



# CASCADE Partnership



Ymchwil Iechyd  
a Gofal Cymru  
Health and Care  
Research Wales



Ariennir gan  
Lywodraeth Cymru  
Funded by  
Welsh Government

## 2022 - 2023 Annual report





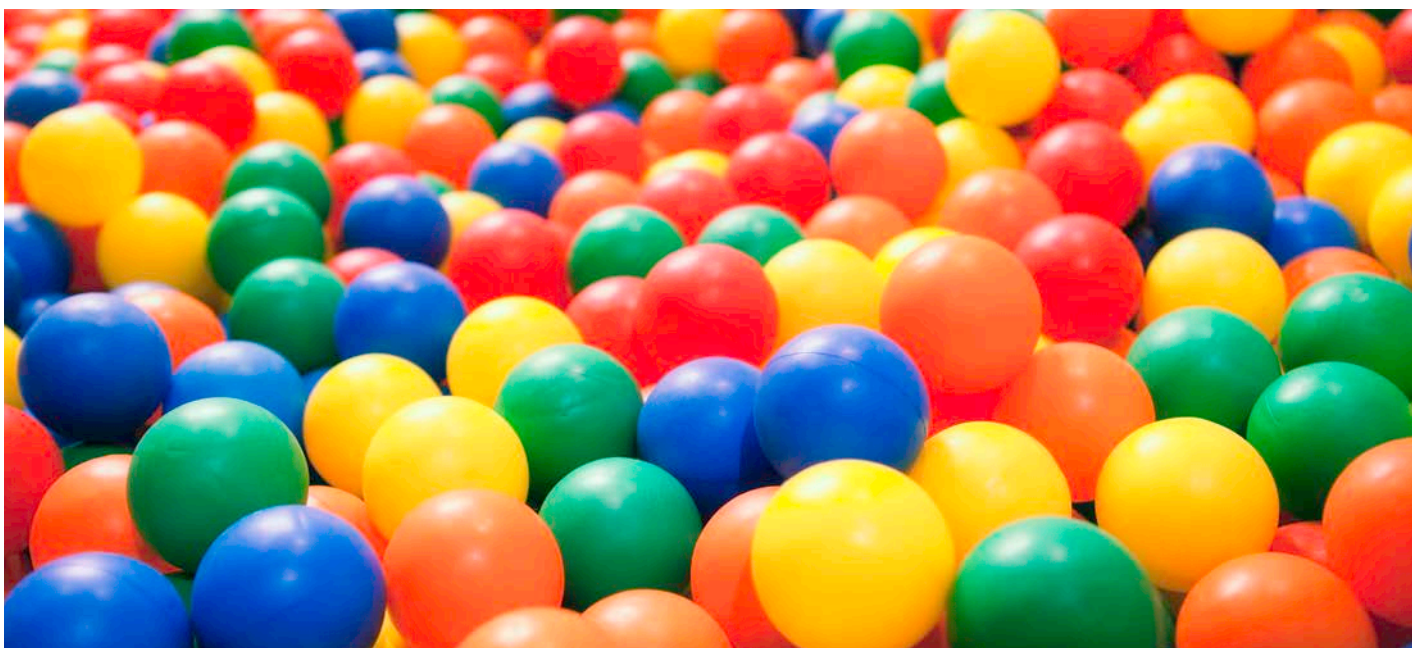
**CASCADE Infrastructure Partners**





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# 1. Director's overview

The CASCADE Partnership is a collaboration between the Centre for Children's Social Care Research and Development (CASCADE) in the School of Social Sciences, the Centre for Trials Research (CTR) and the School of Psychology all at Cardiff University and the Secure and Anonymised Information Linkage Centre (SAIL) at Swansea. Together we seek to conduct research that makes a difference for children and young people, parents and workers in children's social care.

Our collaboration has been enormously enhanced by infrastructure funding from Health Care Research Wales (HCRW), which has supported the work outlined in this Report. A particular highlight of this year was our Partnership Day, which brought together people from across our Partnership and beyond. This was opened by Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services Julie Morgan and saw contributions from across the Partnership. It was particularly inspiring to have input from our parents' group. The energy and commitment to improving policy and practice from everyone involved got 2023 off to a fantastic start.

A particularly welcome development this year has been the return of Professor Sally Holland. Sally founded CASCADE and went on to be Children's Commissioner shortly afterwards. It is wonderful to have her back. She is leading our public involvement work, and has also boosted our policy engagement – as you can read below.

Another welcome development has been moving into the new SPARC/SPARK Building. SPARK is Europe's first social science research park and brings together research centres and related charities and other organisations to increase interchange and collaborative problem solving. The CASCADE Centre is now housed in this beautiful, purpose-built building. It is allowing us to involve PhD students more closely in our work, to build partnerships with charities, and to have other members of the Partnership come and spend days co-located with us. It has been a tremendous boost for CASCADE and the Partnership.

We have had another busy year, with continued success in grant capture and project delivery. The figures are boosted by our involvement in two major initiatives funded by HCRW. We are delighted that Professor Jonathan Scourfield was successful in his bid to lead the Centre for Adult social care Research (CARE). CASCADE will be supporting the set-up of CARE, and the two Centres will thereafter work together to support and enhance social care for adults and children across Wales. This will include shared teams engaging the sector, involving service users in our work and research programmes – though CARE will also develop new areas of research and innovation.





We are also very pleased to be involved with the Health and Care Research Wales Evidence Centre. The Centre will conduct reviews of existing evidence and undertake new research to provide timely, evidence-based findings to inform policy and practice development in Wales.

Even setting these two Centre grants aside, we have continued to have substantial success in grant capture and it is particularly positive to see that we are obtaining more funding from outside Wales, and from different funders. Each year, we choose a focus to showcase particular elements of the work we do. This year the focus is “Beyond social care” to highlight studies that have looked at agencies or experiences beyond a direct focus on children’s social care, including studies in schools, universities, prisons and with the police.

The CASCADE Partnership is continuing to grow and thrive. We hope that this Report gives a flavour of the exciting, innovative and important work that is being undertaken across the Partnership.

**Donald Forrester**  
Director of CASCADE Partnership

*“The School of Psychology has a vibrant community of students and academics with interests in child development. Our work spans prenatal effects on health outcomes, recognising and understanding neurodiversity, as well as innumerable activities that illuminate childhood experiences in the contexts of family and school life. Our work with the CASCADE partnership, enabled through studentships, Fellowships, and strategic investments, is enabling us to break new ground at the interface of social care, health, and education. The interdisciplinary nature of the partnership offers a major opportunity to gain insights that resonate with professionals working directly with and on behalf of children.”*

**Professor Katherine Shelton**

Director of School of Psychology





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## 2. Who's who in the CASCADE Partnership

The Partnership brings together four research centres. We are led by a Governance Board which meets quarterly – though much of our dynamism and the generation of new ideas comes from the work we do together developing and delivering specific projects or areas of work and regular away days and seminars.



**Donald Forrester** is Professor of Child and Family Social Work and Director of CASCADE. He is Director of the Partnership and has responsibility for overseeing all its work.



**Jonathan Scourfield** is Professor of Social Work and Deputy Director of CASCADE. He has a key role in developing our work applying data linkage to children's social care.



**Alyson Rees** is Professor in Social Work and Assistant Director of CASCADE. Alyson leads our all-Wales social care research engagement work – known as ExChange.



**David Wilkins** is Reader in Social Work and Assistant Director of CASCADE. David has lead responsibility for developing the external profile, influence, and impact of the Partnership.



**Jo Parry** is Centre Manager at CASCADE and leads on the efficient delivery of professional services support across the Partnership.



**Mike Robling** is Professor and Director of Population Health Trials at the Centre for Trials Research. He leads the contribution of the CTR and has a key role developing complex and innovative evaluative methods for CSC.



**David Ford** is Professor of Informatics and Director of Population Data Science based in Swansea University Medical School. He leads the contribution of SAIL Databank, supporting the development of a portfolio of studies using advanced data linkage methods applied to children's social care (CSC).



**Katherine Shelton** is Professor of Psychology and Director of the Centre for Human Development Science at Cardiff University. Katherine is currently developing a study investigating the shaping of mental health and the psychological mechanisms that characterise transitions for care-experienced young people.

### 3. Summary of the year

#### Core Metrics

Reporting period: **2022/2023**



**Health and Care Research Wales infrastructure award to the group**



Direct funding awarded  
**£629k**

Jobs created through direct funding



#### Grants won during reporting period

Grants won	Led by group	Group collaborating
Number	<b>24</b>	<b>9</b>
Value	<b>£5.1m</b>	<b>£9.1m</b>
Funding to Wales	<b>£5.3m</b>	<b>£8.2m</b>
Funding to group	<b>£4.9m</b>	<b>£470k</b>
Additional jobs created for Wales	<b>35</b>	<b>20</b>
Additional jobs created for group	<b>35</b>	<b>4</b>



Number of publications



Number of public engagement events



Number of public involvement opportunities

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# Making a difference



## Policy Engagement

A feature of this year that we are particularly proud of is an increased engagement with policy influence. This has been hugely enhanced by the return of Professor Sally Holland to work with us from her role as Children's Commissioner. Her knowledge of policy processes and her reputation, combined with our burgeoning body of studies, has significantly enhanced this element of our work.

We have been active in providing evidence to Senedd, including:

- Louise Roberts and members of our parent involvement group to the Petitions Committee and their evidence featured centrally in the resulting report.
- Rachael Vaughan and a member of our parent involvement group to a closed session of the Children Young People and Education committee in the Senedd Jan 2023 – a session for Members of the Senedd to hear from parents with lived experience of the care system.
- Louise Roberts and Helen Hodges to a closed session of the Children Young People and Education committee in the Senedd Feb 2023 on radical reform in children's social care.
- David Westlake and Melissa Meindl on Family Drug and Alcohol Courts in a public session of the Children Young People and Education committee in the Senedd Feb 2023.
- Hannah Bayfield in a public session of the Children Young People and Education committee in the Senedd Feb 2023 – on care-experienced students.
- We submitted written evidence from CASCADE for the Senedd inquiry into radical reform of children's social care, citing around 10 of our studies, plus insights from our public involvement groups. The resulting report published in May 2023 cited CASCADE evidence throughout, and several of the recommendations can be linked to our evidence:  
[Services for care experienced children: exploring radical reform \(senedd.wales\)](#)



## Welsh Government

- October 2022, Sally Holland submitted written evidence to a Welsh Government consultation on removing profit from children’s fostering and residential care services in Wales.
- January 2023, the Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services visited CASCADE and heard presentations about our projects.
- January, the Director and Deputy Director of Welsh Government Social services Division visited CASCADE to hear about evidence related to their current programmes.



## Our influence extends beyond Wales

- Nina Maxwell gave evidence on child criminal exploitation and knife crime to the UK Parliament in in March 2023.
- Sally Holland acted as an expert advisor to Canadian Senator Stan Kutcher, whose Bill to prohibit physical punishment of children received its second reading in May 2023. She met Senator Kutcher and his team, submitted written information and a letter about the process and outcomes of the legislation in Wales that was circulated to all Senators.

## Care-leavers Christmas dinner

We were delighted that members of CASCADE organised the first Christmas dinner for care leavers in Cardiff this year. Involving several members of the CASCADE family this hugely enjoyable event provided a welcoming and fun Christmas day for 22 care leavers.





## Reports and citations

March 2023: Senedd Petitions Committee report on care-experienced parents heavily cited Dr Louise Roberts' work and parents' group: [We must break the cycle of children of care experienced parents going into care \(senedd.wales\)](#). This report received significant BBC coverage: [Care leaver parent who feels judged calls for change - BBC News](#)

2023, Helen Hodges contributed to the Welsh children's rights independent monitoring group report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. [Wales\\_UNCRC\\_Monitoring\\_Group.pdf \(childreninwales.org.uk\)](#)

We have also been heavily involved in national and international advisory organisations. These include:

- Nina Maxwell, Helen Hodges and Sally Holland are members of the Wales Youth Justice Academic Advisory Group, which is Welsh Government commissioned and advising on devolution and reform of youth justice.
- Nina Maxwell is also a member of the Welsh Government Modern Slavery Victims and Survivors Group, the Wales Violence Prevention Unit and the Data for Research Working Group (WG).

- Sally Holland is on the Welsh NHS CAMHS Whole Systems Approaches Advisory Group.
- Helen Hodges is an affiliate of the Observatory on the Human Rights of Children and Young People (Swansea Uni) and of the Wales Data Analysis Innovation and Improvement Network.
- Martin Elliot is a member of the Social Care Wales Residential Child Care Advisory Group and Health and Care Research Wales Faculty all-Wales research careers pathway advisory group.
- David Westlake joined the UK Government Evaluation and Trial Advice Panel – giving advice to a wide range of UK Government departments eg DEFRA on an evaluation strategy.
- Donald Forrester finished his time on the Evidence Group for the Independent Review of Children's Social Care in England.
- The Independent Review cited several studies by CASCADE researchers, including four by Dr David Wilkins.

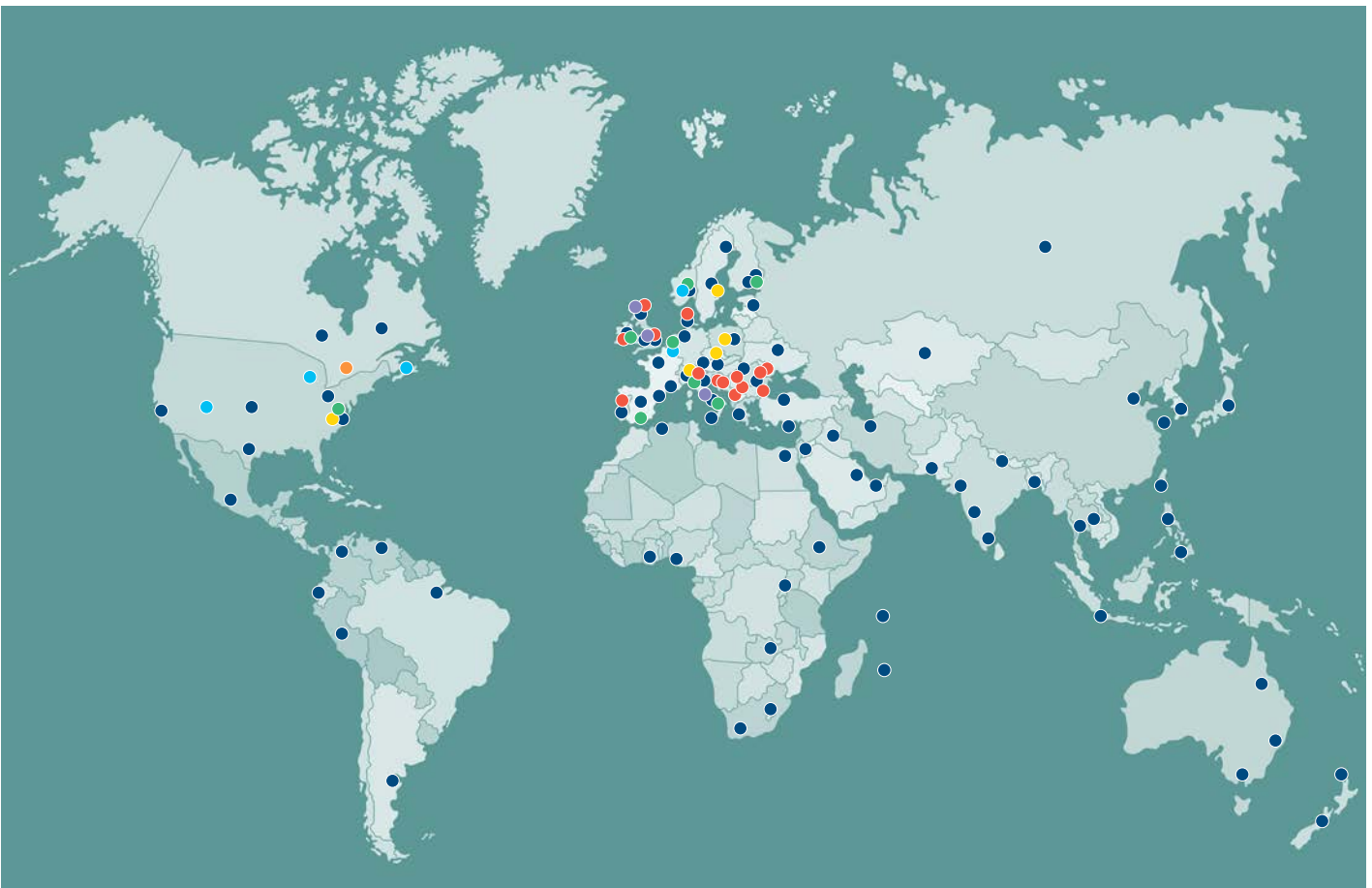
This year also saw members of CASCADE having high levels of media involvement. We were particularly pleased that Rachael Vaughan, Jonathan Scourfield and Sally Holland were all able to give press interviews in Welsh.



## Our international reach

This year we have continued to grow our international reach. We have been invited to collaborate in an exciting new programme of work in Denmark with University College Copenhagen and to partner with universities in Norway, Poland and Italy. We have also been visited by international collaborators from the Universities of Malmo and Bergamo and have had academics visit universities in Chicago, Copenhagen, Milan, Stockholm and Rome.

Our dissemination work has also been international: The care experienced parents' conference series attracted a wide international reach of both speakers and audience, with people attending from the UK, South Africa, Australia, Sri Lanka, Ireland, America, Kenya, Canada, Italy, Israel, India and Norway. We have subscribers to our fortnightly email newsletter from all over the world and our website has been visited by people from 111 countries.



### KEY

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <span style="color: purple;">●</span> Network   | <span style="color: cyan;">●</span> Collaboration      | <span style="color: yellow;">●</span> Presentation   |
| <span style="color: red;">●</span> Publication  | <span style="color: orange;">●</span> Research Project | <span style="color: darkblue;">●</span> Online Reach |
| <span style="color: green;">●</span> Conference |  |  |





## Two CASCADE researchers named amongst the top 100 global social work journal contributors

CASCADE academics, Jonathan Scourfield and Sally Holland, have been named in the top 100 most influential social work academics in the journal *Research on Social Work Practice*. The article identified the most internationally impactful contributors to social work journal scholarship. In this analysis, Cardiff University ranks within the top 20 institutions globally and is one of only two UK universities to feature more than one academic in the top 100.

*“CASCADE is one of the leading Centres for social work research in Europe – and we are delighted to be working with them to develop an exciting programme of work in Denmark”*

**Charlotte Bredahl Jacobsen**

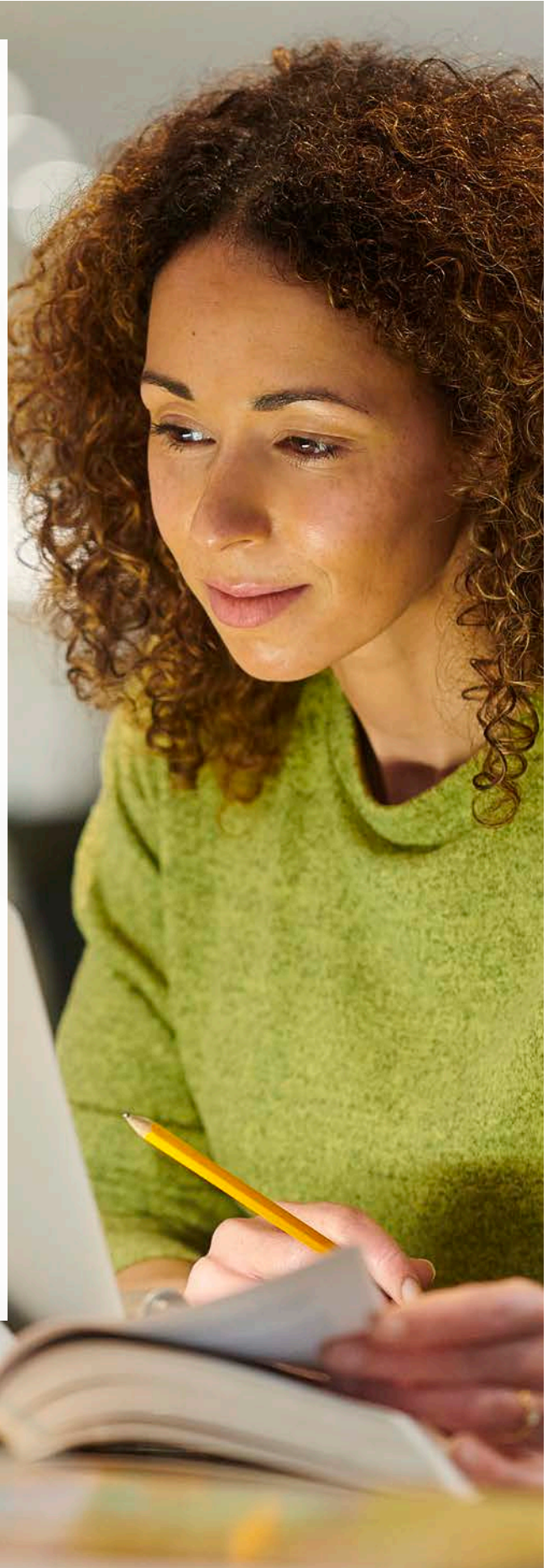
*Head of research and development,  
Copenhagen University of Applied  
Sciences*

## 4. Research

In this section we spotlight some of our work that looks “Beyond Children’s Social Care” – research that focuses on how social workers or others interact with other agencies or what happens after children’s social care involvement. This includes important work being developed on the interface between children’s social care and criminal justice, schools and after care services. We are also delighted this year to have been successful in a bid to set up a new sister Centre focused on Adult Social Care – the CARE Centre. This illustrates that to understand and improve children’s social care we need to do research beyond it, building the transdisciplinary and interprofessional collaborations needed to do such work.

### Beyond Children’s Social Care

- Crime and Youth Justice
- Schools and Education
- Leaving children’s social care
- Adult Social Care





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## Crime and youth justice

There have always been close links between children's social care and youth justice services. Many young people and their families are known to both services, sometimes in complicated ways. Several of our studies explore elements of this interface. Nina Maxwell and colleagues in our Youth, Risk and Society group lead a programme of work in this area within CASCADE. This includes research focused on youth offending, children who are exploited and those whose mothers are in prison. Here we highlight four studies within this programme of work that explores how CSC interacts with the criminal justice system.

### Developing a Tool-Kit for Responding to Child Criminal Exploitation

Children's social care has tended to focus on risks to children within their homes, how families can be worked with and for some children providing alternative care. Yet children are also subject to harm outside the family home, in the communities where they live. This includes child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation and youth violence, where children can be victims, perpetrators or witnesses.

Research led by Nina Maxwell on child criminal exploitation has added insight into how children are criminally exploited in Wales and what approaches enhance the identification, prevention and safe exits away from exploitative relationships. This work led to the co-production of a toolkit of resources for children, parents and professionals, including a Youth Charter, Practitioner Toolkit and our Complex Safeguarding Wales website ([ComplexSafeguardingWales.org](https://ComplexSafeguardingWales.org)).





## Serious Organised Crime Early Intervention Service

A particular feature of CASCADE's work is to support and evaluate new ways of helping children and families. The Action for Children's Serious Organised Crime Early Intervention Service (SOCEIS) is an innovative intervention for young people aged 11 to 18 years. It is aimed at identifying young people involved in, or at risk of involvement in serious organised crime, addressing the vulnerabilities that led to their involvement, and diverting them towards more positive pathways.

Following its success in Glasgow, Action for Children was awarded funding from the National Lottery Community to implement SOCEIS in four new areas: Cardiff, Dundee, Edinburgh and Newcastle. CASCADE was commissioned to undertake a process evaluation that examined the wider feasibility and applicability of the service for potential roll out to other areas in the UK. The evaluation included four sites in three nations and captured case file data from 213 young people and semi-structured interviews with 11 young people, 18 caregivers, 18 service staff and 19 partner organisations.

Findings showed that the Serious Organised Crime Early Intervention Service had established itself as a specialist service for young people involved in serious organised crime or affected by exploitation. Young people were given a safe space to reflect on their lives and consider their existing relationships and the potential consequences of remaining on those negative pathways. Unlike time-limited interventions, SOCEIS were able to stay with young people and deliver intensive, tailored support at the young person's pace, which was cognisant of their developmental needs rather than age-based provision. Engagement with SOCEIS led to outcomes such as fostering the involvement of young people who had not engaged with other services and improvements to confidence, self-awareness, attitudes and behaviour. It also led to other outcomes with SOCEIS facilitating the re-engagement of young people into education and supporting others to obtain qualifications, outside formal education.

*Dr Nina Maxwell*





## Together a Chance

There is no women's prison in Wales. This means Welsh women in prison are placed a long way from their homes and their families, making it difficult for children to travel to see their mothers. When mothers go to prison children go to live with family members, often in a different locality, or are placed in foster care.

Women in prison are very likely to have experienced childhood maltreatment and / or domestic abuse in adulthood, to have mental health issues, be separated from children for the first time, and almost half will have previously attempted suicide. When women are incarcerated, they often lose their homes and then on release cannot have their children back to live with them because they do not have accommodation. Following his review of women convicted of crime, Farmer (2019) recommended the presence of Social Workers in all women's prisons.

We are undertaking a three year evaluation of a scheme placing a Social Worker in two women's prisons to support mothers. The project is run by PACT (Prison Advice and Care Trust ) and funded by the Sylvia Adams Trust and aims to support mothers' involvement with their children, retain their foothold in decision making, support children visiting their mothers, and help plan for their release.

We have written the first interim report and are in the process of writing the second. We have found that mothers, social care professionals and prison staff all find the role of the prison based Social Worker to be invaluable. They are acting as a conduit between mothers and Social Workers in the community, between mothers and the courts, and between mothers and their families. They are helping to ensure that mothers' rights are recognised, and improving their relationships and contact with their children.

*Professor Alyson Rees*

## Schools and education

Schools and other educational settings are important settings for children and young people – and they have been a focus for several of our studies. Dr Phil Smith’s work on Pupil Referral Units explores what happens to young people after they leave PRUs. David Westlake and team have just completed what we believe is the largest ever trial in Children’s Social Care – looking at what difference having social workers in schools makes in a study that involved 280,000 children. It also includes research looking at children from care’s experiences of university, as focused on in the section on “After Care” studies.

### Leaving a pupil referral unit: Exploring the transitions and post-16 destinations of care experienced young people across Wales

The aim of this project is to understand how the transitions of care experienced young people who attend pupil referral units (PRUs) can be improved so that their post-16 destinations become more sustainable. It is known that the likelihood of not being in education, employment or training at 16 increases dramatically for those in PRUs, yet few studies have worked with PRU leavers to explore this period of transition. The study will also explore the school exclusion context in Wales for care experienced young people and the impact that school exclusion can have on the post-16 transitions and lives of those with experience of care.

The research is divided into two main stages. Stage One seeks to understand the factors associated with school exclusion, care experience and good PRU transition practices. A rapid review of the literature is being conducted, along with interviews with staff in mainstream schools. Work is also being carried out with the Secure Anonymised Information Linkage (SAIL) Databank team at Swansea University. This part of the study links and analyses administrative datasets, to provide an overview of exclusion rates in Wales for those with experience of care.

It will also highlight how many of these learners attended a PRU and then move into further education.

Stage two focuses on transition processes and the lived experiences of young people currently in transition. Young people are being interviewed about their experiences of education and their plans for the future. Follow-up interviews will also be carried out once they have moved into a new destination, and again, 12 months later. Interviews with professionals who support them during this time are also being conducted.

This research is already providing valuable insights into the transitions of care experienced young people who have struggled with their education, and their post-16 destinations. It will also outline the kind of professional support that exists in Wales for these learners, highlighting best practices and recommendations for future policy.

*Dr Phil Smith*



## The SWIS trial: Main results published April 2023

The ‘Social Workers in Schools’ (SWIS) trial is the largest Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) ever undertaken in Children’s Social Care in the UK. It involved 280,000 students, in 291 schools, across 21 local authorities in England and ran for two academic years, between 2020 and 2023. The intervention involved basing social workers within schools to do statutory social work, and the Department for Education, who funded the initiative, hoped that this would reduce the need for other social work services.

The trial follows three pilot studies that were undertaken by CASCADE in 2018-2020, which found some indicative evidence that SWIS could reduce rates of child protection and child in need interventions. The trial was therefore designed to test this more rigorously, along with exploring what impact it had on other outcomes such as whether it reduced the need for care or improved educational outcomes. The recent report looked at the main outcomes in relation to Children’s Social Care, and the educational outcomes will be examined in a further report which is due out early next year.

The main finding was that SWIS did not have any impact on the intended outcomes it was designed to change, and there were no statistically significant differences between groups for child in need, child protection or care outcomes.

We also concluded, through an economic analysis, that it was not cost effective. Many interventions fail to achieve the goals they set because of implementation problems, but that is not the case here. We found that SWIS was implemented relatively well across the schools involved, taking account of how different they are and some variations between schools and local authorities in how SWIS was delivered.

We found lots of evidence of positive experiences among students, school staff and social workers. They pointed to various benefits and suggested SWIS was a valuable intervention, even though it may not affect the outcomes the Department for Education hoped it would. Most notably, being based in schools gave them new opportunities to work directly with students and school staff, and to do a wider range of ‘preventative’ work that they would usually not have capacity to do.

The study has already had a major impact on policy, as the Department for Education has decided not to continue to fund or expand the programme. The study shows how research studies – even when they do not generate positive findings – can play an important role in shaping evidence based policy.

*David Westlake*



## Leaving children's social care

We are interested in what happens to children after the involvement of children's social care. In fact, for children in care legal responsibilities extend well into their 20s – but for all children we can find out more about what is helpful by understanding what happens next.

### CLASS Cymru: Developing a website around care experience and university

Following on from a three-year HCRW Fellowship based on understanding university interventions in Wales that aim to support care-experienced young people, CASCADE's Hannah Bayfield gained funding to put some of the project findings into practice. The **CLASS Cymru** website builds on the finding that both care-experienced young people and those who support them were unsure of where to find information about university that was both specific to their experience and relevant to Wales (as well as being bilingual).

The original project highlighted the lack of clear signposting online when exploring the possibilities of higher education, and a desire to have somewhere reliable to source information and advice. This, and the appetite for working together across Wales to make this information more accessible, led to a partnership working with CLASS Cymru network (Care Leavers and Student Support in Wales), researchers and care-experienced young people to develop a website focused on signposting and providing information, advice and guidance on higher education for care-experienced people in Wales and those who support them.

Launched in November 2022, the CLASS Cymru website brings together advice for care-experienced people, teachers, foster carers, and college and university staff.

It follows the transition to Higher Education from first thoughts about applying, through to the application process and the experience of studying at university, to what happens at and after graduation. Developed in collaboration with both care-experienced students and practitioners in universities and colleges, the site utilises the design skills of Frank Duffy (and their web development colleague Gwyn Fisher) to make the information that care-experienced people need informative, accessible and specific.

Since the site launched, over 2400 information sheets have been downloaded, and the website has been viewed over 4000 times by over 1000 different users, covering 16 of Wales' 22 Local Authorities as well as visitors from around Europe and further afield.

*Dr Hannah Bayfield*



## Mental health and transitions for care-experienced young people

ReThink is a major study of transitions and their impact on the mental health of young people in care led by Professor Lisa Holmes (University of Sussex) and Dr Rachel Hiller (University College London) with Professor Katherine Shelton of the CASCADE Partnership leading substantial elements of the work.

# ReThink.



### About the research

Compared to other young people, those who have been in care are five times more likely to have a mental health disorder, including anxiety, depression, posttraumatic stress disorder or behaviour problems. However, while many care-experienced young people struggle with poor mental health, some do not, even with similar early life experiences. We know little about why that is. The ReThink project team are using a 4-year, mixed-methods, longitudinal research design to address this question.

The project is looking at what psychological, social and structural processes are linked to the mental health and wellbeing of young people in care and specifically how young people manage at two key periods, or 'transitions': moving from primary into secondary education and moving into adulthood. We hope to understand what processes are important for mental health, and what they mean for care-experienced young people's wellbeing (like how they find school or work, or their general happiness).

We hope that this research will ultimately be able to help social workers, teachers, and mental health workers better identify those who might need help, and design better support programmes. With more effective support we hope to enable care-experienced young people across Wales and England to enhance their life chances and reach their full potential.

*Professor Katherine Shelton*



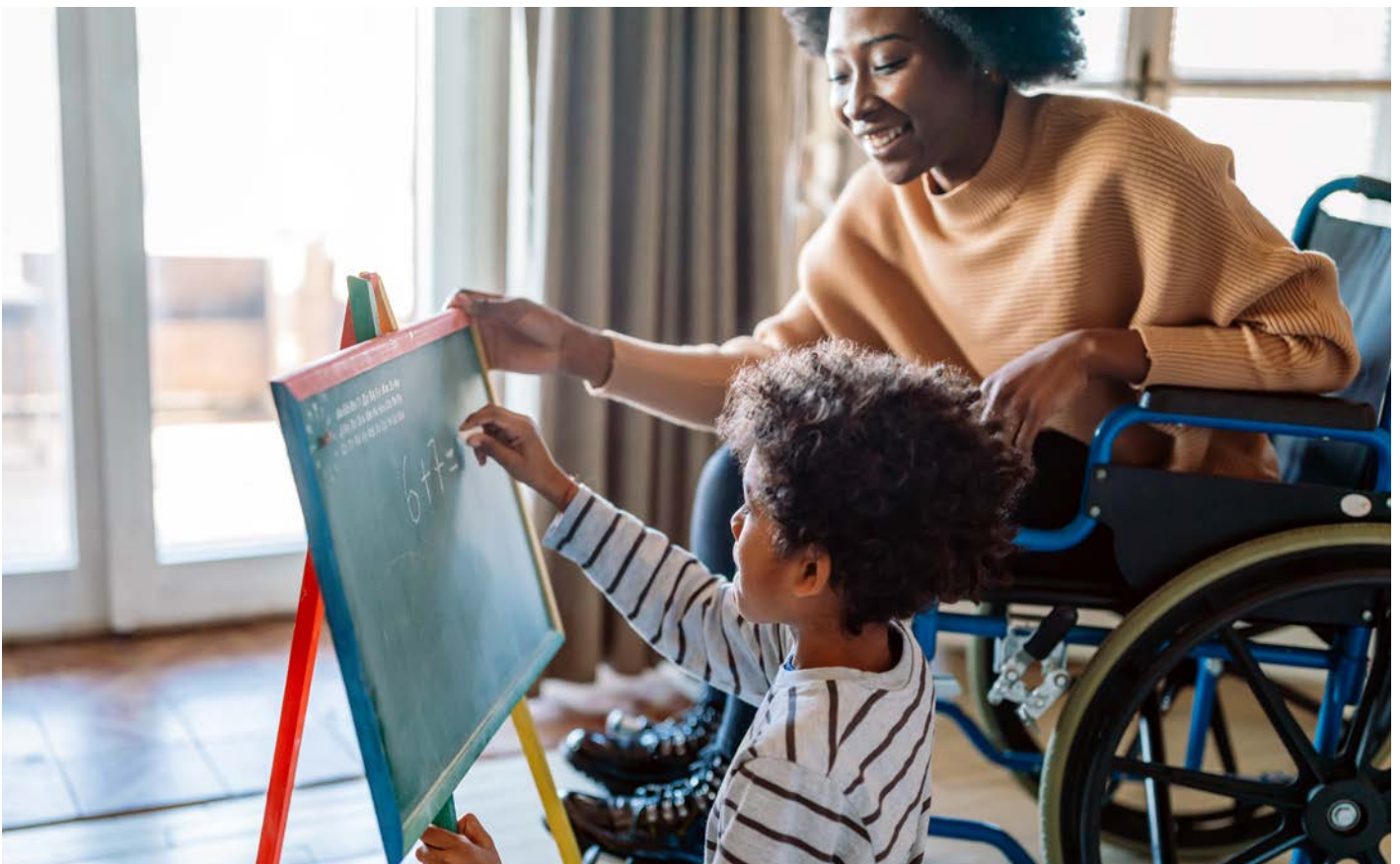
## Adult social care

We are delighted that this year we were able to support Jonathan Scourfield's successful bid to set up a new Centre for Adult social care (CARE). Modelled on CASCADE, CARE will bring together researchers from across the university and beyond to develop excellence in adult social care. This includes recruiting a leading academic as a Director and a team to work with them in building CARE into a powerhouse for research around adult social care.

For CASCADE this is an exciting development. Our work focuses on children but, of course, children live in families with adults, and children go on to become adults. So adult social care is of direct relevance to CASCADE. There are therefore many opportunities for us to develop work together, for instance looking at the impact on children of adult social care issues or examining the support needs of care leavers as they move into adulthood.

There are also organic links between the two Centres. In Wales key social care legislation applies to children and adults, and social work, including professional qualification, covers both areas. CARE and CASCADE will therefore work together to deliver the ExChange network, with CARE enhancing our ability to engage the adult social care sector. We are also developing our public involvement work across both Centres, with an enhanced and expanded team able to build the involvement of adults and children across our work.

We are excited about CARE, and looking forward to building expertise and excellence in social care research for Wales.



# 5. Public involvement, engagement and dissemination

## Public involvement

CASCADE's public involvement team have had a very busy and exciting year. The number of new research projects at CASCADE has meant working in a wide variety of ways and an increase in the range of people with lived experience that have been involved in our work. This year, in partnership with the CASCADE Involvement Board (our strategic board of experts by experience) the team have launched a newsletter, refreshed our development plan and expanded our team.

*"I really enjoy working with cascade it's great being a volunteer and being able to see work from the boardroom to in person. I've learned a lot about how organisations work and that our views really do count."*

Involvement board member

## Public involvement structure

### Core groups

#### Public Involvement Board

The Board consists of members drawn from our involvement groups and the wider sector. They help direct our research and involvement strategy, hold us accountable and provide governance to the research centre.

#### CASCADE Voices

A Partnership with Voices From Care Cymru. Young People with lived experience of Social Care.

#### Parents Research Advisory Group

Parents with lived experience of Social Services interventions

### Project work

#### Family Voice Project

- Peer Researchers
- Families Advisory group
- Co-production session with families

#### Supporting parents in and leaving care

- Co-producing a best practice charter and key messages with care experienced parents

#### Youth justice / criminal exploitation

- Co-produced Youth Charter and videos on CCE with young people.

## Work With Partner Groups

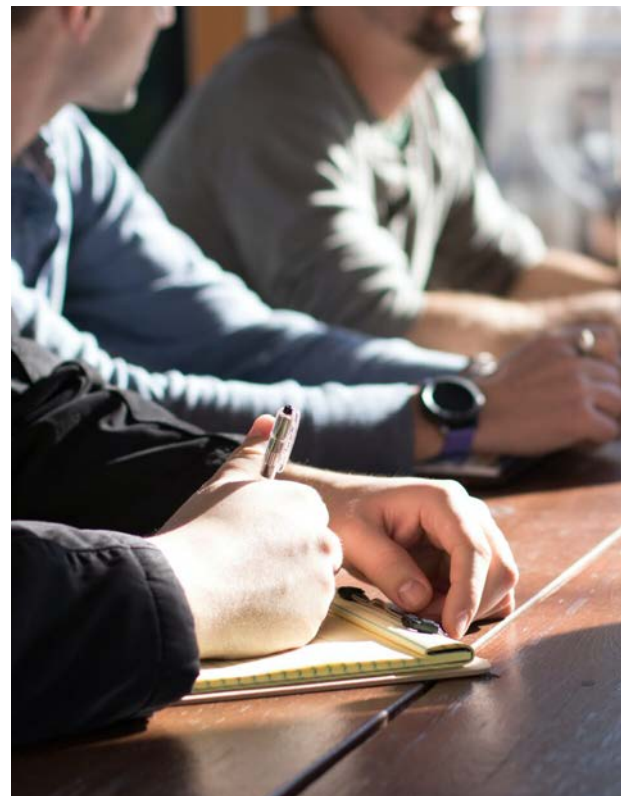
## Public Involvement Participants



- CASCADE Involvement Board** 5 participants
- CASCADE Voices** 21 participants
- CASCADE Parent's research advisory group** 40 participants
- Research opportunities** 221

## CASCADE Parents Research Advisory Group

With support from our CASCADE Involvement Board, the CASCADE Parents' Research Advisory Group was established in December 2020. All members of the group have lived experience of children's social care as parents. We provide remuneration for their time and cover expenses in line with public involvement standards. Members of the group were able to meet socially for the first time at a picnic this summer, organized by CASCADE, as a small token of appreciation for all their hard work and expertise.



## Research Opportunities

There are wider public involvement opportunities outside of our three key groups supported by our Public Involvement team that are project specific. These have increase this reporting year due to CASCADE's continued success in grant capture and commitment to public involvement in research.



## CASCADE Voices

The established collaboration between Voices from Care Cymru and CASCADE, a group of care-experienced young people who advise on research projects from design to dissemination. Training in research methods and group facilitation are provided by CASCADE. Currently meeting approximately 6 times a year, in person.



# Engagement and dissemination

## ExChange

ExChange is the all-Wales network for social care research engagement. It covers adult and child social care. The goal is to disseminate and to engage social care practitioners, experts by experience, academics and policy makers with research. ExChange as its name suggests is about bi-directional knowledge transfer, teaching and learning.

ExChange delivers a range of training and resources through our conference series. Each conference series includes a variety of lectures, workshops, podcasts, blogs, films and art works. We also host a range of resources and materials on each of the conference topics. In order to ensure that the topics we cover are of importance to the sector, we have developed an Adult Social Care Advisory Group to provide insight and direction to steer our content provision.

Over the past year we have run conference series on (i) domestic violence (ii) adult residential care entitled 'Home comforts: getting it right for adults in residential care' (iii) care experienced parents entitled 'It takes a village: global perspectives on care experienced parents', and one on (iv) adoption, called 'Reframing Adoption' opened by Suzanne Griffiths, the director of the National Adoption Service for Wales, which included artwork by young people who have been adopted.

In addition to the conference series' we have run a series of practitioner workshops on anti-racist practice, both on-line and in person in Cardiff and Bangor.

We have also done one off interviews with celebrities, for example, talking to Lemn Sissay during his visit to Cardiff about his experience of being in care.



*"ExChange is an extremely valuable and reliable source of social care Wales focused information, not available elsewhere. In addition, their work is publicly available both in written reports and webinars/ seminars, etc. The work is evidenced with the voice of service users. The end products are of value to practitioners and managers."*

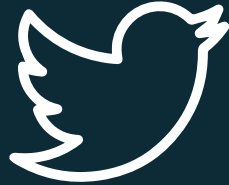
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### Media highlights



Webpage views

**71k**



New followers

**404**



Videos watched

**8313**



Exchange network

**1762**

### Engagement activities



- Webinars** 3883 people engaged
- Blogs** 1155 people engaged
- Podcast** 960 people engaged
- Resources** 590 people engaged
- Masterclass** 44 people engaged





## 6. Conclusion

I hope that this Report provides an indication of the achievements of the Partnership during 2022-2023. These include substantial grant capture, completing studies that are making a demonstrable positive difference to children and families across Wales and beyond, engaging professionals in Wales and the UK, and increasing international recognition of our work. The CASCADE Partnership is now recognised as combining international excellence with real world influence.

There are also reasons to be excited about the year ahead. We look forward to supporting the launch of the CARE Centre and working together to enhance social care research and practice for Wales. This has the potential to provide a substantially enhanced offer for research engagement and to increase both our public involvement work and our research programmes.

Reports always lag slightly behind events, which means I am able to anticipate with a high level of confidence that next year will see some more important grants. We have also substantially increased our involvement in international work, and I anticipate reporting on exciting and ambitious programmes of work beyond Wales for next year. The next few years will see the CASCADE Partnership going global, while retaining our focus on making things better in Wales.

Not everything is plain sailing. All research Centres struggle with the precarity of employment for both researchers and professional services staff, who tend to be employed to the end of specific grants – even when Centres have a track record of sustained grant capture. We are working hard to address these issues, and hope to make progress toward more certainty and stability for more of our workforce. In this regard the flexibility of infrastructure funding provided by HCRW has been invaluable in allowing us to keep good people.

The success of the Partnership has been achieved by the commitment, expertise and hard work of everyone involved. As Director I find myself in the enviable position of being able to cheer on and support a highly motivated and incredibly skilled group of people. It is a privilege to share some of the achievements of an extraordinary team who are dedicated to helping children and families in Wales and around the world.

**Professor Donald Forrester**  
Director, CASCADE Partnership