

WEST YORKSHIRE ADOPTION JOINT COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 26TH JANUARY, 2021

Present: Councillor F Venner (Leeds) – Chair

Councillors: A Farley (City of Bradford MDC), R Forster (City of Wakefield MDC) and V Kendrick (Kirklees MBC)

In Attendance: S Johal (ODWY), J Longworth (LCC) J Jenkins (Calderdale MBC) and J Grieve (LCC)

11 APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS

There were no appeals against refusal of inspection of documents.

12 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.

13 LATE ITEMS

There were no late items of business identified.

14 DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

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

15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A Wilkinson.

16 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 28th July 2020 were submitted for comment/ approval.

Referring to Minute No. 7 - Head of Service Report – Report on Adoption Allowances (financial support for adopters and special guardians) an amendment was requested removing the words “aligning with other local authorities” and replacing with “aligning with the proposed Regional Framework”.

RESOLVED – That, with the inclusion of the above, the minutes of the previous meeting held on 28th July 2020 were agreed as a true and correct record.

17 Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no issues raised under matters arising.

18 Head of Service Report

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report and provided a summary of the developments within the service since October 2020, which included:

- Staffing & HR
- Partnership Working
- Financial Support in Adoption
- Special Guardianship regional work
- Performance Monitoring
- Practice, Quality of Provision and Management Oversight
- Adoption Panel
- Advertising and Marketing
- Family Finding
- Virtual Profiling Event
- Inter-agency Adoption Placements Service
- Link Maker
- Adoption Support
- Continuous Professional Development and Service Development

Referring to sickness absence/ self-isolation as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, Members queried if any discussions had taken place on the possibility of staff being able to access the vaccine.

The Head of Services reported that discussions had taken place with Leeds City Council and it had been agreed that all staff within Group 1 would be invited to receive a vaccination. Some Social Workers fell into Group 1 and some into Group 2 as they could continue to social distance.

Referring to staff who were categorised as most vulnerable, Members queried how the pandemic had impacted on those staff, how had they adapted.

In responding the Head of Service said that Management's focus was on the wellbeing of the staff. Management was mindful that the more we remained in lock down, the more people would struggle. Everyone was working online, the emphasis was to engage staff with regular meetings: all staff events, one to one's, coffee chats and WhatsApp messaging.

Members were informed that individual counselling sessions were also available and encouraged for any members of staff with emotional wellbeing issues.

With regard to formal wellbeing discussions, Members queried if the discussion of these meetings were recorded and actioned.

The Head of Service confirmed this was the case.

Members noted the number of prospective adopters approaching the agency had increased significantly over the last 3 years and that the Management Board had agreed to additional funding for 2 social workers to maintain the momentum of increased approvals (120 projected for the 2020/21 period).

Members welcomed these figures and asked that the thanks of the Joint Committee be conveyed to the Adoption Teams.

RESOLVED -

- (i) To note the progress of the agency
- (ii) To Support the progression of the arrangements, as set out in the submitted report.

19 Half yearly Report for One Adoption West Yorkshire

The Director of Children's and Families submitted a report which presented the half yearly report of the One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY), as detailed in Appendix A of this report, as required by the National Minimum Standards 2014.

The Head of Service explained that the purpose of the report was to enable the Joint Committee to monitor the management and outcomes of the service so that they may be satisfied that the agency was effective and was achieving good outcomes for children and/or service users; and that they were satisfied that the agency was complying with the conditions of registration.

Commenting on Family Finding, the Head of Service said 98 children had been placed in the first half of the year. Staff had worked creatively to undertake family finding and achieve the matches for children. It was suggested that online working had assisted in this process, staff were no longer travelling and all parties were more available (virtually).

Referring to Meetings with Medical Advisors, Members were informed that GP's were not always available due to the pandemic, consequently there was some delay in medical reports being received.

The Chair thanked the Head of Service for her report commenting that there were some really welcome outcomes.

RESOLVED – That the assurances provided by the Director of Children’s and Families, that the agency is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and/or service users; and the agency is complying with the conditions of registration (as required by the National Minimum Standards for Adoption 2014, pursuant to the Care Standards Act 2000) be accepted.

20 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – To note that the next meeting will take place in July 2021, exact date and time to be confirmed at a later date.