

Report of: Head of Service One Adoption West Yorkshire

Report to: Director of Children and Families

Date: 04 March 2020

Subject: One Adoption West Yorkshire to enter into an agreement with and accept grant funding of £1 million from the Department for Education (DfE)



Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary

1 Main issues

- The latest data shows that of the 2,700 children waiting for adoption, almost 40 per cent have waited over 18 months - of these, 24% were from BAME backgrounds.
- In December 2019 the DfE announced that Round 2 of additional grant funding will be provided to Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs), working with voluntary organisations around the country, to run recruitment campaigns in 2020 aimed at finding adoptive families for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) children.
- The funding will be made available from 1 April 2020. There are no restrictions on when the grant funding must be spent
- RAA leaders have once again agreed to collectively to pool the resources, working collaboratively to achieve better outcomes for children waiting for adoption.
- The DfE have approved OAWY to act as a central repository for the grant funds on behalf of all RAAs.

2 Best Council Plan Implications (click [here](#) for the latest version of the Best Council Plan)

- This proposal provides strong support for the refreshed Children and Young Peoples Plan and the Council's ambition to be a Child Friendly City. The outcomes delivered through this grant funding will contribute to a number of the outcomes and priorities within the plan, including the outcome to ensure all young people are safe from harm and the priority to help children live in safe and supportive families
- This proposal also supports the 2019-20 Best Council Plan priority make Leeds the best city for children and young people to grow up in
- The RAA board will consider the environmental impact of their approach to service delivery. They will be asked to demonstrate how they will reduce their carbon footprint, including making best use of technology and sustainable transport in delivering the outcomes required for this grant funded provision

3 Resource Implications

- The total value of grant funding to be received from the DfE is £1 million.
- The grant will be managed by OAWY on behalf of all RAAs, with Leeds acting as the lead local authority.
- The grant funding will be received in one payment on signing of the grant agreement
- This pooled resource will provide best value for money across all RAAs as it will provide the opportunity to enhance and further develop new approaches to the recruitment of adopters at a regional and national level that were introduced through Round 1 of the funding. The activities will be determined by the RAA Leaders' Group

Recommendations

- It is recommended that the Director of Children and Families approves the proposals in this report for the Council to enter into an agreement and accept grant funding from the DfE on behalf of OAWY, such grant funding to be managed by OAWY on behalf of all RAAs for the purpose of undertaking adoption recruitment activity on a national and regional scale, with the Council acting as the lead local authority.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To request approval for One Adoption West Yorkshire to enter into an agreement with the DfE to accept £1 million of Round 2 grant funding on behalf of all Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs), and to work with other agencies to agree a mechanism for allocating the funds.

2. Background information

- 2.1 The Government's regionalisation reforms were introduced in 2017 to reduce the large number of agencies providing adoption services and create 25-30 Regional Adoption Agencies to pool resources and provide:
- More targeted and efficient recruitment of adopters
 - Speedier matching with a larger more diverse pool of adopters
 - An improved range of adoption support services and regulatory compliance
- 2.2 One Adoption West Yorkshire became the country's first Regional Adoption Agency when the regionalisation reforms were launched - bringing together all of the adoption services from Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield. Within its second year of operation the agency has already demonstrated that it is leading the way for newer regional agencies by winning two national awards.
- 2.3 The recruitment of adopters nationally is declining and the gap between the number of children waiting (increasing) and approved adopters waiting (decreasing) is widening.
- 2.4 In July 2019 the DfE made available grant funding for the RAA Leader's Group to fund national and regional projects across the adoption system, particularly focusing on finding adoptive families for the harder to place children currently waiting. Activities included
- A national digital campaign to target potential adopters during National Adoption Week
 - Sector engagement focused around engaging BAME communities through black majority churches and mosques
- 2.5 The value of this Round 1 initial grant was £645k

3. Main issues

- 3.1 In December 2019 the DfE announced that Round 2 of additional grant funding will be provided to Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs), working with voluntary organisations around the country, to run recruitment campaigns in 2020 aimed at finding adoptive families for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) children.
- 3.2 The funding will be made available from 1 April 2020. There are no restrictions on when the grant funding must be spent

- 3.3 RAA leaders have once again agreed to collectively to pool the resources, working collaboratively to achieve better outcomes for children waiting for adoption.
- 3.4 The DfE have approved OAWY to act as a central repository for the grant funds on behalf of all RAAs.
- 3.5 The latest data shows that of the 2,700 children waiting for adoption, almost 40 per cent have waited over 18 months - of these, 24% were from BAME backgrounds.
- 3.6 The regional recruitment drives will have a particular focus on finding families for these children, as well as groups that the system has not previously prioritised, including siblings and older children, helping make sure there are enough adopters around the country and helping reverse the trend in data swiftly.
- 3.7 The RAA Leaders group will continue to work in partnership with voluntary sector organisations during the grant funding period and consider the views of, and impact on, Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) and LAs not yet in live RAAs.
- 3.8 The funding will enable VAAs and other adoption support providers to increase the help they provide and reduce the time families have to wait to receive vital support.
- 3.9 The RAA leaders group are working together to develop a national approach to raising awareness generally and addressing some regional priorities, including BAME recruitment. Alongside this, a small steering group has been assembled with VAA involvement where decisions can be made on what and how the funds are spent across the country over a period of time.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 Consultation took place with the DfE on 6 January 2019 with the Head of Service for OAWY and the National adopter steering group to confirm how the grant will be managed to achieve best outcomes for prospective adopters and children awaiting adoption. It was agreed that, as with the Round 1 grant, a regional approach would best meet the aims of the grant funding, with one local authority acting as lead.
- 4.1.2 The Executive Member for Children and Families has been consulted about this decision
- 4.1.3 The Director of Children and Families and the Deputy Director Children and Families have been made aware of this proposal

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

- 4.2.1 An Equality Impact Assessment Screening document has been undertaken. This identifies there is a positive impact in respect of equality and diversity in that it will advance equality of opportunity for children that are looked after, particularly those most vulnerable i.e. those with special educational needs and disabilities; those from BME backgrounds and older children awaiting adoption

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

- 4.3.1 This proposal provides strong support for the refreshed Children and Young Peoples Plan and the Council's ambition to be a Child Friendly City. The outcomes delivered through this grant funding will contribute to a number of the outcomes and priorities within the plan, including the outcome to ensure all young people are safe from harm and the priority to help children live in safe and supportive families.
- 4.3.2 This proposal also supports the 2019-20 Best Council Plan priority make Leeds the best city for children and young people to grow up in
Climate Emergency
- 4.3.3 The RAA board will consider the environmental impact of their approach to service delivery. They will be asked to demonstrate how they will reduce their carbon footprint, including making best use of technology and sustainable transport in delivering the outcomes required for this grant funded provision

4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money

- 4.4.1 This funding is additional revenue funding that is ring fenced to deliver the outcomes specified in the DfE grant agreement
- 4.4.2 The total value of grant funding to be received from the DfE is £1 million.
- 4.4.3 The grant funding will be received in one payment in the first week of April 2020.
- 4.4.4 The grant will be managed by OAWY on behalf of all RAAs, with Leeds acting as the lead local authority
- 4.4.5 This pooled resource will provide best value for money across all RAAs as it will provide the opportunity to enhance and further develop new approaches to the recruitment of adopters at a regional and national level that were introduced through Round 1 of the funding. The activities will be determined by the RAA Leaders' Group

4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in

- 4.5.1 The value of the grant will be £1 million and so approval to receive the funding is a key decision.
- 4.5.2 This decision is subject to call in and was published on the list of forthcoming key decisions on 7 January 2020.

4.6 Risk management

- 4.6.1 There will be some additional pressure on the finance team and the administrative staff within OAWY regarding administering this fund, however any costs incurred will be reimbursed from the grant.
- 4.6.2 The outcomes will be monitored by the steering group and reported back to the DFE
- 4.6.3 Leeds, as the lead local authority, will receive and manage the funding on behalf of all RAAs. There are no requirements to pay back the grant if the key aims are not

met, although future funding arrangements will be unlikely to be agreed if the aims are not achieved.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 This proposal forms a good basis for supporting our ambition to increase the number adopters recruited and thereby meet the Children and Families obsession to safely and appropriately reduce the number of children looked after

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 It is recommended that the Director of Children and Families approves the proposals in this report for the Council to enter into an agreement and accept grant funding from the DfE on behalf of OAWY, such grant funding to be managed by OAWY on behalf of all RAAs for the purpose of undertaking adoption recruitment activity on a national and regional scale, with the Council acting as the lead local authority.

7. Background documents¹

- 7.1 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.