

A guide for family and friends

Family Group Conference Service

'Families making decisions'

What is a Family Group Conference (FGC)?

Every family is unique and all families experience problems from time to time.

We believe that children, young people and families know themselves best.

A Family Group Conference is a meeting of family members, relatives and friends who work together to find out what issues their children may be having and to talk about how to sort out any problems.

Who is the Family Group Conference Coordinator?

- The coordinator is an independent person whose job is to organise and coordinate the meeting.
- The coordinator will visit you and your child/ young person and agree who will be invited to attend the meeting.
- The coordinator will give you all the information you need about the FGC and reasons for it.
- The coordinator can arrange for any additional support if needed, for example an interpreter or advocate.

Who attends a Family Group Conference?

- The child or young person is invited to come along to all or part of the meeting, but it is their choice. If they prefer they could have what is called an 'advocate' who supports them to have their voice heard.
- Anyone who cares about the child/ young person can be invited: close family; other relatives, including those at a distance; and family friends.
- The agency who referred you to the FGC Service.
- Any other agencies working with your family that you want to invite (and who can give information to support you in finding solutions).

Where is the meeting held?

Family Group Conferences take place outside the family home at a time and place to suit everyone attending. Your coordinator will discuss the various options with you.

What happens at the meeting?

Information Sharing:

- Your coordinator will chair this part of the meeting and welcome everyone.
- The referrer and any other agencies invited will share information.
- Your coordinator will ensure that everyone has an opportunity to discuss the difficulties that they may be having and are clear about the decisions that need to be made.

Private Family Time:

- Your coordinator and the agencies will leave the room.
- Your job as a family group is to decide the best way forward for your child/ young person.
- You will agree a plan, decide who does what and decide how you can check that the plan is working successfully.
- Your coordinator will be available if you need more information, help or refreshments.

Clarifying the plan:

- Your coordinator can help the family make sure that all the questions are covered, the plan is written down and that everyone agrees to their part in the plan.

Agreeing the Plan:

- The referrer rejoins the meeting to hear the plan.
- Your family can discuss what support you think you need from the agencies to make the plan work.
- Your plan will be accepted provided it is safe for the child/ young person and you have addressed the agencies' concerns.
- Usually a date will be agreed for a Review FGC.

What happens next?

- Your coordinator will make sure that everyone invited gets a copy of the plan.
- For the plan to work, everyone involved needs to do their part.
- Your coordinator will organise a Review FGC to discuss progress since the first FGC and to make any changes needed to the plan.

“Good to talk and to listen too” - Young person

“Things moved on more than I would've thought, which was encouraging” - Parent

“After initial strained emotion from both sides, we were able to come up with a plan” - Grandparent

For further information:

If you need any further information or there is anything you are concerned about, you can speak with your coordinator.

Family Group Conference Service, Rivers ACE Centre, Trent Road, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK3 7BB

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