

# A weight off your mind

Supporting you to achieve or maintain a healthy weight



**Information Leaflet**

## What is 'A Weight off Your Mind' (AWOYM)?

A Weight off Your Mind is a regional resource for people with mental health conditions and/or learning disabilities to achieve or maintain a healthy weight.

A range of support materials are available in the North East and in North Cumbria to support you to achieve your goals.

AWOYM supports healthy eating, physical activity and behaviour change to improve your health, life expectancy and quality of life.

## Why?

People with a mental health condition and/or learning disability can die up to 15-20 years earlier. Working together to maintain a healthy weight we can prevent many of these early deaths.

People with a mental health condition and/or learning disability face more challenges in losing and maintaining weight.



One challenge is that many medications can make you feel more hungry than usual, please speak to your doctor or a member of your clinical team for advice about your medication.

By supporting you to make changes to your lifestyle and maintain a healthy weight, we can help you improve your physical and mental health.



## Jenny's story



Jenny is 16 years old and is in the care system, due to trauma at home. Jenny reads magazines and sees images of thin models and thinks she should be skinny. She is on a low income and is not working.

### What the barriers were

Employability skills

Help to understand false reality in the media

Insecurity/low self esteem

Limited access to support staff in the community

### What was important to Jenny

Trusted support worker who can support Jenny to have a positive body image

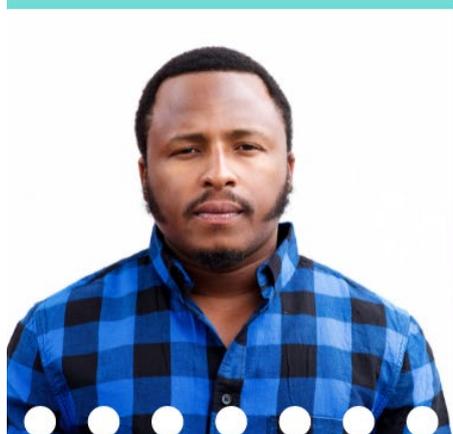
Support to access activities which she can take part in with people of her age group

Access to volunteering to help build her self confidence

Support for her carers so they can better help Jenny



## Martin's story



Martin is 33 years old, has low confidence and lacks motivation. Martin is sectioned on a mental health ward and is taking Olanzapine. Whilst being on the ward he has eaten a lot of takeaways.

### What the barriers were

Lack of cooking skills and knowledge

GP's lack of knowledge about mental health issues and medication

Insecurity/low self esteem

Lack of referral into weight management services

### What was important to Martin

Basic cookery skills course, tips on healthy eating and portion control and healthy takeaways

Working with staff to plan recipes and healthy food options

Support with reducing snacking

Access to a walking group

Taking control



## Trevor's story



Trevor is 65 years old, and lives at home supported by carers. Trevor has a heart condition. He over eats and this affects his physical health. Trevor has a learning disability and has limited ability to exercise. Trevor likes to be left alone and does not like talking to people.

### What the barriers were

- Learning difficulties
- Mobility issues
- Social isolation
- Vulnerable
- Finds it difficult to develop new relationships

### What was important to Trevor

- Access to a Recovery College so that he can build confidence and join in activities
- To feel that he can trust people and build relationships
- Support from gym staff to learn how to use exercise equipment and to join in with classes
- Enjoying a treat without over eating

## What support is available?

You can get advice on healthy eating and becoming more active from the AWOYM website [www.cntw.nhs.uk/awoym](http://www.cntw.nhs.uk/awoym)

If you do not have a computer or cannot use the internet a friend, carer or member of staff can help you. The AWOYM website has lots of information including:

- directory of physical activities in your local area
- advice on healthy eating, and food swaps
- links to Apps that you can use on your phone
- links to advice on making lifestyle changes
- links to the benefits of physical activity and advice on what activities to do and for how long
- advice on food labels to support you to choose healthier options when food shopping.

You could also speak to a member of staff. They will be able to talk to you about simple changes you can make. They will be able to help you look at the reasons why you might be struggling with your weight and help you to come up with some possible solutions.



## What can we all do to help?

- Take time to build relationships
- Find out individual's barriers
- Spend time finding out what is important
- Support to find out what groups are available
- Accompany to attend local activities and groups
- Talk about food swaps
- Provide knowledge and resources to take control of choices
- Understand effect of medication on daily life
- Provide ongoing support
- Setbacks are ok – talk about how we overcome them

## Useful resources

- A Weight off Your Mind website  
[www.cntw.nhs.uk/awoym](http://www.cntw.nhs.uk/awoym)
- Link to the easy read AWOYM plan  
[www.cntw.nhs.uk/content/uploads/2019/10/Easy-Read-A-Weight-off-Your-Mind-Plan.pdf](http://www.cntw.nhs.uk/content/uploads/2019/10/Easy-Read-A-Weight-off-Your-Mind-Plan.pdf)

If you would like further information, please speak to a member of staff or use the website.

AWOYM has been developed in partnership with other organisations including:

- North East Together
- Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust
- Northern England Clinical Networks
- Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Trust

## References

- Public Health England (2018) Severe mental illness (SMI) and physical health inequalities: briefing.
- Royal College of Psychiatrists. 'Improving the physical health of adults with severe mental illness: essential actions' 2016 (viewed on 2 July 2018)



Further information about the content, reference sources or production of this leaflet can be obtained from the Patient Information Centre. If you would like to tell us what you think about this leaflet please get in touch.

This information can be made available in a range of formats on request (Braille, audio, larger print, easy read, BSL or other languages). Please contact the Patient Information Centre on telephone 0191 246 7288.

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