



The lived experience of poverty on health

Scotland's response to the growing health inequality crisis

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Outline

1. The lived experience of poverty on health, including mental health
2. Contributing factors
3. Quantifying the qualitative
4. Next steps: individual, linked administrative data

Early Warning System

- [The Early Warning System](#) (EWS) - set up by CPAG in Scotland to collect and analyse case evidence about how changes in the benefit system affect the wellbeing of children, their families and the communities and services that support them.
- Annual interviews with a group of low income families since 2013 to gain an in-depth understanding of how poverty and benefit changes affect child and family wellbeing.

Mary in 2014

Mary has applied to access a counselling service to help with her anxiety. She says:

'It has just gone overboard now. I was actually at the doctors today about it. But again, that's money worries. My anxiety is making me really, really ill. My anxiety has gone through the roof. I can sleep, but the minute I wake up, all I'm thinking about is money, money, money. What have I to pay tomorrow? How am I going to get the electricity to do another two days? It's quite scary'.

Mary in 2017

Mary has been moved onto JSA after having Income Support and Carer's Allowance removed:

'So the income support got stopped, then I had to apply for JSA. That's what I'm on in the now. And it's absolutely horrendous. Absolutely horrendous... Absolutely horrendous. Absolutely horrendous. Really, really bad.'

Mary in 2018

Mary is also becoming increasingly isolated due to her financial circumstances and decreasing wellbeing. She is self-excluding because she feels she has nothing positive to add to events. She says:

'I've got two really good friends that I used to see them all the time. I've just not got the heart to... I just...there's nothing to tell them. I've not been nowhere, I've not done nothing. And it comes down to, as well, I think no money, I've, ken, they talk about their work and stuff, and their families, where they've been and where they're going on holiday, and I just, I kinda... like for my birthday, it was my 40th in April, and one of my friends had organised all the girls to come over and I just felt like the chicken with one wing. Because... I was the only one sitting there with no job, no money, and I didn't ken what I was going to eat that night. It was quite a sad situation to be in.'

Sarah in 2014

'I was waking up at 4 o'clock in the morning, bolt upright, heart pounding, worrying about something, and going "what is it I'm actually worrying about here?" And I would have to talk myself down to go back to sleep. And it always comes down to money. It's always about money. That's always the root of it...'

Sarah in 2017

‘I’ve had my breathing tested because I was getting panic attacks. I still am. It’s horrible. I’m now on beta-blockers to stop it, to like keep the panic attacks down’.

‘it’s always stress-related, depression-related, anxiety-related’.

‘I’m on drugs because of it (housing benefit problems)... I’m in no two minds about that’.

Sarah in 2019

'Anxiety's taken me to places I didn't know existed before. I get this, where you're dislocated, you feel like you're standing on your own shoulder watching stuff going on. And a year and a half ago I was getting this thing where I was, it wasn't just like a dislocation, it was like I was sitting way back in the darkness and my life's going on on the screen over there, and I can see it all, and I know that over there I've got loves and cares and all that sort of thing, big strong anchors in the world, but in the darkness there's just nothing, there's nothing at all. And I, it was really, really scary for me to go through that over months, and that's when I decided to seek help for it'.

'I've been to dark places before, but I've never been anywhere quite like that, and it gave me a new perspective on suicide... But that's, like, a year and a half ago and this is me just getting to see somebody now'.

Jennifer in 2014

'because of my personal situation, what I went through in separating from my husband... I had the husband and the family and the car and the holidays and he had the full-time job. I was a stay at home mum and if my kids needed anything I went to the shop and bought them it. But then when that carpet was whipped from under my feet and I had absolutely nothing, and nae support, nae money, nothing, nobody there for me, and the only person who was gonna keep my kids looked after and happy and supported was me. And I've had to fight for that'.

'overnight I became a single mum with three kids having to go on benefits, struggling, housing benefit, having to go into the job centre, feeling so low, feeling demoralised, feeling put down, ken like I was nothing eh? That was really, really how I felt. I was so low'.

Jennifer in 2017

Jennifer's mental health has declined. She is reluctant to socialise and see people. She now finds it difficult to leave the house. She says:

'honestly, it totally affects your mental health. And at the time, because I'd been indoors so much - even the most I'd ever done was go and sit out the back, with a coffee - it was like, whenever I started maybe going out to the shop, or going anywhere, I was so conscious that everybody was looking at me. I felt like a fish out of water. Cause I was just out my - my comfort zone was sitting in the house'.

Jennifer in 2019

Jennifer's anxiety problems have increased massively in the two years since we last speak. She thinks it is possibly related to the ill health she experienced that kept her off work and housebound for months and months. She cannot go out alone anymore and a recent trip to the shops by herself resulted in a panic attack. She says:

'I was there about forty minutes. Oh it was just awful! I was crying and everything. I was on my own, I felt ridiculous. And I was going round the shops and it was just like, it must just be like an anxiety thing. Like my heart's beating out of my back, I felt sick. I was soaking in sweat'.

Jennifer's son in 2019

Jennifer's middle son has autism and she was receiving phone calls from school asking her to collect him if he was having a difficult day. This was clashing with her job. It culminated in a suicide attempt by her son and she had to give up work again.

the fact that he tried [to commit suicide] petrified me. And as a parent you just think 'what have I done wrong? I cannae believe I never saw that'. And he obviously feels he cannae talk to me. And I totally blame myself. I actually wasn't even aware of what had happened. And that bothered me as well because seemingly when it all unravelled I had been in the house'.

'[I had] no idea and that made me feel even worse cause I didn't know anything about it. And I felt obviously devastated for [my son] but I felt so guilty for [younger son who witnessed the attempt]'.

What adversely affects Sarah, Jennifer and Mary:

- Housing – overcrowded, damp, low-quality
- Neighbourhood – dirty, unsafe, little outdoor space, low opportunities for exercise, leisure or play
- Unemployment -> Low-paid insecure work
- Income, cost of living, debt, childcare
- Interactions with the social security (benefit) system
- Withdrawing from social security system
- Impact on new Scottish benefits.

Quantifying the qualitative

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Financial vulnerability, mothers' emotional distress and child wellbeing

Article



The Effects of Financial Vulnerability and Mothers' Emotional Distress on Child Social, Emotional and Behavioural Well-Being: A Structural Equation Model

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What variables were looked at...

Child variables:

- Child wellbeing measured by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)
- Child's Gender
- Child's Birth Order

Mothers' variables:

- Maternal Emotional Distress (SF-12)
- Financial Vulnerability
- Income
- Family Composition
 - Stable couple, stable lone parent, separated couple, lone parent re-partnered, separations/re-partnerings
- Maternal Education
- Maternal Employment
- Age of Mother at First Child's Birth

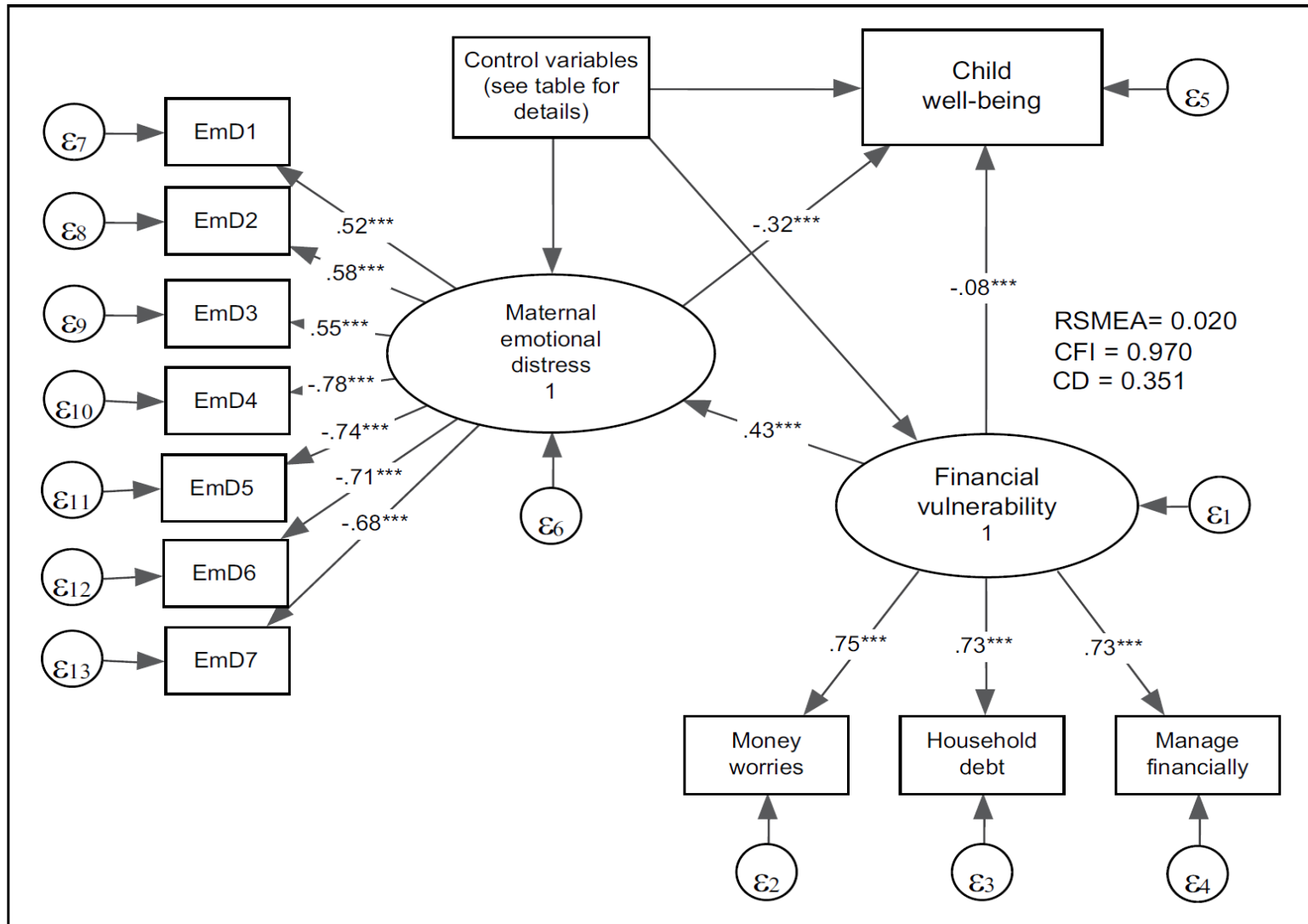
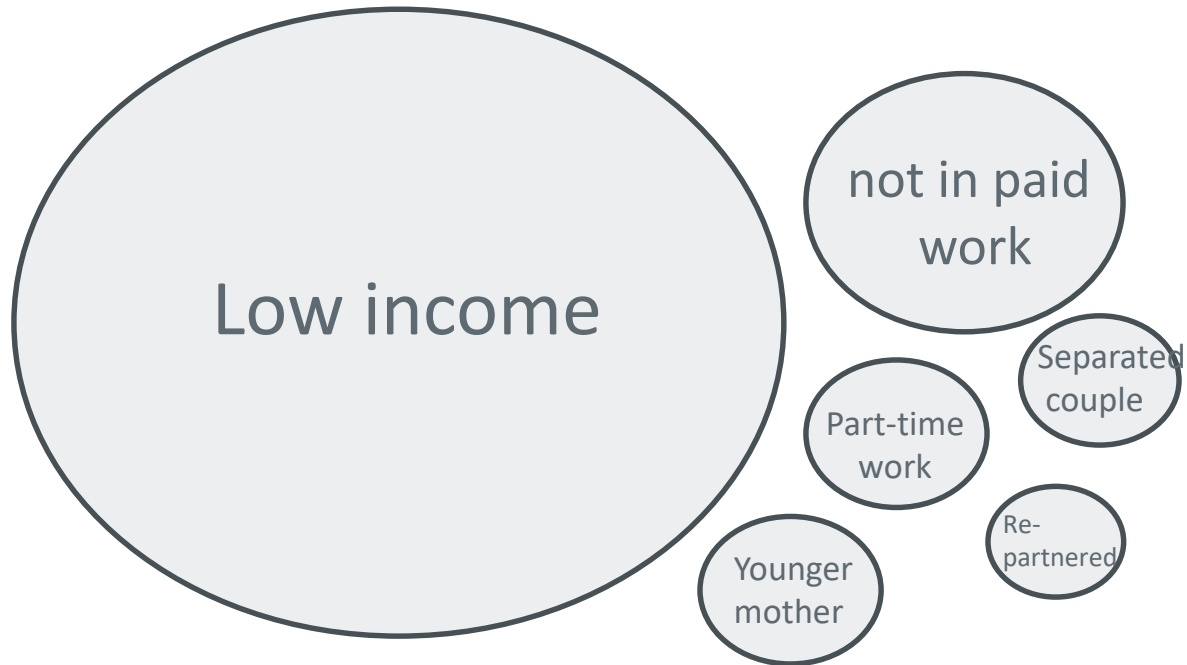


Figure I. SEM model.

Financial vulnerability is associated with:



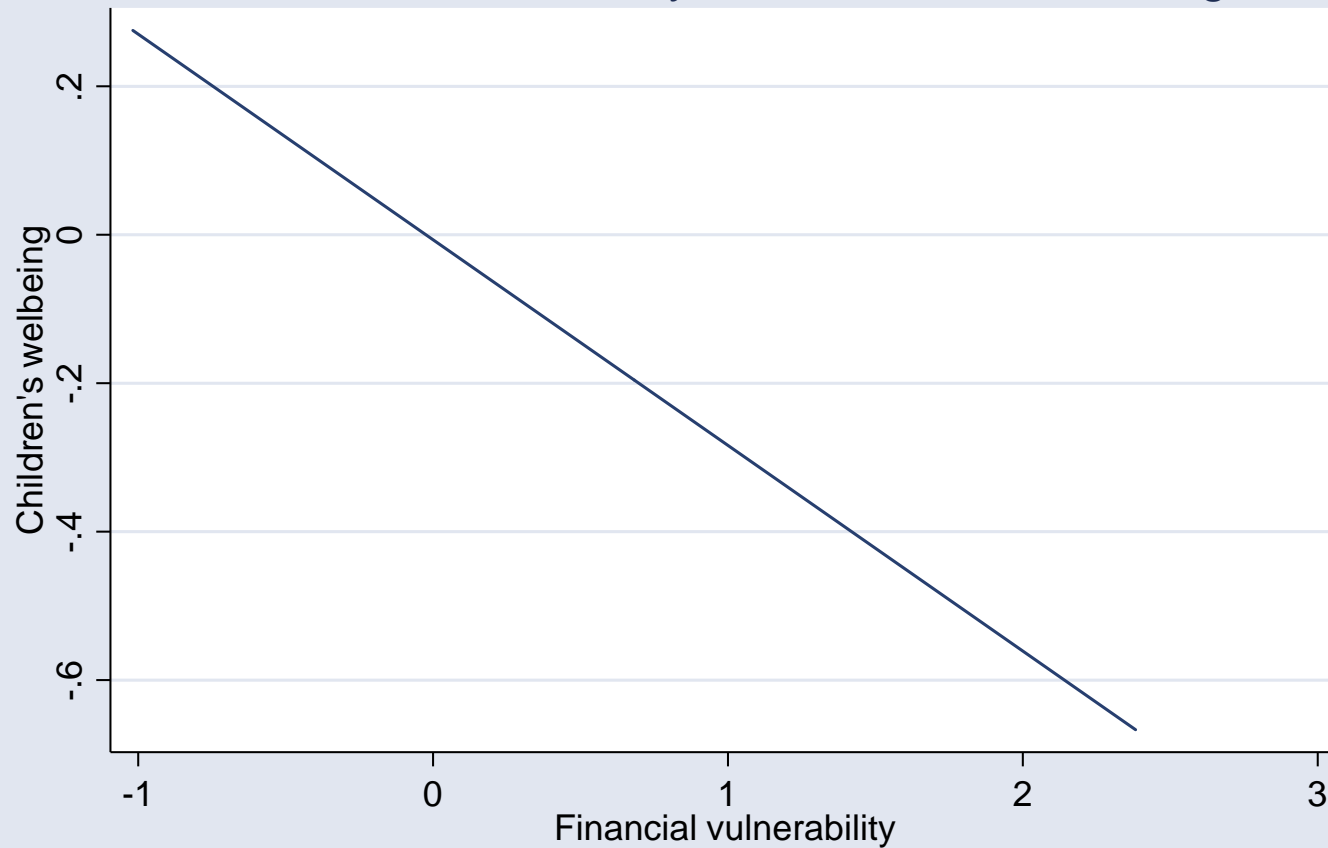
Maternal emotional distress is associated with:



Child wellbeing is associated with:

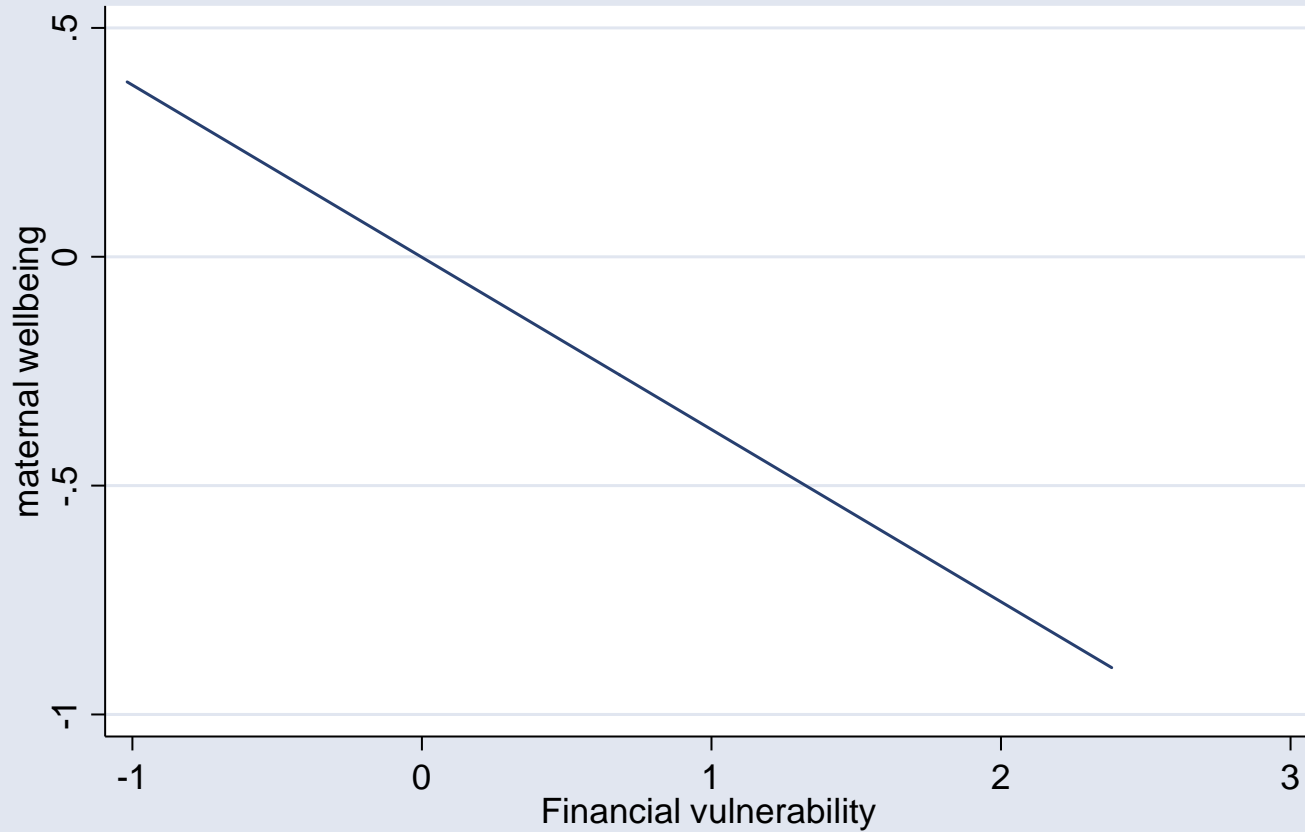


Financial vulnerability and children's wellbeing



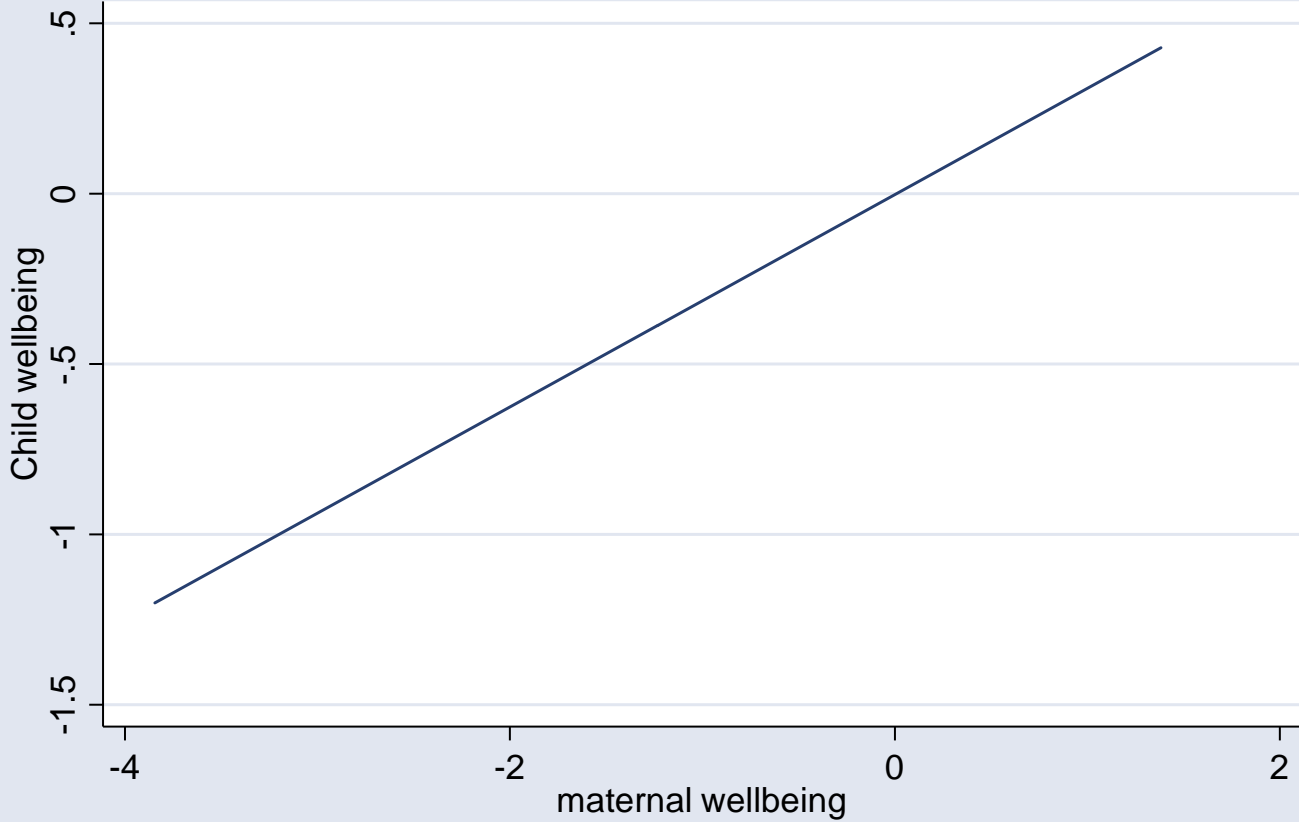
Data source: GUS, wave 7

Financial vulnerability and maternal wellbeing



Data source: GUS

Child wellbeing and maternal wellbeing



Data source: GUS

Next steps: individual, linked administrative data

- Co-investigator of the Scottish Centre for Administrative Data Research
- Co-lead on its new Strategic Impact Programme for Children's Outcomes
- ESRC funding to link individual level administrative children's data
- New proposals for interrogating these data



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Can we put the 'poverty of aspiration' myth to bed now?

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Financial vulnerability, mothers' emotional distress and child wellbeing

WHAT
WORKS
SCOTLAND

Evidence Review
September 2017

Tackling child poverty: Actions to prevent and mitigate child poverty at the local level

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A 'pockets' approach to addressing financial vulnerability