

# Does weight management improve Long COVID symptoms in people with Long COVID and obesity?

<b>Submission date</b>	<b>Recruitment status</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prospectively registered
21/10/2021	No longer recruiting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Protocol
<b>Registration date</b>	<b>Overall study status</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan
25/11/2021	Completed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Results
<b>Last Edited</b>	<b>Condition category</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data
30/01/2026	Infections and Infestations	

## Plain English summary of protocol

### Background and study aims

Around 10% of people with COVID-19 have symptoms that last for 12 weeks or longer – this is termed as having Long COVID. Long COVID symptoms are more likely to affect people with overweight/obesity compared to the rest of the population. Weight management programmes in adults with overweight/obesity can reduce symptoms such as fatigue, breathlessness and pain, however, it is not known how effective intentional weight loss is at reducing Long COVID symptoms. The aim of this study is therefore to test the effectiveness of a well-established professional weight management programme in people with Long COVID.

### Who can participate?

People aged 18 or over with Long COVID symptoms persisting for more than 3 months before first recruitment contact, not currently hospitalised, with body mass index (BMI) above 27 kg/m<sup>2</sup> (>25 kg/m<sup>2</sup> for South Asians)

### What does the study involve?

Participants will be randomly allocated (by a computer programme) to one of two groups:

1. Immediate entry to a remote structured weight management programme, which includes an initial period of total diet replacement (soups and shakes), followed by carefully managed food reintroduction and then weight loss maintenance to enable participants to manage their weight in the long term

2. "Delayed entry", after 6 months, to the structured weight management programme

This study is entirely "remote": there is no need to travel to a research centre or a hospital, and participants can remain at home for the duration of the study. They will receive a set of scales and a blood pressure monitor, and will be asked to report measurements of weight, height, blood pressure and physical activity. They will also be asked to complete questionnaires to name and rate their Long COVID symptoms, as well as questionnaires to assess demographics, medical history, medications, health, and overall enjoyment of life.

Following this, participants will be randomly allocated to receive 12-months treatment on the Counterweight-Plus/DIRECT diet weight management programme, which is delivered online by Counterweight Ltd with personal video/telephone support contact. Around 100 participants will

start the programme immediately following their first appointment, with the remaining 100 participants being offered access to the programme after a 6-month delay.

When participants start the weight management programme, they will be asked to stop eating their usual food and meals and instead start a Total Diet Replacement Plan of soups and shakes for 12 weeks, with the aim of achieving their maximum potential weight loss. The soups and shakes will be provided free of charge as part of the study. Participants will be provided with the Counterweight app, for recording measurements, e.g. weight, blood pressure etc, and provided with weekly educational content. During this 12-week period, they will also be supported and given advice by a specialist Counterweight dietitian, with monthly online/telephone appointments. There will also be an option of additional support via an app, through a chat function.

After 12 weeks on the soups and shakes, participants will be helped to reintroduce normal foods into their diet gradually over the next 8 weeks. During this time, they will continue to record measurements and will be provided with weekly educational content. Also, they will continue to have monthly online/telephone appointments with their specialist Counterweight dietitian.

There will also still be an option of additional support via an app through a chat function.

The initial two phases of the programme aim to achieve at least 15-20 kg (2-3 stones) weight loss. Once the food re-introduction phase is completed, participants will enter the weight loss maintenance programme to learn how to maintain their new lower weight while enjoying a variety of foods. Participants will continue to be supported by their specialist Counterweight dietitian and offered monthly online/telephone appointments for up to 12 months. They will continue to be provided with educational content/advice to help maintain their weight loss which will include goal-setting, self-monitoring, physical activity, relapse prevention if their weight tends to rise again, and nutrition education.

#### What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

There are very few health risks from following this weight management programme. Some people may experience some of the symptoms listed below during weight loss. These are usually temporary and go away once body weight is stable at a lower level.

1. Constipation (the researchers advise taking Fybogel to overcome this)
2. Dizziness is possible when standing up suddenly. This is due to the body adjusting to a healthier, lower blood pressure and happens mainly in those who are taking medication to control their blood pressure. If this occurs, take more time standing up, and aim to remain well hydrated by drinking plenty of water.
3. Gallstones – this is unusual and is most often a consequence of existing gallstones. The diet in this study contains some fat, which further minimises the risk of gallstone problems.
4. Taking part will involve a change in lifestyle and substantial time commitment. The weight management programme is challenging but participants will be given full support throughout the study.

While the researchers anticipate that participants in the study will lose weight, there is no guarantee of improvement in health or success of the intervention. Others living with Long COVID and overweight/obesity in the future, but who are not participating in this study, may benefit from the results of this study.

#### Where is the study run from?

Dykebar Hospital (UK)

#### When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?

March 2021 to May 2024

#### Who is funding the study?

National Institute for Health Research (UK)

Who is the main contact?  
Diann Taggart, diann.taggart@ggc.scot.nhs.uk

## Contact information

### Type(s)

Public

### Contact name

Ms Diann Taggart

### Contact details

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## Additional identifiers

### Clinical Trials Information System (CTIS)

Nil known

### Integrated Research Application System (IRAS)

304075

### ClinicalTrials.gov (NCT)

Nil known

### Protocol serial number

GN21ME311, IRAS 304075, CPMS 51463

## Study information

### Scientific Title

Remote Diet Intervention to Reduce Long COVID symptoms Trial

### Acronym

ReDIRECT

### Study objectives

Previous research has shown multiple clinical and personal benefits from weight loss, including increased energy levels, improved general wellbeing and better quality of sleep. It is not clear, however, whether supported weight loss can improve symptoms of Long COVID.

The hypothesis being tested is that supported weight loss in adults with Long COVID and overweight/obesity can improve symptoms of Long COVID such as fatigue, breathlessness, pain and depression.

### **Ethics approval required**

Old ethics approval format

### **Ethics approval(s)**

Approval pending, South East Scotland REC01 (Waverly Gate, 2-4 Waverly Place, Edinburgh, EH1 3EG, UK; +44 (0)131 465 5473; [sandra.wylie@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:sandra.wylie@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk)), REC ref: 21/SS/0077

### **Study design**

Baseline randomized remote-delivered non-blinded wait-list controlled trial (with entry after 6 months) with mixed methods process and economic evaluation

### **Primary study design**

Interventional

### **Study type(s)**

Quality of life

### **Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied**

Long COVID

### **Interventions**

Following completion of baseline data participants will be allocated to one of the two groups using a mixed minimisation/randomisation approach. 80% of participants will be allocated according to minimisation algorithm or allocated at random, if neither allocation achieves lower imbalance and the remaining 20% will be allocated at random. Participants will be randomised at baseline in a 1:1 ratio to the intervention arm (Counterweight Plus/DIRECT diet) or the wait-list control arm.

Control - participants allocated to the control arm will be given access to the Counterweight Plus /DIRECT programme after 6 months

Intervention - Counterweight Plus/DIRECT diet programmes are delivered by Counterweight Ltd via an online platform with text chat, video or telephone support. Individuals will be allocated a named "Counterweight Coach" for personal support for regular appointments and to moderate an online chat facility to enable peer support between participants. Counterweight coaches include many specialist dieticians, and professionals experienced in behaviour change (i.e. psychology graduates). Coaches receive formal competency-based training from a Counterweight specialist, then ongoing supervision and mentoring to maintain programme fidelity.

### **Intervention Type**

Supplement

## **Primary outcome(s)**

The primary outcome will be a continuous measure derived from the symptom score for the most important Long COVID symptom reported by the participant at baseline, 3 and 6 months, with the 6-month measure the primary outcome. Participants will complete symptom scores at baseline and will nominate the symptom they would most like to improve:

1. Fatigue measured using the Validated Chalder Fatigue Scale (CFQ-11)
2. Breathlessness measured using the modified MRC Dyspnoea Scale
3. Pain measured using the P4 Numeric Pain Rating Scale
4. Anxiety and depression measured using the Hospital Anxiety & Depression Scale (HADS) questionnaire
5. Other - for other symptoms with no pre-specified scale, the researchers will use a Visual Analogue Scale (0 to 10)

## **Key secondary outcome(s)**

Measured at baseline, 3 and 6 months:

1. The symptoms not nominated by each participant as their primary outcome measure (listed above) will become secondary outcomes
2. Quality of life measured using the EQ-5D-5L
3. Work productivity measured using the Work Productivity and Activity Impairment (WPAI) questionnaire
4. Weight in kg will be measured by self-reporting (participants will be sent their own weight scales)
5. A process evaluation will assess the implementation of the intervention in terms of dose, fidelity and reach and explore the experience of the intervention from the perspective of participants including acceptability, patterns of use, and barriers and facilitators to use. This will be done using semi-structured interviews.
6. Cost-effectiveness of the intervention assessed using an economic evaluation

## **Completion date**

31/05/2024

## **Eligibility**

### **Key inclusion criteria**

1. People with Long COVID symptoms persisting >3 months before first recruitment contact, not currently hospitalised
2. People who are aged 18 or above
3. People with body mass index (BMI) above 27 kg/m<sup>2</sup> (>25 kg/m<sup>2</sup> for South Asians)

### **Participant type(s)**

Patient

### **Healthy volunteers allowed**

No

### **Age group**

Mixed

### **Lower age limit**

18 years

**Upper age limit**

120 years

**Sex**

All

**Total final enrolment**

0

**Key exclusion criteria**

1. People who have had lengthy hospitalisations (>10 days) or intensive care unit (ICU) admissions related to COVID-19
2. People who are currently on insulin or anti-obesity drugs
3. People who have had a proven myocardial infarction within the last 6 months
4. People with severe mental illness (including severe depression and eating disorders)

**Date of first enrolment**

20/12/2021

**Date of final enrolment**

04/07/2022

## Locations

**Countries of recruitment**

United Kingdom

Scotland

**Study participating centre**

**University of Glasgow**

Institute of Health and Wellbeing

1 Horselethill Road

Glasgow

Scotland

G12 9LX

**Study participating centre**

**NHS Ayrshire & Arran**

PO Box 13 Boswell House

10 Arthur Street

Ayr

Scotland

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**Study participating centre****NHS Borders**

Newstead

Melrose

Roxburghshire

Scotland

TD6 9DB

**Study participating centre****NHS Lanarkshire**

14 Beckford Street

Hamilton

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**Study participating centre****NHS Grampian**

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**Study participating centre****NHS Tayside**

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**Study participating centre****NHS Fife**

Springfield House

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**Study participating centre****NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde**

JB Russell House

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1055 Great Western Road  
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G12 0XH

**Study participating centre**  
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17 Old Edinburgh Road  
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**NHS Orkney**  
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33 Spittal Road  
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**Study participating centre**  
**NHS Western Isles**  
37 South Beach Street

Stornoway  
Scotland  
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**Study participating centre**

**NHS Dumfries & Galloway**

Grierson House  
The Crichton  
Bankend Road  
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**Study participating centre**

**NHS Shetland**

Brevik House  
South Road  
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ZE1 0RB

## **Sponsor information**

**Organisation**

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

**ROR**

<https://ror.org/05kdz4d87>

## **Funder(s)**

**Funder type**

Government

**Funder Name**

National Institute for Health Research

**Alternative Name(s)**

National Institute for Health Research, NIHR Research, NIHRresearch, NIHR - National Institute for Health Research, NIHR (The National Institute for Health and Care Research), NIHR

**Funding Body Type**

Government organisation

**Funding Body Subtype**

National government

**Location**

United Kingdom

## Results and Publications

### Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

#### IPD sharing plan summary

Data sharing statement to be made available at a later date

#### Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
<a href="#">Results article</a>		08/01 /2025	10/01 /2025	Yes	No
<a href="#">Protocol article</a>		03/08 /2023	26/10 /2023	Yes	No
<a href="#">Other publications</a>	Baseline Characteristics	05/03 /2024	15/08 /2024	Yes	No
<a href="#">Other publications</a>	Cost-effectiveness of the ReDIRECT/counterweight-plus weight management programme to alleviate symptoms of long COVID	01/07 /2025	30/01 /2026	Yes	No
<a href="#">Participant information sheet</a>	version 1.0	12/08 /2021	09/11 /2021	No	Yes
<a href="#">Participant information sheet</a>	version 1.1	19/11 /2021	28/06 /2024	No	Yes
<a href="#">Protocol file</a>	version 1.1	19/11 /2021	15/08 /2022	No	No
<a href="#">Statistical Analysis Plan</a>	version 1.0	24/04 /2023	28/06 /2024	No	No
<a href="#">Study website</a>	Study website	11/11 /2025	11/11 /2025	No	Yes