



**Government
of South Australia**
Office of the Guardian
for Children and
Young People

What makes a good social worker?

Children and young people value a good relationship with their social worker. They want the worker to spend time just with them and for the worker to get to know them. They see the social worker as important to their safety and in resolving issues.

We have combined the views of children and young people previously interviewed by the Office's Youth Advisors and those interviewed for the inquiry report *Quality Contact between Children and Workers* (August 2009) with comments collected by CREATE to compile this summary.

In the interviews, some emphasised personal qualities.

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[I like it] when she explains things really well and treats me like a normal person and not some foster kid. I think she genuinely cares when she helps me and my sister with our [Life] Story Books.

She is nice, and good at emotionally supporting me.

Don't turn up looking like a slob or trying to be who you're not.

For many it was the ability to intervene on their behalf, to get things done.

“

[the worker should] do stuff for us like find me a new placement when I need it and make sure I see my family.

...help me sort out problems at school or in my placement.

She is there to look after me. She helped to get furniture for my place, fridge, microwave. She also went to my school and talked to my teacher.

Once they had established a relationship, children and young people thought it was good to keep it.

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There might have been a time when I didn't have a worker. There was definitely a time when no one contacted me for a bit. I felt lonely.

My social worker and I have a relationship that has been built over time so that I can voice my opinion.

Most placed value on accessibility, on the worker being visible, physically present and responsive.



[I like it when the worker can] visit me at my placement – don't just talk with me on the phone.

I invited her to come to my club to watch me play soccer and she came. I think she is a great woman.

...call us back after we call...spend time getting to know me.

It would take me three buses and about an hour and a half to see my new worker. I wish this didn't happen.

Children and young people prefer workers who involve them in the decisions that are being made about their lives.



[A good worker will] ask me what I think about stuff – school, placement, family, the people I live with.

I had a choice if my sister was to move in with me and also had a choice about who was to look after us when our carer is working.

[I like my worker to] talk to me about how the decisions are made.

...workers rock when they...let you participate in the decisions in your life [and]...show that they're working for you

At the heart of many comments was a request for good communication, of being kept in the loop.



A times, if you haven't had the chance to do something that was agreed, that's okay—just give us a call and let us know.

More about the relationship of young people in care with workers

The inquiry report [Quality Contact between Children and Workers](#) can be downloaded from the Guardian's website.

The [Guide to good practice in children's participation](#) is intended to encourage adults who are making decisions about children's and young people's care to work with them on those decisions.

[A presentation by Sara Bann and Ed King](#) at the *Listening and Talking with Children and Youth People* forum which discusses how workers should listen and talk with children and the [Listening and Talking with Children and Young People](#) forum workshop output are on the Guardian's website.

More about the Office of the Guardian

The Guardian's [Youth Advisors](#) are young people in care, or who have recently been in care, who volunteer their experience and skills to help the Office.

Information about the Office and its functions, as well as a wealth of facts, reports and opinions about issues for young people in care are available from our website www.gcyp.sa.gov.au.

You can contact the Office by telephone on 8226 8570 or email us at gcyp@gcyp.sa.gov.au