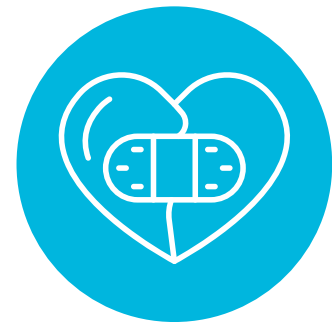


Trauma

An understanding of trauma needs to be embedded into all levels of the school operations from policies and procedures through to in-person interactions and teaching styles.



Understand Trauma

We need teachers to understand what trauma is and how it affects us.

We Have Unique Challenges



There are lots of different things that can make the classroom challenging for us, and diversity of our experiences (e.g. care types) also mean that different supports are needed. For example, if we're in residential care, it's hard for us to even get to school.

We need you to recognise the connections between trauma and neurodiversity. For us, responses often feel incomplete or seem to be based on a misunderstanding or assumption about what we might be struggling with.



We Can Often Be Neurodiverse

We Need Extra Support



We really want to learn and be part of the school environment, but we are struggling. This can look like anger, choosing not to engage, or being really unfocused, but it's actually that we are feeling unsafe and distressed.

Some Tips

- Give us clear and attainable goals
- Recognise common trauma behaviours
 - Difficulty self-regulating
 - Withdrawal
 - Aggression
 - Self-destructive behaviour
 - Shutting down or inability to focus
 - Escalation in behaviour
 - Decreased engagement
- Take a strengths-based approach to communicating with us
- Read our body language

IF UNSURE, CHECK IN WITH US



”

“You don't know you have trauma while you're going through it. You need someone there to help you and show you and guide you during that time”

“You have to say you're fine but you're not, you can't tell them [teachers] because they won't understand”

“I am 23 and I am still a traumatised child. Schools aren't funded for trauma and PTSD – we need to look at the trauma and not everything else”

“Kids shouldn't [have] to use something to show teachers [that they are struggling]. Teachers should be trained to see it more”

Stigma



Don't Discriminate

When we think about our teachers knowing about us being in care, we worry about **being discriminated against** – either positively or negatively.

"[I've been told] 'you're going to be like your mother or you're going to be like your father'"

Recognise Our Potential



We want adults to **recognise our potential** and dream big for us so we can dream big for ourselves.

"[What would help me is] school treating me better, not like I'm nothing"

Be Sensitive and Subtle



We want recognition of when things aren't going well for us in the classroom, but this needs to be subtle so other kids don't notice.

"I always feel different"

Understand Our Challenges



We feel very different to our peers due to our care experience; isolated, ostracised, discriminated against, and like we are viewed as 'no good' or a lost cause.

We feel further stigmatised and unsafe when we are seen as our 'bad' behaviour. We want our teacher's help in getting back to a place of safety so we can stay engaged in learning.

DON'T LABEL US AS BAD

"I wish my teachers knew what it is like to be a young person in OOHC and how to help me"



Safe Space

We want to have genuine opportunities to shape discussions and decisions. We want you to listen to us when we say what we need and help us find that support.

How to help us self-regulate in the space

- Stress-relieving tools like fidget spinners
- Fun or calming activities
- Breaking things into little steps or tasks

Things that help create safety

- Not having to advocate for ourselves when overwhelmed
- Physical space for self-regulation
- Being able to escape the class or situation when feeling overwhelmed
- An inclusive (non-discriminative) environment

What makes us feel safe

- Feeling respected
- Trauma trained teachers who use trauma-responsive practices
- Having someone we know and trust
 - School counsellor
 - Favourite teacher
 - Principal
 - Friends
- When we know that you believe what we say
- Active listening
- Feeling understood
- Understanding of our specific needs and past

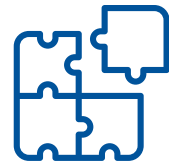
Academic Needs and Support



SUPPORTS

Supports and educational approaches we find helpful often include:

- Personalised Learning options that prioritise our views while including those of our carers, teachers, and caseworkers
- Strength-based and goal-oriented learning
- Using educational games (e.g. Bananagrams)
- Tutoring, mentoring, homework clubs, and other forms of one-on-one learning



NEEDS

There's some things that we really need from you and the school environment:



- Support for diagnosis/education support of: neurodiversity, short-sightedness, and other physical or mental health factors that impact learning
- Adjustments to assignments and the learning environment
 - Print-outs
 - Extensions
- Including different learning styles, particularly kinaesthetic learning
- 'Chunking' learning down into smaller steps or pieces to allow for focus breaks and less overwhelm
- Supporting transitions between primary/high school/college/CIT/uni etc through documenting teaching and adjustments that have been identified as helpful for us as individuals
- Outdoor learning
- **Believe in us and our potential**

Interruptions to our education make us super worried. We know that this can impact our later education and being able to transition to work. When our education is interrupted it's really hard for us to fill in the gaps this makes.

Please help us so we can stay in school and keep engaged in our learning.

CREATE would like to thank all the young people involved in this project for sharing their voice and insights. We thank educators for implementing their advice and helping all children and young people with a care experience to thrive in their learning.