

Standards of Out-of- Home Care – the voices of children and young people

Western Australia (2017)

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Project Participants

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CREATE Project Team

- Lead researcher and facilitator, Katherine Browne, State Coordinator, WA CREATE Foundation
- Project support, Community Facilitators Elly Jones, Laura Florisson and Brittany Neale WA CREATE Foundation.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are those of the children and young people that were involved in this consultation. The contents of this report have been developed in consultation with a non-representative group of young people in care and are not meant to represent the in care population as a whole.



Executive Summary

CREATE Foundation consulted with 25 children and young people with a statutory care experience to inform the development of a new set of Standards of Out-of-Home Care in Western Australia.

In 2014, the Department for Child Protection and Family Support launched the Out of Home Care (OOHC) Reform, and developed an Out-of-Home Care Reform implementation plan, to facilitate a staged implementation of reform actions from January 2016 onwards. As part of the reform process, CREATE Foundation has been involved in an interagency standards working group that has been looking to redevelop the Better Care, Better Services Standards of OOHC (Department for Child Protection WA, 2007). The view of this working group has been to develop a new set of standards for OOHC, as well as a safety standard that organisations and care providers will be monitored externally against.

CREATE Foundation facilitated consultation with 25 children and young people with a care experience to hear their thoughts and views on what needs to be included in the development of new Standards on out-of-home care. This included gaining feedback from children and young people on a set of draft standards, hearing from them about what each of the draft standards meant on a practical and day-to-day basis for children and young people, and hearing their thoughts on what needed to be included as the supporting standards that will be measured for OOHC.

The children and young people involved identified a range of needs children and young people in care have, including the need to belong, feel loved and supported, feel safe, secure and stable, and connected to their family, friends, community, culture and religion. Children and young people also spoke of the importance of children and young people being involved in decision making, having solid plans in place to support their current needs and future goals, and have opportunities to develop a strong sense of identity. Children and young people also spoke about the other people in their lives that played a role in ensuring that their needs were met in care, and how they thought the new Standards could be measured.



About CREATE Foundation

CREATE Foundation is a systems advocacy organisation that works with children and young people who are in, or have left, the child protection system, to empower them to share their experiences in order to change the service system to improve services and outcomes.

CREATE Foundation's mission is to create a better life for children and young people in care. CREATE believes that all children and young people with a care experience should have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

CREATE is a systems advocacy organisation that works to:

- **Connect** children and young people with each other, CREATE and their community;
- **Empower** children and young people to build self-confidence, self-esteem and skills that enable them to have a voice and be heard; and
- **Change** the care system, in consultation with children and young people, through advocacy to improve policies, practices and services and increase community awareness.

We achieve our mission by facilitating a variety of programs and services for children and young people in care and developing policy and research to advocate for a better care system.

Introduction and background

CREATE believes listening to the voices of children and young people is crucial to any discussion about the child protection system; children and young people with an experience of OOHC possess the strongest insights regarding how the system works and where it might be improved. Hearing their experiences of life from within the OOHC system provides rare and valuable opportunities for workers, policy makers and decision makers within the child protection sector.

As at 30 June 2015, there were 3,954 children in out-of-home-care in Western Australia (WA) and over 50 percent of these children were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders (AIHW, 2016). In 2014, the Department established an OOHC Reform Team to develop and deliver an OOHC Reform Plan to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the OOHC system. The Department for Child Protection and Family Support released the *Out-Of-Home Care: Strategic Directions in Western Australia, 2015 – 2020 Discussion Paper* for public comment, outlining the strategic directions of the Department and key reform areas (Department for Child Protection and Family Support, 2014). CREATE coordinated a response to this, outlining a number of key areas of consideration for children and young people in care in Western Australia (CREATE Foundation, 2015). In April 2015, the Department further released the *Response to Out-of-Home Care Strategic Directions in Western Australia 2015–2020 Discussion Paper*. This report outlined the five strategic directions adopted by the Department to underpin the reform based on public feedback including: an out of home care system that is driven by the needs of the child; an out-of-home care system that values and promotes stability and certainty for children; a responsive and sustainable out-of-home care system with capacity; an out-of-home care sector that is accountable; and an out-of-home care sector that is consistent.

Currently, an OOHC reform implementation plan is in place to facilitate a staged implementation from January 2016 onwards. As part of the reform process, CREATE has been involved with a Working Group which has sought to redevelop and rewrite the Standards of OOHC for Western Australia. This has involved looking at the existing standards, and developing a more comprehensive set of Standards to be monitored. Given that the Standards of OOHC affect the care and support that

children and young people may receive, it is vital that their voices, views and experiences are heard in the consideration or development of the new Standards. Based on discussions with the Department and CREATE, this project sought to consult with children and young people in OOHC regarding their views on what should be included in the development of the new set of Standards of OOHC.

The consultation has provided an opportunity for children and young people with experience of OOHC to speak about what they think that children and young people need and should receive while they are in care. The information collected through the consultation has been provided to the Standards Working Group, and this report summarises the findings and provides further context from the consultations undertaken with 25 children and young people.

Method

CREATE spoke with 25 children and young people with a care experience aged between 7 and 25 years of age seeking their views on what they thought children and young people needed in OOHC. Table 1 shows the gender and cultural background of participants.

Table 1

Consultation Participants by Cultural Grouping & Sex

TOTAL Participants	Indigenous	Anglo Australian	Other	Total
Female	9	5	-	14
Male	4	7	-	11
Total	13	12	-	25

Table 2

Consultation Participants by Age

TOTAL Participants	7- 9 years old	10 - 13 years old	14 – 17 years old	18 + years old	Total
	3	6	6	10	25

The consultation was promoted through CREATE WA’s network of key stakeholders, OOHC agencies, carers, clubCREATE member database, CREATE WA’s Facebook page, and through direct phone contact. Participants were invited to take part in individual interviews, either over the phone or face to face. In order to engage a diverse range of children and young people, CREATE made direct phone contact with clubCREATE members who were Aboriginal, living regionally or in kinship care to promote the interview opportunity.

Table 3***Consultation Participants by Care Type***

Care Type	Foster	Kinship	Residential Care	Independent/Semi-independent living	Returned to Birth Family	Other	TOTAL
Participants	6	8	2	7	1	1	25

Table 4***Consultation Participants by Location***

Location	Metropolitan	Regional
Participants	18	7

To capture the views of children and young people in this consultation, CREATE asked participants about their thoughts on what children and young people wanted and needed in out-of-home care. CREATE started each interview by asking children and young people generally what they thought should be included in the Standards of OOHC, and what children and young people needed in care. This information has been collated and included below in the Results section, *General Needs of Children and Young People in Care*. CREATE then gave each participant the opportunity to provide more detailed responses to the draft standards on out-of-home care, by discussing a list of draft standards, and seeing which standards the participants wanted to speak about. Participants were asked what the specific draft standard meant for children and young people in regards to their day-to-day care, as well as their thoughts on how these may be measured or monitored. These draft standards are also discussed in the Discussion section against the title of each draft standard.

Responses were collated and analysed by theme or topic in each standard, which are reflected in the body of the report. The quotes in this document have been taken directly from the voices of young people with a care experience. In order to protect their identities we have used the gender and age of the children and young people who have provided CREATE with their thoughts and opinions.



Discussion

When young people were asked about what young people want and need in out of home care they spoke about the need for love and care, to feel like part of a family and to feel normal. Young people were then given the opportunity to speak in detail about the draft standards of interest to them and to provide feedback. Participants spoke about the specific draft standards and what this would look like in terms of day-to-day care, and how these standards might be measured or monitored.

When young people spoke about what helps young people feel safe, they raised the following things:

- A safe physical environment to live in.
- Protective carers who they trust.
- Support networks outside of their placement.
- Support in transition times.
- Good communication and follow-up of issues.

Young people were asked about security and stability for young people in care. Young people spoke about the importance of the following things:

- Good support and adequate notice before placement change.
- More monitoring of placements and support for placements.
- Knowing what the plan is for their care.
- Consistency where possible with schools, communities, sports and hobbies.
- Consistent Case Workers in regular contact and good handovers when Case Workers have to leave.
- Adequate emotional support.

Young people were asked about ways they can be involved in decision-making. They spoke about the importance of the following things:

- Opportunities to share views and opinions
- Involvement in decision making
- Being involved and prepared for care planning forums.
- Adults listening to them.

Aboriginal young people were asked about what makes them feel connected to family, community and culture. They spoke about the following things:

- Contact with family, both immediate and extended.
- Knowledge and cultural education.
- Being informed about country and being able to go to country.
- Having support from the adults in their lives.

Young people were asked about how planning should happen so young people get the support they need. They provided the following feedback:

- Clear plans being established.
- Good monitoring and review of plans.

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- Support to participate in planning.
 - Accountability & oversight of planning.

Children and young people were asked about how they should be prepared and supported when they move from out of home care and into their adulthood. They spoke about the following things:

- Support to discuss the future and their options & create thorough leaving care plans.
- The importance of young people being informed about their rights, and the supports and entitlements available to them.
- Good networks & emotional support.
- Adequate life skills preparation for independence.

Children and young people were asked about how they can be supported to develop a strong sense of who they are, and how they can be kept connected to their family, friends, culture, and communities. They spoke about the following things:

- Support to stay connected with friends and family
- Being informed about family stories and history.
- Staying connected to culture through attending family events and being involved cultural interests.
- Support for religious connection.
- Being able to keep up hobbies and having adults who show an interest in their hobbies.

Children and young people were asked what helps them feel they have a right to have a voice about things they are worried about, and that their worries will be followed up. They spoke about the following things:

- Being supported and given opportunities to speak up.
- Frequent contact and strong relationships with Case Worker.
- The importance of young people knowing their rights.
- Timely investigation and follow up of concerns.

Young people were asked how the people that work with young people should be trained, assessed and approved to work with children and young people. They spoke about the following things:

- Good initial assessment.
- On and off the job training.
- Adequate supervision.
- The importance of staff having a good understanding of the impact of trauma.

Children and young people were asked what helps them feel that the organisations that are supporting children are solid and professional and put the child first. They spoke about the following things:

- Good systems and processes that young people understand.
- Calm, strengths-based approaches to young people.
- Good organisation and monitoring.



Needs of children and young people in care

Children and young people participating in the consultation identified a broad range of things that children and young people need and want while they are in care.

The same as children not in care, to be cared for, to be loved, to have a stable home environment and life, to be protected not just physically but emotionally and mentally as well, to be fed. (25 year old female)

Children and young people spoke about needing to feel a part of a family, and having strong relationships with solid and loving carers who care about them. Participants spoke about the importance of children and young people in care feeling loved, wanted and important. Children and young people also spoke about the importance of their basic needs being met while they were in care, including having the essentials of food, a clean home to live in, and a bed.

Food, shelter, all the essentials, someone to love them, someone to be there when they are sad. (13 year old male)

Children and young people also spoke about the importance of being treated like other children and young people, feeling normal, and having the same opportunities as their peers. This included having opportunities in their lives, such as being connected with friends, taking part in activities, sporting groups or other hobbies.

Treated like their peers at school. Being able to do afterschool activities and go on excursions etc. (18 year old female)

Stability was identified as an important thing that children and young people need in care. This included having a stable placement, home environment, and stable carers.

Being stable- not going from one place to another. (24 year old female)

Being safe was identified as being important thing for children and young people in care, including having a safe environment to live in, being protected from harm, feeling and knowing your safe, having privacy and being surrounded by safe and familiar people.

Safety and security and knowing they are safe in their own home, and that they have support if something happens. (19 year old male, Aboriginal)

Participants identified health as a need for children and young people in care, and the importance of children and young people being healthy, and having their health needs support. This included both physical, medical and mental health needs.

Maybe having medical check-ups regularly. Keeping an eye on medical issues....keeping them healthy. (19 year old male, Aboriginal)

Children and young people spoke about the importance of having the support that they need to do well in life. They identified the importance of support for their education, their emotions, mental health support (such as counselling), and support for their disabilities.

Support with education, mental health, disabilities. (18 year old female)

Children and young people also spoke about the importance of support networks so that they have someone to talk to, have someone to believe in them and encourage them, and have adults that they can trust and that they could look up to. They needed to be able to communicate and connect with



other people in their lives. Participants spoke about this also including having other organisations to support them, as well as mentoring.

Knowing someone to look up to. Someone they can follow. Like a mentor. Someone they can follow and trust. (19 year old male, Aboriginal)

Participants also spoke about the importance of being supported over time to become independent, and to have the skills and knowledge that they need for independent living.

Need money, help finding jobs – someone to help them find a job. (16 year old male)

Children and young people spoke about the importance of knowing, understanding and feeling connected to their culture in care.

Children and young people spoke about the importance of children and young people in care having a caseworker that they know, and that they have a relationship with.

They need a nice caseworker. (13 year old male)

It was identified that contact and connection to family is important for children and young people in care, and that children and young people should know and have contact or visits with their family.

Having more contact with their family members and knowing their culture and getting to know other family members in their extended family. (15 year old male, Aboriginal)

Children and young people spoke about the importance of feeling heard and listened to, being involved in decision-making, and being given a level of choice about what is happening in their lives and what they want for their lives and futures.

To be heard and listened to, for their voice to be the main priority. (25 year old female)

Children and young people spoke about the importance of understanding why they are in care, and knowing that it isn't their fault that they are in care.

I think it's important that they know it's not their fault, that they can succeed in whatever they choose to do with their life. (25 year old female)

The children and young people who took part in the consultation identified a wide range of people who were responsible for ensuring that children and young people received what they needed in care, and these people were carers, the Department, agencies, teachers, and other significant adults in their lives.

Safety for children and young people in care

There were a range of factors that children and young people felt were important to include in the Standards to ensure that children and young people felt safe in care that are outlined below

Children and young people spoke about the importance of having a safe environment to live in while they were in care, and that there needs to be physical safety for children and young people. They spoke about the importance of children and young people not being exposed to violence, substance use or people who are unsafe in their home. A number of other factors were spoken shared about what created a safe environment, including ensuring that there was privacy and lockable doors for children and young people, having emergency plans in the house (e.g. fire evacuation plans), a space



where you can calm down if you need, as well as having things like curfews. Some participants spoke specifically about the need to ensure that children and young people are protected and safe from other children and young people in the placement. Participants believed that the safety of the placement needed to be monitored by regular home visits to the placement and checking who visits the home to make sure that they are safe to be there.

[The thing that helps me feel safe in care is] not being around violent people and alcoholics, being with safe people. (16 year old male)

Participants thought that the Standards should include that children and young people are placed with good carers who are protective, safe, and care for them, and whom they can trust. This meant carers who could provide good supervision for them, welcome them, and be there for them, and who were a good match for the child or young person. Children and young people thought that the assessment of carers needed to make sure that the carers or other adults interacted with children and young people safely, and with clear boundaries, and that carers had the skills to be able to appropriately respond and react to children and young people. Participants believed that there needed to be good assessment of carers and placements before placing a child or young person there, and that there needed to be documented evidence that a child or young person could see that the person had been approved as a carer. Children and young people also wanted to feel that they were able to protect themselves, and stand up for themselves.

Caseworkers need to assess the placement....see how [the carers] will react if someone, like a kid in the Department, loses their temper and starts to be aggressive. How they would act. Instead of that happening and us getting hit or something. (15 year old male, Aboriginal)

When I was in care, I didn't really believe that [my carers] were safe people. I felt that they were wrong people for me. So I asked the lady who I was staying with to produce some reports to show me that I am in a safe environment. And she did it. It helped me feel safe. (24 year old female)

Children and young people also thought that it was important to have support networks, spaces and time outside of their placement to feel safe. This included having good relationships with caseworkers to be able to express your feelings and concerns in care, having friends and networks, being able to attend school, having a constant adult in your life, and being able to leave your placement to go on things like respite. It also included having someone who was unbiased and independent outside the placement that they could talk to (e.g. a counsellor). Children and young people stated that they thought it was really important that adults were communicating and speaking with children and young people to see if they felt safe or not, and that children and young people were listened to, taken seriously and supported if they felt unsafe.

Having someone to talk to [helps us feel safe]. One constant adult. Someone they know that they can talk to so they don't have to repeat their story over and over again. (18 year old female)

Participants in the consultation also thought that it was important that if a child or young person expressed that they were unsafe, that this would be properly investigated, and plans put in place to keep children and young people safe while it was looked into. Participants believed that adults, particularly carers and the Department, held a responsibility to make sure children and young people were safe in their placements, and that the children or young people were supported to have their safety plans developed and adhered to. Some children and young people also spoke about the need to be supported to transition into placements to feel safe in new placements and have extra support around this period.

I reckon if [kids] say something is going on and they're getting abused, it needs to be investigated and they need to be somewhere else temporarily while they find out. If they



don't do that, they're always going to feel unsafe, feel like they have no one to turn to. (22 year old female)

Do a safety plan with every young person who comes into care. There's lots of care plans, but no safety plans, like what do I do if I'm not feeling safe? Like steps to do, so it doesn't always reach crisis point. (18 year old female)

Children and young people believed that this Standard would be monitored by asking children and young people if they felt safe, having regular contact with them, conduct home visits and by assessing the child or young person's behaviours and actions.

Regular visits to the house – especially a surprise as then you can actually see what the carer is like, rather than the show you might see. A surprise visit can show the true side of someone sometimes. (19 year old female)

Security and stability for children and young people in care

Stability, consistency and security is an important Standard for children and young people in care. The participants spoke about a number of things that supported a sense of stability, security and consistency in care, which should be included in the standards.

That's what stability is - being in a place long enough to let our guard down and be comfortable. (19 year old male)

Children and young people who took part spoke to the importance of experiencing stability in their placement and carers, and that they had a stable environment and home to live in. Participants believed that stability was promoted when siblings were placed together, or where children and young people could be placed with their family, friends, or people known to them. They called for more support to enable children and young people to remain in long-term placements if they were going to be in long-term care, and that they were only reunified where it was certain that this was going to be long term.

Where a placement change was required, children and young people thought that they needed to be given adequate notice and planning to support their transitioning between placements, and a clear explanation on why the placement change was required. Children and young people participating in the consultation believed that there could be better monitoring of placements to ensure that there was support provided for it to stay stable, as well as better monitoring of the numbers of placements that children and young people have experienced.

I never knew what was going to happen, so I never felt secure. (19 year old female)

Children and young people who participated in the consultation believed that stability and security is achieved by ensuring that children and young people know the plans for their lives, and what is going to happen – both in the small day to day and in the future. This included having an understanding about the length of their placements, any plans for reunification, family contact, and how their needs will be met in care.

Caseworkers need to be honest – don't say you are going home if you are not going to. They kept telling me I would go home in 3 months, but I never got to go. I couldn't get comfortable and relax in my placement because I kept thinking I would go home but then I didn't build a relationship with my carer. Unless decisions are kept in stone they shouldn't be telling a child they are going home because it really messes you up. (25 year old female)

Participants in the consultation thought that it is important to keep as much as consistency for children and young people while they were in care, for example, keeping children and young people



in the same school and education, and keeping children and young people within their communities. Participants also thought it was important to support them to continue in their interests, hobbies, and sporting or community groups, as they felt that often these things would remain stable even if placements might change.

Keep as much of their old life as they can. Try and keep, like sports, to keep doing that sport, like church, keep going to that church. Don't change everything. (18 year old female)

It is important that children and young people had consistent people supporting them, who would be there for them and who were looking out for them. Children and young people wanted to have people in their lives who loved them, who reassured them, and showed them belief and encouragement. This included having carers who responded to them in a positive and predicate way, as well as having consistent caseworkers who they saw regularly. Children and young people also wanted to see that where this is due to be a change in caseworker or placement, that there is adequate handover and transition between workers and carers, and that children and young people have contact with new workers or carers.

Having someone that you know that you can talk to [helps you feel stable and secure]. Not a revolving door of people. (18 year old female)

We get different caseworkers all the time, they always change. It's (kind of) difficult when they change....it feels a bit up and down. (10 year old female, Aboriginal)

Children and young people also spoke about the importance of feeling emotionally stable in care. This came from giving children and young people strategies to manage their trauma and emotions, providing counselling, and carers and adults demonstrating an understanding about the child or young person's emotional wellbeing.

[They need someone to be] letting them know it is ok – you come from a traumatic experience. For myself, especially in my early teens, I had a lot of emotions and didn't know how to deal with them or talk to someone. Counselling wasn't suggested or implemented. Having someone outside of the home to talk to and not judge, and give you tactics or ideas on how to deal with things would have helped me feel more stable. (25 year old female)

Children and young people thought that this Standard could be monitored by asking children and young people if they felt stable and secure in care, by ensuring that plans were in place for children and young people, and by collecting data and reporting information to see the numbers of placement changes that a child or young person has experienced.

Ask us if we feel that way. (12 year old male)

Being involved in decision making

Children and young people who participated in the consultation spoke about the importance of the Standard for children and young people sharing their views and opinions, and being active participants in decision-making happening in their lives.

I don't feel involved. It feels like someone is going behind your back and making plans without you. But it's about you, so I think you should really have a say about what happens. (15 year old male, Aboriginal)



Children and young people identified a range of different types of decisions in which they wanted to be involved, including contact with family, their future, education, leaving care, moving placements, how funding is used, socialising with friends, and any other plan that affects their lives. To be involved in decision-making, children and young people thought it was important that there was transparent communication, that children and young people knew that their voice was important, and that others took the time to understand their perspective.

Children and young people spoke about the importance of having a say and having opportunities to talk about their views and opinions on what is happening in their lives both now and in the future.

I didn't even know that I was allowed to be (involved) actually. Which I think is really unfair, my voice did not matter and I was always too young to have a say. There were a lot of decisions I wanted to have a say in, and was unhappy about and they never asked me they just took the decision of someone else. (25 year old female)

Children and young people spoke about the role that care planning played in being able to be involved in decisions being made about their lives. Participants spoke about the importance of not just being involved in care plan meetings, but being able to feel prepared for the meetings by knowing what will be discussed and said; and being given options around how they would like to be involved in the meeting. They wanted meetings that worked around the child or young person's needs; and having space in the meetings to be able to share their voices and opinions. Children and young people wanted to have copies of the care plans after they were written up, and "sign off" on final decisions that had been made.

I wasn't [involved] until the age of 16. I was just asked to tag along to leaving care plans, and it wasn't until I was 17 that I realised through one of my carers how important this was. That's when I finally started wanting to give my voice because I realised I need to say what I wanted. (19 year old male)

Children and young people spoke about the role that other adults played in ensuring that children and young people are able to be involved in decision making. This included caseworkers building a relationship with a child or young person to support their participation, carers and caseworkers ensuring that children and young people have a chance to be involved, and adults listening to what children and young people have to say and what they want.

[Carers] have to ask them if they want a say or anything. Give them the space and opportunity to give their point and give them the opportunity to talk. (19 year old female, Aboriginal)

Give us every opportunity possible to be involved. If something is happening about us just tell us – hey do you want to come along? (19 year old male)

Children and young people believed that the Department should be monitoring this Standard by asking children and young people if they feel involved in decision-making and requiring proof on the care plans that a child or young person was involved in its development.

Have some sort of proof [that a child was involved] – have the child sign when they have the meeting or something. So there is proof that the child was there. Or if they do a recording of the meeting – they should be doing that. (22 year old female)



Aboriginal children and young people are supported to keep connected to family, community and culture

Aboriginal children and young people who participated in the consultation identified a range of different things to be included in the Standards that supported them to feel connected to their family, community and culture.

[If I was connected to my culture] I would be seeing family and being taught about my culture. I would have a family tree. I want to be able to contact them. (19 year old male, Aboriginal)

Participants felt that connection to family was achieved by supporting children and young people to know their family and siblings, their family background and history, where they are from, who is in their extended family, and by having contact and connection with them. This included having contact with them via visits, phone calls or by seeing photos of them.

... wherever your family is, is where your culture is, and wherever your culture is, is where your heart goes. (15 year old male, Aboriginal)

I don't really get connected with my family that much. And I'd like to. It would help to know a bit more about them, whereabouts they were, what tribes they were in. If I have other siblings – I know I have a sister and a brother but I have no idea apart from that? I live with my sister and see my brother quite a lot. (14 year old female, Aboriginal)

Children and young people also spoke about the importance of knowing and having a relationship with their family from a younger age to support that connection to develop over time, as without this, they may grow up to find their older family members have passed away and that knowledge is lost.

[You feel connected to your family by] knowing who your family are and where you fit in. Not being left out and not being told too late about it. (19 year old male, Aboriginal)

The Aboriginal children and young people who took part in this consultation spoke about them being connected to their community by growing up with it, and being connected through their family and events that happen in community.

I feel a little connected to the community, and am slowly trying to figure out some stuff but I'm getting there. [The things that help me connect with my community are] family and going to Aboriginal events. (15 year old male, Aboriginal)

The participants spoke about the importance of connecting to their culture by being educated about their culture by family, other Aboriginal people such as elders, or through cultural services, and having the opportunity to learn through and ask questions from others. This included knowing their family and their own place in it. Children and young people also saw other opportunities to learn about their culture not only through their family and other Aboriginal people, but also through events, by learning their language, through activities, books, stories and television. Children and young people also spoke about the importance of gaining that cultural knowledge by experiencing Aboriginal food, histories, traditions, language, music, art, stories, traditional clothing and dress, as well as by gaining knowledge about the land, plants and animals.

I know some songs, words, cooking, like kangaroo stew. My Aboriginal officer at school and my Nan teach me things. We watched the dreaming time at school and went to a place in



Fremantle to learn about how to skin animals...and I've watched my Nanna paint. (10 year old female, Aboriginal)

Nannie and Pops took us to a few of the Aboriginal activities – like where we get to eat bush tucker and try bush tomato. We have an uncle who lives in Rockingham and he is Aboriginal and he talks to us about it. He says it's good to be an Aboriginal and we're the first people on the land. (10 year old female, Aboriginal)

Children and young people spoke about experiencing a connection to their country by knowing where it is, and being supported to go there and connect with the land.

[The thing that connects me to country is] *going back home and connecting with the land. (15 year old male, Aboriginal)*

Children and young people saw a range of adults being involved in supporting them to develop the connections to the family and culture over time. This included caseworkers undertaking the research to find out about the child's family and culture, and carers and caseworkers supporting children and young people to go to cultural events, to visit country, and connect in with their family, with elders or the Aboriginal community.

[The thing that helps you feel connected is] *asking Aboriginal elders – asking questions about the culture and where do we come from....and pretty much they're the only ones who can tell you. (15 year old male, Aboriginal)*

Caseworkers actually needs to be finding out and doing some research about your family. Your carer can take you to the place that you come from. (14 year old female, Aboriginal)

Children and young people also spoke about the importance of being supported to understand and connect with family they've never connected with before (e.g. through counselling or cultural services).

I feel like I need some counselling. I want to find my family and what I have missed out on. What new family I have that I don't know about. (19 year old male, Aboriginal)

Children and young people stated that this Standard could be monitored by ensuring that Aboriginal children and young people are asked about how they feel connected to their family, culture, community and country, as well as ensuring that there are extensive family trees for all children and young people.

You should ask them about it. (10 year old female, Aboriginal)

Planning needs to happen to make sure that a child or young person gets the support that they need

There were a range of things that children and young people thought needed to be included in the Standards to ensure that there is good planning in place to ensure that children and young people get the support that they need in care.

Children and young people wanted to see planning and support in a variety of areas, including for their schooling and education, health needs, employment, transitions between placements,



developing their independence, their mental health needs, cultural needs, and to support children and young people's understanding of why they are in care.

I've had quite a lot of support from carers and teachers and stuff. They've helped me with getting a traineeship through the school....helping with general work and tutoring. For my health – not entirely. (16 year old male)

I get the help I need for things like understanding my culture, and with school, like English and Maths....I also want help understanding why I'm in care. (10 year old female, Aboriginal)

Participants spoke about the importance of there being clear plans in place to reflect what is happening for a child or young person currently as well as future goals and needs of a child or young person. This meant regular catch-ups to ensure that plans are being implemented, and actions being taken to ensure that goals are being achieved.

[There needs to be] clear outlines of what they want done for the future so everyone is aware. Putting everything down on paper is a good way, as it is documented. Really good planning involves writing everything down and all parties to have a copy of it. There needs to be quite a few meetings and talks and things like that. (18 year old female)

Participants also spoke here about the importance of workers supporting the participation of children and young people in planning and hearing their voices and wishes, which has been discussed in a previous section.

[You need to know] that your voice is actually heard and that there are steps being taken for your thoughts to become reality. (19 year old male, Aboriginal)

Children and young people thought that this Standard could be monitored by ensuring that there were good processes in place to increase accountability of quality plans being developed and followed through on (e.g. by having District Directors sign off of care plans and actions progressed). Children and young people also thought it could be monitored to ensure that plans are updated when circumstances change and that the plans have involved the child or young person.

Make sure that care plans happen if a child or young person changes placements or circumstances. My personal experience says this isn't happening. And you need to make sure that a TL or DD signs off on it. (18 year old female)

Children and young people develop a strong sense of who they are by being able to keep connected to their family, friends, culture, and communities

In this Standard, children and young people spoke about the importance of developing a strong sense of identity through their connection to their family, friends, country of origin and culture, and to their communities and interests.

It was important for children and young people to feel connected to family, and to be able to connect with their siblings or other people in their family who they wanted to connect in with. Children and young people wanted to be supported to develop these connections and have quality time with their family, through either visits, phone calls, or other ways. Connection to family was also important for children and young people to know the stories and history of their family, and understand what they were like in their early life through other adults that knew them then.



Knowing your family is pretty important. Immediate and extended. And knowing where you come from. (16 year old male)

Contact with siblings should be offered. It can't always happen – trying to find the happy medium if one sibling doesn't want to see their younger sibling....and support them through that. One of my older brothers committed suicide while I was in care, I feel that [chance at a relationship] was taken from me. (25 year old female)

Children and young people spoke about the importance of being connected to people and groups who knew them or that they were involved with prior to coming into care, for example, friends, family members, community groups and activities.

My school knew me before I was in care and them being there for me while I was in care was really good because they never treated me like I was any different just that I was this person who was now also in care. (20 year old male, Italian-Aboriginal)

It was important for children and young people to be able to have contact with their friends, and be supported to join them or connect with them through shared interests or hobbies. Children and young people wanted to be supported to maintain old friendships and consistency of friendships, as well as be supported to make new friends.

I keep connected to my friends by hanging out with them on the weekends, and by playing sports and stuff. (16 year old male)

Participants thought that it was important for children and young people not be defined by being in care, and that they have identity outside of being a child or young person in care. This included being able to pursue the interests or hobbies that they enjoy.

Children and young people wanted to develop their connection to their culture by having the chance to learn about their culture through family events, and by knowing their family background. Some children and young people also spoke about the importance of having opportunities to pursue cultural interests such as drama, theatre etc. Connection to country of origin was also important, and having knowledge and exposure to the traditions, history and celebrations of your family and culture.

Nah I wouldn't have any idea about my culture. I know I am Scottish but I know nothing about it. (25 year old female)

Family events are really important for helping children and YP to stay connected to family and culture. Just because you aren't with your parents doesn't mean you can't see your family. Carers should become friends with the wider family so that everyone is working together. (25 year old female)

Participants spoke about their connection to their community being developed by being part of sporting groups or hobbies, and by being encouraged and supported to remain involved and connected with the groups that they have been involved with in the past. Children and young people also spoke about connection to their community being supported by having space to connect in with other children and young people, either through youth centres or through their schooling.

Theatre stuff became a bit of community and people helped me get to rehearsals and be part of the community I am part of now. (20 year old male, Italian-Aboriginal)

I used to go to a place in Kwinana called Youth zone, and I made lots of friends there. It was a good place to go if you were having difficulties at home. (19 year old female)



Children and young people also spoke about the importance of connection to their religion, including being able to identify with the religion of their carers, and being supported to stay connected to the same church or religious communities.

I'm in a Christian family and that has a strong impact on me. The values and beliefs filters through to all the kids and that's a positive thing. (16 year old male)

Children and young people saw that others play an important role in supporting them to keep connected to their family, friends, culture, communities, culture and religion. Participants believed that adults, including carers and caseworkers needed to understand what was important to children and young people, support them to get involved and show interest in what they do. Participants also thought that carers and caseworkers played an important role in encouraging and supporting children and young people to stay connected to their family, community, and culture, by helping children and young people to explore or have contact with family, or by having family members take the child or young person to community, family or cultural events.

Talk to them, join in with activities, if they want to start soccer, help them start soccer, take them to training, and join in with what they are doing. (20 year old male, Italian-Aboriginal)

Participants thought that this Standard would be monitored by speaking to children and young people and asking them about whether they have a strong sense of identity and feel connected.

Children and young people are well prepared and given good support when they move from out of home care and into their adulthood

Participants in the consultation identified a range of things to include in the Standards to ensure that children and young people were prepared and supported as they transitioned from care and into independence.

It is important for young people to know what the future holds and not being unsure. Leaving care is usually around the time of young people leaving school, and when they're turning 18 they need to be aware of what that holds, like voting, photo ID, setting people up with ambulance cover and health insurance. (18 year old female)

Children and young people spoke to the importance of workers and carers supporting children and young people to talk about their future, and ensure they are aware of their options. Participants believed that carers and workers played a role in ensuring young people are aware of their rights, and what should be included in their leaving care plan, including the entitlements and supports available to them.

[It's important for workers and carers to] try and help them get up to the point to figure it out, trying to help them see what they can do, what their options are. (22 year old female)

Participants believed it was vital to have good plans in place to identify the young person's future needs and goals, the options available to them, supports and services they need to achieve them, and any funding or other supports needed to achieve them. These plans needed to cover a range of different needs, including, but not limited to, having secure and supported accommodation, having independent living skills, managing finances, support networks for the young person, having identification documents, how the young person would navigate family contact, and any plans around future study, education and employment. The plans need to help young people not just in their immediate future, but also up to the age of 25.



I felt prepared and supported but I don't think I was. I was given a false sense of support. After six months of being out of care I became homeless. (20 year old male, Italian-Aboriginal)

I had [a leaving care plan] but it was a couple of months from 18 when that happened and freaking out about going into the big bad world and not thinking about what I needed. I was thinking about the now and not what I would need at 22, 23, 25 and stuff. If it wasn't for my youth worker asking for what I did need I wouldn't have had anything, she was the one asking for things that I wouldn't have even known I needed. (25 year old female)

Children and young people spoke about the importance of good planning and supports being in place to manage any transitions between placements or from being in care to living independently. Participants believed that carers, caseworkers, families, and friends all played a role in supporting a young person leaving care to develop their skills, achieve their goals, learn independent living skills, and transition to independence. This included young people having mentors and a strong support network outside of the Department and their placement (e.g. family, friends, leaving care services, other organisations), and having people who could check in and provide support to young people after the age of 18. Children and young people also spoke about having emotional support from carers, family and other workers to help them with the goals and needs.

Mainly you just need to know you are not alone and that there were people that could help you. I still have contact with my old caseworker. It helps to know you are doing the right thing and move on in life and reach more independence. (19 year old male, Aboriginal)

Children and young people also spoke about the importance of a slow transition to independence, giving time for young people to develop their independent living skills, prepare for living independently, and ensuring that all of the logistics of leaving care are organised prior to transitioning to independence.

We need to be slowly adjusting to leaving care. We need that because you're leaving everything behind that you've grown up with your whole life. You don't know how it will work out all in society. It's a chance to train us so that when we do move we'll be ready. (15 year old male, Aboriginal)

Participants believed that this Standard could be monitored by asking young people whether they have received the planning and support they need to transition from care into adulthood; have stronger mechanisms to ensure that thorough and quality planning is occurring for each young person; as well as ensuring that carers have the competencies to support young people to develop independent living skills while they are in care.

If things like this were kept documented – e.g. a checklist – of how to pay bills, how to vote – those checklists they can do the bare minimum on them. If they did have a checklist and they were ticking off on that checklist, I think it would work. (18 year old female)

Children and young people need to know that they have a right to have a voice about things they're worried about, and that their worries will get followed up

Children and young people identified a range of factors that should be included in the Standards to ensure that children and young people can raise their concerns, and have their worries or concerns followed up. This topic was explored in further detail through the Speaking Out About Raising



Concerns in Care Report (Commissioner for Children and Young People, 2016) and further information can be found in this report.

Children and young people spoke about the importance of feeling listened to and heard when they expressed concerns or worries about things happening in their lives. Children and young people wanted support from others to be able to speak up, and believed that more frequent contact and strong relationships between children and young people and their caseworkers helps children and young people to speak up.

You need to be able to have a voice. Seeing my counsellor made me feel like I had a voice. (13 year old male)

If they have a caseworker then the caseworker can organise to talk with them more often and they can have more contact with people when they need help. (14 year old female, Aboriginal)

Children and young people also spoke about the importance of children and young people knowing their right to speak up, and the different ways that they could do this, including other people they can go to if they are not feeling heard. Where children and young people have spoken up, participants believed it was really important that the concerns were investigated properly, that there was support for the child or young person, their concerns were responded to in a timely way, and that any actions were followed through on.

[I feel heard] if I voice a complaint about something in my life and something gets done about it. They need to have someone there who you can complain to if your worry is not heard. (19 year old male)

Children and young people spoke about the importance of carers and workers asking children and young people about any concerns or worries they have in care, and ensuring that children and young people know their rights and that they can speak up.

Make sure the kid has one of those know your rights packs – that can show you how you can have a voice... educate them on their rights. (19 year old male)

Participants believed that the best way to monitor this Standard was by asking children and young people whether they knew their right to speak up, as well as felt that they could speak up about their worries and that they would be followed up.

Ask if there is anything we are concerned about or worried about. (19 year old male)

Children and young people are cared for and supported by people who have gone through good training and assessment and have been approved to work with children and young people.

In this Standard, participants in the consultation identified a variety of things that would ensure that carers and workers supporting children and young people provide quality care and support, and had good training and assessment.



Participants believed that carers and caseworkers needed to have good training and supervision, and that they had undergone training to better understand the needs and experiences of children and young people in care, including trauma, mental health, or any other specific issues relating to the child that they are caring for. Participants believed that there needed to be a good assessment, that they had passed the necessary checks, and that they are supported through training and induction, including by having buddy caseworkers, or mentors that they can shadow, or by carers “transitioning” into caring by providing respite first. Ongoing supervision and assessment was needed to address any issues relating to the carer, and make sure that they had the support and information they needed to provide quality care.

Making sure the carers know about helplines and where to access help, give them support so they don't feel alone. Also, be able to nip [any issues] in the bud with carers. (25 year old female)

Children and young people spoke about the importance of carers been able to understand the impact of trauma on a child or young person's development and behaviour, and that they were able to communicate effectively with children and young people and respond or adapt their own communication to appropriately respond to the child or young person.

The participants believed that this Standard would be measured by asking the child or young person about whether they are receiving a high quality and appropriate care.

Organisations that support children and young people need to be solid and professional and always put the child first

Children and young people identified a range of factors to include with this Standard on ensuring organisations are professional, child-centred and have good systems and structures in place.

Children and young people thought it was important that the organisation had clear systems and processes in place to provide support to children and young people, and that children and young people understand these. This included children and young people having a clear understanding about what the organisation does, and that they connect children and young people with the support that they require.

They have an office and a system for working with..... Rather than an ad hoc system where you can chat to whoever whenever you call. (20 year old male, Italian-Aboriginal)

It's good if they tell you what the company does and explain themselves well. (19 year old male, Aboriginal)

Children and young people also spoke about the importance of organisations having clear boundaries with children and young people, and being professional, calm and non-judgemental in their work. This also included having regular and stable caseworkers who had regular contact with children and young people to develop relationships with them, were available and have good and open communication with them. This may include caseworkers showing interest in the child or young person and participating in special occasions or events for the child or young person (including graduations, birthdays etc.). Participants saw that organisations and caseworkers played a role in advocating for them, and making sure that children and young people are happy and safe.

They're looking after us. They talk to us and try and connect with us. They're helping us to get through things – like things that we've been through. (10 year old female, Aboriginal)



Potentially, you are this kid's adult and person in charge of their life. And only seeing them 3 monthly is not ok. You need more contact with that person. (18 year old female)

Children and young people saw that professional organisations had good systems in place to make sure that they follow up on actions, are prepared and organised, and undertake the tasks and responsibilities that they are required to do. These organisations take responsibility and make sure that all parties supporting a child or young person are on the same page. They also were trustworthy and responsive, and kept information confidential.

Team work is needed to make sure everyone is on the same page and everyone is happy. It affects children and young people, so they need to have a voice, but it's also important to make sure everyone is informed. (25 year old female)

Participants also spoke about the frameworks that organisations have to work with children and young people, including having a strengths-based approach, and having assessment tools in place to be able to identify and respond to a child or young person's needs.

Children and young people had a range of options to support the measurement of this Standard, including by hearing from children and young people, by conducting random audits of organisations and file notes, and by conducting visits to organisations.

Conclusion

The feedback given by children and young people through this consultation process has been invaluable and vital in informing the redevelopment of the Standards and Supporting Standards of OOHC, as has been used by CREATE Foundation and the Department for Child Protection and Family Support Standards working group to develop a set of draft standards for approval. This report, and the quotes included, provide a more comprehensive summary of the feedback given by children and young people about their lived experiences in care, and what they think children and young people need and should be provided with in care under the new Standards of OOHC. The children and young people who participated in this consultation provided such valuable insights, advice and recommendations as to what should be included in the new Standards, and we are hopeful that the final version of the Standards incorporates and honours the feedback that children and young people provided.

CREATE would like to thank the Department for Child Protection and Family Support for the opportunity to consult with children and young people as part of this project, and their willingness to incorporate feedback from children and young people, and most importantly, thank the children and young people themselves who so generously gave up their time to share their thoughts and insights.



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Appendices

Appendix A: Additional quotes from young people about what young people need and want in care

General needs of children and young people in care

Love and support from their foster parents, and anybody. (14 year old female, Aboriginal)

Support and love of their parent or carers. (19 year old female, Aboriginal)

They want to feel loved. They want to feel like they have a home. (18 year old female)

To feel normal, to have a normal home life, to not be moving around, not having to meet new strangers all the time, to have one person that is consistent throughout their entire time in care, and to not deal with the stigma and be a statistic. (25 year old female)

Getting opportunities to do stuff that children who aren't in care get to do. Sometimes we aren't able to go to other people's houses because we don't have permissions and stuff and that's annoying. (14 year old female, Aboriginal)

Stability that's the major thing that they need and want, and a place to call their own. (19 year old male)

For me I want to feel safe, because some places where you live you are not safe, and that's a big one for me. (16 year old male)

Support, understanding and a relationship with their carers – they are the three main things I would say. (19 year old male)

Children in care need someone they can talk to about everything that's going on. (19 year old female)

Safety for children and young people in care

Don't yell at us, not to use weapons or bring them into the house because that doesn't make you feel safe. There is a kid here who brought a fishing knife in and I didn't feel safe. (16 year old male)

[The things that help me feel safe in care are] having a fire plan in the house in case of a fire, knowing who to call if someone is hurt in the house...and having carers and other people in the house and knowing you are not alone and that you have someone you can go to if you feel unsafe. (19 year old male, Aboriginal)

I know nothing bad is going to happen with Nan and Pop. Because they are always there when needed. We're protected by Nan and Pop.....they protect us. (10 year old female, Aboriginal)

I feel safe in care....knowing that I've got a lot of family members who can stick up for me. [And] knowing that I can protect myself if needed. (16 year old male)

Our caseworkers should really go there and have a good look before they put us there. If they think it's a good spot, they should put us there, but if they think oh you're not the right people, they should find somewhere else. Rather than put us there and ending us in different placements (because) it didn't work. Because I've had 29 placements. I've experienced that and that's how I know. My caseworker should have done that. Rather than breaking down a placement and hurting someone else's parents. (15 year old male, Aboriginal)



[One thing that helps me feel safe is] *knowing that the Department are there for you and you can say anything you want to them.* (15 year old male, Aboriginal)

[Things that help children and young people feel safe is having] *counselling and having someone unbiased to talk to about what was going on for them.* (25 year old female)

[The Department needs to] *talk to children and young people about who they have regular contact with and whether they're comfortable with and how they feel about it. For example, if new people are coming into the home and whether child or young person feels safe about them.* (25 year old female)

Security and stability for children and young people in care

[Stability for children and young people in care is] *having one place to stay and having people who care for you.* (12 year old male)

I didn't really feel secure in care – but for me, I would have been if my case worker was honest that I was staying in my placement until I was 18. For me, I felt like I was constantly going to get moved – even though my foster mum was telling me I was staying, my case workers were threatening me that I would be moved if I did not comply, and to use that as a threat took away my security. (25 year old female)

[When you're] *living at one placement [you need] warning when you're going to move on. You need at least 2 weeks' notice before you have to leave so you can at least plan.* (16 year old male)

I felt secure having my school there with me every single step of the way. I was at my school from when I first went into care until 17 so it was like I had a safety net there outside of CPFS. (20 year old male, Italian-Aboriginal)

We have so much other things that change in our lives – we can bounce from placement to placement, or from family to placement. I think the more things you can keep regular and consistent, the better. (25 year old female)

[It helps to] *know if I ever need help with something I can always ask for help and get help from [my carer].* (19 year old female, Aboriginal)

It would have helped me have security if I could have known that my aunt wasn't going to flip out at me for the smallest things. (19 year old female)

The way they act around you, they say they love us, and that's one part where you feel like you're actually loved by someone. So you don't feel fully rejected. But also have someone and somewhere you can call home for a little bit. (15 year old male, Aboriginal)

I've had six caseworkers this year and me and my brothers don't even know who our case worker is because they don't keep in contact with us. Whenever we need something or need to talk to someone we don't always have a caseworker – we do at the moment but not always and we haven't got one. I would like them to get in contact with me when they become my caseworker. (14 year old female, Aboriginal)

Being involved in decision making

Actually going in with the meeting and knowing what they're going to say about you.....Better for you to be there so if they misunderstand something, so you can correct them, and say no it is this way... Instead of planning for them and it not working out because that is a waste of time. If you



don't (want to) go into the meeting, you could probably ask the caregiver or staff member to write everything down you want to raise. (15 year old male, Aboriginal)

If the carer is going to the meeting and notices the child is not coming – they can ask the child to come. If the family is going and sees they aren't going they can ask for the child to be there. Caseworkers may forget but other people can notice and ask for them to be there. (25 year old female)

Nan sometimes asks me what me I want to do...and I have quite a bit of contact with my caseworker. They could speak to the [carers] and go over that some decision making can be negotiated with the kids. The caseworker is supporting our decisions. (16 year old male)

CREATE can send out questionnaires that you can fill out and send back – and can ask them if they are involved...Young people are more inclined to be honest with someone independent of the department than someone within the department. Carers can double check whether kids are having a voice and caseworkers can double check as well. (25 year old female)

Aboriginal children and young people are supported to keep connected to family, community and culture

The thing that would help is seeing the other side of me, the other side of the family. The other part of the Aboriginal family that I had when I left my birth mum. (19 year old female, Aboriginal)

I watch Aboriginal shows on tv and it makes me feel connected, and I read books about being Aboriginal and that. I read a book and I know how to say daughter in Aboriginal. The book called Kimberley Boy. (8 year old male, Aboriginal)

I don't really know my country. I just know that I'm Torres Strait Islander and that. [It would help me feel connected by] finding out where and then going there. (14 year old female, Aboriginal)

For me there's an Aboriginal coordinator that helps me but there should be more than one to help you find that culture. For me I haven't had much to do with my Aboriginal side of the family which is my Dad's side of the family. I feel quite let down that no one has been able to help me. I've been looking for my family for 4 years and I want to find them before my older family members pass away. (19 year old male, Aboriginal) My caseworker should be in charge of it. (8 year old female, Aboriginal)

My caseworker should be in charge of it. (8 year old female, Aboriginal)

Planning needs to happen to make sure that a child or young person gets the support that they need

Case worker needs to work on it, see what needs to be done, organise a meeting. (16 year old male)

Care plans need to be done more regularly than a year. A lot can happen in a year. They might change placements. They need to happen more regularly so that there can be better planning for a child or young person. (18 year old female)

You could have things set out so that goals would be achieved and team leaders could see progress...like it goes into a graph so you can see improvements or where things aren't working right so others can see that and can work towards improving it. (18 year old female)



Children and young people develop a strong sense of who they are by being able to keep connected to their family, friends, culture, and communities

The biggest thing that kept me sort of connected was my aunty and uncle and I spent every second weekend with them and they could tell me about when I was born and stuff. (25 year old female)

I think they need to improve on visits to family. They only let you see your nanna and granddad but what about the people who live further away. My pop and older brother lived more than an hour away and I never got to see them. (13 year old male)

A lot of my friends were sporty and artistic and it helped that I did some sport while in care because we would connect there. (19 year old female)

I kept connected to friends by joining in activities that they are doing. (20 year old male, Italian-Aboriginal)

If they come into care and they are already going to things that keep them connected they should still be allowed to go to that church or those community events. (25 year old female)

[Workers should] just give them one on one time and tell them what's happening and give them advice about things they can do if they are leaving care. (19 year old male, Aboriginal)

Children and young people are well prepared and given good support when they move from out of home care and into their adulthood

The only support I really had was my youth worker. I still felt anxious and worried but she was teaching me how to be an adult and how to set up electricity and cook. She was doing all the things a mum or dad would do for their kid and that's what she was doing for me. (25 year old female)

Before they leave care make sure they have a secure place that has support networks that can help them journey further. (20 year old male, Italian-Aboriginal)

Everyone needs to work together and start early for the best outcome for the young person. Start the process at 15. Slowly build stuff up so that when they live independent, they have stuff and don't have to get everything lump sum. Teach them to do things that an adult would need. Parents would be teaching these things at 20, 21, 22, or above, but no one is teaching these young people how to do these things. (18 year old female)

The carer should be teaching them and it should be part of their role for looking after them to teach them to leave care. It should be a requirement of having a child that you teach them independent life skills and this competency should be tested. (25 year old female)

Children and young people need to know that they have a right to have a voice about things they're worried about, and that their worries will get followed up

Make sure it's not a long wait for that one thing to be answered. Caseworkers should have to get back to you in a certain amount of time. (14 year old female, Aboriginal)

Having someone looking into it and reassuring the child and checking in if other things have been happened. Needs to be a whole investigation – doesn't matter what it is. (22 year old female)

Adults need to talk to each other. If I want to speak about my worries I speak with my nanna and chaplain at the school. (10 year old female, Aboriginal)

Tell them that they have a right, and everyone needs a right to speak. (13 year old male)



[Carers and caseworkers need to] *listen to what you are saying and pay attention and take into account what is being said.* (14 year old female, Aboriginal)

Children and young people are cared for and supported by people who have gone through good training and assessment and have been approved to work with children and young people

Before they become a full foster carer, they need to do respite care first. You'll never know what the job is like before you do it. (18 year old female)

Everyone needs trauma and mental health training; overdose first aid; drug first aid. If you're working with a teenager you might need that. New caseworkers should have a buddy that they can talk to about things. (18 year old female)

Organisations that support children and young people need to be solid and professional and always put the child first

I think organisations should speak to the people they are looking after, once a week, on the phone to make sure they know they are available and they are there to help them. (16 year old male)