

School for Public Health Research, Peninsula

Implementing health promotion in UK schools: a systematic realist review of evidence



**National Institute for
Health Research**

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The idea

We have found over 66 published systematic reviews of health promotion in schools, but these show quite mixed findings about the effectiveness of specific types of strategy and/or targeting specific health problems.

Our review aims to be different in two key respects: first, to focus the review on implementation processes in the school setting (more specifically, UK primary and secondary schools); and second, to use a theory-driven (realist) approach to evidence synthesis, in order to identify and organise evidence about *how* and *why* UK schools, or schools with different characteristics, provide a feasible and sustainable setting for health promotion or health education activities.

Review questions

- What are the main factors or mechanisms that are thought to explain the success or failure of the implementation of health promotion in schools?
- Is there an association between these factors and mechanisms and the successful implementation of health promotion in schools?
- For what public health problems and in what circumstances do schools provide a feasible and sustainable setting for effective health promotion in the UK?

Review methods

The review has two phases:

- Phase 1** has identified programme theories about implementation (ideas about what enables or inhibits effective health promotion to be delivered in a school-setting) from a range of published and other sources.

This is based on a close reading of a small number of papers and reports identified as being conceptually rich, and a process of note-taking and tabulating the key themes, links and ideas within them.

- Phase 2** will test these programme theories, using published and unpublished empirical evidence.

Data extraction and evidence synthesis will involve collating data from and critical discussion of sources between reviewers and the wider team, about selected programme theories. From these we will develop a line of argument about what leads to successful (or unsuccessful) implementation in schools. Realist Synthesis is achieved by juxtaposing, reconciling, adjudicating, consolidating and situating different sources of empirical evidence. It may also involve some 'Qualitative Comparative Analysis' of relevant outcome data.

Bibliographic searches:
8,053 titles and abstracts
screened

22
Conceptually 'rich' sources

356
Descriptively 'thick' sources

of which
21
are on UK studies/
Programmes

972
Descriptively 'thin' sources

Draft conceptual model of key phases, mechanisms and stakeholders

