

## **Effects of Early Interventions in Child Health and Education**

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**School of Economics, University of Surrey**

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**University of Surrey, Guildford, UK**

### **WORKSHOP REPORT**

#### **Introduction**

This workshop considered the impacts of early interventions on children's health and education. Increasingly administrative data is being made available to look at these issues in new ways. The workshop explored how researchers use cutting-edge quantitative techniques to look at a set of related issues on child health and education. Policy interest in the themes of the workshop is likely to reach a peak coming up to the next general election with proposals already announced on free school meals, out of school childcare and family tax allowance. The approach taken in this workshop will be multifaceted, covering health, education, and non-cognitive outcomes, and looking across both developed and developing countries.

**Summary** Our workshop comprised five themed sessions and two keynote presentations by worldwide famous scholars in the field (Professors Aizer and Devereux). The themed sessions were: Session 1: Health Session 2: Child wellbeing in developing countries Session 3: Conflict violence and child wellbeing Session 4: Early education Session 5: Parental behaviour and child wellbeing

**Key themes** Many studies on early childhood development face a common methodological difficulty. We wish to understand the impact of an investment made in the early years, but this investment is made by parents whose decisions are likely to be affected by their own characteristics and their knowledge of their children. This means it is hard to separate out the impact of the investment from all these other factors. Economists would say that the investment is endogenous. Several examples of this were found in the workshop; Emla Fitzsimons paper on breastfeeding and Jo Blanden's presentation on early years education, but also in the papers presented in Sessions 4 and 5.

Other key themes analysed in the workshop were the challenges to measure and assess in utero events on children health (theme 3) or how changes in the economy affect household decisions on fertility and children wellbeing (theme 2).

#### **Aims and outcomes of the workshop**

The aims of the workshop were twofold. One was purely scholarly, to hear and discuss some excellent research, this was certainly delivered. The workshop worked particularly well in that the topic was fairly specific. This enabled us to build sessions with a really clear focus, for example we had three papers which considered the longer term implications of being raised in a conflict zone. This is usual for a small workshop and meant that we were able to look in great detail at a set of related issues and the methodologies used to investigate them. The keynote lectures were a particular highlight. Anna Aizer's was a tour de force in using historical data (from applications for widow's relief) to illuminate an issue of perennial policy interest, the impact of income on children's health.

The second aim was to build the profile of the Applied Micro group at Surrey. Given the growth of the School of Economics many people seemed very curious to come to Surrey and see what was going on. We were delighted with the quality and range of participants. We were able to attract a keynote from the US and several contributors from elsewhere in Europe. It was also very enjoyable to welcome colleagues from around the UK as well as a number of individuals from other departments around campus.

One additional outcome of the workshop is that all the research presented at the workshop is or will be submitted for publication to top journals in the field and presented at seminars and conferences all over the world.

## **Participants**

Anna Aizer – Brown University

Sonia Bhalotra – Department of Economics, University of Essex

Jo Blanden – School of Economics, University of Surrey

Giorgio Brunello, Department of Economics, University of Padova

Francesco Cecchi – Wageningen University

Francesca Cornaglia – Department of Economics, Queen Mary, London

Laure De Preux – Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics

Paul Devereux – Department of Economics, University College Dublin

Bernadette Egan - Department of Psychology, University of Surrey

Corrina Elsenbroich – Department of Sociology, University of Surrey

Emla Fitzsimons – Centre for Longitudinal Studies, Institute of Education

Marco Francesconi – Department of Economics, University of Essex

Vasco Gabriel - School of Economics, University of Surrey

Daniel Kamhofer – Department of Economics, University of Duisberg-Essen

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