

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
BY DEPUTY S. PITMAN OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 7th JUNE 2011**

Question

Would the Minister provide an estimate of the cost to the Health Service over the last ten years of treating illnesses and health issues relating to obesity and further still, the costs relating to the treatment of diabetes and illnesses/conditions linked to poor diets?

Answer

No country has accurately identified the exact cost of treating obesity. Even though we have a better understanding of the prevalence of obesity within populations, the associated costs relating to health care and treatment are far from clear. Given these challenges estimates of the healthcare cost of obesity vary according to different studies.

A recent systematic review¹ which aimed to assess the current published literature on the direct costs associated with obesity concluded that obesity was estimated to account for 0.7% (from a French study) to 2.8% (from a US study) of a country's total healthcare expenditure.

Estimates for the UK NHS costs also vary. For example in the modelling study² undertaken to inform the Foresight report³ a figure of 6% is quoted as the projected proportion of NHS cost for treating obesity in 2007. However in Scotland the treatment cost was estimated at 2% in its Strategy⁴ on preventing and treatment of obesity. Even making crude extrapolations from these estimates to the HSSD budget is problematic as the HSSD budget does not include GP costs (as in the UK) but does include social services expenditure which is excluded from the above studies.

In a previous written question to the minister about the cost of obesity (by the Deputy of St. Mary which was tabled on Tuesday 5th April 2011) a figure of £1.5m was estimated for the direct cost for treating obesity locally. This figure was extrapolated from a report from the National Obesity Observatory 'The Economic Burden of Obesity, October 2010. This figure remains our best estimate.

¹ Withrow D, Alter D. The economic burden of obesity worldwide: a systematic review of the direct costs of obesity. *Obesity Reviews* 2010 Jan 27 (Epub ahead of print).

² Butland B, Jebb S, Kopelman P, et al. Tackling obesity: future choices – project report (2nd Ed). London: Foresight Programme of the Government Office for Science, 2007. www.bis.gov.uk/assets/bispartners/foresight/docs/obesity/17.pdf

³ MacPherson K, Marsh T, Brown M. Tackling Obesity: Future Choices – Modelling future trends in obesity and the impact on health. London: Foresight Programme of the Government Office for Science, 2007.

⁴ The Scottish Government. Preventing Overweight and Obesity in Scotland: A Route Map Towards Healthy Weight. Edinburgh: The Scottish Government, 2010. www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/02/17140721/0 (Accessed 17 May 2010).