



Report author: Sarah Johal

Tel: 0113 2783623

## Report of Director of Children's Services

### Report to West Yorkshire Adoption Joint Committee

Date: 4<sup>th</sup> October 2017

### 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 in the first two months of becoming established

### 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 structural and reporting arrangements for the Regional Adoption 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 on this date.

## **3. Main issues**

### Staffing

- 3.1 Recruitment to posts has continued with all the 4 adoption advisors starting in post in the last two weeks. Advanced practitioner posts are all now recruited to with 1 awaiting a start date. Business support staff are moving into positions, with a further round of recruitment ongoing. The practice improvement manager post is recruited to, start date end of October.
- 3.2 There are 3 members of staff retiring or leaving in the next two months, and a number on staff on maternity leave, including the family finding team manager in Leeds. Temporary cover has been recruited to with an external appointment, due to start in October. 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 .
- 3.3 Existing social work staff are being offered the opportunity to transfer internally before positions are released on a permanent basis. A number of staff have made a request for their terms and conditions be with Leeds- this has been agreed as the requests are made. A further meeting is arranged with HR and the Trade Unions to take this forward with staff who wish

### Business Support

- 3.4 The business support functions of OAWY have now been agreed and progress is being 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. Areas of work currently supported by 2 local authorities will be transferred over by the end of September.

### Information Management and Technology

- 3.5 Mosaic training has been completed for existing staff for recording casework and migration of existing cases is continuing. This has been slower than anticipated due to issues with business support capacity and IT issues. The transfer of cases is a

key priority for the next two months with an aim for all records to be moved over by the end of October.

- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 However, IT issues have been problematic with the issues being complex and technical. The difficulties are more pronounced for those staff who have moved offices and for staff who work across office bases. In summary, the issues are with connectivity and the reliance on Wi-Fi and the intermittent strength; use of the guest Wi-Fi and timescales in requiring login back in; printing; slowness and freezing screens.
- 3.8 Staff based in Bradford have moved to an alternative office base that has temporarily resolved some issues regarding connectivity and the longer term location of these staff is being discussed with colleagues in Bradford. Staff in Huddersfield have moved to a location with a more reliable internet connection which is positive and the Halifax staff are due to move offices in October which may improve connectivity.
- 3.9 The regional IT group continues to meet to resolve the issues.

#### Duty

- 3.10 On the 1st July we implemented a One Adoption Duty system working out of Kernel House following the transitional period. This has been very effective within the 2 months and following feedback from staff and research on the times of duty calls we have amended duty times: now 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 will run for 6 months and will then be reviewed. The majority of calls on duty relate to adoption support, enquiries from professionals about staff across the region and recruitment enquiries. We have 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

- 3.11 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. Plans are in place to roll out the electronic panels starting with Huddersfield and then the Bradford panels and further panel training is being undertaken in November.

### Establishing the culture

- 3.12 Following the first three months of forming the agency the last two months, compounded by the IT issues has presented challenges for all staff as differences in practices across the region come into play and relationships are not yet fully developed. Building relationships across the team manager group is key to ensuring that trust, understanding and a focus on outcomes is maintained in embedding the culture.

### Practice

#### *Voice and Influence of Children and Young People:-*

- 3.13 We held a workshop in July with the 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 is being developed.

#### *Birth Parents*

- 3.14 We have agreed funding for PAC/UK to undertake some work with birth parents across the region regarding their views on services.
- 3.15 A more detailed report is included elsewhere on the agenda.

### Adoption Support

- 3.16 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 principal 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.

### Practice Improvement Fund projects

- 3.17 Adoption Support Fund (ASF) - One adoption west will pilot a regional adoption support fund. The aim of this to improve adoption support across an 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.

- 3.18 *Centre of Excellence* – this is due to start as a pilot in the west with a view to rolling this out across the wider Yorkshire & Humber region with funding for 2 years. We will be recruiting 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.
- 3.19 *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

#### Recruitment & Assessment

- 3.20 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.
- 3.21 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.
- 3.22 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; 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 & Family Finding

- 3.23 Operational leads group:- The first meeting took place between Local Authority leads on adoption and the senior leadership team with terms of reference agreed and principles agreed regarding the interface between the local authority and one adoption regarding children's planning and family finding. Following this further work has been undertaken in one adoption and the family finder role within One adoption has been clarified, with staff having a clear understanding of their role which will assist moving forward.

- 3.24 Prompt matches have been identified for panels to consider and profiles of children and adopters are regularly completed and shared at the regional placement group within one adoption. The system has been set up and is now in place with adoption match for all children to go on this, allowing us a regional view of the children and families available. A system has been established with the voluntary adoption alliance across the region helping us family find for children to avoid any delay. This system will be reviewed in October.

#### Links with Health

- 3.25 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 & 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

- 3.26 Following early meetings with virtual heads across the region, we have agreed with the virtual head in Leeds 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.

#### Marketing, website

- 3.27 The website has been changed and is much improved. There is still work to do and development of this will continue. The enquiries in July were higher than June which is promising. A marketing campaign is due to start 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.
- 3.28 In West Yorkshire we are undertaking additional marketing during the last two weeks of September across bus backs and fleet vehicles with posters and billboards to generate more awareness of the brand locally in a run up to the wider campaign.

#### Performance

- 3.29 The quarterly report has been produced as a separate item on the agenda.

## **4. Corporate considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and engagement**

- 4.1.1 There has been ongoing consultation and engagement with affected staff who have transferred in to the agency as well as formal consultation with the trade unions. This is ongoing. 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 due to start in November.

### **4.3 Resources and value for money**

- 4.3.1 There are no budget pressures at the present time. The staffing budget is currently underspent however we have recently recruited additional temporary social workers to deal with demand. The interagency budget is not predicting an overspend at the current time, however we are aware of the need for placements so this will be kept under review.

### **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 documents<sup>1</sup>**

None

---

<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.