

Child protection reports

Analysis of sibling groups



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper examines the interaction of sibling groups with the child protection system, focussing on those sibling groups that are frequently encountered by DoCS.

Over the three year period, from 2004/05 to 2006/07, the number of sibling groups increased by 14%. This compares to a 32% increase in reports received by DoCS and a 21% increase in children reported.

DoCS receive many reports from a small proportion of sibling groups. In each year from 2004/05 to 2006/07, around 3% of sibling groups (ordered by the most frequently reported) accounted for a quarter of all reports while around 12% of sibling groups accounted for half of all reports. For the combined three year period, reports were even more concentrated in the frequently reported sibling groups – the top 2.2% and 8.5% of sibling groups accounted for a quarter and a half of all reports respectively.

- The most frequently encountered groups in 2005/06:
- had the largest sibling groups,
- were relatively more likely in the regions of Hunter and the Central Coast, Northern and Western and relatively less likely in the other regions (based on the sibling group's last referred report),
- had an over-representation of sibling groups where at least one child was identified as Indigenous,
- were more likely to have reports involving neglect and less likely to have reports involving domestic violence and sexual abuse,
- accounted for a large proportion of the assessment work undertaken by DoCS and were more likely to have reports determined to involve actual harm or risk of harm,
- were more likely to have children who had ever been in (Out-of-home Care) OOHC and who entered OOHC after a child protection report in 2005/06, and
- had higher proportions of short term re-reports.

INTRODUCTION

This paper presents the results from an analysis studying the interaction of sibling groups with the child protection system. Of particular interest are those sibling groups which are frequently encountered by DoCS. It is useful to examine these groups to:

- understand how a 'family'-centric approach to child protection may impact on the service system
- inform appropriate service delivery/provision to these clients to improve outcomes
- develop and implement an alert mechanism to identify these clients when new reports are received about the 'family'.

Section 1 of this paper presents detailed analysis of sibling groups based on reports received in 2005/06 only, while section 2 presents analysis of sibling groups over the three year period from 2004/05 to 2006/07. Short term re-reports (i.e. a report about the same child within 7 days with the same reported issue type) are also examined in section 2.

SECTION 1: SIBLING GROUPS, 2005/06

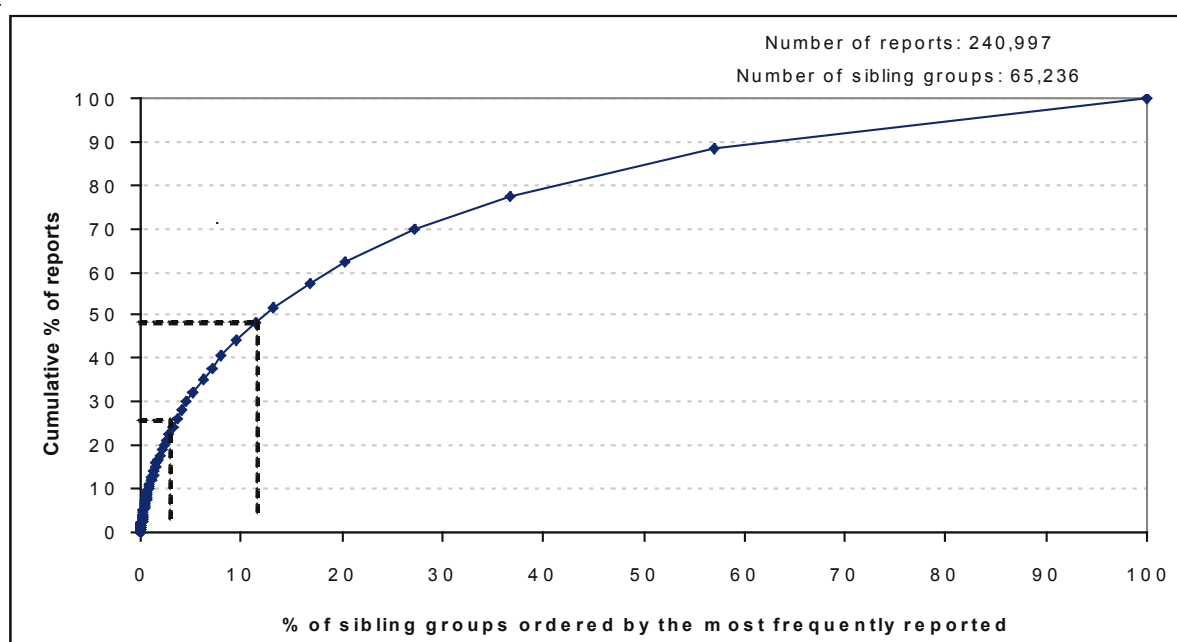
1a. Definition of sibling group

The definition of a sibling group used in this section was “children recorded in KiDS¹ that are related (using the ‘relationship’ component with types: sibling of, sibling to be of, unborn sibling, half sibling of and step sibling of) and for those not matched using the ‘relationship’ component, where their address was the same”².

1b. Analysis of sibling groups – 2005/06

Figure 1 shows that DoCS receives many reports from a small proportion of sibling groups. In 2005/06, the top 3% of the sibling groups (representing a total of 2,054 sibling groups) accounted for nearly a quarter (24%) of all reports while the top 11% of the sibling groups (representing 7,403 sibling groups) accounted for nearly half (48%) of all reports. For these most frequently reported sibling groups (accounting for nearly half of all reports) the number of reports in 2005/06 per sibling group ranged from 8 to 141.

Figure 1: Cumulative percentage of child protection reports received by DoCS by percentage of sibling groups, 2005/06



There were 65,236 sibling groups in 2005/06 – 7.1% with four or more children, 10.1% with three children, 21.5% with two children and 61.2% containing one child (see Table A1 in the Appendix).

Not surprisingly, larger families were over-represented in the frequently encountered groups as there are more children who can be reported, and who may be reported as a group.

¹ The Department’s electronic data base – the Key Information Directory System.

² Sibling groups contain only children that were reported in 2005/06. For example, the matching process may have identified a sibling group of three children. However, only two of these children were reported to DoCS in 2005/06 resulting in a sibling group of two for analysis purposes. A sibling “group” of one therefore means that either: the child reported in 2005/06 was not matched with another child in KiDS based on relationship or address, or the child reported in 2005/06 was matched with other children in KiDS, but the other children were not reported to DoCS in 2005/06.

Sibling groups by region

Comparing the distribution across DoCS regions, frequently encountered sibling groups referred to a Community Service Centre or Joint Investigation Response Team (CSC/JIRT) were relatively more likely in the regions of Hunter and Central Coast, Northern and Western, and relatively less likely in the other regions. Table 1 shows that, based on the sibling group's last *referred* report in 2005/06, Hunter and Central Coast Region had the largest proportion of sibling groups referred to a CSC/JIRT for further assessment while Southern Region had the smallest proportion.

Table 1: Sibling groups referred to a CSC/JIRT for further assessment by DoCS region, 2005/06

	Sibling groups					
	Top 3%		Top 11%		Overall	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Metro Central	206	10.0	834	11.4	7,665	15.0
Metro West	300	14.6	1,129	15.4	8,580	16.7
Metro South West	216	10.5	844	11.5	6,650	13.0
Southern	184	9.0	715	9.7	4,980	9.7
Hunter/Central Coast	467	22.8	1,439	19.6	8,947	17.5
Northern	332	16.2	1,248	17.0	7,855	15.3
Western	314	15.3	1,089	14.8	6,461	12.6
Total*	2,050	100.0	7,335	100.0	51,229	100.0

* The total excludes sibling groups with no reports referred to a CSC/JIRT for further assessment in 2005/06 and includes 91 sibling groups where the region is not identified.

Indigenous sibling groups

It is known that Indigenous children are over-represented in the child protection system, both in terms of the rate of reporting and in the OOH population. Indigenous sibling groups (where at least one child in the group is identified as being Indigenous) were also over-represented in the frequently encountered groups compared to sibling groups overall – 29.5% of the top 3% of sibling groups had at least one child being Indigenous, compared with 24.1% for the top 11% and 10.8% for sibling groups overall (see Table A2 in the Appendix).

Reported issues

Analysis of child protection reports received by DoCS in 2005/06 by *primary* reported issue for the top 3%, top 11% and all sibling groups shows that differences between the groups are small (see Table 2). The most notable differences are that reports from the frequently encountered sibling groups were more likely to involve neglect issues and less likely to involve domestic violence and sexual abuse.

Table A3 in the Appendix, shows that the results using 'any' reported issue (i.e. counting primary, secondary and tertiary reported issues) are consistent with those presented here.

Table 2: Child protection reports by primary reported issue, 2005/06

	Sibling groups					
	Top 3%		Top 11%		Overall	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Reports						
Domestic violence	12,077	20.8	27,582	23.8	64,916	26.9
Neglect	11,313	19.5	20,138	17.4	35,116	14.6
Physical abuse	8,052	13.9	16,046	13.8	34,755	14.4
Carer drug/alcohol issues	6,275	10.8	12,764	11.0	22,487	9.3
Psychological abuse	4,749	8.2	9,712	8.4	20,864	8.7
Carer mental health issues	4,574	7.9	9,254	8.0	17,631	7.3
Sexual abuse	3,103	5.4	6,336	5.5	17,355	7.2
Other	7,820	13.5	14,052	12.1	27,873	11.6
Total	57,963	100.0	115,884	100.0	240,997	100.0

Outcomes of secondary assessments

Table 3 shows that the frequently encountered sibling groups accounted for a large proportion of the assessment work undertaken by DoCS and were more likely to have reports determined to involve actual harm or risk of harm.

The top 3% of sibling groups accounted for 20.7% of Secondary Assessment Stage 1 (SAS1) only completed and 42.5% of Secondary Assessment Stage 2/Judgement and Decisions (SAS2/J&Ds) completed while the top 11% of sibling groups accounted for 44.7% and 71.0% respectively. Overall, the top 3% of sibling groups accounted for 29.9% of completed secondary assessments while the top 11% accounted for 55.7%.

Moreover, the top 3% of sibling groups had an average of 5.0 SAS1 only assessments and 7.3 SAS2/J&D assessments completed per sibling group (see Table A4 in the Appendix). For the top 11% of sibling groups the average number of SAS1 only assessments and SAS2/J&D assessments completed per sibling group was 3.0 and 3.4 respectively. These figures are significantly higher than for all sibling groups (0.8 and 0.5 respectively).

Of the 22,497 reports in 2005/06 that were determined to involve actual harm, 44.0% of these were from the top 3% of sibling groups and 71.9% were from the top 11% of sibling groups. Similar proportions were observed for the 9,814 reports that were determined to involve risk of harm – 41.5% were from the top 3% of sibling groups and 72.2% from the top 11% of sibling groups.

Table 3: Child protection reports by outcome of secondary assessment, 2005/06

	Sibling groups					
	Top 3%		Top 11%		Overall	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Reports						
Secondary assessments completed	25,259	29.9	47,154	55.7	84,616	100.0
SAS1 completed only	10,181	20.7	21,932	44.7	49,097	100.0
SAS2/J&D completed	15,078	42.5	25,222	71.0	35,519	100.0
Determined actual harm	9,908	44.0	16,181	71.9	22,497	100.0
Determined risk of harm	4,074	41.5	7,089	72.2	9,814	100.0
Total	57,963	24.1	115,884	48.1	240,997	100.0

Entry into Out-of-Home Care (OOHC)

Table 4 shows that the most frequently reported sibling groups in 2005/06 were more likely to have children (or, at least one child) who had ever been in OOHC and who entered OOHC after a child protection report in 2005/06.

Almost half (46.8%) of the children who had ever been in OOHC were in the most frequently reported sibling groups (i.e. the top 11%) while nearly 60% of the children that entered OOHC after a report in 2005/06 were in the most frequently reported sibling groups.

A similar pattern is observed (although with lower proportions) when examining sibling groups rather than children. Of those sibling groups where at least one child had ever been in OOHC, over one third (34.9%) were in the most frequently reported sibling groups and almost half (47.9%) of the sibling groups with at least one child entering OOHC after a report in 2005/06 were in the most frequently reported sibling groups.

Table 4: Children and sibling groups by OOHC status, 2005/06

	Top 3%		Top 11%		Overall	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Children						
Have ever been in OOHC	2,757	21.6	5,983	46.8	12,787	100.0
Entered care after a report in 2005/06	1,678	30.0	3,301	59.1	5,589	100.0
Total	8,140	7.4	23,891	21.8	109,568	100.0
Sibling groups						
Have ever had at least one child in OOHC	1,038	13.6	2,661	34.9	7,631	100.0
At least one child entered OOHC after a report in 2005/06	727	20.8	1,675	47.9	3,494	100.0
Total	2,054	3.1	7,403	11.3	65,236	100.0

SECTION 2: SIBLING GROUPS, 2004/05 TO 2006/07

Sibling groups were examined for the three years 2004/05 to 2006/07³ to determine any changes in the numbers and characteristics of the most frequently reported groups. The matching was also undertaken for the combined three year period and the sibling groups, containing children reported in any of the three years 2004/05 to 2006/07, were examined.

2a. Definition of sibling group

The analysis presented in this section uses a simplified definition⁴ based on the 'relationship' component only – "children in KiDS that are related using the 'relationship' component with types: sibling of, sibling to be of, unborn sibling, half sibling of and step sibling of".

2b. Analysis of sibling groups – 2004/05 to 2006/07⁵

Table 5 shows that the number of sibling groups increased by 14% over the three year period compared to a 32% increase in the number of reports received by DoCS and a 21% increase in the number of children reported.

Table 5: Child protection reports, children and sibling groups reported, 2004/05 to 2006/07

	Reports	Children	Sibling groups
	No.	No.	No.
2004/05	216,386	102,349	62,891
2005/06	241,003	109,568	65,301
2006/07	286,033	123,690	71,522
% change 2004/05 to 2006/07	32%	21%	14%
2004/05-2006/07	743,422	242,465	144,902

In each financial year from 2004/05 to 2006/07, around 3% of sibling groups accounted for a quarter of all reports received by DoCS while around 12% of sibling groups accounted for half of all reports (see Table 6).

Most significantly, Table 6 shows that when the data were linked over the three year period, reports were even more concentrated in the most frequently reported sibling groups. Over the three year period, July 2004 to June 2007, the top 2.2% of sibling groups accounted for a quarter of all reports and the top 8.5% of sibling groups accounted for half of all reports.

Table 6: Sibling groups most frequently reported accounting for 25% and 50% of reports, 2004/05 to 2005/06

	Sibling groups most frequently reported accounting for			
	25% of reports		50% of reports	
	No.	%	No.	%
2004/05	2,135	3.4	7,952	12.6
2005/06	2,188	3.4	8,035	12.3
2006/07	2,240	3.1	8,336	11.7
2004/05-2006/07	3,220	2.2	12,291	8.5

Sibling group size has increased over the three years – 6.5% of sibling groups had four or more children in 2004/05 compared with 7.8% in 2006/07 (see Table 7). Correspondingly, the percentage of sibling groups containing one child decreased from 64.2% in 2004/05 to 59.5% in 2006/07. For the combined three year period 7.2% of sibling groups contained four or more children while 62.5% had one child.

³ The relationship component used in the sibling matching was not available prior to 2004/05.

⁴ Using this simplified definition, the sibling matching (and resulting number of sibling groups for 2005/06) was very close to that obtained using the section 1 definition. The simplified definition excludes sibling groups which may have resulted from unrelated children living at the same address (using the section 1 definition). Note that this was a very small percentage – less than 1% of sibling groups.

⁵ The child protection data for this section were sourced from the Key Information and Directory System (KiDS) Annual Extract. Note that for section 1 a draft extract was used and the total numbers of reports differ slightly.

Table 7: Sibling groups by sibling group size, 2004/05 to 2006/07

Size of sibling group	Sibling groups							
	2004/05		2005/06		2006/07		2004/05-2006/07	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	40,372	64.2	40,301	61.7	42,534	59.5	90,628	62.5
2	12,483	19.8	13,723	21.0	15,604	21.8	29,566	20.4
3	5,974	9.5	6,609	10.1	7,770	10.9	14,302	9.9
4+	4,062	6.5	4,668	7.1	5,614	7.8	10,406	7.2
Total	62,891	100.0	65,301	100.0	71,522	100.0	144,902	100.0

2c. Short term re-reports⁶

Table 8 shows the percentage of short term re-reports for all reports increased from 14.8% in 2004/05 to 15.7% in 2005/06 and to 17.5% in 2006/07. For the most frequently reported sibling groups the size of the increase over the three year period has been similar. However, the percentages of short term re-reports are considerably higher for these frequently reported sibling groups.

The percentage of short term re-reports for the frequently reported sibling groups is also considerably higher in the combined data for the three year period (26.4% and 23.1% of reports for the most frequently reported sibling groups compared to 16.1% for all reports).

Table 8: Child protection reports and short term re-reports by most frequently reported sibling groups, 2004/05 to 2006/07

	Reports from most frequently reported sibling groups accounting for								
	All reports			25% of reports			50% of reports		
	Reports	Re-reports	%	Reports	Re-reports	%	Reports	Re-reports	%
	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%
2004/05	216,386	32,055	14.8	54,685	15,041	27.5	105,539	24,418	23.1
2005/06	241,003	37,736	15.7	58,148	16,947	29.1	115,982	28,156	24.3
2006/07	286,033	50,176	17.5	71,875	22,846	31.8	148,372	39,015	26.3
2004/05-2006/07	743,422	119,967	16.1	186,922	49,400	26.4	370,399	85,477	23.1

2d. Analysis of sibling groups excluding short-term re-reports

Table 9 shows that excluding short term re-reports from the analysis increases the proportion of sibling groups accounting for 25% and 50% of all reports. Over the three year period from 2004/05 to 2006/07, around 4% of sibling groups accounted for a quarter of all reports while around 14% accounted for half of all reports. This compares to around 3% and 12% of sibling groups when short term re-reports are included (see Table 6). A similar pattern is evident when looking at the combined data for the three year period (2.7% and 9.9% compared to 2.2% and 8.5%).

⁶ A short term re-report is defined as a report received, with the same issue type, within 7 days of another report for the child. For re-reports a report is considered to have the same issue type if any of the three reported issues match those from a previous report. Issues are grouped into physical, sexual, psychological, neglect and carer for matching.

Table 9: Sibling groups most frequently reported accounting for 25% and 50% of reports excluding short term re-reports, 2004/05 to 2005/06

	Sibling groups overall	Sibling groups most frequently reported accounting for			
		25% of reports		50% of reports	
	No.	No.	%	No.	%
2004/05	62,875	2,637	4.2	9,363	14.9
2005/06	65,286	2,722	4.2	9,518	14.6
2006/07	71,502	2,861	4.0	10,103	14.1
2004/05-2006/07	144,892	3,874	2.7	14,413	9.9

DISCUSSION

This analysis shows that a small proportion of sibling groups are frequently encountered by DoCS and account for a significant proportion of reports received by DoCS and subsequent action undertaken by DoCS.

This paper provides some insights into the characteristics of these frequently encountered groups and their outcomes. Understanding these groups and the impact they have on the child protection system is important and useful in examining DoCS' interaction with these clients, the service they receive and their outcomes.

APPENDIX

Table A1: Sibling groups by sibling group size, 2005/06

Number of children per sibling group	Number of sibling groups	Percent	Cumulative percent	Number of children
1	39,957	61.2	61.2	39,957
2	14,043	21.5	82.8	28,086
3	6,606	10.1	92.9	19,818
4	2,795	4.3	97.2	11,180
5	1,059	1.6	98.8	5,295
6	450	0.7	99.5	2,700
7	190	0.3	99.8	1,330
8	77	0.1	99.9	616
9	31	0.0	100.0	279
10	14	0.0	100.0	140
11	5	0.0	100.0	55
12	6	0.0	100.0	72
13	2	0.0	100.0	26
14	1	0.0	100.0	14
Total	65,236	100.0	-	109,568

Table A2: Sibling groups by size of sibling group and whether at least one sibling is identified as being Indigenous, 2005/06.

Size of sibling group	Sibling groups											
	Top 3%				Top 11%				Overall			
	Sibling groups		Indigenous sibling groups		Sibling groups		Indigenous sibling groups		Sibling groups		Indigenous sibling groups	
	No.	% of total	No.	% of sibling groups	No.	% of total	No.	% of sibling groups	No.	% of total	No.	% of sibling groups
1	115	5.6	13	11.3	853	11.5	117	13.7	39,957	61.2	3,221	8.1
2	335	16.3	77	23.0	1,876	25.3	350	18.7	14,043	21.5	1,598	11.4
3	494	24.1	124	25.1	1,911	25.8	437	22.9	6,606	10.1	1,017	15.4
4	445	21.7	119	26.7	1,453	19.6	380	26.2	2,795	4.3	594	21.3
5	287	14.0	101	35.2	663	9.0	234	35.3	1,059	1.6	315	29.7
6	182	8.9	76	41.8	353	4.8	135	38.2	450	0.7	159	35.3
7	98	4.8	49	50.0	158	2.1	68	43.0	190	0.3	76	40.0
8	50	2.4	25	50.0	77	1.0	35	45.5	77	0.1	35	45.5
9	24	1.2	9	37.5	31	0.4	10	32.3	31	0.0	10	32.3
10	12	0.6	5	41.7	14	0.2	6	42.9	14	0.0	6	42.9
11	4	0.2	1	25.0	5	0.1	1	20.0	5	0.0	1	20.0
12	5	0.2	4	80.0	6	0.1	5	83.3	6	0.0	5	83.3
13	2	0.1	2	100.0	2	0.0	2	100.0	2	0.0	2	100.0
14	1	0.0	1	100.0	1	0.0	1	100.0	1	0.0	1	100.0
Total	2,054	100.0	606	29.5	7,403	100.0	1,781	24.1	65,236	100.0	7,040	10.8

Table A3: Child protection reports by any reported issues, 2005/06

	Sibling groups					
	Top 3%		Top 11%		Overall	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Reports						
Domestic violence	15,499	26.7	34,386	29.7	77,222	32.0
Neglect	16,333	28.2	29,550	25.5	50,700	21.0
Physical abuse	13,526	23.3	26,552	22.9	54,085	22.4
Carer drug/alcohol issues	12,511	21.6	24,719	21.3	43,806	18.2
Psychological abuse	12,994	22.4	26,840	23.2	56,880	23.6
Carer mental health issues	7,978	13.8	16,043	13.8	29,912	12.4
Sexual abuse	4,261	7.4	8,601	7.4	21,615	9.0
Total	57,963		115,884		240,997	

Table A4: Average number of SAS1 only and SAS2/J&D completed per sibling group by sibling group size, 2005/06

Sibling group size	Sibling groups					
	Top 3%		Top 11%		Overall	
	SAS1 completed	SAS2/J&D completed	SAS1 completed	SAS2/J&D completed	SAS1 completed	SAS2/J&D completed
1	3.6	7.9	2.0	3.5	0.4	0.2
2	3.6	7.4	2.2	3.0	0.9	0.6
3	4.3	6.3	2.8	2.9	1.4	1.0
4+	5.8	7.7	3.9	4.0	2.8	2.5
Total	5.0	7.3	3.0	3.4	0.8	0.5