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Welsh Government Flying Start Programme Evaluation Using Linked Data

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Background

Flying Start (FS) is the Welsh Government's (WG) flagship Early Years programme for families with children aged less than 4 years of age. Running since 2006, the four entitlements are:

- Free part-time childcare for 2-3 year olds
- Enhanced Health Visiting
- Parenting support
- Speech, language, and communication support

Objectives

Currently, while we know which areas in Wales are receiving FS support, individual-level data on which child received what entitlements is not available. Area-level outcomes can be used as proxy indicators but the individual impact of receiving FS support cannot be examined. The project aims to evaluate FS by linking the FS cohort to a range of outcomes including health, education and social care.

Methods

A Dataflow Development Project (DDP) has been launched to install SAIL (Secure Anonymised Information Linkage) appliances into 6 pilot Local Authorities in Wales which will test acquiring and linking the individual level FS data from pilot Local Authorities with other datasets in SAIL.

Findings

The project will report some emerging findings from the analysis of pilot data.

Implications

There is a growing interest in using linked administrative data to evaluate government initiatives, and mounting enthusiasm in Local Government. If successful, this model is likely to be adopted by related WG programmes; improving the evidence base, facilitating effective evaluation, and adding to the data available for re-use in Wales.

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