

**The Co-Manage Study
Adult Participant Information Sheet**

Investigators Details:

Dr David Maidment, d.w.maidment@lboro.ac.uk, 01509 225439

Prof Fehmidah Munir, f.munir@lboro.ac.uk

Dr Maria Goodwin, m.goodwin@lboro.ac.uk

Katie Clarkson, k.clarkson@lboro.ac.uk

**School of Sport, Exercise and Health, Loughborough University, Loughborough,
LE11 3TU**

Dr Zahid Asghar, zasghar@lincoln.ac.uk

University of Lincoln

Prof Holly Blake, holly.blake@nottingham.ac.uk

University of Nottingham

Prof Jo Yarker, jo.yarker@affinityhealthatwork.com

Affinity Health at Work

We would like to invite you to take part in our study. Before you decide we would like you to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. One of our team will go through the information sheet with you and answer any questions you have. Talk to others about the study before making a decision if you wish.

What is the purpose of the study?

Many people work while managing a long-term health condition or disability. This can sometimes make work more difficult and may affect wellbeing, attendance, or confidence at work. Employers and managers also vary in how well they are able to support staff with long-term health conditions and disabilities. At present, there is limited evidence in the UK about what kinds of workplace support are most helpful.

This study aims to test a new online support programme called Co-Manage. The programme is designed to help people manage their health at work and to help managers and organisations better support their staff. The study will explore whether the programme is easy to use, acceptable to participants, and suitable for use in a larger future study. By taking part, you will help researchers understand how workplace support can be improved for people with long-term health conditions or disabilities.

Who is doing this research and why?

The study is funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) through the Public Health Research Programme. This research is being carried out by a team of researchers based at Loughborough University, working in collaboration with researchers

from the University of Nottingham, the University of Lincoln, and Affinity Health at Work. The study is led by Dr David Maidment, who is the Chief Investigator, and the research team includes experienced academics and researchers with expertise in workplace health, wellbeing, and long-term health conditions. The purpose of the research is to improve understanding of how people with long-term health conditions can be better supported at work and to test whether a new workplace support programme (Co-Manage) can be used effectively in UK organisations.

Are there any inclusion or exclusion criteria?

For **employees**, to take part in this study, participants must:

- Be aged 18 years or over.
- Be currently employed by a participating organisation for 12 months or more.
- Have a long-term health condition or disability that has lasted, or is expected to last, 12 months or more.
- Be able to read and understand English well enough to complete online questionnaires.
- Have access to the internet.

You will not be eligible to take part if you:

- Are under 18 years of age.
- Do not have a long-term health condition or disability.
- Are unable to complete the study materials in English.
- Are not employed by a participating organisation.

There are no exclusions based on gender, ethnicity, job role, or type of health condition/disability.

For **managers** and **employer stakeholders** (e.g. human resources [HR], occupational health), to take part in this study, participants must:

- Be aged 18 years or over.
- Employed in a managerial, supervisory, HR, occupational health, or senior leadership role within a participating organisation.
- Be able to read and understand English well enough to complete online questionnaires.
- Have access to the internet.

You will not be able to take part if you are:

- Under 18 years of age.
- Not employed in a participating organisation.
- Unable to complete the study materials in English.

What will I be asked to do?

If you wish to take part, you will complete a consent form. For **employees only**, this includes separate optional consent for allowing the research team to request sickness absence information from your employer's records.

You will then receive details to complete an online questionnaire. This will include demographic questions about your health, work status, ethnicity, and gender identity. For **employees**, we will also ask questions about your health at work, wellbeing, work ability, work productivity, job satisfaction, workplace adjustments/support, and self-management. For **managers and employer stakeholders** we will ask you questions about your experiences of supporting staff with long-term conditions and disabilities in the workplace. You can skip any question you do not want to answer. You will complete follow-up questionnaire similar to this first questionnaire at 3- and 6-months.

You will receive login details for the Co-Manage website. You will complete a short introduction section and then use the online resources as you wish during the study period. You can return to the site as often as you like. After 6-months, you will be invited to a one-off remote interview by phone or video call. The interview will explore experiences of taking part in the study and (if relevant) experiences of using Co-Manage. **[Co-Manage group only]**

Once I take part, can I change my mind?

After you have read this information and asked any questions you may have if you are happy to participate we will ask you to complete an Informed Consent Form. However if at any time, before, during or after the sessions you wish to withdraw from the study please just contact the main investigator. You can withdraw at any time, for any reason and you will not be asked to explain your reasons for withdrawing.

However, once the results of the study are aggregated (expected to be by 31 November 2027), it may not be possible to withdraw your individual data from the research.

Will I be asked to attend any sessions and where will these be?

You will not be required to attend any in-person sessions as part of this study. All parts of the study will take place remotely. Questionnaires will be completed online using a secure web-based system and can be completed at a time and place that is convenient for you, such as at home or at work. If you are invited to take part in an interview, this will be conducted remotely by telephone or secure video call (for example, Microsoft Teams), depending on your preference.

How long will it take?

Taking part in this study will involve a small number of activities spread over approximately **6 months**.

You will be asked to complete an online questionnaire at the start of the study, which will take around **30-45 minutes**. You will then be asked to complete two further online questionnaires at approximately 3 months and 6 months, each taking around **30-45 minutes**.

At six months, you will be invited to take part in an interview. This will take approximately **45-60 minutes**. Taking part in an interview is optional.

You may also choose to spend time using Co-Manage. This is self-directed and flexible but is expected to take around 30-60 minutes in total across the study. **[Co-Manage group only]**

Are there any disadvantages or risks in participating?

Some participants may find that answering questions about their health, work, or wellbeing causes mild discomfort or emotional upset, particularly when reflecting on long-term health conditions or workplace challenges. This is expected to be low in likelihood and mild in severity, and any discomfort is expected to be short-term. Participants are free to skip any questions they do not wish to answer and may stop taking part at any time without giving a reason.

Further condition-specific information that might help support you in the workplace includes:

- Musculoskeletal - <https://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/workers-msds.htm>;
- Mental Health - <https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/my-mental-health-at-work/>;
- Neurodivergence - <https://www.cipd.org/uk/knowledge/guides/neuroinclusion-work/>;
- Cardiovascular - <https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/support/practical-support/work-and-a-heart-condition>;
- Respiratory System - <https://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/living-with/working-lung-condition>;
- Diabetes - <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/living-with-diabetes/life-with-diabetes/employment>;
- Health and wellbeing at work - <https://www.acas.org.uk/health-and-wellbeing-at-work>.

The study also involves collecting sensitive information about your health and work experiences. We take confidentiality extremely seriously. Your employer will not have access to your individual responses, and no information that could identify you will be shared with your employer. Findings shared with your employer will be reported in summary form only.

Is there anything I need to do before the sessions?

Before taking part, you will be asked to read this participant information sheet and complete a consent form. Once you have given consent, you will be asked to complete a short online questionnaire before the study begins. There is no other preparation required.

If you are invited to take part in an interview later in the study, you will be given information in advance and can decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What are the possible benefits of participating?

There may be no direct personal benefit from taking part in this study. However, some participants may find that completing the questionnaires helps them reflect on their health, wellbeing, and experiences at work. You may also find the online resources helpful in understanding how to manage health at work and access support. **[Co-Manage group only]**

Participants who complete study questionnaires will be entered into a random prize draw to win gift vouchers. The prize draw will operate across participating organisations, with a total value of £100 per organisation for the completion of the initial questionnaire, as well as separate £100 prize draws for the 3-month and 6-month questionnaires. Entry into each prize draw is voluntary and is not linked to your response to the questionnaires.

Data Protection Privacy Notice

Loughborough University will be using information/data from you in order to undertake this study and will act as the data controller for this study. This means that the University is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly.

What personal information will be collected from me and how will it be used?

As part of this study, a limited amount of personal and sensitive personal information will be collected. This information is required to carry out the research, contact participants, and analyse the findings appropriately.

Personal information collected will include your name, email address or other contact details (such as your telephone or mobile number). This information will be used to contact you to arrange participation, manage consent, and administer questionnaires and interviews. Sensitive personal information will also be collected. This includes information about your health and wellbeing, including whether you have a long-term health condition or disability, information about work-related health and sickness absence, and information about age, gender identity, ethnicity, and employment status. For **employees**, where you give explicit consent, limited sickness absence information may be obtained from employer records. No medical diagnoses or clinical records will be collected.

This information is collected to understand how long-term health conditions affect work, how individuals manage their health in the workplace, and how workplace support can be improved. All data will be stored securely, and identifiable information will be kept separate from research data. Any findings will be reported in a way that does not identify individual participants or participating organisations.

What is the legal basis for processing my personal information?

Personal data will be processed on the public task basis. For further details on the data protection legislation see: <https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public/>

Under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), some of the personal data which will be collected from you is categorised as “sensitive data”. The processing of this data is necessary for scientific research in accordance with safeguards. This means that the study has gone through an ethical committee to ensure that the appropriate safeguards are put in place with respect to the use of your personal data.

How long will my personal information be retained?

We will keep identifiable personal information about you no later than the end of the data collection and verification period (expected 30 November 2027).

Will my personal information be shared with others?

Your identifiable personal information will only be shared with the investigators involved in the study.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

No identifiable personal information will be included in any of the project submissions or shared beyond the investigators. No individual will be identifiable in any report, presentation, or publication.

How will the anonymised data/results collected from me be used?

Your anonymised data will be used in research outputs, including journal papers, conference presentations, and reports.

All information will be securely stored on the University IT systems (OneDrive).

How long will the anonymised data/results be retained?

Anonymised data will be archived to the University's Research Repository and held indefinitely for future research.

I have some more questions; who should I contact?

If you have any further questions, please Dr Maria Goodwin, m.goodwin@lboro.ac.uk.

What if I am not happy with how the research was conducted?

If you are not happy with how the research was conducted, please contact the Secretary of the Ethics Review Sub-Committee, Research & Innovation Office, Hazlerigg Building, Loughborough University, Epinal Way, Loughborough, LE11 3TU. Tel: 01509 222423. Email: researchpolicy@lboro.ac.uk

The University also has policies relating to Research Misconduct and Whistle Blowing which are available online at <https://www.lboro.ac.uk/internal/research-ethics-integrity/research-integrity/>.

If you require any further information regarding the General Data Protection Regulations, please see: <https://www.lboro.ac.uk/privacy/research-privacy/>.