

- Answer any questions that are asked of you
- During private family time you and the Coordinator will leave the room, but you must remain at the venue for the duration of the meeting.
- Once the family has agreed a plan, you and the Coordinator return to the room and agree the plan (The only reason for not agreeing the plan is if it puts the child at risk of significant harm).
- Timescales and responsibility for specific tasks are agreed at this point.
- If requests are made for resources that cannot be agreed immediately then the professional will inform the family as soon as possible thereafter

How can I refer?

Referrals can only be submitted by an Early Help Co-ordinator or a children's social worker, however professionals from Health, Education and other agencies can consult with the Early Help Advice and Allocations Team on 0191 561 4084 if they feel a family would benefit from a FGC.

The Worker should complete the referral form, available from the Practitioners Hub, and return via email to the Family Group Conference Team: FGC@togetherforchildren.org.uk

For further information contact:

one of our workers:

East/West locality

Rose Tracy Tel: 0191 561 4045
Wendy Coghlan Tel: 0191 561 7175

Washington/North locality

Sharon Norton Tel: 0191 561 2860
Emma Johnson Tel: 0191 561 8151

Coalfield locality

Javaid Aslam Tel: 0191 561 4085
Lisa Phillips Tel: 0191 561 8128



Family Group Conference Service

A guide to our service – professionals

What is a Family Group Conference?

A Family Group Conference is a meeting where the child, family members and friends make the main decisions. It is arranged and facilitated by the FGC Coordinator, who is not involved in making decisions about the child.

Family Group Conferences are a means of enabling the child and their family to find solutions to their own problems within a professionally supportive framework. A family is defined as the child, the parents, extended family members and family friends. All parties will attend the meeting.

Why should I refer?

Family Group Conferences are based on a model which has been proven via research to help produce better outcomes for children and young people by keeping them within their family or community. FGCs are based on the belief that



families can usually find their own solutions to their difficulties, and children and young people have a right to have their families involved in their future planning.

Feedback from children and young people who have attended Family Group Conferences has shown that they find them a far better way of getting their wishes and feelings heard. The aim of the meeting is to empower the children and family to come up with an agreed, safe and sustainable plan that will resolve the issue and support change.

Aims and Objectives

- Empower the family to participate in the care and protection of their children and take parental responsibility when possible.
- Explore resources available from within the family, the local community & statutory & voluntary agencies.
- Agree an appropriate plan which meets the child's needs and strengthens future relationships.
- Keep children at home where possible.

Referral Criteria

- When there is a significant issue that the family need to resolve
- Where children are being considered as in need of alternative accommodation or are at risk of becoming Looked After

- Where children are being considered for Initial or Review Child Protection Conference, or at any time when a child is subject to a Child Protection Plan
- At a Looked After Review or Planning Meeting when considering the needs of the children already Looked After

Other situations can be considered on a case by case basis.

Your role as a professional

Before the meeting

The Family Group Conference is a voluntary decision-making meeting and therefore it is important that you:

- Obtain the family's agreement to having a Family Group Conference
- Complete a Family Group Conference Referral Form, which outlines the reason for the FGC and detailing the 'bottom line'
- Meet with the coordinator to confirm the questions the family need to address in the FGC

At the meeting

- Attend the meeting
- Provide clear, concise and understandable information
- Explain what type of help and resources are available