

Working With You





What can our Service do for you?

The Kent Social Connections Service will work with you and your family to help to keep your children and young people safe.

We recognise the importance of connections between children, family, friends, and the community to find solutions and solve problems. You may have been referred to the Social Connections Service because sometimes families need to come together to make changes for their children. This may be to plan for a new baby, because your child is going missing or at risk of coming into Local Authority care, or to help your child make connections with important people in their lives. The Social Connections Service can help with this.

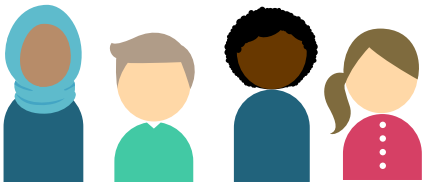
What is different about a Kent Social Connections Service meeting?

These are organised by a Social Connections Coordinator, who is independent of making any decisions for your child. They will tailor a meeting that best meets the needs of your family and your child. These meetings are voluntary and so the people with Parental Responsibility decide whether to have the meeting and can withdraw their consent at any time.



What will the Coordinator do?

The Coordinator will first meet with those people who have Parental Responsibility to help you plan and prepare for the meeting. They will share the worries of professionals and hear the strengths and concerns of the family and your support network.



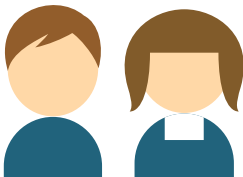
Who can come to the meeting?

The Coordinator will help you to identify who you want at the meeting including family, friends and others who can offer you support and help you to care for your 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 for you.



How will your child be involved?

The Coordinator may meet with your child to obtain their views, worries, and wishes for the future. 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.





Family Group Conference (or FCG)

Do you need extra help?

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; just tell them what's needed. Sometimes people can feel a little nervous or emotional or can struggle to get their voice heard, so in that case the Coordinator can provide an Advocate, just for them.

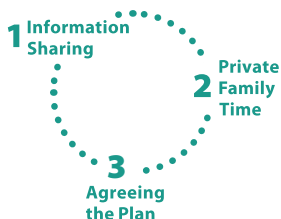
What type of meeting can you have?

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

A Family Group Conference is a meeting where the support network around the child comes together to talk through how everyone can help your 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 Social Worker 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

The Family Group Conference has 3 parts



them understand what is needed. The Coordinator will share any other information provided (including the views of your child if they do not attend).

For **“Private Family Time”** the professionals and the FGC Coordinator leave the meeting. You and your family have time to talk about what everyone will do and how the Plan will work and to write your Plan down.

During **“Agreeing the Plan”** the Family Plan will be read out and the Social Worker will say what they think of it. This Plan can be used to help keep the children 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 and 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?

There is an expectation for those with Parental Responsibility to attend the meeting. All other participants may be able to join the meeting by phone or video link in exceptional circumstances. If this is not possible, the Coordinator can talk with them to gain offers of support, which can be shared at the meeting.



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 Social Worker will use the Plan to work with you in the best interests of your child.

What will happen to my information?

To be able to contact you about these meetings, we will need to store your name, address and contact details on our secure and private database. We will keep limited details of our work with you, such as dates and times of visits and what has been discussed. You will need to consent to this if you wish to be involved. If you have any questions about the data stored, please ask.

Your information will not be shared outside of the Local Authority without your permission, unless for safeguarding or legal purposes in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 (GDPR).



Contacting the Social Connections Service

North West Kent: 03000 410402

socialconnectionsservicenw@kent.gov.uk

South East Kent: 03000 410403

socialconnectionsservice@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



A logo consisting of a 3x3 grid of circles in various shades of green and teal.**Together
we can make stronger
connections**

