

Educational outcomes of children in Wales with cerebral palsy

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Background with rationale

It is recognized that children with disability have special educational needs (SEN). They are likely to have poor school attendance and do not achieve well academically. Many children with a cerebral palsy (CP) have SEN but little is known about their educational provision or outcomes.

Main aim

To investigate the educational experience of children in Wales with CP and describe the type of SEN and SEN provision; school attendance; achievement—teacher assessments at the end of the Foundation Phase and Key Stages 2 and 3 of the National Curriculum (NC)—and in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations.

Methods/Approach

Data from the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC), NC and GCSE results from 2009 to 2016 were linked with routine e-health records of primary and secondary health care data held in SAIL. The health care records were used to identify pupils who, potentially, had a cerebral palsy.

Results

The linked data set included around 360,000 pupils per school census of whom 1200–1400 per school census were identified as having a CP, representing a crude prevalence of 0.4%. Adjusted for age, year and sex, there was no significant variation in prevalence by area deprivation. Around 60% of children with a CP have a statement of SEN; over a quarter of CP children are educated in special schools; CP children in mainstream (primary, middle and secondary) schools tended to miss more school sessions (50% more) than other children and lower percentages achieved the expected levels at Key Stages 2 and 3 and the Level 2 GCSE threshold.

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Conclusion/Implications

This work demonstrates the utility of record-linkage between health and education data to map, monitor and provide information to parents, carers and policymakers about education outcomes for this group of children to inform planning and service provision.

