

Connection to Caseworkers

In New South Wales

CREATE in New South Wales asked 30 young people, aged between 10–25 and with a care experience, about their experiences connecting with Department caseworkers, the levels of support they receive from these relationships, and what caseworkers can do to be more supportive of their needs.

46.7%

either had no scheduled contact with their caseworker or were unsure if they had contact.

21.6%

said the most helpful support from caseworkers included: listening; respecting boundaries; problem solving; commitment; reliability; and being consistent.

39.3%

reported poor communication, no information sharing, and uncaring/rude worker behaviours.

Young people prefer direct, in person contact with their caseworkers.

“

I am a kid but not stupid. Instead of trying to bubble wrap things, be direct and honest.
(Female, 14 years)

Help me in the areas I need help in, not just the areas [you] want to help.
(Male, 18 years)

Listen, act, and be flexible ... too many rules and regulations.
(Female, 14 years)

Contact me, check in and see how I am doing. [Don't] just assume I'm doing ok.
(Female, 22 years)

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Key Messages

Young people identified that a strong relationship could be formed where workers were available, approachable, friendly, trustworthy, and respectful.

Barriers to support included:

- Young people not feeling listened to
- Unreliable/disorganised workers
- Poor communication/contact
- Not following through (no direct action)
- Uncaring attitudes
- Excluding the young person from decision making

During periods of change and disruption (where caseworkers may come and go or young people transition out of care) young people suggested that workers be patient, honest, and respectful; go slow; and take the time to explain changes.

“Leadership, positivity, and working together. [A caseworker should be] a pretty fun, happy person who takes it seriously enough to make sure everything works for both, but you can always have a darned good laugh with them. (Female, 24 years)

Be a caring person, not a robot that has to do their job. (Male, 13 years)

Actions

- Encourage caseworkers to reach out, connect, communicate, and focus on relationship-building with the young person and (if appropriate) family/friends/community.
- Employ caseworkers who can be flexible and balance Department rules with compassion and care for individual needs.
- Caseworkers should respect the voices of young people and work with their strengths and interests to create meaningful, positive, and fun experiences.
- Ensure caseworkers plan for continuity BUT provide stability during periods of change.
- Caseworkers should be proactive, get things done, and follow through on goals.

Contact CREATE in NSW to get a copy of the full report. nsw@create.org.au

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