**Foster Carer Workshop: Feedback**

**Anne-Marie**

1. Foster carer recruitment

There was not a great deal of support for the stalls approach at broad community events, believing that activities should be targeted and that word of mouth was the most significant factor, and they reflected that they often have conversations with people who say ‘I have always thought about that’ but do not know exactly where to point them.

Suggestions

* Existing foster carers to be provided with small information packs that they can pass on to others
* Can we do something more with language school hosts/specialist schools, childminders to raise profile (what events do they go to that we could have a stand at so appropriately targeted)
* Clear view that we need to be raising profile of fostering generally, as this will naturally generate interest
* Behaving more like IFAs in our advertising – eg facebook
1. Respect

There was a strong view in my room that for some social workers they are still not respecting foster carers as a professional partner and not treating them with the appropriate level of respect. Suggestion - can  we involve foster carers in delivering training to AYSEs, and new recruits to demonstrate the importance of the relationship.

1. Tick box

Again it was a reflection that for some social workers there is a perception of a tick box approach. An example was given as to a visit that was arranged for 1 day prior to timescales for visiting, however there was a really significant event happening for the young person a few days later, which the SW knew about but they never followed up with a text or call to the young person or the carer to see how things had gone. The carer reflected that it would have really demonstrated to the young person the commitment of the SW to their welfare had they done so.

Suggestion - Again the group had a discussion as to how foster carers could be used in training for SWs to get this message across.

1. Training

A sense that the core training is too broad. One carer who is long term matched to teenagers reflected how he is mandated to attend Bridging training – where he would prefer to be spending that time supporting his young people.

Suggestion -  consider tailoring the mandatory training to the individuals rather than sheep dipping everyone.

Suggestion – different levels of autism training, depending upon placements

1. Virtual School

There was a real lack of knowledge as to how carers could work with the Virtual School to support young people in education – even those who had been in meetings with the Virtual School!

Suggestion – urgently raise profile of virtual school

**Nancy Meehan:**

The was a real issue about education from the first couple of groups.

* Really positive and nurturing experiences particularly in 2 schools
* Questions why if a child is on role at a school particularly when they enter into care but have not attended for years we “retraumatise them” by making them go to the on role school which is usually in the area that they have left due to being removed from parents care in the same vicinity? This came up at least 2 or 3 times
* Long term placement decisions – better now but delays can impact on children felling settled longer term (drift and delay)
* Joint events between education leads and foster carers to support joint understanding of children
* Foster carers are professionals but their voice is not heard in certain areas (education, VS, PEP)
* Process and policy rather than needs led approach (education VS)
* PACE training in schools would support

**Steve Darling:**

I found foster families happy to support stall events but on reflection I am not sure of they are targeted as they could be.

In conversation it came out that we ought to be asking “do you have space in your family for a foster child?” This could be promoted at school fetes or other school events. We could even try to use a parent whose birth child attends that school where possible.