



# Introduction to Lifelong Links and setting the context

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Cathy Ashley, Chief Executive  
Family Rights Group



# About Family Rights Group

Family Rights Group is the leading national charity working to ensure the child welfare system supports children to live safely and thrive within their family. We also work to strengthen the family and community networks of those children who cannot live at home.

- Our free **specialist advice service** supports parents and kinship carers to understand their rights and options.
- We pioneer **innovative child welfare practices** including Lifelong Links and family group conferences.
- For 50-years, our **legal, policy and campaigning work** has influenced developments in the child welfare system.



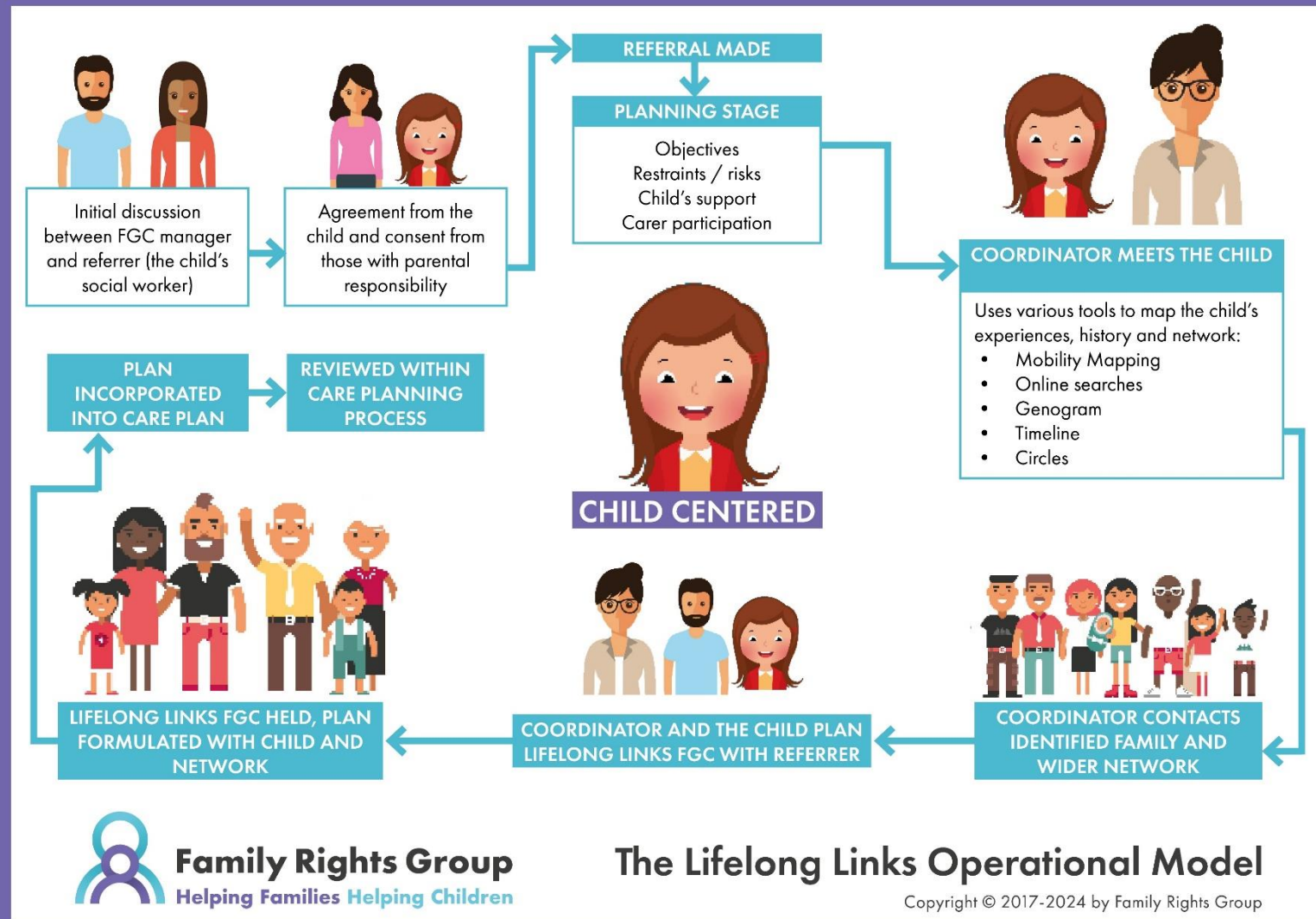
## Why do we need Lifelong Links?

*“The greatest failing of the care system: It too often breaks, rather than builds, relationships for children” Care Inquiry (2013)*



# Key Principles

- Young person driven
- Child safety & welfare is central
- Strength-based family centred approach
- Enable participation for all
- Independent coordinator
- Supportive of all involved
- A problem-solving dynamic approach



# Lifelong Links trial in England

**Three year trial (2017-2020)**

**Seven local authorities, growing to twelve by end of year two.**

**Funded by Department for Education's Children's Social Care Innovation Programme**



## Health and wellbeing

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The longitudinal child level analysis shows that emotional health and wellbeing improve and that improvement is sustained over time.



## Increased stability

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Almost three-quarters (74%) of the children and young people who were referred remained in their same home in the year following Lifelong Links, compared to 41% for the comparison group.



## Improved sense of identity

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78% of children and young people who were offered Lifelong Links felt an improved sense of identity

Lifelong Links evaluation report (2020) // Lifelong Links: embedding practice (2022)

Dr Lisa Holmes et al

# Lifelong Links trial in Scotland

Only possible with the generous support of; KPMG Foundation, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, RS MacDonal Charitable Trust and The Robertson Trust





# Lifelong Links

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Building lasting relationships  
for young people in care

*el* Lifelong  
Links .



## Response and next steps

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Lucy Hutchinson, Head of  
Programmes  
Paul Reddiex, Lifelong Links  
consultant  
Family Rights Group





# Lifelong Links: impact so far



3,297

**Children or young  
people have benefitted**



42

**Local authorities  
offering Lifelong Links**

## Reduced homelessness

Research shows that Lifelong Links, which helps build family support networks for care leavers, reduces the risk of homelessness amongst care leavers by 10%.



[ Discover Circles ]



## Cost avoidance

Hertfordshire County Council found that Lifelong Links supported their local authority in achieving an estimated cost avoidance of over £800,000

- **Adoption**
- **Residential**
- **Care experienced young people in prison**
- **Young people's participation**