

# Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) Scotland

## National Standards and Practice Guidance

Produced in partnership by The National FGDM Steering Group 2023



# Foreword

Family Group Decision Making, or Family Group Conferencing as it is known beyond Scotland, offers a whole family approach to empowering family members to seek their own solutions to life challenges threatening the safety and/or well-being of children, young people or adults. Through an emphasis on engagement and consultation with the wider family and friendship network, it places the needs of the individual at the centre and is a restorative approach to finding safe solutions in circumstances of adversity and risk. It is an internationally recognised model of engagement which respects human rights, equality and diversity, having originated within the Māori community in New Zealand. This approach has since been adopted in local authorities around the United Kingdom, offered both as an independent service within existing Local Authority family support provision and through third sector agencies.

In Scotland, FGDM has been explored over the past thirty years within statutory and voluntary sectors of provision. Whilst there has been a recent flowering of services developing use of the approach when the well-being of children and young people is at the centre of concern, the Scottish FGDM Steering Group also strongly supports developments within adult services in Health and Social Care, currently offered on a smaller scale. We are committed to supporting FGDM managers and practitioners around Scotland as more local authorities adopt the approach in work with children, young people and adults.

This revision of previous Standards documents locates Family Group Decision Making within existing and more recent United Nations and Scottish legislation. It is timely in supporting the work with children and young people following the enactment of the Children and Young Person Act (2014) and, crucially, the recent introduction of The Promise (2020). Both pieces of legislation endorse the value of FGDM as a rights-based, future-focused and blame-free approach to engagement which harnesses protective and nurturing resources within family and friendship networks. Legislation addressing the rights of adults in circumstances of stress and challenge is also included as a context within which FGDM services can be offered.



This document addresses the links and boundaries between FGDM provision and other key services and processes, both within and outwith local authorities. For example, consideration of referral to Child Protection procedures and processes in local authorities, and to the Children's Reporter within the Children's Hearing system, are key points of opportunity for families to be involved in offering protective resources around an individual child or young person as a safe alternative to compulsory intervention. Family Plans, developed in private family time, may also be used in parallel with compulsory processes. Representation on the Steering Group from the Scottish Reporter's Administration and Children's Hearings Scotland is especially valued in this context as these boundaries are reconsidered in the light of any recommendations which emerge from the current Hearing System Review. The document describes core features of the use of the approach and offers guidance to practitioners in support of best practice within high quality services. To ensure that families feel truly empowered in finding their own solutions, fidelity to the FGDM model is vital. It offers practice guidance which outlines unique features of the model as a way of working with the family and the wider network.

The Scottish Family Group Decision Making Steering Group is a collaboration between local authority and third sector agencies working in Scotland with children, young people and adults who face challenge and adversity of all kinds. Working in this group enables us to share expertise and different points of view, enabling a unique synthesis of FGDM expertise throughout Scotland. Representation from partner agencies in linked services is especially valued.

Members of the small group who prepared the text are thanked for their time and energy. Special thanks are due to colleagues from Children 1st who chaired the group which prepared this document and to the Communications Department at Children 1st who carried out the essential work of preparing the text for publication and providing creative illustrations.

This is an exciting time for Scotland where the rapid development of the FGDM approach, combined with the legislative power enshrined in The Promise and associated Acts, herald the arrival of radically new ways of addressing the needs of children and young people, firmly anchored in a family setting. Whilst these Standards largely focus on addressing the needs of children and young people, the FGDM approach has immense possibilities for supporting the family from the cradle to the grave. The FGDM Steering Group looks forward to being part of this venture and to learning from applications internationally and elsewhere in the UK.

**Sally Wassell**

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# 1. Introduction to Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) Standards and Practice Guidance

**In Scotland we have seen a rapid increase in the number of FGDM services and an increase in interest in FGDM. This is due to significant changes in Scottish legislation, policy, and practice guidance, alongside the work of the Scottish National FGDM Steering Group to raise awareness and work with local authorities to develop FGDM.**

As services develop and expand, we need standards to support model fidelity and best practice. This will ensure that families receive high quality, evidence-based support. These National Standards provide guidance and support to managers and coordinators, whether new or experienced in the delivery of FGDM, and contribute to quality assurance across all Scottish FGDM services.



## 1.1 The purpose of the National Standards

The National Standards and Practice Guidance are intended to assist individuals and agencies to develop and sustain effective FGDM services. The Standards are revised within the context of significant legislative and policy changes in Scotland. The Practice Guidance offers support to agencies and practitioners to quality assure and adapt their FGDM practice in line with wider national policy and guidance. The National Standards and Practice Guidance also provide the National Steering Group with a tool to support the development of FGDM across Scotland.

## 1.2 How the National Standards have been developed

These standards and practice guidance have been developed by the Scottish National FGDM Steering Group. The National FGDM Steering Group consists of all FGDM agency and service leads, as well as relevant academic, strategic and policy stakeholders from across Scotland, and is coordinated by an independent chair.

Steering Group members take an active role in supporting the development and implementation of new services, sharing their experience, resources and knowledge with new providers of FGDM. The Steering Group also has a role in supporting and influencing quality assurance and continued improvement, as well as evidencing and influencing best practice across Scotland, in line with and in response to research, policy and legislation.

This guidance introduces the National FGDM Standards in the context of current Scottish policy and legislation and outlines the key principles and core elements of FGDM practice in Scotland.

## 1.3 Equality, diversity and inclusion

The Scottish FGDM Steering Group is committed to creating a culture in which equality, diversity and human rights are actively promoted, and discrimination is not tolerated. As such, we recognise and are committed to delivering our legal duties, outlined within the [Human Rights Act 1998 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/30) and the [Equalities Act 2010 Equality Act 2010 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/14). We strive to ensure that their principles are embedded throughout our policies and practice.

We acknowledge the cultural roots of FGDM, which was developed by the Māori in New Zealand as a way of working with children and families. This was a grass roots, cultural response to a large number of Māori children being accommodated away from home, into mainly white families. The Māori saw this as a significant trauma to children and families, and a significant loss of Māori culture and community. The Māori engaged the Whānau (wider family network, and community) to keep Tamariki (children) safe and at home. Internationally, the model is known as Family Group Conferencing (FGC).

The approach was so successful that it became enshrined in child welfare legislation, the Children, Young Person and Their Families Act 1989. We then saw FGC grow internationally as a result of the success of the Māori approach.

However, as FGC/FGDM has grown internationally we have lost some of that cultural competence. In the UK, Black Minority Ethnic (BME) are under-represented for FGDM referrals when compared with their representation within the care system (Barn & Das, 2016). We understand that we have work to do across Scotland to develop more inclusive services and practice. Within FGDM we commit to embody anti-racist values to create a culture where everyone feels a sense of true belonging, dignity and respect. Cultural competence within FGCs requires constant reflection, engagement, and preparation. We commit to the continuous process of reflecting, learning and change.

These standards will ensure that all our work is underpinned by a core set of principles around anti-discriminatory practice. These values are cross-cutting rather than referring to particular protected characteristics. This sets a clear expectation that the inherent worth, dignity and contribution of every family is respected. This applies to all staff, including front line practitioners, senior managers and policy makers within each organisation or local authority.

#### **1.4 Information sharing and consent**

Our approach to GDPR information sharing incorporates a rights-based approach and is designed to put the child at the centre of what we do. To ensure that we are GDPR compliant in our FGDM services, we will adhere to local guidance and procedure. We commit to providing families with the right information to gather informed consent to work alongside them. We will continuously seek consent from families regarding any information to be shared with the wider family network and other professionals. We aim to be clear about the purpose of sharing information. We will share information without family consent if that information involves a child protection or vulnerable adult concern. This is in line with UK GDPR as well as our commitment to respect, dignity and accountability to the people we work alongside.



## 2. National Standards

### 2.1 Definition of FGDM

Family Group Decision Making (FGDM), also known as Family Group Conferencing, has been used as an effective way of working with children, young people, unborn babies and their families in Scotland since the mid 1990's and with adults since 2012.

FGDM is a rights-based approach that empowers children and families to have a voice and to be involved in decisions that affect them. As a model it supports children and families to have their voices heard and take ownership of decision-making in matters affecting their family. It draws on strengths and resources from within the wider family group. Family Plans are focused on ensuring that children remain safe and at home within their families, and that the rights of children and families are upheld.

FGDM recognises that children are generally best looked after within their own families, and this should be promoted wherever safe and possible. The model respects that, with the right resources, the majority of families have the ability to make safe decisions about their future and the future of the child or young person. FGDM is a family-led decision-making process that recognises and builds on the strengths within the family, empowering them to develop solutions to support and protect their children.

FGDM recognises that partnership, teamwork and multiagency working are in the best interests of families. The model works alongside families where there is a range of risk and needs. It can also work in parallel with other care and protection processes. FGDM can be used from early help all the way to significant risk and complex need. It can be used to support individuals and families from prebirth to end of life.

### 2.2 Principles of FGDM

- FGDM is strength-based, future-focused and blame-free.
- The focus is on the voice and safety of children and young people.
- FGDM recognises that families are the experts in their own lives.
- The FGDM Coordinator are the appropriate professional who oversees the FDGM process. They should always be independent of any other professional involvement with the family.
- FGDM recognises the rights of the child and family to be involved in their future planning.
- Private family time is an essential element of Family Group meetings.

For the purpose of these standards, 'family' is defined as anyone in the wider family network, including adoptive parents, foster parents and other significant people in the child's life as defined by them and their family unit. This guidance can also be used to deliver FGDM with adults.

It is expected that Coordinators have gained a relevant vocational qualification (as stated by the recruiting local authority or organisation) and have extensive experience of working alongside children and families with complex needs. It is also recommended and expected that FGDM Coordinators undertake relevant learning and development in FGDM and have access to and opportunity for continued professional development. FGDM Coordinators are required to recognise, respond and contribute to managing risk and should have access to relevant training, guidance and supervision.



## 3. Scottish Legislative and Policy Context

**There are clear legislative and policy drivers for the development and expansion of FGDM within Scotland. The provision of Family Group Decision Making services for children is now enshrined in legislation.**

### 3.1 The Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 2014

There is a legal duty to provide FGDM for children who may be 'at risk' of becoming 'looked after' by a local authority, which also includes a duty for pregnant women where there is risk, within the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. The most relevant section of the Act for FGDM is Part 12: Services in Relation to Children at Risk of Becoming Looked After etc, and the Relevant services in relation to children at risk of becoming looked after etc. (Scotland) Order 2016. Relevant services are specified as: Family Group Decision Making services as well as support services in relation to parenting.



The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (2014) highlights the role of FGDM to reduce the escalation of risk within families, preventing the likelihood of becoming 'looked after'.

The Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 2014, Part 1, which embeds article 12 of the UNCRC (every child has the right to be heard in matters affecting them and has the right to participate in the life of their family, community and society) highlights the importance of children's voices being at the centre of decision-making that impact them, and their right to be participate in family life. The aim of FGDM to put the child's voice at the centre of decision-making and to keep children safe and at home within their families wherever possible' realises this right. [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014 - National Guidance on Part 12: Services in Relation to Children At Risk of Becoming Looked After, etc. \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

### **3.2 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (incorporation) (Scotland) Bill (2020) (pending)**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (incorporation) (Scotland) Bill (2020) (pending) [UNCRC \(Incorporation\) \(Scotland\) Bill - United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child implementation: introductory guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#) is in the process of being legislated. The whole bill is relevant to FGDM but some examples of specific articles are:

Article 9 (separation from parents): Children must not be separated from their parents against their will unless it is in their best interests (for example, if a parent is hurting or neglecting a child). Children whose parents have separated have the right to stay in contact with both parents, unless this could cause them harm.

Article 12: that the child's views should be central to all matters affecting them and that parents have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of their children, while they have parental rights and responsibilities.

### **3.3 The Children (Scotland) Act 2020**

The Children (Scotland) Act 2020 emphasises the importance of family involvement in decision-making. The recent legal change under Section 13 of the Children (Scotland) Act 2020 (the 2020 Act) amends Section 17(3) of the 1995 Act to add siblings to the persons the local authority has a duty to gather the views, before making decisions about a from whom child who is looked after by them, or whom they are proposing to 'look after'. Siblings are defined as any relationship which is experienced as a sibling relationship including brothers and sisters living out with the home, step or half siblings, being cared for by the same foster carers at the same time. Within FGDM the whole family network surrounding the referred child/ren, including brothers and sisters (where appropriate and with consent) are included and involved in decision-making and planning for the referred child. [Children \(Scotland\) Act 2020 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#).

### 3.4 Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) (2006)

Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) (2006) is the Scottish Government's national approach to improving the wellbeing of children and young people in Scotland. It is a multiagency approach, working in partnership with children, families and services, supporting children and families to be involved in decision making and planning. FGDM aligns with the principles of GIRFEC. The FGDM approach puts the views of children and families at the centre and supports multiagency working by involving the professionals around the family. FGDM emphasises the importance of including the views of children and their families as part of the decision making process. [Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\) - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot).

### 3.5 The Promise

**The Promise states that:**

*“Scotland must ensure decision making is based, first and foremost, on what the child needs and wants. This is particularly important in decisions about where a child will find a stable, loving home.”*

**The Promise also highlights the need for transformational change within our decision-making systems and structures:**

*“Scotland must not aim to fix a broken system but set a higher collective ambition that enables loving, supportive, and nurturing relationships as a basis on which to thrive”*

**The principles of FGDM are aligned with the aims of The Promise (2020) emphasising building resilience within families and communities and providing them with the tools to look after their children and young people, supporting children and young people to stay safe and at home within their families. [The-Promise.pdf \(carereview.scot\)](#) FGDM is highlighted as a fundamental method of delivering The Promise:**

*“Family Group Decision Making and mediation must become a more common part of listening and decision making”*

*“Kinship family decision making must be supported by and characterised by family group decision making to explore the breadth and consequences of decisions about where children should live”*

**The Promise (2020)**

### 3.6 Child protection policy, guidance and legislation

The National Standards are compatible with child protection policy, guidance and legislation in Scotland. National Child Protection Guidance (2021) describes FGDM as a strengths-based approach to working with children and young people going through child protection processes. FGDM, although not an assessment, works in parallel with and contributes to statutory planning and decision making. [National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot).

### 3.7 Adult care and protection

As we engage with and support adults, both within our Children and Families Services and our Adult Services, legislation applicable to adults also apply to FGDM. A few examples include: the Human Rights Act (1998), Adults with incapacity Act (2000) [Adults with Incapacity \(Scotland\) Act 2000 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk) and Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act (2007) [Adult Support and Protection \(Scotland\) Act 2007 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk).

**THE LEGISLATION AND POLICIES LISTED HERE ARE NOT EXHAUSTIVE, BUT GUIDANCE WHICH SUPPORTS OUR RIGHTS- BASED PRACTICE.**



**THE FOLLOWING GUIDANCE IS BASED ON WHAT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES TELL US WORKS FOR THEM AND IS IMPORTANT TO THEM.**

## **4. Practice Guidance: Family Group Decision Making Model**

**This practice guidance section is to provide support and guidance to service leads and coordinators who are responsible for implementing and delivering high quality FGDM services. This guidance is intended to provide the core framework of an FGDM Service.**

### **4.1 Referral**

- FGDM is a voluntary process, families must consent to a referral to FGDM. The offer of FGDM can be mandated within statutory and voluntary processes, but it is the family's choice whether they engage with FGDM.
- A referral is received (after the referrer obtains the family's consent) either through a conversation between the referrer and the FGDM service, including through a referral form, or a direct self-referral from families.

**An independent Coordinator (no previous knowledge or assessment of the family) is appointed to work with the family throughout the FGDM process.**

- A referral meeting between coordinators and the referrer is essential. The referral meeting can clarify the risks to be addressed through the FGDM, the bottom lines (key concerns and risks to be addressed within the plan) and ensuring the consent of the family has been sought before the initial contact with the family.
- The referrer provides knowledge of cultural norms, religion or language barriers that will influence engagement with the family.
- The referrer must provide the information required (with the family's consent). They must also make a commitment to engaging with the FGDM process as required, to attend the information sharing stage and agree and resource the Family Plan.
- If there is no Social Worker or Lead Professional involved/supporting the family, the referrer and/or the family can state the bottom lines to be addressed in the plan.
- Coordinators must be aware of any child or adult protection concerns, lone working risks and any relevant, current risks within the family home. This will be explored in the conversation with the referrer. [National FGDM domestic Violence Practice Standards.](#)

- Coordinators should be advised/seek information about any current statutory processes and decision-making meeting dates that may be pending. The FGDM process can align with statutory meeting dates so that the family's voice and/or plan can be taken forward to these decision-making meetings (i.e. Childrens' Hearings, Child Protection Planning Meetings (CPPM) Child Planning meetings (CPM), Looked After and Accommodated (LAAC) reviews, [SCRA FGDM position Paper \(2022\)](#)).
- The referrer must also commit to taking the Family Plan forward to any decision-making meetings. They must agree, with the family's consent, to support the plan and incorporate it into their assessment and planning processes. Families are also encouraged to take their plan forward to other decision-making meetings.
- Timelines are agency and family specific, however as a guide, we work toward setting a date for the family meeting around 8 weeks from point of allocation.
- There may be exceptional circumstances where legal advice is sought/required to ensure the child's right to a family life is held as priority and FGDM can progress without parental consent. This will be pursued in accordance with each service or local authorities' guidance.



## 4.2 Preparation

- The coordinator makes initial contact with the child or young person and their family. The coordinator explains the FGDM process and gathers informed consent to proceed at this point. Consent about what information is to be shared with whom, is discussed at this point and throughout the preparation stage.
- In order to build relationships, coordinators meet children and key family members several times. Coordinators should be relational in their approach, having a 'listening ear' and should be flexible and responsive to the family's needs and circumstances.
- Ask the family if there are specific cultural norms, religious practice, language use that the coordinators need to be aware of to work with the family in a respectful way. Offer the use of interpreters if appropriate.
- Coordinators explore children and family's reason for wanting to create a family plan, as well as their understanding of the reasons for the referral, bottom lines, and decisions they are being asked to make. The family are asked what they would like to get out of their meeting, ensuring that the focus of the meeting is a balance of professional and personal hopes.
- The coordinator, in discussion with the child and their family, identifies the family network and contacts each member in turn. Widening the family network is a dynamic process and is added to with each additional family member contacted. Consent is continually agreed about what can be shared with the family network and professionals who the family chose to involve.
- The potential need for advocacy for any of the children or family members identified is explored at this point.
- The children's views are paramount to the FGDM process. It is essential for coordinators to focus on gathering the child's views and where appropriate, the views of brothers and sisters, as they have a right to be involved in decisions made about their siblings.
- Coordinators can use a wide range of tools, resources and creative methods and approaches to gather the views of children. This should be cognisant of children's age and stage of development.
- If there is no advocate allocated for the child, discussion should take place as to how the child will be supported during private family time and how they would like to share their views.

- On occasion, individuals who are involved in the child's care may not be able to attend the family meeting (due to geography or risk, for example). Other ways of sharing their views are discussed and agreed (e.g. phone calls, video calls, views read out etc).
- It is important for the referrer to be present at the end of the family meeting (especially if they are the allocated social worker) to agree, support and resource the plan. In exceptional circumstances the family may not want the referrer present. If the referrer is a Social Worker, the impact of them not attending must be fully explored with the family.
- Children attend the family meeting where it is a safe environment for them to do so, as their views are paramount. If they cannot attend, their views must be shared at the meeting and remain central to the family plan.
- Resources that the family may need, and that key professional can offer, are discussed at this stage. This will support the resourcing of the family plan after the family meeting.
- The views of all family members are shared between the family and relevant professionals before the meeting (with informed consent) in accordance with the principles of being future focused, blame free, solution focused and child centred.
- The coordinator supports the family to feel empowered and to take the family plan, or their views gathered, to future decision-making meetings that they attend (i.e. hearings, child protection planning meetings, Team around the Child meetings, LAAC reviews, core groups etc)
- The family take the lead on where and when the family meeting takes place. This may be during evenings or weekends depending on the needs of the family. The family decide, within agreed resources, what food and drink will be available at the meeting. Again, be mindful of family culture and religion when planning food and venue.
- Family members should have time to arrive and feel comfortable and familiar with the venue before other professionals arrive.

## 4.3. Family Group Meeting

### 4.3.1 Information sharing

- The coordinator facilitates this part of the meeting.
- Professionals recap their concerns with the family in order that they can make informed decisions regarding a family plan. The professionals should include identified strengths, 'bottom lines' and the resources their agency can offer.
- The family can ask questions, including questions directed to the referrer, and share any information they wish to discuss ( none of this should be new information, it should have been discussed during the preparation stage).
- The family network, including the child where appropriate, and professionals, are present and reminded of core principles of family meetings and ground rules that were introduced and agreed during the preparation phase.
- Where an advocate has been appointed for the child and/or family member, their role, boundaries, task, and expectations are reiterated.
- Voices and views of those not present, but who are involved in the FGDM process, should be shared.

### 4.3.2 Private Family Time

- Children and family members have the right to consider and chose whether advocates remain in Private Family Time.
- The coordinator and professionals withdraw, leaving the family to create and discuss the proposed plan in private.
- The family now create their Family Plan. This should have the views of the child at the centre, address the identified risks and contain solutions that are meaningful and unique to the family.
- The Family Plan must also contain a contingency plan (Plan B) and identify how they intend to monitor the family plan.
- The coordinator and professionals remain available in a different room during this time should the family require clarification or support.
- The family are encouraged and supported to take as much time as they need and can take breaks at any time.

### **4.3.3 The Family Plan**

- Once the family have agreed a plan, the coordinator and professionals re-join the meeting and the family outline their plan. This should be accepted unless it doesn't address the bottom lines and key concerns outlined in the preparation stage.
- The family and professionals agree any resources the Family Plan may need. The professionals commit to either offer support and resources or refer to other organisations who can.
- The family agree how they will communicate to ensure the Family Plan is working.
- The family members are asked to identify who will inform the necessary professionals if the plan is not working.

### **4.3.4 The Review**

- The family set a date for a review meeting. If they do not want a meeting at this time, the coordinator will arrange a date to check in with the family and give an additional offer of a review.
- The family agree which family members and professionals the plan should be shared with.
- If the children and young people do not attend the family meeting, the Family Plan must be shared with them, and they are provided with the opportunity to agree or disagree with the Family Plan.
- Where there are any significant issues that have not been addressed within the plan, the family may be encouraged to consider these further. This may include the family returning to Private Family Time with more guidance from the referrer/coordinator if appropriate to update their Plan.
- Families have a right to their views and opinions being heard and respected, where a final Family Plan is not agreed by a referrer, families can still request this is shared and distributed as a representation of their views and their proposed plan.
- In exceptional circumstances where a Social Worker/referrer needs to seek Agency support/approval for a plan, a timeframe for this will be agreed.

## 5. Directly Following the Meeting

### 5.1 Putting the Plan into Action

Primary responsibility for putting the Plan into action lies with the family – the family own the Plan. A family member is identified as the main person to ensure the Plan has been put into action and is the link person between the family and professionals. However, where appropriate, the social worker or key professional also monitors the plan through their ongoing work with the family.

- The Family Plan is a core document that may be incorporated into statutory care and protection processes and planning.
- Ensure that the family consents to the Plan being shared with the relevant professionals and family members, and for the Plan to be taken forward to future decision-making meetings (i.e. Childrens Hearings, Core Groups, CPPM, CPM, LAAC reviews etc).
- All professionals agree to take the Family Plan forward to future decision-making forums, and embed the Family Plan into existing statutory plans.
- The family are encouraged to take the Family Plan to all future decision-making forums.
- The professionals agree to resource, action and support the family to implement the plan.
- Evaluation is a key part of quality FGDM services. Coordinators therefore agree a time that the family can be reached for post meeting/process evaluation.

### 5.2 Review Family Group Meeting

A mechanism whereby the family and referrer/professionals can be satisfied that the Family Plan is being put into action and adjust the level of support or resources as necessary, and/or celebrate success. Family members can choose whether to engage in a review or not.

- The Review Family Meeting takes the same format as the original Family Meeting.
- Explore if/how the Family Plans and decisions have been taken forward to the relevant decision-making platforms (i.e. Hearings, Core Groups, CPPM, CPM, LAAC reviews etc) and explore reasons why this might not been shared.
- The support received from the professionals is also reviewed at this point.

- Reviews are usually undertaken within a 6-12 week period after the Family Meeting, however the family decide the timing of the review.
- In the case of a crisis or breakdown of a Family Plan, the review can be brought forward at any time.
- Families are offered up to 2 reviews, however in exceptional circumstances families may be offered additional reviews in response to need and risk. The offer of multiple reviews can fall into a family support role, so should be discussed in supervision.
- If the family situation has altered dramatically, the review may turn into a re-referral. This is an opportunity to look at new or emerging issues as a whole and undertake the process from the beginning.



### 5.3 Significant work

In a variety of circumstances, families may go through the referral and preparation stages of the FGDM process, and this in itself brings appropriate resolution. This can be recognised and recorded as significant work.

Outcomes for the family can be achieved through the significant work undertaken during the preparation stage, resulting in a Family Plan being created. These can also be achieved by gathering views and supporting the family to share these, or demonstrating that the family have addressed the risks outlined in the initial referral conversation, without the need to go to a family meeting.

Significant work can also be identified when using the principles of FGDM (strengths based, future focused, blame free, including the wider family, putting the views of the child at the centre) to gather the views of children and families before decision making meetings.

It is best practice to support the family towards a family meeting in all cases where it is safe to do so, as private family time is recognised as key to achieving transformational change for families. Families are also offered a review meeting after significant work is undertaken. Significant work is not considered the full FGDM process, therefore it is important to record this work as separate outcome/activity from FGDM family meetings.

### 5.4 Emergency Meetings

Significant work also includes Emergency Meeting. In these emergency, time critical situations the family are invited to create a Family Plan within 7 days or less, depending on the crisis/need within the family.

The family may not always progress to a family meeting due to time frames and presenting crisis. The main aim of Emergency Meetings is to gather the family's views and potentially create a short-term plan to keep the child or young person safe, or scope the family network to explore kinship options.

A full FGDM is offered after the emergency network meeting has concluded, to allow the family time to create a robust longer-term plan [Emergency Network Meeting Guidance \(ECC\)](#).

### 5.5 Evaluation

To ensure that family voice, experience and influence is at the heart of our service design and development, evaluation should be an integral part of every FGDM service.

How evaluation and feedback is gathered and implemented depends on the practice and contractual expectations in each individual service or agency.

The ethos of gathering children and family's views and understanding their experiences of FGDM to inform our individual and collective learning and improvement, is core to our shared FGDM principles, practice, and standards.

## 6. Summary

**These standards and practice guidance are not intended to be a static document.**

This guidance will feed into local and national service development and delivery. The Steering Group commits to reviewing and adapting these standards at regular intervals to ensure that FGDM development and practice is informed by current legislation, policies and practice guidance.

These standards will support the work of the Steering Group by providing a framework for supporting consistent, high quality FGDM practice across Scotland.



# Acknowledgements

**The FGDM National Standards and Practice Guidance (2023) has been produced in partnership by the National FGDM Steering Group.**

With thanks to Sally Wassell, Independent Chair of the National Steering Group and Steering Group members and representatives, old and new, who have provided their support, and shared their experience, resources and wisdom:

Barnardos

Celcis

Children 1st

Children's Hearing Scotland

Children's Law Society

Clackmannanshire Council

Edinburgh City Council

Edinburgh University

Family Rights Group

Glasgow City Council

Inverclyde City Council

KALM Social Care Service

Midlothian Council

Moray Council

North Lanarkshire

Scottish Borders Council

Scottish Children's Reporter Administration

Scottish Government

Shetland Islands Council

South Ayrshire Council

University of Strathclyde

West Dunbartonshire Council

Abused Men in Scotland

Highland Council

Scottish Law Centre



