

The facilitator and people from child protection will stay close by in case the family has any questions or needs other help.

When family members are ready, the facilitator will bring the group back together to hear the family's ideas and suggested plan.

### **Part Three – Discussion of the plan:**

The family presents their plan for the future care of the child to the facilitator and to Child Protection staff.

Although everyone at the FGC can agree, all plans have to be approved by a senior manager at Child Protection Services and some might need to be approved by the Court.

At the end of the FGC everyone will be given a copy of the plan that was made and the facilitator will make sure that everyone understands what needs to happen next.

If the family can't agree on a plan, the facilitator reports this back to Child Protection Services and case planning continues as normal.

Things that are said or how people act at the FGC will not be used in Court. Only a record of the agreements or decisions of the FGC will be given to the Court.



# Family Group Conferencing

Information for family members

*There is nothing more important than the safety and wellbeing of our children.*

#### **CONTACT:**

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Children and Youth Services





## What is a Family Group Conference (FGC)?

A FGC is a meeting where family members get together to help make decisions and plans about the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

It is an opportunity for the people who care about the child, and sometimes the child themselves, to talk about what is working well, what is worrying them and what should happen in the future.

A FGC can be organised because the court, family members or the child has asked for one to be held, or because Child Protection Services think it will be a good way to move forward.

## Who organises a FGC?

Child Protection Services make the referral for an FGC but the meeting is organised and run by an independent facilitator.

The family can choose which facilitator they would like.

## Who will support the child?

It is really important that children and young people have a voice so the facilitator will make sure they have their own advocate or support person.

This person will help the child to understand everything that happens and will help them to tell people their views.

## Who will support the family?

Parents and other family members coming to a FGC might want someone to support them and should talk to the facilitator about this before the FGC.

Parents and family members can request to have a formal advocate involved or can have someone else who they know and trust attend the meeting with them.

## What happens before a FGC?

The facilitator will contact the child and their immediate and extended family members and invite them to the FGC.

The child and their family can make suggestions about when and where they would like to meet and what would make it comfortable for them.

The facilitator will invite child protection staff to the FGC and will sometimes also invite professionals from other services that have helped the family or child before or who could help them in the future.

The facilitator will talk to everyone before the conference to make sure that everyone can be safe. This can mean that that some people can't attend on the day or that the meeting is arranged so that not everyone is in the same room together at once.

## What actually happens at a FGC?

### A FGC has three parts:

#### Part One – Introductions and information sharing:

The facilitator will explain why the FGC has been called and introduce everyone.

Child protection staff will give a summary which will include four key questions:

1. *What are we worried about in relation to the child and the family?*
2. *What is working well in the family?*
3. *What needs to happen to make sure the child is safe in the future?*
4. *How safe is the child, from zero (very dangerous for the child) to ten (the child is safe)?*

The facilitator will ask everyone for their ideas about the situation and what support they can offer as part of the plan.

The facilitator will make sure that everyone has a chance to ask questions and will sum up what has been discussed.

Usually everyone takes a short break and has something to eat and drink before the next stage.

#### Part Two – Private time:

The facilitator and the people who are not part of the family will leave the room. The family stay together to share ideas and come up with a plan about how they can support each other to meet the needs of the child.

Sometimes children and advocates and support people can stay for this part of the FGC.