Reviewer’s report

Title: Overview of 71 European community based initiatives against childhood obesity starting between 2005 and 2011: general characteristics and reported effects

Version: 2 Date: 27 January 2014

Reviewer: Miranda Pallan

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This paper is of public health interest, particularly those public health researchers and practitioners involved in childhood obesity intervention. CBIs represent a very heterogeneous group of interventions and it is very useful to see them described and mapped in this way.

I think that there are several improvements that would improve the quality of this paper and make it easier for readers to follow. These are listed below.

Major revisions

1. The 2nd paragraph of the background section would benefit from expansion to include more of a discussion on the interaction between individual behaviours and characteristics of the physical/social/political environment. This will give more explanation as to why CBIs have been encouraged and developed.

2. In section 2.4.2. the authors state that the strategies that were listed in the questionnaire have been described elsewhere. I think it is important for the paper that these strategies are listed, otherwise the reader has incomplete information.

3. In the results section, a distinction is made between CBIs that included the neighbourhood as one of the settings and those that did not, but the significance of this distinction or a discussion on the differences between the two groups of CBIs is not discussed in any detail. I would suggest that a discussion of this is included in the discussion section.

4. In section 3.4, the second paragraph would benefit from more of a critique of the quality of evidence for effectiveness of CBIs. Also in this paragraph, state what the GO Overvecht study is.

5. The 3rd paragraph of the discussion is quite difficult to follow and the points the authors are trying to make in this paragraph need to be brought out more succinctly. For example, the point the authors are trying to make in their discussion on preschool intervention studies is not clear to me.

Minor essential revisions

1. In the 2nd paragraph of the background section there is a sentence: “Information on effectiveness is scarce, however, and previous overviews on
various childhood obesity interventions contained a minority of European studies.” The authors are making two separate points here: 1) there is scarce evidence regarding effectiveness of CBIs, and 2) the general evidence on childhood obesity intervention (i.e. not just CBIs) mainly comes from countries other than Europe. I would suggest rewording this section to make these two separate points clear.

2. In section 2.4.2 the authors talk about “instruments”, “strategies” and activities” at various points. It appears that these all mean the same thing, therefore I would recommend using consistent terminology (perhaps strategies).

3. Table 1 – write out the settings in full at the top of the columns.

4. Tables 3 and 4 – Ensure that the study design is included for each study in the first column.

5. Tables 3 and 4 – I found the footnotes confusing and could not always find the corresponding superscript numbers in the table.

6. Results section – where the authors have given absolute numbers, please give percentages in brackets.

7. Section 3.4, 4th paragraph, the authors state that nine CBIs reported incorporation of their CBI in policy documents. Do the authors mean 9 of the 71 included CBIs or 9 of the 14 CBIs that reported data on outcomes?

8. Table 5 – I would recommend not having codes for the nutrition, PA and body weight objectives, but put the full text (or an abbreviated version) in the column headings. With the codes, it is too confusing for the reader to follow.

6. For the entire manuscript the English needs checking and revising. There are many instances where the grammar or the use of English is not quite correct.

7. Figures 1-3 – please label graph axes.

Discretionary revisions

1. In section 2.3: Number of CBIs, I would suggest inclusion of a flow diagram to aid understanding of why studies were excluded.

2. Tables 3 and 4 – It would be useful to order the studies by study design, as this would help the reader make some assessment of the quality of the evidence.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.