



FAMILY RIGHTS GROUP
Keeping children safe in their families

**who we are
& what we do.**



About Family Rights Group

Family Rights Group's goal is to enable children to be raised safely and thrive within their family and community.

Established in 1974, we support families whose children are involved with, or require, local authority services because of welfare needs or concerns. Families who contact us are often struggling, and scared their child may be removed. Our advice service helps them to understand their rights and options, get the support they need to prevent problems escalating into a crisis and to work constructively with local authorities. This is key to keeping children safe at home and avoiding unnecessary removal into care.

We also support local authorities to deliver family-centred approaches to plan for children in need or at risk.

We campaign for effective support to help struggling parents and family and friends carers such as grandparents, who are raising children who cannot live with their parents.

We also undertake research, deliver training and champion policies and practices that help families to support and protect vulnerable children.



The importance of Family Rights Group's work

It is a fundamental human right of every child to be raised by their parents and of every parent to raise their child, provided it is safe. Where this is not possible, there is strong evidence that children are more likely to thrive within their wider family network than within the care system.

Care proceedings have risen substantially in recent years. Children taken into the care system are regularly separated from siblings and often face multiple, temporary placements. The focus of family justice reforms is on speeding up court decisions and the adoption process. Yet there is a severe shortage of foster carers and adopters. Moreover, every child taken into care is extremely costly in terms of the public purse.

Family Rights Group believes that considerably more could be done to prevent children from needing to be taken into care in the first place. We know from our advice service that parents are struggling to get the early help they need to stop problems escalating into a crisis. For example, the closure of refuge places and impact of welfare reforms means some mothers are unable to leave violent relationships. Funding constraints mean our advice service is unable to directly advise everyone who tries to contact us. Yet an independent evaluation found that every £1 invested in our advice and advocacy services saved the public purse £10 in care costs avoided.

There are 300,000 children in the UK raised by family and friends carers, normally grandparents or older siblings. These children have suffered similar adversities to those in the care system, yet the support they receive (or lack of it) bears little if any relationship to their needs. We also know that more could be done to enable children who cannot live with their parents, to be safely raised by a family member who knows and loves them.



Our work

Our advice service

Our free and confidential advice service is provided via telephone, email and online discussion boards. Our expert advisors have extensive experience in legal and social work practice, they help families to understand the law and child welfare processes, as well as better understand the concerns of social workers. An independent evaluation showed 71% of parents agreed that the advice service had helped them to understand what they needed to do to make things better for their child.

Our interactive, accessible website helps families navigate complex law and child welfare procedures. It includes a wealth of information including films and detailed legal advice sheets for parents and family and friends carers.

“They’re impartial, gave brilliant advice, were really supportive and understood the issues.” - parent

Our advocacy services

Our specialist advocates accompany parents to key meetings, most commonly child protection conferences. They help parents to have a voice and influence decisions about their children. An independent evaluation found 73% of parents thought this direct advocacy support made it easier for them to

communicate with the local authority and 71% of child protection conference chairs felt the advocacy support improved parental engagement. This direct advocacy service can be spot-purchased by local authorities or families in London.

We also provide indirect and self-advocacy to families for whom this support is likely to make a difference. This includes drafting letters and negotiating on behalf of families with children’s services.

Family group conferences

“The family group conference was very helpful. The family group conference allowed me to get my message across to my family and practitioners. It really helped my family resolve our problems.” – young person

A family group conference is a family-led meeting which provides the young person and their family network with the opportunity to make safe plans for a child who is at risk. They have enabled many children to stay within their family as an alternative to going into care. The approach has mainly been used in child welfare but is also effective in preventing school exclusions, tackling anti-social behaviour, addressing youth offending and making plans for vulnerable adults.

We train family group conference co-ordinators, help local authorities set up or commission services and run the national Family Group Conference Network, which enables practitioners to share best practice. We are also rolling out a nation-wide accreditation scheme for family group conference services to ensure consistent, high standards.

Supporting family and friends carers

“I don’t know how we would have survived without our support group. However much other friends try to be supportive, they have no idea what it’s like caring for children again 24/7.”
– grandparent carer

We establish local support groups for family and friends carers. Many are caring for children who cannot live with their parents due to factors such as imprisonment, drug abuse, mental illness or parental death. We run fun days for these carers and the children to address their isolation and create peer support networks.

Family Rights Group is also campaigning for a national support framework for family and friends carers, including a financial allowance for raising children who cannot live with their parents. Research has shown that 38% of family and friends carers need to give up work and 75% are living in severe poverty.

Influencing law, policy and practice

Family Rights Group champions children’s welfare and their right to live safely within their family wherever possible. We campaign for fair process and respect for family life when the state makes decisions about their lives.

We conduct research on effective ways of involving and supporting struggling families to enable their children to thrive. This directly informs our training and policy work.

Our future work

As we move forward Family Rights Group is exploring how our expertise can be best used to support families in youth justice and education, as well as child welfare. These areas are increasingly linked, with families often dealing with multiple problems and agencies. We aim to provide coherent advice across these areas, challenge presumptions, and promote policies that put families at the heart of solutions for their children.

“The local authority has agreed we qualify for foster allowance. Without your help we wouldn’t have known what to do. Thank you once again from less-stressed grandparents.”

How you can get involved

There are many different ways in which you can support the work we do. If you would like to get involved in any of the following ways please visit our website or contact us directly – our contact details are provided on the back page.

Tell others about the charity and our work – Please tell others about our telephone advice line, our website and electronic discussion boards for parents and family and friends carers.

In a click – Sign up to our e-newsletter, like our facebook page and follow us on twitter (@FamilyRightGp).

Provide pro-bono work or volunteer – If you are a lawyer or a barrister, you could join a group of colleagues providing pro-bono work for us. For others, we would be very interested in talking to you about how we can best use your skills and time.

Offer in kind support – Could you provide us a free venue or room for events or meetings? Could you assist us with some other in-kind help? Please let us know.

Make a donation – Securing funding to continue our work is an ongoing challenge. All donations are gratefully received. Regular giving is one of the best ways of supporting our work.

Help with fundraising – Visit our website to see our forthcoming fundraising initiatives and feel free to share ideas with us or join our fundraising committee.



Take part in a sports event to raise funds – We have places in different sports activities, including 10k and half marathon runs – so let us know if you are interested.

Become a supporter – Supporters receive a 10% discount on our publications, training courses and events as well as receiving regular newsletters and our annual review.

Join our board of trustees or a project advisory group - We are seeking people from a range of backgrounds who have different skills and experience to become trustees or get involved in our project steering groups. We are particularly seeking people with the following knowledge or experience:

- Parents and family and friends carers with experience of the child welfare system
- People with experience of fundraising, media and marketing.

How your financial support can make a difference

Your financial support, big or small, will make a genuine difference in enabling us to help families in need of support. For example...

For **£2.50** we can print and post two advice sheets to a single father raising a severely disabled child to help him understand his rights including how to secure support.

For **£48** we can give in-depth telephone advice to a grandparent carer bringing up a child who is at risk of exclusion from school.

For **£110** we can provide indirect advocacy to a sibling who wants to raise her younger brother and so prevent him being taken into care.

For **£150** one of our expert advisers can spend three hours answering queries on our discussion forum for parents in crises, thereby helping not just the parents asking for advice but also the hundreds that read the response.

For **£315** we can advocate in a child protection conference for a mother subject to domestic abuse.

For **£600** we can run a face to face advice surgery at a women's prison and undertake follow up negotiations with relevant local authorities on the women's behalf, assisting mothers in jail to best influence plans about their children and play a constructive role in their lives.

For **£950** we can run a fun day for children and their family and friends carers, providing them with the opportunity to meet and have fun with others who have had similar experiences.

For **£2300** we can help set up a support group for family and friends carers, enabling carers to regularly meet others in similar situations and help reduce their social isolation.

For **£2500** we can add a five minute information film to our website – this helps parents and carers who find written communication difficult to absorb.

For **£20,000** we can produce a professional website film to help family and friends carers to represent themselves in court when they want a legal order to ensure permanency for a child who can't live with their parents.

The work of Family Rights Group includes...

- Offering a free and confidential telephone advice service and website providing legal and practical advice to families involved with social care services
- Supporting family and friends carers who are raising a relative or friend's child, establishing local support groups for these carers and seeking to ensure they can get the support they need from children's services and other agencies
- Promoting family group conferences as an effective family-led decision making process which provides safe solutions to child welfare concerns
- Advocating for parents whose children are subject to child protection inquiries or at risk of being removed into care
- Promoting legislation, policy and practice that respects the right to family life and promotes and safeguards children's welfare
- Undertaking policy and research projects, offering training and consultancy services, producing publications and organising conferences and events.

Accessing our services

If your family is involved with local authority children's services, or you need help from these services, we can give you information and advice.

Our website: www.frg.org.uk

Our confidential telephone advice service: 0808 801 0366 (Monday to Friday 9.30 a.m. - 3.00 p.m.)

Contacting our head office

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