



A youth led social marketing approach to encourage healthy lifestyles

Project Briefing

EYTO is an exciting new project led by the National Children's Bureau (NCB - UK) in partnership with organisations in Spain, Portugal and the Czech Republic.

With funding from the European Union, we will be developing an innovative peer-led social marketing campaign to promote healthy eating and physical activity and stem the rise in obesity amongst young people. With the potential to reach over a million disadvantaged young people, the campaign will transcend cultural barriers to connect with young people and increase their motivation to lead healthier lifestyles.

The Problem

22 million children in the EU are overweight or obese. It is a significant public health issue for all the countries participating in this project, affecting one in three children in the UK, almost half of 10-18 year olds in Portugal, over half of 5-17 year olds in Spain, and over a third of 6-17 year olds in the Czech Republic¹.

Obesity can cause a range of chronic health problems including diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. It is also linked to low-self esteem, poor educational outcomes, and reduced overall life chances². It is a major health inequality; young people from low-income groups are at particular risk – this is connected to low levels of health education, parental obesity, lack of green space and opportunities to be physically active, and the financial cost of eating healthily. Aggressive marketing of unhealthy food to children and young people and the number of cheap takeaways in deprived areas are also important factors.

The teenage years are pivotal in determining the longer term risk of obesity, and as our behaviours are harder to change as we get older, provide a vital window of opportunity to help young people develop healthier lifestyles. As children become teenagers and gain greater independence, they experience new freedoms that can influence their weight – from being able to spend pocket money, eating out with friends to using social networking sites, on which they encounter adverts for junk food. Not enough attention has been given to supporting young people at this point of transition to counter negative pressures and make healthy lifestyle choices. Whilst youth-led social marketing campaigns have been successfully developed on other health topics, the potential to use this technique to tackle obesity has yet to be realised.

There is great promise in emerging technologies to tackle obesity in young people. finding new and creative ways to engage those most at risk.

¹ World Obesity Federation

² Reilly, J.J. (2009) Obesity in children and young people (highlight no 250), London: National Children's Bureau.

The project runs from September 2013 - September 2015 and has received funding from the EU Executive Agency for Health and Consumers in the framework of the Health Programme 2008-2013.

What we will be doing

Between September 2013 and September 2015 we will be:

- Conducting and publishing a review of effective social marketing and healthy lifestyle interventions across the four participating countries
- Recruiting groups of disadvantaged young people in each country to lead the development of a new social marketing campaign to tackle obesity
- Supporting the young people to research, create and pilot the campaign, associated activities and digital applications in their local communities
- Providing opportunities for young people from the participating countries to meet up to share learning, and supporting replication of activities
- Developing and launching a website to promote the campaign across Europe, including all the resources and mate-

In each country the young people will be supported by a project team including youth workers and social marketing experts. In England, NCB will be working in partnership with young people, aged between 13 and 16 years, in the London Borough of Islington. NCB's Research Centre will be working with academic researchers in each country to evaluate the impact of the campaign on outcomes for young people.

The benefits

We anticipate that the campaign will help to reduce obesity amongst young people by:

- Increasing understanding at a local, national and European level of successful social marketing approaches to tackle obesity amongst disadvantaged young people
- Increasing the confidence and skills of young people and practitioners to apply participatory social marketing techniques
- Increasing reported levels of physical activity and fruit and vegetable consumption amongst young people across Europe
- Increasing the sharing and replication of good practice amongst EU member states

Our partners

To deliver this project NCB will be working in partnership with:

- Technology Centre of Nutrition and Health – an academic institution in Spain
- Companhia de Ideias - a multi-media company in Portugal
- Komunikujeme – a youth participation organisation in the Czech Republic
- The European Association for the Study of Obesity, EuroHealthNet, and Eurochild are also supporting the campaign and it's dissemination across Europe.

To find out more please contact
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