

## **European Network- Glasgow 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> November 2008**

The Scottish based charity Children 1st played host to the European FGC network which was held in Glasgow in late November 2008. 10 countries from Europe were represented at the meeting which has been held every year since 1999. The themes of the event included country updates plus a number of issues common to each of the nations represented. These included;

- Maintaining the purity of the FGC model
- Training and accreditation
- FGCs and technology
- How to develop FGC services
- Evaluation

A full report of the meeting will be circulated in due course. However the nations present all reported a brief 'progress update'.

### **Austria**

FGCs don't exist at present in Austria. Austrian representatives were present at the meeting to gather information from other countries in the hope of implementing FGCs in the future.

### **England**

England has in excess of 80 projects/services varying greatly in size and number of referrals. Changes in Government policy has led to FGCs being recommended prior to and during public law proceedings which has led to an increase in the number of referrals in existing projects, an increase in the complexity of cases and the emergence of a number of new projects. Accreditation is being pursued via a partnership between FRG and the University of Chester (and for some projects through the open college network)

### **Germany**

There are 11 projects across Germany which vary in size. FGCs are at the beginning but are being used in child welfare and starting to be used in restorative practice. A national FGC network exists.

### **Netherlands**

The Netherlands have held nearly 2000 FGCs and are using them in social care, youth justice, schools and community conferencing. Each of the 12 regions of the country has a region manager who leads a group of sessional FGC coordinators. They are pioneering the use of a webpage for family members which is opened by the coordinator at the beginning of an FGC and can then be accessed by family only once the FGC is over. This is an informal way of family members monitoring their plans and will be operational in 2009

### **Northern Ireland**

Northern Ireland have 5 Health and Social Care trusts and each of these has an FGC project. They have a national forum for lobbying, support and training and are developing national standards. There is also an accredited FGC course being developed with the University of Ulster.

### **Norway**

Norway have been practicing FGCs for a number of years and work closely with Denmark and Sweden who usually also attend the European network. Practice in these countries is very similar and they have a 3 nation network. 150 out of a total of 450 municipalities have an FGC service.

FGCs have been used with indigenous communities in the north of the country.

The American Humane Society is publishing national Norwegian research next year.

### **Poland**

The 'Hope for Families' foundation in Poland is implementing FGCs in 16 provinces. This organisation also offers advice, information and training on FGCs. and also act lobby the Polish Government. Poland are planning an FGC conference and would like other European nations to be represented at this.

### **Scotland**

Children 1<sup>st</sup> run most of the FGC services in Scotland, however there are a few other organisations doing FGCs, sometimes in consultation with Children 1<sup>st</sup>. Children 1st are commissioning a good deal of research e.g. father's involvement, children's voices and long term outcomes. Scotland are also developing an accredited course for FGC coordinators which will be managed by Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen. The Scottish Government are promoting family and friends care for children who are unable to live at home and have used the FGC approach as an example of good practice in achieving this.

### **Slovakia**

The representatives from Slovakia are keen to implement FGCs but are struggling to persuade the Government that it is an approach that will work. They are, however, encouraged by it's success in neighbouring Poland. There has now been some funding agreed for FGCs and so they are hoping to progress it in 2009.

### **Wales**

18 out of 22 local authorities in Wales have an FGC service-which tends to be called a 'Family Group Meeting' in Wales, as it does in parts of England. Most projects are funded through a service level agreement or through spot purchasing.

Wales have a national network and strong young people/adult service user involvement. Details of current practice and service provision are available on [www.childreninwales.org.uk](http://www.childreninwales.org.uk)

The 2009 European network will be held in Poland in October. Dates and details will be available nearer the time. As always 5 places will be allocated to each nation.

These will be allocated by the country representative from each participating nation.