



Family Group Conference

Training & Consultancy brochure

About Family Rights Group

Our mission:

To create a more socially just society in which the child welfare and family justice systems support children to live safely and thrive within their family, while strengthening the family and community networks of those children who cannot live at home.

Our vision is a society in which children live safely and thrive within their family and community.

The Charity was set up in 1974. Over half a century, Family Rights Group has achieved many successes, but even greater challenges remain.

We seek to ensure that:

- Families involved with the child welfare and family justice system are treated fairly, have their rights respected and are able to make informed decisions;
- Children and families get the help they need, so wherever possible children can live safely and flourish within their family network;
- All children, including those in care, have lasting and supportive relationships to sustain them throughout their lives;
- Our child welfare and family justice system – and wider society – promotes social justice and create conditions that enable children to achieve their potential;
- Children and families' voices and experiences drive decision making at an individual and strategic level within the child welfare and family justice system.

We do this through:

1. A free specialist legal and child welfare practice advice service for parents and kinship carers;
2. By supporting local authorities through the provision of resources, training and consultancy;
3. By finding innovative family-led ways to improve child welfare;
4. Promoting families' voices so children and families with experience of the child welfare and family justice system help shape it, at local and national level; and
5. Research and lobbying for legislative and policy changes.

Our starting point is the child within the family. Feedback from families, practitioners and policy makers is that they find us helpful and non-judgmental, knowledgeable, robust and tenacious, compassionate and inclusive, innovative and problem solving.



Advice Service

Family Rights Group runs a free, independent and confidential advice service. We advise families when they are involved with children's services or need their help. We provide advice for parents, grandparents, relatives and friends including kinship carers in England. Our expert advisers are all experienced lawyers, social workers or family rights advocates. They help families to understand the law and child welfare processes and their rights and options. And to better understand social work concerns.

Our service includes:

Easy-to-follow, **online advice**. Features include an A-Z, FAQs, films, 'top tips' and legal advice sheets: www.frg.org.uk

Online forums where families can receive advice, discuss issues and find support from others

A **free telephone advice line** open Monday to Friday between 9.30am and 3pm (excluding Bank Holidays) on **0808 801 0366**. For Textphone dial 18001 followed by the advice line number.

A webchat service where families can chat online to an adviser and get information and advice

What is a family group conference?

A family group conference (FGC) is a process which enables a family to make a plan with and for their child to address concerns.

FGCs work by helping families resolve concerns, keep children safely within their network and avert children from the care system.

FGCs are internationally recognised and evaluated. A family-led decision-making approach with a set of clear principles and an established accreditation scheme within England.

Family group conference seven quality standards



1. FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCE COORDINATOR IS INDEPENDENT.



2. FAMILY'S DECISION TO PARTICIPATE IS VOLUNTARY.



3. FGC IS FAMILY-LED & INCLUDES "PRIVATE FAMILY TIME" FOR THE FAMILY TO MAKE A PLAN.



4. REFERRED CHILD OR ADULT IS THE CENTRAL FOCUS OF THE FGC & SUPPORTED TO TAKE PART.



5. FGC SERVICE SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE FAMILY HAS ALL NECESSARY RESOURCES TO MAKE THEIR PLAN.



6. FGC SHOULD RESPECT THE FAMILY'S PRIVACY AND RIGHT TO CONFIDENTIALITY.



7. THE FGC SERVICE SHOULD WORK TO THE PRINCIPLES OF EQUALITY AND INCLUSIVITY, PROMOTING DIVERSITY INCLUDING RESPECTING AND BEING SENSITIVE TO THE FAMILY'S CULTURE AND INDIVIDUAL IDENTITIES.

Strengths and benefits of FGCs

Family-driven

The FGC process allows a family and their network to draw on their strengths and resources to make a safe plan with and for their children.

The family group conference coordinator is independent

The coordinator is independent from local authority decisions.

Independence helps build families' trust.

Engagement of parents and wider family & friends' network

Preparation of all family, everyone given clear information and all family visited.

The dedicated role gives coordinators the time to work with family including overcoming any barriers preventing family or friends participating.

Clear practice framework

Supported by practice standards and an accreditation process.

Child-focused and child participation in the FGC

Child offered an independent advocate.

Child involved in the FGC in ways right for them.

What is the evidence telling us?

FGCs lead to more children living safely in their families

Children are less likely to be in care one year later (36%) compared to those not offered an FGC (45%). FGCs lead to more children living with family rather than in local authority foster care / children's home.

Foundations evaluation: RCT of Family Group Conferences. 2023

FGCs widen family & friend participation & draw on their strengths

Draws on the strengths and resources of family, and encourages wider family participation in the process including fathers and paternal relatives.

Karen J. Skaale Havnen and Øivin Christiansen (2014) Knowledge Review on Family Group Conferencing Experiences and Outcomes.

FGCs lead to savings for local authorities

Safely prevents children entering the care system with an estimated cost saving of £150 million over two years if rolled out nationally.

Foundations 2023


FGCs originated in New Zealand in 1989 and are grounded in the Maori culture. The approach has been enshrined in NZ law.

In New Zealand, only 41 per 10,000 children are in care. Of whom 39% are raised in kinship care.~

In England, 71 per 10,000 children are in care. Of whom only 15% are raised in kinship care~~.

~Experiences of Care in Aotearoa
July 2022 – 30 June 2023

~~31st March 2022 DfE 903 data



FGCs are global

Offered in 30+ countries including Australia, New Zealand, United States, across Europe and throughout the UK and Ireland.



Introduced in 1990s

in the UK by Family Rights Group who invited a group of practitioners from New Zealand to share information and their experience of practice.



82%

of local authorities in England have a FGC service.*



75

FGC services are members of Family Rights Group FGC & Lifelong Links Network



58%

of FGC services have expanded over the last 3 years*



50%

over 50% of FGC coordinators are trained by Family Rights Group*



70%

of FGC services offer FGCs at the Early Help stage. Research show that FGCs can be effective whenever the time is right for the family, and the sooner the better.*

*A UK-wide survey of family group conference provision by CASCADE, Cardiff University 2022

After taking part in a family group conference, Kevin Makwikila said:

“

As a father, I often felt like the ghost in the room when children's services were involved with my family. When my family were able to be together in one room during the family group conference, it was so much easier to see who could help with what and it was clear and easy for me to understand what and whom I could rely on in any given situation. Some of my family members offered to provide temporary housing to my son and I until our housing issues could be resolved. Others offered to care for my son at weekends to give me a break and some offered food and financial support. The level of support was wonderful, and this ensured my plans would go well.

”

Training and consultancy packages



Family group conference set up package

Our expert team will guide you through each stage from initial considerations of the drivers for introducing an FGC service to the FGC service becoming operational and planning for future development. Included in the package:

An introductory one hour consultancy session with senior leaders to discuss how to best support the introduction of a sustainable FGC service.

Two “core” practice development sessions from a choice of:

- Introduction to family group conferences
- Referring to and working with a family group conference
- Developing a family group conference service (see p6)

If a service would prefer to access an “advanced” practice development session there will be a supplementary £250 charge.

14 hours consultancy support from a Family Rights Group practice adviser. Each local authority will have a dedicated practice adviser to answer questions, help troubleshoot challenges and be on hand to provide expert advice and support over the course of the year. This support will be provided online and via the telephone. For face to face meetings there will be an additional charge.

Three **FGC coordinator training** places.

One year membership to the FGC & Lifelong Links Network which includes: 4 national network meetings a year, monthly FGC managers’ meetings and access to FGC resources and members area on our website.

Duration: 12 months // Cost: £6000



Family group conference service development

This package will help FGC services who are still in the early stages or are expanding and restructuring and would benefit from additional support. Included in the package:

One “core” practice development session (see page 6). The scope and purpose of these sessions will be developed in consultation with the local authority and Family Rights Group. If a service would prefer to access an “advanced” session there will be a supplementary £250 charge.

14 hours consultancy support from a FRG practice adviser (as above, this support will be online).

Opportunity to submit service for **accreditation**. Family Rights Group have run the quality assurance accreditation programme for family group conference services since 2013.

One year membership to the FGC & Lifelong Links Network which includes: 4 national network meetings a year, monthly FGC managers’ meetings and access to FGC resources and members area on our website.

Duration: 12 months // Cost: £4000

Practice development sessions

All the options outlined below can be tailored to suit the needs of each local authority. Costs are based on support being provided online. In person support is available, costings for this will be provided on request. This is not an exhaustive list of the sessions that we can run. If there is a topic or issue you would like to address then please contact Jordene Sewell (jsewell@frg.org.uk).

Core practice development sessions

Introduction to family group conferences

A half day course that explains the principles of family group conferences and how they work, the research evidence and how an FGC service can be introduced and sustained in the local context.

Referring to and working with a family group conference

This half day course is designed for social workers and any other practitioners who may refer families for an FGC or who may be involved in another way, for example, asked to attend the information giving section of a family group conference.

Developing a family group conference service

It will consider what needs to be in place for the FGC service to work effectively, including organisational culture, aligning of policies and procedures, ways to promote the service and measure impact. It will highlight good practice and potential pitfalls and will assist organisations to develop an effective plan to set up a sustainable service that adheres to Family Rights Group's national accreditation standards.

Duration: half day (3.5 hours) // Cost: £800 standalone (no charge if selected as part of consultation package).

Advanced practice development sessions

FGCs and domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is often a factor leading to children's services involvement with a family. There will also be families the FGC service is working with where social workers are unaware that an adult or child has been or is a victim of domestic abuse. Research shows that family group conferences can be an effective means of safeguarding domestic abuse victims, putting in plans to support their well-being and holding those perpetrating abuse accountable for their behaviour. This session will consider what policies, procedures, practice and support systems need to be in place for an FGC service to reduce risk and prevent further harm.

Embedding or expanding a family group conference service

This bespoke session would be developed in conjunction with the FGC service to consider what steps need to be taken in order to either increase the number of families benefitting from FGCs and/or to extend referrals to the service from other areas of child welfare, youth justice or education.

Engaging families in FGC service design & development

Those with experience of FGCs are often best placed to guide organisations about what needs to be in place for the service to work well. They are also often important champions for the FGC service, with their own experiences persuading decision makers, practitioners and other families alike of the merits of FGCs. Consistent with the ethos of FGCs, this session will involve those with lived experience and guide FGC services as to how to engage young people and families in FGC service design and development as part of the service's commitment to continuous improvement.

Duration: 5 hours // Cost: £1250 standalone (£250 if selected as part of consultancy package)

One-off bespoke consultancy offers

Facilitated discussion

An externally facilitated conversation to discuss a day to day practice issue or something new you are thinking about introducing to your FGC team. This is a semi-structured session with an independent practice advisor from FRG intended to help you think through ideas and practice implications with the aim of exploring options and planning next steps.

Duration: 2 hours plus preparation // Cost: £350

FGC team day

This session is for established FGC services. It is a facilitated workshop providing a mix of FGC practice development and team building. You will have the opportunity to discuss your aims for this workshop in advance. Ideal for a FGC team away day.

Details including cost and duration to be discussed

**Please note that VAT is applicable to the costs quoted in this brochure.*

You can contact Jordene Sewell (jsewell@frg.org.uk) to discuss any of the options outlined.



Family group conferences

Other opportunities with Family Rights Group



FGC coordinator training

A course for those with some knowledge of family group conferences and child welfare processes, who wish to increase their understanding and develop the necessary skills to coordinate a family group conference for a child. Carried out virtually over four days. Individual places can be booked, or whole course commissioned by a local authority. Face to face or hybrid training may be available on request (at an additional cost).

£550 per individual place or £5850 for commissioned course*

(in person training cost available on request)

* 10% discount for FGC & Lifelong Links network members



FGC and Lifelong Links Network

Family Rights Group hosts the Family Group Conference and Lifelong Links Network which was launched in May 1999. The purpose of the Network is to connect family group conference and Lifelong Links practitioners, managers and academics while promoting the development of family group conferences and Lifelong Links and the values they represent.

Cost dependent on size of service click [here for details](#)



FGC accreditation

We have run the quality assurance accreditation programme for family group conference services since 2013. All family group conference services are welcome to apply to become accredited. Accreditation lasts for three years.

Cost dependent on size of service click [here for details](#)

For more information on Family Rights Group visit www.frg.org.uk

Helping Families Helping Children

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101 Pentonville Road, London, N1 9LG



Free Advice Line 0808 801 0366

(Monday to Friday 9.30am to 3pm)



Admin Tel 020 7923 2628 **Email** office@frg.org.uk

(We cannot provide advice by email or on the admin telephone line)

