

## OBESITY

# Success of a new programme for tackling obesity in men

The Football Fans in Training (FFIT) gender-sensitized weight-loss programme has been demonstrated to be successful and cost-effective in a new study by a Scottish research team.

“Obesity is a major challenge to public health and is increasing more rapidly in men than women,” explains author Sally Wyke. “We thought that there was an urgent need for innovation in supporting weight management for men and that working in partnership with professional sports clubs had great potential.” The researchers therefore designed the FFIT weight-loss and healthy-living programme to be delivered by community coaches working in professional Scottish football clubs.



The programme was designed to be attractive to men in relation to context (the traditionally male environment of football clubs, men-only groups), content (information on the science of weight loss presented simply) and style of delivery (participative, peer-supported, learning).

The study included 747 men who were randomly assigned to either start the programme immediately (the intervention group) or to wait for 12 months (the comparison group). The participants were weighed and measured before the programme started, at the end of the 12-week intervention and 12 months after the programme started.

After 12 months, the average difference between the two groups was 4.94 kg. The men in the intervention group maintained the weight loss over 12 months, suggesting that the intervention is effective. The intervention group also had a reduced waist size, percentage body fat and blood pressure and reported feeling better about themselves. Notably, the FFIT programme seems to be successful at

connecting with men who had not been engaged by other programmes, as retention was high at 90%.

The authors note that FFIT could be an effective strategy to tackle the increase in obesity in men, who generally have low participation in weight-loss programmes. “We are already undertaking further research to consider whether elements of the programme are adaptable for delivery in European football clubs, in secure institutions and in rugby union football clubs in the UK,” says Wyke.

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**Original article** Hunt, K. *et al.* A gender-sensitised weight loss and healthy living programme for overweight and obese men delivered by Scottish Premier League football clubs (FFIT): a pragmatic randomised controlled trial. *Lancet* doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(13)62420-4