



FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT

(England & Wales)



PARISH TOOL KIT

Produced by the National Steering Group for Family Groups (England & Wales)



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RESOURCES:

Family Group Member Information Form
Family Group Meeting Contact Sheet
Role of Group Leaders Leaflet
Family Group Member Welcome Leaflet
Sample: Leaders Letter of Introduction
Sample: Leaders Welcome Letter
Sample: Family Group First Newsletter
Sample: Family Group Update Newsletter
Sample: Family Group Event Flyer
Sample: Notes of Parish Leaders Meeting



FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT VALUES (1)

A Family Group is:

A family: somewhere we can share laughter and tears, ups and downs, food and fun through thick and thin

Where everybody is welcome: inclusive and accepting, respecting differences: a family for all

A movement: God's love, in action

About people and the community: Building a sense of parish in the community; community in the parish



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAPLAIN (2)

This year as I celebrate the Ruby Jubilee of my ordination as a Priest, there is one pastoral initiative I helped to implement that still inspires me: the Family Group Movement.

In October 2011 I invited Fr Peter McGrath, founder of the Passionist Family Group Movement, to visit the Parish with a view to introducing it. What attracted me to the Movement, and still does, is its simplicity.

People getting to know each other as members of the parish, supporting each other, sharing joys and sorrows, building the Christian community, as in the early Church: **“Love one another as I have loved you.”**



What delighted me was the enthusiasm with which people of all ages responded. It was a joy to experience God's grace and love coming to people in a way that they would never have expected and from people they would never imagine. I witnessed a quiet transformation of love and concern at work in the parish, with people taking time to speak to each other and help generate a greater spirit of communion. It was very much in keeping with the Motto of the Movement, a 'family for all.'

This is in tune with the freshness of approach of Pope Francis in having a missionary focus in our lives as Christians, being welcoming and inclusive, and moving beyond the boundaries of the Parish. This is at the heart of what Jesus continues to call us to do and the true meaning of evangelisation. I had the privilege of visiting the birthplace of the Passionist Family Group Movement, a little Church in the suburbs of Sydney Australia a few years ago; like the tiny mustard seed which Jesus speaks about in the Gospel a great tree has grown spreading its branches in many countries.

This is a time of a new awakening for the Church in England and Wales to explore the Family Group Movement. There is a network of experienced and really committed parish leaders across the country who are ready to help parishes to get going, with a tool kit containing lots of practical guidance that is written in a friendly and practical manner. From my own experience, the Family Movement brings warmth and enrichment to the life of the Parish, and provides a wonderful opening for people who are new or wish to engage afresh with the parish. True to its Motto, it is truly a 'family for all.'

Fr. Pat Munroe – Chaplain of the Family Group Movement (England and Wales)



WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION (3)

Dear Friend

As you start on a new journey of exploration with Family Groups, we hope that this Tool kit will ignite a spark that will ultimately bring new warmth, a sense of belonging and a special richness to your parish life. Several years ago, just like you, we started on the same path: ordinary people, leading busy family lives who wanted to generate a new energy in the parish, welcoming and bringing parishioners together in a way that had never been done before in our community. In the following pages we share with you what we learned along the way and hope that the information provided will be a source of inspiration and guidance.

The Tool kit is designed to accompany you on your journey from the very first exploratory step right through to the implementation of Family Groups in your parish. In developing the Tool kit materials the Steering Group wanted to share their unique experiences with you so that you may be encouraged to walk the same path and given the confidence to create your own parish Family Groups.

Now almost in their tenth year, the Family Groups in our parish are still very much at the centre of parish life. We have adapted and flexed the groups in response to changes in the parish community but our very simple message remains unchanged: all are welcome to share in the fun, support and friendship that being part of a Family Group can offer.

I do hope that you will now take this initiative forward, be assured of our prayers and the support and guidance that will be available to you from members of the Steering Group. We would love to hear from you soon, so please do get in touch.

With our warm regards

Christine and Vincent Joyce

Chair & Vice-Chair of the Family Group Movement (England and Wales)



A GUIDE TO GETTING STARTED (4)

Welcome to the Family Group Movement and thank you for downloading the Family Group Movement's Parish Tool kit.

So you are thinking about introducing Family Groups into your parish? If so, then this Tool kit has been designed to provide you with all the necessary background information and support you will need to get started. In England and Wales we have a national Steering Group which provides parishes with a support network of volunteers who are all Family Group Leaders or Family Group Coordinators themselves. The Parish Tool kit has been produced by the Steering Group based entirely on their own experience of setting up and sustaining Family Groups over a number of years. It offers down-to-earth, practical, accessible advice, tips and sample materials to Parish Priests and their Leadership teams as they plan, launch and build Family Groups in their parish.

If you would like more 'hands on' support, a member of the Steering Group can also be assigned to your parish as part of our 'buddy' system once you have registered your interest in the Family Group Movement (via email to familygroups2015@gmail.com) Once you have been assigned a 'buddy', they will be available to offer telephone or email guidance and support to the team before, during and after the launch of your Family Groups. A visit to the parish may also be possible by your 'buddy' or another member of the Steering Group (subject to their availability and any geographical restrictions.) In these situations, it is standard practice for the hosting parish to cover the cost of visitors' travel and any other 'out of pocket' expenses they may occur whilst supporting the launch of your Family Groups.

The History of Family Groups

The Passionist Family Group Movement (PFGM) was founded in 1972 by Fr Peter McGrath, cp, with the aim of building Christian community through the development of the parish. The PFGM model creates an extended family atmosphere in the community through Family Groups which are open to everyone and focus on people caring for, loving and accepting each other. In 2007 the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales invited Fr Peter to help launch Family Groups in England and Wales. The Movement had been identified during the Listening 2004 consultation as a useful resource for developing parish community life. Three parishes volunteered to host Fr Peter, two of whom went on to successfully pilot Family Groups (both have strong membership and continue to thrive today). The PFGM team returned to the UK in 2011-12 to help launch Family Group pilots in a number of other parishes. Since then several other parishes in England and Wales have launched Family



Group pilots either independently or with the support of Leaders from neighbouring Family Group parishes.

Over the past three years national efforts have been focused on building sustainable 'grass roots' Leadership and support structures for Family Groups in England and Wales. This will enable parishes to build on the solid foundations established with the support of the PFGM and enable new groups to develop using the home grown experience of Family Group Parishes and the expertise of Family Group Leaders from across England and Wales to support, resource and guide other parishes wishing to develop Family Groups.

National Steering Group

A National Steering Group for the Family Group Movement (England & Wales) was convened in October 2014 to take these objectives forward. The Steering Group is made up of Leaders from Family Group parishes, regional diocesan Family Ministry Coordinators and a Chaplain, all of whom are dedicated to supporting and accompanying parishes as they plan, launch and develop Family Groups. The Steering Group has taken responsibility for developing support and resources for existing and prospective Family Group parishes as well as increasing awareness and communicating on behalf of Family Groups at a national and local level. The Steering Group has agreed three principal objectives for its work:

- To offer a reservoir of energy, experience and support for the development of new Family Groups
- To support and affirm existing Family Groups and their Leaders
- To provide the means of communication between Family Group parishes

What are Family Groups?

Very simply, Family Groups seek to bring together a group of people who share a common bond and commitment through their faith and in doing so they become a *family* in their love for one another. The groups are not exclusive to Catholics as many group members bring along their non-Catholic partners who are integral to the group's success. Family Groups are also not prayer groups – they are parish friendship and support groups open to any parishioner irrespective of age or personal circumstances. Family Groups are not intended to replace other groups in the Parish but to complement them, by providing parishioners with the opportunity to come together regularly in a social setting to get to know one another, develop mutual interests and create meaningful parish support networks. In this way Family



Groups help to create **a sense of community in the parish and a sense of parish in the community.**

You do not have to be a family to belong to a group. Family Groups are made up of people drawn from a range of backgrounds: single, families with children, more mature people and those who live alone, who are gathered together in a group that then grows into a *family*. There are usually 10/12 natural families and individuals gathered together in a group, with a Leader couple and a support couple who act as Deputies. The job of group Leaders is to nurture a feeling of belonging and welcome, and not to be organisers of everything that happens in the group.

Each group is encouraged to arrange a monthly get-together that is simple, low cost and allows people share their food and drink. The overall aim and purpose is for people within the group to mix with each other, celebrate special events such as birthdays and anniversaries, support people in times of need and treat each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. **Simplicity is the key.** The philosophy of Family Groups remains the same today as when the model was first introduced by Fr Peter McGrath over forty years ago – it is about having a positive outlook, when no event is ever cancelled, and whoever comes is meant to come, whether that is fifty people or just one!

When thinking about how a Family Group model may work in your parish, ask yourself how many people you see at Mass where you simply smile and nod or share the sign of peace each week. Do you know their name or anything about them? Most of us leave Mass each week and go about our busy lives without giving a second thought to the people in our church community whom we barely know and who may need our friendship and support. Family groups can act as a catalyst which changes this. Once the model has been introduced into your parish you will soon see the formation of new friendships and support links across the whole parish community that are both strong and enduring.

Getting Started

Before moving forward it is advisable for the Parish Priest and his pastoral support/Leadership team to meet and discuss what their expectations are of Family Groups and what they hope to achieve by introducing the model into the parish. **The Parish Priest's engagement at the early stage and on-going support are crucial to the success of Family Groups.** Once you have agreed your goals and a broad timescale for the initiative you are invited to complete the 'Initial Parish Expression of Interest Form' contained in the Parish Tool kit and email it to the Steering Group at familygroups2015@gmail.com



Once your form has been received a member of the Steering Group will contact you and, if you would find it helpful, a 'buddy' will be assigned to your parish to support and assist you in preparing for the launch of Family Groups. This support may be by telephone or email depending on the location and availability of your 'buddy'. All members of the 'buddy' team are Family Group Leaders in other parishes across England and Wales.

What Next?

The next stage will be for the Parish Priest to appoint two people who will be designated as the Parish Coordinators for Family Groups. The intention here is not to make a lifelong appointment but to agree a timeframe for the appointment that will give longevity and stability to the Family Group structure (the suggested tenure is 3-5 years). By rotating the Parish Coordinator role, new directions can be taken and fresh ideas developed within the Leadership team as Family Groups continue to evolve in the parish. The Parish Coordinators are often Family Group Leaders too.

What is the ideal skill set for a Parish Coordinator? In the Tool kit you will find role descriptors for the key people needed to support the on-going development of Family Groups in your parish. **Appointing the right people as Parish**

Coordinators will be the key to the success of Family Groups in your parish.

The Parish Priest will need to carefully consider the personalities and communication styles of anyone appointed to these roles. And it is worth remembering that the Coordinators may come across confidential and sensitive information and it is therefore crucial that these individuals are able to maintain confidentiality.

As soon as the Coordinators have been appointed, the next goal will be to source potential group Leaders. A good way to approach this is for the Parish Priest and the Coordinators to take time looking around the parish for prospective candidates. Husband and wife teams generally work well, although this may not always be practicable. It is advisable to think creatively about this and to move away from the 'usual suspects.' Experience has shown that new and fresh faces are generally welcomed in the parish and parishioners will be more likely to view Family Groups, rather than a clique or club where long standing parish Leaders dominate, if there are new people are involved.

All Leaders must be willing to undertake a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check; and it is better to be upfront about this with potential Leaders to avoid any difficulties at a later date. The DBS application and assessment process is implemented via your parish Safeguarding Representative. Your Parish Priest will be able to advise you further on the procedure you will need to follow.



Pre-formation Stage: Potential Leaders' Social Event

A good starting point is to set up a social gathering for potential Leaders. Invite more people than are needed for Leader roles as this will be a good PR opportunity for generating group members as well. Some light refreshments and a glass of wine in a nice social setting (e.g. the Presbytery or a small church room for intimacy) are a good way of breaking the ice, talking through the idea of setting up Family Groups and gaining essential 'buy-in' and support from the parish. It also gives you the chance to seek out potential Leaders as not everyone who comes along may possess the right skills to take on the role (although they may all think they are the ideal candidate!)

The Parish Priest and Coordinators will need to select carefully and no Leader appointments or promises should be made during the social evening. It is important that the right Leaders are selected if the venture is to succeed. Therefore, the purpose of the social evening is to start the development of the Family Groups' process and for the Parish Priest to observe and make an assessment of potential Leaders in a social setting. He will also need to take into consideration that the Leaders who are chosen assume the responsibility for caring for a group of parishioners. Not a decision to be made lightly or rushed!

After the social evening, the Parish Priest and Coordinators should agree a list of potential Leaders and Deputies. It is difficult to decide at this early stage how many should be asked to consider the appointment. A useful guide for a reasonable size parish would be to look to appoint 3 Leadership teams and, where possible, Deputies (although Deputies at this early stage are not essential.) With the Coordinators (also group Leaders) you have the potential to start up 4 Family Groups depending on demand. If you do not generate sufficient demand at the start, the Coordinators can continue in a supporting role and pick up a new group as Family Group numbers increase.

Appointment of Family Group Leaders

The invitation to become a Family Group Leader should come from the Parish Priest. This gesture reinforces the importance of such an appointment. Once the Leadership structure has been determined a further meeting should be scheduled to start the very important planning and preparation work that will establish a platform for launching Family Groups in the parish.



The Preparation Phase

As a team you will need to decide when you are ready to launch Family Groups in the parish. Set the date and agree what approach you are going to take. A drip feed notice in the parish newsletter is a good idea as are short introductory talks at Mass. Some teams like to have a parish family evening to attract people to sign up, and others use talks at Mass to encourage people to fill out an initial Information form and become part of a group. Take whatever approach you think will work best for your parish; all you need to succeed is energy and enthusiasm on the part of the Parish Priest and the Leadership team.

You now find it helpful to work with the sample timetable contained in this Tool kit. Remember this is just a simple guide and not meant to be prescriptive. Each parish will want to determine its own timetable of activities in preparing for 'go-live.'

Ready for Go-Live?

Launching Family Groups can be a daunting experience, so keep positive and keep focussed. Remember that Leaders will need support in getting their first meeting off the ground and dealing with any teething issues.

Set the date and go for it!



INITIAL PARISH EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FORM (5)

Thank you for your initial interest in the Family Group Movement (England and Wales). Please complete the questions below so that we are able to offer you appropriate support and answer any further questions you have.

If you would find it helpful, a member of our National Steering Group (who is also a parish Family Group Leader) can be assigned to you to provide telephone/email support as part of our 'buddy' system during the planning and launch of Family Groups in your parish.

In order for Family Groups to be successful in your parish, the support and ongoing commitment of the Parish Priest is vital. Please complete this form in conjunction with your parish priest and return via email to familygroups2015@gmail.com.

[A member of the Steering Group will contact you on receipt of the completed form.](#)

1. Your name and contact details :

Name:

Parish Role (if applicable):

Telephone number:

Email address:

2. Please tell us about your parish:

Parish Name:

Contact Postal Address :

Name of parish priest:

Telephone number :

Parish Email Address:



Tell us about current initiatives, if any exist in the parish, to support / affirm and bring together families and individual parishioners:

Please tell us how you heard about Family Groups and why you would want to take this initiative forward in your parish:

Please tell us what your expectations are of Family Groups and what you hope to achieve by setting up this initiative:

4. Family Groups need 2 Parish Coordinators; have you any thoughts at this stage as to who would act at the Coordinators for your parish?



5. Do you have any timeframe in mind for introducing Family Groups in the parish?

6. Please feel free to raise any specific questions or requests here. Attach additional sheets if you wish to do so.

7. Would you find it helpful to have a member of the Steering Group assigned to your parish as a 'buddy' during the planning and launch of Family Groups?

8. Commitment of the Parish Priest

I confirm that I am happy to support further enquiries about the Family Group movement.

Signed :

Date:

Please email your completed form to the Steering Group at:

familygroups2015@gmail.com



ROLE DESCRIPTIONS TO SUPPORT THE INTRODUCTION OF FAMILY GROUPS (6)

Parish Priest

The shepherd of Family Groups in the parish, whose role is to support, encourage and continually raise the profile of Family Groups within the parish and wider faith community. With the proactive support and encouragement of the Parish Priest Family Groups will flourish.

Parish Coordinators

Usually a team of two people, the Coordinator's role is to help launch Family Groups in the parish and also offer on-going support and encouragement to group Leaders, especially through any challenging periods. Regular catch-up meetings with Leaders will be helpful and the Coordinators should be instrumental in organising periodic 'coffee and a chat' sessions with all group Leaders.

Group Leaders and Deputies

Usually a team of two for each group, the Leader's role is to facilitate the smooth running of the group, encourage and support its members and ensure that all communications are cascaded. Group Leaders are not expected to organise every event but to enlist the support and commitment of others to do so. Group Leaders are instrumental in keeping a watching eye on absent group members and following up with a phone call to check that all is OK. Leaders are encouraged to report successes and challenges to the Coordinators.

Group Members

The group member's role is to commit to belong to and actively participate in a Family Group. Attendance at all events is not necessary but when joining a Family Group the members agree to be part of some activities when they are able to join in.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (7)

Who will help me start a Family Group in my parish?

If you would find it helpful, the National Steering Group will assign a 'buddy' to you who will be available to offer support at the end of the phone or by email. Face to face meetings may also be available but that will depend on availability and distance.

What will it cost to launch Family Groups in my parish?

The cost of starting a Family Group is minimal. The tool kit, DVD and all resources and promotional materials are free to download and can be printed and customised to suit your needs. Steering Group members and 'buddies' give their time and support free of charge. However, if Steering Group members, 'buddies' or group members from neighbouring parishes visit you to speak during Mass or to support you during the planning and launch of Family Groups, it is standard practice for the hosting parish to cover the cost of the visitors' travel and any other 'out of pocket' expenses they may incur.

What does it cost to run a Family Group?

The cost of starting and running Family Groups is minimal. The basic things that a group needs are access to a computer (for sending out email updates), a room to meet, and some refreshments. From experience, the group members will be happy to share the provision of milk, tea bags, biscuits etc. between them.

How many people do we need to start a Family Group in our parish?

You can start out big or small depending on the initial response to the parish launch. There are no set rules regarding group numbers: a group of 15 can work as well as a group of 30.

Our Parish Priest is unsure about Family Groups does he need to be involved?

The engagement and support of your Parish Priest is crucial for the success of Family Groups in any parish. The role of the Parish Priest is not to organise Family Group activities but to offer visible support and on-going commitment to Family Groups across the parish community and to support and encourage the Leadership team.

How many Family Group Leaders do we need?

Each parish will need a parish Coordinator team (usually 2 people) and each Family Group ideally should have a Leader team of two Leaders and two Deputies.



Will I need a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check to be a Family Group Leader/Deputy?

In line with Diocesan Safeguarding Guidelines a check will be required for leaders and deputies. Parish safeguarding representatives will be able to arrange for the necessary checks to take place at no cost to the individuals. Whilst some may question the need for such a check to take place for a Leader role within Family Groups, we would want to reassure you that any such checks are good practice and could provide reassurance to any members of the parish community who may be feeling anxious or vulnerable about signing up to be part of a Family Group. We recommend that you allow 6 weeks for the checks to be undertaken.

Who organises all the Family Group activities?

Initially, during the launch and development of a Family Group the Leader team will need to be very hands on in organising and coordinating activities. However, as the group matures and develops all members should be encouraged to take a turn in organising an activity. Spread over a 12 month period this doesn't amount to a great deal of work. The Leaders' role should evolve over time into a facilitation and communication role which is very different from what is required in the early days of setting up a Family Group.

What do we need to start a Family Group?

Energy, enthusiasm and a passion for building parish community and making Family groups work.

From experience it often works to start small, gain the interest of others and then encourage them to join in. Once they see that a group is active and vibrant, people instinctively want to join in and take part. It is important to raise awareness of Family Groups in the parish and maintain a high profile – little and often keeps interest alive.

How should we name the Groups?

Giving groups names gives them a unique identity. Each Group should decide what they will be called; for example one group chose 'Rafiki' as their name because it means 'friend' in Swahili. In some parishes the groups have numbers. Do whatever suits those who belong to the Group.

We started off with 5 groups but people are dropping out or not attending meetings. What should we do?

Take stock and review, as a parish team, how each of the groups are doing. It is quite normal to have to refine, merge or refresh groups as people move on or family



circumstances change. It is usual to see a reduction in the overall number of groups in a parish after an initial burst of energy. Keep going and don't give up!

Do you have to be a Catholic to join a Family Group?

No. Family Groups are a family for all. It is good to encourage partners of Family Group members who are not Catholic to come along. They are very often integral to the success of the group. Family groups should be inclusive not exclusive.

Do you have to be in a family to join a Family Group?

No. Family Groups are a family for all and like a natural family they are made up of people of all ages and circumstances: young, mature, married, single, separated, widowed and divorced.

Should we hold a big parish Family Group event each year?

Great idea! This would be a chance to bring all the Family Groups together, introducing them to the parish as a whole and a way of raising the profile of Family Groups in your community.

How do we keep the momentum of Family Groups going in the parish?

Keep raising the profile of Family Groups - little and often in the parish bulletin and newsletters. Share your news locally, and with Family Group parishes nationally via the national Family Groups blog. After Family Groups have been operational for some time in a parish the parish priest may wish to undertake a renewal of commitment with the groups during Mass so that the parish community share in and bear witness to the renewal. Personal recommendations also work well as a way of attracting new members to Family Groups.

We don't seem to attract new school families to Family Groups. What can we do?

Try to use new parents' evenings as a way of attracting new members. Keep the profile of Family Groups active in the school community and on occasion place a flyer on the school noticeboard or in book bags advertising Family Group activities that might appeal to parents and children. Advent, Christmas and New Year events/parties have typically worked very well as a way of attracting new members. However, the best source of recruitment is always personal recommendation. So look within your existing groups for families connected with the parish school who could invite new members to come along.



Can we celebrate Family Group members' birthdays and special events?

Of course! This is a lovely idea. In one of our Family Group parishes there is a lady who makes birthday cards, so her group has a list of children's birthdays and wedding anniversaries and everyone enjoys receiving cards on their special day from the group. If and how you do this is something for the group to decide.

Do you have to pay money to be part of a Family Group i.e. a membership fee?

The group will need to decide how the cost of refreshments will be met. Some groups have a kitty for tea and coffee and others volunteer to bring donations on the day. Some groups supply the tea/coffee and cakes after Sunday Mass and use any donations to offset the cost of refreshments. One Family Group raises funds from supplying refreshments after Sunday Mass to cover the cost of printing a postcard for each member of the parish which lists the Family Group's events for the year. In another group parents are asked to donate sufficient postage stamps to enable their card maker to post out the cards to family members. It really is for the group to decide.

How will the group communicate with each other in between meetings?

It is usual for all the group members to be involved in an initial planning meeting and then for a newsletter, containing all the dates for the coming year, to be circulated. It is up to the group to decide how best to communicate. Some prefer to use email and others prefer telephone/text contact. You may need to use a combination of both depending on your group members. It's your group so you will need to decide what works best for you all.

Which logo should we use on our literature?

The Family Group Movement (England and Wales) logo has been designed by the Steering Group to create a common identity for all Family Groups in England and Wales. You are invited to use this in conjunction with your own parish or any other logo you decide to develop to signify being part of the wider Family Group family.

How can we get involved with the Family Group Movement nationally?

Family Groups are a grass-roots parish movement. The Steering Group is comprised of lay parish Coordinators and group Leaders from Family Group parishes across England and Wales, who are supported by a Chaplain (who is the Parish Priest of a Family Group Parish) and diocesan Marriage and Family Life Coordinators. The Family Group Movement also enjoys the patronage of the Rt Rev Peter Doyle, Bishop of Northampton. If you would like to get involved and support the



development of Family Groups in other parishes, please let the Steering Group know. You can become part of the buddy team; consider representing your diocese on the Steering Group or simply keep abreast of national developments or initiatives via email.



THE FORMATION OF FAMILY GROUPS (8)

This is a very important stage in the development of your Family Groups and needs both time and careful consideration. Ideally the person leading the formation of groups should ask all those involved to pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance and it is also beneficial if the Parish Priest is invited to say a short prayer before you get started. You will need to have access to a large table and use of a lap top and printer for this exercise.

A Process for the Formation of Groups

From experience the following process is a useful one to follow:-

Carefully prepare your batch of completed interest forms as follows:

- Count the number of forms to determine the approximate number of groups that will be formed. It is best to divide the number of forms by ten to allow for extras to be added. For example, 60 forms = 6 to 7 groups, 70 forms = 7 to 8 groups.
- If some Leaders have already been chosen, put these forms out first.
- Sort the forms into piles based on the age grouping of the adults. Place the forms with children on the top.

You should end up with six piles in the following age ranges:

25 or under

26-35

36-45

46-55

56-65

65 plus

Starting with the '25 or under' pile work through the age groups laying the forms out in groups. At this stage focus on sorting the forms with children on them to ensure that there are children of similar age and the same gender in each group. If possible, make sure that there are at least four to five families with children in each group. Keep doing this with each age range until all of the forms with children have been sorted.



Note: you will find that some people fill in the names of older children who may not live at home or will probably not be involved in the Family Group. The 'Family Group Member Information Form' has been designed to avoid this but it's worth bearing in mind.

- Next sort the forms without children, adding them to the groups with children by placing a few from each age group into a group. Keep the number of forms in each group to a maximum of ten - this will allow additional forms to be added to the groups before the set-up day. At this point do not concern yourself with the identity of those you are allocating to each group.

Note: At this stage you may find you have a number of forms in the older age groups that have not been allocated to a group. This is where you need to decide whether or not it would work in your parish to form a group of more mature people, without children.

- Once this process is completed, ask the Parish Priest look over the forms and your proposed groups and, on his advice, move any forms where, for example, a personality clash could be avoided or where an elderly person has been placed in a group with children when they have indicated that they would prefer not to be.
- If Group Leaders have not already been chosen or you need more Leaders than you already have, consult with the Parish Priest to identify additional potential Group Leaders. It is good practice in the early sifting stage to use two coloured markers to mark forms with one colour for couples who would make good Leaders and other for couples who would provide good **support** to Leaders (to act as Deputies). If a Parish Coordinator has not yet been appointed, now is also the time to be looking for that couple as well. At this stage mark forms purely on the basis of Leadership suitability, not group formation – for this reason you may end up with a number of Leaders in one group and none in others.
- At this next stage you will need to move the Leader couple forms between groups to ensure that you have at least one **Leader** and one Deputy couple in each group and, as far as possible, keeping the balance of children and single adults in the group.
- The forms should then be placed into group piles with the Leader couple forms on top. In preparation for the set up day, someone will need to type the names of all the group members onto a spreadsheet and create a Word document which lists the members of each group (one group per page) with the Leader couple at the top. The forms should then be batched up with the list on top and put in wallet folders ready to distribute to group Leaders.



- It is good practice for the Parish Priest to then contact all potential Coordinators, Leaders and Deputies and ask them personally to undertake the proposed roles within Family Groups.
- A Leadership 'get together' will need to be organized quickly following the allocation of group members so that the team can move forward and start to set up their initial group meeting.

Note: A sample welcome letter from the group Leaders to group members is included in the Tool kit.

Group Formation Tips:

- Avoid placing existing cliques into the same groups
- Avoid placing people into groups based on geographical boundaries
- You may need to form groups without children. Try to identify older people that **do** want to be in a group with children and make sure that they are placed in a group with children.
- Some groups may have members who do not have transport and ideally they should be placed in a group where other members are able to offer them transport to group meetings.



TIMETABLE FOR SETTING UP FAMILY GROUPS (9)

When establishing Family Groups in your parish, it is essential to do so in a coordinated way. The following table provides an outline guide to the steps you may wish to take to successfully launch Family Groups. Remember to consult with your Parish Priest and Parish Safeguarding Representative at the planning stages to ensure that all requisite DBS checks are completed within appropriate timescales for the launch of your Family Groups.

TIMING	ACTIVITY	TIPS
2-3 <u>months</u> before launch	Engagement from/with Parish Priest and key parish Leaders	
2-3 <u>weeks</u> before launch	Initial presentation/talks to congregation at Masses. Aim: to create interest and discussion in parish. Registration forms available for completion and return to Parish Priest	Customise registration forms with parish logo/name etc.
2 weeks before launch	Identify potential Family Group Leaders and Deputies	Select a good mix from across the parish community to include those not ordinarily engaged in parish activities (i.e. not necessarily the 'usual suspects') Leaders/deputies can be couples or singles and any age
1 week before launch	Parish Priest to host social event for potential Leaders/deputies. Leaders and Deputies selected.	This provides an opportunity for all to check suitability for role, and manage expectations.
LAUNCH WEEKEND	Launch events at every Mass with Family Group	Ideally, Family Group speakers will be available



	<p>promotional talk during each Mass.</p> <p>Registration forms completed and collected.</p>	<p>after Mass (e.g. at the usual post-Mass tea/coffee) to engage all and promote Family Groups.</p>
<p>Launch weekend, or within a week</p>	<p>Leaders and Deputies distribute registration forms between the groups to get an even spread of members</p> <p>Leaders send a welcome letter (see draft) to group members with contact details and time/date of first meeting.</p>	<p>If the parish wishes to have specific groups (e.g. for retired people) then the allocation should take account of this.</p>
<p>Within 1-2 weeks of launch</p>	<p>First meeting: ice-breaker event</p>	<p>Agree when the next meeting will take place</p>
<p>4 weeks after first group meeting</p>	<p>Second meeting: to build group relations.</p> <p>Each Family Groups should plan to hold a House Mass annually</p>	<p>Use the meeting to plan monthly events for the next 6 – 12 months.</p> <p>Beware of school calendar dates!</p> <p>Simple and effective: a Mass to take the parish into the community</p>
<p>Every 3 months after launch</p>	<p>Parish Priest/Coordinator/Leaders meetings</p>	<p>To review progress and take stock of developments.</p> <p>Discuss and agree transfers between groups to avoid losing members in the event of any difficulties arising (clashes of personality; clashes of group events with other commitments, etc.)</p>



6 months after launch	Review of Family Group progress	Assess the development of Family Groups in parish and look at whether additional support/merging is necessary to maintain momentum
12 months after launch	Review of first (and subsequent) years growth of Family Groups	<p>Additional parish activity to promote Family Groups for those who may not have initially engaged, or dropped out</p> <p>Ensure Family Groups are visible in the parish and are not a 'closed' group and constantly available to all to join</p>



THE FAMILY GROUP'S FIRST PLANNING MEETING (10)

At this stage your Leaders will have already sent an introductory letter to the group members inviting them to come to your first meeting (and to bring their diaries with them). In advance of the meeting don't forget the tea and coffee and a few biscuits - asking the group to bring something along to add to a shared table is also a nice way to start. If you have children in the group, make sure you have few colouring activities planned to help keep them occupied. Aim to keep the meeting in the region of 1 to 1.5 hours and no longer: too long and people won't come or will quickly lose interest.

Leaders should aim to arrive early and set up so that you are ready to welcome people as they arrive.

- 1) Have a sign-in/contact sheet ready at the first meeting (there is a Family Group Meeting Contact Form contained in the Tool kit) and ask people to provide email and telephone contact details. Ask the group for agreement that this list is circulated amongst all group members. If you can get a volunteer in the group to type up and circulate the list it will start to build the idea of sharing the workload across the group.
- 2) Before everyone arrives, the Leader team could list the remaining months of the year on a large sheet of paper, or white board, ready for the group to start planning its activities. Your planning could take you to the end of the year or perhaps cover the next 6 months. Experience shows that the earlier you get the dates for the year in the calendar the better chance you will have of people being able to attend. Groups often find it beneficial to have a break during the summer holidays and also find it impractical to arrange anything during the Christmas break. However, a simple walk in the park followed by a drink and a piece of Christmas cake usually fits in well between Christmas and New Year. The group will decide what works best for them.
- 3) Have labels ready so that as people arrive they can create a name tag. This helps the group to start building relationships by using each other's first names from the outset. Offer tea and coffee on arrival and when everyone is settled invite each person to introduce themselves in turn, briefly telling their 'story' (e.g.: where they've come from, how long they've been in the parish, years married, number of children etc. and why they decided to join a Family Group.) The Leaders could start the ball rolling and set a light tone. Humour is allowed!
- 4) Minutes are not required, but it is a good idea to ask someone in the group to make a note of dates and venues agreed for future gatherings - and who is going to be responsible for organising each event, so that a list can be made for circulation to the members.



- 5) Leaders do not organise all the activities. Families can be asked to volunteer to take responsibility for organising the gatherings in turn. If no one volunteers you can always ask: "Would you like to organise it, x?" This works quite well, particularly if x suggested the activity or outing. Two solo parents or two families might like to team together to organise something. It is not a rule that everyone must organise a function, so don't pressurise anyone who isn't confident about taking the lead.
- 6) **All gatherings should be kept either free or low cost.** Family Groups quite often alternate free events (shared suppers, games nights, walks etc.) with those that have a small cost implication to minimise the financial strain on families' purses. In all cases, it is best to gear any activity involving money to the lowest common denominator so that nobody misses out because they can't afford to participate.
- 7) It is recommended that the first gathering is for whole families and should take place as soon as possible after the parish launch. This could simply be a walk in the park with coffee and cakes afterwards. It's a starting point for the group and a chance to get people talking. Doing something active also keeps the conversation flowing. The second gathering could be for adults only: a meal out at a local restaurant is always a nice way for the group to gel and to start to enjoy each other's company. It is a good idea to alternate family/adult functions. Remember that right from the start you may never find a date that will suit everyone, so you just have to settle on something and agree a preferred day – usually a Saturday or Sunday afternoon.
- 8) Most groups like to have an annual House Mass if their Parish Priest is willing to be the celebrant. From experience this is a lovely occasion where the whole group comes together to worship as a family. Make sure that any non-Catholic members are warmly invited and included also. (There is a link to a short video of a House Mass in St Bernadette's parish on the Family Group Movement page of www.catholicfamily.org.uk) A group weekend away is also strongly recommended during the first 12 months. This is one of the best ways of helping the group to bond and there are many inexpensive self-catering venues in England and Wales, which keep the costs to a minimum. Youth Hostels also provide good inexpensive accommodation and usually have a room for group activities.
- 9) A Christmas celebration is always a special time for the Family Group and it works well if you can organise a shared table gathering to take place before a special service e.g. Christingle, which allows the members to go to church together and worship as a family. One idea that has worked well in planning a Christmas celebration is to ask each family to bring along a tree decoration wrapped up with a special message from their family. Each family unit then takes one wrapped decoration home and opens it on Christmas day to hang on their tree.



- 10) A late January function to get the New Year going usually works very well, followed perhaps by a February planning meeting to get dates in the diary for the coming year. Your group might also like to begin a 'family' photo album/record of events. One way to do this might be by asking members to take it in turn to write-up the functions. These can also be shared with other Family Groups on the Family Group Movement's dedicated blog **familygroupsenglandwales.blogspot.co.uk** which helps parishes to stay in touch and share ideas and inspiration. To contribute something pictures or stories to the blog please email: hannah.moruzzi@cbcew.org.uk
- 11) Remember that there are no set rules: it is for the group to decide what works best for them.
- 12) **Never cancel a family group meeting even if you think the numbers will be small.** Keep going, have faith, and your group will grow and develop. PFGM founder Fr Peter McGrath's motto is a good one to follow, '*Those that are meant to be there, will be there.*' Every gathering will be special whether there are 50 people or 5 present.



COMMISSIONING OF FAMILY GROUP LEADERS (11)

It is suggested that the commissioning of Family Group Leaders takes place during Mass following the Prayer after Communion and any parish notices. This will enable the parish community to join in and bear witness to the commissioning. The Leaders will first be invited to take up a position around the Sanctuary:

Priest: May the God of love and peace be with you all

Leaders: And with your spirit

Priest: The needs of the Church are many and varied, but God shows His goodness by sending Leaders to care for the many communities that make up the Church.

Today we ask God to bless our brothers and sisters who have declared their willingness to serve as Leaders in the Family Groups of (*name of Parish*).

Lord God, in your loving kindness, you sent your Son to be our shepherd and guide. Continue to send workers into your vineyard to sustain and lead your people.

Bless these Leaders. Let your Spirit uphold them always as they graciously accept their responsibilities among the Family Groups of this parish. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen

All: Amen



FAMILY GROUP MEMBER RENEWAL OF COMMITMENT (12)

After Family Groups have been operational for some time in a parish the Parish Priest may wish to undertake a renewal of commitment with the groups during Mass so that the parish community can bear witness to the renewal. It is suggested that this takes place after the Homily:

Priest: Family Group Members.....You have sought to model your lives and relationships on the life of Christ. In the Spirit of Jesus, you minister to one another and seek to serve others in the parish. I ask you now to (re)commit yourselves to the beliefs and vision of the Family Group Movement. Will you care for one another in the spirit of Christ's love and friendship?

Family Group Member: I will

Priest: Will you reach out to the forgotten and broken members of the community and give them respect and love?

Family Group Member: I will

Priest: Will you seek to provide an example of the goodness of Christian life to the young people in your groups?

Family Group Member: I will

Priest: Will you support one another in your life as Christians?

Family Group Member: I will

Priest: Will you contribute your time and talents to the building of the parish community?

Family Group Member: I will

Priest: May God, who has begun this good work in you, bring it to completion in the power of the Holy Spirit. We ask this through Christ our Lord.....Amen.

All: Amen



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE (13)

As your Family Groups mature and settle, as a Leader team, you will need to think about how best to keep the Family Group flame alive and glowing. To nourish and continue to refresh the membership of your Family Groups you should, at least annually, think about how to attract new members. Some ideas are set out below:

Targeting the School Community

A good way of raising the profile of Family Groups is via your parish school(s) newsletters. Some Family Groups run drop-in events or have established a tradition for hosting popular seasonal community events (e.g. Christmas and New Year parties) which attract families from the local schools who may not attend church, as well as Family Group members. Adverts need to make it clear that the event is open to all; otherwise people may think that it is an event for regular church-goers or Family Group members only.

One parish has had particular success in targeting the parents at its local school through presentations at 'new intake' evenings, and by inviting the parents to join a Family Group by personal invitation (a personalised letter is handed out to each family on the same night). This has proved to be a good source of recruitment for new members. Another parish was able to set up a new Family Group solely by targeting the Reception intake at its local primary school and this helped new parents to make new friends at the school and become involved with the wider parish family.

Most importantly, don't give up! Keep trying and keep the spirit moving with a 'little and often' approach

Youth Family Group (for children of Family Group Members)

In one parish where Family Groups were already well established the Coordinators wanted to offer something unique and special to the teenagers who attended Family Groups with their parents - so they trialled a Youth Group section. This group had its own Leaders and met independently of the parent group every 6 weeks. The teenagers still came to the general Family Group meetings with their families but also organised their own social events which included bowling, cinema trips, pamper and curry nights. In keeping with Family Groups' ethos the events were always low cost and inclusive.

The Youth Group really took off and was sustained for over 18 months. It worked because the group formed a great bond, developed its own identity and became very active in and around the parish. Memorably the Youth Group contributed a great deal to Masses during Easter and Advent and took responsibility for dressing the



Christmas tree in the church. When the group moved on (either to work or further study) the whole parish celebrated their success and committed to stay in touch. It was particularly rewarding when a short time later, Fr Peter McGrath, the founder of the PFGM, contacted the Parish Coordinators to tell them about a young woman from Maine, USA, who was on a one year placement at a university in Lancaster and had met a member of the parish's youth Family Group at the college. The Family Group connection created an immediate bond between the two young people which extended to their families, and strong and enduring friendships were made.



FAMILY GROUP TOP TIPS (14)

Here are some helpful tips to make setting up and running Family Groups a bit easier:

DO:

- Plan events well in advance and make sure everyone has the dates in their diary
- Keep events 'low cost' so that everyone can join in
- Involve the whole group, including the children, in planning events
- Get group members to take the lead for organising events in rotation
- Organise monthly events for your group, no matter how many can/can't make it
- Plan a House Mass once a year
- Try to plan a weekend away (in a youth hostel, camping, etc.) Time and space away in different surrounding makes such a positive difference
- Keep in regular contact (phone, text, etc.) with group members
- Contact group members who have not been an event for a while – they may have clashing commitments
- Talk to the parish co-ordinators or fellow leaders/deputies if problems arise
- Consider offering members who lose interest or drop-out, for whatever reason, a transfer to another group (with coordinator agreement)

DON'T:

- Allow the cost of events to deter members from joining in
- Be worried if fewer people attend events than planned – seek feedback from members and build on it next time
- Cancel meetings/events, except in extreme circumstances
- Repeat events for the sake of it – challenge the group to come up with new ideas to keep the interest of the whole group
- Keep problems to yourself – share with coordinators, leaders and/or deputies
- Let members drift off the radar: keep in touch without harassing them!
- Let take any negativity from the group personally – get a positive solution from them as a whole
- Let a clique or sub-groups develop – the group belongs to everyone
- Lose sight of the real purpose of Family Groups: bringing a sense of community to the parish, and a sense of parish to the community.
- Give up!



FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT



RESOURCES

Please feel free to adapt any of the resources contained in this section for use in your parish.

For enquiries about Family Group resources and requests for any additional sample materials please contact the Steering Group at familygroups2015@gmail.com

FAMILY GROUP MEMBER INFORMATION FORM

[Parish Name]

[Parish Logo]

Family name					
First names	Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms				
	Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms				
Please circle age group	20-30	30-45	45-64	65 +	
Address					
Email					
Telephone	Home				
	Mobile				
<u>Family details (children and dependants who will be participating in the Family Group)</u>					
Name			Age	Boy/Girl	
<u>Other Relevant Information (e.g special requests)</u>					

PLEASE HAND TO [**WHEN COMPLETED**

FAMILY GROUP MEETING CONTACT SHEET

[illegible]

Respecting Confidences

As a Leader, you may be entrusted with information that is not for public consumption. Even the fact that a person is a single parent may be something that she or he may want to talk about when they feel ready. Respect all confidences that are given to you and make sure that you are not perceived as prying when someone is not willing to give much information about themselves.

Welcoming New Members

As Leaders, you need to make a special effort to welcome new members into your group and to make them feel at home. Remember how it feels to come into a group where everyone already seems to know each other. Make sure all your members realise this so that they do not become complacent, form cliques or relate only to the friends they already have in the group. This could easily happen if people are having such a good time together that they forget how those that are left out might feel.

Benefits of Being a Leader

As a Leader, you are offered the unique opportunity to put your faith into action in a quiet, practical, everyday way. You will improve your communication skills by working with different kinds of people. Your own family will see, by your example, what it's like to reach out beyond your own family and help create a community in which people know that others genuinely care about them. At all levels of the Family Group Movement the emphasis is on love and support. There can be no doubt that the rewards of this ministry bring the Gospel alive as we love one another as brothers and sisters in Chris. It must surely be one of the most exciting and fulfilling ministries in the church.



What does Leadership of a Family Group involve?

The role of a Leader is to facilitate the smooth running of the group. Good Leaders are vital to the growth of a Family Group. They help the different members to get to know one another and encourage them to use their own unique gifts for the development of the group. Leaders need to be aware and sensitive to people's needs and it is important for them to help everyone feel welcome and integral to the group. Leaders are in many ways the servants of the Group: they are there to make sure it develops without dominating or seeking to be in a position of control.

Christian Ministry

Leaders are *not* chosen for their administrative skills or their cleverness. They are chosen because they have shown that they have the interests of the community at heart. They are willing to do something to help others in the parish because they genuinely wish to put their Christian faith into practice. Even if they are quiet, shy people, Leaders who want to serve are always more valuable than "capable" people who are too bound up in their own lives and goals.

Simplicity

A group that is ticking along, with everyone becoming involved and sharing the responsibility for organizing functions, allows the Leaders to relax and enjoy being part of the group. The more the members become involved with the organization and decision-making processes in the group, the more they will feel that it is *their* group too. Family Group Leadership can best be seen as a responsibility for *setting the wheels in motion*. And it shouldn't be seen as a huge burden. Most of us have enough responsibilities without feeling that we bear the responsibility for 10 to 12 other families too. The beauty of Family Groups lies in their simplicity and absence of formal structures. So look at yourself as a catalyst for friendships, not the Prime Minister of a small nation state.

Involvement of the entire Group

Groups are advised to meet and plan their activities at least six months ahead. Many groups start the year with a planning meeting in early February and plan through to December. After this meeting it is a good idea to send a list of dates and all activities to each family.

It helps to encourage greater involvement if different families are asked to organise an activity. In the early stages of the group some may feel too shy to do this and it is often a good idea for two families to work together to organise a function. Those who feel uncomfortable taking the lead should not be pressurized to do so. Leaders need to ensure that suggested functions allow the entire group to participate. Low- to no-cost activities are encouraged. There is no substitute for a simple meal shared with friends. Encourage the family doing the organising to contact all the other members before the function to re-confirm the date, time, place etc.

Caring by Example

The best way to foster the kind of caring that needs to be developed in the group is through your own example. Remember that this is a new experience for most people. Being involved and looking after people that are not members your natural family is unusual in our society. Make sure that you talk to everyone and that everybody is made to feel welcome. Circumstances and other commitments may prevent a family from coming to gatherings for several months, and when they do return they may feel that they no longer belong. Absences like these are an opportunity to ask other members to keep in touch with families, perhaps passing on any news, keeping in contact and generally keeping the lines of communication open. In a group there will be those who are quiet and shy and others who are louder and more dominant. You will need to ensure that the quieter members' voices are heard and that their needs are not overlooked. It takes time to get to know people and to build genuine friendships and support structures, but once this occurs, the love and support will follow on naturally.

Celebrating Diversity



Although there is great satisfaction in being a Leader, there can also be times of pain, frustration and disappointment. It doesn't take long in the development of a group before members start to recognise that there are differences in the way that they and other Family Group members think, feel, act and relate. The key to good

Leadership is not to take any negativity from or in the group personally. Encourage people to accept these differences and to think of them as a source of enrichment for the group. Family Groups provide one of the best learning grounds for living our Gospel values.

Support for Leaders

As Leaders are continually supporting others, their support needs also need to be met. One of the most effective means of support is through the Leaders' Group. Leader support is found through attendance at regular Leaders' meetings which will also be attended by your Coordinators and ideally, the Parish Priest. At Leaders' meetings, you can share the successes and challenges you have encountered and seek advice from fellow Leaders and the Coordinators. You will gain a great deal from other people's ideas and experiences as they too will gain from yours. As Family Groups develop in your Parish community, these systems of mutual support, encouragement and strength will naturally grow too.



A Family Group is:

A Family: Somewhere we can share laughter and tears, ups and downs, food and fun through thick and thin

Where everybody is welcome: inclusive and accepting, respecting differences: a family for all

A Movement: God's love, in action

About People and the Community: building a sense of parish in the community; community in the parish

For more information please contact:



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WELCOME TO YOUR FAMILY GROUP

This is quite a remarkable adventure

On which you have embarked. It is exciting because of all the heartening and supportive relationships that will grow in your Family Group. At the same time it can be a little frightening, because you are starting out on a journey with people who, at this stage, are still strangers to you. In either case you will find the rewards of joining a Family Group very worthwhile.

As you know, there is a leader couple of your Group. They are SERVANTS to the Group and are there to assist all members to get to know one another, to be aware of any needs in the group and know what is happening within the Group. They also keep in contact with the other leaders and the co-ordinators in the parish. Their job as leaders is most definitely NOT to be the organisers of all that happens. The adults in the group share the workload in the practical matters of your Family Group life.

One of the best ways you can support your leaders and each other is by regular attendance at the various gatherings that your fellow-members have arranged. It's great for bonding and morale when there is a good turn-out!

Some Considerations:

- ❖ **Be sensitive to/grateful for differences in personality**
These differences will sometimes frustrate you, but they will also provide great potential for the enrichment of the group.
- ❖ **It is the responsibility of the Group**
Get the whole group involved in planning events and take it in turns to lead the organization of each monthly activity.
- ❖ **Help to organise a "Family Group Calendar"**
This will ensure that important dates, birthdays and anniversaries can be recognised and perhaps celebrated.
- ❖ **Set up a Family Group Kitty**
This will provide for such items as flowers for sick members or little gifts for very special occasions such as the birth of a new little member etc.
- ❖ **Plan events well in advance & make sure everyone has the dates in their diaries**
Once they are in the calendar go ahead with monthly events no matter how many can/can't make it
- ❖ **The golden rules are "keep it simple" and "don't give up"**

Some Suggested Family Group Activities:

Country walk (geared to the youngest and oldest)
Picnic & rounders in the park
Games night
House Mass
Weekend away (at least once per year)
Shared lunch or supper
Car rally/scavenger hunt
Family Group anniversary Mass
Dancing and singing activity
Quiz night
Barbecue
Advent and Easter themed event
Christmas or New Year party
Simple catch up evening with supper

Remember

All functions should be no cost or low cost - make sure nobody misses out because they can't afford to take part. The group belongs to everyone. Don't lose sight of the purpose of Family Groups - building a sense of the parish in the community and a sense of community in the parish.

For more information please contact your Group Leaders on:

Dear [Family Group Member]

Following on from the success of the launch of Family Groups at St Bernadette's this weekend we thought we would make contact with everyone as soon as possible.

Fr Paul asked Steve and me, along with Sue and Phil Taylor, to coordinate a Family Group within St Bernadette's Parish. We met before the gathering on Sunday afternoon and formed a group: 24 of our group were there that afternoon! It was lovely to meet people and start to get to know them. I talked to people I had seen, sat next to and exchanged the sign of peace with but hadn't spoken to before (now I even know some of your names – Maureen, Julie, Luciana, Mike and Maggie to name a few). The idea is very much to form groups within the parish to socialise and ultimately offer friendship and support to each other. Neither Steve nor I are local, (I am from Wolverhampton and Steve is from the North East), so we have left behind our extended families and school friends. We have lived in Bury for 16 years and been to mass at St Bernadette's but really we know very few people there. I hope that is now about to change!

James and Rachel (our little or not so little darlings 14, 12) even quite enjoyed themselves. Thank you Joyce and Winston for bringing little Jeremy as Rachel is very fond of babies and more than willing to play with "little people". James renewed acquaintances with friends he had made when he helped out at Beavers last year. So enough about us: what is next?

Saturday 20th October

Lourdes Room 3.30 – 5.30

We will take time to get to know each other, with a shared table (Jacob's Join) and start to decide how we will take our group forward.

Please could people bring food or drinks to contribute? I will bring paper plates, plastic cups and serviettes and yes, Veronica I will bring those colourful creamy bites! I will be in touch again next week and hope many of our "new" friends will be able to be there. Don't worry if you can't make that date as I doubt we will be able to get everyone there all the time! You will always be welcome whenever you can come. Looking forward to seeing you on the 20th!

Mary, Steve, James and Rachel xxx

10 Oct 2007

Dear [Family Group Member]

ST. BERNADETTE'S FAMILY GROUP

Like you, we signed up to be part of the Family Group feeling excited but apprehensive, a little unsure and not knowing what to expect! Then Father Chris phoned asking us to take a lead in coordinating a group together with Louise and Anthony McGuinness, which we were delighted to accept. So welcome you to your Family Group.

Vince met a number of you during the meeting on Sunday but we thought we would briefly introduce ourselves again. We are the Joyce family: Chris, Vince and our two children, Danielle (15 and a half) and Lydia (9). We've been part of St. Bernadette's community for over 18 years and are 'regulars' at Saturday night Mass. When we first met, Chris lived in Whitefield and Vince in Wigan. Later, after deciding to get married we agreed to look for a home in a convenient location between our families. In the end, Vince 'compromised' and we set up home in Whitefield!

Over the years, we have come to recognise some familiar faces, often exchanging a friendly nod or smile. However, we readily admit to not knowing the names of the lady who sits behind us or the family sitting in the bench to our left! The new Family Group is a great opportunity for us all to make new friends and extend our parish social network. We look forward to meeting and getting to know you all soon.

The group will succeed if we all actively participate, share and contribute, pulling together as a family. We do hope that you will feel able to volunteer for a job every now and then, and most importantly come along to our gatherings.

What will this involve? Well, a number of people have asked us what will happen at each meeting. At the moment we honestly don't know, but at the first meeting we will watch the short DVD from the Family Group Movement as this tells us more about the purpose of a Family Group. We can then discuss what this means for us and get on with planning our activities over the next twelve months, working on the basis of one per month. As a start, we have put together some ideas (enclosed) for you to think about and discuss when we meet. Now we don't have the monopoly on good ideas, so we'll be looking to you to throw in your suggestions to find the best fit for the group that involves everyone.

It was great to meet some of you at the 'meet and greet' last Sunday afternoon. We realise that it was very short notice and not everyone could alter their commitments to come along. Whilst there, we took the opportunity to arrange our **first Family Group meeting (for everyone) on Sunday 4 November at 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. in the Lourdes Room at St. Bernadette's.**

Please bring your diaries with you. [For those who have not been in the Lourdes Room before it is the extension building at the side of the church.] It would be nice if we could share coffee/tea and cakes, so we would be pleased if you could bring some cakes and biscuits to add to our shared table. We will bring all the drinks and paper plates. We will also think of activities to interest our younger members.

Looking ahead, and being very conscious that Christmas is looming large, we thought that it would be fun to have a 'Secret Santa' (see the enclosed list of suggested activities for details) and a shared buffet for our Christmas meeting. We also thought it would be a nice idea to book the **Lourdes Room again for 23 December (1:30 – 3:30)** where we could have our party, and those who want to can go to the **Christingle service at 4:00**. If you haven't been before this is a lovely short service, in which you take your crib or nativity statue to the altar for a blessing from Father Chris. We would like everyone to come to the party even if you cannot go to the service. We hope you like this idea, though again we can discuss it on 4 November.

Well that's all for now. We're really looking forward to meeting you all on **4 November**.

Kind regards

Chris & Vincent
Louise & Anthony

PS: If you have time over the next few weeks please do come and say hello in church on Saturday night. You will find us in 'our bench' (!) roughly three pews from the front on the right-hand side. Or feel free to give us a ring [] or drop us an e-mail [].

These are just a few of our ideas to get our discussion rolling. Please bring yours to the meeting!

Family Group Newsletter

What a great November afternoon we had for our first meeting. It was lovely to see so many of you and get to know you. I think we will need to keep name badges going for a few meetings but we've made a good start and a number of you are recognising family group members in Mass and ASDA when doing your shopping which is great!

A few families had commitments this time and couldn't make the meeting so we hope to see the Speakman, Holt, Norris, Moore and Kumbirienda families when we meet next on 23rd December.

At the meeting we agreed the following:

- That we would end our meeting with a prayer or sometimes a song possibly geared towards the younger group members
- That we would communicate by email in between meetings when necessary
- That we would send the younger members of our group a birthday card (up to the age of 18)
- The costs of attending the group would be minimal.
- That everyone would help to organise a family event over the course of the year so that it is not left to a few people to do the organising.
- That we would look at the possibility of putting something on the Parish website about our group
- That once the notice board is set up in Church we can also use this as a means of communication.

Christmas Party 23rd December 1:30-3:30 in the Lourdes Room
followed by the Christingle Service at 4pm if you wish.

Don't forget

- your family Christmas card
- your 'Secret Santa' present
- your donation for the party table



We are looking for volunteers to sort out some Christmas music and song sheets for a sing a long. Any offers?

If you missed the first meeting it is not too late to join in the Secret Santa or bring something for the shared table. Ring Chris and Vince to discuss further on

Fancy a cuppa?



It was nice to have a cuppa at our meeting. How about each family taking a turn to bring the milk and make the drinks, we will provide the tea and coffee etc? Perhaps a different family could wash up afterwards. As we have at least 12 families in our group it's a once a year job!

Do we have any volunteers for the drinks at the Christmas meeting or the washing up? Let Chris or Louise know

Job Roles

- Louise M agreed to act as treasurer for the group
- Sue Q will take responsibility for making and sending cards to the younger members of the group

Dates for 2008

We agreed the following activities, with details to be confirmed:

Dec- Christmas Party

Jan - Joint event with all family groups plus Father Peter. Date and details to be confirmed.

February - Italian Afternoon

(Social Centre)

Come wearing red, white and green. Each family sign up for donations towards the food, bring a bottle of wine to share. Suggestions include spaghetti Bolognese, lasagne, garlic bread and a pudding. Bernard and Winifred you have strong musical talents, how about organising the background music whilst we eat and something to sing along to? Let us know if you can.

Any volunteers to cook the spaghetti and manage the kitchen? Surely we must have some budding Nigellas or Jamies out there.....

www.theodora.com/flags

March - House Mass at Jo and Tim's.

House Mass during Lent. Date to be confirmed (Jo and Tim - could you liaise with Fr Chris and his diary to set a date please?)

April - family walk

Walk up Holcombe Hill with a packed lunch?

Liz and Chris we think you suggested this, would you lead this please?

May - meal out

Chinese meal/lunch

Suggestions Wah-Ying (Bury, near Wilkinsons)

Sunday lunch £8.00 adult, £5.50 children or do we want an evening/adults option?

June - Barbeque

Barbeque/picnic/ get together with all the family groups. We will discuss this with other group leaders.

July - Car Rally

Car rally/treasure hunt. This was a good suggestion. Any volunteers to lead?

£££ - Thank you for the £1 donations we are able to give Sue £10.50 for the birthday cards and postage. We had a proposal that we pay 50p per meeting each couple (or family up to 3 members) and £1 per family (4 or more members) - what do you think?

And finally... We need YOUR vote!

We agreed unanimously that we wanted to choose a special name for our group to give us our own unique identity. Catherine and Nathan kindly volunteered to do some research based on the ideas we discussed. Here are the suggestions to consider.....

Swahili:

Rafiki - Friend
Karibu - Welcome
Kipande/Sehemu - Share
Pamoja - Together
Kabisa - Altogether
Habari - News
Msaada - Support

African:

Jambo - Hello

Latin:

<i>'In Toto'</i>	Altogether/as a whole
<i>'Bona Fide'</i>	In good faith
<i>'Aeternus'</i>	Everlasting/eternal
<i>'Acceptus'</i>	Welcome
<i>'Unus'</i>	One
<i>'Excelsior'</i>	Ever upward/onward
<i>'Perpetua'</i>	Everlasting
<i>'Gens Primum'</i>	Family first

Please discuss with your family and decide on your two favourites. One vote per family for a first and second

choice. Please let us know your vote by email or telephone by Saturday 24th November.

In the event of a tie, we will draw up a final list and revote, so check out your mail inbox!

As a final point, don't forget your family group needs you and we look forward to many more fruitful gatherings where we can enjoy each others company over the coming months.

Chris and Vince, Louise and Anthony



Rafiki Family Group Newsletter May

Dear All

We hope that you are having a great bank holiday weekend. We had a fantastic time at Waddow Hall, great company, excellent food (what time is the next meal...groan groan) and plenty of fun. Thank you to people who organised activities for us and to everyone for making it a great success.

I am sure you are all awaiting an update on Cara M. For those of you who don't know Liz and Cara ended up in hospital overnight, Cara is now sporting a broken leg and is in plaster. Today she is much better and is glad to be home. We have passed on all your good wishes and prayers to Liz and Chris.

We were sorry the P... family had to pull out at the last minute and we hope that home circumstances are improving now.

Please note no further charge re: the extra activities we used at Waddow- Chris fixed it!

April House Mass

Thank you to Susan and Peter for opening up their home to us. Our house Mass was a lovely spiritual occasion. We will be looking for another venue next year.

Thanks also to Joanne for booking the ladies' meal and to Ian for organising the men's night out- a good time was had by all.

Saturday 13th June – Barbecue

Liz and Chris have kindly offered to host a barbecue for us.

Meet at (Address)..... 1.00pm onwards.

We are charging £2.00 per head for meat, buns, burgers etc. We have asked each family to contribute a salad, dessert or drinks. Chris J has the list. We need numbers and money in advance to Liz please.

It is the birthday of HRH and as Liz is hosting the barbecue should we wear red, white and blue? Tiara's or hats welcome also!

Liz and Chris have extended the invitation to Fr Chris also; we have passed this on but not sure if he will be available.

Sunday 5th July Picnic for all Family Groups

1.00pm onwards meet at the picnic area in Dunham Massey. This event will be open to all Family Groups and the whole parish, and anyone you want to bring with you. We will have our picnic then maybe few games of rounder's, football and parachute games for the young people.

We are looking for people to bring bats and balls and to coordinate a games any offers? (I have a parachute) Then maybe we will all have a walk in the grounds. Please order the good weather!

August: suggest we have a summer break and siesta!

Sunday 12th September 3-5pm

By popular request another Italian afternoon! Come wearing red, white and green, anyone want to coordinate some entertainment for us? Food list to be sorted either by email, at the barbecue or by telephoning Chris and Vince. What will you bring?

Saturday 17th October

Adults only meal out. We need someone to coordinate the booking and suggest a venue. Any preferences for a particular type of food or types of food to avoid?

I am looking for a couple who have not yet had an opportunity to coordinate an activity for the group. Any offers please, it will only involve coordinating numbers and booking the table.

November

As per earlier email from Ian T how about a family paint ball activity?

December

What do you want to do in December, we have had the same Christmas Party for the last two years, should we change it, or do the same again?

Everyone seems to like the Secret Santa, should we retain this? – do we want to keep it as an individual gift or should we change it to a family gift this time – let us know what you think.

Other matters

We need to fit in a planning meeting for 2010, get your thinking caps on; we need new ideas for activities.

We are looking to produce a telephone list so could you email up to date telephone and mobile details for all adults, we will produce a list and circulate it.

New member

We will be welcoming a new member into our group Fr Joe whom some of you will know from the Catholic Family Hols. Fr Joe is a friend of ours who, due to ill health, will be retiring soon to.... Please make him feel very welcome as he is very apprehensive about moving to this area from ... where he has been an active parish priest for many years.

And finally for now...

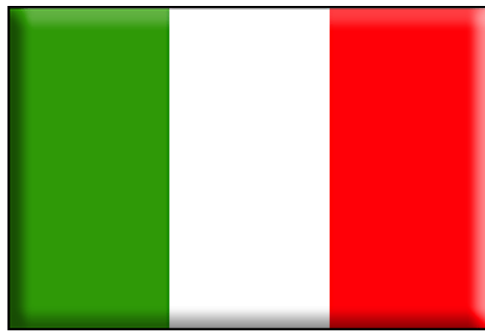
Please remember in your prayers, Cara, the P Family, Harry and Matthew who will be making their Holy Communion next month, and for Ewan and Cara who start School in September. Also Lydia, Hannah, Lydia, Laura and Matthew, who are moving on to St Monica's in September. And of course all **our Family Group members.**

Chris and Vince

Ciao Famiglia!

Italian Afternoon - Sunday 9th March
Social Centre

Catering for:
32 adults &
21 children



Arrive from
3pm.
We plan to eat
around
3-30pm ish.



Don't forget your
plate and cutlery!

Bring a bottle
of vino or
beer to share



Entertainment

Bernardo and Wyn - singalonga
Special guests all the way from Burree: Christoff and Guiseppe will
perform afta de mainacourse.

Don't forget to wear red, white and green!

Food List so far (catering for 32 adults, 21 children)

Starters

Melon slices - Fiona & Peter, Chris & Vince
Grapes on cocktail sticks plus bread sticks - Agnes
Bruschetta and Garlic bread - Joanne

Main Course

Large pan of Bolognese - Chris & Vince
Vegetarian Lasagne - Liz & Chris
Pasta Carbonara - Angie & Paul
Meat Lasagne and salad bowl - Sue & Paul
Parmesan cheese and garlic bread - Colette
Dried Spaghetti for cooking plus jar of coffee - Tim & Jo

Desserts

Chocolate Cake - Claire & Ian
Fruit salad and cream - Andy & Christine
Tiramisu - Tanya & Liam
Profiteroles and cream - Michael & Kirsty
Trifle plus packet of tea bags - Louise & Anthony
Small cakes for children - Danielle & Lydia

Other

Crusty Bread Sticks - Sue C
After Eight mints and 4 pints milk - Wyn & Bernard
After Eight mints - Angela
After Eight mints - Anthony

We already have bottles of cordial donated from another event for the children.

Also please don't forget:

Hot plates [for keeping food warm - some have already offered to bring these]
Serving spoons - appropriate to your dish/dessert

Tea towels - we could do with a few for drying up.
[Note - we have plastic bowls etc for the dessert.]

Finally, we are short of garlic bread for the numbers coming along.
Could each family bring a garlic bread, pre-cooked and wrapped in foil? We can use the pie warmer in kitchen to keep them warm.

Help on the day

We will need some help in the kitchen cooking the pasta and serving the main course.

Layout

We plan to set up two tables (as agreed by the ladies at our night out).
One will be for the adults and one for the younger members. We thought it would be a good idea if we swopped seats after the main course so that we can mingle as much as possible and get to know each other.

We will bring name badges as usual.

"Kitty money"

Louise will collect our kitty money as we only paid at our meeting in October and the pot needs topping up again.

That's all for now, so we look forward to seeing you all Sunday (and of course Friday at Jo & Tim's).

Ciao Famiglia Rafiki

Chris & Vince

Louise & Anthony

SAMPLE NOTES FROM A PARISH LEADERS' MEETING

Present: Vince J (Chair)
Fr. Chris
Denise and John M
Angela G
Mary D
Mary S
Phil T
Steph and Paul G
Peter M

Vince opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Apologies noted from Chris who had a work commitment. The Leaders' meetings are open to all Leaders and Deputies, all are welcome. Fr Chris explained that it is important that the Leader team connect informally to offer support and develop a network for information sharing.

Ceilidh – The Ceilidh was very successful. All the tickets were sold and it was a great night. Mary provided accounts from the Ceildih and the £374.00 profit made would be saved for a later date.

A new Group (no.5) has been created following discussions with the coordinators and Fr Chris. The Leaders of the Group are: Mike & Maggie B., and Olive & Tom D. The first meeting is planned for 20 November.

New members have been shared out amongst the groups to Angela & Mary, John and the new group, which still has plenty of room for expansion. Some other group members have been re-allocated at their request, which was better than losing them from the groups.

Easter Celebration – A good suggestion raised by Eileen at a previous meeting was for an Easter Family Group event. It was decided to ask all the Family Group members to come up with suggestions for a Family Group Easter event and we will all discuss at next meeting.

Church Notice Board – There are two notice boards available (Fr. Chris is going to search for the other notice board). The group needs to decide how best to use these notice boards. Mary still has the Family Group hands, which can be used on the display noticeboard. This will be reviewed at the next meeting.

Fr. Chris told us that the website is soon to be updated and it may be possible for the Family Groups to have their own web page.

Family Group Expansion – Chris has drafted a letter for the new Reception parents. The idea of a newsletter was discussed to inform parishioners and invite newcomers to join the groups. The suggestion of having occasional events after 11.00am Mass in the social centre was made e.g. cake sale etc. Phil suggested putting something into the news bulletin in the New Year.

Teenagers – The idea of this group was to involve teenagers from across the Family Groups in activities of their own. A group of teenagers volunteered to lead the group. They have been busy settling into college, etc so have yet to get organised. It was suggested that they meet in the Lourdes Room, with pizza and coke provided, to help them get started. Vince will prompt the teenagers who have volunteered to get the group started to book a date and invite teenagers across the groups. The age group for now will be 14 or Y9 and above. The discussions will be left entirely to the teenagers themselves. It was suggested that this group may have a limited life span as the children move onto university or work - this was discussed and noted.

Date of Next Meeting – Friday 6th February at 7.30pm in the Lourdes Room. A 'leaders & deputies meal' like last year's was proposed and agreed. It was agreed that we should get together in the Lourdes Room where we can mix freely and keep the costs down. The menu is to be decided at a later date.