

All Wales Family Group Meeting Network Newsletter

Autumn 06

Issue 2



FGCs Recommended by Government

Resources are not being used effectively in the Child Care proceedings in England and Wales....

a new document out identifies particular concerns: unnecessary delays; families lack of understanding, complexity of cases and the need for better inter-agency working.

The Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA) recommends FGCs and advocacy to help families understand LA concerns, and families are then to be encouraged to address these as early as possible and before proceedings are issued. FGCs can also help identify potential kinship care opportunities, which can then be pursued when these are in the best interests of the child.

Courts will now expect a local authority to have completed all activities that can be reasonably expected before any proceedings are instigated: including the appropriate provision of support services to families such as the use of a FGC. For more information contact: aquinnaziz@cardiff.ac.uk,

Launch of the FGC Toolkit

Family Rights Group have produced a *Toolkit* for Family Group Conferences which will be launched in Wales in the New year. The *Toolkit* is aimed at both new and existing projects and offers a comprehensive guide to setting up a FGC project and FGC practice. It will be accompanied by a reader which offers chapters on FGC development throughout the UK and current and innovative new practice.

The *Toolkit* will be useful to all those working in FGCs and those who are hoping to develop a service. It is available in both Welsh and English versions.

Further details of the Toolkit and the work of the Family Rights Group on Family Group Conferences/Meetings is available from Deanna Edwards or Sean Haresnape.

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What do the social workers think about FGCs?

The Vale Family Group Meeting Project reports that the key message from professionals is that they would all use the FGM service again.

The majority of them stated that they were very hopeful for the future and the process had been very helpful.

They felt that the family plan was good and likely to make a significant difference. If you would like more information, please contact

Keith Buckler at

KBuckler@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk.

KBuckler@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk.



To join the Network or find out more about the Network and Family Group Meetings in Wales, UK or Europe, Contact: Val (Secretary) at cwlwm@cartrefbontnewydd.org, Tel: 01286672922

Mike (Chair person) at mike.clark@trosgynnal.org.uk. Tel: 029 2034 4681

Natalie Cleaves shares her personal experiences of being a FGC Coordinator in South Wales

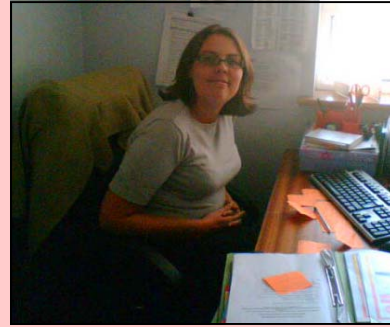
Thank 'FGC' for South Wales practice exchange meetings:

Having worked for a local authority for eight years I became disillusioned with conventional child and family 'interventions'. I first heard about FGCs when the local authority set up a FGC service and I went on a half day training course. I bought in there and then began encompassing some of the principles into my practice. My understanding and commitment increased as I saw positive outcomes.

In September 2005, I was delighted to find a job advertisement for a FGC Coordinators post. I was soon to discover that taking a few principles into conventional child and family practice was one thing but being a full blown coordinator was quite another.

There had been considerable changes within the team when I arrived and I found myself without a manager and minus one very experienced advocate. My line manager confessed that with the coordinator, experienced advocate and manager all gone, there was little or no in-house expertise about FGC. My heart sank.....

Then came an invite to the South Wales practice exchange. Suddenly I was meeting another FGC coordinator on the train and being met at the station. I had no idea who these people were but as they had so kindly offer to hold my hand, I took up the offer! I was extremely nervous but this was dispelled soon enough and I have grown to feel part of an eclectic group of people with one thing in common; a commitment to FGC.



The practice exchange meetings have provided opportunities for me to sound off, listen, learn and liaise. I have visited most of the South Wales projects, and managers, coordinators and advocates have imparted lots of expertise, ideas and suggestions which have all served to make me feel like I know what I'm doing.

Most recently I was invited to attend some FGC training in Cardiff. The first session was quite a shock. I realised that old habits don't die easily! After so many years of supporting families, being head cook and bottle washer and taking sole responsibility for preventing family breakdown, I could hand my chef's hat and rubber gloves over to the family.

These days my stress levels are reduced and just as they begin to simmer again, there's another SW practice exchange. I don't know where I'd be without this support.... Thank FGC it's the SW practice exchange!

New Projects! New Projects!

Barnardo's Cymru were successful in being awarded the contract to be the provider of Family Group Meetings in Powys—this development will be part of a major growth in the work of Barnardo's Cymru in Powys which in addition to the current provision and coordination of parenting work will also be delivering Family Support services across the county. The next stage will be to recruit a FGM Coordinator as well as sessional staff to deliver meetings across this large and diverse county. For more information please contact Delyth Raynsford at: d.raynsford@barnardos.org.uk

Tros Gynnal have opened the Bridgend Advocacy and Conflict Resolution Project which is jointly funded by the local authority and Cymorth to provide an advocacy service to look after children aged 10 to 18 and conflict resolution service to young people aged 11-25. Helen Johnson has moved from the Vale FGM Project to manage this exciting new service and will be using Family Group Meetings to support families in conflict situations. For more information please contact Helen Johnson: Tel 01656 669396

Family Group Meeting Projects Across Wales

Flintshire/Wrexham

Pauline Bowe, Taith y Teulu
Children's Services Department
County Hall, Mold, Flintshire, CH7
6ND. Tel: 01352 702610

Gwynedd/Angelsey/Conwy

Denbighshire: Gwenan Gruffydd
Cwlwm FGM Project, Cartref Bontnewydd Trust, Bontnewydd, Caernarefon, Gwynedd, LL54 7UN. Tel 01286 671008

Ceredigion: Heulwen Davies,
Social Services Department,
Ceredigion County Council, Min
Aeron, Rhiw Goch, Aberaeron,
SA46 ODYFfôn 01545 570881
Carmarthenshire: Families Forward
Natalie Cleaves, 24 Station
Road, Llanelli, SA15 1AN. Tel
01554 745156

Neath Port Talbot: Barnardo's,
Karen Rees, 4a Queen Street,
Neath, SA11 1DL. Tel 01639

Cardiff: Family Circle, Mike Clark, 32b
Lower Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11
6LT, Tel 029 2034 4681

Vale of Glamorgan: Vale FGM Project,
Keith Buckler, Vale of Glamorgan Council,
Dock Office, Barry Docks, Barry,
CF63 4RT. Ffôn 01446 704679

Newport/Monmouthshire/Rhondda Cynon Taff, Caerphilly: Family Answers,
David Flanagan, 30 Stow Park Ave,
Newport, NP20 4FN. Tel 01633 215784