

REUNIFICATION PRACTICE GUIDE

WEBINAR Q&A

Thank you for joining us for the Reunification Practice Guide webinar.

We hope you found it helpful for your work. Here is a summary of the questions from both of our webinars (28 and 29 September 2026) and Foundations' responses.

	Question	Foundations' response
1	How does the guide align with the National Framework for Children's Social Care?	The National Framework sets out the outcomes, and the Reunification Practice Guide sets out the best available evidence on how to improve reunification practice. Throughout the guide, we've highlighted which outcomes from the National Framework are supported by the evidence and recommendations, so leaders can see how implementing the guide can help deliver the Framework's ambitions in practice.
2	In Jess's blog , was the social worker a new social worker to the family or was it a worker who has been working with the family for a while?	'Jess' explained that this social worker was based in a specific reunification team. The social worker worked with her closely and built a relationship. In her blog, you can read more about her experience: "Everyone was on my side" – What a parent going through reunification really needs.
3	For local authorities that don't currently have a formal reunification offer, what are the key actions they should prioritise first? In addition to the question above, another participant asked: Do you have any examples/case studies where local authorities embed the Reunification Practice Guide into their existing permanence and care-planning processes?	A helpful first step is to understand your local picture, including how many children are returning home from care, the outcomes being achieved, and what support is currently available before, during and after reunification. The guide encourages leaders to review existing arrangements against the evidence and recommendations, identifying both strengths and gaps in current practice. The accompanying reflective tool and audit tool can support this process by helping local areas assess how well their current approach aligns with the evidence and identify priorities for improvement.
4	More of a comment , but involving schools in supporting reunification is vital and helping school understand the process and the increased support that may be needed. This might fit in part within key principle 5 around training: schools may need some training around how reunification	We agree! Multi-agency coordination is presented as essential for successful reunification, ensuring that all professionals involved in a child's life share information, responsibilities, and continuous assessment during the return-home process. This approach strengthens planning, reduces risks of breakdown, and supports families in maintaining stability after reunification.



	Question	Foundations' response
	works and what their role in the process is. Virtual School would be a good link here to support.	
5	I'm new to the Practice Guide, but familiar with the NSPCC's reunification framework. Are their significant points of difference in principles? Another attendee asked: As a local authority we use and apply the NSPCC reunification guidance tools and risk assessment process. Are you recommending these alongside Foundations' toolkit for review assessment and planning?	There is alignment between the underlying messages, however the main difference is that the Practice Guide is underpinned by a comprehensive mixed-methods systematic review of the available evidence on reunification, alongside primary research with children, families, and practitioners. The guide then translates that evidence into actionable recommendations for leaders and practitioners and links these to the outcomes in the Children's Social Care National Framework, helping local areas understand how strengthening reunification practice can contribute to those wider outcomes. In the primary research, UK-based practitioners also reported using structured frameworks such as the NSPCC's Reunification Practice Framework, adapted parenting programme content and FDAC where substance use is central. Parents and young people put less weight on named programmes and more on continuity of worker, therapeutic support and help with housing and finances.
6	Has there been any feedback from the judiciary about the tools and Practice Guide? Our experience of discharging a care order has been mixed. Do other local authorities have any challenge in court with risk adverse judges?	We are keen to continue engaging with partners across the system, including the judiciary, to support thinking about reunification more broadly. We've also heard about work being undertaken by CAFCASS in relation to reunification, and we see this as a really positive opportunity to develop greater shared understanding across the system. More broadly, our discussions with practice experts during the development of the Guide highlighted that supporting reunification requires a wider culture shift. For many years, children's social care systems have understandably focused on achieving permanence for children, and reunification and the support that is needed are not considered.
7	Given the emphasis on providing high-quality support during and after reunification, will children who return home typically be supported under a Child in Need plan (Section 17) to ensure they can access the necessary services and interventions to promote a successful reunification?	The Reunification Practice Guide sets out the evidence that children and families benefit from high-quality support before, during, and after reunification, but it does not prescribe a particular legal framework or plan for all children. The evidence indicates that support should be tailored to the child and family's assessed needs and should continue for as long as required to promote stability and prevent reunification breakdown.



	Question	Foundations' response
8	When talking about 'strong training' for the workforce, what training do you consider this needs to include?	Evidence showed us that practitioners need induction, ongoing training, specialist advice, reflective supervision, and opportunities to develop skills to support reunification. Training should use current evidence and translate it into everyday decisions, communication, and planning.
9	You mentioned children who are adopted are included in the Reunification Practice Guide - can you share whether adopters were part of the expert group / expert by experience and contributed to the Guide?	Although the Guide's definition of 'parents' includes adoptive parents, neither the underpinning review nor the Guide reports that adopters took part as research participants, advisory group members or experts by experience. The inclusion is definitional only: the parent sample (n=6) did not record adoptive status, and none of the included studies involved adoptive families.
10	If there's one message from the evidence that you would want local leaders to take away from this guide, what would it be?	There are so many important messages from the evidence, but one of the big stand-out ones is the evidence about support for parents after a child goes into care. This will require senior leaders to promote work across different teams and agencies to provide different routes to support for parents.
11	Do some local authorities have specific reunification teams/workers?	Yes, that is a model some areas are using. The evidence didn't tell us whether this was more effective or not, however the evidence does highlight the benefits of having a specific reunification policy. This is key principle 2. There is a breadth of different practice happening in relation to reunification and we also know this sits in different services across the country. We know that there are some teams in some local authorities and also individual workers. We have learnt this sits in early help/family hubs/edge of care or children in care teams. Other participants also responded: "Yes, in Hertfordshire, our Building Bridges reunification service has a range of different Multi agency practitioners to meet the needs of both parents and children." "Newcastle have a reunification team."
12	How are families identified for potential reunifications, and at what stage in the young person's journey in care? What about the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer in the decision making?	The Practice Guide encourages practitioners to think about reunification regularly for children in care, and the steps needed for that to be a safe option, where it is in the best interests of the child. Independent Reviewing Officers have a critical role in ensuring that reunification is actively considered as part of care planning, where it is safe to do so. This includes providing independent challenge where reunification has not been explored, ensuring plans are based on evidence rather than assumption or drift, and monitoring



	Question	Foundations' response
		whether appropriate support is in place before and after a child's return home. We have also covered some of this in the presentation: it is really important to understand your local data and what are the views of children and young people, using the evidence pie and the reflective tool to support you to understanding the start position. From an attendee: "We have a reunification panel in Newcastle where social workers can bring their cases, and we discuss and plan with them. The Independent Reviewing Officer role is usually discussed within CIC reviews."
13	Is there any further reunification training you can recommend?	The reunification Practice Guide sets out that achieving safe and sustainable reunification requires an equipped and supported workforce. It highlights the importance of practitioners having the knowledge, skills supervision and organisational support needed to undertake effective assessments, planning, relationship based practice and ongoing support for children and families throughout the reunification journey. It does not recommend specific training programmes, but encourages local areas to consider how they use the practice guide and accompanying tools to support workforce development and build confidence.
14	Will there be any more of these reunification webinars?	Yes, we are working with Research in Practice and will be holding a joint webinar on 10 November. More details are here: Reunification: Evidence, Practice & Lived Experience We are also very happy to speak to local authorities about the practice guide in more detail. If you are holding any regional events, you like us to come to please email us at practice_guides@foundations.org.uk to discuss further.
15	Would we be able to share any further information around the work Derbyshire have carried out, or any other local authorities who have a model which is successfully working?	We know there is a real mix across local authorities in terms of where they are on their reunification journey. Some areas have well-established reunification policies, pathways, and support offers, while others are only now beginning to develop a more formal approach.
16	Do you have any examples of reunification policies? And have you seen local authorities translate this into something accessible for families?	One of the key messages from the Reunification Practice Guide is the importance of children and families being actively involved in assessment, planning and decision-making, rather than reunification being something that is 'done to' them. This suggests there is real value in translating local policies, pathways, and expectations into formats that are accessible and meaningful for families.



	Question	Foundations' response
17	Where would a robust assessment to inform decision making about reunification fit into the key principles?	The Guide emphasises that decisions about reunification, planning, support, and risk management should all be informed by a thorough assessment of the child's and family's strengths, needs, risks, and support networks. Assessment is therefore not a one-off activity but a core part of the whole reunification process.
18	We use systemic trained practitioners to support families to avoid further family relationship breakdowns, we use similar strengths-based approach for reunification with our intense support team (targeted family help). We evidence this through relational data (family complete forms) at start, middle and end. What else can we add to this?	We have an Evidence Pie that will be shared with the resources following on from the webinar. This sets out different types of evidence that can be used to inform decision-making, and can include professional knowledge and expertise, population data, organisational data, lived experience, and wider scientific research and evaluation of interventions. The evidence Pie can therefore be a useful tool for identifying areas of strength and considering whether there are additional factors that could be incorporated into assessment, planning, support, or evaluation.
19	Can you please provide some examples of 'evidence-based interventions' which might support reunification? Another participant asked: What specific interventions are being used to work with families around reunification?	In the primary research, UK-based professionals most often described Family Group Conferences, Multisystemic Therapy, Functional Family Therapy, and Life Story Work as helping reunification. Practitioners also reported using structured frameworks such as the NSPCC's Reunification Practice Framework, adapted parenting programme content and FDAC where substance use is central. Parents and young people put less weight on named programmes and more on continuity of worker, therapeutic support, and help with housing and finances. We would recommend having a look at key principle 2 and recommendation 2 in the full Practice Guide. You can also have a look at this page which summaries the evidence from the systematic review.
20	This question was addressed to the practitioner who co-hosted our webinar. At what stage do you first look at family networks? How often do you review their plan?	This question was answered by the practitioner who co-hosted this webinar. We involve them as early as the assessment and then we have regular Family Solutions Meetings. We hold our support planning meetings every 4–6 weeks (this can be more frequent if needed) in which wider family members are also invited to.