

Family Group Conferencing

Evidence based equality analysis

Main aims, purpose and outcomes and how does it fit in with the wider aims of the organisation:

Family Group Conferencing is being introduced as a new preventative model, the overall aim of the service is to reduce the number of children who become looked after by the local authority. The new service will present a real change in how we do things, Family Group Conferencing will enable families to take ownership and become empowered within the decision making process. The new team will be led by a Senior Social Worker who will oversee four family group conferencing coordinators. The coordinator role is an independent and neutral party within the process.

The introduction of Family Group Conferencing aligns directly with the Councils priorities as outlined in the Council Plan, namely:

- ensuring “all of our families, children and young people are supported to get the best start in life”
- and that all of our “vulnerable adults and children feel safe and protected”.

More broadly Family Group Conferencing will contribute to the wider strategy of reducing demand preventing children entering care, reducing the Looked After Children service costs through avoidance of care and also to improve the outcomes for our children and young people so that they can remain safely and sustainably within the family environment.

The service is subject to a 12 month review to assess the effectiveness as a preventative strategy. Each coordinator will manage a caseload of 44 families across a 12 month period. To manage demand for the new service, eligibility criteria for referral will be utilised for case allocation. It is unlikely (within the first 12 months) that the new service will be able to absorb demand within this period which may lead to some unintentional inequality of accessibility for some. Following a review the service may be subject to upscaling to absorb this demand moving forward. The criteria for referral is outlined as follows:

- Priority 1: Cases subject to pre-proceedings
- Priority 2: Child protection cases
- Priority 3: Children in Need repeats

Cases within these cohorts will also be subject to prioritisation based on case histories. Further information relating to the Family Group Conferencing process is included within the service Statement of Purpose which is available on request from equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Lead officer: Sophie Wales (Senior Manager Provider Services)

Stakeholders: Elected members, respective council services including children’s services, finance and human resources

Equality analysis is a valuable tool to help embed equality into everything we do

While process is important, equality analysis is essentially about outcomes

Lack of evidence of discrimination is not evidence of a lack of discrimination

It is not acceptable to say that a policy is applied uniformly to all groups and is therefore fair and equal. Applying a policy or procedure consistently may result in differential outcomes for different groups.

For each of the areas below, an assessment needs to be made on whether the policy has a **positive, negative or neutral impact**, and brief details of why this decision was made and notes of any mitigation should be included. Where the impact is negative, this needs to be given a **high, medium or low assessment**. It is important to rate the impact of the policy based on the current situation (i.e. disregarding any actions planned to be carried out in future).

High impact – a significant potential impact, risk of exposure, history of complaints, no mitigating measures in place etc.

Medium impact –some potential impact exists, some mitigating measures are in place, poor evidence

Low impact – almost no relevancy to the process, e.g. an area that is very much legislation led and where the Council has very little discretion

	Neutral	Positive	Negative
Target group / area			
Race and ethnicity (including		The Family Group Conferencing Team Manager and Coordinators will all receive Equality and Diversity training as part of their	The Children’s and Young People’s Plan 2012-2016 notes that Cheshire West

<p>Gypsies and Travellers; migrant workers, asylum seekers etc.)</p>		<p>individual and team training and development plans. This will ensure that all team members will have the necessary skills to ensure that the needs of the family are met satisfactorily and will meet the diverse needs of residents within Cheshire West and Chester.</p> <p>Families who are referred for FGC will be allocated a FGC coordinator. The coordinator is responsible for making initial contact with the family. At this stage the coordinator will capture the individual requirements of the family and also of all attendees. The FGC process will be tailored to meet the needs of the individuals in attendance.</p> <p>Where there is a requirement for information sharing, such as leaflets, any materials will be provided in a format that is accessible and appropriate for the individuals in attendance. All information will be provided in the language choice of the family.</p> <p>The FGC service will seek to achieve accreditation with the Family Rights Group. To achieve the accreditation the service must evidence how they have met the standards framework, Standard 7 relates to the management of diversity.</p>	<p>and Chester has a relatively small Black and Minority Ethnic population at around 6%. This data does include some Traveller children and children from migrant worker families. However, we cannot assume this captures the ranges of diverse needs within Cheshire West and Chester. Where required specialist support will be sourced however due to the relatively low BME population there may be deficit in specialist support services, however the service will endeavour to meet the required needs of the families wherever possible.</p>
<p>Disability (as defined by the Equality Act - a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that</p>		<p>The FGC team will receive the Equality and Diversity training as a minimum and will be skilled to recognise and assess the needs and requirements of individual service users.</p> <p>Within the FGC process particular regard will be given to disability, additional learning needs and mental health issues of attendees.</p>	<p>Attitudes within the family and wider friends' network may themselves prove a challenge and may be contributing negatively to the progress of the family. This will be managed within the FGC process effectively by</p>

<p>has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities)</p>		<p>Adjustments will be made for attendees. Venues for FGC will be identified which provide adequate access for those attending who may have mobility issues and provisions will be made available for hearing loops, sign language, braille etc.</p> <p>Advocacy and support will be made available for attendees who require the service. The FGC lead will work closely with colleagues within the advocacy service to ensure suitable representation is sourced. An advocate can attend to support any attendee including vulnerable adults, children and young people.</p> <p>In relation to parents with a learning disability/difficulty and this is impacting upon how they are parenting their child then a referral and involvement from Adults Learning Disability Team and health colleagues will be required to form a view on parent cognitive functioning in order to inform how we design our work to meet both the child and the parent's needs.</p> <p>The FGC team will ensure that local authority offer and specialist resource is utilised appropriately in the delivery of FGC. Should gaps be identified within the local offer this will be shared with the relevant officer.</p> <p>It is likely that in some instances there may be service users who have a disability, additional learning needs or mental health issues. The service will ensure that</p>	<p>the coordinators and where appropriate the FGC lead.</p>
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		appropriate adjustments are made to ensure the full participation of all attendees is achieved. The impact of disability will be considered as part of the social care assessment and will inform the FGC team of requirements prior to the information gathering that will take place at the initial point of contact.	
Gender		The proposed service will not discriminate on the basis of gender. The service will be required to have regard for children and young people's needs and experiences regarding the gender of their carer(s).	
Gender identity (gender reassignment)		<p>The new service will not discriminate with regard to gender identity. The service will be required to have regard for children and young people's gender identity and experiences regarding the gender identity of their carer(s).</p> <p>The Equality Act 2010 provides the legislative framework. Guidelines for assessments specify that all assessments should be specific to individual children and young people.</p> <p>Training with regard to gender identity is to become available and will be offered to staff imminently. It will be the responsibility of the FGC lead to ensure that the FGC team receive this training. There are specialist LGBT youth groups which could be utilised to support young people referred to the FGC service.</p>	
Religion and		The Family Group Conferencing Team	Wherever necessary

<p>belief</p>		<p>Manager and Coordinators will all receive Equality and Diversity Training as part of their induction and ongoing training plans. This will ensure that all team members will have the necessary skills to ensure that the unique needs of the family are met satisfactorily.</p> <p>As part of the FGC process initial contact will be made with the family to assess their needs and requirements, this will include discussions relating to religious and/or cultural beliefs. The coordinators will ensure at this stage that this is undertaken for all attendees. The needs of the family and attendees will be observed by the coordinator and incorporated into the FGC process as required. The scheduling of venues and provision of refreshments will also need to adhere to the requirements of the family and attendees.</p>	<p>members of the FGC team will seek advice and support in cases where there may be knowledge gaps relating to equality and diversity. The team will tap into the Unity Centre for additional support in these cases.</p>
<p>Sexual orientation (including heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual)</p>		<p>The service will not discriminate with regard to sexual orientation. Coordinators will continue to have ongoing training relating to equality and diversity and will be respectful and understanding of service users' sexual orientations at all times.</p>	
<p>Age (children and young people aged 0 – 24, adults aged 25 – 50, younger older people aged 51 – 75/80; older people 81+. The age</p>		<p>The service is aimed chiefly at children and young people. Their voice and welfare within the process are paramount. The FGC model works with the families to improve the outcomes for children and young people so that they can remain within the family environment safely and sustainably. This includes the aspect of intergenerational cooperation between the family. Where this is</p>	<p>It is recognised that in some cases prejudices may exist within the family dynamic and may contribute to issues that the family are working to resolve. The FGC team will work to mitigate and manage these issues within the family group conference</p>

<p>categories are for illustration only as overriding consideration should be given to needs)</p>		<p>managed there is likely to be a positive impact on the outcomes for the child and or young person.</p>	<p>environment and were required source support from other specialist services as and when required.</p>
<p>Carers</p>		<p>FGC Coordinators will have an awareness of individual needs of family members. Conferences will be scheduled to suit the needs of the family, where there may be carer responsibilities these will be accommodated by the service.</p> <p>The assessment process will take account of the “lived experience” of the child, including if the parents have “carers” responsibilities and if the children themselves are “young carers” appropriate referrals will be made to ensure support if available.</p>	
<p>Rural communities</p>	<p>The service will be accessed by families, children and young people across the borough.</p>	<p>The service will be accessed by families, children and young people across the borough. Coordinators will strive to ensure that venues are easily accessible for attendees, where a suitable venue is not available within close proximity to the family suitable transport arrangements will be made.</p> <p>FCG project has considered the additional transportation demands to engage with the process. Contributions to travel expenses have been accounted for as part of the budget.</p>	
<p>Areas of deprivation</p>		<p>It is likely that the majority of children and young people accessing the service will live in areas with higher levels of deprivation. The</p>	

		<p>new service will aim to improve the outcomes for children and young people by ensuring that they remain safely within the family environment and therefore their communities. Although there may be no direct impact on communities ensuring that children and young people residing within areas of deprivation feel safe and protected will be a positive outcome although there will be no significant impact on the areas themselves.</p>	
Human rights	<p>The Human Rights Act 1998 underpins all of our social work practice when working with families. Due regard should be given to sharing information and consideration given to all our interventions in infringing upon individuals Human Rights.</p>	<p>This programme supports children's right to a family life and the overall aim of the service is to ensure that children and young people can remain within the family environment where it is safe and sustainable for them to do so.</p>	
Health and wellbeing (consider both the wider determinants of health such as education, housing, employment, environment, crime and transport, as well		<p>Evidence suggests that children and young people achieve better health and wellbeing outcomes within the family environment when compared to entering care. The FGC service aims to ensure that as many children and young people as possible the opportunity to remain within the family environment where it is safe and sustainable for them to do so.</p>	

<p>as the possible impacts on lifestyles and the effect there may be on health and care services)</p>			
<p>Procurement/partnership (if project due to be carried out by contractors/partners etc, identify steps taken to ensure equality compliance)</p>	<p>The introduction of the new service is an in house project and will be evaluated throughout as to its effectiveness.</p> <p>Procurement of any type is governed by the Cheshire West and Chester Finance and Contract Procedure Rules. This is based on a number of principles;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure compliance with all legal requirements - Achieve best value - Ensure transparency, openness; non-discrimination and fair competition demonstrate probity, consistency, accountability and 		

	<p>integrity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support the Council's corporate and departmental aims <p>Operational project team to ensure compliance with the Council's Procurement Strategy where applicable.</p>		
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Evidence:

Family Group Conferencing is a newly introduced prevention team to reduce the number of children and young people who are entering care. Family Group Conferencing is a widely utilised method which empowers families to take ownership and overcome the difficulties that they face. Family Group Conferencing has been successful in ensuring that children and young people are able to remain within the family environment where it is safe and sustainable for them to do so. Leeds City Council operate three Family Group Conferencing Teams across the city with a specialist fourth team working with families experiencing domestic violence. The introduction of Family Group Conferencing in Leeds has been instrumental in reducing the numbers of looked after children from 1443 in 2010 to 1235 in March 2016. In February 2016 a Social Work Forum identified a gap in service provision around Family Group Conferencing – it was widely agreed that introducing Family Group Conferencing would be a positive way to strengthen current practice within Cheshire West and Chester.

An options appraisal was undertaken with regard to the introduction of Family Group Conferencing and how the model would be delivered in practice locally. A number of officers from across the Childrens and Family Service lead on the options appraisal including a Senior Manager, workforce development and a children's commissioner. The appraisal period ensured that a robust approach was taken – best practice models were explored and understood, a soft market exercise was undertaken, a comprehensive literature review was completed, cost benefit analysis was completed, key stakeholder views were sought and any potential collaboration opportunities were explored.

A survey was sent out to all Children and Families staff to seek their views on any previous experience of FGC to establish what worked well and what could have been improved. In addition to the survey three sessions with staff were held, one with Integrated Early Support, one with the Edge of Care team. To explore specific issues in more detail a focus group of

self-selected staff was established, this group considered front line and practice issues and how the model could be applied locally.

Action plan:

Actions required	Key activity	Priority	Outcomes required	Officer responsible	Review date
Training – Equality and Diversity	Ensure that initial and ongoing training plans include equality and diversity training for all team members	High	Ensure that families, children and young people are not discriminated against on the basis of protected characteristics	Vivienne White / Anna Johnson	September 2017
Equality and Diversity – Support	It is recognised that although the team will receive training to support their role in ensuring equality there may be some instances additional support or information is required. All team members are to ensure that support services are utilised for this purpose.	High	Ensure that families, children and young people are not discriminated against on the basis of protected characteristics.	Vivienne White	September 2017
Performance and Quality Management	Performance and quality of service to be monitored to ensure that service users are not discriminated against on the basis of protected characteristics.	High	Ensure that families, children and young people are not discriminated against on the basis of protected characteristics.	Vivienne White / Sophie Wales	September 2017
Equality and Diversity Monitoring	Service delivery will be monitored to ensure the unique needs of each family are considered and met throughout the	High	Ensure that families, children and young people are not discriminated against on the basis of any of the	Vivienne White / Jenny Hulme	September 2017

	process. To be captured as part of the review process.		above protected characteristics. Monitoring to identify any gaps in service or local authority offer.		
Raising awareness and information	Ensure that staff are made aware of issues relating to equality and diversity	High	Staff are aware of issues relating to equality and diversity and receive information in a timely and effective manner.	Vivienne White / Sophie Wales	September 2017

Monitoring and Review

The key actions outlined above will be reviewed and monitored as required by the Senior Social Worker who will have oversight of the new service. It will also be the responsibility of the Senior Social Worker for Family Group Conferencing to ensure that staff are referred for equality and diversity training as and when required. Following the first year of implementation the equality analysis will be updated.

Sign off	
Lead officer:	
Approved by Tier 4 Manager:	Sophie Wales
Moderation and/or Scrutiny – People Equality Group	
Date: 15 June 2017 and subsequent revision	
Date analysis to be reviewed based on rating (high impact – review in one year, medium impact - review in two years, low impact in three years)	One year