

LEICESTER CITY HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD
25/09/2025

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| Subject: | NHS Healthy Weight Declaration |
| Presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board by: | Kathryn McVicar |
| Author: | Kathryn McVicar, Specialty Registrar in Public Health, Leicester City Council |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Whole System Approach to Healthy Weight action plan outlines adoption of the NHS Healthy Weight Declaration as a high priority, long term action. As an anchor organisation, local NHS services have an invaluable role to play in reducing excess weight in staff, patients and patient's families by considering a wider variety of influences on weight.

An NHS Declaration provides a mechanism for organisations to signal their commitment and demonstrate leadership and a coordinated approach to address unhealthy weight. It enables a number of different NHS organisations to develop a consistent approach, working in partnership across organisational boundaries to address unhealthy weight and support the prevention agenda. It also facilitates an approach for NHS organisations to work alongside local authorities to play their part and strengthen their role in supporting a whole systems approach to improve services for patients and staff.

Leicester City Council has funded the adoption of the declaration through funding dedicated for Healthy Weight. Public Health will support NHS organisations to work towards commitments within the Declaration, but the NHS will be responsible for the work. The NHS Healthy Weight Working Group has been established to bring local partners together with a focus on prevention through actions associated with adoption of the NHS Healthy Weight Declaration. Initial engagement across organisations has been positive, but further work is needed to commit capacity and drive support towards this initiative.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Health and Wellbeing Board is requested to:

- a. Note the benefits of adopting the NHS Healthy Weight Declaration locally
- b. Support the identification of appropriate personnel to lead the adoption of the Declaration internally within local NHS organisations (ICB, LPT and UHL).
- c. Advocate and support the adoption of the NHS Healthy Weight Declaration within local NHS organisations.

FULL REPORT:

Background:

Maintaining a healthy weight is important for overall health and wellbeing. People who have excess weight, compared to those with a healthy weight, are at increased risk for many serious diseases and health conditions including cardiovascular and respiratory disease, as well as mental health conditions. In addition, excess weight is known to contribute to factors such as poorer sleep, reduced energy levels, self-esteem and body image. Maintaining a healthy weight can reduce the risk of these adverse impacts.

62.8% of adults, 19.3% of Reception aged children and 39.1% of Year 6 age children in Leicester have excess weight. Higher prevalence exists in those aged 44-64 years, people living with disability, people with poor mental health, people with low level of education and people from Black communities. Crude estimates using current obesity rates suggest that by 2030 there will be around 4000 more adults living with obesity in Leicester, with the majority (2500) of those being over 65 years old. By 2040, there could be over 7000 additional adults in Leicester living with obesity.

However, the world we live in is not conducive to maintaining healthy weight and individuals cannot be blamed. Wider influences on health play a huge role in individual and community capability, opportunity, and motivation to maintain a healthy weight. The complexity of the many influences on healthy weight means the approach to try and improve healthy weight must be comprehensive and draw on the whole system.

Action is required at all levels, including NHS provider organisations, to promote healthier eating and to make it easier for people to make better choices. An NHS commitment on healthier weight has the scope to impact significantly on staff, patients, visitors, and local communities. A whole-systems approach is key to improving the health of our populations, and NHS organisations are in a strong position to provide strategic leadership on this subject.

Introduction to NHS Declaration on Healthy Weight:

The NHS Healthy Weight Declaration has been developed by Food Active, working in partnership with NHS England South West, Public Health England South West (now Office for Health Improvement & Disparities) and Diabetes

UK South West, supporting NHS organisations to work as part of a wider system to promote healthier weight.

The NHS Declaration provides a mechanism for organisations to signal their commitment and demonstrate leadership and a coordinated approach to address unhealthy weight. It is designed to support local NHS organisations to take a structured approach to considering and implementing greater emphasis on prevention in improving health, inequalities, healthy life expectancy and economic savings through the reduction of excess weight and associated chronic disease. It also enables a number of different NHS organisations to develop a consistent approach, working in partnership across organisational boundaries.

This structured approach is designed to positively impact on staff, patients and visitors to NHS sites. As there are approximately 24,500 staff employed across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) NHS (Leicestershire Partnership Trust (LPT) approx. 6500, University Hospitals Leicester (UHL) approx. 18,000 and LLR Integrated Care Board (ICB) approx. 300) the scope of reach for the Declaration when only considering staff is substantial. When considering the LLR population of over one million, of which staff are likely part of, many individuals interact with the local NHS in some form. Consistency within these organisations from the food on offer to the benefits promoted to staff, will support positive changes and promotion of healthy lifestyles.

The Declaration consists of 13 core commitments and 4/5 organisation specific commitments whereby NHS organisations pledge support to achieve action on improving policy, prevention and healthy weight outcomes for the benefit of staff, patients and the wider community. This provides a framework to allow the alignment of existing activities, whilst also identifying gaps and opportunities. See Appendix 1 for full list of commitments.

Evidence from a pilot in the South-West of England is starting to demonstrate that an 'NHS Declaration' on healthy weight is proving to be an effective tool in taking a whole-system approach to healthier weight, bringing together a range of stakeholders and setting the agenda on policies and practices promoting improved diet and physical activity. North Tyneside Council and Northumberland County Council have also adopted the NHS Healthy Weight Declaration, and they have successfully implemented a number of initiatives such as new healthy menus in staff canteens and developed a virtual patient training tool to improve conversations about healthy weight.

Food Active, who developed the NHS Declaration on Healthy Weight, supported Leicester City Councils adoption of the Local Authority Declaration on Healthy Weight in December 2022. The adoption has raised the profile of healthy weight, fostered ownership across the organisation of health and wellbeing, and supported work to progress which is anticipated to contribute to long term positive outcomes.

Leicester's whole system approach:

Leicester's Whole System Approach to Healthy Weight action plan outlines adoption of the NHS Healthy Weight Declaration as a high priority, long term action. The three NHS organisations operating across LLR play a key role in supporting people living with obesity through weight management services and in prevention through raising the issue of weight compassionately and appropriately. Existing training and resources are available for NHS staff to prioritise healthy and wellbeing, but year on year we are seeing increases in the weight status of our population. Earlier this year, the NHS Healthy Weight Working Group was established to bring local partners together to discuss and collaborate on areas of work relating to healthy weight across the NHS. The group focuses on prevention through actions associated with the adoption of the NHS Healthy Weight Declaration (rather than implementation of weight management provision).

Cost of adoption:

The cost of the adoption of the Declaration has been funded through the Whole System Approach to Healthy Weight budget as part of Leicester City Council's Public Health Grant. The benefits included within the fee are outlined below:

- Single meeting at NHS organisation offices & presentation to senior executives *or* at local consultation event
- Access to NHS Declaration support pack, monitoring & evaluation tool & case studies
- Use of NHS Declaration artwork and logo upon successful adoption.
- Email and online support from Food Active staff, including public health nutritionists
- Access to 'buddy-buddy' good practice scheme with other NHS organisations
- Access to Food Active network through Basecamp platform
- PR support for official launch of Declaration

Potential challenges:

There are some potential challenges in adopting the Declaration locally. For example, there is limited budget behind prevention initiatives to support the NHS Declaration. Additionally, given ongoing challenges with the volume of work for staff, there may be limited capacity to support the work, and the Declaration is not currently embedded into local NHS plans. However, the work does align with the NHS 10-Year Plan in making shifts from sickness to prevention, initial engagement regarding the adoption of the Declaration has been positive and well received, and the approach is flexible which means different parts of the NHS can prioritise different areas and celebrate what they are already doing against commitments.

Actions to date and planned next steps:

Approval to progress the work was sought from the Prevention and Healthy Inequalities Board, who were supportive of the adoption being explored further. A briefing from Food Active on the Declaration was provided to the NHS Healthy Weight Working Group where there was consensus of support to adopt from colleagues present. Following approval to progress and fund the work at Public Health Divisional Management Team, a letter was issued to the Chief Executives from the ICB, LPT and UHL outlining the proposal to adopt the declaration and asking for their support. Work has since been underway to ascertain from local NHS leads who can drive the work forwards internally and seek approval from relevant internal boards. Whilst Primary Care Networks have not yet been formally approached about the Declaration, as the work progresses there is ambition to engage them as part of the work with the ICB. Food Active has offered to meet individually with local NHS organisations to discuss and suggest next steps. The plan will then be to hold a launch event later in the year. It is proposed that monitoring of the Declaration will be through the NHS Healthy Weight Working Group, reporting into the Food and Healthy Weight Systems Partnership Steering Group. Additionally, it is proposed that an annual update on progress could be provided to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Conclusion:

The NHS Healthy Weight Declaration offers a strategic and collaborative framework for NHS organisations to demonstrate leadership in promoting healthier weight and tackling obesity. By committing to a set of core and organisation-specific actions, NHS bodies can align existing efforts, identify gaps, and drive systemic change across staff, patients, and communities. With a substantial reach across Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland, the Declaration supports consistent, preventative health measures that aim to improve health outcomes, reduce inequalities, and deliver economic benefits. Early evidence from other regions shows its effectiveness in fostering partnerships and implementing practical initiatives, indicating its potential for long-term positive impact across the NHS system. Whilst the work is tailored towards the NHS, the initiatives and learnings could be transferrable to other local organisations and there are broader opportunities for other local organisations to be involved in the whole systems approach to healthy weight.

The Board are asked to:

- a. Note the benefits of adopting the NHS Healthy Weight Declaration locally
- b. Support the identification of appropriate personnel to lead the adoption of the Declaration internally within local NHS organisations (ICB, LPT and UHL).
- c. Advocate and support the adoption of the NHS Healthy Weight Declaration within local NHS organisations.

Appendix 1: NHS Healthy Weight Declaration Commitments

NHS organisations can work through the commitments in a way that is suitable to the organisation. Guidance to support adoption and implementation of the Declaration is available.

| Term | Commitment |
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| Short term | We commit to providing workplace health programmes that support the health and well-being of NHS staff by increasing knowledge and understanding of what action staff can take to achieve a healthy weight and create opportunities for them to eat well, be active and make lifestyle changes. |
| | We commit to working towards an infrastructure and environment that enables and promotes active travel to and from our NHS organisations and opportunities to be physically activity in line with sustainable management plans. |
| | We commit to reviewing food and drink provision across all our NHS buildings, facilities and providers in line with Hospital Food Standards and the NHS Standard Contract, to make healthier foods and drinks more available, convenient and affordable and limit access to less healthy foods and drinks such as those high in fat, sugar and/or salt. |
| | We commit to contributing to the delivery of national NHS programmes, such as on staff health and wellbeing, food and drink and sustainability, to increase the proportion of people who are a healthy weight and reduce health inequalities within our communities. |
| Mid term | We commit to introducing healthier food and drink vending across NHS sites to encourage healthier choices amongst NHS staff, as well as patients and visitors. |
| | We commit to increasing public access to fresh drinking water on NHS sites (keeping single use plastics to a minimum) and encouraging re-useable bottle refills. |
| | We commit to ensuring catering provided at meetings, conferences and events includes healthier food and drink provisions, through healthy food policy stipulations and supporting caterers to deliver this offer in line with Government dietary recommendations as depicted in the national food model (the Eatwell Guide) and its supporting messages, and the Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services. |
| | We commit to working with clinical staff and our colleagues in public health in the local authority to train more of our staff to Make Every Contact Count. |
| | We commit to monitoring the progress of the plan against all commitments and to publishing the results of our progress at regular intervals. |
| Long term | We commit to review how procurement, contracts and commercial partnerships with the food and drink industry impact on healthier and sustainable food and drink provision in our organisation to ensure we are providing an increasingly healthier food and drink offer and providing consistent messages about healthy eating to our patients and staff. |
| | We commit to embedding a preventative approach to addressing unhealthy weight across our NHS organisation, addressing behavioural, environmental and cultural risk factors to support both patients and staff, and by providing visible leadership from senior leaders (this includes preventing weight stigma and weight bias). |
| | We commit to working with our NHS colleagues across an Integrated |

| Term | Commitment |
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| | <p>Care System footprint to maximise our ability to tackle this population health issue and deliver the prevention ambitions set out in the NHS Long Term Plan.</p> <p>We commit to taking a whole systems approach to tackling unhealthy weight by working with key partners in our local system including local communities, local authorities, third sector, academic institutions and businesses. This recognises the findings of the Government Office for Science Foresight Report, which set out the systemic approach needed to tackle this complex issue.</p> |
| Organisational commitments | <p>Strategic/Organisational Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We commit to develop a communication strategy that will change expectations both internally and externally about the importance of a healthy weight and our organisational commitment to enabling that. • We commit to supporting the local system aspiration to be SUGAR SMART and reduce the availability and sales of sugar sweetened beverages and foods high in sugar. • We commit to developing a Trust-wide Food and Drink Policy to promote healthy eating, high-quality food production, sustainability, excellent nutritional care and explore best practice, in line with the recommendations of the Hospital Food Standards Panel. • We commit to striving to achieve best practice standards for UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative and ongoing accreditation. • We commit to financial interventions to support healthier and more sustainable catering, such as a voluntary sugar levy to subsidise healthier produce. <p>Brief Intervention/National Campaigns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We commit to building healthy weight brief interventions and support into all relevant clinical specialties within our organisation to build prevention into treatment and maximise the quality of the care we offer people locally. • We commit to promoting current physical activity recommendations in the prevention and treatment of unhealthy weight - supporting delivery of 'Moving Healthcare Professionals' and 'One You' campaign • We commit to maximising the opportunities provided by national programmes such as NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme, Moving Medicine, Active Hospitals, One You and Better Health Campaign and building these into our clinical programmes at every opportunity. <p>Maximising In-house Skills and Expertise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We commit to maximising the in-house skills available within organisations to support staff health and wellbeing, recognising the expertise that exists within key specialties within our organisation. • We commit to maximising in-house clinical and patient expertise via weight management services, diabetes services, and wider dietetics service in promoting healthy weight and leveraging this expertise across the organisation; • We commit to training ambassadors across our organisation to encourage healthier food and drink, opportunities to be physically active and to signpost staff and patients to support services. |

| Term | Commitment |
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| | <p data-bbox="443 230 1110 264">Weight Management Programmes and Services</p> <ul data-bbox="491 266 1409 672" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="491 266 1409 365">• We commit to raising awareness and embedding knowledge of weight management/malnutrition care pathways, screening and referral for patients via frontline staff and clinicians; <li data-bbox="491 367 1409 501">• We commit to increasing access to tier 2 lifestyle weight management services locally. (These might include commissioned services, commercial partnerships, electronic platforms and community platforms). <li data-bbox="491 504 1409 672">• We commit to supporting women to achieve a healthy weight before, during and after pregnancy through co-ordinated commissioning of healthy lifestyles services across maternity services and primary care to enable access to behavioural interventions and weight management programmes; <p data-bbox="443 674 1043 707">Primary Care (PCN's) and General Practice</p> <ul data-bbox="491 710 1409 1276" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="491 710 1409 844">• We commit to working with primary care and local authorities to invest in social prescribing within primary care to reduce impact on GP consultation rates, A&E attendance, hospital stays, medication use, and social care; <li data-bbox="491 846 1409 1014">• We commit to working in partnership across our local health system to increase the number of health checks received by eligible persons (working in partnership with local authority public health teams to ensure that the NHS Health Check is reaching high risk and vulnerable communities) <li data-bbox="491 1016 1409 1276">• We commit to offer training and support within general practice and primary care for GP's and Practitioners to equip staff to become healthy weight coaches/offer lifestyle advice, active signposting, promotion and support for self-care; (universal provision and targeted support for high-risk groups e.g. mental health, low income groups). (supporting the ambition in the NHS Long Term Plan to equip staff at the frontline to talk about nutrition and healthy weight confidently and sensitively.) |