



Putting families at the heart of decision-making

A Guide to Family Group Conferences



How can I contact my FGC & Family Networking Advisor:

Phone Number:

You can call, text or use WhatsApp.

Family Group Conferences (FGC's)

A Family Group Conference (FGC) is a planning and decision-making meeting where the family and the people that are important to them (their network) make a family plan to meet the needs of the child/children.

The FGC is arranged by an FGC and Family Networking Advisor, who is an independent person based within the FGC and Family Networking Advisory Service. They will contact everyone before the FGC and make sure it runs well on the day.

The reasons for holding a meeting will be different for everyone. An FGC could be used:

- to create a plan of support for parents to help with family life;
- when decisions need to be made about where a child is going to live if they cannot stay at home;
- when there are difficulties with a child's education or attending school;
- as part of planning when services are coming to an end.

There will be an opportunity for the family to come together themselves without the Advisor or other workers present, so that they can discuss in private what their plan might look like. The aim is to agree a plan that addresses the challenges, led by the family's views of what will help.

Families involved with Children's Services can sometimes feel workers or managers are making all the decisions. Or that the family does not have much say. A Family Group Conference ensures families are involved in planning and decisions about their child/ren.

What the FGC process involves; Things to think about before, during and after the meeting

Who can agree for an FGC to go ahead?

The FGC would usually only go ahead if it is agreed by those who have parental responsibility for a child. (This can include Children's Services if there is a Care Order in place and a network that would like to be involved in planning).

What is the focus of the FGC?

Family members and/or workers involved with the family could identify things that they want the FGC to address. The FGC will focus on these areas and agree a plan led by what the family thinks will help. The FGC & Family Networking Advisor will speak with everyone attending the meeting beforehand to agree what will be discussed and how the meeting will run. This will help the network make a plan of support together.

How is the voice of the child included in the FGC?

Children's thoughts and feelings are part of the discussion. They can attend the FGC or someone who knows them well can speak with them before and share their views and update them after the FGC. Even if a child is very young, it is possible to think about what life looks like for him/her e.g. 'I think Baby John feels lonely when he is left in his cot late in the morning.'

Who is invited to the FGC?

It is up to the child and parents / carers to decide who will be invited to the FGC. This can include family network, friends, neighbours and community figures who know the child and the family – anyone whose involvement will support in making a plan.

Where does the FGC take place?

The Advisor will help the family to decide where and when to hold the meeting. A time and venue that suits the family will be agreed. The meeting will take place somewhere neutral that is not in a family member's home.

What happens with the plan agreed in the FGC?

The plan made by the network, as accepted by the lead worker, is put into action by the family and their network. It is taken into future planning and decision making meetings, meaning everyone is working and reviewing the plan together.

What happens if the plan is not working?

There will be discussion in the FGC about what could/should happen if the agreed plan is not working and/or if people are not doing what they said they would. This is called a 'contingency plan'.

Family Group Conferences: What families say

"I am happy we got to put all of our views across and could explain everything we wanted at the FGC. The plan reflects what I and my family want and what we think will work. The FGC allowed us all to have our say and it is something that works for all of us, it is our plan."

"I couldn't ask for a better experience. The FGC and our family plan is exactly what we (my network) and the workers were trying to achieve. The meeting gave a chance for us all to talk."

"It was really nice having everyone there and being able to discuss everything. I thought it worked really well and it showed how well we can work together."

"The fact that we all had the opportunity to feel comfortable in that space. That helped everybody feel safe to talk. The environment worked well, even though it was a council building it didn't feel too formal."

"Everyone had their say, people were so at ease. I was surprised we all got on so well to do the plan. It was really helpful, and we now know what the family can do and we can ask for help."

"I feel that we had a good lot of support around us, family are sticking to the actions that were spoken about in the meeting."

Further information

Email us if you are interested in having a Family Group Conference:
FNA@norfolk.gov.uk



To find out more about Family Group Conferences visit Family Rights Group and search for Family Group Conferences: **advice for families, or scan the QR code.**