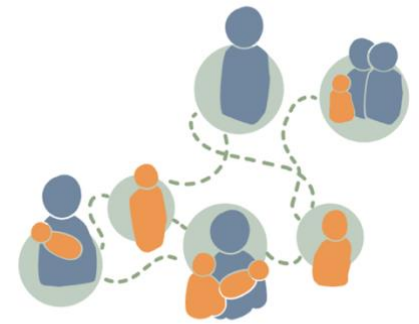


Dear carer,

Between 2020 and 2024, the *Enhancing Children's Journey through Out-of-home Care* research project spoke with children, parents, and carers involved in out-of-home care to better understand their experiences and support needs. We spoke with you and other foster and kinship carers supporting children and young people in out-of-home care to better understand your experiences, challenges, and support needs. You shared honest reflections about the rewards and challenges of caring for children with complex experiences and needs.



What we heard

Carers play a critical role in helping children feel safe, supported, and cared for

Many carers build strong and meaningful relationships with children in their care

Caring can be deeply rewarding, but also emotionally demanding, especially when children have complex needs

Carers often manage an “invisible workload”, coordinating support across multiple service systems

Many carers feel undervalued and excluded from important decisions

Relationships with children's families can be complex and carers need more support

System challenges—including service fragmentation, delays, and staff turnover—make it harder for carers to access support and provide stable care

Reunification is important, and can be difficult for carers and children without clear communication and planning

Carers supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children need greater support, guidance, and resources to help children stay connected to family, community, culture, and Country

We recommend the following service system changes to better support carers

Services provide carers with practical, emotional, and financial support, especially when caring for children with complex needs

Services improve access to training, respite, peer support, and culturally appropriate support

Services support communication and collaboration between carers, parents, practitioners, and services

Services recognise and include carers in decisions about children's care and wellbeing

Services improve coordination across systems to reduce delays and burden on carers

Services work with carers to strengthen support for safe and meaningful family connections

Services provide better support to carers and children during transitions and reunification

Services strengthen culturally safe practices and resources to support children's cultural identity

Thank you for generously sharing your experiences and insights. Your role matters. Your contribution is important and helps improve support for children, young people, and families.