



ASSOCIATION FOR THE  
STUDY OF OBESITY

# **UK Congress on Obesity (UKCO)**

## Guidance for Prospective Hosts

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## Contents

About the Association for the Study of Obesity .....	2
Overview of UKCO.....	2
Purpose of this Guidance .....	3
Governance and Support Structure.....	3
Other Key Contacts .....	3
Key Timeline .....	4
Congress Planning .....	4
Budget .....	4
Location & Venue .....	4
Accommodation & Registration.....	5
Social Events.....	5
Programme .....	5
Congress Theme .....	6
Plenary Lectures.....	6
Parallel Tracks .....	6
Invited Symposia .....	6
Member-Led Symposia .....	6
Industry-Led Symposia .....	6
Oral Abstracts .....	6
Wider Programme.....	7
Poster Session .....	7
Additional Programme Elements .....	7
Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE).....	7
Sponsorship .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Partnerships .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Information required in the application .....	7
Application Requirements .....	7
Applicant Details .....	8
Host Institution and Location .....	8
Accessibility and Travel .....	8
Accommodation .....	8
Proposed Venue.....	8
Future Hosting Interest.....	8
Appendix 1.....	9

## About the Association for the Study of Obesity

Founded in 1967, the Association for the Study of Obesity (ASO) is the UK's leading charitable organisation dedicated to improving the understanding, prevention and treatment of obesity. The organisation brings together researchers, clinicians, public health practitioners and individuals with lived experience of obesity to advance knowledge and improve practice across the UK.

ASO aims to promote excellence in obesity research, education and practice by supporting collaboration across disciplines and strengthening connections between research, policy and clinical care.

Key objectives of ASO include:

- Promoting professional awareness of obesity and its impact on health
- Supporting high-quality research into the causes, consequences, prevention and treatment of obesity
- Improving obesity education and knowledge translation across the UK
- Strengthening collaboration between researchers, clinicians and public health professionals
- Supporting patient and public involvement in obesity research
- Representing the UK obesity research community within European and international networks

## Overview of the UK Congress on Obesity

The UK Congress on Obesity (UKCO) is the flagship scientific meeting organised by the Association for the Study of Obesity. The congress brings together researchers, clinicians, policymakers, industry partners and people with lived experience of obesity to share research findings, exchange ideas and develop collaborations.

The congress typically attracts 300–350 delegates and includes:

- Plenary lectures from leading national and international experts
- Parallel scientific sessions
- Oral and poster abstract presentations
- Early career network activities
- Patient and public involvement and engagement (PPIE) activities
- Networking opportunities and sponsor exhibitions

Satellite meetings are often held the day before the congress, including events organised by the Early Career Networks (ECNs) and the Centres for Obesity Management (COMs).

### ECN Event

Organised by ECN Team

### COMs Event

Organised by COMs Team

### Main Congress

Two-day event – Organised by LOC/UKCO Team

## Purpose of this Guidance

This document provides an overview of what is involved in hosting UKCO. It is intended to help prospective hosts understand:

- The responsibilities of the host institution
- The support provided by ASO and the UKCO Team
- Key requirements for venues and programme planning
- The expected timeline for congress delivery
- The application process

Detailed operational guidance for the LOC is provided separately in the UKCO LOC Handbook (available on request).

## Governance and Support Structure

Planning and delivery of the congress is a collaborative process involving the Local Organising Committee (LOC), the UKCO Team, wider ASO committee members, and the conference secretariat.

The UKCO Team provides strategic oversight, operational coordination and administrative support to ensure the congress is delivered successfully each year. The LOC works closely with the UKCO Team to shape the scientific programme and coordinate local arrangements for the congress.

*Table 1: UKCO Team Roles and Responsibilities*

<i>Role</i>	<i>Main Responsibilities</i>
UKCO Strategic Lead	Provides strategic oversight of UKCO and leadership of the UKCO team; responsible for strategic decisions around the running of UKCO and reporting on UKCO activity to the OMT, Board of Trustees and AGM
UKCO Deputy Lead	Supports with strategic and operational delivery of UKCO, liaising with wider ASO teams (e.g., communications, sponsorship), and lead on key deliverables for UKCO
UKCO Abstracts Lead	Leads on timelines and requirements for abstract reviewing and liaising with journal editors for abstract publication
UKCO PPIE Lead	Provides a patient/public perspective into UKCO activities and contributes to the strategic development and processes related to embedding PPIE into UKCO and the co-ordination of key PPIE activities (e.g., co-chairing of sessions, bookable PPIE sessions)
UKCO Support Officer	Leads on communications around UKCO in addition to general administrative tasks and the planning / delivery of UKCO
UKCO Administrative Lead	Lead on administrative activities and provide wider support in planning and delivery of UKCO
UKCO Team Members	Support the planning and delivery of UKCO

## Other Key Contacts

The ASO President and/or President Elect may be involved in key decisions and contract approvals where required. The congress secretariat also provides logistical and administrative support for the event, including registration and abstract submission systems. Additional support may also be provided by ASO leads responsible for communications, sponsorship, partnerships and network engagement.

## Key Timeline

Planning for UKCO follows an annual cycle, with the congress typically held in September, although other times in the year will be considered. Key milestones include:

- January – congress launch (website, registration portals and abstract submissions open)
- March to April – member-led symposia submissions and review, programme finalised
- May to June – abstract submission deadline, review and confirmation
- June – Abstract decisions confirmed and programme finalised
- July to August – final preparations
- September – congress delivery

## Congress Planning

The UKCO congress is typically launched in January each year. To support this timeline, key elements of the event – including the venue, accommodation arrangements, registration fees, conference theme, and plenary speakers – should be agreed in advanced and ready to be communicated by early January.

### **Budget**

Budget requirements vary depending on the chosen venue and associated costs (e.g., catering or room hire). The proposed budget should therefore be discussed early with the UKCO Strategic Lead to ensure it is appropriate and feasible. The UKCO Team oversees the overall congress budget, which must be approved by the ASO Board of Trustees as part of organisational planning.

Some host institutions have also secured additional local support for UKCO, for example through:

- University-funded delegate places for staff or students
- Institutional support for networking receptions
- Funding to support clinical or public health practitioner attendance
- Sponsored satellite meetings

Sponsorship is coordinated centrally by ASO.

### **Location & Venue**

Consideration should be given to the strength and level of activity of the obesity and weight management community within the host institution and any collaborating or partner organisations.

Accessibility should also be carefully considered, including:

- Transport links to the host city (rail, air and road)
- Local transport between the venue, accommodation and major transport hubs

The proposed venue should accommodate approximately 300 to 350 delegates and include:

- Flexible seating arrangements suitable for individuals living with obesity
- Space for three parallel session rooms
- Poster space for 100–150 A0 posters
- Exhibition space for sponsors and partners
- A dedicated PPIE lounge or quiet space
- Catering and networking areas

Exhibition areas should accommodate approximately:

- 3–4 sponsor stands (3m × 3m)
- Up to 10 tabletop stands

Partnership and patient organisation stands must be located separately from pharmaceutical sponsors in accordance with industry regulations. Accessibility arrangements (e.g., wheelchair access and induction loops) should also be considered when selecting the venue.

A named venue contact should be available throughout the planning process and during the congress. In some cases, additional space may be required for satellite meetings, such as Early Career Network or Centres for Obesity Management events.

## **Accommodation & Registration**

Hosts should ensure that sufficient and affordable accommodation options are available for delegates near the congress venue. This should be considered before confirming the venue. Options may include negotiated hotel rates or university accommodation where available. Due to VAT regulations, ASO cannot contract directly with hotels for delegate accommodation. Delegates must therefore arrange and pay for their own accommodation.

Registration will be managed by the conference secretariat, who will provide updates to the UKCO Team and LOC throughout the planning process.

## **Social Events**

When planning social activities, consideration should be given to the availability of local dining options for delegates. For venues located in city centres, a formal conference dinner is not always necessary. Instead, a networking drinks reception can provide an opportunity for informal engagement between delegates.

## **Programme**

The congress programme plays a central role in attracting delegates and reflecting current priorities in obesity research and practice. The LOC works with the UKCO Team to develop a programme that balances invited speakers, member contributions and abstract presentations.

## **Congress Theme**

Selecting a congress theme can help attract new delegates and support the development of a distinctive programme. The theme should be broad enough to appeal to the full ASO membership, including early career researchers, non-clinical researchers, clinicians, public health professionals and basic scientists. Examples of previous congress themes are included in **Appendix 1**.

## **Plenary Lectures**

UKCO typically includes three to four plenary lectures aligned with the congress theme. These sessions are intended to provide broad appeal across the congress audience and reflect key developments in obesity research and practice.

## **Parallel Tracks**

The congress programme usually includes three parallel tracks, made up of a combination of:

- Invited symposia
- Member-led symposia
- Industry-led symposia
- Oral abstract sessions

The balance of these sessions may vary from year to year depending on the theme, submissions and sponsorship arrangements.

## **Invited Symposia**

The Local Organising Committee (LOC) may propose an invited symposium aligned with the congress theme. Any proposed symposium should be discussed with the UKCO Strategic Lead in advance.

## **Member-Led Symposia**

Member-led symposia enable ASO members to contribute to the congress programme. These sessions are selected through a competitive submission and peer-review process.

## **Industry-Led Symposia**

Industry-led symposia form part of the sponsorship opportunities available to eligible sponsors. These sessions are coordinated centrally by ASO.

## **Oral Abstracts**

Oral abstract sessions form an important part of the scientific programme. The number of oral presentation slots will depend on the balance of sessions within the final programme and the available venue space.

## **Wider Programme**

### ***Poster Session***

The congress typically includes 80 to 100 poster presentations, depending on venue capacity. Posters are usually displayed during dedicated networking and viewing sessions. The format of the poster session may vary depending on the venue and programme design. Printed posters are typically used, although alternative formats may be considered where appropriate.

### ***Additional Programme Elements***

Depending on the final programme, UKCO may also include:

- Award presentations
- Honorary Fellowship presentations
- Three-Minute Thesis presentations
- Rapid fire communications
- ASO network meetings

## **Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE)**

Embedding lived experience within the congress is a core principle of UKCO. The UKCO PPIE Lead works with relevant organisations and representatives to ensure that patient and public involvement and engagement is meaningfully integrated into the programme and wider congress activity.

This may include:

- Participation in sessions and discussions
- Dedicated one-to-one engagement opportunities
- Involvement in judging or feedback activities
- Provision of dedicated space for PPIE representatives

Venue planning must take account of appropriate space and access requirements for these activities. In particular, partner and patient organisation spaces may need to be located separately from pharmaceutical sponsors in line with relevant guidance.

## **Information required in the application**

### ***Application Requirements***

Institutions interested in hosting the UK Congress on Obesity are invited to submit an application using the form provided below:

[Application for hosting the UK Congress of Obesity \(UKCO\)](#)

The electronic form collects information about the proposed host institution, venue, and local arrangements to support delivery of the congress. Applicants will be asked to provide contact details and relevant information about the proposed host location and facilities. The application form requests information including:

### ***Applicant Details***

- Name
- Email address
- Affiliation or employer
- Job role
- ASO membership status and membership number (where applicable)

### ***Host Institution and Location***

- Proposed host institution(s) and city
- Information about the strength and activity of the obesity and weight management community within the proposed host institution or partner organisations

### ***Accessibility and Travel***

- Travel options to the host city (including public transport and road access)
- Local transport connections between transport hubs, accommodation and the proposed venue

### ***Accommodation***

- Details of accommodation options available for delegates, including economical options located close to the proposed venue

### ***Proposed Venue***

Applicants should outline the venue being considered and demonstrate that it can accommodate the requirements of UKCO, including:

- Capacity for up to 350 delegates
- A plenary space suitable for the full congress audience
- Rooms for at least three parallel tracks
- Exhibition space for sponsors and partners
- Poster display space for up to 150 posters
- Space for approximately 10 tabletop exhibitors
- Dedicated lounge areas for PPIE representatives and sponsors

### ***Future Hosting Interest***

Applicants are also asked whether they would be interested in hosting a future UKCO if their initial proposal is unsuccessful.

***Thank you for your interest in hosting the UKCO event. We look forward to reviewing your proposal and working together to deliver a successful meeting.***

## **Appendix 1: Previous UKCO Themes and Locations**

Year	Meeting number	Location	Venue	Themes
2014	1 <sup>st</sup> UKCO	Birmingham		
2015	2 <sup>nd</sup> UKCO	Glasgow		
2016	3 <sup>rd</sup> UKCO	Nottingham		
2017	4 <sup>th</sup> UKCO	South Wales		
2018	5 <sup>th</sup> UKCO	Newcastle		Preconception to person
2019	6 <sup>th</sup> UKCO	Leeds		Future thinking and innovation in obesity
2020	No congress due to COVID-19			
2021	Online congress on 'Hot Topics'			
2022	7 <sup>th</sup> UKCO	Lancaster		
2023	8 <sup>th</sup> UKCO	Belfast		
2024	9 <sup>th</sup> UKCO	Oxford	Rhodes House	Breaking barriers: shaping the future of obesity prevention and management
2025	10 <sup>th</sup> UKCO	Aberdeen	P&J Live	Understanding obesity: from research to clinical and public health practice
2026	11 <sup>th</sup> UKCO	Sheffield	Cutlers' Hall	