**Family Group Conferences:**

**One-minute Guide for social workers**

***“Return the authority of the tribes to the tribes, of the sub-tribes to the sub-tribes, of the families to the families,***

***of the individuals to the individuals, who represent the multiple self, the generations of the past and present”*  (Tibble 1984)**

**What is a family group conference (FGC)?**

A Family Group Conference (FGC) is a meeting where families and their friends are supported to get together to make plans for their child(ren). The FGC is an opportunity for family and close friends to meet, to hear important information about concerns and agencies’ involvement, and to discuss the way forward. At the FGC the family meet in private to draw up a plan. The aim is to achieve a good family plan with family support in place.

The FGC is organised and run by an independent FGC coordinator.

**FGCs and restorative practice**

important information about FGCs are the cornerstone of restorative practice, given their role in building trust and positive partnerships with children and families.

The values underpinning FGCs are:

* a belief in the strength of families, valuing the uniqueness and diversity of each family and their network
* family members need to be involved in decision making about their children, and they can and do contribute to solutions
* children have a right to have a say in decisions that affect them
* children have the right to be cared for within their family whenever this is possible
* when this is not possible, children have the right and the need to maintain contact with family, extended family and other important people

**How is it different from other meetings?**

For the main part of the FGC, the family and friends network meets in private to make their plan. Neither the referrer nor the FGC coordinator are present during the family’s private discussions.

The role of the referrer is to provide information for the family to consider, to attend the FGC to share this information in person, and to hear and agree the family’s plan, if the plan is a safe one.

The FGC is organised and run by an independent person called an FGC coordinator – allocated by the FGC service.

The FGC coordinator will:

* Meet with the referrer and confirm the information to be shared with the family
* Prepare all attendees for the meeting
* Organise and chair the FGC meeting
* Help the family present their plan and confirm with the referrer if the plan is accepted
* Type up and distribute the plan
* Arrange a review where needed

The FGC coordinator makes sure that children participate as fully as possible; trained child advocates are available to help children and young people do so.

**When might an FGC be needed?**

A Family Group Conference can be useful whenever there is a need for a family to make a plan with and for a child / child. Vulnerable pregnant women may also benefit from being referred for FGC.

**How to make a FGC referral**

Complete the Referral Form and action for FGC on Mosaic. You will also be asked to complete the ‘Information for Families’ form. This is shared with family members by the FGC coordinator before the FGC meeting, and you will talk through this at the start of the FGC.

**The Family Group Conference service**

The FGC service is based in Childrens Social care within the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service (SQA)

Tower Hamlets FGC Service has open referral criteria for children and young people from pre-birth to 18 years. FGCs are organised by independent Family Group Conference coordinators with FGC child advocates supporting the children so that they can participate.

Wherever possible FGC coordinators are matched to referred families taking into consideration language, ethnicity, religion, gender or other important factors.

The service has been running for many years and is experienced in delivering Family Group Conferences in a wide range of situations. If you would like to discuss a possible referral please email familygroup.conference@towerhamlets.gov.uk and a member of the team will call you

FGC Manager: Jane Towey

FGC Advanced Practitioner: Nargis Khatun/Richard Desjardins (job-share)

Contact familygroup.conference@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Tel **07950 209497**