

From: Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education
Andrew Ireland, Corporate Director of Social Care, Health and Wellbeing

To: Corporate Parenting Panel – 9 November 2017

Subject: **SAFER CARE FOR CHILDREN LIVING AWAY FROM HOME**

Classification: Unrestricted

Electoral Divisions: All

Summary: This report provides an outline of the changes in the assessment of Foster Carers updating the current British Association for Adoption and Fostering form F to include a specific risk assessment tool to support safer recruitment of foster carers. The risk assessment template will also be used when Foster Carers are subject to their Annual Fostering Review or where there have been allegations or concerns about the care being provided to a looked after child.

Required outcome: To enhance and update the assessment of Foster Carers with a focus on risks and also ensure continuous focus on the safe care provided in fostering households. The British Association for Adoption and Fostering form has been in place and is used across many local authorities in England. Kent has taken an innovative step to use a tailored risk assessment tool to support a cultural change in practice.

Recommendation: The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to **NOTE** and **COMMENT** on the developments and issues in this report.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Kent Fostering Service has been developing its social work practice and enhancing the care provided to children who are looked after away from home with a focus on safeguarding. The developments in the Kent Fostering Service were noted in the recent Ofsted Report, this journey of enhancing good practice continues and includes working with other providers including Independent Fostering Agencies, Semi-Independent Providers and residential care homes.
- 1.2 The focus has been to review and update the policies and procedures relating to the assessment of Foster Carers and safe care planning to ensure they reflect best practice. The Kent Fostering Service, with commissioning colleagues, has used the learning from Serious Case Reviews and internal practice reviews to strengthen best practice with updated tools and guidance. The practice learning has been shared with commissioned colleagues and disseminated to Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) and other provider partners.
- 1.3 There have been significant developments in the communication and joint working with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). Procedures have been updated and there is a focus not only on the investigative process but also the

support that a child or young person requires following an investigation. There is a renewed emphasis on the child to ensure their 'voice' is heard when dealing with child protection concerns expressed by children who are looked after. All cases subject to a LADO referral are reviewed quarterly with local district areas and audits are undertaken to quality assure the standard of practice and timeliness of decision making with management oversight. The audits have taken a holistic approach incorporating discussions with the IRO, social worker and fostering social worker to assess each professional's engagement with the Foster Carers and young person.

- 1.4 There has been an update of the training provided to fostering social workers to ensure that this particularly addresses the assessment of fostering households and enhances safeguarding to protect children and young people against potential sexual abuse. Training has been supplemented with a risk assessment tool to assess Foster Carers and to review fostering households.
- 1.5 There is a continued focus on updating the culture within the Kent Fostering Service, where the focus for all social workers is safeguarding, achieved through developing a culture of learning from complaints, allegations and serious case reviews.

2. Report

- 2.1 Through auditing of the case work, key themes and actions have been taken to achieve a safer Fostering Service and this learning has been extended so that it is being shared with independent providers for fostering, residential and semi-independent accommodation. A seminar is being held for providers in December 2017.
- 2.2 The Kent Fostering Service has reviewed the recruitment and assessment of Foster Carers and considered the current British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) form F assessment template required updating and should include a stand-alone risk assessment. A risk assessment tool for fostering households has been developed and this will be used with all new applications to become a Foster Carer and implemented throughout the service. There will be an ongoing assessment of risk with yearly updates through the Foster Carer Annual Review. The implementation of the Independent Fostering Review Team has provided additional scrutiny when reviewing risk. The template and learning will be shared with independent providers, with an expectation that it is completed for any fostering household caring for a Kent child.
- 2.3 The Stage 1 application process has been reviewed and additional checks added including social media and the LADO service. The key themes and learning from the allegations has been delivered through specific training to fostering staff, panel members and the agency decision makers. "Safeguarding and Professional Curiosity – Thinking the Unthinkable in Foster Care" was delivered on 25 September 2017 and 16 October 2017.
- 2.4 Training commissioned through the Lucy Faithfull Foundation and Dr Graham Hill. Keeping Children Safe: Sexual Abuse in Foster Care was delivered on 13 October 2017 and 1 November 2017.

- 2.5 The content of the training included learning from audits, understanding the motivation of perpetrators of sexual abuse (who are in a position of trust); recognising indicators of potential abuse, risk assessment in fostering and enhancing social work skills to ensure safeguarding practice is core to the supervision and support of Foster Carers.
- 2.6 To continue with the good practice noted by Ofsted, the Kent Fostering Service also ensures it is listening to children and young people in placement. Children are provided with opportunities to make friends with other looked after children and discuss their worries with safe adults including the fostering social worker, the looked after child nurse or a teacher. It is not always the social worker with whom the child will discuss their worries or general events in their life. The participation team and the programme of placement stability a "Sense of Belonging" provides opportunities for looked after children to meet with their peer group and avoid them feeling that they are the "only one in care". Foster Carers' support of children's participation in events will be monitored through their annual reviews.
- 2.7 A further initiative building on the sense of stability project is the setting up of a pilot group in East Kent for girls aged 12 -16 years, starting in January 2018 in partnership with Canterbury College. This will be a group of 30 girls who meet regularly with a focus on Health, Wellbeing and Keeping Safe. Canterbury College will provide a safe venue and staff/students that will support the girls with hair care, healthy eating and other relevant topics, with the group participating in the college's end of year show. The more sensitive subject of Keeping Safe will be co-facilitated with Health, through the Looked After Nurses. This pilot will be a joint venture with Kent Fostering, Health, Virtual School Kent (VSK) apprentices and experienced female Foster Carers who will co-facilitate the group with Canterbury College. It will provide a safe environment for girls to meet, be with their peers and trusted female adults, with the aim of having a safe and confidential environment where they feel able to disclose or reach out to someone away from the foster home to discuss their feelings or compare behaviour they might be experiencing at home. This could be within their foster home, school or local community. The longer-term vision is to extend this model across the county and include groups specifically for boys aged 12-16 years.
- 2.8 As part of the strategy of safe care within the Kent Fostering Service, the template for Safe Care Plans for children will be updated and a more "child friendly" format implemented. The preliminary work on the current Liberi template is being completed in consultation with the Kent Foster Carers Association (KFCA) and our Foster Carer Ambassadors. The format for the template facilitates open communication with children about "Keeping them Safe" and has a robust approach in identifying risks.
- 2.9 In the learning from other Local Authorities, Serious Case Reviews and analysis of recent terrorist attacks, the Kent Fostering Service has included Prevent within its review of Safe Care practice. The Kent Safeguarding Children Board (KSCB) Prevent training is mandatory for all registered Foster Carers. Additional training on caring for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) is commissioned through Save the Children and targeted specifically at foster carers working with this group of young people. In consultation with the Prevent and Channel Strategic Manager a "Review of Prevent checklist" has been implemented for fostering social workers to complete during statutory supervision visits to foster

carers. Please refer to Appendix 1: Kent Fostering: Raising Awareness of Prevent.

- 2.10 The “Sense of Belonging” Service will also provide safe care advice and guidance at times of crisis for children and Foster Carers and fostering social workers. A Clinical Psychologist will be based within fostering teams to support the implementation of changes to safe care practices.
- 2.11 There has been a focus on placement stability with eLearning addressing the Care Planning Regulations. This supports safe care as the placements are risk assessed with a placement plan completed with full information about the placement. Pre-placement visits are encouraged. Good placement matching and planned transitions ensure regulation and oversight by social workers are in place. Training and practice tools enable social workers to have knowledge and confidence to challenge where they assess that the care being provided is not sufficiently good enough for looked after children.
- 2.12 As part of the Ofsted report and in the Practice Development Plan there is a plan to review the remit of Adolescent Risk Management meetings. Consideration is being given by the safeguarding unit to child protection case conferences being used in situations where a child may be looked after and they are also at significant risk. This will support clearer use of child protection processes with core groups of professionals being involved with safeguarding planning. The looked after child review can then remain the domain of the child’s views about their placement and care plan without it being focused on the management of high risks.
- 2.13 The Clinical Commissioning Groups remain committed to providing a service to looked after children. Their management of health providers continues to be a challenge. The County Council has raised and escalated the concern that Review Health Assessments are not in place and completed with the expected timescales. Kent Community Health NHS Trust is committed to improving this performance.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 Significant progress has been made in the delivery of a good Fostering Service throughout 2016/17 and a further programme of ambitious practice is being implemented. There is a focus on safeguarding practice and delivering safe care to children and young people living away from their families. Safe care will be achieved through updated practice guidance along with risk assessment tools; and the involvement of Foster Carers with the active participation of young people.

4. Recommendation

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| 4.1 Recommendation: The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to NOTE and COMMENT on the developments and issues in this report. |
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5. Background Documents

Children Act 1989: care planning, placement and case review

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-care-planning-placement-and-case-review>

Kent County Council Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers

https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/local_authority_reports/kent/054_Single%20inspection%20of%20LA%20children%27s%20services%20and%20review%20of%20the%20LSCB%20as%20pdf.pdf

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Appendix 1: Kent Fostering: Raising Awareness of Prevent

Kent Fostering Service

Review of Prevent



Fostering Social Worker Checklist for Foster Carers Supervision - To be completed for all foster carers.

Foster Carers Name and Liberi ID number:

Fostering Social Worker

Date of Supervision Visit:

| | Notes/Date |
|--|------------|
| Has the foster carer completed the mandatory PREVENT Training? Do they need to refresh their knowledge? | |
| If the foster carer has not completed PREVENT training, this must be completed within 2 weeks of the date of this supervision – Record agreed date for completion? | |
| If the foster carer is caring for unaccompanied asylum young people (UASC), what additional training have they completed on this? Are they booked onto the Save the Children training "Supporting Unaccompanied Asylum Children"? | |
| Does the foster carer know how to make a referral if they have concerns for extremism or radicalisation? Using the PREVENT guidance for discussion, have there been any changes in behaviour/concerns with any member of the fostering household, that require a referral? (Any changes in a young person's asylum status, could be a potential vulnerability or recent media activity – local or global). | |
| What does the foster carer have in place to monitor use of social media/internet use? Are parental controls set up and does the foster carer regularly view internet history to monitor use? Does the carer understand what is being said e.g. Do they use Google translate? | |
| Where children/young people are vulnerable to extremism or radicalisation is this recorded in the Safe Care Plan and Placement Plan Arrangements? | |

<http://www.kscb.org.uk/guidance/extremism-and-radicalisation2>



| | |
|---|--|
| What is working well? | |
| What are we worried about? | |
| What needs to happen next? (Safety Plan) | |
| <p>On a scale of 0 – 10 where 10 means you are confident that you have been provided with the advice and support and have the understanding to spot signs of radicalisation or extremism within your fostering household and community, where do you rate this today?</p> <p>0 ←—————→ 10</p> | |

Fostering Social Workers should refer to the PREVENT training they have completed, to ensure foster carers follow the guidance and referral process. This checklist must be completed and signed by the foster carer during supervision and attached to supervision notes/uploaded onto the carers Liberi file.

Signed:

Foster Carer(s):

Fostering Social Worker:

<http://www.kscb.org.uk/guidance/extremism-and-radicalisation2>