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# Islington Family Group Conference Service

Information for families, relatives and friends



A photograph of a family of four sitting on a dark brown leather couch. In the foreground, a young boy with short hair, wearing a red and black jacket, is smiling and looking towards the right. Behind him, a woman with dark hair is smiling. In the center, a young girl with braided hair, wearing a white shirt, is smiling and looking down at a tablet held by an adult's hands. The background is a warm, orange-toned wall with a wooden panel. The overall mood is happy and engaged.

## What is the Family Group Conference?

We think that families are able to make the best decisions and plans about their children, if those family members have all the information they need.

A Family Group Conference offers family members and others close to the family a chance to get together to find out what is happening in their family and to discuss how to sort out any problems. During a Family Group Conference the family make their plans without the social worker or other workers being there.



## What if I have a complaint?

If you are unhappy about the way that your Family Group Conference was organised or with the work of the co-ordinator, you can contact the manager of the FGC Service on 020 7527 8798. If you or your child remains dissatisfied with any service provided by Children's Services, you may contact the Complaints Unit on 020 7527 8048, and they will be able to assist you in making a complaint under the Department's complaints procedures.

## The co-ordinator

An independent co-ordinator will help you to organise the meeting. 'Independent' simply means that they do not play any part in the decisions made about children by Islington Children's Services.

## Who should come to a Family Group Conference?

The best people to help a child or young person are nearly always their own relatives. Sometimes friends who you think of as part of the family also attend.

## Preparing for the meeting

Your co-ordinator will help you decide who needs to be invited to the meeting. Whenever possible, everyone important to the child will be invited. After talking with you the co-ordinator will arrange a time and a place for the meeting, refreshments and a crèche for any younger children. The meeting will be in the language you speak at home. Your costs for coming to the meeting e.g. travel or accommodation may be covered. The co-ordinator will make sure that the child(ren)'s views are going to be listened to in the meeting.



## What happens at a Family Group Conference?

The co-ordinator will be there with you to help the meeting run smoothly.

## Information giving

This is the part of the meeting where you get the information you need to make a plan. This will also be the time when the children's views are presented. The workers most closely involved with your family will explain why they are worried about your child and tell you the sort of help that they can offer. There will be lots of chances to ask them questions and to be clear about what they are saying. They will then leave the meeting.

## Private family time

At this point the co-ordinator will leave you whilst you:

- discuss the information you have been given
- agree a plan
- decide who will do what
- decide how you can check that the plan is working

You don't have to hurry. If you need more information you can ask the co-ordinator. Families do not always agree. When this happens the co-ordinator will help the family come to some agreement.

## Explaining your plan

This part of the meeting is to make sure that every one is clear what has been agreed. When your family has worked out its decisions and plans, the co-ordinator will help you to get them down on paper and present them to your social worker.



## What will happen to your plan after the meeting?

The social worker will make sure a decision is reached about your plan as soon as possible after your meeting. Children's Services will only disagree with your plan if they think it puts your child or children at risk in some way. If that happens you might decide to hold another conference to change your plan.

Once the plan is agreed, Children's Services will work with you to put the plan into action. For the plan to succeed everyone needs to put into action all that has been agreed. A review meeting may be arranged at a later date to see how the plan is working out or if it needs to be changed in any way.

## How you can have your say

We need families to tell us what they think about Family Group Conferences. You will be asked at the end of your meeting to answer a few questions on a form. You may also be contacted at a later date to see if you would like to have some input in how the FGC service can be developed and improved, perhaps by joining a family forum. We will also be looking for family members willing to talk to other families who are thinking about having a FGC and who would like to talk to someone who has been through it already.



**For further information please contact**

The FGC Manager

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**E** [fgc@islington.gov.uk](mailto:fgc@islington.gov.uk)

**If you would like this document in large print or Braille, audiotape or in another language, please contact 020 7527 2000.**

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