

# VOLUNTEERS AS LIFESTYLE COACHES IN A CLINICAL TRIAL - EXPERIENCES FROM BREAST CANCER NOW ON THE ACTWELL TRIAL

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## BACKGROUND

Most breast cancers occur in women over the age of 50. ActWELL was a randomised controlled trial that aimed to lower breast cancer risk by supporting women, of breast screening age, to make sustainable lifestyle changes (physical activity, diet and bodyweight) over 12 months. It was believed that partnerships with a health charity could potentially increase reach into local communities.

At least 23% of breast cancer cases in the UK could be preventable through making lifestyle changes.

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

Breast Cancer Now (BCN) recruited, managed, and co-ordinated a team of **volunteer lifestyle coaches**. Volunteers received training in the ActWELL intervention from the Research Team and BCN. The intervention was delivered in person at local leisure centres.

### ACTWELL TRIAL DELIVERY



Images courtesy of ActWELL

## FINDINGS



## APPLICANTS' BACKGROUNDS

- UNIVERSITY-STUDENT PUBLIC-HEALTH PROJECT-MANAGER EXERCISE-COACHING PHYSICAL-ACTIVITY CARER
- TEACHER VOLUNTEER COUNSELLING MOVE-MORE CHARITY-WORK MENTOR
- SUPPORT-WORKER MEDICAL RETIRED EDUCATION
- NUTRITION WALK-LEADER COUNSELLOR BEHAVIOUR-CHANGE FITNESS-INSTRUCTOR
- GP HEALTH PSYCHOLOGIST NURSE HEALTH PROMOTION

96% were female  
 79% were aged 35 or over  
 89% identified as White British

## APPLICANTS' MOTIVATIONS

- Raise awareness
- Share skills and experience
- Support others
- Interest in healthy lifestyles
- Contribute to research
- Give something back
- Personal experience of breast cancer

## VOLUNTEER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 623 coaching sessions delivered
- 1,915 support telephone calls made
- On average each volunteer supported 7 participants
- 85% gained new skills or built on existing skills
- 100% enjoyed the role and felt valued
- 82% were more conscious of their own lifestyle habits

### KEY LEARNING POINTS

There was a great deal of interest in this demanding role, particularly from women over the age of 35.

The role attracted volunteers with the appropriate skills and experience.

The volunteers were committed to see the trial through to completion.

## CONCLUSION

Breast Cancer Now's involvement in ActWELL demonstrates it is possible to recruit, train and deploy volunteer lifestyle coaches to deliver a weight management intervention in a community setting. Overall, this highlights the potential to address gaps in current public health efforts.

