

Individual health trainers to support health and well-being for people under community supervision in the criminal justice system: the STRENGTHEN pilot RCT

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Plain English summary

The STRENGTHEN pilot RCT

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Plain English summary

Little is known about the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of interventions to improve the health and well-being of people recently released from prison or serving community sentences, because of the challenges in recruitment and study retention. Health trainers can support healthy lifestyle change without telling clients directly what they should or should not do, and can offer direction to other options for support, but the interest in receiving support is not well understood.

This pilot trial aimed to find out whether or not 120 participants could be recruited into a trial from offender management services, in which they may or may not receive health trainer-led support, and how many would provide follow-up information about their well-being and lifestyles after 3 and 6 months. We also wanted to know the average score and variation in scores in a self-reported measure of well-being after 6 months to estimate the number of participants needed to detect better well-being after health trainer support, compared with usual care, in a full trial. We assessed participants' interest in the intervention by recording the number of sessions they took part in and interviewed them about their experiences.

We learnt how to improve efficiency of recruitment for a full trial within Community Rehabilitation Companies and the National Probation Service, increase the 60% of participants who completed follow-up assessments and encourage > 62% of participants to see the health trainer at least twice from interviews and observations. Those who received the intervention seemed to be more likely to have better well-being after 6 months than those who did not; this information was used to estimate that about 900 participants would be needed to fully assess if the differences were due to more than chance. Interviews and data analysis informed us on making a few changes ahead of a full trial.

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