



# CREATE Position Paper

## Issue: Residential Care

### CREATE's Position

CREATE recognises that not all children and young people can be placed in home based care and acknowledges the role residential care plays within the care system. If residential care is chosen as the most appropriate placement option for a child or young person, the decision must be based on what would be in the best interests of the child or young person.

The chosen facility should be a "home like" environment in a clean and well-maintained building. Staff must be appropriately trained and able to respond to, and work with children and young people who have experienced and continue to experience trauma.

The following National Standards, while not specifically mentioning Residential Care, do address critical aspects of the care experience.

**Table 1**  
***Out-of-Home Care National Standards that Apply to Residential Care (FaHCSIA, 2011)***

National Standards	Measures
1. Children and young people will be provided with stability and security during their time in care.	1.2 The rate and number of children in out-of-home care who were the subject of a child-protection substantiation and the person believed responsible was living in the household providing out-of-home care. 1.3 The proportion of children and young people in out-of-home care who report feeling safe and secure in their current placement
2. Children and young people participate in decisions that have an impact on their lives.	2.1 The proportion of children and young people who report that they have opportunities to have a say in relation to decisions that have an impact on their lives and that they feel listened to.
8. Children and young people in care are supported to participate in social and/or recreational activities of their choice, such as sporting, cultural or community activity.	8.1 The proportion of children and young people who report they may choose to do the same sorts of things (sporting, cultural or community activities) that children and young people their age who aren't in care do
9. Children and young people are supported to safely and appropriately maintain connection with family, be they birth parents, siblings, or other family members.	9.1 The proportion of children and young people in out-of-home care who are placed with relatives and kin. 9.2 The proportion of children and young people who report they have an existing connection with at least one family member that they expect to maintain. 9.3 The proportion of children (as age-appropriate) and young people who report having contact with family members, by the reported frequency of contact, by their reported satisfaction with contact arrangements.

### Evidence

- The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's (AIHW) statistics show that as at June 30 2014, 93% of children and young people living in OOH in Australia were in home based care and 5.5% in residential care placements (AIHW, 2015).

- Large variations exist across Australian jurisdictions as to how residential care is provided, funded, regulated, and reviewed. Whilst some jurisdictions actively discourage residential care facilities as out-of-home care (OOHC) placement options, others provide non-government organisations with additional funding to secure residential facilities and programs.
- CREATE's Report Card 2013 found that 83 per cent of children and young people in OOHC sampled stated they were happy in their placement; however, children and young people in residential care and "other" placements experienced more instability than those in home-based care (foster and kinship) (McDowall, 2013).
- Bath (2008a, 2008b) identified that residential care must recognise the diversity of need of each young person and tailor interventions to that need, rather than the shared needs of the group.
- Children and young people surveyed for the 2013 Report Card reported having a preference for kinship and foster care over residential care. Residential care was seen as the least favoured placement type, bringing forth more negative comments and suggestions for improvement (McDowall, 2013).
- The Commission for Children and Young People in Victoria (2015) reported that children and young people living in residential care:
  - are likely to be exposed to other young people exhibiting high-risk behaviours;
  - tend to lose contact with friends, family, culture, school, and community supports;
  - are at greater risk of developing life-long institutionalised behaviours, mental health issues, substance abuse, and to experience homelessness; and
  - have greater involvement with the youth justice system.
- In terms of understanding their rights in OOHC, children and young people in residential care indicated that they had a greater awareness of their rights within the child protection and/or residential care system and were more likely to have made a complaint and pursued resolution. However, a large proportion of this group was more likely not to raise an issue because of concerns about negative consequences (McDowall, 2013).

## Actions

CREATE believes that residential care models, practices and staff recruitment and training require attention and reform to be suitable as a safe and secure placement option for children and young people in out-of-home care.

Whilst CREATE acknowledges that residential care in some states and territories must continue to operate as a placement option within the OOHC system, CREATE will continue to advocate for:

1. Targeted strategies to improve residential care models and placement options for children and young people that align with the overarching principles of the National Standards for Out-of-Home Care.
2. The provision of high quality care to children and young people in a nurturing environment by appropriately trained staff to maximise the outcomes for children and young people in care.
3. Purpose built residential facilities, maintained to a high standard, to provide a safe and caring environment for the children and young people who live there.

## References:

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- Commission for Children and Young People. (2015). "...as a good parent would..." Inquiry into the adequacy of the provision of residential care services to Victorian children and young people who have been subject to sexual abuse or sexual exploitation whilst residing in residential care. Melbourne: Commission for Children and Young People.
- Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). (2011). An outline of national standards for out-of-home care. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- McDowall, J. J. (2013). Experiencing out-of-home care in Australia. The views of children and young people (CREATE Report Card 2013). Sydney: CREATE Foundation.