Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study

The artist is a young person who grew up in care.

"The banner shows many pathways through the care system with a carer or caseworker acting as a guide, ultimately leading to independence for every young person. Whether we live with family or strangers, study, work, or just try our best, the paths we choose and are guided through in our youth are what we use to prepare ourselves for the happiest adulthood we can achieve" Billy Black

Measuring Placement Stability and Child Developmental Outcomes: a preliminary analysis

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Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet; the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation; and pay our respect to Aboriginal Elders past, present and emerging.

We remember the Stolen Generations – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children forcibly removed from their families, communities and culture under past government practices.

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POCLS background: main cohorts

Study population cohort
Entered OOHC on interim orders for first time
May 2010-October 2011
(n=4,126)

Final orders cohort
Children's Court order by April 2013
(n=2,828)

Interview cohort
(n=1,789)
W1 = 1,285
W2 = 1,200
W3 = 1,033
W4 = 962
W5 currently recruiting

Background

Literature suggests that children:

- Who are not in OOHC are more likely to have better developmental outcomes compared to children in OOHC.

- Have placement stability in OOHC are more likely to have better outcomes compared to those with placement instability.

- Enter OOHC with better development are more likely to perform better in future compared to those who enter with lower development.

Children's development and placement stability

Aim:

The aim of this study is to examine the influence of placement stability on developmental outcomes of children in OOHC over time controlling for children's baseline characteristics, baseline development and other variables.

Hypothesis:

Children who have greater placement stability in OOHC perform better over time.

Study sample:

POCLS interview cohort, Waves 1-3

Modelling children's development

Modelling longitudinal data using mixed effects allows us to:

- model the differences within and between individuals over time accounting for risk and protective factors

- estimate the mean development for the entire sample (fixed-effect), and individual specific deviations from the mean for each person in the sample (random effect)

- estimate some of the unmeasured/unobserved individual differences that we think exist and may impact development. This is called unobserved heterogeneity.

Factors to be included in modelling

- Placement stability
- Length of first placement
- Child demographics (sex, age at entry, cultural background)
- Trauma history (no. of ROSH reports, types of trauma experience prior to care)
- Placement type (foster, relative/kinship, residential)
- Carer demographics (education, income, marital status, cultural background)
- Carer experience (e.g. satisfaction with caseworker assistance, relationship with other agencies, information about child)
- Carer stress (Kessler 10)
- Neighbourhood measure (Social Cohesion and Trust scale)

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# Placement stability: the concept

- Placement stability
  - easy to understand
  - hard to summarise
    - number
    - timing (how soon after entry to care)
    - time between placements
    - types of carers

- We have administrative data on placement and carer ID. These can be used to create measures.

Existing measure: How many distinct placements?

Distinct placements for no final orders, final orders interviewed and final orders not interviewed cohorts
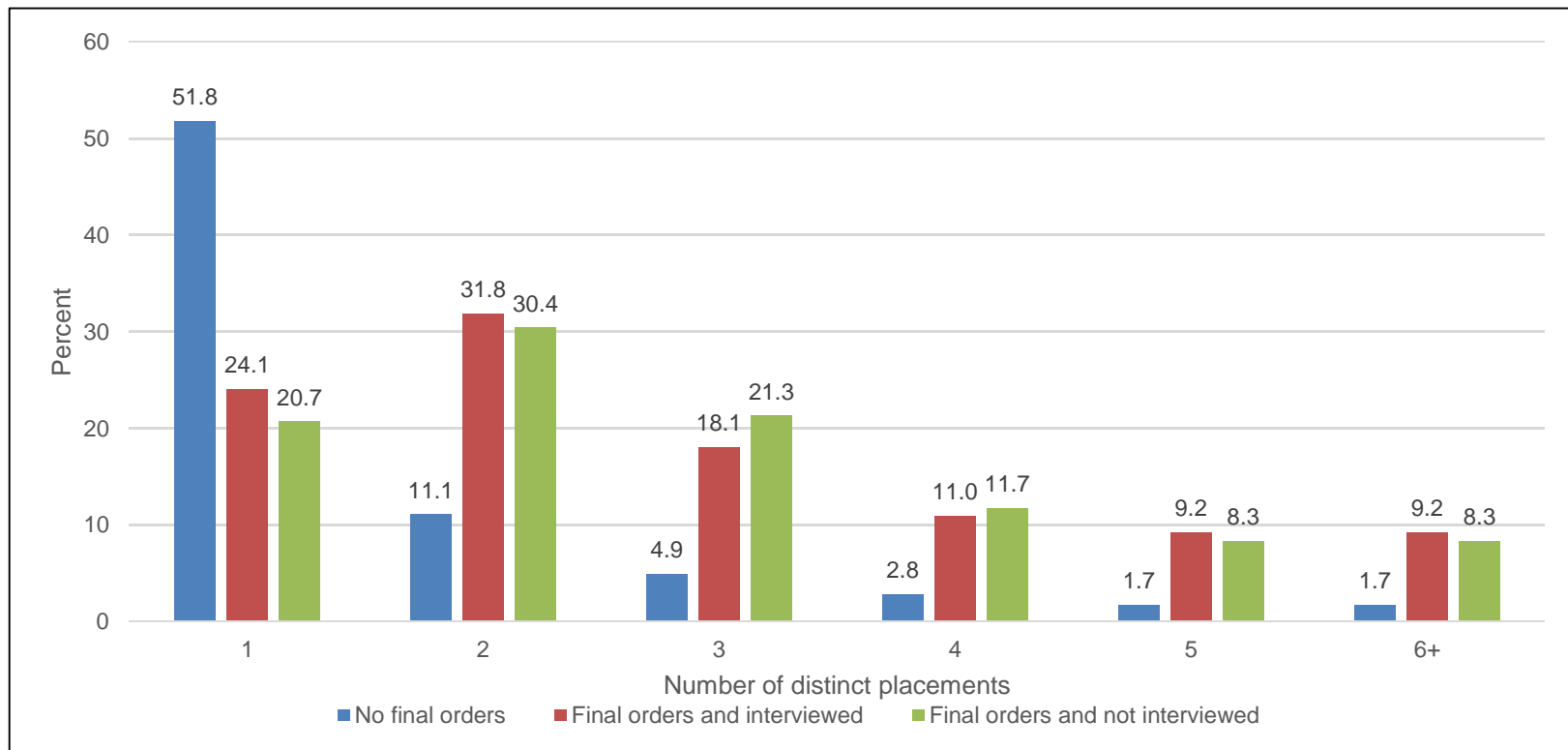
Note: Distinct placements excludes non permanent placements such as respite and emergency of <7 days and return to a previous carer.

Limitation with existing measure

- Do not account for time in care e.g., 3 placement changes in one year versus 3 placement changes in 10 years

- Only available as a summary measure for the whole period (up to when data was extracted)

- Can't be divided into separate time periods, e.g., between wave 1 and wave 2

- Advice indicates that it may be more reasonable to allow 21 days for respite placements (rather than 7 days)

Proposed measure for placement stability

What is a placement change?

- Move between two carers (i.e. a change in carer ID)

What is not a change?

- Same carer ID for two consecutive placements (AA vs AB)
- All placements less than 7 days (unless permanent)
- Respite placements <22 days
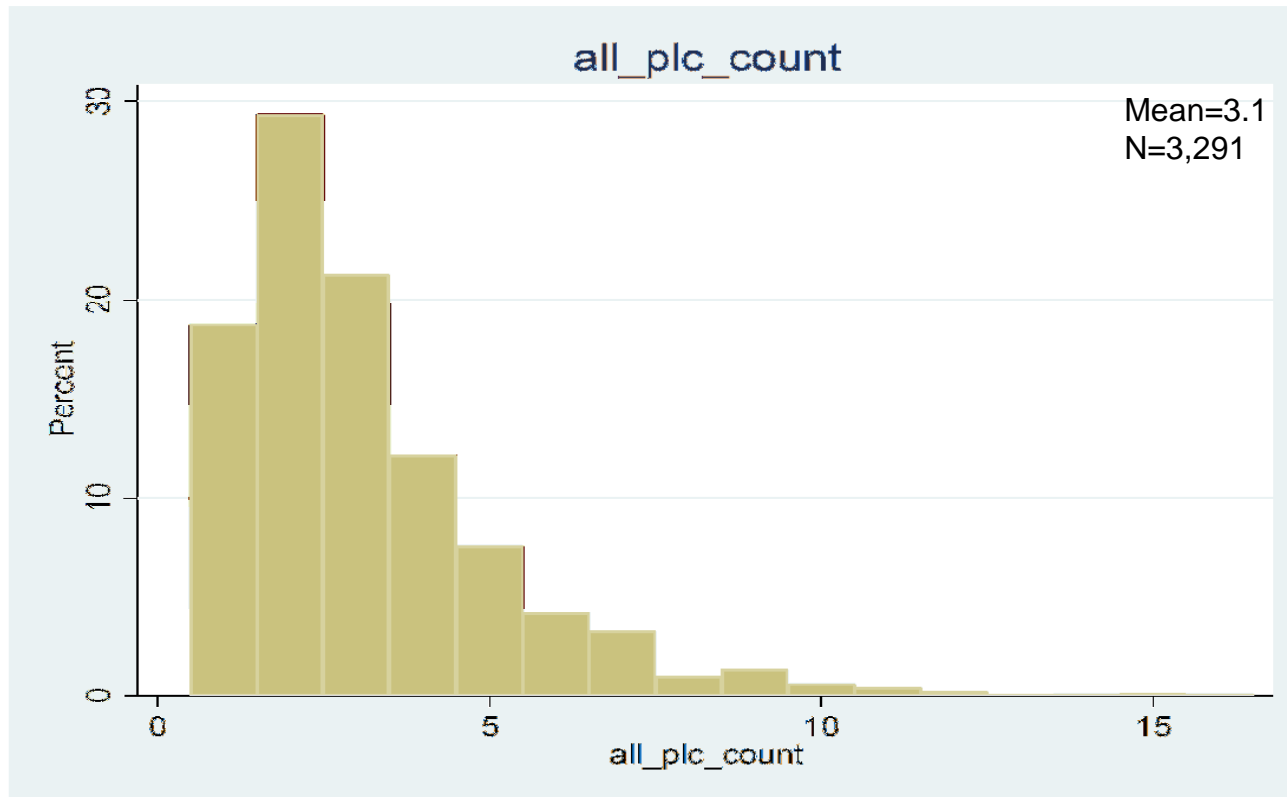- Restorations and adoptions

What else was considered?

- Length of first placement
- Number of changes between waves
- Duration in care (e.g. are 3 placements in 10 years different from 3 placements in a year)

Potential measure to consider (1)
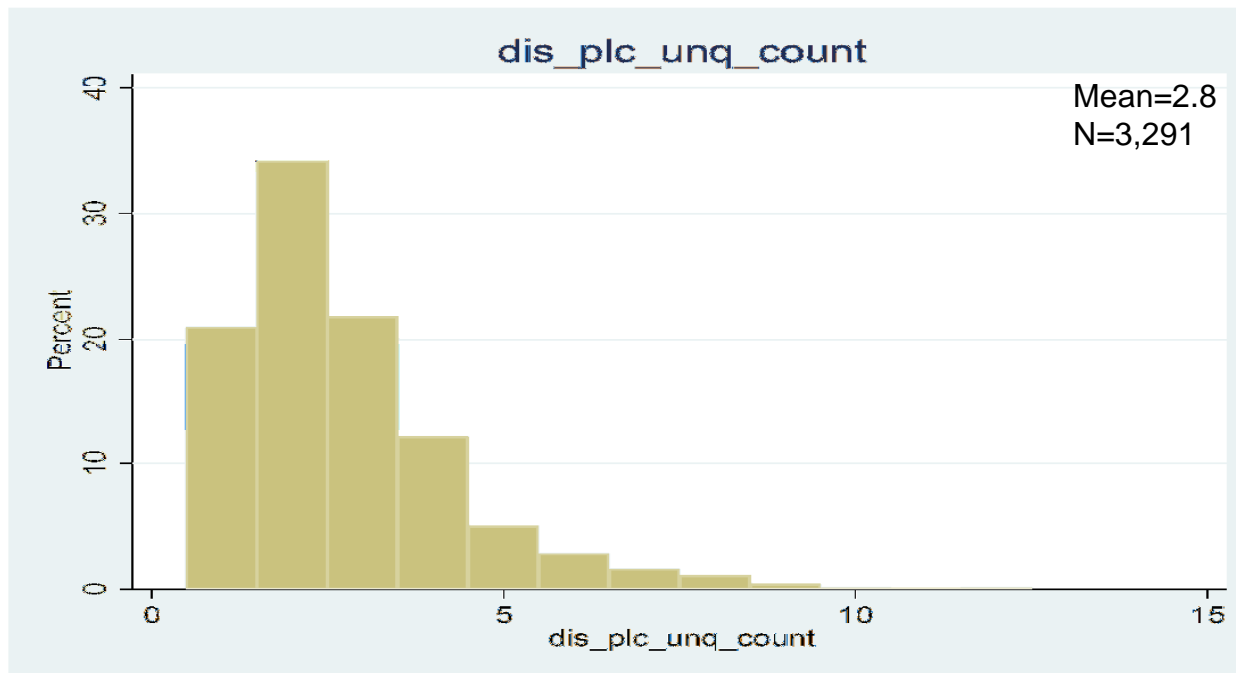
1.Total number of placements

Note: ABCA & AABC are both 4 placements – potentially over counts placements

Potential measure to consider (2)

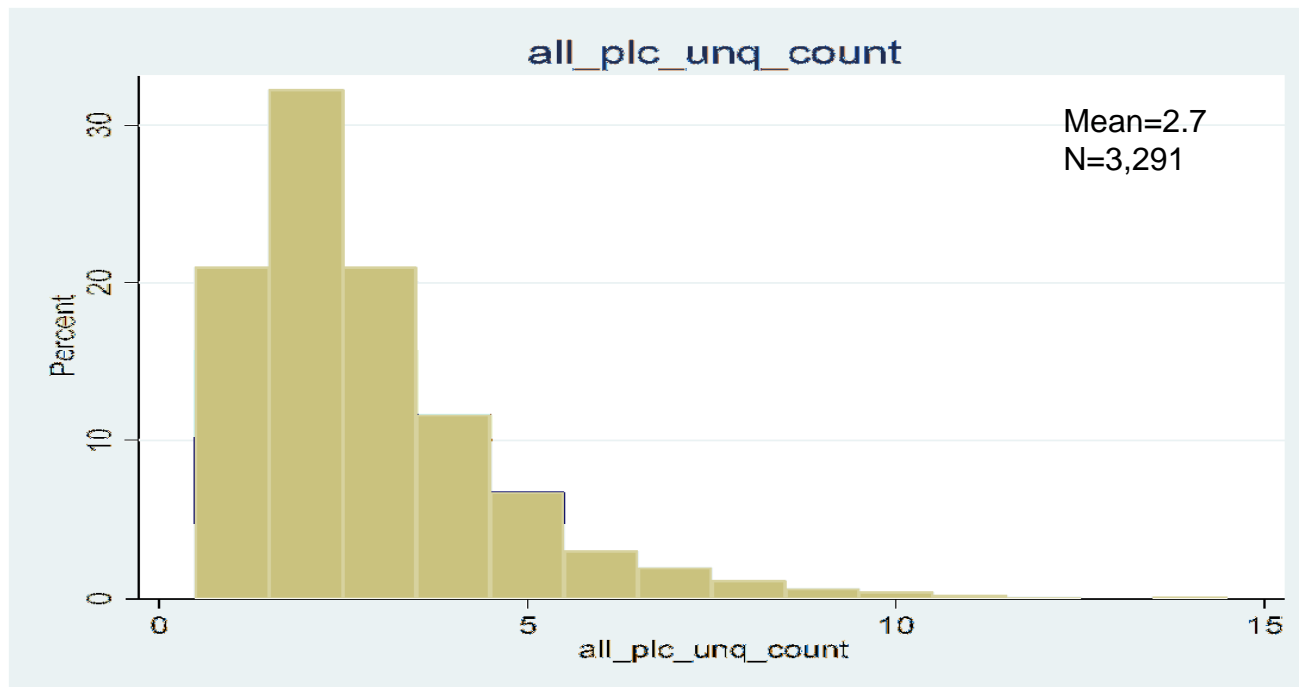## 2. Number of unique placements

Note: ABCA & AABC are both 3 unique placements – counts a carer once and only once

Potential measures to consider (3)
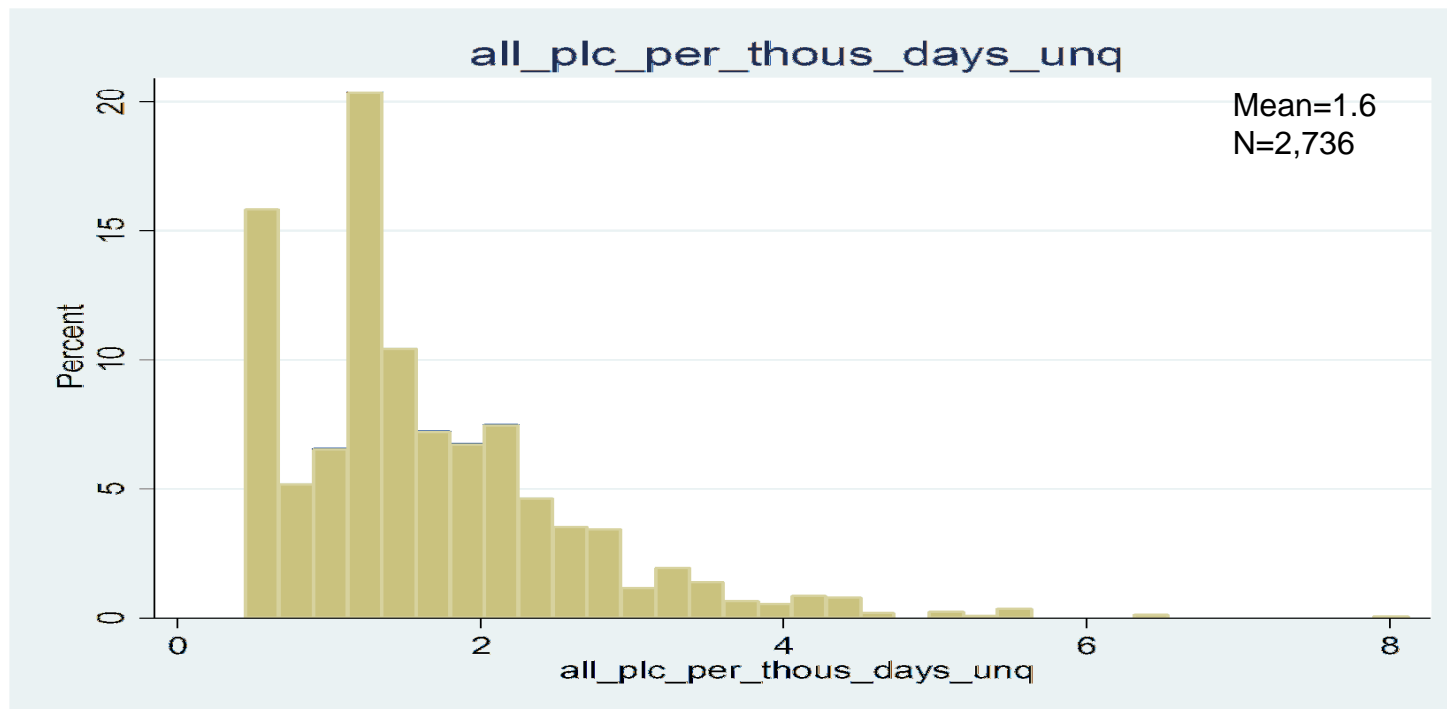
3. Number of placement changes

Note: ABCA is 4 & AABC is 3 placements – a compromise between measures (1) and (2)

Potential measure to consider (4)

4. Number of placement changes/ 1,000 care days

Note: - ABCA is 4 & AABC is 3 placements - adjusts for the length of time in care
- 1,000 care days is approximately 3 years

Proposed placement stability measure

The measure we want needs to address the issues we discussed above:

- avoids over counting or under counting

- takes into account the length of time in care

- does not take into account their entire time in care at once but looks at their recent experience i.e. time between waves (approx. 18 months)

- allows us to look at placement stability in the period prior to when we measured the child's development (Wave 1, 2 and 3 interview).

Proposed placement stability measure
interview cohort entry to wave 3

5. Number of placement changes/ 1,000 care days (between waves)

Mean = 3.3
N=3,156
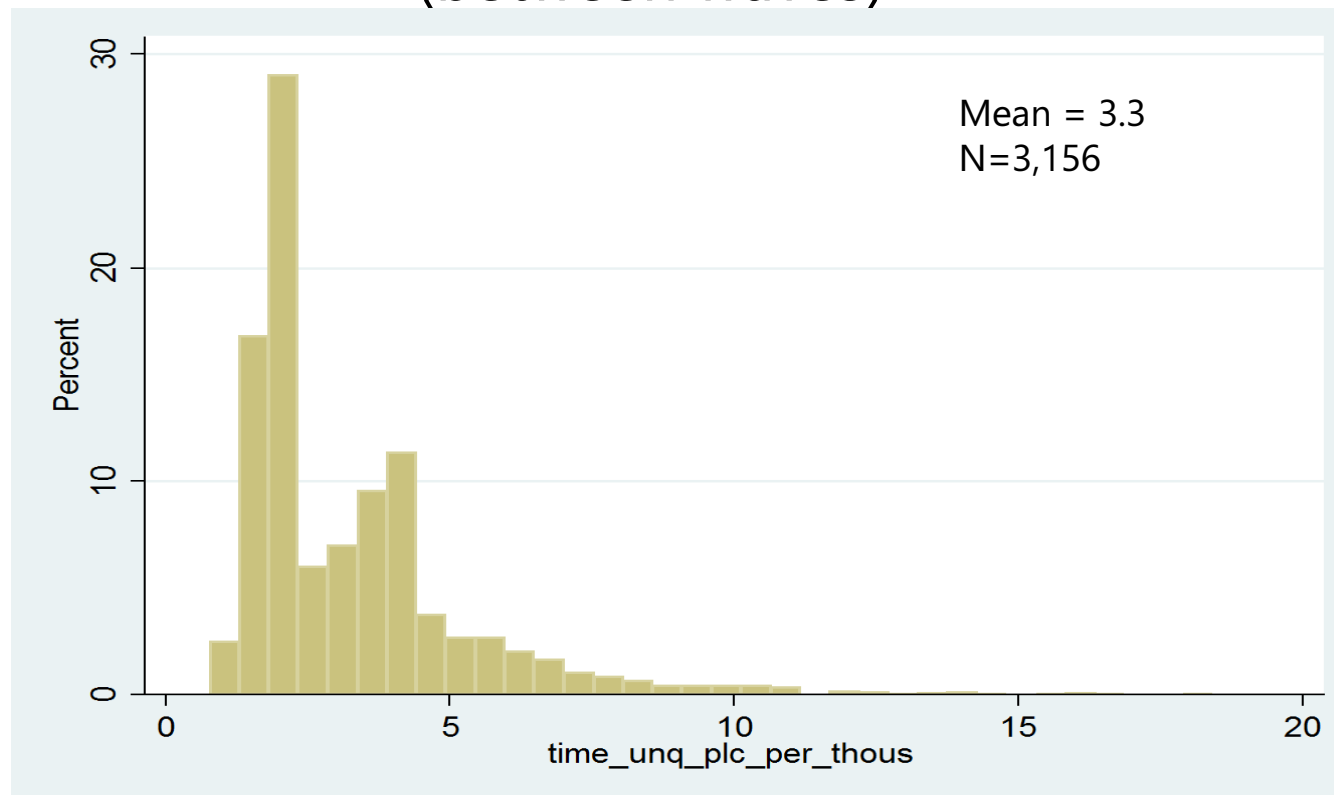
Note: - used for modelling purposes only
- 1,000 care days is approximately 3 years

Placement stability and demographics

Number of placement changes/ 1,000 care days (between waves) observations

Demographic	Entry to Wave 1 N=1260		Wave 1 to Wave 2 N=1005		Wave 2 to Wave 3 N=891	
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean
Female	635	4.2	496	2.6	436	2.5
Male	625	4.1	509	2.6	455	2.6
Aboriginal	491	4.0	410	2.5	370	2.5
Non-Aboriginal	769	4.2	595	2.6	521	2.6
CALD	182	4.3	148	2.8	141	2.7
Non-CALD	1078	4.1	857	2.5	750	2.5

Note: - The focus of the interpretation should not be on the absolute numbers (given the way the measure was constructed), but on relative comparisons across demographics and over time.
- 1,000 care days is approximately 3 years

Placement stability and age at entry

Number of placement changes/ 1,000 care days

Age at first entry	Entry to Wave 1 N= 1260		Wave 1 to Wave 2 N=1005		Wave 2 to Wave 3 N=891	
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean
0-2 years	692	4.3	576	2.5	527	2.5
3-5 years	239	3.9	194	2.6	170	2.5
6-11 years	259	4.1	205	2.8	175	2.8
12-17 years	70	4.1	30	2.7	19	3.4

Note: - The focus of the interpretation should not be on the absolute numbers (given the way the measure was constructed), but on relative comparisons across demographics and over time.
- 1,000 care days is approximately 3 years

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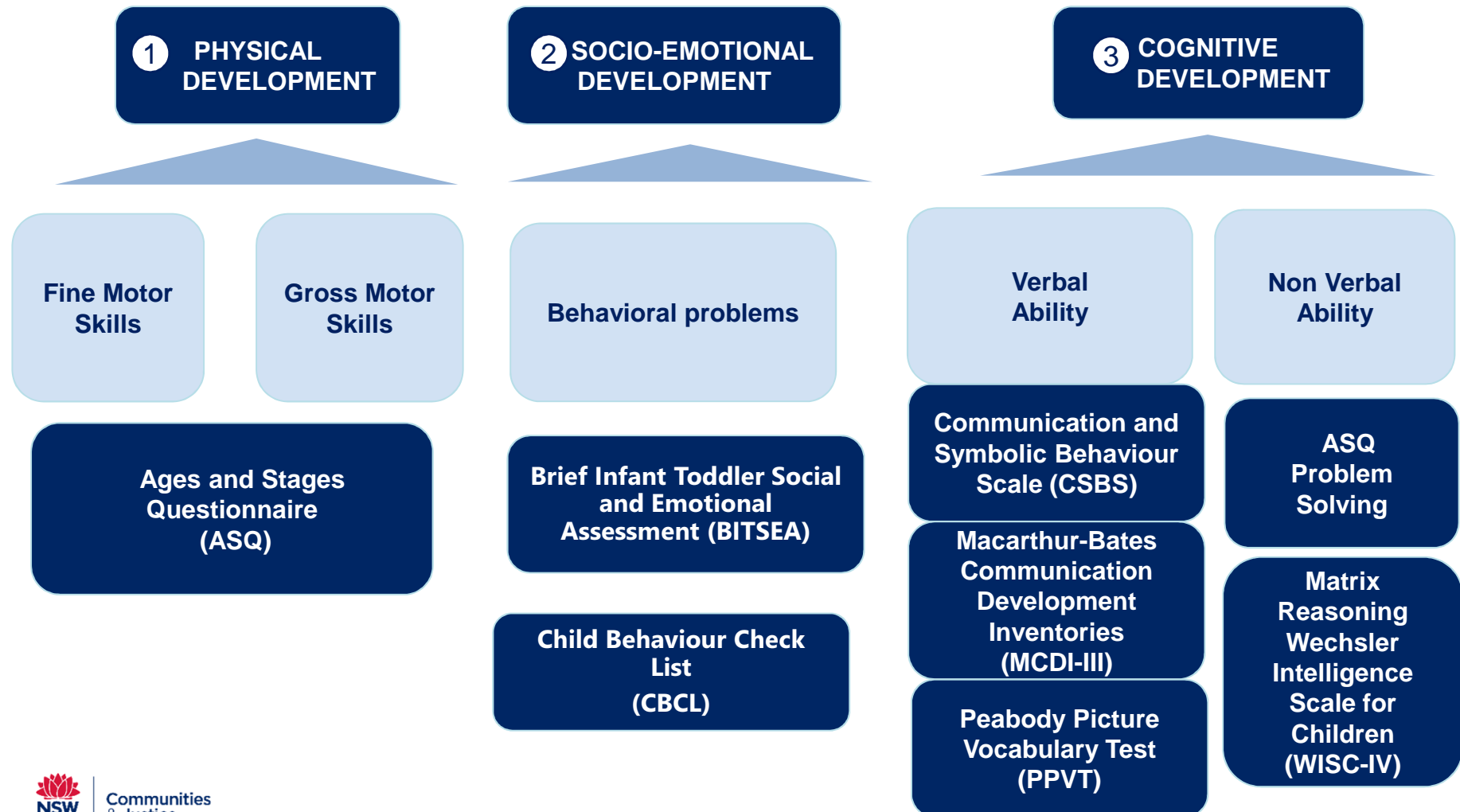
Placement stability and placement type

Number of placement changes/ 1,000 care days

Predominant placement type	Entry to Wave 1 N=1208		Wave 1 to Wave 2 N=963		Wave 2 to Wave 3 N=853	
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean
Foster care	704	4.5	579	2.8	524	2.7
Relative/Kinship care - Aboriginal	97	3.3	76	2.3	69	2.4
Relative/Kinship care – Non-Aboriginal	383	3.7	298	2.2	252	2.2
Residential care	24	5.2	10	2.5	8	4.7

Note: - The focus of the interpretation should not be on the absolute numbers (given the way the measure was constructed), but on relative comparisons across demographics and over time
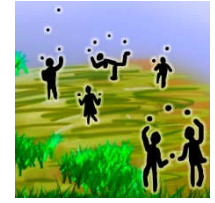- 1,000 care days is approximately 3 years

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Developmental outcome domains

1 **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

2 **SOCIO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

3 **COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Fine Motor Skills

Gross Motor Skills

Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)

Behavioral problems

Brief Infant Toddler Social and Emotional Assessment (BITSEA)

Child Behaviour Check List (CBCL)

Verbal Ability

Non Verbal Ability

Communication and Symbolic Behaviour Scale (CSBS)

Macarthur-Bates Communication Development Inventories (MCDI-III)

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT)

ASQ Problem Solving

Matrix Reasoning Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-IV)

Measures for outcome domains

OUTCOME DOMAINS	9-35 mths	3-5 yrs	6-11 yrs	12-17 yrs
Physical development	ASQ (Fine and Gross Motor Scales)	ASQ	-	-
Socio-emotional development	BITSEA (W1) CBCL (W2) (Behaviour Problem Scale)	CBCL	CBCL	CBCL
Cognitive development - non verbal	ASQ (Problem-Solving Scale)	ASQ	MR-WISC	MR-WISC
Cognitive development - verbal	CSBS MCD-III	PPVT	PPVT	PPVT
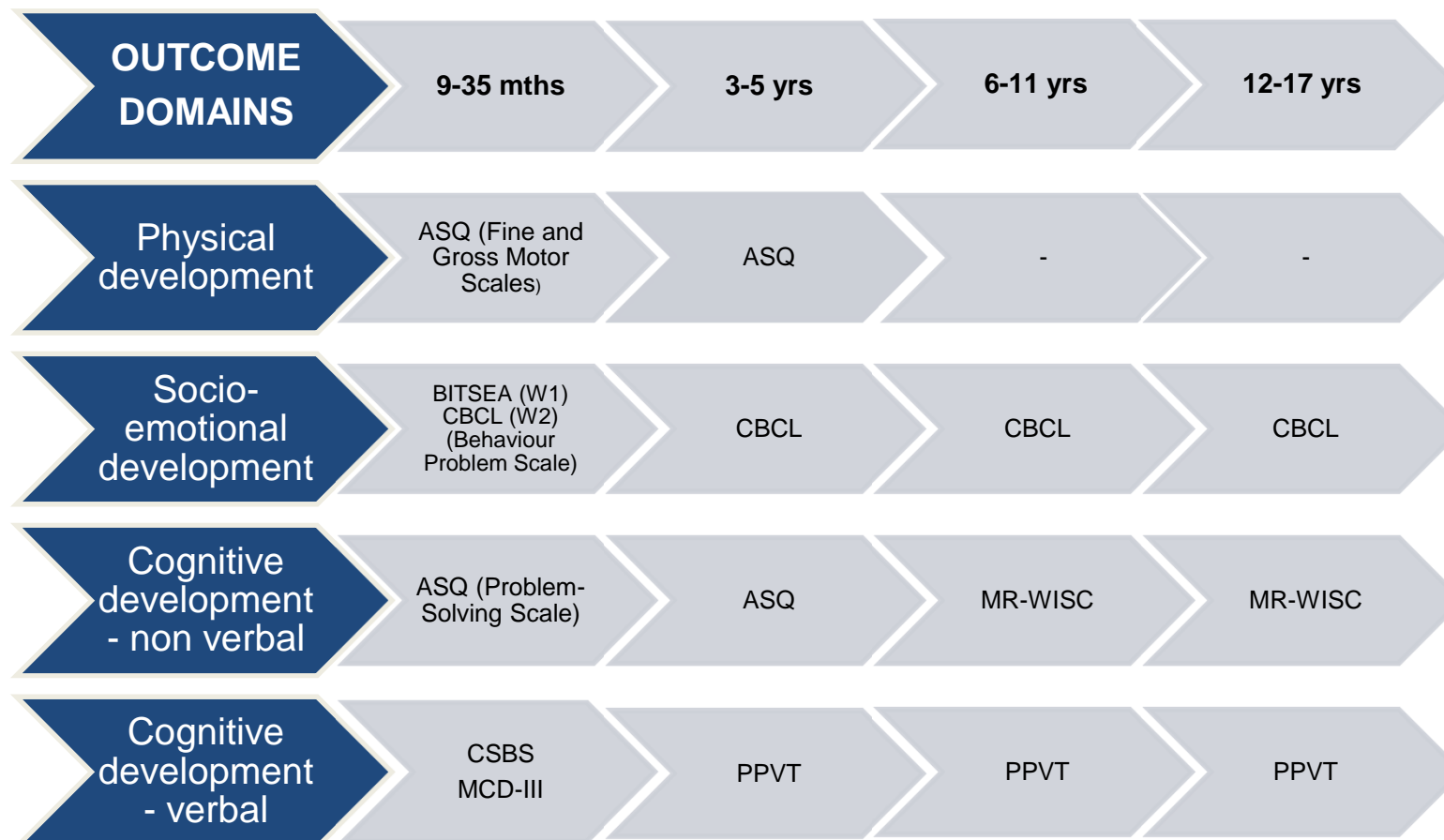
Summary of the presentation

- Current literature indicates that placement stability is important for children's developmental outcomes

- Placement stability is easy to conceptualise but difficult to summarise

- We have created a measure of placement stability to address some of the issues with previous measures

- We have presented descriptive statistics of this measure

- We will model the differences within and between individuals over time accounting for risk and protective factors.

Next steps

- Continue to explore how to best capture placement stability
  - Is all placement change the same?
  - Is our measure robust?

- Model building - mixed effect binary logit
  - outcome variable of the model: typical versus atypical development
  - estimates the probability of being in the typical group
  - measures whether placement stability and other characteristics can explain it.

Acknowledgements

- **FACS** for the investment in research and leading the POCLS

- **I-view** who collected the data

- **Children and young people** who are participating in the study

- **Carers and birthparents** who are participating in the study

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Further information

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