

ONE MINUTE GUIDE

FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCES



Every family is unique, with its own culture, personalities, personal dynamics and history. All families come up against problems from time to time. Some more difficult situations involving children can be sorted out more easily with help from relatives and friends, and some may also need help from the health services, the education department, social services, or other agencies.

Family group conferences are a way of giving families the chance to get together to try and make the best plan possible for children with information and support from professional services. An independent coordinator meets and prepares family members to attend, so they know what the issues are and have time to think about how they might resolve them. The decision makers at a family group conference are the family members, and not the professionals. It is here that the mother or father or aunt or grandfather gets together with the child or young person and the rest of the family to talk, make plans and decide how to resolve the situation.

WHAT IS THE FGC PROCESS

STEP ONE - THE REFERRAL

There is agreement between family members and staff from an organisation that a plan needs to be made for a child or young person. An independent coordinator is appointed to work with the family to set up the meeting.

STEP TWO - PREPERATION FOR THE MEETING

The coordinator, in conjunction with child, young person and immediate carers, identifies the family network. Family members and friends invited to the conference will be contacted by the coordinator who will explain what the meeting is about and how it works. They will share the information agreed with the referrer and discuss any worries or concerns family members may have. The coordinator agrees a venue, date and time for the conference that is convenient for the family, makes the practical arrangements and sends out invitations.

STEP THREE - THE MEETING

- a) Information giving - This is where the referrer explains what they are worried about and why a plan is needed. There may be staff from other agencies, who are there to give the family information about services, resources and support they can offer. This part of the meeting is chaired by the coordinator.
- b) Private family time - Staff and the coordinator are not present during this part. The family members have time to talk among themselves and come up with a plan that addresses the concerns raised by the referrer.
- c) Agreeing the plan - The coordinator and referrer rejoin the family to hear the family's plan. Any services or support from the agencies needed to make the plan work are discussed. The plan should be agreed by agencies unless it places the child or young person at risk of significant harm. Everybody decides how they will check the plan and what they will do if it is not working.

STEP FOUR - REVIEW

A review family group conference or another meeting/forum is identified to review how the plan is working and make new plans if necessary.

