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Full Title of Research Study:	Navigating and surviving states of calm, threat, and attack: A qualitative exploration of the experiences of social care workers in secure residential care.						
Name of Researcher/Researchers: <div style="text-align: right;"> Surname: First Name: Existing post-nominal Letters: </div> Contact email address:	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr><td>Attard</td></tr> <tr><td>Alana Carmen</td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> </table> sapezhia@tcd.ie <div style="text-align: right;"> Surname: First Name: Existing post-nominal Letters: </div> <table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr><td>O'Connor</td></tr> <tr><td>John</td></tr> <tr><td>Dr</td></tr> </table> Contact email address: joconno8@tcd.ie	Attard	Alana Carmen		O'Connor	John	Dr
Attard							
Alana Carmen							
O'Connor							
John							
Dr							

Surname: First Name: Existing post-nominal Letters: Contact email address:	Butlin
	Ben
	Dr
	bbutlin@tcd.ie

Student Research

If research was undertaken for an academic award please state:

Official title of the course:	Doctorate in Clinical Psychology
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Abstract:

Social care workers play a central role in supporting young people with early life trauma in secure residential care. While research has explored the experiences of young people in secure care and heightened emotional states common to these environments, the experiences of the social care workers themselves have received little attention. This study used a psychoanalytically informed, multi-interview qualitative design and analysis to explore the experiences of six social care workers with at least one year of experience in secure residential care. It explored how participants are impacted by their work experiences, and how they contain and process these work experiences in order to support themselves and sustain their capacity to provide consistent relational care and holding. Three core themes were identified from the analysis: 'Keeping the young person in mind and safe', 'Maturing tolerance', and 'Head above water'. Core themes are discussed through a psychodynamic lens, encapsulating how participants provide a facilitative holding environment for the young people they work with as they move between navigating and surviving complex experiences, which at times stretch their capacities to continue providing this containment. A unique contribution of this research is that, with experience, participants developed an implicit skilled fight response in the face of threat, combined with attuned

relational holding. Findings contribute to the limited literature on the experiences of social care workers in secure environments and have implications for research, practice, and policy development.

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