

Individual Report

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Introduction

This report will evaluate the current crisis within the Children's social care system in the United Kingdom. Examining the effects the crisis is having on staff services and the impact this is creating for vulnerable children, particularly in England.

The report will outline information based on several key factors which are contributing to this crisis, including shortages of foster care placements for children, as well as the rising levels of child poverty and reductions in early intervention funding.

Furthermore, this report will adopt a qualitative research approach to gain an understanding of current challenges in the children's social care sector using secondary research.

Task 1 – Selection of a research topic

1.1 The issue and why it matters

The Children's social care system is currently experiencing a crisis in England; this is due to growing concerns based on placements in illegal home settings for vulnerable children in foster care. This heavily impacts children's safety as they are being housed in environments such as air bnbs and caravans, which highlights safeguarding risks and concerns on the implications this can have on the children's wellbeing, including their mental health. "It is illegal to run a children's home or supported accommodation that is not registered with Ofsted" (UK Parliament Committee, 2026). Alongside the children, these ongoing issues are having a negative effect on Social Workers, creating illegal decision making to temporarily place children in unsuitable settings on an emergency basis, they do this as they have no other choice.

Reductions in early intervention funding by the government seems to be a major cause of this crisis, directly impacting the support in early help services which are designed as preventative measures to stop or prevent children from entering the care system. With reduced funding this "has resulted in the closure of over 1,000 children's centres and 750 youth centres across England since 2010/11, particularly impacting the most deprived areas." (Larkham, J. and Ren, A. (2025).

This crisis identifies concerns for children's behavioural, cognitive, social and physical development, especially in those who are being placed in unsafe environments, which are illegally not Ofsted registered.

1.2 Personal reflection – why I chose this topic

Reflecting on the above, I chose to research the Children's social care system and the current problems it is facing as I feel this topic relates to the future career path I wish to take in becoming a Social Worker or Children's Wellbeing Practitioner. Researching these current issues is giving me an in depth understanding of the role and negative issues which may

arise. Recent experience caring for an individual who has lived through the foster care system sparked an interest in this topic, as well as the knowledge of the impact these care systems can have on children's mental health, and throughout adolescence.

Task 2 – Evaluating Information Sources

2.1 Source 1 -

UK Parliament Public Accounts Committee (2026) Hundreds of vulnerable children placed in illegal homes for months by care system. Available at:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/127/public-accounts-committee/news/211346/hundreds-of-vulnerable-children-placed-in-illegal-homes-for-months-by-care-system/> (Accessed: 14 April 2026).

This report highlights concerns surrounding the children's social care system, indicating serious failures in the safeguarding of children, in particular the issues regarding unstable environments and unregistered care settings. The source argues that there is a lack in oversight throughout the social care system, noting these unregistered homes are unsafe, and deemed illegal whereby these settings are not inspected or Ofsted registered, thus there is no guarantee of safety for these vulnerable children and a lack in quality of care for them. Overall, the source suggests the system is not working efficiently and therefore failing, putting vulnerable children at risk.

Applying the CRAAP test, this source proves credible to my research as it is reported on a reliable UK Parliament public website, the information is current and has relevance to my topic on the current crisis within the Children's social care system, highlighting issues surrounding foster care placements and the negative impact its having on both vulnerable children and Social Workers.

2.2 Source 2-

Hood, R., Goldacre, A., et al. (2025) , what factors are associated with placement instability for children in children's homes in England? A retrospective cohort analysis using national administrative data, *The British Journal of Social Work*. Oxford University Press. (Accessed: 15 April 2026)

This article provides an examination of children's social care experience in England, specifically focusing on the instability and how often children are moved between different care placements. Key points argued that there is an increase in the number of children in care, however nowhere near enough suitable placements to support this growing number. These care arrangements have negative effects on the children's long-term health and wellbeing.

The source in this article is credible due to being published by Oxford University, and the study has been evaluated by several experts within this field.

It shows sufficient evidence within the research and supports the argument that there is a current crisis in the Children's social care system within the United Kingdom.

2.3 Source 3-

Gov.uk (2022) Research and analysis Final Report (Accessed: 15 April 2026)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-social-care-market-study-final-report/final-report#:~:text=Overall%2C%20our%20view%20is%20that,placements%20of%20children%20in%20care>

The report analyses a market study into children's social care in England, Scotland and Wales. Two concerns were raised, importantly highlighting the unavailability of access for appropriate placements within the foster care system and the significant impact this has on meeting the needs of children within these care environments. In addition to sources 1 and 2 stated above, this report is also a highly credible source of information as it was published on the official UK government website and involves relevant material in relation to the current crisis within the Children's social care system, looking more closely at the need to review the functionality of the placements market needed in foster care.

2.4 Gaps in current research

There are major gaps in evidence and understanding across the Children's social care system in the United Kingdom. Whilst it is understood there is a crisis, the question is, why is the situation getting worse?

Current research identifies the need for more placements in foster care, and shows the negative impact in most cases that this is having on the children, however there is a lack of understanding in the long-term outcomes into adulthood for those children living within the care system and how this affects their stability, mental health and employment whilst growing up. Moreover, there is limited understanding of how unmet mental health needs in children could directly influence care entry.

Task 3 – Research Methodologies

3.1 Definitions and examples

Qualitative research refers to the use of non-numerical data to understand concepts, experiences and opinions, using observations to answer “Why” questions.

An example of this could include a case study providing an in depth look at the NHS Social Worker staff shortages and the impact this is having on workforce burnout and children within this social care setting.

Quantitative research involves the collection of numerical data, typically measuring values or counts to address the “How” questions. A research method could consist of a survey questionnaire for patients in hospitals to analyse patient satisfaction with care quality and NHS waiting times.

Mixed methods research is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research, integrating both sets of data into a single study to provide more in-depth findings. (Ahmed et al., 2024).

For this type of research, an example would be a study that explores the relationship between nursing care practices in care homes and patient satisfaction. This could include a quantitative survey to understand general services provided by care home nurses, followed by qualitative interviews with patients.

3.2 Chosen Methodology and Justification

Qualitative research is an effective way of exploring lived experiences; therefore, I would use this approach for my study. I selected this method as a qualitative interview approach is appropriate for researching the current crisis in childrens social care. It enables a detailed and more in depth understanding of the perspectives and experiences with those involved in foster care placements and explores how this directly affects the children, Social Workers and Foster carers. I feel these sensitive issues could not be fully understood be fully understood through numerical data, therefore a qualitative research approach would prove more beneficial.

Task 4 – Data Collection

4.1 Primary Vs Secondary data

The difference between primary and secondary research is how the data is initially collected. Primary data focuses on first-hand collection, which is originally sourced by the individual, whereas secondary data already exists and has been collected by someone else.

4.2 Chosen Data Type and Justification

Currently for this assignment, I have used secondary data to help research my chosen topic. There are numerous articles based on the crisis within Children's social care settings, as this is an ongoing issue and has many areas for concern, in the case of vulnerable children and staff members within this Health and Social care field.

Going forward, when researching more in depth, I would personally use Primary data by way of qualitative research methods, involving questionnaires, in person interviews and surveys; collecting this data first hand to gain insight and understanding through the young people, carers and Social Workers and how they feel this crisis impacts them, how it may affect their mental state and what could be done to improve the wellbeing of all involved, especially the more vulnerable cases.

Advantages of using primary data collection is the acknowledgement that the data collected is up to date information, holds relevancy and will be specific to this research topic.

On the other hand, challenges could be faced when collecting primary data due to the time it can take an individual, more time would need to be dedicated for practical work and creations of surveys/questionnaires. Whereas secondary data has convenience as information is readily available and can be accessible in a more time efficient manner.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the crisis in the children's social care system is an ongoing problem within the United Kingdom. The issues found in this research have long term consequences on some of the most vulnerable children in England, and it is having a negative impact on the social care workforce, proving that the underfunding of early intervention help and unmanageable foster care placements is causing instability within this sector, therefore showing the system is struggling to provide the consistent support required.

These matters are significantly important not only for the urgency in safeguarding children, but also for the vulnerability it causes in their long-term life outcomes including mental health, education and social interactions in adulthood.

Understanding this crisis more in depth would require either a qualitative or mixed-methods approach in research to identify any gaps and effectively provide insight into lived experiences and any challenges it exposes. Using these research approaches will allow for human perspective on this crisis and the combination of both primary and secondary data sources can navigate a better understanding of evidence-based research, highlight disadvantages of system weaknesses and create a deeper awareness of what needs to be worked on going forward to prioritise children's welfare needs, and a more sustainable working environment for those working in this health and social care sector.

References

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<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/384402328> Mixed Methods Research Combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches

2. (Gov.uk March 2022) *Research and analysis Final Report* (Accessed: 15 April 2026)

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4. (Larkham, J. and Ren, A. (2025))

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