## Data quality information — Child protection services, chapter 15

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| Data quality information |
| Data quality information (DQI) was prepared for the first time for the 2011 Report on Government Services. DQI provides information against the seven Australian Bureau of Statistics data quality framework dimensions, for a selection of performance indicators in the Child protection services chapter. DQI for additional indicators will be progressively introduced in future reports.  Technical DQI has been supplied or agreed by relevant data providers. Additional Steering Committee commentary does not necessarily reflect the views of data providers. |
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### CHILD PROTECTION AND OUT-OF-HOME CARE SERVICES

### Effectiveness, child protection services — Response times

Data quality information for this indicator has been drafted by the Child Protection and Youth Justice Working Group.

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| **Indicator definition and description** |

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| **Element** | Effectiveness — Child protection services |
| **Indicator** | This indicator comprises two measures:   * Response time to commence investigation. * Response time to complete investigation. |
| **Measure (computation)** | Definition:   * The proportion of investigations commenced, by time taken to commence investigation (time categories: up to 7 days; 8 to 14 days; 15 to 21 days; 22 to 28 days; 29 days or more), within the reference period. * The proportion of investigations completed, by time taken to complete investigation (time categories: 28 days or less; 29 to 62 days; 63 to 90 days; more than 90 days), within the reference period.   Numerators:   * Total number of investigations commenced within each time category (i.e., up to 7 days; 8 to 14 days; 15 to 21 days; 22 to 28 days; 29 days or more), within the reference period, regardless of the date of notification. * Total number of investigations completed within each time category (i.e., 28 days or less; 29 to 62 days; 63 to 90 days; more than 90 days), within the reference period, with an outcome of substantiated or not substantiated recorded by 31 August.   Denominators:   * Total number of investigations commenced within the reference period. * Total number of finalised investigations within the reference period.   Computation:  Expressed as a percentage. Calculation is: (Numerator ÷ Denominator) x 100. |
| **Data source/s** | Numerators:  Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), ‘*Notifications, investigations and substantiations collection*’, data supplied by jurisdictions.  Denominators:  AIHW, ‘*Notifications, investigations and substantiations collection*’, data supplied by jurisdictions. |
| **Data Quality Framework Dimensions** | |
| **Institutional environment** | Data are sourced from State and Territory administrative data systems and compiled by the AIHW. |
| **Relevance** | Data are reported by Australian State and Territory governments and provide information on the timeliness of governments’ responses to notifications of possible harm or risk of harm to children.  Response times to complete investigations are calculated by reference to the total number of finalised investigations. A finalised investigation is an investigation that is complete by 31 August (as distinct from one that is still ‘in process’ at this date). |
| **Timeliness** | The most timely data (i.e., data for the most recent financial year) are reported. |
| **Accuracy** | Data are affected by comparability issues resulting from different policy and legislative requirements across jurisdictions which stipulate the time required for commencing and completing investigations (both of which are based on the seriousness of the presenting child protection concern). In addition, jurisdictions record notifications at different stages in response to a report. There is greater consistency within jurisdictions over time. |
| **Coherence** | As noted above, the data items used to construct this performance indicator are affected by comparability issues arising from different child protection policy and legislation across states and territories. |
| **Accessibility** | Data are published in the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision’s (SCRGSP) Report on Government Services (Report). |
| **Interpretability** | Further technical details are available in the AIHW manual ‘*Child protection notifications, investigations and substantiations, Australia: Data collection standards & counting rules’* at www.aihw.gov.au/child-protection/. |
| **Data Gaps/Issues Analysis** | |
| **Key data gaps/issues** | The Steering Committee notes the following issues:   * Caution should be used when interpreting results as jurisdictions count notifications at different points in response to a report, and have different policies and protocols governing the type and timeliness of response to a notification. |

### Effectiveness, child protection services — Substantiation rate

Data quality information for this indicator has been drafted by the Child Protection and Youth Justice Working Group.

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| **Indicator definition and description** |

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| **Element** | Effectiveness — Child protection services |
| **Indicator** | Substantiation rate |
| **Measure (computation)** | Definition:  The proportion of finalised investigations where harm or risk of harm was confirmed.  Numerator:  Total number of finalised child protection investigations, for notifications received in the reference year, that were substantiated (that is, where harm or risk of harm was confirmed).  Denominators:  Total number of finalised child protection investigations of notifications received in the reference year.  Computation:  Expressed as a percentage. Calculation is: (Numerator ÷ Denominator) x 100. |
| **Data source/s** | Numerator:  AIHW, ‘*Notifications, investigations and substantiations collection*’, data supplied by jurisdictions.  Denominator:  AIHW, ‘*Notifications, investigations and substantiations collection*’, data supplied by jurisdictions. |
| **Data Quality Framework Dimensions** | |
| **Institutional environment** | Data are sourced from State and Territory administrative data systems and compiled by the AIHW. |
| **Relevance** | Data are reported by Australian State and Territory governments and provide information on the rates of finalised investigations that were substantiated over time. The indicator attempts to assess the extent to which child protection services are targeting investigations to those notifications where a substantive child abuse or neglect incident has occurred or is at risk of occurring.  It is important to note that this indicator is not a measure of the rate of child abuse and neglect in the community, or a measure of the extent to which governments are detecting child abuse and neglect in the community (i.e., without a national incidence or prevalence study, it is not possible to estimate these figures). Instead, it is a measure of the extent to which governments target investigations to cases that warrant such intervention, thus avoiding undesirable stress to families in circumstances where investigations are not warranted.  The proportion of investigations substantiated is calculated by reference to the total number of finalised investigations. A finalised investigation is an investigation that is complete by 31 August (as distinct from one that is still ‘in process’ at this date). |
| **Timeliness** | The most timely data (i.e., data for the most recent financial year) are reported. |
| **Accuracy** | Data are affected by comparability issues resulting from different substantiation criteria across jurisdictions (i.e., legislation and policy documents which define thresholds for substantiation vary across jurisdictions, such as whether ‘risk of harm’ or ‘significant risk of harm’ is required in order to substantiate). However, there is greater consistency within jurisdictions over time. |
| **Coherence** | As noted above, the data items used to construct this performance indicator are affected by comparability issues arising from different child protection legislation, policy and practice across states and territories. |
| **Accessibility** | Data are published in the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision’s (SCRGSP) Report on Government Services (Report). The numerator and denominator are also published separately in the AIHW publication ‘*Child protection Australia*’ (CPA), however, the derived rate is not published in CPA. |
| **Interpretability** | Further technical details are available in the AIHW manual ‘*Child protection notifications, investigations and substantiations, Australia: Data collection standards & counting rules’* at www.aihw.gov.au/child-protection/. |
| **Data Gaps/Issues Analysis** | |
| **Key data gaps/issues** | The Steering Committee notes the following issues:   * The proportion of investigations resulting in substantiation vary significantly across jurisdictions. In part, these differences are the result of differences in the availability and capacity of diversionary and family support services; differences in what is substantiated; and threshold differences in the point at which child protection services determine there has been harm/abuse or that there is a risk of harm/abuse (Holzer and Bromfield, 2008). * The proportion of investigations resulting in substantiation also vary within jurisdictions over time. Factors that contribute to these variations include: the introduction of risk assessment frameworks/instruments; changes to the threshold for substantiation (e.g., in January 2010, NSW legislation was amended to change the threshold for recording a substantiation from ‘risk of harm’ to ‘risk of *significant* harm’); and other practice changes (e.g., from March 2005, Qld required all notifications to be investigated and from March 2014, WA required all notifications of children under the age of five to be investigated and all high priority notifications to proceed directly to investigation). |

### Effectiveness, out-of-home care services — Safety in out-of-home care

Data quality information for this indicator has been drafted by the Child Protection and Youth Justice Working Group.

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| **Indicator definition and description** |

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| **Element** | Effectiveness — Out-of-home care services |
| **Indicator** | Safety in out-of-home care |
| **Measure (computation)** | Definition:  This indicator comprises two measures:   * the proportion of children in out-of-home care who were the subject of a substantiation of sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse or neglect (that is, regardless of the perpetrator), during the reference year * the proportion of children in out-of-home care who were the subject of a substantiation where the person responsible was living in the household providing out-of-home care, during the reference year.   Numerators:   * Total number of children in out-of-home care who were the subject of a substantiation of sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse or neglect (that is, regardless of the perpetrator), during the reference year. * Total number of children in out-of-home care who were the subject of a substantiation and the person believed responsible was in the household, during the reference year.   Denominators:  For both measures the denominator is: total number of children aged 0-17 in at least one out-of-home care placement during the reference year.  Computation:  Expressed as a percentage. Calculation is: (Numerator ÷ Denominator) x 100. |
| **Data source/s** | Numerator:  Data supplied by jurisdictions.  Denominator:  AIHW, ‘*Child protection: Out-of-home care collection*’, data supplied by jurisdictions. |
| **Data Quality Framework Dimensions** | |
| **Institutional environment** | Data are sourced from State and Territory administrative data systems. |
| **Relevance** | Data are reported by Australian State and Territory governments and provide information on the safety of children in out-of-home care, based on the rate of substantiations each year concerning these children. At present, not all jurisdictions are providing these data.  While these data are affected by comparability issues as noted below, this is the only indicator of its kind reported nationally. The safety of children in care is of critical importance to government and the community and is a reflection of the extent to which governments are fulfilling their duty of care to children and young people. |
| **Timeliness** | The most timely data (i.e., data for the most recent financial year) are reported. |
| **Accuracy** | These data are affected by comparability issues noted in relation to the ‘substantiation rate’ indicator. Jurisdictions possess different policies and legislation which establish the thresholds at which substantiations should be recorded. In addition, it is understood that child protection services possess higher standards or expectations of care by departmentally endorsed carers. Therefore, incidents or issues that might not give rise to a substantiation when involving a child’s birth parents, might result in a substantiation when involving a child’s foster or residential carer. Different investigative processes employed by jurisdictions regarding registered carers might also create differences in reported rates. Also, it is possible that the count of children subject to a substantiation while in out-of-home care could pertain to an historical experience of abuse while in care, which has only been reported in the reference period (i.e., it does not concern the current carer or care setting). |
| **Coherence** | These data are affected by comparability issues as noted above. In addition, jurisdictions’ compliance with the counting rules for this indicator impact on the comparability of reported data. However, data are considered relatively comparable within jurisdictions over time (notwithstanding that numbers reported for this indicator are small and thus potentially more volatile than other indicators). |
| **Accessibility** | Data are published in this Report. |
| **Interpretability** | Further technical details are available in the AIHW manual ‘*Child protection: out-of-home care, Australia: Data collection standards & counting rules’* at www.aihw.gov.au/child-protection/. |
| **Data Gaps/Issues Analysis** | |
| **Key data gaps/issues** | The Steering Committee notes the following issues:   * The broader measure, ‘the proportion of children in out-of-home care who were the subject of a substantiation of sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse or neglect (that is, regardless of the perpetrator), during the reference year’, is under continued refinement and development. Caution should be exercised when interpreting data for this measure. * There are differences across jurisdictions in the proportion of children in out-of-home care who were the subject of a substantiation where the person responsible was living in the household providing out-of-home care. In part, these differences are explained by differences in the procedures jurisdictions employ for investigating and recording matters of concern when children are in out-of-home care and differences in the application of the counting rules for this indicator. For example: * In NSW, the numerator provided for this measure (i.e., the number of children in care who were the subject of a substantiation and the person believed responsible was in the household providing out-of-home care) excludes children who are in government authorised and funded out-of-home care placements where the out-of-home care placement is facilitated by a non-government organisation (NGO). However, the denominator for this measure (i.e., all children aged 0-17 in at least one care placement during the year) encompasses all children in out-of-home care (including children in government authorised and funded out-of-home care placements where the out-of-home care placement is facilitated by an NGO). This affects the reported rate (i.e., a lower rate is derived than would be the case if the numerator and denominator aligned). * In Victoria, investigations undertaken in relation to quality of care concerns encompass allegations or concerns about the quality of care provided for children, relating to home-based carers or members of their family, kinship carers, residential care staff or other care staff. These data include investigations which were commenced during the relevant financial year for children and young people who, at the time of the incident, were current clients of the child protection program and who were residing in either home-based care (including lead tenant, residential care or kinship care). Substantiated quality of care concerns encompass completed investigations where quality of care concerns were substantiated and action was taken in response. * In Queensland, 2013-14 data are reported in accordance with the department’s new policy ‘Responding to concerns about the standards of care’ introduced in July 2013 and are not directly comparable with previous years. Data comprise children subject to a harm report substantiation, which refer only to children in the custody or guardianship of the chief executive and who are placed in out-of-home care. Queensland’s consideration of ‘the person believed responsible’ relates to overall harm or risk of harm to the child in care. For substantiated harm outcomes, the harm or risk of harm may have involved the actions or inactions of a carer; staff member of a care service; another adult who resides in, or frequents the care environment; another child (in specific circumstances only); or in some instances harm may be substantiated and the person responsible was unable to be identified. It does not report on whether harm was the result of the actions or inactions of the child’s carer or staff member of a care service or whether harm or risk of harm was not as a result of their actions or inactions i.e., there was no indication that the carer, staff member or care service has not met the standards of care required under the Child Protection Act 1999. Therefore, Queensland's data are broader than the scope of the national counting rule and should not be compared to other jurisdictions’ data. * In WA, data include children who have been harmed by foster carers and workers in placement services. Children harmed by relatives of foster carers or other children in care are not included. * The NT cannot provide data for this measure as the NT data system does not identify the person responsible/perpetrator. * There are also differences across jurisdictions in the proportion of children in out-of-home care who were the subject of a substantiation of sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse or neglect (that is, regardless of the perpetrator). In part, these differences are explained by differences in the procedures jurisdictions employ for investigating and recording matters of concern when children are in out-of-home care and differences in the application of the counting rules for this indicator. For example: * NSW data for the 2011-12 reporting period were not comparable to data supplied by other jurisdictions because NSW data encompassed a more inclusive set of substantiated issues, for example, children who absconded from out-of-home care placements and reported incidents of self‑harm. * Queensland’s data from 2013-14 are reported in accordance with the department’s new policy ‘Responding to concerns about the standards of care’ introduced in July 2013 and are not directly comparable with previous years. Data comprise children subject to a harm report substantiation, which refer only to children in the custody or guardianship of the chief executive and who are placed in out-of-home care. For substantiated harm outcomes, the harm or risk of harm may have involved the actions or inactions of a carer; staff member of a care service; another adult who resides in, or frequents the care environment; another child (in specific circumstances only); or in some instances harm may be substantiated and the person responsible was unable to be identified. * NSW and Victoria did not provide data for this measure for the 2012-13 or 2013-14 reporting period. NSW advised that available data were not considered suitable for publication. Victoria advised that data were not available as the Victorian Child Protection Service does not record the required data for children in out-of-home care. |

### Effectiveness, out-of-home care services — Stability of placement

Data quality information for this indicator has been drafted by the Child Protection and Youth Justice Working Group.

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| **Indicator definition and description** |

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| **Element** | Effectiveness — Out-of-home care services |
| **Indicator** | Stability of placement |
| **Measure (computation)** | Definition:  Indicator - The proportion of children who had 1 or 2 placements during a period of continuous out-of-home care. Comprising sub-measures:   1. Proportion of children on a care and protection order exiting out‑of‑home care after less than 12 months, who had 1 or 2 placements. 2. Proportion of children on a care and protection order exiting out‑of‑home care after 12 months or more, who had 1 or 2 placements.   Numerators:  (1) Number of children on a care and protection order exiting out‑of‑home care after less than 12 months, who had 1 or 2 placements.  (2) Number of children on a care and protection order exiting out‑of‑home care after 12 months or more, who had 1 or 2 placements.  Denominators:  (1) All children on a care and protection order exiting out‑of‑home care after less than 12 months.  (2) All children on a care and protection order exiting out‑of‑home care after 12 months or more.  Computation:  Expressed as a percentage. Calculation is: (Numerator ÷ Denominator) x 100. |
| **Data source/s** | Numerator:  AIHW, ‘*Child protection: Out-of-home care* *collection*’, data supplied by jurisdictions.  Denominator:  AIHW, ‘*Child protection: Out-of-home care collection*’, data supplied by jurisdictions. |
| **Data Quality Framework Dimensions** | |
| **Institutional environment** | Data are sourced from State and Territory administrative data systems and compiled by the AIHW. |
| **Relevance** | Data are reported by Australian State and Territory governments and provide information on the placement stability experienced by young people in out-of-home care. |
| **Timeliness** | The most timely data (i.e., data for the most recent financial year) are reported. |
| **Accuracy** | These data are comparable across jurisdictions. However, data are collected only for children who are on orders and who exit care during the reference year. There are limitations to counting placement stability using a cohort of children on exit from care rather than longitudinally tracking a cohort of children on their entry into care (or all children in care during the reference year): an exit cohort is biased to children who stayed a relatively short time in care and thus were more likely to have experienced fewer placements.  Exits from out-of-home care are defined as occasions when children leave care and do not return within 60 days. Placement breaks which do not exceed 7 days are not counted as exits. |
| **Coherence** | The data items used to construct this performance indicator are reported by all jurisdictions and are considered comparable. |
| **Accessibility** | Data are published in this Report. |
| **Interpretability** | Further technical details are available in the AIHW manual ‘*Child protection: out-of-home care, Australia: Data collection standards & counting rules’* at www.aihw.gov.au/child-protection/. |
| **Data Gaps/Issues Analysis** | |
| **Key data gaps/issues** | The Steering Committee notes the following issues:   * While these data are comparable across jurisdictions, the data are biased towards children who have stayed only a relatively short time in care (i.e., an exit cohort). Ideally, stability of care would be measured for all children in care (i.e., number of placements all children in care have experienced). |

### Effectiveness, out-of-home care services — Children aged under 12 years in home-based care

Data quality information for this indicator has been drafted by the Child Protection and Youth Justice Working Group.

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| **Indicator definition and description** |

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| **Element** | Effectiveness — Out-of-home care services |
| **Indicator** | Children aged under 12 years in home-based care |
| **Measure (computation)** | Definition:  The number of children aged under 12 years in home-based care, as a proportion of all children aged under 12 years in out-of-home care, at 30 June.  Numerators:  Total number of children aged under 12 years in home-based care, at 30 June.  Denominators:  Total number of children aged under 12 years in out-of-home care, at 30 June.  Computation:  Expressed as a percentage. Calculation is: (Numerator ÷ Denominator) x 100. |
| **Data source/s** | Numerator:  AIHW, ‘*Child protection: Out-of-home care* *collection*’, data supplied by jurisdictions.  Denominator:  AIHW, ‘*Child protection: Out-of-home care collection*’, data supplied by jurisdictions. |
| **Data Quality Framework Dimensions** | |
| **Institutional environment** | Data are sourced from State and Territory administrative data systems and compiled by the AIHW. |
| **Relevance** | Data are reported by Australian State and Territory governments and provide information on the rates of children under 12 years of age in out‑of‑home care who are in a home-based placement (for example, in foster or kinship care and distinct from residential care arrangements). It is generally considered desirable to place children, particularly young children, in home‑like environments as they will generally make better development progress and have more ready access to normal childhood experiences in family settings than in institutional settings. |
| **Timeliness** | The most timely data (i.e., data for the most recent financial year) are reported. |
| **Accuracy** | The data are reported as comparable across jurisdictions. |
| **Coherence** | The data items used to construct this performance indicator are reported by all jurisdictions and are considered comparable. |
| **Accessibility** | Data are published in this Report. |
| **Interpretability** | Further technical details are available in the AIHW manual ‘*Child protection: out-of-home care, Australia: Data collection standards & counting rules’* at www.aihw.gov.au/child-protection/. |
| **Data Gaps/Issues Analysis** | |
| **Key data gaps/issues** | The Steering Committee notes the following issues:   * These data are a robust count of children under 12 years of age in home‑based care. In future, it might also be appropriate to analyse the placement types of older children. |

### Effectiveness, out-of-home care services — Placement with extended family

Data quality information for this indicator has been drafted by the Child Protection and Youth Justice Working Group.

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| **Indicator definition and description** |

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| **Element** | Effectiveness — Out-of-home care services |
| **Indicator** | Placement with extended family |
| **Measure (computation)** | Definition:  The proportion of children in out-of-home care who are placed with relatives or kin, at 30 June.  Numerators:  Total number of children in out-of-home care who are placed with relatives or kin, at 30 June.  Denominators:  Total number of children in out-of-home care, at 30 June.  Computation:  Expressed as a percentage. Calculation is: (Numerator ÷ Denominator) x 100. |
| **Data source/s** | Numerator:  AIHW, ‘*Child protection: Out-of-home care* *collection*’, data supplied by jurisdictions.  Denominator:  AIHW, ‘*Child protection: Out-of-home care collection*’, data supplied by jurisdictions. |
| **Data Quality Framework Dimensions** | |
| **Institutional environment** | Data are sourced from State and Territory administrative data systems and compiled by the AIHW. |
| **Relevance** | Data are reported by Australian State and Territory governments and provide information on the extent to which young people in out-of-home care are living with relatives or kin. Where safe and appropriate, it is considered desirable to place children in out-of-home care with relatives and kin to enhance a child’s feelings of familiarity and family connectedness. |
| **Timeliness** | The most timely data (i.e., data for the most recent financial year) are reported. |
| **Accuracy** | The data are reported as comparable across jurisdictions. |
| **Coherence** | The data items used to construct this performance indicator are reported by all jurisdictions and are considered comparable. |
| **Accessibility** | Data are published in this Report and in CPA. |
| **Interpretability** | Further technical details are available in the AIHW manual ‘*Child protection: out-of-home care, Australia: Data collection standards & counting rules’* at www.aihw.gov.au/child-protection/. |
| **Data Gaps/Issues Analysis** | |
| **Key data gaps/issues** | The Steering Committee notes the following issues:   * These data are a robust count of children in out-of-home care who are placed with extended family. |

### Effectiveness, out-of-home care services — Placement in accordance with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle

Data quality information for this indicator has been drafted by the Child Protection and Youth Justice Working Group.

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| **Indicator definition and description** |

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| **Element** | Effectiveness — Out-of-home care services |
| **Indicator** | Placement in accordance with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle |
| **Measure (computation)** | Definition:  The proportion of Indigenous children placed with the child’s extended family, Indigenous community or other Indigenous people, as a proportion of all Indigenous children in out-of-home care, at 30 June.  Numerators:  (1) Number of Indigenous children placed with relatives/kin at 30 June.  (2) Number of Indigenous children placed with other Indigenous carer or Indigenous residential care, at 30 June.  (3) Number of Indigenous children not placed with relative/kin, other Indigenous carer or Indigenous residential care, at 30 June.  Denominators:  Total number of Indigenous children in care at 30 June (excluding Indigenous children living independently and those whose living arrangements were unknown).  Computation:  Expressed as a percentage. Calculation is: (Numerator ÷ Denominator) x 100. |
| **Data source/s** | Numerator:  AIHW, ‘*Child protection: Out-of-home care* *collection*’, data supplied by jurisdictions.  Denominator:  AIHW, ‘*Child protection: Out-of-home care collection*’, data supplied by jurisdictions. |
| **Data Quality Framework Dimensions** | |
| **Institutional environment** | Data are sourced from State and Territory administrative data systems and compiled by the AIHW. |
| **Relevance** | Data are reported by Australian State and Territory governments and provide information on the care placements of Indigenous young people. This indicator does not actually assess the process departments employed in seeking out certain care placements, rather it reports on Indigenous placement outcomes. Technically, therefore, this is a proxy indicator, as the ACPP sets out a sequence of steps that should be followed in seeking out certain placements, not just the desirability of final placement settings. |
| **Timeliness** | The most timely data (i.e., data for the most recent financial year) are reported. |
| **Accuracy** | The data are reported as comparable across jurisdictions. However, for all jurisdictions these data are proxy data for compliance with the ACPP (i.e., the indicator measures placement outcome rather than whether the ACPP process was complied with in determining placement outcome). Notwithstanding that this measure is a proxy indicator of compliance with the ACPP, it is an important measure of the placement outcomes achieved for Indigenous children. |
| **Coherence** | The data items used to construct this performance indicator are reported by all jurisdictions and are considered comparable. |
| **Accessibility** | Data are published in this Report and CPA. |
| **Interpretability** | Further technical details are available in the AIHW manual ‘*Child protection: out-of-home care, Australia: Data collection standards & counting rules’* at www.aihw.gov.au/child-protection/. |
| **Data Gaps/Issues Analysis** | |
| **Key data gaps/issues** | The Steering Committee notes the following issues:   * These data are a proxy for compliance with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle (i.e., these data report on the placement outcomes of Indigenous children rather than whether the sequence of steps contained within the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle were followed). |

### Effectiveness, child protection services — Children with current documented case plans

Data quality information for this indicator has been drafted by the Child Protection and Youth Justice Working Group.

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| **Indicator definition and description** |

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| **Element** | Effectiveness — Child protection services |
| **Indicator** | * Children with current documented case plans |
| **Measure (computation)** | Definition: The number of children who have a current documented and approved case plan, as a proportion of all children who are required to have a current documented and approved case plan, at 30 June.  Numerators: Number of children aged 0-17 years who are required to have a current documented and approved case plan who have a current documented and approved case plan, at 30 June.  Denominators: Number of children aged 0-17 years required to have a current documented and approved case plan, at 30 June.  Computation: Expressed as a percentage. Calculation is: (Numerator ÷ Denominator) x 100. |
| **Data source/s** | Numerators: AIHW, ‘*National out-of-home care standards*’, data supplied by jurisdictions.  Denominators: AIHW, ‘*National out-of-home care standards’*, data supplied by jurisdictions. |
| **Data Quality Framework Dimensions** | |
| **Institutional environment** | Data are sourced from State and Territory administrative data systems and compiled by the AIHW. |
| **Relevance** | Data are reported by Australian State and Territory governments and provide information on the number of children who have a current documented and approved case plan. A high or increasing rate of children with documented case plans is desirable.  A case plan is an individualised, dynamic written plan (or support agreement) that includes information on the circumstances explaining why the child is considered to be in need of protection, the goal of ongoing intervention and outcomes and actions required to achieve the goals. A case plan is usually developed between the person and agency as a result of an assessment process and usually includes:   * goals and objectives * planned measures/actions * needs assessment (including: health, education, therapeutic social/cultural support) * family/relatives/kin contact arrangements * living/accommodation arrangements.   Case planning is essential to structured and purposeful work to support children’s optimal development.  A current case plan is one that has been initiated and completed with approval, or reviewed and approved, within the previous 12 months. Individual jurisdictions’ timeframes for ongoing review may vary and reviews may be more frequent when young children or infants are involved, a child has just entered care, and certain orders are in place (for example, assessment orders). Reviews may also be required when circumstances have changed (for example, the death of a parent or carer and placement changes) and significant new decisions are needed.  The scope of this indicator extends to children and young people (aged 0‑17 years) whose care arrangements were ordered through the Children’s Court and for whom parental responsibility has been transferred to the Minister/Chief Executive and who are required by jurisdictional policy/legislation to have a current documented and approved case plan.  If a child has had more than one case plan review during the 12 month period, the relevant date is that of the most recent review during the 12 month period.  The quality of case plans, and the extent to which identified needs and actions are put into place, should also be taken into account when considering this indicator. The existence of a case plan does not guarantee that appropriate case work to meet a child’s needs is occurring. |
| **Timeliness** | The most timely data (i.e., data for the most recent financial year) are reported. |
| **Accuracy** | Data are affected by comparability issues resulting from different policy and legislative requirements across jurisdictions which stipulate the timeframes within which children are required to have case plans prepared. |
| **Coherence** | As noted above, the data items used to construct this performance indicator are affected by comparability issues arising from different child protection policy and legislation across states and territories. |
| **Accessibility** | Data are published in the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision’s (SCRGSP) Report on Government Services (Report). |
| **Interpretability** | Further technical details are available in ‘*National out-of-home care standards data collection: Technical specifications’* at www.aihw.gov.au/child-protection/. |
| **Data Gaps/Issues Analysis** | |
| **Key data gaps/issues** | The Steering Committee notes the following issues:   * Data were collected for the first time for this indicator for the 2012 reporting period. Data are experimental and subject to further review and refinement. * Data were not available for all jurisdictions for the 2014 reporting period. Data were not available for SA or the NT. |

### Outcomes, child protection services — Improved safety

Data quality information for this indicator has been drafted by the Child Protection and Youth Justice Working Group.

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| **Indicator definition and description** |

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| **Element** | Outcomes — Child protection services |
| **Indicator** | Improved safety |
| **Measure (computation)** | Definition:  This indicator comprises two measures:   * Substantiation rate after a decision not to substantiate, within the reference period. * Substantiation rate after a prior substantiation, within the reference period.   Numerators:   * The number of children who were the subject of a substantiation who had also been the subject of an investigation that resulted in a decision not to substantiate in the previous 3 and 12 months. * The number of children who were the subject of a substantiation who had also been the subject of a substantiation within the previous 3 and 12 months.   Denominators:   * The number of children who were not subject to a substantiation in the reference year. * The number of all children who were the subject of a substantiation.   Computation:  Expressed as a percentage. Calculation is: (Numerator ÷ Denominator) x 100. |
| **Data source/s** | Numerator:  AIHW, ‘*Notifications, investigations and substantiations collection*’, data supplied by jurisdictions.  Denominator:  AIHW, ‘*Notifications, investigations and substantiations collection*’, data supplied by jurisdictions. |
| **Data Quality Framework Dimensions** | |
| **Institutional environment** | Data are sourced from State and Territory administrative data systems and compiled by the AIHW. |
| **Relevance** | Data are reported by Australian State and Territory governments and provide information on the extent to which government effectively reduces the risk of harm to children by appropriately assessing notifications of child protection concerns. |
| **Timeliness** | The most timely data are reported. However, because a full 12 months needs to lapse before data can be collected for this indicator, current year data concern the financial year prior. |
| **Accuracy** | Data reported for these measures are not directly comparable across jurisdictions. Data are affected by comparability issues resulting from different substantiation criteria across jurisdictions (i.e., legislation and policy documents which define thresholds for substantiation vary across jurisdictions, such as whether ‘risk of harm’ or ‘significant risk of harm’ is required in order to substantiate). There is greater consistency within jurisdictions over time. However, the proportion of investigations resulting in substantiation can also vary within jurisdictions over time. Factors that contribute to these variations include: the introduction of risk assessment frameworks/instruments; changes to the threshold for substantiation (e.g., in January 2010, NSW legislation was amended to change the threshold for recording a substantiation from ‘risk of harm’ to ‘risk of *significant* harm’); and other practice changes (e.g., from March 2005, Qld required all notifications be investigated). |
| **Coherence** | As noted above, the data items used to construct this performance indicator are affected by comparability issues arising from different child protection legislation, policy and practice across states and territories.  Reported results can also be affected by the finalisation of investigations, factors beyond the control of child protection services, or a change in circumstances after the initial decision not to substantiate was made. For example, a demonstrable risk of harm might not have existed in the first instance. In addition, this indicator does not distinguish between subsequent substantiations which are related to the initial notification (that is, the same source of risk of harm, such as physical abuse) and those which are unrelated to the initial notification (that is, a different source of risk of harm for the subsequent substantiation, such as neglect). |
| **Accessibility** | Data are published in the SCRGSP’s Report on Government Services (Report). |
| **Interpretability** | Further technical details are available in the AIHW manual ‘*Child protection: out-of-home care, Australia: Data collection standards & counting rules’* at www.aihw.gov.au/child-protection/. |
| **Data Gaps/Issues Analysis** | |
| **Key data gaps/issues** | The Steering Committee notes the following issues:   * Caution should be used when interpreting results due to the comparability issues noted above. |

### Outcomes, child protection services — Improved education

Data quality information for this indicator has been drafted by the Child Protection and Youth Justice Working Group.

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| **Indicator definition and description** |

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| **Element** | Outcomes — child protection services |
| **Indicator** | Improved education |
| **Measure (computation)** | Definition:  The proportion of children on guardianship and custody orders to the Chief Executive/Minister achieving national benchmarks in reading and numeracy, compared to all children.  Numerators:   * Total number of children on guardianship and custody orders to the chief executive who achieved national benchmarks in reading and numeracy. * Total number of all children who achieved national benchmarks in reading and numeracy.   Denominators:   * Total number of children on guardianship and custody orders to the chief executive who participated in national testing. * Total number of all children who participated in national testing.   Computation:  Expressed as a percentage. Calculation is: (Numerator ÷ Denominator) x 100. |
| **Data source/s** | Numerator:  There are two sources of data for this indicator. Most recent data are provided directly by jurisdictions participating in the experimental aggregate educational outcomes data collection for this Report (Queensland and SA). These data are reported in the text of chapter 15 of this Report.  Historical data are also available in chapter 15 attachment tables. These data were derived from a pilot study on the educational outcomes of children in the child protection system (AIHW, ‘*Educational outcomes of children on guardianship or custody orders: A pilot study (stage 2)*’, data supplied by jurisdictions).  Denominator:  There are two sources of data for this indicator. Most recent data are provided directly by jurisdictions participating in the experimental aggregate educational outcomes data collection for this Report (Queensland and SA). These data are reporting in the text of chapter 15 of this Report.  Historical data are also available in chapter 15 attachment tables. These data were derived from a pilot study on the educational outcomes of children in the child protection system (AIHW, ‘*Educational outcomes of children on guardianship or custody orders: A pilot study (stage 2)*’, data supplied by jurisdictions). |
| **Data Quality Framework Dimensions** | |
| **Institutional environment** | Current, experimental aggregate educational outcomes data were sourced directly from participating jurisdictions (Queensland and SA).  Historical data were sourced from State and Territory administrative data systems and compiled by the AIHW. |
| **Relevance** | Data are reported by Australian State and Territory governments and provide information on the educational outcomes of children in the child protection system who are attending government schools. In contrast, all student calculations include both government and non-government schools. |
| **Timeliness** | At present, current data are only available for jurisdictions participating in the experimental aggregate educational outcomes data collection for this Report (Queensland and SA). Historical data (published in chapter 15 attachment tables) are only available for the period 2003-06, for selected jurisdictions: Victoria, Queensland, WA, SA, Tasmania and the ACT (for 2003 only). |
| **Accuracy** | Current experimental data  Data are comparable across jurisdictions but are incomplete and only available for selected jurisdictions.  Children exempted from NAPLAN testing are recorded as being below the national minimum benchmarks in reading and numeracy. Experimental data indicate that children on guardianship and custody orders are exempted from NAPLAN testing at significantly higher rates than the general student population, which will contribute to poorer reported NAPLAN results for children on orders than the general student population.  Historical pilot data  Data are comparable across jurisdictions but are incomplete and only available for selected jurisdictions for the period 2003-2006.  Benchmark calculations for children on guardianship/custody orders exclude students who were exempt from the tests, whereas all student calculations include exempted students and these students are reported as falling below the benchmark.  The methods used to calculate percentages and confidence intervals of children who are on guardianship/custody orders who have achieved national benchmark achievement levels is not the same as the method used by MCEETYA to report all student results. Confidence intervals have been calculated for children on guardianship/custody orders using the exact 95 per cent confidence limits, which have been approximated to an F distribution. For the all students estimates, the methods used by MCEETYA for calculating confidence intervals involve specifically developed software, accounting for some sources of error in the measurement and estimation process, and are reliant on having data for large cohorts of students. |
| **Coherence** | Current experimental data and historical pilot data are considered comparable. However, they relate to children in government schools only and are only available for selected jurisdictions.  Historical pilot data were collected prior to the introduction of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests, so should not be compared with later years of NAPLAN test data that may be published elsewhere. |
| **Accessibility** | Data are published in the SCRGSP’s Report on Government Services and in the AIHW publication ‘*Educational outcomes of children on guardianship and custody orders: A pilot study’* (2007). |
| **Interpretability** | Further technical details are available in the AIHW publication ‘*Educational outcomes of children on guardianship and custody orders: A pilot study’* (2007). |
| **Data Gaps/Issues Analysis** | |
| **Key data gaps/issues** | The Steering Committee notes the following issues:   * Current experimental data are incomplete. The Steering Committee considers the measurement of the educational outcomes of children in the child protection system to be a high priority. It is anticipated that the CPYJWG, in conjunction with relevant parallel groups, will prioritise the development of an ongoing national collection to routinely monitor the educational outcomes of children on orders. * Historical pilot data are dated and incomplete. As above, the Steering Committee expects that work will continue to develop national reporting on this high priority issue. |

### Efficiency, child protection services — Total expenditure on all child protection activities per notification, investigation and substantiation

Data quality information for this indicator has been drafted by the Child Protection and Youth Justice Working Group.

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| **Indicator definition and description** |

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| **Element** | Efficiency — Child protection services |
| **Indicator** | * Total expenditure on all child protection activities per notification, investigation and substantiation. |
| **Measure (computation)** | Definition: This indicator is defined by three measures:   * Total expenditure on all child protection activities throughout the financial year, divided by the number of notifications * Total expenditure on all child protection activities throughout the financial year, divided by the number of investigations * Total expenditure on all child protection activities throughout the financial year, divided by the number of substantiations.   Numerator: Total expenditure on all child protection activities throughout the financial year.  Denominators: The denominator for each measure varies:   * Measure 1: the number of notifications received throughout the reference year * Measure 2: the number of notifications that required investigation throughout the reference year * Measure 3: the number of notifications received throughout the reference year that were investigated with an outcome of substantiated   Computation: Expressed in dollar figures. Calculation is: (Numerator ÷ Denominator). |
| **Data source/s** | Numerators: Expenditure data are supplied by Australian State and Territory governments.  Denominators: AIHW, ‘*Notifications, investigations and substantiations collection*’, data supplied by jurisdictions. |
| **Data Quality Framework Dimensions** | |
| **Institutional environment** | Activity data are sourced from State and Territory administrative data systems and compiled by the AIHW.  Financial data are sourced from State and Territory administrative data systems and provided directly to the RGSP Secretariat. |
| **Relevance** | Data are reported by Australian State and Territory governments and provide information on the efficiency of service delivery. Low or decreasing expenditure per notification/investigation/substantiation can suggest more efficient services, but may indicate lower quality or different service delivery models.  These indicators are proxy indicators and need to be interpreted with care. Given each of these proxy indicators is based on total expenditure on child protection activities, they do not represent, and cannot be interpreted as, unit costs for notifications, investigations or substantiations. These proxy indicators cannot be added together to determine overall cost of child protection services.  Child protection activities undertaken by government that fall within the scope of the expenditure data include:   * receiving and responding to allegations of child abuse and neglect, including investigation and assessment * initiating formal statutory intervention to secure the safety of children or young people, including applying to the court for protective orders * ensuring the ongoing safety of children by working with families to resolve protective concerns.   More comprehensive and accurate efficiency indicators would relate expenditure on particular child protection activities to an output measure of those activities. Work is underway to develop a national activity-based costing method, the Pathways project, which will allow this type of reporting from existing information systems.  In some cases, efficiencies might not be able to be realised due to remote geographic locations that limit opportunities to reduce overheads through economies of scale. |
| **Timeliness** | The most timely data (i.e., data for the most recent financial year) are reported. |
| **Accuracy** | Data are affected by comparability issues resulting from different policy and legislative requirements across Australian jurisdictions.  Jurisdictions count notifications at different points in the response to a report, ranging from the point of initial contact with the source of the report to the end of a screening and decision making process. This means the number of notifications is not strictly comparable across jurisdictions. Notifications are subsequently investigated based on the policies and practices in each jurisdiction.  An investigation is the process whereby the relevant department obtains more detailed information about a child who is the subject of a notification and makes an assessment about the harm or risk of harm to the child, and his or her protective needs. Not all notifications are investigated in all jurisdictions. For example, if a determination is made that a child and family are better served by family support services rather than a child protection response, children and families might be referred to diversionary and support services. Once it has been decided that an investigation is required, the investigation process is similar across jurisdictions. An investigation determines whether a notification is substantiated or not substantiated.  A substantiation is the outcome of an investigation where harm or risk of harm, abuse or risk of abuse, is confirmed. The legal definition of harm or risk of harm, abuse or risk of abuse, are similar across jurisdictions. However, there can be differences in practice, including different thresholds for recording a substantiation related to risk of harm, which impact on the comparability of these data.  The national *Child protection services financial data manual* stipulates that the full cost to government of providing child protection services, including all resources consumed in providing a service, should be reported. Types of costs included in the financial data are staffing and salary expenses, usage charges on land and buildings, corporate overheads, and grants to non-government organisations to deliver services.  Time series expenditure data are deflated so comparisons over time can be made in real terms. |
| **Coherence** | As noted above, the data items used to construct this performance indicator are affected by comparability issues arising from different child protection policy and legislation across states and territories. |
| **Accessibility** | Data are published in the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision’s (SCRGSP) Report on Government Services (Report). |
| **Interpretability** | Further technical details are available in the AIHW manual ‘*Child protection notifications, investigations and substantiations, Australia: Data collection standards & counting rules’* at www.aihw.gov.au/child-protection/ and the Steering Committee’s ‘*Child protection services financial data manual’.* |
| **Data Gaps/Issues Analysis** | |
| **Key data gaps/issues** | The Steering Committee notes the following issues:   * Once national unit cost data are able to be derived using the Pathways activity based costing method, it is anticipated that these proxy measures will be replaced by more robust unit cost efficiency data. |

### Efficiency, out-of-home care — Out-of-home care expenditure per placement night

Data quality information for this indicator has been drafted by the Child Protection and Youth Justice Working Group.

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| **Indicator definition and description** |

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| **Element** | Efficiency — Out-of-home care services |
| **Indicator** | * Out-of-home care expenditure per placement night |
| **Measure (computation)** | Definition: ‘Out-of-home care expenditure per placement night’ is defined as total real recurrent expenditure on out-of-home care services divided by the total number of placement nights in out-of-home care.  Numerators: Total recurrent expenditure on out-of-home care services.  Denominators: Total number of placement nights for all children in  out-of-home care during the reference year.  Computation: Expressed in dollar figures. Calculation is: (Numerator ÷ Denominator). |
| **Data source/s** | Numerators: Expenditure data are supplied by Australian State and Territory governments.  Denominators: AIHW, ‘*Out-of-home care collection*’, data supplied by jurisdictions. |
| **Data Quality Framework Dimensions** | |
| **Institutional environment** | Activity data are sourced from State and Territory administrative data systems and compiled by the AIHW.  Financial data are sourced from State and Territory administrative data systems and provided directly to the RGSP Secretariat. |
| **Relevance** | Data are reported by Australian State and Territory governments and provide information on the efficiency of out-of-home care service provision. Low or decreasing expenditure per placement night can suggest more efficient services but may indicate lower service quality or different service delivery models. Further, in some cases, efficiencies may not be able to be realised due to remote geographic locations that limit opportunities to reduce overheads through economies of scale. |
| **Timeliness** | The most timely data (i.e., data for the most recent financial year) are reported. |
| **Accuracy** | Data are affected by comparability issues resulting from different inclusions in out-of-home care expenditure across jurisdictions.  The national *Child protection services financial data manual* stipulates that the full cost to government of providing out-of-home care services, including all resources consumed in providing a service, should be reported.  Time series expenditure data are deflated so comparisons over time can be made in real terms. |
| **Coherence** | As noted above, the data items used to construct this performance indicator are affected by comparability issues. |
| **Accessibility** | Data are published in the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision’s (SCRGSP) Report on Government Services (Report). |
| **Interpretability** | Further technical details are available in the AIHW manual ‘*Out-of-home care, Australia: Data collection standards & counting rules’* at www.aihw.gov.au/child-protection/ and the Steering Committee’s ‘*Child protection services financial data manual’.* |
| **Data Gaps/Issues Analysis** | |
| **Key data gaps/issues** | The Steering Committee notes the following issues:   * It is anticipated that further refinement of the Pathways activity based costing method will improve the comparability of these data as expenditure categories are implemented consistently across jurisdictions. |

### Efficiency, out-of-home care — Total expenditure on all children in residential care and non-residential care per child in residential and non-residential out-of-home care

Data quality information for this indicator has been drafted by the Child Protection and Youth Justice Working Group.

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| **Indicator definition and description** |

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| **Element** | Efficiency — Out-of-home care services |
| **Indicator** | * Total expenditure on all children in residential care and non-residential care per child in residential and non-residential out-of-home care |
| **Measure (computation)** | Definition: This indicator is defined by three measures:   * Measure 1: Total expenditure on residential out-of-home care during the financial year, divided by the number of children in residential out-of-home care at 30 June. * Measure 2: Total expenditure on non-residential out-of-home care during the financial year, divided by the number of children in non-residential out-of-home care at 30 June. * Measure 3: Total expenditure on all out-of-home care during the financial year, divided by the number of children in all out-of-home care at 30 June.   Numerators: The numerator for each measure varies:   * Measure 1: Total recurrent expenditure on residential out-of-home care services during the financial year. * Measure 2: Total recurrent expenditure on non-residential out-of-home care services during the financial year. * Measure 3: Total recurrent expenditure on all out-of-home care services during the financial year.   Denominators: The denominator for each measure varies:   * Measure 1: Number of children in residential out-of-home care at 30 June. * Measure 2: Number of children in non-residential out-of-home care at 30 June. * Measure 3: Number of children in all out-of-home care at 30 June.   Computation: Expressed in dollar figures. Calculation is: (Numerator ÷ Denominator). |
| **Data source/s** | Numerators: Expenditure data are supplied by Australian State and Territory governments.  Denominators: AIHW, ‘Out-of-home care collection’, data supplied by jurisdictions. |
| **Data Quality Framework Dimensions** | |
| **Institutional environment** | Data are sourced from State and Territory administrative data systems and compiled by the AIHW. |
| **Relevance** | Data are reported by Australian State and Territory governments and provide information on the efficiency of out-of-home care service delivery. Low or decreasing expenditure per child in care can suggest more efficient services but may indicate lower quality or different service delivery models.  These indicators are proxy indicators and need to be interpreted with care as they do not represent a measure of unit costs. Expenditure per child in care at 30 June overstates the cost per child because significantly more children are in care during a year than at a point in time. In addition, the indicator does not reflect the length of time that a child spends in care.  Residential out-of-home care comprises care placements in residential buildings with paid staff. These facilities are mainly used for children who have complex needs.  Non-residential out-of-home care comprises home-based care where placement is in the home of a carer who is reimbursed (or who has been offered but declined reimbursement) for expenses related to the care of a child. Home-based care includes relative/kinship care and foster care. |
| **Timeliness** | The most timely data (i.e., data for the most recent financial year) are reported. |
| **Accuracy** | Data are affected by comparability issues resulting from different inclusions in out-of-home care expenditure across jurisdictions.  The national *Child protection services financial data manual* stipulates that the full cost to government of providing out-of-home care services, including all resources consumed in providing a service, should be reported.  Time series expenditure data are deflated so comparisons over time can be made in real terms. |
| **Coherence** | As noted above, the data items used to construct this performance indicator are affected by comparability issues. |
| **Accessibility** | Data are published in the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision’s (SCRGSP) Report on Government Services (Report). |
| **Interpretability** | Further technical details are available in the AIHW manual ‘*Out-of-home care, Australia: Data collection standards & counting rules’* at www.aihw.gov.au/child-protection/ and the Steering Committee’s ‘*Child protection services financial data manual’.* |
| **Data Gaps/Issues Analysis** | |
| **Key data gaps/issues** | The Steering Committee notes the following issues:   * Not all jurisdictions are able to disaggregate out-of-home care expenditure by residential and non-residential service costs. Data for all three measures are reported for Victoria, WA, SA, Tasmania and the ACT. Data for measure 3 *only* are reported for NSW, Queensland and the NT * Once national unit cost data are able to be derived using the Pathways activity based costing method, it is anticipated that these proxy measures will be replaced by more robust unit cost efficiency data. |