

National Obesity Strategy Public Consultation

Fields marked with * are mandatory.



An Roinn Sláinte
Department of Health



Consultation on a new National Obesity Strategy to enable healthier living and provide support to prevent and treat overweight and obesity in Ireland

Submissions

Healthy Ireland is inviting people to provide their input into the development of the next National Obesity Strategy.

To help you make your case, we have provided questions aimed to gauge what direction the next policy should go in, and you will be able to input any further information/thoughts into the box provided at the end.

Please note:

- Keep your responses short and to the point.
- You do not have to fill every box in the template – it is just a guide.
- The deadline for submissions is **18th September 2025**.

Please keep in mind that the focus of the new strategy will be on protecting public health and that any actions included in the strategy will be based on evidence.

If you wish to alert us to any research or articles, please do not paste them in the template but instead provide

a link or reference in the final box.

If you are considering a submission, you are strongly advised to read our privacy notice below which explains how submissions will be made public and how your data will be stored.

If you would like to make your submission in Irish, please contact Healthylreland@health.gov.ie.

What happens to your submission?

Healthy Ireland wishes to inform you that any submissions, including the submitter's name, may be published in whole or in part, either within a Healthy Ireland report or separately, at the discretion of Healthy Ireland.

Healthy Ireland maintains the right to decline submissions and is not obliged to publish any submission content.

Privacy Notice

Any personal information, which you volunteer to Healthy Ireland, will be treated with the highest standards of security and confidentiality, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016/67 and the Data Protection Act 2018. However, please note the following:

By providing a submission to Healthy Ireland, you are consenting to your data being processed by Healthy Ireland. If, at any time, you wish to withdraw your submission please contact Healthylreland@health.gov.ie.

Healthy Ireland expects to publish submissions and a report outlining the key themes arising from the public consultation. Healthy Ireland may include a full list of those who make submissions in an appendix to any report.

Submissions received by Healthy Ireland may be subject to Freedom of Information requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2014. In this regard, submissions will be considered for release under the Act.

The information provided in the submissions will be shared with members of Healthy Ireland, M-CO, who are working with Healthy Ireland in the development of the new strategy and may be shared with relevant Department of Health officials.

Submissions will be retained until the final version of the new strategy has been published.

This survey includes a few example approaches to help make the questions easier to understand. These examples are for illustration only and should not be interpreted as current or proposed government policy.

☒ I accept the Terms as stated above

The Department of Health is currently developing a new National Obesity Strategy to enable healthier living and improve supports to prevent and treat overweight and obesity in Ireland.

1.1. When you hear that the Government is planning to launch a new ‘National Obesity Strategy’, how important do you think it might be for your own health?

	Very important	Important	Neither important nor unimportant	Unimportant	Very unimportant
* When you hear that the Government is planning to launch a new ‘National Obesity Strategy’, how important do you think it might be for your own health?	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐

1.2. We’ve put together six short statements about the National Obesity Strategy, and we’d like to hear what you think. Based on your first impression, how strongly do you agree or disagree with each one?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
* ‘Lower obesity rates will lead to a healthier society.’	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
* ‘The strategy will help people reduce the risk of disease like diabetes and heart disease.’	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐
* ‘The strategy will reduce the cost of overweight and obesity to the health system.’	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐
* ‘Other health issues are more important than obesity.’	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒
* ‘People have enough information to make healthy choices.’	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒
* ‘It is not the Government’s function to reduce overweight and obesity levels in Ireland.’	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒

2. Based on our work on the strategy so far, three key Strategic Objectives have been identified. A brief summary of each objective is provided below:

Strategic Objective 1: Create food environments that enable healthy places and communities

The food environment shapes what food we buy and eat. It's the places where we make decisions about food such as food shops, restaurants, takeaways and also how food is advertised to us. Today our food environment is overflowing with unhealthy options which research shows is affecting our health and can lead to overweight and obesity. The strategy will aim to create a healthier food environment.

Here are three examples of approaches we can take to achieve this objective. How strongly do you agree or disagree with these approaches?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
* 'Limiting ads for unhealthy food across TV and social media would help people to eat healthier.'	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
* 'Introducing clearer food labelling would help people to make healthier food choices.'	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
* 'If the government offered more targeted support, a lot more people would switch to healthier food.'	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐

2.1 Do you have comments on any of these approaches?

In an increasingly market driven global environment, food producers can prioritise profit over population health. Advertisements play a significant role in individual's dietary choices and health, particularly among vulnerable populations. Young people are particularly at risk of being influenced by advertisements and promotion of products both on mainstream media including false or mis-leading information disseminated through social media platforms. EU legislation provides for mandatory nutritional declaration on prepacked foods indicating the amounts of energy, fat, saturates, carbohydrates, protein, sugars and salt per 100g/100ml, however currently there is no requirement to label unhealthy content per portion size nor any provision in place for front of pack labelling such as the UK traffic light system. Both of which has been found to be effective in supporting individuals to make healthier food choices. Industry self-regulation has been found to be of little benefit to public health and robust legislation is needed to ensure that the healthy choice is the easy choice including • restrictions of advertising, marketing and sale of unhealthy food and drink targeted at young people • Mandatory nutritional labelling per portion size and the introduction of front of pack labelling based on the UK's traffic light system In light of growing evidence on the harms of social media including the use of personal data and algorithms which tailor unhealthy content towards young people, the IMO is calling for a ban on social media for under 16 year olds.

2.2 Is there any other approach you think should be included to achieve Strategic Objective 1?

The social determinants of health refer to the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes including the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. Socio-economic and environmental factors such as poverty, deprivation, unemployment, educational attainment, social isolation, discrimination, unsafe neighbourhoods, poor housing conditions, poor air quality, exposure to toxins and access to green spaces all impact our health with climate change set to have a further impact on disease and mortality and increase inequalities. The commercial determinants of health are a key determinant of health and refer to the activities of the commercial sector that can impact on health outcomes. (WHO, 2025) The IMO urges the Government to examine how poor health, including obesity and overweight, is influenced by the social and commercial determinants of health.

Strategic Objective 2: Empower people at risk of obesity with improved skills and confidence to eat healthily.

Some groups of people are more at risk of obesity and overweight than others. This can be caused by factors such as where they live and how much income they have which means they can face more challenges than other groups. To ensure fairness, the strategy will aim to empower these groups by providing improved resources and skills to eat more healthily.

Here are three examples of approaches we can take to achieve this objective. How strongly do you agree or disagree with these approaches?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
* 'Expanding community programmes focused on healthy eating, cooking and shopping will help people to make healthier food choices.'	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
* 'Increasing healthy food options in public services such as schools and hospitals will help people eat healthier.'	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
* 'Developing a public awareness programme explaining that obesity is a disease would help to destigmatise it as an issue.'	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐

2.3 Do you have feedback on any of these approaches?

2.4 Is there any other approach you think should be included to achieve Strategic Objective 2?

The burden of obesity and overweight is significant across all socio-economic groups, however there is a strong socio-economic gradient to obesity prevalence and large inequalities in health related to socio-economic status exist. Socio-economic factors including, income, educational attainment, environmental factors, such as whether individuals live advantaged or disadvantaged areas are associated with differences in risk of obesity.

(ASOI, 2022) Furthermore, children from more deprived areas are less likely to eat fruit and vegetables or participate in regular rigorous exercise and more likely to consume sugar sweetened drinks on a daily basis (HBSC 2022) The determinants of obesity are complex and require upstream policies and interventions across all Government sectors. The IMO is calling for the establishment of a cross-departmental group to address the social, environmental and commercial determinants of health and health inequality including obesity. Obesity is one of the most serious public health challenges affecting children of all ages with major implications for health and health services into the future. A greater focus on prevention is needed including evidence-based programmes that promote child health from ante-natal care through to early childhood. In relation to HFSS foods, pricing structures should be put in place to ensure that the healthy option is the affordable option.

Strategic Objective 3: Increase timely and appropriate access to treatment and prevention supports.

Earlier diagnosis and increased availability of treatment options will help to reduce levels of overweight and obesity. Levels can also be reduced by helping to prevent people from becoming overweight and obese. The strategy will aim to expand both these areas throughout the health service.

Here are three examples of approaches we can take to achieve this objective. How strongly do you agree or disagree with these approaches?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
* 'Increasing funding to provide access to drugs and surgery in the treatment of overweight and obesity will help people to be healthier.'	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
* 'Providing healthy lifestyle programmes across the health service will help to prevent overweight and obesity.'	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐
* 'Improving knowledge of obesity among healthcare workers will help to improve how they engage with patients who are overweight or obese.'	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐

2.5 Do you have feedback on any of these approaches?

Obesity is a chronic disease requiring structured, evidence-based care. Over 60% of Irish adults are living with overweight or obesity, with significant implications for population health and healthcare costs. Access to structured weight management programmes is extremely limited and largely hospital-based, leaving most patients without timely or equitable support. GPs are bearing witness to the downstream complications of untreated or poorly managed obesity, including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, fatty liver, and infertility — many of which could be avoidable with earlier, structured intervention. In addition, patients encounter delays, geographic limitations, and financial barriers that can hinder or prevent timely access to care. As a result many turn to unregulated commercial services. A growing body of research demonstrates that weight management delivered in primary care is both effective and scalable. Interventions led by general practitioners (GPs) and

primary care teams achieve clinically meaningful weight loss, improve metabolic outcomes, and provide safe, equitable long-term care.

2.6 Is there any other approach you think should be included to achieve Strategic Objective 3?

Building on the success of the structured Chronic Disease Management programmes the IMO is calling on the Department of Health and the HSE to negotiate and fund a GP-led national obesity service, integrated into primary care, with clear pathways to specialist care. The IMO are proposing a tiered, model-driven, medication-agnostic GP-led approach initially targeted at specific patient subgroups, ensuring continuity, flexibility, and responsiveness to emerging pharmacotherapies.

3. If you have any other observations or suggestions on the development of the new Obesity Strategy, please comment in the box below, or upload your pre prepared submission.

The IMO is calling for the establishment of a cross-departmental group to address the social and commercial determinants of health and health inequality including obesity. Please see attached proposal from the Irish Medical Organisation for the Development of National Obesity Service in General Practice.

Please upload your file(s)

aa980b50-4f04-4e76-ad54-65ce633de609/IMO_Submission_to_DOH-_GP-led_Obesity_Service.pdf

About you

4.1 Please provide your name and contact details (optional)

Name

Vanessa Hetherington, Assistant Director Policy & International Affairs, Irish Medical Organisation

Email

vhetherington@imo.ie

* 4.2 Select your age bracket (Select one)

- ☐ Under 18 years old
- ☐ 18-24 years old
- ☐ 25-34 years old
- ☐ 35-44 years old
- ☒ 45-54 years old
- ☐ 55-64 years old
- ☐ 65 years old plus

* 4.3 What gender do you identify as? (Select one)

- ☒ Female

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Non-binary
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

*** 4.4 What is your ethnic group/background? (Select one)**

- ☒ White Irish
- ☐ Irish Traveller
- ☐ Roma
- ☐ Any other White background
- ☐ African
- ☐ Any other Black background
- ☐ Chinese
- ☐ Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi
- ☐ Any other Asian background
- ☐ Arabic
- ☐ Mixed, please specify below
- ☐ Other, please specify below

Please specify

*** 4.5 Are you currently a resident of Ireland?**

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No

*** 4.6 Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?**

- ☐ Individual
- ☒ Organisation

*** 4.7 Which one of the following best describes you?**

- ☐ Member of the public
- ☒ Representative of a public health body, advocacy group, NGO or medical organisation
- ☐ Health Sector Worker
- ☐ Involvement in the food industry
- ☐ Other (please state)

Please provide the name of your organisation:

Irish Medical Organisation, Trade Union and Representative Body for all Doctors in Ireland

The Department of Health wishes to thank you for completing this public stakeholder consultation

Contact

[Contact Form](#)