

WEST YORKSHIRE ADOPTION JOINT COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 13TH MARCH, 2019

Present: Councillor L Mulherin (Leeds) – Chair
Councillor M Swift (Calderdale MBC) and Councillor V Kendrick (Kirklees MBC)

In Attendance: S Johal (ODWY), M Green (Wakefield MDC), J Andrew (LCC), J Pocklington (LCC) and J Grieve (LCC)

23 APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS

There were no appeals against refusal of inspection of documents.

24 EXEMPT INFORMATION - POSSIBLE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

That, in accordance with Regulation 4 of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following parts of the agenda designated as exempt on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information so designated as follows:-

“The Head of Service Report” – Appendix No.3 of the submitted report were deemed exempt from publication in accordance with Access to Information Rule 10.4 (3) as it included Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). In those circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.
(Minute No. 30 referred)

25 LATE ITEMS

There were no late items

26 DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

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

27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: A Farley (City of Bradford MDC) and R Forster (City of Wakefield MDC)

28 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Final Minutes approved at the meeting held on Thursday, 1st August 2019.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18th December 2018 were agreed as a true and correct record.

29 Matters Arising from the Minutes

Head of Service Report (Minute No.20 referred) – With reference to Resolution No. (iii) and the request by a Member of this Committee to be provided with details about the delay in providing Children’s medical checks so that he may take up the matter directly with the health partners. Members were informed that the necessary information had been supplied, however, the issue remained unresolved. Officers reported that the matter would now be escalated further with both the Commissioners and the Providers.

Referring to Resolution No.(iv) Members were informed that the structure/ Governance arrangements for both the Management Board and the Joint Committee had been circulated to the Service Director for Children’s Social Care at Wakefield.

In respect of Resolution No. (v) Members noted that the agenda and minutes for meetings of the One Adoption West Yorkshire: Management Board appeared elsewhere on the agenda of this meeting.

30 Head of Service Report

The Director of Children’s Services submitted a report and provided a summary of the developments within One Adoption West Yorkshire since the last report in December 2018, which included issues around:

- Staffing & HR
- Accommodation
- Information Technology
- Budget
- Partnership Working
- Performance Management (Separate agenda item)
- Practice, Quality of Provision and Management Oversight
- Family Finding

Referring to the issue of accommodation, the Head of Service reported that the team from the Wakefield office were transferring to the Bradford office. Plans to transfer staff from the Halifax office to the Huddersfield office were still progressing. It was noted that in both instances staff would still have a presence in the Wakefield and Halifax offices.

With reference to the Budget implications Members were informed that the additional contributions from each local authority in light of the increase in Inter agency fees had been agreed for this year and for 2019/20. However, in February 2019 the Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies announced an inflationary increase in their inter agency fee from June 2019. Members noted the inflationary increase was not as significant as the previous increase.

Members received a progress report on Peer Monitoring which offered support to adopters from Stage 1 to Post Order support, offering emotional support to families and signposting to resources and /or services.

Members welcomed the progress made.

A brief discussion took place about changes of plan for children away from adoption and the reasons for this. Some children return to extended family members and others move towards long term fostering and may even move onto Special Guardianship arrangements with their current foster carer.

Members requested some detail about the numbers and reasons for a change of plan for the next meeting so this could be explored in more detail.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the continued progress of One Adoption West Yorkshire
- (ii) To support the progression of the arrangements
- (iii) To note the dashboard for this financial year as referred to in Appendix No.1
- (iv) That the Agenda and Minutes of the “One Adoption West Yorkshire Management Board” held on 6th February 2019 be noted (Appendix No.2)
- (v) To note the details of the Marketing Strategy, as referred to in Appendix No. 3 of the submitted report (Exempt from publication)
- (vi) To bring a report to the next meeting of this Joint Committee regarding children where there is a change of plan away from adoption

31 Performance Report

The Director of Children’s Services submitted a report which provided the Quarter Three performance statistics of the regional agency.

The Head of Service said the report provided the basis for performance across the region with an aim to improve practice internally and across the partnership.

Members were informed that the approval of adoptive parents had increased over the last two quarters which was encouraging. However, this is not as high as it needs to be in order to meet the needs of children waiting. Attracting a wider range of people to consider adoption is a key priority, with additional

marketing and more targeted advertising underway this week with LGBT Adoption & Fostering awareness week this month.

In offering comment on the targeted advertising, Members suggested that it was important to get the language and the message right.

The Chair requested that a further update on the targeted marketing and advertising could be provided at the next meeting regarding attracting adopters from the BME and faith communities.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the proposed performance information
- (ii) To support the further development of this work
- (iii) That a further update on marketing and advertising be provided at the next meeting regarding targeting BME communities.

32 Education Work with Virtual Schools - Update

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which provided an update on the Education Work being undertaken across West Yorkshire between One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY) and the five Virtual Schools to implement the new statutory duty to provide advice and guidance to children and young people previously looked after children and young people who are adopted.

The Chair introduced and welcomed Jancis Andrew, Head Teacher Virtual School Looked After Children, Children & Families and Julie Pocklington, Practice Improve & Development Manager, Children & Families who delivered a presentation "Education – Work with Virtual Schools – The Journey So Far" explaining:

- Virtual Schools have a New Statutory Duty to provide advice and guidance to previously looked after children
- The Development of a Partnership Approach
- Adoption Education Advice Line
- What we don't know about Previously Looked after Children
- West Yorkshire School Survey
- Virtual Schools Strategies
- Individual Authorities Contributions

Referring to the Adoption Education Advice Line, Members suggested it may be beneficial to advertise the advice line telephone number more widely and to also include the number within these minutes. ([Adoption Advice Helpline \(0113\) 5351931](tel:01135351931))

Reference was made to a video the Joint Committee had viewed in January 2018 – “Finding Families for Older Children” which was one of a series of five themed videos produced to assist in the recruitment process and provide more in depth information to adoptive families.

It was suggested such videos may be a useful aid in working with Virtual Schools.

It was also discussed that the designated teacher was a statutory role and that the need for a designated governor was not a statutory requirement. However, Members could recommend that schools appoint a designated governor for children previously looked after as well to ensure that the needs of children adopted were met with the education setting.

Members requested that training be offered to school governors to ensure that they were aware of the new Statutory Duty and that they could therefore ensure their schools were being held to account for implementing the duty effectively.

The Chair pointed out that a number of new Members had joined the Joint Committee and it may be a good opportunity to view the video or a similar themed one again at a future meeting.

Officers confirmed the necessary arrangements would be made.

Commenting on the Virtual Schools Strategies, Members suggested that the development of a Regional Adoption Agency had been a really positive step forward and had created strong links with the Department for Education (DfE)

The Chair thanked officers for their attendance and presentation.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the contents of the report and presentation be noted.
- (ii) To support the further development of this work.
- (iii) That arrangements be made to view a promotional video, produced to assist in the recruitment process at a future meeting

33 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – To note that the next meeting will take place on Wednesday, 3rd July 2109 at 1.00pm in the Civic Hall, Leeds.

Final Minutes approved at the meeting
held on Thursday, 1st August 2019.