Meeting the “Sufficiency Duty” through Consortium Working - the North West London Fostering Consortium Experience

Paul Adams

“the sufficiency duty”

Section 22G of the Children Act 1989

“requires local authorities to take steps that secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the authority’s area which meets the needs of children that the local authority are looking after”

Features

- Statutory guidance that requires LA's to take "strategic action"
- To be achieved by April 2011
- "Step change" in commissioning practice
- "must have regard to the benefits of securing a range of accommodation through a number of providers"
- "Requires a whole system approach"

Best practice examples

- “where it is not reasonably practicable for a child to be placed in his local area, there are mechanisms in place to widen the range of provision in neighbouring areas”
- “the local authority and its Children Trust partners collaborate with neighbouring Children’s Trusts to plan the market.. and commission in regional or sub-regional arrangements”

NWLFC

- Seven local authority fostering services
- Established April 2006; Operational April 2007
- Structure: steering group and sub-groups
- www.nwlfc.org.uk
- “recognise the value of working collaboratively to deliver better foster placements more efficiently”

Supporting existing foster carers

- Training for fostering social workers
- Sub-group for training organisers
- Commissioned training and materials to implement CWDC TDS
- Sons and daughters of foster carers days (consultation and training)

Sharing of Foster Carers

- Agreed protocol in 2008
- 5 placements in 2 years (3 task centred; 2 respite)
- Positive feedback from those who participated
- Recognised only limited success

Supporting Family and Friends

- Family and friends social work sub-group
- Developed good practice guidance
- Commissioned specialist training for social workers
- Jointly developed training programme for carers
- Buddying Scheme for family and friends carers

Recruitment Outreach

- Appointed recruitment outreach worker in September 2010
- Sub group for marketing leads –sharing best practice
- Presenting at publicity events on behalf of NWLFC/ arranging joint publicity events
- Joint commissioning and shared materials
- Researching the market; identifying opportunities

Key Challenges

- Achieving cultural change so people “think consortium”
- Developing trust, openness and a willingness to share
- Working in the context of limited resources

Key Benefits

- Sharing best practice in various areas
- Forum for reflective practice
- Peer support for practitioners in unique roles
- Peer management support
- Formal and informal benchmarking
- Achieving savings through economies of scale

Meeting the “Sufficiency Duty” through Consortium Working - the North West London Fostering Consortium Experience

Paul Adams