

WELCOME

Welcome to our first newsletter from the [Obesity Institute](#) (OI) at [Leeds Beckett University](#). We will be sharing our progress in two newsletters per year, updating our members, partners, collaborators, and other stakeholders, who work to support those who are living with or at risk of obesity.

The OI was launched earlier this year on World Obesity Day, Friday 4th March, by our Vice-chancellor, Professor Peter Slee <https://youtu.be/kXMu0VWuvTs>, and this newsletter provides an update on our activities. The core interlinked themes of the work of the OI address prevention and treatment of obesity, tackling disparities, and complex systems, all of which are underpinned by our Public and Patient Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) hub – Obesity Voices.

The OI 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.

We have deliberately kept the content of the newsletter short and have used plain English language wherever we can to make the material as widely accessible as possible. However, there are numerous links within the sections below where readers interested in the detail can access more comprehensive material and our web site provides greater coverage of all the aspects of our work ([obesity-institute](#)).

We hope that you find this first edition of our newsletter informative and useful, and we welcome any feedback as to how we might improve future editions, via obesityinstitute@leedsbeckett.ac.uk.

[Louisa Ells](#), [Paul Gately](#) and [Carlton Cooke](#)



STRATEGY

Our Vision: At the heart of our strategy is our vision to improve the lives of people living with or at risk of obesity.

Lived Experience: It is important that we listen to the voices of people living with obesity and to that end the Obesity Institute has developed a national hub called 'Obesity Voices'. Members of our Obesity Voices Hub will ensure everything that the Obesity Institute does is driven by the voice of lived experience and to support our trusted partners to do so too.

Here at the Obesity Institute values are important to us. Our values are based on the pillars of:

- **Inclusion, compassion and collaboration.** This means we co-develop our work with people with a lived experience of obesity and the public whilst seeking to ensure the voice of least heard communities are represented.
- **Integrity and Transparency.** This means we foster a culture of openness, compassion and collaboration within our community and support testing received wisdom and putting forward new ideas.
- **Excellence and Innovation.** This means we want to build on our excellence whilst also seeking to excite and disrupt our community with opportunities, ground-breaking research and practice.

Our Themes: We have developed 3 themes which represent our areas of strength and focus, they are:

- **Weight Management and Wellbeing:** this theme looks at co-design and development of new interventions for the prevention and treatment of obesity and overweight.
- **Systems Approaches:** this theme looks at driving improvements in the prevention and treatment of obesity and overweight through applying methods and techniques that identify and address wider societal and systemic effects on people who are living with or at risk of obesity. These societal and systemic drivers vary from national, regional and local aspects of the environment, culture, policies etc. Understanding all the different ways these can impact on people living with obesity or those at risk is critical and complex, simplifying the causes and working with lots of different stakeholders is key to improving the system in more favourable ways.
- **Tackling Disparities:** this theme looks to identify and address disparities working with key groups and organisations to help take action on obesity, improve access to NHS services and developing strong partnerships with communities. This work will also contribute to the wider Obesity Institute programme of Patient and Public Involvement [Obesity Voices] and values.

The Obesity Institute is involved in activities that cover research, education and training, raising awareness and working with businesses to achieve our vision to improve the lives of people living with at or at risk of obesity. The Obesity Institute is reviewed annually through the University and an Independent Strategic Advisory Board. We have also established a Steering Committee that helps inform all our work with people living with or at risk of obesity, and these are representatives of obesity related organisations or people living with obesity. In the coming months and years, we hope to share opportunities, best practice and develop advances in the study, prevention and treatment of obesity. We will also be holding events and raising awareness through sharing our work and those of our trusted partners with our community and beyond.

Saeeda Bashir, Principal Consultant



Scan the QR code above with your mobile phone camera or click the image to sign up to our Obesity Voices Hub

Keep in Touch

Follow us on social media!

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LinkedIn: [@ObesityInst](#)

Website: [Obesity Institute](#)

Email: [Obesity Institute](#)

The Obesity Voices Hub is an exciting new network developed and supported by the Obesity Institute for people living with obesity.

Obesity Voices is a group of patients and members of the public with a lived experience of obesity, who work with the Obesity Institute and trusted partners to help improve the lives of people living with or at risk of obesity. Listening to the voices of lived experience is critical to everything we do.

Our members ensure everything the Obesity Institute does is driven by the voice of lived experience & supports other organisations to do this too. No experience or skills are required - anyone can join us – all you need is to share our passion to make a positive difference to people living with or at risk of obesity.

What do Obesity Voices members do?

- » They work with us and our trusted partners to ensure the work we do meets the needs of the public & patients we serve.
- » They ensure our work is acceptable, useful & usable.
- » They help us to develop a new generation of compassionate person-centred professionals.
- » They ensure our work is inclusive by providing an opportunity to listen to every voice, not just those who are most often heard.

The Obesity Voices Hub is Led by Ken Clare who chairs the Institutes Patient and Public Involvement & Engagement (PPIE) Steering Committee. The steering committee consists of representatives from obesity related organisations and people living with obesity. To find out more about our Obesity Voices Hub and PPIE Steering Committee visit: <https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/research/obesity-institute/patient-and-public-involvement-and-engagement-hub/>.

If you are interested in becoming a member of Obesity Voices you can complete the online form via our website or simply scan the QR code.



Ken Clare

TACKLING DISPARITIES

• What is Tackling Disparities?

We view health disparities as unfair and avoidable. Addressing them is therefore a social justice issue. Inequalities in obesity among certain ethnic groups, older people, LGBTQ+ communities, people living with severe mental ill-health or neurodiversity, and young and older carers requires specific attention. There are complex reasons for these inequalities but structural issues such as poor access to and experience of services, and lack of cultural competence of health care professionals are among the contributing factors we aim to address in our work. Meaningful inclusion of patients and members of the public from diverse communities, locations/ places, social and ethnic groups is central to our activities. We believe that this is key to ensuring equal access to services, developing relevant interventions and avoiding unacceptable differences in health outcomes.

• Why is this research important?

We know that current interventions have not produced a reduction in the number of people living with obesity. For the most underserved groups, this is largely due to the limited relevance, reach and access to information and services and detrimental changes in legislative and policy landscapes. Our research approach is mindful of wider contexts including racism, other forms of discrimination, and exclusion of the most underserved groups. A robust evidence base that keeps pace with changing political contexts is essential to inform obesity prevention and management actions, especially in underserved groups.

• What do you want to achieve / what are your goals and targets?

We want to increase the breadth, depth and impact of our work, to inform the policy and practice that will hopefully produce better outcomes for those groups that need them the most. In doing so, we will better understand how to support underserved populations by putting their own perspectives at the centre, involving these groups in the research and outputs, building on our exploratory work to develop coproduced and targeted interventions.



Dr Tanefa Apekey



Dr Maria Maynard

• How will this make a difference?

Our plans are ambitious, but we are committed to working with the appropriate agencies to contribute to action that will improve weight related health and quality of life for people from diverse backgrounds. We will contribute to inequalities work locally, nationally and globally, bringing it out of the margins and into mainstream research, resource development, and service delivery. Our approach will ensure that we value different forms of knowledge including giving a voice to the least heard, and communicate effectively.

• What does the research theme mean to you?

Disparities in obesity have been documented for some decades and a number of recommendations have been made, but little progress has been made. The need for concerted action is overdue, and will put our collective drive into a holistic community-based, action research approach with the aim of making a real difference to peoples' lives.

- **What is Weight Management and 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 will strive to design, conduct and report novel research with real-world impact in diverse populations.

- **Why is this research important?**

Global obesity prevalence has steadily increased over the preceding decades and on current trends, one in five adults worldwide are expected to be classed as obese by 2025, yet all countries are set to fall short of 2025 World Health Organisation (WHO) targets of achieving no increase in obesity prevalence among both children and adults. The importance of targeting populations with excess weight has never been greater and thus, research tender opportunities are plentiful both on national and international scales. The reach available within this topic area is demonstrated through currently running local (Leeds City Council), national (Buckinghamshire County Council, Suffolk County Council, OHID, NIHR) and international (Australia New Zealand Sugar Resource Centre, Ethicon, Johnson & Johnson Medical, WHO) projects.

- **What do you want to achieve / what are your goals and targets?**

To co-develop novel research that has real-world impact on people's lives, and practice with patient and public involvement whilst seeking to improve and promote representation, equality, diversity, and inclusion.

- **How will this make a difference?**

Our research will work towards promoting a healthy weight, and/or improved wellbeing. In particular, we feel it extremely important that mental wellbeing is factored into weight management approaches, and research should have a focus on reducing health inequalities. Additionally, our research will aim to reduce the burden of both indirect (e.g., lost quality of life and wellbeing, premature death and productivity losses) and direct (e.g., service use) healthcare costs.



Dr Jamie Matu



Dr George Sanders

- **What does the research theme mean to you?**

Obesity is a chronic, relapsing, complex disease that is not simply about eating less and moving more. We feel strongly that this research theme will attempt to tackle the complexity of obesity, through meaningful research which can make a real difference to people's lives. Through continued strong applications for relevant funding via an internationally recognised team, there will be exciting opportunities for staff and partners to support current and future projects, work alongside experienced and like-minded colleagues and students to deliver novel multi-disciplinary projects, and access a new PPI hub to further foster co-productive learning and support. Through this approach there is brilliant scope to ensure the continued growth of the weight management and wellbeing team, as well as the Obesity Institute as a whole.

SYSTEMS APPROACHES

- **What are Systems Approaches?**

Systems approaches are a collection of methods and techniques that help us make sense of complex messy problems. They require a paradigm shift in thinking, away from simple, linear causal models, to understanding that the structure of a system (i.e., the various parts within it and how they interact) determine a system's behaviour and ultimately the outcome it produces.

- **Why is this research important?**

The physical, psychological, and economic consequences of obesity have been well documented, and it is now considered one of the most serious public health challenges of the 21st century. Despite considerable investment, in research, policy and practise the prevalence of obesity has continued to increase. The failure of programmes to date reflects, to some degree, a misunderstanding of the nature of obesity as a chronic disease, and importantly a limited understanding of the complex, multifaceted nature of the problem. Systems approaches allow us to obtain a better understanding of the systems and identify if and how actions we take contribute to reshaping the system in favourable ways.

- **What do you want to achieve / what are your goals and targets?**

Our goal is to inform and support effective policy responses by improving the design, implementation and evaluation of strategies to address obesity from a systems perspective. To achieve this we must work as part of a transdisciplinary team bringing together academic, policy, practise, and community representatives.



Dr Duncan Radley



Dr Claire Griffiths

- **How will this make a difference?**

To date, the evidence underpinning the response to the prevention and treatment of obesity is largely generated by tools and methods developed to answer questions about the effectiveness of interventions, which are commonly grounded in linear models of cause and effect with a focus on individuals and short term outcomes. Although the basic drivers of obesity are well understood, understanding of the multifaceted causes of this disease is far more complex. Obesity has numerous influences including, policy, economic, environmental, social, cultural, behavioural, and biological drivers; however, not all causal links are clearly defined and the mechanisms of some causes are unknown. Such problems are complex, unstable, a challenge to define, and difficult to resolve. Identification, implementation, and evaluation of effective responses to obesity management requires a wider set of approaches that can capture and characterise the complexity to ensure we make a real and tangible difference to the lives of people, communities and organisations locally, nationally and internationally.

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

The OI is building on the University's long history of researching obesity going back to the 1990s. While numerous research outputs have contributed to previous RAE audits, the last two REF audits in 2014 and 2021 have rated our impact case studies on obesity as world leading (4*) or internationally excellent (3*).

NEWS

UK Government's u-turn on £100m essential funding for obesity

In March 2021 the UK government announced its investment to support treatments for people living with obesity. This new investment was welcomed by stakeholders and people living with obesity alike. Yet in April this year the government delivered its decision to reverse this commitment leaving our community and partners in disbelief and frustration in the government's failure to act on this urgent and complex health priority. Prof Paul Gately, Co-director of the Obesity Institute shares his views in his recent blog. <https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/blogs/carnegie-xchange/2022/06/government-u-turn-on-essential-funding-for-obesity/>

NICE Recommended new guidelines for treatments in obesity

In February this year, NICE published new guidance on the treatment of obesity. NICE recommended that Semaglutide (Wegovy) can be offered as an option for weight management, alongside a reduced-calorie diet and increased physical activity in adults. For more information on this new guideline visit <https://www.nice.org.uk/news/article/nice-recommends-new-drug-for-people-living-with-obesity>. Meanwhile, a strong competitor for the pharmaceutical treatment for obesity is Eli Lilly's Tirzepatide which has shown promising results for people living with obesity and diabetes.

EVENTS

29 September 2022 The Obesity Institute will be holding its first drop in session at the Rose Bowl 10-12pm, All are welcome to learn more about the Institute and meet the team.

6-9 September 2022 UK Congress on Obesity (UKCO) Our members presented their work across all our themes.

PUBLICATIONS

How is the NHS Low-Calorie Diet Programme expected to produce behavioural change to support diabetes remission: An examination of underpinning theory How is the NHS Low-Calorie Diet Programme expected to produce behavioural change to support diabetes remission: An examination of underpinning theory BJD Vol. 22 No. 1 (2022): June 2022

'Valued and listened to': the collective experience of patient and public involvement in a national evaluation RSPH Volume 142, Issue 4

'Embedded Researchers as Part of a Whole Systems Approach to Physical Activity: Reflections and Recommendations' Systems 2022, 10(3), 69; <https://doi.org/10.3390/systems10030069>

BLOGS AND VIDEOS

Below are a selection of blogs and videos that our team have produced. Click the titles below to find out more:

Blogs

[Governments U-Turn on Essential Funding for Obesity is Putting More Lives at Risk](#) | Professor Paul Gately
[Tackling Obesity in Partnership](#) | Nicola Corrigan

Videos

[The Obesity Institute](#) | Leeds Beckett University
[Transforming attitudes towards obesity](#) | Professor Paul Gately
[Transforming health inequality](#) | Dr Maria Maynard

