



Building better futures
for children with disabilities

RBI Bootcamp: Parent Feedback Report 2016

Noah's Ark Inc.
1283 Malvern Rd, Malvern VIC Australia 3144
T (03) 8823 8600 F (03) 8823 8688

Published by © Noah's Ark Inc. 2016

Background

The Noah's Ark Model, which is now described in the Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS) Practice Manual, provides a detailed framework for Key Workers that aims to improve outcomes for children and families by addressing their individual needs. Integral to the model is an understanding of the importance of the child's interests, engagement and learning in everyday routines and activities. One of the core components of the Noah's Ark Model is the partnership between families and Key Workers in establishing functional child and family goals. The approach we have adopted to support this is the Routines Based Interview (RBI). The RBI is an evidence-based approach for family-centred intervention in natural environments that supports Key Workers to:

- fully understand the family environment
- conduct a functional assessment of child and family needs and
- develop clear, specific, measurable goals that directly address the family's priorities and help children develop skills relevant to everyday life.

RBI Implementation

To ensure that all Noah's Ark teams implement the RBI with fidelity, Noah's Ark invited the author of the RBI, Dr Robin McWilliam, to facilitate a four-day bootcamp with all ECIS Team Leaders in April 2016. Bootcamp was a necessary step in providing a consistent and evidence-based approach to child and family goal setting in preparation for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Following bootcamp, feedback from Team Leaders was gathered to understand their challenges, opportunities, required supports and plans for implementation. Each Team Leader has subsequently developed an Individual Implementation Plan to enable them to work towards fidelity and to coach the Key Workers within their team to reach fidelity. Implementation has been supported by a range of resources including tip-sheets, film footage of Dr McWilliam and two Noah's Ark Team Leaders conducting an RBI and support through peer support (in their PODs and RBI practice triads) and during regular supervision with their Manager.

Bootcamp

Bootcamp involved 18 Team Leaders participating in a four-day program of workshops, vignettes and RBI practice with current Noah's Ark families. Practice sessions were supported by an observer, note-taker and coach. The six Noah's Ark coaches worked closely with Dr McWilliam as RBI Coaches throughout bootcamp and will now join the international team of accredited trainers.

Evaluation of bootcamp included feedback from Team Leaders (see above). Another important component of the evaluation was learning about the parent experience of an RBI.

Method

All 19 parents/carers who participated in the RBI bootcamp in May 2016 were invited to complete a semi-structured phone interview. A total of 10 parents/carers participated in a phone interview and four requested to answer the questions by email. Five chose not to provide feedback. Of those who responded, one was a grandmother; one the child's father and the rest were the child's mother. For the purpose of this report, all parents/carers are referred to as the parent/s.

The interviewer asked the parent a series of questions to explore their experience of participating in an RBI interview. The interview was designed to learn about the parent's perception of what was most valuable, least helpful and their sense of the amount of time the RBI took to undertake. They were also asked about the development of goals, the RBI interviewer's technique and whether there were questions asked during the RBI that were particularly helpful or unhelpful.

Family Feedback Results

The phone interviews were recorded with permission from the parents and transcribed verbatim. Interview transcripts were analysed to identify the frequent, dominant or significant themes and are described below.

Q1. Thinking back to the interview a few weeks ago, what was that experience like for you?

Parents described the RBI as beneficial, positive and helpful. However, several parents expressed their initial nervousness in being part of the RBI within a training context where a group of professionals were observing them. One parent indicated that it was an intense and emotionally taxing experience.

“Before I did it I was a bit nervous.”

“The actual interview itself was really helpful for us back at home ... And I found, you know, I found the actual interview process was really, really warm and so it wasn't intimidating at all which was really lovely. In those situations, it can be really intimidating but it was great and I've...found that I was able to use a lot of the information that we talked about really helped me go back home and use...the skills I've already got but just sort of—you know, re-remind myself of.”

“It was definitely beneficial and gave me sort of an opportunity to reflect on where we're at and where we'd like to go. Yeah and sort of gave me that time and space to do that ... in quite a non-threatening way. I can say that it was also quite emotionally exhausting and a pretty intense process.”

Several parents commented that they appreciated the opportunity to talk in depth about their family experience during the interview and reflected on the value of being listened to and understood.

“I don't know if you would call it interview because it make me like wow, there is like other people care about children too, because I always thought I'm alone...”

“She seemed to—whether she did or not—understand where I was coming from which made it seem a lot better and made me feel more relaxed.”

“Yeah, to be honest it was really—it was probably a really good thing for me. Since [he] got sick and was diagnosed I actually hadn’t spoken about him in such a way and the impacts on our family and how much it sort of affected us, what we were going through. “So yeah, it was quite an interesting experience for—for us to actually do it in that sort of format and—and go very, very deep into the whole family sort of position.”

“Just, you know, the fact that it was actually relaxing. There was no pressure to say anything that, you know, I didn’t want to say.”

“If anything it was actually very cathartic ... You know being a, being a fulltime mum, the only people that generally sit and listen to anything I have to say are aged two and three, so to have a room full of adults who were happy to listen to me talk about the highs and lows was actually kind of nice.”

One parent found the experience somewhat confronting, but it appears that the process also encouraged her to reflect and consider new ideas. Several other parents indicated that it helped them to explore and discover ways to move forward.

“I thought that it was almost confronting in a, a little way to really take stock of everything that’s happening and what you would like to happen ... And, and I found—I think—yeah, I think that was the main thing. Like, I came away from it thinking that actually brought up a few interesting points that I hadn’t considered.”

“It was very interesting for me to discover some areas of our family life that I hadn’t really explored before and along with that some areas of improvement for us going forward.”

“Good experience. First time I was able to actually think about everything collectively. Was good to explore how our life really is at this point in time.”

Q 2. What aspect of the interview was most valuable?

Most parents indicated that establishing goals and taking time to think about the daily routines was the most valuable part of the RBI.

“So we’ve ended up with more goals. Yes, yep. We’ve already worked on a few of them already. To be honest I think, not one particular thing. For me it was great to just go through the day slowly.”

“I think the most valuable part was I suppose just going through and trying to establish what was the—what was the key things and key goals that we were trying to set. Yeah, it was very interesting for me to discover some areas of our family life that I hadn't really explored before and along with that some areas of improvement for us going forward.”

“Working out how we could best assist my daughter with her skill development.”

Other parents appreciated the structure of the RBI, with guided questions and a re-cap at the end of the interview being noted as particularly helpful.

“Yeah, again I think just having the guided questions and the structured nature of it meant that—you know, you—you wouldn’t really—you wouldn’t allow me to sort of run away with things and go off on tangents. It was kept ...contained. Yeah, and then I think also the end where it was going back through all the points we’d made and then building some goals around those points was also a really effective way of goal setting. Yeah, really accurate and a true representation of what is currently going on in our world. Her understanding was very validating.”

Q 3. What was the least helpful part of the interview?

There was not a common theme from parent feedback in relation to what was least helpful, but comments below provide individual responses to this question.

“I didn’t realise until afterwards but it was quite emotionally draining ... Yeah, but I don’t even think that’s a negative because I think that sort of has to be part of the process—to get—to get through to be able to identify those goals.”

“I don’t like one thing is too much rushing so I can—I can speak ...some questions maybe I have to think, so I can’t just rush, you know. Too much—a bit short time—like small questions and then plenty of time...”

“I suppose the only thing is that it probably... when there were parts that focussed on parts of the days that aren’t really important to us.”

“Drawing the family tree, it has come up often in medical meetings but I never know what relevance it has.”

Q 4. Did you work out some useful goals for you and your child by the end of the interview?

Parents spoke of both child and family goals as being a really positive outcome of the RBI. Many indicated that the RBI helped them prioritise goals and motivated them to get started on strategies.

“Well, I found, going through the day I’ve noticed that I’m in the kitchen a lot and I don’t really interact with the children, ‘cause I’m always doing something around the house. So, my husband, he’s now doing the dishes after dinner so I can play with the kids or do something that I wanna do for myself, so it’s been really good. What a great goal!”

“They have been useful. It’s funny, just yesterday I was thinking I must go and relook at the sheet because ... the top three or four goals we’ve been ... trying to spend time doing but the others not so much if that makes sense. Yes, so that the top ones I’ve focussed on because I find that I spend most of my time if I’m not with (my son) I am making visuals or working out how to make his life a bit better when he comes home. As

opposed to, you know, having a bit of me time, so going and meeting a friend for lunch and not talking about, you know. So I've done that a bit and it has made me feel amazing and it's helped my patience and, you know, in turn it helps everything. So that was one of the main ones that I've been working on. And in regards to my son, we've been working on morning routines and getting out of the house which is still a bit of a struggle but I feel like we've got some really good new strategies and it's that thing that you have to keep on trying new strategies...because if the first strategy works then we go, 'Wow, aren't we clever'!"

"I think it's more the overarching messages that came out of it or goals that came out of it that sort of prompted discussion and then allowed us to—yeah, have that sort of overarching discussion about where we're trying to get to and how we want to get there. But certainly identifying the priority of some of those goals, yes, gave us a good ability to say okay, yeah, let's try and tackle that now and let's approach things a little bit differently. So yeah, that was good."

"That for me was really, really good. We always have goals but I've never really prioritised them and they obviously change a lot with us anyway but just sitting down and doing that has even helped me with things moving forward for (my son) medically wise. But, looking at the smaller goals that I need to achieve for him rather than the huge ones at this stage."

"We came up with a lot of goals. They are definitely goals we will be aiming to achieve."

Q 5. Is there anything you particularly liked or disliked about the way the Team Leader conducted the interview?

Parents provided positive feedback about the skills and qualities of the Team Leaders who conducted the RBI and provided useful feedback about how to improve their technique.

"I found he was easy to talk to. He didn't make me feel nervous, so that was good and if I wasn't clear on something he would explain it which was good."

"Sometimes the questions were a bit too general and I wasn't sure exactly what they were after."

"Nothing that I disliked because I found it as I said just really warm and not intimidating at all so I felt really at ease."

"I thought she was excellent. I thought that she was really skilful and definitely helped put me at ease. The only thing I guess is that you could feel like there was a serious time constraint and that she often felt under pressure to move on quite quickly."

"I actually thought she was very good, very personable. I thought her approach was really, really good."

Q 6. Were there any questions that you found were really helpful or really difficult during the interview?

The majority of parents indicated that the questions were 'straight-forward' and didn't provide further comments. However, one parent commented that being asked specifically about what worked well within a daily routine was helpful. Two parents indicated that there were some questions that were more difficult than others.

"No, not really. They were all pretty straight forward. I didn't find anything too confronting or anything."

"What was helpful was asking about daily routine and also whether it was working or not. You often don't think about that until someone asks you."

"Probably personal ones. A couple of them more that relate to my partner and my sort of time and relationship. Those sort of things because I suppose they make you realise that

maybe those—you know, those things are really hard and difficult at that point in time and—and it's kind of—it opens up a whole can of worms to—to bring that into that environment as well because ...”

“What was difficult was, ‘What would I change if I could change one thing?’ It was really hard. At times I wish my son didn't have Autism but that's who he is. I do wish there was a cure because it has been so hard for all of us and still is. It's difficult because I want to change a lot of things: the financial impact Autism has had on us, the lack of family support and our lives have been significantly impacted.”

Q 7. Is there anything that could have been done differently?

Only one parent made a suggestion of what might have been managed differently.

“Maybe getting a copy of the notes. Like we only got a copy of the goals, but if I had like a copy of what they were writing down, maybe that would be good.”

Q 8. How was the time, how long did it feel for you? Did it feel long, or just right?

Parents commented that the two-hour interview was a long period of time, but that it went very quickly. Several parents indicated that it felt rushed at times.

“I felt it went really quick, ‘cause yeah, it was in and out really. It didn't feel like the whole two hours, which was good. I was sort of nervous thinking, ‘Oh, I'm gonna sit and talk for two hours,’ but really it wasn't, it was more back and forth, which was good.”

“You don't want to feel that you're rushed because when you're rushed you can't then really think of what you need to highlight. I think when you have the chance to talk things out and the right questions are asked sometimes that can take longer because when the right ones are asked then you actually get the right answers.”

“I was worried it was gonna take a long time and I’m gonna struggle with, you know, talking about things, but it kind of went pretty fast and then I was at the end.”

“I think it was appropriate for what we were trying to achieve but it was long, it was really long. It didn’t feel as long as it actually was. You know, it did go quite quickly.”

“It felt like it flew by.”

Q 8. Is there anything else you’d like to tell me about the interview?

Parents made the following concluding comments:

“For me it was a great experience and it gave me—I really felt empowered I guess after just sitting down and having the questions and being able to answer them. Just reminding myself. It gave me a sense of empowerment that gave me confidence to come back home and I don’t know if that’s just luck, but ever since we’ve had a really great time at home... and that could be good timing, but I think also that it just helped me feel confident in what I was doing. And I think that’s really important for a parent because you kind of lose—you sort of—to be reminded that you’re doing okay and to be given a few little, little things. And the questions that were asked gave me a bit more insight...”

“I think it’s a really, really excellent tool for assessment and goal setting.”

“It’s confronting to think about goals that might just be related to a daily routine and not to something that has a more medical or therapeutic origin. So, you know, the way that you would say, ‘Okay, well why are we doing this and what do we really want to get out of trying to do this?’, as opposed to just we have to do this because this is the advice that we’ve received. And to bring those two approaches together I think is a difficult thing to do.”

Conclusion

Noah's Ark recently adopted the RBI to support Key Workers to fully understand the family environment, conduct a functional assessment of child and family needs and develop clear, specific, measurable goals that directly address the family's priorities and help children develop skills relevant to everyday life. The RBI also provides an important way in which families and Key Workers can develop a trusting and respectful partnership in the early stages of their work together. Semi-structured phone interviews were conducted with 14 parents in order to better understand their experience of the RBI.

Parents reported on the interview experience as cathartic, beneficial and relaxing. Others found the process emotionally draining. They highlighted the positive impact of having a professional really listen to them; a professional who was warm, caring and personable. Some parents also suggested that the skills of the interviewer were also important. In particular, parents indicated that the use of appropriate questioning techniques to learn more about their daily routines and the skills to make the interview feel less rushed was necessary. Many parents indicated that developing functional goals was the most valuable part of the process. One parent indicated that the eco-map was not helpful, indicating that she didn't know the purpose of it. Whilst the majority of parents indicated that the questions were straight-forward, one parent found the more personal questions more difficult and another found the question about change hard. Parents commented that the two-hour interview was a long period of time, but that it went very quickly. One parent made a clear recommendation that receiving a copy of the professional's notes would be helpful.

Listening and responding to parent experience of the RBI will continue as we implement this evidence-based practice throughout the organisation.

Dr Kerry Bull

Senior Manager, Services

Lou Ambrosy

Training Manager