

A qualitative exploration of the barriers to healthy physical activity and diet in young adults with intellectual disabilities transitioning to adulthood



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1. Background

- Obesity is associated with poor health outcomes, including increased all-cause mortality^[1, 2]
- The prevalence of obesity is significantly higher in adults with intellectual disabilities (ID) than the general population^[3, 4]
- Adults with ID are more likely to have poor lifestyle behaviours associated with obesity^[5]
- They lead less physically active and more sedentary lifestyles than the general population and most do not meet the recommended amounts of physical activity^[4-6]
- School structure and social connectedness facilitate increased PA and healthier diet, whilst home life and a lack of social connectedness serve as barriers^[7]
- Transition period between adolescence and adulthood is risk period for weight gain in general population^[8]

2. Study aims

- To explore participants' perceptions of factors influencing their physical activity engagement and diet 12 months post-transition from school
- To follow-up participants' experiences from final year of school to 12 months post-transition from school

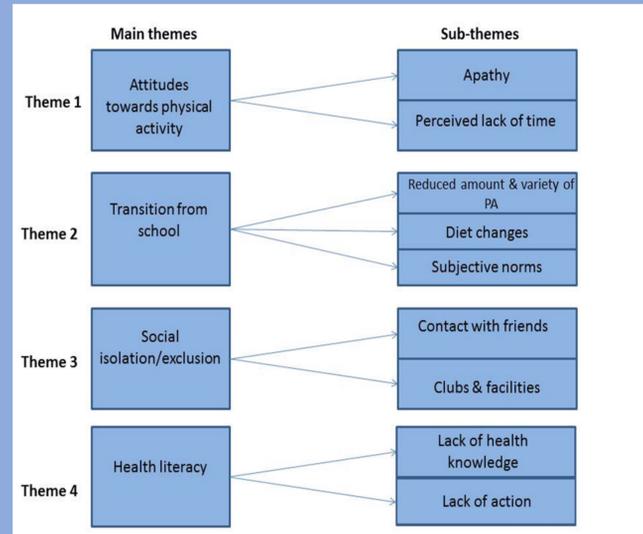
3. Method

- Study forms part of wider mixed-method longitudinal feasibility study
- Qualitative data collected over two time points: baseline (during final year of school) and 12 months post leaving school
- Data generated from 11 semi-structured interviews with young adults with mild-moderate ID
- Participants consisted of nine males and two females, aged between 18-19 years old
- Participants were recruited from four additional support need schools in Greater Glasgow and South Lanarkshire, Scotland
- Activity and food cards were used to stimulate conversation around PA and diet^[9]
- Data analysed using an inductive thematic analysis

4. Findings

- Post-transition from school, young adults' attitudes, physical and social environment play a key role in influencing PA and dietary habits
- Four themes and nine sub-themes emerged from analysis (see Figures 1 & 2)

Figure 1 – Themes identified



5. Conclusions

- Transition from school fosters changes to participants' lifestyle behaviours relating to obesity
- Apathy for PA, a perceived lack of time, increased time spent at home, social exclusion and a lack of health knowledge all serve as barriers to healthy physical activity and diet in this population
- Opportunities to participate in PA drastically decrease, and in most cases cease, after leaving school
- Leaving the structured environment of school presents as a key risk period for lifestyle behaviour change associated with weight gain
- Interventions focused on preventing the development of obesity in this population should target this transition period

Figure 2 – Example quotes



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