

WEST YORKSHIRE ADOPTION JOINT COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 28TH JUNE, 2017

PRESENT: Councillor in the Chair

Councillors L Mulherin and Rowley

Present: Councillor L Mulherin (Leeds) - Chair
Councillor C Thirkhill (City of Bradford) and Councillor O Rowley (City of Wakefield MDC)

Councillor H Hayden (LCC)

In Attendance: S Johal (LCC), S Tariq (LCC), A Hanson (LCC), C Hudson (LCC), S Parkin (LCC), M Freeman-Hacker (LCC), A Mouse (LCC) J Jenkins (Calderdale MBC) R Roberts (LCC), H Lovelady (LCC) and J Grieve (LCC)

1 **APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS**

There were no appeals against refusal of inspection of documents.

2 **EXEMPT INFORMATION - POSSIBLE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

There were no items identified where it was considered necessary to exclude the press or public from the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be considered.

3 **LATE ITEMS**

There were no late items of business

4 **DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made at the meeting.

5 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillor E Hill, Councillor V Slater and Councillor M Swift.

Councillor C Thirkhill was substituting for Councillor V Slater.

6 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 15th March 2017 were agreed as a true and correct record.

7 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

Business Report (Minute No.7 referred) – The Chair made reference to Resolution (iii) and the decision to issue a standing invitation for

representatives from the Voluntary Adoption Alliance to attend future meetings of this Committee, the Chair queried if an invitation to attend had been sent.

In responding, the Head of Service reported that an invitation had been issued, however, the Voluntary Adoption Alliance were not able to send a representative to each meeting, but had indicated a representative would be in attendance when certain themes were being discussed and they would continue to get the agenda and the minutes of the meeting.

Structure Report (Minute No. 9 referred) – Members sought an update on the receipt of guidance around inspection regime for Management Boards.

In responding, the Head of Service said the Minister responsible had lost his seat as Member of Parliament at the recent General Election which had led to some delay. Robert Goodwill MP had been appointed as the new Minister of State at the Department for Education on 12th June 2017. It is understood that a move to regionalisation was still been taken forward as a policy by the Government.

8 ADOPTER DEVELOPMENT REPORT

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which set out details of the Adopter Development Co-ordinators (Adoptive Parents employed and funded by the One Adoption Agency) and their role to work with the regional adoption agencies across Yorkshire and the Humber region to develop adopter led services.

The Chair welcomed and introduced; Sam Parkin, Marnie Freeman-Hacker and Andrew Mouse, Adopter Development Co-ordinators (ADC's) for the North & Humber, West and South areas. Each ADC was appointed in February 2017 and would be in place until February 2018, each working 15 hours per week.

It was reported that the main roles of the ADC was to conduct further, fuller research and engagement with adopters in the region with a view to developing:

- An Adopters Charter for adoption agencies to sign up to, guaranteeing a common minimum service standard across the region
- Establishment of a Peer Mentoring scheme to provide additional support for adopters beyond the current offer.
- Easier Access to Adoption Support, with a better focus on communication and relationships.
- Adopter Led/ engaged Training, more training for adopters

Proposed Timescales:

- May – August - Draft Charter for consultation & research carried out

- September – November - Secure login website area pilot and gather data
- December – February - Peer support pilot & training plan agreed.
- Adopter Charter Agreed. Adopter led services to be piloted

Members welcomed the work being undertaken, one Member commenting that if you support the adopter, they are then in a better position to support the child. “Get it right at the beginning to avoid problems later”

Members queried if there was an opportunity for children to have a voice.

In responding officers confirmed that there was a group called the AT_ID that is a group across the Yorkshire and Humber region for adopted teenagers.

The Chair requested if more details could be provided on this particular issue and suggested that a report be prepared for the next meeting about the views of young people.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To endorse the information provided by the Adopter Development Co-ordinators
- (ii) To support their work in going forward
- (iii) That a report be prepared for the next meeting explaining how the views of young people are expressed.

9 HEAD OF SERVICE REPORT

The Director of Children’s Services submitted a report which provided a summary of the structural and reporting arrangements for the Regional Adoption Agency for the first two months of becoming established.

The Head of Service, One Adoption West Yorkshire presented the report spoke in detail about the following:

- Senior Leadership Team
- Staffing
- Team in transition
- Adoption Panels
- Establishing the culture
- Practice focus
- Recruitment & Marketing, website
- Matching
- Links with senior leadership team in partner Local Authorities

The Head of Service reported that recruitment to vacant posts was continuing with on-going recruitment for adoption advisors, advanced practitioners, social

workers and business support positions. Interviews for business support vacancies were planned throughout June and July.

It was noted that all staff had been provided with a One Adoption mobile phone which would assist in enabling them to access the Leeds ICT system, including Mosaic, the integrated children's case recording system utilised by OAWY. Also all staff had now been issued with a One Adoption West Yorkshire email account your.name@oneadoptionwy.leeds.gov.uk

Referring to the role of Adoption Panels and the process by which panels make recommendations on the suitability of prospective adopters, the Head of Service reported that adoption panels would sit on 7 occasions per month across 3 OAWY bases (Bradford, Huddersfield and Leeds)

Referring to paragraphs 3.20 and 3.21 of the submitted report Members queried the support provided to birth parents of children, following the adoption of their child. Members took the view that some kind of interface was required.

In responding, the Deputy Director, Children and Families said work was on-going across a number of local authorities providing a support service for parents who have had children removed from their care and further work was being developed to identify which of the services would deliver the most appropriate support.

In summing up the Chair said that the transition appeared to have gone very smoothly, could the thanks and appreciation of the Joint Committee be conveyed to all teams on the completion of a successful move.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To welcome the progress made and to support the further progression of these arrangements
- (ii) That the thanks and appreciation of the Joint Committee be conveyed to all teams on the completion of a successful move

10 PRACTICE IMPROVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which set out the practice improvement framework and baseline performance data for One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY)

In addressing the main issues the Head of Service, One Adoption West Yorkshire reported that work had been undertaken to establish the key

performance criteria which would form the basis for practice improvement for the agency (Appendix No. 1 of the submitted report referred). Parallel work had also taken place to establish the baseline data which showed the patterns, trends and snapshot information relating to adoption activity in the past 3-5 years in each local authority.

The Head of Service said that a performance group had been set up across the region involving a lead officer from each Local Authority (LA) to ensure that the data was effectively shared with OAWY and that this work be further developed. Further data from Local Authorities partners was also required as the service moved forward and development work continued (Appendix 2).

It was suggested that Adoption Support was one area that required more detailed consideration. There were a number of discussions locally, regionally and nationally about the data requirements that would assist in measuring performance and the adopter voice forum was working closely with OAWY in developing this. This work will be presented to the next meeting.

In offering comment the Chair that focus required concentrating on the recruitment process, it was very important to get the right family.

Members queried if children had a voice in terms of “did they want to be adopted”

In responding the Deputy Director, Children and Families suggested that young children did not have much of a say, but older children do have a say, and sometimes adoption is not the best route for older children and they may remain in care longer term and not be adopted.

With reference to the data on prospective adopters, Members queried the length of time potential adopters were waiting to adopt a child.

In responding the Head of Service said that progress through the adoption process could take some time due to the preparation required; the needs of the child had to be taken into account, would the adopter be willing take a wide range of children, what was the child’s cultural needs, heritage and how would the adopter be positioned towards such issue.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To endorse the proposed practice improvement framework and baseline data and to support the continued development of this work
- (ii) That further information about Adoption Support and the data requirements that would assist in measuring performance be the subject of a report to the next meeting of this Committee

11 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED – That the next meeting be arranged for Wednesday 4th October 2017 at 10.00am in the Civic Hall, Leeds.

12 CHAIR'S CLOSING REMARKS

The Chair reported that today's meeting would be the final meeting when Howard Lovelady, Project Manager, Children & Families, would be in attendance.

In paying tribute the Chair said Howard had been a key figure in the establishment One Adoption Agency, his knowledge, skill and commitment would be really missed.

Members joined the Chair in expressing their best wishes to Howard and wished him well in his future endeavours.