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Being there for each other – health promoting school development from young peoples perspective

The purpose of this study was to describe and understand how mental health can be promoted in schools from young people's perspectives. Three focus group discussions were held with 14 young people, 8 from Scotland and 6 from Sweden aged 15-21, 11 girls and 3 boys. Participants came from youth groups organized in Scotland by Highland Children's Forum, and in Sweden by the County Council and the Swedish church. The participants were presented with an overall question, *How can schools promote mental health and have a role in supporting early intervention in children and young people with emotional and mental health problems?* To capture their experiences, thoughts and ideas they received two poster assignments which were the point of departure in the discussions. A phenomenological analysis was used. The findings consisted of one main theme *Everyone is being there for each other* and three themes without any relative order of precedence; *Being in a safe, inclusive and well informed space*, *Meeting adults who are available, listening and taking action* and *Feeling significant and being of significance to others*. The young people want adults in school who are present, knowledgeable, taking action and talking with them about their mental health needs. Both adults and young people have the possibility and responsibility to contribute to a school that promote mental health. Listening to young people sharing their experiences and perceptions can provide valuable insight informing further research and health promoting school development efforts.

Keywords: Health promoting school, student voice, mental health