

Research to Practice Webinar: Reflective practice evidence on Family Time

*Fostering Lifelong Connections
research study*

19 August 2020

Research Centre for Children & Families



ARC Linkage - Fostering Lifelong Connections for Children in Permanent Care

Partner organisations

NSW DCJ, Barnardos Australia, Catholic Care Hunter/Maitland, Catholic Care Wollongong, Key Assets, Uniting, Wesley Dalmar

Research team

Chief investigators: Associate Professor Amy Conley Wright, Professor Judith Cashmore AO, Dr Lynette Riley, Dr Susan Collings

Research Centre for Children & Families: Sarah Ciftci, Dr Betty Luu, Suzanne Pope

Partner investigators: Professor Elsbeth Neil (University of East Anglia) & Professor Peter Pecora (University of Washington & Casey Family Programs), Matthew Jones (NSW DCJ) and Robert Urquhart (Barnardos Australia)

Expert Reference Group: Experts-by-Experience and Experts-by-Profession



Acknowledgement of Country

Archibald portrait subject, Dr Lynette Riley, 2020

Painted by Charlotte Lund

<http://sydney.edu.au/kinship-module>

https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2020/08/18/archibald-prize-submission-recognises-aboriginal-education-academic?fbclid=IwAR128NzOsnHzSILZT_qQEe6Bbz2faukMu-KeNo56D8raHduHBHruCdLmksw

Webinar overview

- **Part 1 – Introduction & Overview**

Dr Amy Conley Wright – Director, Research Centre for Children and Families

Bernadette Wood – Director, Practice and Permanency, OSP, NSW DCJ

- **Part 2 – Sector collaboration and privileging lived experience**

Dr Susan Collings – Research Fellow, RCCF

Bobby Hendry – Expert by Experience, RCCF

- **Part 3 – Practice trials and evidence gathering**

Sarah Ciftci – Research Associate, RCCF

Blythe Quick – Caseworker, CatholicCare, Hunter Manning

- **Question & Answer with panel**

Part 1: Introduction and Overview

Amy Conley Wright & Bernadette Wood

Context and aims

- Expectation of regular face-to-face visits and continued relationship across placements for children on permanent orders (Kinship care, Guardianship, open adoption and long-term foster care)
- For Aboriginal families, complex Kinship interrelationships and obligations among extended family and community need to be factored into caseworkers' relationship-building practices
- Project aim is to **develop, test, embed, and disseminate relationship-building practices** to encourage positive interactions between children's birth and permanent care families.

Fostering Lifelong Connection website

Fostering lifelong connections for children in permanent care

The Fostering Lifelong Connections study (funded through an Australian Research Council Linkage grant) explores how the out-of-home care sector can encourage positive relationships between children's birth and permanent care families. This project develops, tests, embeds, and disseminates practices for children in permanent care to develop and sustain positive connections with birth relatives by:

- identifying relationship-building practices and co-designing resources to promote good practice
- conducting action research at four NSW sites to trial, implement and evaluate practice changes
- implementing new relationship-building practices in organisations through embedded champions, staff training and change management
- disseminating research findings, practice resources, and training to the out-of-home care sector.

Visit the [Fostering Lifelong Connections](#) project website to find out more.

[Research synthesis on priority vulnerable](#)

<https://www.sydney.edu.au/arts/our-research/centres-institutes-and-groups/research-centre-for-children-and-families/our-research.html>

Check out website for series of research to practice notes and tip sheets

Resources and publications

[Priority Vulnerable Populations](#) 

[Remote Social Work - Research to Practice](#) 

[Virtual Visitation for Separated Families - Research to Practice](#) 

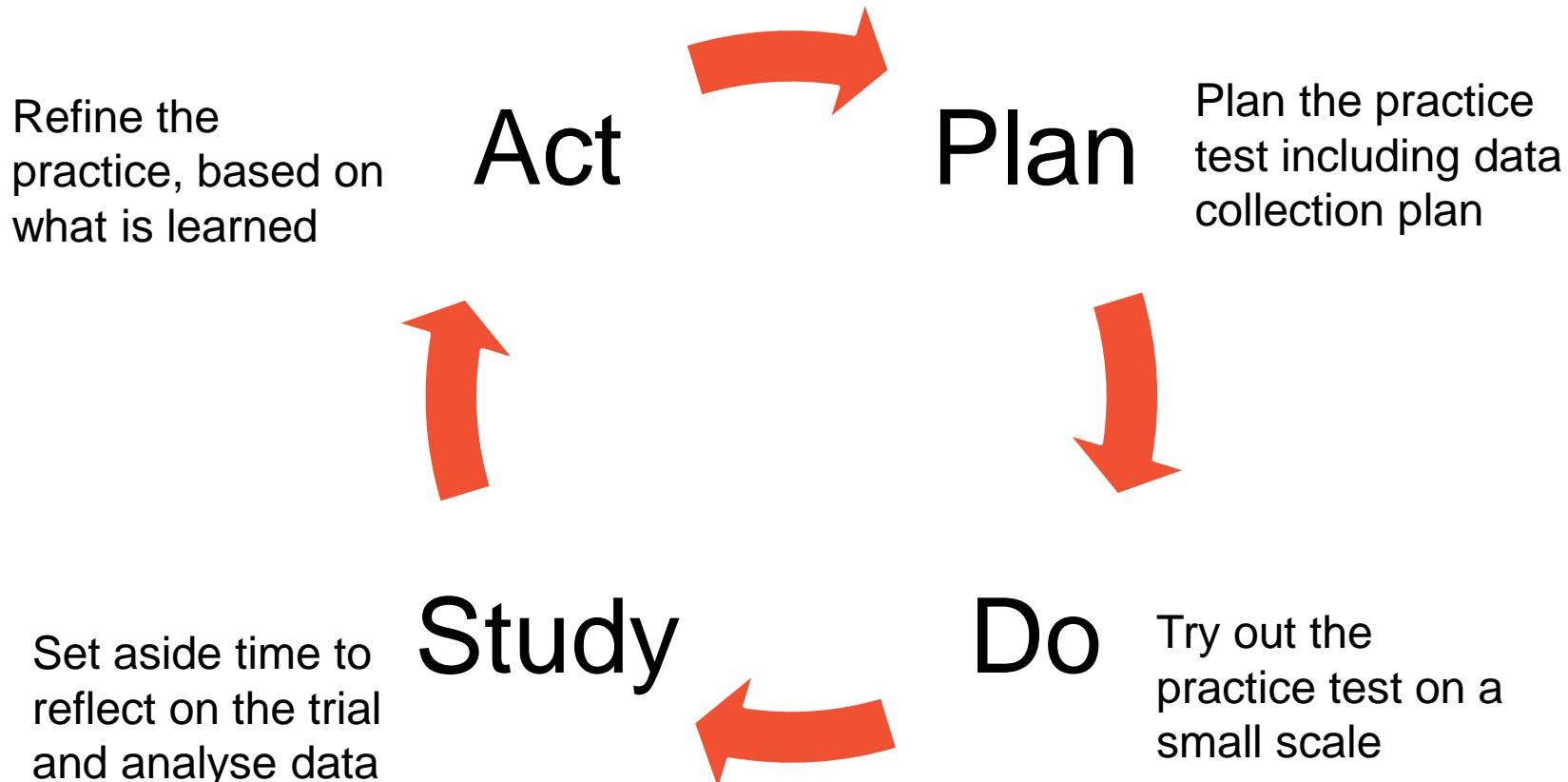
[Helping children in care stay in contact with their birth families during COVID-19](#) 

[Developing a trauma-informed approach to birth family contact - summary](#) 

More info on dedicated project website

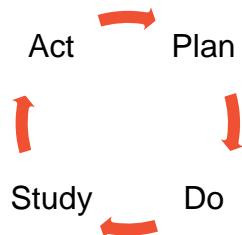


Method: Breakthrough Series Collaborative

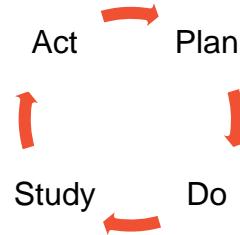


Method: Breakthrough Series Collaborative

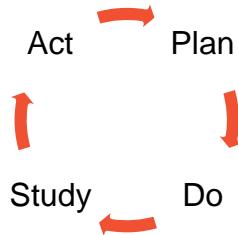
Learning session 1-
Initiation
Feb 2020



Learning session 2-
Refinement
Oct 2020



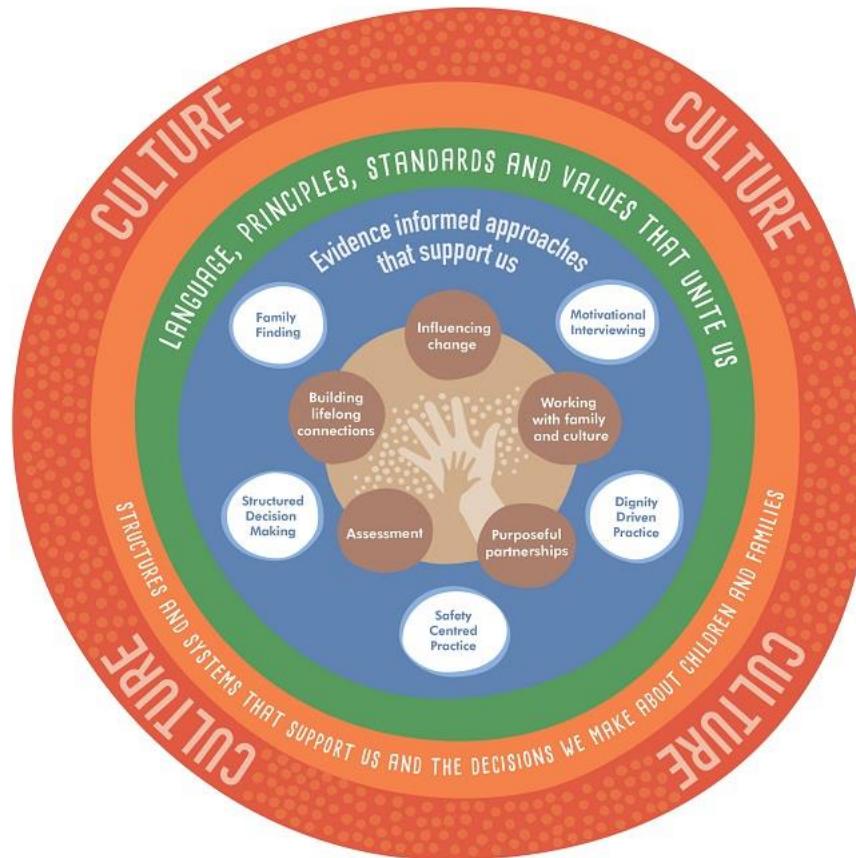
Learning session 3-
Sustainability
April 2021



Learning session 4-
Dissemination
Nov 2021

Scaling up in Partner
Organisations and resource
development for the sector
Dec 2022

Link to NSW Department of Communities and Justice Practice Standards





Family time

1. Family time is critical to supporting children's connections, sense of belonging and to the successful restoration of a child to their family time.

2. Family time can and should be inclusive of a child's siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles etc.,

3. Caseworkers must speak with children, parents and carers in preparation for and following family time, providing support and feedback as necessary to make visits together meaningful and enjoyable.

4. The preparation of family time must be attentive to a child and family's needs, including accessibility needs, practical needs (eg transport) and emotional needs.



Family time

5. Children deserve family time in an enjoyable and relaxed environment. Caseworkers should work with children, families and carers to create meaningful visits in places that feel safe.

6. If supervision is required, think critically about who might be the best person to supervise. A member of the child's family network may be suitable and help create a more relaxed atmosphere.

7. Caseworkers can use family time to not only assess a family's progress towards goals, but also to model responsive care.

8. Caseworkers should follow up family time with strengths-based feedback for parents, particularly where we are working to restore a child home.

Part 2: Sector collaboration and privileging lived experience

Susan Collings and Bobby Hendry

Sector collaboration

The BSC co-design brings together people with knowledge based on research, practice and lived experience to devise small and achievable solutions to recognised problems

The FLC project brings together **academics, OOHC organisation leaders and caseworkers, child welfare and trauma experts, and people with personal experience of out-of-home-care** to trial and refine new ways of working with families to improve children's experiences of family time.

Buy-in is key to lasting changes



The Expert Reference Group

Research Team

Amy Conley Wright, Judy Cashmore, Lynette Riley, Susan Collings, Sarah Ciftci, Betty Luu, Suzanne Pope

Experts by Experience

Bobby Hendry, Miimi Morris, Malcolm Sky, Jacqui Kaelle, Billie Black and Tegan Whittaker

Experts by Profession

Mariaeleno Albu, Judy Atkinson, Sue Burrati, Sue Foley, Steve Kinmond, Loyola McLean, Rowena Medland, Bernadette Wood, Ananda Hall

Role of the Expert Reference Group

- **Feedback on practices being trialled**
- **Feedback on systemic issues e.g. law, policy, court changes**
- **Formed two subcommittees to focus on trauma and on Aboriginal children & families**
- **Support development of good practice resources in 2022**
- **Group meets biannually**

The voice of experience

People with experience of out-of-home care are a critical voice on FLC

Bring unique understanding of how casework practices for family time affect children, young people and families, including Aboriginal families.

Six people employed as casual research assistants

Matched to a research mentor for 1:1 support with personal goals e.g. research skills, system change, personal development



Plan for the Experts by Experience Group

2020

Develop a communication guide for Family Time that focuses on helping to build relationships not on obligations and rights

Audience: DCJ, OOHC organisations, families, young people

2021

Contribute to data analysis (key messages)

Contribute to ERG and subcommittee work



2022

Provide feedback on promising practices identified

Contribute to development of multimedia resources

In conversation with an Expert

Introducing Bobbie Hendry

What did caseworkers do to help you connect with your family?

What do you wish they had done differently?

What message do you have for caseworkers about involving children in decisions about family time?



Part 3: Practice trials and evidence gathering

Sarah Ciftci and Blythe Quick

Practice Trials

Newcastle-Maitland & Dubbo Teams

Doing Family Time from a distance – Supporting families with distant modes of communication to promote meaningful Family Time and family connections.

Sydney Team

Post visit debrief with children, carers and parents – Have debrief phone calls with children, carers and parents (or other relatives involved in contact) within one week after visit to assess what worked well and identify areas for improvement.

Wollongong Team

Pre and post visit debrief with parents to promote participation in Family Time, identify any barriers to participation, assess what worked well and identify areas for improvement.

Evidence Gathering

Our teams of action researchers meet monthly to reflect on their experiences with trialling practices with children and families.

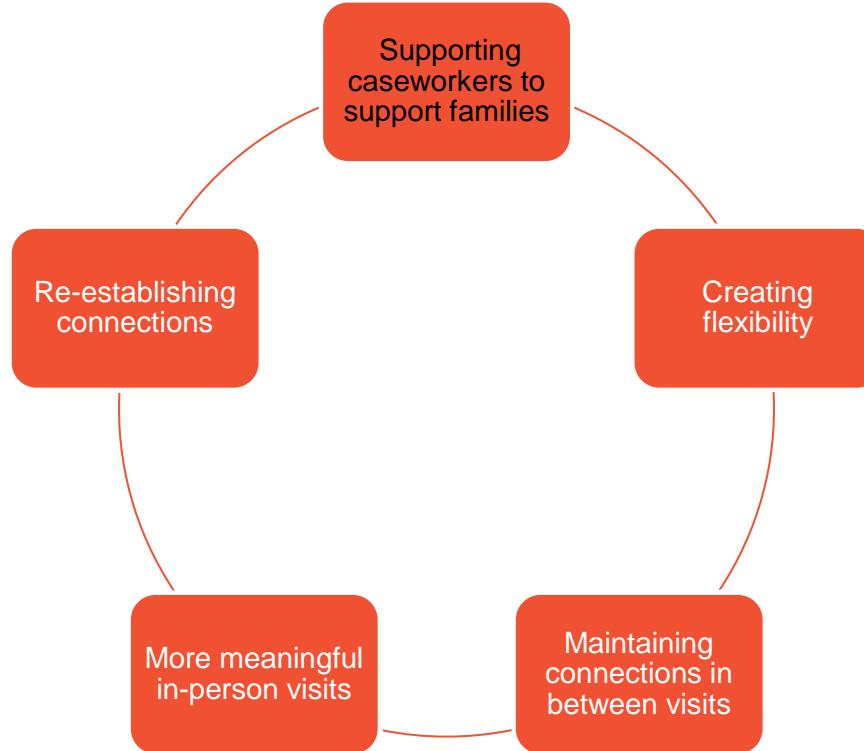
This creates a space for action researchers to collaborate and share what worked well, what could be improved and how, and what they are learning about their own practice.



Kolb, D. A. (1984) Experiential Learning. Englewood Cliffs, NJ.: Prentice Hall

Family Time from a Distance

**What have we
learned from trialling
and reflecting?**



Case Study and Reflections from an Action Researcher

