



Bill Black

A newsletter for participants in the Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study

Deputy Secretary Message

Sincerest thanks to all caregivers during the very challenging times we are experiencing in 2020. We really appreciate the contribution participants make to this important Study. Through this Study we can better understand how to improve the support we provide to you and children.



Simone Walker, Deputy Secretary of Strategy, Policy and Commissioning, NSW Department of Communities and Justice

My job is to lead a team to develop policies and practices to support people like you to keep children safe and allow them to reach their full potential. This Study provides new robust evidence to inform the OOHC sector about the development of children who experience OOHC, and the factors that influence their development. This would not be possible without your precious time and contribution.

Documenting the experiences of children and caregivers in NSW allows us to train and support our caseworkers and caregivers. The Study findings are currently being included in a program to develop new caseworkers skills and knowledge to do their job well. We acknowledge and thank you for your ongoing participation in this important study.

We want to keep in contact with you!

Please let the researchers at the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (Ph: 1800 997 960) or I-view (Ph: 1800 105 088) know if you change your address or phone number. We want to keep in contact with you!

What's on in 2020?

We hope to complete the 5th round of interviews with children, young people and their caregivers by the end of 2020. For those of you still to complete the interviews, they will be almost the same as the interview you did about 2 years ago. By repeating the questions we can track children and young people's pathways growing up.

The Study is collecting a broad range of information as children grow about their development and factors that influence development so policy makers and caseworkers have information based on first-hand accounts to improve the way we work with families. In 2020, with almost 10 years of in-depth data on children's experiences, we have engaged a number of researchers to answer questions about children's outcomes in OOHC.

For those that have already completed the most recent interview, THANK YOU!

We hope everyone who is a part of this Study joins in to make it a world-class Study to improve kid's lives.



How is the study tracking?



Message from I-view

Interviewing people during the COVID-19 pandemic



Andy Cubie Director, I-view

We are proud to be in our 10th year assisting this valuable Study. Our interviewers are thoroughly enjoying meeting everyone again, as well as welcoming new caregivers to the Study. We would like to thank everyone who has taken time to participate in this 5th round of interviews so far – already that's over 550 children and their caregivers.

It's with regret that during the COVID-19 pandemic we won't be able to continue visiting families at their homes, however we would still very much like to speak with anyone by phone who has not yet taken part in the 5th interview.

Over the coming months our interviewers will be making contact to arrange a time to interview caregivers and children 9 years and older by telephone. We hope to have the opportunity to hear from as many of you as possible.

The I-view interviewer team have been collecting experiences and views of children, young people and caregiver's for 10 years!

"It has been an honour to work on this Study"



What does Interview 4 tell us?

Interview	Number of children
Interview 1	1,285
Interview 2	1,200
Interview 3	1,033
Interview 4	962
All Interviews	734
At least 1 Interview	1,507

Participation in the interviews remains high

- Of those that agreed to be contacted, 84% have completed at least one interview.
- Over half completed Interview 4
- 53% of the children who participated in Interview 4 were aged between 6-8 years at the time of the interview
- 40% of the children were Aboriginal, 15% were from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background and 5% identified as both Aboriginal and CALD.

Child development over time



Physical Health

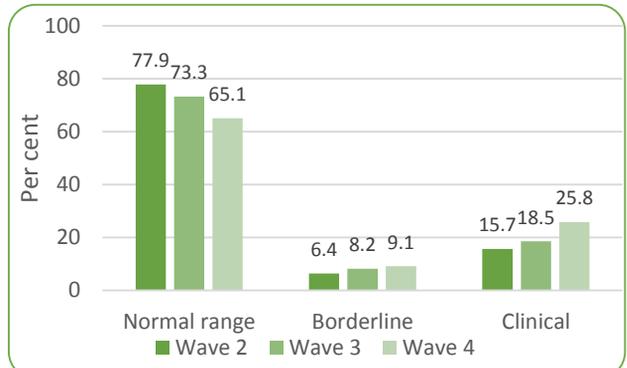
The vast majority (97%) of children were rated by their caregivers as having 'good' to 'excellent' physical health.



Socio-emotional wellbeing



At Interview 4, one quarter of the children scored in the clinical range for total behaviour problems on the Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL). This indicates they may need professional support for behaviour problems. The majority of the children are in the normal range of behaviours at every interview. There has been an increase in the proportion of children that may need support for behaviour problems.



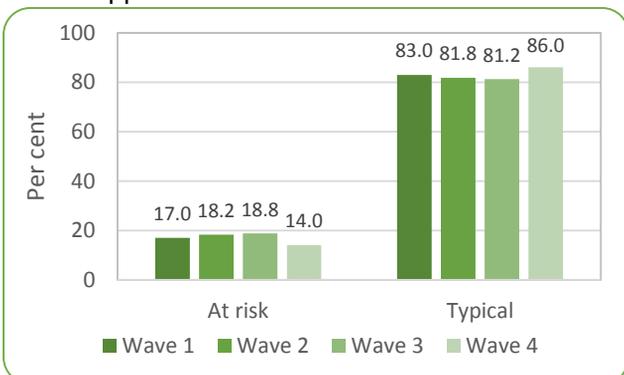
Children who participated in CBCL in Interviews 2 to 4, n=791.

Cognitive development



Verbal ability

The majority of the children were in the normal range of language development at every interview. There has been an decrease in the proportion of children that may need support for verbal skills between Interview 3 and 4. Fourteen per cent are at risk at Interview 4 and need support.



Children who participated the verbal ability measures in all 4 interviews, n = 565

Non-verbal ability



The majority (over 70%) of the children were in the normal range at every interview on the non-verbal ability measures.

These measures assess problem solving skills. For children that participated in all four interviews (n=497) there has been a decrease in the proportion that are at risk. About 20% are considered at risk and may need extra support.

What else have we found?



Caregiver's households

- Approximately 7-8 years after entering OOHC, two-thirds of the children and young people had been living with the same caregivers for 6 years or more.
- About 15% of children had 5 or more caregivers. Placements were less likely to breakdown when caregivers felt satisfied in their caring role and supported by caseworkers. Contact your caseworker or other support services if you need help.



School experience

- At interview 3 (about 5 years after the children entered care), caregivers reported about a quarter of 6-11 year olds and about one-third of 12-17 year olds have academic or other problems at school.
- Caregivers reported that over a third of children have an Individual Education Plan. Foster carers and residential care workers were more likely than relative/kinship carers to report that children have an Individual Education Plan. Caseworkers report that almost two thirds of children have an Individual Education Plan.
- Individual Education Plans are now referred to as Personalised Learning and Support Planning. The NSW Department of Communities and Justice is working with the Department of Education to improve support for children in care. Talk to your caseworker or child's school teacher about your child's education - they are there to support your child's wellbeing and education.

In the words of caregivers

Comments about support received from caseworkers

"I need very little support I just get on with it but it is good to know I have someone to turn to should I need to."

"It's been up and down. it's definitely improved. There's had to be a lot of strong conversations but it's coming good again now. I think we're lucky because now we have a caseworker that is in their corner and does what's needed."

"I am very happy with dealing with my caseworker and the assistance I receive."



"Our caseworkers don't get involved as much because we are kin and we are happy to have it that way."

"What assistance from caseworkers would you like but did not get?"



"Access to parenting support groups."

"I would have liked them to check up and see how we are managing."

"Just someone to talk to, like counselling."

"More reassurance that things could turn around."

What questions are we answering in 2020?

Researchers using the data

The NSW Department of Communities and Justice has funded 10 research teams from across Australia to use the de-identified data you have provided. This new evidence can inform better policy and practice to make positive change for children, their families and caregivers.

Some policy areas being examined:

- How do child characteristics, carer resources, and life stressors impact on caregiving?
- How can we better support birth family relationships for children over time?
- What are the factors that influence restoration for Aboriginal children, and what are the outcomes for these children?
- What factors promote the wellbeing of children with disability in care? What factors hinder their progress?
- What are the needs of infants that enter care? How can the system meet their needs? What are the outcomes for infants in care?

Your privacy and ethics

All information collected for the Study is de-identified and remains confidential. Participation in this study is voluntary and you can withdraw from the Study at any time. The University of NSW Human Research Ethics Committee Approval No. HC16542. Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW Ethics Committee Approval No. 766/10.

All the Study results are available on the Study webpage:

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

Contact us

Department of Communities and Justice
Insights, Analysis and Research:

- Email Pathways@facs.nsw.gov.au
- Phone 1800 997 960.

I-view, who are conducting the interviews:

- Webpage www.iview.com.au
- Phone 1800 105 088.

Carer information on COVID-19

This is a very challenging time for carers. The NSW Department of Communities and Justice have information about COVID-19 for carers on their webpage. With answers to common questions and links to trusted and verified sources of information, this is the most up-to-date information for carers from the Department <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/coronavirus-information-for-carers>

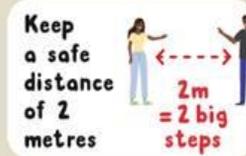
Topics covered include:

- Carers and children who are unwell or are in high risk groups
- Family time, home visits, case planning and specialist visits
- Schooling, child care and learning
- Talking to children about Coronavirus and reducing risks

Support agencies:

- Lifeline. Phone 13 11 14
- Kids Helpline for children and young people aged 5-25 years. Phone 1800 55 1800
- More numbers available at: <https://www.relationships.org.au/relationship-advice/crisis-help>

Let's **SLOW THE SPREAD** of COVID-19 together



COVID-19



visit health.nsw.gov.au for the latest information

