



# Audit of Annual Reviews 2015-16

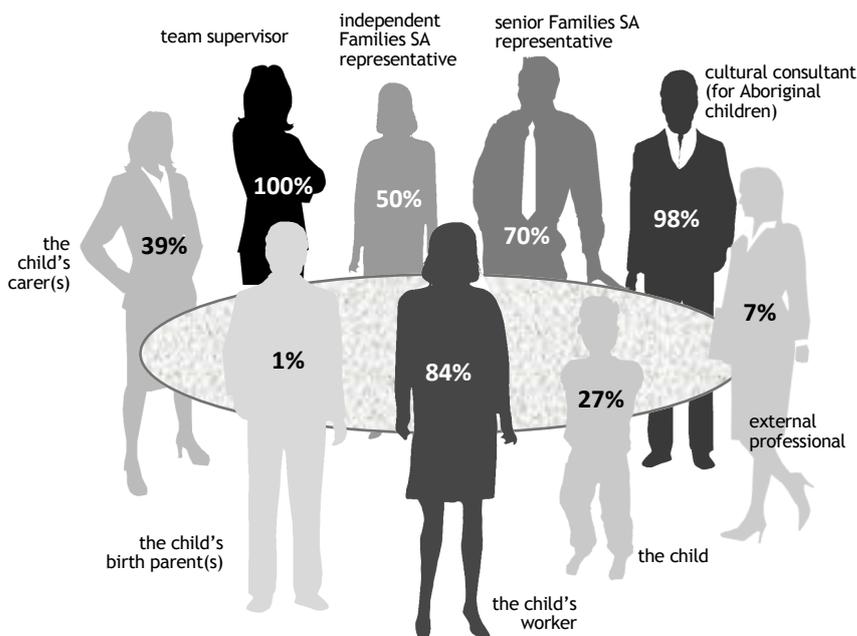
Each year the circumstances of each child<sup>1</sup> in long-term state care are required to be reviewed.

The adults in the child’s life come together to consider the child’s stability, sense of belonging, connectedness to carer and birth families, cultural identity, physical safety, emotional security, development opportunities, academic achievement and wishes now and for the future.

Participants at the review could include:

- the supervisor of the relevant care team
- at least one other senior Families SA staff member
- a social worker familiar with the circumstances of the child
- the child (allowing for age and other factors)
- foster carers, relative carers or residential care workers as relevant
- external professionals, for example from education, mental health or disability
- birth parents (with due regard to necessary constraints)
- a cultural consultant (for Aboriginal<sup>1</sup>children)

## The people who attended in 2015-16



## Children’s participation

Children should have a voice in their Annual Reviews. They can ‘attend’ by being there in person, via a written survey, via Viewpoint tool or by having their views expressed by an adult.

## The Guardian’s Office

The Senior Advocate of the Office attends annual reviews to sample how children in care are faring overall, to learn how effectively the reviews are being done, and, in some cases, to advocate for the child.

The Office provides feedback to Families SA<sup>2</sup> and an annual report to the Minister.

The Office audited 152 annual reviews in 2015-16 which was 6 per cent of the reviews due to be conducted in that year.<sup>3</sup>

Audits were conducted at 12 Families SA offices. Ninety-four of the annual reviews audited were for Aboriginal children and young people.

1. In this document, children is taken to refer to children and young people and Aboriginal includes both Aboriginals and Torres Strait islander peoples.

2. Now the Department for Child Protection.

3. The Office’s audit may not include a representative sample of all children in care because it has no control over selection of the cases reviewed and only attends those that the Families SA office has scheduled for review.

## What the audit told us



## What the 2015-16 audit revealed about children in care

- 72% of children and young people whose cases were reviewed were in stable, long-term placements
- 88% had at least one significant adult in their lives
- 88% were confidently considered safe and reported to feel safe.
- 80% were receiving standard health services and, where necessary, specific health and disability services to meet their needs
- 24% did not have regular contact with the same worker
- 15% of those who were allocated a social worker received less than the recommended monthly face-to-face contact
- 43% of children had a Life Story Book
- 78% of the 123 children and young people who were of school age and attending a state pre-school, primary or secondary school had a current Individual, or Negotiated Education Plan
- 43% of the 90 children and young people who had the capacity to understand had been provided with the *Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care*
- 61% of Aboriginal children were placed with their extended family or with Aboriginal carers
- 38% of Aboriginal children had a culturally appropriate Life Story Book

## What the 2015-16 audit revealed about annual reviews

- **Participation by external agencies** involved with the child's life occurred in 7% of the reviews meaning that they potentially lacked much vital information that could have materially contributed to the quality of the decision making.
- The one office that applied the **Solution Based Casework** model to its annual reviews produced the most comprehensive reviews with high levels of participation and collaboration.
- **Representation of the views** of the 133 children and young people who were considered capable of directly contributing to their annual reviews was unsatisfactory. 41% did not have their views represented either via survey, being present or having their view related by others. Country offices involved children most effectively.
- The **quality of reviews** was very inconsistent, ranging from excellent to some in which the quality was of such concern that the reviews were terminated.
- Reviews were significantly impaired by the **allocated worker's lack of knowledge** of the child's circumstances in 11% of reviews.

Download the full report, [The Guardian's Audit of Annual Reviews in 2015-16](#).