

MEDIA RELEASE

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creating a better life
for children and young
people in care

NEW RESOURCE OPTIMISES PRACTICE TO INCLUDE CHILDRENS' VOICES IN DECISION MAKING

CREATE Foundation recently launched the *“Children and Young People as Decision-makers: Encouraging Participation in Out-of-Home Care Guide”* which outlines seven principles to optimise practice in child protection and community organisations. The objective of this best practice guide is to support development of a more child-centred approach to participation and decision-making.

In Australia, 44,906¹ children did not sleep in their own home last night and are growing up in out-of-home care (i.e. foster, kinship or residential care). Decisions regarding matters such as where a child will live, attend school, or family contact are often made without asking what the child wants or needs. Each decision has the potential to impact their future and the child or young person must be the central focus of this decision-making process.

The guide is grounded in the voices expressed by young people with an out-of-home care experience at CREATE's **2019 Voices in Action Conference** and is designed to create a clear path forward for workers and organisations. It will help organisations and professionals to work towards optimal participation outcomes for children and young people – ensuring decision-making participation is encouraged, inclusive and strengths-based.

The Best Practice Guide outlines the following seven principles to cultivate child-centred participation:

1. Recognise that young people's participation in decision-making (both within and beyond the care sector) is underpinned by Child-Rights culture.
2. Engage with children and young people and allocate time to develop meaningful, respectful, and trusted relationships.
3. Use strengths-based approaches to promote agency and opportunity for young people.
4. Create culturally safe spaces and mechanisms to encourage connection and participation.
5. Keep channels of communication open and use inclusive, respectful, and child-friendly language.
6. Invest in recruiting, training, and supporting quality staff to ensure that the right people are in the job.
7. Establish a working culture driven by professional integrity—be flexible, responsive, transparent, and accountable!

It is so important that children and young people in care feel empowered to be meaningfully involved in decisions that affect them. Informed by their views and experiences, this guide enables the sector and to optimally facilitate and encourage decision-making for young people in care.



We invite you to read and share the Best Practice Guide ***Children and Young People as Decision-makers: Encouraging Participation in Out-of-Home Care*** and the poster resource available [here](#), and help to create a better life for children and young people in care.

[Download the Best Practice Guide](#)

[Download the Poster Resource](#)

For further comment from CREATE's Chief Executive, Ms Jacqui Reed, and/or a young person with care experience contact Leigh White, CREATE Communications Advisor, via (m) 0431 932 122 or leigh.white@create.org.au

CREATE Foundation is the national consumer body representing the voices of children and young people with an out-of-home care experience (including kinship care, foster care and residential care). CREATE develops policy and research to report on and advocate for a better care system.

Feedback is welcome at CREATE's office on 1800 655 105 or email create@create.org.au
Read more at www.create.org.au

Key statistics on the care sector in Australia:

1. 44,906 children were in out-of-home care across Australia (AIHW 2020)
2. Young people in out-of-home care are 16 times more likely to be under a youth justice order than the general population
3. 35% of young people experience homelessness within the first year of leaving care
4. 46% of males have been involved with the justice system since leaving care
5. 29% of young people who have left care or preparing to leave care are unemployed
6. 36% children and young people in care do not live with any of their siblings
7. 35% of young people in care have five or more caseworkers during their time in care
8. 67% of young people in care over the age of 15 are not aware of having a leaving care plan

McDowall, J. J. (2018). Out-of-home care in Australia: Children and young people's views after five years of National Standards. Sydney: CREATE Foundation.

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