



Erasmus + in Sofia, Bulgaria

Family Rights Group have been fortunate to have been involved in a European, Erasmus funded, family group conference project over the last two years. The aim of the project has been to exchange FGC experience and good practice across a wide range of FGC services from the UK, France, Bulgaria and Germany.

The conference in Bulgaria was the 4th event to be held and was hosted by the Tulip Foundation. Approximately 100 professionals attended the three day event, coming from Bulgaria, the UK, France and Germany. There was broad discussion and shared learning across a number of topics including sessions on:

- Lifelong Links;
- Participation of children and young people in FGCs;
- FGCs for adults.

A number of Bulgarian organisations gave fascinating presentations about their work with the Roma community and FGCs. It once again stressed the importance of sensitivity to the family's culture and working with the community. Trust and mutual respect were key to the success of the FGC process and buy-in from the family and wider community.

The final Erasmus event takes place in Bordeaux, France in April 2019.

Family Group Conference (FGC): This is a process led by family members to plan and make decisions for and with a child. It is often used to address child welfare concerns.

Lifelong Links: for children in care to help identify and find relatives or other supportive adults for them, in order to build a support network for the child.



News from around the FGC & Lifelong Links network

Upcoming FGC training dates

22nd - 24th January 2019
27th - 29th March 2019
11th - 13th June 2019
10th - 12th September 2019
10th - 12th December 2019

To book go online at
www.frg.org.uk/training

FGC Survey 2018

The results of the survey are critical to FRG's ability to influence national and local decisions about the impact of FGCs, how FGCs are currently being used and how FGCs can be used more extensively. It also informs future FGC Network activities. If your FGC service hasn't responded to the survey, please do so now.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/FGCsurvey2018>

Job news!!

Family Rights Group are looking for a Development Officer to join the Lifelong Links team. To find out more, or to apply, visit: <http://bit.ly/FRGjobs>

Closing date is 5pm on Monday 3rd December 2018

Upcoming FGC network dates

5th December 2018, Cardiff
Signs of Safety

13th March 2019, Manchester
Ensuring Quality Standards

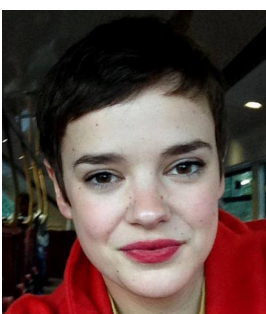
19th June 2019, Newcastle
Use of Advocacy

18th September, Cambridge
Keeping Safe project findings

4th December 2019, London
Legal Framework

If you would be in a position to provide a free venue for any of these meetings then please contact Sophia Hill.

Introducing... Sophia Hill

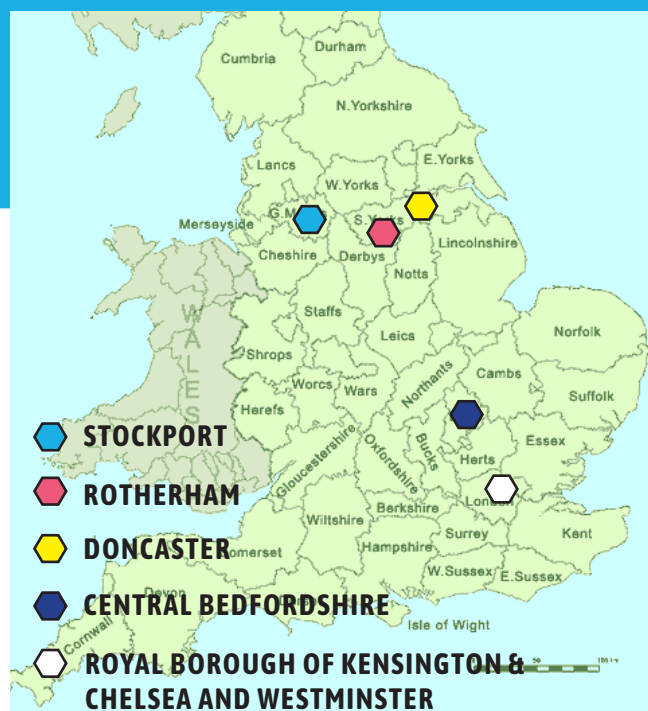


Sophia was appointed as the Family Group Conference and Lifelong Links Network Administrator at Family Rights Group in August 2018. She replaces Rachida Aziz who has sadly left FRG to live in France. Sophia is responsible for organising training, accreditation, national meetings, communication with the network and day to day assistance. Before working at Family Rights Group, Sophia had worked and volunteered with various charities focused on women's and marginalised communities, human and legal rights. Sophia can be contacted at SHill@frg.org.uk

Lifelong Links: Second wave sites in England

We are very pleased to be able to announce that the five local authorities which will be joining the Lifelong Links trial are:

- Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster
- Central Bedfordshire
- Doncaster
- Rotherham
- Stockport



In September 2018 an event at the Scottish Parliament was held to launch new research about the impact of FGCs. This was hosted by Daniel Johnson MSP and attended by the the Minister for Children and Young People, Maree Todd MSP (pictured right alongside Dr Mitchell).

Dr Mary Mitchell's research was undertaken in collaboration with Children 1st and the Centre for Research on Family and Relationships at the University of Edinburgh. It explored the contribution that FGC makes to longer-term outcomes for children at risk of being accommodated in Scotland and for their families. The launch was an opportunity to explore research findings and to consider the implications for policy and practice, including wider child protection practice.



Dr Mitchell's research can be accessed here <https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/31278> and is well worth a look.

FGC & Lifelong Links Network... Mediation

At our last FGC and Lifelong Links network meeting held on the 19th September in Birmingham we discussed the theme of mediation. We are very grateful for Maureen Japp from Y Bont and Maura Rose from Just Psychology for presenting on the day and sharing with us their experiences on the subject. Both presentations are available to download from the Family Rights Group website (<http://bit.ly/FGCNetwork>).

One year on...

Lifelong Links in Herts



The Hertfordshire Lifelong Links team

On 25 October 2018, Hertfordshire County Council held a celebration event for one year of implementing Lifelong Links. The event was well attended by social workers, foster carers and other professionals. It was co-organised with, and chaired by, care leavers and looked after young people who have been through Lifelong Links. David Akinsanya, a journalist, poignantly shared his own experience as a looked after child and care leaver as well as respite foster carer. Cathy Ashley spoke about the Lifelong Links model and the progress of the three year trial. There was beautiful artwork created by one of the young people who experienced Lifelong Links.

Lifelong Links in Hertfordshire so far:

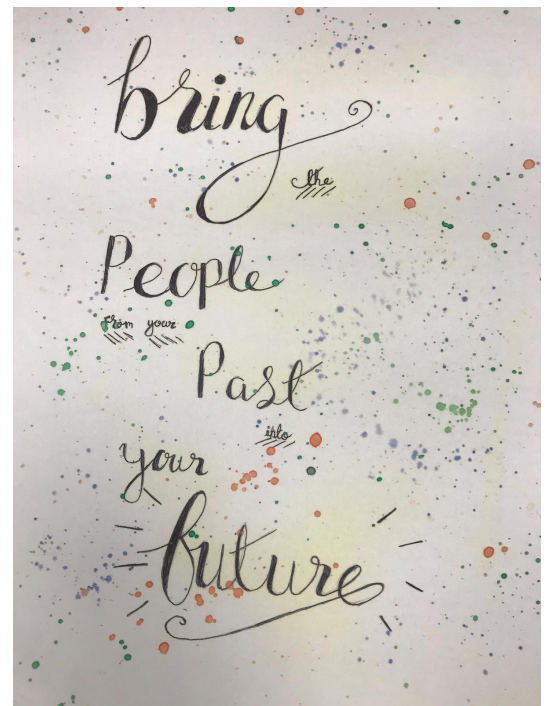
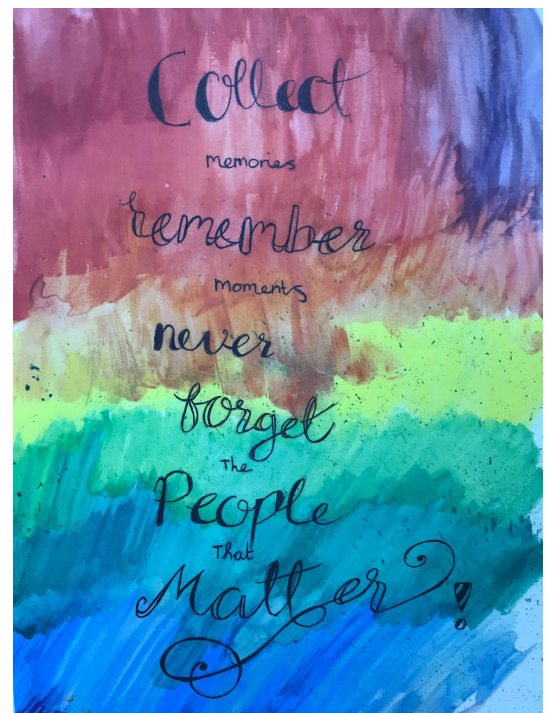
90 children or young people have been referred to Lifelong Links

24 Lifelong Links family group conferences have been held

2 months the youngest person to attend a Lifelong Links FGC

250+ family and friends have attended a Lifelong Links FGC

89 years old the oldest person to attend a Lifelong Links FGC



Setting standards in FGC practice... Accreditation

There has been a significant increase in the number of local authorities in England using FGCs in child welfare in recent years. 80% of local authorities run or commission an FGC service. This growth in the use of FGCs has been supported by the government and FGCs have been identified as a good practice model in various policy documents. However, standards in the delivery of FGCs vary and this variation in practice has become more acute as some local authorities seek ways to make savings by cutting corners and compromising the basic values upon which the approach is predicated.

Family Rights Group was initially funded by the Department for Education between 2011 and 2013 to develop a framework for the accreditation of FGC services. 33 FGC services are now accredited or are in the process of becoming accredited.

The framework is intended to:

- give clear guidance as to how services should operate
- provide a way in which the quality of the service can be measured
- provide external scrutiny of practice

The framework includes:

- a set of agreed standards
- expectations for the training and ongoing support of FGC coordinators.

How has the accreditation framework benefitted FGC services?

- It has helped to identify areas of practice within individual FGC services and across the board that require greater attention
- It has increased the profile and support for FGC services locally.
- It has established a framework for service improvement.
- It also provides a benchmark for how the service should operate.

All services that were accredited three years ago or more should now apply to be reaccredited.

The accreditation process and pricing is the same for all FGC services, regardless of whether your service has been previously accredited.

STANDARD 1

The FGC coordinator is independent.

STANDARD 2

The FGC should respect the family's consent to proceed.

STANDARD 3

The FGC should be family led and include 'private time' for the family to make a plan in response to concerns.

STANDARD 4

The central focus should be the child or adult who is the subject of the FGC and they should be offered support in their involvement including an advocate.

STANDARD 5

The FGC service should ensure that the family has all necessary resources, including adequate preparation, relevant information, and a safe and appropriate environment to make its plan.

STANDARD 6

The FGC should respect the family's privacy and right to confidentiality.

STANDARD 7

The FGC should be sensitive to the family's culture including their ethnicity, language and religion.

Accreditation* costs from November 2018 - March 2020

Accreditation lasts for 3 years

SIZE OF PROJECT	ONE OFF FEE	
	NON NETWORK MEMBERS	NETWORK MEMBERS
SMALL (under 40 FGCs a year)	£850	£550
MEDIUM (40-99 FGCs a year)	£1050	£700
LARGE (99 plus FGCs a year)	£1300	£875
RE-SUBMISSION FEE	£300	£250

**The cost will go up in April 2020 following a review with network members*

The full article can be found online at:
<http://bit.ly/2PWSEjG>

New postgraduate certificate in family group conferencing

We are pleased to announce that we will be delivering this programme with the University of Salford. The first intake of students will be in 2019.

The programme builds on eight years of work in developing and running a similar postgraduate certificate with the University of Chester. It benefits from partnering with Salford University, where there is considerable expertise in relation to FGCs. Both Deanna Edwards and Kate Parkinson, two of the senior lecturers in the social work department at Salford University, are experienced FGC project managers and Deanna previously worked for many years as a Policy Adviser for Family Rights Group.

The Social Work Department at the University of Salford is keen for FGCs to be central to its training programmes and places considerable value in working with FRG to be able to achieve this. As such this is an opportunity to develop a valuable partnership with the university that

will give an independent and academic validity to FRG's ongoing FGC coordinator training offer.

Intake to the programme is expected to be for up to 25 students per year. Students will be expected to complete the first stage administered by FRG within six months in order to move to stage two with the University.

The University of Salford will administer the programme. Students will register with the university at the beginning of the course and all of the arrangements concerning fees and student support will be undertaken by the university.

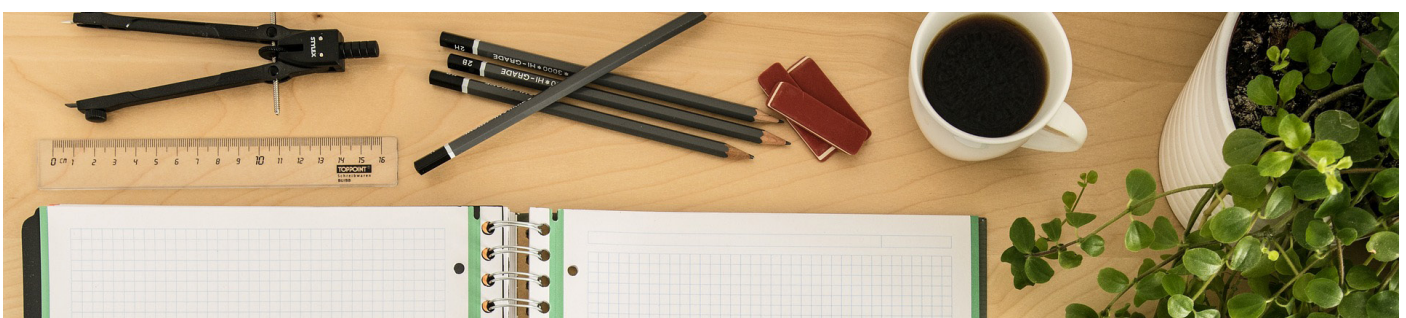
We will present more detailed information about the programme at the Network meeting in Manchester on the 13th March 2019.

Fees

The overall fee that each student will be required to pay for the whole course will be £2460 which is in keeping with the fees elsewhere for post graduate courses.

Further information

*Please contact
Deanna Edwards:
D.Edwards@salford.ac.uk
or
Kate Parkinson:
K.P.Parkinson@salford.ac.uk*



Lifelong Links Roadshow...

in Scotland



The Lifelong Links Scottish Roadshow was held on the 16th August in Edinburgh. Its purpose was to introduce Lifelong Links to other interested Scottish local authorities and share Children First, Edinburgh and Glasgow's experience of delivering FGCs. Family Rights Group are looking to encourage two more local authorities in Scotland to join the Lifelong Links trial.

There was a strong sense of optimism about this opportunity to further develop Lifelong Links in Scotland and create positive lasting relationships for looked after children.

Here are just a few of the comments that were made by presenters and attendees:

“Making that connection brings the family together, can't underestimate the importance of that connection.”

“Councils should be interested as Lifelong Links harnesses the strength in families and also makes financial sense.”

“Lifelong Links offers a sense of belonging, lifelong emotional and practical support and puts their history into context.”

A big thank you to Edinburgh City Council for hosting the event and to the presenters and attendees for finding the time to support Family Group Decision Making and Lifelong Links across Scotland.



Introducing... Vicky Rourke

What a welcome I have received! I am delighted to be working for Family Rights Group as the Development Officer for Lifelong Links in Scotland. In my interview I talked about the hats I wear....the one as a social worker, the one as a parent, the one as a previous foster carer and the one as an adopter of the amazing Jacob. Now in this job they have all come together!

I am really keen to support the Lifelong Links trial sites in Scotland and encourage local authorities to make available Family Group Conferencing and Lifelong Links to all young people in care.

Further Scottish news: we are pleased to announce that we now have in post the Scottish Lifelong Links Director - Stuart Graham. Stuart previously worked for Edinburgh City Council and was the Lifelong Links Development Officer for Scotland prior to taking up this new position.