

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 National Standards 1, 2, 8 and 9 for Out-of-Home Care, while not specifically mentioning Residential Care, do address critical aspects of the care experience (FaHCSIA, 2011).

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 OOHC 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

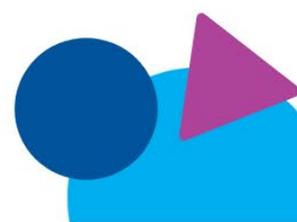
young person and tailor interventions to that need, rather than the shared needs of the group.

- 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 just 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:



- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

(CREATE Report Card 2013). Sydney: CREATE Foundation.

References

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