Family Group Conferences in Sweden 2022

Background

Family Group Conferences came to Sweden in the mid-1990s. Two projects were run by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities, the first between 1995 and 1997 and the second one between 1998 and 2000.

Present situation

There is no legal mandate for using Family Group Conferences in Sweden, but the values underpinning the method are consistent with legislation.

There has been no national funding for developing Family Group Conferences after 2000 and no state funded national organization taking responsibility for promoting or supporting FGCs. Predominantly two municipalities take responsibility for promoting and supporting FGCs in Sweden. All FGC practice is organized by local authorities, predominantly used for children and families. For many years two municipalities have been responsible for promoting and supporting FGCs in Sweden; Höör and Botkyrka. Other municipalities using family group conferences are Landskrona, Karlskrona, Visby and probably more. A goal for 2022 is to gather information about how many and which municipalities use FGC and in which areas.

As research about implementation tells us it is difficult to implement new models and methods. When FGC is concerned focus must be not only the method, but especially on the value base underpinning the method. The political and official leadership need to have a plan for implementation. Social workers and other professionals need to be on board and have a deeper understanding of why to use FGC. The need of well trained and experienced coordinators goes without saying. In our experience many local authorities in Sweden try to use FGC as "just another tool in the toolbox" and miss the value base. There is a big difference between theoretical understanding of, and acting, the value base.

The cooperation with, and support from, other Scandinavian and Nordic countries is very important for Sweden. Research and experiences from Norway and Denmark in particular have laid a ground for the development of FGC in Sweden. Children participation and how to prepare and support them during the FGC process is of main interest for us. We hold on to our tradition of Nordic conferences about FGC every other year. Last year the Nordic conference was held via zoom from Helsinki, Finland.

In Sweden, as well as all over the world, Covid -19 has changed the conditions for FGC. Now digital solutions are an important part of family group conferences.

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