

# *In-Home Care*

## **Outcomes Report 2022-23**

Executive Summary



## Introduction

As of June 2021, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) reported a seven per cent increase in the number of children and young people (C&YP) in out-of-home care (OOHC) since June 2017. This data indicates that there are currently more than 46,200 C&YP in OOHC (AIHW, 2022a). On 30 June 2021, approximately 19,500 First Nations C&YP were in OOHC, an increase from 2020 when there were 18,900. In contrast, rates for non-First Nations C&YP in OOHC remained stable at five per 1,000 throughout 2020 and 2021.

Of the C&YP in OOHC, 68 per cent had been in long-term OOHC (i.e., in care for two or more years), and the majority (91 per cent) of C&YP in OOHC were placed in home-based care (i.e., in a family setting with a carer). It is understood that C&YP placed in home-based care are more likely to experience improved developmental outcomes compared to those living in residential care, where staff are employed to provide care (AIHW, 2022a).

While home-based care has shown positive effects, it is crucial to acknowledge that all C&YP in OOHC still face significantly poorer outcomes in various areas, including health, education, wellbeing, stability, and connectedness to family and culture. These outcomes are notably worse compared to C&YP who have never been in OOHC. To improve outcomes for these C&YP, research has identified that the implementation of evidence-based interventions holds the potential to make a positive impact (Osborn & Bromfield 2007; Fisher, Chamberlain & Leve 2009).

As such, OzChild's Strategic Plan to 2026 is centred around the commitment to use evidence to identify the most effective approaches in delivering foster and kinship care. This will be achieved in a variety of ways including the continued implementation of the National Practice Framework, advocating for the expansion of evidence-based models of care, and utilising evidence-based decision-making principles. To enhance understanding of effective strategies and identify areas that require improvement, OzChild introduced Project CORE (Continuous Outcomes, Reporting, and Evaluation). The project aims to improve OzChild's outcomes and reporting processes by updating outcomes frameworks, Program Logics, and reviewing outcomes tools and indicators. Furthermore, Project CORE aims to transition from the annual delivery of outcomes reports to a quarterly delivery. In addition, following each quarterly report, there will be dedicated revision and actions workshops conducted with teams to identify areas of improvement and establish actionable strategies. Through the regular reporting and the facilitation of workshops, Project CORE will empower OzChild staff to consistently deliver enhanced services, resulting in improved outcomes for children and their families.

In 2023, Project CORE will focus on consolidating OzChild's outcomes reporting by revising outcomes frameworks, Program Logics, and outcomes indicators and tools. As a result of these initiatives, OzChild's IHC outcomes report for 2022-23 has been condensed, resulting in the delivery of an executive summary instead of the custom, comprehensive report. This summary will provide a succinct overview of our progress against specific outcome indicators enabling a comparison to data from the 2021-22 reporting period.



## Purpose

The purpose of this document is to evaluate the efficacy of OzChild's IHC programs in attaining the three key domain outcomes outlined in OzChild's IHC Outcomes Framework. This framework was adapted from the OOHC National Standards and their associated indicators, which were subsequently aligned with the three primary domain outcomes.

## Permanency

OzChild aims to ensure that C&YP, if unable to live with their birth families or kin, are placed into planned and stable long-term or permanent care arrangements with families who can provide for their safety and wellbeing.

## Safety

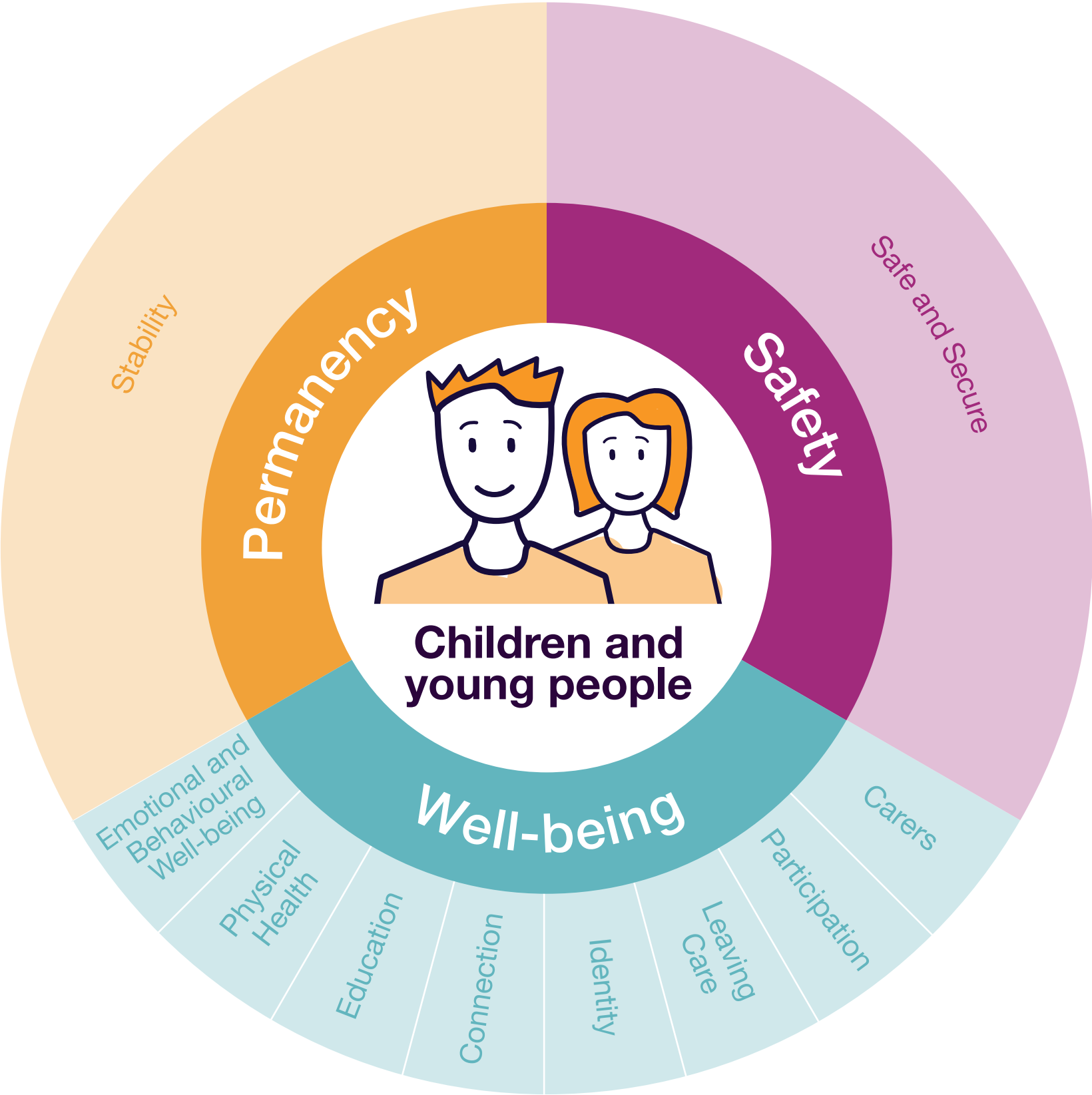
OzChild ensures the safety of C&YP in their care so they can live lives free from family violence and child abuse and neglect.

## Well-being

OzChild employs a variety of measurement tools to assess a broad range of outcomes relating to child and family well-being. These outcomes encompass areas such as education, emotional and physical health, identity, as well as social and cultural connections.



## In-Home Care Outcomes Framework



### Stability

Children and young people are in stable placements



### Safe and Secure

Children and young people feel safe



### Emotional and Behavioural Well-being

Children and young people have improved emotional and behavioural development



### Physical Health

Children and young people are supported with their physical health needs



### Education

Children and young people are engaged in and achieving in education



### Connection

Children and young people are supported to safely and appropriately maintain connection with family



### Identity

Children and young people are supported to develop their identity, safely and appropriately, through contact with their culture and communities and have their life history recorded as they grow up



### Leaving Care

Children and young people are supported and participate in planning for leaving care



### Participation

Children and young people participate in decisions impacting their lives



### Carers

Carers are assessed and receive relevant ongoing training, development and support, in order to provide quality care

## Scope and Methodology

### Programs

The programs in scope are as follows:

- Foster Care – ACT (C&YP Demographics, Placement data and the First Nations Cultural Connections Review (FNCC) data was the only data included in this review. This team is part of a broader consortium in the ACT)
- Foster Care – VIC
- Circle Program – VIC
- Treatment Foster Care Oregon (TFCO) – NSW, QLD, SA, and VIC
- Kinship Care - Case Contracting Service – VIC
- Kinship Care - First Supports – VIC
- Lead Tenant – VIC.

### Review period

C&YP who were active in the programs listed above at any point between 1 May 2022 and 30 April 2023 were considered in scope. This includes C&YP who commenced a program prior to 1 May 2022 but remained active at some point during the review period.



# Methodology

## Quantitative

- Validated outcomes tools
  - Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (all programs except for Foster Care – ACT and Lead Tenant – VIC)
  - Progressive Achievement Test (PAT) (TFCO only)
- Outputs
  - Placement's data (Foster Care – ACT and VIC, Circle Program – VIC, Kinship Care – Case Contracting, Kinship Care - First Supports, and all TFCO programs)
  - Permanency data (all programs except TFCO)
  - Program graduation data (TFCO only)
  - Attendance at School (all programs except for Foster Care – ACT, Kinship Care – First Supports and Lead Tenant – VIC)
  - Numeracy and Literacy minimum requirement achievements (Foster Care – VIC, Circle Program – VIC and Kinship Care – Case Contracting – VIC)
  - FNCC Review (April 2022 and March 2023 data) (Foster Care – ACT and VIC, Circle Program – VIC and TFCO – NSW, QLD, and VIC)
  - Feedback Surveys (all programs except for Foster Care – ACT<sup>1</sup> and Lead Tenant – VIC)
    - Children and Young People Feedback Survey (CYPFS)
    - Carer Feedback Survey

## Qualitative

- Outputs
  - Feedback Surveys (all programs except for Foster Care – ACT<sup>1</sup> and Lead Tenant – VIC)
    - CYPFS
    - Carer Feedback Survey

<sup>1</sup> This program was out of scope as OzChild staff within Foster Care - ACT are part of the Barnardo's consortium.



## Key Considerations

Several factors that impacted the comparison of data between 2021-22 and 2022-23 include:

- The current reporting period included TFCO - SA, whereas in the previous reporting period, this program was not in scope as the service commenced towards the end of the previous reporting period.
- The CYPFS modified its approach by administering the survey to C&YP from the age of eight instead of five. This adjustment was based on research indicating that children under eight may have difficulties providing accurate responses to survey questions as a result of limited language and developmental capabilities such as comprehension and verbal memory (Borgers, de Leeuw & Hox 2000). By administering the survey to C&YP aged eight and older, it was determined that more reliable information could be obtained (Borgers, de Leeuw & Hox 2000; Coyle et al., 2007).
- In the CYPFS, an extra response option was introduced to better capture feedback from young people who were in the process of planning for leaving care. The option aimed to identify young people who were yet to commence their leaving care plans as discussions with program teams revealed that many C&YP aged between 15 and 16 had not started their plans. By incorporating this response option, young people yet to commence planning for leaving care were excluded from analysis, thereby ensuring accuracy of responses relating to involvement and satisfaction with leaving care planning and arrangements.
- Although the FNCC review report is typically developed biannually, the data used in this report was collected from the April 2022 report and the March 2023 report. This approach was taken to demonstrate changes throughout the reporting period and maintain consistency in the comparisons with the rest of the analysed data.



## Demographics

**Table 1 – Number of C&YP active in OzChild IHC programs during reporting period**

Program name	Foster Care - VIC	Foster Care - ACT	Circle Program - VIC	TFCO - NSW	TFCO - QLD	TFCO - SA	TFCO - VIC	Kinship CCS - VIC	Kinship FS - VIC	Lead Tenant - VIC	TOTAL
No. of First Nations C&YP	54	18	8	5	9	0	4	0	1	0	99
No. of Non-First Nations C&YP	231	60	13	9	8	3	11	143	325	10	813
Total No. of C&YP <sup>2</sup>	285	78	21	14	17	3	15	143	326	10	912

**Table 2 – Number of accredited Carers active in OzChild IHC programs during reporting period<sup>3</sup>**

Program name	Foster Care - VIC	Circle Program - VIC	TFCO - NSW	TFCO - QLD	TFCO - SA	TFCO - VIC	Kinship CCS - VIC	Kinship FS - VIC	TOTAL
No. of Carers	436	18	22	43	5	15	131	276	946
No. of Households	276	12	14	28	3	12	98	224	667

<sup>2</sup> This includes clients on accepted referrals, that commenced placement and were active at some point during the reporting period (1 May 2022 to 30 April 2023). It also includes clients that commenced prior to 1 May 2022 but were active in the program at some point during the reporting period. The number of C&YP in Kinship Care was calculated based on referral data and the number of C&YP in other programs was calculated based on placement data.

<sup>3</sup> Carer demographics did not include Foster Care – ACT carers as Foster Care - ACT operates within the larger Barnardo's consortium, and all carers are affiliated with Barnardo's, not OzChild.



# Demographics

In recent years, there has been a consistent decline in the number of carer households commencing and remaining as Foster Carers (AIHW, 2022a). In 2020-21 there was a decrease of 205 carer households nationwide. Specifically in Victoria, there has been an average annual decrease of 245 carer households since 2017. Accounting for the fact that many carer households care for more than one child (on average there is 1.25 C&YP in care per household), the average loss amounts to 307 carer households per year. If this downward trend persists, it is projected that by 2026, there may only be 22 carer households remaining in Victoria. OzChild's carer and C&YP demographics for the reporting period highlight the concern that Foster Care may be nearing its capacity to adequately provide care to C&YP due to the limited number of carer households in comparison to the growing rate of C&YP in need of care.

OzChild is committed to implementing effective and impactful strategies to improve the recruitment and retention of carers. In addition, OzChild is also committed to advocating for a more contemporary model of foster care across multiple states and territories, ensuring that the system evolves to better meet the needs of carers and C&YP. In alignment with OzChild's Strategic Plan to 2026 which emphasises the use of evidence to identify the most effective approaches, OzChild is actively working to gain a comprehensive understanding of this emerging issue through the collection of various forms of evidence. These include ongoing data analysis, modelling, behaviour/implementation research, qualitative insights from carers, creation of an evidence synthesis, and technology assessments. By gathering this information, OzChild aims to gain insights on the demographics of potential carers, identify effective strategies to attract carers, understand barriers preventing carers from commencing and continuing caring, as well as the key factors that can optimise carer experience and therefore improve retention. Through this knowledge, OzChild will develop a strategy expertly focused on attracting, onboarding, supporting, and retaining carers, therefore increasing the number of households available to provide care to C&YP.





# Key Findings



## Key Findings

### 1. Permanency

OzChild aims to ensure that C&YP, if unable to live with their birth families or kin, are placed into planned and stable long-term or permanent care arrangements with families who can provide for their safety and well-being.



#### 1.1 Stability: C&YP are in stable placements

Number of C&YP who had a Permanent Care Order Granted.

2022-23

16 C&YP

2021-22

18 C&YP



The 16 C&YP were from Kinship Care - Case Contacting (eight C&YP), Foster Care - VIC West (five C&YP), and Foster Care - VIC South (three C&YP).

Proportion of C&YP who had two or less placements.

2022-23

93 per cent

2021-22

95 per cent



Of the Foster Care programs, Foster Care – ACT demonstrated an increase in the proportion of C&YP placed in two or less placements during the reporting period compared to the previous one. This increase was relatively small, at three per cent (91 per cent to 94 per cent). On the other hand, Foster Care – VIC South experienced a four per cent decline (from 90 per cent to 86 per cent), while Foster Care – VIC West experienced a decline of nine per cent (dropping from 88 per cent to 79 per cent).

Proportion of C&YP successfully graduating from TFCO.

2022-23

82 per cent

2021-22

71 per cent



A total of 22 C&YP entered the TFCO program throughout the reporting period. Of those who entered, 18 C&YP graduated from the program while four experienced placement breakdowns.



Proportion of C&YP graduating from TFCO who were placed in lower-level care arrangements.

2022-23

94 per cent

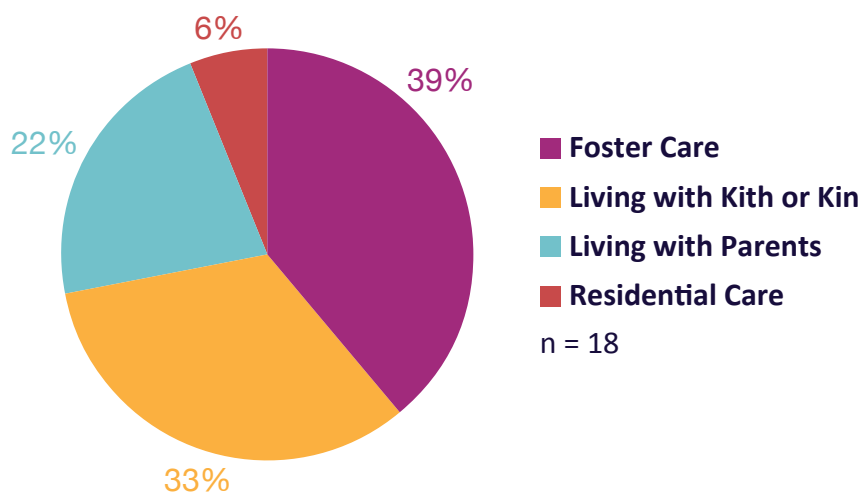
2021-22

100 per cent



Of the 18 of C&YP who graduated from the TFCO program, 94 per cent were placed in lower-level care arrangements. Specifically, 39 per cent were placed in Foster Care, 33 per cent were placed with kith or kin, and 22 per cent were placed with their parents. The remaining six per cent were placed in residential care.

**Figure 1 – Care Arrangements of C&YP who Graduated from TFCO**



## 2. Safety

OzChild ensures the safety of C&YP in their care so they can live lives free from family violence and child abuse and neglect.



### 2.1 Safe and Secure: C&YP feel safe

Proportion of C&YP in OzChild IHC services who report feeling 'Completely Safe' where they live.

2022-23

88 per cent

2021-22

91 per cent



Of the 10 C&YP who did not feel 'Completely safe', nine reported they felt 'Just about safe'. Each of these C&YP reported that they had a trusted adult they could talk to when they were worried. These trusted adults varied from their carer, birth parent, to their OzChild worker. One C/YP from TFCO – VIC reported that they did not feel safe at all. Program management advised that at the time of survey administration, this child was experiencing significant issues in their contact with their mother. More recently, it was reported that the child stated they felt completely safe and settled in their foster home. This C/YP reported that they had trusted adults to talk to when they were worried but emphasised they rarely saw them.

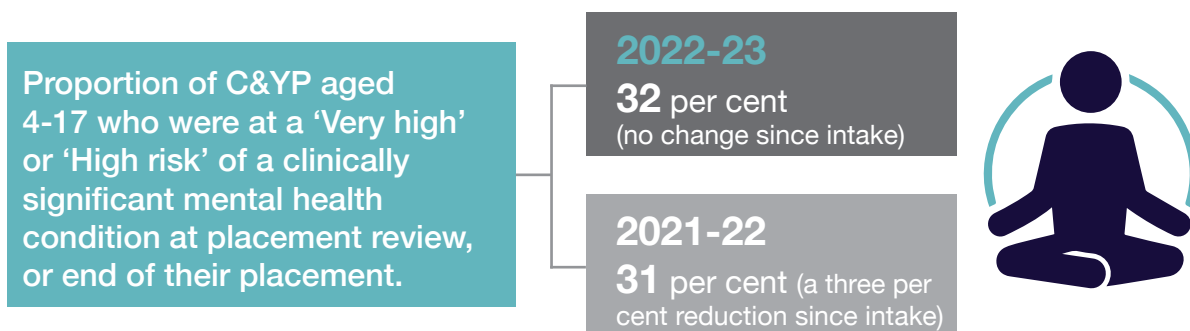


### 3. Well-being

OzChild employs a variety of measurement tools to assess a broad range of outcomes relating to child and family well-being. These outcomes encompass areas such as education, emotional and physical health, identity, as well as social and cultural connections.



#### 3.1 Emotional and Behavioural Well-Being: C&YP have improved emotional and behavioural development

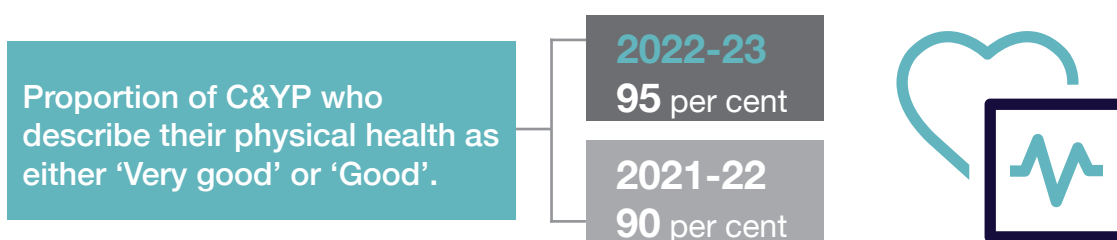


185 C&YP had both pre and review/post SDQ's completed by their parents during the reporting period. This marked a positive increase from the previous reporting period, where 140 SDQ's were completed. Although the proportion of C&YP in the 'Very high' and 'High' risk categories for the Total Difficulties scores showed no change at review/closure, there was a two per cent rise in the rate of C&YP in the 'Very high' risk category. This highlights an increase in the number of C&YP in the 'Very high' risk category for Total Difficulties at program closure compared to intake, suggesting that these C&YP faced heightened mental health challenges at program review/closure.

Program-specific findings revealed that Kinship Care – First Supports, TFCO – NSW, TFCO – SA, and TFCO – QLD demonstrated a reduction in the rate of C&YP who were at a 'Very high' or 'High' risk of a clinically significant mental health condition at review/closure. However, the Circle Program – VIC South experienced a significant increase of 50 per cent in the proportion of C&YP who were at a 'Very high' or 'High' risk of clinically significant mental health conditions by program review/closure.



#### 3.2 Physical Health: C&YP are supported with their physical health needs



Accounting for the remaining five per cent, three young people aged between 15 and 17 described their physical health as 'Poor'. These young people were from Kinship Care – Case Contracting (two C&YP) and Circle Program – VIC South (one C&YP).



Proportion of First Nations C&YP who had their annual 715 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Check.<sup>4</sup>

April 2023

60 per cent

April 2022

68 per cent



Although there has been a decline in the rate of First Nations C&YP receiving their annual 715 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Check since April 2022, this rate remains considerably higher when compared to the overall First Nations population in Australia, where just 27 per cent received their annual health check during 2020-21 (AIHW, 2022b).



### 3.3 Education: C&YP are engaged in and achieving in education

#### TFCO

The proportion of C&YP graduating from TFCO who had school attendance rates above 80 per cent at program closure.

2022-23

83 per cent

2021-22

94 per cent



Out of the 18 C&YP who graduated from the TFCO program, school attendance rates at program closure were available for six C&YP. The 17 per cent with attendance below 80 per cent at program closure represents one C&YP from TFCO – NSW who had a 78 per cent attendance rate. This C&YP demonstrated an 11 per cent decline in attendance at program closure compared to program commencement.

The proportion of C&YP graduating from TFCO who had an improvement in their average PAT Reading scores by program closure.

2022-23

67 per cent

2021-22

71 per cent



Out of the 18 C&YP who graduated from the TFCO program, six completed the PAT reading assessments both at the beginning and end of the program. Out of these six C&YP, two demonstrated a decrease in their average reading score at program closure. On the other hand, the remaining four C&YP demonstrated improvements to their reading scores at program closure, with an average increase of 39 per cent to their overall average score.

<sup>4</sup> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of all ages have access to a free health check (the 715 Health Check) once a year, as well as free follow-up care if needed. The 715 health check is important as it can help identify risks of ill health early to prevent chronic conditions from developing (Department of Health and Aged Care, 2022).

The proportion of C&YP graduating from TFCO who had an improvement in their average PAT Mathematics scores by program closure.

2022-23	86 per cent
2021-22	83 per cent



Seven out of the 18 C&YP who graduated from TFCO completed the PAT maths assessments both at the beginning and end of the program. Out of these seven, one C&YP demonstrated a decline in their average maths score at program closure. The remaining six C&YP demonstrated improvements to their maths scores at program closure, with an average improvement of 28 per cent to their average score).

## ***Foster Care, Circle Program and Kinship Case Contracting***

The proportion of C&YP in Foster Care – VIC South and Kinship Care - Case Contracting with school attendance rates above 80 per cent.

2022-23	89 per cent
2021-22	80 per cent



There was a significant rise in the number of C&YP with school attendance rate data available in the client management system since the 2021-22 reporting period. Specifically, the count of C&YP with attendance rate data available increased from 16 to 87. This increase was primarily observed in Kinship Care – Case Contracting. Foster Care - VIC South demonstrated a notable decline of 57 per cent in the number of C&YP with attendance rate data entered.

Additionally, it is worth noting that no school attendance information was entered in the client management system for Foster Care – VIC West, which has been observed since the 2021-22 reporting period.

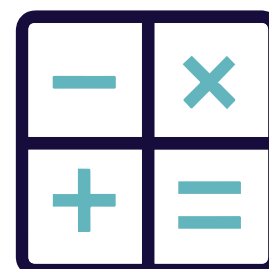
The proportion of C&YP achieving national literacy benchmarks.

2022-23	74 per cent
2021-22	70 per cent



The proportion of C&YP achieving national numeracy benchmarks.

2022-23	75 per cent
2021-22	69 per cent



Foster Care – VIC West and Circle Program – VIC South had the highest rates of C&YP achieving national literacy benchmark requirements (86 per cent for both). Kinship Care - Case Contracting demonstrated the lowest percentage (67 per cent). With regard to numeracy, Foster Care – VIC West demonstrated the highest rate of C&YP achieving national numeracy benchmark requirements (93 per cent). Foster Care – VIC South had the lowest rate of C&YP achieving benchmark requirements (67 per cent).



### 3.4 Connection: C&YP are supported to safely and appropriately maintain connection with family

Proportion of First Nations C&YP who were in contact with their siblings in care.

March 2023

94 per cent

April 2022

90 per cent



Of those in contact with their siblings in care, 47 per cent were living with their siblings. This was a nine per cent improvement since April 2022. The remaining 53 per cent were in contact with their siblings in care but were not living together. Of these C&YP not living with their siblings, there was a 19 per cent decline in the rate of regular weekly contact since April 2022. Specifically, the percentage dropped from 27 per cent to eight per cent. These findings suggest that while a larger proportion of C&YP are maintaining contact with siblings in care, those who are not living with their siblings are experiencing less frequent contact in comparison to April 2022.

Proportion of First Nations C&YP who had contact with at least one family member (parents, grandparents, aunts/uncles, cousins, and other family members).

March 2023

80 per cent

April 22

80 per cent



Proportion of First Nations C&YP who had contact with all family members (parents, grandparents, aunts/uncles, cousins, and other family members).

March 2023

13 per cent

April 2022

21 per cent



Among the First Nations C&YP who maintained contact with at least one family member, 79 per cent were in contact with their parents. This reflects an eight per cent decline since April 2022, where 87 per cent of First Nations C&YP were in contact with their parents.

Proportion of C&YP reporting that they did not want to change anything about their current contact arrangements with their siblings.

2022-23

56 per cent

2021-22

63 per cent



Of the 32 C&YP (44 per cent) who reported that they wanted to change contact arrangements with their siblings, 97 per cent wanted to **increase** contact.



Examples of specific comments included:

“I want to see them more, once a week or every 2 weeks.”

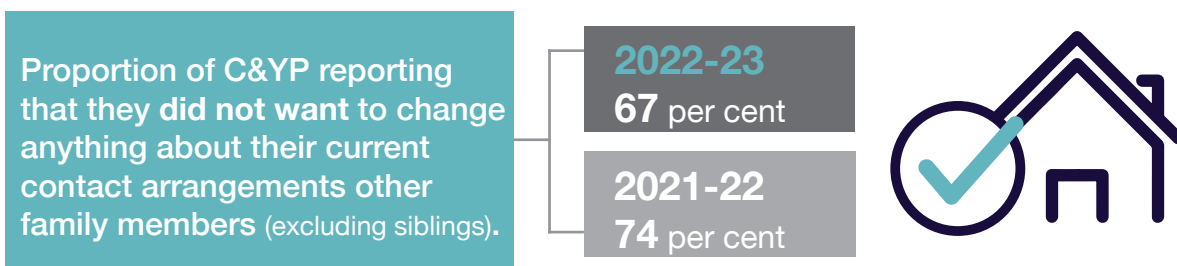
“I want to see my siblings more often.”

“Talk to them more, attend a holiday with them once in a while.”

“I want to see them more often, and to have more contact with them regularly.”

“I want to see my little brother more.”

“I want to see my sisters and brothers, I haven’t seen them in 3 years.”



Each of the 28 C&YP (33 per cent) who reported they wanted to change something about their current contact arrangements with their family members, expressed a wish to **increase** contact with either their parents, grandparents, or aunts/uncles. There was one unique case where one C/YP wanted more contact with their mother while also expressing a desire to reduce contact with their father.

Examples of specific comments included:

“I would like to be able to have a sleep over at my mums house.”

“If I could see my mum on the weekends and meet my dad in NZ.”

“I want regular respite with my mum.”

“I would like to see my Nan & Pop more because they make me feel safe.”

“I want to see my dad three times a week.”

“Want to see mum and aunty more.”



### 3.5 Identity: C&YP are supported to develop their identity, safely and appropriately, through contact with their culture and communities and have their life history recorded as they grow up

Proportion of First Nations C&YP who participated in at least six community gathering activities and/ or events (outside of the home) within the past six months.

March 2023

55 per cent

April 2022

38 per cent



Among the 27 First Nations C&YP (45 per cent) who did not participate in monthly community gatherings or events outside of the home, 16 C&YP did participate in community gatherings, just not on a monthly basis. The remaining 11 C&YP faced various barriers to attendance, including the age of the child limiting event options, behavioural challenges faced by C&YP, challenges engaging carers to organise attendance to events, C&YP declining to attend, and event location. Additional challenges such as new caseloads, placement changes, and the recent identification of one C&YP also impacted monthly attendance in cultural events.

Examples of specific comments included:

**“(Carer) continues to state that he would like to be involved in developing a network that will support links in the community for (C&YP) and their family, however there is yet to have been any action.”**

**“Young person is very young and difficult to engage in activities due to behavioural challenges.”**

**“Unable to attend Koori playgroup due to being in childcare full time as carer works full time. Has been taken to some events but not six.”**

**“Distance from events & long travel times to/from placement to school daily. OzChild has been advocating for school move in part to make this more achievable.”**

Proportion of First Nations C&YP who participated in weekly Aboriginal activities (within the home) within the past six months.

March 2023

75 per cent

April 2022

65 per cent



Barriers preventing participation in weekly cultural activities within the home included time constraints of carers, behavioural challenges of C&YP taking priority, difficulties engaging C&YP, and difficulties engaging carers to facilitate activities. Moreover, new caseloads and placement changes posed a challenge in measuring the frequency of activities facilitated within the home. Lastly, one C&YP was yet to participate in weekly activities due to recent identification.

Examples of specific comments included:

**“Change of placements, brand new carer.”**

**“(Carer) has said she is willing to support (C&YP) in engaging with Aboriginal programs and activities however she has not been able to describe these as her focus was on caring for (C&YP’s) overwhelming behaviour management needs.”**

**“(C&YP) has cultural activities and resources in the home available to her and is supported by her carer to participate regularly, however she is still learning on her cultural journey and has been reluctant to fully embrace culture”**

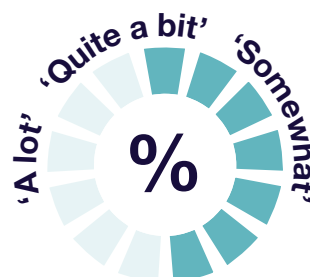
Proportion of C&YP surveyed who felt either ‘A lot’ or ‘Quite a bit’ in touch with their culture or community.

2022-23

48 per cent

2021-22

68 per cent



C&YP who felt ‘Not at all in touch’ were from diverse cultural backgrounds, including Australia, Asia, Europe, and New Zealand. Interestingly, 54 per cent of these C&YP were from more than one cultural background. In contrast, just 23 per cent of C&YP who reported feeling ‘A lot’ or ‘Quite a bit’ in touch were from more than one cultural background. These findings demonstrate that C&YP with multiple cultural backgrounds were more likely to experience a sense of disconnection from their cultures and community.

Proportion of C&YP surveyed who reported they knew either ‘Everything they need’ or ‘Quite a lot’ about their birth family.

2022-23

55 per cent

2021-22

59 per cent



Kinship Care - Case Contracting had the highest percentage (66 per cent) of C&YP reporting they knew either ‘Everything they need’ or ‘Quite a lot’ about their birth family. This higher rate is largely attributed to C&YP being placed with family members, facilitating easy access to family history, background, and traditions. Interestingly, in the previous reporting period, Kinship Care - Case Contracting also recorded the highest percentage of C&YP knowing ‘Everything they need’ or ‘Quite a lot’ about their birth families. However, this rate experienced a 19 per cent decline since then, dropping from 85 per cent in the previous period.





### 3.6 Leaving Care: C&YP are supported in planning for leaving care

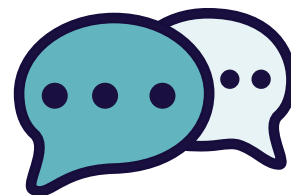
Proportion of young people surveyed aged 15-17 years old who felt they were involved in their leaving care plan and arrangements.

2022-23

80 per cent

2021-22

50 per cent



Proportion of young people surveyed aged 15-17 years old who reported being 'Very satisfied' or 'Satisfied' with their leaving care plan and arrangements.

2022-23

90 per cent

2021-22

83 per cent



One C&YP from Foster Care – VIC West reported that they were not involved in their leaving care planning and arrangements. Additionally, they also expressed that they were 'Dissatisfied' with their leaving care plan and arrangements. Their comment emphasised their perception of not feeling heard as well as the perceived lack of support received from the Department of Families, Fairness, and Housing (DFFH):

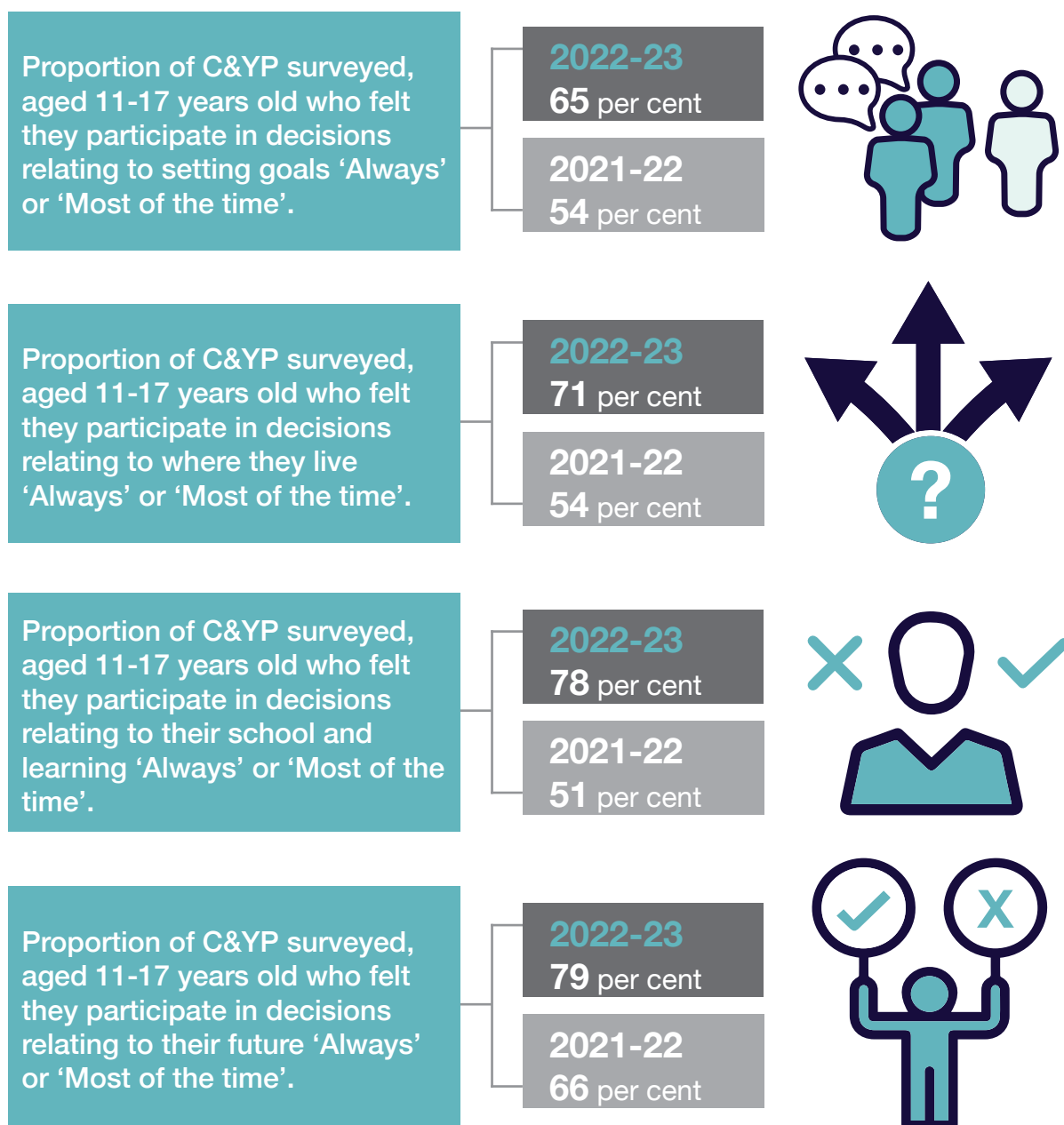
**“Don't feel heard Don't feel supported by DFFH.”**

Similarly, one C&YP from the Circle Program – VIC South reported feeling not involved in their leaving care plan and arrangements. Lastly, within the Kinship Care - Case Contracting program, one C/YP reported that they were 'Dissatisfied' with their leaving care plan and arrangements. Their comment brought attention to their perception of limited progress, absence of agency involvement, and lack of opportunities presented:

**“Because it has been a long time of talk and no action. No agency's or opportunities have been shown to me.”**



### 3.7 Participation: C&YP participate in decisions impacting their lives



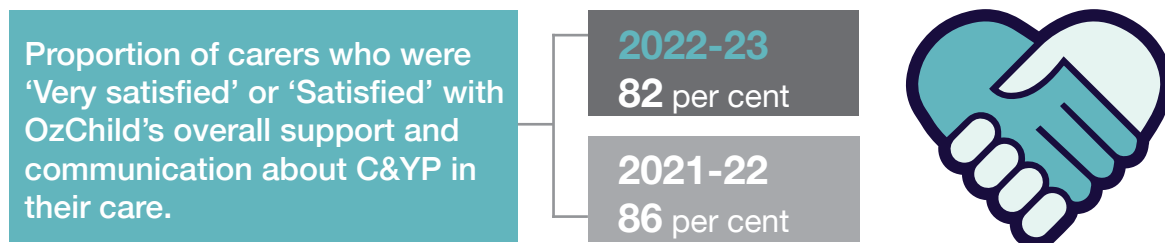
C&YP between the ages of 15 and 17 were more inclined to feel that they 'Always' or 'Most of the time' participate in decision making relating to where they live, their school and learning, and their future in comparison to those between the ages of 11 and 14. In contrast, C&YP aged between 11 and 14 were more likely to feel they participated in decision making when setting goals, in comparison to those aged between 15 and 17.

C&YP who had a disability reported a lower levels of involvement when it came to decision making that impacted their lives. For instance, only 25 per cent of C&YP with a disability reported consistent participation ('Always' or 'Most of the time') in decision making relating to setting goals. In contrast, 75 per cent of C&YP without a disability felt consistently involved in decision making regarding setting goals. Similarly, when it came to decisions about where they live, schooling and learning, and their future, only 50 per cent of C&YP with a disability reported consistent participation. This was significantly lower compared to those without a disability, where at least 76 per cent reported consistent participation.



### 3.8 Carers: Carers are assessed and receive relevant ongoing training, development, and support, in order to provide quality care

#### Communication and Support



Carers who expressed being 'Very satisfied' or 'Satisfied' shared comments that showcased their positive experiences with OzChild staff, specifically highlighting their appreciation for various aspects of support and communication. These aspects included, clear communication, prompt responses when required, the presence of supportive and empathic staff, as well as staff members who demonstrated knowledge and expertise in their roles.

**"Communication very clear, good to have confirmations via email as well as verbal."**

**"Have a strong relationship with our current social worker."**

**"Ozchild's planning and organised support team is fantastic."**

**"readily available. Quick response if needed. Very supportive staff and easy to work with."**

**"Having 24/7 support gives me the assurance that I am only a phone call away from the help that I need. I feel that is significant to my role as a carer because there are so many different situations that occur throughout the days and weeks. I would feel so lost without the support I receive. The team of support staff are highly experienced and knowledgeable about caring for children in out of home care. I trust them!"**

**"OzChild support has been amazing, I feel respected by the staff"**

**"We have always had caring workers/staff who have supported us throughout our fostering (over 14 years)."**

**"I have been so happy with the support I have had through OzChild west. The team are caring and thoughtful..."**



Carers who expressed being 'Not at all satisfied' shared comments highlighting several issues. These included the lack of timely assistance and support when needed, inadequate provision of accurate information, limited experience of case managers impacting their ability to make appropriate decisions, as well as a perceived lack of understanding and support from both case managers and carer support services:

**"Carer support person would take weeks to respond to any of my emails, - case managers inexperienced causing a lot of unnecessary distress and heart ache..."**

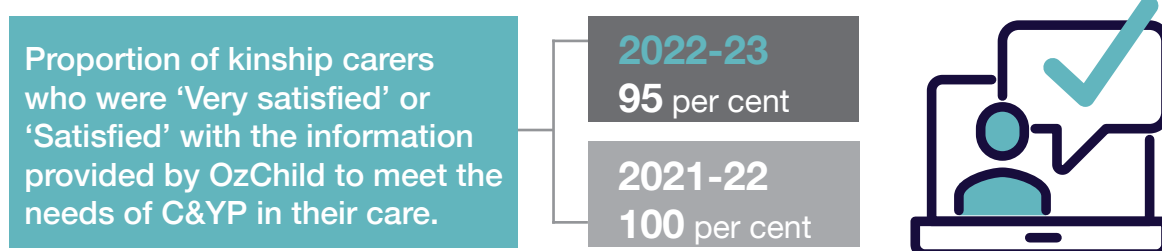
**"Workers always seem to be busy or away when things are urgent. Don't get back to you in a timely manner."**

**"Sometimes don't even get a response or action to questions asked."**

**"Often told incorrect details from CM eg. not provided with important accurate information prior to taking on a placement, advised of incorrect payment rates and minimised needs to the child before accepting a placement just so the placement will be accepted."**

**"Lack of support from carer support person who hardly ever got back to me until weeks and weeks later and the worst was the case managers who I unfortunately experienced lacked experience and hence where unwilling to problem solve to have try to find reasonable solutions."**

### ***Kinship Information and Training***



One carer from Kinship Care - First Supports represented the five per cent 'Not satisfied' with the information provided by OzChild. While no additional feedback was provided, program management have been informed and will take the necessary steps to address this concern.

Of the 95 per cent of carers who felt either 'Very satisfied' or 'Satisfied', specific comments included:

**"Super informative. Always able to answer any questions we have and if they don't know the answer, they get back to us within a day with the relevant information."**

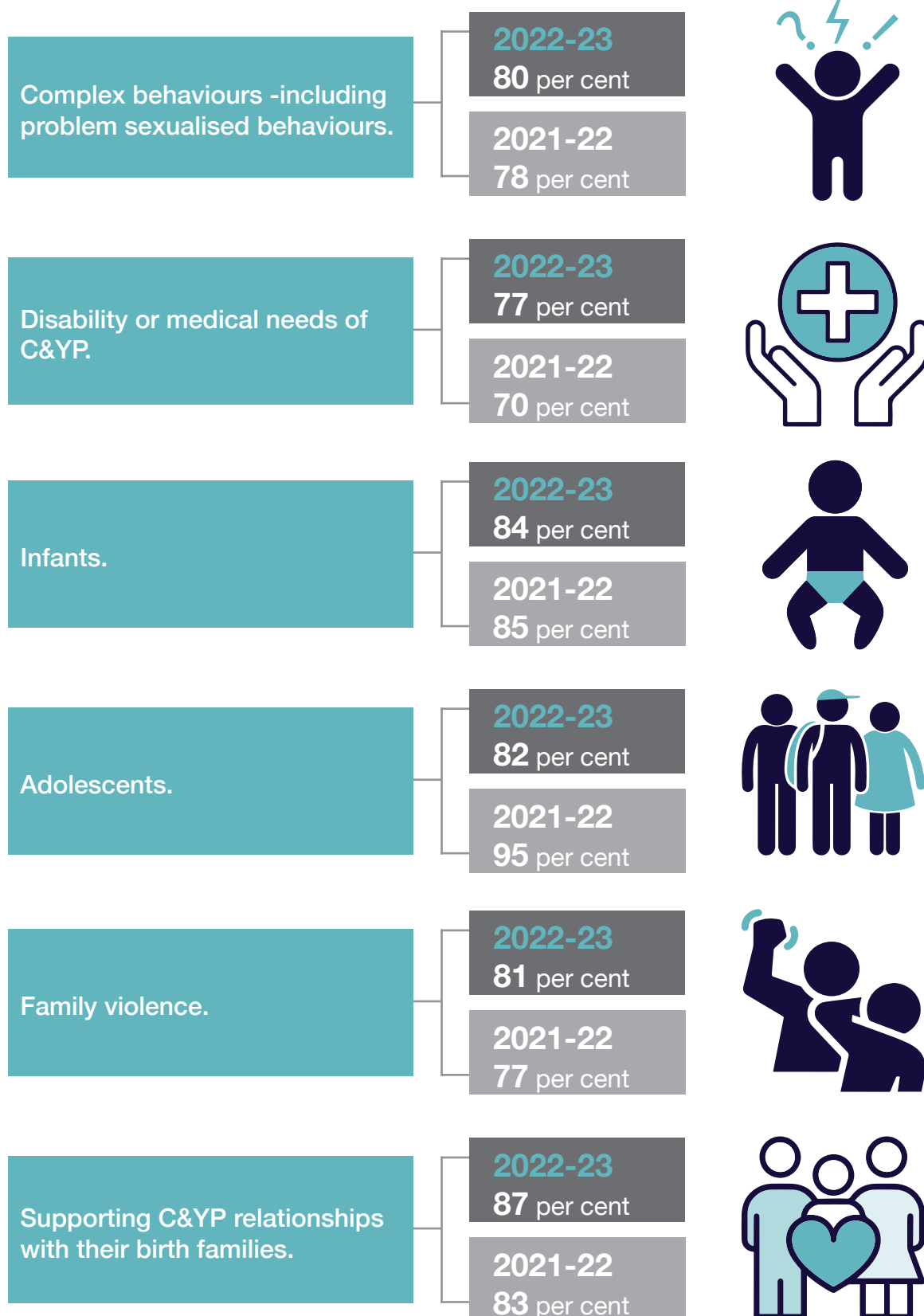
**"...If OzChild hadn't been involved I would never have been given the right information I needed or the positivity they have shown to me to give me the reassurance I needed to believe and feel I can do this and give my grandchildren the best support I can offer and the positive experiences they need to grow."**

**"OzChild always there when I need them or call them."**

**"They have given me lots of information."**

## Foster Care, The Circle Program, and TFCO Training

Proportion of carers who reported they were either 'Very satisfied' or 'Satisfied' with OzChild's training relating to:



In contrast to Foster Care carers, TFCO and Circle Program carers were more likely to express a greater level of satisfaction ('Very satisfied' or 'Satisfied') with the different types of training offered.

Carers from Foster Care who expressed they were either 'Slightly satisfied' or 'Not at all satisfied' with at least one type of training highlighted several factors impacting their level of satisfaction. Firstly, the scheduling of training sessions was a significant concern, as it often failed to accommodate the needs of carers who work full-time. Additionally, carers expressed discontent with the limited availability of online training options, which posed challenges for those unable to attend in-person sessions. Lastly, carers expressed frustration regarding the volume of required training and the repetitive nature of content across various training sessions.

To improve training, these carers suggested the following:

- Conducting training sessions in the evenings and/or weekends to accommodate the busy schedules of carers.
- Providing options that are both online and in-person, ensuring accessibility for all carers.
- Offering opportunities for refresher/follow up training sessions to reinforce skills and knowledge.
- Providing training specifically focused on addressing complex behaviours as guided by the needs of carers.
- Incorporating cultural training sessions to improve cultural awareness.
- Increasing participation in sessions to provide carers with an opportunity to ask questions.

Among the carers who expressed their satisfaction by stating they were either 'Very satisfied' or 'Satisfied' with at least one type of training offered, some shared specific comments highlighting their positive experiences:

**"I've only attended the 1 training. I thought it was great on all levels, time, length, speaker, I formation provided and interaction with participants. It was a really helpful first training to attend delivered by someone with lived experience, which was great."**

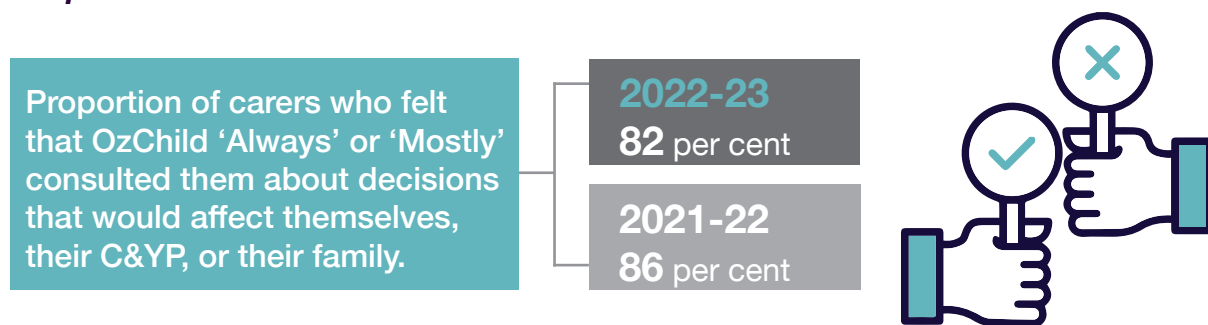
**"More training on offer than I have ever sort!"**

**"We love all the training we have done and wish there were more."**

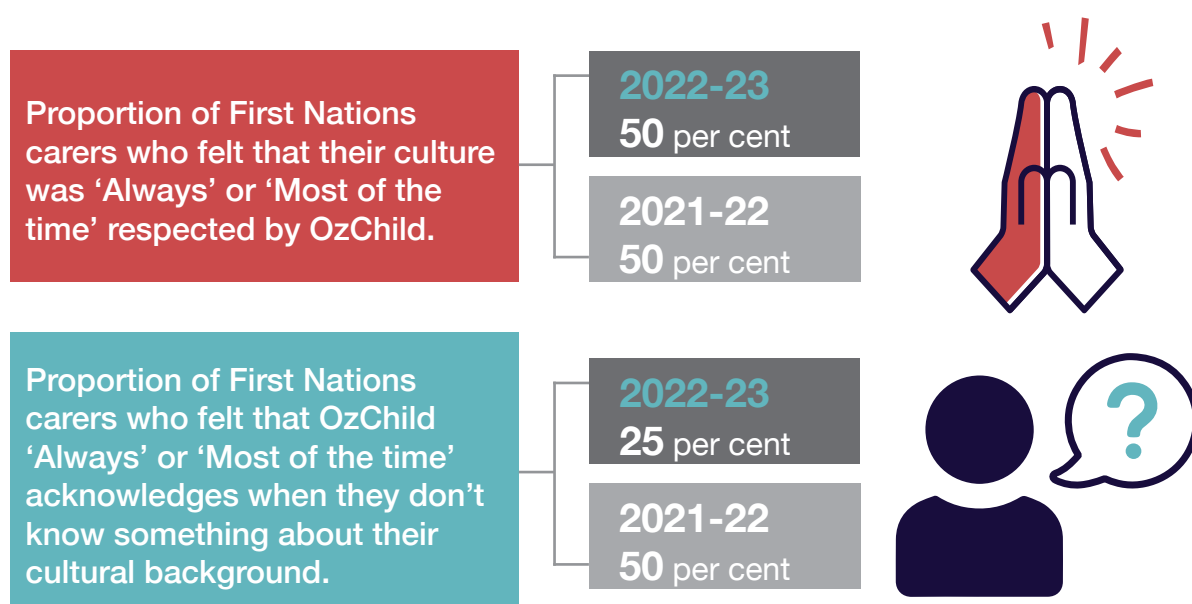
**"Very professional training and very informative."**

**"Yarning Circle was good, learnt a lot."**

## Respect



Four per cent of carers felt that OzChild 'Never' consults them about decisions that may affect themselves, their C&YP, or their family. This rate remained unchanged since 2021-22. These carers were from Foster Care – VIC South, Foster Care – VIC West, and Kinship Care – First Supports.



Four First Nations carers responded to the 2023 Carer Feedback Survey, which was two less than the previous year. Among them, only one carer reported that OzChild 'Always' demonstrates respect for their families Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background and 'Always' acknowledges when they lacked knowledge about their culture. On the other hand, one First Nations carer reported that OzChild 'Never' respected their Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander culture while another First Nations carer felt that OzChild 'Never' acknowledged when they do not know something about their culture.



Proportion of non-First Nations carers who felt that their culture was 'Always' or 'Most of the time' respected, acknowledged, and support by OzChild.



Two non-First Nations carers (one per cent) felt their culture was 'Never' respected, acknowledged, and supported by OzChild. These carers were from Foster Care – VIC South and Kinship Care – First Supports. Both of these carers had an Australian background. Interestingly, both carers reported that OzChild 'Never' consults them about decisions that may affect themselves, C&YP in their care, or their family.

Proportion of carers who felt 'Very satisfied' or 'Satisfied' with their overall relationship with OzChild.



Despite a decline in the rate of carers feeling either 'Very satisfied' or 'Satisfied', just two per cent of carers felt 'Not at all satisfied' with their overall relationship with OzChild. This was a one per cent improvement since 2021-22. The carers who were 'Not at all satisfied' were from Foster Care – VIC South, Foster Care – VIC West, and Kinship Care – First Supports.



## Summary and Conclusion

The 2022-23 IHC Outcomes Executive Summary found that OzChild's in-scope IHC programs have made both improvements and declines in the achievement of indicators relating to the three key outcome domains: Permanency, Safety, and Well-being.

For C&YP, several indicators demonstrated progress compared to the previous reporting period. Notable improvements included:

- A 30 per cent increase in the proportion of young people aged 15-17 years old who felt they were involved in their leaving care plan and arrangements.
- An 11 per cent increase in the proportion of C&YP successfully graduating from TFCO.
- A nine per cent increase in the proportion of C&YP from Foster Care – VIC South and Kinship Care – Case Contracting with school attendance rates above 80 per cent.
- A seven per cent increase in the proportion of young people aged 15-17 years old who were 'Very satisfied' or 'Satisfied' with their leaving care plan and arrangements.

Moreover, there were significant increases in the proportion of C&YP aged between 11 and 17 years who felt they participated in decision-making relating to their school and learning (27 per cent increase), where they live (17 per cent increase), their future (13 per cent increase) and setting goals (11 per cent increase).

In contrast, there were some indicators that demonstrated a decline compared to the previous reporting period. The most significant declines were observed in the following areas:

- The proportion of C&YP who felt 'A lot' or 'Quite a bit' in touch with their culture or community, which decreased by 20 per cent.
- The proportion of C&YP graduating from TFCO who had school attendance rates above 80 per cent at program closure, which decreased by 11 per cent.

Specific to First Nations C&YP, positive improvements were observed in specific indicators. These included a 17 per cent increase in the rate of C&YP 'participating in community gatherings and/or events,' a 10 per cent increase in the 'engagement in weekly Aboriginal activities within the home', and a four per cent increase in the proportion of First Nations C&YP 'maintaining contact with siblings in care.' However, declines were seen, primarily in the rate of First Nations C&YP receiving their annual 715 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Check (down by eight per cent) and the rate of First Nations C&YP maintaining contact with all family members (i.e., parents, grandparents, aunties/uncles, cousins, and other family members) (down by eight per cent).

For carers, there were a relatively equal number of declines in comparison to improvements. Improvements were mainly seen in the satisfaction of training provided to Foster Care, Circle Program, and TFCO carers, specific to training regarding disability or medical needs of C&YP (up by seven per cent), supporting C&YP relationships with their birth families (up by five per cent), family violence (up by four per cent), and complex behaviours (up by two per cent).

The most significant decline was observed in the rate of First Nations carers who felt that 'OzChild acknowledges when they don't know something about their cultural background,' a decrease of 25 per cent. It should be noted that only four First Nations carers completed the Carer Feedback Survey in 2023, compared to six carers in 2022. In contrast, a two per cent increase was observed in the rate of non-First Nations carers reporting that 'their culture was respected, acknowledged, and supported by OzChild.'

These findings highlight the outstanding efforts of OzChild's IHC programs over the past year while also identifying areas of focus for improvement. These findings will be discussed with teams through the facilitation of an actions workshop where actions will be developed, along with checkpoints to monitor progress to therefore improve outcomes for C&YP.

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**[ozchild.org.au](https://www.ozchild.org.au)**

**National Support Office**

PO Box 1312  
South Melbourne VIC 3205  
T: (03) 9695 2200  
F: (03) 9696 0507  
E: [hello@ozchild.org.au](mailto:hello@ozchild.org.au)