

Exploring young people's perceptions about health: A qualitative data service evaluation for An Apple A Day (AAAD) project

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Sub-theme: Healthy and resilient populations, just and equitable food systems

Background

The following qualitative data analysis component contributes to the continuous cycle of evaluation and development of the ongoing An Apple A Day (AAAD) programme. AAAD is a volunteer project run by medical students that aims to empower young people to lead healthy lifestyles by addressing health inequalities at a local school situated in an area of lower socioeconomic status in Brighton, England.

Objectives

- To understand Year 7 pupils' perceptions of 'being healthy'
- To inform the development of the AAAD programme and ensure that it remains contemporary and responds to the challenges that young people encounter in this area of Brighton.

Methods

The service evaluation took the form of an integrated focus group which was conducted with 23 year 7 pupils who had not yet participated in AAAD at the school. An information sheet was used to inform parents and carers about the focus group.

During the focus groups, pupils completed conversation-based discussion and written activities. Themes were identified using thematic analysis with the verbal focus groups and compared to the worksheets by inductive reasoning to check findings.

Results

The focus group participants understood the importance and relevance of eating a healthy balanced diet, regular exercise, good hygiene, protected sleep and mental health. Pupils alluded to healthy lifestyles being unobtainable, sometimes due to financial expense, with unhealthy food and lack of exercise being perceived the 'norm'. Lockdown, technology, and lack of motivation were identified as barriers to exercise and physical activity while socialising and being part of a winning team were seen to be reasons why these young people were more likely to exercise.

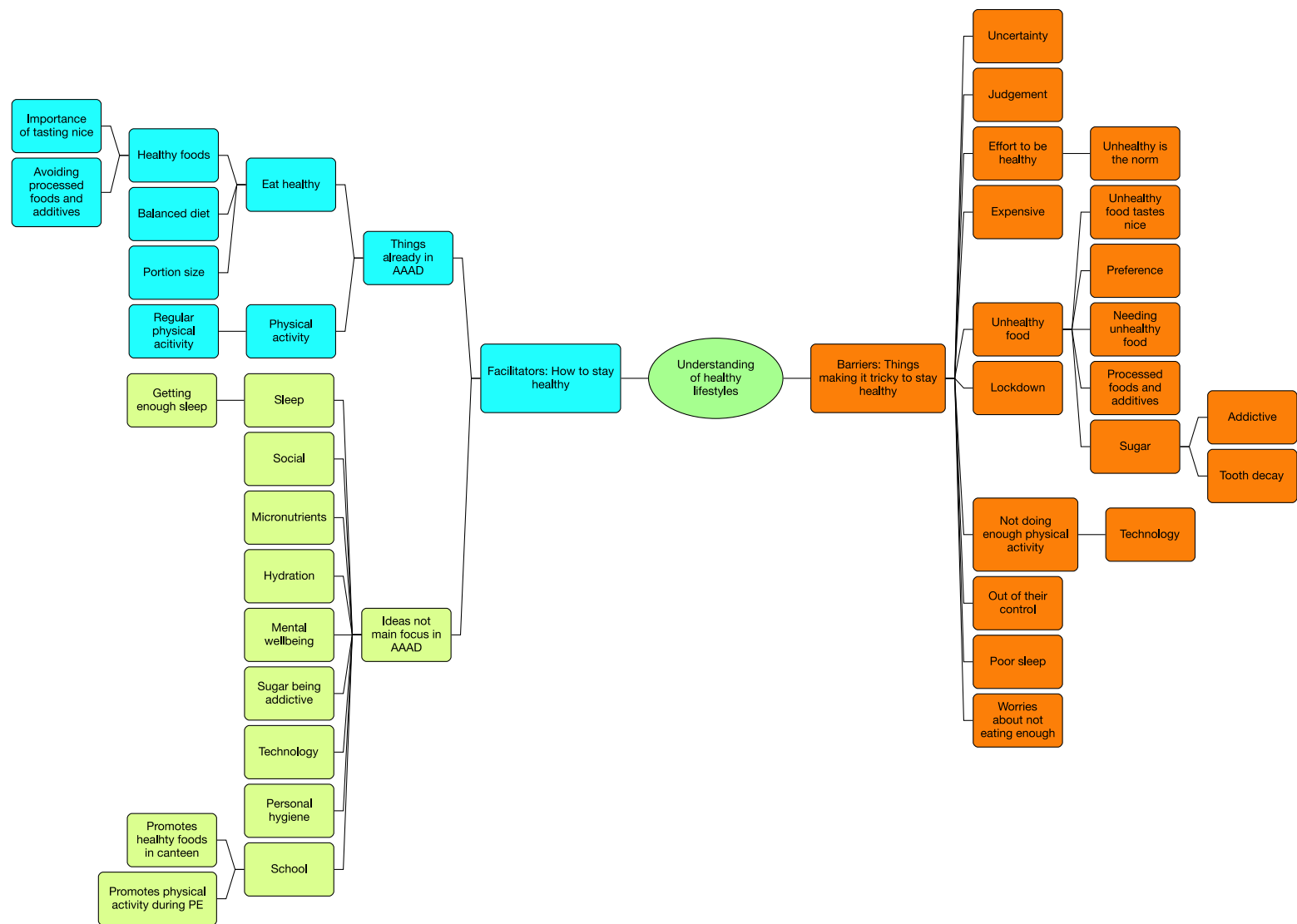


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of themes arising from focus group

Conclusion

The findings will support the AAAD curriculum development to build on what young people know using supportive discussion-based mentorship that addresses misconceptions and empower young people to remain engaged in healthier lifestyles.