

**We want to hear
from you...**



Inquiry into Intensive Therapeutic Care: Consultation Paper

Pursuing fairness for
the people of NSW.

 **Ombudsman**
New South Wales

Under the *Community Services (Complaints, Review and Monitoring) Act 1993* (CS CRAMA) the NSW Ombudsman has functions to: monitor and review the delivery of community services, conduct inquiries into matters affecting service providers and receivers and make recommendations for improvements in the delivery of community services. This includes community services that are provided by the non-government sector, with funding or authorisation from the NSW Government.

In July 2024, the NSW Ombudsman announced the commencement of an inquiry into Intensive Therapeutic Care (ITC).¹ Once the Inquiry is completed, we will prepare a Special Report to Parliament (the **Report**) by the end of 2025 about what we have found and our recommendations. The Report will be available on our website.

The ITC program provides residential care placements for children over 12 years of age with high and complex needs “...who are either unable to be supported in foster care or require specialised and intensive supports to maintain stability in their care arrangements.”²

ITC was implemented by the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) in 2018-19 as a new model of care for children in residential care. DCJ refers children to ITC through its Central Access Unit (CAU) - a centralised referral pathway. As at November 2024, ITC was being provided by 18 Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) across NSW.³

Our Inquiry started after DCJ announced it had commenced a system review into Out-of-Home Care.⁴ DCJ has since released its Out-of-Home Care (OOHC) Reform Plan⁵ with an implementation plan due by the end of 2025 and full implementation by mid-2027.

While the Inquiry is independent from DCJ, we will seek information from DCJ about any implications for the ITC program from the reforms so the Inquiry’s recommendations can take account of these developments.

Why we are undertaking this Inquiry

There is no public information on the performance of ITC and outcomes achieved for children, and the program has not previously been evaluated.⁶

ITC has been operating for over 7 years and has expanded significantly with an increase in both providers and funded placements.

The Inquiry will consider the [range of ITC services](#) within the ITC program with a focus on the operations of Intensive Therapeutic Care Homes (ITCH) because the largest proportion of contracted placements for children in ITC are in ITCH (around 60%).

The Inquiry purpose

The Inquiry’s central purpose is to assess whether ITC is meeting its objectives for children and to recommend how ITC can be improved.

The ITC service system is “designed to be flexible enough to respond to the needs of children and young people with the most complex support needs,”⁷ so they can recover and heal from “the most severe forms of trauma, neglect, abuse or adversity.”⁸

The Inquiry will seek to answer the following questions:

1 Are children stepping down from ITC into less intensive placements?

2 Are children in ITC placements safe?

3 Are ITC placements stable?

4 Do children in ITC access and engage in therapeutic support?

1. [NSW Ombudsman | Protecting children at risk: an assessment of whether...](#) p. 6; This Inquiry is being conducted under s11(1)(e) *Community Services Complaints, Review and Monitoring Act 1993* (CS-CRAMA)
2. [Residential care placements | Communities and Justice](#)
3. [Intensive Therapeutic Care \(ITC\) providers by Hub and Service](#)
4. [System review into out-of-home care \(OOHC\) | Communities and Justice](#)
5. [Transforming out-of-home care \(OOHC\) | Communities and Justice](#)
6. The Centre for Evidence and Implementation (CEI) on behalf of DCJ undertook an extensive evaluation of the PSP which was published in April 2023. ITC was not included in the evaluation. [Evaluation for the Permanency Support Program: Final Report](#)
7. [Fact sheet explaining ITC service system and types - June 2019](#)
8. [Residential care placements | Communities and Justice](#)

1. Are children stepping down from ITC into less intensive placements?

The key objective of ITC is to “assist the child or young person, where possible, to make a successful transition to a permanency outcome or less intensive placement type...”⁹ DCJ refers to this as “stepping-down”.

To answer whether children are stepping down from ITC to less intensive placements, we are examining:

- how children are supported through significant transitions in their lives such as leaving care, changing location, changing schools and moving to other placements.
- whether children are “stepping-down” to less intensive placements.

2. Do ITC placements provide stability for children?

ITC aims to provide children with stable care arrangements and consistent specialised support where needed. Stability for children in ITC is not just about the number of placements but also their environment and “experience of consistency, predictability and a sense of safety.”¹⁰

To answer whether ITC provides stability for children, we are examining which factors:

- contribute to a stable, consistent and predictable environment, and provide a sense of belonging for children in ITC.
- impact on the effectiveness of [client matching and client mix](#) practices.

3. Are children in ITC placements safe?

ITC aims to provide a safe environment for children with high and complex needs because safety is fundamental to the provision of therapeutic care.¹¹

To answer whether children are safe in ITC, we are examining which:

- arrangements provide *physical* and *relational* safety for children in ITC (e.g. structures, design, systems, processes, practices).
- factors make an ITC *home* physically safe or unsafe.
- factors help a child *feel* safe or unsafe in an ITC home.

4. Do children in ITC access and engage in therapeutic support?

The ITC service system aims to help children to recover from the most severe forms of trauma, neglect, abuse or adversity¹² by offering them the necessary therapeutic support. It is underpinned by the [NSW Therapeutic Care Framework](#) and the ‘[10 Essential Elements of Intensive Therapeutic Care](#)’.

To answer whether children in ITC are accessing therapeutic support, we are examining:

- whether children are receiving the necessary therapeutic support to help them recover and heal.
- children’s participation in planning, reviews and decisions that affect them.
- how children are supported to build and maintain relationships with family, friends, caregivers, community and within the home.
- whether information sharing and/or information exchange in ITC provides the necessary, timely information to:
 - o assess children’s needs and plan for their support across their ITC journey.
 - o respond to and manage safety and risks.

9. Placement types such as Foster Care, SIL (Supported independent Living), THBC, TSIL or a TSOP. [Fact sheet explaining ITC service system and types - June 2019](#)

10. [CETC - What does stability in residential care mean? Part 1 - CETC](#)

11. [NSW Therapeutic Care Framework](#)

12. [Residential care placements | Communities and Justice](#)

How to make a submission

You can choose to address in your submission any or all the questions being considered by the Inquiry. You can also tell us what you think is most important about ITC and suggest ways to improve outcomes for children in ITC.

In your submission, we would appreciate you including your name, contact details and information about your connection to ITC (whether you are/were a child in ITC, are a family member/friend/carer of a child in ITC, a worker, a provider, researcher etc). This will help us to understand the different perspectives of stakeholders.

We will also accept anonymous submissions.

You can make a submission online, by email or by post.

Submissions can be made online or by uploading a document at: www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/itc-consultation-paper-call-for-submissions

Email: ITCInquiry@ombo.nsw.gov.au

Post: NSW Ombudsman, Level 24,
580 George Street, Sydney NSW 2000

If you require assistance to make a submission or would like to make a verbal submission, please contact us on ITCInquiry@ombo.nsw.gov.au or telephone **1800 451 524** and we can discuss this with you.

What we do with your submission

We understand you may have concerns about the privacy and confidentiality of any information you provide to us. We have strict statutory non-disclosure obligations to protect the privacy and confidentiality of those who make submissions and any person who is referred to in those submissions.

Once the Inquiry is completed, we will prepare a Special Report to Parliament (the **Report**) about what we have found and our recommendations. The Report will be available on our website.

We will use your submission to help in preparing our Report and may refer to or quote parts of your submissions in our Special Report.

We will not publish the names of people who made submissions without their consent or the full submissions themselves. The Report will include information about how many submissions we received and may also include information about the groups of stakeholders who responded (for example how many families, providers, researchers etc).

If we refer to or quote part of your submission in our Report, we will not publish your name or any information that identifies you without your consent. We will also not publish the names of any other persons or providers you mention in your submission.

There are protections in the *Ombudsman Act 1974* and the *Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Act 1993* for people who provide information to the Ombudsman. This means that no one can take detrimental action against you in relation to the information you provide and that we cannot disclose or use your submission except in limited circumstances or with your consent. These limited circumstances include:

- use for other functions of the Ombudsman.
- if your submission raises serious matters of maladministration, corrupt conduct or concerns about the care of children and young people, we may need to take further action.

You are welcome to contact us on ITCInquiry@ombo.nsw.gov.au or **1800 451 524** if you have questions about how we will use your submission, or to discuss your concerns about privacy or confidentiality.

SUBMISSIONS CLOSE: 09 May 2025



Scan the QR code
to find out more
on our website.

Contact us

✉ ITCInquiry@ombo.nsw.gov.au

☎ (02) 9286 1000

🌐 www.ombo.nsw.gov.au