



Case study one:

Tool 2 - Family group conferences

This tool sets out the process for a Family Group Conference. You can use it to plan and hold a conference.

The Family Group Conference Model



The Family Group Conference process

Stage 1: The referral

Whether or not a family group conference takes place is a decision made by the family. Under no circumstances can a family be made or forced to have a family group conference.

Once a referral for a family group conference is made, there will need to be a co-ordinator to liaise with the family.

The co-ordinator helps the family to plan the meeting and chair the meeting. The co-ordinator is different from the referrer and acts as a neutral person. The co-ordinator will not influence the family to make a particular decision but will help them to think about the decisions that need to be made. Families should be offered the opportunity to request a co-ordinator who suitably reflects their ethnicity, language, religion or gender, and the family's request should be accommodated wherever possible.



Case study one: Tool 2 - Family group conferences continued

Stage 2: Preparation

The co-ordinator organises the meeting in conjunction with the family members and other members of the network. This can include close friends.

- > The co-ordinator discusses with the person with care and support needs how they can be helped to participate in the conference and whether they would like a supporter or advocate at the meeting. The supporter/advocate will then meet with them in preparation for the meeting.
- > The co-ordinator meets with members of the family network, discusses worries or concerns, including how the family group conference will be conducted, and encourages them to attend.
- > The co-ordinator liaises with the referrer and other relevant agencies to ensure family members have appropriate information about:
 - the wellbeing concerns which need to be considered at the family group conference. This includes identifying any bottom line about what can, and, importantly, cannot be agreed as part of the plan from the agency's perspective.
 - services that could help.
- > The co-ordinator negotiates the date, time and venue for the conference, sends out invitations and makes the necessary practical arrangements.

Stage 3: The conference

The family group conference follows three distinct stages.

a) Information giving

This part of the meeting is chaired by the co-ordinator. They will make sure that everyone is introduced, that everyone present understands the purpose and process of the family group conference and agrees how the meeting will be conducted including, if felt helpful by those present, explicit ground rules. The service providers give information to the family about:

- > the reason for the conference;
- > information they hold that will assist the family to make the plan;
- > information about resources and support they are able to provide;
- > any wellbeing concerns that will affect what can be agreed in the plan; and
- > what action will be taken if the family cannot make a plan or the plan is not agreed.

The family members may also provide information, ask for clarification or raise questions.



Case study one:

Tool 2 - Family group conferences continued

b) Private family time

Agency staff and the co-ordinator are not present during this part of the conference. Family members have time to talk among themselves and come up with a plan that addresses concerns raised. They will identify resources and support which are required from agencies, as well as within the family, to make the plan work.

c) Plan and agreement

When the family has made their plan, the referrer and the co-ordinator meet with the family to discuss and agree the plan including resources.

It is the referrer's responsibility to agree the plan of action and it is important that this happens on the day of the conference. It should be presumed that the plan must be agreed unless it puts anyone at risk of significant harm. Any reasons for not accepting the plan must be made clear immediately and the family should be given the opportunity to respond to the concerns and change or add to the plan.

It is important to ensure that everyone involved has a clear understanding of what is decided and that their views are understood.

Resources are discussed and agreed with the agency concerned, and it is important that, at this point, timescales and names of those responsible for any tasks are clarified. Contingency plans, monitoring arrangements and how to review the plan also need to be agreed.

The co-ordinator should distribute the plan to family members involved and to the social worker and other information givers/relevant professionals.

This information is based largely on www.frg.org.uk/the-family-group-conference-process

Stage 4: Implementation of the Plan

It is essential that everybody involved implements their parts of the plan within agreed timescales and communicate and addresses any problems that arise.

Stage 5: Review of the plan

There should be a clear process for reviewing the implementation of the plan. A review family group conference or other meeting should be offered to the family so they can consider how the plan is working, and to make adjustments or change the plan if necessary.