

PRESS RELEASE

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WEIGHT LOSS TRIAL PAYS YOU TO SUCCEED

HUNDREDS of volunteers are being sought by NHS Eastern and Coastal Kent to take part in a trial which will pay them cash if they lose weight.

Run in conjunction with specialists Weight Wins, the Pounds for Pounds trial has just been launched and will continue throughout 2009.

300 men and women are being urged to sign up and set their personal weight loss targets to earn rewards from £70 to £425. The size of reward grows as targets become more challenging.

This is the first public trial by the NHS of a weight loss incentive scheme. More than 150 people in the UK have already tried out the idea and the financial incentives helped them to lose significant amounts of weight and maintain the loss, say Weight Wins.

The January start for the trial was chosen as many people consider losing weight after the excesses of Christmas and New Year celebrations.

Claire Martin, public health specialist for the NHS in east Kent, said: "Achieving a healthier weight and encouraging people to choose a healthier lifestyle are major issues for the health service.

"This scheme will be ideal for people who have tried to lose weight before but have found it difficult to make progress.

"We hope this trial will help establish whether financial incentives can motivate people to shed the pounds – and keep them off. This is their chance to be one of the first and make the east Kent wide programme a success.

"In an earlier trial, this scheme particularly appealed to men who are usually less keen to join weight loss groups."

The way the scheme works is very simple. Once you have registered online on the trial's website, you will be given a personal incentive plan with monthly targets, tips to help you lose weight, and directions to local services.

If you want to learn more about taking part in the trial, please visit the website at www.nhsweightlosstrial.com or call the trial help line on 0800 849 4000.

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Issued on behalf of NHS Eastern and Coastal Kent

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Notes for editors: NHS Eastern and Coastal Kent has an annual budget of more than £1 billion and spends £200 million of that on issues related to encouraging weight loss and healthier lifestyle choices.

The annual cost to the NHS in east Kent of treating diseases related to overweight and obesity is £200 million. These diseases include Type 2 diabetes, heart disease and cancer. 24% of adults in east Kent are obese.

The national cost to the NHS of overweight and obesity is £4 billion. The Department of Health's 'Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives' strategy (January 2008) calls for "piloting and evaluating a range of different approaches to using personal financial incentives to encourage healthy living, such as losing weight and sustaining weight loss."

The Pounds for Pounds programme conforms to the NICE Obesity Guidelines of Best Practice (December 2006, 1.1.7.1) for self-help, commercial and community programmes. The programme rewards gradual safe rates of weight loss, a balanced diet and lifestyle and is focused on long-term weight control.

Individuals may pick the plan targets that most suit their situation. Examples of plans are:

Lose 15lbs weight – receive £70

Lose 30lbs weight and keep it off for six months – receive £160

Lose 50lbs weight and keep it off for six months – receive £425

Participants may choose to receive their earnings in cash or vouchers for holidays and shopping.

Eligibility. Any resident of east Kent who is overweight and would not be at risk from losing weight is eligible for the free trial. Participants may not be pregnant or have an eating disorder. Applicants under 21 or over 65, nursing a baby, or with certain medical conditions such as diabetes must obtain their doctor's permission.

Based in London, Weight Wins creates weight loss incentive programmes for organisations such as the NHS, weight loss and patient groups, health insurers, fitness clubs and corporate employers. It has pioneered the concept of 'weight contracts,' which reward participants with cash and vouchers as they achieve their weight loss goals.