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FRESH - Facilitating Return to work through Early Specialist Health-based interventions

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September 2014 NEWSLETTER

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/go/fresh>

What is Fresh? otherwise known as 'Working after Brain Injury' FRESH is a feasibility randomised control trial designed to test whether a method of supporting people who've had a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) to return to work that was developed and works well in Nottingham can be delivered in three other NHS trauma centres (Preston, London and Leeds). We want to know if it's possible to train therapists in other centres to deliver it and whether patients are willing to be randomised to receive it and whether we can measure the effects and cost effectiveness of this support compared to usual NHS rehabilitation.

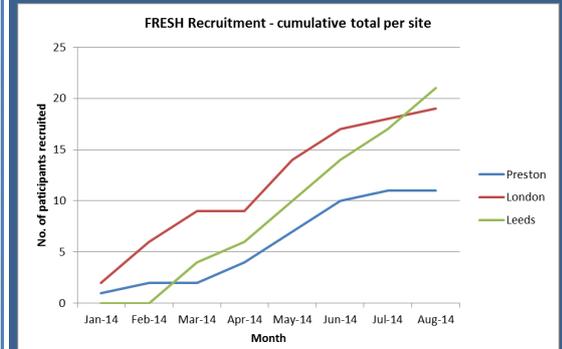
Project Updates;

We hope everyone has made the most of the sunshine, found time for a summer break and returns re-FRESHed?

Great news from the NIHR HTA – who have granted an unfunded extension to the project, enabling us to extend recruitment until 31st December 2014. As you can see recruitment has dropped off slightly in two centres during July and August. **Please can we make a final push for target?** We really appreciate your ongoing support with this and are relying on you to plough your time and effort into recruiting as many people as possible in the last four months.

Recruitment : Total number of participants recruited as at 1st Sept n=51

- Leeds 21
- London 19
- Preston 11



A day in the life of a FRESH Therapist **Suzanne Henshall**, Senior Occupational Therapist, Leeds Community Neurology Team

Q – What is your role in the FRESH project? I see participants who have recruited to the trial by my colleague Lindsay Howard and randomised to receive the Early Specialist TBI Vocational Rehabilitation (ESTVR) intervention.

Q – How did you come to be involved? I was keen to be involved in FRESH as it puts service users at the heart of their treatment, picking them up early and working towards their goal of returning to work/education. The intervention being pioneered optimises the skills of a neuro OT - as instrumental to an individual's recovery. I was aware of Julie Phillips' earlier work through her BJOT articles, so to be involved in practice is a great opportunity. I strongly believe in the role of OT in vocational rehabilitation and hope this feasibility trial facilitates further work across the UK. Despite fitting well with my usual role, I am learning new skills, knowledge and interventions through the helpful training, guidance and support of the FRESH mentors, Julie Phillips and Jain Homes. This has been particularly rewarding. They have been great in sharing their TBI and VR specialist knowledge and expertise.

Q – What does a typical day as a FRESH therapist involve? I start with a review of my caseload, planned visits and telephone calls. This helps me prioritise and ensures I provide timely interventions. Next I respond to any new notifications of clients randomised into the study so that I can book the next available slot in my diary - ensuring 'early intervention'. The clients are at different stages in their recovery and return to work, so my day is varied. Interventions range from telephone reviews, functional preparatory work, education with a client (and family members) at home, to liaising with/meeting employers. It's fair to say my FRESH days are diverse and draw on all my skills as an experienced neuro OT. This is what I love!

Q – What are the main challenges (this role poses) for you? Some very complex but interesting cases have tested my engagement skills! Creative problem solving and my FRESH manual are my new best friends. Also, I was initially phased by venturing further than Leeds (FRESH participants can live up to an hours' drive), developing awareness of local services and working creatively to meet the client's needs.

Q- What advice would you give other therapists considering getting involved in research? Get involved! I was looking for a challenge, am loving the work and learning every day. It's keeping me 'fresh' as an OT clinician, benefitting me, my service, and the service users.

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