

research
in practice
for adults

What is...

***a family group
conference for
adults?***

Dartington

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Adult family group conferences (FGCs) are family-led meetings that encourage and empower an adult with care and support needs and their family/wider support circle to think about their collective strengths and resources to make personalised plans for the future.

If there is a need to reduce conflict, rebuild trust or improve communication between family members, then some form of mediation may need to be considered and this should also be discussed with the Family Group Conference coordinator before the meeting.

The FGC may include family, friends, neighbours, local community and faith groups, or anyone else who is involved in providing informal care and support in a person's life.

How... *can it help?*

An FGC can be used in a wide variety of circumstances.
For example:

- > Young adults at transition to adult services, to plan for their future care. It may also consider what support the wider family support network can offer to allow that person to access education and employment.
- > People living with early stages of dementia, to make decisions about their future care and support needs.
- > Older people, to plan care and support if they wish to stay in their own home.
- > Carers, to plan support for themselves and the person they care for.

This list is by no means exhaustive, an FGC may be beneficial in many other circumstances where someone has care and support needs and where families/support circles need to talk together about problems or concerns and find solutions.

Who... *might be involved in the family group conference?*

The meeting may be recommended by your social worker but organised by an independent coordinator. 'Independent' means someone who has not been involved in the decisions made about what is currently happening to you. Their job is to make sure the meeting runs smoothly.



What...

might need to happen before a family group conference can take place?

Your social worker will ask you if you want a family group conference, participation is **entirely voluntary**. If you agree to an FGC your social worker might provide you with a report which will set out their views on your situation, professional help available and pose some questions for you and your family group to consider when you make your plan in the meeting.

Your coordinator will talk with you about who is in your family network. Whenever possible, everyone important to you will be invited. After talking with you, the coordinator will arrange a time and a place for the meeting. Where appropriate the coordinator can arrange for an advocate, this is someone to support you individually to ensure your views are heard in the FGC.

What...

might happen at the family group conference?

The FGC is likely to involve three main parts:

1. Information giving

The social worker and any other professionals present will give their views and tell you the sort of help they can offer. There should be lots of chances to ask them questions. They will then leave the meeting.

2. Private family time

At this point the coordinator will leave while the group:

- > discuss the information they have been given
- > work out and agree a plan
- > decide who will do what
- > decide what support you need
- > decide how they can check the plan is working.

3. Explaining your plan

This part of the meeting is to make sure everyone is clear on what has been agreed. When you and your family/friends have worked out the plan, the coordinator can help you to get it down on paper and present it to the social worker.

The adult at the centre of the meeting owns the plan and **must** agree to everything in it.

What...

will happen after the meeting?



Whenever possible, the Adult Social Care team should respond to your plan at the end of the meeting. If this is not possible, the social worker should make sure a decision is reached about your plan quickly. They will only disagree with your plan if they think it puts you or someone else at risk in some way.

Once the plan is agreed, the Adult Social Care team 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 second and final FGC should be held six to eight weeks after the initial conference to review the plan. This meeting usually takes less time, but will follow the same three-stage process.

This guide is based on a publication by the London Borough of Camden - *Adult Family Group Conferencing*. Research in Practice for Adults thanks Camden for its kind permission to adapt their work.

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This guide has been produced by Research in Practice for Adults. We are a charity that uses evidence from research and people's experience to help understand adult social care and to improve how it works.

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