

Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study

The artist is a young person who grew up in care.

"The banner shows many pathways through the care system with a carer or caseworker acting as a guide, ultimately leading to independence for every young person. Whether we live with family or strangers, study, work, or just try our best, the paths we choose and are guided through in our youth are what we use to prepare ourselves for the happiest adulthood we can achieve" Billy Black

Wellbeing and Education for Children in Out-of-Home Care

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Key Study Cohorts

Study population cohort

Entered OOHC on interim orders May 2010-October 2011
(n=4,126)

Final orders cohort

Children's Court order by April 2013 (n=2,828)

Interview cohort

(n=1,789)

W1 1,285

W2 1,200

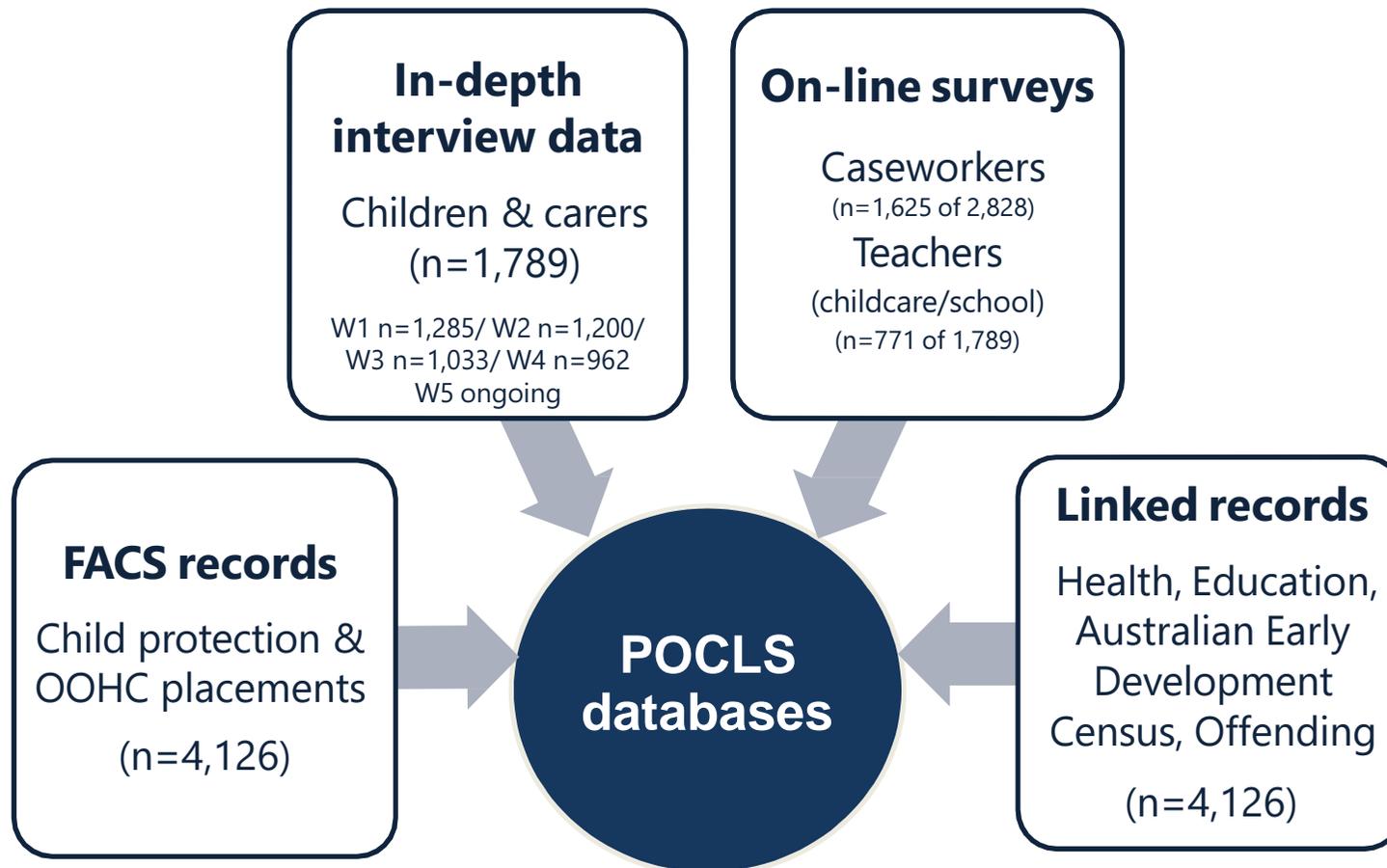
W3 1,033

W4 962

W5 ongoing



Multiple Data Sources



Research Questions



1. What are the cognitive/learning abilities of the children and young people entering OOHC compared with other children in the community?
2. What are the educational developmental pathways of the children and young people in OOHC?

Overview of Presentation



- Interview data with carers and young people (waves 1-3)
- Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) (Kindergarten)
n = 695 participated in one of the testing cycles (2009, 2012, 2015)*
- National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) n = 1,691 (2008-14)*
- Caseworker survey n = 2,828 (wave 2)

*Some children may or may not have been in care at the time of these assessments

Brief Overview of the Literature



- Australian research in this area is still limited but the findings are consistent that children who enter OOHC are at risk educationally
- Views divided as to whether the OOHC system is responsible or whether children in care would experience poor educational outcomes even if they had not been placed in care
- Children (aged 5 years) exposed to substantiated maltreatment were more likely to be vulnerable on multiple AEDC domains (30% exposed to substantial harm were developmental on track, compared with 57% of children not exposed) (Carr et al., 2016)
- Older age at entry, type of placement and restoration influenced children's Year 3 NAPLAN outcome (Maclean et al., 2017).

Importance of Student Wellbeing



- Better student outcomes

Higher levels
of wellbeing



Better
mental
health



More pro-
social and
responsible
lifestyle

More Yr 12
completions



Paying attention to student wellbeing also acknowledges the pivotal role of education in preparing students for a rewarding life beyond school

Australian Catholic University and Erebus International (2008)
Scoping study into approaches to student wellbeing: Literature review.
Report to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace
Relations: Canberra



Communitie
& Justice



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Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL) (POCLS interview cohort)



The CBCL measures a range of child and adolescent behaviour problems and interpersonal competencies

CBCL	Wave 1 n = 325			Wave 2 n = 302			Wave 3 n = 394		
	Mean (95% CI)	% Border- line	% Clinical	Mean (95% CI)	% Border- line	% Clinical	Mean (95% CI)	% Border- line	% Clinic al
6–11 years									
Internalising	51.4 (50.1, 52.7)	4.9	18.2	48.6 (47.5, 49.8)	7.6	12.2	47.6 (45.9, 49.2)	5.6	11.2
Externalising	56.8 (55.3, 58.3)	10.5	33.8	54.9 (53.6, 56.3)	9.4	27.2	55.5 (46.6, 56.9)	8.4	30.5
Total problems	55.8 (54.4, 57.3)	10.8	30.8	52.9 (51.6, 54.4)	7.5	24.4	53.3 (51.9, 54.7)	10.2	25.4
12–17 years									
Internalising	55.8 (53.4, 57.9)	14.5	27.4	52.6 (50.7, 54.5)	10.6	19.9	51.0 (49.1, 52.8)	8.0	17.7
Externalising	59.7 (57.4, 61.9)	10.5	45.2	57.6 (55.5, 59.8)	13.7	37.3	54.7 (52.8, 56.8)	9.1	30.3
Total problems	59.1 (56.8, 61.5)	9.7	46.8	56.8 (54.7, 59.0)	12.4	37.9	53.9 (51.8, 56.0)	9.1	29.1

Note: This is all children participating in any Wave i.e., not the tracked sample

Education (interview cohort Wave 3)



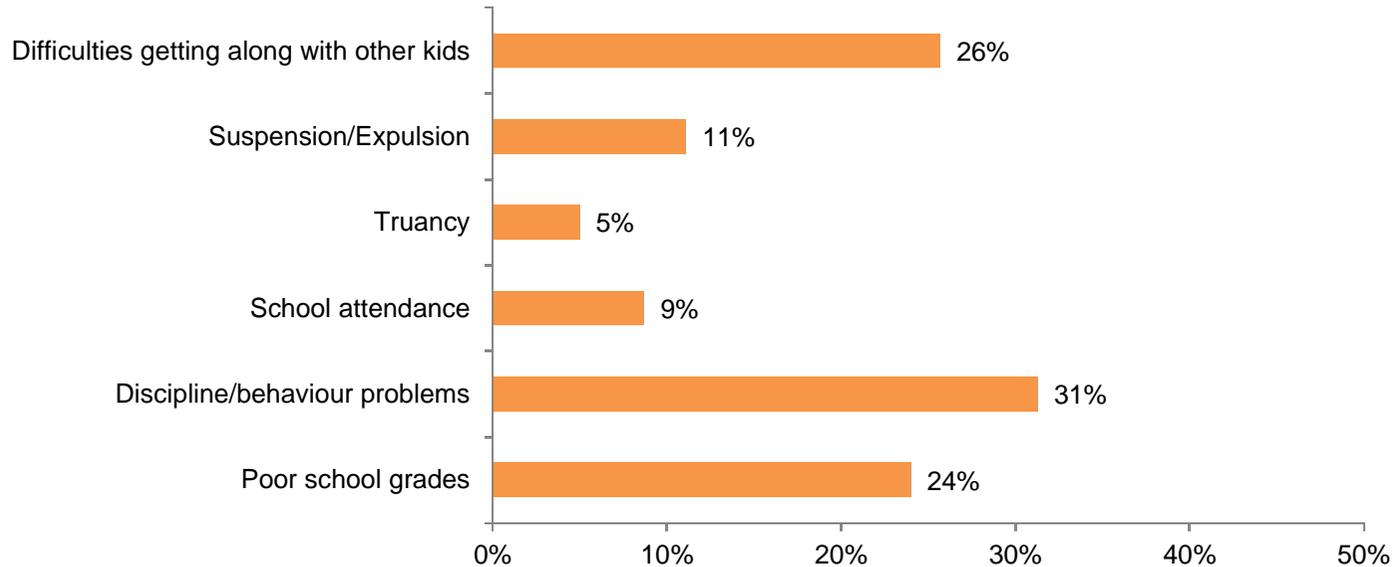
Change of schools (excluding primary to high school):

- 53.2% of children aged 6-11 years had experienced at least one change of primary school (mean no. of schools 1.86)
- 95% of young people aged 12-17 years had experienced at least three changes of school (mean no. of schools 3.67)
- Over half (61%) of children aged 6-11 year years; and 40% of 12-17 years had changed schools on placement change

Carers report about 36% of children were reported to have an OOHC education plan (children in residential care or foster care more likely)

14% of children aged 6-11 years and 19% of children aged 12-17 years attended a non-government school.

Caseworker: Difficulties relating to schooling



Since first meeting the child: 65% of children's caseworkers report that the child's wellbeing is improving, 30% report the child's wellbeing is unchanged, and 5% report the child's wellbeing is deteriorating (n=1293)

Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)



- AEDC provides a standardised tool to assess children's development on entry to school
- Commenced in 2009, teacher complete for children 100 questions across five domains:
 - physical health and wellbeing
 - social competence
 - emotional maturity
 - language and cognitive skills
 - communication skills and general knowledge
- Children who participated in the AEDC in 2009 had not yet entered OOHC, those who did it in 2012 had recently entered and those in 2015 had entered OOHC a few years prior

AEDC continued



Developmental vulnerability on one or more domains: Comparison to national data



Note: The 'no final orders' and 'final orders' status was determined according to whether the child received a final order by April 2013. Subsequently some children may have taken different pathways by exiting or re-entering OOHC. These subsequent pathways are not accounted for in this analysis.

Proportion of children from POCLS population cohort by order type, who were developmentally vulnerable on 'one or more' domains, compared to the general population for each AEDC cycle (2009 n=188, 2012 n=206, 2015 n=289)

AEDC continued



Developmental vulnerability on two or more domains: Comparison to national data



Note: The 'no final orders' and 'final orders' status was determined according to whether the child received a final order by April 2013. Subsequently some children may have taken different pathways by exiting or re-entering OOHC. These subsequent pathways are not accounted for in this analysis.

Proportion of children in the POCLS population cohort by order type, who were developmentally vulnerable on 'two or more' domains, compared to the general population for each AEDC cycle (2009 n=188, 2012 n=206, 2015 n=289).

AEDC continued



Developmental vulnerability by domain: Comparison to national data 2015



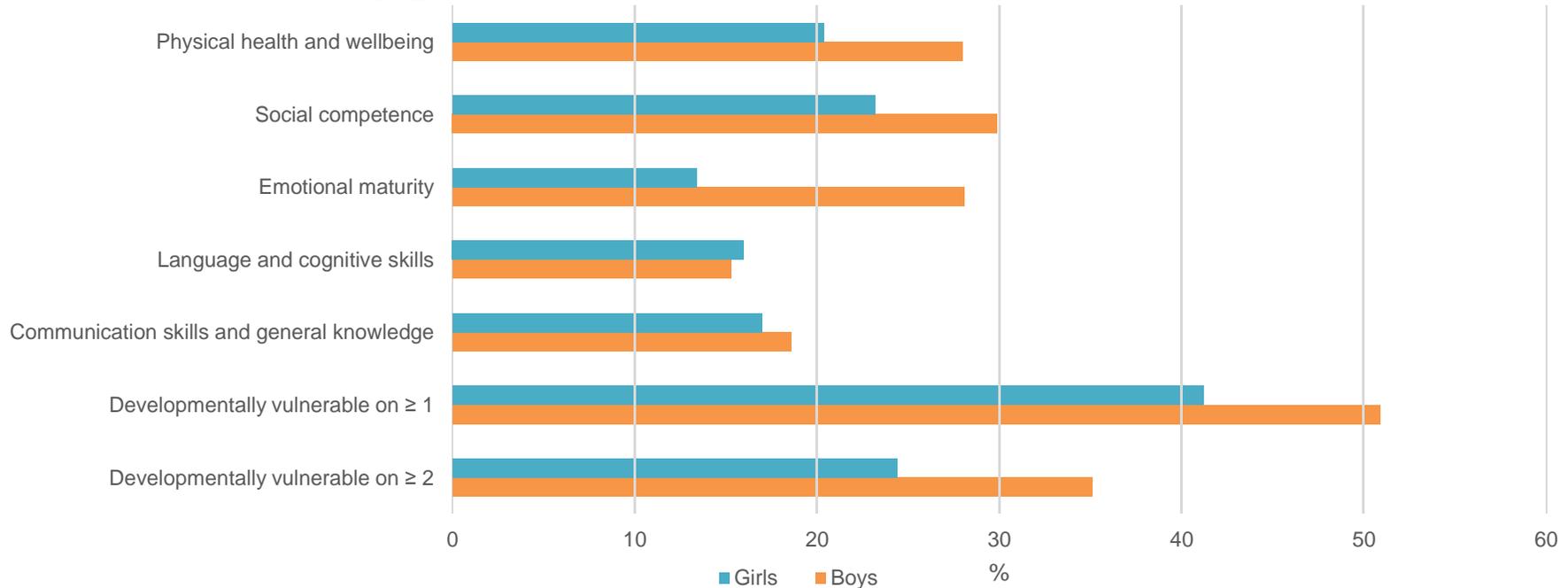
Note: For the physical health and wellbeing domain results for the no final orders cohort are withheld due to small numbers. The 'no final orders' and 'final orders' status was determined according to whether the child received a final order by April 2013. Subsequently some children may have taken different pathways by exiting or re-entering OOH. These subsequent pathways are not accounted for in this analysis.

Proportion of children in the POCLS population cohort in the 2015 AEDC cycle (n=289–291) who were developmentally vulnerable on each domain, by order type, and compared with Australian data

AEDC continued



Proportion of children in the POCLS cohort who are developmentally vulnerable on each domain by gender (n=683–686)



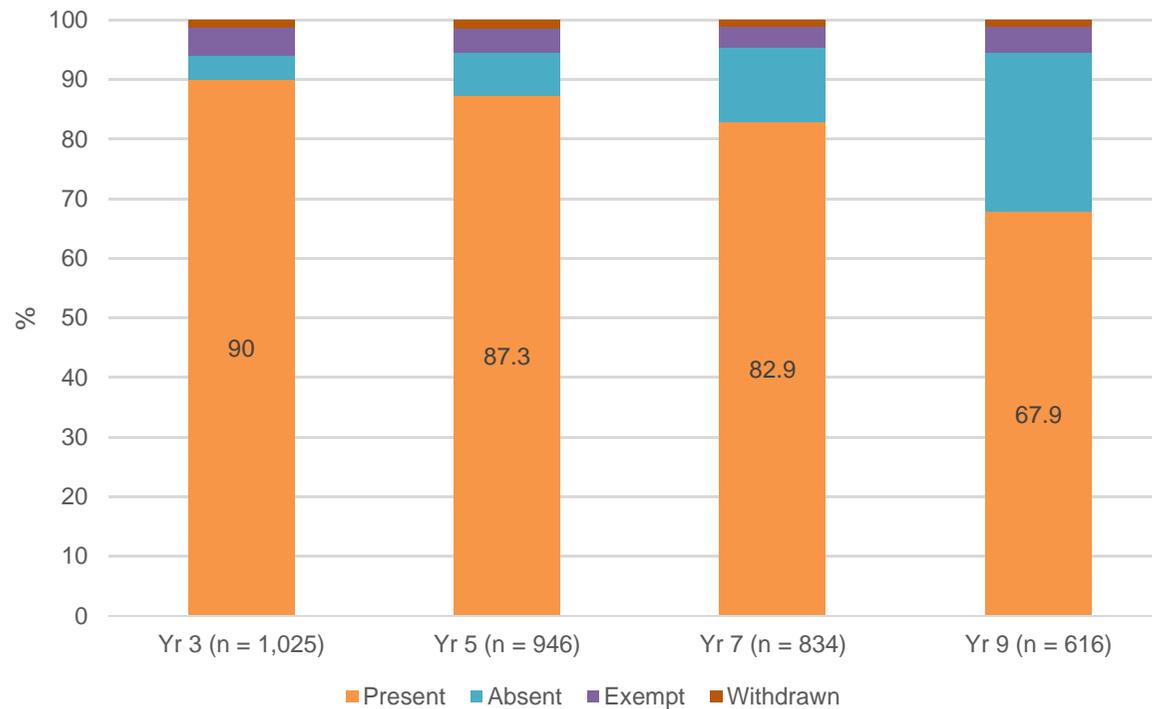
Boys are at significantly higher risk than girls at being developmentally vulnerable in several domains – physical health and wellbeing (OR 1.2), emotional maturity (OR 2.1), developmentally vulnerable in 1 or more domains (OR 1.4)

National Assessment Program–Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)



- The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing regime commences with children being tested in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9
- These tests are designed to assess the sorts of literacy and numeracy skills that are essential for every child to progress through school and life. They also assess whether children have achieved the minimum benchmark standards appropriate for their year level
- Data drawn from 2008 to 2014 calendar years. Children who participated in the NAPLAN in 2008-2009 had not yet entered OOHC, those who participated in 2010-11 had recently entered and those in 2012-14 had entered OOHC a few years prior

NAPLAN Participation POCLS Cohort



There were no significant differences in NAPLAN participation rates between children on final orders in OOHC and those who were not on final orders across all school years

NAPLAN Meeting of Minimum Standards: Reading



Note: The 'no final orders' and 'final orders' status was determined according to whether the child received a final order by April 2013. Subsequently some children may have taken different pathways by exiting or re-entering OOHc. These subsequent pathways are not accounted for in this analysis.

There were no significant differences between the children on final orders and those not on final orders

NAPLAN Meeting of Minimum Standards: Numeracy



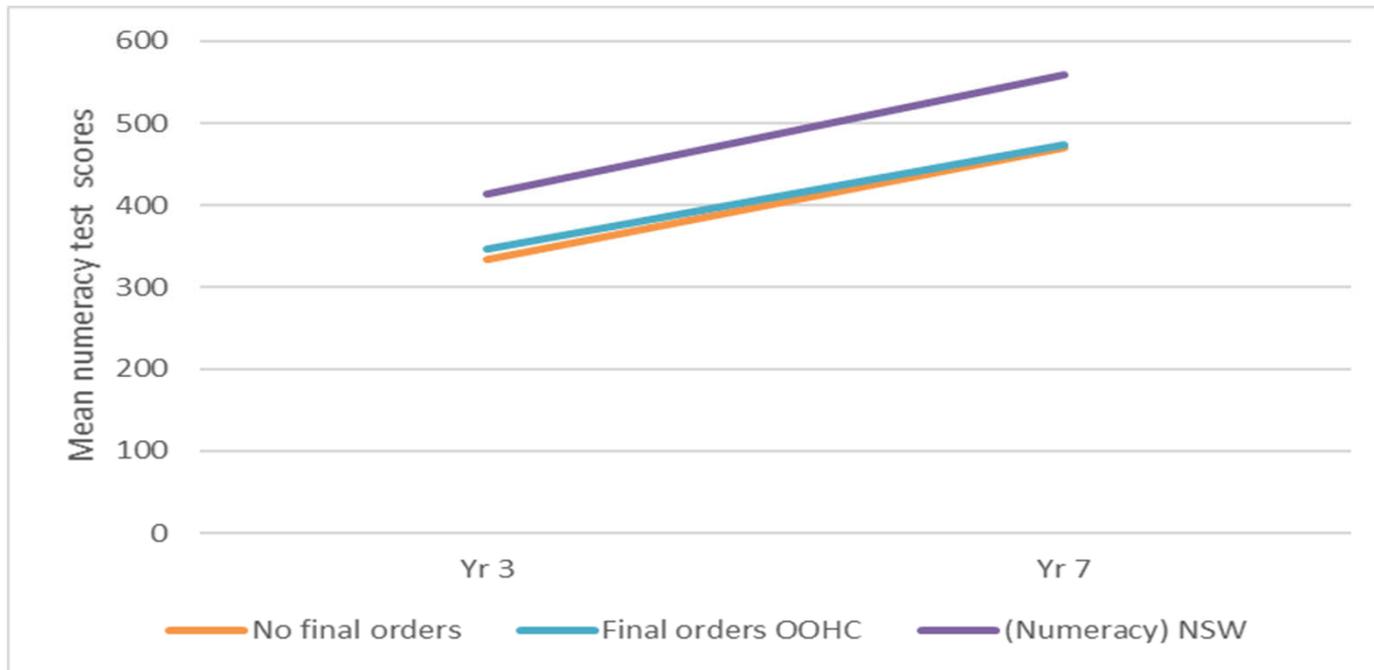
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There were no significant differences between the children on final orders and those not on final orders

NAPLAN Progress



Matched numeracy scores by order type, for POCLS population cohort compared to children in NSW, Year 3 and Year 7 ($n = 217$)



Note: The 'no final orders' and 'final orders' status was determined according to whether the child received a final order by April 2013. Subsequently some children may have taken different pathways by exiting or re-entering OOHC. These subsequent pathways are not accounted for in this analysis.

There were no significant differences between the children on final orders and those not on final orders

NAPLAN Progress



Matched reading scores by order type, for the POCLS population cohort compared to children in NSW, Year 3 and Year 7 ($n = 217$)



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There were no significant differences between the children on final orders and those not on final orders

Summary of Findings



- AEDC - strong evidence that children who experience maltreatment are more likely to be developmentally vulnerable on commencing school
- NAPLAN - no significant differences between children on final order and those not, both performing below state average
- NAPLAN - declining participation by Year 9 – marker for school disengagement?
- School changes - just over half of children aged 6-11 years had experienced at least one change of primary school; and almost all young people aged 12-17 years had experienced at least three changes of school.
- Overall children who stayed in OOHC on final orders* and those not on final orders* were at educational risk, likely due to similar early life experiences that increase vulnerabilities

Selected Policy and Practice Implications



For all children involved with the child protection system:

- Ensuring children attend a quality pre-school in the year before starting school
- That NAPLAN assessments when a student is achieving at or below the national minimum standards should be used as a marker for focused intervention and additional supports both in and outside of school

Individual education planning (IEP):

- All children in OOHC should have IEP. Review: post AEDC in kindergarten, at start of Year 6 to prepare for high school, after the Year 7 and Year 9 NAPLAN results are available, and on change of school/placement
- IEP meetings held in Years 10 to 12 include the school careers guidance counsellor to support career aspirations
- Young people in Year 10 who are interested in going to university be provided with an education mentor within the school

Selected Policy and Practice Implications



Children's Court:

- On entry to care, the caseworker and birth parents record current educational details and school history, including any educational assessments. Provide to the Children's Court Magistrate as part of child's care plan

Children who are restored:

- That restoration planning gives priority to addressing children's educational needs and school continuity
- Support by agencies is provided post restoration for educational needs
- That all school-aged children who are restored to their birth parent/s be linked into relevant support programs such as the Smith Family Learning for Life Program

Recommendations for research:

- There is a need to develop and pilot early education interventions that can meet the needs of children who have been maltreated and in OOHC as currently the evidence for effective interventions is limited

Limitations of the Analysis



- The analysis of the survey data based on unweighted data; selection biases within the data; and not a representative sample
- The caseworker survey represented a 62% response rate and the data was unweighted
- Analyses presented did not control for potential confounders and/or modifiers
- POCLS is a longitudinal study, however, this current analysis has not presented all outcomes over time

Further Information



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