

## Frequently asked questions

### How long will the process take?

This usually takes around six weeks to organise a family meeting, then another 8-12 weeks to see if the plan is being successful.

### Where will the FGC be held?

The FGC will be held in a place most convenient for the family.

### Who might attend a FGC?

The person who made the referral will attend and service providers may be invited by the family to share information. If anyone needs extra support to attend and have their voice heard we can help with this. Children are always encouraged to attend, or share their views whenever possible.

### What meetings will the Family Group Conferencing Practitioner attend?

For FGC Practitioners to be independent they cannot attend CAF, CIN, safeguarding conferences or strategy meetings.

### What will happen with safeguarding concerns?

We will pass on any concerns to the relevant professional or social worker as soon as possible.

### Will you share case notes?

Not unless there is a safeguarding concern.

### What is expected of the referrer?

You will provide the danger statement and set a clear 'bottom line' (safety goal).

You will be expected to attend the Family Group Conference and review.

You will share relevant information sensitively.

Approve and support the plan with appropriate resources if it meets your bottom line (safety goal).

## Family Group Conference: A guide for referrers



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# Family Group Conference: A guide for referrers

## What is a Family Group Conference?

Family Group Conferences are a way of giving families' the chance to get together to make the best plans for their children's future.

It is a decision-making and planning meeting that puts the family in the driving seat.

All families come up against problems from time to time. Every family is unique with its own culture, personalities, dynamic and history. A Family Group Conference uses the families own skills, strengths and personal knowledge to resolve difficulties for children and young people.

The Review of Care Proceedings (DCA/DfES 2006) recommended FGCs as an effective process for exploring placements for vulnerable children/young people with their wider family and friends.

## The FGC Practitioner (FGCP)

The FGC Practitioner is an independent coordinator - they have a neutral role and will help you prepare and give information to the FGC but will stay impartial throughout.

FGCPs have been given official status in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2006 (Page 189).

## Preparing for the conference

An FGC is not a cure and is sometimes just the start of a much longer process; the meeting can raise uncomfortable issues which you need to be prepared for. As a professional you are entering into a process of family led decision making and need to be flexible and responsive in your role.

## What is different about FGC?

FGC gives responsibilities back to families – supporting them to solve their own problems. This happens best when everyone's views are listened to especially those of children and young people.

It is informal with light refreshments and held in a neutral venue near the family home.

## Why FGC?

Family Group Conferencing started in New Zealand in the 1980s. Since then a great deal of evidence worldwide has shown that families are often the best decision makers when it comes to solving their own problems. Through FGC families are empowered to make safe decisions and the solutions they come up with have been found to be more likely to last.

FGC brings together a whole network of people other than the immediate family to share the problem and offer solutions.

This network can include wider family members and close family friends. These people bring with them a wealth of experience, resources and a fresh look on a problem and ideas which may have been overlooked.

## What are the criteria?

Referrals can be made to the FGC Service in the following circumstances:

- Cafcass referrals regarding contact dispute/disagreements
- Second entry child protection
- Child in Need, stepping up to child protection.

## What is the FGC process?

1. Make a referral to the FGC team via [FGCReferrals@Nelincs.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:FGCReferrals@Nelincs.gcsx.gov.uk)
2. Meet with the FGCP to discuss the referral and bottom line.
3. The FGC practitioner will work with the family over several weeks to explain the process, and to find out who they would like to attend the meeting and make all arrangements.
4. The FGCP will visit and invite all family members and close friends who might support the plan and attend the family meeting.
5. The referrer will attend the FGC meeting to give an outline of what the problems are.
6. The family will have private time to discuss issues and prepare a plan.
7. The referrer will be asked to endorse the plan as long as it meets their bottom line.
8. The FGC practitioner will then send the plan out to everybody who attended the meeting.
9. The referrer will make every reasonable effort they can to support the plan.
10. The plan will be reviewed after 8-12 weeks. If another meeting is required the FGCP will arrange this.

You can find the referral form on the LSCB website at [www.nelsafeguardingchildrenboard.co.uk/practitioners/](http://www.nelsafeguardingchildrenboard.co.uk/practitioners/) under Family Group Conferencing.