

INITIAL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS (EqIAA)

Family Group Conference Consultation

Please Note:-

This document describes an initial assessment of equalities impacts in relation to the proposals for the Family Group Conference.

The council has a statutory duty to consider the impact of its actions in relation to the following protected characteristic groups:-

Age
Disability
Gender Reassignment
Marriage and Civil Partnership
Pregnancy and Maternity
Race
Religion or Belief
Sex
Sexual Orientation

Therefore, the council wishes to hear and proactively consider any comments in relation to how any aspect of the issues presented may impact on any sections of the community as listed above. Any feedback in relation to equalities and any point raised within this document will feed into and inform a full Equality Impact Assessment and Analysis.

You can find out more and tell us your views by completing our [survey online](#) or sending your comments to:

Email: consultation@southglos.gov.uk

Write to: Freepost SGC, South Gloucestershire Council, Council Offices, Badminton Road, Yate, BRISTOL, BS37 5AF

Phone: 01454 868154

Copies of the consultation are available from your local library or one stop shop.

The consultation on these proposals starts on Monday 4th January 2021 until 1st March 2021

SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

The Family Group Conference was first commissioned by South Gloucestershire Council (SGC) in 2007 – 08. An external provider has delivered the contract since 2007.

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 to reduce the possibility of children being taken into care.

The current contract for Family Group Conferences (FGC) 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 and the contract is due to expire on the 31st March 2021.

The option being considered is to bring family meetings in line with the Signs of Safety Practice model adopted by SGC Social Work Team. The proposal is to bring the Family Group Conference contract to an end and use the funds to train further SGC staff in the delivery of Family Finding and Family Network Meetings as part of the newly adopted practice model.

South Gloucestershire Council use a Signs of Safety strengths-based approach to working with children and families. As part of this approach SGC 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 for children with the aim to remain within their family. The expectation is that now, by using this model, 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 akin to that approach.

SECTION 2 - RESEARCH AND CONSULTATION

PLEASE NOTE: THIS SECTION WILL BE UPDATED POST CONSULTATION

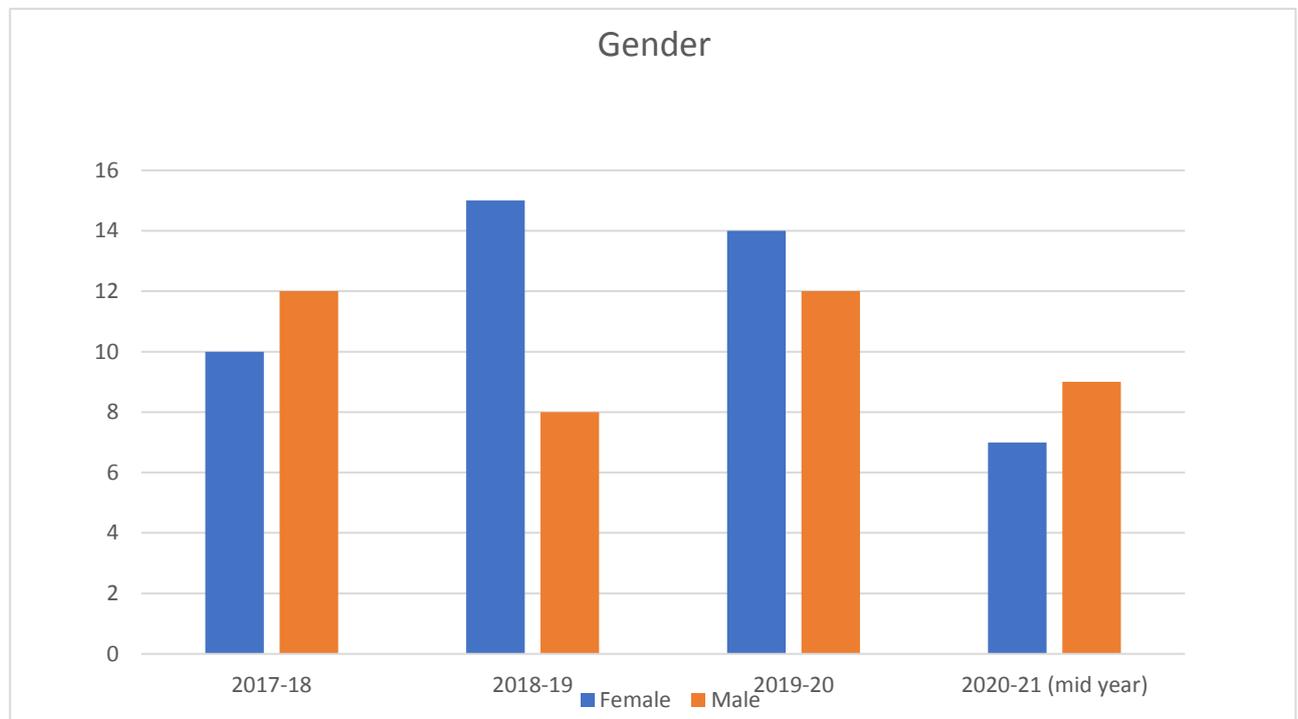
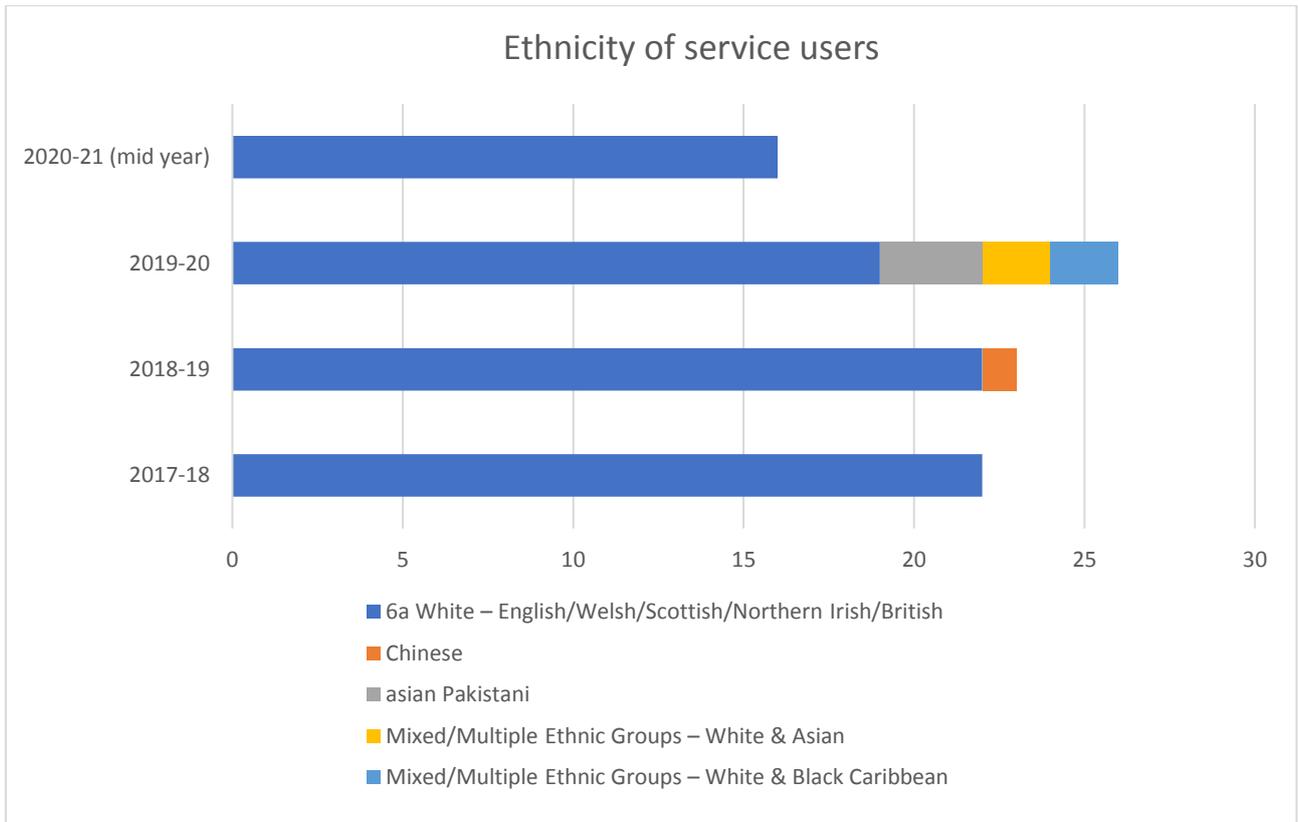
SGC will publish a public consultation and make relevant organisations, professionals, as well as service users (where possible) aware of the consultation. In addition to this public consultation a feedback exercise was carried out with Social Workers referring to the service in August & September of 2020, by the Provider.

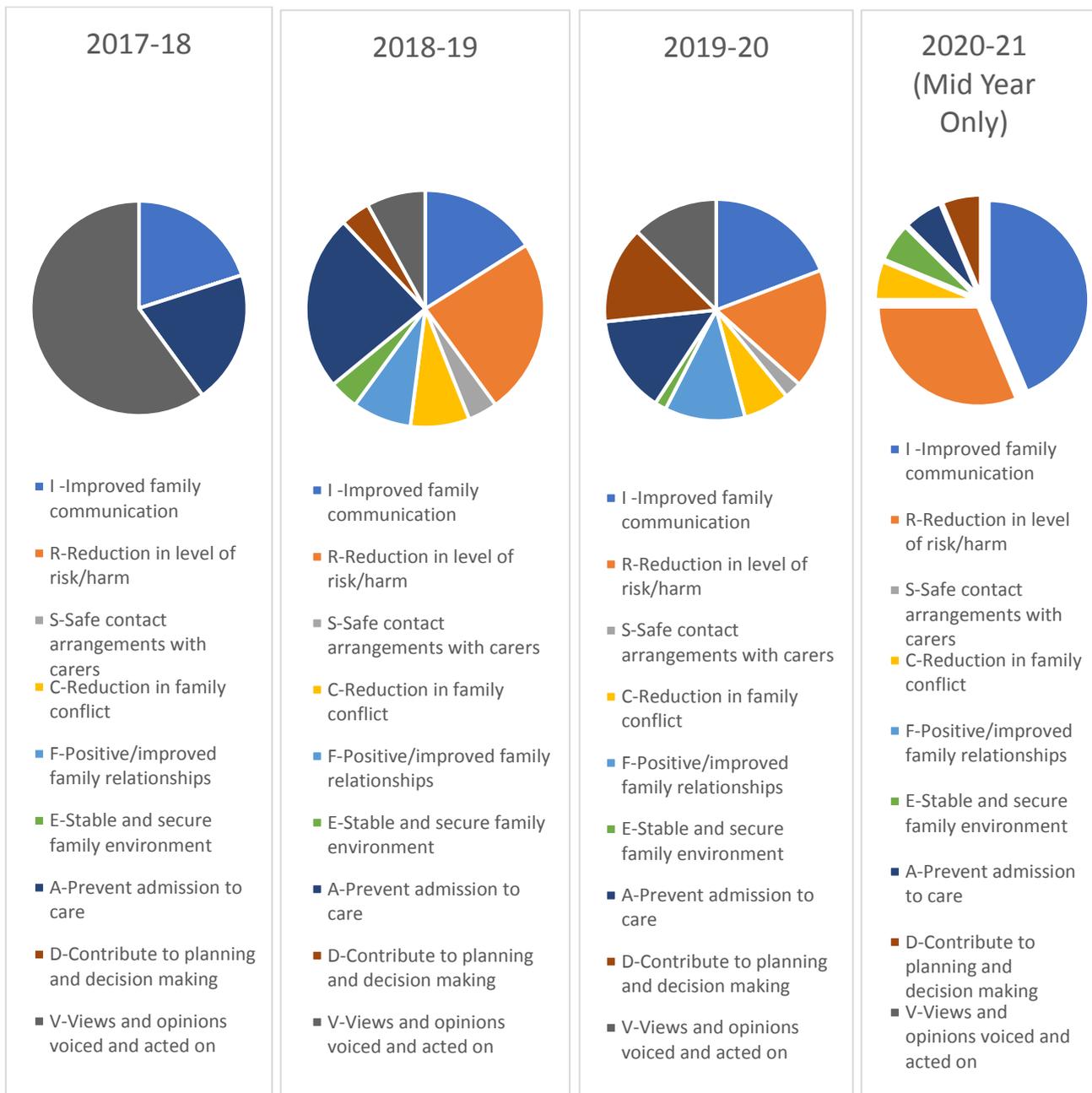
The feedback exercise produced a mix of positive comments on how FGC's (including some delivered out of the timeframe) have helped in both keeping children out of care, through identifying alternative carers within the family and in supporting Social Work assessments of the need for court action, when the family has been unable to create a safe plan.

There was also some criticism of the speed of the Providers response and the need for improved communication from the Provider.

"In South Gloucestershire 21% of children are in the most deprived 40% nationally. Nearly one third (32%) of the population live in areas with the poorest scores (quintiles 1 & 2) for educational attainment, skill level and level of training. The picture for children's education and skills subdomain is also of concern, with 41% of the South Gloucestershire under 16 population being among the most deprived nationally – contrasting sharply with overall Index of Multiple Deprivation." (*South Gloucestershire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment*)

Returns from the last three and a half years of the contract have been analysed (2017-2018 to 2020-21 (mid year only)) and the following information shows the protected characteristics of service users:





The contract only attracts a small number of service users due to its specialist nature and narrow referral pathway, but overall, there is an even split between male and females accessing the FGC service.

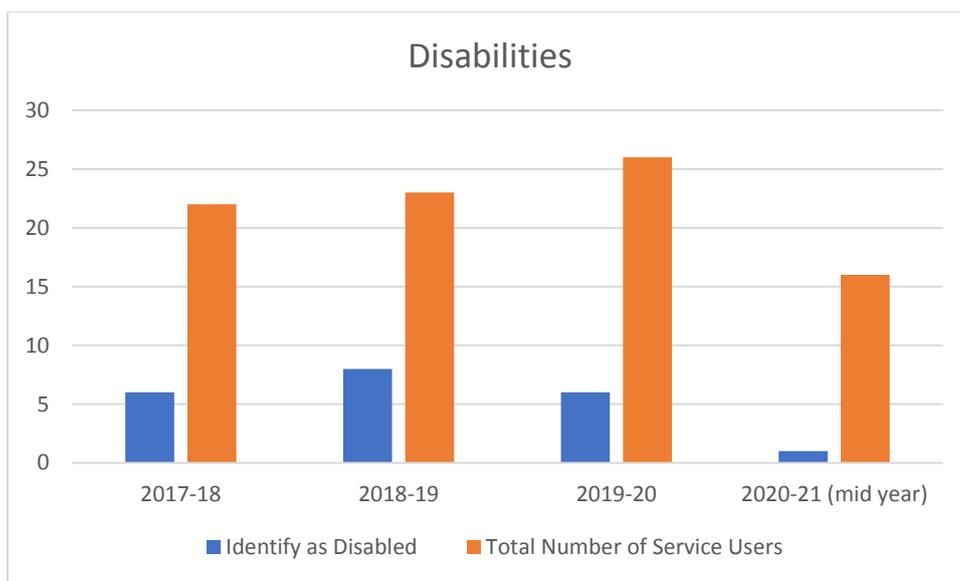
The number of different outcomes achieved by children and young people has increased over the last three years. However, the total number of young people engaging with the service has been steady between 2017 and 2019.

South Gloucestershire had a Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) population of 8.1% in 2011 – defined as the ethnic groups other than White. Younger age groups have the highest proportion of ethnic minorities, with 11.5% BAME in under 40s compared to 5% in those aged 40 and over. (South Gloucestershire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment).

The ethnicity of FGC service users is not representative of the South Gloucestershire region, although it is recognised that the limited number of service users referred to this specialist service has the potential to exaggerate and / or skew results.

An estimated 3.0 – 5.4% of children have disabilities, when applied to South Gloucestershire this equates to between 1,607 and 2,893 children with some level of disability (*South Gloucestershire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment*).

Children or young people identifying as disabled each year within the FGC service are below the district wide estimate of children with disabilities in South Gloucestershire.



SECTION 3 - IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS OF EQUALITIES ISSUES AND IMPACTS

PLEASE NOTE: THIS SECTION WILL BE UPDATED POST CONSULTATION

South Gloucestershire Council now use a Signs of Safety strengths-based approach to working with children and families. As part of this approach Social Workers 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 is that by using this model 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 akin to that approach. Expected outcomes would also be very similar to the outcomes in place for the existing FGC contract.

Rather than a referral to an external agency to carry out a family group conference, Social Workers would be required to carry out family meetings at an earlier stage of any intervention. Family meetings are currently provided by Social Workers in house, resulting in quicker turnaround times and measurable outcomes for the children and young people.

The information shown in Section 2 of this EqIAA does not show a service-user population that is representative of the population of South Gloucestershire, especially in respect of the Protected Characteristics of Disability and Race. It is anticipated that bringing family meetings in line with the Signs of Safety Practice model adopted by SGC Social Work Team has clear potential to address this. Proactive equalities monitoring and analysis allows for tailoring and targeting of services to closer meet identified need, thus ensuring a positive impact in respect of both take-up and outcomes experienced by service-users.

SECTION 4 - EqIAA OUTCOME

PLEASE NOTE: THIS SECTION WILL BE COMPLETED POST CONSULTATION

| Outcome | Response | Reason(s) and Justification |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Outcome 1: No major change required. | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Outcome 2: Adjustments to remove barriers or to better promote equality have been identified. | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Outcome 3: Continue despite having identified potential for adverse impact or missed opportunities to promote equality. | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Outcome 4: Stop and rethink. | <input type="checkbox"/> | |

SECTION 5 - ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN AS A RESULT OF THIS EqIAA

PLEASE NOTE: THIS SECTION WILL BE UPDATED POST CONSULTATION

A comprehensive monitoring system will be adopted which ensures that the protected characteristics of service users are captured and analysed in respect of both take-up and outcomes. This will allow for continuous improvement analyses to be proactively conducted and services tailored as required.

SECTION 6 - EVIDENCE INFORMING THIS EqIAA

South Gloucestershire Council's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
Feedback survey August 2020 – FGC Provider