Modelling tool to support decision-making in the NHS Health Check programme: workshops, systematic review and co-production with users

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Declared competing interests of authors: Brendan Collins is a member of the Health Services and Delivery Research Research Led Panel.

Published May 2021
DOI: 10.3310/hta25350

Plain English summary

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Health Technology Assessment 2021; Vol. 25: No. 35
DOI: 10.3310/hta25350

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The NHS Health Check programme is available for adults aged 40–74 years in England to find the early risk of heart disease, cancers, lung disease and dementia, and lower that risk. However, some studies have suggested that the current scheme could perhaps be improved.

We systematically looked at previous studies to understand what makes a screening programme successful. We also contacted local authorities with the best NHS Health Check programmes to find out how they were being delivered so well. The most successful local authorities highlighted a wide variety of methods for achieving success. All had concrete plans in place for delivery, including different approaches for encouraging more adults to participate.

We further developed our existing computer model into a web-based tool [workHORSE (working Health Outcomes Research Simulation Environment)]. This tool can help those responsible for commissioning NHS Health Checks to further improve the delivery of their local programme. We held four workshops with relevant professionals to develop the workHORSE model. These workshops resulted in a useful ‘real-world’ tool for local commissioners: a tool that can calculate the current and potential future benefits of different programmes.

We used the model to show how commissioners can explore and compare a variety of different programmes. We found that combining several improvements can be useful. However, this provides modest benefits in improving health and value for money. At the same time, the impact on reducing inequalities is less clear and depends on the interventions used.

Our results suggest that:

1. a variety of successful approaches can be used to help increase the uptake of screening programmes such as NHS Health Checks
2. jointly developing a computer model with end-users leads to a more user-friendly and relevant model to improve the programme
3. the stage is now set for further work to identify the best approach in each local area.
Health Technology Assessment

ISSN 1366-5278 (Print)
ISSN 2046-4924 (Online)
Impact factor: 3.370

Health Technology Assessment is indexed in MEDLINE, CINAHL, EMBASE, the Cochrane Library and Clarivate Analytics Science Citation Index.

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

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This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HTA programme as project number 16/165/01. The contractual start date was in November 2017. The draft report began editorial review in February 2020 and was accepted for publication in December 2020. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HTA editors and publisher have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors’ report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the draft 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 HTA 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 HTA programme or the Department of Health and Social Care.

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