



Lifelong Links

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What is Lifelong Links?

- Lifelong links was founded by the Family Rights Group in response to The Care Inquiry (2013) which concluded that the greatest failing of the Care System is that it often breaks, rather than builds upon relationships for children in care. The model was co-created with care experienced young people and aligns with the Family Group Conferencing (FGC) model
- A three-year pilot project was implemented in England & Scotland between 2017 – 2020 involving 17 Local Authorities
- Lifelong Links aims to find and bring together important positive people in the young person's life who **they** have identified as people they would like to reconnect with, to provide them with ongoing support. This could be former foster carers, teachers, Family support workers, play therapists, mentors, volunteers, faith leaders, friends and neighbours, as well as extended family members. People may be identified who they have not previously had a relationship with before.
- The young person's network is brought together in a Lifelong Links family group conference, to establish what support the network can offer both now and in the future. This is where their Lifelong Links plan will be developed.
- This plan is then incorporated into the young person's pathway plan and care plan, which is reviewed regularly at their child in care review meetings by the IRO

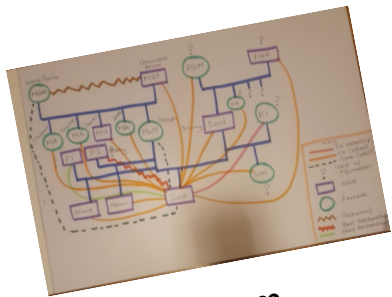
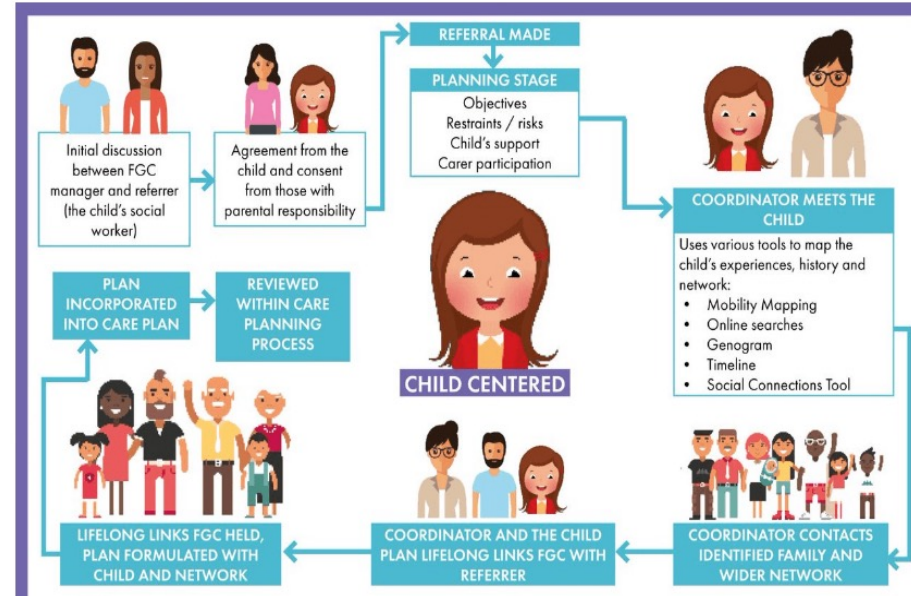
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Who is it for?

- Children and young people who are in care with no plan for reunification home or adoption (Care Order & Section 20) – Care proceedings concluded
- Young people aged 12 + years – preparing for Pathway planning and leaving care – Can be younger
- Care experienced young adults up to the age of 25 years can access Lifelong Links by making direct contact with the Lifelong Links lead through the LBBD Lifelong Links website, Facebook page or email
- Lifelong Links can support young people who are incarcerated to rebuild relationships and identify support prior to release into the community
- UAS – Immigration Lawyer needs to provide the young person advice. If seeking to reconnect with family and friends outside of the UK, use British Red Cross service

The Model

- ❖ Consent – Child centred and driven
- ❖ Independent Lifelong Links Coordinator
- ❖ Genogram, Circles, mobility mapping
- ❖ Family / friend finding
- ❖ Support with initial contact
- ❖ Lifelong Links family group conference & Lifelong Links plan
- ❖ Lifelong Links plan embedded in pathway and care planning
- ❖ Journey book documenting the Lifelong Links journey.

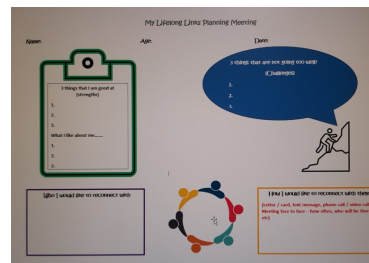


Genogram



Mobility Mapping

Initial Planning meeting Prep



Circles (Eco-Map)



"I really thought my family had forgotten me"

I remember that every time I visited, your face was always orange where you had been eating wotsits which you loved



"My only wish was to be reconnected with my family who I had not seen since I was taken into care in December 2011. I was not sure if they had forgotten me or even wanted to reconnect with me"

First trainer that has been kept by Grandad



I remember taking you for a walk in your wheelchair with your favourite blanket which got caught in the wheels! We brought a big pizza and then laughed so much together about how we were going to carry it home.



"I now knew that my family had always held me in their hearts"

Why is it important?

- Reduces isolation and has a positive impact on emotional well-being & mental health which improves placement stability and reduces risk taking behaviours.
- Learn more about their history and feel a stronger sense of identity.
- Have people they can rely on for practical and emotional support. This could be telephone calls, cards, outings, emails, invites to family events, holidays

Lifelong Links Review 2021

- In January 2021 the report of independent evaluation into Lifelong Links was published. This covered the three-year trial from 2017 - 2020
- 91% reported positive outcomes associated with direct contact instigated by Lifelong Links.
- 78% children and young people reported an improved sense of identity after finding out more about family roots
- 74% of the children and young people who were referred remained in their placement in the year following Lifelong Links, compared to 41% for the comparison group.

2023

Lifelong Links reduces homelessness in Care leavers by 10%



Lifelong Links Evaluation 2022

- Focus on how Lifelong links is embedded in practice
- Should be child led at a child's pace
- Clear communication and shared understanding is pivotal in the success of the plan
- Relationships can work beyond placements with foster carers and birth families working together
- Found placement stability continues after Lifelong links
- Emotional health and well-being of the young person improved

Support

Young Person

- Lifelong Links coordinators can access the SIS therapeutic team for consultation and advice regarding the emotional wellbeing of young people. There are designated therapists assigned to Lifelong Links for Play therapy / creative therapy. Therapeutic team manager also supports with signposting / CAMHS / School emotional support
- Lifelong Links Lead and Therapeutic Team Manager provide a bespoke model of intervention, planning for co-ordination of direct work with young person, when Lifelong Links and therapeutic support are simultaneously required. This is regularly reviewed
- Care leavers 18 + can access an Independent emotional well-being officer via their allocated worker. There is also another emotional wellbeing officer for 14 + within the same service
- Childrens Rights officer can provide independent visitors for young people to undertake direct work and provide support 14+. 18+ can receive support and advice around housing
- SIS Volunteer offer – Lifelong Links works closely with this service to provide befrienders / mentors (3 – 18 years - building relationships) – accompany to appointments and family time contact

Carers

- Lifelong Links updates in Fostering Newsletter
- Regular Q&A sessions at foster care association meetings.
- Lifelong Links Lead attendance at supervising social worker team meetings
- Lifelong Links to be included in the Skills to foster training
- Supervising social worker, young persons allocated social worker and Lifelong Links co-ordinator
- Foster carers own support network / Mockingbird constellations
- Opportunity for Foster carers to make enquiries to the service regarding young people they may wish to reconnect with



Thank you for listening

Thoughts, views and reflections?

For further reading visit:

<https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/lifelong-links>
[Lifelong Links - Family Rights Group \(frg.org.uk\)](https://www.frg.org.uk)

fb: [facebook.com/LifelongLinksBD](https://www.facebook.com/LifelongLinksBD)

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