

Source: Clark, R. (1997). *A review of intensive out-of-home care support services*. Canberra: Deakin Human Services and Department of Community Services.

Aim	Method	Findings and recommendations	NCPC comment
<p>The aim of the study was to review the intensive services for children and young people in NSW.</p>	<p>The New South Wales Department of Community Services commissioned the review of 15 intensive out-of-home care support services designed for troubled children and young people. The study used both quantitative and qualitative methods in order to examine the perceived changes in the young residents of these services.</p>	<p>The report noted that since the intensive services were established, 95 young people had received a service. Due to the rapid de-institutionalisation movement occurring at the time, however, service staff were ill-equipped to implement services and staff burn-out was a real issue. At the time of the review, the recipients of the services were typically males aged 15 years or over. Many of the children and young people displayed challenging behaviours, experienced a long history of disrupted placements and were often in care for many years. Fifteen of the young people were attending school quite regularly and 18 were noted as having some form of regular employment. However, 24 young people were reported as having poor patterns of school attendance. The majority of young people were having some form of contact with family members. The author recommended the appointment of a specialist Aboriginal worker, given the number of Aboriginal young people in intensive services.</p> <p>Clark noted that in regard to service design, the intensive services were initially designed to provide care in groups. However, it was noted that seven out of the 15 services had moved away from solely using group care models and were offering individualised services for some young people. Furthermore, those services that were continuing to use the group model had decreased the numbers to three or fewer young people being cared for in a group. Nevertheless, the author suggested that the cost-effectiveness of providing care on this smaller scale required justification; it needed to be demonstrated that the young people had higher levels of difficulty in comparison to the rest of the target population of young people.</p> <p>Overall, the findings from the report provided evidence to support the continued development of community-based intensive out-of-home care support services for young people with troubling emotional and behavioural problems.</p>	<p>The study provides a very good review of a range of intensive support services and a number of recommendations for the provision of such services. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • commissioning a further study to assess the real costs incurred by intensive services, to enable appropriate allocation of budget; • listening to staff members regarding size of group preferences; • encouraging the development of a program document by service providers to offer guides on the most effective manner to provide new individualised services; • developing an inter-departmental approach to behavioural difficulties and mental health needs; and • arranging collaboration with the substitute care program and disability services to ensure that planning and smooth transition is available for young people moving to adult disability services (pp. 8–9).

Source: Delfabbro, P. H., & Osborn, A. (2005). Models of service for children in out-of-home care with significant emotional and behavioural difficulties. *Developing Practice, 14*, 17–29.

Aim	Method	Findings and recommendations	NCPC comment
The aim of the paper was to review models of service for children and young people in Australian out-of-home care who have high support needs.	The paper involved a review of service models in Australia and around the world that may be suitable for the sample in the national profile study of children and young people with high support needs.	The authors found that children with the poorest placement outcomes tend to have a background of significant trauma and abuse and have multiple needs that are unlikely to be met by any single treatment approach. The authors argued that a dimensional approach to service design and the continuum of care that views placement options as a configuration of factors is more desirable. They argued that appropriately designed residential and group care should form a component of these services.	The authors provide a good review from current Australian research findings of appropriate services and programs for children and young people in Australian out-of-home care who have high support needs.

Source: Delfabbro, P. H., Osborn, A., & Barber, J. G. (2005). Beyond the continuum: New perspectives on the future of out-of-home care research in Australia. *Children Australia*, 30, 11–18.

Aim	Method	Findings and recommendations	NCPC comment
The aim of the paper was to review the continuum of care model in Australia and examine new perspectives on the role of the care continuum.	The paper involved a review of the continuum of care model in Australia and around the world. The authors then reviewed dimensions of care (physical arrangement and location, staffing arrangements and living environment, and types of intervention) that might be useful as the basis for differentiating between programs.	The authors argued that the continuum of care model can be limiting, as it fails to consider the diversity of services and structures possible at different points in the hypothetical continuum. Conversely, the authors argued that a dimensional approach to service design that views placement options as a configuration of factors is more desirable.	The authors provide a good overview of the continuum of care model and a way of redefining the dimensions of care to create innovative solutions to better meet the needs of children and young people in care.

Source: Flynn, C., Ludowici, S., Scott, E., & Spence, N. (2005). Residential care in NSW (OOHC Development Project Report). Sydney: Association of Childrens Welfare Agencies.

Aim	Method	Findings and recommendations	NCPC comment
<p>The aim of study was to investigate residential care in New South Wales as part of the Association of Childrens Welfare Agencies' (ACWA) Out-of-Home Care Development Project.</p>	<p>Interviews were conducted by ACWA with chief executive officers, and program managers/ coordinators of 42 non-government residential care providers in New South Wales. The authors also interviewed chief executive officers, managers/coordinators of other forms of out-of-home care placement, regional directors and peak organisations with an interest in out-of-home care. Phone interviews were also conducted with government and non-government representatives in other Australian jurisdictions (except for Victoria, where face-to-face interviews were conducted by ACWA and a NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS) researcher). A total of 109 interviews were conducted between May and August 2005.</p>	<p>The interview data reflected that residential care is a small but active component of care in New South Wales. The 42 providers were accommodating 330 residents in 181 properties, but the total capacity of all current providers was estimated at 420 placements.</p> <p>One of the main findings was that “while foster care remains the preferred form of out-of-home placement, there is a definite place for residential care in the service system and that residential care capacity should be increased” (p. v). The interviewees also reported that residential care should be used selectively for children and young people with high support needs, sibling groups, young people moving on to independent living, and children and young people following a foster placement breakdown.</p>	<p>The report provides a comprehensive overview of residential care services in NSW, including descriptive case studies of each of the services. The report aims to contribute to the development of DoCS' intention to build capacity in out-of-home care and provide an opportunity for revisiting the role of residential care as a planned service option for children in out-of-home care.</p>

Source: Gilbertson, R., Richardson D., & Barber, J. G. (2005). The Special Youth Carer program: An innovative program for at-risk adolescents in foster care. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, 34, 75–89.

Aim	Method	Findings and recommendations	NCPC comment
The aim of the study was to monitor the implementation of the Special Youth Carer (SYC) program and to evaluate whether the program was meeting its primary goals of placement stability and behavioural gains for at-risk adolescents.	Reviewed outcomes for 8 participants (6 females, 2 males) with a mean age of 14.75 years (<i>SD</i> = 1.04) in the SYC program over a 12-month period. Two carers who had experienced breakdowns were also interviewed.	<p>The SYC program is an innovative program developed by Anglicare in South Australia in response to the needs of at-risk adolescents. The program is designed to reduce placement instability and improve behavioural functioning of the adolescents. The SYC model incorporates features from both treatment foster care models and lead tenant models. The SYC program has a unique feature that in the event of a placement breakdown it is the carer and not the young person who leaves the home.</p> <p>The majority of participants were noted to have a positive improvement in their behaviour and there were also improvements noted in the placement stability of some participants.</p>	The paper provides a very detailed overview of the components and outcomes of an innovative program for at-risk adolescents with high levels of placement instability.

Source: Kelly, M. (1999). *High-risk adolescents*. Melbourne: MacKillop Family Services.

Aim	Method	Findings and recommendations	NCPC comment
To evaluate the High Risk Adolescents (HRA) Project at MacKillop Family Services (Barwon).	<p>The sample comprised 14 adolescents in the HRA program (8 males, 6 females), aged between 13 and 16 years.</p> <p>Results were based on a review of files and documentation provided by the Victorian Department of Human Services and MacKillop, and interviews with MacKillop staff, departmental staff and external agencies, including minutes of case coordination meetings, policy material and guidelines relating to the HRA initiative, and discussions and consultation with several other key stakeholders. This was a quantitative and qualitative design.</p>	<p>Despite the best efforts of management, case managers and other staff, targets were not able to be met in relation to intensive case management and home-based one-to-one care during 1998–1999. Placements could not be stabilised and insufficient numbers of one-to-one home-based carers were recruited. The report concluded that there were serious problems with the planning, development and operation of the HRA initiative. The report recommended that a high degree of cooperation is required in establishing projects for high-risk adolescents. The report called for the department to invest substantially (training, staff secondments and transfers) in order to ensure a viable service and that significant organisational changes are required to strengthen capacity for service delivery.</p> <p>Furthermore, for one-to-one home-based care to be viable, the component needs to be situated within an established adolescent placement or home-based care structure that provides the opportunity to recruit seasoned carers and provides established structures and systems of volunteer support.</p>	<p>The report highlights that if agencies are intending to implement services, a great deal of preparation is required for it to be successful. Negative findings are discussed openly, and extensive recommendations are provided.</p> <p>The study sample was relatively small for an empirical study, but the mixed methodology (qualitative and quantitative) provides a rich source of descriptive data.</p>

Source: New South Wales Community Services Commission. (1999). *Group review report: The experiences and progress of 17 young people in substitute care*. Sydney: Author.

Aim	Method	Findings and recommendations	NCPC comment
The aim of the report was to review the experiences of young people in out-of-home care in Sydney.	The experiences and progress of 17 young people (13 males, 4 females) aged 9–15 years in substitute care in Sydney was reviewed. The review was conducted in five stages between November 1996 and April 1999 (both services were closed in 1998 and a crisis unit was established for the young people). All of the young people moved on to other forms of care (group homes, refuges, foster care, supported accommodation, kinship care and independent living) after the closure of the services.	The report was in response to the finding that a large number of young people were residing in intensive support services for very long periods. The report findings indicated that the outcomes for young people were better when there were flexible and comprehensive case plans, continuity of service provider, consultation and coordination between services and a commitment to services to support young people regardless of the circumstances. The report highlighted the importance of case planning to achieve stability of placements and contended that, in the absence of case planning and stability, young people's health, education, social and recreational needs were often neglected. The review indicated that a system of statutory reviews and monitoring of all young people is critical, given the rapidly changing models for the provision of intensive support services and that these models are yet to be tested in terms of outcomes for young people in care.	The report provides insight in the experiences of young people in care and recommendations for improving their experience and progress.

Source: Raymond, I. (2005). The Rock and Water program: Empowering youth workers and clients. *Youth Studies Australia*, 24, 34–39.

Aim	Method	Findings and recommendations	NCPC comment
The aim of the paper was to review an innovative youth development program (the Rock and Water program).	The program was trialled with thirteen boys aged 11 to 15 years in residential care in South Australia. The program was evaluated using both qualitative and quantitative measures, including an analysis of key indicators, observational data, a client-completed questionnaire, and open interviews with all youth workers and stakeholders involved in the program.	Raymond conceded that the measures used lacked methodological rigor. However, Raymond argued that, when viewed together, the measures provide preliminary evidence regarding the effectiveness of the program. Specifically, it was found that the program had minimal drop-out (10 of the 13 boys completed the entire program). There were no critical incident reports completed during any of the sessions. All of the boys completed the work booklets and indicated that they had assimilated the contents of the program. Both youth workers and the boys reported improved interpersonal relationships and the boys also reported improved relationships among each other. Based on reports from the evaluation forms completed by the boys, they all enjoyed themselves and believed that the program had been beneficial.	The paper provides important preliminary evidence for the effectiveness of this program and the need for future evaluations to be conducted with new clients groups (e.g., of different ages, needs, gender) and to determine whether the improvements in this particular client group have been maintained over time with longitudinal research. Outcome rather than satisfaction measures are needed to determine the effectiveness of the program.

Source: Szirom, T., McDougall, J., & Mitchell, J. (2005). *Evaluation of the Treatment and Care for Kids (TrACK) program*. Melbourne: Department of Human Services Eastern Metropolitan Region, Anglicare Victoria and Australian Childhood Foundation.

Aim	Method	Findings and recommendations	NCPC Comment
<p>The aims of the study were to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review literature relating to similar service models; • evaluate the effectiveness of the TrACK program in achieving improved outcomes for children under statutory care who present with a range of complex needs and challenging behaviours; and • provide recommendations regarding strengthening future service developments. 	<p>Seven children and their carers were included in this evaluation, on the basis that they had been in the program for a minimum of six months. Six of the seven children had been with the TrACK program for approximately eighteen months. Research methods used in the evaluation included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a case file audit; • a questionnaire to carers and caseworkers/therapists regarding the children’s behaviour changes over time; • focus groups and individual discussions with carers, caseworkers/therapists, Department of Human Services (DHS) Protective Services staff, senior staff with Anglicare, DHS and the Australian Childhood Foundation and other stakeholders; and • testing the strength of the service partnership through the application of a Partnership Strengths tool. 	<p>The study reported that “for all children there were significant changes in critical areas of emotional, psychological and social functioning including self esteem, ability to verbalise fears and worries, and ability to establish and maintain relationships with carers and demonstrate affection” (p. 5). Children were found have significant improvements in a range of behaviours commonly referred to as “challenging”.</p>	<p>The study only had a small sample, but the authors assert that the outcomes for the group have been substantial and sustained over time. A limitation of the study is that all of these improvements were assessed using rating scales that only allowed responses in a positive direction, and there was no baseline assessment or follow-up assessment that allowed the comparison of scores obtained using the same measures.</p>