Structured lifestyle education to support weight loss for people with schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder and first episode psychosis: the STEPWISE RCT

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Plain English summary

People with schizophrenia are often overweight. Losing weight and being more active can reduce the risk of diabetes mellitus and heart disease and dying early. The NHS recommends offering a weight loss programme; however, mental health care providers do not know how best to do this.

We assessed whether or not an education programme to help people with psychosis to lose weight would be better than the usual care provided by the NHS.

A total of 414 people took part. We selected half of them at random to attend an education programme run by trained facilitators. The other half received their usual health care.

We found no important difference in weight between the two groups, at either 3 months or 12 months. We also found that the programme did not provide good value for money. In interviews, service users said that they liked the education programme and that it helped them to eat healthily and lose weight. However, we found no change in their diet and activity levels in either group. The trained staff thought that the programme could benefit service users, but were unsure if the NHS could afford it. They also wanted to know whether or not service users were losing weight during the programme.

People were interested in the trial and stayed in the trial until the end. Unfortunately, although some people benefited, the programme did not work for most people. Therefore, we need to look for better ways to help people with psychosis to lose weight.
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This report

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