

A weight management programme for fathers of children aged 4–11 years: cultural adaptation and the Healthy Dads, Healthy Kids UK feasibility RCT

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Declared competing interests of authors: Peymane Adab reports grants from the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), Birmingham City Council and Zhejiang Yongning Pharmaceutical Co. Ltd (Taizhou, China) during the conduct of the study, and is a member of the NIHR Public Health Research (PHR) funding committee. Clare Collins reports being involved in the development of the original Healthy Dads, Healthy Kids (HDHK) intervention and previous evaluations. Furthermore, she is supported by an Australian National Health and Medical Research Council Senior Research Fellowship and a Faculty of Health and Medicine Gladys M Brawn Senior Research Fellowship at the University of Newcastle. Amanda Daley reports being a member of the NIHR Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Clinical Trials Committee, from July 2014 to July 2015. Emma Frew reports grants from NIHR and Birmingham City Council, outside the submitted work. Kate Jolly reports grants from NIHR and funding for the intervention from local authorities in the West Midlands and the South West during the conduct of the study; she is part funded by the NIHR Collaborations for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (CLAHRC) West Midlands and is a subpanel chairperson of the NIHR Programme Grants for Applied Research panel. Laura Jones reports grants from the NIHR PHR programme during the conduct of the study and personal fees from North 51Bionical (Willington, UK), outside the submitted work. Miranda Pallan reports grants from NIHR during the conduct of the study for HTA 12/137/05: cultural adaptation of an existing children's weight management programme: the Child weigHt mANaGement for Ethnically diverse communities (CHANGE) intervention and feasibility randomised controlled trial. Philip Morgan reports that he developed the Healthy Dads, Healthy Kids programme.

Published February 2020

DOI: 10.3310/phr08020

Plain English summary

The Healthy Dads, Healthy Kids UK feasibility RCT

Public Health Research 2020; Vol. 8: No. 2

DOI: 10.3310/phr08020

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Plain English summary

About three-quarters of middle-aged men are overweight or obese and are insufficiently active, which makes them more likely to develop heart disease and diabetes. Children are influenced in their eating and physical activity behaviours by their parents.

Healthy Dads, Healthy Kids is a successful men's weight loss programme in Australia. Fathers attend nine group sessions with their primary school-aged children and learn about healthy lifestyles and do fun physical activities together. We wanted to adapt Healthy Dads, Healthy Kids so that it would be suitable for the different communities in the UK, and then see whether or not it was feasible to test it in a large research trial.

First, we interviewed people from ethnically diverse, disadvantaged areas in the West Midlands and incorporated their views to make programme changes. Then we tried out the programme with fathers and their children by recruiting overweight men living in similar areas. Two-thirds of the fathers were allocated, by chance, to attend Healthy Dads, Healthy Kids UK and one-third were allocated to a comparison group that received one free family leisure centre voucher. We followed up families after 3 and 6 months and asked fathers and the programme facilitators about their experiences.

We had difficulties in recruiting overweight fathers and delivering the programme at a time and in a location that was convenient for all of the families. Forty-three fathers from disadvantaged areas took part; 60% of these identified with a minority ethnic group. The programme facilitators needed high-level skills to deliver the intervention. Fathers and their children who attended enjoyed the intervention. Overall, 75% attended at least five sessions and reported positive changes to their lifestyle behaviours, but only 63% of participants were assessed at 6 months.

In summary, we conclude that it will not be practical to test the delivery of the adapted Healthy Dads, Healthy Kids UK intervention for overweight fathers as part of a large randomised trial.

Public Health Research

ISSN 2050-4381 (Print)

ISSN 2050-439X (Online)

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Editorial contact: journals.library@nihr.ac.uk

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This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the PHR programme as project number 14/185/13. The contractual start date was in May 2016. The final report began editorial review in December 2018 and was accepted for publication in May 2019. 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 and Social Care. 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 and Social Care.

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