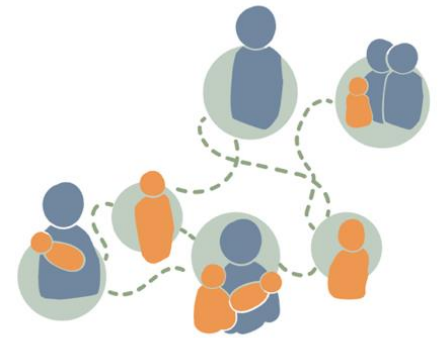


Dear parent,

Between 2020 and 2024, the Enhancing Children's Journey through Out-of-home Care research project spoke with children, parents, and carers involved in out-of-home care to better understand their experiences and support needs. Over the course of the project, we spoke with you and other parents to understand what families go through and what supports are needed when children are placed in care. Your honest and powerful stories about parenting, separation, loss, and staying connected to your child(ren) provided a viewpoint not often reflected in policy and research.



What we heard

Many parents experience trauma, poverty, poor health, housing insecurity, family violence, mental health challenges, and financial hardship before, during, and after their child's removal

The removal of a child is deeply painful and traumatic, often experienced as grief and loss

Many parents feel judged, alone, and unsupported, especially after removal

Parents spoke strongly about their love for their children and the importance of staying connected to them

Many parents feel confused by the service systems in their lives and excluded from decisions about their children

Following child removal, some parents experience further loss of housing, income, and formal supports, making it harder to rebuild and address safety concerns

Maintaining relationships with their children is often difficult due to limited formal and informal supports, complex contact arrangements, and logistical challenges (e.g., transport options)

We recommend the following service system changes to better assist families

Service systems to provide earlier support to families before challenges reach crisis point

Service systems to improve practical support, including safe housing, transport, financial assistance, and access to health, disability, mental health, and family support services

Practitioners to provide compassionate, trauma-informed emotional support before, during, and after children's removal

Government and services to improve communication processes and provide clear guidance to families about child protection and legal processes

Government to ensure parents have access to advocacy and support to navigate service systems

Service systems to strengthen support options and resources for safe and meaningful parent-child relationships

Service systems to create opportunities for respectful relationships between parents, carers, and practitioners

***Thank you** for sharing your experiences with courage and honesty. Your voice matters and has helped us to make recommendations to child safety and community service agencies about how to improve support to families.*