

National FGDM Steering Group correspondence regarding the Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Bill, dated 18 November 2025

We note the Minister's comments in Committee last week and, in particular, reference to a view put forward by COSLA suggesting a preference for FGDM to grow in an organic fashion within local authorities rather than through legislation.

The FGDM Steering Group, with members from all of the two-thirds of local authorities currently already using the Family Group Decision Making approach, is not aware of any consultation process with COSLA on their position with regard to FGDM.

This is particularly disappointing because the Steering Group has a vast amount of expertise, practice wisdom and experience of the transformative impact of use of the approach in reducing the number of children and young people separated from their families. This is especially evident in those authorities where the approach has been used for many years, such as Edinburgh and Glasgow.

The approach embodies the philosophy and principles underlying The Promise and has the potential to contribute to the transformation of services in local authorities, in addition to freeing resources through significant financial savings, as has been the experience in Glasgow.

The Group believes that legislation should be considered because it is our experience that, without a legal mandate, rather than growing naturally in a reliable fashion, services will remain vulnerable to changes in local management priorities.

Local authorities are attempting to invest in FGDM but, without a legal mandate prioritising use of the approach, it is our concern that provision will continue to be patchy and small-scale. The Steering Group's experience is that, in the absence of formal support, especially in the smaller authorities, the approach does not take root and is often cut when the wider service is under pressure. There is a real risk that, without national investment and a robust statutory footing, vulnerable services will be lost and with them the vital opportunity for children to remain with, or return safely to, their families.

The Steering Group operates entirely on the goodwill of their member local authorities and third sector agencies in a unique collaboration to ensure the highest quality of practice in delivery of the FGDM approach. To this end, the Group has produced National Standards and companion documents for practitioners in challenging areas of practice such as domestic abuse. Rather than growing

organically, the fear is that, without Government investment, the Steering Group will also cease to function. Whether or not FGDM is included in the Bill, the development of the approach, as recommended in the 2014 Act, requires significant funding to operationalise best practice countrywide.

We look forward to the opportunity to contribute to the debate about support for this unique approach to work with families which carries so much potential for enhancing outcomes for children in Scotland.

Sally Wassell, Independent Chair National FGDM Steering Group

18th November 2025