



Children in Care  
Collective

# Children in Care Collective



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## THE GOALS OF THE CHILDREN IN CARE COLLECTIVE

This is the first Bulletin for the Children in Care Collective. The Children in Care Collective was formed in 2016 by a group of out of home care service providers and leading experts in the field, from across Australia working with children with complex needs. The aim of the Collective is to share information and work collaboratively and proactively on issues concerning these children. The voice of the young person is paramount to the work of the Collective.

The goals of the Collective are to;

- Build our practice capabilities
- Partner with others to improve outcomes in the out of home care service system
- Create a positive voice for children and young people in care with complex needs

The members of the Collective provide expertise in the field of out of home care providing valuable practitioner



knowledge and adding value to the system through dialogue and problem solving. Over the last two years the Collective has been looking at solutions to some of the difficult systemic practice issues

faced by the sector. The Collective has done this by using evidenced based practice, drawing on the lessons learnt by the each agency and engaging with relevant academics. The Collective meets every two months and have identified practice topics to be discussed at each of these meetings in 2018. The Collective has agreed to target issues that will genuinely lift agency capability beyond anything that could be achieved as a sole agency. The issues identified are systemic practice issues, difficult issues that could benefit from the Collective's reflection.

This Bulletin is designed to share the discussions and outcomes from the topics discussed. This Bulletin is not meant to be a comprehensive review of the topic, but to reflect on some of the current thinking and practices within agencies.

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## BUILDING CAPACITY AND CREATING SUSTAINABLE WORKFORCE IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

At the Children in Care Collective meeting in February 2018 the member agencies presented their perspective on how agencies are working to build the capacity of their workforce. In addition other agencies provided input on the day and reflected on their own practices.



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## Allambi Care **Simon Walsh, Chief Executive Officer**

One of the biggest challenges for OOHC service providers is creating a sustainable workforce, with the key questions being; how do we recognise the front line and how do we keep them? Allambi Care identified that there was a lack of tailored 'tools' available to support staff in the field. In response to this Allambi has developed and are implementing a study program inclusive of an in-house diploma (in partner with an RTO) and an in-house tertiary study program (in partnership with a university) to empower front line staff to reach their full potential within the organisation.

The program is also designed to meet the required standards and core competencies in this field, and is infused with training developed by international experts in the field. Staff participation in the course is compulsory, with the expectation that the course is completed on the staff's own time, as they progress towards a bachelor degree and endless career opportunities.

For more information contact Simon Walsh [SimonW@allambi.org](mailto:SimonW@allambi.org)



## Lessons learnt from the process

- Staff stability and retention was the key behind establishing the courses
- Engaging international experts through multiple avenues is a great tool to use with staff.
- A flexible and tailored learning approach works best when supporting staff who work rostered shifts with children, young people and their families.
- Staff value the investment made by Allambi and see the courses as helping establish a career path

## Key Assets

**Rob Ryan, CEO**

**Asia-Pacific Region**

In 2017 Key Assets implemented the Great Places to Work study. The study was run Great Place to Work Institute ([www.greatplacetowork.com.au](http://www.greatplacetowork.com.au)). The study had two key components – trust index (completed by staff) and a culture audit (completed by the organisation). The object of the study was to understand how staff feel about the culture and climate of the organisation, and whether staff feel it is a great place to work.

The survey was run over a short period, 10 business days, with reminders sent to staff over this period. Key Assets achieved a 99% completion rate for the survey. The results of the survey indicated the 87% of staff thought that Key Assets was a great place to work. The results also helped Key Assets identify geographic areas where there were lower levels of satisfaction; these results helped Key Assets to target their support to staff.

For more information contact Rob Ryan  
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[www.greatplacetowork.com.au](http://www.greatplacetowork.com.au)

## Lessons learnt from the process

- The independence of the survey was an important factor for staff, and may also explain the high level of participation
- The Study creates a reliable baseline that can be viewed against the performance of other organisations and also allows for replication of the study in the future
- The results helped to shape management's response to staff support
- While the Study has been mostly used by corporations and some NGOs, the questions in the Study could be more targeted to better reflect the needs/ language of the NGO sector
- The questions are mostly multiple choice – 58 questions and 2 open ended questions, this meant that the results were useful from a baseline perspective but did not give much detail about what staff wanted changed in the organisation
- An internal survey conducted by Key Assets prior to the Study provided more concrete changes that staff wanted from the organisation

# Anglicare Sydney

## Sue Madden, Manager/ Principal Officer, Foster Care & Adoptions

Developing a knowledge sharing culture and a workplace culture to support professional development. Over many years Anglicare Sydney has identified the need to support and develop staff. One of Anglicare's key priorities has been to embed a knowledge sharing culture in the organisation and a workplace culture to support professional development. This approach is an intentional focus on developing a workplace culture to support professional development - as a strong culture helps to shape the quality of the services delivered as well as staff retention and job satisfaction.

Anglicare Sydney has been using a framework to promote a workplace culture of professional development with 9 culture building priorities;

1. Culture that keeps high internal motivation; personal/professional level, team level and organisations/systems level
2. It requires a clearly stated vision, aims, purpose & expectations
3. Inclusion through induction culture; on-board new staff, buddy system and welcome celebration
4. Knowledge sharing culture; respect the learning process, reciprocity - we each learn and share and safety in groups
5. Culture of reflection and growth; reflection, formal learning and reviews
6. Culture of informal support; collaboration, peer to peer guidance and accessible leaders
7. Culture of developing practice through group learning; collective reasoning, team relationship development and promote critical thinking
8. Culture of supervision, support & accountability; formal supervision, clear expectations and clinical team consults
9. Culture of whole team interaction, and collective restoration; team days, team meetings and collective restoration

One example of how this is being achieved at Anglicare Sydney is through the use of practice pods. These ensure regular learning and input, embed change management processes and translate any information that needs to be understood by the front line. This is an organisational effort to develop a community of practice, at a micro level. The practice pods allow for small group learning between direct supervisor and those being supervised by that team leader. At Anglicare Sydney the pods comprise of 4 – 5 people, occurs once a month and lasts for 1.5 hours.

For more information contact Sue Madden  
[sue.madden@anglicare.org.au](mailto:sue.madden@anglicare.org.au)

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Policy Forum

In March 2018 the Collective will partner with The Sydney Policy Lab, University of Sydney, to deliver a Policy Forum. At this forum academics, service providers and bureaucrats from across Australia will come together to discuss critical policy topics in out of home care.

The objective of the forum is to bring researchers and practitioners together to discuss policy gaps, and identify actions to either (a) better understand policy and practice options (where there is not enough info/evidence) or (b) identify ways to influence policy and practice where the solutions are already generally agreed, but policy and practice does not yet reflect this.

The forum is a partnership between the University of Sydney, the Sydney Policy Lab and the Children in Care Collective. The topics selected for discussion at the Forum were identified by the Collective as priority areas for 2018.

The Policy Forum will allow a closer examination of the identified policy topics. Post the Forum, the Collective intends to continue working with the subject matter experts, academics, practitioners and government, to develop solutions to these difficult policy issues.



## Small groups will be formed to discuss priority topics at the forum

The groups will be co-facilitated by an academic and a practitioner. The four priority topics of focus for the small groups will be:

1. Post guardianship and adoption support services
2. Children with harmful sexual behaviours
3. Returning children to Aboriginal community controlled organisations
4. Establishing a professional paid workforce to provide out of home care

## Children in Care Collective Meeting - April

### Commissioner Robert Fitzgerald AM

The Collective are pleased to welcome Commissioner Robert Fitzgerald AM to their April meeting. Commissioner Fitzgerald was one of the lead Commissioners in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse. The final recommendations from the Commission were released in December 2017. The Collective is developing a joint response to a number of key recommendations from this report, and are looking forward to discussing these responses at this meeting.

Board members from the member agencies of the Collective are also invited to attend this meeting.

## Members of the Collective

- Allambi Care
- Anglicare NSW South, NSW West and ACT
- Anglicare Sydney
- CareSouth
- Key Assets
- Life Without Barriers
- Mackillop Family Services
- Stretch-a-Family
- Settlement Services International (SSI)
- Australian Catholic University; Institute of Child Protection Studies