Sibling Bullying and Educational Outcomes

A) RATIONALE FOR THE PROJECT (Brief background about why this project is important)
In the UK, 85% of children have at least one sibling. Good quality sibling relationships are important as they help children to develop social skills and are a source of emotional support (Downey & Condron, 2004). However, sibling relationships can also include frequent conflict and aggression. Up to 50% of children have been bullied by their siblings and up to 40% have bullied their siblings (Wolke, Tippett, & Dantchev, 2015).

Sibling bullying is associated with higher levels of depression and loneliness (Duncan, 1999), more behavioural problems (Wolke & Samara, 2004), and higher levels of mental distress (Tucker, Finkelhor, Turner, & Shattuck, 2014). Furthermore, children who are bullied by a sibling at the age of 12 years are more likely to have depression, anxiety, and have self-harmed by the age of 18 years compared to those who are not (Bowes, Wolke, Joinson, Lereya, & Lewis, 2014). It is well documented that poor mental health is associated with poor educational outcomes. What is unclear is whether 1) sibling bullying is associated with poor educational outcome and 2) if such a relationship exists, whether it is mediated by poor mental health.

B) REFERENCES THAT SHOULD BE READ (if you do not have access to these, please email me)

C) RESEARCH AIMS / QUESTIONS
1. Is there a relationship between sibling bullying and educational attainment during childhood and adolescence?
2. Are different types of sibling bullying involvement, such as victim only or perpetrator only, associated with differential educational attainment?
3. Does mental health mediate the relationship between sibling bullying and educational attainment?
4. What role do other factors, such as socioeconomic status, gender, family type, and parenting styles, play in the relationship between sibling bullying and educational attainment?

D) METHODS
This project will be solely based on the secondary analysis of existing data from the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS). Full details of the MCS, including methodological information, are reported elsewhere (Connelly & Platt, 2014). The data to be used in this analysis will be taken from waves 5 and 6 (i.e. when the children were aged 11 and 14 years), specifically: child-based self-report questionnaires about sibling bullying involvement, child-based parent-report questionnaires sociodemographic and family level variables, and educational attainment data from the national pupil database. It is anticipated that structural equation modelling will be used to map pathways from sibling bullying involvement to differential educational attainment. Full training in advanced statistical methods will be provided.