Fostering Advisory Partnership

How we work:

**Aim 1:**
Maximise the welfare of children in our care through the promotion of good practice and partnership working.

**Impact:**
Improved experience in foster care for children in care by setting clear standards outlining the skills that all foster carers should have and increasing access to specialist training and support. Foster carers are central to many children and young people’s experience of care. It is essential that the foster carers are valued and supported and ensure that they are properly equipped with the necessary range of skills

**How this is evidenced:**
- All foster carers have a clear Valuing care skillset measurement tool.
- Recording {review, (un)announced visits, supervision forms} clearly evidences the National Minimum Standards.
- All foster carers are knowledgeable of the NMS and this is evidenced in the recording.

**Aim 2.**
Have high ambitions and a shared commitment for improving outcomes for children and young people in care to achieve lasting change for them by having a coordinated approach across the system.

**Impact:**
Continuous development of foster carers’ skills; to establish greater consistency in the way in which skills are assessed and recorded.

In order for carers to provide the supportive commitment, which is essential for children’s development, they themselves must be provided with effective training and support. Carer stress, and the need to respond to difficult behaviour, account for a high proportion of placement breakdowns and instability for children.

The diverse needs of the children in foster care require a range of skills and it is essential that training and support are available to ensure that carers are properly equipped with these skills

**How this is evidenced:**
- Number of carers who have come forward for specific fostering tasks.

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• Each foster carer has a clear CPD plan (in their annual review).
• Foster carers form an integral part of the CPD workstreams and they contribute to the tailoring of the learning and development offer. Carers can be skilled up to co-facilitate and co-deliver training.
• Specific training for the Enhanced fostering team, UASC or any other innovative fostering models.

Aims 3:
As part of the corporate parents, we must champion the needs of children in care and deliver what is best for them.

Impact:
Identifying and spreading good practice in corporate parenting.
Transforming the availability of positive activities for children and young people in care, find and secure local authority’s own leisure provision free for children and young people in care.

All foster carers complete health assessments in a timely manner.
Foster carers will ensure continuous engagement in the children’s education: support them with their homework, attend school parent’s evenings and help make appropriate choices for their education. It is vital that carers develop good links with schools as this is central to ensuring that they understand the educational needs of children in care.

All foster carers encourage the children’s education and act as strong advocates for the children in their care by being committed parents and seek advice from educational professionals.
Support children with developing their own interests and, through these, establishing new relationships and friendships by supporting children in engaging in out-of-school activities such as sports, dance and theatre clubs was an important way for young people to develop normal healthy relationships outside the home.

How is the evidenced:
• Library of evidence of good practice and joint working and success story which will be built into the Fostering Service’s annual review
• FAP makes contact with local District councils to explore further offer to foster carers: i.e. free membership to local leisure centres, parking permits.
• Number of out of timescale health assessments.
• Head of the Virtual school is part of FAP and will ensure ongoing communication around educational issues.
• FAP promotes any programs developed by the Virtual school.
• Exchange of information about activities available in the local communities.
• FAP seeks useful information about the local offer within different clusters.
Aim 4:

To adopt a culture of continuous improvement, to offer ideas on new and innovative ways of working, thus achieving a better outcome for every child placed within Norfolk County Council Fostering Service.

Impact:

Work with the service in embedding new programs: i.e. enhanced, learn from other programs i.e. Mockingbird program, that have started to show us how stability in a family environment can be achieved even for children with the most challenging backgrounds when foster carers are properly trained and supported, and young people have access to proper respite and therapy.

Learning from file audits to be fed back to ensure completeness, quality and consistency around practice.

Use the new national learning infrastructure to learn from the best authorities.

Supporting family time: Foster carers to promote family time in line with the children’s care plan in a highly sensitive and supportive way, to engage or re-engage with their families.

Identify areas of their services which could be improved and develop solutions jointly. These sessions will maintain the continuing drive towards improvement. Formal quality assurance processes are established, so that all carers are asked regularly for their feedback regarding the service and for their suggestions for developments or improvements.

Promote the usage of the new hub and Portal.

Fostering team managers and senior managers to be accessible and visible.

Task and focused groups will meet bimonthly or more frequently to ensure that tasks are completed: communication plan, support the service in implementing new ways of working and placement support.

Communication with colleagues, decision making, information sharing and lead responsibilities, ensuring that the needs of the child continue to be prioritized.

How this is evidenced:

- Support the service in embedding new ways of supporting foster carers.
- Two meetings dedicated to learning from other LAs or providers.
- Feedback from annual survey.
- Feedback from newly approved carers.
- Number of foster carers supported in using the Portal. FAP members will support other foster carers to embed the Portal as a way of recording and communicating with the NFS and the child’s SW.
- Quarterly meetings in each locality to support carer to know the team.
• 3-6 months planner of activities to continue to be shared with FAP by Norfolk Fostering Service and foster carers to be identified for specific working groups.
• FAP to continue highlighting the needs of the service around sufficiency: Pace beds, emergency, long term, sibling placements.
• One foster carer from each locality to accompany Laura Gavrila to team meetings of the front line teams to launch the charter and handbook.
• One foster carer to engage in facilitating themed workshops: i.e. transition, allegations and placement planning.

Aims 5:

Working in partnership with the In Care Council and others to create opportunities for children and young people to meet together for the purpose of growth and development through activity and learning.

Impact:

Children are placed in homes that are matched to their needs.

It is important that children have a chance to shape and influence the parenting that they receive at every level – from expressing their wishes and feelings about the individual care they receive in their placements, through to helping to shape the overall strategy for children in their area through a Children in Care Council.

Ensure that the voice of the child is heard at each FAP meeting.

All practice is child focused.

The voice of the child is captured in the foster carers' reviews.

The child is seen by their SW as well as by the SSW.

How this is evidenced:

• Finalised SNAP document.
• Outcome of the Bright Spots and any other surveys are shared by Irene Kerry and by the participation officers.
• Laura Gavrila to attend the NiCC at least twice year to gather the children’s feedback on various aspects of fostering.
• There is a comprehensive record kept of the child's life within the fostering household.
TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Methods of consultation and actions resulting from:
   a. Support groups for foster carers and membership on the Advisory Partnership.
   b. Management and social worker representation on the Advisory Partnership.
   c. Methods of consultation with the wider TAC to continue to be developed.
   e. Recording feedback and actions where required.
   f. The working groups will consult with members of the team around the child who have an area of expertise as required.
   g. workstream on specific areas of work: Enquiry and journey to approval and Support and Supervision.
   h. FAQ recorded on the new Hub

2. Compilation of Advisory Partnership.

   There will be a core group made up of a Foster Carer Chair, Head of Fostering Vice Chair, representative from each Network Group, sub group Chair, representative from the Virtual School and Health, a Fostering Manager, Head of Service/Team Manager of Looked After Children, Children and Young Persons Participation Manager, representative of LAC CAMHS, Service Development Manager, Advice & Mediation Worker and an ‘Executive’ Administrator.

   There will be occasions when invited guests will cover particular areas of interest e.g. marketing, recruitment, training etc.

3. Frequency and type of meeting.

   a. The Advisory Partnership will meet monthly.
   b. The working groups will meet as required to be decided by the group.

4. Service of committee.

   a. Foster Carer chair, reselected every two years with a maximum of up to two terms.
b. New members will be invited to join the Advisory Partnership every 12 months working alongside existing members.

5. **Selection of Advisory Partnership members.**
   
a. By recommendation/invitation/volunteering.

b. Moving in because of work undertaken in a specialist group.

c. Members leaving the Advisory Partnership should, where possible, provide a notice period, replacements will be selected on the basis described above.

d. Members leaving the Advisory Partnership, who are also members of a specialist working group, should where possible, provide a recommendation of a replacement from that group to provide continuity.

e. Any member of the Advisory Partnership or working group can be asked to leave the group at any time should their conduct is seen as unsatisfactory by the group or they are no longer in the same role.

6. **Relationship and communication with specialist groups.**
   
a. Via representation on Advisory Partnership.

b. Via membership of Advisory Partnership people in these groups.

c. Minutes of Advisory Partnership and working group meetings to be sent out as soon as possible following a meeting. The minutes will be agreed by the appropriate group prior to being sent out or posted onto web page.

7. **Communication method**

All minutes and information from meetings of the Advisory Partnership and the working groups will be posted on the NCC fostering and adoption website, once agreed by the Chair. A new button will be created to facilitate ease of access. The proposal is that all we undertake should be open to all in Children’s Services and foster carers.

8. **How do we measure the effectiveness** of the Advisory Partnership and the working groups?
   
a. Develop short, medium and long term goals and objectives which can be used as benchmarks to measure the effectiveness of the groups.

b. There should also be some form of self and perhaps external evaluation.

c. A record of achievements, issues resolved to be kept – minute taker to do this.

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d. Updates provided through the Norfolk Fostering Service quarterly Newsletter.

9. **A decision making quorum** will be defined as 4 foster carers and 1 Children’s Services staff.

10. Each working group will have **representation on the Advisory Partnership** to facilitate communication and direction if issues raised at AP require action from working group.

11. Expense and compensation for participation.

   a. Mileage to and from meetings will be covered.

   b. An allowance for lunch will be provided where people are away for the whole day and lunch is not provided.

   c. Where a foster carer is responsible for the administration and minute taking of the meetings an hourly rate will be paid.

Aims and Terms of reference updated and agreed by FAP April 2020.