

Family and Group Conferencing for Adults

INFORMATION FOR THE CENTRAL PERSON

What is a Family and Group Conference for adults?

What is a Family and Group Conference (FGC)?

A Family and Group Conference (FGC) offers a way of bringing together the people that are important to you in helping you decide on the sorts of support you may find useful. For example, the FGC could be about assistance with day-to-day living, enabling your recovery, getting out and about, or ensuring your safety.

It's not like many other meetings: you are in charge. There will be an independent person, called a coordinator, who will be there to help you all the way through. (The coordinator is someone who is separate from your friends and family, and will not be one of the professionals who is currently supporting you.)

An FGC is always voluntary and you are in control. You don't have to have one. If you choose not to, other options can be discussed.

This leaflet will help you if you want to consider having an FGC. This leaflet contains several quotes from people who have had an FGC, so as to give you an idea of what it is like.

There is a separate leaflet aimed specifically at the other people you invite to an FGC (called 'network members').

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 you and help arrange your meeting the way that you would like it to be. They will talk to you about who you might like to invite – and can make the invitations on your behalf if you would like them to. They will talk with you about the things you would like support with, and options you would like to be considered.

An FGC is always led by you, and you can invite anyone who you would like there – for instance, family, friends, neighbours, people from your local community or people from faith groups. If appropriate, you can invite (to the first part of the meeting) any social workers, nurses, doctors or other professionals that may also be involved in supporting you. You get 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, putting you at the heart of decision-making and involving other people who know you and care about you. 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 your social network, and with any professionals or services that may also be involved in supporting you.

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

- > Enabling you to do the things that matter to you in your daily life – with the people that you would like to be with.
- > Planning for the future – for instance, deciding how best to support your independence or making decisions together about where you might live.
- > Arranging the immediate support that you may need while you are getting better – for example, if you are being discharged from hospital or have faced other challenges in your life.
- > Making things safer for you where you live, or when you go out.
- > Making sure that your family and friends who support you have the support that they need too.
- > Better coordinating the help you are getting from professionals and services, so that this fits better with what you 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 you don't feel rushed.

What happens before your conference?

Before the meeting takes place, your coordinator will help you write down what you would like to discuss in the FGC. They will listen to your ideas and preferences about what you think is helpful to include in your plan.

The coordinator will also talk with everyone who you have invited, so that they are clear about what they are coming to. The people you have invited will also be asked whether they have any of their own ideas or concerns that might be useful to share before coming to the meeting.

With your permission, all relevant information will be written down and sent around for everyone to see and think about before they come to your FGC. You may choose to write this yourself. You could even choose another way to share this information, such as to audio record it, or to use pictures or photos.

What will the FGC meeting be like?

It's your meeting, so you can decide who to invite to the FGC and where you'd like to hold it – somewhere where you would feel most comfortable. It's not usual to hold FGCs in 'formal' places like council offices – so you might be looking at places that are local and familiar to you, such as community centres or libraries. Some people prefer to host their FGC where they are living. If there is someone who is important to you that lives some distance away, they may be able to join the meeting online, so that you can talk to them on a screen and they can be part of the conversations.

The coordinator will ensure that any access, communication and/or cultural needs are met – including whether it may be helpful for you to have an advocate in order to help you to get your ideas and preferences across.

If you find it difficult to keep going through a long meeting, you can take breaks or arrange to split your conference up into smaller meetings.

Everyone who comes to your FGC is there because you want 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 you get into your 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 your fears and concerns, so don't worry if you don't feel confident. They are there to help you and make sure that your voice is heard. A good way to do this is to start by going through what had been sent around to everyone ahead of the meeting.

If you have invited professionals to your FGC, they will join you for the first part of the meeting, so that you can ask them questions and discuss ideas and possible options – including what sorts of community or service support may be available to you. If they have raised any concerns about your welfare, you will be able to discuss their concerns with them – and what they think might help to resolve these concerns.

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 you, and your chosen support network, can have Private Time together. This is when everyone can discuss options and ideas.

In Private Time, you, along with your family and friends, can:

- > Discuss the information that has been shared.
- > Clarify how you would like your life to be, and what sorts of support you 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 you want to have in your 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 you hoped it would.

If the discussion gets a bit stuck, you can invite the coordinator back in to help get back on track. You do not have to agree to anything that does not feel right for you.

How is your plan finalised?

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

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

What will happen after the Family and Group Conference?

The coordinator and any professionals will work with you to put your plan into action. Once your plan is finalised, it can be shared with everyone who is involved, including professionals and services, 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 you, and those who are supporting you, how the plan is working out and whether anything in it needs to be changed. An FGC can help to bring people closer together around you, and improve relationships with professionals and services. Your 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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