



Public Document Pack

WEST YORKSHIRE ADOPTION JOINT COMMITTEE

**Meeting to be held Remotely via: <https://www.youtube.com/user/Leedscouncil>
on Tuesday, 28th July, 2020 at 1.30 pm**

MEMBERSHIP

Adrian Farley - City of Bradford MDC

Adam Wilkinson -Calderdale MBC

Viv Kendrick Kirklees MBC

Fiona Venner (Chair) Leeds City Council

Richard Forster City of Wakefield MDC

Note to observers of the meeting:

To remotely observe this meeting, please click on the link below. This will take you to Leeds City Council's YouTube channel, and the meeting can be viewed live from there.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/Leedscouncil>

A G E N D A

Item No	Ward/Equal Opportunities	Item Not Open		Page No
1			<p>APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS</p> <p>To consider any appeals in accordance with Procedure Rule 15.2 of the Access to Information Rules (in the event of an Appeal the press and public will be excluded)</p> <p>(In accordance with Procedure Rule 15.2, written notice of an appeal must be received by the Head of Governance Services at least 24 hours before the meeting)</p>	
2			<p>EXEMPT INFORMATION - POSSIBLE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC</p> <p>1 To highlight reports or appendices which officers have identified as containing exempt information, and where officers consider that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, for the reasons outlined in the report.</p> <p>2 To consider whether or not to accept the officers recommendation in respect of the above information.</p> <p>3 If so, to formally pass the following resolution:-</p> <p>RESOLVED – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following parts of the agenda designated as containing exempt information 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 press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information, as follows:-</p>	

3

LATE ITEMS

To identify items which have been admitted to the agenda by the Chair for consideration

(The special circumstances shall be specified in the minutes)

4

DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

To disclose or draw attention to any disclosable pecuniary interests for the purposes of Section 31 of the Localism Act 2011 and paragraphs 13-16 of the Members' Code of Conduct.

5

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive apologies for absence (If any)

6

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

7 - 10

To confirm as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 14th February 2020.

(Copy attached)

7

MATTERS ARISING

To consider any matters arising from the minutes.

8

ANNUAL REPORT OF ONE ADOPTION WEST YORKSHIRE & STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

11 -
76

To consider a report by the Director of Children's and Families which presents the Annual Report of the One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY) as required by the National Minimum Standards 2011 (Appendix A refers)

The report requests the Joint Committee to note the revised statement of purpose for OAWY (Appendix B refers). The Statement of Purpose is required as part of the national minimum standard in order to be able to provide those services.

(Report attached)

9

10.4(3)

HEAD OF SERVICE REPORT

77 -
110

To consider a report by the Director of Children's Services which provides a summary of the developments of the service since the Annual Report was completed in April 2020.

(Report attached)

10

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

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

Third Party Recording

Recording of this meeting is allowed to enable those not present to see or hear the proceedings either as they take place (or later) and to enable the reporting of those proceedings. A copy of the recording protocol is available from the contacts named on the front of this agenda.

Use of Recordings by Third Parties– code of practice

- a) Any published recording should be accompanied by a statement of when and where the recording was made, the context of the discussion that took place, and a clear identification of the main speakers and their role or title.
- b) Those making recordings must not edit the recording in a way that could lead to misinterpretation or misrepresentation of the proceedings or comments made by attendees. In particular there should be no internal editing of published extracts; recordings may start at any point and end at any point but the material between those points must be complete.

2

a)

b)

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WEST YORKSHIRE ADOPTION JOINT COMMITTEE

FRIDAY, 14TH FEBRUARY, 2020

Present: Councillor F Venner (Leeds City Council) – Chair
Councillors: A Wilkinson (Calderdale MBC), V Kendrick (Kirklees MBC) and C Kirkwood (City of Bradford MDC)

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

13 APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS

There were no appeals against refusal of inspection of documents.

14 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 from the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be considered.

15 LATE ITEMS

There were no late items of business identified.

16 DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

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

17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: A Farley and R Forster.

18 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 1st August 2019 were agreed as a true and correct record.

19 Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no issues raised under Matters Arising.

20 Head of Service Report

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Tuesday, 28th July, 2020

The Director of Children's Services from Calderdale submitted a report and provided a summary of the developments within One Adoption West Yorkshire since the last report to the Joint Committee in August 2019.

Referring to the Recruitment of adopters, Members were informed that at a national level the Department of Education had provided funding of £645k in September 2019 for adoption agencies to recruit adopters. It was reported that a national cross sector steering group had been established and One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY) had agreed to hold the funds on behalf for the steering group. Members noted the steering group had appointed a creative agency to develop a national campaign to take place between March and June this year. This is alongside a working group of stakeholders from Black and minority ethnic communities working with sector to help improve the recruitment adopters from faith and ethnic minority communities.

The Head of Service (OAWY) informed Members that she was a member on the steering group and that Leeds were supporting the commissioning processes involved in this work.

Members were informed that within OAWY Information events were taking place every three weeks across the region and these continued to be well attended. A new video had been developed for use within the session and this would be circulated to Members of the Joint Committee for information.

It was reported that work had commenced with an organisation called "My foster family", a Muslim based faith group who had worked with fostering services and were moving to work with adoption agencies. OAWY were working in partnership with the group to increase the awareness of adoption within the Black and Minority ethnic communities across the region and the first event was held in Leeds in November, seven families attended and interest was being followed up. The Head of Service OAWY said this was something that we were looking to replicate across the region to increase the diversity within our approved adopters to meet the needs of children.

Members were informed that work was ongoing across the region on adoption allowances (financial support for adopters and special guardians). It was suggested that this was a complex piece of work involving key stakeholders across the region, the department of works and pensions, Grandparents Plus, Family Rights Group and carers themselves. It was understood that this issue would be discussed further at a future meeting of the OAWY Management Board.

Reference was made to the development of a new funding formula for implementation within the agency in 2021/22. Members queried what the implications were for the various LA partners and were all of the Section 151 Officers aware.

Members were informed that all Section 151 Officers were aware, in terms of financial implications for the various LA partners, it was suggested that some authorities would gain whilst others would need to find additional funding. The

Head of Service OAWY said discussions between the partners was still ongoing and officers were working to deliver a fair funding formula which would include statistics on outcomes.

The Chair thanked officers for the update on progress

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the progress of the agency
- (ii) To support the continued progression of these arrangements
- (iii) That the new video, People sharing their experience of adoption, be circulated to all Members of the Joint Committee for information

21 Half Yearly Adoption Agency Report

The Director of Children's Services from Calderdale submitted a report which sets out the work and developments within One Adoption West Yorkshire between April 2019 and September 2019 which included the following:

- Staffing & HR
- Accommodation
- Information Technology
- Budget
- Duty System
- Partnership Working
- Performance Management
- Practice, Quality of Provision and Management Oversight

In providing an update on Partnership Working, the Head of Services reported that the Department of Education had extended the funding for the One Adoption Centre of Excellence project until 31st March 2020 and training of staff across the region continued into May. The creation of a multi-disciplinary model had been completed and a business case had been circulated to the Management Board and Health Commissioners across the region for discussion about future funding of the model and the benefits this could have for children and families in the region.

Reference was also made to the Special Guardianship Programme which was seeking to create a standardised policy and approach regarding adoption and special guardianship support, including financial support. Members were informed that a lot of work was ongoing in each local authority with co-ordination taking place at regional level.

Members were informed that the Kinship Connected Project had been extended following an interim evaluation report. The project was due to an end in March 2020, the extension was for a further two year period.

Members considered the Quarterly Performance Report (July – September 2019) which provided statistics on children and young people at various stages of the adoption process within West Yorkshire, including a breakdown by the five local authorities.

The Chair thanked Members and officers for their contributions

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the Half Yearly Adoption Agency Report information
- (ii) To support the continued development of this work

22 Frequency of Meetings

The Chair sought Members views on the frequency of meetings of the Joint Committee following a number of instances where the meeting may have been inquorate. Members were informed that the Committee's Terms of Reference / procedure rules required that the Joint committee must meet at least once a year.

In the discussion that followed Members expressed the view that to only meet once a year would result in much of the information being presented to the Joint Committee would be out of date.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the existing arrangement of two meetings per year be continued
- (ii) That Members and Officers prioritise their attendance, in order to avoid meetings being cancelled due to being inquorate, and to identify deputies if they were unable to attend

23 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – To note that the next meeting will take place on Tuesday, 28th July 2020 at 1.30pm in the Civic Hall, Leeds.



Report author: Sarah Johal

Tel: 0113 2783623

Report of Director of Children's Services

Report to West Yorkshire Adoption Joint Committee

Date: 22nd July 2020

Subject: Annual Report of One Adoption West Yorkshire & Statement of Purpose

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?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, access to information procedure rule number:		
Appendix number:		

Main issues

1. The Executive Board of Leeds City Council, as the host local authority for the regional adoption agency, recommended last year that future annual reports be submitted to the West Yorkshire Joint Committee for the regional adoption agency, as a more appropriate forum for this to be received, given this is a regional service.
2. The West Yorkshire Joint Committee recognise the importance of adoption and want to be updated about the management and outcomes of the service. The report provides an overview of adoption service activity from April 2019 to March 2020. The report is attached at Appendix A.
3. This report provides the Joint Committee with an updated statement of purpose for One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY). The Statement of Purpose for the service is attached at appendix B. The Statement of Purpose is required as part of the national minimum standards in order to be able to provide those services.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the Joint Committee receives the annual report of One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY), detailed in Appendix A of this report, as required by the National Minimum Standards for Adoption 2014, pursuant to the Care Standards Act 2000. The report is to enable to committee to monitor the management and outcomes of the service so that they may be satisfied that the agency is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and/or services users.

2. This report also asks the Joint Committee note the updated statement of purpose for OAWY. The Statement of Purpose for the service is attached at appendix B. The Statement of Purpose is required as part of the national minimum standards in order to be able to provide those services and enables to Joint Committee to agree the changes to the Statement of Purpose on an annual basis.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report asks the West Yorkshire Joint Committee to consider the annual report of the One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY), as detailed in Appendix A of this report, as required by the National Minimum Standards 2011. This is to enable the Joint Committee to monitor the management and outcomes of the service so that they may be satisfied that the agency is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and/or services users; and satisfy themselves that the agency is complying with the conditions of registration.
- 1.2 This report also seeks elected members to note the updated statement of purpose for OAWY. The Statement of Purpose for the service is attached at appendix B. The Statement of Purpose is required as part of the national minimum standards in adoption in order to be able to provide those services.

2 Background information

- 2.1 It is a requirement of the National Minimum Standards for Adoption Services, that each adoption service produces a statement of purpose, including its aims and objectives, a description of the service it provides and the facilities that are provided. This Statement of Purpose gives an outline of those requirements and also how the service is managed and its fitness to provide a comprehensive adoption service. It shows the policy and performance framework that underpins the work and shows how the welfare of children will be met. It also demonstrates the systems which we have set in place to recruit, assess, prepare and support adopters and to family find for children with a plan for adoption.
- 2.2 Children's services are inspected against these standards by Ofsted. The statement of purpose and any updates must be approved through the 'Executive side of the council' on an annual basis and following legal advice and guidance it the Leeds City Council Executive Board agreed last year that future reports will be submitted to the West Yorkshire Joint Committee for the regional adoption agency, as a more appropriate forum for this to be received, given this is a regional service.
- 2.3 The background issues in relation to the adoption annual report are addressed in detail in the report itself at Appendix A.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 The statement of purpose and the annual report was last submitted to |Leeds City Council Executive Board in July 2019. The main issues are contained within the report itself at Appendix A.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 One Adoption West Yorkshire has good mechanisms to consult with and engage adopters and young people in order to develop and deliver service and the annual report contains a report regarding the voice and influence of those using the services.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 OAWY completed a full Equality Impact Assessment in 2018 and is an appendix to the annual report. This is in the process of being reviewed.

4.3 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 One Adoption West Yorkshire is resourced through a joint pooled budget and underpinned by a partnership agreement. This is discussed more fully in the main body of the annual report at appendix A.

4.4 Legal Implications and Access to Information

4.4.1 It is a requirement of the National Minimum Standards 2011 for adoption that the Executive side of the council receives a written report, and all reports will be submitted to the West Yorkshire Joint Committee for the regional adoption agency, as a more appropriate forum for this to be received, given this is a regional service.

4.5 Risk Management

4.5.1 Not applicable

5 Conclusions

5.1 This report seeks that Joint Committee review the annual report, as outlined in Appendix A, and continue to support the work of OAWY to ensure our children receive the best possible support.

5.2 This report also seeks the Joint Committee to note the updated statement of purpose for One Adoption West Yorkshire. The Statement of Purpose for the service is attached at appendix B. The Statement of Purpose is required as part of the national minimum standards in order to be able to provide those services.

6 Recommendations

6.3 It is recommended that the West Yorkshire Joint Committee receive the annual report of One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY), detailed in Appendix A of this report, as required by the National Minimum Standards for Adoption 2014, pursuant to the Care Standards Act 2000. This is to enable the Committee to monitor the management and outcomes of the service so that they may be satisfied that the agency is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and/or services users; and satisfy themselves that the agency is complying with the conditions of registration.

6.4 This report also asks the Joint Committee to note the updated statement of purpose for OAWY. The Statement of Purpose for the service is attached at appendix B. The Statement of Purpose is required as part of the national minimum standards in order to be able to provide those services and enables to Joint Committee to agree the changes to the Statement of Purpose on an annual basis.

7 Background documents¹

7.1 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.

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One Adoption West Yorkshire Annual Report 2019/20

June 2020

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report sets out the developments within One Adoption West Yorkshire from April 2019 to March 2020.

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.
- 2.2 Adoption remains a key priority for the government and there are now 24 regional adoption agencies (RAA's) up and running covering 115 local authorities. A further 30 local authorities are involved in 8 projects to develop RAAs and 2 local authorities have plans to join an existing RAA. There are only 4 local authorities remaining that are not currently involved in an RAA project.
- 2.3 There continues to be a gap between children waiting and adopters available and an increase in the number of children waiting with a placement order for 18 months or more and the government have invested £645k to the adoption sector to improve the recruitment of adopters, with a key focus on attracting more adopters from the black and minority ethnic communities. A national campaign was due to commence in March but was postponed due to the coronavirus crisis.
- 2.7 The future of the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) remains still remains uncertain although a cross party all parliamentary group fully supports the continuation of the fund and the fund is committed to continue until July 2021. The next Spending Review will hopefully clarify the longer term plans for the adoption support fund.

3 Main issues

3.1 COVID-19

3.1.1 OAWY response

The coronavirus has impacted on the whole service and although it emerged towards the latter end of the year it is important to address this issue before going onto review the progress over the year.

Our whole team have been working from home since the 18th of March. The team have adapted well and have found creative ways to ensure that families are supported and children's plans progressed as far as possible. We have been very aware of the impact on staff wellbeing as a large number of staff have been juggling caring for children at home as well as continuing to work. We have aimed to support staff with a range of materials and tips for self-care in these difficult times, and have advocated flexible working.

Despite Covid19 we have continued to receive enquiries from people interested in adopting and have quickly had to adapt how we carry out our recruitment and assessment of adopters. We have created a new online information film, complemented with regular live Facebook question and answer sessions, to replace our information events. And, whilst we are unable to carry out initial home visits and assessment sessions in person, we have put in place mechanisms for these to take place virtually for the most part.

With many GPs currently unable to offer appointments for medical assessments, we have implemented a self-declaration form for adopters in stage one of the process which will allow many applicants to proceed into the next stage of the process without the usual health check. However, further discussions are ongoing about this issue with health services as we cannot approve adopters until a health check has been fully completed.

Virtual Adoption Panels have quickly become the norm across the region and despite the length of panels being reduced, these have continued to progress with minimal delays. The lockdown has required us to put a lot of thought into how we move children on from foster care to adoption. Utilising technology to support the "getting to know you" phase of introductions has enabled us to move some children from foster care to adoption during this time. However, we approach these on a case by case basis, looking at the risks, so it has not been possible for all children, and unfortunately some plans have been delayed.

Appendix A

We continue to provide a social work service to 800 children via WhatsApp, Skype and telephone calls, and have been able to connect with our teen support group through video conferencing. Although our support groups, workshops and training are currently suspended, we are already exploring how we might deliver some of these differently, given the different audiences and modes of delivery available, taking into account security, ease of use and information governance.

Maintaining the letterbox service has been particularly important to us so we are encouraging families to use electronic means wherever possible, although we have been able to maintain a reduced service for hardcopy mail as well.

This is particularly anxious and uncertain time for birth families, with increased concerns about their children's wellbeing. Therefore we are working closely with our commissioned service, PAC/UK, to ensure support is available for families in our region.

Communication with staff and key stakeholders has been key and OAWY website and social media platforms are updated regularly to provide updates; all adopters on the OAWY mailing list have been emailed directly and the Duty line is still up and running with staff working from home and connecting via Enterprise Voice; Letterbox and internal mail is actioned by business support staff from each of the regional offices on a fortnightly rota.

The impact of the pandemic will be long lasting and the service is actively considering the longer term implications and adaptations required to ensure that we can maintain social distancing and provide a good quality service for children and families moving forward.

3.2 Use of Resources

3.2.1 Staffing

Staffing generally remains stable, although there are a few vacancies across the service due to the retirement of staff and staff being promoted within the service. Recruitment to posts was temporarily put on hold whilst we prioritised other areas of work with the current issues around COVID-19. However, recruitment activity has now started again.

One of our long standing service managers retired this year due to ill health and a temporary appointment was made to cover the position initially and is in the process of being made a permanent replacement. We have also had some changes with the team manager cohort during the year with two managers going on maternity leave and one manager leaving due to a change in personal circumstances. This has provided opportunities for internal staff to progress their career within the service.

During the course of the year there have also been a number of people leaving within the business support team and this had significant pressure on the service. However, four new staff have been recently appointed, increasing the capacity to better meet the needs of the service with two more members of staff recently recruited and awaiting start dates. There are a range of development opportunities within business support and some staff have taken up apprenticeships and we continue to look closely at staff retention in this area of the service. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused delays to both training and bringing in new staff and the team are looking at alternative ways to deliver induction and training for staff. All of the staff are currently working from home and have risen to the challenge incredibly well.

3.2.2 Duty System

Following on from an increase in the number of teams based at Kernel House last year a further evaluation of the duty system took place in the summer last year and changes were implemented in September 2019, which saw a 7 week rota introduced with the Leeds office undertaking 3/7 weeks on the rota and Huddersfield and Bradford offices 2/7 weeks each.

There were 5,119 calls to the duty line during 2019/20. Due to COVID-19 the Duty line is being run by staff working from home and connecting via Enterprise Voice. During the lockdown the number of calls to the duty line is lower than usual, however the families that are calling in are tending to require longer and more in-depth support from the duty worker than typical calls.

3.2.3 Accommodation & service delivery

Work completed last summer moving from 5 office bases to 3 main office bases- with desk space remaining in Halifax and Wakefield. These moves have enabled three teams across recruitment and assessment, family finding and adoption support to be co-located with one service manager.

The increase in teams at Kernel House in Leeds is causing pressure on space and is causing difficulties for staff. Constructive discussions are underway with asset management to address this issue. However, COVID-19 has forced different ways of working. All staff are now working from home and making better use of the technology we have available. When things return to normal, some of these ways of working may be adopted permanently which may then ease pressure on office space and we will keep this under review.

3.2.4 Information Technology

The Bradford, Calderdale and Wakefield portals are now up and running effectively. This has proved to be essential as all staff are now working from home. Further work with Kirklees still needs to be progressed and discussed as some staff are still using two computers.

3.3 Partnership working

3.3.1 Operational leads meetings

The operational leads group continues to meet quarterly to discuss practice issues and have discussed a range of issues during the year from foster carer adoptions, adoption support, and access to records and most recently discussed transitions and moving children onto adoption. The coronavirus has created some clear difficulties moving children on and we are taking a case by case approach with a risk assessed decision being made and a guidance document has been provided for staff.

3.3.2 Centre of Excellence Project- adoption support

The Centre of Excellence project team came to an end at the end of March 2020. The local authorities and the clinical commissioning groups within health have agreed to fund a 3 year extension of the project to implement a multi- disciplinary team within OAWY working across the region. The team will consist of 12 staff with a Team Manager, 2 Therapeutic social workers, 2 Education workers, 1 Early Years Practitioner plus 1.5 Clinical Psychologists and an Assistant Psychologist, 1.2 Occupational Therapists and a Speech and Language Therapist. In addition the team will have access to consultancy support from Educational Psychologist, Paediatrician and Psychiatrist, and will 1.5 business support staff to support this work. We are working closely with Leeds Community Health Trust to recruit the health staff and there are some delays in taking this forward as health providers focus on the response to the COVID19 crisis.

During the course of the year the team has continued to work with the management team in OAWY providing support and training to embed the new assessment framework as part of the standard practices. The basic framework training has been completed in the Yorkshire and the Humber region, with over 150 professionals partaking in the two day training.

3.3.3 Agency Medical Advisors

The agency continues to communicate regularly with Medical Advisors across the region where there is a need to discuss practice issues. The medical advisor protocol remains in place and there have been some improvements in the availability of medical appointments across the region more recently.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted upon the capacity of medical advisors to offer medical advice in relation to children, adopters and to the Adoption Panels and for GP's to carry out medical assessments regarding prospective adopters. There has been a commitment across the region to continue providing medical advice in order to achieve permanence for children wherever possible and discussions with commissioners and providers have been progressed to ensure that this remains a key focus to prevent delay for children in moving to their permanent family. There will however, inevitably be some delay for children during this time.

3.3.4 Virtual school heads (VSH)

OAWY and the VSH continue to meet on a termly basis to share information around the issues that are currently impacting on adopted children and their families. It is an opportunity to build and develop the skills and knowledge in the region and promote a shared knowledge base for those who are living or working with these children. The Adoption Education Duty line continues to be used by parent's social workers and schools across the region and informs the VSH of the current challenges people are facing. Virtual Schools have embraced the Secure Base Model – resulting in one authority effectively using parts of this model within their Personal Education Planning. It has been reported that the Virtual School representatives value this opportunity to come together to focus on this particular cohort of children and think about their needs. Information from the Schools' Survey (which has been carried out twice across the region) will be a strong measure of the impact of the work and also identify areas where the group needs to focus next. Linking this meeting with grandparents plus project workers who support special guardians has been positive and further discussion is required to support this work moving forward.

3.3.5 Special Guardianship

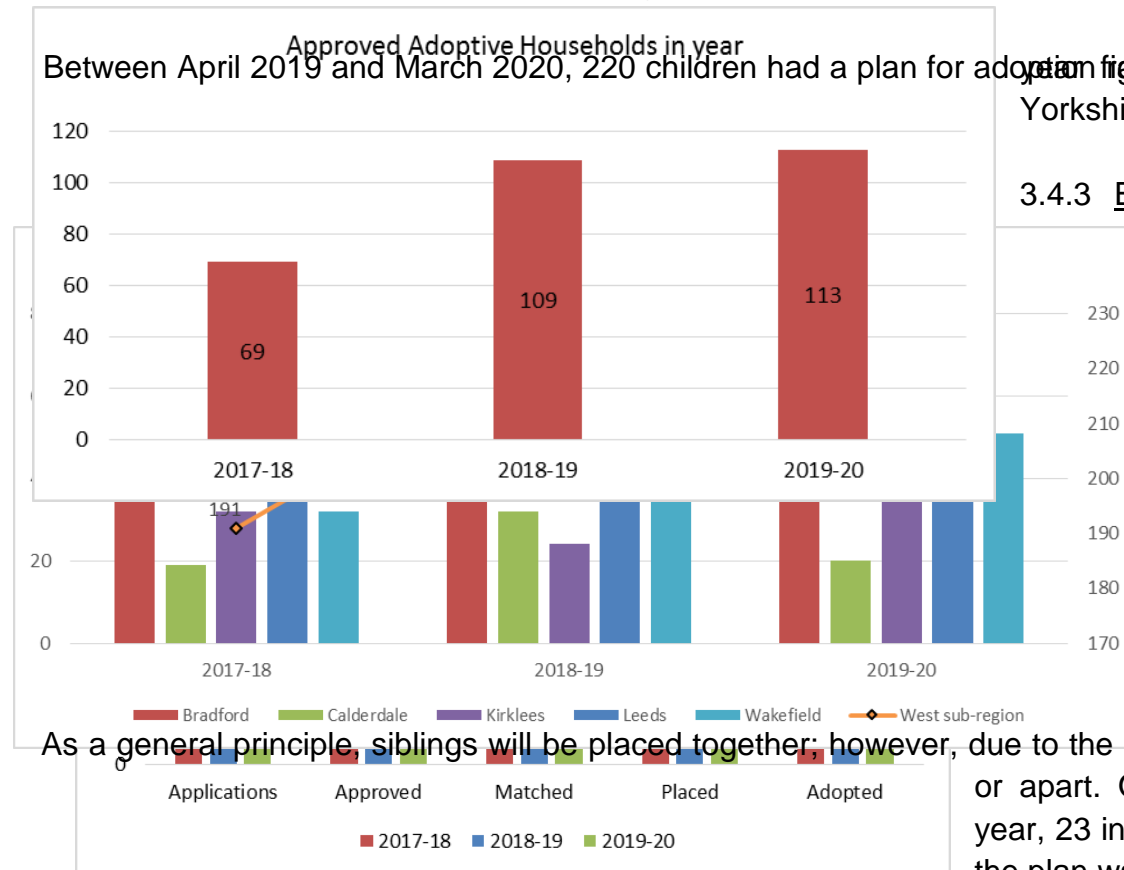
The Grandparents plus contract has now being extended for a 2 year period. They have adapted their work since the restrictions came into play and this has been working well to date. The regional work around the policy development and financial support for special guardians has progressed well this year and a support plan template is currently being piloted in two local authorities. The management board have looked at a regional approach to financial support, with a refreshed financial assessment tool in the process of development and a revised policy framework. There have been some challenges around adopting a regional approach however there is a clear consensus on the aspiration to have a streamlined approach and this work is progressing well with decisions progressing through local governance arrangements for agreement.

3.4 Performance Management

3.4.1 The agency provides quarterly reports to the management board. This data provided has developed over the last 3 years and is gathered to ensure that we are aware of how much work is undertaken, how well was it undertaken and if anyone is any better off.

A) Sufficiency: Are enough of the right kind of adopters being recruited and approved to meet the needs of the children waiting:

3.4.2 The children with a plan for adoption during 2019/20



As a general principle, siblings will be placed together; however, due to the evidence based on children, placed together or apart.

Between April 2019 and March 2020, 220 children had a plan for adoption ratified by 226 5 West Yorkshire local authorities.

3.4.3 Ethnicity

Of the 220 children with a plan for adoption ratified this year, 174 (79%) children were from white British backgrounds (including information not obtained) and 42 children (19%) were from Black and Minority Ethnic groups, including children from eastern European, Gypsy Roma, Black African and Black Caribbean backgrounds.

3.4.4 Placement with Siblings

Of the 71 individual siblings placed during the year, 23 individual children were placed apart, for which 22 the plan was to be placed apart.

3.4.5 Adopter recruitment

113 adoptive households were approved during the year and you will note from the table below that this is another increase from year-end 2017-18 and year end 2018-19.

Within the 113 households, 219 individuals were approved throughout 2019-20. Of these, 21 (10%) are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds (last year it was 11%). We need to improve our percentage of BME carers and keep a focus on ensuring that we approve a full range of adoptive families to meet the range of children requiring placement, while at the same time not relying on matching children with regard to ethnic identity as an overriding factor. This is a key issue for the service and we have commissioned an organisation called My Adoption Family to work with us in engaging with Black African and Black Caribbean communities in the region to help us increase the diverse range of adopters available. We have a webinar planned with key organisations to discuss local reflections on the barriers for people coming forward and to seek their help in our campaign to attract more adopters to come forward.

Households approved for sibling groups decreased slightly this year with 16 households approved for sibling groups, 14 for 2 children; 2 approved for a sibling group of 3 and 34 households open to an Early Permanence Placements. There is still more to do around recruiting adopters for sibling groups and a new training programme was due to be implemented in April and due to Covid19 is now being adapted for an online course so implementation has been delayed.

3.4.6 Children currently with an adoption plan

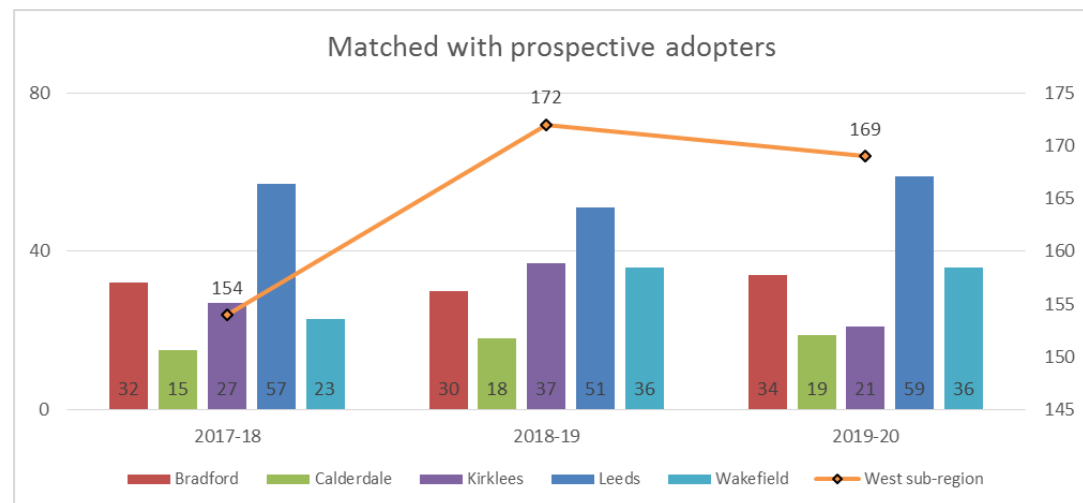
As of the end of March 2020 there are 162 children with a plan for adoption and have a placement order, from the 5 West Yorkshire local authorities not currently placed and requiring adopters. 91 children out of the 162 are 0 - 2 years, 42 are between 2 and 4 years and 29 children are 5 years of age or older.

From the children waiting for a placement there are 110 girls and 116 boys, and 22% are children from BME backgrounds (including children from eastern European, Gypsy Roma, Black African and Black Caribbean backgrounds). 61 children are from sibling groups. The plans for these children are actively reviewed with the local authorities with clear monitoring and tracking systems to understand the range of family finding activity going on for these children and whether adoption remains the right plan for each child. The delays for these children are related primarily to the needs of the children; the need to place siblings together, the age of the children or their particular special needs or complexity.

3.4.7 Adopters available

As of the end of March 2020, there are 50 approved adoptive households that have not been matched and 43 are in the process of looking and are in discussions about considering placements and 7 have a panel date booked.

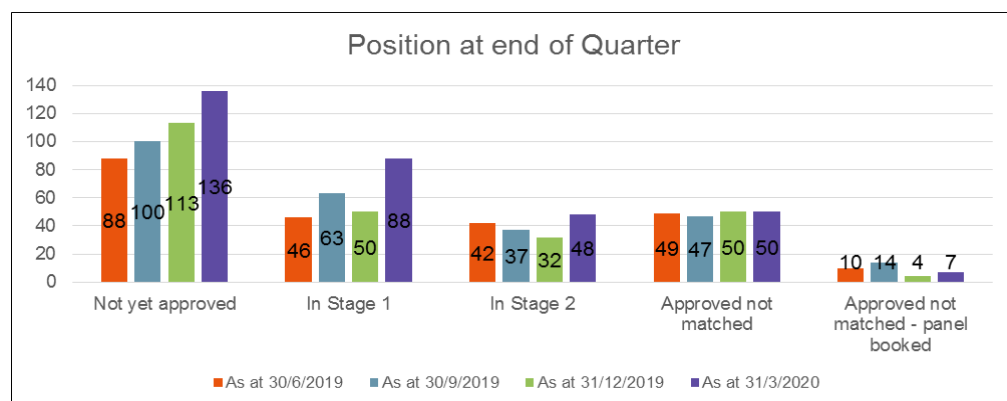
On the 31st March 2020 113 adopters are in the process of assessment (in stage 1 or 2) although these will take a number of months to become approved. There is a steady increase in those within the assessment process overall.



B) Timeliness: Are children being matched and placed without delay including those children who wait longer?

3.4.8 Children matched in the year for adoption

Between April 2019 and March 2020, 169 children from the 5 West Yorkshire local authorities were matched with families at adoption panels; this is a slight decrease of 3 children matched between April 2018 and March 2019 from across the 5 West Yorkshire local authorities. From April 2019 to March 2020, 25% (42) of the children matched were from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities and this is extremely positive news as these children often wait longer to be placed.

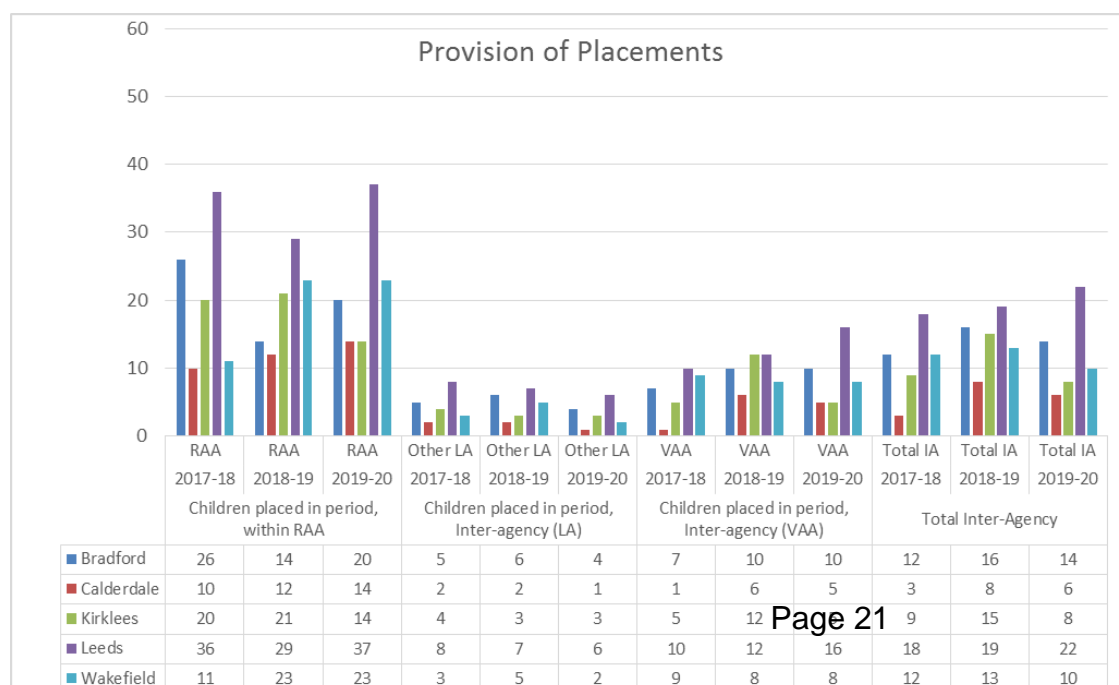


- 130 of the children matched were 0 to 2 years old;
- 31 children matched were 2 to 4 years old;
- 8 children were aged 5 years or older;
- 72 children were part of a sibling group (of the 169 matched);
- 64 children (of the 169 matched) were placed who are part of a sibling group of which 23 were placed apart, 22 had a plan to place apart due to their individual needs;
- 14 children (of the 169 matched) had been previously placed in early permanence placements (8 during the year) of which 7 of these 14 children have been adopted in the year. This is a very positive step in reducing the number of moves for children before they reach their permanent family.

3.4.9 Provision of Placements

We placed 168 children this year. The percentage of placements provided in-house within the region has increased significantly this year.

- 108 children within OAWY;

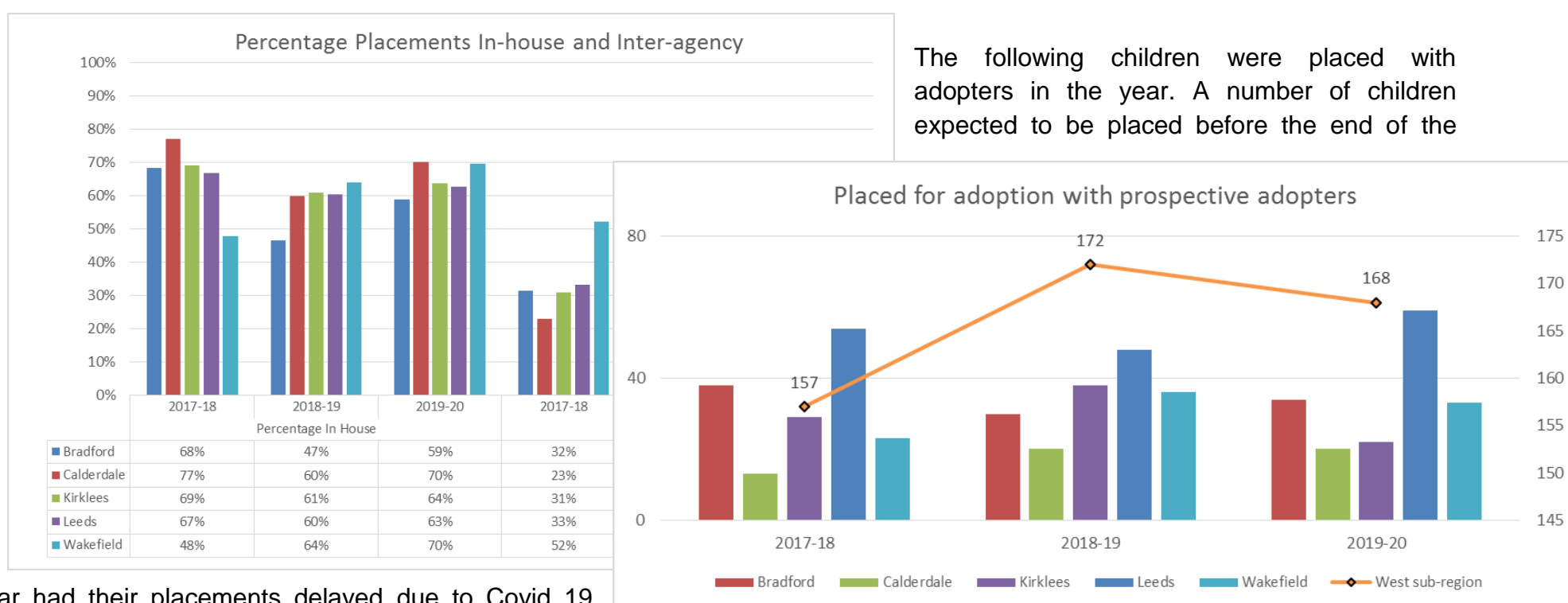


- 16 children with other local authorities or other Regional agencies;
- 44 children with Voluntary Adoption Agencies

The percentage this year was 64% in house and 36% interagency. Last year it was 59% in house and 41% interagency. It is clear from the table below that the trends for LA's in the use of

Appendix A

interagency placements has changed with all LA's increasing last year on the previous year but decreasing again this year.

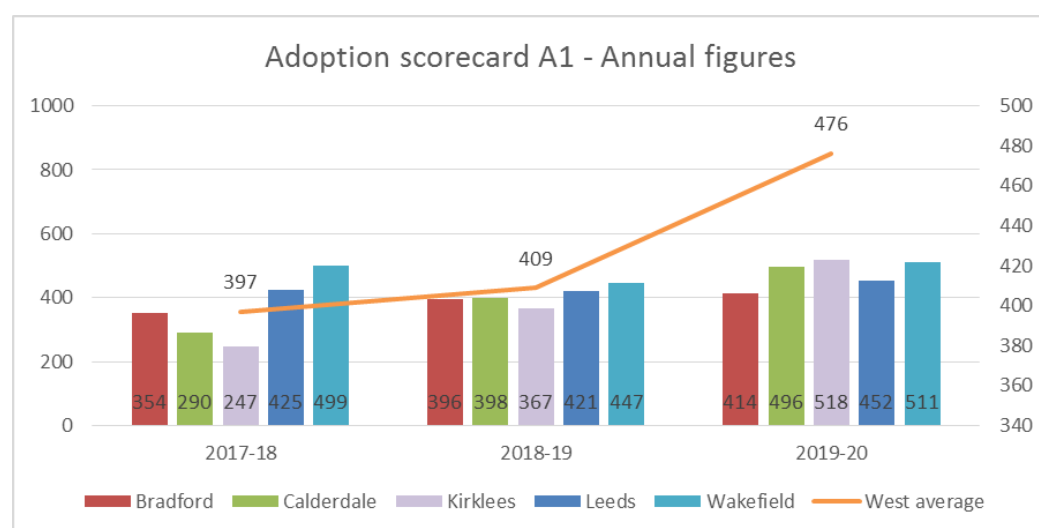


year had their placements delayed due to Covid 19 and their plans for moving in with their family are regularly reviewed and will take place as soon as is possible.

3.4.10 Adoption Scorecards

A1 indicator

The average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family (indicator A1) for children in West Yorkshire is 476 days, the National Indicator target is 426 days and the England 3 Year Average is 486). Whilst this is above the national target, it is below the England 3 year average and is based upon children adopted in the period.

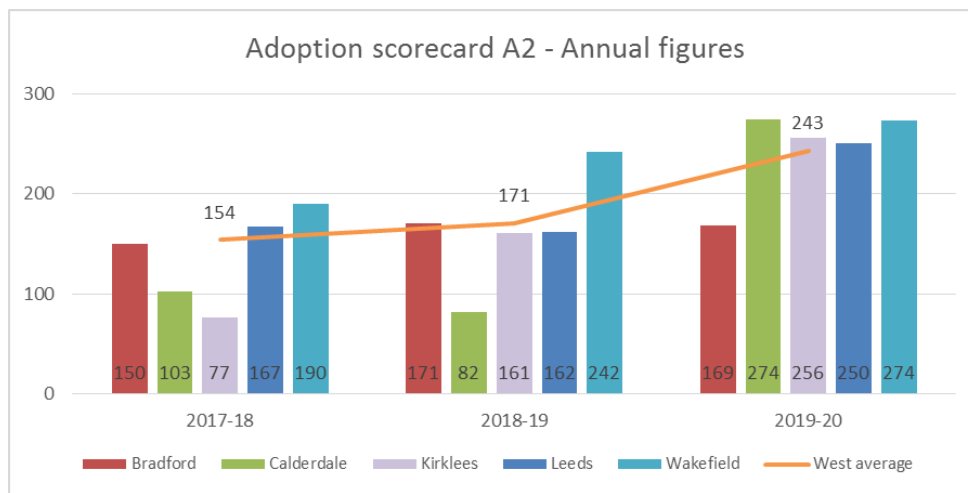


- o 42 of the 174 children adopted entered care more than 3 years ago;
- o 91 of the 174 children adopted were hard to place children;
- o 67 of the 174 children adopted took more than 500 days between entering care and being placed,
- o Of the 67 children that took more than 500 days 49 of the 67 were hard to place children with 22 having 2 or more characteristics

It is clear that there are some children where there have been some issues regarding drift in care planning and there are also some of the children being older and with more complex needs resulting in adoption taking longer to achieve. It is important to look at the individual local authorities but on the whole most of the children will have actually been placed in the last 3 years and formally adopted more recently, reflecting a number of years of local authority practice and care planning from a number of years ago.

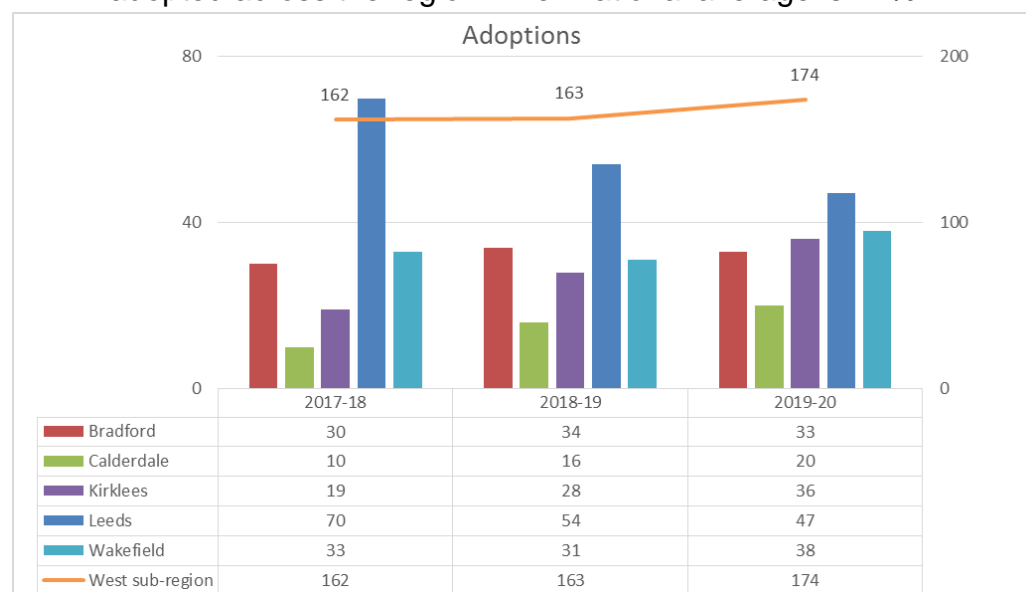
A2 indicator

The average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family (Indicator A2) for children in West Yorkshire has increased to 243 days, the National indicator target is 121 days and the England three year average is 201. This is above the national indicator and reflects an issue of a national decline in the number of adopters available and the complexity of children waiting for adoption.



3.4.11 Children adopted from care

The number of children who have been formally adopted has increased by 11 (174) with 13% of children leaving care being adopted across the region. The National average is 12%.



3.5 Practice, quality of provision and management oversight

3.5.1 Recruitment and Assessment

In May 2019 Coram Baaf awarded OAWY the quality mark for Early Permanence Placements. This will assist us in attracting adopters and is a partnership approach with the five local authorities, giving confidence in the court arena that adopters are fully prepared for this task and that support is available for all parties involved in these arrangements.

The use of Virtual Reality is now well embedded in our preparation and assessment of prospective adopters. We have trained an additional cohort of staff in the use of the VR headsets, in particular focusing on adoption support staff as there are new films soon to be available which will be relevant to adoption support work with content such as knife crime, county lines etc. We had training planned regarding the new content, which has been postponed due to COVID19. However, we have had 2D versions of the existing films made available for use in preparing prospective adopters in the interim.

The adopter preparation training has been fully reviewed and a new programme developed. This was due for implementation from April 2020. However, in response to COVID19 this is being reviewed further and an online preparation training program is currently being devised. Here are some comments from those attending the adopter preparation training:

- Was great again having the adoptive parent there! Was great at answering any questions and it felt very real!
- Personable, patient, honest and realistic whilst still being positive;
- Excellent training and brilliant for preparing us as parents;
- I feel like I gained a lot of insight, knowledge and confidence from the training.

Appendix A

The adopting sibling training programme has been developed, however, we have been unable to implement this as planned. We are currently exploring how this, and the EPP training, can be delivered virtually to prospective adopters. Here are some comments from those who have attended the EPP training:

- *Great training. Very honest and realistic;*
- *We were pretty sure we wanted to do EPP but the training confirmed we definitely do;*
- *The key learning for me was being able to listen to and ask questions to someone who has gone through the process and ask her opinions and thoughts;*

The review of the website has been ongoing. Proposals for the content and layout were shared with prospective adopters for their feedback. This will now be moved forward with the web developers. We hope to extend the online functions available to adopters, such as booking training, following the success of the online submission forms for visit requests and the Registration of Interest.

The impact of Covid19 on the pipeline of adopters coming through is not clear as yet. We had to cease the information event for a period of five weeks during the first phase of lockdown and given that we had a backlog of enquiries to deal with once we got the information event online this suggests we may not have an issue in due course. However, the impact of not being able to approve adopters due to the lack of medical assessment and advice is one we need to keep a close eye on in the coming months.

3.5.2 Adoption Panels

A review of adoption panels was undertaken throughout January and February 2020. It found that despite there being 7 panels taking place on a monthly basis, with three chairs and a varied membership, there is a high degree of consistency in the implementation of panel protocols. Recent recruitment to Business Support vacancies has improved the efficiency of panels, for example in relation to outcome letters being distributed in a timelier manner.

In response to COVID-19 Adoption Panels are now taking place virtually, with members joining the meeting via video or conference call. Despite some small technical issues, overall panels are going well and positive feedback has been received. Prospective adopters are not currently routinely 'attending' panel; this is something we will continue to review as panel members and attendees become increasingly confident with the technology. We have reduced the number of items on each panel due to the new way of working, but have capacity to provide additional panels, should they be required.

3.5.3 Family Finding

Agreement was reached that a research informed practice model developed by the University of East Anglia for moving children from foster care to adoption be adopted in the region and implemented in Leeds and Calderdale in the first instance and discussions have taken place to support services with this, including training for foster carers and there have been a number of introductions that have taken place utilising this model. In the other areas where full implementation has yet not been possible, elements of this model have been used, such as a greater use of video calls to familiarise children with their new families in the getting to know you stage.

Due to the current restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic introductions have more widely utilised technology and whilst a number of transitions have taken place some have been delayed due to a range of issues relating to the health needs of children, adopters and foster carers, the distance and logistics in being able to undertake transitions. Where plans have been delayed these are kept under regular review.

The children's profiling events continued to take place with the last event being in January, inviting adoptive families from across the region and beyond to consider a selection of children awaiting adoption who were featured with high quality photos, DVDs and personalised displays. 22 families attended and we featured 34 profiles totalling 49 children, resulting in 17 expressions of interest. 2 of these expressions of interest have led to linking visits and 1 is being explored further.

Fun Days were piloted in 2019/20 with 2 being held resulting in 4 children being matched. The 3rd Fun Day, scheduled for March, was cancelled due to COVID-19. The Fun Days were very well received by those attending. Comments from the adopters who attended stated "A really great experience. Well worth it;" and "it was great to talk to the foster carers about the children and to meet the children".

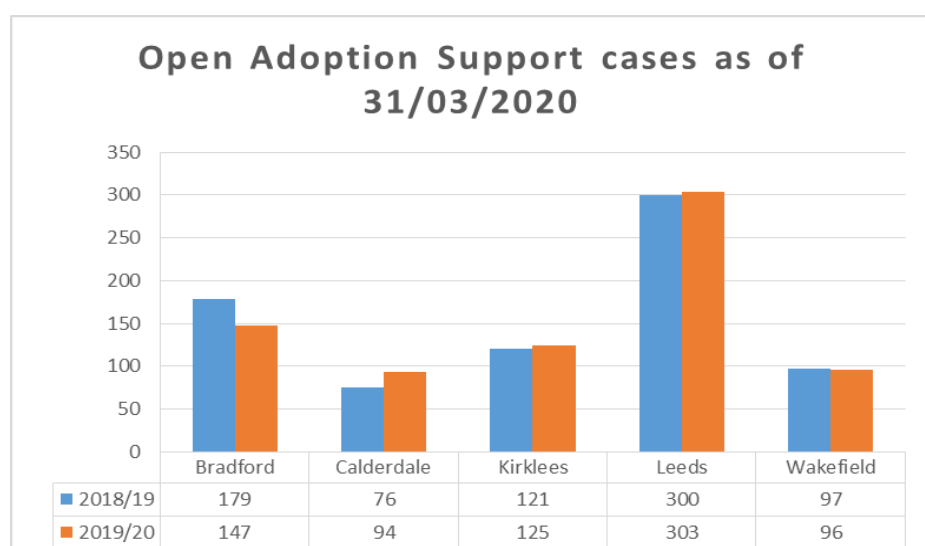
We are exploring undertaking profiling events virtually so that these can continue during this period of uncertainty, the profiling events have had a positive impact in raising the understanding of adopters of the needs of children with a plan of adoption and have led to a number of matches.

We have progressed with commissioning 30 placements from the Voluntary agencies alliance in order for children to move into families within the region. This faltered slightly with the impact of Covid-19 but the contract was awarded on the 28st May.

3.5.4 Adoption Support

a) **Adoption support:** Do children and families have timely access to high quality support services?

The service has continued to provide a direct social work service to almost 800 children. There continues to be a number of families waiting for allocation for an assessment of their support needs not on the allocated list below, however this number is reducing following some increased capacity and different processes put in place to manage new enquiries from families. Workers have successfully applied for £1.78m funding from the Adoption Support Fund for therapy services for children and their families.



Since the introduction of restrictions as result of Covid-19 Social workers have been maintaining contact with families via virtual means, this has meant we have had to consider the way we work with families and how we deliver of our core offer of support.

Through most of the year we have continued to provide a number of events and support groups for adoptive families across the region including non- violent resistance, Foundations for Attachment, Therapeutic Playgroup, and Sensory Integration programmes. We have put on workshops across the region for parents on Brain Based Parenting, Education, and Therapeutic Parenting. However, these are all currently suspended and we are currently exploring how we might deliver some of these via more virtual platforms in light of the current restrictions.

We are very mindful about the difficulties COVID-19 places upon families and we have provided updated information about the service with links to a range of online resources for people to access.

The letterbox service has continued to facilitate over 5,000 exchanges across the region. Work is nearing completion in creating electronic records for children who have an arrangement. Since the Covid-19 restrictions we have continued to scan and email letters wherever possible.

Through our contract with PAC/UK they have been able to amend their offer to remote working to continue to offer their existing service. They have also been working with us particularly to ensure that birth families are supported as this can be a very anxious time for both birth families anxious about the welfare of their children.

3.5.5 Peer Mentoring – PAC-UK/ Adoption UK

There are now 27 active peer mentors (Bradford 4, Calderdale 1, Kirklees 3, Leeds 17 and Wakefield 2) supporting 56 families across the region. The table below shows the number of referrals received and the number that have gone on to access the service broken down by area.

No. referrals 19/20	Brad	Cald	Kirkls	Leeds	Wkfld	Total
Received	19	3	11	37	9	79
Accepted Support	15	3	9	25	8	60

Here are some comments from those accessing the mentoring service:

- *We would highly recommend the mentoring service. We have a very close knit support group with our family and friends however they don't all fully understand what we are always going through so having the mentoring service available has been invaluable to us;*
- *It was an outstanding experience, having somebody who was able to listen and discuss different aspects of the adoption process with.*
- *The mentoring scheme has allowed me to ask questions throughout the process as they come to mind, it is reassuring to have someone there to chat to 'as and when' I need to.*

3.5.5 Non Agency Adoption

One Adoption West Yorkshire undertakes non-agency adoption on behalf of Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield councils, Bradford and Leeds councils undertake their own.

Appendix A

Over the last 12 months there were a total of 38 enquiries received for non-agency adoption. 61% of enquiries were from families living in Wakefield, 21% were from families living in Calderdale and 18% were from families living in Kirklees.

Over the past 12 months we received 24 Notifications of intention to apply for an order we received with 38% from families living in Kirklees, 33% were from families living in Wakefield and 29% were from families living in Calderdale.

Over the past 12 months there were 14 non-agency adoption orders granted, 43% were for families from Calderdale, 36% were for families from Wakefield and 21% were for families from Kirklees.

3.5.7 Disruptions

There were 7 disruptions of adoption placements (pre adoption order) during 2019/20 which relate to 6 placements (2 children were part of a sibling group). This is an increase from last year of 4 disruptions. The children's ages at disruption ranged from 11 months old to 10 years, the length of placement ranged from 9 days to 5 months. Of the 6 placements, 1 of these was an in-house placement and 5 external (RAA, LA and VAA) placements. Some of the themes from the review of these are as follows:

- The majority of placements were at distance;
- In 2 cases there were risks identified in progressing to adoption, one being the age of the child (who was 9 at the time of placement) and one where it was recognised that there would be a high need for therapeutic support;
- Access to local service provision where placements are at a distance is at times challenging;
- Presenting behaviour of the child in placement and adoptive parents ability to cope with the level of need;
- Experiences of children in early life;
- Initial preference for approval age for 2 sets of adopters was lower than the age of the child placed with them;
- Lack of connection developed between the adoptive parent and child (2 cases).

A detailed review of the themes emerging from disruptions is been undertaken and will be used to share learning with partner agencies.

3.5.8 Quality Assurance

One Adoption West Yorkshire has developed a practice improvement framework and is committed to an improvement culture of learning. The principal sources of feedback are:

- Views of Children and Families: The views and experiences of children & young adults;
- Performance Data: Any statistical data that helps us judge the quality and effectiveness of our professional practice;
- Practice Wisdom & Knowledge: The practice wisdom of those staff who work with children, young people and families, adoption panels and learning from disruptions;
- The findings of external and internal inspections, audits and evaluations of our practice.

A Quality Assurance (QA) mechanism for panel work is used as a matter of course and has found that the majority of prospective adopter reports (PARS) were of a good or outstanding standard (8% outstanding, 74% good, 2% satisfactory, 8% requiring improvement and 8% not recorded). This is an improvement on last year's figure. The Child Permanence Reports (CPR's) provided by local authority social workers over half were considered good or outstanding (3% outstanding, 54% good, 12% satisfactory, 29% requiring improvement and 2% not recorded) - this is a slight improvement on last year. OAWY continue to work with the 5 local authorities to raise the quality of CPR's and support them with training and development work more detailed feedback is provided for each local authority.

With regard to feedback from service users at adoption panels; an online survey was introduced this year and return rates have been low. However, we will be working to improve the return rate. 7 questionnaires were received from attendees at panel who could rate the overall experience as either very good, good, neither good nor poor, poor or very poor. All responses rated the experience as very good or good.

- 6 (85.7%) respondents rated the experience as very good;
- 1 (14.3%) respondents rated the experience as good.

There were 23 complaints made regarding the Adoption Service during 2019/20. Eleven complaints related to post-adoption support or payments, four focused on letter box contact issues, four were unhappy with the assessment process, three were about staff attitude/customer service and one for delays in the adoption process. 21 complaints were resolved at stage one and of the stage one responses three were inconclusive or locally resolved, four were not upheld, eleven were partially upheld and three were fully upheld. Each year we look at any themes arising from complaints to ensure that we can learn from these and feedback into practice improvement.

3.5.9 Case File Audits

Dip sampling case file audits was undertaken with three Local authorities to look at family finding activity for those children waiting (Leeds, Wakefield and Kirklees). The Head of Service, Service managers and team managers also complete audits to look at the quality of work and the preparation of adopters, adoption support work and planning for the children which is

Appendix A

generally of a good quality. An audit schedule has been agreed for 2020/21 and results are reported quarterly into OAWY senior leadership team.

3.5.10 Voice and Influence of Children, Young People and Adopters

Appendix 1 provides the Voice and Influence of Children, Young People and Adopters report card. This highlights examples of work undertaken to capture the views of service users to help develop and shape the service.

3.6 **Continuous Professional and Service Development**

3.6.1 Staff development and support

All of the staff receive regular monthly supervision and have an appraisal. This is an opportunity for staff to ensure that there is reflection regarding their work and addresses their own personal and professional development and practice.

3.6.2 Training

During 2019/20 a range of training has been delivered across the teams. Here are some highlights:

- Post-commencement training for Adoption Support Managers;
- Non Violent Resistance - Level 1 and Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP) - Level 1 for Adoption Support workers;
- Attachment Style Interview training for recruitment workers;
- Virtual Reality training;
- Transitions – delivered by Professor Beth Neil at an all staff event;
- Introduction to Theraplay, Parenting with PACE (playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy) and Neuroscience & Trauma at a Recruitment & Assessment and Family Finding development day.

A skills gap analysis for social work staff was completed in 2019/20 which is directing a staff development plan. Training workshops on trauma and home inventory scheduled for delivery in April and May '20 had to be cancelled but will be re-booked when possible. Plans are also in place to source training for DDP level 1 and 2 as well as Theraplay level 1 and 2 during 2020/21.

The Business support team has worked together to agree a core competency framework which will link to annual appraisals and feed into the further development of bespoke training for business support staff. A number of training opportunities are available and a number of staff have taken up apprenticeships.

The family finding teams across West Yorkshire provide regular clinics to local authority social workers within the region to provide information, advice and support regarding individual cases and processes in adoption. Workshops are also provided across the region focussed on key themes, i.e. child permanence reports, early permanence placements and direct work with children. OAWY also contribute to newly qualified social work programmes, legal training in some areas of the region as well as supporting foster carer groups and contributing to sessions focussed on adoption.

OAWY delivered a conference at the end of January regarding Adoption & Contact –valuing relationships and identity. This was well received with 185 social work practitioners present from across England. The feedback was excellent. There is a real appetite for change and progressing practice around this area of work and we are looking at a follow up workshop with adopters, birth parents and social workers to explore the issues further.

3.6.3 Strategic issues and forward plans

OAWY's plan on a page, Appendix 2, outlines the vision, mission, outcomes and priorities up to 2020/21. Activities linked to the delivery of the plan are tracked through the OAWY Service Improvement Plan. Work will commence this year with a forward three year plan to be ready for the end of 20/21.

Corporate Considerations

4.1 **Consultation and Engagement**

There has been ongoing engagement with staff over the year. 2 all staff events are held twice a year, one in June and one in October which covered identity and lifelong relationships and rethinking children's moves from foster care to adoption respectively. Following staff feedback on communication there is now a quarterly newsletter in place to keep staff updated. Ongoing engagement with adopters, young people through adoptees and birth parents is an integral part in order to co-develop and co deliver the services provided for children and families in the region.

4.2 **Equality and Diversity/ Cohesion and Integration**

Appendix A

The OAWY Equality Impact assessment can be found as **Appendix 3**. Actions from this are fed into the annual service improvement plan and tracked throughout the year. Please note this Equality Impact Assessment is in the process of being reviewed and will be completed by October 2020.

4.3 Resources and value for money

4.3.1 The 2019/20 final outturn position of OAWY was £5k underspend.

There were some pressures on the 2019/20 budget specifically the shortfall of Inter Agency Income £247k and Commissioned Services of £109k, however, these were mitigated by Staffing savings of £139k, Inter Agency expenditure savings of £22k and a combination of additional income (£195k) and running cost savings of £5k.

5. Conclusions

5.1 We continue to see the increase in adopters coming into the process which is positive and children who generally wait longer for adoption are moving in with their adoptive families. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought many challenges for the service and we have adapted quickly to the new "norm". We are now starting to reflect and think about how we operate moving forward with social distancing likely to be in place for a long period of time. There are many things that we have started that we will continue to do in the future and we have kept a learning log to help us understand what has worked well and what has not worked well to inform future planning. The staff in the agency are extremely committed and passionate about improving outcomes for children in the region and to being part of a developing a flagship adoption service that promotes and develops best practice.

Appendix 1



Voice and Influence of Adopters, Children & Young People report Card April 2019 to March 2020

Outcome: Children and adoptive families to have an influence over decisions affecting their families' lives and the services we provide.

Best ideas - what has worked?

Prospective adopters wanted more opportunities for adopter led matching

Profiling Events

The Profiling events give prospective adopters information about children waiting for adoption in the region.

OAWY have delivered 5 events this year which have resulted in 8 matches so far:

- April event; 2 matches (2 children);
- July event; 1 match (1 child);
- Sept' event; 2 matches (2 children);
- Nov' event; 1 match (2 children);



Here is some of the positive feedback from those who attended the events:

- *Very friendly and welcoming staff;*
- *Informative and questions answered;*
- *Welcoming and fully explained;*
- *Very approachable and professional.*

OAWY Fun Days!



OAWY held its first Fun Day in June 2019 and it's second in October 2019. This was in response to prospective adopters getting a better understanding of the children waiting for adoption in the region. The Fun Day is a chance for adopters (OAWY & external) to meet some of the children who are waiting to be adopted, allowing them to interact with the children in an enjoyable environment. The children who attended these events were those who would typically wait longer to be adopted. There is careful preparation for these events with children, their foster carers and adopters.

The June and October events resulted in 4 matches for 4 children (2 internal and 2 external) and 27 expressions of interest overall. Here are some of the comments from the adopters who attended:

- *Really great experience. Well worth it;*
- *It was so useful to meet the children and their carers, it was invaluable;*

- *...it was great to talk to the foster carers about the children and to meet the children..;*
- *Thank you. It was a really nice event, I enjoyed it;*
- *We loved the day. Thank you;*
- *Very friendly atmosphere made welcome.*

A further event had been scheduled for March but this had to be postponed. Due to the success of the first 2 events more will be scheduled when it is safe to do so.



10 Out of 15 Adopteens Youth Council members are from West Yorkshire. Here is some of the work Adopteens have completed or been involved in this year:

- Youth council session held in January – ARC adoption came to discuss their digital life story work and gather young people’s views. Also completed work around the One Adoption (OA) questions on letterbox, life story and contact;
- Activity day has been held – a photography workshop based at the Hepworth. Great workshop, positive feedback;
- A young person presented at the OA conference on Contact at end of February;
- Have been running a series of song writing workshops in association with Sea glass collective. 7 members of Adopteens have attended these workshops – a series of 3 workshops with a gig at the end of it where musicians will perform some of the songs that the young people have written;
- 2 x Young people sat on interview panel for Service delivery manager.

Adopteens Timeline Animation

- <https://youtu.be/ZA-5DCCK-8E> This animation completed by young people in the Adopteens group as they reflect on important stages in their lives, sharing their thoughts and feelings about the various support they have received providing important messages for professionals and parents and carers. This is a useful learning tool for anyone professionally and/or personally linked to adoption and has been shared with corporate parenting boards and at conferences. Please share widely.

Adopter Voice

Adopter Voice continue to influence and help us improve the adoption service. Here are some highlights:

adoptervoice

Creating empowerment and engagement for the adoption community

- A Facebook group for adopters in Yorkshire and Humber is in place with 530 members. Over 200 of these members are from West Yorkshire. This fantastic online community helps adopters to support each other and they offer views and opinions from questions posed about practice and to test ideas with.
- Adopter feedback is influencing changes to contact, life story work and introductions within OAWY;
- There are now 25 peer mentors supporting over 70 families.



Early Permanence Placement (EPP)

This training provides an overview of the process that identifies children where EPP may be in their interests. It also provides an opportunity for prospective adopters to increase their understanding of the role of EPP carers in order to inform their decision making.



Here are some comments from those who have attended this training:

- *We had brief understanding of what EPP was going in however we have a clear understating now that we have done the session;*
- *Great training. Very honest and realistic;*
- *We were pretty sure we wanted to do EPP but the training confirmed we definitely do;*
- *The key learning for me was being able to listen to and ask questions to someone who has gone through the process and ask her opinions and thoughts;*
- *A great experience and being able to ask questions in an open environment was just what we needed.*

Connected by Adoption

Connected by Adoption is an informal, one day training event that offers relatives and close friends of those adopting the opportunity to ask questions, feel involved and to speak with others in a similar situation. The main reasons parents adopt are discussed, myths dispelled and a there is discussion of the changes in the adoption process over the years. We also look at how connected people can learn about embracing a child's identity when they join an adoptive family, and how to help a child feel securely embedded into their new family.



Here are some comments from those who have attended:

- With little prior knowledge of the formal adoption process, the information was very useful and informative. It certainly gave us a very good introduction to how we can assist to help a successful adoption;*
- I feel much more enabled to provide support on a practical and emotional level;*
- Knowledge gained will, we feel, be of great benefit.*

Birth Parent – Twilight Session

Adopted teenagers talk about the importance of identity and lifelong relationships & birth families and adoptive families are key in helping children develop a coherent sense of identity, usually through contact arrangements and being open with children about their history. Many adoptive families have misconceptions about birth parents and therefore we have introduced workshops in preparation training, delivered by birth parents talking about their experiences of contact. The introduction of this has been very powerful for adopters and has helped dispel myths about birth parents.



Here are some comments from the adopters who have attended:

- *It's really eye-opening to hear about things from the birth parents' point of view;*
- *I really enjoyed this session, it was good to hear stories from the other side!*
- *The session really cemented the benefits for contact. Helps to see the wider perspective and aids in being able to feel empathy for birth parents. An extremely valuable session;*
- *It helped me to ensure I am patient and sympathetic towards birth parents no matter how hostile they might appear. I wished I could give them a hug;*
- *It was nice to hear the other side of adoption, I can honestly say I hadn't thought of it from the side of the birth parents;*
- *It was nice to hear the stories of the birth parents. It must be so hard for them and for them to sit there and tell people their story and their feelings was amazing.*

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ONE ADOPTION WEST YORKSHIRE'S PLAN: 2018/19 - 2020/21



Our Vision: To be a flagship adoption agency that develops & promotes best practice, improving adoption standards nationally.

Our Mission: To find loving families who can meet the needs of children & offer an innovative & supportive approach to all those affected by adoption.

What we'll do:

4 Outcomes:

1. Children move into their adoptive family without delay;
2. Families get help and support at every stage of the adoption journey;
3. Children have good quality care, a sense of belonging and stability within their adoptive family;
4. Children, adoptive and birth parents and adopted adults are listened to and have an influence in decisions that affect them and service development;

8 Priorities:

1. Recruit & assess sufficient numbers of adopters to meet the needs of our children;
2. Work with Local Authorities & partners to:
 - Improve early identification of children and further develop the use of EPP across the region;
 - Develop practice around identity (relationships with birth families & life story work);
 - Develop knowledge and understanding about matching with adopters who are committed, flexible, open communicators and are willing to access support.
3. Develop our staff team & panel members to ensure all our children & families receive consistently excellent service & support;
4. Implement a consistent offer of adoption support across OAWY;
5. Develop a Centre of Excellence for Adoption Support;
6. Create new partnerships with organisations that will help us achieve our outcomes;
7. Establish & promote a peer mentoring scheme;
8. Continue to work with Adopter Voice, AT-ID & birth families;

3 Obsessions:

1. Increase the number of adopters recruited
2. Timely placement of children with families
3. Quality of support provided

How we'll do it:



3 behaviours that underpin everything:

1. Listening & responding to the voice of the child;
2. Restorative Practice: doing with not for or to;
3. Outcomes based accountability is anyone any better off?

How we'll know if we've made a difference:

- Increased the numbers of adopters recruited & approved
- Positive service user feedback
- Reduced timescale in which children are placed with adoptive parent(s)
- Evaluation from Adoption Support Fund;
- High level of family stability maintained
- A range of established service user groups that feed directly into our business planning.

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As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration. In all appropriate instances we will need to carry out an equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impact assessment.

This form:

- can be used to prompt discussion when carrying out your impact assessment
- should be completed either during the assessment process or following completion of the assessment
- should include a brief explanation where a section is not applicable

Directorate: Children & Families	Service area: One Adoption West Yorkshire
Lead person: Sarah Johal	Contact number: 07891277316
Date of the equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impact assessment: February 2018	

1. Title: One Adoption West Yorkshire
Is this a:
<input type="checkbox"/> Strategy /Policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service / Function <input type="checkbox"/> Other
If other, please specify

2. Members of the assessment team:

Name	Organisation	Role on assessment team e.g. service user, manager of service, specialist
Sarah Johal	One Adoption West Yorkshire	Head of One Adoption West Yorkshire
Mary Brudenell	One Adoption West Yorkshire	Service Delivery Manager, One Adoption West Yorkshire
Julie Chew	One Adoption West Yorkshire	Service Delivery Manager, One Adoption West Yorkshire
Mandy Prout	One Adoption West Yorkshire	Service Delivery Manager, One Adoption West Yorkshire
Aretha Hanson	One Adoption West Yorkshire	Business Support Manager, One Adoption West Yorkshire
Richard Stevenson	One Adoption West Yorkshire	Practice Improvement & Development Manager, One Adoption West Yorkshire

3. Summary of strategy, policy, service or function that was assessed:
In 'Regionalising adoption' in June 2015 the Government set out its commitment to

markedly improve outcomes for children through the delivery of a regional adoption system where:

- children are matched with the most suitable adopter as quickly as possible;
- recruitment takes place at an efficient scale to provide a pool of 'adoption ready' adopters large enough and well enough matched to the needs of children waiting and;
- enough high quality adoption support services are available nationwide.

One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY) was the first Regional Adoption Agency to go-live on the 1st of April 2017. OAWY is made up of the 5 separate Local Authority adoption agencies which provided adoption services for West Yorkshire; Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield and is the largest adoption agency in the North of England.

This new agency is designed to offer an innovative and adopter friendly approach to adoption recruitment, adoption support, and family finding for children and prospective adopters as well as high quality training.

By working together we will provide even higher levels of expertise and support to our adoptive families at all stages of the adoption process and with the inspiration and direction provided by our adoptive parents we will ensure that we provide the kind of support that families want and need.

We want every child to have a family to grow up in and we need more adoptive parents to play a vital role in fulfilling this vision. Adoption is an exciting and challenging experience for everyone involved. We are seeking adoptive parents from all walks of life to reflect the range of children we have who are looking for a secure home with patience, understanding and loving kindness.

This Assessment looks at how OAWY considers Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration throughout the adoption process. It will also highlight areas that need to be improved and the actions that will be taken to address them.

4. Scope of the equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impact assessment
(complete - 4a. if you are assessing a strategy, policy or plan and 4b. if you are assessing a service, function or event)

4a. Strategy, policy or plan (please tick the appropriate box below)	
The vision and themes, objectives or outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>
The vision and themes, objectives or outcomes and the supporting guidance	<input type="checkbox"/>
A specific section within the strategy, policy or plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Please provide detail:	

4b. Service, function, event please tick the appropriate box below	
The whole service (including service provision and employment)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
A specific part of the service (including service provision or employment or a specific section of the service)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Procuring of a service (by contract or grant)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Please provide detail: This assessment will cover the three core elements of service delivery; Recruitment and Assessment, Family Finding and Adoption Support and the services users; the child/ adopted person, people wishing to adopt, adopters, birth parent and staff.</p>	

<p>5. Fact finding – what do we already know Make a note here of all information you will be using to carry out this assessment. This could include: previous consultation, involvement, research, results from perception surveys, equality monitoring and customer/ staff feedback.</p> <p>(priority should be given to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration related information)</p> <p>There are no restrictions to adoptive applicants regardless of age, religion/ belief/ faith, disability, gender, sexual orientation, race or if they are a trans person, provided they are deemed to be able to meet the needs of the child/ children they wish to adopt.</p> <p>Children who wait longer to be adopted generally have one of more of the following characteristics; they are older, BME, have a disability or are part of a sibling group.</p>		
	Strengths	Weaknesses
Age	Age restrictions for adopting applicants are flexible and OAWY recognise that more people are having children at an older age.	There is a shortage of adopters for older children. The lack of placements could have a negative impact on this group as these children may be placed out of their local area which in turn may impact on their continued contact with their family and local support structures. Specific targeting of older adopters has not been carried out to date.
Religion/ Belief / Faith	OAWY accepts adoption applications from applicants of all religions/ beliefs/ faiths. This ensures there is potential for a	There are not always adequate numbers of potential adopters or children to meet the religious/ belief/ faith needs of either party.

	wide range of potential adopters recruited to meet the range of children needing placement.	Adopters from faith backgrounds often adopt for altruistic reasons and tend to consider taking older children and sibling groups. There is not enough adopters for this group of children so a more targeted approach is required.
Disability	Adopters with a disability are able to adopt. The services of the medical advisor are used to ensure decision making is always done to prevent discrimination, whilst ensuring the needs of the child are paramount.	<p>Some potential adoptive applicants who have a disability may view this as negatively impacting upon their right to adopt. For example, the issue of mental health or a life limiting health issue/disability can be a limiting factor when deciding someone is suitable to adopt a child. However the needs of the children to have stability and care throughout their childhood must remain the primary focus and therefore some applicants may feel they have been discriminated against.</p> <p>Some children, because of their complex needs, often wait longer for permanent placements. There is a need for more Adopters to offer a permanent home for disabled children. In particular children with Asperger's or those on the Autistic spectrum are particularly hard to place and consideration needs to be given to recruiting and supporting adopters who have the skills to look after these children.</p>
Gender	Female and male adopters are able to adopt.	<p>Single males and single female adopters at times are not aware they can adopt on their own and applicants from single males are small. Although there are no gender considerations in recruiting Adopters and the service operates according to our own anti-discriminatory practice the main carer within the household within adoption is usually female. A negative impact of this may be that there is a potential for male adopters to become isolated and in these instances they should be encouraged to attend support groups (see Action Plan).</p>
Sexual Orientation	OAWY recruitment procedures are anti-discriminatory and welcome applicants who are LGBT. The assessment process conforms to British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) guidance on assessment and workers have been trained in assessment,	We are not aware of any barriers to LGBT groups being recruited to adoption. However, refresher training would be useful to staff in matters of recruitment and assessment of LGBT applicants.

	including assessing gay and lesbian adopters.	
Race	Adopting applicants from any racial background are recruited to OAWY, if they meet all the relevant criteria and are able to meet the needs of the children.	Recruiting adopters for children from BME backgrounds particularly children with mixed heritage remains a challenge. Resources are available to purchase appropriate adoptive placements for children and we have a growing number of out of authority placements that reflect this.
Trans People	OAWY policies do not discriminate against trans-gender adopters.	Of all the diversity strands OAWY has the least knowledge and experience in working with Trans People. Staff training and development needs to be undertaken to ensure Trans People who wish to adopt have fair access to the process and feel confident to adopt.

**Are there any gaps in equality and diversity information
Please provide detail:**

N/A.

Action required:
 Action 1 - Develop an innovative & bespoke family finding/ matching process for children who wait longer.
 Action 2 - Ensure marketing campaigns are inclusive of older adopters.
 Action 3 - Specific marketing campaign target at adopters from faith backgrounds.
 Action 4 - Implement a service user feedback mechanism that allows analysis by diversity strand. This will enable OAWY to identify areas where action is required.
 Action 5 – Provide refresher LGBT Training.

6. Wider involvement – have you involved groups of people who are most likely to be affected or interested

Yes **No**

Please provide detail:

In order to gather a perspective of the main service users the following groups who represent adopted teenagers, adoptive parents and birth parents were consulted.

- Adopters via Adopter Voice.

Action required:
 Action 6 - Maintain active contact with service user groups and work with them to identify and implement service improvements.

7. Who may be affected by this activity?
 please tick all relevant and significant equality characteristics, stakeholders and barriers that apply to your strategy, policy, service or function

Equality characteristics

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Age	<input type="checkbox"/> Carers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Disability
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Race	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion or Belief
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sex (male or female)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sexual orientation	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other		

(**Other** can include – marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, and those areas that impact on or relate to equality: tackling poverty and improving health and well-being)
Please specify: n/a

Stakeholders

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Services users	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Employees	<input type="checkbox"/> Trade Unions
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partners	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Members	<input type="checkbox"/> Suppliers
<input type="checkbox"/> Other please specify		

Potential barriers.

<input type="checkbox"/> Built environment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Location of premises and services
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information and communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Customer care
<input type="checkbox"/> Timing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stereotypes and assumptions
<input type="checkbox"/> Cost	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consultation and involvement
<input type="checkbox"/> Financial exclusion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Employment and training

- specific barriers to the strategy, policy, services or function**

Please specify

The above are noted as potential barriers but are not known to be. Action 4, section 12 will seek to evidence if there are any such barriers which OAWY will then plan to address.

8. Positive and negative impact

Think about what you are assessing (scope), the fact finding information, the potential positive and negative impact on equality characteristics, stakeholders and the effect of the barriers

8a. Positive impact:

Recruitment & Assessment of Adopters

1. The OAWY website signposts potential adopters to Information Events which are held across the region, so there are always local events. Generally the events are held at venues that ensure they are physically accessible for people who wish to attend who have a disability;
2. OAWY has a clear statement in its' policy that we accept and actively recruit adopters regardless of age, religion/ belief/ faith, disability, gender, sexual orientation, race or if they are a Trans Person provided they are deemed to be able to meet the needs of the child/ children they wish to adopt;
3. The service focuses on effective partnership working to continue the improvement of services to children affected by adoption irrespective of age, religion/ belief/ faith, disability, gender, sexual orientation, race or if they are a Trans Person. Our marketing and publicity material uses positive images to promote our approach to equality within our advertising, see Appendix A;
4. OAWY have approved a diverse range of people, including same gender couples and single people. We have undertaken specific LGBT recruitment for adoption families and have been actively involved in the LGBT Challenge group;
5. We have a planned process of continual training for adoption Social Workers around LGBT;
6. Constructive use of targeted recruitment activity has increased our ability to secure placements for children with specific needs arising from cultural background or developmental issues and disability;
7. Information events and preparation events are held at venues to meet the needs of adopters with a disability;

Family Finding for Children

8. Profiling Events are held in accessible buildings quarterly which are aimed at adopters in assessment as well as approved. This enables people to get information early about the reality of the children OAWY are seeking to place;
9. OAWY has a robust approach to ensuring that children's religious and cultural needs are met through effective matching meetings identifying need and support plans;
10. OAWY seeks to identify and meet any additional support needs Adopters may have in order to care for children from different ethnic, cultural and religious groups and children with disabilities;
11. OAWY uses Adoption Match and Link Maker to identify placements for those

children who wait longer. This includes regularly attending national exchange days and activity days – allowing OAWY to identify adopters who can meet the specific needs of the child;

Adoption Support

12. OAWY provides generic support services to all affected by adoption (birth relations, adopters and adoptees);
13. Adoption Support Assessments are based upon the needs of the person/ people;
14. Initial advice and information is free and the majority of services are free to access;
15. Adoption Support is provided at a range of accessible locations;

Adopter Voice

16. Adopter Voice are an adopter led group that work with OAWY to ‘challenge, support and input into the development of adoption services at local, regional and national levels so that they are adopter led’. Adopter Voice is available to all adopters and encourages adopters to become involved and/ or access support on-line;
17. All 15 Yorkshire LAs sent a survey to all registered adopters inviting them to join Adopter Voice;
18. Adopter Voice provides an arena for all adopters to access information and advice;

Birth Parent Groups

19. OAWY work with PAC-UK (the country’s largest independent Adoption Support Agency) to learn from feedback from birth parents;
<http://www.pac-uk.org/>

AT-ID

20. OAWY work with AT-ID (adopted teens identity) to learn from feedback from adopted teenagers;
<http://www.at-id.org.uk/>

Staffing

21. Diversity issues are addressed during supervision to ensure that the needs of children are met and that service users are being treated fairly;
22. We are members of New Family social, a LGBT group who offer specific support to the LGBT community of adopters. There are support groups across the region for single adopters;

Training

23. Social workers are trained regarding equality and diversity issues in their degree in social work. All the managers have had recent training regarding unconscious bias within OAWY;

Specialist Advice

24. We commission a service for Inter Country Adoption from the Yorkshire adoption agency. All inter country adopters attend specialist training specific to adopting from overseas provided by this agency.

Action required:

None.

8b. Negative impact:

Recruitment and Assessment of Adopters

- 1. There are insufficient adopters with a diverse background coming forward to adopt;
- 2. OAWY have a high level of interest from the south Asian communities to adopt full Asian babies rather than older children of mixed ethnicity;

Family Finding for Children

- 3. There can be unconscious bias from Children's Social Workers regarding considering single females and males for the children they have waiting;
- 4. Children cannot always be matched with families that meet their own cultural heritage and social workers are not always willing to consider families with a different heritage from the child's;

Adoption Support

- 5. We do not know if there are any groups of people who struggle to obtain the adoption support we offer;

Training

- 6. Of all the diversity stands Trans People is the area we have the least knowledge of, training is needed in this area.

Action Required

Action 7 - Link with BME communities to promote and educate in terms of the children we have available for adoption (work with Leeds City Council's Communities Teams for advice and support).

Action 8 - Continue to challenge unconscious bias from children's social workers in a restorative way and provide training and support as required.

Action 9 - Conduct Analytical work to establish if OAWY can better target adopters that meet the cultural needs of our children.

Action 10 - Work needs to be conducted to identify groups that may benefit from more specific adoption support i.e. Dad's group, same sex parents as there may be gaps in the support we offer.

Action 11 – Training delivered to enhance organisational understanding of Trans People and to harness their ability to become adoptive parents.

9. Will this activity promote strong and positive relationships between the groups/communities identified?

Yes

No

<p>Please provide detail:</p> <p>OAWY will always try to build and maintain positive and open relationships for people aiming to or being involved in the adoption process.</p>
<p>Action required:</p> <p>See actions 1 – 11, section 12.</p>

<p>10. Does this activity bring groups/communities into increased contact with each other? (e.g. in schools, neighbourhood, workplace)</p>
<p> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No </p>
<p>Please provide detail:</p>
<p>Action required:</p> <p>None.</p>

<p>11. Could this activity be perceived as benefiting one group at the expense of another? (e.g. where your activity/decision is aimed at adults could it have an impact on children and young people)</p>
<p> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No </p>
<p>Please provide detail:</p> <p>There could be the perception that certain groups are less likely to adopt than others. The primary focus of OAWY will always be the child. The decision to place a child will be based upon the individual(s) ability to meet the child’s ongoing needs and not their individual(s) diverse group. Therefore, prospective adopters who are not matched with a child may feel they are at a disadvantage.</p>
<p>Action required:</p> <p>See Action 3, section 12.</p>

12. Equality, diversity, cohesion and integration action plan

(insert all your actions from your assessment here, set timescales, measures and identify a lead person for each action)

Action	Timescale	Measure	Lead person
Action 1: Develop an innovative & bespoke family finding/ matching process for children who wait longer.	31/03/2019	A new approach to reduce waiting time for children who wait longer piloted.	Mary Brudenell
Action 2: Ensure marketing campaigns are inclusive of older adopters.	31/03/2019	Campaign delivered.	Mandy Prout/ Dave Glanville
Action 3: Specific marketing campaign target at adopters from faith backgrounds.	31/03/2019	Campaign delivered.	Mandy Prout/ Dave Glanville
Action 4: Implement a service user feedback mechanism that allows analysis by diversity strand.	31/12/2018	Service user satisfaction results reportable by diversity strand. This will enable planned action to be taken to make improvements as required.	Richard Stevenson/ Aretha Hanson
Action 5: Provide refresher LGBT Training.	31/12/2018		Mandy Prout/ Mary Brudenell/ Julie Chew
Action 6: Maintain active contact with service user groups and work with them to identify and implement service improvements.	31/06/2018	Service user groups improvement actions added to OAWY service improvement plans.	Richard Stevenson
Action 7: Link with BME communities to promote and educate in terms of the children we have available for adoption (work with Leeds City Council's Communities Teams for advice and support).	31/03/2019	Outcomes based accountability workshop held with community leaders across the West Yorkshire Region.	Sarah Johal/ Mandy Prout/ Mary Brudenell
Action 8: Continue to challenge unconscious bias from children's social workers in a restorative way and provide training and support as required.	31/03/2019	Set-up training/ support group and deliver bespoke training session(s) as required to children's social workers.	Mandy Prout/ Mary Brudenell/ Julie Chew

Action 9: Conduct Analytical work to establish if OAWY can better target adopters that meet the cultural needs of our children.	31/06/2018	Produce map that shows the demographic geography of our region and highlights where there are recruiting gaps. Recruitment & Assessment to plan based upon results.	Richard Stevenson
Action 10: Work needs to be conducted to identify groups that may benefit from more specific adoption support i.e. Dad's group, same sex parents as there may be gaps in the support we offer.	31/12/2019	Needs analysis that details gaps in adoption support provision and a plan to reach people who may have found barriers previously.	Julie Chew
Action 11: Training delivered to enhance organisational understanding of Trans People and to harness their ability to become adoptive parents.	31/03/2019	Relevant training sought and delivered to required staff.	Mandy Prout

13. Governance, ownership and approval

State here who has approved the actions and outcomes from the equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impact assessment

Name	Job Title	Date
Sarah Johal	Head of OAWY	
Date impact assessment completed		

14. Monitoring progress for equality, diversity, cohesion and integration actions (please tick)

- As part of Service Planning performance monitoring
- As part of Project monitoring
- Update report will be agreed and provided to the appropriate board
Please specify which board
- Other (please specify)

15. Publishing

Though **all** key decisions are required to give due regard to equality the council **only** publishes those related to **Executive Board, Full Council, Key Delegated Decisions** or a **Significant Operational Decision**.

A copy of this equality impact assessment should be attached as an appendix to the decision making report:

- Governance Services will publish those relating to Executive Board and Full Council.
- The appropriate directorate will publish those relating to Delegated Decisions and Significant Operational Decisions.
- A copy of all other equality impact assessments that are not to be published should be sent to equalityteam@leeds.gov.uk for record.

Complete the appropriate section below with the date the report and attached assessment was sent:

For Executive Board or Full Council – sent to Governance Services	Date sent:
For Delegated Decisions or Significant Operational Decisions – sent to appropriate Directorate	Date sent:
All other decisions – sent to equalityteam@leeds.gov.uk	Date sent:

**You learn a lot when
you adopt, Liam and
Nick learned it really
is good to talk.**



One
Adoption

YOUR REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY

**Hear more about their adoption story at
www.oneadoption.co.uk/liam**



You learn a lot when you adopt, Alice and Ben learned that honesty really is the best policy.



One
Adoption

YOUR REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY

Hear more about their adoption story at
www.oneadoption.co.uk/alice



**You learn a lot
when you adopt,
Nicola learned that
two can be family.**



One
Adoption

YOUR REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY

**Hear more about her adoption story at
www.oneadoption.co.uk/nicola**





For Megan and Angie, starting a family was a little more complicated than for some couples

We thought about all the alternatives - and explored some a little more than others - and although in the beginning I was keener than Angie to consider adoption that was the path we decided to follow.

Read Megan and Angie's story



Matt and James wanted to adopt a very young child so Early Permanence Placement (EPP) seemed like the natural choice

'We started talking about adoption with friends, family and work colleagues, and it became clear that many people had some knowledge of, or had their lives touched by adoption,' says James. 'So, armed with encouragement and reassurance, we began researching online to learn more about opportunities for adoption and the processes involved.'

Read Matt and James' story



'You learn a lot when you adopt. Jane and Simon learned how many toys fill a house'

Jane and Simon made the decision to adopt, rather than pursue fertility treatment, after trying for a baby for over five years. They felt that they could provide a loving, stable family home for a child that needed one.

Read Jane and Simon's story



'You learn a lot when you adopt. Alice and Ben learned that honesty really is the best policy'

Alice and Ben adopted James and his disabled brother Luke, when they were four and three years old respectively, and their four birth children were in their teens.

Read Alice and Ben's story

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

June 2020



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(The wording in this publication can be made available in large formats such as large print of Braille. Please call us on 0113 3783535)

1. INTRODUCTION

It is a requirement of the National Minimum Standards for Adoption Services, that an adoption service produces a statement of purpose, including its aims and objectives, a description of the service it provides and the facilities that it provides. It can be used by children and young people and families as a guide to what they should expect a service to provide and to do.

This document is the Statement of purpose for One Adoption West Yorkshire. One Adoption West Yorkshire came into being on the 3rd April 2017. It is a shared adoption service across the region working on behalf of Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield councils. The Head of Service reports quarterly to a Management Board, made up of Senior Officers from each local authority with representation drawn from Adopters and the Voluntary Adoption Alliance (VAA). The Chair of the Management Board is Julie Jenkins (Head of Safeguarding Calderdale). The service is overseen by a Joint Committee, made up of elected members from the five local authorities chaired by Councillor Lisa Mulherin (Leeds).

The regional agency is operated under the terms of a Partnership Agreement, which confirms the legal and governance arrangements; the budget; staffing and funding contributions for the five local authorities.

Coronavirus - COVID-19

Due to COVID-19 we have had to temporarily adapt many of our services to ensure government guidelines, including social distancing, are being upheld. This means many of our events, training sessions and workshops are online. The safety and wellbeing of everyone is our main priority at this time but please be assured we are doing everything we can to deliver a high quality service.

The Statement of Purpose has been produced in accordance with:

- Adoption National Minimum Standards 2011;
- Care Planning Regulations 2010;
- Adoption Agency Regulations 2005 (amended 2011);
- Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013;
- Local Authority Regulations 2005;
- Adoption Agencies & Independent Review of Determinations (Amendment) Regulations 2011;
- Adoption Agencies (Panel & Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012;
- Care Planning, placement and Case and fostering services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013;
- Adoption and Children Act 2002;
- Care Standards Act 2000.

Adoption Agencies are inspected against these standards by Ofsted.

2. PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

The requirements of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the Children and Families Act 2014 underpin the principles and values of our service:

Principles & Values: Children

- Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family which can meet their needs during childhood and beyond and where possible this should be within their own family;
- The Child's welfare, safety and needs will be at the centre of the adoption process;
- The Child's wishes and feelings will be taken into account at all stages;
- Delays in adoption can have a severe impact on the health and development of children and should be avoided wherever possible;
- The child's ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, language and sexuality will be fully recognised, positively valued and promoted when decisions are made;
- The particular needs of disabled children will be fully recognised and taken into account when decisions are made;
- The role of adoptive parents in offering a permanent family to a child who cannot live with their birth family will be valued and respected;
- Adoption has lifelong implications for all involved and requires lifelong commitment from many organisations, professionals and individuals who have to work together to deliver to meet the needs of the services;
- Birth parents and birth families are entitled to services that recognise the lifelong implications of adoption. They will be treated fairly, openly and offered a support service.

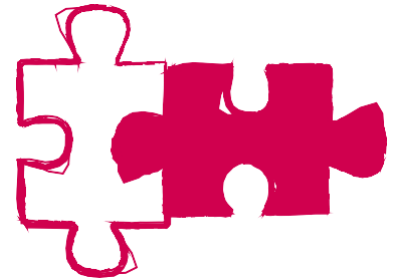
Equal Opportunities

The adoption service abides by equal opportunities legislation and the policies of Leeds City Council. The service works positively and respectfully with all service users and partner agencies regardless of race, colour, religion, language, culture, disability, gender, sexual orientation or age.

Every attempt will be made to secure an adoptive family which meets a child's emotional and developmental needs taking into account their ethnicity, religion, language, culture, gender and disability taking into account the need to avoid undue delay.

3. THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE AGENCY

The agency is committed to fulfilling the requirements of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the Children and Families Act 2014 by:



1. Ensuring the provision of a high quality adoption service which guarantees the best possible standards of care, safety and protection for children or young people who are looked after and who need adoptive placements;
2. Ensuring that all those whose lives have been affected by adoption are helped to identify and receive appropriate services;
3. Working in partnership with adoptive families & other agencies ensuring the service is based on statutory requirements & good practice within the principles of value for money for the agency.

Objectives of the agency

1. To recruit, assess and provide adopters that meet the needs of the children to be placed for adoption within the timescales laid down by National Adoption Standards;
2. To provide information on the process to applicants interested in becoming adopters and on the children requiring adoption;
3. To ensure that adopters receive appropriate preparation, training, support and advice to enable them to offer the best possible standards of parenting, safety and protection for children or young people in their care;
4. To minimise delay in family finding, paying attention to the needs of the child at all times;
5. To provide information on the services available to all those affected by adoption recognising that as adoption has lifelong implications for all those involved, their needs will change over time;
6. To provide a range of adoption support services to birth relatives, adopted adults, adopters and their children in partnership with other agencies;
7. To provide information on the service that is available to those wishing to adopt from abroad;
8. To ensure that any decisions are transparent and fair;
9. That concerns about the service are addressed and that information about the complaints procedure is made available;
10. That the organisation regularly reviews the services it provides, consults with, and learns from, those in receipt of their services through comments, compliments and complaints,

4. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE & OFFICE BASES

Head of Service, One Adoption West Yorkshire					
Sarah Johal					
Service Delivery Managers					
Julie Chew – Leeds		Michelle Rawlings – Bradford & Calderdale		Suzanne Whiteley – Kirklees & Wakefield	
Team Managers – Bradford & Calderdale					
Rhian Beynon – Adoption Support		Katie Robinson – Family Finding		Samantha Thomas – Recruitment & Assessment	
Team Managers – Kirklees & Wakefield					
Tony Bryce – Adoption Support		Valerie Edwards – Family Finding		Claire Lomas – Recruitment & Assessment	
Team Managers – Leeds					
Sarah Ryan – Adoption Support	Amy Wood (P/T) – Adoption Support	Steph Jones (P/T) – Adoption Support	Nicola Steele – Family Finding	Carl Nash – Family Finding and Recruitment & Assessment	Sheila Wood – Recruitment & Assessment
Business Support Manager					
Aretha Hanson					

One Adoption provides an adoption service to:

- Children in need of an adoptive family;
- Birth parents;
- Prospective and approved adopters;
- Children and adoptive parents who need adoption support services;
- Adopted adults and members of their birth families.



5. THE WORK OF THE ADOPTION SERVICE



The service undertakes the following tasks:

Recruitment of prospective adoptive families;

Assessment and preparation of adoptive families, including visits to the home, a home study, taking up references and statutory checks and running preparation training;

Family finding for children who need a permanent home through adoption;

Support for families waiting for a child to be placed with them;

Advice, guidance and support to adoptive families during the matching process and after placement. This includes workshops and training and support groups;

Those wishing to adopt from abroad are referred to another agency that provide a service under contract for One Adoption;

Non agency adoption work for Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield;

The family finding team become involved with every child where adoption may be the plan during the decision making process and takes the lead in family finding at the earliest point possible;

Children's social workers and adoption social workers undertake the task of planning for permanence and preparing children for adoption. The responsibility for matching and supporting adoptive families is a shared task until the adoption order;

The adoption letterbox service and access to adoption archives is provided and enables adopted children to maintain contact with their birth families;

Support and signposting to counselling services for adopted adults wishing to find out about their birth families and an Intermediary service are provided. The majority of this work is provided through a contract with other agencies operating in West Yorkshire;

Information about all aspects of the adoption service can be accessed via the One Adoption line 0113 3783535, the website oneadoption.co.uk or via the Facebook page www.facebook.com/oneadoption.

All enquirers are followed through by an adoption advisor. An interpreter is available through a three way phone if required. Help is also available through social workers in the service who speak Asian languages. Currently there are social workers who speak Urdu and Punjabi. Approved interpreters will be used if required.

The head office is based at:

Kernel House,
Killingbeck Drive
Leeds

LS14 6UF

Other office bases are:

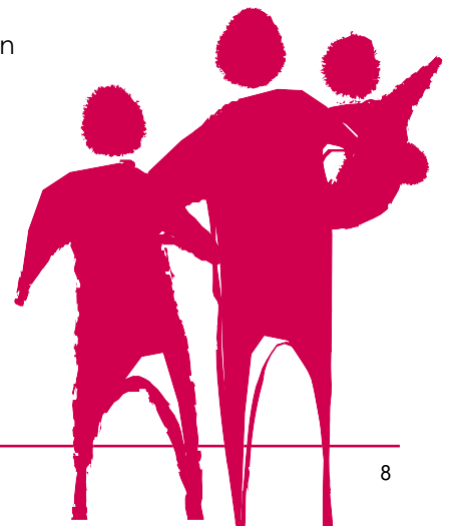
Bradford	Halifax	Huddersfield	Wakefield
Margaret McMillan Tower Prince's Way Bradford BD1 1NN	Ground Floor Princess Buildings Princess Street Halifax HX1 1T	Civic centre 1 High Street Huddersfield HD1 2NF	Queen's House Queen's Row Market Street Wakefield WF1 1DF

6. QUALIFICATIONS, EXPERIENCE AND NUMBERS OF STAFF

Sarah Johal, Head of Service, has overall responsibility for One Adoption West Yorkshire. Qualifications: CQSW in Social Work 1990; MA Social Work and Social Care 2001; Advanced Award in Social Work 2002; Post Graduate Certificate in Applied Social Work Management 2007. Sarah, has over 29 years post qualification experience in child care, including 20 years in Adoption and Fostering. Sarah, has been a manager for over 17 years within both statutory child care and adoption and fostering services. The agency has three Service Delivery Managers; Suzanne Whiteley, manages the Kirklees and Wakefield teams and leads on Family Finding. Qualifications: Diploma in Social Work 2000 and CMI Level 6 Certificate in Management & Leadership. Suzanne, has worked in a variety of settings in relation to children and families social work and has been an adoption manager since 2012. Julie Chew, manages the Leeds team and leads on Adoption Support. Qualifications: CQSW in Social Work 1992 & NVQ Level 4 in management. Julie, has worked in a variety of settings in relation to children and families social work and has been an adoption manager since 2007. Michelle Rawlings, manages the Bradford and Calderdale team and leads on Recruitment & Assessment. Qualifications: Diploma in Social Work 2003 & CMI Level 5 Certificate in Leadership & Management. Michelle, is an experienced adoption social worker and has been a manager in adoption services since 2012.

The agency employs 135 staff. There are 69 full time equivalent qualified social workers across the three service areas, 8 of whom are Advanced Practitioners. There are 8 adoption advisors who support the recruitment and family finding service. The agency has a Business Support Manager and 21 full time equivalent administrative staff.

All social workers have a social work qualification and are registered with the Social Work England and have relevant experience in children and families service. They have an enhanced DBS check.



7. THE SERVICE TO PROSPECTIVE ADOPTERS

Enquiries and first contact

Enquirers can access information on adopting with One Adoption West Yorkshire via the Regional Adoption Agency website ([https:// www.oneadoption.co.uk/about-one-adoption-west-yorkshire](https://www.oneadoption.co.uk/about-one-adoption-west-yorkshire)) or make contact through the dedicated advice line. At first contact, enquirers are given information verbally about the adoption process and invited to an information session.

Applications for adoptions from overseas

Inter-country adoption is a specialist area of work, as each country has its own rules and regulations regarding adoption. One Adoption West Yorkshire has a contract with another agency to provide this work. Applicants pay a fee for their assessment service, including the home study and then further fees for safeguarding checks etc.

Information events

Enquirers are invited to attend or access an information event. If they choose to attend an information event, a presentation about adoption will be delivered and there will be the opportunity to meet adopters and experienced adoption social workers to discuss the different routes to adoption. If enquirers prefer, they may access our online information event from the comfort of their own home. They will be able to view our presentation and then contact OAWY with any question they may have. Should enquirers wish to progress their interest, following the information event, they request a home visit, the details of which are provided at the event. Information events are held a minimum of every three weeks across the West Yorkshire region. Details of these events are available on the One Adoption website.

Initial home visit

The home visit request can be submitted at any point during the twelve month period following the information event being attended. The home visit is undertaken by an adoption social worker and adoption advisor who will provide more information about adoption. The personal circumstances of adopters will be discussed in detail to help them consider if adoption is the right choice for them. The social worker will also start discussions about practical considerations.

A detailed summary of the home visit will be completed and passed to an adoption manager before the registration of interest form is provided. The adoption manager will make a decision within 5 days of receipt of the completed registration of interest form about whether it should be accepted.

At this stage, the enquirer becomes known as a prospective adopter(s). A letter will be sent to the prospective adopter(s) confirming that their application is proceeding or detailing the reasons why their registration of interest cannot be accepted.



Stage 1 - Pre-assessment process

Stage One begins on the day that One Adoption West Yorkshire accepts the registration of interest from the prospective adopter(s) and should normally take 2 months to complete.

The stage one process will include the following:

- All of the statutory references/checks will be completed including the DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check;
- The prospective adopter(s) will complete an adoption medical as soon as possible. This will be considered by the adoption agency medical advisor, who will provide advice about any concerning medical issues;
- The prospective adopter(s) will be expected to attend training /preparation sessions. This will give prospective adopter(s) more detailed information and will allow them to meet experienced adopters who can help answer questions that they have;
- An adoption advisor will be provided to support prospective adopters on completing the stage 1 process and an agreement will be drawn up with prospective adopters detailing expectations.

Preparation sessions

Prospective adopters will be invited to attend preparation sessions in Stage One. The process will be delayed if applicants are unable to attend initial preparation, and a clear indication of their availability will be ascertained. They will also be encouraged to access e-learning components on the First4Adoption website.

Preparation groups for first time adopters usually run approximately 11 times per year based on need. Second or subsequent adopter training is provided at regular intervals across the region, as is foster carer adoption preparation group training.

Stage 2 – the assessment process

The stage two assessment process cannot begin until stage one has successfully been completed (apart from second time and foster carer adoptions, see next page).

Stage two begins when prospective adopters notify the agency of their wish to continue with the process. The prospective adopter(s) have 6 months from the completion of stage one to provide this notification. From the date of receipt of this notification, the stage two process is a 4 month long period during which a home study assessment is undertaken. This leads to a panel recommendation and an Agency Decision about suitability to adopt.

The prospective adopter(s) will be allocated an adoption social worker to complete their assessment. A Stage Two plan will be drawn up between the social worker and the prospective adopter(s) agreeing arrangements for the assessment process and a provisional panel date.

The assessment will involve a series of home visits utilising a variety of assessment tools and will include additional checks including school, nursery, ex-partner, employers and personal referees will also be visited.

On the basis of the information in the assessment the adoption social worker will write a Prospective Adopters' Report (PAR). This is a very detailed report providing information about the prospective adopter(s) and their background. The report will reach a conclusion about the prospective adopter(s) suitability to adopt and the applicants will have up to 5 working days to comment on their completed assessment before it is presented to the adoption panel.

If the agency reaches a decision during the stage 2 process that they cannot recommend approval and /or if the agency decision maker decides not to agree the approval, the prospective adopter(s) will be able to request a review by the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). The IRM is an independent body that can scrutinize the decisions of adoption agencies.

Adoption by existing foster carers

Foster carers should notify the service in writing of their wish to be considered as adopters for a child or children in their care. If the child/ children's plan is for adoption, this will be acknowledged and a meeting held between workers from the adoption and fostering teams and the child's social worker to consider how this should be progressed and will be discussed with the foster carers, who will also be informed of their legal rights.

A fast track process will be provided for approved foster carers who want to be assessed as adoptive parents. Stage one and two of the adoption process will take place concurrently in order to avoid delay. They will be offered training.

Second or subsequent adopters

Families who have already been assessed as adopters can apply to adopt again as long as there is a year's gap following their child's adoption order being made and a 2 year age gap between their child and a potential new child. In this case, they would express an interest in adopting again and be offered a home visit to discuss their circumstances. If it is appropriate to proceed they would then complete the registration of interest form and start the process. Depending on the circumstances of the family stage one and two of the process may run sequentially or concurrently. They would be offered training.

If their interest is in respect of a subsequent sibling or half sibling of a child they have already adopted, the timescales and age gap would not necessarily apply. This assessment would be given high priority and the home visit would involve the child's social worker too. In these cases stage one and two would run concurrently.

Adoption panel

The main purpose of the Adoption Panel is to consider and make recommendations to the adoption agency on the following:

- People to be approved as adoptive parents;
- Whether an assessment to approve adopters should continue following a brief report to panel;
- Approval of the match between children and adopters and
- The placement of children for adoption where their birth parents desire adoption to be the plan.

One Adoption West Yorkshire holds seven adoption panels per month, three taking place in Leeds, two taking place in Bradford and two taking place in Huddersfield. The panels have an Independent Chair with significant experience of family placement work.

Membership of the panels meets the statutory regulations and takes its members from a central list. Members include those who have personal experience of adoption and others with relevant skills and experience and aim to reflect the diversity of the population of the district.

All applicants are invited to attend the Adoption Panel. The Panel makes recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker who will make their decision following careful consideration of the recommendations and all of the information presented at panel. The Decision Maker must make their decision within 7 working days of the recommendation of the panel. They may make a decision different to that recommended by the panel.

One Adoption West Yorkshire has an agency decision maker to consider the approval of prospective adopters; decision making for children to be placed for adoption is considered by the Agency Decision Maker in the child's home local authority.

Decisions are notified to a child's parent(s), guardian(s) and prospective adopter(s). Social workers will be informed of the agency decision within 2 working days and a fast track process will be provided for approved foster carers who want to be assessed as adoptive parents. Stage one and two of the adoption process will take place concurrently in order to avoid delay. They will be offered training.

The decision will be confirmed in writing within 5 working days.

8. BEYOND APPROVAL

Matching and support

Following panel adopters are offered an additional training day to help them prepare for a child coming into their family. Topics covered include introductions, moving children into new families, making good connections and contact. Adoption Social Workers ensure that adopters have access to local support networks and specialist national organisations such as Coram BAAF, Adoption UK and PAC UK. Adopters are provided with one year free subscription to Adoption UK following approval.

There is also a one day training course available for grandparents or other relatives who are supporting the adopter/s and wish to have more in depth information regarding adoption called Related by Adoption.

The adopter(s) social worker will help to identify suitable matches with a child/ children and will provide support and guidance throughout the whole process. All prospective adopters are referred to the regional Hub and the Adoption Match at three months, with their agreement, if no match has been identified locally.

Each child where adoption is a likely plan will have an allocated worker from the family finding team. The family finder works closely with the child's social worker to consider matches for that child.

When a match is being considered adopters are given the Child Permanence Report and all appropriate written information about the child, their background and assessed needs. The report will include details of any proposal for contact, or exchange of information through the letterbox system with the birth family that will operate once the child is adopted.

Adopters meet with the child's social worker and other professionals relevant for that child; medical advisors; child's foster carers; teachers etc. to enable them to make an informed decision regarding their ability to meet the needs of the child. A life appreciation day will often be arranged depending on the child's age and circumstances to help build as full a picture as possible of the child's experiences.

Details of the level of parental responsibility that will be delegated to the prospective adopters will be outlined and any adoption support, including any financial arrangements will also be discussed. The proposals for the placement will then be set out in the adoption placement report, which will be seen by the prospective adopters before panel and comments and observations will be included in the panel documentation.

Process for the matching of a child

The child's social worker, the prospective adopters and their social worker will attend the Adoption Panel. The process for panel is the same as for approval with recommendations being made to the Agency Decision Maker who will make the decision on whether the adopters are suitable for a particular child.

If a match is agreed an introductions planning meeting is arranged to plan for the introduction and placement of the child. Good practice guidance on placements called "Flying Start" is used to guide the meeting. This meeting will involve the foster carer for the child, the prospective adopters, and the relevant social workers. The meeting will establish that the adoptive family has all the information available about the child and will draw up a timetable and process for the introductions, monitoring and support.



There are some variations to this process if prospective adoptive parent/s are taking the Early Permanency Route to adoption, are second time adopters or foster carers adopting the child they have been fostering. These differences will be carefully explained to prospective adoptive parents from the beginning of their adoption process with us starting with written accounts on the One Adoption West Yorkshire website under "routes to adoption".

Annual reviews of prospective adopters

In the event that it is not possible to move to a match within 12 months from approval, the adoption social worker and their manager will conduct an a review of the plans and checks and references may need to be updated. If no placement has been made within two years of approval, an updated report will go to adoption panel for consideration.

Meeting birthparents

Most adopters will meet the child's birth parents either prior to placement, or more usually, once the child is placed and settled. They will be supported by their social workers in a suitable venue. The benefit of meeting birth parents is so adoptive parents can talk to their child about their birth family and aid the exchange of information.

After placement

Visits will be made by both the child's social worker and the family's adoption social worker. These are based on both statutory requirements and the individual needs of the child and prospective adopter(s).

The child remains a 'looked after' child until an Adoption Order is made. The child has to be visited in the first week of placement, followed by weekly visits up to the child's first statutory review at 4 weeks post placement, when the pattern of visiting will be discussed and agreed but will be not less than six weekly. The child's review will determine when an application to adopt may be made and advice will be given by the worker for the prospective adopters. The Annex A report for court will be prepared by both the family's and child's social workers.

Life story material will be provided for the child by the child's social worker and given to the adopters for safe keeping for the child in the future. The child's social worker is responsible for ensuring that a "later life letter" is completed before the Adoption Order is made, which will give an account of the circumstances of the adoption.

Contact and the letterbox service

Support with contact arrangements between adopted children and their birth families are provided by the agency. All contact arrangements will be reached having taken account of what is in the best interests of the child, and will be specified in the Adoption Support Plan before a child is placed. Contact may include letter-box contact or face-to-face meetings between the child and members of his/her family, including parents, siblings, or extended family members.

A letterbox service may be set up between the adoptive parents on behalf of the child and a birth parent or any other relative or with any other person the agency considers relevant. Support and supervision of direct contact may be arranged where necessary and agreed.



9. ADOPTION SUPPORT SERVICES

One Adoption West Yorkshire has a comprehensive adoption support service for all those affected by adoption. This service is provided in partnership with a number of voluntary agencies & other providers who provide an independent service and other services.

The adopters' social worker will ensure that adopters have access to local support networks and specialist organisations, e.g. Adoption UK, NORCAP, New Family Social and other services and are on the mailing list for any events organised through the adoption service. The adoption service also provides 12 months free membership of Adoption UK to all new adopters.

The agency has 3 specialist adoption support teams across the region who offer a range of adoption support services. They also signpost other services for those affected by adoption:

- Adoptive parents;
- Adopted children and young people;
- Birth parents;
- Adopted adults.

The adoption support service provides adoption support services in line with the "Adoption Passport" according to individual circumstances.

For adoptive families:

The adoption support team will undertake an assessment of need with the family and will agree a support package based on the family's identified needs, including consideration of making an application to the Adoption Support Fund.

- Advice line and newsletter;
- Support groups including stay and play groups;
- Peer Mentoring Service;
- Training and workshops including ADOPT programme & non- violence resistance training;
- Therapeutic and filial therapy groups and access to theraplay trained workers;
- Links with mental health and educational services;
- Assistance and review of contact arrangements between adopters and birth relatives;
- A annual social event for adoptive families;
- Assistance and review of contact arrangements.



Adopted children & young people:

- Social groups and activities;
- Offering training and advice for schools to help teachers understand adopted children's needs;
- Working with children in their adoptive families around understanding their life stories;
- Signposting to other organisations designed to help adopted children;
- Information about registering a veto.

Birth relatives:

- Access to a confidential and independent advice and counselling service via an independent agency;
- Support regarding letterbox and contact arrangements;
- Enabling parents to record on their child's file whether or not they wish to have contact with their child from the age of 18.

For adopted adults:

- Discussion and advice about wishes around contact with and from birth relatives.

Information about our Adoption Services can be accessed via our Adoption Advice Line Telephone number 0113 378 3535, website: <https://www.oneadoption.co.uk/about-one-adoption-west-yorkshire> or by email: oneadoptionwy.leeds@gov.uk

10. MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE ADOPTION SERVICE

Adoption staff receive regular supervision and annual appraisals of their performance. Training needs are identified and met through in-house training or through externally commissioned trainers.

A management information system and government score card are in place which ensures reporting of accurate information about adoption.

Adoption Agencies are monitored by external inspections carried out by Ofsted.

There is regular adoption panel training to ensure that panel members keep up to date with current issues. Panel members also have annual appraisals.

Regular feedback is received from the Adoption Panels and twice yearly meetings are held between the Management team, Panel Chairs and Agency Decision Maker.

The Head of Service submits a quarterly report to the Management Board and provides an annual review and plan for the Joint Committee by 30th June in any year. This can also be taken to individual local authority scrutiny boards or Executives by 30 September in any year.

A robust quality assurance framework is in place with regular auditing of files, plus evaluation feedback from adoptive parents and other service users. This is held centrally and is undertaken at key points in the adoption process.



11. CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

All prospective adopters engaging with the Agency and all birth parents of child for whom the Agency is planning adoption are provided with written information about Complaints Procedures, including contact details for the Complaints Officer. All young people, for whom there is an adoption plan and who are of an appropriate age and understanding are likewise informed of the Complaints Procedures and also informed of the role of the Children's Rights Service.

Freepost
PO Box 657
Leeds LS1 9BS

Tel: 01132224405
Email: feedback.children@leeds.gov.uk

Details of the Registration Authority

OFSTED CONTACT DETAILS

Ofsted National Business Unit
Piccadilly Gate Store Street,
Manchester,
M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 1231
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Web: www.ofsted.gov.uk





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www.oneadoption.co.uk



Report author: Sarah Johal

Tel: 0113 2783623

Report of Director of Children and Families

Report to West Yorkshire Adoption Joint Committee

Date: 28nd July 2020

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:	X No

Summary of main issues

1. This report is a brief report and provides a summary from the Head of Service on the developments of the service since the annual report was completed in April 2020.

Recommendations

1. The Joint Committee is requested to:
 - a) Note the progress of the agency; and
 - b) Support the progression of these arrangements.

1.	<u>Use of Resources</u>
1.1	Staffing & HR
1.1.1	<p>Since the start of the pandemic the staff group have worked incredibly hard and have gone the extra mile in supporting children and families in the region. The wellbeing of staff has been a primary concern and we have put in place a number of support arrangements to ensure that they are well supported during this time. This has included regular check ins, buddying for those living alone, coffee catch ups within and across teams with managers accessing peer support and training to help think about developing resilience and promoting self-care.</p>
1.1.2	<p>There have been a number of vacancies across the service in the social work teams and business support. Within the social work staff these are due to three members of staff retiring, a member of staff moving back to the local authority for a promotion opportunity and other vacancies following the promotion of internal staff to advanced practitioner positions. In addition to these pressures we also have 7 members of staff on maternity leave, including two managers and this creates additional pressures within the service and achieving temporary backfill for the social work positions can be difficult.</p>
1.1.3	<p>We have been working closely with staff regarding the recovery regarding Covid 19 and held an all staff event in June looking at self-care, building resilience and developing relationships online. Staff spent time in small groups thinking about the recovery and we asked staff their views on the following questions: what have we stopped doing that we should bring back; what have we started that we could/should stop; what have we started that we should continue; what are we not doing now that we have never done before, but that we might need?</p>
1.1.4	<p>The overwhelming view of staff is that there are many aspects of working at home that are beneficial and they feel they are more efficient and get more done, spending less time travelling. Some meetings are much better done virtually and the availability of other professionals has improved enabling decisions to be made more quickly, particularly about progressing matches. Some staff are very anxious about undertaking home visits and office working, whereas others feel more confident and feel able to manage well with social distancing arrangements. These discussions will continue.</p>
1.1.5	<p>Accommodation</p> <p>Staff within the agency continue to work from home with one member of staff in each area collecting the post and some managers going in for the induction of new staff. The service managers linked to each LA are linked in with the key operational lead for adoption in each LA to determine the local arrangements and health and safety assessments are still being undertaken in some LA's. We are not expecting staff to</p>

<p>1.2</p> <p>1.3</p>	<p>return to the office in the near future, unless for business essential reasons.</p> <p>Budget</p> <p>Based on our latest intelligence we are forecasting a balanced financial position for OAWY. There are some pressures identified for Inter Agency both shortfall of income (£220k) against the target and on the expenditure side (£187k) where we are seeing higher placements than at this time last year. However, they are currently savings that will mitigate these pressures on Staffing and other running costs.</p> <p>There have been ongoing discussions about changing the funding formula with a view to implement an activity based funding formula in April 2021. A verbal update can be provided regarding this at the meeting.</p>
<p>2</p> <p>2.1</p> <p>2.2</p> <p>2.2.1</p> <p>2.2.2</p> <p>2.3</p>	<p><u>Partnership working</u></p> <p>Centre of Excellence</p> <p>Discussions continue to take place with Leeds Community Health trust to progress the recruitment to the health positions. This was delayed due to Covid 19 as the trust were unable to take forward any other work. This has recently started again and at this point the indicated costs are higher than anticipated and negotiations and discussions are ongoing regarding this with the provider and health commissioners across the region to come to a resolution regarding the staffing required to achieve the intended outcomes of the project.</p> <p>Financial Support in adoption</p> <p>The management board have agreed proposals to move towards a regional approach regarding the financial support in adoption. These proposals are in the process of being considered through the local governance arrangements to seek agreement to the proposals.</p> <p>Special Guardianship regional work</p> <p><i>Financial support</i></p> <p>Similar discussions regarding a regional approach to supporting special guardians have also taken place and each local authority (LA) is now considering how these proposals are progressed through the governance processes of each LA.</p> <p>A task and finish group regarding the financial assessment tool met in June and all the finance leads involved within carer payment teams were involved in the discussions and feel very positive about the work. This is currently being tested and the stakeholder group is due to meet at the</p>

<p>2.3.1</p> <p>2.3.3</p>	<p>end of July to assess the impact if we implement the tool and once assessed agree an implementation plan.</p> <p>One of the managers from OAWY, Rhian Beynon, has been appointed to lead from within OAWY on special guardianship and co-ordinate the regional work and contract with Grandparents Plus. Rhian co-ordinated the recent funds from the ASF Covid 19 fund for SGO with a really positive take up from the LA's.</p> <p>The Grandparents Plus project is progressing well with further support provided from the ASF Covid 19 funds. The latest quarterly report is attached at Appendix 1.</p>
<p>3.</p> <p>3.1</p>	<p>Performance Management</p> <p>The annual report with the performance of the last year is discussed in a separate report. The first quarter report is not due to be reported until August.</p>
<p>4.</p> <p>4.1</p> <p>4.1.1</p> <p>4.12</p>	<p><u>Practice, quality of provision and management oversight</u></p> <p>Black Lives Matter</p> <p>The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement presents us with some very serious questions regarding our regional adoption service but it is also an opportunity that we can take to address the issues raised. We cannot change the past but we can all challenge how we think about things in the future and it is important that we view family values through the lens of different people and create more discussion, challenge existing stereotypes and bust myths. We are taking these discussions forward with our staff, our service users and partners who are working with us to set a reviewed vision of inclusion, diversity and equality for the future that we are all working towards. These discussions will feed into our equality impact assessment and will work towards a clear action plan about the areas we need to focus on for our new 3 year plan.</p> <p>Recruitment and Assessment</p> <p>The recruitment and assessment teams are currently under a great deal of pressure due to the number of people entering the assessment process since the start of the year; at the end of May there were 90 households in stage one of the process, compared with 64 at the end of May 2019. With a reduced adoption advisor capacity due to staff leaving and sickness this has proved challenging. We currently have three full time vacancies within the recruitment service, which is impacting on allocation capacity. Alongside this a number of sessional workers are not currently in a position to carry out assessments, which means we now have a large number of families waiting to be allocated a social worker for an assessment. There is a backlog of people due to the</p>

postponement of preparation training due to the pandemic and we are now catching up with the cohorts from March, April and May as this training is now being carried out using Zoom. We have an action plan in place to address the bulge that is likely to occur in the autumn and recruiting to positions and sessional posts is underway. The flexibility within the amended regulations enables us to move adopters from stage 1 of the process to stage 2 of the process without a medical assessment and this is helpful, given the difficulties experienced regarding adult medical assessments given the pandemic.

4.2

Adoption panel

Virtual panels are now well established, and while there continue to be some bumps along the way, we are now involving adopters in the panel meetings. We have increased the number of adoption panels to 9 panels a month and have increased the number of items considered at each panel to 4 items in order to increase capacity and reduce delay for adopters. We are also utilising the amended regulations to allow some cases to be considered directly by the agency decision maker, rather than going to panel and this is discussed in more detail below.

4.3

Flexibility in the regulations due to Covid 19

The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 allow agencies to consider whether to refer cases to the adoption panel, or proceed to make a decision under regulation 19 without such a referral. Given the issues with adoption panels being held virtually and to ensure the continuation of approvals of adopters, the management board have agreed that Agency Decisions could be made outside of the adoption panel process in the following circumstances, only where panel capacity would cause delay for the child or in approving the adopter where children are identified to be matched with them.

- Approval of experienced adopters
- Approval and Match of foster carer adopters
- Approval and Match of sibling adopters
- Approval of adopters who can consider early permanence placements and a child has been identified as a match.

4.4

It is important to ensure that whilst this is agreed we continue to ensure planning for children and adopters is appropriately scrutinised. Each local authority have agreed the who the nominated officer is responsible to agree the use of the flexibility and in all LA's this held at the Head of service position or above across the 5 LA's. OAWY are keeping a log of when the flexibilities have been used around this process.

4.5

Advertising and marketing

4.5.1

Proposals for a new website design have now been agreed and these are now with the web developers with a view to implement a new site by the end of September. The evaluation of the 19/20 marketing strategy is attached and the plan for 20/21 attached at **Appendix 2**.

Family Finding

4.5.2

Matching and Introductions

The impact of Covid 19 within the court arena has meant that some final hearings of care proceedings have been deferred to a later date. This has meant that children's plans for moving to their permanent family are delayed. However, family finding has been progressing and some children have moved to their adoptive family. We continue to monitor the impact of the delays in the court arena.

4.5.3

Virtual Profiling Event

Our first virtual profiling event took place on 2nd June, via Skype. We profiled six children, two of whom are part of a sibling group. 11 adopters attended the event, with a large number being supported by their adoption social workers who were able to attend the event. Three children received expressions of interest following the event and two of these of being further explored.

4.5.4

We received some great feedback from the adopters who joined us for the event:

"Family finders seemed really engaged with the needs of the children they were presenting – it was lovely to see that they had built such relationships with the children and their foster carers"

"Family finders really help bring each child to life"

"very supported by the people running the event and my social worker"

"it calmed of fears of the process, how well the children (and their new families) are supported through transitions"

4.5.5

We received positive feedback and we will be holding the next virtual profiling event on 6th August and will be profiling a higher number of children and opening up the event to more adopters including to our Voluntary Adoption Agency (VAA) partners who we are contracting under the Inter-agency Adoption Placements Service.

Inter-agency Adoption Placements Service

4.5.6

A contract was awarded at the end of May to a consortium of local voluntary adoption agencies provide a minimum of 30 placements per year and have 6 placements identified to date and we are working with the Alliance to formulate a referral pathway. The aim of this is to ensure

that children can be linked with more local families, where we are not able to find a family from within our own resources.

4.6

Adoption Support

The lockdown has forced us to work with families, children and young people in a different way. We have had to suspend our support groups, workshops and parenting programmes as these all involved meeting face to face in fairly close proximity. Assessments, direct work has moved to being undertaken on a virtual platform where appropriate. We have found that it is possible to undertake an assessment with families and young people via virtual means – although it has been harder with those families where we didn't have a pre-existing relationship with them.

4.6.1

We have undertaken a small number of visits to families – subject to a risk assessment and ensuring social distance measures are observed – mostly when there is risk of edge of care/breakdown or safeguarding concerns.

4.6.2

Applications to the Adoption Support Fund have continued to be made and we continue to work with therapy providers to identify the most appropriate way for therapy to be delivered to children, young people and families at this time. Most therapy sessions are being provided either over virtual platforms or if that isn't appropriate sessions have been paused for the time being.

4.6.3

The Adoption Support Fund Covid-19 scheme provided by the government has meant that we have been able to put together packages of immediately available support for families. We have drawn down £300k to support adoptive families and special guardians within the region. Examples of support provided is across 3 tiers:

Tier 1 – annual memberships of Adoption UK and Grandparents Plus

Tier 2 - Peer support for families

Additional peer support for adopters and special guardians

Child to parent violence seminars focussing on de-escalation, presence and Support.

Tier 3 Support

Packages of individual support for families.

The take up has been very positive from special guardians and adoptive parents.

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Kinship Connected West Yorkshire

Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds, Wakefield

Quarter 3, 2020 Review – Wednesday 1 July 2020

Grandparents Plus project workers, Rachael Sherrington and Karen O'Connor have been providing support to Special Guardians across the five local authorities covered by One Adoption West Yorkshire since October 2018. Kinship Connected and Kinship Response have been commissioned for a further 2 years in West Yorkshire from April 2020 to March 2022



In quarter 3 (Yr2), Rachael has been supporting Special Guardians in Bradford, Calderdale and Kirklees, Karen in Leeds and Wakefield.

Kelly Taylor joined the team on 22nd June 2020 and will be supporting Special Guardians in Bradford and Calderdale, while Rachael will support Special Guardians in Kirklees and Leeds. Karen will continue her support for Special Guardians in Leeds and Wakefield.

Support provided to date:

Local authority	Target no. of SGs to support (yearly)	Target no. of SGs to support (6 mths)	Total no. of referrals (Oct 2018 – June 2020)	No. of referrals Q3	Total no. Initial assessments completed Q3	Initial assessments booked	Support groups attended (virtual)
Bradford	46 (previously 32)	23	36	5	5	0	6
Calderdale	17 (previously 10)	9	10	2	2	0	5
Kirklees	31 (previously 20)	16	33	3	2	1 rescheduled at SG request - booked for 1 st July at time of writing	7
Leeds	57 (previously 40)	29	69	8	8	4 to be booked	7

Wakefield	29 (previously 18)	15	28	4	4	0	6
West Yorkshire (county)							2 – West Yorks virtual support groups 1 – West Yorks Facebook page
Total	180	92	176	22	21	1 (4 to be booked)	33

Karen currently has 27 open cases across Leeds and Wakefield. Rachael currently has 33 open cases across Kirklees, Bradford and Calderdale.

In Quarter 3, Karen has engaged with nine special guardians in Leeds and Wakefield regarding grant applications. A total of eight have been successful, one awaiting a decision. This has resulted in securing grants worth £3818, including tumble dryers, fridge freezers, gas cookers, bedroom furniture and bunk beds and money towards school uniforms and resources, a short break, laptop and Kindle.

Karen also made a significant number of holiday grants for special guardians, which are currently on hold due to the current Covid 19 pandemic.

Rachael has secured a washing machine, cooker, two bunk beds and mattresses. A number of holiday grants, which it is, hoped that in the coming weeks these can be re-considered and families given the option of sometime away.

Key themes arising from the support provided

Education

Following the temporary closure of all schools, many special guardians were anticipating a steep decline in behaviour. However, after this initial period of anxiety regarding school closures many families have experienced less problematic behaviour at home due to school based issues, with the perceived problems having been much worse than the reality.

There are some families who have experienced an increase of child on carer violence, and the lockdown has exacerbated this. However, some special guardians have reported an improvement in their relationship with their child, an improvement in behaviour and a steep reduction in meltdowns and arguments.

Many special guardians are anxious that their children, many who are already behind their peers by way of education attainment, are going to suffer more, given the lack of schooling. Many carers are older (some with literacy issues) and do not understand the teaching methods in place today. Most families report that they have tried to home school with varying degrees of success, most have been struggling.

Numerous special guardians report that any attempt at home schooling was met with arguments, tantrums and concerns about a child's mental wellbeing. Many report that they finally gave up, because it was not worth the child being in such distress.

Nationally, Grandparents Plus project workers have been working together to develop a pool of resources that are shared regularly with families, either via WhatsApp, emails or Facebook. Project workers continue to make calls to special guardians to check in, and are often about reassuring carers that by helping children be happy, settled and reassured about coronavirus, they are doing an amazing job in unprecedented times.

Behaviour

As above. Many families were anxious about how they could handle children's behaviour, especially when outside time is restricted. Project workers are encouraging physical activity in the home and garden, such as games, online PE lessons and online yoga etc. For many, the fear of the unknown has been worse than the reality.

Finances

Queries regarding losing jobs, furlough, affording food, the larger utility bills that are being created.

Grandparents Plus have shared a plethora of information about benefits, free school meals, MOTs, and advice about employment rights. There remains a high need for grants, but with increased capacity at Grandparents Plus, this need is being addressed quickly.

Mental health

With Covid 19 comes concerns over maintaining 'social connectednesses and simply being isolated. Grandparents Plus are working hard to create virtual support groups. West Yorkshire Kinship Carers Facebook Group is now live and has 89 members. There is also a WhatsApp groups for each Local Authority area.

Training Needs

Many special guardians are not IT literate, and find social media intimidating. Project workers are encouraging carers to sign up to Facebook and WhatsApp to ensure they are as connected as possible, while also supporting them to ensure their privacy settings are in place. Project workers are also facilitating introductory sessions where special guardians can try to join the training session, receive support to be guided through issues, without the pressure in a support group.

Support Groups

Rachael and Karen facilitate fortnightly virtual support groups for each Local Authority area. These groups are facilitated using the zoom platform. There are plans to trial the use of Facebook "rooms" to ascertain if an increase in special guardians would engage this way. The remote groups were initially established following consultation with group members to ensure the most suitable platform is utilised e.g. WhatsApp,

Messenger but that process is continual and could change as more carers work out what they are comfortable using.

Karen has attended the first Leeds LA virtual Skype special guardian support group session. The plan is that this continues monthly.

Since lockdown each face-to-face group/LA area has its own WhatsApp group established, allowing special guardians to connect and network with each other.

West Yorkshire - Special Guardian Support Group via Zoom

Karen and Rachael have established a monthly West Yorkshire Zoom support group. This group is focused on a key issue identified by special guardians. An outside speaker is invited to deliver training or facilitate a discussion, in response to support needs. These groups have been well attended.

May 13th facilitated a legal theme, Helen Moody from Ridley & Hall law firm attended and discussed legal issues regarding contact during COVID and provided clarity regarding any other questions.

June 18th, Martin Honnor from the Wakefield Youth Offending Team give a Webinar about Attachment disorder. Martin is returning on July 16th to deliver the second part of his training "How Attachment manifests itself in adolescence".

August 20th - Catherine Beal, Educational Psychologist is scheduled to attend to provide a session relating to reducing anxieties in children and carers on the return to school life.

September 17th - Rhian Beynon is scheduled to provide a webinar about FASD for special guardians.

West Yorkshire Facebook Page

Karen and Rachael have established the West Yorkshire Facebook Page. Currently this page has 89 special guardians who have joined. It provides a platform to share targeted and localised information across all five LAs. We will further develop this group to form a connected community with mechanisms in place to monitor comments.

Case Study 1

SG1 cares for her grandson. SG1 lost her daughter to a heroin overdose and has cared for her grandson since. SG1 was referred by the Local Authority due to financial worries. On talking to SG1 the project worker learnt that she has limited emotional support. SG1 revealed that this initial phone call was the first time she had opened up about being a special guardian, about losing her daughter, and the hardships she feels now caring for her grandson. SG1 spoke about feeling alone, and how no one understands how she feels. The project worker has referred SG1 to the Grandparents Plus advice line for a benefits check, to discuss a grant, and a referral has been made to the Someone Like Me Program where a trained volunteer kinship carer will call SG1 as a listening ear. SG1 is kept up to speed with the referrals being made so she has clear expectations, feels listened too and valued.

Case Study 2

SG2 cares for her granddaughter. She was a regular attendee of all Wakefield support groups and reported on multiple occasions how she looked forward to the groups and found them a supportive outlet for her. When COVID 19 arose, there was a significant rise in contact from the special guardian who was feeling anxious, isolated and upset at the thought of not being able to attend support groups. She is a self-confessed techno-phobe. The project worker spent significant time on the phone talking through downloading WhatsApp, then Zoom and had practise sessions with the special guardian. This resulted in the special guardian now attending the online support groups, including the countywide group.

Case Study 3

SG3 cares for her two x grandsons. The project worker supported her to reduce multiple financial concerns that she had. The project worker applied for a short-term holiday, which is currently being held with the Family Holiday Association due to COVID 19. One of SG3's grandsons has food issues, and as the special guardian didn't currently have a dining table or money to buy one, the project worker applied for a grant for this, as the family were also missing out on much needed family bonding time at meals. The application was rejected as the charity said the family did not meet their current criteria. The project worker challenged this on behalf of SG3, pointing out multiple areas of need, and crises that the family had endured and reapplied. This time the charity accepted that they had not fully understood the family situation and awarded the grant.

Rachael and Karen continue to contact and check in on those families they are working with, prioritising those over 70 or with underlying health issues. They have also been contacting those clients, who although cases are closed, are likely to need more support given the complexities of living in isolation and social restriction.

Many families we work with have underlying health issues, whether as a result of old age, or simply poor health. Many suffer with COPD, chronic asthma, depression or anxiety, which can be exacerbated by the news and constant fear. Many are scared of what will happen if they fall seriously ill, or worse, die due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Rachael and Karen have been offering emotional support and practical advice on issues such as contact, benefits, work and schools.

Catherine Beal, an Educational psychologist who wished to coordinate a Kinship Celebration event in Leeds, approached Karen. Karen has worked with Catherine, other relevant charities and local authority contacts to discuss ideas and share contacts. Catherine visited the Leeds - Pudsey support group to hear the views of special guardians. An initial date of Tuesday July 7th was booked with a college in Leeds. Plans were in place to involve Grandparents Plus, local authority, relevant charities, coffee groups, mindfulness sessions, poetry sessions, Ridley and Hall solicitors among others to make the day a celebration, as well as a chance to bring together relevant contacts that Kinship Carers often need. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, it is likely this event will be postponed.

Key Achievements

1. Continued referrals from all local authorities.

2. Quickly adapting and moving support groups to virtual groups via WhatsApp and Zoom.
3. Quickly adapting 1-1 project worker sessions to virtual support via WhatsApp and Zoom.
4. Development of the West Yorkshire Facebook page for special guardians.
5. Development of the monthly county wide West Yorkshire Special Guardian Support Group via Zoom – focused on information sharing on key issues affecting SGs
6. Significant successful grant applications made for Special Guardians across all areas.

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