

Abstract

This thesis presents an exploration of the experiences of adolescents with health-related needs in secondary schools, and of the parents and carers, school nurses and teachers supporting them. The health of adolescents is strongly affected by multiple factors at personal, family, school, and national levels. Safe and supportive families and schools, access to education and supportive teachers and peers are crucial to helping young people with health conditions to achieve their full potential. Improving adolescents' daily lives with families and peers, addressing risk and protective factors in their schools, and focusing on points of intersection between their educational and healthcare providers are the structural changes needed to improve their educational and employment outcomes. For this study, an ecological model helped to understand the experience of adolescents with health-related needs and the factors that impact their support and outcomes. The research used mixed methods with a quantitative survey exploring the views of school nurses and qualitative semi-structured interviews exploring the views of adolescents, their parents and carers, school nurses and educational professionals. The interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. Findings included themes which described the views of the different participant groups from multiple angles. The central theme revolved around communication. Better and more transparent communication between all stakeholders and agencies can lead to necessary structural changes to improve the outcomes of adolescents with health-related needs. Further themes included invisible needs linked with health, training and awareness raising in schools, enhancing self-advocacy skills for adolescents, the lack of standardised support in schools as well as the need for scrutiny of the support and outcomes of

this population. Recommendations for professionals and directions for future research are outlined.