

A feasibility randomised controlled trial of a motivational interviewing-based intervention for weight loss maintenance in adults

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Plain English summary

Trial of a motivational interviewing-based intervention for weight loss

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Maintaining weight loss is important for reducing health issues related to obesity. We tested a weight loss maintenance counselling programme for people who had already lost weight. We intended to carry out a larger study with longer follow-up but, owing to recruitment problems, the study became a feasibility study with a 1-year follow-up. We recruited individuals from across South Wales and the East Midlands to take part through general practitioner surgeries, Slimming World, exercise referral schemes and advertising. Participants had a current or previous body mass index (BMI) of ≥ 30 kg/m², were aged 18–70 years and provided evidence of having lost 5% of their weight before entering the study. They were randomly allocated to one of three groups: (1) usual care, (2) intensive (more sessions) counselling and (3) less intensive counselling.

Study participants completed questionnaires before, during and after the study to detect any changes and allow for comparisons between groups. Interviews with participants and focus groups with counsellors were carried out to find out their views and experiences of the counselling sessions.

A total of 170 participants took part. Most participants completed the follow-up questionnaires (84%) and attendance at the counselling sessions was excellent. A potential difference in BMI of 1 point (or 2.8 kg) was found between the intensive counselling and usual-care group, a difference which is considered to be important in terms of improving health; however, the small number of participants and short follow-up meant we were unable to predict long-term results. Participants and counsellors spoke positively of the counselling. We recommend that more research be completed to find effective ways to help people maintain their weight.

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