**Learning brief – December 2019 - Fostering Supervision Visits**

This learning brief draws together the findings from 25 audits which reviewed the quality of the supervision offered to Foster Carers by supervising Social Workers. The purpose of this audit was to provide a benchmark across the service as to where we believe the quality of the visits/recording of visits sits currently and then consider what work/changes may be necessary to ensure the standard is consistently good going forward.

The National minimum standards (standard 21) tells us that the purpose of Foster Carer Supervision is:

*Providing information, advice and guidance; reviewing practical and emotional support needs; checking stands of care; responding to comments, concerns and allegations; ensuring compliance with policies and procedures; noting significant events and changes to the household; managing risk; health and safety and ensuring safer care; reviewing implementation of care plans for each child in placement; monitoring impact of fostering on the household; responding to carers’ feedback and concerns; identifying and supporting learning and development needs; reviewing current and future use of resources; checking payments and equipment; reviewing records and reviewing carer’s relationships with children placed*

 **So what did we find?**

What’s working well?

* In the main, supervision visits are taking place within timescale
* Most foster carers have signed supervision agreements
* Some visit records demonstrated real clarity regarding discussions that took place about children, showed evidence of appropriate challenge, actions that had been completed against outcomes for the child.
* The quality of the recording indicated that Carers appear to know the children in their care well
*  Some visits gave up to date information about training and development plans
* Some visits contained clear information about the voice of the child.

What are we worried about?

* Inconsistency about how the form is used/completed within Mosaic – not necessarily right or wrong, but different, this appears to lead to inconsistency in analytical information being recorded about the care afforded to children by carers.
* The way visits are recorded doesn’t enable us to understand how carers are meeting NMS or contributing to the child’s care plan.
* Some specific questions within the form about who was seen, information about training and development is not completed.
* Limited evidence on observations of interaction between the FC , foster children and or their own children
* We are overly reliant on self-reporting of information from carers to inform opinions about the quality of care they provide. This is compounded by the lack of the 2nd carer’s voice or presence in supervision visits.
* There is not enough evidence that supervising social workers are seeing the children placed with carers and talking to them about their views about their placements.
* Not all visits are written up within the expected timescale and therefore are not in compliance with policy. Visits are not consistently copied to the records of both carers.
* Outcomes required from previous visits are not consistently referred to and forward planning is not always evident.
* Social workers are not making reference to the weekly recordings of foster carers to inform conversations about what has been happening for the child since their last visit, as well as making reference to the quality/timeliness of the recording submitted by the foster carer.

What needs to happen?

* The fostering supervision form within mosaic needs some changes made to it to make it simpler to use and enable the recording of information to be more consistent. Agreement needs to be made amongst team members about what headings may be useful to have within the form and how these should relate to NMS. It would be beneficial for some mandatory boxes to be added to the form to ensure there is some key information (eg training and how it is embedded, foster carer weekly recordings) recorded as required which could then be easily reported on. *TM already has a meeting set with IM to discuss changes to the form and IM team have been asked to produce a draft template.*
* Use of an appreciate enquiry questioning style within fostering supervision visits will improve the quality of information social workers gather and therefore what they have to record. S*ocial workers have already been provided with example questions they can use, this will be monitored through future audits. There have also been two workshops run with the fostering team around appreciative enquiry to help equip staff to use this with carer.*
* Social workers need to ensure they talk to foster carers in supervision about the recording they send in about the children they are looking after. The information they provide should be good enough to enable planning around the discussion about things that are working and things they may be struggling with to enable an analytical discussion.
* There needs to be some clear analysis recorded by the SW following the visit in the visit record. Changes to the form should make ‘where’ this is recorded more obvious. Social workers need to ensure they record their analysis of the information discussed to provide a view about the care being afforded to the child by the carer/s, what is their evidence to support this, what impact does it have? is there anything that should be done as a result of what you have observed/have been told? This should provide some inherent evidence of the carers meeting the NMS.
* A dashboard for compliance will ‘go live’ soon to enable monitoring of compliance information – supervision, annual reviews, recording, foster carer training and training plans etc – *This has gone live but there is still additional work to be done so that all things that need to be reported on are being reported on.*



***Further reading can be found at:***

<https://fosteringandadoption.rip.org.uk/topics/leadership/>