FOSTERING ADVISORY PARTNERSHIP MEETING

23rd November 2016 @ South Green Park, Mattishall, NR20 3JY 10-12.30

Present: Peter Ronan (Vice Chair), Julia Spinks (Chair), Cathy Mouser, Mike Woodward, Theresa Lavery, Stef Rice, Catherine Sutton, Roni Kingston-Miles, Sharon Donoghue (Minutes), Dan St John, Lori Ong, Anne Richie, Anja Grau, Sarah Cressey.


1. Welcome Lori and Sarah to the meeting, and introductions and apologies.
3. Action points:
   - Peter/Cathy to invite Jonathan Stanley to the next meeting and ask for a representative to attend TAC.
   - “This is me” workers profile – Cathy to chase up the roll out.
   - Mockingbird Model – once Peter has an assistant, Peter will talk with Fostering Network regarding mockingbird.
   - 7 unaccompanied refugee children have been placed in-house. Sharon asked if the mockingbird can be used for these families or if not the buddy system. Discuss at next meeting as still early days.
   - Provide a list of reputable organisations for schools to assist with identifying services for children’s wellbeing and mental health. – Danielle and Martyn.
   - Pull up board – Julia will ask a friend if they can action this.
   - Lack of space on courses – Peter and Sarah have met to discuss this. There is a greater need for child sexual exploitation and missing children training, so four further courses will take place next year. Peter will send out the “What to do if a child goes missing” card to all carers via Supervising Social Workers.
   - Sharon passed on Ann McKendrick’s message that she would be happy to help with CSE in any way needed. Peter will bear this offer in mind.
   - If courses for next year are over subscribed, Training will identify those carers who need it the most.
   - Also, carer trainers will be developed as mentors.
4. **Look East**: Have asked to come along to the Conference, following communications with Julia and Sharon. A meeting will take place between carers, Julia, Sharon and possibly Lori and Anne on the 24th November with a view to developing this further. Sharon will contact Roger Smith and invite him to the conference and the next FAP meeting.

5. **Michael Rosen** – We are shocked and sad that Michael has left. During his time here we felt that he was committed to the group which was shown through his attendance and in the way he listened to our views. We wish him all the best in the future and want to thank him for all that he has done for Norfolk’s Children.

We were moved that Michael took the time to email FAP members today to say how much he has enjoyed working with us.

DFE and Ofsted identified that we are not strategic enough. Whilst progress was being made it is not quick enough and one of the main challenges is staffing stability. Cathy has met the new Interim Director, Andrew Bunyan and he has already started work. He is not in Norfolk full time so may not be able to attend as many meetings as Michael did but would be committed to keeping FAP running. Further information may be available by the conference next week.

6. **Conference 2016**

Cathy and Julia will be speaking. FAP have a stand which will have a laptop which will enable a duty worker to sign carers up to the hub and show them how it works. Antonella and Sharon will man the stand. Posters have been completed.

Carers have had problems accessing the Hub; **Mike will do a reminder email for those who have not yet signed up.**

7. **Social Media Policy**

Slight amendment needed on page three – **Mike/Peter**

All matters relating to social media must be discussed within the placement planning meeting. **The child must not be excluded, or treated differently from others.** Any changes can be discussed at the LAC review between all in the Team Around the Child, or if more urgent in discussion via the social worker, carer and the supervising social worker.
8. **Carers Facebook page – Fostering Friends**

Sharon invited the representatives from Fostering Friends because this social media page has become an important tool in communication and vital for carers who might be feeling isolated. Since it started in June, the page has grown and now has 93 members. The page is secret so is not searchable and administered by four carers. One of these; Lori prepared and read excerpts from the information sheet she had prepared, entitled “Welcome to Fostering Friends – A place to talk with people who get it” (Please see appendix a.)

The following comments were made today:

- I am impressed with the amount of information on there.
- I like the flexibility to use it whenever suits me.
- It’s a great opportunity for carers to get to know each other, meet, and for the looked after children to meet other children like they did during the half term craft morning.
- Talking 1-1 about private things is fine. Other Foster Carers are your colleagues so there’s no reason why you can’t discuss the children you look after during these confidential discussions. But you must presume that anything posted on your computer or device can be read. (it’s in the hard drive).
- Carers communicating are an essential part of adult health and wellbeing.
- It is Foster Carer led.

FAP and Fostering Friends agreed they would like to work in partnership. Norfolk Children's Services or FAP does not have governance; this is the role of the carers who are part of the Facebook group. Fostering Friends should provide the NCC social media policy for all participants. Lori and/or Sarah will come to the FAP meetings, so that they can feedback to carers and discuss any issues which carers want to raise.

9. **Guidance on placement endings**

A simple message will be devised by Peter regarding placement endings, which will be similar to “Wherever possible, carers and workers should always give at least 2 weeks’ notice to end a placement”. This does not mean that a carer cannot end a placement immediately if this needs to happen. 

*Peter will remind all workers that retainers are no longer paid.*
10. **Contact Guidance.**

Carers have said they would like clear guidance on contact and expectations in relation to this. Carers had particular issues where contact is in the home or community and where they were being asked to supervise contact. A group of carers came up with some guidance, but Mike felt this was weighted to heavily in favour of the carer.

**Carers must be willing to facilitate contact; however they should not be expected to supervise contact.** Carers were unclear what type of contact is classified as supervised and what is meant by facilitating.

The social worker must be clear on what the child’s needs are at the start of the placement and a discussion must take place at the placement planning meeting about the type of contact and expectations in relation to what happens during the contact. Carers needed to know what are the right questions to ask, and the ‘Devising a Placement Plan’ booklet can be used to help with this to prompt discussions about who is responsible for things such as who pays for lunch, who transports, timings etc.

As contact is individual to each child, a one rule fits all approach cannot be used. Contact must always be discussed at the review with all in the Team Around the Child in agreement, in respect of where contact is at that time and future plans for contact.

Mike has purchased 5 books from the Fostering Network about Contact. Contact is covered in the new Stepping Stones course, so any carer who wishes to learn more can join the course or just come to the session on contact as a one off. Fostering Network have online training on Contact. It was agreed that a few more books would be purchased so that each Network Group representative and Fostering Friends could have a copy. The copies are to be shared between carers via the Network Groups and Breakfast clubs, and a record of who has the book is kept by either Anne, Debbie, Lori, Roni, Julia, Pam. **Anne will devise a statement for carers**, saying what the difference is between Supervised and Facilitated contact, including also where contact is initiated (Placement Planning meeting) and how it is reviewed. This will then go to Mike for approval, and be rolled out to carers.

11. **Network Groups and Social Events** – see separate minutes
12. **CPD** the next meeting will take place on the 15th Dec and will focus on next year’s training. The first Stepping Stones course is complete and the feedback has been excellent.
13. **Team Around the Child** – see separate minutes
14. **North Walsham Network** Group – No guest speak but Jackie Venables stepped in to do a talk about the Therapeutic Parenting book by Sarah Naish. Children With Disabilities – there are no speaker for these groups and carers use the time to share their own experiences.

15. **Kinship Care Group**

Peter and Anja to meet in the new year to discuss how this can be taken forward.

**AOB.**

Peter and Julia will revisit the terms of reference for FAP.

Update councillors in September ’17 on FAP – Peter to organise.

Buddy Scheme – Anja asked how the Buddies were joined together as there is quite some distance between hers. Mike said that only 10% of carers asked to be part of the buddy scheme and they were joined to their nearest carers. A map of the location of all carers in Norfolk is available.

Lots of carers said they didn’t know about the Buddy Scheme which was advertised on the hub. Other carers have come forward and asked to join and will be joined to an existing group, however when an existing group reach 7/8 it should really be split. Carers can add other carers to their group but Duty Workers must be informed so that a record can be maintained. New carers will be added to a group if they wish to. Some carers thought that it was a mentoring scheme.

Next Meeting 14th December 2016, Mattishall.

Written by - S Donoghue 23rd November 2016
Checked by - J Spinks 24th November 2016

**Appendice a)**
Welcome to Fostering Friends

A place to talk to people who get it....

Tina decided to make this page after meeting the most wonderful people on a 'Fostering Changes' course for foster carers, she had no idea what the course was about (it was a brilliant one) so thought it would be great to be able to open a page to allow foster carers to talk positively about courses that they have been on, also you can find out what courses other carers are attending and maybe meet up or share lifts.

This group is administered by Norfolk Fostering Service (NFS) foster carers Tina Nobbs, Sarah Cressey, Lori Ong and Sharon Donaghue. We are here to help and to keep this a friendly space for members. New members can only be added by members. Admin need to approve all new members and will ask for proof of ID prior to approval.

The following statement is shared with all new members.....

This group is strictly for Norfolk Fostering Service (NFS) foster carers only, although not directly connected to that service. This is a secret group and not searchable. Members names are only accessible to other members. Members can add foster carer friends who work for NFS, admin will need to see proof of ID during the approval process. When joining this group members should be aware of the ethos of this group and its aims. Please avoid posting anything confidential or inflammatory as your post is likely to offend and be deleted. There are Social Media and other policies for NFS that we will uphold.

Please feel free to contact admin if you feel uncomfortable about the content of any post. This group was created with a positive ethos to provide genuine support and friendship in an otherwise sometimes solitary environment. We strive to ensure you have access to consistent, relevant, current information, guidance and resources and to feel part of a team of professional foster carers and also have some fun in the process.

From its early days as a small group of friends ‘Fostering Friends’ has grown and currently has 92 members. The Breakfast Club started via Fostering Friends as two carers meeting for coffee during contact time one evening a week and then moved to breakfast when contact ceased. This grew quickly as friends were invited and is now attended by up to 18 carers. We have also been given the use of a function room for this weekly event. Carers drop in throughout the morning and we use this as a supportive group, friendship and sharing of resources. King’s Lynn have now successfully replicated this in their area with similar outcomes.

As a result of Fostering Friends Facebook group and The Breakfast Club we recently organised a Holiday Breakfast Club which included children and crafts, this was very successful and we have organised a Kids Craft Day in December as a result of this.
Fostering Friends members....

- Promote the Fostering Advisory Partnership and its role
- Initiate discussions for FAP to take forward to management
- Arrange and promote Christmas parties in Norwich and King’s Lynn
- Have seen the need for enuresis training and have held their first enuresis support group in Norwich. This has prompted a request for something similar in King’s Lynn.
- Use the Breakfast Club as a meeting place for Buddy groups and a place to invite foster carer friends who want to meet others.
- Arrange and promote social events including movie nights, coffee meet ups, days out.
- Share links to all current NFS working documents (already in the public domain)
- Encourage attendance on courses and events.
- Promote membership of The Hub
- Gather information regarding future training needs
- Promote and review training
- Support other carers emotionally and physically
- Share books, equipment and online resources
- Guide other carers to appropriate services when requested
- promote best practice

Recent feedback from members....

I think it's a safe place for us to go to vent without breaking confidentiality because we can all relate to the issues we may be going through. It enables us to support each other going through tough times with the incredibly hard job we all do.

The greatest gift we give each other is knowing you're not alone.

For me this page has shown me I am not alone. It has given me support from people who totally understand! Not having other professionals on the page means that I don't feel judged and I feel like I can be more honest and open which means I use it more. It's also given me lots of useful information and encouraged me to become more involved in things like FAP and the TAC. I've seen first-hand how we can implement changes for the better. It's made me feel much more positive about fostering in general. I love it.

It's a fantastic platform to share information/ideas which I have found extremely useful.

Just think this page is an opportunity for positive support and building some new friendships with people who just 'get it'. Xx
I wish I had this nine years ago. I only had one other carer I could turn to and no support coming from my or YP workers for almost four months!!

As a newby to foster caring this type of informal discussion group is a vital resource providing advice and support which comes with an understanding of the unique challenges foster carers face. You just can't get this level of understanding support from anywhere else; family, friends it's not the same for numerous reasons.

Having this group and you lot and the support without judgements has made fostering something I'm not so desperate to stop doing any more. Because I was. Xx