



Report author: Sarah Johal

Tel: 0113 2783623

## Report of Director of Children and Families

### Report to West Yorkshire Adoption Joint Committee

**Date: 6<sup>th</sup> July 2018**

### **Subject: Head of Service Report**

Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	X No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number: 2 (10.4 (3) and (10.4 (6a)	X Yes

---

### 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 January 2018.

### 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 January 2018.

## **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**

### **Use of Resources**

#### *3.1 Staffing & HR*

Staffing remains relatively stable and some recent recruitment to posts will assist in covering the work left by vacancies. There remains a number of staff who are on sick leave and we are working closely with the managing attendance team and occupational health to address ill health in the service.

- 3.2 The waiting list in adoption support has again increased recently due to 3 staff leaving and a member of staff on long term sick and stands at around 80 cases. Recruitment to the posts has been undertaken but adoption support work also remains in the recruitment and assessment teams that needs to be transferred. The teams are supporting 680 families and the managers are struggling to maintain good quality oversight of the work over different Local authority areas.

- 3.3 We are currently looking at management capacity overall with two managers off sick with stress related illness. We have agreed a half time additional manager post across family finding from September to provide additional management oversight of work to assist with the Wakefield and Bradford areas and are discussing at a similar approach regarding adoption support with managers.

#### *Accommodation and Service Delivery*

- 3.4 Staff are currently in 5 bases across the region and staff are experiencing excessive travelling across the region. Discussions earlier in the year took place regarding the concerns of staff and coincidentally a potential office space became available at the West Yorkshire Joint Services (WYJS) in Gildersome. We have explored in detail the options regarding accommodation to ensure that the service is maximising the use of resources given the annual lost time and travelling costs associated with the current working arrangements. As a conservative estimate these are as follows:

1,164 lost hrs due to travel time (cost of £24,556.92);

£18,480.09 mileage;

£3,425.30 parking.

3.5 The senior leadership team has been considering 3 options:

- Remain in the current arrangements
- Look at moving from 5 bases to 3 bases so that the three teams in each area could be located together (as in Leeds office at Kernel House)
- Move to one central office location for everyone but for staff to have touch down space in each LA area to maintain relationships with LA staff.

3.6 Team Managers were asked to seek views from staff on the proposed options and a workshop was held with managers to explore the proposed options and consider any alternative options that may have been suggested and this has assisted the senior leadership team in thinking through the issues from different perspectives.

3.7 Following two site meetings to look at the accommodation at WYJS in detail it has become clear that the facility was not large enough to accommodate all the staff within the agency and provide accessible car parking on the premises or the surrounding area. There was also little public transport to this location and was a drawback.

3.8 The longer term aspiration is to find a building for all the staff with touch down space in each local authority area to provide an integrated and joined up service that enables a more flexible use of resources across the region.

3.9 In the meantime there are plans to move from five office bases to three office bases with the Halifax team moving to Huddersfield and the Wakefield recruitment and assessment team moving to Bradford, although touch down space in both locations will remain. Discussions are underway with asset management in each local authority to explore this further and this will not take place until the autumn.

3.10 Alongside these issues, discussions are currently underway to address the issues of service delivery across the Wakefield area from the Bradford office. We are now working towards sharing this work across the Leeds and Bradford teams with some staff being based in Leeds as well as Bradford in adoption support and family finding with a view to using our resources more flexibly.

3.11 These planned interim arrangements will give time to see how the new arrangements fit with the developing use of technology to allow for telephone conference meetings, as well as implementing proposed changes to the duty system with the roll out of enterprise voice, where duty will take place by rotation across the 3 office bases. This will reduce staff travelling to Kernel House to cover duty in the future and reducing travel time and costs. Initial discussions have taken place with the trade unions regarding the moves of accommodation for those staff affected and individual discussions will take place to discuss specific arrangements.

## IT

- 3.12 The work regarding accessing the local authority systems from a portal on the Leeds laptop remains problematic and is difficult to implement due to different systems in place and priorities in each local authority. Currently, this poses issues for some staff having to rely on two or three computers to access information and this has yet to be fully resolved in Wakefield, Bradford and Kirklees for a variety of reasons.
- 3.13 The IT project team is working with the teams on developing business processes and integrating forms into the mosaic workflow as well as developing the reporting from the system. The family finding activity and tracking form is the current focus of work as this is the principal tool for data reporting on the Family Finding activity in the agency.

### **Partnership working**

#### *Operational leads group*

- 3.14 Child Permanence Report training for social workers across the region has been agreed and has been commissioned by One Adoption West Yorkshire. In addition training regarding sibling assessments is also being commissioned to improve practice in these areas.
- 3.15 An update regarding the work around Early Permanence in the region was discussed and all relevant staff within OAWY have had training. Work with Voluntary alliance and the practice improvement grant continues and a regional meeting with service managers and leads for fostering and placements teams were held to ensure a joined up understanding and approach regarding these issues. The first session with partner local authorities took place in Bradford in April. 22 people attended: contact managers, social workers, practice supervisors.
- 3.16 The next session will take place in June and will cover the Leeds/Wakefield border. The event is open for anyone to attend. The third event will be held in Kirkless/Calderdale area.

#### *Centre of Excellence*

- 3.17 The sector specialists for education and social care have started and the project is well supported by project manager and project administrative resources. The deployment of the sector specialist has been delayed, but we have commissioned expertise from mental health sector to support in the development of the multi-disciplinary adoptions support assessment and support model. We have established excellent working relationships with voluntary sector colleagues to ensure all the practice improvement projects in the Yorkshire and Humber region work towards a shared goal. Our adopter community is involved in the project both on an informal and formal levels.
- 3.18 We have commenced the analysis of as-is state of the adoption support assessment and created an on-line tool, which allows us both to baseline the current

skills and knowledge levels and to measure change after the improvements have been implemented. Simultaneously we have engaged with other adoption agencies to learn what assessment methods and tools are used outside our region.

- 3.19 The drafting of the improved assessment framework and toolbox is progressing, and whilst there has been a slight delay in delivering this objective, we have made changes to the project plan to minimise the impact of the overall project.
- 3.20 To start developing the multidisciplinary assessment and support model, we have built relationships with our colleagues across the education and mental health sectors. Due to the relatively recent publication of new regulation regarding the role of Virtual Schools in supporting the adopted children, our engagement with the Virtual Heads in the region commences at a very early stage for the schools and education community.
- 3.21 Following further discussions with the Dfe regarding extending the ASF pilot this is now not progressing and a verbal update will be provided at the meeting.
- 3.22 Meetings with medical advisors
- 3.23 Recent meetings with medical advisors and OAWY have taken place and templates have been agreed across the region for medical reports on children and what these should consider.

#### *Performance Management*

- 3.24 The final quarter and annual reconciled figures are available in the separate performance report for the committee.

#### Management oversight of practice and quality

- 3.25 All staff have regular supervision and managers are underway with the annual appraisals of staff.
- 3.26 A Case file audit framework has been developed with tools for adopters and children's files with feedback from adopters and children and young people, where appropriate. This was discussed at the operational leads group (overview attached at Appendix 1). This will be piloted and tested in the next three months with a view to full implementation in September. For children's cases we have agreed to trial a joint approach picking out three cases in each LA to see how this works out in the next few months.
- 3.27 An adopters' survey is in development and will be sent out to adopters across the region to look at their feedback over the last year. Work is being undertaken to modernise and digitalise feedback from adopters to influence and shape service development and delivery moving forward. The report card in the annual report is a tool that we intend to use twice a year to capture qualitative feedback from adopters and young people initially.

3.28 The service has been conducting a review of letterbox exchange work across the region. In each LA this task was undertaken by business support staff with staff on different grades. An options paper was presented to the senior leadership team about whether this function be part of the social work team or remain part of business support and the outcome is that letterbox will be a function within business support but will have access to professional advice and support with clear referral routes for those families requiring social work support.

#### *Continuous Professional Development and Service Development*

3.29 A restorative leadership programme of training has been completed with the senior leadership team, team manager group and advanced practitioners and senior business support officers and has really helped in building relationships across the region. An evaluation of the programme is currently being undertaken and will inform the roll out of further training for teams around restorative practice.

3.30 Staff have accessed a range of training individually to progress their own development. However, family finding and recruitment and assessment staff have had training in Early Permanence across the agency. Training regarding adoption support has also been provided regarding the new portal for the Adoption Support fund and ensuring that staff are up to date with the range of core provision across the agency and with independent providers, although there is further work required in this area.

3.31 A 3 year plan has been devised and is referred to in a separate item presented to this meeting. A service improvement plan sits behind the 3 year plan and is currently being finalised with service managers. A first year celebration event was held on the 13th June for the first year of the agency with staff reflecting on key achievements, presented by staff across the region and areas of practice.

## **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 regarding accommodation. 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 has been completed and is attached to the annual report being addressed by a separate report within the meeting.

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

4.3.1 At the end of period two the staffing budget remains on target, although there are capacity issues in adoption support in terms of being able to meet the demands within the budget. The current spend on interagency placement is also on target however further analysis is currently underway regarding the changes in the fee arrangements which are discussed in Appendix 2 to this report. The management board have agreed to meet in the summer to have further discussions about the budget given the potential issues regarding inter agency fees and adoption support.

#### **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 potential financial risks with regards to the budget and the inter agency spend and demands within adoption support. Regular financial monitoring is in place and the management board are meeting in the next two months to discuss budgetary issues further.

### **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.