Author's response to reviews

Title: Do weight management programmes delivered at professional football clubs attract and engage high risk men? A mixed-methods study

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Response to reviewers’ comments

Thank you for forwarding your reviewers’ comments. We were pleased to see that they requested no or only minor changes. We have also taken the opportunity to make some very minor edits to the paper (e.g. typos, minor editorial changes to introduction). We provide our point by point response to the referees’ comments below. All changes to the manuscript are marked in tracked changes in the resubmitted paper. We hope that you will now judge the paper to be acceptable for publication.

Reviewer 1: Andy Pringle

We thank this reviewer for taking the time to provide a detailed and thoughtful commentary on the paper.

We were very pleased to read his positive remarks and note that he requested no revisions to the paper.

Reviewer 2: Emma George

Minor essential revisions

- Background (paragraph 3). The authors briefly describe the FFIT program, explaining that community coaches were trained in diet, nutrition, physical activity and behaviour change techniques to a standard protocol. Are the authors able to provide some information on the standard protocol?

We have included some information on the coach training on page 5 and referred the reader to a published paper on the FFIT programme development which includes more detail. Specifically, we have added:

“This training included discussion of SMART goal setting and implementing the pedometer-based walking programme. Training was interactive and designed to promote the principles of adult learning and the use of banter in the group sessions to make men feel more comfortable about raising sensitive issues. Coaches shared ideas about suitable in-stadia physical activities which could be adapted to different levels of fitness.”

- Results (paragraph 5). Given that physical activity was one of the program components (reference 36) and that sports such as football involve and promote physical activity, were participants’ perceptions of physical activity explored in relation to their involvement in or attraction to the FFIT program? If so, please provide results related to physical activity.
In discussing the ‘push’ factors that drew them to FFIT, men did talk about wanting to be fitter, but in the context of concerns such as their future health and weight, and being ‘there’ and fit enough for their families in the future. However, in this context with this group of overweight and obese men, our analysis did not identify specific physical activity motivations for participation and we have not commented further on this point in the manuscript.

Like the referee, we think this is very interesting and we are further exploring men’s views of their involvement in FFIT in other papers based on our process evaluation as part of the RCT of the effectiveness of FFIT in helping men lose weight. Certainly for some men, increasing their physical activity both during and between FFIT sessions (often from a high level of inactivity when they first join the programme) is something which they say motivates them to continue and contributes to their increased well-being and self-esteem.

- **Results (paragraph 6 and 7).** The inclusion of quotes throughout the results section really illustrates participants’ perceptions of, and involvement in the program. In some instances, however, the authors refer to an extract in a table rather than including a direct quote. For consistency, are there any quotes that can be included in the text in these instances?

We think this is an editorial decision. We feel that the presentation of these extracts within the boxes nicely illustrates the points made in the text without disrupting the flow of the text. However, we would be very happy to insert each quote into the text as suggested if the editors would like us to make this change.

- **Discussion (Overall).** It seems that the “pull” factor of being involved in a program run at their chosen football club was a major incentive for many participants who joined the FFIT program. As men are often underrepresented in weight loss programs, the authors may wish to consider providing greater discussion on the potential of football clubs, in terms of recruiting male participants to weight loss programs and the implications for future studies targeting male participants.

At the end of the first paragraph in the discussion, on page 16, we have added text to underline the potential of football clubs in attracting men to weight loss and other health-related initiatives. Specifically, we have added:

> “and thus adds further evidence of the potential of the professional football club setting for attracting men to health-related initiatives, including weight management.”

**Discretionary revisions**

- **Results (paragraph 1).** A brief introductory section explaining how the results will be presented would be beneficial.

We have added an introductory paragraph to the results page 16. Specifically, we have added:

> “We first describe the characteristics of men who enrolled for FFIT and their risk of future disease (on the basis of their weight and body compositional measures) in comparison with Scottish men of the same age. We then present qualitative data to show what attracted men to the FFIT programme, focusing both on ‘push’ factors
(such as growing health concerns, wanting to lose weight to ‘be there’ for their family in the future) and ‘pull’ factors, specifically the attraction or ‘draw’ of the football club setting.”

- **Background (paragraph 2).** NHS to be written in full in first instance (Minor issues not for publication).
- **Results (paragraph 6).** In the sentence beginning with “Indeed many man” – “man” to be replaced with “men” (Minor issues not for publication).

We have corrected the typo and spelt out NHS in full.

- **Discussion (paragraph 3).** Can the authors please provide a brief explanation of what is meant by the term “masculine capital”?

We have added a brief explanation of ‘masculine capital on page 18.