



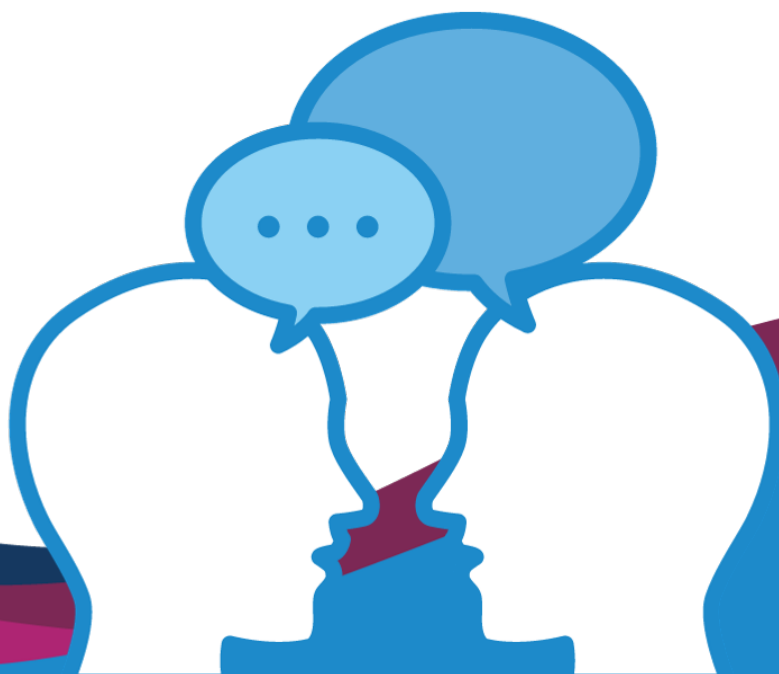
**Lancashire and
South Cumbria**
Integrated Care Board

Review of tier three weight management services

Listening to communities report

April 2025

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Introduction

Tier three weight management services are a specialised form of weight management, typically offered through NHS services, that provide intensive support for individuals struggling with obesity. These services often involve a multi-disciplinary team (MDT) approach, incorporating expertise from dietitians, psychologists, physical activity specialists and other healthcare professionals. The goal is to help individuals achieve sustainable weight loss and improve their overall health through lifestyle changes, behavioural modifications and in some cases with the aid of weight-loss medications.

Tier three services are a step below the more extreme tier four, which involves patients undergoing bariatric surgery. Typically, a patient will only access tier four having demonstrated a genuine attempt to manage their weight under a tier three service.

In Lancashire and South Cumbria, services are delivered in a non-uniform way based on historical commissioning arrangements inherited by the ICB, which replaced the former eight clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) in Lancashire and South Cumbria. Access to services can be further complicated by providers being awarded contracts in other areas of the country and thus obtaining a 'qualifying contract' under the NHS's patient choice framework.

The ICB has committed to looking at ways to standardise tier three weight management services across Lancashire and South Cumbria to reduce inequity and postcode lotteries and to ensure best value for money both for the NHS and for taxpayers living in the region. As part of this review, the views of patients who have experienced the current tier three weight management services in Lancashire and South Cumbria were sought.

Executive summary

Twenty-eight people were heard from during our engagement exercise, either filling out an online survey or taking part in online focus groups. While numbers were quite small, this was direct engagement with service users of tier three weight loss service providers for people living in Lancashire and South Cumbria and provided rich feedback.

Overall, patients reported very positive experiences of the services and the majority it would appear have lost a significant amount of weight, which has resulted in additional physical and mental health benefits.

Staff within the services were praised as being supportive and helpful and had gone a long way to assisting patients in changing their perceptions of food, developing better habits and ultimately losing weight in a sustainable and manageable way.

There were concerns raised but these were primarily about the length of time a number of patients had to wait from referral to access of the service and also the lack of ongoing support following discharge.

Who have we heard from?



How many people got involved?

Six people were spoken to face-to-face across **three** virtual focus groups. Two of these patients were accessing support from Oviva to manage their weight and had not yet been discharged. The other four patients were under the Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust service.

22 completed responses to the online survey were received, which was shared by providers with patients.

How did we speak to people?



Virtual focus groups

All service providers were asked to provide contact details for patients who would be interested in taking part in focus groups. We were provided with details of a small number of patients by Blackpool Teaching Hospitals and Oviva and spoke to them in separate groups across three virtual sessions using Microsoft Teams on Tuesday 8, Thursday 10 and Wednesday 23 April 2025.

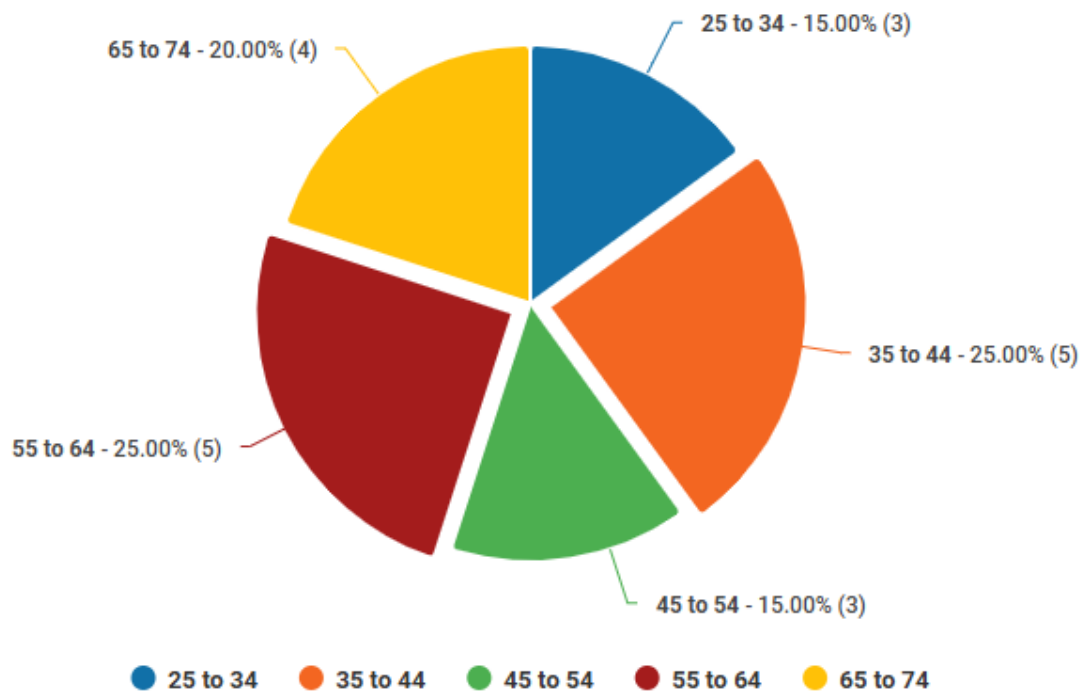
During the sessions, attendees were asked to talk through their journey through the tier three weight management service, their weight loss, and provide feedback on their overall experiences of the services.

Survey

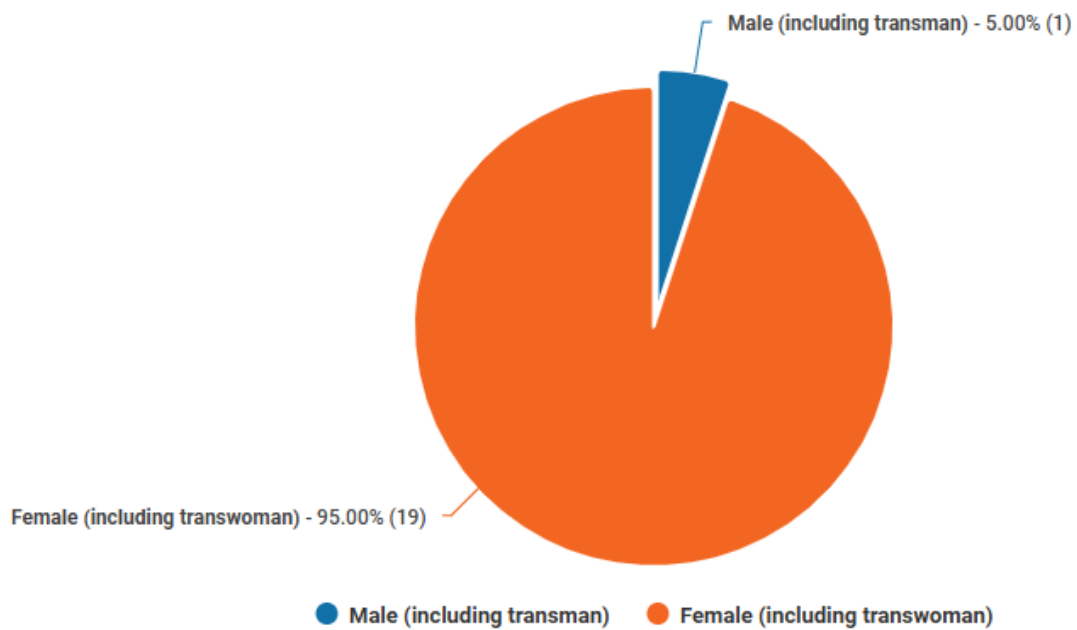
An online survey was developed and promoted directly to patients via their service provider. It was also posted on ICB social media. The survey was live from Friday 28 March to Tuesday 29 April 2025.

As part of the survey, demographic data was captured. Around 90 per cent (20) of respondents agreed to provide this data. The responses, detailing who responded to the survey, are below:

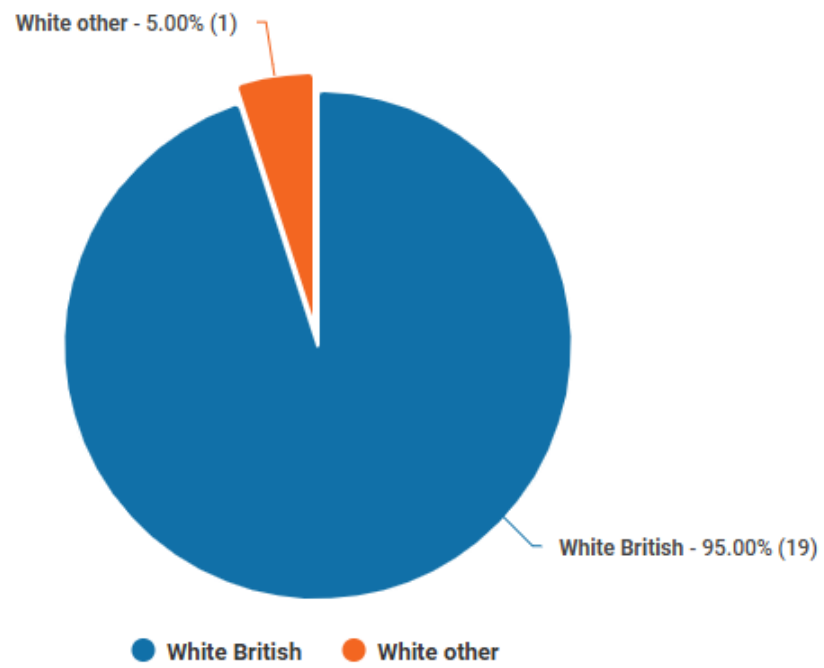
Age



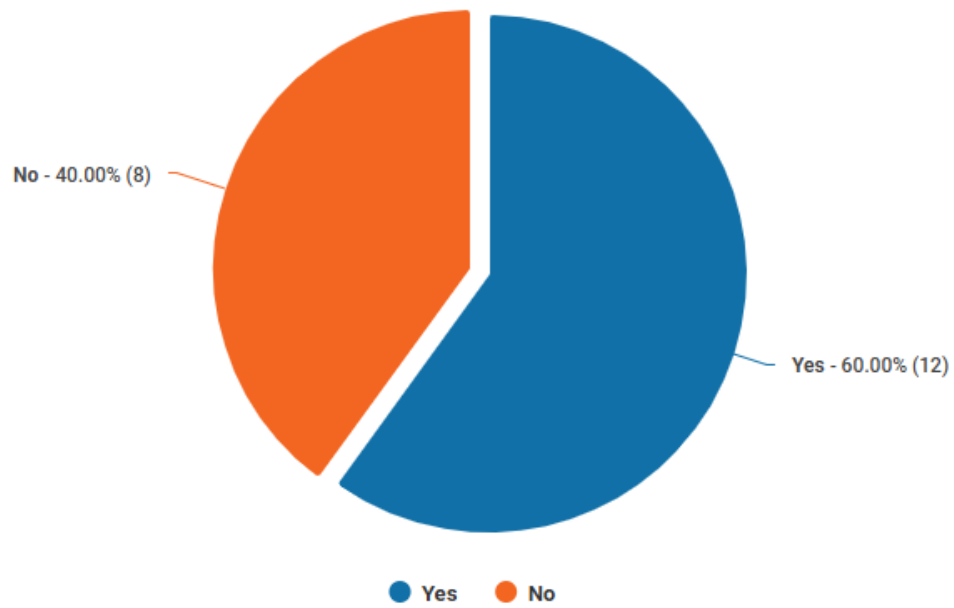
Gender



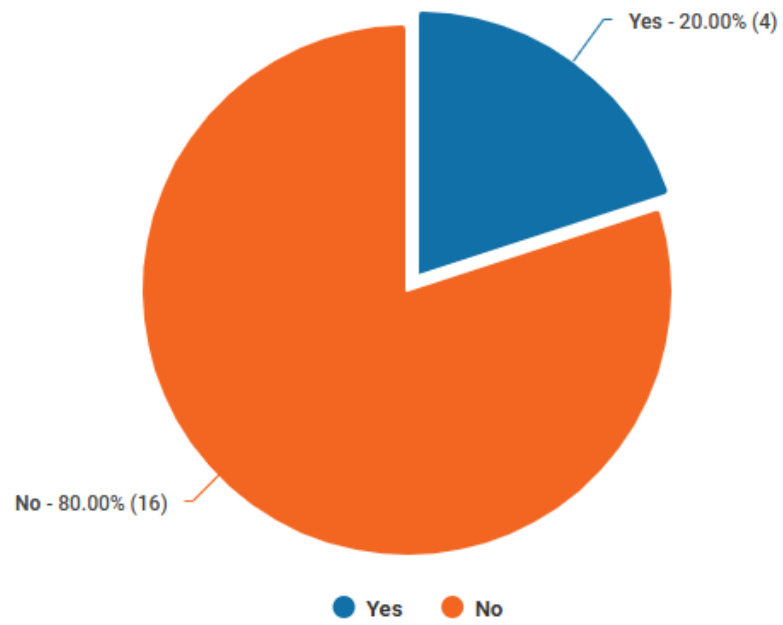
Ethnicity



Disability



Carer



What did we hear?



Focus groups

Six people took part in focus groups. Four were patients of Blackpool Teaching Hospitals' weight management service while two were being supported by Oviva.

Below is a summary of the comments made:

Blackpool Teaching Hospitals

All participants who had accessed the service at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals had done so due to health issues being exacerbated by their weight and had demonstrated a desire to lose the weight but needed support to do so.

One said he had initially been seeking bariatric surgery and had been told he had to try the tier three service initially. He was initially unwilling to engage with the tier three service but, having been re-referred he described an extremely positive experience that had not only helped him to lose weight but had seen him lose interest completely in undergoing surgery.

Two of the four participants from Blackpool Teaching Hospitals said they had faced significant delays in accessing support following referral, one due to a loss of paperwork and the other had been accepted on to the service but experienced a delay before gaining access to psychological support.

Feedback was universally positive. All patients had been satisfied at their weight loss and the support received had been appropriate and useful. Dietitian Rani was singled out for praise from two participants who said the advice provided helped them to see a new perspective on eating and weight loss that had helped them create healthy habits would stand them in good stead for the future.

Some of the participants had taken part in group sessions which had provided valuable peer support and shared experiences. However it was recognised that the group format was not ideal for everyone and perhaps smaller groups would allow for more effective interaction.

A concern raised was around the loss of support following discharge and fears that without the support the patient may struggle to maintain the weight loss. It was suggested that perhaps a longer period of support could be implemented, or ongoing monitoring could be offered via an app.

In addition, one participant raised that the tone of communications was somewhat patronising and treated patients as if they were 'morally defective' for allowing themselves to become obese. He said he felt talked down to.

Oviva

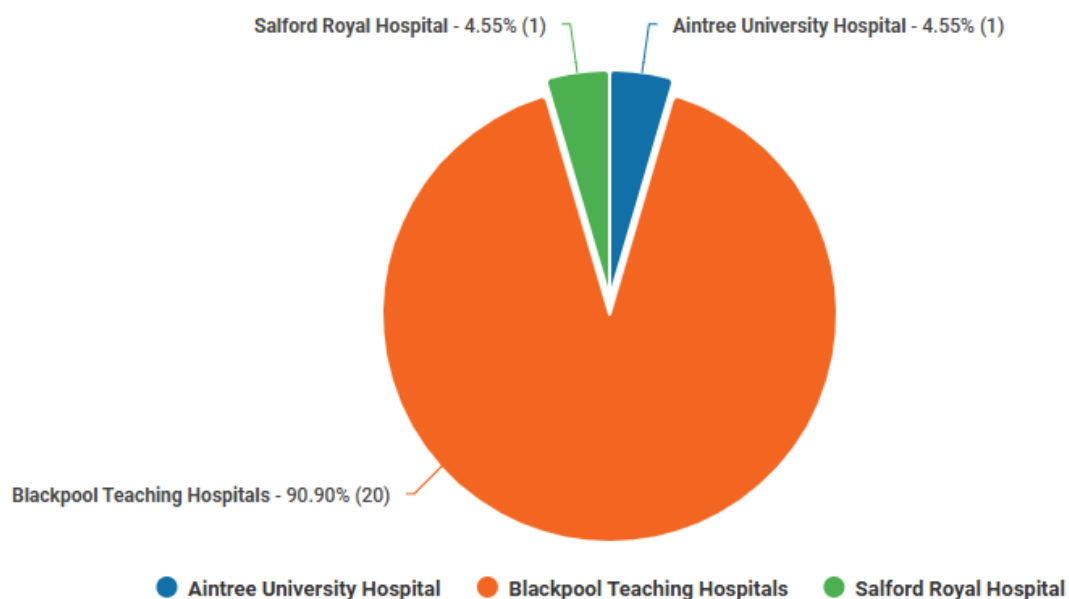
Both participants were on a 24-month pathway with Oviva and have been accessing the injectables. They shared their positive experiences with the Oviva weight management program, highlighting the support provided through the app and phone calls. They both mentioned the effectiveness of the injectables in helping them manage cravings and achieving significant weight loss.

The referral process had been relatively straightforward and no real delays in accessing the service had been experienced.

Both patients said they were very satisfied with the quality of service provided by Oviva, appreciating the prompt responses and helpfulness of the staff. They found the digital service convenient and accessible, with no concerns about the lack of face-to-face interactions.

There were minor concerns about how the transition off the injectables will be managed towards the end of the program. Both participants said they hoped to continue accessing the app after the program ends for ongoing support.

Survey: Which NHS weight management service did you access?



Ideally there would have been more responses from services other than Blackpool Teaching Hospitals. We are assured that all providers made efforts to promote the survey to their patients.

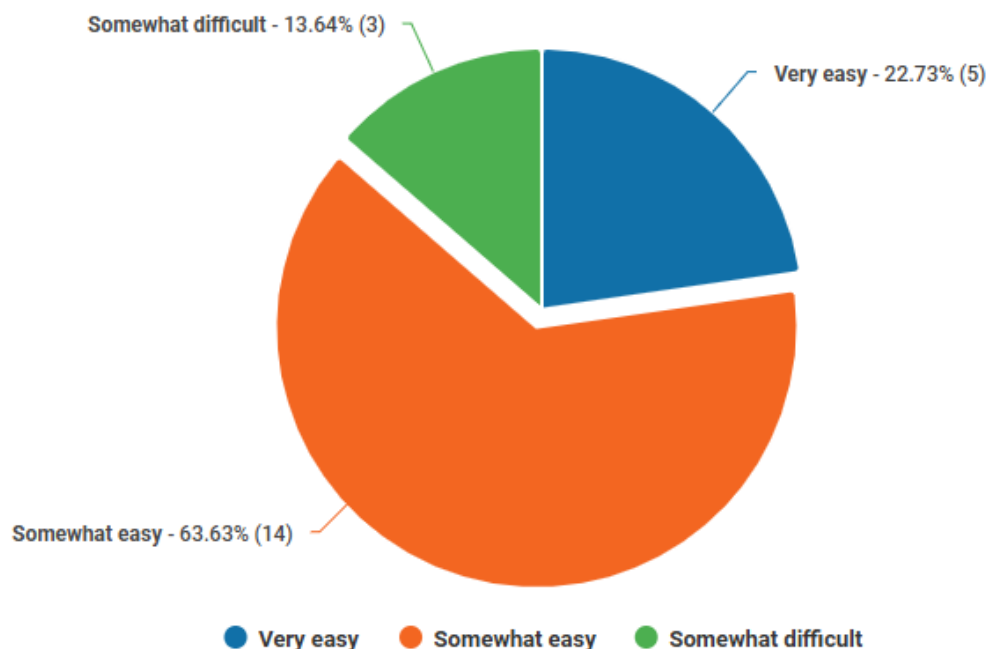
Survey responses: Please briefly tell us what prompted you to seek support with your weight

Comments responding to this question included:

- **Transgender individual with high BMI:** A person with a BMI over 56 sought support to reduce their BMI to under 30 in preparation for surgery.
- **Atrial fibrillation:** A nurse at a heart clinic suggested the NHS weight management service, and the individual agreed.
- **Post-illness weight gain:** After a serious illness, one person struggled to lose weight despite their best efforts.
- **Long-term overweight:** A GP referral was made for someone who had been overweight for many years and had tried various methods to lose weight.
- **GP recommendation:** Another individual was referred by their GP due to a high BMI affecting their life.

- **Struggling with food habits:** One person had a poor relationship with food and found that constant dieting led to weight gain.
- **Health issues:** Several individuals sought support to improve their health and quality of life by losing weight.
- **Desire to improve overall health:** Some people wanted to improve their overall health and felt their excess weight was affecting them.
- **Inconsistent weight loss:** For years, one person struggled with consistent weight loss, often regaining weight after losing it.
- **Difficulty losing weight alone:** One person found it challenging to lose weight by themselves, often falling off the wagon.
- **Weight gain after gastric band removal:** Another individual sought support after gaining weight following the removal of a gastric band.
- **Frustration with weight:** Some people were frustrated with their weight and knew they needed support.
- **Health issues not taken seriously:** One person felt their health issues were not taken seriously unless they addressed their weight.
- **Musculoskeletal problem:** A GP suggested weight loss to someone with a musculoskeletal problem, who had previously experienced ridicule and fat-shaming.
- **Rapid weight gain after managing diabetes:** Another individual sought help after rapid weight gain affected their daily activities.
- **Wheelchair-bound individual:** Being wheelchair-bound made it difficult for one person to lose weight, and they needed support and guidance to get started.

Survey responses: How easy did you find the process of being referred?



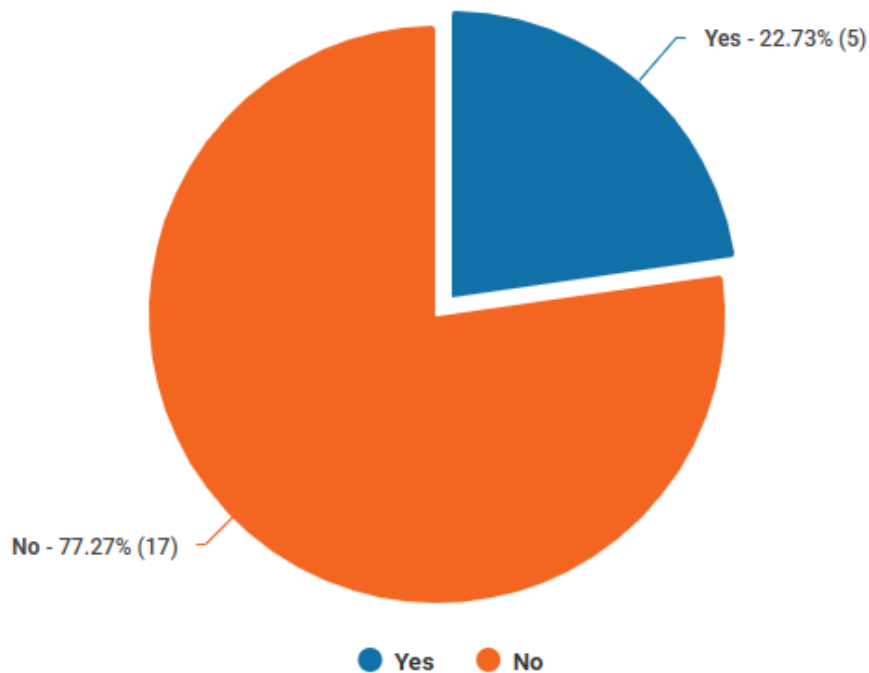
Respondents were asked to explain their answer. A summary of responses is below:

- **Referral process:** Many individuals found the referral process straightforward and easy once initiated by their GP. However, there were instances where communication issues led to delays or confusion, such as not receiving initial invitations or being discharged for not responding.

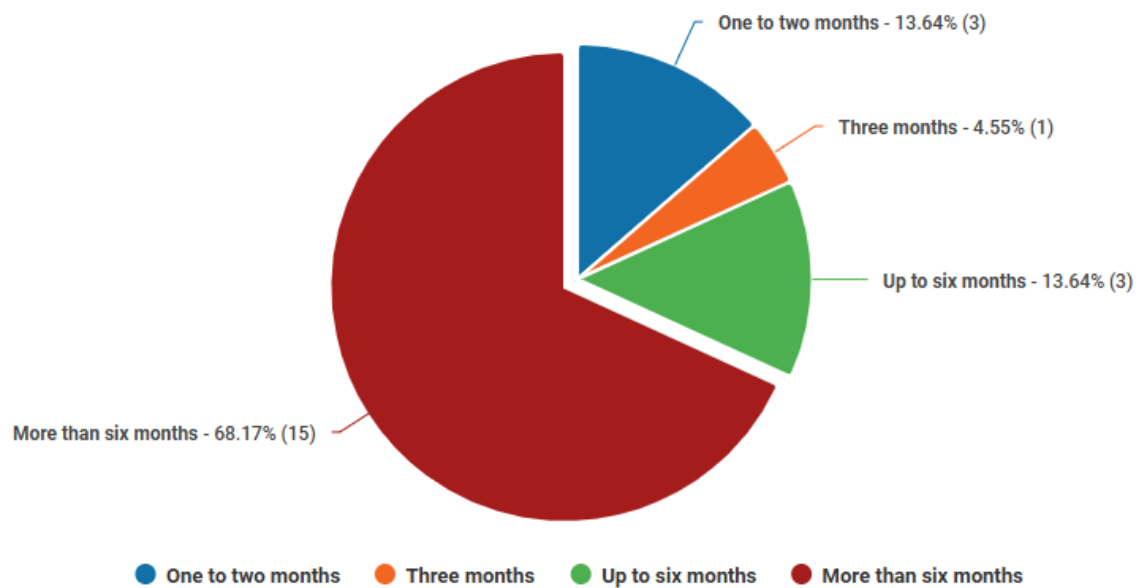
- **Waiting times:** A number of comments mentioned long waiting times, some around a year or more, before receiving the first phone call or appointment. This waiting period was a source of frustration and concern, especially for those struggling with weight-related mental health issues.
- **Communication and navigation:** Some individuals found it difficult to navigate the system and felt that communication could have been better. This included challenges in understanding the options available and figuring out their status in the waiting list.
- **Support and experience:** Despite the long waiting times, several comments noted that once the referral was completed, the process went smoothly, and they felt supported. Positive experiences included enjoying visits, receiving answers to questions, and feeling that the process fit well with their lives.

Overall, while the referral process itself was generally seen as straightforward, the lengthy waiting times and occasional communication issues were significant concerns for many individuals.

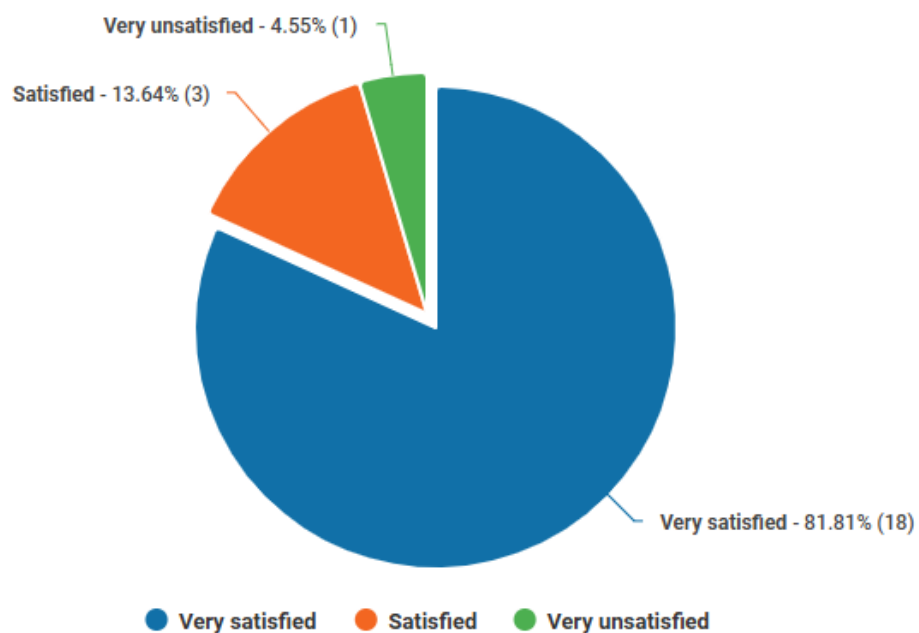
Survey responses: Were you given a choice of where you could be referred?



Survey responses: How long did you have to wait to be seen following your referral?



Survey responses: How satisfied were you with the quality of the service you received?



Survey responses: How satisfied were you with the quality of the service you received?

- **Supportive and knowledgeable staff:**
 - There was praise for the Blackpool Teaching Hospitals staff including:
 - Dietician Rani Nagarajah for being helpful, supportive and knowledgeable. Rani helped patients understand their diet, adapt their eating choices and referred them to other practitioners as needed.

- Maria was mentioned as being incredibly supportive, understanding, and non-judgmental. Patients felt listened to and encouraged by her.
 - Katie, who handled weigh-ins, was also noted for her supportiveness.
 - Monika and the entire team were appreciated for their support throughout clients' journeys.
- HCAs, support staff, and doctors, were also commended for being professional, sympathetic, non-judgmental and supportive. This support extended to helping patients work through barriers and providing encouragement and guidance.
- **Effective communication and regular check-ins:**
 - Communication between the service and clients was highlighted as being very good, with regular check-ins and appointments booked consistently. Zoom calls were easily accessed and the professionals were described as understanding and empathetic.
 - Clients felt the service made them a priority and they could easily ask questions and receive help.
- **Educational and practical support:**
 - The service provided valuable information about diet, including what foods to eat, portion sizes and behaviours that trigger eating. This education helped clients understand why they over-eat and make healthier choices.
 - Monthly weigh-ins and group meetings, including referrals to activities like Active Blackpool, were beneficial in keeping clients on track.
- **Positive impact on patients' lives:**
 - Patients expressed gratitude for the support they received, noting it helped them stay on track and achieve their weight-loss goals. Some mentioned the service had given them a second chance at life, particularly those who had undergone weight-loss surgery.
 - The non-judgmental and supportive approach of the staff was a significant cultural shift for some patients, helping them overcome deeply ingrained negative perceptions about weight and eating behaviours.

Overall, the comments reflect a highly supportive, knowledgeable and professional service that has made a positive impact on patients' lives through effective communication, regular check-ins and educational support.

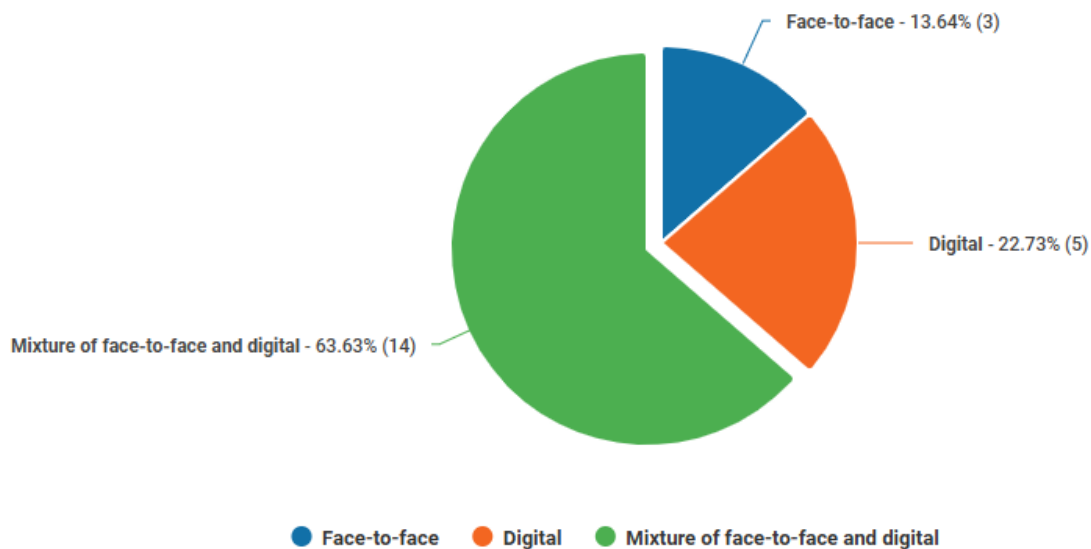
Survey responses: How could the service be improved?

- **Extended support and follow-up:**
 - Several individuals expressed a desire for the program to last longer than 12 months, suggesting continued support, such as appointments every two months and monthly weigh-ins for up to two years, would help maintain healthy eating habits and provide ongoing accountability.
- **Communication and contact:**
 - A patient was discharged after only one attempt to contact them, suggesting that more persistent follow-up would be helpful.
- **Waiting times:**
 - Many comments highlighted the need for shorter waiting times both to start the program and between appointments. Long waiting times were seen as a barrier to maintaining momentum and motivation for weight loss.
 - There was an understanding of the demand on the service, but a call for more investment to reduce these wait times.
- **Psychological services:**

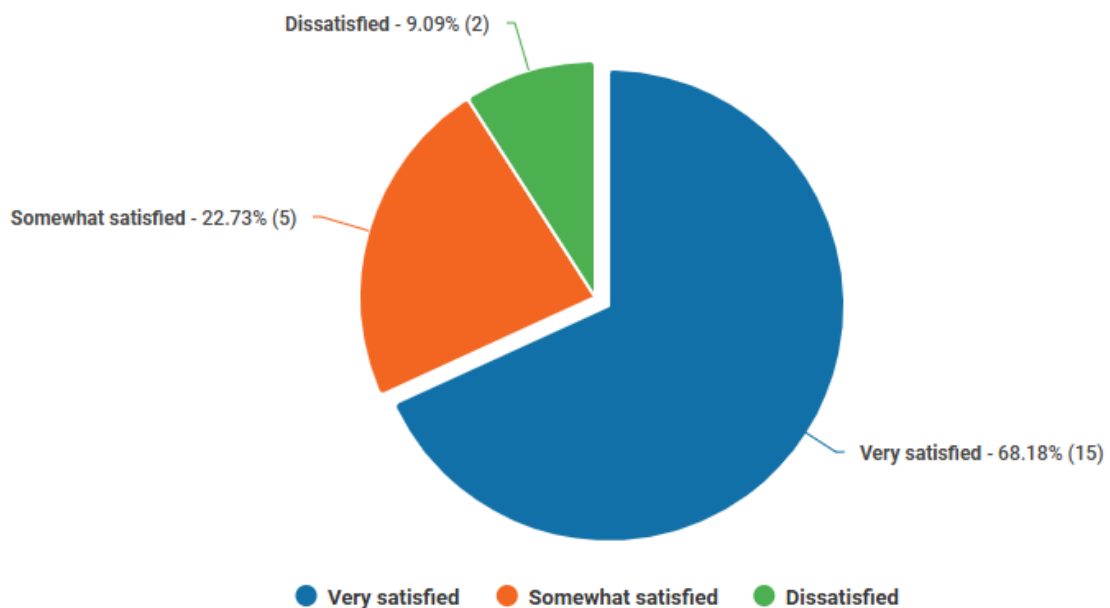
- There were calls for more investment in psychological services, as long waits and cancellations due to high demand made it difficult to address emotional issues associated with weight.
- **Positive feedback:**
 - Some felt that nothing needed to be improved apart from the initial long wait time.

Overall, while the service received positive feedback for its support and staff, there were clear calls for extended support, better communication, shorter waiting times, more investment in psychological services, and increased funding to enhance the overall effectiveness of the program.

Survey responses: How could the service be improved?



Survey responses: How satisfied were you with your reduction in weight?

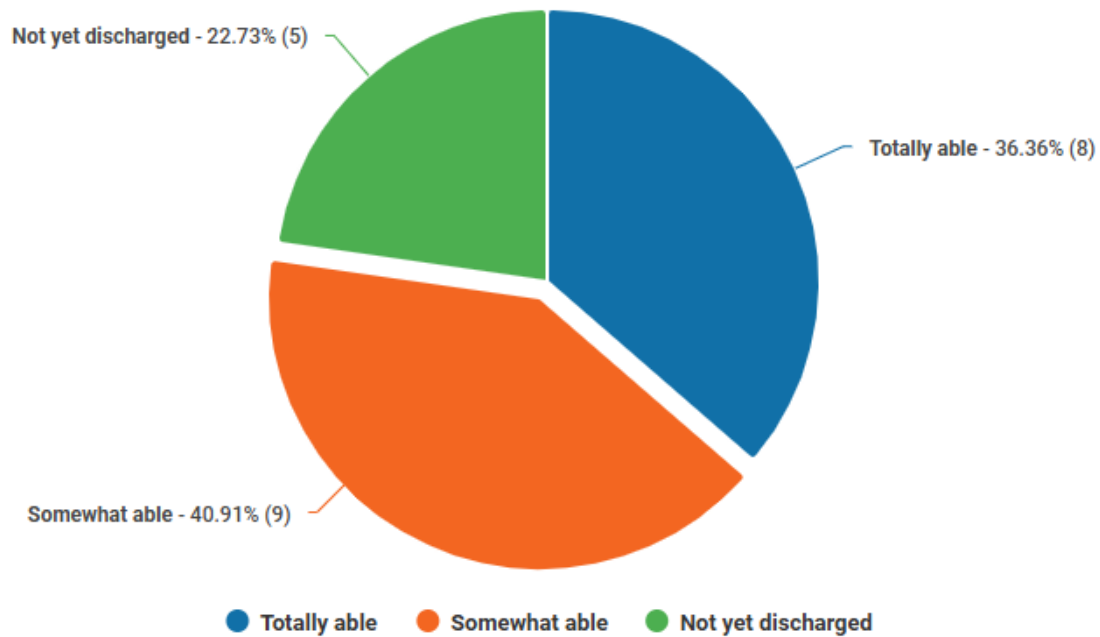


Survey responses: Did you notice any other benefits?

- **Significant weight loss and physical improvements:** Many individuals reported substantial weight loss, such as losing more than 60lbs in 12 months, which led to improvements in physical abilities, such as being able to put on socks and experiencing less breathlessness.
- **Pain management and health benefits:** Weight loss has helped some individuals manage pain from various health issues better. Others noted improvements in overall health, including lower cholesterol levels and increased energy.
- **Mental health and confidence:** Several comments highlighted improvements in mental health, increased confidence and a more positive self-image. The support from the service, including talking therapy, was beneficial in understanding and managing emotional issues related to weight.
- **Improved diet and relationship with food:** Participants reported a better understanding of food and diet, leading to healthier eating habits and a positive change in their relationship with food. This included a more balanced diet and increased awareness of food choices.
- **Increased activity and enjoyment of life:** Increased physical activity and overall enjoyment of life were common themes. Individuals felt fitter, more active and experienced an overall improvement in their quality of life.
- **Consistent progress and healthier lifestyle:** Even those with slower weight loss progress felt more confident, slept better, had clearer minds, healthier skin and felt less restricted by their weight. Regular check-ins and support from the service helped maintain this progress.
- **Ongoing challenges and future goals:** While some still experienced pain or had not seen significant weight changes, they felt healthier and less stressed. Others looked forward to further improvements, such as post-surgery benefits or continued weight loss despite being wheelchair-bound.

Overall, the comments reflect a wide range of positive physical, mental and emotional benefits from participating in the weight management service, with many individuals experiencing significant improvements in their health and quality of life.

Survey responses: To what extent did you feel able to manage your weight having been discharged from the service?



Survey responses: Do you feel there is anything that could be put in place to support you if you were unable to engage with services or to continue your weight loss journey after being discharged?

- **Extended support and follow-up:** Many individuals expressed a desire for the service period to be extended to two years to ensure the practices learned are fully implemented and maintained. Regular check-ins, such as monthly or quarterly appointments, were suggested to help keep individuals focused and motivated.
- **Continued accountability:** Regular weigh-ins were seen as crucial for maintaining accountability and motivation. Some individuals preferred not to own scales and felt self-conscious about using external units, so having access to weigh-in sessions after one-on-one sessions would be beneficial.
- **Support groups and local resources:** The idea of local support groups and after-support groups was mentioned as a way to provide ongoing encouragement and a sense of community. Some individuals struggled to attend suggested centres and hubs, indicating a need for more accessible local resources.
- **Concerns about maintaining progress:** There were concerns about maintaining weight loss and the fear of regaining weight without continued support. Some individuals felt confident in their ability to self-encourage but still valued the idea of periodic check-ins to ensure they stayed on track.
- **Positive feedback and suggestions for improvement:** While some individuals felt they received excellent support and had all the tools needed to succeed, others suggested the service could be rethought to treat people more empathetically.
- **Accessibility issues:** Access to weighing scales, especially for those in wheelchairs, was highlighted as a significant issue. Having accessible weighing options would encourage and help individuals continue their weight loss journey.

Overall, the comments reflect a strong desire for extended support, regular check-ins and accessible resources to maintain progress and ensure long-term success in weight management.

Survey responses: Please let us know what other support would help you

- **Need for additional support:** Some individuals expressed a need for additional support, such as physio and mobility assistance, especially for those with ongoing health issues like back problems. While weight loss has helped, it hasn't completely resolved their pain.
- **Continued journey and follow-up:** There is a sentiment among some participants that they are only part way through their journey and feel 'dumped' by the service. They would appreciate continued support and follow-up to ensure they stay on track.
- **Suggestions for improvement:** Suggestions for improvement include providing more guidance on keeping fit, diet updates and recipe suggestions. Some individuals also mentioned the need for a more holistic approach, including options like weight-loss drugs (on services that don't currently offer them) and blood tests.
- **Positive feedback:** Many individuals felt the support they received was amazing and more than enough. They appreciated the tools and information provided, which helped them maintain a good diet and enjoy various exercises. Participants found value in discovering new exercises and activities, such as gym sessions, exercise classes, aqua aerobics, and toning chairs, which they were previously unaware of.
- **Gratitude and acknowledgment:** Several comments expressed gratitude for the help received, noting the service had a significant positive impact on their lives. They felt more in control of their health and appreciated the support in reclaiming their lives.

Overall, while there is a strong appreciation for the support provided, there are also clear calls for additional physio and mobility support, continued follow-up, and more holistic and comprehensive care options to address ongoing health issues and ensure long-term success.

Next steps

The findings of this report will be used to support the ongoing review of tier three weight management services in Lancashire and South Cumbria and in the development of an equality impact and risk assessment.

In addition, comments made will be fed back to the relevant service providers in order to support continuous improvement of the existing services and to help providers understand what is currently working well and what could be improved for future patients.