



Leeds Family Group Conference Service Practice Standards

Family Group Conferences aim to work WITH families, not doing TO or FOR them

The Model

How is a Family Group Conference (FGC) set up and who does what?

Step 1 – The referral

- There is agreement between family members and staff from an agency 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 2 – Preparation for the meeting

- The coordinator, in conjunction with child or young person and immediate carers, identifies the family network which can include close friends.
- Family members and friends invited to the conference will be contacted by the coordinator who will let them know the reason for the meeting, the concerns about the child /young person, the questions and any bottom lines. They will also discuss any worries or concerns family members may have about the meeting, including potentially difficult family dynamics. They will support individuals to enable them to participate fully in the meeting.
- The coordinator meets with the child or young person to prepare them for the meeting
- The coordinator agrees a venue, date and time for the conference and sends out invitations.

Step 3 – The meeting

a) Information giving

This is where workers involved with the family give the information they have about the child or young person, the concerns and any bottom lines i.e. what is expected in terms of safety for the child and what is non-negotiable, plus about services, resources and support that may be available. This part of the meeting is facilitated by the coordinator.

b) Private family time

The coordinator and workers involved 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 in the information sharing meeting.

c) Agreeing the plan

The coordinator and workers involve with the family re-join the group 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 if the plan is working and what they will do if it is not working. The family agree who, from within the family network, will be the monitor of the plan.

Step 4 – Reviewing the plan

A review FGC or other meeting is often arranged to review how the plan is working and make new plans if necessary.

Practice Standards

Standard 1. The FGC co-ordinator is independent

- 1.1 The FGC will be delivered by an independent co-ordinator who will have no other professional role with the family and will have no involvement in any professional decision making or allocation of resources for the child/young person.
- 1.2 The co-ordinator will be managed by someone who has no previous or current involvement in any decision making for the child/young person.
- 1.3 The FGC Service will ensure that the independent co-ordinator is trained in the FGC model and in the skills necessary to independently undertake the role
- 1.4 All co-ordinators will receive supervision and support regarding their role from an experienced FGC practitioner.

Standard 2. The FGC should respect the family's consent to proceed

- 2.1 The co-ordinator will ensure that there is informed consent given by an appropriate person with the legal authority to agree to have the FGC (e.g. a parent or guardian who has parental responsibility). This consent can also be withdrawn at any stage of the process.
- 2.2 The co-ordinator, with the child/young person and carers, will explore who from their own network they wish to invite to the conference. The decision as to who attends will be negotiated with the family.

Standard 3. The FGC should be family led and include 'private time' for the family to make a plan in response to concerns.

- 3.1 The FGC process is a strengths-based way of working, which acknowledges the positives as well as addressing the needs and challenges a family is facing.
- 3.2 Families should be provided with clear information about the concerns and any bottom lines i.e. what is expected in terms of safety for the child and what is non-negotiable.
- 3.3 Families should be supported to be active decision makers about their children.
- 3.4 The FGC involves the extended family network and can include any other network members as identified by the family.
- 3.5 The FGC will happen at a date, time and venue that has been agreed by the family and all participants.
- 3.6 Families should always have private family time within a safe and supportive environment in order to make decisions and plans.
- 3.7 The family will agree how the plan will be monitored and reviewed at the FGC.

Standard 4. Children or young people who are the subjects of a FGC will be the central focus and will be offered support to be involved, which may include an advocate/supporter.

- 4.1 Children or young people should be supported to have their families and other significant people fully involved in planning their future.

4.2 Children or young people who are the subject of the FGC will be central to the FGC process and their views and wishes should be heard at all stages of the process.

4.3 The co-ordinator will ensure that advocacy is offered for those young people or vulnerable adults who need it both during the preparation and in the FGC itself.

4.4 Where a child/young person/vulnerable adult chooses not to be, or are unable to be present at the FGC, the co-ordinator will make arrangements to ensure that the family plan is appropriately shared with them afterwards.

Standard 5. The FGC service will ensure that the family has all necessary resources, including good preparation, relevant information, and a safe and appropriate environment to make their plan

5.1 Families have the right to clear, appropriate information about the FGC process.

5.2 The co-ordinator will prepare staff from agencies for their role in the FGC process and will ensure that the family have all the relevant information both about concerns and resources needed to make a plan. The family must be given relevant, factual and jargon free information about the agencies' concerns and the resources available.

5.3 The co-ordinator will use a range of creative methods to ensure that all contributions are sought and shared and will ensure that where possible the views of those unable to attend are shared at the meeting.

5.4 Everyone participating in the FGC will be prepared and supported throughout the process, and the coordinator will usually meet with all prior to the meeting.

5.5 The FGC Service will ensure that the safety of all those attending the FGC will be planned for and all necessary provision put in place. The FGC service is responsible for ensuring that health and safety issues are addressed throughout the FGC process.

5.6 Families have the right to have safe plans agreed and agencies must provide reasonable resources to enable the plan to be carried out.

If there is to be a delay in agreeing the plan or if resources are unable to be provided the family need to be informed of the reasons and a timescale agreed of when they will receive a response.

5.8 The co-ordinator, at the end of the process, will ensure that all participants have understood what has been decided.

Standard 6. The FGC should respect the family's privacy and right to confidentiality

6.1 The co-ordinator will ensure there is appropriate agreement to share any information with the wider family network and professionals. It is responsibility of the referring agency to ensure that they have agreement to share any information that they are presenting which is of a confidential nature.

6.2 The family plan is the only written document to result from the FGC. The co-ordinator will ensure that all participants receive a copy of the plan within 3 working days of the meeting. The plan will include details of what resources the family needs and how the proposals in the plan will be carried out and monitored.

6.3 Information received from family members as part of the FGC process will not be shared with agencies without appropriate consent. An exception to this would be information that if not shared would place a child or adult at significant risk.

Standard 7. The FGC should be sensitive to the family's culture, taking account of ethnicity, language and religion.

7.1 Where possible family should be offered the option of holding the FGC in the first language of the family. The family will decide what language will be used, with interpreters provided for others present as needed.

7.2 Where possible coordinators should reflect the local community and (if available) families will be offered a coordinator who speaks their language and ~~who~~ has an understanding of the way religious beliefs, cultural traditions and other lifestyle issues influence how the family operates.

Standard 8 Families should have the opportunity to be involved in developing policies and practice about FGCs.

8.1 All families will be given the opportunity to give their opinion of the service they have received. Services will routinely seek feedback from all participants and these views will be used to inform and develop practice. Where possible, families will be kept informed about changes made as a result of their comments.

8.2 Participants can raise concerns or provide feedback about their involvement with the FGC process and this will be dealt with constructively.

8.3 Family members will be informed of the complaints policy of the service where needed.

8.4 Families should have the opportunity to have contact with other families who have used the service.