

Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study (POCLS) Consultations on Priority Policy Questions

The following table lists POCLS policy questions arising from consultations with stakeholders. This is a working document and is updated regularly. The POCLS may not necessarily be able to answer all of the questions raised in consultations but the purpose of the document is to guide the development of data analysis plans. Where questions can't be answered with the current POCLS data, they can be considered for future collections or smaller qualitative studies.

All analysis should report by District, cultural background and age groups where relevant and possible.

Permanency Support Program objective	Policy topic	Policy questions raised in consultations	Related Analysis Complete or Underway
Increased exits out of care via permanency	Placement stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does a good placement look like? What do we know about the number, type, duration of placements? We need analysis on placement moves: when, why and what is the impact? • Is the early stability of the sample reflected over time? Number of placements by type of care. • What are the reasons for exiting care, and the characteristics of children who move a lot? • How does change of address/placement type affect outcomes? • Is there a connection between moves and purpose of placements? • How can we assist frontline workers in assessing the risk/likelihood of an unplanned placement change in order to intervene to support carers and children/young people to maintain placements? • What are the district differences in the POCLS data? Where would efforts to improve practice pay off the most? 	<p>Placement stability (Wave 1-2) (Wulczyn, 2017).</p> <p>Exits from out-of-home care (Wave 1-3). (Wulczyn, forthcoming).</p>
Increased exits out of care via permanency	Child characteristics on entry to OOHC and permanency pathways (adopted, on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What differences exist amongst children entering Out of Home Care (OOHC) at different ages and length of exposure to Risk of Significant Harm (ROSH)? • What role does Child Protection (CP) history play in terms of developmental outcomes? What role does offending history play? Is there any data on CP interventions prior to entering OOHC and how 	

	guardianship orders or restored)	<p>could we use that information to influence early intervention/targeted early intervention?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the outcomes for those in different permanency options? We assume early decisions are better but is that reflected in research? • How do we support successful restorations? What do caseworkers need to support guardianship and adoptions? • Why is there a decrease in entries to care? • What are the experiences of those on guardianship orders? 	
Increased exits out of care via permanency	Factors that influence outcomes for children in OOHC over time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the characteristics of those children that improve over time and those that have outcomes that worsen? • How are children in OOHC faring in comparison to their peers in the general population using the standardised measures, linkage data, common questions with other Australian studies e.g. LSAC, LSIC. • What are the factors that influence safety, socio-emotional wellbeing, cognitive learning ability and permanency? • Will there be an increase in developmental related disabilities as the children age (as trauma may not become evident until later)? 	
Better quality support in care	Case management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the differences between NGO and FACS managed cases in terms of children’s experiences, casework and outcomes; and carer support and satisfaction? • What is the connection between the number of NGOs in a District and how many placements are with NGOs? • How does formal and informal support differ between FACS and NGOs? • What data is available to help navigate the fact that most foster care is sector managed while relative/kin care is FACS managed? 	
Better quality support in care	Characteristics and experiences of carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the carer characteristics in terms of age, health and other vulnerabilities? • What input do carers have into decision making?, What gets carers through the hard times? How do we increase carer satisfaction? 	Child and carer needs and services (Wave 1-2) (Katz, 2018).

		<p>What supports would they like? What type of carer support helps reduce placement breakdown?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can we think more creatively around support – is there a more responsive and flexible approach? • What are the household characteristics of carers? How many are culturally matched? How many care for siblings? What is the number of dependents living in households? What are the socio-economic characteristics of households? What do we know about household stress, housing tenure, housing/overcrowding and geographic location? • Do we need to explore changing supports or additional support for carers? What are the changing supports in an integrated or holistic model that enables greater stability of a placement over time? • What do we know about carer support for kin and non kin? • Where are the skills gaps with carers? Do children have access to trauma informed care? • Do we need to recruit new carers with permanency options in mind? • Are we giving carers the right support? Are they taking a trauma informed approach? What are the effects of caring for a child on the rest of the family? • Role of carers in the restoration space – what are the carer characteristics that support successful relationships? • What motivates people to become carers? • Has there been a change over time in carer support? • Do children’s needs and carers perceptions align? 	
<p>Better quality support in care</p>	<p>Characteristics and experiences of children with disabilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do we know about children with disabilities – in particular mental health and cognitive disability? • What are the experiences and care arrangements of children and young people with disabilities? • What formal and informal support are caregivers receiving? • What are the family contact arrangements? 	

<p>Better quality support in care</p>	<p>Characteristics and experiences of CALD children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do children connect to culture? • Are CALD children with culturally matched carers? • The legislation reflects a view in foster care literature and casework practice that for culturally diverse children in care, there are identified practices which assist to maintain the child’s connection to their birth culture, and develop a positive cultural identity; and that maintenance of cultural connection and positive self-identity supports a positive experience of care for the child, and enhances child wellbeing and felt security. Can we test this hypothesis through analysis of the relevant data produced by POCLS? 	<p>CALD children and young people in out-of-home care (Wave 1-3) (SSI, FACSIAR, Cashmore and Delfabbro, forthcoming).</p>
<p>Better quality support in care</p>	<p>Characteristics and experiences of Aboriginal children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiences of Aboriginal children -are there any age related differences? • Kinship placements –does there tend to be contact with only maternal or paternal side? Are there district differences? • More targeted qualitative analysis, e.g., what is the nature of cultural information provided to children at school and related cultural activities? Would these be considered sufficient by the Aboriginal community? How are children given access to country? Can we work with Aboriginal agencies to understand what is currently happening in practice when Aboriginal children change placements? • What are the implications of guardianship orders for Aboriginal communities? • Can we analyse the data to look at the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle? • Do Aboriginal carers access health services less than non Aboriginal carers • How are cultural connections for Aboriginal young people maintained and how does that impact on outcomes over time? • Can we look more closely at the finding that there is less access to social support for kin carers in relation to Aboriginal kin families (most would expect Aboriginal kin would have higher social support). 	<p>Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care (Wave 1-3) (Delfabbro, 2018).</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the data be used practically for communities to come up with their own solutions to improve Aboriginal children’s experiences of OOHC and developmental outcomes? • What is considered good practice in finding placements for Aboriginal children? 	
Better quality support in care	Children experiences of out-of-home care and permanency options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are children’s experiences of activities with the caregiver household, early childhood education, access to services and support? (the first 2000 days). • What are the positive stories? Is there information about formal and informal support networks and children’s level of wellbeing? • What do we know about children’s peer relationships? • What do we know about placement with siblings? • What makes children happy? Do children feel safe? • What constitutes a good care placement from a client perspective? What do we know about participation in decision making? • Do young people feel they have control over their lives, access to information, and good relationship with caseworkers / support networks? • What is the quality of relationships young people had with their OOHC provider? • What worked and what needs to change? Who would children like more contact with? • How do children feel about their caseworkers? How much support do they get? • What meaning do they make from their lives of being in care? Were they told why they are in care? • Do the needs and complexity of children who are 10 or 11 increase? 	
Better quality support in care	Family contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What works in terms of contact and what are the challenges? • What role does contact play in successful restorations or long term placements? 	Children’s family relationships in out-of-home care (Wave 1-2; 1-3)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is family contact including siblings maintained when children are adopted? • Who would children like to have more contact with and how would they like to have that contact? • Further research on contact, possibly a qualitative study? How much is contact used as a therapeutic process? Who is supervising contact? Who is taking the kids to contact? What is it like for children? Contact with fathers and paternal relatives to be explored. • What do we know about sibling relationships? • What support do we provide for kinship carers and carers of Aboriginal children to manage contact? • What are the challenges for carers managing contact - foster vs grandparents • What is the influence of contact in relation to identity and placement stability, frequency, method of contact? • What are the differences in supervised and non-supervised contact and how do carers feel about each option? What is the purpose of different types of contact? What is civilised contact? What does that mean? Who is supervising it? What is the regularity of contact like? 	<p>(Cashmore, 2017; forthcoming).</p>
<p>Better quality support in care</p>	<p>Education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the effects of changing schools? Does it make a difference if children stay within the same area? • What support is there for homework, education and vocational aspirations? • Are there gender differences in terms of educational outcomes? • How do we manage stability of schooling alongside stability of placements? • What is support for young people like? How do we empower young people to be part of the decision making, whatever age they may be? 	<p>Educational outcomes of children and young people in out-of-home care (Wave 1-3) (Townsend, forthcoming).</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we support new carers to navigate the education system once a child changes placement? • What are the reasons kids in OOHC are not enjoying school? Is bullying a problem? Is stigma of being in care a problem? • How engaged are carers in the school environment? 	
Better quality support in care	Young people who offend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the crossover between OOHC and Juvenile justice? • What are the linkages to substance abuse • Only 2% of the OOHC population offend. In a previous data matching exercise between FACS and Juvenile Justice over 40% had an OOHC placement (many had multiple placements). How can we reduce instability and the highest risks? How do we identify that group e.g., do they have similar or different characteristics? 	Offending in the POCLS population cohort (FACSIAR, forthcoming)
Better quality support in care	Casework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many caseworkers have children had? • What is helpful caseworker contact by age? What are caseworker relationships with carers and children like? • What do we know about participation in decision making by child, family and carers; care plans and case planning in first years of OOHC, early decision making about permanency (long term care, adoption, restoration, guardianship)? • In successful placements, what was the practice of caseworkers that were seen to be helpful? What was the key ingredient e.g., the level of support, how it was delivered, case planning? When things don't go well, for example with multiple abuse experiences, under what circumstances don't they change placements? What role does CP history play in terms of outcomes? What is the magic that happens to achieve positive outcomes in OOHC? • Do we have information on behaviour support plans? • Family group conferencing – is there evidence to support children having a better experience in care? • Do case plan goals lead to better outcomes for children? How are we achieving case plan goals? 	Children's experience of casework support (Wave 1-3) (Katz, forthcoming).

<p>Better quality support in care</p>	<p>Leaving Care and after care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are young people’s experiences of leaving care planning and support as they prepare to age out of OOHC and how does it impact on their outcomes? • What are the housing arrangements of young people when they leave, how many continue to live with their carers, and how can policy contribute to better outcomes in this area? • What are the educational, health and housing circumstances of young people after they have left care and what after care support and services would improve their outcomes? 	
<p>Better quality support in care</p>	<p>Services and support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the access to informal support and mainstream services like by placement type, what services arrangement provide better outcomes, what makes a difference, what additional supports are needed by children and carers, what are the needs of carers in lower socio-economic status and Aboriginal carers? • What are the barriers to providing good services and support? What is consistency in service providers like? Do case plans address children’s needs? What sort of access to information do they have? • Do we have a system that caters for large families that come into care? How do we do this differently? How do we manage Sibling contact and support for parents? • What can we do to better support children coming in at older ages? • What other universal/mainstream services make a difference to kids’ outcomes? • What types of trauma informed care practice supports are available to kids and carers? • What planning/ support is provided pre and post removal? • What are the standards governing the quality of accommodation and support services? • Can we do qualitative work on birth parent experiences – ask parents what they need to be able to do better. • What are the differences in service systems between Districts? 	<p>Child and carer needs and services (Wave 1-2) (Katz, 2018).</p>

<p>Better quality support in care</p>	<p>Kinship care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the nature of orders for kinship placements? • Is there a selection bias for children going into kinship care; and how might the proportion of Aboriginal carers influence results? • Can we work with Districts to find evidence of good practice for supporting kinship carers? • What do we know about support for kin carers? What practice changes are needed? Are we going to where the need is? • Do kids in kinship care fare better than those in foster care over time? • Can we look at better ways to sustain placements, for example shared care? 	<p>Relative/kinship and foster care: A comparison of carer and child characteristics (Wave 1; Wave 1-3) (Delfabbro, 2017; forthcoming).</p>
<p>Reduction in entries and re-entries into care</p>	<p>Trajectories of children who entered care for the first time on interim orders only i.e., never received final OOHC orders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do children who enter OOHC on final orders fare in comparison to those who remain with their parents? • How many children enter care a second or third time? • What are the timing of restorations? • How many re-enter care? • What are the district differences? • How do we target the right children when we think about the next generation? 	