

# Family group conferences

Information for family, relatives and friends



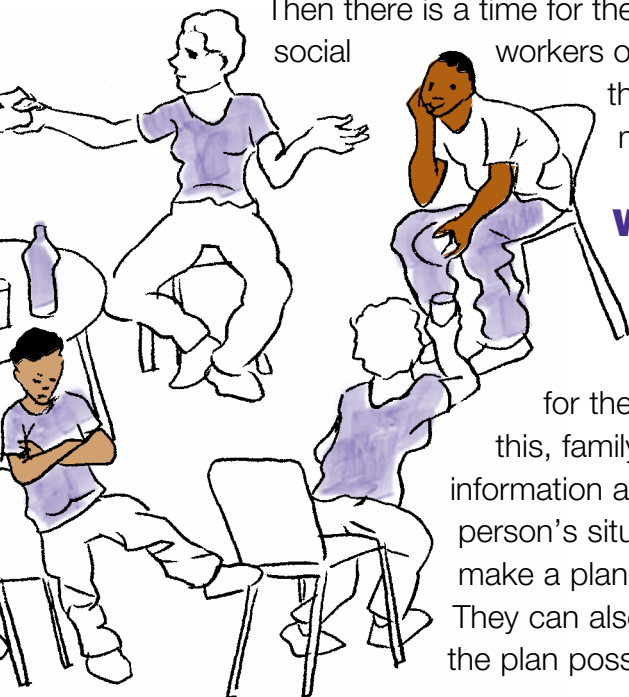
# Family group conferences – family decision-making

## What is a family group conference?

A family group conference – FGC – is a meeting of family members and others close to the family to talk about the needs of children or young people and make plans for them. It is a chance to get together, find out what is happening and think about what is best for children who face some kind of difficulty.

Social workers and other people who have concerns about a child present the information about what is worrying them and what may happen if problems are not sorted out.

Then there is a time for the family to meet without social workers or other outsiders. During this time the family can make a plan.



## Why hold an FGC?

We think families are able to make the best decisions and plans for their children. To do this, family members are given information about the child or young person's situation. Families can then make a plan about the child's future. They can also ask for help to make the plan possible.

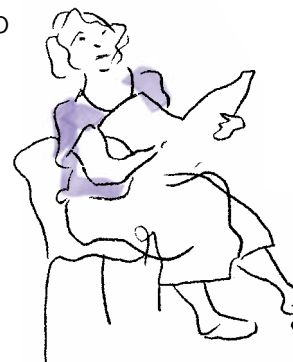
## Who should come to a family group conference?

The best people to help a child or young person are nearly always their own relatives. Sometimes friends whom you think of as part of the family also attend. The idea of an FGC is that as many people in the family network as possible are invited. Our experience is that even people you have had little contact with come up with good ideas or offer useful help. People should only be excluded from the meeting if they have been seriously abusive to a child or other members of the family.

“Maternal and paternal sides were brought together through the FGC. They didn't know each other before. They were able to make a plan together. We are very grateful.”

## Who organises a family group conference?

The meeting is organised by an independent co-ordinator. 'Independent' means someone who is not involved in the decisions about what will happen to the children or young people. Their job is to make sure that the meeting runs smoothly.



## What if I agree to attend a family group conference?

Your co-ordinator will talk with you about who is in your family network. Whenever possible, everyone important to the child will be invited. After talking with you, the co-ordinator will arrange a time and a place for the meeting, refreshments and crèche for any younger children. The meeting will, whenever possible, be in the language you use at home. We can pay your costs for coming to the meeting such as travel or accommodation.

“It reminds me of other cultural family meetings back in my country of origin. It was very important for all of us to have a co-ordinator from our own background. It made everything easy, and there was no barrier of language and culture.”

The co-ordinator will make sure that the child or children's views are heard in the meeting. Where appropriate they may arrange for someone to support the child in the meeting, or to speak for them.

“An advocate is available for young people which means that there is a voice for the child.”



## What happens at a family group conference?

There are three parts to an FGC. The co-ordinator will always be available to help sort out any problems.

### Part 1. Information giving

This is the part of the meeting where you get the information you need to make a plan. The workers most closely involved with your family will explain why they are worried about your child and tell you the sort of help that they can offer. There will be lots of chances to ask them questions and to be clear about what they are saying. They will then leave the meeting.

### Part 2. Private family time

At this point the co-ordinator will leave while you:

- discuss the information you have been given
- work out and agree a plan
- decide who will do what
- decide what support you need
- decide how you can check that the plan is working.

You don't have to hurry. If you need more information you can ask the co-ordinator.

### Part 3. Explaining your plan

This part of the meeting is to make sure that everyone is clear what has been agreed. When your family has worked out its decisions and plans, the co-ordinator will help you to get them down on paper and present them to the social worker.

## What will happen to your plan after the meeting?

Whenever possible, family services and social work should respond to your plan at the end of the meeting. If this is not possible, the social worker will make sure a decision is reached about your plan quickly. Family services and social work will only disagree with your plan if they think it puts your child or children at risk in some way. The help asked for in the plan will be provided unless it is unreasonable or is unnecessary for the plan to be implemented. If your plan is not accepted you might decide to hold another FGC to think how you could change it.

Once the plan is agreed, family services and social work will work with you to put the plan into action. For the plan to succeed, everyone needs to put into action all that has been agreed. Later on, another FGC can be held to review the plan and see what still needs to be decided.



**“ I feel at least some form of dialogue has now begun and hopefully we can begin to work together as a family for our child’s sake. ”**

Remember, it is your decision whether or not to have an FGC. Most families tell us it made a difference to them.

## What if I have a complaint?

If you are unhappy about the way that your family group conference was organised or with the work of the co-ordinator, you can contact the FGC manager on 020 7974 2335 or 020 7974 1051 or visit [camden.gov.uk/fgc](http://camden.gov.uk/fgc)

If you or your children are not happy with any service provided by Camden children, schools and families you can contact:

The complaints officer  
Freepost RRAR-KKUL-RCEZ  
Camden Council  
Children, schools and families department  
Crowndale Centre  
218 Eversholt Street  
London NW1 1BD  
Tel 020 7974 6673  
Freephone 0800 393 561  
Minicom 020 7974 6096  
Fax 020 7974 1439

Co-ordinator’s details .....

Advocate’s details .....

**“ Difficult process but helpful. ”**

**“ There was no pressure on the family. ”**

If you would like  
'Family group  
conferences:  
information for  
family, relatives  
and friends'  
in large print  
or Braille,  
audio tape or  
in another  
language,  
please contact  
020 7974 2335  
or  
020 7974 1051

Camden family group  
conference service  
Family services  
and social work  
1st Floor  
218 Eversholt Street  
London NW1 1BD

Nëse e dëshironi Konferencat e Grupeve të Familjeve: informata për familjen, të afërmit dhe shokët, në shtyp të madh apo Braille, audiokasetë apo në ndonjë gjuhë tjetër, ju lusim kontaktoni 020 7974 2335.

إذا أردت مؤتمرات المجموعات العائلية: معلومات للعائلة والأقرباء والأصدقاء بالطبعة الكبيرة أو بلغة بريل أو على الشريط أو بلغة أخرى فالرجاء الاتصال مع رقم هاتف: 020 7974 2335.

आपनि यदि फ्यामिलि ग्रुप कनफारेन्ससमुह: इनफरमेशन फर फ्यामिली, विलेटिउस एन्ड फ्रेन्ड्स (परिवार, आश्रियसजन एवंग वन्डु-बान्धवदेर जन्य तथ्या) सम्पर्के वडु छापार अकरे मुद्रित आकारे अथवा ब्रेइल वा अन्धलिपिते, अडिओटेप वा वाज्जिमे शोनार केसेटे अथवा अन्य कोन भाषाय पेते चान, ताहले अनुग्रह करे 020 7974 2335 नाभारे फोन करुन।

Si vous souhaitez obtenir family group conferences: information for family, relatives and friends (Conférences de groupe pour les familles : Informations pour les membres de la famille, les parents et les amis) en gros caractères, en braille, sur support audio ou dans une autre langue, veuillez contacter le 020 7974 2335.

Haddii aad jaclaan lahayd in Shirarka Ururka Qoyska: Warbixino ku wajahan qoyska, qaraabada iyo asxaabta, lagaaga sameeyo daabacaad weyn, qoraalada ay dadka indhoolayaashu akhriyaan (Braille), cajiladaha maqalka ama luuqad kale lagu turjumo, fadlan la xidhiidh 020 7974 2335.

En caso de que desee las Conferencias en Grupo para la Familia: Información para la familia, parientes y amigos en tipo grande o Braille, audio cassette o en otro idioma, no dude en contactar con el número 020 7974 2335.

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