



Case Study: Reunification Vale – Lessons and Successes

Background

The Reunification Vale initiative was developed to support families in reuniting safely and sustainably. This case study explores the key outcomes, challenges, and lessons learned from the implementation of the program.

How People Felt About What Has Been Delivered

- Positive Impact on Practice
- Improved organisation and assessment writing
- Increased focus and clarity
- Best Outcome Scaling (BOS) as a strength-based approach

"Using BOS helped us see the positives rather than just focusing on the negatives."

- Clearer structure in casework, making decision-making more effective

"My reports have become clearer and more focused, making decision-making easier."

- Encouragement of reflective practice to support professional growth
- Encouraged empathy and understanding of families
- Enhanced communication and collaboration

"There is now a real culture of collaboration within our team."



- Impact on the Team

"This approach has made us all more mindful of how we work together."


- Positive influence on decision-making
- Desire to apply learning
- Increased staff well-being
- Strengthened team dynamics and relationships
- Heightened emotional well-being and self-reflection
- Acknowledgment of emotional well-being as an integral part of practice
- Increased job satisfaction through improved structure and support

"For me the building on strengths is just good practise. I think it has helped that people understood that it's not a complex theory, but is social work done well."

"I feel more confident in my role and in the decisions I make"

Initial Challenges and Anxieties

- Lack of clarity and understanding: The shift to a new approach required significant adjustments, and early on, some staff struggled to grasp the key concepts and how to apply them effectively.
- Varied levels of confidence: Some team members felt more prepared than others, highlighting the need for more tailored support during the early stages.



"At first, it felt overwhelming because it was so different to how we worked before"

"I wasn't sure I was doing it right, and that made me nervous."

- Concerns about additional workload: Staff were worried about the time it would take to implement new practices alongside existing responsibilities.
- Importance of clear communication and initial explanations: Early communication around the purpose and benefits of the approach could have been stronger to alleviate initial doubts.
- Need for adjustment and time: Staff required time to adapt, and additional reflection sessions or case discussions could have supported a smoother transition.

"I think if we had clearer guidance at the start, it would have been easier to adapt."

"The difficulties were that when the training first started, the training was more around staff well-being than it was around training and I think people struggled to bring themselves into the training"

"It took time to fully understand the new approach, but now I can see the benefits."


- Resistance to change: Some practitioners were hesitant to move away from traditional methods, leading to initial reluctance in adopting the new framework.
- Difficulty with change and new practices: The transition required a change in mindset, particularly in moving from deficit-based assessments to a strengths-based approach.

What Went Well?

- Improved Practice
- Outcome-oriented approach
- Strength-based focus
- Enhanced engagement and support through feedback, regular meetings, and discussions
- Improved well-being assessments and shifting towards child-centered practice

"The shift towards a child-centered approach has made a real difference in our practice"

- Reinforcing existing best practices
- Strength-based conversations leading to improved relationships with families
- Regular structured meetings allowing for continuous improvement
- Improved Well-being
- Increased staff well-being



"I now feel more confident in conducting well-being assessments and focusing on strengths rather than deficits"

"I've found it quite productive and useful because it gives me the gaps and the information that I need to know and what I already know is factual and what I need to check up on"

What Went Well? Cont.

- Greater empathy and understanding of families
- Shared reflection and appreciation

"I feel more connected with the families I work with and understand their journeys better"

"Taking time for reflection has helped me appreciate the impact of my work."

- More open dialogue about well-being and emotional resilience
- Recognition of the importance of self-care in social work practice
- Individual Learning
- Openness to learning
- Continuous learning through reflection

"There is always room to learn and grow. This approach has shown me new ways to improve my practice"

- Increased willingness to embrace new methodologies
- Staff feeling more equipped to adapt to changing practices
- Key Takeaways for Improvement

"We are now building on strengths, not just with the people that we're working with, but the people within our own local authority and our own teams by sharing compliments as part of our model"

- Introduce change in a phased manner to ease transitions
- Provide more practical, hands-on training sessions with real-world case studies
- Ensure structured guidance and clearer communication at all stages of implementation
- Address workload pressures to allow time for reflection and adaptation

What Didn't Go Well

Despite the successes, some areas presented ongoing challenges:

- Resistance to Change
- Some staff struggled with adopting new methodologies
- The shift to a strengths-based approach required a mindset change that took time

"I initially found it hard to move away from the way we used to do things."

"The training was great, but I needed more real-life scenarios to fully understand how to apply it."

- A need for more gradual introduction to avoid overwhelming staff
- Gaps Between Training and Practice
- More hands-on guidance was needed to bridge the gap
- Communication Barriers
- More structured guidance could have helped streamline the transition
- System Pressures and Time Constraints
- Some staff felt there was a lack of clarity in the early stages of implementation
- Training sessions were useful but lacked direct translation to real-world practice

"I think at the beginning it would have probably been better to really understand exactly what building on strengths is: the purpose, the rationale, the reason"

"We are often too busy to take a step back and reflect properly on what we're doing."

- High caseloads made it difficult to implement new practices effectively
- Time pressures meant that reflection and learning were sometimes deprioritised

Conclusion

The Reunification Vale initiative has demonstrated strong outcomes in improving practice, team well-being, and decision-making.

While challenges such as adapting to new practices and system pressures were evident, the lessons learned provide a roadmap for continuous improvement and sustainable success in reunification work.

The importance of sustained support and structured learning has been reinforced and lessons learned from this project will inform future practice improvements

“Looking back, I can see how much we have grown as a team. The changes have been worth it”

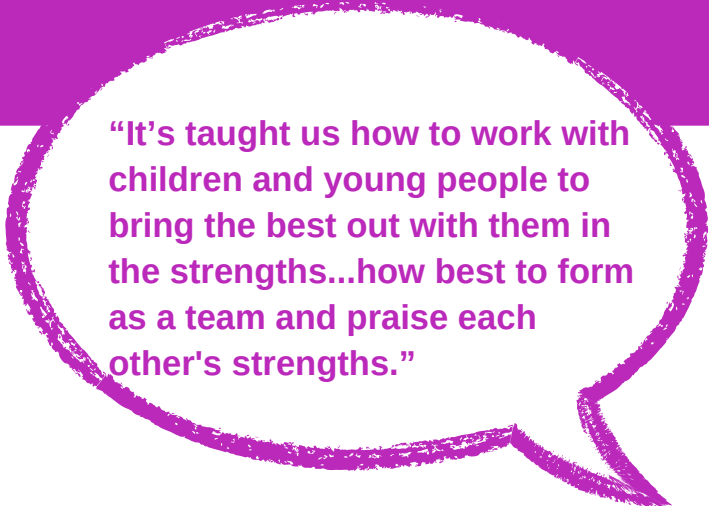
“Often when we do an assessment or we're doing reports, we look at theories or applications of processes and you have to explain what those theories are. For me, this is such basic social work practise by saying to somebody it is about engagement, it is about relationships and about working together.”

“It's opened people's minds to really think about how it should be and to reflect on their work.”

“The direct exercises that we've been doing have really improved staff well-being and people's values...”

“One of the things that our team has started doing is writing their assessment to the young person, whereas before it was always about the young person. For example, it used to be 'I spoke to X and X told me this', where now it is phrased 'You have a disability and I'm involved with you. You are able to do this, but you sometimes need a little bit of help with this’

“Recognising the people out there as the experts to their situation and setting smart goals.”



“It's taught us how to work with children and young people to bring the best out with them in the strengths...how best to form as a team and praise each other's strengths.”