

Report of the Assistant Director, Children's Specialist Services

## **Making York Home – Project Update**

### **Summary**

1. At their last meeting on 26 September 2016, the Corporate Parenting Board received a brief verbal update on the City of York's Making York Home Project. This report provides a comprehensive update to the Board on Making York Home.

### **Background**

#### **Vision and Approach**

2. Making York Home started as a project which looked at the emotional, practical and professional support that foster carers need in order to provide safe, caring and stable homes in York to all children and young people in their care. Explicitly, the aspiration is that all of York's children and young people in care will be in foster placements, in York, if that's right for them.
3. The project, to date, has included representatives from social work, foster carers, the youth offending team, health, the virtual school, independent visitors and the children's rights team.
4. Show Me That I Matter (Children in Care Council) has played a key role throughout, helping to sense-check and develop ideas.
5. Innovation Unit, a not for profit consultancy, has been working alongside the project group to provide advice and challenge.
6. Foster Focus, an organisation that engages with young people providing children's organisations with youth participation strategies that will improve services and the life chances of children in care and care leavers, has provided additional support and challenge.

7. The project approach has included four key and simple stages, namely:

**Research** – gaining new perspectives on the challenge - *any more eg reviewing other models?*

**Co-design** – participatory events, involving a large consultation group across the disciplines involved in the project, to test insights, generate ideas and set priorities

**Sprints** - rapid phases of work to dig deeper into challenges and generate practical new models

**Strategy** – embedding insights and actions in policy, process and practice

The first three stages of the process were completed between January 2016 and June 2016 and the final stage of the work commenced September 2016.

### **The Sprints**

8. Each sprint involved up to 10 people including foster carers and representatives from the fostering team, social workers, the virtual school, health colleagues, children's rights and the youth offending team.

9. Sprints lasted for one month and sessions were held twice a week to allow for detailed discussion and exploration of the issues and themes. The sessions broadly followed a defined framework, with sessions:

- Looking at insights from the research and from priorities set in the co design sessions
- Exploring examples of innovative practice from elsewhere
- Interrogating the current ways of doing things
- Creating ideas and starting to develop thinking around potential models and processes

10. The sprints focused on 3 key themes which were identified through research and co-design:

## i) Placement Planning

How do we create a planning process that raises the ambition of what young people can achieve, aims for long term stability, and puts the right support in place to get there?

### Emerging ideas and priorities:

What do we want to achieve?	What needs to be different?
<p>Planning which is informed by honest and relevant information which children and young people inform and contribute to.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good quality and content of information are available to support matching</li> <li>• Information is balanced, starting with strengths but honest about any concerns or risks</li> <li>• Information is collated in an inclusive way and involving children, young people and their birth family, when appropriate</li> <li>• Support is provided to the child/young person to make their contribution</li> <li>• Matching is carefully planned other than in exceptional emergencies</li> </ul>
<p>Planning which focuses on aspirations and goals which are about the long term as well as the short term, and which is responsive to changes in the child/young person's needs and circumstances.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Placement planning is timely and in advance of the placement</li> <li>• Placement plan is reviewed regularly throughout the placement</li> <li>• All placement planning considers the longer term (needs, aspirations and identity)</li> <li>• Priority is given to visits home and/or to other important people</li> <li>• Planning for transitions, whether return home, move to another</li> </ul>

	<p>placement or move to independence, starts early and is thorough</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All statutory reviews celebrate aspirations and are goal orientated</li> </ul>
<p>Planning which establishes, maintains and builds important relationships (children, young people, birth family and friends, foster carers and professionals)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The birth family is involved in the placement planning process</li> <li>• There is focus on other important relationships which prioritise a child/young person's identity</li> <li>• Placements are as local as possible whenever it is in the child's best interest</li> <li>• Steps are in place for actively building the relationship between the child or young person and the foster carer</li> <li>• Building relationships, particularly between social workers, foster carers and other professionals, is supported</li> </ul>
<p>Bespoke planning for children and young people which promotes the principle of delegated authority to foster carers and ensures that young people understand the decisions reached.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The placement planning process is flexible and creative, and starts from a position that all children, young people and placements are different</li> <li>• Children and young people participate in making decisions and are given clear explanations of decisions made</li> <li>• The principle of delegated authority is embedded and central to placement planning and decision making, at a level that is right for a child or young person and their foster carers</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Normality' is promoted throughout the Placement Plan and evidenced through the statutory review process</li> </ul>
Placement planning which relates well to other planning and is reviewed using the same principles and values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Placement planning includes contributions from all areas of the child's life</li> <li>• All statutory reviews are child/young person centred, promoting the strategic principle of personalisation</li> <li>• Reviews should challenge care plans keep a focus on the changes that happen for children and their families, promoting responsiveness, identity and shared care, when right for a child.</li> </ul>

## ii) Placement Support

How do we put together a bespoke package for each placement that includes the right mix of professional, practical and emotional support?

### Emerging Ideas and Priorities:

What do we want to achieve?	What needs to be different?
An integrated team of support around the placement which puts the child at the centre and emphasises the foster carer's key role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A range of knowledgeable support available 24 hours a day</li> <li>• Development of the fostering service to provide out of hours' contact</li> <li>• A structure of accessible foster carer to foster carer support</li> <li>• Reliable duty/cover arrangements and out of office notifications in social work teams when the child's social worker is not</li> </ul>

	<p>available</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A comprehensive learning and development package for all foster carers designed in consultation with foster carers and fostering social workers</li> <li>• Consultation with and advice from psychotherapeutic, education and health services</li> <li>• The opportunity for foster carers to access independent advice and guidance when required</li> </ul>
<p>Formal and informal framework of foster carer to foster carer support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hub carer and buddy arrangements to be developed</li> <li>• Individual peer mentoring to be provided for newly approved foster carers and for others who need it</li> <li>• Information about York Area Foster Care Association (YAFCA) support groups and other foster carer events to be well advertised</li> <li>• The expectation for all foster carers to attend support groups and/or training opportunities</li> <li>• Experienced foster carers to be involved in designing and delivering training, including preparation and core training modules</li> <li>• YAFCA to provide a formal and structured system to support foster carers during allegations or complaints processes</li> </ul>

<p>Time away from the foster placement, whether planned or unplanned, as a normal part of the child or young person's life experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Stay overs</u> (ie overnight stays but no longer called respite care) to be considered as a positive option for all looked after children</li> <li>• Work to be undertaken with extended birth family to build in home visits where this is safe</li> <li>• Stay overs with foster carers' family and friends to be a positive choice under delegated authority</li> <li>• Regular stay overs with other foster carers to be a positive option as part of a child's plan</li> <li>• Other daytime and staying over activities to be planned to respond to a child's needs, interests and ambitions</li> </ul>
<p>A range of interventions that are responsive, timely and flexible to prevent or manage crisis points in the foster placement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediate Response Team to provide rapid first level advice and support</li> <li>• Support from other services to be speedy and sustained</li> <li>• Foster carer to foster carer support to be provided through YAFCA</li> <li>• Well-supported and widely-disseminated models of de-escalation to be available</li> </ul>

### iii) Learning and Development

How do we build the ability of our foster carers to look after our children and young people including those with the most complex needs?

## Emerging Ideas and Priorities:

What do we want to achieve?	What needs to be different?
<p>Supervision of foster carers is professional, purposeful and supports reflection of practice and foster carer development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster carer’s support plan to be agreed at Annual Review and updated during supervision visits</li> <li>• Formal supervision by fostering social worker to be productive, with mutually agreed frequency and format and shared actions and accountability</li> <li>• Informal supervision to be accessed through a variety of options including group supervision and fostering support workers</li> <li>• Role and skills of fostering social workers to be explored and refined</li> </ul>
<p>Opportunities for learning and development to build a skilled and confident team around the child</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional Development Plan to be reviewed at least annually</li> <li>• Foster carer’s skills and strengths to be identified as well as gaps in learning</li> <li>• Foster carers to be supported in (or take responsibility for?) accessing training and other learning opportunities</li> <li>• Workforce Development Unit (WDU) to identify and commission targeted training in consultation with foster carers</li> <li>• Foster carers to be signposted to other relevant WDU training opportunities</li> </ul>



<p>Opportunities for accreditation and recognition to consolidate and extend foster carer development and acknowledge achievement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster carers to be encouraged to develop short term learning goals that build towards longer term learning aspirations, objectives and qualifications</li> <li>• A portfolio to be developed for each foster carer that identifies and records all relevant learning experience</li> <li>• Work to continue to build relationships and develop learning opportunities for foster carers with York St John University as a Centre of Excellence</li> <li>• Organise celebration events</li> </ul>
<p>Commitment, supported by senior management, to build and develop professional relationships to create a shared understanding and respect for roles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint training to be provided for foster carers, social workers and other professionals</li> <li>• Information sharing to be a joint responsibility</li> <li>• Foster carers and children's social workers to contribute to each other's induction and preparation training</li> <li>• Foster carers to contribute to planning and delivery of training for other professional teams</li> </ul>

11. At the start of the project, many of those involved anticipated that the work would highlight a set of priorities which focused on resources, systems and records. In fact, throughout the project, the process has highlighted a primary importance of strengthening professional and other important relationships, which provide real and tangible opportunities to plan and support placements differently.

12. The sprints identified 11 cross cutting relationship based aspirations intended both to support the overarching strategy for children and young people in care and to provide a detailed framework from which to progress Making York Home - from a project to a new and embedded way of working.
  1. We put the involvement and experience of young people front and centre. We always start by understanding the individual story
  2. We are relationship driven, not process driven. We focus on building strong relationships around each child and young person
  3. We consistently recognise and value the importance of birth parents (and other family members) in placement planning and placement support
  4. We strive to achieve bespoke and creative placement planning and support for children and young people in care.
  5. We will develop placement matching which is based on a potential connection between child and carer. We aim to give young people a voice and choice, where possible.
  6. If we must place out of area due to lack of capacity, we commit to bringing children back to York within 4-6 weeks
  7. We routinely identify opportunities for delegated authority to our foster carers.
  8. We develop foster carers in coaching circles and strengthen professional relationships through formal and informal training and networks
  9. We promote planned 'stay overs' in a familiar and consistent setting as standard and think about the purpose and value within a context of normality
  10. We work differently with our local children's home, recognising the strengths and capacity this resource brings to the city
  11. We work differently with CAMHS to ensure that more placements have timely access to specialist advice and support

## Progress and Impact

- 13 At this stage, it is difficult to evidence the impact of MYH. The project is not a 'short term fix', rather an approach which is focused on the culture, behaviour and relationships required to achieve excellent services and placements (in York) for children and young people in care.
- 14 As a result, the early signs of progress lie in the qualitative feedback around how relationships, communication and approach are beginning to change, including:
- Examples of placement planning involving birth parents which extends, in some cases, to improved ongoing working relationships with birth families.
  - Structural change which promotes and supports relationship based practice, including a dedicated role focused on placement planning and commissioning.
  - Greater focus around what bespoke placements might look like for more children, including the exploration of outreach support.
  - An improved quality assurance of placement planning records.
  - Plans to commence a combined duty system (November 2016), organised by fostering social workers and children's social workers together.
  - The introduction of 'hub working' with foster carers, linked to fostering social workers and training and support.
  - Examples of foster carers co-supporting placements when complex needs are identified.
  - Creative discussion and planning to support family placements differently, using planned short breaks or stay overs, sometimes routinely and certainly at points of crisis.
  - A shift in language from respite care to 'stay overs'.
  - Work with a local residential provider to consider the opportunities to extend the approach to the very small number of young people who need residential care.
  - Examples of commissioned therapeutic support, designed to support placements, for some children.

- Closer working relationships with the advocacy service and examples of early resolution of concerns for young people.

15. In terms of data, the MYH project commenced following an increase in the number of children being placed outside of the York area. The most recent data reflects that this position has improved during 2015/16, with 12 additional children and young people being placed in Local Authority local placements and 14 fewer children and young people being placed out of area, compared with 2014/15 data.

	2015/16	2014/15
	Total: 73 children	Total: 75 children
New placements in LA	47	35
New placements outside of LA	22	29
New placements +20 miles	4	11

16. Equally, data around the number of children placed with Independent Fostering Agencies highlights a reduction from 20 children to 13 children over the same reporting period, suggesting greater capacity and resilience in York placements.

## Summary and Conclusions

17. The MYH project has consistently highlighted the value of bringing different disciplines and skills together to work on cross cutting priorities and themes. Without exception, and despite requiring a significant commitment in terms of time, the sprints have consistently achieved commitment and innovative/creative ideas. More importantly and indirectly, the process has helped individuals understand different roles and perspectives, creating momentum and belief that the ambition and aspiration is achievable.
18. The work must continue to build on this strength and create further momentum to embed the ideas and opportunities into practice.

## Emerging ideas to develop practice and professional relationships...

- A fostering team with a broader remit to create the right kinds of placements and the permissions to try things out safely
- Pulling new approaches (and resources) together to create bespoke models of support available in every placement
- Joint training for foster carers and social workers in evidenced based approaches
- A review of out of hours support for local placements, from well organised peer support to specialist support
- Tailored, responsive and accessible Child and Adolescent Mental Health support for children in foster placements, including opportunities for consultation and support for foster carers

### **Consultation**

19. The report contains details of groups of people and organisations which have been involved in the Making York Home project.

### **Options**

20. Not applicable

### **Analysis**

21. Not applicable

### **Council Plan**

22. Ensuring safe and effective care arrangements for Looked After Children falls within the Council Plan key priority “A Focus on Frontline Services”.

### **Implications**

23.
  - Financial: Making York Home is part of this directorate’s approach to ensure it operates within budget.

- Human Resources (HR): *None*
- Equalities: *None*
- Legal: *None*
- Crime and Disorder: *None*
- Information Technology (IT) Property: *None*
- Other: *None*

### **Risk Management**

24. There are no known risks associated with the recommendations in this report. The approach and progress relating to the Making York Home project are addressed more widely within this report.

### **Recommendations**

25. Members are asked to note the project update.

Reason: In order that Members are kept informed on Making York Home.

### **Contact Details**

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**Specialist Implications Officer(s)** *None*

**Wards Affected:** All

For further information please contact the author of the report

**Background Papers:** None

**Annexes:** None

### **Abbreviations**

CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
MYH	Making York Home
WDU	Workforce Development Unit
YAFCA	York Area Foster Care Association