

Is Slimming World on Referral an effective option to help people with learning difficulties manage their weight?

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1 Background

Slimming World on Referral¹ is a subsidised partnership scheme enabling primary care to refer patients to a local Slimming World group for weekly weight management at no cost to the patient.

By early 2008, over 40 schemes have been set up, mainly for people with general medical conditions associated with obesity.

Obesity levels are greater in adults with learning difficulties than the general population and contribute to reduced life expectancy and increased health needs².

In 2007, Berkshire East PCT & Slimming World trialled the use of Slimming World on Referral specifically for people with learning difficulties.

2 Methods

20 adults with learning difficulties were referred to a specially set up Slimming World group and given the opportunity to attend free of charge for 24 weeks. The group was run by a local Slimming World Consultant with support from the PCT's learning difficulties team. A simplified version of Slimming World's healthy eating plan was promoted. Visuals were used to encourage the intake of low energy dense foods and healthier meal options.



3 Results

Table 1 – Average attendance and weight change of members

	Average	Range
Attendance (weeks)	19	12 to 24
BMI change (kg/m ²)	-1.6	1.5 to -3.7
Weight change (kg)	-4.2	4.3 to -11.1
Percentage weight change (%)	-4.4	3.7 to -11.4
Number achieving 5% weight loss	11/20 (55%)	

12 (60%) members attended at least 20 of the 24 sessions and data improved further (all p-values = 0.002.): mean BMI change -1.9kg/m² (+1.3 to -3.7), weight change -5.4kg (+3.4 to -11.1kg), percent weight change -5.8% (+3.4 to -11.4).

4 Conclusions

Slimming World on Referral offers a feasible option to help adults with learning difficulties manage their weight.

1. Lavin JH. *et al.* (2006) Feasibility and benefits of implementing a Slimming on Referral service in primary care using a commercial weight management partner. *Public Health* **120**, 872-881

2. Royal College of Nursing (2006). Meeting the health needs of people with learning disabilities – Guidance for nursing staff. Royal College of Nursing, London.