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Action Research in the Design, Development and Delivery of a Sustainable, School-based, Health Promotion Intervention for Children and Young People

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Introduction: Interventions are often developed without the guidance of the target group to be worked with. Action research (programme development with the input of researchers *and* clients) has been highlighted as a useful method for increasing programme engagement and achieving programme outcomes [1]. Hearty Lives Renfrewshire (HLR), is a British Heart Foundation a community-based intervention aiming to increase knowledge and awareness of CVD risk factors in young people, adopted an action research methodology. HLR delivers a school-based intervention to young people aged 13-16; this intervention was developed by the young people, with elements of the intervention delivered by the young people.

Objectives: To evaluate the use of an action research approach to designing, developing and delivering HLR.

Method: Semi-structured interviews with stakeholders ($n = 5$, 22-56 minutes), and focus groups interviews with participants [attending the HLR intervention] ($n = 9$, 15 minutes). Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

Results: Students suggested they felt empowered when consulted with about improving and refining the programme. The HLR delivery team were responsive to participant ideas and facilitated the implementation of ideas. Intervention content was also refined to become more engaging – this was a product of participant feedback. To increase programme reach, a Parkour (acrobatic free running) club was set up which had health messages embedded in its design. All participants cited an improved knowledge, yet behaviour change was less apparent.

Conclusion: HLR successfully engaged with participants in all stages of the intervention. Moreover, the programme expanded using alternate modes of delivery (e.g. Parkour) to engage a traditionally hard-to-engage demographic. Action Research should be considered when designing, developing and refining an intervention rather than a traditional problem-solution orientated approach.