



Mental Health and Wellbeing in Schools

Briefing from the London School of Economics and Political Science

Summary

- New research from LSE and UCL has looked at the short, medium, and long-term effects on people's lives of being identified with SEN at school. It looks, at ages 14, 25 and 50, at the mental health, social networks and friendships, as well as the employment situations, of those who have or had SEN in comparison with those who have not. The results are stark.
- At the age of 14, when compared to teenagers with the same cognitive ability, those with SEN are around three times more likely to lack a close friend, more than twice as likely to never spend time with friends, and nearly three times more likely to be bullied most days. They are also less likely to have someone to turn to or to trust, and are more likely to be depressed or self-harm.
- At the age of 25, adults who had SEN at the age of 16 are nearly twice as likely to only see friends once or twice a year, are nearly three times as likely to have never had sex, and almost twice as likely to feel they have no one to listen to their problems as adults who did not have SEN at school and have the same level of educational qualifications.
- By the age of 50, adults who had SEN at school are four times as likely to be single, twice as likely to have no children, and twice as likely to have no one to turn to if sick in comparison to adults of the same age who did not have SEN. They are less likely to trust people, more likely to have not visited friends, and twice as likely to have no phone or letter contact with others. They are also twice as likely to not own a PC to keep contact with the world.
- The implications for mental health and wellbeing, and also the economy, are equally stark. Adults who had SEN at school are far less likely to go out for a drink, go to a concert or the theatre, or even work in the garden – all leisure activities that many of us take for granted. They are twice as likely as their non-SEN contemporaries to feel that life's problems are too much, and more likely to be in poor or fair physical health.
- Cross-party commitment to tackling mental health issues in schools is to be warmly welcomed, and it is vital that increased effort is put into helping people with SEN or disabilities into apprenticeships and work placements. Disabled adults have poorer employment outcomes and lower qualifications than non-disabled adults, and there are ongoing associated mental health issues associated with this.
- Encouragingly, the reduction in the employment gap for adults who had SEN over time suggests policy changes may have a positive effect on outcomes. **Looking at how SEN is managed and delivered, and focusing on encouraging and facilitating social links as well as virtual or remote relationships, could have a significant positive impact on the loneliness and depression felt throughout life by some who have had SEN at school.**