

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

POCLS Governance Groups and Terms of Reference



Produced by

FACS Insights, Analysis and Research

NSW Department of Communities and Justice

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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 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.

POCLS aims:

- 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.

POCLS 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

POCLS key research questions

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?

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.

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 objectives and strategic research agenda publication

This is the POCLS biennial report that will be updated every two years.

2 POCLS collaborative governance framework

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

Chief Investigator

The CI is responsible for leading the POCLS and ensuring that the overall conduct of the POCLS aligns with the ethics approvals granted.

DCJ Executive Board – accountability focus

The Board reviews the direction of the POCLS Strategic research agenda and advice from consultations, FACSIAR and the Study Advisory Group. From 2018, the POCLS has reported to the Board twice a year.

Study Advisory Group – strategic focus

This group was established in 2017 and meets up to twice a year to provide high level advice and direction, identifying key policy questions, and interpreting results and knowledge translation.

Study Working Group – scientific focus

This group was established in 2011 and meets quarterly to ensure the design, implementation and analytical methods are the best they can be.

Study Evidence to Action Working Group – practice focus

This group was established in 2019 and meets as research reports are approved to publish to draw out all the learnings to inform legislation, policy, mandates, new services/models, tools/frameworks, training or further research that will result in practice change in order to improve client outcomes.

Aboriginal Governance Panel

An Aboriginal Governance Panel is being established for the POCLS to strengthen the existing governance existing structures and processes so that Aboriginal community members and stakeholders are better engaged as equal research partners in all aspects of the Study.

Ngaramanala - Aboriginal Knowledge Program

Ngaramanala and FACSIAR are working together to develop a framework on the best approach to facilitating Aboriginal agency within DCJ. The whole of government

response to Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance is critical to improving outcomes for Aboriginal children, families and communities through services based on culturally relevant evidence. The aim of Ngaramanala is to improve the programs, reforms, policies and practices behind the collection, control, analysis and use of evidence and data in DCJ to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal people. The POCLS is committed to working with Ngaramanala, the Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes team and the AH&MRC HREC and will be improving the governance of the study through the establishment of an Aboriginal Governance Panel.

Ethical oversight

Ethical approval for POCLS was provided by University of NSW Research Ethics Committee (HC10335, HC16542 & HC210985) and the 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). Approval for the teacher survey was provided by the State Education Research Applications Process (SERAP) (Approval Number 2012250) and the 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. 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. Agreements govern the review and publication process.

3 Study Advisory Group - Terms of Reference

This Terms of Reference (TOR) outlines the purpose and role of the Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study (POCLS) Advisory Group. The TOR may be revised when major changes to the group's structure or function occur

Purpose

The purpose of the Advisory Group is to serve as a focused structure for providing strategic high level advice, direction and support to the POCLS. The Group's role is to identify key policy questions to be explored using the POCLS data, interpret results and knowledge translation in order to improve policy and practice and outcomes for children and young people in out-of-home care (OOHC). The Advisory Group will also play a critical role in promoting the profile of the Study within DCJ, other government agencies and among key stakeholders. The Advisory Group is not a decision making body but will provide advice and make recommendations.

Membership

Membership includes DCJ experts from Strategy Policy and Commissioning including Child and Family, Aboriginal Strategy, Co-ordination and Evaluation, and FACSIAR; Operations Executive including the Office of the Senior Practitioner; Youth Justice 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.

Those chosen to represent their division/organisation on the Advisory Group must have OOHC policy and/or operational expertise in their individual organisations. All Advisory Group members have an equal role.

Advisory Group Members as at September 2022

Department of Communities and Justice	
Chairperson	
1.	Anne Campbell, Deputy Secretary, Strategy, Policy and Commissioning
2.	Simone Czech, Deputy Secretary, Northern Cluster
3.	Jessica Stewart, Executive Director, FACSIAR (Monday, Tuesday and Thursdays)
4.	Stuart Malcher A/Executive Director, FACSIAR (Wednesday and Fridays)

5. Merran Butler, Director, Statistical Analysis, Data Governance and Research. FACSIAR
6. Lauren Dean, Executive Director, Stronger Communities PaTH Readiness
7. Matthew Jones, Director Strategy, Child & Family, Strategy, Policy & Commissioning Backup - Nadine Woodward, Manager
8. Rebecca Hinchey, Manager, Out of Home Care Programs, Child and Family – Strategy, Policy and Commissioning
9. Jayde Ward, Director, Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes
10. Elaine Thomson, Executive Director, Office of the Senior Practitioner.
11. Lisa Charet, Executive Director, Northern Cluster
12. Nicola Jeffers, A/Executive District Director, South Western Sydney District
13. Briony Foster, Executive District Director, Sydney, South Eastern Sydney and Northern Sydney Districts
14. Jacqueline Richardson, Casework Manager, Child and Family District Unit.
15. Victoria Perry, Manager, Research and Information, Youth Justice NSW
16. Marilyn Chilvers, ED Strategy, NSW Department of Customer Service
17. Kate Alexander, Executive Director, Office of the Senior Practitioner
18. Joe Sumegi – Director, Communications
19. Ian Brown – Senior Program Officer. Ngaramanala, Aboriginal Knowledge Program
20. Brendan Thomas – Deputy Secretary, Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes
Other government departments
21. A/Prof Elisabeth Murphy, Senior Clinical Advisor, Child and Family Health, NSW Health
22. Trisha Ladogna, Director, Behaviour and Student Participation, Department of Education.
23. Richard Weston, Aboriginal Deputy Children’s Guardian, Office of the Children’s Guardian (OCG) - EA Paola Sagredo
24. Jen Roberts, Practice Specialist, Accreditation and Monitoring Team, Office of the Children’s Guardian (OCG)
Non-government agencies
25. Jacqui Reed, Chief Executive Officer, CREATE
26. Steve Kinmond, Chief Executive Officer, Association of Children’s Welfare Agencies (ACWA) Back-ups Julianna Demetrius and Sharon Broady
27. John Leha, CEO, NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation (AbSec).
28. TBC, Head of Advocacy, Engagement, Adopt Change and My Forever Family NSW (All correspondence to Stephanie Van den broek, Operations Manager)

Responsibilities

By accepting appointment, Advisory Group members agree to:

- actively contribute to Advisory Group meetings
- review materials
- follow-up actions in a timely manner

All members have an equal role.

Duration

The Group will exist for the duration of Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study, however membership will be revisited on an annual basis.

Meetings

Meetings will be held once a year and additional meetings may be organised at key study milestones.

Chair

Anne Campbell, A/Deputy Secretary, Strategy, Policy and Commissioning.
Department of Communities and Justice

Agenda setting

The agenda will be set by the Chair with a draft agenda distributed one week prior to the meeting. Members may propose agenda items out of session.

Attendance

Group members should attend each meeting to enable efficient and timely guidance/recommendations.

Recording of meetings

Minutes and an action log will be taken at every meeting by FACSIAR and circulated to members within two weeks following each meeting.

Sitting fees for external parties

Not applicable, member's participation in the Advisory Group is voluntary and directly relevant to the role of the position held.

4 Study Working Group - Terms of Reference

This Terms of Reference (TOR) outlines the purpose and role of the Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study (POCLS) Advisory Group. The TOR may be revised when changes to the group's structure or function occur.

Purpose

Membership includes external academics, data collection experts, data management experts, longitudinal analysis experts and the FACSIAR researchers responsible for managing and undertaking the study. This group was established in 2011 and meets quarterly and is responsible for advice on design and implementation, scientific input and longitudinal analysis. In 2018, the group expanded to include advice from policy and practice experts from Child and Family, Office of the Senior Practitioner and Aboriginal Strategy, Co-ordination and Evaluation and the NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation (AbSec). In 2019, the group expanded to include experts in longitudinal analysis.

Membership

Membership will change to serve the needs of the longitudinal study. Membership will be reviewed every two years. The following members agreed to be on the SWG in July 2021¹:

Research staff from FACS Insights, Analysis and Research

External experts for advice and analysis

1. Professor Judy Cashmore University of Sydney
2. Professor Ilan Katz University of NSW
3. Dr Fred Wulczyn University of Chicago

¹ In July 2021, Professor Paul Delfabbro and Dr Johanna Watson retired from the group. Associate Professor Paul Gray, Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research UTS is currently not an active member of the Advisory Group. In February 2022, Associate Professor Ben Edwards retired from the group due to work priorities but stays committed to the study.

4. Dr Michelle Townsend, University of Wollongong
5. Dr Alan Taylor, Macquarie University
6. Professor Michael Tarren-Sweeney, University of Canterbury, New Zealand
7. Associate Professor Melissa O'Donnell, University of South Australia
8. Associate Professor Melissa Green, UNSW
9. Associate Professor Amy Conley-Wright, Sydney University
10. Associate Professor Dan McAullay, Kurungkurl Katitjin, Edith Cowan University

Contracted agencies

- Sax Institute – advice and data management
- I-view – advice and data collection.

Policy and practice subject matter experts

Attend SWG meetings to brief the group on current work and provide input:

- Child and Family, Strategy Policy and Commissioning
- Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes
- Office of the Senior Practitioner
- NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation (AbSec).

All members have an equal role.

External experts chosen to be on the Study Working Group must have OOHC research expertise and/or high level statistical expertise.

DCJ staff chosen to represent their division at the Study Working Group must have OOHC policy and/or operational expertise.

Role

- advise on the study design at each wave
- review and design questionnaires at each wave
- undertake data collection

- build a study database
- develop a data management and quality plan
- advise on and conduct data analysis
- review data analysis plans
- review draft reports
- advise on policy and practice settings.

Responsibilities

By accepting the appointment, the Study Working Group members agree to:

- provide written progress reports for contracted deliverables
- provide expert advice and special reports within the timeframe specified unless an extension is requested
- actively contribute to Study Working Group meetings
- review all materials tabled one week prior to the meeting
- follow-up actions within the timeframe specified unless an extension is requested
- provide written advice on relevant agenda items if unable to attend a meeting.
- attend the POCLS Advisory Group if requested by the Chair
- attend collaborators meetings if requested.

Duration

The Group will exist for the duration of the POCLS, however membership will be revisited on an annual basis.

Meetings

Meetings will be held quarterly and additional meetings may be organised at key study milestones. Secretariat support will be provided by FACSIAR.

Chair

Meetings will be chaired by the POCLS Chief Investigator or Project Manager.

Agenda setting

The agenda will be set by the Chief Investigator with a draft agenda distributed one week prior to the meeting. Members may propose agenda items.

Attendance

Group members should attend each meeting to enable efficient and timely guidance/recommendations.

Recording of meetings

Minutes and an action log will be taken at every meeting by FACSIAR and circulated to members within two weeks following each meeting.

Sitting fees for external parties

External experts will be paid sitting fees of \$300 per meeting to cover preparation, meeting attendance, meeting follow-up and advice between meetings. External experts are expected to invoice DCJ in April/May only for Study Working Group meetings attended in the current financial year period.

5 Study Evidence to Action Working Group - Terms of Reference

Purpose

In 2019, an Evidence to Action Working Group was established to ensure a collaborative effort among stakeholders in identifying the policy, program and practice areas that can be informed by the POCLS new evidence and knowledge translation. This group will get key stakeholders to work together to ensure the POCLS evidence to action notes document legislative, policy, services/models, tools/frameworks, training or further research recommendations that will result in change to policy and practice. The group will also ensure that the notes are disseminated and accessible to appropriate staff.

The group may also provide input on seminar topics of interest.

Collaborative approach to informing practice change

1. POCLS Advisory Group, Operations Executive Sub-Committee and SPC Reform Committee advise on the priority policy questions to be addressed by FACSIAR and contracted analysts.
2. POCLS Study Working Group policy and practice members meet analysts at project milestones to ensure the policy/practice context is understood and the POCLS data is interpreted correctly. For quality assurance each publication has a technical review, policy/practice review and blind peer review.
3. Office of the Secretary approves all reports for publication.
4. FACSIAR and the report authors draft Evidence to Action Notes as a resource for policy makers and senior practitioners.
5. Directors Community Services (DCS) and the Directors Commissioning and Planning Forum (CAPF) review the draft POCLS E2A Notes to identify if the POCLS findings are known, if they are being addressed already and provide input on recommendations to be considered by the E2A Working Group.
6. POCLS E2A Working Group
 - a. Read POCLS/FACSIAR Evidence to Action Notes and consider the findings
 - b. Draft recommendations to improve policy, practice, administrative data collections, practice mandates, frameworks, etc. and consider how recommendations will align with current work and their likelihood of implementation.

- c. Identify appropriate ways to translate knowledge to internal and external OOHC policy and practice audiences such as Practice Notes, Casework Development Program, E2A forum/webinar, other.
 - d. Ratify if recommendations are being addressed, decide what recommendations need to be prioritised, agree on actions (timeframes, lead, roles, responsibilities, and resources)
 - e. Take relevant recommendations back to their Divisions/Organisations for implementation and prioritisation, report back to the Evidence to Action Working Group on progress at the next E2A meeting (bi-annual).
7. Practice Framework Working Group consider the POCLS recommendations to ensure an Agency wide response and minimise duplication
 - a. POCLS team - populate the Practice Framework Working Group meeting agenda template tabling any POCLS recommendations that are deemed by the E2A Working group to have an operational impact.
 - b. POCLS Team to seek updates from Practice Framework Working Group on actions.
 8. DCJ Operations Executive Committee and SPC Reform Sub-Committee briefed by the FACSIAR Executive Director and Director prior to the bi-annual POCLS progress report to the DCJ Executive Board.²

Membership

Membership will consist of a core group reflecting key policy, program and practice stakeholders. Additional people may be invited to attend specific meetings (including report authors or subject content experts) to reflect agenda items to be discussed.

Standing membership includes representation from:

- FACSIAR
- Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes
- Child and Family, Strategy

² Steps 4-8 were endorsed by the Operations Executive Sub-Committee in February 2021. Will be tabled at the March 2021 SPC Reform Committee meeting.

- Child and Family, OOHC Program
- Child and Family, Family Preservation and Child Protection
- Office of the Senior Practitioner
- Office of the Deputy Secretary
- District representation
- Youth Justice
- POCLS Advisory Group members from education and health will be invited to meetings when these areas are being discussed.
- Representation from relevant advocacy groups that represent young people and caregivers - CREATE; Aboriginal children and families - NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation (AbSec); Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA); Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG); MyForeverFamily.

Members chosen to represent their division/group on the Evidence to Action Working Group must have OOHC policy, and/or operational expertise.

Evidence to Action Working Group Members as at September 2022

Department of Communities and Justice	
Chairperson	
1.	Dr Jessica Stewart, Executive Director OR Stuart Malcher, A/Executive Director FACSIAR
2.	Sarah Bramwell, Director Practice, Office of the Senior Practitioner
3.	Noni Greenwood, Director Aboriginal Culture in Practice, Office of the Senior Practitioner
4.	Sam Gooch, Director, Performance and Continuous Improvement
5.	Briony Foster, Executive District Director Sydney, South Eastern Sydney and Northern Sydney Districts
6.	Belinda Edwards, Director Psychological & Specialist Services. Child Protection and Permanency
7.	Nicola Jeffers, Executive Director, South Western Sydney District
8.	Lauren Dean, Executive Director, Stronger Communities PaTH Readiness
9.	Matthew Jones, Director, Strategy, Child and Family (alternative Rebecca Magoffin)
10.	Jake Gordon, Manager, Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes
11.	Briana Jurgeit, Director, Family Preservation and Child Protection
12.	Daniel Barakate, Director, Commissioning and Planning, SWS District
13.	Gavin Peek, A/Director, Policy and Practice, Strategy, Policy and Commissioning
14.	Tim Warton, Senior Manager Practice Implementation, Youth Justice (alternative Jordan White)

Other government and non-government

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| 15. Steve Kinmond, CEO Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA) |
| 16. TBC, AbSec Rep. |
| 17. TBC, Head of Advocacy, Engagement, MyForeverFamily NSW (All correspondence to Stephanie Van den broek, Operations Manager. |
| 18. Mohita Kapoor, NSW State Coordinator, CREATE Foundation |
| 19. Jenny Roberts, Practice Specialist, Accreditation and Monitoring Team. Office of the Children's Guardian |

All members have an equal role.

Roles & Responsibilities

The Evidence to Action Working group members will:

- review reports and draft evidence to action notes which are intended to be a resource for policy makers and senior practitioners
- advise on insights and implications for legislative, policy, new services/models, tools/frameworks, training or further research that will result in practice change
- develop appropriate messages for evidence to action notes ensuring recommendations made are specific and actionable

By accepting the appointment, the Evidence to Action Working Group members agree to:

- review all materials tabled prior to the meeting
- collate information from colleagues in their teams prior to the meeting
- actively contribute at the meetings
- take responsibility for progressing recommendations relevant to their area and reporting back on outcomes and progress
- follow-up actions within the timeframe specified unless an extension is requested
- provide written advice on relevant agenda items if unable to attend a meeting

Before the evidence to action notes are finalised the Evidence to Action Working Group may seek feedback from reference groups (e.g., children and young people, carers, birth parents, other as relevant) and in particular [two consultation groups](#) that Practice Quality Initiatives run:

Youth Consult for Change is a program of young people 14 – 25 years who have a care experience. The consultants have a range of permanency experiences (including long term out of home care, after care, adoption and guardianship); a variety of services who have/do provide case management responsibility and are a diverse group in terms of their cultural identity, sexuality, gender, ability and geographic location. Meet six weekly in Ashfield. Almost half of our members are Aboriginal and strong representation of CALD young people.

Practitioner Advisory Group is a SME consultation group of DCJ practitioners with approximately 30 members. The members include practitioners from a range of roles – from caseworkers, managers, managers client service services, casework specialists and directors across different operational program areas (CSC, JCPR, Adoptions, OSP, permanency coordinators). Members are from all districts, Aboriginal practitioners and CALD practitioners.

Timeframes and meeting arrangements

The Group will exist for the duration of the POCLS. The TOR may be revised when major changes to the group's structure or function occur.

Meetings

Meetings will be scheduled bi-annually. Secretariat support will be provided by FACSIAR.

Chair

Meetings will be chaired by the Executive Director, FACSIAR.

Agenda setting

The agenda will be set by the POCLS team with a draft agenda distributed two weeks prior to the meeting. Members may propose agenda items out of session.

Attendance

Group members should attend each meeting to enable efficient and timely publication of POCLS findings. If members cannot attend they should nominate a team member to attend on their behalf and/or provide written feedback.

Recording of meetings

Minutes and an action log will be taken by FACSIAR and circulated to members within two weeks following each meeting.

Sitting fees for external parties

Not applicable, member's participation in the working group is voluntary and directly relevant to the role of the position held.

