Author's response to reviews

Title: Prevalence of Childhood Disability and the Characteristics and Circumstances of Disabled Children in the UK: Secondary Analysis of the Family Resources Survey

Authors:

  Clare M Blackburn (c.m.blackburn@warwick.ac.uk)
  Janet M Read (j.m.read@warwick.ac.uk)
  Nick J Spencer (n.j.spencer@warwick.ac.uk)

Version: 2 Date: 28 January 2010

Author's response to reviews: see over
RESPONSES TO REVIEWERS’ COMMENTS

We would like to thank the reviewers for their helpful comments. We have taken account of these as follows:

Reviewer 1:

1. We have discussed our findings in relation to other recent literature (including Emerson and Hatton, 2007; Mooney, Owen and Statham, 2008).

2. We have checked the data on equivalised median incomes. The data on black and minority ethnic groups was incorrect due to a typo. The data on number of adults in the family is corrected: the similar median incomes for lone parent households with and without disabled children may be explained by additional benefits in households with disabled children.

3. The number of households with children has been added into page 7.

4. The word ‘impact’ has been deleted and ‘association’ substituted throughout.

5. The missing word has been added on pg 9.

6. When reducing variables, the variables with the highest odds ratios were selected. Housing tenure was selected on this basis. This has been clarified on page 9.

7. 95% confidence intervals have been added for all prevalence estimates.

8. Test names and statistics have been added.

9. Controlling for the effect of household clustering: to control for the affect of clustering it is necessary to have access to a variable that identifies the primary sampling unit. Such variable is not available in the publicly available dataset. We have established, after contacting the Office for National Statistics, that it cannot readily be made available. We have taken statistical advice and have been informed that not taking account of clustering is likely to increase the standard errors of the odds ratios, but normally only in the level of the second decimal place. We have commented in the methods section on the lack of a variable to control for clustering and the effect it may have had. We hope this is acceptable to the reviewer.

10. We feel it is more appropriate to use the term ‘lone’ parent. In the data, it indicates where there is only one adult in the family. It isn’t clear from the dataset whether these parents are single or married.

11. While this would be interesting, we do not wish to do this further analysis at present.
Reviewer 2:

1. Suggestion to change title: after careful consideration, we feel it is more appropriate to use the term ‘disabled children’ rather than ‘children with disabilities’, as suggested by the reviewer. While ‘children with disabilities’ is commonly used in the North America and Canada, in the UK and some other Northern European countries, the preferred term is ‘disabled children’. Historically in the UK, this was seen to reflect the view that disability is the outcome of social and environmental barriers that limit the social participation of children with impairments rather than a characteristic of an individual child. The term ‘disabled children’ has been adopted in official publications by the UK Government.

2. Estimate of children not living in private households. It is not possible to estimate this from the data set we used as it is from a survey of private households. We have however, added a sentence on page 14 which points out that as a consequence, a limitation of the data is that it excludes children who are living elsewhere, for example in residential establishments.

3. Non-response: there is no evidence for the survey year concerned that non-response is due to low literacy or poor understanding. Geo-demographic analyses of responders and non-responders were carried out, where areas were classified according to a number of social and material factors, a number of which would be proxies for educational level. These analyses suggest that areas likely to contain less affluent, less educated people have higher response rates than more affluent areas.

4. Rewording page 12:
   10th line: corrected as suggested
   12 line: corrected to 26% in multivariate analyses. The reviewer suggested changing to 50% in bivariate analyses but as we are reporting multivariate analyse, it is more accurate to correct the figure for multivariate level.

5. Prevalence estimates: these have been included as requested in tables 1 and 2.

6. Pg 16: relationship between adult and child disability. It should be possible, if complex, to carry out these analyses using this data set. As the data on type of impairment was crude we decided not to do these analyses but to look for a dataset with better data on type of impairment and analyse this for a future paper.

7. Age and prevalence: The age patterning of disability found in our study is consistent with the findings from other UK studies. Although failure to identify disability in the early years of a child’s life may play some part in this, the most likely explanation is that some conditions do not manifest themselves until
later and some become progressively more activity limiting as the child gets older. We have added a comment on this on page 14.

We hope these amendments are acceptable.

Yours sincerely,

Clare Blackburn, Nick Spencer and Janet Read