Author's response to reviews

Title: Shaping the Social: design and baseline findings of a settings-based intervention study to improve well-being, and reduce smoking and dropout in Danish vocational schools

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Dear Editor-in-Chief

Regarding manuscript: 7769145661728562 entitled ‘Shaping the Social: design and baseline findings of a settings-based intervention study to improve well-being, and reduce smoking and dropout in Danish vocational schools’.

Thank you for the response to our manuscript. In the following we provide or address each of the requested responses:

1.1 Ethical and Funding Approval Documentation: I will forward the documentation of ethical approval and funding approval as email attachments to BMCSeriesEditorial@biomedcentral.com. For your information, however, I did also send these documents on 22nd May 2015.

1.2 Funding: The study has received external funding and undergone peer-review by TrygFonden; a major funding body in Denmark.

1.3 Study status: The study is ongoing and we are at present analysing data. This is stated on page 15, line 320.

1.4 Related Articles: The results of this study have not been published nor submitted to any journal. The intervention development is described and recently published in BMC Public Health, manuscript id 1412317859137682, entitled: How can we strengthen students’ social relations in order to reduce school dropout? An intervention development study within four Danish vocational schools. This study is cited as reference no. 19.

2.1 Remove baseline results: We are aware that it is normal procedure not to include baseline results in study protocols. However, because the participating schools were not randomly allocated to either intervention or control, we would very much like to include the baseline results in order to compare intervention and control groups on a wide range of participant characteristics. We believe that this increases the relevance of the study and hope that you are willing to reconsider your request.

2.2 Provide a note on consent: We have addressed the consent in the Ethical Issues section (page 20, lines 422-428). The study was conducted according to national guidelines, and there is no formal agency for ethical approval of school surveys in Denmark. We asked the school management in each of the participating schools for approval. Furthermore, we informed the students that participation was voluntary and that data would be used for research purposes only. Regarding parental consent for participants under the age of 16: The Danish authorities have no objection to the conduct of school surveys among 15-year-olds, if school authorities approve the study and individual informed consent is given and data are anonymised. Thus, based on national legislation and ethical constraints young people aged 15 or older can make an independent decision to participation in surveys without parental consent (see Helweg-Larsen K, Bøving-Larsen H: Ethical issues in youth surveys: Potentials for conducting a national questionnaire study on adolescent schoolchildren’s sexual experiences with
adults. *Am J Public Health* 2003, **93**: 1878-1882). In our study, a total of 5794 students were assessed at baseline, of which 101 (1.7%) were 15 years old; the remaining was aged 16 years or older.

**3.1** We have provided the date of registration alongside the Trial Registration Number (page 4, line 61).

Hence, I am pleased to submit this revised manuscript for exclusive publication in BMC Public Health. We appreciate your time and look forward to hear from you.

Sincerely,

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