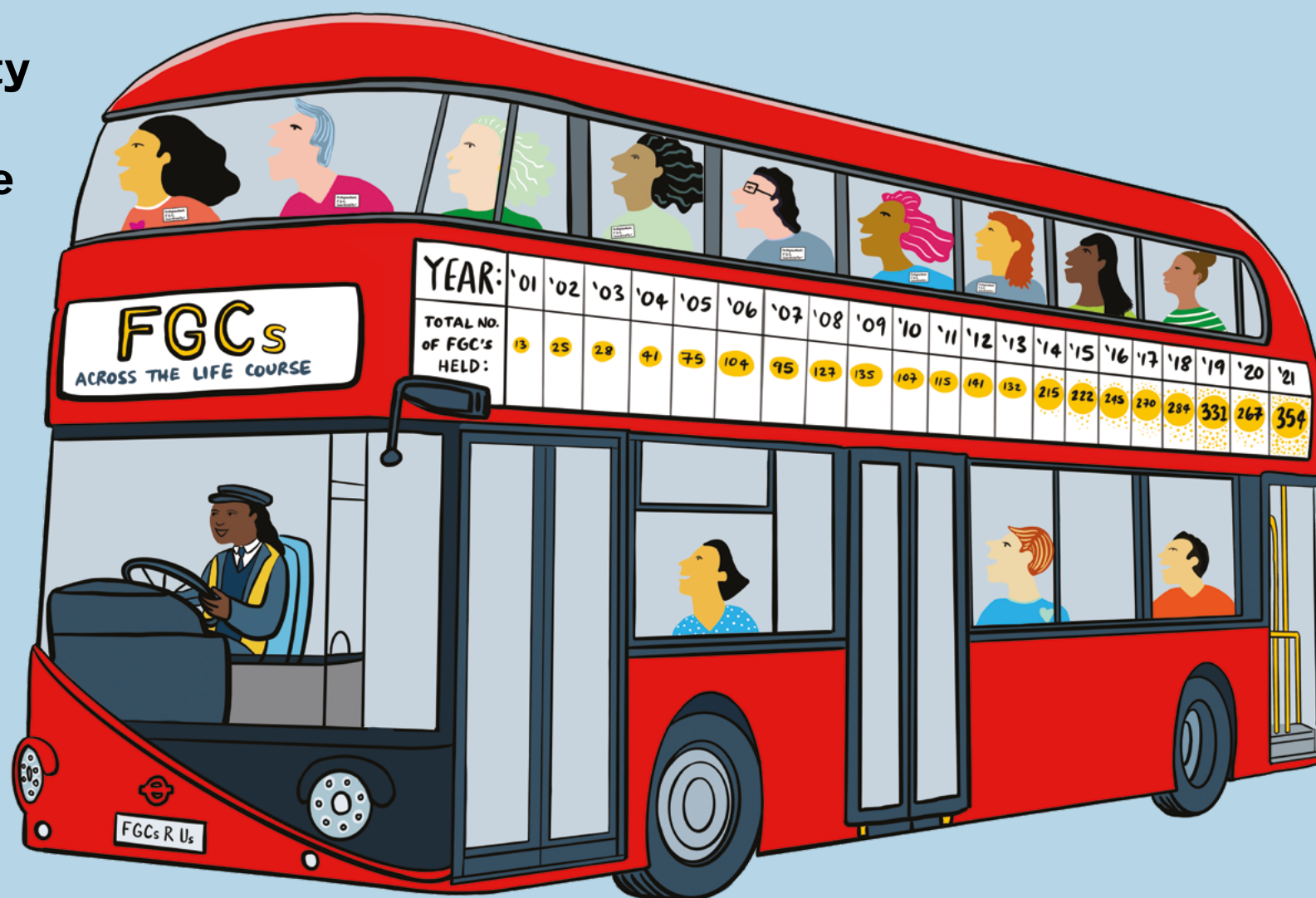


FGC Progress Report 2018–2021

Routes to community
decision making
across the life course



Contents

Introduction	3
The Family Group Conference Process	4
20 years of Family Group Conference in Camden	5
FGCs across the life course - types of FGC	7
5 Year Trends	13
COVID-19 : Our year in 2020 / 2021	15
FGC Community Offer	16
Further focus on Child Welfare FGCs	17
Further focus on the other types of FGC across the life course	20
Friday stories across the life course - examples of the FGC work	25
Appendix 1: Participation describer	32
Appendix 2: Feedback Document	35



Introduction

A family group conference (FGC) is a facilitated family meeting to make plans and decisions about a child or adult.

An FGC is convened and run by an independent co-ordinator. 'Family' includes the child or adult concerned, parents, extended family (close and distant relatives), and other adults and friends, who are concerned and care about the child or adult and the child or adult's immediate family who needs support. The professional's role at the FGC is to provide information and consultation. They should not lead the decision making. At the FGC, the family will have private discussion time to produce their plan to meet the needs of the child or adult, with their carers at the centre of the process. The family's plan should be accepted, supported and resourced, provided it does not put the child or adult at risk of harm.

The strength of the FGC model comes from its roots as a method of re-establishing a conversation between indigenous people and the government in New Zealand. FGCs are widely-used in the UK in child protection cases, due to the recognised universal value of their ability to widen the circle of support on a problem and focus the strengths of individuals within the group. In Camden we hold with the key learning from New Zealand and the origins of FGC as a challenge to white supremacy in that country in the late 1980s, and that the process must be culturally attuned to the communities it seeks to help.

Our skilled FGC coordinators are independent. They are commissioned to match the diversity within the borough so they can speak our Camden residents' language in more ways than one. We have continued to expand the membership of our Family Advisory Board (FAB), which consists of FGC family member participants. The FAB meets regularly to contribute to the development of the FGC service. Furthermore, the group takes every opportunity for 'learning exchange' where members work collaboratively with social workers and helpers to contribute broadly to our relationship-based practice in Camden.

Camden FGC is not a service with a traditional project base and a telephone reception. It is a collaborative enterprise across teams, services and directorates. Accredited by the DfE funded FGC standards programme, Camden FGC adheres to the FGC National Quality Standards Framework.

Consistent with Camden's model of social work and the value placed on participation, borough residents of all ages utilise FGC. FGCs are used for family and community problem solving beyond child protection and across an individual's life course, holding the conversation when it can make a difference.

It's not what you do: it's that way you do it!

Across the life course of people and life situations

The quality of the conversation is important. In Camden this is facilitated by meeting people in community spaces, building relationships and taking a culturally-appropriate approach. FGC facilitation matches language and reflects family and community heritage where possible, providing a bridge to understanding and the potential of coordinated family help. The social worker or other referring professional is key to the quality of the conversation, they make the move to step into the community, to listen, to participate in a family-majority meeting. This signals respect and their valuing of the individual and the process.



The Family Group Conference Process

The Referral

The process starts with someone referring a family or adult to the family group conference service. This 'referrer' will usually know and be working with the child or adult. They might be a social worker, teacher or health professional.

Independent Coordinator Appointed

An independent coordinator helps families plan for their FGC. They are neutral and do not influence a family to make a particular decision. They are independent of a children's services social worker who may be working with the family.

Preparation - 8 Steps

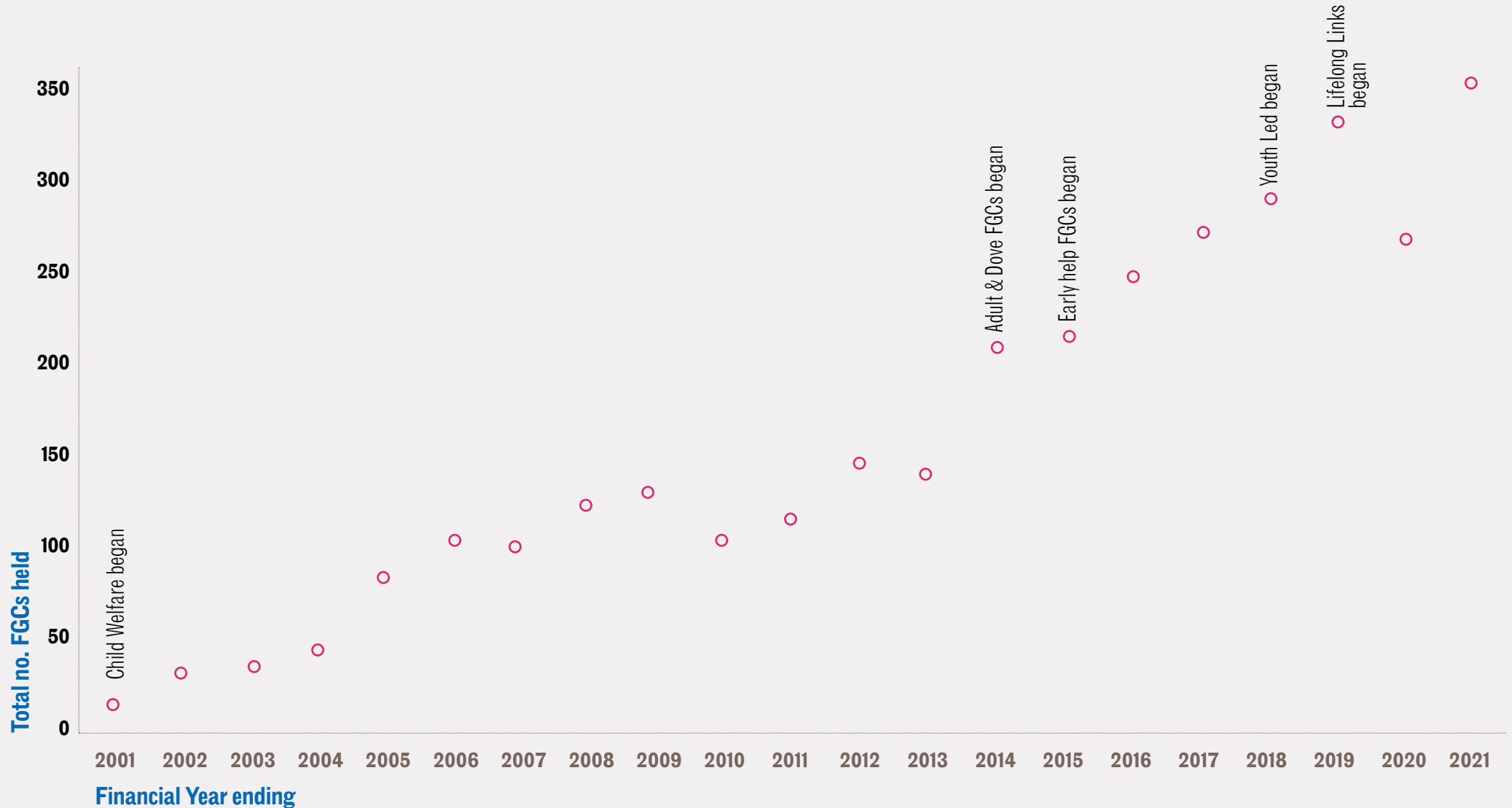
1. Initial preparation
2. Agreement for the FGC to be held
3. Involving the child/young person/adult. They are independent of a children's services social workers or other practitioners who may be working with the family
4. Agreeing who is invited to the FGC
5. Practical arrangements
6. Meeting with invited family members and friends
7. Advocates for the young person or adults who would benefit from additional support
8. Information sharing by practitioners ahead of the FGC

The Conference - 3 Stages

1. Information sharing
2. Private family time
3. Agreeing the plan



20 years of Family Group Conference in Camden



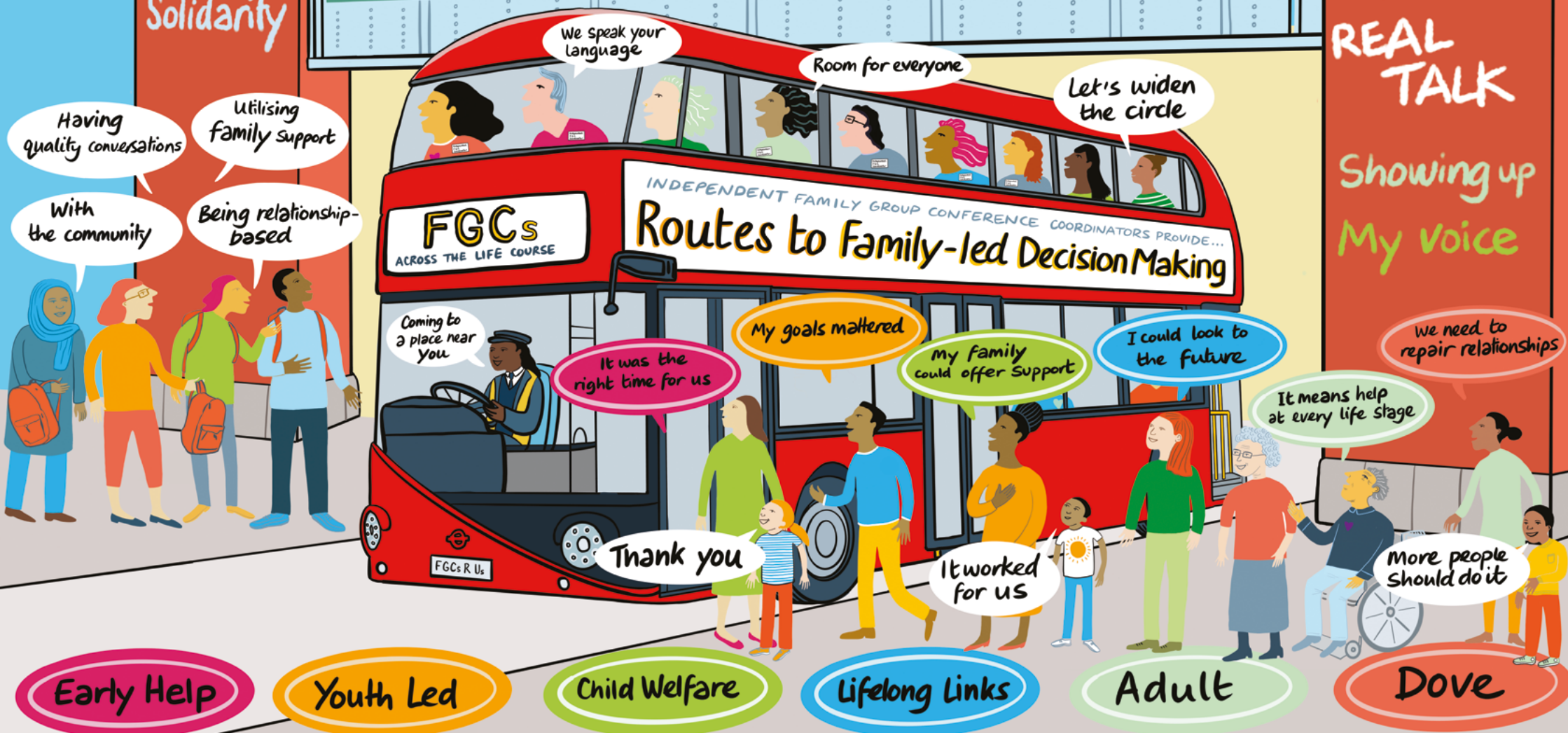
20 years of Family Group Conferences

Appreciation
DIGNITY
Solidarity

CAMDEN'S FGC BRIDGE

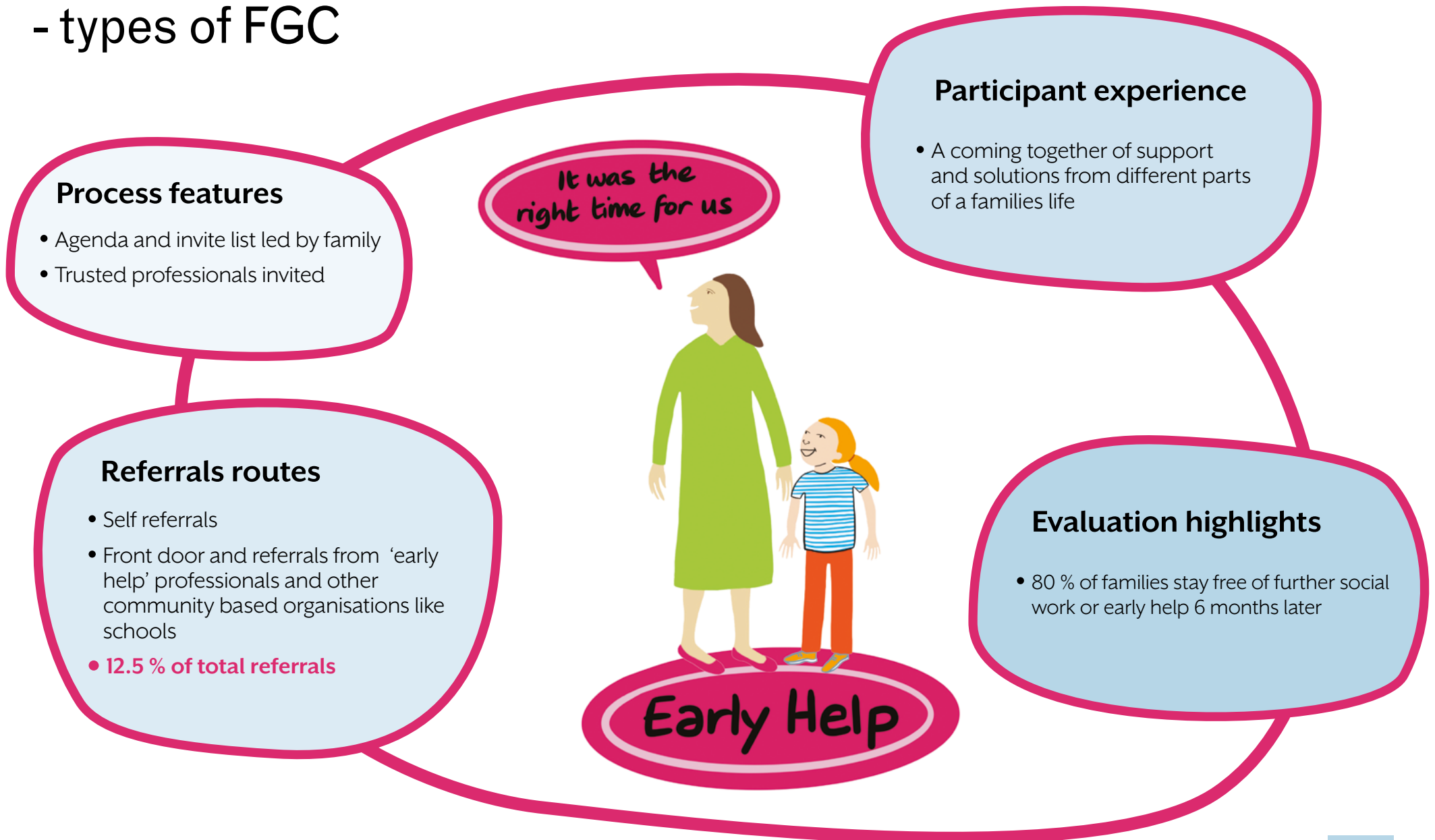
Celebrating the connecting conversations

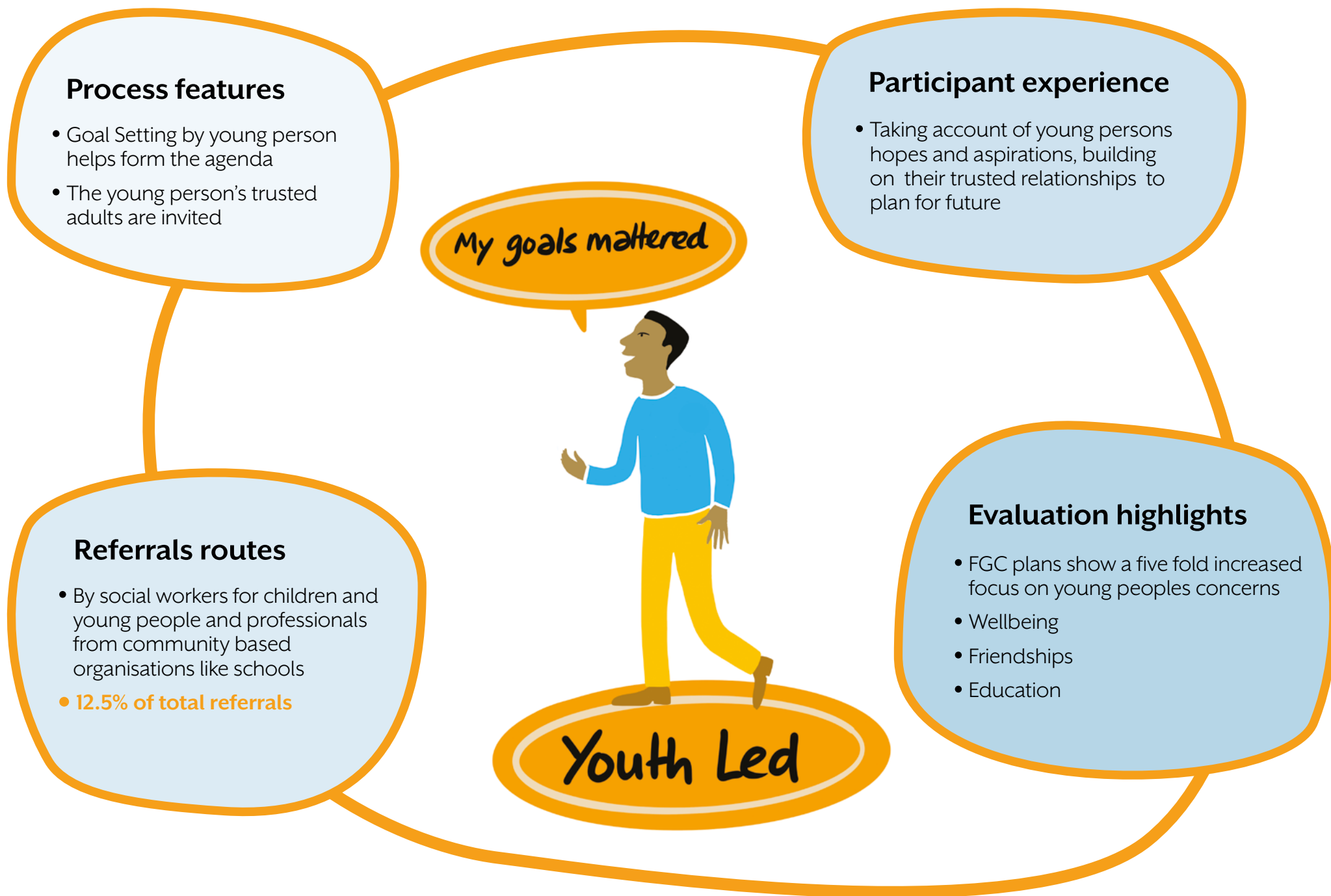
RESPECT
Recognition
Empowerment
REAL
TALK
Showing up
My voice



FGCs across the life course

- types of FGC





Process features

- The referring social worker is upfront about their worries and the strengths they see in the family
- Agenda formed of questions set collaboratively with professionals and family

Participant experience

- Plans made in response to professional concerns
- A clear agenda to which the family responds with their solutions

Referrals routes

- Children's social workers refer from Children in Need Teams, Child Protection and Looked after Children
- All families with a child on a CP plan should be offered an FGC
- **40% of total referrals**

*My family
could offer support*



Child Welfare

Evaluation highlights

- Respite care offered in two thirds of FGCs. A long-term care offered by family members in more than a third of FGCs

Process features

- Children and young people who are looked after map their past, present and potential future connections

Participant experience

- The family group conference will often have a social feel, like that of a family reunion

I could look to the future



Referrals routes

- Looked after children's social workers refer
- Offer to all young people that will be looked after (for those with no plan to return home)
- **5 % of total referrals**

Evaluation highlights

- Average 350% increase in new & renewed connections for children and young people

Lifelong Links

Process features

- The professionals, the adult, family/network set goals for the FGC process

Participant experience

- Help the adult at the centre of the process and the network of trusted relationships around them plan for what matters

Referrals routes

- From across Adult Social Care and Mental Health Services
- Additionally referrals focused on prevention from other community based organisations
- **30% of total referrals**

Evaluation highlights

- 8 out of 10 goals set by the person and family met by the FGC



Process features

- Risks of holding the FGC assessed
- Possible use of split meetings to separate 'victim' and 'perpetrator'
- Domestic abuse directly addressed on the agenda

Participant experience

- Can feel like conversations are helping keep people safe and in some instances Repairing relationships

Referrals routes

- Referrals from early help and social workers
- **15 % of total referrals**

Evaluation highlights

- 89 % participants reporting feeling more in control 6 months after their FGC

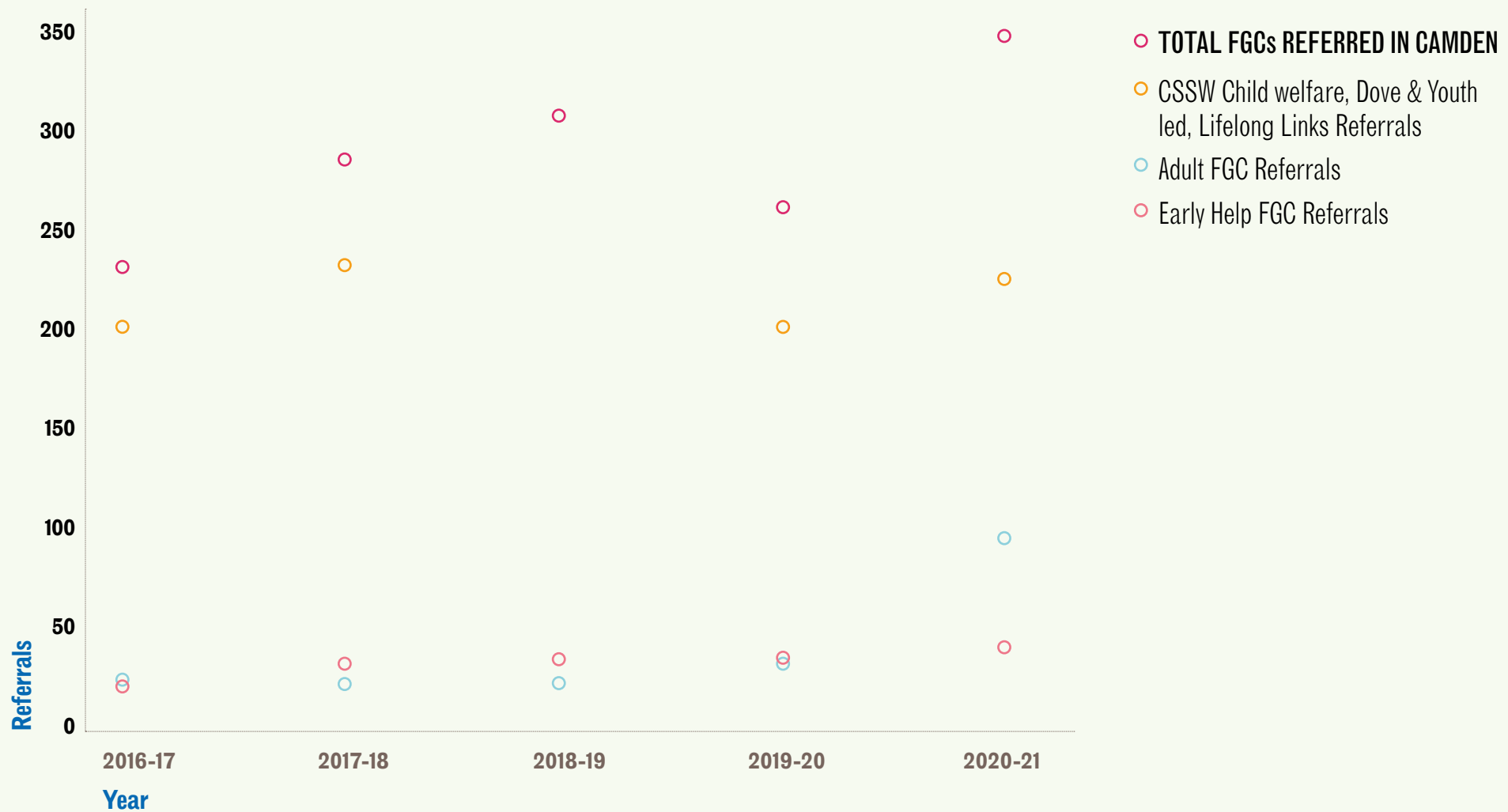
*We need to
repair relationships*



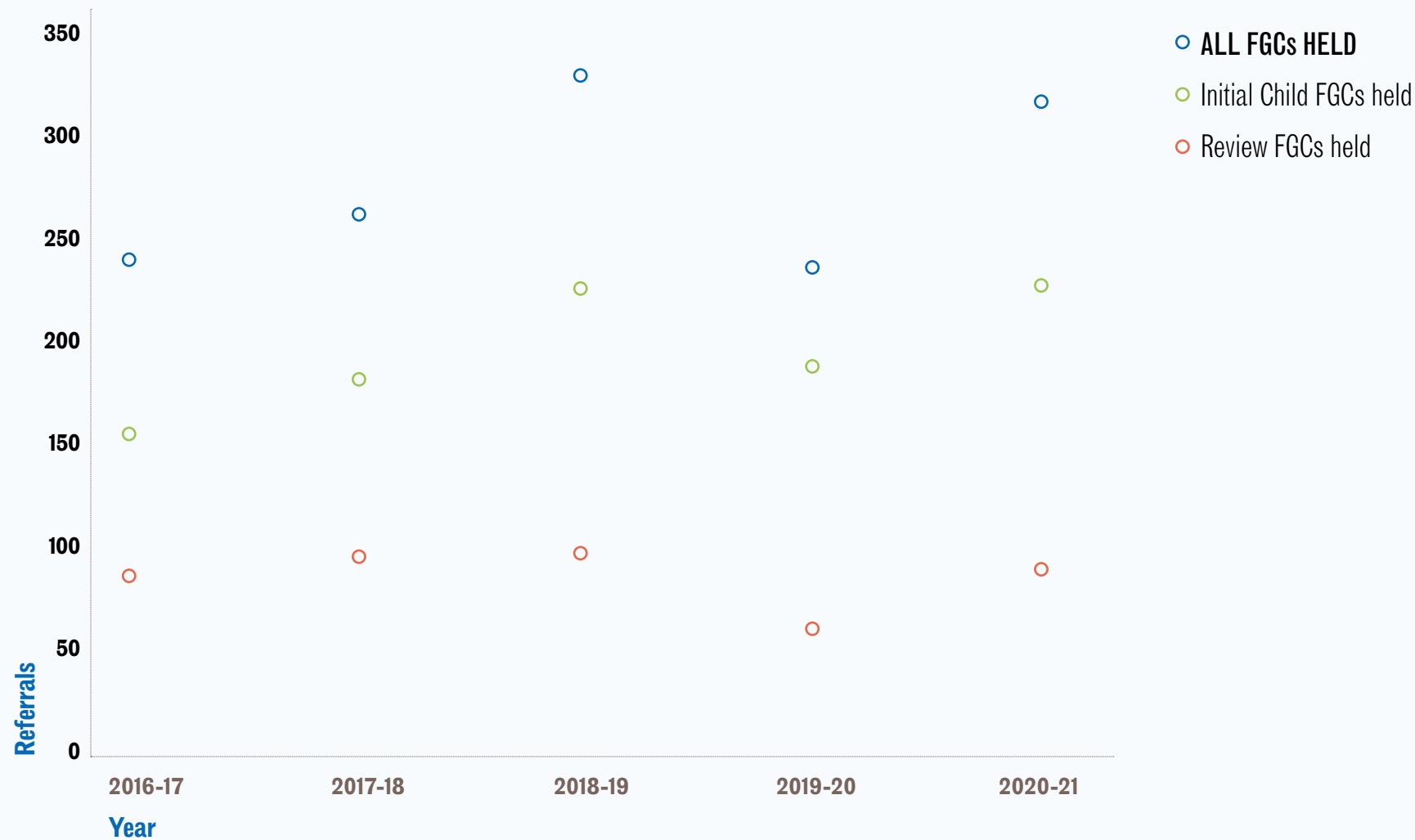
Dove

5 Year Trends

Referrals



**All Childrens Safeguarding & Social Work FGCs held
(including Child Welfare, Youth Led, Lifelong Links
and Dove FGCs)**



COVID-19: our year in 2020/2021

In March 2020, there was a real danger that FGCs would be put to one side as the emergency professional response to Covid-19 kicked into gear.

The language we heard around us was understandably focused on 'protecting the vulnerable' and meeting people's needs as we wondered how we could retain our commitment to relationship-based working through the crisis. As COVID developed, Camden's FGC work remained a strong part of the social work and early help response, evolving in ways that surprised us and teaching us all about virtual meetings as we lived our new slogan, "connection over distance". We know that FGCs are a space where people can come together to look after each other by sharing information and having private time to come up with a plan to solve a problem or make a change. Covid-19 and lockdown meant we had to hold with the well known and powerful elements of these independent conferences, using different & digital methods.

The family group conference in the community venue has been called a 'home game' the deliberate construction of a space where dialogue can occur (Rob Van Pagee). An opportunity for professionals to recognise potential strengths in others and invite the family group (including friends and community)

to bring their own views, ideas and solutions on their 'home turf'. The place this happens is important and the value of face to face FGCs with food in community centres in the Borough of Camden should not be overlooked or diminished.

FGC coordinators, who facilitate the meetings, however were forced to be pragmatic in the face of the emergency and embraced a mixed way of working. They learned to use the new tools and speak of a certain amount of good feeling and spirit of connection in the work during this time. The team of independent coordinators, who between them speak more than 20 different community languages, have also sometimes been working in a more graduated way as 'network connectors', building up to larger virtual meetings where possible but always doing significant work with people to support links, increase contact and connection in people's informal networks. This work has significantly relieved pressure on citizens and our frontline workers. One of the points of exploratory learning for FGC has been around connections made locally to community volunteers who are part of the mutual aid movement, a new concept for us in our FGC practice as we widen the circle beyond family and traditional networks of support. Face-to-face FGCs have been happening too, particularly between the lockdowns, cautiously planned for people who want them and rigorously risk

assessed, this remains the heart of the work, the 'home game', but we know the connection over distance approach and its digital methods will remain in the FGC mix going forward in some form.

Guidance was shared with FGC coordinators, advocates and family members around holding FGCs online:

Video conferencing tips for FGCs

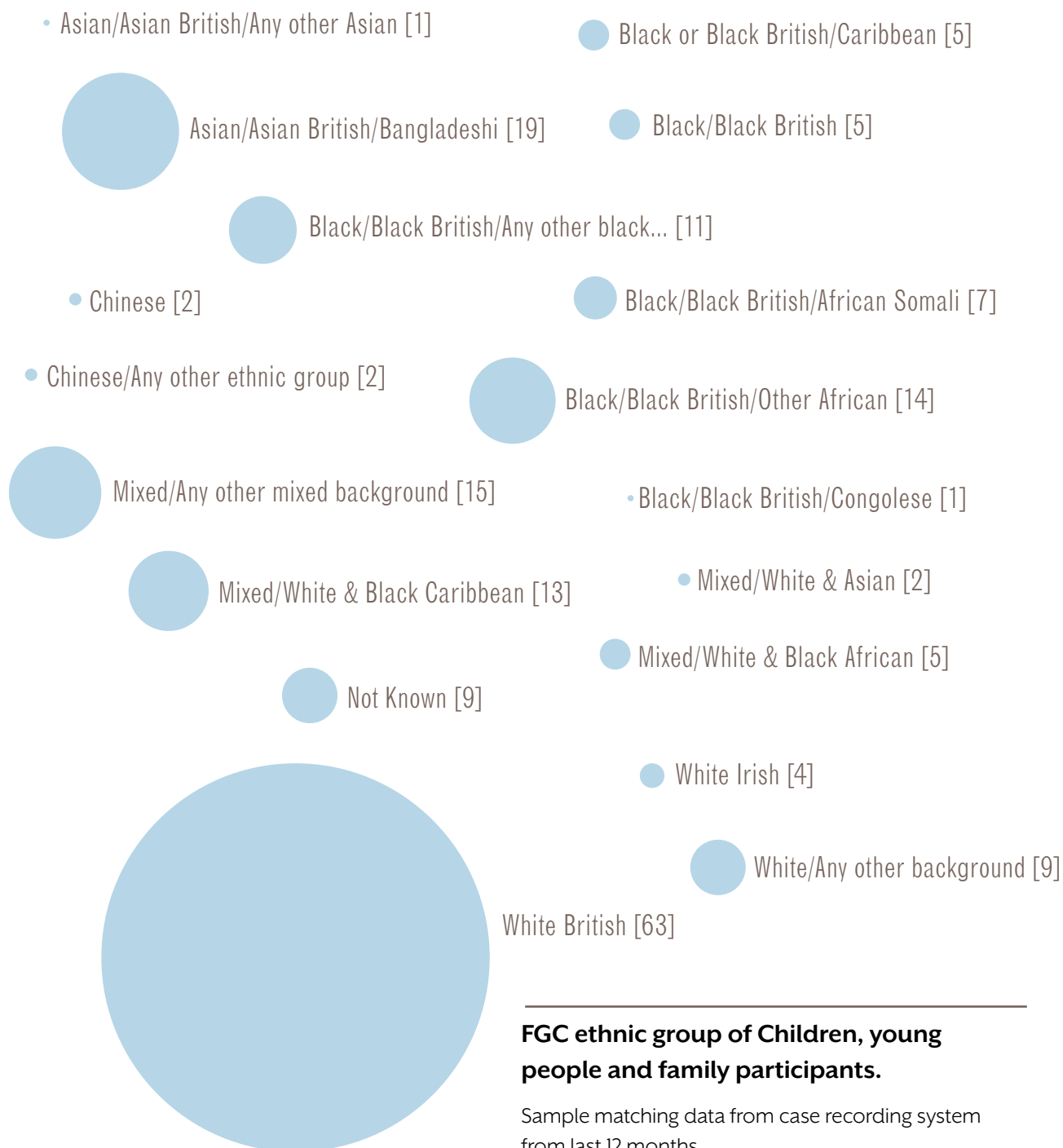
- There are some important things to consider when using video conferencing tools:
- How people can access these platforms.
- Which are secure platforms to use and align with local policies
- What platforms are families already using;
- What is the access to wifi or reliance on precious mobile data allowances;
- Is there potential for using virtual breakout rooms to preserve the principle of 'private family time'.
- Features of 2020/2021 FGC participation

There was an increase in numbers participating in medium to large FGCs, those with more than 6 family member supporters attending, these meetings grew by a 5th. While father (inc father figures) participation increased to 86 % from average of 70 % in previous years.

FGC Community Offer

Our independent coordinators and advocates available in the Independent FGC Coordinator Group, are commissioned per FGC. These coordinators and advocates originate from multiple cultural & ethnic backgrounds including Bangladeshi, Black British, White Irish, White Scottish, Ghanaian, Somali, Syrian, White European Spanish heritage.

The family group conference approach and philosophy is a strength-based way of working that aspires to recognise and utilise the strengths of all people, at the intersections of lived and learned experience e.g. inclusive of race, ethnicity, language, religion, class, poverty, sexuality. One of the tenets of the FGC model is matching the coordinators cultural background and language to that of the family, unless there is a specific request from the family not to be matched. There are a number of reasons for the match: it can provide a common ground between the coordinator and the family network; it can provide a better understanding of a culture, its perspective and the impact of these on the FGC arrangements as well as having an impact on the family creating a plan for their children. In addition, a close match enables the coordinator to involve the family in as many aspects of the organisation as possible, including the choice of the language for the meeting, the venue, the food, the date – giving a sense of ownership. Matching to heritage and culture is a big part of the FGC work, this is a significant contribution to Camden's ethic of anti-racist social work.



FGC ethnic group of Children, young people and family participants.

Sample matching data from case recording system from last 12 months.

Further focus on Child Welfare FGCs

3 year analysis

Our outcomes tool is completed by the Coordinators once the FGC has been held and reflects the agenda for the FGC and conversations with social workers.

The spread of data for 'What the FGC addressed' highlights when in the journey of the child the service is being used, what level of need and which FGCs are on the edges of potential "movements" in the local authority intervention. There is overlap on the percentages, which reflects the fact that some outcomes can be included in more than one category, Camden use of family group conferencing as a preventive step is clear in the data more than 40% of FGC work for Children in Need. This is important as an offer to family to plan to prevent risk and utilise family resources as early as possible e.g. seen in the offers of support and respite in evidence on FGC plans (more info on our Early Help FGC offer in the report below too). There is a significant change on the plans towards more children and young peoples voice, although Camden still holds many FGCs for families with young children (under 6), the increase in numbers of Youth Led and Lifelong Links where children collaborate is influencing the character of Camden FGC and the plans

that are produced. Numbers of FGCs being used to plan parent / child contact arrangements a stable of FGCs over the years and still a valid purpose, is on the decrease, perhaps evidence of lockdown conditions, it may also be a sign of a move away from functional parent-led FGC outcomes towards more creative (potentially Youth Led generated) outcomes.

Advocacy is routinely offered to children and young people (also sometimes to adults to aid inclusion) to help them participate and have their wishes and feelings expressed on the FGC plan. More than half FGCs featured advocacy.

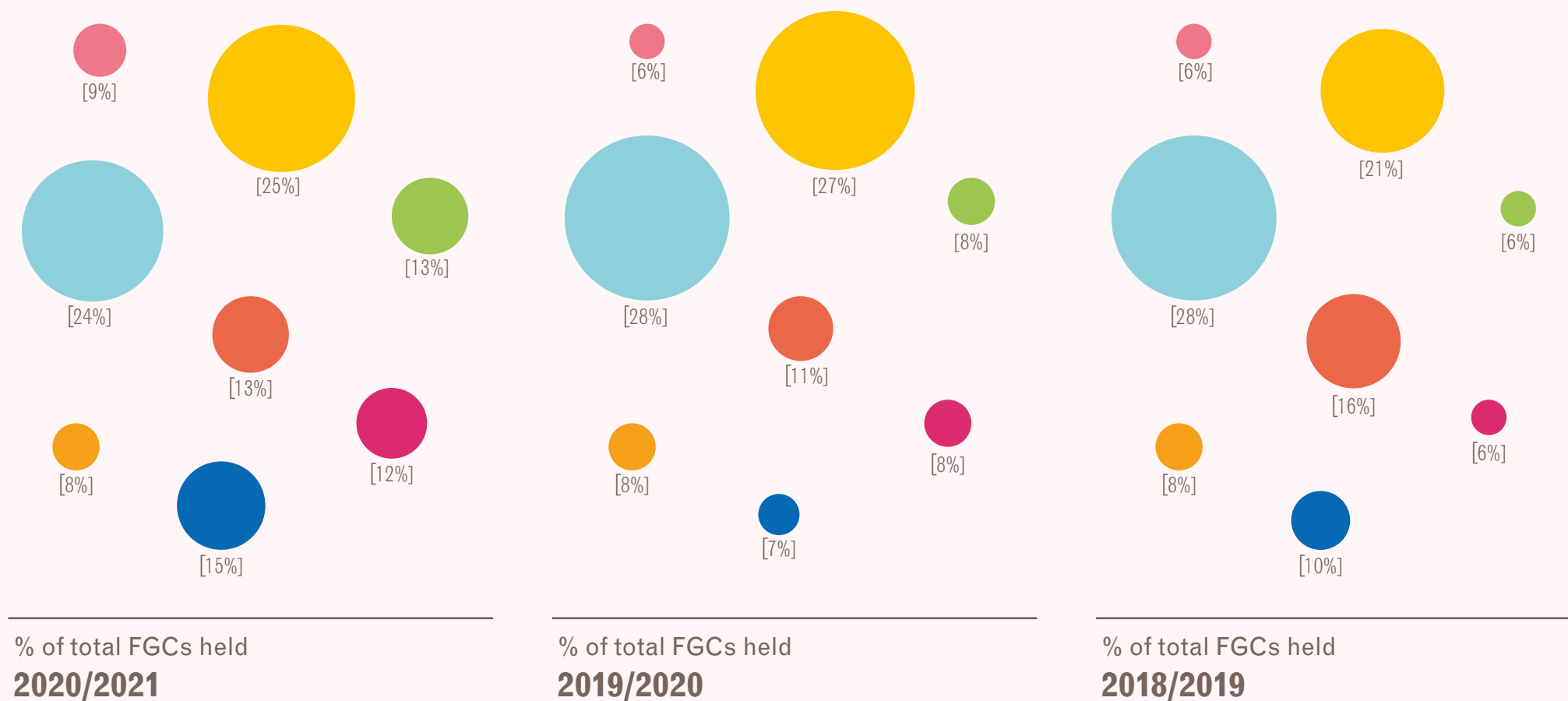
For families with a child on a Child Protection Plan Camden CSSW policy is that we offer them all an FGC. CP planning represents the largest category in our outcomes tool of FGCs. For children and families involved in decision making on where children will live, with the potential for local authority care, our FGCs remain a very important mechanism for social workers to work collaboratively with families and be clear about possible outcomes. From our analysis of family plans (see table overleaf) family members step forward as long term care options in more than

a third of Camden FGCs. Timely referrals and pursuing FGC during PLO process are key. There have been increased referrals from the Looked After Childrens service this year, and Lifelong Links referrals are positively influencing FGCs which address placement stability and future planning for looked after children.



Outcomes

What did the FGC address?

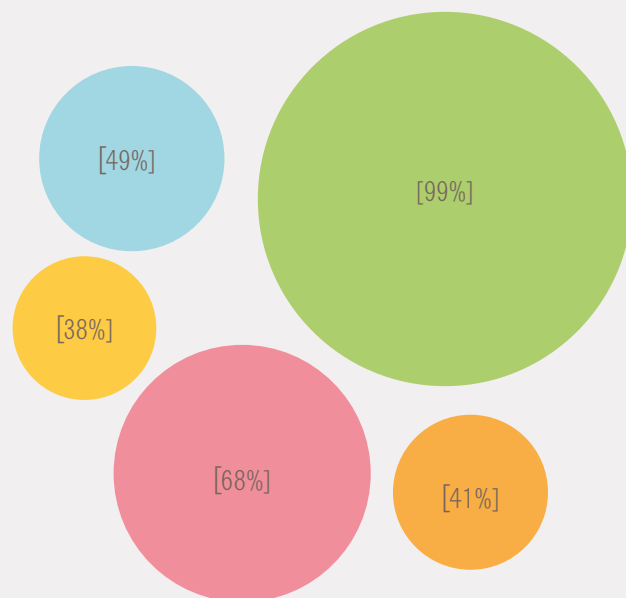


KEY

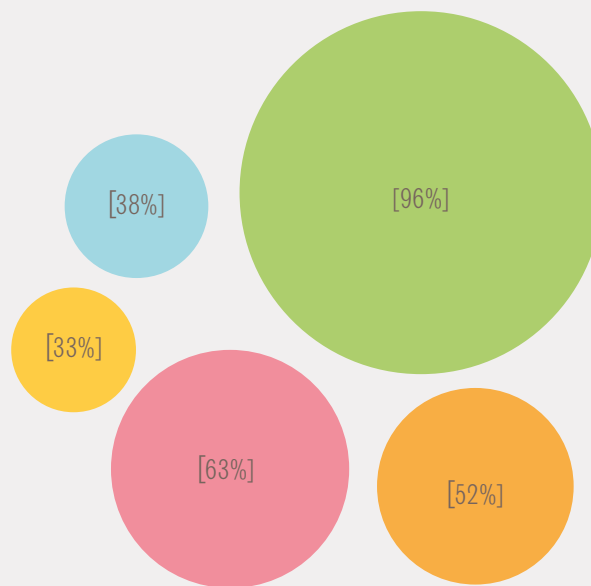
- Case closure with family safety and support plan made
- Child in Need Planning
- Preventing CP Plan
- Child Protection Planning

- Preventing children becoming looked after
- Placement stability and future planning for looked after children
- Avoiding care proceedings
- Family in care proceedings plan permanent care arrangements

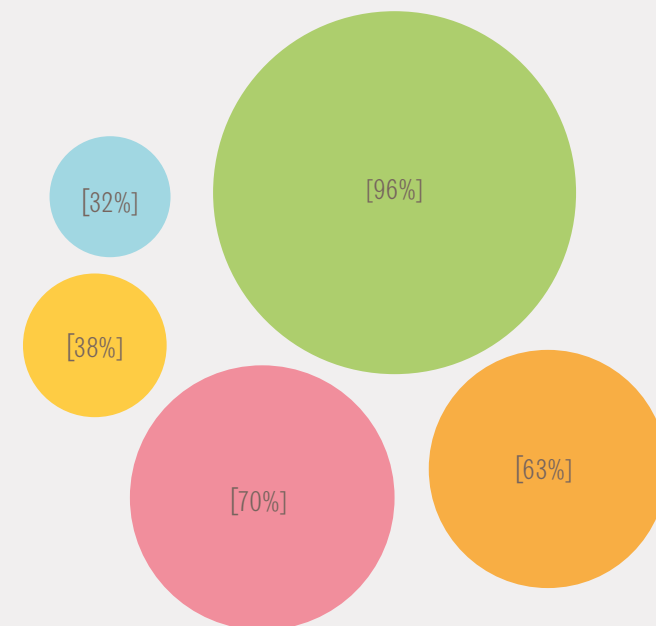
What is on FGC plans?



% of total FGCs held
2020/2021



% of total FGCs held
2019/2020



% of total FGCs held
2018/2019

KEY

- Extra supported offer by family members/friends
- Children/young people express wishes and feelings
- Extended family member/friend offers respite care
- Contact arrangements made
- Extended family member/friend offers long term care

FGC re-referrals

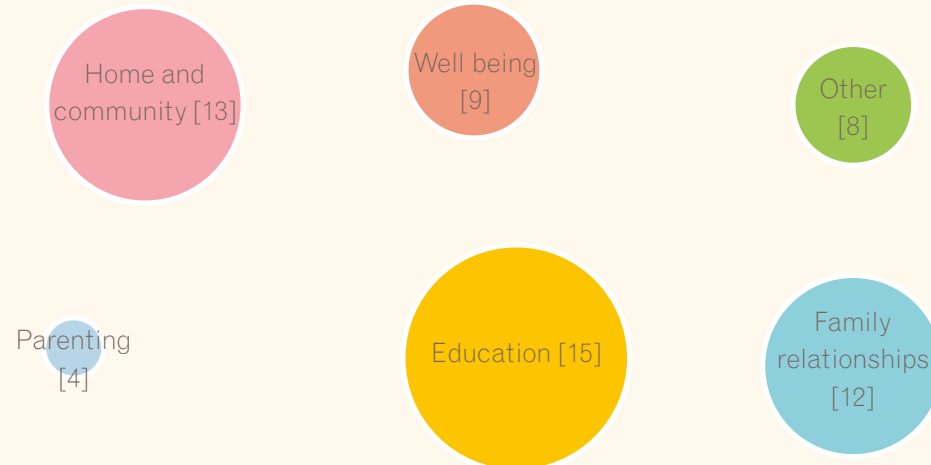
The figures for re-referrals were examined, where families come back to have an extra initial FGC after a break of more than a year. These have reduced over the past two years. This could mean that FGCs are being used more purposefully, FGC plans utilised better, earlier in the life of problems and families are coming back in for FGCs less. This might also suggest more family and Youth Led thinking, coming to their own solutions at an earlier stage.

Financial Year	No of re-referrals
2016/2017	39
2017/2018	45
2018/2019	44
2019/2020	24
2020/2021	18

Further focus on the other types of FGC across the life course



For Initial FGCs, what does the Right Balance FGC plan address?



Focus on Youth Led

Youth led Family Group Conferences is an agenda founded on young person's goals and life hopes. It is a chance to take account of professional and family member worries whilst strengthening trusted relationships and community opportunities. It is a chance to take time out, to work on repairing

relationships and planning for life situations. Young people are encouraged to have their own advocate to amplify their voice if needed. A playbook and a film has been created this year which features the Youth Led FGC work.

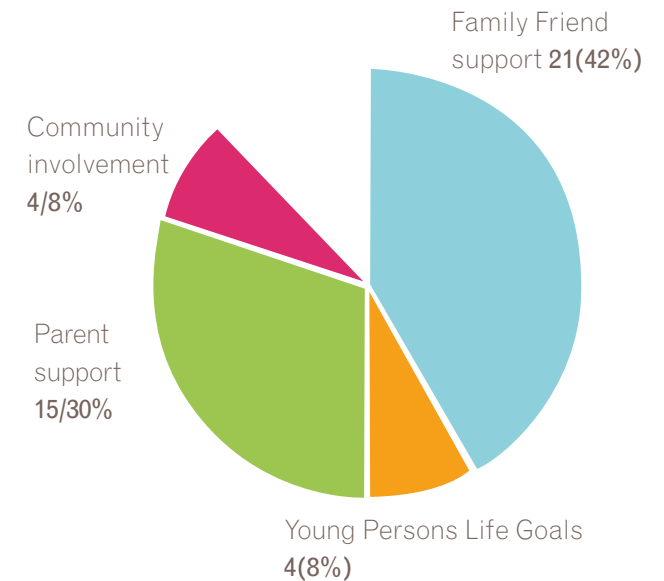


Focus on Early Help FGC

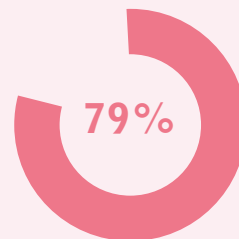
In 2015, we began a trial to extend the offer of FGC, using the same model and keeping fidelity to it, to children and families in the early help space. Family workers started to use FGC as a way of bringing their work with families to a close, helping to ensure the family feel safe and secure on their onward journey, supported through their natural network.

We then started to use it as an early help option for families ending their time with statutory social care. It has gone from strength to strength with referrals, direct from the front door, from early help professionals across a range of settings and this year taking self referrals direct from families.

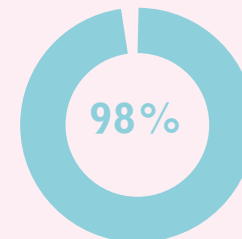
For Initial FGCs, what does the Early Help Plan address?



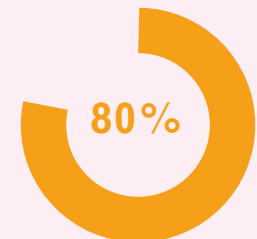
Efficacy of Early Help FGC within Camden



79% of families who have had an Early Help FGC remained free from further early help or social work intervention within 12 months of closure



In feedback, 98% of people when asked said that their Early Help FGC had happened at the right time



More than 80% of families say 6 months after their FGC experience that they feel more in control and better able to cope with future issues

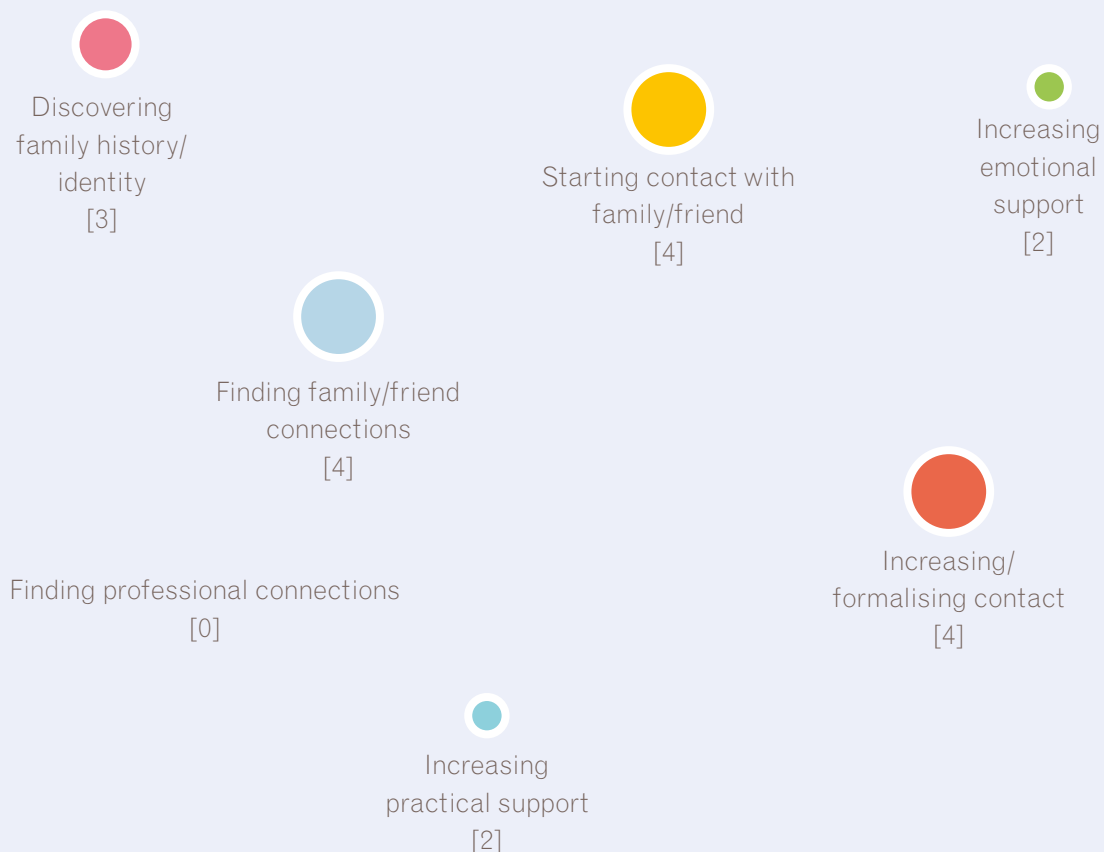


Focus on Lifelong Links

This is a relatively new approach to finding lasting connections for children in care for whom there is no plan for them to live within their family or be adopted.

Camden is one of a number of local authority partners who were fully funded to implement Lifelong Links over a 3 year span. Lifelong Links is designed for young people in care aiming to reconnect with family members, former foster carers, teachers and other people who are important to them, with a view of bringing them together and holding an FGC, where they can discuss that support they are able to offer.

For Initial FGCs, what does the Lifelong Links in the data address?



Family Rights Group is the lead organisation which secured funds from the DfE Innovation Fund.
<https://www.frg.org.uk/involving-families/family-group-conferences/lifelong-links>

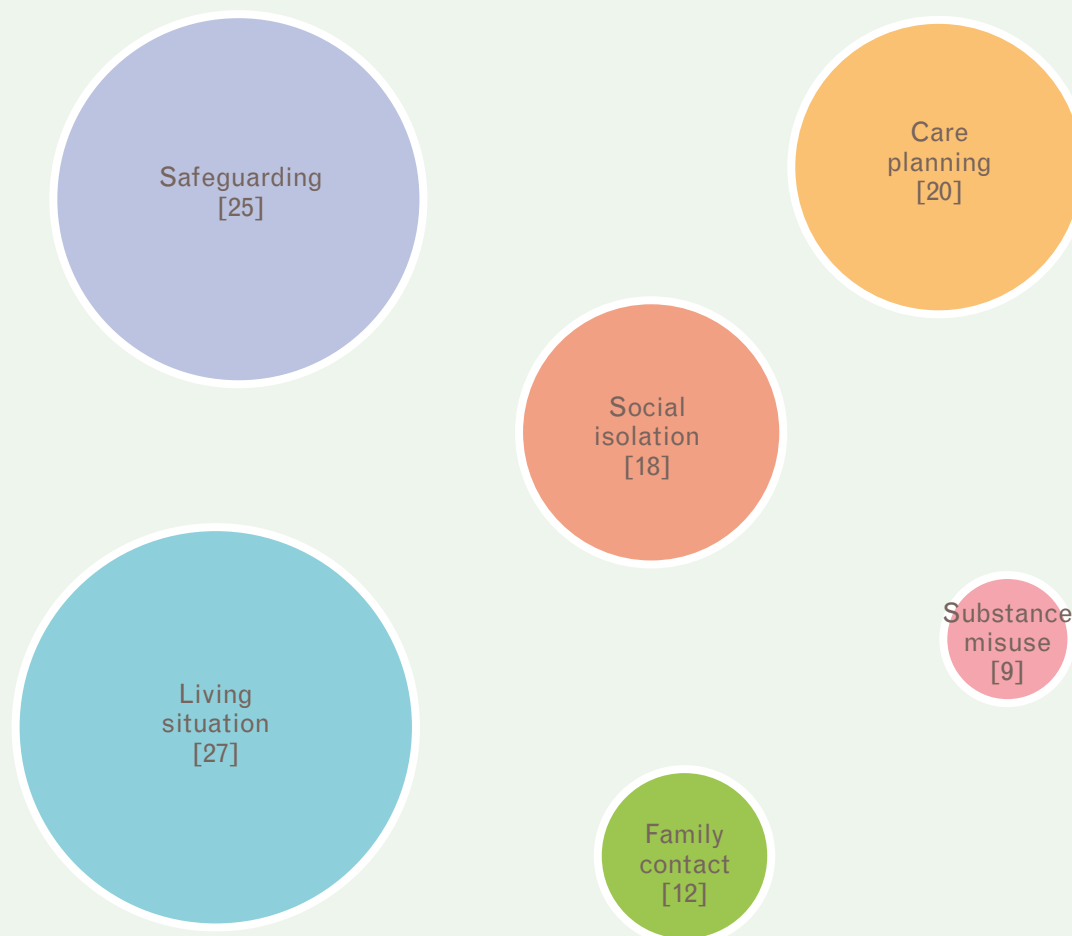


Focus on Adult FGC

Adult Family Group Conferences in Camden is part of our commitment to working with individuals and families to have the freedom to make their own plans. FGCs are family network meetings where people come together in person to work through problems and make a plan around an adult that needs support. The work has accelerated this year, and our full report on the Adult FGC work can be viewed on this link.

<https://ascpractice.camden.gov.uk/media/2082/adult-fgc-report-2020-final-1.pdf>

For Initial FGCs, what does the Adult FGC plan address?





Focus on Dove FGC

DOVE has a more structured multi-agency approach to family group conferences (FGCs) and addresses situations of violence within the family directly. The key aim is to enable families to make their own plans that will help keep everyone safe, taking referrals for families that experience domestic abuse in its widest interpretation of physical, emotional, psychological, financial or sexual. Dove FGCs are domestic abuse focused Family Group Conferences.

Dove FGC referrals made

2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
10	23	25	22	30

Key features of the Camden-Dove Restorative FGCs include:

- Completing a suitability risk assessment with the referring social worker. Only proceeding with a full restorative process if the perpetrator and victim both acknowledge the Domestic Abuse and feel they are able to meet together with their family/families safely.
- Gathering extra information.
- Approaching the family and the planning in a more purposeful way, using an evidence-based understanding of domestic violence.
- Involving extra professionals such as local domestic violence services and The Police Community Support Unit, where needed, as well as statutory services. This ensures a multi-agency focus to sharing the risk assessment.
- Checking any bail conditions or court orders which prohibit the perpetrator's attendance.

Friday stories across the lifecourse - examples of the FGC work

Early help

Faye's Family Group Conference came as a result of her calling Early Help services herself. She was not well and a mother to a young infant, Savannah.

She received a call from her Family Group Coordinator Cristina to ask if she was interested in a meeting. Cristina then called Faye's family on Faye's behalf to assemble them, this 'family' was unusual as it was a family she had constructed herself out of her friends.

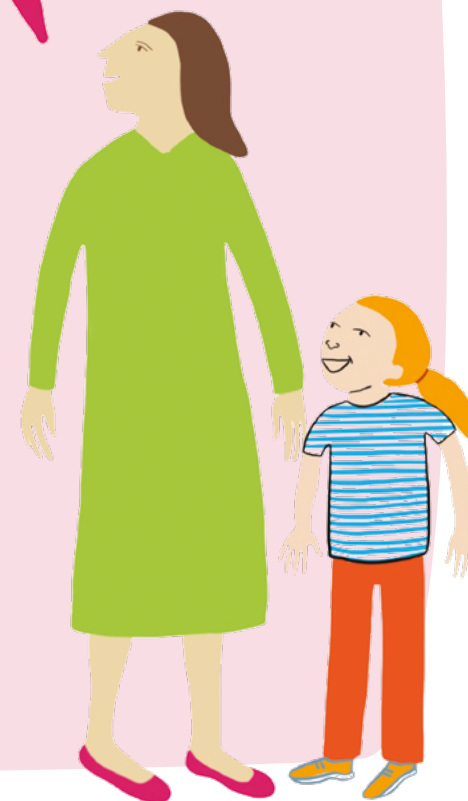
When they were all together they made a plan to take care of Faye and her daughter, and collaboratively they safeguarded them both. Faye believes that the family Group Conference was the right course of action as her family were in control. They lead the process and she was given a voice.

The privacy they were given away from the family group coordinator in the course of the meeting allowed everyone to focus on what was important and communicate without pressure.

She trained as an FGC worker last summer and is currently working for the borough of Harrow. She felt that her experience with Family group conferences put her in a unique position to help other people.

She is an enthusiastic advocate for FGCs to social workers across London to promote the meeting as suitable for the majority of families who undertake them, as it is about breaking down the barriers of communication and focus on the issues at hand. Faye had the meeting her daughter was two years old and wanted to let Cristina know that Savannah had grown to 4'11.

It was the right time for us



Youth Led

Last week a young person spoke about their positive experience with a Youth Led FGC and the two coordinators who worked with her.

The FGC meeting was planned two weeks before. Jourdelle explained how the meeting would run and brought in another coordinator, Warsan, as an advocate to express her views if she felt too stressed in the meeting. The young person was pleased to have Warsan and her aunty in the meeting for support. The meeting focused on the young person's living situation and her relationships with her family.

They spoke through the questions about how to improve her complicated relationship with her step-father. He does not accept her sexuality, which has caused tension between them. Another point on the plan is to maintain the friendship she is rebuilding with her mother, focusing on regaining each other's trust. Moving out of her girlfriend's mother's house into private accommodation was discussed and approved by the young person's social worker. They cried, were angry and spoke about difficult feelings.

They compromised around his beliefs, agreeing that he will help her with other issues in her life.

This agreement will help preserve her relationship with her siblings. The young person is not in a rush, but they are thinking about getting dinner. Regular meet-ups with her mum will continue, and she believes that their relationship was already on the mend before the meeting.

The young person noted that the virtual meeting was calmer with professionals present, and she is pleased that everyone could express the opinions that were weighing on them. The coordinators said it was a great FGC as they made clear and realistic long-term plans.

Speaking on repairing her familial relationships, she said that they 'may not happen fast but they will happen eventually.' Since the FGC, her life is more settled. She recently completed a risk assessment to move into a hostel on her way to private accommodation.

Until then, her girlfriend is there for her, and although they have been dating for four months, they have known each other for a long time. She is happy where she is and is happier in herself.

My goals mattered



Lifelong Links

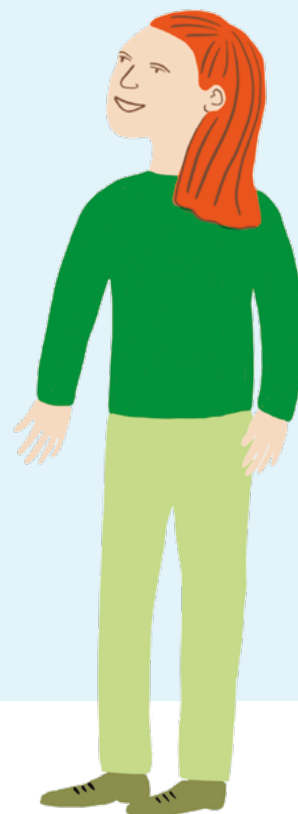
James found out about Lifelong Links family group conferences through his social worker Rochelle Maria from Lifelong Links visited him and asked questions about who he would like to find through the service, James spoke about his brother Daniel, who he had not known growing up in the care system.

Maria asked James for information about his brother to help locate him, and she went away to research. They needed a way to refine the Facebook search results. From a detail of a conversation with James' mother, Maria was able to deduce Daniel's grandparent's location from Google maps, searching for estates with a playground this ended up taking four days.

From this amazing discovery, James and his brother swapped details and spoke on through Whatsapp before settling on a date to meet for the first time. They chose to meet in a station and James was trying to track his brother down through the crowd, when



I could look to
the future



he saw a familiar face appear. Nerves disappeared into a good time finding they had plenty in common.

After lunch at McDonalds, they walked around central London and caught up, taking a photo together in front of the London Eye to commemorate the day. He found he was not only a brother but an uncle to Daniel's two daughters. They promised to keep in touch and they have been speaking throughout the lockdown, planning another meeting soon when it is safe to do so or online. He recommends the Lifelong Links service to others as he is a youth worker himself and knows the value of changing a young person's life for the better.

James experienced a significant loss of someone close during the lockdown and his work and his strong relationships helped comfort him in a difficult time.

Adults

Jerome's referral for this family group conference came before lockdown. Brian is a 70-year-old man of Mediterranean heritage with a learning disability that was living with his brother.

Brian's brother could no longer give him the support he required as he got older. The conference was put in place to aid a smooth transition from his brother's home into assisted accommodation. Brian's attachment to, and love for his old life was a big topic for him in the first meeting.

The family came together to support his transition and help comfort him through the change. In the virtual meeting, they created a list of all the essential items Brian would need in his new home. Jerome was set with the task of getting a photo of the new property from the staff at the facility.

Due to the lockdown, the family could no longer offer all the practical support they

would have wanted but they were still able to provide emotional support in this difficult move. Brian's sister agreed to help him shop for the food he needed. Jerome returned to coordinate another FGC 6 weeks later in deep lockdown as he wanted to keep the feeling of community alive.

This meeting was really positive. Brian was moved and settled into his new home. Now, lockdown restrictions have eased and his family committed to visiting him weekly. Brian's brother has moved in around the corner and the two are as close as ever. Jerome himself has adjusted to well to life coordinating virtual FGCs but is now planning a return to some face to face meetings again.

It means help
at every life stage



Dove

Many Family Group Conferences that Cristina conducts have an element of domestic violence, which has only increased with the pressures of the last year.

The meeting's objective is to safeguard the children and providing familial support to their parent. Dove FGCs, named after the symbol of peace, are family-focussed and create a support network for the family member who experienced domestic violence.

One family that Cristina worked with recently, an FGC was called to make sure a mother and her children felt safe in their new home. The father is in prison but had discovered their new address; in the meeting, the family established a contingency plan.

The mother agreed that she would call the police, her family and the social worker in case of emergency. They also put a non-molestation order so that he can not approach the house.

The family will relocate to a safe address with the help of the local authority.

The local authority will monitor the contact between the children and their father. Once the local authority is happy with the arrangement, it will be up to the family to supervise the contact.

The first review will assess the safeguarding efforts, the second review will occur after the father returns from prison, and they will evaluate the contact agreement. It was a productive meeting because one of the family member's is a student social worker. She had lots of questions for Cristina and the social worker and really made the most of information time.

The social worker had a list of her questions before the meeting and came prepared. Cristina spoke about the importance of the FGC model as it helps express to the family the adverse effects of domestic violence on children to the family, which can often go unseen.

Domestic violence can be secretive for victims, and the FGC allows them to open up to the people that love them most.

We need to repair relationships



Child Welfare

Video calls have been the primary platform for many meetings over the last year. Recently, Judit held a Family Group Conference virtually in response to a mother's surprise positive Coronavirus test result.

The mother was isolating with one of her children and her son was isolating with his father who was also on the call. Judit spoke about how it felt like a family reunion when they first got on the call, all chatting and catching up.

They were using the meeting to discuss a contingency plan to help the mother, who was experiencing difficulties with her mental health.

The family discussed what would happen if there was another emergency, making sure the mother was comfortable with who would be caring for the children.

Over the next three hours, they spoke without judgement in a supportive atmosphere and covered topics the mother had previously

been too embarrassed to talk about, such as her finances.

The network offered to help the mother with child care and made arrangements for the children and phone calls to the mother.

Due to technology, they were able to meet safely despite the unique situation. Judit was glad to have the visual element as she was able still to chair the meeting effectively.

The grandmother was especially happy to be given the platform to speak with everyone, previously, she had not used video call technology.

This meeting was an opportunity for the mother to feel the support of her family and that she is part of the group.

Delighted with their new group chat they continue to use it to catch up, a wonderfully practical element they took from the meeting.

My family
could offer support



Appendix

Appendix 1 Participation describer

Family Group Conference (FGC) since 2000

A family group conference (FGC) is an opportunity for people and their support networks to get together to plan for the person which addresses the problems identified by professionals or the support network who know the person, with extra help being given by other appropriate agencies. The FGC process involves:

- Preparatory work to gain the involvement of all those with an interest in a person's welfare (both family and significant others)
- Facilitating a meeting which comprises
 - an initial discussion with all practitioners involved
 - 'private family time' in which those present devise their own plan
 - checking out and agreeing the plan with practitioners
- Review(s) to see how the plan is working.

Adult FGC since 2014

Adult FGCs are family/network-led meetings that encourage and empower an adult with care and support needs and their family/wider support circle to think about their collective strengths and resources to make personalised plans for the future. When we talk about a family in FGC we don't just mean immediate relations: Family = relational network of significant others.

Early help FGC since 2015

Making family group conference available for families looking for early intervention, moving family group conference further upstream to help families draw on their own resources and support networks at a much earlier stage and well before child protection or proceedings.

Helping hands (Matching peer experience with peer experience) since 2016

Parents with experience of family group conference get matched up to parents at the start of the journey who maybe uncertain, need some explanation.

Advocacy in Child Protection since 2017

Independent Family Group Conference Coordinators providing advocacy to parents in child protection conferences.

Lifelong Links for Looked after Children since 2017

Identify and build positive lasting support networks for children in the care system. These networks can consist of family, extended family, friends and professionals. Lifelong Links is aimed at young people under 16, who have been in care for less than three years and for who there is no plan for them to return home.

Youth Led / Right Balance for Children in Need FGC since 2017

A new approach to social work offering multi agency support for children aged 10 – 13 who are already receiving support from social care. Right Balance puts the families at the heart of the plan, who set their own goals, which are discussed in depth at the Family Group Conference. This creates a family-led plan which underpins the work with the family going forward.

Camden conversations participatory research since 2018

Parent citizen researchers conducted interviews with 25 professionals made up of social workers and social work managers and 25 people that had experienced the child protection process and made recommendations for potential changes to the child protection process based on their findings.

Peer Advocacy in early help & child protection since 2019

Bringing the skills and expertise of lived experience into the helping network in early help and child protection, offering and receiving help, based on shared understanding, respect and mutual empowerment between people in similar situations.

Full Circle meetings organised by Camden people for Camden people since 2019

Combining family group conference values and asset-based community development approaches, full circle is a community-led problem-solving model for individual or groups of residents looking to make a change.

Relational activism since 2019

Relational activism makes change happen through personal and informal relationships. It's open to anyone who wants to achieve social change but may not choose to participate in the demonstrations and campaigns of more "traditional" forms of activism.

See articles by Becca Dove and Tim Fisher.

https://ssir.org/articles/entry/becoming_unstuck_with_relational_activism

Relational Camden films since 2019

These films show Camden's commitment to bringing people together from different parts of the system to talk.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSLzjeJPVAYajxXCUnDtGPg>

Whole service Camden conversations led by young people and families since 2019

Getting the whole of the children's safeguarding service together at events facilitated by Camden people and families.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EPTljq94qE&t=1s>

Banner 'To Love is To Act' first flown since 2019

For the last six months, a giant banner emblazoned with 'To love is to Act' - the Victor Hugo proclamation - has become our travel companion and art-fully adorned the places we have met, talked and shared; It's been at a parent activist meeting, in a disused café in Kentish Town, in a British Legion hall in Bath. It's been up and down the M4 to Cardiff, and it's made its way across oceans to Turku and Oslo.

Relationships making the difference/ Love Shows Up – national events since 2018

These national events bring together citizens and professionals in order to hear stories from people with lived experience from both children and adults services. Through mutual learning the events help council officers to see how they can develop and sustain credibility when working in the community with citizens and their social networks.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n53hW-0r3c0>

Training with social workers, led by Annie from Surviving safeguarding and Camden Parents (2016)

Holding 'empowering families' sessions where family members work co-productively with social workers to help develop our relationship-based practice in Camden.

Featured in community care - click through link.

<http://www.communitycare.co.uk/2016/09/22/werent-service-users-social-workers-just-people/>

Citizen led focus groups in Camden places since 2017

Family members, parents, young people and community members led discussions in Camden places like the Town Hall, 5 Pancras Square and Crowndale Centre about growing up, staying safe and how we can help each other.

Learning exchange workshops since 2018

Social workers meet with parents and discuss different topics e.g. Domestic Abuse, and how they impact on their lives and ability to provide professional help.

Camden conversations launch 2019

The findings of the Camden conversations were shared widely to inside and outside of Camden to highlight the findings.

<https://www.camden.gov.uk/documents/20142/1006758/Camden+Conversations+-+full+report.pdf/675d7d6c-827b-a4ba-08a9-1fbaa9378d10>

High Street conversations 2019

High street conversations – taking and finding opportunities to use neighbourhood locations to open up spaces for citizen led conversation and action. Example at Think and Do in Kentish Town, based in a disused café and opened as a participatory space for residents to talk, connect and generate ideas. Parent activists used the space to talk about how they could help local parents affected by trauma. Next stop, a public living room in West Hampstead.

Family Advisory Board since 2013

In Camden, its citizen-led Family Advisory Board is now in its 8th year. This parent group has given a platform for participation, inclusion and the co-construction of services which has been very useful to the local authority.

Camden Conversations is an example of this 'a family-led child protection inquiry' it was born out of a partnership with academic Professor Anna Gupta and 'Annie' from Surviving Safeguarding and became a developing case study in the power of parents to change how social workers conceive of their practice.

Throughout 2018, our parent-activists led this major participatory research project into child protection practices, engaging other parents and also professionals to talk about their experiences, which enabled them to participate and influence the system.

Their final report has already led to real change, for example, parents now lead monthly "learning exchange" workshops, sharing with practitioners their experiences of subjects such as domestic violence and of being in State care. The relationship between the independent chair of the child protection meetings and the family is being improved; the chair now keeps in contact with the family between meetings so the family has the opportunity to give feedback and build a trusting relationship so they can speak openly and honestly.

Link to full report and recommendations:

<https://www.camden.gov.uk/documents/20142/1006758/Camden+Conversations+-+full+report.pdf/675d7d6c-827b-a4ba-08a9-1fbaa9378d10>

Camden Conversations a video summary

<https://youtu.be/nnhjunSxGAg>

Whole service conversation led by parents and young people

<https://youtu.be/4EPTljq94qE>



Friday story since 2020

These stories show diverse situations and relationships of people from Camdens work. They connect together conversations with social workers, adults, family networks, people of different backgrounds, with the aim of finding human situations. Friday Story is not trying to function as a platform for case studies or direct best practice but rather it is an exercise in connecting people and recognising experiences.

Local Authorities that Listen Circle since 2020

Camden has been convening a network of local authority peers for professionals and their parent partners to think about parent inclusion. More than 40 different local authorities are connected and the good practice shared includes a wide range from new Parent Peer Advocacy programmes to improving feedback forms.

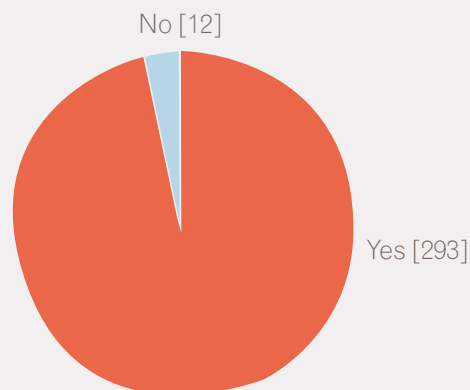
Family Changemakers since 2021

Changemakers is a participatory design project that brought together Camden parents and family members with service design Masters students from the University of the Arts London College of Communication to co-create a design vision for good family help after COVID. The parents and students worked together to describe how good help should feel and what good help should be, and created a set of design concepts to bring the vision to life.

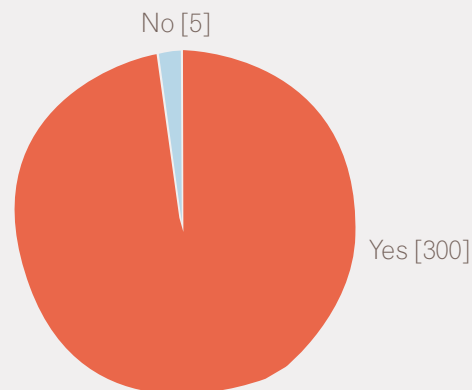
Appendix 2

Family Group Conference Family Questionnaire

Did you feel prepared for the Family Group Conference?

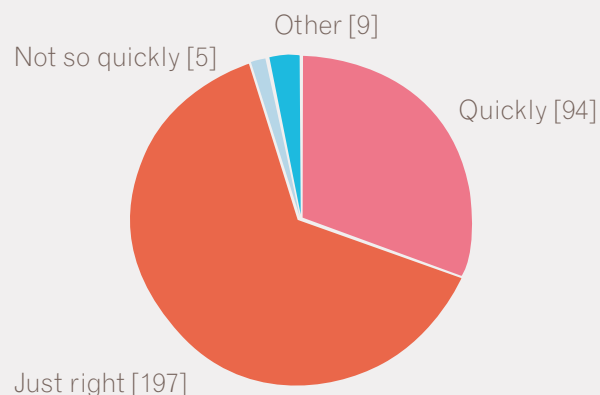


Was the Conference arranged at a convenient time?



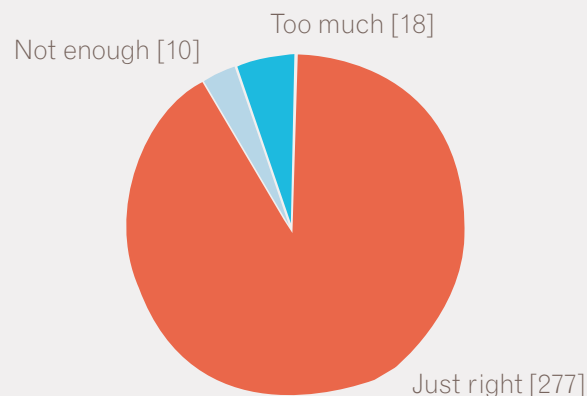
When arranging a Family Group Conference, the coordinator will try to schedule the FGC around the working hours of parents and family, also taking into account childcare arrangements. It is pleasing to see 98% of families felt the FGC was held at a time suited to their needs.

How quickly was your conference arranged?



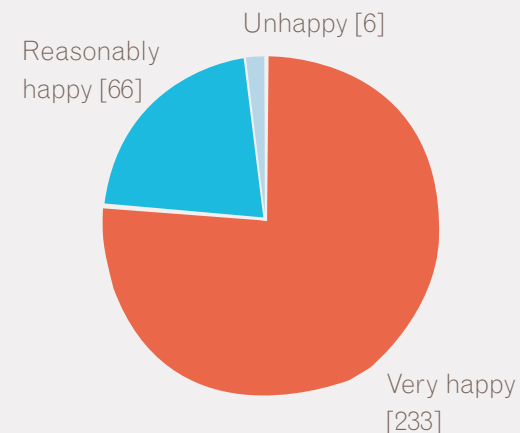
The FGC Coordinator will try to arrange the conference as soon as possible, again working round the family's schedules to accommodate various working patterns. We can see that 64.5% of participants felt the conference was arranged just right, 31% felt it was arranged quickly, 1.5% felt it was not arranged quickly enough and 3% did not provide a preference.

Did the Social Worker provide you with enough information for your plan?



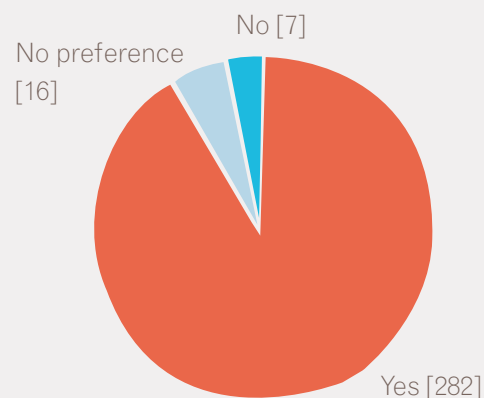
From the surveys completed, 91% felt they had just the right amount of information to formulate the plan, 6% felt the information provided was too much, and 3% would preferred to have more information provided for the family plan.

Were you happy with the plan that was made?



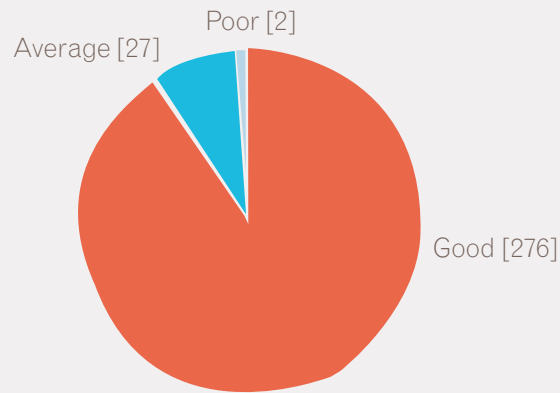
The family plan is a written document that is produced at the FGC, containing decisions made by the family in relation to the concerns shared. From the chart above, we can see that 76% were very happy with the plan that was made, with 21.5% stating they were reasonably happy, however 2% recorded their views as unhappy with the plan. Again no further information was provided as to why this reason was recorded.

Did you find having private time useful?



The coordinator offers private time for the family which is an essential part of the Family Group Conference process. The family have private discussion time to talk through and produce their plan, with the central focus on the adult or child/children who are the subject of the FGC. The plan should be agreed and resourced unless it places the child/children at significant risk of harm, and 92% of families felt this was a very useful tool. It is noted that 5% did not have a preference either way and 2% felt that this was not useful to the FGC process.

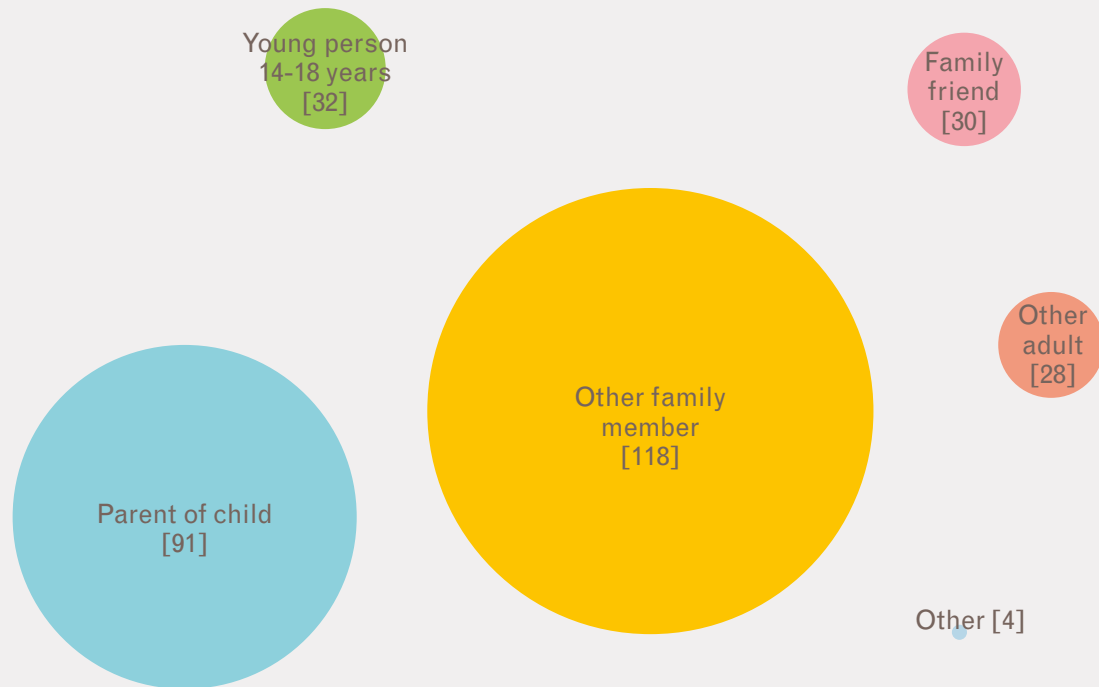
How did you feel about the meeting overall?



When asked about the FGC conference overall, 90.5% felt the meeting was good and met their needs, 9% stated the meeting was average and 0.5% felt the meeting was poor.

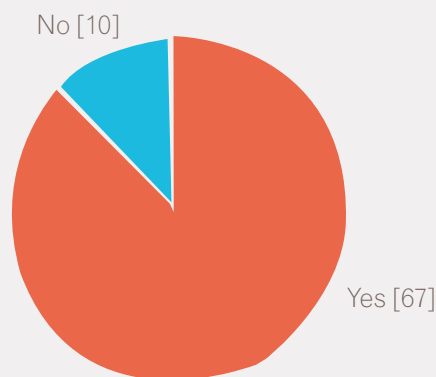
Relationship of person completing the questionnaire

When asked if there was anything else the family/friend would like to add about their Family Group Conference experience, the comments are listed below:



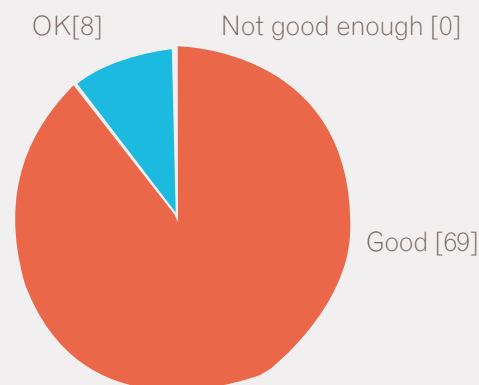
Overall 77 questionnaires were completed by workers and professionals, below are the results obtained:

Have you had previous involvement with FGC's before this referral?



From the responses received, 87% of workers and professionals have previously been involved in the FGC process, and for 13% of the respondents, FGC's are a new experience.

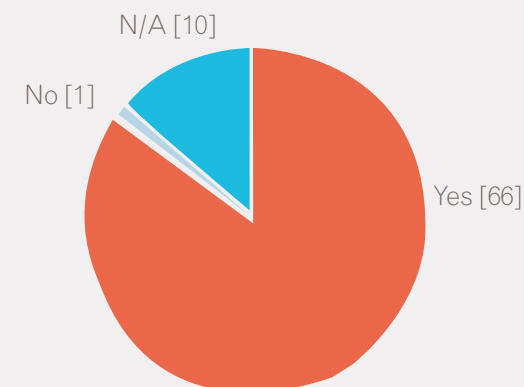
For Social Workers only, during the referral of the FGC, how was the information regarding the process of the FGC shared by the coordinator?



It is the responsibility of the coordinator to liaise with the social worker and guide them through the process and from the chart above, 90% of social workers felt they received a good understanding of the FGC process and 10% stated that the information they received was adequate.

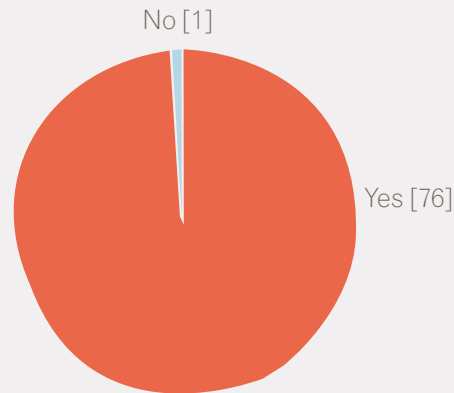
Next are some of the comments provided by social workers when asked if any other information would have helped at this stage.

Do you feel you were provided with enough help to prepare your agenda/report?



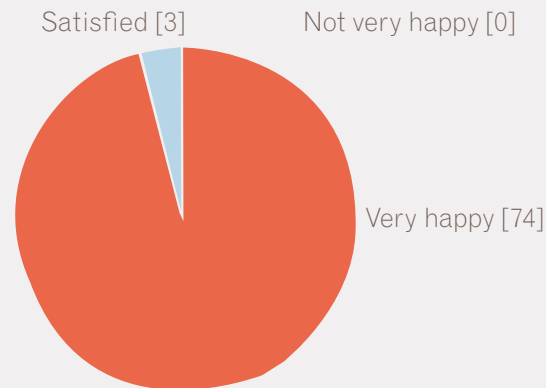
We can see that 86% of social workers felt they had enough information to assist them with their report, and 1% felt the information provided was insufficient. Although 13% have responded as not applicable, there are no clear indications given as to why this deems to be the case.

Were the practical arrangements for the meeting suitable?



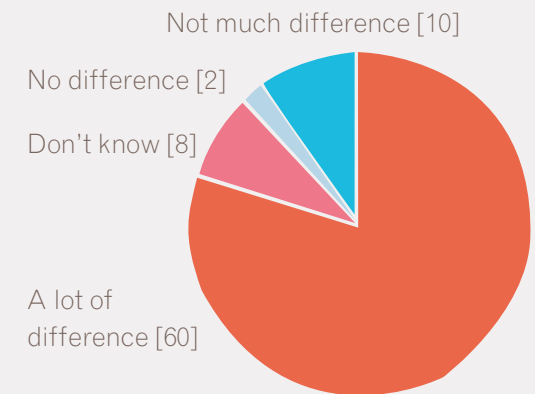
From the questionnaires completed 99% of the workers and professionals involved in the FGC felt the venue/meeting was suitable and catered to the needs of the family and professionals alike. Only 1% recorded this to be unsuitable.

Were you happy with the way the coordinator chaired the FGC meeting?



A high proportion of professionals, 96%, responded they were very happy in which the way the FGC coordinator chaired the meeting, with only 4% of professionals feeling satisfied in this area.

Do you think the FGC has made a difference to the outcome compared to other ways of working?



From the responses received, 78% of professionals felt the FGC made a lot of difference to the outcome, compared to others ways of working, with 9% feeling not much difference was made. The results show that 2.5% feel the outcome remained the same, with 10.5% not sure on how the FGC makes a difference in relation to family outcomes.

