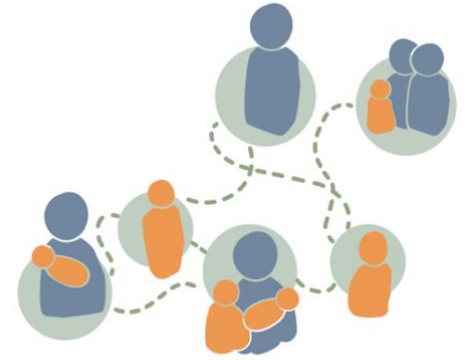


Dear children and young people,

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 talked with you and other children and young people about your lives and what helps you feel safe, happy, and supported. You shared your stories and what matters most to you.



What we heard

Family is very important, and children care about their parents, brothers, sisters, and other family members even when they cannot live together

Many children want more time with their family and can feel sad that they cannot see them

Children want adults to listen to them, tell them what is happening, and include them in the decisions that affect their lives

Moving homes, changing schools, or losing contact with important people feels sad, lonely, stressful, and confusing

Photos, toys, gifts, and special memories help children stay connected to the people they love

Children feel better when they have caring adults, safe homes, and support they can trust

Kind carers, other children in the household, friends, routines, and connection to culture help children feel safe, settled, and included

Children also forge bonds with other children in the carer household and changes to the lives of these other children (e.g. placement change/reunification) also impact them and need to be better recognised and supported

We recommend the following changes to better support children and young people

Adults listen to children's voices and include them in decisions about their lives

Carers and practitioners help children to stay connected to family and siblings where it is safe and possible

Carers and practitioners protect and value children's memories and life stories

Carers and practitioners support children to stay connected to their culture and community

Carers and practitioners help children when things change so they feel prepared and supported

Remember

- ➔ **It's okay to feel lots of different emotions**
- ➔ **You deserve to feel safe, loved, and included**
- ➔ **Your voice matters**

***Thank you** for sharing your stories. Your voice and the voices of other children in care are important and will help make better support for children and young people who are in care.*