

March 2025

Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill

Report Stage

Introduction

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill returns to the House of Commons for Report stage on Monday 17th March 2025.

This briefing sets out Family Rights Group's analysis of the Bill and proposed amendments in relation to children's social care. It focuses on measures where we have specialist expertise including: supporting more children to remain safely in their family through family group decision making (page 2); kinship care (page 4); improvements to support for children in care and care leavers (page 7); accommodation for children deprived of their liberty (page 9); and adoption contact (page 10).

About Family Rights Group

We are the leading specialist charity working to ensure children can live safely in their family, and children in the care system have loving relationships they can turn to throughout life. For 50 years, we have worked to shape the child welfare system to make that a reality. We are unique in combining legal and social work expertise with advice giving, policy and campaigning, and direct work with families.

Overall reflections

- **The Bill is a landmark opportunity for reforming the child welfare system.** With record numbers of children in care the need for reform is urgent. Families in crisis are not being helped early enough. The child welfare system has become reactive and focused on investigation rather than prevention. Children in care often experience separation from their family, friends and community, leaving them isolated. Kinship care families are commonly overlooked and under-supported.
- **We strongly welcome the new mandate on local authorities to offer families the opportunity to come up with solutions for their children's welfare, to safely avert children entering the care system.** Currently, the support that family and friends can offer is not consistently explored prior to a child entering the care system. It means there are children in the care system who did not need to be. They could be safely at home with their parents or raised by relatives and friends in kinship care, instead of with strangers. This Bill could deliver a step change in how the state works with, rather than does to, children and their families.
- **However, we are concerned that the family group decision making offer in the Bill is too ambiguous.** Without strengthening the provisions, we fear in practice it will not deliver the Bill's ambition, to ensure fair and effective opportunity across England for children and families to get the support they need to stay safely together.
- **Defining kinship care in primary legislation for the first time, and requiring councils to publish a local kinship care offer, is a historic step toward recognising and supporting the over 153,000 children in England living in kinship care.** However, the expectations for councils to involve families in shaping and promoting their local offer are minimal and could be strengthened. Investment in the practical, emotional, financial, educational and therapeutic support that children and carers need is also essential.
- **Building not breaking children in care's relationships, including with their brothers and sisters.** We are very encouraged by the Bill's inclusion of relationships in the provisions on Staying Close support for young people in care, and new clauses to ensure the wellbeing of care experienced children and young people is a priority across Government and the public sector. The Government could go further by providing all children in the care system with the same right to reasonable contact with their brothers and sisters, as they currently have in law as they have with their parents.

Clause 1: Family Group Decision Making

A new mandate on local authorities to offer families the opportunity to come up with solutions for their children's welfare, to safely avert children entering the care system.

The Bill defines this as a 'family group decision making meeting' to be offered at the pre-proceedings stage, where the local authority thinks it is in the children's best interests.

Key messages:

- **A potential step change:** The new mandate is strongly welcome and could deliver a step change in how the state works with, rather than does to, children and their families.
- **Minimum expectations are essential:** It is concerning that the Bill does not provide clear, minimum expectations on what family group decision making means in practice. For local authorities to understand what they should be doing, for families to know what they can expect, and for Government including Ofsted to benchmark compliance and success.
- **Family-led vs professionally led:** The narrative around this provision includes reference to a family-led process, but the detail establishes a professionally led one. For example, as drafted, it is professionals who determine whether it is in the best interests for an offer to be made at all, and who to invite and exclude. We are already seeing evidence of local authorities claiming to use family group decision making to describe meetings in which families' involvement is peripheral.
- **Follow the evidence:** The Government states that family group decision making is an umbrella term and it does not wish to recommend a particular model of family group decision making in order to give local authorities flexibility. However, the Government's rationale for introducing this duty is based on the strong evidence base on the positive impact of the family group conference approach to deliver better outcomes for children, including averting from the care system. Family group conferences are a family-led process underpinned by clear principles and standards. If the legislation does not specify the key principles, approaches unsupported by evidence could proliferate.
 - Family group conferences originated in New Zealand where it is a mandatory offer to families where there are care or protection concerns. NZ [now has](#) a low rate of children in care (41 per 10,000) and more children living in kinship care (39% of children in care). In [England](#), 71 per 10,000 children are in care (16% in kinship care).
 - A [randomised control trial](#) led by Foundations found that over 2000 children per year could avoid going into care and instead safely remain with their families if family group conferences are rolled out across England. With an estimated cost saving of £150 million over two years.
- **Legislation:** The Government has indicated that it will set out further expectations on local authorities in statutory guidance and is commissioning a best practice FGDM guide. However, this is not sufficiently robust. Statutory and best practice guidance needs to complement, not be a substitute, for the law setting out robust baseline principles that local authorities must follow. Without the latter, the change the Government is seeking will not happen across the country. For example, family group conferences have been recommended in 2011 family and friends' care statutory guidance (now called [kinship care guidance](#) since 2024 update) and [court orders and pre proceedings guidance](#) for many years but still do not happen routinely.
- **Learning from Scotland:** In Scotland, legislation introduced in 2016 [references family group decision making](#). While it looks like a mandate for ensuring that FGDM is offered in every local authority, it is not clear and precise enough in what it is asking for. As a result, ten years on and a third of local authorities in Scotland still have no FGDM offer at all.
- **Complex safeguarding requires a clear process and standards:** Domestic abuse is one of the most prevalent concerns in referrals to children's services. Family group conferences have often been used at home and abroad to address situations where domestic abuse is a

factor, and there is evidence of the benefits that can bring to children and adults. In situations where there are safeguarding concerns - including domestic abuse, child sexual abuse and criminal exploitation – preparation time and clear principles and standards are key to safety planning.

How this clause could be strengthened

- **The Bill should refer to a family group decision making ‘process’ rather than a ‘meeting’.** Instead of viewing it as a one-off meeting or box ticking exercise, a process allows for rigorous preparation. This includes allowing the time to identify all who are important to the child and their family, and for ensuring safety planning given the concerns being addressed. A simple amendment to the Bill would bring important clarity and consistency.
- **Offer being made to 16 and 17-year-olds.** The Bill makes provision for the offer to be made to the child’s parents or anyone with parental responsibility but currently makes no reference to the offer being made to an older child. Yet when a child reaches the age of 16, they can agree to their own care plan. It is therefore important that the provisions for family group decision-making meetings reflect that the offer of a meeting should, for those children aged 16 and over, also be made to the child.
- **Family taking the lead in who attends.** The Bill defines the child’s family network as those the local authority considers appropriate to attend. Yet a key principle of successful family-led decision making is that those attending include those most important to the child and their parents, as determined by them. Currently in social work practice, relatives, and particularly paternal family often describe feeling excluded from discussions about their children. Similarly, non-familial relationships such as friends and other sources of support may not be well known to the local authority but be important to the child and their parents. For example, Azariah Hope, a care experienced young parent on our parents’ panel, describes her frustration at how she was not offered a family group conference because the local authority presumed she did not have family or friends to draw on. We have drawn up an amendment which would ensure that a child’s family network is not limited to those who the social worker happens to be aware of and deems to be important. The local authority can still determine if it’s in line with the child’s welfare for them to attend.
- **Defining the key principles of effective family group decision making.** The term family group decision making is open to wide interpretation. The Government’s rationale for introducing the policy is based on the strong evidence base around family group conferences, including how children can be averted from the care system. We propose that key principles from the family group conference approach are defined in the legislation to ensure all family group decision making processes include the key ingredients which research shows has made family group conferences so successful. In particular:
 - A trained, skilled coordinator facilitates the process, and because they are independent from decision making, they can be a trusted mediator between family and state;
 - Private time allows the family to have open, and sometimes tough conversations to come up with a plan in their own way.

Questions

- Practice evidence shows that effective family led decision making is a process with careful preparation and safety planning. How will the Government make clear to local authorities that this is a process and not a tick-box, single meeting exercise?
- When a child reaches the age of 16, they have the agency to agree to their own care plan. Yet the Bill only specifies family group decision making meeting being offered to a parent. Will the Government make clear that the offer should also be made to those older children?
- Given the robust evidence on the benefits of the family group conference model, will the Government incorporate the key principles into the Bill and related guidance?

Clause 5: Information: children in kinship care and their carers

A new duty for local authorities to publish a kinship local offer, with kinship care defined in primary legislation for the first time.

About kinship care

There are over [153,000](#) children in kinship care across England. Too often kinship care is undervalued and unsupported. Many struggle to access the practical, emotional and financial support children and their families need. The support available to children and their kinship carers is often dependent on the type of arrangement, where they live, and whether the child has been, or is, looked-after in the care system. More children in care could be living safely and thriving in kinship care with the right support.

Key messages:

- We are delighted to see our proposals for a local kinship care offer and definition of kinship care in primary legislation adopted.
- By introducing a legal duty for councils to publish a kinship local offer, the Government is taking an essential step toward greater clarity, consistency, and accountability in respect of support for kinship care families.
- However, the difference this measure will make depends on ensuring the local offer includes the right support services and that families are actively involved in shaping and reviewing it.
- One major omission is the absence of legal support from the list of services that local authorities must include in their kinship local offer. The child welfare and family justice system is complex, and many carers struggle to navigate it without expert legal advice.
- Furthermore, the Bill does not require local authorities to actively engage families in the process of developing a local offer, in stark contrast to the SEND local offer. Statutory guidance on the kinship local offer only mentions allowing families to complain – not to positively shape it.

How this clause could be strengthened

- **Include information on legal support.** Legal support is vital for current and prospective kinship carers. Research by the [APPG on Kinship Care](#) found that 82% of kinship carers did not feel they had enough information about their legal options to make an informed decision. Nearly 4 in 10 (38%) had received no legal advice at all about their rights and options. While legal support is referenced in statutory guidance, it should be explicitly included in the legislation. Our [analysis](#) of local kinship care policies found that only a fifth address support with the legal expenses that kinship carers may incur. This includes legal costs such as applying for a special guardianship or child arrangements order. Unless the Bill is explicit on what is required, it is highly unlikely that local authorities in England will consistently and clearly address the question of legal support in their kinship local offer. Amending the list in the Bill would be a straightforward change that would not add an additional cost burden.
- **Involve families in developing the kinship local offer.** The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) local offer is backed by clear regulations which cover: how the offer should be published; when it should be reviewed; and how children and families should be involved in its development. The kinship local offer provision in the Bill stands in stark contrast in not granting the Secretary of State to regulate for similar. We have proposed that the Secretary of State be given similar powers in relation to the kinship local offer. This would ensure that kinship families are actively engaged in shaping the support available to them and that local authorities are held accountable for delivering on their obligations. Amendment 174 tabled by Bobby Dean MP and 183 by Laura Trott MP seek to strengthen the expectations on local authorities to engaged children and families in reviewing their local offers.

Questions:

- Will the Government ensure that local authorities are expected to work with children and families to develop an accessible kinship local offer?
- Will the Government ensure that the list of information local authorities must set out in their kinship local offer includes legal support, so current and prospective kinship carers to understand their rights and options?

Wider kinship care support:

Employment:

- The period when the child moves in with their kinship care can be difficult. The carer may have to spend significant time attending meetings including with children's services or at court. Sometimes, children's services can place an expectation on kinship carers to leave work if they think it is necessary to meet the needs of the child.
- Our [2024 survey](#) found 6 in 10 kinship carers have to give up work or reduce their hours when the child comes to live with them. Kinship carers then often become dependent on welfare benefits. 37% are in receipt of Universal Credit.
- An [independent cost benefit analysis](#) by Alma Economics, commissioned by Family Rights Group, found that a right to paid employment leave, equivalent to adoption leave and rate of pay for all new and existing kinship carers in England would generate wealth for the country. For every £1 spent, £2.20 of benefits would be generated for the Treasury and wider society over the next 30 years.
- NC25 tabled by Munira Wilson MP seeks to introduce paid kinship employment leave.
 - Will the Government commit to considering a right to paid kinship care employment leave as part of the Government's review of parental leave and the Employment Rights Bill?

Financial:

- [Research](#) by the APPG on Kinship Care showed 3 in 4 carers say they faced financial hardship when becoming kinship carers.
- Whether or not a kinship carer receives financial support depends on the child's legal arrangement and the discretion of the local authority.
- Our advice service often hears examples of heart-breaking, unfair and inconsistent practices. For example, some kinship carers with a special guardianship order are seeing their welfare benefits, including disability related payments, unfairly and erroneously deducted from special guardianship allowance.
- Some local authorities are basing their special guardianship allowance calculations on an outdated means assessment model published by the Department for Education in 2005. This pre-dates major welfare reform, including the introduction of Universal Credit. The model also does not make very thoughtful provision for households in receipt of disability benefit. There is concern that some local authority policies and calculations therefore do not adequately account for any disabilities children and carers have. In practice, this means some special guardians are being expected to use disability benefits to meet the basic needs of the child.
- The Government has announced it will pilot a national kinship care allowance in up to 10 local authorities. The details have yet to be disclosed.
- NC26 tabled by Munira Wilson MP seeks to introduce a national financial allowance.
 - The commitment to a kinship financial allowance pilot is a welcome step, but it is being limited to 10 local authorities and it's still not clear which kinship families will be eligible. Will the Government confirm who will be eligible, which local authorities will take part in the trial, and the prospects for a national rollout?

- What wider work is the Government undertaking, concurrently with the pilot, to ensure that the calculation of special guardianship allowances is both fair and transparent?

Mental health:

- Many kinship carers have significant difficulty accessing therapeutic support for the children, who have very often experienced trauma.
- The Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund pays for some families to access therapeutic support but the criteria is restricted to those children who were previously in the care system and are the subject of a special guardianship or child arrangements order.
- There has also been no confirmation of funding beyond March 2025 for any therapeutic support that the Support Fund hadn't already committed to paying. This is leaving families in limbo, unsure whether the children they are raising will be able to access essential therapeutic services.
- We are already hearing examples from special guardians who, despite assessments of the children making clear recommendations for specific therapeutic support, cannot progress this until Government plans for the 2025/2026 financial year are certain.
- Building on the Government's mental health commitments, therapeutic and mental health support should be made available to all kinship families, regardless of the type of kinship care arrangement.
 - Will the Government commit to securing long term funding for the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund to end the current uncertainty and to prevent the cliff edge that materialises at the end of each Treasury funding round?
 - Will the Government address how therapeutic and mental health support can be made available to all kinship families who need it?

Education:

- There are higher levels of special education needs among kinship children compared to the wider population.
- [Research](#) shows over half (54%) of kinship children have additional educational needs or disabilities, yet entitlement to support often depends on whether or not the child has been looked-after in the care system.
- Clause 6 of the Bill 'promoting educational achievement' extends the statutory duty of the Virtual School Head to have oversight of the educational achievement of all children in kinship care. It also extends the duty to provide information and advice to kinship families with special guardianship or child arrangements orders. For children in other types of kinship care arrangement, Virtual School Heads will not be expected to work directly with individual children and their families or respond to requests from parents or carers to offer advice, intervention and support in relation to individual children. The whole range of responsibilities should be extended to ensure equality of access in support.
- All children in kinship care should be entitled to supports like Pupil Premium Plus and priority school admissions. NC27 and NC28 tabled by Munira Wilson MP seek to deliver this.
 - Will the Government use this opportunity to extend the full package of Virtual School Head support to all children in kinship care?
 - Currently many children in kinship care fall through the net for Pupil Premium Plus eligibility because they haven't spent time in the care system, despite having similar needs to looked-after children. Is the Government seeking to address this?
 - There is growing concern among families about the cliff edge in post-16 and post-18 including educational support for young people raised in kinship care. Is the Department for Education undertaking work to explore this?

Support for children in the care system and care leavers

Clause 7: Providing Staying Close support to care leavers

A requirement on each local authority to assess whether they should provide a 'Staying Close' service to eligible care leavers (up to age 25), which gives support to help find and keep suitable accommodation, and to access services relating to health and wellbeing, relationships, education, training and employment.

Clause 8 local offer for care leavers

Local offers for care leavers will be required to include information about the local authority's arrangements for anticipating the future needs of care leavers for accommodation, co-operating with the local housing authorities in its area and providing assistance to care leavers who are at risk of homelessness.

New clauses on corporate parenting responsibilities

Amendments tabled by the Government will extend corporate parenting responsibilities beyond local authorities to all Government departments and some public sector bodies, including schools, NHS Trusts and the Youth Justice Board. This means the relevant public bodies will be subject to a duty to take care-experienced young people into consideration when designing policies and delivering services, to be alert to their needs, and to take action to improve outcomes.

Key messages:

- The expansion of Staying Close to become a national offer for care leavers, and strengthening requirements to help care leavers with housing are important changes.
- We also welcome the extension of corporate parenting responsibilities beyond local authorities across Government and key areas of the public sector. As proposed by [Become and by the APPG for Care Experienced Children and Young People](#).
- We are very encouraged by the Bill's inclusion of relationships in the provisions on Staying Close support for young people in care. Many children in the care system are living far away from family and friends. 18 miles is the average distance a child in care in England is living away from their family and friends ([Become](#)). Young people leaving care are often alone and isolated, as their professional support network falls away.
- The absence of positive relationships in children's lives increases the likelihood that they experience longer term difficulties – such as poor mental health, a tougher time at school, unemployment and homelessness.
- However, the Government could go further to ensure important relationships for care experienced children and young people are strengthened, and that they have the support around them to thrive in the care system and beyond.

How this Bill could be strengthened

- **Contact with brothers and sisters:** [Research](#) by the Children's Commissioner for England found that an estimated 37% of children with a sibling – that is 20,000 children - are separated from a sibling when placed in care. For some children, the chance of being separated is far greater: 93% of older children placed in semi-independent accommodation are separated from their siblings. The report highlighted how siblings are not always supported to stay in touch. This is reinforced by our experience from the findings of [Lifelong Links](#), in which children often speak of their desperate wish to see their brother or sister. All children in the care system should be afforded the same right to reasonable contact with their

brothers and sisters, as they currently have in law as they have with their parents. Family Rights Group has long worked to deliver this. NC44 tabled by Emma Lewell-Buck MP seeks to do so.

- **Building not breaking relationships:** Important relationships are often broken when children enter the care system. Many have to change school, or move far away from family and friends. [Lifelong Links](#) is an innovative approach, developed by Family Rights Group, to address this. A trained Lifelong Links coordinator works with the child or young person to find and safely bring together all those who are important in the child or young person's life – relatives they may have lost contact with or never met, and others who care about them, such as a former foster carers or teacher. It aims to ensure that a child in care has a positive support network they can rely on during their time in care and into adulthood. [Evaluations](#) of Lifelong Links show it increases children's positive social connections, mental health, sense of identity and stability in where they are living. Lifelong Links is now available in over 40 authorities across the UK, 23 of which are currently in receipt of Department for Education funding which runs out in March 2025 – those authorities are still to hear whether that funding may be continued beyond 1 April 2025. We propose Lifelong Links should be set out in regulations and guidance as an offer to all children in care and care leavers. Find out if [your local authority](#) has Lifelong Links.
- **Homelessness:** Analysis by Become, [published in October 2024](#), found that over 4,300 young care leavers were facing homelessness, an increase of 54% in the last five years. Data from Crisis found that 25% of homeless people are care experienced. The Government has committed to remove the local connection test for care leavers, which should now be implemented urgently. We support Become's wider proposals which include that all care leavers should be a priority for social housing up to the age of 25, an exemption for care leavers from homelessness intentionality rules, and rent guarantor and deposit schemes for care leavers. NC35 tabled by Bobby Dean seeks to extend the priority need status under homelessness legislation to all care leavers up to the age of 25, regardless of vulnerability. Currently, those over 21 have a priority need only if they are vulnerable as a result of being in care.
- **National Care Offer:** The Education Select Committee has proposed a national care offer, to address the great variation between local authorities in the support offered to young people as they leave care and transition into living independently as adults. NC3 tabled by Helen Hayes MP seeks to deliver this.

Questions

- Thousands of brothers and sisters are separated in the care system, with many then not even supported to keep in contact. Will the Government ensure all children in care are afforded the same right to reasonable contact with their brothers and sisters, as they currently have in law as they have with their parents?
- On 7 March 2017, then Children's Minister Edward Timpson MP, acknowledged that there was an anomaly in current legislation whereby the Care Planning, Placement and Care Review (England) Regulations do not refer to provide for sibling contact between a child who is looked after and siblings who are not looked after. He stated that officials would start work to amend the regulations. Does the Minister agree, 8 years on, that it is time to amend those regulations?
- The Lifelong Links approach is transforming the lives of care experienced children and young people to have a support network of lasting, loving relationships. The Government has supported the development of Lifelong Links, will they now look at making it a national offer?
- Will the Department for Education continue the Befriending, Mentoring and Family Finding Grant, that currently is funding 23 local authorities to implement Lifelong Links, beyond 31 March 2025?

Clause 11: Use of accommodation for deprivation of liberty

Children's services departments will now be able to apply for an order to deprive a child of their liberty in "relevant accommodation". This is described as accommodation provided for the purposes of care and treatment of children but that is also deemed capable of being used to deprive a child of their liberty.

Key messages:

- This seeks to address the issue, over recent years, of children being deprived of their liberty outside of the statutory route, in inappropriate and unsuitable accommodation. Between October 2023 and September 2024, 1464 children were involved in applications to deprive them of their liberty.
- We welcome moves to address this important issue but note the following:
 - First, the success of these changes hinges on the accompanying regulatory framework. Details about what constitutes "relevant accommodation," its standards, and Ofsted registration requirements remain unclear.
 - Second, the proposals neglect the critical matter of maintaining children's relationships with family and friends. Many children in such placements face isolation, living far from home with limited contact.
 - Finally, families' access to justice remains a challenge. Current legal aid provision when children are deprived of their liberty often leaves parents unrepresented. The Government has indicated that legal aid under this new provision will mirror that which is available to children and families when an application for a secure accommodation order is made. But we know from evidence that is insufficient. We have [called for](#) legal aid provision to be in line with that which is available to parents and children in care proceedings. This will help families understand what applications may be made and the processes involved and how they can inform decisions and planning for their child.

Questions

- It may be some time before this type of accommodation is available. What is the Government doing in the interim to help the children who are currently being deprived of their liberty in unsuitable accommodation, too often at a great distance from their family and friends?
- Will the Minister confirm when the regulations in relation to Clause 11 will be brought forward?
- Will the Government work with families with lived experience of their children being deprived of their liberty in shaping the framework around this clause, including the regulations and statutory guidance?
- Government amendment 117 will allow Welsh local authorities to place children in relevant accommodation in England. Is it envisaged that where accommodation in Wales and Scotland meets the definition of "relevant accommodation" children from English local authorities can be placed there under this route? If so, how will the Government make sure cross border placements are used only where necessary and appropriately to meet the child's needs?
- The Secretary of State has the power, under the current regulatory framework, to ensure that no child under the age of 13 can be placed in a secure children's home without her authorisation. Can the Secretary of State confirm this will also apply to those children deprived of their liberty in "relevant accommodation"?
- Currently, legal aid for families whose children are deprived of their liberty falls woefully short of what families need, with very low levels of parental representation. Will the Secretary of State engage with the Ministry of Justice to review legal aid provision for children and families in all forms of family court applications to deprive a child of their liberty?

Adoption

NC13 tabled by Caroline Voaden MP and supported by Adoption UK seeks to introduce a review of adoption support offered by local authorities. The list of services this would include those relating to birth family contact.

Key messages:

- Under the Adoption and Children Act 2002, the courts are required to consider whether anyone should have post-adoption contact with a child before making an adoption order. They may also make orders requiring or prohibiting contact, including with the child's birth family. However, recent reports have showed that such orders are rarely made.
- For the last 20 years, letterbox contact has been the typical way of enabling adopted children to stay in touch with their birth families. It usually involves the exchange of letters between adoptive parents and birth relatives, facilitated by an adoption agency, once or twice a year.
- Birth mothers and fathers speaking to Family Rights Group described how they were told they could not 'show emotion or love' in letters. Some spoke of letters arriving late, or not at all. Letterbox contact is mainly used for exchanging information, but it rarely helps build meaningful relationships and often fades by middle childhood.
- Research highlights that safe, face-to-face contact with birth relatives plays a crucial role in enhancing adopted children's sense of identity, emotional well-being and understanding of their adoption.
- Many adoptive families report positive experiences with direct contact while also raising the importance of support in overall outcomes. Notably, fewer than half of adoptive families report feeling adequately supported with contact arrangements.
- Many adopted children eventually seek information about their birth parents, and in the absence of effective arrangements, are likely to initiate contact – especially during their teenage years - via social media, which can lead to distressing and even harmful situations.
- A [recent report](#), commissioned by the President of the Family Division of the High Court, described the current system as 'outdated,' advocating for a fundamental shift in practice. It recommended an individualised approach that prioritises face-to-face contact with birth relatives, including siblings, when it is safe and aligns with the child's best interests.
- Family Rights Group, funded by Adoption England, has now adapted our Lifelong Links model (see above) for adopted children. It seeks to offer safe, structured contact between adopted children and birth relatives, in line with the child's wishes and the support of their adoptive parents. A trial phase, launched in September 2024, is currently underway in Coventry, North East Lincolnshire, Hertfordshire, and Tower Hamlets.

Questions:

- What assessment has the Government made of the recommendations from the President of the Family Division's Public Law Working Group about ongoing support for contact between adopted children and their birth family?

Contact Details:

For further information, please contact Head of Public Affairs, Jordan Hall, on jhall@frg.org.uk

Find us online:

www.frg.org.uk

X: [@familyrightsgp](https://twitter.com/familyrightsgp)

Bluesky: [familyrightsgp](https://bsky.app/profile/familyrightsgp)

Facebook: [FamilyRightsGp](https://www.facebook.com/FamilyRightsGp)

Instagram: [@familyrightsgroup](https://www.instagram.com/familyrightsgroup)

LinkedIn: [family-rights-group](https://www.linkedin.com/company/family-rights-group)