

Children and Young People Policy Scan Issue 8, August 2010

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Reports, research papers, policy initiatives etc

Child Protection

Young people's satisfaction with residential care: Identifying strengths and weaknesses in service delivery. *Child Welfare*, Vol. 89, No.2, 2010, pp.209-228, by Jenni Southwell and Elizabeth Fraser (Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian).

This article presents findings from the Commission's 2008 survey of young people in residential care to an international audience in a special edition of the journal on residential care and treatment. Data from a representative sample of young people in statutory residential care are analysed to identify young people's satisfaction with various aspects of their residential care experience: their sense of safety, normality, support, comfort in general living environment, participation in decision making, and improvements in well-being. Findings point to strengths and weaknesses in current service delivery. The vast majority of respondents felt safe and well-treated and satisfied with the care and support provided by residential care staff. Respondents were less commonly satisfied with the care and support provided by statutory case workers, their participation in higher order decision making, their sense of normality, and the amount of contact with their families. Compared with older respondents, younger respondents less commonly expressed satisfaction with various aspects of their care. Similarly, those reporting more placements were less satisfied with their care and support than those reporting fewer placements.

The article highlights the unique nature of the research that is possible in the Queensland context given the role of the Commission and the existence of the Community Visitor Program. The quantitative design of the study and the large representative sample achieved enable it to overcome many of the limitations of previous research in this area.

Full-text article available via EBSCOhost or for purchase from CWLA, <http://www.cwla.org/articles/cwjabstracts.htm#1002>

Updated Resource Sheets, the Australian Institute of Family Studies:

Mandatory reporting of child abuse, Compiled by Daryl Higgins, Leah Bromfield, Nick Richardson, Prue Holzer and Claire Berlyn, National Child Protection Clearinghouse, August 2010.

This resource sheet examines legal provisions requiring specified people to report suspected child maltreatment to statutory child protection services in Australia. This requirement is known as mandatory reporting. All jurisdictions have mandatory reporting requirements of some description. However, the individuals mandated to report and the types of abuse that must be reported vary across Australian states and territories. This resource sheet provides a summary of the mandatory reporting requirements in each jurisdiction and a brief look at the benefits and problems with mandatory reporting.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/sheets/rs3/rs3.html>

Children's commissioners and guardians, Compiled by Alister Lamont & Prue Holzer, National Child Protection Clearinghouse, July 2010.

This resource sheet provides information about the way that each state and territory in Australia has developed independent children's commissions and/or guardians intended to represent the rights of all children. The establishment of independent state bodies has been important for providing a voice for children in decision-making. This resource sheet provides the details of the relevant legislation and Commissioner/Guardian details, as well as the specific activities of state Commissioners/Guardians in each jurisdiction.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/sheets/rs15/rs15.html>

Youth Justice

Admission and discharge from secure accommodation, The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, UK Government, August 2010.

This report evaluates the processes of admission, discharge and resettlement into the community, for young people placed within the UK Youth Justice System, which is referred to as the 'secure estate'. It examines factors that help or constrain effective practice and makes recommendations for improvement, including:

1. The Youth Justice Board should:

- review the range, number and location of secure placements within the 'secure estate' to ensure that young people:
 - are placed as close as is practicably possible to their home
 - maintain contact with their families
 - have appropriate vocational and work experiences, and
 - have continuity of care before, during and after admission
- involve and consult the appropriate youth offending teams, secure establishments, social workers and the families about the most appropriate placement of young people who are sentenced or on remand, and
- consider the cost implications of placing young people a long distance from their homes and seek to achieve better value for money.

2. Local authorities responsible for placing children and young people within the 'secure estate' should:

- wherever possible, seek to involve parents and families in decision-making when young people are to be placed on a secure accommodation 'welfare' order (which restricts their liberty) and give due regard to their opinions
- ensure that young people who are entitled to support under the *Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000* receive the services they require during their placement within a secure establishment
- ensure that young people moving out of secure settings have a guaranteed education or training place arranged for them, and
- ensure that firm discharge plans, based on the assessed need of the individual young person, are in place sufficiently early to enable transitional work with any new placement or facilities.

3. Secure establishments should:

- consider, at all reviews, how young people may be supported throughout their placement and during the immediate period following their discharge to home or to another placement, and
- ensure that each child or young person placed in a secure setting is allocated a named worker to provide personal support throughout their placement and during the period of transition.

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Thematic-reports/Admission-and-discharge-from-secure-accommodation>

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People

Closing the Gap on Indigenous Disadvantage: Progress towards this important goal, Dr Russell, L. & Dr Wenham, S. Menzies Centre for Health Policy, July 2010.

This report examines whether the six targets for *Closing the Gap* on Indigenous disadvantage are on track. The report's key findings regarding the six targets are:

Target 1 – close the life expectancy gap of Indigenous people within a generation

Over the years, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has used several different methods to estimate the life expectancy of Indigenous Australians which has resulted in a reduction in the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. However, the report suggests that this does not indicate an actual improvement in the life expectancy of Indigenous people. Although the ABS argues that the new methodology for measuring Indigenous life expectancy,

which matches death records with census data, is more accurate, some 26% of Indigenous deaths are not matched with a census record. This means that the latest figure lacks some accuracy. The report concludes that due to the different ways of measuring the gap, progress made to date is cosmetic.

Target 2 – halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade

Combined data from New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory show that over the past decade, there has been a steady decline in the gap in infant mortality. However, robust data from other states is not available. The report concludes that the current available data is not yet good enough to know if any progress has been made regarding this target.

Target 3 – ensure all Indigenous four year olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years (by 2013)

The best available data indicates that there has only been a slight improvement in the numbers of Indigenous children attending early childhood education in the year before commencing school. However, it is unclear from the data how many children enrolled in preschool actually attend regularly. The report concludes that the current available data is not sufficiently robust to measure progress towards this target.

Target 4 – halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade (by 2018)

The report concludes that there is little indication of any improvement in literacy and numeracy of Indigenous students and that in some cases, literacy rates have worsened.

Target 5 – at least halve the gap in Indigenous Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020

There has been some slight progress towards improving Year 12 retention rates for Indigenous students.

Target 6 – halve the gap in employment outcomes for Indigenous people by 2018

While there has been some progress towards meeting this target, the report concludes that employment of Indigenous people needs to occur at a faster rate if the target is to be achieved by 2018.

http://www.menzieshealthpolicy.edu.au/other_tops/pdfs_pubs/closinggapjul10.pdf

The Early Years

The Foundations of Lifelong Health are Built in Early Childhood, This publication was co-authored by the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child and the National Forum on Early Childhood Policy and Programs, Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University, July 2010.

This report suggests that a vital and productive society with a prosperous and sustainable future is built on a foundation of healthy child development. A focus on health promotion in the early childhood period can help reduce the social and economic burdens of illness, not only in childhood but also throughout the adult years. This connection between early life experiences and the health of a nation underscores the importance of strategic investments in the care and protection of pregnant women, infants, and young children, and it suggests that most current attempts to prevent adult disease and create a healthier workforce may be starting too late.

The authors argue that new scientific knowledge compels us to think and act creatively to enhance the healthy development of young children by reducing the disruptive effects of significant adversity on their development. Promising ideas include:

- child welfare agencies can help prevent long-term adult impairment, not just provide immediate child protection
- zoning laws and land development policies can facilitate healthy lifestyles, not just generate commercial profit
- alternative child care arrangements for young children whose mothers are mandated to work as a condition of receiving public assistance provide an opportunity to build foundations for healthy development, not just support maternal employment, and
- high-quality early care and education programs can promote health and prevent disease, not just prepare children to succeed at school.

Education

Participation in and completion of vocational education and training for people with disability, Polidano, C. & Mavromaras, K., Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, August 2010.

This paper uses the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey to examine whether people with a disability face barriers in participating in and completing a Vocational, Education and Training (VET) qualification, with a particular focus on the role of social support.

The paper acknowledges that the key to improving employment and life prospects for people with a disability is reliant upon improving their educational outcomes. VET is seen as an important avenue for furthering the education of people with a disability because of its flexibility and accessibility.

The paper's key findings were that people with a disability are:

- less likely to be in paid employment
- more likely to not complete school or obtain any further qualification
- less likely to complete a VET course module, particularly if they have a mental disability or severe physical disability, and
- overall, not disadvantaged in terms of participating in VET courses, but are disadvantaged in terms of completing them.

The paper also found that when people with a mental illness receive adequate support, they achieve the same VET completion rate as people without a disability. The paper suggests that access to appropriate support mechanisms is essential if people with a disability are to fulfill their academic potential and achieve the best possible educational outcome.

<http://www.melbourneinstitute.com/wp/wp2010n08.pdf>

What Works. The Work Program: Core Issues 8. Education and Student Health: the big picture, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, August 2010.

This 11 page paper looks at selected health issues affecting some Indigenous students and the part schools and teachers can play in supporting students.

The Work Program is a set of resources designed to help schools and those who work in them improve outcomes for Indigenous students. The 'core issues' series is an attempt to distil some topic-based key directions for practical action.

Information in the paper is set out under the following headings:

- What are the issues?
- What are the causes?
- General advice (on dealing with students' health issues)
- A 'whole of life' approach
- Intervention in the early years
- Resources for parents
- Particular issues:
 1. Hearing problems. What can teachers do?
 2. Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. What can teachers do?

The paper also includes case studies on some of the topics and 'more information' boxes at the end of each section.

http://www.whatworks.edu.au/upload/1281511388241_file_8Health.pdf

Health and Wellbeing

Incidence of type 1 diabetes in Australian children 2000-2008, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, August 2010.

Type 1 diabetes is a serious, life-long disease which causes a major health, social and economic burden for individuals with the disease, their families and the community. Type 1 diabetes is marked by severe insulin deficiency, which requires insulin replacement for sufferers to survive. Type 1 diabetes commonly arises in children and young adults, but can occur at any age.

This report focuses on new cases of Type 1 diabetes in Australian children that is children aged 0–14 years who began using insulin to treat diabetes between 2000 and 2008. Incidence estimates for Type 1 diabetes in children by age, sex, year of first insulin use, Indigenous status and state or territory of residence. Data comes from the National Diabetes Register.

Between 2000 and 2008, 8259 children aged 0–14 years with Type 1 diabetes began using insulin in Australia. In this time, the age-standardised incidence rate increased significantly from 19.1 to 23.9 per 100,000 population. However, there have been no significant changes since 2005.

The average annual rate increased with increasing age, from 14.6 per 100,000 for 0–4 year olds, 24.1 per 100,000 for 5–9 year olds, to 29.3 per 100,000 for 10–14 year olds.

During 2005–2008, there were 90 children recorded as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander who began using insulin to treat Type 1 diabetes – representing 2.4% of all new cases.

In Queensland, the incidence rate of Type 1 diabetes was 21.8 per 100,000 population, down from 25.9 in 2007. The average annual rate for the period 2000–2008 was 23.2 per 100,000. Rates increased with increasing age from 15.4 per 100,000 for 0–4 year olds, to 24.2 per 100,000 for 5–9 year olds, to 29.5 per 100,000 for 10–14 year olds.

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/11414>

Participation and Engagement

Hearing Directly from Vulnerable Young Australians, Hampshire, A & others, Mission Australia, August 2010.

In 2009, around 48,000 young people across Australia participated in the eighth annual Mission Australia National survey of young Australians. The survey asked young people aged 11 to 24 years about what they value, their concerns, where they go for advice and support and who they admire.

More than 1000 respondents who completed this survey identified themselves as homeless (or in unstable housing), involved in the juvenile justice system, or living in out-of-home care. These sub-populations have been classified as vulnerable for the purposes of this report.

Compared with young people living in other housing (i.e. with family, in a share house, living alone or at boarding school), vulnerable young people who responded to this survey were:

- less likely to be studying fulltime or part-time
- more likely to have government allowance as their main source of income
- more likely to value being independent, and less likely to value family relationships and friendships
- more likely to report body image and alcohol as major concerns, and less likely to report personal safety as a concern. Homeless young people were also less likely to be concerned about drugs and school or study than young people in other living situations
- more likely to turn to community agencies (e.g. youth workers) and the internet for advice and support, and less likely to turn to parents and relatives, and

- were more likely to admire friends, and less likely to admire family.

The report also reports on policy and practice implications.

<http://www.missionaustralia.com.au/downloads/national-survey-of-young-australians/2009/232-hearing-directly-from-vulnerable-young-australians-snapshot-2010>

Tell Us 2010 survey, Foundation for Young Australians, August 2010.

Seven thousand young people in secondary school education across Australia recently participated in the *Tell Us*, survey on school education conducted by the Foundation for Young Australians.

The survey's key findings include:

- student's wanting a more active role and a greater voice in their schooling
- the majority of students surveyed felt that schools were positive places that prepared them for the future, and
- that in addition to academic achievement, students felt that success in school came from:
 - participating in the school community
 - having friendships
 - participating in sport and the arts
 - receiving recognition from peers and teachers, and
 - obtaining leadership positions.

<http://www.fya.org.au/index.php?s=tell+us+survey+results>

'Where are you going with that?': Maximising Young People's Impact On Organisational & Public Policy, Australian Youth Affairs Coalition, August 2010.

This research report examines young people's inclusion in decision making and their experience and perception about whether or not policy makers heed their ideas. The report also attempts to identify the barriers that prevent young people from having an impact on policy, ways in which organizations can become more open to young people's views and potential youth participation strategies.

To improve young people's participation in policy making the research report focuses on:

- improving young people's understanding of the policy process
- embedding young people's needs in policy development processes
- empowering young people to enable them to raise issues directly with policy decision makers and politicians
- establishing effective youth participation practices in government agencies
- minimising resistance to young people's participation, and
- developing tools to measure and evaluate success.

Some of the research report's key recommendations include:

- embedding youth participation principles in all organisational documents
- providing consistent feedback to young people
- ensuring that outcomes of policy and decision making processes are communicated to young people
- empowering young people to enable them to contribute to high level governance decision processes by ensuring young people are represented on boards and are given adequate support to enable them to fulfill their responsibilities
- creating opportunities to enable young people to network with and raise issues with policy decision makers and politicians
- developing training to increase people's awareness of the contributions young people can make to decision-making processes within their communities, and
- developing sound measurement and evaluation tools that monitor young people's impact on policy initiatives.

<http://www.ayac.org.au/2010/08/where-are-you-going-with-that-maximising-young-people%e2%80%99s-impact-on-organisational-public-policy/>

Resources

Working Together: A toolkit for parents to address bullying, Queensland government and the Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence, August 2010.

The *Working Together: A toolkit for parents to address bullying* and the video series *Six Quick Tips for Parents about Bullying* were publically released in August.

The toolkit was developed by the Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence and aims to provide parents with practical tips on how to support their children should they experience or engage in bullying behaviour and information to assist them to communicate with school staff should any concerns regarding bullying arise.

The toolkit and the video series will help parents to:

- identify what bullying is
- recognise if their child is being bullied
- develop strategies for supporting their child
- develop techniques to work effectively with their child's school
- decide what steps to take if their child is doing the bullying, and
- raise their awareness of cyber safety information.

<http://education.qld.gov.au/student-services/behaviour/qaav/>

Working Together: A toolkit for effective school based action against bullying, Queensland government and the Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence, August 2010.

The *Working Together: A toolkit for effective school based action against bullying* was released in August

The toolkit provides school staff with practical strategies to address student-on-student bullying including fact sheets for staff, students and parents, an example of anti-bullying policy and links to additional resources.

<http://education.qld.gov.au/student-services/behaviour/qsaaav/>

Events and Conferences

Current Trends in child abuse and neglect in the United States: What might Australians learn and disregard from this evidence base? Professor Berry, M., Director Australian Centre for Child Protection, State Library of Victoria, Conference Centre, Village Roadshow Theatre, Melbourne, September 2010.

This presentation will review the American evidence base regarding effective interventions to protect and treat child abuse and neglect. It will also discuss practices and policies that might and might not be effective within the diverse cultures and policy frameworks in Australia.

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/seminars/seminars.php>

Early Childhood Development in Indigenous Communities: Integrating services for a healthy start to life, Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, Holiday Inn Esplanade, Darwin, 21-22 September 2010

This conference will present initiatives which have positively impacted on the development, health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and share best practices for integrated services which help to Close the Gap on child disadvantage. The conference will also assess progress made under the National Partnership for Early Childhood Development and identify key priority areas to improve service delivery and community wellbeing.

<http://www.atsichildren.com/index.php>

Connecting and Collaborating: moving towards holistic approaches when working with children, families and communities, Australian College for Child and Family Protection Practitioners, Australian Capital Territory, 15-17 October 2010

This conference aims to stimulate thinking on how to achieve a stronger shift in focus from the protection of children being primarily a responsibility of statutory child protection systems to a unified, integrated, holistic approach based on strengthening the capacity of families and the communities in which they live to raise happy and healthy children.

Keynote speakers include:

- Professor Nigel Parton, NSPCC Professor in Applied Childhood Studies, University of Huddersfield, UK
- Professor Louise Newman, Professor of Developmental Psychiatry & Director, Centre for Developmental Psychiatry and Psychology, Monash University, Melbourne
- Associate Professor Paul Delfabbro, Department of Psychology, University of Adelaide, and
- Dr Adam Tomison, Director, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra

<http://www.acfpp.org.au/>