A school-based social-marketing intervention to promote sexual health in English secondary schools: the Positive Choices pilot cluster RCT

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Declared competing interests of authors: Chris Bonell was a member of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Public Health Research (PHR) programme research funding board (2013–2019). Rona Campbell is a member of the NIHR PHR programme research funding board (2018 to present). Lucy Emmerson reports funding from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, London, during the conduct of the study. Lucy Emmerson reports that the Sex Education Forum is hosted at the charity National Children’s Bureau and receives funding from a number of organisations; for example, income is generated through training contracts with local authorities, membership, and a grant programme delivered in partnership with the Anti-Bullying Alliance (also hosted at the National Children’s Bureau) and funded by the Government Equalities Office. All work operates under a clear set of values and principles that are in line with evidence-based comprehensive relationships and sex education and is, therefore, compatible with our contribution to Positive Choices. Steve Morris reports being a member of the following NIHR committees: NIHR Health Services and Delivery Research (HSDR) Funding Board, 2014–19; NIHR HSDR Commissioning Board, 2014–16; NIHR HSDR Evidence Synthesis Sub-board, 2016; NIHR Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Clinical Evaluation and Trials Board (associate member), 2007–10; NIHR HTA Commissioning Board, 2009–13; NIHR PHR Funding Board, 2011–17; NIHR Programme Grants for Applied Research expert subpanel, 2015–19.
Plain English summary

Positive Choices pilot cluster RCT
Public Health Research 2021; Vol. 9: No. 1
DOI: 10.3310/phr09010

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Plain English summary

We developed a new school-based programme to prevent unplanned teenage pregnancy and promote sexual health. This consisted of teacher training, a student–staff committee to plan activities, a report of student needs based on survey responses, sex education lessons for year 9 students, students planning campaigns on sexual health, and reviewing school sexual health services. This intervention was finalised with staff and students from a secondary school and the Sex Education Forum (a charity advocating for and providing relationships and sex education). We tested whether or not the intervention was deliverable and acceptable in the secondary school with which we collaborated; the intervention was deliverable and acceptable, with some refinements. We then conducted a pilot evaluation with six schools across south-east England. This examined whether or not a larger study to assess impacts on pregnancy and sexual health would be feasible in terms of the intervention and the research methods, so that we could be sure that this larger study would be worthwhile. Of the six schools participating in the pilot evaluation, four were randomly chosen to deliver the intervention and two acted as comparisons. We surveyed students on their knowledge, attitudes and experiences just before this random selection and then 1 year later after the intervention had been delivered in four schools. Schools were happy to be randomly chosen and to have their students surveyed. Students and staff were happy to participate in the research and the intervention. The intervention was delivered in line with targets in three of the four schools, and was acceptable to the staff and students. The new lessons covered key topics more thoroughly than lessons in comparison schools. Examination of official records of births and abortions showed that there were none among the students who took part in the pilot. Our questionnaire measures generally worked well. It would be useful to examine the impacts of the intervention in a larger study. This should focus on a broader measure of sexual health than teenage pregnancy alone.
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**This report**

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the PHR programme as project number 14/184/02. The contractual start date was in April 2017. The final report began editorial review in January 2020 and was accepted for publication in July 2020. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The PHR editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors’ report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the final report document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the PHR programme or the Department of Health and Social Care. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the PHR programme or the Department of Health and Social Care.

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