FOSTERING ADVISORY PARTNERSHIP

Meeting @ Dereham Football club: 11th March 2015  9.30 –13.00

Present:  Chair - Mark Buckle, Vice Chair - Peter Ronan, Natalie Samways, Martin Lovett, Anne Ritchie, Pam Weyer, Julia Spinks, Steve Ginn, Kevin Martin, Michael Cox, Sharon Donoghue, Sarah Hunter, Sheila Locke, Anja Grau.

Apologies:  Antonella Parker, Michael Cox.

1. Meeting of 5th Feb 2015 -Minutes agreed and welcome Anja to the group.
2. Action points checked from 5th Feb  (see updated Action Points sent out with Minutes)
3. Support groups – Some issues in relation to training from Norwich Support Group: Carers said a course or some rules/guidance on what forms should be used for supervision and recording as all carers seem to be doing things differently. Carers suggested we could have a library and a list of recommended reading for each subject area, together with book reviews. Norfolk Library Service will be visiting all Support Groups in the next two months so could we set something up with them. Sharon has made Anne Ritchie aware of the above points to see if training department can assist.

Carers said that there is a long delay from when expenses are requested to when they are paid, (not from Support Workers but all other depts.) Also there is no information as to what the payment is for when it is received and this makes things difficult to identify the payment when it is actually received. Peter has agreed to help resolve this issue and contact the relevant departments with a view to all payments to foster carers being paid via Support Workers in the future but in the short term it maybe possible to have the codes so that foster carers can identify what the payment if for.

No other feedback from NW or Thetford, Gt Yarmouth.

CWD support group feedback. This was a successful get together and good turnout. Carers thought it was good fun, and very positive. One issue which was raised was that changing facilities at venues aren’t good, it is very difficult for carers with children with disabilities to change a child especially when they are bigger. They would like a resource book which highlighted places to go with good changing facilities. Steve has agreed to contact Norfolk Coalition for Disabled to assist with this as they have already done this work.

Steve attended an informal adolescent Support Group, initiated by Nicola Grounds from Wymondham. Nine carers attended and many thanks to Nicola for running it in her home.
The group talked about what they want from meetings. They agreed that guest speakers in following meetings would be good i.e. YMCA, SOS bus.

4. Working Group Feedback

Team Around the Child T.A.C. – Encourage other social workers onto the group. Currently restructuring will impact on who wishes to attend. Peter and Shelia to discuss further to ensure Social Workers are represented. Peter and Sheila will have proposals at the next meeting. Pam suggested T.A.C. could go into Social Worker meetings and tell them what we do to raise our profile and get Social Workers on board.

Currently we have Sheila, Peter, Michael, and Martin representing the Fostering Advisory Partnership. We discussed the need for a greater representation of Social Workers both on Fostering Advisory Partnership and the Team Around the Child. For change to be effective it was suggested that Cathy Mouser – Head of social work, Don Evans assistant director, and a Team Manager from LAC should attend. Also social worker from grass roots so that the balance is correct. Managers and Social Workers from around the county should be approached, not just from Norwich.

Continuous Professional Development, CPD

Meeting took place on the 9th March, this was the 2nd meeting. Discussed:

- Different ways of evidencing CPD, via portfolio – evidence of learning sheets as well as certificates from courses. Samples of learning sheets being looked at and outcome TBC shortly.
- A course for new carers which can include Kinship carers too. This “foundation course” will cover the following – recording, life story work, working with families, court procedures, Placement meeting, delegated authority, data protection and confidentiality, so all carers know what’s expected.
- Kinship group – buddy system for kinship carers 1-1 contact with new carers and experienced carers. Friends and family carers have different needs to other foster families regarding training more specific to F&F, different set of rules eg contact can often be taken in homes. Anja and Steve in time to set a F&F/Kinship Support Group, establish what is required first. Anne to take kinship issues raised to training group for discussion.
- Library service – having a good selection of books that carers can use, write reviews about and a list of recommended reading.

Support Groups and Social

Steve to attend Thetford and Gt Yarmouth support groups. The Working Groups is being populated and all members are keen. Thinking of the feasibility of holding activity days with children, carers and social workers. Rachel, Micaela and Teresa agreed that one of them will always attend Working Group meetings. First meeting of working group after Easter Break – the meeting will discuss support groups frequency, running, planning etc. A map of the distribution of carers is in existence which indicates the distribution of foster carers across the
County, this will aid the development of Support Groups. This means a plan can be developed for where support groups should be and possible link up with carers in their areas. Peter confirmed that we would not have any confidential information about the carer, such as names and numbers, but would purely have a dot on the map so a link up would need to be carried out by Fostering Support Teams. Pam to talk to Mike at TAC to obtain map.

**Virtual school** – Julia to go on governing body, Julia to email Peter to request she goes on it. Pupil premium system currently doesn’t specify how it’s spent. This should be mentioned at PEP to ensure it is used correctly.

**Annual Checks** - It was agreed by Peter Ronan that unannounced visits to homes when carers are on a break of up to four weeks will not happen. If a foster carer is taking a break for longer than four weeks and a check is due, a check will take place after the fourth week as it is not practical to wait any longer.

5. **Preventing signs of safety.**

Norfolk has adopted a new training programme which is being rolled out throughout children’s services. (Police, workers in schools, nursery nurse, IRO’s). All feedback has been that signs of safety is very useful, and where already used has had very positive outcomes for children. Fieldwork teams currently doing training, and it was suggested that carers could train alongside Social Workers so all get to know each other and how we work. Suggestion that Carers to have a half day course, whilst carers with a more specific role like trainers to have two days, all still undecided.

What is sign of safety? It’s a consistent approach – What’s going well, what isn’t, what can be done to solve the issues.

6. **Publicity**

Some negative coverage regarding an historical case from Anglia news recently. To clarify – Fostering Advisory Partnership is not connected in any way to Norfolk Foster Care Association and is not a Foster Carer Association. We are concerned that this might reflect badly on the group and NCC as a whole. Foster carers may require some media training – Peter to organise if required.

7. **Fostering Advisory Partnership information.**

The button on the NCC website is now up and running and accessible to all. It currently has the Terms of Reference for the group on, but this will be added to each time a meeting happens or information needs to be fed back to carers. This will be a useful tool in the distribution of information to carers along with Support Groups. (For link go to NCC Children’s Services, Adoption and Fostering, Fostering, Support for foster carers, Fostering Advisory Partnership). It was agreed that a Fostering Advisory Partnership newsletter would also be useful too, and the group will look at taking this forward at the next meeting. Natalie suggested having a photo of each member on the website. (Action point - to have a look at the website before the next meeting - all). Literature – a leaflet to be devised as soon as possible. Mark to decide what to include but will circulate for comment. Antonella has completed the logo which is going to be added to all literature. All agreed that a newsletter would be a good idea to advise carers what
the Fostering Advisory Partnership is doing and keep them updated with developments. Christine Burchill to next meeting to discuss communications, and to help with newsletter. (newsletter on next agenda)


a. Working groups established.
   - Team Around the Child.
   - Continuous Professional Development.
   - Support groups and social events.

Sheila and Peter to advise of future Children’s service staff involvement.

We had original envisaged a Kinship Working group but after discussion it was thought a dedicated support group maybe of more use at the moment but will be reviewed. The difficulties faced from Friends and Family carers are different to those faced by general foster carers. Anja pointed out that the feeling amongst Friends and Family carers is that they aren’t getting the same level of support and training as foster carers.

Peter will look at what is needed to assist.

b. Conference 2015 – “One service”

Children’s services and carers jointly to have two separate conferences one in Norwich another nearer Kings Lynn if viable, sometime between September and November. Dr Rene Marks the key note speaker from adoption conference was excellent. It was suggested that Dr Marks have a half day slot, the other half day would be working groups. These should be longer sessions than the December conference so that we do not run out of time and issues can be fully discussed. It was suggested that a representative from Blackburn Foster Care Association be invited to talk about best practices as they already have good systems re TAC in place, Antonella to action. A stand at conference for Fostering Advisory Partnership. Venues and costings to Sheila from Sarah asap. Sarah to please attend Fostering Advisory Partnership meeting in May.

10. Interaction with other groups –

In-care council Kevin and Peter, no action

Children’s services committee date to be organised by Peter.

11. Next meeting: all to be emailed soon, after consultation with diaries of Shelia, Peter, Cathy, and Michael.

Ofsted – Meeting due sometime before End April.

12. AOB - Where a child is placed permanently, all information should be shared with carers that is relevant to child, just as it would be shared if the child is adopted. Peter.