

Educational Experience

In Western Australia

School experiences can either enhance or hinder a young person's path to educational attainment. For those living in out-of-home care, learning may be further impacted by placement factors and/or trauma history.

In WA, CREATE asked 26 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; mentorship; support at home; stigma and bullying; school environment; post-care opportunities for further education; and whether individual goals and aspirations were supported.

64%

reported having a good learning experience at school.

38%

received no support at home with their homework.

42%

would have benefited from having a support person.

Final comments by young people revealed additional challenges...

23.7%

Felt very unsupported

18.6%

Struggled with curriculum

11.9%

Dissatisfied with multiple school changes

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... so many caseworker appointments and ... they were during school time, so I had to miss a lot of school and I didn't have a choice. (Male, 22 years)

Not all children learn in the same way so we should be given different options. They should find what the kids are really interested in and then guide them towards that. (Male, 17 years)

Don't move kids around schools so much. Keep them in the same school so that they can finish year 12 more easily and keep the same friends and not get behind in schoolwork. (Female, 21 years)

[Was] dealing with my trauma... I didn't have any teacher give me one-on-one attention. I would have liked a tutor. I asked for it but ... I was told that I didn't need it. (Female, 20 years)

[There is] stigma around kids in care not being able to finish year 12, or not being smart enough. Changing placement and moving schools all the time [also] made it difficult to catch up on all the work. Each school would be at a different stage. (Female, 21 years)

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Key Messages

Young people valued education that was inclusive (offering diverse curricula and a choice of different learning pathways); was encouraging; had caring teachers; and offered young people with a care experience the same opportunities to learn and grow as their peers.

Barriers to education included having to move schools; insufficient support from teachers at school and carers at home; stigmatisation and being seen as "different" to classmates; bullying; and inadequate learning and emotional support.

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

- More tutor support
- More academic classroom assistance
- Less school mobility
- Trauma-informed support
- Teacher training and resources on the OOHC experience
- Addressing stigma and bias
- Better interagency communication between the Education Department and other relevant departments
- Listening to what young people want
- Encouragement
- Developing individual learning support
- Better paved pathways to higher education or vocational training

I didn't get a lot of support during primary or high school... I had a teacher's aide, but I didn't have any support from my foster carer at the time. I didn't have any support from the Department or the high school. I definitely should have had a tutor or something to go to for help with my schoolwork and stuff.

(Non-binary, 19 years)

I had a lot of support but not the right sort of support. It took about two years before I got to see a counsellor at school. I had a good relationship with my teachers. It was easy to ask them for help. A couple of them would take time out of their lunch break to help me; especially in year 10.

(Female, 20 years)

Actions

Include young people when reviewing/designing better educational support frameworks.

Strengthen interagency cross-collaboration between the education and welfare sectors to ensure Documented Education Plans (DEP) and Care Team strategies engage all relevant parties and are meaningfully implemented.

Provide wrap-around support (i.e., tutors; mentors; afterschool programs; care-leaver support; training and resources for teachers; and educational support for carers).

Minimise disruption caused by placement and school changes.

Consultation
completed in 2021

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