

Exploring the application of social media in influencing the attitudes and behaviours of young athletes towards doping

Summary

This project will explore how social media can be harnessed by local anti-doping organisations to influence the attitudes and behaviours of young athletes towards performance enhancing drugs.

The research will be undertaken over three stages:

- Stage One: a review of existing literature, consultation with experts in the field of online social marketing/campaigns and interviews with anti-doping stakeholders

In this initial phase of research, we will conduct a focussed literature review to identify research which outlines key factors in encouraging positive behaviour change through communications. This will help us develop the core criteria for a set of guiding principles which we can test with stakeholders and use as the basis for identifying social media campaigns which have the core components for effecting behaviour change.

- Stage Two: qualitative interviews with young athletes

Given the importance of gathering data from young people across the world on both their use of social media and the guiding principles and concepts developed, we propose conducting qualitative telephone research with young athletes from a range of different countries and sports.

We propose carrying out 16 interviews lasting 45 minutes to one hour each with athletes that have been identified and put forward by the eight representatives of local anti-doping organisations spoken to when formulating the guiding principles. The 16 interviews should comprise two athletes per country who represent different sports.

These interviews will enable us to test the principles identified and developed through the literature review and interviews with experts. The interviews will be undertaken in the respondents' native language to ensure that meaning is correctly understood.

- Stage Three: testing of guidance with local anti-doping organisations

As a final stage, we suggest sending the guidance, once it has been revised to reflect the findings of the qualitative interviews, by email for comment to the representatives from the eight local anti-doping organisations interviewed as part of the literature review. This will enable a final check of the guidance among local anti-doping organisations for usefulness, relevance and appropriateness.