

Episode 36 | FRG's Lifelong Link and Build Not Break campaign transcript

Welcome to CoramBAAF Conversations, a podcast series dedicated to adoption, fostering and kinship care. We asked children, social care professionals, and experts by experience to join us to share with us and you, our listeners, their experiences, reflections and knowledge. I hope you enjoy.

Hello, I'm James Bury, head of policy, research and practice at CoramBAAF. And today I'm going to be speaking with Andrew Rist from Family Rights Group about their work on developing and delivering the Build Not Break campaign. Thank you for joining me, Andrew. Would you like to introduce yourself and tell us about how you first became involved with the Family Rights Group and the Build Not Break campaign?

Thank you, James. Yeah, I'm a Family Group Conference and Lifelong Links Practice Advisor for Family Rights Group and I've been at Family Rights Group since 2019. My job is to support the implementation and development of lifelong links in local authorities across the UK. Lifelong links is an innovative approach developed by family Rights Group, working to make sure that every child in care and every care leaver is connected to people who care about them.

Brilliant. Thank you, Andrew. We also have Sandra joining us who is a lifelong links coordinator, but importantly also has a second role as a life story facilitator, which you might find out a bit more about later. And finally, we also have Saima, who is a young care experienced person with lived experience of life. Links. So thank you both for joining us and it'd be nice to have an introduction to you both. So I'll invite you Sandra first.

I'm Sandra. Well, I got involved with lifelong links when I trained as a lifelong links coordinator, and I'm just really keen to see how we can connect care-experienced children with their family and friends and the people who are significant to them in their life. I'm also a life story social worker, and I think there's a really good connection between the two. Yeah, I've really enjoyed experience.

Thank you, Sandra. I'm going to come to you now, Saima. So it'd be really nice to hear from you in a bit about yourself and your involvement with lifelong links and whatever you want to say.

I'm Saima and I am a care-experienced young person. I've used lifelong links that the service and I actually really enjoyed my lifelong link support.

Thank you so much, Saima. That's really appreciate that. Now what I was going to do is just start with the campaign itself. So the campaigns called build not Break campaign. Where did that idea come from?

So build not break is a campaign for family rights group for children and young people in care and care. Leavers have positive loving relationships that they can rely on into adulthood. In 2013, the care inquiry identified that the greatest failing of the care system is that too often breaks rather than build relationships for children and so family rights group has been working hard to change this. We work with parents, kinship carers, young people and other partners across England, Scotland and Wales to influence national and local policy making. Family Rights Group has an advice and advocacy service that supports families to understand the law and child welfare process. Is when social workers or courts are making decisions about their children, and in 2017 we developed lifelong links to help local authorities directly support children and young people with establishing, developing and maintaining links with people that they care about. We hope that one day life long links won't be needed because relationships are not broken at that point, but we clearly are not there yet.

Thank you, Andrew. So it's it's come from a really clear identified need. That this is work that needs to take place to support young people, and I just wonder whether you could share some of the challenges or the OR any insights you have in some of the challenges that children in care or those leading care face, particularly regarding their support networks. Is there anything any of you might want to share?

Yeah, I'm happy to start, but Saima and Sandra, please jump in. Most of us have somebody that we can turn to for practical or emotional support, family, friends, neighbours, but this is. For not the case for children in care and those leaving care, those important relationships have been broken at the point of entering the care system, and I've heard poet Lemn Sissay talk about when he left care as, as he says, when when care left him, he realised the gravity of his situation by who wasn't there? He had no one to call, no one to celebrate or commiserate with. No one to give him a hug. No, it's not every child's care experience, but I've seen how young people are still left isolated and. Alone and at at that point, and even when they're kept busy and seemingly doing well, there still is an element of being lonely and and missing people that they care about.

I think I do relate to that in that sense that when I was in care, I think the challenges I faced a lot were the social workers because it was really hard getting that relationship from with my family because the social workers weren't as keen in building that relationship before us and helping us instead, it felt like. They were breaking. It, which was really difficult because in the long run we became so lonely and we had so much. Time like it. Was so weird. Because we and and it was instead, despite having each other, we felt we felt like we had so much time. We didn't know what to do with that time because we didn't have that much time. Like we've always had our family surrounding us and to be in the care system, we realise, like how much more lonely you are. You only have like selected few people that you can see and it is mainly

the social worker that allows you to see that gives you that permission to see your family. But initially it was really hard for me to actually see my family because we had so many restrictions along the way as well, which made it really, really difficult. That's where like lifelong link. Really helped because. They were supporting us in actually building and strengthening our relationships with our family and actually giving us a choice in who we wanted to see and like, actually allowing us to have our voices heard. Which social service doesn't really allow. I would agree.

And from the social work perspective, there are a number of issues why those links are broken. I don't think it necessarily intentionally, but I think that social workers, you know, have a set way of. Kind of looking at. Things we're thinking about safety and keeping children safe, but what we're not looking at is how things change along the way. And you know, there's no reason why we can't keep on developing relationships. And that's where the lateral links has come in. And I think it's been very supportive for a lot of young people who, you know. I've lost those links. They remembered being with family, having cousins, having friends, having neighbours, going to different schools and stuff like that. But nobody's gone back to look at. It and lifelong links has really helped a lot of people to kind of just, you know, make those things again and look at them and look at how safe they are and you know, reasons why, maybe it should happen or maybe shouldn't happen because there's a lot of different ways that it can happen. It doesn't have to be direct contact. It could be, you know. Over the phone, it could be a a video. Call. It could be a number of different things.

Yeah, that, that's one thing that I really, really liked about lifelong, like cause one. They actually challenged the social workers because we had in terms of actually challenging social workers. It was only me and my little sister. And I feel like a lost cause because we would a question and ask, but they wouldn't really respond because they. Ultimately looked at us as children, we felt. Unworthy because of the fact. That we didn't get a. Response. Yeah. No, I do agree with that because we've lifelong link. It really taught me that there's different forms of communication and like, and it really empowered us in that way because we got to choose how we wanted to communicate how we wanted. To have contact with our family. But yeah, it really strengthened my relationship with certain family that I haven't got in contact with that. For example, with my dad, I haven't had contact with him for a good few years. I think the last time I had contact with him was when I was five years old and I was 17 when. I tried to get back into contact with him, but I didn't feel comfortable getting in contact with him because I felt like I was initially meeting a stranger at first. But with lifelong links, we were able to get a supportive way into like making it a safe environment and making it into a comfortable environment for us. So it started off with like messages and calls and things like that, which really helped.

I've just got to say this, you know, just thank you so much, Saima, for talking to us about that. It's so powerful and important for us to hear this. So I just want to say I really appreciate or we really appreciate you sharing that we can really already hear the value of lifelong links and the importance of this campaign coming through from this discussion.

And I just wanted to go into. what are the long term effects of sort of separation from family members or networks on children? You know what what is that impact? Because we know that there is 37% children in care, have siblings separate from them. According to the Children's commissioner. So that's that's a significant number. So what? What is the impact on children? And that happened.

I would say it was. It was. A really bad impact. On me and my sister because we hadn't seen, for example, my little brother, he was. And spent into care before me and my sister had there was a good two years before I got to see him and it felt really strange cause like we were used to living together and then all of a sudden like our family was ripped apart. We were. It was just so strange because it's like 1 morning. You wake up and you're like, where what's going on? Like you don't know what's happening. And you feel lost, but that really strange because everything, everyone was everywhere. And not having that contact, it makes you drift apart because your relationship isn't isn't as strong as before, because you've always you've lived together, you've always known what to talk about and you know, but. But now had, like, separated from my brother. You just see how much they grow. You see every little difference. And it feels like you. They're losing out on milestones like birthdays and like any celebrations we have going on because you can't really do them. The same, especially because he moved really, really far from from us, like we had to drive a good couple of hours to be. Able to see him. But it was really hard because we our relationship wasn't the same as before and it was really hard accepting that as well because you you notice, like how it's not the same. For example, for me, I didn't really want contact with my mum. That has been a good few years. However, I did want contact with my older sibling. To actually carry on, but it was hard because we I felt that it was really upsetting as well because we actually missed a lot of like milestones. We missed a lot of like birthdays as well and actually seeing how much our family has changed was really difficult. And also it actually makes me really lonely because you. Yeah. My sister had become really close, which was a positive, but at the same time, it made us really upset because we couldn't really do much. And emotionally it wasn't really great because we were really struggling to accept that one we were in. Care, too, that we don't get to see our family as often. And yeah, it made us realise how much we were missing out on as well.

Yeah, like I guess, I guess as I was saying, I mean it kind of makes you feel different, you know, makes you maybe to other children who are who do have those links and we're looking after children in terms of like social services and social workers. So we should be trying to encourage

that we should be trying to get something as close. As we can to family life, whatever that family life was like with for, for that particular child or young person.

And lifelong links for me, from what I've seen, and I know a bit about Saima, and it helps with that because breaking the links is just not helpful for everybody's identity, emotional hell for some I know it's not for Saima because Saima is very bright, intelligent and and young person. Thank you. I wouldn't say young person, young woman. She's, you know, she's grown. Now. She's done extremely well, but there are there are a lot of young people who don't do so well. You know, me, their education and the way they feel, feel about themselves and they just don't have those connections that look like them. Sound like them or, you know, culturally it could be very different in terms of their. Experiences and as Saima has so rightly said, the distance that you have to travel to see a member of your family and your brother or sister also impacts on you emotionally. Imagine the journey you know, and what you might be thinking and how, how that can build up the anxiety. Of you know. Ohh I haven't seen seen him in in, you know, three years. You know I I how old is he again? What does he look like? OK, I may have had a photo and it could, you know make make an individual feel so scared. Really.

You just made me realise the culture is a big thing as well because like I was, I've obviously been Gordy. And my car was Pakistani and it was a huge like culture clash because the cultures are quite similar, but at the same time it was still very different cause our languages are very different and my little and stuff that I should have been going anymore. Things like, yeah, she's she felt so like lost in that time because she started, she's actually forgotten. Have to speak Bengali. And completely. And because over time, like she didn't really have anyone to speak to go anywhere then I didn't. Really. Because we're sisters. We we naturally just spoke English as it is anyway. But yeah, I really agree with that because it was a huge culture clash for us as well, because we're like, oh, well, like we didn't realise how different household runs as well. And things like that.

Thank you so much, Saima. And so it's it's really powerful hearing these accounts and those experiences and just how all sorts of changes from you know. Your own change in circumstance and your own journey can have an impact on your life in so many different ways, and I just wanted to look into sort of lifelong links, particularly cause, and that all children need those positive relationships. So how does lifelong links help support this?

One of the top requests that we get with lifelong links is to reconnect or find out some information. About brothers and sisters and and and family members and and like, you know, people that were living together at the time, as as Saima described there. And so life from its coordinators work really hard to with, with families, with adoption agencies, where brothers and sisters have have have been adopted across local authority, boundary, even, even international. Boundaries to try and reconnect them and find out information about them, and

even find out about family members, including brothers and sisters, that they never knew they never knew they had. Outside of that we we know that when when children and young people are in care, it's it's really hard for them as as you've both described. To see parents, to see brothers and sisters, and then the further you get away from that nuclear family, grandparents, cousins, friends, neighbours. It can be like nearly impossible for them to to get through the bureaucracy of, of local authority, to have a relationship and thinking about my my own children, who are 7 and 10. You know, they've got lots of people in their life that they call aunt. And uncle, that are just our friends, you know, blood relation. And if my children came into care, those would be the relationships, the important relationships, that that would be lost as well. So lifelong links really looks at all potential loving, caring relationships that young people find important to them. It's it's young person led. And so we'll we'll work extensively with young people. That to map out like their own private detective. In a way that we can map out all of the people that they think might be important to them and with them select AA few or a lot or just one person to reach out to, to see if that person has room in their lives to build a relationship and and become. A lifelong link.

Thank you, Andrew. Is, is there anything from Sandra or Saima around our life links help?

I would say the fact that it made me realise that who we have as family cause, not only did we have like my family, we also had, like our teachers, that we wanted to go back to and. We come into our lives as well, which was really nice because we didn't realise that we can also have the most family as well, and they're really supportive. They're really, you know, welcoming and kind. My little sister teacher had, like, taken us out. He will check up on us, he'll message us and it's just another role and. That that another adult role that we have in our life to make sure that we're OK and you know, just to check up on us, which is really nice because. When you're in care, you realise how small your family is, especially when you're out. When you're a care leaver as well. I realise how small it gets as well because you really start realising like who your family is in that way a life long link has really taught me like family isn't always blood. We can always have other people as family as well.

Yeah. No, I totally agree. Because it's whoever is significant to that child or young person, it's whoever is significant. It doesn't matter whether it's the school, whether it was a neighbour, it's whoever is important to that, to that person. What I will say is that sometimes I think a lot of things get lost when children don't go into care, which I think I mean, that's all-purpose of life and rights, recognising that we need to build that out and so many things get missed like just simple things, you know, someone to tell you who is who in your family. Whenever you want to have that link or. What it may be just saying, OK, well, this is your auntie. Whoever this is your uncle and they have these children and you know, these are their names. These are their ages. So that they know. So they've got an an awareness of that. And so, you know, if life long sitting

involved we can. Explore. That we can explore what's important to that child and and we can talk to their families. Let's not forget about the families because families also and parents and children, aunties, uncles, they all have their own stories and they may have felt a certain way. So it gives them the opportunity to actually. Talk and and and talk about, talk about their feelings around that, which will help the life of the links coordinator assessing the same way is it's gonna be good for the child or young person. Is it going to be good for them and then talk to the child or young person about that.

Sandra, I wanted to come in on that sort of point about being a lifelong links coordinator and also your role as a life story facilitator and sort of doing that work with children and families around life stories and how those. Goals sort of potentially complement each other. I just wondered if you could sort of talk about how how that works in practise.

Well, in, in terms of life story, the whole idea, I mean, all social workers, should be doing life story work with children and young people. And I mean that's that's not. I mean I'm not saying it's an issue with the. Just an issue with our that I work with. It's a national issue. You it's a national issue that maybe they don't have the time to do the quality work that is necessary in terms of helping the care experienced person to understand. No go on a journey and think about things. I think with life story work you're able to kind of you may be able to map out things but it really depends on who's doing it. What time you've got to actually do it and the benefits of life long links is that they're not seen as a threat, a life long links called and they and they not be seen as a threat to an auntie, uncle, parent, mother, father. But whoever and the siblings, it may be, they're seen as some somebody positive trying to do something positive. A social worker may be seen as somebody who's you know they've done bad to them in some way. They took their child or children away or the child in their family away. And so I think by having a life long it's coordinator. That helps to squash that kind of idea, and it helps us to be able to. Get a bit more info. Nation. Because like I said, everybody has a different story. And when we think about life story work, a lot may be taken out of what is written in a file. The case notes that may not be correct, and that's just one perspective. Whereas with life and it's coordinator, they can sit, they can listen. And they can, you know, get a bit more information which will tell you about that individual's experience and and and their story. And then the two can actually meet somewhere so I can actually use information from and work together with a life long weeks coordinator and their allocated social worker. And I could put that information in a life story book. Or I would say a lifelong lynx walk, because at the end of the work. We can put together a book. Life long links can put together a book with all the information and the stories. That have been. Have it along the way, so I think it's they complement each other in a very positive way.

I was just gonna identify that as with a family group conference coordinator, the lifelong links coordinator is independent from all decision making for a child or their families, so that independent and neutral position really gives the coordinator. That ability, as Sandra has just said, to engage with the family, to build relationships, to work in a restorative way, to heal those relationships that during the adversarial court process, might have been damaged between families and local authorities. So it's a very unique position. It's a very privileged position to be in, to act. As that restorative practitioner in that way, and certainly with with life story work, you know, certainly on my, my own personal experience is that life story work isn't done nearly as much as it should be, putting it mildly. And when it is done, there are varying degrees of what that looks like. Not everyone's lucky enough to have a Sandra come along to, to work with them, but where they. Kind of differ a little bit is that. Lifelong links will seek to look for family members or network members, as Sandra said, and and Saima said. Different different people, such could be teachers, former foster carers, family blood relatives, friends, school friends that can be in their life for the foreseeable future no matter what. And it it really is the no matter what that we're looking for. So that not just the child that's in front of us, but the 20 year old version of that child, the 30 year old version who's starting their own families and having their own life problem. Teams have people that they can lean on at different times and as are all of our families, really ebb and flow. You know, people in and out of our life. We just want to make sure that we're not missing anyone so that this really arguably the most supported a, a child's ever gonna be in their life whilst they're in care we can use all of these resources to help try and find a network that can support that. Child Post 18 Post 20 and we know. We know that children and young people will do this anyway. They will. They will look for family, they will go back to family. So we're we're doing lifelong means in a very safe and supported way to try and find people that have got that room in their lives to become a life long link for a for a child.

Thank you, Angie and Sandra. This really helpful helpful to sort of shape how lifelong links works for listeners in terms of the where lifelong links currently is. It says only sense available in 32 local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales. Can you share a bit more about the implementation and the scale of its impact so far?

Yeah, absolutely. So we have essentially a little bit more than that. I'm pleased to say. So we're we're life long links is being offered in over 40 local authorities across England, Scotland and Wales and and currently 2800 children and young people have benefited from lifelong links and also you know there might be 2800 slightly different versions of lifelong links because it's tailored to each. Individual young person that's in front. Person on average, when a young person starts life long links, they will have an average of seven connections in their life, and when they. And do the work of life long links that will increase to on average 26 connections. So over the years since 2017, we've pretty much filled a football stadium full of people in children's

lives that weren't there before cheering them on in different ways and has been said earlier, you know, it could be sending a birthday card, it could be visits, it could be. Spending time with them, it could be helping them out practically. There are a range of different ways that that people can. Be lifelong links and over the next few years we hope to increase the number of children's services offering lifelong links. We are always, always looking for other ways in which this model can be adapted to support other children and young people, so we're we're currently doing a piece of work with children that are already adopted and to look at what life long weeks might look like for those young people. With young people in residential children's homes. As well, and young people in prisons, so thinking about that, those individual circumstances and how lifelong links can help.

As I just said something and yeah, I mean just as I mean totally agree with everything that Andrew has said. But one of the really important things like if it's a key experience young person just thinking about who they're living with currently living with and the importance of being unable to.

Please.

Help them to understand, like if it's a foster carer, if it's a special guardian, whoever it is working together with them and working together with them in a way that they understand and they actually embrace the idea of extending that child or young person's networks. For the future, yeah, for the current time and the future. Because if we if a foster carer or a whoever, whoever the permanent or the person who's looking after the child is if they're not on side, it's just a very difficult it will be a very difficult process and I think a lot of foster carers may worry about it destabilising the child in their home. I just wanted to say how important it is and with life long reach, she worked to give with everyone and the person who's looking after the child is just as important. Well, is very important.

To.

You know, be there for the child at all the times we're not there 24/7.

I think that's a really, really good point and that, you know we we through through the practise tools we're we're using such as genogram something called mobility mapping and our recently developed practise tool called circles just promoting the fact that it's OK to have different families or foster family and adoptive family, a birth family. So all of these families. That are coming together and and we we bring people together at the end of life long links ideally in a family group conference where people can get together can share stories, share pictures. They can make plans for the future. So that this isn't just a nice day out, they had once, but it means something. It's embedded thoroughly in in care plans and and pathway plans so that it can continue to to evolve and grow with that young person over time. And we we have had a lot of

foster carers become lifelong Lynx, former foster carers. We've had teachers. You name it there. There are no limits to what a lifelong link can look like as long as that person is committing to the child or young person, they they can be a. From link.

Thank you. And that that's what leads me into the to the next question, which is just any sort of specific success stories where children, young people would benefit from lifelong links. Is there any sort of either personal or professional examples that you can think of where life long links has really made that positive difference and really made a significant impact on? On a child. Every person.

I mean every, every single piece of lifelong links work that I have encountered since it started has been of benefit in in, in some small way or some huge large way. And you never know. Really, the the profound impacts that are going to happen because of the the work that that you're doing, that one relationship that is going to evolve into something really important that didn't exist before, that, that group of people that are going to support that child during lockdown. Over the pandemic that weren't in their life before. The people that can help get them work experience or a job and get started out or help them move house. You know, I think there are, it's always the unknown and and people are often a bit worried about the unknown in social work we like everything measured out and and planned and risk assessed and the unknown is a little bit scary. But what we do with lifelong links is just start everything with the planning meeting. To to try and allay those fears a little bit and and become aligned to the fact that again the young person is going to do this. Anyway, and so how can we support them to explore their family and networks in in a safe way? How can we help support them to understand difficult information about people in their network that could pose a danger to them in the future and present that information in an age appropriate way? And I think. All, all of these benefits can help, and even as as a lifelong links coordinator, you know myself. And it wasn't quite the desired outcome that I I was hoping for. It was absolutely everything to the young person because they got the answers that they needed at that time to move on to the next part in their life. But I'd, I'd throw it open to to Saima and and Sandra's as well.

I would say made such a huge impact in my life, because now that I'm. A care leaver. You really realise that it truly, really, really made me realise that you need the family that you have. Because as you're moving on and you know, you start to become more independent, it does become difficult and lonely. So to have that family, it makes you stronger and it makes your relationship with people in your life more stronger. And it really does teach you, like, how to be like a better person, in my opinion. Like it really helped me grow as well, and especially when things were becoming difficult, like accepting that. You know, even me accepting that I was gonna, I was going to be 18, was really difficult for me because it's a huge life change for me because I wasn't going to be a child anymore. And that I'm living in a whole city independent,

which was really difficult for me to like accept as well like and time felt really fast and like having my family there and support me really helped me become stronger. And not only that, but it helped me emotionally be stronger as well because and it made me happier so much happier because it made me realise my own strength and not even that. But when it came to doing my like education or anything that was good for me. It was really helpful. Because I was like, clear headed, I was like more. Especially with the changes that you go through, once you turn 18, because there's not a social worker looking out for you anymore, you want someone's priority anymore. Like you don't have the same support system and support network. But when you're 18, that everything changes and it's really hard. But initially I feel like your family are the only ones there for you. In the end, because your PA isn't as like supportive and she isn't there as much as a social worker. It is, but even I do. I really do enjoy my PA and like having her there, but it's still very different. Like, who would you go to when you have that extra time, like your foster care isn't there anymore? Like you, you do live by yourself. So you. It's that having that free time as well. So it really helps you emotionally. And really grow and actually become stronger. Well, but yet again it's another way as well to actually get support in other things, cause my little sister, now that she's doing work experience as well, she she had her teacher come into her and sorry, helping her with work experience and has offered to help help her and things like that. It's just. And I realise as well it's a novel way of networking because you realise you have more support. And you know, and like they help you in ways. That you can't imagine. But yeah, it really helped me. It really did.

Yeah. And I think some of the experiences, I mean, if I was to go years back into social work, cause I've been doing social work for quite some time and you know, a lot of young people would, you know, 18, they'd be that cut off. It's not that social workers, teachers or anybody didn't want to stay in contact. I think it's that. They didn't feel safe to do it in the local authority, maybe would be said. I mean, you know you're doing something wrong and there are there are instances where it isn't safe, but I think what lifelong X has done was something I've always wanted. I've wanted to be able to say, yeah, I'm still a part of that young person's life. I'm still a part of their life. I've watched them grow up. I've watched. Them have their own children. And become grandparents. Yeah, I'm still part of their life. I couldn't really do that and feel comfortable that I was doing that. And you're just gonna say, as a social worker and maybe as a teacher, and you may not feel comfortable doing it, but lifelong links has is doing it in a way where you can say, yeah, I can actually do that. I can actually. Get the permission to do this because that's what feels natural. It doesn't feel natural to. For me, as a social worker to, you know, just cut off links with somebody because it's part of my job. Yeah, I know you can't do it with all young people, but lifelong links and you to explore that and explore what kind of link you want. So whether it's e-mail contact, whether it's, you know, it doesn't matter whether

how little or How much it is lifelong links makes it a Safeway. And the and the young, the young person is the person who says what they want and what they feel comfortable with.

That's really powerful, Sandra. Thank you. But a couple more questions now, just coming in. So this is probably more for you, Andrew, are there any more plans to expand life links to more local authorities and how can people find out more about life on links itself?

Yes, is the. Sir, we're always looking to expand lifelong links, the lifelong links network to the UK and and perhaps even abroad. It's a very strong and supportive network full of people and local authorities that that deeply care about making life better for children and young people. As I mentioned earlier, looking at different ways to. Use the lifelong links model to support different young people and children across the country. And if you are in a local authority and haven't got lifelong links, you can visit our website, which is www.frg.org.uk. We're on our website, there's lots of videos from young people like. Emma just who are talking about their their lived experiences of, of lifelong links and what that was like from from different perspectives. And there's foster care perspectives on there as well. So lots of plans.

Thank you. But just is there anything for each of you that you think listeners can do that could support children in care and care leaders in their communities? And I'll put as an open question, who wants to go first?

I'll. I'll jump in there, James. So you could you could find out more from the family rights group perspective by by visiting our website and signing up to the build not break campaign. It's if you click on the lifelong links tab, it will be easy to find it. We would also encourage people to have conversations in their own local authority. And about setting up a service, we also have a councillors network that councillors, in particular those with responsibility for children and families, can join to learn more about life. Links and family rights groups, advice and advocacy services and and the work that we're doing around kinship care and many other areas of note. So there's there's plenty you can do.

I was just going to add to what Andrew said and said, yeah, you know anybody can be involved and they need to talk to what they need to know, who to talk to in order to find that information. But as Andrew said, you could go through the family rights group. But if a local authority doesn't. Have lifelong links. I think that if you were a neighbour, a teacher and you were worried that, you know, they're leaving school and you still want me to be in contact, you can have that conversation with the local authority and see if they do have lifelong links. Because I think people don't necessarily know that there is life long links in a in a particular. Local authority, if they don't know what lifelong lynx is, even though it does say it in in the title life long links.

I would want people to actually learn what life learn link is and actually educate. I'm asked a lot of questions because I don't really understand what life long link was. I didn't really want to be open about it, especially with the way that my social worker had come about it. So and it's the same with. My career because. She wasn't really aware of it, so she. Would just say like. I've just been told you need to do this so she was kind of forcing it on me too. But yeah, I would just say to actually. And like educate people, what lifelong links is and how it can be another way of actually gaining family and not all? Also that, but actually you can even have your lifelong link worker as a support person as well, because I'm still in contact with my lifelong link worker. And yeah, I would say for people to be more open about it and things like that. So it could be really helpful.

Thank you so much, Saima. That is sort of the the the main right group of questions. And I just want to say thank you all of you for joining. I just want to go around to each of you and just say, do you have any final thoughts or messages for our members of people listening? I'll start with you, Andrew.

Think that if lifelong links is something that you do want to find out more about, family rights group is very happy to have a conversation with you about that. It's worth saying that lifelong links isn't just a A1 service operation, it's a whole local authority approach to system change. So as I said earlier, we hope that one day lifelong links isn't needed and that's by getting the infrastructure right and by involving directors, lead Council members, a range of different services within the local authority to bring about this change and actually implement some real. Long term strategy for supporting children and young people from the from the point of being at the edge of care all the way through. To through through their care journey and through leaving care as well. So there's a lot of conversation to have, so please do have it with us and visit our website. Contact us. We would love to have that conversation with you.

OK, Sandra, final thoughts.

Yeah. I I I just think that as Saima Says we we we kind of need to I think everybody needs to be educated in some way about life long links and to know that you know it's possible that you can remain in a child or young person's life. For and for life, and there were different ways of doing it. I think that lifelong links is something that, like I said before, people may not know about, just need to help educate people more about it and local authorities. But most importantly, as Andrew said, it's about assistant change. It's about a mindset change. Because we the mindset may not be that, you know, it's gonna be beneficial and it is.

Thank you, Sandra. Saima, I'm going to come to you with final thought. Is there anything you want to share or send a message to people listening?

I would say that like like for me as a carnival lifelong link has actually been one of the best thing that's ever happened to me. Even being in care. To be fair, I realised like it was the only support system that I really had, even though I had a social worker, I had more relationship with my. Knife, long link worker and it was one of the best decisions I've made, so I'd want people to actually see and try how it feels to have a life long blink worker and actually give it a chance. Because when when you're not that educated about it, you tend to like, push it to the side and not want to do it. So it could be one of the best things that's happened to. You if you tried, but yeah, that's the one thing I would say is that I'm really happy that I did try that actually. Do last long link.

Thank you so much, Saima. I'm going to thank you all for joining me today. But Saima, particularly just your input today just being incredible and powerful and thought provoking, I know that people listening will hear what you've had to say and it will make them think more about life long links, those relate. Ships and how important they should be, cherished, nourished, and and supported for children. Caring care leaders. So I just want to say thank you so much, Saima in particular, but thank you Andrew and Sandra too. We will share. This podcast, and I think this will provide lots of helpful information and guidance for our Members because I know there's lots of think about. So thank you.

Thank you for the invitation.

Yeah. Thanks.

Thank you, James.