




What is the Initial Child Protection Conference /Safeguarding Family Group Conference Alternative Pathway

- In 2014 we embarked on a theory of change programme introducing systemic practice and Signs of Safety in the way we work with children, young people and families.
- In 2018, the DfE invited us to do a review to understand the impact of our use of Danger Statements to replace Child Protection Categories. The comprehensive review evidenced the need to do something very different, something that would reduce bureaucratic processes and create an environment that was more collaborative, one that reduced shame.
- Drawing on the learning and experience from Leeds and other areas that use the Family Group Conference model we designed and implemented the Alternative Pathway to bring about change and reflect systemic approaches.
- Relunched last year as a Bi-Borough approach.





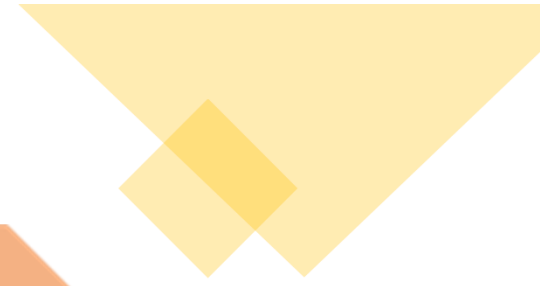

What are our overarching principles

- To apply a safeguarding framework that is transparent and robust.
 - To improve the way we communicate that its relational ;
 - For conferences to reflect systemic approaches, be places of reflection and only attended by those that need to be there or who the family knows;
 - For reports to be brief, shared in advance and co-created with families to facilitate a paperless meeting.
 - To encourage decision-making that is collaborative and from an equal platform;
 - For outcomes and Plans to be co-produced and to reflect the voice of the child and the family;
 - To consider the Physical Environment of the conference space and pre-conference meetings;
 - To consider whether a Safeguarding Family Group Conference (SFGC) is a more appropriate intervention for families who may respond to family led meeting with independent SFGC co-Ordinator.
 - To provide robust oversight , monitoring and scrutiny of the ICPC and SFGC Alternative Pathway.
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What changes have we made.....

Every family who is considered for initial child protection case conference is considered for a **Safeguarding Family Group Conference** as an alternative

Where a **SFGC** is not considered suitable, we have made changes **before, during and after** the **Initial Child Protection case Conference**:



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So, what does this mean in practice...

Every family who is considered for initial child protection case conference is considered for a **Safeguarding Family Group Conference** as an alternative, this conversation will usually take place at the Strat or decision -making meeting but you can consider a Safeguarding Family Group Conference at any point. Thresholds and risk must be considered in the same way as ICPC and the decision to invite family to consider a SFGC must be made by a Team Manager . When making decision consider the following ;

- ✓ Consideration of previous history and an understanding of the current risks.
- ✓ Family demonstrate willingness to work with agencies.
- ✓ Identified risks can be managed in the short term by social work safety plan.

As the Safeguarding FGCs are a safeguarding pathway, the Safeguarding Service play a key role in oversight, advice and support to ensure there is rigor to the process and safety planning aimed at ensuring children are protected and to ensure the professional network is connected and informed throughout

The decision to engage in an SFGC is made by the family who should be made aware that this is an alternative to the ICPC route.

The family should be made aware that by engaging in this pathway the same requirements in terms of parental agreement, information sharing and partnership arrangements that apply within our existing child protection safeguarding framework and arrangements as with any child/ young person considered to be vulnerable / at risk

What is a Safeguarding Family Group Conference?.....

SFGC is a meeting convened and facilitated by an independent FGC Co-Ordinator where the child/ren's family and support network come together to agree what they can and will offer to keep the child/ren safe from risk and achieve best outcomes.

How is it different to an Initial Child Protection Conference?.....

- It is a family led meeting
- It is facilitated and chaired by an Independent FGC Coordinator who is not an employee of LA
- It is a family lead decision making process
- A parent/main carer identifies their support network and who will be invited to their meeting
- It is a solution focused meeting where the only information shared is a statement of the concerns, information on resources to support the family's plan and an indication of what action the LA may take if the situation does not improve.
- The family network draw up their plan stating who and what they will do to support the child/ren, parents
- At the SFGC there will be private family time where they will discuss and plan together

So, if we follow the SFGC pathway is the family a CIN or CP.....

This is one of the challenges we face in introducing this alternative way of dealing with CP

the simple answer is a complex CIN. we have introduced the term Safeguarding FGC and Family Safeguarding Multi Agency Meeting for the on-going meetings and reviews to implement and monitor the progress of the Family Safeguarding Plan.

We have set clear expectations regarding the recording of the process and the work following the SFGC, including an allocated Child Protection Adviser to advise and have oversight of the work

So, what happens after a SFGC, monitoring, oversight, recording of decision/plan.....

It is essential to record all decision making, out puts and outcomes on Mosaic and to attach the SFGC Plan , minutes and associated reports. Oversight of the SFGC will be provided by the CPA/FSCPA, who will chair **the first SFGC Multi agency safeguarding Meeting** (within 10 working days of SFGC) and subsequent review. Any decision to step up or step down will be made by the CPA/FSPCA/Team Manager. A safeguarding plan is produced that incorporates the family plan and professional considerations.

We identify those families subject to SFGC Plans in our weekly bulletin that notifies partners of CP cases.

SFGC Process and considerations for practitioners...

Before an SFGC

Decision made that case meets criteria for offer of SFGC (at strategy meeting or CPA consultation including input from FGC lead). Safety plan agreed, decision and plan noted on record. CPA/FSCPA and CP business officer allocated to oversee the case

Once a referral has been made by the S/W, an Independent FGC Coordinator will meet with parent/main carer and their network to explain the purpose and process. provide weekly updates and flags any disengagement to SW & FGC Lead

SW visits parent to explain CP threshold met but alternative pathway being offered. If parent consents, FGC coordinator explains SFGC process and starts preparation

SW meets with FGC lead ,draft SFGC agenda questions to address professional networks. Share with allocated CPA/FSCPA. Timescale for SFGC agreed (max 20 wdays from offer to family) and date of Family Safeguarding Network Meeting identified (5-10wdays after SFGC)

CP business co-ordinator ensures informs professional network of escalation to CP via SFGC pathway, sets date & invites to family safeguarding network mtg. Partner agencies send written confirmation of concerns discussed on brief SOS form to SW and ensure they are shared with family and before Safeguarding Family Meeting and captured in questions to be considered in SFGC.

During

FGC independent coordinator:

- ensure everyone understands the concerns and what they are being asked to do;
- Invite the family to address the questions and create a plan.
- support the child to participate directly or via an advocate, including their input into safeguarding family meeting;
- Encourage family to present their plan with confidence at the Safeguarding Family Network Meeting.

SW:

- continue working on cp assessment/intervention;
- attend SFGC to ensure clarity of concerns and agree family plan;
- Remind family of aims of safeguarding family meeting and who will be there;
- Keep CPA informed of progress and record date of SFGC

CPA/FSCPA :

- Maintain oversight of process;
- Provides advice and consultation as required

After

FGC independent coordinator sends family plan to SW & FGC Lead within 3wdays of SFGC and circulates to family members within 5wdays.

SW, family and network of partner professionals attend family safeguarding network meeting within 5-10 working days of SFGC. Chaired by CPA/FSPA and serviced by CP business officer
Family present their plan and professionals input how they will support and monitor to co create the final Multi-agency Safeguarding Plan.
CP Business officer records and distributes agreed Multi-Agency Safeguarding Plan
Dates for 6 week review and future meetings to review progress of the plan are agreed. SW agrees visits with family to provide support and monitor progress of plan

CPA/FSCPA

Provides oversight and is available for consultation. Chairs SFGC Network meeting within 10 working days of SFGC .
reviews progress at 6 weeks and 3 months with SW and team manager and approves decision to step down if risk is sufficiently reduced or step up if required.

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Where a **SFGC** is not considered suitable, we have made changes **before, during and after** the **Initial Child Protection case Conference**:

What to consider before the ICPC...

Focus on advance joint planning of the ICPC, involving social worker, Chair, Clinician, parents and children.

Focus on social work time being relational and spent on direct work with parents and children and preparation for conference

Social work reports to be shared with family 3 days in advance of conference

If required engage interpreter from the onset

Consider planning in respect of time and location of conference; arrangements for the child's attendance / how the child's voice will be heard; support for parents so they are not alone;

Engage with family on who attends; the format of the ICPC, systemic interventions to be used.

Professional reports should be brief and shared in advance of conference so that those attending conference are aware of what is going to be shared.

Ensure the family understand the process throughout

Identification of any risks and how they may be shared with family in advance of the conference

Engage family from the onset in the plan.
Social worker (and clinician where available) undertakes mapping with family in advance to begin their engagement in the plan

CP Business co-ordinator to notify partners of contact details of S/W and Chair and provide suggested report guidance if required.

CPA/FSCPA meets with family in advance

Use the Freedom and Flexibilities that enable a 15- 20 -day period for this to occur before conference.

Child Advocates introduced to work with child and ensure their voice is heard and reflected

Brief reports by social worker (co-created with family) and other professionals, based on Signs of Safety

How to engage the C&YP, voice of the child (child advocate)

What to consider during ICPC ...

Paperless meetings to encourage a conversation

Try to ensure that those invited to the conference are known to the family .

Consideration for who should attend.

Signs of Safety elements provide basic framework- focus is on relational communication that enables everyone to have a voice and be listened to.

Welcoming environment

Expectation is that child will be present, unless good reason not to be. Voice of the child to be central element.

Availability of clinician to provide additional reflection capacity and application of systemic approaches

Recording by CP Business co-ordinator.

Maximum duration of conference 90 minutes

Families to have a voice in determining the plan.

Notify of dates of future reviews and meeting and who should attend

All safety plans must be SMART

How to reflect voice of child

After ICPC ...

Consideration for continuity of social worker

Gain and consider feedback from family about their experience of process

Therapeutic Letter to be sent to children and parents by chair.

Appropriately phrased written record of the conference shared with both parents and children by social worker.

Ensure professional network continues to contribute to and be informed of progress or risks to plan.

Ensure recording and uploading of associated report and plans, dates for core meetings and reviews .