

Consultation with family based carers

Feedback for carers

What this consultation was about

We are trying to make it easier for carers to have a say in the review and development of DCP policy, programs and strategies that affect them in their caring roles. To support this, DCP is developing new guidance for staff about how to provide greater opportunities for carers to contribute their valuable feedback and ensure that we are conducting high-quality and safe discussions with carers.

The guidance will help DCP staff know when and how to ask carers their opinions, to use the information carers give us to help improve our work, and to get back to carers afterwards to let them know the outcomes of the consultation.

Who we spoke to

To ensure the new staff guidance reflects carer needs and expectations, we spoke to:

- Kinship carers
- Foster carers
- Regionally-based carers
- Carers of Aboriginal children
- Carers identifying as culturally and linguistically diverse
- Carers supporting children and young people with complex needs.

We also spoke with a wide range of other stakeholders, including Connecting Foster and Kinship Carers SA as the peak body for carers, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and family-based care agencies, and DCP staff who provide direct support to carers.

What we asked

The consultation was focused on answering the following questions:

- What things would make you more likely to participate in a DCP consultation opportunity?
- What would make you not want to take part in a DCP consultation opportunity?
- Do you think that having a specific space for consultation on DCP's website would be helpful to you, as a carer?

Our approach

Between November 2023 and February 2024 DCP used the following approaches to hear from family based carers:



1 in-person small group discussion



2 online individual discussions



3 in-person individual discussions




7 in-depth phone consultations

Most carers responded to an invitation to get involved via DCP's Facebook page, while others were reached through DCP staff who work directly with carers. In addition, we held 16 meetings with other stakeholders.



What you told us

Advertise consultation opportunities widely

 To reach a diverse range of carers, DCP needs to let carers know about consultation opportunities through multiple channels. Carers most frequently told us that they would like to hear about upcoming consultations by:

- Emails from DCP
- Their case worker letting them know
- Their care agencies and/or Connecting Foster and Kinship Carers SA letting them know
- Posting on DCP's Facebook account, particularly if this is then re-shared by care agencies
- Listing on DCP's website on a specific page for consultation opportunities
- Hard-copy mail outs, which can reach carers who are less comfortable with online platforms.

Provide multiple and varied ways for carers to get involved



Carers would like DCP to make different options available for carers to give their feedback, including:

- Online options – online surveys, emails, video calls, online forums
- In-person options – forums, group discussions, meetings, hardcopy surveys/feedback forms
- Phone-based options – phone discussions
- Mail outs – hard copy surveys.

Be respectful of carers' time when scheduling consultations



Carers asked DCP to:

- Ensure surveys are short and do not take large amounts of time
- Let carers know about opportunities far enough in advance that they can make arrangements to participate
- Avoid busy periods, such as school holidays and the start of the school year
- Provide multiple options at different times of day to cater to both working carers, and home-based carers with young children and to avoid dinnertimes and child bedtimes
- Allow plenty of time for carers to share their stories and engage in group discussions
- Let carers know the outcomes of the consultation in a timely manner.

Take time to build trust



Carers told us that to be motivated to take part in consultations, they need to trust that their voices will be heard and that their feedback matters to DCP. The existing relationships that carers have with DCP staff informs how they feel about the department and their willingness to get involved in consultations.

What happens next?

Feedback provided by carers has been incorporated into the development and refinement of staff guidelines and tools to support carer consultation.

Carers Voice is a new section of DCP's website which is dedicated to carer consultation. This is now live and lists current opportunities, future consultation topics, and reports from past consultations.

Moving forward, DCP is committed to providing carers with more ways to have their voices heard in ways that are accessible, respectful, and inclusive.

DCP sincerely thanks all who took the time to participate in these consultations and provide feedback.

We appreciate you. We hear you. We're working on improvements.