

Complaints Processes in New South Wales

The right to 'have a say' includes having the knowledge, confidence, and support to be able to make a complaint if and when needed.

CREATE asked 29 young people with a care experience aged 12 - 18 in NSW about making a complaint and what helps and hinders participation in this process.

97%

of young people said there was someone they could talk with if they were feeling unhappy with an aspect of their life in care.

Most frequently, young people said they could talk to their carers, caseworkers, and friends.

36%

were "not at all" or only "a little" likely to raise a complaint.

Of those who had made a complaint, **60%** were "not at all" or only "a little happy" with they response received.

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The way I was treated in care. I spoke to someone I trust. She was very caring. (Young person, 18)

I wouldn't complain about it ... if I do they may put restrictions on me. (Young person, 13)

No one takes me seriously. (Young person, 17)

When I complained, I was just looking to be moved into somewhere that would look after me... They were very concerned for me and they wanted me out of that placement ASAP. I think it took about six months for me to get out of that placement. (Young person, 14)

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Key Messages

Barriers to making a complaint included:

- feeling worried about the consequences of complaining
- feeling worried that they won't be believed (or previous experience of this)
- difficult or daunting process
- not thinking anything would change
- not having a trusted person to talk to.

Young people wanted:

- positive relationships with skilled, trusted, stable, and engaged caseworkers with whom they felt confident to make a complaint
- to be informed and encouraged to make complaints (e.g., access to information, resources, and a trusted support person or advocate)
- to feel listened to and believed when making a complaint
- to be able to make a complaint to an independent body if needed
- to be involved in decision-making
- to feel confident that the process would help their situation and that they would be safe
- to receive regular updates about what was happening
- to have a timely resolution.

“ [I am] afraid of someone being angry with me or the person I complain about coming back at me. (Young person, 14)

“ If I had a stable caseworker who actually put in the work to show up and made me feel like I was an actual person I would have said it sooner and complained. I would have been more confident and felt like I could trust my caseworker. They need to build that relationship with a child... (Young person, 18)

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Actions

- Ensure that children and young people have good quality, trusting relationships with their caseworkers.
- Ensure complaints mechanisms adhere to the principles from CREATE's Child-Centred Best Practice Guide, which was informed by the voices of young people and consistent with what young people from this consultation have said.
- Ensure there is capacity to monitor and evaluate complaints systems over time. This includes having clear, specific, and measurable indicators assessing the experiences of young people and their level of satisfaction with processes.
- Ensure there are transparency and accountability mechanisms.

Consultation
completed in 2023

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