

Care Leavers' Charter of Rights

This Charter outlines key principles that Communities and Justice will follow in supporting care leavers as they transition to independent living. It is intended to help care leavers become confident, resilient and independent adults who feel in charge of their own lives.

This Charter was developed by Youth Consult for Change. Coordinated by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice, Youth Consult for Change is a group of young people who use their own experiences in care to give expert advice to improve the care system.

To the young people reading this – these are your rights as described by other young people who are or were in care. The Charter tells you how you are to be treated and what you can expect from workers. If you are not getting these rights while you are in care or after you turn 18, you can use these words to help you ask for the support and respect you are entitled to.

To the professionals reading this – remember it was written by young people to you, the practitioners who support them. The Charter outlines your responsibilities to them as they journey into adulthood. It tells you what they need from you and what good casework should look like. While it is the young person's plan it is up to you to bring it to life and to make it happen.

Participation is more than being physically present in meetings or shown a finished plan, it's making room for us to use our voice and take control of our lives

Make us a leader in our lives

- Remember that leaving care is our journey, not a task or a meeting
- Involve us from the beginning to the end, don't leave planning conversations till the last minute
- Find creative ways to help us understand and be involved in the process
- Listen to what we want and need, ask questions, help us understand ourselves and our options so we can make good decisions

"Being a leader is better than participation"

Be genuinely interested in us. Do what you say you will in an appropriate timeframe

Respect us and make us a priority

- Be there when we need you, show urgency and make us feel like we are worth it
- Listen to us
- Get to know us as people, not what you have read about us
- Don't overlook us because we are older or not in crisis, we still need support and care

"We want your support and genuine care – please give it to us"

Communication is key, lead by example!

Be proactive; follow-up and check-up, we shouldn't have to chase you

- Communication needs to be ongoing, not just when something is wrong or needs to be done
- Include us in decision making, don't just tell us or do things without asking us
- Let us know where things are up to, the outcome of a decision and reason why. It's a task in your day but it's our life and we are relying on you
- Be open, honest and transparent with us, even if it is hard to hear

"If I have to chase you, I feel like I am not important"

Prioritise our connection to culture and community

Make culture and community part of every single day

- Know that culture is specific to each person
- Give us access to Elders, language and community
- Be respectful, speak to people in our lives and communities who know our culture
- Make sure our carers and family are on the journey too, it's important the people we look up to are connected too

"Being Aboriginal isn't just about culture... it's deeper than that, it's about community, kinship and returning to country"

Make sure we know and understand our rights

Give us the right information, explain things more than once using words we understand

- Remember who you are talking to, use the words we know and use
- Write with us and for us, it's our plan
- Tell us who we can talk to if we are not happy with something you do or feel we are not getting what we need
- Tell us that it is ok to ask for help, support and advice after we turn 18 and don't make us fight for aftercare support. Make sure we know who to contact and how to get help

"There was a meeting but things were not explained properly"

Listen and be adaptable to changes in our lives

Our circumstances change and so do we. Our plans and your support need to be adaptable

- Let us know we can change our plan if things change
- Listen when we tell you what's happening in our life and respect our opinion when we tell you what we need
- Remember that it is our life and we know ourselves best
- Don't make assumptions based on your experience. Ask us what we need and want, give advice but don't tell us

"No one can predict the future, understand that my needs and wants will change"