Fostering Advisory Partnership

Friday 12th October at South Green Park, Mattishall NR20 3JY 10am

Present: Julia Spinks, (chair), Stefan Rice, Sharon Donoghue, Pam Weyer, Roni Kingston-Miles, Anne Ritchie, Laura Gavril, Sarah Hunter, Alison Utting, Tracy Collins, Scott Mackay, Keeley White, Catherine Sutton, Mike Woodward, Craig Secker, Donna Stapley, Owen Garrod, Michaela Fysh, Vicky Hogg.

Apologies: Kate Dexter, Sally-Anne Sinclair, Debbie Burrell.

1. Welcome and introductions.
2. Craig Secker declared his interest; he owns Insignia Health Care.

3. Family Network Training - Sarah Hunter

Sarah gave details of the proposal for FNT for feedback and comments. This is a development from Signs of Safety with the aim to involve family and friends in the life of the Child who may have lost touch and are important to the Child. This will be done in a safe way and in the Childs best interest. Foster Carers will be closely involved in the planning and regular meetings and the Childs voice will be heard through-out.

Questions raised:

Whose role would it be to organise this? The Childs Social Worker would be responsible for the setting up and monitoring of this. The group expressed concerns that Social Workers already have many pressures. Time is not something which Social Workers have in abundance.

Is this just another ‘Plan’ in addition to many others? This will become part of not separate to other plans for the child.

Are we not already doing this? Yes but not always.

Can the meeting have a more informal approach? Yes.

Children do not always say instantly who they are missing from their past, sometimes it takes time for the child to express they miss someone? This doesn’t have to happen when the child is initially placed; these contacts can be approached at any time by the Social Worker.

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Is this in addition to existing formal contact arrangements? Yes
What if a person suggested by the child is not appropriate? There will be an assessment process and if not suitable then they would not be pursued.
Can a mailbox be set up like there is for adoption? There may be cases where it is not appropriate to share addresses, Tracy agreed to look at whether this is a worthwhile in the wider context.
What if it is not working out for example if the family/friend did not attend a contact or if the venue wasn’t right? Their commitment will need to be checked and if it isn’t working it will stop and changes can be made with regards to venue etc. The Social Worker is responsible.

4. Conference Update – Sarah Hunter

Numbers so far; 104 Carers, 84 Adoption, 67 Children’s Services staff. Anne to advise carers via fostering friends so that they do not miss out.
Running order will be Tracy Collins, Julia Spinks, Adoptive Parents, Richard Rose. This will be an extended interactive training session covering all ages and abilities.

There is a new excellent Trauma Course which can be booked via the training hub.

5. Foster Carer Recruitment – Scott MacKay:

“Open Your Heart and Your Home” – Presentation Here…….Scott gave a presentation which included feedback from recent Impower survey. Norfolk Fostering Service is focusing on recruitment of new carers and are utilising the skills of existing carers as Ambassadors to help with this. To help with recruitment Ambassadors will attend events and buddy up with a potential Carers to assist them throughout the process and beyond.

Questions following presentation:
Carers used to receive numbers for looked after children including the split between IFA’s and NCC Carers but due to the change to liquid logic this has not been possible at the moment. Once accurate information is available FAP will discuss on a quarterly basis.
There is 15 IFA’s operating in Norfolk; this figure is not dissimilar to other counties. Foster carers are crucial in spreading the word about fostering and have been using social media to do this. Scott will be creating more videos which will go on social media.
There is a new point of contact on the phone which is positive as FAP carers said they know of cases where potential carers have called to enquire and they have not been followed up and had gone elsewhere. When a call is received now the potential carer will be linked with an ambassador.
The aim is to increase the conversion rate and increase the ratio of NCC/IFA carers in NCC favour. Potential carers said they liked hearing from existing carers as they "make it real" for them.
6. **Achievement Event**

There will now be an achievement event annually for carers held in March. This is going to be named “Foscars”. Tracy will look at whether carers can nominate workers and vice versa for “Oscars” in addition to Foscars. With regards to retention of carers, Tracy will hold an exit interview with carers who wish to leave to find out if anything can be done to prevent this and to find common themes. At the conference Tracy will be available to speak with carers and is happy to be contacted in respect of problems carers are having with payments. A ‘This is Me’ letter from Tracy will go out Monday to carers via email.

7. **Social Worker Retention:**

FAP will review this quarterly to check for progress. It is crucial that the Child has a regular Social Worker but this has not been the case for some time for many of our children. There is currently a national shortage of Social Workers. Norfolk County Council has recruited 32 workers in October and the are 80 newly qualified workers. Norfolk is investing in them by providing a greater degree of support and training to ensure they are of a high calibre and want to stay in Norfolk. Norfolk will keep agency workers so that they can provide expertise whilst supporting workers who are new in their role for 6 months to ensure the new workers feel fully supported and don’t move on. In order to free up Social Workers, business support will be helping with admin tasks so that Social Workers have more time for direct work. Carers should notice a change in stability of Social Workers in the next four months.

Vicky said that the permanency rate in Breckland is high. In our (FAP) experience, Nipe (Newly qualified) Social Workers are of a high standard and they have time to get to know the child and what is needed. Vicky or Kate Dexter will be attending FAP and TAC in the future.

8. **Supervising Social Workers:**

Mike wanted to keep us information about some changes with Supervising Social Workers and said that there will be a 3 full time equivalent workers leaving soon for various reasons such as, maternity leave, different job role and retirement. He is currently recruiting to replace these workers and interviews will take place by 30th Oct. There has been a good deal of interest. Any Carers affected will receive a phone call or email advising them who to contact until a replacement is provided. The Fostering Stocktake suggested that there might not be a need for both a Social Worker and Supervising Social Worker where the placement is long term and stable. Tracy will look into whether this is viable.
9. **Groups feedback:**

**Kings Lynn** - A very well attended group - there were 13 foster carers including some newly approved members which was good to see. 5 preschool children attended and 4 members of staff. Suzy Holman was hoping to be our speaker but unfortunately was unable to attend. However, 2 support workers and one student from the team attended as well as duty worker Jemma. It took the form of a general question and answer session and as there were a number of new carers we talked about the role of the duty team, placements, FAP, network groups and social events as well as explaining the Hub and Fostering Friends to those who hadn’t joined. It was a relaxed and enjoyable meeting, especially beneficial to the newer members and a good opportunity for a coffee and catch up for all. Anne, Kings Lynn

“We are still doing really well with our weekly coffee mornings in Kings Lynn and I am organising the children’s Christmas party again this year (either 1 or 8 December TBC) and foster carers Christmas Lunch Monday 3rd December” Anita, Kings Lynn

We discussed how the numbers for those attending Network Groups has increased in the last year and this may be due to the use of Hub and Fostering Friends to communicate with carers.

Christmas parties are being organised for Norwich and CWD too.

**CPD – on Nov Agenda**

Michaela asked for ideas for speakers for next years network Group meetings and will communication via email with the Network Group Representatives.

Question was asked for carers who are awaiting approval at panel could they attend a Network Group meeting? It was felt that as potential carers will already have a buddy ambassador and can attend regular get togethers then this is probably not beneficial to them at the moment.

10. **AOB:**

There has been a mixed response from the InCare Council with regards to Social Worker Profiles.

Payslips – there is still much confusion surrounding payslips with many carers not being paid correctly and are unable to track what payments are for. Tracy will look at this again for possible solutions. Some carers who have regular respite have not been deducted and will be contacted soon regarding this. Craig has an expenses sheets which he is happy to share with carers to help define how much is expected.

Bromley Children’s Services would like to set up a similar FAP and suggested that some Norfolk carers visit and speak with carers from Bromley to share ideas. Sharon will email FAP carers to find out who wants to attend, agree a date and liaise with Bromley.
Birth Children in Recruitment – Two ladies who attended FAP today are from Fostering Families and wondered if children who grow up in fostering households have been approached about recruitment more carers. Vicky to speak with Tracy regarding this.

CWD – passport to independence to be discussed in November. IRO’s will be gathering data to see how things are progressing with passport to independence since the launch.

Transitions Post 16 will be discussed in November FAP.

Meeting Closed at 12.30

Written on 12\textsuperscript{th} Oct by Sharon Donoghue
Checked 13\textsuperscript{th} Oct by Julia Spinks