

Young Parents with Experience of the Care System Research Project 2020/2021

Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) has been funded by the Department of Social Services (DSS) to undertake a 12 month research project to explore ways to mitigate early parenthood among young people with experience of the care system as a driver of further contact with the child protection system. This research will be used to inform future policy and the revised National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children.

Background

International and Australian research shows that a substantial proportion of young people leaving care become parents under the age of 20 years. Cashmore and Paxman (2007)¹ showed that nearly a third of young females had become parents 12 months after leaving care. This is consistent with statistics from Victoria², the US and the UK, and is substantially higher than rates of teenage pregnancy in the general population³.

Statistics also show the intergenerational nature of contact with the child protection system with almost one-third of children and young people involved with the NSW statutory protection system in 2014-15 had at least one parent who had either been reported or were in OOHC [out-of-home-care] when they were a child⁴.

Outline

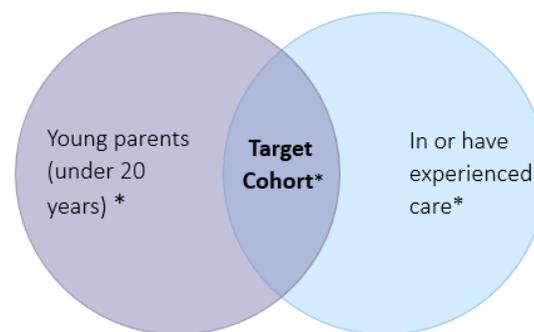
Research will involve a review of national and international literature to gather data, identify the specific needs of young parents with experience of the care system, and interventions to support those needs.

This will be followed by qualitative research with researchers, peak bodies, relevant service providers, young parents with care experience (ethics permitting) and current or previous carers of young parents.

The final report in June 2021 will make recommendations on best approaches for early intervention, prevention, and targeted support services.

A Reference Group will provide expert oversight throughout the project.

Figure 1. Interview groups – Young parents with care experience (cohort), their carers, and relevant services



*inclusive of young people who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, culturally and linguistically diverse and/or living with disability

¹ https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0005/321728/research_wards_leavingcare2.pdf

² https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/1812_b18_wave_3_final_report.pdf

³ <https://learning.berrystreet.org.au/sites/default/files/2018-05/Just-Beginnings-Report.pdf>

⁴ https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0016/421531/FACS_SAR.pdf

Research questions

Our work will focus on the research questions below, with specific questions tailored to each group. Our primary target group for interviews is young parents with a care experience.

1. What supports are most effective for meeting the needs of young parents (aged <20 years) with experience of the child protection system, specifically in order to prevent inter-generational contact? This includes the timing (e.g. prenatal, age 0-3 years etc.) and nature of support provision.
2. Do young parents with experience of the care system have specific needs as a sub-group of young parents?
3. What services are available to young parents who have transitioned from out-of-home care arrangements or who have otherwise had substantial contact with child protection services as children and young people?
4. Where do support gaps exist?

Do you work with or research young people in Out of Home Care, care leavers, and/or young parents?

Your contribution to this work is welcome. This may include:

- Providing data or access to relevant research
- Identifying other relevant services, organisations or contacts
- Promoting participation to relevant contacts
- Helping to recruit young parents with care experience for interviews
- Recruiting carers of young parents in the care system for interviews
- Helping to conduct interviews with young parents and/or carers

ARACY

ARACY works to improve outcomes for young Australians. To do this we bring people together - political decision makers, policy makers, researchers, people delivering services, children, and young people. Through building alliances, we can learn from each other, focus resources, and avoid duplication and waste, to get the best results for Australian children and young people.

Contact

For more information or to get involved, please contact:

Sarah Brittle

Email: sarah.brittle@aracy.org.au

Telephone: 02 6248 2409