

Consultation on the Family Group Conference service

Background & what the Service does

The service was first commissioned by South Gloucestershire Council in 2007 – 08. The purpose of the contract is to work with children, young people, and their families, enabling identification of ways forward to meet the children and young person's needs. Ultimately with the aim of reducing the possibility of children and young people being taken into care.

The current contract for Family Group Conferences operates on the same purpose set out in 2007. The Provider receives £22,631 per annum for the service and is currently required to deliver 15 Conferences. The current contract is due to end on the 31st March 2021.

Who can use this service?

The service is only open to families supported by South Gloucestershire Council Social Workers. Social Workers (practitioners) who have identified a need for this specialist service refer directly to the Provider.

Our Proposal

In South Gloucestershire we now we use a Signs of Safety strengths-based approach to working with children and families. As part of this approach, we engage with the whole family at the earliest stage. This involves SGC practitioners convening family meetings with the families support network to devise support and safety plans in order for children to remain within their family.

The expectation that now by using this modal that practitioners are holding family meetings as part of their standard practice with children and families, and although these meetings are not following the Family Group Conferencing model exactly, they are very much a kin to that approach.

As a Local Authority we have invested in specific training in this area (Family Finding skills) to equip staff to ask questions to find family networks and connected people. Staff are trained to facilitate family network meetings and use these networks when planning the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person.

It is proposed that funds from a potential decommission would be used to invest in training additional SGC staff in the delivery of the signs and safety practice model including family finding and family network meeting.

Any child or family involved with the current Family Group Conference would not be left without a service as the children & young people will already be receiving assistance from SGC's social work teams.

How will it be paid for?

We propose that staff training will be paid using the funds that would have been allocated to the Family Group Conference contract for 2021-22.

Have your say on how the future of the floating support service

The consultation is open for 8 weeks from 4th January 2021 until 1st March 2021

We are interested in hearing views on:

- The benefits or drawbacks of bringing a family safety meeting in-house rather than commissioning an external provider.

There are a range of ways to take part:

- Go to our [webpage](#) to see more information and complete our [online survey](#), or print out a copy of the paper survey
- You can pick up a paper survey from your local library or One Stop Shop, which can be posted back to us at the address below. Or you can ask the library for a Freepost envelope to return the survey without the need for a stamp.
- Telephone: 01454 863297
- Email: consultation@southglos.gov.uk
- Write to: *South Gloucestershire Council, Corporate Research & Consultation Team, Council offices, Badminton Road, Yate, BRISTOL, BS37 5AF*

In addition to the range of stakeholders the council always engages with for public consultations, we will be speaking to:

- People who are currently using the service or who have used it recently.

What Happens Next?

We will use consultation feedback to inform the recommendation paper to SGC Children Adults and Health (CAH) Senior Leadership Team.