



Public Document Pack

WEST YORKSHIRE ADOPTION JOINT COMMITTEE

Meeting to be held in the Civic Hall, Leeds on
Friday, 12th January, 2018 at 1.00 pm

MEMBERSHIP

Val Slater	City of Bradford MDC
Megan Swift	Calderdale MBC
Erin Hill	Kirklees MBC
Lisa Mulherin(Chair)	Leeds City Council
Olivia Rowley	City of Wakefield MDC

A G E N D A

Item No	Ward/Equal Opportunities	Item Not Open		Page No
1			<p>APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS</p> <p>To consider any appeals in accordance with Procedure Rule 15.2 of the Access to Information Rules (in the event of an Appeal the press and public will be excluded)</p> <p>(In accordance with Procedure Rule 15.2, written notice of an appeal must be received by the Head of Governance Services at least 24 hours before the meeting)</p>	
2			<p>EXEMPT INFORMATION - POSSIBLE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC</p> <p>1 To highlight reports or appendices which officers have identified as containing exempt information, and where officers consider that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, for the reasons outlined in the report.</p> <p>2 To consider whether or not to accept the officers recommendation in respect of the above information.</p> <p>3 If so, to formally pass the following resolution:-</p> <p>RESOLVED – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following parts of the agenda designated as containing exempt information on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information, as follows:-</p>	

3

LATE ITEMS

To identify items which have been admitted to the agenda by the Chair for consideration

(The special circumstances shall be specified in the minutes)

4

DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

To disclose or draw attention to any disclosable pecuniary interests for the purposes of Section 31 of the Localism Act 2011 and paragraphs 13-16 of the Members' Code of Conduct.

5

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

6

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

1 - 6

To confirm as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 4th October 2017.

(Copy attached)

7

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

To consider any matters arising from the Minutes (If any)

8

HEAD OF SERVICE REPORT

7 - 12

To consider a report by the Director of Children's Services which provides a summary from the Head of Service on the developments of the service since the last report to the committee in October 2017.

(Report attached)

9		<p>REGIONALISATION OF THE ADOPTION SUPPORT FUND PILOT REPORT</p> <p>To consider a report by the Director of Children’s Services which sets out details for piloting the regionalisation of the Adoption Support Fund Pilot.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p>	13 - 18
10		<p>PRACTICE FOCUS- RECRUITMENT AND ASSESSMENT REPORT</p> <p>To consider a report by the Director of Children’s Services which sets out the recruitment and assessment strategy and action plan for One Adoption West Yorkshire.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p>	19 - 24
11		<p>PERFORMANCE REPORT</p> <p>To consider a report by the Director of Children’s Services which sets out the second quarterly performance report of the new regional agency.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p>	25 - 44
12		<p>DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING</p> <p>Date and time of next meeting to be determined</p>	

Third Party Recording

Recording of this meeting is allowed to enable those not present to see or hear the proceedings either as they take place (or later) and to enable the reporting of those proceedings. A copy of the recording protocol is available from the contacts named on the front of this agenda.

Use of Recordings by Third Parties– code of practice

- a) Any published recording should be accompanied by a statement of when and where the recording was made, the context of the discussion that took place, and a clear identification of the main speakers and their role or title.
- b) Those making recordings must not edit the recording in a way that could lead to misinterpretation or misrepresentation of the proceedings or comments made by attendees. In particular there should be no internal editing of published extracts; recordings may start at any point and end at any point but the material between those points must be complete.

WEST YORKSHIRE ADOPTION JOINT COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 4TH OCTOBER, 2017

Present: Councillor L Mulherin (Leeds) - Chair
Councillor V Slater (City of Bradford), Councillor M Swift (Calderdale MBC)
and Councillor O Rowley (City of Wakefield MDC)

Councillor H Hayden (LCC)

In Attendance: S Johal (LCC), S Tariq (LCC), and J Grieve (LCC)

13 APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS

There were no appeals against refusal of inspection of documents.

14 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.

15 LATE ITEMS

Although there were no formal late items, the Chair did accept the inclusion of supplementary information in respect of Agenda Item No.8 - "Birth Parent Voice – Proposed Consultation for One Adoption" (Minute No. 20 refers)

16 DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

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

17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor E Hill (Kirklees MBC)

18 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 28th June 2017 were agreed as a true and correct record.

19 Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no issues raised under matters arising.

20 Head of Service Report

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Friday, 12th January, 2018

The Director of Children's Services submitted a business report and provided an update on the following:

- Staffing
- Business Support
- Information Management and Technology
- Implementation of the One Adoption Duty System
- Adoption Panels
- Establishing the culture
- Voice and influence of young people
- Birth Parents
- Adoption Support
- Practice Improvement Fund projects
- Centre of Excellence
- Early Permanence Placements (EPP)
- Recruitment and Assessment
- Children's Planning and Family Finding
- Links with Health
- Links with Education
- Marketing, Website
- Performance

It was noted that recruitment staffing was progressing well with all the 4 adoption advisors starting in post in the last two weeks. Advanced practitioner posts were all now recruited. Business support staff were moving into positions, with a further round of recruitment ongoing. The Practice Improvement Manager had been appointed with a start date at the end of October.

Members were made aware that progression of the IT systems had been problematic. It was noted that issues around: connectivity, reliance on Wi- Fi, intermittent strength; use of the guest Wi-Fi, timescales for login back in; printing; slowness and freezing screens were all issues which required further attention.

Members expressed disappointment about the IT issues and requested if the necessary actions could be put in place to ensure a reliable service was provided.

A discussion ensued on the Adoption Support Fund. Members suggested that there appeared to be raised expectations by adoptive parents on the level of funding that could be expected from the Local Authority that was over and above the limit imposed by the fund for therapeutic support. It was suggested

that greater communication was required with adoptive parents in order to clarify the arrangements.

In responding the Head of Service said at the present time there was different criteria regarding the levels of financial support in adoption across different local authority areas. It was suggested that some consideration be given by the officers to look at this across the local authorities.

In summing up the Chair said that the transition continued to progress, although there appeared to be a number of issues around IT connectivity and reliability which required addressing.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note and welcome the progress of the agency
- (ii) To support the further progression of these arrangements
- (iii) That the issues around IT connectivity and reliability be addressed as a matter of priority.

21 Voice and Influence of Children & Young People Report

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which set out details of the work undertaken by One Adoption West Yorkshire to ensure that the voice and influence of children and young people was at the heart of the adoption service.

The report provided details about the Adopted Teens Identity Group (AT_iD), a project set up by the Yorkshire & Humber adoption consortium with a vision of offering adopted teenagers the opportunity to express their views over the development of the adoption service and the services they accessed.

Members noted the project was overseen by PAC/UK who employ a child & family project worker to oversee the development of the group which included:

- AT-iD Website - open to anyone, offering useful information & insight into the experiences of adopted teenagers
- Online Chat Forum – A safe online space where adoptees could talk, share, rant, giggle and support each other. Members can also ask questions or seek support from the project workers via the chat forum
- Activity Days – providing an opportunity to make new friends and make new memories. They are held 4 times a year and participants get to have a say in what the group does

- Youth Council – for those who are looking to get more involved and make a difference in adoption, members aged 13+ can join our panel and attend workshops with the aim of using views and experiences to help professionals and policy makers.

Members were informed that in 2014 “After Adoption” brought together groups of young people on its national TalkAdoption programmes along with the AT-ID group in Leeds to get a national picture of the needs and expectations of adopted young people. “The Big Consult” was published in 2016 and is attached at Appendix 1 of the submitted report.

Members were made aware that in 2016 the AT_iD group made a film about adopted young people “Voices of Adopted Teens” The film talks about their experiences of being adopted and is used to raise awareness with prospective adopters; professionals and to share nationally with other Regional Adoption Agencies the views and experience of young people who are adopted.

The film “Voices of Adopted Teens” was viewed by the Committee.

Members welcomed the film commenting that it sent out a powerful message.

A discussion ensued about some of the themes covered in the film: making contact with birth parents, a child/ young person deciding for themselves about if they wanted others to know they are adopted and, as an adopted child, they did not want to be treated differently.

Reference was made to “open adoption” the Head of Service explained that this was where a child lives with adopted parents but occasionally meets with birth parents so the child has regular contact with their birth family. Members were informed this was agreed on an individual basis depending upon the circumstances and needs of each child.

In drawing the discussion to a conclusion the Chair reiterated the comments made earlier that the film did send out a very powerful but positive message.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions.

Members requested if “outcome statistics” for adopted children could be circulated to the Committee and a report be brought back to a future meeting focusing on the outcomes for adopted children, including education.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the information provided by the AT-ID group.
- (ii) To support the continued work of the agency in encouraging the voice and influence of adopted children and young people.
- (iii) That a report be brought back to a future meeting focusing on the outcomes for children adopted including educational outcomes.

22 Performance Report

The Director of Children’s Services submitted a report which provided the first quarterly performance report of the new regional agency.

The Head of Service reported that the partnership agreement required that One Adoption West Yorkshire would develop a performance management framework and would comply with the key performance indicators set and report upon performance in relation to these, to the Management Board of the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), the Adoption Leadership board and any other statutory body as required.

It was reported that work had been undertaken to establish the key performance criteria which would form the basis for practice improvement for the agency and this was discussed at the last meeting.

Members were advised that the first two quarterly reports were likely to be light in detail as trend analysis and data was not yet available for an extended period.

The key performance indicators were set out in Appendix 1 of the submitted report.

Members welcomed the report, noting that as more Adoption Agencies came on stream, more data would become available for analysis and comparison.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the proposed performance report format and information

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Friday, 12th January, 2018

- (ii) To support the continued development of this work

23 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – That the next meeting be arranged for Friday 12th January 2018 at 1.00pm in the Civic Hall, Leeds.



Report author: Sarah Johal

Tel: 0113 2783623

Report of Director of Children's Services

Report to West Yorkshire Adoption Joint Committee

Date: 12th January 2018

Subject: Head of Service Report

Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, access to information procedure rule number:		
Appendix number:		

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 provides a summary from the Head of Service on the developments of the service since the last report to the committee in October 2017.

Recommendations

1. The Joint Committee is requested to:
 - a) Note the progress of the agency; and
 - b) support the progression of these arrangements.

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.

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 The last of the recruitment activity for business support and social workers has now been completed to ensure the structure is fully established, with staff due to start in January. In addition, a number of temporary staff have been recruited to cover the maternity leave of existing staff in the field of family finding and adoption support.
- 3.2 Meetings have taken place with Trade Unions and staff regarding those staff wishing to move over to Leeds terms and conditions and with regard to market supplements. The majority of staff have opted to move over to Leeds with implementation taking place on the 1st December. Staff moving over will become eligible for an essential car user allowance after 6 months of employment, depending upon mileage. Given the current mileage use the majority of social workers will be eligible for this allowance.

IT

- 3.3 The IT issues are improving and the move to all staff having a Leeds laptops was completed at the end of November. 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.
- 3.4 Connectivity has also improved across the region and the long term solution to this, via VPN access, is being piloted in Huddersfield with a view to rolling out across the other offices in the New Year. This will enable printers to be connected to the Leeds laptops from the end of January.
- 3.5 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 being achieved with a small number of cases requiring documents uploading on to the system before closing down the local authority file.

- 3.6 Family finding work is also now on Mosaic. Adoption support work will be fully migrated by the end of January with business support assistance required in Bradford and Wakefield staff to move the work over.
- 3.7 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.

Practice

Children planning & Family Finding

- 3.8 There has been meetings with legal advisors across the region regarding the decision making process for children who require a plan for adoption (known as Shopba). This process was discussed and agreement was reached about templates and documents to be submitted with placement order applications and court bundles.
- 3.9 One adoption has been looking with local authorities to support the 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.
- 3.10 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.
- 3.11 The Family Finding service have been working on developing more creative and streamlined processes for finding families for the children in West Yorkshire with a confirmed adoption plan. This has included the further development of the Regional Placement Group to look at children and families in the assessment process at an earlier stage.
- 3.12 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.
- 3.13 In November 2017 we held our first Children's Profiling Event, inviting adoptive families from across the Yorkshire and Humber 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.

- 3.14 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 are in the process of being discussed with local authority leads and staff across the region, with an aim to implement in January. Joint workshops and training will be arranged between One Adoption and LA staff in the new year to look at providing guidance for staff using the new templates.
- 3.15 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. This will be discussed more in the performance report as we start to address sufficiency issues and the potential impact upon the inter agency budget for 2018-19.

Adoption Support

- 3.16 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 to pilot this in house over the next year.
- 3.17 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.
- 3.18 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
- 3.19 A providers 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. There is ongoing discussions with colleagues across the wider Yorkshire and Humber region about which local authorities will be part of this wider commissioned service.

Adoption Support Fund

- 3.20 This is a separate agenda item and will be addressed in detail.

Centre of Excellence

- 3.21 The Centre of Excellence grant has now been agreed and we have recruited staff to the project team. These include two sector specialists. Shelagh Ethell (adoption manager) and Julie Pocklington (education specialist) plus a business support officer- Daniel Borlase. They will come into post in January and will work with Howard Lovelady and Eva Booth who are working across the adoption support fund and Centre of Excellence across the region.
- 3.22 We have identified a psychologist from Leeds Community Health Trust and discussions are underway with Leeds Community Health to release the worker and in addition to provide a Band 4 trainee psychologist.

Recruitment & Assessment

- 3.23 There is a separate item for the committee on this topic with a strategy document and a video.

Operational leads group

- 3.24 The group has met three times and discussions have centred around the arrangements regarding Shopba decisions, Family Finding templates, discussions about the Adoption Support Fund & Adoption allowances; medical Advisors, adoption panels and access to records and archiving arrangements. These are helpful meetings to discuss streamlining arrangements around practice/ legal/court issues that crop up that.
- 3.25 Any concerns are flagged up in between meetings if they need addressing with operational leads in each local authority (LA) and escalated to more senior managers if matters are not resolved. The next meeting will focus upon performance issues and a more in depth look at the stages of the adoption process in each LA to see what can be shared and learnt about best practice at each stage of the journey.

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. 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 Resources and value for money

4.3.1 There are no budget pressures at the present time. (further to add here about next years budget)

4.4 Legal implications and access to information

4.4.1 There are no implications for this report.

4.5 Risk management

4.5.1 There are no implications for this report.

5. Recommendations

5.1 The Joint Committee is requested to:
a) Note the progress of the agency; and
b) Support the progression of these arrangements.

Background documents¹

None

¹ 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.



Report author: Sarah Johal

Tel: 0113 2783623

Report of Director of Children's Services

Report to West Yorkshire Adoption Joint Committee

Date: 12th January 2018

Subject: Regionalisation of the Adoption Support Fund Pilot Report

Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?

Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?

Yes No

If relevant, access to information procedure rule number:

Appendix number:

Summary of main issues

1. This report sets out information regarding piloting the regionalisation of the Adoption Support Fund Pilot.

Recommendations

2. The Joint Committee is requested to:
 - a) note the information regarding the pilot; and
 - b) support the development of this work.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report sets out the key aims and objectives of the regionalisation of the Adoption Support Fund Pilot being undertaken within One Adoption West Yorkshire.

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.
- 2.2 The partnership agreement is clear that One Adoption West Yorkshire is responsible for the adoption support function of the adoption work.
- 2.3 In September One Adoption was successful in being granted a Practice Improvement Fund (PIF) grant from the government that seeks to strengthen services and spread good practice that will make a difference to adoptive families far beyond the period for which the funding is available. The overarching objective for this grant is to provide funding which will deliver better outcomes for children, by improving access to adoption support services.

3. Main issues

Aims of the grant

- 3.1 This grant relates to testing the regionalisation of the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) by supporting One Adoption to scope out and explore how this will work in practice.
- 3.2 The main aims through piloting the regionalisation of the ASF are to improve adoption support across the region by:
- Regional commissioning of the ASF
 - Engaging users in the development and testing of regionalised support services
 - Improving the speed and quality of adoption support assessments and
 - Developing the adoption support market across the regional agency
 - Improving links with other services such as health, education and Centres of Excellence
 - To test out how the ASF could be managed in a regionalised structure including how human and financial resources for adoption support will be deployed
 - To inform future national policy and delivery of ASF and share emerging practice with other regional adoption agencies.

Objectives

- 3.3 To explore the integration of ASF as part of the wider adoption support offer available to all adopted families.

- 3.4 A consistent process for use by the RAA, which ensures that requests for support assessments are dealt with in a timely way.
- 3.5 A process for decision making across the RAA regarding adoption support provision of services including match funding (see **Appendix 1** letter from the minister).
- 3.6 A regional commissioning strategy which develops the range and quality of support services and makes best use of funds.
- 3.7 To ensure user voices are integral to the development of a regionalised ASF.
- 3.8 To share learning from the ASF pilots and support the development of national ASF policy/
- 3.9 To liaise with Mott to identify and trial process requirements to manage regional applications

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 There has been ongoing consultation and engagement with the local authorities and with adoptive parents about regionalisation of the adoption support fund.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

- 4.2.1 There are no implications for this report.

4.3 Resources and value for money

- 4.3.1 There are no implications for this report.

4.4 Legal implications and access to information

- 4.4.1 There are no implications for this report.

4.5 Risk management

- 4.5.1 There are no implications for this report.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 The Joint Committee is requested to:

- a) note the information regarding the adoption support fund pilot; and
- b) support the development of this work.

6. Background documents¹

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website,

6.1 None

unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.



Robert Goodwill MP

Minister of State for Children and Families

Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus

To: Directors of Children's Services

22 November 2017

THE ADOPTION SUPPORT FUND

The Adoption Support Fund has been a great success with over 21,000 adoptive and special guardianship families and over 25,500 children receiving therapeutic support since it was launched in May 2015. Thank you for making this possible.

You will recall that it became necessary to introduce fair access limits and to ask local authorities to share the costs of support over and above the fair access limits through a match-funding approach because of the scale of demand. This approach has been in place for some time and it is good to see that almost half of local authorities have made applications for match-funding, providing additional therapeutic support for almost 250 children. I am also pleased to see that about a quarter of local authorities are providing additional funding where cases do not meet the match-funding criteria – a further 97 children have benefitted from this. I would urge all local authorities to consider using match-funding where this is necessary to meet children's needs.

Demand for the fund continues to grow and is almost three times the level it was in 2015-16. In recognition of that rising demand, I am pleased to announce that an additional £1m will be made available this year, bringing spend on the Fund to £29m this year. Whilst funding has increased, and will continue to do so until 2020, it remains necessary to keep the fair access limits in place. I want to offer the sector some certainty and confirm that the existing fair access limits – up to £2,500 for specialist assessments and up to £5,000 for therapy - will remain in place for the next two financial years.

The recently published evaluation covering the early implementation of the Fund found that the children accessing the Fund showed substantially higher levels of emotional, behavioural and developmental needs than both children in the general population and when compared to looked-after children as a whole. It also found that 84% of parents believed that the Fund had helped their child. You can find the evaluation [here](#).

The evaluation also found that the efficiency and quality of assessments was improving and that parents were generally satisfied with the assessment process. That said, I continue to hear concerns from some parents and the voluntary sector about delays securing assessments of adoption support needs. I would be grateful if you could ask your teams to look into this and consider ways in which

both timeliness of assessments and subsequent applications to the Fund could be improved.

DfE is commissioning a further evaluation that will take us through to the end of this parliament. It will be closely aligned with the evaluation of the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) programme, also currently being commissioned.

The RAA programme is progressing well with five RAAs now live. Adoption is in a significant period of change. It is important that the Fund is able to operate successfully in the emerging regionalised system. We are funding three RAAs – Adoption Counts, One Adoption West and Adoption South West – to consider how the ASF would operate in a regionalised framework. We have asked them to prioritise work this year on reaching agreements with local authority partners on the approach to match-funding applications to the Fund. If children and families do not receive the therapeutic support they need, they are more likely to experience an adoption breakdown with the child or children returning to care at great expense to local authorities. It is, therefore, in the best interests of families, local authorities and RAAs to agree a process for match-funding these applications.

I know that some voluntary organisations are anxious about a lack of certainty during this period of change. Some Regional Adoption Agency projects have agreed plans to extend existing support contracts for a year or more whilst they develop their commissioning strategy. This has helped the voluntary sector to make plans, and I would encourage all local authorities to consider how they manage this transition in a way that protects vital services.

The next couple of years will be critical and we must ensure that we build on the early success of the fund and the emerging RAAs, to ensure all adopted children get the support they need.

Please accept my thanks and appreciation for the work that you and your teams are doing to support some of the most vulnerable children in society.

Yours sincerely,



Robert Goodwill MP
Minister of State for Children and Families



Report author: Sarah Johal/ Mandy Prout
Tel: 0113 2783623

Report of Director of Children's Services

Report to West Yorkshire Adoption Joint Committee

Date: 12th January 2018

Subject: Practice Focus- Recruitment and Assessment Report

Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<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. This report sets out recruitment and assessment strategy and action plan for One Adoption West Yorkshire.

Recommendations

2. The Joint Committee is requested to:
 - a) note the strategy and action plan; and
 - b) support the development of this work.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report sets out recruitment and assessment strategy and action plan for One Adoption West Yorkshire

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.
- 2.2 The partnership agreement is clear that One Adoption West Yorkshire will be responsible for the recruitment and assessment of adopters.
- 2.3 This report provides information regarding the strategy to deliver this effectively, the desired outcomes and the action plan to take this work forward. Information will be shared with the board regarding the progress of this work to date and the journey of the adopter through the recruitment and assessment process.

3. Main issues

Vision

- 3.1 One Adoption West Yorkshire (the agency) will recruit, assess and prepare sufficient numbers of adoptive families who can go on to meet the varying needs and backgrounds of the children across West Yorkshire who have a plan for adoption. We will provide a responsive, friendly, and supportive service to our prospective adoptive families that is underpinned by a clearly defined, open and fair process.

Desired Outcomes

- 3.2 There will be an adopter informed process which works with adopters throughout and values their opinions and experiences.
- 3.3 The agency will recruit a wide variety of families, by being open to the possibilities and skills that prospective families have to offer and will work with them so that they feel able to meet the needs of the children awaiting adoption.
- 3.4 During every stage of the process the agency will work with experienced adopters to assist in the preparation of new adoptive families. The agency will work with partner agencies to ensure appropriate use of birth parent experiences when training and preparing adopters.
- 3.5 The agency will provide high quality training at all stages of the process which is backed up by excellent materials and information that takes into account different learning styles and abilities.

- 3.6 The agency will layer information and learning about adoption throughout the whole process in order to aide and enable information to be heard and understood.
- 3.7 Staff will be well trained, skilled and confident in all aspects of recruitment and assessment. Work will be based upon current practice knowledge and staff will have excellent understanding of the issues facing adoptive families and children throughout life.
- 3.8 The agency will have well written and structured procedures, processes and templates that will ensure the adoption practice is consistent and professional in all office bases and teams.
- 3.9 The agency will use good quality assurance tools to continually check that practice is of a very high standard and ensure that provision changes and improves as required.
- 3.10 The agency will work jointly with the adoption support teams to make sure the offer of support starts from the first telephone call and flows seamlessly into a child's adulthood.
- 3.11 The agency will work directly with the family finding teams to implement an efficient, responsive and realistic matching process which is child focussed and adopter friendly.

Action Plan

- 3.12 Work closely with the marketing team to influence marketing strategy and its implementation, with a view to this being welcoming, creative and interesting, using the full range of media, online, radio, posters, bus backs and events. This should be backed up by making the most of our links in GP surgeries, hospitals, faith groups, local businesses and First4adoption.
- 3.13 The agency will ensure that information events, initial home visits and all conversations with adopters during the early part of the process are encouraging and supportive and remain focused on the needs of the children who require adoption. In order to promote consistency in approach adoption advisors will be on duty answering all the enquiries from prospective adopters and then leading on all aspects of the pre-stage 1 and the stage 1 process.
- 3.14 Develop good systems and effective tools for obtaining feedback from prospective adopters and approved adopters at all parts of the adoption process including on the closure of cases. Work with our Data and Performance Manager to deliver a systematic approach to analysing and using this feedback to continually improve and update practices.

- 3.15 Work with experienced adopters and birth parents to develop practices, procedures, preparation and training of adopters and to influence the agency's direction of travel. Ensure that experienced adopters and where appropriate birth parents are represented on boards, practice improvement groups, interviews and alike, as well as co-facilitating training for adopters, information events and helping to update and write practice guidance and procedures. Promote and support the Adopter Voice group and work with them to develop a bespoke Peer Mentoring Service.
- 3.16 Establish a matching working group jointly with family finding and adoption Support with the aim of developing and embedding processes that are based on effective and evidence based matching practices. The agency should seek to agree consistent practice through the use of agreed templates, clarity on roles, planning/matching meetings, and agreed wisdom and knowledge in relation to good transitions for children. In addition the agency should consider how to best promote adoptive families in the process. The end goal should be matching processes that find a balance between avoiding unnecessary delay for children while ensuring high quality matches.
- 3.17 Undertake an evaluation of the process between approval and match for adopters this could look at the frequency of support visits, use of matching reports, mandatory/voluntary training, expectations for ongoing learning, attending exchange events and other adopter led matching practices. This will also include the manner for reviewing waiting adopters encompassing the potential option of going back to panels to review the approval and guidance on how and when prospective adopter reports (PAR's) should be updated.
- 3.18 Continually seek out the knowledge and wisdom gained by adoption support staff while working with adoptive families in crisis to inform recruitment, assessment and preparation of adoptive families. Undertake joint training, use area team meetings to share and seek views and ensure the adoption support perspective forms part of all development work. Adoption support services must be clearly understood by all Recruitment and Assessment staff to promote the use of our adoption support services to families from the outset.
- 3.19 Work directly with TRI.X (the leading provider in West Yorkshire regarding policies, procedures and associated solutions in the children's sector) to produce good quality adoption procedures for all aspects of the work. Ensure the adopter voice and birth parent voice is included in this process. In order to achieve quality, this will be undertaken in 3 stages and will be led by Team Managers.
- 3.20 Development of the work force is a priority; the agency will undertake an analysis of the learning needs within the service and the skills that already exist. Practice development sessions will be promoted, learning workshops, group supervision and increased use of practice champion's for example regarding Attachment Style Interviews, Early Permanence Placements, life story work, life scripts and guided

recall. In addition the agency will seek to use the training budget to ensure that specialist training can be accessed where possible.

- 3.21 Development of information and promotional material to provide to external agencies and LA social work teams regarding who the agency is and what they can expect from us as an agency.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 There has been ongoing engagement with staff and adoptive parents about the development of the recruitment and assessment of adopters.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

- 4.2.1 There are no implications for this report. An Equality Impact assessment is currently being undertaken and will be completed in March 18. This will further inform any action plan and priorities moving forward.

4.3 Resources and value for money

- 4.3.1 There are no implications for this report.

4.4 Legal implications and access to information

- 4.4.1 There are no implications for this report.

4.5 Risk management

- 4.5.1 There are no implications for this report.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 The Joint Committee is requested to:
- a) note the strategy and action plan; and
 - b) support the development of this work.

6. Background documents¹

- 6.1 None

¹ 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.

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Report author: Sarah Johal

Tel: 0113 2783623

Report of Director of Children's Services

Report to West Yorkshire Adoption Joint Committee

Date: 12th January 2018

Subject: Performance Report

Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?

Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?

Yes No

If relevant, access to information procedure rule number:

Appendix number:

Summary of main issues

1. This report sets out the second quarterly performance report of the new regional agency.

Recommendations

2. The Joint Committee is requested to:
 - a) note the proposed performance report format and information; and
 - b) support the development of this work.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report sets out the first quarterly performance report of the new regional agency.

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.
- 2.2 The partnership agreement is clear that One Adoption West Yorkshire will develop a performance management framework and will comply with the key performance indicators set and report upon performance in relation to these to the Management Board of the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), the Adoption Leadership board and any other statutory body as required.
- 2.3 This is the format of the quarterly report and the second quarter performance information.

3. Main issues

- 3.1 Work has been undertaken to establish the key performance criteria which will form the basis for practice improvement for the agency and this has been built upon since the first quarter report.
- 3.2 Adoption Support is one area that requires more detailed consideration. There are a number of discussions nationally about the data requirements that will assist in measuring performance and the adopter voice forum is working closely with us in developing this. This work has been delayed at a national level and we are to be involved in piloting a dataset from April 2018 to take this forward.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 There has been ongoing consultation and engagement with other local authorities and with adoptive parents about the practice improvement framework and performance measures.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

- 4.2.1 There are no implications for this report.

4.3 Resources and value for money

- 4.3.1 There are no implications for this report.

4.4 Legal implications and access to information

4.4.1 There are no implications for this report.

4.5 Risk management

4.5.1 There are no implications for this report.

5. Recommendations

5.1 The Joint Committee is requested to:

- a) note the proposed performance report format and information; and
- b) support the development of this work.

6. Background documents¹

6.1 None

¹ 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.

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One Adoption West Yorkshire quarterly performance report

July to September 2017

Introduction/summary

This is the second quarterly report, providing an update on One Adoption West Yorkshire.

This report is based in the premise of how much work has been undertaken in the period, how well and what difference has it made. The report is a simple and concise report. The report contains a number of tables and charts (when trends allow).

The first two quarterly reports will likely be light on detail and trend analysis as data is not available for an extended period. Future iterations will include trend data as a picture emerges of the impact that the agency is having for children, young people and prospective adopters and adoptive families across West Yorkshire.

Children

This section of the report provides headline figures relating to children and young people at various stages of the adoption process within West Yorkshire. The figures in bold are for Quarter 2 and those in brackets are for the previous quarter.

<p>How much did we do?</p> <p><i>During the quarter</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 412 (303) children left care, 39 (42) were adopted <i>During 2016/17 177 children were adopted, average 45 per quarter (14.9%)</i>• 48 (46) children had an ADM decision made <i>During 2016/17 211 children had ADM decision made, average 52 per quarter</i>• 43 (32) placement orders were granted <i>During 2016/17 200 placement orders were granted, average 50 per quarter</i>• 32 (37) children were matched to an adoptive family – 4 (18) inter agency placements) 12% (49%) <i>During 2016/17 210 children were matched, average 52 per quarter</i>• 41 (39) children were placed with an adoptive family <i>During 2016/17 204 children were placed, average 51 per quarter</i>• 3 (3) children in new EPP <i>During 2016/17 7 children were in new EPP, average 2 per quarter</i>• XX Children added to tracking• 6 Children had a change of plan away from adoption• No Children had an adoption disruption	<p>How well did we do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 9% (14%) of children leaving care were adopted, (England average is 16%) <p>Numbers of children going through the adoption process during this quarter are increased on the past quarter including ADM and placement orders granted, with ADM's almost reaching last year's average quarterly figures. Matching and placements made are slightly reduced although EPP which shows a slight increase.</p> <p>For the 39 children who were adopted during quarter two 2017/18, it took an average of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 430 (439) days between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (National Indicator is 426 days) (England Average is 593)• 193 (182) days between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family (National indicator is 121 days) (England average is 223)• 22 (56%) of children who were adopted were placed within 426 days of entering care• 18 (46%) of children who were adopted were matched within 121 days <p>For the 32 children matched with an adoptive family during the quarter it took an average of 164 days from placement order and 346 days from entering care</p> <p>For children placed with an adoptive family during quarter it took an average of:- (see Table A1-3 for detailed information)</p>
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How much did we do?***At the end of the quarter***

- **121** (122) children being tracked to family finder prior to ADM (this is indicative data is taken from the One adoption tracker - work in progress)
- **153** (132) children have an ADM decision but not yet matched
- **160** (149) children have an ADM decision but are not yet placed
- **112** (97) children have a placement order but are not yet placed. Of these, **53** (37) have been waiting for at least 18 months since entering care. **71** children have been waiting more than 121 days since the placement order was made
- **14** (62) children with an ADM decision have a potential match identified

How well did we do it?

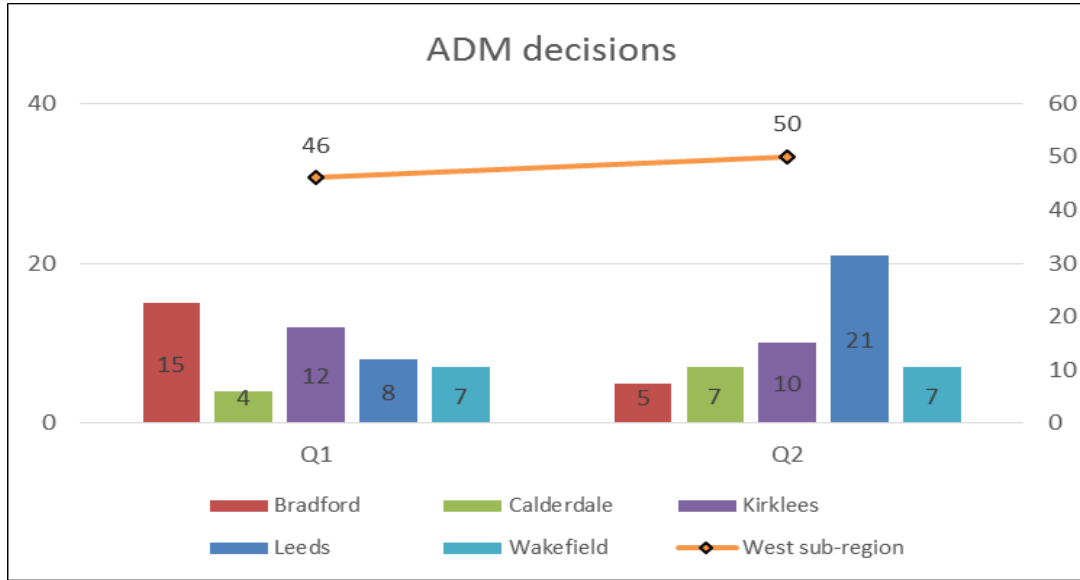
There is an increase in children in the system with a plan for adoption confirmed and a large number of children being tracked. There is an increase in children with ADM's and placement orders without a match identified.

What would we like to do better?

- We would like to have less children with a placement order with a potential match identified and identify matches earlier in the process.
- The figures are skewed by individual situations in specific LA's relating to meeting the needs of specific children – see case example and detailed information

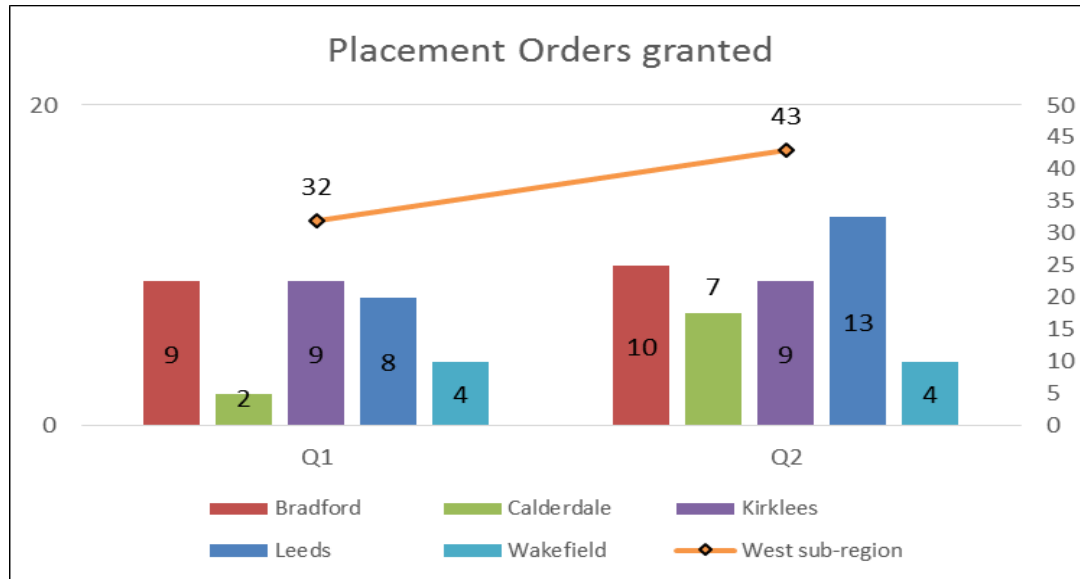
What difference did we make?

- More children were placed in house within the region in the 2nd quarter as a result of pooled resources.



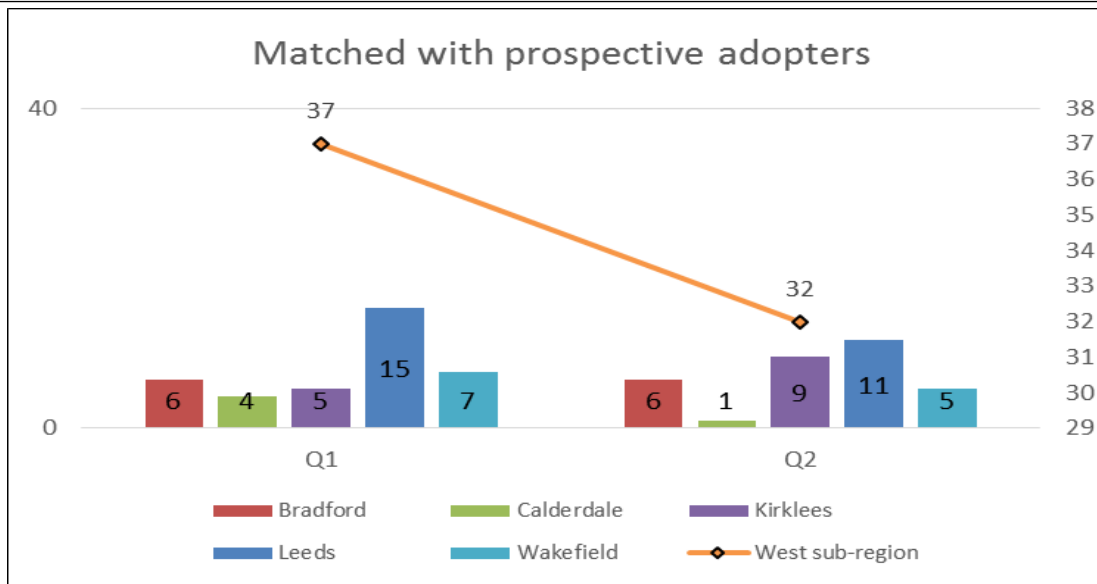
Commentary

This graph shows numbers of children who had an ADM decision in Quarters 1 and 2. As we move forward we will see Q3 and Q4 included in the graph as further comparisons.



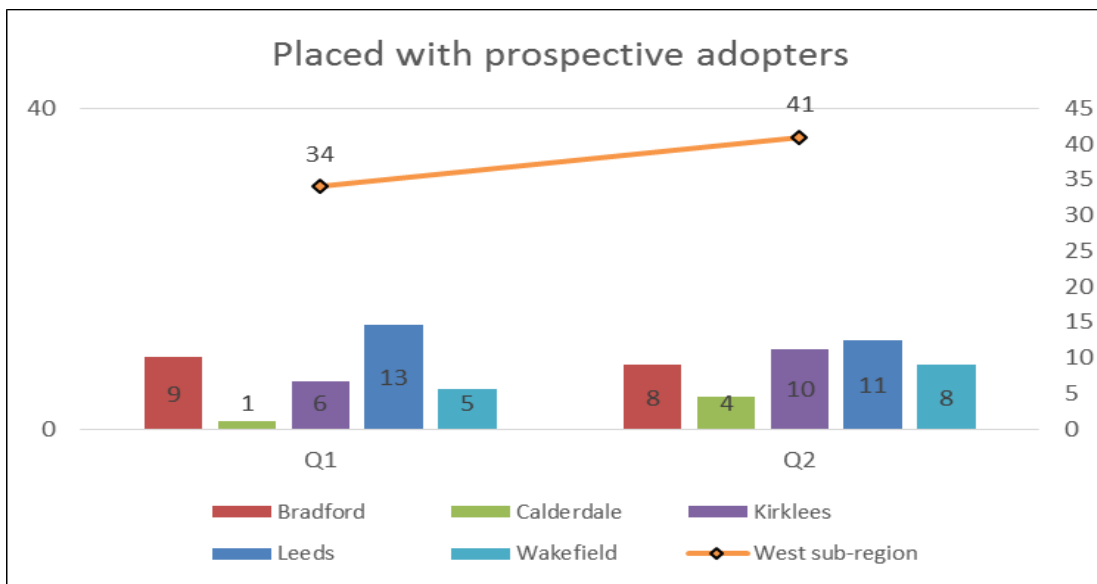
Commentary

This graph shows the number of placement orders obtained in Quarters 1 and 2. As we move forward we will see Q3 and Q4 included in the graph as further comparisons.



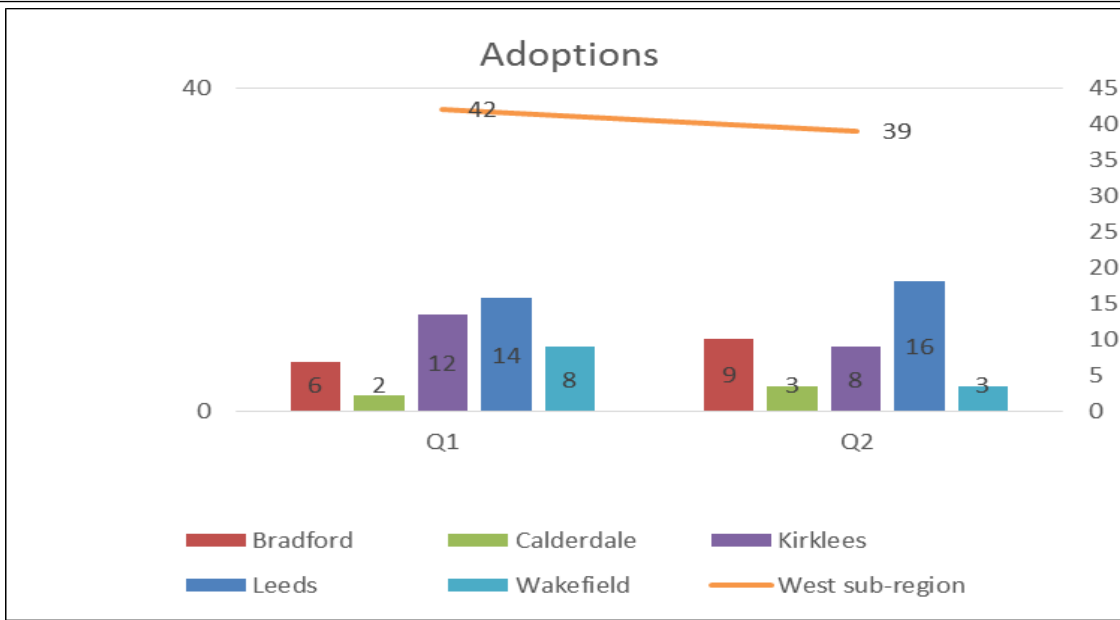
Commentary

This graph shows numbers of children who were matched in Quarter 1. As we move forward we will see Q2, Q3 and Q4 included in the graph as comparisons.



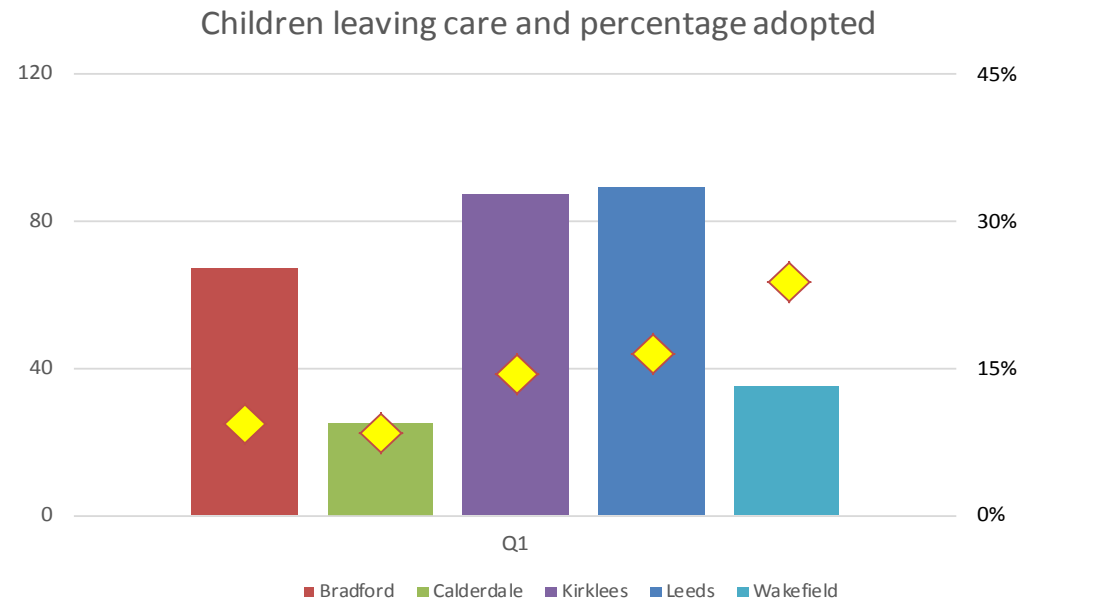
Commentary

This graph shows the number of children placed in Quarter 1. As we move forward we will see Q2, Q3 and Q4 included in the graph as comparisons.



Commentary

This graph shows numbers of children who were adopted in Quarters 1 and 2. As we move forward we will see Q3 and Q4 included in the graph as further comparisons.



Commentary

This graph shows the number of children leaving care and the percentage of those who were adopted. As we move forward we will see Q2, Q3 and Q4 included in the graph as comparisons.

The diamond pointers indicate the percentage of children leaving care who were adopted.

Adopters

This section of the report provides headline figures relating to prospective and approved adopters at various stages of the adoption process in One Adoption. Appendix two contains figures for the year-to-date.

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How much did we do?

During the quarter

- **117** (58) prospective adoptive households attended information sessions
- Xx Request for Initial visits requested
- Xx initial visits undertaken
- **12** families formal registration of interest to proceed
- **25** Families started Stage 1
- **27** (23) prospective adoptive families attended preparation training
- **20** Families started Stage 2
- **18** (15) prospective adoptive families were approved, of these, **2** families were Foster Carer Adopters
- **20** (15) prospective adoptive families were matched, of these, **2** families were matched with children outside the RAA and **18** were matched with children from within the RAA
- **18** prospective adoptive families had a child(ren) placed, of these, **3** families had children placed from outside RAA and **15** had children placed from within the RAA
- **24** (15) adoptive families adopted a child/young person
- **9** Families withdrew from the process

How well did we do it?

- Of those prospective adoptive families who ended Stage 1 in the quarter, they were in Stage 1 for an average of **3** (2) months
 - **39%** were within timescales (Lowest was **1** month, highest was **6** months)
 - Those still in Stage 1 at the end of the quarter have been in Stage 1 for an average of **3** (4) months
 - **54%** are within timescales

There is variation between some applicants being ready to progress. Xxxx were completed within timescales

Xx went out of timescales (issues with ???)

- Of those prospective adoptive families who ended Stage 2 in the quarter, they were in Stage 2 for an average of **4** (4) months
- **83%** were within timescales
- Those still in Stage 2 at the end of the quarter have been in Stage 2 for an average of **2** (3) months
- **82%** are within timescales

Of those approved xxxx average time between registration of interest and approval.

- **4** (7) adoptive families matched within three months of their approval; **14** (8) were matched after three months of their approval
- The average time taken from approval to matching was **6** (9) months
- **6** adoptive families matched within 3 months of approval

- X families lodged applications
- X families had children adopted in the quarter

How much did we do?

At the end of the quarter

- Of the **96** (113) individual approved adopters, **47** (60) are female and **49** (53) are male. **17**, **18%** (18,16%) are from a BME background
- **65** (46) prospective adoptive families are not yet approved
- **37** (30) prospective adoptive families are in stage one; **28** (16) are in stage two
- **51** (61) approved adoptive families are yet to be matched
 - **9** (22) if these families have been waiting more than six months
 - **24** (22) of these families have a matching panel booked
 - **13** (4) of these families have a match identified but no panel date booked
- 6** (9) prospective adoptive families are on hold
- Xx approval terminated during quarter

How well did we do it?

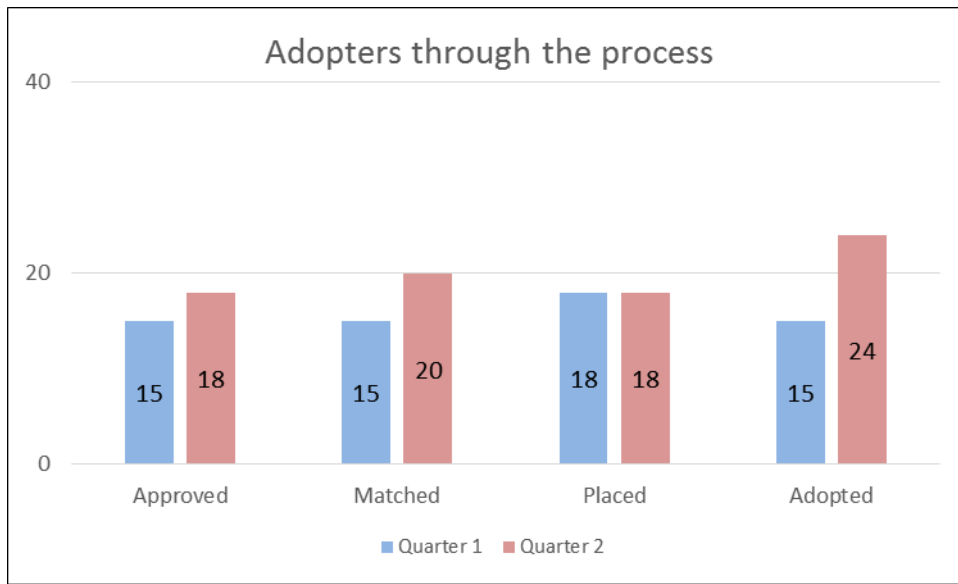
- There is an increase in assessment than previous quarter.
- A number of adopters waiting for more than 6 months has drastically reduced.
- Less families are available to be matched but there is an increase in the numbers of families with a link and a match booked at panel

What would we like to do better?

- We need to achieve a higher number of applications from the children who wait longer (sibling groups and older children and BME children)
- Although the stage 1 process has improved we will have a key focus on processes with our new business support staff recently in post to improve this.

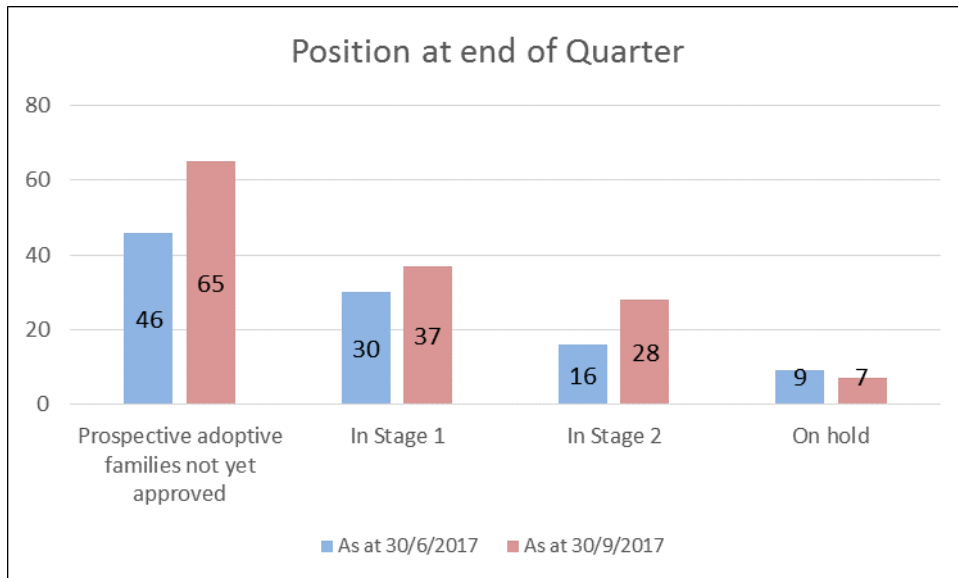
What difference did we make?

The number of people attending information events have improved considerably this quarter and the adopters in stage 1 and 2 has also improved indicating improvements in the marketing and advertising arrangements.



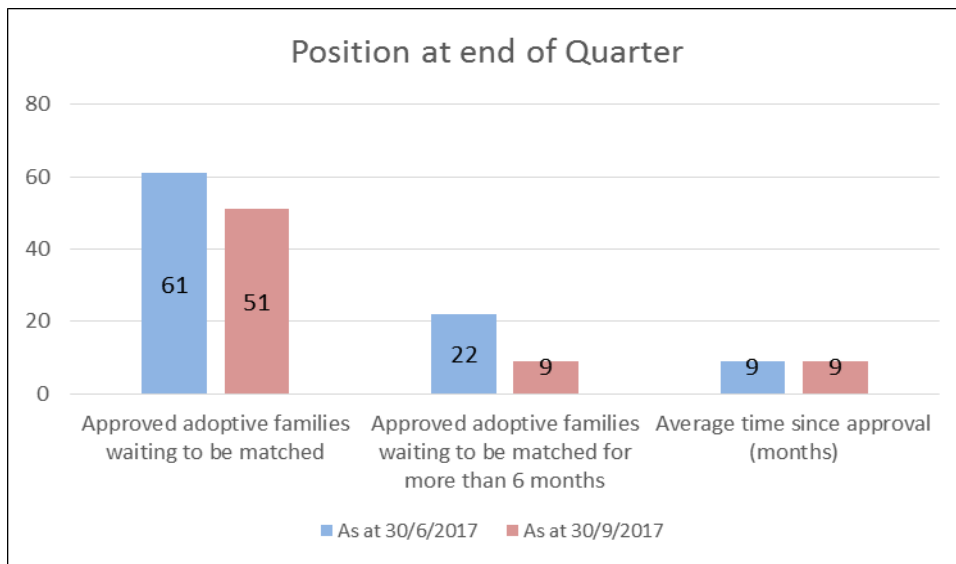
Commentary

This graph shows numbers of adopters going through the process in Quarters 1 and 2. As we move forward we will see Q3 and Q4 included in the graph as comparisons.



Commentary

This graph shows the number of adopters at various stages in the process at the end of Quarter 2. As we move forward we will see the change in position at the end of each Quarter as comparisons.



Commentary

This graph shows the number of adopters waiting to be matched and the average time they have been waiting (in months). As we move forward we will see the change in position at the end of each Quarter as comparisons.

Snapshot Figures

This section of the report looks at characteristics of prospective adopters who are approved but not yet matched and those characteristics of children still waiting to be matched as at the end of the quarter. **This section is work in progress and requires further development.**

Adopters approved not matched CHARACTERISTICS		Children with ADM not matched (160) CHARACTERISTICS	
Ethnicity	Number of individual adopters	Ethnicity	Number of children
African	1	African	2
Any other Asian background	4	Any other Asian background	1
Any other Black background	5	Any other Black background	2
Any other ethnic group	1	Any other ethnic group	5
Any other Mixed background	1	Any other Mixed background	4
Any other White background	8	Any other White background	9
Gypsy/Roma	1	Gypsy/Roma	4
Information not yet obtained	74	Information not yet obtained	9
Pakistani	1	Pakistani	1
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	96	White and Asian	5
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	51	White and Black African	1
		White and Black Caribbean	3
		White British	107
		Grand Total	153
Religion	Number of individual adopters		
Christian	40	Children who wait longer (one or more characteristics)	Number of children
Muslim	8	Part of a Sibling Group	51
No information available	17	With a Disability	2
None	22	BME	28
Other	9	Aged 5 years +	24
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	96		
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	51		

ADOPTERS

Certain characteristics specified	Number of Households
Potential Match	32
Not specified any age group	30
Specified 0-4 years (incl 0-2 years)	20
Specified 0-2 years	16
Sibling groups	1
Specific Gender	3
Open to EPP	10
Ethnicity White British	1

Adoption Support

This section is work in progress and requires further development.

Non Agency Adoption

This section is work in progress and requires further development

Appendix One

This appendix contains a range of measures related to prospective adopters progressing through the approval and adoption process.

Table A9: individuals and families progressing through the approval and adoption processes

	Enquiries		Progress through the adoption process (Families)					
	Individuals	Families	Start Stage 1	Start Stage 2	Approved	Matched	Placed	Adopted
Quarter 1	69	38	12	9	15	15	18	15
Quarter 2	79	42	25	20	18	20	18	24
Quarter 3								
Quarter 4								
Full Year	148	80	37	29	33	35	36	39

Table A10: snapshot numbers of prospective adopters at different stages of the approval process

	Prospective adoptive families				Approved adoptive families waiting		
	Prospective adoptive families not yet approved	In Stage 1	In Stage 2	On hold	Approved adoptive families waiting to be matched	Approved adoptive families waiting to be matched for more than 6 months	Average time since approval (months)
As at 30/6/2017	46	30	16	9	61	22	9
As at 30/9/2017	65	37	28	7	51	9	9
As at 31/12/2017							
As at 31/3/2018							