

Choosing Healthy Eating when Really Young (CHERRY)

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Registration date 07/11/2011	Overall study status Completed	<input type="checkbox"/> Protocol
Last Edited 13/12/2017	Condition category Nutritional, Metabolic, Endocrine	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan
		<input type="checkbox"/> Results
		<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data
		<input type="checkbox"/> Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

Choosing Healthy Eating when Really Young (CHERRY) is a family-centred nutrition intervention which has been delivered in children's centres, aimed at helping young children and their families to eat better. It has been developed by researchers at University College London and the University of Plymouth and is funded by the Food Standards Agency (now part of the Department of Health). The aim is to pilot this intervention in children's centres in rural and urban settings (Cornwall and Islington) to test how well encouraging healthy eating in young children and their families works. It aims to encourage children to eat a wide variety of healthy, nutritious food from an early age. Parents are also encouraged to adopt healthy dietary practices.

Who can participate?

Families with a child aged 18 months to 5 years were able to take part, unless the child was on a special diet, had a serious medical condition or if the parents/carers were not able to speak good English (as the study was done in English). Parental consent was required.

What does the study involve?

The study is a healthy eating initiative for parents with children aged 18 months to 5 years. It is designed to encourage children to eat better, increasing the amount of fruits and vegetables they eat, and reducing the amount of sugary drinks and snacks. There are two groups in the study - an intervention group and a control group. In the intervention group, parents attended the CHERRY project which consisted of four weekly sessions (two hours duration) at the children's centres. The sessions were led by a health trainer and were a mixture of theory (covering topics such as what makes a healthy diet, how to overcome fussy eating and how to shop on a budget), and a practical session, learning how to cook healthy recipes with the children which the participants then got to try. Information, such as the child's dietary habits, was collected at baseline (i.e. before families in the intervention group attended the CHERRY programme) and again six months later. Parents were visited at home (or at the centre if they preferred) at a time that was convenient for them by one of the research team. They were asked to answer some questions about what they and their children eat. All information given is confidential and anonymous. Home visits were followed by three phone calls to find out what their children ate on different days. This is repeated after six months. For the control group, the

data collection was identical to parents from the intervention arm; however they were not invited to take part in the intervention.

What are the possible benefits and risks in taking part?

There is no risk to participants taking part in the study and no side effects. Individuals who are involved do not have to make any special visits to their doctors or the hospital. All parents that take part and complete the data collection at 6 months receive a £10 gift voucher for a shop of their choice, as well as a recipe book of healthy, child-friendly recipes.

Where is the study run from?

The study has been run in 14 Children's Centres across Islington (London) and Cornwall. The centres are Willow, Bemerton, Paradise Park, Conewood Street, Hungerford and Hornsey Road Children's Centres in Islington (London) and St Ives, Lizard, Falmouth, Liskeard, Pondhu, St Just and Pendeen, Torpoint and St Austell Children's Centres in Cornwall. All centres are equal, there is not one lead centre.

When is the study and how long is it expected to run for?

The study started in June 2009 and is planned to be completed by October 2012. The study recruited children's centres and families to take part from July 2010 to Sept 2011.

Who is funding the study?

The study is funded by the Food Standards Agency (now part of the Department of Health).

Who is the main contact?

Professor Richard Watt
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Contact information

Type(s)

Scientific

Contact name

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Contact details

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Additional identifiers

Protocol serial number

N/A

Study information

Scientific Title

Exploratory and developmental trial of a family centred nutrition intervention delivered in children's centres in Islington and Cornwall

Acronym

CHERRy

Study objectives

A poor diet in early childhood can have a significant impact on a child's immediate and longer term health. Most nutrition intervention research has focussed on school-age children, but there is still a lack of evidence in the pre-school age group. It is important to involve parents to improve the diets of the under fives. Children's centres provide an ideal setting and opportunity to promote healthy eating in families. The aim of this study was to develop and pilot a family centred nutrition intervention delivered in children's centres. The Medical Research Council (MRC) framework for evaluating complex interventions was used and a detailed process evaluation undertaken. The study was conducted in two diverse locations: Islington and Cornwall.

Ethics approval required

Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)

Camden and Islington Community Health Service Research Ethics Committee, 26/08/2009, ref: 09/H0722/56

Study design

Multicentre exploratory randomised controlled trial

Primary study design

Interventional

Study type(s)

Prevention

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Nutrition in early years

Interventions

Choosing Healthy Eating when Really Young (CHERRY) is an exploratory randomised controlled trial with the aim of improving the diet of children under 5, attending children's centres in Islington and Cornwall. It is a four week programme with one 2 hour session each week. The sessions are led by a trained health trainer who delivers an hour's theory about food and nutrition for under-fives, followed by an hour's practical cooking session involving the children.

16 children's centres (6 in Islington and 10 in Cornwall) were recruited to the study. In Cornwall, only centres in rural settings were selected to provide a rural/urban comparison. 21 families were recruited from each centre. In July 2009, 7 centres were randomly selected to receive the intervention and 7 to act as controls. A further two were randomised in Cornwall in August 2011. The intervention phase of the trial ran from October 2010 to October 2011.

CHERRY also aims to instigate change in children's centres, improving food provision and policy. Staff training around key aspects of food and nutrition was delivered in intervention centres.

Control centres did not receive any additional support other than what is currently offered by the Local Authority or local NHS organisation, and were asked not to initiate any additional nutrition-based programmes for families.

Participants from both arms are followed up at 6 months.

Intervention Type

Other

Phase

Not Applicable

Primary outcome(s)

Child's fruit and vegetable consumption (portions per day)

Key secondary outcome(s)

1. Child's consumption of soft drinks and sugary snacks (as an indicator of NMES consumption). Parent/guardians' consumption of selected foods and drinks e.g. fruit and vegetables, sugary snacks and drinks
2. Parent/guardians' food knowledge, confidence and self-efficacy
3. Parent/guardians' 'food involvement'
4. Food provision and policy within children's centres

Completion date

31/10/2012

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

1. Child aged 18 months to 5 years
2. Attending children's centres in Cornwall and Islington
3. Full parental consent given

Participant type(s)

Healthy volunteer

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Child

Lower age limit

18 months

Upper age limit

5 years

Sex

All

Key exclusion criteria

1. Child aged under 18 months
2. Child has serious medical condition
3. Child on special diet
4. Parent/guardian unable to speak English

Date of first enrolment

01/07/2010

Date of final enrolment

01/09/2011

Locations**Countries of recruitment**

United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre

University College London

London

United Kingdom

WC1E 7HB

Sponsor information**Organisation**

Department of Health (UK)

Organisation

University College London (UK)

Organisation

Department of Health and Social Care

ROR

<https://ror.org/03sbpja79>

Funder(s)

Funder type

Government

Funder Name

Department of Health (UK)

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary

Not provided at time of registration

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Other publications	methodology	01/04/2014		Yes	No