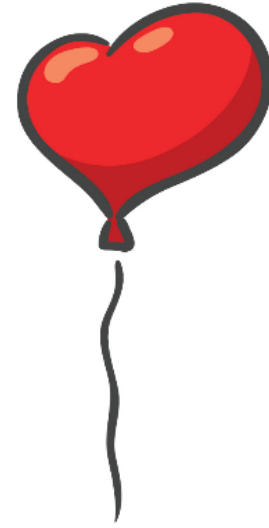


# Stand Up For Siblings



Supporting relationships of brothers and sister in care

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## The importance of brothers and sisters

Sibling relationships are amongst our longest lasting relationships and contribute greatly to our sense of identity. Research has demonstrated that positive sibling relationships can provide a source of resilience for children facing adversity and provide continuity at a time of change and uncertainty. They can also be a source of support into adulthood. Placing siblings together has been associated with increased wellbeing and stable, enduring placements.

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## Losing touch with brothers and sisters

Despite these benefits, sibling separation and estrangement are common outcomes when children become looked after and accommodated. Research has estimated that around 70% of children in care experience separation from siblings. Where this occurs children typically express a strong desire to stay in contact with brothers and sisters yet contact varies in quality and tends to become less frequent over time. This is a source of distress for children and a concern of professionals working on their behalf.

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The Promise

## The Promise to brothers and sisters

“The Care Review has heard many stories from care experienced people that contact with the ‘care system’ has led to them being separated from their brothers and sisters. The pain of that separation has often been profound and had lifelong consequences.

Sibling relationships can be complicated and it should not be assumed that they are always easy, but when separated from parents, relationships between brothers and sisters are an important protective factor for children.

Decision making must take account of the dynamics of sibling relationships and all sibling voices must be heard.”

(Chapter 4 Care page 62)

<https://www.carereview.scot/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/The-Promise.pdf>

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## New measures will apply from 26th July 2021:

- a duty on local authorities to promote contact between looked after children and siblings (section 13 of the Children (Scotland) Act 2020)
- a duty on children's hearings to consider contact when making etc. compulsory supervision orders (section 14 of the Act)
- rights for siblings to participate in children's hearings (section 25 of the Act)
- a duty to place siblings together or in homes which are near to each other. (The Looked After Children (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2021, SSI 2021/103)

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## Keeping that family feeling

The ideal scenario is for children to experience 'normal family life'.

This should always mean growing up together when in their best interests to do so.

When they can't live together, can they meet up with siblings at the park, at the beach, at each other's homes?

Can they have sleepovers?

Can this be arranged between families; be they Foster, Adoptive, Kinship families?

Can they stay in touch by telephone call, video calls, postcards, letters, sending pictures, email.

Let's move away from referring to "*Contact*" and instead focus on "*catching up*", "*play dates*" etc.



Research, law, policy and practice resources  
available at [www.standupforsiblings.co.uk](http://www.standupforsiblings.co.uk)

