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| Meeting Title: | Recruitment and Retention Panel |

**Date:** Thursday 9th March 2023

**Time:** 11am

**Location:** Knights Court, Room 2

**Chaired by:** Sarah Duerden

**Attendees**: Carole Hill, Stacey Green, Maria White, Hannah Wheelhouse-Thomas, Sarah Stallwood, Sarah Cornett, Sarah Duerden, Deb Light, Jackie Giles

**Apologies:** Sam Allen, Ruth McVeigh, Mary Bayat and Rakesh Mistry

**Minutes by:** Sarah Stallwood

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| **Item** | **Item** | **Minutes** | **Action** | **Lead** | **Date** |
| **1** | **Welcome and Introductions** | Introductions made by all |  |  |  |
| **2** | **Minutes and Actions from last meeting** | -Minutes received in time for OFCA meeting.  -Free school meals communication was sent  -Theresa was going to her manager to see if that was still happening  -On hold policy sent to OFCA in time for their meeting  -Rakesh said that IFA’s wouldn’t provide childcare because they don’t have capacity. The support they do offer is by means of family support. Not spoken to LA’s but would assume the same applies there too.  -Information about the Portal is going out today. If any support needed then contact social worker who will raise a ticket with SASHA. ITC number provided. Any changes should be told before hand – there are still ongoing issues because mileage is not being paid in time.  -WatsApp ‘how to’ has been started by Wendy  -Jackie has looked at other LA fostering websites for wording etc. Some work has been started and put on word document.  - Jackie has spoken to Jo Upton – Exit interviews have not been happening as a rule . There is a need to use these more robustly to understand whether we could have done something differently to support people staying . Noted an average of 10 carers resign a year , the reasons in the main being due to retiring or change of family circumstances . Jackie can pull a report that identifies all those who have deregistered with the overarching reason if helpful to the meeting . It will be helpful to capture the main reasons and also ensure we are having robust retention conversations with carers. Agreed Jo Upton to continue to carry out the exit interviews. | If ongoing issues then try deal with them on an individual basis so social worker can work out what the problem is  Jackie to send the website information to maria – pull from last minutes to next meeting.  Jo Upton is due to attend meeting later in the year and can give feed back outcomes for exit interviews over last few months |  |  |
| 3 | **Foster Care Figures** | Up until Feb – 25 new approvals, 1 waiting ADM decision  15 of those are short term - in total 23  1 new short break  9 new relief  Improvement on last year. Still not meeting target set.  On Wednesday morning there is a vacancy meeting within foster service where all requests are reviewed for foster placements. Including the needs for children to receive respite care . Requests for respite need to go through SSW and child SW.  Planning any relief care for children needs to be in line with their overall care plan so that it does not disrupt their emotional stability.  If there are respite carers who are concerned they are not being asked to care for children or foster carers who feel it is in the best interests of the child to have respite and are not being offered respite, they need to speak to their SSW and the child’s social worker . | Maria to bring approvals over the year to see the peaks for enquiries and approvals. Have oversight of what was done the year before.  OFCA from annual recruitment drive work over the year and what has been successful places to promote fostering  Add to next agenda |  |  |
| 4 | **Feedback from OFCA Meeting** | Staff volunteering – want support from OCC staff at fundraising events.  Support needed at stalls.  Noted the OCC policy on volunteering and wondered if this could be used to support staff to offer some hours to promoting fostering .  It’s suggested by OFCA that OCC volunteer for 4 hours a year to help at fundraising. SSW can bring along foster carers they work with to interact with OFCA at the same time. Fun environment that builds relationships.  Stacey has a list of events coming up – not enough FC’s currently offer to help (we just need 4hr slots – even 2 would be helpful at start & finish),  Children’s SW do have to work outside their hours and go to other events throughout the year.  Our own fostering recruitment events have SW and carers attending. There are now more events taking place, so workers are being spread more thinly.  There are concerns from some carers around OCC trying to save money and returning children in long term care to their families  Response from Sarah: There is always a need to consider whether children can return to their birth families where safe to do so. We know many of our young people do this when they turn 18. There is a real focus now on ensuring children are in the right place at the right time to ensure there is no drift in planning for their care now or into adulthood. There are more open discussions being had to see if child can return home but only where this is safe and in the child’s best interest.  The Local Authority are looking at ensuring better support is out there for families when they are struggling. For a child , living away from your birth family and community is unimaginable for most of us. | Stacey to send list of events coming up to Hannah  Hannah will do rota for support at events. |  |  |
| 5 | **On Hold Policy – Fixed Timescales and Payments** | -OCC has to have a policy in place. It’s an on-hold policy for those that are not actively fostering.  Put on hold – on 31st March we have to say who is not actively fostering.  People picked up on grammar and use of abbreviations/acronyms. Abbreviations are understood by SW’s etc.as this is an OCC policy  On hold policy can be seen if foster carer asks to see it.  People’s circumstances are always going to be different – the policy is guidance so that you can adapt it to the individual’s situation.  If unavailable for over a year, would have to de-register and come back again when they are ready and go back to panel  OFCA have suggested that someone on hold should be told immediately what pay if any they going to receive and what the timescales are | Carole to send list of questions/queries raised – all to be discussed at the next meeting |  |  |
| 6 | **Recruitment to FC Coordinators Post** | Jackie and Kim interviewed last week. Recruited 5 new co-ordinators.  Meeting to be had with all co-ordinators to discuss what contact information they will be willing to share before being named  Once all details have been sorted an announcement will be made properly in a newsletter. | Details will need to go to Maria to update welcome pack, leaflets and websites.  Information to be shared at next meeting | Next meeting |  |
| 7 | **Senior Practitioner Post in Recruitment Team** | New permanent post within Recruitment and Retention. It has been incredibly difficult when searching for placements. To make process tighter and communication between brokerage, 1 senior who will sit in R&R team to be the one point of contact. 1 person can filter information to all the teams. Looking at every opportunity to house children within County. Bring themes to R&R meeting to feedback information. Will come along to the monthly meetings. Will work flexibly. | Senior Practitioner to be added to the WatsApp group |  |  |
| 8 | **Household Grants** | Paying £200 for all carers who have been active over the last 6 months – included supported lodgings. Writing individually to all carers by letter via email. SGO’s getting payment too. Funding has come from the Government. Will be paid by 31st March. |  |  |  |
| 9 | **WhatsApp or Good Sam App?** | Ruth to bring the information to next meeting.  WhatsApp not been that busy. EDT are going to a carer directly who is posting it on a different WhatsApp group which isn’t closed and open to discussions – This is not what the WhatsApp group was designed for. Chat has been inappropriate.  WhatsApp is a closed group facilitated by Stacey and Deb that is used by head of service and service manager of fostering to request in emergencies whether any foster carers can take a child in an emergency.  Only this group should be contacted for emergency placement for young people. This is to ensure children’s details are not shared inappropriately and unnecessarily. | Roll over to next month  Wendy to chat with foster carer to get her to stop.  Asking new worker to follow this up at next R&R meeting |  |  |
| 10 | **FC Run Training Courses** | Deb said that she went to a Support Group a few weeks ago where carers had said they had been to training event and were asked by the trainer if anyone would be interested in running courses for OCC as there are not enough taking place. | Deb to get more information on who trainer was and what course it was |  |  |
| 11 | **Communication** | Foster carers feel they are not getting enough communication and have asked for a list of who does what within the service.  This information can be found on the internet – statement of purpose. | OFCA to Put a link in their communication |  |  |
| 12 | **Portal** | Everything will be mandatory. Registration going out again. |  |  |  |
| 13 | **AOB** |  |  |  |  |

Next meeting

Thursday 13th April