

Young Health Champions: Hearing the Adolescent Voice for Promoting Health and Wellbeing through Peer Mentoring



Lovelock D¹, Bagust L¹, Barker M^{2,3}, Godfrey KM^{2,3,4}, Grace M¹, Griffiths J^{1,5}, Hanson M^{2,4}, Inskip H^{2,3}, Taheem R^{2,6}, Woods-Townsend K^{1,2}

¹Southampton Education School, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Southampton, Southampton, UK, ²NIHR Southampton Biomedical Research Centre, University of Southampton and University Hospital Southampton, NHS Foundation Trust, Southampton, UK, ³MRC Lifecourse Epidemiology Unit, University of Southampton, Southampton UK, ⁴Institute of Developmental Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, University of Southampton, Southampton, UK, ⁵Mathematics and Science Learning Centre, University of Southampton, Southampton, UK, ⁶Southampton City Council, Southampton, UK

Young Health Champions

The Level 2 Award for Young Health Champions (YHC) from the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) is a qualification for young people between the ages of 14-24 who want to both help their peers develop a healthier lifestyle and make their voice heard around health and wellbeing issues.

Introduction

Adolescence is an opportunity to change lifecourse health trajectories, for adolescents now, as future adults and also for their future children. The YHC qualification can play a key role in engaging them with health.

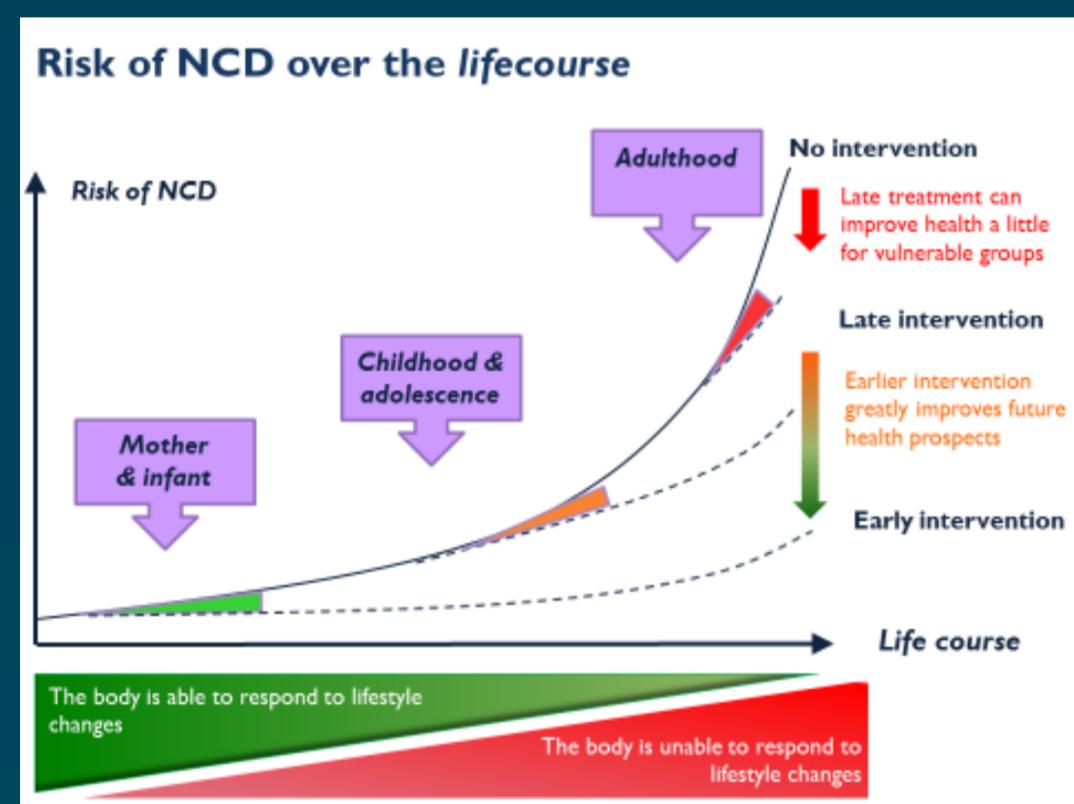


Figure 1: Graph to show lifecourse trajectories

Results

62 students from 8 different schools have been trained as YHCs through LifeLab.

90% of students rated the training as good or very good (55% very good).

97.5% students agreed or strongly agreed that the training gave them the skills to become YHCs.

Students have delivered health campaigns on:

Social media, sleep, sugar reduction, alcohol, mental health and body image via leaflets, posters, videos, school assemblies and displays.



Figure 4: YHC qualification presentations

All students commented that the interactive activities were the most interesting and enjoyable ways of learning;

"I most enjoyed module 1, I thoroughly enjoyed all of the health experiments we did in the Wet Lab."

They have also shown that they recognise the value of peer to peer advice and collaboration with some responding they most enjoyed;

"Learning about how to give advice to people and planning our campaign" and "Working with my friends finding out how to help others."

Discussion

The YHC qualification empowers adolescents to take the lead on health and wellbeing. The next steps are to engage more schools and students with the qualification and increase buy-in from schools to ensure sustainability within the local community and to evaluate the longer term impact of the training.

As a result of the training we have delivered so far LifeLab has been awarded Centre of Excellence status by RSPH.

Acknowledgements for funding

LifeLab is supported by NIHR Southampton Biomedical Research Centre in Nutrition, UoS and University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust and has received research funding from the Wellcome Trust, the MRC, CRUK, RCUK, the BUPA Foundation, Rotary, BHF and Wessex Heartbeat.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank staff and students from Cantell School, Saint George Catholic School, Thornden School, Redbridge School, Woodlands Community College, Oasis Academy Lordshill, Oasis Academy Mayfield and Oasis Academy Sholing and staff at The Saints Foundation for undertaking and supporting the qualification. We would also like to thank No Limits and Solent NHS for supporting with the delivery of the qualification.



Figure 2: YHC training



Figure 3: YHC campaigns and campaign delivery

The YHCs have shown that they understand and value the importance of their own health and their responsibility to act as role models with;

97.5% agreeing or strongly agreeing that it is important to promote healthy lifestyles and behaviours to young people and 97.5% agreeing or strongly agreeing that having a healthy lifestyle now is important for their future.