



Lifelong Links

Implementation package

2024/2025



 **Lifelong
Links**®

About us

Family Rights Group



Our mission is to create a more socially just society in which the child welfare and family justice systems **support children to live safely and thrive within their family**, while **strengthening the family and community networks of those children who cannot live at home**.

We are a national charity that advises parents, grandparents, relatives and friends about their rights and options when social workers or courts make decisions about their children's welfare. We develop innovative child welfare practices. In the 1990s we introduced the **Family Group Conference (FGC)** model to the UK from New Zealand, so **families are supported to take the lead in making safe plans** for a child at risk. We developed **Lifelong Links** which **supports care experienced children and young people to build positive, lasting support networks they can turn to during their time in care and beyond**.



Family Rights Group and Lifelong Links

Family Rights Group developed Lifelong Links in collaboration with key people including local authorities, young people in care and care experienced young people, parents and foster carers. Lifelong Links aims to ensure that a child in care has a positive support network around them to help them in child and adulthood and has been described as a combination of the TV programmes "Long, Lost Families" and "Who do you think you are?".

Trained Lifelong Links coordinators work with a child, using various tools and techniques, to search for and find family members (known or unknown to the child) and other adults (such as former foster carers or teachers) who care about the child. This network is then brought together in a Lifelong Links family group conference to make a life-long support plan with, and for, the young person. The local authority should integrate the Lifelong Links plan into the child's care plan and continue to support the young person and their network in order that such relationships can grow.

Family Rights Group is the leading authority on Lifelong Links and local authorities who would like to establish a Lifelong Links service are able to commission a bespoke Lifelong Links implementation package.

Lifelong Links

The impact so far

Lifelong Links was [independently evaluated](#) over three years (2017-20) by Oxford University, with an additional one year [longitudinal evaluation](#) (2020-21). The evaluations found:

- A significant improvement on the mental health and well-being of young people who participated in Lifelong Links as measured by SDQ scores.¹.
- 78% children and young people felt an improved sense of identity.
- 74% of children and young people were in the same home a year after Lifelong Links compared with 41% of young people in the comparator group, which is considered a statistically significant positive impact.
- **Value for money:** Cost benefit analysis showed a return on investment of monetisable outcomes is £1.02 for every £1 spent.

Family Rights Group trialled Lifelong Links for three years in England and five years in Scotland. Beginning with ten local authorities in 2017, **Lifelong Links is now offered to children and young people in care in 41 local authorities** in England, Scotland and Wales. **Over 2600 children and young people have benefitted** from Lifelong Links so far.

In 2022 Lifelong Links was recommended in the final report of the independent review of children's social care. **"All local authorities should have skilled family finding support equivalent to or exceeding, the work of Lifelong Links in place by 2024 at the very latest."**²

Other more [recent findings](#) have shown the long-term impact, with young care-experienced people who live in areas which offer Lifelong Links 10% less likely to become homeless when they leave care. Evaluations carried out by local authorities including Hertfordshire County Council demonstrate that Lifelong Links helps save money by averting care costs – over £830,000 year on year in Hertfordshire during 2021/22 alone.

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Lifelong Links helps you get answers to questions you had for years. It is life changing, I don't think anyone would regret doing it.

Alfie, young person who participated in Lifelong Links



¹ Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) scores, improved year on year. Average SDQ scores the year before children and young people took part in Lifelong Links were 16.77 but had fallen to 12.44 three years after they had started participating in Lifelong Links (note a reduction in score is a sign of improvement).

² <https://childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk/final-report/>

Lifelong Links

Setting up a service

Lifelong Links is an innovation of Family Rights Group which we have continued to develop since we first trialled the approach in 2017. We are the only provider of Lifelong Links training, have introduced and run the quality assurance accreditation programme for Lifelong Links services and assist local authorities to set up and establish a Lifelong Links service. Details of what is included in our Lifelong Links support package is below.



One to one support

Provided by Family Rights Group's experienced team to support the introduction and ongoing implementation of Lifelong Links. This includes working with children's services' senior management, practitioners and relevant people to consider the values of Lifelong Links and how to ensure the structures, policies, procedures and practices best enable the work to flourish.



Lifelong Links training

Family Rights Group is the only organisation that delivers Lifelong Links coordinator training. This course is for family group conference coordinators to enable them to develop the necessary skills to become a Lifelong Links coordinator.

This interactive course is delivered virtually over three days.



Peer support

Family Rights Group facilitate and run a number of opportunities for Lifelong Links coordinators and service managers from across all Lifelong Links local authorities to meet virtually and discuss practice, share ideas, celebrate success and support and learn from each other.

- Lifelong Links practice learning sets (three times a year) for coordinators.
- Lifelong Links managers' meetings (every 6 weeks).



Lifelong Links resources

Access to the up-to-date Lifelong Links toolkit that sets out how to establish and sustain a Lifelong Links service. Organisations will also have access to new or updated films, guides and templates. Includes:

- Cost benefit analysis template
- Circles tool



Service accreditation

Family Rights Group is the leading authority on Lifelong Links & family group conferences and has been at the forefront of developing and promoting high standards of practice for both services.

We run separate quality assurance accreditation programmes for Lifelong Links & family group conference services. Accreditation lasts for three years.



Bespoke impact report

Family Rights Group will provide participating authorities with a bespoke annual impact report which will include analysis of their own data. It will be based on anonymised practice summaries for each child and the quarterly reports submitted by each local authority.

Overview of available support

	ONE YEAR SET UP PACKAGE	3 YEAR IMPLEMENTATION PACKAGE		
		YEAR ONE	YEAR TWO	YEAR THREE
ACCESS TO LIFELONG LINKS RESOURCES	✓	✓	✓	✓
LIFELONG LINKS COORDINATOR TRAINING	3 PLACES INCLUDED	3 PLACES INCLUDED	✗ *	✗ *
ACCESS TO "CIRCLES"	✓	✓	✓	✓
1 TO 1 SUPPORT FROM DEDICATED LIFELONG LINKS PRACTICE ADVISER	UP TO 35 HOURS OF SUPPORT	UP TO 35 HOURS OF SUPPORT	UP TO 21 HOURS OF SUPPORT	UP TO 3 HOURS OF SUPPORT
ACCESS TO PRACTICE LEARNING SETS	✓	✓	✓	✓
ACCESS TO LIFELONG LINKS MANAGERS' MEETINGS	✓	✓	✓	✓
FGC SERVICE ACCREDITATION	✓	✓ CAN BE SUBMITTED IN YEAR ONE OR TWO	✗	
LIFELONG LINKS SERVICE ACCREDITATION	✗	✗	✓ CAN BE SUBMITTED IN YEAR TWO OR THREE	
BESPOKE IMPACT REPORT	✓	✓	✓	✓
COST	£8160	COST: £15,045		

*Training places available at an additional cost (see box below). Costs of all packages are subject to VAT.

ADDITIONAL SERVICES	
MEMBERSHIP OF THE NATIONAL FGC & LIFELONG LINKS NETWORK	SMALL GROUP MEMBERSHIP: £240 (less than 40 FGCs a year) MEDIUM GROUP MEMBERSHIP: £420 (between 40 to 99 FGCs a year) LARGE GROUP MEMBERSHIP: £600 (over 99 FGCs a year)
FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCE COORDINATOR TRAINING	£550 per person **
LIFELONG LINKS COORDINATOR TRAINING	£675 per person **

Consultancy support, including training, will all be conducted online. Face to face support or attendance at in person meetings can be discussed on a case by case basis. This will incur an additional charge.

** 10% discount available for FGC & Lifelong Links Network members

Lifelong Links

What happens next?



At my Lifelong Links family group conference my grandfather stood up and welcomed me into the family and gave me a hug.... I can just go to my aunts, uncles, granddad, go have a catch up, have a cup of tea, help granddad up the allotment. **They are always there and they know I'm there for them too.**

Brad, young person who participated in Lifelong Links

A Lifelong Links offer is embedded within an existing family group conference service. If your local authority does not currently have a family group conference service, Family Rights Group can assist with thinking through the implications and benefits of having such a service. Full details of our family group conference support package can be found [here](#).

If you have a family group conference service and are interested in finding out more about Lifelong Links then we can set up an informal meeting to discuss the process and the support package in detail, as well as answer any questions you may have.

Once your local authority is clear that they want to set up a Lifelong Links service we will set up a meeting with the senior leadership and ourselves to discuss embedding the service and how Lifelong Links can benefit wider local authority practice.

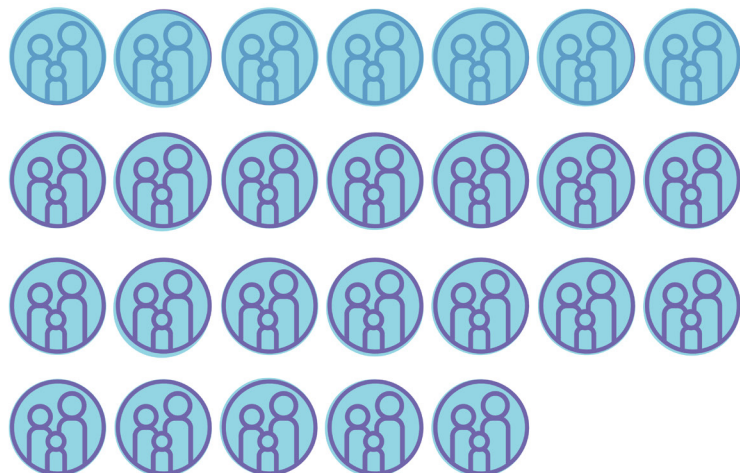
To take the next step, please contact Jordene Sewell (jsewell@frg.org.uk).

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Average number of connections that child had at the start of Lifelong Links

26

Average number of connections that child has following Lifelong Links



Helping Families Helping Children

Family Rights Group, 101 Pentonville Road
London, N1 9NN



Free Advice Line 0808 801 0366

(Monday to Friday 9.30am to 3pm)



Admin Tel 020 7923 2628 **Email** office@frg.org.uk

(We cannot provide advice by email or on the Admin telephone line)