



# Doncaster Council

**Doncaster Health and Wellbeing Board**

**Date: 10/06/21**

**Subject:** A Compassionate Approach to Weight

**Presented by:** Carrie Wardle, Public Health Specialist, Doncaster Council

<b>Purpose of bringing this report to the Board</b>	
Decision	
Recommendation to Full Council	
Endorsement	X
Information	X

<b>Implications</b>		<b>Applicable Yes/No</b>
DHWB Strategy Areas of Focus	Substance Misuse (Drugs and Alcohol)	
	Mental Health	X
	Dementia	
	Obesity	X
	Children and Families	X
Joint Strategic Needs Assessment		
Finance		
Legal		
Equalities		X
Other Implications (please list)		

<b>How will this contribute to improving health and wellbeing in Doncaster?</b>
<p>A person's weight is a complex issue governed by the interactions between multiple genetic and environmental factors. In the decades of public health intervention, nothing so far has made any long-term impact in reversing the ever-increasing rates of overweight and obesity. Between 1993 and 2019, the percentage of adults with overweight or obesity in England increased by 11%, from 53% to 64% of the population.</p> <p>It is a widely held belief that body weight and size is an individual responsibility, and failing to have a Body Mass Index (BMI) less than 25, is the result of a lack of willpower or self-discipline. Less widely known, or accepted, is that there is a significant body of research demonstrating the complexity of relationships between bodyweight and health, and how the wider determinants of health play a significant role in a person's weight. These can take the</p>

form of social, economic, or environmental factors. These determinants are multifactorial and interwoven, determining an individual's physical, social, and personal resources, which affect their ability to live healthy lives or make changes to their circumstances.

It is well evidenced that obesity disproportionately affects disadvantaged communities and is strongly associated with inequality and yet most interventions focus on individual responsibility to change behaviour without addressing underlying determinants that impact on health, wellbeing, and people's ability to take care of themselves.

The vast majority of people who go on restrictive diets only have short term success and often put on more weight once they regain; this can lead to disordered eating habits; detrimental to mental health; feelings of failure and poor sense of self worth; harmful weight cycling. Shaming people for the way they look, what they eat, and how they live is not a motivator for change. Setting unrealistic targets and 'ideals' does not elicit long term behaviour change and can make things worse for individuals.

Given what we know about the complexities of weight and health and the detrimental effects of some current approaches, we are proposing a new approach to tackling issues of weight, health and wellbeing. A compassionate approach to weight incorporates more supportive measures that shift blame away from individuals; helps people navigate the unfair environments they live in; and fully acknowledges the mental and financial burden poverty and inequality places on people and the way it constricts their lives.

Our vision is that everybody in Doncaster is fully able to pursue their own health goals and are fully supported to do so by society, without judgement or assumptions. They feel valued as an individual just the way they are. Compassion is at the heart of how we move together towards a healthier society for future generations.

The approach is a practical application of the Borough Strategy's goal: '*A compassionate Doncaster that improves the conditions and opportunities for better health and how we care for our most vulnerable*'.

## **Recommendations**

The Board is asked to:-

Consider the information presented and endorse a compassionate approach to weight in Doncaster.