

**ROCHDALE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES
POLICY & PROCEDURE**

**ROCHDALE FAMILY GROUP MEETINGS
POLICY & PROCEDURE**

Terminology used in this policy.

The term Family Group Meeting is being used in Rochdale, however when referring to national comparisons the term Family Group Conferencing will be used.

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** 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.

Definition

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

Introduction

A Family Group Meeting 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 Meeting and to the sharing of information.

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

- 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 Meeting 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 Meeting (FGM) Co-ordinator is available for consultation and advice, about anything relating to Family Group Meetings.	FGM Co-ordinator
1.2 Where the Social Worker and their Team Manager or Assistant Team Manager has identified the potential benefits of a Family Group Meeting, information about the Family Group Meeting will be given to the family.	Social Worker / Team Manager
1.3 The Social Worker will discuss the need for a Family Group Meeting with their Team Manager or Assistant Team Manager for their agreement to proceed	Social Worker / Team Manager / Assistant Team Manager

PROCEDURE	TASK ALLOCATION
1.4 Information leaflets will be available from the Family Group Meeting Co-ordinator.	FGM Co-ordinator
1.5 The Social Worker will provide the family with information about the Family Group Meeting.	Social Worker
1.6 In order to proceed, a person with parental responsibility must have agreed to the request for a Family Group Meeting proceeding and to the necessary sharing of information.	All to note
1.7 Consent forms will be available from the Family Group Meeting Co-ordinator.	FGM Co-ordinator
1.8 The Social Worker will obtain written consent and if appropriate, consult with the child.	Social Worker
1.9 If the Local Authority has parental responsibility, there may be justification for going ahead with the Family Group Meeting without the agreement of those it shares parental responsibility with.	All to note
1.10 The child, depending on their age and understanding, will also be consulted about the Family Group Meeting and their views will be considered in deciding how to proceed.	
1.11 Potential requests will be discussed with the Family Group Meeting Co-ordinator. If it meets the above criteria and it is agreed to proceed, the overall purpose and desired outcomes of the Family Group Meeting will be identified and timescales provisionally agreed.	
1.12 Social Worker, Team Manager or Assistant Team Manager, to liaise with the Family Group Meeting Co-ordinator	Social Worker / Team Manager / Assistant Team Manager / FGM Co-ordinator
1.13 For the referral to progress it is essential that the case remains open, and the referrer agrees to attend the FGM for the duration of the meeting.	
2 PREPARATION	
2.1 The family, children and professionals involved, need to be prepared for the Family Group Meeting and there needs to be common understanding about the purpose of the meeting.	All to note
2.2 The Family Group Meeting Co-ordinator will take responsibility for all the preparation with those involved.	FGM Co-ordinator

PROCEDURE	TASK ALLOCATION
2.3 The Family Group Meeting Co-ordinator will liaise with the Social Worker and any advocates that may be required.	FGM Co-ordinator
2.4 A date, time and suitable venue for the Family Group Meeting, needs to be agreed and confirmed in writing. This needs to suit the family's availability and potentially may need to be in the evening or at a weekend or at a venue outside of the Rochdale area	
2.5 The Family Group Meeting Co-ordinator will negotiate a suitable date, time and place, send out invitations and ensure all the practical arrangements, including any child care, are made. FGMs should be held within 6 weeks of initial referral.	FGM Co-ordinator

3 THE FAMILY GROUP MEETING

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 Social Worker / Referrer detailing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The family's strengths • Present concerns 	Social Worker / Referrer
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 FGM Co-ordinator will explain the process of the meeting, and give any other professionals an opportunity to share information	FGM Co-ordinator
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.	
3.2.2 The Family Group Meeting 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.	FGM Co-ordinator
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 FGM Co-ordinator will help the family to finalise the plan and flesh out the details.	FGM Co-ordinator

PROCEDURE	TASK ALLOCATION
<p>3.3.3 This will also address how to resolve any elements of the plan that cannot be agreed on the day.</p> <p>3.3.4 The plan should include a contingency plan and details of how the plan will be monitored and reviewed</p> <p>3.3.5 The Family Group Meeting Co-ordinator will ensure that a copy of the signed plan is distributed to all present, within 2 working days of the Family Group Meeting</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>FGM Co-ordinator</p> <p>FGM Co-ordinator</p>
<p>4 IMPLEMENTING AND REVIEWING THE PLAN</p>	
<p>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 Meeting.</p> <p>4.2 It may be agreed to review the plan by reconvening the Family Group Meeting. 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.</p> <p>4.3 Social Worker to ensure that the plan is effectively reviewed</p> <p>4.4 FGM Co-ordinator to set Review date with the family and professionals</p>	<p>All to note</p> <p>Social Worker</p> <p>FGM Co-ordinator</p>
<p>5 MONITORING EFFECTIVENESS</p>	
<p>5.1 The Family Group Meeting service will need to implement a system for monitoring the outcomes and effectiveness of plans made by Family Group Meetings.</p> <p>5.2 The Family Group Meeting 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 Meetings</p>	<p>FGM Co-ordinator</p>