

Referrers' Information





Kent Social Connections Service

Information about the Kent Social Connections Service

The Kent Social Connections Service arranges meetings with immediate families and their support networks, to help to address the worries of professionals (usually Social Workers) and build upon existing strengths. We have a range of different meetings (see as we move on for full details), which all work by aiming to build connections between children, family, friends and the community to find solutions and solve problems.

The aim and focus of all meetings is to keep the children and young people safe. They are organised by a Social Connections Coordinator, who will tailor a meeting that best meets the needs of a child and their family. These meetings are voluntary, so the people with Parental Responsibility decide whether to have the meeting and they can withdraw their consent at any time.

Kent Social Connections Service is independent of decisions regarding the child and will remain neutral throughout the process. We work with the current circumstances to produce the best possible outcomes for the child. Our aim is to create an environment that is conducive to the family being able to come together to make the changes needed to keep the child safe.



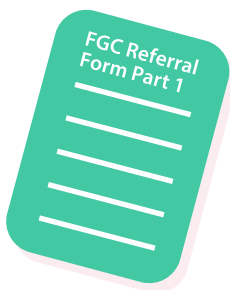
**Social
Connections
Coordinator**

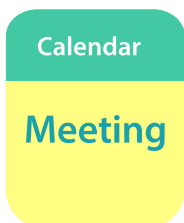
When can I make a referral?

In Kent, it is mandatory for ALL families where a child(ren) has been assessed by their Social Worker as being likely to come into the public care system, to be given the chance to plan for the child(ren) by means of a Family Group Conference. The referrer must discuss this with the family before submitting the referral. It is the choice of those with Parental Responsibility whether they proceed.

How do I make a referral?

The referring Social Worker, (having had agreement from their supervisor that the referral criteria is met), completes the 'FGC Referral Form Part 1' on Liberi. The Social Worker then sends the referral to the FGC team tray using the 'send for authorisation button' (do not start the episode). For unborns the referral must be made for the unborn, not the mother. It is the Social Worker's responsibility to speak to the family members with Parental Responsibility to gain agreement for the referral to be made to the Social Connections Service.





For those with no Liberi access please contact the Social Connections Service for a referral form and to discuss your referral.

You will need to provide us with information, such as who the referral is for (including whether or not it is for all children in the family), basic information about the family, what the worries, strengths and safety goals are and what you want to gain from the referral.

What happens next?

Once accepted, the referral will be assigned to a Coordinator within a timescale depending on priority. Once assigned, the Coordinator will meet with the referrer to discuss the concerns, risks and complete the Signs of Safety map. This map will be shared with parents/caregivers and all those who attend the meeting.

The Coordinator will:
Assist the family in identifying all significant people to invite to the meeting. This can include not only extended family, but friends and other significant relationships.
Help all participants recognise the strengths and concerns within the family situation and assist the family to be able to vocalise what they might want from the meeting.

Ensure the child is central to the process throughout and if appropriate, support them to participate in the meeting. The Coordinator will arrange the meeting and invite all participants agreed by those with Parental Responsibility. The Coordinator is responsible for the safety of all participants at the family meeting.

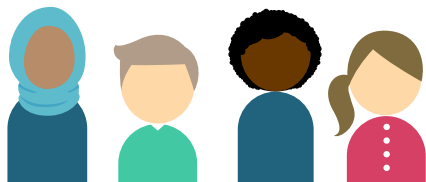
What is expected of the referrer?

Attend the Allocation Meeting to give background information, discuss legal status and risks and complete the Signs of Safety Map.

Keep the Coordinator informed of any changes throughout the process.

To attend the majority of meetings to share information with the family and answer their questions. To be available during the planning stage if the family need more information or support. To give feedback on the Plan once written by the family and re-scale the concerns. Jointly work with the Coordinator to secure a safety plan that will protect all participants at the meeting.

Respond in a timely manner to requests from the Coordinator for additional information. Support, resource and implement the Plan as appropriate after the meeting.



Who can come to the meeting?

The Coordinator will help those with Parental Responsibility to identify who they want at the meeting including family, friends and others who can offer support and help to care for the child. The Coordinator will talk to these people so that they know what the meeting will be about. Once they have spoken with everyone, they will organise the meeting.

**Social
Connections
Coordinator**



How will the child be involved?

The Coordinator may meet with the child to obtain their views, worries, and wishes for the future. Sometimes this will happen at home and sometimes this will happen at school. Children do attend the meeting and even help set it up if they want to. Some types of meetings are led by children and young people from the start to finish.



Extra help available

If anyone participating in the meeting needs support, for example a translator, sign language or support to physically attend the meeting, the Coordinator will arrange this. An advocate can be provided for people who may feel a little nervous or emotional or may struggle to get their voice heard.

Family Group Conference (or FGC)



What are the types of meetings?

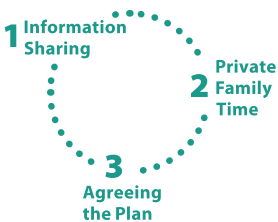
There are different types of meetings depending on what's best for the family's circumstances. All of our meetings are tailored specifically to the family.

Family Group Conference (or FGC)

A Family Group Conference is a meeting where the support network around the child comes together to talk through how everyone can help the child. These offers of support can be put into a Family Plan to keep the child safe. Sometimes families choose to have other professionals at their meetings to give more information and inform their plan.

During **“Information Sharing”** the referrer will explain to everyone what they are worried about and what they would like the family to plan for. The family can ask questions to help them understand what is needed. The Coordinator will share any other information provided (including the views of the child if they do not attend).

The Family Group Conference has 3 parts





Family Group Conference (or FCG)

For **“Private Family Time”** the referrer, professionals and the FGC Coordinator leave the meeting. The family have time to talk about what everyone will do and how they will write the Plan.

In **“Agreeing the Plan”** the Family Plan will be read out by someone in the family network and the referrer will provide feedback on the Family Plan. This Plan can be used to help keep the child safe and can be shared at other meetings i.e. a Child Protection Conference, however it is not legally binding.



Emergency Meeting

This meeting happens at a point of crisis, where the family are brought together quickly with the right professionals. They will put an emergency plan together to deal with this crisis. A Family Group Conference can be held later with a wider support network if a further long-term plan is required.



Restorative Meeting

A Restorative Meeting can be used to help improve and repair relationships between people. The meeting is usually between two or three people and aims to resolve the issues that have caused the relationship to break down. It will help to find a better way of dealing with things in the future, for the benefit of the child.

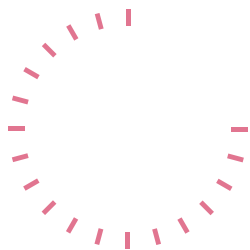


Lifelong Links aims to make connections with family members and other people who are important to a child in Local Authority care, with the goal of enabling lasting relationships to be formed which will support the child into adulthood. A meeting similar to a Family Group Conference may be part of this process.

What if I can't attend?

As the referrer, you are expected to attend the meeting to give information to the family and support network and to give feedback for the Plan and re-scale. Occasionally a meeting may need to be held outside of business hours to accommodate the needs of the family. There is an expectation that the referrer will attend these.

If you cannot attend, you will need to arrange for someone to attend in your place to give this information and feedback for the Plan.



How long will the meeting take?

A Family Group Conference can take between two and four hours, but a restorative meeting may only take an hour. However, this is dependent on the individual needs of the family and can take longer if needed.

What happens afterwards?

The Coordinator will send the Family Plan to everybody involved.

The referrer will use the Plan to work with the family in the best interests of the child.

The Social Connections Service is responsible for putting the Plan on Liberi main pathway.



Working
with you

Contacting the Social Connections Service

North West Kent: 03000 410402

socialconnections servicenw@kent.gov.uk

South East Kent: 03000 410403

socialconnections servicese@kent.gov.uk



www.kent.gov.uk/familygroupconference

www.kent.gov.uk/lifelonglinks

Family Rights Group

The Family Rights Group is a charity that works with parents in England or Wales whose children are in need, at risk or are in the care system and with members of the wider family who are raising children unable to remain at home. They advise parents, grandparents, other relatives, and friends about their rights and options when Social Workers or courts make decisions about their children's welfare.

www.frg.org.uk/involving-families/family-group-conferences

FGC Project Accreditation

This service has met the requirements of the National Accreditation Framework



 **Together
we can make stronger
connections**

