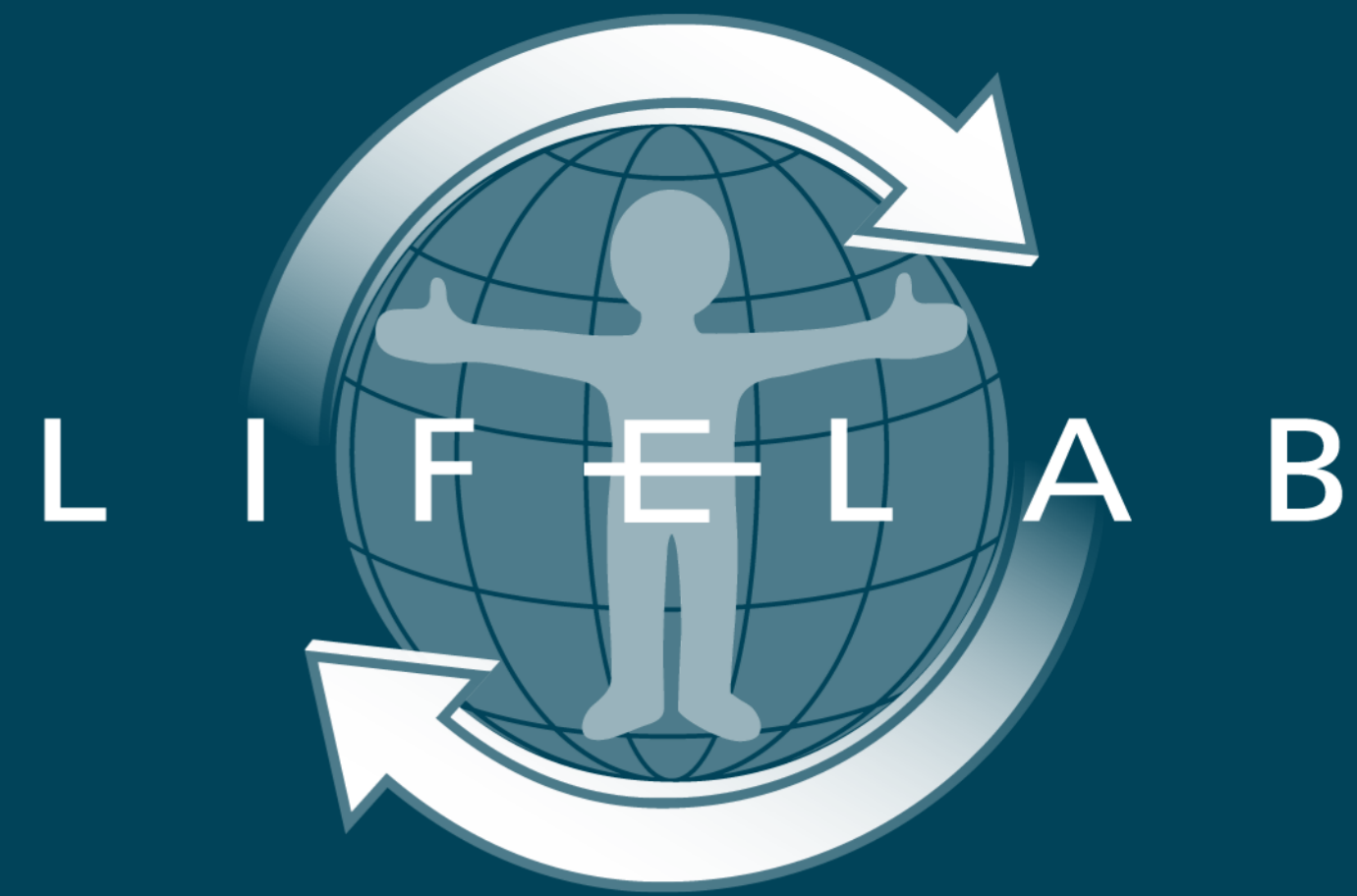


Young Health Champions: Hearing the Adolescent Voice for Promoting Health and Wellbeing through Peer Mentoring



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Young Health Champions

The Level 2 Award for Young Health Champions (YHC) from the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) is a qualification for young people between the ages of 14-24 who want to both help their peers develop a healthier lifestyle and make their voice heard around health and wellbeing issues.

Introduction

Adolescence is an opportunity to change lifecourse health trajectories, for adolescents now, as future adults and also for their future children. The YHC qualification can play a key role in engaging them with health.

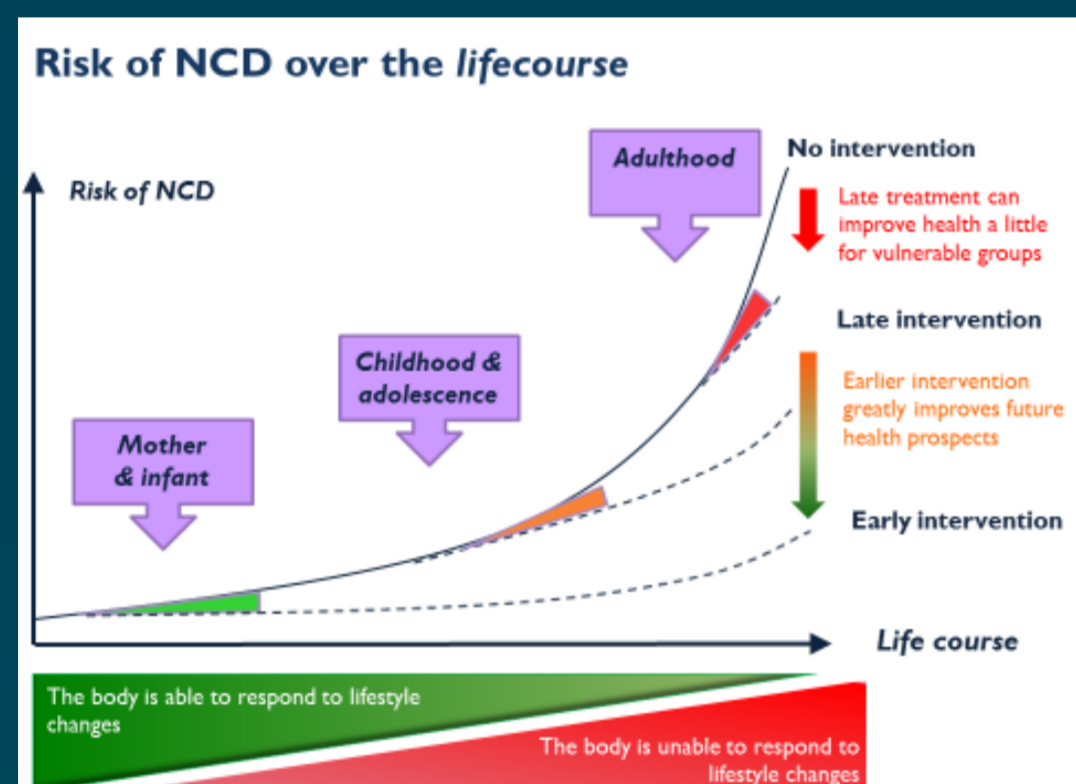


Figure 1: Graph to show lifecourse trajectories

Aim

To engage adolescents with the skills needed to make changes to their lifestyles and support their peers through small group training and peer mentoring, thereby becoming agents of change for health in their communities.

Method

LifeLab partnered with Southampton City Council and The Saints Foundation, a charity linked with our Premier League Football Club, to deliver the RSPH YHC qualification to train a cohort of adolescents to act as role models and champions for health in their schools.

Training is carried out at LifeLab and includes activities encompassing; healthy eating, physical activity, smoking, alcohol and emotional health and wellbeing.



Figure 2: YHC training

Results

62 students from 8 different schools have been trained as YHCs through LifeLab.

90% of students rated the training as good or very good (55% very good).

97.5% students agreed or strongly agreed that the training gave them the skills to become YHCs.

Students have delivered health campaigns on:

Social media, sleep, sugar reduction, alcohol, mental health and body image via leaflets, posters, videos, school assemblies and displays.

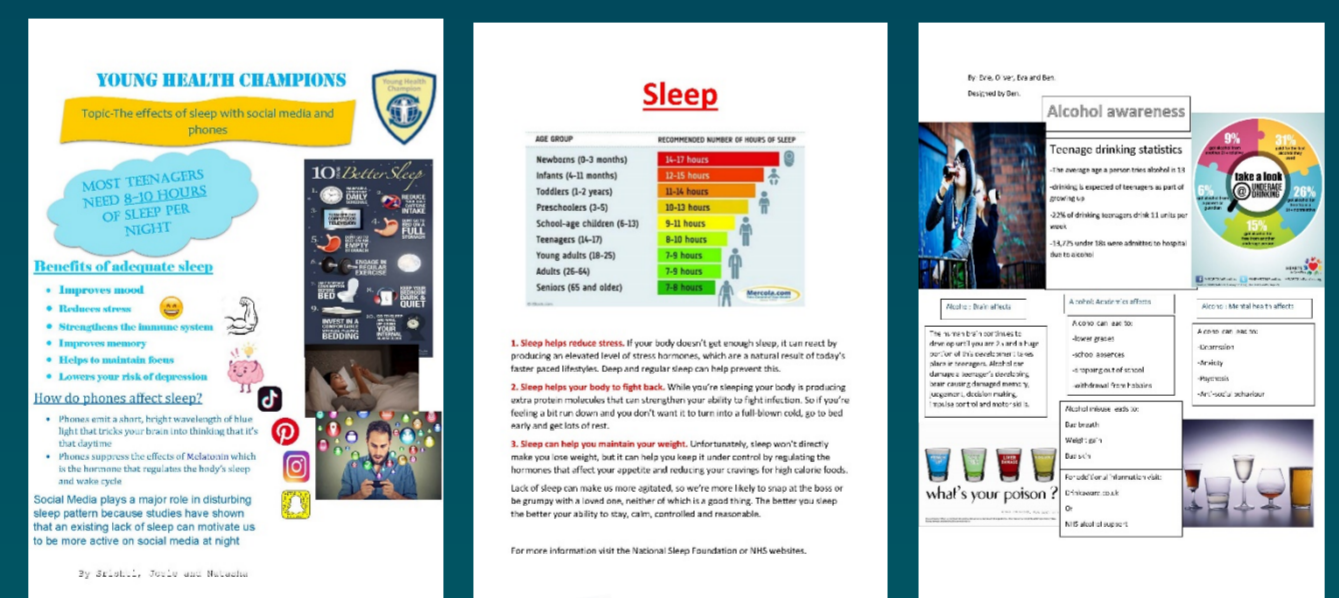


Figure 3: YHC campaigns and campaign delivery

The YHCs have shown that they understand and value the importance of their own health and their responsibility to act as role models with;

97.5% agreeing or strongly agreeing that it is important to promote healthy lifestyles and behaviours to young people and 97.5% agreeing or strongly agreeing that having a healthy lifestyle now is important for their future.



Figure 4: YHC qualification presentations

All students commented that the interactive activities were the most interesting and enjoyable ways of learning;

"I most enjoyed module 1, I thoroughly enjoyed all of the health experiments we did in the Wet Lab."

They have also shown that they recognise the value of peer to peer advice and collaboration with some responding they most enjoyed;

"Learning about how to give advice to people and planning our campaign" and "Working with my friends finding out how to help others."

Discussion

The YHC qualification empowers adolescents to take the lead on health and wellbeing. The next steps are to engage more schools and students with the qualification and increase buy-in from schools to ensure sustainability within the local community and to evaluate the longer term impact of the training.

As a result of the training we have delivered so far LifeLab has been awarded Centre of Excellence status by RSPH.

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