

'Much happier' after treatment from children's obesity clinic

Computer helped teenager lose 5st

Shedding the pounds: Right, Laurence Willshire at 16 stone and, below, as he used to look at 21 stone



AN OBESE teenager from Horfield has lost almost 5st with the help of Bristol Children's Hospital.

Laurence Willshire, aged 17, is 6ft 7in tall and used to weigh 21st but has slimmed down to 16st 7lb after being referred to the Care of Childhood Obesity Clinic at the Bristol Royal Hospital for Children in June last year.

The clinic uses a system called the Mandometer, where a computer is connected to a set of scales that is filled with food.

The computer then records the weight of the plate as Laurence eats to show when he is eating more than he should be.

Laurence, who has learning difficulties and sought comfort in food after being bullied, said: "I used to eat very, very fast. I could eat a very large meal in about three minutes. Now I take about 16 minutes.

"The Mandometer asks questions when I'm eating, like whether I am full up and whether I am still hungry.

"It tells me when I can have my next

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mouthful and lets me know when I'm eating too quickly.

"The treatment has given me so much confidence - I feel very, very good about myself now."

He is now steadily working towards his target weight of 15st 5lb.

However, the Government was today accused of "moving the goalposts" on childhood obesity and appearing to back away from the problem.

The British Heart Foundation made the claim after public health minister and Bristol South MP Dawn Primarolo pledged to make children the starting point for an ambitious new strategy to tackle obesity in Britain.

She said that by 2020, the Government intended to reduce the proportion of overweight and obese children to levels seen in 2000.

But the British Heart Foundation (BHF) maintained this was a "softer, more distant" target than the one orig-

inally proposed, to halt the increase in childhood obesity by 2010.

Peter Hollins, chief executive of the heart charity, said: "We would like to ask the Government why it has so dramatically failed to make progress towards its original target to the extent that it feels compelled to move the goalposts in this way.

Obesity defined as a body mass index greater than 30, has now reached 21 per cent in both males and females - a figure that has trebled since 1990.

The consequent impact of chronic health problems on society is predicted to cost Britain well in excess of £45 billion a year.

A spokesperson for the Department of Health said: "It's become clear that we have more to do than we originally thought.

"We've had to take on board the new evidence, but that's not a sign that we're not taking the issue seriously.

"In fact it's a sign that we're taking it even more seriously. We now know we have to find ways to act across the board to tackle obesity."

