

Interventions to improve mental health and well-being in care-experienced children and young people aged less than 25: the CHIMES systematic review

Rhiannon Evans,^{1*} Sarah MacDonald,¹ Robert Trubey,² Jane Noyes,³ Michael Robling,² Simone Willis,⁴ Soo Vinnicombe,³ Maria Boffey,¹ Charlotte Wooders,⁵ Asmaa El-Banna⁶ and GJ Melendez-Torres⁷

¹DECIPHer, School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK

²Centre for Trials Research, Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK

³School of Medical and Health Sciences, Bangor University, Bangor, UK

⁴Specialist Unit for Review Evidence, Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK

⁵The Fostering Network in Wales, Cardiff, UK

⁶University of Warwick, Coventry, UK

⁷Peninsula Technology Assessment Group (PenTAG), University of Exeter, Exeter, UK

*Corresponding author EvansRE8@cardiff.ac.uk

Published December 2024

DOI: 10.3310/MKYP6299

Plain language summary

Interventions to improve mental health and well-being in care-experienced children and young people aged less than 25: the CHIMES systematic review

Public Health Research 2024; Vol. 12: No. 14

DOI: 10.3310/MKYP6299

NIHR Journals Library www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk

Plain language summary

Children and young people in care may include those who live with foster carers, kinship carers or in residential care. Some care-experienced young people will have poorer mental health and well-being than those who have not been in care. In the United Kingdom, there have been policies and recommendations to improve mental health service provision, but it is not clear what works. We brought together all international research to understand what approaches work best and if they could be successfully used in the United Kingdom. We found 64 different types of mental health and well-being provision for children and young people up to the age of 25 years. Most approaches were delivered and evaluated in the United States. Generally, there was a lack of description of different provisions, but they often focused on improving young people's social and emotional skills or changing the parenting style of foster carers. We found that, in the short term, these approaches could work to positively impact children and young people's mental health, but in the longer term they did not seem to work. It is not clear if these approaches are more cost-effective than current services. We did not find much research looking at the impact on children and young people's well-being, self-harm or suicide. We also considered some of the challenges to delivering services. Issues included a lack of time and finance, the burden on social care staff and carers, difficulty in relationships between organisations, services not meeting the needs of young people and carers struggling to deliver new approaches that do not fit with their skill set. After talking through our findings with stakeholders, we identified potential services that should be considered for delivery in the United Kingdom. These are mentoring for children and young people by individuals with experience of care and support to help carers, other professionals and organisations to work together.

Public Health Research

ISSN 2050-439X (Online)

A list of Journals Library editors can be found on the [NIHR Journals Library website](#)

Public Health Research (PHR) was launched in 2013 and is indexed by Europe PMC, NCBI Bookshelf, DOAJ, INAHTA, Ulrichsweb™ (ProQuest LLC, Ann Arbor, MI, USA) and MEDLINE.

This journal is a member of and subscribes to the principles of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) (www.publicationethics.org/).

Editorial contact: journals.library@nihr.ac.uk

The full PHR archive is freely available to view online at www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/phr.

Criteria for inclusion in the *Public Health Research* journal

Manuscripts are published in *Public Health Research* (PHR) if (1) they have resulted from work for the PHR programme, and (2) they are of a sufficiently high scientific quality as assessed by the reviewers and editors.

Reviews in *Public Health Research* are termed 'systematic' when the account of the search appraisal and synthesis methods (to minimise biases and random errors) would, in theory, permit the replication of the review by others.

PHR programme

The Public Health Research (PHR) programme, part of the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), is the leading UK funder of public health research, evaluating public health interventions, providing new knowledge on the benefits, costs, acceptability and wider impacts of non-NHS interventions intended to improve the health of the public and reduce inequalities in health. The scope of the programme is multi-disciplinary and broad, covering a range of interventions that improve public health.

For more information about the PHR programme please visit the website: <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/funding-programmes/public-health-research.htm>

This article

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the PHR programme as award number NIHR129113. The contractual start date was in April 2020. The draft manuscript began editorial review in October 2022 and was accepted for publication in March 2024. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The PHR editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors' manuscript and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the draft document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this article.

This article presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, the PHR programme or the Department of Health and Social Care. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, the PHR programme or the Department of Health and Social Care.

This article was published based on current knowledge at the time and date of publication. NIHR is committed to being inclusive and will continually monitor best practice and guidance in relation to terminology and language to ensure that we remain relevant to our stakeholders.

Copyright © 2024 Evans *et al.* This work was produced by Evans *et al.* under the terms of a commissioning contract issued by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. This is an Open Access publication distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 4.0 licence, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, reproduction and adaptation in any medium and for any purpose provided that it is properly attributed. See: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>. For attribution the title, original author(s), the publication source – NIHR Journals Library, and the DOI of the publication must be cited.

Published by the NIHR Journals Library (www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk), produced by Newgen Digitalworks Pvt Ltd, Chennai, India (www.newgen.co).

