

## Educational Experience

### in New South Wales

Education is a basic human right and is essential for young people's wellbeing and development. However, research shows that young people in out-of-home care experience disadvantage in their education compared to the general population.

CREATE spoke to 25 young people with a care experience aged 15 - 17 in NSW about their experiences with education. They commented on what was working well and what additional supports they needed.

When asked to rate their school experience out of 100, young people chose a high average rating of 74.

Young people described their carers as extremely supportive of their education, most frequently providing support by helping with homework.

64% of young people said they were planning to pursue further education or training after school.

Young people said stress & difficulty with schoolwork were the top barriers to finishing school.

“ I'm motivated to finish school because I want to be the first person in my family to finish school. (Young person, 17). ”

We do have lots of support systems there. We have people that you can talk to, like teachers, counsellors and student buddies. (Young person, 15)

It was hard for me to focus in high school... I had to change schools when I changed placement. It was hard and I felt left out. (Young person, 17) ”

## Key Messages

- Most young people described their school experience as generally positive. Young people said they particularly valued:
  - Positive relationships with teachers with both academic and personal support
  - School structures that allowed additional support (eg. small class sizes)

“ They (teachers) support me through anything, personal things or just school work in general... Usually when I'm going through things, they ask if they can help me or talk to me about it. They find time to do that. (Young person, 16)

- Young people described their carers as extremely supportive of their education. They provided a range of support such as homework help, practical support (i.e. transport, laptops), and encouragement.
- When asked what additional support they needed to thrive at school, young people said they needed:
  - More academic support (i.e. a supportive teacher, extra help with school work)
  - Social support (i.e. support to manage bullying, to have friends).

“ I get too stressed out. I don't get motivated. Sometimes I wake up in a bad mood or I don't know the answer I stress out (Young person, 16)

“ I got bullied a lot for being in the system... (Young person, 17)

- Young people who had left high school commented that placement instability and bullying were significant barriers to completing school. In contrast, the top barriers to school completion chosen by current students were stress and difficulty with school work.

## Actions

- Ensure teachers are able to build supportive relationships with young people, including by providing professional development in trauma informed practice and school structures that allow time for individualised support.
- Address bullying and the emotional wellbeing of young people, including education about stigma faced by young people in care.
- Provide ongoing academic support to young people in OOHC through Individual Education Plans, free additional support, and equipping carers.
- Minimise the disruption of placement and school changes.

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