

Developing a black swan service

**How Denmark could lead the world in
community child mental health**

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- Black Swans and Financial wizards
- Karl Popper and the central role of refutation in science

- There **are** excellent specialist child mental health services in many places providing evidence-based treatments with good outcomes
- However, community services often struggle to provide a half-decent service in the face of overwhelming demand and little capacity for early intervention or prevention.

- Tired and demoralized staff conclude that:
 - “Nobody can make a good job of community child mental health”
- This pessimistic perspective is self-fulfilling
- How can we refute this?

Or to put it another way:

Where is the black swan service that succeeds in promoting child mental health and providing excellent help to the entire community it serves?

Denmark could be just the right place for finding the black swan that refutes self-defeating pessimism about community child mental health

Even one demonstration site for excellent community child mental health services would be important for the whole world

Why Denmark?

- Right scale
- Collaborative
- Sympathetic to a public health approach
- Well-trained professionals across many disciplines and settings
- Routine monitoring of child mental health in schools
- Registers

Mental health data is collected in school and can be linked to important long-term outcomes such as:

- Educational attainments
- Employment
- Adult mental health and substance use
- Accidents
- Crime
- Happiness, well-being, flourishing

Methodology

- Observational data are easier to collect than trial data, but can be misleading.
- Propensity matching may help.
- At the very least, high-quality observational data may suggest promising directions for further investigation.
- The effects of local variety and innovation can be examined.

- Big data also allow gold-standard randomised clinical trials to be done even better, with cheaper and more comprehensive outcome monitoring.

- A systematic programme of trials has transformed the outcome of children with leukaemia.
- Why not try to do the same for child mental health, helped along by big data?

