

Lone parent jobseeking requirements negatively affect mental health

July 3 2018

Mandatory employment requirements adversely impact the mental health of lone parents, according to a new study.

The research, from the MRC/CSO Social & Public Health Sciences Unit, University of Glasgow and published today in *The Lancet Public Health*, found that [mental health](#) worsened among lone parents newly exposed to a change in employment requirements.

In the UK, lone parents must seek work as a condition of receiving [welfare benefits](#) once their youngest child reaches a specified age. Since 2008, the lower age limit at which these "Lone Parent Obligations" (LPO) apply has been reduced in steps.

The researchers compared lone mothers newly exposed to LPO when the age limit was reduced to seven and then to five years, with lone mothers who remained unexposed or who were continuously exposed.

The study found mental [health](#) worsened more among lone mothers affected by the changes in the child age cut-off.

The study is the first outside the USA to use robust methods to evaluate the health impacts of mandatory job-seeking requirements for lone parents, using nationally-representative data from the largest UK household panel study (40,000 households from across the UK).

Dr. Peter Craig, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Health and

Wellbeing's MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, said:
"Our results suggest that requiring lone parents with school age children to seek work as a condition of receiving welfare benefits may adversely affect their mental health

"More and more lone parents have been subject to the job seeking requirements in recent years, so the possibility of adverse effects on health should be taken seriously.

"Further research should focus on the longer term effects of mandatory employment requirements, and whether the health of children in lone parent families is also affected."

Previous research has suggested welfare reforms may have adverse impacts on the health of the long-term sick, elderly and general population, but less research has been conducted on lone parents.

The study, "Evaluating the impacts of restrictions to Income Support for lone [parents](#) on health: A natural experiment study" is published in *The Lancet Public Health*.

More information: Evaluating the health impacts of restrictions to income support for lone parents: a natural experiment study using understanding society *J Epidemiol Community Health* 2017;71:A38.

Provided by University of Glasgow

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