
Title registration for an evidence and gap map: Institutional responses to child maltreatment

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Other:

Plans to co-register:

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Yes Cochrane Other

Maybe

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Title of the EGM

Institutional responses to child maltreatment: an evidence and gap map

This EGM will cover studies reporting on the evidence for the effectiveness of interventions aimed at safeguarding children within institutional settings, including e.g. schools, out-of-home care, sport clubs, religious institutions and comparable institutional settings in which children live and / or spend their time.

Background

In recent years, child maltreatment occurring in institutional settings has received substantial attention both at the policy level, amongst practitioners and service agencies working with children in different capacities and roles, and as part of the public debate.

By ‘child maltreatment’, we mean physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, including child neglect.

The shift in attention and prioritisation of child maltreatment as a key concern of society is reflected in a broad range of official inquiries and key reports conducted in recent years in especially high-income countries - of which the following is a selected sample:

- Law Commission of Canada (2012). [Restoring Dignity – Responding to Child Abuse in Canadian Institutions](#)
- The Scottish Government (2012). [Review of Child Neglect in Scotland](#)
- New Zealand House of Representatives (2014). [Inquiry into Improving Child Health Outcomes and preventing child abuse with a focus from preconception until three years of age](#)
- [Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse](#) (Australia, 2014-2017)
- [Northern Ireland Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry 1922-1995](#) (2017)
- Pennsylvania Attorney General (2018). [Pennsylvania Diocese Victims Report](#).
- [Unabhängige Kommission zur Aufarbeitung sexuellen Kindesmissbrauchs](#) (Germany, 2016-2023)

While these inquiries have led to the production of many research reports – among them a number of systematic reviews – there is still considerable confusion amongst sector stakeholders and a lack of clarity about what evidence exists for safeguarding interventions developed for use in institutional settings.

An evidence and gap map aiming to support both practitioners, organisational leaders, policy developers and research organisations could provide direction at multiple levels of the

service system: It can support stakeholders in selecting and improving institutional safeguarding practice, and inform both the commissioning of research and the development of safeguarding policies.

Existing EGMs

To our knowledge, there are only two evidence and gap maps – both of which are registered with the Campbell Collaboration – that relate to the topic of child maltreatment. One of these ([Kornør et al., 2017](#)) is in development still, while the other ([Saran et al., 2018](#)) has been developed in full and is available in the public domain.

However, the focus of the former EGM is child abuse and neglect in general, with a focus on clinical interventions and hence does not keep a focus on institutional settings where the evidence on the effectiveness of non-clinical interventions aimed at enhancing e.g. organisational standards or disclosure rates, is of particular interest.

The second evidence and gap map includes 302 systematic reviews on a broad range of child welfare interventions and outcomes with a focus on evidence relating to low and middle income countries. Interventions addressing child abuse are a minor element of this EGM and no particular focus on institutional settings is described.

The above means that the EGM described here will be a genuine and much needed contribution to the evidence base on child maltreatment in institutional settings and a resource for a broad range of stakeholders operating in child health, welfare and protection sectors.

Suggested dimensions

Based on the intervention-outcome framework common for evidence and gap maps, the following grid reflects suggested dimensions for organising the evidence that will emerge as part of literature searches.

Note that this grid is of preliminary nature and will be further refined at protocol stage and in producing the map itself.

Preliminary framework: EGM on child maltreatment in institutional settings

		Institutional practice		Disclosure	Child maltreatment			Child health & wellbeing				Perpetrators		Non-offending carers		
Intervention focus	Addressing	Staff awareness	Policy implementation	Disclosure rates	Neglect	Emotional abuse	Physical abuse	Sexual abuse	Knowledge / awareness	Physical health	Mental health	Behavioural health	Desistance	Recidivism	Health	Wellbeing
PREVENTION	Victim															
	Perpetrator															
	Organisational context															
TREATMENT	Victim															
	Perpetrator															
	Org. context															
DISCLOSURE	Victim															
	Perpetrator															
	Org. context															
RESPONSE	Victim															
	Perpetrator															
	Org. context															

Intervention(s) or problem

The guiding research question for this evidence and gap map is:

What is the prevalence of evidence on the effectiveness of interventions that – within institutional settings – are aiming to

- *Prevent the occurrence of maltreatment of children;*
- *Prevent the recurrence of maltreatment of children;*
- *Reduce harm to the health and wellbeing of children exposed to child maltreatment;*
- *Enhance the disclosure of child maltreatment; and*
- *Improve organisational practice and standards for addressing issues related to child maltreatment?*

Based on this question, the below list of inclusion and exclusion criteria for both the EGM– child maltreatment – and eligible interventions has been developed. This list is preliminary and will be further refined at protocol stage.

FOCUS	CRITERIA	
	Included	Excluded
Child maltreatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child sexual abuse • Child physical abuse, including corporal punishment • Child emotional / psychological abuse • Child neglect (incl. inadequate food, but also inadequate love/care) • Child on child abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child prostitution • Child marriage • Bullying • Domestic violence • Female circumcision • Sugar daddies
Interventions	<p>Aimed at supporting institutions to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilitate disclosure / detect maltreatment • improve institutional practice related to child maltreatment • respond to the detection of maltreatment (including e.g. restorative justice) • prevent child maltreatment • treat (the consequences of) child maltreatment. 	<p>Addressing issues of child maltreatment outside of institutional settings, e.g. within the home, in public spaces</p>
Setting	<p>Institutional settings, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindergarten / preschool settings, • Schools / after-school settings, • Sports clubs, • Churches / religious institutions, • Summer / vacation camps, • Out-of-home care settings (OOHC) • Orphanages • Detention centres • Rescue centres 	<p>Non-institutional settings, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home- / family settings • Public spaces • Corporate settings

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any other type of organisation / institutional setting in which children may spend their time. 	
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Population

This EGM will focus on studies testing interventions aiming to enhance outcomes for children:

- aged 0-17 years at the point of baseline measurement,
- living in and/or engaging in activities taking place in institutional settings

Whilst children are the key target population, study participants may still be adults in that this EGM aims to include evidence on interventions that improve the professional practice of staff and organisational standards of agencies providing services to children and families.

The EGM is global: it will include studies conducted in low, middle and high-income countries. The EGM will not be limited to at-risk populations only but take a whole-of-population approach and thereby include both universal, early and targeted interventions.

Studies written in multiple languages will be eligible for the EGM, including:

- English
- German
- French
- Spanish
- Italian
- Portuguese
- Dutch
- Danish
- Swedish
- Norwegian

No limitations will be put on years.

Outcomes

For outcomes to be included in this EGM, please refer to the preliminary version of the EGM grid shown on page 4 above.

As can be seen from this grid, for outcomes of interest, the primary focus will be on six different outcome domains:

- Institutional practice*** – focused on the quality and standards with which institutions work to address issues of child maltreatment

- ***Child maltreatment disclosure*** – focused on rates of child maltreatment disclosure within institutional settings
- ***Child maltreatment occurrence*** – focused on the (re-)occurrence of different forms of child maltreatment
- ***Child health and wellbeing*** – focused on the safety, physical and mental health and wellbeing of children in relation to issues of maltreatment within institutional settings
- ***Perpetrator outcomes*** – focused on rates of desistance or recidivism amongst perpetrators and other relevant outcomes related to offenders or others at risk of maltreating children within institutional settings
- ***Non-offending carer outcomes*** – focused on the safety, physical and mental health and wellbeing of the non-offending caregivers to children exposed to child maltreatment interventions within institutional settings

Study designs

This EGM is focused on studies that report on the effectiveness of child maltreatment interventions used within institutional settings. With this scope in mind, it will include the following study designs.

Finalised and ongoing:

- Randomised controlled trials
- Quasi-experimental designs
- Systematic reviews of studies using randomised controlled or quasi-experimental designs
- Overviews of systematic reviews of studies using randomised controlled or quasi-experimental designs

Ongoing studies will be identified through registered protocols based on database searches / trial registries and grey literature searches (to be described further in the EGM protocol).

The above implies that the following study designs will be excluded from this EGM:

- Non-controlled pre-post evaluations
- Case studies
- Opinion pieces, editorials

Stakeholder engagement

The scope of this EGM was developed in close collaboration between

- The [Porticus](#), represented by
 - Jane Leek, Regional Director, Porticus UK
 - Joachim Krapels, Senior Analyst, Porticus Effective Philanthropy Group
- Giving Evidence, represented by its CEO Caroline Fiennes
- The Centre for Evidence and Implementation, represented by Director Bianca Albers
- Monash University, represented by Professor Aron Shlonsky

This team will continue to collaborate around producing this EGM and facilitate joint decision-making.

In addition to these key stakeholders, a group of subject matter experts has been convened to ensure that all relevant aspects of child maltreatment within institutional settings are sufficiently captured throughout the EGM production. This group has been gathered once already to a general information and engagement meeting. In subsequent steps, this group will be included in sourcing relevant publications to be considered for the EGM and in disseminating the final EGM amongst relevant organisations, institutions and networks around the world. The current composition of this group is reflected in the table below. Further experts may be added as the EGM production progresses.

	Name	Organisational affiliation	Country
1	Professor Leah Bromfield	Australian Centre for Child Protection, University of South Australia	AUS
2	Professor Daryl Higgins	Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University	AUS
3	Professor Ben Mathews	Director, Childhood Adversity Research Program, Faculty of Health, Queensland University of Technology	AUS
4	Emeritus Professor Stephen Smallbone	Griffith University, Australia	AUS
5	Mathieu Lacambre / Wayne Bodkin	Department of Forensic Psychiatry, University Hospital Montpellier, France	F
6	Dr Karen Devries / Louise Knight	London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, U.K.	UK
7	Donald Findlater / Stuart Allardyce	'Stop It Now' / Lucy Faithfull Foundation, U.K.	UK
8	Honorary Professor Derek E. Perkins	School of Law, Royal Holloway University of London, U.K.	UK
9	Professor Richard Wortley	University College London, U.K.	UK
10	Professor Elizabeth J. Letourneau	Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health	US
11	Professor Jennie Noll	Penn State College of Health and Human Development	US
12	Dr Bruce Taylor	NORC, University of Chicago	US

References

- Kornør, H., John, D., Axelsdottir, B., Biedilæ, S., & Albers, B. (2018). Interventions for Child Abuse and Neglect: title registration for an evidence and gap map, Campbell Collaboration
https://campbellcollaboration.org/media/k2/attachments/SWCG_Kornor_EGM_Title.pdf
- Saran, A., Albright, K., Adona, J., & White, H. (2018). Mega-map of systematic reviews and evidence and gap maps on the effectiveness of interventions to improve child welfare in low-and middle-income countries (LMICs), Campbell Collaboration
https://www.campbellcollaboration.org/media/k2/attachments/SWCG_Saran_EGM_Title.pdf

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Roles and responsibilities

The three key competency areas – content, methods and information retrieval – required for this EGM will be covered by research team members in the following way:

- **Content:** Professor Aron Shlonsky will provide content expertise in producing this EGM. Joachim Krapels will provide content-focused input to the development of the map, representing the perspective of the funder – Porticus (described further below)
 - Professor Aron Shlonsky is Professor and Head of Social Work at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. After graduating from UC Berkeley with a doctorate in social welfare and a master's degree in public health, Shlonsky was an Assistant Professor at Columbia University School of Social Work and was then Factor-Inwentash Chair in Child Welfare at the University of Toronto Faculty of Social Work. Shlonsky is known internationally for his work in risk assessment for child maltreatment and domestic violence, child welfare practice and policy, data analytics and the use of evidence to inform practice and policy. He also has had a long-term involvement with the Campbell Collaboration. Shlonsky has been investigator and Co-Investigator on a large number of impact evaluations of systems that provide services to children and families and has authored and co-authored numerous other books and peer-reviewed articles on issues related to evidence-based child welfare practice and child maltreatment. This includes the lead authorship for multiple reports commissioned by the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse between 2014 and 2017.
 - Joachim Krapels is a Senior Analyst at Porticus, supporting the production of this EGM. He provided early input on the scope, framing and content of the EGM, bringing the perspective of Porticus to the work. He will not be engaged in detailing the methods for producing this EGM, the retrieval, screening and assessing of literature or the synthesis of findings. However, he will review findings and as part of that process provide suggestions from perspective of the funder.
- **EGM methods:** Bianca Albers and Professor Aron Shlonsky will provide methods expertise in producing this EGM
 - Bianca Albers Bianca Albers is a Director, heading CEI's work with knowledge synthesis and translation. Ms Albers has extensive experience in conducting different types of systematic literature reviews for policy and practice use. She has been involved in the production of full systematic reviews, rapid evidence assessments, scoping reviews, reviews of reviews and evidence and gap maps - commissioned among others by the VIC Department of Health and Human Services Australia (EGM on child and family services); the NSW Department of Family and Community Services (Australia – EGM on OOHC); World Health Organisation (full systematic reviews on Community Health Worker Programmes), and The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (multiple projects).
 - In questions that require particular methodical and / or statistical expertise, Ms Albers will be supported by Professor Aron Shlonsky, who also will review key documents outlining the methods for this EGM before these are applied.

- **Information retrieval:**

- The production of this EGM will be supported by a Monash University librarian. While there is a clear agreement to involve Monash University in this capacity, the identification of the librarian is pending. His / her profile will be included in the protocol for this EGM.

In addition to the above functions, the daily management of the EGM production, including coordination of multiple, parallel work processes, stakeholder engagement and communication and other responsibilities will be shared by Caroline Fiennes and Bianca Albers.

The screening of literature, quality assessments and coding of studies and comparable research tasks will be solved by two research assistants – Ludvig Bjørndal and James Hennessy – under the daily supervision of Bianca Albers. If issues – e.g. particular methodical questions - require specialist expertise, Professor Shlonsky will be involved on an ‘as-needed’ basis.

Funding

The proposed EGM will be funded by [Porticus](#), an international organisation managing and developing the philanthropic programmes of charitable entities established by Brenninkmeijer family entrepreneurs. Porticus is involved with and fund a broad range of social service activities, including to both faith-based organisations, and organisations unrelated to religious institutions.

Potential conflicts of interest

Porticus has supported, and currently supports, efforts among its grantees to improve organisational safeguarding of children. Specifically, Porticus

- requires from all its grantees to have a safeguarding policy
- works with some grantees to further develop interventions that can make the organisations safer.

These projects are conducted in collaboration with both faith-based organisations and non-faith-based organisations. To ensure that all standards for the production of a Campbell EGM are met, Porticus has not been and will not be involved in any technical steps taken to produce the EGM, including information retrieval, data analysis and reporting of findings.

Porticus commissions this EGM to further support its own and others’ ongoing work to enhance organisational safeguarding.

Professor Aron Shlonsky and Ms Bianca Albers have co-authored multiple publications commissioned by the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse including the following:

- **Shlonsky, A., Albers, B., & Paterson, N.** (2017). *Research Report - Rapid evidence review on the availability, modality and effectiveness of psychosocial support services for child and adult victims and survivors of child sexual abuse - Treatment and support needs* (pp. 1–85). Melbourne: University of Melbourne - School of Health Sciences.
- **Shlonsky, A., Albers, B., Tolliday, D., Wilson, S. J., Norvell, J., & Kissinger, L.** (2017). [Rapid evidence assessment: Current best evidence in the therapeutic treatment of children with problem or harmful sexual behaviours, and children who have sexually offended](#) (pp. 1–114). Sydney: Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.
- **valentine, K., Katz, I., Smyth, C., Bent, C., Spada-Rinaldis, S., Wade, C., & Albers, B.** (2016). [Key Elements of Child Safe Organisations – Research Study](#) (pp. 1–112). Sydney: Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Commonwealth of Australia.
- **Albers, B., & Mildon, R.** (2016). *Implementation best practice: A rapid evidence assessment* (pp. 1–143). Melbourne: The Parenting Research Centre for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.
- **South, S., Shlonsky, A., & Mildon, R.** (2014). [Scoping review: Evaluations of out-of-home care practice elements that aim to prevent child sexual abuse](#). Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.
- **South, S., Shlonsky, A., & Mildon, R.** (2015). [Scoping review: Evaluations of pre-employment screening practices for child-related work that aim to prevent child sexual abuse](#). Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Preliminary timeframe

- Date we plan to submit a draft protocol: Two weeks post the approval of this title registration
- Date we plan to submit a draft EGM: three months post the approval of the EGM protocol