

Football Fans in Training (FFIT): a randomised controlled trial of a gender-sensitised weight loss and healthy living programme for men – end of study report

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Disclaimer: This report contains transcripts of interviews conducted in the course of the research, or similar, and contains language which may offend some readers.

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Plain English summary

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Obesity in men is rising but few men take part in existing weight management programmes. We developed a men-only weight management programme, Football Fans in Training (FFIT), which was specifically designed to be delivered in Scottish professional football clubs by club community coaches. In the 12 weekly sessions, men learnt about diet and healthy living for weight loss, how to set goals and monitor their eating and physical activity, and top tips for making long-term changes. The FFIT programme also included a pedometer-based walking programme, group physical activity sessions at the club and some minimal ongoing support including a reunion session at the club.

We evaluated whether or not FFIT was effective and good value for money, whether or not coaches delivered it as intended, what made men want to do FFIT and whether or not men and coaches enjoyed it. The study was the first randomised controlled trial of a health programme in a professional sports club setting. Out of 747 men who wanted to do FFIT, 374 were picked at random to do the programme immediately and 374 to be in a comparison group who did FFIT a year later.

Men who did the programme lost 4.94 kg more weight than men in the comparison group. They also had lower waist size, lower percentage body fat and blood pressure, reported higher levels of physical activity, better diets and felt better about themselves.

The programme was good value for money, was well-delivered by the coaches and attracted men at high risk of ill health. The club setting was a crucial factor in attracting men to FFIT.

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This report

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