

European Network for Family Group Conferences

Meeting held in Manchester on 7th October 2002

Introduction:

This meeting was to explore the possibility of establishing a European network for promoting the development of Family Group Conferences and the exchange of information about policy, practice and research.

1. Current Networks in Europe:

There are currently a number of smaller networks already operating in Europe namely:

a) Family Rights Group – national network in England and Wales. It is membership based and has some international members. The FGC Network promotes family group conferences in England and Wales, publishes a Newsletter, provides training and other opportunities for network members to exchange ideas etc. Groups of network members meet in Wales, London and the North West of England.

b) Nordic Network - Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark. Each country has its own established network. The Nordic group collects and compares research findings, provides a means of learning from each other, and is building a knowledge base. They meet frequently and have hosted a FGC conference earlier this year.

c) Northern Ireland Forum. Grew out of a practitioners conference, covers child welfare, education, and youth justice. Has a mixture of practitioners and managers. Meets four times a year. Four sub groups focus on: co-ordinators, policy and PR, training, and finance.

2. What do we want from a European FGC Forum/ Network?

Four key themes emerged:

- Learning about implementation and practice
- Working at the political level
- Sharing resources
- A common research agenda

a) Learning about practice and implementation

A network could provide easy access to

- Knowledge about best practice
- Contact names and organisations
- Ideas and exchanges of expertise
- Research evidence on practice and implementation
- New approaches or uses of FGCs
- Training materials
- Help and advice about implementation

b) Working at the political level

- Generating a common European approach
- Raising profile and awareness about FGC
- Involving families as users in developing policy and practice
- Strength in unity – gaining political support
- Adopting a common set of values/principles about FGC
- Promoting wellbeing of children

c) Sharing Resources

- making bids for European funding
- each country could host a meeting of European forum
- possibly setting up a European conference
- Sharing training materials and implementation plans
- Sharing policy, procedures, practice guidelines

d) A common research agenda

- Share information about current of existing research
- Consolidate research information that could inform new research
- Develop comparative studies
- Comparing orthodox approaches with FGC
- Sharing research information about 'what works' with implementation

3. How to take forward a European network?

a) Flexibility in the beginning

- b) One person from each country to be the contact / link to a European network
- c) Develop a European network Internet *list-serve* so we can continue the discussion and stay in touch
- d) A number of Websites already exist. We need to link these (I am sure they are not all in English which will be a problem for some of us) See attached list.
- e) Host meetings – so that we can develop these ideas – perhaps each country could host one meeting - possibly 2 meetings a year?

(Could we use existing conferences or events on FGC that are already planned as an opportunity to meet?)

15th October 2002