

WEST YORKSHIRE ADOPTION JOINT COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 1ST AUGUST, 2019

Present: Councillor F Venner (Leeds) – Chair

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

In Attendance: S Johal (ODWY), E Whittell (LCC) and J Grieve (LCC)

1 APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS

There were no appeals against refusal of inspection of documents.

2 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.

3 LATE ITEMS

There were no late items of business identified.

4 DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

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

5 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

6 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13th March 2019 were agreed as a true and correct record.

7 MATTER ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

The Head of Service provided an update on the following issues arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

Minute No.30 - Head of Services Report - Resolution (vi) That a report be prepared for the next meeting which sets out details of the numbers of children whose plan moved away from adoption, the reasons why the plans had changed and the outcomes for these children. The Head of Service confirmed that the requested information appeared elsewhere on the agenda.

Minute No. 31 - Performance Report – Resolution (iii) That an update on adoption marketing and advertising targeted at the BAME communities be provided for the next meeting. The Head of Service confirmed that the requested information appeared elsewhere on the agenda

Minute No. 32 – Education Work with Virtual Schools – Update – Resolution (iii) That arrangements be made to view a promotional video, produced to assist in the recruitment process. The Head of Service confirmed that arrangements were progressing and it was envisaged the video would be available shortly.

8 Video - Adopteens Timeline Animation - The Ride of Your Life

Members viewed a video - Adopteens Timeline Animation - The Ride of Your Life

The video was funded by the DFE and commissioned by the One Adoption VAA. Members were informed that the project was designed and built by adopted teenagers and would be used by professionals and others involved with adopted children to learn what had been important to them growing up, addressing what had helped and what had not helped throughout their lives. The Adopteen group is a made up of adopted teenagers who meet as a group to share their experiences, thoughts and feelings about the various support they have received and to inform service development across One Adoption.

The project seeks to encourage adopted teenagers living in the Yorkshire and Humber region aged between 11 – 18 to participate in the project.

The Head of Service said one of the main themes that had arisen from the project was understanding issues of engagement and in particular the need to prepare prospective adopters for discussions about birth parents.

Councillor A Wilkinson said that as a school teacher he had not received any training about adopted children in school and often children were not open about been adopted.

The Head of Service said the video and work going on between birth parents and adopters could help adopters think about how they support their adopted children.

Members welcomed the video commenting that early engagement with all parties was a key factor in tackling the issues of concern.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the video be noted and welcomed

9 HEAD OF SERVICE REPORT

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

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

Commenting on the accommodation issues Members were informed that agreement had been reached for staff to be relocated from offices in Halifax to Huddersfield. A date for the move was still awaited but it was envisaged this would be completed shortly.

On the issue of IT Services, Members were informed that portal technology was an outstanding issue at both Bradford and Kirklees Council's. IT collaboration was taking place between Leeds and Bradford Councils, once resolved a similar collaboration would be set up with Kirklees Council. Kirklees had recently procured a new case recording system so this needed time to bed in and then discussions would be taken forward.

The Head of Service said that any influence / engagement from Members which may assist in progressing the IT issue would be welcomed.

With reference to the Centre of Excellence project (Paragraph 3.9 of the submitted report) Members noted that additional funding of £100k had been agreed by the DfE to extend the project to the end of March 2020. It was reported that work on the multi - disciplinary model was almost complete but moving forward a new funding model would be required and discussions would be needed with local authorities and health services to sustain and develop a multi- disciplinary model of support across the region.

On the issue of Special Guardianship Members were informed that the project was progressing well. Referrals to the service has been expanded to cover referrals from other sources than just fostering and Special Guardianship as the service was an early intervention service. This was a service requested by kinship carers with an aim to develop peer support and to complement the work of the local authority. A further review of the project would take place in September to ascertain if this service should be re- commissioned following the pilot phase.

Members noted the community engagement strategy, the initiative to find adopters for Black and Asian minority Ethnic Children (BAME) was progressing.

The Head of Service said the intention was to establish better links with the BAME communities using relevant faith groups. Additional resource may be needed from the third sector to help with this work to take forward Community engagement.

Commenting on the issue of Family Finding (Paragraph 3.26 of the submitted report) Members noted that the first Activity Day had being trialled on 16th June 2019 with children from across the region attending with their careers. It was reported that feedback following the event was very positive and a number of matches have progressed.

Members welcomed the report and the continued progression of the agency

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the progress of the agency
- (ii) To support the continued progression of these arrangements

10 Annual Agency Report and Revised Statement of Purpose

The Director of Children's and Families submitted a report which presented the Annual Report of the One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY) as required by the National Minimum Standards 2011 (Appendix A of the submitted report referred)

Members were made aware of a minor amendment to the statement of purpose for OAWY (Appendix B referred) noting that the Statement of Purpose was required as part of the national minimum standard in order to be able to provide those services.

Members noted that between April 2018 and March 2019, 226 children had a plan for adoption ratified by the 5 West Yorkshire local authorities Agency Decision Makers (For the same period last year 191 children had an adoption plan in place an increase of 18%). It was further reported that 97 adopters were in the process of assessment.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the minor amendments to the Statement of Purpose and the Annual Adoption Report
- (ii) To continue to support the work of One Adoption West Yorkshire to ensure children receive the best possible support

11 PERFORMANCE REPORT

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

The Head of Service said that work had been undertaken to establish the key performance criteria which would form the basis for practice improvement for the agency and this continued to be built upon.

It was suggested that Adoption Support was one area that required more detailed consideration, the intention was to start providing data in the first quarter of 2019-20.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the proposed performance information
- (ii) To support the further development of this work

12 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT

RESOLVED – To note that the next meeting will take place on Wednesday, 8th January 2020 at 1.00pm in the Civic Hall, Leeds.