

REPORT TO THE CITY OF LONDON SOLICITORS COMPANY

How grant funding in 2025-26 supported Family Rights Group's work to improve access to justice for children deprived of their liberty and their families.



Family Rights Group
Helping Families Helping Children

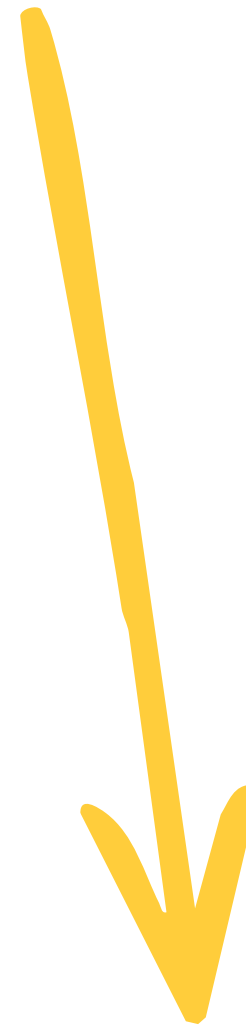
Family Rights Group is the leading specialist charity working to ensure children can live safely and thrive in their family, and children in the care system have loving relationships they can turn to throughout life.

Our vision

A society in which children can thrive in their families, and have loving relationships to turn to throughout life.

Our mission

Our mission is to ensure that the child welfare and family justice system supports children to live safely and thrive within their family, while strengthening the family and community ties of those children who cannot live at home.



Family voices

We promote families' voices, expertise and insights in all our work. We support mothers, fathers, kinship carers and care-experienced young people to be heard by policy-makers, practitioners and the public.

Innovation

We create and champion innovative family-led solutions, including family group conferences and Lifelong Links. We partner with local authorities, other agencies and academics to embed these practices.

Advice and Advocacy

We provide free, independent and confidential advice to help parents and kinship carers understand the law, child welfare processes, their rights and options.

Campaigns

We lead campaigns to achieve changes in law, policy and practice, informed by research and the perspectives of those with lived experience.

For 50 years, we have worked to shape the child welfare system to make that a reality. We are unique in bringing together legal and social work expertise with the direct voice and insights of young people and families.

THE LEGAL TEAM AT FAMILY RIGHTS GROUP:



Caroline Lynch



Frances Edwards



Jessica Johnston

- Take a pivotal role in Family Rights Group achieving its strategic goals as well as the charity's reputation as a leading authority on child welfare law, policy and practice
- Devise and pursue legal work to address a range of systemic injustices impacting children and families involved with the child welfare and family justice systems
- Work closely with social work, policy and public affairs colleagues and families
- Carry out legal work which supports:
 - Innovation and system change
 - Provides public legal education
 - Influences government and law reform.



Family Rights Group
50th Anniversary Legal Lecture



Read more about our legal team [here](#)

**WITH YOUR
FUNDING, WE
SUCCESSFULLY
PROGRESSED SIX
STRANDS OF
ACTIVITY**



1 Further disseminated Family Rights Group's briefing note on legal aid in deprivation of liberty cases

2 Influenced parliamentarians and officials about urgent reforms needed to improve access to justice for children deprived of their liberty and their families

3 Developed written parliamentary questions to scrutinise and probe government policy and data regarding access to early legal advice for children and families

4 Used social media to raise awareness about access to justice for children deprived of their liberty and their families

5 Highlighted children and families' lack of access to justice whilst attending and/or speaking at conferences and events relating to deprivation of liberty

6 Continued to review reports, judgments and Ministry of Justice data in relation to deprivation of liberty

A CLOSER LOOK AT STRAND 2...



2

Influenced parliamentarians and officials about urgent reforms needed to improve access to justice for children deprived of their liberty and their families

We briefed Peers, Members of Parliament and Government Officials on deprivation of liberty and legal aid reform as they considered amendments, and prepared for debates, in relation to the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill. We were the only voluntary sector organisation consistently bringing parliamentarians' attention to the access to justice issues impacting children deprived of their liberty and their families.



SIGNIFICANT AWARENESS RAISED WITHIN GOVERNMENT ABOUT THE LACK OF ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN DEPRIVED OF THEIR LIBERTY AND THEIR FAMILIES. AND THE REFORMS WHICH CAN ADDRESS THIS INJUSTICE.

READ OUR:

- **WRITTEN BRIEFINGS [HERE](#)**
- **SUBMISSION TO THE JUSTICE COMMITTEE'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE INQUIRY [HERE](#)**
- **OUR SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO THE HUMAN RIGHTS IN SOCIAL CARE IS NOT YET AVAILABLE ONLINE - A LINK CAN BE PROVIDED IN DUE COURSE.**

Photo above, from left to right: Sarah Sackman, Minister for Justice with the Family Rights Group team - Caroline Lynch, Legal Director Jordan Hall, Public Affairs Manager, Cathy Ashley, Chief Executive.

A CLOSER LOOK AT STRAND 3...



3

Developed written parliamentary questions to scrutinise and probe government policy and data regarding access to early legal advice for children and families

WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

We drafted a parliamentary question, tabled by Munira Wilson MP in June 2025, to probe in relation to access to legal aid for child welfare legal advice outside of court proceedings. Including where children's social services are considering making a court application to enable them to deprive a child of their liberty.

The government response in July 2025 revealed the startlingly and persistently low numbers of children and families in England & Wales who can access legal advice when critical child welfare plans and decisions are being made outside of court proceedings.

This data further supported our case for urgent legal aid reforms if children are deprived of their liberty and their families are to be able to access legal advice about their rights and options.

Legal Aid Scheme

Question for Ministry of Justice

UIN 62255, tabled on 24 June 2025

Question



Munira Wilson
Liberal Democrat
Twickenham

Commons

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many matter starts there have been for (a) legal help public law level one, (b) family help public law lower level two, (c) legal help private law level one and (d) family help private law lower level two in the last five years for which data is available.

Public Family Law

Financial Year	Fee Level 1
2020-21	1,542
2021-22	1,351
2022-23	1,110
2023-24	1,238
2024-25	1,266

Answer



Sarah Sackman
Labour
Finchley and Golders Green

Answered on

1 July 2025

STRAND 3

We drafted a further parliamentary question in August 2025, and secured data which revealed how few of those accessing advice outside of court proceedings are children.

Family Proceedings: Legal Aid Scheme

Question for Ministry of Justice

UIN 71125, tabled on 29 August 2025

Question



Munira Wilson

Liberal Democrat

Twickenham

Common

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 1 July 2025 to Question 62255 on Legal Aid, how many of the Public Family Law Legal Help Fee Level 1 matter starts were for clients who were children, in each of the five years.

Answer



Sarah Sackman

Labour

Finchley and Golders Green

Answered on

4 September 2025

The requested information can be found in the below table:

Financial Year	Public law family Level 1 - children
2020-21	36
2021-22	21
2022-23	18
2023-24	21
2024-25	27

In 2024-5, across England and Wales there were only 27 instances of a public law legal help file being opened for a child. This very low number raises serious questions about the extent to which children who are looked after in the care system - including those who are being deprived of their liberty - have access to independent legal advice when they need it.

We were able to include this data insight within our submission to the access to justice inquiry. We further highlighted the data with allies in key practitioner networks, garnering support for our legal aid reform proposals.



STRAND 3

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A CLOSER LOOK AT STRAND 4...

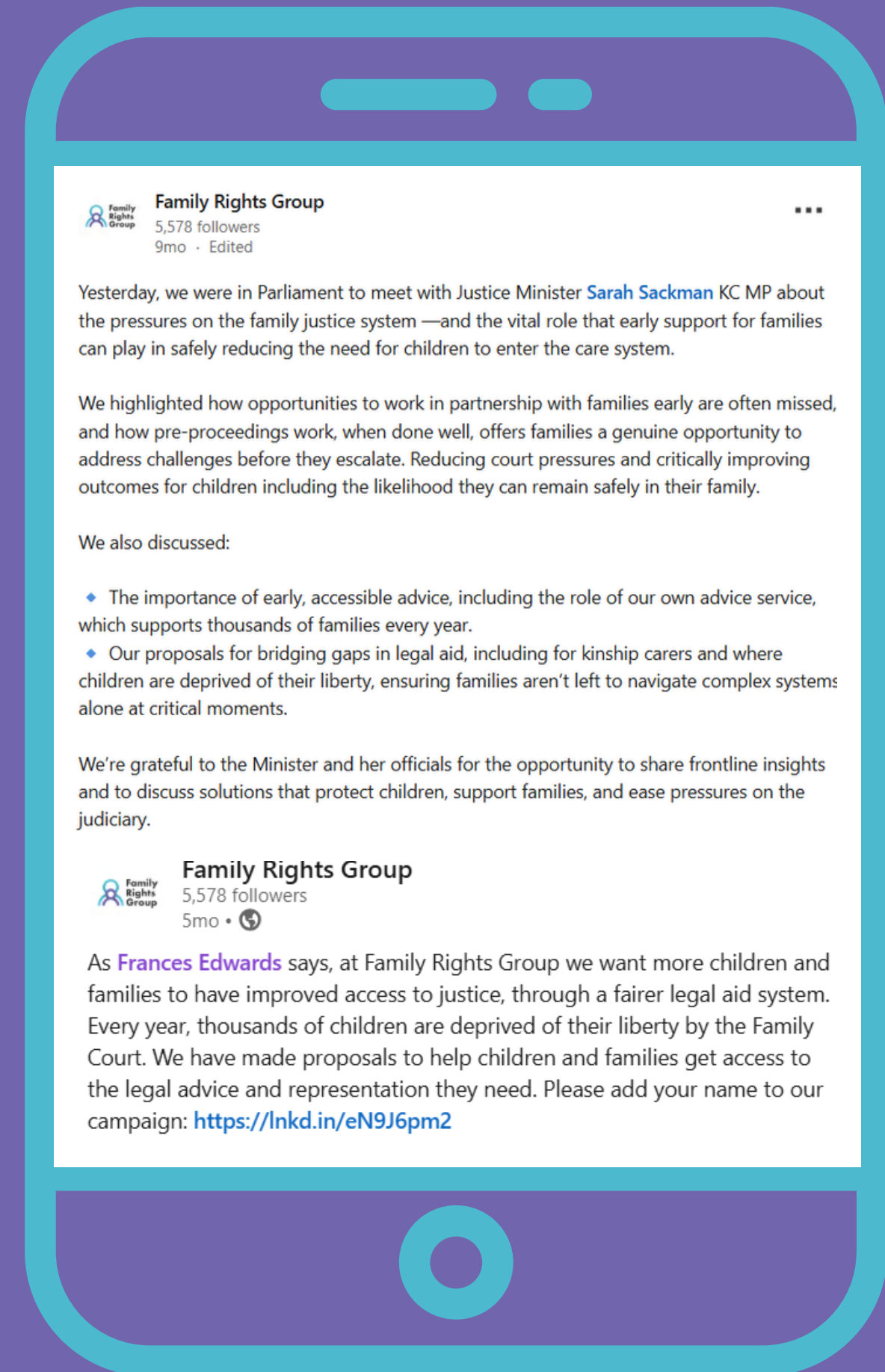


4

Used social media to raise awareness about access to justice for children deprived of their liberty and their families

SUCCESSFULLY USED SOCIAL MEDIA TO:

- Raise awareness of the lack of access to justice for children deprived of their liberty and their families
- Gather support for Family Rights Group's campaign for reform
- Disseminate our legal aid reform briefing.





In celebrating Family Rights Group's 50th anniversary, we used social media to reflect on milestones in the charity's history.



In 2025 Frances Edwards, Legal Adviser, provided case commentary on a high profile High Court decision concerning a child deprived of their liberty. And published a blog 'How will the Children's Wellbeing Bill impact children deprived of their liberty', providing vital commentary on how the Bill did not address the lack of access to justice for families of children deprived of their liberty.

This included our deprivation of liberty reform proposals

We are proud to be celebrating our 50th anniversary!

For five decades, Family Rights Group has championed the rights of children and families.

In the run-up to our anniversary legal lecture, reception and dinner next week, we are sharing four milestones in FRG history, reflecting our achievements over the past 50 years and highlighting why our work remains as important as ever.

Today's highlight: In 2023, we published the first in-depth analysis of legal aid provision for children deprived of their liberty by the Family Court and their families. We revealed a regime riddled with anomalies and injustices.

We made detailed proposals to help children and families get the access to legal advice and representation they need. And launched our widely endorsed campaign calling on Government to urgently make these reforms to the legal aid regime.

Link to more information about the campaign in the comment below.

Frances Edwards • You
Legal Advisor at the Family Rights Group
1yr • Edited •

Still digesting this important judgment from Mr Justice Keehan. An extremely tragic but sadly not unfamiliar set of circumstances for this young person, Holly. The judgment raises so many important practice issues, including how much better we need to be at listening to young people living under deprivation of liberty orders and the importance of including family members in their care planning decisions. Many of these issues were raised and discussed at [Nuffield Family Justice Observatory's](#) inspiring Back To Their Futures Summit earlier this week.

note that Holly's grandparents, who had parental responsibility, were represented for a large part of proceedings. We at [Family Rights Group](#) now this is too often the case for the parents and carers of children deprived of their liberty which is why we are campaigning for legal aid reform. You can find out more about our campaign to improve access to legal aid for the families of children deprived of their liberty and how to do it here: https://lnkd.in/e_jCt5Se. And more on the other topics in a blog post published fully soon. And finally, thank you [IGC Family Law](#) for sharing and in representing Holly.

Finally, the changes don't address the lack of access to justice for the families of these children. The details of the legal aid regime that will apply to this new form of arrangement are yet to be fully set out. The Government has indicated that it will mirror that which is available to children and families when an application for a secure accommodation order is made. But we know from evidence that more often than not, parents are unrepresented in applications to deprive their child of their liberty. Family Rights Group has [already called on the Government](#) to bring legal aid provision in line with that which is available to parents and children in care proceedings. We have also asked that parents and children have access to early advice when any (Family Court) deprivation of liberty proceedings are contemplated. This will help families understand what applications may be made and the processes involved. We are clear that this legal aid provision will also need to be available for children and families where an application to deprive a child of their liberty in "relevant accommodation" is contemplated or made, should these changes become law.

The social media posts are available to view [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

STRAND 4

A CLOSER LOOK AT OUTPUT 5...



5

Highlighted children and families' lack of access to justice whilst attending and/or speaking at conferences and events relating to deprivation of liberty

Regularly attending Nuffield Family Justice Observatory's deprivation of liberty legal roundtable meetings. These bring together lawyers and socio-legal academics to share updates. We have helped shape the agenda at these meetings such that access to justice issues are now regularly discussed.

Leveraging Family Rights Group's position as charity partner at Family Law Week's public children law conference in September 2025 to raise awareness of the campaign and further disseminate the legal aid briefing.



EVENTS AND NETWORKS

Attending Nuffield Family Justice Observatory's Back to their Futures Summit. A multi-disciplinary event convened to discuss matters of law and practice relevant to children being deprived of their liberty.

Attending and speaking at the Child Law Network's 2025 conference which focused on deprivation of liberty. The President of the Family Division gave the key note speech.

Using the opportunity to raise awareness of the gaps in legal aid for children deprived of their liberty and their families and disseminate the legal aid briefing note.



STRAND 5

LEGACY AND ONGOING IMPACT

THREE EXAMPLES OF THE IMPACT AND LEGACY OF OUR WORK WHICH YOUR GRANT FUNDING SUPPORTED

1

Influencing opportunity:

Invited by the Department for Education to contribute to the Government's consultation on the statutory amendments relating to children deprived of their liberty.

Significance: Family Rights Group has successfully established a position of authority and expertise on this topic. And could use this to influence policy makers and bring about change for children deprived of their liberty and their families.

2

Providing cross-border legal expertise:

Invited to sit on a Scottish Government working group developing new regulations for children from England placed in Scotland.

Significance: Family Rights Group is a known authority on the law relating to children deprived of their liberty. We were able to influence the development of the regulatory framework for children from England placed in residential care in Scotland including those moving to secure settings.

3

Public legal education opportunity:

Invited to write an article in relation to families of children deprived of their liberty in a prominent social work journal.

Significance: Family Rights Group has successfully established a position of authority and expertise on this topic. And could use this to raise awareness of families' experiences of their children being deprived of their liberty, including their lack of access to advice and information.



Family Rights Group

Helping Families Helping Children

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Free Advice Line 0808 801 0366

(Monday to Friday 9.30am to 3pm)



Web enquiry form - <https://frg.org.uk/advice-form/>

Admin Tel 020 7923 2628 Email office@frg.org.uk
(We cannot provide advice by email or on the Admin telephone line)