# NHS England pilots smart scales to tackle severe childhood obesity with tech-driven care



Thousands of children struggling with severe obesity in England may soon find support through innovative technology as NHS England launches a new initiative involving advanced “smart scales.” These digital devices, described as a “game-changing tool” by health officials, will be available at specialist clinics designed to promote weight loss and foster healthy behaviours.

The smart scales connect to a mobile app, providing an ingenious method for children to monitor their weight management journey without focusing on specific numbers. Instead, the device visually indicates the trend of their weight, allowing children and their families to receive ongoing support and feedback from their clinical teams. This approach aims to encourage healthier habits and reduce the need for in-person visits to healthcare facilities.

Currently, about 350 young patients are trialling these smart scales, with plans to extend usage to another 150 children at four additional clinics this summer. The initiative aligns with a broader NHS strategy to combat childhood obesity, with the goal of implementing early interventions that can prevent the serious health complications associated with excessive weight gain.

Professor Simon Kenny, NHS England’s national clinical director for children and young people, emphasised the importance of such tools in providing ongoing support in the home setting. He stated, “Living with excess weight can cause problems affecting every organ system and long-term complications such as type 2 diabetes, stroke, early joint replacements, and mental health difficulties.” Recognising that health issues arising from obesity can significantly hinder a child's future opportunities, he underscored the urgency of proactive measures.

The pilot programme is being executed within 15 Complications from Excess Weight (CEW) clinics, where comprehensive care is available. A significant aspect of this project is the embodied multidisciplinary approach, integrating dietary education, behavioural coaching, and mental health support. According to recent research presented at the European Congress on Obesity, many young patients face complex health challenges; the data highlights that a considerable percentage of these individuals also deal with neurodevelopmental disorders. For instance, over 20% of the patients in the CEW system are reported to be affected by learning disabilities or autism.

Kirsty, a 16-year-old who sought treatment at a CEW clinic, shared her personal experience, indicating how the support she received not only transformed her physical health but also provided substantial mental wellness interventions. “Talking about my mental health helped me a lot,” she reflected, adding that the comprehensive education surrounding nutrition and health has empowered her in profound ways.

The introduction of these smart scales reflects a significant investment in technology aimed at reaching some of the most vulnerable segments of the population. Further emphasising this investment, NHS England is expanding its network by launching new specialist clinics that will cater specifically to teenagers and children with severe obesity issues. According to the announcement, these clinics will be equipped to offer tailored healthcare packages, considering factors from dietary requirements to psychological support.

Moreover, a crucial component of combating childhood obesity lies in initiatives like the National Child Measurement Programme, which tactically gathers data on children’s height and weight at various stages in their education. This data is pivotal in shaping local health strategies and ensuring the right resources are allocated effectively.

With the stakes higher than ever amidst a fluctuating healthcare landscape, these technological and strategic advancements illustrate a renewed commitment from NHS England to tackle the pressing childhood obesity crisis comprehensively. As health officials continue to innovate and expand their support services, the hope remains that future generations can lead healthier lives, free from the burdens of obesity-related health conditions.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2. Paragraph 4, 5
3. Paragraph 5
4. Paragraph 4
5. Paragraph 4
6. Paragraph 4
7. N/A

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/nhs-england-england-leeds-university-sheffield-hallam-university-leeds-beckett-university-b2749621.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/get-involved/cyp/specialist-clinics-for-children-and-young-people-living-with-obesity/> - NHS England's Complications from Excess Weight (CEW) clinics offer holistic treatment for children and young people with severe obesity. These clinics provide multidisciplinary care, including mental health support, dietary strategies, and behavioural coaching, aiming to prevent long-term health complications associated with obesity. The program is part of the NHS Long Term Plan to address childhood obesity and its related health issues.
3. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/london/london-clinical-networks/our-networks/london-babies-children-and-young-peoples-transformation-team/weight-management/complications-of-excess-weight-clinics/> - The CEW clinics in London are part of a nationally funded 2-year pilot program designed to help children and young people with complications from excess weight. The program includes multiple CEW services based on the patient's home address, offering specialized care to address obesity-related health issues.
4. <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/childrens-weight/national-child-measurement-programme/> - The National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) measures the height and weight of children in Reception class (aged 4 to 5) and Year 6 (aged 10 to 11) to assess overweight and obesity levels in primary schools. The data collected helps inform local planning and delivery of services for children and families.
5. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2023/06/nhs-to-open-new-specialist-clinics-for-obese-children-and-young-people/> - NHS England announced the opening of 10 new specialist clinics across England to provide intensive support for severely obese children and young people. The initiative aims to prevent long-term health conditions associated with obesity by offering tailored care packages developed with families, including diet plans, mental health care, and coaching.
6. <https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/childrens-weight/> - The NHS provides resources and support for parents and carers to help children maintain a healthy weight. This includes information on the National Child Measurement Programme, advice on discussing weight with children, and tips for healthy lifestyle changes to support weight management.
7. <https://www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/about-us/media-centre/news-archive/new-eating-device-retrains-dietary-habits-and-helps-children-lose-weight> - University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust reports on a new eating device that retrains dietary habits and helps children lose weight. The device, known as Mandometer, focuses on eating speed and meal size, showing promising results in improving weight loss in obese adolescents without the need for pharmacotherapy.