

## Report of Head of One Adoption West Yorkshire

### Report to Scrutiny Board (Children & Families)

**Date:** 15<sup>th</sup> March 2018

**Subject:** One Adoption West Yorkshire



Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

### Summary of main issues

1. Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield adoption functions as specified in the partnership agreement were delegated on the 1st April 2017 to Leeds City Council and One Adoption West Yorkshire formally opened.
2. This report sets out the developments within One Adoption West Yorkshire since the last report in October 2017 for scrutiny board.

### Recommendations

3. The scrutiny board is requested to continue support the work of One Adoption and promote the recruitment of adoptors in West Yorkshire.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This report sets out the developments within One Adoption West Yorkshire since the last report in October 2017 for scrutiny board.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield adoption functions as specified in the partnership agreement were delegated on the 1st April 2017 to Leeds City Council. One Adoption West Yorkshire formally opened on this date.

## **3 Main issues**

### **Staffing**

#### **3.1 Senior Leadership Team**

One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY) opened as Regional Adoption Agency on Monday 3 April 2017. It is led by the senior leadership team of:

Sarah Johal, Head of Service

Mary Brudenell, Service Delivery Manager

Julie Chew, Service Delivery Manager

Mandy Prout, Service Delivery Manager

Aretha Hanson, Business Support Manager

The Head Service has overall responsibility for the operations of One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY) and she undertakes the role of the agency decision maker for adopters. Mary takes a strategic lead on family finding, while taking on the line management of staff in the Bradford and Wakefield offices and links with those Local Authorities. Julie takes a strategic lead on adoption support, with line management for staff in the Leeds office and linking with that Local Authority (LA). Mandy has a strategic lead on recruitment and assessment, line manager for staff in the Halifax and Huddersfield offices and linking with Calderdale and Kirklees LAs. Aretha manages the administrative business support to all of the teams based in the 5 offices. She has the strategic lead on seeking rationalisation of business processes, where beneficial and practicable.

- 3.2 The collaboration between the Leeds HR business partner and his counterparts in the other 4 local authority's enabled as smooth a transition as possible. Subsequently, the majority of staff have opted to move over to Leeds Terms and Conditions with implementation taking place on the 1st December 2017.
- 3.3 The agency started off with a high number of vacancies across business support and adoption support. Recruitment to posts has continued over the last 7 months with the majority of positions being filled. Additional temporary social worker vacancies have been advertised and recruited to, to assist with demand in family finding and adoption support, rather than using agency cover.

- 3.4 All staff have been provided with a One Adoption mobile phone, which has assisted in enabling access to the Leeds ICT system, including Mosaic the integrated children's case recording system utilised by OAWY. All staff now have a your.name@oneadoptionwy.leeds.gov.uk e mail address.
- 3.5 Key IT training was undertaken throughout June and July on the Mosaic case recording system for all staff & induction training for staff regarding the self service, Performance and Learning system (PALS) and finance system took place from June through to mid-July.
- 3.6 Establishing the culture
- Work has been undertaken with the senior leadership team, the management team and with all staff to establish the vision and values of One Adoption West Yorkshire. The mission statement is clear: "To be an outstanding adoption service achieving outcomes for children without delay; recruit adopters for all children who need adoption with an excellent adoption support service for all affected by adoption."
- 3.7 The vision is to be a listening service; a learning service and a responsive service. This is underpinned by 3 behaviours: Children are the client; a sense of urgency to avoid unnecessary delay and working with families every step of the way.
- 3.8 Work continues with the staff regarding the importance of relationships as we build the OAWY identity with the teams, working in a culture of high support and high challenge.

## **Practice focus**

### Adoption Support

- 3.9 We held a workshop in July with the Adopted Teenagers, AT-Id group to get their ideas about how we communicate and develop our work with young people to improve services. An action plan to take this work forward within One Adoption has been developed.
- 3.10 We are progressing the re-commissioning of independent adoption support services for birth parents, adoptive families and adopted adults. We will commission this jointly with North Yorkshire and Humber Regional Adoption Agency. North Yorkshire Council will take a lead on this as they currently oversee the approved provider list for adoption support across Yorkshire & Humber. South Yorkshire are involved in this and have given a commitment in principle to be involved, pending formal agreement from their local authorities. This is with a view to commence from October 2018 with current contracts being extended from March 18- October 18.
- 3.11 One Adoption inherited a waiting list of unallocated adoption support assessments on opening in April 2018. The adoption support teams are almost fully staffed and waiting times for assessments have reduced. However, there is still a waiting list for adoption support assessments between 6-8 weeks across the region. We have a prioritisation system in place and are trialling a triage system offering an initial visit to see if this assists in addressing concerns at an early stage and signposting

where appropriate. The main assessment work that is waiting is where adoptive families are seeking therapeutic support via the adoption support fund. The expectations of adopters in accessing therapeutic support are high and there is further work for us to do across the region in ensuring that the adoption support offer across west Yorkshire is known to families. The development of a peer support service is moving forward with the adopter voice co-ordinators and Cornerstone as a provider service working to pilot this in house over the next year.

- 3.12 The Adoption support teams with business support held a development day on 11th October undertaking work on the information exchange (letterbox) service and adoption support needs assessments. Work has started on regionalising the letterbox service so that we provide a consistent approach to all families and ensuring that this work can be covered from different bases.
- 3.13 The Non Violence Resistance and Theraplay groups have been running and take up from families for both of these has been good with positive feedback from adoptive parents.
- 3.14 A provider's event took place in December regarding the re-commissioning of independent adoption support services for birth parents, adoptive families and adopted adults, including adding in the AT\_ID group into the specification and the adopter voice forum.

#### Practice Improvement Fund projects

- 3.15 Adoption Support Fund (ASF) - One Adoption West is piloting a regional adoption support fund. The aim of this to improve adoption support across a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) by: regional commissioning of the ASF and engaging users in the development and testing of regionalised support services; test out how the ASF could be managed in a regionalised structure including how human and financial resources for adoption support will be deployed and to inform future national policy and delivery of ASF and share emerging practice with other RAAs. We have recruited a project manager to oversee this work.
- 3.16 Centre for Excellence – this has started as a pilot in west Yorkshire with a view to rolling this out across the wider Yorkshire & Humber region with funding for 2 years. We have recruited 3 sector led specialists to lead the development work: a senior clinical psychologist, adoption manager and an education specialist. The objectives of this are to look at a framework for assessment of support needs; to develop multi- disciplinary support for adoptive families and to develop a training and development programme for professionals in the sector.
- 3.17 *Early Permanence Placements (EPP)* - the Voluntary Adoption Alliance have been successful with the practice improvement bid for developing early permanence across the Yorkshire & Humber region and to look at concurrency within the West. This will help us improve our ability to place children earlier for permanence. The objectives of the bid are to:

- build awareness of EPP including concurrency across the whole region and building a champions network
- Developing concurrency placements based on model from North West
- Developing a fostering to permanence pilot for 'harder to place' children

### Marketing, recruitment & assessment

- 3.18 The One Adoption website has been launched and marketing activity has been undertaken to raise its web profile. The website has been changed and is much improved. There is still work to do and development of this will continue. The enquiries have increased over the year as more people become aware of the new brand. A marketing campaign began across the wider Y & H region from the first week in October in the lead up to national adoption week with an Outdoor campaign and radio campaign. In West Yorkshire we undertook additional marketing during the last two weeks of September across bus backs with posters and billboards to generate more awareness of the brand locally in a run up to the wider campaign.
- 3.19 Prospective adopters are making contact with One Adoption WY and attendance at the information evenings across the area has improved and we are currently exploring bigger venues in the Halifax, Bradford and Wakefield areas.
- 3.20 All recruitment staff have now been trained to use the Attachment Style Interview tool. It will take time to embed the learning from this into the assessment work undertaken it will assist staff in being clear about how we effectively support adopters moving forward.
- 3.21 The teams have made real progress in agreeing the practice across the teams. In summary we now have the following: Standardised information sessions & pre-approval training; a clear stage one process with all new applications on MOSAIC ( the case recording system); agreed criteria for recruitment of adopters, templates agreed for case work and a system for the allocation of assessments and booklets produced for adopters.

### Children's Planning and Matching

- 3.22 The family finding teams identified that a significant number of children required placements at the outset of the agency and a lot of activity has been focussed on ensuring effective plans are in place for each child waiting for adoption.
- 3.23 Progress has been made on streamlining links with Adoption Match (previously the Adoption Register) and Linkmaker and in developing stronger links with the local Voluntary Adoption Agencies and now have a regional view of all the children and families across our region and in the New Year across the wider Yorkshire & Humber region.
- 3.24 In November 2017 we held our first Children's Profiling Event, inviting adoptive families from across the Yorkshire and Humberside and the North West to

consider a selection of 25 children awaiting adoption who were featured with high quality photos, DVDs and personalised displays. Interest has been shown in a number of the children featured here which we are actively following up. The intention is to hold a profiling event every quarter and invite approved adopters and those in stage 2 of the adoption process to see the children who have a plan for adoption with a view to making links for potential matches.

- 3.25 A focus for the family finding teams over this period has been the revision of the key forms that support the matching and placement process (Adoption Placement Report, Adoption Placement Plan and Adoption Support Plan) taking all the aspects of best practice to ensure a consistent high standard across the regional adoption agency. These have been discussed with local authority leads and staff across the region with implementation taking place in February. Joint workshops and training will be arranged between One Adoption and LA staff to look at providing guidance for staff using the new templates.
- 3.26 A key issue that is the mismatch locally, regionally and nationally between the numbers of children in the adoption process and the declining number of adopters available. The importance of recruitment to address sufficiency issues is key and we are currently looking at the potential impact upon the inter agency budget for 2018-19.
- 3.27 One Adoption has been looking with local authorities to support the agency decision making (ADM) process regarding adoption plans for children (called the ADM or Shopba process) and Huddersfield, Bradford and Leeds have now aligned their systems with legal advisors present and support from business support in arranging and the minute taking of these meetings. Work is in progress with Wakefield and Calderdale on finalising how these meetings will be supported moving forward.
- 3.28 Discussions with medical advisors and commissioners are ongoing regarding improving the quality of the written information provided, ensuring quality standards are in place for updating medicals and providing advice to adopters.

#### Business Support

- 3.29 The business support functions of OAWY have now been agreed and progress has been made in setting up systems to support the work of the agency with key processes around the panel work, children's planning and children's tracking developing well. There is ongoing work to streamline processes and support the work of the teams.

#### Information Management and Technology

- 3.30 The IT issues have been problematic for a number of complex reasons for the new agency however these are now improving with all staff having use of a Leeds laptop. The difficulties for staff working across offices have also generally improved although access to the other local authority systems remains an issue and work is in progress regarding accessing these via a portal from the Leeds laptops.

- 3.31 Connectivity has also improved across the region and the long term solution to this, via VPN access was piloted in Huddersfield and is now rolling out across the other offices. Printers are now connected to the Leeds laptops which is a great step forward in enabling staff to print off their work as required.
- 3.32 The migration of data onto Mosaic is still work in progress as this is a time consuming and manual task. The target to move all records for adopters in assessment prior to adoption order has largely been achieved with a small number of cases requiring documents uploading on to the system before closing down the local authority file.
- 3.33 Family finding work is also now on Mosaic. The aim is for adoption support work to be fully migrated by the end of February with business support assistance required with Bradford, Calderdale and Wakefield staff to move the work over.
- 3.34 Once the work is migrated the requirement for access to the local authority systems will be read only and this will ease the burden for staff needing to use more than one system for recording their work.
- 3.35 The tracker for monitoring children through the adoption process from legal gateway is in place and the data is improving. We have a new URN (RAA1) and provided the first Adoption leadership board (ALB) quarterly data return.
- 3.36 The regional IT group continues to meet to resolve the issues.

#### Duty

- 3.37 On the 1st July a One Adoption Duty system was implemented working out of Kernel House following a transitional period. This has been very effective and this service operates from 10am- 4pm each day (3.30pm on Friday) to allow time for staff to get to Kernel House and be ready, with IT support, to take calls from 10am. This is currently being reviewed as the system has been run for 6 months. The majority of calls on duty relate to adoption support, enquiries from professionals about staff across the region and recruitment enquiries. There are qualified social workers, adoption advisors and business support staff operating duty with a team manager and service manager on a rota basis to ensure the service is effective.

#### Adoption Panels

- 3.38 Adoption panels have been rationalised to 7 per month sitting in Bradford, Leeds and Huddersfield. They are chaired by two independent adoption panel chairs, Julie Archer and Julia Pearmain. The panels make recommendations about proposed matches for all 5 partner LA children, which will be decided upon by the agency decision makers in the 5 LA's. The panels will make recommendations regarding the suitability of prospective adopters to be approved, which will be decided by the OAWY agency decision maker.
- 3.39 Adoption Panel training was undertaken in June and the panel protocol has been agreed with guidance for staff across One adoption and the local authorities been issued. A second Adoption Panel Training Day was completed in November 2017

- 3.40 The process of moving to electronic panels has been completed and panel members have received training and can access ongoing support as they become familiar with using the new system.

#### Links with Health

- 3.41 The first meeting with health commissioners and providers across West Yorkshire was undertaken to discuss the medical advisor role, now working across the region on adoption panels. Issues around consistency of practice, information provided and ability to meet demand was discussed. Agreement was reached about developing key standards and performance indicators regarding the role and the merits of considering a West Yorkshire specification about this role. Discussions were also opened at this meeting regarding the Centre for Excellence and the Adoption Support Fund and this work will continue.

#### Links with education

- 3.42 Following early meetings with virtual heads across the region, we have agreed with the Virtual Head in Leeds who will work with us to arrange an Outcomes Based Accountability workshop with key stakeholders across the West with a view to developing a clear action plan for taking this work forward.

#### Performance Data

- 3.43 Performance Data relating to Leeds Children for quarter 1 and Quarter 2

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2
Number of ADM Decisions	46	50
Number of Placement Orders Granted	32	43
Number of children matched	37	32
Number of children placed	34	41
Number of children adopted	42	39
Number of disruptions	0	0



A Practice Improvement Framework has been agreed (Appendix 1) and the Second Quarterly Performance Report (Appendix 2).

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

- 4.1.1 There has been ongoing consultation and engagement with staff who have transferred in to the agency as well as formal consultation with the trade unions over the last nine months. Consultation with service users is ongoing to inform the development of the service design and delivery of the agency.

### **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

- 4.2.1 There are no implications for this report. An Equality Impact assessment is underway and will be completed by March 2018 to inform any gaps and future improvement plans.

### **4.3 Council policies and Best Council Plan**

- 4.3.1 One Adoption supports the council aim to be a Child Friendly City and ensuring that children are safe from harm. The work of the agency also support a key objective of appropriately and safely reducing the numbers of children looked after.

### **4.4 Resources and value for money**

- 4.4.1 There are no budget pressures at the present time.

### **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 4.5.1 There are no implications for this report.

### **4.6 Risk Management**

- 4.6.1 There are no implications for this report.

## **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 This the summary of the first 9 months of One Adoption agency operating and aims to give the scrutiny board and overview of the progress made since April 2017.

## **6 Recommendations**

- 6.1 The scrutiny board is requested to continue support the work of One Adoption and promote the recruitment of adoptors in West Yorkshire.

## **7. Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

### **7.1 None**

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.