

# **Family and Group Conferencing for Adults**

## **INFORMATION FOR PEOPLE INVITED TO AN FGC (NETWORK PERSON)**

## **What is a Family and Group Conference for adults?**

## What is a Family and Group Conference (FGC)?

Adult family and group conferences (FGCs) are a type of meeting that can be offered to adults who have care and support needs. The FGC is about bringing together people to help someone find a way forward in their current situation. For example, the FGC could be about assistance with someone's day-to-day living, enabling their recovery, getting out and about, or ensuring their safety.

This information is for anyone who is interested in knowing more about FGCs. It will help if you are a family member or friend of someone who is having an FGC, and you have been invited to their FGC. It will also be of interest to any health or social care practitioner who wants to know more about FGCs. There is a separate leaflet aimed specifically at people who are at the centre of the FGC.

This resource contains several quotes from people who have experienced an FGC, either as the central person in the FGC, or as a family or friend.

*It became clear that [the FGC] wasn't about putting in basic support, but helping me to live my best life possible.*

*Michaela, Central Person*

## Who might be involved?

Every FGC has a trained coordinator. This coordinator is always **independent**. Their job is to get to know the central person in the FGC, helping them to decide who to invite, the things they would like support with, and options they would like to be considered.

An FGC is always led by the person, and they can invite anyone who they would like there – for instance, family, friends, neighbours, people from the local community or people from faith groups. People can also choose to have any social workers, nurses, doctors or other professionals join in the first part of the meeting. The person **always** gets to decide who comes to an FGC.

*You can bring any member of your family in. Which I think is really important for those that are on the journey with that person.*

*Debi, Central Person*

*I was pleased it was happening, because I was concerned about my friend. She was struggling a little bit, and she needed some support. When I found out that this [the FGC] was going to happen, I thought it would be a good opportunity for people to come together and to talk about how we were going to support my friend.*

*Sam, Network Member*

## How can it help?

An FGC can be a good way of drawing up a plan for support or recovery. It puts the person at the heart of decision-making and involves other people who know and care about them. Since everyone will be in the same room together, it can also help to bring people closer together and improve communication – with friends, family and a person's social network, and with any professionals or services that may also be involved in a person's support.

An FGC can help in a wide variety of circumstances. For example, the discussion could be about:

- Enabling someone to do the things that matter to them in their daily life – with the people that they would like to be with.
- Planning for the future – for instance, deciding how best to support someone's independence or making decisions together about where someone might live.
- Arranging the immediate support that someone may need while they are getting better – for example, if someone has recently been discharged from hospital, or has faced other challenges in their life.
- Making things safer for someone where they live, or when they go out.
- Making sure that family and friends around a person have the support that they need too.
- Better coordinating the help that someone is getting from professionals and services, so that this fits better with what they would like.

## What are the stages of an FGC?

This is how an FGC is usually structured.

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The preparation before, and the conference itself, can take as long as it needs to take. It is important that the process doesn't feel rushed.

## What happens before the FGC?

Before the meeting takes place, the coordinator will help the person write down what they would like to discuss in the FGC. The coordinator will also talk with everyone who the person has invited, so that they are clear about what they are coming to, and can share any ideas or concerns of their own.

With the person's permission, all relevant information will be written down and sent around for everyone to see and think about before they come to the FGC.

## What will the FGC meeting be like?

It's the person's meeting, so they decide who to invite to the FGC and where they'd like to hold it. This will usually be somewhere where they feel comfortable rather than in a 'formal' place like a council office. It may be, for example, in a community centre, library, or the place where the person is living. Family and friends who can't be there in person may be able to join the meeting online.

The coordinator will ensure that any access, communication and/or cultural needs are met – including whether it may be helpful for the central person to have an advocate in order to help them to get their ideas and preferences across. If anyone finds it hard to keep going through a long meeting, you can take breaks or arrange to split the conference up into smaller meetings.

Everyone who comes to the FGC is there because the central person wants them to be there.

*Everyone's different, but the FGC works in a much more unique way, built around the person as a whole. It's much more tailored to you.*

*Anna, Central Person*

## How does the meeting start?

Before getting into the discussions, it is usual to do something informal together, such as sharing some food. This can help set a friendly and welcoming atmosphere, and break down barriers between people who may not know each other very well.

The coordinator will be there at the start to support each person to have their say and listen to what others may be thinking or feeling. The coordinator will understand any fears and concerns. They are there to help everyone, including family and friends, and make sure that everyone's voice is heard.

The coordinator will often start the FGC by going through what had been sent around to everyone ahead of the meeting.

If professionals have been invited to the FGC, they will join the first part of the meeting. The person, and their family and friends, can ask them questions and discuss ideas and possible options – including what sorts of community or service support may be available. If professionals have raised any concerns about the welfare of the person, everyone will be able to discuss those concerns together.

*We were sat in a circle... the chap who was leading it, he was sat on the sofa as well with us. There were a few people, but we weren't too far apart.*

Sam, Network Member

## What is Private Time?

After this opening discussion, the coordinator and any professionals will leave the room so that the person, and their chosen support network, can have Private Time together. This is when everyone can discuss options and ideas.

In Private Time, the person, along with the family and friends at the FGC, can:

- > Discuss the information that has been shared.
- > Clarify how the person would like their life to be, and what sorts of support they may need in order to achieve this.
- > Share ideas about what might work best.
- > Decide on who would like to do what.
- > Identify what additional care or support may be needed.
- > Work out and agree what the person wants to have in their plan.
- > Agree how everyone will communicate with each other to make sure that the plan is put into action and that everything is fitting together as the person hoped it would.

If the discussion gets a bit stuck, you can all invite the coordinator back in to help get back on track.

## How is the plan finalised?

When Private Time is over, the coordinator will return to the meeting to help firm up the plan and help write it down. The person's plan will outline who will be doing what to provide the person with the support and resources that they may need in order to move forward.

The plan will reflect what has been discussed during Private Time. It will be a record of things everyone has agreed between themselves. There may need to be a further discussion with relevant professionals to clarify whether care or support services can be provided as the person would wish – or whether they are happy that the plan has addressed any professional concerns about the person's welfare.

## What will happen after the Family and Group Conference?

The coordinator and any professionals will work with the person and their support network to put the plan into action. Once the plan is finalised, it can be shared with everyone who is involved, including professionals and services, family and friends, so that everyone is clear about who will be doing what, and how everyone will be communicating with each other.

After a few weeks, the coordinator will review with the person, and those who are supporting them, how the plan is working out and whether anything in it needs to be changed. An FGC can help to bring people closer together, and improve relationships with professionals and services. The review provides an opportunity to discuss how this is going – and look at ways to improve communication if this may be helpful.

*Once the plan was in place, we all tried our best to follow the plan. Not straightaway, but over time, I've seen a massive improvement.*

*Rebecca, Network Member*



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