

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

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.