

Specialist NHS clinics for severely obese children and young people are to be set up in [England](#) as part of an early intervention scheme to help tackle an issue costing about £6bn a year.

A pilot of 15 clinics across the country will provide more than 1,000 children a year, aged between two and 18, specialist treatment to support weight loss.

Tailored care packages developed with their family will include diet plans, mental health treatment and coaching, with early action aimed at preventing long-term health problems such as [type 2 diabetes](#), health attacks, strokes and cancer.

The rollout of the pilot delivers on the [NHS](#) Long Term Plan ambition to treat children for severe complications related to their obesity, avoiding the need for more invasive treatment.

Obesity affects [one in five children](#) in the UK and can increase the likelihood of a child developing serious health issues such as type 2 diabetes, liver conditions and early heart disease. Children who are severely obese can also develop difficulties such as breathing problems, sleep issues and mental health problems.

In England, the number of children living with obesity doubles from the start of primary school to the end of primary school – with latest data showing that one-fifth of children aged 10-11 are obese in England.

At the new clinics, group sessions will be provided with a full clinical team, including support from dietitians, psychologists, specialist nurses, social workers, youth workers and a paediatrician. The services will identify the factors causing obesity in children, considering their mental and physical health.

Amanda Pritchard, the chief executive of NHS England, said: “The pandemic has shone a harsh light on obesity – with many vulnerable young people struggling with weight gain during the pandemic. Left unchecked, obesity can have other very serious consequences, ranging from diabetes to cancer.”

The new services “are a landmark moment” in efforts to help children and young people “lead longer, healthier and happier lives”, she said.

The pilot is based on an existing service in Bristol Royal hospital for [Children](#), which has been supporting children in the area since 2018. The Care of Childhood Obesity (CoCO) clinic has treated thousands of children from across the south-west since its launch.

Julian Hamilton-Shield, a professor of diabetes and metabolic endocrinology at the Bristol hospital, said: “Using a team of experts from many disciplines, including specialist dieticians, social support workers, and mental health professionals, we can pinpoint the exact causes of weight gain and create tailored treatment plans for each child to help accelerate weight loss and address the complications caused.

“The creation of these 15 new clinics across the country demonstrate the NHS’s commitment to help tackle obesity and provide more local access to specialist weight management support for children in England.”

Available evidence shows younger generations are becoming obese at earlier ages and staying obese for longer, putting themselves at greater risk of 13 different types of cancer, heart attacks, strokes and type 2 diabetes. Children living in the most deprived areas are more than twice as likely to be obese than those living in the least deprived areas.

Source: [NHS to set up 15 special clinics in England for severely obese children](#)