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Eating well, living well and weight management: A co-produced qualitative study of barriers and facilitators experienced by adults with intellectual disabilities

Abstract

Adults with intellectual disabilities in England experience health inequalities. They are more likely than their non-disabled peers to be obese and at risk of serious medical conditions such as heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes. This semi-qualitative study engaged adults with intellectual disabilities in a co-production process to explore their perceived barriers and facilitators to eating well, living well and weight management. 19 participants with intellectual disabilities took part in 4 focus groups and one wider group discussion. They were supported by 8 of their carers or support workers. Several barriers were identified including: personal income restrictions, carers' and support workers' unmet training needs, a lack of accessible information, inaccessible services, and societal barriers such as the widespread advertising of less healthy foodstuffs. A key theme of frustration with barriers emerged from analysis of participants' responses. Practical solutions suggested by participants included: provision of clear and accessible healthy lifestyle information, reasonable adjustments to services, training, 'buddying' support systems or schemes, and collaborative working to improve policy and practice. The findings also imply the need for improvements in referrals and access to weight management services for this population.