

Rapid reviews of evidence in children's social care: Call for proposals

What Works for Children's Social Care (WWCSC) is funding a series of rapid reviews. We are seeking proposals from research teams with expertise in undertaking rapid systematic reviews, and with knowledge of the sector.

These reviews will be used specifically to inform the decisions and recommendations of the [Independent Review of Children's Social Care](#), and more broadly, to help build the evidence base in children's social care, and inform decisions about the research and projects that we fund and conduct.

We are particularly interested in funding reviews on a number of specific topics, and will be releasing calls for these separately over the coming months.

The current call for rapid reviews examines: factors for successful reunification of children in care

Background

The number of children in care has increased steadily over the last 10 years; in 2020, 80,080 children were looked after in England. A large proportion of children with experience of care return home however, and in 2020, that number was nearly 30,000. Many however, are likely to be re-referred back into Children's Social Care at some point before their 18th birthday. A number of systematic reviews have been conducted but these focus exclusively on US or Australian evidence. To date, none exist for the English context.

The Independent Review of Children's Social Care would like to explore the factors associated with successful reunification. Specifically, this call for a rapid review aims to answer the following questions:

- What are the factors associated with successful reunification for children in care in England?
 - The review would welcome a primary focus on impact evaluations of interventions facilitating reunification. These may be supplemented with evidence from implementation or process evaluations.
 - Proposed definitions of successful reunification should be outlined in the application



Applicants are welcome to propose variations to the questions above provided they meet the scope of the review. We will also facilitate a discussion with the Independent Review of Children's Social Care to finalise the research questions.

With all rapid reviews commissioned, the Independent Review of Children's Social Care will be looking to make recommendations, and would be interested in a discussion about whether effective interventions identified in the review could be scaled.

What is a Rapid Review?

A rapid review is a tool for collating the available research evidence on a certain topic / issue, as comprehensively as possible, within the constraints of a given timetable. This is done by setting parameters around the review to ensure the amount of evidence reviewed is manageable within the timeline.

WWCSC's approach is for rapid reviews to be systematic but focussed, and include consideration of quality.

- **Systematic:** Following a clear and replicable method identify evidence on a given topic that is as comprehensive / exhaustive as possible within your specified parameters – i.e. specifying in advance your research question, search terms, sources/databases to search and inclusion/exclusion criteria.
- **Focussed:** The rapid element involves using clear and focussed parameters to ensure the amount of evidence you identify and include is manageable e.g. using a narrow research question, searching a narrow set of dates or sources, using a narrow set of inclusion / exclusion criteria (e.g. location of research, type or quality of study)
- **Quality:** Systematic and rapid reviews should always include assessment of the quality of the evidence you are reviewing

Expectations

Conducting a rapid review under this funding stream will involve:

- Submitting and publishing a protocol for the methods used in the rapid review (please see the [rapid review protocol template here](#));
- Submitting a rapid review report that will be peer reviewed independently, and reviewed internally by the WWCSC research team (please see the [systematic/rapid review report template here](#));
- Incorporating comments from WWCSC and peer reviewers to ensure the review is of high quality and robust, and meets WWCSC's expectations;
- Final report to be published on the WWCSC website.

We would anticipate reasonable support provided to dissemination activities. This might include participating in a round-table event (or similar) to discuss the findings and implications for the next steps of the review.



We also expect teams to conduct all research activities in line with relevant Data Protection Laws including and without limitation the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the UK Data Protection Act 2018.

Budget

The total budget for this rapid review should not exceed **£20,000** and value for money will be taken into account when assessing applications.

Evaluations will be awarded as grants, so VAT is not applicable. Please note that we will not cover the FEC cost for HEIs and indirect costs for these organisations should not be included in your budget. We will fund overhead costs for non-HEIs, but we do not expect overheads to exceed 60% as a proportion of salaries.

Timelines

We expect work to begin on the 1st September 2021 at the latest, and for a final draft of the rapid review to be submitted to WWCS and the review team by early December 2021. Please see below for indicative timelines:

Activity	Due date
Call live	2nd August 2021
Call closes	5pm 23rd August 2021
Successful applicant notified	27th August 2021
Work to commence	1 September 2021
Protocol submitted to WWCS for review and approval	17 September 2021
Protocol published	29 September 2021
Rapid review submitted to WWCS and the review team for peer review and WWCS internal review	3 December 2021
Final review ready for publishing	Mid January
Participation in a roundtable to discuss findings and implications	Mid January



Application

To apply, please submit a proposal to programmes@whatworks-csc.org.uk by **5pm, 23rd August 2021**, although we would encourage you to submit proposals sooner, if possible.

Your proposal should total **no more than 4 sides of A4** and include the following:

1. Proposed research question and title for your review (making reference to the participants, interventions, comparators and outcomes (PICO)).
2. Background and rationale for your proposed review.
3. A brief outline of your proposed methodology to conducting the rapid review, including:
 - a. Study selection criteria (inclusion/exclusion), report characteristics, study characteristics, and limits (e.g. including study type, timeframe of existing research, geographical region, language etc);
 - b. Study outcomes;
 - c. Proposed search strategy (i.e. selection of databases);
 - d. Proposed analytical approach.
4. An overview of your core team's relevant skills and experience, as well as knowledge and understanding of the area.
5. Your proposed timeline for the work.
6. A suggested budget, including a detailed breakdown of these costs, stating the number of days or % FTE allocated to each staff member per research activity, and the costs associated.



Assessment criteria

The WWCSA will assess applications on a rolling basis. Applications will be assessed by the WWCSA's internal research and programmes teams, according to the following criteria.

Research questions and rationale:

- Clearly specified research questions that will be addressed by the review. These should reference the participants, interventions, comparators and outcomes (PICO).
- Clear rationale for the proposed research questions

Proposed methodology and approach includes:

- Suitable and clearly defined approach/methods, which can appropriately answer the specified research questions. This should refer to the proposed search strategy and study selection criteria.
- Consideration of the scope of the review. This includes considering key limits/constraints of conducting this rapid review, and articulates what it will and will not be able to look at within this review.
- Inclusion of a proposed analytical approach.
- Outlined approach adheres to methodological standards for rapid reviews.

Project team:

- Expertise and experience of the suggested core project team:
 - Evidence of undertaking previous rapid/systematic reviews or similar work;
 - Knowledge and understanding of the subject matter, and of key issues in this research area.

Budget and timelines:

- The proposal represents good value for money;
- Timelines are achievable, and meet the necessary criteria (a final draft should be available to WWCSA for peer review within 4 months of the grant being issued).

Please note that you can find further information on how we process your personal data in relation to your application can be found on our website [Privacy Policy](#) here.