

**Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol](#) ar [Atal iechyd gwael - gordewdra](#)**

**This response was submitted to the [Health and Social Care Committee](#) consultation on [Prevention of ill health - obesity](#)**

**OB39 : Ymateb gan: Slimming World | Response from: Slimming World**

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**Written evidence for the ‘Prevention of ill health – obesity’ consultation**

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Submitting evidence on behalf of Slimming World.

Response to key questions as below:

**Interventions in pregnancy and early childhood to promote good nutrition and prevent obesity**

We’d like to highlight the following studies which are relevant to this question:

**During pregnancy**

*Feasibility study* A feasibility study with midwives in Cardiff and pregnant women living with obesity to explore referring pregnant women to Slimming World.

- Attending Slimming World during pregnancy had no detrimental effect on length of pregnancy and birth weight.
- Using Institute of Medicine guidelines, 94% of women avoided excess weight gain during their pregnancy.
- Reductions in the number of babies born both small and large for gestational age were seen.
- Postnatally, breastfeeding rates were higher than the national average. As well as adopting a range of new healthy eating and activity habits, 70% of mums who started breastfeeding were still doing so at 28 days after giving birth.

*Jewell K et al. 2014. The healthy eating and lifestyle in pregnancy feasibility study. British Journal of Midwifery 22(10):727-736*

*HELP study* A large scale randomised controlled trial, involving 598 women during pregnancy and up to 12-months after giving birth, looked at the effects of attending a Slimming World group during this time.

- Women who had attended Slimming World during and after pregnancy had healthier diets, including higher fibre intake, and had significantly lower levels of risky drinking than the control group.

*Simpson S et al 2021. Healthy eating and lifestyle in pregnancy (HELP): a cluster randomised trial to evaluate the effectiveness of a weight management intervention for pregnant women with obesity on weight at 12 months postpartum. International Journal of Obesity 45:1728–1739*

### **Postnatal evidence**

*Postnatal weight outcomes* A survey involving 1,015 women who had joined a local Slimming World group postnatally for weight management support.

- This survey showed that most women join Slimming World between 6-26 weeks after giving birth.
- Attendance at Slimming World resulted in significant weight loss and increases in self-esteem, self-confidence and wellbeing.

*Avery A et al. 2016. Factors influencing engagement in postnatal weight management and subsequent weight and wellbeing outcomes. British Journal of Midwifery 24(11): 806-812.*

*Gestational diabetes trial* Study aiming to determine the impact of a lifestyle intervention program (Slimming World) for women who were overweight and had gestational diabetes during a previous pregnancy.

- Women who attended Slimming World had greater weight losses at 6 months compared with usual care, which could benefit long-term health and help to prevent type 2 diabetes for women with previous gestational diabetes.

*Holmes VA et al. 2018. Postnatal lifestyle intervention for overweight women with previous gestational diabetes: A randomized controlled trial. The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism, 103(7): 2478-2487.*

*SWAN study* A feasibility study involving women with an overweight BMI or excess weight gain during their pregnancy.

- Women who joined Slimming World postnatally were significantly less likely to be drinking sugary drinks and alcohol than women in the control group 6 months after giving birth.
- Women who attended 10 or more Slimming World sessions had significantly greater weight loss at 12 months than women in the control group.

*Bick D et al. 2020. Lifestyle information and commercial weight management groups to support maternal postnatal weight management and positive lifestyle behaviour: the SWAN feasibility randomised controlled trial. BJOG: An International Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology 127:636-645*

### **People's ability to access appropriate support and treatment services for obesity**

It's vital that across Wales health professionals have access to services to refer to and to offer patients a choice to ensure they can select what will best suit them and their needs. It's vital that clear care pathways are in place so GPs are well aware of the services available to their patients and that services are commissioned across all areas. Ideally, nationwide there would be consistent commissioning of weight management services.

### **International examples of success (including potential applicability to the Welsh context)**

Commercial weight management organisations, like Slimming World, which meet NICE best practice standards have a proven track record for playing an important part in the weight management pathway. Not only can they provide a scalable solution, they have been shown to be cost effective and importantly accessible to a wide range of people. Below is a summary of some key relevant research, please do get in touch if we can provide any further information or context.

- The programme has been [reviewed, audited and measured](#) and results show that referred patients who attend 10 out of 12 sessions lose 5.5% of their body weight in 12 weeks (Stubbs et al, 2011). Those patients who have more to lose and continue to get support go on to lose over 10% of their body weight over [12 months \(Toon et al, 2019\)](#).
- An extensive amount of research has been conducted evaluating the success of these partnerships and continues to show referral is a cost effective and successful scheme. Research published in the [British Journal of General Practice 2014](#) shows that at 12 months, Slimming World leads to a greater weight loss than other weight loss programmes (Madigan et al, 2014). In 2014, an [independent economic evaluation](#) by the University of Leeds found that, compared to usual care, Slimming World on Referral is cost-effective against the standards set by NICE at 12 months and over a lifetime (Meads et al, 2014).
- In addition a study led by the University of Oxford and published in The Lancet in 2016, found that patients are motivated to lose weight by conversations with their GP and, if they also provide referral to a weight loss programme like Slimming World, then patients are five times more likely to be successful with their weight loss ([Aveyard et al, 2016 The Lancet](#)).
- A study looking at the benefits for people referred with type 2 diabetes also showed beneficial impact on blood pressure and triglyceride levels. ([Endocrinology, diabetes and metabolism, 2019](#))
- Obesity prevalence is higher among those living in areas of greater deprivation so it's important weight management services effectively support people in these areas. In a secondary analysis of our latest referral audit, data from 27,560 patients showed clinically significant weight losses were achieved irrespective of socioeconomic status ([Toon et al, 2019](#)).
- Research shows that lifestyle weight management programmes facilitate widespread behaviour change. In a recent evaluation of Slimming World's approach, not only were positive behaviour changes seen in those engaging with the service, a positive influence on the wider family network was also seen. In [2021 published research](#) showed the significant improvements in members' wellbeing and positive behaviour changes made since joining, including:
  - Significantly increasing fruit and vegetable consumption
  - Eating fatty and sugary foods less often
  - Drinking sugary drinks less often
  - Cooking from scratch more often
  - Increasing physical activity levels (Avery et al, 2021)

- It's also important to consider the benefits of recommendations from healthcare professionals. In members who have attended without a referral, ie self-funding members, the programme has been shown to support members to achieve clinically significant weight loss at 12 months (Toon et al, 2024 <https://doi.org/10.1111/cob.12665>). Sustained positive behaviour changes up to 3 years after joining have also been reported (Avery et al, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nutos.2023.07.003>).

### **The stigma and discrimination experienced by people who are overweight/obese;**

It's vital that when GPs and other healthcare professionals are discussing areas such as excess weight with patients that they are skilled to raise the issue sensitively. We would suggest that specific training is given to include skills and confidence in the ability to be able to sensitively raise the issue of weight with their patients. It's vital that any conversations around weight are supportive and compassionate and avoid any feeling of judgement or stigma around weight. This is an area which many health care professionals struggle with and often leads to any discussion being avoided and should be addressed through nationwide and consistent training to ensure they have the relevant skills and competence in this area.

Refs - [Lavin, et al. \(2015\). Journal of Primary Health Care, 25\(2\): 18-22](#); [Swift, et al \(2013\) Patient Educ. Couns., 91 \(2\), 186-191](#)