

Lifelong Links

Building lasting relationships
for children in our care



A Guide for Young People



What is Lifelong Links?

Lifelong Links aims to build lasting relationships for young people in our care in Durham. It helps bring together people that you want to connect with. These can be people that you know well but have not seen in a while (like a previous foster carer, a teacher or neighbour), family members that you have lost contact with or even a family member that you have not met yet.



“ Every child is one caring adult away from being a success (Nick Barwick) ”



How can it help me?

You will have your own independent Lifelong Links co-ordinator every step of the way that can help you find family and friends that care about you, who want to be there for you to turn to for support and will be that caring adult that makes a difference in your life.

You can find out more about your family history and find answers to some of the questions that you may have.

Working with you, your Lifelong Links co-ordinator will find, in a safe way, your family and friends, previous carers or professionals that you want to re-connect with and who you can turn to for long lasting support.

We can bring together those people you want in your life and to be able to turn to for support in adulthood in a Lifelong Links Family Group Conference, if that is what you want.

« Lifelong Links is your choice. »

Lifelong Links will only happen with your agreement and, if you change your mind tell your carer, social worker or Lifelong Links co-ordinator.

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

It's all about bringing together those people that care about you to decide on a plan of support for you so that:

- ✓ You have lasting relationships you can depend on.
- ✓ It is clear to everyone who is responsible for staying in touch with you and how this will happen, so there is no confusion.
- ✓ For you to learn more about your history and develop a stronger sense of identity.
- ✓ Have people that you can turn to for practical and emotional support. This could be by being invited to family events, holidays, having telephone calls, sending emails, cards, going on outings or getting support with work experience.



What would my Lifelong Links Family Group Conference look like?

Your Lifelong Links co-ordinator will work with you to bring together your network of support to make a plan with you about the support they can offer you. You can help plan where this would be, when, what refreshments you would like to have, so that you feel comfortable and relaxed at your meeting.



The Family Group Conference usually includes you, family members you have chosen to be there (and others who care about you), your social worker, your foster carer or residential carer, other adults that you want to connect with, your Lifelong Links co-ordinator and possibly an advocate for you, if that is what you would want to have.

The Family Group Conference includes some private time which practitioners do not attend, to give you time to spend with your supporters and to agree on your plan of support.

What happens after my Family Group Conference?

Your social worker should work with you and your support network to ensure that the plan you make is carried out and that it is safe. It will form part of your care plan and eventually your pathway plan as you become more independent.

A Family Group Conference review will be offered to you and your support network, to check that your plan is working.

The plan should also be regularly reviewed by your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and social worker.

How can I have a Lifelong Links co-ordinator?

Just talk to your social worker, your carer or your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and ask them to contact Durham's Lifelong Links service.

You are eligible for Lifelong Links if you are:

- ✓ Aged 15¾ years and over.
- ✓ Approaching leaving care prior to your 18th birthday.

Your Family Group Coordinator is:

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**Telephone number:** ~~~~~

**Or contact:** ~ 03000 262278

**Email:** ~ LifelongLinks@durham.gov.uk

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