

# The HELPER programme: HEalthy Living and Prevention of Early Relapse – three exploratory randomised controlled trials of phase-specific interventions in first-episode psychosis

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**Declared competing interests of authors:** none.

**Disclaimer:** this report contains transcripts of interviews conducted in the course of the research and contains language that may offend some readers.

Published April 2015

DOI: 10.3310/pgfar03020

## Plain English summary

### **The HELPER programme**

Programme Grants for Applied Research 2015; Vol. 3: No. 2

DOI: 10.3310/pgfar03020

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# Plain English summary

## Background

Psychosis means:

- hearing or seeing things that are not there
- believing things that cannot be true and
- having confused thoughts.

Schizophrenia is a type of psychosis. After an attack of psychosis people can find it hard to get back to normal. People get worse after each attack.

## Aims

We wanted to stop people having another attack of psychosis. We looked at three treatments. The first was a 'mind gym', similar to a computer game. We hoped that it would make talking therapies work better. The second helped people control their weight by healthy living. Drugs for psychosis make you gain weight and so people stop taking them. The third was a talking therapy designed to help users give up cannabis. Cannabis use causes further attacks of psychosis. We carried out a small trial for each of our treatments. We wanted to see if any were promising enough for us to carry out a much bigger study.

## Methods

Our first trial (mind gym) involved 61 people waiting for talking therapy (cognitive-behavioural therapy) after their first attack of psychosis. Our second trial (weight control) involved 105 people. Our third trial (stopping cannabis) involved 110 people.

## Results

People liked all three treatments. The mind-gym treatment made talking therapy work more quickly. The healthy-living treatment did not work that well although it might have helped some people who take drugs that cause a lot of weight gain. So far we do not know how well the stopping-cannabis treatment worked.

## Conclusions

The mind gym is worth testing in a bigger trial.



# Programme Grants for Applied Research

ISSN 2050-4322 (Print)

ISSN 2050-4330 (Online)

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## This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by PGfAR as project number RP-PG-0606-1302. The contractual start date was in August 2007. The final report began editorial review in May 2013 and was accepted for publication in July 2014. As the funder, the PGfAR programme agreed the research questions and study designs in advance with the investigators. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The PGfAR editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors' report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the final report document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

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