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Citation:

Staniford, LJ and Nobles, JD and Gately, P (2016) Addressing Health Disparities: Action Research in the Design and Development of Health Promotion Programmes for Young People. In: World Congress of Cardiology and Cardiovascular Health, 4 - 7 Jun 2016, Mexico City, Mexico. (Unpublished)

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Document Version:

Conference or Workshop Item (Accepted Version)

Conference Abstract

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Addressing Health Disparities: Action Research in the Design and Development of Health Promotion Programmes for Young People

Staniford, L.J., Nobles, J., & Gately, P.

Introduction: Hearty Lives (HL) is a £1.2 million programme established by the British Heart Foundation which aims to reduce health inequalities, particularly by supporting those 'at greatest risk' of Cardiovascular Disease (CVD). Six programmes have been set up (Adur, Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, Renfrewshire & Wolverhampton) to reduce the incidence of CVD risk factors in children and young people (aged 11-18 years old). Leeds Beckett University (LBU) is conducting the national three-year evaluation of the HL programmes.

Objectives: The national evaluation aims to extract key learnings and provide recommendations for working with vulnerable populations (at greater risk of CVD). This is done through an action research methodology.

Methods: Within this action research approach, a case study methodology has been used to recognise the uniqueness of each HL project. Impact and process outcomes are being collected to assess HL intervention effectiveness and to establish what processes led to the success or shortcomings of each approach. Key stakeholders views towards HL interventions were captured.

Results: The evidence produced from the first year fed into the refinement and development of each of the six HL interventions in the second year. The 6 HL interventions have considered stakeholders views in order to develop tailored and flexible HP interventions. This is considered key when addressing health disparities (Jacobs et al., 2012). All HL interventions recognise the importance of planning for sustainability and putting strategies in place to ensure that they can be continued beyond the three year funding. Developing links with partners, delivering training to multiple stakeholders and accessing other sources of funding are key to consider in the sustainability of such HP interventions.

Conclusion: This research highlights the benefits of a collaborative action research approach. It identifies the value of evaluation teams working alongside stakeholders to refine and develop feasible, acceptable and efficacious HP interventions.