

Services for children with learning disability and behaviours that challenge (MELD national study)

The **MELD** research study (Mapping and Evaluating Services for Children with Learning Disability and Behaviours that Challenge) is a **nationally important study providing crucial information for future services planning**. MELD is funded by the National Institute for Health Research Health Services and Delivery Research Programme.

We need your help to pass on information about the study to services that are likely to meet the inclusion criteria, or to individuals who will have direct knowledge of these services and can pass on this information email.

The first stage of MELD is to map community services for children with learning disability and behaviours that challenge across the whole of England, and to describe distinct “service models”. We will collect data for the first stage of MELD until **November 2021**. Brief information about the services that are eligible to be involved in the study, and the study methods, is included at the end of this message.

Any service interested in taking part can email MELDstudy@warwick.ac.uk to find out more. Please also email the same address if you can help to identify likely eligible services or if you have questions about the study.

The MELD Study is on the national NIHR CRN portfolio (CPMS ID **49890**).

Thank you for your support.

Professor Richard Hastings
University of Warwick
(Chief Investigator, and on behalf of the MELD study team)

Additional information

The inclusion criteria for services to be involved will be that they:

- Are located in, and at least partially drawing referrals from, England
- Are community-based services
- Are NHS, local authority or other (e.g., private, charity) services commissioned by a CCG/STP/ICS/local authority, or a service where individual places are purchased by CCG/STP/ICS local authority commissioners
- Provide support for behaviours than challenge of children with learning disabilities between 0-17 years of age, or providing supports to this group of children as a clearly distinct care pathway

(whilst also providing other services – that may include children without learning disability, and/or children with learning disability and other support needs). Services will also not be excluded if they provide services to individuals 18+ years of age as well as within the 0-17 age range.

Exclusion criteria that mean services would not be eligible if they:

- Are inpatient only services
- Are commissioned by non-CCG/STP/ICS/local authority commissioners (e.g., solely a special school service)
- Are not yet operational (i.e., has received no referrals at the time of data collection).

Study Methods

We plan to identify as many community services for children with learning disabilities and behaviours that challenge in England as we can, ideally capturing all such services.

Eligible services will be asked to take part in an online survey to provide us with information about their service and, ideally, a short interview to gather some information hard to gather with a survey. The research team are flexible and there are several ways for services to complete the survey (online survey link, online completion with a researcher). Where one person may be reporting on several linked but separate services, it may be more efficient to complete data collection online with a researcher.

A statistical method called Latent Class Analysis will then be combined with stakeholder consultation to define distinct “service models”. In a second stage of the research starting in 2022, we will be comparing outcomes, costs and experiences in example services reflecting distinct service models. This second stage of the research will involve separate ethics and other approvals. We are only requesting expressions of interest in the services mapping element of the project at the moment.