

MINUTES OF MEETING

Meeting	FLAG Meeting	
Date and Time	Monday, 24 April 2023	
Location	Virtual Microsoft Teams Meeting	
Attendees	<p>Rachel Cutts - Chair Laura Redfern - Treasurer Cllr Tracy Taylor Cllr Sinead Anderson Amanda Collinson – Service Director Sophie Eadsforth – Group Manager Ty Yousaf – Fostering Service Manager Linda Rushby – Children’s IRO Debbie Ratcliffe – SSW Tracey Rawlings – SSW Rachel Stimson – LAC Service Manager/Guest Speaker Zeeshan Swati – Shared Lives Service Senior Co-Ordinator/Guest Speaker Penny Hannah – FSO/Minute Taker Louise Jeffery – FSO/Observing 23 Fostering Households present</p>	
Agenda	<p>Welcome and Introductions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Previous Minutes 2. Guest Speakers – Rachel Stimson and Zeeshan Swati 3. Updates from Service Director, Group Manager and Fostering Service Manager 4. Update from IRO Service – Linda Rushby 5. Finance update from Treasurer, Laura Redfern 6. SEND/EHC Plans 7. Good New Stories 8. Fostering’s Got Talent Reminder/Financial Contribution 9. Matters for next FLAG meeting (where to send) 10. Date Next Meeting 	
<u>Agenda Items</u>		<u>Action</u>
<p>Rachel Cutts, Chair, opened the meeting and welcomed all. Introductions were made.</p> <p>1. Guest Speaker(s) Rachel Stimson, LAC Service Manager and Zeeshan Swati Shared Lives Senior Co-ordinator attended the meeting to talk about staying put and shared lives.</p> <p>Rachel talked about the staying put scheme. Every Local Authority has a staying put policy based on government legislation and it is designed to facilitate the gradual transition for a young person to adulthood.</p>		

Staying put is only considered if both the foster carer and the YP both want it to happen. Fostering Regulations no longer apply but there are key standards instead. The YP must be looked after immediately prior to their 18th birthday and the arrangement stays in place until either the YP chooses to leave the arrangement, or they reach 21.

In Nottinghamshire we have 2 schemes:

- Education extension staying put. This scheme is designed to ensure the YP is cared for until they finish their education. Payments for this match what the carers are receiving in the year the care leaver turns 18 paid and are paid until the last Fri in July (end of that Academic Year), unless the YP is going away to university in which case we pay until September when they take up their accommodation.
- Mainstream staying put – This scheme is for YP who wish to continue to live with their foster carer after their 18th birthday. Payments for this per week match the current Basic Fostering Allowance for a YP of 17 which is £264.94 from April 2023. Part of this payment is made up of a contribution from the YP of £30 (usually from their Universal Credits) and £70 from housing benefit entitlement.

Foster carers on a salary (e.g fostering futures) will only continue to get their salary if they have another child/YP under 18 in the placement. If there are no other under 18s in placement they will receive the staying put payment as above

As the staying put payment matches the current rate of BFA it will go up when it does (usually yearly)

There are also bespoke arrangements depending on the circumstances:

- For example a YP on an apprenticeship. The YP should have 2/3 of their earnings left so their level of contribution may be different based on their pay.
- YP over 18 remaining in education (other than uni) they can claim an element of Universal Credits – Leaving care advisor can advise and help with this

Shared Lives

Zeeshan Swati, Shared Lives Senior Co-ordinator spoke to the meeting. If a YP meets the criteria that they have adult care needs the foster placement should then become shared lives placement.

The reason for this is that the YP will be recognised as having adult care needs and it will be better for them in terms of accessing future services.

In these cases, the Preparing for Adulthood Team (PFA – previously Transitions Team) will complete an assessment on the YP which is then passed to Shared Lives if eligible. This needs to be done in advance of the YP reaching 18. The referral needs to be made to the PFA Team around 16/16.5 years it may be pended until the age of 17 but the team will be aware of the YP in good time. (If a YP with adult care needs comes in to

care much later – 17.5 for example they would be referred straight to adults.)

Shared lives works on the same principles as fostering but can only match adults 18 plus. They are classed as a provider service not a social work team and work on the referrals received from PFA

If you have a YP who is staying put who is assessed as having adult care needs Shared Lives is a more appropriate arrangement and comes with different allowances. There is an assessment/application process which is similar to a fostering assessment and will involve seeking references and DBS etc. Mandatory training you have gained as a foster carer such as First Aid are transferable

There are 3 main bandings – assessed by social workers in the PFA Team and the contribution from the YP is similar to staying put

Zeeshan talked about the Shared Lives scheme in general. Their team is growing. They have 40 people living long term with shared lives family and around 60 who access short breaks via the scheme. They have carers from all sorts of backgrounds, and it is possible to do shared lives and fostering alongside one another

Aiming to get assessment done in time for the YP reaching 18. Lack of awareness amongst people.

There was a question about the tax allowance from a foster carer who is entering in to a staying put arrangement with her YP. This was answered by Laura Redfern who has already sought advice on this from Fostering Network. The tax allowance is still applicable, but the housing benefit contribution must be classed as income when completing any returns/paperwork. Fostering Network can advise if you are unsure on tax matters.

Rachel and Zeeshan are happy to answer any further questions people might have.

The Chair thanked them for coming.

2. Previous Minutes and Outstanding Actions:

No outstanding matters from previous minutes. Some foster carers have reported not getting the minutes. These can be sent out to anyone who is missing them.

3. Updates from Leadership Team

From Amanda Collinson, Service Director

- The increases to allowances should take effect this month
- In Children's Social Care a creative solutions panel has been implemented. This has been developed for children on the edge of care or on the verge of coming in to care and is to find alternative solutions to support the child and their family to hopefully avoid the child coming in to care.

This has been successful, not only in sometimes stopping children coming in to care but it means that if they do come in to care we know them better and we have found that relationships don't break down in the same way as they might when a child unexpectedly comes into care.

- There is also a Strengthening Families Team which is made up of youth workers and family workers; putting in extra support and working with families to improve and strengthen relationships
- A new team which is being piloted in Newark area called the Stronger Families Team – This is a multi -disciplinary team which includes workers from Change Grow Live (drug and alcohol abuse), Women's Aid and Adult Mental Health

From Ty Yousaf, Fostering Service Manager

- Fostering Service is reorganising/restructuring.

The structure of the service is being altered so that there will no longer be different locality teams. Existing staff will now operate countywide. Team Manager Jayne Ripley is retiring and her work will be dispersed amongst the remaining managers. Moving over to a countywide model is considered to be the least amount of disruption for foster carers and staff and should have little impact on the foster carers.

Fostering Recruitment and Assessment and Family and Friends Teams will be combined for assessments.

A foster carer asked what the support would look like. Ty spoke about our workloads as a service being lower than some others. We have lost a number of foster carers recently due to different reasons either retirement, resignation or de-registration following concerns. We are recruiting but this is currently cancelled out by the losses so workers will have the capacity to support their foster carers.

- **Recruitment Activity**

Ty talked about the upcoming Foster Care Fortnight Campaign and asked the foster carers to consider coming forward to get involved with recruitment activity such as being involved in video clips, giving interviews or case studies to help prospective foster carers and the general public become more interested in fostering as we have found that campaigns where our own foster carers are actively involved are more successful. – Contact recruitment team if you think you can help or want more info

- **Fostering's Got Talent**

This super event is quickly approaching (24th May) and we need more entries to run the show. It is a very enjoyable, fun evening and we really want to encourage people to enter

- **Staffing Matters**

TM Jayne Ripley is retiring
SSW from the South Team Debbie Beech retiring
Robyn Harland from North is moving on to a different role
Zoe (Family and Friends) moving on to a different role

Recruitment is currently taking place for Fostering Family Support Workers

Linda to find out about the booklets and update at next FLAG meeting

4. Update from IRO Service

Linda Rushby Children's IRO gave an update

Linda said the IROs are continuing to work to a strengths based agenda particularly around language, and the language used in recordings, such as use of acronyms. This is so that children who participate can understand.

The team are now aiming for all initial reviews to be face to face wherever possible unless there is a reason this is not in the child's best interests. For subsequent reviews it will be decided taking the child/young person's views into consideration. Some children do prefer virtual meetings as it means they can be there and contribute but don't necessarily have to appear direct to camera when speaking.

The IROs are trying to encourage children to participate as much as possible and welcome any ideas from foster carers around how children can be helped to take part. They are happy to work creatively and consider input from FC. Don't be afraid to get in touch/give feedback

There are 2 new IROs joining the team alongside. The 3 who recently joined the team – Paul Scott, Tabitha Price and Michelle Franks who have now had their induction.

Questions/feedback

Some foster carers were please that there will be the opportunity to have face to face reviews again. The IROs feel it is important to visit and see children on their terms.

A foster carer asked about the booklet that children complete for the review and whether there are any plans to revamp it.

Linda said that they are finding most children/young people are using the Mind of My Own App in some way to give their feedback and was unsure if the booklets were used any more as they stopped being sent during Covid. Linda will speak to her colleagues and feedback at the next meeting.

Linda finished by saying that it is ok to contact the IRO involved if they have questions, things aren't going so well or the care plan is not progressing. All of the IROs want to listen and help.

Linda is also happy to answer general questions outside the FLAG meeting if people prefer

5. Finance Update from Treasurer – Laura Redfern

Laura gave an update on finances. There is currently £1636.44 in the pot. She confirmed that the £250 discussed at the last meeting has now been paid out to the respective groups.

No money has been paid into the FLAG budget over the last couple of years, but Laura said that the money that is there is not being spent.

The Fostering Recruitment Team have asked if FLAG would consider a donation towards Fostering's Got Talent as in previous years.

This was agreed. Laura and Ty agreed for this to be taken out of the budget at source.

6. EHC/SEND School Places

Foster carers had asked for this to be on the agenda as there is general concern around EHC timescales and the lack of SEND school places.

Sophie has tried to find out some more info about special school places. It is acknowledged that there are not enough. There are various things commissioned in independent sector and some work going on to look into it and report back findings about things we can do differently.

Amanda talked to the meeting about this. As an Authority we were not selected to receive funding from the Government for a SEND free school. There is currently a feasibility study for us to fund our own. There is a strategy around SEND place planning - [Nottinghamshire SEND Place Planning Strategy 2021-2026](#) which can be accessed via the SEND page of the Nottinghamshire website. Amanda/Sophie will provide updates when they become available.

EHC Plans

There has unfortunately been a backlog and this is regularly discussed at the SEND board. We currently have a shortage of Educational Psychologists which is causing this. Linda Pool interim group manager over Integrated Children's Disability Services is currently reviewing the situation and implementing a plan using current staffing or bringing in more capacity to address the backlog.

Laura Redfern added that she is a member of the Notts parent carer forum which is a good place to get more information/support around this.

Amanda reassured the meeting that the board is looking at this. She and Sophie will update the meeting as and when there is more information

7. Good News Stories

Carers shared the following good news stories –

Laura R is proud of a young person in placement with her who has been struggling with reading and was adamant she could not do it. She's been working hard on it and has now progressed to the next reading level which is brilliant!

Jan talked about being proud of her 18-year-old young person who has been applying for university and has been offered places at Nottingham Trent, Sheffield Hallam and Leeds to do a social work degree, well done! Nottingham Trent is her first choice and Jan fed back that the taster day opportunity and being showed around Nottingham Trent was what swayed her decision.

Zelda is proud of a young person who has been with her 14 years. They have got an interview on Weds for the Army. Good luck to them!

Laura K is proud of a young person placed with her who is 15. She has been working with her to encourage her to tidy her room. Laura went in one day last week to discover that the room was tidy with no prompting from Laura. This is brilliant progress, well done!

8. AOB

A query was raised from one foster carer about holiday allowance. Could consideration be given to how it is currently paid as the payments are often having to be chased up. Sophie asked if this could be emailed to her separate from the meeting and she would look in to it

Matters for the next FLAG meeting

Please email one of the following with any matters you would like to be raised -

Rachel Cutts (Chair) - rachelcutts7@gmail.com

Liz Keogh (Vice Chair) elizabethkeogh1@hotmail.co.uk

Laura Redfern (Treasurer) laura_redfern11@hotmail.com

Sophie Eadsforth – sophie.eadsforth@nottsccl.gov.uk

Ty Yousaf – ty.yousaf@nottsccl.gov.uk

9. Close and Next Meeting Date

Rachel closed the meeting.

Next date – Monday 17th July 2023 at 7pm via Microsoft Teams – link below

[Click here to join the meeting](#)