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## 5 Patterns in the characteristics of the young people who died by suicide and their contact with State government departments and authorities, schools and registered training organisations

### 5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 discusses demographic characteristics and the risk factors, warning signs and precipitating events, referred to as **factors associated with suicide**, experienced by the 36 young people. To analyse the factors associated with suicide, the Office grouped them into the categories shown in Figure 22 below.

**Figure 22: Factors associated with suicide and corresponding categories used in this report**

Category	Factors associated with suicide
Mental health problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental illness</li> <li>• Self-harming behaviour</li> </ul>
Suicidal ideation and behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suicidal ideation</li> <li>• Previous suicide attempts</li> <li>• Communicated suicidal intent</li> </ul>
Substance use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alcohol or other drug use</li> </ul>
Child maltreatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family and domestic violence</li> <li>• Sexual abuse</li> <li>• Physical abuse</li> <li>• Neglect</li> </ul>
Adverse family experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent with a mental illness</li> <li>• Parent with problematic alcohol or other drug use</li> <li>• Parent who had been imprisoned</li> <li>• Family member, friend or person known to the young person died by suicide</li> </ul>

Source: Ombudsman Western Australia

Through this analysis, the Office identified four groupings of young people, distinguished from each other by patterns in the factors associated with suicide that each group experienced. In brief, the four groupings of young people are:

**Group 1** - twenty young people who all were recorded as having allegedly experienced one or more forms of child maltreatment, including family and domestic violence, sexual abuse, physical abuse or neglect. Most of the 20 young people in Group 1 were also recorded as having experienced mental health problems and suicidal ideation and behaviour.

**Group 2** – records indicate that five young people who were recorded as having been diagnosed with one or more mental illnesses, as having a parent who had been diagnosed

with a mental illness and/or demonstrated significant planning for their suicide. None of the five young people were recorded as having allegedly experienced child maltreatment.

**Group 3** – records indicate that six young people experienced few factors associated with suicide. None of these six young people were recorded as having allegedly experienced any element of child maltreatment, a mental health problem or adverse family experiences. All six young people were recorded as being highly engaged in school and highly involved in sport.

**Group 4** – records indicate that five young people, like the young people in Group 3, experienced few factors associated with suicide. None of the five young people were recorded as having allegedly experienced any elements of child maltreatment, a mental health problem or adverse family experiences. However, the records indicated that all five young people demonstrated impulsive or risk taking behaviour.

This chapter discusses these four groups of young people in more detail. A summary of their contact with State government departments and authorities is also provided. The table below sets out the definition of ‘contact’ used during this discussion. It also shows the acronyms used.

Organisation	Definition of 'contact' as indicated by the records
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service ( <b>CAMHS</b> ) <sup>133</sup>	Young person was the subject of a referral received by CAMHS, or received services from CAMHS.
Department for Child Protection and Family Support ( <b>DCPFS</b> )	Young person was the subject of an interaction with DCPFS; young person directly communicated with DCPFS; or young person was the subject of protection action by DCPFS (including being in the care of the CEO). In this report, if a young person had contact with DCPFS, or was part of a family who had contact with DCPFS, we refer to this situation as the young person being <b>known to DCPFS</b> .
Department of Corrective Services ( <b>DCS</b> )	Young person was referred to a DCS service by Western Australia Police officers under section 27 of the <i>Young Offenders Act 1994</i> ; young person was referred by a court under section 28 of the <i>Young Offenders Act 1994</i> ; or young person served time in a custodial facility.
Department of Housing ( <b>Housing</b> )	Young person was part of a family that lodged an application for, or received services from Housing.
Department of the Attorney General ( <b>DOTAG</b> )	Young person received an offer of services from DOTAG's Child Witness Service or Victim Support Services.
Government ( <b>Gov't. schools</b> )	Young person was enrolled with a government school as their last school. Enrolment with non-government schools is also discussed in each section.
Government and non-government registered training organisations ( <b>RTO</b> )	Young person participated in an educational program delivered by a government or non-government registered training organisation.
WA Health	Young person received treatment from a hospital Emergency Department; young person received treatment as an inpatient or outpatient of WA Health, except Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, which are shown separately.
Western Australia Police ( <b>WAPOL</b> )	Young person was the subject of a report by WAPOL to DCPFS; young person was charged with an offence by WAPOL.

By understanding the groups of young people and their patterns of contact with State government departments and authorities, the Office has been able to identify ways that

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<sup>133</sup> The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service is a service administered by the Department of Health. For the purpose of this investigation, contact with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service has been considered separately from contact with other health services administered by the Department of Health to identify access to specialised mental health services.

State government departments or authorities can potentially prevent or reduce suicide by young people. These are discussed in Chapters 6 to 10.

The patterns described in this chapter are consistent with similar investigations by Child Death Review teams from New South Wales,<sup>134</sup> Queensland,<sup>135</sup> and British Columbia, Canada,<sup>136</sup> which identified two 'groupings' of young people:

- Young people who had experienced significant enduring life difficulties including mental health problems, family dysfunction, school related difficulties or any combination of these factors. This group made up 66 per cent to 80 per cent of cases across the three studies; and
- Young people who had experienced a precipitating or 'life changing' event in the absence of chronic family, relationship or mental health problems. This group made up 20 to 26 per cent of cases reviewed across the three studies.

The British Columbia study further categorised the first grouping of young people into young people who had ongoing mental health problems (45 per cent of the cases) and young people experiencing chronic dysfunction in their interpersonal relationships (44 per cent of cases).<sup>137</sup>

## 5.2 Young people in Group 1

### 5.2.1 Factors associated with suicide

The Office identified that 20 (56 per cent) of the 36 young people were recorded as having experienced multiple factors associated with suicide. All of these 20 young people were recorded as having allegedly experienced some form of child maltreatment including family and domestic violence, sexual abuse, physical abuse or neglect. Nineteen of these 20 young people were recorded as having allegedly experienced child maltreatment in conjunction with other factors associated with suicide, including suicidal ideation (16 young people), mental health problems (14 young people), substance use (14 young people) and adverse family experiences (13 young people). In this report, this grouping of young people is referred to as **Group 1**.

The factors associated with suicide experienced by the young people in Group 1 are summarised in Figure 23 below.

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<sup>134</sup> M Sankey & R Lawrence, *Suicide and risk-taking deaths of children and young people*, New South Wales Commissioner for Children and Young People, Sydney, 2003.

<sup>135</sup> State of Queensland, Commissioner for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, *Reducing youth suicide in Queensland Final Report*, Commissioner for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, Brisbane, 2011.

<sup>136</sup> Government of British Columbia, Child Death Review Unit, *Looking for something to look forward to: A five-year retrospective review of child and youth suicide in BC*, Child Death Review Unit, Burnaby, 2008.

<sup>137</sup> Government of British Columbia, Child Death Review Unit, *Looking for something to look forward to: A five-year retrospective review of child and youth suicide in BC*, Child Death Review Unit, Burnaby, 2008, p. vii.

**Figure 23: Young people in Group 1 – overview of factors associated with suicide**

Child maltreatment	Young person 1	Young person 2	Young person 3	Young person 4	Young person 5	Young person 6	Young person 7	Young person 8	Young person 9	Young person 10	Young person 11	Young person 12	Young person 13	Young person 14	Young person 15	Young person 16	Young person 17	Young person 18	Young person 19	Young person 20
Suicidal ideation and behaviour																				
Mental health problems																				
Substance use																				
Adverse family experiences																				

Source: Ombudsman Western Australia

More detail about the factors associated with suicide experienced by the young people in Group 1 is provided below.

**Child maltreatment**

Records indicate that, of the 20 young people in Group 1:

- seventeen were said to have experienced family and domestic violence;
- nine were recorded as having allegedly experienced sexual abuse;
- eight were recorded as having allegedly experienced physical abuse; and
- twelve were recorded as having allegedly experienced elements of neglect, including:
  - eight young people were recorded as allegedly not having been given assistance when required;
  - seven young people were recorded as allegedly not having been given affection or emotional support;
  - four young people were recorded as allegedly having experienced infection because of poor hygiene or lack of medication; and
  - three young people were recorded as allegedly having been left alone without appropriate supervision.

- Suicidal ideation and behaviour** Records indicate that, of the 20 young people in Group 1:
- thirteen demonstrated suicidal ideation;
  - twelve communicated their intention to commit suicide to a friend, family member or health professional; and
  - twelve had previously attempted suicide, with four of these young people previously attempting suicide on more than one occasion.
- Mental health problems** Records indicate that, of the 20 young people in Group 1:
- eleven self-harmed;
  - eight were diagnosed with a mental illness including Depressive disorders, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Anxiety disorders or Conduct disorders;
  - six were prescribed medication for a diagnosed mental illness, as follows:
    - five were prescribed anti-depressant medication;
    - two were prescribed anti-psychotic medication; and
    - three were prescribed medication used to treat Attention Deficit Disorder.
- Substance use** Records indicate that, of the 20 young people in Group 1:
- eleven consumed alcohol at some time in their lives;
  - nine consumed illicit drugs at some time in their lives; and
  - toxicology reports indicated that seven consumed alcohol or cannabis prior to their deaths.
- Adverse family experiences** Records indicate that, of the 20 young people in Group 1:
- ten had a parent with a mental illness;
  - eight had a parent who had problematic alcohol and other drug use;
  - five had a parent who was imprisoned; and
  - six had a family member, friend or person known to them who had died by suicide.

### 5.2.2 Demographic characteristics

Records indicate that, of the 20 young people in Group 1:

- ten (50 per cent) were male and 10 (50 per cent) were female;
- ten (50 per cent) were Aboriginal and 10 (50 per cent) were non-Aboriginal;
- ten (50 per cent) were aged 14 to 15 years and ten were aged 16 to 17 years;

- ten (50 per cent) resided in a major city, six (30 per cent) resided in a regional area and four (20 per cent) resided in a remote or very remote region; and
- with respect to structure of household:
  - three (15 per cent ) lived in either an intact family or a step or blended family;
  - seven (35 per cent) lived in one parent families;
  - seven (35 per cent) lived with relatives other than parents; and
  - three (15 per cent) lived in other circumstances.

### **5.2.3 Contact with State government departments and authorities, schools and registered training organisations**

Records indicate that, as a group, the 20 young people in Group 1 had extensive contact with State government departments and authorities, schools and registered training organisations, as set out in Figure 24. This figure shows that all of the young people in Group 1 were known to the Department for Child Protection and Family Support. All had contact with WA Health, with eight young people having contact with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. Eighteen of the young people had contact with a government school and seven had contact with a registered training organisation.

**Figure 24: Young people in Group 1 - overview of contact with State government departments and authorities, schools and registered training organisations<sup>138</sup>**

WA Health																				
DCPFS																				
Gov't. school																				
WAPOL																				
Housing																				
CAMHS																				
DCS																				
RTO																				
DOTAG																				
	Young person 1	Young person 2	Young person 3	Young person 4	Young person 5	Young person 6	Young person 7	Young person 8	Young person 9	Young person 10	Young person 11	Young person 12	Young person 13	Young person 14	Young person 15	Young person 16	Young person 17	Young person 18	Young person 19	Young person 20

Source: Ombudsman Western Australia

More detail about the contact by the 36 young people with the Department for Child Protection and Family Support, schools and registered training organisations, and WA Health’s Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service is provided below.

#### 5.2.3.1 Department for Child Protection and Family Support (DCPFS)

Records indicate that, of the 20 young people in Group 1, all had contact with DCPFS, or were part of a family who had contact with DCPFS. We refer to this situation as the young person being **known to DCPFS**. Of the 20 young people in Group 1:

- sixteen were known to DCPFS because the Department had received information that raised concerns about the wellbeing of the young person;
- four were known to DCPFS solely through a parent’s application for financial assistance or because DCPFS had received information that raised concerns about the wellbeing of the young person’s sibling or through a Western Australia Police notification.

<sup>138</sup> In this figure the acronyms refer to the following: **WA Health** WA Health (not including CAMHS, which is shown separately); **DCPFS** Department for Child Protection and Family Support; **Gov’t. school** government schools; **WAPOL** Western Australia Police; **Housing** Department of Housing; **CAMHS** Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service; **DCS** Department of Corrective Services; **RTO** government and non-government registered training organisations; **DOTAG** Department of the Attorney General.

Information provided to DCPFS relating to the wellbeing of young people in Group 1 encompassed a number of issues:

- child maltreatment allegations, including allegations of family and domestic violence, sexual abuse, physical abuse and neglect;
- parent with problematic alcohol or other drug use;
- absconding from places of care;
- access to adequate food or medical care; and
- concerns raised by a member of the public about parenting of a young person.

Reports to DCPFS originated from a number of sources, including members of the community such as family members or neighbours, and from a range of professionals who had contact with the young people or their families. This included:

- Western Australia Police officers;
- Teachers, psychologists or administrative staff of schools;
- Staff of a hospital or medical centre;
- Staff of the Department of Corrective Services; and
- Staff of a non-government organisation (for example a youth centre, refuge or homeless service provider).

Further analysis of the contact between the young people in Group 1 and DCPFS, and the implications of this analysis, is discussed in Chapter 8.

#### 5.2.3.2 *Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)*

Records indicate that, of the 20 young people in Group 1, eight had been referred by a general practitioner or staff of a hospital emergency department to CAMHS. Four of these young people were also admitted to hospital for a mental illness.

Further analysis of the contact between the young people in Group 1 and CAMHS, and the implications of this analysis, is discussed in Chapter 7.

#### 5.2.3.3 *Schools and registered training organisations*

Records indicate that, of the 20 young people in Group 1:

- eighteen were enrolled with a government high school as their last school; and
- two were enrolled with a non-government high school as their last school.

Records indicate that, of the 20 young people in Group 1, seven had contact with a registered training organisation:

- five young people had contact with a government registered training organisation in their school; and
- two young people had contact with a government registered training organisation on the campus of the registered training organisation.

Further analysis of the contact between the young people in Group 1 and schools and registered training organisations, and the implications of this analysis, is discussed in Chapter 9.

#### 5.2.3.4 *Contact with other State government departments and authorities*

Records indicate that the 20 young people in Group 1 had significant contact with the justice system and associated State government departments and authorities. Fifteen of the 20 young people had contact with Western Australia Police at some point in their lives. Thirteen young people were the subject of reports by Western Australia Police to DCPFS raising concerns about the safety or wellbeing of the young person (discussed at section 5.2.3.1 above). Nine of the 15 young people were charged by Western Australia Police with one or more offences. Three of the nine young people who had been charged with an offence were charged on multiple occasions.

Records indicate that seven of the 20 young people in Group 1 had contact with the Department of Corrective Services. All seven young people were referred to Juvenile Justice Teams. Three young people also spent time on remand in a custodial facility.

Records indicate that the majority of young people in Group 1 also had contact with the Department of Housing. Fourteen of the 20 young people had contact as follows:

- at the time of their death, seven young people were listed with the Department of Housing as registered householders;
- three young people had also been registered householders in the past but were no longer registered at the time of their death; and
- four young people were listed on applications for public housing that were later withdrawn.

Further details about contact by the 36 young people with other State government departments and authorities is provided in the Appendix.

## 5.3 Young people in Group 2

### 5.3.1 Factors associated with suicide

The Office identified that records indicate that five (14 per cent) of the 36 young people were diagnosed with one or more mental illnesses and/or demonstrated significant planning of their suicide. Four of these five young people were recorded as having been diagnosed with multiple mental illnesses and three of the five young people were recorded as having a parent who had been diagnosed with a mental illness. None of the five young people were recorded as having allegedly experienced any other types of adverse family experiences or any elements of child maltreatment (as defined in section 4.5.3). In this report, this grouping of young people is referred to as **Group 2**.

The factors associated with suicide experienced by the young people in Group 2 are summarised in Figure 25 below.

**Figure 25: Young people in Group 2 – overview of factors associated with suicide**

<b>Suicidal ideation and behaviour</b>					
<b>Mental health problems</b>					
<b>Adverse family experiences<sup>1</sup></b>					
<b>Substance use</b>					
<b>Child maltreatment</b>					
	Young person 21	Young person 22	Young person 23	Young person 24	Young person 25

Source: Ombudsman Western Australia

Note 1: The only type of 'adverse family experience' for the young people in Group 2 was a parent diagnosed with a mental illness.

More detail about the factors associated with suicide experienced by the young people in Group 2 is provided below.

**Suicidal ideation and behaviour**

Records indicate that, of the five young people in Group 2:

- all five demonstrated suicidal ideation;
- three communicated their intention to commit suicide to a friend, family member or health professional; and
- two had previously attempted suicide.

**Mental health problems**

Records indicate that, of the five young people in Group 2:

- four had diagnoses of multiple mental illnesses:
  - all four young people were diagnosed with depression, as well as a second mental illness including anxiety or personality disorders. All four had also self-harmed; and
  - all four young people had been prescribed with anti-depressant medication. Two of the four young people had been prescribed with anti-depressant medication combined with anti-psychotic medication.

**Adverse family experiences** Records indicate that, of the five young people in Group 2:

- three had a parent who had been diagnosed with a mental illness; and
- none had a parent who was imprisoned, a parent who had problematic alcohol or other drug use; or a family member, friend or person known to them who had died by suicide.

**Substance use** Records indicate that, of the five young people in Group 2, two had consumed alcohol and/or illicit drugs at some time in their lives.

**Child maltreatment** Records indicate that none of the young people in Group 2 were recorded as having allegedly experienced any child maltreatment that is, family and domestic violence, neglect, sexual abuse, and/or physical abuse.

### 5.3.2 Demographic characteristics

Records indicate that, of the five young people in Group 2:

- three were female and two were male;
- all five were non-Aboriginal;
- their ages ranged from 15 to 17 years;
- all were residing in either a major city or an inner regional area; and
- all were living with either both biological parents or one biological parent.

### 5.3.3 Contact with State government departments and authorities, schools and registered training organisations

Records indicate that four out of five (80 per cent) young people in Group 2 had contact with WA Health and CAMHS. Three of the five young people had contact with a government school and two had contact with a registered training organisation, as shown in Figure 26.

Records indicate that none of the young people in Group 2 had contact with the Department for Child Protection and Family Support, Department of Corrective Services, Department of Housing, Department of the Attorney General or Western Australia Police.

**Figure 26: Young people in Group 2 - overview of contact with State government departments and authorities<sup>139</sup>**

WA Health					
CAMHS					
Gov't. school					
RTO					
DCPFS					
DCS					
DOTAG					
Housing					
WAPOL					
	Young person 21	Young person 22	Young person 23	Young person 24	Young person 25

Source: Ombudsman Western Australia

More detail about the contact by the young people in Group 2 with CAMHS, schools and registered training organisations is provided below.

#### 5.3.3.1 *Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)*

Records indicate that the four young people in Group 2 who had been diagnosed with a mental illness all presented at CAMHS following referral by a general practitioner.

Further analysis of the contact between the young people in Group 2 and CAMHS, and the implications of this analysis, is provided in Chapter 7.

#### 5.3.3.2 *Schools and registered training organisations*

Records indicate that of the five young people in Group 2:

- three were enrolled with a government high school as their last school; and
- two were enrolled with a non-government school as their last school.

<sup>139</sup> In this figure the acronyms refer to the following: **WA Health** WA Health (not including CAMHS, which is shown separately); **DCPFS** Department for Child Protection and Family Support; **Gov't. school** government schools; **WAPOL** Western Australia Police; **Housing** Department of Housing; **CAMHS** Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service; **DCS** Department of Corrective Services; **RTO** government and non-government registered training organisations; **DOTAG** Department of the Attorney General.

Records indicate that, of the five young people in Group 2, two were, or had been, enrolled with a registered training organisation on the campus of the registered training organisation or in their school.

## 5.4 Young people in Group 3

### 5.4.1 Factors associated with suicide

Records indicate that six (17 per cent) of the 36 young people experienced few factors associated with suicide, except for two young people who were recorded as having experienced suicidal ideation. None of the six young people were recorded as having adverse family experiences, were recorded as having allegedly experienced any elements of child maltreatment or were recorded as having been diagnosed with a mental illness.

However, the Office observed similarities in other characteristics of the six young people. Records indicate that, all of the six young people were highly engaged in school, with each being acknowledged for their high academic performance, either through awards for academic distinction and excellence, by being observed by teachers as bright or intelligent or being discussed for academic acceleration. Each young person was also highly involved in a sporting activity. In this report, this grouping of young people is referred to as **Group 3**.

The factors associated with suicide experienced by the young people in Group 3 are summarised in Figure 27 below.

**Figure 27: Young people in Group 3 – overview of factors associated with suicide**

<b>Suicidal ideation and behaviour</b>						
<b>Substance use</b>						
<b>Adverse family experiences</b>						
<b>Child maltreatment</b>						
<b>Mental health problems</b>						
	Young person 26	Young person 27	Young person 28	Young person 29	Young person 30	Young person 31

Source: Ombudsman Western Australia

More detail about the factors associated with suicide experienced by the young people in Group 3 is provided below.

#### **Suicidal ideation and behaviour**

Records indicate that, of the six young people in Group 3, two demonstrated suicidal ideation and/or their intention to commit suicide to a friend, family member, or health professional.

<b>Substance use</b>	Records indicate that, of the six young people in Group 3, two had consumed alcohol at some time in their lives.
<b>Child maltreatment</b>	Records indicate that none of the young people in Group 3 were recorded as having allegedly experienced any child maltreatment, that is, family and domestic violence, sexual abuse, physical abuse and neglect.
<b>Mental health problems</b>	Records indicate that none of the young people in Group 3 were diagnosed with a mental illness or self-harmed.
<b>Adverse family experiences</b>	Records indicate that none of the six young people in Group 3 had a parent with a mental illness; a parent who was imprisoned; a parent who had problematic alcohol and other drug use; or had a family member, friend or person known to them who had died by suicide.

#### **5.4.2 Demographic characteristics**

Records indicate that, of the six young people in Group 3:

- all were male;
- all were non-Aboriginal;
- their ages ranged from 15 to 17 years;
- five (83 per cent) resided in a major city; and
- four were living with two biological parents and two were living with one biological parent or living in a step family with two parents.

#### **5.4.3 Contact with State government departments and authorities, schools and registered training organisations**

Records indicate that the six young people in Group 3 had minimal contact with State government departments and authorities, as shown in Figure 28. The figure shows that the young people in Group 3 had contact with one State government department, namely WA Health, plus one government school and several registered training organisations.

None of the young people in Group 3 had contact with CAMHS, DCPFS, Department of Corrective Services, Department of Housing, Department of the Attorney General or Western Australia Police.

**Figure 28: Young people in Group 3 - overview of contact with State government departments and authorities<sup>140</sup>**

<b>WA Health</b>						
<b>RTO</b>						
<b>Gov't. schools</b>						
<b>CAMHS</b>						
<b>DCPFS</b>						
<b>DCS</b>						
<b>DOTAG</b>						
<b>Housing</b>						
<b>WAPOL</b>						
	Young person 26	Young person 27	Young person 28	Young person 29	Young person 30	Young person 31

Source: Ombudsman Western Australia

More detail about contact by the young people in Group 3 with schools and registered training organisations is provided below.

#### 5.4.3.1 Schools and registered training organisations

Records indicate that, of the six young people in Group 3:

- five were enrolled with a non-government school as their last school; and
- three had contact with a registered training organisation in their school or on the campus of the registered training organisation.

<sup>140</sup> In this figure the acronyms refer to the following: **WA Health** WA Health (not including CAMHS, which is shown separately); **DCPFS** Department for Child Protection and Family Support; **Gov't. school** government schools; **WAPOL** Western Australia Police; **Housing** Department of Housing; **CAMHS** Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service; **DCS** Department of Corrective Services; **RTO** government and non-government registered training organisations; **DOTAG** Department of the Attorney General.

## 5.5 Young people in Group 4

### 5.5.1 Factors associated with suicide

Records indicate that, like the young people in Group 3, five (14 per cent) of the 36 young people experienced few factors associated with suicide, except for four young people who demonstrated suicidal ideation and behaviour and/or engaged in substance use. None of the five young people were recorded as having experienced adverse family experiences, were recorded as having allegedly experienced any elements of child maltreatment or were recorded as having a mental health problem or having been diagnosed with a mental illness.

However, the Office observed similarities in the experiences of the young people in this group. Records indicate that all five young people in this Group demonstrated behaviours that could be considered impulsive or risk taking, including:

- substance use;
- suspension from school for physical assault, verbal abuse, harassment or intimidation of staff;
- engaging in criminal activity;
- engaging in unprotected sex on repeat occasions, with multiple partners; and
- driving a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol.

In this report, we refer to this grouping of young people as **Group 4**.

The factors associated with suicide experienced by the young people in Group 4 are summarised in Figure 29 below.

**Figure 29: Young people in Group 4 –  
overview of factors associated with suicide**

<b>Suicidal ideation and behaviour</b>					
<b>Substance use</b>					
<b>Adverse family experiences</b>					
<b>Child maltreatment</b>					
<b>Mental health problems</b>					
	Young person 32	Young person 33	Young person 34	Young person 35	Young person 36

Source: Ombudsman Western Australia

More detail about the factors associated with suicide experienced by the young people in Group 4 is provided below.

<b>Suicidal ideation and behaviour</b>	Records indicate that, of the five young people in Group 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• three demonstrated suicidal ideation;</li><li>• three communicated their intention to commit suicide to a friend, family member, or health professional; and</li><li>• two had previously attempted suicide.</li></ul>
<b>Substance use</b>	Records indicate that, of the five young people in Group 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• three consumed alcohol or illicit drugs at some time in their lives; and</li><li>• two young people consumed alcohol in the 24 hours prior to their death.</li></ul>
<b>Adverse family experiences</b>	Records indicate that, none of the five young people in Group 4 had a parent with a mental illness, a parent who was imprisoned, a parent who had problematic alcohol or other drug use, or had a family member, friend or person known to them who had died by suicide.
<b>Child maltreatment</b>	Records indicate that, none of the young people in Group 4 were recorded as having allegedly experienced any elements of any child maltreatment that is family and domestic violence, sexual abuse, physical abuse or neglect.
<b>Mental health problems</b>	Records indicate that, none of the young people in Group 4 were diagnosed with a mental illness or self-harmed.

### 5.5.2 Demographic characteristics

Records indicate that of the five young people in Group 4:

- four were male and one was female;
- three were Aboriginal;
- their ages ranged from 14 to 17 years;
- two resided in a major city and three resided in either a regional area, remote or very remote region; and
- all young people were living with either both biological parents or one biological parent.

### 5.5.3 Contact with State government departments and authorities, schools and registered training organisations

Records indicate that the five young people in Group 4 had contact with a range of State government departments and authorities, plus government schools and registered training organisations, as shown in Figure 30.

**Figure 30: Young people in Group 4, overview of contact with State government departments and authorities<sup>141</sup>**

<b>WA Health</b>					
<b>Gov't. schools</b>					
<b>DCPFS</b>					
<b>RTO</b>					
<b>WAPOL</b>					
<b>Housing</b>					
<b>DCS</b>					
<b>DOTAG</b>					
<b>CAMHS</b>					
	Young person 32	Young person 33	Young person 34	Young person 35	Young person 36

Source: Ombudsman Western Australia

As shown above, records indicate that the five young people in Group 4 had some contact with the justice system and associated agencies. Three young people had contact with Western Australia Police (either as the subject of a Western Australia Police notification to DCPFS or through being charged with an offence) or were offered support services for victims of crime by the Department of the Attorney General.

Records indicate, of the five young people in Group 4, two had been listed as registered householders with the Department of Housing in the past but were no longer listed as registered householders at the time of their death. None of the five young people in Group 4 had contact with CAMHS.

More details about contact by the young people in Group 4 with the Department for Child Protection and Family Support, schools and registered training organisations are provided below. Further details about contact by the 36 young people with other State government departments and authorities is provided in the Appendix.

<sup>141</sup> In this figure the acronyms refer to the following: **WA Health** WA Health (not including CAMHS, which is shown separately); **DCPFS** Department for Child Protection and Family Support; **Gov't. school** government schools; **WAPOL** Western Australia Police; **Housing** Department of Housing; **CAMHS** Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service; **DCS** Department of Corrective Services; **RTO** government and non-government registered training organisations; **DOTAG** Department of the Attorney General.

#### 5.5.3.1 *Department for Child Protection and Family Support (DCPFS)*

Records indicate that, of the five young people in Group 4, four were known to DCPFS for a number of reasons:

- through a parent's application for financial assistance;
- through a Western Australia Police notification;
- through contact concerning advice regarding parent-adolescent conflict or wellbeing concerns about the young person's sibling.

#### 5.5.3.2 *Schools and registered training organisations*

Records indicate that all of the five young people in Group 4 were enrolled with a government high school as their last school.

Four of the five young people in Group 4 had contact with a registered training organisation.