

# Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study of Children in Out-of-Home Care (POCLS)

## Dashboard 4 – Children’s socio-emotional wellbeing, cognitive learning ability and physical health conditions

### What is included in Dashboard 4?

This POCLS dashboard provides a summary for the **interview cohort** of the children’s socio-emotional wellbeing, cognitive learning ability and physical health conditions from the following study topics:

- Caregiver rating of child's general physical health
- Child rating of their own physical health in the last four weeks
- Child health conditions
- Whether the child received special education, remedial services, and/or attended a special class or special school
- Whether the child needs assistance with self-care, body movement or communication activities
- Child social emotional wellbeing
- Child verbal ability
- Child non-verbal ability

Dashboard 4 includes data from the first four waves of the POCLS broken down by gender, age, Aboriginality, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) status, OOHC placement type and district.

Results for standardised measures about child non-verbal ability, socio-emotional wellbeing and verbal ability are shown for the **interview cohort** and the **tracked samples**. The interview cohort is children and young people who completed interviews at each wave and the tracked samples are children and young people who participated in an interview in all of the first three or first four waves of POCLS. For more information about the cohorts, please see Dashboard 1.

### Why is Dashboard 4 needed?

Findings are used to answer a key study objective of understanding factors that influence the outcomes for children and young people who grow up in OOHC and to measure if services and support to children and young people in OOHC meet the following NSW Standards for Statutory OOHC:

- NSW OOHC Standard 3 - Child Protection and Child Safety: Children and young people’s

safety, welfare and wellbeing is actively safeguarded.

- NSW OOHC Standard 8 - Emotional and Social Development: Children and young people are cared for in placements that meet their specific emotional, social and behavioural needs.
- NSW OOHC Standard 9 - Health: Children and young people's health and developmental needs are addressed.
- NSW OOHC Standard 11 - Behaviour Support: Children and young people have effective behaviour support and management plans where necessary.

## **Summary of Dashboard 4 findings:**

### **Study Topic 1 – Caregiver ratings of the current general physical health of children and young people**

This study topic presents the caregiver ratings of the current physical health of children and young people from Wave 1 to Wave 4.

- The majority of children and young people were rated by their caregivers as having 'excellent' or 'very good' physical health ranging from 86.3% to 90.4%.
- For children aged 9-35 months this percentage varied from 89.6% (in Wave 1) to 87.2% (in Wave 2), for children aged 3-6 years from 86.6% to 93.3%, for children aged 7-11 years from 88.0% to 95.0% and for children and young people aged 12-17 years from 70.2% to 84.6%.
- Aboriginal children and young people were generally rated by their caregivers to be in 'excellent' or 'very good' physical health, ranging from 83.2% to 90.8%.
- The percentage of CALD children and young people who were rated by their caregivers to be in 'excellent' or 'very good' physical health ranged from 88.9% to 91.2%.
- The majority of children and young people in foster care were rated by their caregivers as having 'excellent' or 'very good' physical health (ranging from 85.8% to 90.7%) with similar proportions for children and young people in relative/kinship care (87.4% to 93.2%) and children and young people on guardianship orders (ranging from 88.6% (Wave 4) to 95.0% (Wave 3)).
- The majority of children and young people from each district group were rated by their caregivers as having 'excellent' or 'very good' physical health ranging – 82.7% to 89.9% for Hunter and Central Coast; 77.4% to 92.0% for Illawarra Shoalhaven and Southern NSW; 82.6% to 94.1% for Mid North Coast, New England and Northern NSW; 85.5% to 91.4% for Murrumbidgee, Far West and Western NSW; 90.8% to 91.8% for South Eastern Sydney, Northern Sydney and Sydney; 87.3% to 91.8% for South Western Sydney; and 88.0% to 93.5% for Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains.

### **Study Topic 2– Child ratings of their own health in the last 4 weeks**

This study topic presents the child's rating of their own health in the 4 weeks prior to their interview. This question was only asked of children and young people aged 12-17 years at the time of their interview.

- Overall, the percentage of children and young people who reported their health was 'excellent' or 'very good' ranged from 61.7% to 71.9%.
- The percentage of Aboriginal children and young people who reported their health was 'excellent' or 'very good' ranged from 60.0% to 73.3%.

- The results for CALD children and young people are not presented due to small numbers aged 12-17 years at the time of the interview for this cohort.
- A rating of 'excellent' or 'very good' was reported by 58.8% to 84.1% of children and young people in foster care and by 57.1% to 78.2% of children and young people in relative/kinship care. The results for children and young people on guardianship orders are not presented due to small numbers aged 12-17 years in this cohort.
- The results are not presented by district group again due to small numbers aged 12-17 years by district groups.

### **Study Topic 3– Caregiver reports of the child’s health conditions that lasted or were expected to last 6 months or more**

This study topic presents caregiver reports of the types of health conditions that children and young people had that lasted or were expected to last 6 months or more and were diagnosed by a health professional.

- Overall, the top two health conditions affecting children and young people were 'problems with eyesight' ranging from 10.2% to 23.3% across all waves and 'other conditions' ranging from 9.6% to 22.4% across all waves.
- Young children aged 9-35 months were most likely to suffer from 'asthma or bronchitis' (ranging from 16.0% to 22.6% across all waves) or 'other conditions' (10.6% to 15.0%). Children aged 3-6 years also had 'asthma or bronchitis' (10.3% to 32.3%) and 'other conditions' (7.4% to 26.3%) as the top 2 health conditions. For children aged 7-11 years, the top two health conditions were 'problems with eyesight' (20.6% to 25.3%) and 'other conditions' (10.9% to 22.5%). Older children and young people aged 12-17 years most commonly suffered from 'problems with eyesight' (16.9% to 27.8%) and 'problems with teeth/oral hygiene' (15.3% to 20.1%).
- The top two health conditions affecting Aboriginal children and young people were 'problems with eyesight' (8.5% to 22.6%) and 'other conditions' (9.2% to 21.3%).
- CALD children and young people most commonly suffered from 'asthma or bronchitis' (10.7% to 23.6%) and 'other conditions' (6.5% to 21.5%).
- The top two health conditions for children and young people in foster care were 'other health conditions' (12.6% to 26.2%) and 'problems with eyesight' 10.0% to 24.0%). These were similar for children and young people in relative/kinship care ('other conditions' ranging from 8.6% to 19.9% and 'problems with eyesight' ranging from 10.1% to 22.7%) and children and young people on guardianship orders ('other conditions' ranging from 16.8% to 21.5% and 'problems with eyesight' ranging from 19.3% to 28.5%).
- Amongst children and young people from Hunter and Central Coast, the top two health conditions were 'problems with eyesight' (7.1% to 25.9%) and 'asthma or bronchitis' (12.6% to 25.4%). For Illawarra Shoalhaven and Southern NSW, the top two conditions were 'problems with eyesight' (8.5% to 31.0%) and 'other conditions' (10.9% to 28.6%). For Mid North Coast, New England and Northern NSW, the top two conditions were 'problems with eyesight' (9.2% to 25.8%) and 'other conditions' (9.4% to 16.8%).

### **Study Topic 4 – Caregiver reports of special education/remedial services received or special classes/schools attended**

This study topic presents the percentage of children and young people who received special

education/remedial services or attended special classes/schools from Wave 1 to Wave 4 according to their caregiver. This question was only asked for children and young people aged 4-17 years.

- Overall, according to their caregiver, between 32.8% and 37.0% of children and young people received special education/remedial services or attended special classes/schools.
- The percentage of children and young people receiving special education services ranged from 27.6% to 37.7% for children aged 4-6 years, 32.8% to 38.5% for children aged 7-11 years and 27.0% to 35.2% for children and young people aged 12-17 years at interview.
- Between 33.1% and 42.7% of Aboriginal children and young people received special education services.
- Around one-third of CALD children and young people received special education services at each wave (30.8% to 33.3%).
- The percentage of children and young people receiving special education services ranged from 37.9% to 42.5% for those in foster care, 26.3% to 33.7% for those in relative/kinship care and 24.1% to 29.1% for those on guardianship orders.
- For the Hunter and Central Coast districts, 29.4% to 45.0% of children and young people received special education services, for Illawarra Shoalhaven and Southern NSW this varied from 31.7% to 41.0%; for Mid North Coast, New England and Northern NSW from 29.5% to 41.5%; Murrumbidgee, Far West and Western NSW from 25.3% to 34.9%; South Eastern Sydney, Northern Sydney and Sydney from 28.9% to 38.7%; South Western Sydney from 28.0% to 44.4%; Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains from 26.8% to 38.2%.

## **Study Topic 5 – Caregiver reports about the child’s need for help with activities**

This study topic presents the proportion of children and young people that need assistance with self-care, communication and/or movement according to their caregiver. This question was introduced at Wave 4, so data are not available for earlier waves.

- Overall, 16.0% of children and young people needed assistance with self-care activities, 13.3% with communication and 2.4% with movement.
- The need for assistance with self-care or communication generally decreased with age at interview. Of the children aged 3-6 years, one-quarter (25.5%) needed assistance with self-care, compared with 17.3% of children aged 7-11 years and 3.7% of children and young people aged 12-17 years.
- In terms of assistance with communication, 18.4% of children aged 3-6 years required help, 13.3% of children aged 7-11 years and 8.3% of children and young people aged 12-17 years.
- Relatively small proportions of children aged 3-6 years (2.8%) and 7-11 years (2.7%) needed assistance with movement. Less than 5 children and young people aged 12-17 years needed assistance with movement. As this question was introduced at Wave 4, there were no children in the 9-35 months age group at interview.
- For Aboriginal children and young people, 14.4% needed help with self-care, 12.0% with communication and 3.4% with movement.
- Assistance with self-care, communication or movement were needed by 15.8%, 14.4% and 3.4% of CALD children and young people respectively.

- Around 20% of children and young people in foster care needed assistance with self-care (19.6%) and 16.9% required assistance with communication. This compares with 12.6% of those in relative/kinship care who needed assistance with self-care and 10.8% with communication. Of the children and young people on guardianship orders, 15.8% needed assistance with self-care and 10.1% with communication. No children on guardianship orders, relative/kinship care or foster care needed assistance with movement.
- Of the children from Hunter and Central Coast, Illawarra Shoalhaven and Southern NSW and Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains around 20% of children and young people needed assistance with self-care (22.4%, 19.0% and 18.4% respectively). Lower proportions of children from Mid North Coast, New England and Northern NSW (13.5%), Murrumbidgee, Far West and Western NSW (13.8%), South Eastern Sydney, Northern Sydney and Sydney (10.8%) and South Western Sydney (11.8%) needed assistance with self-care. Assistance with communication was needed by 20.8% of children and young people from Hunter and Central Coast. This type of assistance was required by around 10% of children and young people from other districts including Illawarra Shoalhaven and Southern NSW Districts (10.7%); Mid North Coast, New England and Northern NSW Districts (13.5%); Murrumbidgee, Far West and Western NSW Districts (9.2%); South Eastern Sydney, Northern Sydney and Sydney Districts (7.2%); South Western Sydney District (12.7%); and Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains (13.3%). No data were provided by district for children who required assistance with movement due to small numbers.

## Study Topic 6 – Child non-verbal ability

This study topic presents non-verbal ability for children and young people from Wave 1 to Wave 4.

Non-verbal ability was measured by the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) Problem Solving Scale for children aged 9-65 months and the Matrix Reasoning Test (MR WISC-IV) for children and young people aged 6 years and over. There are 5 months between the ages of 67-71 months that are not covered by either of these tests so numbers may be reduced in the 3-6 year age bracket.

The results for this study topic are shown for both the interviewed cohorts and the tracked samples.

### Interviewed cohort:

- Overall, the percentage of children and young people in the interviewed cohorts at each wave who were in the normal range for non-verbal ability varied from 69.2% at Wave 1 to 75.7% at Wave 2, 77.0% at Wave 3 and 77.9% at Wave 4.
- For children who were aged 9-35 months at interview, 65.8% were in the normal range for non-verbal ability at Wave 1 and 80.3% at Wave 2. From Wave 3 onwards there were no children in this age group. For children aged 3-6 years at interview, the percentage in the normal range varied from 76.2% at Wave 1 to 88.3% at Wave 4. Between 68.1% (Wave 1) and 73.5% (Wave 4) of children aged 7-11 years at interview were in the normal range. For the older children and young people aged 12-17 years at interview, the percentage in the normal range varied from 60.3% at Wave 2 to 78.8% at Wave 4.
- The percentage of Aboriginal children and young people in the normal range for non-verbal ability varied from 67.8% at Wave 1 to 72.9% at Wave 2, 74.0% at Wave 3 and 71.8% at Wave 4.

- For CALD children and young people, 68.6% were in the normal range for non-verbal ability at Wave 1, 77.9% at Wave 2, 83.6% at Wave 3 and 80.8% at Wave 4.
- The percentage of children and young people in the normal range varied from 64.3% to 79.9% for those in foster care, from 75.1% to 79.2% for those in relative/kinship care and from 78.8% to 82.1% for those on guardianship orders.
- More than 70% of children and young people were in the normal range for all waves in the following districts: Illawarra Shoalhaven and Southern NSW (70.9% to 79.5%); Murrumbidgee, Far West and Western NSW (71.3% to 76.0%); South Eastern Sydney, Northern Sydney and Sydney (81.3% to 89.2%). For children and young people in the following districts, more than 60% were in the normal range in all waves: Hunter and Central Coast (67.4% to 78.8%); Mid North Coast, New England and Northern NSW (65.9% to 79.3%); South Western Sydney (65.4% to 81.4%); and Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains (65.9% to 76.5%).

### **Tracked samples:**

- For the children and young people who participated in Wave 1-3 interviews:
  - Overall, the percentage of children and young people in the normal range for non-verbal ability ranged from 69.1% to 80.0%.
  - Of those aged 9-35 months at entry into OOHC, 66.8% to 84.0% were in the normal range. This compares to 68.4% to 75.7% of those aged 3-6 years at entry into OOHC and 70.8% to 80.2% of those aged 7-11 years. Data on those aged 12-17 years at entry into OOHC is not presented due to small numbers.
  - Over two-thirds of Aboriginal children and young people were in the normal range (68.5% to 76.7%)
  - Between 67.0% and 85.4% of CALD children and young people were in the normal range.
  - Over 60% of children and young people were in the normal range across the following districts: Hunter and Central Coast (65.5% to 79.7%); Illawarra, Shoalhaven and Southern NSW (67.2% to 88.1%); Mid North Coast, New England and Northern NSW (67.3% to 76.6%); Murrumbidgee, Far West and Western NSW (70.8% to 79.2%); South Eastern Sydney, Northern Sydney and Sydney (85.5% to 88.7%); South Western Sydney (63.2% to 77.0%); and Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains (71.3% to 79.3%).
- For the children and young people who participated in Wave 1-4 interviews:
  - Overall, the percentage of children and young people in the normal range for non-verbal ability ranged from 71.4% to 81.1%
  - Of those aged 9-35 months at entry into OOHC, 69.4% to 85.6% were in the normal range. This compares to 68.1% to 78.8% of those aged 3-6 years at entry into OOHC and 68.4% to 80.7% of those aged 7-11 years. Data on those aged 12-17 years at entry into OOHC is not presented due to small numbers.
  - Over two-thirds of Aboriginal children and young people were in the normal range (70.1% to 76.5%)
  - Between 66.7% and 86.7% of CALD children and young people were in the normal range.
  - Over 60% of children and young people were in the normal range across the following districts: Hunter and Central Coast (65.9% to 78.0%); Illawarra, Shoalhaven and Southern NSW (66.7% to 85.4%); Mid North Coast, New

England and Northern NSW (71.1% to 81.9%); Murrumbidgee, Far West and Western NSW (72.5% to 88.4%); South Western Sydney (70.5% to 83.6%); and Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains (69.1% to 79.4%). South Eastern Sydney, Northern Sydney and Sydney are not presented due to small numbers.

## **Study Topic 7 – Socio-emotional wellbeing for children and young people**

This study topic presents socio-emotional wellbeing for children and young people from Wave 1 to Wave 4.

Socio-emotional wellbeing was based on the Brief Infant Toddler Social Emotional Assessment (BITSEA) Behaviour Problem Score for children aged 9-35 months in Wave 1 and the Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL) for children and young people aged 3-17 years in Wave 1 and for children aged 1.5-17 years from Wave 2 onwards.

The results for this study topic are shown for both the interviewed cohorts and the tracked samples.

### **Interviewed cohort:**

- Overall, the percentage of children and young people in the normal range for socio-emotional wellbeing varied from 71.9% at Wave 1 to 74.3% at Wave 2, 70.6% at Wave 3 and 62.9% at Wave 4.
- For children who were aged 9-35 months at interview, 88.0% were in the normal range at Wave 1 and 87.6% at Wave 2. From Wave 3 onwards there were no children in this age group. For children aged 3-6 years at interview, the percentage in the normal range varied from 65.0% to 81.2%. Between 59.4% and 65.9% of children aged 7-11 years at interview were in the normal range. For older children and young people aged 12-17 years at interview, the percentage in the normal range varied from 43.5% at Wave 1 to 62.2% at Wave 4.
- The percentage of Aboriginal children and young people in the normal range for socio-emotional wellbeing varied from 76.2% at Wave 1 to 74.2% at Wave 2, 68.3% at Wave 3 and 58.8% at Wave 4.
- For CALD children and young people, 81.4% were in the normal range for socio-emotional wellbeing at Wave 1, 82.9% at Wave 2, 71.6% at Wave 3 and 70.5% at Wave 4.
- The percentage of children and young people in the normal range across all waves varied from 56.5% to 71.7% for those in foster care, from 67.1% to 78.6% for those in relative/kinship care and from 75.9% to 82.6% for those on guardianship orders.
- The following proportions of children and young people were in the normal range by district groups: 55.8% to 71.3% in Hunter and Central Coast; 61.9% to 75.0% in Illawarra, Shoalhaven and Southern NSW; 61.3% to 75.4% in Mid North Coast, New England and Northern NSW; 64.2% to 71.7% in Murrumbidgee, Far West and Western NSW; 72.3% to 81.4% in South Eastern Sydney, Northern Sydney and Sydney; 64.5% to 79.7% in South Western Sydney; and 66.5% to 71.7% in Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains.

### **Tracked samples:**

- This study topic presents socio-emotional wellbeing for children and young people who participated in Wave 1-3 interviews and Wave 1-4 interviews.

- For the children and young people who participated in Wave 1-3 interviews:
  - Overall, the percentage of children and young people in the normal range for socio-emotional wellbeing ranged from 70.4% to 75.3%.
  - Of those aged 9-35 months at entry into OOHC, 75.3% to 84.8% were in the normal range. This compares to 65.0% to 71.4% of those aged 3-6 years at entry into OOHC and 58.6% to 63.3% of those aged 7-11 years. Data on those aged 12-17 years at entry into OOHC is not presented due to small numbers.
  - Over two-thirds of Aboriginal children and young people were in the normal range for socio-emotional wellbeing (68.2% to 77.3%)
  - Between 71.9% and 84.3% of CALD children and young people were in the normal range for socio-emotional wellbeing.
  - The following proportions of children and young people were in the normal range by district groups: 68.2% to 74.9% in Hunter and Central Coast; 67.4% to 75.6% in Illawarra, Shoalhaven and Southern NSW; 73.5% to 75.0% in Mid North Coast, New England and Northern NSW; 65.2% to 73.3% in Murrumbidgee, Far West and Western NSW; 83.6% to 84.9% in South Eastern Sydney, Northern Sydney and Sydney; 74.2% to 80.9% in South Western Sydney; and 67.3% to 72.9% in Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains.
- For the children and young people who participated in Wave 1-4 interviews:
  - Overall, the percentage of children and young people in the normal range for socio-emotional wellbeing ranged from 63.4% to 78.2%.
  - Of those aged 9-35 months at entry into OOHC, 63.5% to 85.4% were in the normal range. This compares to 61.8% to 70.8% of those aged 3-6 years at entry into OOHC and 60.2% to 69.9% of those aged 7-11 years. Data on those aged 12-17 years at entry into OOHC is not presented due to small numbers.
  - The percentage of Aboriginal children and young people in the normal range varied from 58.2% to 82.1%.
  - Between 71.0% and 87.0% of CALD children and young people were in the normal range for socio-emotional wellbeing.
  - The following proportions of children and young people were in the normal range by district groups: 56.5% to 76.4% in Hunter and Central Coast; 62.5% to 82.8% in Illawarra, Shoalhaven and Southern NSW; 63.1% to 75.7% in Mid North Coast, New England and Northern NSW; 63.7% to 74.5% in Murrumbidgee, Far West and Western NSW; 68.3% to 86.7% in South Eastern Sydney, Northern Sydney and Sydney; 68.5% to 84.9% in South Western Sydney; and 67.0% to 77.7% in Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains.

## **Study Topic 8 – Verbal ability for children and young people**

This study topic presents verbal ability for children and young people from Wave 1 to Wave 4.

Child verbal ability was measured by the Communication and Symbolic Behaviour Scale (CSBS) total composite standard score in Wave 1 for children aged 9-23 months, the MacArthur Bates Communicative Developmental Inventories (MCDI-III) in Waves 1 and Wave 2 for children aged 24-35 months and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) from Wave 1 onwards for children aged 3-17 years.



The results for this study topic are shown for both the interviewed cohorts and the tracked samples.

### **Interviewed cohort:**

- Overall, the percentage of children and young people in the normal range for verbal ability varied from 74.6% at Wave 1 to 76.2% at Wave 2, 78.9% at Wave 3 and 82.9% at Wave 4.
- For children who were aged 9-35 months at interview, 76.3% were in the normal range at Wave 1 and 82.2% at Wave 2. From Wave 3 onwards there were no children in this age group. For children aged 3-6 years at interview, the percentage in the normal range varied from 80.0% to 83.7%. Between 70.6% and 84.3% of children aged 7-11 years at interview were in the normal range. For the older children aged 12-17 years at interview, the percentage in the normal range varied from 56.6% at Wave 1 to 79.7% at Wave 4.
- The percentage of Aboriginal children in the normal range for verbal ability varied from 74.0% at Wave 1 to 72.8% at Wave 2, 73.5% at Wave 3 and 80.6% at Wave 4.
- For CALD children, 72.8% were in the normal range for verbal ability at Wave 1, 77.9% at Wave 2, 73.3% at Wave 3 and 83.0% at Wave 4.
- The percentage of children and young people in the normal range varied from 72.4% to 84.3% for those in foster care, from 77.9% to 81.6% for those in relative/kinship care and from 84.9% to 85.6% for those on guardianship orders.
- The following proportions of children and young people were in the normal range by district groups: Hunter and Central Coast 78.7% to 86.2%; Illawarra, Shoalhaven and Southern NSW 74.5% to 86.3%; Mid North Coast, New England and Northern NSW 73.0% to 83.9%; Murrumbidgee, Far West and Western NSW 70.7% to 82.4%; South Eastern Sydney, Northern Sydney and Sydney 71.8% to 82.1%; South Western Sydney 74.5% to 82.5%; and Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains 72.6% to 80.1%.

### **Tracked samples:**

- This study topic presents verbal ability for children and young people who participated in Wave 1-3 interviews and Wave 1-4 interviews.
- For the children and young people who participated in Wave 1-3 interviews:
  - Overall, the percentage of children and young people in the normal range for verbal ability ranged from 79.8% to 80.9%.
  - Of those aged 9-35 months at entry into OOHC, 82.2% to 85.1% were in the normal range. This compares to 73.2% to 82.1% of those aged 3-6 years at entry into OOHC and 76.0% to 80.8% of those aged 7-11 years. Data on those aged 12-17 years at entry into OOHC is not presented due to small numbers.
  - Around three-quarters of Aboriginal children and young people were in the normal range for verbal ability (75.1% to 78.8%)
  - Between 78.5% and 81.3% of CALD children and young people were in the normal range for verbal ability.
  - The following proportions of children and young people were in the normal range by district groups: Hunter and Central Coast 83.8% to 85.1%; Illawarra, Shoalhaven and Southern NSW 77.1% to 81.4%; Mid North Coast, New England and Northern NSW 73.2% to 78.0%; Murrumbidgee, Far West and Western NSW 78.9% to 80.7%; South Eastern Sydney, Northern Sydney and Sydney 81.2% to

88.4%; South Western Sydney 75.9% to 84.8%; and Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains 77.8% to 79.8%.

- For the children and young people who participated in Wave 1-4 interviews:
  - Overall, the percentage of children and young people in the normal range for verbal ability ranged from 81.5% to 86.1%.
  - Of those aged 9-35 months at entry into OOHC, 82.5% to 86.7% were in the normal range. This compares to 73.3% to 83.6% of those aged 3-6 years at entry into OOHC and 73.1% to 88.1% of those aged 7-11 years. Data on those aged 12-17 years at entry into OOHC is not presented due to small numbers.
  - Three-quarters or greater of Aboriginal children and young people were in the normal range for verbal ability (75.9% to 82.0%)
  - Between 76.9% and 89.0% of CALD children and young people were in the normal range for verbal ability.
  - The following proportions of children and young people were in the normal range by district groups: 83.8% to 86.8% in Hunter and Central Coast; 73.6% to 88.7% in Illawarra, Shoalhaven and Southern NSW; 78.7% to 87.2% in Mid North Coast, New England and Northern NSW; 81.6% to 87.4% in Murrumbidgee, Far West and Western NSW; 80.0% to 83.6% in South Eastern Sydney, Northern Sydney and Sydney; 79.4% to 87.3% in South Western Sydney; and 76.7% to 87.2% in Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains.

## **Study Topic 9 – Child symptoms of depression based on the Short Moods and Feelings Questionnaire for children and young people**

This study topic presents the results of the Short Moods and Feelings Questionnaire (SMFQ) for children and young people from Wave 2 to Wave 4.

Children and young people aged 12-17 years were asked to complete the 13 items that comprise the SMFQ from Wave 2 onwards. It is designed to measure core depressive symptomology in children and adolescents. More specifically, it assesses the presence of affective and cognitive symptoms of depression that have been experienced in the past 2 weeks.

- Overall, the percentage of children and young people with symptoms of depression has varied from 30.6% in Wave 2 to 26.4% in Wave 3 and 24.5% in Wave 4.
- Over one-third (36.4%) of Aboriginal children and young people had symptoms of depression based on the SMFQ at Wave 2, and one-quarter at both Waves 3 (25.6%) and Wave 4 (25.0%).
- Results for CALD children and young people are not available for Waves 2 and 3 due to small numbers. At Wave 4, 17.2% of CALD children and young people had symptoms of depression.
- The percentage of children and young people with symptoms of depression for those in foster care varied from 18.9% to 27.7%, for those in relative/kinship care from 16.1% to 28.6%, and 24.2% for those on guardianship orders at Wave 4. Results at Wave 3 are not presented for those on guardianship orders due to small numbers.
- Results for the SMFQ are not shown by district group due to small numbers.

## **Explanatory notes:**

1. Data for Wave 1 may vary slightly from the Wave 1 Baseline Statistical Report and other POCLS reports due to a subsequent data refresh in the reporting system.
2. Aboriginal is used throughout this dashboard and is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
3. Data for non-Aboriginal cohort also include children with Aboriginal status of 'not stated'.
4. CALD data should be interpreted with caution due to relatively small numbers and data quality issues.
5. Districts reflect where the case plan of the child and young people in the study was held at the time of interview.
6. To maintain confidentiality and prevent identification of study participants, numbers less than 10 for Aboriginal children and young people and less than 5 for non-Aboriginal children and young people are not published. The small numbers may be replaced with 'not shown', categories may be combined or approximate percentages provided. Percentages are also not shown if there are less than 20 children in the cohort.