

MINUTES OF MEETING

Meeting	FLAG Meeting	
Date and time	Monday, 10 January 2022	
Location	Virtual Microsoft Teams Meeting	
Attendees	Rachel Cutts - Chairperson Elizabeth Keogh - Vice Chairperson Laura Redfern – Treasurer Steve Edwards – Service Director Sophie Eadsforth – Group Manager Ty Yousaf – Fostering Service Manager Councillor Sinead Anderson – V/C Children and Young People’s Committee Prue Oakden – Fostering Support Officer (Minute Taker) Sue Denholm – Assistant Head of Virtual School Stephanie Pritchard – Assistant Head of Virtual School Jill McLaughlin - IRO Linda Rushby - IRO Stuart Ferguson from My Bag Charity 16 Fostering Households attended	
Apologies	FC - Kate Wheat	
Agenda	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Previous minutes 2. Financial Position 3. Guest speaker/Visitor – Stuart from My Bag, IRO’s & Virtual School 4. Service Update Children’s & Fostering Services 5. Carers Concerns and Matters arising 6. AOB 7. Date of Next Meeting 	
<u>Previous Minutes and updates</u>		Action
<p>Rachel Cutts (Chairperson) opened the meeting and introduced herself. There were 16 fostering households in attendance and a round of introductions were made.</p> <p>Previous minutes read and outstanding issues addressed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ty confirmed that he had checked that a buddy system was in operation for new carers throughout the service. Buddies are available at enquiry stage, relationships are formed during training and locality teams can match newly approved carers up with experienced carers when they transfer from the recruitment team to provide ongoing support. 		
<u>Agenda Items</u>		
1. Financial Position		

Laura Redfern is the new treasurer of FLAG but has not yet been able to transfer all of the banking documents into her name. The current balance of the Natwest FLAG account as shown in the most recent statement from 5/11/2020 is approximately £3,200.

2. Guest speaker/Visitor

Stuart Ferguson from My Bag Charity

Stuart has previously attended FLAG but gave a general overview of the registered charity and explained that they use 98p from every pound raised to purchase the bags and the contents. They supply the bags to both Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council. NCC made My Bag their chosen “Christmas Charity” last year and this helped generate a large amount of funds, as well as now being available as a Co-op community charity for donations. The bags come in three different age brackets; for infants, primary and secondary school age children and the contents are age appropriate, ranging from teddy bears, pencil cases, lunch boxes, colouring pencils and note pads, toothbrushes, throws, toys etc.

Some foster carers were unaware of this initiative and have had children arrive with them who do not come with a *My Bag*. Stuart said he is aware that there have been problems with the bags getting to the children during the pandemic as offices have been shut but there is a good supply of bags at each base and he contacts the teams each month to check on stock levels so they should never run out. Sophie Eadsforth said she had emailed the children’s team manager today to ask that social workers are reminded to take the bags out to children. Sophie and Ty suggested that foster carers can contact them via email if their foster child does not have a bag and they will contact the child’s social worker to ensure they are delivered.

Stuart also explained that last year they evolved the charity to produce boxes for young people living semi-independently called My Box, which contain a number of useful household and food items, including shower gel, toothbrush, toilet cleaner, loo roll, rice, pasta, tea bags, tinned food etc.

Stuart informed the meeting that they have been upgrading the standards of the bags and their contents with the money they have raised, however they still have a small pot of funds available, and they would like feedback from carers regarding how the money could be best spent on looked after children – maybe days out or vouchers. Rachel Cutts explained that school holidays can become

Action Ty to contact TMs to ensure newly qualified social workers in DCPT should be notified of My Bag so they are aware of the scheme. Stuart is happy to present during a training session for them if required.

long and expensive for foster families so vouchers for things like the cinema, the zoo, nice days out etc would be very much appreciated. Jill McLaughlin said that children in semi-independent accommodation often get forgotten about in conversations like these so contacting homes and the providers such as Framework and New Roots would be a good way to get more ideas about how the money could be used for them as well. Stuart explained that they have provided some Christmas meals and £25 Argos vouchers for young people in semi-independent homes recently too.

Stuart said he can be contacted via email if carers have trouble getting a My Bag or if they have ideas regarding the money. hello@mybagcharity.co.uk

Jill McLaughlin and Linda Rushby - Independent Reviewing Officers

Jill and Linda informed the meeting that they are working on a new agenda for looked after review meetings which will make them more child friendly. They are running the meetings with a child centred and strength-based approach and adapt each one to the preference of the child. A FC suggested that the looked after children are contacted the night before the actual review as they may be more likely to open up during a one-on-one call. Jill explained that some children really like the new video call system, and some don't, but they will run the meetings however the child wants and are encouraging children to be really involved in the meetings including choosing who to attend.

One carer informed the meeting that their young person has had their social worker leave without being informed and parts of the plan have not been executed as they should have been. Linda advised the carers to copy in the child's IRO to emails when they have any issues such as these as the IROs want to know what is happening in the child's life, they are not just around at the time of the review but throughout the year as well.

Sue Denholm and Steph Pritchard from the Virtual School

The new dedicated website for Foster and Residential Carers regarding all things virtual school is up and running and should answer a lot of the frequently asked questions. There are training dates for foster carers regarding the roles of adults involved in yp's education and booking can be made through the website.

[Foster and Residential carers | Nottinghamshire County Council](#)

The new system for PEP has been rolled out.

There is currently a pilot for post-16 pupil premium. The outcomes are being measured regarding raising the profile of looked after children, improving attendance and better pathway plans. They are working with a local college on the project and the college is receiving lots of training regarding trauma and providing additional support for children resitting English and Maths exams. Hopefully all children post 16 will be entitled to pupil premium in the future.

Nottingham Trent is providing a mentoring service for looked after children thinking about applying to university, this doesn't just have to be to Nottingham Trent, they will support young people with the UCAS process, funding and what happens when your offers come through. Dates for the upcoming events are often shared in the Fostering Newsletter.

3. Service Update – Children and Young People's Services – Steve Edwards

Over this year are going to be hearing a lot more about our "Whole family Safeguarding Programme" work we have already started that we will continue to develop over 2022, building on our successes and the skills and commitment of our workforce. Some 2022 highlights will include:

- Continuing to support the workforce and increase the number of social work apprenticeships we offer, there is a shortage of social workers nationally.
- Developing our "front door" with closer working between the MASH and EHU
- Developing a new approach to supporting adolescents on the edge of care
- Developing a new approach to pre care proceedings work – support more children to stay home and those need to come into care get into care more quickly.
- Trialling a multi-disciplinary team approach in Newark District Child Protection Team Change, Grow, Live, Domestic Abuse services and Mental Health Services working with social workers
- Growing the support we provide to Kinship carers through the development of a new specialist service, more money has been invested to give better offer to kinship carers. This will be rolled out from April onwards
- Growing the number of small residential homes for children and young people in Nottinghamshire, our internal homes

- Growing accommodation for Children age 16+
- Working with our partner Councils in Nottingham City, Derbyshire and Derby City to commission services and innovate

4. Update from Ty Yousaf, Fostering Service Manager

Ty thanked everyone for attending the meeting and said it was the best turnout at any FLAG meeting he has been to.

There are changes to the locality team managers as follows:

Ruth Goodison continues to cover the South Team as Marie Dean is still required at the MASH service. Rachel Taylor-Murray will be managing the Family and Friends team as Alison Hardy is moving to the Leaving Care Team. An agency worker will be brought in to manage the Fostering Family Team as Zoe Dean, the current manager, will be working in the IRO team. Lucy Andrewartha will be back from maternity on 7th February and will return to the Central & Short Breaks Team.

Changes to training – the service has been looking at the feedback from carers regarding the mandatory training and have relooked at the first three years after approval. Once that is finalised it will be circulated more widely. The handbook has also been brought in-line with the policies and procedures, making it easier to navigate and find information you are looking for. Ty would like to get feedback from carers on the new handbook when it goes live.

We are also doing some work with D2N2 (Derbyshire County Council, Derby City Council, Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City Council) around what we can do jointly to promote fostering recruitment, so applicants foster for their respective council rather than an IFA, this is a work in progress. They are currently doing joint marketing and joint pre-approval training is starting in February.

5. Concerns and Matters Arising

- Whose responsibility is it to inform the looked after child and the foster carers when children have a change of social worker?

Sophie Eadsforth informed the meeting that it would be the social workers responsibility to inform the child that they are leaving via a visit or call to say goodbye and then new social worker should also be introducing themselves. If carers are not happy or feel they have not been contacted, then the team manager is happy to speak to them and also each team has its own social work support officer (SWSO). They are responsible for

writing emails and letters and can give updates over the phone, so please make use of the SWSO's if the social workers are unavailable.

- One foster carer had a baby placed with them in December and was told by the court team manager that the child was not entitled to a festivities payment because he was less than a month old and the presents were not required.

Sophie replied that it is difficult to make hard and fast rules for payments like holiday allowance and festivities payments as they may depend on how long the child has been there, how old they are etc. Team managers can use their discretion. Foster carers can speak to their supervising social workers and their team managers about these decisions.

- A foster carer asked for clarification regarding how many days of a foster carers 28-day support care allowance a weekend of support care counted as. There was some confusion as to whether a change had been brought in in 2016 so that a Friday – Monday weekend now counted as 3 days when it had previously counted as 2. Ty said he would raise it at the next team managers meeting to seek clarification.
- A foster carer asked the meeting if they have a looked after young person on a staying put policy with an education extension if they are entitled to the same tax exemption as before. They were advised to contact The Fostering Network for clarification and details of the upcoming tax workshops were shared by the website
- [Tax and National Insurance | The Fostering Network](#)

6. AOB

Positive stories were shared by foster carers of their recent experiences, including one carer who said she had recently offered support care to a teenage girl which had previously been an age bracket she wouldn't have considered to care for, but it went really well and had been a really positive experience.

7. Next meeting

25 April 2022 7.00pm – 8.30pm MS Teams Online

Action – Ty to confirm the number of days a weekend of support care counts as

