Fostering Advisory Partnership

Meeting on 6th November 2015 at Hethel Engineering Centre 10am – 12.30

Present: Mark Buckle – Chair, Peter Ronan – Vice Chair, Carey Cake, Sharon Donoghue, Natalie Samways, Kevin Martin, Martyn Lovett, Julia Spinks, Cathy Mouser, Antonella Parker, Anne Ritchie, Michael Rosen.

Apologies: Pam Weyer, Anja Grau, Sarah Hunter.

1. Minutes of 30th September and action points checked.
   We welcome Michael Rosen to his first Fostering Advisory Partnership meeting, in his new role as our Executive Director of Children’s Services. Round the table introductions were made.

2. Support group feedback:
   It was agreed that we would now refer to support groups as Network Groups.

   Kings Lynn took place on the 7th October with a massive turnout of 21 carers together with 10 children. Due to the high number, the room was too small and the noise amplified creating a chaotic environment. Julia suggested that all Network Groups could contact local colleges to see if they have people taking childcare courses that could attend and help with the children. A new venue with a larger room should be given consideration so that the children can be given a corner/area to play in.

   Norwich took place on the 6th October and 4 carers attended. Rosie and Ester came to talk about the new short term break scheme (respite). All carers found this really informative and two would be keen to offer this service. However it was felt that further information or training would be needed, as the task is different to the usual role. It might be that a carer who already does this could attend a Network Group meeting and give a briefing. Peter will talk with Mike Woodward regarding the need for this.

   Gt Yarmouth took place on the 13th October. There will be a venue move next time to the Time and Tide Museum. A query was raised regarding having contact in carers homes and whether there should be an agreement prior to contact to prevent any misunderstandings and disagreements. All agreed that there should be a contract similar to the ones which are used at contact centers. Fostering Network has very comprehensive information for this and Signs of Safety framework should also be taken into account when drawing up the contract. Peter agreed that this issue should be looked into further and Julia will ask the carer concerned to contact him.
Thetford and North Walsham – No meeting during this period.

Note - North Walsham Network Group – Martyn received a call during this meeting regarding renewing the crèche for the next year. Due to the cost and the fact that for the past five times the crèche wasn’t used, it was decided that for the time being the crèche would be cancelled. If this was in demand again Martyn would look again at this need.

CWD took place on the 3rd November with around ten carers. The feedback was that it went well.

3. Conference Feedback – The group formally acknowledges that the first joint carer and social worker conference was a success. In all, it was felt that it was a positive event and it was good for us all to mix and hear each other views. It was noted that there could have been more children’s social workers in attendance. Cathy suggested that next year each team would be targeted with sending at least one representative to the conference. We all acknowledge that we have a long way to go but it was a great start! We would particularly like to thank Sarah and her team for all the hard work they put into making the day work like clockwork.

- People who expressed an interest to join:
  One carer and some workers were keen to be involved in the group in one way or another. All these people will be contacted. Stefanie from Action for Children, Independent Visitors Service is keen to be involved and we felt that she would be of benefit on the Team Around the Child group. Sharon to call Stef and invite her to the next meeting.

We decided that the Partnership should hold quarterly strategic meetings and invite those professionals who wanted to be involved, but were not able to commit to a monthly meeting.

- Charter Feedback:
  Most felt the idea for a new charter was good and feedback for the draft charter was positive. The charter can be used, for example, when dealing with the school, thus empowering the carer and providing guidance for social workers.
  
  Feedback from the tables at the conference below:
  How will the partnership culture in the revised charter make a difference to a child in care? - Shared information = effective team, Consistency of approach, Charter gives everyone a written frame of reference, Will help to manage everyone’s expectations, More child focused.
  How will we know the charter has made a difference to a child in care? - Things for the child will move and work smoothly, Strengths and difficulties questionnaire, Child reaches their full potential, Permanency and stability of placement.
• **General Feedback:**
  
  Guest speaker was excellent, however some felt that the speech was too long and at the wrong time of day - not enough time for feedback after this.
  
  A greater presence of Children’s Social Workers would be encouraging next time.
  
  A better mix of workers and carers on the tables, could a different system be used in the future?

4. **Working group feedback and objectives for 2015:**

   a. **Team Around the Child**
   
   Due to the rewriting of the Charter and the work involved in this, the TAC have not had a full meeting since July. The next meeting is planned for 10th November at County Hall.
   
   The main objective for the groups is to continue and finish the Charter work. Mark feels the next step with the Charter is to take a section at a time, beginning with Education, and ask relevant parties/organisations to look at it. Mark has devised a list of questions for interested parties in education to look at when considering this element of the charter.
   
   Many felt that monitoring at Supervision should include whether the child is making progress at school and what the carer is doing to assist in the child’s progress.

   **Education questions.**

   1. What is the attendance record of looked after children and young people in Norfolk?
   2. How do we ensure that the c/yp attends the best school to meet their needs, where is the evidence that this is happening?
   3. What percentage of the c/yp have undergone an assessment of needs? Where is the evidence that this is happening?
   4. How many moves of school are the looked after children making compared to their peers?
   5. What levels of attainment are being achieved by looked after children and how does this compare to their peers?
   6. Evidence that PEP’s are in place and are regularly reviewed. Does the foster carer need to own these more, taking responsibility for execution.
   7. What specialist support is being put in place to ensure that the attainment gap narrows between them and their peers?
   8. Is the information on all looked after children that covers the above accurate and up to date?
   9. Education should form part of the supervision discussion to ensure that all activities/functions which would normally be attended by a parent are attended by the c/yp carer.
   10. Are foster carers given all the information they need to advocate for the c/yp with the school?
   11. There should be an evidence based system that shows carers are involved in the education of the c/yp, reading record, help with understanding homework etc.
Michael said that the Virtual School will become more prominent and is to be expanded. *Julia expressed an interest to be involved with the Virtual School and will contact Keely White to request this.*

We discussed Nelsons Journey and Compass and if they could help the children in our care by organising group work or fun events to gain a therapeutic benefit. Compass and Children’s services have already organised a meeting on the 24/11 for carers to attend.

Peter confirmed that he thought the TAC groups next steps would be to look into the area of Education, moving on to Health and Wellbeing, then Contact as detailed in the TAC charter. Carey felt that the overriding emphasis in all aspects of the charter is the child’s emotional wellbeing and mental health. A small group will now take the “Contact” section over, if numbers allow, to devise a list of questions and seek feedback from interested parties, and amend the “contact” section of the charter as appropriate; Martyn (fostering team manager), Natalie Samways (carer) and Kate Lyon (IRO). *Sharon to forward draft charter to Kate.*

Peter is to write an introduction to the charter and it should also be decided who is the owner of the charter. We aim to complete the charter by April.

The Supervision Agreement is to be rewritten too.

The above was agreed by all at the meeting.

b. **Continuous Professional Development**

A meeting was recently held and a draft CPD portfolio document has been devised and was brought to the group for comments. We felt the document is good and the only question at the moment is whether the portfolio will be computer based or paper within a folder. Most felt that computerised would work better. Peter will be taking this document to the Corporate Parenting Board for their approval.

More carers are needed on this group. Antonella added that If the Portfolio and Charter are introduced at “Skills to Foster” this is provide an incentive for recruitment onto all partnership groups. The next CPD meeting is 10th Dec.
c. Network Groups (formerly known as Support Groups) & Social Events

A meeting for this group recently took place. A new venue for the Children with Disabilities Group was discussed. Also during holiday times could the Network Group be more of an outing with a more social element such as taking place in a park.

With regards to the running of the Network Group Peter said that the organisation, planning and lead was children services but ownership was the Fostering Advisory Partnership. Social Events would be carer organised, but there would need to be a children’s services presence.

The group said a buddy scheme would benefit carers especially those new ones. The idea being, Supervising Social Workers would discuss which carers are new at their team meetings and find someone who lives in the area of the new carer who is able and willing to meet up and/or go with the new carer to Network Group meetings and the like.

*Julia will discuss the need for an Adolescent group at their next meeting.*

Upon his departure, Michael said that he is pleased with the progress and ethos of the group and would like to attend the next meeting on the 2nd December.

Dates of next meetings – these to take place on the 1st Wednesday of each month except when they fall in school holidays. Next dates to be agreed at Dec meeting.

Wednesday 2nd December 2015

Wednesday 6th January 2016

Wednesday 3rd February 2016

Wednesday 2nd March 2016