

KARNAGE

Background

Karnage* was 12 years old when he was referred to LINKS by his DCJ caseworker. He had difficulty regulating his emotions, and experienced significant anxiety around contact visits. Karnage also had diagnoses of Autism Spectrum Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

Karnage was removed from his mother's care in 2016, and spent 17 months in an alternate care arrangement (ACA). DCJ could not find a home-based placement to support him with his behaviours, which included physical and verbal aggression. In December 2017, Karnage was finally placed with foster carers Sarah* and Dave*, where he has lived since.



* Names changed to protect identities. When we sought permission to share Karnage's story, we asked what he would like to be called. He replied, 'Karnage! But it has to be with a K!'

The LINKS Difference

When Karnage was referred to LINKS, he met mental health clinician Robyn*. She knew there was something special about him – a sense of resiliency, braveness, and motivation for growth and joy. Robyn determined that Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (TF-CBT) was the best intervention to help Karnage understand the physiological and psychological effects of his complex trauma.

He and Robyn worked hard at learning relaxation strategies, increasing his emotional literacy, learning cognitive coping strategies (using thoughts to regulate feelings and shape behaviour), creating a trauma narrative, and preparing for future challenges.

Karnage's spirit really shone when he and Robyn created his trauma narrative, which he referred to as his 'life story'. It began with the words, 'I've been sad most of my life. I haven't once really had a good smile on my face.' Karnage titled his trauma narrative 'If only I could imagine'.

Karnage, like no other young person Robyn had worked with before, showed a deep desire and unwavering commitment to processing the traumas he had experienced in the past, and moving forward. Several weeks later, when he was finally happy with it, he ended his life story with the words, 'I have lots of friends and family who love me. I feel happy and joyful, and I love my life.'

Karnage's story highlights the strength and resiliency of our young people in OOHC. "As a clinician, it was an absolute honour and privilege to have Karnage share his story with me," Robyn said, "and to share in the joy of his progress."