Fostering Advisory Partnership Meeting @ South Green Park, Mattishall.

14th December 2016 9.30-12

Present: Sarah Hunter, Roni Kingston-Miles, Cathy Mouser, Keeley White, Sharon Donoghue, Lori Ong, Anne Ritchie, Antonella Parker.


1. Introductions.
2. Previous minutes of 23rd November agreed.
3. Outstanding Action Points:
   • Invite a NIPE representative to attend FAP – Cathy to take forward.
   • Carer’s feedback for Social Worker appraisals – Cathy to look at ways to facilitate this.
   • Carer’s Recording – With Legal department at the moment and Anne R will chase in the new year.
   • Term time holidays – Keeley. Due to recent court action the exact wording is not yet finalised, however the stance for looked after children is the same for all other children and permission must be sought from the child’s school. Keeley will provide a statement for February’s meeting. (February agenda)
   • Roll out of “This is me” Social worker profile for the child – Cathy said that there has been discussion at the Managers meetings and some social workers were not 100% comfortable in using their photo. This will be discussed at the LAC Service Development meeting and a definitive answer will be made in January. It would be beneficial for a simplified version of “This is me” to be devised for schools, and a similar version for contact supervisors so that the children can see their new one before meeting them. (Revisit these points in January’s meeting)
• Contact – Following on from previous meetings Anne has devised a statement which she forwarded to Mike. Some amendments were made and by Mike and again by Anne and this is the statement which she read out to the group:

“Contact” for children in foster care

There is an expectation that all foster carers will enable children they look after to have contact in the foster home with their parents, siblings, extended family members and friends when it is in the best interests of all parties and facilitate contact away from the foster home where needed – this could be transporting children to a contact centre, accompanying them to a play area etc.

All members of the team around the child need to be mindful of difficulties that may arise for the child, family members and carer and this will need thorough discussion and agreement beforehand.

Carers are not expected to supervise contact – however, if requested, some may be happy to do this by prior agreement.

All contact arrangements should be discussed and recorded in detail at the child’s placement planning meeting with the supervising social worker present. This will provide an opportunity for the carer and others to establish exactly what is required of them, discuss any potential difficulties that may arise and reach an agreement that is in the child’s best interests.

Contact arrangements should be reviewed regularly and certainly after any major changes in the care plan. Any difficulties or queries need to be directed towards the child’s social worker and the carer’s supervising worker immediately so they can be resolved quickly and any subsequent changes should be included in an updated placement agreement.

We agreed that this is good and covers most eventualities. Amendments relating to Changes in contact, that contact is court led, and a reference to the Fostering Network “Contact Guidance” book should be included. The author must be included. When the deep dive into the Contact part of the Charter happens, this should reference the above guidance, and the book. Mike has ordered 10 copies for the Fostering Network book and will bring to the next FAP meeting.
• List of local support organisations and youth groups for children – Danielle King has devised this list which we all felt was good and Keeley would like to forward it to schools for their use. *Sharon to forward to Keeley and put on the Hub/Fostering Friends.*

• Pull up boards – still awaiting a decision on supplier – *Peter at next meeting.*

4. **Conference feedback** – Sarah has provided the group with the following written feedback from delegates:

**TAC Conference**  
**Evaluation Summary**

**What was good?**

We received an overwhelming number of positive comments around what a good day it was and how Margot was an excellent, engaging, knowledgeable speaker.

Several appreciated only having one key speaker and the extra time this gave them to flesh things out.

Special appreciation was shown for the following areas:

• Strategies for dealing with traumatic behaviour in a positive way  
• Focus on three age groups  
• Hearing about the effects of trauma on the brain  
• Relaxed atmosphere of the event  
• Handouts and booklet

Other positive feedback included:

• Best yet; improvement on last year  
• Marketplace very interesting  
• Good to network  
• Several comments on the food being nice - especially smoked salmon!  
• Use of video clips fantastic  
• Venue good with good parking  
• Several comments that day was well organised and well run  
• Many comments that booklet was a great improvement and good to take away  
• Great pace
What could we improve?

There was comparatively little in the way of negativity but there was a feeling among a number of delegates that schools would benefit greatly from a similar event.

A couple of delegates commented that they found the temperature to be a little low but the venue’s heating was on all day to combat the cold.

A handful of conflicting comments around more time for Margot vs more time for marketplace – a sure sign that the balance was good!

Comments included:

- A lot for one day!
- Margot’s first session was garbled and she was rushing through complex theories with little explanation
- How to pull this together – need schools and carers and social workers to give same message
- [It would be good to see] examples of places it does work
- A couple of comments on the lunch but no suggestions how to improve (despite others praising the lunch)
- Record conference to share with colleagues
- Gluten free sandwich was horrible
- Finish at 3pm – carer-friendly timing?
- Sign at roundabout to indicate where carpark is
- Run similar events more often – annually?
- A couple of requests for marketplace map
- Partnership presentation could be improved
- A couple of calls for a two-day event
- More questions and answers
- Less Powerpoint and more audience interaction
- Many said nothing could be improved!

Follow up?

- Resources for helping and understanding trauma in our children
- More conferences like this
- Many requested similar training around trauma
- Setting up clusters
- More trauma/attachment training focusing on specific ages
- Neuroscience and brain development training
- Several comments on Play therapy course
- Several requests for Life story training
- Library of resources to borrow/share
- Something in place to prevent people from forgetting today’s messages
- Follow up email with links to resources
- Marketplace contact list
- Info to schools to be more trauma aware
• Other speakers such as Bruce Perry, Dr Van der Kolk, Graham Muric
• Info line for foster carers
• Kinship training

We all felt the conference was very positive and the coverage by BBC Look East managed to capture our ethos that the child is central to all we do. The whole conference was well organised and special thanks to Sarah and her team for this. The overall the feeling was that it was the best Conference yet.

There were just over 270 attendees, but unfortunately some delegates didn’t attend or give apologies. Whilst some absences are unavoidable, not contacting Learning and Development to give apologies meant that others who could have filled the space weren’t able to attend and the cost of their space was lost.

Thanks to Anne and Julia for their work with the BBC. Sharon to contact Look East to see if a copy of the piece can be obtained. Sarah will look into media training for FAP representatives.

Julia sent a “Thank You” letter which Sharon read out:

“My apologies for being unable to attend today’s meeting due to having a LAC review to attend at 930 in caister

I would like to take the opportunity to Thank everyone for there commitment support and dedication to the FAP group we all have busy lives but amazingly make the time for the FAP meetings, so enabling us to help get it right for our looked after children as this paramount to us all

I would also like to personally thank you all for your words of encouragement and support at the conference and after it meant a lot to me. A special Thanks to Anne who came all the way from Kings Lynne to do the TV interview with me couldn’t have done it without you Anne and to Sharon for getting the ball rolling with the media. As you all know I am not a professional speaker but a foster care who speaks from the heart I’m passionate about the children in care and giving them the best life and outcomes as we all are.

I feel such pride at how positive the conference and the TV interview was and long may it continue Less negativity and more positively in 2017

Finally I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year – Julia”.

PG5
5. **Next Years Conference**

There will be two conferences next year, the first on March 22\textsuperscript{nd} at John Innes is for Social Workers and Designated Teachers. Sarah asked if FAP could have a stand which we will be pleased to organise. Keeley is in discussions with Julia about how FAP can assist with the day’s proceedings.

The other conference is in July with the venue yet to be decided. It was felt that this time is should be over to the west of the county so Green Britain at Swaffham, Gressenhall or John Innes are amongst the venues which Sarah is looking into. The virtual School are leading this Conference and the theme is “Learning Through Play”. The Education theme such as “making Maths fun”, will be interactive with various outdoor activities taking place, rather than the usual indoor, one room event. FAP will also have a stand at this conference.

6. **Network Group Feedback:**

**Watton**

There were four carers and the guest speaker was Claire Sieboth from Virtual School who talked about Early years. They also discussed Permanency and inviting Ricky Cooper to the next group to talk some more about this. *Sarah will look into doing a workshop on Permanency as we felt carers needed further information.*

**Kings Lynn**

There were 7 carers and they discussed foster to adopt, the impact and positives of this. They also talked about vacancies.

7. **Fostering Friends:**

- Christmas lunches were organised for carers in Norwich and Kings Lynn, there was a good turnout and all enjoyed these. Breakfast clubs continue to do well in both these areas. Any carer from any area can attend either.
- A craft day was held for all children so that they could make decorations and cards for themselves and/or birth families and about 30 children attended. Anne was given a present by Lori and Tina for helping to make the craft day a success. The large “Positive Pants” were a humorous addition to the meeting!
• Christmas Parties have taken place for Norwich area, Children with Disabilities and Kings Lynn is this week. The children have enjoyed mixing and making friends with other children which we all feel is important. A child commented “you wouldn’t know which are birth children and which are not”.
• The next event will be a walk on the beach early January.

8. **AOB**

• During discussions with other carers, carers have highlighted that there are some inconsistencies with their level of supervision, and support. There are regulations for carers supervision; if carers do not feel they are receiving the appropriate level of supervision they should speak with the Supervising Social Worker and/or the Fostering Manager. However if a carer feels that they are not able to do this then they can speak with Antonella Parker (Fostering Network) who can give them independent advice and if needed representation. Antonella can mediate and help work through any difficulties. If needed, she can speak with the Manager if the carer wishes to remain anonymous. All carers in the room said that their support was exceptional, but acknowledge that other carers may not be receiving the same level.

• Some carers are still without placements and have been for over a year. We discussed if carers could be made more aware of the short term breaks scheme “fostering support” via Supervising Social Workers as this is a good way of utilising carers skills and giving the carer work. We felt that new carers might be missing out on placements and that perhaps they could initially do some respite to get used to how everything works and build their experience. Further discussion next meeting, as no Fostering Manager present. *Sharon to ask Mike to provide the list of vacancies.*

• There is no Supervising Social Worker representation on FAP or TAC. *Sharon to email Peter to ask for a staff member to attend.*

• Five FAP members who remained at this point discussed unaccompanied child refugees and the course which was made available a few months ago, and the presentation to this group by Simon Booth (Breaking the Cycle) and Karen Cooper (SSW).
The chances of the Child at 18 staying in the UK is not guaranteed and we felt that it is wrong that they lose everything that they and the carers have worked towards. From a carers perspectives having put all their dedication into integrating a young person into society, helping them achieve their goals, keeping them safe from all kinds of harm only to have this ripped from them is the reason why many carers said they could not offer a home to these Children. Protection, support and love does not stop because a child reaches 18.

Imagine being the child who is aware that they have a limited time to make a difference, their dreams of becoming a Doctor, Teacher and making a positive contribution to the society which once welcomed them, are ripped from the palms of their hands. These very vulnerable Young People might despair and disappear and living with this knowledge is damaging and not protecting the welfare of the child. It is our Legal Obligation under International Law and UK legislation to protect children.

Sharon will look into how we can pursue this matter further.

Written on 14th December by Sharon Donoghue
Checked by Anne Ritchie, Lori Ong, Keeley White on 15th December