

# Family Group Conferences for Adults - in Practice

**Presented by: Linda Tapper**

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with

Coordinators, staff and volunteer Advocates from **DAYBREAK FGC**,  
Hampshire

# Who we are.....

**Linda Tapper:** previously employed by Daybreak to develop the first Adult FGC programme specifically for Elder Abuse, subsequently expanded to cover all adult safeguarding situations. Now working as an independent Trainer and Consultant in all aspects of Adult FGC

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**Daybreak FGC:** The UK Family Group Conference specialists, providing FGC programmes across London and Southern England, and training and consultation in all aspects of FGC nationally and internationally

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# Safeguarding is everyone's business?

- Throughout history families and communities have supported each other with little or no statutory involvement
- Over time governments have taken more control so that families now frequently feel disempowered and unable to help themselves
- Many countries are now actively seeking to reverse this trend and encourage and support family and community responsibility

# The Mental Capacity Act

- recognises the right of adults to decide how they live their lives – even if they make “unwise” decisions.

Family Group Conferences support individuals to make their own decisions, ensuring that they have full information on the risks, ways to mitigate the risks and possible alternatives. In addition FGC provide a safe forum for family members (and others) to explain their concerns, and for everyone to listen to the viewpoint of others.

# “Making Safeguarding Personal”

*MSP – “aims to encourage practice that puts the person more in control and generates a more person centred set of responses and outcomes.”* MSP Guide 2014

The MSP Toolkit for Responses (2011) suggests FGC as one of a number of potentially useful approaches that could improve outcomes as well as people’s overall experience of safeguarding.

# The Care Act 2014

One of the main aims of the Act: *“To safeguard individuals in a way that supports them in making choices and controlling how they live their lives.”*

The Act warns that organisations must guard against safeguarding arrangements reverting to a *“paternalistic and over-interventionist way of working”*, and stresses that responses must be the least intrusive and proportionate to the risk presented.

# Key Beliefs of the FGC model

- We are all more committed to carrying out plans for our own welfare if WE make the plans, rather than have others impose plans on us
- Families are the experts in their own situation – professionals see only a snapshot of the circumstances.
- Empowering individuals and families to work together to find solutions can have long-term benefits for all, and reduce reliance on services.



# Key elements of Family Group Conferences

- Independent coordinator / facilitator
- Service user participation is central to the process and he/she chooses who to invite (family members and /or friends)
- Formal or informal Advocacy is always offered to the service user, though not always accepted. The service user is given time and support to prepare for the meeting
- Meetings are “family-led” and plans are developed by the service user and their chosen support network **in private**
- The role of professionals is to provide good clear information to enable realistic plans to be made to address the concerns

# The FGC Process

- Preparation: coordinator meets and prepares service user and all participants, and makes arrangements for the meeting (*3-5 weeks*)
- The FGC meeting: 3 stages (*2-3 hrs in total*):
  - i. Information sharing
  - ii. Private family time
  - iii. Agreeing the plan
- The Review meeting: (*approx. 12 weeks later*)

*Total coordinator time: approx. 28 hours for initial FGC + 10 hours for Review*

# Welcome to **Margaret's** Family Group Conference

## **Background:**

Margaret was widowed 9 months ago and lived alone until her youngest daughter Jane moved back in 4 months ago. Margaret has Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary disease (COPD) and uses inhalers to help her breathing. She has had 4 hospital admissions over the last 2 years. Jane has had problems with depression for many years and recently lost her job and broke up with her partner. Margaret says Jane has a new group of friends with whom she spends a lot of time, and has started taking drugs. This causes arguments between them. A month ago Margaret's neighbour called the police when she heard shouting and screaming late at night. When police arrived Margaret was visibly upset but said it was a minor disagreement and she wasn't hurt – she refused to press charges against Jane or give a statement. However, Jane was abusive to the police officer and was arrested. Jane was released without charge next day and went home.

Police reported the incident to Adult Services as a Safeguarding concern.

# Questions for the Family Group Conference:

1. What support does Margaret want to enable her to live safely in her own home and who can help provide this?
2. How can Margaret and Jane stop the arguments and get on better together?

Those invited to attend:

**Margaret**

**Jane** – Margaret's younger daughter

**Connie** - Margaret's elder daughter and her partner **Chris**

**Lewis** - Margaret's son

**Brian** - Margaret's brother and his wife **Betty**

**Pat** - Margaret's neighbour

**Emma** - Margaret's social worker

**Helen** – Margaret's COPD nurse

**Sam** – Community Police Officer

# What happens next?

- Service user and family asked to decide who will monitor progress of the plan /situation and take action if necessary
- The referrer (usually the social worker) is asked to agree to support the plan
- Coordinator writes up the plan and distributes it. Note: the meetings are not minuted!
- Review meeting arranged approx. 12 weeks later, depending on situation and wishes of service user and family.

## A real case...

“Annie” had been experiencing domestic violence and abuse from her husband for 40 years. She had previously tried to get help but felt either she was not believed, or the option offered (a women’s refuge), was not appropriate for her. Family and friends were supportive when an incident occurred, but eventually Annie always felt she had no option but to go back.

After the latest incident the police referred Annie for a FGC.....

# “MY STORY”

- by a victim of  
domestic abuse.

Referred for a Family  
Group Conference in  
2008

Written in 2009 – now  
“a-non victim”!

(reproduced by permission  
of the author)

What an awful week I'd had, not one to be repeated,  
A friend took me shopping but there was no money to be treated.  
From day to day I'd got to this state since I said I've had enough.  
Help came from friends and family but still my life was tough.  
A broken arm, no money and a granddaughter to support,  
No safe home or daily life; a long time 'til we went to court.  
And then I got a phone call, when I thought no one else had cared.  
Was help at hand, someone to listen and believe? - to hope I hardly dared.

I met a remarkable lady, at least she was in my eyes.  
Her name was Dot, but I wasn't taken in by size!  
The name Dot may be short but it signifies a period and an end.  
From the time that I met with her my life was on the mend.

Within the hour we were drinking coffee in a bar,  
Shopping trip forgotten, this was more important I felt by far.  
I don't think I knew quite what help I might avail,  
But this was surely better than Sainsbury's even with a sale!

A group meeting was arranged, quite scared I felt it's true  
To tell what I kept inside so long I did not want to do.  
Only once I told my tale all help required was sat there.  
I looked around, their faces showed they only seemed to care.

Dot documented our plan of each and every task,  
If help, support or advice was needed we only had to ask.  
Court date was set, plan fulfilled, and I was on my way  
Prepared I was, I gained so much - Hip, Hip, Hip, Hooray!

Life is still an uphill climb, the end though is in sight.  
I am a different person now, I know I have the right  
To look forward to the future not fearing when I wake,  
Having hopes and aspirations with each and every new Daybreak!

**No one did this for me I did it myself - with help!**