

Information sheet for parents & family members:

Family Networking with children living at home



**England
Innovation
Project**
*Aligning the organisation
to the practice*

Background.

In Norfolk we want to work with and alongside families, rather than taking decisions about them in isolation.

We are embedding Family Networking to ensure that all those connected to the child who can be a source of emotional, physical, mental, spiritual or cultural support are able to engage with workers and those caring for the child. This will provide opportunities to make a positive difference to the child's everyday life and give support where required, to have a relationship with the child where this would be in the child's long term best interests.

Our new way of working enables parents and families to take more ownership of the concerns and risks and be part of putting a plan together with professionals to keep children safer and healthier.

What are the principles of Family Networking?

1. Every child/parent has a family and/or network and they can be found if we try
2. A meaningful connection to their family or network helps a child develop and/or maintain a sense of belonging
3. The single factor most strongly connected with positive outcomes for children is meaningful, lifelong connection to their family and/or network

How does it work when the child is living at home?

1. Workers working with the child will set up a network meeting.
2. The child (depending on age and understanding) and the parents (all those with parental responsibilities) will be invited at the earliest stage to involve their wider networks in the meeting to help them put a plan together that will keep the child safer/promote their wellbeing.
3. The worker, working directly with the child and parents will identify members of the network that could be involved in planning and support.
4. The worker will contact those people identified to see if they would be interested in attending a meeting to help the child and family. The meeting should happen at the earliest point possible, while respecting network members caring or work responsibilities.
5. At the first meeting ground rules suggested by the members will be established. The first meeting should be used to see if anyone from the network has been missed out who could helpfully be included. There will be discussions why the network is there and the support they can offer to the family.



6. The (safety) plan is written up and shared with all those attending, and any professionals involved with the family. The family network will then review progress at follow up meetings with the other professionals involved.

7. All family network plans must be regularly reviewed to check on progress.

Frequently Asked Questions

Are we doing this already?

Yes, in some services this already happens. We need to make sure it is a consistent approach for all children and a shared vision across Norfolk.

Can the meetings have an informal approach?

Yes, absolutely. Timings, venue, refreshments will be child and family friendly. If a child is attending the meeting, careful planning will be put in place, so the child is not overwhelmed.

What if a person is considered to be unsafe by the network but the child wants to see them?

The risks and safety will be explored with the network: what we are worried about, what existing safety there is/there could be, and what needs to happen. The child's welfare must be paramount, and they will need to be helped to understand if there are things that can't happen and why, using words and pictures to explain the reasons people are worried. The situation will be regularly reviewed.

What will happen if the Family Network Meeting doesn't work out? E.g. the family/network member did not attend, or the venue isn't right?

The network members will agree how they will explore non-attendance to the best interest of the child. Opportunities to share feedback following the meetings also will be provided.

