

Family Group Conferences

FGC Project Accreditation
This service has met the requirements of
the National Accreditation Framework



Devon
County Council

Information for service providers

Talk about the possibility of a Family Group Conference with the family, and with the child if appropriate. We can visit families directly to explain the process if this is wanted. Once the family agrees, make a request for service, and we will contact you to discuss. You will need to help identify the issues and strengths, to set an agenda for the family to discuss when they meet. Families need to know why they are meeting and what they are being asked to plan for.

As a service provider you will be asked to share relevant information with the family, and to explain any concerns and outline any resources you can offer. The family will be encouraged to ask questions.

If you are the service provider who has referred the family you will need to stay for the whole meeting. If you have been invited to attend the meeting to share information, you can leave after this part of the meeting.

Most meetings take 2–3 hours in total so please allow enough time to be there.



Family Group Conferences

Contacting the Family Solutions Service

The Family Solutions Service works with families across Devon and requests for services or enquiries can be sent to our mailbox:

familysolutionservice@devon.gov.uk

We would welcome any enquiries. Please feel free to make contact to discuss the scheme and cases that may benefit from a Family Group Conference.



Independent Co-ordinator details:

<http://devon.cc/fss>

The Family Solutions Service also offer meetings aimed at supporting families to find their own solutions. Please contact us for more information.



An opportunity for families to be fully involved in planning for their child



Family Group Conferences

What are Family Group Conferences?

Family Group Conferences are an opportunity for the family to meet together to make and agree plans about what should happen for children in the family. The term 'family' includes extended family and significant friends in your network.

The reason for the meeting will depend on what plans are needed. A Family Group Conference will give families a safe and comfortable environment to meet and make plans.

The meeting is set up by an independent co-ordinator who is not involved with the family in any way. It is held in a neutral place at a time agreed by everyone. The co-ordinator will explain the process, discuss the involvement of other agencies and answer any questions about how the meeting might work best for the family. They are trained to set up meetings with families whatever the issue. At the meeting the family are the decision-makers.

Advocates can be provided to ensure that children / young people's views will be heard as part of the meeting. All participants will be encouraged to actively contribute to the meeting.

Why have a Family Group Conference?

Families may be offered a Family Group Conference if their children are involved with children's social work as part of the court process or much earlier within Early Help. We believe that families can make good plans for their children if they have the information and support they need, and if they want to be involved in making changes.

This is an opt-in process. It is the family's choice and if they decide at any stage that they do not want to continue with the meeting, the process stops.

The independent co-ordinator will help to prepare the family group for the meeting. They will also speak to any service providers and prepare them for the meeting too.

The focus of the meeting will always be the child's needs.

How do Family Group Conferences work?

1. A service provider, such as a social worker or a teacher or health worker the family are working with, agrees with them to request a Family Group Conference.
2. The family will sign to consent to share information for the meeting.
3. The independent co-ordinator identifies everyone who will be involved and then visits and prepares them.
4. At the meeting there are three stages:
 - **Information giving** – when the family hears the relevant information about the issues and can ask questions.
 - **Private planning time** – when the family is left alone to talk and agree their plans.
 - **Sharing the plan** – after the family has agreed the plan it is shared with the independent co-ordinator and the referrer.

After the meeting the co-ordinator will type up the plan and send it to the people involved in the planning, including the service providers. The plan will be agreed unless it does not keep the child safe. Families can meet again to review their plan. The family will be in charge of monitoring how the plan is working.

Who comes to the Family Group Conference?

This will be decided with the family and usually includes relatives and close friends. The person who made the referral will attend and relevant service providers will be invited to share information as needed. Advocates can be provided to support children, and sometimes adults through the process. Children are encouraged to attend, or share their views whenever possible.

Who do I speak to about having a Family Group Conference?

Families can speak to someone who works with them such as teachers, health workers, or a social worker. Family Group Conferences can be held for any child where plans are needed and changes need to be made. Contact our team to see if this is the right option for taking the child's planning forward. We can offer to visit families to discuss the FGC process before they decide if they want to proceed.