**ANTI-OBESITY SCHEME TO OFFER VOUCHER REWARDS**

**FOR HEALTHY LIVING**

Ministers will offer rewards such as clothes vouchers and discounted theme park tickets in return for exercising and eating healthily, under plans to tackle Britain’s obesity crisis.

The anti-obesity scheme, which uses an app to help people make changes to their diet and physical activity, will launch next year, initially in a pilot scheme, the government has announced. Participants will wear Fitbit-style devices that can generate personalised health recommendations, such as increasing their step count, eating more fruit and vegetables and reducing portion size. Those increasing their exercise by taking part in organised events such as parkruns or walking to school or work may accumulate extra points in the app.

Under plans being discussed before the scheme’s planned launch in January, the app could also be used to monitor supermarket spending, rewarding those who cut their calorie intake and buy healthier options.

Participants will collect points for their healthy behaviours, which will unlock rewards that could include gym passes, clothes or food vouchers and discounts for shops, cinema or theme park tickets. After a competitive tender process, *HeadUp* has been chosen to deliver the scheme, with £3m coming from the Department of Health and Social Care to provide incentives in the pilot.

Evidence suggests financial incentives can improve rates of physical activity and inspire healthier eating. *HeadUp* will work with a range of organisations to provide rewards such as vouchers, merchandise, discounts and gift cards.

Sajid Javid, the health secretary, said: “I want to ensure we’re doing as much as we can to tackle health disparities across the country, and this new pilot will pave the way for developing innovate ways to improve the lives of individuals, and also help to reduce strain on the NHS”.

The UK has one of the worst records for obesity in western Europe, with two in three adults overweight or obese, and one in three children reaching this stage by the time they leave primary school. Obesity-related illnesses cost the NHS £6bn a year and fuelled death rates from Covid.

Sir Keith Mills, the entrepreneur behind Air Miles and Nectar points, was brought in by ministers to advise on the development of the app. Mills said: “This scheme is a fantastic opportunity to explore how government, business and the third sector can work together to deliver a new and engaging way of supporting the public to make healthier choices. Through the pilot we will have exciting and innovative partners on board will help motivate people to want to earn incentives, but also should help them overcome barriers to making healthy decisions in future”.

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