



Born Talking

BORN TALKING: USING BIRTH COHORT DATA ABOUT SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION TO INFORM POLICY AND PRACTICE: AN ESRC SEMINAR SERIES

Summary of Discussions

15th January 2015

Woburn House, London

Introduction

The *Born Talking* seminar series is funded by the Economic & Social Research Council. It will consist of 6 live events taking place in London, Norwich, Newcastle and Bristol in 2015-16, supplemented by on-line resources. The over-arching goal of the series is to promote the use of birth cohort datasets to address high-impact research questions about speech, language and communication. We hope to engage a range of stakeholders – including third sector organizations, policymakers and practitioners as well as academics – to work jointly to develop these questions and to form effective research collaborations.

The aim of the first seminar was to introduce a variety of basic issues related to birth cohort datasets and their use in informing and influencing policy and practice around speech, language and communication. The event also generated engagement between different stakeholder groups, and encouraged participant involvement in shaping further events. The feedback, comments and suggestions received from the participants during and after the seminar provide a valuable resource for this seminar series, and are summarised below.

‘How do we achieve our aims?’

We asked participants how we could go about achieving our aims for the series, which include: familiarizing stakeholders with the resources and their potential; introducing some practical skills to increase research capacity and to promote the use of the datasets in teaching; consulting with a range of stakeholders to identify research questions; influencing teams collecting birth cohort data. Participants suggested that we could:

- Provide practical, workshop style sessions/tutorials, e.g. using the UK Data Service site. People want to explore further what kind of information is available. A teaching dataset would be valuable. These need to be enduring resources – could the UK Data Service create and curate this? Step-by-step instructions about who to ask for, what to ask, how to get the different permissions, what the costs are. End up with a teaching resource, possibly a webinar.
- Create a discussion board within the Born Talking website for general discussion and debate on important issues
- Produce an online forum where questions could be posed to those already working with cohort data
- Clarify what speech/language/communication measures are available in the datasets, e.g. create a survey/resource/presentation of each cohort study and language-relevant measures. Raise the issue of labelling/tagging/identifying themes so that it is easier for the relevant variables to be identified
- Establish mechanisms for practitioners to get involved in birth cohort research
- Frame speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) as a public health issue
- Need to think about how to communicate the findings – see FrameWorks Institute <http://sfa.frameworksinstitute.org/>.

‘What sorts of issues would we like to be able to explore in the birth cohorts?’

Here are some examples that the participants suggested – some can be explored already, but where this is not the case we can seek opportunities to get them included:

- Impact of social mix in schools
- Training requirements for early years staff
- Cost-benefit of services
- Protective factors/resilience
- Cross-cultural/cross-linguistic/bilingual comparisons
- Typically developing populations

- Economic impact of SLCN
- Parent knowledge and understanding of language/cognitive development. E.g. do they know that babies arrive looking, copying, ready to interact? And if they know about singing/talking to babies – who told them? Do midwives, Health visitors, GPs and so on communicate this well? Prevention of difficulties – rather than intervention, problems and fixing them. Also parents' recognition of achievement – what do they know/expect about children's language development. Who helps with this? What is best way of getting messages out?
- Combined and inter-related effects of factors over time
- Mothers and fathers
- Developmental trajectories
- Birth order/siblings
- Cross-cohort comparisons, including international data
- Child development
- Ages and stages
- Values
- Environment

'What should the structure/content of future events be?'

- Provide a practical teaching element through the use of webinar/lectures that can be disseminated and used widely
- Provide more information about CLOSER
- Provide case studies of the way that the datasets have been used in research about speech, language and communication. Impact case studies. How was that achieved; how do we use statistics appropriately and meaningfully. Perhaps a mini-conference or plenary.
- Explore the impact of using birth cohorts – what are the priorities
- Opportunities for discussion as well as presentations
- Allow for interaction between event participants and encourage discussions and input throughout the seminar series
- Involve commissioners to address policy implications
- Perhaps more formal opportunities to introduce ourselves to each other
- Opportunities to work on bids together
- Events could be focused around a specific topic (e.g. socio-economic and language development) and focus around 1 to 2 examples of research using cohort studies and discussions around implications of findings for policy and practice

- Invite experts who have worked with or who run the various cohorts to explain their cohort in more detail, in particular what language data there is within the cohort dataset; also the related and relevant variables that might be used to investigate predictors or outcomes. A chance to discuss and explore what questions could be answered with each dataset, its advantages and limitations
- Further opportunity to examine how to ask the questions; what are the right kind of questions; what are the pitfall of working with these datasets; what is the learning from experts who have worked with the datasets.
- What are the important aspects of SLCN that the cohorts should be measuring? How can we influence their future direction? Invite people who are running the existing cohorts to present their plans for the future of their cohorts, what the timelines are, what plans they have for consultations, existing plans for collection of speech, language, communication and related data. Discussion of opportunities to influence future data collection and a strategy for how they can take account of/use the expertise within our field.
- What other cohorts and relevant datasets are there? e.g. TEDS (Twins Early Development Study).
- Presentations about data linkage.

Feedback on the first seminar

- An excellent day
- Lovely to have plenty of networking time. Good venue/facilities
- Quite SLCN focused, I would have like more about use for typically-developing populations
- Really useful, good blend of researchers and practitioners
- Pacing very good, plenty of time for individual and group interaction
- Extremely useful to meet people from these different sectors. We have learned a lot from each other
- Would be good to have a participants list
- Lovely venue
- All very informative and well thought through
- Very interesting and thought provoking
- A great introduction to the events
- Great! Good range of speakers
- Useful info on range of cohorts and ways to access

- Enjoyed talks on current landscape and influencing commissioners