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

Well-being and Education for Children in Out of Home Care
Association of Children’s Welfare Agencies (ACWA) Conference
21 August 2018

Michelle L Townsend, Laura Robinson, Kate Lewis
POCLS main 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&5 ongoing
Multiple data sources

In-depth interview data
Children & carers (n=1,789)
W1 n=1,285/ W2 n=1,200/
W3 n=1,033/ W4&5 ongoing

On-line surveys
Caseworkers & Teachers
(n=1,617 of 2,828)
(childcare/school)
(n=673 ongoing)

FACS records
Child protection & OOHC placements
(n=4,126)

Linked records
Health, Education, Australian Early Development Census, Offending
(n=4,126)
Research Questions

1. What are the cognitive/learning ability 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 during their time in OOHC and post restoration?

3. How do placement characteristics and placement stability, influence children and young people’s educational outcomes?

4. In what ways do the characteristics of the child, carer, community and school affect the educational pathways?
Overview of Presentation

Preliminary findings, further analysis will be included in research report published later this year

- Survey and Interview Data
- Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) (Kindergarten)*
- National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)*
- Initial implications

*Some children may or may not have been in care at the time of these assessments
• Australian research in this area is still limited but the findings are consistent that children in 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) exposed to substantiated maltreatment were more likely to be vulnerable on multiple domains (30% exposed to substantial harm were developmental on track, compared with 57% of children not exposed (Carr et al., 2016).

• Older age of entry, type of placement and reunification influenced children’s Year 3 NAPLAN outcome (Maclean et al., 2017).
Importance of Student Well-being

- 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.

Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL) (interview cohort n=714)

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

- Children all age groups showed a:
  - Reduction in Internalising behaviours (clinical) over time
  - Externalising and total problem scores declined (waves 1-2), but slightly increased wave 3

- Total CBCL scores were consistently higher in males than females and these differences were significant at waves 2 and 3

- Children in foster care reported significantly greater CBCL Total Problems at each wave than children in relative/kinship care
Education
(Interview Cohort Wave 3 n=620)

Change of schools:
- 40% of 6 – 11 year olds had experienced at least one change of primary school
- 61% of 12-17 year olds
- Nearly half (42%) of 6 – 11 year olds and 49% of 12 – 17 year olds had changed schools upon being placed

About 40% of children were reported to have an OOHC education plan (61.4% of 6 – 11; 24.1% of 12 – 17 year olds)

- 5% repeated a grade
- 14% attend non-government school
Caseworker concerns for child:

Since first meeting the child: 65% 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)

*Includes children in care that are taking part in the study and those who are not
The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)

- The 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
AEDC (cont.)

Developmental vulnerability: comparison to national data (2015)

Both groups (final orders, no final orders) are at significantly higher risk than the general population (p<.001)

Note: Data presented is for children who completed AEDC in 2015 (N=289)
Boys are at significantly higher risk than girls (p<.001) at being developmentally vulnerable in several domains – physical health and wellbeing, emotional maturity, social competence, developmentally vulnerable in 2 or more domains.

Note: Data presented is for all POCLS children who completed AEDC in 2015, all who had entered care on interim orders in May 2010-October 2011 (N=289).
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
Achievement in Numeracy from Year 3 to Year 9 (NAPLAN)

![Graph showing mean scale score for Numeracy from Year 3 to Year 9 (NAPLAN) with data points for Year 3 (n=907), Year 5 (n=808), Year 7 (n=679), and Year 9 (n=414). Graph includes lines for No final orders, Final orders OOHC, and NSW.](image-url)
Achievement in Reading from Year 3 to Year 9 (NAPLAN)
# Achievement in Numeracy by Order (NAPLAN)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 5</th>
<th>Year 7</th>
<th>Year 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No final orders</strong></td>
<td>Mean / (S.D.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>334.9 (68.6)</td>
<td>427.1 (64.3)</td>
<td>478.5 (59.9)</td>
<td>524.9 (60.6)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(n=270)</td>
<td>(n=289)</td>
<td>(n=350)</td>
<td>(n=247)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% at or above NMS</td>
<td>88.6%</td>
<td>81.9%</td>
<td>84.7%</td>
<td>68.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Final orders</strong></td>
<td>Mean / (S.D.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>346.5 (66.7)</td>
<td>421.2 (82.4)</td>
<td>474.0 (58.9)</td>
<td>517.1 (57.4)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(n=637)</td>
<td>(n=515)</td>
<td>(n=329)</td>
<td>(n=167)</td>
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<tr>
<td>% at or above NMS</td>
<td>86.8%</td>
<td>82.4%</td>
<td>82.0%</td>
<td>78.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NSW</strong></td>
<td>Mean / (S.D.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>407.3 (74.2)</td>
<td>493.4 (71.1)</td>
<td>550.3 (77.7)</td>
<td>594.3 (77.2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>% at or above NMS</td>
<td>96.8%</td>
<td>94.3%</td>
<td>95.5%</td>
<td>94.5%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*aNSW data is from 2014
## Achievement in Reading by Order type (NAPLAN)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 5</th>
<th>Year 7</th>
<th>Year 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No final orders</td>
<td>Mean / (S.D.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>339.0 (88.5)</td>
<td>421.2 (82.4)</td>
<td>481.3 (67.1)</td>
<td>523.7 (64.2)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(n=267)</td>
<td>(n=296)</td>
<td>(n=360)</td>
<td>(n=249)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>% at or above</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NMS</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>88.4%</td>
<td>75.5%</td>
<td>80.4%</td>
<td>67.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final orders</td>
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<td>349.7 (80.3)</td>
<td>432.6 (74.9)</td>
<td>484.5 (65.2)</td>
<td>516.6 (69.0)</td>
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<td>(n=645)</td>
<td>(n=520)</td>
<td>(n=327)</td>
<td>(n=178)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>86.2%</td>
<td>76.9%</td>
<td>82.9%</td>
<td>74.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW(^a)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>422.9 (84.3)</td>
<td>504.0 (77.8)</td>
<td>548.3 (69.9)</td>
<td>584.3 (69.1)</td>
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<td>(n=565)</td>
<td>(n=520)</td>
<td>(n=327)</td>
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<td>% at or above</td>
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<td>94.7%</td>
<td>93.7%</td>
<td>95.4%</td>
<td>92.6%</td>
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\(^a\)NSW data is from 2014
## NAPLAN Results by Gender

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total score</th>
<th>Numeracy score</th>
<th>Reading score</th>
<th>Spelling score</th>
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<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
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<td>POCLS</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>POCLS</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>341.76</td>
<td>404.5</td>
<td>355.15 (79.93)</td>
<td>361.68 (82.32)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>343.58</td>
<td>410.0</td>
<td>336.48 (84.75)</td>
<td>341.61 (85.81)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>427.50</td>
<td>487.9</td>
<td>434.13 (70.99)</td>
<td>450.13 (74.69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>431.36</td>
<td>498.6</td>
<td>421.04 (84.99)</td>
<td>424.27 (85.53)</td>
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<td>Year 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>473.36</td>
<td>545.5</td>
<td>486.05 (60.37)</td>
<td>508.66 (75.60)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>478.97</td>
<td>554.9</td>
<td>476.71 (75.09)</td>
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<td>Year 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>519.61</td>
<td>588.2</td>
<td>523.67 (59.15)</td>
<td>543.35 (77.97)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>523.90</td>
<td>600.1</td>
<td>516.24 (74.70)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

POCLS included both children on final orders and those without final orders


School Bonding and Problems

Mean scores for the school bonding scale (SBS) and the school problem scale (SPS) by gender across time.
Conclusion

• Initial findings

• Policy and Practice implications

• Further analysis required
Limitations of the analysis

• The analysis of the survey data based on unweighted data: selection biases within the data: not a representative sample
• The caseworker survey only 62% response rate and – no corrections made to the data
• Analyses presented did not control for potential confounders and/or modifiers
• POCLS is a longitudinal study, however not all outcomes presented have been examined over time
Further Information

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Study DVD, information and publication clearinghouse

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