



Family Connections and Contact Study:

What did we learn?

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A birth mother shows her new blended family - herself, children at home & in care & their carers

Contact and Connection

In Australia, most children and young people in out-of-home-care still see birth relatives. This is called 'contact' and it can help children stay connected to family, Kin, community and culture.

Why did we do the study?

In New South Wales, changes have happened in out-of-home-care to help children and young people have security and stability which is called 'permanency'. Now it is easier for carers to become guardians and to adopt children. If they do, they will take over organising contact with birth relatives. We wanted to find out what children and young people, carers and birth parents think about contact and what help they want from caseworkers to make it work.

There were 19 children and young people, 12 birth parents and 26 carers. Twenty people identified as Aboriginal*.

The study happened between May and August 2018.

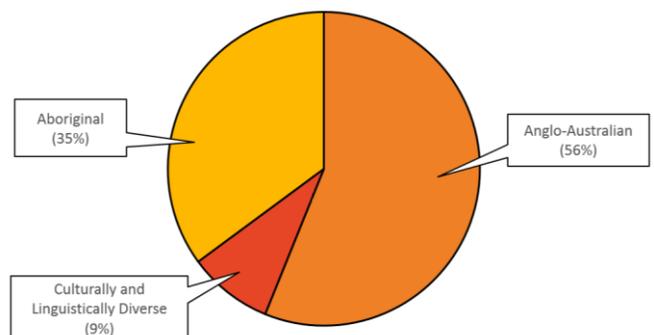
Ingredients for good contact

- Everyone is clear what will happen at visits
- Activities and plans are right for the child or young person
- Children and young people have a say in what happens
- The location is safe and comfortable
- Children see the people from their two families getting along together.

Who did we talk to?

We talked to 57 people who lived in Sydney, the Illawarra and Hunter regions, and the central west of the state.

Cultural background of participants



**In recognition of Aboriginal people as the original inhabitants of NSW, this document refers specifically to Aboriginal people and communities.*



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Challenges for children

It could be hard for some children and young people to see birth parents because of what that happened to them in the past. Sometimes they might act out before, during and after contact to show how bad they felt. This could make things tense between carers and birth parents. It helped to talk about it so no one felt blamed and families could share ideas about how to help the child or young person cope and reconnect with family.

Contact could be a special time for children to spend with their families when it was what they wanted and the adults had a good attitude and kept the focus on what was best for the child or young person.

Making contact part of life

Many carers, birth parents & children and young people told us they wanted their family to be seen as normal even though it combined two unrelated families. Contact went well when:

- Children and young person got to see people who were important to them and could be confident it was going to happen and felt safe when it did.
- Birth parents could accept their different role and carers could accept that birth parents will always be interested in and connected to their child.
- Adults could help children feel like they were allowed to be connected to both families by showing respect and having shared celebrations and creating positive memories



A young child's way of showing who they feel close to in their lives by placing figures near or far from a figure at the centre which is the child.

For more information about the study visit

<https://goo.gl/Kkr3kg>