



CREATE Position Paper

Issue: Education and Out-of-Home Care

CREATE's Position

CREATE recognises education is an important gateway to health and emotional wellbeing, job satisfaction, economic prosperity, and independence; an absence of education contributes to enduring disadvantage across the life domains beyond the care years. CREATE aims to improve the educational attainment and participation of children and young people in out-of-home care during their school years and increase the number of young people with a care background going on to achieve further education or a higher degree.

For these aims to be achieved, education must be: (a) featured in all aspects of care planning to ensure care environments are orientated to positive and enduring educational experiences; (b) prioritised in outlining the strategies needed to address the child or young person's disrupted placements and associated compromised educational attainment; and (c) addressed in "transition from care" planning to ensure consideration of enrolment in further and higher education along with dedicated financial support (Mindis, 2012).

Table 1

Out-of-Home Care National Standards that Apply to Education (FaHCSIA , 2011)

National Standards	Measures
6. Children and young people in care access and participate in education and early childhood services to maximise their educational outcomes.	6.1. The proportion of children and young people achieving national reading and numeracy benchmarks 6.2. The number and proportion of three and four year old children who participate in quality early childhood education and child care services.
7. Children and young people up to at least 18 years are supported to be engaged in appropriate education, training and/or employment.	7.1 The proportion of young people who complete year 10 and the proportion who complete year 12 or equivalent Vocational Education and Training.

Evidence

- People who have been in OOHC have the highest risk of social exclusion as adults and are over represented on every measure of social pathology and disadvantage (Jackson & Cameron, 2012).
- Challenges identified include poorer education chances, education instability, and lower attainment both at school and post schooling (Cashmore, Paxman, & Townsend, 2007; Jackson & Ajayi, 2007; Pecora, Williams, Kessler, Hiripis, O'Brien, Emerson, Herrick, & Torres, 2006).
- The CREATE Report Card 2013 (McDowall, 2013) found that:
 - almost two thirds (64.6%, $n = 691$) of children and young people interviewed described their school experience as quite good or better; 4.0% ($n = 43$) found it quite poor or worse;
 - females and younger age groups were more positive about their schooling than males and older age groups;
 - placement changes can result in some children changing primary schools many times, leading to lower school stability and engagement (this is more of an issue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, and those living in residential care placements);
 - there is an increased likelihood of suspension from school for those living in residential care or who are male;
 - only 25% of children and young people surveyed ($n=267$) knew about an individual education plan and few had been involved in the development of one.

- Children in out-of-home care achieve lower results in standard numeracy and literacy tests compared with their peers (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2015).
- There is a lack of consistent data in Australia on higher and further education attainment for young people who have left care (Harvey, McNamara, Andrewartha, & Luckman, 2015).
- Barriers to educational attainment include:
 - placement instability impacting on schooling experiences;
 - financial stress and limited family encouragement;
 - lack of transitional and continuing support;
 - lack of priority given to education from carers, welfare staff, and family; and
 - cultural barriers
- Three key factors encourage children and young people in out-of-home care to engage in higher and further education:
 - educational optimism from those around;
 - system compatibility between welfare and education; and
 - support of young people after leaving care to help them withstand the challenges of transition while remaining engaged in education (Jurczynszyn & Tilbury , 2012).

Actions

CREATE calls on federal, state and territory ministers with responsibility for education and child protection to implement strategies based on the work of the National Partnership Agreement on Young Attainment and Transitions to better integrate education and child protection. CREATE will advocate for the implementation in each state and territory of policy to ensure that:

1. Children and young people (aged 4-25 years old) who are, or have been in out-of-home care, remain engaged in education and are able to achieve results in line with community standards.
2. All school aged children and young people in out-of-home care have Individual Education Plans (IEP) that are reviewed annually.
3. Integrate education planning into case planning for those preparing to leave care and who have left care in all states and territories.
4. Require federal and state and territory governments to fund targeted education re-engagement strategies for young people with a care experience to 25 years of age, including providing priority enrolment at TAFE, university, college, etc., and fee waiver programs.

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