



**The Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith**

**Minister for Skills**

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The Baroness Berridge  
House of Lords  
London  
SW1A 0PW

Friday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2025

Dear Baroness Berridge,

I'd like to thank you for the interesting debate on Clause 1 of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, which seeks to mandate the offer of family group decision-making (FGDM) at the pre-proceedings stage.

I committed to write to the House on the topic of FGDM in relation to special guardianship orders.

Clause 1 is clear that the offer of FGDM must be made to the child's parents or any other person with parental responsibility for the child. Special Guardians gain parental responsibility for a child through Special Guardianship Orders and therefore, the offer would be made to a child's Special Guardian, as well as their parents. FGDM is about empowering a child's family network to come together and make a plan to support the child and it is right that everyone with parental responsibility for the child is given the opportunity to take part in this family-led process. If the offer is accepted by at least one person to whom it is made, the Local Authority must arrange for the meeting to be held. Special Guardians should consult parents and others with parental responsibility about decisions for the child.

Local Authorities know their families' circumstances best, and they must only make the offer of the FGDM meeting when it is in the best interests of the child. It is for the Local Authority to consider a child's family network and decide which members should attend the meeting having regard to the child's best interests. Statutory guidance will set out how the process should be carried out to ensure that it is effective and safe.

Thank you again for taking the time to engage on these matters. I hope these further details have been useful and I will place a copy in the House libraries.

Yours sincerely,

**The Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith**

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