

Project Details	
Project Code	PHS27Br Cornish
Title	How does childhood disadvantage contribute to inequalities in adult health, work and financial outcomes?
Research Theme	Population Health Sciences
Project Type	Dry lab
Summary	Around one in three children in the UK live in poverty, and many experience other forms of disadvantage, including abuse, neglect, or family adversity. Childhood adversity is associated with many poor long-term health and employment outcomes. However, previous research has examined these outcomes at one point in time. This PhD will examine the relationships between childhood disadvantage and longitudinal patterns of health, employment, and welfare outcomes. The project will draw on uniquely linked cohort studies, health records, and administrative data on employment, earnings and benefit receipt. The findings will provide new insights into the development of health and socioeconomic inequalities.
Description	Childhood disadvantage, including poverty, abuse, neglect, family adversity, is common in the UK and remains a major public health and social policy concern. Childhood disadvantage is associated with many short- and long-term health problems across the life course. Research has consistently shown it is associated with poorer physical and mental health, lower educational attainment, and poorer employment outcomes later in life (Hughes et al., 2017, Hughes et al., 2020, Felitti et al., 1998, Houtepen et al., 2020, Yu et al., 2022, Bellis et al., 2014, Bellis et al., 2023, Hardcastle et al., 2018). However, most of the existing evidence focuses on outcomes measured at a single point in time, providing limited insight into the development patterns of health and socioeconomic inequalities over time. Longitudinal studies suggest that mental health problems often emerge early and may persist into adulthood (Thapar et al., 2012). Poor health is also associated with unemployment, lower earnings, and greater reliance on welfare benefits. Despite this, little is known about how trajectories of health from adolescence into adulthood are associated with later employment and welfare outcomes among individuals who experienced childhood disadvantage. Similarly, while different forms of childhood disadvantage frequently co-occur, their contribution to adult health and socioeconomic inequalities remains unclear. This PhD will use uniquely linked longitudinal cohort (such as The Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents [ALSPAC]), electronic health, and administrative datasets on employment, earnings and benefit receipt to examine associations between childhood disadvantage, health trajectories, employment outcomes, and benefit receipt across the life course. By combining rich longitudinal information on early-life experiences, measures of health and economic outcomes, the project will provide a comprehensive understanding of how inequalities may persist from childhood through to adulthood. The overarching research question is: How are different forms of childhood disadvantage associated with trajectories of physical and mental health, employment outcomes, and benefit receipt over time?

	To address this question, the student will work towards the following objectives: 1. Characterise childhood disadvantage using measures such as poverty, family adversity, maltreatment within longitudinal cohort data and electronic health records 2. Examine associations between childhood disadvantage and adult employment outcomes, including employment stability 3. Investigate associations between childhood disadvantage and benefit receipt, including duration and patterns of benefit claims over time 4. Identify distinct trajectories of physical and mental health from adolescence to adulthood and examine how these differ according to type of childhood disadvantage 5. Assess associations between health trajectories and adult economic outcomes, including employment and benefit receipt 6. Estimate the contribution of different dimensions of childhood disadvantage to inequalities in adult health, employment, and benefit receipt outcomes The student will gain skills in longitudinal data analysis, analysis of health and administrative data, advanced statistical methods such as sequence analysis and latent class models. There will also be opportunities to apply machine-learning approaches to identify complex patterns of childhood disadvantage and health service use, and to improve our understanding of their links to adult health, employment, and benefit receipt outcomes using linked administrative and health records. The student will receive training in longitudinal data analysis, and analysis of health and administrative data. They will gain experience working with large-scale population-based datasets and develop transferable analytical and statistical skills relevant to academic, government, health service, and third-sector careers. The student will have scope to shape the direction of the project. Following an initial scoping review, they will be encouraged to refine specific research questions, select exposures and outcomes of particular interest, and contribute to decisions regarding analytical approaches. The student will have opportunities to explore additional topics arising from the data, such as differences by sex. This flexibility will allow the student to develop as an independent researcher, while contributing to an important and policy-relevant programme of research on health and socioeconomic inequalities across the life course.
Can be completed part time?	Yes
Supervisory Team	
Lead Supervisor	
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