Fostering Advisory Partnership Meeting

On 19th October 2016 9.30-1pm at South Green Park, Mattishall.

Present: Julia Spinks, Pam Weyer, Mark Buckle, Sarah Hunter, Mike Woodward, Peter Ronan, Stef Rice, Debbie Burrell, Roni Kingston-Miles, Anne Ritchie, Dan St John, Catherine Sutton, Ann McKendrick, Michael Rosen, Cathy Mouser, Antonella Parker.

Apologies: Keeley White.

1. Welcome to our two new members; Roni and Debbie who are representatives for Watton and Norwich Network Groups.
2. Minutes from 28th Sept checked and agreed.
3. Action points:
   - Peter to speak with Fostering Network possibly via video link to discuss; Mockingbird, different ways to utilise carers, education champions/fostering achievements/young ambassadors.
   - Cathy and Ann to roll out “This is me” workers profile to Social Workers.
   - Pull up board for presentation – Antonella to forward what we want on it to Peter, so that it can be available for the conference.
   - Recording – still with the legal department for approval, Anne will chase.
   - Strategy for speaker cancellations at Network Groups – discussed at NWG & Social events group, difficulty when very short notice as no time to organise replacement. At Kings Lynn Anne stepped in and talked about Contact.
   - Hearing the voice of the child, postponed visit to In-care Council until after New Year as they are restructuring.
   - Antonella gave out her flyers to be distributed to Children’s Services offices around Norfolk. Could Charter/FAP information be given with these via a presentation? The next Social Worker meeting is 7th Nov at Breckland. Antonella/Sharon/Julia
   - Buddy system – spreadsheet of carer’s names is with Fostering Managers. Mike will meet with Suzy and Michael within the next two weeks to join carers together.
   - Use of Children’s Centres for older children – Tracy Andrews is invited to the next TAC to discuss this.
   - Health and Wellbeing deep dive – Chris Buttright to be invited to next FAP meeting.
4. **Network Groups feedback:**

**North Walsham** – 12 Carers attended. Karen Searle talked about the importance of education and a lady from the leaving care team talked about benefits, both speakers were very interesting and informative.

**Norwich** – 5 Carers attended. Virtual School were the speakers which carers found useful and informative. Feedback from a carer who went to her child’s school and requested that they utilise the pupil premium for therapy. She wouldn’t have known this if she hadn’t been to the group.

**Watton** – 5 Carers attended. Mary Baldwin LAC Team Manager was the guest speaker. She was really interesting and informative. “She spoke for an hour and a half but we could have listened to her all day”.

**Gt Yarmouth** – 15 Carers attended.

**Kings Lynn** – 17 Carers attended. A massive increase to this time last year. The speaker didn’t come, so Anne facilitated discussion about Contact. This proved to be really useful. The rise is numbers is due to the networking of carers, with carers encouraging other carers they know to attend.

5. **Working Groups:**

**Continuous Professional Development** – no meeting yet.

**Team Around the Child** - Discussed the workers profile “This is me” – Laura will devise a different form for older children to use. Keeley created a story board on “transitions” with the help of the carers at the meeting. The Health and Wellbeing deep dive questions are now with Ricky Cooper who will be coming to the next TAC meeting. Next year meetings will be bi-monthly and will be held at county hall. Additional meetings will be added in if necessary.

**Network Groups and Social Events** - Meeting held with Charlene Ledgard from Open Venue in Norwich. Discussed an open day in January so carers and children can try different activities for free, with the hope this will lead on to an event just for our looked after children and/or fostering families. Open work with children who do not attend school and would like to work with excluded looked after children, focusing on confidence building activities, therefore we have linked Open with Keeley from Virtual School.

6. **Social Media and the use of photos**

There is a social media policy which state that “Information and photographs of a looked after child must never be posted on social media sites without the written consent of the placing Local Authority, birth parents and the child, if of an appropriate age.” If the child goes to a party, wedding or other event, we did not feel that it was right to exclude them from photos if permission was not previously sought. The delegated authority emphasis is on “Not making the child stand out”. Social media and photos should be discussed at the placement planning meeting and if the worker doesn’t approve and carers feel that agreement should have been given then they should challenge the worker. Where any problems arise a positive discussion should take place. We felt that the existing policy should be changed to reflect a more inclusive approach - and Mike and Peter will amend this policy.
Also where a staff member’s name is used to sign off policies this should be verified with the worker involved, so that they can read and check the document beforehand putting their name to it.

7. Placement endings

Recently Peter met up with Sharon and two Carers who had highlighted a need for guidance surrounding placement endings. Foster carers feel sometimes a child is moved quickly without preparation which has emotional and financial implications for the child and the fostering family. The group read the guidance previously prepared, and Cathy said that better assessment communication and planning is essential which is about the Team Around the Child working together to get it right for the Child. Mike added that foster carers do not need to give notice to end a placement. Peter will amend the guidance which was recently prepared and share when done.

Note on Retainers

Five years ago retainer payments were stopped, due to budget cuts, as this was costing in excess of £500,000 a year. Retainers were being paid as a matter of course in instances such as; to a carer for a number of months when a child was returned home. Retainers are now very rare and are only paid in very exceptional circumstances, due to unexpected extra needs of a child.

8. Training – Lack of spaces on courses

Carers have mentioned that they are unable to get a place on courses which are relevant to the needs of the child they are looking after because the courses are full. This is a new phenomenon as last year we were finding it difficult to fill the spaces and had to cancel the courses due to lack of delegates. Discussed how we could match the carer to the course based on particular needs of the child rather than opening it up to anyone who has a subject interest. Also could we use NSCB more for Safeguarding courses? Peter and Sarah to discuss this tomorrow and feedback.

Break courses are open to carers and there are many online courses.


264 have signed up which includes 101 carers. There are 28 market place stalls. FAP have their own stall which we will take turns in manning. Sharon to organise FAP posters and pass to Sarah. Michael will introduce, followed by Julia who will be updating about FAP, then Margot will speak about early trauma in three stages; preschool, primary age and adolescence.

Next year, in July the conference will be about Education and will be practical based on learning through play. Mark suggested doing a similar conference for parents, family intervention, & children’s centres which we all thought was a good idea.

10. Mental Health

Michael said that there has not been sufficient support for carers and the child which is why point 1 contract length is being extended. 20 million has been spent on Mental Health Services. Most of this has gone to the top tier i.e. suicide or risk of serious harm. More innovations funding has been applied for. Compass will be rolled out across the county. More money going into early
intervention – although this will take at least 18 months to get take effect. Pam asked if we could have mental health nurses as some schools have them. If we have a child at school we could tap into this resource and the Educational Psychologists via PEP meeting. There is a possibility that “Paths” programme interventions could be rolled out to all LAC via Schools which would mean the whole class rather than just the LAC gets this. There is some disparity with counselling services at school and pupil premium/plus can be used for this.

LAC CAMHS – Chris Buttright could nominate a representative to attend TAC? If carers/workers are struggling to find a service for their child, they can contact Jonathan Stanley or Compass.

11. Farewell and Thank you - Mark

With his retirement from Fostering looming, Mark has stepped down from his role as Chair. Mark Buckle was integral to the start-up of FAP two years ago. He went to Lewisham Council along with Peter and spent time finding out what they were doing well for the looked after children and what it was they were doing to promote good relationships and communication between workers and carers. Following this Mark and Peter set up the partnership with the ultimate aim of improving outcomes for our looked after children.

Mark has been dedicated and passionate in setting up, and running the partnership for the last two years. The time he has given up to this is immeasurable and his commitment limitless. Julie Buckle must also be appreciated for allowing Mark to give up his time, free of charge, for the benefit of our looked after children, whilst they are still fostering!

“I’d like to say that Mark was key in forming and driving the NFAP forward, his energy and commitment to forming a healthy working partnership have been invaluable. He has never shied away from stating the challenges we faced as a group and facilitating difficult discussions which have helped us to move forward. I hope one day soon we will achieve Mark’s and the group’s aim to welcome more children’s social workers to the discussions and that Mark leaves us feeling satisfied that he has been instrumental in creating a forum for discussion, debate, learning and progress which is special and does in some way make a difference to the experience of children and young people in care.” Antonella

“I’d like to thank you for being the person for getting NFAP up and running. Your tenacity, encouragement and honesty has founded a means for all of us colleagues, who work for our looked after children, to have frank discussion and debate. You have helped create a platform were we can challenge each other, so that we get the best outcomes for those in our care and you have given us the opportunity to feel more part of a working team. I hate to see you go, I know we will all miss you. Please have a wonderful retirement, with the greatest of regards and friendship,” Pam

“When I was asked to join the partnership I didn’t want to do it as I wasn’t keen on speaking in groups. However I reluctantly gave it a go and Mark made me feel at ease. Over the two years he has encouraged and supported me in all my roles at AP and has given me the confidence to eventually do presentations to staff, something I never thought I’d ever do. I want to thank Mark from the bottom of my heart for all he has done for Norfolk, our children, and for my confidence.” Sharon.
Mark was nominated for the Fostering Networks Carer of the Year award. He was a runner up for this and received a certificate.

All at children’s services wish you well in the future and thank you for all you have done.

**AOB**

EHCP – these can be requested by the school or by the child’s social worker. Further information on the hub or at parent partnership [http://www.norfolksendpartnershiass.org.uk/](http://www.norfolksendpartnershiass.org.uk/)

Sarah will contact Christine Birchall to get the press at the conference. “Outstanding Achievement awards” will be looked into for next year.

Ann requested that a carer help with the Service User Feedback – set up to develop a framework for service user feedback. Debbie volunteered for this.

Mike said that there is only one designated officer for LADO at the moment and this has meant a delay for a carer facing an allegation. Carey is looking for a solution and will be speaking with Ann today to get this unacceptable situation resolved.

Peter – 2 foster carers are needed to for input to assess bids which will happen in the coming months. Julia volunteered.

Catherine – shared “Warwick infant mental health online”, a course which she has done which would be beneficial for carers. Information passed to Sarah.
Julia – felt the recent coverage of BBC look east into historical allegations was unfair. All agreed and felt that reporting was bias, sensationalised and overtly negative. Current social workers, staff and carers felt the reporting had a negative view of children’s services and whilst failings may have been the case, we would like to move on from this. We are all working hard to ensure that this doesn’t happen and that our children get the best service possible. Norman Lamb has been invited to our FAP meetings, so he can see for himself that things are changing, for the better.

Sharon – will continue working with Sallie Tuck, with the items raised in last month’s meeting regarding hearing the child’s voice in carer’s reviews.

Written by S Donoghue 19/10/2016

Checked by J Spinks 19/10/2016