



## PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Committee on Children and Young People

### Public hearing - Inquiry into child protection and the social services system

#### Supplementary questions for Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People

**1) Can you elaborate on the tool being used in the United Kingdom, whereby children are able to record their experiences in their own words and have this information used in court proceedings that impact them?**

**a. Do you foresee any challenges in implementing a similar tool in NSW?**

Throughout ACYP's consultations, children and young people highlighted the need for there to be resources and tools that specifically provide support to children and young people in care. They also discussed the need for having avenues to provide feedback and seek advice. Key to the recommendations and the report is the need to elevate the voice of the children and young people in care, and for this to be done in a consistent, meaningful way that gives the young people autonomy.

Mind Of My Own is a tool that was developed in the UK and was developed with children and young people who have experienced the care system. Mind Of My Own believe that every child should be able to give voice to their lived experience – and be heard. They have created fully accessible apps that provide a unique digital solution to advancing universal children's rights; as such they are the only digital tool that comprehensively supports Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Their ambition is for all children's voices to be heard and they carefully co-produce all apps with young people: these are two of the reasons why Mind Of My Own has become a trusted app for children's services.

They have created a secure tool, that allows a child or young person in care to document their experiences. It can be simply selecting an emoji to explain how you have felt in a day, or it can be lodging a complaint or report of harm that is escalated to the relevant authorities. The app provides an online mechanism for children and young people to be heard, and to have access to support.

#### **Use in court proceedings**

One way in which Mind Of My Own has been used in the UK is to help prioritise children and young people's voices in Court proceedings. When a child completes a Mind Of My Own statement their responses are provided to their worker in PDF format. This PDF can then be included in the documentation for the Court and ensures that the judge and other parties can see the child's views, written in their own words, rather than the child's views being summarised or potentially misinterpreted by adults.

For example, the Open Home Foundation (OHF) in New Zealand gives their children and young people the option of sending statements directly to their Court Appointed Lawyer. Recently a young person in OHF's custody did just that, sending a "My Wellbeing" statement from their Mind Of My Own account. They were able to tell their lawyer what was going on for them without having to wait for the lawyer to make an appointment to come and see them.

A child protection worker in the UK shared her experience of using the app in court proceedings:

*"I used the worker app to capture the wishes and feelings of a child who was the subject of care proceedings. She was clear that she wanted to return home to be with her family and I was able to reference the statement in my assessment. In this instance, it was refreshing to provide a neatly presented Mind of My Own statement to the court as opposed to the usual case management system case notes which can diminish the impact of direct work."*

You can another example of how the app has bene used in UK court proceedings here: <https://mindofmyown.org.uk/childrens-participation-in-court-decisions/>

## **Implementation**

Mind Of My Own has many years of experience helping organisations with the roll-out of their products. They have a full and comprehensive implementation process that they guide organisations through and provide ongoing support around usage

In 2021 Mind Of My Own worked with CareTech, the largest independent residential, fostering and education provider in the UK, to rollout our apps across their 300 services. ACYP also understands that an Australian OOHHC provider will be commencing a trial of Mind Of My Own in NSW and Victoria next month. ACYP would welcome the opportunity to work in partnership with Government to support the development and implementation of a tool for all children and young people in the NSW context.