

Evaluation of the LINKS Trauma Healing Service

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Parenting Research Centre acknowledges and respects the diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of this country and the Elders of the past and present.



Acknowledging contributors

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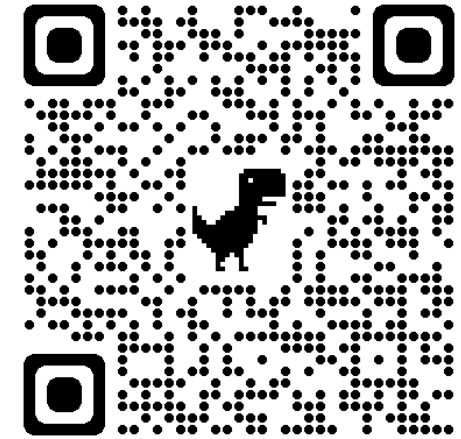
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LINKS staff, youth & carers

DCJ staff



LINKS Aims

- increase stability of OOHC placements
- respond to trauma and other underlying causes of child abuse and neglect
- decrease trauma symptoms and improve psychological wellbeing of CYP and carers

Evaluation Aims

- examine success of LINKS in improving client outcomes
- understanding the experiences of clients and carers exposed to the program
- examine cost-effectiveness of LINKS



Evaluation Methods

Design:

- Process, outcome and economic evaluation
- Hybrid effectiveness-implementation design (Bernet et al., 2013)
- Between-groups repeated-measures quasi-experimental design for the outcome evaluation: matched comparison group
- Cost-effectiveness analysis for economic evaluation



Evaluation Methods

Data:

- 23 staff interviews; 27 carer interviews
- Pre-post (& 6-12 month f/up) data from LINKS service records:
 - trauma symptoms (TSCC, TSCYC)
 - children's behavioural and emotional functioning (SDQ)
 - children's psychological wellbeing (PWI-SC & HoNOSCA)
 - Carer capacity & wellbeing (PWI-A & PSS)
 - Carer report of child hospital visits, school attendance, justice contacts
- LINKS service receipt data & staff fidelity data
- DCJ/LINKS cost data (e.g. financial reports)
- DCJ data on RoSH reports & placements including for a matched comparison sample



Findings - Referrals

- 415 referrals, 47% Aboriginal, <17 year olds
- 343 accepted into LINKS, 264 started receiving a service before end 2019
- 208 exited before end 2019, 108 successfully completed 1+ program
- 7% not accepted as they did not meet referral criteria (e.g., not in placement) or they declined service.

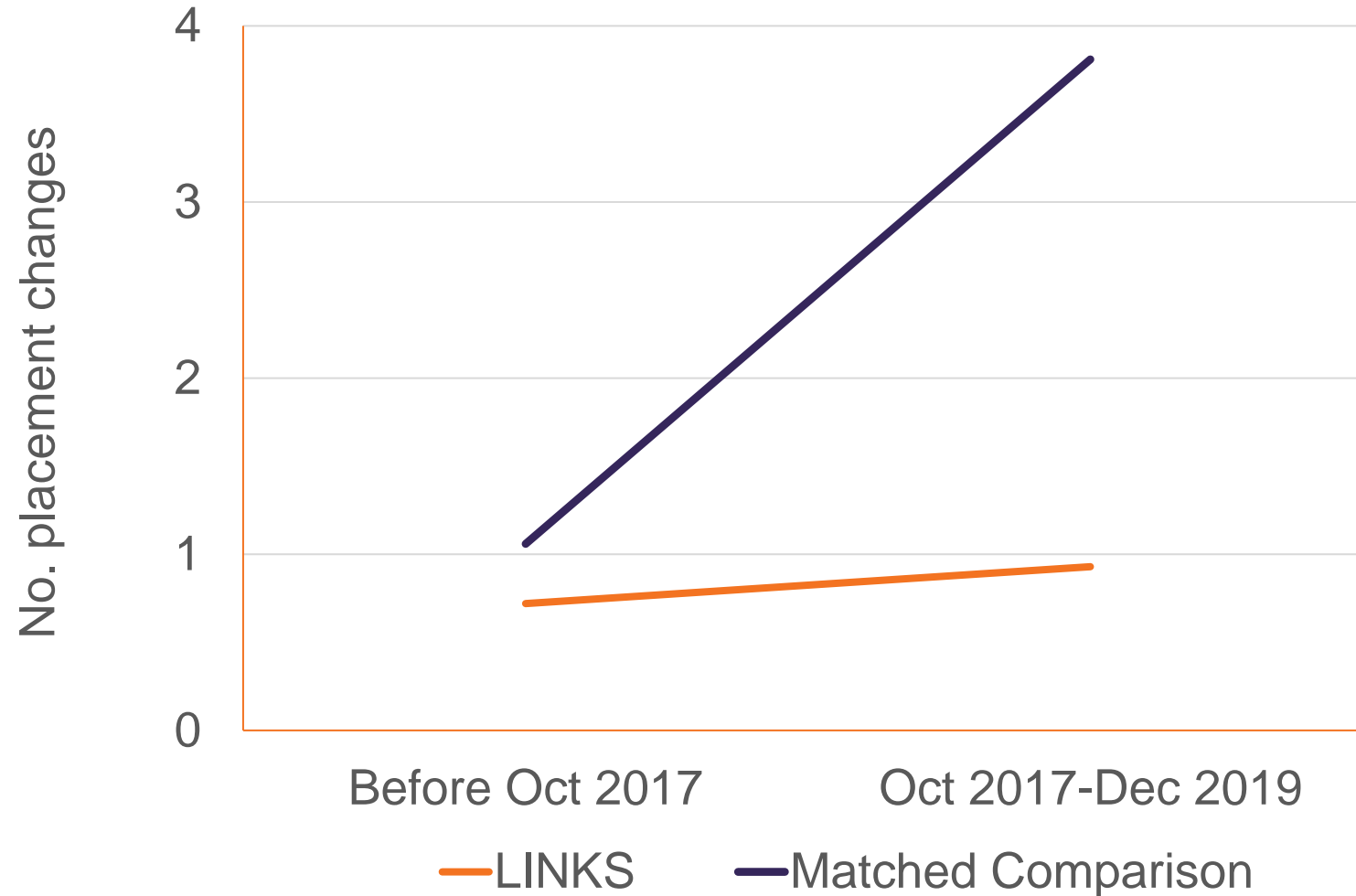


Findings – Experiences of the service

- 54% allocated to TF-CBT, 35% to TIK or TIK(T), 17% to PCIT, 17% to EMDR
- High satisfaction among staff, carers & children
- Filling a gap
- Positive outcomes
- Cultural adaptation
- Flexible
- Relationship-based
- Role of LINKS in supporting cultural needs of Aboriginal children?



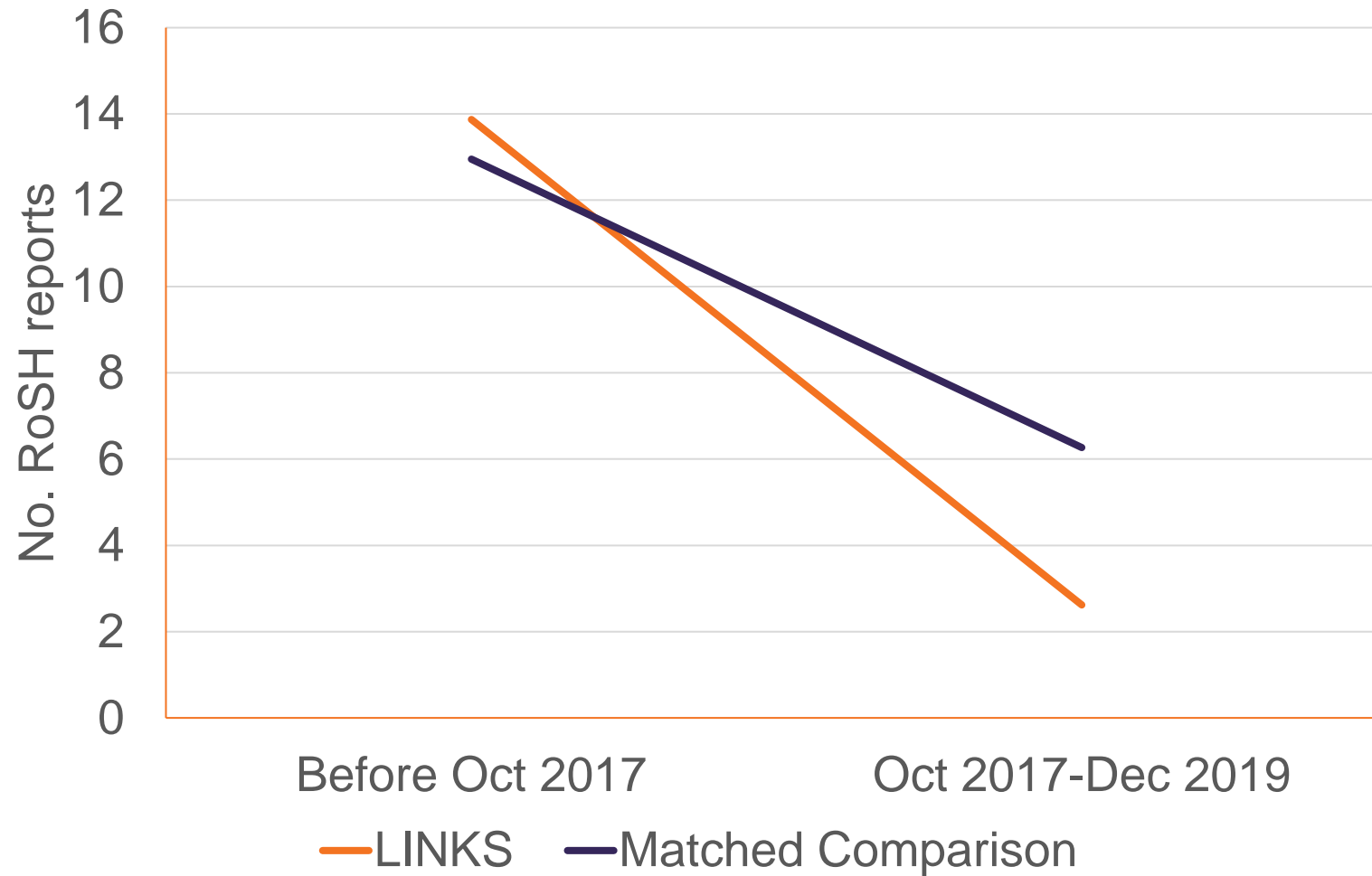
Findings – Placement stability



LINKS clients had significantly ($p < .001$) better improvement in placement stability than the matched comparison group, and this treatment effect was in the moderate to large range



Findings – Risk of Significant Harm



LINKS clients had a steeper decline in RoSH reports than the matched comparison group, although this difference between groups was not statistically significant ($p=.062$)

Other findings

- No differences in restoration rates (4-5%)
- Of the 108 'completers', 59 achieved treatment goals & 39 made progress
- Reduction in disruptive behaviour problems ($p < .05$, moderate effect)
- Reduction in socio-emotional difficulties ($p < .05$, moderate effect)
- Improved relationships with peers ($p < .001$, large effect)
- Improvements in general health & social functioning ($p < .001$, large effect)
- Reduction in posttraumatic stress ($p < .05$, large effect)
- Fewer school suspensions ($p < .05$, moderate effect)
- Fewer court appearances ($p < .01$, moderate effect)
- Improvements in carer wellbeing ($p < .05$, moderate effect)
- Potential cost savings of \$3,305 for each future placement breakdown



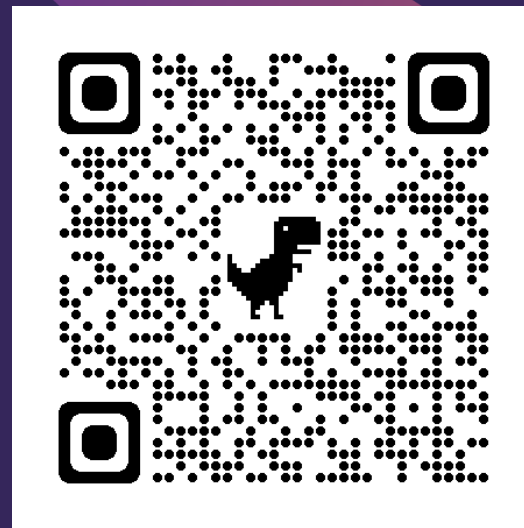
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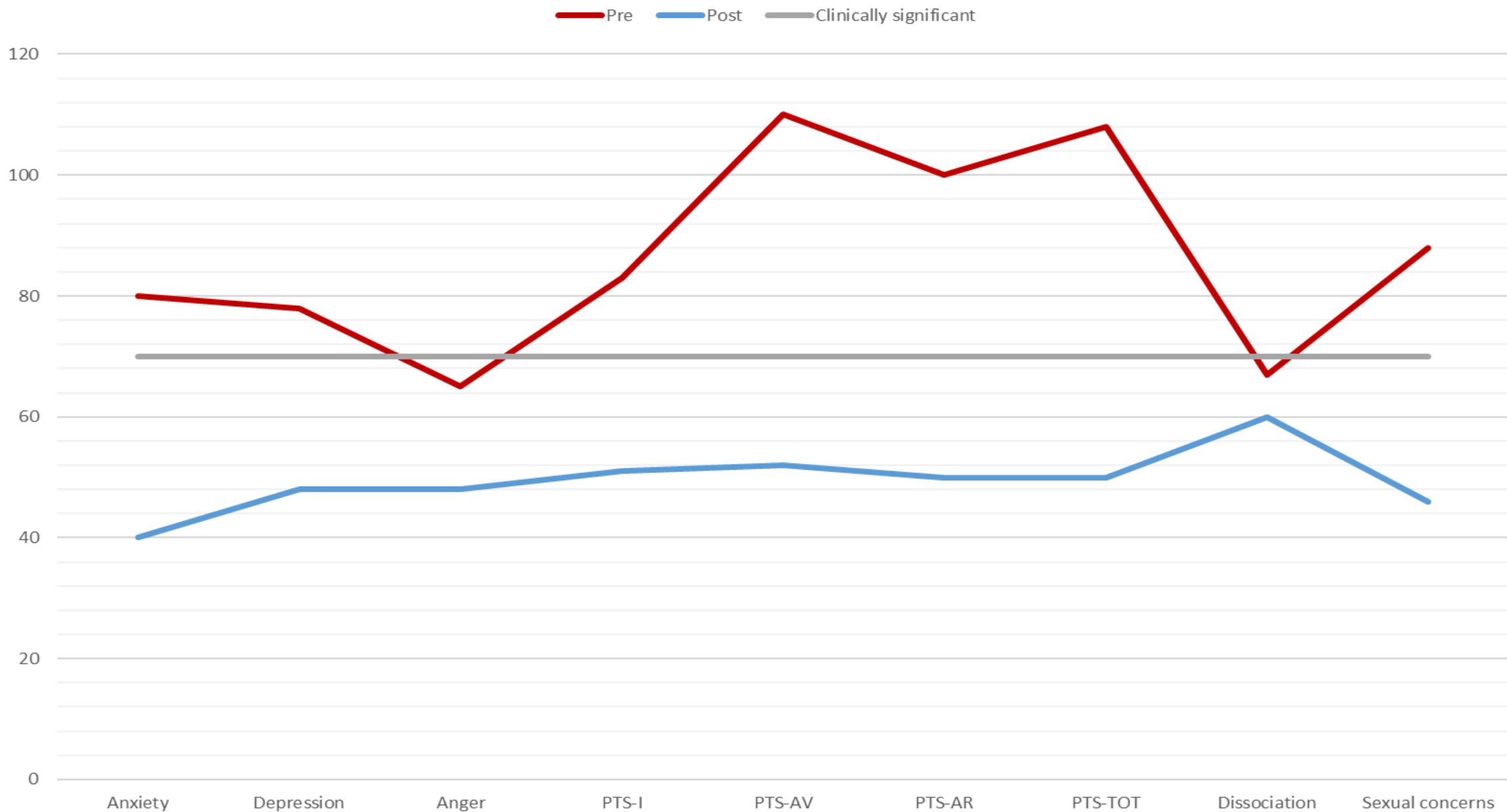
Sam's Story

Sam was 9 years old and at the time of referral the case plan goal was for her to go home to her mum.

Behavioural symptoms of complex trauma:

- Complex grief
 - Suicidal ideation
 - Attachment disruption
 - Multiple school suspensions
 - Significant placement instability
 - Highly avoidant in therapy
-
- TF-CBT, Occupational Therapy and Speech Pathology

Sam's Trauma Symptoms Checklist for Young Children Results



Where is Sam now?

- Sam lives at home with her mum
- Sam's sister has recently gone home too and things are going well
- Sam hasn't been suspended from school for over 12 months
- She's in the local soccer team

Sam says:

I am more confident and I get less angry

I don't have nightmares now