The impact of SMF programmes on participants’ early education outcomes

Ellen Greaves and Claire Crawford
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Importance of evaluation

- The UK has relatively low levels of intergenerational income mobility and large inequalities in educational attainment
- Important to attempt to increase mobility and reduce socio-economic inequality
- What programmes are most effective at raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils?
- Where is limited funding best allocated?
- Few charities undertake robust analysis to help determine this
- SMF and J.P. Morgan should be congratulated for their open approach, and other organisations should follow
- This will help to ensure that scarce resources are targeted most effectively and thus hopefully help narrow the attainment gap
The SMF programmes

- Aspiring Professionals Programme (APP)
  - Delivered to Year 12 students with high academic attainment and lower socio-economic status
  - Mentoring
  - Internship
  - Skills development
  - Events and trips to universities
  - University application support
- J.P. Morgan Residential Programme
- Whitehall Social Mobility Internship Programme
The SMF programmes

• Aspiring Professionals Programme (APP)
• J.P. Morgan Residential Programme
  – Delivered to Year 12 students with high academic attainment and lower socio-economic status, living outside London and with an interest in a career in finance and economics
  – Two week internship
  – Mentor from J.P. Morgan
• Whitehall Social Mobility Internship Programme
The IFS evaluation

- Evaluate the impact of SMF programmes on education and employment outcomes of participants

**Education outcomes:**
- Higher Education (HE) participation
- Amongst those who go to university:
  - Participation at “high-status” institution
  - Subject choice
  - Participation outside home region
  - Degree completion and classification

**Early employment outcomes:**
- Activity status: whether in work, further education, or unemployed
- Whether working in a professional occupation
The IFS evaluation

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**Early employment outcomes:**
- Activity status: whether in work, further education, or unemployed
- Whether working in a professional occupation
Gold-standard evaluation

- Use group of potential participants (e.g. successful applicants)
Gold-standard evaluation

- Randomly assign potential participants to two groups
Gold-standard evaluation

Programme group
Receive programme

Comparison group
Counterfactual for programme group
Gold-standard evaluation

Programme group
60% attend Russell Group institutions

Comparison group
50% attend Russell Group institutions

In this example the impact of the programme is 10 percentage points (20% increase)
Feasible evaluation

Programme group

Comparison group
Choose individuals with very similar characteristics to programme group
Feasible evaluation

Programme group

Comparison group
Choose individuals with very similar characteristics to programme group

Disadvantage: we may not observe all the important ways in which treatment and comparison groups differ
What do we know about SMF participants?

- Background characteristics from application form
  - GCSE attainment
  - Ethnic group
  - Eligibility for free school meals/education maintenance allowance
  - Postcode
- A-Level attainment from subsequent SMF survey
- HE destination and subject choice from subsequent SMF survey
IFS approach to construct comparison group

- Use administrative data to find individuals with similar characteristics to act as our comparison group
  - Eligibility for free school meals
  - Local area characteristics
  - Prior attainment
  - Ethnic group

- But we cannot observe:
  - Motivation
  - Desired future occupation
  - Parents’ level of education
  - etc . . .
Concerns about approach

• Survey non-response
  – If SMF participants (who answered the survey) are more motivated than individuals with similar attainment, etc, in admin data, then we will be overestimating the impact of the SMF programme
  – Hope that this potential bias is relatively small – but can’t be sure

• Comparison group for 2011 and 2012 cohorts
  – We do not yet have access to administrative data for these cohorts
  – This means we have to use the 2010 cohort for our comparison group
  – Not ideal because we know HE participation has been increasing over time (and SES gaps have been falling slightly)
  – Impacts may be upward biased for the 2011 and 2012 cohorts
Evaluation findings
University participation

Percentage Point Impact


SMF Cohort

Equivalent to a 12% increase

Possibly due to earlier cohort used to construct comparison group
Russell Group participation (amongst those going to university)

Percentage Point Impact

SMF Cohort

- Equivalent to a 17% increase
- Equivalent to an 18% increase
- Equivalent to a 72% increase
“Top 10” participation (amongst those going to university)

- Equivalent to a 16% increase
- Equivalent to a 13% increase
- Equivalent to a 130% increase
Other

• Little impact on subject choice, conditional on HE participation
  – Some exceptions, including the probability of studying business and
    finance for participants on the J.P. Morgan Residential Programme

• Impact is largely similar for participants inside and outside London

• Little impact on the probability of attending an institution outside
  home region
  – Positive impact for 2012 cohort
Summary

Amongst those who went to university, SMF programmes appear to have increased participation at high status institutions

- Increase at Russell Group institutions between 17% and 27% across SMF cohorts
- Increase at institutions most visited by top employers between 13% and 43% across SMF cohorts

Larger impact for J.P. Morgan residential programme

Findings are subject to assumptions

Difficult to compare results across cohorts
- Changing selection criteria across cohorts
- Necessity to use earlier cohort to construct a comparison group
Conclusion

- The SMF programmes seem to have had a sizeable positive effect on institution choice and/or Russell Group application success amongst high achieving young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who might otherwise have gone to different universities.

- Magnitude is roughly equivalent to the difference between pupils who achieve three A grades at A-level and three A* grades at A-level, on average, conditional on participation.

- Amongst those who go to university, probability of attending a Russell Group institution is higher than those from private schools.

- Estimation method could be replicated for other programmes to determine the most effective ways to increase socio-economic mobility and access to professional occupations.