

Obesity Pathway Innovation Q&A from Webinar 13/02/25

The questions below have been posed by registered attendees to a public webinar. Questions are solely the opinions of the attendees. Answers have been drafted to help understanding, based on information that is currently available. Answers are opinions and do not represent an instruction, policy or regulation.

1. Context for market engagement

How does this discussion relate to existing NHS plans to rollout obesity treatments?

This discussion is separate to any existing NHS planning. We are interested in understanding the potential for novel community-based patient access models that are safe, effective and resource efficient to open the possibility that these new treatment options could be accessed by eligible patients through the NHS

Does any solution or intervention to be developed/proposed need to include medications?

No. Solutions or interventions for obesity can be multifaceted and do not always need to include medications. The approach taken often depends on the specific needs and circumstances of the individuals or populations being targeted. For example, common components of obesity interventions include sustainable lifestyle and behavioural change.

Is this discussion only about implementing a single drug?

No, the discussion about obesity interventions is not limited to implementing a single drug. While medications can be a part of the overall strategy, they are just one of many potential components. Emphasis should be on a comprehensive and collaborative strategy that includes various interventions such as lifestyle changes, community and environmental modifications, and sometimes surgical options, in addition to medications.

Is this a funded innovation competition?

No, this is a market engagement process to ascertain the opportunities for innovation? Should a funded competition be formed, this would be advised separately.

You mention "where we want to be" what does that look like for this work? Can you clarify if this is about appropriate care, or is the direction of travel more about fast tracking a mass medication approach (particularly given that the evidence is that weight loss is not often maintained with medication leading to untested long-term use)?

This is a market engagement process to help us understand the potential to improve access to weight management services through the development of integrated community-based care services that combine components of obesity care navigation and service provision including preventative and treatment approaches. The implementation of any new pathway will be a clinical decision made on the basis of the best available evidence that the services are safe, effective and resource efficient.

Can you share some insights into the types of projects that have been successfully funded in the weight loss space? Specifically, what can we expect in the future as these projects move forward.

We are not at a point of confirmed funding, nor eligibility criteria. This pathway-centric innovation discussion does not have precedents, so not sure any prior funding decisions would be a useful steer.

Are existing innovations eligible for consideration, or is the goal to create new strategies?

It is expected that a whole pathway solution will be a composite of existing, adjusted and entirely novel components. It is possible that even existing innovations have not yet been co-ordinated with other existing or new elements, so a pathway design could be entirely novel.

2. Who should be involved?

Is this discussion UK wide? What if I'm in Scotland, Northern Ireland or Wales?

This is a UK wide discussion. We are very keen to involve parties from devolved nations.

I represent an ICB already piloting innovative new approaches. Should I contribute to the process?

Absolutely we are keen to learn from your experiences.

Will this initiative involve food producers and retailers?

It is possible that retailers with health propositions will seek to be involved. Food producers should be actively interested but may not feel they can contribute to a discussion about weight management pathways.

Will this initiative involve gyms and leisure centres?

Gyms and leisure organisation would be encouraged to participate in discussions, particularly where they have an existing weight management offering. Their proximity and engagement with communities would be useful to explore.

Has any thought been given to the significant increase in the number of pharmacist prescribers practicing in the community pharmacy network. This would give medication access and wrap around support

Pharmacy prescribers may play an important role in community-based services and they are encouraged to be involved in forthcoming engagement activities.

3. What ideas might be of interest?

What are your thoughts about technology and digital solutions solving this challenge?

We understand that patient choice is vital and different interventions or combinations of approaches could yield optimised outcomes.

How open are you to wearable technology that addresses the effectiveness of exercise and lifestyle interventions, e.g. devices capable of monitoring response to nutrition to provide real time feedback?

At this market engagement stage of discussions, nothing is out of bounds. Wearables and remote sensors could be important for some pathways and a preference for some beneficiaries.

Is it in your plan to include awareness (or raising awareness) of diseases linked with obesity? Like cancer or cardiovascular diseases?

These engagement activities will not be focused on awareness raising, but the participants to any discussions will either have this knowledge or it will be confirmed in contextual briefings.

Are there any opportunities to integrate mental health perspectives and interventions?

Mental health and psychological factors should be considered as part of any weight management services; in line with the [Overweight and obesity management NICE guideline \[NG246\]](#).

Can innovative pathways already rooted in the NHS be explored where evidence exists already around sustainable and scalable solutions

Yes. We would be interested in understanding the potential for existing community-based solutions to incorporate new capabilities, such as prescribing, and for the model to be scaled for other areas.

Are you looking for ideas where there is already evidence in an advanced state of readiness?

At this early stage we are open to hearing about any ideas that provide opportunities for innovation. That means there aren't set criteria for evidence or readiness. We would expect any subsequent implementation in an NHS pathway would need to meet quality standards for safety and performance, but it would be premature to define these now.

We have a project which we think may be successful and would like to explore ways to spread & scale it to the rest of the UK, is there scope for this within your initiative?

At this early stage we are open to hearing about any ideas that provide opportunities for innovation, including existing offerings with potential to scale and spread.

4. A systematic approach

Will the process of the Whole Systems Approach for obesity used in many areas, be a consideration within this?

The [*Whole Systems Approach \(WSA\)*](#), is a legacy Public Health England (PHE) framework designed to support challenges like those presented in the weight management space. Given its comprehensive nature, the WSA could be considered in various initiatives aimed at tackling obesity such as the development of community-based weight management services that require a coordinated and multi-faceted approach.

Does this roll out include a plan/knowledge on how many times or how long a person may need to use a pharmacological intervention (e.g. any concern or plan for weight regain)?

Pharmacological interventions for obesity included in a weight management pathway should be used in line with relevant NICE or equivalent guidance and the NICE Overweight and obesity management guidelines ([NG246](#)).

We are already working on a unique solution with an Innovate UK award that could also support this obesity pathway innovation. How can we present what we are developing so we can discuss collaboration?

The next stage of our market engagement is a sandpit event, which would be an ideal opportunity to share your solution. This will be a workshop that focuses on collaboration and having great conversations to get to the roots of what the challenges will be. We will seek to bring together many voices.

5. Service Integration

Primary Care and Trusts have some novel ideas to provide wrap around care and prescribing. Are they able to access funding opportunities?

This market engagement activity will be keen to explore to novel ideas from NHS and local authority organisations across the UK involved in providing weight management services. This is not a funding call and our aim is to establish the potential for future funding of solutions that can fit alongside existing weight management services.

Are you considering approaches that provide access via community services working in collaboration with the NHS?

There is potential for integrated community-based services from a range of providers to offer choice and improve outcomes. As with other aspects of population health, this will require collaboration between NHS, Social Care and other providers at a local level. This is UK wide so devolved nations may take different approaches to suit their population health management.

Whilst we don't want to overload GPs/ existing primary care services, the complex needs of patients living with obesity will often necessitate the need for collaboration with GPs. How can we facilitate this collaboration?

Facilitating collaboration between GPs and other healthcare providers is crucial for managing the complex needs of patients living with obesity. We welcome input on various strategies for how this can or has been achieved such as integrated care pathways, educational programmes, multidisciplinary teams and use of community resources.

Will the 'innovation' be led /administered via the ICS or NHS Health Board in Scotland, NI? Or will it be a lead consortium style administration that may or may not involve an ICS or Health Board?

We are seeking to make the case for innovation which would inform the design of any future funding opportunity. No decision has been made.

6. What kind of people, patients and/or communities is this initiative focussed on?

What is the definition of an eligible patient for these services?

Currently the focus is on adult weight management as set out in the [Overweight and obesity management NICE guideline \[NG246\]](#). However, this in is an opportunity to look at the whole pathway.

What definition of obesity are you using? BMI over 30, or over 35, or another indicator? Also, is this relevant for obesity only, or should we include type 2 diabetes services as well, as they are very much linked and indeed the injectable meds are used for both?

All weight management services and obesity definitions should consider the [Overweight and obesity management NICE guideline \[NG246\]](#). To note, this market engagement is focused on the complete pathway and emphasise should be on a comprehensive and collaborative strategies that includes various interventions such as lifestyle changes, community and environmental modifications, and sometimes surgical options, in addition to medications.

Can you say more about how you are involving communities (particularly diverse communities) in this process and how you plan to do so in developing options and pathways?

At this early stage all parties can contribute to the discussion. As highlighted in other answers we will actively seek to understand how health inequalities can be understood then narrowed.

Citizens, who may or may not be patients, need supported-self management 'pre-NHS'. Does the IUK interest relate to prevention pre-NHS', perhaps provided by community assets like Leisure Sport centres enabled by novel digital health and care innovation?

The present scope of discussion is centred on NHS and potentially devolved nation health system pathways. Elements of any pathway solution could also form part of a prevention approach in communities.

Does this include Children and Young people? / Are children a focus of this project, or is it mainly for the adult population? / Are children and young people included in finding solutions across the age span

Currently the focus is on adult weight management pathways. However, it is likely that solutions will emerge that could be relevant to the care of children and young people in the future.

Will these projects be targeting specific demographics of people (older people, young mums, deprived areas, etc) to tailor initiatives rather than a one for all approach?

This is a market engagement process to help us understand the potential to improve access to weight management services. Any subsequent implementation would need to be made in accordance with the NICE funding variation for NHSE which defines the clinical criteria for which people will be eligible. Services would be looking to ensure that people are not excluded. Obesity is closely correlated to deprivation and other factors so to achieve a population impact it would be necessary to design and implement pathways that are inclusive.

Will innovation be directed toward diet change?

NICE guidance related to Overweight and obesity management specifically references the importance of diet in the management of patients. The expectation is that diet will be an important element of any model of care for patients with obesity. However, there may be a variety of ways that support related to diet could be delivered to patients.

Are you also considering prevention and weight maintenance?

Emphasis should be on a comprehensive and collaborative strategies for weight management pathways that include various interventions such as lifestyle changes, community and environmental modifications, and sometimes surgical options, in addition to medications.

7. What type of organisations can get involved in this initiative?

We are a CIC supporting adults with chronic conditions, so weight management is certainly a core issue for our attendees. Would Innovate UK be interested in something like ours or are you only looking for research and AI type organisations?

Yes, we are interested in involving innovative businesses and organisations, small and large, including CICs.

You would be welcome to share your ideas in planned engagement activities.

My organisation is a university start-up with new technology that can have an impact in obesity services. How do you foresee collaboration between technology companies and those delivering services on the ground being facilitated and working?

Just being in the same room during the sandpit or collaborative space having first hand conversation with varying levels of expertise can be groundbreaking. It starts with talking to experts from different walks of life.

Will there be potential for Innovate UK to support start-ups who are innovating in this sector and hoping to support the NHS with this pathway?

These early discussions are about making the case for innovation. Any organisation with relevant insights can input into this engagement process.

I represent a drug company for a drug not yet approved, can I be part of the discussion?

Yes, this is about weight management pathways where medications are an important addition to the range of options available. Any new pathways involving medication must be drug agnostic with prescribing decisions made in accordance with NICE or equivalent guidance.

Can universities be involved who have connections to the community?

We don't envisage that this will be an academic exercise. We anticipate that there would need to be an evaluation that could be university led. Universities with established ventures operating in weight management would be open for inclusion.

Regionality

One of your speakers on the webinar was talking about NHS England. Is this open to schemes/projects from Wales?

Our market engagement is open to organisations across the UK. We are engaging with Governments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland as well as the NHS in England. It will be for those Governments to decide if they want to engage in any funding opportunity that may arise following this market engagement.

8. How do we get involved and what happens next?

What happens after the webinar?

Make sure you complete the Call for Input process we have highlighted here. This will enable us to keep you up to date with the evolving process. In particular, check the 13th March in your diary as this will be a major workshop that you could be involved in.

What is a Sandpit event?

A sandpit is a highly collaborative workshop where we ensure a wide mix of expertise and ideas are brought together to create innovative thinking. These two events will broadly follow the Design Council's "Double Diamond" approach that Harry Kerr outlined in the webinar presentation.

Is anyone excluded from the discussion?

No, everyone is welcome to register their interest., however spaces at the sandpit events will be limited.

Will this discussion have NHS decision makers involved?

Clinical engagement and leadership are an essential part in exploring innovative weight management pathways. Should we identify the potential for an innovation investment, NHS decision makers will be involved.

Just to confirm - at this stage - all you are looking for is interested companies, organisations, and businesses to come together to discuss these issues at the sandpit event? - is the purpose of the sandpit to decide on what would form any funding opportunity? (I'm just wondering how I could persuade a small business that they should get involved)

We are hopeful that businesses of any size will see the value in the potential to shape the opportunities in this area.

What if I apply to join the next stage but are not accepted?

The capacity for subsequent innovation events will be limited. In the unfortunate event that we are unable to accommodate everyone who expresses an interest, that would not exclude you from any future innovation funding or procurement opportunities.

Will you be facilitating a collaboration directory as part of this call?

We will be opening up an interactive mechanism to support the ideas and collaboration process. Watch out for more details soon.

What metrics will be used to evaluate the success of these new care pathways, and how will continuous improvement be facilitated?

At this early stage we are open to hearing about any ideas that provide opportunities for innovation. That means there aren't set criteria to evaluate success or facilitate continuous improvement. These are important questions for any new care pathway and can be raised in any collaborative engagement sessions.

If we form a partnership agreement in next month, will it become incorrect, or any updated change in the answer look awkward?

This is a market engagement process to ascertain the opportunities for innovation, one aspect of which might involve novel partnerships that bring together a comprehensive service offer. At this stage it is not possible to say what partnerships may or may not be needed. Should a funded opportunity be established, the details including scope would be advised separately.

Is this work sponsored by one or a number of pharmaceutical companies?

Presently no, but partnership discussions are ongoing with a number of organisations.