**South East Region Adoption Leadership Board**

**Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 1st December 2014, 10.30am – 12.30pm , Floor 4 Fountain House, Queens Walk, Reading, RG1 7QF**

**Present:** Judith Ramsden, DCS, Wokingham, Chair); Lorna Hunt (AD, Bracknell Forest); Annie McIver (ADCS, West Sussex); Theresa Leavy (Interim DCS, Southampton); Shirley Elliott (for Jan Fishwick, PACT); Chris Atkins (for Lesley Newth-West, BAAF); Alastair Lee (Data and Improvement Manager, East Sussex); Rosemary Perry (SESLIP)

**Apologies:** Lucy Butler (AD, Oxfordshire); Hilary Brook (Cabrini); Jan Fishwick (PACT); Lesley Newth-West (BAAF)

**Welcome and Introductions:** New members of the group were introduced and welcomed. It was noted that Hilary Brook would be resigning from the Board as she was leaving her position with Cabrini. She was thanked for the contribution she had made.

**Minutes of the Meeting held on 10th October 2014:** The minutes of the meeting were agreed

**Matters Arising:**

* New members had been finalised from PACT and BAAF
* Terms of Reference had been finalised and circulated to DCS group in South East
* Outstanding position statements had been chased and received
* VAAs had not yet progressed their collection of information/ data; this would be carried over to the next meeting. **Action RP, JF,LNW,CA,SE**
* Benchmarking data had been collected and was on the agenda
* Position statement had been progressed and was on the agenda

**Membership of the Group:** After some discussion it was agreed that the membership of the group would be re-considered in the new year. **Action JR.** It was further agreed that it might be useful to seek health representation from health via NHS England. RP to progress. **Action RP**

It was agreed that the Board would aim to meet 6 weekly and that a programme of dates for 2015 would be established, noting that the February meeting was already set. RP would establish the best days for members of the group and circulate a list of dates. **Action RP**

**National Developments:** JR and RP reported back on the meeting with the national board which had taken place on 21st October 2014, which had been very interesting. JR reported that it was not clear how often these meetings would continue. One of the key issues coming out of the meeting was how the regional infrastructure should be used to communicate key messages and one of the key agenda which needed to be a focus of our regional borda related to market shaping to address the unmet needs of children in the system who have not to date been adopted.

A recent development included the use of the boards infrastructure to ‘help’ LA submit data to Dfe.; JR had been contacted by our national sponsor about missing data from 3 authorities in the South East. It was agreed that AL would check out the detail and report back to JR. **Action AL.**

TL reported on an emerging issue around discussions with Family Justice Boards about the use of Section 20. This may be an issue we return to in the future.

JR posed the question about whether, as a region, we are clear which potential adopters we are going to target and how we have shared this with each other. TL reported that Southampton had developed a substantial marketing approach and would be happy to share this with the group. **Action TL**

Other emerging issues identified were:

* Judicial issues and the response to the “mythbuster” communication; the group considered whether all the myths were really myths;
* The big shift to SGOs and the consequent implications for post adoption work and how we capture this as a board;
* Issues arising out of the Safeguarding Pressures Report;
* Increasing issues of delay and the reasons for this ;
* Are we being challenged/ are we challenging enough about the children who are not adopted; and
* Increasing numbers of children who need to go back to court to secure placement orders.

**Key Lines of Enquiry**

In response to the above discussion, it was agreed that the following key lines of enquiry would be developed and pursued in more detail:

* To develop and encourage a more accurate baseline, to include:
  + Number of placement orders needing to go back to court
  + Trends in numbers of SGOs
  + This set against the overall profile of children in care who are not adopted or don’t have a care plan for permanence through adoption/ SGO and data on destination planning
  + Profiles of prospective adopters
* To identify aspirations around the shaping of the market and how the market to meet need is identified
* Budget implications and whether more has to be spent to get better outcomes
* How to target adoption recruitment to meet unmet need
* To find some case studies where children’s outcomes have been better and what the cost implications are of these.(i.e. SGO support packages, higher levels of support and post adoption allowances – akin to the cost profile of a child staying in LTFC)

It was agreed that:

AL/RP would check with data group on the feasibility of collecting baseline information as outlined above. **Action AL/RP**

AM would investigate some previous work in this area which was conducted by Barnados and/or Lambeth (although latter some years ago) **Action AM**

**VAAs:** CA reported back to the group in some detail about the initial findings of the Adoption Support Fund pilot. It was noted that Hampshire, in the south east region are part of the pilot. The key issue was the vast underspend in the original budget with discussions about whether this sum would now be rolled forward into the first year of the scheme. It wasn’t completely clear when the pilot was due to end but it was thought that the scheme would be starting before the election. One key issue was how the scheme would be rolled out to all authorities on the basis of a small pilot where not much of the funding had been accessed. It was also unclear whether the funds could be used to pay for CAMHS services. It was noted that the scheme operated through a brokerage service and it was not yet clear whether there were enough services to be accessed (Hampshire had raised this in their position statement response).

It was felt that this had been a very useful update for the group and agreed that someone from Hampshire would be invited to attend the next meeting of the Board to provide an update. **Action RP.** It was also agreed that JR would speak to KBD about whether the criteria for the scheme could be widened in order to ensure that the funds were accessible via LA / or to fund family based models within the adoptive family rather than child only therapeutic inputs **Action JR**

SE provided an update on current issues for the VAAs. It was noted that many of the issues were the same as for LAs. VAAs were engaging with the DfE to try to increase the number of adopters with an increasing priority on hard to place children. Issue was that there was no clear link through to LAs with VAAs feeling out of the loop, except for sight of the ALB data. It was felt that VAAs can help with support packages but are unaware of numbers and needs of the children in the system.

It was noted that PACT were now members of two different consortia and that this was helping in becoming more engaged with the work.

It was agreed that some work could be undertaken to establish which authority (ies) had been more successful in placing children in the 7+ age group (and sibling groups). AL thought that the data would be available for this and agreed to consider and report back to the next meeting. **Action AL.**

**Position Statement:** RP introduced the position statement which had been compiled from returns from all 19 authorities and from Q2 data from 18 authorities. The paper analysed the data in respect of the key themes coming from the ALB Data Intelligence Pack and also from the responses to the questionnaire. Authorities had identified many areas of good practice and development work which is being undertaken. All 19 authorities were keen to have a regional event and had made suggestions for the topics to be included.

The group noted the report and it was agreed that it would be discussed in more detail at the next meeting. **Action ALL.**

**Regional Event:** It was agreed that it a regional event should take place, probably at the end of March 2015.

RP would find out from the programme what funding was available for such an event and AL would provide costings for a similar event held in Crawley. **Action RP/AL**

It was agreed that nominations would be sought from a task group to come up with a theme for the event, to report back to the next meeting in February. JR to send out a note asking for nominations for the group. **Action RP/JR.**

**Work Programme:** Based on the lines of enquiry discussion earlier in the meeting, JR and RP would meet to devise a work programme which would be shared with the group for sign off at the next meeting. **Action JR/RP**

**Response to ALB Data Matching Exercise:** It was agreed that AL would take the lead on the data question, involving the regional data group. **Action AL.** Using the position statement information, RP would draft a response to the other questions for checking with Adoption Leads by the end of December. This would then be signed off by JR in time for the deadline submission of 12th January 2015. **Action RP/JR**

**Communication/Dissemination:** It was agreed that this would be added into the work programme; communications with consortia, adoption leads, sevice managers and VAAs would be included.

JR to send out a communication to Directors and ADs about the outcome of the Board meeting, including lines of enquiry and proposals for a work programme, inviting comments. **Action JR**

**Date of Next Meeting:** Wednesday 25th February 2015 at 10.30am. Venue to be in Wokingham. RP to confirm. **Action RP**