

One Adoption West Yorkshire

Community engagement strategy:

Finding adopters for Black and Asian Minority Ethnic children (BAME)



One
Adoption
Agency
WEST YORKSHIRE

1.0 Introduction

There are currently over 200 children who have a plan for adoption across West Yorkshire who are not yet matched with an adoptive family and 24% of these come from BAME backgrounds; predominantly Black African, Black Caribbean, mixed heritage or Eastern European. However only 11% of adopters approved within the past year identified as being from BAME backgrounds. In order to address this shortfall, it has been identified that a dedicated project be undertaken to focus on improving the number of BAME adopters. Whilst we will not rely on matching children with regard to ethnic identity as an overriding factor, it is important that we keep a focus on ensuring that we approve a full range of adoptive families to meet the range of children requiring placements.

2.0 Insight

Research carried out for the DfE by Kindred in 2014 identified that one of the characteristics people with the highest propensity to adopt includes those who actively practice a religion. Therefore it has been identified that one way to attract more adopters from BME communities is to raise the profile of One Adoption West Yorkshire within faith communities and organisations whose members match the backgrounds of the children we need to find families for.

Informal research from discussions with an existing adopter from the Black African community identified a lack of trust in 'social services' especially within first and second generation immigrants, as one reason people from their community do not come forward to adopt. The adopter suggested that building relationships with church groups attended by community members would help with building this trust – and that marketing alone will not suffice.

Some marketing campaign work has already taken place to target people who actively follow a religion. Between July and September 2018 a Facebook campaign targeting people who actively follow a religion, and those who may adopt for more altruistic reasons was carried out. The imagery on two of

the adverts for OAWY contained people of Black African Heritage. The campaign as a whole reached 92,000 people and over 1200 people clicked on the advert to find out more, which is a click through rate of 0.52% and a cost per click of £1.11. This is comparable to ads targeting different demographics.

3.0 Community engagement

A working group has been formed to take a lead on community engagement to establish links with relevant community leaders and influencers.

One Adoption's unique position within the five West Yorkshire authorities will allow us to access existing expertise for engaging with harder to reach communities in each area. Including identify organisations with good practice around engaging with faith communities and approach with a view to establishing a partnership/ joint campaign work. Other community links and expertise we will seek to work with include:

- Local councillors
- Local Authority area support teams
- Local Authority area committees
- Local authority employee networks – BAME and Faith
- Community networks
- One Adoption West Yorkshire staff with links to communities
- Existing BAME adopters
- Local Authority fostering teams – pool knowledge and resources

One Adoption will also engage with key community-based representative groups and organisations directly to develop an understanding of the issues around the reluctance to adopt.

- Parish and town councils
- Voluntary, community and faith organisations - the initial focus would be on Baptist and Evangelical churches and groups to reach the Black African and Black Caribbean communities, and Catholic Churches within areas with a high Eastern European population.
- Community groups and residents associations
- Local Dioceses

A variety of engagement activities will be undertaken including:

- community forums;
- community events;

- newsletters;
- meeting councillors.

4.0 Marketing and activity plan

Targeted marketing alone will not be sufficient to reach, engage and challenge misconceptions within the targeted communities, therefore all marketing activity will run alongside the community engagement work being carried out by the service.

The marketing and communication activities which will be undertaken are:

- A targeted digital marketing strategy will be delivered using the existing OAWY channels – Facebook, Google Ads, Instagram and Twitter, building on the campaigns previously undertaken. Targeting people who meet the required demographic and have an interest in faith/ religion or charitable work.
- Advertising or editorial to be placed in faith publications which are distributed in churches and other relevant organisations. Research will be undertaken to ascertain which publications are most relevant in terms of content, audience and cost.
- New posters and other marketing collateral will be distributed across churches in the areas which have high Black African/ Black Caribbean or Eastern European attendance.
- OAWY staff will attend community events / festivals/ carnivals to ensure OAWY is visible in the communities and able to speak directly with residents and distribute marketing collateral.
- New case studies for the website and social media of existing BAME adopters – these could also be used for PR and media work, including interviews.
- Imagery of adopters and children which meet the target demographic will also be used as part of other campaign and marketing work to ensure that we demonstrate an ongoing need for adopters to meet the needs of a wide range of children.

5.0 Key messaging

By engaging with community and faith leaders and influencers we want to ensure that they develop an understanding of the needs of the children that we have to place, as well as the differences between voluntary agencies and statutory organisations like OAWY. This is with a view that they will pass this on to their communities and congregations and help build trust in One Adoption as an agency.

The general One Adoption key messages are:

- One Adoption is the adoption service for your local council
- Lots of people like you have already adopted - and you can hear about their experiences
- Adoption is challenging, but rewarding and fulfilling
- You don't just adopt a child, you create a family for life
- One Adoption provides support right through the application and approval process and beyond

In addition to these the specific key messages for this project will be:

- Children from your community need loving families
- Children from your community wait longer than others
- Lots of people of faith have already adopted a child with One Adoption