

LIFETIME ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS IN CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE

PSSRU

Outline of a research project funded by the Department of Health

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BACKGROUND

The PSSRU at LSE has completed a small number of studies that examine the connections between behavioural and emotional problems in childhood and/or adolescence and a range of economic consequences in adulthood. These economic consequences include the utilisation of health care and other services (with their associated costs), impacts on earnings and problems in relation to employment (such as unemployment, not being economically active, working in a low-status occupation, and low income). Some of those completed studies have been opportunistic, using data from national or local cohort studies and from clinical trials or follow-ups to make the connections between childhood and adulthood variables. Others – such as our inputs to the Cambridge Study of Delinquent Development (CSDD) (see below) – have been purposive.

AIMS

This project aims to develop a more systematic approach to these childhood–adulthood connections, and in particular to build a series of models that allow the projection of the economic consequences of childhood problems over a much longer period, perhaps over much of the full life span. 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 study (BCS70) that has followed every child born in one week in April 1970 in the UK, 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 PSSRU 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 generated by other people's 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.

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OUTPUTS

Some of the early work has already been published (Scott et al., 2001; Healey et al., 2004; McCrone et al., 2005).

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.

PUBLICATIONS

Healey, A., Knapp, M. and Farrington, D.P. (2004) Adult labour market implications of antisocial behaviour in childhood and adolescence: findings from a UK longitudinal study, *Applied Economics*, 36, 93–105.

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.

TIMING

Work is expected to continue until December 2010.

PROJECT TEAM

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