



Friday Story



Okie works as a Family Group Coordinator in Camden, and has been extremely busy since the lockdown started. She had been holding her meetings online and has been surprised by how normal some elements of the meetings have been. At the beginning of the call, families catch up and greet each other as they would have over a tea in an face-to-face meeting. Even though the technology was new and unusual, families have been using it to their benefit by speaking just as passionately as they would normally. Okie believes that food is integral to the Family Group Conference process, as it can be used as a tool to aid difficult conversations. **In one meeting, she asked a family if they would like food delivered. They settled on a pizza that was delivered while the meeting was being held by video call.** She believes that these thoughtful measures provide the 'human touch' to a virtual meeting. In another meeting, there was a disagreement between a father and child, the latest argument in a repeated pattern of conflict between the two. However, this time it happened on camera in front of a full conference call of their friends and family. Their family was able to visualise for the first time the issue that they had previously only heard about, this allowed them to provide reflective feedback addressing what they had now seen first hand. From this experience, they were able to provide a plan that focused on repairing the relationship between father and child before any other steps were taken. **Okie feels that the integrity of FGCs has not been compromised and she is excited that coordinators are still able to provide the three parts of the meeting virtually.** Okie has stated the core of the meetings has not been lost, the very human emotions that lie at the centre of these meetings still make themselves known, even through a screen.

Family Group Conferencing



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Jerome has been considering the best strategy to help people while lockdown measures are in place. He is a family group coordinator that has had meetings disrupted by the government guidelines surrounding Covid-19. One meeting with a new mum proved an interesting challenge. **She did not have a family, so a support network had to be built from other areas in her life such as work friends.** Jerome considered sending a takeaway for the meeting but realised that a food-shop delivery may prove more helpful to a new mum that has been faced with the realities of lockdown. **All of the online shopping slots were taken up so Jerome sent her the equivalent money as a 'food voucher'.** The new mum showed her appreciation by sending a photo of the shop she bought with a grateful message. Jerome has found that it is imaginative gestures such as these that help build relationships with the participants of meetings. He uses food as a tool in his meetings to engage with the families, and through food he is able to create positive associations with family group conferences. He has found that by asking for help setting up meetings virtually he is involving the family more intimately with the process of coming together. They are consulting their network and deciding on the platform that suits them best, which is a uniting activity in itself. He has found that the participants in meetings are now active collaborators and they use the meetings as a forum to connect. **As work and leisure blend into each other, Jerome has found that by rediscovering old hobbies such as DJing and using his local park for daily exercise he is maintaining structure.**

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