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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.