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Family Group Conferencing and Relationship-Based Practice in Social Work

Part of the Professionals in Practice Webinar Series

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Introduction

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Family Group Conferencing as a model of community- based practice

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A FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCE IS A BRIDGE



OUTCOMES...



- The FGC **co-ordinator** is **independent**
- The FGC **respects** the **family's consent** to proceed
- The FGC is **family led** and includes **private time for the family** to make a plan that reflects the aspirations of the group and their response to concerns
- The **central focus** is on the **child or adult** who is the subject of the FGC and they are offered support in their involvement including an advocate
- 5. The FGC service ensures that the **family has all necessary resources**, including adequate preparation, relevant information, and a community space
- 6. The FGC **respects the family's privacy** and right to confidentiality
- 7. The FGC is **sensitive** to the **family's culture** taking account of ethnicity, language and religion.

FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCE

TAKING ACTION. PARTICIPATING. VALUING PEOPLE
AND THE QUALITY OF THE CONVERSATION.

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Jerome has been considering the best strategy to help people while lockdown measures are in place. He is a family group coordinator that has had meetings disrupted by the government guidelines surrounding Covid-19. One meeting with a new mum proved an interesting challenge. **She did not have a family, so a support network had to be built from other areas in her life such as work friends.** Jerome considered sending a takeaway for the meeting but realised that a food-shop delivery may prove more helpful to a new mum that has been faced with the realities of lockdown. **All of the online shopping slots were taken up so Jerome sent her the equivalent money as a 'food voucher'. The new mum showed her appreciation by sending a photo of the shop she bought with a grateful message.** Jerome has found that it is imaginative gestures such as these that help build relationships with the participants of meetings. He uses food as a tool in his meetings to engage with the families, and through food he is able to create positive associations with family group conferences. He has found that by asking for help setting up meetings virtually he is involving the family more intimately with the process of coming together. They are consulting their network and deciding on the platform that suits them best, which is a uniting activity in itself. He has found that the participants in meetings are now active collaborators and they use the meetings as a forum to connect. **As work and leisure blend into each other, Jerome has found that by rediscovering old hobbies such as Djing and using his local park for daily exercise he is maintaining structure.**

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Virtual Family Group Conferencing

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Restorative Approaches in Youth Justice – is there space for FGC's?

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When young people offend it causes a multiple of fractures in their relationships on individual, family, community, social and political levels.

Restorative approaches were introduced into youth justice intervention in the UK initially in the Youth Justice and Evidence Act 1999 with a focus on 'repairing harm' with the communities and victims of offences.

Typically this was in the remit of approaches at the time as being being 'tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime' (Blair, 1999) using an individual-reformist approach (Payne 2014).

Contextual safeguarding approaches encourages a broader view of the causes of behaviours young people might display. Similarly, Johns et al (2017) advocate for an ecological approach when working with young people who offend which is much more aligned to the ethos and value base of FGC's.

So, what does the research say about using the FGC model when working with young people who offend?

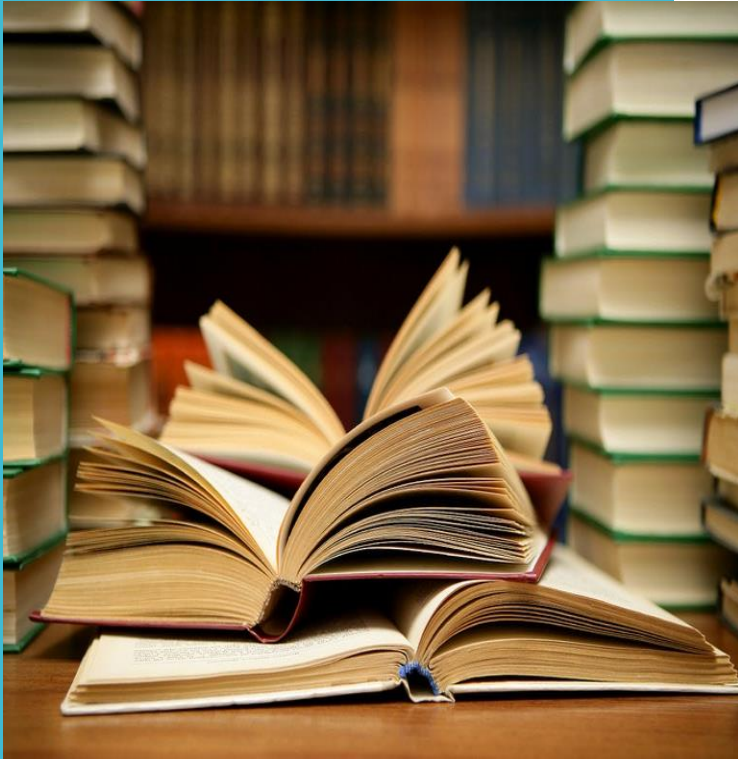
McKenzie (2002) found in their Hampshire Project of using FGC's as a restorative approach, families felt empowered, in what had previously been typically disempowering processes in the youth justice setting.

Mutter et al (2008) reflected on the use of FGC's in restorative approaches with emphasis on the importance of the 'private family time' element, often missing from other RJ approaches.

Henry et al (2014) used a case study approach to identify that approaches which combine the control (accountability) and care (well-being) involving young people and their families are more likely to engage young people and reduce re-offending.

Winokur et al (2013) concluded that family focused resettlement services can help to re-engage the family and there is evidence that they can successfully reduce reoffending.

Adler et al (2016) concluded that restorative approaches were more likely to have positive impact on re-offending rates than punishment orientated approaches



Addressing the fractures?



Is there benefit in using FGC's in youth justice intervention more?

In October 2019 the Criminal Justice Youth Inspection Report was published citing that nearly 65% of young people leaving custody go on to re-offend. The recommendation being that more planning for release and re-integration needs to take place.

What are the benefits and challenges of using an FGC approach when working with young people who offend?

References used

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Implementing Family Group Conferences

Richard Chalmers
CEO
Daybreak FGC



A new view on an old problem

DAYBREAK

Family Group Conferences



Key aspects of a FGC

- A decision-making meeting
- Employs a broad definition of family
- Focussed on building partnerships
- Recognises the family as “experts”
- Helps children have a voice in their future
- Makes good use of professional consultation and support
- Built on a strong set of values



A new view on an old problem

DAYBREAK

Family Group Conferences



Value Statement

- A belief that families have the ability to make decisions about the members of their own families
- A commitment to the empowerment of families to make those decisions
- The demonstration and promotion of mutual respect
- The wish to promote the active participation of all involved in the process
- A recognition and valuing of the roles and responsibilities of agencies
- The recognition and valuing of difference



A new view on an old problem

DAYBREAK

Family Group Conferences



**"Coming together is a beginning,
staying together is progress, and
working together is success."**

Henry Ford

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Questions?