Building a Better Future

Out-of-Home Care Reform in Western Australia
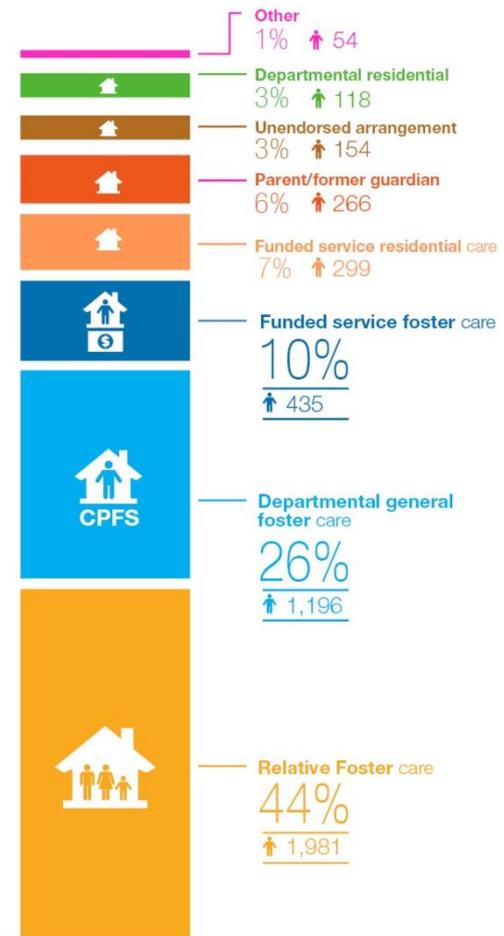
Why out-of-home care reform?

Key drivers for reform:

1. Significant <u>demographic changes</u> including:

   - System capacity - number and needs of children;

   - Aboriginal children - 52% of all children in care; and

   - More children with family than general foster care (44%).

2. <u>System changes</u> – small system to large, complex system.

3. <u>Financial accountability and sustainability</u> – demand and cost containment.

4. <u>Permanency planning</u> – better lives for children.

5. *<u>The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse</u>* - highlights gaps in the WA system.

Children in care at 30 June by placement option

Other 1% ↑ 54
Departmental residential 3% ↑ 118
Unendorsed arrangement 3% ↑ 154
Parent/former guardian 6% ↑ 266
Funded service residential care 7% ↑ 299
Funded service foster care 10% ↑ 435
Departmental general foster care 26% ↑ 1,196
Relative Foster care 44% ↑ 1,981

What needs to happen?

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1. Re-orientate to meet the needs of the system – family carers, Aboriginal children, care arrangements in regional areas, children with complex needs

2. Align our system to support early decision-making for children, families and carers

3. Adjust our processes and practices to a large, complex system

4. Develop a financially sustainable and accountable system for the future

How feedback was heard -

Consultation papers released (internal and external)	14
Submissions to *Strategic Directions* consultation paper	49
Submissions to Legislative Amendments consultation paper	41
Cross-sector working groups	9
Forums/workshops held with stakeholders	20
Presentations and feedback, opportunities for stakeholders	90

Child individual and permanency needs – the issues

Child's psycho-social needs

Individual

- Difficulty in gaining an overall picture of a child's needs – including cultural needs.

- Inconsistent language used when considering a child's need – speaking 'different languages'.

- Accurate allocation of resource to child need.

- Tracking changes in a child's needs overtime.

System

- Identifying whole-of-system needs – and allocating resources appropriately. Currently based on feel and anecdote.

- Demand model – 'flat' resource allocation model with Treasury.

Child's permanency needs

- Limited articulation of where a child is in their permanency trajectory.

Child needs and matching – simplified and clarified

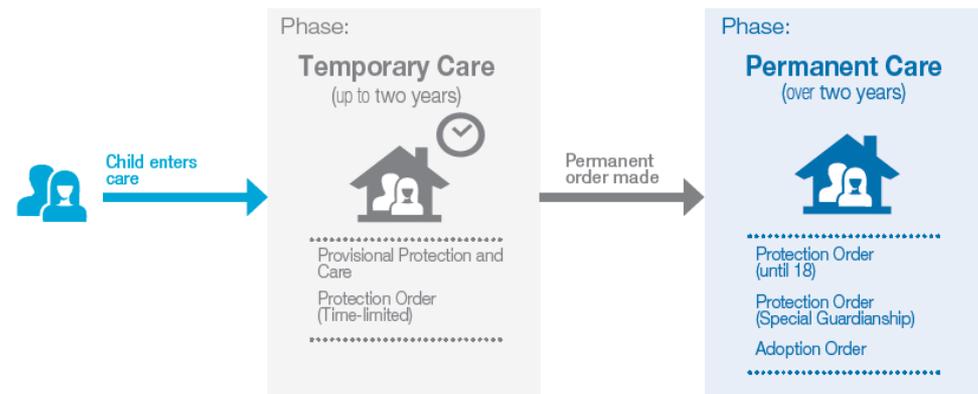## Child's psychosocial needs

- Implement Needs Assessment Tool (NAT).

- Simple 'drop-down menu tool' that uses consistent prompts to identify the needs of individual children.

- Understand and plan for individual and system needs

- A cost-framework that is linked to the NAT has been built.

Child's permanency needs

- Simplifying and clarifying the out-of-home care system

- Implement 'phases of permanency'
  - Temporary or permanent phases of care

eg. Needs Assessment Tool

Safety	Child needs (drop down)
Self-harming behaviour In the last 12 months has there been evidence of…	No self-harming behaviour
	Some self-harming behaviour
	Frequent self-harming behaviour
	Extreme self-harming behaviour

Phase:
Temporary Care
(up to two years)

Child enters care

Provisional Protection and Care

Protection Order
(Time-limited)

Permanent order made

Phase:
Permanent Care
(over two years)

Protection Order
(until 18)

Protection Order
(Special Guardianship)

Adoption Order

Carer needs and matching – the issues

Carers

- Currently there are numerous 'types of carers'.

- Carers are squeezed into 'program carer-types' which limits flexibility.

- Confused message to the community of what carer-types are required.
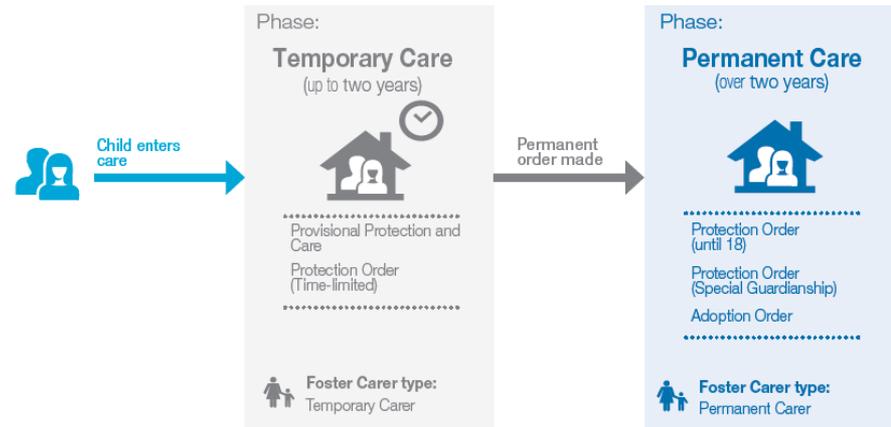
Linking children with carers

- Linear referral pathway that leads to 'narrow vision' of available care arrangements.

- There is limited matching of children with carers based on their individual characteristics, permanency needs and with appropriate resourcing.

Carer needs and matching

Simplifying and clarifying what type of carers are required to meet the needs of the system.

All carers in the system are incorporated and referred to as *temporary* and/or *permanent* carers.

Carer-type	Role	Reform actions
Temporary carer	Support child whilst permanent pathway is explored (reunification or permanent care)	• Expectations on minimum length of care arrangement • Clarified expectations on support for reunification
Permanent carer	Life-long connection with child	• Streamline adoption and foster carer assessment and training into one process • Decentralise home-for-life program • Explore parental leave for permanent carers • Increase pool of permanent carers (campaign)

Child needs, carer capacity and matching – bringing it all together

Current

Less than 5% connection rate

- Generic referral to 12 CSOs
- 5-10% connection rate
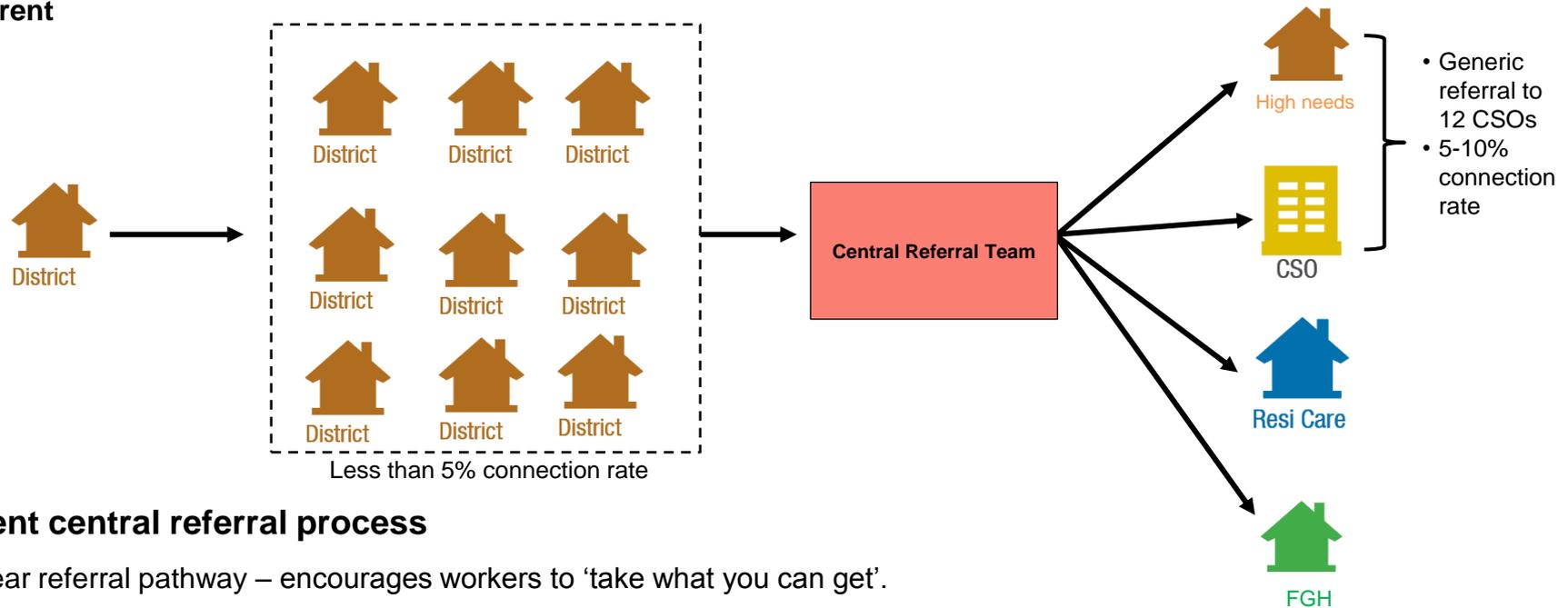
Current central referral process

- Linear referral pathway – encourages workers to 'take what you can get'.
- CSO referrals are at the end of the referral process – missed opportunity for good matches
- Broad referrals into 'space'.
- No whole-of-system understanding of what capacity exists in which area.

Result

    1. a system with siloed and uncoordinated approach to child-carer connection.

    2. more care arrangements movements for children.

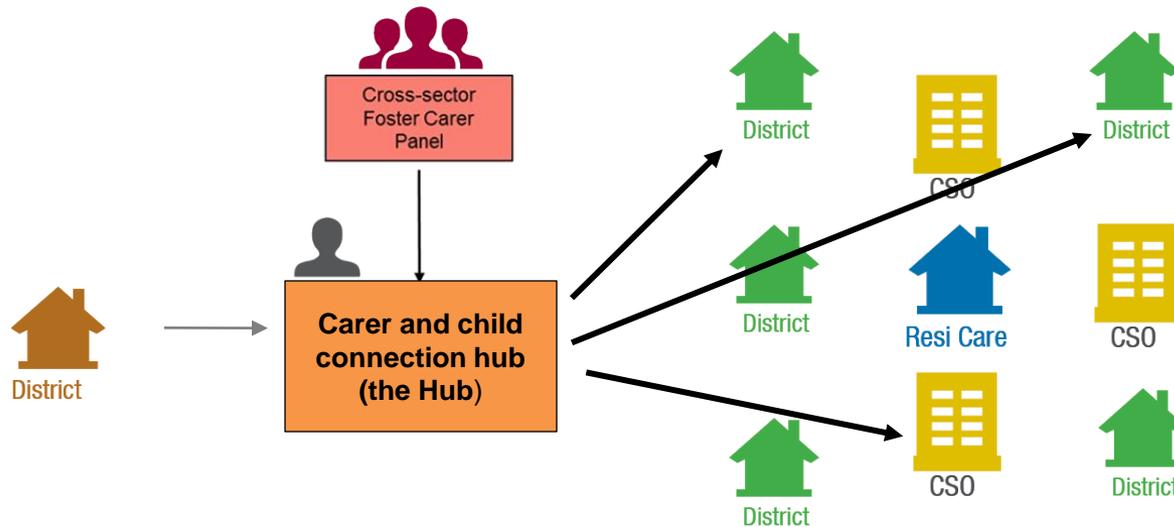# Child needs, carer capacity and matching – bringing it all together

Carer and child connection hub (the Hub)

- Referred when care arrangement unavailable in District.

- Bringing community sector care arrangements earlier into referral pathway

- Clear and consistent information on needs of child and capacity of carer (individual and permanency).

- Real-time knowledge of all care arrangements available in the system

Phase 1 (October 2016) – intentional referral of children based on child needs and carer capacity

Phase 2 (2017/18) – matching of children and carers

Future

Cross-sector Foster Carer Panel → Carer and child connection hub (the Hub)

District → Carer and child connection hub (the Hub) → District, CSO, District, Resi Care, CSO, District, CSO, District

Resourcing and outcomes – the issues

Resourcing of care arrangements

- Inconsistent resource allocation – not necessarily related to child need.

- Inconsistent resource allocation in high-needs programs – inconsistent presentation of child needs, inconsistent responses, no costing benchmarks.

Outcomes

- Limited outcome focus for individual children.

- Limited linking of funding to achievement of outcomes in foster care.

- No measurement of systemic outcomes for children in care.

Resourcing and outcomes – Outcomes Framework

Measure the outcomes for children at a system level:

- **Safe and stable** - Children live safely in a stable care arrangement.

- **Healthy** - Children have strong physical, social and mental health.

- **Achieve** - Children attend, participate and achieve in quality education.

- **Belong** - Children develop and retain a deep knowledge and understanding of their life-history and identity.

- **Included** - Children are included by the systems that support them.

- **Future life outcomes** - Children leave care equipped with the resources to live productive lives.

Improve link of outcomes to individual contracts – NAT pilot.

Longitudinal post-care research project - utilising data linkage.

Resource allocations framework

Implement new resource allocation framework
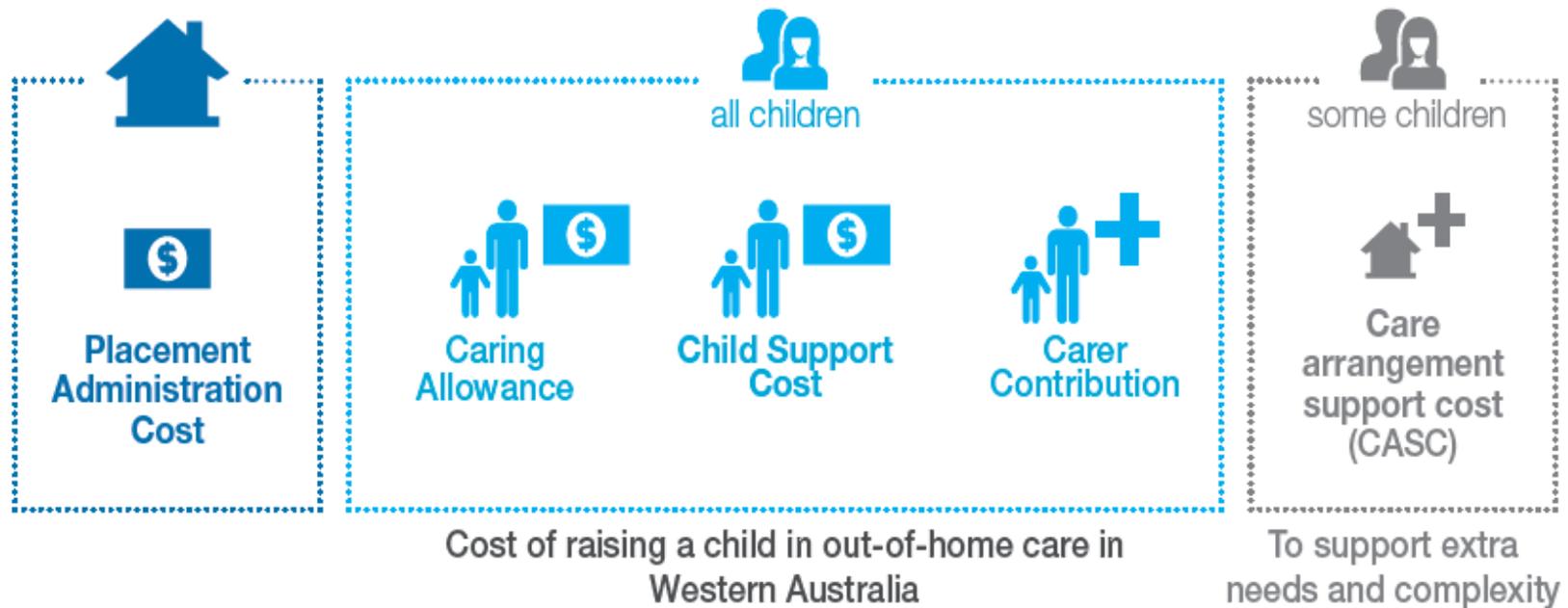
Resource allocation framework roll-out

Phase one - Care arrangement support cost (CASC) Pilot (high needs programs) – October 2016

- Needs Assessment Tool (NAT) and cost framework pilot

- Resource allocation model (care arrangement support cost).

- NAT linked to cost framework - benchmarked costs for extra complexity of child.

- Identify outcomes sought for child (measure for success).

Phase two – Foster care – January 2018

- Department carers and community sector organisation carers

Phase three – Family care

Policy and practice directions - normalising a child's experience in care

Greater control of resources for carers. More cost activities moved to the caring allowance:

- Sport and recreation;
- School fees, books and uniform;
- Extracurricular activities;
- Child gifts.

Care team approach – evolving the Foster Carer Partnership. Shared responsibility for meeting needs of children in out-of-home care.

Natural support networks - increased use of child's biological family and carer family as supports for care arrangements. Better practice directions about screening required.

Policy and practice directions – Family care

- Rename 'relative care' as **'family care'.**

- Improve support for family carers:

  - Assessments to be more inclusive and understandable for family carers.

  - Consistent orientation process for family carers.

  - Improved focus on learning and development plans.

  - More accessible learning opportunities for family carers – including peer support networks.

  - Realign funding for services to family care - including identifying family carers and supporting to overcome structural disadvantage.

- Workforce improvements

  - Workforce realignments to increase focus on family carers

  - Training on working with family carers

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Carer standards – the issues

High quality care standards should exist, irrespective of care-type, care model or organisation.

Carer standards

- Competing pressures:

    - Importance of family care for children, and maintenance of high-quality family carer standards

    - Increase in numbers of children in OOHC and increased difficulty in finding foster carers.

- Inconsistency in expectations for competencies used in carer assessments.

- Lack of clarity about who (what model) is considered a foster carer.

- Inconsistent approval standards between carer approvers (Districts and organisations).

- Inconsistent preparation training content and process for foster carers.

- Lack of consistent sector-wide process for reviewing carer standards.

Carer standards – consistent high-quality carers

- Increased independence of family care assessment – completion by person other than case worker.

- Broadened and clarified definition of foster carer – takes priority over employment status.

- All foster carers must be assessed against competencies as defined in Regulations.

- New 'cultural competency' for foster carers.

- All foster carers must complete consistent preparation training.

- Cross-sector Foster Carer Panel.

Employee and care-giver standards – system oversight

The oversight of standards in out-of-home care is currently undertaken by the Department who is the provider and funder of out-of-home care.

- Review and update Better Care Better Services into:

    Part 1 - Safety standards – non-negotiable requirements to provide OOHC

    - Ombudsman to monitor these standards

    Part 2 - Quality standards – continual improvement focus

- Align to *National Standards of Out-of-Home Care* and *Child Safe Organisations (where appropriate)*

Responsibility for monitoring	Standards	Standards name	Scope of monitoring
Ombudsman WA	Safety standards	Better Care, Better Services: Part 1	Whole organisation
Department for Child Protection and Family Support (Standards Monitoring Unit)	Safety and quality standards	Better Care, Better Services: Part 1 and 2	Individual services and programs

System standards – child-related employee misconduct

Child-related employee misconduct

Inconsistencies and gaps in the identification, management and resolution of incidences of child harm perpetrated by carers and employee related. Leads to various problems:

- the same type of incident being assessed as appropriate by one organisation and inappropriate by another;

- individuals moving between organisations with multiple unresolved investigations; and

- terminated employees being employed by other organisations.

Implement shared guidelines (CSO and CPFS) for responding to allegations of child-related harm perpetrated by carers and/or employees.

Explore implementation of a Reportable Conduct system:

- Oversight of all child-related misconduct by carers and employees

- Recording and monitoring names and outcomes of child related misconduct

- Linking misconduct finding to review of WWC

Service system design

The suite of services provided by the Department and community services sector need to represent desired outcomes.

District structural changes to align to better align prevention, reunification and permanent care

Aligning contracts together for holistic view of the system - Jan 2018.
- Full open tender process
- Strategically develop Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO).
- Contracts and outcome/output measures that support flexibility and delivery of outcomes for target group.

Service system design

= CPFS provided

= CSO provided

= provided by CPFS and CSO

Reunification
- Child centred family support teams
- New-parent live-in
- Practical in-home support
- Enhanced contact centres

Family Care
- Provide family care
- Identifying and linking children with family carer and family connection
- Supporting family care (including housing focus)

Foster Care
- Community foster care
- Group foster care

Complex Care
- Complex care house
- Complex community care

After-care support
- Post-SGO and adoption support

Temporary Care
- Temporary care houses
- Foster care – minimum length of care

Residential Care
- Residential group homes

Transitioning to adulthood
- Group-living transition services
- Transition to adulthood support

Child advocacy and support
Parent advocacy and support
Carer advocacy and support

Legislation

Cabinet approved Permanency amendments that includes:

1. **Maintaining relationship with family and culture –** support children to develop and maintain identity and sense of belonging

2. **Shared responsibility for children** - require agencies to prioritise services such as housing, education and health to children in care, or have left care, to have access to services they need

3. **Timely certainty for children and families** - measures to support earlier permanent decision-making for children (using permanency hierarchy)

Currently awaiting drafting

Children and Community Services Act and Adoption Act will occur in 2017/18. Consultation and consideration will include:

- Sector-wide carer approvals and revocation
- Reducing Department role in relative/adult/step-parent adoption
- Intersection between Family Court and Children's Court proceedings

Questions?