

Hon Rachel Sanderson MP

Minister for Child Protection

Hon Anne Ruston MP

Federal Minister for Families and Social Services

New reunification program for children in care

A new family reunification program is being launched as part of a joint \$18.2 million State-Federal Government initiative to help bring children in care and their parents safely back together.

Launching in 2021, the Newpin program is expected to support more than 200 families over 7 years and will be delivered by Uniting Communities across Adelaide's north, north-western and southern suburbs.

The program is funded through Social Impact Bonds, an innovative way of building partnerships between the non-government sector and investors to achieve improved social outcomes. The returns to investors are driven by government outcomes payments, which depend on the level of performance achieved.

The Newpin program will involve parents and their children regularly attending a centre-based program for up to 18 months to engage in a range of activities that promote wellbeing, improve parenting capacity and support the development of positive family relationships.

It is directed specifically at children aged six years and under and in care on a temporary order where reunification had been identified as appropriate and possible.

Minister for Child Protection Rachel Sanderson said the State Government was committing \$15.05 million to the innovative program.

"I am really excited to begin the Newpin Program here in South Australia – it's another major step towards improving social outcomes for vulnerable families and their children," said Minister Sanderson.

"It is widely acknowledged that, where it is safe to do so, supporting children to return to their family is highly advantageous to their health and wellbeing and longer-term outcomes, such as education and employment.

"The Newpin program is an evidence-based, intensive therapeutic centre-based program and delivers a new approach to family reunification in South Australia.

"We now look forward to seeing the program's positive results and the reconnection this will give to many families.

“By using this innovative funding approach, we can provide additional early intervention and prevention services with clearly measured outcomes and the best interests of the child in focus.”

Federal Minister for Families and Social Services Anne Ruston said South Australia was one of the first states to sign onto the Commonwealth-State Project Agreement which underpinned investment in the Newpin program.

“Social impact bonds bring together some of the sharpest minds in investment with the best and brightest in social services to find new ways of tackling social problems where existing policy interventions and service delivery are not getting the desired outcomes,” said Minister Ruston.

“It is exciting to see the expansion of this program because it keeps everyone involved accountable to the ultimate goal which is changing the lives of the most vulnerable in our community in a very real way.”

Uniting Communities Chief Executive Simon Schrapel said that addressing the growing number of children in out of home care who can be successfully and safely reunified with their family needs to be one of the State’s top social and economic priorities.

“Through practical intervention and help, relationships can be re-established which allows children to return to live safely with their family in their community,” said Mr Schrapel.

“This has so many obvious benefits for children who have suffered the trauma of abuse resulting in separation from their families, but it also has an enormous economic benefit for the state by reducing the costs of a growing population of children in state care.”