

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE SAID ABOUT...

COVID-19: The views and experiences of young people with an out-of-home care experience in the ACT

CREATE in the ACT asked 25 young people (aged between 14-25 years old) with a care experience about their experiences during COVID-19.

More than 60% (n = 16) of participants rated the impact of COVID-19 on their mental health in the middle to high range.

Young people also said that their family contact and education were affected during COVID-19.

Generally, young people felt they had a good understanding of what was happening and all the information they needed about COVID-19.

60% (n = 15) of participants reported some difficulty accessing support during COVID-19.

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Stress. My mental health hasn't been doing well. My psychiatrist has been on leave so I've been left out in the dark a bit. (Female, 19)

Not being able to see friends... Not being able to go out. Missed going to the skate park with friends. (Male, 14)

The services were not well enough equipped to provide the support we needed. There needs to be more funding for mental health and in-home support. (Female, 20)

It's hard because part of my family lives in a different state, so I haven't been able to see them. (Male, 18)

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Key Messages

- Some young people reported that COVID-19 restrictions had negatively affected their mental health, education/training and family contact. Other areas of concern included:
 - not being able to do their usual activities
 - contact with friends
 - financial and housing instability
 - lack of employment opportunities and job losses.
- Some young people commented that they were coping well and many (n = 18) had experienced some positive impacts during this time e.g. increased hygiene practices, enjoying a new exercise routine.
- Support appeared to be an important theme. Young people commented about the impact insufficient support had on a range of life areas, including their:
 - mental health
 - education
 - access to disability services and support
 - ability to maintain stable, independent accommodation
 - transition from care.

“ All in all bad because of supports not being around anymore because I just moved into my own place. Set up to fail – have lost this now – back in supported accommodation. (Male, 21)

Actions

- Ensure young people have access to appropriate and affordable mental health care.
- Strengthen relationships between case workers and young people to maintain an essential source of support.
- Ensure all young people over the age of 15 years are actively engaged in transition from care planning. Young people should understand the process and have a plan that is flexible and meets their individual needs and goals.
- Extend supported care to 21 years for ALL young people.
- Allocate additional funding for a mentoring system to assist young people to access appropriate supports and services.

Contact CREATE to get a
copy of the full report.
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