



Web Story

Virtual male-only weight-management group helping to tackle obesity and change lives in South and West Essex

Our male-only weight management groups in South Essex are proving to be a welcome and safe space for men living with obesity who want to change their lives.

We are piloting the male only weight management group after research showed that higher numbers of men than women are living with obesity, but we find that males are more reluctant to join a weight management group.

As well as delivering the pilot programme, we have partnered with Healthwatch Essex to study the experiences of men living with obesity and gain feedback from the groups.

Data published by Public Health England shows that 66.9% of men are living with obesity or are overweight, compared to 59.7% of females.

One of the first participants on the male only programme, 65 year-old Colin Porter from Southend-on-Sea, has already lost one and a half stone after just six weekly sessions.

Colin was a competitive badminton player until his 50s but after suffering continuous sciatica injuries, had to take a more administrative role at Southend & District Junior Badminton Association. A more sedentary lifestyle and the loss of his beloved wife in the summer of 2018 saw Colin's weight increase to 18.5 stone.

Colin said, "I think us men can be stubborn when it comes to our weight and think we know what is best. Having previously attempted to go on a diet, I was at a loss to why it was not working and was recommended by my GP to try MoreLife.

"The MoreLife sessions have been fantastic so far and being able to tune in from your own home through a Zoom call gives a relaxed feel. Rather than being told that I must lose weight, the team has given me the insight and knowledge to make better choices and reduce my portion sizes which is ultimately helping me achieve my weight loss goals."

The free 12-month programme starts with weekly group Zoom sessions hosted by our expert team of nutritionists, psychologists, dietitians and sport and exercise specialists. After three months, clients attend monthly virtual maintenance sessions with a dedicated weight management practitioner.

Sophie Edwards, MoreLife Health Psychology Lead, said; “From our research partners at Leeds Beckett University, we understand that some men find male only groups a ‘safer space’, and reasons for not attending groups in the past include weight loss being seen as a feminine issue.

“By introducing the male only pilot groups, we hope to create a safe, welcoming environment and also learn more from our clients so our programmes can be tailored to get the best outcomes for their health and wellbeing.”

John Day, Research Manager at Healthwatch Essex, added: “With high levels of adult obesity in Essex, it is more important than ever that we work closely with our community partners to tackle this challenge.

“We are delighted to be working with MoreLife Essex and their male clients to fully understand the experiences of men living with obesity across the county, so that we can better inform our local community on how we can overcome these challenges.”

The new groups are open to any male living in South and West Essex with a BMI of 40+ alone or BMI of 35+ with any weight related health condition, as well as any male living in West Essex with a diagnosis of type 2 diabetes and a BMI of 30+.

The next male only sessions kick off on Monday 1st February at 1:00pm and Tuesday 2nd February at 6:00pm.

If you are interested in taking part in a weight management programme, you can speak to your GP or self-refer through <https://bit.ly/MoreLife-Essex>

To learn more about the Healthwatch Essex research programme, visit <https://healthwatchessex.org.uk/>



Photo: Colin Porter (right) with son Lee (left)



Photo caption: Colin (left) awarded Bernard Chandler's trophy in recognition of his work in promoting Junior Badminton within Southend & District in Essex. Mike Workshop (right)

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¹ Adult obesity statistics by local authority, Public Health England - <https://bit.ly/30cdU86>