Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care

Children in Out-of-Home Care with Young Parents
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Children in Out-of-Home Care with Young Parents
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Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study Clearinghouse
All study publications including research reports, technical reports and briefs can be found on the study webpage www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/pathways-of-care

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# Contents

Preface .............................................................................................................................. 1  
Executive Summary ........................................................................................................... 3  
Background ........................................................................................................................ 4  
Methodology ...................................................................................................................... 4  
Research Questions .......................................................................................................... 5  
Literature Review ............................................................................................................... 5  
Findings ............................................................................................................................. 8  

1 Characteristics of the birth parents .............................................................................. 8  
   1.1 Child protection history of birth parents ................................................................. 9  

2 Characteristics of the child’s removal ........................................................................ 11  
   2.1 Child protection history ....................................................................................... 11  
   2.2 Child’s entry into OOHC ..................................................................................... 14  
   2.3 District of OOHC stay ......................................................................................... 15  

3 Restoration attempts and success ............................................................................. 16  
   3.1 Restoration attempts ........................................................................................... 16  
   3.2 Restoration success ........................................................................................... 16  

4 Relationship between child and young parent ........................................................... 18  
   4.1 Birth mother’s contact with child ......................................................................... 18  
   4.2 Carer’s opinion of relationship between child and birth parent ......................... 19  

5 Summary of key findings ........................................................................................... 21  

Appendix: Grouping of Districts into geographic regions ................................................. 22  
References ...................................................................................................................... 22
List of Figures

Figure 1: POCLS population cohort by their birth mother’s child protection history, age at birth and Aboriginality .................................................................10
Figure 2: POCLS population cohort by their birth father’s child protection history, age at birth and Aboriginality .................................................................11
Figure 3: POCLS population cohort - age at first ever child/young person concern report to FACS by mother’s Aboriginality and age at birth of child .......................12
Figure 4: POCLS population with Aboriginal mothers - Reported issues prior to study child’s first entry into OOHC (percentage with issue reported) .........................13
Figure 5: POCLS population with non-Aboriginal mothers - Reported issues prior to study child’s first entry into OOHC (percentage with issue reported) .........................13
Figure 6: Distribution of mother’s age at birth of the child for geographic regions (first placement in OOHC) by mother’s Aboriginality ........................................15
Figure 7: Percentage of children who were restored by 30 June 2016 by age of mother at birth ........................................................................................................16
Figure 8: Percentage of children who had contact with their birth mother, POCLS waves 1 - 3 ..........................................................................................................19
Figure 9: Percentage of children with a ‘Good relationship between Study Child and birth mother’, POCLS waves 1 - 3 ........................................................................20

List of Tables

Table 1: POCLS population cohort – Mother’s Aboriginality and age at birth of child ....8
Table 2: POCLS population cohort – Father’s Aboriginality and age at birth of child ....8
Table 3: POCLS population cohort – Mother’s Aboriginality and age at birth of child by father’s Aboriginality and age at birth of child .........................................................9
Table 4: POCLS population cohort - age at first entry in OOHC by mother’s age when child was born .........................................................................................14
Table 5: Restoration status by 30 June 2016 by mother’s age at birth ..................17
Table 6: Number of children who participated in all three waves of the POCLS by parent’s age at the birth of study child and Aboriginality ........................................18
Preface

The Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study (POCLS) is funded and managed by the New South Wales Department of Family and Community Services (FACS). It is the first large-scale prospective longitudinal study of children and young people in out-of-home care (OOHC) in Australia. Information on safety, permanency and wellbeing is being collected from various sources. The child developmental domains of interest are physical health, socio-emotional wellbeing and cognitive/learning ability.

The overall aim of this study is to collect detailed information about the life course development of children who enter OOHC for the first time and the factors that influence their development. The POCLS objectives are to:

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

The POCLS is the first study to link data on children’s child protection backgrounds and OOHC placements with data on health, education and offending held by multiple government agencies as well as to first hand accounts from children, caregivers, caseworkers and teachers. The POCLS database will allow researchers to track children’s trajectories and experiences from birth.

The population cohort is a census of all children and young people who entered OOHC for the first time in NSW over the 18 month period from May 2010 to October 2011 (n=4,126). Children and young people who went on to receive final Children’s Court care and protection orders by April 2013 (n=2,828) were eligible to participate in the study with a subset of these agreeing to participate in the interview component. For more information about the study please visit the study webpage www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/pathways-of-care.

The POCLS acknowledges and honours Aboriginal people as our First Peoples of NSW and is committed to working with the FACS Aboriginal Outcomes team to ensure that Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities are supported and empowered to improve their life outcomes. The POCLS data asset will be used to improve how services and supports are designed and delivered in partnership with Aboriginal people and communities.
FACS recognises the importance of Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS) and Indigenous Data Governance (IDG) in the design, collection, analysis, dissemination and management of all data related to Aboriginal Australians. The POCLS is subject to ethics approval, including from the Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council of NSW. FACS is currently in the process of scoping the development of IDS and IDG principles that will apply to future Aboriginal data creation, development, stewardship, analysis, dissemination and infrastructure. The POCLS will continue to collaborate with Aboriginal Peoples and will apply the FACS research governance principles once developed.
Executive Summary

Children in the POCLS population cohort (n=4,126) were compared by their parent’s age at their birth. Comparisons were made between children with parents aged 15-19 years, 20-25 years and 26 years and over at their birth as well as between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parents.

Of the children in the POCLS population cohort with Aboriginal birth mothers, one quarter (24.1%) had mothers who were aged 15-19 years when they were born, a third (34.1%) had mothers aged 20-25 years and 39.5% had mothers who were 26 years and over when they were born. For those with non-Aboriginal mothers, 16.3% had mothers aged 15-19 years when they were born, 31.7% were aged 20-25 years and 44.4% were aged 26 years and over when they were born.

Similarly, the children with Aboriginal birth fathers were more likely to have a teenage father (13.7%) compared with children with non-Aboriginal fathers (5.6%).

In terms of the parents own child protection history, for children with Aboriginal teenage mothers approximately one third had a mother who had been in OOHC herself as a child and for a further 46.6% their mother had been the subject of a child protection report but had not been in OOHC. Of the children with non-Aboriginal teenage mothers, 22.9% had a mother who had been in OOHC and 42.9% had a child protection history but had not been in OOHC.

Children of both Aboriginal teenage mothers and non-Aboriginal teenage mothers were more likely to be reported at ROSH before their first entry into OOHC for domestic violence (69.8% and 60.4%) than those with mothers who were in their early twenties when the child was born (59.7% for Aboriginal older mothers and 51.8% for non-Aboriginal older mothers).

Children of Aboriginal teenage mothers were also more likely than children of Aboriginal older mothers to be reported at ROSH before their first entry into OOHC for issues involving physical abuse. Children of non-Aboriginal teenage mothers were more likely than children of older non-Aboriginal mothers to be reported at ROSH prior to their entry into OOHC for issues involving neglect.

Similar rates of restoration attempts were found across the age groups for Aboriginal mothers with approximately one quarter of children with Aboriginal teenage mothers having at least one restoration attempt. Children of non-Aboriginal teenage mothers were less likely to have had a restoration attempt than for non-Aboriginal early 20s mothers and non-Aboriginal older mothers.

Restorations were successful on the first attempt for 71.9% of children with Aboriginal teenage mothers (where a restoration was attempted). For a further 5.3% multiple restorations occurred and ended with a successful restoration. Similar patterns were
seen for children with non-Aboriginal teenage mothers but a higher proportion were restored on the first attempt (78.0%).

The children’s contact with their birth mother varied according to the mother’s age, Aboriginality and time since the first entry into OOHC. At Wave 1, children with Aboriginal teenage mothers were more likely than those with Aboriginal early 20s mothers and Aboriginal older mothers to have contact with their birth mother. Although these percentages declined by Wave 3, contact with Aboriginal teenage mothers remained higher than for Aboriginal early 20s mothers and Aboriginal older mothers. For children with non-Aboriginal mothers, there was no significant difference in contact at Wave 1 based on the mother’s age. At Wave 3, contact with non-Aboriginal teenage mothers remained relatively high but had declined for those with older non-Aboriginal mothers. These differences were significant.

In terms of the carer’s perspective of the relationship between the child and their birth mother, no significant difference was found between Aboriginal teenage mothers and non-Aboriginal teenage mothers. No significant differences were found between the mother’s age groups for Aboriginal mothers at any wave. Children with non-Aboriginal teenage mothers were more likely to have a good relationship with their mother than children with non-Aboriginal early 20s and non-Aboriginal older mothers by Wave 2 and 3.

### Background

The NSW *Their Futures Matter* (TFM) reform of OOHC uses a cohort approach to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families. This involves analysing cohorts of children and young people using a strong evidence base including data analysis, before rolling out wrap around supports through an investment approach. NSW Government agencies are working together to target funding, effort and other resources to cohorts who have the greatest needs and where there are greater opportunities to improve outcomes.

The current analysis was undertaken to inform this cohort approach and focuses on young parents with children in OOHC who are part of the POCLS and compares Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parents.

### Methodology

This analysis examines children in the POCLS population cohort (n=4,126) by their parent’s age at their birth. Comparisons are made between children with parents aged 15-19 years, 20-25 years and 26 years and over at their birth as well as between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parents.
This report draws on data extracted from multiple sources including the FACS client information system and the POCLS child and carer survey data. The survey data analysed are to Wave 3 which was conducted from October 2014 to July 2016 while the administrative data are to 30 June 2016.

The analyses presented here are descriptive only and are based on unweighted data. The bivariate analyses provide evidence of associations only and do not indicate causality. Tests of statistical significance have been undertaken where possible (using Chi-squared tests) with significant results being reported.

When interpreting the data, it is important to note that the POCLS sample entered OOHC for the first time during May 2010 to October 2011 and their outcomes may differ from same aged children who have been in OOHC for a longer period of time. Further details of the study can be found in Paxman, Tully, Burke and Watson (2014).

Research Questions

The analysis using the POCLS data will inform the following questions with comparisons between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal young parents:

- Are children whose parents were in OOHC more likely to enter OOHC?
- Are children of young parents more likely to enter OOHC or enter more quickly?
- How involved are young parents with their children in OOHC?

Literature Review

Child maltreatment and violence against children (VAC) is a global public health and human rights problem (Hills et al., 2016). A recent meta-analysis examining the global prevalence of child maltreatment estimated that 7.6% of boys and 18.0% of girls experience sexual abuse, 22.6% of children experience physical abuse, 35.3% of children experience emotional abuse, and 18% of children are neglected (Stoltenborgh, Bakermans-Kranenburg, Alink, & van IJzendoorn, 2015). In Australia alone there were 37,088 children (aged 0-17) who were investigated by the child protection system and found that there was sufficient reason to believe they had been, were being or were likely to be abused, neglected or otherwise harmed (AIHW, 2018). Just under half (15,038) of these children resided in NSW.

The adverse consequences of childhood abuse and neglect on the socio-emotional development and health of victims is extensively documented. Childhood abuse and neglect has been linked to the development of emotional disorders such as depression and anxiety (Li, D’Arcy & Meng, 2016), adolescent aggression (Auslander er al., 2016), self-harm and suicidal behavior (Maniglio, 2011), post-traumatic stress disorder (Lansford et al., 2002) as well as other outcomes such as intellectual impairment or educational underachievement (Jones, Trudinger & Crawford, 2004), risky sexual behavior (Wilson &
Widom, 2008) and serious criminal offences such as homicide (Boduszek, Hyland & Bourke, 2011). Additionally, evidence suggests that while the majority of victims of childhood abuse and neglect do not perpetuate the cycle of maltreatment with their own children, they are significantly more likely to have children who experience abuse and neglect when compared to parents without previous abuse and neglect history (Yang et al., 2018). This cycle of mistreatment between generations is called the intergenerational transmission of child maltreatment (ITCM).

Children of parents who become pregnant as teenagers are at an increased risk of child maltreatment and entering OOHC (Dhayanandham, Bohr & Connoly, 2014). Even when controlling for demographic factors, having an adolescent mother was a significant predictor of aggression and harsh parenting behaviors (Lee, 2009) and all forms of infant and child maltreatment (Lee and George, 1999). One longitudinal study found that the rate of child maltreatment was 2.4 times higher for adolescent parents who were under the age of 18, when compared to parents between the ages of 19 – 34 (Stier et al., 1993).

Currently, there is no one justification for the link between child maltreatment and parental age. One explanation is that adolescent mothers tend not to have reached cognitive or emotional maturity and have less knowledge of child development (Borowski et al., 2007). Another explanation is that young mothers have an increased risk of maltreating their children because they have to balance the challenges associated with adolescence (identity development, independence, occupation development etc.) while simultaneously learning how to nurture their child (Dhayanandham, Bohr & Connoly, 2014).

One widely agreed reason for the link is that adolescent mothers tend to be of lower socioeconomic standing, which compounds the risk of child maltreatment (Lee & George, 1999). This compounding affect has been attributed to a number of different reasons: lower socioeconomic communities have fewer resources, higher mobility and more social isolation resulting in lack of connectedness or sense of community (Duncan & Magnuson, 2005); higher rates of community violence and victimisation in disadvantaged neighborhoods (Valentino et al., 2012); conflict due to economic disadvantage and stress increases the chance of familial abuse (Azar, 2002) and limited exposure to optimal child-rearing practices and classes to improve parenting skills (Dhayanandham, Bohr & Connoly, 2014). This finding is particularly pertinent for the Australian context, as approximately 2.7% of all births are to teenage mothers, who are 9 times more likely to live in the lowest socio-economic areas compared to the highest socio-economic areas (AIHW, 2018).

Further, pregnant teenagers and their children are also particularly susceptible to a number of harmful situations and outcomes (Marino et al., 2016). In Australia, one fifth of pregnant adolescents experienced violence from a partner or family member before the age of 16 (Quinlivan, Peterson & Gurinn. 1999), with studies suggesting that teenage
mothers are at higher risk of domestic and family violence (Wood & Barter, 2015). Further, depression is much more prevalent in populations of teenage parents than their adult counterparts, which left untreated, can increase the risk of suicide and intergenerational disadvantage (Marino et al., 2016).

The multitude of risk factors for adolescent parents and the impact these can have on their children highlight the need for effective interventions to support young families (Lachance, Burrus & Scott, 2016). Recent studies into adolescent parents have stressed the importance of programs to support school engagement, adolescent development, social engagement, family planning, maternal health and wellbeing and developing parenting skills (Hudgins, Erickson & Walker, 2014; Gruber, 2012; Jacobs et al., 2016). However, there continues to be a lack of vigorous evaluations and replications of these support programs (Lachance et al., 2016). Further research into interventions and their effectiveness is needed to ensure public policy and funding is allocated in an efficient and effective way to mitigate the risk of adolescent parenting.

Further, given the link between adolescent parents and child maltreatment, it is important to understand the protective and risk factors that may contribute to both short term and long term outcomes for children of adolescent parents. However, relatively little longitudinal research has been conducted on adolescent parents, particularly within the context of Australia. Therefore, the purpose of this paper was to explore the trajectories of children of adolescent and non-adolescent parents in NSW, who have had some experience of OOHC in NSW. These findings will inform both policy and practice with adolescent parents and their children, and identify the key factors which should be addressed.
Findings

1 Characteristics of the birth parents

Tables 1 and 2 show the children by the birth parent’s Aboriginality and age when the child was born. Table 1 shows that for one quarter (24.1%) of the children with Aboriginal birth mothers, their mother was aged 15-19 years (‘Aboriginal teenage mothers’) when they were born, a third (34.1%) had mothers aged 20-25 years (‘Aboriginal early 20s mothers’) and 39.5% had mothers aged 26 years and over (‘Aboriginal older mothers’).

For the children with non-Aboriginal mothers, 16.3% had mothers who were aged 15-19 years when they were born (‘non-Aboriginal teenage mothers’), 31.7% had mothers aged 20-25 years (‘Non-Aboriginal early 20s mothers’) and 44.4% had mothers aged 26 years and over (‘non-Aboriginal older mothers’).

Similarly, the children with Aboriginal birth fathers were more likely to have a father aged 15-19 years when they were born (13.7%) compared with children with non-Aboriginal fathers (5.6%).

Table 1: POCLS population cohort – mother’s Aboriginality and age at birth of child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother’s age when child was born</th>
<th>Aboriginal</th>
<th>Non Aboriginal</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-19 years</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-25 years</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>1,004</td>
<td>1,332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26+ years</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>1,406</td>
<td>1,786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown/less than 15</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>961</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,165</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,126</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: POCLS population cohort – father’s Aboriginality and age at birth of child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father’s age when child was born</th>
<th>Aboriginal</th>
<th>Non Aboriginal</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-19 years</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-25 years</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26+ years</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>1,750</td>
<td>2,090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown/less than 15</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>836</td>
<td>872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>633</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,493</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,126</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 shows the children by their birth mother’s Aboriginality and age at the child’s birth compared with the father’s Aboriginality and age at the child’s birth. It shows that of the children with Aboriginal teenage mothers, 22.3% also had Aboriginal teenage fathers, 16.8% had Aboriginal early 20s fathers, 18.3% had non-Aboriginal teenage fathers and 25.7% had non-Aboriginal early 20s fathers. For the children with non-Aboriginal teenage mothers, 26.9% had non-Aboriginal teenage fathers and 42.5% had non-Aboriginal early 20s fathers.

Table 3: POCLS population cohort – mother’s Aboriginality and age at birth of child by father’s Aboriginality and age at birth of child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father’s Aboriginality</th>
<th>Father’s age when child was born</th>
<th>Mother’s Aboriginality</th>
<th>Mother’s age when child was born</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15 19 years</td>
<td>20 25 years</td>
<td>26+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15 19 years</td>
<td>20 25 years</td>
<td>26+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
<td>15-19 years</td>
<td>n 45</td>
<td>10 np</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20-25 years</td>
<td>n 34</td>
<td>51 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26+ years</td>
<td>n 14</td>
<td>53 119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 22.3</td>
<td>% 16.8</td>
<td>% 6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 3.6</td>
<td>% 18.6</td>
<td>% 19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% np</td>
<td>% 2.5</td>
<td>% 37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17 7 np</td>
<td>4.0 0.9</td>
<td>7 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.0 0.9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aboriginal</td>
<td>15-19 years</td>
<td>n 37</td>
<td>5 np</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20-25 years</td>
<td>n 52</td>
<td>59 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26+ years</td>
<td>n 20</td>
<td>96 157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 18.3</td>
<td>% 25.7</td>
<td>% 9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 1.8</td>
<td>% 21.5</td>
<td>% 35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% np</td>
<td>% 8.2</td>
<td>% 49.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>115 22 np</td>
<td>42.5 36.2</td>
<td>17.5 51.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26.9 2.7 np</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>82.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total n 202 274 316</td>
<td>428 806</td>
<td>1,157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 100.0 100.0 100.0</td>
<td>100.0 100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: np is not publishable due to small numbers

1.1 Child protection history of birth parents

The child protection history of the birth parents was identified by matching the children with their parents using the relationship data in the FACS client information system (KiDS). For a birth parent to be identified as having a child protection history there needed to be a matching relationship record and a placement or report record for the parent in KiDS.
Figure 1 shows that for one third (33.2%) of the children with Aboriginal teenage mothers, their mother had a history of being in OOHC, while for a further 46.6% their mother had been the subject of a child protection report but had not been in OOHC. This compares to 30.2% and 36.6% for children with Aboriginal early 20s mothers and 14.7% and 22.9% for those with Aboriginal older mothers. These differences were significant.

For almost a quarter (22.9%) of the children with non-Aboriginal teenage mothers their mother had been in OOHC while 42.9% of children had mothers who had been the subject of a child protection report but had not been in OOHC. This compares with 14.3% and 28.8% for children with non-Aboriginal early 20s mothers and 5.3% and 10.5% for those with non-Aboriginal older mothers. These differences were also significant.

Figure 1: POCLS population cohort by their birth mother’s child protection history, age at birth and Aboriginality

Of the children with Aboriginal teenage fathers, over a quarter (27.6%) had a father who had been in OOHC and approximately half (49.4%) had a father who had been the subject of a child protection report but had not been in OOHC. This compares with 12.9% and 27.6% for those with Aboriginal early 20s fathers and 5.0% and 12.4% for those with Aboriginal older fathers. These differences were significant.

For children with non-Aboriginal teenage fathers, one in five (20.8%) had a father who had been in OOHC and over a third (36.5%) had a father who had been the subject of a child protection report (but had not been in OOHC). For children with non-Aboriginal early 20s fathers, 11.5% had a father who had been in OOHC and 21.7% had a father who had been reported but not in OOHC. For children with non-Aboriginal older fathers the comparable proportions were 1.9% and 4.7%. Again, these differences were significant.
2 Characteristics of the child’s removal

2.1 Child protection history

Figure 3 shows that regardless of the mother’s age at the child’s birth or Aboriginality, the most common age for the study child to be reported to FACS, either at risk of significant harm (ROSH) or non-ROSH, for the first time ever was at less than one year. For the children with Aboriginal teenage mothers, 58.0% were reported for the first time when they were less than one year old. This compares with 63.1% for those with Aboriginal early 20s mothers and 72.1% with Aboriginal older mothers. For children with non-Aboriginal teenage mothers, approximately half (48.5%) were first reported when they were less than one year old, compared to 45.1% for those with non-Aboriginal early 20s mothers and 56.3% for those with non-Aboriginal older mothers. It may be the case that older mothers have had other older children previously reported or who have entered OOHC meaning that these children become known to FACS at a younger age.
Figures 4 and 5 show the percentage of the children who were reported at ROSH with the categories of issues listed prior to their first entry into OOHC. Children may have been reported at ROSH multiple times and multiple issues can be recorded at each ROSH report. The percentage shows whether the reported issue was recorded as an issue against any of these reports.

Children of both Aboriginal teenage mothers (Figure 4) and non-Aboriginal teenage mothers (Figure 5) were more likely to be reported at ROSH for domestic violence (69.8% and 60.4%) than older mothers (59.7% for Aboriginal older mothers and 51.8% for non-Aboriginal older mothers).

Children of Aboriginal teenage mothers were also more likely than children of Aboriginal older mothers to be reported for issues involving physical abuse (79.3% for Aboriginal teenage mothers, 72.6% for Aboriginal early 20s mothers and 68.2% for Aboriginal older mothers).
Children of non-Aboriginal teenage mothers were more likely than children of older non-Aboriginal mothers to be reported at ROSH prior to their entry into OOHC for issues involving neglect (73.4% for non-Aboriginal teenage mothers, 70.6% for non-Aboriginal early 20s mothers and 66.1% for non-Aboriginal older mothers) as shown in Figure 5.
2.2 Child’s entry into OOHC

Table 4 shows the age that the child entered OOHC for the first time by the mother’s age when the child was born. For both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children, a larger proportion of children with older mothers entered OOHC when they were aged less than one year old (36.3% and 28.1%) than for those with teenage mothers (24.6% and 21.4%) or early 20s mothers (27.4% and 18.7%).

**Table 4: POCLS population cohort - age at first entry in OOHC by mother’s age when child was born**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother’s Aboriginality</th>
<th>Study child’s age at entry into OOHC for the first time</th>
<th>Mother’s age when study child was born</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt; 1 year</td>
<td>1-2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 100.0</td>
<td>% 100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aboriginal</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>1,004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 100.0</td>
<td>% 100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.3 District of OOHC stay

Figure 6 shows the geographic region of the child’s first placement in OOHC and may not be the region in which the mother lives. See Appendix 2 for grouping of FACS Districts into the geographic regions shown here. Figure 6 shows the percentage of children in each region who were born to teenage mothers, early 20s mothers and older mothers by their mother’s Aboriginality.

In terms of children born to Aboriginal mothers, Southern metro (27.1%) and Northern non-metro (26.6%) had the largest proportions with teenage mothers although the differences found were not significant.

For non-Aboriginal children, Southern non-metro (22.0%) and Western non-metro (22.1%), Western metro (18.4%) and Northern non-metro (18.6%) had the largest percentages of teenage mothers. These were significantly higher than Southern metro (11.1%).

Figure 6: POCLS population cohort - distribution of mother’s age at birth of the child for geographic regions (first placement in OOHC) by mother’s Aboriginality
3 Restoration attempts and success

3.1 Restoration attempts

For children in OOHC, there may be multiple attempts at restoration with a child exiting and re-entering OOHC more than once. Figure 7 shows the percentage of children with at least one attempt at restoration regardless of the success of that restoration. Children with Aboriginal mothers had similar rates of restoration attempts across age groups (24.6% for Aboriginal teenage mothers, 27.4% for Aboriginal early 20s mothers and 22.9% for Aboriginal older mothers). No significant differences were found.

Children of non-Aboriginal teenage mothers were less likely to have had a restoration attempt (29.1%) than non-Aboriginal early 20s mothers (32.3%) and non-Aboriginal older mothers (35.8%). These differences were significant.

Figure 7: Percentage of children who were restored by 30 June 2016 by age of mother at birth

3.2 Restoration success

Table 5 shows the success of restoration attempts by the mother’s age when the child was born. It shows that for some children multiple restoration attempts occurred as well as the final status when the data was extracted at 30 June 2016.

Table 5 shows that of the children with Aboriginal teenage mothers and at least one attempt at restoration, 71.9 per had a successful restoration on the first attempt. That means the child was restored and did not re-enter OOHC by 30 June 2016. A further 5.3% had more than one attempt at restoration but the final restoration was successful as
there was no re-entry into OOHC. For 22.8% there had been at least one restoration but the child had re-entered OOHC. Similar patterns were seen for children with non-Aboriginal teenage mothers but a higher proportion were restored on the first attempt (78.0%).

No significant differences were found between mother’s age groups for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal mothers.

**Table 5: Restoration status by 30 June 2016 by mother’s age at birth**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother’s Aboriginality</th>
<th>Restoration status by 30 June 2016</th>
<th>Mother’s age when study child was born</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15 19 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
<td>One restoration and no re-entry</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiple restorations ending with no re-entry</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One or more restorations and re-entry</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aboriginal</td>
<td>One restoration and no re-entry</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiple restorations ending with no re-entry</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One or more restorations and re-entry</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This table includes children with an attempted restoration.
4 Relationship between child and young parent

This section presents information collected in the POCLS Child and Carer surveys. It is based on children who participated in all three waves of research so that the change over time can be shown. Wave 1 interviewing was conducted soon after the child entered OOHC for the first time and further waves were 18-24 months apart. Table 6 shows the base number of children for this section by the parent’s age at the child’s birth and the parent’s Aboriginality.

Table 6: Number of children who participated in all three waves of the POCLS by parent’s age at the birth of study child and Aboriginality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Birth parent</th>
<th>Aboriginality</th>
<th>Parent’s age at birth of study child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15 19 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Aboriginal</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Aboriginal</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: only parent’s with known DOB and Aboriginality are included

Results in the following sections are shown only according to the mother’s Aboriginality and age at the child’s birth and not for the father’s Aboriginality and age at the child’s birth due to the small number of children with Aboriginal teenage fathers.

4.1 Birth mother’s contact with child

In each wave of interviewing, carers were asked about contact between the child and birth family members. Figure 8 shows the percentage of children who had regular contact with their birth mother.

At Wave 1, children with Aboriginal teenage mothers (90.4%) were more likely than those with Aboriginal early 20s mothers (69.1%) and Aboriginal older mothers (62.1%) to have contact with their birth mother. These differences were significant. Although these percentages declined by Wave 3, contact with Aboriginal teenage mothers remained higher (73.1%) than for Aboriginal early 20s mothers (70.0%) and Aboriginal older mothers (49.0%). These differences were still significant.

For children with non-Aboriginal mothers, there was no significant difference in contact based on the mothers age in Wave 1 (91.3% of children with non-Aboriginal teenage mothers, 89.8% of non-Aboriginal early 20s mothers and 85.4% of non-Aboriginal older mothers). At Wave 3, contact with non-Aboriginal older mothers had declined to 74.1% but remained relatively high for non-Aboriginal teenage mothers (83.7%) and non-Aboriginal early 20s mothers (82.7%). These differences were significant.
4.2 Carer’s opinion of relationship between child and birth parent

Carers were asked about the relationship between the child and their birth parents and whether they agreed that it was a good relationship.

At Wave 1, 33.3% of children with an Aboriginal teenage mother were described as having a good relationship with their birth mother compared with 39.5% of non-Aboriginal teenage mothers. These differences were not significant.

No significant differences were found between the age groups for Aboriginal mothers at any wave.

Children with non-Aboriginal teenage mothers were more likely to have a good relationship with their mother than children with early 20s mothers or older mothers at Wave 2 and Wave 3. These differences were significant.
Figure 9: Caregiver reports of children with a ‘Good relationship between Study Child and birth mother’, POCLS Waves 1 - 3

Note: Only includes children who answered the question in all three POCLS waves of interviewing
5 Summary of key findings

Children in the study with Aboriginal mothers were more likely to have mothers who were teenagers when they were born than those with non-Aboriginal mothers. Similarly, the children with Aboriginal fathers were more likely to have a teenage father than those with non-Aboriginal fathers.

For the children with Aboriginal teenage mothers, around one-third had mothers who had been in OOHC herself as a child and for a further 46.6% their mother had been the subject of a child protection report but not been in OOHC. Of the children with non-Aboriginal teenage mothers, 22.9% had a mother who had been in OOHC and 42.9% had a child protection history but not been in OOHC.

In terms of the issues that the children were reported at ROSH for before entering OOHC for the first time, domestic violence was higher amongst children with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teenage mothers than those with older mothers. Physical abuse was higher amongst children of Aboriginal teenage mothers compared with children with older Aboriginal mothers.

Children with Aboriginal mothers had similar levels of restoration attempts across the mother’s age group whereas children with non-Aboriginal teenage mothers were less likely to have had a restoration attempt than those with older non-Aboriginal mothers.

Restorations were successful on the first attempt for around three-quarters of children with Aboriginal teenage mothers (where a restoration was attempted). For a further 5.3% multiple restorations occurred and ended with a successful restoration.

The children’s contact with their birth mother varied according to the mother’s age, Aboriginality and time since the first entry into OOHC.

In terms of the carer’s perspective of the relationship between the child and their birth mother, Aboriginal teenage mothers were just as likely to have good relationship with their child as non-Aboriginal teenage mothers. No significant differences were found between the mother’s age groups for Aboriginal mothers at any wave. Children with non-Aboriginal teenage mothers were more likely to have a good relationship with their mother than children with non-Aboriginal early 20s and non-Aboriginal older mothers by Wave 2 and 3.
## Appendix: Grouping of Districts into geographic regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic level 1</th>
<th>Geographic level 2</th>
<th>Geographic level 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metro</td>
<td>Southern metro</td>
<td>South Eastern Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>South Western Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern metro</td>
<td>Central Coast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Northern Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western metro</td>
<td>Nepean Blue Mountains</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Western Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional/remote</td>
<td>Southern non-metro</td>
<td>Illawarra Shoalhaven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Southern NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern non-metro</td>
<td>Hunter New England</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mid North Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Northern NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western non-metro</td>
<td>Far West</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Murrumbidgee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Western NSW</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Report No. 19
References


