

HIPS/22/10 - Assessing The Implementation Of The Public Health Scotland Physical Activity Referral Standards: A Process Evaluation.

Physical inactivity is a major public health problem and increasing population physical activity levels is a Scottish Government priority. In Scotland, 49% of men and 58% of women are not active enough to benefit their health, increasing their risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and some cancers. One approach to address this is the provision of physical activity referral schemes (PARS). These are widely available across Scotland and involve healthcare professionals referring patients with a range of health conditions to leisure providers. Schemes include supervised physical activity programmes after an individual assessment and are usually 10-16 weeks long. PARS are effective in increasing activity for older people and those with cardiovascular risk factors, but it is unclear what PARS delivery models work best for other health conditions (for example, a scheme for heart health may require a different approach to one for mental health). To help guide practice, Public Health Scotland published National Physical Activity Referral Standards in February 2022. These have six elements: partnership working, local delivery models, learning and workforce development, data systems; monitoring and evaluation; and sharing learning and good practice. In this project, we will evaluate the implementation of the Standards and assess whether the monitoring data suggested by the Standards is suitable for a future evaluation of PARS effectiveness and cost effectiveness. This will be followed by a National Institute for Health and Care Research grant application for a national evaluation of PARS effectiveness to increase understanding of what works best and for whom.