



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



UNLOCKING THE FACTS:
**YOUNG PEOPLE REFERRED
TO SECURE CHILDREN'S
HOMES**
TECHNICAL REPORT

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What Works for Children's Social Care

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About What Works for Children's Social Care

What Works for Children's Social Care seeks better outcomes for children, young people and families by bringing the best available evidence to practitioners and other decision makers across the children's social care sector. We generate, collate and make accessible the best evidence for practitioners, policy makers and practice leaders to improve children's social care and the outcomes it generates for children and families.

About CASCADE

CASCADE is concerned with all aspects of community responses to social need in children and families, including family support services, children in need services, child protection, looked after children and adoption. It is the only centre of its kind in Wales and has strong links with policy and practice. CASCADE's aim is to improve the well-being, safety and rights of children and their families.

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Across the United Kingdom 22 Secure Children's Homes (SCHs) are licensed to deprive the young people referred to their care by court of their liberty. Some young people are placed in SCHs on remand or on being sentenced by the justice system, others enter for welfare reasons due to concerns that they are at serious risk themselves or are a serious risk to others.

While the numbers of young people referred to SCHs remain low, the current system lacks the capacity to provide a bed for all young people referred for welfare reasons. On such occasion local authorities are required to find a safe residence to meet the young person's needs and keep them safe. This is commonly called an alternative accommodation.

This study is concerned with the pathways of young people who receive a secure order for welfare reasons: their experiences and care histories before the order, at the time of referral to a secure accommodation, and their experiences and outcomes afterwards. Within this, the study sought to explore similarities and differences between the journeys and outcomes of those young people placed in SCHs and those for whom a place cannot be found and are housed in an alternative accommodation. Specifically, the study is interested in

1. Young people's life and care histories in the three years prior to referral to secure accommodation
2. Detail of the placement in a SCH or alternative accommodation
3. Care, substance misuse, conviction, and mental health outcomes in the year after referral to secure accommodation

4. The comparative costs of SCH and alternative placements

Study design

The study is an analysis of routinely collected data sets that contain information about the contact with the care system and referral to a secure accommodation of the young people from England placed in a SCH or alternative accommodation for welfare reasons between October 1st 2016 - March 31st 2018. The data sources consist of

- Children in Need returns
- Children Looked After returns
- Records of referral to and subsequent use of SCHs or alternative accommodation held by the Secure Welfare Coordination Unit (SWCU)

Drawing on these data sets a series of statistical analyses was undertaken to identify similarities and differences between those placed in SCHs after a secure accommodation referral and those placed in alternative accommodation. Further detail was explored through thematic analysis of free text where available.

Findings

527 young people (262 female, 265 male) from England were referred to secure accommodation during the study time frame. The young people's ages ranged from 10 -17, and while most were 14-16 years of age, 19 were aged 10 -12. Approximately two thirds of the young people were white (67.2%). 15.2% were from mixed/multiple ethnic groups, 11.8% were Black/African/Caribbean/Black British, 4.0% were Asian/Asian British.



On receiving a secure order 319 young people were placed in a SCH and 208 in an alternative accommodation.

Life and care histories prior to the referral to secure accommodation

Quantitative and qualitative analysis confirmed the known high levels of abuse, neglect, bereavement, lack of engagement in education and being a victim of crime.

All young people for whom the requisite data existed were a 'child in need' at some time in the three years before referral to secure accommodation. Nearly all of these were still a child in need at the point of referral to secure accommodation. No differences between young people sent to SCH or alternative accommodation in terms of having a Child in Need plan at the time of referral were found. Over the three years prior to secure accommodation referral over a third of these young people were subject to a Child Protection Plan, with again little difference between the two groups found.

While a small proportion of the young people who had been a 'child in need' were not looked after during the three years before the secure accommodation referral, the vast majority were. Of these three fifths were subsequently placed in a SCH and two fifths in alternative accommodation. Few differences in the length, number or episodes of care were found. Overall, the most common placements in the three years before the secure referral were children's homes and foster care.

Immediately prior to referral, children's homes and foster placements were again the most common placements although semi-independent living accommodations were also commonly used. More young people who were in children's homes were placed in SCHs, as opposed to alternative accommodation. There were no further large differences.

Secure Accommodation Referral

Overall, less than a fifth of the young people received a secure order because they were seen as a danger to others, two of every five because they were perceived as a danger to themselves, and nearly half due to a risk of going missing.

When multiple risk factors for each young person were recorded, the study sample was linked to 2 – 11 risks at referral. When multiple risk factors were recorded, nearly all young people had a history of absconding, with approximately four fifths associated with aggressive or violent behaviour, substance misuse, and previous offending behaviour. About a half of all young people had been victims of sexual exploitation, at risk of self-harm, or had a diagnosed or suspected mental health condition.





Between groups differences were found:

- Challenging behaviours were higher in young people placed in alternative accommodation when compared to those placed in SCHs.
- More than four out of five of the young people placed in alternative accommodation had previous offending behaviour reported, compared to just under three quarters of those placed in SCHs.
- Just under a third of young people placed in alternative accommodation were known to have been linked with a gang, compared to one in four of those in SCHs.
- Nearly a fifth of young people placed in alternative accommodation had shown sexually harming behaviours compared to 13.2% of those in SCHs.
- Two thirds of young people placed in SCHs were victims of sexual exploitation compared to under half of those placed in alternative accommodation

The time taken either for a SCH or alternative accommodation placement ranged from the day of the order to over four months, with on average four attempts made to find a placement at a SCH. Finding a place tended to take three applications for those placed in a SCH, with six unsuccessful attempts the average for those subsequently placed in alternative accommodation. While many reasons for placement refusal were common between the two groups, refusals for young people later placed in alternative accommodation were more likely to include the young person's aggression.

Young people placed in an alternative accommodation were sent to a variety of settings. Nearly half for whom the data was available were placed in a children's residential home, and a tenth in a Young Offenders Institution. Fewer numbers were split between an independent living, foster care, a mental health hospital or with parents. Further information of the nature of alternative accommodations was unavailable.

The likelihood of being placed in a SCH after a referral to secure accommodation increased significantly for girls and for young people who had been in a SCH within the last three years. The odds of being refused a place increased with age and having a history of challenging behaviours prior to referral. There was further suggestion that having been placed in a youth offending institute in the three years prior to referral to secure accommodation was associated with being placed in alternative accommodation although numbers were small so should be interpreted with caution.

Outcomes after secure accommodation referral

The most common placement for all immediately after a SCH or alternative accommodation was a children's home subject to children's homes regulations, followed by independent living and semi-independent living. Placement in children's homes happened for approximately two fifths of young people placed in SCH, compared to roughly one in seven of those in alternative accommodation. More young people who had been in alternative accommodation were placed in a SCH or a Young Offenders Institute. Over a longer period of time (the year after referral to secure accommodation) the most common placement was again a children's home subject to children's home regulations. The number of young people who had been in a SCH placed in children's homes was still higher than those placed in alternative accommodation. Moreover, young people who had been placed in an alternative accommodation were twice as likely to go to a youth offending institute, prison or a SCH at some point in this year.

Substance misuse, convictions and mental health status were also explored. Nearly half of the young people referred to secure accommodation had a recorded substance misuse problem before the referral to secure accommodation with use higher among those placed in SCHs. While substance use for both groups decreased in the year after the referral to secure accommodation, the difference between groups persisted.



Just over half of the young people referred to secure accommodation had a recorded conviction within the study period. More with this record were placed in alternative accommodation when compared to those placed in a SCH. Again, more young people had a conviction at the end of the year they were referred than in the years before and after referral. While the patterns of conviction were similar for both groups, young people placed in alternative accommodation had the highest proportions of convictions in each year.

During the year of referral, the average mental health scores across the sample was a cause for concern. While this score dropped slightly in the year after referral those placed in alternative accommodation had a slightly higher score than those placed in a SCH. Exploration of individual scores showed that just over a half of young people's score worsened over time, nearly two fifths improved, and the remainder stayed the same. High levels of missing data makes interpretation of these figures difficult.

The average annual cost for those placed in SCH was £190,776.9 compared to £110,512.6 for those in alternative accommodation. The average cost per day for alternative accommodation was £310 compared to £1008 for a SCH placement for welfare reasons.

Discussion and Conclusion

Young people's chaotic backgrounds, experiences of bereavement and the unstable placement pathways experienced on entering care reinforces established knowledge. Factors such as the gender and age profiles of the whole sample largely fit with that recorded in other parts of the UK.

Overall, while the number of young people from England referred to secure accommodation remains low, the finding that two of every five young people who receive a secure order for welfare reasons cannot be found a place in a SCH is of deep concern. Similar anxiety arises from the lack of knowledge of the nature of the care

given to those young people placed in alternative accommodation or of how well that given meets the specific needs of each child.

The study suggests that those young people placed in alternative accommodation are likely to be older males with a history of challenging behaviours. This goes some way towards explaining why young people refused a place in a SCH are more likely to be perceived a risk to others when compared to those placed in a SCH and thus be harder to place.

The lack of knowledge of what alternative accommodation is affects interpretation of the economic analysis of the comparative costs of SCH and alternative accommodation. While the analysis found that SCHs were significantly more expensive than alternative accommodation, the calculations were based on assumptions that alternative accommodations were standard care placements, an assumption challenged by the sparse knowledge that exists in this area. This situation calls for further exploration of this area.

Few differences in outcomes could be found in the total study sample or the two study groups. The main difference was seen in care settings. The lower numbers of young people from the alternative accommodation group placed in children homes suggests that their life and care history continued to form a barrier to care placements after the referral. Furthermore, the numbers of young people re-referred to secure accommodation in the year after the first referral asks questions of the care given in and after the SCH or alternative accommodations. This is particularly true of young people placed in alternative accommodation as higher numbers went to youth offending institutes, prisons, and SCHs in the year after referral.

The study supports a number of recommendations:

- Some of the most vulnerable young people in society are referred to secure accommodation, but the study evidenced little improvement in outcomes. This demands some revision of policy and practice related to the care offered



in secure welfare settings and that provided afterwards

- Study analysis of outcomes was limited to the available measures within local authority records. Further data linkage with justice, health and education databases would extend knowledge in this area considerably
- The study suggested that more of the young people placed in alternative accommodation were perceived as a risk to society, rather than a victim of life circumstances. The lack of knowledge of what alternative

accommodation is demands further exploration to discover what is provided, whether it is appropriate and if it can be viewed as a real alternative to a SCH. As well as obtaining clearer knowledge of what alternative accommodation is, the research would allow a more realistic comparison of the comparative costs of these forms of secure placements.

- With little knowledge of the process of and barriers to a SCH placement, further analysis of the SWCU data is warranted.





2 INTRODUCTION

The problem

The 22 Secure Children's Homes (SCH) existing across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are residential homes subject to legislation (The Children Act, 1989; The Children (Northern Ireland) Act, 1995; Secure Accommodation (Scotland) Regulations 2013; Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014) that allows them to restrict the liberty of young people aged 10-17 believed to be a risk to themselves or a risk to others (Goldson, 2002; Hart & La Valle, 2016; Warner et al; 2018). Young people in secure accommodation can be placed in a SCH through two routes: on remand or after being sentenced by the legal system; through local authority concerns that the welfare services cannot keep the young person safe in the community or that the young person poses a serious risk to others. To place a young person in a SCH for welfare reasons, a Local Authority must apply to court for a secure order. If the young person is under thirteen a senior government official must also give approval. While the number of young people placed in a SCH by the Youth Custody Service has fallen over the last decade, the percentage placed by welfare services has increased from 32% in 2009 (DfE, 2010) to around a half (48%, 2020; 56%, 2019) in recent years (DfE, 2020). This, together with the fact that some young people subject to a secure order for welfare reasons cannot be found a place in a SCH and so are placed in an alternative accommodation and the lack of knowledge of young people's outcomes after either types of accommodation, raises questions of whether a secure order and subsequent accommodation best meet the needs of the young people.

The background

Evidence indicates that most young people who receive secure orders are seriously affected by abuse and neglect in their early lives (e.g. Walker et al, 2005; Rose, 2014; Hart & La Valle, 2016; Williams et al, 2019; Miller 2019). While not all secure order applications are made for young people already in the care system, the vast majority are. These young people tend to enter care late with a range of risky behaviours such as absconding or going missing, self-harm, aggression, associations with dangerous adults, and mental health, emotional or developmental problems or disorders (Ellis, 2015; Hart & La Valle, 2016). On care entry the inability of placements to sufficiently meet the complex emotional and behavioural needs of this small but vulnerable group of young people (Williams, et al 2019) leads to an application for a secure order. If successful, the order should lead to a period of time in a SCH. SCHs across England and Wales UK vary in their intake with some only caring for welfare or justice cases while others provide both types of placements. If a place is not found or offered by a SCH, young people are placed in an alternative accommodation that has to be sourced and provided by their local authority (Walker et al, 2005; Hart & La Valle, 2016). While there is no definition of an alternative accommodation, the existence of a secure order implies that it is somewhere that deprives the young person of liberty and keeps them safe. The difficulties this may pose are often complicated by the residence having to be provided with little or no notice (Williams et al, 2019). Moreover, while the placements found may be described as 'quasi-secure' homes, this is not a legal category and the court process through which it was provided does not provide any assurance of the type or suitability of the accommodation (Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2019).



While a small body of knowledge of the experiences of young people from across the UK referred to SCHs exists (e.g. O'Neill, 2001; Browne, 2009, Ellis, 2012; Hart & La Valle, 2016, Williams et al, 2019, Miller et al, 2019) there is little knowledge of the outcomes of the young people after being placed in SCHs, and less of progress after an alternative accommodation or the financial costs of both residences. Moreover, the majority of information that does exist is based on young people from outside of England (Walker et al, 2005; Kendrick et al, 2008; Ellis, 2012, Williams et al, 2019) with recent comment on the lack of knowledge of the 'profile, experiences or outcomes of children from England who have been placed in an SCH' (Hart & La Valle, 2016).

The rationale for the study

The practice of placing some of the young people who receive a secure order in a SCH and others in an alternative accommodation, gives two groups of young people referred by a court order to a secure accommodation. This gives opportunity to compare the experiences and outcomes of the two groups through analysis of routine information stored in three data bases:

- Children in Need (CiN) returns
- Children Looked After (CLA) returns
- Records of referral to and subsequent use of secure or alternative accommodation collected from Local Authorities by the Secure Welfare Coordination Unit (SWCU) and owned by the Department of Education.

Analysis of these data sets promises to generate new information of the backgrounds, care histories and outcomes of young people from England before, during and after referral to secure accommodation. The process would also allow exploration of similarities and differences between the young people placed in SCHs and alternative accommodations.

The project set out to answer the following questions:

1. What are the life and care histories of young people before a court referral to secure accommodation and how did this vary across young people placed in SCHs and alternative accommodations?
2. What are the care outcomes for young people in the 12 months from time of court referral to secure accommodation and how did they vary across young people placed in SCHs and an alternative accommodation?
3. What are the conviction, substance misuse and mental health outcomes of young people in the 12 months after court referral to secure accommodation and how did they vary across young people placed in SCHs and an alternative accommodation?
4. What is the cost of a stay in SCH and how does this compare to that in an alternative accommodation?





3 METHODS

The routinely collected national data sets in England cited in the introduction were used to examine what happens to young people before, at and after secure accommodation referrals for welfare reasons. The study did not set out to explore similar in young people referred to a secure accommodation through the justice system.

A series of comparative analyses were undertaken to identify differences between those placed in SCHs after a referral and those who were unable to be placed for various reasons and instead placed in alternative accommodation. Further detail was explored through thematic analysis of free text where available.

Findings have been split into four sections:

1. Young people's life and care histories in the three years prior to referral to secure accommodation
2. Detail of the placement in a SCH or alternative accommodation (see appendix A for referral form completed by local authorities)
3. Care and substance misuse, conviction, and mental health outcomes in the year after referral to secure accommodation
4. The comparative costs of SCHs and alternative placements

Study population and setting

All young people from England referred to secure accommodation for welfare reasons (being a risk to themselves or others (ibid, p.4) between 1st October 2016 and 31st March 2018.

Data sources

Secure Welfare Coordination Unit

The Secure Welfare Coordination Unit (SWCU) co-ordinates referrals to SCHs for welfare reasons. Local authorities complete a referral form which collates information about the young person's demographics, risk factors, history, and circumstances of the referral. The unit then tries to find a placement in a SCH that meets the young person's needs. If this is not possible the form gives detail of the alternative accommodation found and provided by the young person's local authority. As SWCU data collection began in May 2016, this date was first used to select the study sample. Due to data quality issues only data from October onwards was used.

Child in Need Census

The Child in Need (CiN) Census is an annual statutory census submitted by English local authorities. It includes information about social service referrals, a child's health, or development if at risk, child in need status and child protection conferences. For the purposes of the study CiN data was used to explore service contact and child and family circumstances in the three years prior to application for a secure order.

Children looked after returns

Children looked after (CLA) returns are an annual statutory data return required of all local



authorities, which collate information on every child looked after including placement type, duration, distance from home. The return also records convictions, substance misuse and mental health status for young people continuously looked after in the same local authority for 12 months. Data in the return was used to explore care history in the three years prior to referral and the year after. It was also used to measure the outcomes of substance misuse, convictions and mental health in the year after referral.

Economic Analysis

Unit costs for residential placements were extracted from the published literature, including the Personal Social Services Research Unit (PSSRU) (2015, 2019) (See Appendix E, Table 34). As well as being consulted for all placements in the 12 months after referral, these costs were applied to the residences provided as an alternative accommodation as found in CLA records (e.g. a regulated children's home £473.21/day; an unregulated children's home £196.42/day). Where cost information was not available in the public domain, Freedom of Information requests were made to a random selection of local authorities and an average across these was estimated.

To estimate the cost of a welfare placement in SCHs, SCWU was contacted for information on the cost of both a youth justice bed and a welfare bed in a SCHs. The average cost of a welfare bed was estimated based on the data provided.

Data linkage

Data from the SWCU was matched to the CLA and CiN data using the Child LA code; a unique identifier provided by the local authority that is changed if a child moves local authority.

Of the 527 young people in the SWCU data, 507 were matched to CiN data and 473 to the CLA data. For 16 young people, although the CiN data matched there were no records for the three years prior to the application for a secure order, providing a sample of 491 individuals with CiN data for this period. Of those with CLA data 424

young people had a CLA outcome record. The CLA returns only collect this outcome data if young people are continuously looked after for 12 months. Of those matched to the CiN data, valid records were only available for 491 individuals for the three year period before the secure order. This may be an indication that the young people were not involved with children's services or due to missing data. (See figures B1 & B2 in Appendix B)



Variables

The following variables were used in the analysis to explore differences and similarities in the demographics, situations and histories of young people referred to secure accommodation. These were: age, gender, ethnicity, disability, risk factors, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) involvement, CiN plans, categories of need, child protection plans, distance from home, length of stay, substance misuse, convictions, and the Strength and Difficulty Questionnaire. A full list of how these variables were derived is available in Appendix C.



Statistical analyses

CLA, SWCU, CiN

The descriptive comparative statistics that formed the majority of analysis were stratified by placement in SCH or alternative accommodation after referral. Where data was skewed, medians were reported instead of means. All numbers less than 6 were suppressed to avoid identification of individuals.

Logistic regression tested factors associated with being placed in a SCH after referral to secure accommodation in comparison to being placed in alternative accommodation. Logistic regression also tested whether being placed in a SCH in comparison to alternative accommodation was associated with having a substance misuse problem or a conviction in the year after referral to secure accommodation. Odds Ratios (ORs) were reported. Cluster-robust standard errors for the estimated ORs were used to account for clustering within local authorities. Likelihood-ratio tests determined which independent variables were included in the models. Age, gender and ethnicity were controlled for in all models. Analysis was conducted using STATA V.15 and IBM SPSS v25.

Economic analysis

Summary statistics by comparator group (children placed in SCH versus those placed in alternative accommodation) were estimated for placement costs. Data on each young person's placement history, including episode start and end dates and the type of placement accommodation were extracted and used to generate a 12-month timeline for each young person from the day of the secure order.

A list of placements was generated, and unit costs extracted from the published literature, including the Personal Social Services Research Unit (PSSRU) (2013, 2015, 2019). All costs were expressed in pounds sterling and reflected values for the financial year 2018-2019. No discounting (cost adjustment to equate monetary value change over time) was applied as all costs occurred

within the first-year post referral. The cost of each episode was calculated by applying the unit cost per day for each of the placement types to the total time spent by each young person in the placement. A total 12-month placement cost was estimated for each young person from the day of referral from a local authority perspective.

Missing episodes

Over the 12-month period some children had episodes when they had absconded or gone missing. Since we could not be sure where these children were, these days were costed as £0. Sensitivity analysis found little difference (£1,492.0) in the average annual costs for the whole sample when cost assumptions were made based on the "reason for the episode ceasing" prior to the missing days and the "reason for the new episode" following the missing days.

Regression model

A generalised linear model was applied to model predictors of placements costs. The dependent variable in this model was the total annual cost of each child included in the study after the secure order. The independent variables included placement in either SCH or alternative accommodation, age, ethnicity, and gender.

The average marginal effect was estimated, which represented the change in total yearly placement costs, associated with the type of placements, SCH vs alternative accommodations. The marginal effect represents the absolute change in the dependant variable, in response to a one-unit change in the placement type.

Qualitative analysis

Qualitative analysis was conducted on sections of free text in found in responses to specific questions within the SWCU data.

Thematic analysis was carried out on the free text relating to a randomly selected subsample of approximately 10% of the total study population (14 young people placed in alternative accommodation and 19 in SCHs). While the



size of this arm of the study was limited by time resources, the purpose was to identify further detail of the areas explored quantitatively. Specifically, the analysis sought additional information of young people's care histories, care plans, life histories, risk factors, mental health and offending histories at referral. It also detailed the process of the secure referral, and exit plans made.

Free text data was also used to quantify the time taken to place all the young people in the sample in a SCH or alternative accommodation. This process was based on communication logs between local authorities and SCHs.

Key stakeholder involvement

Key stakeholders involved in children's social care included senior officials from the DfE and the third sector. Social work practitioners within the research unit and those who took part in interim report meetings were consulted in relation to study development and the interpretation of findings.

Ethics approval

The project was approved by Cardiff University Ethics Committee and DfE's data sharing approvals panel.





4 RESULTS

The sample consisted of 527 young people referred to secure accommodation by 129 English local authorities from 01.10.2016 to 31.03.2018. Of these 319 were placed in secure and 208 in alternative accommodation.

The backgrounds and care histories of young people before the secure order

The first section is concerned with the backgrounds and experiences of young people in the three years before the secure order was granted, with further interest in similarities and differences between the young people placed in a SCH and those placed in alternative accommodation.

Backgrounds

The following considers the home areas, ages, gender, ethnicity and disability levels of the study sample alongside further detail of wider life histories.

Regional referral

As in Figure 1 the number of referral varied across England. Over the study time frame most referrals were from London local authorities followed by the North West, West Midlands and the South East (See Table D1, Appendix D for more detail). These numbers should be considered in light of the varying child and in-care populations.

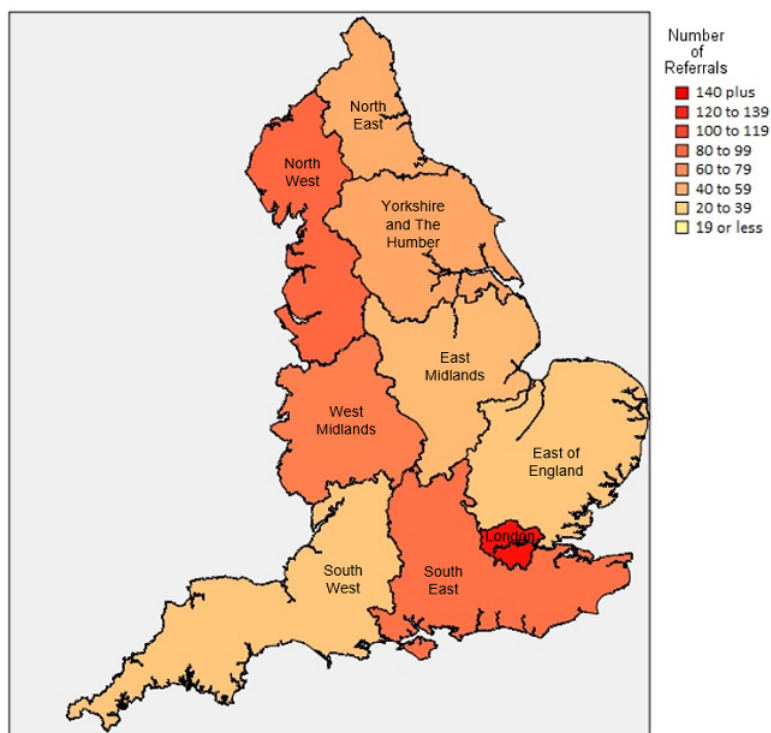


Figure 1. Regional local authority referrals to secure accommodation | Source: SWCU



Demographic profile

The sample gender split was equal, with 49.7% (n=262) females and 50.3% (n=265) males. Young people's ages ranged from 10 to 17 (M=14.9 years, SD=1.3), including 19 children aged 10 -12.

As seen in Figure 2 most young people referred were aged 14 -16. Analysis of age and gender showed that boys were the majority of referrals up to age 15 and girls aged 16-17. See Table D2, Appendix D for table of results).

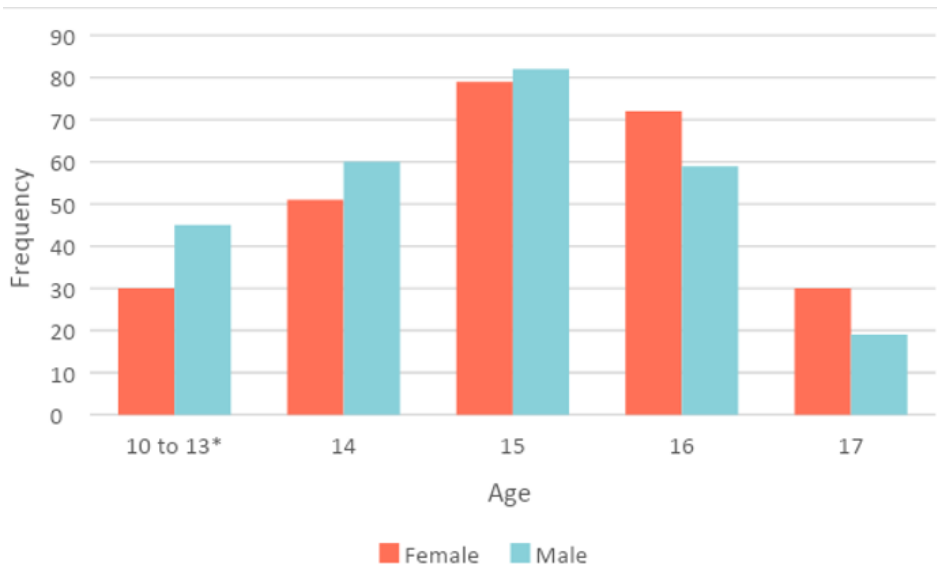


Figure 2. Age range of young people referred to secure accommodation | *categories collapsed due to small numbers less than 6 | Source: SCWU

Figure 3 shows that the majority of the young people were white (67.2%, n=354), 15.2% (n=80) were from mixed/multiple ethnic groups, 11.8% (n=62) were Black/African/Caribbean/Black

British, 4.0% (n=21) were Asian/Asian British and 1.9% (n=10) were from an other ethnic group. See Table D3, Appendix D.

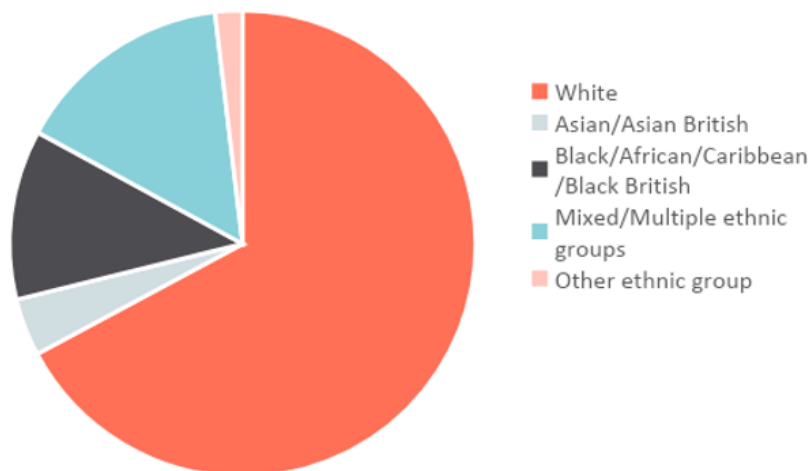


Figure 3. Sample ethnicity | Source: SCWU



As information about disability status is not recorded in the SWCU dataset, CiN data provided this detail. This necessity meant that the information was only available for individuals with

active CiN records (n=491). Table 1 summarises detail of individuals with a disability recorded in one or more of the years for which data was available.

Table 1. Disability in Sample

	N	%
With a disability	83	16.9
Behaviour*	48	9.8%
Learning	18	3.7%
Autism / Asperger Syndrome	14	2.9%
Communication	6	1.2%
Other disability**	28	5.7%
Without a disability	408	83.1%
Total where disability status known	491	100%

* CiN Guidance defines behaviour as "a condition entailing behavioural difficulties, includes attention deficit hyperactivity disorder."

**'Other disability' includes cases where the records specify: mobility problems, hand function, incontinence, hearing, personal care needs, vision problems or any other disability as set out by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

Source: CiN

Young people's life histories

Qualitative analysis of the 33 randomly selected SCWU files confirmed the high levels of abuse in the form of domestic violence, parental substance misuse, neglect, sexual abuse and physical abuse experienced by the young people as found by other research (ibid, p. 4). Parental and sibling criminal activity was also high. Most young people had little or no contact with their parents or family members at the point of secure referral.

Of the sub-sample explored, many had been affected by bereavements including the death of close family members such as a sibling, aunt, uncle, grandparent or parent.

In terms of education, while most young people were not engaged in education at referral, a few

of those placed in a SCH were still engaged or keen to engage.

Being a victim of crime was mentioned in the histories of both groups. For those placed in a SCH more of the crimes identified: physical assault, modern day slavery and rape suggested that they were at risk from others. For those in alternative accommodation, the sole crime mentioned was serious physical assault.

Care Histories before the secure order

Attention now turns to the contact of the study population with the care system in the three years before the secure accommodation referral. This includes time as a Child in Need, on a Child Protection plan and in care.



Child in Need status before Secure Accommodation Referral

All 491 individuals who could be linked to the CiN data were a 'child in need' at some point in the three years before referral to secure accommodation. Of these a large proportion, (n=449) were also looked after at some point during this time, and these are considered in more detail below. The vast majority, 95.5% (n=469), of the young people who were a CiN at some point were still a CiN at the point of referral to secure accommodation. There were no differences between young people sent to SCH or alternative accommodation in terms of their likelihood of having a CiN plan at the time of referral (95.3%, n=283 vs 95.9%, n=186).

Further analysis found that CiN plans, before referral, had been in place between 6 days and 16 years (M=3.4 years, SD=3.4). Young people's ages when CiN placements started ranged from pre-birth to 17.5 (M=12.0, SD=3.4). Little difference between the study groups was found (see Tables D4 and D5, Appendix D for details).

Children who receive services as a CiN are assigned a Primary Need Code which indicates the main reason the child started to receive those services. Table 2 presents details of the categories of need identified at the last CiN assessment before referral to secure accommodation. As only one category is allowed per child this should

be taken as a measure of the problem that is perceived as the greatest at the time of referral, rather than of all that exist. The figures indicate that abuse or neglect was the most common primary need recorded (for nearly half of the young people) with little difference between the study groups. Differences are evident however between the primary needs identified in this population and the entire population of children in need in England as published through official Government statistics (DfE 2019). In particular 8.7% of the young people being referred to secure accommodation had socially unacceptable behaviour identified as the primary concern compared to 2.1% of the whole children in need population.



Table 2. Primary need codes, CiN Plan's open at referral to Secure Accommodation

	SCH		Alternative Accommodation		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Abuse or neglect	131	46.3	88	47.3	219	46.7
Family Dysfunction	63	22.3	44	23.7	107	22.8
Family in Acute Stress	38	13.4	27	14.5	65	13.9
Socially Unacceptable Behaviour	27	9.5	14	7.5	41	8.7
Other need or data missing*	24	8.5	13	7.0	37	7.9

*Other needs, classified together as the cell counts less than 6 included; child's disability, parental disability or illness, absent parenting, cases other than children in need.

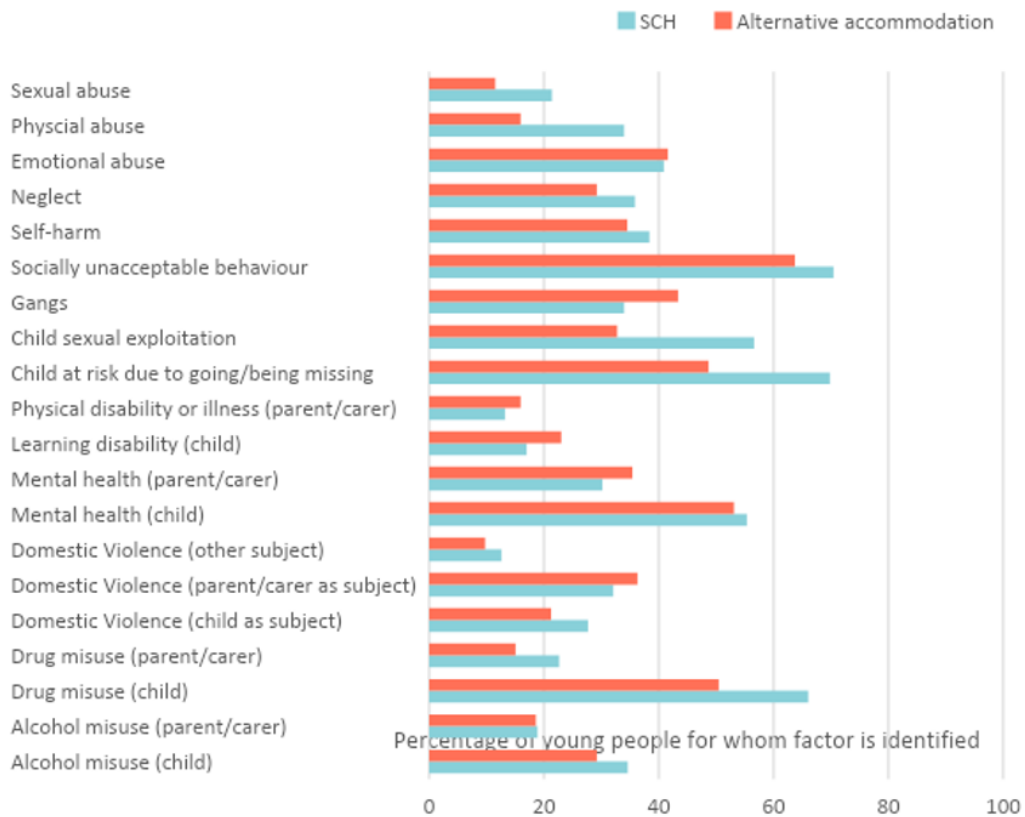
Source: SWCU- CiN



Data was available for 488 of the 491 young people for the three year period prior to referral to secure accommodation. This data shows that for many young people there was a lot of activity within children's services in this period, including new referrals, new assessments and new child protection plans. Analysis of this data gives further insight into the pattern of service provision provided. The majority of the young people (59.8%, n=292) received one or more new referrals to children's services during this time period. These may have been their first referral to children's services, or new referrals for children who had previously been on a CIN Plan that had subsequently ceased. Of these 27.5% (n=134) received more than one referral and 10.5% (n=51) three or more. There was no apparent difference in the number of referrals between those placed in SCH and those placed in alternative accommodation (see Table D6, Appendix D).

Just over half, 55.4% (n=272) of the sample received one or more CiN assessments in the three years prior to secure accommodation referral. The assessments also detail concerns beyond the primary need recorded at referral.

As in Figure 4, the most prevalent was socially unacceptable behaviour (67.6%, n=184); a concern defined by DfE (2015) as a child's behaviour that impacts detrimentally on the community. This was followed by going or being missing (61.0%, n=166) and child drug misuse (59.6%, n=162). Child mental health problems, Child Sexual Exploitation and emotional abuse were also identified in over 40% of the sample. The figure also shows that Child Sexual Exploitation, going missing, and being perceived as at risk of physical abuse, sexual abuse and drug misuse were more prevalent in young people placed in SCHs. Young people referred to alternative accommodation were more likely to be involved in gangs. See Table D7, Appendix D for more details.



*Only factors that occur in > ten individuals in either SCH or alternative placement categories are shown.

Figure 4. Factors identified in assessments in the three years prior to secure accommodation referral, by placement type | Source: SWCU- CiN



In the three years prior to referral to secure accommodation, just over a third (n=171) of the 488 young people were subject to a Child Protection Plan, with little difference between the two study groups found. Most of these young people (31.4%, n=154) had only one plan recorded during the timeframe of the study; the remaining few had two or three. While most plans were closed before referral to secure accommodation, 7.3% (n=36) of the total sample still had a referral open at this time (Table D8, Appendix D).

Care Placements three years before secure accommodation referral

473 young people referred to secure accommodation had a CLA record during the study period. As mentioned above a small proportion of children were a 'child in need', but not looked after (3.8%, n=18). Of the 473 young people, 60.0% (n=284) were subsequently placed in a SCH and 40.0% (n=189) in alternative accommodation. Differences and similarities in the care placements of the two groups in the three years prior to referral were identified:

- 94.9% (n =449) of the total sample had a CLA episode of care in the three years prior to referral.
- 27.1% (n=104) of young people were in care continuously within the three years prior to referral.
- 72.9% (n=345) entered care for the first time or re-entered care after a period of not being looked after within the three years prior to referral suggesting that many of these children come into care late or had experience of going in and out of care.
- A slightly greater percentage of the SCH group entered care for the first time or re-entered care (75.4% vs 69.3%, see Table D11, Appendix D) within the three years prior to referral.
- 23.9% (n=113) of young people started to be looked after more than once in the three years prior to referral (max number of new episodes

= 5). Little difference between study groups was found (see Table D11, Appendix D).

- If the young person did start a new episode of care during the study time frame, the median number of days between start of the latest episode of care and secure accommodation referral was 275 days, with slightly longer periods for those subsequently placed in SCHs (Mdn= 289.5 vs 266 days; Table D12, Appendix D).
- While in care, an average of 5.5 placement (SD=3.5) moves over the three years was found with little difference between groups (Table D13, Appendix D).
- There was some suggestion from the qualitative data that those placed in alternative accommodation experienced shorter care placements, with breakdowns often caused by aggression and sexualised behaviours.

The most common placements, for the whole sample within the three years before the secure accommodation referral were children's homes (79.5 %, n=357), followed by foster care (68.2%, n=306). Young people subsequently placed in a SCH were more likely to have previously been in either a SCH (24.7% vs 14.6%) or foster care (72.7% vs 61.2%). The alternative accommodation group were more likely to have been in a young offender's institution (9% vs <6 placements*) or an establishment providing medical or nursing care (8.4% vs 3.7%; Table D14, Appendix D).

Immediately prior to referral, the most common placements were again children's residential homes subject to children's homes regulations and foster placements. Semi-independent living accommodations not subject to children's homes regulations were also commonly used (see Table D15, Appendix D). More young people who were in children's homes subject to regulations, were placed in SCHs, as opposed to alternative accommodation (45.4% vs 28.0%). Those placed in SCHs were also more likely to be placed in



residential homes with an element of personal or nursing care (5.6% vs <6 placements¹). There were no further differences in placement type prior to secure accommodation referral for those placed in alternative accommodation.

The distance from home for the final placement before a SCH or alternative placement was similar for both groups (Mdn= 21.5 vs 21.6km; for full detail see Table D16, Appendix D).

The median length of stay of the last placement, before the secure order was slightly longer for those placed in SCH (Mdn= 42.5 days) than for those placed in alternative accommodation (Mdn=38 days). For full detail see Table D17, Appendix D.

Secure Accommodation

Risk Factors at Secure Accommodation Referral

As found in Section 25 of The Children Act 1989, there were three possible primary reasons that each secure order application was made. Of the

sample, 15.7% (n=83) received a secure order because they were seen as a danger to others, 39.8% (n=210) because they were felt to be a danger to themselves, and 44.4% (n=234) due to risk of absconding (Table D18, Appendix D).

As shown in Figure 5, when exploring group differences, of the young people placed in SCHs 11% (n=35) primarily received a secure order because they were seen as a danger to others, 38.9% (n=124) were felt to be a danger to themselves, and half (50.2%, n=160) due to risk of absconding. Of those placed in alternative accommodation, over double the percentage were perceived as a danger to others (23.1%, n=48), a similar proportion as a danger to themselves (41.3%, n= 86), and fewer due to risk of absconding (35.6%, n=74). See Table D19 & D20, Appendix D for a breakdown of results by age and ethnicity.

More detail of specific risk factors was identified in the data (Table D21 & D22, Appendix D). On average young people had 5.7 risk factors recorded (SD=1.3, range= 2-11). Records linked nearly all young people (98.1%, n=517) to a

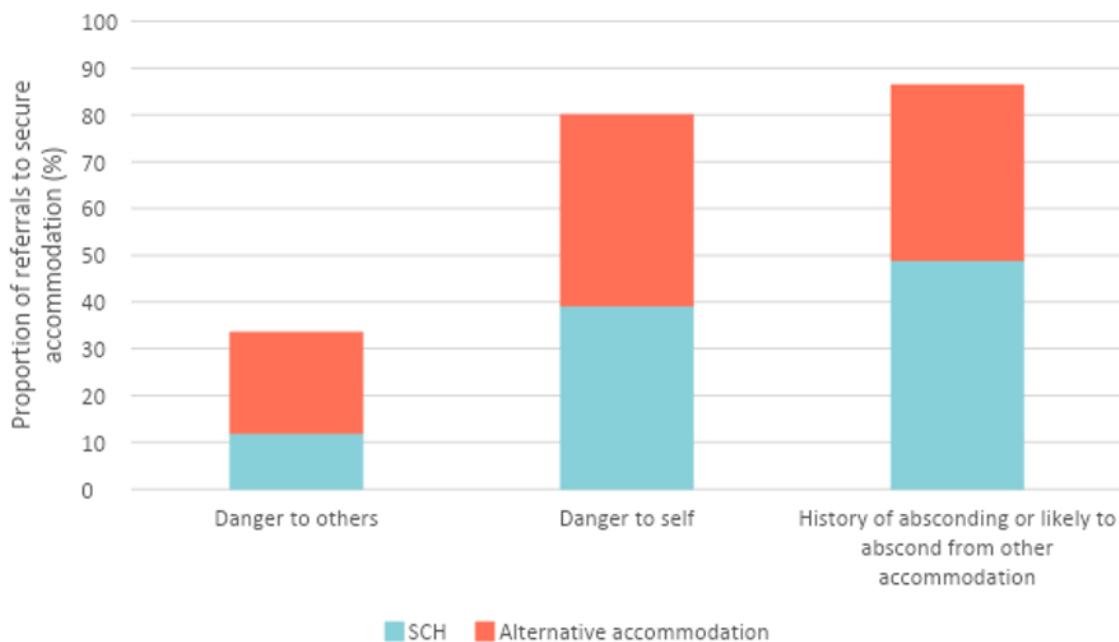


Figure 5. Reasons for secure accommodation referral | Source: SWCU

1 Numbers too small to be reported



history of absconding. Other behaviours affecting approximately four out five young people across the sample included: aggressive or violent behaviour or damage to property (85.8%, n=452); substance misuse (81.9%, n=431); previous offending behaviour (77.4%, n=408). Around half of all young people were categorised as victims of sexual exploitation (55.6%, n=293); at risk of self-harm (50.3%, n=265); or had a diagnosed or suspected mental health condition (44.8%, n=236).

Analysis found differences in the prevalence of some of these and other factors between study groups:

- Challenging behaviours (including violence towards staff, family, peers or damage to property) were higher in young people placed in alternative accommodation (97.8%, n=193) than in SCHs (81.2%, n=259).
- Over four fifths of young people placed in alternative accommodation (83.2%, n=173) had previous offending behaviour reported, compared to just under three quarters (73.7%, n= 235) of those placed in SCHs.
- Just under a third (31.7%, n= 66) of young people placed in alternative accommodation were known to have been linked with a gang, compared to 25.7% (n=82) of those in SCHs.
- 19.7% (n=41) of young people placed in alternative accommodation had shown sexually harming behaviours compared to 13.2% (n=42) of those in SCHs.
- Two thirds of young people placed in SCHs were victims of sexual exploitation (62.7%, n=200) compared to under half of those placed in alternative accommodation (44.7%, n=93).

Placement on receipt of secure order

The report now considers young people's placements on receipt of a secure order. As noted above 60.5% (n=319) of young people were

placed in SCHs and 39.5% (n=208) in alternative accommodation.

Referral pathway

The time taken either for a SCH placement to be found or until it was evident a place was unlikely to be offered (for those placed in alternative accommodation) ranged from the day of referral to over four months (range=0-133 days, n=514; Table D23, Appendix D). The average number of attempts at a placement being made was 4.23, (Mdn= 3, range= 0-28, n=515).

Qualitative analysis gave insight into the complexity of the referral process in which SWCU staff make requests for SCH placements and SCH managers make the decision. Within the cases explored most young people placed in SCHs gained a place after up to three applications (maximum six). These placements were often made the same day as the referral went live, although there were delays and the maximum time to a decision was 36 days. In contrast, young people placed in alternative accommodation tended to have referral requests sent to SCHs up to six times (maximum 15). Here, most decisions were made in less than ten days but there were cases of over 30 days with the maximum time being 64 days. However, the randomly selected qualitative sample did not include some of the longest times taken to find a placement which in some cases took over 100 days, as highlighted above.





Many of the reasons recorded for placement refusal were similar between the two study groups, with instances of units feeling unable to meet young people's high needs or only having female beds common. However, refusals for young people later placed in alternative accommodation also included the young person's aggression. This was not evident within the SCH group where the main reason tended to be matches with individuals with similar backgrounds or problems with who were already in the unit.

Secure and Alternative placements

English children were most likely to be placed in SCHs in England (74.0%, n=236). However, 17.2%

(n=55) were placed in Scotland and 8.8% (n=28) were placed in Wales over the study period.

It is not possible to determine from the data where the alternative accommodations were located, but as Table 3 shows, most young people placed in alternative accommodation were housed in children's residential units, others went to a range of settings including birth parents. Further information of the quality or nature of the alternative accommodations was unavailable. Table 5 shows that most young people placed in alternative accommodation were housed in children's residential units; others went to a range of settings including their birth parents. Further information of the quality or nature of the alternative accommodations was unavailable.

Table 3. Alternative Accommodation and number of young people placed

	N	%
Foster Care	11	5.3
Independent living	12	5.8
Mental Health Hospital	*	*
Other	*	*
Placed with parents	16	7.7
Residential	100	48.1
Not CLA	10	4.8
Youth offending institution	19	9.1
Missing data	32	15.4
Total	208	100.0

*Numbers less than 6 suppressed or secondary suppression applied to avoid identification of individuals

Source: SWCU

Factors associated with placement acceptance

A logistic regression model tested the factors most associated with placement in a SCH compared to placement in alternative accommodation after a referral to secure accommodation. As can be seen in Table 4, the odds of being placed in a SCH compared to being placed in alternative

accommodation after a referral to secure accommodation increased significantly for

- Females, who were more than twice as likely to be placed in a SCH
- Young people who had previously been placed in a SCH in the past three years, who



were more than twice as likely to be placed in a SCH

The odds of being placed in a SCH significantly decreased with

- Age at referral; older children were less likely to be placed in a SCH. For every one year increase in age, their odds of being placed in a SCH decreased by 25%.
- A history of challenging behaviour prior to referral, which reduced the odds of being placed in a SCH by two thirds.

Statistical models are not able to look at certain factors that are strongly related. Sexual exploitation was strongly correlated with gender in our model and so had to be excluded. However, when we swapped gender for sexual exploitation in the model, we found that the odds of being placed in a SCH compared to alternative accommodation more than doubled (OR: 2.2, 95%CI 1.5- 3.2).

Moreover, it is also worth noting that being placed in a youth offending institute in the three years prior to referral to secure accommodation was also associated with being placed in alternative accommodation compared to being placed in a SCH. However, since few young people were placed in a Youth Offender Institute (YOI) prior

to referral (n=20) and less than 6 of these were in the SCH group, it could not be included in the model. Since numbers are small, this finding should be interpreted with caution, but it could suggest that young people placed in alternative accommodation have a greater association with the youth justice system prior to referral to secure accommodation than young people placed in a SCH.

Distance from home

The median distance from home for SCH placements was 132.3km and for alternative placements 24.1km. See Table D24, Appendix D for full details.

Length of stay

As in Figure 6, the median length of stay in a SCH (129 days) was longer than alternative accommodation (106 days; Table D25, see Appendix D). The preponderance of 3 to 6 month placements for SCH placements asks questions of whether secure orders are lengthening or being more regularly extended, as historically 3 month placements were more standard (Williams et al, 2019).

Table 4. The odds of being placed in SCH after a referral to secure accommodation (compared to being placed in alternative accommodation)

	All (n=464) Odds ratio (95%CI)
Previously placed a SCH in the three years prior to referral^a	2.12 (1.23-3.64)**
Age^b	0.75 (0.64-0.89)***
Female (Y/N)^b	2.26 (1.49-3.43)***
White (Y/N)^b	1.36 (0.89-2.09)
History of challenging behaviour^{bc}	0.34 (0.17-0.69)**

^aSource: CLA; ^bSource: SWCU, ^cSource: CiN

*P ≤ 0.05; **P ≤ 0.01, ***P ≤ 0.001.

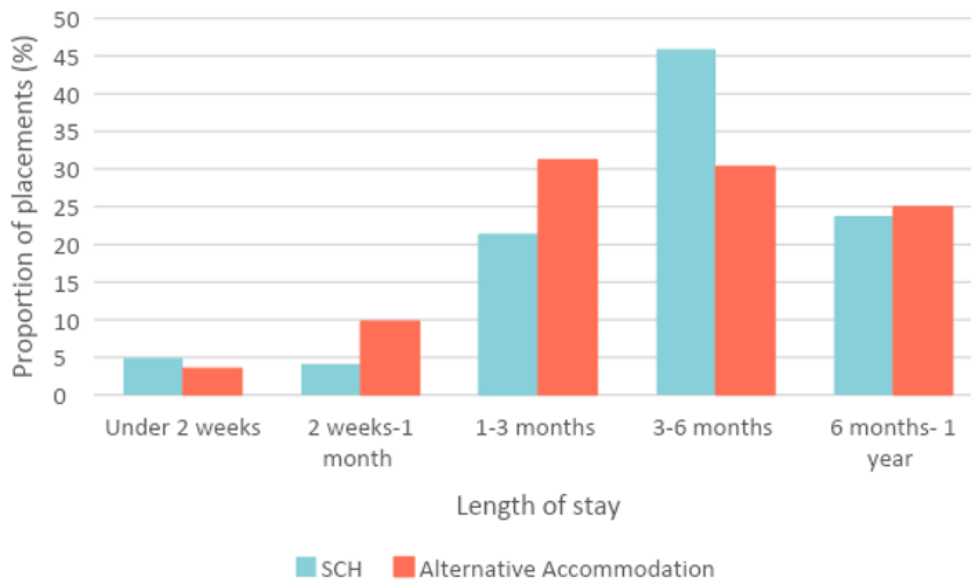


Figure 6. Length of stay* for secure and alternative placements

*figure excludes young people whose length of stay exceeded the 1 year follow up period (SCH n=7; alternative placement n=22) | Source: SWCU-CLA

Experiences and outcomes after secure accommodation referral

This final section is concerned with outcomes after a SCH or an alternative accommodation. This section comprises three parts. The first two give detail of the immediate placement after SCH or alternative accommodation and the care trajectories for 12 months after the secure accommodation referral. Both use the CLA dataset (n=473) reported in the prior sections. The third part is concerned with other outcomes for which data is available (substance misuse, convictions and mental health scores). This section uses information derived from a separate CLA data set (n=424) which includes information on outcomes for young people continuously looked after for 12 months. Outcomes in this data set are recorded annually (ending 31st of March) and the number of young people included within each year varies as it is dependent on when the young person became a looked after child or ceased to be a looked after child.

Early outcomes: Immediate placement type after secure and alternative accommodation

The most common placement for all after a SCH or alternative accommodation was a children's home subject to children's homes regulations. The next most common placements for both groups were independent living and semi-independent living not subject to children's homes regulations. While similar levels of independent and semi-independent residences were evidenced for both groups, placement in a children's home subject to children's homes regulations was much more common for young people placed in SCH than those in alternative accommodation (41.2% vs 14.8%).

The other variations found were subsequent SCH (SCH: 6.7%; alternative placement: 9.0%) and YOI placements (SCH: count less than 6; alternative placement: 7.9%; See Table D26, Appendix D). Collectively, these findings indicate that young people placed in alternative accommodation were more likely to return to a secure setting.



In terms of further planning for young people's futures, qualitative analysis found that the records for young people placed in SCH included planning for education, child sexual exploitation support, CAMHS services, support groups and family contact. Few references for such support were found in the records of young people placed in alternative accommodation which tended to include less detail, but the small number of cases explored by the qualitative arm of the study must be remembered.

Distance from home

In line with the distance from home in SCHs or alternative accommodation, the first placement afterwards tended to be further for those from SCHs (Mdn= 31.7km) rather than alternative accommodation (Mdn= 26.9). See details in Table D27, Appendix D.

Length of stay

The median length of stay for the first placement was slightly longer for those placed in SCHs (Mdn=85 days) than those placed in alternative accommodation (Mdn=76 days). See Table D28, Appendix D for further details. Young people who had been in SCHs had very short (up to one month) or long (6 months – 1 year) first stays afterwards, whereas those who had been in alternative accommodation had medium length stays afterwards (1-6 months; see Figure 7). As we only followed young people for one year after a referral to secure accommodation, it is possible that some young people had subsequent stays longer than one year. Furthermore, for young people in alternative accommodation, the end of the secure order in place at the beginning of this episode of care does not necessarily lead to a change of placement, and so associated figures should be considered in light of this.

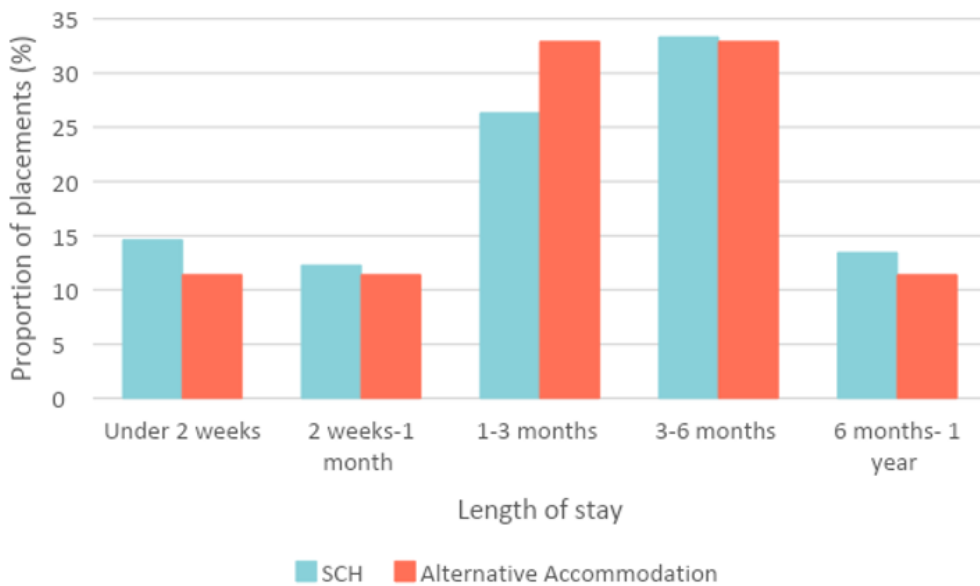


Figure 7. Length of stay for the first placement after SCH and alternative placements

*excluded young people whose length of stay exceeded the 1 year follow up period (secure placement n=69; alternative placement n=32) | Source: SWCU-CLA



For both groups it is also possible the length of this stay is affected by young people aging out of care. This could disproportionately affect those placed in alternative accommodation as they tend to be older than those placed in SCHs.

Outcomes in 12 months after secure accommodation referral

This section is concerned with the later care trajectories of young people after leaving SCHs or alternative accommodations. It also considers the further outcomes of substance misuse, convictions and mental health.

Care trajectories after secure accommodation referral

Placement moves

In the year after referral to secure accommodation the average number of placement moves was three. No difference between those from SCHs

and alternative accommodation was found (see Table D29, Appendix D).

Placement type

Similarly to the first placements after SCHs or alternative accommodation, the most common placement type in the year after referral to secure accommodation (excluding the young person's SCH or alternative placement) for both groups, was children's homes subject to Children's Homes Regulations, see Table 5. Again, the SCH group were much more likely to be placed in these, than were those from alternative accommodation (56.3% vs 37.0%).

Placement in a youth offending institute, prison or a SCH at some point in the year after referral to secure accommodation was much more common for the young people placed in alternative accommodation (41.8%, n=79) than those placed in SCHs (20.4%, n=58).

Table 5. Placement type in the year after referral to secure accommodation

Placement type	SCH		Alternative Accommodation	
	N	%	N	%
Semi-independent living accommodation not subject to children's homes regulations	62	21.8	46	24.3
Secure children's homes	42	14.8	48	25.4
Children's Homes subject to Children's Homes Regulations	160	56.3	70	37.0
Placed with own parent(s) or other person(s) with parental responsibility	27	9.5	26	13.8
Independent living for example, in a flat, lodgings, bedsit, bed and breakfast (B&B) or with friends, with or without formal support	63	22.2	43	22.8
Residential care home	16	5.6	11	5.8
National Health Service (NHS)/health trust or other establishment providing medical or nursing care	11	3.9	*	*
Family centre or mother and baby unit	*	*	*	*
Young offender institution (YOI) or prison	18	6.3	42	22.2
All residential schools, except where dual-registered as a school and children's home	*	*	*	*
Foster placement	42	14.8	22	11.6
Other placements (must be listed on a schedule sent to DfE with annual submission)	7	2.5	7	3.7

*Numbers less than 6 suppressed or secondary suppression applied to avoid identification of individuals

Source: SWCU-CLA



Re-referrals to secure accommodation

36.5% (n=76) of those placed in alternative accommodation were re-referred to secure accommodation in the following year, compared to 30.1% (n=96) of those in SCHs.

Other outcomes

The data available limited reports on other outcomes to substance misuse, convictions and mental health status as measured by the Strength and Difficulty Questionnaire (SDQ). These outcomes are collected annually on the 31st of March. This data is only collected if the young person has been in care continuously for 12 months (n=424). Analyses is broken down into the three years before referral, the year of referral which is the year the young person was referred to secure accommodation and the year after referral which, depending on when the young person was referred, could include part of their SCH or alternative accommodation stay. See Appendix C for more details.

Substance misuse

For the purposes of this analyses the term 'substance' refers to both drugs and alcohol but not tobacco. Substance misuse includes problematic use of both legal and illegal drugs,

including alcohol when used in combination with other substances (DfE, 2019b).

Overall 46.2% (n=196) of the young people referred to secure accommodation during the study timeframe had a recorded substance misuse problem, with substance misuse levels highest during the year of referral when compared to the subsequent year or that before (see Table 6). Substance misuse problems over the study period was higher among the group of young people (48.1%, n=124) placed in SCHs than those placed in alternative accommodation (43.4%, n=72). This difference was found in the years before referral and continued into referral the year of referral and the subsequent one.

This report must be interpreted with caution as it is not possible to determine when, in each year, the substance misuse was recorded, and this poses challenges. First, the year of referral includes the period within a SCH or alternative accommodation which varies with individuals. This issue is further complicated by a lack of knowledge of whether residence in an alternative accommodation finished or continued at the end of a secure order. Moreover, the reason for the difference in recorded substance misuse here as compared to the risk factors on referral (p.15) is unknown, but likely due to the inclusion of tobacco in the SWCU substance misuse definition criteria.

Table 6. The number and proportion of young people referred to secure accommodation with a substance misuse problem by year and group

Number of years from referral*	SCH		Alternative accommodation	
	All young people with CLA outcome data	Young people with substance misuse problem	All young people with CLA outcome data	Young people with substance misuse problem
	N	N(%)	N	N(%)
Three years prior	52	*	42	*
Two years prior	77	10 (13.0%)	52	5 (9.6%)
One years prior	119	43 (36.1%)	75	19 (25.3%)
Year of referral	174	74 (42.5%)	117	45 (38.5%)
Year after referral	219	83 (37.9%)	135	41 (30.4%)
Total	258	124 (48.1%)	166	72 (43.4%)

*Numbers less than 6 suppressed or secondary suppression applied to avoid identification of individuals

Source: SWCU- CLA



Substance misuse intervention offered and received

Of the young people who had a substance misuse problem during our study period 89.3% (n=175) were offered a substance misuse intervention, but only 48.6% (n=85) received one. By group, 90.3% (n=112) of young people placed in SCH were offered a substance misuse intervention and 50.0% (n=56) received the intervention. A similar percentage (87.5%, n=63) of young people placed in alternative accommodation were offered an intervention and 46.0% (n=29) received one.

Factors associated with having a substance misuse problem in the year after referral to secure accommodation

A logistic regression model (Table 7) suggested that placement in a SCH instead of alternative accommodation, does not significantly change the odds of having a substance misuse problem in the year after referral to secure accommodation, even when historical substance misuse problems are controlled for.

Other factors, that were shown to increase the odds of having a substance misuse problem, in

the year after referral were; substance misuse problems in the three years prior to referral to secure accommodation, being convicted in the year after referral to secure accommodation, being on a child protection plan in the three years prior to referral, being placed in foster care in the three years prior to referral and being placed in a semi-independent non-regulated children's home in the three years prior to referral. Age and ethnicity did not significantly influence the outcome. See Table 7 for odds ratios.

As previously mentioned, since there are no dates in the CLA outcomes data set, we cannot be sure when in the year after referral to secure accommodation the substance misuse problem occurred. If the young person had a referral early in the financial year, the time from referral to outcome could be a lot longer than for a young person who had a referral later in the year. To see if this influenced the results, we included a variable in the model that accounted for the time from referral to the start of outcome period (one year after). The variable made no significant contribution to the model so was therefore excluded.

Table 7. The odds of having a substance misuse problem in the year after referral to secure accommodation

	All (n=417) Odds ratio (95%CI)
Placed in a SCH vs alternative accommodation^a	1.28(0.78-2.11)
Age^a	0.9(0.77-1.06)
Female (Y/N)^a	1.24(0.7-2.21)
White (Y/N)^a	0.84(0.52-1.37)
Substance misuse problem in the three years prior to referral to secure accommodation^b	2.57(1.44-4.58)***
Conviction in the year after referral to secure accommodation^b	1.96(1.15-3.35)*
On a child protection plan in the three years prior to referral^c	1.71(1.03-2.83)*
Placed in foster care in the three years prior to referral vs not being placed in foster care^b	1.65(1.03-2.65)*
Placed in a semi-independent non-regulated children's home in the three years prior to referral vs not being placed in a semi-independent non-regulated children's home^b	2.15(1.17-3.95)*

^aSource: SWCU; ^bSource: CLA; ^cSource: CiN

*P ≤ 0.05; **P ≤ 0.01; ***P ≤ 0.001.



Convictions

53.5% (n=227) of the young people referred to secure accommodation had a recorded conviction within the study period. A higher percentage of these young people (59.0%, n=98) were placed in alternative accommodation when compared to those placed in a SCH (43.8%, n=113). As found in Table 8, more young people had a conviction

at the end of the year they were referred, than in the years before and after referral.

Table 8 also shows that although patterns of conviction were similar for both groups, young people who were placed in alternative accommodation had the highest proportions of convictions in each year.

Table 8. The number and proportion young people referred to secure accommodation with a conviction by year and group

Number of years from referral*	SCH		Alternative accommodation	
	All young people with CLA outcome data	Young people with a conviction	All young people with CLA outcome data	Young people with a conviction
	N	N(%)	N	N(%)
Three years prior	52	6 (11.5%)	42	*
Two years prior	77	12(15.6%)	52	12(23.1%)
One years prior	119	37(31.1%)	75	32(42.7%)
Year of referral	174	76(43.7%)	117	67(57.3%)
Year after referral	219	67(30.6%)	135	51(37.8%)
Total	258	129(50.0%)	166	98(59.0%)

*Numbers less than 6 suppressed or secondary suppression applied to avoid identification of individuals

Source: SWCU- CLA

Factors associated with having a conviction in the year after referral to secure accommodation

A logistic regression model (Table 9) suggested that placement in SCH instead of alternative accommodation, did not significantly change the odds of being convicted of a crime in the year after referral to secure accommodation, even when historical convictions are controlled for.

Other factors that were shown to increase the odds of being convicted in the year after referral, were a conviction in the three years prior to referral to secure accommodation, displaying challenging behaviours in the lead up to referral to secure accommodation and having a substance misuse problem in the year after referral to secure accommodation. Factors that significantly decreased the odds of being convicted were being female and having a referral to CAMHS

prior to referral to secure accommodation. Having a referral did not necessarily mean the young person was seen, but it does suggest that the young person had a mental health or behavioural problem. Age and ethnicity did not significantly influence the outcome.

As previously mentioned, since there are no dates in the CLA outcomes data set, we cannot be sure when in the year the conviction occurred. If the young person had a referral early in the financial year, the time from referral to outcome could be a lot longer than that for a young person who had a referral later in the year. To see if this influenced the results, we included a variable in the model that accounted for the time from referral to the start of outcome period (one year after). The variable made no significant contribution to the model so was therefore excluded.



Table 9. The odds of having a conviction in the year after referral to secure accommodation

	All (n=417) Odds ratio (95%CI)
Placed in a SCH vs alternative accommodation^a	1.02(0.62-1.68)
Age^a	0.96(0.81-1.14)
Female (Y/N)^a	0.24(0.14-0.41)***
White (Y/N)^a	1.13(0.68-1.89)
Conviction in the three years prior to referral to secure accommodation^b	2.03(1.13-3.65)**
Substance misuse problem in the year after referral to secure accommodation^b	2.11(1.26-3.55)**
Challenging behaviours in the lead up to referral to secure accommodation^c	2.35(1.14-4.86)*
Had a referral to CAMHs prior to referral to secure accommodation^{ac}	0.59(0.36-0.95)*

^aSource: SWCU; ^bSource: CLA; ^cRecorded at referral

*P ≤ 0.05; **P ≤ 0.01; ***P ≤ 0.001.

[†]0.05 < P ≤ 0.10

Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire

The SDQ scores range from 0-40. Scores over 17 are considered a cause for concern (DfE 2019b). The mean SDQ score for our sample during the year of referral was 18.2 (SD=7.2) with little difference between in scores for those placed in SCH and those placed in alternative accommodation (see Appendix D, Table D30.).

In the year prior to referral the mean score was 19.3 (SD=7.1), again there was little difference between those placed in SCH and those placed in alternative accommodation (see Appendix D, Table D31).

For the year after referral, the mean score was 17.2 (SD=7.5). Those placed in alternative accommodation had a slightly higher score than those placed in a SCH (M=18.2, SD=7.7 vs M=16.7, SD=7.4). While this suggested poorer mental health for young people who had been in alternative accommodation the results were not significant (see Appendix D, Table D32.).

The research team attempted to track individuals before referral to secure accommodation and after referral. However, 36.1% (n=70) of data for

individuals was missing before referral to secure accommodation and 51.7% (n=183) missing after referral. This data was missing for children who are looked after continuously for 12 months and therefore included in this data collection. In addition, in the year before referral 25.3% (n=49) of the data was not recorded for "other" reasons and 23.1% (n=73) in the year after referral. It is also practice to not record SDQ past the age of 17 years, losing a further 12.7% (n=40) of data in the year after referral.

Nonetheless, 50 young people with an SDQ score were able to be tracked before and after referral to secure accommodation. Of these, 56.0% (n=28) of young people's score worsened with a mean change of 8.4 points (SD=5.7), and 38.0% (n=19) of young people's scores improved with a mean change of 6.2 (SD=3.5; see Appendix D, Table D33.). The remaining scores stayed the same. Numbers were too small to break these results down further to compare those placed in a SCH to those placed in alternative accommodation.



Costs of secure and alternative accommodation

This section uses the CLA dataset (n=473) reported in the prior sections. As previously stated, 284 young people were placed in a SCH and 189 in alternative accommodation. In the 12 months after referral, the total number of recorded episodes for children placed in SCHs was 1,274 episodes, with 810 episodes for children placed in alternative accommodation.

Details of how costs were calculated can be found in Appendix E. The average (M) annual cost of all young people referred to secure accommodation regardless of whether they were placed in a SCH or alternative accommodation for the 12-months

after referral, was £159,556.6 (SD= £76,306.3, 95% CI £156,279.3 to £162,833.8).

Looking at comparative costs, the average annual cost for those placed in SCH was £190,776.9 (SD= £69,060.8, 95% CI £186,981 to £194,572.7). The average cost of placing young people in alternative accommodation was lower at £110,512.6 (SD= £59,529.8, 95% CI £106,409.4 to £114,615.8). There was a significant difference (two sample t-test, p-value <0.001) in the mean annual cost of placing a child in a SCH when compared to an alternative placement of £80,264.3 (95% CI £74,492.2 to £86,036.3). See Figure 8 for the distribution of annual costs.

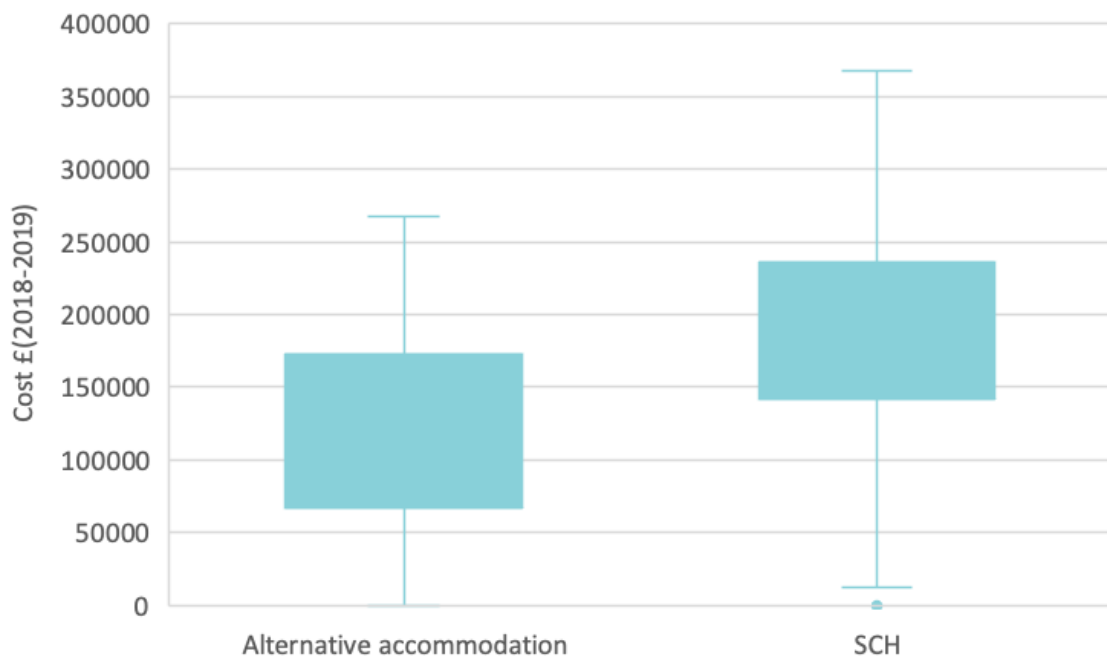


Figure 8. Box and whisker plot showing the distribution of annual costs for SCH and alternative accommodation | Source: SWCU-CLA



Cost per day for children placed in SCH and alternative accommodation

Based on the distribution of alternative placements identified in the CLA data (see Appendix C), the average cost per day for alternative accommodation was £310 compared to £1008 for a SCH placement for welfare reasons. Alternative accommodation costs should be interpreted with caution since we do not know whether there are additional costs associated with alternative accommodation such as additional support and staff costs or whether children were on deprivation of liberty orders. Costs for SCH placements for welfare reasons specifically, were sought from an average provided by the SWCU. This rate is higher than the average day rate (£628) used for other SCH placements identified in the CLA data since these placements cannot be differentiated between welfare and youth custody placements. Youth custody beds are less expensive since they are commissioned, and therefore guaranteed payment all year around.

Factors associated with the annual cost of placements after referral to secure accommodation

A generalised linear regression model indicated that young people placed in SCHs cost £72,367.1 more annually, on average, than those placed in alternative accommodation (95% CI £66,847.5 to £77,886.7), which was statistically significant at the <0.001 level. With increasing age for young people, the cost of placements decreases by £19,821.0 on average each year, which is statistically significant at the <0.001 level.

It was also found that placements for females cost on average £15,989.2 more than those for males. This finding was statistically significant at the <0.001 level.

The study also found that certain ethnic groups cost significantly more to allocate placements after referral to secure accommodation than others. Children from the Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups, Black/African/Caribbean/Black British, and Other ethnic groups, cost on average less than children from the White ethnic group. Children from the Asian/Asian British ethnic

group, on average cost more to allocate into placements than those from the White ethnic group (see Table 10).





Table 10. Generalised linear regression model results for the cost of placements (Pound Sterling (£)) on the type of placement allocations (SCH vs alternative accommodations).

Placement type and demographic characteristics	Total costs (£, 95% CI)
Placement	
Alternative accommodation	Reference category
SCH	70,516.7*** (65,026.6 to 76,006.9)
Age	-19,821.0*** (-22,018.5 to -17,623.6)
Ethnicity	
White	Reference category
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	-12,472.0*** (-19,799.3 to -5,144.8)
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	-17,286.1*** (-25,786.1 to -8,786.1)
Asian/Asian British	14,848.1* (2,630.7 to 27,065.5)
Other ethnic group	-11,167.0 (-23,814.0 to 1,479.9)
Gender	
Male	Reference category
Female	15,989.2*** (10,607.7 to 21,370.8)

***p<0.001, **p<0.01, * p<0.05



5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study analysed routine data pertaining to 527 young people from England referred to secure accommodation over a period of seventeen months, to our knowledge this is the first such study to date. Study interest lay in the backgrounds and care histories of young people before referral to secure accommodation, detail of the secure accommodation referral, young people's outcomes afterwards and the relative SCH and alternative accommodation costs. Throughout, differences between young people placed in a SCH and an alternative accommodation were of primary interest.

Some study findings such as young people's chaotic backgrounds, their high experiences of bereavement and the unstable placement pathways experienced on entering care reinforced established knowledge (e.g. Valentine, 2003; Creegan et al, 2005; Walker et al, 2005; Moodie et al, 2015; Hart and La Valle, 2016) and echoed the high levels of adverse child experiences noted by Gibson (2020).

When considering socio-demographic factors across the sample, the gender and age profiles of the whole sample largely fit with that recorded previously in other parts of the UK (Williams et al, 2019; Gibson, 2020). While young people of Black and Mixed ethnicity were over-represented when compared to census figures (ONS, 2011) this is somewhat expected as young people of these ethnicities are more likely to live in more deprived communities and thus be subject to increased intervention (Bywaters et al, 2016); a pattern of situation and events that has long been an issue of concern (Owen & Statham, 2009).

On splitting the sample a number of important key differences were found. First, it was of deep concern that two fifths of the young people subjected by court to a secure order could not be found a place in a SCH. When exploring the characteristics of those placed and non-placed in SCHs, older, male individuals with challenging

behaviours were significantly more likely to be placed in an alternative rather than a SCH. Moreover, this group was more likely to have been linked to previous offending behaviours, gang association and sexually harming behaviours in the years immediately preceding the secure accommodation referral. It was also of interest that while the numbers are small and hence should be interpreted with caution the alternative accommodation group demonstrated greater experience of having been in a young offender's institute previously, unlike the SCH group whose most prevalent previous secure setting, if experienced, tended to be a SCH. Collectively it is likely these findings explain why a greater number of the young people in the alternative accommodation group had, at some point, been categorised as a greater risk to others, in contrast to the SCH who were linked with higher incidences of being victims of abuse and child sexual exploitation and more likely to be classed as at risk from others.

This knowledge is likely to play a role in the different trajectories experienced by the two study groups on referral to secure accommodation. The study found that the young people in the alternative accommodation group placement experienced a longer wait than the SCH group; some waiting over four months before it became evident that a place in a SCH was unlikely to be



offered. During this time, the number of requests sent to secure units for a bed was far greater than those made for the SCH group. The reasons for placement failure across both study groups were diverse but concerns about aggression and violence were predominantly voiced for the alternative accommodation group. Overall, it can be argued that the most secure settings for children referred for welfare reasons in England, often feel unable to offer accommodation to vulnerable young people displaying violent and socially dangerous behaviours as they feel they do not have the capacity to meet and address their needs.

This turns attention to the finding that the data concerned with alternative accommodation gives limited detail of what is provided. The economic analysis which found SCHs to be much more expensive than alternative accommodation was based on the assumption that young people placed in alternative accommodation were housed in standard care placements as shown in Table 5 (further detail, Appendix E, Table E 34) The little literature concerned with the nature of alternative placements suggests otherwise. While Walker et al (2005) contend that the most likely alternatives are a residential unit or school, other research reports highly staffed single bed residential units put together reactively in the circumstances (Held, 2006; Williams et al, 2019). When reporting on similar 'bespoke' care placements created for children and young people with complex needs, albeit outside of secure orders, Greatbatch, & Tate (2020) note that the type of care provided is likely to be very expensive. The unknown nature of alternative accommodation; the environment, the levels of security, the existence of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards, the quality of care and its financial demands call for further exploration of this area.

There were few differences in outcomes in the year after referral to secure accommodation. The main found was the care settings after SCH or alternative accommodation. Lower numbers of the alternative accommodation group were placed in Children Homes subject to Children's Homes Regulations, suggesting that their histories

and associated risk factors continued to form a barrier to care placements. Of further concern were the high numbers of young people placed or re-placed in a secure setting (youth offending institutes, prisons, SCHs), especially those who had been placed in alternative accommodation. This finding asks questions of the care pathways across the sample, this includes the SCH and alternative accommodations and care placements afterwards. Such questions have been previously articulated elsewhere (Walker et al, 2005; Williams et al, 2019) but as yet seem unresolved. The higher incidence of involvement with the justice system of the alternative accommodation group before and after the referral to secure accommodation supports observations that young people tend to follow care pathways within the system they first come in contact with (Rose, 2014)





Study findings must be considered in knowledge of the project's limitations many of which stemmed from the quality and nature of the data available. Due to the relatively recent existence of SCWU data the sample size was low. These numbers will improve over coming years and replication of the work conducted for this study promises to give more robust findings. Within CiN data missing closure intervention dates may have affected the validity of some analysis as assumptions that cases had remained open had to be made. Moreover, lack of event dates in the CLA outcome dataset meant that for analysis grouped under the year of referral, it was not possible to determine if the event happened before or after referral to secure accommodation. More widely, difficulties in gaining access to the CiN and CLA data (thirteen months overall) left the research team short of time and prevented further work particularly on the qualitative arm of the study that could have given greater and stronger evidence of the histories and life events explored. Finally, the outcome data existing in the CLA returns limited statistical analysis of outcomes and further data linkage, particularly with health, justice and educational data sets, would greatly improve the current state of knowledge.

Overall, the study raised concerns about the capacity of current services to recognise and meet the needs of this small, complex and vulnerable group of young people. Applying for a secure order is a serious matter and the subject of much debate in relation to children and young people's liberty and rights. It would be hoped and perhaps presumed that when deemed necessary a secure place would be found for each young person referred, and that the length and nature of care given within a secure setting was sufficient to recognise and begin to meet young people's needs. It would also be hoped that this level of care continued afterwards on return to the community. However, study findings indicate that when a referral is made, many young people, in great need, are refused a place because of the risk they pose to SCHs with their current resources. More widely the lack of differences in the outcomes on leaving SCHs and alternative accommodations

reinforces concerns that the current system, consisting of the care and intervention provided before, during and after a secure or alternative placement is insufficient to meet the needs of all young people referred there.

The knowledge gained by the study supports a number of recommendations:

- Some of the most vulnerable young people in society are referred to secure accommodation, but the study evidenced little improvement in outcomes. This demands some revision of policy and practice related to the care offered in secure welfare settings and that provided afterwards
- Study analysis of outcomes was limited to the available measures within local authority records. Further data linkage with justice, health and education databases would extend knowledge in this area considerably
- The study suggested that more of the young people placed in alternative accommodation were perceived as a risk to society, rather than a victim of life circumstances. More of these young people, trod a pathway, between the justice and welfare systems before and after the secure accommodation referral. The lack of knowledge of what alternative accommodation is demands further exploration to discover what is provided, whether it is appropriate and if it can be viewed as a real alternative to a SCH. As well as obtaining clearer knowledge of what alternative accommodation is, the research would allow a more realistic comparison of the comparative costs of these forms of secure placements.
- With little knowledge of the process of and barriers to a SCH placement, further analysis of the SWCU data is warranted.



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7 APPENDICES

Appendix A: Secure Accommodation Referral Form



REFERRAL FOR A SECTION 25 CHILDREN ACT 1989 SECURE CHILDREN'S HOME PLACEMENT

PLEASE FILL IN **ALL** BOXES ON THE REFERRAL FORM.
A CARE PLAN MUST BE SENT TO THE SECURE CHILDREN'S HOME WITHIN 72 HOURS OF THE YOUNG PERSON BEING PLACED.

SAN Referral Form Vr 2.0

1. REFERRAL		Show Guidance	
Date of Referral :	Click here to enter a date.		
Referring Officer :	Click here to enter text.		
Tel No. :	Click here to enter text.		
Mob No :	Click here to enter text.		
Email :	Click here to enter text.		
Secure Email :	Click here to enter text.		
Referring Local Authority :	Choose an item.		
Court :	Click here to enter text.		
Primary Reason for Order :	Choose an item.		
Start Date :	Click here to enter a date.		
Expected End Date :	Click here to enter a date.		
Extension :	Choose an item.		
Currently in Police Cell :	Choose an item.		
2. YOUNG PERSON (CORE INFORMATION)		Show Guidance	
Forename : Click here to enter text.		Surname : Click here to enter text.	
Social Care System ID : Click here to enter text.	Gender : Choose an item.	DoB : Click here to enter a date.	Age : Choose an item.
Ethnicity : Choose an item.		Religion : Choose an item.	Height: Click here to enter text.
On Child Protection Register : Choose an item.	Legal status : Choose an item.	Weight : Click here to enter text.	First Language Click here to enter text.
Date : Click here to enter a date.	72 hour placement requested : Choose an item.		Secretary of State Approval : For under 13's (if applicable)
		Applied for : Choose an item.	Granted : Choose an item.
3. KEY CONTACTS		Show Guidance	
Role	Name	Tel No.	Mob No.
Social Worker:	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.
			Email Click here to enter text.



Appendix B: Data Flow Diagrams

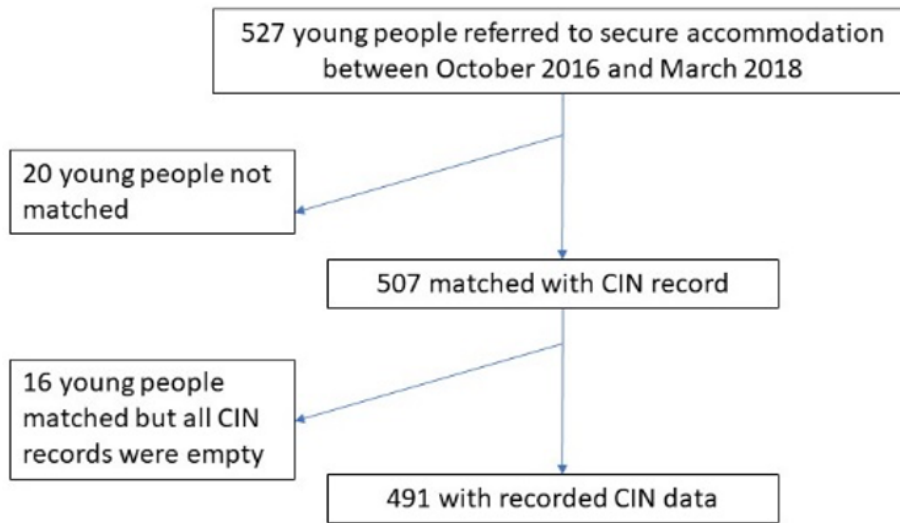


Figure B.1: Linkage of CiN and SWCU

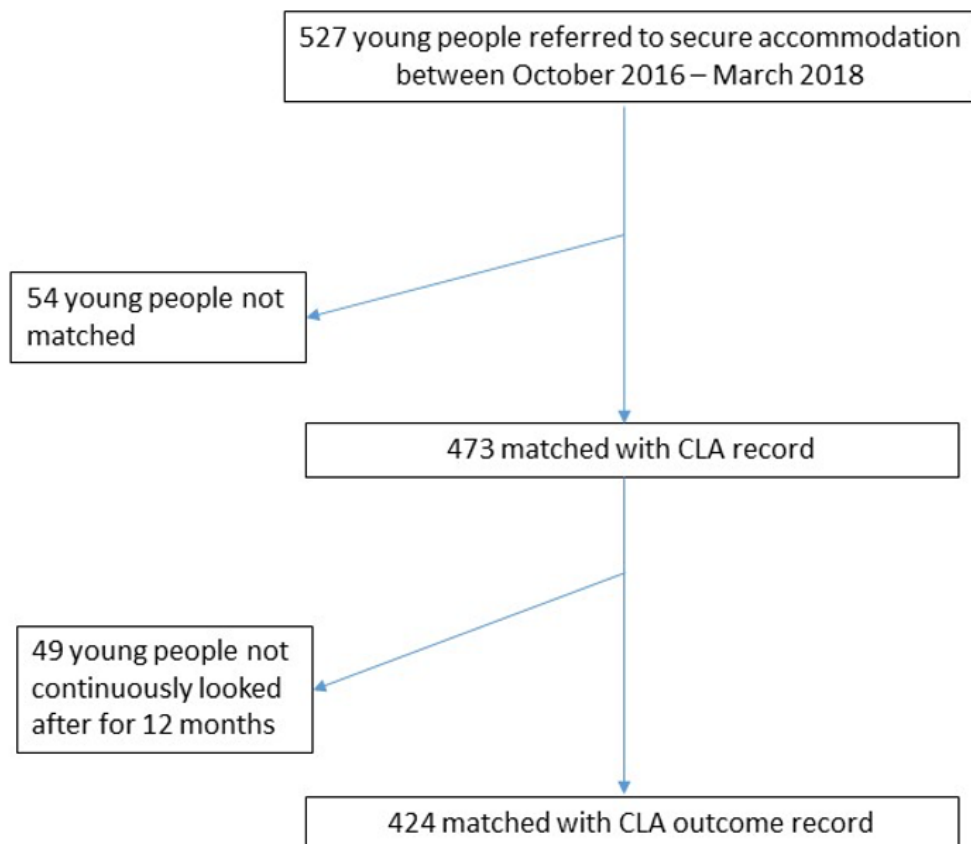


Figure B.2: Linkage of CLA and SWCU Data



Appendix C: Measures used in the Analysis

Young people are referred to secure accommodation for welfare reasons if they are at risk of absconding, are a danger to themselves or a danger to others. Referrals were counted and split by age, gender, ethnicity, risk factors and placement acceptance.

Age, gender and ethnicity

Age, gender and ethnicity were recorded at the time of referral to secure accommodation from the SCWU dataset, with findings and gaps confirmed or filled using Children Looked After (CLA) and Children in Need (CiN) records where necessary and possible. Ethnicity was grouped based on the recommended categories defined by the UK government and used in the UK census¹.

Disability

Taken from the child's CiN record, the definition used is consistent with that provided by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. Multiple conditions can be recorded.

Risk factors

Risk factors were categorised by the SWCU based on information provided by the local authorities at the time of referral.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service involvement

Previous Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) involvement was recorded at referral.

CiN plans during the three years prior to referral to secure accommodation

The CiN census collects information for all children referred to social services. Actioned referrals resulting in a child in need plan were used to identify young people on a CiN in the three-year period, calculated from the date of the young person's referral to secure accommodation. This included those with a new referral during the

three year period, and those with an open referral at the start of it.

CiN Plans open at referral to secure accommodation

Actioned referrals resulting in a child in need plan, were used together with data on the closure of plans, to identify young people who had an open CiN plan at the time of referral to secure accommodation.

Categories of Need

These are given to the children and young people at assessment and were designed only to identify what kind of pressures are placed on social services.

Risk factors identified at CiN assessment

As part of the CiN assessment, risk factors are identified to enable local authorities to determine the services and action required with respect to individual children in need. The factors identified can be divided into those which impair the child's health and development; the parent/carer's capacity to respond to the child's needs and other people in the family/household. Only current concerns are recorded. Children may be subject to multiple assessments. Factors highlighted in this report, mean that a factor has been associated with a young person, at any assessment made, in the three year period, prior to their referral to secure accommodation.

Child Protection Plans

Data on whether a young person had a Child Protection Plan in the three years, prior to referral, to secure accommodation, was derived from information about the start and end date of Child Protection Plans in the CiN data.

Child Protection Plan Category of Abuse

At child protection conferences the initial category of abuse will be recorded and the need for a child protection plan determined. The

1 <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/ethnic-groups>



initial category of abuse can change as further conferences proceed and a latest category of abuse is recorded. The category of abuse used in this report are derived from the latest category of abuse, recorded at the last child protection conference, to be held before the young person's referral to secure accommodation.

SCH placement

Whether a young person was accepted for placement in SCH, was recorded in the SWCU data set. The SCH placement associated with the secure accommodation referral was identified in the CLA data by identifying the closest episode on the day of or after the referral date and marked as a SCH placement.

Alternative accommodation placement

Alternative accommodation placement information was recorded in the SWCU. In order to identify further details of the placement (e.g. length of stay). Attempts were made to identify these placements in CLA dataset. When records were linked, placement information was sometimes contradictory. In these instances, placement type was marked as "unsure". Alternative placements were identified in two ways. An episode was considered the alternative placement: 1) if a new episode started within two weeks of the referral date that matched the alternative accommodation placement information provided by the SWCU; 2) the young person stayed where they were for longer than two weeks and this placement matched the alternative accommodation placement provided by the SWCU. Two weeks was deemed an appropriate cut off, since on average it took 11 days or young people to be placed in a SCH after a referral. This sentiment was also echoed through consultations with social work practitioners.

Distance from home and length of stay

The distance from home and placement is calculated by the DfE as the number of miles between the child's home postcode and the placement postcode. Length of stay was calculated by subtracting the number of days between episode end and start date. If the

episode preceding was due to a change in legal status only (i.e. they did not move placements) then this episode start date was used to calculate length of stay.

Outcomes: Care trajectories

To gain a sense of the disruption to the young person's living arrangements after placement in a SCH or alternative accommodation, the number of placement moves, placement types and re-referrals to secure accommodation were calculated in the year after referral. This was calculated as one year from the date of referral to secure accommodation.

Outcomes: Substance misuse, convictions, Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire

The CLA returns include data on outcomes for young people continuously looked after for 12 months (n=424). Outcomes are recorded annually (ending 31st of March) and the number of young people included within each year varies depending on when the young person became a looked after child or ceased to be a looked after child. Event dates are not recorded so analysis was divided into pre referral to secure accommodation (years April 2013 to March 2016); during year of referral (years April 2016 to March 2017); after referral (April 2017-March 2018). The outcomes included are:

Substance misuse

The DfE collects data on whether the young person has a substance misuse problem during the year, whether they were offered an intervention and refused it and whether they received the intervention as binary "yes/no" variables. No further information is provided about the type or severity of the problem, the type of intervention received nor why the intervention was not received (unless it was refused).

The term 'substance' refers to both drugs and alcohol but not tobacco. Substance misuse is defined as 'intoxication by (or regular excessive consumption or and/or dependence on) psychoactive substances, leading to social, psychological, physical or legal problems.'



Substance misuse includes problematic use of both legal and illegal drugs, including alcohol when used in combination with other substances (DfE, 2019b).

Convictions

Convictions refer to whether the child was convicted or subject to a youth caution (including a youth conditional caution) during the year, for an offence committed, while being looked after. Similar to substance misuse, it is a binary “yes/no” variable with no further information provided.

SDQ score

The SDQ is recorded up to the age of 17. It is a screening tool to assess whether the child or young person has, or may develop, emotional or behavioural difficulties. The scoring range is between 0-40. A score of 13 or below is normal and 17 and above is a cause of concern (DfE, 2019b). It is not known from the data, when during the year the SDQ is recorded and by whom it was recorded by.



Appendix D: Tables relating to quantitative analysis

Table D.1. Secure accommodation referrals by region of England

Region	N	%
East Midlands	34	6.5
East of England	27	5.1
London	130	24.7
North East	41	7.8
North West	81	15.4
South East	75	14.2
South West	27	5.1
West Midlands	67	12.7
Yorkshire and The Humber	45	8.5

Table D.2. Age (in years) and gender of young people at time of referral to secure accommodation

Age	Female		Male		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
10	*	*	*	*	*	*
12	*	*	*	*	*	*
13	25	9.5	31	11.7	56	10.6
14	51	19.5	60	22.6	111	21.1
15	79	30.2	82	30.9	161	30.6
16	72	27.5	59	22.3	131	24.9
17	30	11.5	19	7.2	49	9.3
Total	262	100.0	265	100.0	527	100.0

*Numbers less than 6 suppressed or secondary suppression applied to avoid identification of individuals

Table D.3. Ethnicity of young people at the time of referral to secure accommodation

Ethnicity	N	%
Asian / Asian British	21	4.0
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	62	11.8
Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups	80	15.2
Other ethnic group	10	1.9
White	354	67.2



Table D.4: Length of time* the young person was on a CIN plan open at time of referral to secure accommodation

	SCH placement (n=283)	Alternative accommodation (n=186)	Whole Sample (n=469)
Mean	3.5	3.3	3.4
SD	3.4	3.3	3.4
95% CI	(3.1, 3.9)	(2.8, 3.8)	(3.1, 3.7)
Median	2.5	2.1	2.3
Range	4 days - 16.6 years	6 days - 14.1 years	6 days - 16.6 years

*Time in years unless otherwise stated

Table D.5: Age young person started CIN plan open at secure accommodation referral

	SCH placement (n=282)	Alternative accommodation (n=186)	Whole Sample (n=468)
Mean	11.8	12.3	12.0
SD	3.6	3.4	3.5
95% CI	(11.4, 12.2)	(11.8, 12.8)	(11.7, 12.3)
Median	12.9	13.3	13.0
Range	Pre-birth - 17.4 years	2.8 - 17.5 years	Pre-birth - 17.5 years

Table D.6: Number of referrals to children's services within the three years prior to referral to secure accommodation

	SCH placement		Alternative accommodation		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	124	42.0	72	37.3	196	40.2
One	96	32.5	62	32.1	158	32.4
Two	47	15.9	36	18.7	83	17.0
Three	18	6.1	17	8.8	35	7.2
Four or more	10	3.4	6	3.1	16	3.3
Total	295	100	193	100	488	100



Table D.7. Factors identified as concerns during assessments in three years prior to secure accommodation referral

	SCH placement		Alternative accommodation		Whole Sample	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Alcohol misuse (child)	55	34.6	33	29.2	88	32.4
Alcohol misuse (parent/carer)	30	18.9	21	18.6	51	18.8
Alcohol misuse (other in household)	*	*	*	*	12	4.4
Drug misuse (child)	105	66.0	57	50.4	162	59.6
Drug misuse (parent/carer)	36	22.6	17	15.0	53	19.5
Drug misuse (other in household)	12	7.5	9	8.0	21	7.7
Domestic Violence (child as subject)	44	27.7	24	21.2	68	25.0
Domestic Violence (parent/carer)	51	32.1	41	36.3	92	33.8
Domestic Violence (other subject)	20	12.6	11	9.7	31	11.4
Mental health (child)	88	55.3	60	53.1	148	54.4
Mental health (parent/carer)	48	30.2	40	35.4	88	32.4
Mental health (other in household)	*	*	*	*	18	6.6
Learning disability (child)	27	17.0	26	23.0	53	19.5
Learning disability (parent/carers)	*	*	*	*	6	2.2
Learning disability (other in household)	*	*	*	*	9	3.3
Physical disability or illness (child)	*	*	*	*	16	5.9
Physical disability or illness (parent/carer)	21	13.2	18	15.9	39	14.3
Physical disability or illness (other person in household)	*	*	*	*	9	3.3
Young person's caring responsibilities	11	6.9	6	5.3	17	6.3
Private fostering arrangements	*	*	*	*	10	3.7
Child at risk as unaccompanied asylum-seeker	*	*	*	*	*	*
Child at risk due to going/being missing	111	69.8	55	48.7	166	61.0
Child sexual exploitation	90	56.6	37	32.7	127	46.7
Trafficking	19	11.9	8	7.1	27	9.9
Gangs	54	34.0	49	43.4	103	37.9
Socially unacceptable behaviour	112	70.4	72	63.7	184	67.6
Self-harm	61	38.4	39	34.5	100	36.8
Neglect	57	35.8	33	29.2	90	33.1



Emotional abuse	65	40.9	47	41.6	112	41.2
Physical abuse	54	34.0	18	15.9	72	26.5
Sexual abuse	34	21.4	13	11.5	47	17.3
Other	48	30.2	39	34.5	87	32.0
Abuse linked to faith or belief	*	*	*	*	*	*
Whole Sample	159	100.0	113	100.0	272	100.0

*Numbers less than 6 suppressed or secondary suppression applied to avoid identification of individuals

Table D.8. Occurrence of Child Protection Plans

	SCH placement		Alternative accommodation		Whole sample	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Number of CIN Plans in three years before referral to secure accommodation						
None	188	63.3	132	68.0	320	65.2
One	98	33.0	56	28.9	154	31.4
Two or more	11	3.71	6	3.1	17	3.5
Child Protection Plan at Referral	21	7.1	15	7.7	36	7.3
Whole Sample	297	100	194	100	491	100

Table D.9. Latest Categories of Abuse Identified at Child Protection conferences, for Child Protection Plans open during the three years prior to referral to Secure Accommodation

	SCH placement		Alternative accommodation		Whole sample	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Emotional abuse	32	29.9	15	24.2	47	27.8
Neglect	43	40.2	25	40.3	68	40.2
Sexual abuse	19	17.8	6	9.7	25	14.8
Physical abuse	6	5.6	6	9.7	12	7.1
Multiple categories of abuse	7	6.5	10	16.1	17	10.1
Total	107	100	62	100	169	100



Table D.10. Length of time in years the young person was on a CIN plan open at time of referral to secure accommodation by primary need

Primary Need	Mean	SD	Median	95%CI
Abuse or neglect	3.7	3.6	2.5	(0.0, 16.6)
Family Dysfunction	3.7	3.0	2.8	(0.1, 13.8)
Family in Acute Stress	3.3	3.8	2.0	(0.1, 16.5)
Socially Unacceptable Behaviour	1.6	1.2	1.3	(1.2, 5.0)

Table D.11. Number and proportion of "started to be looked after" episodes in the three years prior to referral to secure accommodation

Number of "started to be looked after" episodes	SCH placement		Alternative accommodation		Whole sample	
	N ^a	%	N ^a	%	N ^a	%
1 or more	214	75.4	131	69.3	345	72.9
2 or more	71	25.0	42	22.2	113	23.9
3 or more	22	7.7	9	4.8	31	6.6
4 or more	10	3.5	*	*	13	2.7
5	*	*	*	*	*	*

^aTotals add up to more than the total number of children entering care as cumulative totals given

*Numbers less than 6 suppressed or secondary suppression applied to avoid identification of individuals

Table D.12. Number of days between the latest "started to be looked after" episode and referral to secure accommodation

	SCH placement (n=214)	Alternative accommodation (n=131)	Whole sample (n=345)
Mean	398.0	331.1	372.6
SD	371.5	278.3	340.3
95% CI	(347.9, 448.1)	(283.0, 379.2)	(336.6, 408.6)
Median	289.5	266	275
Range	3 - 2399	1 - 1242	1 - 2399



Table D.13. Number of placement moves three years prior to referral to secure accommodation

	SCH placement (n=271)	Alternative accommodation (n= 178)	Whole sample (n=449)
Mean	5.6	5.4	5.5
SD	3.6	3.5	3.5
95% CI	(5.2, 6.1)	(4.8, 5.9)	(5.2, 5.9)
Median	5	4.5	5
Range	1 - 22	1 - 22	1 - 22

Table D.14. Placement type in the three years prior to referral to secure accommodation

Placement type	SCH placement		Alternative accommodation	
	N	%	N	%
Semi-independent living accommodation not subject to children's homes regulations	38	14.0	31	17.4
SCH	67	24.7	26	14.6
Children's Homes subject to Children's Homes Regulations	220	81.2	137	77.0
Placed with own parent(s) or other person(s) with parental responsibility	30	11.1	24	13.5
Independent living for example, in a flat, lodgings, bedsit, bed and breakfast (B&B) or with friends, with or without formal support	33	12.2	23	12.9
Residential care home	42	15.5	19	10.7
National Health Service (NHS)/health trust or other establishment providing medical or nursing care	10	3.7	15	8.4
Family centre or mother and baby unit	*	*	*	*
Young offender institution (YOI) or prison	*	*	16	9.0
All residential schools, except where dual-registered as a school and children's home	*	*	*	*
Foster placement	197	72.7	109	61.2
Other placements (must be listed on a schedule sent to DfE with annual submission)	9	3.3	9	5.1

*Numbers less than 6 suppressed or secondary suppression applied to avoid identification of individuals



Table D.15. Placement type immediately prior to referral to secure accommodation

Placement type	SCH placement		Alternative accommodation	
	N	%	N	%
Semi-independent living accommodation not subject to children's homes regulations	25	8.8	12	6.3
SCH				
Children's Homes subject to Children's Homes Regulations	129	45.4	53	28.0
Placed with own parent(s) or other person(s) with parental responsibility	*	*	*	*
Independent living for example, in a flat, lodgings, bedsit, bed and breakfast (B&B) or with friends, with or without formal support	23	8.1	11	5.8
Residential care home	16	5.6	*	*
National Health Service (NHS)/health trust or other establishment providing medical or nursing care	*	*	*	*
Young offender institution (YOI) or prison	*	*	*	*
All residential schools, except where dual-registered as a school and children's home	*	*	*	*
Foster placement				
Other placements (must be listed on a schedule sent to DfE with annual submission)	*	*	*	*
Unclear				
	44	15.5	68	36.0

*Numbers less than 6 suppressed or secondary suppression applied to avoid identification of individuals

Table D.16. Distance from home (km) for final placement before SCH or alternative accommodation placement

	SCH placement (n=240)	Alternative accommodation (n=118)
Mean	53.1	54.9
SD	103.9	73.4
95% CI	(39.9, 66.3)	(41.6, 68.3)
Median	21.5	21.6
Range	0 - 999.9	0 - 345.5

Table D.17. Descriptive statistics for the length of stay (days) for final placement before SCH or alternative accommodation placement

	SCH placement (n=240)	Alternative accommodation (n=121)
Mean	81.8	89.2
SD	96.9	170.9
95% CI	(69.5- 94.1)	(58.4, 119.9)
Median	42.5	38
Range	1 - 651	1 -1065



Table D.18 Reason for secure accommodation referral

	Danger to others		Danger to self		History of absconding or likely to abscond for other accommodation	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
SCH placement	35	11.0	124	38.9	160	50.2
Alternative Accommodation	48	23.1	86	41.3	74	35.6

Table D.19. Reason for referral to secure accommodation and age (in years) at time of referral

Age	Danger to others		Danger to self		History of absconding or likely to abscond for other accommodation	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
10	*	*	*	*	*	*
12	*	*	6	35.3	6	35.3
13	10	17.9	18	32.1	28	50.0
14	21	18.9	35	31.5	55	49.5
15	23	14.3	57	35.4	81	50.3
16	14	10.7	64	48.9	53	40.5
17	9	18.4	29	59.2	11	22.4

*Numbers less than 6 suppressed or secondary suppression applied to avoid identification of individuals

Table D.20. Reason for secure accommodation referral and ethnicity

	Danger to others		Danger to self		History of absconding or likely to abscond for other accommodation	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Asian / Asian British	*	*	10	47.6	*	*
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	8	12.9	24	38.7	30	48.4
Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups	15	18.8	28	35.0	37	46.3
Other ethnic group	*	*	*	*	*	*
White	58	16.4	143	40.4	153	43.2

*Numbers less than 6 suppressed or secondary suppression applied to avoid identification of individuals



Table D.21. Number of risk factors among young people referred to secure accommodation

	SCH placement (n=319)	Alternative accommodation (n=208)	Whole sample (n=527)
Mean	5.7	5.8	5.7
SD	1.3	1.3	1.3
95% CI	5.5-5.8	5.6-6.0	5.6-5.8
Median	6	6	6
Range	3-10	2-11	2-11

Table D.22. Risk factors among young people by placement

	SCH placement		Alternative accommodation	
	N	%	N	%
Absconding	314	98.4	203	97.6
Adoption breakdown	16	5.0	15	7.2
Challenging behaviours	259	81.2	193	97.8
Fire setting	38	11.9	24	11.5
Gang affiliation	82	25.7	66	31.7
Mental health	137	42.9	99	47.6
Offending behaviours	235	73.7	173	83.2
Self-harm	161	50.5	104	50
Sexual exploitation	200	62.7	93	44.7
Sexualised behaviour	39 ^a	27.5	30 ^b	29.4
Sexually harming	42	13.2	41	19.7
Substance misuse	267	83.7	164 ^c	79.2
Supporting pregnancy	*	*	*	*

^aData missing (n = 177); ^bData missing (n = 106); ^cData missing (n = 1)

*Numbers less than 6 suppressed or secondary suppression applied to avoid identification of individuals



Table D.23. Time from referral to secure accommodation to a either SCH placement being found or it becoming evident a place could not be offered

Time to placement (in days)	Frequency
0-25	444
26-50	55
51-75	9
76-100	*
101-125	*
126-150	*

*Numbers less than 6 suppressed or secondary suppression applied to avoid identification of individuals

Table D.25. Length of stay for the SCH and alternative accommodation placements

	SCH placement (n=244)*	Alternative accommodation (n=112)*
Mean	136.9	123.8
SD	77.9	88.7
95% CI	(127.1, 146.7)	(107.2, 140.4)
Median	129	106
Range	3 - 364	1 - 364

*excludes young people whose LOS exceeded the 1 year follow up period (SCH n=7; Alternative accommodation placement=22)

Table D.24. Distance from home (km) for the SCH and alternative accommodation placements

	SCH placement (n=251)	Alternative accommodation (n=131)
Mean	141.7	47.9
SD	94.1	54.1
95% CI	(130.0, 153.4)	(38.6, 57.3)
Median	132.3	24.1
Range	0 - 399	0 - 227.4

Table D.26. First placement after either SCH or alternative accommodation

Placement type	SCH placement		Alternative placement	
	N	%	N	%
Semi-independent living accommodation not subject to children's homes regulations	31	10.9	15	7.9
Secure children's homes	19	6.7	17	9.0
Children's Homes subject to Children's Homes Regulations	117	41.2	28	14.8
Placed with own parent(s) or other person(s) with parental responsibility	9	3.2	*	*



Independent living for example, in a flat, lodgings, bedsit, bed and breakfast (B&B) or with friends, with or without formal support	31	10.9	19	10.1
Residential care home	9	3.2	*	*
National Health Service (NHS)/health trust or other establishment providing medical or nursing care	*	*	*	*
Young offender institution (YOI) or prison	*	*	15	7.9
All residential schools, except where dual-registered as a school and children's home	*	*	*	*
Foster placement	16	5.6	7	3.7
Other placements (must be listed on a schedule sent to DfE with annual submission)	*	*	*	*
Unclear	44	15.5	78	41.3

Table D.27. Distance from home (km) of the first placement after the SCH or alternative accommodation

	SCH placement (n=240)	Alternative accommodation (n=109)
Mean	72.1	59.0
SD	115.3	77.7
95% CI	(57.4, 86.7)	(44.2, 73.8)
Median	31.7	26.9
Range	0 - 999.9	0 - 374.3

Table D.29. Number of placement moves in the year after referral to a secure accommodation

	SCH placement (n=281)	Alternative accommodation (n=171)	Whole sample (n=452)
Mean	3.3	3.3	3.3
SD	1.6	2.0	1.7
95% CI	(3.1, 3.5)	(3.0, 3.6)	(3.2, 3.5)
Median	3	3	3
Range	1 - 11	1 - 12	1 - 12

Table D.28. Length of stay (days) of the first placement after SCH or alternative accommodation

	SCH placement (n=171)*	Alternative accommodation (n=79)*
Mean	98.8	91.4
SD	82.2	74.2
95% CI	(86.4, 111.2)	(74.8, 108.0)
Median	85	76
Range	1 - 357	1 - 320

Table D.30. Descriptive statistics for SDQ during year of referral to secure accommodation

	SCH placement (n=103)	Alternative accommodation (n=70)	Whole sample (n 173)
Mean	18.5	17.9	18.2
SD	7.3	7.2	7.2
95% CI	(17.0, 19.9)	(16.2, 19.6)	(17.1, 19.3)
Median	19	20	19
Range	0 - 33	1 - 30	0 - 33

*excluded young people whose LOS exceeded the 1 year follow up period (SCH n=69; Alternative accommodation placement=32)



Table D.31. Descriptive statistics for SDQ during year before referral to secure accommodation

	SCH placement (n=68)	Alternative accommodation (n=56)	Whole sample (n=124)
Mean	19.5	19.1	19.3
SD	5.9	8.4	7.1
95% CI	(18.1, 20.9)	(16.9, 21.4)	(18.0, 20.6)
Median	20	19.5	20
Range	5-32	1-38	1-38

Table D.33. Change in SDQ scores after referral to secure accommodation

	Change in improved score (n=19)	Change in worsened score (n=28)
Mean	6.2	8.4
SD	3.5	5.7
95% CI	(7.8, 4.5)	(6.2, 10.6)
Median	5	7.5
Range	1-13	1-21

Table D.32. Descriptive statistics for SDQ during year after referral to secure accommodation

	SCH placement (n=110)	Alternative accommodation (n=61)	Whole sample (n=171)
Mean	16.7	18.2	17.2
SD	7.4	7.7	7.5
95% CI	(15.3, 18.1)	(16.2, 20.2)	(16.1, 18.4)
Median	17	19	18
Range	0 - 34	1 - 33	0 - 34



Appendix E: Economic Costings

Table E.34. Types of placements and source of unit

Placement type	Source of unit costs		Costs per day
Residential accommodation not subject to children's Homes Regulations	Three English local authority borough council	Freedom of information requests	£196.42
Placed in SCH	Ministry of justice	https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-05-15/144303/	£628
	SWCU	Average cost for place for welfare reasons	£1008
Children's home	Children's homes data pack DfE	https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/388701/Childrens_Homes_data_pack_Dec_2014.pdf	£473.21
Residential care home	PSSRU 2013	https://www.pssru.ac.uk/pub/uc/uc2013/full-with-covers.pdf	
	PSSRU 2013	https://www.pssru.ac.uk/pub/uc/uc2013/full-with-covers.pdf	£473.21
All residential schools, except where dual registered as a school and children's home	PSSRU 2013	https://www.pssru.ac.uk/pub/uc/uc2013/full-with-covers.pdf	£473.21
Placed with own parents or other person with parental responsibility	Costs and consequences of placing children in care		£32.49
Independent living	Costs and consequences of placing children in care		£121.27
NHS/Health Trust or other establishment providing medical or nursing care	The cost of late intervention: EIF analysis 2016		£733



	3b Who are they? where are they? Children locked up	https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/who-are-they-where-are-they/	
Young offender institution or prison	Ministry of Justice Information release: Costs per place and costs per prisoner by individual prison. Published 31 October 2019	https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/prison-performance-statistics-2018-to-2019	£207.76
	Ministry of justice	https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-05-15/144303/	
Foster care	PSSRU 2019	https://www.pssru.ac.uk/project-pages/unit-costs/unit-costs-2019/	£87
Other placements		https://doncasterchildcare.proceduresonline.com/pdfs/guidance_s38.pdf	£32.49
Residential care funded by adult social services	PSSRU 2019	https://www.pssru.ac.uk/project-pages/unit-costs/unit-costs-2019/	£217.57
Family centre or mother and baby unit	PSSRU 2015	https://www.pssru.ac.uk/project-pages/unit-costs/unit-costs-2015/	£753.08



What Works *for* Children's Social Care

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