



CARER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018

Carer Information and Support Service (CISS)

FCAV's CISS service is invaluable to foster carers as they navigate the complex Out of Home care sector. Whilst the past 12 months has seen the introduction of the new CIMS model, the Reportable Conduct Scheme and the Transitioning of Aboriginal children to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), it has also been an exciting time for CISS to broaden the support offered to foster carers and foster care agencies.

CISS Service Delivery Annual Results

In the 2017-2018 financial year the CISS team responded to and closed **648 foster care enquiries, delivering 1073 hours of service.**

In addition, the CISS team responded to and closed 90 enquiries relating to Kinship and other, delivering another 87 hours of service.

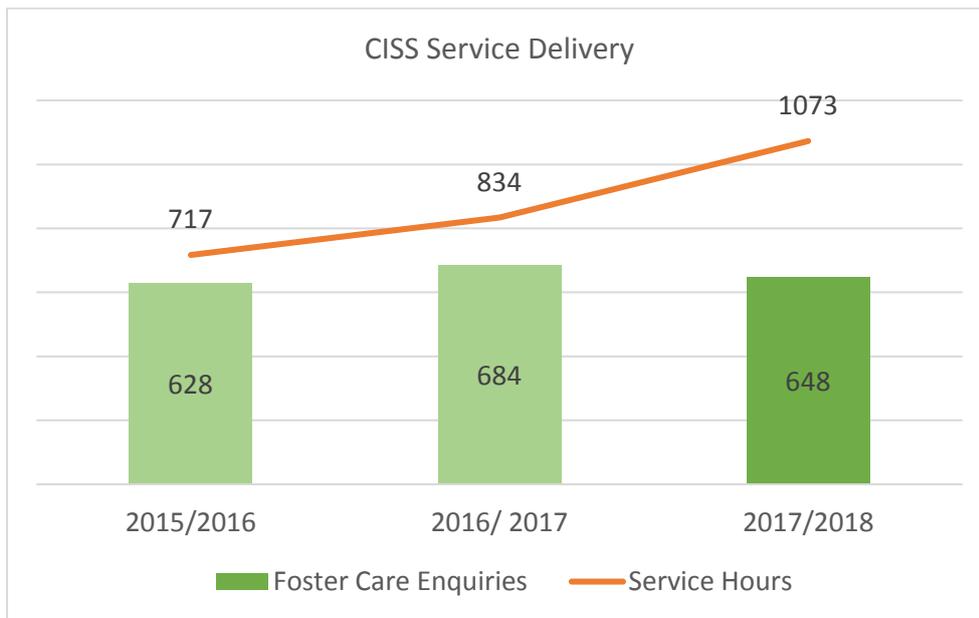
FCAV is funded to provide support to 400 foster care contacts per year. The number of foster care contacts has exceeded this benchmark on average over 60% each year since 2015-16 as shown in Figure 1 below.

**In this report: an 'enquiry' is one case, a 'contact' is an individual call, email, meeting, etc.*



The Foster Care Association of Victoria operates on the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respect to their Elders, past and present, and to all the traditional custodians of land throughout Victoria.

Figure 1: Service Delivery

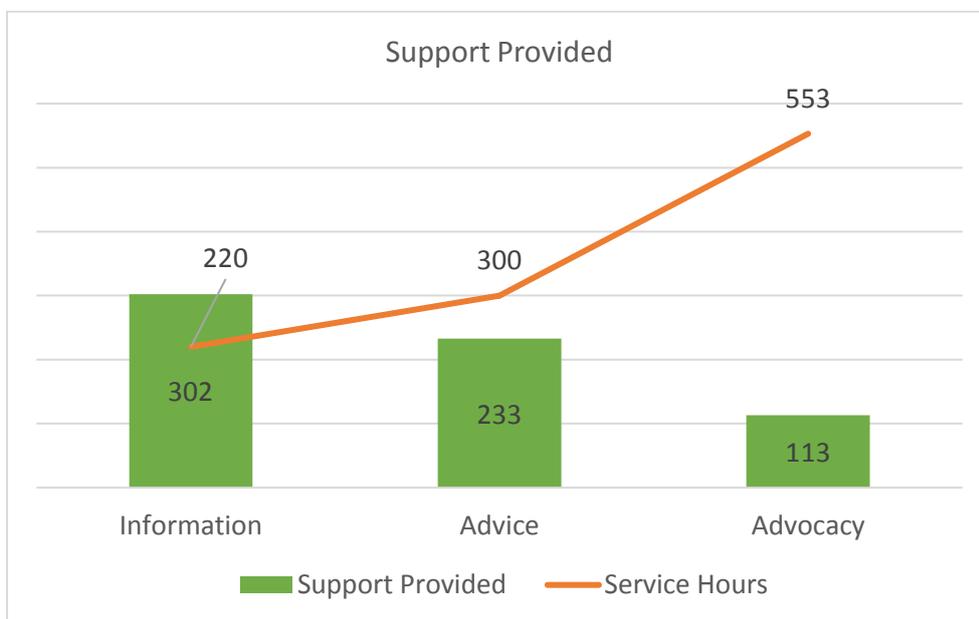


CISS Support Provided

Of the 648 enquiries, CISS provided **information** to 302 (220 service hours), **advice** to 233 (300 service hours) and **advocacy** to 113 (553 service hours).

Figure 2 below highlights that the provision of advocacy support to carers continues to be the most complex and time-consuming component of CISS service delivery. This support involves conversations with carers and advocating on their behalf with the agency or DHHS.

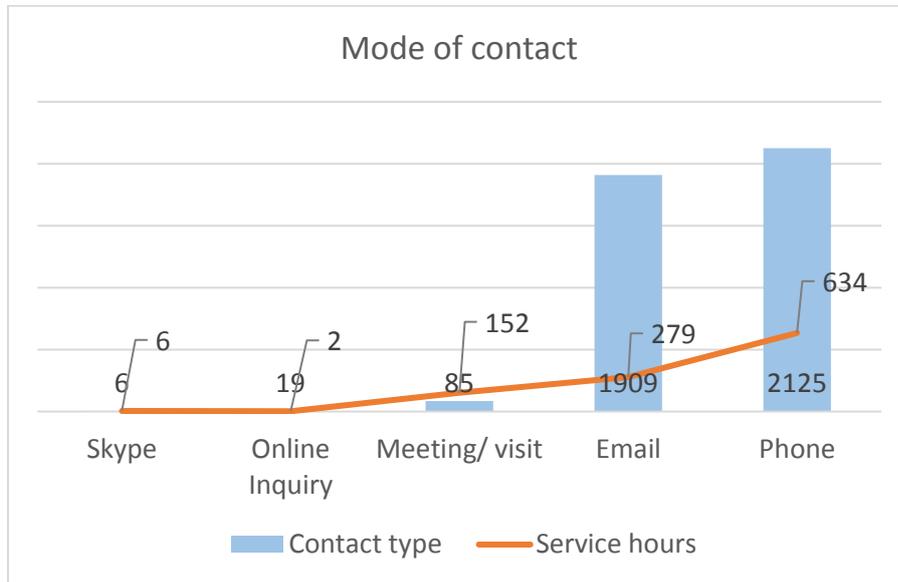
Figure 2: Support Provided



Mode of contact

An enquiry can involve multiple contacts and modes of support. While the majority of support is provided via phone and email, there has been an increase in the use of Skype video conferencing and attendance at meetings to support carers.

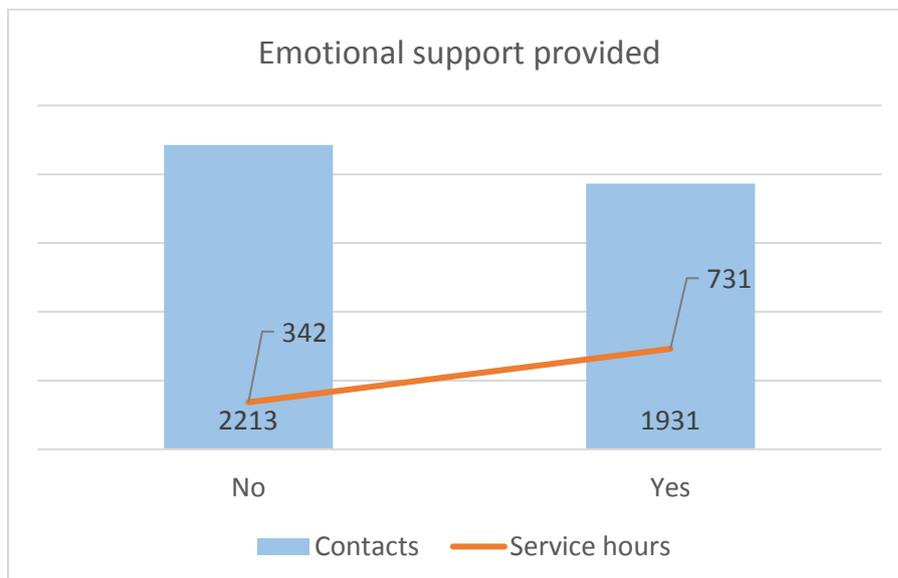
Figure 3: Mode of contact



Emotional Support

The CISS team spends a considerable amount of time providing emotional support to carers as they deal with traumatic, distressing experiences. The grief and loss that carers feel when a child is removed from their care plays a large part of this.

Figure 4: Emotional Support Provided



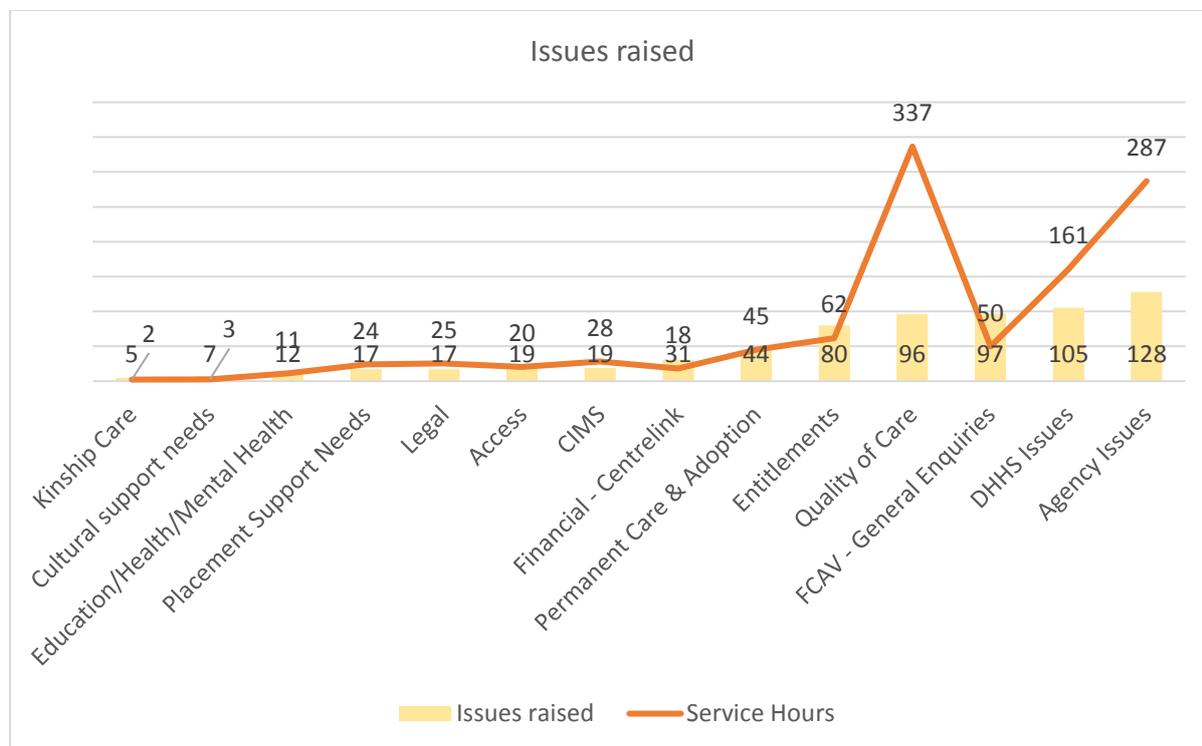
FCAV has been able to offer emotional support to carers through new mediums including hosting our first evening webinars on the topics 'Self-care' and 'Grief & Loss'. The webinars were well received and gave carers an opportunity to reach out after hours, for extra support.

Following the webinars, FCAV hosted a weekend wellness camp for carers, focusing on self-care and emotional intelligence. The camp used a number of strategies for managing stress including meditation, art and laughter therapy, exercise and massage.

Issues raised by carers

Of the 648 enquiries, 677 issues were raised. The majority of issues were in relation to agencies and DHHS and the most time was spent providing advocacy support to carers undergoing Quality of Care (CIMS) investigations.

Figure 4: Issues raised

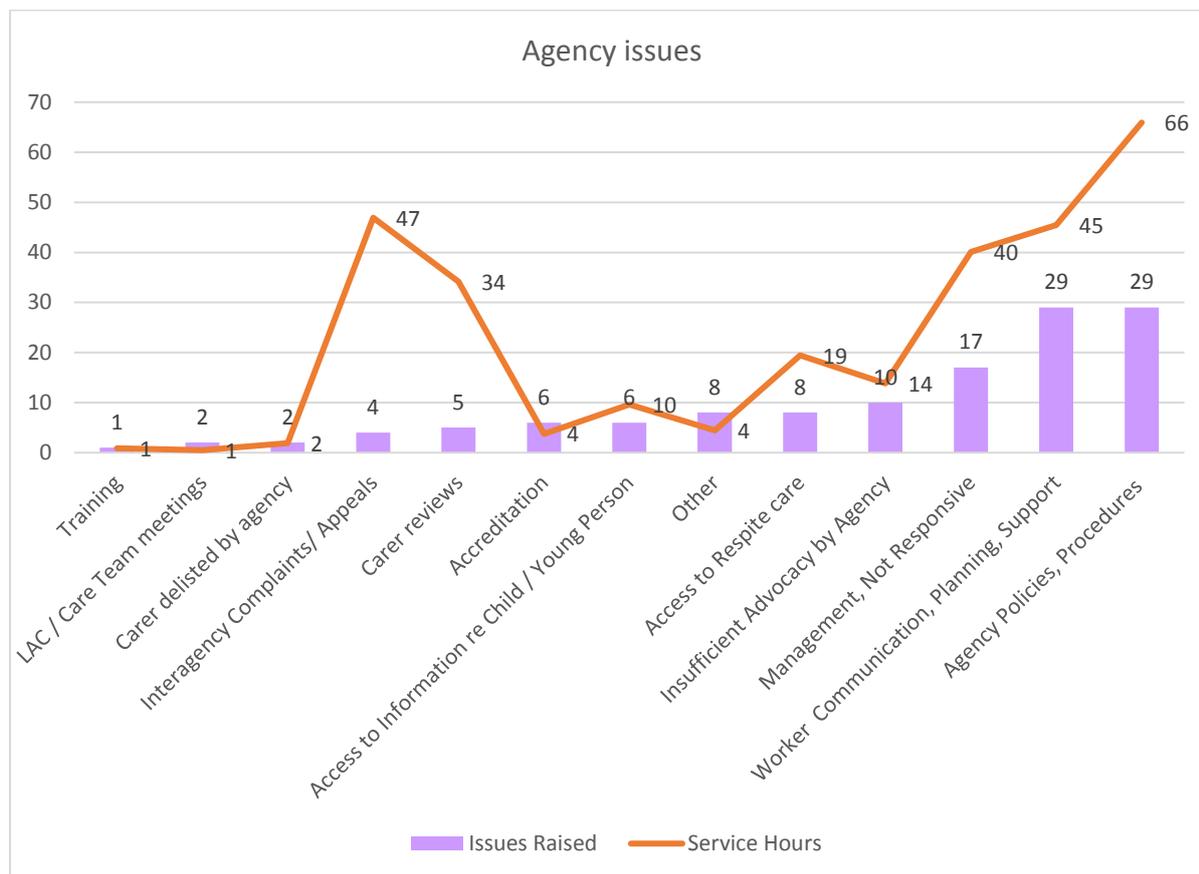


Agency Issues

A consistent theme in the past 12 months has been that complex children are placed with first time and often inexperienced carers. Carers have felt there was minimal information provided by their agency. CISS encourage carers to really be clear about the information they require before they accept a placement.

Many of the calls received are foster carers trying to access practical information and advice to assist in the care of children. There is often frustration with the large waiting lists for specialist services like residential support programs, Take Two therapeutic services and counselling. It would be helpful if agencies could resource carers with all relevant information.

Figure 5: Agency Issues



Client Incident Investigations

In the past year CISS have supported carers for periods of up to seven months through investigations of Quality of Care or new the Client Incident Management System (CIMS) process.

There are many children removed immediately from carers in relation to the alleged concerns. Even when allegations are unsubstantiated, children are not returned to the carers, sometimes due to the length of time the child has been out of the placement.

Some agencies are unclear about the new CIMS process and are not providing allegations to carers in a timely manner. Once the process has been investigated agencies are not providing written information or outcomes.

Carers often comment that they are not receiving any support from their agency, when there is an investigation. Their calls are not returned.

Two CISS team members are currently completing *CERT IV in Government Investigations*, to become experts on the CIMS process to be able to provide advice and guidance to agency workers on best practice.

Figure 5: Quality of Care Issues

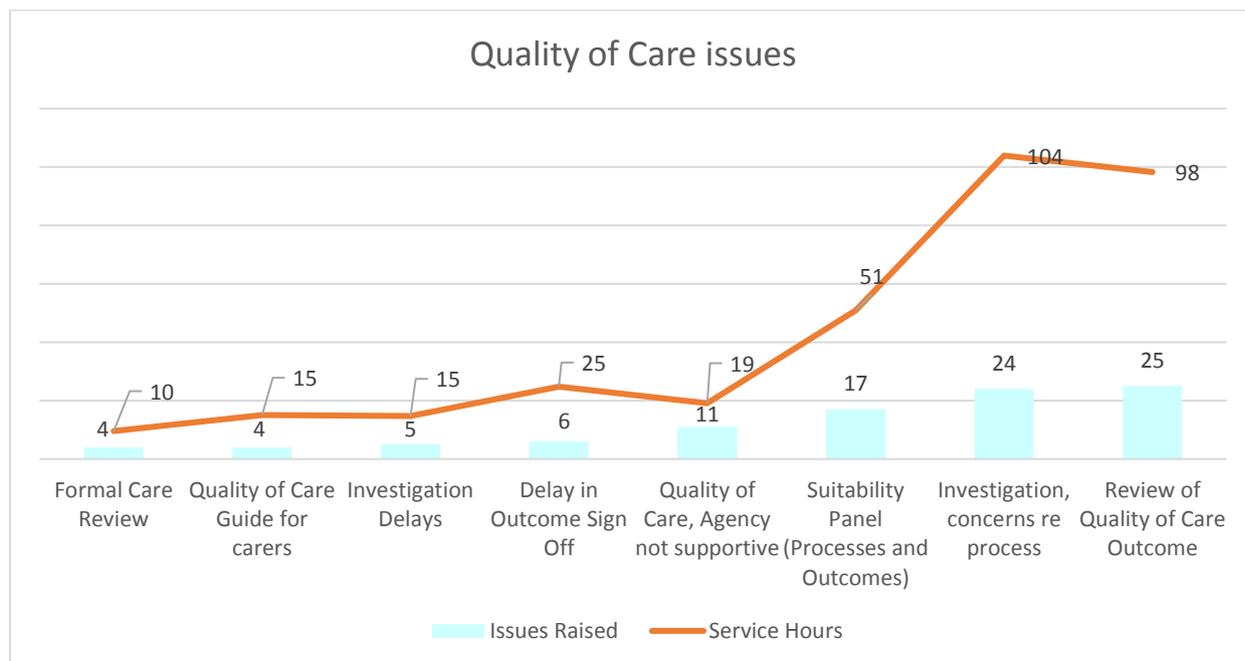
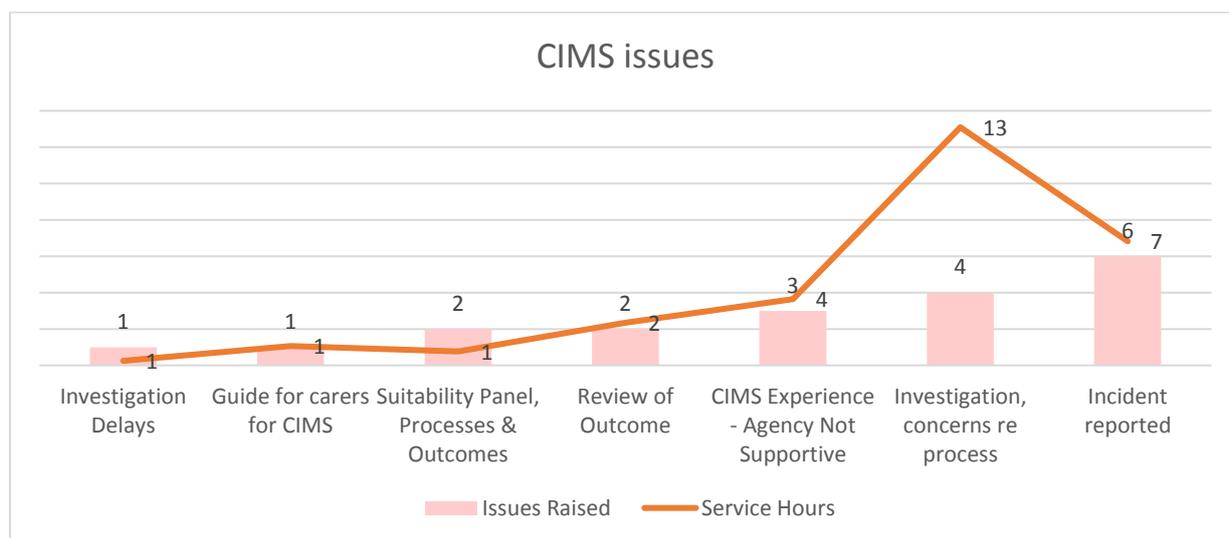


Figure 6: CIMS Issues



Agency relationships

In addition to the support provided to enquiries, CISS have continued to strengthen relationships with agencies. Since July 2017 the team have completed 31 agency visits across Victoria.

CISS have developed some positive partnerships with agencies, working together to better support carers through a range of initiatives including co-hosting cultural carer forums and a new CIMS Webinar on 12 July 2018;

<https://www.facebook.com/events/197542401069444/>.

