FOSTERING ADVISORY PARTNERSHIP

MEETING @ South Green Park, Mattishall 24th May 2017 9.30 – 12.15

Present:  Peter Ronan, Sharon Donoghue, Owen Garrod, Sarah Cressey,  Keeley White, Theresa Lavery, Sarah Hunter, Anne Ritchie, Catherine Sutton, Roni Kingston-Miles, Lori Ong, Stef Rice, Fiona Fitzpatrick.


1. Introductions not required. Apologies as above.
2. Previous minutes checked and can now go online.
3. Action Points:
   Statement on placement endings - “All planned placement moves must be given a minimum of 2 weeks’ notice. This applies whether the carer is giving notice or the department”.

4. Conferences – Sarah Hunter:
   The Foster Carer Forum entitled “Learning is Fun” has been organised by Virtual School in partnership with Training & Development Department, will be held on July 11th 10am-3pm at Green Britain Centre, Swaffham. There will be 6 workshops and carers will need to specify their preference for three and book either online or via the booking form. Peter will start the day and a FAP representative will be doing a short speech, then later in the day Stefan will speak about some work he has recently done on PEP’s. Peter would like to take this opportunity to offer carers a 20 minute consultation with him, if Sarah is agreeable to this. Carers can be made aware of this via email, the hub or fostering friends and a time slot should be given.

More stalls are needed, so if carers have links with organisations then please ask if they wish to participate and speak with Sarah Hunter to confirm their place. The type of stalls required will be anything recreational or educational that our children/young people use, such as outdoor activities centres. *Sharon/Lori to ask carers via the Hub/Fostering Friends.

The funding for Novembers conference has been approved and carers said that they would definitely like Sir John Jones as key note speaker.  Pg1
5. Virtual School - Keeley White and Catherine Sutton:

At Woodside, there is a best practise room which has been commended by Ofsted and will be officially launched soon. 12 Carers are invited to attend this exciting learning space on the 14th June from 1.15 – 4.30 to see how it’s set up, and perhaps use some ideas in our practice. Although it is aimed at under-fives, certain elements are suitable for older children. Sally Thomas will be speaking at the event. *Keeley will ask if the time can be changed to suit school pick-ups and will draft an email to go to Theresa who can put it on the hub to ask carers if they wish to attend.

6. Compass feedback via email – Dr Emily Wilkens:

The first foster carer reflective practice group commenced on 12th January 2017 in Norwich and is currently held every fortnight on a Thursday between 10:30-12:00. The group has been well attended by a core group of between 6-8 carers comprised of a mix of those who are looking after young people currently accessing Compass Outreach/Schools and Compass LAAC (previously LAAC CAMHS). More recently, we have been joined by an additional four sets of NCC carers and have also taken several expressions of interest from Supervising Social Workers as to the suitability of potential NCC carers for the group. Feedback in relation to the current group has been extremely positive and from a facilitator point of view, discussions have been warm, supportive and thought provoking.

An additional group located in the West (Kings Lynn) is planned to commence on 20th June which will follow the same format as the Norwich group and will run on a fortnightly basis. Any potential referrals for either group can be discussed with either Emily, Andy Middlecoat or Joy Burton (who will be facilitating the West group alongside Marg Borg). Unfortunately, plans to set up a group in the East (Great Yarmouth) have been slightly more delayed and at this point in time, we do not have any dates that can be shared as to a possible start date in this locality.

More recently, we been asked by several colleagues whether we are able to accept referrals for agency foster carers to join the group(s). Whilst we are keen to make the groups as accessible as possible, we are mindful that this is perhaps a slightly broader issue that requires additional discussions with NCC senior managers. For this reason, at this point in time our eligibility criteria remains open to any NCC carer and/or agency carers who care for a young person who is currently open to any of the Compass Services (Compass Schools/Outreach or Compass LAAC).
In January 2017, former LAAC CAMHS across East, West and Central joined the Compass Service to become Compass LAAC. This service is being managed by Pauline Goff with the intention that a consistent provision to LAAC will be offered across the County.

Carers at today’s meeting generally felt that agency carers should be able to join to support sessions. However, as agencies are paid enough to provide this kind of support service they should be charged a fee to attend to generate some income.

7. General update from Peter:

- The improvement Plan highlighted that not all carers were aware of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), therefore four workshops will be held to advise carers of what to do for those missing from care and CSE. In addition to the workshops there will be an online course. Peter will write to carers once this is available and reiterate that this is part of their CPD.

  There is a strong drug culture in Norfolk and “Operation Gravity” has highlighted just how bad the situation is with gangs grooming our vulnerable young people. It is a major priority for us to recognise the early signs to prevent exploitation and disrupt the criminal behaviour.

  Keeley pointed out that many parents feel that their children are somehow safe in Norfolk from drug culture and CSE, however this is not the case and all parent rather than only foster carers should be made aware of the risks.

  Sarah gave examples of where children have been at accommodation with adults who are exploiting them (therefore missing from care) and the police failed to respond in a sufficient and timely way. Peter said that this should not now be the case and due to operation gravity they are acting swiftly to ensure the children are protected and returned to a safe place. If carers are finding this is not the case they should escalate by asking Social Worker for a strategic meeting which will include the police force.

  *Theresa to invite Val Crewsden from the Youth Offending Team to Network Groups across Norfolk.*

- Assistant Team Manager within LAC teams are now Managers and the teams have been divided up so they are smaller.

- Recruitment – there is a recruitment drive at the moment to try and attract more foster carers, especially those who can offer sibling groups or children with disabilities. In June there will be a Facebook campaign and a Twitter takeover. The website will be updated and Roni will be involved in a video for this.
8. **Network Groups:**

   **Watton** took place on the 18th May with 9 Carers. There was an impromptu discussion on Passport to Independence which worked really well for carers. With regards generally to the passport to independence carers felt very positive about this. The recommendations following trials, such as removal of the age bands have been applied.

   So that the Passport is now implemented quickly, these will be distributed at Network groups, July Virtual School Forum, and wherever groups of carers meet.

   **North Walsham** – Library services attended which was very informative. The groups were well attended.

   Norfolk Library Service will be holding an event at the Forum so that they can show carers everything they need to know. A date is to be advised.

   Theresa said that the groups have been better attended this year which we feel is probably because they are advertised on the Hub and Fostering Friends and communication amongst carers is better.

9. **Continuous Professional Development (CPD):**

   Meeting to take place on the 5th June.

   Carers who attended ‘Court Work’ provided feedback that it was an excellent course as the leader was clear, concise, and provided good explanations.

10. **Team Around the Child (TAC):**

    Meeting took place on the 11th May.

    - Children’s Centres - Matters relating to Children’s Centres have now been finalised and we are moving ahead with plans to fully utilise the Children’s Centres. Three members of the group intend to set up workshops to help with the Passport to Independence such as cookery classes in different areas and would like other carers who are interested in doing something similar within their own areas to get in contact. *Sharon to put a request for volunteers on the Hub/Fostering Friends.*
      
      Carers Caroline Sexton will be joining the children’s centres governing group as our carer representative.

    - Scoring/Scaling – An IRO had previously taken our concerns regarding inconsistency to his team but as there was no IRO representative at the meeting Pam will be taking our issues forward with Carey Cake who Manages IRO’s.
• Respite – a working group is being set up to look at finding solutions and provide changes to systems to alleviate problems encountered by carers. The first meeting will take place on the 8th June.

• Mental Health – feedback from carers in the West is that Mark Borg is providing an excellent service for our families and his should be the model we follow in other parts of the County. Once we are sure what it is we are missing we can request funding for a service. The groups should also look at what is required to bring out of county children back. There is currently no data to tell us how many of our children/young people need a service, therefore the TAC have devised a questionnaire to obtain feedback from carers. Permission was given to send this out. The UEA are trialling what different types of therapy work. They plan to offer a consultation and make recommendations following this, and then track the progress to see what is working over a period of 18 months. The Mental Health First Aid course will happen and carers will be running this. A Virtual School pack for carers is being organised along similar lines to the one for designated teachers; carers are helping with this. A deep dive into contact should happen in the autumn.

11. Fostering Friends:

Now has 126 members. Information is being shared from the Hub on Fostering Friends and vice versa. Carers often ask questions or opinions about matters relating to fostering and these are answered quickly. This form of communication is helping to alleviate isolation as carers are getting to know each other and now meet up regularly and car share to Network Groups and Training Courses. At the last Friday Therapy, Antonella (Fostering Network representative) came along and share her ‘felting’ skills. Breakfast clubs are now running in Norwich, Gt Yarmouth, and Kings Lynn. Roni will look at setting one up for the south and discussions are happening about one in the North.

AOB:

It seems that there are a lot of adoption breakdowns recently, has the number increased? No, the figure is still 2 or 3 a year which is usual. There are now longer introductions where necessary and mid-point reviews are used during bridging to identify any difficulties and to end the bridge when it is not working out. UEA are researching this issue currently.
Why aren’t carers invited to the Permanence Panel in respect of their children? Carers are not currently invited due to the backlog of cases and pressure to finalise these quickly, but carers should see the Permanence Report and Permanence Support Plan. *Peter/Theresa to email workers to ensure that this happens.

If a young person is not staying put and their birthday is in the winter or spring, their education will be disrupted if they have to move before the academic year ends. Can this be taken into consideration so that a move doesn’t happen until the end of the academic year and we continue to foster instead of staying put? There have not been any further changes to staying put at the moment but this kind of issue should be part of the pathway plan for the young person where their needs are assessed and a case made if necessary.

In-Care Council – The Norwich group will be launched on the 6th June. Please can we ask carers to mention this to their young people and encourage them to attend? A meal out is planned which should prove very tempting. Theresa will Email/Hub carers to advise them of this and who to contact.

Sally Sinclair – Head of Social Work for Breckland will be attending FAP and TAC.

Written by S Donoghue 24th May 2017
Checked by Anne Ritchie, Roni Kingston-Miles and Keeley White. 25th May.