

## One minute guide

### Voices of foster carers

Number 3 January 2019

In October 2018 the Coventry Safeguarding Children Partnership conducted an audit of Looked After Children which included the voices of children, care leavers and carers via both interview and questionnaire. The audit report was discussed with partners in December 2018 and a key recommendation was to share the learning from these voices to front line staff across the city partnership.

***Please - hear the Coventry voices and reflect on what this might mean in your work.....***



Overall, about three quarters of the carers surveyed felt as though their views and wishes were taken into account. There was a strong, positive message around carers consistently being invited to and being able to participate in meetings. Carers told us:

*“As carers we know the child well. It is recognised we use a child centred approach”*

33% of the carers surveyed had had to give notice on a placement at least once, and each carer described experiencing frustration as there were things that would have prevented this; 2 of the responses noted that being given full information at the time of considering the placement would have resulted in the placement being determined unsuitable, preventing notice being given and disruption for the child/young person.

Only a third of the foster carers surveyed described a good working relationship with professionals working alongside them and their looked after children. Conversely, 77% of respondents said they felt they could trust their professionals, and there was consistency in professionals explaining change and helping both carers and children to understand what was happening.

A lower number of respondents (69%) expressed satisfaction that the interventions completed had improved the lives of the children within the cohort; however some carers reported meetings could sometimes feel like 'box ticking' exercises. There were lots of examples given of last minute meetings, last minute cancellations and children dreading the professional visits because they were dry and repetitive.

Overall, carers highlighted themes around professionals communicating with them and respecting the role they play in the care of children and young people. Carers want professionals to share all information with them, and listen to what they have to share in return.

*"Listen and hear me. Take a breath, put your pen and form down and hear what I am saying. Respect my role and what I do"*

It was particularly noted by carers that they wanted professionals to take a holistic view of their families, and not just always focus on the looked after child or children in the home. There was respect shown by carers for professional roles, and praise for visits planned ahead of time and made fun for the child (ren) with activities involved such as cooking which left positive impressions on the family.

*"Value our time, value our opinion, value our family"*

Finally, concerns were consistently raised around feeling less valued than professionals, and around visits and meetings being arranged and re-arranged at the last minute disrupting family plans and life.

*"Treat me as an equal partner"*

## **REFLECTIONS**

What do you need to do in your practice now you have read this? Are there conversations you need to have, and does anything need to change?

*Remember – even the most appropriate placements can go wrong! If you ever have any concerns that a placement is not suitable or a child or young person is at risk, always talk to your manager.*

### **Key Contacts and Further Information**

Coventry Safeguarding Children Partnership website - <https://www.coventry.gov.uk/cscp>