

# FAMILY INCLUSION IN CHILD PROTECTION AND CARE

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Association of Children's Welfare Agencies  
Conference, 2018, Sydney.

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LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS  
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If a community values it's children, it must  
cherish their parents. John Bowlby, 1951





The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust supports Australians to travel overseas to research innovations and knowledge that will benefit Australia.

Family inclusion is urgently needed in Australian child welfare systems

[www.churchilltrust.com.au](http://www.churchilltrust.com.au)

***Poverty is not Neglect,  
Surveillance is not Support.***



*Joyce McMillan, Child Welfare Organising Project, New York City*

# FAMILY INCLUSION – THE REAL CRISIS IN CHILD PROTECTION

- 1.The context for family inclusion.
- 2.The key elements of family inclusive practice
- 3.Peer Parent advocacy and support – cheap, accessible, practical.

***Families are children's first and most enduring relationship.  
Relationships are the golden thread in children's lives.*** UK Care Review, 2013

# THE CONTEXT – WHY FAMILY INCLUSION?

- *Evidence support for family engagement*
- *Child welfare practice has not met the needs of parents, families and children*
- *The availability of models and programs that don't always help*
- *We need to refocus on the lived experience of parents and their children*

***Every child has the right to their parents to be represented by the best lawyer in town,*** Professor Martin Guggenheim, 2017



# THE ELEMENTS OF FAMILY INCLUSION

## Address Power imbalances



Through skilled  
advocacy,  
information,  
education,  
**accountability**

*Our clients have an  
advocate at every  
single meeting – we  
fight for them* Centre for  
Family Representation, NYC,  
2018

## Use a lens of social justice



Poverty,  
homelessness,  
inequality, racism...

*(intra family  
interventions) do not  
address the root  
causes of most child  
removal - poverty,  
racism and entrenched  
disadvantage. Jeremy  
Kohomban Children's Village,  
NYC*

The wallpaper of practice....



*“Poverty is the wall  
paper of practice in  
child welfare –  
unremarkable and  
unremarked upon.”*

*Professor Kate Morris and colleagues, Child Welfare  
Inequalities Project, UK*

<http://www.harryvenning.co.uk/>  
[www.coventry.ac.uk/CWIP/](http://www.coventry.ac.uk/CWIP/) | @CWIP\_Research

# ELEMENTS OF FAMILY INCLUSION

## Parents as Leaders



## Peer work, policy reform, training and research

*Change comes from the ground up and parent allies are leaders of change and educators in the system. Dana Dildane, Parents 4 Parents Program Seattle*

## Relational permanence



## It is what children experience that matters – not the legal order

*Carers often continue a relationship with children post reunification which contributes to safer reunification and greater permanency. Fairfax County VA, Bridging the Gap, 2018*

# PEER WORK – A FAMILY INCLUSION INNOVATION

Peer workers are parents who have had personal experiences in the child welfare system and offer **advocacy and support** to parents newly involved in the system (Lalayants, 2013).

*Parent  
Ally*

*Parent  
Partner*

*Parent  
Leader*

*Parent  
Advocate*

*I want to talk to a parent. No offence. I'm sure you're really nice. But another parent will know what I'm going through* Parent in Newcastle, 2017

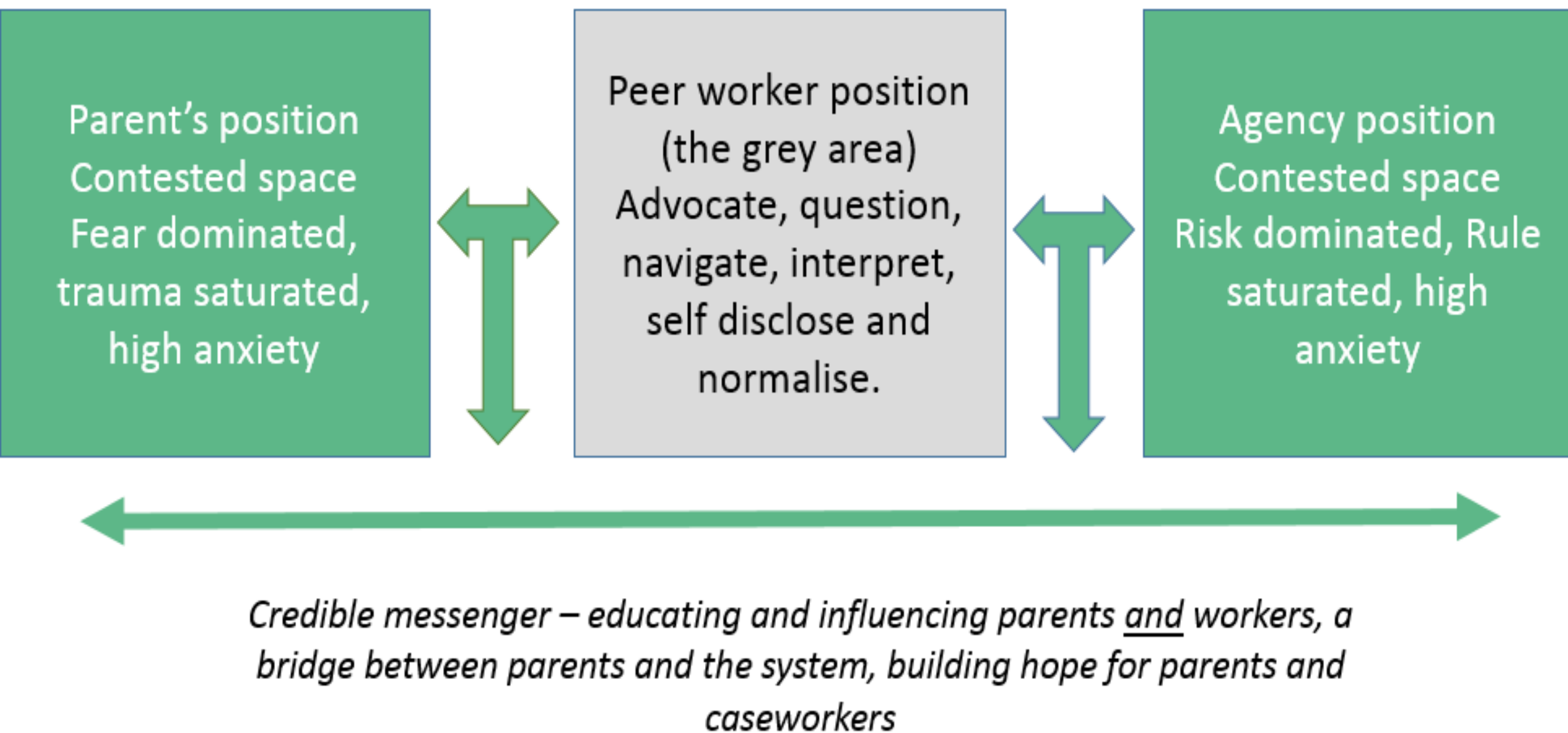


- Peer workers coach, translate, encourage, empathise and advocate – above all they offer hope.
- They influence and role model.
- Peer workers don't take case notes, they rarely give evidence. They don't assess, monitor or supervise.

*Family partner roles have no actual power. Only influence. They don't take notes and we have an agreement with the court that they won't give evidence.* Manager

*I can trust my parent partner – I can't totally trust the social worker. It's as simple as that. I know I won't be judged by her. She helps me work out how to talk to the social worker.* Parent

## Professional relationships – the contribution of peer work





## Peer Parent Implementation issues

- *Supervision, training and support*
- *Locate outside of government*
- *Make access to peer workers easy – no gateways*
- *Anticipate and plan for resistance*
- *High expectations of professionalism*
- *Build alliances with leaders, managers, educators, policy makers, researchers*
- *Ensure links to systems change – partner with parent led organisations*

*Parent partners have brought a relational focus back to child welfare. I highly value them as team members. They have improved my relationships with clients. Social Worker*





# THANKS AND QUESTIONS

<https://www.churchilltrust.com.au/fellows/detail/4104/Jessica+Cocks>

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We all share the responsibility for child safety



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