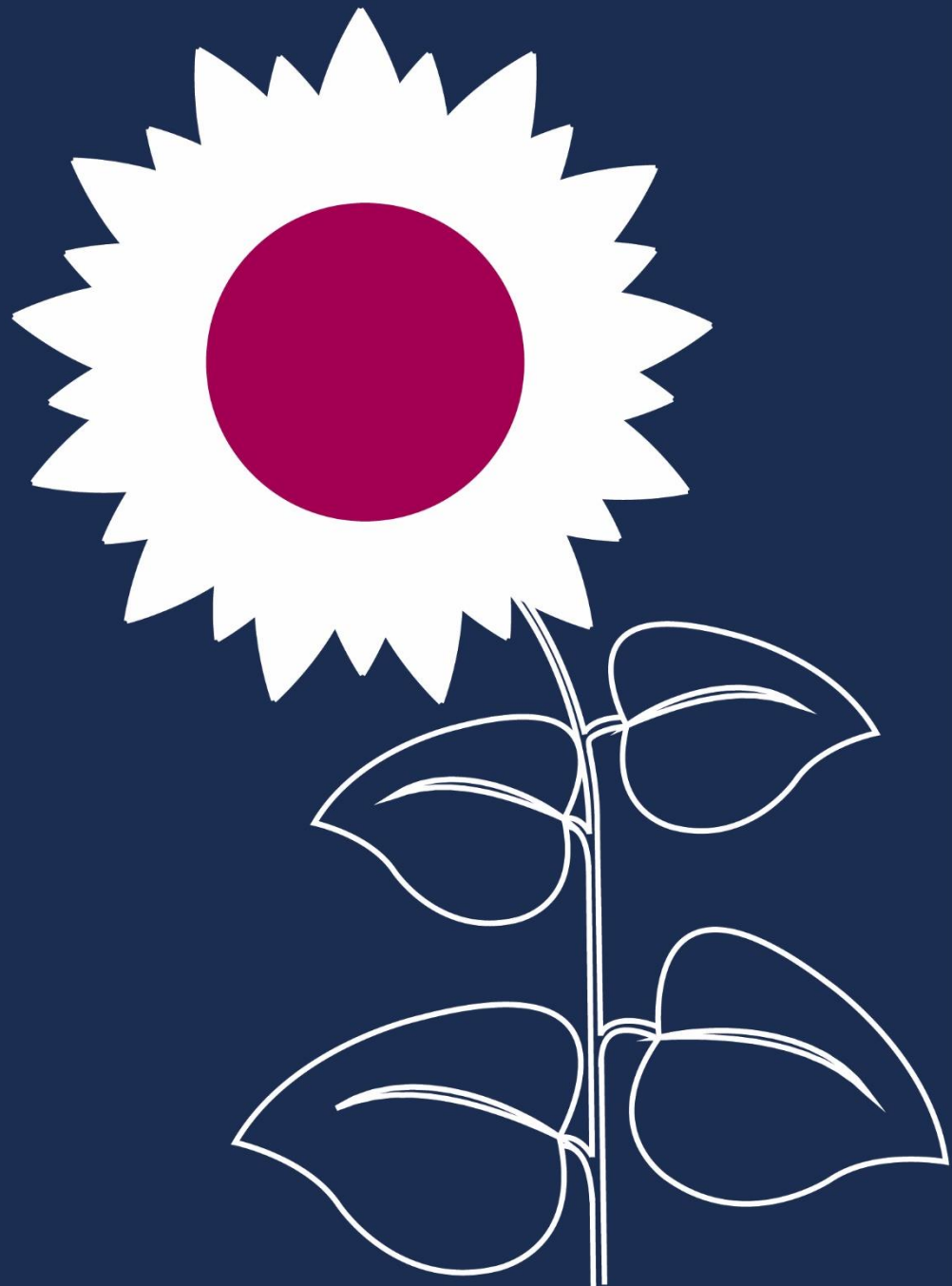


Family Group Conference

Tri x 1_4_11 October 2021

Review date October 2022



Legislation, Regulation and Guidance

- The key principles of the Family Group Conference model are consistent with those within the **Children Act 1989**. “Guidance & Regulations Volume 1 Court Orders” ref: (3.24) (3.7) (3.8)
- **The Public Law Outline: Guide to Case Management in Public Law Proceedings, April 2008**, section 18, states that, “The court will encourage the parties to use an alternative dispute resolution procedure”.
- Family Group Conferences have been recommended in the **Review of Child Care Proceedings (DCA/DFES 2006)** as an effective means of resolving disputes.
- **Care Matters: Time for Change** states that Family Group Conferences used at an early stage of concerns about a child can reduce the need for children to enter care and ensure that resources within the family network are tapped for the benefit of the child.
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2006 & 2010** outlines situations where Family Group Conferences may be used, either before the threshold for a Child Protection Case Conference is met, or to develop the outline child protection plan into a fully worked up plan.
- **The Children & Families Act 2014** outlines FGCs to be used as early as possible to prevent cases proceeding to proceedings.

Definition

Within the context of this policy the term ‘family’ will include children, family members, extended family and friends.

Introduction

A Family Group Conference is a decision making and planning process whereby the wider family group are asked to make a plan that addresses specific concerns about a child’s safety or welfare.

A person with Parental Responsibility must agree to the request for a Family Group Conference and to the sharing of information.

A request for a Family Group Conference can be made when one of the following criteria is met:-

- The child/young person represents with additional needs that can be met by targeted support by a single practitioner or agency and the family have the option to a FGC to explore alternative routes, in line with the Care Matters: Time for Change.
- The child/ young person is underachieving and are unable to meet their performed targets set by schools and have multiple issues i.e. non-school attendance, behaviour issues, young offender etc.

- There are children/young people with multiple needs and the family want the option of a FGC to explore alternative routes, in line with the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010 process.
- The Care Matters and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010 guidance recognises and endorses the use of FGC as an effective means of mobilising networks and more likely to divert children from care than traditional forms of decision making.
- The child protection plan is not working, and further plans to need to be made to safeguard the child/young person.
- The child/young person is accommodated, or at risk of being accommodated, and there is a need to identify a family placement in order to secure permanency for them.
- The Local Authority is considering initiating care proceedings and the family want the option of a Family Group Conference to explore the alternatives, in line with the PLO process.
- The case is already in proceedings and early identification of a family placement could avoid the need for foster/residential care.

PROCEDURE	TASK ALLOCATION
1 REQUEST FOR SERVICE	
1.1 The Family Group Conference (FGC) Co-ordinator: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is available for consultation and advice, about anything relating to Family Group Conferences • will provide information leaflets, Consent forms 	FGC Coordinator
1.2 Where the Professional/ Referrer and their Team Manager have identified the potential benefits of a FGC, information about the FGC will be given to the family.	Referrer/ Team Manager
1.3 The Referrer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • will discuss the need for a FGC with their Team Manager for their agreement to proceed • Will provide the family with information about the FGC • will obtain written consent and if appropriate, consult with the child 	Referrer
1.4 In order to proceed, a person with parental responsibility must have agreed to the request for a Family Group Conference proceeding and to the necessary sharing of information.	All to note
1.5 If the Local Authority has parental responsibility, there may be justification for going ahead with the Family Group Conference without the agreement of those it shares parental responsibility with.	The Social Worker will obtain written and if appropriate, consult the child

PROCEDURE	TASK ALLOCATION
1.6 The child, depending on their age and understanding, will also be consulted about the Family Group Conference and their views will be considered in deciding how to proceed.	Referrer
1.7 Potential requests will be discussed with the Family Group Conference Co-ordinator. If it meets the above criteria and it is agreed to proceed, the overall purpose and desired outcomes of the Family Group Conference will be identified and timescales provisionally agreed.	Referrer, Team Manager to liaise with the FGC Coordinator
1.8 For the referral to progress it is essential that the case remains open, and the referrer agrees to attend the FGC for the duration of the Conference.	Social Worker, Team Manager

2 PREPARATION	
2.1 Agreement needs to be reached, with a person with parental responsibility for the child, about the purpose of the FGC and who needs to be involved in the FGC.	FGC Coordinator
2.2 The family, children and professionals involved, need to be prepared for the Family Group Conference and there needs to be common understanding about the purpose of the Conference.	All to note
2.3 The Family Group Conference Co-ordinator will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take responsibility for all the preparation with those involved. • liaise with the Referrer and any advocates that may be required • Arrange suitable date, time and venue for the FGC, and confirm in writing. This needs to suit the family's availability and potentially may need to be in the evening or at a weekend. • Send out invitations and ensure all the practical arrangements, including any child care, are made. FGCs should be held within 6 weeks of initial referral. 	FGC Coordinator

3 THE FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCE	
3.1 Part 1: Information Giving	
3.1.1 The family will be given the opportunity to provide information, and to ask any questions.	All to note
3.1.2 A short report should be presented by the Referrer detailing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The family's strengths • Present concerns 	Referrer

PROCEDURE	TASK ALLOCATION
3.1.3 The “bottom line” i.e. stipulation as to what is needed for plan to be endorsed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources/services available 	
3.1.4 The FGC Co-ordinator will explain the process of the Conference, and give any other professionals an opportunity to share information	FGC Coordinator
3.2 PART 2: Private Family Time	
3.2.1 The family are left alone (non-legal advocates may be present) to talk amongst themselves, to produce a plan and to identify what support and resources are required to implement the plan.	FGC Coordinator
3.2.2 The Family Group Conference Co-ordinator will ensure that the family have the time and facilities they require and will be available throughout to assist in any way required.	FGC Coordinator
3.3 PART 3: Plan and Agreement	
3.3.1 If the plan is agreed, the details of who will do what and timescales for action, will be agreed in the form of a written, signed plan.	
3.3.2 The FGC Co-ordinator will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help the family to finalise the plan and flesh out the details • address how to resolve any elements of the plan that cannot be agreed on the day 	FGC Coordinator
3.3.3 The plan should include a contingency plan and details of how the plan will be monitored and reviewed	
3.3.5 The Family Group Conference Co-ordinator will ensure that a copy of the signed plan is distributed to all present, within 3 – 5 working days of the Family Group Conference	FGC Coordinator
3.3.6 If the plan cannot be agreed, the reasons for this must be given and the family given the opportunity to change the plan.	FGC Coordinator & Referrer
4 IMPLEMENTING AND REVIEWING THE PLAN	
4.1 The plan will be implemented and reviewed in line with what has been agreed and written into the plan at the Family Group Conference.	All to note
4.2 It may be agreed to review the plan by reconvening the Family Group Conference. Alternatively, the plan could be reviewed where there are pre-existing arrangements for a Child & Family Plan Review, a Child Protection Review Conference or a Looked After Child Review.	

PROCEDURE		TASK ALLOCATION
4.3	Liaison between FGC Coordinator and Referrer to ensure that the plan is effectively reviewed	Referrer & FGC Coordinator
4.4	FGC Co-ordinator to set Review date with the family and professionals	FGC Coordinator

5 MONITORING EFFECTIVENESS

5.1	The Family Group Conference service will need to implement a system for monitoring the outcomes and effectiveness of plans made by Family Group Conferences.	FGC Coordinator
5.2	The Family Group Conference Co-ordinator will devise a system of monitoring that will aim to monitor the short, medium and long-term outcomes and effectiveness of plans made by Family Group Conferences	FGC Coordinator