



## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is *Pathways of Care*?

*Pathways of Care*, is a large-scale representative longitudinal study that will follow children and young people aged 0–17 years entering out-of-home care (OOHC) on Children’s Court orders for the first time between May 2010 and October 2011. Children and young people who progressed to final Children’s Court orders, and their caregivers, were invited to participate in three face-to-face interviews every 18-months.

The study is designed to show how children and young people’s placement and other service experiences influence their development while taking the characteristics of the child, caregiver, family, and neighbourhood into account.

### What is the aim of this study?

The aim of the study is to provide the knowledge needed to strengthen the OOHC service system in NSW in order to improve the outcomes for children and young people in OOHC. These outcomes include children’s and young people’s permanency, safety and wellbeing (including their physical health, socio-emotional wellbeing and cognitive/learning development).

### What are the objectives of this study?

- To describe the characteristics, child protection history, development and wellbeing of children and young people at the time they enter OOHC on Children’s Court orders for the first time.
- To describe the services, interventions and pathways for children and young people in OOHC, post restoration, post adoption and on leaving care at 18 years.
- To describe children and young people’s experiences and outcomes from growing up in OOHC, post restoration, post adoption and on leaving care at 18 years.
- To understand the factors that influence the outcomes for children and young people who grow up in OOHC, are returned home, adopted or leave care at 18 years.
- To inform policy and practice to strengthen the OOHC service system in NSW to improve the outcomes for children and young people in OOHC.

Key research questions will address the OOHC population in general as well as the key sub-populations in OOHC including Aboriginal children and young people; children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; and children and young people with high needs and/or disabilities.

### Who are the researchers undertaking this study?

The Department of Family and Community Services is funding and leading the *Pathways of Care* study, and has contracted a team of experts to provide advice on study design and undertake data collection and longitudinal data analysis. The experts are:

- a consortium of Australian researchers from the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) including the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of NSW, Associate Professor Judy Cashmore University of Sydney, and Associate Professor Paul Delfabbro University of Adelaide
- Chapin Hall Centre for Children at the University of Chicago
- I-view, social research data collection agency.

Further information about the study design can be accessed through the study's webpage at: [www.community.nsw.gov.au/pathways](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/pathways).

### **How is this study different from other research in OOHC?**

This study is different from other Australian research in OOHC because it:

- is a representative sample of children and young people entering OOHC
- collects information from multiple sources including the carer; child/young person; childcare worker or teacher; caseworker; as well as administrative data
- includes children and young people of all ages up to 17 years in OOHC and also young people after they leave OOHC
- follows the child or young persons' progress regardless of their circumstances (eg placement changes or restoration).

Recent reviews of Australian OOHC research are:

McDonald, M., Higgins, D., valentine, k. & Lamont, A. (2011). Protecting Australia's children research audit (1995–2010) [A report to the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs]. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies & Social Policy Research Centre – University of New South Wales.

Bromfield, L., Osborn, A. (2007) Getting the big picture': A synopsis and critique of Australian out-of-home care research. *Child Abuse Prevention Issues* (26) National Child Protection Clearinghouse, Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Osborn, A. & Bromfield, L., (2007) Outcomes for children and young people in care. *Research Brief* (3) National Child Protection Clearinghouse, Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Bromfield, L., Higgins, D., Osborn, A., Panozzo, S., & Richardson, N. (2005). *Out-of-home care in Australia: Messages from research*. Melbourne, Vic: Australian Institute of Family Studies, for the Community Services Ministers' Advisory Council, commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services.

Cashmore, J., & Ainsworth, F. (2004). *Audit of Australian out-of-home care research*. Sydney, NSW: Child & Family Welfare Association of Australia.

### **Who has been asked for their opinions about this study?**

A range of briefings and consultations were conducted to: inform key stakeholders about the study; obtain feedback on current practice, placement best practice and issues in OOHC; gain input to the proposed study design; and gain input to questionnaire development.

The Create Foundation consulted with young people in care about participation in research, appropriate data collection methods and sensitive questions. The Create Foundation report is published on the study webpage under the 'Publiactions' tab.

Information sessions and focus groups were conducted with a wide range of organisations including non-government organisations involved in OOHC; and carers including Aboriginal carers, rural and metropolitan carers, and carers whose first language was not English. Within Community Services consultations were held with Regional Directors, Managers, Caseworkers, OOHC Policy, Aboriginal Services Branch and Multicultural Services Unit.

### **Does this study have ethics approval?**

Ethics approval for the study has been obtained from UNSW Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval Number 10335); and the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW Ethics Committee (Approval Number 766/10); and for the childcare worker and teacher survey additional approval was obtained from the NSW Department of Education and Communities State Education Research Approval Process (SERAP, Approval Number 2012250): and the Catholic Education Office (CEO) Sydney (and relevant Diocese).



All interviewers and researchers involved must comply with the *Privacy Act 1988*  
([http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/privacynsw/ll\\_pnsw.nsf/pages/PNSW\\_03\\_fedprivact](http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/privacynsw/ll_pnsw.nsf/pages/PNSW_03_fedprivact))

### **How are children and young people selected for this study?**

Children and young people aged 0–17 years entering OOHC care on Children’s Court orders for the first time were selected from the FACS administrative database. All children and young people including sibling groups were eligible if they met these criteria during the study recruitment period.

### **What data will be collected?**

**Carers, children and young people:** primary data will be collected from carers, children and young people themselves from the age of seven years depending on maturity.

**Teacher and caseworker surveys:** to gain the views of childcare workers and teachers and caseworkers an internet based survey will be administered.

**Record Linkage:** in addition to FACS’ child protection and OOHC administrative data, four external data sources will be linked to data from POCLS including the Australian Early Development Census records (Commonwealth Department of Education), education records (NSW Department of Education and Communities), health records (NSW Ministry of Health) and youth offending records (Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research).

### **How will the data be collected?**

Data collection with carers, children and young people will be via face-to-face interviews using both Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) and Computer Assisted Self Interviewing (CASI). The interviews are being conducted by I-view, who are social research data collection experts.

### **When do the interviews take place?**

Three rounds of face-to-face interviews with carergivers, children and young people started in May 2011 and will continue through to June 2016

### **What does participation in the study involve for carers and adoptive parents?**

Participation in the study involves interviews every 18 months with carers and adoptive parents. Each interview takes about one and a half hours and will focus on the child or young person’s health, behaviour, development, wellbeing and experiences. Carers will also be asked about the services and support they receive and their family’s situation. If a child or young person changes carers, the new carer will be invited to participate in the subsequent interviews.

### **What does participation in the study involve for birth parents?**

If a child or young person is restored home, their parents will be invited to participate and complete a face-to-face interview.

### **What does participation in the study involve for children and young people?**

Children and young people will also be interviewed from the age of seven depending on their maturity. With their agreement, the child or young person will answer questions about their development, family experiences, school and friends and will do a language and reasoning activity. Their involvement in this interview will take about twenty to thirty minutes. From the age of three children participate in a brief language activity and from the age of six a reasoning activity that will take about ten minutes.

### **Additional data collections**

Internet based surveys will be administered to gain the views of childcare workers, teachers and caseworkers.



## **How will the results of the research be made available?**

A newsletter/ bulletin summarising the study's findings will be published on completion of each wave of data collection and also on completion of the research. The newsletter/ bulletin will be sent by post to everyone interviewed for this study. Carers and the general community will also be able to access reports, articles and further information from the *Pathways of Care* webpage [www.community.nsw.gov.au/pathways](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/pathways)

## **Will carers have access to their child and young person's data?**

The information provided by caregivers will be confidential and study participants will not be able to access any study data on the child in their care.

## **Will caseworkers and Community Services staff have access to the data?**

All information provided by carers, children and young people is confidential and all the data will be de-identified once entered onto the study database. Caseworkers and FACS staff will not have access to any information about individuals collected for this study.

## **Is participation voluntary?**

Participation is voluntary. Participants in the study can withdraw from the study any time. A carer's decision whether to take part in the study or not, will not affect their relationship with FACS or OOHC non-government organisations in any way.

## **Where can carers get support after the interviews?**

Phone **1300 794 653** (freecall) for Connecting Carers NSW (CCNSW) who provide all foster, kinship and relative carers across NSW access to a 24 hour support line.

Phone **1800 888 698** (freecall) for the Aboriginal Statewide Foster Care Support Service (ASFCSS) who provide telephone advice for kinship, relative and foster carers of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care.

## **Who is conducting the interviews?**

I-view, an independent social research data collection agency, have been engaged to conduct the face-to-face interviews and manage the on-line surveys of teachers and caseworkers. I-view can be contacted on 1800 105 088 (free call).

