

# People's experience of the weight management service

January 2019

*This report is based on conversations or responses freely given by members of the public. Where possible quotations are used to illustrate individual or collectively important experiences.*

*Engagement officers collect responses verbatim and we also present these in our final report as an appendix. This is important in showing the accuracy of our analysis, and so that further work can be done by anyone wishing to do so.*

*A full explanation of the guiding principles and framework for how we do engagement and analysis can be found online on our website [www.healthwatchwiganandleigh.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchwiganandleigh.co.uk).*

*Please note that this report relates to findings observed and contributed by members of the public in relation to the specific project as set out in the methodology section of the report.*

*Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all service users and staff, only an analysis of what was contributed by members of the public, service users, patients and staff within the project context as described.*

According to Public Health England Wigan Local Authority Health Profile 2018 the estimated levels of obesity and excess weight are worse in Wigan than the England average. Prevention of obesity is a priority in the NHS England Long Term Plan and within the strategy for Greater Manchester Health and Social Care.

Food and health was voted the top priority for 2018-2019 by Healthwatch Wigan and Leigh members and the public. People who responded to the priorities consultation felt that prevention is better than cure and that if individuals diagnosed with a long term condition were referred to a relevant professional or service at an early stage could help to alleviate symptoms of many problems with nutrition, weight etc. People asked why only certain service options are offered and felt that the service provision was too clinically driven rather than person centred.

Wigan borough is addressing people's weight through two key approaches, a specialist weight management service for those in need of clinically led intervention, and a community service for those trying to lose weight/identifying as wanting to lose weight. There are several strands within the community based approaches, with 'lose weight and get active', 'inspiring healthy lifestyles', 'healthy routes', 'lose weight feel great', and 'lose weight feel great for men' being available. In this report you will see a combination of comments from users of these services.

<https://www.wigan.gov.uk> – more details can be found here by searching under Specialist Weight Management Service and/or Community Weight Management.

<http://www.inspiringhealthylifestyles.org> – details on the community weight loss programmes on offer.

Those featured in this report were:

- A balance of 44% male, 56% females.
- Most were adults with 2% 15-19 years old, 55% 20-54 years old, 43% 55+ years old.
- 51% of participants reported that they are diagnosed with a long term condition.

Awareness of weight loss approaches:

- Many had tried weight loss before.
- Many had also heard of various council led initiatives to lose weight as well as non-council campaigns.

Experience of the programmes on offer:

- People were mostly happy with the community based services and liked the variety and choice.
- The targeted approaches towards men were particularly popular.
- There are some suggestions which are highlighted in this report, many focus around maintaining free or subsidised access to the programme activities after the target weight has been reached, around providing some kind of post programme support and encouragement, around cost, as well as keeping activities person centred.
- Several people commented on lack of follow up after referral, particularly in Tier 3 services.
- People were interested in accessing more online support to wrap around the sessions they were attending and help them keep motivated after their programme ends.

Healthwatch staff worked through a prepared set of questions about people's experiences of weight management services across tiers 1–3, (community services and first line clinical interventions) in conversation, focus groups, and via a survey.

Healthwatch visited venues and groups such as Slimming World, Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles, Healthy Routes, Lose Weight Feel Great as well as various groups facilitated by Aintree NHS Trust (Tier 3 services).

An online survey was distributed to individuals and organisations on the Healthwatch Wigan and Leigh members and contacts database, with the request that these people share the survey with their personal networks. The survey was also be promoted on social media.

### Planned groups to reach included:

- Individuals (adults and children) currently using weight management services
- Individuals (adults and children) that have used weight management services within the past 12 months
- Young people (Transition) aged between 16–24
- Adults aged 25+

There were 198 respondents in the study.

There were 577 comments; *this only forms a part of the data gathered, some questions were y/n or require one word answers.*

Gender (total 198)

Males: 87 respondents

Females: 111 respondents

Age range (total 198)

15-19 years: 4 respondents

20-54 years: 109 respondents

55+ years: 85 respondents

Diagnosed long term condition (total 198)

Yes: 102 respondents *\*161 conditions mentioned*

No: 96 respondents

The questions:

1. Do you identify as? (gender question)
2. What is your age range?
3. Have you been diagnosed with a long term condition?
4. What weight management approach did you try before accessing the Weight Management Service?
5. What service have you attended?
6. What other services are you aware of?
7. Is there a reason you did not engage with or attend a service?
8. What has been your experience of the weight loss pathway? Was the service you received timely and appropriate, etc?
9. What have you liked/disliked about the service you have used? Were the staff welcoming, approachable, encouraging? Did staff listen to your interests, needs?
10. Has the service worked for you or would you have preferred an alternative approach, more choice etc.
11. Do you have any suggestions on how the service could be offered differently or improved to suit future clients, different groups of people?(online/ app based provision, cooking skills, incentives, meal planning, location, access, etc?).

## The following questions are addressed:

- What weight management *approaches* have people tried before being referred for services?
- What weight management *services* have people used and how/by whom did they come to be referred?
- Do people feel that the referral was timely and appropriate?
- What do people like about the services they have used (in terms of access, location, timing, frequency, approach taken, person-centeredness, flexibility and outcome)?
- What do people dislike about the services they have used (in terms of access, location, timing, frequency, approach taken, person-centeredness, flexibility and outcome)?
- What does the ideal support look like for different groups?

# Analysis – What had people tried before?

*\*147/198 people had tried some other method before the weight management programme/service.*





# Analysis – What had people heard of before?

*\*79/198 people had heard of some other weight management route or idea.*



# Analysis – Which services had they attended before?

*\*190/198 people responded to say which services they tried, some had tried more than one.*

Service attended	Responses
Lose weight feel great: community weight management – slimming world	67
Specialist weight management service	51
Inspiring healthy lifestyles	41
Lose weight feel great for men	25
Healthy routes	11
Other	8
Slimming world	6
TOTAL	209

Most respondents reported using Lose weight Feel Great, Specialist weight management service, and Inspiring healthy lifestyles.

Has the service worked for you?	Responses
Yes	170
No	17
TOTAL	187

Most respondents thought the service they had accessed had worked for them.

## I dislike the options:

“I get anxious in groups.”

“Not appealing before I started the football.”

“Probably lack of motivation.”

“The only restriction I put on attending was that I did not want to play a team sport. I was referred to the soccer dome where they played football. I didn't go back. I was not followed up for 12 weeks. Not all men are interested in team sports.”

## I was concerned about cost:

“I don't have the money.”

“I had engaged with the services as long as they would allow me to but then they told me my time was up and I'd have to pay or the service was no longer available to me (so I lapsed) and regained the weight I'd lost.”

## I was unable to attend:

“I do Lose weight feel great for men and wanted to do the football but you can't do two.”

“Injury.”

“I'm a shift worker and find it difficult to attend at times.”

“I live outside the Wigan Borough.”

The majority of comments (169) were positive or gave a “yes” to the weight loss pathway.

However a small number of comments (14) disagreed, a selection have been shown here.

\*Total comments 183.

## I want to access more services:

“I go to Man v Fat so attend slimming world independently.”

## I didn't find it worked:

“I could not follow the slimming world diet.”

“I didn't feel I fitted in a slimming world - it was all ladies.”

“I stopped using Lose Weight Feel Great service because I didn't like the group sessions and the way they discuss things in front of everyone. I prefer the one to one support at Healthy Routes.”

## Other:

“This was the first service I found.”

“I wasn't aware of anything else.”

“...none of the LWFG team are experts in coeliac disease so they sometimes gave wrong information to me about what I could eat or they could not offer advice on alternatives...”

# Analysis – Thoughts on the weight management pathways



169

Comments happy with the pathway.



14

Comments critical of some elements of the pathway.

“Everything about the SWMS has been great for myself with a lot of different ways to achieve my goals.”

“The SMWS has been non-judgemental, sympathetic, encouraging and useful.”

“The organisation of Man v Fat has been great. The email updates have really helped as well as social media updates.”

“I am doubly satisfied with the monthly meetings I had. I was never told not to do this or that but was informed in a most courteous manner what was good to eat and drink. I was actually listened to. I was given printed leaflets and copies of recipes which I have tried out most of them. Also a daily diary which I followed and kept for future references for myself. What I did like about visiting Pensioners Link [is] that it is on my into town and on my way home, which made it easy accessible.”

“I would give Healthy Routes 10 out of 10 but the Specialist Weight Management Service 2 out of 10...They had a psychologist, a dietician etc. but their information wasn't as helpful. They spent no time with me I was literally in and out at appointments. I would go in the room get weighed, sometimes they didn't even lift their head, and I was out again with no information.”

“For me the pathway is not person centred - it dictates which eating plan you have to follow and that is not appropriate to my condition.”

“It was great whilst I was allowed to access it and get the support but this was time restrictive. I was told I'd had two goes (over a 4 year period) and that was it.”

“I found I lost more weight on the Slimming World programme than I did attending the services.”



161

Comments liked the programme.



18

Comments disliked the programme.

“All the staff are excellent and knowledgeable about this subject. They have given me excellent support and encouragement.”

“I've liked it all because the SMWS has been non-judgemental, sympathetic, encouraging and useful.”

“I like the bond and collaboration at Man v Fat and the drive to improve.”

“Similar minded lads wanting to lose weight while having a laugh.”

“Staff were encouraging but I didn't feel I fitted in as a man attending slimming world.”

“More evening sessions for SWMS please.”

“Slightly unorganised at times.”

“I do the Man v Fat football. Far too many are too competitive. This is a weight loss programme not football trials for a premiership football team.”

“I didn't like the Specialist Weight Management Service because they offer no real help and don't offer much support or advice. I really like Healthy Routes...”

“...What I disliked on LWFG was that the activity leader was...activities were too much...didn't really listen or understand how restricted we were. [As] a person living with coeliac disease...the staff are not trained and don't understand so are unable to give appropriate advice.”

## Communication ideas

- “Make more people aware of the service in the press, posters in the GP surgery etc. It's a fantastic service.”
- “Online or mail shot. Make more people aware of the services that are on offer.”

## Content suggestions

- “I go to Man v Fat football and think cooking skills would help and some incentives e.g. gym membership reductions.”
- “More time. Twelve weeks could be too short so there could be an incentive to carry on.”

## Cost concerns

- “I want to do the touch rugby session but I can't unless I stop coming to Man v Fat or unless the Council stop funding it. If the Local Authority is encouraging us to get active they should be encouraging people to do as much as possible. Not everyone can afford to do all these activities but will take part if its free as it is so beneficial not just for your weight and fitness but for your mental health.”

## Technology ideas

- “Specialist weight management service needs to offer weekly appointments and meal planning and online planning/monitoring would be helpful.”
- “A non-Facebook app would be fantastic as not everyone is on Facebook. More advertising would be helpful  
Cooking workshops would be really beneficial.”
- “An online app based service that can give hints, tips or just somewhere to note thoughts and feelings down.”

Overall we received overwhelmingly positive comments on overall programme appropriateness, the weight management pathways on offer, and the programmes on offer.

It should be noted that we interviewed those using the services, which may influence the comments collected. For this reason critical comments have been highlighted alongside positives, so that all experiences and needs can be taken into account.

In particular it is worth considering:

- The *cost of participation*, while not a big issue this was mentioned in some comments, particularly around the need for continued funding of the current offer and the opportunity to participate in more than one programme
- People view the social element of the programmes differently, some prefer 1-1 sessions, others enjoy groups, some enjoy team based activity others more individual challenges. It is important to keep a variety of options available and to assist access to first choice options.
- There will be people with *specific conditions* attending programmes. More thought around what programmes work best for people with specific conditions and more support to group leaders to access advice about these groups would be welcome.
- Finally it would be worth exploring if *gender* has any impact on referral, take-up and interest. For example are men encouraged to try slimming world ? are team sport options are open to women?

*Healthwatch Wigan and Leigh would like to thank all those that took part in this research or facilitated it to take place.*



Gender	Responses
Male	87
Female	111
TOTAL	198

Age range	Responses
15-19 Years Old	4
20-54 Years Old	109
55+ Years Old	85
TOTAL	198

Diagnosed with a long term condition	Responses
Yes	102
No	96
TOTAL	198

Question	Comments
Is there a reason you did not engage with or attend a service?	99
What has been your experience of the weight loss pathway? Was the service you received timely and appropriate, etc?	185
What have you liked/disliked about the service you have used? Were the staff welcoming, approachable, encouraging? Did staff listen to your interests, needs?	182
Do you have any suggestions on how the service could be offered differently or improved to suit future clients, different groups of people?(online/ app based provision, cooking skills, incentives, meal planning, location, access, etc?)	111
TOTAL	577