



# Lifelong Links<sup>®</sup>

Building lasting relationships  
for children in care

Lifelong Links is an exciting project for children and young people in care.

Lifelong Links aims to find family members and other people who care about them such as former foster carers, teachers or family friends. These people are brought together in a meeting called a family group

conference. At this meeting they can talk with the young person about what support they are able to offer, both now and in the future. This is written down into a plan so that everybody knows exactly what they are doing. The plan should be agreed by the young person's social worker providing it is safe.

## What is the process?

A young person is allocated a Lifelong Links coordinator. The person or local authority with parental responsibility for the young person must consent to the referral. The young person must also agree.

The Lifelong Links Coordinator:

- Meets with the young person and works with them to find all the people who may care about them.
- With the agreement of the young person, contacts all the people identified (where safe) and arranges to visit them.
- Discusses with family and friends how they may be able to support the young person.
- In consultation with the young person, invites family and friends to the Lifelong Links family group conference.

# What is the purpose of Lifelong Links Family Group Conference?

To make a plan so the young person:

- Has lasting relationships upon which they can depend
- Knows more about their own history and may feel a stronger sense of identity
- Has people to turn to for practical and emotional support. This could be invites to family events, holidays, telephone calls, emails, cards, outings, work experience etc.

## Who attends the Lifelong Links family group conference?

This will vary but usually includes the young person, family members (and others who care about the young person), the social worker (and other professionals who may be involved), the foster or residential carer, the Lifelong Links coordinator and possibly an advocate for the young person. The family group conference includes some private time which practitioners do not attend.

## What happens afterward the family group conference?

The social worker should work with the young person and their support network to ensure that the plan is carried out and that it is safe. It will form part of the young person's care plan and eventually their pathway plan as they become more independent. A family group conference review should be offered to the young person and their support network to check that the plan is working. The plan should also be regularly reviewed at the young person's looked after review meetings.