

**Full title of study: The impact of regulation and registration on the residential childcare workforce: comparing England and Wales.**

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<b>Key Protocol Contributors</b>	Martin Elliott, Mary Baginsky, Alyson Rees, Jill Manthorpe, Mike Robling, Rebecca Playle

## Study Summary

<b>Study Title</b>	The impact of regulation and registration on the residential childcare workforce: comparing England and Wales.
<b>Internal ref. no. (or short title)</b>	N/A
<b>Study Design</b>	The study consists of four work packages, which are sequentially organised: Focus groups and interviews (WP1) Online survey (WP2) Semi-structured interviews (WP3) Research protocol development (WP4)
<b>Study Participants</b>	WP1 – residential childcare stakeholders, including people with care experience, families, service commissioners, policy makers, residential care providers, residential childcare workers, and regulatory and inspection bodies.  WP2 – people registered to work as residential childcare workers in Wales and those working in residential children’s homes in two regions of England.  WP3 – participants will be those entering the residential childcare workforce in England and Wales  WP4 – interviews with a small number of key informants to gain their views on which areas a possible future effectiveness study might usefully focus on
<b>Planned Size of Sample (if applicable)</b>	WP1 – a minimum of 5 focus groups each attended by at least 8 participants and interviews (n=40) WP2 – the survey will be sent to every residential childcare worker registered with Social Care Wales (n=circa 3000) and those working in children’s homes in two regions of England (n=approximately 500-1000) WP3 – interviews will be undertaken at two time points with staff entering the residential childcare workforce, 25 participants in England and 25 in Wales
<b>Follow up duration (if applicable)</b>	N/A
<b>Planned Study Period</b>	July 2022 – June 2024
<b>Research Question/Aim(s)</b>	How do stakeholders describe and understand the underlying rationales for staff registration and the design of regulatory regimes in relation to residential childcare staff? (RQ1)

	<p>What are the understandings and experiences of residential childcare workers in Wales of the regulatory and registration framework within which they work? (RQ2)</p> <p>What are the experiences of staff entering the residential childcare workforce and what is the impact of differing regulatory frameworks on those experiences? (RQ3)</p> <p>What research design and data would be needed to undertake an effectiveness study of the impact of staff registration on longer-term outcomes, including those of children and young people? (RQ4)</p>
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### **Funding and Support in Kind**

<b>Funder(s)</b>	<b>Financial and non-financial Support Given</b>
NIHR Health and Social Care Delivery Research (HSDR) Programme	£496,507.27

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Study Steering Committee**

To provide independent oversight including scientific and methodological review of the design and conduct of the study on behalf to the funder and sponsor.

**Protocol Contributors** Martin Elliott, Mary Baginsky, Alyson Rees, Jill Manthorpe, Mike Robling, Rebecca Playle

**Key Words:** Residential care; children and young people; registration; regulation

## Study Protocol

**Full title of study:** The impact of regulation and registration on the residential childcare workforce: comparing England and Wales.

### Background/Rationale

Historically, the children's residential care workforce has often been undervalued and seen as transient and low skilled (Department for Education, 2021a), despite working with 'looked after' children who have often experienced significant trauma and challenges and who are often placed in residential care as a 'last resort'. Consequently, the registration and regulation of such staff have the potential to have an impact "not only on the lives of registered and aspiring professionals; [but also to affect] the lives of all those who use their services" (Law Commission, 2014, P.2).

Devolution has seen significant divergence between the UK home nations in the regulatory framework around both adults' and children's social care. Wales now has a substantially different regulatory landscape than England, not least in relation to registration and regulation of care staff (APPG, 2019; Hayes et al. 2019). The registration of residential childcare staff involves not only vetting and barring processes at entry to the workforce, but also requirements to adhere to a code of practice and guidance; being subject to fitness to practise procedures where there are concerns; and registrants demonstrating that they have undertaken appropriate levels of training and development as part of the requirements of maintaining registration. Whilst the primary aim of workforce regulation and registration is driven by the needs of public protection and public confidence in services (McLaughlin, 2006; Kirwan and Melaugh, 2015; Worsley et al. 2019), arguably regulation and registration have the capacity to fulfil a much wider remit regarding the professionalisation of the workforce; recruitment to the sector; staff retention; being a stimulus for staff training and development (Rainbird et al. 2011); and of service standards more generally. That public protection and public confidence in services were primary drivers of workforce regulation and registration in children's social care is illustrated in Wales by the role that the 'Lost in Care' report on abuse in north Wales children's homes (Department of Health, 2000) played in the introduction of regulation of residential childcare staff. Similar calls have recently been made for the introduction of registration in England through the recommendations of the Interim Report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (2018), set up in the wake of serious high-profile instances of child sexual abuse.

However, the case for registration and its impact is not universally accepted. The review of children's residential care in England, undertaken by Sir Martin Narey, did not identify registration of staff as an issue for exploration, instead he recommended that guidance should be provided to employers on how they "can screen out those whose behaviour might fall short" (Narey, 2016, p.61). Whilst not what Narey is advocating, such ideas of 'weeding out' bad practice provide an example of one of the rationales for staff registration, whilst at the other end of the spectrum are Rainbird and colleagues' (2011) ideas of registration as a mechanism for improving and developing the practice of all staff across the sector. Regardless of the programme theory that underpins a particular regulatory approach, there is a need to critically engage with whether it either wholly or partially achieves the intended aims.

## **Research Aims/Questions**

The project consists of two elements, a primary research study and a related feasibility study. The overall aim of the research study is to explore the question “what is the impact of regulation and registration on the residential childcare workforce?”. This question has four subsidiary questions:

- How do stakeholders describe and understand the underlying rationales for staff registration and the design of regulatory regimes in relation to residential childcare staff? (RQ1)
- What are the understandings and experiences of residential childcare workers in Wales of the regulatory and registration framework within which they work? (RQ2)
- What are the experiences of staff entering the residential childcare workforce and what is the impact of differing regulatory frameworks on those experiences? (RQ3)
- What research design and data would be needed to undertake an effectiveness study of the impact of staff registration on longer-term outcomes, including those of children and young people? (RQ4)

The main objectives of the proposed research are:

- To develop a logic model for registration and regulation of social care staff. The model will draw together and describe the hypotheses held by a wide range of stakeholders about the inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes of the registration and regulation process as they relate to residential childcare workforce, elements of which will then be explored through other work packages within the study.
- To provide an analysis of 1) how the registration and regulation process is experienced and understood by the residential childcare workforce and 2) their understandings of its impact on their own practice and development; the quality of care provided; and outcomes for young people.
- To contribute new knowledge and generate empirical insights for understanding the impact of regulatory frameworks and shaping future developments of regulatory policy in England, Wales and elsewhere.
- To explore the feasibility of a potential future longitudinal research design, utilising both existing data and new forms of primary data, to research the long-term impacts of regulation on the residential childcare workforce and outcomes for young people.

## **Study Design and Methods of Data Collection and Data Analysis**

*Work package one (WP1)* – Literature review and logic model. We will undertake a scoping review of international policy, research and grey literature on social care workforce registration and regulation and learning from other fields. This will inform the development of the programme theory and associated logic model for registration and regulation of residential care staff that will be developed. This work will draw together and describe the hypotheses held by a wide range of stakeholders about the inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes of the registration and regulation process as it relates to workers, including how they believe these will impact on outcomes for children and young people in the long term. Care-experienced young people will be central to these deliberations.

*Scoping Review* - We will draw together the literature, both academic and grey, with the help of an information specialist covering the rationale for social care (including social work and childcare workers) registration noting the development of registration in Wales and debates in England that so far have not followed the Welsh example, and parallel debates in Scotland and in Northern Ireland. Following the approach of a scoping review one key aspect will be to locate where gaps in the evidence lie. The databases searched will cover both research and policy collections and include governmental consultations, policy documents and advocacy submissions. To further encourage engagement with the study we will first publish this review as a working paper, then later revise as a peer reviewed publication.

*Setting/context:* Given the varying ways in which registration and regulation can be conceptualised and implemented (see the theoretical / conceptual framework section), WP1 provides an opportunity to explore with a wide range of stakeholders their understandings of the rationales for regulatory policies and strategies and the design of regulatory regimes, programme theories, and the intended impact of these both in terms of the workforce and improving outcomes for children and young people. Since there is little research on registration and regulation in children's social care, outside of research on social worker registration and early years, this WP will provide new insights. The WP will also provide a framework for testing elements of this logic model by exploring the experiences and understandings of residential childcare staff in Wales of being in a regulated profession. Furthermore, the study will, through comparison of the experiences of both registered and non-registered residential staff in Wales and England respectively, explore the potential impact of registration on the experiences of staff at entry to the residential workforce. Finally, the logic model will provide a basis to explore the possibilities of developing a future study design that would not only allow consideration of the impact of regulation in the longer term (including on outcomes for young people), but that could also potentially be applied to other groups who are or will be subject to registration.

*Sampling:* Participants for focus group discussions or interviews will be invited through purposive sampling of representatives of stakeholders in the residential childcare sector, including providers representatives, residential childcare workers, parent carers, service commissioners, inspection and regulatory bodies from both England and Wales. We will endeavour to include a broad range of experiences and diverse participants (although some may not wish to talk in mixed groups). Brief demographic details will be collected at recruitment stage and supplementary recruitment approaches will be adopted to ensure inclusiveness. In terms of specific routes to engaging the social care sector, we will use the following:

Engagement of residential children's home providers will be made through the Independent Children's Home Association (<https://www.icha.org.uk/Public/Home/Index>), the umbrella organisation for residential children's home providers in England and Wales. The research team has long-standing contacts with the sector in Wales through the PI's membership of the Social Care Wales Expert Reference Group on Residential Childcare. This group includes provider representatives from organisations that operate children's homes in both England and Wales; existing links with the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4Cs), which commissions most residential care on behalf of local authorities in Wales.

Care experienced young people and parent carers: Involvement of care experienced young people will be through the CASCADE Voices group supported by Voices from Care, the 4Cs young commissioners' group, and with Become (<https://www.becomecharity.org.uk/>) and the Family Rights Group. Involvement of parent carers will be through the CASCADE parent group, which consists of parents with experience of involvement with statutory children's services and through the Family Rights Group. We are very conscious of the need for sensitivity in this engagement and have protocols for responding to distress and concerns about safeguarding.

Local authorities (LAs) will be engaged as providers of residential children's homes in their own right, and as the organisations with legal responsibility for placing children in out of home care. In Wales, LAs will be engaged through the existing relationship between the research centre, and the PI specifically, with groups such as the All-Wales Heads of Children's Services. In England we have good engagement through our previous and current work with LAs, the Association of Directors of Children's Services, the Local Government Association, and the Social Care Institute for Excellence. We are members of LARIA, the Local Area Research, and Intelligence Association. We are also well connected with LAs that are members of our Making Research Count knowledge mobilisation network and invite these to participate in a range of workforce studies.

Regulatory and inspection bodies – As part of its development, this application has been discussed with the Department for Education; inspection bodies in both England and Wales (OFSTED and Care Inspectorate Wales); and is supported by the regulatory body in Wales, Social Care Wales. We will build on these existing links and interest in the study to engage representatives from these organisations in both the WPs and the Study Steering Committee.

*Data collection:* A series of five workshops will be held covering both England and Wales. Participants will debate questions which draw on the literature review and that are developed with the advice of the Study Steering Committee. Should some participants be unable or find it difficult to participate we will offer interviews online using Microsoft Teams, by phone or in person (if permitted). With permissions, discussions will be recorded and transcribed. Transcription will be undertaken by researchers. Most of these sessions will be attended by heterogenous groups of participants, although as described in the summary of services users/carers/public as research participants, a homogenous group attended by only parent carers who have had children placed in residential care may be run if that is their preferences. Informed consent procedures will apply to all participants. Prior to the focus group/interviews, researchers will provide all participants with an information sheet that details what participation involves and repeats that participation is voluntary. This information will be provided to potential participants at least 2-4 weeks before the focus group is due to be run or interview held. Paper based consent forms will be completed on the day of the focus group where these are face to face. Where focus groups or interviews are conducted on Microsoft Teams consent will be gained electronically by email.

*Data analysis:* Data collected will be synthesised into a programme theory and logic model(s) of the overarching understanding of registration and regulation process as it applies to residential childcare staff, while recognising that not all data will be complementary, and a



single unified understanding may not be possible. Such discrepancies will be picked up and explored more fully through the online survey of registered staff to be undertaken in WP2. Focus group data will be analysed thematically (Braun and Clarke, 2006), using a combination of *a priori* (e.g., theory context, implementation, outcomes) and *in vivo* codes.

Data will also provide important contextual detail that will be used in reports and study dissemination.

*Work package two (WP2) – Survey.* The Welsh residential childcare workforce is one in which registration is well embedded, having been a legal requirement of working in the sector in Wales since 2008. WP2 provides an opportunity to compare the programme theory developed in WP1, which captures the underlying rationales held by a range of stakeholders for regulatory policies and strategies and the design of regulatory regimes, to the everyday experiences and understandings of the workforce of what it means to be registered and whether it has an impact on their work.

*Sampling:* The population from which the sample will be derived will comprise all residential childcare workers working in Wales registered with the regulator, Social Care Wales, at the time the survey is conducted. As of 21st April 2020, 2975, workers were registered, and it is anticipated that numbers of registrants will remain at or near this level. Based on this and an estimated potential response rate of 34% for an on-line workforce survey (Shih and Fan, 2008) we would expect a sample of over 1000 respondents. In addition, the study will collect survey data from the English residential childcare workforce drawn from two contrasting regions.

*Data collection:* An online survey, using Qualtrics software will be used. The survey design will draw on the focus groups in WP1. Because the WPs are sequentially organised, with each informing the next, the finalised survey questions will be submitted for ethical review as an amendment to the initial HRA application. In Wales, a link to the online questionnaire will be circulated by Social Care Wales as part of regular communications with registrants by the regulator. In England, direct contact will be made with residential children's homes operating in the regions targeted. To encourage responses, we will publicise the survey in online publications such as Community Care and Young People Now and highlight its importance as well as social media. We shall run a prize draw to encourage participation with offers of vouchers or the option to donate to charity as we have done in other studies. Potential participants will be provided with information on the study as part of the materials circulated to encourage participation in the study. Potential participants will also be provided with contact details for one of the research team in case they have any questions regarding the survey. The online survey will be open for two months. Consent will also be taken electronically on Qualtrics, and respondents will be asked to confirm that they have read and understood the information about the survey, and that they understand that taking part is voluntary, before completing the questionnaire.

*Data analysis:* A Framework analysis approach (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994) will be used to analyse the data derived from the open questions within the survey. The themes within the analysis framework will be drawn from sources such as the theoretical model developed in WP1 and the review of existing academic and grey literature. These will be supplemented by



further themes derived from the initial analyses of the data. Descriptive statistics will be used to illustrate the overall characteristics of respondents to the on-line questionnaire (e.g., age, sex, ethnicity, type of provider, length of time registered, etc.) and responses to closed questions or those utilising scales.

*Work package three (WP3) – Interviews.* The interviews will provide opportunities to explore early employment experiences in terms of induction, training, and preparation for working with vulnerable children and young people, and to consider these within the context of the differing regulatory frameworks operating in England and Wales.

*Setting/context:* The period of entry to the residential childcare workforce is a key time in terms of ensuring people with right skills and aptitudes are recruited into the profession; that they are appropriately vetted (prior to appointment); that they receive preparation and training to undertake the role; and that they have a clear understanding of the expectations around their conduct and values. The mechanisms for achieving these currently vary between England and Wales because of the differing regulatory frameworks. For example, induction into the workforce in Wales is linked to registration and is delivered through the All-Wales induction framework. No equivalent country level mechanism currently exists in England.

*Sampling:* The sample will be taken from those entering the residential childcare workforce in England and Wales in the period December 2022 to June 2023. Participants will be a non-probabilistic purposive sample, which, as far as possible, will be selected by the research team to be representative of the residential childcare workforce in terms of a range of demographic variations (e.g., gender, ethnicity, and age; and factors such as the size and sector (not for profit and commercial) of the employing residential provider and inspection outcomes of the settings where participants work. In Wales in 2019/20, 651 people registered as new residential childcare workers. If that level of new registrants was replicated during the study period, the sample of 25 interviewees in Wales would represent approximately 3.8% of new registrants. Since the workforce is not regulated in England, we cannot give approximations of representation but will seek again a broad span of participants who are new to the work, cover different residential providers and geographies (specifically recruiting from under-researched areas) and have socio-demographic variation. In Wales, participants would be recruited through Social Care Wales and the registration process with information on the study being forwarded to new registrants. In England we will circulate information on the study directly to residential care homes and care providers as well as more broadly through sector networks. In seeking to ensure participation from minority and underserved communities we will draw on the work of Salihu et al. (2015), adapting socio-ecological frameworks to consider barriers to participant engagement and how they might be addressed.

*Data collection:* Will consist of semi-structured interviews with staff entering this workforce in England and Wales at two time points: T1 at or as near as possible to entry to the workforce (and registration in Wales); T2 at 6-9 months after entering the workforce. The interview schedules will draw on the literature review and focus groups/interviews undertaken in WP1, using key elements of the programme theory to explore the early experiences of both registered and unregistered residential childcare workers. Because the WPs are sequentially

organised, with each informing the next, the finalised interview schedules will be submitted for ethical review as an amendment to the initial HRA application. The T2 interviews will enable us to capture participants' reflections on factors such their induction, training, perceived adequacy of preparedness for role and the potential impact of registration on those experiences. Follow up will also allow us to capture whether these staff have remained in the residential childcare workforce and if they have whether they have moved between employers between the period (churn). We will undertake interviews with 50 participants (25 in England and 25 in Wales) a total of 100 interviews. Interviews will be undertaken either in person or on Microsoft Teams. Informed consent procedures will apply to all participants. Prior to the interviews, researchers will provide all participants with an information sheet that details what participation involves and repeats that participation is voluntary. This information will be provided to potential participants at least 2-4 weeks before the interview is held. Paper based consent forms will be completed on the day of the interview where these are face to face. Where interviews are conducted on Microsoft Teams consent will be gained electronically by email. Each interview will be conducted by one of the study's two Research Associates, who are based in Cardiff University and King's College London. The interviews will take place across England and Wales in locations that are both convenient for the participant and appropriate in terms of issues such as privacy and confidentiality. If participants would rather be interviewed in the medium of Welsh, we will arrange a Welsh language interviewer. Several CASCADE researchers are Welsh speakers, and we can draw on them to undertake interviews where necessary.

*Data analysis:* All interviews, at both time points, will be recorded and transcribed by a transcription service with permissions. We will have a confidentiality agreement with the transcriber. As with WP2, the data will be analysed using a Framework analysis approach. A coding matrix for each subgroup of participants (English and Welsh) will allow consideration of the similarities and differences between the two groups of respondents. As noted earlier, we will seek input from our study advisors on emerging findings.

*Work package four (WP4)* – evaluative research protocol. The feasibility component of the study will explore the possibilities of developing a study protocol for evaluating the effectiveness of registration that would not only allow consideration of the impact of regulation long term (including on outcomes for young people), but that could also potentially be applied to other groups who are or may be subject to registration in the future e.g., domiciliary care workers in England (these are already registered in Wales). As with the previous WPs, the programme theory and logic model developed in WP1 will provide the framework to shape this phase of the study. WP4 will include elements of our review of international policy, research and grey literature on social care workforce registration and regulation and learning from other fields; exploring sources of data that could be included in the study design; and defining data that would need to be collected to undertake such a study. The study design developed will then be used as the basis for a small number of interviews with key stakeholders, including residential childcare staff and care experienced young people, to discuss the feasibility of the proposed study.

*Setting/context:* There is a lack of evidence around the long-term impact of staff registration and wider regulation on outcomes for children and young people placed in residential

settings. Our preliminary discussions with stakeholders, including regulatory and inspection bodies, have highlighted a need for empirical evidence in this area. However, disentangling the effects of a complex intervention that includes registration of staff; approval, registration and inspection of settings and providers; and the planning and review of individual children's placements is challenging.

*Sampling:* In addition to pulling together findings from the previous three WPs, WP4 will also include undertaking a small number of additional interviews with key informants to gain their views on which areas a possible future effectiveness study might usefully focus on.

*Data collection:* as part of the feasibility element of the study this WP will explore which routinely collected administrative data or other data currently collected, both at a local and a regional or national level, could be used as part of a future research study. This will include exploring with the Secure Anonymised Information Linkage (SAIL) databank based at Swansea University, the potential future opportunities of using data linkage to explore longer term outcomes. WP4 will also explore the nature of new primary data that would need to be collected as part of a future study to improve understandings of the longer-term impact of regulation on the quality of staffing, and the care that children experience as a result. This WP will also include Patient and Public Involvement in the form of a small number of interviews with key informants, recruited from policy and practice networks.

*Data analysis:* This will bring together the literature review and programme theory developed in WP1; the analysis from the survey and interviews in WP2 and WP3; with a review of existing secondary data sources (including consideration of completeness and quality) and opportunities for data linkage; identification of gaps in data that would require additional primary data collection, into a protocol for evaluating the effectiveness of registration in a further study.

### **Study Setting**

The research will not be undertaken in a specific setting(s). Instead, the three WPs for which we will recruit participants will be across England and Wales. Specifically, for the focus groups/interviews, participants will be key stakeholders for residential childcare identified from across England and Wales. The focus groups will be conducted in settings across England and Wales to make them accessible to participants and maximise engagement. The survey will be administered online and circulated to all residential childcare workers registered with the regulatory body for Wales and to those working in registered children's homes in two English regions (to be identified). For the semi-structured interviews, participants will be those entering the residential childcare workforce in either England or Wales during the study timeframe. The interviews will take place across England and Wales in locations that are both convenient for the participant and appropriate in terms of matters such as privacy and confidentiality.

### **Sample and Recruitment**

The following inclusion and exclusion criteria will be applied:

*Work Package 1. Focus Groups.* Participants will be a purposive sample of representatives of the stakeholder groups related to out of home care of children in residential children's homes. Representatives of stakeholder groups will include, residential childcare workers, residential childcare providers, local authorities, social care inspection bodies, social care workforce regulatory bodies, and parent carers with experience of their children being placed in residential care. Individual interviews will be offered if this is more convenient and acceptable to participants.

*Work Package 2. On-line survey.* Responses will be sought from those working as residential childcare workers working in settings registered with the relevant regulatory body (Care Inspectorate Wales and OFSTED) as Registered Children's Homes. In Wales the survey will be circulated by the workforce regulator, Social Care Wales, on behalf of the research team, to all those registered as a residential childcare worker (n=3165 in 2021). In England, the survey will be circulated to settings registered with OFSTED as Registered Children's Homes in two regions. These regions have yet to be identified but are likely to be areas with high concentrations of registered children's homes e.g., the North West of England. Exclusion criteria will include those working in settings not registered as children's homes, including residential schools (unless dual registered as a Children's Home), supported lodgings and other forms of unregulated settings.

*Work Package 3 Semi-structured Interviews.* Participants will be working in registered residential children's homes in England or Wales (n=25 per country). Participants will be new entrants to the residential childcare workforce and as close as possible to starting this role with their employer. These participants will be interviewed at two time points, as close as possible to starting their role (T1) and six to 9 months later (T2). They will be employed to working in settings registered with the relevant regulator as a residential children's home and will exclude those working in settings not registered as children's homes, including residential schools (unless dual registered as a Children's Home), supported lodgings and other forms of unregulated settings.

## **Funding**

This study was submitted to the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) HS&DR call on the health and social care workforce (Ref NIHR134942).

## **Ethical and Regulatory Considerations**

Research Ethics Committee (REC) and other Regulatory review & reports - Before the start of the study data collection, a favourable opinion will be sought from the Health Research Authority Social Care REC for the study protocol, informed consent forms and other relevant documents e.g., advertisements. Whilst most of this study's participants will be social care professionals, the focus groups that will be undertaken as part of Work Package 1 will include parents and carers whose children have been living in residential care. Parents will be given the option of participating in a focus group with stakeholders attending including residential childcare workers, residential childcare providers (commercial and not for profit organisations), local authorities, social care inspection organisations and workforce regulators; a separate session just for parent carers; or one-to-one interviews as they may wish to talk about sensitive matters or confidentially. We will respect participants preferences. Those who participate will receive a

payment, along with reimbursement of travel and subsistence costs. We have made it clear to parents and carers in information sheets that this is payment for their time and knowledge. We have ensured payment is not overly emphasised in recruitment materials to avoid parents feeling led to participate if they would normally not have wanted to without payment.

### **Study Benefits**

**Focus groups** - The contribution of those attending the focus groups will help us, and others understand how regulatory frameworks in social care are understood to work by a range of stakeholders. Participants who are experts by experience, e.g., parents/carers who have had children placed in the care of the local authority, will have their travel and subsistence expenses reimbursed and will receive vouchers to the value of £25 for participating in the focus group or interview. Professionals attending the sessions will receive no payments as they will be attending in work time.

**Online survey** – Those completing the online survey will help us to explore the everyday understandings and experiences of the workforce of registration. To thank participants for their time those completing the survey will be given the option to be entered into a prize draw. The draw will be for a total of ten prizes of £50 in vouchers or the option to donate to charity at the same value.

**Semi-structured interviews** - There will be no direct advantages or benefits to participants, but their contribution will help us, and others understand how different regulatory regimes impact on the early experiences of those entering the residential childcare workforce.

### **Study Management**

We will hold fortnightly project team meetings with the core members of the project team (principal investigator, co-applicants, and the two study research associates) from CASCADE, the Centre for Trials Research and King's College London. Due to the geographic locations of the team these meetings will be online, but once every three months the team will meet in person, either in Cardiff or London.

**Study Steering Committee (SSC)** – the SSC will meet at 6 points over the course of the study. The SSC will be chaired by Dr Lisa Trigg from Social Care Wales and will have membership of academics and practitioners with expertise around regulation and regulation in social care, residential care for children and young people, routinely collected administrative data. Additionally, the group will also benefit from input from a statistician, a social work trainer and HR expert, and public contributors with lived experience of being 'looked after'.

### **Resource/Cost Implications**

Most costs associated with the study relate to staffing costs for the research team, including two research associates recruited to undertake most of the fieldwork. In addition, costs associated with the fieldwork, including travel and subsistence; the prize draw for those completing the online survey (WP2); and dissemination and impact activities for the study overall, are also included. All costs are covered by the funding received from NIHR.

### **Peer review**

A funding application was assessed by independent external peer review at two stages. At the first stage for the NIHR Health and Social Care Delivery Research (HS&DR) programme themed call (health and social care workforce) the application was reviewed by two independent reviewers. Comments were sent to the Chief Investigator along with the decision to put the application through to stage two of the application process. At the second stage, the full application, including a response to the stage one feedback, was reviewed by the funding committee. Considering the reviews and our response, the NIHR panel decided to fund the study subject to the research teams' response to panel comments. A final revised application was then submitted and approved for funding.

### **Patient & Public Involvement**

Our Study Steering Committee has representation from those with care experience. As well as a nominated representative who will attend SSC meetings, we will also gain the views of a broader group of care experienced people through a range of activities, which will be fed into both the SSC and the overall design and conduct of the study.

We will work with several existing groups of care experienced children and young people. These will include the CASCADE Voices group and the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4Cs) young commissioners' group. These groups will be involved in the development of the study survey questions and the interview schedules and will also 'sense check' the logic model(s) and programme theory developed in work package 1.

### **Protocol compliance**

Accidental protocol deviations can happen at any time. They will be adequately documented on the relevant forms and reported to the Principal Investigator and Sponsor immediately. Deviations from the protocol which are found to frequently recur will not be acceptable and will require immediate action including those that could potentially be classified as a serious breach.

### **Data protection**

The Data Custodian for the study will be the Principal Investigator, Dr Martin Elliott. Data on University computers (in Cardiff and King's College London) will also be stored in a secure manner on university servers in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 and DPA 2018. Only authorised members of the research team will have access. The use of personal contact details will be treated as sensitive information and stored securely and separately to any participant responses. Access to study and personal data will be limited to the minimum number of individuals necessary for quality control, audit, and analysis. No individuals or residential care providers will be identified in any publication that comes from the research project. All research data will be anonymised by researchers as part of the transcription process. No individuals or residential care providers will be identified in any publication that comes from our research project. Any direct quotations from participants will be anonymised and any identifying details obscured. Where personal data is transferred electronically, it will be encrypted during transfer and transferred securely using FastFile, Cardiff University's facility for secure encrypted file transfer. Data will be held on FastFile for a maximum of 14 days, after which time it will be automatically deleted. Audio data from recording devices will be treated as strictly confidential. The audio files will be removed from the recording device and stored on the secure network at Cardiff University and King's College London. The audio data will be transcribed and



during this process any names mentioned will be removed. Hard copy consent forms will be stored securely in locked desks/filing cabinets on university premises. Electronic consent collected as part of the online survey will be stored securely, along with survey responses, on university servers. Laptops will be necessary due to working arrangements resulting from Covid-19 that may reoccur and data collection occurring off-site. Researchers will use university laptops which are encrypted, and data will be stored in a secure manner on the Universities' networks, rather than on the laptops themselves. Data on University desktop computers (in Cardiff and King's College London) will also be stored in a secure manner on university servers and only authorised members of the research team will have access. King's College London is joint data controllers for the focus groups/interviews and later semi-structured interviews so will have access to all data - participants will be asked to consent to this. Data will be transferred by FastFile. A written agreement will be made between the University of Cardiff and King's College London to ensure data security.

### **Indemnity**

Non-negligent harm: This study is an academic, investigator-led, and designed study, coordinated by the Centre for Children's Social Care Research and Development (CASCADE). Cardiff University does not provide compensation for non-negligent harm.

Negligent harm: Cardiff University will provide indemnity and compensation in the event of a claim by, or on behalf of participants, for negligent harm as a result of the study design and/or in respect of the protocol authors/research team.

### **Access to the final study dataset**

Raw data containing personal information will be retained until the end of the research project in June 2024. After that, only anonymised data will be kept for a minimum of 5 years after the end of project or after publication in line with the Cardiff University retention policy and will only be accessible by members of the research team. All identifiable data will be stored on secured university servers from which they will be deleted on completion of the retention period.

### **Participant Withdrawal**

Participants will be informed in information sheets that they can withdraw consent and they will be provided with information on how to do this in the information sheet. We recognise that the granting of consent is not a singular event but part of an ongoing process. Our intention is to interview participants in WP3 at two time points. Participants would sign a consent form at the beginning of the study, and this would be verbally revisited and recorded at the start of each interview. Consent forms will outline that should a participant withdraw from the study, any data already provided will be retained and used for research purposes, unless they inform the research team that they do not wish for the information to be used. Participants will also be made aware that there will come a time point at which it will be impossible to destroy their data, e.g., once the results of the study have been published. Participants will provide consent to demonstrate that they understand this prior to participating in the study.

### **Publications**

The study will have a publication and dissemination policy and plan that will be saved in the study master file.



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**Appendix 1 – Amendment History**

<b>Amendment No.</b>	<b>Protocol version no.</b>	<b>Date issued</b>	<b>Author(s) of changes</b>	<b>Details of changes made</b>