

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

Leaving Care Cohort (15-17 years) Statistical Report:
Experiences of Young People who Entered Out-of-Home Care Aged 9-14 Years





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Research Report No. 5

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Out-of-Home Care Aged 9-14 Years

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About the information in this report

All the analyses presented in this report are based on the May 2018 version of the Wave 1-3 unweighted data collected in face-to-face interviews with children, young people and caregivers; on-line caseworker survey; and FACS administrative data.

Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study Clearinghouse

All study publications including research reports, technical reports and briefs 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 Family and Community Services (FACS). 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 objectives are 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.
- describe the services, interventions and pathways for children and young people in OOHC, post restoration, post adoption and on leaving care at 18 years.
- describe children's and young people's experiences while growing up in OOHC, post restoration, post adoption and on leaving care at 18 years.
- 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.
- inform policy and practice to strengthen the OOHC service system in NSW to improve the outcomes for children and young people in OOHC.

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 April 2013 (2,828) were eligible to participate in 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 FACS 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.

FACS recognises the importance of Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS) and Indigenous Data Governance (IDG) in the design, collection, analysis, dissemination and management of all data related to Aboriginal Australians. The POCLS is subject to ethics approval, including from the Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council of NSW. FACS is currently in the process of scoping the development of IDS and IDG principles that will apply to future Aboriginal data creation, development, stewardship, analysis, dissemination and infrastructure. The POCLS will continue to collaborate with Aboriginal Peoples and will apply the FACS research governance principles once developed.

1 Introduction

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 interested in young people leaving care. This analysis focuses on young people in the POCLS who were in either Wave 2 or Wave 3 of the Study, and aged 15-17 years old at the time of interview. The young people who participated in the survey entered OOHc for the first time during middle childhood therefore are not representative of all young people leaving care. These young people are referred to in this report as the leaving care cohort. Further details of the study can be found in Paxman, Tully, Burke and Watson (2014).

A number of other documents are useful to help with the navigation and understanding of the POCLS data. These publications can be found on the POCLS webpage: www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/pathways-of-care

2 Method

To date, four Waves of data collection have been undertaken at 18-24 month intervals. By the end of Wave 5 which commenced in April 2019, the POCLS will have 10 years of in-depth data on children's OOHc experiences. Wave 1 interviewing was conducted June 2011 - August 2013 with 1,285 children and carers participating. Wave 2 was conducted April 2013 – March 2015 with 1,200 participants. Wave 3 was conducted October 2014 – July 2016 with 1,033 participants. Wave 4 was conducted May 2017 – November 2018 with 961 participants.

Questions about leaving care were added to the carer and child surveys in Wave 2. The data in the following tables contain information collected at both Waves 2 and 3. Where the questions were answered by carers and young people at both Waves, the Wave 3 data have been included as it is the most current information at the time of writing this report. The data have been restricted to include information about young people who were 15-17 years at the time of the interview at either Wave 2 or Wave 3 and who were in foster care, relative/kinship care or residential care at that time.

The report also includes information gathered from the caseworker survey administered as part of the POCLS (October 2014 to June 2016). The caseworker survey was conducted online by the OOHc caseworker who was nominated to know the young person best. This included caseworkers from both FACS and non-government organisations, depending on where the young person was placed. Caseworkers were asked to complete the survey even if the young person had left care and they no longer had case management. The questions asked in the survey

were reduced if the young person had left OOHC more than 12 months ago, the caseworker did not know them well or the young person was deceased. Participation in the survey was voluntary and caseworkers did not have to answer all the questions.

The caseworker data has also been restricted to include only information about young people who were aged 15-17 years at the time of interview and who were in foster care, relative/kinship care or residential care at that time.

The analyses presented in this report are descriptive only and are based on unweighted data. For those tables where the sample numbers reported are small, results should be interpreted with caution.

When interpreting the data, it is important to note that the POCLS sample entered OOHC for the first time during May 2010 to October 2011 and their outcomes may differ from same aged young people who have been in OOHC for a longer period of time. In addition, the results presented in this statistical report are on a leaving care cohort who entered OOHC in their middle childhood so the results may be different for a leaving care cohort who entered OOHC as infants.

3 Research Questions

Questions that are answered using the POCLS data include:

- What are the demographic characteristics of young people in the leaving care cohort?
- What are the child protection histories of young people in the leaving care cohort?
- What was the OOHC experience for the leaving care cohort?
- How are young people in the leaving care cohort going on standardised measures of child development?
- What are the perspectives of carers, caseworkers and young people about life after leaving care?

Findings

4 Characteristics of the leaving care cohort

4.1 Child characteristics

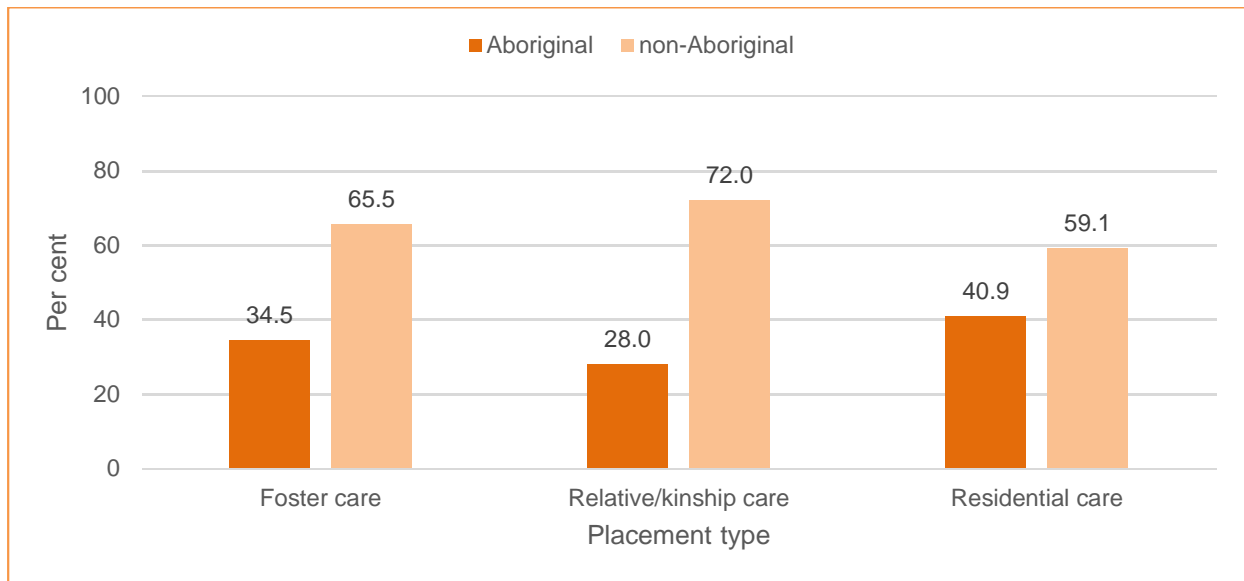
There were 76 young people in the leaving care cohort. There were more males than females in the cohort, with 64.5% being male (n=49) and 35.5% female (n=27). This pattern was similar across the foster care (n=29), relative/kinship care (n=25) and residential care cohorts (n=22) within the group.

Figure 1 shows the Aboriginal status of those in the sample. In line with the proportions in the OOHHC population generally there were 34.2% Aboriginal young people (n=26) and 65.8% non-Aboriginal (n=50). This varied slightly across different placement types with 65.5% of young people in the foster care cohort being non-Aboriginal (n=19), 72.0% in the relative/kinship care cohort being non-Aboriginal (n=18) and 59.1% of the residential care cohort being non-Aboriginal (n=13).

The analysis was disaggregated by Aboriginality, to explore whether there were any significant differences in the outcome variables (e.g., language skills or areas young people will need assistance with on leaving care) between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal young people.

For the most part the results from this analysis revealed that there are no statistically significant differences. The areas where there were differences found are noted in section 5 of the report. According to carers, Aboriginal young people were less likely than their non-Aboriginal counterparts to require help in accessing financial support or assistance (e.g., transitions to independent living allowance) and being healthy (e.g., diet and exercise). In other words, according to the carers, access to financial support or staying healthy appear to be less of an issue for Aboriginal young people leaving care than for non-Aboriginal young people.

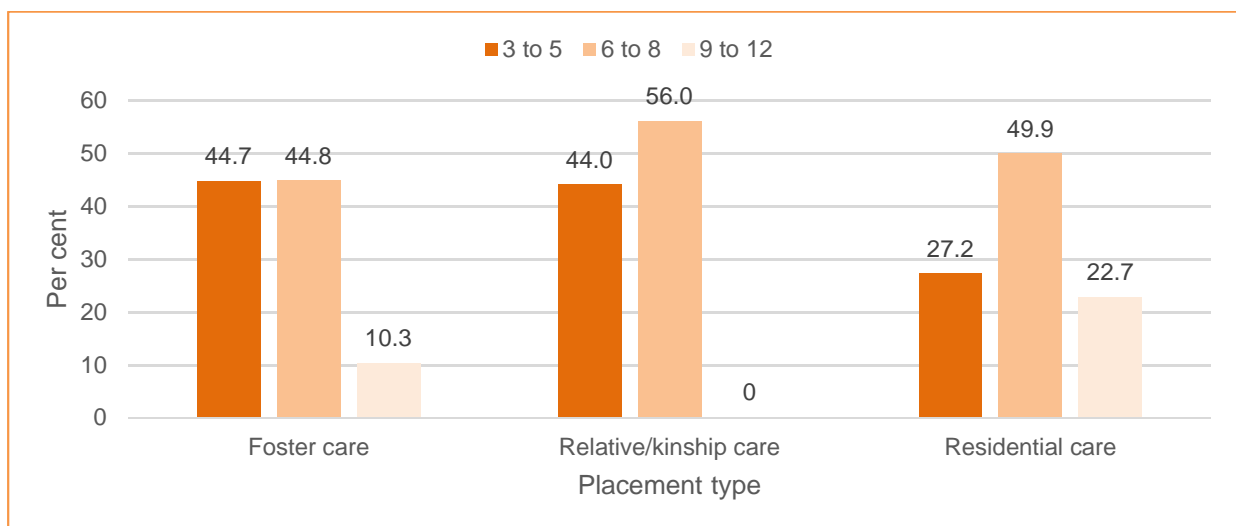
Figure 1: Leaving care cohort by Aboriginality and placement type



4.2 Child protection history

Figure 2 shows that young people in the leaving care cohort tended to be reported for the first time when they were aged between six and eight years old. Fifty per cent (n=38) of the 76 young people in the cohort were first reported at this age. Only 10.4% (n=8) of the group were first reported between nine and twelve years old.

Figure 2: Leaving care cohort by the child's age at their first ever ROSH report and placement type



Over half (59.2%, n=45) of the leaving care cohort had 10 or more ROSH reports prior to their first entry into OOHC. Around 10% (n=8) had 30 or more ROSH reports prior to entering care. The most frequent range for reports prior to entry was 5 to 9 reports (28.9%).

Figure 3: Leaving care cohort by the number of ROSH reports prior to first entry into OOHC

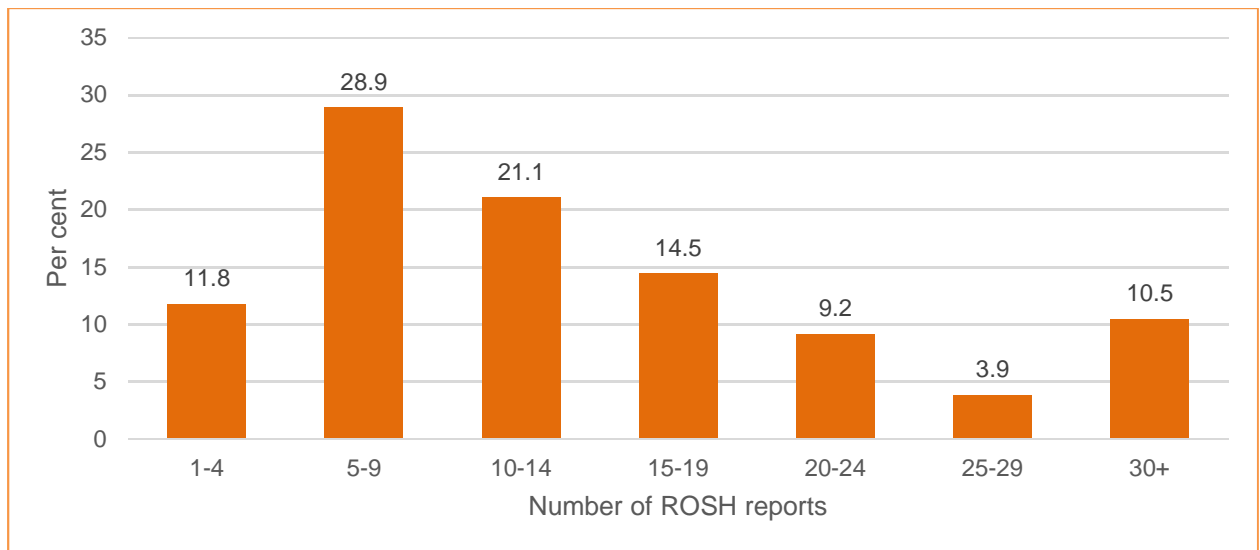
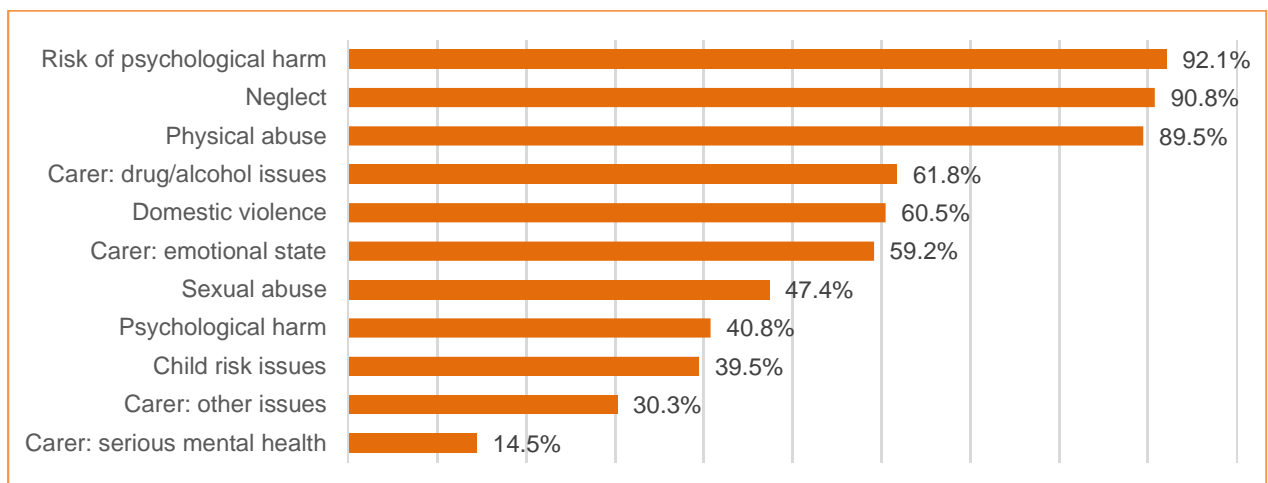


Figure 4 shows the broad categories of reported issues in ROSH reports made to FACS about the young person before entering OOHC for the first time. The leaving care cohort were most likely to have been reported at ROSH for issues involving risk of psychological harm (92.1%), neglect (90.8%) and physical abuse (89.5%). It should be noted that children can be reported at ROSH multiple times, and multiple issues can be recorded at each ROSH report.

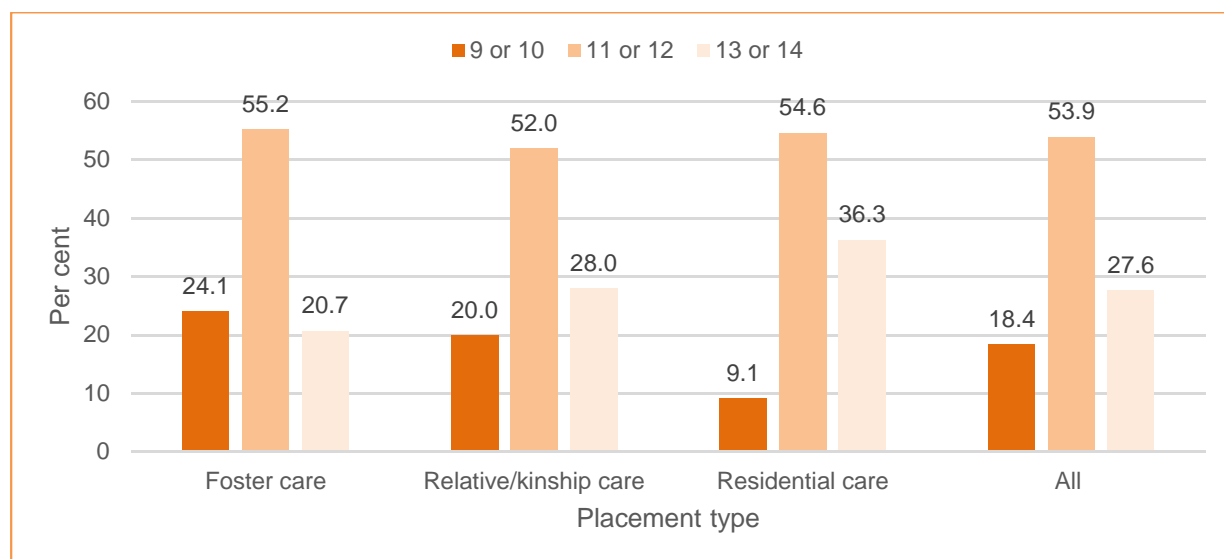
Figure 4: Leaving care cohort by the reported issues of ROSH reports prior to first entry into OOHC



4.3 Placements in out-of-home care

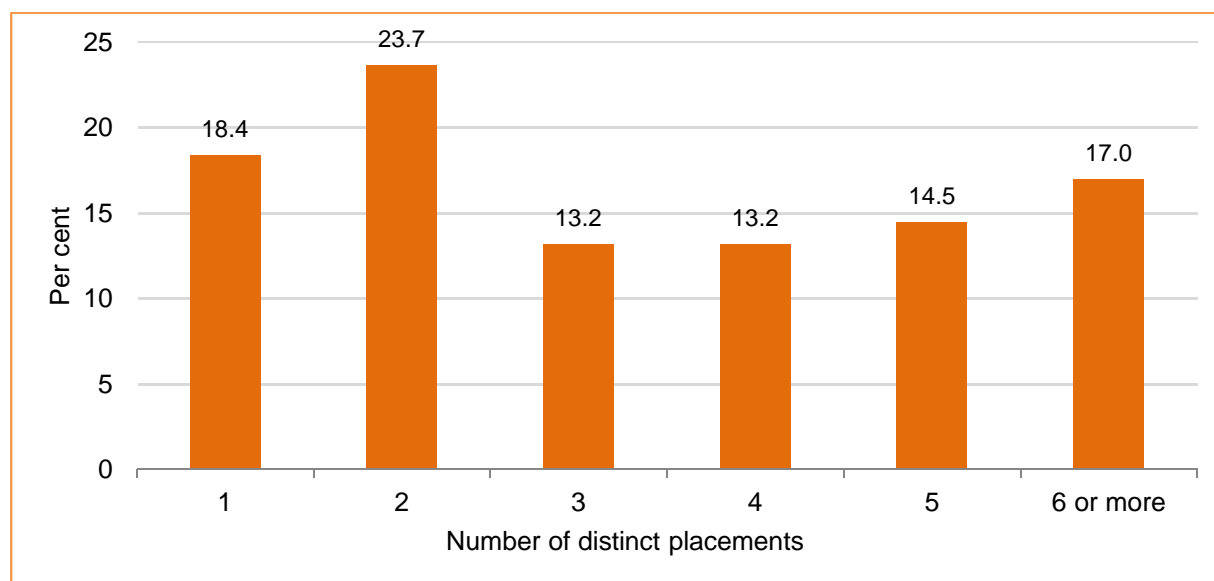
As shown in Figure 5, the majority of the leaving care cohort entered care at age 11 or 12. This is due to the POCLS population cohort entering care between May 2010 and October 2011 and then needing to be 15 years or older at Wave 2 or Wave 3 to be a part of the leaving care cohort.

Figure 5: Leaving care cohort by age at first entry into OOHC and placement type at time of interview



In Figure 6, the number of distinct placements that a young person had during their entire OOHC experience to 30 June 2016 is shown. Distinct placements exclude non-permanent placements of less than seven days (such as respite and emergency placements) and do not count a return to the same carer as a new placement. For 42.1% (n=32) of the sample the number of distinct placements was one or two. For 17.0% (n=13) of the sample the number of distinct placements totalled six or more.

Figure 6: Leaving care cohort by the number of distinct placements ever



4.4 Standardised measures of child development

The POCLS Carer and Child Surveys includes the following standardised measures of child development:

- Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL, Achenbach & Rescorla, 2000, 2001) was completed by the carer and asks over 100 questions about a range of child and adolescent behaviour problems and interpersonal competencies for children aged 18 months to 18 years. The CBCL provides cut-offs to identify children showing differing levels of problems: a 'clinical range' score indicates that the child has high levels of problems of similar severity to children who are receiving clinical treatment for a diagnosed behavioural or mental disorder (above the 90th percentile in the general population); a 'borderline range' score indicates that the child has elevated, but less severe levels of problems (above the 84th percentile in the general population), and a 'normal range' score indicates that the child is in the normal range of the general child population.
- The interviewer-administered Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test Version 4 (PPVT-IV) was used to assess language capacities in children aged 3 to 17 years. The PPVT-IV measures children's understanding of spoken words (i.e., their receptive language skills) and can be used to assess growth in vocabulary acquisition over time. Depending on their score, children are classified as having language skills below the average range, in the average range or above the average range.

- The interviewer-administered Matrix Reasoning Test (MR) from the Wechsler Intelligence Test for Children Version 4 (WISC-IV; Wechsler 2004) was used to assess general non-verbal intelligence among children aged 6 to 16 years. Depending on their score, children are classified as having below the average range cognitive abilities, average range cognitive abilities or above average range cognitive abilities.

Behaviour problems

Just over half (53.7%) of the POCLS leaving care cohort who answered the CBCL questions at either Wave 2 or Wave 3 were in the normal range for behaviour problems while 46.3% of the cohort were in the borderline or clinical range. This pattern was somewhat different for the young people in residential care (n=15) with three young people in the normal range and just over 80.0% (n=12) in the borderline or clinical range.

Table 1: Carer report of the most recent behaviour problems score (CBCL) for young people aged 15-17 years by placement type

| Total problem cut off | Child placement type at interview | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| | Foster care | | Relative/kinship care | | Residential care | | Total | |
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Normal range | 15 | 65.2 | 11 | 68.8 | 3 | 20.0 | 29 | 53.7 |
| Borderline or clinical | 8 | 34.8 | 5 | 31.3 | 12 | 80.0 | 25 | 46.3 |
| Total | 23 | 100.0 | 16 | 100.0 | 15 | 100.0 | 54 | 100.0 |

Language skills

Table 2 shows that almost half (49.0%) of the young people in the leaving care cohort were in the normal range for language skills on the PPVT-IV. Again a smaller proportion of the residential care sample were in the normal range however the sample is small (n=12).

Table 2: Carer report of the most recent language ability score (PPVT IV) for young people aged 15-17 years by placement type

| Language ability | Child placement type at interview | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| | Foster care | | Relative/kinship care | | Residential care | | Total | |
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Below normal range | 10 | 45.5 | 7 | 46.7 | 8 | 66.7 | 25 | 51.0 |
| Within normal range | 12 | 54.5 | 8 | 53.3 | 4 | 33.3 | 24 | 49.0 |
| Total | 22 | 100.0 | 15 | 100.0 | 12 | 100.0 | 49 | 100.0 |

Non-verbal reasoning

In terms of non-verbal intelligence on the MR Test (WISC-IV), Table 3 shows just under half of the leaving care cohort (46.8%) were in the below normal range. The remainder were in the within or above normal range (53.2%). The majority of the residential care sample were in the below normal range (63.6%) however the number in this sample was small (n=11).

Table 3: Carer report of the most recent non-verbal reasoning score (MR test WISC-IV) for young people aged 15-17 years by placement type

| Non verbal reasoning | Child placement type at interview | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| | Foster care | | Relative/kinship care | | Residential care | | Total | |
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Below normal range | 8 | 38.1 | 7 | 46.7 | 7 | 63.6 | 22 | 46.8 |
| Within or above normal range | 13 | 61.9 | 8 | 53.3 | 4 | 36.4 | 25 | 53.2 |
| Total | 21 | 100.0 | 15 | 100.0 | 11 | 100.0 | 47 | 100.0 |

5 Leaving care questions asked of caregivers

This section examines the views of those caring for the leaving care cohort (young people aged 15-17 years). In particular carers' perspectives of the young person's living situation and the casework planning are considered. These questions were introduced at Wave 2 of the POCLS and the tables below report the responses of those caring for young people who were of 15 – 17 years when interviewed at either Wave 2 or Wave 3.

5.1 Young people's accommodation plans after leaving care

Carers were asked about young people's living arrangements once they leave care. Around half (51.3%) thought that the young person would 'probably or definitely' live with them once they left care. This was less likely the case for carers of young people in residential care (27.2%), as would be expected.

Table 4: Carer report of the accommodation plans for young people aged 15-17 years by placement type

| Do you think the child will want to continue living here after they leave care? | Child placement type at interview | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| | Foster Care | | Relative/kinship care | | Residential care | | Total | |
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Definitely will | 12 | 41.4 | 9 | 36.0 | 3 | 13.6 | 24 | 31.6 |
| Probably will | 4 | 13.8 | 8 | 32.0 | 3 | 13.6 | 15 | 19.7 |
| Unsure/probably/definitely won't | 13 | 44.8 | 8 | 32.0 | 16 | 72.7 | 37 | 48.7 |
| Total | 29 | 100.0 | 25 | 100.0 | 22 | 100.0 | 76 | 100.0 |

The carers were asked whether they would be willing for the young person to live with them once they left care. The majority of relative/kinship and foster carers indicated that they would be willing to have the young person stay on (85.2%). The proportion of residential careworkers who would be willing to accommodate the young person beyond 18 years was much lower, as would be expected (27.3%).

Table 5: Carer report of their willingness to have the young person live with them after they turn 18 years old by placement type

| Are you willing to have the child stay on to live with you after they leave care? | Child placement type at interview | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| | Foster Care | | Relative/kinship Care | | Residential Care | | Total | |
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Yes | 24 | 82.8 | 22 | 88.0 | 6 | 27.3 | 52 | 68.4 |
| No /don't know/refused | 5 | 17.2 | 3 | 12.0 | 16 | 72.7 | 24 | 31.6 |
| Total | 29 | 100.0 | 25 | 100.0 | 22 | 100.0 | 76 | 100.0 |

For those who answered they would be happy to have the young person live with them once they turned 18, the majority of carers were happy to have them stay as long as they wanted (84.8%).

Table 6: Carer report on the length of time they are willing to have the young person live with them after they turn 18 years by placement type

| How long are you willing to have the child continue to live with you after they leave care? | Child placement type at interview | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| | Foster care | | Relative/kinship care | |
| | n | % | n | % |
| As long as they wanted | 21 | 87.5 | 18 | 81.8 |
| Other | 3 | 12.5 | 4 | 18.2 |
| Total | 24 | 100.0 | 22 | 100.0 |

Carers were asked if they expect to keep in touch with the young person they cared for after leaving care. The overwhelming majority (around 95%) of both foster and relative/kinship carers indicated that they definitely or probably will. For residential careworkers this number was lower at 50.0% (n=11).

5.2 Casework with young people leaving care

Carers were asked if anyone had explained to the young person that their legal care status would be changing after they turned 18. Almost half (48.7%) of the carers indicated that they had, but the percentage was higher for residential care workers (77.3%) than for foster carers (37.9%) or relative/kinship carers (36.0%).

Table 7: Carer report of whether the legal care status of the young person once they turn 18 years old had been explained by placement type

| Has anyone explained the legal care status changing after the child turns 18? | Child placement type at interview | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| | Foster care | | Rel/kinship care | | Residential care | | Total | |
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Yes, myself | 11 | 37.9 | 9 | 36.0 | 17 | 77.3 | 37 | 48.7 |
| Yes, caseworker | 13 | 44.8 | 7 | 28.0 | 5 | 22.7 | 25 | 32.9 |
| No | 5 | 17.3 | 9 | 36.0 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 18.4 |
| Total | 29 | 100.0 | 25 | 100.0 | 22 | 100.0 | 76 | 100.0 |

Carers were asked whether the young person has a case plan to address leaving care. Overall around half answered that they did (48.7%) and the remainder indicated either 'no' or 'don't know'. This varied across the groups with 81.8% of residential care carers indicating the young person had a case plan but only 24.0% (n=6) of relative/kinship carers.

Table 8: Carer report of whether the young person aged 15-17 years has a leaving care plan by placement type

| Does the child have a case plan that will address all that they need to manage in leaving care? | Child placement type at interview | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| | Foster care | | Relative/kinship care | | Residential care | | Total | |
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Yes | 13 | 44.8 | 6 | 24.0 | 18 | 81.8 | 37 | 48.7 |
| No/don't know | 16 | 55.2 | 19 | 76.0 | 4 | 18.2 | 39 | 51.3 |
| Total | 29 | 100.0 | 25 | 100.0 | 22 | 100.0 | 76 | 100.0 |

Carers were asked whether the young person had received a copy of the resource: *Your Next Step: Information for young people leaving care*. Only 28.9% (22 from 76) indicated that they had, with 9 of the 22 residential care workers (40.9%) indicating the young people in their care had this resource.

Table 9: Carer report of whether the young person aged 15-17 years has a copy of *Your Next Step: Information for young people leaving care* by placement type

| Has the child been given a copy of the resource book titled: <i>Your Next Step: information for young people leaving care</i> ? | Child placement type at interview | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| | Foster care | | Relative/kinship care | | Residential care | | Total | |
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Yes | 9 | 31.0 | 4 | 16.0 | 9 | 40.9 | 22 | 28.9 |
| No | 16 | 55.2 | 18 | 72.0 | 8 | 36.4 | 42 | 55.3 |
| Don't know | 4 | 13.8 | 3 | 12.0 | 5 | 22.7 | 12 | 15.8 |
| Total | 29 | 100.0 | 25 | 100.0 | 22 | 100.0 | 76 | 100.0 |

Carers were asked whether young people have been told about services or support groups. Carers were given a list of services or support groups and answered 'yes', 'no' or 'don't know' (as to whether they had been told about them). Around a third of the cohort had been told about the local CSC (38.2%), after care services (31.6%) and the Create Foundation (32.9%). Again the proportions are much higher for residential care than for foster or relative/kinship care.

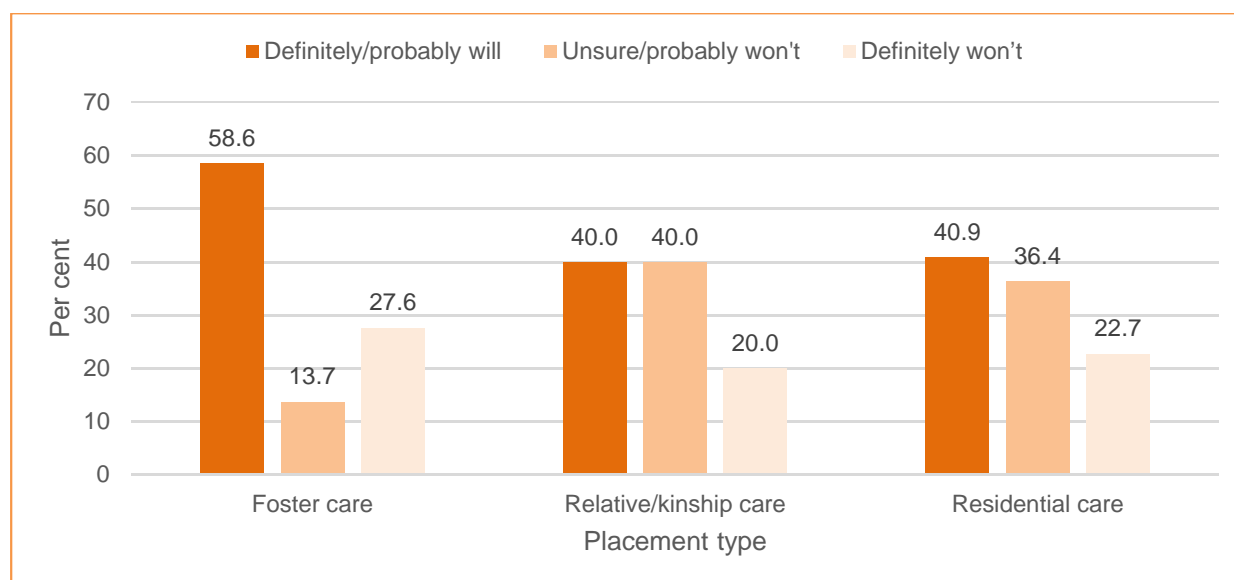
Table 10: Carer report of whether the young person aged 15-17 years has been told about after care services by placement type

| After care services or support groups | Child placement type at interview | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------|-----------------------|------|------------------|------|-------|------|
| | Foster Care | | Relative/kinship care | | Residential care | | Total | |
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Local Community Services Centre | 8 | 27.6 | 7 | 28.0 | 14 | 63.6 | 29 | 38.2 |
| After care services | 6 | 20.7 | 6 | 24.0 | 12 | 54.5 | 24 | 31.6 |
| Create Foundation | 3 | 10.3 | 6 | 24.0 | 16 | 72.7 | 25 | 32.9 |

5.3 Carer reports of young person’s ability to cope on leaving care

Carers were asked whether they thought that the young person would be able to manage independent living after he or she left care. While there were a number of carers (n=36, 47.3%) who thought that the young person ‘definitely’ or ‘probably will’ manage on leaving care there were also those (n=18, 23.7%) who rated the young person’s ability to manage independent living as ‘definitely won’t.’

Figure 7: Carer report of the young person aged 15-17 years ability to manage independent living by placement type



The carers were asked to note the areas that the young person is likely to need help in on leaving care (listed in Table 11), with the carer asked to indicate which areas applied to the young person in their care. Those that were most often reported across the different placement types included finding somewhere suitable to live, enrolling in a course of study, accessing financial support and budgeting.

Table 11: Carer report of areas the young person aged 15-17 years will need assistance with on leaving care by placement type

| Areas the child will need help in | Child placement type at interview | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|------|-----------------------|------|------------------|------|-------|------|
| | Foster care | | Relative/kinship care | | Residential care | | Total | |
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Looking after themselves (e.g. cooking, cleaning, getting up on time) | 14 | 48.3 | 11 | 44.0 | 13 | 59.1 | 38 | 50.0 |
| Finding somewhere suitable to live | 25 | 86.2 | 18 | 72.0 | 21 | 95.5 | 64 | 84.2 |
| Finding employment | 19 | 65.6 | 14 | 56.0 | 21 | 95.5 | 54 | 71.1 |
| Enrolling in a course of study | 20 | 69 | 17 | 68.0 | 21 | 95.5 | 58 | 76.3 |
| Budgeting | 23 | 79.3 | 18 | 72.0 | 16 | 72.7 | 57 | 75.0 |
| Accessing financial support or assistance (e.g. Transitions to Independent Living Allowance) | 20 | 69.0 | 21 | 84.0 | 17 | 77.3 | 58 | 76.3 |
| Getting documentation e.g. Medicare card, birth certificate, 100 points of identity (ID) | 15 | 51.7 | 16 | 64.0 | 19 | 86.4 | 50 | 65.8 |
| Accessing services e.g. medical, legal, counselling, Centrelink | 18 | 62.1 | 17 | 68.0 | 14 | 63.6 | 49 | 64.5 |
| Being healthy (diet and exercise) | 12 | 41.4 | 10 | 40.0 | 17 | 77.3 | 39 | 51.3 |
| Contacting family members | 9 | 31.0 | 5 | 20.0 | 5 | 22.7 | 19 | 25.0 |
| Having someone to call on for support | 18 | 62.1 | 11 | 44.0 | 12 | 54.5 | 41 | 54.0 |
| Driving lessons | 18 | 62.1 | 14 | 56.0 | 19 | 86.4 | 51 | 67.1 |
| Socialising | 11 | 37.9 | 6 | 24.0 | 10 | 45.5 | 27 | 35.5 |

Note: Carers could choose more than one response hence there are no column totals.

Carers were asked to list their biggest concerns for how the young person will manage after leaving care (see Table 12). The most cited responses were around self-care and coping skills (30.3%), independent living skills (18.4%), having a bad peer group (17.1%) and employment and education (15.8%).

Differences were found between the carers of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal young people. According to carers, Aboriginal young people were less likely than their non-Aboriginal counterparts to require help in accessing financial support or assistance (e.g., transitions to independent living allowance) and being healthy (e.g., diet and exercise). In other words, according to the carers, access to financial support or staying healthy appear to be less of an issue for Aboriginal young people leaving care than for non-Aboriginal young people.

Table 12: Carer report of their biggest concerns about how the young person aged 15-17 years will manage after leaving care at 18 years old

| What is your biggest concern about how the child will manage after leaving care? | Response | |
|--|----------|------|
| | n | % |
| Self-care and coping skills | 23 | 30.3 |
| Independent living skills | 14 | 18.4 |
| Stable accommodation | 5 | 6.6 |
| Employment and education | 12 | 15.8 |
| Birth family involvement | 6 | 7.9 |
| Personal safety | 3 | 3.9 |
| Stable moods/mental health | 4 | 5.3 |
| Feeling lonely | 4 | 5.3 |
| Bad peer group | 13 | 17.1 |
| Alcohol and drug misuse | 3 | 3.9 |
| Criminal behaviour | 4 | 5.3 |
| Other mentions | 16 | 21.0 |

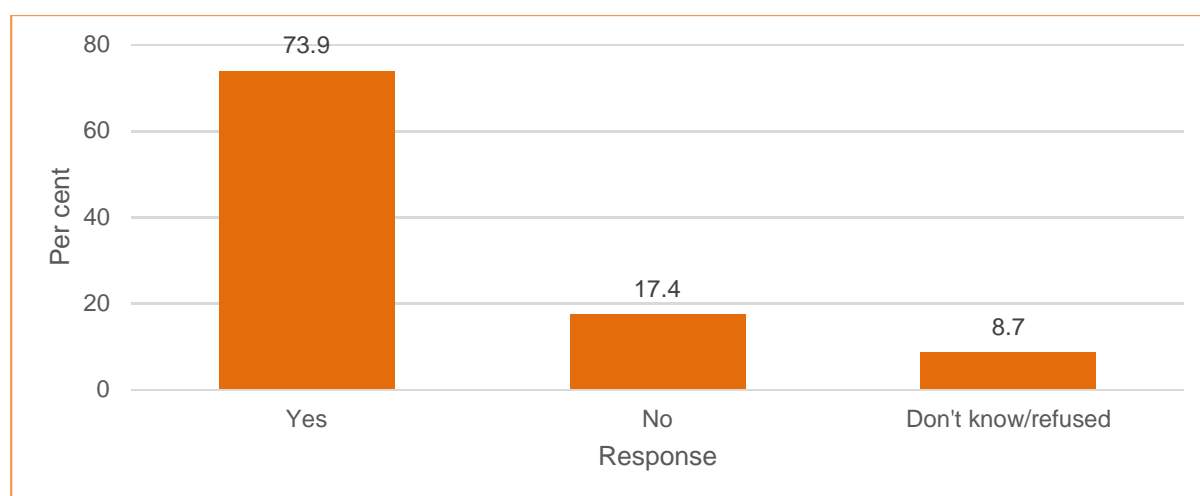
Note: Carers could choose more than one response hence there are no column totals.

6 Leaving care questions asked of young people

The following section describes the questions related to leaving care asked of 46 young people. Of these, 20 were in foster care, 19 in relative/kinship care and seven in residential care.

Figure 8 shows the proportion of the young people interviewed who had been told that their children's court order would end once they turned 18 years. Of the 46 young people interviewed, the majority (73.9%, n=34) indicated that they had been advised about this.

Figure 8: Young people aged 15-17 years report of whether a caseworker or carer explained that the children’s court order will end near their 18th birthday?



As shown in Table 13, overall 45.7% of young people (n=21) reported that a caseworker had started talking to them about a plan for the next couple of years such as where they might work, study or live. This proportion was less for those young people in relative/kinship compared to those in foster or residential care however the numbers in these groups are quite small.

Table 13: Young people aged 15-17 years report of whether a caseworker has started talking to them about a leaving care plan by placement type

| Has a caseworker started talking to you about a plan for the next couple of years such as where you will work, study and live? | Child placement type at interview | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| | Foster care | | Relative/kinship care | | Residential care | | Total | |
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Yes | 11 | 55.0 | 6 | 31.6 | 4 | 57.1 | 21 | 45.7 |
| No/don't know/refused | 9 | 45.0 | 13 | 68.4 | 3 | 42.9 | 25 | 54.3 |
| Total | 20 | 100.0 | 19 | 100.0 | 7 | 100.0 | 46 | 100.0 |

Young people who answered yes to having had a caseworker talk to them about plan for the next few years were asked if they had a written document outlining any plans. Tables 14 and 15 show that of the 20 young people who responded, 10 indicated that they had a written plan and 8 had written information about services and support that they may access.

Table 14: Young people aged 15-17 years report of whether they have a written leaving care plan

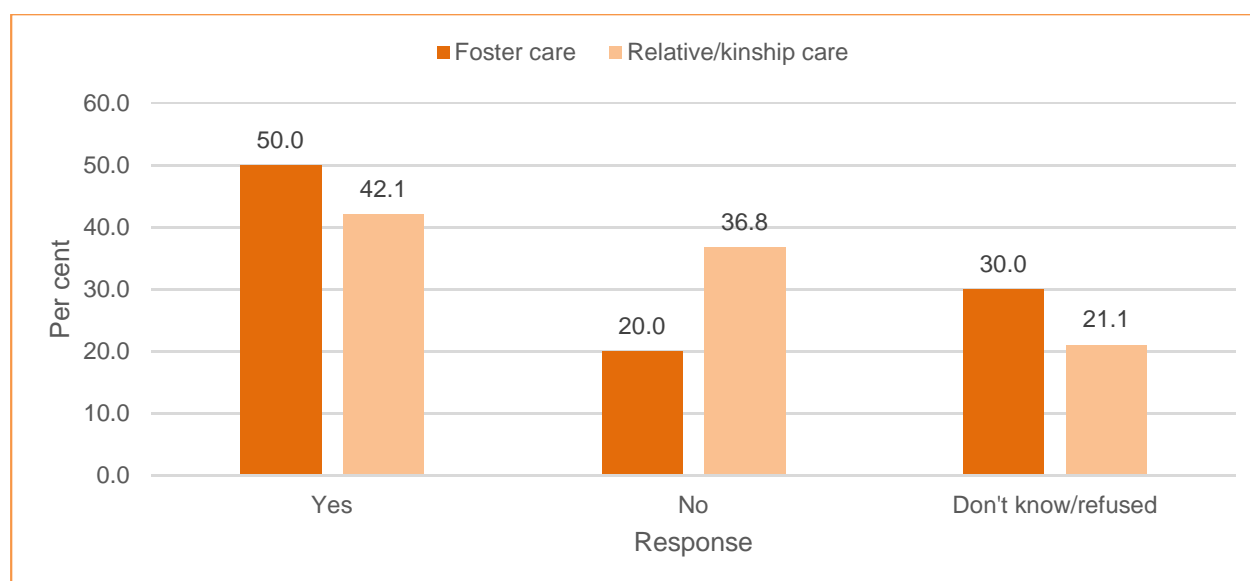
| Do you have a written document that outlines your plans for the future such as where you might study, work and live? | n | % |
|--|-----------|--------------|
| Yes | 10 | 50.0 |
| No | 10 | 50.0 |
| Total | 20 | 100.0 |

Table 15: Young people aged 15-17 years report of whether they have written information about access to services and support

| Do you have written information about services and support? | n | % |
|---|-----------|--------------|
| Yes | 8 | 40.0 |
| No | 7 | 35.0 |
| Don't know/refused | 5 | 25.0 |
| Total | 20 | 100.0 |

Young people (n=39) were asked whether they would stay living where they are once they turned 18. Just under half (46.2%) thought they would stay on, while 28.2% said they wouldn't. Around a quarter didn't know or refused the question. This question was not asked of young people in residential care.

Figure 9: Young people aged 15-17 years report of whether they will stay living in their placement after turning 18 years by placement type



Young people, excluding those in residential care, were asked who they would stay in touch with after they turned 18 years old. As shown in Table 16, most young people thought that they would stay in touch with the people they are living with now (92.3%), many also thought they would stay in touch with people they had lived with previously (61.5%) and around a third thought that they would stay in touch with their caseworker.

Table 16: Young people aged 15-17 years report of who they will stay in touch with after they turn 18 years old

| Do you think you will stay in touch with any of the following people after you turn 18 years old? | n | % |
|---|-----------|--------------|
| The people you are living with now | 36 | 92.3 |
| The people you have lived with before | 24 | 61.5 |
| Your caseworker | 13 | 33.3 |
| Refused | 3 | 7.7 |
| Total | 39 | 100.0 |

Young people were asked about what areas they may need help with after turning 18 years. As shown in Table 17 the most popular responses were ‘learning to drive’ and ‘accessing their Community Services file’. The next most popular responses were ‘finding somewhere to live’, ‘finding a job’, ‘finding out about courses’ and ‘finding services’. While the responses were similar to those the carers chose (Table 12) the proportion of young people who thought they would need assistance was much lower than the proportion of carers who thought assistance would be required. The issue of accessing Community services files was not raised by carers while 39.1% of young people thought they would need help with this.

Table 17: Young people aged 15-17 years report of areas they will need help with after they turn 18 years old

| Do you think you will need help in any of these areas after you turn 18 years old? | n | % |
|--|----|------|
| Looking after yourself such as cooking, cleaning, getting up on time | 4 | 8.7 |
| Being healthy and eating well and exercising | 4 | 8.7 |
| Finding somewhere to live | 16 | 34.8 |
| Finding a job | 14 | 30.4 |
| Finding out about courses and where to study | 14 | 30.4 |
| Handling money and saving | 8 | 17.4 |
| Finding services such as legal services, Medicare, Centrelink, a doctor or a dentist | 14 | 30.4 |
| Learning to drive | 18 | 39.1 |
| Accessing your Community Services file | 18 | 39.1 |
| Contacting your birth family and relatives | 4 | 8.7 |
| Keeping in touch with your friends | 5 | 10.9 |

Note: Young people could choose more than one response hence there are no column totals.

Over half (58.1%, n=25) of the 43 young people who answered were 'not at all' worried about turning 18 and the future while a further 32.6% (n=14) were 'a little bit' worried. Only four of the young people indicated that they worried 'a lot' about the future.

Table 18: Young people aged 15-17 years report of whether they worry about leaving care and their future

| Do you worry about turning 18 years old and your future? | n | % |
|--|-----------|--------------|
| Yes, a lot | 4 | 9.3 |
| A little bit | 14 | 32.6 |
| Not at all | 25 | 58.1 |
| Total | 43 | 100.0 |

7 Leaving care questions asked of caseworkers

The final set of questions related to the leaving care cohort were asked of caseworkers via the caseworker survey. It should be noted that young people were excluded where a case plan had been closed for more than 12 months or the caseworker didn't know the young person well. This reduced the sample size to 62

with 28 young people in foster care, 21 in relative/kinship care and 13 in residential care as shown in Table 19.

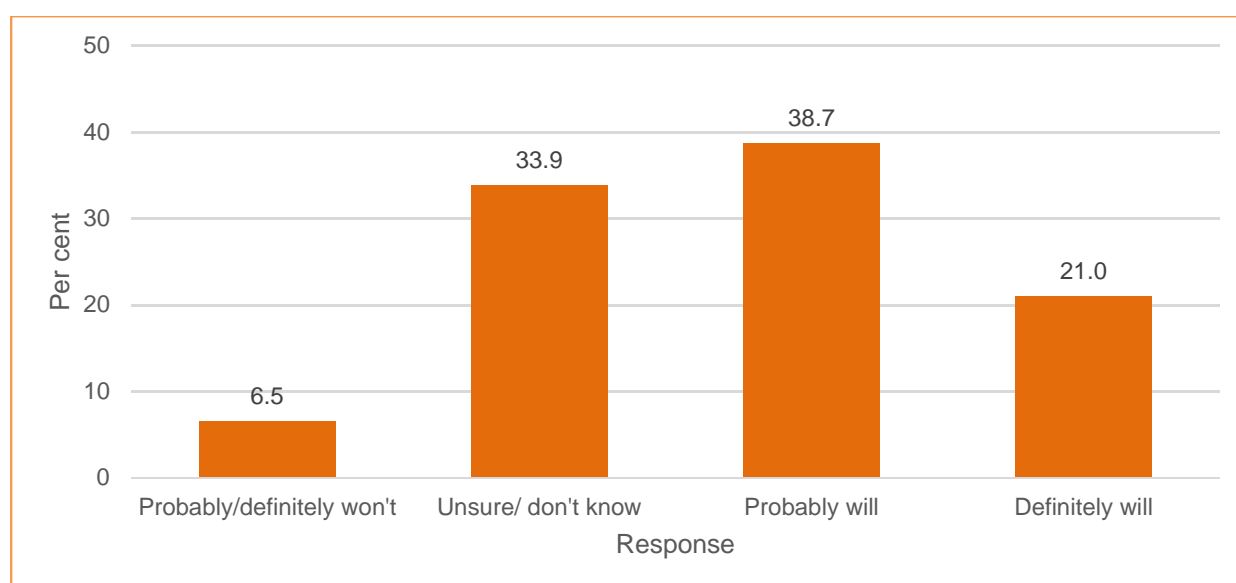
According to caseworkers around half (53.2%) of the young people had a leaving care plan developed but this varied across the placement types. Of those in residential care 10 out of the 13 had a plan while for relative/kinship care it was 8 out of 21.

Table 19: Caseworker report of whether a leaving care plan has been developed for the young people aged 15-17 years by placement type

| Has a leaving care plan been developed for the child? | Child placement type at interview | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| | Foster care | | Relative/kinship care | | Residential care | | Total | |
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Yes | 15 | 53.6 | 8 | 38.1 | 10 | 76.9 | 33 | 53.2 |
| No/don't know | 13 | 46.4 | 13 | 61.9 | 3 | 23.1 | 29 | 46.8 |
| Total | 28 | 100.0 | 21 | 100.0 | 13 | 100.0 | 62 | 100.0 |

As for the carers and young people, caseworkers were asked whether they thought the young person would have the skills to look after themselves when they turned 18 (Figure 10). While over half (59.7%) thought the young person either 'definitely or probably' would, there were also a significant proportion who were unsure or didn't know (33.9%) or who thought the young person 'probably' or 'definitely wouldn't' cope (6.5%).

Figure 10: Caseworker report of whether the child will have the skills to look after themselves when they turn 18



As for carers and young people the caseworkers were asked the areas they thought young people would need assistance with. As can be seen in Table 20 the most popular responses reflected previous answers with 'finding somewhere suitable to live', 'budgeting', 'accessing financial support or assistance' 'driving lessons', 'accessing services' and 'finding employment' all being chosen by over 70% of caseworkers. Again these percentages were higher than those for the young people themselves.

Table 20: Caseworker report of the areas that the young people aged 15-17 years will need assistance with by placement type

| Do you think this young person will need help? | Foster care | | Relative/kinship care | | Residential care | | Total | |
|--|-------------|------|-----------------------|------|------------------|-------|-------|------|
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Looking after themselves (e.g. cooking, cleaning, getting up on time)? | 11 | 42.3 | 7 | 43.8 | 6 | 46.2 | 24 | 43.6 |
| Finding somewhere suitable to live? | 20 | 76.9 | 11 | 73.3 | 13 | 100.0 | 44 | 81.5 |
| Finding employment | 19 | 79.2 | 10 | 62.5 | 12 | 92.3 | 41 | 77.4 |
| Enrolling in a course of study | 15 | 60.0 | 9 | 56.3 | 12 | 92.3 | 36 | 66.7 |
| Budgeting | 20 | 80.0 | 11 | 73.3 | 11 | 84.6 | 42 | 79.2 |
| Accessing financial support or assistance (e.g. Transitions to Independent Living Allowance) | 19 | 73.1 | 13 | 86.7 | 11 | 84.6 | 43 | 79.6 |
| Getting documentation e.g. Medicare card, birth certificate, 100 points of identity (ID) | 11 | 42.3 | 10 | 62.5 | 8 | 66.7 | 29 | 53.7 |
| Accessing services e.g. medical, legal, counselling, Centrelink | 17 | 68 | 11 | 73.3 | 10 | 76.9 | 38 | 71.7 |
| Being healthy (diet and exercise) | 6 | 22.2 | 8 | 53.3 | 10 | 76.9 | 24 | 43.6 |
| Contacting family members | 5 | 18.5 | 7 | 41.2 | 4 | 33.3 | 16 | 28.6 |
| Having someone to call on for support | 9 | 33.3 | 9 | 56.3 | 7 | 58.3 | 25 | 45.5 |
| Driving lessons | 18 | 69.2 | 11 | 68.8 | 11 | 84.6 | 40 | 72.7 |
| Socialising | 8 | 28.6 | 8 | 47.1 | 4 | 33.3 | 20 | 35.1 |

Note: Caseworkers could choose more than one response hence there are no column totals.

Finally, the caseworkers were asked for the accommodation plan for once the young person leaves care. As can be seen in Table 21 around a third (32.3%) thought the young person would stay with current carers and another third (32.3%) thought they would be living independently or in supported accommodation.

Table 21: Caseworker report of current plan for accommodation once the young people aged 15-17 years leave care

| What is the current plan for accommodation once the child leaves care? | n | % |
|--|-----------|--------------|
| Stay on with the current carers | 20 | 32.3 |
| Return to family | 7 | 11.3 |
| Supported accommodation | 7 | 11.3 |
| Independent living | 13 | 20.9 |
| Other (specify) | 5 | 8.1 |
| Don't know | 10 | 16.1 |
| Total | 62 | 100.0 |

8 Summary of key findings

8.1 Characteristics of the leaving care cohort

- The analysis in this report focuses on those young people who had been surveyed at either Wave 2 or Wave 3 of the Study, and were aged 15 – 17 years old at the time of interview. This is referred to as the leaving care cohort.
- There were 76 young people in the leaving care cohort with more males than females, and more non-Aboriginal than Aboriginal young people although this varied slightly across placement types. They tended to be reported for the first time before the age of eight years old and over half had 10 or more risk of significant harm (ROSH) reports prior to entering care for a range of issues, most frequently reflecting risk of psychological harm, neglect and physical abuse. Twenty nine of the young people were in foster care, 25 in relative/kinship care and 22 in residential care.
- Just over half of this group entered care at age 11 or 12 (due to the POCLS cohort entering for the first time between May 2010 and October 2011). For 42% of the 76, their total number of placements was one or two.
- At the time of their latest interview, just over a third of the group were in the clinical range for behaviour problems, and just over half were below normal range on measures of language. In terms of non-verbal intelligence (problem solving and reasoning) just under half were in the below normal range.

8.2 Carer's views of leaving care

- Around half of the 76 carers interviewed thought that the young person 'definitely' or 'probably would' live with them on leaving care. The majority of foster and relative/kinship carers (85.2%) said they would be willing to have the young person stay, most saying they could stay as long as they like and

nearly all of them saying they would expect to stay in touch with the young person after they turned 18.

- Almost half of the carers thought that someone had explained the change in legal status to the young person once they turned 18. Around half of the carers thought the young person had a leaving care case plan and around a third thought the young person had been told about leaving care services.
- Just under half of carers thought the young person 'definitely' or 'probably would' be able to manage on leaving care. The biggest concern for carers was around the young person's self-care and coping skills.

8.3 Young people's views of leaving care

- Forty six young people completed interviews. The majority of young people interviewed (73.9%) indicated they had been advised that their care order would end once they turned 18 years. Just under half indicated a caseworker had been talking to them about a plan for the next few years. Of those who indicated they had talked about a plan, 50% had a written plan and 40% had written information about possible services and support available.
- Just under half of the young people interviewed (46.2%) thought that they would stay on with current carers after they turned 18 and the majority (92.3%) thought they would stay in touch with their current carer. In terms of assistance they need after turning 18 the most popular responses were related to learning to drive and accessing their Community Services file. Young people were asked if they worried about turning 18 and the future and the most popular response option was 'not at all' with 58.1% choosing this option.

8.4 Caseworker's views of leaving care

- Sixty two caseworkers answered questions about this cohort of young people. Around half (53.6%) said a leaving care plan had been developed for the young person but this varied from 76.0% of young people in residential care having a plan compared to 38.1% of those in relative/kinship care.
- Over half of the caseworkers (59.7%) thought the young person 'definitely' or 'probably would' have the skills to look after themselves once they turned 18. Caseworkers reported areas where young people would need assistance most notably finding a place to live, budgeting and accessing financial support and assistance.
- Around a third thought the young person would stay with current carers on leaving care while another third thought they would live independently or in supported accommodation.

9 Conclusion

The POCLS leaving care sample in this statistical report entered OOHC in their middle childhood and the data collected from carers, caseworkers and young people themselves gives important insights into their developmental outcomes and the type and level of services and supports they need. In summary this analysis showed at the time of leaving care, over a third of the young people had clinical range behaviour problems, over half had below normal range language development and just under half had below normal range non verbal reasoning.

While most carers are happy to have the young people in their care stay on in the placement after they turn 18 years old, the analysis found variance in leaving care planning across placement types as would be expected. For example, there was less leaving care planning for young people age 15-17 years in relative/kinship care placements compared to young people living in residential care placements. Only around half of the young people when aged 15-17 years old had caseworkers commence any planning for leaving care. Carers and caseworkers tended to report young people requiring support to a greater degree than the young people reported themselves.

The analysis was disaggregated by Aboriginality to examine whether there were any significant differences in the findings between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal young people. The majority of results from this analysis found no statistically significant differences between the two groups.

10 References

Paxman, M., Tully, L., Burke, S. & Watson, J. (2014). Pathways of Care: Longitudinal Study on Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care in New South Wales. *Family Matters*, 15-28.

