

The Mental Health and Well-being needs of Looked After Children in South East England

Looked After Children (LAC) often experience substantial life challenges that affect their mental health and wellbeing. Almost half of children and young people in care meet diagnostic criteria for a psychiatric disorder, compared to one in 10 in non-looked after children. Unaccompanied migrant children in particular face extra complexities due to their immigration status, which may be compounded by the social, cultural, and linguistic differences in the new setting. This project will explore the identities, experiences, and wellbeing of LAC who are currently - or have previously been - looked after by KSS local authorities.

This PhD studentship will provide the opportunity for the candidate to enhance their knowledge in the subject area and to develop their methodological skills. In terms of content, the project is designed to increase understanding of the mental health and wellbeing needs and experiences of LAC to identify good practice and to identify areas for improvement and suggestions for improvements.

In relation to methods, the programme of work will enable the candidate to develop methodological expertise in quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods public health research as well as evidence synthesis.

Of key importance to all aspects of the research programme will be engagement with LAC, carers, health and social care professionals and local authorities to co-design and co-produce outputs and potential interventions. This process encourages active engagement and partnership work, and is valuable for gaining a deeper understanding of the issues faced by the LAC and related parties.

