Meeting at Dereham Football Club, 4th May 2016 9.30 – 1.30

Present: Mark Buckle, Peter Ronan, Pam Weyer, Julia Spinks, Anne Ritchies, Sharon Donoghue, Stefan Rice, Antonella Parker, Rachel Bartholomew, Carola Doy, Ann McKendrick, Dan St John, Michael Rosen, Mark Watkins, Anja Grau, Claire Seiboth.

Apologies: Mike Woodward, Sally Gallop, Suzy Holman, Caroline Sexton, Keeley White.

Invited: Joanna Adande – Regional Consultant Fostering Network & Lilian Stevens - Programme Manager for Mockingbird Model.

Introductions & Welcome - to the guests Joanna and Lilian. Also welcome to Rachel Bartholomew who has joined AP and is a carer support worker and duty worker.

This meeting will follow a different format to the usual AP meetings. Joanna has visited to see what the AP does and if there is anything we could improve on. Whilst Lilian will give a presentation on the Mockingbird Model.

1. Consultation & Communication Strategy:

We discussed how the group could obtain feedback from carers, and the difficulties we have had in the past in this respect. In the recent past we have used newsletters, and Improving Times to feedback to carer’s developments, and the minutes are online for all to see. The Conferences have been well attended, reaching a large group of carers, and Network Groups are used albeit with sporadic attendance. The recent workshop on vacancies was attended by approximately 30 carers but only a handful of carers were those who are currently being affected by lack of placements.

Ideas on difference methods of communication were a NCC Fostering Facebook page, as part of the annual review and at LAC reviews. Ann asked if a section of Improving Times could be used by the partnership to feedback and for consultation requests. Some useful tools we could use to obtaining feedback from carers are Network Groups, Survey Monkey, Newsletters, Focus Groups. Questionnaires could be used at the end of PEPs and Reviews to capture the view of Social Workers and others.
A new team is to be set to look at communication strategy: Mike, Stefan, Julia, Pam and Ann.

2. **Recording** – Pam asked if the social worker could and should read the carers recording on the child, as this provides an accurate account of the child’s life. Others thought this was a good idea.

Anne and Suzy have been working on updating the recording workbook and this will soon be ready. Carers currently record in a variety of ways, and some carers use our life together recordings for the child as a daily log but also have a separate log for incidents which occur that are of a delicate nature. Peter provided guidance and stated that the daily log should be used, but if a disclosure is made it should be noted in the daily recording that e.g. “you told me about something that happened when …….., I have emailed the social workers further details of this today” and then send full details off to the Social Worker. Ann reminded everyone that if two separate records are used then these will both be required at court if necessary in the future.

3. **AP External Evaluation:**

The AP Terms of Reference stated that an external valuation should be carried out to ensure that the groups is legitimate and doing everything above board. The evaluation should also be used to highlight any areas which are lacking and can be improved on as well as the positive aspects.

Joanna from the Fostering Network has agreed to attend and carry out this evaluation. Joanna has reviewed all the documentation online and overall believes the partnership to be very good. Joanna was impressed with the inclusivity and that it is child and partnership focused with all levels of personnel attending groups. The group was then split into four and SWOT analysis carried out:

**Strengths:**

- We are a committed group with an awareness and understanding of issues faced.
- It feels like a partnership where we all have a voice.
- Want the same thing for our children.
- Challenge – identify and confront weaknesses.
- A good quality conference.
- New Charter.
- Starting to be credible.
Children’s services feel that there is an opportunity to work more constructively and positively to make better outcomes for children.

Weaknesses:

- Time restraints.
- Whilst enthusiasm exists there is also apathy.
- A more dynamic relationship is being developed.
- Membership – getting other carers involved.
- Trust – afraid of consequences. Victimised a disincentive.
- Outreach – greater participation.

Threats:

- Not enough time to focus on aims and reaching objectives.
- Budgets.
- Disenchantment of volunteers.
- Potential external threats – recruitment of carers and social workers and potential of outsourcing children’s services should improvement plan fail.
- Risk talking rather than doing.
- Opportunities to make changes.
- Unintended consequences.
- Communication – ensuring that the voice of the child is heard
- Getting the word out at events

4. Mockingbird Model – Lilian

You tube video link https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xivyTALkCPC

Questions raised:

a) What are the costings and could the government’s innovation fund be used for this? The costing is £22000 per hub in the first year. Yes the innovation fund can be applied for.

b) We use the signs of safety approach, could this be used within the Hub? Yes.

c) What is the role of the Supervising Social Worker? The SSW will be responsible for all carers in the hub.

d) What groups of children and young people have been targeted? The target age range is 11-18 but there is no reason why other groups cannot be targeted.

e) Is there a fixed criteria for the Hub home carers? Yes they would need to be experienced, have two spare bedrooms and want to attend training and be really keen to do this.
f) Would the Hub carers have the same values as the foster carer in respect of the sets of rules in the foster home? Yes, so if a child goes to bed at 8pm in the foster home the hub home would also do this. The hub home would know all children in their hub well.

g) How many Hubs are there? There are 102 families with 172 children over 6 local authorities.

A.O.B.

Peter: Will have a further conversation with Lilian to discuss Mockingbird & Lisa Bellaty re: fostering achievements/ education champion/ young ambassadors.

Pam: Members of AP can go to NCC on the 3rd Thursday of each month between 10.30-1.30 to discuss any ideas and issues. Norwich Open Day is on the 19th and there are 18 carers booked.

Anne: Kings Lynn Open Day is almost full.

Julia: As Julia is soon going to become chair of AP, her role at Support groups and social events is now empty. Julia will approach a carer to do this.

Anja: Does Joanna know if there is a successful support group in existence for Kinship Carers? Joanna will check and feedback to Anja.

Sharon to complete a new contact list.

It was useful to have members of the TAC at this meeting. AP to hold an extended meeting Sept/Oct time and include TAC, CPD & Joanna.

Written by S Donoghue 4/5/16

Checked by J Spinks 12/5/16