

USING INCENTIVES AND REWARDS TO ENABLE MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC TO DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN HEALTHY BEHAVIOURS

MARKET BRIEF

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- HMG is looking to develop and test an approach to positive behaviour change that uses incentives and rewards to inspire adults (18+) to engage in increased levels of physical activity and improve their dietary choices.
- The Department of Health and Social Care is holding a market engagement event to enable interested parties to learn more. The market engagement phase is an opportunity for us to understand and engage with potential solutions to inform and shape our thinking. We are interested to understand how existing app-based incentives schemes could be adapted to facilitate sustained behaviour change in the areas of physical activity and diet, but also to explore novel and innovative potential solutions.
- In FY 2021/22 we are looking to test a primarily app-based programme (or programmes) that incentivises increased physical activity levels and/or improved dietary choices. Incentives would include, but not be limited to, financial rewards.
- We are looking for interested parties to define success and how this would be measured. As a minimum, programmes will be required to measure levels of initial engagement, continued participation in the programme and evidence of behaviour change at an individual level with benchmarking in place.
- If, in the test year, the programme(s) can successfully demonstrate the ability to achieve sustained behaviour change, our ambition would be to expand it into a national programme available to all adults in England from FY 2022/23. The precise nature and scale of the programme is subject to the Government's funding review process. Proposed solutions will therefore need to demonstrate an ability to engage and achieve sustained behaviour change within a range of demographic groups, in addition to the test audience.
- We would encourage interested parties to work together to develop potential solutions, and we are open to facilitating partnerships, if needed.
- £5 million is available to fund the test phase and this may be split across a number of test programmes. A minimum of £3 million will need to be made available for the incentivisation element of the programme. £2 million will be available for research and development, and supplier costs. Funding for Year 2 and beyond is subject to the Government's funding review process.

BACKGROUND

HMG wishes to develop and test an incentives and rewards approach to positive behaviour change that can help support healthier lives and our ambitious commitment to tackle obesity and obesity-related illnesses, reducing pressure on the NHS as we emerge from the pandemic and enabling us to 'build back' better as a more resilient, healthier society.

On 4 March, HMG announced a package of measures to improve the health of the nation by empowering people to make healthier choices and to support those living with obesity to move towards and maintain a healthier weight.

As part of this, we trailed our commitment to test an approach to changing behaviours that uses incentives (including financial rewards) to inspire people to engage in more physical activity and healthier eating.

We are now seeking interested parties to work with us in scoping, developing and delivering this approach over the course of the next financial year: April 2021 to April 2022.

If successful, our ambition is for this approach to be scaled up towards a national programme and potentially broadened out to look at a range of health behaviours and outcomes. This work also supports a wider and emerging approach to public health and prevention that is more personalised, data-driven and digital in nature.

OVERVIEW OF REQUIREMENTS

HMG is looking to work alongside interested parties to help design and deliver an incentive and reward test programme (or programmes) over the course of the 2021/22 financial year.

If the programme (or programmes) can demonstrate a successful impact during the test year, our ambition would be to scale this up from Year 2 (FY 2022/23). The precise nature and scale of what the programme would look like in Year 2 and beyond would be subject to the Government's funding review process.

Whilst there can be no guarantee of future funding of the programme, the challenge for Government in tackling obesity is such that highly ambitious programmes and strategies will need to be deployed now, and in the future, if we are to be successful in tackling the issue.

APPROACH

Government is clear that it does not have all the solutions in testing out approaches to incentivising positive behaviour change and is therefore looking to understand, listen to and engage with potential market solutions in this space. Given the novel approach to behaviour change, market engagement will be important in shaping our approach to the policy and the procurement of the potential tests.

TIMING

Following the initial market engagement phase, the Department will develop a commercial route to market to secure the partnerships to deliver the test phase. We will seek to open the formal competition in May and announce successful applicants by July so that the tests can begin operation in September and conclude by March 2022.

TARGET BEHAVIOURS

In the test year, we are looking for interested parties to develop approaches that use incentives (including, but not limited to, financial rewards) that primarily:

- Increase physical activity levels; and/or
- Improve dietary choices.

The long-term aim of the programme is to enable individuals to achieve – and then sustain – a healthy weight, with an expectation that this may eventually have a positive impact on population-level weight status. In the test year we are looking to demonstrate the ability of incentives to inspire sustained behaviour change at an individual level, but in light of this longer-term objective we would not discount solutions that deliver weight loss as a behavioural outcome, as long as this was demonstrative of successful and sustained behaviour change.

Furthermore, although our intention is not to set specific requirements for the actions that schemes must engage participants in to facilitate and measure behaviour change, solutions would need to align with government policy on recommended physical activity levels (see the [UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines](#)) and diet and nutrition (see the [NHS Eatwell Guide](#) and the [Nutrient Profiling Technical Guidance](#)). It would be for suppliers to set out the specific actions they intend to employ, bearing in mind that user needs will vary depending on demographic and other factors.

Current evidence around using rewards and incentives to change health behaviours suggests that there is impact only whilst the reward mechanism is in place. Therefore, we would be particularly interested in ideas and solutions that were able to demonstrate how long-term maintenance of positive health behaviours might be secured and how health education could complement and contextualise the incentives and rewards being deployed.

We have not made any decisions yet on the number of tests we would wish to run in this test year, and indeed this market engagement will help shape this.

The maturity of the market for solutions that would be able to improve physical activity and dietary choices is not clear to us at this point, but we would encourage and be very open to solutions where a number of interested parties and suppliers worked together. Although by no means exhaustive we might expect to see technology platforms and solutions, retailers, schools, local authorities and health services and general practice, leisure services, academia, reward and incentive specialists playing a role either as lead suppliers or as part of a wider partnership or consortium. We are open to facilitating partnerships, if needed.

TARGET AUDIENCE

We are looking for the health incentives approach to primarily change the behaviour of adults (18+) in this test year.

We would be willing to consider ideas and solutions that engaged families and, if a compelling case can be made, for children. However, given the nature of the financial and data considerations, our focus will remain on adults.

It is important that the test phase engages harder to reach groups that experience higher rates of obesity and obesity-related illnesses. By harder to reach groups, we mean:

- People in lower Social Economic Status (SES) groups
- People who are less active
- People who have poor diets

We encourage ideas and solutions that would be available to all adults in the test area, not just those in hard to reach groups, but they will need to demonstrate how they would reach, engage and change behaviours in harder to reach groups in sufficient numbers to allow meaningful comparisons across the different groups. We are likely to be more specific on this point during the commercial process that will follow.

Clearly the financials of the test year will shape the scale and reach of any potential ideas and solutions so whilst we would not discount any ideas at this stage, we would envisage that the tests would take place in a geographically limited area such as a town or similar, which would allow a range of other assets and contexts to add value to the tests.

Consideration should be given to the geographical area as part of any strategy to engage the hardest to reach people. We may be more specific on this during the commercial process that will follow.

Our ambition for the programme in Year 2 and beyond would be for the selected scheme to have national reach (potentially all adults in England) and this should be taken into consideration during the design phase in the test year. Ideas and solutions would need to demonstrate that the test market allows for a range of groups – both economically and demographically – to be targeted.

Schemes must be primarily digital in nature (using app-based and online tools). We are open to considering schemes that also seek to engage people who are not digitally enabled (bids must outline how this will be achieved) but this is not a requirement.

MEASURING SUCCESS AND EVALUATION

The way in which success is determined and measured will be key to the delivery of the tests. Clearly, any proposals would need to be able to successfully measure behaviour change from an identified baseline at an individual level, but at this early stage we will be looking for interested parties to set out what exactly success would look like and how it would be measured. This should be ambitious but realistic given the potential experimental nature of the process and the short timeframe for the test phase.

Whilst this is more straightforward for increasing physical activity levels this is potentially more difficult for dietary choices, so we are looking to work with interested parties to understand what would be possible.

However, as a minimum we would expect ideas and solutions to express success in terms of:

- Sign up and engagement in the test approaches
- Individuals' continued participation in the test approach
- Evidence of individual behaviour change during the test approach with benchmarking in place

Whilst we would expect measures such as step counts, pedometers and food purchasing data to be prominent in any plans, we would also be keen to explore new or innovative measures. The Department will advise the successful applicants on their evaluation plans, setting out how improvements might be made and giving support to achieve these.

We are likely to be more specific on success measures as we move into the formal commercial process but at this stage are keen to invite thoughts and proposals to help shape this thinking.

FURTHER DETAIL AND REQUIREMENTS

HMG views this programme as an opportunity to harness the very best innovation and thinking from across the public, private and third sectors to develop, refine and test innovative approaches to incentivising behaviour change. This initial market engagement

phase is our opportunity to understand the range of potential ideas and solutions to help shape and inform our thinking.

We are interested to understand how existing app-based incentive schemes could be adapted to meet our requirements, as well as being interested in identifying a novel solution that demonstrates success while delivering a return on investment. Therefore, interested parties will need to demonstrate evidence of previous success (or in the case of novel solutions, demonstrate how success will be achieved).

The branding and marketing will be crucial to the success or otherwise of the tests and we are interested to hear what interested parties feel would be most effective, including a range of branding from any multiple partners involved in a successful bid. There will be advantages and disadvantages to this being branded (even in part) as a government funded programme. Should the tests require it, however, government digital assets and branding (including the NHS and 'Better Health') may be available for suppliers to deploy. Depending on the outcome of the market engagement, we may be more specific on the branding requirements.

Interested parties and suppliers will need to demonstrate how they will collect, process, store and share data in a necessary and proportionate way, in compliance with GDPR. The Department will require access to the data through the test pilots to validate the work and evaluation presented but also (if required) to use the data for communication with programme participants.

Ideas and solutions put forward and funded will need to demonstrate that any technology platform will be able to interface with other platforms (such as existing reward programmes) and databases within the test partnerships. The platform will also need interoperability with the NHS app and will need to integrate with the PHE Better Health App and related databases as appropriate.

Interested parties and suppliers will need to identify and mitigate risks, including how they intend to prevent and combat fraud and avoid creating or exacerbating health inequalities.

Whilst it might be intuitive, and indeed effective, to offer rewards in line with the health behaviours such as money off leisure membership or money off food shopping, we would also be open to understand the full range of potential rewards and incentives that could drive behaviour change.

Clearly whilst we are open to innovative and novel rewards and incentives that can or could demonstrate behaviour change there will be a number of potential rewards and incentives that would be inappropriate for a government funded health programme to offer and the Department will reserve the right to be very specific in its requirements in this area.

Funding

While we are not yet determining the number of specific tests that we wish to fund as, again, this will be shaped by the market engagement, the total size of the funding pot is £5 million.

As part of this funding pot – which may be split across a number of tests – a minimum of £3 million will need to be made available for the reward and incentive element of the test or tests. The remaining funding (£2 million) will be available for research and development, administration and costs of running the scheme.

Interested parties may want to outline how they can bring additional value on top of the HMG investment in the form of existing or potential reward and incentive partnerships.

Interested parties will need to demonstrate how they will activate, market and promote the test to ensure maximum engagement including specific plans to engage the hard to reach groups. Again, HMG assets and communication channels may be able to be used to assist in this area.

Expressions of interest (EOI)

We are keen to understand the range of incentive schemes currently being used to achieve positive behaviour change, as well as what innovative solutions may be possible. To help shape our thinking, we will be encouraging interested parties to submit a summary of any initial ideas to the DHSC Health Incentives team in the form of an EOI. More information about this will be given at the market engagement events.

To be clear, not submitting an EOI will not impact your ability to engage with the formal commercial process when it begins. The process we will follow will remain fair, open and transparent, however the EOI is an opportunity for DHSC to understand the appetite and potential solutions in a way that helps us to shape our thinking.