

**Partners in Practice
Feedback
Rotherham MBC**

5th, 6th and 7th November 2018

Areas of Focus

- **Quality of Care Plan and Pathway Plans**
- **IRO's – challenge and monitoring of quality**
- **Fostering Recruitment** – Review of the process at the front end e.g. marketing, expressions of interest
- **Admissions to Care** – review of cases
- **Right Child Right Care Programme** – review to ensure performance Voice of the Child
- **Interface/Transition LAC** – Leaving Care/Adults

Workforce - Strengths

- Children's Services demonstrate a strong commitment to improving outcomes for children. There has been clear improvement within the LAC service since Lincolnshire's visit in 2017.
- There is a strong cultural shift across the organisation, which is clearly evident when meeting all staff.
- Workforce stability in LAC/IRO/LC teams is good, and the workforce are motivated and keen to provide a good service to Looked After Children in Rotherham.
- All social workers reported access to frequent verbal case discussions with their managers, including senior leaders. Senior leaders visible, accessible, staff able to raise concerns/suggestions and feel listened to.
- Continued reduction in agency staff, with agency staff becoming permanent employees.
- All staff know their children well and had high aspirations and hopes for their futures.
- Co-Location seen as a major success, LAC feel integrated into the wider CYPS.
- Therapeutic support, particularly IIP is seen as highly successful.

LAC – Strengths

- LAC and Leaving Care meet regularly to improve integrated working.
- Joint supervisions between teams at transfer.
- Edge of Care Team very well regarded and seen as effective.
- Some positive views re PLO Panel. Staff could see more recent challenge of thresholds, pre proceedings, to divert families away from proceedings or from Children becoming LAC.
- Leaving Care and LAC are proactively working with parents and their networks to support young people with maintaining or re building relationships.
- Improved accommodation for 16/18 year olds.
- Missing episodes for 16/17 year olds has reduced by 60%. Leaving Care are identifying risk, undertaking intense direct work , they know and care for their children and will go the extra mile to ensure their safety.
- Majority of case records viewed are up to date. Children seen and stat visits in most cases within timescale.

IRO- Strengths

- Dispute resolution process is making a difference.
- Major drive on performance within the IRO Service, including a data suite and monthly performance meetings. IRO's striving to evidence their footprint and impact on the child's plan.

Foster Carer Recruitment

Strengths

- The staff are enthusiastic and motivated to provide a good service.
- There is a stable management group.
- There is a specialist team that works with Reg 24 carers, private fostering short breaks and Mocking bird. Team managers have been proactive in ensuring the child's voice is included within fostering network evaluation of hub, and have been creative in how they achieve this with a video.
- Workers feel supported by the management team in developing the service.
- There is a dedicated marketing worker based within the Fostering team, working jointly with the Comms team.
- A PSW has recently been appointed to the team which they are finding invaluable with supporting new carers.
- Managers felt that most of the Reg 24 placements progressed to SGO's and those that did not, did not do so, as this was the right plan for the child.
- The foundations with regards to marketing are strong with a communication and marketing campaign plan for the year. The challenge 63, Muslim foster carer project and star parties appear to have worked well and have resulted in formal applications being received.

Foster Carer Recruitment

Strengths (continued)

- The managers and foster carers were positive about the retention project in place with fostering network.
- There is a dedicated recruitment team. Drop in sessions are regular and facilitated by workers and Foster carers.
- The skills to foster course is bi-monthly, there is flexibility with facilitating the course to avoid drift and delay in assessments. The introduction of Mocking bird has commenced and is now in the process of setting up the 2rd hub with a 3rd identified
- There is a dedicated fostering advisor offering consistency to all new applicants.
- The introduction of the pipeline is proving effective with clear monitoring and tracking of all enquiries including long term enquiries, resulting in 3 that have progressed to assessment.
- There is a positive working relationship between the fostering advisor and the assessing social workers, this has supported the development of the initial visit process, ensuring initial visits are robust. This has also included joint visits with assessing social workers.
- There was a clear sense of a developed fostering community with the foster carers.
- The introduction of the Mocking bird has been welcomed by foster carers who see this a valuable source of support.
- The Mocking bird carers felt that the multi agency training was a real positive and should be extended to all foster carers.
- Foster carers felt that the support that they received from their SSW when in work was excellent, however commented that there have been significant periods of instability within the service.

Workforce – Areas for Future Focus

- Attention to compliance has been robust, however, staff and managers suggest the need to move the focus to outcomes, whilst not diluting compliance.
- A review of transfer points is welcomed by staff, there are still too many transfer points, changes of social workers which is not in line with your relationship based practice framework and restorative practice.

LAC – Areas for Future Focus

- Review of transfer point to LAC is welcomed, by staff, CYP still have too many handover points.
- There is not always adherence to the PLO process and Care planning process where permanence other than adoption is the plan.
- Not effectively using the pre proceedings process for unborn babies. There is no consistently used pre birth assessment template.
- Family finding is not as rigorous as we would expect to see, there is a concern about the robustness of the viability assessments. Need to encourage staff to develop a more systematic approach to exploring networks and family members, both as potential carers but also as key support in safety planning.
- Some misunderstanding and lack of knowledge regarding Reg 24/SGO's placements. Over reliance upon the 2 specialist fostering workers.
- An improving focus on robust permanence planning would assist, with exit planning being in the mind from the outset.
- In some cases planning and decision making about achieving permanence suggested drift and a lack of clarity
- Review planning pathways and streamline panels.
- LAC staff reported that OOB placements, court work and processes are impacting upon their ability to progress permanence plans and undertake life story work.
- Single assessments are not always updated to assist planning or following significant events.

Right Child Right Care Programme

- Growing numbers of LAC presents significant risk to LAC services budget and, consequently, the Borough's budget as a whole.
- Rotherham has undertaken a 'Deep Dive' of the current and recent LAC cohort to ensure children are transitioning to LAC status within appropriate thresholds, to secure permanence via a number of routes and to develop exit plans.
- The RCRCP is yielding results, however in some cases where permanence or revocations of orders had been agreed, there was drift and delay. Staff cite these delays as insufficient Panel availability, court time and capacity due to court work demands. Furthermore LAC staff questioned thresholds within the duty teams and identified cases where they had been able to return child home in a short space of time.

IRO- Areas for Future Focus

- IRO compliance form – Focused on paperwork rather than outcomes. SW's spoke negatively of report and questioned IRO's ability and confidence to navigate the case record system. This form could be developed to be more restorative and include impact and outcomes for the child.
- Managers to ensure robust follow up to escalations from the IRO service.

Care Plans- Areas for Future Focus

- Quality of care plans/Pathway Plans reviewed was inconsistent. However 1 plan sampled was deemed an excellent example and could be used as a best practice example. 1170191.
- Several of the care plans/pathway plans reviewed lacked analysis, defined actions and how progress will be measured.
- Child's voice was not consistently apparent in care plans.
- SW's felt the current care planning form is too process led and not child or family friendly.
- Focus on consistency now in respect of children's care plans and ensuring that these are analytical, SMART and clearly articulate the child's lived experience.

Areas for Future Focus

- Staff know their children well, we would encourage an increased use of direct work (words and pictures etc.) with children and that this is clearly evident on the case records, this will increase the quality of care planning.
- You have a real opportunity with a clear practice framework SOS and Restorative Practice, to place relationships at the heart of all you do. To ensure that this is embedded within CYPS and across partner agencies, this needs to become a shared language and be driven by senior leaders across the organisation. A review of the implementation plan and re-launch of the vision may be necessary.

Foster Carer Recruitment

Areas for future Focus

With the growth in LAC numbers in Rotherham, it is vital for the financial sustainability of the LAC service, that investment in the fostering service ensures sufficient in house placements.

- The marketing campaign would benefit from being strengthened in terms of a focussed and targeted campaign. In addition to the yearly campaign a long term strategy linked to Rotherham's sufficiency strategy, would provide focus and clear direction moving forward.
- Strengthen the analysis of soft intelligence and data, to inform a targeted recruitment strategy. Recruitment needs to reflect the demographics of the current and future Looked after population and increase the growth of in house foster placements.
- Link recruitment campaigns to an umbrella slogan to gain brand recognition.
- The front door appears vulnerable with only one worker who is to go on maternity leave. The service would benefit from being strengthened in terms of staffing capacity. The fostering advisor role works well and is valued by the teams, if capacity were increased this would support growth within the service. The fostering advisor appears to manage all initial expressions of interest, enquiries and visits and holds until stage 1. Additional capacity would allow for reflection and would also ensure timely and quality responses to enquiries. This is a significant part of the process as recruitment and retention of foster carers is key in delivering the service plan.
- There is a retention project being undertaken with fostering network, the offer to foster carers needs to be more explicit and used as part of the marketing campaign.
- Foster carers felt that they were not seen as professionals or valued and commented that they would like the opportunity for their voice to be heard. One comment "please treat me like a professional and be open and honest". Foster carers are keen to be part of the fostering journey, moving to a "done with" culture. As part of a longer term strategy annual surveys and focus groups with existing foster carers would support and inform retention.

Foster Carer Recruitment

Areas for future focus (continued)

- Drop in sessions are in place however consideration as to the facilitation of these events needs to consider all targeted areas including evenings as currently they are excluding a proportion of the market. (applicants who work). A reduction in the frequency from monthly to bi-monthly with a consistent targeted message may want to be considered.
- Foster carers felt that joint training with social workers would provide them with a more holistic picture and would make them feel more valued.
- Foster carers understand the necessity to recruit new carers, however they do not feel they are part of the journey or as involved as they could be.
- Although the managers and the foster carers felt that the IPP was a good resource, there is a significant waiting list.
- Foster carers felt that the investment in the service has reduced in terms of staffing and “cover” for maternity and sickness with a number of part time staff, leaving foster carers feeling unsupported and not valued.