Pilot Protocol
Putting Kitbag to Work
Evaluator (institution): What Works for Children's Social Care
Principal investigator(s): Aoife O'Higgins

Pilot Study of "Putting Kitbag to Work"

Intervention Developer	International Futures Forum (IFF)
Delivery Organisations	International Futures Forum, University of Sussex
Evaluator	What Works for Children's Social Care
Principal Investigator	Aoife O'Higgins
Protocol Author(s)	Shibeal O' Flaherty, Emily Walker, Alyssa Eden
Type of Trial	Pilot Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial (2-arm; parallel design; multi-site)
Age or Status of Participants	Children and young people (aged 4-18 years old) on child in need plans, on child protection plans, or in care
Number of Participating Local Authorities	4
Number of Children and Families	c.9300 children aged 4-18 years old
Contextual Factors	Caseload (quantity and complexity)
Version	Version 1.2 Note that an earlier version of this protocol was published on our website on 8th October 2021. This updated version of the protocol reflects the removal of the impact evaluation and an updated version of our plan for the implementation and process evaluation. The planned impact evaluation has been dropped due to low uptake of the intervention evident in survey data collected from social workers, family support workers and foster carers in participating LAs in October 2021.

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Background and Problem Statement

Kitbag is a resource that was developed by the International Futures Forum (IFF), a Scottish charity, "with a mission to enable people and organisations to flourish in powerful times"[1]. It was designed to help people develop their inner capacity for calm, resilience and communication for individuals, families, groups and teams. Since its conception in 2005, Kitbag has been used in a variety of settings (a women's prison, a disabled adults' support group, a domestic abuse group, a Scottish Health Board department and schools) on a relatively small scale (the largest being 71 schools). In 2007, IFF received a grant from Nesta to develop a Kitbag for children.

Since 2019, social care researchers at the University of Sussex have partnered with the IFF to embed and support the tool's wider development, particularly in its use with vulnerable children in social work settings. The aim of using Kitbag in social work settings is to support both the social and emotional wellbeing of the child (and their family) as well as the professional. With a grant from the University of Sussex / ESRC Impact Accelerator, small groups of social workers in eight local authorities have received Kitbags and support to use them through workshops and webinars. Two of the local authorities participating in this trial (Bexley and Oxfordshire) received a Kitbag each through this grant. In July 2020, the University of Sussex obtained funding from the Higher Education Impact Fund to buy Kitbags for all the social workers and foster carers in two local authorities, Brighton and Hove and Rotherham[2], and have further developed the programme of support. Brighton and Hove distributed the Kitbags to social workers and foster carers with some delay due to Covid-19, whilst Rotherham distributed the Kitbags to the social workers and also introduced them within their school settings. Covid-19 disruptions meant that planned light touch evaluation activities did not take place.

The initial evidence to date has been implementation and process evaluation, focusing on the implementation of Kitbag in school settings and at a small scale in eight children's services. The IFF conducted a qualitative evaluation[3] looking at the resources used in 71 schools (70 primary schools and 1 secondary school) in Fife, Scotland. The schools had 1-3+ Kitbags each and a small number of staff were trained within each school. Kitbag was mostly used weekly, usually in designated sessions and occasionally in full classroom settings. The evaluation was based on 24 survey responses and a framework and thematic analysis of 8 semi-structured interviews with staff who had used Kitbags. There was a perceived impact on the culture of the school and the majority of the survey respondents rated that the materials were "excellent". Although it was difficult for some schools to find time for external training, further training was identified as an essential component, particularly with high turnover of staff. Some schools commented that with the number of nurture-based approaches they already use in school, using Kitbag additionally may overexpose the children to the discussion of feelings. A barrier identified was that Kitbag may be less suitable for particular

[1] https://www.internationalfuturesforum.com/
[2] Putting Kitbag to Work, (n.d.) Retrieved 9th May 2021 from
http://www.sussex.ac.uk/socialwork/cswir/research/researchhighlights/kitbag
[3] International Futures Forum / Playfield Institute. (2017). *Fife Schools Evaluation Report 2017.*
https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/IFF-Kitbag-Fife_Schools_Evaluation_2017.pdf

age groups (older young people who see themselves as "too cool" and very young children who may not have the emotional maturity to make the most of Kitbag).

The University of Sussex led some early-stage research[4], which explored how social workers communicate with vulnerable children. The research found that resources to elicit concerns in a child-centred way would be helpful. Where such resources were used, they were usually provided privately by the social worker themselves instead of by their employer. The aim of this current trial is to evaluate the impact of Kitbag within a social care setting specifically on children and young people's social and emotional wellbeing and CSC-specific outcomes such as placement stability. The trial also evaluates the impact on the social and emotional wellbeing of professionals. We will also conduct an implementation and process evaluation to understand how the use of Kitbag differs from usual practice, is adapted for the social care setting, the impact perceived by social workers and its suitability for different subgroups.

As mentioned above, alongside this trial, the IFF and the University of Sussex recently received a Higher Education Impact Fund (HEIF) grant to provide all social workers and foster carers in two local authorities with Kitbags. The HEIF-funded project is focused on the confidence of the practitioner in eliciting information from the children and building relationships. This trial aims to complement the HEIF-funded project by giving many more social workers access to a Kitbag to embed the Kitbag within practice.

Intervention and Theory of Change

Why:

Reports from practitioners indicate that social workers are not often provided with resources to support direct work with children and young people[5]. Where resources are provided to teams, these are sometimes lost or not replenished. Kitbag is a resource for direct work designed to promote emotional literacy, positive behaviour and good relationships between children, professionals and carers. Additionally, anecdotal evidence suggests that social workers don't receive much training on direct work and so the programme involves support around the resource.

Who:

The Kitbag is designed to be used with children and young people between the ages of 4 and 18 years old and by those who care for children and young people for reflective practice.

Kitbags will be provided to social workers, family support workers, kinship carers and foster carers to use with the children and young people and families they support. Kitbags can also be used by the professionals themselves either individually or in team meetings.

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[4] Ruch, G., Winter, K., Morrison, F., Hadfield, M., Hallett, S. and Cree, V. (2019) From Communication to Co-operation: Re-conceptualising Social Workers' Engagement with Children in Child & Family Social Work. https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.sussex.ac.uk/doi/epdf/10.1111/cfs.12699

[5] Ruch, G., Winter, K., Morrison, F., Hadfield, M., Hallett, S. and Cree, V. (2019) From Communication to Co-operation: Re-conceptualising Social Workers' Engagement with Children in Child & Family Social Work, https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.sussex.ac.uk/doi/epdf/10.1111/cfs.12699

What:

The "Putting Kitbag to work" programme involves:

- The distribution of "Kitbags", bespoke resources for direct work with children and families, to social workers and family support workers across 4 local authorities in England. Social workers and family support workers use the Kitbag when they visit the children and young people they support to build a relationship, better understand the situation from the child's point of view and / or discuss a particular issue. Social workers and family support workers can also use the Kitbag to support themselves and / or as part of team meetings to build emotional awareness within the team.
- The distribution of Kitbags to foster carers and kinship carers to use with the children they look after, for example, to help them calm down after a distressing episode.
- Social workers and family support workers will be given access to Kitbag Online to facilitate virtual direct work with children and families (in particular whilst Covid-19 social distancing measures are in place).
- The appointment of a "Kitbag Super Lead" to lead the adoption of Kitbags across the local authority, and two "Designated Kitbag Leads" in each team (in the intervention group only) to support colleagues in their team to use Kitbags. The Super Lead coordinates the project overall, getting the necessary buy-in and arranging the logistics of distributing Kitbags. In this case, they also play a major role in setting up the evaluation. The Kitbag Leads are appointed on the basis of an expression of interest - some of the local authorities have chosen for one of the Kitbag Leads to be a team manager or senior practitioner.
- Monthly workshops for Designated Kitbag Leads facilitated by IFF/UoS to support them in their role of encouraging uptake and use of Kitbag by social workers and foster carers within their local authorities.
- Support by Designated Kitbag Leads to social workers and foster carers to provide support to use the Kitbags and facilitate sharing of ideas for how to use the Kitbag. Due to time constraints, it is expected that the support takes place in routine team meetings. The Designated Kitbag Leads in the fostering teams support their colleagues to support foster carers.

- Social workers and family support workers completing recording sheets as a space to reflect on using the Kitbag as part of direct work.

A Kitbag contains:

- Aromatic oil
- Timers: to time mindfulness exercises and in conversations for people to take turns with equal amounts of time
- Feelings cards: which open up a way to describe and share feelings
- A talking stick: which encourages listening and taking turns for people to speak and others to listen with respect
- Animal cards: cards with a picture of an animal and an associated quality e.g. love, communication etc. designed to encourage affirmation and empathy.
- Presence cards: which feature mindfulness exercises
- A "Wonder journey": a story which acts as a visualisation and relaxation exercise
- Finger puppets: to enable role play and for soothing

Kitbag Online replicates elements of the Kitbag in an online form, for example, the user can display all of the animal cards and click on each card to turn it over and reveal the characteristic associated with the animal.

The workshops emphasise that Kitbag enables and enhances what social workers and family support workers are trained to do when working with children and families. There is no prescription as to how to use the Kitbag, or how often to use it - the programme also gives practitioners and foster carers permission to be creative. Some examples of previous uses include:

- The child chooses an animal card for themselves and gifts a card to someone else in the family.
- The child projects their feelings onto one of the puppets so that they can discuss their feelings at some distance.

Where:

Under non-Covid-19 arrangements, it is expected that social workers would carry the Kitbag with them on visits and use the Kitbag at the family's home, on local authority premises or in public settings e.g. a park or a cafe.

Under Covid-19 arrangements, whilst social workers have (to varying extents) continued to conduct home visits during the lockdowns, there has been limited use of resources to facilitate direct work to reduce the risk of spreading Covid-19 to and between the families they work with. Use of Kitbag during Covid-19 restrictions is evolving and social workers are finding ways of using it for their interactions in creative ways and putting the resource into quarantine if necessary. Social workers may use the Kitbag Online during a virtual visit as well as or instead of using the physical resource on a home visit. On the other hand, foster carers will have a Kitbag available for use with those in the same household.

Support workshops and use of Kitbags in team meetings are also likely to take place virtually for at least the initial months of the programme.
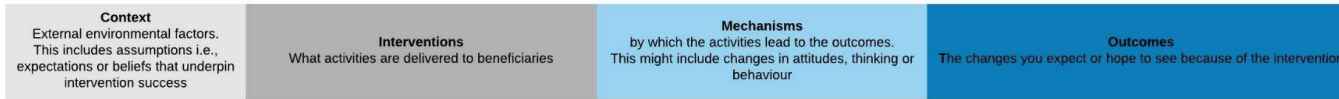
When:

Social workers have a statutory obligation to visit children on a child protection plan every 10 days, and children on a child in need plan every 4 weeks and children in care every 6 weeks. Social workers do not have to use the Kitbag on each visit so this represents the maximum frequency of use. The maximum frequency of use is determined by the extent of children's social care involvement. The intervention developers estimate that 3-4 sessions would be the minimum use of Kitbag for it to be beneficial.

Adaptation:

There has been no additional adaptation of the Kitbag itself from the school setting but the support is tailored to the social work setting, focusing on the relationship-based and reflective practice skills of the social workers and their role in leading the shift in practice within their teams.

As mentioned above, we expect that the version of the programme trialled will involve considerably more use of the Kitbag Online than in non-Covid-19 times. We attempt to address the generalisability of the findings in the implementation and process evaluation (please see below).

Logic Model

Context	Interventions	Mechanisms	Outcomes
External environmental factors. This includes assumptions i.e., expectations or beliefs that underpin intervention success	What activities are delivered to beneficiaries	by which the activities lead to the outcomes. This might include changes in attitudes, thinking or behaviour	The changes you expect or hope to see because of the intervention

Context

Contextual factor 1: Social workers have to build trusting relationships with children and families quickly, in a challenging organisational context.
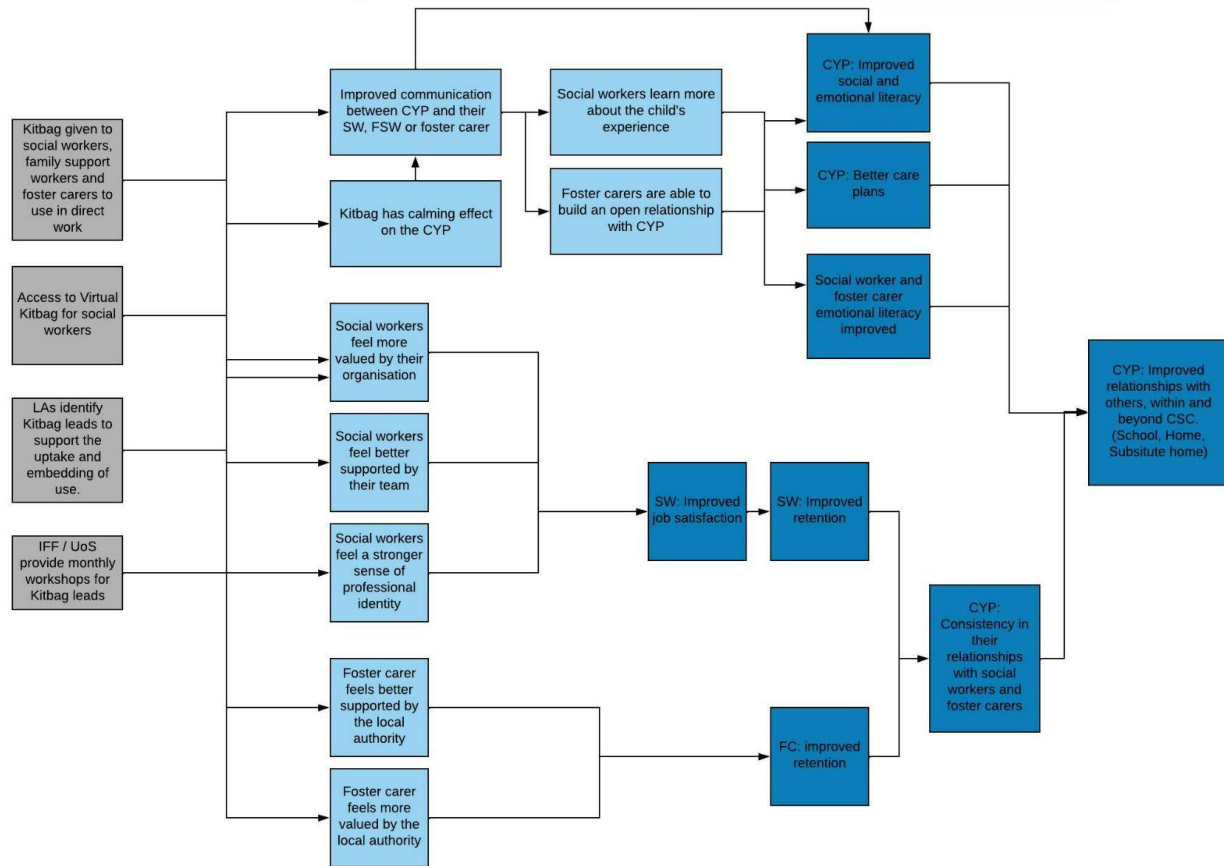
Contextual factor 2: Social workers do not all use resources for direct work with children and families.

Contextual factor 3: Where SW do use resources for direct work, they typically have to buy their own.

Contextual factor 4: Covid restrictions mean that it is difficult to share resources between families.

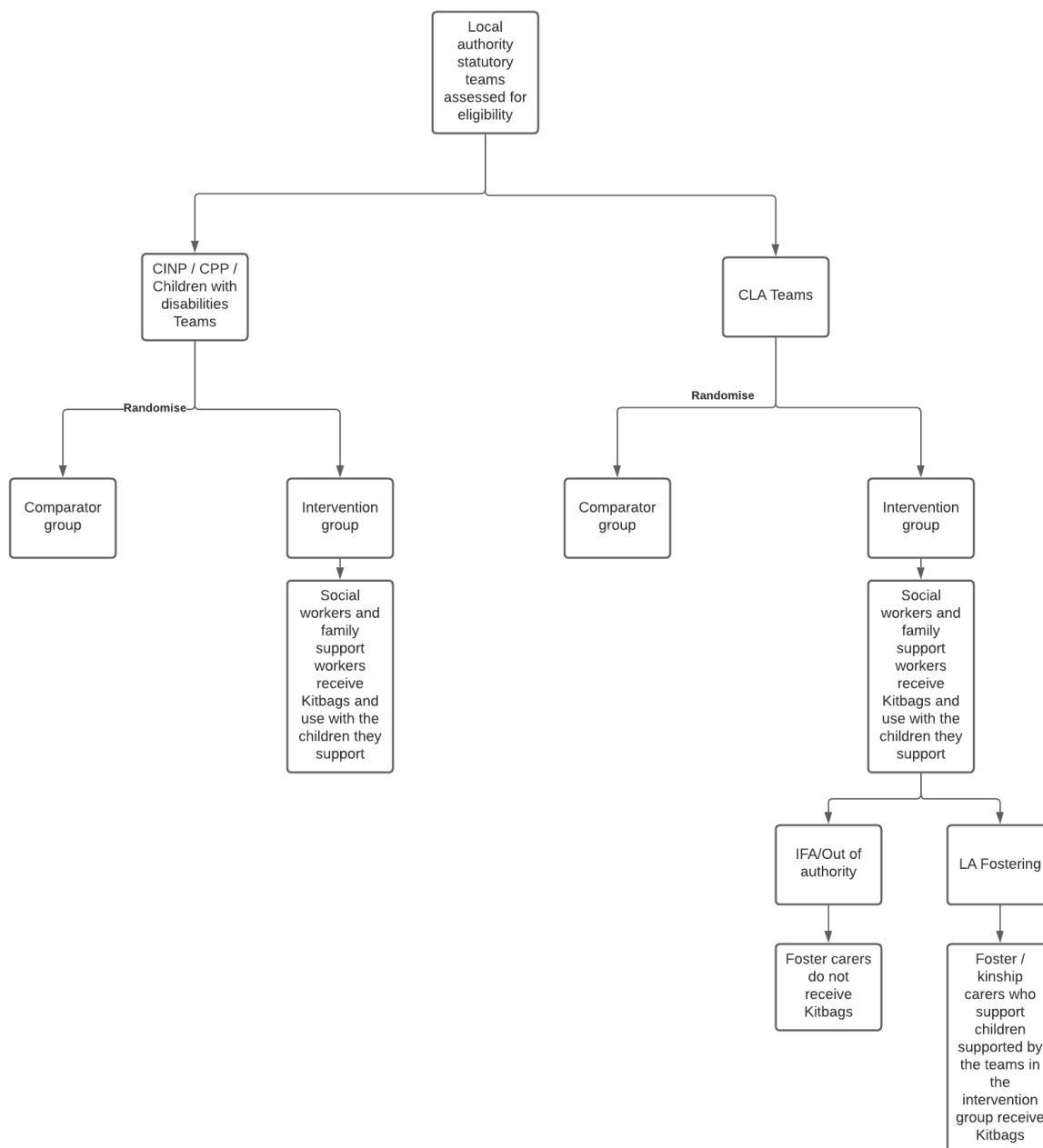Contextual factor 5: Covid has intensified pressures within familes, necessitating improved/enhanced support.

Contextual factor 6: High turnover of social workers may make new practice difficult to embed.

Interventions

Kitbag given to social workers, family support workers and foster carers to use in direct work

Access to Virtual Kitbag for social workers

LAs identify Kitbag leads to support the uptake and embedding of use.

IFF / UoS provide monthly workshops for Kitbag leads

Mechanisms

Improved communication between CYP and their SW, FSW or foster carer

Kitbag has calming effect on the CYP

Social workers learn more about the child's experience

Foster carers are able to build an open relationship with CYP

Social workers feel more valued by their organisation

Social workers feel better supported by their team

Social workers feel a stronger sense of professional identity

Foster carer feels better supported by the local authority

Foster carer feels more valued by the local authority

Outcomes

CYP: Improved social and emotional literacy

CYP: Better care plans

Social worker and foster carer emotional literacy improved

CYP: Improved relationships with others, within and beyond CSC. (School, Home, Subsitute home)

SW: Improved job satisfaction

SW: Improved retention

FC: improved retention

CYP: Consistency in their relationships with social workers and foster carers

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Design

Teams in the 4 LAs were randomised at the social work team level (teams of 6-8 social workers), stratified by Local Authority and Team Type (i.e. CIN /CP, CLA, Children with Disabilities). The randomisation was conducted while the trial was still intended to be a parallel multi-site cluster RCT (with two arms), and the randomisation information is included in figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Randomisation of teams within the 4 LAs

Participants

Oxfordshire County Council, the London Borough of Bexley, Haringey Council and Warwickshire County Council shall be participating in the trial.

Teams

Since the intervention is allocated by team, we define eligibility criteria for teams: statutory teams who we would typically expect to conduct longer term (4+ months) work with children and young people to allow for the minimum number of sessions with a Kitbag. This includes safeguarding teams who work with children and young people who are subject to a child in need (CIN) plan or a child protection plan (CPP), teams that work with children who are looked after (CLA) or teams who work with children with disabilities. Please see Table 1 for the number of eligible teams per local authority. As different local authorities have slightly different names for each team, we've included the type of team in brackets. The teams we have determined are not eligible to participate include MASH / front door, assessment, early help, youth justice and leaving care teams, as they do less of the longer term direct work. Please see Table 2 for the number of social workers, family support workers and foster carers.

Table 1: Eligible teams within each local authority

Local authority	Eligible teams
Bexley	Family support and child protection teams (North, East, Central and South, South West) (4 CIN / CPP teams)
	Looked After Children team (1, 2, 3) (3 CLA teams)
	Children with Disabilities team (1, 2) (2 Children with disabilities teams)
	Total: 9 eligible teams
Haringey	Children in Care team (1, 2) (2 CLA team)
	Disabled Children's team (1, 2) (2 Children with disabilities teams)
	Safeguarding and Support team (1-6) (6 CIN / CPP teams)
	No Recourse to Public Funds team (1 CIN / CPP teams)
	Total: 11 eligible teams
Oxfordshire	Children's Disability Teams (North, South, City) (3 Children with disabilities teams)
	Family Solutions Plus Teams (North 1-6, Central 1-5, South 1-6) (17 CIN / CPP teams)
	Rosehill Statutory Teams (1, 2) (2 CIN / CPP teams)
	Unaccompanied Children (1 CLA team)
	Children in Care (North 1, North 2, South 1, South 2, Central 1a, Central 1b, Central 2) (7 CLA teams)
	Total: 30 eligible teams
Warwickshire	Safeguarding and support (Bedworth and North Warwickshire, Nuneaton, Rugby, Stratford, Warwick) (5 CIN / CPP teams)
	Children in Care aged 14-18 (1 CLA teams)
	Strengthening Families (1 CIN / CPP team)
	Children with Disabilities (safeguarding and support hub, children in need hub, strengthening families hub) (3 Children with disabilities teams)
	Total: 10 eligible teams
Total	60

Social workers and family support workers

Social workers and family support workers in eligible teams are eligible to receive Kitbags. Family support workers who work in the eligible statutory teams are eligible to be part of our sample as they do a considerable amount of the direct work with the children and young people. We consider team managers as not eligible because they are unlikely to do much direct work with children and young people. Social workers and family support workers who have permanent contracts are given the Kitbags to keep, and so if they leave the local authority's employment, a new Kitbag will need to be given to their replacement. (Agency workers leave at a sufficiently high rate that they will be asked to leave the Kitbag with their team for their replacement if they leave). We also allow for 15% contingency to account for these circumstances. If social workers or family support workers change teams within the local authority, they are asked to adopt the treatment assignment of their new team to prevent contamination but for analysis purposes they will be considered according to their original team treatment allocation.

Foster carers and kinship carers

Additionally, local authority foster carers and kinship carers who care for children supported by social workers and family support workers in treated teams will receive a Kitbag. Foster carers who care for children supported by social workers and family support workers in treated teams and employed by independent fostering agencies or other local authorities are not eligible to receive a Kitbag. This is to concentrate the resources with the participating local authorities. By kinship carers, we mean carers of children who are looked after on a voluntary, interim or full care order whose placement type is a placement with a relative or friend. The children supported by social workers and family support workers in treated teams will still have the opportunity to benefit from the Kitbag through their social worker or family support worker.

Local authorities may recruit new foster carers and kinship carers may start their caring responsibilities over the intervention period, and these foster carers and kinship carers who are caring for children supported by a social worker in a treated team will be given a Kitbag. We also allow for 15% contingency to account for these circumstances.

Table 2: Number of Kitbags for each local authority

Local authority	Number of social workers and family support workers in teams in the intervention group	Hold back for staff turnover (assume 15%)	Number of foster carers (including kinship carers) in the intervention group	Hold back for new foster carers (assume 10%)	Number of Kitbags for social workers in the fostering service	Total
Bexley	33	5	57	6	2	103
Haringey	28	4	100	10	2	144
Oxfordshire	120	18	119	12	4	273
Warwickshire	119	18	148	15	10	310
Total	300	45	424	43	18	830

Children and young people

Children and young people aged 4-18 years old who have an open case in May 2021 or whose case opens betweeen May 2021 and December 2021 and supported by social workers and family support workers in eligible teams are eligible for the programme. Only those whose case starts before December 2021 will be eligible to allow for the minimum number of sessions to feasibly be delivered with a Kitbag before the evaluation period concludes (May 2022).

The number of children and young people who are classified as children in need (according to the Department for Education's broad definition including children on a child in need plan, child protection plan and children in care) across these four local authorities is approximately 13,000. We estimate that there are approximately 9300 eligible children and young people across the four local authorities (henceforth we refer to them as the population).[6]

Table 3: Number of children in need in Bexley, Haringey, Oxfordshire and Warwickshire between 2019 and 2020

Local authority	Number of children in need at 31 March (2019)	Number of children in need at 31 March (2020)
Bexley	1594	1757
Haringey	2073	2284
Oxfordshire	4511	4750
Warwickshire	3914	4073
Total	12092	12864

Recruitment

Social workers / family support workers

Social workers will be identified from their membership in eligible teams, as per the HR IT systems of the local authorities. The social workers and family support workers will be asked to provide their informed consent before participating in the primary data collection (survey, interviews). They will also be notified of the use of their absence data in the email inviting them to participate in the survey at T6 (prior to the data sharing) and of their rights in relation to the processing.

Children and young people

Children and young people will be identified as eligible by their allocation to a social worker in an eligible team.

Carers (including kinship and foster carers) will be identified and recruited through the same mechanisms as social workers/family support workers.The birth parents of children in care will not be included as participants.

English as an additional language

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[6] Department for Education (2019) Characteristics of children in need tables: 2019, Table B4.https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/characteristics-of-children-in-need-2018-to-2019

In order to complete their working responsibilities, we assume that social workers and most foster carers have a level of English language comprehension that would allow them to fully participate in the evaluation if they wish to. Where this is not the case (e.g. EAL is a bit more common for foster carers who foster unaccompanied asylum seekers), we shall ask social workers if they can support the foster carer to answer the questions.

Implementation and Process Evaluation (IPE) of the "Putting Kitbag to Work" programme

Aims

This implementation and process evaluation has three key aims:

1). Firstly, we seek to understand **the implementation of Kitbag in a children's social care context**. This includes understanding what business as usual looks like i.e. what does direct work look like without use of Kitbag. We want to understand the delivery of the "Putting Kitbag to Work" programme in the four participating local authorities and subsequently the take up of Kitbag by practitioners.

2). Secondly, we seek to understand **people's experiences of using Kitbag and any perceived impacts.** This includes understanding whether there has been perceived change in how direct work is undertaken in the participating local authorities, and any other perceived impacts for children, social workers, and foster carers. We also want to understand what prevents or supports staff to use Kitbag.

3). Thirdly, we want to understand the factors that would need to be in place to **enable a successful randomised controlled trial** of Kitbag, or a similar intervention in the future.

Research Questions

RQ1). Implementation of Kitbag in a CSC context

RQ1a). What is business as usual (i.e. what does direct work look like in the four participating local authorities without Kitbag)?

RQ1b). How is Kitbag implemented and used in the four participating local authorities?

RQ2). Experiences and perceived impacts

RQ2a). To what extent is Kitbag perceived to have changed practice?

RQ2b). What's the experience of social workers and family support workers (from receiving Kitbag and getting support to using it with children) and what perceived impacts do they identify?

RQ2c). What's the experience of foster carers (from receiving Kitbag and getting support to using it with children) and what perceived impacts do they identify?

RQ2d). What's the experience of children who have used Kitbag (with their SW, FSW or FC) and what perceived impacts do they identify?

RQ2e). What supports and prevents use of physical and online Kitbag in a children's social care context?

RQ3). Readiness for trial

RQ3). What factors would need to be in place to support a successful randomised controlled trial of Kitbag, or a similar intervention?

Design and Methods

Research question	Indicator	Method
RQ1). Implementation of Kitbag in a CSC context		
RQ1a). What is business as usual (i.e. what does direct work look like in the four participating local authorities without Kitbag)?	Self-reported resources staff use (in both intervention and comparator groups) in their direct work with families including how they fund and access them Staff views around how direct work is recorded and discussed before Kitbag was introduced	Survey with both intervention and comparator groups (October, 2021) ● Interviews with SLs ● Focus groups with SWs, FSWs and TMs (April - May, 2022)
RQ1b). How is Kitbag implemented and used in the four participating local authorities?	Understanding how and when each LA distributed Kitbags to staff Frequency of Kitbag workshops with SWs, and FCs Attendance of DKLs, SLs, SWs, and FCs, at Kitbag workshops Understanding the role of the Designated Kitbag Lead (DKL) and Super Lead (SL) in each LA	Interviews with SLs and admin data from local authorities (April - May, 2021) Admin data from delivery partners (April - May, 2021) Admin data from delivery partners (April - May, 2021) ● Interviews with SLs ● Interviews with delivery partners ● Focus group with SWs, FSWs and TMs (April - May 2022) Survey in October, 2021

	Understanding the use of online Kitbag and physical Kitbag (including at team level) across teams in each LA	
		Interviews with delivery partners and SLs Focus groups with SWs, FSWs and TMs Interviews with non-users (April - May, 2022)
	Whether there is any difference in use of Kitbag depending on the team type	
	How delivery partners and Kitbag Super Leads describe the challenges and facilitators with implementing the "Putting Kitbag to Work" programme	Interviews with delivery partners and SLs (April - May, 2022)
	Whether there is any sustainability planning around use of Kitbag (i.e. cost of replacing items, on-going training needs etc.)	Interviews with SLs (April - May, 2022)
RQ2). Experiences and perceived impacts		
RQ2a). To what extent is Kitbag perceived to have changed practice?	SWs, FSWs, and TMs' views on the extent to which Kitbag differs from BAU Understanding how direct work is recorded and discussed after Kitbag was introduced and whether there has been any perceived change or not How staff describe the extent to which using Kitbag has changed practice	Focus group with SWs, FSWs and TMs (April - May, 2022)
RQ2b). What's the experience of social workers and family support workers (from receiving Kitbag and getting support to using it with children)	**Experiences:** Staff satisfaction with how the programme was implemented (e.g. distribution of Kitbags, support from Kitbag Leads, dissemination of information	Survey with SWs, FSWs and TMs (October 2021) Focus group with SWs, FSWs and TMs (April - May, 2022)

and what perceived impacts do they identify?	from monthly workshops, replacing materials as needed)	
	What practitioners who've received a Kitbag think about the intervention Kitbag and whether they think any changes are needed to the Kitbag content or delivery of the programme	Focus group with SWs, FSWs and TMs (April - May, 2022)
	Understanding around why some SWs and practitioners assigned to the treatment group did not engage with or use Kitbag online or the physical Kitbag	Interviews with non-users (April - May, 2022)
	How staff describe use of Kitbag with different subgroups e.g. across age, disability, level of need of the child, and also at their own team level	Focus group with SWs, FSWs and TMs and survey (April - May, 2022)
	Perceived impacts: How staff describe any current positive or negative changes arising for themselves from use of Kitbag, or that could come from Kitbag in the future	Focus group with SWs, FSWs and TMs (April - May, 2022)
	Whether staff report any perceived impacts on a). Themselves, their practice, or wider practice and b). For children, young people or families	
RQ2c). What's the experience of foster carers (from receiving Kitbag and getting support to using it with children) and what perceived impacts do they identify?	**Experiences** What foster carers who've received a Kitbag think about the intervention Kitbag and whether they think any changes are needed to the Kitbag content or delivery of the programme	● Survey (October 2021) ● Interviews with FCs (April - May, 2022)

	Understanding around why some carers assigned to the treatment group did not engage with or use Kitbag online or the physical Kitbag	Interviews with FCs (April - May, 2022)
	Perceived impacts: How foster carers describe any current positive or negative changes arising from use of Kitbag, or that could come from Kitbag in the future	Interviews with FCs (April - May, 2022)
	Whether foster carers report any perceived impacts on a). Themselves and b). For the children or young people they care for	Interviews with FCs (April - May, 2022)
	Whether foster carers perceive that use of Kitbag differs depending on factors such as: disability or additional needs, age	Interviews with FCs (April - May, 2022)
RQ2d). What's the experience of children who have used Kitbag (with their SW or FC) and what perceived impacts do they identify?	How children and young people who've worked with a Kitbag describe using it including any positive or negative changes for them or anyone else	Interviews with children and young people (April - May, 2022)
	Whether children and young people would like to see any changes to the Kitbag content or how this is used with them e.g. the frequency or location etc.	
	Whether children and young people prefer using Kitbag to other types of activities (direct work) they have done with either their social worker or foster carer	
	If used both online Kitbag and physical Kitbag: How children and young people speak about the differences between the two modes of	

	Kitbag, and whether they prefer one to the other	
RQ2e). What supports and prevents use of physical and online Kitbag in a children's social care context?	TMS, SWs, FSWs, and FCs views on any contextual factors supporting or preventing use of both physical and online Kitbag	• Focus groups with SWs, FSWs and TMs • Interviews with FCs non-user SWs/FSWs (April - May, 2022)
RQ3). Readiness for trial		
RQ3). What factors would need to be in place to support a successful randomised controlled trial of Kitbag, or a similar intervention?	How delivery partners and Kitbag Super Leads describe the challenges relating to adhering to the treatment and control groups	• Interviews with delivery partners and SLs (April - May, 2022)
	Understanding any ideas which would support adherence to the treatment and control groups and successful distribution and management of Kitbags to the allocated teams	• Focus groups with SWs, FSWs and TMs • Interviews with FCs • Interviews with delivery partners and SLs (April - May, 2022)
	How staff describe the challenges relating to participation in the evaluation process e.g. completing surveys	• Focus groups with SWs, FSWs and TMs • Interviews with FCs and non-user SWs/FSWs (April - May, 2022)

Methods

Focus groups (April - May 2022)

We will endeavour to facilitate the focus groups in person, however we will also be guided by the wishes of the LA. The focus groups will be no longer than one hour thirty minutes each. If SWs, FSWs, and TMs consent to their email address being shared with us, then we will reach out and explain more about what the research will entail and share an information sheet. We want to speak only with those who have been in the treatment groups, i.e. those teams who have received a Kitbag, and those who have actively used Kitbags during the pilot study.

Interviews (April – May 2022)

Children and young people (aged between 8 and 18) will have the choice to be interviewed in person, in a setting they feel most comfortable in, or virtually and to be with a parent / carer or sibling during the conversation. These conversations with children and young people will last for up to thirty minutes and we plan to have the physical Kitbag with us to aid discussion about their thoughts on using this. Consent will be sought from the child's parent or carer. We will explain the research to the children and young people taking part and ask if they are happy to take part and have a chat about how they have found using Kitbag. The interviews with foster carers will be semi-structured, via telephone or a virtual platform, and will last up to half an hour.

All participants will be given the choice of platform between Zoom, Microsoft Teams and a phone call. Where possible, and safe to do so, given the Covid-19 context, we will undertake some interviews in person. Prior to the interview an information sheet will be shared with participants and the researcher will discuss the evaluation and measures taken to ensure confidentiality and privacy. The participant will have the chance to ask any questions and will be asked whether they consent to the interview being audio-recorded. If consent to record the call is not given, descriptive notes will be written by the researcher and written up following the call.

Survey (October, 2021)

The survey will help us to answer our research questions and in particular we seek to understand:

- Confidence with using Kitbag
- How often social workers complete direct work with children and families
- The kinds of activities completed and the resources used for direct work
- How staff are supported to complete direct work with children and families
- How staff record direct work
- Whether staff feel supported to use Kitbag and how they are supported
- Frequency of use of Kitbag including whether some components are used more often than others
- Frequency of use of the Kitbag within the social worker team
- Support from team manager in supervision to use Kitbag

Observation of workshops and learning event

Researchers will virtually observe six workshops in total delivered by the intervention developers between September - December 2021. Participants attending the workshops were informed about the research and had the option to opt out of the research and observation. This includes one workshop with Kitbag leads and social workers per LA and two workshops with supervising social workers and foster carers (from two LAs). The workshops will not be recorded (for the purpose of the evaluation), however the researcher will take descriptive notes. We will also attend and observe the 'Kitbag Learning Event Feb 2022' and take some descriptive notes.

Administrative data

Administrative data will be collected from participating LAs on the following:
1. We will seek anonymous records of log-ins to Kitbag online as a proxy for frequency of use of Kitbag online in the 12 month period out of all social workers and foster carers in the intervention group to calculate the following:

a. the mean number of times a social worker logs on to Kitbag Online in the 12-month period (pro rata-ed for those who have access to it for a shorter time period)

b. the mean number of times a social worker logs on to Kitbag Online over 3-month windows (May-July, August-October, November-January, February-April, again pro rata-ed for those who have access to it for a shorter time period).

2. The date that social workers were given Kitbags, and the number that were distributed.

We will additionally request from the delivery partners the number of workshops that have taken place, and the number and proportion of designated Kitbag leads that attended each workshop.

Data Collection Schedule

Method (Sample size)	Provisional timeline	Sample and stratification
Focus groups (2 in total)	April – May 2022	● Two focus groups to be conducted in two separate LAs, including a mixture of social workers, family support workers and team managers who were assigned to the treatment group (including those working with different age groups), who used Kitbags over the course of the pilot study.
Interviews (13 in total)	April – May 2022	● Interview with the delivery partners (1 in total) ● Interview with LA super leads (4 in total) ● Interviews with foster carers across the LAs (2 in total) ● Interviews with non-users, i.e. social workers and family support workers assigned to the treatment group who did not use Kitbags - including a mixture of individuals who worked with different age groups - e.g. age 8-12, age 12-18 (3 in total) ● Interviews with children / young people across the LAs, including a mixture of different age groups - e.g. age 8-12, age 12-18 (3 in total)

Survey (at one time point)	October, 2021,	A survey will be shared with all staff (i.e. no sampling) across intervention and comparator teams in October 2021. ● Social workers and family support workers (includes Kitbag Leads) ● In-house foster carers (the survey will be adapted for this group) ● Team Managers
Observations of workshops (6)	September 2021 - February 2022	● One workshop with Kitbag leads and social workers in three of the LAs (3 in total) and two workshops with supervising social workers and foster carers (from two separate LAs). ● Observation of the 'Kitbag Learning Event Feb 2022'
Admin data (2 admin data requests)	April - May 2022	From the delivery partners: ● Request anonymous records of log-ins to Kitbag online as a proxy for frequency of use. ● The number of workshops that have taken place, and the number and proportion of designated kitbag leads that attended each workshop. From participating local authorities: ● The date that Kitbags were distributed to treatment teams, and the number that were distributed. ● How the budget allocated for administrative time was spent (for the purposes of understanding how a future cost evaluation might be impacted).

Recruitment

Unit of analysis	Number	Sampled	Rationale
Organisations			
Local Authorities	4	2	We will select two of the participating LAs. We will purposively select one of the small London boroughs, and one of the large, more rural boroughs to provide a

			difference in size and location[7]. This selection will be made on the basis of how engaged the LA appears to be (measured by Oct 21 survey response rate).
People (the 'number' column below represents the total number of participants in the two selected LAs)			
Developers	2	2	We will hold a workshop with both of the developers together.
Kitbag Super Leads	4	4	We will interview the Kitbag super leads in all four LAs.
Staff users of Kitbag: team managers; social workers; family support workers	Approx. 152	10	We will hold focus groups of five participants in each of the two sampled LAs. These participants will be recruited with help from the super leads. They will be selected with a view to provide representation from a range of teams and working with children of different ages.
Staff non-users of Kitbag: social workers; family support workers		2	We will hold one interview in each of the two sampled LAs with a staff member who did not use their Kitbag. These will be selected with help from the super leads.
Foster carers	Approx. 205	2	We will hold one interview in each of the two sampled LAs with a foster carer. These will be selected with help from the super leads and participating social workers.
Staff and foster carers	Approx. 1000	All	We will survey all team managers, social workers, family support workers, and foster carers in the participating teams (both in the control and treatment group). **We will include all four LAs in the survey.** The aim is to maximise sample size.

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[7] The two larger councils outside of the capital have roughly four times the number of participating SWs than the smaller two. We reason this could lead to different organisation and team dynamics. Warwickshire is classified as 'Urban with Significant Rural' and Oxfordshire as 'Largely Rural', they are both composed of smaller district councils, covering a far greater area than the London boroughs. We reason this could impact the way in which Kitbag was distributed.

Children/Young people	Unknown	3	We will hold interviews with three children or young people (aged 8-18) who have used Kitbag. These will be selected based on convenience.

Analysis

Qualitative data preparation and analysis

Interviews will be audio-recorded, transcribed and pseudonymised prior to analysis. Qualitative analysis of interview, focus group, survey, and observational data will use NVivo software and follow a thematic analysis approach. This will involve data familiarisation, labelling the data with descriptive codes, and developing themes using an inductive approach which describe patterns across the data to answer the pre-specified research questions. Analysis will look for patterns, consistencies and inconsistencies across different informants and time points that might be informative for the research questions. The following steps will be taken to ensure rigour in the analysis and reporting of qualitative data:

- Confidence that the findings are an accurate reflection of participant experience will be ensured through presentation of examples of participant responses using quotes, and triangulation between different informants and data collection methods.
- The degree to which findings are transferable to other contexts will be considered through detailed description of contextual factors, and collection of data from a range of informants to gather a range of perspectives.
- Transparent reporting of the research and analysis process will ensure the study methods are clear and repeatable.
- When interpreting findings, consideration will be given to contrasting and inconsistent accounts.
- Qualitative data analysis will be overseen by WWCSC's Senior Qualitative Researcher.

Quantitative analysis of survey and administrative data

Quantitative data will be analysed descriptively, in order to present characteristics of delivery, perceived impacts, and acceptability. The results will be triangulated with the qualitative findings by looking for consistencies and inconsistencies between the different data sources. We will present a comparison of administrative data across LA sites (also comparing different teams within LAs). We will also compare the usage of physical and online Kitbags across LA sites, again looking at differences between teams in LAs.

Ethics & Participation

An ethics application for this evaluation was submitted to WWCSC's research ethics committee on 25th February 2021 with a favourable opinion given on 23rd March 2021.

Consent procedures

Information sheet contents
The information sheets will be tailored to the participant group and will detail the purpose of the project, why they have been invited to take part, what will happen if they take part, whether they have to take part, the possible risks, the possible benefits, the data handling, confidentiality and data protection, the right to withdraw their consent, how the project is funded, what will happen to the results of the project, contact details if they wish to ask further questions.

Social workers
Data collection from social workers will be via an online survey. The first page of the survey will be an information sheet and consent elicitation.

Administrative Data Collection

Social workers and family support workers
Summary statistics about access to Kitbag Online will be requested from IFF. Given that the social worker participants will not have accessed the website before, it may be possible to add consent to share for purposes of the evaluation into the terms of use. We are currently investigating this with the delivery partners.

Implementation and Process Evaluation

Focus group discussions and interviews
Focus group discussion and interview participants will be sent an information sheet in advance of the interview or focus group. Before the interview or focus group commences, the researcher will ask the participant if they have read and understood the information sheet, and whether they have any questions. The researcher will then elicit consent for participation and for the interview or focus group to be recorded. When eliciting consent for participation in interviews or focus groups, researchers will make clear the limits of confidentiality (See Section D for further information).

Observation
Researchers will observe a subset of the workshops conducted by the intervention developers. The attendees of the workshops are social workers and family support workers in the treated teams. The number of participants in each workshop is quite large (approximately 25) and so it would be difficult to seek verbal consent from all participants. Workshops attendees will receive an information sheet explaining that the workshop will be observed as part of the evaluation and be given the opportunity to ask any questions. At the beginning of the workshops, those running the workshops will inform attendees about the observation and introduce the researchers who are observing. The attendees will be informed that:

- The sessions will not be recorded (for evaluation purposes at least);
- The coding frame will be designed such that attendees will not be identifiable;
- (In the likely case that the workshops will take place virtually) attendees can keep off their camera and microphone if they chose to.

Although there is a risk that declining to be observed affects participation in the workshop, we think that this is relatively low risk (as participating in any group setting involves being observed by others to a certain extent).

Withdrawal of consent

Any participant who would like to withdraw their consent to participate and for their data to be processed (alongside exercising any other rights guaranteed under GDPR) can use a form on the WWCSC website. The email invitation to the survey for social workers and family support workers will include a link to the page containing the form so that participants can easily find it after completing the survey. The email invitation will also include contact details of the evaluators so that participants can submit a request to withdraw consent directly via email also. We anticipate that if a CYP or parent / carer wishes to withdraw, their social worker can assist them to WWCSC. We provide instructions to social workers on how to do this in an FAQ document. The participants will be able to request for their data to be deleted up until the analysis and reporting stage of the project (June 2022).

Risks of the data collection activities:

- **Time burden on social workers:** According to an April 2020 Community Care survey, about 70% of the social workers who responded found their caseload "completely unmanageable" or "hard to manage". We also appreciate that at the current time social workers may be taking on additional work due to Covid-19 (colleagues being sick or shielding, withdrawal of multi-agency partners from conducting home visits, supporting CYP to return to school). Adding to the burden on social workers could have knock-on effects for the families they support in leaving less time for direct work. To reduce the burden as much as possible on social workers, we only ask them to collect the data themselves for new CYP entering services (rather than all CYP with an open case) For those with open cases, we ask them to introduce the evaluation and encourage the parents / carers to participate. In our power calculations, we assumed a 15% rate of parents / carers consenting to be involved in the evaluation. Although we will ask social workers to try to recruit all families (otherwise there is a risk of selection bias into the sample); a conservative estimate of the success rate takes into account the other pressures on their time.

Registration

The trial has been pre-registered on the OSF website: osf.io/zf5aj and published on WWCSC's website. The OSF pre-registration will be updated with the final report at the end of the evaluation.

Data Protection

We have prepared a data privacy impact assessment for the project, which has been approved by WWCSC's Director of Operations. Please find the link to the data protection notice published to our website here.

Purpose of data processing
The aim of this research is to:
- evaluate the impact of Kitbags on the emotional resilience of children and young people with a social worker (and secondary outcomes for CYP, parents, social workers and foster carers)
- evaluate how the programme is implemented in a social care setting (and during Covid)

The expected benefit of conducting the research is to provide evidence on whether Kitbag "works" in a children's social care setting, and so feed into decision-making of senior leaders in CSC. A secondary benefit is for the findings to feed into the further development of Kitbag.

Categories of personal data

We expect to process:

- Pseudonymised data for c. 13,000 children and young people, c.1000 social workers and c.1000 foster carers

The processing of pseudonymised data involves storing it and conducting analysis on it. The pseudonymised data will contain special category data including ethnicity and health (disability) data. It will also contain data which is not special category but highly sensitive e.g. children's social care status.

The geographical coverage is CYP supported by children's services in four local authorities (a small proportion may be in placements outside of those local authorities' boundaries). The data includes data about children, in particular vulnerable children. The approach is not novel and there are no issues of public concern.

Roles of key parties

WWCSC will be the controller for the primary and secondary data collected.

Legal basis

We rely on different legal bases for different processing activities. Please see the Privacy notice[8] (p.4) for full details.

We will process some special category data, namely ethnicity and health (disability status). The conditions for special category data is archiving, research and statistics.

Data transfers

We shall request for all personal data to be sent via Egress or an equivalent platform of the local authorities' choice.

Storage

For the duration of the project (until Summer 2022), data will be stored on a dedicated drive only accessible to the project team in line with WWCSC's data protection policy. The access will be controlled by WWCSC's access control policy.

Intention to archive data

As with many of our other projects, we anticipate that the data shall be transferred to our secure data archive. This archive is hosted and stored by the Office of National Statistics ("ONS") 'Secure Research Service' on our behalf, we are the data controller and access to any data stored within the archive is therefore controlled by the ONS and WWCSC. We shall ensure that we have all necessary rights, notices and/or consents in place in order to transfer such personal data to us for this purpose. The location of the archive is to be confirmed, we anticipate it will be held by the Office for National Statistics 'Secure Research Service'. The duration of retention is indefinite.

Personnel

Delivery team:

- **Gillian Ruch**, Professor of Social Work and a qualified, registered social worker has extensive experience of, and a national reputation for, conducting high quality,

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[8] https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Data-Protection-Notice-Kitbag-1.pdf

impactful research, benefitting the wellbeing of vulnerable children and the social work workforce. See: http://www.talkingandlisteningtochildren.co.uk/. Gillian has experience of managing and delivering all aspects of research programmes and brings her skills in leadership and programme management to the PI role. Gillian will have overarching responsibility for the programme, be one of two Kitbag Practice Intervention delivery partners and be the point of contact with the WWCSC.

- **Dr Margaret Hannah**, Director of Health Programmes, International Futures Forum (IFF) is a medical doctor by training and former Director of Public Health (Fife). Margaret will bring her experience in public mental health, culture change in health and social care, teaching and training to her role as programme Co-I and delivery partner. Margaret had the original idea for Kitbag, was involved in its design/evolution and has extensive experience of running local, national and international Kitbag workshops and online webinars for diverse groups of professionals.
- **Nicola Yuill**, Professor of Developmental Psychology, University of Sussex, will bring to the programme her expertise in the social development and quantitative analysis of children's social interactions with others and in the use of Video Interaction Guidance in professional settings.
- **Graham Leicester**, Director of the International Futures Forum, who with his extensive expertise in supporting organisational transformation, will facilitate the midway and endpoint reviews.
- **Programme Support Team**: Two experienced part-time co-ordinators, based at IFF and Sussex, will provide day-to-day support for the overall programme and the PI/Co-I specifically.

Evaluation team (WWCSC):

- Dr. Aoife O'Higgins, Director of Research, WWCSC, is the principal investigator
- Shibeal O'Flaherty, Research Associate, WWCSC, is responsible for overall project management.
- Emily Walker and Alyssa Eden, Research Assistants at WWCSC, are responsible for research assistance for the project.

Timeline

Dates	Activity	Staff responsible/ leading
January 2021	Kick off meeting	All
January 2021	Advisory Board meetings	UoS/IFF
January - March 2021	Site selection, engagement, set up meeting and work	All
March 2021	Ethics approval obtained	WWCSC
March 2021	Randomisation of teams to kitbag	WWCSC
April 2021	Kitbag leads identified and appointed	LA partners
Before data collection	Trial protocol drafted and published	WWCSC
May 2021	Kitbag distribution	UoS/IFF

10th May 2021	Launch of project in 4 sites as one online event	UoS/IFF + LA partners
May 2021 - April 2022	Regular Kitbag use	LA partners
April - May 2022	Endline data collection	LA partners / WWCSC
June - July 2022	Final analysis and report	WWCSC