



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

BLOGS

Shajna Azad 2232143

Blog 1

LCHS7009 Population Health and Digital
Promotion

Dr Raheela Sheikh
MSc Public Health and Social Care in Practice



Can a Smartphone Really Change Your Health?

Exploring the NHS Digital Weight Management Programme

Digital technology is changing the way we prevent obesity - but can a smartphone help people develop healthier habits, or is technology only one part of the solution?

Published: June 2026 | HealthConnect UK Editorial Team | 5-minute read | Category: Digital Health Promotion



Figure 1. Digital health technologies are increasingly being used to support healthier lifestyles and prevent obesity.

In brief: The NHS Digital Weight Management Programme is a free 12-week digital behaviour change intervention for eligible adults living with obesity and hypertension, type 2 diabetes or both. Its promise in combining access, coaching and self-monitoring; its challenge lies in sustaining engagement and ensuring digital health does not widen inequalities.

Every choice tells a story

Every meal skipped. Every supermarket purchase. Every evening walk - or evening spent sitting. These everyday decisions quietly shape one of England's greatest public health challenges: obesity. However, obesity is far more complex than simply eating too much or exercising too little. Lifestyle behaviours are influenced by income, education, food environments, mental wellbeing and access to healthcare (NICE, 2025).

Obesity is a major contributor to preventable illness, increasing the risk of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, stroke and at least 13 cancers (World Health Organization, 2025). Recent national data indicate that around 66% of adults in England are overweight or living with obesity, including approximately 30% living with obesity, highlighting why prevention remains a public health priority (NHS Digital, 2024).

HealthConnect Insight

2 in every 3

Adults in England are overweight or living with obesity. Obesity contributes to rising demand for NHS services and is strongly associated with long-term health inequalities.

A digital approach to healthier living

Recognising the growing burden of obesity, NHS England introduced the NHS Digital Weight Management Programme, a free 12-week digital intervention for eligible adults living with obesity and either hypertension, type 2 diabetes or both (NHS England, 2021). Delivered through approved digital providers using smartphones or computers, the programme combines personalised nutrition advice, physical activity guidance, self-monitoring, behavioural coaching and progress tracking.

Unlike many commercial weight-loss applications, the programme is grounded in evidence-based behaviour change techniques and aims to promote sustainable lifestyle improvements rather than rapid weight loss alone (NHS England, 2021).

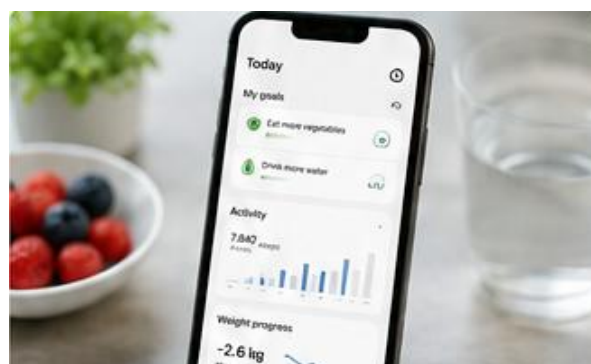


Figure 2. Digital self-monitoring can help participants engage with healthier behaviours through tracking, feedback and goal setting.

Expert insight

According to Michie, van Stralen and West (2011), sustainable behaviour change occurs when individuals have the capability, opportunity and motivation to adopt healthier behaviours.

This matters because the NHS programme is not simply a calorie-counting tool; it combines education, access and coaching to support behaviour change.

Does it actually work?

Early evidence is encouraging. During the programme's first year, 63,937 people were referred, approximately half enrolled, and participants completing the intervention achieved an average weight loss of 3.9 kg over 12 weeks (Taylor et al., 2024). These findings suggest that digital interventions can support meaningful lifestyle change while expanding access to preventative healthcare.

Nevertheless, the available evidence should be interpreted cautiously. Most evaluations focus on short-term outcomes, with limited evidence demonstrating whether weight loss and healthier behaviours are maintained after programme completion (Taylor et al., 2024). From a public health perspective, sustained behaviour change and reduced disease incidence are more meaningful measures of success than short-term reductions in body weight alone.

Can digital health reach everyone?

Perhaps the greatest challenge is equity. While digital programmes improve convenience for many users, they may unintentionally disadvantage those experiencing digital poverty, limited health literacy, language barriers or poor internet access. These populations are also more likely to experience obesity and its associated health conditions (NICE, 2025). Consequently, digital innovation has the potential to both reduce and reinforce health inequalities depending on how interventions are implemented.

Furthermore, obesity is shaped by wider structural factors including poverty, food affordability, employment and the built environment, which cannot be addressed through digital technology alone. Digital weight management should therefore be viewed as one component of a broader public health strategy rather than a standalone solution.

Looking ahead

The NHS Digital Weight Management Programme demonstrates how digital technology can support modern public health by improving access to evidence-based behaviour change interventions. However, success should not be judged solely by kilograms lost, but by whether the programme promotes sustainable lifestyle change while reducing health inequalities.

Future developments should incorporate culturally tailored nutrition advice, multilingual support, greater accessibility for digitally excluded populations, integration with wearable technologies and stronger links with primary care and social prescribing. Technology cannot solve obesity on its own, but when combined with behaviour change science, clinical expertise and wider action on the social determinants of health, it can become a powerful catalyst for improving population health.

Watch

 Watch



Suggested video: How the NHS Digital Weight Management Programme works (NHS England).

Useful links

- [NHS Digital Weight Management Programme](#)
- [NHS Better Health](#)
- [Office for Health Improvement and Disparities](#)
- [NICE: Overweight and obesity management](#)

You may also be interested in

- [Digital health and prevention](#)
- [How behaviour change supports public health](#)
- [Health inequalities and access to care](#)

References

Brown, K., Cheng, C., Hamilton, K., Hagger, M. and Sutton, S.R. (2025) The SAGE handbook of health psychology. London: SAGE Publications.

Michie, S., van Stralen, M.M. and West, R. (2011) 'The behaviour change wheel: A new method for characterising and designing behaviour change interventions', Implementation Science, 6(42). doi:10.1186/1748-5908-6-42.

NHS Digital (2024) Health Survey for England. Available at: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/health-survey-for-england>. (Accessed: 3rd June 2026)

NHS England (2021) The NHS Digital Weight Management Programme. Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/digital-weight-management/>. (Accessed: 3rd June 2026)

NHS England (2023) How to access the programme. Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/digital-weight-management/how-to-access-the-programme/>. (Accessed: 3rd June 2026)

NHS England (2024) NHS online weight loss programme highlighted as a success in new study. Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2024/04/nhs-online-weight-loss-programme-highlighted-as-a-success-in-new-study/>. (Accessed: 3rd June 2026)

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) (2025) Overweight and obesity management. Available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng246>. (Accessed: 3rd June 2026)

Taylor, K. et al. (2024) 'Early outcomes of referrals to the English National Health Service Digital Weight Management Programme', Obesity, 32(6), pp. 1083-1092. doi:10.1002/oby.24024.

World Health Organization (2025) Obesity and overweight. Available at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/obesity-and-overweight>. (Accessed: 5th June 2026)



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

BLOGS

Shajna Azad 2232143

Blog 2

LCHS7009 Population Health and Digital
Promotion

Dr Raheela Sheikh

MSc Public Health and Social Care in Practice

[Home](#) > [Blogs](#) > [Digital Health](#) > [Introducing HealthConnect+](#)

Introducing HealthConnect+

The Next Generation of Digital Weight Management

Building on the NHS Digital Weight Management Programme to create a smarter, more personalised approach to obesity prevention.

Published: June 2026 | HealthConnect UK Editorial Team | 5-minute read

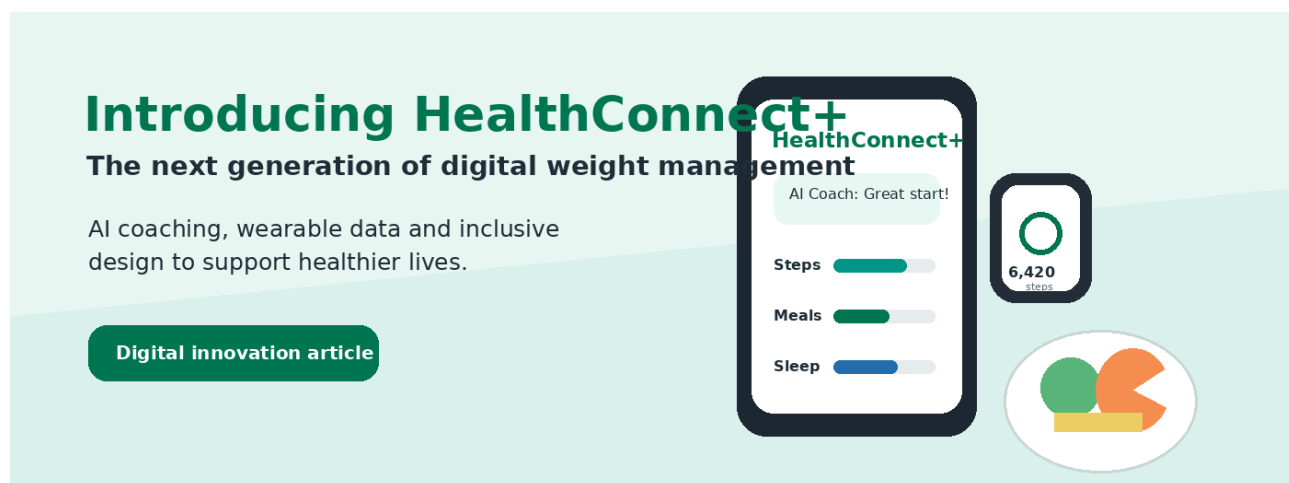


Figure 1. HealthConnect+ integrates artificial intelligence, wearable technology and personalised coaching to support long-term behaviour change.

From evaluation to innovation

Obesity remains one of England's most significant public health challenges, increasing the risk of cardiovascular disease, Type 2 diabetes and several cancers (World Health Organization, 2025). Blog 1 showed that the NHS Digital Weight Management Programme expands access to evidence-based support, but opportunities remain to improve personalisation, long-term engagement and accessibility.

What is HealthConnect+?

HealthConnect+ is a designed digital health promotion intervention that builds on this existing NHS model. It combines artificial intelligence (AI), wearable technology and behaviour change science to provide personalised weight management support. Users receive an AI health coach, activity and sleep feedback from wearable devices, meal scanning, culturally tailored recipes, mental wellbeing check-ins, GP connectivity and social prescribing links.

How would it promote health?

The intervention is underpinned by the COM-B model, which argues that behaviour change depends on capability, opportunity and motivation (Michie, van Stralen and West, 2011). HealthConnect+ improves capability through tailored education, increases opportunity through multilingual, Easy Read and offline access, and strengthens motivation through personalised feedback, goal setting and adaptive prompts. This aligns with NICE guidance that obesity management should combine dietary, physical activity and behavioural support (NICE, 2025).

HealthConnect Innovation

Designed to address gaps identified in current digital programmes:

- AI-powered personalised coaching
- Wearable and meal-photo feedback
- Multilingual, Easy Read and voice navigation
- Social prescribing and GP connectivity
- Early identification of declining engagement

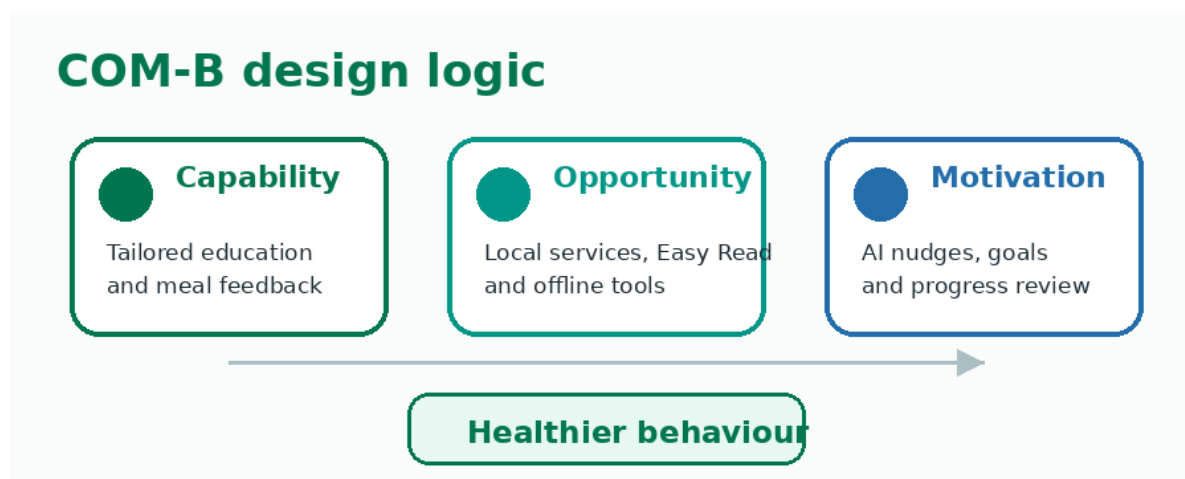


Figure 2. How HealthConnect+ applies COM-B to digital weight management design.

Critical impact and shortfalls

HealthConnect+ could improve engagement by offering support that adapts to individual needs rather than relying on fixed digital modules. It may also reduce barriers for people who find face-to-face services difficult to attend. However, AI-enabled health technologies raise important ethical concerns around privacy, transparency, bias and clinical safety (World Health Organization, 2021). There is also a risk that reliance on smartphones could exclude people experiencing digital poverty.

Addressing the risks

To reduce these shortfalls, HealthConnect+ would require clinician oversight, transparent AI decision-making, secure data governance and rigorous evaluation using the NICE Evidence Standards Framework for digital health technologies (NICE, 2022). It should also offer offline functions, translated content and non-digital referral routes. HealthConnect+ is therefore not a replacement for NHS services, but a proposed enhancement that could support more inclusive, preventative and personalised obesity care.

From current support to HealthConnect+

Current digital programme

- 12-week programme
- Self-monitoring
- Digital coaching
- Evidence-based support



HealthConnect+ enhancement

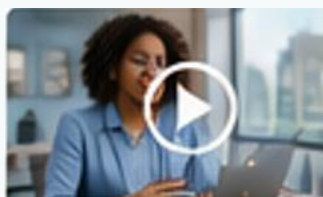
- ✓ Adaptive AI coaching
- ✓ Wearable + meal photo feedback
- ✓ Social prescribing links
- ✓ Inclusive access features

Figure 3. HealthConnect+ builds on current digital weight management support by adding personalisation, integration and inclusion features.

Expert Insight

According to the World Health Organization (2021), AI in health must be transparent, accountable and designed to protect equity. This is why HealthConnect+ includes clinician oversight, accessibility features and clear data governance rather than relying on automation alone.

Watch



► Suggested video: How AI is transforming personalised healthcare.

Useful links

- NHS Digital Weight Management Programme
- NICE: Digital Health Technologies
- WHO: Ethics and Governance of AI for Health
- NHS Long Term Plan

References

Brown, K., Cheng, C., Hamilton, K., Hagger, M. and Sutton, S.R. (2025) The SAGE handbook of health psychology. London: SAGE Publications.

Ewles, L., and Simnett, I (2003) Promoting Health: A practical guide, 5th edn. London: Baillière Tindall

Green, L. W., & Kreuter, M. W. (1999). *Health promotion planning: An educational and ecological approach* (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw - Hill.

Michie, S., van Stralen, M.M. and West, R. (2011) 'The behaviour change wheel: A new method for characterising and designing behaviour change interventions', *Implementation Science*, 6(42). doi:10.1186/1748-5908-6-42.

Murray, E., Hekler, E. B., Andersson, G., Collins, L. M., Doherty, A., Hollis, C., ... & Wyatt, J. C. (2016). Evaluating digital health interventions: key questions and approaches. *American journal of preventive medicine*, 51(5), 843-851.

NHS Digital (2024) Health Survey for England. Available at: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/health-survey-for-england>. (Accessed: 3rd June 2026)

NHS England (2021) The NHS Digital Weight Management Programme. Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/digital-weight-management/>. (Accessed: 3rd June 2026)

NHS England (2023) How to access the programme. Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/digital-weight-management/how-to-access-the-programme/>. (Accessed: 3rd June 2026)

NHS England (2024) NHS online weight loss programme highlighted as a success in new study. Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2024/04/nhs-online-weight-loss-programme-highlighted-as-a-success-in-new-study/>. (Accessed: 3rd June 2026)

Naidoo, J. and Wills, J. (2016) *Foundations for health promotion*. Fourth edition. London: Elsevier.

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) (2025) Overweight and obesity management. Available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng246>. (Accessed: 5th June 2026)

Taylor, K. et al. (2024) 'Early outcomes of referrals to the English National Health Service Digital Weight Management Programme', *Obesity*, 32(6), pp. 1083-1092. doi:10.1002/oby.24024.

World Health Organization (2025) Obesity and overweight. Available at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/obesity-and-overweight>. (Accessed: 5th June 2026)