

A family group conference (FGC) is a decision-making meeting that put families, children and young people at the centre of decision making. When the family is under pressure it empowers them to take the lead role in addressing the concerns raised by service providers to move things forward. Children and young people are normally involved in their own family group conference, although often with the support of an advocate. The meeting is arranged, convened and facilitated by an independent Daybreak coordinator.

In a family group conference it is believed that if the family is provided with high quality information, they are in the best position to make plans for a better future.

During preparation the Daybreak coordinator will meet with the referrer to discuss the referral and to prepare them and other service providers to take part in the process. They will also discuss with the family who should be invited and will then meet with everyone to prepare them for the meeting.

The Family Group Conference process

The meeting will be arranged in a neutral venue and will be in 3 stages:

1. Information sharing: The role of the referrer and other service providers is to provide information about the current concerns including any safety issues. Also to give information about available resources and any relevant legal issues.
2. Private family time: The family is left on their own to think about the situation and to formulate a plan that address the concerns of the agencies involved.
3. Agreeing the plan: Everyone gets back together, and the family presents their plan. It is important to give the family feedback and agree the plan if possible, bearing in mind safety and resources concerns.

A review meeting can be arranged for a few months after the FGC, if there is funding available, to check the plan is working. The referrer will need to remain for the full meeting but other service providers may leave after Information sharing. After the meeting the coordinator will write up the family plan and send it out to everyone involved.

When could a family group conference help?

There are many situations where a family group conference can help including when:

- A child is at risk
- A decision has to be made about where a child should live
- The family need support to cope better
- A young person needs support to live a safe and independent life
- Safe contact between family members needs to be arranged.

General Points

- A Family Group Conference (FGC) is not a magic wand and a single meeting is not going to change the world
- Be realistic and view the FGC as a problem solving tool
- As with other meetings, plans need to be reviewed and sometimes changed
- FGCs are family led and each is unique. Everyone needs to be as flexible and responsive as possible within their role

How do I make a referral?

To make a referral you need to get the agreement of your Team or Service Leader and then agreed by Head Family Safeguarding panel. The family will also need to agree to the referral before the referral can be made.