



Press Release

Life-saving benefit of losing weight endorsed by Essex resident

An Essex resident who was given one year to live by his GP, has turned his life around by losing 6 and a half stone, and is encouraging others to join a weight management programme during the Covid-19 crisis.

Harlow-based Nigel Powell, who suffers from kidney disease, weighed 19 stone, 5lb when he was referred to the MoreLife programme by his local GP back in 2018. He had been diagnosed with expected kidney failure in less than a year unless he tackled his obesity.

After losing over 6 and a half stone on the 12-month programme he has significantly improved his kidney function, reduced the need for regular medication and improved his confidence as well.

Nigel said: "It was difficult to accept how much my weight was negatively affecting my health, but by acknowledging it and then taking part in the MoreLife weight management programme it has saved my life!"

"I'm now a lot more confident in managing my diet, which has been particularly helpful during Covid-19 as with panic buying there was less choice at the local supermarkets. The old me might have reverted to unhealthy options, but now I am more aware of the healthy choices available. I hope that by sharing my story I can encourage others to get the support they need to make positive changes to lose weight and live a healthier and happier life."

Research suggests that obesity can increase the risk of death from COVID-19 by as much as 48%¹ and could also make vaccines against the disease less effective. According to *Public Health England*, one in every two adults in Essex are living with obesity or overweight and could be at risk.

¹ *Obesity reviews journal, August 2020 - <https://bit.ly/2FWWC8k>

Since the start of the Covid-19 crisis, MoreLife, which is commissioned by West Essex and South Essex Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) to offer free psychologically informed weight management programmes, has adapted its services for South and West Essex residents. The provider works with CCGs, GPs and local community partners to signpost residents most in need of the free service.

The 12-month programme, which has supported over 1,700 Essex residents, is now delivered in virtual group sessions which are run by an expert team of nutritionists, psychologists and sport and exercise specialists for anyone with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 35+ or 32.5+ with type 2 diabetes.

Paul Gately, Professor of Exercise and Obesity at Leeds Beckett University and CEO of MoreLife said; “The Public Health England evidence is clear that people who are suffering from obesity or are overweight are at greater risk of serious illness or death from Covid-19.

“I hope that by sharing Nigel’s life changing story and giving guidance we can help others to change and even save their lives through losing weight. This will help them to reduce their risk of serious long-term health conditions including diabetes, heart disease and kidney disease, as well as improve their chances of a better outcome should they get Covid-19.”

Anyone living in South and West Essex is encouraged to ask their GP for a referral to MoreLife or they can self-refer to the free weight management programme through the MoreLife website.

Essex wide residents can visit the MoreLife website to find useful guidance on managing their weight and health during the Covid-19 crisis.

To find out more see <https://bit.ly/MoreLife-Essex>

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District	Percentage of Adults living with Obesity or Overweight (2018/19)
Basildon	59.7%
Braintree	65.1%
Brentwood	54.4%
Castlepoint	65.6% (2 in 3)
Chelmsford	61.9%
Colchester	60%
Epping Forest	62.4%
Rochford	63.7% (2 in 3)

Harlow	68% (2 in 3)
Maldon	66.6% (2 in 3)
Southend-On-Sea	61.7%
Tendring	66.4% (2 in 3)
Thurrock	75.9% (3 in 4)
Uttlesford	57.6%



Photo caption: Nigel Powell following the MoreLife programme



Photo caption: Professor Paul Gately

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Notes to editors

- MoreLife is a provider of NHS and Local Authority funded healthy lifestyle programmes.

- From managing weight to stopping smoking, MoreLife help bring about real and long-lasting changes through proven, science-powered programmes.
- MoreLife was founded by Professor Paul Gately of Leeds Beckett University, one of the UK's most respected experts in obesity and exercise. MoreLife is a subsidiary company of Leeds Beckett University and through its relationship with the University's centre for Applied Obesity Research MoreLife designs and delivers evidence based healthy lifestyle programmes across the UK.
- In Essex, MoreLife is commissioned by West and South Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) to deliver Tier 3 weight management programmes to West and South Essex residents.
- Professor Paul Gately is also a strategic advisor on the All Party Parliamentary Group on Obesity and a Director for Obesity UK (the leading charity dedicated to supporting people living with obesity).