

Capturing all voices in school-based mental health & obesity prevention research

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AIMS & RESEARCH QUESTION(S)

This research aims to explore young people's participation in **mental health and obesity** research conducted in **mainstream secondary schools** in England.

Research question(s):

1. What are the key barriers and facilitators to young people's participation?
2. Who are we currently missing? Why?
3. How can we recruit a diverse range of young people?

IMPACT

Its important conclusions about effectiveness and health knowledge are based on everyone.

Understanding the views and experiences of young people, schools and parents will help inform future, inclusive, recruitment strategies.

By building strong representation and diversity within prevention research samples, we can work towards a healthier future for all.

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

RATIONALE

Mental health and obesity are two key health priorities for children and young people:

With 1/4 young people classified as obese (age 11), and 1/5 with a probable mental disorder (age 11-16).

Schools are a valuable setting to implement and research public health initiatives. However, recruitment of students into research projects can be complex and challenging.

Reaching *all* students to participate has also been identified as a further challenge, with growing concern that some groups may be systematically underrepresented within preventative research (including those with a lower health status).

Through public involvement and engagement activities I will carefully develop a knowledge exchange plan and materials.

This will help establish the preferred form of sharing information with young people, clinicians and educational professionals, alongside their research priorities. Likely formats may include infographics, short videos, and attendance of school assemblies.

Additional academic outputs will include publication of key findings in open-access, peer reviewed journals.

METHODS

Mixed-methods will be used to answer the research questions described above.

2 IDENTIFY

A **systematic search** of the NIHR Journals Library within the last 5 years will be conducted. All obesity and mental health Randomised Control Trials based within mainstream secondary school settings will be identified and included, with key demographic data extracted. A comparison will then be made to population characteristics over the same time period. This will help identify who is currently underrepresented within secondary school-based mental health and obesity trials.

1 SYNTHESISE

This project will **qualitatively synthesise** existing evidence. This will help to bring together what is already known about encouraging/inhibiting young people from participating in school based obesity and mental health research. As parents/school staff are important gatekeepers, their viewpoints (alongside the perspective of young people) will all be included within the review. A secondary aim will be to explore whether barriers/facilitators are different for those from underrepresented groups.

3 EXPLORE

Phase 3 will seek to further explore experiences and feelings about participation in school-based mental health and obesity prevention research through a series of **semi-structured qualitative interviews**. N~12 Educational professionals, and parents/young people from currently under-represented backgrounds will be purposively recruited (N~36 total).

4 CO-PRODUCE

Phase 4 will bring together a panel of students, educational professionals, parents, policy makers & researchers. Using a **delphi** methodology we will work together to co-produce a framework. This will guide inclusive recruitment practices in school-based mental health and obesity prevention research.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT & ENGAGEMENT (PIE)

To watch our young person research advisor information video scan the QR code below

SCAN ME



Young people, educational professionals, youth workers & parents will help shape this research. Purposeful PIE will be embedded throughout the project to improve my research's quality, relevance and reach.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

SCAN ME



NAVIGATING CHALLENGES

I am currently struggling to make some decisions about my research methods and would value some guidance from the SPHR community!

1. Working out 'who we are missing' is a challenging task. I have described one method below. An alternative solution might be to conduct a secondary data analysis using 2 example studies (1x mental health & 1x obesity). Which solution do you think is more appropriate? Do you have any alternative suggestions?
2. Would a recruitment toolkit be more useful to you than a framework?

TRAINING

I will undertake a number specialist methods, public involvement and engagement, and general 'academic skills' training opportunities. These will be scheduled at key points throughout the project.

This will allow me to further build both confidence and capacity to undertake rigorous and high quality public health research.



SPHR community & networks

I look forward to continuing to learn from, and share expertise with, the SPHR Researchers network throughout my future research journey.

I will also engage with the wider academic community through attendance at scientific conferences, seminars and special interest groups. This includes gaining interdisciplinary expertise from those with backgrounds in mental health, epidemiology, obesity, and education.

In addition, I hope to undertake a research placement within either a local authority or policy setting (e.g. the Department for Education). This will help to further translate my research findings and build links with policy makers.