

# Lancet attacks plan to punish obese people

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David Cameron's plans to link benefits to obesity reduction programmes are "ethically and financially questionable", a respected medical journal says.

The prime minister's proposal to make weight-loss treatment a condition for obese people to receive sickness benefits was criticised in *The Lancet*.

An editorial said that diet and lifestyle changes had "restricted, often transient benefits" in the obese because of changes in their biology.

"The only treatment for obesity that has been proven to be successful for substantial long-term weight loss and improved quality of life in a high proportion of people is bariatric surgery. Requiring people to undergo a major surgical procedure as a condition of receiving benefits seems far from ethical."

*The Lancet* also said the number claiming sickness benefits as result of obesity was small, only 1,780 people as of May 2014, against roughly 2.5 million people claiming these benefits in total.

The costs of delivering treatment and monitoring compliance might dwarf any savings made by the policy.

The editorial concluded: "The funds could usefully be spent on benefits such as universal free access to leisure facilities, investment in healthy outdoor spaces and public health education."