preserve the existing local specialist service offer. This included the decision to pause referrals from 1st July 2023 to help reduce current waiting list demands.

While accepting that it would not be appropriate to continue expanding the waiting list for the Tier 3 Specialist Weight Management Service, the Scrutiny Board recommends exploring an approach whereby new referrals are considered on a case-by-case basis to allow the most urgent and engaged patients to be prioritised where possible, rather than imposing a blanket pause on all referrals.

3

While acknowledging the efforts being made to help mitigate the impact of the decision to pause referrals into the Tier 3 service, such mitigations are expected to be put in place from August 2023. With the decision to cease referrals from 1st July 2023, the Scrutiny Board feels that such mitigated actions should have been put in place prior to referrals being ceased.

4

The Scrutiny Board acknowledges that engagement work will be undertaken during Autumn 2023 with staff, patients, carers and stakeholders, including the Scrutiny Board, as part of the forthcoming pathway redesign work.

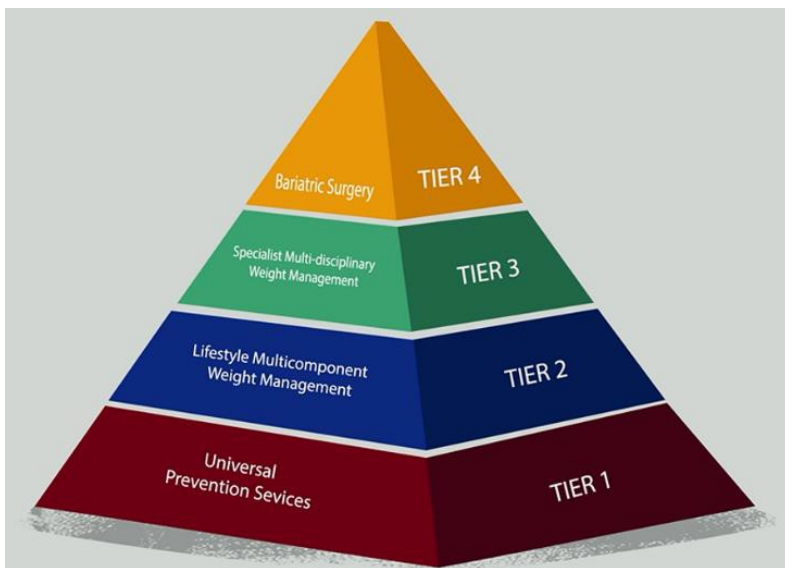
While appreciating the need to now act urgently to consider options to protect and preserve the existing specialist service offer in the absence of further investment, the Scrutiny Board identified missed opportunities to engage with Scrutiny at the point when increasing demand pressures were first being observed and therefore urges earlier engagement in future.



# Summary of Main Issues

## Understanding the broader provision of adult weight management services.

Board Members were advised that adult weight management service provision has historically and nationally been based on a tiered model of provision.



Tier 1 and Tier 2 focus on primary and secondary prevention, with local authorities having a key role in terms of commissioning, developing and ensuring these services align with current evidence and best practice guidance. The NHS and commercial providers also have a role in providing support, including national offers and digital options.

Tier 3 and Tier 4 represent more specialist, clinically led weight management services and are commissioned by the NHS.

Source: Image from 'Lets Talk About Weight, Public Health England, 2009

It was also highlighted that the principle of service provision is to ensure a continuum of person-centred support along a multidisciplinary weight management pathway that is able to meet individual needs, with higher numbers supported at the lower levels. This is intended to reduce demand for specialist support where the cost and complexity of need is higher.

## Provision of a Tier 3 Specialist Weight Management Service in Leeds.

The Leeds Health and Care Partnership holds a contract with Leeds Community Healthcare (LCH) (lead provider), Leeds Teaching Hospitals (LTHT) and Leeds Yorkshire Partnership Trust (LYPFT) for the provision of the Tier 3 Specialist Weight Management Service.

This service is a 12-18 month programme for people with a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or higher, or 35 with one or more comorbidity. The service is run by experienced healthcare professionals including a consultant physician, physiotherapists, dieticians and mental health specialists. The team works to support adults with severe and complex obesity to make sustainable diet and lifestyle changes to improve their health.

The current contract value (23/24) for this service is £426,363. Linked to this, Board Members were advised that in 2019, when the former Leeds Clinical Commissioning Group (now Leeds Health and Care Partnership) had re-procured this service; capacity and demand modelling estimated that there was a need to commission an offer that could manage approximately 250 new referrals per annum alongside patient numbers within the programme offer. This assessment of need was also based on historic referral numbers/activity.



# Summary of Main Issues

## **Early observations of increasing demand pressures.**

Board Members were informed that throughout 2021, there had been a steady consistent monthly increase in demand for the Tier 3 specialist weight management service. Some of this had been linked to media coverage/a spotlight on the first NICE approved weight-loss drug, Saxenda; an injectable that works by suppressing appetite. The drug was launched as a NICE Technology Appraisal (TA) and was mandated to be available within all Tier 3 Specialist Weight Management services. A Saxenda pathway was therefore implemented locally in early 2021.

It was highlighted that Tier 2 services being offered at that time had also observed an increase in referral rates, which was linked to the introduction of a national scheme aimed at incentivising GPs to identify and refer appropriate patients into adult weight management services.

Board Members acknowledged that there had also been consequential impacts following the Council's decision to make reductions to the One You Leeds Contract due to financial pressures/national income ceasing. This had resulted in the Tier 2 weight management service element of that contract being managed to a close by March 2023, with referrals ceasing in October 2022. It was noted that the Leeds Health and Care Partnership and all local providers had worked with the Council to mitigate the gap as much as possible. This included revisions to the Leeds Adult Weight Management Pathway to promote other equivalent national Tier 2 weight management services. However, these were primarily digital offers with a focus on specific priority groups.

## **The development of a business case for investment and transformational change.**

It was highlighted that workshops had been held during June and July 2022 with health and care partners to explore the opportunities and challenges to delivering weight management support in Leeds. Using the intelligence from these workshops, Board Members noted that in October 2022 concerns had been escalated to senior leaders across the Leeds health and care system, who meet regularly in the form of the Leeds Health and Care Executive Partnership Group (PEG). In outlining the risks relating to Tier 2 and Tier 3 weight management services, it was noted that support had been given at that stage to work up a business case for investment to mitigate such risks (incorporating Tier 2 and Tier 3) along with growing need.

This business case was developed with and engaged on by the Healthy Adults and Long-Term Conditions Population Boards (Leeds Health and Care Partnership Boards) during the period of November 2022 to February 2023. Board Members were informed that a request had been made for a minimum five-year investment and transformation programme to transform weight management services in Leeds and address the growing demand for specialist support. Having presented the business case to the Leeds Health and Care Executive Partnership Group in March 2023, Board Members were advised that, due to the emerging and confirmed NHS financial position in March/April 2023, this unfortunately had not been progressed at that time.

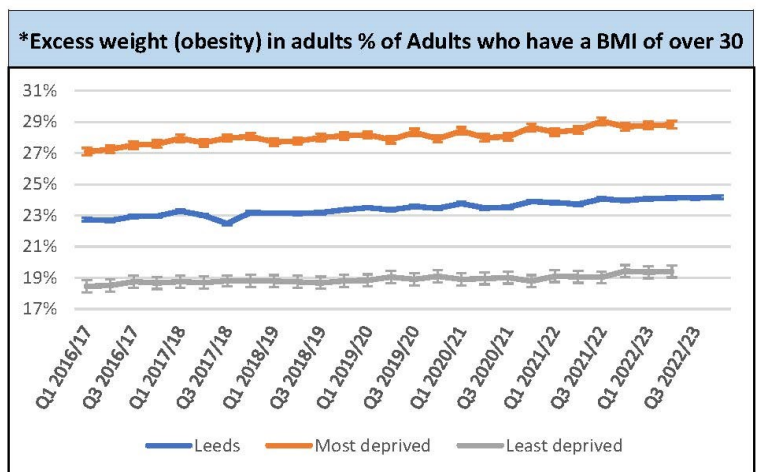


# Summary of Main Issues

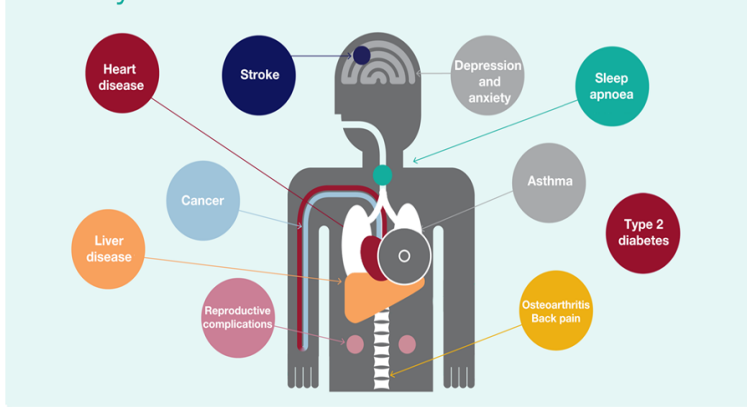
## Recognising the key benefits of investing in local weight management services.

Rates of obesity in England are high and rising. The prevalence and rate of increase are not spread equally across society as there is a strong systemic relationship between obesity and deprivation. Obesity rates are also higher in women than in men, and in some ethnic minority groups compared to the white British group ([The Kings Fund 2021](#)).

At its meeting on 13th June 2023, the Scrutiny Board received the latest performance information from Public Health that included the percentage of adults in Leeds with a BMI over 30. The data showed that in Q4 2022/23 this was 24.2%. Although this is not a statistically significant change from the previous quarter (24.1% in Q3), it was reported that the overall trend is slightly increasing and is statistically significantly higher than it was five years ago (23.2% in Q4 2017/18). It was also acknowledged that rates are significantly higher for those adults living in the most deprived areas of the city.



## Obesity harms health



*Source: Guidance: Adult obesity: applying All Our Health. Updated 11 February 2022.*

As well as the need to start tackling this rising trend in adult obesity rates, Board Members recognise that by investing in local weight management services now, this would consequently help to alleviate pressures and costs in other areas of the health sector as it is widely acknowledged that obesity is linked to other significant health issues such as type 2 diabetes; stroke; hypertension; some cancers; heart disease and liver disease. Obesity also has links with poor mental health, as both a cause and consequence, and where severe health conditions do develop, the elevated risk posed by obesity can also shorten lives.

It is reported that the NHS spent £6.1 billion on overweight and obesity-related ill-health in 2014 to 2015 and that the UK-wide NHS costs are projected to reach £9.7 billion by 2050, with wider costs to society estimated to reach £49.9 billion per year ([Public Health England 2017](#)). Given the wide-ranging implications of living with obesity on health and beyond, it is evident that investing in weight management services is beneficial to individuals and the wider community.

While the business case presented to the Leeds Health and Care Executive Partnership Group (PEG) in March 2023 had not been shared with the Scrutiny Board as part of the working group meeting on 28th June 2023, Board Members request that details of that business case are shared with the Board, along with a response from the PEG to further explain the rationale for not prioritising additional investment in local weight management services at this point.



# Summary of Main Issues

## **Adopting an alternative approach to addressing demand pressures.**

It was reported that since the closure of the Tier 2 weight management service in March 2023, the Tier 3 service had been receiving more than 140 referrals per month. It was highlighted that the service had a caseload increase of 79% between April 2022 and May 2023. The patient caseload figure was reported to be 1230 patients as at 21st June 2023.

Given that the service was originally commissioned based on an offer to manage approximately 250 new referrals per annum, Board Members were advised that in the absence of further investment to help expand capacity, other options had to be urgently considered to be able to protect and preserve the existing local specialist service offer.

This led to a decision made by healthcare partners to pause referrals from 1st July 2023 with an aim to reduce the current waiting list demands; provide appropriate care for the patients on the caseload without compromising on quality; retain and protect the welfare of existing specialist staff by reducing workload pressures; and ultimately move towards undertaking a pathway redesign, including new referral criteria, to help make the best use of existing resources in 2024/25.

While accepting that it would not be appropriate to continue expanding the waiting list for the Tier 3 service, Board Members encouraged an approach whereby new referrals are considered on a case-by-case basis to allow the most urgent and engaged patients to be prioritised where possible, rather than imposing a blanket pause on all referrals.

## **The effective use and timing of proposed mitigations.**

Board Members were advised that an Equality and Quality Impact Assessment (EQIA) had been undertaken to understand the impact of this decision on all stakeholders and that actions will also be undertaken to help mitigate the impact wherever possible. Such actions would include the active promotion of existing alternative offers available for patients, such as the NHS Low Calorie Diet Programme aimed at helping people diagnosed with diabetes to lose weight and make better decisions about their health. However, it was acknowledged that these would not be equivalent offers.

Board Members were also informed that a monthly Advice and Guidance Multi-Disciplinary Team session would also be established from August 2023, whereby key professionals will be able to obtain specialist advice from obesity specialists in the city where there are significant concerns about individual patients. To supplement this, it was highlighted that work is also underway to map existing local provision across the Third Sector so that patients and GPs can also be signposted to all other available advice and support services too.

While acknowledging the efforts being made to help mitigate the impact of the decision to pause referrals into the Tier 3 service, Board Members noted that the planned mitigations were expected to be put in place from August 2023. With the decision to cease referrals from 1st July 2023, Board Members felt that such mitigated actions should have been put in place prior to referrals being ceased.



# Summary of Main Issues

## Engaging effectively with Scrutiny.

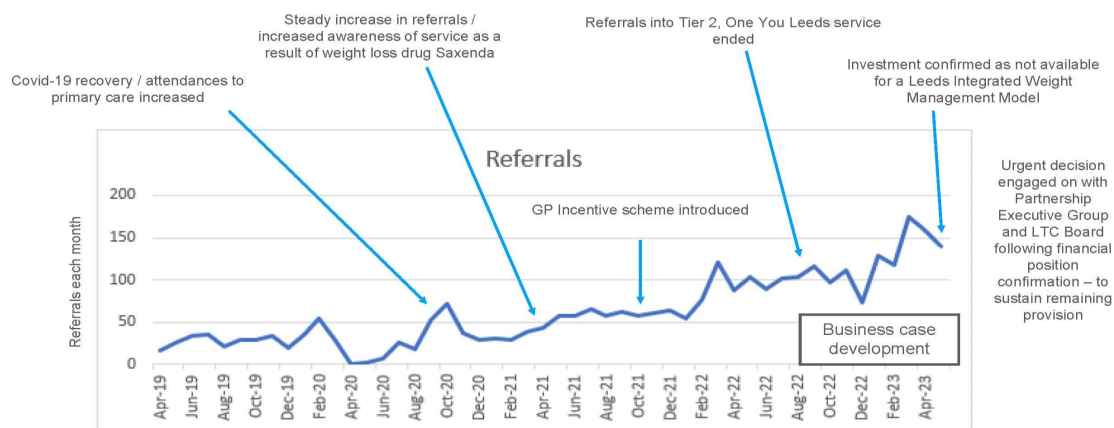
Currently, Part 4 of the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013 requires the responsible NHS body or health service provider to consult local authorities (through the health overview and scrutiny function) where any proposal is under consideration for a substantial development of the health service; or a substantial variation in the provision of such a service in the local authorities area. Such a duty does not apply to any proposals on which the responsible NHS body is satisfied that a decision has to be taken without allowing time for consultation because of a risk to safety or welfare of patients or staff. However, the Regulations state that the authority must still be notified immediately of the decision taken and the reason why no consultation has taken place.

On 14th June 2023, the Head of Pathway Integration – Long Term Conditions at the Leeds Health and Care Partnership had provided a communication document to the Chair of the Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board explaining that from 1st July 2023, referrals into the Leeds Specialist Tier 3 Weight Management Service will be paused to enable the service to reduce the current waiting list, provide appropriate care for the patients on the caseload without compromising on quality and to move towards undertaking a pathway redesign, including new referral criteria. It was highlighted that engagement would be undertaken during Autumn 2023 with staff, patients, carers and stakeholders, including the Scrutiny Board, as part of the forthcoming pathway redesign work.

However, the Chair requested that this matter be brought to the Scrutiny Board in accordance with its Health Service Developments Working Group approach so that Board Members can be provided with more clarity and the opportunity to share its views surrounding the implications of the decision to cease referrals to the Tier 3 service before it is enacted.

In seeking clarity, Board Members had been advised of the timeline leading up to this decision, which has been reflected earlier in this Statement but is also captured in the chart below. While appreciating the need to act urgently to consider options to now protect and preserve the existing specialist service offer in the absence of further investment, Board Members felt there had been a missed opportunity to engage with Scrutiny at the point when increasing demand pressures were being observed and urge that engagement is undertaken earlier in future.

## The timeline to this decision



Growing demand/need for all weight management service provision



**More information about Leeds City Council's Scrutiny Service, along with the activity and membership of individual Scrutiny Boards, can be found on the Council's committee webpages.**

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