

# Health screening clinic to reduce absenteeism and presenteeism among NHS Staff: eTHOS a pilot RCT

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## Plain language summary

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## Plain language summary

Sickness absenteeism and presenteeism (attendance at work while ill, with poor work performance) are major problems in the NHS and associated with worse patient health care.

The most common causes of NHS staff sickness absenteeism and presenteeism are muscular complaints and mental ill health. Poor lifestyle and illnesses associated with heart disease are also important factors. Staff health checks might improve the health of NHS staff, but no studies have included screening tests to address the most common causes of poor staff health.

This pilot study tested whether it would be possible to deliver a randomised controlled trial of an NHS staff health screening clinic, where some people get the screening check and others do not (chosen at random, like flipping a coin). We used an electronic database to capture all data. Participants completed initial questionnaires either at home or at work, then attended a face-to-face screening clinic using recognised screening questionnaires and tests to detect problems with muscular, mental or heart health. We considered how NHS staff and healthcare organisations would want the screening clinic and trial to run, how a diverse range of NHS staff could best be approached, how many staff might need to be invited and what their healthcare needs would be.

The study ran in four UK NHS hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic. Two hundred and thirty-six NHS staff participated, but early trial closure due to the pandemic meant that some results were unavailable. For the primary feasibility outcomes, although recruitment rates of around 8% were lower than anticipated, half of staff screened needed referral for further health care and one-third reported intending to attend. Staff felt that the clinic addressed an important health need. The Trial Oversight Committee recommended proceeding to a full-scale trial but with modifications to address findings from the process evaluation, including ways to encourage a wider group of NHS staff to take part.



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