

Obese told: Don't have surgery - talk your way to weight loss

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Health Editor

OBESSE Londoners are being offered therapy instead of weight loss surgery. Patients will be referred to a psychologist as a part of a programme to reduce the need for gastric band procedures.

The residential programme has been set up by St Ann's eating disorder service at Barnet, Enfield and Haringey mental health NHS trust and GPs are

referring patients from across the capital. This comes amid claims that the national strategy on providing weight loss surgery is confused and operates on a "postcode lottery" system.

A report today by the Royal College of Surgeons warns that patients needing life-saving surgery are being refused treatment because of "inconsistent and unethical" hospital policies.

The investigation reveals that some doctors are even telling people to go away and put on more weight to qual-



Ideal meals: Prue Leith has advised the Government on food in schools, such as this one in London

PRUE'S WARNING JUNK FOOD ADS DAMAGE CHILDREN'S HEALTH

ify for weight reduction operations. Official guidelines recommend that morbidly obese patients with a BMI of 40 or more have a legal right to be assessed for weight loss surgery.

But some health trusts give priority to only the most extremely ill patients – those with obesity-related diabetes or a BMI of 50 or above.

A separate report also shows that the number of private patients taking legal action after paying for weight loss surgery has risen. An analysis by the

Medical Defence Union reveals 35 negligence claims have been reported to it since 2003. Of these, 21 cases have been in the past two years alone.

The St Ann's programme aims to curb the high rate of "relapse" after weight loss surgery and address any mental health problems which might be the cause of the patient's excessive weight.

Those taking part in the treatment are given therapy both in individual and group sessions to identify the root

JUNK food firms that bombard children with adverts for chips and chocolate are a serious threat to health, the Government's school meals czar warned today.

In her last remarks before leaving her post as chair of the School Food Trust, Prue Leith said: "What scares me right is the power of the manufacturers to sell junk to children." She said parents must stop rewarding their children with chocolate bars and sending them to the chip shop for cheap lunches.

Ms Leith, right, said teaching children to eat healthy food should have the same political priority as teaching them to read and write.

cause of their weight gain. They are also given access to a physical trainer and dietitian. Research shows that a high percentage of patients have to come back for more surgery or even emergency surgery after bursting their gastric bands.

A total of nine trusts in London have set up special units for treating obese patients with the aim of completing at least 2,000 operations a year to reduce the burden on the NHS of weight-related diseases.

