Benefits of Incentives for Breastfeeding and Smoking cessation in pregnancy (BIBS): a mixed-methods study to inform trial design

Heather Morgan,¹ Pat Hoddinott,^{1,2*} Gill Thomson,³ Nicola Crossland,³ Shelley Farrar,⁴ Deokhee Yi,⁴ Jenni Hislop,^{1,5} Victoria Hall Moran,³ Graeme MacLennan,¹ Stephan U Dombrowski,^{5,6} Kieran Rothnie,^{1,7} Fiona Stewart,^{1,8} Linda Bauld,⁹ Anne Ludbrook,⁴ Fiona Dykes,³ Falko F Sniehotta,⁵ David Tappin¹⁰ and Marion Campbell¹

¹Health Services Research Unit, University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, UK

²Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professions Research Unit, University of Stirling, Stirling, UK

³Maternal and Infant Nutrition and Nurture Unit, University of Central Lancashire, Preston, UK

⁴Health Economics Research Unit, University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, UK ⁵Institute of Health and Society, University of Newcastle, Newcastle, UK

⁶Psychology, University of Stirling, Stirling, UK

⁷London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, London, UK

⁸Academic Urology, University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, UK

⁹The Institute of Social Marketing, University of Stirling, Stirling, UK

¹⁰Perinatal Epidemiology and Child Health Unit, School of Medicine, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK

^{*}Corresponding author

Declared competing interests of authors: Professor Sniehotta is a co-applicant on a National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Career Development Fellowship for Jean Adams, University of Newcastle (title: Financial incentives for health promoting behaviours). Professor Sniehotta is also a co-applicant on a related grant from the NIHR Health Technology Assessment (HTA) programme [title: Parental incentives and quasi-mandatory schemes for increasing uptake of immunisations in pre-school children (September 2012–July 2014). J Adams, B Bateman, B Gardner Sood, S Michie, J Shucksmith, FF Sniehotta, T Cresswell, L Ternant. Value: £275,419.00]. Professor Linda Bauld is chief investigator on a NIHR HTA grant [title: Facilitators and barriers to smoking cessation in pregnancy (May 2013-April 2015). Bauld L, Graham H, Sinclair L, Flemming K, Naughton F, Tappin D, Gorman D. Value: £250,753.00]. Professor Bauld is also coprincipal investigator on a study funded by the Chief Scientist Office, Scottish Government Health and Social Care Directorates, and the Glasgow Centre for Population Health and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde [title: Cessation in Pregnancy Incentives Trial (CPIT) (February 2011–December 2013). Tappin D, Bauld L, Briggs A and colleagues. Value: £850,000.00]. Professor David Tappin is co-applicant on a NIHR HTA grant [title: Facilitators and barriers to smoking cessation in pregnancy (May 2013–April 2015). Bauld L, Graham H, Sinclair L, Flemming K, Naughton F, Tappin D, Gorman D. Value: £250,753.00]. Professor Tappin is also coprincipal investigator on a study funded by the Chief Scientist Office, Scottish Government Health and Social Care Directorates, and the Glasgow Centre for Population Health and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde [title: Cessation in Pregnancy Incentives Trial: The CPIT (February 2011–December 2013). Tappin D, Bauld L, Briggs A and colleagues. Value: £850,000.00].

Published April 2015 DOI: 10.3310/hta19300

Plain English summary

Incentives for breastfeeding and smoking cessation in pregnancy

Health Technology Assessment 2015; Vol. 19: No. 30

DOI: 10.3310/hta19300

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Plain English summary

We reviewed the evidence on incentives to help women stop smoking in pregnancy or to breastfeed. We interviewed 88 women/partners, 53 health professionals, 24 experts/service managers and 63 conference attendees to discuss how incentives might work and features of incentive services. We surveyed 1144 members of the general public, 497 health professionals and 320 women who smoke or who smoked.

Voucher incentives of > £20.00 per month, with regular check-ups to prove that smoking has stopped, increase the likelihood that women will stop smoking in pregnancy. Opinion on the acceptability of incentives was mixed. Agreement was more likely in adults aged ≤ 44 years and ethnic minorities (for breastfeeding). Disagreement was more likely among women and the less educated. Incentives for all, regardless of income, were preferred. Of seven potential incentives, a free breast pump worth £40.00 was most acceptable. People supported giving shopping vouchers for stopping smoking in pregnancy more than giving shopping vouchers for (1) stopping smoking after birth, (2) a smoke-free home or (3) breastfeeding. Additional funding for local health services who meet targets had similar support, but doctors disagreed. Concerns included cheating, stigma and wasting money.

Personal difficulties, emotions, socialising and attitudes of family and friends are all challenges in stopping smoking and breastfeeding. An incentive service might address these challenges by including regular telephone, text or face-to-face support; setting goals; including check-ups; providing a buddy; and providing non-judgemental, continuous care from someone with expertise.

Research is needed into whether incentives work on their own and/or with support and the costs compared with the benefits.

HTA/HTA TAR

Health Technology Assessment

ISSN 1366-5278 (Print)

ISSN 2046-4924 (Online)

Impact factor: 5.116

Health Technology Assessment is indexed in MEDLINE, CINAHL, EMBASE, The Cochrane Library and the ISI Science Citation Index and is assessed for inclusion in the Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effects.

This journal is a member of and subscribes to the principles of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) (www.publicationethics.org/).

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This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HTA programme as project number 10/31/02. The contractual start date was in February 2012. The draft report began editorial review in October 2013 and was accepted for publication in April 2014. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HTA editors and publisher have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors' report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the draft document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HTA programme or the Department of Health. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HTA programme or the Department of Health.

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