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An online group programme to support weight management in adults who have severe obesity

Submission date
15/06/2026

Recruitment status
Recruiting

Registration date
16/06/2026

Overall study status
Ongoing

Last Edited
16/06/2026

Condition category
Nutritional, Metabolic, Endocrine

[ ] Prospectively registered
[ ] Protocol
[ ] Statistical analysis plan
[ ] Results
[ ] Individual participant data
[X] Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
Severe obesity affects over 5 million adults in the UK and can have serious impacts on health and wellbeing. We have previously developed a group-based behavioural weight management programme called PROGROUP, which is usually delivered face-to-face. However, many NHS services find it difficult to offer in-person programmes due to travel, cost, and limited clinic space. Since more care is now delivered online, this may help more people access support, but we do not yet know whether online group programmes are acceptable or practical for people living with severe obesity.
This study aims to develop and test an online version of PROGROUP (PROGROUP-Online). It is a feasibility study, meaning it will assess whether it is possible and practical to deliver the programme online and whether a larger study should be carried out in future.

Who can participate?
We aim to recruit around 80 adults who have been referred to NHS specialist weight management services.
Participants must:
1. Be aged 18 years or over (up to 85 years)
2. Meet criteria for specialist weight management referral (BMI ≥40 kg/m2 or ≥35 kg/m2 with related health conditions)
3. Be registered with a participating NHS service
4. Be willing to have their weight measured at the start and end of the study
5. Be suitable for group-based care and able to give informed consent
People cannot take part if they are currently in another weight management trial, unable to attend sessions, planning to move away, or unable to engage with the study due to language or communication difficulties (unless suitable support is available).

What does the study involve?
Participants who agree to take part will be asked to provide consent and complete some baseline questionnaires and measurements.
Up to 60 patients will take part in the PROGROUP-Online programme, which lasts around 5 months and includes:
1. 12 online group sessions (with up to 15 participants)

2. Three one-to-one online sessions with a trained facilitator (such as a nurse, dietitian or physiotherapist)
The programme supports people to make lasting changes to eating and physical activity habits using behavioural techniques such as goal setting and problem-solving, along with dietary advice.
Participants will also:
1. Complete questionnaires at the start, 3 months, and 6 months
2. Provide weight measurements at the start and end
3. Complete brief feedback after sessions
4. Take part in an optional interview about their experiences
A subgroup (up to 30 participants) will be invited to take part in a Photovoice activity, where they share photographs illustrating factors affecting their eating habits, followed by interviews and a focus group.
Group sessions will be recorded for research purposes only.
Up to 20 additional patients, who decline the programme, will be asked about the reason for their choice and invite to complete a short questionnaire and interview.
Up to 10 members of staff will be included and interviewed about their experience of delivering the programme.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
We do not yet know if PROGROUP-Online will be effective, but participants may find the support helpful. The study will help improve future NHS weight management services.
Participants who complete the final questionnaire will receive a £10 voucher. Those taking part in the Photovoice activity will receive an additional £10 voucher.
There are no known significant risks to taking part. However:
1. Participation requires time commitment over 6 months
2. Some questions or discussions may feel sensitive or upsetting
3. Participants will need access to suitable technology for online sessions
Participants can withdraw at any time without affecting their care.

Where is the study run from?
The study is led by researchers at the University of Plymouth and the University of Exeter, in collaboration with NHS specialist weight management services across the UK. The study sponsor is Devon Partnership NHS Trust (UK).

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
June 2026 to May 2027

Who is funding the study?
The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) (UK).

Who is the main contact?
Dr Dawn Swancutt, dawn.swancutt@plymouth.ac.uk or progroup-online@plymouth.ac.uk

Contact information

Type(s)
Principal investigator

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Integrated Research Application System (IRAS)
333265

Central Portfolio Management System (CPMS)
58282

National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR)
208731

Study information

Scientific Title
A feasibility study of a remote group-based behavioural change support for adults living with severe obesity

Acronym
PROGROUP Online

Study objectives
The research addresses seven specific questions:
1. What content would patients like in PROGROUP-online, and how should this be delivered?
2. What is needed for successful online delivery of PROGROUP-online, in accordance with the intervention logic model, including training and facilitator competencies?
3. How do patients and healthcare professionals experience PROGROUP-online?
4. Is it feasible to deliver PROGROUP-online for patients with fidelity, in terms of core behaviour change content and facilitator action sets to promote shared social identity?
5. Is PROGROUP-online acceptable to patients with differing needs, experiences, IT competencies and accessibility and general health inequalities?
6. What is the cost of delivering the intervention compared with face-to-face PROGROUP and with usual care?
7. What are the potential travel savings to participants from online attendance and the distribution of these savings by socio-economic status and ethnicity?

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 31/03/2026, West of Scotland REC 3 (West of Scotland Research Ethics Service Admin Building, Level 2, Gartnavel Royal Hospital, 1055 Great Western Road, Glasgow, G12 0XH, United Kingdom; -; ggc.WoSREC3@nhs.scot), ref: 26/WS/0042

Primary study design
Interventional

Allocation
Non-randomized controlled trial

Masking
Open (masking not used)

Control
Uncontrolled

Assignment
Single

Purpose
Treatment

Study type(s)
Treatment

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Obesity and other hyperalimentation

Interventions

Within this study we will include three types of participant:
1. 60 patients who choose to attend the PROGROUP-online programme
2. 20 patients who choose not to attend the online programme
3. Staff who deliver or manage PROGROUP-online

1. Patients in PROGROUP-Online will complete a questionnaire upon consent, will attend 5 months of the programme* delivered by local healthcare staff, will complete short feedback at each online session, will complete a short questionnaire at 3 months, and will complete a final 6-month questionnaire, and all will be offered the opportunity to participate in a qualitative interview about their choice and experience. A subset of up to 20 patients will participate in a photovoice exercise to photograph and describe their thoughts about foods and settings.
2. Patients who choose not to attend the programme will complete one questionnaire at consent and one 6 months later. They will be offered the opportunity to participate in a qualitative interview about their choice and experience.
3. Healthcare staff who deliver or manage the PROGROUP-online programme will be offered a qualitative interview to discuss their experiences.

*The programme offers 12 online group sessions, each of 1-2 hours, plus three one-to-one (30-minute) appointments with the healthcare staff.

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
Feasibility of delivering the PROGROUP-online intervention, assessed using:
1. Recruitment rate (number of participants enrolled over the recruitment period)
2. Intervention uptake (proportion of eligible patients consenting to participate)
3. Attendance (proportion of scheduled sessions attended by participants)
4. Programme completion rate (proportion of participants completing the intervention)
Time frame: recruitment period (4 months) and intervention period (5 months)

Key secondary outcome(s)
1. Acceptability of the PROGROUP-online intervention, assessed using qualitative interviews with participants and healthcare professionals exploring experiences of participation and delivery. Time frame: during and immediately after the intervention period (5 months)
2. Fidelity of intervention delivery, assessed through process evaluation methods, including review of intervention delivery against the planned protocol. Time frame: throughout the intervention period (5 months)
3. Patient preferences for PROGROUP-online, including factors influencing participation or non-participation, assessed using:
3.1. Qualitative data from participants and non-participants
3.2. Brief demographic and preference data from those declining participation
Time frame: recruitment period and early intervention phase
4. Health economic outcomes, including:
4.1. Cost of delivering the PROGROUP-online intervention
4.2. Comparison with usual care
Time frame: during intervention delivery and analysis phase
5. Travel-related outcomes: estimated travel time and cost savings for participants receiving PROGROUP-online compared to in-person care. Time frame: during intervention period.
6. Intervention engagement metrics, including:
6.1. Session attendance rates

6.2. Retention throughout the programme
Time frame: during intervention period (5 months)

Completion date
31/05/2027

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Newly referred patients meeting standard criteria for specialist weight management referral (BMI >40 kg/m2, or >35 kg/m2 with comorbidity, and adjusted for ethnicity) will be invited to participate in the study.
2. Patients must satisfy all of the following criteria to be enrolled in the study:
2.1. Registered with the participating NHS site
2.2. Aged >=18 years
2.3. Willing to have weight measured on two occasions (at consent and 6 months)
2.4. Considered suitable for group-based care
2.5. Have the capacity to consent

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Mixed

Lower age limit
18 Years

Upper age limit
85 Years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
0

Key exclusion criteria
1. Aged under 18 years
2. Currently engaged in any other weight management trial
3. Unwilling or unable to attend the intervention/UC appointments
4. Intending to relocate outside the geographical region during the trial period
5. Participants who have significant difficulties in adequate understanding of English or a sensory impairment, such that they are unable to sufficiently understand/access the trial documentation or engage in intervention/UC appointments, in the absence of a local provision of translated materials or communication aids.

Date of first enrolment
01/06/2026

Date of final enrolment
30/09/2026

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust
Walsgrave General Hospital
Clifford Bridge Road
Coventry
England
CV2 2DX

Study participating centre
South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
Trust Headquarters
Fieldhead Hospital
Ouchthorpe Lane
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WF1 3SP

Sponsor information

Organisation
Devon Partnership NHS Trust

ROR
https://ror.org/04fkxrb51

Funder(s)

Funder type
Government

Funder Name
National Institute for Health and Care 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
After the study has been reported, the individual participant data that underlie the results will be available on request from the CI and Sponsor, along with supplementary files as required (e.g., data dictionaries, blank data collection forms, thematic coding structure etc). Data will be shared with (or access to the data will be provided to) requestors whose proposed use of the data has been approved by the CI and Sponsor, under an appropriate data sharing agreement. It will not be possible to identify participants personally from any information shared.

IPD sharing plan summary
Available on request