



Royal College of Surgeons of England
35-43 Lincoln's Inn Fields
London
WC2A 3PE

27th July 2020

Obesity UK and BOMSS welcome the Government's new focus on obesity, spurred on by the PM's recognition that people living with obesity have been shown to be at an increased risk of severe consequences from COVID-19. However, we are concerned that the strategy published today contains no concrete proposals for increased patient access to what is indisputably the best treatment available for those living with severe and complex obesity, bariatric surgery. The focus (once again) is on prevention and low-level interventions mainly aimed at the majority of adults with milder degrees of obesity.

Whilst we are broadly supportive of the new measures outlined so far, we hope that today's announcement is just the first stage of a rapidly implemented, more comprehensive approach to addressing the needs of those living with severe and complex obesity and that we will be hearing more detail about the Government's plans for improving nationwide access to high quality obesity treatments, particularly bariatric surgery. We specifically wish to see improvements in mental health support offered to patients.

Given the pressing timescale resulting from the coronavirus pandemic there are two measures the Government should consider implementing immediately.

- Firstly, to prioritise admission of patients on the bariatric surgery waiting list who are currently being left to wait as 'routine' admissions, despite their urgent need to lose weight quickly.
- Secondly, to authorise a short-term expansion of bariatric surgery over the next 12 months to enable as many patients with severe and complex obesity to be moved out of harm's way whilst we await an effective coronavirus vaccine.

Our full responses to this strategy and statement can be seen online at:

www.obesityuk.org.uk/our-work

BOMSS link