

Project Details	
Project Code	NMH27Ba Fairchild
Title	Understanding and improving the provision of clinical services for youth with disruptive behaviour disorders
Research Theme	Neuroscience & Mental Health
Project Type	Dry lab
Summary	This PhD project will involve mapping mental health service provision for children and young people with disruptive behaviour disorders through a nationally representative survey of healthcare professionals, commissioners, and parents and carers. It will identify barriers to service access, healthcare professionals' training needs and existing care pathways. The project will also use existing longitudinal data to investigate the impact of accessing versus not accessing mental health support, on children and parents' mental health and wellbeing, and health economic outcomes. The overall objective is to improve care for this disadvantaged group and their families and inform commissioning and mental health policy.
Description	Conduct Disorder (CD), Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are among the most common neurodevelopmental disorders in children and young people, affecting approximately 2%, 3% and 5% of the school-aged population, respectively. Together, they represent a substantial public health challenge. The Global Burden of Disease 2019 study identified CD as the leading cause of burden among psychiatric disorders in children aged below 15 and the 4th leading cause of burden in 15-19-year-olds, while ADHD ranked 6th in burden among psychiatric disorders in this age group. Despite this considerable burden, access to appropriate assessment and treatment for these conditions remains limited in the UK. Many children and youth people (CYP) experience long waits for assessment and diagnosis or are never assessed, and care pathways are fragmented, restricting access to evidence-based interventions. Mental health services for CYP are under significant pressure and CD and ODD are often not recognised or treated by healthcare professionals. The key research question that this project seeks to address is: How are CYP with CD and ODD currently identified, assessed and treated within mental health services in England, and how can service delivery be enhanced to increase assess and improve outcomes? This PhD project will build on the NIHR Bath Mental Health Research Group's work by combining primary data collection with secondary data analysis and embedding Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) work throughout the project. Main study: Mapping national services for children and youth people with CD and ODD The first project will map clinical services for CYP with CD and ODD in England using a nationally representative survey. Using methods developed by our colleagues at Exeter (the seven-step service mapping method) and building on the Mapping ADHD services in Primary care (MAP) study, the student will design and deliver a nationally representative survey. This will involve designing three linked cross-

	sectional surveys examining the experiences of healthcare professionals, commissioners and parents/carers of CYP with CD/ODD. The survey will examine: • Current diagnostic practices, referral mechanisms and care pathways for CD/ODD • Availability of psychological and pharmacological treatment for CD/ODD • Barriers and facilitators to accessing care • Adherence to NICE guidelines for the management of CD/ODD • Workforce training needs PPI work will underpin every stage of the project, from survey development to interpretation of findings and dissemination. The student will establish advisory groups of healthcare professionals and parents/carers to guide the research and ensure outputs are relevant and accessible to service users and providers. The study will generate the first comprehensive map of service provision for CYP with CD/ODD in England, identify examples of good practice, and provide evidence to inform future service development and youth mental health policy. Ideas for additional studies This ambitious mixed-methods project will provide many opportunities for student ownership. The student will choose which components to focus on, the methods to apply, and could develop new objectives as the PhD develops. Below are some ideas for further studies. These will be shaped based on the student's interests, stakeholders' priorities, and the initial findings of the national survey and the wider Bath Mental Health Research Group project. • An experimental vignette study exploring mental health professionals' ability to recognise disruptive behaviour disorders A possible add-on/optional element to circulate with the national survey would be a vignette study investigating whether healthcare professionals are able to recognise symptoms of CD and ODD and can accurately identify/diagnose these disorders and suggest appropriate treatment pathways (e.g., McGuire et al., 2022). • Educational professionals' perspectives on mental health support and referral pathways from schools to mental health services A qualitative interview study exploring how educational professionals recognise behavioural difficulties, support the mental health needs of this group, and navigate referrals to mental health services. • Secondary data analyses of longitudinal cohort study data As well as collecting primary data, the student would have opportunities to analyse secondary data from a longitudinal cohort study investigating service access among 9–12-year-olds with CD/ODD (n=200), conducted within the Bath Mental Health Research Group. They could use advanced statistical approaches such as growth mixture modelling to analyse the longitudinal data to investigate changes in mental health problems among CYP who access treatment versus those who are unable to access treatment. They could also perform health economic analyses examining how access to treatment affects the costs incurred by families and society over time (e.g., parents' ability to work).
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	The exact programme of work will be refined collaboratively and iteratively between the student, the supervisory team and PPI contributors, enabling the student to develop methodological expertise (e.g., in repeated measures analysis) while pursuing their research interests. This structure provides substantial opportunities for intellectual ownership, including shaping the project based on stakeholders' research priorities, developing additional studies based on the initial findings, leading publications and gaining experience of PPI work and public engagement.
Can be completed part time?	Yes
Supervisory Team	
Lead Supervisor	
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