



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

Research Centre
for Children and
Families



Practice learnings and resources,
Fostering Lifelong Connections:

Hearing Children's Voices

Presented by:

Dr Susan Collings, Chief Investigator

Funded by the Australian Research Council LP180101332



Tree of Knowledge

pokerwork on kangaroo skin

Lynette Riley, 2010

We acknowledge the tradition of custodianship and law of the Country on which the University of Sydney campuses stand. We pay our respects to those who have cared and continue to care for country.

Hearing children's voices about family time

- Children and young people in out-of-home care have a right to maintain contact with their families and other significant people in their lives.
- This includes a right to participate and to have a say about decisions that are important to them, including who they see or speak to, how often, where and what they do.
- Caseworkers can make efforts to collect children's immediate feedback after visits, discuss their feedback with carers and family members and make changes that respond to their wishes.

Case Study

Zac



Background

Zac is 11 years old and lives in a kinship placement with his maternal Aunty. He hadn't seen his dad and paternal siblings for a number of years as they live interstate and his Aunty had worries about him travelling to visit them.

Casework Support

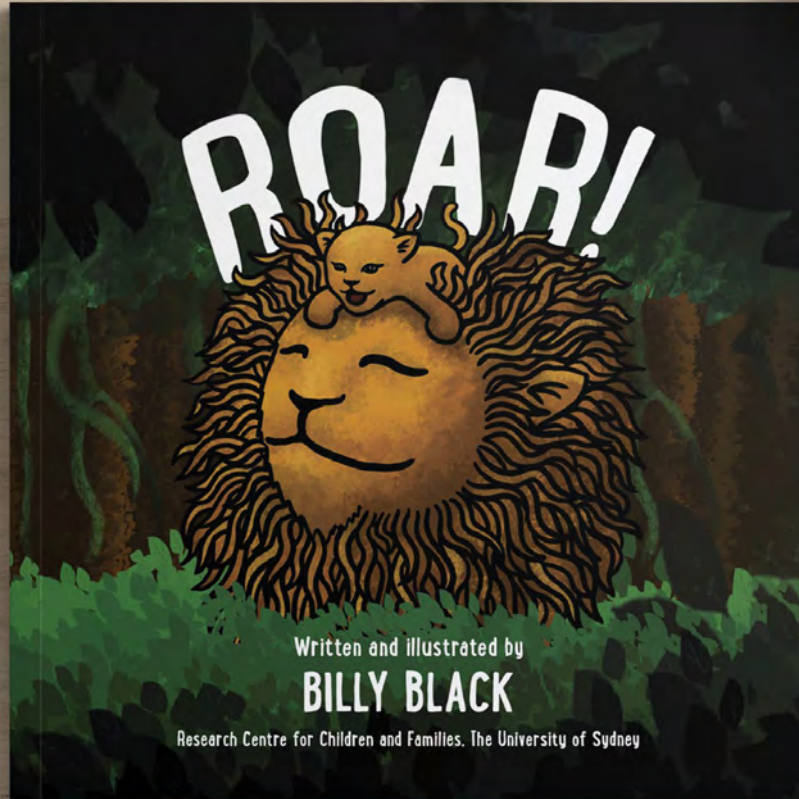
His caseworker began having regular and informal one-on-one conversations with Zac. Over time, Zac started to open up more and told the caseworker that he really wanted to see his dad and siblings. The caseworker then met with his carer to work through her worries and suggested a plan for Zac to travel interstate that addressed her concerns. She also worked with the father to develop a safety plan. Zac's first interstate visit with his paternal family occurred without a hitch and he is now travelling every school holidays to spend time with them and stays in touch by phone in between.

Practice Learnings

- Shift practice from primarily asking carers about how children are going and what they need to asking children directly. There are often differences in their perspectives.
- It's important to have one-on-one time with young people outside of the home and when the carer is not there so they can freely express their views.
 - Regular, informal conversations over time help to build rapport.
- When children ask for something and you give it to them, it builds their faith in you as their caseworker, lets them know you are there for them and opens them up to asking for more things they want.

Practice Tips

- Types of questions you ask get a better response than others. Mix it up if you aren't getting the information you need, e.g., 'when was the last time you felt frustrated with your carer? Tell me about that' rather than 'how is everything going?'
- Regularly asking young people about their wishes and involving them in decisions can help with preparing them to leave care and start making decisions for themselves as adults.
- It's important to use appropriate ways to gain children's perspectives which may differ based on their age or developmental stage or for children living with disabilities.
- It's also important to manage children's expectations. If they ask for something that is not possible, explain why.



ROAR!

Written and illustrated by
BILLY BLACK

Research Centre for Children and Families, The University of Sydney



**my family
time is mine.**

every question you've had
about family time + tips and
tricks to navigate it all.

BOBBY HENDRY

RESEARCH CENTRE FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Reflective exercise

Think of a child or young person you work with.

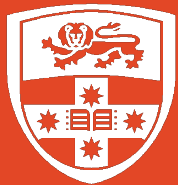
- Have you ever collected their feedback about family time?
 - What did they share with you?
- How did this influence your decision making?

Connect With Us

Research Centre for Children and Families
Sydney School of Education and Social Work
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Website www.rccf-fostering-connections.sydney.edu.au

Email rccf.research@sydney.edu.au



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