

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration. In all appropriate instances we will need to carry out an equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impact assessment.

This form:

- can be used to prompt discussion when carrying out your impact assessment
- should be completed either during the assessment process or following completion of the assessment
- should include a brief explanation where a section is not applicable

| | |
|---|---|
| Directorate: Children & Families | Service area: One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY) |
| Lead person: Michelle Rawlings | Contact number: 07712 216 979 |
| Date of the equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impact assessment: March 2022 | |

1. Title: One Adoption West Yorkshire

Is this a:

Strategy /Policy

 Service / Function

 Other

If other, please specify

2. Members of the assessment team:

| Name | Organisation | Role on assessment team e.g., service user, manager of service, specialist |
|-------------------|---------------------|---|
| Michelle Rawlings | OAWY | Head of Service |
| Rhian Beynon | OAWY | Service Delivery Manager |
| Julie Chew | OAWY | Service Delivery Manager |
| Nicola Steele | OAWY | Service Delivery Manager |
| Richard Stevenson | OAWY | Practice Improvement & Development Manager |

3. Summary of strategy, policy, service or function that was assessed:

OAWY was the first Regional Adoption Agency to go-live on the 1st of April 2017. OAWY is made up of the 5 separate Local Authority adoption teams which provided adoption services for West Yorkshire; Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds, and Wakefield and is the largest adoption agency in the North of England.

OAWY is designed to offer an innovative and adopter friendly approach to adoption recruitment, adoption support, and family finding for children and prospective adopters as well as high quality training.

By working together, we will provide even higher levels of expertise and support to our adoptive families at all stages of the adoption process and with the inspiration and direction provided by our adoptive parents we will ensure that we provide the kind of support that families want and need.

We want every child to have a family to grow up in and we need more adoptive parents to play a vital role in fulfilling this vision. Adoption is an exciting and challenging experience for everyone involved. We are seeking adoptive parents from all walks of life to reflect the range of children we have who are looking for a secure home with patience, understanding and loving kindness.

This Assessment looks at how OAWY considers Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration throughout the adoption process. It will also highlight areas that need to be improved and the actions that will be taken to address them.

4. Scope of the equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impact assessment
 (Complete - 4a. if you are assessing a strategy, policy or plan and 4b. if you are assessing a service, function or event)

4a. Strategy, policy or plan
 (Please tick the appropriate box below)

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| The vision and themes, objectives or outcomes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The vision and themes, objectives or outcomes and the supporting guidance | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A specific section within the strategy, policy or plan | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Please provide detail: | |

4b. Service, function, event
 please tick the appropriate box below

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|---|-------------------------------------|
| The whole service (Including service provision and employment) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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| A specific part of the service (Including service provision or employment or a specific section of the service) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Procuring of a service (By contract or grant) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <p>Please provide detail: This assessment will cover the three core elements of service delivery; Recruitment and Assessment, Family Finding and Adoption Support and the services users; the child/ adopted person, prospective adopters, adopters, birth parent and staff.</p> | |

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| <p>5. Fact finding – what do we already know Make a note here of all information you will be using to carry out this assessment. This could include previous consultation, involvement, research, results from perception surveys, equality monitoring and customer/ staff feedback. (Priority should be given to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration related information)</p> <p>There are no restrictions to adoptive applicants regardless of age, religion/ belief/ faith, disability, gender, sexual orientation or race provided they are deemed able to meet the needs of the child/ children who have a plan for adoption.</p> <p>Adopters need resilience, skills and openness to parenting in a therapeutic way, regardless of age, gender, religion, sex etc.</p> <p>Children who wait longer to be adopted generally have one of more of the following characteristics: they are older (5+ years old), BME, have a disability or are part of a sibling group.</p> | | |
| | Strengths | Weaknesses |
| Age | Legally you must be at least 21 years old to adopt. Age restrictions for people that age or above applying to adopt are flexible provided they meet all the relevant criteria and can meet the needs of the children with a plan for adoption. | There is a shortage of adopters for older children. The lack of placements could have a negative impact on this group as these children may be placed out of their local area which in turn may impact on their continued contact with their family and local support structures (see section 12, action 1 & 2). |
| Religion/ Belief / Faith | OAWY accepts adoption applicants of all religions/ beliefs/ faiths provided they meet all the relevant criteria and can meet the needs of the children with a plan for adoption. This ensures there is potential for a wide range of | There are not always adequate numbers of potential adopters or children to meet the religious/ belief/ faith needs of either party (see section 12, action 1 & 2). |

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| | adopters recruited to meet the range of children needing placement. | |
| Disability | <p>Adopters with a disability can adopt. The services of the medical advisor are used to ensure decision making is always done to prevent discrimination, whilst ensuring the needs of the child are paramount.</p> <p>OAWY offers a range of key services virtually (i.e., information events, training and support) throughout the adoption journey. This means people who may struggle or be unable to travel to events still have access.</p> | <p>Potentially some adoptive applicants with a disability may view this as negatively impacting upon their right to adopt. For example, the issue of mental health or a life limiting health issue/ disability can be a limiting factor when deciding someone is suitable to adopt a child. However, the needs of the children to have stability and care throughout their childhood must remain the primary focus and therefore some applicants may feel they have been discriminated against.</p> <p>Some children, because of their complex needs, often wait longer for permanent placements. There is a need for more Adopters to offer a permanent home for disabled children. In particular children on the Autistic spectrum are particularly hard to place and consideration needs to be given to recruiting and supporting adopters who have the skills to look after these children (see section 12, action 1 & 2).</p> |
| Gender | <p>Gender identity does not impact a person's ability to adopt provided they meet all the relevant criteria and are able to meet the needs of the children with a plan for adoption.</p> <p>Although there are no gender considerations in recruiting Adopters and the service operates according to our own anti-discriminatory practice the main carer within the household within adoption is often female. A negative impact of this may be that there is a potential for male adopters (Dads) to feel isolated. Therefore, we have a regional support group for dads.</p> <p>Gender variance training delivered by New Family Social (NFS) to 75 social work staff in 2021/22. Staff can also access free webinars offered by NFS through our membership which focus on</p> | <p>Single adopters at times are not aware they can adopt on their own and applicants from single males are few. However, our marketing does make clear it is not an issue (No action required).</p> |

| | | |
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| | gender, sexuality and relationships. There is also introductory training on PAL through LCC. | |
| Sexual Orientation | <p>OAWY recruitment procedures are anti-discriminatory and welcome applicants who are LGBT+ provided they meet all the relevant criteria and can meet the needs of the children with a plan for adoption.</p> <p>The assessment process for adopters conforms to the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (Coram BAAF) guidance.</p> <p>Some OAWY social workers have been trained in assessing gay and lesbian adopters.</p> <p>OAWY attends regional Pride events annually to promote adoption.</p> | <p>OAWY are successful in recruiting gay and lesbian adopters however there may still be perceived barriers for this group. OAWY's marketing promotes adoption to members of the LBGT+ community and actively supports LGBT+ national events and campaigns (No specific action required).</p> |
| Race | <p>Adopters from any racial background are recruited by OAWY, provided they meet all the relevant criteria and can meet the needs of the children with a plan for adoption.</p> <p>There is a transracial support group for adopters.</p> <p>The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement led to OAWY forming a BLM working group and action plan for 2021/22. This plan includes actions on access to services and support, training for adopters and staff, recruitment and representation. The OAWY BAME staff group will decide if a specific BLM action plan is needed for 2022/23 or if actions should be added to the strategic SIP.</p> | <p>Recruiting adopters for children from non-white British backgrounds particularly children with mixed heritage remains a challenge. Resources are available to purchase appropriate adoptive placements for children and we have a growing number of out of authority placements that reflect this (see section 12, action 1 & 2).</p> |
| <p>Are there any gaps in equality and diversity information? Please provide detail:</p> <p>N/A.</p> | | |
| <p>Action required:</p> | | |

See section 12.

6. Wider involvement – have you involved groups of people who are most likely to be affected or interested

Yes

No

Please provide detail:

This document was emailed to Sam Parkin at Adoption UK for review and comment. Feedback received March 2022.

Action required:

N/A

7. Who may be affected by this activity?

please tick all relevant and significant equality characteristics, stakeholders and barriers that apply to your strategy, policy, service or function

Equality characteristics

Age

Carers

Disability

Gender reassignment

Race

Religion or Belief

Sex (male or female)

Sexual orientation

Other

(Other can include – marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, and those areas that impact on or relate to equality: tackling poverty and improving health and well-being)

Please specify: n/a

Stakeholders

Services users

Employees

Trade Unions

Partners

Members

Suppliers

Other please specify

Potential barriers.

Built environment

Location of premises and services

Information and communication

Customer care

Timing

Stereotypes and assumptions

Cost

Consultation and involvement

Financial exclusion

Employment and training

specific barriers to the strategy, policy, services or function

Please specify

8. Positive and negative impact

Think about what you are assessing (scope), the fact-finding information, the potential positive and negative impact on equality characteristics, stakeholders and the effect of the barriers

8a. Positive impact:

Recruitment & Assessment of Adopters

1. The OAWY website signposts prospective adopters to Information Events which are held virtually. Events being held virtually means that prospective adopters don't have any issues with the access limitations some building, and locations may have.
2. OAWY accepts and actively recruit adopters regardless of age, religion/ belief/ faith, disability, gender, sexual orientation or race if they are deemed to be able to meet the needs of the child/ children who have a plan for adoption.
3. The service focuses on effective partnership working to continue the improvement of services to children affected by adoption irrespective of age, religion/ belief/ faith, disability, gender, sexual orientation or race. Our website uses positive images to promote our approach to equality within our advertising, see Appendix A.
4. OAWY have approved a diverse range of adopters, including same sex couples and single people. We have undertaken specific LGBT+ recruitment for adoptive families.
5. Adopter preparation events are held at virtually or at venues which can meet the needs of adopters with a disability.

Family Finding for Children

6. Profiling Events, which are aimed at approved adopters and adopters in assessment, are held virtually making them accessible to both internal and external adopters. This enables people to obtain information early about the reality of the children OAWY are seeking to place.
7. Fun days (post Covid-19) will be held in an accessible and child friendly locations – taking place at least 4 times per year aimed at approved adopters and adopters in assessment. Fun days allow a focused event for children who are deemed harder to place, typically older (5+ years old), BME, have a disability or are part of a sibling group. These events are designed to give children a greater chance of a timely match.
8. OAWY has a robust approach to ensuring that children’s religious and cultural needs are met through effective matching meetings identifying need and support plans.
9. OAWY seeks to identify and meet any additional support needs adopters may have to care for children from different ethnic, cultural and religious groups and children with disabilities.
10. OAWY uses Link Maker to identify placements for those children who wait longer.
11. OAWY attends national exchange days and activity days (when they are held). These events allow OAWY to identify adopters who can meet the specific needs of the child with a plan for adoption.

Adoption Support

12. OAWY provides generic support services to all affected by adoption (birth relations, adopters and adoptees).
13. Adoption Support Assessments are based upon the individual needs of the person/people.
14. Initial advice and information are free, and most services are free to access.
15. Adoption Support is provided via a range of accessible means.

Adopters

16. Adopter Voice are an adopter led group that work with OAWY to ‘challenge, support and input into the development of adoption services at local, regional and national levels so that they are adopter led’. Adopter Voice is available to all adopters and encourages adopters to become involved and/ or access support on-line.
17. A Peer Mentor service is available to OAWY adopters.
18. A support group for dads has been in place since June 2021.
19. A transracial adopter’s support group has been in place since January 2022.
20. Adoption UK provides an arena for all adopters to access information and advice -

<https://www.adoptionuk.org/>

21. We are members of New Family social, a LGBT+ group who offer specific support to the LGBT+ community of adopters. There are support groups across the region for single adopters.

22. We run a number of monthly online support groups for adoptive parents including specific ones for single adopters, dads and adopters who adopt a child of different race or culture to themselves.

Birth Parent Groups

23. OAWY work with PAC-UK (the country's largest independent Adoption Support Agency) to learn from feedback from birth parents - <http://www.pac-uk.org/>

Adopted Teens

24. OAWY work with ADOPTTEENS (adopted teens identity) to learn from feedback from adopted teenagers. ADOPTTEENS is a project that was originally set up by the Yorkshire & Humber adoption consortium (a group of local authority adoption teams and voluntary adoption agencies) back in 2014. Their vision is to offer adopted teenagers their own space online and as part of a group that has the power to speak out and make a difference! - <https://www.adopteens.org.uk/>

Tweens (9 to 12 years old)

25. OAWY runs a range of Tween support groups aimed at children aged 9 to 12 years.

Staffing

26. OAW have diverse interview panels when possible.

27. Social workers are trained regarding equality and diversity issues in their degree in social work.

28. All staff events are held at least twice a year which often have a training element to them i.e., unconscious bias, cultural awareness/ understanding, BLM.

29. All staff at the agency are working toward the Cultural Cohesion Quality Mark.

Specialist Advice

30. We commission a service for Inter Country Adoption from the Yorkshire adoption agency. All inter country adopters attend specialist training specific to adopting from overseas provided by this agency.

Action required:

See section 12.

8b. Negative impact:

Recruitment and Assessment of Adopters

1. There are insufficient adopters with a diverse background coming forward to adopt (see section 12, action 1 & 2).
2. OAWY have a high level of interest from the south Asian communities to adopt full Asian babies rather than older children of mixed ethnicity (see section 12, action 1 & 2).

*Please note: Work has been undertaken with My Adoption Family to ensure that the messaging around adoption is clear regarding the needs of children waiting in England for adoption. Asking adopters to consider children of mixed heritage and older children and sibling groups is a key priority when working with the faith and community organisations to ensure that those coming forward are clear about the need for the service to prioritise those who can consider a range of children.

Family Finding for Children

3. There can be unconscious bias from Children's Social Workers regarding considering single females and males for sibling groups they have waiting (see section 12, action 4).
4. Children cannot always be matched with families that meet their own cultural heritage and social workers are not always willing to consider families with a different heritage from the child's (see section 12, action 1 and 2).

Adoption Support

5. The feedback from 2020 adopter survey highlighted a need for more flexibility in the training and support we offer in terms of timings and day delivered. This would improve access for full-time parents and/ or working parents (see section 12, action 5).

Action Required

See section 12.

9. Will this activity promote strong and positive relationships between the groups/communities identified?

Yes

No

Please provide detail:

OAWY will always work to build and maintain positive and open relationships for people aiming to or being involved in the adoption process.

Action required:

None.

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| 10. Does this activity bring groups/communities into increased contact with each other? (e.g., in schools, neighbourhood, workplace) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Please provide detail: |
| Action required: None. |

| |
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| 11. Could this activity be perceived as benefiting one group at the expense of another? (e.g., where your activity/decision is aimed at adults could it have an impact on children and young people) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Please provide detail: There could be the perception that certain groups are less likely to adopt than others. OAWY will always promote that this is not the case. The primary focus of OAWY will always be the child. The decision to place a child will be based upon the individual's ability to meet the child's ongoing needs and not based upon any of their diversity characteristics. |
| Action required: None. |

12. Equality, diversity, cohesion and integration action plan

(Insert all your actions from your assessment here, set timescales, measures and identify a lead person for each action)

| Action | Timescale | Measure | Lead person |
|--|------------|---|-------------------|
| Action 1 - Develop an innovative & bespoke family finding/ matching process for children who wait longer. *Project underway, started 2019/20. | 31/03/2022 | A new approach to reduce waiting time for children who wait longer piloted. | Nicola Steele |
| Action 2 – Recruit and assess a diverse range of adopters to meet the needs of the children. *Covered in the 2022/23 SIP | 31/03/2022 | Improved wait times for children from diverse backgrounds. | Michelle Rawlings |
| Action 3 – Implement Black Lives Matter action plan, see Appendix B. | 31/03/2022 | BLM action plan actions created, assigned and monitored. | BLM working group |
| Action 4 – Identify and deliver appropriate training on unconscious bias for OAWY staff and children’s social workers. *Covered in the 2022/23 SIP (CCQM) | 31/03/2022 | Training delivered to staff. | SLT |
| Action 5 – Review existing support and training offer and identify which can be made more accessible in terms of times/ days delivered. *Covered in the 2022/23 SIP | 31/03/2022 | Support/ training offered with a wider variety of times/ days. | Julie Chew |

13. Governance, ownership and approval

State here who has approved the actions and outcomes from the equality, diversity, cohesion and integration impact assessment

| Name | Job Title | Date |
|---|--------------|-------------------|
| Michelle Rawlings | Head of OAWY | March 2022 |
| Date impact assessment completed | | March 2022 |

14. Monitoring progress for equality, diversity, cohesion and integration actions (please tick)

As part of Service Planning performance monitoring

As part of Project monitoring

Update report will be agreed and provided to the appropriate board
Please specify which board

Other (please specify)

15. Publishing

Though **all** key decisions are required to give due regard to equality the council **only** publishes those related to **Executive Board, Full Council, Key Delegated Decisions** or a **Significant Operational Decision**.

A copy of this equality impact assessment should be attached as an appendix to the decision-making report:

- Governance Services will publish those relating to Executive Board and Full Council.
- The appropriate directorate will publish those relating to Delegated Decisions and Significant Operational Decisions.
- A copy of all other equality impact assessments that are not to be published should be sent to equalityteam@leeds.gov.uk for record.

Complete the appropriate section below with the date the report and attached assessment was sent:

| | |
|--|-----------------------|
| For Executive Board or Full Council – sent to Governance Services | Date sent: TBC |
| For Delegated Decisions or Significant Operational Decisions – sent to appropriate Directorate | Date sent: TBC |
| All other decisions – sent to equalityteam@leeds.gov.uk | Date sent: TBC |

Appendix A



Who can adopt



Steps to adoption



The children



Events



Support



About One Adoption



Information and support for first parents and relatives



Information for people who have been adopted



Partner or step parent adoption

Children from African, Caribbean, mixed ethnicity and Gypsy Roma backgrounds

In the West Yorkshire area especially we have a shortage of prospective adopters coming forward who can meet the needs of children from African, Caribbean, mixed ethnicity and Gypsy Roma backgrounds. If you are considering adoption and feel you can meet the needs of these children, please get in touch.



Children with unknown health needs or additional needs

All children need secure and loving homes. We are looking for adopters willing to help meet the needs of children with additional health needs or disabilities. Sometimes we do not know what the likely health or developmental outcomes may be for a child, for example if they have a chromosome abnormality. We need adopters who are willing to accept and understand these uncertainties and help the child develop and succeed at their own pace. With the right support and training, we aim to help every child reach their full potential.



