

Employer schemes to encourage walking to work: feasibility study incorporating an exploratory randomised controlled trial

Suzanne Audrey,^{1*} Sunita Procter,¹ Ashley Cooper,² Nanette Mutrie,³ William Hollingworth,¹ Adrian Davis,⁴ Ruth Kipping,¹ Philip Insall,⁵ Kirsty Garfield¹ and Rona Campbell¹

¹School of Social and Community Medicine, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK

²Centre for Exercise, Nutrition and Health Sciences, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK

³Sport, Physical Education and Health Sciences, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK

⁴Transport Department, Bristol City Council, Bristol, UK

⁵Sustrans, Bristol, UK

*Corresponding author

Declared competing interests of authors: Rona Campbell is a director of DECIPHer IMPACT Ltd, a university-owned not-for-profit company that licenses and supports the implementation of evidence-based health promotion interventions, for which she receives fees paid into a grant account held by the University of Bristol used to support further research activities. She is also a population and public health member of the Wellcome Trust's Expert Research Group; a fee was paid for the time spent reviewing applications and attending board meetings in London. Adrian Davis is an independent public health consultant on transport planning and health, promoting evidence-based transport policy and practice, and has been paid by Bristol City Council in this capacity.

Published March 2015

DOI: 10.3310/phr03040

Plain English summary

Employer schemes to encourage walking to work

Public Health Research 2015; Vol. 3: No. 4

DOI: 10.3310/phr03040

NIHR Journals Library www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk

Plain English summary

Physical inactivity increases the risk of coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity and some cancers, but many people do not do enough physical activity. One way for working adults to get more exercise is to walk to work. Researchers for the Walk to Work study wanted to see if it was possible to train Walk to Work promoters in workplaces to encourage people to walk to work by giving them information about the benefits of walking and how to change their travel behaviour. The study took place in 17 workplaces in the Bristol area (eight small, five medium-sized and four large). Walk to Work promoters were trained in seven workplaces, and 10 workplaces carried on as usual. Those who took part in the study (187 people) were asked to wear monitors to measure their activity, and to complete travel diaries and questionnaires. Some people were interviewed about their views and experiences of the Walk to Work study and their journeys to work. The results of the study showed that employers and employees were willing to try to increase walking to work and to let the researchers measure their activity. The study was not big enough to show whether or not there was really an increase in walking in the workplaces where Walk to Work promoters were trained, but it did look promising. The researchers believe that there should now be a much bigger study to give stronger evidence about whether or not the Walk to Work scheme can increase adults' physical activity.

Public Health Research

ISSN 2050-4381 (Print)

ISSN 2050-439X (Online)

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

Editorial contact: nihredit@southampton.ac.uk

The full PHR archive is freely available to view online at www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/phr. Print-on-demand copies can be purchased from the report pages of the NIHR Journals Library website: www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk

Criteria for inclusion in the *Public Health Research* journal

Reports are published in *Public Health Research* (PHR) if (1) they have resulted from work for the PHR programme, and (2) they are of a sufficiently high scientific quality as assessed by the reviewers and editors.

Reviews in *Public Health Research* are termed 'systematic' when the account of the search appraisal and synthesis methods (to minimise biases and random errors) would, in theory, permit the replication of the review by others.

PHR programme

The Public Health Research (PHR) programme, part of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), evaluates public health interventions, providing new knowledge on the benefits, costs, acceptability and wider impacts of non-NHS interventions intended to improve the health of the public and reduce inequalities in health. The scope of the programme is multi-disciplinary and broad, covering a range of interventions that improve public health. The Public Health Research programme also complements the NIHR Health Technology Assessment programme which has a growing portfolio evaluating NHS public health interventions.

For more information about the PHR programme please visit the website: <http://www.nets.nihr.ac.uk/programmes/phr>

This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the PHR programme as project number 10/3001/04. The contractual start date was in October 2011. The final report began editorial review in April 2014 and was accepted for publication in July 2014. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The PHR 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.

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 PHR 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 PHR programme or the Department of Health.

© Queen's Printer and Controller of HMSO 2015. This work was produced by Audrey *et al.* under the terms of a commissioning contract issued by the Secretary of State for Health. This issue may be freely reproduced for the purposes of private research and study and extracts (or indeed, the full report) may be included in professional journals provided that suitable acknowledgement is made and the reproduction is not associated with any form of advertising. Applications for commercial reproduction should be addressed to: NIHR Journals Library, National Institute for Health Research, Evaluation, Trials and Studies Coordinating Centre, Alpha House, University of Southampton Science Park, Southampton SO16 7NS, UK.

Published by the NIHR Journals Library (www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk), produced by Prepress Projects Ltd, Perth, Scotland (www.prepress-projects.co.uk).

Public Health Research Editor-in-Chief

Professor Martin White Professor of Public Health, Institute of Health & Society, Newcastle University and Honorary Consultant in Public Health with Public Health England

NIHR Journals Library Editor-in-Chief

Professor Tom Walley Director, NIHR Evaluation, Trials and Studies and Director of the HTA Programme, UK

NIHR Journals Library Editors

Professor Ken Stein Chair of HTA Editorial Board and Professor of Public Health, University of Exeter Medical School, UK

Professor Andree Le May Chair of NIHR Journals Library Editorial Group (EME, HS&DR, PGfAR, PHR journals)

Dr Martin Ashton-Key Consultant in Public Health Medicine/Consultant Advisor, NETSCC, UK

Professor Matthias Beck Chair in Public Sector Management and Subject Leader (Management Group), Queen's University Management School, Queen's University Belfast, UK

Professor Aileen Clarke Professor of Public Health and Health Services Research, Warwick Medical School, University of Warwick, UK

Dr Tessa Crilly Director, Crystal Blue Consulting Ltd, UK

Dr Peter Davidson Director of NETSCC, HTA, UK

Ms Tara Lamont Scientific Advisor, NETSCC, UK

Professor Elaine McColl Director, Newcastle Clinical Trials Unit, Institute of Health and Society, Newcastle University, UK

Professor William McGuire Professor of Child Health, Hull York Medical School, University of York, UK

Professor Geoffrey Meads Professor of Health Sciences Research, Faculty of Education, University of Winchester, UK

Professor John Powell Consultant Clinical Adviser, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), UK

Professor James Raftery Professor of Health Technology Assessment, Wessex Institute, Faculty of Medicine, University of Southampton, UK

Dr Rob Riemsma Reviews Manager, Kleijnen Systematic Reviews Ltd, UK

Professor Helen Roberts Professor of Child Health Research, UCL Institute of Child Health, UK

Professor Helen Snooks Professor of Health Services Research, Institute of Life Science, College of Medicine, Swansea University, UK

Please visit the website for a list of members of the NIHR Journals Library Board:
www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/about/editors

Editorial contact: nihredit@southampton.ac.uk