

Exploring the barriers and facilitators for safe and stable reunification: Parent experience and perspectives on the reunification process

Information for Parents and Caregivers

Dear Parents/Caregivers,

You are being invited to participate in an individual interview with Ebony Tucker, the researcher for the current project.

What is the project about?

This project aims to improve the way families are supported through the reunification process, including once their child has returned home, to make sure families can remain safely together after their child has returned home from out-of-home care. We know that families experience the process of reunification differently, and that there are many different challenges and supports which may impact their ability to work towards and maintain reunification, so their child remains in their care.

The project hopes to share parents' and caregivers' experiences of the reunification process and challenges experienced in working towards reunification, to help services and decision-makers better meet their needs and ensure families remain safely together once reunified.

Who is the project being led by?

The research project is being conducted by a PhD Candidate from the University of South Australia's Australian Centre for Child Protection, whose research project aims to improve the process and outcomes of reunification for families (i.e., help improve practices which see children return home to their family from out-of-home care and remain safely in their care after they return home).

What am I being asked to do?

You are being asked to take part in an individual interview regarding your **previous experience** when working towards having your child returned home from out-of-home care, including yours and your family's experience once your child returned home.

We are most interested in your past experience of working towards having your child returned home, the challenges and supports once your child did return home, and what safe and stable long-term reunification looks like and means to you.

If you are currently working towards reunification (i.e., having your child returned home from out-of-home care), **you will not be asked about your current experience**. Parents and caregivers are being asked to reflect on their previous experience of reunification, where their child already returned home from out-of-home care. The interview will involve some questions about your experience, but participants will be encouraged to discuss what is meaningful and important to them, and you do not have to answer any questions you feel uncomfortable speaking about.

The interview will take approximately 1-1.5 hours to complete. However, if at any point you do not wish to continue the interview any longer, we can stop at any time. If you would like, we may continue the interview at another time more suitable to you.

At the end of the interview, you will be given a \$50.00 Coles Group & Myer gift card for your time. Only one gift card per participant can be received.

What will happen to the information I provide?

With your permission, we will audio-record your interview so that we have an accurate record of what you have said. We will transcribe your responses and delete things that might make it easy for people to identify you (like your name, who is in your family, and where you live). With your permission, a transcript (i.e., a written document of everything which was said in the interview) will be provided to you via email once it has been written. You will have the opportunity here to read through the transcript and let us know if there's anything you want removed or added. The information and any audio-recordings collected from interviews will be stored for a maximum of 5 years by the research team but will not include your name or other identifying details.

We will not tell people that you participated in the study or share with them anything you have said, except:

- If we are worried about your safety or the safety of someone else (e.g., your child/ren)
- If you give us permission to share something so that you are given help or support

In each of these situations, we will talk to you about what we need to do and involve you in coming up with a plan.

Findings from the interviews will be used in the lead investigator's PhD thesis and may be published in other ways, such as academic journal articles or summary reports provided to child protection policy and practice organisations, to help develop resources and practices to improve families' experience of the reunification process. If you'd like to read about these findings or see these resources, please contact the researchers and we will send you details on how to find them. With your consent, a summary of findings will additionally be emailed to you upon completion, or alternatively, will be made available on the Australian Centre for Child Protection's website (<https://www.unisa.edu.au/research/australian-centre-for-child-protection/our-resources/#resources>) around 6 months after interviews have finished.

Can I withdraw from the project?

Participation in this project is completely voluntary and it is your choice whether you want to participate or not. If you agree to participate, it is also up to you whether you complete the interview or stop the interview after starting. You can withdraw from the project at any time. If you decide to stop participating it is also up to you whether the things you have already shared can be used by the research team or whether they should be deleted.

We will not tell the worker who first invited you to participate or their organisation whether you completed an interview or not. No matter what you choose to do, your decision will not affect your relationships with any of the organisations involved.

If you withdraw from the project, you do not have to give back the \$50 gift card. This is yours to keep.

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?

You will not have to answer any questions in the interview that you don't feel comfortable answering. However, some parents/caregivers might find some of the questions a bit uneasy or distressing. The researchers will try to avoid this as best as possible, but if needed, please discuss any discomfort or distress you are feeling from the survey with your organisations' support staff. You may also like to contact:

Lifeline Australia
Tel: 13 11 14 Website:
www.lifeline.org.au

Kids Helpline (help for parents)
Tel: 1800 55 1800 Website:
www.kidshelpline.com.au

UniSA Psychology Clinic
Tel: 08 8302 4875
Email:
psychologyclinic@unisa.edu.au

As you will remain completely anonymous if you decide to participate in this project, nobody will know if you completed the interview or not, except for the lead investigator (and any support persons you wish to attend the interview). No matter what you choose to do, your decision to participate will not affect your relationships with the organisation who has provided you this information or any other relationship. If you are currently working towards

reunification (i.e., having your child returned home), your survey responses will have no impact on this process, or any decisions made about this.

What if I have a question about the study?

If you have any further questions about this study, including questions about the interview process, what you may be talking about, or anything else which this Information Sheet does not answer, please contact the lead researcher Ebony Tucker via email: ebony.tucker@mymail.unisa.edu.au

What if I have a complaint about the study?

This project has been approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee (Ethics Protocol 205859). 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.

What do I do if I want to participate?

If you would like to participate in an interview, please respond to the lead investigator via email letting them know you are interested. They will respond to you via email to arrange a time to speak.

Thank you for your participation in the survey and we hope to hear back from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Ebony Tucker (UniSA)

Lead Researcher

Ebony.tucker@mymail.unisa.edu.au

