



Focus Group Report

Mount Gambier Carers – Focus Group 2: 30 March 2017

1. Priorities identified by participants

COMMUNICATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to foster parent’s concerns re: a child’s behaviour – not let the social worker belief’s enter decision making. • More communication from workers and department about child and processes involved in child being in care. • Communicate on time – every time. • To be told the truth about placements. • Honesty/transparency. • Communication with social workers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS – MOVE TRUST, POWER AND CONTROL, RESPECT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carers are important – more child focus. • Relative kinship carers have more understanding about the needs of the children in their care as they are the ones providing love, nurture and care for children 24/7 and need to be acknowledged for this. • The family kinship carers need to be given more reins as the children in their care are blood family and this needs to happen across the board with all cultures.

ADOPTION/SECURITY – OPG
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption. • Get OPG organised or Open Adoption - Give children security.

2. Child Safety Pathway

2.1 We are currently designing a new system for how we receive notifications. Other than reducing call wait time what else could be done to improve our initial contact with notifiers?

- To hear feedback from the call.
- Softer approach by CARL staff.
- Feedback would be useful to understand what is being done about report. Important family or kin.
- Loss of key information/documents pertaining to reports.
- Instead of a wait time a call back service.
- Problem for those with English as a second language – access to interpreters.
- Felt like my report was not given weight because I was the ex-carer for the children.
- Worry about how things are assessed – provide feedback to caller on process.
- Carers should be able to report low level concerns vial CARL.
- Why can't you email a notification instead of sitting and waiting on a phone?
- Stressful to call, operators could be more supportive.

2.2 What information should we provide to notifier while they are on hold?

- Information on how calls are assessed/actioned and prioritised.
- Your call is important to us.
- At the completion of the call what will happen next?
- Alternative agency options.
- Keypad options: Sexual abuse; neglect; physical abuse; emotional abuse; unsure.
- If you are traumatised by this call – please contact ... Your information is strictly confidential.
- A call back system option.
- Name, phone number; region/postcode.
- Information if possible on how long you will be waiting.
- How long until your call is answered or number in the queue?
- Information on where you are in the queue.
- Option to select abuse type and to escalate the call.
- Potential outcomes of the call.

3. Out of Home Care

3.1 How would you like to provide compliments and complaints to the Department for Child Protection? How shall information on this process be provided to new carers?

- Website, email or phone number (free call).
- Independent complaints area.
- It is important we have a place to share compliments.
- Email update - link to more information.
- Better response time to complaint or even a response.
- Feel safe to have open, honest discussions.
- Independent body to take complaints.
- Weekly newsletter update.
- Group text message – staff changes.
- Would you mind staying online to answer survey?
- Worry about children being removed from your care by complaining.
- Information during training.
- Beginner’s back.
- Ring through to a phone line.
- Children need to have some rights about choosing their workers.
- Feedback option at the end of call.
- Feel can’t speak openly (fear.)

3.2 How can the Department for Child Protection sensitively scope family members to provide care and support for children and young people where there are child protection concerns so there is no further damage to family relationships?

- If child removed into foster placement, then scoping done later, where family identified it is often too late to maintain connection with extended family. This is a big issue – broader family need more access and contact with children (more trauma for child).
- Training for kinship carers.
- Referee checks.
- Need to be done quickly – children in limbo.
- Kinship carers struggle with the powers invested in their decision making – more decision making by carers.
- Depending on age of child – ask the child who they feel safe with.
- Departmental policy to be flexible to include cultural needs while still ensuring the needs of children are met and enabled – connection to cultural ways maintained.
- What about new arrivals without connection to community or no natural helpers.
- Ensure Aboriginal cultural needs are covered but also ensure other cultures are equally important.
- School – who is dropping the children off etc?
- Conflict between parents creates issues for broader contact in the family.
- Concern over open access for parents within kinship care.
- Talk to the notifier to see if they have any ideas about the family.
- In a court openly discuss options to make broader family – better to have a family conference setting.

3. Out of Home Care (continued)

3.3 How can we enable carers to provide Aboriginal children and young people with an understanding of their culture when they come into their care with very little connection?

- More training for carers.
- Department to focus more on knowing what clan area they are from?
- Higher recruitment of Aboriginal staff and ability to accompany staff to placement visits.
- Ensure Aboriginal workers accompany non-Aboriginal workers into an Aboriginal placement.
- No tools.
- Aboriginal worker would give good advice on Community Conflict.
- Aboriginal activity day for foster kids.
- Aboriginal person or advocate could provide cultural awareness to non-Aboriginal person.
- Good examples in Health – where Aboriginal workers accompany health workers on home visits.
- Accessing services with risk of seeing family i.e. Pangula playgroups.
- Non-Aboriginal carers do not have the insight into the importance of Aboriginal culture.
- No childcare when training is available.
- Resources Pack for Aboriginal services re Aboriginal children.

3.4 If you're caring for a child/young person who is part of a larger family, how could we better support you to maintain contact with siblings?

- No contact from other Out of Home Care.
- Provide information on other siblings.
- Sometimes sibling contact not appropriate i.e. jail etc.
- Not just direct siblings – nieces and nephews.
- More information about siblings – re: safety suitability.
- Encourage contact between carers of siblings.
- Respecting carers' knowledge and advice about children with placement needs.
- If department approves family contact why can't carers organise between family themselves?
- Include the ability to Skype family, not just option for kinship but extended family to foster carers.
- A lot of concern about how poorly this is done – children miss out on seeing family – including grandparents.
- Allowing carers to facilitate some family contact.
- Children placed into a strange family often do not maintain contact with family – this needs to be a priority, include family photos and letters.
- Where approved carers can co-ordinate access between other carers – more flexibility.

3. Out of Home Care (continued)

3.5 How can we improve collecting and sharing information about children and young people's needs, routines, preferences, social activities when they first come into your care?

- After access information – will there be issues?
- Give us some information!
- Have had to 'shoo' parents away!
- Food.
- Photo – who are the parents/behaviour of parents.
- Sheet to indicate key information.
- Health information – ambulance number.
- Medicare number – Health care number.
- Sometimes carers receive information on a piece of paper, sometimes an email and sometimes no information.
- Better to get the information first hand not second or third - e.g. by DCP.
- Are teenagers given rules about placement?
- Carers often find out more information via other practitioners e.g. Doctor's appointment about medical issues.
- Triggers/behaviours.
- Share more information about child's trauma e.g. do not raise voice, bath time is a trigger, does child have any medical conditions?

3.6 What is your understanding of what happens when a care concern is raised?

- Provide information about process and what the alleged concern is.
- Have a rule of striking care concern after a period of time (unsubstantiated).
- Question over incident resolved but not recorded on system – resulting in another investigation.
- Labelling does not necessarily mention the issue at times – care concern almost means it is a bad placement issue.
- Made to feel guilty – no support – need support.
- Often carers do not know the outcome after Case Manager has visited the carer.
- Purpose to keep children safe and investigate.
- Carers are unclear what this means – needs to be clearer information shared on the purpose.
- Assume a Care Concern is a really bad thing! A stain on you as a Carer.
- Does this mean you may take away my children – lots of worry!
- Unsubstantiated Care Concern should be removed from record.
- Carers worry about what other people think when they have a Care Concern raised on them.
- Ignored/looked down.
- Terrible/terrible process.
- Do not agree with undetermined.
- Trauma of children being removed during investigation