

# Weight Management Service Transformation: Embedding Recommendations from Behavioural Science into the Commissioning Process

**Ellie Whittaker**, Behavioural Science Specialist, North Yorkshire Council  
**Ruth Everson**, Public Health Manager, North Yorkshire Council  
**Jenny Thompson**, Public Health Officer, North Yorkshire Council  
**Jenn Cassarly**, Behaviour Change Officer, North Yorkshire Council

## BACKGROUND

Over the last decade, there has been an increased interest in how behavioural science can be utilised within local authorities and across the public health system. The CASCADE report (PHE, 2021) provides guidance to facilitate the integration of behavioural science into local authority public health commissioning. In 2022, North Yorkshire Council established a Behavioural Science Unit, who aim to embed behavioural science on a phased basis across Public Health, Adult Social Care, and the wider council.

61.4% of adults in North Yorkshire are living with excess weight, similar to the England average (63.8%). North Yorkshire's Tier 2 Weight Management Service is currently undergoing transformation, with a view to relaunching in Spring 2025.

Practitioner Psychologists have competencies in delivering interventions on a one-to-one and small group basis, as well as delivering behaviour change interventions. Service data has demonstrated an increased prevalence of mental health issues which may prevent or reduce engagement with the Tier 2 weight management service. However, a Practitioner Psychologist is not currently part of the multi-disciplinary team. Additionally, the way in which behaviour change components of the service translate into frontline delivery are unknown.

## BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE'S ROLE IN COMMISSIONING

By incorporating behavioural science within the transformation of North Yorkshire's weight management service, we aim to:

Understand patterns and factors contributing to low uptake in specific populations.

- This has been achieved by surveys, focus groups and interviews with 179 people across 7 target groups (teens, men, people living with moderate to severe mental illness, people living in rural areas, people with learning disabilities and ASD, people with long-term conditions and physical disabilities, and pregnant women).
- COM-B was applied to the data to identify group-specific barriers and facilitators of uptake and adherence to the service.
- These insights will allow us to develop interventions to increase uptake amongst these groups and across the service.

Appraise the use of psychology and behaviour change within the service.

- This will be achieved by understanding which behaviour change techniques are evident in the service specification and in current staff training.
- We will identify the most effective behaviour change techniques that should be included within a tier 2 service, and ensure these are delivered with fidelity in the service

Develop the Psychology offer within the Tier 2 service and establish a Practitioner Psychologist role within the service. The aim of this role will be to:

- Support the embedding of behavioural science across the service
- Develop colleagues' ability to use behaviour change within their roles
- Conducting one-to-one psychological interventions with people who access the service, as appropriate.
- Engender collaboration with Psychologists working in the Tier 3 service.
- Support the adoption of a weight neutral and compassionate approach within the service.