

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

POCLS Objectives and
Strategic Research Agenda 2022-2023





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

Technical Report No.1

POCLS Objectives and
Strategic Research Agenda 2022-2023

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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

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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). 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 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 over an 18 month period for the first time in NSW between May 2010 and October 2011 (n=4,126). A subset of those children and young people who went on to receive final Children's Court care and protection orders by 30 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.

The POCLS acknowledges and honours Aboriginal people as our First Peoples of NSW and is committed to working with the DCJ Transforming 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) of all data related to Aboriginal Australians. The

NSW Data Strategy (April 2021) includes the principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance and provides provisions in regard to:

- Ensuring that our approach to data projects assesses the privacy, security and ethical impacts across the data lifecycle.
- Ensuring the controls are proportionate to the risks and that we consider community expectations and IDS.
- Guaranteeing a culture of trust between data providers and recipients, including Aboriginal people, through consistent and safe data sharing practices and effective data governance and stewardship

A whole of government response to IDS and IDG in NSW is being led by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, along with the Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations, including a position on reporting disaggregated data. The POCLS will continue to collaborate with Aboriginal Peoples and will apply the policy principles once developed.

1 Introduction

The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) is funding and leading the Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study (POCLS) to collect detailed information on the life-course development of children and young people in out-of-home care (OOHC) and the factors that influence their development.

The POCLS provides a strong evidence base to inform policy, practice and professional development, to improve decision making and support for children and young people who cannot live safely at home. The POCLS multiple data sources including in-depth interview data collected from children, young people and caregivers; the views of caseworkers and teachers collected via an on-line survey; and linked services data form a significant data resource for studies whose aims are consistent with the aims of the POCLS.

The POCLS Strategic research agenda has been developed to ensure that this world class study supports strategically-driven research projects and research collaborations with universities, NGOs and other government agencies to address our most pressing research priorities.

The POCLS aims to:

- Improve the outcomes for children in OOHC and their families by expanding the evidence to inform policy and practice and strengthen the OOHC service system
- Encourage researchers to use the POCLS survey and linked services data in policy relevant research to underpin evidence based policy and practice change
- Develop a critical mass of researchers with expertise in using the POCLS data
- Invest in building career researchers in OOHC.

The POCLS Strategic research agenda will ensure that:

- DCJ priority policy questions are addressed and new knowledge generated to inform future policy and practice
- Proposed research is delivered by credible researchers that can demonstrate clear benefits to DCJ clients and links to key objectives in the DCJ Strategic Direction 2020-2024.
- The quality of research can be maintained and thus the outcomes of the research will be reliable, timely and useful to DCJ strategic planning and policy
- All researchers have equity of access to the process, and understand what is required of them to gain access to the POCLS data
- Research findings are published in peer review journals and evidence to action notes are written to inform policy and program development.

The results from the POCLS will contribute to significant changes in policy and practice regarding working with children in OOHC, improve investment decisions and improve the long-term outcomes of children.

Study protocol

An overview of the study rationale and design was first published in Paxman, M., Tully, L., Burke, S. and Watson, J. (2014). Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study on children and young people in out-of-home care in New South Wales. Family Matters, 94, p15-28.

The POCLS Study Design and Data User Guide (Technical Report Number 2) provides up-to-date information about the POCLS design, data collection methods and datasets.

Study webpage

Information for study participants, data users and all study publications can be found on the study webpage www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/pathways-of-care

POCLS publication clearinghouse

Research reports, technical reports, evidence to action notes, interactive dashboards, presentations, webinars, videos, podcasts, participant newsletters and promotional brochures; and information for participants; are available on the POCLS website www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/pathways-of-care

The appendices in this publication list the:

- POCLS resources for data users (Appendix 1)
- Analytical projects commissioned in 2020 (Appendix 6)
- POCLS published research reports (Appendix 7).

POCLS objectives and strategic research agenda publication

This report will be updated at the end of each calendar year. Approved publications will be uploaded to the POCLS webpage as completed so please visit the webpage for more up to date information.

2 OOHC policy and practice in NSW

Legislative and policy context

The Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 governs the child protection system in NSW. The Act specifies how children under the age of 18 years at risk of significant harm (ROSH) should be protected. This includes guidelines around reporting, assessments and the provision of services, including OOHC. The Act specifies care types, including Interim care orders (S69) (Interim Orders) and Parental Responsibility Orders (S79A) (Final Orders). The Children's Court may make an Interim Order prior to determining whether the child is in need of care and protection. In seeking an Interim Order, DCJ needs to satisfy the Children's Court that it is not in the best interests of the safety, welfare and well-being of the child to remain with their parents or other persons having parental responsibility. Subsequently, the Children's Court may allocate, by Final Order, all or some aspects of parental responsibility for a child until permanent restoration, guardianship or adoption is arranged. Some children may remain in long-term care until they reach 18 years of age.

OOHC includes home-based care (relative/kinship care and foster care), therapeutic intensive care (replacing residential care) and independent living. At June 2018, there were 17,837 children in OOHC in NSW of which 39% were Aboriginal. Around half (53%) of the children were placed in relative/kinship care while 44% were in foster care and 3% in residential care. The transition of case management to the NGO sector for children in statutory care began in 2012 and by June 2018, 56% of the 13,935 children in statutory care were with accredited and DCJ funded OOHC agencies. Further details about the policy context in NSW during the POCLS data collection is available in the POCLS OOHC Policy Landscape (Technical Report Number 17).

OOHC is an intervention of last resort if early intervention and family preservation services are not an option. The goals for OOHC in NSW are that children are safe, are developing well in a stable environment matched to their needs and, where possible, are successfully restored to their family. The key policy and practice principles state the importance of: providing children with a family for life as early as possible (permanency); maintaining cultural identity and connections with family/community; involving children in appropriate decision-making; and supporting carers to care for children.

OOHC reforms and initiatives

There have been a series of reforms and initiatives designed to improve OOHC in NSW that have been implemented over the life of the POCLS (see Appendix 2). The POCLS findings need to be considered in the context of these reforms and initiatives (Technical Report Number 17).

The Permanency Support Program (PSP) is the most recent reform aiming to increase exits, reduce entries and ensure children and young people receive quality services and supports. Reforms were initiated in 2017, with the primary goals being:

1. Fewer children and young people entering care through doing everything possible to work with families to support change so children can safely live at home with their families and communities. The focus is on working with children and families with urgency as the experts over their own lives.
2. Shorter time in care, with a focus on achieving children's permanency goals wherever possible within two years. It is always the preferred option to restore children and young people to their family/kin. If this is not possible, other options such as guardianship and open adoption are considered. Open adoption is not a preferred option for Aboriginal children. A key focus is on achieving relational permanency not just a permanent 'placement' and acting with urgency to prevent drift in OOHC.
3. Providing the best in-care experience while children and young people achieve permanency. This includes the best health, education, therapeutic care and support to enable children and young people to thrive and where high expectations and good quality casework enable children to achieve their goals.

Strategies and priorities

The NSW government has set a number of initiatives to improve the outcomes of children and young people including:

Human Services Outcomes Framework

- The POCLS sits within the NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework which provides a common set of population-level wellbeing outcomes and indicators for NSW government and non-government agencies. The seven outcome domains are Safety, Home, Health, Education and Skills, Economics, Social and Community and Empowerment.

DCJ Strategic Direction 2020-2024

- The POCLS proposed research must have clear benefits to DCJ's state outcomes outlined in the [DCJ Strategic Direction 2020-2024](#).

Premier's Priorities

- [Protecting our most vulnerable children](#) - Decrease the proportion of children and young people re-reported at risk of significant harm by 20% by 2023.
- [Increasing permanency for children in OOHC](#) - Double the number of children in safe and permanent homes by 2023 for children in, or at risk of entering, OOHC.

State Outcomes

- Indicators endorsed by the Attorney General to make communities safer, reduce re-offending, promote active and inclusive communities, help children and families thrive and support safe and affordable housing.

Practice Framework

- The NSW Practice Framework shows how DCJ works with children and families in NSW including the principles, values, mandates, approaches and systems that underpin our work. Practitioner skills include: working with family and culture; purposeful partnerships; assessment; building lifelong connections; and influencing change.

3 POCLS aims, objectives and key research questions

Rationale

Significant literature shows that children growing up in OOHC are at greater risk for negative outcomes than their peers in the general population in terms of their physical health, socio-emotional well-being and cognitive/learning ability. While placement in OOHC protects children who are at risk of abuse, they are more likely to come into contact with the juvenile justice system, drop out of school early and suffer poorer general and emotional health (Cashmore & Paxman, 2006; Fernandez, 2009; Nathanson & Tzioumi, 2007; Octoman, McLean & Sleep, 2014; Osborn & Bromfield, 2007; Sawyer, Carbone, Searle & Robinson 2007; Tarren-Sweeny, 2008; Townsend, 2012; Vimpani, Boland, Barr & Marshall, 2012). The degree to which this compromised life experience is due to the earlier maltreatment, removal from their family of origin, or by their experiences in OOHC is not known.

Recent research audits undertaken about OOHC in Australia (Cashmore & Ainsworth, 2004; Bromfield & Osborn, 2007; McDonald, Higgins, Valentine & Lamont, 2011) indicate that more research is needed to understand the linkages between children's developmental status at entry to care, their experiences in care, and later developmental outcomes. Existing research is limited by cross-sectional designs, single sites, low response rates, small sample sizes and a lack of validated measures. There is a clear need for a large-scale prospective longitudinal study of children and young people in OOHC to examine developmental trajectories over time in order to identify factors that improve well-being. Prospective longitudinal studies are the most appropriate to examine developmental trajectories. Existing literature on the factors that influence the outcomes of children and young people who have experienced OOHC is available in the POCLS Literature Review (Research Report Number 6).

Aim

The POCLS is the first large-scale prospective longitudinal study of children and young people in OOHC in Australia.

The aim of the POCLS is to provide significant new knowledge that will inform policy and practice to improve the outcomes of children and young people in OOHC. The outcomes include children and young people's permanency, safety and wellbeing including their physical health, socio-emotional and cognitive/learning development. With large numbers of children in OOHC, statutory agencies have a duty to understand how OOHC and other services influence child development so that the service system can be improved.

The POCLS is the first study to link child protection, health, education and offending administrative data for children in care with first-hand accounts from children, caregivers, caseworkers and teachers in order to examine their experiences in OOHC and developmental pathways. The data asset enables us to identify the risk factors that

lead to poorer outcomes as well as the protective factors that mitigate these risks and result in improved outcomes.

This study provides unique, high-quality information about the wellbeing trajectories of children in OOHC, with immediate relevance to policy and practice decision making regarding: the length of time in OOHC; placement type and exiting care; recruiting, training and supporting carers; family contact; the provision of casework, services and supports; improved resource allocation; and improvements to the utility of the administrative data.

As with all prospective longitudinal studies, the evidence base becomes stronger and more robust as more waves of data are collected from the same cohort of children. The aim of the POCLS is to drive evidence-based decision making across DCJ to achieve the best outcomes for children, families and vulnerable communities.

Objectives of the study

The research addresses the following objectives:

- 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
- to describe the services, interventions and pathways for children and young people in OOHC, post restoration, post adoption and on leaving care at 18 years
- to describe children and young people's experiences while growing up in OOHC, post restoration, post adoption and on leaving care at 18 years
- to 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
- to inform policy and practice to strengthen the OOHC service system in NSW to improve the outcomes for children and young people in OOHC

Key research questions

The key research questions for the POCLS are:

On entry to OOHC:

- What are the backgrounds and characteristics of the children and young people entering OOHC, including their demographics, child protection history, reasons for entering care, and duration of the legal order?
- What is the physical health, socio-emotional and cognitive/learning development of the children and young people entering OOHC compared with other children in the community?
- How are the Aboriginal Child Placement Principles used in placement assessments and placement decision making for the Aboriginal children and young people entering OOHC?

During OOHC:

- What are the placement, assessment, service intervention and case planning pathways for the children and young people during their time in OOHC or following their return home (restoration) or exit to guardianship or adoption?
- What are the developmental pathways of the children and young people during their time in OOHC or following their return home (restoration) or exit to guardianship or adoption?
- How safe are the children and young people during their time in OOHC or following their return home (restoration) or exit to guardianship or adoption?
- How prepared are they for their return home (restoration) or exit to guardianship, adoption or the transition out of care at 18 years?

Outcomes from OOHC:

- What are the placement characteristics and placement stability of the children and young people and how do these influence their outcomes?
- In what ways are assessments and service interventions (including service models and methods of delivery) related to the outcomes for the children and young people and how is this affected by their developmental status when they entered OOHC?
- In what ways do the characteristics of the child, carer, home/family and community affect children's developmental pathways, and how do these differ from similarly situated children in the general population?

- How does contact between the children and young people in OOHC and their birth parents, siblings and/ or extended family influence their outcomes?
- How does type of placement for children and young people in OOHC (such as foster care or relative/kinship care) influence their outcomes?
- How well does the administrative data capture the relevant information about the process and quality of care for assessments, case planning and permanency planning and how can it be improved?

The key research questions address the OOHC population in general as well as key sub-populations in OOHC including Aboriginal children and young people, children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children and young people with high needs and/or disabilities.

In addition to the key research questions listed above, the POCLS data asset will be used to answer specific queries relating to OOHC policy and practice on the request of the Minister, Secretary or policy makers.

4 POCLS collaborative governance framework

The POCLS collaborative governance framework includes experts from DCJ, universities, other government and non-government agencies:

Chief Investigator

Responsible for leading the POCLS and ensuring that the overall conduct of the POCLS aligns with the ethics approvals granted.

DCJ Executive Board

Reviews the direction of the POCLS strategic research agenda and advice from consultations, FACSIAR and the Study Advisory Group twice a year.

Study Management Group – feasibility focus

DCJ officers in policy, research, operations, districts, information management, and media and communications were responsible for the internal strategic management and coordination of the study during the establishment stage 2008-2010.

Study Advisory Group – strategic focus

Membership includes DCJ policy and practice experts from Strategic Policy and Commissioning, the Office of the Senior Practitioner, Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes, Operations, Youth Justice and FACSIAR;; and representatives from NSW Health, NSW Department of Education, CREATE Foundation, Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat (AbSec), My Forever Family NSW, Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA) and the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG). This group is responsible for providing high level advice and direction, identifying key policy questions, and interpreting results and knowledge translation. This group was established in 2017 and meets up to twice a year.

Study Working Group – scientific focus

Membership includes external academics, data collection experts, data management experts and FACSIAR researchers responsible for managing and implementing the study. In 2018, the group expanded to include policy experts: DCJ Strategic Policy and Commissioning, Office of the Senior Practitioner, Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes, and the Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat (AbSec). This group was established in 2011, meets bi-monthly and is responsible for design, implementation, scientific input and analysis.

Study Evidence to Action Working Group – practice focus

Membership includes DCJ representatives in the POCLS Study Working Group and subject matter experts from OOH policy, Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes, Office of the Senior Practitioner, Districts and AbSec. This group draws out the policy and practice insights from POCLS analysis, ensures all

learnings are captured, and disseminated to the appropriate audiences. Other groups including young people, parent and carer reference groups will be consulted on evidence to action work as appropriate. This group was established in 2019 and meets as research reports are approved to publish.

DCJ Strategy Policy and Commissioning Sub-Committees – implementation focus

The POCLS evidence to action notes will be tabled at the Operations Executive Sub-Committee and SPC Reform Committee responsible for implementing and monitoring system improvements.

Aboriginal Governance Panel

An Aboriginal Governance Panel is currently being established. The POCLS will use the Panel to strengthen its governance structures and processes so that Aboriginal community members and stakeholders are better engaged as equal research partners, in line with the Family Is Culture (FIC) review recommendation 3 and 96 and the whole of government response to IDS and IDG. -

Ngaramanala (Aboriginal Knowledge Program)

The POCLS is committed to working with the Ngaramanala to improve the governance of the study and to embed the principles of IDS and IDG in the POCLS. This is critical to improving outcomes for Aboriginal children, families and communities through services based on culturally relevant evidence.

Ethical oversight

Ethical approval for POCLS was provided by:

- University of NSW Research Ethics Committee (HC10335, HC16542 & HC 210985)
- NSW Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council Ethics Committee (No. 766/10)
- Ethical approval for NSW linked services data was provided by NSW Population and Health Services Research Ethic Committee (HREC/14/CIPHS/74; Cancer Institute NSW: 2014/12/570)
- The Australian Institute for Health and Welfare Ethics Committee (EO2019 1 406)
- Approval for the teacher survey was provided by the NSW Department of Education State Education Research Applications Process (SERAP) (No. 2012260) and the NSW Catholic Education Office (CEO) Sydney (and relevant Diocese).

Data governance - data security and research agreements

The POCLS unit record data are stored securely in the Secure Unified Research Environment (SURE) managed by the Sax Institute www.saxinstitute.org.au/sure.

Unit record data are available to approved researchers and policy makers within DCJ and more broadly. This is done under strict governance to ensure the information is being used appropriately, and that the research is scientifically sound, feasible and answers important policy questions.

Researchers are able to access the POCLS data asset by way of DCJ commissioned projects or in-kind through the DCJ External Research Program. The POCLS Guidelines to Access Survey Data and Publication (Technical Report Number 14) and Guidelines for Using Record Linkage Data (Technical Report Number 15) have been written to ensure a fair and consistent approach to accessing the POCLS data. The POCLS has developed guidelines, data user resources, data documentations, technical reports and data user training which are available on the POCLS webpage (See Appendix 1).

5 POCLS conceptual overview

The developmental domains of interest in the POCLS include children's safety, physical health, socio-emotional well-being and cognitive/learning ability. These developmental outcomes over time will be affected by:

- Characteristics of the children (gender, disability, age on entry into care and cultural background), their child protection history (parental risk factors, the type, severity and chronicity of maltreatment) on entry into OOHC.
- System response, type of court order and different pathways through the OOHC system, including access to and uptake of services (interventions) and movement between different living arrangements (placement stability).
- Characteristics of the carers and placement - broadly (kin, foster or residential) and specifically (e.g., parenting styles, warmth, experience, community support).
- The interactions between child characteristics; socio-cultural context; characteristics of the care provided (the services/interventions, characteristics of the carer and placement).

The conceptual overview is shown in Figure 1 and the data items that align to the conceptual framework are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 1: POCLS conceptual overview of the factors influencing the outcomes of children and young people in OOHC

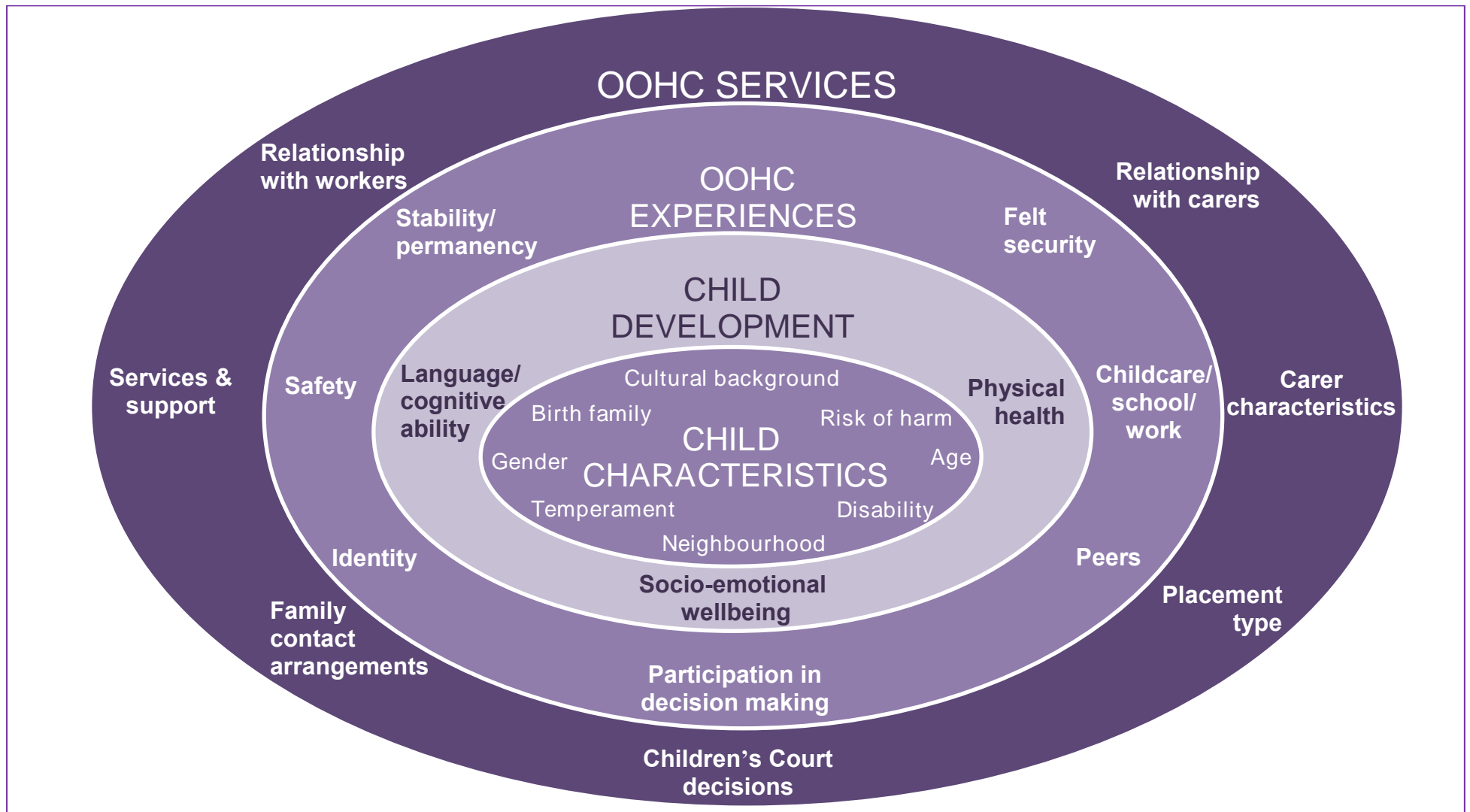
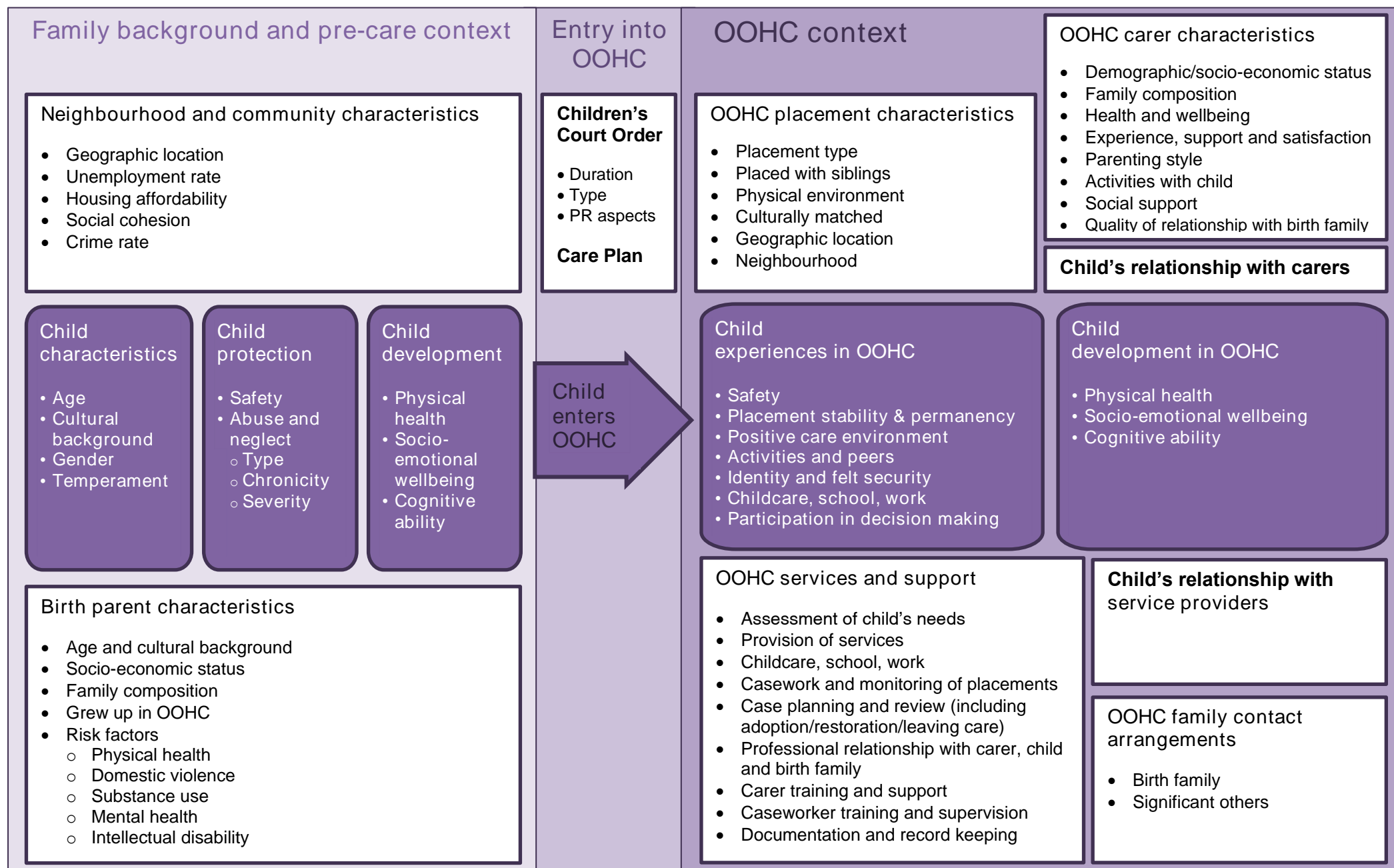


Figure 2: Data items to inform the conceptual overview of factors influencing outcomes of children in OOHC



Data items

The data asset shown in Figure 3 was created in collaboration with OOHHC stakeholders and research experts. The POCLS is of international and national significance and is likely to have greater explanatory power than other studies because of the large sample size, high retention rate across waves, and the selection of gold standard measures and reliable/valid questions used in other studies such as the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children where possible. The linked data provides some outcome information for children that are lost to follow-up or do not participate in the interview component of the study. The planned inclusion of linked data for young people after they turn 18 years old allows the opportunity to explore longer term outcomes for children who experience OOHHC.

The breadth of information in the data asset is extensive and includes:

- Detailed information about the child including their physical health, socio-emotional well-being, cognitive development, how settled they are, temperament, activities and friends, education and work, services and supports, casework, and birth family contact.
- Detailed information about the caregiver including their relationship with the child, parenting style, carer experience and training, informal support network, casework support, satisfaction with being a carer, health/mental health, relationship with partner, finances and housing, and neighbourhood.
- Information from the caseworker about their current involvement, how well they know the child, placement and child needs, child's birth family, birth family contact and case planning.
- Information from the child's teacher (childcare, preschool or school) about the child's socio-emotional wellbeing, school attendance, education plans, progress with schoolwork, extra activities and friends.
- Details of child protection reports and OOHHC placements
- Perinatal information about mothers and babies
- Information about presentations to the emergency departments of public hospitals in NSW
- Information about all admitted patient services provided by NSW public hospitals
- Information from the NSW Mental Health Ambulatory Data Collection which is dedicated to the assessment, treatment, rehabilitation or care of non-admitted patients. It may include mental health day programs, psychiatric outpatients and outreach services (e.g. home visits).
- Death and cause of death information

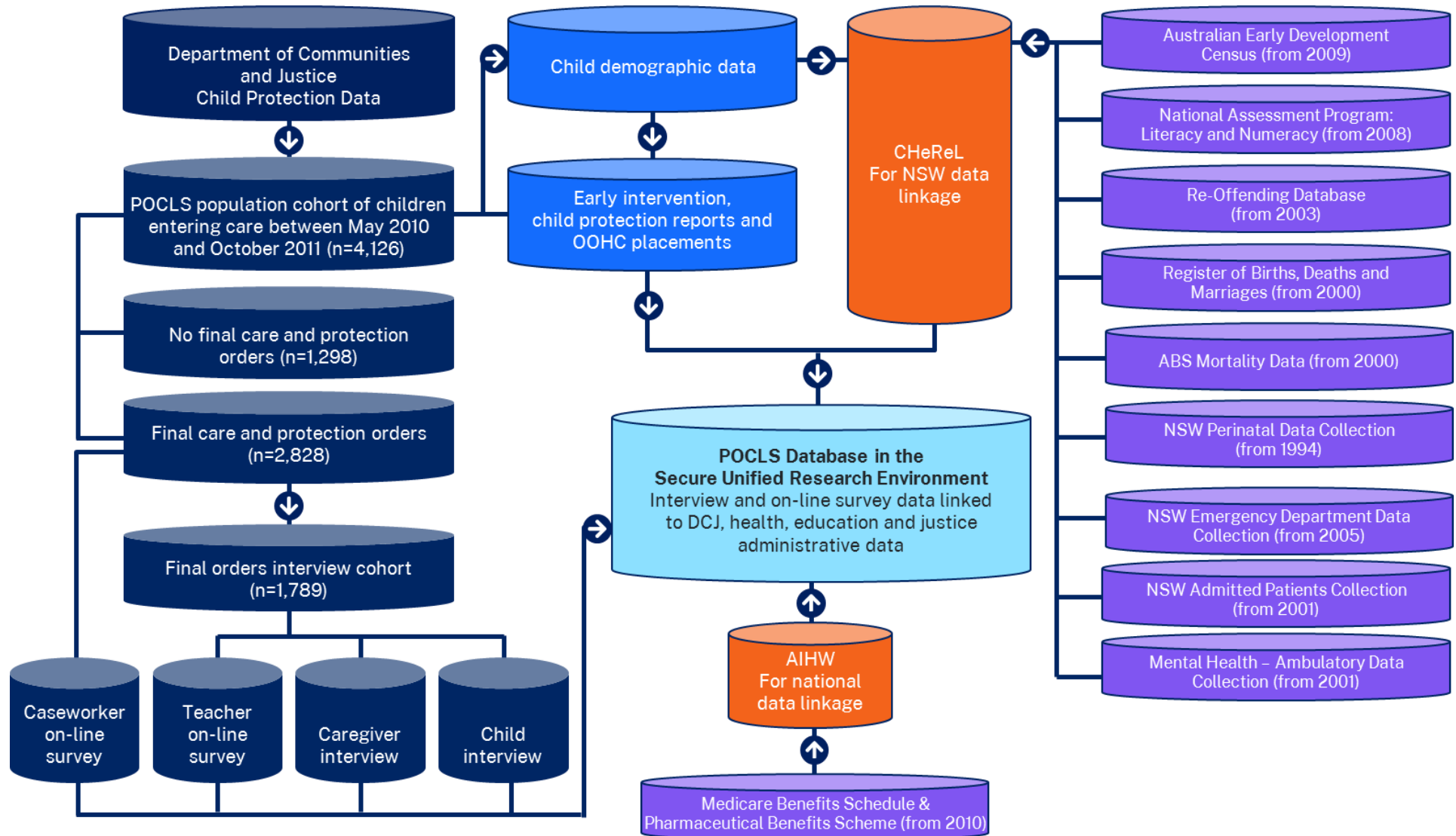
- Information on contact with the juvenile justice system including offending and custodial sentences
- Indicators of the children's development in their first year of full-time school using the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)
- Details of educational performance using the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN).

Expanding the data asset

To maximise the benefit of this rich longitudinal data asset to inform policy and practice, the POCLS Study Working Group continue to improve and expand the data asset by:

- Ongoing consultations with OOHC stakeholders before every wave of data collection to ensure the data items are relevant and updated to reflect policy reforms
- Ongoing collaboration with Ngaramanala to ensure the implementation of the IDS and IDG principles are adhered to so that culturally relevant evidence is built
- Further waves with repeat questions and measures to track the cohort of children and young people overtime
- Additional record linkage collections
- Aftercare sub-study to follow the young people after they turn 18 years old
- Qualitative sub-studies to provide a deeper understanding in key policy and practice areas
- Implementation research studies to test if a new strategy or approach works
- Data quality assurance and data documentation are prioritised.

Figure 3: POCLS Data Asset



Project timelines

The POCLS began in 2010 and collected baseline information about the children and young people on entry to OOHC as well as collecting ongoing information on their life experiences and the various factors that influence their overall development. Data are collected from children, caregivers, caseworkers, parents and teachers and are linked to administrative data from multiple government agencies to track client outcomes to better support children in OOHC.

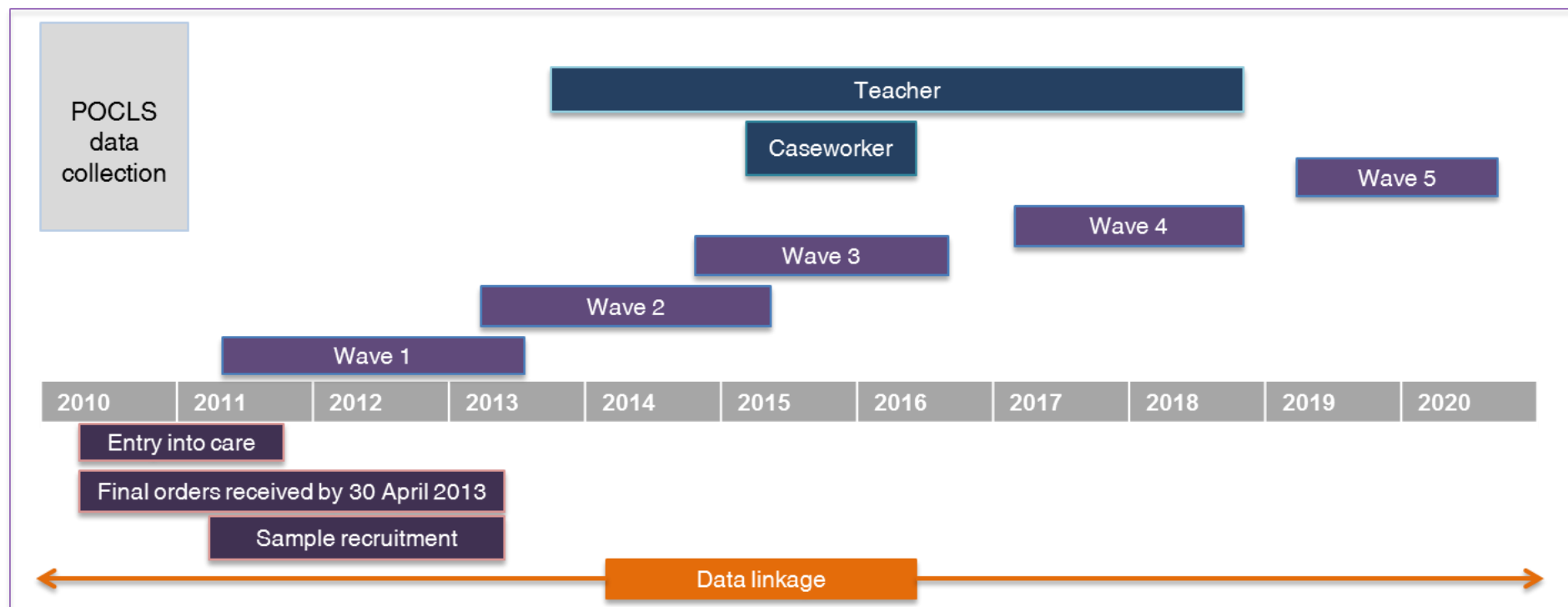
The POCLS population cohort is a census of all children and young people who entered OOHC over an 18 month period for the first time in NSW between May 2010 and October 2011 (n=4,126). A subset of those children and young people who went on to receive final Children's Court care and protection orders by 30 April 2013 (n=2,828) were eligible to participate in the interview component of the study.

As shown in Figure 4, the POCLS sample recruitment began in 2010-2011 and data collection commenced in 2011. Data collection will continue in waves (Wave 1 from 2011 to 2013; Wave 2 from 2013 to 2015; Wave 3 from 2014 to 2016; Wave 4 from 2017 to 2018; Wave 5 from 2019 to 2020) with Wave 6 due to commence in 2023. The interval between waves of data collection is 18-24 months. By the end of Wave 5 in late 2020, the POCLS had 10 years of in-depth data on children's OOHC experiences (including exits and re-entries) and developmental outcomes. Table 1 shows the sample size and retention rate over 5 waves of data collection.

Table 1: Participation and retention in the POCLS interviews over Waves 1 - 5

Wave	n
Wave 1 (2011 – 2013)	1,285
Wave 2 (2013 – 2015)	1,200
Wave 3 (2014 – 2016)	1,033
Wave 4 (2017 – 2018)	962
Wave 5 (2019 – 2020)	862
All waves	623
At least one wave	1,521

Figure 4: POCLS sample recruitment and Wave 1-5 data collection timelines



Wave 6 commencing in 2023 will collect data from the infant cohort transitioning to high school, and collect data for the first time from young people who are 18 years and older.

Key:

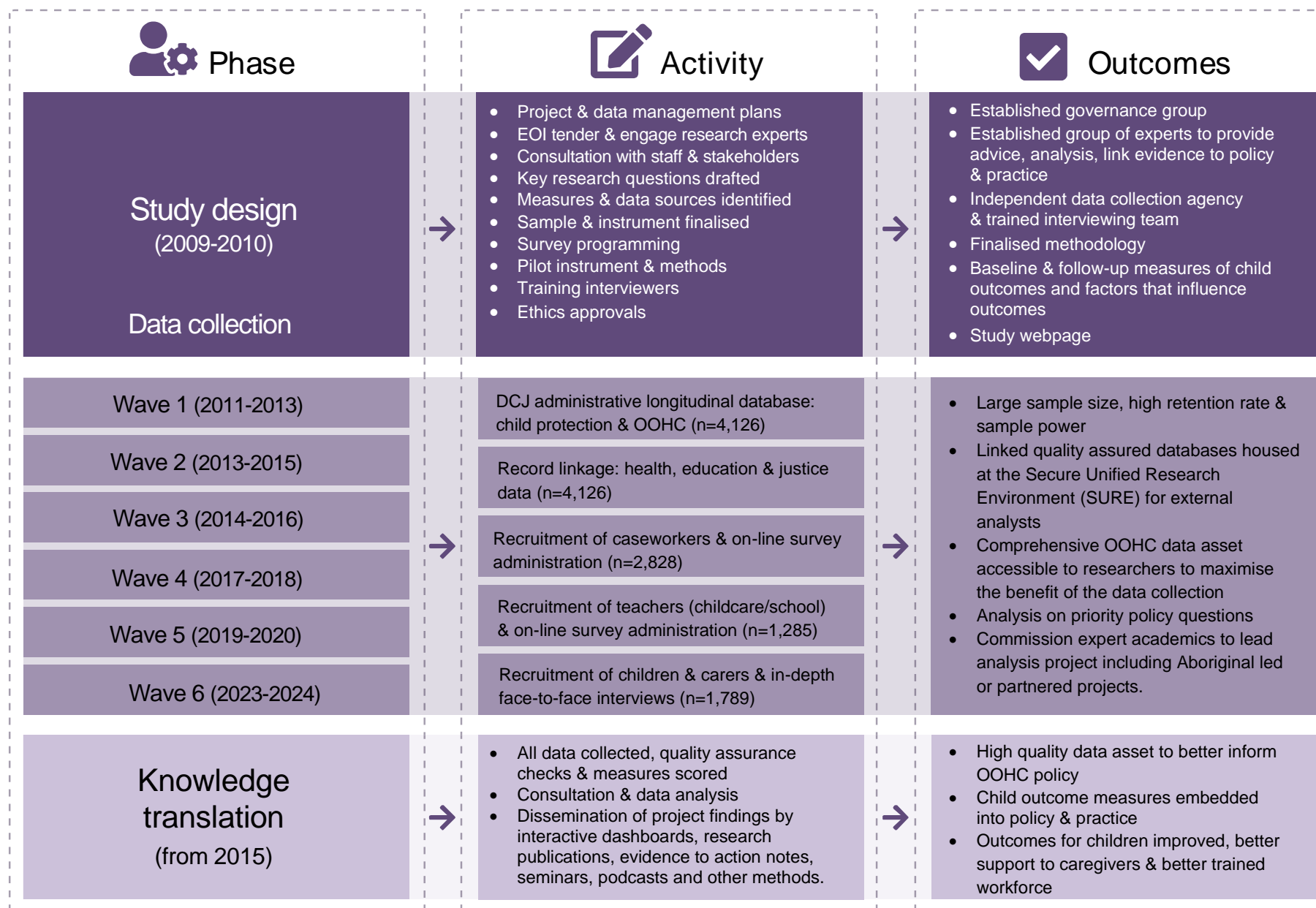
- On-line surveys
- Face-to-face interviews with children and caregivers: interval between Waves 1-3 = 18 months and Wave 4-5 = 24 months.
Children's ages at each wave: Wave 1 9 months-17 years; Wave 2 2 years-17 years; Wave 3 3 years-17 years; Wave 4 5 years-17 years; Wave 5 7-17 years
- POCLS interview cohort recruitment
- Record linkage to child protection, health, education and offending data

6 POCLS project phases

The POCLS framework in Figure 5 below sets out the:

1. Project phases: design, data collection, knowledge translation
2. Key activities that are undertaken at each project phase
3. Outcomes and achievements mapped to each key activity.

Figure 5: POCLS Project Phases



7 POCLS strategic research agenda aligned to DCJ priorities

The POCLS strategic research strategy aims to answer specific policy questions, find solutions and gain insights to support OOHC achieve its immediate and longer term priorities. It will also enable the POCLS to fund, undertake, support and translate research in a timely way to improve policy and practice. Developing a strategic research strategy will enable the POCLS to:



Align research priorities with DCJ's broader Strategic Direction



Align research priorities with the NSW State Outcomes, Premier's Priorities and Human Services Outcomes Framework



Identify our most pressing challenges and priorities and work towards strategic and innovative solutions to address these challenges and priorities



Utilise subject matter experts across DCJ to inform the development of strategic research projects



Promote collaboration between DCJ, universities, NGOs and other government agencies interested in building stronger and safer communities



Enhance the research that DCJ conducts internally, increasing transparency and reducing duplication



Identify research gaps and devise strategic research projects and priorities to improve the evidence base



Support Aboriginal-led research and the principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty



Improve client outcomes by ensuring that our programs are aligned with evidence-based recommendation



Maximise DCJ data and resources to enable ethical and high quality research to be undertaken to answer policy questions



Transform DCJ into an evidence-based organisation where research informs decision making



Implement a best-practice model to direct, conduct and translates knowledge to improve practice

POCLS process to ensure research is policy relevant

To ensure alignment with OOHC's most pressing challenges and priorities, the POCLS strategic research agenda was developed through:

- **Extensive consultation** with internal and external OOHC stakeholders and subject matter experts (see Appendix 3)
- **Priority identification** through POCLS advisory group and DCJ policy and practice experts
- **Endorsement** by the DCJ Executive Board of the priority projects.

Figure 6 shows the key stages of developing a strategic research agenda to inform evidence to action work that ultimately improves the outcomes of children and young people. These stages of embedding evidence to action are explained in more detail in Sections 8-10.

Figure 6: POCLS process to ensure research is policy relevant



8 POCLS key research areas

The POCLS Strategic research agenda was developed through extensive consultation (Appendix 3). The Agenda defines five key research areas, with the aim of strengthening the existing knowledge base, generating new data and making the extensive data that has been collected accessible to researchers. The priority topics for POCLS research are listed under each key area. They are aligned with the DCJ strategic priorities and mapped to the Permanency Support Program objectives (see Appendix 4).

1. OOHC service system and factors that influence children's outcomes

This includes maltreatment history, characteristics of the children placed in OOHC, children and carers experiences of placement stability, different placement types, NGO and DCJ case management, family time, casework, access to services, child activities and hobbies, early childhood education, school education, preparation for exits and leaving care.

2. Permanency options and children's outcomes

This includes family preservation (no final orders cohort), family restoration, guardianship, open adoption, long-term parental responsibility orders to the Minister (foster care, relative/kinship care). Data will be collected from young people who have left OOHC because they turned 18 years from Wave 6.

3. Experiences of children and young people who have entered OOHC and their developmental outcomes over time

This includes the factors that influence developmental outcomes (socio-emotional wellbeing, physical health, cognitive learning ability) including the long-term influence of maltreatment backgrounds (including inter-generational trauma) prior to entering OOHC.

4. Carer characteristics and what we can do to better support carers

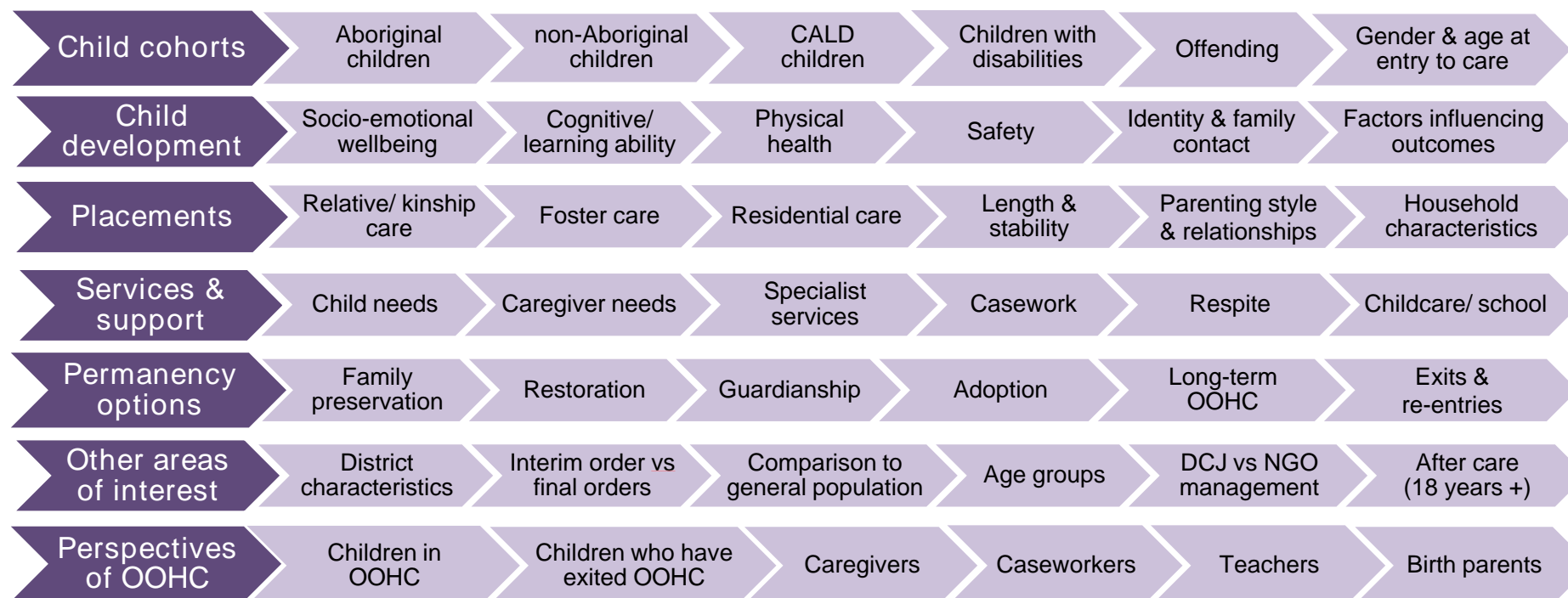
This includes describing carers' socio-demographic characteristics, characteristics of carers' households, carers' satisfaction with their caring role, training and support networks.

5. Experiences and developmental outcomes for cohorts of interest

This includes Aboriginal children, non-Aboriginal children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, young people who are offending, children with disabilities, children entering OOHC for the first time at different ages (infants, middle childhood, and as teenagers) and children in different geographic locations. As noted above, data will be collected from young people who have left OOHC because they turned 18 years from Wave 6.

Figure 7 below illustrates one way to organise the data to see how it can answer key policy areas.

Figure 7: POCLS data mapped to key policy topics



9 POCLS data asset

The POCLS team serves many functions that include:

1. Building a data resource for researchers and policy makers (data asset)
2. Undertaking analysis for business partners
3. Commissioning analysis that addresses key research questions
4. Translating knowledge to improve policy and practice.

To assist with building on existing evidence and identifying gaps in knowledge, DCJ commissioned the Centre for Evidence and Implementation (CEI) to systematically search for high-quality evidence of the impact that different OOHC interventions have on particular child and youth outcomes. The CEI published the results of this search in the [Out-of-Home Care: An Evidence and Gap Map Report](#) in 2017. In 2019, DCJ updated the tool and it is published on the FACSIAR webpage. This resource should be used by researchers who plan to undertake analysis with the POCLS data asset.

Proposals for data analysis are assessed against the POCLS consultation document (Appendix 4) and reviewed by OOHC policy colleagues and Aboriginal Outcomes to ensure priority policy questions are answered. Through this approach DCJ is more likely to achieve its immediate and longer-term priorities for building stronger and safer communities.



Source: DCJ Research Strategy and Research Priorities 2020-2022

The POCLS has written guidelines for accessing the POCLS survey data and linkage data to undertake analysis and publication (Technical Report Number 14 and 15).

Undertake internal research and respond to ad hoc requests

The POCLS research team will continue to work on internal analysis projects as decided in consultation with the POCLS Advisory Group and the DCJ Executive Board. This ensures timely analysis of policy relevant topics.

The POCLS holds unique data to fill data gaps and responds to requests from the Minister, Secretary and other business partners to inform budget proposals, initiatives, reforms and reviews to shape policy and practice.

Commission external research

The POCLS funding is used to contract external experts on policy issues raised in consultations to:

- Improve the outcomes for children in OOHC and their families by expanding the evidence to inform policy and practice and strengthen the OOHC service system
- Encourage the use of the POCLS survey and linked services data in policy relevant research
- Raise the profile of the POCLS study among researchers and the community – through policy relevant research, research outputs and research-guided policy and practice change
- Begin to develop a critical mass of researchers with expertise in using the POCLS data
- Invest in building career researchers in OOHC.

Support collaborative research

External researchers are also able to apply to use the POCLS data through the External Research Program under an in-kind arrangement.

Communicate and translate

All policy applications from research reports are considered by the Evidence to Action Working Group and Evidence to Action Notes are published to inform policy and practice improvements. Roundtables are hosted to facilitate discussion between analysts and members of the POCLS governance groups. FACSIAR's Lunch and Learn webinar series is open to internal and external stakeholders and includes presentations from expert academics who have undertaken analysis of the POCLS dataset.

10 POCLS approach to knowledge translation

In developing a knowledge translation approach, the POCLS team are following the guidance from the Research Impact Academy who specialise in assisting with the translation of research for greatest impact. The Research Impact Academy suggest five steps towards creating impact with research:

1. **Begin with the end in mind** – Consult with likely users of your research to determine relevance and practical implications of the research outcomes
2. **Build relationships** – For long term success, build and maintain collaborations and partnerships. Consider the needs, wants and capacity of each party
3. **Plan** – Develop a project vision and map out short, medium and long term goals and how you'll reach them, be they policy, behaviour or practice change, or new technologies, products or scientific knowledge
4. **Build processes and systems** – Think innovatively to determine the best way of delivering new knowledge according to your goals. Find out what the audience needs to make sure the knowledge will be useful
5. **Create feedback loops** – Create feedback loops by evaluating your knowledge implementation processes to determine if you're creating your intended impacts. Revisit your plan and adapt it as you go ensure it meets goals and is relevant to all involved.

In very simple terms, knowledge translation can be summarised with a series of questions:

- Who? (audience)
- Why? (knowledge translation objectives)
- What? (message)
- How? (format, delivery, barriers, opportunities)
- Impact (measured by?) (Public Health Agency, Canada: 2012).

A POCLS Evidence to Action Working Group has been established to reflect the collaborative effort required to translate research findings to support evidence-informed policy development, practice innovation and service delivery. The membership of the working group are subject matter experts from OOHCC policy, Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes, Office of the Senior Practitioner and the districts. External stakeholders are consulted as relevant including AbSec, CREATE, My Forever Family NSW, reference groups (e.g., youth, birth parents), other government agencies and non-government organisations. The POCLS Evidence to Action Working Group will consult with experts in evidence based policy and practice in the DCJ Office of the Senior Practitioner and other organisations such as Berry Street, SNAICC, Black Dog Institute and Beyond Blue. Evidence to action work will align with the principles of IDS and IDG.

Implementation and monitoring process:

1. **POCLS Evidence to Action Working Group** discuss the POCLS findings that could be used to inform legislation, policy, mandates, new services/models, tools/frameworks, training or further research that will result in practice change. The POCLS Evidence to Action Notes are disseminated via the POCLS communication strategy (see Section 11).
2. **POCLS Evidence to Action Working Group** identify appropriate ways to translate knowledge to internal and external OOHC policy and practice audiences such as Practice Notes, Casework Development Program, and Evidence to Action forums/webinars.
3. **POCLS team as appropriate** brief the Strategy, Policy and Commissioning Reform Subcommittee (or alternate Sub Committee if appropriate), the Operations Executive or the Practice Framework Working Group on the POCLS applications to improve practice.
4. **POCLS team** report on the progress to the DCJ Executive Board up to twice a year.

Please see Appendix 5 for the list of POCLS Evidence to Action Notes completed or in preparation.

11 POCLS communication strategy

DCJ disseminates research findings to support evidence-informed policy development, practice innovation and service delivery. This is supported by a range of knowledge translation activities and platforms:

- Webpage
- Interactive dashboards
- Symposium at national conferences every alternate year: the Australian Association of Welfare Agencies (ACWA) and the Australian Social Policy Conference UNSW (disrupted by COVID-19).
- Evidence to Action webinars are hosted by FACSIAR to disseminate insights to our stakeholders - this link takes you to information about future and past research seminars conducted by DCJ www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/research-seminars
- Casework Development Program
- District roadshows to provide data about their clients and practice
- Roundtables
- Scientific peer-reviewed journals
- Evidence to Action Notes
- Practice kits
- Podcasts and videos
- Newsletters and communiques targeting different audiences.

12 Keeping POCLS relevant and timely

To ensure the POCLS remains relevant and timely the following principles are applied:

- The POCLS is directly relevant to State Outcomes, Premiers Priorities, DCJ strategic priorities, commissioning activities, practice, and service delivery
- The POCLS is aligned to the Human Services Outcomes Framework
- The POCLS is practical, meaningful and timely, leading to evidence-informed decision making
- The POCLS is rigorous, culturally competent and ethical
- The POCLS incorporates effective governance mechanisms and processes to commission research
- The POCLS encourages collaboration with all parts of DCJ and with external organisations.

Ongoing consultations

- Respond to policy, practice and service delivery research challenges.
- Update priorities and research agenda so new evidence is timely and relevant

Follow processes

- Collaborate with SWG policy members at all milestone stages of a project (beginning, middle and end)
- Embed IDS and IDG principles in the POCLS
- Consult with stakeholders reference groups (young people, carers, birth parents)
- Terms of Reference of the POCLS Advisory Group, Study Working Group, Study Evidence to Action Working Group
- DCJ Executive Board reviews and endorses research priorities.

Measures of progress

- External research grants program established
- Number and type of research studies funded in relation to each of the DCJ research priority areas
- Number of peer-review publications and other media platforms such as podcasts and videos
- Strategies are in place to facilitate the use of research findings in policy and practice

-
- Collaborations established between DCJ, other government agencies, peaks, service delivery providers and researchers
 - Case studies of how DCJ-funded research evidence has influenced policy and practice.

13 POCLS commissioned and internal analysis projects

There are several ways researchers can access the POCLS data:

- DCJ commissions external research experts to undertake analysis on priority policy questions.
- Approved researchers with their own funds are able to access the POCLS data via the DCJ External Research Program (DCJ provides in-kind support).
- Researchers in FACSIAR also undertake analysis to inform policy and practice.

Publication details are provided in Appendix 6 and Appendix 7 and research reports or links to journal articles are published on the POCLS webpage www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/pathways-of-care/pocls-publication. A Special Issue on the Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study in Child Abuse and Neglect is being prepared and is due to be released in 2023.

DCJ commissioned projects

From 2015, DCJ has funded experts in the POCLS Study Working Group to undertake analysis on children and young people in OOHC to address key policy issues in their area of interest and of relevance to DCJ. Through an Expression of Interest process in 2019, and a targeted Expression of Interest for Aboriginal led or partnered projects in 2022¹, DCJ will have supported 20 analysis projects to address priority policy questions raised in consultations.

Commissioned projects completed at the time of publishing this report are listed in Appendix 6 and Appendix 7.

DCJ in-kind support to researchers with external funding

The POCLS data asset is available to approved researchers with their own funds via the DCJ External Research Program (DCJ provides in-kind support) from 2020 – see the POCLS Guidelines to Access Survey Data and Publication (Technical Report Number 14). Two projects have received in-kind support through the DCJ External Research Program:

¹ At the time of publishing this report, the EOI process was underway and the successful candidates will commence their projects in 2023. The list of funded projects will be available on the POCLS webpage www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/pathways-of-care/Information-for-data-users

- Professor Judy Cashmore. University of Sydney. ARC Discovery Grant DP130104812 (2013 – 2020). How are decisions made in Children’s Court care matters and what are the outcomes for children?
- Professor Amy Conley-Wright. Research Centre for Families and Children. University of Sydney. University of Sydney research grant (2020). What are the long-term benefits of different permanency pathway arrangements?

DCJ support to post graduate students

The POCLS data asset is available to approved post graduate students enrolled in higher degrees. One PhD student has been approved to receive in-kind support through the DCJ External Research Program:

- Anna Dawson, Australian National University Doctor of Philosophy (Clinical Psychology) Degree. Exploring Wellbeing Trajectories of Youth in Australian Kinship Care.

DCJ internal analysis projects

To support the program work of DCJ analytical projects are undertaken by FACSIAR. Internal research reports are listed in Appendix 7.

Mapping POCLS analysis projects by policy topics

Appendix 4 maps the POCLS analysis completed by topic. It was informed by the consultations undertaken over the previous years which have been mapped to the Permanency Support Program objectives.

POCLS sub-studies

Potential topics for small in-depth qualitative sub-studies or intervention studies have been proposed during POCLS consultations to provide more in-depth data to inform policy and practice.

POCLS proposed small qualitative sub-studies include:

- Examine the application of the Aboriginal child placement principle and Aboriginal children in non-Aboriginal placements (including identity, contact, case work support and planning). To be designed with Aboriginal Outcomes with community consultation.
- Relative/kinship placements where the carer has little case-worker contact (how are they doing?)
- Resilience - children with complex child protection backgrounds who have improving scores on CBCL and stable placements.
- Children and young people with high needs who are not in a stable placement.
- Restored children and their parent’s experiences.
- Test an intervention to improve practice – topic TBC.

Appendix 1: Resources for POCLS data users

The following is a summary of the resources available to researchers interested in using the POCLS data set. It flows from high level information aimed at providing background and context; to more detailed resources to aid use and interpretation of the data; and interactive dashboards making the key data available to stakeholders. All resources are available at the study webpage.

Data documentation

- Questionnaires and data collections

www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/pathways-of-care/pocls-publication/questionnaires-pocls

The questionnaires used at the carer, child and young person face-to-face interviews; and the teacher and caseworker on-line surveys; are essential to the proper development of research questions, understanding the data and the optimal approach to analyses. The questionnaires should be consulted as a priority. Other data collections include the felt security activity and scans of the child's NSW Health My Personal Health Record known as the Blue Book.

- Data dictionaries

www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/pathways-of-care/pocls-publication/data-dictionaries-pocls

Data dictionaries are available on all POCLS datasets and should be consulted when designing and implementing study analyses. The data dictionaries provide variable level information for each of the data sets. They include variable names, codes, eligibility, applicability, type, length, module, and mode of questioning. Data dictionaries are available for the: child/young person and caregiver surveys, Adapted Kvebaek Family Sculpture Technique; caseworker survey; teacher survey; DCJ administrative data; and the linked external data.

- Data Books

Data books are available to approved researchers in SURE

The POCLS data books for the survey data are intended to be used by researchers to help in understanding the data structure, the frequency of responses to survey questions and as a resource to cross-check during analyses. For obvious reasons, frequency tables have not been prepared for text response variables. There are also data books for the linkage data, which provides frequency counts of selected variables by care and protection order type; and a data book on interviewer ratings which collects data on the quality of the interview, reasons why the interview and/or activities were not completed, and the environment where the interview took place.

- Data user training slide deck

www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/pathways-of-care/pocls-publication/data-user-guides-pocls

The data user training slide deck provides an outline of the POCLS data user training workshop.

Technical reports

Technical reports aid the use and interpretation of the POCLS data. All resources are available at the study webpage: www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/pathways-of-care/pocls-publication/pocls-technical-reports; and www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/pathways-of-care/pocls-publication/data-user-guides-pocls.

- Study objectives and strategic research agenda 2019-2020 & 2022-2023 (Number 1)

The study rationale and strategic research agenda provides the business case for the investment in research to build a new evidence base and knowledge to improve interventions aimed to keep children and young people safe and foster their wellbeing so they can develop to their full potential. An overview of the study rationale and design that tracks a population cohort is all children entering OOHC for the first time in NSW was published in Paxman, M., Tully, L., Burke, S. and Watson, J. (2014). Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study on children and young people in out-of-home care in New South Wales. Family Matters, 94, p15-28.

- Study design and data user guide (Number 2)

An overview of the study and the data covering the following:

- Overview of the study, study design, and data collection methods
- Data sources, data structure, and variable naming convention
- Data access procedure
- Data confidentialisation and weighting

- Non-response correction and data weights (Numbers 3-7)

Analysis examines bias in response patterns to questions and direct measures due to the wide eligibility and recruitment lens (i.e., respondents varying duration in OOHC by the time of the Wave 1 interview; and the varying duration in the current placement at the time of the Wave 1 interview). Another analysis examined how Wave 1 participants differ from study-eligible non-participants. Detailed descriptions of the construction of the POCLS weights are provided in several technical reports on: statistical power, selection bias, and non-response correction; initial wave weighting; and cross-sectional and longitudinal weighting for the POCLS.

- Measures manual (Number 8)

The Measures Manual provides an overview of each of the standardised measures incorporated into the questionnaires. The overview includes: measure domain;

waves at which the measure was delivered; age range of the child for whom the measure was applied; length – number of items in the measure; publisher/cost/permissions required for the measure; psychometric properties of the measure; studies used/ rationale for use – other seminal studies that use the measure; scoring information; and references.

- **Measuring child developmental outcomes: approaches and methods (Number 9)**

This report addresses the consistent use of the POCLS standardised measures of child development to cover a life span from 9 months to 17 years.

- **Looping and conditional branching (Number 10)**

The POCLS Child and Young Person, Carer, Teacher and Caseworker surveys include questions that, depending on the response to the question, require the interviewer to ‘loop’ back to a previous question, repeat (‘loop’) the current question, or ‘skip’ a question. This report explains the looping approach.

- **Adapted Kvebaek Family Sculpture Technique (Number 11)**

This report provides an overview of the activity conducted with children aged 7 years and older to measure how close children and young people feel to people in their current household and special people outside of their current household. Those opting out are asked similar questions during the interview.

- **Identifying the cultural background of children in the POCLS (Number 12)**

Given the multiple data sources reporting child cultural background, and the inconsistency over time and between reporters, a counting rule was established for consistent reporting of a child’s cultural background for the POCLS.

- **Human capital formation during childhood provides a framework to analyse child development and wellbeing (Number 13)**

This paper outlines one framework to analyse child development and wellbeing with the POCLS data.

- **Guidelines for accessing the data and publication (Number 14)**

This technical report provides an overview of how to apply to access the POCLS data; the contracts and ethics approvals required for external researchers; and publication and authorship guidelines.

- **Guidelines for using the record linkage data (Number 15)**

Record linkage data from a number of administrative data bases have been obtained as part of an extension study attached to the POCLS. This technical report provides an overview of the datasets available, the approval process to gain access to the data and requirements for use and reporting.

- **Guidelines for publishing results with small sample sizes (Number 16)**

This report presents guidelines for reporting findings from analysis of the POCLS survey, DCJ administrative and linked data sub populations involve small numbers. The purpose of the guideline is to help users to better understand and manage confidentiality and minimise the risk of disclosure of identity. These guidelines apply to results presented in any form (e.g., tables and graphs), to both internal and external reports and publications, and outputs (including syntax) taken out of SURE.

- **OOHC policy landscape 2010-2018 (POCLS Waves 1-4) (Number 17)**

The policy context during the period of the POCLS Waves 1-4 data collection is outlined to assist researchers to interpret the results. This will be updated with the release of additional waves of data collection. This will be updated for Wave 5 and Wave 6.

- **POCLS Cohort: examining differences in final orders and no final order cohorts over time (Number 18)**

The POCLS sample has two main cohorts - the 'Final order' and 'No final order' cohorts. The criteria to be in each cohort was legal status at one point in time. Those who were 'No final orders' by 30 April 2013 might since have received a final order later, be returned to their birth parents, adopted or received a guardianship order. Similarly, those on final orders might have returned to their birth parents, adopted or exited OOHC to guardianship. Legal status needs to be considered when interpreting the results of analysis.













Research publications

See Appendix 6 and Appendix 7 for completed analysis projects.

Interactive dashboards

The POCLS dashboards are currently being built to provide an interactive platform to enable stakeholders to access the data to gain accurate and useful insights into practice and policy questions. The dashboards may answer high level questions for Districts and provide some direction for more specific research questions that can be answered with more in-depth analysis by researchers/statisticians. They will be available on the POCLS webpage in 2023.

The dashboards protect the confidentiality of the study participants by only using summary data and suppressing any cells/counts with less than five individuals for the non-Aboriginal cohort and less than 10 for the Aboriginal cohort as advised by the AH&MRC HREC.

POCLS dashboard topics	
	1) Characteristics of the children and young people in the POCLS
	2) Child protection history of children and young people in the POCLS
	3) Characteristics of carers, households, and their neighbourhoods in the POCLS
	4) Children's socio-emotional wellbeing, cognitive learning ability and physical health conditions in the POCLS
	5) Learning and education of children in the POCLS
	6) Children's connection to birth family, culture and community in the POCLS
	7) Children's feelings, supports and relationships in the POCLS
	8) Caregiver support and satisfaction in the POCLS
	9) Casework and children's access to services and support in the POCLS
	10) Care giver support and satisfaction in their caring role in the POCLS
	11) Placement stability and permanency in the POCLS
	12) Preparation for leaving care in the POCLS

POCLS publication clearinghouse

Research reports, technical reports, evidence to action notes, interactive dashboards, presentations, webinars, videos, participant newsletters and promotional brochures; and information for participants; are available on the POCLS website

www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/pathways-of-care.

Appendix 2: Key DCJ OOHC reforms and initiatives

Building stronger communities

DCJ brings together the former Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) and Department of Justice. To build stronger communities, DCJ focuses on:

- Prevention and early intervention in the social welfare system within the entire law and order system;
- Supporting major change in how NSW looks after its most vulnerable people; and
- Fostering greater collaboration across the family, communities and justice functions.

The research that DCJ conducts and commissions plays a significant role in achieving these outcomes.

NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework

The NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework specifies seven wellbeing outcomes for the NSW population: safety, home, economic, health, education and skills, social and community, and empowerment. Across Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), the Human Services Outcomes Framework is used to support the design and implementation of programs and services. Research that contributes to understanding how to best achieve these outcomes across all these domains is of high priority for DCJ.

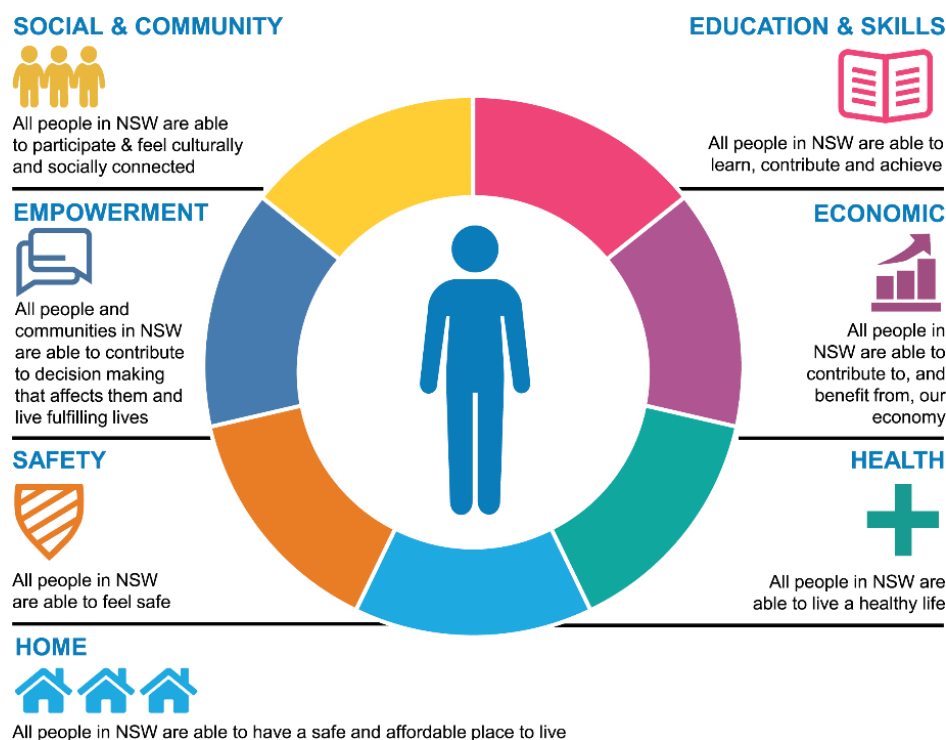


Table of key reforms, initiatives and priorities

Reform	Objective
Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy	A Deputy Secretary Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes was appointed in DCJ on 8 November 2021 charged with creating a safe, just, resilient and inclusive NSW where Aboriginal people have the opportunity to realise their potential. DCJ's Aboriginal Service Direction 2020-2024 Implementation Plan addresses the Closing The Gap targets and is also reflective of the Family Is Culture recommendations (Final Report, July 2019).
Permanency Support Program	The Permanency Support Program assists to provide every child and young person a loving home for life, whether that be with parents, extended family or kin, or through open adoption or guardianship. https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/permanency-support-program
Commissioning for Better Outcomes	Includes Sector Development and Social Benefits Bonds (SBB). The aim for SBB is to fund the delivery of services targeting an improvement in a particular social outcome to reduce the need for, and therefore government spending on acute services. https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/about/reforms/CBO
NSW Practice Framework	The NSW Practice 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. Skills required to represent practitioner skills include: working with family and culture; purposeful partnerships; assessment; and building lifelong connections, influencing change. https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/children-families/child-protection-services/practice-framework?SQ_VARIATION_537670=0
Resource	Further Detail
State Outcome Budgeting	https://www.treasury.nsw.gov.au/budget-financial-management/reform/outcome-budgeting
NSW Premier's Priorities	https://www.nsw.gov.au/improving-nsw/premiers-priorities/
NSW Human Services Outcome Framework	https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/human-services-outcomes-framework
Aboriginal Impact Statement	https://intranet.dcj.nsw.gov.au/dcj-initiatives/aboriginal-impact-statement

Appendix 3: POCLS key consultations on priority policy questions

POCLS consultation	Detail
FACS staff briefing 2014	<p>POCLS presenters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Fred Wulczyn, Chapin Hall University of Chicago • Professor Alan Hayes, Australian Institute of Family Studies • Dr Daryl Higgins, Australian Institute of Family Studies • Ms Diana Smart, Australian Institute of Family Studies • Dr Julie LaHausse, Australian Institute of Family Studies • Panel: Q&A and aims of upcoming in-depth analysis <p>Panel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A/Professor Judy Cashmore (University of Sydney) • Marilyn Chilvers (FACS Analysis and Research) • A/Professor Paul Delfabbro (University of Adelaide) • Dr Daryl Higgins (Australian Institute of Family Studies) • Professor Ilan Katz (University of NSW) • Dr Fred Wulczyn (University of Chicago)
OOHC stakeholders roundtable 2015	<p>POCLS presenters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Judy Cashmore, University of Sydney • Professor Paul Delfabbro, University of Adelaide • Professor Ilan Katz, University of NSW • Dr Fred Wulczyn, University Chicago <p>Panel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simone Walker, Executive Director Design Innovation Safety and Permanency FACS • Louise Coe, Director Child Safe Organisations, Office of the Children's Guardian • Deidre Cheers, ACWA Chairperson • Steve Kinmond, Deputy Ombudsman • Tim Ireland, CEO AbSec • Rita Fenech or Penny Jones, Director Connecting Carers • Maria Chan, Community Facilitator CREATE
Western District seminar 2016	<p>Presentations by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharryn Wheeler A/Director, Western NSW • Jo Lawrence District Director, Western NSW • Professor Judy Cashmore University of Sydney • Professor Paul Delfabbro University of Adelaide • Professor Ilan Katz University of NSW • Dr Fred Wulczyn University Chicago <p>Q&A with Western District staff</p>

OOHC stakeholders roundtable 2016	<p>POCLS presenters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Judy Cashmore, University of Sydney • Professor Paul Delfabbro, University of Adelaide • Professor Ilan Katz, University of NSW • Dr Fred Wulczyn, University Chicago <p>Panel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minister Brad Hazzard • Sandra Heriot, Office of the Senior Practitioner • Janet Vickers, District Director • Deidre Cheers, ACWA Chairperson • Robyn Bale, Director, Student Engagement and Interagency Partnerships, NSW Department of Education • Casey Ralph, KARI • Lisa Townshend and young person from CREATE
Roundtable with Aboriginal stakeholders 2018	<p>POCLS presenter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Paul Delfabbro, University of Adelaide <p>Invited:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul Gray, AbSec • Bianca Jarrett, Aboriginal Policy Branch • Nattie Smith, Aboriginal Policy Branch • Jennifer Mar Young, Aboriginal Policy Branch • Vanessa Ford, Aboriginal Policy Branch • Jenny Howard, Aboriginal Policy Branch • Winsome Matthews, Aboriginal Policy Branch • Blake Cansdale, Aboriginal Policy Branch • Amy Opio, Aboriginal Policy Branch • Paul Coe, Western District • Amanda Kami, TFM • Sheree Stewart, TFM • Margaret Cashman AH&MRC HREC • T Brown AH&MRC HREC • K Armstrong AH&MRC HREC
Roundtables with the Advisory Group, Evidence to Action Working Group 2022	<p>A panel of 16 academic researchers summarise the key insights from recently completed analysis of the POCLS dataset to inform policy and practice to improve children's experiences in out-of-home care and developmental outcomes. The policy areas of the five roundtables were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child development, wellbeing and children with a disability • Cultural connections and family time • Education and Youth Justice • Casework and Support • Permanency and wellbeing pathways

Roundtable with Aboriginal stakeholders 2022	<p>Presenter: Dr BJ Newton, UNSW on the restoration of Aboriginal children</p> <p>Invited: DCJ --</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brendan Thomas - Deputy Secretary • Jake Gordon - Manager Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes • Laura-Lee Stuart - Manager Aboriginal Culture in Practice • Noni Greenwood - Director Aboriginal Culture in Practice • Bianca Jarrett - Manager Transformation Office • Andreas Vorst-Parkes - Manager Care and Housing • Lorna O'Shane - Manager Care and Housing • Mark Milbrya - Senior Policy Officer Care and Housing • Jody Stewart - Senior Program Officer Care and Housing • Shaylee Matthews - Project Officer, Youth Justice • Ian Brown Ngaramanala • Sussan Maybury - Director Family Violence <p>Other experts -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shane Hamilton - Deputy Secretary Aboriginal Affairs NSW • A/Professor Paul Gray – Indigenous child protection hub - Jumbunna Institute of Indigenous Education and Research, UTS • Catherine Liddle - CEO, SNAICC - National Voice for our Children • Karly Warner - CEO, Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT • Aunty Deb Sawn-Char, Grandmothers Against Removals NSW • Alicia Bairle – CEO, Coota Girls Aboriginal Corporation • Kathleen Blakeney –Children of the Bomaderry Aboriginal Children's Home Incorporated • POCLS Advisory Group • POCLS Evidence to Action Working Group
Meetings with stakeholders	<p>Consultations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • POCLS Advisory Group (representing DCJ, other government, and non-government organisations) • Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat - the peak body for Aboriginal in OOHC. • CREATE Foundation - the peak body for children and young people in OOHC • My Forever Family NSW – the peak body for OOHC carers
Annual POCLS symposium & webinars since 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Association of Children 's Welfare Agencies Conference in 2014, 2016, 2018 • Australian Social Policy Conference UNSW in 2015, 2017, 2019 • FACSIAR Lunch & Learn webinars in 2021-2022
Collaborate with Ngaramanala since 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitated a consultation with AbSec and Ngaramanala to address the Family Is Culture independent review recommendations 3 and 96 to embed IDS principles into the POCLS to improve the POCLS governance.
Advisory Group meetings – up to two a year	<p>Members as at 2022:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anne Campbell, Deputy Secretary, Strategy, Policy and Commissioning (Chairperson)

- Simone Czech, Deputy Secretary, Northern Cluster
- Jessica Stewart, Executive Director, FACSIAR
- Stuart Malcher A/Executive Director, FACSIAR
- Merran Butler, Director, Statistical Analysis, Data Governance and Research. FACSIAR
- Lauren Dean, Executive Director, Stronger Communities PaTH Readiness
- Matthew Jones, Director Strategy, Child & Family, Strategy, Policy & Commissioning
- Rebecca Hinchey, Manager, Out of Home Care Programs, Child and Family – Strategy, Policy and Commissioning
- Jayde Ward, Director, Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes
- Elaine Thomson, Executive Director, Office of the Senior Practitioner
- Lisa Charet, Executive Director, Northern Cluster
- Nicola Jeffers, A/Executive District Director, South Western Sydney District
- Briony Foster, Executive District Director, Sydney, South Eastern Sydney and Northern Sydney Districts
- Jacqueline Richardson, Casework Manager, Child and Family District Unit.
- Victoria Perry, Manager, Research and Information, Youth Justice NSW
- Marilyn Chilvers, ED Strategy, NSW Department of Customer Service
- Kate Alexander, Executive Director, Office of the Senior Practitioner
- Joe Sumegi – Director, Communications
- Ian Brown – Senior Program Officer. Ngaramanala, Aboriginal Knowledge Program
- Brendan Thomas – Deputy Secretary, Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes
- A/Prof Elisabeth Murphy, Senior Clinical Advisor, Child and Family Health, NSW Health
- Trisha Ladogna, Director, Behaviour and Student Participation, Department of Education.
- Richard Weston, Aboriginal Deputy Children's Guardian, Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG)
- Jen Roberts, Practice Specialist, Accreditation and Monitoring Team, Office of the Children's Guardian
- Jacqui Reed, Chief Executive Officer, CREATE
- Steve Kinmond, Chief Executive Officer, Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA)
- John Leha, CEO, NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation (AbSec).
- TBC, Head of Advocacy, Engagement, Adopt Change and My Forever Family NSW

Appendix 4: Policy questions raised at consultations mapped to POCLS completed analyses

PSP objective	Policy topic	Policy questions raised in consultations	Analyses completed on the policy topic (see Appendix 6 & 7 for details)
Increased exits out of care via permanency	Placement stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What does a good placement look like? Number, type, duration of placements? We need more 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 exit, characteristics of children who move a lot? Change in caseworkers? Sibling placement arrangements? 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? Further exploration of the POCLS data to look at district differences would reveal where efforts to improve practice will likely pay off the most. Examine geographic differences in casework, placement breakdowns and carer satisfaction. Does variation in the way districts support foster parents explain variation in the placement stability by District. Impacts on Aboriginal children of placement with kin, non-kin Aboriginal, kin (non-Aboriginal) and non-Aboriginal carers on placement stability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wulczyn, F. et al. (2017). Placement Changes Among Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report Number 8. Wells, R. et al. (2020). Influence of Placement Stability on Developmental Outcomes for Children in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report Number 21. Wade, C. (2022) Mapping the trajectories for children and young people in OOH in NSW.
Increased exits out of care via permanency	Child characteristics on entry to OOH and permanency pathways (adopted, on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What differences exist amongst children entering OOH at different ages and length of exposure to ROSH? What role does CP history play in terms of developmental outcomes? What role does offending history play? Any data on CP interventions prior to entering OOH and how we could use that information to influence early intervention/targeted early intervention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wulczyn, F. et al. (2019). Do Infants and Toddlers Leave Long-term Out-of-Home Care? Research Report Number 13. Wells, R. et al. (2020). Temperament of Children in Out-

	guardianship orders or restored)	<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 get caseworkers to consider guardianships and adoptions rather than long term care? How do we support successful restorations? • Why is there a decrease in entries to care? • What are the experiences of those on guardianship orders? What are the positive features of guardianship? • Are we giving the right levels of support to children regardless of where they are placed? Should they get a package of care wherever they end up? • Are children better off under guardianship orders? Need to look at outcomes for the child post-guardianship. With adoption, there is a sense of permanency, is it similar with guardianship? How is the relationship with the guardians/adoptive parents maintained after the child turns 18 with guardianship vs adoption orders? • What are the factors which go in a parenting capacity assessment to assess restoration? Need to look at what we know about successful restorations? Do any service system factors influence restoration outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DCJ case management versus a Funded Service Provider (FSP) case management versus Aboriginal children case-managed by ACCOs ○ Has the implementation of the PSP funding model influenced any change? ○ Being placed with a kinship carer versus foster carer ○ Evidence of family finding or family group conferences ○ Time from placement in care to final court order ○ Any particular aspects of case management that have been useful with families over multiple situations – what should we be doing more or less of that actually makes a difference in achieving restoration. 	<p>of-Home Care Stability, Differences and Relationship with Socio-Emotional Wellbeing. Report Number 23.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • O'Donnell, M. et al. (2022) Infants entering care: developmental needs and care trajectories. • Durant, H. et al (2021). How Children who Exit Out-of-Home Care to Guardianship Orders are Faring - An Overview of the POCLS Cohort. (Report Number #24-1). • Asif, N. et al. (2021-22). How Children who Exit Out-of-Home Care to Guardianship Orders are Faring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Socio-Emotional Wellbeing - Cognitive Learning Ability - Relational Permanence. (Report Number #24-2-4). • O'Donnell, M. et al. (2022) Infants entering care: developmental needs and care trajectories.
Increased exits out of	Factors that influence outcomes for children in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the characteristics of those children that improve over time and those that have outcomes that worsen? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hopkins, J. et al. (2019). The Experiences and Wellbeing of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care: first five years

care via permanency	OOHC over time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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)? Variance for Aboriginal children coming from complex trauma backgrounds including stolen gens households or households with other DCJ involvement generationally. Rather than characterize early experiences as traumatic vs not, the better question is to associate early child experiences and their effect on developmental outcomes with a particular emphasis on human capital formation. From this one could identify experiences that are adverse. Self-harm and suicidal behaviours in children and adolescents with childhood trauma history What sort of interventions have resulted in improved outcomes? 	(Wave 1-3). Research Report Number 17.
Better quality support in care	Differences and similarities between DCJ and NGO managed cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the differences between NGO and DCJ managed cases in terms of children's experiences, casework and outcomes; and carer support? What are the differences in terms of casework and carer 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 DCJ and NGOs? What data is available to help navigate the fact that most foster care is sector managed while relative/kin care is DCJ managed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breen, C. et al. (underway). A. Case management by DCJ vs NGOs and child outcomes.
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? Carers input into decision making, degree to which views are respected, what gets carers through the hard times, how do we increase carer satisfaction, what supports would they like, what type of carer support helps reduce placement breakdown? Creative thinking around support - more responsive and flexible. What are the household characteristics of carers, how many are culturally matched, how many care for siblings, number of dependents living in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mitchell, R. et al. (2022) Exploring the impact of child and placement characteristics, carer resources and perceptions, and life stressors on caregiving.

		<p>households, socio-economic characteristics, household stress, housing tenure, housing/overcrowding and geographic location.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do the high percentage of carers not working mean for kids in their care? • Exploring changing supports or additional supports that are needed for carers – especially those from low socio-economic status/ Aboriginal carers. What are the changing supports in an integrated or holistic model that enables greater stability of a placement over time? • How do we best support relative/kinship carers especially Aboriginal relative/kin carers? • 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? 	
Better quality support in care	Characteristics & experiences of children with disabilities	<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? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hopkins, J. et al. (2020). The Experience and Service Needs of Children in Out-of-Home Care Aged 5-12 years with Cognitive and/or Behaviour Problems. Research Report Number 22. • Tani, M. et al. (2022) Children with disability in OOHC – wellbeing and outcomes.
Better quality	Characteristics and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do children connect to culture? • Are CALD children with culturally matched carers? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Settlement Services International, NSW Department of Communities and Justice, Delfabbro, P. and Cashmore, J. (2021) Wellbeing

support in care	experiences of CALD children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. There is an opportunity to test this hypothesis through analysis of the relevant data produced by POCLS. 	and Cultural Maintenance of Culturally Diverse Children in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report Number 20.
Better quality support in care	Characteristics and experiences of Aboriginal children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiences of Aboriginal children -are there any age related 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? Work with Aboriginal agencies to understand what is currently happening in practice when Aboriginal children change placements? How are cultural connections for Aboriginal young people maintained and how does that impact on outcomes over time? 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 sort of interventions have resulted in improved outcomes? What evidence is there about the impact of Aboriginal organisations in improving outcomes for Aboriginal children in OOHC, including prior to removal and for those who are restored to their families. What does community-partnered analysis of disaggregated data show in terms of outcomes for children in OOHC, their families and community Examine geographic poverty rates amongst Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal families and effect on decision making and permanency pathways How do we progress to permanency and exit Aboriginal children in the OOHC system? How do we change the system before they get to the front door? <p>Carers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can we analyse the data for Aboriginal children by Aboriginal carers versus non Aboriginal carers? For example around placement stability? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delfabbro, P. (2018). Aboriginal Children in Out-of-Home Care in NSW: Developmental Outcomes and Cultural and Family Connections. Research Report Number 11. Newton, BJ. et al. (2022) Understanding the influential factors and outcomes of restoration from OOHC for Aboriginal children.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do Aboriginal carers access health services less than non-Aboriginal carers (due to fear of mainstream services?) • What are the current demographics on carers? Do we have enough Aboriginal carers and elders out there? They can be difficult to recruit into the system <p>Placement type</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kinship placements –tend to be contact with maternal or paternal side? Are there district differences? • What are the characteristics of the children in Aboriginal relative/kinship placements? • What are the implications of guardianship orders for Aboriginal communities? • We need a closer look 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). • What is considered good practice in finding placements for Aboriginal children? • The evidence so far says that Aboriginal children do better in relative/kinship care. Of those who exited into other arrangements, what do wellbeing, safety and other outcomes look like? What do carers and community need to make it safe, supported and viable alternative for these children so we don't only have an Aboriginal care system? • Why do the Aboriginal community feel guardianship is inappropriate for Aboriginal children? <p>Placement stability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are Aboriginal children in foster care placements more likely to experience placement instability than Aboriginal children in relative/kin care placements? (Policy question: Does Aboriginal relative/kin care provide better stability for the children than foster care?) • Do Aboriginal children experience higher rates of placement instability when they placed off Country/outside of their own community versus remaining within their own community? (Policy question: Do Aboriginal children in OOHHC who maintain connection to their community and have less disruption to their normal routine (school, sports, friends) while in care lessen the risk of placement breakdown?). 	
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Better quality support in care	Children experiences of out-of-home care and permanency options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first 2000 days – what are children’s experiences of activities with the caregiver household, early childhood education, access to services and support? • What are the positive stories? Information about formal and informal support networks and their level of wellbeing • What do we know about their peer relationships? • What do we know about placement with siblings? • What makes children happy? Do children feel safe? • Would be interesting to understand client experience for what constitutes a good care placement. • Linkages to positive factors to reduce substance use and reduce sleep complaints • Participation in decision making. • Control over their lives, access to information, and relationship with caseworkers, support networks • 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? • How can we make contact with caseworkers more meaningful for children? How do we ensure purposeful caseworker contact? Do we need more caseworker training on their role in talking to children and the importance of the voice of the child? • How important is caseworker communication to children in care? Children’s voices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hopkins, J. et al. (2019). Children in Out-of-Home Care with Young Parents. Research Report Number 19. • Lingam. R. et al. (2022) Pathways of Change: optimising the mental health of children in OOHC. • Laslett, A. et al. (2022) Substance use by young people, their parents and carers: outcomes for young people in and beyond OOHC.
Better quality	Family time/ 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? • How is family contact including siblings maintained when children are adopted or guardianship? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cashmore, J. et al. (2017). Children’s Family Relationships in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report Number 9.

support in care		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. Analysis on sibling relationships Support for kinship carers and carers of Aboriginal children to manage contact Challenges for carers managing contact - foster vs grandparents Influence of contact in relation to identity and placement stability, frequency, method of contact. Difference in supervised and non-supervised contact and how 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? Do we need to consider if contact orders are needed in guardianship? What is the role of the caseworker in managing contact? What are the roles of the carer in birth parent in managing contact? Should supervision be flexible and reviewed to reflect changes in children and families over time and support case plan goals? Focus of contact and needs of the child must be foremost. Is further caseworker training required? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cashmore, J. et al. (2020). Family Contact and Relationships (Waves 1-3). Report Number 15. Suomi, A. et al. (2022) Patterns of family contact for children in OOHC: how can we better support birth family relationships for children over time?
Better quality support in care	Education	<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? Support 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? 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? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zhou, A., et al. (2019). Childcare and School Teachers Survey Statistical Report. Research Report Number 4. Townsend, M. et al. (2020) Educational Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report Number 14. Maclean, M. et al. (2022) Investigation of care experiences

			and support associated with positive educational outcomes: evidence for improving educational trajectories for children in OOHC.
Better quality support in care	Young people who offend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the crossover between OOHC and Juvenile justice? • Linkages to substance abuse • Only 2% of the OOHC population offend. In a previous data matching exercise between DCJ 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? • A qualitative project to explore more about the circumstances of children in residential care and those in contact with the justice system (over policing, were they engaging in crime before but it was not being reported, placement order (do children in residential care have PRM orders with carers then moved to residential care after offending, reasons for their movement into residential care, types of offences that they were engaging in, geography)? • FIC rec 70 - DCJ should conduct or commission further research regarding the involvement of Aboriginal children and young people in OOHC in the juvenile justice system to determine, among other things, the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ number of Aboriginal children in OOHC involved in the juvenile justice system ○ nature of offences committed by Aboriginal children in out-of-home care (and whether these are influenced by their OOHC status) ○ nature and level of assistance provided by FACS to Aboriginal children involved in the juvenile justice system; and ○ outcomes for Aboriginal children involved in the juvenile justice system (and whether these are influenced by OOHC status) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zhou, A. et al. (2020) Offending Among Young Persons who Came into Contact with the Child Welfare System. Report Number 18. • Zhou, A. et al. (2020). Young People who Offend Before Turning 16 Years Old. Research Report Number 23. • McFarlane, K. et al. (2022) Offending youth, their families and pathways of care.
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? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hopkins, J. et al. (2019). Caseworker Survey Statistical Report. Research Report Number 3.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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? • 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? • How do caseworkers understand their role? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Katz, I. et al. (2020). Caseworker's Communication with Children in Out-of-Home Care and their Caregivers. Research Report Number 12.
Better quality support in care	Leaving Care and after care	<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? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burke, S. et al. (2019). Leaving Care Cohort (15-17 years) Statistical Report: Experiences of Young People who Entered Out-of-Home Care Aged 9-14 years. Research Report Number 5.
Better quality support in care	Services and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to informal support and mainstream services by placement type, what services arrangement provide better outcomes, what makes a difference, what additional supports are needed by children and carers, needs of carers in lower socio-economic status and Aboriginal carers. • Barriers, consistency in service providers, case plans address needs, access to information; • Do we have a system that caters for large families that come into care? How do we do this differently? Sibling contact, support for parents • What can we do to better support children coming in at older ages? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eastman, C. et al. (2018). Service Needs and Uptake Amongst Children in Out-of-Home Care and their Carers. Research Report Number 10.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 & post removal? • Standards governing the quality of accommodation and support services • 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? • Could we look at short sharp analyses about current care models – including commentary on model fidelity? 	
Better quality support in care	Relative/kinship care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further POCLS analysis to determine nature of orders for kinship placements • Further POCLS analysis to see if there a selection bias for children going into kinship care; and how proportion of Aboriginal carers influence results. • 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? • Differences between relative/kinship care vs foster care - why is socio-emotional wellbeing better in rel/kinship care? • We have seen information that children with rel/kin are doing better – but they are doing better with certain levels of support? How much support do they need and under what circumstance? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delfabbro, P. (2017). Relative/kinship and Foster Care: A Comparison of Carer and Child Characteristics. Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report Number 7. • Delfabbro, P. (2020) Developmental Outcomes of Children in Relative/Kinship Care and Foster Care. Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Report Number 16.

Reduction in entries and re-entries into care	Trajectories of children who entered care for the first time on interim orders only i.e., never received final OOHC orders	<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? • Variance between the outcomes for non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal children in the two cohort groups. • What service factors are associated with successful restoration? 	
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Appendix 5: POCLS evidence to action notes

Number	Policy and practice area	Description
1	Birth family contact for children and young people in out-of-home care What does the Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study tell us? - December 2016 https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=388334	This publication outlines key findings relating to carer parenting practices and the relationships between children, carers and their carer families. Links to current best practice and resources are included.
2	The early learning and childcare experiences of children in out-of-home care What does the Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study tell us? - December 2016 https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=388337	This publication outlines key findings relating to the childcare and early learning experiences of young children in the POCLS. Links to current best practice and resources are included.
3	The importance of casework when establishing and supporting out-of-home care placements What does the Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study tell us? - December 2016 https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=388335	This publication outlines key findings relating to the provision of casework support to children and young people in the POCLS. Links to current best practice and resources are included.
4	Carer parenting practices and children's relationships with their carer's family What does the Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study tell us? - December 2016 https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=388336	This publication outlines key findings relating to carer parenting practices and the relationships between children, carers and their carer families, for children and young people in the POCLS. Links to current best practice and resources are included.
5	Educational outcomes: Children and young people in out-of-home care https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=813820	This evidence to action note is based on a report by Townsend, Robinson, Lewis, Wright, Cashmore and Grenyer (2019). This note describes how this new evidence can inform OOHC policy and practice to improve educational outcomes.
6	Aboriginal cultural and family connections: Children and young people in out-of-home care	This evidence to action note is based on a report by Delfabbro (2018) examining the experiences of Aboriginal children in OOHC in the POCLS.

	https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=813819	The purpose of this evidence to action note is to examine the maintenance of cultural and family connections for Aboriginal children in OOHC.
7	Placement stability: Children and young people in out-of-home care https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=813818	This evidence to action note is based on the Wulczyn and Chen (2017) paper and considers how frequently the POCLS sample change placements and the extent to which characteristics of the child and carer are associated with the number of timing of placement changes.
8	Developmental outcomes: Children and young people in out-of-home care https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=821620	This evidence to action note is intended to give an overview of child development for the POCLS sample at Wave 4. It is a cross sectional analysis over several key time points. Characteristics such as age at entry to care, placement type and cultural background
9	Developmental outcomes: Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=821619	The findings in this evidence to action note are based on a report by Delfabbro (2018) examining the experiences of Aboriginal children in OOHC in the POCLS. The purpose of this note is to examine the OOHC history for children entering care, school engagements and developmental outcomes for Aboriginal children in the study.
10	Casework and support: children in out-of-home care and their caregivers See https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/pathways-of-care/pocls-publication/evidence-to-action-notes	This evidence to action note outlines key findings in a number of reports relating kinship and foster care placements based on the report by Delfabbro (2017;2020); support to prevent unplanned placement changes by Wulczyn and Chen (2017), services, supports and caseworker communication with children and carers based on reports by Katz and Eastman (2018; 2020).
11	Family contact and felt security: Children and young people in out-of-home care See https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/pathways-of-care/pocls-publication/evidence-to-action-notes	This evidence to action note outlines key findings relating to family contact and felt security based on the report by Cashmore (2020).

Appendix 6: POCLS analysis projects commissioned in 2020

Topics funded by DCJ in 2019-20	Lead researcher Status of project as at October 2022	Description
Pathways of Change: optimising the mental health of children in OOHC	Professor Raghu Lingam. School of Women's and Children's Health Faculty of Medicine, University of NSW Submitted to peer-reviewed journal	The aim is to identify key modifiable factors at the level of the child, carer and the OOHC service system that influence the socio-emotional development of children and young people in the OOHC system. We will first examine how children in care develop regarding their socio-emotional outcomes over time. We will then examine how the children's socio-emotional development is shaped by a wide range of factors including children's protection background, experience of OOHC (e.g., placement), caregiver's factors, and case planning. The goal is to understand what elements of care from child, caregiver, and system perspectives give rise to socio-emotional resilience over time, and to what extent that OOHC services are people-centred (children and caregivers) and its importance for children's socio-emotional outcomes.
Understanding the influential factors and outcomes of restoration from OOHC for Aboriginal children	Dr BJ Newton. Social Policy Research Centre, University of NSW Submitted to peer-reviewed journal	The restoration of Aboriginal children in care is an extremely under-researched area that requires urgent attention. The overall aim of this research is to develop an understanding of the factors that influence the restoration of Aboriginal children to their birth families, and their outcomes following restoration. Using the POCLS datasets, this research will track the interventions, pathways, experiences, and outcomes for Aboriginal children and their families from the time they enter OOHC. The research will pay particular attention to the child's relationships with their parents, their health and wellbeing, connection to culture, and the role of their caseworker, to identify the impact of these factors prior to and following restoration (for those who have been restored). The research will explore the journey of all Aboriginal children from the time of removal and compare the experiences and outcomes of those who have been restored, with those who have not been restored. This will provide significant evidence into how and why restoration is achieved. The specific question is 'What are the factors that influence restoration from OOHC for Aboriginal children, and what are the outcomes for these children'?

Investigation of care experiences and support associated with positive educational outcomes: evidence for improving educational trajectories for children in OOHC	Dr Miriam Maclean. Australian Centre for Child Protection. University of South Australia Submitted to peer-reviewed journal	It is well established that children and young people in OOHC are at risk for low achievement at school. The focus of the study is which in-care factors, experiences and supports are associated with positive educational trajectories in children who enter OOHC. Study aims: 1) Using longitudinal NAPLAN data across Year 3 - 9, examine the educational trajectories (e.g. improving, declining, stable low or stable high achievement), for the children overall and for key subgroups such as Aboriginal children, different age groups, and those in different care circumstances. 2) Examine which pre-care factors such as demographics and early developmental needs are associated with later educational outcomes. 3) Identify in-care factors, experiences and supports that are associated with positive educational trajectories, taking into account pre-care factors. Influential factors may vary across the subgroups.
Exploring the impact of child and placement characteristics, carer resources and perceptions, and life stressors on caregiving	Associate Professor Rebecca Mitchell. Australian Institute of Health Innovation Published in Child Abuse and Neglect 127 (2022) 105586	This study aims to examine the impact of child and placement characteristics, carer resources and perceptions, and life stressors on caregiving. Available evidence indicates that both carer's personal characteristics and their access to external resources play a role in placement stability and quality of care. Strain caused by stressful life events, financial hardship, or poor health can impact on the ability of carers to parent well, and caregiver mental health is known to have a significant impact on children's long-term outcomes. This research will examine carer and household characteristics and factors such as the experience of stressful life events and social support from family and friends to determine how these impact on caregiving. The role of service factors, such as DCJ or non-government organisation management, will also be considered. Specific research questions being addressed are 1) what impacts on a carer's ability to provide care? 2) how do child and placement characteristics, carer resources and perceptions, and life stressors impact on caregiving?
Patterns of family contact for children in OOHC: how can we better support birth family relationships for children over time?	Dr Aino Suomi. Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University Submitted to peer-reviewed journal	This study will explore patterns of birth-family contact over time for children who enter OOHC in NSW. The study will examine patterns in the frequency, supervision and type of contact, as they occur in relation to specific subgroups of children. The study will also examine factors that may predict significant change in contact patterns (for instance a drop off or increase in contact frequency). The project includes a data linkage to the NSW OOHC administrative data and it will improve

		understanding of differences of contact needs and patterns between different subgroups of children, where families need additional support to make contact work, or 'best as possible', and how contact needs evolve over time when children remain in care long-term.
Substance use by young people, their parents and carers: outcomes for young people in and beyond OOHC	Dr Anne-Marie Laslett. La Trobe University Submitted to peer-reviewed journal	This study's objective is to examine whether and how strongly a history of substantiated parental alcohol or other drug use (yes/no) is associated with health, cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes for children (9 months-17 years of age) who experience OOHC. The key hypothesis is that for children and young people in (and traversing) OOHC, substance use history of their birth parent family is associated with poor developmental (cognitive, physical, social-emotional) outcomes in comparison to children and young people from a birth family where substance misuse was not reported.
Mapping the trajectories for children and young people in OOHC in NSW	Dr Catherine Wade. Parenting Research Centre Submitted to peer-reviewed journal	A detailed examination of data available through POCLS will be undertaken to explore influences on children's trajectories to a range of different placement and permanency outcomes, including restoration, kinship and non-kinship care, guardianship and Intensive Therapeutic Care. This study is aimed at furthering understanding about the pathways via which key child and carer factors impact on decisions about OOHC and associated outcomes for children and young people. Findings are likely to contribute significantly to the evidence base to support permanency/placement decisions for core target groups who are sometimes over-represented in the OOHC system. Specific questions are: 1) how do birth parent, carer, child, social and environmental characteristics predict different child trajectories over multiple waves of data collection? 2) how do these characteristics interact with child characteristics to influence outcomes (such as restoration, adoption, ROSH, criminal justice etc.)?
Infants entering care: developmental needs and care trajectories	Dr Melissa O'Donnell. Australian Centre for Child Protection. University of South Australia Submitted to peer-reviewed journal	While infants constitute an increasing proportion of children in OOHC, there is a dearth of research which shows for which children this is beneficial. This means that decision-making is not as evidence-based as would be expected, given the high-level of intervention occurring. This project will increase our knowledge about the trajectories of infants entering the care system and how we might better intervene to improve outcomes. In the POCLS study there were 881 eligible infants under 1 year

		of age were in care in Wave 1. These infants are the focus of our analyses to answer the specific questions: 1) what are the developmental needs of infants entering care and how can the system be optimised to meet them? 2) what are the care trajectories for infants and what factors predict them?
Offending youth, their families and pathways of care	Dr Kath McFarlane. Kath McFarlane Consulting Pty Ltd Submitted to peer-reviewed journal	The aim is to identify key modifiable factors at the level of the child, carer and the OOHC service system that influence the socio-emotional development of children and young people in the OOHC system. We will first examine how children in care develop regarding their socio-emotional outcomes over time. We will then examine how the children's socio-emotional development is shaped by a wide range of factors including children's protection background, experience of OOHC (e.g., placement), caregiver's factors, and case planning. We are keen to understand what elements of care from child, caregiver, and system perspectives give rise to socio-emotional resilience over time, and to what extent that OOHC services are people-centred (children and caregivers) and its importance for children's socio-emotional outcomes. Children's socio-emotional development is crucial for their general wellbeing as they enter into adulthood. Our findings will inform the development of the OOHC service to improve children's social-emotional experience in OOHC, and centrally to improve their long-term wellbeing in terms of education, community engagement, and occupational prospects.
Children with disability in OOHC – wellbeing and outcomes	Professor Massimiliano Tani. School of Business, University of NSW Canberra Submitted to peer-reviewed journal	Children with disability are a disparate group, including those with physical, sensory or cognitive impairments and children with developmental issues such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and various congenital syndromes. The overall aim of the project is to identify the factors which promote the wellbeing of children with disability in OOHC and factors which hinder their trajectories in the OOHC system. We will use the POCLS panel data to construct and test complex behavioural hypotheses and individual outcomes related to children with disabilities in the cohort. In addition to using regression analysis to estimate the predictors of the outcomes at the centre of this analysis, we will apply decomposition techniques to gain further insights about which variables contribute most and least to the differences recorded for the child groups under study (e.g. children with disability vs children without disabilities).

Appendix 7: POCLS research reports published on the POCLS webpage

Number	Approved Publication	Description
1	<p>Australian Institute of Family Studies, Chapin Hall Centre for Children University of Chicago and NSW Department of Family and Community Services. (2015). Wave 1 Baseline Statistical Report: Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study. Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care in NSW</p> <p>https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=335866</p>	<p>The first public release of data from the study about children and young people on entry to OOHC from which their wellbeing, and factors that influence their wellbeing, can be examined over time. The report presents an overview of the study design and key findings over a broad range of areas from the Wave 1 data collection. Given the large size of the POCLS database, the report cannot present all of the data items collected. This report provides a baseline picture of the children's wellbeing across major areas of life, service provision and support, children's contact with their birth family and the characteristics of the current caregiving household.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 1: Executive summary, p.19-26. • Chapter 2: Introduction. Marina Paxman, Lucy Tully, Sharon Burke, Johanna Watson and Albert Zhou, p.27-52. • Chapter 3: Eligibility for and participation in the study. Fred Wulczyn, Xiaomeng Zhou and Lijun Chen, p.53-60. • Chapter 4: Establishing children's placements. John De Maio and Daryl Higgins, p.61-80. • Chapter 5: Wellbeing of children and young people. Diana Smart, p.81-124. • Chapter 6: Children's childcare and educational experiences. Diana Smart, p.125-150. • Chapter 7: Caregiver parenting practices and children's relationships. John De Maio and Diana Smart, p.151-174. • Chapter 8: Service provision and support. Julie Lahausse and Michelle Silbert, p.175-199. • Chapter 9: Characteristics of the caregiver, household and neighbourhood. Julie Lahausse, p.200-219.

2	<p>Paxman, M. and Wells, R. Children's Voices Statistical Report: Perspective of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care Aged 7-17 years over an 8 year period. Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report Number 2. NSW Department of Communities and Justice.</p> <p>Underway</p>	<p>This statistical report provides a summary of the data collected for the POCLS from children and young people aged 7-17 years on topics such as: school, work and friends; where they are living; wellbeing, feelings and lifestyle (asked of older kids); casework and support; adoption; and leaving care. The purpose of this report is to provide a useful reference point for policy officers, frontline workers and researchers.</p>
3	<p>Hopkins, J., Paxman, M., Zhou, A., Watson, J., Burke, S. and Butler, M. (2019). Caseworker Survey Statistical Report. Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report Number 3. Sydney. NSW Department of Family and Community Services.</p> <p>https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=677178</p>	<p>This statistical report provides a summary of the data collected in the Caseworker Survey conducted as part of the POCLS. The purpose of this report is to provide a useful reference point for policy officers, frontline workers and researchers.</p>
4	<p>Zhou, A., Durant, H., Paxman, M., Burke, S. and Butler, M. (2019). Childcare and School Teachers Survey Statistical Report. Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report Number 4. Sydney. NSW Department of Family and Community Services.</p> <p>https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=677180</p>	<p>This statistical report provides a summary of the data collected in the Teacher Survey conducted as part of the POCLS. The purpose of this report is to provide a useful reference point for policy officers, frontline workers, teachers and researchers.</p>
5	<p>Burke, S., Hopkins, J., Paxman, M., Zhou, A., Butler, M. (2019). Leaving Care Cohort (15-17 years) Statistical Report: Experiences of Young People who Entered Out-of-Home Care Aged 9-14 years. Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report Number 5. Sydney. NSW Department of Family and Community Services</p> <p>https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=677179</p>	<p>This statistical report provides a summary of the data collected on leaving care in the child, carer and caseworker surveys conducted as part of the POCLS. The purpose of this report is to provide a useful reference point for policy officers, frontline workers and researchers.</p>
6	<p>Walsh, P., McHugh, M., Blunden, H. and Katz, I. (2018). Literature Review: Factors Influencing the Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study:</p>	<p>This review of the literature on the factors that influence the outcomes for children in OOHC has identified a range of factors that have been demonstrated empirically to affect outcomes, as well as factors that</p>

	<p>Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report Number 6. Sydney. NSW Department of Family and Community Services.</p> <p>https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=656569</p>	<p>research indicates have little effect on outcomes. Overall, the research evidence indicates that the quality of care received by children is the strongest predictor of outcomes over time, given the level of difficulties they have on entry into OOHC. Research also shows that children's trajectories through the care system are determined by interactions between the different risk and protective factors over the course of their placement. It is these interactions, rather than the factors themselves, which are likely to have the greatest impact on children's wellbeing over time. The research evidence is accumulating rapidly and it is likely that new research including the POCLS and studies using data linkage will fill many of the gaps in the evidence base, particularly in the Australian context.</p>
7	<p>Delfabbro, P. (2017). Relative/kinship and Foster Care: A Comparison of Carer and Child Characteristics. Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report Number 7. Sydney. NSW Department of Family and Community Services.</p> <p>https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=591664</p>	<p>This research report provides analysis of the differences between relative/kinship care and foster care. Analyses involve comparisons of different types of relative/kinship care such as the difference between grandparent and other relative carers as well as between grandparents who are, or are not, raising their own children.</p>
8	<p>Wulczyn, F. and Chen, L. (2017). Placement Changes Among Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report Number 8. Sydney. NSW Department of Family and Community Services</p> <p>https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=591669</p>	<p>This paper examines 1) what fraction of the children belonging to the interview cohort changed placement prior to the Wave 1 interview date; 2) how frequently did children change placement following the Wave 1 interview; and, 3) how soon after the Wave 1 interview did the first placement change take place? The paper also considers the extent to which characteristics of the child and the foster carer are associated with the number and timing of placement changes.</p>
9	<p>Cashmore, J. and Taylor, A. (2017). Children's Family Relationships in Out-of-Home Care. Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report Number 9. Sydney. NSW Department of Family and Community Services.</p> <p>https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=591670</p>	<p>This report examines children's relationships with the people they are living with and with the members of their birth family, from the perspective of the children themselves and their carers in the first wave of data collection in the POCLS. The report includes the amount of contact children have with members of their birth family, and in particular their mother, father, and siblings, and how their carers assess the value and issues associated with contact.</p>

10	<p>Eastman, C., Katz, I. and McHugh, M. (2018). Service Needs and Uptake Amongst Children in Out-of-Home Care and their Carers. Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report Number 10. Sydney. NSW Department of Family and Community Services.</p> <p>https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=656550</p>	<p>This report provides an analysis of two waves of the POCLS. The analysis focuses on the need for and access to services for children, focusing on specialist services such as paediatricians, as well as universal services such as dentists and general practitioners. The report also examines the formal and informal supports for carers. The report includes a review of the Australian and international literature on service engagement for children in OOHC.</p>
11	<p>Delfabbro, P. (2018). Aboriginal Children in Out-of-Home Care in NSW: Developmental Outcomes and Cultural and Family Connections. Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report Number 11. Sydney. NSW Department of Family and Community Services.</p> <p>https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=656548</p>	<p>The report includes a review of the Australian and international literature on Aboriginal children in OOHC. The aim of this report was to examine the outcomes for Aboriginal children placed into OOHC in the POCLS. The study includes comparative analysis with non-Aboriginal children as a reference for stakeholders to provide insights into whether the OOHC system is providing an equivalent standard of care and outcomes for all children.</p>
12	<p>Katz I and Eastman C. Caseworker's Communication with Children in Out-of-Home Care and their Caregivers. Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report Number 12. Sydney. NSW Department of Communities and Justice.</p> <p>https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=808080</p>	<p>This report examines the factors that influence communication practices between caseworkers and young people as reported by young people and explores whether different factors influence high versus low levels of communication. It explores the influences that communication practices have on children's socio-emotional wellbeing over a 5-7 year period.</p>
13	<p>Wulczyn, F. and Chen, L. (2019). Do Infants and Toddlers Leave Long-term Out-of-Home Care? Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report Number 13. Sydney. NSW Department of Family and Community Services.</p> <p>https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=677175</p>	<p>This paper examines the infants and toddlers in the POCLS sample who exited OOHC because they either went home to live with their parents (i.e. restoration), were placed with guardians, or because they were adopted.</p>
14	<p>Townsend, M., Robinson, L., Lewis, K., Wright, I., Cashmore, J. and Grenyer, B. Educational Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Research</p>	<p>This report uses POCLS interview, DCJ administrative data and linked education outcome data. It examines the cognitive/learning abilities of the children and young people entering OOHC compared with other children in the community and reports educational outcomes for children over a 5-7</p>

	Report Number 14. Sydney. NSW Department of Communities and Justice. https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=808081	year period. The report explores how placement characteristics influence educational outcomes and examines how child, carer, community and school characteristics affect educational pathways.
15	Cashmore, J. and Taylor A (2020). Family Contact and Relationships (Waves 1-3). Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Report Number 15. Sydney. NSW Department of Communities and Justice. https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=823745	This analysis examines the relationships that children in stable OOHC placements have with the people they are living with and with the members of their birth family since they entered OOHC 5-7 years earlier. The analysis is from the perspective of the children themselves and their carers. It examines the change in the quantity and quality of contact children have with their family members over time, how placement characteristics influence the amount and type of contact and congruence of the carers' and children's reports about carers' emotional responsiveness.
16	Delfabbro, P. (2020) Developmental Outcomes of Children in Relative/Kinship Care and Foster Care. Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Report Number 16. Sydney. NSW Department of Communities and Justice. https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=808082	This report uses longitudinal analysis to examine how different types of care (relative/ kinship vs. foster care) is related to developmental outcomes for children across three waves of data (approximately five years). This report presents initial analysis to provide an overall summary of outcomes and identifies areas where additional analyses should be conducted to examine issues in more detail.
17	Hopkins, J., Watson, J., Paxman, M., Zhou, A., Butler, M. and Burke, S. (2019). The Experiences and Wellbeing of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care: first five years (Wave 1-3). Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report Number 17. Sydney. NSW Department of Family and Community Services. https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=726191	This report uses the data from the first three waves of the study and describes children's child protection backgrounds, permanency trajectories including number of placements, duration of placements, exits to restoration, guardianship and adoption and re-entries to OOHC. The report describes how the children are developing overtime in regards to physical health, socio-emotional wellbeing and cognitive learning ability.
18	Zhou, A., Hopkins, J., Butler, M., Burgess, M., Paxman, M., Burke, S. and Watson, J. (2020) Offending Among Young Persons who Came into Contact with the Child Welfare System. Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-	This analysis investigated the likelihood and timing of first offence among young in OOHC and is based on the POCLS record linkage data. Through modelling of event occurrence, factors such as child protection background, age, gender, cultural background and length of time in OOHC are examined in relation to risk of offending. Findings highlight the importance of placement setting and duration of OOHC in preventing

	<p>of-Home Care. Report Number 18. Sydney. NSW Department of Communities and Justice.</p> <p>https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=812791</p>	<p>and/or reducing risk of offending among young people in care. Implications of the findings for policy and social work practice are discussed.</p>
19	<p>Hopkins, J., Butler, M., Shuttleworth, L., Paxman, M. Zhou, A., and Burke, S. (2019). Children in Out-of-Home Care with Young Parents. Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report Number 19. Sydney. NSW Department of Family and Community Services.</p> <p>https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=677176</p>	<p>Children in the POCLS population cohort (n=4,126) were compared by their parent's age at their birth. Comparisons were made between children with parents aged 15-19 years, 20-25 years and 26 years and over at their birth, as well as between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parents.</p>
20	<p>Settlement Services International, NSW Department of Communities and Justice, Delfabbro, P. and Cashmore, J. (2021) Wellbeing and Cultural Maintenance of Culturally Diverse Children in Out-of-Home Care. Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report Number 20. Sydney. NSW Department of Communities and Justice.</p> <p>https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=833450</p>	<p>This report includes a literature review of evidence regarding culturally diverse children in out-of-home. It documents how cultural diversity is measured in POCLS and the characteristics of CALD children in the POCLS and their interaction with the child protection system including child protection issues, OOHC placement type and stability, length of OOHC stay, exits and re-entries. The report provides information on the relationship between cultural matching of placements and cultural maintenance and child socio-emotional wellbeing outcomes. The analysis also examined the relationship between cultural matching of placements, cultural maintenance and child felt security.</p>
21	<p>Wells, R. Asif, N., Breen, C., and Zhou, A. (2020). Influence of Placement Stability on Developmental Outcomes for Children in Out-of-Home Care. Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report Number 21. Sydney. NSW Department of Communities and Justice</p> <p>https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=808083</p>	<p>This report examines how placement stability in out-of-home care and a range of other factors influence children's development. The report focusses on cognitive, physical and socio-emotional development over time. It examines different measures of placement stability and how many placements children have over time.</p>
22	<p>Hopkins, J., Zhou, A., Watson, J., Paxman, M., Butler, M. and Burke, S. (2020). The Experience and Service Needs of Children in Out-of-Home Care Aged 5-12 years with Cognitive and/or Behaviour Problems. Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of</p>	<p>This report focuses on children who are aged 5 to 12 years-old and have a disability impacting their cognition and/or behaviour, or show early indications of having one, who are either living in OOHC, or have contact with the Justice system. The analysis was requested by Their Futures Matter.</p>

	Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report Number 22. Sydney. NSW Department of Communities and Justice. https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=833451	
23	Wells, R. (2020). Temperament of Children in Out-of-Home Care: Stability, Differences and Relationship with Socio-Emotional Wellbeing. Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report Number 23. Sydney. NSW Department of Family and Community Services. https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=823746	This study examines the association between a child's temperament and a child's socio-emotional wellbeing for children in OOHC. The stability of temperament is examined by comparing a child over time on a range of different measures commonly used within the literature. This study can be considered a first step in examining the usefulness of using a child's temperament to identify children who may later develop issues and to tailor interventions to address their needs.
24-1	Durant, H. (2021). How children who exit Out-of-Home Care to Guardianship Orders are Faring: An overview of the POCLS Cohort. Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report 24-2. Sydney. NSW Department of Communities and Justice. https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=821302	The first of 4 reports in this series provides an overview of the children who exited to OOHC to guardianship under legislative reform enacted on 1/10/2014 ('transitioned guardians' cohort). This report provides an overview of access to services, family time, connection to culture and wellbeing.
24	Asif, N. and Zhou, A. (2021). How Children who Exit Out-of-Home Care to Guardianship Orders are Faring: Socio-Emotional Wellbeing. Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report 24-2. Sydney. NSW Department of Communities and Justice. https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=821301	The second of 4 reports in this series examines the socio-emotional wellbeing of children who exited OOHC to guardianship under legislative reform enacted on 1/10/2014 ('transitioned guardians' cohort). This report also examines the factors associated with being transitioned to guardianship orders.
24	Asif, N. (2021). How children who exit out-of-home care to guardianship orders are faring - cognitive learning ability. Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report 24-3. Sydney. NSW Department of Communities and Justice.	The third of 4 reports in this series examines cognitive outcomes of children who exited OOHC to guardianship under legislative reform enacted on 1/10/2014 ('transitioned guardians' cohort). This report also examines how children who exited OOHC on guardianship orders fare on those outcomes compared to children who remained in OOHC.

	See https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/pathways-of-care/pocls-publication/pocls-research-and-statistics-reports	
24	<p>Asif, N. (2021). How children who exit out-of-home care to guardianship orders are faring - relational permanence. Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report 24-4. Sydney. NSW Department of Communities and Justice.</p> <p>See https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/pathways-of-care/pocls-publication/pocls-research-and-statistics-reports</p>	The fourth report in this series examines the wellbeing of children who exited OOHC to guardianship under legislative reform enacted on 1/10/2014 ('transitioned guardians' cohort). The current report focuses on the experiences and perceptions of children that promote relational permanency and how children who exited OOHC on guardianship orders fare on those aspects compared to children who remained in OOHC relative/kinship placement.
25	<p>Breen, C and Zhou, A. Case management by DCJ vs NGOs and child outcomes. Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care. Research Report. Sydney. NSW Department of Communities and Justice.</p> <p>Near final</p>	The study focuses on the short- to medium-term (three to four years) socio-emotional outcomes for children in OOHC. The first part of the report will examine and classify patterns of movement of the POCLS population cohort between being managed by DCJ services and NGOs and secondly, compare profiles of the POCLS population cohort managed by DCJ and NGOs. The second part of this report will utilise the POCLS interview cohort to examine whether there are differences in socio-emotional outcomes over time for children managed by DCJ and NGOs and investigate what accounts for the differences.

This report and table will be updated every two years. Approved publications are uploaded to the POCLS webpage so please visit the webpage for more up to date information <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/pathways-of-care/pocls-publication>

Appendix 8: POCLS Chief Investigator and Co-Investigators

The POCLS Study Working Group membership includes FACSIAR researchers, external academics, data collection experts and data management experts who are responsible for managing and implementing the study.

DCJ FACSIAR POCLS research team:

- Merran Butler (Chief Investigator)
- Marina Paxman (Project Manager)
- Johanna Hopkins (Data Manager)
- Dr Nafisa Asif, Senior Analyst
- Sharon Burke, Senior Analyst
- Dr Proshanta Dey, Senior Analyst
- Jen Lau Yuen, Senior Analyst
- Toulia Kypreos, Analyst.

A team of experts are contracted to provide advice on the study design, data collection, data management and analysis:

- Professor Judy Cashmore University of Sydney
- Professor Ilan Katz, UNSW
- Professor Fred Wulczyn, University of Chicago
- Dr Michelle Townsend, University of Wollongong
- Dr Alan Taylor, Macquarie University (retired)
- Professor Michael Tarren-Sweeney, University of Canterbury, New Zealand
- Professor Amy Conley-Wright, Sydney University
- Associate Professor Dan McAullay, Kurungkurl Katitjin, Edith Cowan University
- Associate Professor Melissa O'Donnell, University of South Australia
- Professor Melissa Green, UNSW
- Professor Judy Cashmore, University of Sydney
- Andy Cubie, Director IPSOS/I-view - independent data collection services
- Manager, Sax Institute - data management services and secure storage of the POCLS data in SURE.

