

User guide

For local authority commissioners
and placement staff

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Link Maker Systems

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Introduction

Link Maker helps care placements to be identified for children by giving the right information, and the right tools, to the right people. It allows staff to manage discussions, exchange sensitive information, and share access to cases, on one secure platform. Those most directly involved with a child can work together to find an appropriate placement quickly, including children's social workers and foster carers.

This guide is aimed at authority placement staff and commissioners. It gives a quick overview of what you can do, and how Link Maker can support your placement practice.

Link Maker gives total control over the breadth of a placement search. For the best chance of identifying the most suitable placements, you can make placement requests available to all providers, including those you may not have previously worked with. Alternatively, referrals can be issued to framework groups initially, in a way that is fully contract compliant. Link Maker's own placement request template is available to use, capturing comprehensive information about a child's needs.

Placement providers use Link Maker to list vacancies in the form of foster carer profiles and children's home profiles. You can use Link Maker to search any placements made available to you, helping to identify possible placements much quicker, and begin enquires directly. You can use search filters to find placements based on geography, needs and other factors, and bookmark those that are of interest.

Link Maker provides email alerts, directing you to new vacancies that have been made available to you. You can tailor these alerts to your needs, making it easier to find suitable placements.

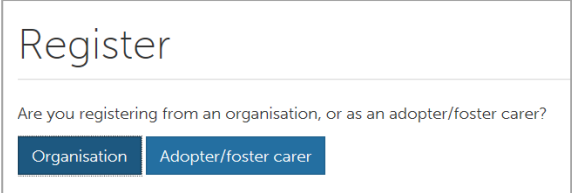
You can use Link Maker's community features to provide advice and support to foster carers (not just your own). You can also create agency events and advertise these to other using Link Maker.

For further help and support, view our step-by-step tutorials at www.linkmaker.co.uk/pages/view/58 or call our support team on 0843 886 0040.

Please note that all names shown in this user guide are purely fictional and are used for training purposes only. Any resemblance to actual persons, is purely coincidental.

Registering for a Link Maker account

To create your own user account, click the 'Register' button on the [Link Maker homepage](#). On the resulting page, choose the 'Organisation' option and enter the required details.



Register

Are you registering from an organisation, or as an adopter/foster carer?

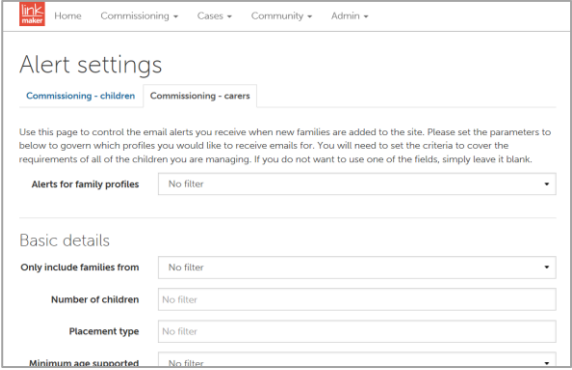
Organisation Adopter/foster carer

You will receive a confirmation email confirming you have entered the correct email address with a link that will activate your account. Your account will then need to be verified by your organisation before you can begin using Link Maker's commissioning features.

All staff who are involved in placement finding should create their own individual user account on Link Maker. This improves security, allows an open flow of communication and provides a record of activity.

Receiving alerts for new placements

Once your account has been set up, you can begin receiving email alerts for new placements. Each user can individually set, through their own account, what kind of profiles they want to be alerted to, according to the type of placement, who the authority is, and other factors. This means your alerts are personal to you and specific to your needs.



Alert settings

Commissioning - children Commissioning - carers

Use this page to control the email alerts you receive when new families are added to the site. Please set the parameters to below to govern which profiles you would like to receive emails for. You will need to set the criteria to cover the requirements of all of the children you are managing. If you do not want to use one of the fields, simply leave it blank.

Alerts for family profiles No filter

Basic details

Only include families from No filter

Number of children No filter

Placement type No filter

Minimum age supported No filter

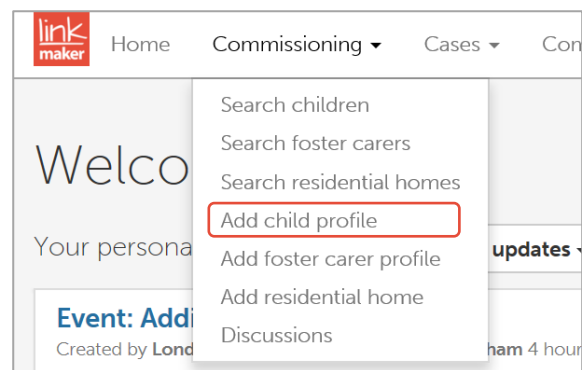
By clicking the link in the alert email, any member of staff will be able to securely view the relevant placement by logging into their own account on Link Maker.

To view and manage new placement alerts, go to your username menu and choose 'Manage alert settings'. You can use this page to control the email alerts you receive when new foster carer and residential home profiles are added to the site. Set the parameters to govern which profiles you would like to receive emails for. If you do not want to use one of the fields, simply leave it blank.

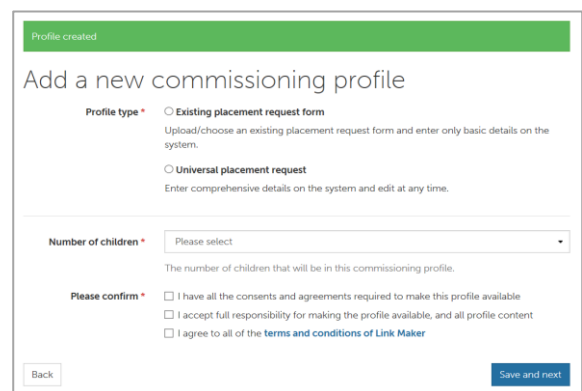
Creating a placement request

For the best chance of finding suitable vacancies, you can make placement requests available on Link Maker for any providers to search, and express their interest to you directly ([see later section](#)).

To create a new referral profile, go to the Commissioning menu and choose 'Add child profile'. You can then choose to create a profile with an existing case or create a new case. When creating a new case, you can add your own internal reference for your records, helping you to identify your cases easily.



When creating a new child profile, you can choose to either upload an existing placement request, or to complete a universal placement request as part of the profile creation.



Now, fill in the required field covering the child/children's basic details, health and development, placement details, and optionally, add any supporting documents.

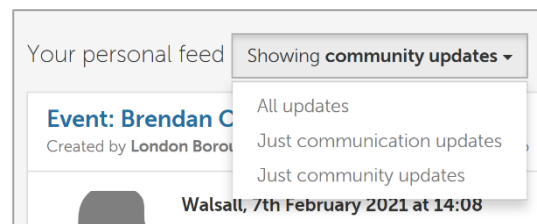
As you complete each of the steps, your information will be saved so that you can complete the profile later if you need to. If you initially attached an existing placement request, you will only have to fill in basic details.

During this process, you will have the opportunity to view and edit your organisation's details. Please make sure your organisational information is up to date. Changes made here will appear on all child commissioning profiles uploaded from your organisation.

Finally, add any excluded areas and choose who can see the profile by setting the profile availability ([see later section](#)). This can either be static, or on a schedule that will automatically change over time. You can widen the availability, and express interest in families/vacancies yourself, at any time.

About your homepage

You have access to a number of features and quick links from your homepage, as well as your personal feed. Your personal feed provides up-to-date information on community and communication updates, as well as any Link Maker announcements that may concern you.



Use the personal feed filter to determine what information you would like to see. Communication updates show recent activity for your cases. You can also find recent news and updates from Link Maker here. To return to this page from any other pages, simply click the 'Home' item in the top menu.

Making a placement request available

Once a child profile has been created, you have a variety of options when choosing to make it available to others. You can keep the profile hidden, allowing you to make your own outgoing enquiries only, or limit the profile availability to your own LA/agency or any agency groups that you have created ([see later section](#)). Alternatively, advertise the profile to all of the UK, allowing you to accept incoming enquiries from providers across the country.

Creating and managing agency groups

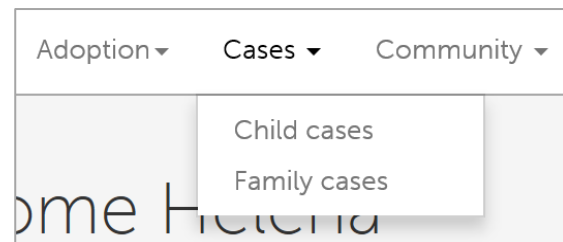
Agency groups provide you with more options when choosing availability for child commissioning profiles ([see previous section](#)) or when choosing to receive new placement alerts ([see previous section](#)). Agency groups can be personal to your individual account or available for all practitioners within your LA/Agency to use. To manage existing agency groups, go to the Admin menu and choose 'Manage agency groups'.

Here you can see all personal agency groups and any agency groups that have been made available to you by others in your LA/agency. To create a new agency group, click 'New agency group' and fill in the required fields.



Accessing cases

To access your cases, go to the 'Cases' menu and select 'Child cases'. The 'Cases' page will, by default, be filtered to cases that you are connected to. You can, however, filter for any case from your organisation, including cases managed by specific practitioners.



On the 'Cases' page, you'll find an overview of your cases, including any linked profiles, the number of discussions, incoming and outgoing interest, the last activity recorded against the case, the availability of any profiles, and the number of discussions that require your attention.

Click on a case name to navigate to the 'Case management' page for that case. You can connect yourself to any case from your organisation, by clicking on the case name and choosing 'Connect account' from the 'Case management' page. Or, click on a profile name to navigate to the 'Profile settings' page for a specific profile.

Managing a case

Go to the 'Cases' page ([see previous section](#)) and click the name of the case you wish to manage. This will bring you to the 'Case management' page for your chosen case. Here, you can manage every aspect of the case, such as viewing discussions, documents and reports or adding/managing profiles.

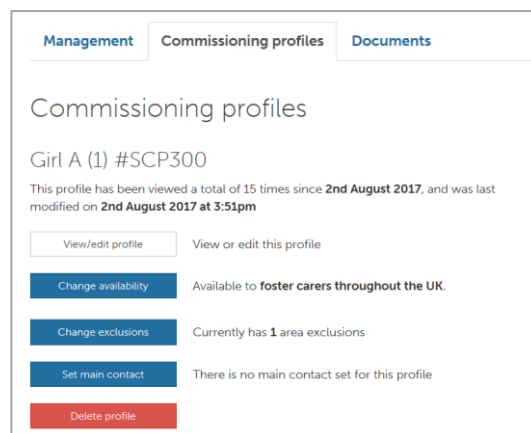
To connect to a case, click the 'Connect account' button. You will then be linked to the case, meaning you can edit profiles and participate in placement finding for the child(ren). To disconnect yourself from a case, click the 'Disconnect account' button. You will no longer be listed as a linked practitioner and your permissions will be removed.

In the 'Case management' tab, you can share the case with other practitioner, connect or disconnect yourself from the case or set the case as inactive. Inactive cases are not subject to activity chasing and will not appear in your active case listing on the 'Cases' page. You may also choose to delete the case. Please note that if you intend to delete the case, you must first delete all profiles. This is an irreversible action; it cannot be undone.

Managing a child profile

In the 'Commissioning profiles' tab of the 'Case management' interface ([see previous section](#)), you can view/edit the profile, change its availability or add area exclusions.

Through the 'Profile activity' feature, you can review which organisations have viewed the profile, including their interest status. If a placement has yet to be identified, you can resend profile alerts to specific agencies.



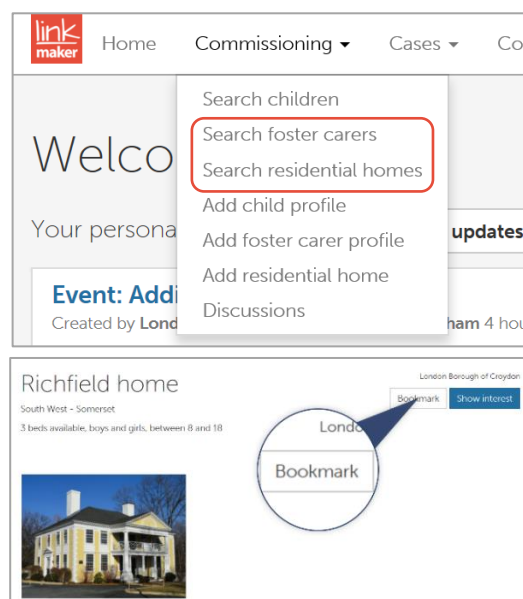
You can also delete the profile from the 'Profile settings' page. Be aware that deleting the profile will automatically decline any outstanding expressions of interest and links and is an irreversible action. In the 'Documents' tab, you will find all documents linked to the case.

Searching and bookmarking potential placements

You can search through any placements that have been made available to you. Placements may have been targeted at you because you are on a framework or preferred list, or they may have been made available widely to any provider.

To access the search page, go to the 'Commissioning' menu and choose 'Search foster carers' or 'Search residential homes'. You can use a range of filters to help you find specific types of profiles.

When searching placements, you may find profiles that you wish to bookmark and return to later. Simply click the 'Bookmark' button associated with the profile you wish to save and the profile will be saved to the 'Bookmarked' tab. To remove a bookmark, click 'Remove bookmark'. These bookmarks are personal to your own individual account.



Once you have found a potential placement, you can start enquiries by showing interest ([see later section](#)).

Showing interest in a placement

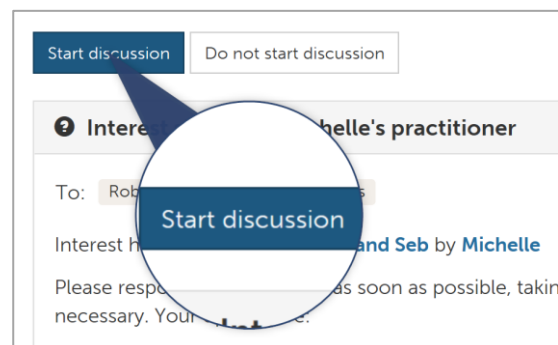
Once you have searched placement profiles ([see previous section](#)), or have received a new placement alert ([see previous section](#)), you may want to begin enquiries.

To show interest in a placement, go to the full profile page (either foster carer or residential home) and click 'Show interest'. You can then add any additional information with your expression of interest. This will alert relevant placement staff and will invite them to review your information and respond.



Managing incoming enquiries

If you have listed a placement request and have made it available to others ([see previous section](#)), then you might begin to receive incoming enquiries. Once you have received an incoming expression of interest, you can view the referral and choose whether or not to start a discussion by choosing 'Start discussion' or 'Do not start discussion'.

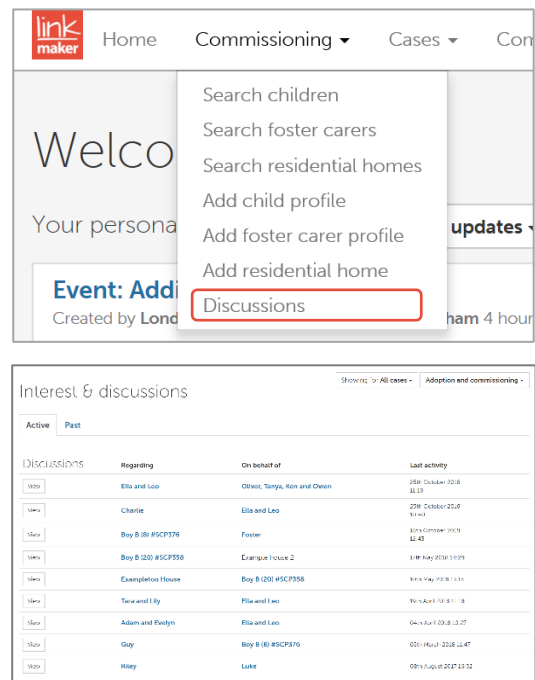


If you choose not to start a discussion, you will be asked to provide some feedback as to why. If you choose to start a discussion, you can then exchange messages and documents with the other party.

Using the interest and discussions page

The 'Interest & discussions' page is a dashboard for all discussions. You can view discussions relating to cases you are connected to, or view discussions relating to any case in your organisation.

To access the interest and discussions page, choose 'Discussions' in the 'Commissioning' menu. Alternatively, simply click the envelope icon shown in the right-hand corner, next to your username. This icon may appear with a number, indicating that you have discussions that require your attention. You have a number of filters on this page, enabling you to flexibly manage all cases from one page.



The page is separated into four sections: needs attention (for those discussions that require an action); discussions (for active conversations); outgoing (for outgoing expressions of interest that have not yet received a response) and incoming (for expressions of interest in the profiles you manage to which you have not yet responded). You can find all your previous closed discussions in the 'Past' tab.

You are automatically subscribed to discussions relating to cases you are connected to. This means you will receive updates via email. You can choose to subscribe or unsubscribe from discussions whenever you like; just click the 'Subscribe' or 'Unsubscribe' buttons from within the discussion.

Accessing the provider directory

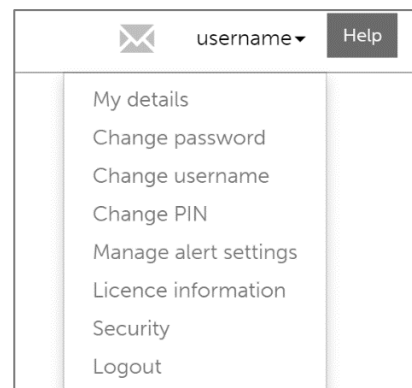
Placement providers with at least one active user on Link Maker can be found in the provider directory. To access the provider directory, go to the 'Commissioning' menu and select 'Provider directory'.

Some providers may have supplied additional information, such as their contact details, Ofsted information or organisational documentation. These additional details can be found by selecting the provider name.

Managing account settings

All settings relating to your account, can be found in your username drop-down menu.

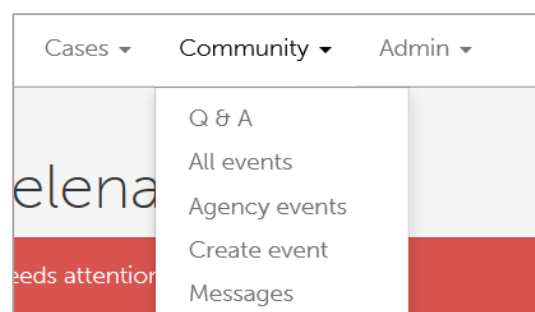
You can change details relating to your account, change your password, username or PIN, manage your alert settings ([see previous section](#)), view your licence information, view our security information or logout of your account.



Using community features

With a Link Maker account, you can access community features. You can create a community profile and interact with others in all stages of the commissioning process, offering advice and guidance. You can create agency events and advertise these to your foster carers or to other families.

All community features can be accessed in the 'Community' drop-down menu.



Finding further help

For further help and support, simply click the 'Help' button in the top menu, next to your username. Alternatively, view our step-by-step tutorials at www.linkmaker.co.uk/pages/view/58 or call our support team on 0843 886 0040.