

Barry fosters kids' hopes

POST
PEOPLE

By RHIANNON SHINE

University of WA student Barry Krost stands out among the statistics relating to kids brought up in foster care, and he wants to inspire others to do the same.

According to a 2009 study by CREATE Foundation, Australia's peak body for children in out-of-home care, people from foster-care backgrounds have the odds stacked against them.

The study showed that children brought up in out-of-home care were more likely to be under-educated and unemployed and to become homeless.

It showed these children were likely to earn less, become parents at a younger age, be involved in the juvenile justice system and have mental health issues.

But Barry is an exception - he is three years into a bachelor of science degree in public health and aspires to be a doctor or surgeon.

Now 20, Barry has been with his current foster family, who live in Subiaco, since he was three.

He had been cared for by a Nedlands couple for the first few years of his life, because his biological mother was unable to care for him properly from birth.

He went to Subiaco Primary School and Shenton College.

Barry said his foster-care experience had been positive.

"I see my biological mother regularly and also my first foster family - there is lots of contact between all three of our families," he said.

“It's about giving a voice to young people”

"Being in foster care has given me a really positive outlook on life, considering my whole life I have had to try to find a harmony between my biological family and my foster family.

"I feel that it has made me more receptive and easy-going.

"There is a stigma around people in my situation and I just want to do my best to prove that it is not necessarily the norm."

Barry said he was very aware of the negative situations many

people found themselves in after leaving foster care.

"I think about it a great deal and as a result I have decided to become a CREATE Foundation young consultant," he said.

"It's about giving a voice to young people who have had a care experience.

"Because my experience has been better than the average, I thought I could help these children to reach their full potential by giving them my own story."

Barry also volunteers with other organisations by mentoring and tutoring young people.

While Barry's family situation is not necessarily conventional, he said he was not bothered.

"When I bring friends home, the usual reaction is 'Wow, why do you have two white parents?', but for me that's just water off a duck's back," he said.

According to the CREATE Foundation, more than 39,000 Australian children and young people live in care, increasing by 9% every year.

CREATE Foundation will run events between September 7 and 13, National Child Protection Week, to raise awareness about children in foster care.

