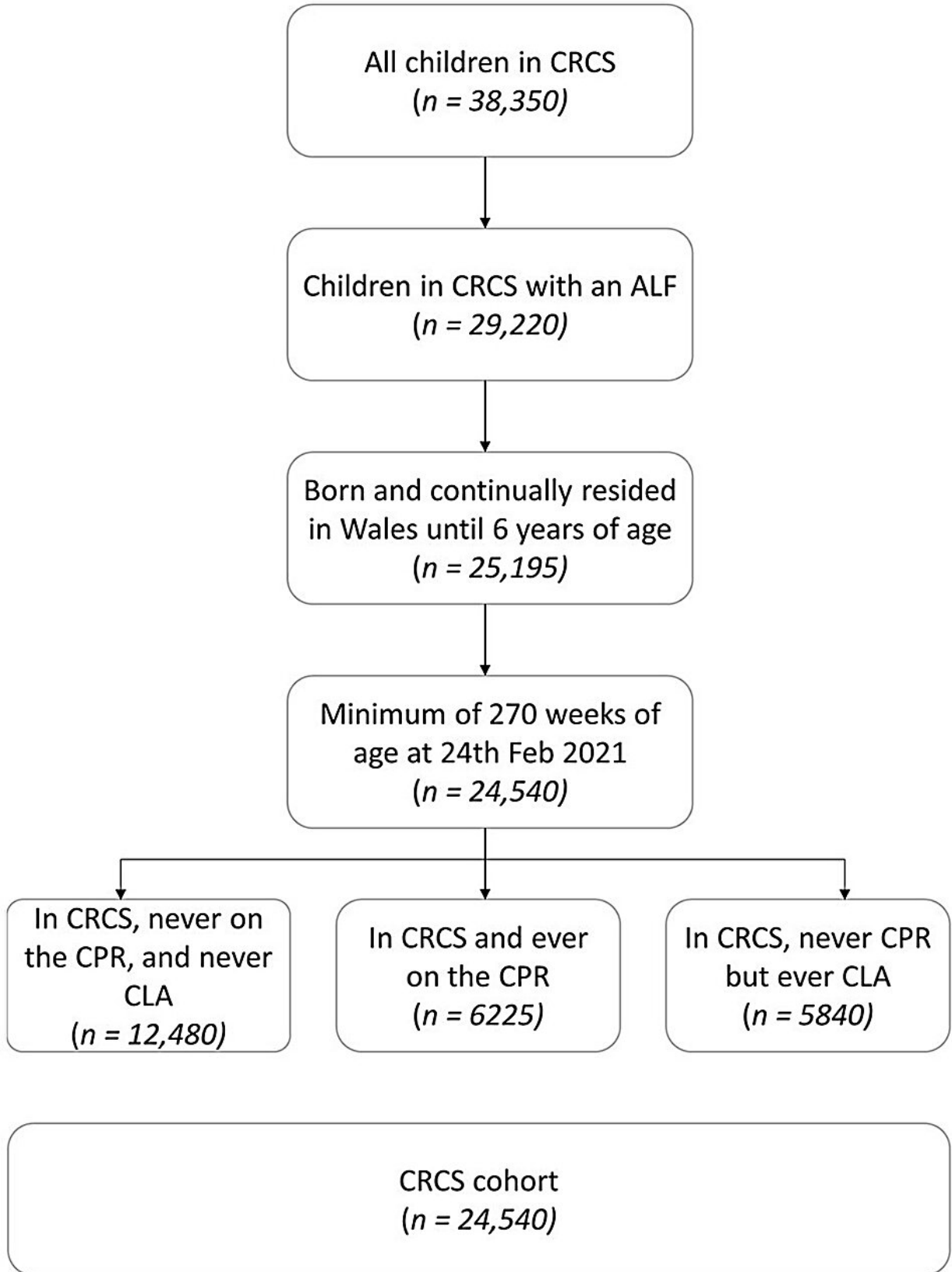


Children receiving care and support in Wales are more likely to be up to date with immunizations

August 21 2023



Consort creation flow chart. Credit: *Frontiers in Public Health* (2023). DOI: 10.3389/fpubh.2023.1231264

A new study has revealed that children receiving services under a care and support plan had higher overall vaccination rates and were more up to date with immunizations than the general child population in Wales.

Published in *Frontiers in Public Health*, the research by experts at Population Data Science at Swansea University in collaboration with experts at Cardiff University and University College London represents the first data linkage study to explore vaccination coverage in [children](#) under social care services in Wales.

In the UK, a robust childhood immunization program ensures children are offered protection against serious infections; identifying inequalities in vaccination coverage is essential. The team explored coverage of primary, as well as preschool boosters and second doses of MMR vaccines.

The analysis included records from the Children Receiving Care and Support (CRCS) Census and the National Community Child Health Database, which contains vaccination records for all children in Wales registered for NHS care.

The study analyzed data from the [Secure Anonymised Information Linkage \(SAIL\) Databank](#) and examined the immunization status of children living in Wales between April 2016 and March 2021.

Its key findings were:

- Children receiving care or support were less likely to have

missing vaccines than those within the population comparison group;

- Children receiving care or support were more likely to be up to date with all six vaccines compared to children in the comparison group;
- However, those vaccinated were less likely to be vaccinated in a timely manner; both early and delayed vaccinations were more common; and
- Immunization flags were accurate for around 70 percent of children's records within the CRCS Census. An immunization flag is a notation in a person's [health](#) record that shows whether they are considered up to date with their vaccinations or not. Exploring accuracy of immunization flags is important as inaccurate immunization flags can have significant consequences—if vaccinations are missed for certain diseases, children may be left vulnerable to preventable infections.

Grace Bailey, from Population Data Science at Swansea University, said, "Our study reveals that looked after children in Wales are more likely to be up to date with immunizations than the general child population."

"Early and delayed vaccinations were common—demonstrating that more inter-disciplinary coordination and planning are needed to improve outcomes."

"This work provides vital insights that can inform targeted interventions and help prioritize efforts in areas that need catch-up programs."

Sally Holland, from the Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre at Cardiff University, added, "Our findings suggest that social services and health colleagues' efforts to support children who have faced more challenges than the general population are paying dividends when it comes to immunization."

"Immunization programs are a key intervention for improving [population](#) health. Our research can inform and contribute to ongoing efforts to improve immunization programs across Wales, ensuring that all children, regardless of social care status, receive timely and comprehensive protection against serious infections."

Helen Bedford, from UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health, said, "Historically, [vaccine](#) uptake among disadvantaged groups of children particularly those in the care of the local authority, has been poorer than that of other children, leaving them vulnerable to potentially serious infections."

"The results of this research are therefore very encouraging and hopefully can be built on to improve the health of looked after children more widely."

More information: Grace A. Bailey et al, Immunisation status of children receiving care and support in Wales: a national data linkage study, *Frontiers in Public Health* (2023). [DOI: 10.3389/fpubh.2023.1231264](#)

Provided by Swansea University

Citation: Children receiving care and support in Wales are more likely to be up to date with immunizations (2023, August 21) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-08-children-wales-date-immunizations.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--