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The CONNECTS-Food Study: the development of an implementation intervention to support whole-school approaches to food

Submission date
04/05/2021

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
10/05/2021

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
15/06/2023

Condition category
Nutritional, Metabolic, Endocrine

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

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
Children consume a third of their food at school, providing an opportunity to promote healthy diets and reduce levels of obesity. International and national organisations recommend that schools adopt approaches across the whole school day to support children to make healthy food choices, offering consistency in the quality of foods provided, eating culture, food education, and use of food to learn. In reality, uptake is poor, partly due to a lack of direction on how to use such an approach, but also because schools are highly complex environments with multiple competing demands, and influences from wider factors like national policy, cultural beliefs, population characteristics, and funding. The aim of this study is to design a practical intervention to help primary schools deliver existing policies which promote whole-school approaches to food.

Who can participate?
Eight schools across four sites (Bradford, Leeds, Belfast and Newcastle) are taking part in the study. Stakeholders within participating schools, including teachers, parents, children, and catering staff are invited to take part in system mapping workshops. Workshop participants will also be invited to join the intervention development team.

What does the study involve?
The researchers will partner with key people (stakeholders) including headteachers, teachers, staff, children, parents, school governors, and government representatives; host workshops with stakeholders to get a rich picture of all of the factors that influence food choice in the school day; develop the intervention alongside stakeholders; and explore whether their intervention can be feasibly used by schools across the UK.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
Participants will not receive any direct benefit from participation; however, they may feel a sense of satisfaction that their opinions will contribute towards the study and, potentially, to

how schools prioritise food policies. The researchers also anticipate that they will enjoy meeting others (if face-to-face meetings are permitted) and some may benefit by acquiring skills /knowledge related to food and/or school policies.

Where is the study run from?
University of York in partnership with University of Leeds, Newcastle University, Queens University Belfast, University of Bradford and Born in Bradford (UK)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
January 2021 to June 2022

Who is funding the study?
MRC Public Health Intervention Development Scheme (PHIND) (UK)

Who is the main contact?
Wendy Burton
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Contact information

Type(s)
Public

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Additional identifiers

Study information

Scientific Title
Co-design of a sustainable and acceptable implementation intervention to maximise the impact of whole school approaches to food within primary schools

Acronym
CONNECTS-Food

Study objectives
The World Health Organisation and UK government recommend that schools adopt approaches across the whole school day that support children to make healthy food choices, offering consistency in the quality of foods provided, eating culture, education about diet, and use of food to learn. In reality, uptake is poor, partly due to a lack of direction on how to use such an approach, but also because schools work in highly complex environments with multiple competing demands, and influences from wider factors like national policy, cultural beliefs, population characteristics, costs and catering requirements.

The researchers will design a practical and acceptable intervention to help primary schools adopt whole-school approaches to food.

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 01/02/2021, University of York Health Sciences Research Governance Committee (c/o Department of Philosophy, Heslington, York, YO10 5DD, UK; +44 (0)1904 323253; smh12@york.ac.uk), ref: HSRGC/20210/428/A

Primary study design
Observational

Study design
Intervention development study

Study type(s)
Prevention

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Childhood obesity in primary school-aged children

Interventions
Systems mapping workshops will be held with stakeholders across eight school sites to develop a rich picture of the school food system, followed by the development of an intervention to support whole-school approaches to food using a co-design approach.

Intervention Type
Other

Primary outcome(s)
'Systems map' of the school food system derived from eight systems mapping workshops held in May-July 2021

Key secondary outcome(s)
1. Key themes describing the factors influencing a whole school approach to food informed by qualitative inductive thematic analysis of workshop transcripts finalised by December 2021
2. Acceptability rating of the intervention design obtained from stakeholder engagement events held February to April 2022

Completion date
30/06/2022

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Stakeholders from public and academy schools (including headteachers, teaching staff, catering staff, school governors, and parents)
2. Primary school children from any age group
3. External catering stakeholders (including representatives from catering and/or procurement services, and food supply chain agents (producers, distributors)
4. External local businesses (as appropriate)

Participant type(s)
Mixed

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Mixed

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
82

Key exclusion criteria
1. Stakeholders from private and specialist schools
2. Children whose families do not consent to take part

Date of first enrolment
01/02/2021

Date of final enrolment
31/07/2021

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
University of York
Health Sciences

Seebohm Rowntree Building
Heslington
York
United Kingdom
YO10 5DD

Sponsor information

Organisation
University of York

ROR
https://ror.org/04m01e293

Funder(s)

Funder type
Research council

Funder Name
Medical Research Council

Alternative Name(s)
Medical Research Council (United Kingdom), UK Medical Research Council, Medical Research Committee and Advisory Council, MRC

Funding Body Type
Government organisation

Funding Body Subtype
National government

Location
United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
These data will be confidential qualitative data (workshop transcripts) which will not be available to anyone outside of the immediate research team, in line with the ethics approval.

IPD sharing plan summary

Not expected to be made available

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Results article		13/03/2023	15/06/2023	Yes	No
Participant information sheet	Participant information sheet	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes