# Notes and actions – South East regional fostering network

**Chair Deborah Glassbrook** DCS Reading

**Meeting details:** April 27 2022, via MS Teams 10-11.30

Chair: Deborah Glassbrook, Brighter Futures (Reading)

Meeting details: January 26 via MS Teams 10.30-12 noon   
Attendees: James Ball (West Sussex); Adrian Sewell (East Sussex); Anisha Reed (Wokingham); Jackie Clark (Portsmouth); Liz Shields (Bucks); Catherine Tilzey (West Sussex), Gemma Pavey (Brighton and Hove); Seamus Jennings (Brighter Futures/Reading); Karl Davis (West Berks); Peter Hodges (Bracknell Forest); Mark Vening (Kent), Nicola Anthony (Kent), Martin Smith (Southampton), Robert Wayman (Hampshire), Sarah Smith (Hampshire), Cathy Seiderer (Brighton and Hove); Berni Farmer (Isle of Wight), Helen Field (Southampton); Harkiran Randhawa (Windsor and Maidenhead/Achieving for Children); John Donnelly (Brighton and Hove); Melinda May (Milton Keynes)

LAs not represented:, Slough, Surrey, Medway, Oxfordshire

(supported by Rebecca Eligon, SESLIP)

# Review minutes and action log from last time

The minutes and action log from January 2022 were agreed.

# 2. Mystery shopping: West Sussex

West Sussex reflected that undertaking the mystery shopping was a good learning opportunity. Areas for learning – being able to articulate how the LA offer is different from the iFA offer. The scenario presented was in relation to someone with childcare exp and single person. Many Las didn’t seem to ask about work and flexibility and support network. Felt like sometimes we would be put in line as a respite carers. In more positive calls some workers started to go on the journey, and described how it might be exciting. Positive that people were investing 40 mins in a call that wasn’t necessarily going anywhere right now. About a third explained about information sessions. Some Las offered to follow up with an email. Only one asked about motivations but this was a really important area.

DG thanked colleagues from West Sussex and asked if the mystery shopping is having any tangible impact and whether it should be continued. MM fed back that Milton Keynes had done miserably and had made several changes and scores were now improving. Karl D also feedback that it had made a big impact. MS from Portsmouth said it was really good evidence for us, which they present back to corporate parenting.

**Action:** Draft model of excellence for next time based on learning over the last several waves

**Action:** Next waves of mystery shopping are Bracknell Forest, then Milton Keynes then Bucks

# 4. Practice sharing: West Sussex

West Sussex shared the story of their improvement journey. In 2019 there was an inadequate judgement, followed by a 6 month root and branch review, workstreams have emerged, which are much broader than Ofsted relating to recruitment and retention, process and technology, customer journey, strategy business and structure, marketing engagement. One of the key pieces of work is establishing a fostering hub. What Ofsted found was inconsistent lines of communications between key partners. The Fostering Hub brings partners together in a single approach. In the hub reviewing officers (previously TMs reviewed annual reviews), retention officer, 2 panel advisors, data analyst, business admin. The front door is also part of fostering hub and there is a marketing lead, performance management lead. This model moves away from various people in different parts of the structure where comms weren’t as good as they could have been.

Alongside this West Sussex is participating in a number of pilots, Mockingbird, step up/step down – which is an attachment-based programme for stepping down from residential and preventing escalation to escalation; vastly improving therapeutic offer to carers. The aim is to increase provision in house from 50%, to 65% by 2027. Keen to hear if any other Las doing similar projects or creating or already have similar roles.

Colleagues fed back that the retention role was an interesting one. West Sussex reflected that they were losing as many carers as we were recruiting – the retention officer has a focus on communication with carers, out meeting with carers especially those that might not be that happy and they are there to celebrate carers’ successes.

**Action:** CS keen to share management structures. Get a sense of structure. RE to incorporate into survey

**Action;** West Sussex to share retention officer JD

**Action:** MV volunteered Kent to share practice next time relating to advertising and media platforms

# 5. Mockingbird

Regional learning sessions have been held in October, November, February and April.  Foundation reviews (readiness self assessments) are completed for 7 out of 8 participating LAs. All 7 LAs have met with Fostering Network coaches, and project working groups are either forming or operational in 7 LAs.  LAs are anticipating go live with their constellation in from July through to 2023, with the majority aiming for Sept/Oct. Many LAs have identified liaison workers (at SSW and TM level) and are starting engagement to support the appointment of hub home carers. There are no issues that require escalation to the chair.

# 6. Inside out

Work is progressing in all 11 participating authorities. However RE noted that there are some risks to flag which have not been successfully resolved in the last 3 months which will impact on the project’s ability to deliver a business case by the summer:

1.       **Progress to define a cohort of at least 5 cases and intervention:** Each LA agreed to confirm the selected cohort for Inside Out and intervention by the end of March.  Progress is as follows:

a.       Progress complete 9 LAs: Kent, Milton Keynes, Surrey, West Sussex, Windsor and Maidenhead, Wokingham, Brighton and Hove, Buckinghamshire, Bracknell Forest

b.       No progress 2 LAs: Hampshire and Reading have not confirmed any cases or interventions.

2.       **Progress to complete baseline surveys:**Each LA agreed to complete at least 2 baseline surveys per case (one professional, and one by the recipient of the intervention) by the end of March. This would mean in total there should be at least 55 completed professional surveys and 55 recipient surveys.  Progress has been limited with only Brighton and Hove complete and up to date. To date 15 professional surveys have been completed (3 Bracknell Forest, 8 Brighton and Hove, 1 Kent, 3 Windsor and Maidenhead) and 14 recipient surveys (12 carers/ 2 YP) (3 Bracknell Forest, 6 Brighton and Hove, 1 Bucks, 2 Kent, 1 Milton Keynes, 1 Windsor and Maidenhead).  The pre-survey is critical to establishing a baseline position against which the success of the intervention can be judged and the business case can be built.

3.       **Progress to transfer funds:**Due to sickness in Wokingham there has been no progress to transfer the £13k funding for this project to each of the participating Las.

**Action:** The chair agreed to escalate these issues.

# 7. Practice issues

**Homes for refugees: What impact is Ukraine having on fostering services?**

KD had first experience this week, most of the checks are happening through the housing dept, we heard from Home Office that we had 12 year old and two 17 year olds, on their own. But upon investigating they had not yet come into the country. The 12 year old did not come, and the two 17 year old girls we did a connected persons assessment (even though there wasn’t a relationships) so that was interesting and involving.

MS said 3 potential foster carers taking Ukraine kids so lost them. Also looking at following up those that are part of Homes for Ukraine to see if they are interested in fostering.

JC in Portsmouth increase in calls… whilst they are really clear they want to offer home for Ukraine child we are trying to get them to think about other children.

**Action:** Can we monitor and discuss again next meeting

**Fostering allowances: Have any LAs given cost of living increases and is it impacting in any way?**

Bucks have been able to offer an increase but this was pre-agreed and part of the budget; Reviewing skills levels in Portsmouth. It is an emerging issue and one we need to keep an eye on. Petrol prices may impact on contact/family time.

**Respite:**

Agreed we should reframe language around respite, sleepover was felt to be better language. Group agreed it would be useful to understand what is being offered as standard across the region. . KD shared some language that children want to use: Sleepover club, Home away from home, time off for us not carers We don’t want to have language that makes children feel responsible for their carer’s needs.

**Action:** Map respite for next meeting

**Unregulated placement:**

Law changed in September so those under 16 are illegally placed in unregulated. DG had 3 situations since sept where we’ve had to make that decision. Boy 15, bounced through placements in residential, Ofsted said safeguarding issues in provision and we had to remove today. Suggested action around emergency placements at a regional level. We are going to have to start to think outside the box. Enhanced foster type placement

# 8. Standing items and AOB

No issues for escalation or any other business

Agreed agenda for next time: 1. Kent sharing practice, 2. Bracknell Forest mystery shopping, 3. Best practice framework based on learning from mystery shopping, 4. DfE projects inside out, mockingbird 5. Ukraine 6. Learning from structural and staff mapping (Cathy) 7. Mapping of sleepovers (what is standard offer and how does it vary/what flexibility is there)

**Action log:** This action log was updated on January 20 2022. Shaded lines, actions are complete

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|  | **Action** | **Responsible** | **Date issued** | **Status** |
| **17** | Can we monitor and discuss Ukraine again next meeting | **DG** | **April 2022** | **Closed** |
| **16** | Chair to escalate issues re: Inside Out | DG | April 2022 | Closed |
| **15** | West Sussex to share retention officer JD | JB | April 2022 | Open |
| **14** | Kent to share practice next time | MV | April 2022 | Closed |
| **13** | Map management structures and roles, map respite/sleepover offer through survey | RE | April 2022 | Closed |
| **12** | Draft model of excellence for next time based on learning over the last several waves | RE | April 2022 | Closed |
| **11** | Next waves of mystery shopping are Bracknell Forest (July), then Milton Keynes (October) then Bucks (Jan) | RE | April 2022 | Open |
| **10** | RE to contact IoW Milton Keynes and Surrey who have had no reps at the last two meetings | RE | Jan 2022 | Closed |
| **9** | Terms of reference to be finalised and uploaded to SESLIP website. | RE | Jan 2022 | Closed |
| **8** | JB and MS to share contact details for training delivered on anti-racist practice | JB and MS | Jan 2022 | Closed |
| **7** | Discuss at April meeting which of the areas for regional collaboration the group want so take forward first (discuss with new chair) | All | Jan 2022 | Open |
| **6** | LS to share legal advice received in relation to case where unions involved, re: foster carers and employment rights. | LS | Jan 2022 | Closed |
| **5** | Rebecca to draft Terms of reference and regional priorities for consideration at next meeting | RE | Oct 2021 | Closed |
| **4** | Any LAs interested in forming project team to develop regional recruitment website contact Rebecca. Revisit this action in Jan 2023 pending outcome of Care review and capacity of Las to take forward. | All | Oct 2021 | Open |
| **3** | Reading to share practice and mystery shopping at January meeting | SJ | Oct 2021 | Closed |
| **2** | All to contact Alistair Herbert to arrange support with using the fostering projection tool. Fostering projection tool to come back once further work complete. (Agenda for Jan 2023) | All | Oct 2021 | Open |
| **1** | All to publicise regional online SG conference | All | Oct 2021 | Closed |