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PLAN-A - STUDY INVITATION

Dear Colleague,

We are writing to invite your school to take part in the PLAN-A study. The study is funded by the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) and Sport England.

What is the study about?

PLAN-A (or Peer-Led physical Activity iNtervention for Adolescent girls) aims to find out whether Year 9 girls who receive training to be a “peer-supporter” can encourage their friends to adopt an active lifestyle. Studies show that increased physical activity levels are good for children’s health but by the middle of primary school girls are less active than boys and this trend is never reversed. Many adolescent girls do not take part in enough physical activity. We have developed the PLAN-A project alongside secondary schools in the South West, and have shown that our peer-supporter model has real promise to improve girls’ physical activity. We have now secured more funding from the National Institute of Health Research and Sport England to test the effect of the intervention in 20 secondary schools.

What is required from the school?

We are seeking 22 secondary schools from South West England to take part in the study. Ten schools will be chosen at random to receive the PLAN-A intervention. Ten schools will be “comparison” or “control” schools, and will be asked to provide information but not run the PLAN-A peer-supporter programme. Two schools will be reserves.

We will randomly assign schools to the two groups after we have taken “baseline” measures (see below). We hope to include **all Year 9 girls** who consent in each school. We will visit the school to make a presentation to inform Year 9 girls about the study. All girls will be invited to take part and given study information and consent forms for themselves (opt in) and their parents (opt out).

The ten schools that receive the PLAN-A intervention will be asked to support our arrangements to run a **2-day off-site peer-supporter training session** and a follow up **refresher 1-day session**. This will take place within normal school hours and be run by experts in healthy lifestyles and working with young people. **All of our project team have enhanced DBS checks**. We will pay for and arrange everything involved in the training, including all transportation and refreshments. We ask that the girls attending be chaperoned by a school staff member whilst they receive training, therefore we require your support in facilitating this.

What will happen in intervention schools?

- Intervention schools receive **the PLAN-A programme** that will run over approximately 10 months (Oct 2018 – July 2019). The girls taking part will be asked to complete a questionnaire to nominate influential peers (those whom they trust and respect) in their year group. We use this information to identify peer-supporters. The girls (approx. 15% of Year 9 girls) who accept the invite to become a peer-supporter will attend a 2-day off-site peer-supporter training session. After this they will return to school and will be asked to share positive

messages about physical activity amongst their peer group over a 10-week period. The peer-supporters will receive a further 1-day training session (again off-site, run by the trainers) half-way through the 10 week period to refresh the aims of the programme and to support them with any issues they encounter. You can read about other teachers', students' and parents' experiences of PLAN-A below.

- We take measurements (physical activity monitor and questionnaire measuring attitudes towards activity) from all girls taking part in the study, twice; before (baseline – start of Year 9) and 5-6 months after the intervention finishes (start of Year 10).
- **Girls will receive a £10 high street voucher** for completing each measurement point.
- Schools will be asked to provide the time and physical space for data collection and a staff member to chaperone the girls when they receive their peer-supporter training (3 days).
- Each school will receive **feedback on the activity levels of children taking part**.
- To acknowledge the time devoted to accommodating the study, **each school receives a £500 donation upon completion of the schools participation on the study**.

What will happen in comparison schools?

- Comparison schools **will not receive the PLAN-A programme**. We understand that this will be disappointing, but having comparison schools is very important to the research.
- All Year 9 girls will be invited to be involved in the project and asked to take part in the same measurements as outlined above. **Children will receive £20 in gift vouchers** for completing the measurements (as above)
- Each school receives **feedback on the activity levels of children taking part along with a £500 donation to acknowledge the time dedicated to our research**.

How will data be stored and used?

All information will be treated as confidential and anonymous (names removed) unless a child or parent tells us that a child is at risk of harm. If this happens we would inform the school and ask them to follow their safeguarding plan. We plan to write the results up in research papers but no names will be used and all identifying information will be removed. We will store the data securely for 20 years in line with the Data Protection Act (1998). Anonymised data will also be stored University of Bristol system and made available to other researchers. Details of any reports that we write will be given on the PLAN-A website **www.plan-a-study.org**.

Who approved the study?

This research has been approved by the University of Bristol's School for Policy Studies Ethics Committee. If you have any ethical concerns about the project please contact Professor Russ Jago (russ.jago@bristol.ac.uk, tel 01179 546603).

What should I do now?

At this point we are simply asking if you are willing to be part of our study. If you would like your school to be involved, or would like to ask any questions before making a decision, then please contact Prof Jago using the contact details at the top of this letter.

We hope our study will be of interest to you and look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

What do teachers, students and parents say about PLAN-A?

I think it's done their confidence a world of good and, like I say, they've taken quite a lot of pride in what they're doing because they've been chosen to do it. (Teacher)

Whereas before they go to a youth club and I used to drop them off, now she's walking. She gets her friends to call, they call for each other and they walk. (Parent)

I tried to incorporate something that they liked. Erm, cos some of my friends like to dance so it's finding something that they like and encouraging them to do that more.

(Peer-supporter student)

It's just the everyday getting along. The supporting in a classroom and not if somebody gets something wrong – not laughing, not laughing. You know, they are much more aware of people's feelings themselves. (Teacher)

Sincerely,



Prof Russ Jago
Principal Investigator



**National Institute for
Health Research**

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