

# Research Matters

## Understanding the Needs of Children and Young People with Acquired Brain Injuries (ABIs) and Their Families

### ABOUT THIS ARTICLE

The purpose of this literature review was to summarize existing knowledge about the needs of children and young people (CYP) with acquired brain injuries (ABIs) and their families.

Although advances in medical care have reduced mortality rates, many CYP with ABIs continue to face lifelong disabilities which can have a profound long-term impact on the quality of life for both the individuals and their families.

By establishing a better understanding of the needs within this population, this review may serve to inform the development of future services.

### METHODS

This review explored the research related to the needs of CYP with ABI, their family members, educators and other professionals providing care. The authors searched library databases, Google, and other sources. The authors ranked the articles based on their level of evidence and identified the key themes.

### KEY FINDINGS

The authors identified four themes from their review.

**CYP-related impairment needs:** CYP have significant needs relating to ongoing physical, cognitive, psychological, emotional, behavioral, and social impairments.

**Support needs:** Parents and CYP with ABIs have a strong need for information and emotional support from professionals throughout the care process. However, many parents report a lack of support and unmet needs in these areas.

**Return to school support:** Parents express the need for support when their child returned to school following ABI. This includes effective communication, information sharing, training, and collaboration between schools, families, and healthcare professionals. Parents describe having to negotiate with schools to secure the necessary support for their children and note that a coordinated collaboration between educators, families, and healthcare providers can significantly

reduce their burden. Teachers also highlight the importance of receiving information from healthcare professionals about brain injury and its long-term effects, as well as the need for collaboration in planning and implementing effective transitions back to school.

**Long-term aftercare:** Several studies highlight unmet needs in follow-up medical care for CYP with ABI. Other research identified unmet or unrecognized healthcare needs throughout the care continuum.

## STUDY IMPLICATIONS

CYP with ABI and their families have extensive needs related to impairments, support, school reintegration, and long-term aftercare. These needs extend beyond the healthcare and educational sectors. Their needs reflect the desire to fully participate in society and life.

## REFERENCE

Keetley, R., Radford, K., & Manning, J. C. (2019). A scoping review of the needs of children and young people with acquired brain injuries and their families. *Brain injury, 33*(9), 1117-1128.