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Conference Abstract

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A Qualitative Exploration of Key Stakeholders Views towards Designing Health Promotion Interventions for Looked After children (LAC)

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

Introduction: Looked After Children (LAC) are some of the most vulnerable and socially excluded in society (Golding, 2008). Hearty Lives (HL) is £1.2 million British Heart Foundation project designed to reduce health inequalities by supporting those at greatest risk of cardiovascular disease. Two of the six sites focussed on addressing inequalities specifically in children in the social care context.

Objectives: The research aimed to gather stakeholders' views in the design, development and refinement of the HL, health promotion intervention (HP based interventions) to ensure they were acceptable and feasible for LAC and/or carers.

Method: 14 qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with stakeholders. Interviews explored views towards the HL intervention and what they felt were the key factors to consider in designing HP interventions in the social care context.

Results: Stakeholder views revealed two approaches to working with LAC. One approach was to develop an in-house intervention that targeted LAC and care home workers in a safe, familiar environment. Stakeholders believed the key to this approach was taking time to build trust and rapport with the children which increased the likelihood of children engaging and adhering to the HP intervention. Stakeholders suggested a second, more cost and time effective, approach was to target LAC carers and home workers directly. The carers could then filter and transfer the healthy lifestyle/educational messages to LAC. This removed barriers to accessing LAC.

Conclusions: Stakeholders views suggest that both in-house interventions and interventions targeted at LAC workers are acceptable and feasible approaches to working with LAC. Their views suggest that targeting LAC workers could be a more sustainable method of delivering HP interventions. Further research is needed to establish the effectiveness of different approaches to engaging LAC in health promotion.