

Community of Practice for Siblings Newsletter

Keeping the promise for brothers, sisters, siblings and sibling-like relationships

➔ Heading into 2026 together

Kate Richardson - Chair of Stand Up For Siblings

Welcome to the first Community of Practice for Siblings Newsletter of 2026. Stand Up For Siblings continues to host the Community of Practice with the support of the many dedicated members of the Planning Group. We are looking forward to another year of collaboration and progression of ensuring the rights of siblings and sibling-like relationships are prioritised, fulfilled, and protected for all children and young people growing up in Scotland.

2025 was a busy year for the Community of Practice, with three online events featuring inputs from; Dr Autumn Roesch-Marsh about considering Friendship as a 'sibling-like' relationship through the Friendship Focused Support project with Staf; Dr Helen Whincup spoke about siblings within the longitudinal study Permanently Progressing and in November we heard from Dr Katie Cebula and the students involved with the Sibling Data Cafés.

We also benefited from coming together in person at Siblings Reunited (STAR) in June and in November at the SCRA offices in Bell Street where there was a focus on hearing directly from those with experience of care including a preview of the Our Connections Matter video co-produced by TFN, Perth & Kinross Champions Board and Braw Talent.



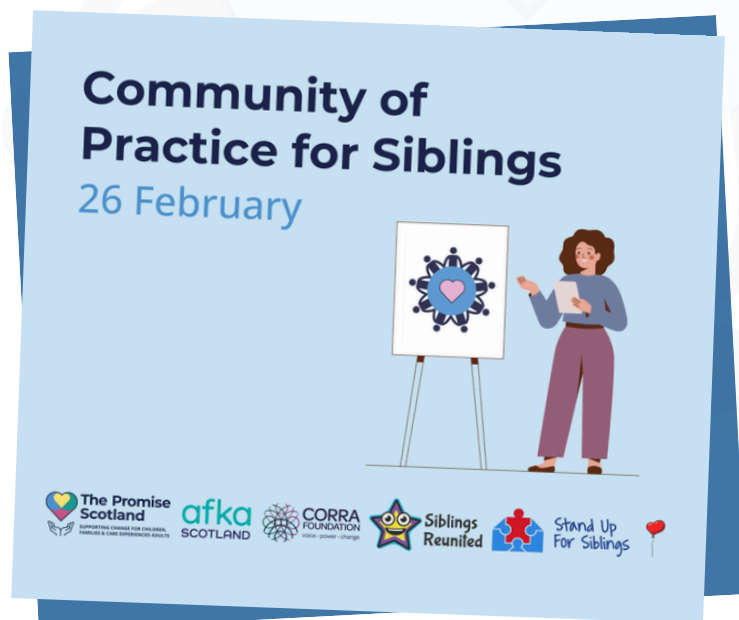
Throughout the year we have reflected on decision making processes, ensuring the voices of children and young people are heard and kept at the fore when considering sibling and sibling-like relationships, exploring the application of Participation Rights and methods of identifying those people most important to all children and young people such as [Glasgow's Family Connections Assessment and Plan](#).

A highlight of 2025 was the growing engagement and contributions from young people in person, and we are hoping to build on this in the coming year, helped by our newest planning group member, Paige Mitchell, Youth Work Modern Apprentice from Perth and Kinross Council.

We begin 2026 with our first online event of the year on 26 February. You can sign up [here](#) to attend. We will be exploring the role of Lifelong Links in supporting children and young people to identify, locate, and establish new and existing sibling relationships. We will also be hearing about a new approach to encourage young people to take more of a lead in running their review meetings.

Our first in-person event is planned for May (venue still to be confirmed) with a focus on reflecting and agreeing a shared focus for the years to come – *Building on momentum and moving forward!*

We are keen to spread the word about the Community of Practice far and wide, so please do share this newsletter and the invitation to the first online session with your networks – we want to ensure that all children in Scotland benefit from the vision of the promise to grow up safe and loved, in conjunction with their siblings, sibling-like relationships and the close friendships that support them throughout their lives.



Reflection from our November event

Dr. Katie Cebula, Sibling Café Project

The Sibling Café Project (led by the University of Edinburgh and funded by Research Data Scotland) brought together researchers, care experienced co-researchers, a poet and advisers from Stand Up For Siblings and The Promise Scotland.

At the heart of the project was conversations with care experienced individuals and their supporters (e.g. foster carers, adoptive parents) about the administrative anonymised data collected annually in Scotland about care experienced young people (the 'Children Looked After in Scotland' (CLAS) dataset, particularly new data on sibling relationships). The project team designed and held two 'pop up' Sibling Cafés last year, where – through conversations and creative activities (and lots of biscuits!) - café visitors learnt about and shared their views about the CLAS sibling data.

In particular we explored their messages for data analysts about the 'stories behind the numbers' – what was important to them about sibling relationships and how they felt sibling relationships can best be supported. Café visitors also had an opportunity to share their priorities for how they would like CLAS data to be used in the future to make a positive difference to young care experienced siblings.

A performed poem titled 'Change' was created with our café visitors using words, phrases and ideas that they contributed. At the November Community of Practice meeting, we were grateful to have an opportunity to share our poem and early findings from the project for the first time, and to have a wider discussion about future directions for research in this area. The project team hope to publish the poem and a project report soon.



[More information about the Sibling Café Project](#)

[Posters used at the Sibling Cafes](#)

Reflection from our November event

Kirsty Miguda-Scott, Children's Reporter, SCRA

It was great to join the recent meeting of the Community of Practice for Siblings and to be able to deliver a short presentation about Participation Rights in Children's Hearings. My presentation looked at the legal rules about participation rights, including: the criteria which must be met for participation rights to apply; how an individual obtains participation rights; and what the participation rights are.

An important point which was raised in the discussion and which I reflected on afterwards was the formality and language of the legal rules, which we are bound by, in contrast with how relationships between brothers and sisters were otherwise being discussed in the meeting. For example, a question was asked about whether we need to use the word "contact". Unfortunately, "contact" is the word which is contained within the legislation, so when referring to the legal rules there will be circumstances in which we need to use that language.

This doesn't, however, take away from our full support for the Language Leaders principles of using personalised, balanced, non-stigmatising, clear and involved language when communicating to and about children and families. Reflecting these principles whilst also discussing the legal rules is an interesting challenge which I will take away with me!



Paige Mitchell, Youth Work Modern Apprentice, Perth and Kinross Council

Paige joined the Community once again to share the fantastic Our Connections Matter resource now that it is live following a launch event during Care Experienced Week for the young people who helped co-design the video. If you would like to learn more, please reach out to Paige at PaigeMitchell@pkc.gov.uk.

Reflection from our November event

Dr Autumn Roesch-Marsh, Transforming Friendship Focused Support Project

Transforming Friendship Focused Support was a one year project funded by the ESRC.

The project was a partnership between the Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum, the University of Edinburgh and the University of Stirling.

A team of experts by experience, throughcare and aftercare staff and researchers worked together, using creative methods, to explore the importance of friendship for care experienced people and develop resources to improve practice.



A photo of part of the Friendship collage made by the FFSP team November 2024 in Glasgow

These resources include: a theory to practice guide, creative ideas for practice, case studies, topic guides on key themes like the online world and friendship, and a comic book.

We hope these will help workers to better support the friendships of care experienced people. You can find all the resources here: [Friendship resources | Staf \(Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum\)](#)

If you would like hear more about the findings or the project you can contact Dr Autumn Roesch-Marsh a.roeschmarsh@ed.ac.uk

Update from Scottish Government

Debbie Silver, Senior Policy Officer, Adoption and Siblings Team

National Vision for Kinship Care

The Scottish Government remains committed to strengthening support for kinship care as a core part of wider care system reform. In December, we published a draft Vision for Kinship Care, which sets out our ambition to improve consistency, equity and access to support for kinship families. A public consultation on the draft Vision is now live on Citizen Space, and we encourage anyone with an interest in kinship care – whether through lived experience, professional expertise, or community involvement – to share their views. The insights gathered through this consultation will assist in shaping a final vision that delivers real improvements for children and families.

➔ Update from Scottish Government

The draft Vision and public consultation are available via the following links:

- [Scotland's Vision for Kinship Care: Our Offer of Support for Families - For engagement and consultation - gov.scot](#)
- [Vision for Kinship Care - Scottish Government consultations - Citizen Space](#)

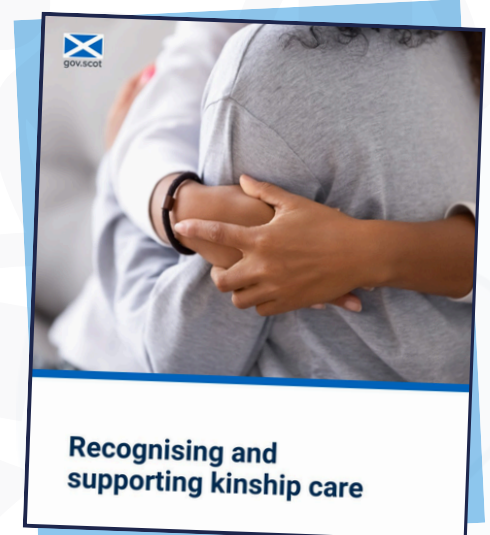
As we move towards final publication in Spring 2026, our focus remains on working closely with partners and listening carefully to kinship carers and to young people with lived experience. Their perspectives will ensure the Vision reflects what matters most to families and provides a strong foundation for future change.

Housing Roundtable

One of the most pressing challenges facing kinship families is housing. Many carers live in overcrowded or unsuitable accommodation, with limited access to larger or adapted homes that meet the needs of growing children or sibling groups. Others struggle to secure the adaptations that could allow them to remain in their current home. It's important to recognise that these issues are occurring within the context of a wider national housing crisis in Scotland. Many of the pressures facing kinship families are systemic and complex and affect families across the country – not only those in kinship care.

In November 2025, Scottish Government, with help from the Community of Practice for Siblings, convened a roundtable bringing together professionals from housing, social work, policy and academia. The aim was to explore whether there are immediate, practical actions, within the influence of housing and social work services, that could make a meaningful difference for kinship families in the shorter term, even while broader structural issues continue to be addressed.

The event featured presentations from local authority social work and housing teams, alongside academic research insights and a contribution from the Siblings Community of Practice, who showcased the innovative New Horizon approach they are currently progressing.



➔ Update from Scottish Government

Participants then engaged in discussion within breakout groups, examining the key systemic barriers that prevent kinship carers from accessing suitable housing and sharing ideas for how these challenges might be tackled.

The discussions highlighted a strong shared commitment across sectors to improve outcomes for kinship families. Participants identified several opportunities for practical next steps, including strengthening local collaboration between housing and social work, improving the consistency of information and guidance available to carers, and considering short-term measures that could help to ease pressure.

Over the coming months, we will share further reflections from the session and continue working with partners to explore these ideas and consider whether they can be taken forward in practice.

➔ Community of Practice Podcast

Members of the Community of Practice for Siblings appeared on an episode of [The Promise Scotland](#) podcast.

The in-depth discussion focuses on the group's commitment to improving outcomes for brothers, sisters and sibling-like relationships in care. They also discuss why the group was formed, the progress that has been made so far, and, most importantly, how professional organisations from across Scotland can work together to protect sibling and sibling-like relationships.

The speakers include Kate Richardson, Scotland's Adoption Register and SUFS chair, and Tom Boyd, The Promise Scotland, alongside Frances Maguire and Elaine Gouldie from Glasgow City Health & Social Care Partnership.



Upcoming Events

26 February - Online

Our next event will be online on 26 February.

We will be hearing about the Scottish Lifelong Links and Connections Network and how they support young people through Lifelong Links and Connection work as well as the work they plan to undertake as a network moving forward.

We will also be hearing about the Family Compass Framework, a new approach to encourage young people to take more of a lead in running their review meetings.

[Sign up here.](#)

13 May - In-person, location to be announced

This will be our first in-person event of the year focused around reflecting on the work the Community has done so far and looking forward to where we go to next.

Save the date and help us shape the direction of our future and identify where we can have the most impact.

Sign up details will be forthcoming.
Keep a look out on The Promise Scotland's social media or the Stand Up for Siblings website [here.](#)



**Thank you for being a part of our community.
We look forward to seeing you soon.**

- Community of Practice for Siblings Planning Group

