 Family Group Conferences (FGC)

One Minute Guide

What is a “Family Group Conference”?

A Family Group Conference (FGC) is a meeting where family members and those close to the family come together to make a plan for a child or young person. This usually happens when there is a problem that needs to be solved or a decision about a child/young person’s future needs to be made.

Why have a family group conference?

We believe that families can usually make good decisions and plans for their children if they are given the information they need to do so. A Family Group Conference gives parents and their family network the opportunity to come up with solutions to the problem that needs to be solved.

Who can refer?

Referrals are received from Children’s Social Care. Cases must be open to CSC and only certain cases meeting referral criteria can be referred by the child’s allocated social worker. It is a requirement that parents/carers with Parental Responsibility consent to taking part and are committed to finding a solution to the concerns identified.

What is different about this type of meeting?

The FGC process is different because it is family led. The family will decide who attends and have input to where and when the meeting will be held. It is also expected that children be involved in discussions and decision making. A Family Group Conference Co-ordinator will be allocated to help the family with this FGC Process.

**The FGC does not remove or replace the need for Child Protection Conferences.**

The role of the FGC Co-ordinator

The Co-ordinator is neutral ie they have no case holding, statutory or decision-making responsibilities in relation to the child. The Co-ordinator will meet with the parent/carer and the young person to decide who to invite to the FGC including which professionals, if any, they want to attend. The Co-ordinator will then meet with the family network and any professionals to prepare them for the FGC which will be held at a time and venue to suit the family.

For further information contact:

Newcastle Family Group Conference Service, Allendale Road Depot,

Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE6 2SZ

Telephone: 0191 2116040

What happens at the family group conference?

The meeting is held in 3 parts. The Family Group Conference Co-ordinator will be at the meeting to help it run smoothly.

1. **Information Giving –** This part of the meeting is led by the Co-ordinator and provides information the family need to make a plan. The social worker and any professionals invited to the meeting will explain what they are worried about and tell the family what sort of help they can offer. The family will be able to ask questions about what the social worker and professionals have said.
2. **Private Family Time –** The professionals (including the Co-ordinator) will leave and give the family the chance to talk about the problem or decision that needs to be made and come up with a plan.
3. **Agreeing the Plan -** The whole group gets back together so the family can share their plan. The social worker will be asked if they agree the plan. Unless the plan puts the child/children at risk of harm then the social worker should accept the plan. Sometimes, further assessment or a decision from the court will be needed before a plan can be agreed. If the family want one, a review meeting will be arranged, to see how the plan is working or if any changes are needed.

How long does it take to set up a FGC?

FGCs are not an emergency response; they are a planned process and the recommendation for a FGC should be made following an assessment of the case. It is anticipated that a FGC would be completed within 12 weeks from the referral.

What happens after the FGC?

If a plan is agreed, the Family Group Conference Co-ordinator will make sure that everyone who attends the FGC gets a copy of the plan. The social worker will share the plan with other professionals who are working with the family. For the plan to work everyone needs to do what has been agreed in the plan.