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Report of Director of Children and Families

Report to West Yorkshire Adoption Joint Committee

Date: 1st August 2019

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. Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield adoption functions as specified in the partnership agreement were delegated on the 1st April 2017 to Leeds City Council and One Adoption West Yorkshire formally opened.
2. This report provides a summary from the Head of Service on the developments of the service since the last report to the committee in March 2019.

Recommendations

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

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report sets out the developments within One Adoption West Yorkshire since the last report in March 2019.

2. Background information

- 2.1 Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield adoption functions as specified in the partnership agreement were delegated on the 1st April 2017 to Leeds City Council. One Adoption West Yorkshire formally opened on this date.

3. Main issues

Use of Resources

3.1 Staffing & HR

- 3.2 Interviews have taken place to cover for Mandy Prout and discussions are underway regarding the secondment of the member of staff from Barnardo's. The gap is causing increasing pressure on other service managers and myself, particularly with Ofsted's presence in the region at the present time. This has reduced the ability to drive forward service improvements in family finding, in particular, as well as managing the interface between the LA's and OAWY when issues arise.

3.3 Accommodation

- 3.4 Agreement in principle has been made for space in Huddersfield regarding staff moving from Halifax. A date has not yet been agreed for the move, dependent upon staff moving elsewhere in the building but we aim for this to be August. This has been escalated to the assistant director to address barriers in this progressing.

- 3.5 The increase in staff at Kernel House in Leeds is causing pressure on space. Discussions are underway with colleagues and asset management to address the need for space for One Adoption and the looked after children's teams.

3.6 IT

- 3.7 The work regarding accessing the local authority systems and taking a snapshot of the letterbox database from a portal on the Leeds laptop remains outstanding with Bradford and Kirklees. It would be helpful if board members would ensure that this work is prioritised with the relevant IT services so that time can be agreed to prioritise this work and resolve the issue as staff are still using different systems and computers to undertake their work.

3.8 Partnership working

3.9 Centre of Excellence

3.10 This project is progressing and the report from Suzanne Whiteley, project lead is attached (Appendix 1). Additional funding of £100k has been agreed by the DfE to extend the project to the end of March 2020. This will enable discussions to take place regarding funding options for the sustainability of the centre of excellence for the budget setting for 2020/21. The team have almost completed the multi-disciplinary model of adoption support and this will be shared once completed.

3.11 Medical advisors

3.12 A medical advisor protocol has been agreed and was implemented in March 2019. This has been circulated to operational leads and medical advisors in the region and has been helpful for discussions with commissioners. Discussions have been ongoing with health in Bradford and Wakefield regarding medical advisor capacity as children have experienced some delay and partners are working hard to remedy the issues

3.13 Special Guardianship

3.14 The project is progressing well. The referrals to the service are to be expanded to cover referrals from other sources than just the fostering and SG teams in the areas, looking at early help teams and the front door.

3.15 The regional work regarding the special guardianship is underway with work carried out to create a standardised policy and approach regarding support and financial support. Task and finish groups are underway and the variations amongst the LA's regarding the offer for special guardianship is wide. An audit tool, templates and guidance have been drafted regarding support plans and a draft means test has been developed. This will need further testing with the finance teams across the LA and this work is ongoing.

3.16 A full report will be provided regarding Special Guardianship at the next committee meeting in the autumn.

3.17 Performance Management

3.18 This is addressed as a separate report.

3.19 Practice, quality of provision and management oversight

3.20 Recruitment and Assessment

3.21 There are a number of service developments underway with a full review of the information events, adopter preparation training and additional training ongoing. There are plans to develop and deliver training for applicants able to consider adopting siblings as this has been identified as an area of need within One Adoption

West Yorkshire, with many of our sibling groups being placed externally some distance from the area. We plan to build on the success of our Early Permanence Training and develop a training package which will ensure adopters are more prepared and confident in meeting the needs of siblings.

- 3.22 We held a staff development day on 22nd May for recruitment and assessment staff where we explored the content of Initial Home visits to prospective adopters, exploring the purpose of the visit, consistency and how to make them supportive to those entering the adoptive process. The Brain Based Parenting session for Prospective Adopters was also delivered to staff on that day; so they are aware of the information shared with their families, but also generated discussion regarding the content of other training delivered to prospective adopters and their families. This added to the focus on helping adopters be aware of the need to have a therapeutic approach to parenting in order to meet the needs of children.
- 3.23 We have received notification that we have achieved the quality mark for Early Permanence Placements for the OAWY with Coram Baaf. This will assist us in attracting adopters and assisting with our vision of becoming a flagship adoption agency (**Appendix 2**).
- 3.24 At the last Joint Committee meeting members had discussions about the marketing strategy and asked to see the work that was underway regarding a focus on attracting more BAME adopters and those from a faith back ground. This strategy is discussed in more details at (**Appendix 5**)
- 3.25 *Family Finding*
- 3.26 The profiling events are very successful and building on from this we trialled a first activity day on the 16th June. This took a lot of planning and preparation with children from across the region attending with their carers. Adopters from other agencies are invited as well as our own adopters in stage 2 to consider some of the children waiting for adoption.
- 3.27 We have trialled our first meetings with the VAA's being involved in the linking meeting. We have had a very productive meeting with the VAA's in the region to look at how we can think about more of our children remaining in the region. Consideration is being given to commissioning 30 placements for children in the region with the
- 3.28 *Adoption Support*
- 3.29 This area of work has been discussed in-depth in the annual report. Work regarding the development and agreement of an early help offer during the first three years of placement is almost completed. This will be presented at the next board in the autumn.
- 3.30 *Training*

3.31 OAWY undertook as training session for other Regional adoption agencies on adoption panels and Shopba decision making across a regional agency in March. This was well received. Plans are underway to provide a training event around adoption support in an RAA and to look at putting on a conference in the spring regarding identity and lifelong relationships for social work professionals in the region in conjunction with the Leeds relational centre.

3.32 *Skills development*

3.33 OAWY senior leadership team have identified a range of skills social workers require for their specific role. During supervision, staff have worked through this list of skills with their line-manager to determine what level of development, if any, is required for each skill. Once all staff have completed this activity the returns will be collated and a training plan produced. The plan will then be rolled out based on priority and need.

3.34 *Surveys*

3.35 The OAWY staff and adopters surveys have been developed and have been emailed out early June.

3.36 *Changes of Plan*

The committee asked for some further information regarding the numbers of children whose plan moved away from adoption and the reasons why these plans had changed and the outcomes for these children.

This is addressed at **Appendix 3**.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

4.1.1 There has been ongoing consultation and engagement with staff who have transferred in to the agency as well as formal consultation with the trade unions regarding accommodation. Consultation with service users is ongoing to inform the development of the service design and delivery of the agency.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

4.2.1 There are no implications for this report. An Equality Impact assessment has been completed and is attached to the annual report being addressed by a separate report within the meeting.

4.3 Resources and value for money

4.3.1 At the end of period 2 the budget remains in line with projections. A full report will be provided at the end of quarter 3. The outturn report for the last financial year is attached and (**Appendix 4**).

4.4 Legal implications and access to information

4.4.1 There are no implications for this report.

4.5 Risk management

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

5. Recommendations

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

Background documents¹

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.