



Editorial

ISSUE9: Spring 2010



Welcome to the Spring 2010 edition of the Carer' News.

Recent media coverage about Child Protection Services has been intense. The role of protecting children is complex and difficult and as reports in other States and Territories have demonstrated, mistakes can happen. The public debate following an incident of failing to protect a child places extreme pressure on workers and carers.

Although we have invested a significant level of resources into Child Protection Services over the past few years there are clearly challenges ahead. A major challenge for Tasmania will be the implementation of the National Standards for Out of Home Care. I attended the Area Partnership Forums during August to seek input on the draft national standards. Central office staff also met with the office of the Commissioner for Children, the CREATE Foundation, the Foster Carers Association of Tasmania (FCAT) and the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC) to seek their input.

In late August, I attended a national meeting in South Australia to progress the standards. I am happy to report that a number of suggestions made at the forums were accepted. I anticipate that the national standards will be approved soon. Reporting against the National Standards will not be easy but over time we will have a clearer picture as to how well Tasmania is providing out of home care.

I really enjoyed the opportunity to spend time with many carers and workers from across the country during the National Carers Conference in Hobart on 28 and 29 August. I would like to acknowledge the hard work of the committee that delivered a successful conference.

Tasmanian carers received new carer payments in mid September 2010. The new payments are being backdated to 3 July 2010. This has been a major achievement and the standard payments for Tasmanian carers are above the average standard payments received by mainland carers for the majority of children and young people in care. As Marilyn McHugh, from the Social Policy Research Centre, noted during her presentation at the recent national conference the increase in carers payments over the past decade had significantly exceeded the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Regards

Mark Byrne

Chief Executive Officer, Children and Youth Services

Disability, Child, Youth and Family Services

NEWS

National Carers' Conference 2010

The 2010 conference, held at the Hobart Casino on Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 August, was a great success.

The response to the keynote speakers and the workshops was very positive. Robyn Moore's final session on Saturday 28 August resulted in a standing ovation and it was clear that carers from across the nation were inspired by her capacity to rise above negative forces.

Paul Mason, Commissioner for Children and Marilyn McHugh, Patron of the Australian Foster and Kinship Carers Partnership, presented 11 special national awards. Five of these were awarded to Tasmanian carers. They included Judy and Terry Flanagan, Michelle and Chris Smith, Maggie and Kim Phillips, June Boon, and Sheila and Ken Aberly. Congratulations!

Many Tasmanian carers also received a general recognition award.

FCAT elects a new President

FCAT held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) in September. John Flanagan was elected as the new President for FCAT. John was previously the Vice President. Wayne Dank is the new Vice President.

John and Wayne will be meeting with Mark Byrne and Area Directors over the coming year. Carers are encouraged to discuss their concerns with the FCAT executive. DCYFS looks forward to working closely with the new executive and responding to carers' concerns where possible.

CREATE News

The CREATE Tasmanian office has two new staff members. They are Amanda Street and Belinda Tome. Amanda and Belinda are new to the sector although Belinda has been a volunteer with CREATE. They are developing the CREATE Your Future Program. There will be more information about this exciting new program in future editions of the Carers News.

Kylie Gibbs and Mel Casten remain part of the CREATE team for Tasmania.

CREATE held two major connection events for children and young people in care during the September school holidays. Sixty young people and their carers attended a 'fun day' in the North West. CREATE is keen to expand its presence in the north of the state and it was great to see such a big response. Forty young people attended an action packed activity day in Hobart.

The southern Youth Advisory Group (YAG) will meet on Saturday 13 November. This is an opportunity for young people in care to voice their concerns and opinions while enjoying a free fun activity. The activity in November is likely to be a taiko drumming session. Contact CREATE if you are caring for a young person aged between 12 and 17 years in the south who would like to participate in the Youth Advisory Group.

CREATE is holding a Halloween Party on 29 October at the Masonic Temple, 3 Sandy Bay Road from 5 to 8 pm. This is a fancy dress event in the theme of Halloween. There will be games and plenty to eat.

CREATE, together with the Foster Carers Association of Tasmania (FCAT), will host Christmas parties for carers and children in care in the south on Saturday 27 November and in the north west on Tuesday 30 November. These events provide a fantastic opportunity for the sector to get together and celebrate the spirit of Christmas.

For more information and to sign up to our mailing list, please contact the CREATE Tas Team on 62249822 or 62237749.



CREATE Office
260 Macquarie Street Hobart
7000

www.create.org.au

Support For Care Leavers

Did you know that the Adoption and Permanency Services provides support for young adults who have been raised in out of home care?

The service supports care leavers to explore written information about their period in care. The service can also provide advice on how to make contact with family members.

Care leavers who are under the age of 25 year can apply for financial assistance to make a successful transition to independence. Assistance can be approved for such things as undertaking education and training, contacting family members and participating in sporting or creative activities. The spirit of the program is that young adults who have been in care receive some financial support in the same way as many parents continue to provide financial support to their children when they are young adults.

For instance a young care leaver who was returning to education received assistance to purchase a computer. Other expenses which can be considered include clothing to wear to job interviews etc.

The maximum level of assistance is \$2 500 per year per young person. To date, the 'take-up' of assistance has been limited. If you know a young adult care leaver who is missing out on life opportunities because of a lack of funding, please tell the care leaver to phone Adoption and Permanency Services on 6232 2273. Application forms are also available from CREATE and child protection workers.

The CREATE Your Future program includes an intensive training program for up to ten young people at any one time. The training covers many of the aspects of living independently such as shopping, cooking, getting accommodation and attending to health needs.

The first session of the program is called 'think outside the square'. The session breaks leaving care into manageable tasks. The session was held in south on 23 October. A session is being planned for the north.

We will include more information in future Issues. In the mean time check out the CREATE Your Future website for more information
<http://www.createyourfuture.org.au/>

The Charter of Rights – making a difference for children and young people in care

The Charter of Rights for Tasmanian children and young people in out of home care makes clear statements about what a child in care can expect. For instance, children in care have a right to have safe contact with family and people who matter to them.

They also have the right to have their privacy respected. This includes having some private space and to know that their personal information will only be shared where it is needed. There are many reasons why information about children in care needs to be shared. For instance, the carer needs information about the child's background in order to provide appropriate care.

However, children in care are sensitive about having their information shared. As a consequence, carers need to treat information sensitively. Carers need to exercise discretion regarding a child in their care in social settings such as an appointment with their hairdresser or following a church service. We now live in an age where a lot of social networking occurs online. Carers are advised to exercise the same level of discretion when using social networking mediums such as Facebook. If you use Facebook and other social mediums you should discuss privacy issues with your child protection worker before sharing information about a child in your care.

Additional copies of the Charter of Rights booklets have been printed and these are being distributed to Area Offices. If you have a child or young person in care who does not have a copy of the Charter, please contact the child's worker to request one.

Carers Notice Board

Training sessions for carers

DCYFS is developing training sessions for carers on administering medication for children in care and the revised complaints in care policy.

It is anticipated that these sessions will commence in early 2011. There will be more information in the Summer edition of the Carers' News.

Contact us on fostercare@dhhs.tas.gov.au if there are events for carers in your area that you would be included in the Summer edition of the Carers' News.

A Focus on Kinship Care

What is Kinship Care

Kinship care is the placement of children under care and protection orders with a relative or an adult who is a significant member of the child's community. It is the preferred placement for children who are unable to remain with their parents because of care and protection concerns.

There are similarities and differences between kinship care and foster care. The major difference is that kinship carers are likely to know the child and the child's immediate family prior to a child's removal.

Kinship carers are approved to provide care for a specific child whereas foster carers are approved to provide care for children in general. Kinship carers receive the same standard payments for the care of a child as foster carers.

Because the child is under a care and protection order, the child has a child protection worker who works with the carer to meet the needs of the child in the same way as a child in foster care.

Although child protection workers prefer to place a child with kin wherever possible, these placements can pose specific challenges. Often the greatest challenge revolves around the shared responsibility for the care of the child. For instance, the child's contact with extended family is usually more informal than that for a child in foster care. Although informal contact can have benefits for the child it is important that the child's worker is aware of such contact.

The national picture

The use of kinship care has increased over recent years to the extent that there are almost as many children placed in kinship care as there are in foster care. Some states, such as Victoria, anticipate that in the near future the majority of children in care in Victoria will be placed with kin.

The experiences of kinship carers

Understandably many kinship carers feel a strong sense of responsibility for the related child in their care. They want the child to grow up in his or her family and to have a strong sense of the family's history.

Many kinship carers are the child's grandparents. Although they are committed to the child, they often have to come to terms with the reasons why the child ended up in their care. It is common for the

grandparents to feel grief and loss about their own child's life and the reasons why the grandchild was removed. This can also involve feelings of guilt and shame as well as significant concerns about the safety and wellbeing of the child's parent.

Taking on the care of a child as a grandparent can change family dynamics and relationships. For instance, the other grandchildren in the family can feel that they are missing out on their relationship with their grandparent because the grand parent has taken on the primary parenting role.

Kinship carers are encouraged to explore their feelings and circumstances with their child protection workers.

The experiences of children placed with kin

Children who are placed with kin tend to have a greater sense of belonging and continuity.

Although they have been removed from their immediate family, the adjustment to a placement with a relative is usually less disruptive as the child is likely to know the carer.

Children in kinship care also tend to feel more relaxed about their situation. It is often easier to tell a friend that they are living with a relative than it is to admit to be living with a foster carer.

New resources for carers

The Department now has copies of new publications that are a great resource for carers and children in care.

From Isolation to Connection

The Victorian Child Safety Commissioner has developed a guide to understanding and working with traumatised children. The guide outlines the impact of abuse, neglect and other trauma on children. It covers the theory in a 'plain English' style and provides sound strategies for responding appropriately manner.

A home away from home – Children's stories about foster care

This publication, developed by the Australian Childhood Foundation, has been written for children who are in foster care. It contains stories of the experiences of being in care by a variety of children.

Children in care are able to include their own information and their own stories in the final pages of booklet.

If you would like copies of these resources contact your out of home care support worker.

Receiving Carers News by email

In the winter edition we invited carers to nominate if they are happy to receive future editions of the Carers News by email. The number of carers who responded was very low. We encourage you to switch to electronic mail. All you have to do let us know your name and email address via

fostercare@dhhs.tas.gov.au

Medication Guidelines

As you will be aware, changes have been made to the *Poisons Act*. As a result the Department was required by law to issue Medication Guidelines for foster carers. These were drafted in collaboration with the Foster Care Association of Tasmania, the Commissioner for Children, CREATE Foundation, Child Protection Managers, and the Chief Pharmacist in the Department of Health and Human Services.

To assist foster carers to understand the guidelines, sessions will be held around the State by the Pharmacy Guild of Tasmania. Foster carers will need to attend a session to ensure that they are familiar with their obligations.

A pilot session will be held in the near future in Hobart and if you would like to attend please contact Diane Caney on 0407001717 or diane.caney@dhhs.tas.gov.au

Following that session further sessions will be held around the State until all foster carers have been able to attend a session.

The medication guidelines can be found online at this URL: http://www.fostercare.tas.gov.au/information_for_foster_carers2

A copy of the medication guidelines is also included with your Spring Newsletter.

Do you have a story to tell about your caring experience?

Know of an experienced carer who deserves recognition?

Send a piece to the Foster Carers Newsletter at

fostercare@dhhs.tas.gov.au