



## Standing up for Glasgow's Siblings

### Glasgow Family Connections Assessment and Plan (FCAP)

#### Why did we want to make this change?

Within Glasgow's Promise Action Plan, one of our key priorities is protecting and promoting relationships between brothers and sisters in our care; not only because this is highlighted as a key priority for change within 'The Promise' but also because research tells us about the importance of protecting the sibling relationships of our care experienced children and young people; recognising that siblings should not be separated on admission into our care but if it does happen, that they are reunited where possible to avoid losing a shared sense of development and identity.

We also wanted to recognise our duties under The Children (Scotland) Act 2020 in relation to the promotion of contact and connected care planning between children in our care and their siblings.

#### What did we do and who were involved?

We created a working group to think about the creation of a new sibling assessment tool for social workers and others involved in the helping teams around children's care plans, but crucially one which involved the voices of children and young people and their families.

The working group comprised of key representatives from Families for Children, Locality Teams, Children's Rights and our Independent Review Team, who met regularly to map out what existing tools which were being used. We then considered research, had consultation with CELCIS and used networks such as "Stand Up for Siblings" for advice and guidance.

The Family Connections Assessment and Plan was then created and launched as a pilot in Spring 2022. This assessment framework replaced the Sibling Separation which was formerly used within Glasgow at the point of a Permanence Review where the focus of thinking and language was upon separation of siblings when required at this point. We shifted the focus of thinking and language therefore to be around **connection**.

The FCAP Framework is designed to support child centred, relationship-based practice with children and young people that helps us to plan effectively for children who are a part of a wider sibling group whether they live together or not. It is designed to be a dynamic tool that social workers can use at the point that children become care experienced to help map out brother/sister and other important relationships that need to be maintained. It allows then for a plan to be created to support these relationships that can then be reviewed and developed alongside the child's care plan

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and encourages conversations and explanations with siblings each step of the way. This work also then paves the way for more focussed Lifestory work and allows for evidence of decision making and a record of this as we support children and their families on their care experience journey.

This is not an assessment that area team social workers should ever complete in isolation. The FCAP encourages a collaborative process that includes the children and the relevant carers and professionals involved in supporting brothers/sisters in a family to pull together information and views that will assist the social worker to complete the assessment. This will go to the Head of Service for final approval prior to a Permanence Review taking place. It is also important to highlight that this is not a one-off assessment. The FCAP is designed to be a living document, which will grow and develop with the children and in line with their circumstances

This new set of Tools and associated Guidance are also designed to meet the expectations of the National Practice Guidance “Staying Together and Connected: Getting it Right for Sisters and Brothers: National Practice Guidance”, The Scottish Government September 2021.

The FCAP requires that all sibling information is recorded along with their care arrangements and views with a section for then planning how to support these relationships if safe to do so. There are also a variety of direct practice tools which workers are encouraged to use including sibling maps, genograms and family trees. We have also created practice guidance which sits behind this.

### **What did we learn and how does it make a difference to the children, young people and families that we support?**

In terms of implementation, we delivered briefing sessions to all children and families practitioners and some teams were also asked to pilot the FCAP, encouraging feedback so we could learn from this. We also worked with CELCIS who conducted evaluation through user group feedback. The working group continues to meet and ensure the FCAP is meeting the needs of children and young people. Workshops, further guidance, practice exemplars, training are some of the ongoing supports that continue to take place.

Our reviewing officers and other chairs are also now ensuring that the FCAP is a central agenda item in care planning and the importance of ensuring understanding the importance of sibling connections is also now a significant part of the recruitment process for our carers and adopters.

### **How does it make a difference to the children, young people and families that we support?**

We have received feedback from children, young people, carers, families and their social workers that there are improved sibling connections, and we see this in our daily practice.

As we are helping children and young people have more information about each other and their families we have seen this can often be connections with adult siblings, siblings of unaccompanied children and foster siblings where relationships were lost. We have had examples of new babies coming into our care where they have a large and separated sibling group already in our care and we are able to promote safe connections leading to much better permanence plans and outcomes.

Crucially our children and young people are being made aware of their rights in this area too and are being given explanations about decision making.

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Our reviewing officers are also now allocated to full sibling groups and to full children's houses which is also another mechanism for improving connected care planning. All children and young people who come into our care in Glasgow are also assigned a reviewing officer at this stage and teams are asked to begin the FCAP work, and links are made with our Family Group Decision Making Teams for assistance. Once we have information, we are also linking up siblings in our electronic systems which also allows improved data quality in this area.

This work is also allowing us also to consider the issue of sibling contact more closely in all care plans and where we are not placing children together then we will try to do so geographically and ensure connections between carers are taking place. Including in adoption work.

There are multiple other work streams around standing up for our siblings in Glasgow's Promise Action Plan and we hope the Family Connections Assessment and Plan continues to be a key driver in all of these. We are also members of national fora such as Stand up for Siblings and the National IRO Network where we are sharing and gathering ways of taking this work forward.

If you would like more information about the work we are doing, please contact:

**Alison Cowper, Service Manager:** [alison.cowper@glasgow.gov.uk](mailto:alison.cowper@glasgow.gov.uk)

**Elaine Goudie, Assistant Service Manager:** [elaine.goudie2@glasgow.gov.uk](mailto:elaine.goudie2@glasgow.gov.uk)

**Elaine Millar, Senior Learning and Development Officer** [elaine.millar@glasgow.gov.uk](mailto:elaine.millar@glasgow.gov.uk)

**Janine Fraser, Independent Reviewing Officer** [janine.fraser@glasgow.gov.uk](mailto:janine.fraser@glasgow.gov.uk)

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