Education and Child Health Insights from Linked Data - England Research Priorities

ADR UK Research Fellowships 2024

Background

Children and young people's health, education and social care are inextricably linked. For example, children with chronic health conditions have higher rates of school absence than their peers, and are less likely to achieve expected levels of attainment. Young people who struggle at school are more likely to experience poor mental health outcomes. These strong interrelationships are recognised by policymakers, but evidence is lacking on how services complement or compensate for each other and there have been calls for a stronger evidence base to be developed.

About the dataset

The Education and Child Health Insights from Linked Data (ECHILD) research database is now available to researchers. ECHILD links de-identified records for around 20 million children, and can be used to better understand how education affects children's health and how health affects children's education. This data can be used to generate a comprehensive view of the journey through childhood to adulthood, and to understand how trajectories of health, education and social care vary across children's lives. ECHILD facilitates research that will inform policymakers and service commissioners about the associations between education risk factors and health outcomes.

This first release of the database includes the National Pupil Database linked to Hospital Episodes Statistics, and also includes community, maternal, and mental health services data. ECHILD also includes a mother-baby link, meaning that children in ECHILD can be linked to their mothers. For details on coverage, linkage methodology and restrictions, please read the **user guide** carefully.

Research themes

To date, ECHILD has been used to understand how disruptions to services during the national Covid-19 lockdown affected children's hospital use, focusing on children who require extra support from services. This includes those receiving special educational needs support or those who are in care. It has also been used to evaluate educational attainment and special educational needs provision according to **gestational age at birth**, and to determine the proportion and characteristics of **pupils affected by self-harm**.

ECHILD has been approved for use in research that has a clear public benefit relating to the provision of healthcare and to education. This falls under the following five themes.

1. Informing preventative strategies by healthcare and education services
2. Informing children and their parents
3. Informing clinical and educational practice
4. Identifying the characteristics of groups who could benefit from an intervention
5. Understanding the most effective methods for working with linked health and education data

Research topics

We welcome applications looking at the following research topics for this round of our research fellowships.

- How can we improve health and education for children with chronic physical or mental health conditions in England?
- How can we better understand the health-related drivers of educational outcomes in England?
- How can we improve the quality and equity of health, education and children's social care provision in England?
- How do community services such as health visiting affect children's health and education outcomes, and interactions with social care services?
- How does the provision of education and social care services affect children with mental health conditions?
- What are the maternal health and education factors associated with child health and development?

This is not an exhaustive list and other questions are also welcomed providing you can demonstrate policy relevance and likelihood of impact and uptake. **A more extensive list of potential research questions can be found here**.