

Guidance for Presenting Information to Family Group Conferences and Completion of FGC Forms

When a family is referred for a Family Group Conference, it is important that both the family and the agencies involved are clear about the purpose of the meeting.

Of absolute importance is the issue of clarity. The family needs to understand what the issues are from the perspective of the referrer, in order to be able to make safe and realistic plans for their children.

The report should be clear, straight forward and avoid professional jargon such as “parenting capacity” or “environmental concerns” etc.

It must be shared with the parents/adults with PR and the child well in advance of the meeting so the family have time to think about the information provided. There should be no new information or surprises on the day.

Information about the family is confidential, consent should also be sought to share the contents of the report with the other family members and professionals attending the meeting. This can either take the form of signing at the bottom of the report that they agree to its contents being shared at the FGC or obtaining a verbal agreement that you then record on file for the purposes of Data Protection Act 1998.

Presenting Your Information at the FGC

There is no one way to present your information, you are trying to present it in a way that is clear, accessible and appropriate to this particular family. So think about literacy levels, disabilities, culture and religion of the family, their language of choice, the age and understanding of the children involved:

For example:

- As you go through the report verbally, you may want to write down 'bullet points' to remind you and the family what you covered.
- You can pose a series of questions you would like their answers to.
- This information could be on paper (bring enough copies for everyone), on a flip chart, on a video, or on an audiotape.

FGC Forms

Below is the guidance for the information boxes on each of the FGC forms

Request for a Family Group Conference

Why is it important to have an FGC? What questions do you want the family to consider?

Be specific, it is more helpful to make a number of clear specific statements and questions, rather than one vague or global one.

What will the next steps/consequences be should the situation not improve (including any legal implications)?

Very clearly, what are the consequences? Including any legal action.

Are there any conditions to the family plan? Is there anything which cannot be agreed as it would place the child/ren at risk of significant harm and/or fail to meet legal requirements?

For example: Martha cannot have unsupervised contact with her Uncle Jim because of his recent convictions.

Be clear when something is desirable in the interests of the children but about which you have no statutory power, versus something, which, if it is not covered in the plan, will lead to statutory action. Be clear where this is different for different issues.

Are there any significant timescales to note – or dates for court?

Court dates, assessments due, Child Protection conferences, Looked After Reviews, prison release dates etc.

Are there any health and safety concerns relevant for either workers or family members?

Has there been violence and/or threats made between family members or towards staff.

Do any family members have disabilities or health issues which would need to be taken into account when arranging the FGC?

Are there any other concerns?

Information to be Shared at Family Group Conference

What are the family strengths?

FGC is a strengths and solution focused meeting.
Use this section to name family strengths and successes.

What are the current concerns?

Outline your current concerns about the child/ren, rather than a detailed account of how the situation arose.

Name family strengths and successes, as well as what you are concerned about.

Be specific i.e. "Joe has run away from home three times", rather than "Joe absconds frequently".

Explain your worries in relation to the child and in your professional view, the effect this is having on the child or young person.

Do the family agree with the concerns or do they have a different view?

What does the plan need to achieve? What needs to happen?

Be clear exactly what you would like to see change, and in what time scales. However this must not be prescriptive; if we are merely telling what people to do, there is no purpose in engaging in the FGC process. It's about participation and partnership between the family and agencies involved.

Address what needs to happen, not how it should happen. Think about what questions do you want the family to answer.

Good examples are:

Emma needs to be safe from harm: How can the family ensure that Emma is safe?

The violent arguments between Mum and Dad are causing Charlie emotional harm: How can the family stop Charlie being exposed to arguments?

Betty is not attending school, how can the family make sure she gets to school?"

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Are there any conditions to the plan? Is there anything that cannot be agreed?
<p>Are there any conditions to the plan, is there anything which cannot be agreed because it would place the child/ren at risk of significant harm and/or not meet legal requirements?</p> <p>For example: Billy's father cannot live in the family home until he has successfully completed a rehabilitation programme and children's services believe it is safe for him to move back.</p> <p>Be clear when something is desirable in the interests of the children but about which you have no statutory power, versus something, which, if it is not covered in the plan, will lead to statutory action. Be clear where this is different for different issues.</p> <p>What is contained in this section is non negotiable at conference.</p>

What are the consequences or next steps should the situation not improve? – Including any legal action.
<p>Very clearly, what are the consequences? Including any legal/statutory action.</p>

What resources can be provided by the referrer or additional support services to support the plan?
<p>Detail any resources or services available to the family, especially if a representative of that agency is not going to be present at the FGC.</p> <p>Clarify whether the family would automatically get support, or whether it requires approval by management, resource/fostering panel, court etc.</p> <p>Be clear about any likely delays e.g. if an assessment is needed or there is a long waiting list for a particular service.</p>

