



# **FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT**

## **(England & Wales)**



## **PARISH TOOL KIT**

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

# **FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – TABLE OF CONTENTS**



## **Table of Contents**

- 1. Family Group Movement Objectives**
- 2. Welcome and Introduction**
- 3. A Message from our Patron**
- 4. A Message from our Chaplain**
- 5. A Guide to Getting Started**
- 6. Initial Parish Expression of Interest Form**
- 7. Family Group Movement DVD Order Form**
- 8. Family Group Role Descriptions**
- 9. Frequently Asked Questions**
- 10. A Process for the Formation of Groups**
- 11. Timetable for Setting Up Family Groups**
- 12. Commissioning of Family Group Leaders**
- 13. First Family Group Planning Meeting**
- 14. Family Group Member Information Form**
- 15. Family Group Meeting Contact Sheet**
- 16. Family Group Member Renewal of Commitment**
- 17. Looking to the Future**
- 18. Top Ten Tips**

# **FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT**

## **(England & Wales)**



### **Objectives of the Movement**

The Family Group Movement seeks to create an extended family atmosphere in the parish community through friendship groups which meet regularly for low cost activities and support each other through fellowship. Family groups are open to any parishioner, their family and friends, irrespective of age or personal circumstances. Family Groups share a common bond through their faith but are not exclusive. They are a family for all.



## FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION



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 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)



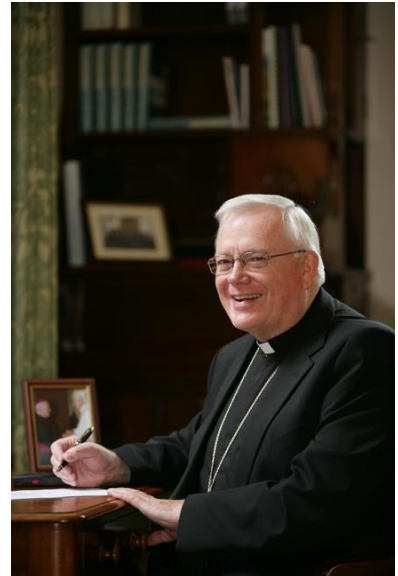
## A MESSAGE FROM OUR PATRON

'The Family Group Movement seeks to create a true sense of community in fulfilment of Jesus Christ's command for love, friendship, and companionship in the lives of his disciples, and as experienced by the early Christian communities. Now establishing firm foundations in England and Wales, parish Family Groups are notable for their simplicity, their inclusiveness and their rootedness in ordinary life.

Family Groups offer our Catholic communities the chance to become more family-sensitive, friendly and welcoming, in line with the objectives of the Bishops' collaborative pastoral initiative: Everybody's Welcome.

At their best, Family Groups offer understanding, friendship and support to all, encourage and celebrate family life in its myriad forms, and help everyone in the parish feel that they belong. I am delighted to be the patron of the Family Group Movement (England & Wales), and to endorse this initiative.'

Rt. Rev. Peter Doyle  
Bishop of Northampton







## A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAPLAIN

Last year I celebrated the Ruby Jubilee of my ordination as a Priest, and 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 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)

# **FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – GUIDE TO GETTING STARTED**



## **Welcome to Family Group Movement (England and Wales)**

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 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 once you have registered your interest in the Family Group Movement (via email to [familygroups2015@gmail.com](mailto:familygroups2015@gmail.com)) They will be available to offer telephone or email support to the team before, during and after the launch of your Family Groups. A visit to the parish may also be possible subject to the Steering Group member's 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 incur 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

# FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – GUIDE TO GETTING STARTED



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



# FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – GUIDE TO GETTING STARTED



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

# FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – GUIDE TO GETTING STARTED



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](mailto: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, support you in preparing for the launch of Family Groups in your parish.

## 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

# **FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – GUIDE TO GETTING STARTED**



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 Leader's 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

# **FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – GUIDE TO GETTING STARTED**



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!**

# **FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT – PARISH INITIAL EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FORM**



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 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](mailto: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:



## **FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT – PARISH INITIAL EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FORM**



**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?**

## **FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT – PARISH INITIAL EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FORM**



**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 during the planning and launch of Family Groups?**

## FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT – PARISH INITIAL EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FORM



### 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](mailto:familygroups2015@gmail.com)



# **FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT - ROLE DESCRIPTORS**



## **Role Descriptions to Support the Introduction of Family Groups**

### **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.



# **FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**



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

If you would find it helpful, the National Steering Group will assign one of their members (who are all Family Group Leaders themselves) to you and they 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 and all promotional materials are free to download and can be printed and customised to suit your needs. The DVD can be viewed for free online but if you would like to purchase your own copy for £5 (including P&P) it can be ordered using the Order Form in parish Tool Kit. Steering Group members give their time and support free of charge. However, if Steering Group members 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 running a Family Group 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.

# **FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**



## **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

## **FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**



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?**

# **FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**



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

## FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



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.



# FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – FORMATION OF GROUPS



## Formation of Groups

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 to Follow

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

## FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – FORMATION OF GROUPS



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.

## FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – FORMATION OF GROUPS



- 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.

## FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – TIMETABLE FOR LAUNCH



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.

## FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – TIMETABLE FOR LAUNCH



<b>LAUNCH WEEKEND</b>	<p>Launch events at every Mass with Family Group promotional talk during each Mass.</p> <p>Registration forms completed and collected.</p>	<p>Ideally, Family Group speakers will be available after Mass (e.g. at the usual post-Mass tea/coffee) to engage all and promote Family Groups.</p>
Launch weekend, or within a week	<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>
Within 1-2 weeks of launch	First meeting: ice-breaker event	Agree when the next meeting will take place
4 weeks after first group meeting	<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>
Every 3 months after launch	Parish Priest/Coordinator/Leaders meetings	<p>To review progress and take stock of developments.</p> <p>Discuss and agree</p>



## FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – TIMETABLE FOR LAUNCH



		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.)
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>

## FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – COMMISSIONING OF FAMILY GROUP LEADERS



### Commissioning of Family Group Leaders

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 MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – THE FIRST FAMILY GROUP PLANNING MEETING



## The Family Group's First Planning Meeting

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

## FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – THE FIRST FAMILY GROUP PLANNING MEETING



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 helps to keep 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](http://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

## FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – THE FIRST FAMILY GROUP PLANNING MEETING



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](http://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](mailto: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.

# FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – MEMBER INFORMATION FORM



[Parish Name]

[Parish Logo]

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

**PLEASE HAND TO [ CONTACT NAME ] WHEN COMPLETED**

# FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – CONTACT SHEET

[illegible]



# FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – CONTACT SHEET

[illegible]

## FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – GROUP MEMBER RENEWAL OF COMMITMENT



### Renewal of Commitment by Family Group Member

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

# **FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**



## **Looking to the Future**

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

## FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – LOOKING TO THE FUTURE



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 MOVEMENT TOOL KIT – TOP TEN TIPS



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!