

Connection to Child Safety Officers In Tasmania

CREATE in Tasmania asked 25 young people, aged between 10–25 and with a care experience, about their experiences connecting with Department Child Safety Officers (CSO), the levels of support they receive from these relationships, and what caseworkers can do to be more supportive of their needs.

41.6%

either had no scheduled contact with their caseworker or were unsure if they had contact.

43.5%

identified poor communication; no information sharing; limited contact; not getting to know the young person; and the exclusion of young people in decision making as barriers to support.

33%

said the most helpful support from CSOs included listening; asking questions, giving constructive advice, following through on goals, being reliable, respecting boundaries, and getting things done.

Young people prefer direct, in person contact with their caseworkers.

“

Inform the young person personally and work a day where the young person can help get the new worker up to speed. (Female, 20 years)

Helps me move placements [and] gets stuff done—[he] cracks on with it [and] doesn't take a couple of months to get to things I need. (Male, 14 years)

Catch up more. I thought you were supposed to see your caseworker every couple of months, mine only comes around when I contact her. (Male, 14 years)

Listen more, and do some fun things, not just meetings. (Female, 14 years)

”

Key Messages

- Key factors contributing to meaningful support included professional practice (influenced by caseworker attitudes and general interpersonal qualities); good communication style; the ability to forge meaningful relationships; and the ability to produce positive child-centred outcomes through practical, targeted action.
- It is also important for workers to regularly invest time and effort into getting to know the children and young people as individuals, as well as visit regularly. Young people identified that a strong relationship could be formed where workers were available, approachable, and friendly.
- During periods of change and disruption (where caseworkers may come and go or young people transition out of care) young people suggested that workers be patient, honest, and respectful; go slow; and take the time to explain changes.

“Give them time; don't pressure them into answering personal questions right off the bat. They're not going to answer, you're wasting your time. Give them a week or so, at least to build the relationship and get settled in. (Male, 16 years)

Giving comfort and constructive advice. (Non-Binary, 17 years)

Actions

- Encourage caseworkers to reach out, connect, communicate, and focus on relationship-building with the young person and (if appropriate) family/friends/community.
- Employ caseworkers who can be flexible and balance Department rules with compassion and care for individual needs.
- Caseworkers should respect the voices of young people and work with their strengths and interests to create meaningful, positive, and fun experiences.
- Ensure caseworkers plan for continuity BUT provide stability during periods of change.
- Caseworkers should be proactive, get things done, and follow through on goals.

Consultation
completed in 2020

create
FOUNDATION

create.org.au