

An app-, web- and social support-based weight loss intervention for adults with obesity: the HelpMeDolt! feasibility RCT

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Plain English summary

The HelpMeDolt! feasibility RCT

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Plain English summary

The majority of adults now own a smartphone and have access to the internet. Application (app) and web-based interventions have the potential to reach large numbers of people at low cost. HelpMeDolt! explored whether or not an app and a website could be used alongside support from family and friends to help people lose weight.

The aim was to develop and explore whether or not the intervention was acceptable to people and to test study processes, such as recruitment. In total, 38 users helped develop the app and website. A total of 109 people then signed up to test the intervention, and 73 of them were given access to the HelpMeDolt! app and website for 12 months. They were able to set weight loss goals, monitor their progress and receive support from one or more people they invited to be a 'helper'. The other 36 people were in the control group and they were given a healthy lifestyle leaflet.

We found that:

- although there were some early technical problems, people were generally positive about the app and website
- people we interviewed liked the idea of using a helper whom they already knew
- helpers did not use the app as much as we had hoped, but they gave support and encouragement in different ways (e.g. sending text messages, meeting up face to face)
- the goal-setting, self-monitoring and social support features of the app were used by people and their helpers.

The results also showed that enough people could be signed up to the study and kept in the study 1 year later, and that data could be easily collected and analysed. Further work is needed to evaluate whether or not the HelpMeDolt! app and website can actually help people to lose weight. If the intervention is shown to work, it may have the potential to be delivered at a low cost to a lot of people.

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