

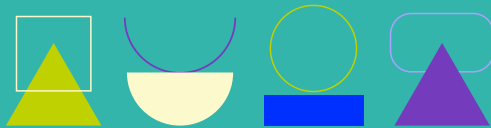


OBESITY INSTITUTE

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023



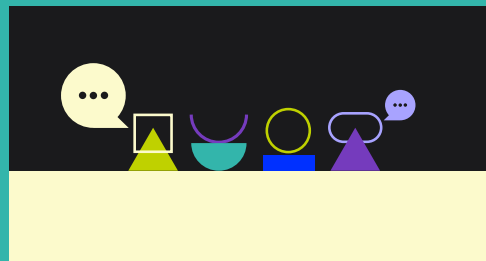
LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY
OBESITY INSTITUTE



WATCH OUR OBESITY INSTITUTE ANIMATIONS



**THE OBESITY INSTITUTE AT
LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY**



**OUR APPROACH TO
ADDRESSING OBESITY**

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INTRODUCTION

We are delighted to present the first annual report of the newly formed Obesity Institute for the academic year, 2022-2023. Following the vision of our Vice Chancellor, Professor Peter Slee, the Obesity Institute was officially launched on World Obesity Day, March 4th 2022.

The Obesity Institute is a pan-university institute led by three co-directors: Professors Louisa Ells, Paul Gately and Carlton Cooke, with strategic and operational activity led by our Principal Consultant, Saeeda Bashir.

The Obesity Institute brings together our expertise across Leeds Beckett University, with that of our partners and collaborators, to focus on supporting those living with or at risk of obesity through our Research, Knowledge Exchange, and Education and Training activities. Building on our established track record, we apply creative and innovative approaches to the study of obesity. Bringing together leading researchers across multiple disciplines and sectors with expert practitioners and people living with or at risk of overweight and obesity and their families, we co-develop innovative, person-centred solutions to weight related issues, which inform policy and practice from a system to an individual level.

All of our work is underpinned by our Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPI&E) Hub called Obesity Voices; the membership now comprises 250 individuals living with or supporting those living with obesity. Our core interlinked themes of work address Weight Management and Wellbeing (prevention and treatment of obesity), Tackling Disparities (Health Inequalities), and Systems Approaches. Each of the core themes contribute to the research, knowledge exchange and education and training developed and delivered under the auspices of the Institute.

In our first year we experienced an unprecedented year of growth. We developed infrastructure and policies to support our community and activities. This led to exciting new partnerships with obesity related organisations to ensure our work reflects and serves our community.

In each of our themes we have an ambitious and innovative portfolio of work and as we look forward to what 2023 brings we remain dedicated to improving the lives of people living with or at risk of obesity and, in particular, those from the most underserved communities.



Saeeda Bashir
Principal Consultant



Professor Carlton Cooke
Co-Director



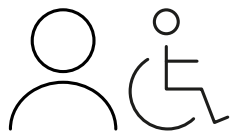
Professor Louisa Ells
Co-Director



Professor Paul Gately
Co-Director

YEAR AT A GLANCE

2



16
Our Community of Staff
+ PGR members

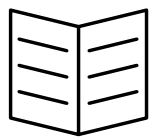


8
PhD students studying
obesity across LBU, with one
completion in 2021-22



250+
Obesity Voices Hub
(PPI+E members)

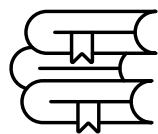
PUBLICATIONS



44
Journal papers



7
Reports



5
Books & book chapters



5
Internet, magazine, or
newspaper publications

CONFERENCE CONTRIBUTIONS



23
Conference presentations
including keynote and
invited talks

FUNDING



£5.7Million
Research Income



£2.9Million
Knowledge Exchange
Contracts

3

OBESITY: THE CONTEXT FOR OUR INSTITUTE

Obesity is a global and complex public health concern. It is associated with reduced life expectancy and is a risk factor for a range of chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, at least 12 kinds of cancer, liver, and respiratory disease, and also impacts on mental health.

The World Health Organization (WHO) acknowledge that the growing obesity epidemic is one of the world's most visible, yet most neglected public health problems. Recent estimates suggest that 800 million children and adults are living with obesity worldwide. The medical consequences of global obesity are estimated to be approaching £1trillion by 2025, and this does not take account of social care costs and the personal physical, social and emotional costs to each individual. Childhood obesity is expected to increase by 60% in the next decade, resulting in an estimated 250 million children living with obesity globally. Evidence from the Covid pandemic, pre vaccination programmes such as those in the UK, showed that those living with obesity were twice as likely to be hospitalised when testing positive.

In England obesity continues to increase, as it does throughout the UK. The most recent estimates of obesity prevalence in adults living in England come from the Active Lives Adult Survey. The findings estimate that 25.3% of adults aged 18 and over were living with obesity in November 2020 to November 2021, which is an increase from 24.4% in 2019 to 2020 and 22.7% in 2015 to 2016. There is also large variation in the prevalence of adult obesity across local authorities in England, ranging from 10.5% to 40.3%, which reflects data on other health inequalities and how they have been exacerbated as a consequence of the Covid pandemic.

The rate of increase in prevalence of obesity in children is even worse than in adults. The most recent data for obesity prevalence in children living in England comes from findings from the Government's National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) for England, 2020/21 school year. It covers children in Reception (aged 4-5 years) and Year 6 (aged 10-11 years) in mainstream state-maintained schools in England. In Reception children, obesity prevalence has increased from 9.9% in 2019/20 to 14.4% in 2020/21. In Year 6 children, obesity prevalence has increased from 21.0% in 2019/20 to 25.5% in 2020/21.



OUR MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

4

4.1 MISSION

Working with people living with and at risk of obesity to co-develop innovative person-centred advances in obesity locally, nationally and internationally.

4.2 VISION

Improving the lives of people living with or at risk of obesity.

4.3 VALUES

Inclusion and collaboration

All our activities are co-developed with people with lived experience of obesity, working in collaboration with key policy, practice and academic partners to ensure everything we do is person-centred and addresses real world need. We continually seek to improve and promote representation, equality, diversity and inclusion.

Integrity and transparency

We foster a culture of openness, compassion and collaboration within our community, and support the rights of academic freedoms by building a community that tests received wisdom and puts forward new ideas.

Excellence and Innovation

We are building on our excellence in applied obesity research and education, and seek to excite and inspire the public, our students and colleagues, with disruptive and ground-breaking research, innovation and practice.

OBESITY VOICES

Patient & Public Involvement and Engagement underpins all aspects of the work of the Institute and is a completely new innovation and initiative. This work is carried out with members of Obesity Voices (currently 250) who are individuals living with or at risk of obesity or supporting those living with or at risk of obesity. This work is facilitated and supported through the PPI&E Steering Committee comprising of people living with obesity or representatives of obesity related organisations such as Obesity UK. Because it cuts across all that we do in providing the voice for those living with obesity we have positioned it separately to the core themes of our work. Due to the nature of this work we have developed a complimentary vision, codes of conduct, and objectives appropriate to the specific focus of PPI&E work but which complement and augment those of the Institute.

Below are some of our PPI&E Steering Committee members sharing their experience of working with us.

**Councillor
Hannah Bithell,
Obesity & LGBT+
Champion, Leeds
City Council**

"I am so pleased to be working with the Obesity institute. As a person living with obesity and also representing residents as a councillor here in Leeds, it is incredibly important to me to be able to engage with this work. The systemic discrimination that people like me face in all manner of areas of life is prolific and having a strong voice of lived experience through this group is imperative to improvements in stigma and health and wellbeing care."



**Catherine Homer,
Senior Research
Fellow, Sheffield
Hallam University**



"Working with the team at the Obesity Institute means together with researchers at Sheffield Hallam University we are developing more multidisciplinary applied obesity research which will ultimately impact on health and wellbeing and decrease inequalities."

5.1 OUR VISION FOR OBESITY VOICES HUB

To ensure Patient and Public Involvement & Engagement (PPI&E) is fully integrated across all the Obesity Institute's activities. We will work with people living with, or at risk of obesity, from across broad and diverse populations to design, shape and co-produce the work we undertake.

Our ethos is to demonstrate care, compassion, and collaboration with the person at the centre of everything we do.



"Working for the obesity Institute is very important to me because the work/ research they do is inclusive and is reflective of the diverse society in which we live where everyone's voice is heard. My experience so far has been excellent!!"

Dr Jenny Teke, PPI&E Representative

5.2 OBESITY VOICES HUB ACTIVITY

To date the Obesity Voices Hub has attracted over 250 members nationally, these members are people with a lived experience of obesity and provide the bedrock of support for our activities underpinned through co-production.

Susie Birney, PPI&E Steering Committee Member, representative for European Coalition for People Living with Obesity (ECPO) and Irish Coalition for People living with Obesity (ICPO).

"I am honoured to be involved with the Obesity Institute at Leeds Beckett. I began with minimal knowledge of PPI&E and how it should effectively work for good collaboration.

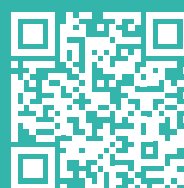
Since joining the Institute's PPI&E Steering Committee and seeing the Obesity Voices Hub develop, I believe that the Institute is an example of best practise with regards PPI&E.

I have learnt a lot, but what I value the most is the respect and honest engagement with all members of the team and truly feeling heard"

OBESITY VOICES HUB

To find out more visit: [Obesity Voices Hub](#)

If you are interested in joining Obesity Voices Hub please complete our [expression of interest form](#) or via the QR code:



A detailed welcome and induction pack including codes of conduct and advice on participation has been met with positive feedback from this network of members. This membership contributes to the strength of collaborations with [Obesity UK](#) and other obesity related organisations represented on the PPI&E Steering Committee.

Mark McCormack,
Director of
Obesity UK

"Obesity UK are delighted with the plans for the new Obesity Institute at Leeds Beckett University, with a long track record in delivering applied obesity research at Leeds Beckett, we look forward to our future collaboration and patient and public involvement and engagement activities"

Obesity UK continues to be a source of support for our work (with its 25,000 members and strong UK profile) and we are collaborating on a number of initiatives and building on this mutually beneficial relationship.

To encourage our colleagues and partners in recognising the value of the voice of lived experience the Institute has developed a professional code of conduct and entered a partnership with the [Association for the Study of Obesity \(ASO\)](#), which is a professional and charitable organisation dedicated to the prevention and treatment of obesity, with membership open to obesity researchers, healthcare professionals and students. This allows the Institute to provide a dedicated resource for our trusted partners to share opportunities for PPI&E activities with our Obesity Voices members.

"Ensuring that the lived experience is embedded into the work we do at the UK Association for the Study of Obesity (ASO) is a priority. For example, we have a Trustee role dedicated to patient and public involvement and engagement, and people living with obesity are involved in all ASO events, including our annual conference, the UK Congress on Obesity.

This partnership with Obesity Voices is another step towards ASO providing our members with an important resource to ensure that their research is informed and shaped by people living with obesity. We hope that this partnership will support ASO members develop and deliver more impactful research, that makes a real difference to understanding obesity and informing obesity prevention and management."

**Dr Nicola
Heslehurst,**
Newcastle
University and
ASO Chair



The Institute also hosts the [Yorkshire Obesity Research Alliance](#) led by Professor Louisa Ells, This collaborative project across the region in supporting people with a lived experience of obesity has resulted in this work being put forward as a case study for best practice by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR).

CASE STUDY: YORKSHIRE OBESITY RESEARCH ALLIANCE

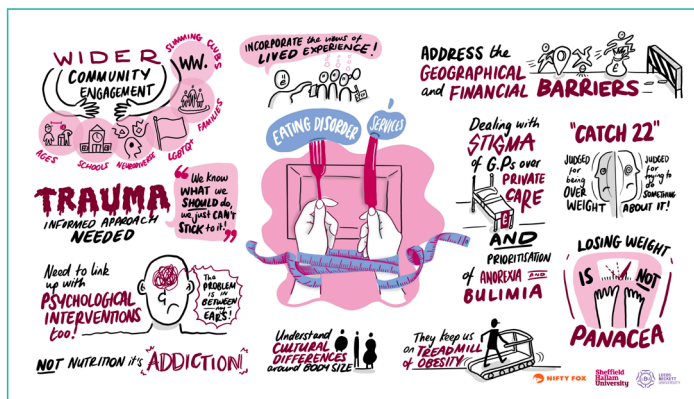
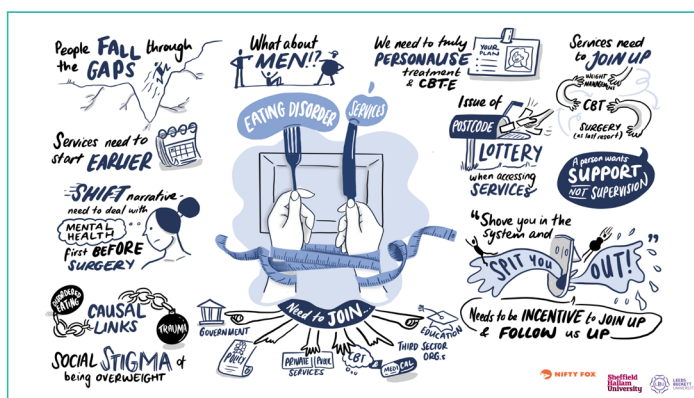
Yorkshire and Humber region currently has the highest prevalence of adult overweight and obesity in England (NHS digital 2019). It is against this backdrop that the Clinical Research Network within the National Institute for Health and Care Research funded Yorkshire and Humber Obesity Research Alliance (YORA). YORA was established in 2019 by Professor Louisa Ells (LBU), Nicola Corrigan (OHID) and Dr Catherine Homer (SHU) and was officially launched in January 2021. The overarching aim is to facilitate collaborative working in obesity across the region through a forum of shared learning and the development of an applied research strategy and action plan that compliments other regional activity and plans. The alliance will ensure that all research addresses real world priorities in obesity and provides solutions that make a real difference to population health.

Following initial sandpit events with members and stakeholders, the following priority areas were identified for the YORA network:

- Emotional eating (led by Louisa Ells)
- Food poverty and insecurity (led by Kristin Bash)
- Children and young people (led by Catherine Homer)
- Weight management strategies (led by Nicola Corrigan)

YORA currently has 169 members, from a range of disciplines and backgrounds. Membership has steadily grown, with noticeable uptake after the initial sandpit meetings (45 new members) held in February 2021. The membership is reflected across academia, local authority, clinical, charity and research centres, demonstrating the diverse nature of the alliance.

YORA provides networking, collaboration, and opportunities for early career researchers to develop their work in obesity. We host quarterly seminars with different themes, where YORA members can learn about the latest research, policy, and advances in practice. Speakers at YORA events have included: academics from universities across the region presenting on topics such as NHS evaluations, emotional and disordered eating, weight management and physical activity strategies, and food insecurity; colleagues from NIHR CRN and RDS; charities such as Rethink Food; research groups such as Born In Bradford; PPI&E members sharing lived experience of obesity; colleagues from NHS Trusts and Local Authorities; industry colleagues from weight management services. The CRN is also using YORA as an impact case study, demonstrating the strategic importance of the project.



Examples of PPI&E insights on emotional and disordered eating captured during a workshop through illustrations.

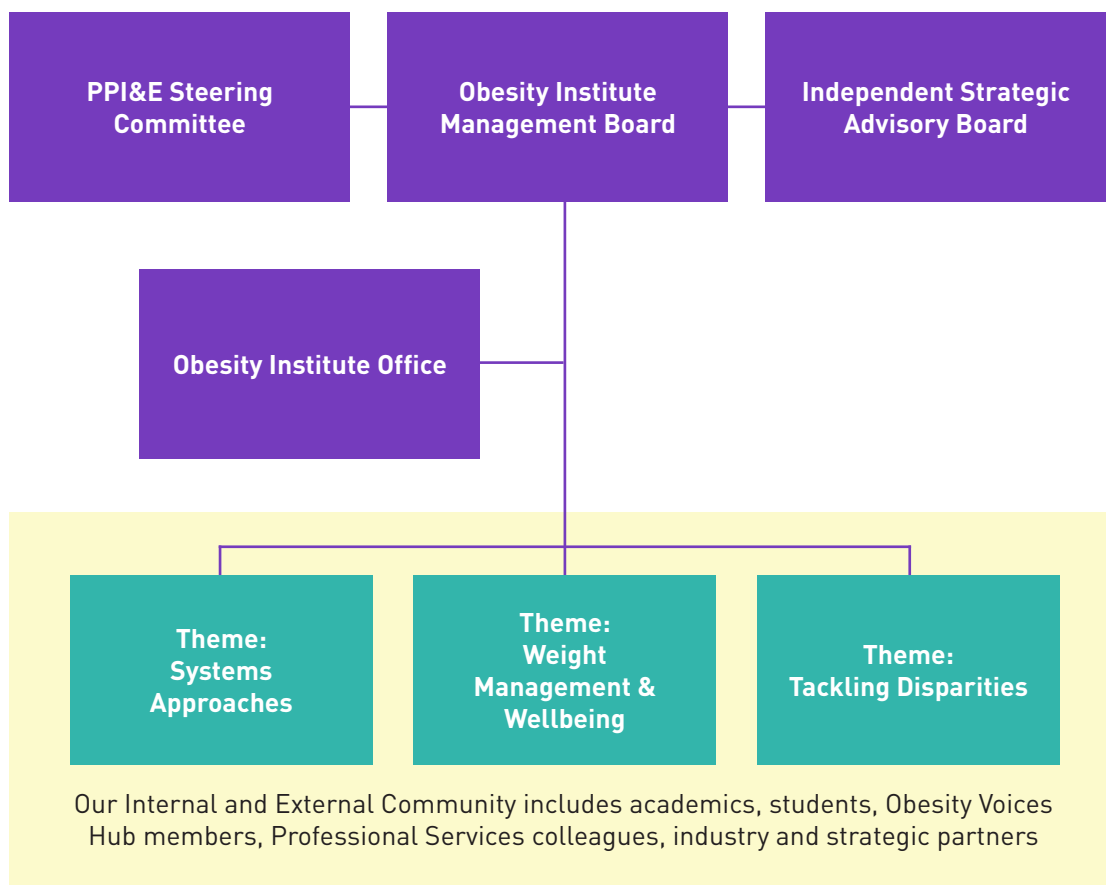
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OUR PEOPLE

Our aim as a pan-university Institute is to draw together and coordinate opportunities, activities and contributions from all schools across the university and with our external partners and collaborators.

Figure 1 shows how we are managed through our Management Board, together with the provision of strategic advice through our external Independent Strategic Advisory Board, which comprises a panel of experts chaired by Jamie Blackshaw (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, Department of Health and Social Care). All the work of the Institute is underpinned by patient and public involvement and engagement (PPI&E), delivered through Obesity Voices, which is overseen by the PPI&E steering group that reports into the Management Board. This independent lens to all our activities holds us accountable to our strategy, ambition and values.

Fig.1. Our Governance and Operational Structure



OUR THEMES



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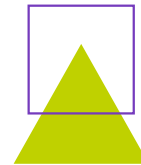
7.1 SYSTEMS APPROACHES

This theme seeks to support a step change in the way we address obesity by developing and applying systems approaches to policy and intervention development and evaluation.

It is now accepted that obesity results from many interconnected policy, environmental, social, economic, cultural and biological factors and to reduce obesity action from individuals and society across all sectors is necessary. Despite this awareness, the majority of interventions and strategies do not take this complexity into account and continue to focus on individual behaviour change approaches.

Systems approaches are a collection of methods and techniques, including qualitative system mapping and quantitative system modelling. Systems approaches require a shift in thinking, away from simple, linear models to understanding the complexity. In addition to asking whether a policy or intervention works to reduce obesity, systems approaches allow us to identify if and how policy/interventions contribute to reshaping the system in favourable ways.

**SUPPORT A STEP
CHANGE IN THE WAY WE
ADDRESS OBESITY**



We continue to work with government departments in the UK and beyond as well as a number of local authorities in England. In the first year of the Institute there have been a variety of emerging opportunities to work with a mixture of stakeholders across industry, with presentations of systems work to companies such as Pepsi in the US and the Food and Drink Federation in the UK.

7.2 WEIGHT MANAGEMENT & WELLBEING

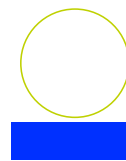
Through coproduction with local, national and international colleagues within public health, academia and government, the weight management and wellbeing team at the Obesity Institute design, conduct and report novel research with real-world impact across the lifespan.

The importance of targeting populations of excess weight has never been greater and thus, research opportunities are plenty on national and international scales. The reach available within this topic area is also demonstrated through currently running local (Leeds City Council), national (Buckinghamshire County Council, Suffolk County Council) and international (Ethicon, Johnson & Johnson Medical and St Helena) projects.

Our NHS low calorie diet evaluation project is an example of our highly applied research informing policy and practice, for more information about this project please see the RE:MISSION case study on the next page.

Our work with MoreLife (a Leeds Beckett University subsidiary company and weight management service provider) demonstrates continuing significant impact, with 28,000 people supported in the last year. Our annual process of development and refinement as part of our Suffolk partnership is continually refreshing MoreLife services as well as realising research outputs in the form of peer reviewed papers.

**CONDUCT AND REPORT
NOVEL RESEARCH WITH
REAL-WORLD IMPACT**



CASE STUDY: RE:MISSION PROJECT



The Re:Mission Study led by Prof Louisa Ells is evaluating the NHS low calorie diet programme for people living with or at risk of obesity and Type 2 Diabetes.

We know that for some people living with, or at risk of obesity and Type 2 Diabetes, a low calorie diet achieved by Total Diet Replacement can lead to significant weight loss and can improve diabetes control. However evidence on this approach has come from clinical trials and the NHS needs to understand how it works when delivered within a real world setting.

The NHS therefore made a commitment to evaluate a pilot of Low Calorie Diet programme to understand how it works across our broad and diverse populations.

The Re:Mission study is a coproduced qualitative and economic evaluation of the NHS Low Calorie Diet programme. PPI&E is central to the Re:Mission study, from the preparation of the initial funding proposal, through to the study design, delivery, and dissemination. An article has been written by the Re:Mission PPIE team which highlights their voice and experiences.

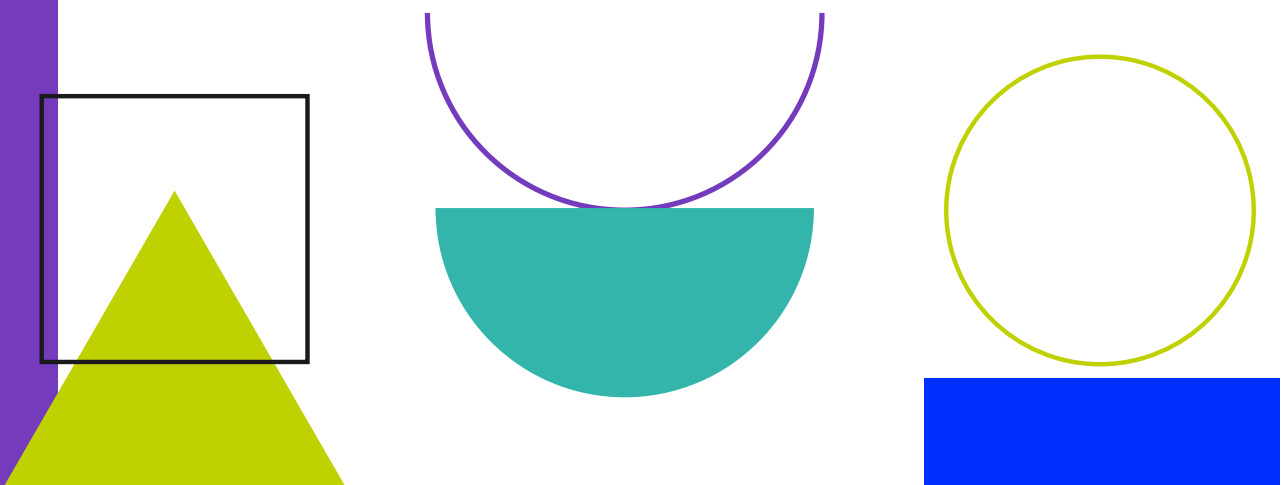
The Re:Mission study sets out to understand more about the NHS low calorie diet programme, looking at what works, for whom, in what context, and why, and whether it provides value for money. We are doing this by speaking to different people involved in the programme, to understand their experiences. This includes talking to

NHS staff to understand how the programme is mobilised and how referrals work; talking to the programme providers to understand how the programme is delivered, and most importantly speaking to service users to understand their experiences of the Low Calorie Diet programme. To date, NHS England have made key changes to the Low Calorie Diet programme design and delivery based on preliminary findings and early learning from the Re:Mission study.

Future outputs from the Re:Mission study will continue to inform the ongoing development and delivery of the programme.

The Re:Mission study will conclude in late 2023 and will provide a greater understanding of how the one year low calorie programme works for different people, and what it costs. However, we don't currently know what happens to different people once they have finished the programme. Understanding the long term impact of the programme is important, as previous studies have shown that not everyone is able to maintain weight loss and diabetes improvements. The Re:Mission study team therefore plans to conduct a longer term follow up study to find out how the programme works long term for different people, and what longer term support different people may need.

To find out more about this study visit: remission.study



This project (NIHR132075) is funded by the NIHR Health Service and Delivery Research programme. The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the MRC, NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care.

7.3 TACKLING DISPARITIES

Whilst public involvement and tackling disparities are central to all work undertaken by the Obesity Institute, this theme will undertake specific research to promote this field. This theme builds on:

Obesity Voices Hub, to demonstrate the importance and impact of PPI&E in research, and to work with our Obesity Voices members to co-develop patient-led research programmes, that will directly address priorities and questions that are important to the public and patients living with or at risk of obesity.

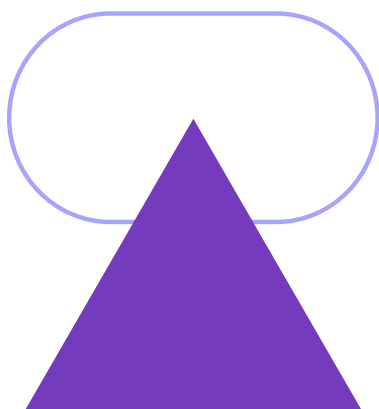
- Growing a portfolio of work undertaken by the University's Migrant Health group, which includes projects working in coproduction with ethnically diverse communities to develop culturally appropriate dietary advice and resources, and culturally competent, tailored weight management support programmes.
- Work programme with the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities, to support their priorities in identifying and addressing health disparities; taking action on obesity; working with the NHS to improve access to services; and developing strong partnerships with communities.
- NIHR funding portfolio which includes the evaluation of the NHS Low Calorie Diet programme to specifically examine impact across broad and diverse populations (NIHR 132075 - more information available at ReMission), and work with University of Glasgow to understand the effectiveness and underlying mechanisms of lifestyle modification interventions in adults with learning disabilities (NIHR 128755).
- This theme will also contribute to the university's wider Equality, Diversity and Inclusion programme. We therefore want to lead the way in future collaborations and research, to hear the voice and support the needs of our broad and diverse communities locally, nationally and internationally.

CASE STUDY: HEALTH CONNECTIONS: A COMMUNITY-BASED DIET, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, AND HEALTHY WEIGHT INTERVENTION FOR UK BLACK AND ASIAN ADULTS

Disparities in support for people living with obesity have been documented for some decades and although a number of recommendations have been made, little progress has been achieved.

The need for concerted action is overdue, and we put our collective drive into a holistic community-based, action research approach with the aim of making a real and tangible difference to peoples' lives.

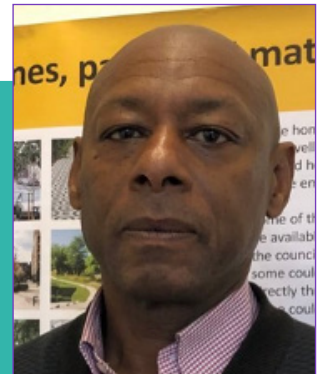
Research led by Professor Maria Maynard at the Obesity Institute centred around discussions with Black Caribbean, Black African and South Asian women and men and to health practitioners who helped to develop this project. In these conversations people shared that they are very motivated to improve their health behaviours to prevent serious health conditions such as type 2 diabetes. However, some also told us that worrying about or experiencing racism, and other barriers such as time and expense, stopped them from taking part in healthy lifestyle programmes. Existing services were felt to lack relevance for Black and Asian people and were poorly communicated.



The views of those who are likely to use a new programme were key in developing the funding bid for the project (as noted earlier) and will continue to be of utmost importance. We have a dedicated Public Involvement in Research (PIR) group which is integral to this project. As our PIR group lead Claude Hendrickson says:

Claude Hendrickson,
Public Involvement
in Research
Lead

"It's vital that members of the public are involved in projects like this. However, we must manage our expectations. It's like planting a fruit tree – it takes a while before it bears fruit".



We have formed a group made up of researchers, members of the public, charities, health professionals, and policy makers. Together we aim to co-design 'Health Connections' – a new intervention tailored to the needs of Black Caribbean, Black African and South Asian men and women, based in communities and delivered by community educators supported by health professionals. We will look at how a culturally sensitive communication campaign and mental health support can be included in an intervention programme to improve diet and physical activity choices, and promote healthy weight. We will also examine how health professionals can be trained in cultural competency (being able to see things from the point of view of people from other cultures), so that partnerships between health professionals and community educators are improved.

The project commenced in November 2022. An important first step for the research team was for them to spend time exploring values and principles, ensuring representation from the public, academic and non-academic partners. Key ideas from these discussions are summarised in the word cloud below. The team will continue to map their activities to these guiding principles.



Men and women from the target populations have told us that weight loss, if needed, was seen as something that happened naturally, if healthy habits could be maintained. Our holistic approach means we are approaching the project in a way that is meaningful in terms of diverse views and ideals around body size and shape, challenging stigma and discrimination. The next steps for this project are exciting as they seek to complete the first stage of the project in the next six months and we look forward to the report on their qualitative interview findings and our critical overview of existing resources.

IMPACT

8

It is important to the Obesity Institute that our work positively impacts on people living with, or at risk of obesity. As an academic organisation we have various frameworks in which the quality of our impact and excellence is critiqued. We set out these frameworks and our achievements against these below.

8.1 OUR RESEARCH: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (REF)

The REF is an audit of research activity for Higher Education in the UK, which uses expert peer assessment in Units of Assessment (UOAs) based on subjects/areas of work to grade the quality of research outputs (60% weighting), impact (25%) and environment (15%). For the purposes of the REF, research is defined as 'a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared'. Performance in the REF defines income to universities based on the size of the UOA in terms of staff submitted and its quality profile that is judged to be in the top two categories (internationally excellent (3*) or world leading (4*)).

Since the Institute was launched the results of REF2021 have been announced, showing significant improvement in the overall quality of research at Leeds Beckett University (ref.ac.uk), including significant contributions in the form of a total of 20 research outputs to two units of assessment from the staff who are now working in the Institute (UOA 3: Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy and UOA 24: Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism).

The Institute is building on the University's long history of researching obesity going back to the 1990s and research conducted by Professor Paul Gately and others. While numerous research outputs have contributed to previous RAE audits, the last two REF audits in 2014 and 2021 (Tackling Obesity) have rated our impact case studies on obesity as outstanding in reach and significance (4*, top category for impact). Below is the lay summary of impact set out in the REF2021 impact case study, 'Tackling obesity in the UK and internationally: LBU and MoreLife'.

'More than 72,000 children and adults have directly benefited from improved obesity treatment delivering clinically significant weight loss, provided by Leeds Beckett University's (LBU) subsidiary company, More Life, primarily via the NHS and local authorities. MoreLife have also successfully transferred this impact to the treatment of Qatari children and underpinned the development of the national NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme. LBU's co-created research with Public Health England (PHE) on a Whole Systems Approach (WSA) to obesity has impacted obesity in local authorities across England and beyond, as well as framing the submission of evidence that has changed UK Government policy on childhood obesity.'

This summary of impact illustrates part of the beneficial ratchet effect between the university and its subsidiary company MoreLife, as much of the impact rated as outstanding is provided by the work completed by MoreLife, with the impact underpinned by research completed by staff and students of the University.

8.2 OUR KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE FRAMEWORK (KEF)

The KEF is an audit of knowledge exchange activity carried out in Higher Education in the UK. Higher Education Providers, such as universities, teach students and undertake research that creates new and useful knowledge. But they also work with many different types of partner to ensure that this knowledge can be used for the benefit of the economy and society - this is known as knowledge exchange (KE). This audit is of the whole university and is mainly metric driven, but with the addition of three narrative statements (Institutional Context, Local Growth and Regeneration and Public and Community Engagement), using seven 'perspectives' which reflect different types of knowledge exchange activity (Research partnerships, Working with

business, Working with the public and third sector, provision of CPD and graduate start-ups, Local growth and regeneration, IP and commercialisation, Public and community engagement). Performance in the KEF, which has been completed twice and will now become an annual process, determines Higher Education Innovation Funding income provided to Universities.

The Institute, through its integrated themes and Obesity Voices, engages in knowledge exchange (KE) activities both in the UK and abroad. Projects in progress or completed in 2021-2022 include supporting St Helena and Wales with a systems approach to obesity and working on the production of a systematic review on discretionary snacks. We are also conducting work in Australia and New Zealand supporting efforts to create a joined-up systems approach to obesity. Locally we are working with Leeds City Council on a secondary school weight management project.

CASE STUDY: SYSTEMS APPROACHES IN PRACTICE

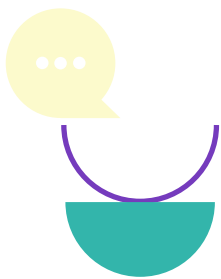
Researchers at the Obesity Institute developed Public Health England's (now Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID)) ['Whole Systems Approach to Tackling Obesity' Guide](#) and accompanying learning report published in 2019. The guide was the first UK guidance for local authorities on how to address complex public health challenges using a systems approach and has been the catalyst for members of the Institute to support knowledge exchange.

Knowledge exchange activities predominantly involve commissioned training and implementation support to develop skills and professional practice in local authority teams and their partners. Examples of recent activities include support for the Scottish, Northern Irish and Welsh Governments, and technical assistance to the Government of Saint Helena funded by the OHID. Some of the projects are one off activities, whilst others, like support for the National and Local Welsh Government teams leading their whole systems approach to obesity, have developed into ongoing collaborations. Beginning in early 2022 with training sessions, knowledge exchange activities were expanded to include workshop support in North Wales in late 2022, and continued in 2023 with further workshops in South Wales and the development of an Evaluation Framework for the national implementation.

The Saint Helena project is also of particular significance. As a pilot for the implementation of a whole systems approach in a UK Overseas Territory, with the intention to develop a programme of work for other UK Overseas Territories, it demonstrates the international impact of our work.

The primary aim of the theme's knowledge exchange work is to support a step change in the way obesity is addressed by applying systems approaches to policy and intervention development, in order to improve the lives of those living with or at risk of obesity.

One of the overarching principles to a systems approach is understanding the multiple perspectives of individuals within the system. As such, PPI&E is a key factor in our training of what it means to implement a whole systems approach. In addition to the overarching inclusion of the public voice in our approach, members of the institute have been working to develop ways to include young people, who are typically not represented within the stakeholders invited to participate in the process. One of the Institute's PhD students has developed a way to simultaneously capture the views of young people and provide education about whole systems approaches. This has been achieved by the development and implementation of a 6-week programme of delivery within school for adolescents who are all studying GCSE Citizenship. The sessions include workshop style activities and deliver knowledge of how young people can be involved in system changes, i.e., through engaging with local authorities, campaigning and social action activities.



CASE STUDY: FOOD INSECURITY AND OBESITY: FIO-FOOD PROJECT

One example of a successful funding application that has a major focus on PPI&E is our UKRI funded FIO-Food project led by the Rowett Institute at the University of Aberdeen, which includes our Institute and MoreLife, as well as Obesity UK and food banks across the UK (FIO-Food).

The FIO-Food project commenced in September 2022. It is made up of a multi-disciplinary team, including Professor Paul Gately, Professor Mark Gilthorpe, Dr Claire Griffiths and Dr Hannah Greatwood, from The Obesity Institute. The project employs a food systems and collaborative approach with co-production as a key feature, through four inter-linked work packages. The aim is to combine our knowledge of large-scale population data with an understanding of lived experiences of food shopping for people living with obesity and food insecurity, to develop solutions to improve sustainable and healthier food choices. The project has four work packages (WP) that interlink:

- WP1 aims to capture and apply the lived experience to inform retail strategies.
- WP2 is using population level data (supermarket transactions) and data science to understand healthy choices and environmental sustainability of the population diet at scale.
- WP3 includes the implementation of UK wide, online and in-store retail strategies to promote sustainability in consumers and assess the feasibility and acceptability within a MoreLife patient cohort.
- WP4 will share key project findings that have the potential to be transformative with key stakeholders through engagement and impact delivery.

The FIO-Food project is timely given that the current UK economic climate has led to a cost-of-living and energy crisis, which is disproportionately affecting poorer households. Increased cost of food is likely to be escalating existing diet challenges, including food insecurity. Food insecurity, defined by the Trussell Trust “as a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food” can lead to health disparities. Nutritionally poor, often ultra-processed, energy-dense foods are typically cheaper and more readily available, making the purchase of healthy, nutritious, and sustainable food challenging. Research suggests that it may be harder for people living with obesity and food insecurity to reduce their weight, compared to individuals who are food secure. For example, those on low incomes need to spend 43% of their disposable income on food, to consume a healthy diet according to the Eatwell guidelines, which compares to just 10% for the highest-income. Given the continued economic uncertainty and cost of living crisis, failure to address the increasing prevalence of people living with obesity and food insecurity will result in the widening of the health inequalities gap and increase financial pressure on the NHS service.

At the heart of the FIO-Food project is co-production. Co-production describes working in partnership with key stakeholders to tackle health challenges. For FIO-Food this includes working with a PPI&E group throughout the project. Our PPI&E groups comprise participants with lived experience of obesity, food-insecurity, or both. The PPI&E group will help ensure the research addresses issues relevant to the target population and confirm all data collection materials and interventions are acceptable and accessible for participants. The PPI&E group will also help ensure research findings are presented in a way that is easily understandable, with the focus on what is important for the target population. The FIO-Food PPI&E group members are currently working alongside researchers to provide feedback on the development, delivery, and the dissemination of all work conducted within WP1.

The National Food Strategy for England recognised the complex issues in the UK, where obesity and diet inequalities exist. However, a key challenge facing people living with obesity is the ability to afford a healthy, sustainable, balanced diet. The work being undertaken by FIO-Food recognises that obesity results from many interconnected policy, environmental, social, economic, cultural and biological factors and to reduce obesity action from individuals and society across different sectors is necessary.



8.3 OUR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

We are in the process of developing an exciting new MSc in Obesity and a Professional Doctorate. These will complement our existing recruitment of funded, match funded and self-funded Post Graduate Research (PGR) students across our themes of work. Work is well underway with the development of the Masters programme, with co-production underpinning not only the design of the programme but also the delivery. The first cohort is planned for Autumn/Winter 2023.

Learning from all of our activities so far, PPI&E is embedded across all of our teaching programmes. Researchers at the Obesity Institute have also contributed to training programmes for the World Health Organization (WHO), European Association for the Study of Obesity (EASO easo.org), International Network for Research on Inequalities in Child Health (INRICH inrichnetwork.org)

Linked to our Knowledge Exchange work, we will also offer continuing professional development (CPD) courses, based on our expertise and experience across the University and MoreLife. Opportunities will also be provided for students of the university to undertake work placements, major independent study in the form of either research projects or work based learning projects with MoreLife.

MoreLife are also supporting a PhD in systems approaches with the School of Sport where the MoreLife staff member is undertaking work in obstetric weight management. Results from this research were recently published at the International Congress on Obesity in Melbourne. Team members at MoreLife, who are associate staff members of the Institute have delivered a total of eight conference presentations at international conferences in Oslo, Melbourne, San Diego, and an invited presentation to a Personalised Nutrition Event in Washington by Professor Gately.

8.4 WIDER POLICY IMPACT

8.4.1 COVID-19 INSIGHTS WORK WITH PUBLIC HEALTH ENGLAND

Members of the Obesity Institute worked with Public Health England (now named Office for Health Improvements and Disparities, Department of Health and Social Care) on COVID-19 insights.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought huge disruption to weight management services in the UK, with many simply stopping all together. Members of the Obesity Institute worked alongside colleagues at the University of Leeds, University College London, and the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities to explore the impact of the pandemic on weight management services, and to determine what needed to happen going forwards. We found reduced access to services across the country for many individuals, and through surveys, webinars, and wider consultation with diverse groups, we provide recommendations for the implementation of future services nationally (this can be found [here](#)). We also found many excellent examples of good practice where services had been rapidly adapted to continue support. We provide 17 local practice examples [here](#).

COVID-19 has been shown to disproportionately effect those living with excess weight. We have undertaken a large review of literature to investigate how and why individuals living with excess weight may experience worse COVID-19 outcomes than those with a healthy weight. The findings of this study will be available soon.

8.4.2 TRAINING HEALTHY WEIGHT COACHES

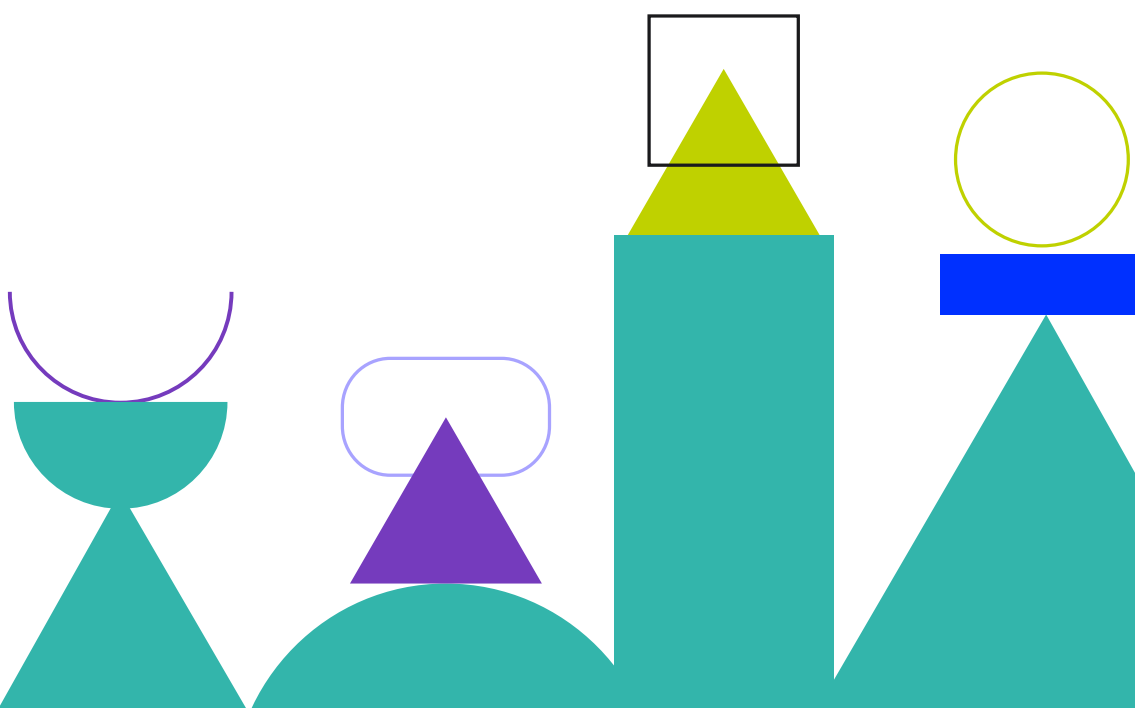
Members of the Obesity Institute worked in collaboration with the University of Leeds to design and evaluate the national healthy weight coaches training programme for Health Education England and Office of Health Improvement and Disparities. Following this work, the programme has been rolled out nationally in order to fulfil the government's commitment to offer all primary care networks the opportunity for staff to support people to achieve a healthier weight by training to become a healthy weight coach. For more information visit: e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/healthy-weight-coach



LOOKING AHEAD

The Obesity Institute has enjoyed rapid development in its first year and tremendous support across its internal and external community. Looking ahead to 2023/24 we are dedicated to:

- Build on the diverse and ambitious portfolio of research and knowledge exchange activities.
- Undertake our first Annual Review of the Obesity Institute with our Independent Strategic Advisory Board.
- Begin recruitment of cohorts to our new Masters and Professional Doctorate Programmes.
- Continue expansion and growth of the Obesity Voices Hub. Refining our systems and processes to improve access to the voice of lived experience through the Obesity Voices Hub and develop new partnerships to share this valuable resource to other researchers.
- Continue to support the development of more evidence-informed policies to address obesity underpinned by the voice of people living with obesity, particularly those from under-represented and least heard communities.
- Help tackle the discrimination and bias experienced by people living with or at risk of obesity and overweight.
- Continue to support and nurture a collaborative, inclusive and diverse community working towards improving the lives of people living with obesity.





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OBESITY INSTITUTE

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OBESITY VOICES HUB

To find out more visit: **[Obesity Voices Hub](#)**

If you are interested in joining Obesity Voices Hub please complete our **[expression of interest form](#)** or via the QR code:

