The effect of flexible settings on participation rates, data quality and costs in a longitudinal study of ethnically diverse young adults: the London Determinants of young Adult Social wellbeing and Health (DASH) study

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Background
• Loss of young and disadvantaged people in cohort studies compromises representativeness and scientific and public value

• The cohort is now aged 21–23 years, an important transition phase to adulthood that influences health and wellbeing in later life

Aim
• To examine the costs and benefits of different settings on motivation for participation

Methods
• Feasibility sub-sample (N=400) from DASH longitudinal study of 6,443 schoolchildren, now aged 21-23 years

• 50 people were sampled per ethnic group to give a reasonable spread by sex and socioeconomic position

• Flexibility in settings was based on the number of interview locations available and appointment times

• Two-hour assessment with a 60-item main questionnaire, dietary recall, body size, blood pressure, pulse wave velocity, lung function, accelerometry, 25ml blood sample

Interview locations within 2km of residential postcodes & easy reach of public transport
• General practice surgeries
• Community pharmacies
• Clinical Research Centre
• Clinical Research Facility
• Kings College London
• Home

Results
Participation rates high across ethnicities, settings and measures

Cost per participant varied by setting

Cost per participant:
• varied from £229 (Kings College London) to £283 (Clinical Research Centre)
• was intermediate for surgery nurses but quality was least favourable

Busy environments of inner-city surgeries in deprived areas compromised adherence to protocol

Conclusion
• Flexibility in interview location and appointment times boosted participation rates

• The use of our own study team rather than surgery nurses was associated with lower cost per participant and better quality data

• Participants were not randomly assigned to a setting which compromised comparisons of setting-specific participation rates

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