



# NAVIGATING THROUGH LIFE

Initial Findings  
FACSIAR Lunch and Learn Webinar  
Dr Lauren Parsons, Prof Melissa O'Donnell

# Acknowledgements

**Young people with care experience who have participated**

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**Research partners:** WA Department of Communities, Wanslea

**Data custodians:** Social Investment Data Resource (SIDR) Governance Group members, Victoria Departments of Health and Human Services, Families, Fairness and Housing, and Justice and Community Safety

**Data linkage partners:** Centre for Data Linkage, Centre for Victorian Data Linkage, Western Australian Data Linkage Branch

**Funders:** Australian Research Council, Australian Government Research Training Program, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute



# Project aims

1

- **Pathways and outcomes** of young people in, and transitioning from care

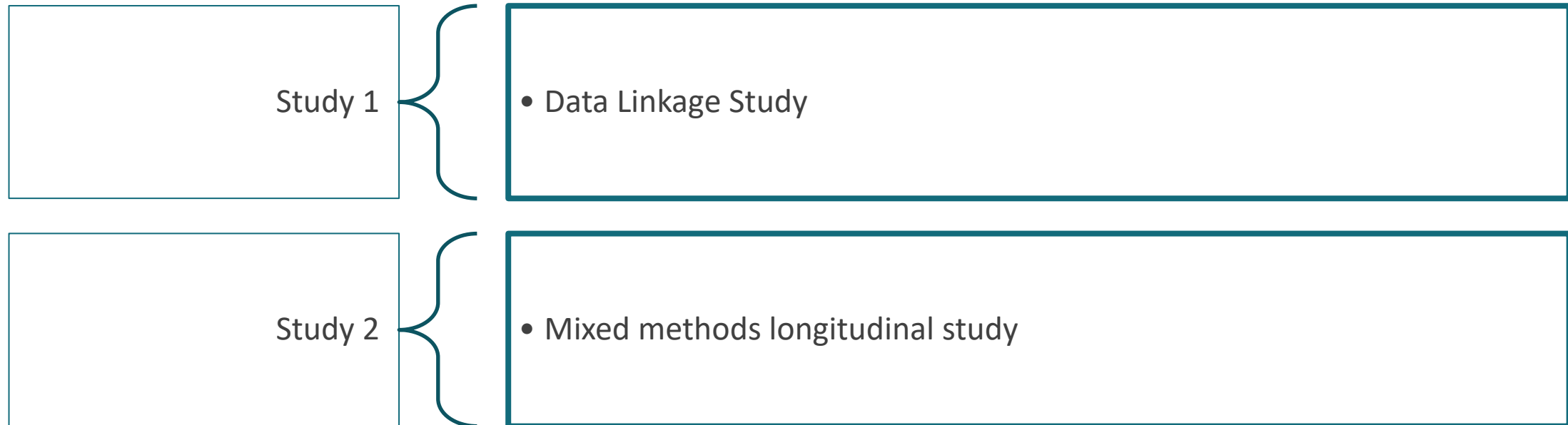
2

- **Map the pathways and lived experience** of young people as they are leaving, and after exiting care

3

- **Key factors** for meeting the cultural, social and developmental needs associated with **successful transition** from care

# Project overview



PhD Project 1

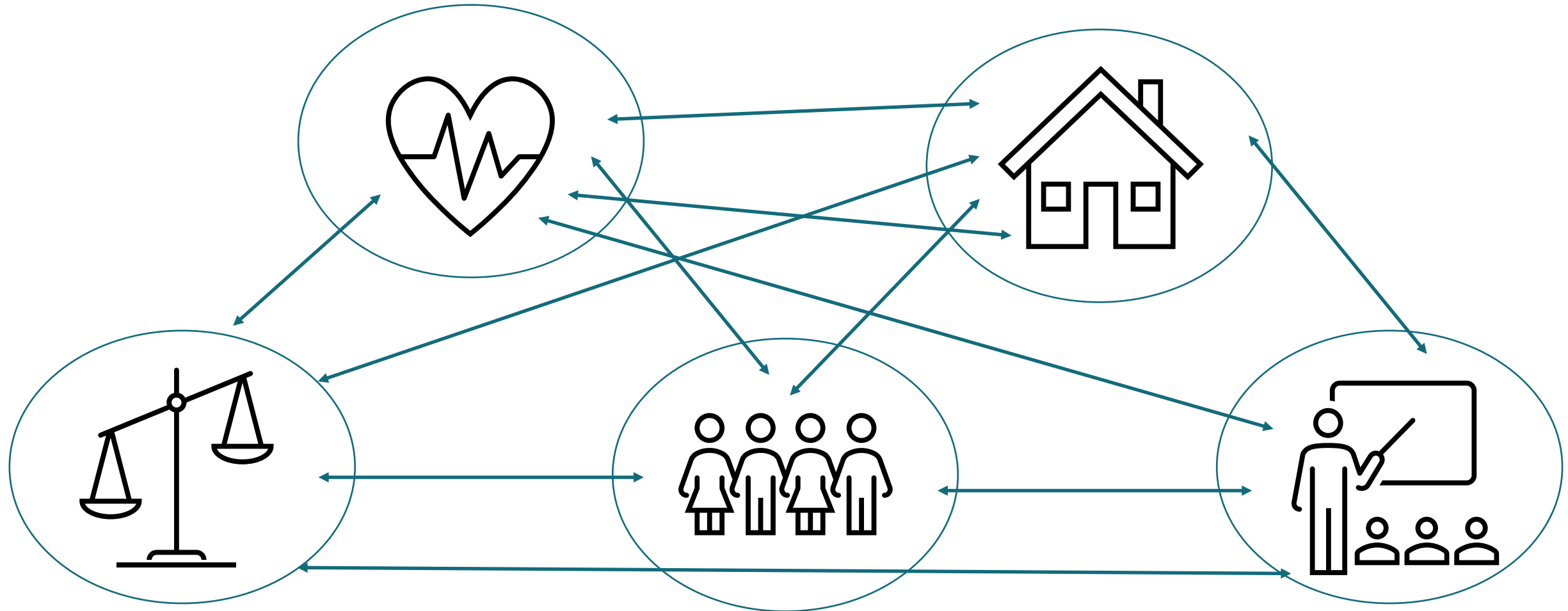
- Mental Health
- Housing



PhD Project 2

- Independent Living Skills
- Care experience

# Linked data study: Data domains (SIDR)



# Initial findings from WA linked data

Parsons, L., Cordier, R., Chikwava, F., O'Donnell, M., Chung, D., Ferrante, A., Mendes, P., & Thoresen, S. (2024). Shedding light on the social and health realities of care-experienced young people in Western Australia: A population-level study. *Child Abuse & Neglect*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2024.107053>

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## Child Abuse & Neglect

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/chiabuneg](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/chiabuneg)



Shedding light on the social and health realities of care-experienced young people in Western Australia: A population-level study



# Study Design

No child protection  
contact  
**No CP Cohort**






With care experience  
**OOHC Cohort**



Child protection contact,  
no care experience  
**CP Cohort**



# Population Demographics

	Cohort Size	Male	Aboriginal	Socioeconomic disadvantage
<b>OOHC Cohort</b> 	6,526	50.9%	40.2%	47%
<b>CP Cohort</b> 	78,095	50.1%	21.8%	38%
<b>No CP Cohort</b> 	329,645	51.6%	2.3%	18%



# Health domain: Hospital admissions

	OHC vs. CP	OHC vs. No CP
	Odds Ratio	Odds Ratio
<b>Having at least one admission</b>	1.4	<b>2.4</b>
<b>Maltreatment</b>	5.7	<b><u>59.6</u></b>
<b>Assault</b>	2.3	<b><u>16.2</u></b>
<b>Hyperkinetic disorders</b>	3.0	<b><u>15.5</u></b>
<b>Pervasive and specific developmental disorders</b>	2.8	<b><u>8.9</u></b>
<b>Substance use</b>	1.7	<b><u>7.8</u></b>

- Up to 2.5 times more likely to ever be hospitalised
- 6-60 times more likely to be hospitalised for maltreatment, also increased likelihood for assault
- Increased likelihood of hospitalisation for a mental health or psychosocial need

# Housing Domain: Access of public housing

	OHC vs. CP	OHC vs. No CP
	Odd Ratio	Odds Ratio
<b>1-2 applications</b>	1.1	6.3
<b>3 or more applications</b>	2.1	<u>8.9</u>
<b>1-2 tenancies</b>	1.9	<u>21.1</u>
<b>3 or more tenancies</b>	2.4	<u>79.7</u>

- 2-9 times more likely to make multiple applications for public housing
- Up to 80 times more likely to utilise public housing over the long term

# Criminal Justice Domain

	OHC vs. CP	OHC vs. No CP
	Odds Ratio	Odds Ratio
<b>Registered offence with WA Police Force</b>	<i>1.8</i>	<b><u>10.4</u></b>
<b>Juvenile Justice custodial stays</b>		
<b>On remand</b>	3.9	<b><u>142.5</u></b>
<b>Sentenced detention</b>	4.0	<b><u>216.9</u></b>
<b>Adult Justice custodial stays</b>		
<b>On remand</b>	2.3	<b><u>46.8</u></b>
<b>Sentenced detention</b>	2.2	<b><u>38.3</u></b>

# Summary

- Across all indicators we see large differences between OOHC and No CP Cohorts
- CP Cohort fairs better than OOHC but with a smaller margin than No CP Cohort
- Areas of greatest discrepancy
  - Hospitalisations for maltreatment, assault, mental health
  - Number of public housing tenancies
  - **Custodial stays (youth and adult)**
- Need for tailored mental health and psychosocial responses for children and young people in care and after leaving
- Coordinated housing responses between child protection and public housing, support people to move on from long term public housing
- Preventative efforts to reduce offending and future incarceration

# Homelessness - Victorian linked data

Chikwava, F., Cordier, R., Ferrante, A., O'Donnell, M., & Pakpahan, E. (2024). Trajectories of homelessness and association with mental health and substance use disorders among young people transitioning from out-of-home care in Australia. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 149, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2024.106643>

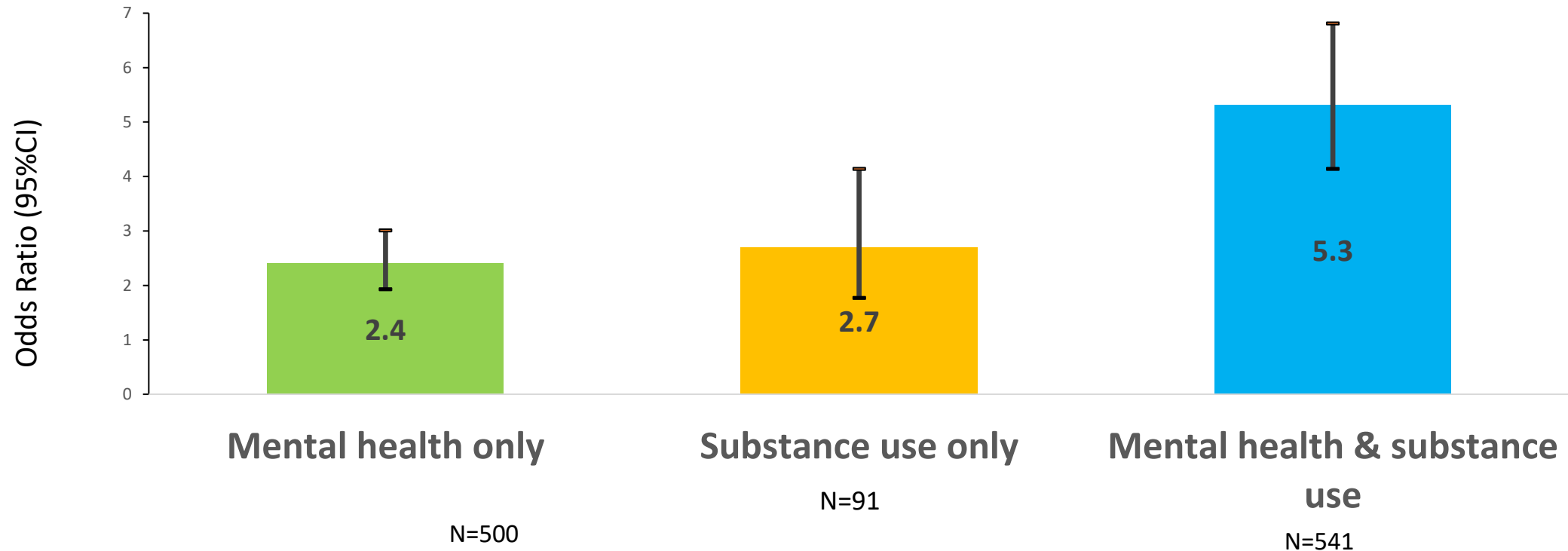


## Trajectories of homelessness and association with mental health and substance use disorders among young people transitioning from out-of-home care in Australia



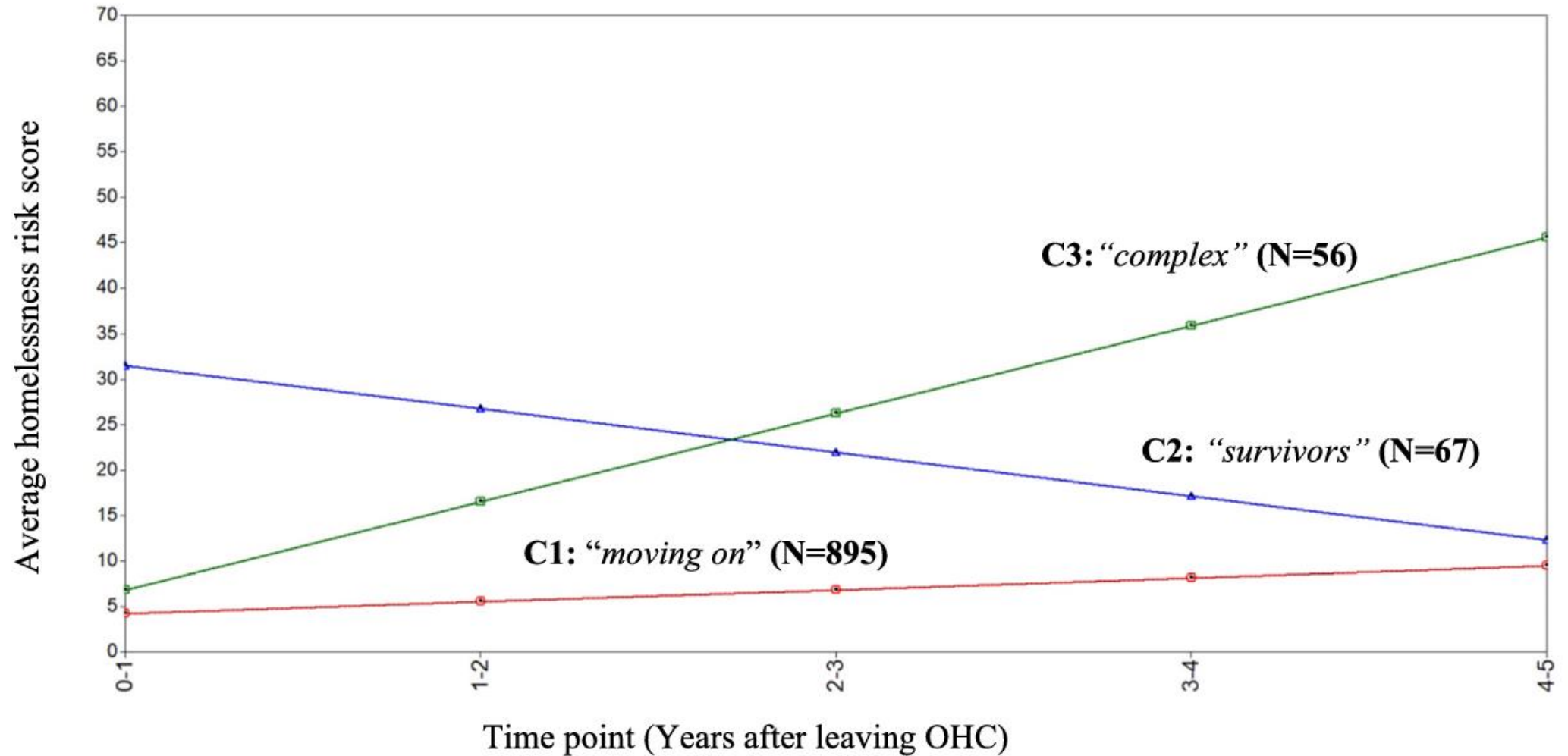
- Are there groups of young people transitioning from OHC with specific trajectories of homelessness risk? If so, What are the characteristics of those groups?
- To what extent is the combination of a mental health diagnosis and substance misuse associated with homelessness trajectories?

# Predictors of homelessness: Mental health and substance misuse



**Notes.** Ref = No Mental Health; Adjusted for placement type, age of leaving care, Indigenous status, abuse and maltreatment, involvement with community justice, history of alcohol and drug abuse, history of public housing tenancy

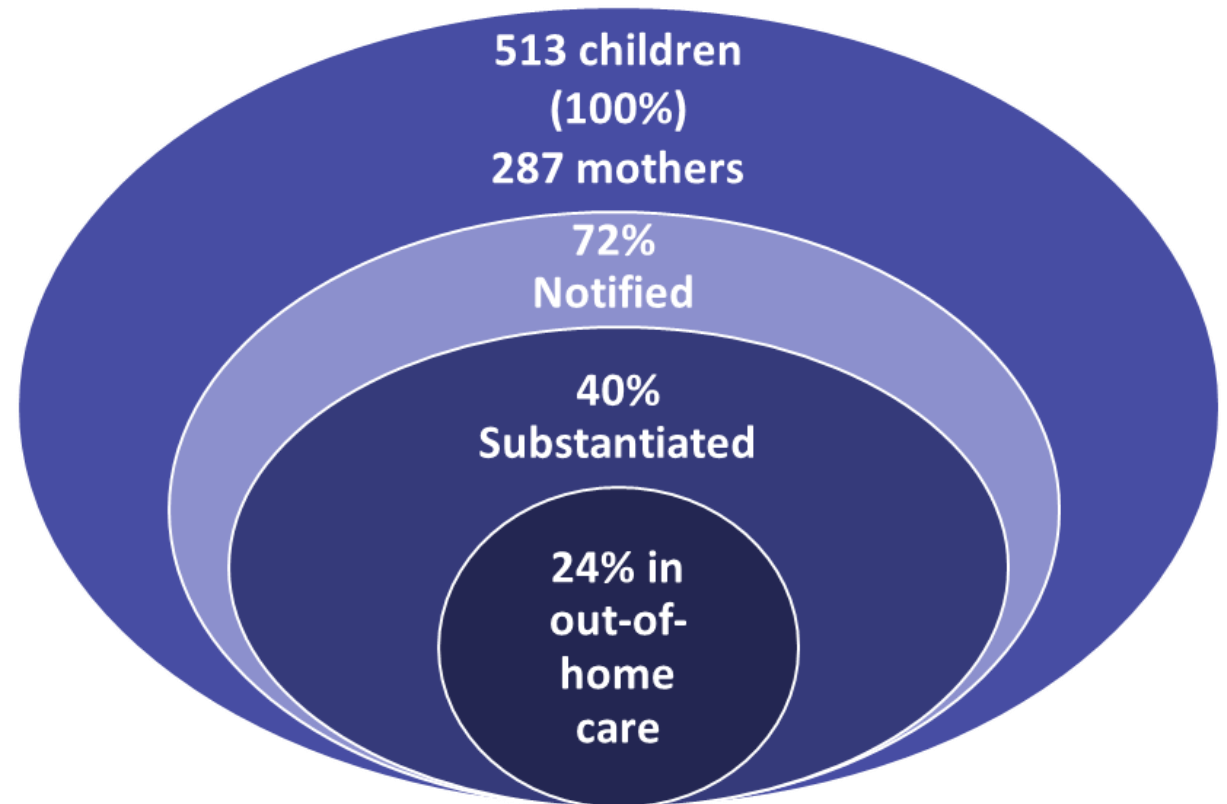
# Trajectories of Homelessness risk



# Young parents (WA): Quantitative Findings

Lima, F., Maclean, M., O'Donnell, M (2018). Exploring outcomes for young people who have experienced out-of-home care. Telethon Kids Institute. <https://www.thekids.org.au/globalassets/media/documents/projects/developmental-pathways-project/dcpfs-outcomes-report-final.pdf>

- Pregnancy - until 23 years of age
- 28% of the care group females had a baby (that could be identified through child protection records).
- Children of care group:





# Young parents (WA): Qualitative Findings

Usher, R., Parsons, L., O'Donnell, M., Walter, B., Thain, E., & Chung, D. (2024). *"It's not a normal upbringing": A qualitative study of young care leaver mothers' views to enhance parenting supports and help break the cycle of intergenerational out-of-home care*. Manuscript submitted for publication.

- Interviews with 11 mothers who were young care-leavers (10 who still had their children in their care) aged 18-25 years.
- Themes identified:
  - Leaving care planning and post-care support did not meet the needs of mothers, particularly around parenthood (e.g., access to basic material needs, stable housing).
  - Mothers felt under-supported and unprepared to leave care and be independent as mothers (unique needs of young women, pregnancy support, parenting advice, mostly single mothers, no access to childcare).
  - Mothers also expressed a strong desire to break or avoid an intergenerational cycle of OHC in their families (eg fear of child protection involvement, children a motivation to implement positive changes and have purpose).

# Findings

- Housing issues and homelessness are faced by a large proportion of care leavers.
- Young people need a flexible housing response that prioritises empowerment, agency and choice, whilst walking alongside them to grow their confidence/capacity to find and maintain safe and stable living arrangements.
- Findings point to groups with greater complexity that will need more targeted support particularly young people with ongoing mental health and/or substance use issues.
- Young parent care leavers are another important group who have a strong desire to break the intergenerational cycle of child protection involvement and will need support to meet their needs as a young person and a parent.

# Western Australia - Homestretch

## ■ Homestretch Core Elements

- Co-designed with young people and organisations
- 2023: rolled out across the state
- Available for **all** young people from **18-21 years**.

### Safety Net

Right to visible secure safety net that ensures access to housing, health, education and life skills.

**Staying on Agreement**  
**Housing Subsidy**  
**Invest in Me Funding**

### Transition Support

Flexible one-to-one support focusing on coaching towards interdependence.

**Smooth Transition**  
**Transition Coach**

### Support Circles

Supporting a young person to establish an enduring network of personal, family and community connections.

**Support Circle**  
**Nitja Nop Yorga Ngulla Mia**

# Contact



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Chikwava, F., Cordier, R., Ferrante, A., O'Donnell, M., Speyer, R., Parsons, L. (2021). Research using population-based administrative data integrated with longitudinal survey data in Child Protection Settings. A Systematic Review. *PloS One*. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0249088>

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Hodgson, D., Cordier, R., Parsons, L., Walter, B., Chikwava, F., Watts, L., Thoresen, S., Martinez, M., & Chung, D. (2022). Developing and using matrix methods for analysis of large longitudinal qualitative datasets in out-of-home-care research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2022.2159323>.

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