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

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<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 an early job retention intervention for supporting people with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) to return to work that was developed in Nottingham, can be delivered in three new NHS trauma centres (Preston, London and Leeds) and whether we can measure the effects and cost effectiveness of this intervention compared to usual NHS rehabilitation. The findings will inform the design of a definitive trial.

FRESH study progress;

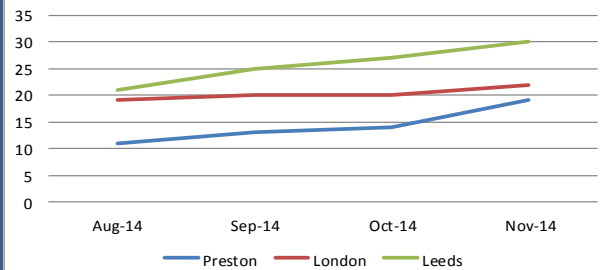
Recruitment: We are nearly there! Although we will fall short of our 102 target, each centre has pulled out the stops and achieved the per month target at some point during the course of recruitment showing that it can be done. We have learned a lot about feasibility, which will inform the design of a larger study. Well done everyone! Thank you for your patience and perseverance in working with us to achieve this.

Total number of participants recruited as of 30 Nov n = 71 (Preston = 19, London = 22, Leeds = 30)

Over the coming year we continue to follow up participants (patients and carers) at 3, 6 and 12 month periods to understand the issues in measuring outcomes.

Meanwhile the process evaluation to understand the issues in running the trial and delivering the intervention continues.

FRESH Recruitment - cumulative total per site



Under the spot-light Ruth Tyerman FRESH Mentor

Vocational Rehabilitation expert and Senior Occupational Therapist at The Community Head Injury Service in Aylesbury.

What is your role in the FRESH project? I am one of four FRESH mentors and mentor one of the London therapists. I was also involved in developing and delivering the training for the FRESH therapists.

How did you come to be involved? I work for The Community Head Injury Service in Aylesbury and am team lead for the 'Working Out' Brain Injury Vocational Rehabilitation Programme. Andy Tyerman, Consultant Clinical Neuropsychologist and Head of Service was involved in the early discussions for this study. We very much wanted to be involved but as we already have an established vocational service that both supports people back to their existing job and also works with people to explore new/alternative vocational opportunities, it was felt best to do this by supporting the therapists working in the different recruiting sites.

What does being a FRESH mentor involve? I initially met the therapists who would be carrying out the early specialist TBI vocational rehabilitation (ESTVR) interventions at the 2 day training event and subsequent study days in Nottingham. My role is to support the therapist with the study participants. So far this has involved:

Detailed discussions about individual cases, their ongoing rehabilitation needs and linking this with the process of returning to work; broader discussions about the return to work process e.g. benefits, consent; trouble shooting discussions around problem situations; use of FRESH paperwork and general support. To date we have done this using telephone sessions (agreed in advance) and face to face meetings and once we had a joint mentoring session with the other London based therapist. We have also had e-mail contact and have an understanding that I can be contacted at any time to discuss issues that arise.

What are the main challenges (this role poses) for you? The role poses challenges but these are also opportunities. The process has reinforced my view that there is something to learn from every situation. Some challenges for mentors now and in the future include: Training and support needs vary as therapists on the project come with different experience in vocational rehab and work in a mixture of acute/community settings. This has implications for time commitment; not always easy for therapists to embrace different approaches; Therapists are sometimes out of their comfort zone e.g. meeting/negotiating with employers, engaging participants in need of OT support in work; building therapist's confidence in a new area of work; protecting time for mentoring and being available at short notice; gauging levels of support required to mentors capacity.

What advice would you give future mentors considering getting involved in research? It is very positive to be involved in research that you know is valuable. Supporting people back to their jobs with the right input works! Most definitely get involved, there is so much to learn and share to promote the role of OT in vocational rehabilitation.

Trial Manager: Denise Forshaw
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Merry Christmas & A Happy New Year

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