



## **BOMSS Statement on Weight Stigma**

The British Obesity and Metabolic Surgery Society (BOMSS) is dedicated to advancing effective, timely and equitable treatment for people living with obesity in the UK. We recognise that weight stigma presents one of the most significant barriers for people living with obesity when accessing healthcare, including bariatric surgery.

BOMSS strongly believes that weight stigma and discrimination is unacceptable in all domains of society, including healthcare settings. Healthcare professionals, including those working in bariatric surgery services, may hold stigmatising attitudes about people living with obesity. Recent research by [Abbott et al. \(2023\)](#) suggested that 51% of healthcare professionals working in bariatric surgery in the UK hold an implicit weight bias against people living with obesity.

We recognise that, given the long-standing pervasiveness of weight stigma, the healthcare professional should not be blamed for having developed these biases. However, given the wide-ranging impacts of weight stigma, it is also important to recognise that there is a need to address stigmatising attitudes and discriminatory behaviour, and it is the responsibility of all healthcare professionals and organisations to strive to change these. All patients, irrespective of their body shape and size, should be treated with compassion and respect.

Therefore, BOMSS strongly opposes weight stigma and discrimination, and as such, would encourage healthcare professionals and organisations to take action to address weight. Our BOMSS members are therefore encouraged to speak out against weight-related stigmatising attitudes and discriminatory practices.

In 2020, BOMSS signed the [international consensus statement](#), pledging to eliminate weight bias and stigma. At this year's BOMSS Annual Scientific Meeting, we are introducing a zero tolerance for stigmatising attitudes and behaviours. Abstracts which do not use people-first language will be rejected and speakers will be asked to confirm in writing that they will use non-stigmatising language and images in their presentations. In the coming months, we will be advertising for a Patient and Public Involvement Officer to join BOMSS Council, a testament to our commitment to continue to build positive relationships and representation for people living with obesity in the UK.

### **References:**

Abbott, S., Shuttlewood, E., Flint, S.W., Chesworth, P., Parretti, H.M. (2023) "Is it time to throw out the weighing scales?" Implicit weight bias among healthcare professionals working in bariatric surgery services and their attitude towards non-weight focused approaches. *EClinicalMedicine*, doi: 10.1016/ 10.1016/j.eclinm.2022.101770

Rubino, F., Puhl, R.M., Cummings, D.E. et al. (2020) Joint international consensus statement for ending stigma of obesity. *Nature Medicine*, doi: 10.1038/s41591-020-0803-x

### **Recommended resources:**

SCOPE e-learning module Weight Bias: A Hidden Harm (Part 1 and Part 2) – enrol [here](#) for free

Food Act'ive weight stigma checklist – available [here](#)