



Cardiff University

Main Building
Park Place
Cardiff
CF10 3AT, Wales, UK
www.cardiff.ac.uk

Prifysgol Caerdydd

Prif Adeilad
Plas y Parc
Caerdydd
CF10 3AT, Cymru, DU
www.caerdydd.ac.uk

24th May 2022

Dear Family Review Team,

Re: Cardiff University response to The Children's Commissioner Family Review call for evidence

On behalf of Cardiff University's School of Medicine, please find attached evidence to be considered for The Children's Commissioner's Family Review.

We would be happy to expand on the points covered in the attached evidence if it would be helpful to do so. Likewise, if there have any queries regarding the response, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Robert French

Senior Research Fellow
Division of Infection and Immunity
School of Medicine
Cardiff University
Email: FrenchR3@cardiff.ac.uk



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The Children's Commissioner Family Review

Cardiff University response

About us

Cardiff University is an ambitious and innovative university with a bold and strategic vision. A top 20 university in the UK for the overall quality of our research (19th), impact (11th), and environment (16th), as assessed by the Research Evidence Framework 2021. We provide an educationally outstanding experience for our students. Driven by creativity and curiosity, we strive to fulfil our social, cultural, and economic obligations to Cardiff, Wales, the UK, and the wider world.

Summary of evidence

We are submitting as evidence a Cardiff University and University of Bristol study, ['Estimating the Importance of Families in Modeling Educational Achievement Using Linked Swedish Administrative Data' \(2022\)](#), published in the leading American academic education journal, *'Journal of Research Educational Effectiveness'* (impact factor 2.23). This study quantifies how important families are in children's educational attainment.

Studies of educational attainment typically account for the differences between individuals, differences between schools and differences between residential areas. This study adds the families as a factor, measuring the overall importance of families for educational achievement and exploring the effects of specific family structures on educational attainment, including family size, birth order, birth spacing and sibling gender.

By adding family as a factor, the research found that 40 per cent of the variability in educational attainment can be attributed to the family unit (with 49 per cent attributed to individual differences, 7 per cent to school differences and 4 per cent to residential area differences).

This study shows the importance of accounting for family and the scope for policy interventions focused on the family level rather than at an individual or school level.