

Parents' experiences of receiving feedback from national child weight screening programmes in the UK: A Mixed Methods Systematic Review

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INTRODUCTION

Aim: To examine parents' experiences of receiving feedback from a child weight screening programme in the UK

Childhood obesity is of continuing concern due to the increasing trends observed, the possible health consequences and implications for the child and the projections into adulthood.

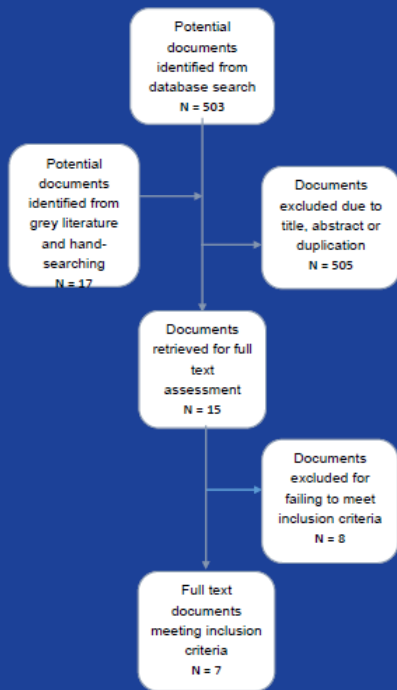
Launched in England in 2005 the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) is a mandatory school based surveillance programme which measures the height and weight of children in reception (4-5 year olds) and year 6 (10-11 year olds). It is recommended that routine feedback on children's height and weight is provided to all parents. Previous research highlights parental concerns over weight-related feedback and the effects it has on them and their child.

METHODS

A mixed-methods systematic review was conducted to identify relevant quantitative, qualitative or mixed-methods studies related to parental feedback on child weight and screening programmes. Study design features, context, methodology and outcomes were extracted. Due to the nature of the included papers a meta-analysis was not appropriate; all studies were narratively analysed. Final searches were undertaken in March 2016.

Seven studies were eligible for inclusion, which included three mixed-methods, two qualitative, and two cohort studies. One of the included studies was of good quality and the remaining six were of moderate quality.

RESULTS



Five themes were generated from the data. These were parental perception of weight and health; healthy lifestyles and behaviour change; feedback method and structure; impact on the child; and, measures and credibility.

The findings of this review identified that, generally speaking, parents wanted to receive feedback on their child's height and weight. Some parents felt that it would be unacceptable not to receive feedback, whereas other parents objected to it. This review supported previous findings that some parents find it difficult to accurately recognise their child's weight status and use a number of other reasons to explain their child's weight, such as having a muscular physique or engaging in physical activity. There were some reports of the feedback causing parents distress, but there were also reports of feedback providing positive reinforcement about child weight status.

DISCUSSION

There were some limitations to the papers included in this review such as the tools used; the self reported nature of the data; self selected respondents; in some cases low response rates and an underrepresentation of parents with overweight children; from areas of lower socioeconomic status and from ethnic minority groups.

Some of the studies were published in reports not peer reviewed journals and in terms of study design the evidence may not be considered the highest quality, however from the searches conducted it is the best available evidence with which to address the research question.

This review was conducted and the data extracted and synthesised by a sole researcher, although for two of included studies the data extraction was carried out by a second researcher to ensure validity of the tables used.

CONCLUSIONS

As the NCMP has now been in place for over 10 years, parents preferences may be further understood by conducting public involvement research, establishing what parents currently want from the feedback, how they would prefer to receive it and what they would like to know to help support their children's weight. Some of the studies included in this review have highlighted the potential strength of feedback that focuses on healthy lifestyles as opposed to weight, as well as tailoring to the individual and taking account of their lifestyle. These could be considerations for piloting in the future.

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