

## **Lessons learnt from Diet and Eating Behaviours across Early Adulthood Transitions (DEBEAT) pilot study:**

A summary of the lessons learnt by conducting the DEBEAT pilot study in 2023 from study implementation, data collected, participant and school feedback and input from YPAG and Advisory Groups.

### **School recruitment:**

- Approx. 10% of schools that we approached expressed an interest in participating. Only 60% of those who expressed an interest then engaged in study activities.
- Providing the school with as much information as possible at point of recruitment helps to disseminate study better within the school environment and get wider engagement.
- Speak to school contact in person/on the phone to explain study procedures rather than just email. Have an open conversation about possibilities within the school and the school infrastructure to see what will work for them
- Be flexible with recruitment strategies and allow the school to have an input into what they will be able to implement. Some schools will be able to implement different strategies. Have a toolbox of options for them to choose from.
- Be clear about requirements from schools and the benefits about participating
- Offer feedback to schools throughout involvement and summary involvement data at the end

### **School engagement:**

- Levels of school engagement varies massively. Contributing factors include who your contact teacher is and the role and influence they have in the school.
- Incentives for teachers involved helps. Give them a reason to want to be involved in the study and do well with recruitment/retention. Taking part in the study will be adding to their workload so be mindful of that.
- Keep in contact with school throughout. Let them know they are doing a good job and report what is working well/what could do with some more engagement.
- Offer to do in person visits to help with study related activities if required
- Give oversight about the purpose of the research, and what research is to help build the bigger picture for school involvement
- Don't be afraid of sending too many messages/emails- if your email is not at the top of someone's inbox then it will likely be missed/ignored

### **Participant recruitment:**

- Approx. 1.5% of students invited to pilot signed up

- Predicting 5% uptake per school for main study if school engagement is increased and other recruitment methods implemented
- Email study invitations out to students are not that effective. Students get a lot of emails that they either ignore or don't need to regularly engage with
- Easier for schools to target specific groups of students rather than whole year groups
- Ensure incentive is clear
- Be clear what will be expected of participant and what they will be asked to do
- A video that can be shown numerous times would be helpful
- Study information that is presented by peers rather than researcher/teachers would be better
- Social media was doubly as effective at participant recruitment than through schools

#### Participant engagement:

- Large drop off between completing consent and baseline questionnaire
- SMS messages a lot more helpful than email. More SMS reminders would be beneficial
- Better timed survey invites/reminders, e.g. one in morning, one in evening
- Give feedback about study progress and incentive amount earned
- Be clear about timeframes for receiving incentive. Send incentive out as soon as possible so participants can see immediate reward