

## Where are the meetings held?

The meetings normally take place at local family or children's centres.

## Further Information

If you wish to know more about the Family Group Conferences please contact

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- A Family led decision making meeting.
- Families are the experts; they are asked to develop a plan for the care or protection of a child or young person.
- Social workers and other professionals are invited to attend by the family.
- The Family Group Conferences are held in a neutral venue, refreshments are provided and travel costs are met.

## FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCES



Information for Families

## **What is a Family Group Conference?**

A Family Group Conference offers family members a chance to get together, to find out about what is happening in the family, and to discuss how to sort out any problems.

Usually, when difficulties and problems relating to children arise and result in the involvement of outside agencies, decisions and plans are made by professional workers who will attempt to involve children and their parents as much as possible. However, those decisions are often made in meetings which parents and children find very difficult or threatening.

## **Why have a Family Group Conference?**

We think that families are able to make better decisions about their children provided that family members have all the necessary information to reach their decisions. Families may also need financial or other assistance to carry out their decisions.

## **Who arranges Family Group Conferences?**

The Family Group Conferences are run by BATHNES. We provide co-ordinators who are independent from any decisions concerning your children and who will help you to arrange a Family Group Conference.

## **Arranging a Family Group Conference**

Your social worker will talk to you about this idea. If you agree, they will then ask us to allocate an independent co-ordinator who will visit you to discuss the idea.

## **Who should be at the meeting?**

It is a good idea to invite as many members of your family as possible, and any other people who you think may be able to play a part in helping you find solutions to the problem. The co-ordinator will also help you decide if you need other professionals in addition to the social worker at the meeting.

The co-ordinator will answer any questions you or your family may have about the meeting. We can also provide someone to help your child prepare for the meeting and to say what they think.

We will ensure that support with childcare is provided to enable you to be at the meeting. We will also provide food and refreshments for you.

## **How does the Family Group Conference work?**

The conference will be in three parts.

**Part One** – Your family will meet with the professional who will give you a clear and straightforward account of their concerns and also tell you what financial and other assistance could be available.

**Part Two** – When you are ready, you will be left in private as a family, to talk things through together. If you need further information, the co-ordinator will always be on hand to help with this. Your family can take as long as needed to discuss the situation and decide on the best solution. There is no need to hurry. Families themselves may not always agree. If this happens the co-ordinator will try to help the family come to some agreement.

**Part Three** – When you have discussed in private and reach your conclusion, you present “your plan” to the professionals. The co-ordinator can help with this if you wish. Provided your plan does not put your child at risk it will be accepted, and the professionals will work with you to put your plan into action.

## **Co-ordinators**

The meeting will be arranged by a co-ordinator who will be impartial but knows how welfare services work. He/she will help the family to meet together and will make sure that everyone is there to focus on the needs of the child.

The co-ordinator will help you arrange the Family Group Conference and will be present at Part One and Part Three.

The co-ordinator will help with practical arrangements and will help if there are disagreements in your family about who to invite, or about the plans you make.

## **Language and Culture**

Every effort will be made to ensure that the meeting is conducted in the first language of the family and that attention is given to cultural issues.