

Connection to Caseworkers

In Western Australia

CREATE in Western Australia asked 28 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.

50%

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

24.8%

value caseworkers that have genuine, kind, and caring attitudes; provide positive guidance and encouragement; are trustworthy; and offer emotional support.

49.3%

reported caseworkers who didn't listen or answer questions; were pushy and intrusive; did not respect young peoples' privacy or confidentiality; were unreliable and disorganised; and slow to act.

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Talk to the kids, talk to the carer, establish a good trusting relationship, and everything else will fall into place eventually. Don't expect respect straight away. Be interested, go slow, and be patient. Kids have learnt not to trust, so being patient, respectful, and going slow [will] help.
(Female, 19 years)

Be a good listener.
(Male, 11 years)

Take in the kid's side of what is happening, and just try and interact with them and keep positive. Don't focus on the negative stuff that's happened in the past.
(Male, 16 years)

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

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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 (when 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.

“Have a clear plan in place that is transparent for the caseworker, family, and child. Make sure the child is aware of the care plan and every transitional step forward, so they have a grip on their life [and] a sense of control over what's going on.

(Female, 22 years)

Contacting Aunty and Uncle and communicating effectively so that [the] young person can have normal experiences.
(Male, 14 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 WA to
get a copy of the full
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