

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Exploring the facilitators and barriers for safe and stable reunification

NGO Interviews

Project ID: 206504

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You are invited to take part in this study. Please read this Participant Information Sheet in full before deciding whether to participate in this research. If you would like further information about this project, you are encouraged to contact the lead investigator via the email address or phone number listed above.

Background of the research

As the number of children and young people residing in out-of-home care continues to rise across the globe, reunification has become a significant policy and practice priority for child protection systems. Such an emphasis on reunification in child protection policy and practice has led to a variety of strategies, frameworks and research designed to help facilitate child protection practices which see children return to their families whom they were removed from, where attainable. Despite this, figures of reunification breakdown, where children are subsequently removed from their families for a second time or more, heighten long-established concerns over the success of family reunification and the ability of reunified families to remain safely together.

Currently, there remains a lack of understanding on the factors which place children and their families at subsequent risk of experiencing reinvolvement with the child protection system following reunification. While there is a growing body of evidence on some of the factors within child protection data (e.g., demographic information, abuse type) which may impact post-reunification outcomes for families, there is a dearth of literature on the perspectives of professionals in this context.

Purpose of the research

The current study is a part of a larger PhD project exploring the facilitators and barriers to safe and stable reunification. The aim of this study is to explore professional experiences of working with and supporting families in achieving and maintaining reunification, including the policy and practice experiences underpinning reunification work, perceptions of family experiences, and ideas for meaningful development and change in practice, to help explore the facilitators and barriers for safe and stable reunification for families.

What does the research involve?

Participation involves:

- Taking part in one one-on-one 60-minute interview with the lead investigator

The current study is primarily seeking eligible professionals, who currently work with, assess, support, and/or oversee families working towards and/or following reunification (in the child protection space), to participate in a one-on-one interview with the lead investigator, spanning for approximately 60-minutes,

Interviews will be held during business hours (weekdays 8:00am – 5:00pm) and take place online via Microsoft Teams. With your permission, interview discussions will be recorded to be later transcribed by the lead investigator. Transcripts and all follow-up analyses and results will be completely de-identified and participant numbers assigned to each speaker will be kept confidential.

Through interviews, the current study seeks to gain workers' insights into:

- Organisational challenges and strengths in supporting families work towards and maintain a safe and stable reunification,
- Perceptions of effective and ineffective child protection practices throughout the process of reunification,
- Understandings of family challenges and strengths in working towards and maintaining a safe and stable reunification; and
- Reflections and ideas for improvement and development in practice better support families involved in reunification.

Who is eligible to participate?

Staff aged 18 years and above currently employed by a NGO who provide support services to families experiencing reunification, including those working towards or maintaining reunification, are eligible to participate. Staff may currently hold managerial, frontline, or other roles, where they support, oversee, and/or directly deliver support services to families in achieving and/or maintaining reunification. Only staff proficient in English are able to participate in the current study.

Source of funding

The current study does not have any funding sources.

Consenting to participate in the project and withdrawing from the research

While you may have been identified as a potentially eligible participant by your employer or other colleagues (and your staff contact details provided for these purposes), you are under no obligation to take part in the project and the research team will not provide any information to organisations on who has (or has not) decided to take part in the study. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. ***If you do not wish to take part, you do not have to*** and you are ***free to withdraw from the project at any stage***. You can withdraw from the project verbally or in writing. If you choose to withdraw from the study after participation, any data collected during your interview participation will be deleted and not included in the reporting of results. In this instance, your results may be excluded from the analysis and study findings up until the point of publication (the lead investigator will advise you at the point of your request where this is possible). Following the interview, all participants will be given the opportunity to amend, redact, clarify, or elaborate on any of the data provided in their interview upon being forwarded a copy of their full interview transcript. Following data collection and

analysis, participants will additionally be provided with a de-identified summary of the overarching themes and findings from across the interviews conducted, to invite further input and/or feedback on the collated findings and interpretations. Please note that your decision on whether to take part in this study or not will not affect your work role or relationships.

Confidentiality and anonymity

Transcripts and reporting of results from interviews will remain anonymous, with any information which may be linked to any one participants' identity redacted, and results kept entirely anonymous, including over any member checking processes of transcripts and themes generated. Organisations to which participants belong too will additionally remain anonymous. Pseudonyms will be used for all participants in transcripts and in all reports, with only broad organisational summaries provided for the overall sample, where appropriate. To help protect the identity and privacy of participants, all original video recordings will be permanently deleted upon the extraction of audio files.

Potential benefits and risks of participation

While participating in this study may not carry direct benefits for individual participants, benefit remains in adding valuable contribution to industry knowledge the potential to inform future practice.

Specifically, while there is a growing body of evidence using administrative child protection data to help elucidate some of the factors associated with different post-reunification outcomes, there remains a dearth of qualitative research offering a rich understanding of the reunification process and factors impacting reunification outcomes for families. Research which captures the perspectives and insights of on the ground workers who play a key role in families' reunification experience and process, including challenges and supports for families and organisational barriers and strengths, can help inform the development of improved practices and targeted support to better meet family's needs.

We believe that participation in this research would be very low risk for you. However, there is a very small chance that you may experience some discomfort during the interview, due to the nature of the research and reflections made over participation. For example, you may reflect on instances of failed reunification and/or situations where you felt that you and/or your organisation were unable to meet a family's needs. If this occurs, you can choose to end the interview at any time (with follow up provided by the researcher to check that you are okay and if any addition support is required). All reasonable care will be taken by the researcher to make sure that all interview discussions remain confidential (*e.g.*, through de-identification procedures, robust and secure software for data collection and analysis, secure servers for data storage), however, please be aware that the researchers cannot ultimately guarantee the confidentiality or anonymity of any material transferred by email or the internet.

Please note that due to a lack of funding attached to this project and that participation will occur during business hours, participants are not able to be reimbursed for their participation.

Data storage

Any information we collect from you, including online files, such as audio recordings and transcriptions, will be stored in a confidential folder on a secure password protected computer at the University of South Australia Australian Centre for Child Protection for 5 years after the conclusion of the study. After

this time, they will be securely destroyed. Only the named Investigators of this project will have access to the online files.

Results

Findings of the study will be used in the lead investigator's PhD research thesis and may be published in other research outputs, such as academic journal articles, conference presentations, and the Australian Centre for Child Protection's resource page. Findings from the study may additionally be presented to industry, such as the Department for Child Protection, to help highlight the voices and perspectives of workers in reunification space. The lead investigator will liaise with all participants before the end of their interview to discuss preferences for ongoing communication for transcript review, member checking, and providing a copy of the final report. With permission, a copy of the final report will be provided to participants upon publication, following appropriate member checking procedures.

The study does not seek to obtain any personal or identifiable information for the purpose of findings, and the researcher will take every care to remove any identifying material from the responses you provide. Participants will not be identified in the reporting of the research and any records containing personal information will remain confidential. No information which could lead to the identification of any individual will be released (other than where this is required by law).

Complaints or questions

This project has been approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee (Ethics Protocol # 206504). If you have any questions about being a research participant in general or should you have any concerns or complaints about any aspect of the project or the way it is being conducted, please contact the Executive Officer of this Committee on email: humanethics@unisa.edu.au or telephone: (+61) 8 8302 6330.

If you have any questions or would like further information about the project itself and practical aspects of participation, you can contact the Lead Investigator Ebony Tucker via Email:

Ebony.tucker@mymail.unisa.edu.au

Thank you,

Ebony Tucker

Lead Researcher/Investigator

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