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Participant information sheet for interviews

You are being invited to take part in an interview as part of a **rapid evaluation of referrals to the NHS Digital Weight Management Programme** for musculoskeletal and perioperative elective surgical care patients being conducted by BRACE. Before you decide if you are willing to be interviewed it is important for you to understand why the evaluation is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the purpose of this evaluation?

NHS England has created a Digital Weight Management Programme, which is routinely used for patients living with obesity (a BMI of 30 or above, adjusted for ethnicity) with high blood pressure and/or diabetes. NHS England is piloting two new referral pathways into the Digital Weight Management Programme: one for patients living with obesity with hip and/or knee osteoarthritis (the musculoskeletal pathway) and one for patients waiting for four types of elective surgeries – hernia repair, hysterectomy, hip/knee replacement, or gallbladder removal - (the elective surgical care pathway).

There is a large range in the numbers of referrals coming from the different pilot sites and NHS England would like to understand why that might be. The findings of this study will help NHS England better understand how to support sites with low referral rates to increase the number of referrals they make, support new sites wanting to use these pathways, and provide learning about the development of future referral pathways into the Digital Weight Management Programme. The evaluation will consist of five main activities: (1) analysis of referral data; (2) interviews with patients; (3) interviews with healthcare professionals and stakeholders; (4) mapping of the referral pathways; (5) two online workshops - one for each pathway (musculoskeletal or elective surgical care). This information sheet refers to activity 2.

What would taking part in this evaluation involve?

We are inviting you to take part in an interview for this evaluation as a patient who was offered a referral into the Digital Weight Management Programme via either the musculoskeletal or elective surgery pathways. We would like to speak to patients who accepted the referral (it does not matter if you have started, are in the middle of, or have completed the programme) and also patients who declined the referral.

If you decide to take part in an interview, a member of the research team will send you a consent form to complete and will arrange a convenient time to speak to you. The interview will be conducted either by telephone or via an online platform (Zoom or Microsoft Teams) according to your preference and is expected to last 30-45 minutes.

During the interview, the researcher will ask you about your experience of being offered a referral to the Digital Weight Management Programme, including how you were told about the programme, why you decided to accept or decline the referral, and the processes involved in being referred. If

there are any issues that you do not want to talk about, you do not have to, we will move on to the next question. We will also encourage you to discuss other issues that you think are important but may not be directly covered by our questions. Information from the interview will not be shared with your healthcare team.

Do I have to take part?

No, it is your choice whether to participate or not. You can also withdraw from the project even after you have agreed to take part in the interview without giving a reason. You can withdraw up to two weeks after you have participated in an interview. There are no consequences for withdrawing. If you do decide to withdraw, your data will be destroyed and will not be used in analysis or reporting. The reason for the two-week deadline is a practical one. The rapid nature of the evaluation means that data will be anonymised, processed and analysed quickly and once this has occurred it will not be possible to separate out your data from others for it to be destroyed. Please contact a member of the team if you do want to withdraw. Our researchers are happy to discuss any concerns you might have before, during or after the interview to ensure that you are comfortable with the way that we will use and report the comments you make.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

Your participation consists of an interview discussion about your experiences of the referral process to the Digital Weight Management Programme. Whilst the focus of the interview is about the processes of being referred, we appreciate that conversations around weight management and wider health issues can be sensitive. You are free to stop the interview or take a break at any point, and in such cases you will have the opportunity to talk further about the issue in a debrief with a senior researcher if you would like to. In the unlikely event that the interview deals with sensitive or distressing issues, we have provided a list of places you can seek free support at the end of this information sheet.

What will happen to the results of the study and how will I know of them?

We will produce a report about the research, to be published by the National Institute of Health and Care Research Journals Library. We expect to present findings of the research at conferences, seminars or other similar events. We will also publish our findings on the BRACE website, in blog posts and journal papers. If you would like to see a copy of the final report please indicate this on your consent form and we will send you a link to it once it is published.

How will the information that I share be used and kept confidentially?

We will ask your permission to digitally record the interview. Recording ensures that we capture your comments and perspectives accurately. The interview will then be typed up in full. Everything that you say will be treated confidentially and will only be seen by members of the research team. To help people understand our findings and ensure that patient voices are heard, we may use things that you have said in interview in our reports and other outputs from the evaluation, but we will not use your name or mention any details by which you could be identified. The information you provide in the interview will have no effect on the healthcare treatment you are provided.

Data will be stored securely and managed in accordance with the UK Data Protection Act (2018) and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018 and in accordance with the University of Birmingham's policies for data storage and management. Identifiable data (your name and contact details) may be stored at either the University of Birmingham or RAND Europe. All data will be stored on password-protected computers and servers and will only be accessible to members of the research team. Your details will not be passed on to anyone outside the research team. Data will be stored for a period of 10 years in line with the [University of Birmingham's Research Data Management Policy](#), after which it will be destroyed. You can find out more about how we store,

process and manage your personal data at

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/libraryservices/library/research/rdm/Policies/Research-Data-Management-Policy.aspx>

Who has reviewed this work?

The evaluation has been reviewed by the University of Birmingham Life and Health Sciences Ethical Review Committee, University of Birmingham (Approval number: ERN_24-0037).

Who is funding and organising this evaluation?

As part of its portfolio of work, the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) has funded the Birmingham RAND and Cambridge (BRACE) rapid evaluation centre to undertake a study of the patient referral pathways to the NHS Digital Weight Management Programme for musculoskeletal (MSK) patients and perioperative elective surgery patients.

The study is led by Professor Justin Waring (University of Birmingham) and Jon Sussex (RAND Europe). The University of Birmingham is the sponsor for the project. More information on the BRACE Centre can be found here: <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/brace/index.aspx>.

Who do I contact if I want to make a complaint?

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research or the way in which you have been treated, or would like to talk to someone from the University of Birmingham outside the immediate evaluation team, please contact:

Dr Manbinder Sidhu: m.s.sidhu@bham.ac.uk

Associate Professor at the Health Services Management Centre and Deputy Director of the NIHR BRACE Rapid Evaluation Centre

Support information

If you feel that you need medical and mental health support following this interview, here is a list of some organisations which can offer this help for free:

Call NHS on 111: If you urgently need medical help or advice but it is not a life-threatening situation. It is free to call. This includes mental health support needs.

Call Ambulance on 999: If you have urgent health or mental health needs please call the ambulance.

Contact your GP: If you have non-urgent concerns about your physical or mental health or wish to discuss your health conditions.

Contact Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS): Offers confidential advice, support and information on health-related matters. You can find your local PALS office online at <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/other-health-services/patient-advice-and-liaison-services-pals> or by telephoning 111.

Call Samaritans on 116 223: If you are thinking about ending your life or are concerned about someone who may be, you can call for help any time of day or night. It's a free call.

Arthritis Action: UK charity that gives hands-on, practical help to improve the quality of life of people affected by arthritis. Phone: 020 3781 7120. Website: <https://www.arthritisaction.org.uk/>

Mind: Promotes the views and needs of people with mental health problems. Phone: 0300 123 3393 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm) Website: www.mind.org.uk

The Silver Line: A free 24hr telephone service for people aged 55+ run by Age UK offering support, friendship and conversation. Phone: 0800 4 70 80 90. <https://www.thesilverline.org.uk/>