

Family Inclusion Strategies in the Hunter



WE
LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS
WE



Family Support Newcastle
your family, our community

Felicity Kime **Teegan Bain**

Lyn Stoker **Lauren Graham**





**Acknowledgement
of the traditional
custodians of the
land.**

Session outline



- Family Inclusion Strategies in the Hunter – who are we?
- Why we need to build a more family inclusive approach to work – how do children benefit – Protecting Australia's children?
- Some strategies we are doing in the Hunter
- Developing strategies in your setting

Why build relationships with parents and family?



Activity:

....as a child what offered you a sense of security?

Share with the person next to you what simple action helped to keep you or your child feeling secure or reassured.

Family Inclusion Strategies in the Hunter -Who we are



- Practice forums and regular community meetings, workshops and team presentations, social media
- Reframing parents and family as experts from who we need to learn. A genuine partnership between workers and parents.
- Research on Parent Perspectives – partnership with the University of Newcastle & LWB
- Website for parents and family www.finclusionh.org and on Facebook.
- Information and referral – peer support for parents
- Practitioner and Carer Training

Family inclusion is more than contact...



“Family inclusion is the active & meaningful participation of parents and family in the lives of children. It requires open, warm, professional relationships aimed at building equity with workers & carers. It is underpinned by respect & trust.”

(Family Inclusion Strategies in the Hunter, 2015)

Family inclusion ...

is about children's rights



Because it is good for children

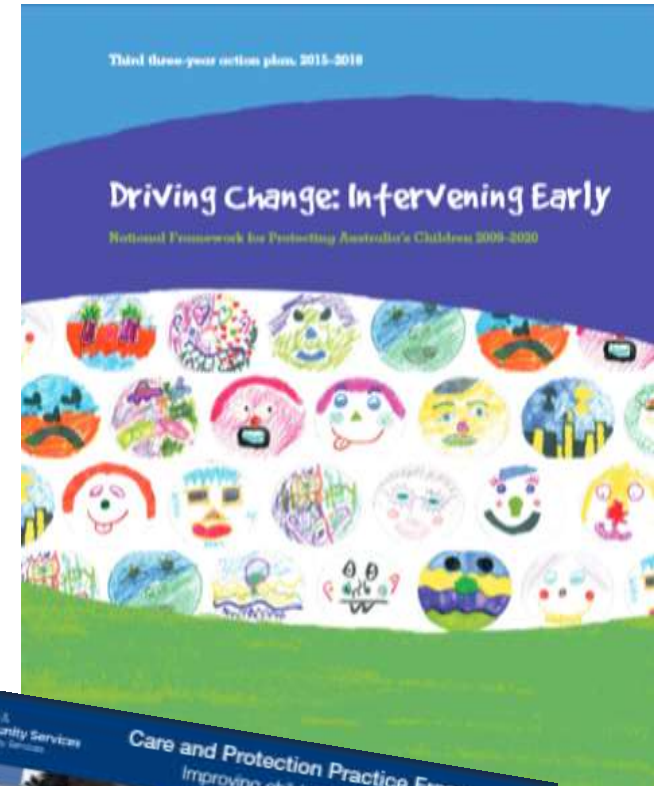
- There are better outcomes
- it continues relationships and attachments already formed
- family is part of every child's forming identity
- it leads to better long term support - beyond care
- it is consistent with what children want and need.
- it contributes positively to stability in care

Changing policy and legislative framework



Royal Commission
into Institutional Responses
to Child Sexual Abuse

FACS
caseworkers
encouraged to
use family group
conferencing
9 May 2016



Family inclusion ... better outcomes for children



National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children Third Action Plan 2015–2018

1. Advancing children's development and wellbeing in the first 1000 days.
2. Supporting young people in out-of-home care to flourish in adulthood.
3. Building child safe organisations and environments.

Family inclusion ... better outcomes for children



1. Advancing children's development and wellbeing in the first 1000 days

Many parents who have children removed are young adults and go on to have more children

Many parents were themselves removed – where do they learn to be better parents?

Why do we stop supporting parents who have children removed?

Messages from research – importance of family



Relationship based practice which ameliorates power is good for kids (Reimer, 2014)

“The weight of evidence, from all quarters, convinces us that the relationships with people who care for and about children are the golden thread in children’s lives, and that the quality of a child’s relationships is the lens through which we should view what we do and plan to do (The Care Inquiry, 2013, p.2).

Challenging stated and unstated beliefs....



- We do not have to choose between parents rights and children's rights
- Your role as a parent continues when your child is placed in long term out of home care.
- People can change
- Children can continue to love and have positive relationships with their parents when they are in long term care

Family inclusion ... better outcomes for children



2. Supporting young people in out-of-home care to flourish in adulthood

Children in long term care benefit from “belonging” to their families and their carer families. This contributes to permanence and “felt security” (Biehal, 2014)

no matter what the legal outcome

Children who leave care with intact and warm relationships with family have better outcomes (Mendes et al, 2012)

Family inclusion ... better outcomes for children



2. Supporting young people in out-of-home care to flourish in adulthood

Carer and parent partnerships contribute positively to reunification and in other ways (CWIG, 2015, Hojer, 2009)

Children in care want ongoing relationships and involvement with their parents and benefit from ongoing attachments (Create, 2014, Baker, 2016)

Family inclusion ... better outcomes for children



3. Building child safe organisations and environments

Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual Assault

The more people involved in a child's life, the more people who are able to notice changes the greater likelihood that they will be kept safe from institutional abuse.

Being “family and community involved” has been identified as an element of child safe organisation. (RC, 2016)

Family inclusion ... better outcomes for children



Parents want to play a parenting role and to be an important part of their children's lives when their kids are in care. They can be good advocates and stay child focused. (Ross et al, 2016)



Teegan “Peer Worker – Engagement and inclusion”

***My experiences as a peer support
worker in LWB***

Peer parent worker in out of home care



A peer worker is someone who has similar experiences in their past and has recovered and learned as a result.

In this case the peer worker Teegan, is a parent who has experienced child removal, placement and services to support restoration and family preservation”

Peer parent worker in out of home care



“Thankyou Teegan, you are amazing and strong . You inspire me with your amazing achievements. “

...quote from a Mum

Teegan...”made a potentially awkward situation more comfortable for all”

...quote from a case manager

Peer parent worker in out of home care



”
There is some evidence that peer workers can help build a more family inclusive approach in out of home care and promote family engagement.

Families are more likely to build trusting relationships with someone who they relate to and who has had similar experiences.



Felicity Kime

Felicity volunteers with FISH to speak to carers & practitioners.

She is currently working on a LWB project consulting with parents.

Parent experiences.



“Family inclusion is, above all, about learning from the lived experience of parents and families”

Peer parent worker in out
of home care



”
*Children benefit when they remain
connected with family and when they
have strong and enduring relationships
with their families, especially their
parents and siblings.*

Activity



**What does family inclusion look like
in your setting?**



In your work what are the things your teams can do to include families?

- With families?
- With carers?
- In your teams and in supervision?
- In your regions?



Divide up into groups of like work

- Family support / early intervention
- Schools & or early education
- OOHC
- Health & Medical settings

What does family inclusion look like?



Practical support

Relationships with carer and parents

Professional relationships with workers

A lot more than contact – reduce supervision

Flexible and informal – not rules and procedures

Acknowledge and mitigate power imbalances.

Activity: - examples



- *Have more conversation with a parent about removing a child;*
- *Have more conversations after removal - making plans for next steps;*
- *Acknowledge their grief and loss*
- *Talk about an experience of family time together – how did the parent find it and how could it be improved?*
- *Have a conversation with a carer about meeting a parent*
- *Have a supervisory conversation with a caseworker /your manager about relationships with parents.*

Family Inclusion



“In order to keep kids safe and do the best we can for them we need all the voices at the table – including parents”.

Gillian Calvert AO

former Commissioner for children and young people NSW

*“Kids need their parents in their lives... one way or the other”
(Parent with children in care, Newcastle, 2014)*