# Review title

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| --- | --- |
| **Institutional affiliation** |  |
| **Principal Investigator** |  |
| **Protocol Author(s)** | Describe contributions of protocol authors and identify the guarantor of the review |
| **Contact details** | Provide name, e-mail address of protocol lead author(s); provide physical mailing address of corresponding author |
| **Funder** | Provide name of the review funder(s) or sponsor(s) |

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| --- |
| Delete this box before publishing* What Works for Children’s Social Care (WWCSC) expects all review teams to produce a protocol, which will be published on the WWCSC website.
* The purpose of developing a protocol before undertaking a systematic review is to guide the research, improve transparency and to prevent making methodological decisions after the fact that could influence the results in a certain direction
* Once the review questions have been set, modifications to the protocol should be allowed only if alternative ways of defining the populations, interventions, outcomes or study designs become apparent. Any amendments to a review protocol should be tracked and dated.
* Please ensure you use accessible language, and check the document for accessibility according to WWCSC [Accessibility Guidance](https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/WWCSC-Accessibility-Guidance-V1.1.pdf).
* Delete all yellow highlighted text before publishing
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# Summary

* Provide a short summary of the information contained within the protocol, including an introduction to the review, the aims and methods, and any key timelines.

# Table of contents

* Please insert here (with section links, if possible).

# Part 1) Rationale and question formulation

* An explanation of the theoretical and scientific background, policy context and rationale for the systematic review.

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| Rationale | Describe here the rationale for the review in the context of what is already known, including a description of the issue that the review is aiming to address, and whether the review topic has important practice and / or policy implications for children’s social care. |
| Research question(s) | Provide an explicit statement of the question(s) the review will address, that explicitly references the participants, interventions, comparators, and outcomes (PICO) that the review is intending to address (see the PRISMA-P guidance for more details on using the PICO framework). |

# Part 2) Identifying relevant work

* Detailed description of the steps taken to identify and select studies, with enough detail to allow for replication of the study.

### Search Strategy

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| Electronic databases | Provide details of the electronic databases you will search, including the planned dates the searches will cover |
| Other sources | Describe all other information sources (such as contact with study authors, trial registers or other grey literature sources) |
| Key search terms  | Provide details of your planned search terms |
| Draft search strategy | Present draft of search strategy to be used for at least one electronic database, including planned limits, such that it could be repeated (see the [PRISMA-P guidance](http://www.prisma-statement.org/documents/PRISMA-P%20Statement%20-%20Moher%20Sys%20Rev%20Jan%202015.pdf) for an example). |

### Study selection criteria

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| Inclusion criteria | Specify the criteria to be used as criteria for eligibility for inclusion in the review:* Study characteristics (such as participants, interventions, comparators, primary and secondary outcomes of interest - including method and timing of outcome measurement, the minimum acceptable level of study design, setting, time frame)
* Report characteristics (such as years considered, language, publication type or status e.g. unpublished material or abstracts, completeness of reporting to enable assessment of study characteristics)
 |
| Exclusion criteria | Specify any exclusion criteria |
| Process of study selection | State the process that will be used for selecting studies (such as two independent reviewers) through each phase of the review (that is, screening, eligibility and inclusion in meta-analysis), and the method for handling duplicate, companion or self-plagiarised publications. |

### Study records

|  |  |
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| Data collection | Describe planned method of extracting data from reports, (such as piloting forms, done independently, in duplicate), any processes for obtaining and confirming data from investigators |
| Data management process  | Describe the mechanism(s) that will be used to manage records and extracted data throughout the review, including any software to be used |
| Data items | List and define all variables for which data will be sought (such as participants, intervention, comparators, outcomes, funding sources), any pre-planned data assumptions and simplifications |
| Outcomes and prioritisation | List and define all primary and secondary outcomes for which data will be sought, with rationale |

# Part 3) Risk of bias assessment

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| Risk of bias assessment criteria | Provide details of any criteria that will be used to assess risk of bias in individual studies, including whether this will be done at the outcome or study level, or both, providing links to any critical appraisal guides or design-based checklists[[1]](#footnote-1) that will be used. |
| Purpose of risk of bias assessment | Provide details of how risk of bias assessments will be used in data synthesis. For example for exploring heterogeneity and informing decisions regarding suitability of meta-analysis, or in assessing the strength of inferences and making recommendations for future research. |

# Part 4) Summarising the evidence

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| **Data synthesis**  | Provide detail on how data will be combined (statistical or narrative), and rationale for this.If data are appropriate for quantitative synthesis:* Describe planned methods for estimating effect size, including conversion to a consistent format, units of analysis, formulae and software
* Describe your intended approach to handling missing data (studies, outcomes, summary data, individuals, study-level characteristics)
* Prior distributions if using a Bayesian approach
* Describe methods for statistical meta-analysis, including whether a fixed effects or random effects meta-analysis will be undertaken
* Describe any potential sources of, and planned approach to exploration of between study variability (such as I2, Kendall’s τ)
* Describe the methods for evaluating the assumptions if using a network meta-analysis
* Describe sensitivity analyses
* Describe any proposed additional analyses (such as subgroup analyses or meta-regression)

If quantitative synthesis is not appropriate, describe the type of summary planned |
| **Meta-bias(es)** | Specify any planned assessment of meta-bias(es) (such as publication bias across studies, selective reporting within studies) |
| **Confidence in cumulative evidence** | Describe how the strength of the body of evidence will be assessed (such as GRADE) |
| **Reporting and interpreting findings** | Describe what will be reported and how results will be interpreted (for example in what format summary results will be presented, whether implications for practice and research will be considered). The Cochrane handbook chapters 14 and 15 provide some guidance on this[[2]](#footnote-2). |

# Registration

Ensure the review is registered with the OSF and that the registry is updated with outcomes at the end of the project.

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# Data protection

**This section on data protection is only needed if the project will involve re-analysis of personal data (we interpret all individual-level data to be personal data), particularly where the review involves identifying information on participants or information that could be linked to identify participants. If the project will involve review or re-analysis of publicly available aggregate level data only, then this section can be deleted as we do not consider aggregate-level data to be personal data.**

* Include a data protection statement relevant to the project.
* Provide details of the categories of individuals (e.g. social workers, children in care etc..), the categories of personal data (i.e. contact details, children’s social care case data, demographic characteristics including gender) and the categories of special category (e.g. health, ethnicity) that are being processed in this project.
* Describe, at a high level, relevant procedures for ensuring data quality (if not already covered in the data analysis section above), anonymity or confidentiality, as applicable.
* Outline any key data protection related activities you’ve under-taken. This should include:
	+ Providing details of the data protection legislation being abided by (e.g. the Data Protection Act (2018)).
	+ Detailing whether or not you’ve conducted a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA).
	+ Linking to (or providing as an Annex) relevant privacy notices.
	+ Outlining any data sharing that may take place, and any relevant agreements you have in place with other parties (Data Sharing Agreements or Data Processing Agreements).
	+ Explain the role of key parties - e.g. who are the data controllers and processors.
	+ Providing contact details of your DPO (if applicable).
* Reference relevant organisation policies (e.g. Data Protection Policy and Information Security Policy) or accreditations (e.g. ISO 27001, Cyber-Essentials).
* Describe your legal basis for processing personal data and / or for processing special categories of personal data, with reference to the [General Data Protection Regulation, Chapter 2, Article 6](https://gdpr-info.eu/art-6-gdpr/). Provided it’s documented elsewhere (e.g. DPIA or privacy notice, you do not have to provide your full rationale here).

# Research Ethics

**This section on research ethics is only needed if the project will involve re-analysis of individual level data, particularly where the review involves identifying information on participants or information that could be linked to identify participants. If the project will involve review or re-analysis of publicly available aggregate level data only, then this section can be deleted.**

* Clearly describe the process for obtaining ethical approval, including timelines and responsible parties.
* Where a generic ethical clearance has been issued, refer to the original judgement on this process.
* Ensure ethical issues (e.g. protecting participants and researchers from harm, confidentiality, consent, right to withdraw, data security) are considered here or elsewhere within the protocol.

# Personnel

* Roles and responsibilities within the project; institutional affiliation for each member

# Timeline

* Timetable including specification of who is responsible for completing each task
* Include specific dates or date intervals.

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| Dates | Activity | Staff responsible/ leading |
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# References

This protocol template is informed by the following sources:

Khan, K. S., Kunz, R., Kleijnen, J., & Antes, G. (2003). Five steps to conducting a systematic review. Journal of the royal society of medicine, 96(3), 118-121.

Higgins JPT, Thomas J, Chandler J, Cumpston M, Li T, Page MJ, Welch VA (editors). Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions version 6.0 (updated July 2019). Cochrane, 2019. Available from www.training.cochrane.org/handbook.

Moher, D., Shamseer, L., Clarke, M., Ghersi, D., Liberati, A., Petticrew, M., ... & Stewart, L. A. (2015). Preferred reporting items for systematic review and meta-analysis protocols (PRISMA-P) 2015 statement. Systematic reviews, 4(1), 1.

1. For example, for RCTs: <https://www.bmj.com/content/343/bmj.d5928?ijkey=b12df513a3dab9335437ec301f80fbdb8eaaed95&keytype2=tf_ipsecsha> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://training.cochrane.org/handbook/current/chapter-15> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)