THE BIG THINGS WE HEARD

2018 YOUTH ROUNDTABLE

ACT Government
Community Services

INFOSHEET

On 24 November 2018, a group of young people joined a Youth Roundtable to share their views and experiences about case planning and decision-making in out of home care.

Young people provided so much great feedback. It will be written up in a more detailed report so action can be taken by the ACT Government with the help of others including CREATE and the Youth Coalition. These are the big things we heard.

Involvement in decision-making

Most young people present on the day agreed **case managers should hold the final responsibility for making important decisions**. Many were able to recognise times when they felt they were not well placed to make good decisions for their own future. Despite this, everyone emphasised the importance of ensuring they had **opportunities to be involved in decisions** and understand what was happening in their lives and why.

Every young person present was able to identify times in their lives when they felt important decisions had been made without their involvement. Most young people shared stories of confusion, hurt, distress and frustration when they felt they hadn't been consulted, or where the reasons for key decisions had not been properly explained.

The young people wanted those involved in making decisions about their lives to take the time to talk to them, **ask them for their perspectives and 'actually listen'** to their responses. 'Actually listening' involved more than nodding and smiling, but actively seeking to understand what is important.

The young people also wanted workers to recognise they may need time to think when considering big decisions. They talked about finding it difficult to talk in a single meeting, particularly if they had just received upsetting information. Young people wanted case managers to **provide multiple opportunities to discuss their thoughts and feelings**.

Also, where decisions need to be made that go against a child or young person's wishes, those present emphasised the importance of **workers promptly getting back in contact** with them to explain what has happened and why.

Case manager relationships

Young people present recognised the important role case managers play in the lives of children and young people in out of home care. They wanted **case managers to be powerful advocates**, like 'bulldogs', who fight for what is best for them. They wanted case managers who act with empathy, who understand mental health issues and were willing to be flexible with rules and procedures.

Those present wanted more **frequent and direct contact to their case manager**, independent of anyone else in their lives. A number of young people highlighted the importance of **'matching' case managers and young people** to ensure a good fit, or giving young people some say in choosing a new case manager if the partnership isn't working.

Overall, the young people present wanted case managers who actually listen and genuinely care.

NEXT STEPS

1. CSD is preparing a more detailed report about what young people told them.
2. CSD will start acting on what we learnt from young people to continually improve our governance, planning and policies.
3. CSD will be hosting similar events in 2019 to hear more about young people's views and solutions. Young people told us that they want more opportunities to have their voices heard.

If you would like more information about the Youth Roundtable please email CBRStepsUp@act.gov.au

listen
advocate
care