

## **EPD/24/16 - Bringing obesity care home: Housebound Obesity Pathways & Engagement (HOPE)**

Recent Hollywood film “The Whale” highlighted a neglected but growing population: people with obesity who are housebound. Such people often have problems moving about, washing, dressing, and doing daily tasks, meaning that they can need help with everyday tasks from family or formal carers. Housebound people are those usually unable to attend their GP, instead needing support at home from a wide range of care professionals, including district nurses, occupational therapists, General Practitioners, physios, community psychiatric nurses, and social carers. Uncertainty exists over the numbers affected, as being housebound is poorly recorded, and community staff lack portable scales suitable for larger-bodied people. Conservative estimates suggest >7,500 people affected across Scotland.

People who are housebound can have poor quality of life, struggle to access healthcare, and have high levels of unmet need. Care can be complex, long-term and expensive, with annual social care costs up to £70,000 per person.

Most housebound people living with obesity are unable to attend in-person weight management clinics, although some may receive limited home visits from weight management services. Often, they experience a “vicious cycle” of increasing weight making disability from conditions such as arthritis worse, contributing to poor mental health and social isolation, leading to further weight gain. New, effective weight-loss drugs are now available, but crucially only via specialist weight management services. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, digital weight management support has also been available via virtual appointments or apps at home. These changes could make significant weight loss possible for housebound people living with obesity, improving mobility, reducing the need for costly care and improving quality of life. But, as a neglected population, there is currently no research to answer important questions about how best to provide weight management services to housebound people with obesity.

The focus of this fellowship is foundation work for a programme of research on specialist weight management services for housebound people with obesity. This will explore what barriers housebound people with obesity face in getting effective specialist weight management services, as there is little research presently. Importantly, I will ask housebound people about their needs, also asking the views of health and care staff.

Three different groups will be considered:

1. Specialist Weight Management Services: what services do they offer for housebound people? What stops them, and what helps them, in providing services for people who are housebound? Possibilities include cost, who is referred, and staff knowledge about housebound people.
2. Wider health and care staff: do they refer people who are housebound for weight loss support? If not, why not? What would help them?

3. Housebound people living with obesity: what do they want from a weight management service? Would they prefer digital, in-person or a mixture of provisions? What stops them from accessing services?

I will work with people living with obesity in the United Kingdom to create a combination of on-line surveys and interviews, one for each group, to answer these questions. Online surveys will allow many people to take part, giving a broad range of views. At the end of each survey, people can opt-in to an interview, to gain more in-depth understanding of their views.

I will use established networks (such as Community Nursing Research Forum, Association of Study for Obesity, The Alliance, Carers UK) to facilitate recruitment. Results will show the level of service provided to housebound people by specialist weight management services, plus what barriers and enablers each group has. This will help plan an effective study of specialist weight management services for housebound people.

Findings will be shared in research journals, blogs, conferences and social media to reach a wide audience.