

Boosting uptake of NHS Health Checks in Northamptonshire

Submission date	Recruitment status	<input type="checkbox"/> Prospectively registered
28/03/2014	No longer recruiting	<input type="checkbox"/> Protocol
Registration date	Overall study status	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan
25/06/2014	Completed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Results
Last Edited	Condition category	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data
17/12/2019	Other	

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

The NHS Health Check programme has been set up to help prevent heart disease, stroke, diabetes, kidney disease and some types of dementia in the general population. Everyone aged 40 to 74 and not either already diagnosed with one of these conditions, or have certain risk factors, will be sent an invite once every 5 years to attend an appointment to check on their risk of developing these diseases. They will be then given support or advice on how to manage or reduce such risks. The programme is a policy priority for the Department of Health, NHS England, Public Health England and local authorities in their efforts to tackle premature death and promote healthy lifestyles. However, the number of people who join the programme are significantly lower than desired, at around 50 per cent. Local authority commissioners of the NHS Health Check currently use a range of different letters and marketing to encourage those eligible to attend. However, there has not to date been any robust research into what type of letters or marketing strategies will be most likely to lead to an increase in the number of people taking part in the programme. There is compelling evidence in the field of behavioural science to suggest that a low cost intervention within the content of the invitation letter or a reminder text message may be effective at changing peoples behaviour. The aim of this study is to determine what type of patient invitation letter would be most likely to successfully encourage people to enrol on the NHS Health Check programme. The results will be used to help promote the uptake of Health Checks.

Who can participate?

People eligible for an NHS Health Check in the Borough of Northamptonshire during the duration of the study

What does the study involve?

This study tests whether a number of small, low-cost changes to the invitation process for Health Checks can increase uptake. Patients are randomly allocated to receive the usual letter of invitation (control), a new, shorter, action focused letter containing some questions and answers relating to the Health Check (intervention 1), or a shorter letter with a reference to the cost of the Health Check appointment (intervention 2).

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

There are no risks to participants. The standard NHS leaflet explaining the risks of attending a Health Check, or not, is included in both the control and intervention letters.

Where is the study run from?

GP surgeries in Northamptonshire (UK)

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

March 2013 to April 2014

Who is funding the study?

The Department of Health (UK)

Who is the main contact?

Annabelle Bonus

Contact information

Type(s)

Scientific

Contact name

Ms Annabelle Bonus

Contact details

Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London
United Kingdom
SW1A 2NS

Additional identifiers

Protocol serial number

N/A

Study information

Scientific Title

Using behavioural insights to change uptake of the NHS Health Check

Study objectives

Does making small, low-cost changes, based on behavioural insight, to the NHS Health Check invitation process change levels of uptake?

Ethics approval required

Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)

NHS Health Research Authority NRES committee, 23/09/2013, ref: 13/SW/0293

Study design

Multicentre randomised controlled trial

Primary study design

Interventional

Study type(s)

Other

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

NHS Health Checks

Interventions

Patients in participating practices who are due to be invited to a health check are randomly allocated into one of three groups. This is a simple randomization done locally by each practice once a month. The letter variations should include:

1. National template (control)
2. A shorter letter containing some questions and answers relating to the Health Check
3. A shorter letter with a reference to the cost of the Health Check appointment

Intervention Type

Other

Phase

Not Applicable

Primary outcome(s)

Uptake of the NHS Health Check. This is recorded by the local IT system EmisWeb. This is recorded once the appointment is attended, and the data provided for analysis six months after the invitation letters are sent.

Key secondary outcome(s)

Not provided at time of registration

Completion date

30/04/2015

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

Any patient registered at a consenting participating GP practice in Northamptonshire during the trial duration who is due to be invited for an NHS Health Check. Patients aged between 40-74 are invited to attend for a Health Check via an invitation letter sent to the address held in their medical records. The letters are sent monthly by the individual GP practices.

Participant type(s)

Patient

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Adult

Sex

All

Total final enrolment

6331

Key exclusion criteria

Participants will only be excluded if they are no longer eligible for an NHS Health Check at their GP's surgery, for example, if they have had one at a local pharmacy already.

Date of first enrolment

01/03/2014

Date of final enrolment

30/04/2015

Locations

Countries of recruitment

United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre

Department of Health

London

United Kingdom

SW1A 2NS

Sponsor information

Organisation

Department of Health (UK)

ROR

<https://ror.org/03sbpja79>

Funder(s)

Funder type

Government

Funder Name

Department of Health (UK)

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary

Not provided at time of registration

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Results article	results	16/12/2019	17/12/2019	Yes	No
HRA research summary			28/06/2023	No	No
Participant information sheet	Participant information sheet	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes