

Case Study: Maximising the use, value and impact of UK longitudinal population studies during a global pandemic

Context

In April 2020, as the UK locked down in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK's longitudinal population studies (LPS) began to capture data on the experience of their study participants and how the pandemic was affecting their lives. However, with information on different websites, varying approaches to data access across the studies and a crowded field all trying to promote their work through their own individual channels, there was a danger that vital insights could be lost through uncoordinated activity and the clamour of individual studies to demonstrate value and impact to their funders.

About CLOSER

CLOSER, the home of longitudinal research, is an interdisciplinary partnership of world-leading longitudinal population studies, with participants born throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. Our mission is to maximise the use, value and impact of longitudinal studies and research, at home and internationally. CLOSER works alongside the UK Data Service and The British Library and is funded by the UKRI Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

CLOSER's COVID-19 Taskforce

Created in May 2020, CLOSER's COVID-19 Taskforce brought together data, research, policy engagement and communications specialists to unify this disparate activity under one roof. With a laser focus on added value, the Taskforce aimed to 'cut through the noise', present a coherent narrative to policy and decision makers, develop bespoke resources for researchers, make COVID-19 data more discoverable, and give a voice to the longitudinal research community.

Snapshot of our impact

In just under a year, the Taskforce has delivered multiple outputs and generated significant outcomes, reaching new audiences and demonstrably increasing the visibility and impact of UK longitudinal population studies and research. Since its launch in June 2020, CLOSER's bespoke online platform, the COVID-19 Longitudinal Research Hub, has established itself as a trusted source of information and insights across the research and policy landscapes. Tailored products and resources have received endorsements from across academia, government and parliament and CLOSER Discovery now includes COVID-19 data from seven longitudinal studies in unprecedented detail.

1. Capturing the response of UK LPS to the pandemic



The **COVID-19 Longitudinal Research Hub** contains the new surveys, data releases, latest research and evidence, and expert opinion, **all in one place**.

2. Providing resources for researchers



170 research publications available in the **searchable Research Tracker**.

3. Bringing the LPS community together



Three COVID-19 events brought together the longitudinal, research and data communities to discuss the **future of data collection and generating policy impact**.

4. Increasing the visibility of UK LPS and research



Eight COVID-19 Update Bulletins showcased study activity and research, **reaching new audiences** across the education, research, government, charity and healthcare sectors.



14 COVID-19 Perspectives blogs gave a platform to longitudinal researchers to **promote their work**.



CLOSER's **COVID-19 Twitter campaign** generated **over half a million** impressions.



The COVID-19 Longitudinal Research Hub was **accessed over 7,300 times** by **3,738 users** from across the world.

5. Generating insights for policy and decision makers



CLOSER briefed **parliamentarians** on the response by longitudinal population studies to the pandemic at an **All-Party Parliamentary Health Group (APHG) webinar**.



Three COVID-19 Policy Briefing Notes synthesised evidence from across the studies for policy and decision makers.



Written evidence submitted to the House of Commons Education Committee **Home Education inquiry**.



Article published in Science in Parliament Journal summarising policy relevant findings from COVID-19 surveys.

6. Making COVID-19 data discoverable



2,688 COVID-19 questions and 9,337 COVID-19 variables from seven longitudinal studies added to CLOSER Discovery.



COVID-19 metadata in CLOSER Discovery **covers 12 topic areas** including physical and mental health, education and employment.

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