

Mental Health Economics and Policy

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As evidenced by the European Commission's recent Mental Health Pact, mental health has moved up the policy agenda in many countries. There is much more attention now on promoting general mental wellbeing in the population, and addressing the needs of people with mental health problems. Particular concerns are: human rights abuses; rebalancing community and institutional care; coordinating action across multiple sectors; delivering effective treatments and supports; preventing mental health problems arising in the first place; and overcoming the huge problems of stigma and discrimination.

The PSSRU's Mental Health Economics and Policy (MHEP) programme at LSE is working to inform better understanding of some of these issues. It seeks to generate knowledge of what works, for whom, in what context and with what resource implications. Recent UK-based work includes research on **age discrimination in mental health services**; assessment of the **long-term economic consequences of behavioural and emotional problems arising in childhood**; the **economics of autism**; and income-related **inequalities in access to services**. Complementary work for the government's **Foresight programme** includes assessment of debt management and its links to mental health needs, while the team are also involved in the evaluation of a system of structured, pro-active care for chronic depression in primary care. Research in relation to older people includes **development and testing of evidence-based interventions for dementia care**, as well as collaborative work on the **development of a dementia-specific QALY** (Quality Adjusted Life Year).

At an international level the MHEP programme includes numerous EC-supported projects, including: the **DATPREV** project to grade the quality of the evidence base for mental health promotion and prevention in Europe; **EuroCoDe** which is looking at methodological developments and estimates of informal care costs for people with dementia; **HELPS**, which is exploring the physical health of residents of psychiatric and social care institutions; and **e-DESDE**, which is developing electronic standard coding and mapping of services for long-term care. The team are also involved in work to promote mental health in the workplace to **support implementation of the EC Mental Health Pact**.

Key publications

Beecham, J., Knapp, M., Fernández J.L., Huxley, P., Mangalore, R., McCrone, P., Snell, T., Winter, B. and Wittenberg, R. (2008) Age Discrimination in Mental Health Services, Report to the Department of Health, PSSRU Discussion Paper 2536, LSE.

Mansell, J., Knapp, M., Beadle-Brown, J. and Beecham J. (2007) Deinstitutionalisation and Community Living – Outcomes and Costs: a Report of a European Study. Report to the European Commission, Tizard Centre, University of Kent, Canterbury, 2007.

McCrone, P., Dhanasiri, S., Patel, A., Knapp, M. and Lawton-Smith, S. (2008) Paying the Price: The Cost of Mental Health Care in England to 2026, King's Fund, London.

McDaid, D. (2008) Mental Health in Workplace Settings, Consensus Paper, Commission of the European Communities, Luxembourg.

McDaid, D., Knapp, M. and Raja, S. (2008) Barriers in the mind: promoting an economic case for mental health in low- and middle-income countries, *World Psychiatry*, 7, 79–86.

Further information

New findings have been generated from the BCS70 dataset (projecting from behavioural and emotional problems at age 10 to employment and income consequences at age 30) and will shortly be submitted for publication. Publication of the project findings will also follow shortly.

Project team

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Lifetime economic consequences of mental health problems in childhood and adolescence

Background

The UK Home Office recently introduced the Respect campaign in its drive to tackle antisocial behaviour (Home Office, 2008). It adopts a broader and deeper approach to intervene early and tackle underlying causes of antisocial behaviour. An important motivation for this is the future impact of antisocial behaviour on individuals and society as a whole. One ongoing area of study within the Mental Health Economics and Policy programme focuses on the connections between behaviour and emotional problems in childhood and/or adolescence and their economic consequences in adulthood. Current work has drawn from a small number of previously completed studies (Scott et al., 2001; Healey et al., 2004; McCrone et al., 2005) to develop a more systematic approach to identifying childhood-adulthood connections, and in particular to build a series of models that estimate the projected economic consequences of childhood problems throughout the span of adulthood.

Where data allow, the project distinguishes between different personal, public sector and economic consequences of different childhood behavioural and emotional problems, and seeks to integrate this work with existing evidence on the effectiveness of childhood interventions. In this way, it may be possible to gain a more complete picture regarding the long-term economic benefits of programmes that target mental health problems in childhood.

Methods

The sources of evidence include cohort studies, such as the 1970 birth cohort (BCS70) that has followed every child born in one week in April 1970 in Great Britain, and smaller studies such as the Inner London Longitudinal Study set up by Michael Rutter, and the CSDD directed by David Farrington (Cambridge University).

The project seeks to interpolate relevant service use and employment profiles between observations, and – if this proves sufficiently robust – to extrapolate beyond the current observed evidence on the basis of existing economic data, patterns of economic variables in later years, and clinical and social evidence on the connections over the life span for people with different behavioural, emotional or cognitive problems. Careful econometric specifications underpin the analyses.

The project further builds on evidence of effective interventions in childhood and adolescence such as multisystemic therapy and parent training. This evidence is further enhanced by including other published trials and systematic reviews. We can then trace the potential economic benefits through the models (for example in terms of reduced health service and other costs, criminal justice savings, higher rates of labour force participation, and lower rates of social exclusion) at various ages.

References

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- McCrone, P., Knapp, M. and Fombonne, E. (2005) The Maudsley long-term follow-up of childhood and adolescent depression: predicting costs in adulthood, *European Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 14, 407–413.
- Scott, S., Knapp, M., Henderson, J. and Maughan, B. (2001) Financial cost of social exclusion: follow-up study of antisocial children into adulthood, *British Medical Journal*, 323, 191–194.