

# NEWSLETTER

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## UNLOCKING THE POWER OF LONGITUDINAL DATA FOR CHILD AND YOUTH WELLBEING: INSIGHTS FROM OUR SEPTEMBER 2024 WORKSHOP

**Date:** 27 September 2024

**Location:** University of Essex, Colchester

In September 2024, researchers, policymakers, and stakeholders from across the UK and beyond gathered at the University of Essex to explore how longitudinal data can drive policy and improve child and youth wellbeing. The workshop, hosted as part of the COORDINATE project, underscored the vital role of evidence-based research in shaping policies that support children and young people.



### WHY LONGITUDINAL DATA MATTERS

Understanding children's wellbeing requires more than a snapshot in time. Longitudinal studies track individuals over years, providing invaluable insights into how early-life experiences influence future outcomes. This evidence is critical for designing policies that effectively address issues such as mental health, education, and social inequality.

The UK government has long recognised the value of longitudinal data in policymaking, with major investments in studies like the Millennium Cohort Study and the Growing Up in Scotland (GUS) study. This workshop showcased how the UK's approach serves as a model for other European nations, encouraging cross-border collaboration and harmonised research efforts.

## KEY DISCUSSIONS AND INSIGHTS

### MENTAL HEALTH, WELLBEING AND SCHOOLS: THE ROLE OF DATA

Professor Jess Deighton (UCL, Anna Freud Centre) highlighted the power of longitudinal data in understanding mental health trajectories. Her presentation on the #BeeWell programme demonstrated how collecting young people's perspectives can directly inform school and community-level interventions. With over 85,000 responses, #BeeWell's data infrastructure is enabling targeted support and fostering more inclusive education policies.

### THE GUIDE PROJECT: A EUROPEAN VISION FOR CHILD WELLBEING

Professor Gary Pollock (Manchester Metropolitan University) introduced GUIDE, Europe's first comparative birth cohort study focused on child wellbeing. By facilitating cross-national comparisons, GUIDE will provide harmonised data to help governments design policies that reflect both local and European-wide priorities. The discussion highlighted the potential for a European-level data platform, akin to Australia's Child and Youth Wellbeing Atlas, to centralise and enhance research-driven policy.



### POLICY IN ACTION: PERSPECTIVES FROM GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES

A lively policy panel, chaired by Professor Emla Fitzsimons (UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies), featured representatives from England, Scotland, and Wales, each demonstrating how longitudinal research informs policy in their regions:

- **Launa Anderson (Welsh Government):** Discussed their investment in the Millennium Cohort Study and how linked data is being used to tackle child obesity and literacy gaps in Wales.
- **Sarah Newton (Scottish Government):** Showcased how GUS data supports initiatives such as the Bookbug programme, while also identifying gaps in data on care-experienced children.
- **Michael Dale (Department for Education, England):** Highlighted how longitudinal studies (e.g., EPPSE, SEED, LSYPE2) shape early years provision and mental health policy in schools. He emphasised the importance of direct engagement between researchers and policymakers to maximise data impact.

## COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS: WHAT'S NEXT?

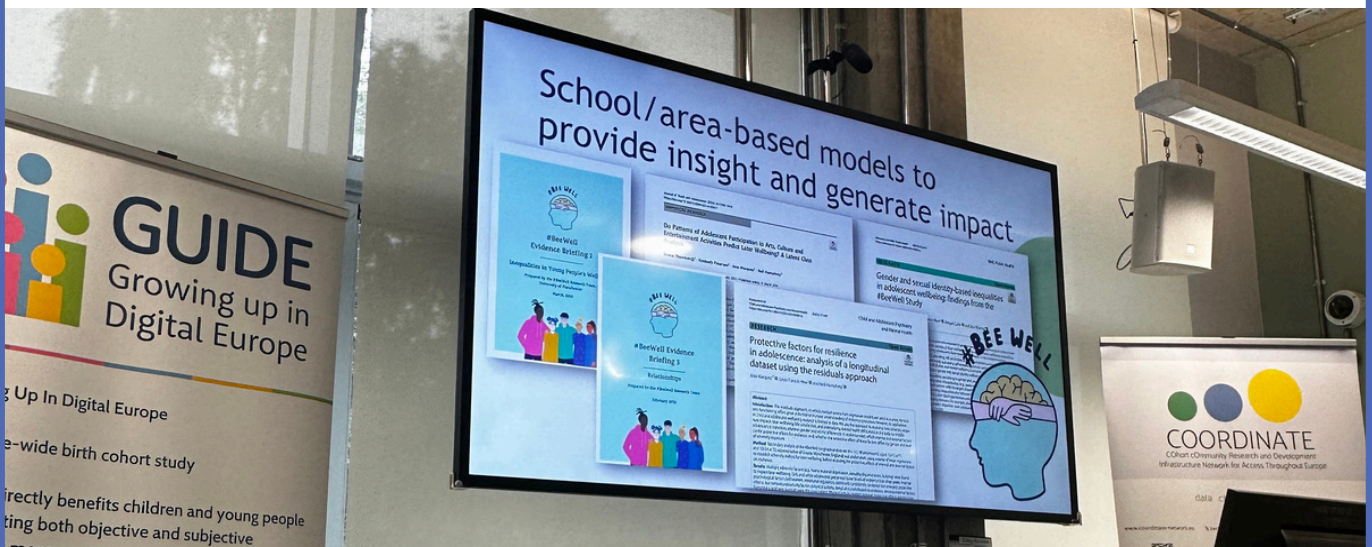
An interactive session, led by Professor Lisa Calderwood (UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies), invited attendees to share key priorities for future research and policy. Participants highlighted:

- The need for more data on underrepresented groups.
- Strengthening the feedback loop between research, schools, and policymakers.
- Expanding cross-national collaborations to enhance comparative studies.

## FINAL THOUGHTS: THE FUTURE OF LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH

The workshop reaffirmed the importance of sustained investment in longitudinal data to inform policies that genuinely improve children's lives. The discussions emphasised the growing appetite for cross-national studies like GUIDE and the need for robust data-sharing infrastructures.

As we move forward, it is crucial that researchers, policymakers, and practitioners continue working together to translate data into action. By fostering international collaboration and embedding research into policy development, we can create a stronger foundation for child and youth wellbeing both nationally and globally.



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