

25 August 2023

Dear Cllr Scopes, on behalf of the Scrutiny Board (Adults, Health & Active Lifestyles)

Response to the Statement: Leeds Tier 3 Specialist Weight Management Service, dated 11th July 2023

Thank you for sharing the statement prepared by Scrutiny in relation to the Tier 3 Specialist Weight Management Service. As requested, please find here a response on behalf of the Leeds Health and Care Partnership Executive Group (PEG). Though we are trying to work in an integrated way, the accountability and formal decision making for different aspects of the weight management offer in Leeds lies with different statutory organisations as mentioned below. PEG as a partnership forum can only offer a view to partners who ultimately have to take the decisions.

The Leeds, Specialist Tier 3 weight management service is part of a wider weight management tiered offer available across Leeds which includes:

- Tiers 1 and 2 which cover primary prevention/supporting healthy weight environments and group support in community settings, and are the commissioning responsibility of Public Health;
- The Leeds Specialist Tier 3 service supports adults with severe and complex obesity to lose weight through a 12-18 month programme, and are the commissioning responsibility of NHS/West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB);
- Tier 4 is bariatric surgery, and are the commissioning responsibility of NHS/ICB.

These services are also only one element of a whole programme of work around healthy weight which Public Health and partners are progressing including the development and delivery of the Leeds Food Strategy, actions under the Healthy Weight Declaration and delivery of the Child Healthy Weight plan. A range of other support offers available in Leeds include:

- The [Leeds Adult Weight Management Pathway](#) for detailed information on weight management support in Leeds.
- A free **NHS weight loss plan** is available to download from [Digital Weight Loss App](#)
- The [NHS England » The NHS Digital Weight Management Programme](#) should be the **default** option for people with hypertension and/or diabetes with a BMI ≥ 30
- **National Diabetes Prevention Programme Healthier You** is the primary service for patients when non-diabetic hyperglycaemia is identified. For info, please visit [Healthier You | Diabetes Prevention Programme \(preventing-diabetes.co.uk\)](#)
- **HENRY** (Health, Exercise and Nutrition for the Really Young) offers 8-week courses for parents/ carers of 0-5 year old and 5-12 year old children.
- **A healthy start for a brighter future (0-5)** – covers parenting confidence, physical activity for little ones, what children and families eat, family lifestyle habits and enjoying life as a

family. [LCH 0 - 19 Health and Wellbeing Group Support \(leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk\)](https://leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk)

- **Healthy Families Growing up Programme (5-12)** - Programmes focus on building parents' confidence and strengths exploring key themes such as; emotional well-being, whole family lifestyle habits, mealtimes, TV, sleep, food, parenting and physical activity. Information on how to access the programmes and dates of next courses go to can be found here [School Wellbeing](#).

In terms of the points Scrutiny have raised, you have asked whether we can share a copy of the business case. It may be helpful to understand the context when the business case was submitted for approval, as though the business case itself is thorough, it was the context which resulted in the decision being taken at the time. There is also some commercially sensitive information contained within the business case. If Scrutiny still feel it necessary to see the business case, we will look into what can be shared.

It is important to clarify that PEG *didn't not* prioritise investment in local weight management services; there is still spend in weight management services, we could not commit to additional spend over and above current commitments, at that moment in time. The existing Specialist Tier 3 service will continue to operate whilst paused to new referrals.

To understand the reasons behind why no new additional investment could be approved at this stage, it is helpful to understand the context at the time the discussions regarding the Tier 3 weight management service took place. Demand generally for services across the NHS and the Council have been increasing but without the corresponding increase in available resources.

As you will be aware in December 2021 the Council had to find significant savings due to severe financial pressures. This resulted in the difficult decision to reduce the budget available from April 2023 onwards for Healthy Living Services provided through the former One You Leeds contract which included weight management and stop smoking support. The provision of a smoking cessation service was prioritised using the reduced budget due to smoking being the leading preventable cause of ill health in the city. The new Leeds Stop Smoking service launched on the 1st of April 2023. The Tier 2 weight management service therefore ceased operating at the end of the contract period in March 2023.

Since March of this year, the financial position has been challenging, and the NHS in West Yorkshire and particularly in Leeds is in financial turnaround and is not in a position therefore to invest in any new services (or indeed allowed to). In total across the NHS in Leeds at the time were having to find circa £160m plus additional £15m of risks, and have identified £150m without cutting any services to date. Given we are still short we are not permitted to commit or invest in a new recurrent programme such as the business case set out.

At the point of pausing referrals into the Leeds Specialist in July, the Tier 3 service was receiving around 140 referrals a month and handling an overall caseload of around 1200 people. The numbers of referrals have gone up for several reasons namely availability of new weight loss drug and associated publicity, GP incentive scheme and withdrawal of the Tier 2 commissioned service which ceased taking referrals in late 2022. The NHS in Leeds is not currently able to pick-up the additional demand caused by these different factors.

As no new investment could be confirmed at the time, the ICB were looking for a way to manage demand by pausing referrals in order to risk stratify the current waiting list and look at options for an improved service delivery model which will ultimately help with better outcomes for those at most urgent need.

It is worth noting that there is also work taking place across West Yorkshire as there is variable offer/access to Tier 3 across the different places and the ICB are currently looking at whether there should be a regional offer.

In terms of the Scrutiny Board's recommendation to explore 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, there will be a route whereby cases of extreme concern can be reviewed by a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) of specialists working between Tier 3 and Tier 4. GPs will also be given an escalation route for exceptional patients and guidance as to what might constitute exceptional risk issues.

We also acknowledge the feedback from Scrutiny regarding mitigating actions ideally being in place prior to referrals being paused. Based on your feedback at the June meeting, we delayed the pause to referrals into the Tier 3 service by two weeks and worked rapidly to ensure mitigations were in place/fully in development, with supporting communications to referrers/primary care issued. We were unable to delay the pause to referrals for any longer; 215 referrals were received in June alone into T3. Further delays to pausing would increase the length of time that referrals remain paused for, significantly.

In terms of timeliness of informing Scrutiny, as soon as the decision was made to temporarily close the list, Scrutiny was informed. However, there have been changes in staff across the partnership and it would be good to run a couple of learning sessions with officers to increase the understanding of Scrutiny. The Head of Corporate Governance & Risk (ICB in Leeds) and the Principal Scrutiny Advisor are organising 'learning sessions' for NHS and other colleagues to increase understanding and how we expect colleagues to work proactively and early with Scrutiny.

It is unlikely the financial and demand pressures the system are facing will subside in the short and medium term and we may need to make more difficult decisions going forward. We would welcome working with Scrutiny to put in place a framework of the kinds of things which constitute a 'significant service change,' ensuring we are able to engage with Scrutiny in a timely manner without overloading everyone.

PEG accept that there is learning overall in how we work as a system to make financial and planning decisions especially in these challenging times and welcome and continued open dialogue with Scrutiny.

Yours sincerely,

On behalf of the Leeds Health and Care Partnership Executive Group (PEG)



Tim Ryley
Co-Chair, Leeds Health and Care Partnership Executive Group,
Accountable Officer (Leeds), West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board



Tom Riordan CBE
Co-Chair, Leeds Health and Care Partnership Executive Group,
Chief Executive, Leeds City Council