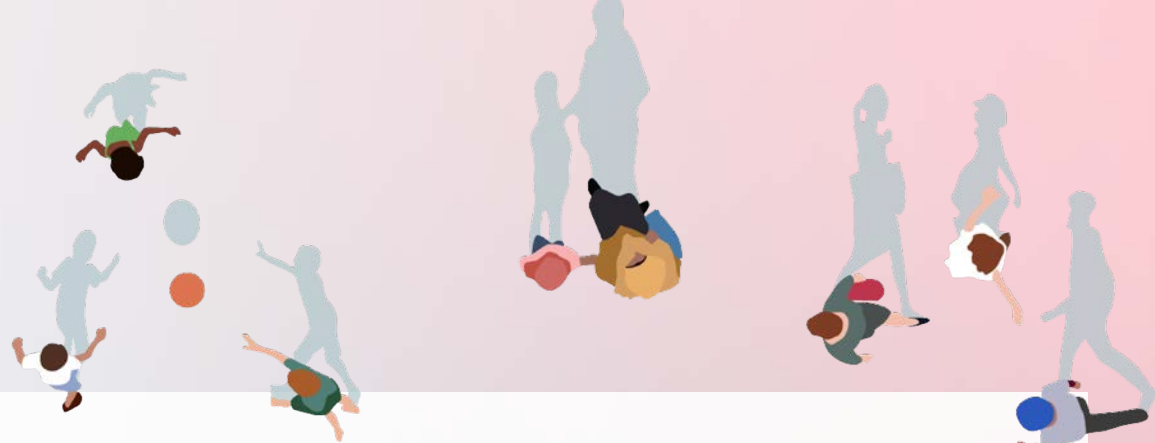




What Works for  
**Children's  
Social Care**



# Unlocking the facts of secure children's homes

**Spring Webinar Series**

01.03.2021

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# Housekeeping

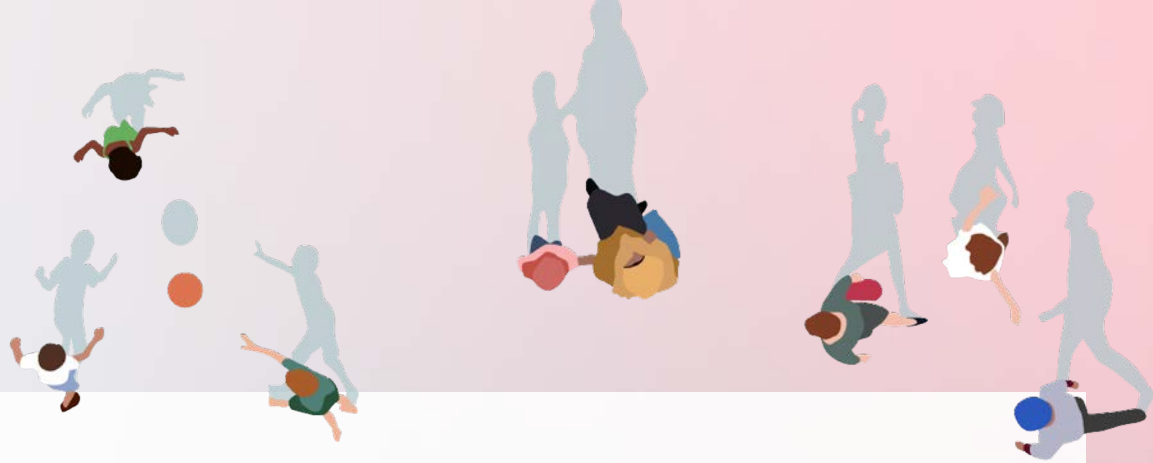
- We're recording the webinar
- We have an hour and a half
- We'll have time for questions at the end
- Please type your questions into the chat box
- We'll do our best to get to as many as possible, and may group similar questions
- If your question is for a particular panellist, please include this!



# Speakers

- Dr Michael Sanders, Chief Executive, What Works for Children's Social Care (Chair)
- Dr Annie Williams, Research Fellow, CASCADE, Cardiff University
- Harriet Waldegrave, Senior Public Affairs & Policy Analyst, Office of the Children's Commissioner
- **Additional panel members:** Eleanor Briggs, Director of Policy, What Works for Children's Social Care; James Houghton, Founder, Future Voices; Sophie Wood, Research Associate, CASCADE, Cardiff University





# About WWCSC



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# IMPROVING EVIDENCE FOR BETTER OUTCOMES



# How?

- Pulling together what we already know
- Supporting the good work that is already happening
- Commissioning new research
- Giving practitioners, young people and families a platform to share their experience
- Improving the accessibility and relevance of the evidence

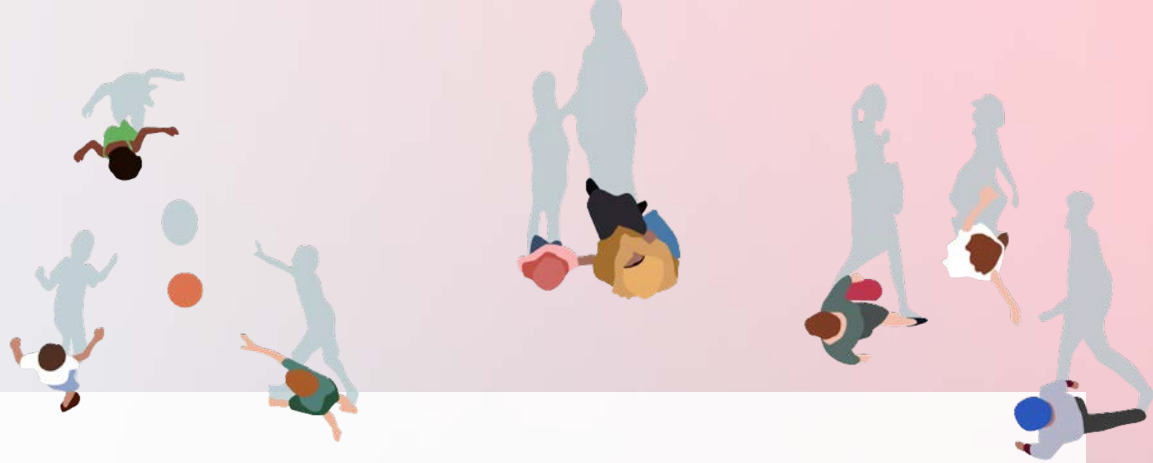


# Why do we exist?

To deliver better outcomes for young people and families across the country, we need to know what works - for whom - and see effective practice spread far and wide.

By producing high quality evidence on “what works” and helping to translate this into practice, we hope to help all children fulfil their potential





# Secure Children's Homes



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# Background

- Secure Children's Homes are one type of secure setting - others include secure mental health wards, Young Offender Institutions and Secure Training Centres
- Secure Children's Homes are licensed, by courts, to deprive children and young people referred to their care of liberty
- Some children and young people are referred to SCHs through the justice system, other for welfare reasons
- In November 2020 the government announced £24m in funding to start a new programme to maintain capacity and expand provision in secure children's homes





**HEARING THE VOICES OF THOSE  
IN SECURE CHILDREN'S HOMES**



# Experience of being placed in a secure children's home



**Girl, age 16**



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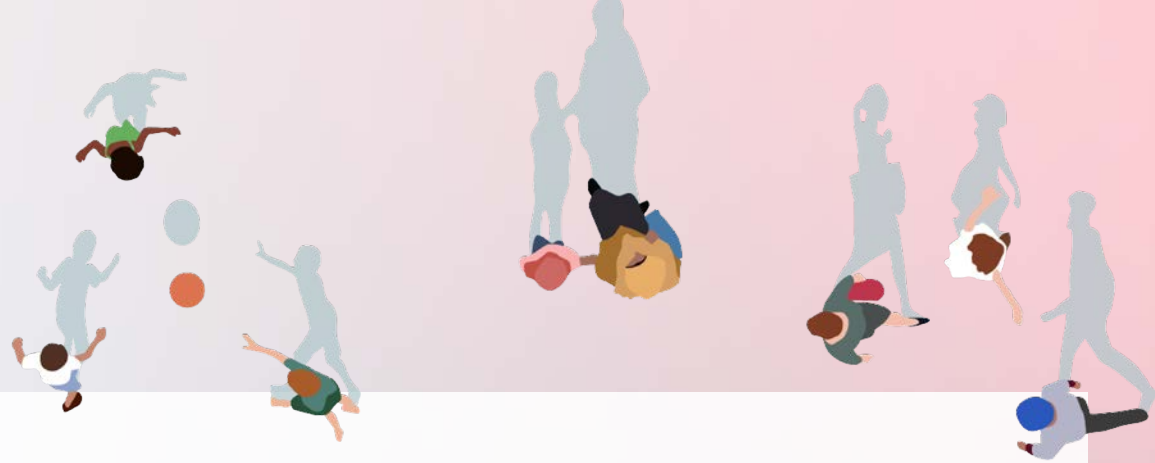
# Life in a secure children's home



**Girl, age 16**



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# Dr Annie Williams

## CASCADE, Cardiff University



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# Children and Young People from England referred to Secure Children's Homes: History and Outcomes

Aimee Cummings<sup>1</sup>, Shahd Daher<sup>2</sup>, Asmaa El-Banna<sup>3</sup>, Helen Hodges<sup>1</sup>, Nell Warner<sup>1</sup>,  
Annie Williams<sup>1</sup>, Sophie Wood<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>CASCADE Cardiff University

<sup>2</sup>Oxford University

<sup>3</sup>University of Warwick

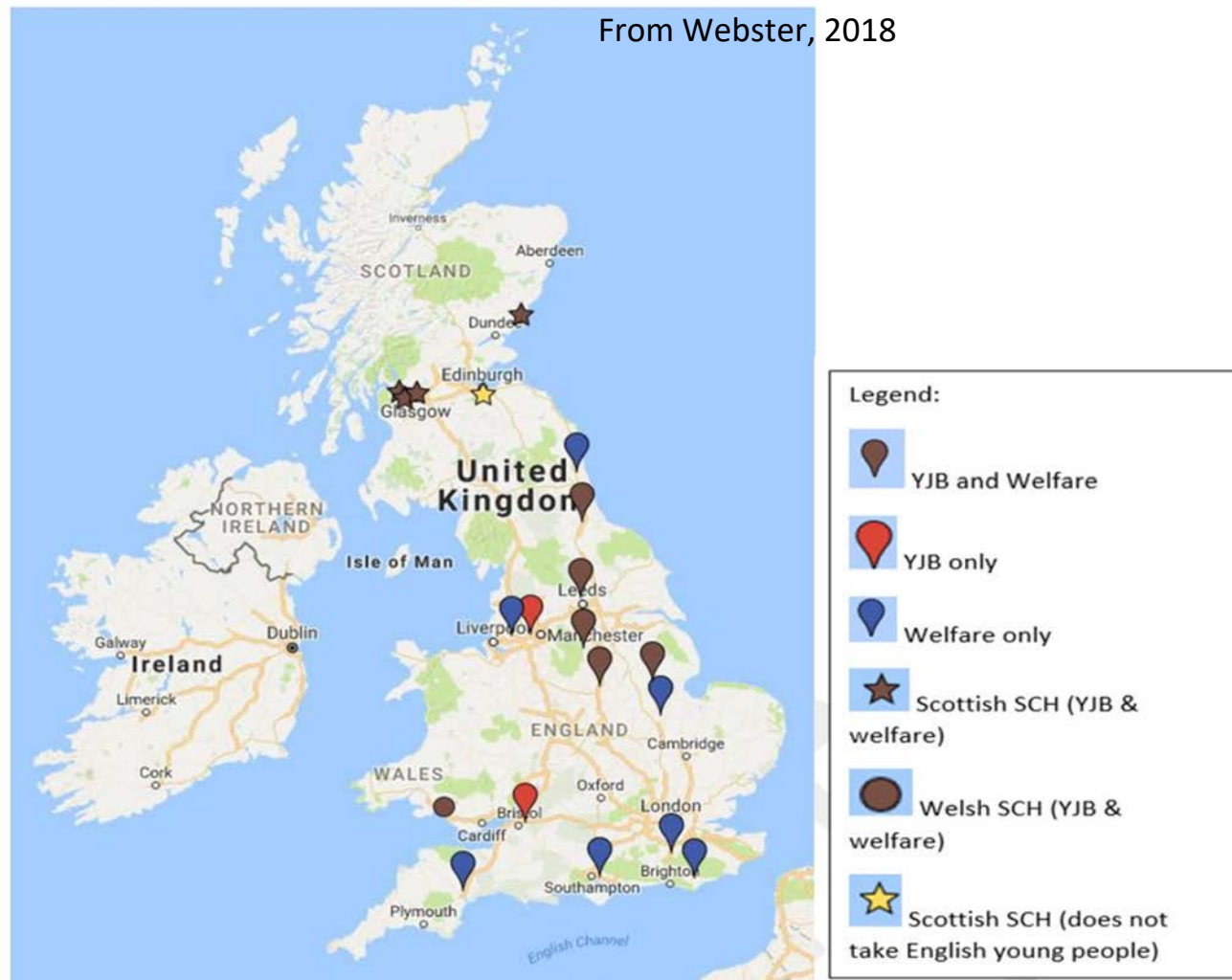
# Background

- Secure Children's Homes are licensed, by courts, to deprive children and young people referred to their care of liberty
- Some children and young people are referred to SCHs through the justice system, other for welfare reasons
- Despite the relatively low numbers of C&YP referred to SCH, not all can be accommodated & some are therefore placed in 'alternative accommodations'

Map 3: SCHs that can take young people from England<sup>8</sup>

From Webster, 2018

SCHs in  
England  
Scotland  
where C&YP  
can be  
placed





# Study Interest: the pathways of C&YP from England referred to SCHs

- Their experiences and care histories before the secure order
- The detail of the placement in a SCH or alternative accommodation (AA)
- Outcomes in the year after referral to SCHs
- The comparative costs of SCH & AA

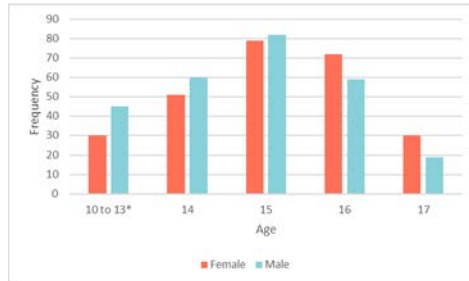
# Study Design

Analysis of 3 routinely collected data sets

1. Children in Need returns
2. Children Looked After returns
3. Secure Welfare Co-ordination Units records (information of referral to & use of SCHs & Alternative Accommodations)

# Findings

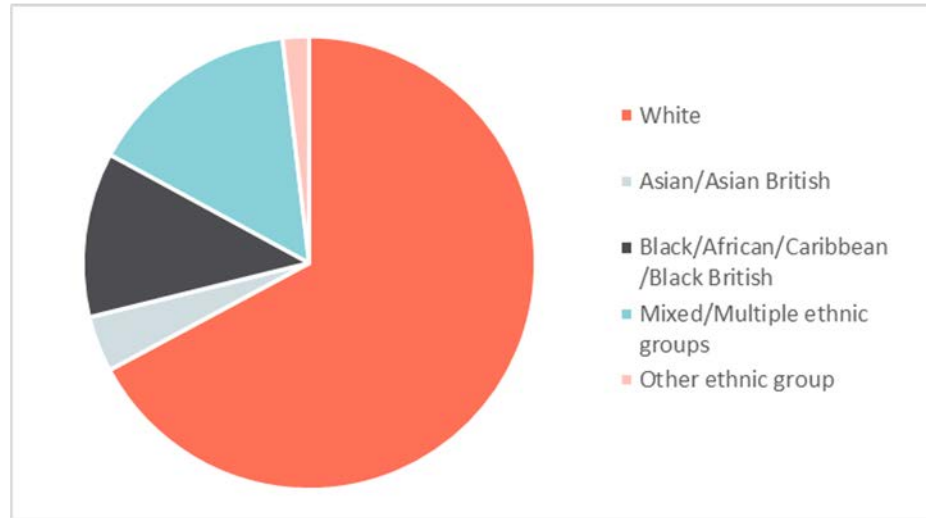
- 527 young people (262 girls, 265 boys) referred to SCHs over the study time frame (Oct 1<sup>st</sup> 2016 - March 31<sup>st</sup> 2018)
- 60.5% (n=319) of young people were placed in SCHs and 39.5% (n=208) in alternative accommodation.
- Age range 10 -17, most 14 -16. **19 aged 10 -12**

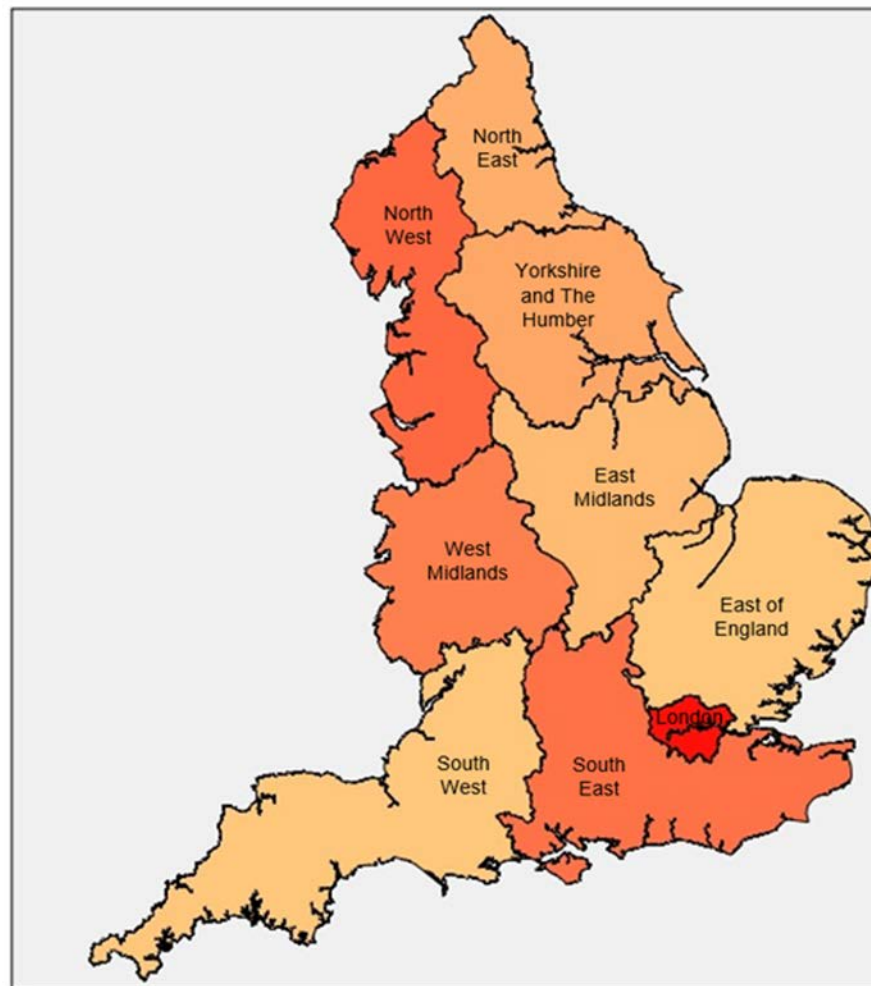


Boys = greater referral rate  
up to age 15, girls 15  
onwards

# Ethnicity

White (67.2%, n=354), mixed/multiple ethnicity 15.2% (n=80),  
11.8% (n=62) Black/African/Caribbean/Black British, 4.0% (n=21) Asian/Asian British, 1.9% (n=10)  
other ethnic group





Number  
of  
Referrals

- 140 plus
- 120 to 139
- 100 to 119
- 80 to 99
- 60 to 79
- 40 to 59
- 20 to 39
- 19 or less

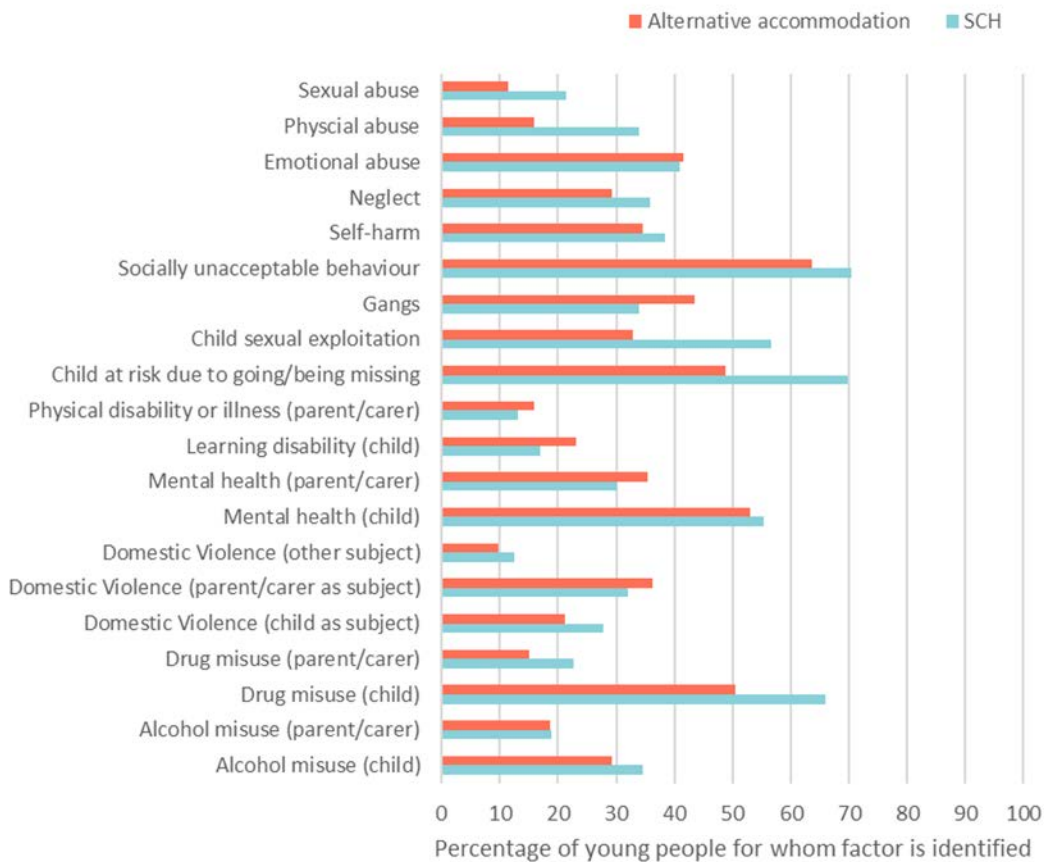
# Life histories before SCH referral ( 3 years pre-ref)

- Analysis SWCU data confirmed known high levels of neglect & abuse
- Most YP had little contact with family at time of referral
- High levels of bereavement
- Most not engaged in education
- Victims of crime

# Care histories before referral

Little difference found between SCH and AA groups

- All YP who were linked to CiN data ( 491) had been a Child in need in 3 years pre-SCH referral
- Of these majority ( 445) had been looked after at some point
- Length CiN plans 6 days – 16 years , child's age on start: pre-birth to 17.5



In 3 years prior SCH referral  
59.8%, (n=292) received 1 or more new referrals to CS (1st or new if previous CIN Plan ceased). Primary need on referral abuse or neglect (only space for one primary need: no difference between SCH/AA groups)

55.4% (n=272) received one or more CiN assessments. These records collect detail of multiple needs



# Care placements

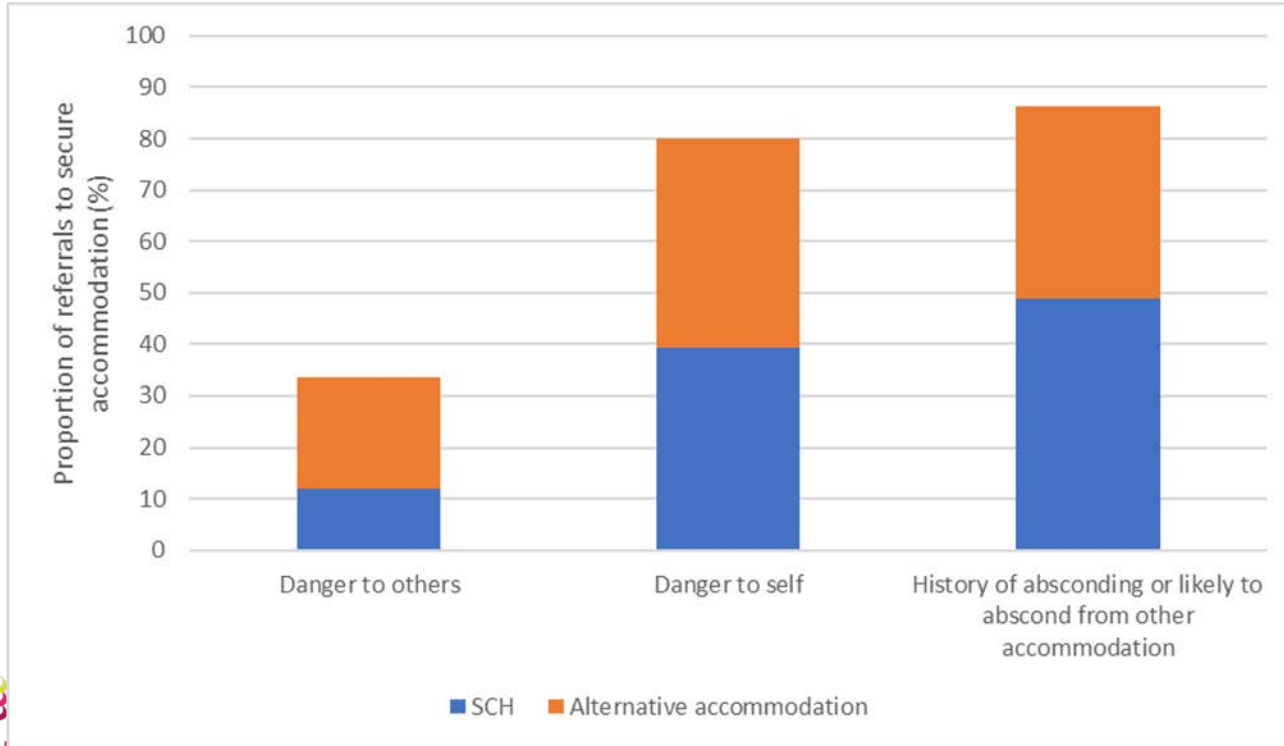
## 3 years pre SCH referral

- Average of 6 placements
- Most common : Children's homes (79.5 %, n=357); foster care (68.2%, n=306)
- YP subsequently placed in a SCH more likely to have previously been in SCH (24.7% vs 14.6%) or foster care (72.7% vs 61.2%).
- YP subsequently in AA more likely to have been in a YOI (9% vs <6 placements\*) or medical/ nursing setting (8.4% vs 3.7%).

## Immediately prior to referral

- Most common: Children's homes subject to children's homes regulations; foster placements. Semi-independent living accommodations (not subject to children's homes regulations) were also commonly used
- YP placed in SCHs more likely to have been in children's homes subject to regulations, (45.4% vs 28.0%); residential homes with element of personal or nursing care (5.6% vs <6).
- No further differences in placement type prior to secure accommodation referral for those placed in alternative accommodation.

# Secure Accommodation pathway: Key reason for referral



# Risk factors SWCU referral forms

## SA/AA placement: Differences in risk factors on referral to SA

Risk Factor	Secure Accommodation (%)	Alternative Accommodation (%)
Challenging Behaviour	81.2	97.8
Previous offending Behaviour	73.7	83.2
Sexual Exploitation	62.7	44.7
Linked to Gang	25.7	31.7
Sexually Harming Behaviours	13.2	19.7



# Placement on receipt of secure order: 60.5% (n=319) placed in SCHs and 39.5% (n=208) in AA

- The time for placement ranged from day of referral to over four months (range=0-133 days)
- Average number of attempts at a placement being made was 4.23
- Most YP placed in SCHs < three applications (maximum six). Often same day as the referral went live. Maximum 36 days.
- YP placed in AA -referral requests up to six times (maximum 15). Most decisions < ten days but some took over 30 days.  
Maximum 133 days

Table 3. Alternative Accommodation and number of young people placed

	N	%
Foster Care	11	5.3
Independent living	12	5.8
Mental Health Hospital	*	*
Other	*	*
Placed with parents	16	7.7
Residential	100	48.1
Not CLA	10	4.8
Youth offending institution	19	9.1
Missing data	32	15.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\*Numbers less than 6 suppressed or secondary suppression applied to avoid identification of individuals

Source: SWCU

## Factors influencing SA acceptance

The odds of being placed in secure accommodation after a referral (compared to being placed in alternative accommodation)

	All (n=464) Odds ratio (95%CI)
Previously placed secure accommodation in the three years prior to referral <sup>a</sup>	2.12(1.23-3.64)**
Age <sup>b</sup>	0.75(0.64-0.89)***
Female (Y/N) <sup>b</sup>	2.26(1.49-3.43)***
White (Y/N) <sup>b</sup>	1.36(0.89-2.09)
History of challenging behaviour <sup>bc</sup>	0.34(0.17-0.69)**

<sup>a</sup>Source: CLA; <sup>b</sup>Source: SWCU; <sup>c</sup>Recorded at referral

\*P ≤ 0.05; \*\*P ≤ 0.01; \*\*\*P ≤ 0.001.



# Experiences and outcomes in the year after SCH referral

## Care trajectories:

- A children's home subject to children's homes regulations most common placement overall (SCH:56.3%, AA: 37.0%)
- Young people from AA (41.8%) more likely to be placed in a youth offending institute, prison or SCH than those from SCH (20.4%)
- Average placement moves 3. No difference between SCH & AA
- More (36.5%) of those placed in AA were re-referred to SA in the following year, compared to 30.1% of those placed in SCHs

# Substance Misuse

- Nearly half (46.2%) of YP had a recorded substance misuse problem
- Substance misuse highest during the year of referral when compared to the subsequent year or that before
- Substance misuse higher among the group of young people (48.1%, n=124) placed in SCHs than those placed in alternative accommodation (43.4%, n=72).
- Difference was found in the years before referral and continued into the year of referral and the subsequent one.
- Of young people with substance misuse problem 89.3% were offered a substance misuse intervention, but only 48.6% received one. Little difference between groups

## Young people referred to SA with a conviction by year and group

	SCH		Alternative accommodation	
Number of years from referral*	All young people with CLA outcome data	Young people with a conviction	All young people with CLA outcome data	Young people with a conviction
	N	N(%)	N	N(%)
Three years prior	52	6 (11.5%)	42	*
Two years prior	77	12(15.6%)	52	12(23.1%)
One years prior	119	37(31.1%)	75	32(42.7%)
Year of referral	174	76(43.7%)	117	67(57.3%)
Year after referral	219	67(30.6%)	135	51(37.8%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>129(50.0%)</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>98(59.0%)</b>



# Mental Health measures

## (Strength & Difficulties Questionnaires: measure of concern 17+)

- Year pre-referral the mean score was 19.3 with little difference between SCH & AA.
- Year of referral, mean score reduced 17.2 . YP in AA higher score than SCH (16.7 v 18.2). But results were insignificant
- High levels of missing data meant only 50 young people could be tracked before and after referral to secure accommodation.
- Of these, 56.0% (n=28) of scores worsened & 38.0% (n=19) improved. The remaining scores stayed the same. Numbers were too small to break these results down further to compare those placed in a SCH to those placed in AA

# Costs of SCH & AA

- Secure accommodation average day rate: £1008
- Alternative accommodation average day rate: £288.14\*

\*Interpret with caution,

*Care in year after referral*

## Mean placement costs/year:

- Children placed in secure accommodation **£156,880.88**
- Children placed in alternative accommodation **£106,344.23**
- 95% confident that the mean annual placement cost of children placed in secure accommodation is somewhere between **£31,698 and £70,572 greater** than the placement costs of children placed in alternative accommodation

# Conclusions

- YP's chaotic backgrounds, reinforces established knowledge.
- While the number of YP referred to SCHs remains low, two of every five YP not being found a place in a SCH is of concern.
- The study suggests YP placed in AA tend to be older males with a history of challenging behaviours.
- Study highlights lack of knowledge of the care given in AA & how well it meets need
- Lack of knowledge of what AA is affects interpretation of the economic analysis of the comparative costs. Study calculations based on assumptions that AA were standard care placements.
- Few differences in outcomes could be found in the total study sample or the two study groups.
- The main difference is in care settings. The lower numbers of YP from the AA group placed in children homes suggests their histories continually form a barrier to care placements after the referral.
- Numbers of YP re-referred or placed in secure accommodation, YOI or prison asks questions of the care given in and after the SCH or AA.

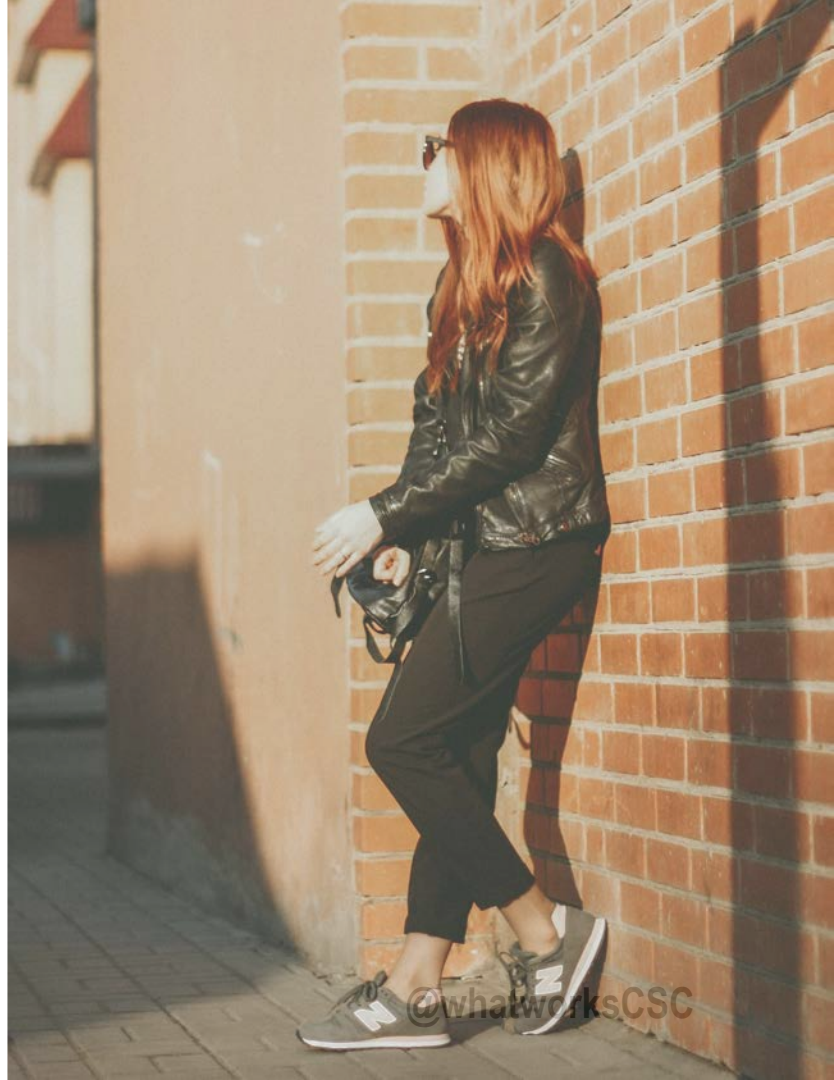
# Recommendations

1. The study evidenced little improvement in outcomes. This demands some revision of policy and practice related to the care offered in secure welfare settings and that provided afterwards
2. Analysis of outcomes was limited to the available measures within local authority records. Further data linkage with justice, health and education databases would extend knowledge
3. The study suggested that more of the young people placed in AA were perceived as a risk to society, rather than a victim of life circumstances. The lack of knowledge of what AA is demands further exploration to discover what is provided, whether it is appropriate and if it can be viewed as a real alternative to a SCH.
4. With little knowledge of the process of and barriers to a SCH placement, further analysis of the SWCU data is warranted

2 out 5 young people who  
needed a place in secure,  
didn't get one



Girl, age 15



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# What are the positives and negatives of living in a secure home?

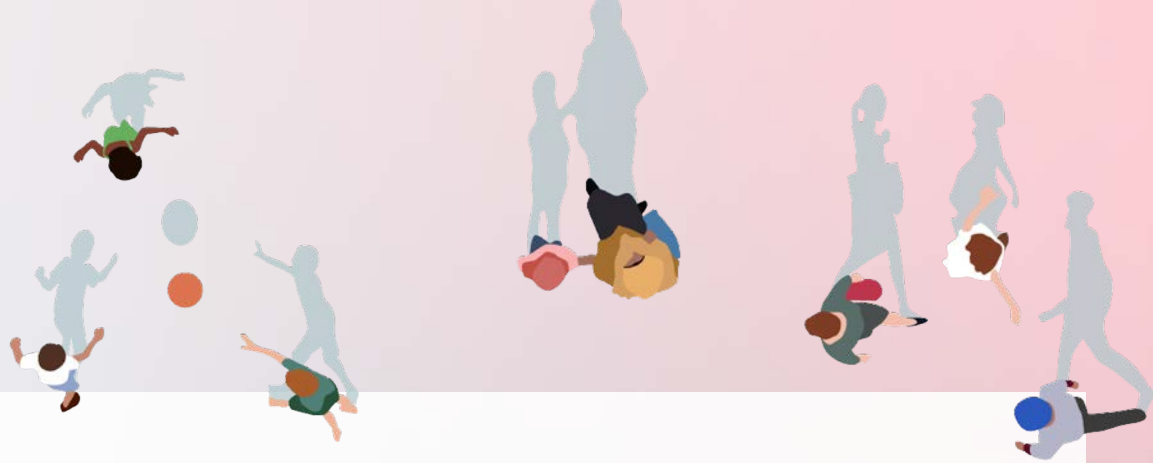


**Girl, age 16**



**Girl, age 16**





# Harriet Waldegrave

## Office of the Children's Commissioner



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# The Children in Secure Accommodation

What Works for Children's Social Care, Unlocking the Facts of Secure Children's Homes  
1<sup>st</sup> March 2021





# Who are they, and where are they?

SCHs -  
youth  
justice  
90

Mental  
Capacity  
Act  
59

SCHs –  
welfare  
81

Secure  
Training  
Centres  
114

Informal/  
legal basis  
unknown  
400

Children deprived  
of liberty under  
inherent  
jurisdiction of High  
Court  
327 (over 2019/20)

Young Offender  
Institutions  
511

Children detained under  
Mental Health Act on  
other wards  
544  
(237 on secure/PICU and  
307 on other wards)

# Needs of Children in Secure Care

Mental Health Needs: 78% of children in youth custody  
55% of children referred to SCHs for welfare reasons

Welfare Needs: 56% of children in youth custody have had contact with children's social care  
44% of children's detained under Mental Health Act have care history, and 19% with social worker (based on survey data)

Offending Behaviour: 84% of children referred to SCHs for welfare reasons  
Unknown for children under MHA - 18% had previous YOT contact section (based on survey data), 1% there under 'forensic'

# Demographics of Children in Secure Care

## Mental Health:

- 75% of those detained are girls.
- Black children twice as likely to be in secure wards as White children
- Black children more likely to be admitted from criminal justice settings

## Welfare:

- Quite even gender split within secure children's homes,
- No data published on ethnicity (although will be in future)
- WWCS research finds older boys are more likely to not get placements

## Youth Justice:

- 97% boys
- Black and mixed race children over-represented; 27% and 13% of custody population compared to 5% and 5% of under 19 population.
- BAME children more likely to be placed in YOIs than White children

# 'Demand' for Placements

## Mental Health:

- 296 beds in secure mental health wards and PICUs in March 2020, down from 355 in March 2019.
- No published data on children referred to inpatient beds or waiting times

## Welfare:

- 30 children a day on average 2019/20 waiting for a place in SCHs
- 40% of children referred don't get a place

## Youth Justice:

- The number of MoJ contracted places in SCHs has nearly halved in the past ten years
- No data published on numbers of children turned away from SCHs
- Reports of children remanded to custody due to lack of community provision

**All types of settings report challenges in finding appropriate accommodation to 'step down' or resettle children from secure, which in turn can prevent children from needing another secure placement**

# Children the system can't place

## Child G

- › Discharged from an adult psychiatric ward
- › Repeated attempts to take her own life, but assessed as not meeting criteria for detention under MHA
- › Not accepted by any Secure Children's Home
- › Placed in a setting that was not willing to register with Ofsted, deprived of liberty

*"inadequate provision in this jurisdiction for children and adolescents who do not meet the criteria for detention and treatment under the Mental Health Act 1983 but nonetheless require assessment and treatment for mental health issues within a restrictive clinical environment"*

## 327 Children Deprived of Liberty Under the Inherent Jurisdiction of High Court

- › Unknown how many children are in this situation, or where they children are living
- › Court judgements show some are in makeshift arrangements such as holiday homes
- › 26% of children referred to SWCU were in semi-independent or 'other' accommodation
- › Several LAs report using unregistered accommodation as an interim measure while awaiting a secure bed

# What is needed?

- › A radical redesign of the whole system, to deliver settings which can accommodate children with mental health, welfare and offending needs
- › Settings which flexibly adapt to children's increasing or decreasing need for restrictions of liberty on the same site
- › Small units, closer to children's homes where appropriate, to ease reintegration
- › Building on best practice in Secure Children's Homes, and learning from the Secure School

# Who are they? Where are they?

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/report/who-are-they-where-are-they-2020/>

[harriet.waldegrave@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](mailto:harriet.waldegrave@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)



There needs to be further research to find out how best to help young people who have been placed in a secure home



Girl, age 16



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**What support would you like to see when you leave the secure home?**



**Girl, age 16**



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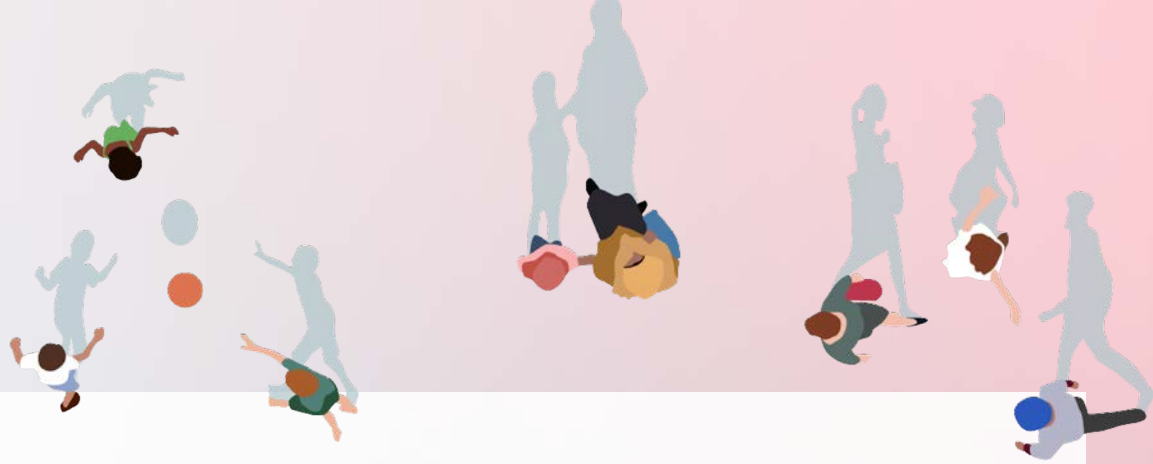
# Questions and discussion



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# Thank you!

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