

Reflecting In, On and For Practice: Reunification Work

Contributors

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History of the Project

- An adventure in partnership
- Action research
- Seeking good outcomes for children
- Addressing systemic stuckness

Project Goals

Establish purposeful, inclusive working relationships between:

- Professionals
- Parents
- Carers
- And most importantly - **Children**

The Reunification Team

Colleagues with a shared history:

- Jenny Terry
- Pauline Dixon
- Brenda Clare

Initiators of the Project

Two old colleagues who trusted each other:

1. A Regional Manager of the Department for Community Development
2. The CEO at Wanslea

Travel Guides

1. St Luke's Bendigo
2. Canterbury Families First programme

Practice Principles

- Responsible partnership
- Working with families' strengths
- Positive collegial working relationships
- Families are the experts in their lives
- Working with difference without conflict
- Ownership of professional authority

Ongoing Objectives

- Seek partnership with other stakeholders
- Avoid adversarial engagement
- Work honestly and transparently
- Be accountable

Reunification as Planning

Planning reunification involves:

- Families – reintegration

OR

- Permanent alternatives allowing connections

Success Story 1

- 1 boy, 12 years self-referral
- 3 outcomes of reunification process:
 1. Assessed safety at home
 2. Restored parents' belief
 3. Helped return his childhood

Success Story 2

- 2 boys, 9 and 7 years, and 1 girl, 5 years in long-term care following neglect
- 3 outcomes of reunification process:
 1. Eldest boy returned home
 2. Younger boy safely in shared care
 3. Mother recognised value of care for girl

Success Story 3

- 1 boy, 9 years, long-term care following abuse
- 3 outcomes of reunification process:
 1. Carers identified as optimal solution
 2. Therapeutic work to address issues
 3. Carers' daughter helped to accept placement

The Take-Home Message

- Individualise assessment and intervention
- Success equals what is **best for the child** – not return home
- Rely on:
 1. Trusting networks
 2. Shared vision
 3. Express what you think – regardless of risk

Please Contact Us With Questions

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