

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

Out-of-Home Care Policy Context in NSW - 2010-2018:  
Wave 1-4 Data Collection Period







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Out-of-Home Care Policy Context in NSW - 2010-2018:  
Wave 1-4 Data Collection

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#### Prepared by

Sharon Burke, Kate Furst, Merran Butler and Courtney Breen. NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ).

#### Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study Clearinghouse

All study publications including research reports, technical reports and evidence to action notes can be found on the study webpage [www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/pathways-of-care](http://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/pathways-of-care)

**Study design by** NSW Department of Communities and Justice Insights, Analysis and Research; Australian Institute of Family Studies; Professor Judy Cashmore, University of Sydney; Professor Paul Delfabbro, University of Adelaide; Professor Ilan Katz, University of NSW; Dr Fred Wulczyn, Chapin Hall Center for Children University of Chicago.

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## Preface

The Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study (POCLS) is funded and managed by the New South Wales Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ)<sup>1</sup>. 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's and young people's experiences while growing up in OOHC, post restoration, post adoption and on leaving care at 18 years
- 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, OOHC placements, health, education and offending held by multiple government agencies; and match it 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 between May 2010 and October 2011 (n=4,126). A subset of those children and young people who went on

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<sup>1</sup> Formerly the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS). Throughout this document DCJ has been used to reflect the current name of the Department and FACS is used to reflect the name noted in historical documents.

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to receive final Children’s Court care and protection orders by April 2013 (2,828) were eligible to participate in the interview component of the study. For more information about the study please visit the study webpage [www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/pathways-of-care](http://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 DCJ 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.

DCJ 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. The DCJ 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 DCJ research governance principles once developed.

# 1 Introduction

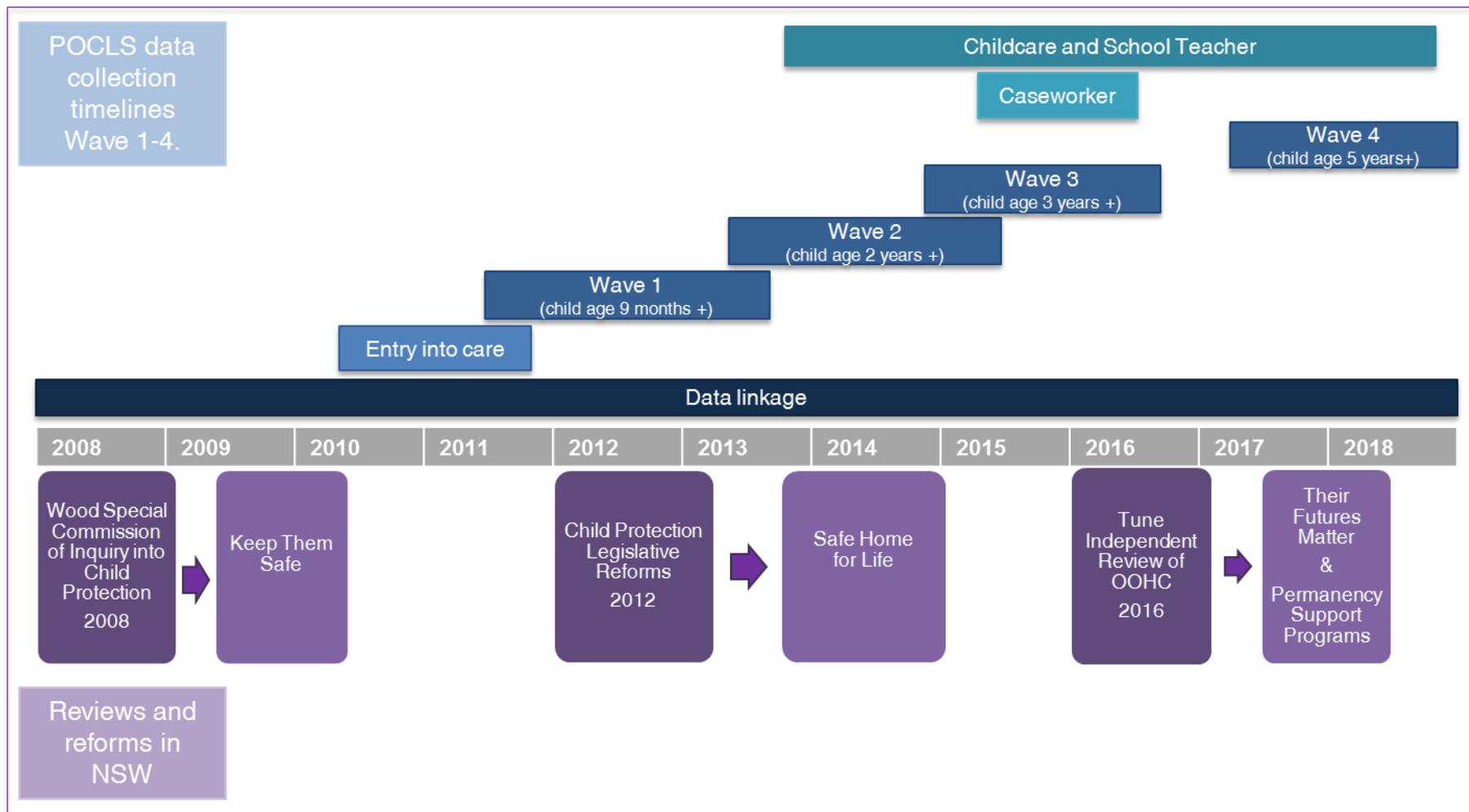
Over the last decade there have been a number of reviews that have examined the functioning of the child protection and OOHC systems and subsequently a number of significant reforms to child protection in NSW. The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of these reforms and the policy context during the first four waves of POCLS data collection, that is, from 2010 to 2018, to provide background and assist with the interpretation of the POCLS findings.<sup>2</sup>

Figure 1 provides an overview of the timelines for the POCLS data collections. In addition it highlights the timeframes for the major reviews conducted during the planning and implementation of the POCLS with the major reforms that have resulted from these reviews. Further detail on the reforms and the implications for policy and practice is provided in this report.

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<sup>2</sup> This document provides historical context. The Children and Young Person (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW) is amended routinely and policy and practice changed to reflect amendments. There have been additional changes since 2018.

Figure 2: Overview of POCLS data collection timelines and key OOHC reviews and reforms



## 2 Overview of key dates and developments

### 2018

- In February 2018, the FACS Strategic Plan 2017-2021<sup>3</sup> was released setting out the Departments direction, goals and priorities.
- During 2018, Their Futures Matter<sup>4</sup> team focused on rolling out evidence-based packages, drawing on a whole-of-government investment approach, building stronger evidence of which programs and services work best for Aboriginal children and families, redesigning the child protection and child wellbeing access systems.
- The Permanency Support Program<sup>5</sup>, one of the most significant changes made to the NSW child protection and OOHC systems in decades, began full implementation in July 2018. The program is a government and sector-wide reform to child protection and OOHC practice and culture. There was a requirement for funded service providers to identify case plan goals for children and young people by 1 April 2018.
- In July 2018 Adopt Change was announced as the successful supplier on the new My Forever Family NSW program to provide recruitment, training and support to a range of carers including short term foster carers, guardians and adoptive parents.
- The Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Amendment Act 2018 resulted in key changes to practice including that DCJ must offer families Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) to work towards a family-led plan to keep their children safe. DCJ can also ask an agency or a funded service provider to give prioritised access to services for children at risk of significant harm and their families.
- In 2017/18, 2,157 children and young people entered OOHC, a decrease of 27% from 2016/17.
- At 30 June 2018 there were 17,387 children and young people in OOHC in NSW.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=550111>

<sup>4</sup> Their Futures Matter joined DCJ and was renamed Stronger Communities Investment Unit in late 2019. <https://www.theirfuturesmatter.nsw.gov.au/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/permanency-support-program>

- During 2017/18 there were 140 adoptions and at 30 June 2018 there were 2,849 children and young people on guardianship orders.

## 2017

- The Care Plan for children and young people in statutory OOHHC was redesigned, with the latest version coming into effect in January 2017. To help deliver culturally appropriate care to Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse children and young people, the redesigned Care Plan includes a 'Cultural Plan' to ensure children preserve their cultural identity as well as their connection to culture and family.
- In March 2017, the NSW Government announced both immediate and major long term changes to the child protection system. The more immediate changes were brought together under the Permanency Support Program. The main change was a shift from 'placement-based' service system to a child and family centred service system that focuses on individual needs and helps families to change.
- Three year funding arrangements were granted under the new Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) program,<sup>6</sup> from 1 July 2017. These services were required to continue to work with DCJ to implement TEI service reforms in their area. The TEI Sector assistance strategy was also released.<sup>7</sup>
- In August 2017, the Government committed to implementing new evidence based models that aimed to reduce the number of children entering care and increase the number of exits from care. This included Multi-systemic Therapy for Child Abuse and Neglect (MST-CAN) and Functional Family Therapy (FFT) to be delivered as part of TFM.
- The NSW Practice Framework<sup>8</sup> was launched in September 2017. The Framework shows how DCJ works with children and families in NSW. It includes the principles, values, mandates, approaches and systems that underpin DCJ's work.
- ChildStory went live across NSW between 29 November and 12 December 2017. ChildStory replaced existing technology and expanded the digital toolkit available to caseworkers, service providers, families, carers and children. ChildStory was

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=408091>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/children-families/early-intervention/TEI-program/chapters/sector-assistance-strategy>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/children-families/child-protection-services/practice-framework>

designed to lower the day-to-day administrative toll, take advantage of opportunities to improve practice, and ultimately enable caseworkers to spend more time in the field with families and provide quality care to more children.<sup>9</sup>

- The Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy (AOS)<sup>10</sup> was released in 2017 setting out a new approach for delivering quality outcomes for Aboriginal people over the next five years. The Strategy is a priority initiative in the FACS Strategic Plan 2017-2021 and will be supported by the Cultural Capability Framework and Aboriginal Impact Statements.
- In 2016/17, 2,969 children and young people entered OOHC, a decrease of 24% from 2015/16.
- At 30 June 2017, there were 17,803 children and young people in OOHC in NSW.
- During 2017/18 there were 129 adoptions and at 30 June 2017 there were 2,667 children and young people on guardianship orders.

## 2016

- In November 2016, the Their Futures Matter reform was released by the NSW Government.
- In September 2016, the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) trial started<sup>11</sup>. The QAF provides regular information on the safety, permanency and wellbeing each child and young person in statutory OOHC to caseworkers to support and inform their case planning.
- The Minister committed to The Independent Review of Aboriginal Children and Young People in OOHC in NSW examining the circumstances of 1,152 Aboriginal children and young people who entered OOHC in NSW between July 2015 and June 2016. On 25 August 2016, the NSW Cabinet approved the approach in response to the Independent Review of Out-of-Home Care in NSW 2017.<sup>12</sup>
- All 15 Districts became accredited to provide OOHC by the independent statutory body, the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian. This milestone was reached in

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<sup>9</sup> At time of writing the implementation of ChildStory continues with sections of ChildStory still being finalised.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/about/reforms/aboriginal-outcomes>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/about/reforms/children-families/QAF/chapters/overview>

<sup>12</sup> The Family is Culture (FIC) Independent Review of Aboriginal Children and Young People in OOHC in NSW report was released in 2019. <https://www.familyisculture.nsw.gov.au/>

December 2016 making NSW the first state in Australian history to gain accreditation for its government-run child protection service.

- In 2015/16, 3,886 children and young people entered OOHC and at 30 June 2016, there were 17,841 children and young people in OOHC in NSW.
- By the end of 2015/16, 8,078 or 54% of children and young people in statutory OOHC were placed with NGOs.
- During 2015/16 there were 67 adoptions and at 30 June 2016 there were 2,486 children and young people on guardianship orders.

## 2015

- From 1 December 2015, the NSW Child Safe Standards for Permanent Care 2015<sup>13</sup> replaced the Statutory OOHC standards and the Adoption standards.
- In November 2015, the NSW Government commissioned an independent review of the OOHC system to “examine the drivers of demand, the outcomes for children and young people, the over-representation of Aboriginal children and the ongoing financial sustainability of the system”.
- On 15 June 2015, the Office of the Children’s Guardian established a Carers Register.
- The Government announced that funding for programs and services as part of Keep Them Safe will be ongoing.
- In 2014/15, 3,639 children and young people entered OOHC and at 30 June 2015, there were 17,585 children and young people in OOHC in NSW.
- As at 30 June 2015, 7,525 or 54% of children and young people in statutory OOHC had been placed with an OOHC NGO.
- During 2014/15, 87 children and young people in OOHC were adopted and at 30 June 2015 there were 2,418 children and young people on guardianship orders.

## 2014

- The Child Protection Legislation Amendment Act 2014 received assent on 1 April 2014 and commenced on 29 October 2014.
- On 29 October 2014, relative and kinship carers who had an order from the Children’s Court giving them full parental responsibility for a child or young

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<sup>13</sup><https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/statutory-out-of-home-care-and-adoption/nsw-standards-for-permanent-care>

person transitioned to guardianship orders. This resulted in a number of children in the POCLS transitioning to guardianship.

- From 29 October 2014, the permanency placement principles give preference to adoption before the allocation of parental responsibility to the Minister.<sup>14</sup>
- Health Management Plans for children in OOHC increased 55.4% between 2013/14 and 2014/15.
- In 2013/14, 3,418 children and young people entered OOHC and at 30 June 2014, there were 18,950 children and young people in OOHC in NSW.
- As at 30 June 2014 the percentage of children and young people in statutory OOHC with NGOs was 50.9%.
- Over the 2013/14 period 82 children and young people in OOHC were adopted.

## 2013

- On 15 June 2013, the Government introduced a new Working with Children Check (WWCC) for child-related work.
- The state-wide rollout of the online referral management system was completed on 29 April 2013. The system allows 'real-time' referrals for placement to all NGOs.
- A number of clinical guidelines relating to paediatric emergency care, maternity care and health assessment for children in OOHC were reviewed/developed.<sup>15</sup>
- In 2012/13, 3,210 children and young people entered OOHC and at 30 June 2013, there were 18,300 children and young people in OOHC in NSW.
- As at 30 June 2013, 40.7% of children and young people in statutory OOHC had been placed with an OOHC NGO.<sup>16</sup>
- In 2012/13, 78 adoption orders were made for children in OOHC .

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<sup>14</sup> For Aboriginal children adoption is considered after parental responsibility to the Minister; 'Where it is preferable to any other order, including parental responsibility to the Minister, open adoption is a permanency option for Aboriginal children in out-of-home care (OOHC).' <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/permanency-support-program/paths>

<sup>15</sup> NSW Ministry of Health Annual Report 2012/13  
<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/publications/Pages/annualreport13.aspx>

<sup>16</sup> Family and Community Services Annual Report 2012/13  
<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/publications/annual-reports>

## 2012

- The Minister endorsed the OOHC Transition Implementation Framework in January 2012. In March 2012, the transition of OOHC to the NGO sector began and by 30 June 2012, 123 children and young people had been transferred to NGOs along with 64 carers.<sup>17</sup>
- Schools continued to develop and/or review education plans for those new to statutory OOHC collaboratively with parents (authorised carers), caseworkers, and the child or young person, where appropriate.<sup>17</sup>
- The Office of the Senior Practitioner was established in July 2012 to work with child protection practitioners to provide good practice and support continuous improvement in service delivery to children and families.
- The Care and Protection Framework was launched in December 2012. This Framework outlines the Departments approach to working with children and families.
- In 2011/12, 3,585 children and young people entered OOHC and at 30 June 2012, there were 18,169 children and young people in OOHC in NSW.

## 2011

- In March 2011, the Departments of Education and Communities (formerly DET) and Community Services signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in relation to the provision of educational services for children and young people in OOHC. The MOU provides an agreed framework for a coordinated approach by the two agencies in responding to the needs of children and young people in OOHC who are enrolled in, or applying to enrol in, a NSW Government school, including a preschool.
- In August 2011, an MOU was signed between Community Services and the Ministry of Health that set out the roles and responsibilities for each agency in working together to facilitate access to health services for the OOHC population.
- The MOU contained an interagency framework for conducting and coordinating health screening, assessment, and intervention for children and young people in statutory OOHC, Model Pathway for the Comprehensive Health and Developmental Assessments for All Children and Young People Entering Out-of-Home Care.

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<sup>17</sup> Keep Them Safe Annual Report 2011/12

<https://www.theirfuturesmatter.nsw.gov.au/about-us/other-reforms/keep-them-safe>

- Each Local Health District (LHD) in NSW established service delivery models for the coordination, delivery, monitoring, and reporting of OOHC health assessments. In line with the MOU, local agreements were developed between the LHDs and Community Services to support timely referrals to the health assessments for children and young people entering OOHC who are expected to remain in care for more than 90 days.<sup>17</sup>
- An OOHC Clinical Coordinator was appointed at The Children’s Hospital, Westmead to provide clinical advice and support to OOHC Clinical Coordinators state-wide.<sup>18</sup>
- Community Services Interagency Pathways Coordinators were employed in each region to facilitate education planning for children and young people in statutory OOHC. These positions were responsible for ensuring interagency collaboration between both agencies at the regional level.
- A Checklist for school principals: Who can make decisions on behalf of students in statutory out-of-home care, was developed. It aimed to help principals identify who is responsible for making decisions that may be relevant to a child or young person’s schooling.<sup>18</sup>
- On 30 June 2011, the Minister for Family and Community Services announced the establishment of a joint NGO/Government Ministerial Advisory Group. The advisory group was tasked with presenting a shared position on the transition of OOHC to the NGO sector, as well as providing clear advice on the broader reforms that the NSW Government should prioritise in order to improve OOHC services.
- Capacity building and the transfer of placements to Aboriginal OOHC service providers was a priority, given the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child and Young Person Placement Principles articulated in Section 13 of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998, and the significant overrepresentation of Aboriginal children and young people in the NSW OOHC system.<sup>18</sup>
- Practice First, a model for child protection service delivery involving greater collaboration, better communication, more time with families and a determination to keep families together where possible was developed in 2011.
- 3,696 children and young people entered OOHC in 2010/11 and at 30 June 2011, there were 17,896 children and young people in OOHC in NSW.

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<sup>18</sup> Keep Them Safe Annual Report 2010/11.

## 2010

- In January 2010 the threshold for reporting children and young people to the Child Protection Helpline increased from 'risk of harm' to 'risk of significant harm'.
- In January 2010, Child Wellbeing Units were established in the Departments of Health, Police and Education.
- On 27 January 2010, OOHC Coordinators commenced work in each NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) region in order to develop more effective ways to improve educational outcomes for children and young people in OOHC.
- An Out-of-home care in government schools – Education plan procedures document was developed to guide staff in developing and implementing education plans for children and young people in OOHC.<sup>19</sup>
- OOHC Coordinators in each Area Health Services were recruited to plan and implement Individual health assessments for children and young people entering OOHC.<sup>19</sup>
- 4,105 children and young people entered OOHC in 2009/10 and at 30 June 2010, there were 17,400 children and young people in OOHC in NSW.

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<sup>19</sup> Keep Them Safe Annual Report 2009/10.

### 3 Summary of key reforms

There have been a series of reforms over Waves 1 to 4 of the POCLS (2009-2018).

Table 1 Reforms as a result of inquiries and reviews

| Year | Review   | Outcome  |
|------|--|--|
| 2008 | Wood Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection | Keep Them Safe (KTS) in 2009.  |
| 2012 | Child Protection Legislative Reforms                     | Safe Home For Life (SHFL) in 2014.                                     |
| 2016 | Tune Independent Review of Out-of-Home Care              | Their Futures Matter (TFM) & Permanency Support Program (PSP) in 2017. |

#### Their Futures Matter and Permanency Support Program

In November 2015, the NSW Government commissioned an independent review of the OOHC system in NSW. The review was commissioned in response to the growth of the OOHC population, and continuing poor outcomes for the most vulnerable children and families. The final report was delivered in July 2016. The Review found that “while the current system responds to immediate crisis, it is failing to address the complex needs of vulnerable children and families or arrest the devastating cycles of intergenerational abuse and neglect”.

#### Their Futures Matter

In November 2016 the government released their response to the Tune Review; Their Futures Matter: A New Approach. It outlined a vision for a whole of system reform.<sup>20</sup>

Their Futures Matter (TFM) is a cross-government reform delivering whole-of-system changes to better support and improve long-term outcomes for vulnerable children and families in NSW.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.theirfuturesmatter.nsw.gov.au/>

<sup>21</sup> TFM joined the DCJ and was renamed Stronger Communities Investment in late 2019.

The reform includes:

- Placing children and families at the centre of program design and decision making so that services are specific and targeted to their needs. This is achieved through analysing cohorts of children, young people and families to understand their needs and providing wrap-around support packages designed to meet these needs.
- Bringing together services and evidence from across government to deliver one-connected response which places children and families at the centre through a single commissioning entity responsible for driving, managing and implementing the reform process and focussing on achieving better outcomes for children and families.
- Building a smart system that is sustainable and integrated where investment and services are informed and guided by data and evidence from all areas of government.

## Permanency Support Program

The Permanency Support Program (PSP) has been designed to improve the safety, permanency and wellbeing outcomes for children at risk of entering or in OOHC. It provides tailored services to vulnerable children and young people so that they can grow up in stable, secure and loving homes.

PSP originated from a number of initiatives to increase exits, reduce entries and ensure children and young people receive quality services and supports including reforms as part of Safe Home for Life. This included the introduction of performance- and outcomes-based contracts<sup>22</sup> to encourage NGO partners to focus their efforts on achieving safety, permanency and wellbeing outcomes, and to ensure that the services they provide align with the permanent placement principles introduced into the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW) on 1 October 2014.

The Independent Review of Out-of-Home Care in 2016 confirmed that these initiatives should set the groundwork for a broader reform to:

- Better fit the system to the needs of children and young people
- Enhance collaboration between DCJ, NGOs and families and kin

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<sup>22</sup> Commissioning for Better Outcomes <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/about/reforms/CBO>

- Invest more up front to support families and kin keep their children at home.

The PSP draws all these objectives together under the one reform and has three goals:

1. Reducing the number of entries into care by keeping families together.
2. Reducing the time children and young people spend in care by returning them home or finding other permanent homes for more children.
3. Improving the care experience by supporting the needs of individual children and young people and their recovery from trauma.

The PSP has a set of permanency placement principles which provide guidance on safely placing a child or young person in a permanent home. The preferred order for permanent placement is:

1. Preservation or restoration
2. Guardianship
3. Open adoption
4. Parental Responsibility to the Minister.<sup>23</sup>

There are four parts of the program which support children, young people and families to achieve permanency:

1. Permanency and early intervention principles built into casework.
2. Working intensively with birth parents and families to support change.
3. Recruitment, development and support of carers, guardian and adoptive parents.
4. Intensive Therapeutic Care system reform – aimed at reducing the length of time young people need to spend in intensive OOHC services by supporting them to recover from trauma, abuse and neglect and providing clear pathways to permanency.

## Safe Home for Life

On 22 November 2012, the Minister for Family and Community Services released the Child Protection Legislative Reforms discussion paper which proposed 29 wide-ranging legislative and practice changes to improve the NSW child protection system. The reforms aims to reduce the number of children and young people at risk

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<sup>23</sup> As per the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles (ACPP), options 3 and 4 are reversed for an Aboriginal child. 'Where it is preferable to any other order, including parental responsibility to the Minister, open adoption is a permanency option for Aboriginal children in out-of-home care (OOHC).'

<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/permanency-support-program/paths>.

of significant harm and provide permanency and a 'home for life' for those children who cannot live at home safely. A number of specific reforms were also proposed to make the NSW child protection system more child-focused – a key goal of the child protection reform package.

The Safe Home for Life reforms strengthened the child protection system through legislative change, new policy and practice and a redesign of how technology is used in child protection. Permanency placement principles and guardianship orders were introduced for the first time alongside a renewed focus on open adoption.

Safe Home for Life sought to move towards providing a less legalistic, process-driven child protection system by focusing on three areas:

- Building parenting capacity and increasing responsibility
- Providing greater permanency for children and young people in care
- Delivering and developing a more modern, responsive and child-focused system.

As part of the Safe Home for Life reforms, the Child Protection Legislation Amendment Act 2014 (the Act) received assent on 1 April 2014 and commenced on 29 October 2014. The Act implements the government's reform agenda across the child protection system with a particular emphasis on working more effectively with parents and families, creating a more responsive and child focused system and better achieving permanency for children in OOHC.

### Pathways to permanency

On 29 October 2014 amendments to the *Children and Young Person's (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)* introduced a hierarchy for planning for permanency as part of the Safe Home for Life reforms. The changes to the legislation set out guiding principles for the permanent placement of a child or young person and the timeframes in which the Children's Court must make its decision about restoration.

### Restoration

From 29 October 2014, the Children's Court must decide if it accepts the DCJ assessment of whether or not there is a realistic possibility of a child or young person being restored to their family within a certain timeframe:

- For a child less than two years of age – within six months from the time an interim care order is made by the court allocating parental responsibility to a person other than a parent
- For a child or young person two years of age and older – within 12 months from the time an interim care order is made by the court allocating parental responsibility to a person other than a parent.

These timeframes guide when a decision about restoration should be made, it is not the timeframe in which restoration should occur. The Court has the power to extend the timeframe when it is in the best interests of the child or young person.

### Guardianship

Guardianship orders aim to provide greater stability for children and young people when the Children's Court makes a decision that they cannot live with their parents. Guardianship orders are a way of helping ensure a child or young people has a stable, nurturing and safe home without cutting legal ties to their family.

Under a guardianship order, a child or young person is not in OOHC but in the independent care of their guardian. A guardian is a person who provides a caring, safe home for a child or young person until they turn 18. They have full care and responsibility for a child or young person in their care. This includes making decisions about health and education, as well as managing contact between a child or young person and their parents, family and important people in their lives.

If the child or young person is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or has a cultural background that is not one of the dominant English-speaking backgrounds, they will have a cultural support plan that identifies their cultural needs for the guardian to follow.

If a guardianship order is made, case management support will no longer be provided to the guardian, child or young person or their family. Supervision of contact will not be provided by DCJ.

On 29 October 2014, relative and kinship carers who had an order from the Children's Court giving them full parental responsibility for a child or young person transitioned to guardianship orders. This meant that relative and kinship carers who had full responsibility for a child or young person in their care became guardians.

### Open adoption

When a child or young person cannot be restored to the care of their parents, and guardianship is not appropriate, open adoption should be sought where it is practical and in the best interests of the child or young person.

Adoption is not usually considered suitable for Aboriginal children, however legislation allows for adoption of Aboriginal children as a final preference following parental responsibility to the Minister. Importantly, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles (ACPP) still apply.

From 29 October 2014, the permanency placement principles give preference to adoption before the allocation of parental responsibility to the Minister for non-Aboriginal children and young people.

The Adoption Act 2000 (NSW) was changed to increase the involvement of parents in the development of an adoption plan. All parents are given the opportunity to participate in the development of the adoption plan.

For children under the Parental Responsibility to the Minister, their individual family circumstances will determine whose consent is required.

The consent of the birth parents and the Minister is required when the:

- Child is under 12 years of age, or
- Child (aged 12-18 years) has been in the care of the prospective adoptive parents for less than two years, or
- Child (aged 12-18 years) is deemed to not have sufficient maturity to give consent.

The consent of the child is required if the child is aged 12 years or over and is deemed to have sufficient maturity to give consent.

### Inclusion of alternative dispute resolution

From 29 October 2014, alternative dispute resolution is included in the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998.

Alternative dispute resolution includes:

- Voluntary processes arranged by DCJ, such as family group conferences
- Dispute resolution conferences conducted by Children's Court registrars
- Processes external to the Children's Court, which the court may order parties to attend, such as the mediation service provided by NSW Legal Aid to resolve contact disputes.

### Changes to parent responsibility contracts

Parent responsibility contracts aim to improve parenting skills and encourage parents to accept greater responsibility for the care of their child. In the contract, parents agree to actions that will reduce key risks to their child. The contract also details what the department will do to support the parent or primary caregiver to address the issues, and how the contract will be monitored. A parent responsibility contract can only be made if the parent or primary caregiver agrees. Parent responsibility contracts are registered with the Children's Court and are for up to 12 months.

### Introduction of parent capacity orders

Parent capacity orders require a parent to participate in a parent capacity program, service, course, therapy or treatment aimed at enhancing their parenting skills to reduce the risk of harm to their child. The Children's Court may make a parenting

capacity order when the department has clearly identified: an issue with the parent or primary caregiver's ability to care for a child or young person; the potential for the child or young person to be at risk of significant harm; it is reasonable and practical to require the parent or primary caregiver to participate in a service, course or other treatment program; there is an appropriate and available service, course or treatment program; it is unlikely the parent or primary caregiver would participate unless an order is made. The duration depends on the service, program or treatment required.

## Keep Them Safe

Keep Them Safe: a shared approach to child wellbeing was a five-year action plan (2009 – 2014) to improve the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in NSW.<sup>24</sup> It was written in response to the recommendations from the 2008 final report made by the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW headed by the Hon James Wood, AO QC. Keep Them Safe included a number of reforms of particular relevance to OOHC.

## Transition of OOHC to the NGO sector

One of the key recommendations (recommendation 16.2) of the Wood Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW was that the government transfer statutory OOHC services to the non-government (NGO) sector. The transition of statutory OOHC provision to the NGO sector began on 1 March 2012 with the aim of delivering better outcomes for children, young people, families and carers and allowing DCJ caseworkers to focus on the most vulnerable families and provide the support to help prevent more children going into care. The aim was to transfer all children in statutory care to NGO's by mid-2022.<sup>25</sup>

## Education plan and co-ordinators<sup>26</sup>

The Inquiry also identified that children and young people in OOHC are at a higher risk of poor educational achievement. The Government supported the

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/about-us/key-reforms/keep-them-safe>

<sup>25</sup> Audit Office of New South Wales & Department of Family and Community Services Sydney. (2015). Transferring out-of-home care to non-government organisations. NSW: Audit Office of New South Wales. Available at: <https://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/our-work/reports/transferring-out-of-home-care-to-non-government-organisations>

<sup>26</sup> As at September 2019, Education Coordinator positions in each of the school education Districts were no longer funded. From 2010-30 June 2013 every DCJ district had an Interagency Pathway Coordinator (IPC) who liaised directly with OOHC Health and Education Coordinators in their district. Only Murrumbidgee/Far West and South Western Sydney DCJ Districts retained Interagency Pathway Coordinator (IPC) positions post June 2013.

recommendations directed at ensuring all children and young people in care have an individual education plan that addresses their specific needs and that an OOHC coordinator be appointed in each region to assist with the implementation of these plans (recommendations 16.5, 16.8). The intention was that these positions would also work with other regional staff in establishing more effective and efficient modes of working to improve the educational outcomes for children and young people in OOHC.

The OOHC Education Pathway ensures that children in OOHC participate in education and have learning and support plans in place. Schools and caseworkers work together to improve the educational outcomes of these children.

The caseworker plays a pivotal role in: supporting regular attendance at school; raising children's expectations for future success; organising external services that may be required; providing educational information to carers and participation in extra-curricular activities; and including actions and recommendations in the child's case plan.

This supports work done by the school to encourage children to participate in educational decisions; implement school based actions; promote communication between carers, the school, the agency and students; and provide information to the child on educational issues impacting them.<sup>27</sup>

### Health services and OOHC coordinators<sup>28</sup>

The Government supported the recommendation that all children and young people entering, and in OOHC having timely and ongoing priority access to health services that meet their individual needs. In particular, it was recommended that comprehensive health and development assessments be commenced in the first 30 days of a child entering care which clearly define the health needs of children and allow systematic planning and active referral to address the needs.

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<sup>27</sup><https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/children-families/oohc-education-resources-and-tools/education-pathway-for-children-and-young-people-in-out-of-home-care-casework-guide-for-funded-service-providers>

<sup>28</sup>Each local health district has an OOHC Health Pathway Coordinator responsible for managing and coordinating referrals across all facilities in their district. From 2010-30 June 2013 every DCJ district had an Interagency Pathway Coordinator (IPC) who liaised directly with OOHC Health and Education Coordinators in their district. Only Murrumbidgee/Far West and South Western Sydney DCJ Districts retained Interagency Pathway Coordinator (IPC) positions post June 2013.

NSW Health committed to establishing OOHC Coordinators in each Area Health Service and The Children's Hospital at Westmead to liaise with carers, caseworkers and the health system.

The OOHC Health Pathway, a joint initiative between FACS and NSW Health, ensures that every child entering OOHC receives timely and appropriate health screening, assessment, intervention, monitoring and review of their health needs. Caseworkers, carers and health professionals' work together to ensure the health needs of the child are being met. Carers play a pivotal role in encouraging the child to participate in the process.

The Health Pathway<sup>29</sup> involves:

- Commencing a primary health screening assessment within 30 days of the child entering care.
- Undertaking a comprehensive health assessment as required.
- Developing a Health management plan which outlines the child's health needs and how they will be addressed.
- Providing health services identified in the plan.
- Undertaking regular health reviews.

### Increasing the threshold for reporting

The threshold for reporting children and young people to the Child Protection Helpline in the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 NSW increased from 'risk of harm' to 'risk of significant harm' to assist in identifying children and young people who require a statutory child protection response.

The criteria for 'significant' is not minor or trivial, and may reasonably be expected to produce a substantial and demonstrably adverse impact on the child's or young person's safety, welfare, or wellbeing.

### Establishing Child Wellbeing Units

Child Wellbeing Units were established in January 2010 in the government agencies responsible for the largest number of child protection reports: NSW Health, NSW Police, and Department of Education (and Communities). The functions include helping agency mandatory reporters identify the level of suspected risk to a child or

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<sup>29</sup> [https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/file/0008/345788/OOHC-Health-Pathways-a-caseworkers-guide.pdf](https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/file/0008/345788/OOHC-Health-Pathways-a-caseworkers-guide.pdf)

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young person, including whether matters require a report to the Community Services Child Protection Helpline; providing advice to mandatory reporters about other possible service responses; and driving better responses to children and families through alignment and coordination of agency service systems.

### Establishing Family Referral Services

Family Referral Services were established to assist children, young people, and families who do not meet the statutory threshold for child protection intervention, but would benefit from accessing specific services to address current problems, prevent escalation, and foster a protective and nurturing environment.

Family Referral Services are intended to link vulnerable children, young people in need of assistance, and their families, with the most appropriate available support services in their local areas.

### Enhanced service provision

As part of Keep Them Safe, a number of prevention and early intervention programs/initiatives were implemented or enhanced. It should be noted that these programs may not be current and vary by location.

#### Getting on Track In Time (Got It)

A school-based mental health early intervention service implemented by NSW Health Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in partnership with Department of Education. Got It aims to reduce the frequency and severity of conduct problems and prevent the development of severe behaviour problems in young children from Kindergarten to Grade 2 (between the ages five to eight years). It also aims to improve schools' capacity to respond to children with conduct disorders. Originally piloted under KTS, the program was expanded across NSW under the NSW Mental Health Reform.

#### Sustaining NSW Families

A nurse-led evidence-based high-intensity health home visiting service that strengthens relationships, builds parenting capacity, and enhances child development, wellbeing and health. The target group is families with social and economic disadvantage who are vulnerable and who have associated psychosocial distress. Home visiting ideally commences in pregnancy through to the child's second birthday.

#### SAFE START

Supports women and families with a range of social and emotional issues during pregnancy and following birth. SAFE START provides comprehensive psychosocial assessment at least twice (at first point of contact during pregnancy and in the first 12 months after birth) and helps identify families with psychosocial difficulties

(including depression and other mental health problems) during the critical perinatal and postnatal periods and offers appropriate care and support.

### Aboriginal Impact Statement

Ensures Aboriginal stakeholders are consulted in the development and implementation of Keep Them Safe projects and actions and that the specific needs of Aboriginal people and communities are taken into account in developing and rolling out Keep Them Safe initiatives.

### Protecting Aboriginal Children Together

Aims to develop locally driven service models which empower and actively engage with the unique needs of Aboriginal families and their communities, with the aim of ensuring the safety and wellbeing of their children. It also aims to actively encourage consultation between relevant non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal NGOs to form meaningful partnerships and enhance service capacity.

### Care Circles

A new way for matters involving Aboriginal children and young people to proceed in the Children's Court. It encourages more culturally appropriate decision making and care plans for Aboriginal children and families.

### Safe Families

An early intervention program involving a coordinated approach between government agencies and communities to work together to tackle child sexual assault in Aboriginal communities. The approach was trialled in five communities over four years. Safe Families uses a combination of education and awareness raising initiatives together with direct service provision and informal case management to:

- Improve the awareness and understanding of child sexual assault and its impacts
- Decrease vulnerabilities of children and young people
- Strengthen the capacity of Aboriginal communities to appropriately recognise, report, and reduce the incidences of child sexual assault within their communities.

**Safe Aboriginal Youth Program:** identifies vulnerable youth who are unsupervised on the street at night. It provides safe transport options to clients and links them to a safe place where they can access supervised activities and trained youth workers. SAY patrols operate in Armidale, Bourke, Dareton, Dubbo, Kempsey, La Perouse, Newcastle, Nowra, Taree and Wilcannia.

### Aboriginal Intensive Family Support Services

Is an intensive, time-limited, home-based support program for families where children or young people are at risk of entering the OOHC system, or are currently in care and a restoration plan is in place.

### Targeted Earlier Intervention program reform

In August 2015, the Minister released the Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) programs sector consultation paper. This reform is not directly applicable to children and young people currently in OOHC, but the intention of the targeted earlier intervention programs is to improve child and family outcomes and build community capacity.

The TEI services aim to identify and alter the behaviour or development of individuals and families who show signs of an identified problem, or exhibit risk factors or vulnerabilities, by providing the resources and skills necessary to combat identified risks and by building inclusive communities.

The programs to be reviewed under these reforms cover a broad spectrum and include:

- Community development
- Prevention and early intervention
- Support to families with greater needs

The programs considered as part of the reform are:

- Community Builders
- Families NSW
- Aboriginal Child Youth and Family Strategy
- Triple P
- Child Youth and Family Support
- Getting It Together.

The TEI Sector Assistance Strategy (the Strategy)<sup>30</sup> was released in 2017 and aims to support existing TEI funded services to effectively and confidently transition to the new TEI program. The Strategy is designed to build upon the wide range of existing work being conducted by FACS, peak agencies and other organisations, and deliver additional support to the sector where it is needed.

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<sup>30</sup> <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/children-families/early-intervention/TEI-program/chapters/sector-assistance-strategy>.



The Strategy will deliver assistance in two stages. Stage One will support services to engage with the TEI commissioning process and Stage Two will focus on program implementation, building the TEI service delivery evidence base, and enhancing supporting activities.

## 4 Other key OOHC policy information

### NSW Child Safe Standards for Permanent Care 2015

On 1 December 2015 the NSW Child Safe Standards for Permanent Care came into effect.<sup>31</sup> The standards establish the minimum requirements for the accreditation of OOHC and adoption service providers and are based on the statutory responsibilities of OOHC and adoption service providers, as set out in the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998, the Adoption Act 2000 and relevant regulations. The Office of the Children's Guardian is responsible for assessing agencies' compliance against the standards.

The purpose of the standards is to ensure that the rights of children and young people are upheld and that children and young people receive quality services, regardless of where they are placed.

If the standards are met there should be evidence that:

- Children and young people are safe and cared for in environments that are free from harm and abuse
- Children and young people are cared for in stable care arrangements appropriate to their particular needs
- Children and young people participate in decisions that affect their lives and their views and wishes are considered
- Children and young people are cared for by caring and skilled adults
- Children and young people are supported to develop resilience and a positive sense of identity
- Children and young people maintain important relationships with their family and other people of significance
- Children and young people maintain connections to community, culture, language and spirituality
- Children and young people have access to quality health care and have their health and medical needs met
- Children and young people are supported to achieve their developmental and educational potential and have access to additional education supports where required

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<sup>31</sup> <https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/statutory-out-of-home-care-and-adoption/nsw-standards-for-permanent-care>.

- Children and young people engage in play, leisure activities, recreation and sport and have hobbies and interests that assist them to learn new skills
- Children and young people feel valued by the people caring for them, their families and their peers
- Children and young people are able to make personal choices that are safe and appropriate and are supported to manage their own behaviour
- Children and young people develop self-care and independent living skills, as appropriate to their circumstances, for transition to young adulthood
- Children and young people have access to information that is collected about them and can be confident that their personal information will be used appropriately
- Children and young people and the people who work with and care for them are confident to raise concerns or complaints and are taken seriously when they do
- People who work with and care for children and young people have the necessary qualities, skills and supports to provide appropriate care
- People who work with and care for children and young people are confident in their skills and knowledge and feel that their work is valued.

In December 2016, all FACS districts became accredited to provide OOHC by the independent statutory body, the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian.

## Casework support

Caseworkers are responsible for investigating reports of abuse or neglect of children and young people, working with families to support permanency, and supporting carers who look after children and young people who cannot live safely with their parents. Casework support is provided whilst a child or young person is in OOHC or until such times as restoration is achieved or guardianship or adoption orders are made. Caseworkers also work directly with young people in care to prepare them for independence, future planning and leaving care as well as providing after care support.

The role of caseworkers is to:

- Lead development, implementation and review of the child or young person's Case Plan, identifying the best pathway to permanency (e.g. restoration, guardianship) and engaging the child or young person and their families to ensure their views and wishes are included in planning.
- Recruit, retain and support carers to meet the needs of a child or young person and providing ongoing support and training.

- Ensure placements are culturally appropriate, cultural care plans are developed and realised, and children and young people are connected with their communities.
- Undertake assessment to identify and address any safety or risk concerns within the placement.
- Advocate for the child or young persons to ensure their needs are met and their voice is considered in decision making about their lives.
- Educate and communicate with children and young people about their rights in OOHC.
- Ensure children and young people have an age appropriate understanding of why they are unable to live with and be cared for by their birth parents.
- Ensure carers and other agency workers involved with the child or young person contribute to the development and implementation of the Case Plan.
- Work with carers and the child or young person to ensure they understand their circumstances and their needs are being met in the placement.
- Listen to, record and respond to information provided by carers, significant others in the child's life and other agencies concerning the child or young person.
- Act as the conduit for the exchange of information between the child or young person, their families, carers and service providers ensuring appropriate service delivery, provide timely responses to requests for financial and other support in line with the DCJ Financial Guidelines.
- Instigate, oversee and support contact between children and young people, birth families and significant others.<sup>32</sup>
- Engage the young person to develop quality leaving care planning to support transition to independence and provide after care support, including referral to After Care Services if needed.

## Allowances and payments

The Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 authorises the payment of allowances and contingency payments when a child or young person is in statutory, supported or voluntary OOHC.

The Statutory Care Allowance and Supported Care Allowance are fortnightly payments made to authorised carers as a contribution towards the expense of caring

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<sup>32</sup> Caring for Kids: A guide for foster, relative and kinship carers 2017

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for a child or young person. The payment amount may vary depending on the age of the child, any special care needs and the policies of the accredited OOHC agency.

Contingency payments are made for costs outside the general expenses covered by the fortnightly allowance such as specialist medical services or tutoring.

Guardians receive a Guardianship Allowance to enable them to meet the needs of the child or young person. The guardianship allowance is paid at the same rate as the Statutory Care Allowance.

Payments are also made to help with education. The Teenage Education Payment is paid to carers and to assist them in keeping 16 and 17 year olds engaged in full or part-time education and/or training. A Post Care Education Financial Support Allowance is paid to carers where a young person continues to live with them after they turn 18 so that they can complete their year 12 studies.

In 2017, the NSW Government introduced the means-tested Adoption Allowance which aims to help people who are considering adoption of a child in their care but who might require financial support to meet the child's needs. The allowance is available to eligible people who adopt a child or young person who was under the parental responsibility of the Minister in NSW on or after 1 July 2017. If an adoptive family does not meet the means test at the time of adoption they are automatically entitled to the one-off Adoption Transition Support Payment of \$3,000 (introduced in April 2014) and the annual Adoption Payment of \$1,500 (introduced in 2012).

## 5 Other relevant initiatives

### National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is a new way of providing individualised support to people with an impairment or condition that is likely to be permanent, or a developmental delay that affects their ability to take part in everyday activities. The NDIS is being implemented by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA).

The NDIS was rolled out in NSW between 1 July 2016 and 30 June 2018 and aims to improve the lives of people with a disability by allowing them to decide what supports they receive.

Under the NDIS, State governments will retain responsibility for protecting the wellbeing of children. The Scheme will support the child's disability related needs, such as aids and equipment, supports to access the community and transport. The participants and their families will discuss their goals with the Agency as part of their planning conversation. The participants' plans will include the supports the Scheme will fund and any other supports participants and their families may require from the community services system.

### National framework for protecting Australia's children

The National Framework was endorsed by the Council of Australia Governments in April 2009 and represents the highest level of collaboration between Commonwealth, State and Territory governments and non-government organisations, through the Coalition of Organisations Committed to the Safety and Wellbeing of Australia's Children.<sup>33</sup>

The aim of the National Framework is to ensure Australia's children and young people are safe and well. It includes high level and other supporting outcomes and actions which are being delivered through a series of three-year action plans.

The six supporting outcomes are:

- Children live in safe and supportive families and communities

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<sup>33</sup> <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/programs-services/protecting-australias-children>

- Children and families access adequate support to promote safety and intervene early
- Risk factors for child abuse and neglect are addressed
- Children who have been abused or neglected receive the support and care they need for their safety and wellbeing
- Indigenous children are supported and safe in their families and communities
- Child sexual abuse and exploitation is prevented and survivors receive adequate support.

### Action plan 2009 – 2012

The first Action Plan 2009-2012 included the:

- Development and implementation of National Standards for OOHC.
- Development of a biennial survey of children and young people in OOHC as a measure of the National Standards for OOHC.
- Development of Transitioning from out-of-home Care to Independence: A Nationally Consistent Approach to Planning, to improve consistency across jurisdictions by outlining best practice in leaving-care planning.

The National Standards<sup>34</sup> are designed to improve the outcomes and experiences for children and young people by focusing on the key areas within care that directly influence positive outcomes including: health; education; care planning; connection to family; culture and community; transition from care; safety, stability and security; and belonging and identity.

At the time, OOHC standards varied across jurisdictions and were not reported on consistently. The lack of consistency made cross-jurisdictional data collection difficult and hampered the identification and development of best practice and service delivery gaps.

### Action plan 2012 – 2015

The second action plan sought to build on and strengthen delivery of six significant National Priorities including the national standards for OOHC.

Five actions were included under this priority:

- Enhance the application and nationally consistent reporting of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle

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<sup>34</sup> The National Standards and measures can be found at [https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/pac\\_national\\_standard.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/pac_national_standard.pdf)

- Develop minimum quality benchmarks for each of the OOHC standards and deliver full reporting on the standards in 2015
- Conduct the first national surveys of children and young people in care under the National Standards for OOHC
- Improve the stability of placements for children in OOHC, including through permanency planning
- Scope options to more effectively manage the transfer of children and young people in child protection who relocate to a different State or Territory.

### Action plan 2015– 2018

The third action plan aimed to give best effect to the National Standards for OOHC in light of the recommendations from the Senate Inquiry into OOHC.

The third action plan included four actions to address the aim of ‘develop and strengthen support for young people in care transitioning to adulthood and improve priority access to support services:

- Continue support by the Commonwealth for eligible young people to access services through the Youth Employment Strategy, Growing Jobs and Small Business Package.
- Commonwealth to trial ways of improving support to young people by better utilising available data, and delivering intensive case management including wrap-around services linking to education, health and housing, working with jurisdictions. All parties to use findings to guide future interventions for young people.
- Examine 2014 reforms to the Transition to Independent Living Allowance to ensure it continues to target those who need it most and improve efficiency.
- Evaluate impact of jurisdictions’ policy changes to extend statutory responsibility and access to services to young people who exit OOHC over the age of 18 years.

### NSW Child Safe Standards for Permanent Care

From 1 December 2015, the NSW Child Safe Standards for Permanent Care 2015 replaced the Statutory OOHC standards and the Adoption standards.

The OOHC and adoption standards were merged to create one set of standards which support a dual accreditation process for agencies choosing to provide both statutory OOHC and adoption services. The Standards were updated to provide a greater focus on achieving permanency for children and young people. This focus supports the Government’s Safe Home for Life reforms.

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The NSW Child Safe Standards for Permanent Care 2015 are used by the Children's Guardian for the accreditation of agencies that provide statutory OOHC services and/or adoption services in NSW.

## Quality Assurance Framework

The Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) provides OOHC caseworkers with access to reliable and comprehensive information about the safety, permanency and wellbeing of children in statutory OOHC. The QAF is being trialled in four OOHC services before being rolled out across NSW.

The QAF supports caseworkers by providing them with a comprehensive picture of what is happening in a child or young person's life over time. It includes information about the child's safety, permanency, education and wellbeing. This information helps caseworkers to make decisions about case planning, review outcomes over time, and assess how decisions and activities have impacted the child's outcomes.

## 6 Further reading

### Department of Community and Justice documents

FACS Strategic Plan 2017-2021

<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=550111>

Caring for kids

<https://www.caring.childstory.nsw.gov.au/>

Keep Them Safe webpage

<http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/about-us/key-reforms/keep-them-safe>

Keep Them Safe annual reports

<http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/resources/publications>

Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy

<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/about/reforms/aboriginal-outcomes>

Their Futures Matter: A New Approach

<https://www.theirfuturesmatter.nsw.gov.au/>

Permanency Support Program

<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/permanency-support-program>

Commissioning for Better Outcomes

<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/about/reforms/CBO>

NSW Practice Framework

<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/children-families/child-protection-services/practice-framework>

Family is Culture

<https://www.familyisculture.nsw.gov.au/>

Quality Assurance Framework

<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/about/reforms/children-families/QAF/chapters/overview>

Targeted Earlier Intervention Program

<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/children-families/early-intervention/TEI-program>

## OOHC Standards

NSW Child Safe Standards for Permanent Care

<http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/out-of-home-care/statutory-out-of-home-care/nsw-standards-for-permanent-care>

National Standards for Out-of-Home Care

[https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/pac\\_national\\_standard.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/pac_national_standard.pdf)

National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children

<https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/programs-services/protecting-australias-children>

Out-of-Home Care in Australia: Children and Young People's Views After 5 Years of National Standards Report

<https://create.org.au/publications/research-reports/>

AIHW (2016). The views of children and young people in out-of-home care: overview of indicator results from a pilot national survey 2015 -

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=60129554600>

## Other documents

National Disability Insurance Scheme

<https://myplace.ndis.gov.au>

NSW Government National Disability Insurance Scheme

<http://ndis.nsw.gov.au/>

The Senate's Community Affairs Reference Committee's inquiry into out-of-home care

[http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Community\\_Affairs/Out\\_of\\_home\\_care/Report](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/Out_of_home_care/Report)

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

<https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/final-report>



