



## What is a Family Group Conference?

A Family Group Conference (FCG) is a decision making meeting. It is arranged and run by an Independent Co-ordinator.

'Family' is defined broadly, to include the child, parents, extended family and significant others.

At the Conference, the family will always have private discussion time to produce their plan for the care and protection of the child. The family's plan should be accepted unless it places a child at risk of significant harm, and should be resourced within reasonable limits.

## Why should I refer?

FGCs are based on the principles of partnership, as defined in the Children (NI) Order 1995. They are a means of enabling families to find solutions to their own problems within a professionally supportive framework. The process aims to make use of the family's strengths and resources and seeks to respect each family's own culture and values.

## When should I refer?

When there is a need to make plans for a child's welfare.

## How to refer

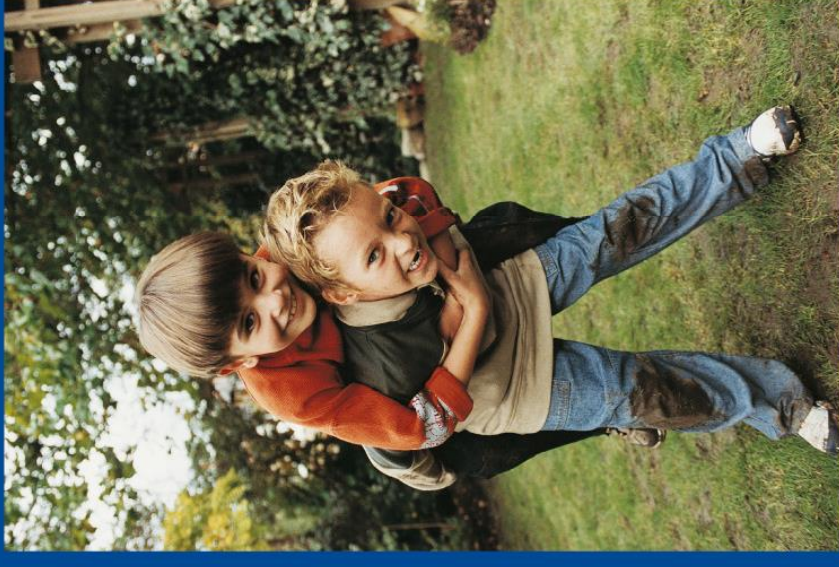
Talk to the family about the possibility of having a FGC. There is no need, at this stage, to obtain detailed information about the family network.

Complete an FGC referral form and send it to the Project Manager who will organise a referral meeting. In cases of urgency, a telephone call can precede the referral.

## What happens next?

An Independent Co-ordinator, whose role is to convene the FGC, will be allocated the referral.

The Co-ordinator will meet with the child and the family and map out the family network. It is the Co-ordinator's task to write to family members and to engage and prepare them for the Conference.



## Your role as a professional

### Before the Conference

- to make an assessment of the problems;
- to be clear about the 'bottom line';
- to discuss your assessment with the family; and
- to liaise with the Co-ordinator in preparation for the Conference.



#### At the Conference

- to provide information in a form which is concise, relevant and understandable;
- to describe the type of help/resources your agency can offer;
- to answer any questions asked by the family about the information you provide;
- to agree the plan unless it places a child at risk of significant harm; and
- to agree responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the plan.

#### After the Conference

- once the family has produced a plan, the Co-ordinator records it and a copy goes to all those invited to the FGC;
- the family's plan forms the basis for future work with the child and family; and
- professionals should support and implement the plan, if at all possible.

Family Group Conferences are family-led and therefore each one is unique. The process places a requirement upon professionals to be as flexible and responsive as possible in their role.



## Family Group Conference Service

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# Family Group Conferences

a guide for professionals

