



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

# WHAT MATTERS FOR WHAT WORKS?

SETTING RESEARCH PRIORITIES FOR  
WHAT WORKS FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

APRIL 2020

# THE PROCESS

Children's social care (CSC) is complex and involves a range of people with very different perspectives. Identifying which research is most needed and would be the most useful to as many people as possible, is therefore challenging. In an attempt to address this, What Works for Children's Social Care undertook a collaborative exercise in early 2020, to identify priorities for the organisation's research.

An initial list of potential topics was compiled, drawing from the existing literature and refined in consultation with others. Participants from key groups in the children's social care sector were then invited to review, suggest and score topics over three rounds of online surveys. The results were then collated to create an overall list of ten priorities, as well as priority lists for each stakeholder group. In doing this, we were able to reach a consensus, whilst also retaining the 'voice' of each group.

Over 250 people shared their views through this process and helped produce a list of priorities which will guide our decisions about future research. We are confident that the resulting research will be more useful and impactful as a result. You can read more about the process and all the groups in the full report, available on our website.

## WHO WAS INVOLVED?

CARE  
EXPERIENCED  
PEOPLE

CSC PROFESSIONALS  
& MULTI-AGENCY PARTNERS

PARENTS  
AND CARERS

SENIOR LEADERS  
WITHIN CSC

PRIVATE SECTOR  
PROVIDERS &  
THIRD SECTOR

ACADEMICS

**LITERATURE  
REVIEW**

81 TOPICS

SURVEY 1

**ADD OR  
REMOVE  
TOPICS**

n=189

97 TOPICS

SURVEY 2

**SCORE  
TOPICS**

n=142

39 TOPICS

SURVEY 3

**RE-SCORE  
TOPICS  
WITH  
FEEDBACK**

n=86

10 TOPICS

**RESEARCH  
PRIORITIES**

# OUR TOP PRIORITIES

**MENTAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**IMPACT OF TRAUMA ON CHILDREN**

**WORKFORCE WELLBEING**

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIVED EXPERIENCES**

**ACTIVELY INVOLVING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN IDENTIFYING NEEDS AND PLANNING SUPPORT**

**TRANSITIONS**

**EMOTIONAL ABUSE**

**STABLE WORKFORCE**

**DOMESTIC ABUSE**

**SOCIAL CARE PROFESSIONALS' TRAINING AND SKILLS**

## NEXT STEPS

It's promising to see that we already have work underway in some of these priority areas. However, more work is clearly needed. Next, we plan to conduct in-depth assessments of the research priorities identified. For most areas, we expect to need to invest further in gathering the existing evidence and/or launching new research projects to fill gaps where the research does not yet exist.

We recognise that it won't be possible to conduct research into all priorities, and that the list is not exhaustive - we still need to be able to respond to new opportunities and emerging issues. However, we will strive to work on as many as possible, and to work with others to produce the best possible evidence in the areas which our stakeholders have told us it is most needed.

A coloured dot next to an overall priority denotes where it also appears on a specific stakeholder group's priority list.

- Care experienced people
- CSC professionals and multi-agency partners
- Parents and carers
- Senior leaders within CSC
- Private sector providers & third sector
- Academics

# BY GROUP

## CARE EXPERIENCED PEOPLE

- Mental health of children and young people
- Impact of trauma on children
- Emotional abuse
- Children and young people's lived experiences
- Adolescence
- Sexual abuse
- Social care professionals' training and skills
- Domestic abuse
- Child sexual exploitation
- Homelessness

## CSC PROFESSIONALS AND MULTI-AGENCY PARTNERS

- Impact of trauma on children
- Mental health of children and young people
- Workforce wellbeing
- Emotional abuse
- Actively involving children and families in identifying their needs and planning their support
- Children and family relationships with children's social care professionals
- Reunification
- Repeated removals
- Stable workforce
- Children and young people's lived experiences

## PARENTS AND CARERS

- Actively involving children and families in identifying their needs and planning their support
- Power imbalance
- Children and family relationships with children's social care professionals
- Mental health of children and young people
- Permanence
- Adolescence
- Children Looked After
- Local Authority/regional differences
- Social care professionals' training and skills
- Attachment

## SENIOR LEADERS WITHIN CSC

- The cost of children's social care services
- Direct work with children
- Organisational culture
- Local Authority/regional differences
- Education
- Social care professionals' training and skills
- Repeated removals
- Children and family relationships with children's social care professionals
- Therapeutic approaches and interventions
- Stable workforce
- Workforce wellbeing

## PRIVATE SECTOR PROVIDERS & THIRD SECTOR

- Workforce wellbeing
- Adolescence
- Criminal exploitation
- Effective leadership
- Mental health of children and young people
- Actively involving children and families in identifying their needs and planning their support
- Models of practice
- Education
- Children and young people's lived experiences
- Social care professionals' training and skills

## ACADEMICS

- Mental health of children and young people
- Organisational culture
- Direct work with children
- Social care professionals' training and skills
- Workforce wellbeing
- Children and family relationships with children's social care professionals
- Domestic abuse
- Criminal exploitation
- Transitions
- Repeated removals



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