



# Reference guide for primary care networks and staff on the healthy weight coach elearning programme

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## Contents

Purpose of the guidance .....	2
What are healthy weight coaches and what do they do? .....	2
Who can become a healthy weight coach? .....	4
How do you become a healthy weight coach? .....	8
What are the benefits to having a healthy weight coach in your primary care network or becoming a healthy weight coach yourself?.....	8
Why is the healthy weight coach role needed? .....	9
How does the healthy weight coach elearning relate to other roles or training available in primary care? .....	11
Governance.....	13
Practical considerations .....	13
Key summary points.....	16
Questions and feedback.....	16
Updates and amendments to healthy weight coach elearning programme.....	16

## Purpose of the guidance

This guidance has been developed for primary care networks, healthcare practices and pharmacies interested in training staff, and staff interested in undertaking training, to become a healthy weight coach.

The healthy weight coach is a voluntary role for individuals working within primary care and primary care networks, meaning this guidance is advisory only.

It is important that the healthy weight coach elearning programme and this reference guide is fit-for-purpose and therefore is subject to change. Any substantial changes or updates to the healthy weight coach elearning programme will be outlined in the [Updates and amendments to the healthy weight coach training programme section](#) of this guidance.

## What are healthy weight coaches and what do they do?

A healthy weight coach engages and supports people living with overweight or obesity to make positive changes to their health and health behaviours with the aim of promoting a healthier weight.

The healthy weight coach is a new, voluntary role with an additional (and, in some cases, overlapping) set of competencies and responsibilities to an individual's existing substantive role. It is up to primary care networks, healthcare practices, pharmacies and staff should they wish to be trained to become a healthy weight coach.

The healthy weight coach is not a mandatory role and there is no additional remuneration for an individual taking up this role.

### Key responsibilities

A healthy weight coach supports people living with overweight or obesity, by:

- having conversations about health and wellbeing
- offering appropriate evidence-based information
- signposting or, where appropriate, referring to health and weight management services

- offering follow-up conversations during a person's weight management journey

## **Having conversations about health and wellbeing**

A healthy weight coach will be able to have a conversation with a person living with overweight or obesity about weight sensitively, confidently and non-judgementally. They will use a person-centred approach to elicit a person's knowledge, beliefs and perceptions about healthy eating, drinking and physical activity, including their motivations, barriers and enablers to change. A healthy weight coach will employ a range of communication skills and language that is appropriate based on a person's needs.

## **Offering appropriate evidence-based information**

A trained healthy weight coach will have a basic understanding of the importance of a healthy balanced diet, regular physical activity and other behaviours that may influence health and weight and will be able to provide evidence-based information on these topics to people seeking support. However, a healthy weight coach is not expected to be an expert in nutrition and dietetics or exercise medicine. In some cases, people may have more than one medical or social need which may be out of the scope of a healthy weight coach's expertise, and therefore should be signposted or referred to further support.

## **Signposting or referring to health and weight management services**

A healthy weight coach will need to know what support and services exist to signpost or, where this forms part of their substantive role, refer people to weight management services and support.

There are a range of services and support available to adults living with overweight or obesity to help them work towards a healthier weight. This includes national weight management services, as well as those available in the local community. The way in which weight management services in England are delivered locally varies greatly. Therefore, it is important healthy weight coaches understand what is available so that they can signpost or refer people to the most appropriate support. In some cases, there will be multiple services available which means it's important for a healthy weight coach to discuss the options with people to ensure they're offered a choice so they can access the right support for them.

A National and local weight management service mapping template (Annex A) has been developed to support healthy weight coaches and primary care networks to map the services available to people in their local community.

## **Offering follow-up conversations**

A healthy weight coach will be able to provide an initial discussion and offer ongoing support to people during their weight management journey. This can help to motivate people, as well as provide an opportunity to discuss people's concerns or issues they may be experiencing as they make changes to their behaviour.

It is up to the primary care network and staff trained as healthy weight coaches to ensure processes are in place to have follow-up conversations with those people seeking support. More information is available within the [Practical considerations](#) section of this guidance document.

## **Who can become a healthy weight coach?**

Any staff member working within a primary care network who (1) already engages and interacts with people as part of their role; and (2) is interested in supporting people who want to prioritise their weight, health and wellbeing can become a healthy weight coach. There are no prior experience, skills or qualification requirements for this role.

It is a non-clinical role, though those with clinical roles are encouraged to complete the training to become a healthy weight coach as it will help to provide them with the information and tools to have supportive conversations with people about weight.

This may include, but is not limited to:

- GPs
- Practice Nurses
- Pharmacists
- Pharmacy Technicians
- Qualified health champions<sup>1</sup>
- Physician Associates
- Paramedics
- First Contact Physiotherapists
- Dieticians
- Occupational Therapists
- Podiatrists
- Trainee Nursing Associates
- Nursing Associates
- Mental Health Practitioners
- Social Prescribing Link Workers
- Health and Wellbeing Coaches
- Care Co-ordinators

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<sup>1</sup> Staff in community pharmacies who have completed The Royal Society for Public Health, level 2 award: Understanding Health Improvement

## Healthy weight coach role description

The purpose of the role, including key responsibilities and eligibility requirements of the role are included in the Healthy weight coach role description (Annex B).

## How do you become a healthy weight coach?

The healthy weight coach elearning programme can be accessed via the following platforms:

- [Health Education England's \(HEE\) elearning for healthcare \(eLfh\) hub](#)
- [Personalised Care Institute's \(PCI\) platform](#)

The healthy weight coach elearning content is identical regardless of which elearning platform is used.

Once all the sessions are completed then a HEE's eLfh certificate of completion is generated automatically. The learner can download the certificate and print it if required or store as a PDF copy.

Learners can access the elearning programme through the PCI. The training is endorsed by the PCI and on completion learners can receive 2½ continuous professional development (CPD) points and a PCI certificate for their learning portfolios.

## What are the benefits to having a healthy weight coach in your primary care network or becoming a healthy weight coach yourself?

Supporting people to move towards a healthier weight can have important benefits to the health and wellbeing of the individual seeking support, individual primary care practices, as well as primary care networks and the NHS by reducing ill-health related to overweight or obesity.

Those completing the training will be equipped with the means to have meaningful conversations to support people to move towards a healthier weight.

## **Weight Management Enhanced Service 2021/22 in GP practices.**

From 1 July 2021, NHS England offered GP practices the voluntary opportunity to participate in a new Weight Management Enhanced Service, which encourages GP practices to develop a supportive environment for clinicians to engage with patients living with obesity<sup>2</sup> about their weight. Patients who are ready to make behavioural changes will be offered, and if appropriate to do so, referred to relevant weight management services<sup>3</sup>. GP practices appropriately referring patients living with obesity will be financially incentivised. GP practices that signed up to this enhanced service must ensure staff involved in conversations with patients have the necessary skills and training to have effective conversations in encouraging behaviour change and weight management.

The healthy weight coach elearning programme is one way in which staff can obtain these skills. Practices participating in the enhanced service may wish to encourage GPs and suitably qualified healthcare professionals to complete the healthy weight coach elearning programme as one way to fulfil this requirement.

- The announcement of the Weight Management Enhanced Service can be found [here](#).
- The Weight Management Enhanced Service specification can be found [here](#).

The Weight Management Enhanced Service attracts a payment for a GP or a suitably qualified healthcare professional in GP practices referring a patient living with obesity to a suitable weight management service; there is no incentive for referring patients living with overweight to these services. Moreover, the financial incentive will not be paid if the referral is not made by a GP or suitably qualified healthcare professional working in a GP practice.

## **Why is the healthy weight coach role needed?**

Today, around two-thirds (63%) of adults are above a healthy weight, and of these, half are living with obesity. As well as being associated with a range of chronic health conditions, recent evidence shows that people who are living with overweight or obesity who contract

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<sup>2</sup> Defined as a Body Mass Index (BMI)  $\geq 30$  or  $\geq 27.5$  for those of Black, Asian and other minority ethnic groups.

<sup>3</sup> Weight management services include those listed in Annexe A – summary of Weight Management Enhanced Service; Component 2: patient support and referral. Section 8. [Letter: update to GP contract arrangements for 2021/22 \(england.nhs.uk\)](#)

coronavirus (COVID-19) are more likely to be admitted to hospital, admitted to an intensive care unit and, to die from COVID-19 compared to those of a healthy weight.

## **Tackling obesity: the government strategy (2020)**

In July 2020, the government announced an ambitious strategy to tackle obesity. To fulfil several commitments made in this strategy, the government announced an additional £100 million in 2021/22 to improve the support available for adults, children and families to achieve and maintain a healthier weight. This funding will help to expand the availability of weight management services across the country, as well as increase signposting and referrals to weight management services.

## **Expanding weight management services**

Over £70 million is being invested into weight management services, made available through the NHS and local authorities, which will enable up to 700,000 adults to have access to support that can help them to lose weight. This includes improving the availability of universal services, including the NHS Weight Loss Plan app, expanding behavioural (tier 2) weight management services commissioned through local authorities, delivering a new (tier 2) NHS Digital Weight Management Programme for people living with obesity who also have a diagnosis of diabetes or hypertension or both, and delivering specialist clinical support for people with more complex needs. The government's obesity strategy also set out to expand the NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme, identifying those at high risk and referring them onto a behaviour change programme, including high-impact weight management services.

## **NHS England and Improvement's new Weight Management Enhanced Service**

To meet the training requirements for practices participating in the Weight Management Enhanced Service for 2021/22, GPs and suitably qualified healthcare professionals in GP practices can complete the healthy weight coach elearning programme. For more information on the Weight Management Enhanced Service, see [What are the benefits to having a healthy weight coach in your primary care network or becoming a healthy weight coach yourself?](#)

## **How do healthy weight coaches fit?**

The government's obesity strategy (2020) committed to offering all primary care networks the opportunity to equip their staff to support people to achieve a healthier weight by training to become a healthy weight coach. Healthy weight coaches can make an important



contribution to help normalise conversations about weight. They will look to engage and support people living with overweight or obesity, to help them make positive changes to their health and health behaviours, promote a healthier weight, and thereby reducing the likelihood of future health problems. Healthy weight coaches will be well-placed to signpost or refer people to weight management services.

## **How does the healthy weight coach elearning relate to other roles or training available in primary care?**

Both clinicians and non-clinicians in primary care can become a healthy weight coach.

Below are some specific examples of how the healthy weight coach elearning programme can support other training and roles within primary care.

### **GPs**

GPs and healthcare professionals working in a GP practice frequently have contact with patients living with overweight or obesity. The healthy weight coach elearning programme will provide them with the skills and confidence to have and structure these often-difficult conversations with their patients.

Until the end of March 2022, practices participating in the Weight Management Enhanced Service will be financially incentivised to refer patients living with obesity to weight management services. GP practices may wish to encourage GPs and suitably qualified healthcare professionals working in a GP practice to become healthy weight coaches so they can deliver the Weight Management Enhanced Service appropriately and effectively.

### **Health and Wellbeing Coaches**

Health and wellbeing coaches (HWBCs) predominately use health coaching skills to support people with lower levels of patient activation (that is, the knowledge, skills and confidence in patients and the extent to which they feel engaged and confident in taking care of their condition) to become active participants in their care so that they can reach their self-identified health and wellbeing goals. They may also provide access to self-management education, peer support and social prescribing.

The healthy weight coach elearning programme complements this role and will help HWBCs to structure conversations about weight, provide patients with evidence-based

information, signpost or refer them to further support, and follow-up during their weight management journey.

## **Pharmacists and pharmacy teams**

Around 80% of the English population live within a 20-minute walk of a local pharmacy and access is highest in the most deprived areas, illustrating the reach pharmacy can have into under-served communities. There are trusted professionals (pharmacists and pharmacy technicians) trained support staff on site, with no appointment required and long opening hours.

The healthy weight coach elearning programme will provide individuals who work in pharmacies with the skills and confidence to have conversations about weight with at-risk people, often when they're well. This builds on the Pharmacy Quality Scheme that includes a criterion for pharmacies to identify people who would benefit from weight management advice and onward referral to services, such as the NHS Digital Weight Management Programme.

This training will complement the existing role pharmacy teams can play in supporting people's health by providing individuals with information and additional support to adopt healthier behaviours and attain a healthier weight. Conversations about weight should occur in private, accessible spaces within the pharmacy setting to ensure the person is comfortable and able to have an open conversation.

## **Making Every Contact Count training**

Making Every Contact Count (MECC) is an approach to behaviour change that utilises the millions of day-to-day interactions that organisations and individuals have with other people to support them in making positive changes to their physical and mental health and wellbeing. This includes healthy eating, being physically active and keeping to a healthy weight. MECC enables the opportunistic delivery of consistent and concise healthy lifestyle information and enables individuals to engage in conversations about their health at scale across organisations and populations.

The healthy weight coach elearning complements MECC by providing in-depth information to help organisations and people have structured conversations about weight, provide them with evidence-based information, signpost or refer (where appropriate) people to further support, and follow up during their weight management journey.

# Governance

## Supervision arrangements for a healthy weight coach

A healthy weight coach should be supervised in line with the requirements for their substantive roles recruited through the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS). There are no additional supervision requirements for a healthy weight coach and therefore no additional costs for supervision expected.

Clinical supervision is primarily provided by a GP or by a verified and recognised advanced practitioner. CPD supervision is usually provided by a line manager, however this could also be offered by a senior professional from across the multi-disciplinary team.

It is the responsibility of the employing organisation to ensure there is appropriate supervision in place.

## Ongoing support for healthy weight coaches

Further support for primary care networks is available on the [PCN Development FutureNHS workspace](#), including a discussion forum to raise any further questions or queries about this Healthy weight coach reference guide or the Healthy weight coach elearning programme.

# Practical considerations

## Engaging people living with overweight or obesity

It is important to remember that talking about a person's weight can be an extremely sensitive topic, and by completing the healthy weight coach elearning programme, primary care staff will be well prepared to navigate these conversations and provide further support to people who need and want it.

Where appropriate, healthy weight coaches can approach people living with overweight or obesity and provide an offer of support. Because of the variety of roles within a primary care network that are able to become a healthy weight coach, the way in which they operate and document their conversations may differ depending on a healthy weight coaches' substantive role. In some cases, for example with GPs and practice nurses, a healthy weight coach may be the first point of contact and will be able to employ the skills from their training to provide support directly to a person. They will also be able to refer people directly into weight management services. In other instances, another member of the primary care

network may refer the person to a healthy weight coach. Practices should also accommodate self-referrals to healthy weight coaches.

It is important that primary care networks, primary care practices and pharmacies encourage people to engage with healthy weight coaches, and that healthy weight coaches are available to provide appointments to people.

## **Consultations with healthy weight coaches**

A healthy weight coach needs to make time available during their working week to provide the one-to-one, personalised support to people seeking help to achieve a healthier weight. It is up to primary care networks, and trained healthy weight coaches as to how they will ensure sufficient time and private, accessible space is made available to fulfil the duties of a healthy weight coach, and that people are able to book appointments, including follow-up appointments. This may be in-person or remotely, in line with individual practice policy. The time required to fulfil the role will be dependent on demand, current staff capacity and the priority given to the role within each practice or network.

A consultation between a healthy weight coach and a person should occur in a private, accessible space within a primary healthcare setting to ensure the person is comfortable and able to have an open conversation. In some instances, a healthy weight coach may need to weigh and measure a person to calculate their BMI so it's important that a set of calibrated scales and equipment to measure height and weight is available in consultation rooms if the appointment is happening in person. If the consultation is taking place remotely, individuals can self-report their height and weight so that BMI can be calculated.

A healthy weight coach will know how to structure conversations with people to ensure they provide appropriate, evidence-based and sensitive support for people seeking help. The Healthy weight coach checklist (Annex C) outlines the key points to help a healthy weight coach deliver the role effectively when having conversations with people living with overweight or obesity.

## **Time commitment**

### **Training**

To become trained as a healthy weight coach you must complete all 8 elearning sessions. The duration of each session varies between 20-30 minutes with an estimated total completion time of around 2½ hours. The training can be saved and returned to at any time, allowing people to complete the training over multiple sessions.

## **Performing role**

A healthy weight coach needs to make time available during their working weeks to provide the one-on-one, personalised support to people seeking help to achieve a healthier weight. It is up to primary care networks, individual practices and trained healthy weight coaches to ensure sufficient time is made available to fulfil the duties of a healthy weight coach, and that people are able to book an appointment (including follow-up appointments) with a healthy weight coach.

As a guide, consultations with a healthy weight coach typically last between 10 and 30 minutes.

The time required to fulfil the role will be dependent on demand, current staff capacity and the priority given to the role within each practice or primary care network. It is important that teams regularly review whether the time commitment planned for a healthy weight coach to fulfil their duties is sufficient and appropriate for their team and patient lists.

## **Documenting conversations with people**

A healthy weight coach should document all conversations with people in clinical management systems to ensure a record of the conversation and actions taken to support the person. This is particularly important for when a person attends follow-up discussions with a healthy weight coach and that other members of staff are aware of what support has already been provided.

It is important that actions taken to support a person, including signposting or referring to a weight management service, is recorded in the clinical management system.

A healthy weight coach may also check a person's BMI during a consultation, so it's important that when BMI is measured that it is updated on a person's clinical record. This will help other primary care staff to offer and provide the right support for that person, and also fulfils the Quality Outcomes Framework and new Weight Management Enhanced Service requirements.

## **Providing follow-up support and coaching**

It is important that a person attending an appointment with a healthy weight coach is offered ongoing support and coaching should they want it. At the end of a discussion or appointment with a person, a healthy weight coach should offer a follow-up conversation.

## Summary

It is up to the healthy weight coaches, the healthcare practice, pharmacy and primary care network in which they work to decide how much time to dedicate to fulfilling the healthy weight coach role. This will be dependent on demand, staff capacity and the priority given to the role within each healthcare practice, pharmacy or primary care network.

Practices need to have systems in place so people can book appointments with a healthy weight coach.

To promote healthy weight coaches, healthcare practices, pharmacies and primary care networks can communicate the role to people, taking opportunities to raise the topic of weight in accordance with MECC principles.

A healthy weight coach can take the opportunity to promote healthier weight with their colleagues.

To ensure an accurate record is available to support future conversations, a healthy weight coach is encouraged to record all conversations and appointments with people on clinical management systems.

## Questions and feedback

Should you have further questions or feedback about the role of a healthy weight coach, or the supporting documentation, please contact: [wholesystemsobesity@phe.gov.uk](mailto:wholesystemsobesity@phe.gov.uk)

For questions, feedback or issues with accessing the training, please contact: [Support Forms](#)

## Updates and amendments to healthy weight coach elearning programme

Version	Date published	Update/amendment	Rationale for update/amendment
Version 1	10 November 2021	Healthy weight coach elearning programme launched	Not applicable

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