

## Siblings, Contact and the Law: Update - January 2020

This update is being sent to individuals and organisations who have shown an interest in our research. <https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/project/siblings-contact-and-the-law-an-overlooked-relationship/>

You also can keep up with our work by following us on Twitter: @SiblingsLaw

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Since our last update, we have continued to disseminate the findings of our research to practitioners and beyond. You may have heard last week's **BBC Radio 4 'File on 4'** programme, '**Separated Siblings**', which was partly inspired by our research and to which Daniel Monk was a key contributor.

The programme can be listened to here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000d71r>

*When Sophia was growing up, she had an imaginary friend. It was only later she learned that the little girl she played with in her mind was not imaginary at all, but a distant memory of an older sister. The two had been separated when they were in care, and contact between them was soon lost. It might sound like a Dickensian tale of misery, but it's not rare for siblings to be forced apart whilst in the UK's care system. In England alone, there are currently more than 78,000 children living in foster care or children's homes. Many have brothers and sisters, but keeping them together is difficult.*

*File on 4 hears from the children and young people who have been split up, and hear how it has affected the rest of their lives. When they can't be placed together, experts agree that robust plans should be put in place to maintain contact between them. So why is it not happening? If one child goes on to be adopted, maintaining contact with their brothers and sisters is far from straight forward. And for the families who do adopt sibling groups, there's concern that they're not getting the right help to support those relationships. Some experts argue that keeping siblings together shouldn't always be the default intervention. For some, placing them apart might be in their best interests but are the views of children always being taken into account when these decisions are being made and is the importance of sibling relationships sometimes being overlooked?*

*Reporter - Paul Kenyon*

*Producer - Emma Forde*

*Editor - Carl Johnston*

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We have now spoken to almost 2000 people at small and large events. These have included:

*May 2019*

Speaking at the **Annual Conference of the President of the Family Division.**

*June 2019*

Training provided to **District Judges at the Family Law Judicial College.**

*Sept 2019*

Informal seminar to discuss **sibling issues with psychologists and psychotherapists.**

*October 2019*

Presentation at **Gough Square Chambers, London, Family Law Conference** for barristers and solicitors.

Presentation to the **Family Justice Board.**

Presentation to the annual **NAIRO conference.**

*November 2019*

Presentation of **Research in Practice Webinar** 'Brothers and sisters in public law proceedings: assessment, placement, permanence and contact' in support of a **RiP briefing** of the same name. Both available to RiP subscribers.

Training provided to the **Public Law Judicial College.**

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You may also be aware of the case published last week on bailii which contains many of the issues concerning siblings raised by our own research and that of others.

<https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWFC/OJ/2019/B70.pdf>

The case is reported and commented on in Community Care:

<https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2020/01/21/family-court-judge-denounces-councils-brutal-separation-of-close-sisters/>

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Please do get in touch if you have any further questions about our research, if you would like us to speak at an event or if you have any sibling cases you would like to draw to our attention.

Best wishes,

Daniel Monk and Jan Macvarish

[D.Monk@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:D.Monk@bbk.ac.uk)

[J.Macvarish@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:J.Macvarish@bbk.ac.uk)