

# Forward4Families

Family Group Conference Service

## What are the advantages?

- Involvement of the family network will help to keep the focus on the needs of the child.
- It will involve grandparents and close family members from both sides of the family, whose involvement will be important in keeping aspects of the child's life stable.
- It will identify any support for parents at the meeting and in the future implementation of the agreed Family Plan.
- It will protect children from disruption to their day to day care, routine and relationships.
- It may involve hearing the views of the child through the use of advocacy.
- It helps you to find a way to continue to jointly parent your child despite your separation.
- The Plan can potentially form the basis of a Consent Order thereby avoiding the need for protracted and costly legal proceedings, the outcome of which will be uncertain.

## What happens next?

### The Review Process

For the Plan to succeed all parties need to put into action all that has been agreed.

Families are offered a review meeting about three months after the initial Family Group Conference to review the Family Plan and make any adjustments as agreed.

If the plan breaks down irretrievably, then you may well need to consider another intervention or adopt a more traditional route through the courts and litigation.

### Costs

Each of you will be responsible for sharing the cost of the service. This is likely to be substantially less than contested litigation through the courts.

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# Forward4Families

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## Collaborative Decision Making

A unique approach  
for divorced and separating parents

*Putting children first*



# Families making decisions

Forward 4 Families

## Forward4Families

We are an innovative and well-established, independent organisation that has successfully provided high quality Family Group Conferences, Mediation and Conflict Resolution Services. We provide a unique model of decision making, which unlike mediation, makes use of the family network.

## What is a Family Group Conference?

A Family Group Conference is a meeting involving significant family members who come together to make important decisions regarding children and young people when their parents are separating.

**The aim of the Conference is to produce an agreement which will form the Family Plan.**

This process recognises the importance of extended family members in the life of the child. It is tailor made to address the individual needs of the children and the wishes of the parents.

The concept of a Family Group Conference has been successfully used worldwide to ensure the best possible decisions are made for children and young people.

## How might it help me?

A Family Group Conference can assist you and your former partner to make important decisions for your children in a way that uses the support and input from close friends and family.

As the children will remain members of both their extended families, you will want to reduce the impact of your separation upon the children.

The major decisions affecting the children are likely to be:

- Where they will live.
- The arrangements that will be made for them to spend time with each parent, grandparents and other relatives.
- Special provisions, if any, which might need to be made about such matters as education, religion, health and travel.
- Any other support that is required to meet their needs.

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## How does it work?

Initially, the Co-ordinator will meet with both parents to give information about the Family Group Conference model.

If you decide to proceed, the Co-ordinator will meet with you and your partner separately to identify the issues and agree a set of relevant questions to be addressed at the Conference.

At this point, consideration will be given to how best to represent the children's views. A list of potential participants will be identified.

All those invited to the Family Group Conference will be visited by the Co-ordinator to inform them of the purpose and process of the meeting, to encourage their attendance and to enable the most effective use of time on the day.

The Conference will take place in an informal and neutral environment and will include some time to discuss the questions without the presence of the Co-ordinator.

The Co-ordinator will ensure that the process remains entirely focused on the needs of the children.