

PS48 PROCESSES OF CHANGE: WHAT ARE THE SPECIFIC PATHWAYS AND PROJECT COMPONENTS THAT HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE WELL-BEING OF PARTICIPANTS IN A 'WELL LONDON' PROJECT?

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Background This paper presents follow-up data from a qualitative study of a Big Lottery funded 'Well London' project; an initiative set up to improve the health and well-being of Londoners living in areas historically marked by social, economic and environmental deprivation. The project introduced a series of health interventions: healthy eating, physical activity, and mental health and well-being, across a total of 20 areas within London. An evaluation of the interventions was conducted through a series of in depth semi-structured interviews with residents in 3 of the areas. Participants were interviewed twice: initially at the start of the interventions and again twelve months later. The interviews explored which of the project components acted positively on participant's sense of well-being and lead to changes in health behaviour. The methodology used, placed emphasis on the opinions and reflections of study participants and responds to Popay's call for research to be centred not only on theoretical concerns, but also to be attentive to 'lay' theories of health.

Methods Two sets of 60 semi-structured interviews, taking place a year apart were conducted across three locations identified as Census Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs). These measured changes in health behaviour and residents' perceptions of 'well-being' that arose following the Well London interventions. Residents were interviewed about their experiences and perceptions of the neighbourhood; also their health and views of the Well London interventions. Residents who had not taken part in the project interventions were also selected and interviewed, for comparison.

Results The study found that the project objectives succeeded where there were at least one of the following present; a) high levels of individual motivation; b) the involvement of external agencies in the form of key worker and/or agency support; c) where residents were involved in the organisation and dissemination of the projects, often as volunteers; and d) where the environment was made accessible, safe and conducive to a sense of belonging and 'community ownership'.

Conclusion The findings indicate that the Well London project increased perceptions of well-being in populations defined by inner city social disadvantage. However, the pathways to change are complex and not easily generalized. Success is dependent on multiple interacting interpersonal, social and contextual factors, as well as the actual type of interventions themselves.

PS49 FOOD FOR THOUGHT! THE ROLE OF DIETARY CHOICES ON COGNITIVE BEHAVIOUR

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Background Cognitive decline indicates the first sign of dementia and a major public health impact associated with ageing. Evidence suggests that dietary patterns are associated with cerebrovascular and cardiovascular risk factors.

Methods To examine the association between dietary choices and 20 years cognitive decline from 43 to 60+; 1018 study members from the MRC National Survey of Health and Development regularly followed up since birth in 1946 were included in the study.

Cognitive functioning was measured at 43 and 60+ years using two tests: verbal memory (maximum words recalled 45) and visual search (maximum letter searched: 600).

Dietary data was obtained using a 5 days diet diary at age 36 and 43y. An overall score representing level of healthy food choice was derived, by summing scores from five separate criteria: 1. consumption of breakfast (0 no consumption to 2 all days); 2. type of milk (from 0 whole to 3 skim milk); 3. type of bread (from 0 white to 4 wholemeal); 4. number of daily portions of fruit and vegetables (from 0 none to 5 portions/day) and percentages of energy from daily intakes (0-more than 45% energy to 5 -less than 30% energy). A total score was derived and further classified as 0 low or 1 higher choice, subject to median split at each age. A cumulative midlife score was further derived as 0 low choice at either age or 1 higher choice at least at one age or both. The confounding variables were father's social class, childhood cognition, education, adult social class and depression.

Results There was a cross sectional positive association between a higher choice of diet and verbal memory scores at age 43y compared to a lower choice 1.83 (95% CI 1.12 to 2.54). This association was maintained after adjusting for all covariates. There was also a significant association between a midlife cumulative healthier choice of diet and a slower verbal memory from 43 to 60+ in a fully adjusted model 0.69 (1.10 to 1.27) compared to midlife lower choice. There was no association between dietary choice and visual search or visual search decline.

Conclusion Our results suggest that a healthy dietary option based on high intake of fruit and vegetables, complex carbohydrates and cereals made in early midlife is protective of verbal memory decline from mid to later life. Public health interventions based on healthy diets and the prevention of nutritional deficiencies should be considered an important line of defence against cognitive decline and dementia.

PS50 THE DEVELOPMENT OF MINIMUM UNIT PRICING OF ALCOHOL IN SCOTLAND: A POLICY CASE STUDY

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Background Awareness of alcohol as a public health issue has increased in the UK and elsewhere over recent years. Evidence exists to support the use of price mechanisms to address alcohol harms. While various Canadian provinces have used reference pricing to control off-license alcohol prices in state-run monopolies, no country has implemented a uniform minimum unit price (MUP) that applies to all alcohol sales. This policy is being actively considered in Scotland, with legislation likely to be passed this year. Studying developments in Scotland may therefore help those working in public health to improve their engagement with policymakers as well as being of use to other countries seeking to introduce MUP in the future.

Methods Political science theories can be used to identify potential explanations for the development of policy. We draw on a number of theories to allow a range of explanations to be identified (a 'multiple-lenses' approach). Punctuated-Equilibrium Theory (PET) suggests policymakers use their limited time to address a few issues in detail (which can experience major policy change), while paying little attention to most other policy areas. Alternatively, multi-level governance highlights the diversity of actors seeking to influence policy within different governmental levels (venues). The same policy issue can therefore be considered at European Union, Westminster Parliament or Scottish Parliament, for example. We utilise political science theories to provide explanations for the