

Stockport Family



Family Group Conference

What is a Family Group Conference (FGC)?

Our work with Stockport Families when there is a concern about safeguarding children is influenced by a restorative approach and FGC is central to this way of working. Helping families to find their own solutions to problems they are facing is the aim of a FGC.

A FGC is a decision making meeting in which a child's wider family network come together, discuss concerns and make a plan about the future arrangements for the child. Respect and empowerment are essential elements of the FGC process in which parents, children, members of the wider family and family friends are given clear information about safeguarding concerns and are asked to produce a plan that addresses those concerns.

Within the FGC process it is acknowledged that every family is unique and the FGC uses the family's own skills, strengths and personal knowledge to resolve the challenges and difficulties that they face. A major strength of FGCs is that the child or young person usually participates and can therefore have a significant influence on the plan being made for them.

FGC conference coordinators are accredited and work independently from the social work service. The Co-ordinator is responsible for the planning, facilitation and review of the FGC process and is not involved in case management responsibilities. The Co-ordinator spends time with each family member when planning for the FGC to ensure that all are aware of the concerns and are able to freely express their wishes and feelings at the meeting. Preparing individual family members to participate in private family time and ensuring that this is a safe space for all to express their views is a key responsibility of FGC coordinators.

Why are we doing FGC's in Stockport?

Stockport has decided to implement a whole system restorative approach based on the principles of:

- Respect
- Responsibility
- Reflection
- Working 'with'

- Giving everyone involved an equal voice
- Fair and consistent process
- Honesty
- Inclusion
- Empowerment

These principles are central to the FGC approach and will support a move away from identifying and addressing problematic behaviour and apportioning blame to strength based way of working with families.

Top priorities for the Stockport Families First FGC approach is;

- To safely reduce the need for children to be looked after
- To safely reduce the need for children to be subject to Child Protection Plans

We want to offer a FGC when it is safe to do so at every key point at which decisions need to be made by families and agencies working with them about safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

We are driven by our determination to make sure that wherever possible;

- Families are supported to develop an alternative solution before children are removed from their homes
- Families are supported to develop solutions in other circumstances when there is a safeguarding issue.

FGC's are recognised internationally as an evidenced-based and restorative way of working with families. FGC's underpin the commitment in Stockport to work with children young people and their families in ways that help them find solutions to their difficulties.

Key contacts for FGC's in Stockport

Stockport Families First Team manager

Wendy Delag

Wendy.delag@stockport.gov.uk

Senior practitioner

Charlotte Rozsas

Charlotte.rozsas@stockport.gov.uk

Stockport FGC Service is an Accreditation Project under the Family Rights Group – Keeping children safe in their families.

www.stockport.gov.uk

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