

Meeting title: FLAG Meeting
Date and time: Monday, 10th October 2022 7pm
Location: Microsoft TEAMS

Attendees

Rachel Cutts – Chairperson
Liz Keogh - Vice-Chairperson
Laura Redfern – Treasurer
Amanda Collinson – Service Director
Sophie Eadsforth – Group Manager
Ty Yousaf – Fostering Service Manager
Colin Pettigrew - Corporate Director Children Families and Cultural Services
Councillor Tracey Taylor – Cabinet Member for Children and Young People’s Committee
Prue Oakden – Fostering Support Officer (Minute Taker)
Jenny Whiston – Placements commissioning manager
Deborah Ratcliffe – SSW representative
Apologise given by Linda Rushby IRO

24 Fostering Households attended

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and a round of introductions were made.

Standard Agenda Items –

1. Previous minutes and outstanding actions. In the last meeting it was agreed a pre-FLAG meeting would be set up for the Chair to speak with the service manager and group manager about the matters arising. This meeting was arranged and took place last week giving Ty the opportunity to begin actioning matters arising and to be able to give an update at the FLAG meeting tonight.
2. Update from Service Director, Amanda Collinson – Amanda introduced herself as Steve Edwards’ replacement and said she is getting round to all of the team meetings in the fostering teams and looks forward to getting to know supervising social workers and carers better. She attended the foster carer conference last week and had the opportunity to meet some carers then.
3. Update from Service Manager, Ty Yousaf – Ty informed the meeting that the survey results had been sent out last week and thanked carers for taking part in that. The foster carer referral scheme has been increased to £1,000 now and carers are encouraged to share the recruitment teams contact details with friends and family. We had a successful foster conference last week and had a really good turn-out of staff and carers.
4. Guest speaker Jenny Smith- Jenny introduced herself as the new Strengths-Based Practice Lead, which is a new role focusing on the Council’s drive to putting relationships at the heart of what we do, looking at what’s going well for children, families and in community networks, and how we can help build on this instead of focusing on what’s not going well. Jenny will be looking at how can we hear and learn from the voice of children, families and carers more, and support greater participation. She will be working with colleagues across all areas of the children and families department to embed this way of working. It is a broad role and Jenny has only been in post for a month, she wanted to come along to FLAG to hear from foster carers and see what happens at these meetings. She is also wanting to look for opportunities for co-production, including with the foster carer community, where carers could be involved from the start in a project which could help improve part of the service. Action – Jenny to attend future FLAG meetings and meet Sophie and Ty regarding potential participation/co-production opportunities.

5. Finance update from Treasurer, Laura Redfern - Laura said there is currently £2,026.44 in the FLAG bank account. Two support groups have been given some funds so far, £250 to Newark and £250 to Bassetlaw groups. Ty has asked the team managers to produce a list of all the hubs and then thought the managers could authorise the money to be distributed between them. Each teams have different numbers of carers in the hubs and will want to use the money differently. The money goes towards Christmas parties and summer BBQs or however the group wishes to spend the money.

Matters arising

6. Cost of living crisis – costs have gone up across the country from everything to fuel, food and energy prices and lots of carers are struggling with increased costs of living. Sophie informed the meeting that Steve Scott, projects officer, has spent a long time making a report looking at payments of neighbouring authorities and some NCC payments which haven't changed for a long time, like holiday payments, and the report will be shared with elective members soon. Sophie hopes to feed back to carers about any developments and changes to carers payments within the next month.
7. Council Tax reduction for foster carers update – Sophie confirmed that there currently no updates to share on this. It is still an aspiration but as Nottinghamshire is a two-tiered council and it is the 7 district councils that residents pay their council tax to, rather than NCC, it is difficult to get everyone on board. Also we have carers who live out of county who we could not negotiate a discount for. Cllr Taylor added that she'd had a look at the general legislation around council tax and there is no legislation to say foster carers are exempt from paying council tax and asked if anyone has any details about the councils that do offer reductions, they should share it as part of an initial information gathering stage of the process. Unitary Councils have authority for everything and therefore have an easier way of agreeing a reduction in council tax, however from her research it looks like those may be discounts that carers would be eligible for anyway, such as for low earners receiving benefits or for single occupants.
8. Supervision; secondary carers have to be seen at every other visit. Ty confirmed that there is an expectation that secondary carers participate in supervision, it is really important that the service engages with all of our carers and that includes in supervision. It has raised issues and concerns in the past, and featured in serious case reviews, where it hasn't always been clear that all family members have been seen by the service, therefore we are working to policy that all carers are seen. We are asking supervising social workers to work flexibly, perhaps having supervision remotely over TEAMS or out of hours to meet families' needs but we are clear that all carers are seen.
9. Children's car seats fitting - Some carers had concerns that not all social workers or carers knew the correct laws around car seats or how to fit them properly in cars. There are changes to legislation coming into effect soon and it is important that any changes are communicated to staff and carers who will be transporting children in car seats. Ty has already started making enquiries into this and any updates will be communicated out to carers and staff. Action – Ty to chase car seat training with Diana Bentley.
10. FC Conference – no creche option. The conference is designed to fit in with the school day so that the majority of carers can make it. Foster carers who look after pre-school aged children are encouraged to ask their close support network to help out but it is acknowledged that this isn't always an option for all children/carers. Childcare provision for next conference is to be discussed in the future planning of the next conference. One carer informed the meeting that in 2010 the conference was held at Dukeries school and community centre with a creche for small babies and all looked after children (and birth children) were invited and cared for (didn't say who by?) in the hall. It was on a Saturday so both primary and secondary carers could attend. Another carer asked that the next conference be Hybrid so that if people couldn't attend in person they could watch the conference online. Ideas for the conference to be included in the next fc survey.
11. Issue re children spending too long in car seats – A carer raised a concern about babies and young children being in their car seats for too long if their family time is taking place a long distance away from carers homes. Ty said that he didn't think this happened often, but that this should be raised with foster carers' SSW if there are concerns in the first instance, if it is not resolved it should be escalated to team

managers and finally escalated to Ty if the issue has not been resolved. There is a team called the Contact Service who supports the Fostering Service and will help avoid these kinds of situations in the first place. Ty has raised this concern with Davina Lawton, CSM re contact service.

12. Child specific – support carers getting pro-rata amount payment. Sophie confirmed that the support carer for a child specific placement will receive the £600 pro-rata payment when caring for a child with an attached child specific fee. Sophie has emailed the fostering team managers and FSO's to confirm this and asked that the payments are put on the system for the support carer so that the payment is paid.

13. Any other business

- A carer said they've recently received a "You Know Your Own Mind" payment of £500 but they're not sure what this is for and how it should be spent. Action – Sophie to get a worker to present regarding "You Know Your Own Mind" payments.
- A carer asked why annual review paperwork can't be filled in online. At the moment they get a bundle through the post and they have to complete it and return it but it would be easier to complete it online. Ty replied that this is something they have started having discussions about as it was raised in the foster carer survey. This is an issue for colleagues in the corporate departments, rather than fostering service to look at, so we are having conversations about this but have no updates at this moment. Another carer said they have had their paperwork sent electronically and sent it back via email, so it is possible to request it electronically. Action – Ty to email managers that papers should be sent electronically where possible.
- Some carers added that they are having to pay £80 a year to subscribe to Word in order to complete this kind of work and asked if that payment could be refunded by the service as it's not fair that workers are provided with a laptop with Word on it, but carers have to pay for this with their own money. Action – Ty to make enquiries as to whether we can cover these costs. Claire Dobbs said that NCC employees are offered a discount for Microsoft packages, could this be rolled out for foster carers as well? Sophie said they would look at this.

14. Good news stories – Attendees commented that the keynote speaker at the conference (Jenny Molloy) was excellent, and it was a brilliant day.

Next meeting date – 16th January 2023 at 7pm via Microsoft teams [Click here to join the meeting](#)