

Winter 2008

UK Pensions policy – a long-term perspective

The Government is undertaking a landmark reform of the UK pensions system – but political decision making is inevitably influenced by short-term considerations, and pension policy decisions can have very long-term consequences. Grants from Nuffield have enabled the Pensions Policy Institute to review the policy options and decisions from an independent and long-term perspective, providing information that played an important part in debating the latest Pensions Bill and helps all those interested to achieve a better, wider understanding of retirement provision issues.

Maintaining consensus: long-term goals for the UK pensions system and options for ongoing policy review explores the long-term goals for the pensions system and the options for monitoring key trends and reviewing policy in the future. The report highlights that there is no definitive agreed vision for

pensions policy beyond the next set of reforms, and shows that the policy making process is important for enhancing trust and confidence in the pensions system.

Will personal accounts increase pension saving? considers a range of potential outcomes for overall levels of pension savings, depending on how employees and employers react to the

introduction of auto-enrolment into workplace pension schemes in 2012. *An assessment of the Government's reforms to public sector pensions* sheds light on comparisons of pensions and overall remuneration in the public and private sectors, as well as investigating the potential costs to taxpayers of supporting public sector schemes in future. [www](#)



©iStockphoto.com

Welcome to the Nuffield Foundation Newsletter which highlights our current areas of grant making and focuses on the outcomes of the projects we fund.

Further details on all the stories marked with this icon [www](#) can be found on our website.

The Newsletter is published three times a year and you can obtain further copies or ask to be put on the mailing list by contacting the Foundation. If you have any comments on the Newsletter we would be delighted to hear from you.

Inside

2

Language for life

Pre-school

Early adolescence

Adulthood

3

Sourcebook on solitary confinement

Parenting – then and now

Tax advice for low-income pensioners

4

African research into neglected tropical diseases

First UK study of tribunal decision-making

Resilience in children

in brief

Living and caring?

Prize-winning Nuffield science bursar

Language for life

Up to seven per cent of children encounter marked spoken language delays and disorders yet have normal development in other areas. These language difficulties can have a major negative influence on these children's subsequent cognitive, emotional and social development.

Over recent years Nuffield has been supporting a cluster of research projects on these specific speech and language delays and disorders. The aim is not just to fund excellent

research, but also within it, to foster collaboration and co-ordination between researchers and practitioners. In addition, Nuffield facilitates the dissemination of the findings to policy-makers and to other academics and professionals working in the field.

The three projects described here illustrate work being undertaken to trial interventions to improve language skills at different ages and to understand the longer term impacts of these language difficulties on later economic and social well-being. [www](#)



Pre-school

Fluent reading builds on oral language skills – hence children with oral language difficulties at school entry are at high risk of literacy problems.

Professor Margaret Snowling and her team at the University of York are about to embark on an intervention to provide pre-school training in oral language skills for children with weak skills in this area, looking at whether this can improve their later response to reading instruction. The study builds on their previous work funded by Nuffield that showed that, through a structured oral language intervention programme, oral language skills can be improved in children who begin school with language weaknesses. Research by others has demonstrated that phonological training prior to formal schooling can enhance the later development of literacy skills but, until this current study, no research has looked at the impact of broader oral language intervention programmes at the pre-school level. [www](#)

Early adolescence

Although language continues to develop in complexity and abstractness throughout adolescence, much of the research into language development and disorders has focussed on early preschool and primary development and there has been little research into young adolescents with language weaknesses.

Similarly, there is little speech and language support at this level. Dr Joffe at City University is addressing this deficit. Her current work is exploring the prevalence and nature of specific language impairment in secondary school children aged 11-13 and investigating the effectiveness of two interventions to improve their language and communication skills. [www](#)



Adulthood

Professor Gina Conti-Ramsden and her team at the University of Manchester have been working with a group of young people with these specific language difficulties who were attending specialist language units at age 7 in the mid 1990s.

Research into their educational and social outcomes at adulthood showed that some were doing quite well at this stage of their lives, compared with peers with typical development, but that others were struggling in a number of areas.

A proportion had experienced difficulties learning at school and obtaining recognized qualifications but the findings indicated that their achievements and opportunities are better now than for those with the same language difficulties 10 years ago and much better than 20-30 years ago. At the same time, they found that adolescents with language difficulties are at risk of being less independent, having poor quality of friendships and emotional health and lower self-esteem. The team suggests that the improvement in educational outcomes is partly due to policy changes leading to improved practice relating to children and young people with special needs, but that there is a need for support services in the areas of emotional health, independence and social relationships. [www](#)

Sourcebook on solitary confinement

The sourcebook on solitary confinement, by Dr Sharon Shalev of the Mannheim Centre for Criminology at the LSE, was launched at the Foundation's office in October, providing a much needed comprehensive single point of reference on prison segregation for prison practitioners, policy makers and other interested professionals.

The Sourcebook examines the use of solitary confinement in prisons and other places of detention, reviews its documented health effects and some of the human rights, ethical and professional guidelines relating to its use, and proposes safeguards and best practice in light of the above. It is hoped that this work will assist those concerned with the diagnosis and treatment of isolated prisoners, and encourage policy makers and prison managers to put in place safeguards and mechanisms to limit the use of solitary confinement and to mitigate its harmful consequences. [www](#)



Tax advice for low-income pensioners



In 2001, Nuffield helped fund the Low Incomes Tax Reform Group to run two pilot schemes, one in urban Wolverhampton and one in rural Dorset, in which professional tax advisers would give free tax advice to older people whose incomes were too low to afford professional fees.

Advice 'surgeries' were held face-to-face in places frequented by older people, such as offices of Age Concern and other local charities. Their success led to nationwide expansion of the service that became known as TaxHelp for Older People, or TOP.

Low-income pensioners everywhere now have someone they can call on for help in completing tax forms, checking PAYE coding notices, reclaiming overpaid tax (often going back many years), or just for reassurance. There are approximately 560 volunteers based at 300 surgery venues across the whole of the UK and expanding weekly. TOP's next aim is to analyse and research properly the data they have accumulated in order to bring about changes in the tax system. [www](#)

Parenting then and now

Do parents monitor their offspring more or less closely than in earlier decades? Do they show more or less parental involvement, indicated by time spent in caring for young people, in conversation and joint activities?

As part of the Foundation's Adolescent Mental Health Initiative, Professor Frances Gardner, Dr Stephan Collishaw, Professor Barbara Maughan and Professor Jacqueline Scott, from the Universities of Oxford, London, and Cambridge, have been undertaking a unique study of time trends in parenting in the UK. The preliminary results were debated at a recent Foundation seminar attended by key academics working in the parenting field.



In fact, it seems there is little evidence for a decline in parent monitoring or involvement with young people, or in the quality of parent-child relationships. The research team will be finalizing their report in the next few months. A briefing paper summarizing the findings will be launched in the New Year. [www](#)

African research into neglected tropical diseases



The neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) are a group of chronic, disabling infections affecting more than one billion people worldwide, mainly in Africa and mostly those living in remote rural areas, urban slums or conflict zones. Beyond their negative impact on health, NTDs contribute to an ongoing cycle of poverty and stigma that leaves people unable to work, go to school or participate in family and

community life. Nuffield is part of a funding collaboration supporting a postdoctoral fellowship programme to strengthen Africa's research capacity to tackle NTDs. The first awards were made during a selection process at an international conference on NTDs held in Mali in September. [www](#)

First UK study of tribunal decision-making



©iStockphoto.com

Tribunals play a vital role in administrative justice, resolving over one million disputes a year between individuals and the state, yet little is known about what influences tribunal

decision-making. Professors Hazel Genn and Cheryl Thomas of UCL's Faculty of Laws have a grant under Nuffield's Administrative Justice Initiative to determine whether the form of tribunal hearings and the composition of panels affect the decision-making process and the outcome of the case.

The study is being conducted in cooperation with the new Tribunals Service and is the first time empirical research into tribunal decision-making will be conducted in the UK. The results will help to address important policy issues, including case management, training and assessment of tribunal members and chairs. [www](#)

Living and caring?



©iStockphoto.com

A Nuffield-funded study by NatCen looks at the effects of unpaid care provision on the lives of older carers, exploring who is cared for, how much care is provided and what the impact is on income, health and quality of life. [www](#)

Resilience in children

In 2007 the Foundation launched a call for research proposals that examined the issue of resilience in children - how some children and young people manage to survive troubles and traumas in their early years and go on to lead satisfying and constructive lives. Dr Sara Jaffee, at the Institute of Psychiatry, King's College

London, has just been awarded a grant to study how genes interact with adverse environmental factors. The investigators will aim to link the effect of specific genetic variants with children's psychological outcomes when exposed to harsh, non-supportive parenting in early childhood. [www](#)



©iStockphoto.com



Prize-winning Nuffield science bursar

Elisabeth Muller won first prize at the EU Contest for Young Scientists for her project investigating the early processes that shaped the moon. [www](#)



William Morris, Lord Nuffield
1877-1963

The Nuffield Foundation is an endowed charitable trust established in 1943 by William Morris (Lord Nuffield) the founder of Morris Motors with the aim of advancing social well being. We fund research and practical experiment and the development of capacity to undertake them, working across education, science, social science and social policy. While most of the Foundation's expenditure is on responsive grant programmes we also undertake our own initiatives.

Full information on all our current activities and on how to apply for grants can be found at www.nuffieldfoundation.org

The Nuffield Foundation
28 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3JS Tel 020 7631 0566 Fax 020 7323 4877

The
Nuffield
Foundation