



Leading the positive life

Marcus Richards and Felicia Huppert with evidence from a longitudinal birth cohort study. E-mail 'Big picture' ideas to jon.sutton@bps.org.uk.

While we know a great deal about the continuity between childhood mental health problems and outcomes in adulthood, we know very little about the continuity between childhood well-being or positive mental health and outcomes in adult life. Troubled children are likely to become troubled adults but how likely are happy, well-adjusted children to flourish in adulthood?

To investigate, Marcus Richards (MRC Unit for Lifelong Health and Ageing) and Felicia Huppert (Well-being Institute,

University of Cambridge) analysed data from the British 1946 birth cohort study. Positive childhood behaviour (rated by school teachers at 13 and 15) was associated with a low probability of lifetime emotional problems, satisfaction with work, high contact with friends or family and engagement in social activities.

Writing in the *Journal of Positive Psychology* last year, the authors said: 'childhood well-being predicts positive adult well-being, and not merely the absence of mental ill-health'.