Thank you.

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| Host department: Southampton |
| Project Title: Access to healthcare for children aged 0-5: understanding and mapping parental help-seeking behaviour. |
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| Proposed supervisory team: |
| Prof Ingrid Muller  Prof Matthew Ridd (Bristol)  Other members of the supervisory team: Prof Miriam Santer (Southampton) |
| Potential for cross consortium networking and educational opportunities: |
| There will be strong opportunities for collaboration, including links with ongoing research groups specialising in common childhood conditions at Southampton and Bristol’s Centre for Applied Excellence in Skin and Allergy Research (CAESAR). There will be opportunities to link with other PhD students and senior academics in the NIHR School for Primary Care Research and NIHR Three Schools (NIHR Schools for Primary Care, Public Health and Social Care) Mental Health Programme. |
| Project description: |
| Young children frequency experience symptoms such as colic, vomiting, fever, rash, sleep problems, constipation that can be worrying for parents/carers. More than 80% of parents report seeking online health advice and information and this continues to increase. Parents also often consult for common self-limiting conditions, particularly in general practice, out of hours and A&E. Little is known about how help -seeking behaviours have changed in recent years, how parents make help-seeking decisions, and how they access information, advice and support in a post-pandemic context.  This project aims to understand and map help-seeking behaviour and access to health services for children under five. The supervisory team will work with candidates to develop the project objectives related to this area. We propose:   1. Systematic review and synthesis of qualitative studies of common infant symptoms and parental help-seeking behaviour 2. Qualitative interview study with parents/carers about how and when they access health services. 3. Qualitative interviews with primary and secondary care health professionals and/or ethnography in urgent treatment centres. 4. Complex systems analysis to produce a systems map of care pathways. Systems mapping will map direct and indirect care pathways for parents/carers to explore how they get support and advice for their child’s symptoms. |
| Indicative project costs: |
| Salary – three years full-time (pro rata if part-time)  Training expenses (over course of doctorate) to include PhD fees, Training courses and conferences (2 UK and 1 international conference). Total estimated £30,000.  Research costs will be required for data collection travel, interview transcription, incentives, stakeholder workshops and PPIE. Total estimated £15,000. |
| Training and development provision by host: |
| *Formal training:*  The training plan will be informed by an analysis of the academic needs of the PhD candidate carried out in the first month. Training will be directed towards the needs of the PhD project and helping the candidate develop as an independent researcher.  The formal taught postgraduate research training programme at the University of Southampton and Bristol Medical School includes epidemiology, statistics, research governance and study design. In addition, transferable skills courses are offered including Good Clinical Practice, time management, leadership, grant writing, and presentation skills. The Fellow will also be able to access masterclasses on systematic reviews, research governance, ethics, patient and public involvement and engagement, developed by leaders in the SPCR. |
| *Informal training:*  The Fellow will also be offered mentorship from a senior primary care academic working in an external institution, meeting twice a year. Mentors receive formal training, developed by the Society for Academic Primary Care, to ensure independence and appropriate support. The Fellow will also have access to informal mentoring from senior members of the collaboration at an annual training meeting, and to participate in doctoral exchange programmes. |
| *PPIE*:  We will work with patient and public partners at all stages to ensure that this research is addressing the needs of families and the public and is feasible and acceptable. The Fellow will have access to established PPIE advisory groups and have support from PPIE officer Kate Henaghan-Sykes, as well as the supervisory team, in planning and carrying out involvement and engagement activities. |