

Accessing their records in Queensland

Stories, photos, written records, language, songlines, mementos, artworks: all are ways by which young people develop a sense of who they are, where they fit in the world, and how they are connected to family, community, and country.

For young people in out-of-home care, their story-tellers include those connected with their life in-care (e.g., caseworkers, carers, residential workers).

CREATE asked 26 young people aged 17-25 years with a care experience in Queensland about their views on accessing their records.

Young people wanted to access their records for practical reasons (e.g., apply for jobs; look after their health) and to know their story.

Young people thought their records should contain many different types of documents and information.

More than 50% wanted their records to contain the reason for their being in care, and their placement, medical, and cultural history.

Those who had already accessed their records rated carers as the most helpful when accessing and reviewing their records.



I think the records should be somewhat the answers to our questions. Answer missing parts that we may not remember (e.g., why we were placed into care; the positive that we have done, not just the negative; why certain placements may not have worked). (Female, 21)

There are things in there I didn't know about myself - that I didn't know until I had access to them (Male, 18)

Because it is all important to know. I have a lot of questions and I really want to read everything. (Non-binary, 19)



Key Messages

Young people valued good quality records as they helped them:

- navigate and participate in the world (e.g., apply to university, get a driver's license);
- to know their story and what happened in their life;
- to maintain good health and wellbeing (e.g., be able to answer questions about their medical history; communicate with medical professionals); and
- to remember.

“ I have a right to know who I am, what happened to me and my life. (Female, 21)

Barriers to accessing and reviewing records included:

- not being aware of their rights;
- unclear or complicated application processes;
- incorrect information or a lack of support from caseworkers; and
- documents that were unclear, confusing, inaccurate, long, or heavily redacted.

“ These records are the replacement of family stories people share, the replacement of photos and home videos. For some of us this is all that we have. These records aren't scientific records about a thing, it's about someone – a person. You're telling someone's stories through these documents. (Female, 23)

Young people wanted clear information, and practical and emotional support from trusted sources when accessing and reviewing their records. They wanted support that was responsive to their individual wishes and needs.

Actions

Integrate the Rights-Based Charter for Childhood Record-Keeping into legislation and policy.

This Charter was developed with care leavers, stolen generation survivors, social workers, and other stakeholders at the Australian National Summit on Setting the Record Straight for the Rights of the Child. For more information, go to <https://rights-records.it.monash.edu/research-development-agenda/rights-in-records-by-design/recordkeeping-rights-charter/>

Ensure all young people are informed of their rights around record-keeping.

Ensure caseworkers and Departmental staff are well informed so that they can implement good practice in relation to:

- writing good quality, meaningful, and appropriate records;
- involving children and young people in writing records in an age-appropriate manner;
- supporting access to records.

Continue to monitor the quality and accessibility of records.

Consultation
completed in 2022

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