



NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board

Management Office
197 Eyre Street
Sheffield
S1 3FG

8th October 2025

To: All Primary Care Practices in South Yorkshire
SY GP Federations
SY Acute Trust and Sheffield Teaching Hospital Medical Directors
Cc ICB Place Medical Directors
SY Adult Specialist Weight Management Services and Oviva Right To Choose Service

Dear Colleague

Change in Eligibility Criteria for New Referrals to Adult Specialist Weight Management Services (Tier 3)

I am writing to notify you of a change in the referral criteria for new referrals to the adult specialist weight management services for South Yorkshire patients, that will come into effect from 24th October 2025 for a 12 month period.

Following the high levels of media coverage of the NICE approval of new weight loss drugs, the demand for specialist weight management services (SWMS) (in order to access the drugs) has escalated and is outstripping available resources and local capacity causing significant waiting times.

Local referral criteria for specialist services have not been updated for some years and vary across the South Yorkshire services, leading to inequitable access to specialist support.

To support equitable access to specialist weight management services within the available resources, for people who have the greatest need, NHS South Yorkshire ICB has revised the criteria for **new referrals to all adult tier three specialist weight management services in South Yorkshire and for Right to Choose (RTC) services**. This will ensure that all local and RTC services are using the same referral criteria.

Notably, the guidance removes the previous requirement applied in Doncaster that patients express a desire to pursue bariatric surgery in order to access support.

To ensure that patients demonstrate commitment to their weight loss journey, the guidance specifies that patients must have participated in a recognised weight loss programme, as defined with the guidance, in the 24 months preceding referral.

The appendix details the new criteria with a copy of the ICB Commissioning Policy available through the link: [Policies, procedures and guidance: South Yorkshire I.C.B.](#)

These changes will take place from the 24th October 2025 for NHS SY patients and will be reviewed in 12 months.

No changes are being made for the eligibility of patients already referred to and on specialist weight management services waiting lists, prior to the implementation of this updated guidance.

SWMS will be asked to decline referrals that do not meet the new referral criteria.

No changes are being made for the eligibility of the paediatric or maternity referrals to the South West Yorkshire Foundation Trust Specialist Weight Management Service or for the clinics for Children with Complications of Excess Weight (CEW) run by Sheffield Children's Hospital.

Patients continue to be required to attend the specialist weight management service (Tier 3) before referral for bariatric surgery (tier 4).

The ICB's patient web page on weight loss has also been updated [Changes to the Adult Specialist Weight Management Service Referral Criteria: South Yorkshire I.C.B.](#)

I would be grateful if you could update all relevant colleagues.

Thank you for your support in helping us target the limited resources to patients with the greatest need.

Yours sincerely



Dr David Crichton

Chief Medical Officer

Appendix: New eligibility criteria from 24th October 2025

Referral criteria for specialist weight management services in South Yorkshire (also known as tier three)

Prerequisite prior to referral

1. Adults **aged 18 years and over** registered with **South Yorkshire ICB general practices**

AND

2. The person must have demonstrated **significant commitment to lose weight** and have **engaged in a supported attempt to modify diet and exercise levels prior to referral**, as indicated by **undertaking one of more of the following within 24 months of referral to the SWMS**:

- A locally commissioned **tier two weight management service**
- An equivalent NHS **nationally commissioned tier two programme** (such as National Diabetes Prevention Programme, Digital Weight Management Programme, Type two diabetes Pathway to Remission)
- Attended a **commercial weight loss service**
- Primary care / Local authority **health coaching, dietetic or practice nursing support to enhance diet/nutrition +/- increase physical activity +/- weight management**
- Completed the 12 week free **NHS Weight Loss Plan app**

AND

- Patients must **understand the requirements** and demonstrate a **commitment to actively participating** in the SWMS and to be **able to fully engage** with the program requirements.

Eligibility criteria

Note: There is an increased risk of health conditions at lower BMI thresholds in certain populations. Reduce all BMI thresholds by 2.5 kg/m² in people from South Asian, Chinese, other Asian, Middle Eastern, Black African or African-Caribbean ethnic backgrounds to ensure equitable clinical prioritisation and access to appropriate treatment. This also applies to people of mixed race who have one of these backgrounds.

- People with a **BMI above 50 kg/m²**

OR

- People who meet the **current NHSE/NICE Funding Variation cohort eligible** for tirzepatide in primary care as set out in the NHS England Interim Commissioning Guidance. ([NHS England » Interim commissioning guidance: implementation of the NICE technology appraisal TA1026 and the NICE funding variation for tirzepatide \(Mounjaro®\) for the management of obesity](#))*. This applies only to *Cohort 1* patients. The ICB will notify practices when prescribing can be extended to *Cohort 2*. (**Cohort one – must have a BMI of 40 or more and four of the following five conditions: hypertension, dyslipidaemia, obstructive sleep apnoea, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes mellitus**).

OR

- **Transition of care for young people** from Complications of Excess Weight (CEW) services – any BMI

Patients requiring urgent weight loss for a time sensitive intervention for a life threatening condition (e.g. surgery, cancer therapy) who do not meet any of the above criteria who have a BMI ≥ 35 will need to have an Individual Funding Request (IFR) approval.

There may also be some other rare situations where urgent weight loss is needed (e.g. Idiopathic intracranial hypertension resistant or intolerant of medical intervention with impending visual compromise or on transplant waiting list). An IFR will need to be completed for these.

Where there is suspicion of, or confirmed, rare monogenic or hypothalamic **cause of obesity, patients should be referred to Consultant Endocrinology services**. If the consultant feels the patient would benefit from the MDT support of a SWMS they would then refer the patient to the SWMS, using an IFR if they do not meet any of the above criteria (any BMI).

*As tirzepatide becomes widely available through primary care not all patients meeting the NHSE eligibility cohorts will require specialist referral. Consider referral to specialist services for the **people who meet NHSE cohort criteria and have:**

- **Complex neuropsychological needs** that are interfering with the individual's ability to engage with primary care services, e.g. severe and enduring mental illness, learning disabilities, special educational needs and disabilities
- **Additional complex medical, psychological and social care needs** requiring specialist input and support. Such referral shall be at clinician discretion.
- Patients **on NHS prescribed weight loss medical therapies who despite maximum tolerated doses, have ongoing weight-related complications** and would benefit from evaluation for alternative weight loss intervention.

Exclusion criteria for specialist weight management services

- People who do not satisfy the prerequisite and referral criteria
- People who are pregnant or breastfeeding
- Uncontrolled Health Conditions: Including uncontrolled hypertension, heart conditions, or any medical condition preventing increased activity levels
- Severe Mental Health Conditions: Patients with severe, unstable mental health conditions beyond primary care expertise, active eating disorders (e.g. binge eating disorder), recent suicide attempts (within the past year), or mental health concerns that would prevent engagement in a behavioural change program
- Post-Bariatric Surgery: Patients must be at least two years post-bariatric surgery before referral.
- Conditions for Referral Once Stable:

- Substance Use: Patients in recovery from alcohol or drug use should have received support and maintained recovery for at least three months.
- Other Conditions: Conditions such as hypothyroidism and Cushing's syndrome must be stabilized before patients can be considered for referral.

Note: These referral inclusion / exclusion criteria do not apply to the maternity or paediatric weight loss support currently provided by the Barnsley specialist weight management service.

Where a patient does not meet these criteria, but a referrer and / or provider believes that there is clinical exceptionality as to why the patient should receive to Tier 3 Weight Management Services referrers and / or providers may submit an Individual Funding Request in accordance with the relevant SYICB policy, currently available at: <https://southyorkshire.icb.nhs.uk/our-information/policies-and-procedures>