

## Family Group Decision Making

Stronger Families, Safer Childhoods, Positive Futures

Referral

Independent  
Coordinator  
appointed

Plan put  
in place

Review of  
the Plan

Preparation

The Family Meeting

## Young Person and Family Guide



Barnardo's Falkirk Pathways

Watling Lodge

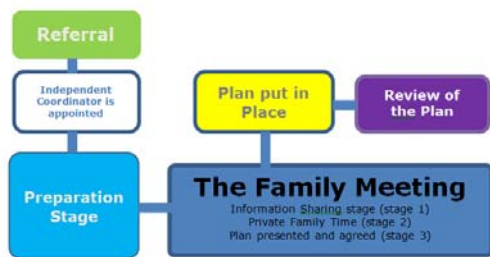
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future orientated child focused blame free



Every family is unique and every family has strengths

## Family Group Decision Making Explained

### What is Family group Decision Making?

Family Group Decision Making is a family led decision making process that recognises the strengths within the family. They are empowered to find their own solutions and to develop a plan to address the difficulties they face to protect and support the child(ren) of the family.

The Family Meeting provides a supportive space where families and agencies can work together to support the wellbeing of children and young people.

#### Referral Stage

Prior to making a referral a Social Worker will explore with the family the possibility of making a referral for Family Group Decision Making. A Coordinator will meet with the Social Worker before meeting with the family to discuss the purpose of a Family Meeting.

### The Role of the Independent Coordinator

Falkirk Pathways will allocate an independent Coordinator employed by Barnardo's. They will not have any other professional role with the family and will have no current involvement in any professional decision making for the child, young person or their family.

#### Preparation

The Coordinator will meet with all the family members to consider their strengths and look at solutions that may be on offer to address the current family needs, concerns or difficulties. The date, time, food and venue are agreed for the **Family Meeting**. The Coordinator will support the family to come up with an agenda for the Family Meeting to help structure the discussion.

### Widening the Family Circle



The goal of widening the family circle is to encourage all the important family members to participate. Family is defined as anyone who feels like family; not just blood relatives. Widening the family circle enables more ideas, and more support during the decision making process. Family Meetings may involve extended family, such as grandparents, aunts and uncles or community members, for example family friends or neighbours.

# The Family Meeting

## Information Sharing

(Stage One)

The referrer sets out the issues for the family. They are asked to consider these along with their strengths and any other resources they can access.

## Private Family Time

(Stage Two)

A unique part of the Family Meeting with the Family Group Decision Making process is Private Family Time. **The family is given time on their own to discuss their possible solutions.** There is no timescale for this meeting and neither the Social Worker nor the Coordinator is present - just family. The professionals are nearby to answer any questions about the plan but the family is given a private space to discuss their issues and write up a plan to address their family's needs.

## Plan Presented and Agreed

(Stage Three)

Once a plan is in place the referrer and the Coordinator are invited to hear the family's plan. The workers can support the family to make the plan more specific or to explore additional professional support, if required. The referrer will agree the plan if it addresses the issues identified.

The Coordinator records the plan, confirms agency support and sends out the plan to all family members involved and to appropriate professionals with whom the family have agreed to share their plan.

*"We felt empowered as a family and valued as parents"*

Parent feedback from a recent Family Meeting

### Plan put into place

A member of the family will be asked to take responsibility for monitoring the plan and informing appropriate agencies if the plan is not able to be taken forward.

### Review of the Plan

A Review Family Meeting is arranged at an agreed timescale.

## Advocacy

We can arrange for an Advocate or 'helper' to help you prepare for the meeting or they can be at the meeting with you. The Advocate or 'helper' can help to express your views and make sure your voice is heard within the meeting. They can help you to understand other people's views and make sure you understand any decisions that are being agreed.

If you feel an Advocate would be helpful they will meet with you a few times before the Family Meeting to get to know you and agree how you want your voice to be heard within the meeting.

## Guiding principles which inform our work with families:

- Family group meetings are convened only when a family agrees – they should not be imposed on families and they are organised by an independent co-ordinator.
- We believe that families do the best they can with what they have. All families have the capacity to change and grow
- Private family time is essential to this process – empowering families to have a voice and make decisions.
- Everyone including children should have a voice.
- We will only know which families can be successful when we try
- Every family is unique; our role is to discover their strengths, resources and beliefs
- Our fundamental role is to empower families to provide a safe, healthy and secure home for their children

Family Group Decision Making is a rights based approach that engages family members in decision making in child welfare contexts.

### United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

- Families have a moral and human right to meaningful participation and self-determination.
- Article 3: All actions concerning the child must be based on his or her best interests
- Article 12: The child has the right to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account, in any matter or procedure affecting the child, in accordance to age and maturity.

### The Children (Scotland) Act (1995)

- Refers to parents' rights to live with their children or to regulate their children's residence and make decisions about their upbringing.
- States that, in relation to Looked After Children, before a decision is made about a child, the local authority should take into consideration the views of the child, the child's parents and anybody else whose views are relevant such as relatives.

### The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (2014)

- Local authorities should consider placing children with family in the first instance and only if that is not appropriate to then place children in foster or residential placements.
- Local authorities must make arrangements to ensure that relevant services are offered to children who are at risk of becoming looked after and to pregnant women whose babies are at risk of becoming looked. These relevant services are Family Group Decision Making and Parenting Skills services.

**At Barnardo's we aim to provide a safe, positive, and nurturing environment** where everyone is treated as unique and where we recognise and value individual differences. At Barnardo's we believe in children regardless of their: circumstances, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, belief, disability, age, or behaviour. To enable us to protect this environment we will challenge behaviour which could impact on our welcome to all.



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