

## Principles of Family Group Conferencing

Family Group Conferences are based on the principle of working in partnership.

- Families have more knowledge about what works than professionals, which can lead to better plans and decisions
- Families are able to make good decisions about their children, provided they are given the opportunity and information to do so
- Family difficulties can be resolved by involving friends and extended family
- Families have the strongest potential and motivation to care for their own children
- Families can make a plan that focuses on what is important to them as a family that addresses concerns raised
- Children are generally best looked after by their own families where it is safe to do so.



### General contact info

[familygroupconferencing@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:familygroupconferencing@suffolk.gov.uk)

Find out more about Family Group Conferencing at: Team number: 01473 263630

[www.suffolk.gov.uk/FGC](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/FGC)

Family Rights Group- [www.frg.org.uk](http://www.frg.org.uk)

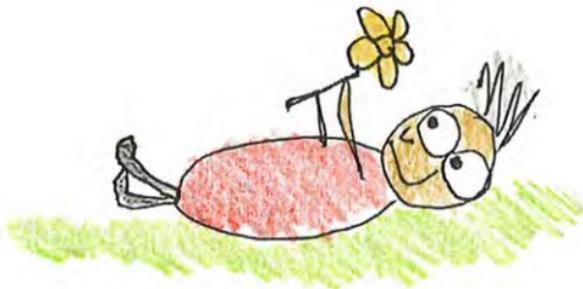


Suffolk  
**FGC**

## Family Group Conferencing

A guide for  
Professionals

EVERY  
**child**  
SUFFOLK



## Family Group Conferences (FGCs): Working together for better outcomes

### What is an FGC?

A Family Group Conference is a decision making and planning process whereby the wider family group makes plans and decisions for children who have been identified as being in need of a plan that will safeguard and promote their welfare.

### Why FGCs matter

FGC's originated in New Zealand, developed in response to concerns from the Māori community about child welfare decisions impacting their cultural traditions and increasing care placements. Today, FGCs are used in 82% of local authorities in the U.K. (*Research in Practice, 2023*) and 30 countries world wide (*Family Rights Group, 2025*).

FGCs empower families by:

- **Promoting safety and stability** for children.
- **Harnessing family strengths** to develop practical solutions.
- **Encouraging participation** of children in decisions that affect them.

## Benefits of an FGC for families and professionals

- **Collaborative approach:** Families take ownership of plans, reducing conflict and increasing engagement.
- **Sustainable solutions:** Plans are more likely to succeed because they are created by those who know the child best.
- **Clear process:** FGCs provide a structured, transparent framework for decision making.

### The role of a Referrer\*

- **Identify families** who could benefit from an FGC and who meet the referral criteria.
- **Share concerns clearly** so families understand what needs to be addressed.
- **Support the process** by working alongside the FGC Co-ordinator and respecting family led planning.

*\*Suffolk Family Group Conferencing team will initially be accepting referrals for families where a decision has been made to enter pre-proceedings (Phase One).*

*Please refer to FGC referral criteria on our website.*

## How does it work?

1. **Referral:** The child's social worker identifies the need for an FGC, after discussing with the family and gaining consent, makes a referral to Suffolk Family Group Conferencing Team.
2. **Preparation:** The FGC Co-ordinator meets with the family, friends, child and anyone else identified by the family as being able to help. The FGC Co-ordinator explains the process, listens to any concerns the family may have and arranges the meeting, at a time and place suitable for the family.
3. **FGC Conference:** Family meets, and discusses the concerns that professionals have shared. They create a Family Plan in private family time that addresses the concerns raised.
4. **Agreement:** The Family Plan is shared with professionals and agreed upon. The plan should be agreed if the plan is safe, legal and addresses the concerns raised. If it is not possible to agree straight away, clear timeframes should be given when a decision will be made.
5. **Follow-up:** A review meeting will be offered to monitor progress and make any changes that may be needed to ensure the plan works.