

Complaints Processes in Queensland

The views and experiences of young people with an
out-of-home care experience in Queensland

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Background

All children and young people have the right to have a say about their happiness, wellbeing, and safety. It is vital that when children and young people raise concerns, they feel heard, listened to, and believed. When children and young people encounter harm or lack safety in their living environment, it may become necessary for the state to intervene, and as a result they can be placed in out-of-home care. While under the care of the state, it is expected by their families and the wider community that they will be provided with the support they need to speak up if anything is worrying them, or if they are unhappy with an aspect of their life in care. This ensures that children and young people maintain self-determination and are involved in making decisions about their own lives.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 12; United Nations, 1989) outlines the basic human rights that apply to children. Australia is one of the 191 countries that has agreed to uphold the rights outlined in the convention. The Queensland *Child Protection Act 1999* (Qld) states that children and young people in care have the right to “be consulted about, and to take part in making, decisions affecting the child’s life (...) particularly decisions about where the child is living, contact with the child’s family and the child’s health and schooling”. Queensland Family and Child Commission states that if a child or young person would like to formally review a decision of Child Safety Services they are able to talk to their Child Safety Officer, and if they are still concerned they can access the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT) to review the decision (QFCC, 2020).

In the absence of a reliably supportive parent or guardian who can act as an advocate, the voices of children and young people in the care system often go unheard within our communities. Children and young people can experience trauma as a result of neglect, abuse, or emotional harm even while in care, which usually occurs in the context of social disadvantage and intergenerational trauma (DCPFS, 2015). It is important for these children and young people to develop trusting relationships with adults whom they can speak with if they are unhappy or worried about their experience. However, these relationships can be hard for young people in OOHC to build, due to placement instability and inconsistency of caseworkers (McDowall, 2013). It is therefore essential to have strong policy and practice in place that ensures children and young people in OOHC understand their right to complain and are provided with the adequate means of support and assistance to do so.

As of June, 2019, there were 8,125 children and young people living in out-of-home care in Queensland. For Indigenous children in QLD, 37 per 1000 live in out-of-home care, making them 8.8 times more likely to end up in out-of-home-care than non-Indigenous young people. Just over half of the care population in QLD identify as male (51.8%). It is unknown what percentage identify as non-binary (AIHW, 2020).

This consultation was conducted by the CREATE Foundation to hear directly from young people aged 16 to 25 with a care experience living in Queensland at the time of the consultation. It seeks to better understand the factors that may enable or hinder children and young people to exercise their right to speak up about their concerns while in care and find out if they are able to access the appropriate help to resolve the issues.

The present consultation aimed to hear about the experiences of children and young people with a care experience of making a complaint and focuses on

- their understanding of Queensland’s complaints process;
- key facilitators and barriers when raising concerns;
- processes participants used to raise complaints; and
- ways to improve the current process to encourage young people to raise issues in the future.

The findings of this report aim to provide valuable information for Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women, necessary for developing and refining strategies and practices to ensure children and young people feel safe and supported in speaking up and voicing their concerns. This will help to



promote strategies for better outcomes and wellbeing for young people with a care-experience in Queensland overall.

The present consultation seeks to ensure that the Queensland Child Protection system adequately supports children and young people in care to speak up and be heard, consistent with the United Nations declaration. It seeks to continue improving policy and practice regarding complaints to ensure children and young people maintain self-determination and are kept safe, healthy, and happy.

Method

Participants

A total of 25 young people aged 16 to 25 with an OOHC experience participated in this consultation. Participant demographics are presented in Table 1. Within the participant group, 15 identified as female. The majority of the participants had been in care since they were younger than 5; and just over half (16/25) were living independently at the time of consultation. Ten identified as living with a disability, and the majority of these (8/10) reported receiving assistance for their condition. Over half the participants (15/25) identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, 12 in the 18 and older group.

Materials

The survey consisted of 29 questions and contained a range of question types such as rating scales, binary questions (Yes/No), comment boxes, and open-ended questions (see appendix A). A variety of question styles provided opportunities for young people to express their views in a way that suited them and as such allowed better insight into their experiences.

The consultation focussed on determining participants understanding of the complaints process. It explored young people's experiences in making complaints, factors that inhibited them from complaining, and enquired about ways in which the complaints process could be improved. Quotes from participants were recorded verbatim in order to retain the authenticity of their words, and they have been cited where relevant in the main findings of this report.

Procedure

The participants were selected based on the following selection criteria: resided in Queensland at the time the survey was conducted, were aged between 16 and 25 years, and were existing members on *clubCREATE's* database¹. Participants were invited to participate via phone and email contact.

The consultation was conducted in accordance with the CREATE Consultation with Children and Young People and Disclosure Policies. Informed consent was obtained from all young people; carers or caseworkers signed consent forms on behalf of young people 17 years and younger, or verbal consent was recorded where participants completed the consultation over the phone. All participants were provided with a Participant Information Sheet (either directly or through CREATE's web site) detailing the nature of the consultation and informing young people that they could withdraw at any time without penalty. Young people were told that if they revealed information that led the interviewer to believe they, or another young person appeared unsafe or in danger of harm, the situation would have to be reported to the relevant authorities. All concerns or disclosures that were made by participants regarding any complaints raised have all been handled in accordance with CREATE's *Disclosure Management* policy and raised with the Department for appropriate actioning.

In recognition of the time and effort provided by young people for the consultation, each participant was provided with a \$25 gift voucher. Young people answered the consultation questions over the

¹ Children and young people who participate in activities and events conducted by CREATE Foundation are invited to become members of *clubCREATE* and have the opportunity to share their views in consultations and research projects.

phone with a CREATE staff member, and their responses entered into the structured interview on Survey Monkey. The quotes in this document have been taken directly from the voices of children and young people with a care experience. In order to protect the identities of the young people involved, attributions of the quotes in this report are made using the participant’s sex and age.

Table 1. Demographics of Consultations Sample

Demographics	Number of Young People
Age	
16-17	5
18-19	11
20-22	6
23-25	3
Sex	
Male	10
Female	15
Culture	
Aboriginal	12
Torres Strait Islander	2
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	1
No Special Group	10
Placement Type	
Foster Care	4
Kinship Care	2
Residential Care	1
Independent Living	16
Other	2
Disability	
Yes	10
No	13
Prefer not to say	2

Table 2. Survey Method

Survey Method	Number of Young People
Telephone Interview	24
Face-to-face Interview	1

Limitations

The intent of the study was to hear from children and young people in Queensland with a care experience about how well they understand the complaints process, to find out what barriers young people face in making complaints, and enquire about the ways in which the system could be improved to ensure young people are able to speak up and raise their concerns. It should be noted that the study is limited by its sample size ($n = 25$) and selection based on volunteer respondents. As of the 30th June 2019, Indigenous young people made up a disproportionate 44% of the out-of-home care population in Queensland. This consultation received a 60% Indigenous participant rate, slightly overrepresenting the population in out-of-home care. It is, however, important we have a strong representative voice from Indigenous young people with out-of-home care experience. The majority of the respondents (20/25) in the present consultation were over 18 years of age. As a result of the age sample, a significant number ($n = 16$) of participants are now located in independent living. Additionally, the majority of responses from participants that have already left care may no longer reflect the current Department's complaints management processes due to recent reforms, but nonetheless, provide invaluable insight into the lived experiences of those with a care experience.

Findings

Deciding to Complain

Who Young People Speak to About Their Concerns

The majority of young people consulted reported having someone to speak to if they were feeling dissatisfied or unhappy (21/25). Four young people did not have someone they could speak with. Of those with a confidant, 19 indicated who those people were, these results are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. *Who Young People Speak to When Feeling Unhappy/Dissatisfied*

Relation to Young Person	Mentions
Foster Carers	14
Birth Family	5
Community Visitor	3
Friends	2
Counsellors/Psychologist	2
School Chaplain	1
Church	1
Child Safety Officer	1
CREATE Staff	1
Doctor	1

Note: Some young people gave multiple answers.

Clearly, the most common person whom young people would speak to when they were dissatisfied or unhappy was their carer. A small number would contact birth family members (parents and an aunt), while others would approach a variety of professional supporters.

How Young People Decide Whether to Raise a Complaint

Young people were asked how they would decide whether to complain if something about their treatment in care was worrying them. Of the 25, seven stated they simply wouldn't complain, often because they felt no one listened.

I wouldn't really complain because I was really quiet and because no one really listened to me (Female, 24 years)

The remaining young people explained they were more likely to complain if they felt they had a caring network of supporters who would respond to their concerns, or they felt the issue was really serious (see Table 4).

Table 4. Factors That Positively Influence a Decision to Complain

Factors that positively influence a decision to complain	Mentions
Having a trusting support network (CSOs, Carers etc.)	12
Severity of concern (causing harm or unhappiness)	6
Didn't hesitate; complained immediately	1
Wouldn't complain	7
Unsure	2

Note. Some young people gave multiple answers.

Having a Trusting Support Network. Young people are overwhelmingly more likely to raise a complaint if they have a support network whom they can turn to when they are having troubles. Overall, 12 participants (48%) mentioned they would first consult members of a trusting support network such as a carer, child safety officer, or someone else they felt comfortable with.

Talk to someone I am comfortable with (to) make decision on if I felt safe and comfortable. (Female, 18 years)

It would depend. First, I would go to my carer or otherwise my community visitor before I complain to ask whether a complaint was needed. (Male, 16 years)

I mostly told my foster carers who took it up the chain. They could tell someone higher up. My foster carers would ask us if things were okay. It gave me an opportunity to tell them if I was worried about something. (Male, 20 years)

Unfortunately, some young people stated they had negative experiences when they did consult their accessible support network.

I told CSO about my carers and how I disliked them. My CSO never listened to me. I also complained to the team leader about my CSO. (Male, 18 years)

I would re-evaluate the situation to work out if I'm not overreacting. If it's a big enough situation where I feel that I've been hard done by, I would first send a letter to my CSO [Child Safety Officer] to let them know my concerns. If we can't come to a compromise then I would speak to a team leader. In the past when I have spoken to a team leader it has been quite uncomfortable. I made a complaint a while ago. The team leader put the CSO who I was complaining about into the conference call. I felt quite uncomfortable and like I was in the wrong. They both had their feet to stand on and I felt like I didn't get the chance to say what I wanted to say. (Female, 17 years).

Severity of Concern. Some young people mentioned that a key factor in deciding whether to complain or not would be the severity of the concern. Mainly, the participants mentioned judging severity on whether it was causing unhappiness or harm, or if it was not getting any better over a period of time.

If the situation became out of hand or escalated or nothing was getting done. If it was an argument with carer that wasn't getting better. (Male, 25 years)

I would decide based on how bad it was affecting me and how much it would continue to affect me. (Female, 18 years)

If it became harmful or an unhealthy environment I would report it. (Female, 18 years)

If I was really unhappy, getting withdrawn or felt shit. (Female, 20 years)

Complain Immediately. One participant stated they wouldn't go through a deliberation process but would simply complain immediately.

I didn't think about it. I reported it straight away. (Female, 21 years)

Table 5. Factors That Inhibit Decisions to Complain

Factors that inhibit decisions to complain	Mentions
Not feeling believed or listened to	5
Believing it will not change anything	2
Fear of getting in trouble	1
Unaware of rights	1

Not Feeling Believed or Listened To. Five participants mentioned that they would decide not to complain because they did not feel that they will be listened to or believed if they were to raise a complaint.

Department didn't believe me and blamed the child. (Female, 22 years)

It would take me a while to complain. When I was in resi I felt like my complaint may not be listened to. I used to have some shitty CSOs. (Female, 16 years)

I wouldn't really complain because I was really quiet and because no one really listened to me. (Female, 21 years)

Believing It Will Not Change Anything. Two young people stated that they would not complain due to the belief that it would not change the outcome or the complaint would not be followed up on.

I didn't ever really do because I knew it wouldn't go anywhere. (Female, 22 years)

I kept my mouth shut after complaints because nothing ever got done. (Male, 18 years)

Fear of Getting in Trouble. One young person mentioned that she feared getting in trouble if she were to complain.

No decisions were made, I just didn't complain, fear of getting in trouble. (Female, 22 years)

Unaware of Rights. One young person was unaware of her rights to complain to the department.

I usually just wouldn't complain. If it was something that really made me feel uncomfortable, I might mention it but wouldn't make a big deal of it. [In regards to making a complaint with the Department] I didn't know I was allowed to. (Female, 18 years)

Young People's Preferred Way of Complaining

Young people were asked what was their preferred way to raise a complaint. A summary of the 24 responses is shown in Table 6. Most young people (n=12) wanted to raise the issue with their caseworker in person, although nine discussed an "other" form of communication, including speaking

to team leaders, talking over the phone to the department, texting their CSO, and talking to anyone who is honest and helpful.

Table 6. Young People’s Preferred Way to Complain

Preferred way of complaining	Mentions
In person with a Child Safety Worker	12
CREATE complaints form	3
Other	9

Experiences Making Complaints

Reasons for Complaining

The majority of participants (20/25) had raised complaints in the past. Most of the complaints were in regards to Child Safety Officers (n=8) and care situations (n=5). The results are displayed in Table 7.

Table 7. Reasons Young People Raised a Complaint

Reason for raising a complaint	Mentions
Child Safety Officers	8
Foster or Residential carers	5
Department	2
Other	5

Complaints Regarding Child Safety Officers. Lack of communication, physical abuse, and bullying were some of the key reasons that young people raised complaints against Child Safety Officers. Some young people recalled examples of poor treatment from their CSOs:

There was one time when I complained about a worker [Child Safety Officer]. She was bullying me. We were going to a visitation one day. I had just finished my dance concert. She starts egging me on. She was mimicking me in not a good way. It really hurt my feelings as a nine-year-old. (Female, 20 years)

Getting hit by a CSO and team leader. (Female, 21 years)

I complained about my old CSO promising me things that she could not deliver on. My Dad bought me a boxing bag. I checked with my CSO first and she said I could have it. The resi then said I couldn't have it at the resi and the CSO denied even having that phone call with me. It made me feel bad. I would have preferred a solid "no" rather than spending \$80 on it and have it taken away. (Female, 16 years)

My CSO wouldn't tell me anything and wasn't doing his job properly. He wouldn't tell me about changing placements or moving or anything. I went to the team leader and complained. I had to sign a form to move into a place and I told him to tell me the date things were happening and when I asked he said he had already organised it. He told me the wrong court house so I went to the Caboolture and I was supposed to be at Strathpine so I missed my court date. I have massive headaches and missed school a lot and the day I was expelled he came and told me I had to get and move house. (Male, 18 years)

My CSO [Child Safety Office] was very distant and wasn't communicating with me. She wouldn't fulfil the things that she was supposed to do. It got really frustrating. She would go on leave



and not tell me. She said she would get funding for my laptop and then changed her mind.
(Female, 18 years)

Complaints Regarding Foster or Residential Carers. Physical abuse and mistreatment were key reasons that young people complained against their carers. Some young people complained about living arrangements, being treated differently from birth children, and physical harm. Examples of responses include:

About being treated different. I was treated different compared to birth daughter I felt neglected compared to the birth daughter... the carer would not listen to me. (Female, 18 years)

I told my Child Safety Officer that my foster brother's head was thrown into a fish tank by the carer. I was there when it happened. My foster dad paid my foster brother \$50 to not say anything and to lie that it didn't happen. My CSO asked my carers and my foster brother. That was it. I was called a liar. (Male, 18 years)

The living arrangements with a carer. (Female, 23 years)

When I was in a resi, I told a staff member that I was being abused by another staff member.
(Female, 16)

Complaints Regarding the Department. Some young people had made complaints about departmental issues such as poor communication and issues with privacy.

My most recent complaint was about the Department moving me out of the home. It was very slack on their behalf. They said to me that they would help me move out, sending my belongings to the office. When they arrived at the home. The vehicle was too small to fit any of my furniture. I had to get rid of all my new furniture that I had spent my YHARS money on. Throughout my time as well my CSO's response was that she was going away and I said I didn't know where I would be sleeping on the Monday. (Female, 17 years)

I was in emergency accommodation. One of the workers was a parent of daughter at my school. The daughter would ring and the carer would tell them what we were doing and who was there. I felt uncomfortable because I was withholding the fact that I wasn't still with my parents. The next day everybody at the school knew where I was living. I kind of dropped out of school that week. (Female, 18 years)

Other Complaints.

The fact I did not want to have any contact with any family members, especially with my grandparents... (I) fought very hard to be heard... even the CSO tried to force me to see them just one more time... no one listened AT ALL. it took me nine years to be heard... when I was 16... I was finally able not to see them again (Male, 19 years)

When I had to go to court. I didn't get the right support from them. They weren't there when I needed them. When I got interviewed by the police they weren't there. (Female, 20 years)

About a youth worker being rude to me. (Female, 17 years)

Youth not treating me and my brother right. (Male, 18 years)

How Young People Actually Complained

The 20 young people who actually had raised a complaint in the past explained the process that they followed. Fifteen young people spoke to their designated staff worker (six participants raised the complaint straight with their Child Safety Officer, four spoke with their Team Leader, the others spoke

with staff and other caseworkers. The remaining participants raised their complaints a number of ways such as with their carer or online (see Table 8).

Table 8. How Young People Raised Actual Complaints

How Young Person Raised Complaint	Mentions
Spoke to a designated staff member (CSO, Team Leader, caseworker)	15
Spoke to carer	2
Online	1
To the organisation in question	1
Didn't initially complain but it later came out	1

Spoke to a Designated Staff Member. Many young people went to a designated staff member about their complaint such as their Child Safety Officer, Team Leader, or caseworker. Some young people noted that the complaint was actioned; however, unfortunately many were disappointed with the lack of response following their complaint.

- I rang a lot of people including people above my CSO even then I got no reply! (Male, 19 years)*
- I went to my CSO. I didn't get the response that I wanted from her so I went to the team leader. I didn't like what she said so I went to complaints [online]. (Male, 19 years)*
- I told a staff member. They just said it wasn't true. I didn't realise at the time but the other person [the person who committed the offense] was their brother-in-law. (Female, 22 years)*
- Team Leader. They didn't listen either and after that I never bothered again. (Male, 18 years)*

Some had more positive experiences.

- I talked to one of the support workers at Child Safety Labrador. She was removed from my caseload. (Female, 20 years)*
- I talked to my CSO then I actually had a meeting with the old Minister, , with CREATE. (Male, 18 years)*
- Told child safety in person and then they went from there. They told us the process from there. (Male, 18 years)*

Some young people simply emailed or spoke to their CSO during their monthly visit.

- I spoke to my Child Safety Office and then spoke to the manager. (Female, 17 years)*
- I complained by email to the Team Leader. (Female, 24 years)*
- I told my Child Safety Officer in person during their monthly visit. (Male, 18 years)*
- I went straight to the CSO [Child Safety Officer] about carers. I called and went into the centre. (Male, 25 years)*

Spoke to Carer. Two young people spoke directly with their residential or foster carers who were able to help them to action the complaint.

- I had help from my residential carer. I reported it to Department management and then we went to the police. (Female, 21 years)*

My carers told someone higher up and someone else from the Department came out and there was someone from the Department on the phone. We were able to tell them what happened. I wanted to get it over and done with. (Male, 20 years)

Spoke to The Organisation in Question. One young person went directly to the organisation at the centre of the complaint.

I complained to the organisation. I filled out a form about what had happened and said that it made me uncomfortable. I didn't hear back. Nothing happened. As far as I am aware, she still works there. (Female, 18 years)

Didn't Initially Complain but It Later Came Out. One young person explained that they didn't actually initially complain, however it came out later through anger.

I didn't say anything to the carer... and kept quiet because I wanted to be moved again eventually it all came out in anger and I was moved again. (Female, 18 years)

Feedback After Making a Complaint

Of the 20 young people who had experience making a complaint in the past, 13 received a response to their concerns and 7 did not. The types of feedback the 13 participants received are shown in Table 9.

Table 9. How Young People Received Feedback About Their Complaint

How Young Person Heard Back	Mentions
Email/Phone Call	4
Was told the problem will be resolved	4
Caseworker or CSO visited home	2
Told by CSO the complaint was registered	2
Went to court	1

Email/Phone Call. Four participants heard back regarding their complaint via an email or phone call.

Phone call and email from my Child Safety Officer. (Female, 17 years)

I got a phone call from the Team Leader. I complained on Friday and I got a response on Monday. (Female, 18 years)

Problem Resolved. Four young people understood that their complaint was registered due to the problem becoming resolved or being told that it would soon be resolved.

I was still very young. I got a new CSO. (Female, 20 years)

CSO met with me and my brother. Told us we were being removed from their care. (Male, 18 years)

Someone from the Department came out and they sat us down and told us what happened to the person [who had previously gotten aggressive in questions]. I think they got transferred to somewhere else. (Male, 20 years)

Unfortunately, in one case, the resolution was not seen through.

I heard that I'd get a new CSO. Nothing about the boxing bag. Once I got threatened by a male worker at a resi. He threatened to get his kids to bash me. I reported it to the head of the resi.

They said he'd just attended a family funeral. I said why was he fit to work that night and be put through that emotional stress. I had to apologise to him. I had to initiate. He shouldn't have been at work under that emotional stress. I didn't want him around me. I told my CSO, she said, "There's nothing they can do. It wasn't resolved. In Kingaroy there's less organisations than in Brisbane that you can go to for support or to have issues resolved. (Female, 16 years)

Received A Visit from Caseworker or CSO. Two young people received a home visit from their caseworker or CSO. Unfortunately, both young people didn't have positive experiences with this method.

The CSO showed up and the carers just told the CSO that I did it [physical abuse] to myself. The CSO dismissed the complaint and listened to the excuses that the carer came up with. (Male, 25 years)

The next week they came out and asked the carer. I was called a liar. (Male, 18 years)

Told by CSO the Complaint Had Been Registered. Two participants heard back from their CSO that the complaint had been received.

The next time I saw my CSO she came up to me she told me she put it in her notes. Nothing happened though. (Male, 18 years)

CSO told me he had a complaint but didn't change anything. (Male, 18 years)

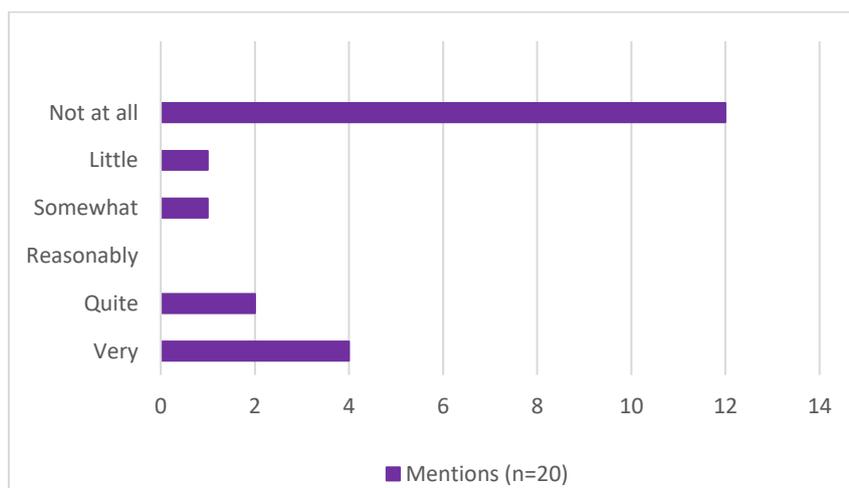
Went to Court. One young person was told the issue was taken to court.

It went to court and the team leader and CSO got away with it. (Female, 21)

Feelings Towards the Handling of the Complaint

Young people were asked if they were happy with the response they received after they raised their complaint. All 20 young people who had raised a complaint in the past answered this question. Over half (12 of the 20) expressed their high levels of dissatisfaction with the complaints process, while six were quite or very happy with the outcome. Their responses are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Happiness with the Response Received After Lodging a Complaint



Young People’s Awareness of the Review System

Of the 20 participants who complained, 12 were aware that they had the opportunity to ask for a review if they were not happy, but eight were unaware they had this option.

Barriers to Speaking Up

Past Concerns That Weren’t Formally Raised

Thirteen participants reported a past incident or concern related to being in care about which they did not raise as a complaint. The issues reported are summarised in Table 10.

Table 10. Past Concerns Young People Did Not Raise as Complaints

Concerns	Mentions
Issues related to carers	9
Issues related to treatment from CSO	2
Not sure / Too many	2

Issues Related to Carers. Nine respondents spoke about issues with carers which they did not raise as complaints in the past. These included poor treatment, child abuse, neglect, and issues with other young people in the carers house. Some examples include:

In one household I was made to sleep outside in the shed. (Female, 18 years)

Carers. There was an unfair hierarchy. They had their own kids. They treated us as pay checks. You feel awkward as a young kid and especially when you know there are not a lot of placements available. (Female, 20 years)

Another carer who was also abusive and is still a carer. She told kids to lie for her. (Male, 18 years)

I haven’t complained about sexual assault [someone else in the house] and family dynamics. [CREATE followed this up with DCSYW] (Female, 17 years)

One young person was unable to speak up about treatment from their carers due to lack of accessibility for their disability:

I was in a respite situation. Of an evening they would just close the door and my brother and I would eat dinner in a bedroom. The carers and their kids would eat out in the dining room. I don’t know if I was allowed to eat in the dining room. I was pretty non-verbal at the time. The fact that my brother and I would both eat in the bedroom feels like it was more of a forced situation. I wasn’t able to physically tell anyone with my autism and because I was non-verbal for an extended period of time. Looking back on it now if I had just been able to speak, I probably would have said something. I physically was incapable of speaking. When it came to communicating with people who didn’t understand, it was easier to either nod or shake my head. Whiteboards are really handy. Typing is uncomfortable for some people. I like using whiteboards to write my feelings. It is an expansive communication tool. That’s what I use now. (Female, 18 years)

Issues Related to Treatment From CSO. Some young people spoke about issues related to the treatment they received from their Child Safety Officers.

Having my CSO as a neighbour. Every time we would have a birthday party or gathering he would just randomly rock up. It made me feel uncomfortable. He’s a CSO. (Female, 24 years)

The constant changing of CSOs [Child Safety Officers]. (Female, 18 years)

Factors inhibiting the making of complaints

Young people were asked what stopped them from raising the complaint. Some key themes arose such as not feeling they would be listened to and fearing the repercussions of speaking up. Twelve young people provided reasons for not complaining. The results are displayed in Table 11.

Table 11. Reasons Young People Did Not Raise Past Complaint

Reason	Mentions
Didn't feel anyone would listen	4
Fear of repercussions	4
Unsure how to	1
Didn't feel safe	1
Spoke to other young people	1
Resolved the issue alone	1

Didn't Feel Anyone Would Listen. Some young people consulted didn't complain as they believed no one would actually listen if they did.

I didn't think anything would get done if I said anything. Or I didn't think anyone would believe me; they believe the old innocent lady. (Male, 18 years)

Partially because I didn't want to be a bother. Partially because I knew it would take a lot of work to be listened to. (Female, 18 years)

Fear of Repercussions. Some young people spoke about fearing the possible repercussions that could follow raising a complaint. These included fears of the police, physical injury, and of carers.

Scared of police - scared in more abusive home and scared of carers (Female, 22 years)

Fear of the department telling the carer and that will have later repercussions when the Department is closed. (Female, 20 years)

I was frightened that I could be injured and it could come back on me. (Female, 17 years)

Unsure How To. One young person was not aware of their rights or of the processes of raising a complaint.

I didn't even know how to get in contact with a CSO or CV (Female, 18 years)

Didn't Feel Safe. One young person didn't feel safe enough to speak up.

Because I did not feel safe to talk to anyone (...) I was NOT CONFIDENT enough to speak. (Female, 18 years)

Spoke to Other Young People. One young person reflected on speaking to other young people who would listen, rather than raising a formal complaint.

Having other young people around me listening. (Female, 23 years)

Resolved the Issues Alone. One young person simply stated that they resolved the issue alone.

I had resolved it myself. (Male, 18 years)

What Would Help

What Worked Well with Complaining

Ten young people had a past positive experience while complaining and elaborated on what worked well. The results are shown in Table 12.

Table 12. What Worked Well with Raising Complaints

What Worked Well	Mentions
Seeing the problem resolved	4
Open communication	3
Feeling believed/listened to	2
Receiving Follow Up's	1

Seeing the Problem Resolved. Four participants noted the importance of seeing a change after a complaint has been made.

Sometimes the positive experience was moving out of where I was being neglected and into respite. (Female, 18 years)

I complained about not seeing my foster mum. They [the Department of Child Safety] got back to me that day with a positive outcome. I felt happy because I got to speak to my foster mum again. (Female, 21 years)

I was in a foster home. You know puppy farmers, they were like "kid farmers." They get as many kids as they can and just house them all in a room. I was in a room with six young people. I asked to be moved by my CSO. Two months later I was moved out of there. It's not healthy to have six children in a room on bunk beds. My CSO said, "Let's work this out." The carers didn't celebrate kids' birthdays or Christmas. My CSO said "That's not right. Let's get you moved." Whenever the CSO came round (in the past) they moved the bunk beds around the house. They had foster kids in a bloody caravan. The CSO listened and moved me away. (Female, 16 years)

Open Communication. Three young people spoke about the way that open communication assisted them to feel supported throughout the complaints process.

I went straight to the CSO. I had a trustworthy and respectful relationship with my CSO. The problem was resolved. I felt happy with the process. (Male, 18 years)

I got a near immediate response from the Team Leader. They were very sympathetic. I never got that CSO again. They communicated with me more than was needed to ensure I felt supported. (Female, 18 years)

Communication. It helped with getting things done. (Male, 20 years)

Feeling Believed or Listened To. It was important to some young people to feel as if they were being listened to and believed in what they were saying.

They actually listened to me and didn't say "no you're lying." (Female, 17 years)

Getting listened to. (Female, 23 years)

Receiving Follow Ups. Ensuring young people are followed up with was mentioned by one participant.

Open communication and follow up. The follow up should be in two days at least. (Female, 20 years)

What Did Not Work Well with Complaints

Participants who had a negative experience with complaining were asked what did not work well for them; 16 young people elaborated on things that made their experience a negative one. The results are shown in Table 13.

Table 13. Negative Experiences with Complaints

Negative Factors	Mentions
Feeling not taken seriously or listened to	11
Not seeing a result or change	3
Feeling unsupported	1
Getting the police involved	1

Feeling Not Taken Seriously or Listened To. Overwhelmingly a key factor that can make the complaints process a negative one for young people is the feeling that they are not being believed, taken seriously, or listened to. In some cases this led to further abusive situations or unhappiness.

Not being believed. Being told in other complaints, "that's life." That's what they used as a bit of a slogan. When I made smaller complaints, it was never done in a private. If you are making a complaint it should be done in private and done in a safe environment. (Female, 22 years)

I told my past carer about abuse from a current carer. After that my past carer told me to take notes and to write down everything I wasn't happy with and about the abuse. The past carer told the Department. They came out the next day. It was second period and I got taken to the office. There was a CSO and police and then from there I had a chat. I told them what I wrote down. I got a call before the end of school. I got taken away. It took them seven years to realise that I was abused for nearly seven years straight. I had tried telling the Department before many times. Sometimes I couldn't tell the Department how I was being treated because a carer was right next to me. (Male, 18 years)

The person I'm talking to going over my head to talk to someone else as if I don't exist. Talking to my carer instead of me. Not treating me seriously when I am talking to them. (Male, 20)

I feel that Child Safety doesn't actually take the time to take it in and listen to what you are complaining about. I feel they go straight to being defensive. I feel that they could change that to being more open minded to what the person is saying and to listen to their perspective. (Female, 17 years)

Not Seeing Change or a Result.

Well I complained and reported it and the CSO and team leader got away with it. (Female, 21 years)

I call it two-faced. The CSO said they would do something to follow up on it and take it further but nothing happened at all and there was no change. (Male, 18 years)

All of it. Once I had submitted the complaint they kind of just swept it under the rug and no one wanted to talk about it. (Female, 18 years)

Feeling Unsupported. One young person had a negative experience due to feeling unsupported through the process.

(I) felt unhappy because no one was there to support me. (Female, 18 years)

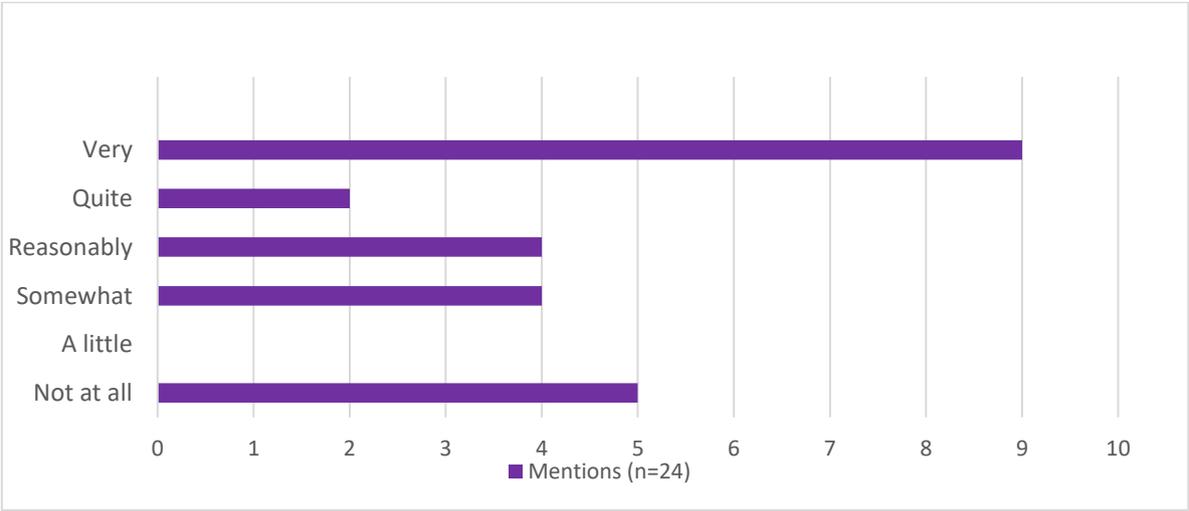
Getting the Police Involved. One participant was unhappy due to the police being called every time a complaint was made.

Every time I did make a complaint I had the police called on me. Apparently, I was in the wrong and not allowed to make a complaint. There was one day when I had to walk home from school. When I got home I asked for a Panadol from a carer. She refused to give it to me and insisted that I have half a glass of water first. They ended up calling the police because I wouldn't drink the water until I had a Panadol and they called the police and I had to have a psych evaluation. The next day when my aunty came up to the Dept to fight she also made a complaint about it. (Female, 20 years)

Likelihood of Making a Complaint

Young people were asked to rate how likely they would be to make a complaint if they were dissatisfied or unhappy with an aspect of their life in care. Most young people were “reasonably” to “very” likely to raise a complaint (60%); however five young people stated they were “not at all” likely to.

Figure 2. Likelihood of Raising a Complaint.



Following this question, young people were asked if there was anything their Child Safety Workers or the department could do to make it easier for them to raise issues when they have concerns; 17 respondents took the opportunity to suggest changes. A common theme was the desire to be better listened to and taken seriously (see Table 14).

Table 14. Factors Increase Likelihood of Complaining About Issues

Factors Facilitating Complaining	Mentions
Being listened to	9
Better accessibility to complaints system	3
Having a Peer Worker/Someone to connect with independent of department workers	1
More opportunities to speak up	1
Confidentiality	1
Increased visits	1
Better living standards	1



Some of these answers are explained further in quotes by the young people below:

Better Listened To. Young people were clear about the need to feel better listened to when making a complaint, stating that open communication and feeling listened to helps them to feel valued. Some participants spoke about the way they feel betrayed by the system when they do not feel heard, which leads to a loss of faith in the complaints process.

Being listened to by the Department and them actually following up and feeling valued by the Department and worker. (Female, 20)

Listen more and understand that it's our lives that it's affecting. When you don't listen we feel betrayed. (Female, 20)

Simply listening and whenever I complain feeling heard and valued. I feel like there's no use in complaining if they never take in what I said. (Female, 17 years)

Listen to the complaint and actually deal with it instead of dismissing it. Maybe find a temporary place for me to go while they were looking into the situation so it would stop happening. (Male, 25)

Better Accessibility. Three young people elaborated on ways that the complaints system could be made more accessible.

Talk about the issue that you have and make it more easy. If kids have a disability or are struggling try to have more support. Try to make it easier to read. It was hard to actually understand the web page and the writing. Use pictures. Many young people can understand pictures more than words. (Male, 19 years)

They could make the complaints more accessible. Make you aware that you can make a complaint and the process. Maybe a flyer that gets handed out when kids enter care and also in waiting rooms at Child Safety. (Female 18 years)

It just felt like a really formal and complicated thing that I have got to do. I would rather not do. It would be just easier to ignore it like it didn't happen. (Female, 18)

Having A Peer Worker/Someone to Connect with Independent of Department Workers. One young person wanted to have a person who they could connect with who was not a general departmental worker.

Find a person who could connect with me - not worker or worker known and comfortable with. (Female, 22 years)

More Opportunities to Speak Up. One young person elaborated on the need to be given more opportunities away from carers to speak up about things that might be worrying them.

I would definitely make a complaint now because I have family support [kinship care] around me. They would help me get it done. It's really life-changing. When you're with family, you aren't just with workers who have you around. Asking do you have any issues you want to talk about. Not leaving it for the child to bring up. It would have been a game-changer for me in the past. Asking the child, what's good and what's bad? Bringing up positives as well would help. Give young people phone calls. Take us away from the care home for a few hours. Just picking us up from school so we can have privacy to share that information. (Female, 16 years)

What Young People Think Would Improve the System

As a final question, young people were asked if there was anything they would like to tell the department about how the out-of-home care complaints process could be improved; 22 young people took the opportunity to share their thoughts. Results are summarised in Table 15.

Table 15. Young People's Suggestions for Improving the Complaints System

Suggestions	Mentions
Listen better to young people	5
Make safer environment for meetings	3
More support	3
Educate Young people about their rights	3
Better communication	3
Improve the process	2
More accountability (such as having an independent third-party deal with complaints)	1
Show positive outcomes	1
Give young people access to someone with similar experience	1

Listen Better to Young People. A recurring theme in this consultation has been the need for young people to feel as if they are being listened to better when they speak up. Young people expressed the wish to be taken seriously and to feel valued and heard.

DON'T IGNORE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE. When they speak up... LISTEN. Make sure they know who they can turn to in times of need! (Female, 18 years)

Listen to the young person. Make them feel valued about their complaint and physically do something about it. (Female, 20 years)

Always make sure you listen to both sides not just the carer. Sometimes the child might have something that needs to be said but is just too frightened to say it. They might be scared of something. Speak to the child normally in an area where they would feel comfortable. It might not be that they're scared of the carer, they might (be) scared about something themselves and want to know it's safe to tell. (Female, 17 years)

Take the side of the young person. Just listen to the young person and believe the young person (until proven false). Take their complaint seriously. (Male, 25 years)

Make Safer Environment for Meetings. Three young people spoke about the need to increase the comfort and safety of meeting with CSOs and the department. This ranged from increased privacy to making a more comfortable environment through toys, for example.

I wish I could write a full essay for you!! listen to the kid... I know it's a priority to keep in contact... but get them alone... they will tell you everything... make meetings less formal... some toys or comfort food or through art... they will open up eventually!! They feel pressured to give the answers when others are in the room... had no space to open up and tell the truth!! Carer would always talk for me... would cut me off and I could never talk openly. (Male, 19 years)

Especially when young people are getting older, you must recognise the confidentiality in confiding with the Department with issues. (Female, 20 years)



If a kid has a complaint don't let it sit there. Process it with the child. Some kids will exaggerate what's happened and some kids won't. If something bad happens young kids may exaggerate. Give young people a healthy environment away from their carers (like a park) so the kids don't feel like there is someone listening or the carer could get upset by it. (Female, 18 years)

More Support. Three young people spoke about the need for increased support, such as emotional, physical, and moral support.

Help more kids that are struggling – e.g., homelessness (Female, 16 years)

Just giving us that phone call and that bit of moral support. It will make kids more happy to give the information over. Just supporting us a bit more. (Female, 16 years)

Actually go and see the young person. As soon as someone makes a complaint actually go out and check on them. Maybe then people would start trusting the Department of Child Safety about their problems and fears. (Male, 18 years)

Educate Young People About Their Rights. It was raised by some young people that there is a need to increase the education to young people regarding their rights to complain or raise their concerns. One young person suggested visual representations to explain how to complain.

Let kids know they can actually complain and getting them a Community Visitor. (Male, 18 years)

Young people need to know that they have the right to make a complaint and it's important that they do to improve the system for them and other youth. (Female, 18 years)

I thought that I had to tell whoever I was with (like if I was with a carer or in respite). I thought the third-party organisation were the ones that went directly to the Department. I didn't know that I could go directly to them. I thought I had to go through someone else and they'd talk to them. Put an ad on TV so I knew I could go directly to them if I had a complaint. If I'm watching it helps me remember more than telling me face to face. Any kind of visual representation. You can sit me down and tell me but I probably would misinterpret it. A poster or a video would help. (Female, 18 years)

Better Communication. Some young people raised the need for better communication between young people, foster parents, CSOs, and the department.

Communicate with foster parents and young people in the system by seeing them in person, not by phone. (Female, 21 years)

Encouraging young people to talk to people like CREATE (where they feel confident and comfortable) to make a complain that will better their situation and don't feel guilty. I didn't really see my CSO much. It is unlikely that I would have told my CSO if there was a problem. Having better communication with the Department would make people more likely to say something. (Male, 19 years)

Give them options to say what they want to say and just asking a few more questions so that Child Safety have a bit of a better understanding of the situation that the young person is in. (Female, 17 years)

Improve the Process. Two young people commented specifically that aspects of the process could be improved:

Speed the process up. (Male, 18 years)

Have easy to read forms. (Female, 23 years)



More Accountability (Such as Having an Independent Third-Party Deal with Complaints). One young person wanted to see more accountability after a complaint has been made, stating that complaints handling should be dealt with by a third-party.

There should a proper process. On KICBOX there should be a section that says “make a complaint.” It should show you if it's been sent and what stage of the complaints process it is up to. Have an accessible timeline like a diary of the complaints process. In my ideal world, the complaints process should be handled by a third-party person. So many times, I would make a complaint about a CSO and it would go to the team leader who is really good friends with them because they've worked for them. It could be investigated properly by a third party and not minimised. (Female, 22 years)

Show Positive Outcomes. One participant suggested showing young people examples of positive outcomes from complaints to demonstrate what is achievable.

Show them cases where there's been positive outcome cause if kids can see it in their eyes they'll trust them - seeing what happens is positive, don't stop trying to find someone child can relate to - comfortable and safe with (Female, 22 years)

Give Young People Access to Someone with Similar Experience. One participant suggested giving young people access to someone with the same experience.

Have them talk to someone else who has had that experience. (Female, 23 years)

Discussion

This consultation sought to hear from young people with a care experience living in Queensland about their understanding of the complaints process, their experiences in raising concerns, and perspectives on how the department could improve the current complaints process.

The majority, 80% (20/25) of young people consulted had raised a complaint in the past. Most of the young people who had made a complaint did so by speaking to an adult staff member such as their Team Leader, Child Safety Officer, or caseworker. A large number of complaints that were made regarded the actions of Child Safety Officers² and Foster/Residential carers³, reaffirming the importance of having multiple adult staff members available for young people in care to speak to if they need to raise concerns about other adults in their life. CREATE's research has shown a mixed response regarding the experiences of raising complaints, with many participants revealing that they often do not feel heard, listened to or believed, and that they are often not informed about the process and outcomes of any complaint's actions taken (CREATE, 2020; McDowall, 2018). If complaints are acted on, there must be an obligation to ensure that departmental processes also include feedback mechanisms and communication with the young people to inform them on the outcomes of actions taken (CREATE, 2020).

Queensland's Office of the Public Guardian (2021) is an independent body that provides Community Visitors for high needs children and young people in care and can support them in raising complaints. There are about 140 Community Visitors that cover all potential sites across Queensland for both children and adults. Findings from this consultation show that only a few participants had spoken to a Community Visitor about concerns that they have had in the past. While recent reforms to the Department's complaints management process may have occurred, young people's experiences

² This would be considered an “Allegation of serious misconduct” and would be managed by the Department's Professional Standards team.

³ The Department would manage complaints about a carer through a “Standards of Care” process.



highlight that more promotion about Community Visitors and ensuring appropriate resourcing is provided so that Community Visitor services can actively assist young people to raise feedback and complaints with the Department when needed.

Unfortunately, the participants who spoke to staff members reported mixed feelings regarding their responses, with only three explicitly stating that the experience was positive. Overall, 70% (14/20) of complainants were unhappy with the response they received, with only six reporting feeling satisfied with the outcome. This suggests that while the specific policies may be in place for establishing a complaints process, more needs to be done to ensure the response and handling of the expressed concerns of young people is done with integrity, transparency, and respect for the young person.

A factor that overwhelmingly reoccurs in consultations with young people is the need to feel heard and believed. This theme continued to emerge within this consultation. Almost half the young respondents stated that not being listened to or believed was the reason for having a negative experience with raising a complaint in the past; four stated this was the reason they chose not to complain regarding past concerns, and nine young people stated that being listened to better would increase the likelihood of them raising issues in the future. This mirrors the findings in McDowall's (2018) report which found that "being heard" is a critical factor in young people's decision-making regarding raising a concern or complaint (p. 59). This suggests that much more needs to be done to ensure that all the adults in a child or young person's life take all the necessary steps to make them feel that their views are being properly listened to and taken seriously.

Over half the young people consulted (n=13) remembered a past incident or concern related to being in care which they had not raised as a complaint. This observation raises concerns regarding the barriers that young people in care in QLD face when raising complaints. Beyond not feeling heard, the findings also reveal several other structural barriers that prevent young people from speaking up when they are unhappy with an aspect of their life in care. Some other barriers discussed include fear of repercussions, feeling unsupported, disbelief that any change would occur, inaccessibility of complaints processes, poor communication of workers, and not having enough opportunities in private to speak up. As a result, many young people consulted had lost faith in the complaints system and took the opportunity of making suggestions to better it.

Some young people suggested the need to make meetings feel more supportive by being conducted in a more comfortable, and a safer, environment. There were requests to increase the privacy of meetings (such as holding them without the carer present) and making the meetings feel less formal. Suggestions such as these emphasise the need for young people to be given frequent time and space to raise their concerns in a safe and comfortable way. These suggestions are similar to points raised by McDowall (2016) which emphasise that young people must feel confident they have the time and space to express a range of views. This consultation found it vital that young people feel they have the opportunities to have their say in an equal and safe dialogue with the adults in their life.

Having a trusting support network greatly influenced the ability of young people to complain. Open communication between young people, carers, and their Child Safety Officers can work to build a relationship of trust. Some young people who reported a past positive experience with complaints spoke about the ways in which open communication between them and their Team Leader or Child Safety Officer helped them to feel supported throughout the process. In order for young people to feel as if they can fully participate in decisions that affect their lives they must feel a level of respect and trust with the adults in their life who have the power to make change. As Keenan (2014) argues, trust is fostered through transparent processes of accountability for decision-making so that young people can see the outcomes of their participation, through feedback, coordination, open communication and documentation of influence. Some participants raised specific concerns over the relationships that adults have with one another that hinder the young person's ability to feel their concerns will be kept confidential (due to conflicts of interest amongst adults). This further diminishes a sense of trust between young people and their carers or workers. Trust takes time to develop and is predicated on meaningful, regular contact between young people and significant adults. This indicates



a need for more accountability regarding open, honest communication, ensuring long-term trusting relationships are built with young people, and that young people are kept updated throughout the complaints process to ensure transparency.

Conclusion

All children and young people have the right to have a say and be heard on matters that concern their wellbeing, happiness, and safety. This consultation aimed to hear from young people with a care experience in Queensland to gain a better understanding of their experiences with the complaints system, and to hear their views on ways the system could be improved. Young people aged 16-25 with a care experience currently residing in Queensland participated in the consultation. The results found that, while many young people had raised complaints in the past, there was a general sense of distrust in the system. This was often due to a feeling that no one will listen or believe them if they speak up about their concerns. Most often, this feeling has grown out of negative past experiences in making complaints. Some young people spoke about the increased need for communication to build trust with the adults in their lives and to be given more safe spaces to speak up. Others spoke about a need to see more outcomes when they raise their concerns. Some young people had positive experiences with complaining usually based on a feeling of being heard or transparent communication.

CREATE recommend Queensland's Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women invest in establishing a more positive complaints handling culture, and system in which young people's concerns are taken seriously and treated with respect, and one that is more responsive to positive and negative feedback.

Actions

1. Create a Positive Complaint Handling Culture

- Train staff in child-centric practices that uphold the self determination of children and young people and develop consistent reminders and encouragement for staff to act according to these practices.
- Incorporate informal and ongoing feedback mechanisms at case planning and other meetings with young people to ensure a positive and ongoing method of hearing young people's concerns and views.
- Promote and ensure appropriate resourcing is provided so that Community Visitor services can actively assist young people to raise feedback and complaints with the Department when needed
- Increase communication between young people and their Child Safety Officers, Team Leaders, and caseworkers. This can be facilitated by controlling caseloads so that workers have time to build relationships with young people.
- Increase transparency by ensuring complainants are given the option to be regularly updated on the outcomes and progress of their complaints to build trust in the complaints system by young people.
- Promote child centred practice through training and encouraging officers to listen and respond to children and young people's complaints and feedback in a timely manner that is both safe and empowering; view and respond to young people's complaints seriously and communicate regularly, no matter the outcome of the complaint.
- Work with staff and carers to ensure all concerns that are raised by young people are formally raised as a complaint, and standardise the handling system that follows to ensure all complaints are taken seriously.



2. Ensure Staff are Properly Trained to Adhere to Child-Safe Principles, Culturally-Safe Practices, and are Trauma Informed

- Ensure young people have regular check-ins with a trusted adult in their life, and are regularly asked directly, in a manner that adheres to child-safe and trauma-informed principles, if they have any concerns or worries. Make seeking feedback from young people a standard part of case management.
- Ensure staff understand and practice child-safe principles, and that they build trusting relationships based on respect.
- Provide more opportunities for children and young people to build trust with caseworkers and staff with whom they communicate.
- Ensure that young people have private spaces to raise their concerns with trusted adult staff members, such as opportunities to speak in a comfortable space both away from their carer or CSO.
- Make meeting places more comfortable and less “formal” (e.g. by choosing locations appropriate for the young person, and if necessary, “humanising” the space through the use of posters, toys, seating etc.)
- As stated in the *Complaint Handling Guide* (2015), staff should not only be trained in cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, but work towards eliminating bias and barriers Indigenous young people face when accessing or participating in the complaints system.

3. Increase the Accessibility of the Complaints Process by Making it Young-Person Centric

- Develop and regularly promote resources that explain the complaints and feedback system to children and young people in a way that is child and young-person friendly.
- Ensure case notes are young-person centric, easy to read, and can be explained to the young person. Since young people are likely to access their files, the records should be written knowing they will be read by the young person. Avoid acronyms, patronising language, and jargon.
- Ensure that the complaint’s website is built using a child-friendly format and appropriate language.
- Provide the necessary support to carers, residential workers, and caseworkers that enables them to communicate with children and young people about their rights, and to provide information to them about the support services available when raising concerns. Ensure the same is done for other trusted adults in young people’s lives (such as teachers and counsellors).
- Ensure that Departmental complaints and feedback processes include mechanisms that communicate with young people about the progress and outcomes of actions taken.



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Appendix A. Complaints Processes Survey

CREATE Consultation: Complaints Processes (Queensland)

WHAT IS THIS SURVEY ABOUT?

There are formal complaint processes available to children and young people who live in out-of-home care. Such processes are designed to enable young people to speak up and seek support if they are unhappy about their treatment in care. Complaints can be made, for example, if you are unhappy with an aspect of how your carer or caseworker is looking after you. We are interested in learning about YOUR understanding of, and experience with, complaint processes: If you feel able to, or have complained; how you complain; the type of things you have, or are likely to complain about; what it is like for you to complain; and what would make the complaint process better for you.

INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY

Please answer all questions and leave comments where applicable. You can click through the sections by clicking "Next" at the bottom of the screen. At the end of the survey click the "Done" button.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Before you begin, we would like to remind you of a few things: Doing this survey is completely voluntary. You can stop doing this survey at any time and this will not affect you joining in with any other CREATE events and activities. You can skip questions if there is a reason you would rather not answer them; however, we at CREATE hope that you will want to share as many of your views as possible. Everything you tell us in this survey will be kept confidential (this means private) unless you tell us something that makes us concerned for your safety or for the safety of another young person in care, then we may have to tell someone. You can have a support person help you with the survey if you would like. We may use the information gained from the survey for reports and presentations but we will NEVER use your name. You will be anonymous in these reports. Having understood the above information, by continuing with this survey you are giving your consent to participate. For more information on consultation participation, you can refer to CREATE's website, or ask your local CREATE Office (1800 655 105) for a Consultation Participation Information Sheet.

1. What method are you using to complete this survey?

- a. Online Independent Online as a group (with a staff member)
- b. Telephone interview Face-to-face interview Other (e.g., hard copy)

2. In what state or territory do you live?

3. What is your post code?

4. How old are you?

5. I identify as:

- Female
- Male
- I identify with another gender

6. Culturally, I identify as:

- Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander
- Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- Other Cultural Group (non-English speaking background)
- No specific group
- If "Other Cultural Group", please specify: _____

7. How old were you when you came into care?

8. What type of placement do you live in? Please select only one.

- Foster care
- Kinship care
- Residential care
- Permanent care
- Semi-independent supported accommodation
- Independent living
- Other (please specify): _____

9. Do you identify as someone living with a disability?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

10. Please describe, in your own words, what your disability is. Any comments?

11. Are you receiving special support for your disability? This could include medication, special education, counseling, etc.

- Yes
- No

12. Do you have someone you can talk to if you are dissatisfied or unhappy with aspects of your life in care?

- Yes
- No

If you answered "Yes", what is the person's relationship to you (e.g. carer, casework, birth parent, friend)?

13. If something about your treatment in care was worrying you, how would you decide whether to complain about it or not?

14. Have you ever made a complaint?

- Yes
- No



15. What did you complain about?

16. How did you go about complaining?

17. What would be your preferred way of making a complaint? (Please check all that apply)

- In person with a Child Safety Worker
- Online complaints form to Department Children's Guardian
- CREATE complaints form
- KicBox
- Email
- Text
- Other (please specify)

18. Who did you complain to in the first instance? (Please tick all that apply)

- Child Safety Worker
- Carer
- Birth Parent
- Other family member
- Partner/ Girlfriend/ Boyfriend
- Friend
- The Advocate/Guardian/ Commissioner for Children and Young Person
- Child Safety Complaints
- Other Worker
- Other (please specify) _____

19. Did you hear back about your complaint?

- Yes
- No

20. How did you hear back about your complaint?

21. How happy were you with the response you received?

- Not at all
- A little
- Somewhat
- Reasonably
- Quite
- Very

22. Are you aware that you can ask for a review if you are not happy with the outcome of your complaint?

- Yes
- No



23. If you have had a positive experience with complaining, please help us to better understand what worked well for you (e.g. problem was resolved, I felt listened to)?

24. If you have had a negative experience with complaining, please help us to better understand what did not work well for you (e.g. was unhappy with the outcome, I didn't feel believed)?

25. How likely are you to make a complaint if you are dissatisfied or unhappy about an aspect of your treatment in care?

(Not at all likely – 0) _____ (Very Likely – 6)

26. Thinking about the score you have given above, what could your Child Safety Worker, or the Department in general, do to INCREASE the likelihood of you complaining if you did have a problem?

27. Can you think of something related to being in care that may have worried you in the past which you HAVEN'T complained about? *If "Yes", please share what this is, if you are comfortable to do so.

- Yes
- No

28. What would you say the main reason for you NOT speaking up and complaining about the above was?

29. What (if anything) would you like to tell the department about how they can improve the complaints process for children and young people in care?

Thank you for completing this survey. To allow CREATE to use your responses in our final report you will need to provide us with your consent. To do this, please copy and paste the link below into your web browser and fill in the details. Please be sure to submit your responses before you leave this page by clicking the "DONE" below.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Consent_and_Thank_you_Complaints_Processes_QLD

To say thank you for the time and effort you have taken in answering these questions, we would like to give you a \$25 gift card. If you would like to receive a gift card, the link above will ask you to provide your postal address and contact details. If you do not want a gift card, you can simply select no. Please note, only the first 25 responses will receive a voucher. If you have any questions about the survey, or if you would like to know more about what CREATE does for children and young people in out-of-home care, contact your local CREATE Office on 1800 655 105