

The motivations of individuals and families who foster or adopt a child living with a disability: A scoping review

Foster care

Adoption

Permanency planning

Children with disability

Sherring, L., Rockloff, S., & Lane-Krebs, K. (2026). The motivations of individuals and families who foster or adopt a child living with a disability: A scoping review. *Child & Family Social Work*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.70217>

Context: Children with disability are over-represented in out-of-home care internationally, yet carers are in chronic short supply, and placements for these children break down more often. Understanding what motivates people to foster or adopt a child with disability is positioned as useful for recruitment, support and retention. The review asks “what motivates individuals and families in industrialised Western countries to care for a non-biological child living with a disability?”

Key findings:

Across 12 international studies, the review groups carers' motivations to foster or adopt a child with disability into four themes.

- Altruism, a general desire to help vulnerable children, was the most common stated motivation, but the review reports it is usually generic rather than disability-specific and tends to initiate rather than sustain caregiving.
- Enduring commitment to the ongoing medical, behavioural and advocacy demands of disability care, was tied more to carers' preparedness and lived experience than to initial intentions.
- A third theme linked caregiving to personal values and faith, with several studies describing it as a moral or religious choice.
- Fewer studies described disability care as mutually beneficial and enriching to family life rather than a sacrifice.

Summary: Recruitment that leans on altruistic appeals alone may not produce carers who stay, because sustaining a disability placement depends more on preparedness and evolving acceptance of disability as part of family life, drawn from a limited, heterogenous evidence base with no Australian studies. Authors flag the need for larger, longitudinal, disability type specific and kinship inclusive research.

Domestic and family violence experienced by children and young people in NSW

Domestic and family violence

Implementation gap

Child rights

Nelson, J. (2026). *Domestic and family violence experienced by children and young people in NSW* (Research Paper No. 2026-03). NSW Parliamentary Research Service, Parliament of New South Wales.

Key takeaway: This paper describes domestic and family violence as the most common form of child maltreatment in Australia. The Australian Child Maltreatment Study found 39.6 per cent of people aged 16 to 65 had been exposed to domestic violence as a child at least once. The paper argues that children and young people experience this violence directly and should be recognised as victim-survivors in their own right rather than only as dependents of an adult victim-survivor. It finds that NSW has begun to embed this understanding in some policy and service settings, but that recognition is not yet consistent across social services, education, justice and child protection.

Key findings: This is a literature review and evidence synthesis prepared by the NSW Parliamentary Research Service.

- It reports that intake systems, eligibility rules and risk tools are often designed around adults and gives examples where parental consent requirements can act as a barrier or a means of continued control.
- The review notes an overlap between young people who use violence and those who have experienced it and describes services for adolescent violence in the home as limited.
- The NSW child protection system remains largely ‘crisis-driven’. Budgetary data highlights this imbalance: 61 per cent of expenditure is allocated to out-of-home care (OOHC) compared to only 13 per cent for family support services.
- It reports that Aboriginal children made up 45 per cent of children in OOHC as at June 2023, while seven per cent of NSW children are Aboriginal, and that 7.2 per cent of targeted early intervention funding went to Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) as at 2024, against a 2017 commitment to reach 30 per cent.

Summary: The paper concludes that NSW has made policy commitments to recognising children as victim-survivors of domestic and family violence and some progress in implementing them, but that workforce capability, data collection and service integration remain uneven. It presents this as recognition stated in strategy but not yet consistent in practice.