

Report of The Head of Service, One Adoption West Yorkshire

Report to Director of Children & Families

Date: 25th March 2021

Subject: National Adoption Strategic Lead position



Are specific electoral wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	
Has consultation been carried out?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, access to information procedure rule number:	
Appendix number:	

Summary

1. Main issues

- The DfE has made available grant funding available to improve the adoption system national by supporting the development of a national team including the appointment of a National Adoption Strategic leader and a project team.
- The Department for Education (DfE) and Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) leaders agreed collectively to pool the resources and deposit the funds into one RAA.
- One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY) has agreed to act as a central repository for the grant funds on behalf of all RAAs.
- The RAA leaders group have been working with the Department of Education and have developed a Job description regarding the roles and responsibilities of the post and this has been job evaluated by Leeds City Council HR team as the host Local authority for the project team.
- The post is called National Adoption Strategic Lead and is job evaluated at Director 65%.

- The post will be advertised nationally for a term of 1 year as a temporary position, pending the outcome of a further spending review by the government and the total cost of this will be met by the grant from the government.
- The post will report regularly on progress made to the RAA leaders group and the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board, Association of Directors of Children's services and the Department of Education.
- The post will be added to the structure of One Adoption West Yorkshire under the national team.

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 2020-25 Best Council Plan priority to make Leeds a Child Friendly City where families are supported to give children the best start in life.
- The RAA steering group regarding this role will consider the environmental impact of their approach and 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 funding.

3. Resource Implications

- Funding from the government for Regional Adoption Agencies has been made available for the development of the national team and will cover the cost of the national strategic lead and project team.
- The grant will be managed by OAWY on behalf of all RAAs, with Leeds acting as the lead local authority.

Recommendations

- a) It is recommended that the Director of Children and Families approves the proposals in this report for the position of a National Strategic Lead to be added to the OAWY staffing structure for the purpose of undertaking the development work with RAA leaders on a national scale, with the Council acting as the lead local authority.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To recommend the approval of a new position within the staffing establishment of OAWY that of National Adoption Strategic Lead on a 1 year temporary basis and to release this position for advert.

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 (RAAs) 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 In the longer term RAAs are expected to provide
- Better outcomes for children and adopters
 - Reduced practice and performance inconsistencies
 - More effective strategic management of the service delivering efficiency savings
 - A culture of excellence in adoption practice through strong partnerships with the Voluntary Adoption Agency (VAA)
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 In July 2019 the DfE made available grant funding of £645k to undertake adoption recruitment activity on a national and regional scale, to further support the adoption regionalisation reforms that were introduced in 2017. The Department for Education (DfE) and Regional Adoption Agency Leaders group (RAA's) agreed collectively to pool the resources and deposit the funds into one RAA and deliver a national adopter recruitment campaign. One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY) acted as a central repository for the grant funds on behalf of all RAAs.
- 2.5 Following the success of the adopter recruitment campaign funded from the first grant, the DfE awarded a further £1m in 2020 to continue the adoption recruitment activity.
- 2.6 This year the DfE has extended the grant to cover the recruitment of a national team to improve the adoption system nationally, including the agreement to appoint a national strategic lead. OAWY are acting as the host to the national team and already have two members of staff within the service working as part of the national work regarding the recruitment of adopters.

3. Main issues

- 3.1 This funding the government is intended to support the development of a national team and the appointment of a National Strategic Lead post is crucial to the development of this work.
- 3.2 The DfE and RAA leaders agreed collectively to pool the resources, working collaboratively to achieve better outcomes for children waiting for adoption.

- 3.3 The RAA leaders group are working together to further develop a national approach to raising awareness generally and addressing some regional priorities. The agreement has been reached to appoint a National Strategic Lead and project team to lead the work and Leeds have agreed to be the host local authority for this work through the OAWY.
- 3.4 The position needs to be established on the staffing structure of OAWY and the job description has been developed by the RAA leaders group in consultation with the Department of Education and the Association of Directors of Children services (ADCS).

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 Consultation has taken place with the RAA leaders group and the Head of Service for OAWY and representatives from the DfE and ADCS to explore options on how to best to achieve the appointment to this new National Adoption Strategic lead position and to achieve positive outcomes for prospective adopters and children awaiting adoption.
- 4.1.2 The Executive Member for Children, Families and Adult Social care has been consulted about the decision to accept the grant for the purpose of establishing a national team and national strategic lead as has the Chair of the Children's Scrutiny Board.

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 2020-25 Best Council Plan priority to make Leeds a Child Friendly City where families are supported to give children the best start in life.

Climate Emergency

- 4.3.3 The RAA leaders group and the national lead will consider the environmental impact of their approach to their work. 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 for this post is additional revenue funding that is ring fenced to deliver the outcomes specified in the DfE grant agreement regarding the appointment of a national adoption team, including that of a National Adoption Strategic Lead
- 4.4.2 The grant will be managed by OAWY on behalf of all RAAs, with Leeds acting as the lead local authority.
- 4.4.3 This pooled resource will provide best value for money across all RAAs as it will provide an opportunity to develop and improve the adoption services for children across England.
- 4.4.4 The job description has been job evaluated and is a Director 65% level.
- 4.4.5 Director 65% salary band 1-5 is 1 £77,773- £83,464; with on costs band 1-5 £99,942 - £107,341 depending on the level of experience of the successful candidate.

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

- 4.5.1 This is a significant operational decision.

4.6 Risk management

- 4.6.1 Leeds, as the lead local authority, will receive and manage the grant for this post 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.
- 4.6.2 The position is a temporary position and will be filled on a secondment basis with the appointee remaining on the terms and conditions of their host local authority. Should the postholder not be on a secondment basis the contract will be temporary for 1 year and therefore presents no financial risk for the council.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 This proposal forms a good basis for supporting our ambition to support children who are within the adoption system 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 add the position of a National Adoption Strategic Lead to the staffing establishment of OAWY at Director 65% level. This is a temporary position for 1 year.

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.