

Educational Experience

In South Australia

School experiences can shape educational attainment. For those living in out-of-home care, learning may be further impacted by the instability of moving around; stigma and bullying; not having a support person; or learning/behavioural difficulties connected to trauma experiences.

In SA, CREATE asked 27 care-experienced young people, aged 15–25, about their secondary education. Topics included quality of learning support; access and equity; relationships with teachers; curriculum content; peer relationships; support at home; school environment; post-care opportunities for further education; and whether individual goals and aspirations were supported.

22%

reported poor educational experience.

65%

felt very supported by their carer on their educational journey.

41%

had been suspended or excluded from school.

41%

expressed a desire to find full-time work after school while

15%

wanted to go to university.

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I have the opportunity to learn but I find it hard to learn. I learn better when things have been broken down for me. More explained and steps so I have a better understand. (Female, 17 years)

She [carer] encourages me to do my school work, communicates with teachers. (Male, 15 years)

I've been bullied a lot and moving placements messed up my entire year this year. (Female, 16 years)

I get along with some people but others are really mean about my situation and what I've gone through. (Male, 16 years)

They [school] don't understand what it's like living away from home and [they] have the same expectations of me as other kids who live with their family. (Female, 16 years)

I've had great support. I've been on a negotiable education plan since the start of school which has helped. This means we have regular meetings with school, foster carer and case worker to achieve learning goals, what's working and what isn't. (Male, 17 years)

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Key Messages

Positive supports affecting learning experiences included: individual resilience; peer networks; supportive teachers; access to SSOs; recognition and understanding of individual circumstances; and inclusive support in the form of negotiable education plans, individual education plans, and team meetings.

Barriers to education included moving schools; bullying; social isolation; inadequate learning and emotional support; difficulty with schoolwork; and poor self-esteem.

Key areas of educational change young people in this consultation want to see include:

- More individual and tailor-made learning support (learning plans, tutors, classroom assistance)
- Less school mobility/instability
- Mental health support (stress/anxiety)
- Encouragement
- Trauma-informed support and support for trauma-related learning difficulties (e.g. ability to concentrate)
- Consider the appropriateness of the school for the individual.
- Listening to what young people want
- Better pathways to higher education or vocational training
- Teacher training on the OOHC experience
- Addressing stigma/bias/harassment

The way my humanities teacher teaches, I don't understand. I've asked for help and they're organising a meeting. I definitely struggle with changing placements and school at the same time as it's disruptive moving placements. I was told twice to pack up my things and I'd be leaving placement in an hour then it didn't happen.

(Female, 15 years)

Actions

- Include young people when reviewing/designing better educational support frameworks.
- Strengthen interagency cross-collaboration between the education and welfare sectors to ensure One Plan/Documented Education Plans (DEP) are relevant parties and meaningful.
- Provide wrap-around support (i.e., tutors; mentors; afterschool programs; care-leaver support; counselling; training and resources for teachers; and educational support for carers).
- Ensure curriculum, school environment, and teaching pedagogy is inclusive for CALD and First Nations learners; young people with a disability; and members of the LGBTQI+ community.
- Minimise disruption caused by placement and school changes.

Consultation
completed in 2022

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