

Give musculoskeletal health to children and young workers

20-21 March 2019, Hotel Carlton, Plaza Federico Moyúa, 2 – Bilbao

Perspective 4: Communication – Body self-perception – with a communications dimension

INTRODUCTION

The seminar brought together four perspectives, mixing research, policy, and practice to explore the scope and variation in the theme of 'MSD prevention among school children / young workers':

Perspective 1: Mainstreaming OSH into education – with a practical dimension

Perspective 2: Ergonomics – with a policy dimension

Perspective 3: Musculoskeletal health and young people – with a research dimension

Perspective 4: Body self-perception – with a communications dimension

All attendees participated in expert-led discussions in four small groups and covered the four different perspectives. The groups did not discuss the same questions, as through the group discussions, the experts led the meeting discussion, funnelling down in specificity towards the preparation of an outcome. Each group spent one hour with each expert.

For more information about the practicalities and the dynamics of the workshop, please consult the agenda of the seminar and the PPT called "background information (ahead of the seminar)".

In this document the summary of the perspective 4 is presented. The discussions questions were:

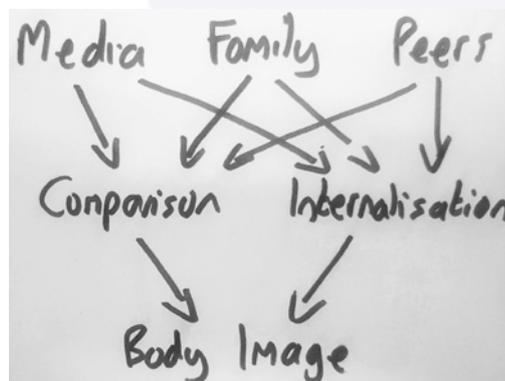
- What is the issue with body image and body perception?
- What is the influence of self-perception on young people in particular?
- How can we positively influence the self-perception of young people about their body?

Following these discussions with the different groups, with the last one an approach to influence the body perception of young people, with particular on the musculoskeletal system was designed.

What is the issue with body image and body perception?

- Body image is how we think, how we feel, and how we behave; it is about our body functionality as well as its aesthetic appearance
- The pressure on how we appear has increased around the world, much of which is due to the introduction of social media
 - The portrayed "perfect" bodies are often unobtainable. This is achieved by image manipulation.
- We need to focus on what your body does (its functionality) and not what it looks like
- The portrayal of appearance ideals starts early in life
 - From children's' films/programmes onwards, the "bad guy" is often scarred or deformed, and the hero/heroine is stereotypically handsome and beautiful.

- Our body image impacts on our health
 - Having a negative image of one's own body is a strong indicator for eating disorders, which can lead to osteoporosis
 - "Bulking up" (often done by boys) can lead to problems with the musculoskeletal system
- And our health impacts on our body image
 - Physical activity improves body image perception
 - Ill health can lead to reduced body confidence – something that should be considered in rehabilitation and return to work processes.
- Low body confidence leads to a loss of participation in education that in turn can lead to unemployment or underemployment.
- There is a relationship between socioeconomic status and body image (poor perception of one's own body image is linked to lower socio-economic status).
- "Driven" (highly motivated and perfectionistic) people are often more likely to have eating disorders – and anorexia in particular.
- Our body image is influenced by the messages from media, family and peers, internalising them and using the messages to compare ourselves to others.



Body image and young people

- Young people are subject to strong peer pressure to conform with their peers
- Young people are subject to strong media pressures
 - But the media does not have great diversity or representation of different body types
 - Some enterprises are marketing insecurities for profit, but we can be lazy and want to believe in "magic diet pills".
- Image manipulation is impacting strongly on young people leading to a desire for increased cosmetic surgical interventions
- Social media has a large impact on young people
 - Social media image filters are having a negative impact on body image
 - The greater the engagement in social media the worse a person feels about their body
- Weight stigma is a big issue in young people
- High pressure on kids can lead to eating disorders
- Social inequality is a key factor in poor body image
- People have many values in their lives that contribute to your self-worth. Your body image is one of them, but many have body image as a high percentage of their self-worth.
 - This is particularly true among low-income groups

- Physical activity among young people is changing
 - The hashtag #fitspiration is leading to image focus and not to actual physical activity
 - There appears to be a trend towards more gym work than team sports
- There is a need to encourage physical activity
 - Sedentary lifestyle in the UK is worse for girls than boys

How can we influence young people?

- Cannot expect ONLY the school to educate but teachers must be mindful of body image matters – they are important role models
 - Even compliments may cause unintentional negative influence
- Need for parental education regarding the increasing pressures on children
- There should be better media representation of different body forms
 - Why not normal, different people in the media and normalise different body sizes and shapes?
- We have to identify and promote the role models for young people?
 - E.g. Paralympians
- Social media is a core channel, but it is very dynamic and difficult for institutions to keep up
- Enterprises should be encouraged to take action under the CSR (corporate social responsibility) umbrella
- The media norms of beauty are not good and change over time
 - The media messages for ergonomics are not good either
- We should not talk down to young people
- We need to interact (listen!) to young people
- Have to make available the type of physical activity that young people actually want
- Children/young people's TV programmes are perpetuating images of beauty
- Assertiveness is a skill to be developed in young people – schools programmes can help
- Body confidence also has to be developed
- Young people have to be empowered to see their body positively
- Young people can be influenced via employers / manufacturers
 - E.g. body image can be impacted by clothes labels
- Young people like tailored, bite-sized, multimedia snippets
- For the prevention of MSDs in workers, a key challenge has been motivation, and in the Netherlands they have used an app that shows movies
- Sport England “this girl can” campaign is trying to get young people to move away from #fitspiration <http://www.thisgirlcan.co.uk/>

A proposed intervention

- There must be diverse messages for a range of target audiences – it is a very segmented target group (age, gender, socioeconomic group)
- The use of young people as ambassadors – body champions? - (who are “regular” looking – not “beautiful”)
- We need to find the “unofficial” leaders of young people to be the role models for the campaign – these could be older peers
- Core message – look after yourself now to ensure your long term health
- But weight stigma should be avoided
- There is a need to engage emotions
- Young people should have ownership of the campaign for better media pickup

- The campaign should include positive media messages as well as positive good practice examples in the language of young people showing different approaches
- The campaign should include education on a mindfulness approach for educators and parents
- Posture education should also be included
- The campaign should link to young peoples' interests (e.g. saving the environment)
- There is a need to challenge young people and make them think
- An app could be developed to support the campaign