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Background:

Recently, in some European countries asset-based approaches (ABAs) are being adopted as complementary health promotion strategy. ABAs centres on engaging local stakeholders to identify resources in their areas and connect them. Research on how ABAs interventions work is limited and understanding the mechanisms of their implementation could support the development of an evidence base, and transferability to other contexts. This research explores how ABAs can promote health when implemented in disadvantaged areas.

Methods:

Two cases have been selected (Spain and UK) where a similar intervention adopting ABAs is being implemented: training lay people to become peer health promoters, and encouraging strategic partnerships among health services and local stakeholders. In each setting, a theory of change developed with programmes' staff informs the focus of the fieldwork. Interviews and observations are conducted to explore how the intervention is implemented and how participants perceive the potential changes in their areas. Findings will be analysed thematically and combined with results from the literature on ABAs to develop a conceptual model of how ABAs' interventions work.

Results:

A theory of change developed in one field site highlighted partnerships, empowerment and peer support for health literacy as key mechanisms in the intervention. Currently, data are being collected through interviewing trained peer supporters, local charities' representatives and health professionals to discuss their perceptions on these mechanisms. Results are still partial.

Conclusions:

ABAs are an understudied area of health promotion research and practice. This study is contributing to the understanding of some of the mechanisms which are expected to make ABAs work to promote health and wellbeing in local communities through using qualitative methodologies to enhance the understanding of how ABAs interventions adapt in complex systems like communities.

Key messages:

- The assets approach is underpinned by assumptions related to working in partnerships and empowering stakeholders.
- This research explores how these assumptions are translated into practice.

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