FOSTERING ADVISORY PARTNERSHIP

Meeting at South Green Park, Mattishall.

18th October 2017 10am-1pm

Present: Julia Spinks (chair), Peter Ronan (vice chair), Stefan Rice, Keeley White, Catherine Sutton, Sharon Donoghue (minutes), Roni Kingston-Miles, Sarah Cressey, Fiona Fitzpatrick, Jo Mills, Michaela Fysh, Owen Garrod, Pam Weyer, Francis Whymark, Craig Secker, Lori Ong, Anne Ritchie.

Apologies: Debbie Burrell, Antonella Parker.

1. **Introductions and welcome** to Jo Mills who is a therapist representing Compass and Craig Secker who is a kinship foster carer.
   Peter declared a conflict of interest; that Craig’s company does some work for Children’s Services - ‘Insignia Health Care’ but does not do work for LAC or Adoption.

2. **Minutes** have been checked and in future attendees will be given a week to read the minutes and then they will be shared and go online. Therefore if corrections are needed you must advise Sharon within a week of the minutes going out.

3. **Action points from previous minutes:**
   **Medical Forms** - *Michaela will remind carers and workers that hard copies of the forms are available via duty which should be used instead of emailed copies. Pg1*
**Permanance Panels** – Peter will check with Sally Sinclair whether agreement has been reached for carers to attend Panels.

**Mobile Phones** – ‘Deprivation of Liberty’. This has been checked with the legal department and the use of electronic devices including phones must be monitored at their chronological age appropriate level (not at their emotional age). Carers can put on the usual parental controls but must not check private emails or other private sites, as this would be considered a deprivation of liberty. Liability sits with Children’s Services. If you have a child where you have concerns about what they are accessing or how they are using technology i.e. they are at risk of sexual exploitation, then you must speak with your child social worker who will seek legal advice. NCC has trackers and filters on laptops provided by NCC which notifies the social worker of the sites the child has accessed. If there are technical difficulties carers can contact the Virtual School who will be glad to help.

There have been training courses for carers and children in the West to help with difficulties in using technology; *Michaela will find out if there are any more of these for the rest of the county.*

Police are visiting secondary schools to provide information and guidance and Facebook are providing digital ambassadors for schools.

School have different rules regarding looking at content and removing mobile phones. Pg2
**Christmas Parties** – Norwich (9/12) and Kings Lynn are organising this year’s parties and funds have been requested and reimbursed for last year’s hall hire and paid for this years hire. CWD and Gt Yarmouth are to be announced soon. Santa has been found for Norwich!

4. **Compass:**

Jo is a therapist who co-facilitates the Spixworth reflective practise group. There are some common themes coming from the groups such as those issues surrounding placement breakdowns. The numbers for the reflective practise group in the West have dwindled and more referrals are needed. Referrals should be made via the supervising social worker (SSW). Michaela will remind SSW that this support is available. Carers who use the group say that it is a vital area of support to the placement and allows the carer to speak in a non judgemental environment with other carers who understand and can relate to similar feelings.

Referrals to Compass LAC are made by the social worker via consultation at each locality. Areas explored are placement stability, attachment, and mental health needs. Referrals should only be made via the child’s social worker but if you do not have any success then contact your supervising social worker who will liaise with workers for you. Referrals can be made to CAMHS services via the GP but as Compass is LAC CAMHS they will get to know about the referral. If a referral is made carers can ring CAMHS to find out what is happening if there is a delay.

*Pg3*
- **TAC to identify a wish list regarding what we carers and workers feel is needed or missing from our Mental Health Services and bring this along to the meeting on 9\textsuperscript{th} Nov with Jonathan Stanley.**

- **TAC to devise a card for carers to use with different sources of support available.**

- A proposal for all children to receive a mental health assessment has been suggested at national conference.

- Carers are reminded that they can ask for a Signs of Safety meeting. It is advisable to not wait until the placement is at breaking point before calling a SOS mapping meeting.

- The ‘Healthy Child Service’ with the one stop helpline number can also help with emotional wellbeing and can be used by carers and children.

- Carers can access ‘Supportline’ and receive 6 free consultations.

- Compass will have a stand at the Conference, so pop along for a chat.

- Emily from Compass will attend the Watton Network Group meeting on the 23\textsuperscript{rd} November.

  Thank you to Jo for attending today.

5. **Continuous Professional Development:**

   a) Anne held a meeting on the 2\textsuperscript{nd} October where they discussed the conference on the 21\textsuperscript{st} November which is now full. If you are not able to attend you must let Learning and Development know ASAP so that others who are on the waiting list can attend in your place.
If you do not attend the conference your department will be charged for your non attendance.
The key note speaker is booked and other speakers will be presenting from 10 – 3pm. The market place is full and is open from 9 – 4pm to give everyone the opportunity to access the stalls/stands before and after the presentations.

b) Discussed next year’s conference and the possibility of Richard Rose attending to talk about therapeutic life story work which would continue the current theme of therapeutic care. Any other ideas to Anne please. Anne may provide a questionnaire within the conference packs to find out what training carers would like. Next year carers will be able to use the learning hub to book courses and this is to be launched at the conference. When carer/partners use learning hub you must have separate accounts and email addresses. A charge will be made if no notice is given for cancelling courses. If cancelling within 24 hours and you ask a friend to attend in your place then no charge will be made to the team.

Portfolio – Some clarity is required as to how much information is needed on the portfolio as some SSW are asking for a large quantity of information whereas others aren’t. Peter said that he wanted to allow a couple of years whilst everyone is getting to grips with the portfolio and set some stricter rules in year three. Anne and Suzy will be working on the training standards which are now out of date.
Fiona said that carers will be able to access courses which are normally just for social workers, via the social care academy, and vice versa.

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6. Shortage of Social Workers:
Carers have expressed concern via private messaging on fostering friends about changes and shortages of social workers and are worried about the effect of not having a worker or having several over the course of a year has on the children. Carers have indicated that the lack of social workers means that no life story work is done or later life letter for adoption cases, changes in dates and venues and cancellations in meeting such as PEPs are not consulted to carer/child. Often an expected social worker does not turn up. The lack of continuity is a problem which affects all relationships around the child and sometimes poor decisions are made because vital information is not being passed on. One child has had 6 social workers in 10 months. Keeley pointed out that if there are any problems concerning PEP’s then we should let her or her team know and they will help.

Fiona gave some reasons for the current problem;
- Government rules in relation to agency workers claiming expenses when they work away from their home town has impacted on the number of available workers.
- A new service provider has been used to obtain agency workers but not enough have come through.
- Court work to LAC teams has increased the burden for workers. 13-15 social workers have left and all had exit interview. During these interviews workers said that reasons were either personal or because there has been a change in expectations.
- Aug was busier than expected – traditionally a quite month but became very busy. PG6
Changes in middle management have also impacted. Fiona added that there were 36 newly qualified workers plus 15 agency workers have been taken on last week and they are embedded in all teams. We should see the effect of this over the next 3-8 months. NIPE will join more than two intakes being made in a year. Newly qualified workers will be given a few cases until they become more experienced. Fiona acknowledges that consistency and retention of permanent staff is priority and that stability has been lost in recent months. All agreed that the quality of NIPE workers is excellent.

Legal work has reduced. Where carers are experiencing difficulties in gaining access to social workers they can contact the social worker team managers. *Peter will issue a list of managers.*

Questions raised - How does Norfolk compare with using agency staff to other County’s? Some other Counties are 50% agency Norfolk isn’t as high.

Fiona left the meeting.

What can be done to retain workers? The case loads are currently very high and unmanageable. There is no business support which could have been used to give social workers time for the children. All agreed that social workers would much rather carry out 1-1 therapeutic work with children rather than crisis management but with the current workloads this is not a reality. Allocation information this week (23.10.17) indicates that workload is beginning to decrease.

7. Peter will be looking for carers to carry out foster carer recruitment. Whether this is carried out in your own area or in a different area is the carers choice.
8. **Team Around the Child – TAC**
An update meeting was held last week:
a) Respite guidance is now on the Hub.
b) Scaling – Stef and Pam visited the IRO meeting to talk about inconsistencies. Carey will visit some Network Groups.
c) Mental Health – will be discussed in meeting of 9th November.

9. **Fostering Friends:**
The fostering friends admin team have issued new guidelines which include a paragraph about correct use of the page. Please see appendix a. Keeley would like a copy of the guidelines to share with designated teachers. Lori reminded us that fostering friends is only for local authority carers.
Items for CPD continue to be posted as well as social events. Some of the events being organised are Christmas parties for children, Christmas lunches for carers, breakfast clubs, craft days and a book group. Carers attended the Forum library to an event set up Beth from the library service and enjoyed this. Michaela hopes to set this up in the West.
When carers meet up inevitably they discuss support and during discussions differences and inconsistencies crop up. Such as some carers getting regular supervision and some less regular.
Carers are reminded that duty and fostering managers can be contacted if carers are needing help or information and are unable to get hold of their SSW.
10. **11 Plus group:**
Sarah has set up a group to organise activities and events for looked after children aged over 11. This will be just for looked after children and not birth children in order for them to feel special and allow them to make other friends who do not live with birth families. Anyone in this group can set up events and post out an invite but Sarah will coordinate and let everyone know via the hub and fostering friends. Watch this space for some activities to be organised!

*Sharon will ask Mike to allow Sarah to be a Hubster so that she can advertise events on the Hub as well as fostering friends.*

11. **Network Groups:**
Gt Yarmouth – 6 carers attended and Antonella talked about changes in Tax for carers. Such as if you have a child for respite Friday to Monday then you will receive two weeks tax allowance. Further details are on Fostering Network website.
Kings Lynn – 8 carers attended and Helen Maund visited to discuss Theraplay. Carers found this very useful.
Any ideas for future groups can be passed to duty workers.

*Lori to put a request for idea on fostering friends.*

12. **AOB:**
Adoption retention payments: Following a period of bridging carers are asked to keep the child’s place open for a period of time and not take another child a payment is made to the carer. The time required is agreed during the adoption planning meeting which is chaired by an adoption manager, and it should be made clear exactly what the timescale is and what the payment will be.
The carer should be paid as though they still have the child in placement, not as a retainer. *Francis will check this with Peter and let FAP and all workers know.*

All carers agreed that they do not like to ask for money even if it is travel expenses as this feels awkward. However Francis pointed out that it is an entitlement which we should take.

For next meeting agenda – Catherine Sutton.

Written by S Donoghue 18th Oct 2017
Checked by J Spinks 18th Oct 2017