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Report of Director of Children's Services

Report to West Yorkshire Adoption Joint Committee

Date: 4th October 2017

Subject: Voice and Influence of Children & Young People 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. 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 information regarding One Adoption West and how it ensures that the voice and influence of children and young people is at the heart of the service. The report sets out the information we have to date about the views of adopted children and young people and provides information about the Adopted Teens Identity project (AT_iD) incorporating the views of children and young people who are adopted. The report also sets out the initial plans for ensuring that children and young people have a voice and influence over decisions that affect their lives and the adoption services they access.

Recommendations

1. The Joint Committee is requested to:
 - a) Note the information provided by the AT_ID group;
 - b) support the work of the agency regarding the voice and influence of adopted children and young people.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report sets out information regarding the AT_iD group and the view of children and young people who are adopted. The report also sets out the initial plans for ensuring that children and young people have a voice and influence over decisions that affect their lives and the adoption services they access.

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

- 3.1 The AT-iD stands for Adopted Teens identity. It is a project that was set up by the Yorkshire & Humber adoption consortium with a vision of offering adopted teenagers a space they can call their own and to gain their views about the development of services. It is overseen by PAC/UK who employ a child & family project worker to oversee the development of the group. AT-iD consists of:
- *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 can 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.
- 3.2 AT-iD is simply trying to do something that is aimed directly at adopted teenagers by bringing people together and offering a space where they can connect and be themselves.
- 3.3 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. This was published in 2016 and is attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 3.4 The project worker who oversees the AT_iD group from PAC/UK has been involved with the regional adoption board steering group, ensuring that voices of adopted young people are integral to the development of regional adoption agencies.

- 3.5 Young people have been involved in the recruitment to all posts within One Adoption West Yorkshire from the Head of Service appointment through to social workers.
- 3.6 In 2016 the AT_iD group made a film about adopted young people and this was launched at the Hyde Park Cinema in Leeds. The film talks about their experiences of being adopted and will be shared in the meeting today. This film will be 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.
- 3.7 In July 2017 we held a workshop in West Yorkshire with the AT_iD group to look at a number of key issues: ideas about how to better communicate with young people across west Yorkshire; ideas how we can improve prospective adopters understanding of young people's needs during their preparation and finally what ideas they have about services that may help them as they are growing up. The notes from the meeting are attached at **Appendix 2**.
- 3.8 As a result of this workshop we are developing an action plan to take this work forward with the AT_iD group, looking at how this fits in with the other local groups for children and young people across the region.
- 3.9 It is the intention of One Adoption West Yorkshire that we will provide a report card twice a year looking at the how we evidence the voice and influence of children and young people within the service. This will capture data about our work with young people across the region, including information about events and groups, any complaints and what we are doing to tackle any issues raised by the data. We will report on "best ideas for what worked" during the period the report relates to. The first report card will be incorporated into the first 6 month report of the agency.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 There has been ongoing consultation and engagement with young people in Yorkshire through the AT_iD group from the recruitment of staff to the development of practice. This work will continue to be developed.

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 provided by the AT_ID group; and
- b) support the work of the agency regarding the voice and influence of adopted children and young people.

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.