

fostering our future

ISSUE 40: SPRING

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Family &
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FOSTER CARE WEEK CELEBRATIONS



Minister's Message

Welcome to the spring edition of the *Fostering Our Future* magazine.

This edition celebrates Foster Care Week and acknowledges the wonderful contribution of foster carers in NSW. Thank you for the love and support you give to children and young people across NSW. Read more about Foster Care Week celebrations on page 6.

For young people leaving care, transitioning to independence can be both exciting and daunting. CREATE has developed a leaving care kit to help support young people with the transition, find out more on page 16. There's also a story on page 8 about how the new Careleaver's line can help.

When children are feeling secure in a safe and caring environment, they may feel more comfortable about disclosing abuse or neglect.

If a child discloses abuse or neglect to you, it's important for the child's wellbeing that you understand how to respond and where to seek help. For further information, see page 3.

This edition also includes highlights from the much-anticipated, first report from the Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study – the first large-scale study in Australia to look at outcomes for children and young people in out of home care. The study will help frontline workers better support and work with children and young people in out-of-home care. Thank you to the children, young people and carers who have taken part in the study. To find out more, see page 7.

To read about our recent Ministerial OOHC Forum - Partners In Care: Achieving Better Outcomes for Children and Young People in Care, turn to page 18. Thanks to the more than 250 people who attended – particularly the young people in care, care leavers and carers from across NSW. It was a privilege to hear first hand your experiences and insights.

Finally, read the perspectives of Foster Care Ambassador Jill De'Ath with five decades of out of home care under her belt on page 5.

Until next edition, a heartfelt thank you for providing a safe and caring home for the children in your care.

Brad Hazzard

Minister for Family and Community Services

Fostering our Future can only continue to be a valuable resource with your feedback. If you'd like to see a particular topic covered, have an interesting story, or you wish to nominate a child in your care to be profiled confidentially, please email us at: fostercarers@facs.nsw.gov.au.

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When a child or young person discloses abuse or neglect

When caring for a child, situations sometimes arise where a child discloses information about abuse or neglect to you. This could be information that is already known or it could be new information. This article can help you to understand what you can do in these situations, how to respond, and where to seek help. This is important because sometimes when children are settled and feeling secure in a placement they may feel more comfortable about disclosing more information about any abuse or neglect they may have experienced.

Types of disclosure

Disclosure can be direct, indirect or a third-party disclosure.

Indirect disclosures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • verbal hints that appear to be about abuse • written hints that appear to be about abuse • graphic hints such as journal writing, drawings, art work that appear to be about abuse
Direct disclosure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the child says they are (or have been) abused or neglected • the child says they will tell about something happening to them only if certain conditions are met • the child pretends it is happening to someone else • the child says they were abused previously
Third party disclosure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the child tells another person who discloses to someone else



There are different forms of abuse. These include neglect, sexual, physical abuse, and emotional abuse or psychological harm, which could consist of witnessing domestic violence.

Although it is possible for 'one-off' incidents to cause serious harm, it is generally the frequency, persistence and duration of the abuser's behaviour that defines the consequences for the child or young person. Emotional abuse can include a range of behaviours such as excessive criticism, withholding affection, exposure to domestic violence, intimidation, or threatening behaviour.

Being aware - looking for signs or indicators of abuse

There are a number of indicators that can lead to indirect disclosure of an abuse, even if a child does not directly disclose the abuse to you. These can come in the form of physical indicators or behavioural indicators.

All types of abuse and neglect harm children psychologically, but the term 'psychological harm' or 'emotional abuse' applies to behaviour that damages the confidence and self esteem of a child or young person, resulting in serious emotional deprivation or trauma. Some indicators may stand alone, while others may be grouped together.

What can you do?

If a child or young person discloses information about experiences of abuse or neglect, listen calmly without judgment. Don't ask probing questions and be careful not to let them see reactions of shock, disbelief, disgust, or fear.

Reassure them that it's not their fault, that you believe them, that they did the right thing by telling you, and that you are there to support them.

Don't make promises you may not be able to keep – like you are going to make sure nobody ever hurts them again. Let them know you have to tell their caseworker because it is their job to keep them safe.

Depending on the age of the child it may be helpful to ask a few gentle 'clarifying' questions to help determine what the child is telling you – but be careful not to 'interview' the child by asking many probing questions. Questions such as who, what, where, and when will result in a more meaningful response to the abuse from the child's caseworker and authorities.

At the next available opportunity take notes of what the child has said – try to record the child's words and behaviours and make a note of the date of this conversation. This will assist in any investigation. These disclosures contain sensitive information so it is important to maintain confidentiality.

Who do I tell?

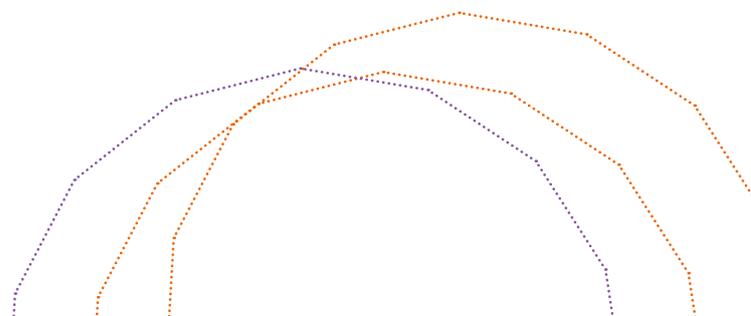
- If you suspect that a child is at risk of significant harm, you can report it to FACS by contacting the Child Protection Helpline or your caseworker.
- ◆ You can make a report by phoning the Helpline on 132 111 (TTY 1800 212 936) for the cost of a local call, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The first response is to phone the Helpline as the caseworker may be out or unavailable. The right people need to be informed about the child's welfare. However, it is important not tell everyone as this could negatively affect the child's safety, privacy and confidentiality.

What happens next?

FACS must assess reports where a child or young person is at risk of significant harm from abuse or neglect.

- When you report to your caseworker you will be asked questions to help them find out the risk of significant harm to the child or young person involved. This will assist FACS to determine the appropriate response.
- What happens next depends on the information received by FACS, the circumstance, or the urgency of the report. The report may receive a response from multiple authorities including the police, Joint Investigation Response Teams (JIRT), as well as FACS.
- FACS staff may also need to talk to other people to find out more information. For example, the caseworker might contact the child or young person's teacher, the affiliated non-government organisation (NGO), childcare worker, or relatives.
- The law allows FACS to exchange information that relates to the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child or young person with a range of agencies, including NSW Police, NSW Health, or the Department of Education.
- If the child or young person is at risk of significant harm, FACS tries to work with the family, other agencies, and professionals to make sure they are safe. If a child or young person is in immediate danger, they will be moved to a safe place. The child or young person is involved as much as possible in decisions that affect them.
- ◆ The matter may also be sent locally for further assessment by the local FACS Community Services Centre or it may be closed upon receipt as no risk of significant harm is indicated.

The caseworker will work with you as the carer to support the child or young person through any investigation. ◆





Through my eyes: Jill De-Ath

Jill De-Ath has spent the past 50 years as a carer, ambassador, and advocate for foster carers. Recently announcing her resignation from Connecting Carers, she shares her insights on foster care today and we celebrate her enormous contribution to foster care.

What are the rewards of being a carer?

You'll laugh at this, but for me it's seeing children being restored to their parents. If a child can live safely with their parents, that would be the best option. When a child came into my care, I treated them like little birds with broken wings. I took them in to mend their wings so they could fly home. If they come back to me, they were mine. If they don't, they never were.

During the 50 years you have been involved in foster care, what have been some of the key changes?

Birth family contact is very, very important now. Just as it should be – it's their birth right. It doesn't matter what the birth parents are like. As they get

older, children can learn about why they can't live with their parents right now.

'Life story work' is also a very important change. Each child in care now will have an accurate record of their life in care, whether they are restored to their birth family or are in long-term care.

There's also more scrutiny behind becoming a carer, and the state-wide register of carers is an important change. I think abuse in care is less likely to happen nowadays.

What are some of the challenges for today's foster carers?

Foster carers are under the microscope a lot more today. A foster carer now is a very busy person with more appointments than in the past – dealing with medical services, caseworkers, arranging family contact. I like that children in care and carers have a lot more contact with their caseworkers. But I think it's important that caseworkers respect the carer's family as well as the foster child when making arrangements for contact.

What's working well today in foster care?

Carers today are told a lot more about the children coming into their care, which can help them prepare for supporting that child. Carers today are more empowered to be advocates for their foster children. A carer's voice is very important.

Given your experience over several decades, how do you think support and training for carers has changed?

I think carers are now considered as part of a team more than before. If they aren't then they should be. With the NGO sector meeting carers and children on a regular basis, any problems with the carers or the children can be identified and hopefully rectified. With regular training sessions offered in all areas of NSW, and coffee and chat morning teas, carers can meet and get to know one another which can assist them if they have a problem.

What inspires you about foster carers?

Foster carers of today have a lot more going on in their lives. A lot of foster carers now work, children are involved in extra curricular activities and are encouraged to do sport, another expense and commitment. But carers do this on a day-to-day basis to make life for the foster child rewarding and to help them reach their full potential. ♦

25th Foster Care Week celebrates carers and families 'growing together'

Foster Care Week 2015 – now in its 25th year – was launched on Sunday 13th September with a Picnic Day at south western Sydney's Lizard Log Reserve. More than 1,000 picnic-goers gathered to enjoy a host of fun, family friendly activities including face painting, pony rides, games, races, competitions, entertainment, and fabulous barbecued food in a relaxed bushland setting.



The event, hosted by ACWA and Fostering NSW, kicked off a week of recognition and acknowledgement of the amazing role played by foster carers in our community.

Festivities opened with an address by the Minister for Family and Community Services, Brad Hazzard, who thanked carers for their dedication and commitment to improving the lives of our most vulnerable children and young people.

ACWA Acting Chief Executive Officer, Dr Wendy Foote said the theme of this year's Foster Care Week, Growing Together, aimed to highlight the crucial role foster carers play in instilling in children the sense of belonging and stability that helps them thrive and reach their full potential, both as children and as adults.



'The best outcomes are achieved when foster carers, out-of-home care agencies and birth families can all work together as a team,' Dr Foote said.

'The unique insight and experience of foster carers is absolutely pivotal when it comes to planning and responding in the best interests of children and young people.'

In the spirit of growing and working together, the picnic was run by a legion of volunteers from both FACS and non-government agencies who worked tirelessly to make the day a huge success.

Similar events were held around NSW throughout Foster Care Week offering plenty of opportunity not only to say 'thank you' to the state's many foster carers, but also to invite others to open their hearts and homes to make a difference in a vulnerable child's life.

The drawing and writing competitions were as popular as ever, attracting entries into one or both from more than 100 children. Each and every entrant was a winner and received a HOYTS movie voucher and a certificate of recognition for their amazing creation. ♦





Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study - a window into care

A heartfelt thank you to the 1,000 plus children, young people and their carers who took part in the Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study face-to-face interviews.

FACS has now published the first-of-many, and much-anticipated, findings from the Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study.

This study follows children and young people in out-of-home care through their care experience. The idea is to track the developmental wellbeing of these kids to see how they're faring over time to learn more about how to support them.

Commenting on the launch of the report, Minister for Family and Community Services, Brad Hazzard, said he wants to see children and young people in out-of-home care getting the same opportunities as those in the general community.

'This is a complex area and the NSW Government is always looking for ways to help children and

young people in care live in a safe and loving home and achieve their best – whether it's staying in school, going to university or getting a job,' he said.

'This study will help us see where we can improve the system to help them achieve the best possible outcomes,' he added.

The next wave of results from the study, with data collected at 18-month intervals, is expected to be published early next year. ♦

You can read the full report and related information on the FACS website www.community.nsw.gov.au/pathways and click on 'publications'

Please send any feedback by email to: pathways@facs.nsw.gov.au



Connecting young people: new phone line helps teens in care

The new Careleaver's Line on 1800 994 686 is now available to help young people connect to support and services – especially those teens getting ready to live independently. This is a free phone line service available Monday to Friday, 9am to 4.30pm where staff are able to answer queries and provide information and links to services.

FACS is committed to supporting young people to plan and develop the skills to become independent over time. Young people (from 15 years of age) who are transitioning from living in OOHC to independence are a particularly vulnerable group in our community. While many may have good relationships with their carers, friends, family, or caseworkers, many often have to develop independent living skills and manage on their own much earlier than other young people.

'It's important young people leaving care have access to information that can help them learn, work, engage in community life and influence the decisions that affect them,' said Simone Walker, Executive Director Design, Innovation, Safety and

Permanency. 'FACS has a range of supports in place to help prepare young people as they start their journey to independence. The Careleaver's line is just one way to connect young people to the supports available. This is especially important for those young people who may be feeling vulnerable or don't have a stable home life family around them.'

The Careleaver's line will support young people who are planning to leave care or have left care. It can help answer queries and provide information on topics such as housing, Centrelink, health, training or contact with family. The service is aimed to complement other information young people may receive from people involved in their lives such as their carers, caseworkers or family members.

Where relevant, staff will direct young people to their local Community Services Centre or non-government agency or services - including after care services.

A letter has been sent to agencies to advise them about the Careleaver's Line. ♦

For further information about leaving care call 1800 994 686 or CareleaversLine@facs.nsw.gov.au





Post care education financial support

The Minister for Family and Community Services recently announced a new non-means tested allowance for carers to help young people aged 18-24 remain in the carers home while they complete their NSW Higher School Certificate or equivalent.

Young people due to transition to independence from out-of-home care at the same time that they finish school are at risk of not attaining their HSC or equivalent if they need to establish independent accommodation at this time.

Many young people turn 18 while they are completing year 12. This is even more likely for young people in out-of-home care who, because of the circumstances which led them to enter care, may mean they finish school at an older age than their peers.

To be eligible the young person in OOHC must be enrolled full-time or equivalent in one of the following courses:

- Higher School Certificate (HSC)
- HSC via school-based apprenticeship or traineeship
- HSC via Vocational Education and Training (VET) Board Endorsed Courses
- TAFE NSW Certificate IV in Tertiary Preparation
- Post-School course at Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) Certificate II level or higher
- International Baccalaureate Diploma.

The young person's case worker (NGO or FACS) will explore living arrangements when developing the leaving care plan and will talk through the options with the carer as well as the young person. To be eligible for this allowance the carer must have been receiving a care allowance immediately before the young person reached 18 years of age, the young person must be 18 and under 25 years of age and live with the carer in a placement that ended due to their age. A semester or school report must be provided to the caseworker each school term to demonstrate that young person is still studying. ♦



You can find out more about the Post Care Education Financial Support online at www.facs.nsw.gov.au/postcarefinancialsupport

Health and Education Pathways



TAFE Scholarships: Study for free!

Did you know that since July 2015 NSW State Training Services offers fee-free scholarships for eligible students enrolled in a certificate qualification? Young people in out-of-home care (OOHC) who are thinking about studying a course through a registered training organisation (such as TAFE) may be exempt from paying their entire course fees. Students are eligible for this scholarship if they are between 15 and 30 years of age, interested in learning a 'Smart and Skilled' course, and receiving a Commonwealth subsidy (for example, Youth Allowance, rental assistance) or are a dependent of a carer receiving a subsidy (for example, Family Tax Benefit A). Students who are tenants of NSW social housing are also entitled to apply for this scholarship. This is a great opportunity to enrol in a course, learn new skills, vocation or apprenticeship without the burden of having to pay tuition fees.

Visit www.smartandskillsed.nsw.gov.au for more information.

Keeping kids in care healthy

NSW Kids and Families is working with the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) to ensure all children and young people in foster care have regular health assessments and have access to the best services, which optimise their physical and emotional health.

Within 14 days of a child entering care, FACS will ask the carers' permission before making a referral to the 'health pathway' via the local health district OOHC coordinator.

Carers play an important role in preparing and taking the child or young person to the first health screening and/or comprehensive assessment. Following the assessment, the health practitioner (for example, a GP) will write a Health Management Plan, which outlines the best services or programs for the child's specific needs. Some children may need speech therapy, glasses, or a hearing check, while others may need to see a medical specialist for further tests.

Some children may benefit from counselling sessions with a psychologist, or a few sessions with a dentist or dietician to improve their physical health.

Finding the best therapy or program, whether they are public or private services, can make a huge difference to children's learning, friendships and wellbeing. Regardless of how long a child has been in care, your caseworker can start the health referral process.



Ask your caseworker for more information about a health assessment or visit www.community.nsw.gov.au/docswr/_assets/main/lib100049/health_pathways.pdf

Individualised education plans for children in foster care

Identifying goals by which your child can remain engaged and motivated in school provides the best foundation for a happy and successful education. By identifying early learning problems, teachers and school counsellors can prevent a child from under achieving, losing motivation, or dropping out of school. Within 14 days of entering care, the caseworker will send a notification to the child's school, after which the caseworker, carer, and child are invited to the school enrolment session.

Following this, the learning support teacher, in liaison with the child and the carer, will develop the child's individual education plan (IEP). Carers play a vital role in keeping the child engaged in school and asking for additional resources or teaching support where needed. If your child does not have a current individual education plan, contact your caseworker who can guide you in finding the best learning solutions. ♦



Also see
www.community.nsw.gov.au/docswr/_assets/main/lib100049/education_pathways.pdf



Keep watch – be water safe

Each year many children in NSW die from drowning. Swimming pools can provide hours of fun for the whole family as long as safety rules are followed.

Supervision and safety by the pool

Even when they know how to swim, children must never be left unsupervised while around water. Children under five should also always have an adult swimming within an arm's reach from them.

During parties or large gatherings, nominate a designated 'child supervisor' to make sure children are supervised at all times.

Have some rules for around water, such as locking gates, waiting for a grown up, no running or diving, and no rough play.

Make sure the pool fencing and gate meet safety standards, which includes having a self-closing gate.

When children are taught to swim from an early age, they build confidence, so it's good to talk to children about water confidence and what they know about water safety.

What is a swimming pool?

The Swimming Pools Act 1992 describes a swimming pool as an excavation, structure or vessel that is capable of being filled with water to a depth greater than 300 millimetres. This means that a spa pool and a portable/inflatable pool are classified as a swimming pool by the Act.

Does my pool need to be fenced?

Yes. All swimming pools are required to be fenced and have a child-resistant barrier installed. A spa pool must be fenced if it is not covered and secured by a lockable lid.

The fence has to meet the requirements of Standard AS 1926.1 (Building Code of Australia). See the Office of Local Government for further information.

Carers/parents must also supervise children around the pool at all times as a fence is no substitute for responsible supervision.

Pool registration and compliance certificate

FACS policy is that all FACS authorised foster, relative or kinship carers living in a residence with a swimming pool must have their pool registered and have a valid pool compliance certificate.

More information is available at www.swimmingpoolregister.nsw.gov.au





Prospective FACS foster, relative and kinship carers living in residences with a swimming pool are required to provide a pool compliance certificate before being authorised as a FACS carer. This includes carers being authorised for emergency care, which is normally up to three months.

FACS annual carer reviews and five-year carer authorisation reviews will include a review of the Home Inspection Checklist to ensure ongoing compliance to swimming pool safety.

If you are renting your home, the real estate agent should be able to tell you if the pool at your house/unit has a pool compliance certificate and can provide a copy of this certificate. Under the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 (NSW), a landlord must ensure that the pool is surrounded by child resistant barrier at all times. The barrier must be designed, constructed, installed and maintained to the standards prescribed in the legislation.

Contact your local council if you require a pool inspection and a pool compliance certificate will be issued if the pool is compliant. The pool compliance certificate is valid for three years, provided there are no changes to the pool barrier during that time. There is a fee for a pool compliance certificate.

Home water safety

Don't leave water in eskies, buckets or toddler pools. Young children can still drown in very small amounts of water.

Know where your child is and keep doors and gates locked if there are water tanks, drains or fountains where you live.

Never leave young children alone or leave children to supervise children.

Dam safety

Having a securely fenced house yard or 'safe play area' with child-resistant gates is the best way to prevent farm tragedies. This will help stop unsupervised access to farm hazards, such as dams and other dangers. Families need to ensure young children stay in this safe play area unless an adult is available to take them out and closely supervise them. For more information about child farm safety, visit www.farmsafe.org.au

Hypoxic blackout (shallow water blackout)

Hypoxic blackout describes a loss of consciousness under water caused by a lack of oxygen to the brain following competitive or repetitive breath-holding. Hypoxic blackout can lead to brain damage and death. Many children play in the pool and compete with each other to see who could hold their breath the longest under water, which can be extremely dangerous. Competitive and repetitive breath holding can be deadly. ♦

For more information visit
www.royallifesaving.com.au and
shallowwaterblackout.org

NSW Carers Register

The NSW Carers Register was launched on 15 June 2015. It is a NSW-wide database that will record the details of people who are authorised, or apply to be authorised, to provide out-of-home care.

The Carers Register is a secure, restricted-access system that will improve the authorisation process by supporting better information sharing between designated agencies. The register is managed by the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG).

The Carers Register records information about carer applicants and authorised carers, and their household members including their names, previous names, gender, date of birth, and whether they identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Recorded household information includes the residential address, a list of people who live in the home, and the outcomes of home inspections.

Associations between carers and household members are recorded, including movements

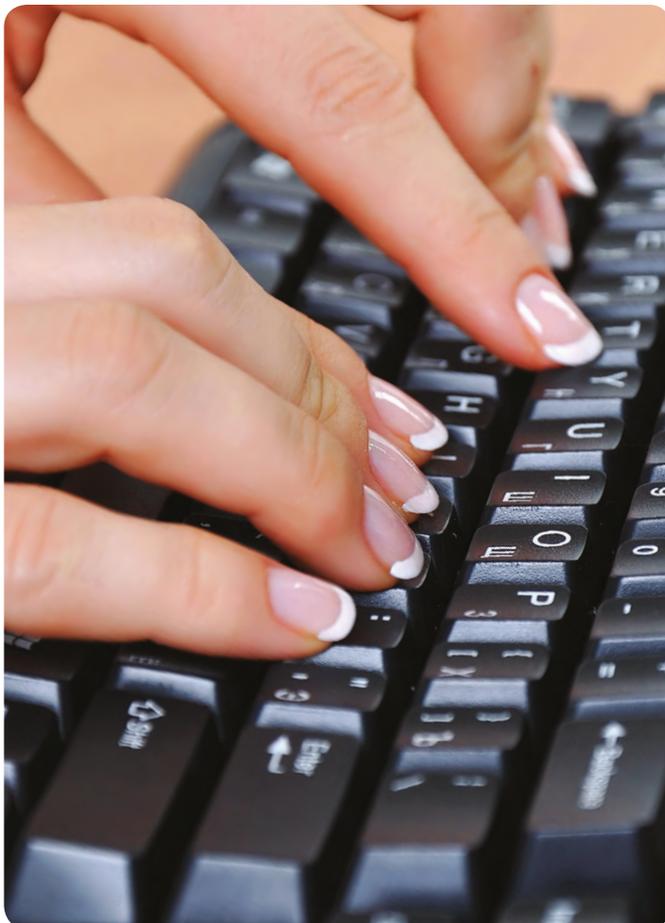
into (and out of) carer households. A household member is any person who regularly resides in a carer's home and visitors who stay at the home for three weeks or more. It's possible for a person to reside at more than one home.

Will my information be recorded in the Carers Register?

The information of authorised carers and their household members, as well as carer applicants and their household members, is required by law to be entered into the Carers Register. Designated agencies are required to inform people that their information will be recorded in the Carers Register.

Who has access to Carers Register information?

A designated agency will only be able to access information about its own carers and household members in the Carers Register. The agency will be able to access the history of an individual in the Carers Register if they apply to the agency for authorisation as a carer. The agency will also be able to access the history of an individual if they become a household member of a carer applicant or authorised carer. ♦



For more information:

visit the Office of the Children's Guardian website at www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au

email questions to carers-register@kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au



OOHC Transition Evaluation Foster Carer Survey update

An evaluation of the transition of OOHC from FACS to accredited non-government organisations (NGOs) has included a survey for carers to complete. Today about 50% of children and their carers are with an NGO.

As part of the OOHC Transition evaluation, the Social Policy Research Centre developed an online survey for carers. The aim of the survey was to explore how carers have experienced the transition of case management from FACS to the non-government sector.

A link to the survey was publicised and distributed by the Association of Child Welfare Agencies (ACWA), AbSec, and Connecting Carers to their networks of carers. The survey was open for a two-week period in May 2015 and then extended for a further two weeks. A total of 301 surveys were completed by foster and kinship carers in NSW.

The survey is being analysed and a report will be submitted to FACS. The survey collected information on carers' background and experience, their experience of case management with both FACS and agencies, and how carers whose case management has transferred from FACS to an agency have experienced the transition. Initial analysis of the survey indicates that:

- the majority of the carers that completed the survey were female
- the largest proportion of respondents were in the 45-54 years age range

- a quarter of carers who completed the survey lived in single carer households
- just under half of respondents lived in regional areas, a third lived in metropolitan areas and a fifth lived in rural areas
- a third of carers who completed the survey had been fostering for between five and 10 years
- just under three-quarters of carers who completed the survey provided long-term care
- a quarter of respondents had fostered a total of 3-6 children and over a fifth had fostered 21 children or more
- a majority of carers who completed the survey reported that they had undertaken some foster care training in the past
- almost half of the carers who completed the survey had experienced case management by both FACS and an agency, over a quarter had only ever been case managed by an agency and a quarter had only ever experienced case management by FACS.

On completion of the survey, foster carers were invited to enter the draw to win an iPad (16GB+ Wifi). Over 200 foster carers entered the draw and a name was drawn at random. Congratulations to Jenny Lowe, who was the lucky winner of the iPad! We would also like to thank everyone who took the time to complete the survey. ♦

You've got mail

Promotional materials about the CREATE Foundation were sent out to carers in September. FACS needs your permission to give CREATE the contact details of the child or young person in your care to encourage them to join Club CREATE. You can also go online and help children and young people sign up to the CREATE network!

Keep an eye out for the postcard included in your mail. Complete the details in the postcard, place the postcard into a stamped envelope and don't forget to post it!

CREATE Foundation is a national not-for-profit organisation that creates a better life for children and young people in care by:

- Connecting children and young people with each other and their community
- Empowering children and young people to build self-confidence, self-esteem and skills that enable them to have a voice and be heard



- Changing the care system through advocacy and consultation so that young people can have a say about the decisions that impact the child protection system in Australia.

Club CREATE is the gateway to CREATE programs and services and is available nationally to children and young people aged 0-25 who are in care or who have had a care experience. Joining Club CREATE is free. ♦

For more information, phone CREATE on 1800 655 105 or visit www.create.org.au



Leaving care kits

CREATE Foundation has consulted extensively with young people across Australia to develop a nationally consistent 'leaving care' resource – the Go Your Own Way Info Kit.

The info kit includes a workbook with general information, planning checklists and contact details for organisations that may be able to support young people as they become more independent. The info kit comes in a bag and is also provided in electronic form on a USB flash drive.

From October, this free kit will be sent to all young people in care in NSW who are turning 17 years old this year.

Young people will receive a letter first before getting their kit in the mail. Any questions, contact CREATE on 1800 655 105. ♦

Supporting children with disability

Children with disability across NSW can now access support through the Early Links program, which supports children with disability and their families/carers in fulfilling their goals, hopes and dreams.

From July 2015, an additional 35 Early Linkers will be established across NSW, including 15 Aboriginal identified positions. This brings the number of Early Links supporting families with children with disability to 79.

Early Links NSW provides community-focused supports to children with disability aged from birth to eight years. Early Links coordinators provide a

range of supports for families of children with disability or developmental delay during the time of diagnosis or while awaiting diagnosis. This includes providing information and assistance to access mainstream and specialist services.

Early Links NSW is a key component of the NSW Government's contribution to local area coordination and decision support under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

The program promotes a 'strengths based' approach, focussing on increasing opportunities for people with disability, their families and carers' participation and inclusion in their local communities. The key focus is to support people outside of the traditional disability service system. ♦

To contact an Early Links program, visit www.earlylinks.org.au

We are the world: International carer conference in Sydney

Final preparations are underway for the International Foster Carer Organisation (IFCO) World Conference 'Tell Someone Who Cares' which will be held at the Star Casino in Sydney on November 8-11, 2015.

The conference – funded by Family and Community Services and led by Connecting Carers NSW/Karitane – provides an opportunity to showcase foster, kinship and relative care in the Australian context and international speakers will present important and innovative work being undertaken in other parts of the world. Across the three days, more than 900 carers, professionals, academics, and others actively involved in caring for children and young people or providing support and services will come together from Australia and the world to participate, engage and celebrate fostering.



They'll take part in networking, presentations and social activities.

The IFCO Conference will also feature a youth program and provide an opportunity to share latest research, best practice, real stories and international trends and changes. ♦

Please visit www.ifco2015.com.au to register and for more details.

OOHC Forum: Partners In Care

More than 250 people, including many young people in care, care leavers and - foster and kinship carers, attended the recent Ministerial OOHC Forum - Partners In Care: Achieving Better Outcomes for Children and Young People in Care held on 19th October at the Australian Technology Park in Sydney.

Minister for Family and Community Services and Social Housing, Brad Hazzard, held the event to hear first hand the experiences and insights of young people, carers and practitioners who work with young people in out of home care (OOHC).

The day was facilitated by SBS Insight host, Jenny Brockie, who posed a number of important questions to participants, panels and presenters. The event focused on themes like education, the impact of trauma and the importance of cultural identity.

One of the key themes was the impact of trauma. Child welfare expert Dr Howard Bath, former Northern Territory Children's Commissioner and psychologist, spoke on this issue and mental health for young people in care.

Dr Bath said the three core trauma-related needs are: the need to feel safe; the need for trusting connections and 'normal' engagement with the community; and the need for support in developing coping strategies and managing turbulent emotions.

Young people in care have suffered trauma, often severe. It is in everyone's interests to ensure they do not further experience harm and trauma by interacting with Police and the criminal justice system unnecessarily.

Sydney foster carer James Bean and Western NSW carer Janet Moriarty, together with young person Gemma, were interviewed by Ms Brockie as part of a panel discussion and ask about their experiences and insights.

As part of the day there were discussion tables talking through ideas, what works and what doesn't and what needs to improve to support the experience of children and young people in care.

Representatives from the six Carer Reference Groups were also there as part of the day.

Some of the hundreds of ideas generated from the forum included:

- early intervention to prevent placement breakdown
- training and understanding trauma for carers and caseworkers
- more flexibility of models in care such as keeping siblings together
- opportunity to say goodbye to previous caseworker and better transition preparation
- reducing red tape and bureaucracy
- ◆ collaborating, sharing information and being proactive to improve educational outcomes. ◆

OOHC forum wall of ideas





Carer Reference Groups

What's being discussed within Carer Reference Groups across NSW?

Carer Reference Groups (CRG) have been meeting in July, August and September and have been actively involved in generating, advocating, and providing feedback to improve the processes and functions of foster and kinship care.

Some of the themes discussed include:

- concerns regarding the Carer Register and how data will be recorded and updated
- the role of media in representing carers and carer recruitment
- understanding guardianship
- information about the new Institute of Open Adoption
- communication activities to support distribution of information for carers
- clarity around carers entitlements and processes
- the types of funding available to non-government organisations supporting foster and kinship care

- current research projects such as Pathways of Care
- supplementary support for children with additional needs
- training provided to staff and services within non-government organisations that support foster and kinship care, including parenting training and understanding cultural diversity
- carer recruitment methods.

This year training opportunities taken up by the CRG networks include Cybersafety and the Connecting Carers training camp which included training on understanding and supporting children who have been sexually abused.

Each CRG has shown professionalism and diligence in seeking outcomes and progressing each issue as an important topic to be addressed. ♦

Ideas?

Submit an idea for discussion by emailing: carerreferencegroupsnsw@facs.gov.au or calling (02) 9716 2731

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Casework staff or your local Community Services Centre (CSC) should be the first point of contact for any queries. To find your local CSC, look under 'Community Services, Department of' in the White Pages.
www.community.nsw.gov.au

Child Protection Helpline

132 111 TTY: (02) 9633 7698

Foster Care Complaints freecall:

Freecall: 1800 000 164

OTHER USEFUL CONTACTS

Connecting Carers NSW

Free advice, information, training and support across NSW plus information sessions for carers, workers and the public.
1300 794 653
www.connectingcarersnsw.com.au

Foster Parents Support Network

Telephone support services to carers.
(02) 9608 8494
Freecall: 1800 262 445 (24 hrs)
www.fosterparentsupportnetwork.org.au

Karitane

Child and family help services and a 24-hour care line.
1300 227 464
www.karitane.com.au

Careleavers line

Telephone advice and information for young people.
Freecall: 1800 994 686

Parent Line NSW

Telephone advice and information service for carers and parents.
Freecall: 1300 130 052

CREATE Foundation

Supports young people living in out-of-home care and those who have left care.
(02) 9267 0977 Freecall: 1800 655 105
www.create.org.au

NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal NSW

Independent, external review of administrative decisions.
1800 060 410 TTY: (02) 92352674
www.ncat.nsw.gov.au

Centrelink

A range of government services throughout Australia.
www.centrelink.gov.au

NSW Ombudsman

An independent and impartial government agency watchdog.
(02) 9286 1000 Freecall: 1800 451 524
www.ombo.nsw.gov.au

ABORIGINAL SPECIFIC SERVICES

AbSec

Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat

Aboriginal carers and carers of Aboriginal kids can visit AbSec's website for the latest news and information about carer support groups. www.absec.org.au
ASFCSS

AbSec's Statewide Aboriginal Foster Carer Support Service (ASFCSS)

Freecall: 1800 888 698 | (02) 9559 5299

foster@absec.org.au www.absec.org.au/foster-care

LEAVING CARE

Link-up NSW

Helps Aboriginal adults separated from their families as children and Aboriginal families separated from their children.

(02)4759 1911 www.linkupnsw.org.au

Marungbai Aboriginal Service

Supports Aboriginal young people who have been in care.
1800 422 555 or (02) 6551 3973

EDUCATION & TRAINING

Aboriginal Education Council

(02) 9660 5696 www.aec.org.au

AECG NSW

Aboriginal Education Consultative Group provides advice on behalf of Aboriginal communities on education and training.

(02) 9550 5666 www.aecg.nsw.edu.au

NSW Department of Education and Training

Aboriginal Education and Training

www.aboriginaleducation.nsw.edu.au

Tranby Aboriginal College

An alternative, independent learning environment

Freecall: 1800 601 988 www.tranby.edu.au

ABORIGINAL AGENCIES

Abcare

(02) 9559 5299

Anglicare Aboriginal

Partnership
(Leeton/Griffith)
1800 367 837

GLMACS (Great Lakes

Manning Aboriginal
Children's Services) –
Biripi Aboriginal

Corporation
Medical Service
(02) 6551 2088

Barnados Aboriginal

Partnership (Orange)
02 6342 4223

Burrn Dalai Aboriginal

Corporation
(02) 6562 1913

Illawarra Aboriginal

Corporation – Myimbarr
(02) 4226 3358

KARI Aboriginal

Resources
(02) 8782 0300

Ngunya Jarjum Aboriginal

Child and Family Network
(02) 6626 3700 /
0400 521 488

Ngurambang (in

partnership with Uniting
Care Burnside
(02) 6885 5010
(Uniting Care Burnside)

South Coast Medical

Service Aboriginal
Corporation OOH
(02) 4428 6666

South Coast Medical

Service Aboriginal
Corporation OOH
(in partnership
with MacKillop)
1300 791 677

Wandiyali

(02) 4957 5900

Waanggay - RivMed &

Anglicare Partnership
(Wagga)
02 6927 0400