

A qualitative exploration of the barriers to healthy physical activity and diet in young adults with intellectual disabilities transitioning to adulthood



Dr. Gemma Stevens, School of Applied Social Studies
g.d.stevens@rgu.ac.uk



Prof. Andrew Jahoda, Dr. Lynsay Matthews, Dr. Heather Murray, Dr. Catherine Hankey, Prof. Craig Melville & Dr. Fiona Mitchell

1. Background

- Obesity is associated with poor health outcomes, including increased all-cause mortality^[1, 2]
- The prevalence of obesity is significantly higher in adults with intellectual disabilities (ID) than the general population^[3, 4]
- Adults with ID are more likely to have poor lifestyle behaviours associated with obesity^[5]
- They lead less physically active and more sedentary lifestyles than the general population and most do not meet the recommended amounts of physical activity^[4-6]
- School structure and social connectedness facilitate increased PA and healthier diet, whilst home life and a lack of social connectedness serve as barriers^[7]
- Transition period between adolescence and adulthood is risk period for weight gain in general population^[8]

2. Study aims

- To explore participants' perceptions of factors influencing their physical activity engagement and diet 12 months post-transition from school
- To follow-up participants' experiences from final year of school to 12 months post-transition from school

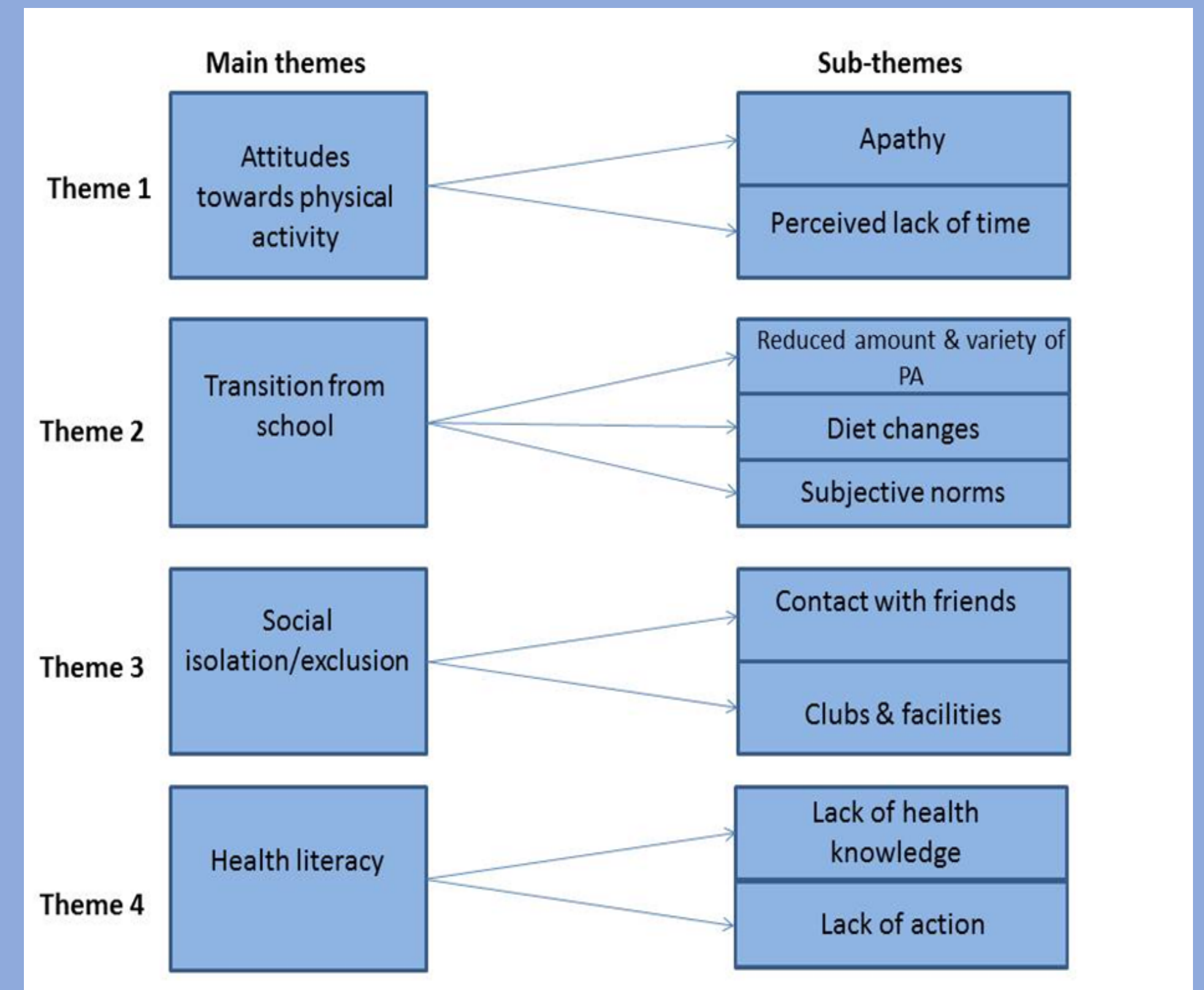
3. Method

- Study forms part of wider mixed-method longitudinal feasibility study
- Qualitative data collected over two time points: baseline (during final year of school) and 12 months post leaving school
- Data generated from 11 semi-structured interviews with young adults with mild-moderate ID
- Participants consisted of nine males and two females, aged between 18-19 years old
- Participants were recruited from four additional support need schools in Greater Glasgow and South Lanarkshire, Scotland
- Activity and food cards were used to stimulate conversation around PA and diet^[9]
- Data analysed using an inductive thematic analysis

4. Findings

- Post-transition from school, young adults' attitudes, physical and social environment play a key role in influencing PA and dietary habits
- Four themes and nine sub-themes emerged from analysis (see Figures 1 & 2)

Figure 1 – Themes identified



5. Conclusions

- Transition from school fosters changes to participants' lifestyle behaviours relating to obesity
- Apathy for PA, a perceived lack of time, increased time spent at home, social exclusion and a lack of health knowledge all serve as barriers to healthy physical activity and diet in this population
- Opportunities to participate in PA drastically decrease, and in most cases cease, after leaving school
- Leaving the structured environment of school presents as a key risk period for lifestyle behaviour change associated with weight gain
- Interventions focused on preventing the development of obesity in this population should target this transition period

Figure 2 – Example quotes

References

- Sohler, N., Lubetkin, E., Levy, J., Soghomonian, C., & Rimmerman, A. (2009). Factors associated with obesity and coronary heart disease in people with intellectual disabilities. *Social Work in Health Care, 48*(1), 76-89.
- Fliegel, K. M., Kit, B. K., Orpana, H., & Graubard, B. I. (2013). Association of all-cause mortality and overweight and obesity using standard body mass index categories: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *The Journal of American Medical Association, 309*(1), 71-82.
- Melville, C. A., Hamilton, S., Hankey, C. R., Miller, S., & Boyle, S. (2007). The prevalence and determinants of obesity in adults with intellectual disabilities. *Obesity Review, 8*, 22-230.
- Hsieh, K., Rimmer, J. H., & Heller, T. (2014). Obesity and associated factors in adults with intellectual disability. (2014). *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research, 58*(9), 851-863.
- McGuire, B. E., Daly, P., & Smyth, F. (2007). Lifestyle and health behaviours of adults with an intellectual disability. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research, 51*(7), 497-510.
- Emerson, E. (2005). Underweight, obesity and exercise among adults with intellectual disabilities in supported accommodation in northern England. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research, 8*, 134-143.
- Stevens, G., Jahoda, A., Matthews, L., Hankey, C., Melville, C., Murray, H., & Mitchell, F. (2017). A theory-informed qualitative exploration of social and environmental determinants of physical activity and dietary choices in young adults with intellectual disabilities in their final year of school. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities, 1-16*.
- Nelson, M. C., Story, M., Larson, N. I., Neumark-Sztainer, D., & Lytle, L. A. (2008). Emerging adulthood and college-aged youth: An overlooked age for weight-related behaviour change. *Obesity, 16*(1), 2205-2211.
- Mitchell, F., Jahoda, A., Hankey, C., Matthews, L., Murray, H., & Melville, C. (2016). Moving on feeling good: a feasibility study to explore the lifestyle behaviours of young adults with intellectual disabilities as they transition from school to adulthood – a study protocol. *Pilot and Feasibility Studies, 2*(8), 1-10.