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Effectiveness of a peer-led, school-based intervention to promote healthy food choices in adolescents

Submission date
08/11/2021

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
01/12/2021

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
19/11/2026

Condition category
Other

[_] Prospectively registered
[_] Protocol
[_] Statistical analysis plan
[X] Results
[_] Individual participant data

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
The transition from childhood to adolescence is recognised as a nutritionally vulnerable time as adolescents begin to become more independent when making their food choices. Evidence highlights that many UK adolescents fail to meet the dietary recommendations, with inadequate consumption of fruit, vegetables and fibre and excessive sugar intakes. Promoting positive dietary choices within this age group is of primary importance to reduce the risk of future ill-health, as poor eating habits established during adolescence tend to track into adulthood. Adolescents spend a significant proportion of their time in school. Therefore, schools are a favourable environment to promote healthy food choices in adolescents as they provide access to a large proportion of this population. The aim of this study is to investigate whether adolescents (aged 11-12 years) can improve their food choices over a period of 12 weeks by taking part in a school-based, peer-led intervention.

Who can participate?
Mixed-gender Year 8 pupils (aged 11-12 years), Year 13 pupils (aged 16-17 years) and school stakeholders in mainstream post-primary schools in Northern Ireland who operate a 'CRBCunningham' Cashless Canteen System.

What does the study involve?
The intervention will run for a period of 12 weeks. Participants are randomly allocated to one of two groups depending on their school.

In the schools allocated to group one (intervention), Year 13 pupils (aged 16-17 years) are recruited as peer leaders to assist in making adaptations to the canteen environment to promote healthy food choices to Year 8 pupils (aged 11-12 years) at lunchtime over a 12-week period. Year 13 pupils (aged 16-17 years) are asked to complete a questionnaire at the beginning of the intervention. The school allocated to group two (control) will continue with their normal canteen routine practices over the 12-week period. In both groups, Year 8 pupils purchasing data records in the canteen at lunchtime are collected at baseline (week 0) and weekly throughout the 12-week intervention and the Year 8 pupils complete a questionnaire at baseline (week 0)

and at the end of the intervention. In the schools allocated to group one, a subsample of Year 8 pupils will participate in focus groups, a subsample of Year 13 pupils will take part in focus groups or interviews and school stakeholders will participate in interviews.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
Benefits if allocated to group one (intervention):
Year 8 pupils have the opportunity to receive regular low-cost rewards throughout the 12-week period and be entered into a draw to receive larger prizes at week 6 and week 12 of the intervention. Year 13 pupils have the opportunity to receive a £20 voucher and a certificate.
Benefits if allocated to group two (control):
Year 8 pupils have the opportunity to be entered into a prize draw to receive larger prizes.
Risks:
There are no direct risks associated with participating in this study.

Where is the study run from?
Ulster University, Coleraine (UK)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
November 2020 to June 2022

Who is funding the study?
Department for the Economy (DfE) and the Generating Excellent Nutrition In UK Schools (GENIUS) Network (UK)

Who is the main contact?
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Additional identifiers

Protocol serial number
REC/21/0051

Study information

Scientific Title
Effectiveness of a peer-led, school-based intervention to promote healthy food choices in adolescents: a pilot feasibility study

Study objectives
Intervention participants will improve their food choices in the school canteen at lunchtime.

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 28/09/2021, Ulster University Research Ethics Committee (Shore Road, Newtownabbey, Country Antrim, BT37 0QB, Northern Ireland; +44 (0)28 9036 6700; researchgovernance@ulster.ac.uk), ref: REC/21/0051

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Single-centre interventional pilot feasibility cluster randomized controlled trial

Study type(s)
Prevention

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Public health nutrition in post-primary schools.

Interventions
This study is a pilot feasibility cluster randomised-controlled trial evaluating the effectiveness of a school-based, peer-led intervention to promote healthy food choices in adolescents in the school canteen at lunchtime.

Year 8 pupils (aged 11-12 years), Year 13 peer leaders (aged 16-17 years) and school stakeholders will be recruited from three post-primary schools (intervention group) and Year 8 pupils (aged 11-12 years) will be recruited from one post-primary school (control group) across Northern Ireland and the intervention will take place for a period of 12 weeks.

Participants will be randomised at school-level to participate in the intervention group (n=3 schools) or the control group (n=1 school) using MINIM software.

In the schools allocated to group one (intervention), Year 13 pupils (aged 16-17 years) are recruited as peer leaders to assist in making adaptations to the canteen environment to promote healthy food choices to Year 8 pupils (aged 11-12 years) at lunchtime over a 12-week period. Year 13 pupils (aged 16-17 years) are asked to complete a questionnaire at the beginning of the intervention. The school allocated to group two (control) will continue with their normal canteen routine practices over the 12-week period. In both groups, Year 8 pupils purchasing data records in the canteen at lunchtime are collected at baseline (week 0) and weekly throughout the 12-week intervention and the Year 8 pupils complete a questionnaire at baseline (week 0) and at the end of the intervention. In the schools allocated to group one, a subsample of Year 8 pupils will participate in focus groups, a subsample of Year 13 pupils will take part in focus groups or interviews and school stakeholders will participate in interviews.

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
Food choices in the school canteen at lunchtime measured using the cashless canteen purchasing data records at baseline (week 0), week 1 - week 12

Key secondary outcome(s)
1. Dietary knowledge measured using a questionnaire at baseline and post-intervention (12 weeks)
2. Health-related quality of life, KIDSCREEN-10 measured using a questionnaire at baseline and post-intervention (12 weeks)
3. Self-efficacy towards diet measured using a questionnaire at baseline and post-intervention (12 weeks)
4. Dietary habits measured using a questionnaire at baseline and post-intervention (12 weeks)
5. Outcome Expectations measured using a questionnaire at baseline and post-intervention (12 weeks)
6. Dietary motivation measured using a questionnaire at baseline and post-intervention (12 weeks)
7. Dietary support measured using a questionnaire at baseline and post-intervention (12 weeks)
8. Dietary attitudes measured using a questionnaire at baseline and post-intervention (12 weeks)

Completion date
30/06/2022

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Mainstream post-primary schools in Northern Ireland who operate a 'CRB Cunningham' cashless canteen system.
2. Year 8 pupils (11-12 years).
3. Year 13 pupils (16-17 years).
4. School stakeholders (Senior staff members/ teachers/ caterers).

Participant type(s)
Mixed

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Mixed

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
532

Key exclusion criteria
1. Post-primary schools in Northern Ireland that do not operate a 'CRB Cunningham' cashless canteen system.
2. Non-mainstream post-primary schools.

Date of first enrolment
29/09/2021

Date of final enrolment
31/05/2022

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

Northern Ireland

Study participating centre
Ulster University
Cromore Road
Coleraine
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Sponsor information

Organisation
Ulster Univeristy

ROR
https://ror.org/01yp9g959

Funder(s)

Funder type
Government

Funder Name
Department for the Economy

Alternative Name(s)
An Roinn Geilleagair, Department for the Economy NI, Department for the Economy (Northern Ireland), Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland, Department for the Economy, DfE

Funding Body Type
Government organisation

Funding Body Subtype

National government

Location
United Kingdom

Funder Name
Generating Excellent Nutrition In UK Schools Network (GENIUS)

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary
Data sharing statement to be made available at a later date

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Abstract results	Process evaluation	05/09/2023	03/12/2024	No	No
Other publications		25/08/2026	19/11/2026	Yes	No
Thesis results		31/10/2023	03/12/2024	No	No