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Report of Director of Children and Families

Report to West Yorkshire Adoption Joint Committee

Date: 14th February 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 provides a summary from the Head of Service on the developments of the service since the last report to the committee in August 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 is a brief report, given the half yearly agency report on the agenda today.

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

3.1 Recruitment of adopters

At a national level the Department of Education has provided funding of £645k in September 2019 for adoption agencies to recruit adopters. A national cross sector steering group has been established and One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY) has agreed to hold the funds on behalf for the steering group. The steering group has appointed a creative agency to develop a national campaign to take place between February and May next 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 from OAWY is on the steering group and Leeds as the host LA for OAWY are supporting the commissioning processes involved in this work.

Within OAWY Information events take place every three weeks across the region and these continue to be well attended. A new video has been developed for use within the session and this will shared in the meeting.

We have commenced work with an organisation called My foster family. They are a muslim based faith group who have worked with fostering services and are moving to work with adoption agencies. OAWY are working in partnership with them to increase the awareness of adoption within the Black and Minority ethnic communities across the region and our first event was held in Harehills in Leeds in November. We had seven families attend and we are following up this interest. This is something that we are looking to replicate across the region over the next year as we are keen to increase the diversity within our approved adopters to meet the needs of children.

3.2 *Adoption Allowances*

Work is ongoing across the region regarding proposals for a regional approach to the financial support for adopters and special guardians. This is 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. This has involved a number of task and finish groups looking at different aspects looking at

support plans, the financial assessment tools used and eligibility criteria. This work will be discussed further at the management board in January.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

4.1.1 There is ongoing consultation and engagement with staff and service users regarding the development of delivery of the work 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 currently in the process of being reviewed by the agency to ensure it is relevant and up to date.

4.3 Resources and value for money

4.3.1 The overall position of OAWY budget in December 2019 is forecasting a balanced position, with some potential risks of non- achievement of Inter Agency income (£270k). This has been offset by an underspend on staffing due to vacancies as well as income from another source.

4.3.2 The budget for 2020/21 has been recommended by the management board with an increase regarding the baseline budget for pay increases as well as costs in order to continue to procure grandparents plus to support special guardians and kinship carers. The costs for the implementation for the multi- disciplinary team as part of the development of the centre of excellence in adoption support are also recommended and health partners have been asked to contribute to this.

4.4 Funding Formula

There are ongoing discussions between the partners regarding the development of a new funding formula for the agency, with an aim of implementing a revised model in 2021/22. This will be discussed further at the management board in January regarding a proposed model and further discussions will be progressed within each local authority after this.

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 some potential financial risks with regards to the budget. However, an action plan is in place and is forecasting a balanced position. Regular financial

monitoring is in place and there is regular dialogue between finance leads across the region.

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.