

National Adoption Team – staffing establishment change

Date: 31/05/2022

Report of: National Adoption Strategic Lead

Report to: Director of Children and Families

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

What is this report about?

Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

- This report seeks approval to increase the staffing within the National Adoption Team, on behalf of Regional Adoption Agencies (RAA's), to undertake activity on a national and regional scale in support of the National Adoption Strategy, with the Council acting as the lead local authority.
- This report seeks to increase the staffing with 1 Project Support officer (SO2), 1 Programme manager (Dir 45%) , 1 Voice and Influence Coordinator (PO5) and 1 project manager (PO6).
- This proposal seeks to make permanent the existing temporary posts of National Adoption Strategic Lead, 1.5 project managers and 1 business support officer.
- This proposal 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.

Recommendations

- a) The Director of Children and Families is recommended to approve the proposals in this report for the Council to increase the staffing establishment within the National Adoption Team, on behalf of all RAAs, to undertake activity on a national and regional scale in support of the National Adoption Strategy, with the Council acting as the lead local authority. The positions are as follows:
 - a. 1 Project Support Officer (SO2)
 - b. 1 FTE Voice and Influence Coordinator (PO5)
 - c. 1 FTE Project Manager (PO6)
 - d. 1 FTE Programme Manager (Dir 45%)
- b) To agree making the current temporary positions permanent
 - 1.5 Project Manager (Position Numbers 50483392 & 50512588)
 - 1 National Adoption Strategic Lead (Position Number 50512139)
 - 1 Business Support Officer (Position Number 50512589)

Why is the proposal being put forward?

- 1 The National Adoption Strategy set by government sets out a bold vision to deliver excellence in adoption services across England. The aim is to ensure that best practice becomes the norm so that every adopted child and their family can access the services and support they need wherever they live and maximise children's outcomes in the short and long term.
- 2 The aim is for all adoptive children to be found permanent loving families as quickly as possible where they will be safe and secure; adopters are recruited from all communities so that we have a range of approved parents able and well prepared to meet the needs of children waiting to be adopted and that children and families get the support they need when they need it.
- 3 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

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 Agencies (VAA's)

- 4 The DfE has made available grant funding to improve the adoption system for vulnerable children and young people since 2019. The grant for 2022/23 – 2024/25 is intended for activity on a national and regional scale in support of the National Adoption Strategy. Funding includes grants to further boost adopter recruitment (£1.5m); support improvements in early permanence (3m); national matching of children and families (£5m); national commissioning of adoption support (£3.5m); and developing Centres of Excellence (£5m).
- 5 This funding is available for a period of three years, 2022/23 to 2025/25 and will be made available by way of a Section 14 grant agreement.
- 6 The Department for Education (DfE) and RAA leaders have again agreed collectively to pool the resources, with One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY) acting as a central repository for the grant funds on behalf of all RAAs. As host of OAWY, Leeds City Council is the lead Local Authority for managing the grant budget and commissioning.
- 7 Given the increases in the grant the National Adoption Strategic Lead has discussed with RAA leaders increasing the staffing to ensure that the activity and projects can be progressed, and objectives achieved.
- 8 The existing temporary posts of National Strategic lead, project managers and business support officer to be made permanent and the staffing establishment to be increased with 1

Programme Manager (Dir 45%) 1 Project support officer (SO2), 1 project manager (PO6) and 1 Voice and Influence coordinator (PO5). The latter will be offered as a secondment for an initial period of 1 year and a decision then being made if to be required as a permanent position.

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards Affected:

Have ward members been consulted?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
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- 1 No individual wards in Leeds will be impacted by these proposals because the work will be delivered to support the National Adoption Strategy at a national and regional level.
- 2 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.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 3 There are no particular legal or statutory requirements to undertake consultation as part of this decision. Consultation has taken place regularly at regional RAA meetings with the National Adoption Strategic Lead and representatives from the DfE and RAA leaders to explore options on how to best continue management of the grant to achieve positive outcomes for prospective adopters and children awaiting adoption. The RAA leaders have agreed formally through their governance group that they wish for the National lead to be made permanent. Formal consultation has also taken place with the Trade Unions in Leeds.

What are the resource implications?

- 4 The funding for the staffing of existing positions and the new positions is additional revenue funding that is ring fenced to deliver the outcomes specified in the DfE grant agreement.
- 5 The total value of grant funding to be received from the DfE is £19.5m for the period 2022/23 to 2024/25. The funding is available in April 2022. Funding will be made available in each of the financial years: £3m in 2022/23; £7.5m in 2023/24; and £9m in 2024/25. The grant includes costs for strategic leadership and for host costs such as finance, commissioning and management.
- 6 The posts to be added to the structure are costed as follows:
 - 6.1.1 1 Project Support Officer (SO2) £ 42,277 with oncosts
 - 6.1.2 1 Voice and Influence Coordinator (PO5) £59,641 with oncosts
 - 6.1.3 1 Project Manager (PO6) £62,335 with oncosts
 - 6.1.4 1 Programme Manager (Dir 45%) £77,077 with oncosts

Discussions are underway about an operational manager to oversee administration, data, marketing and communications staff but this is not something that is to be progressed at the present time as further exploration is required.

What are the legal implications?

- 7 This is a significant operational decision

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 8 Leeds, as the lead local authority, will receive and manage the funding on behalf of all RAAs. The grant is a section 14 grant and will be claimed for quarterly in arrears and staff employed by Leeds will be funded by the grant. The Voice and influence position will be offered as a 1-year secondment initially to establish if the position is needed beyond this timeframe and if so a permanent position will be progressed.
- 9 Given the funding is for three years the other existing temporary positions and new positions will be made permanent positions, with staff being made clear that the funding is for a 3-year period. There are some risks associated with this as staff will have employment rights and should the funding cease there may be a need for redeployment of staff or redundancy. The permanent positions are generally for staff whose skills could be transferable within the council. Staff employed will be made aware of the funding arrangements for the posts and contingency funds will be made available within the ring-fenced funding envelope to reduce the risk to Leeds should redundancy costs be incurred.

Does this proposal support the council's 3 Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth Health and Wellbeing Climate Emergency

- 10 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.
- 11 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.

Options, timescales and measuring success

a) What other options were considered?

- 12 N/A

b) How will success be measured?

- 13 The RAA Leader's Group is responsible for ensuring projects and activities deliver the intended outcomes of the grant and that performance is robustly monitored against the priorities of the National Adoption Strategy.

c) What is the timetable for implementation?

- 14 It is anticipated the recommendations be implemented immediately to progress the activity needed to meet the objectives of the grant.

Appendices

Background papers



Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Screening

Appendix 1

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.

A **screening** process can help judge relevance and provides a record of both the **process** and **decision**. Screening should be a short, sharp exercise that determines relevance for all new and revised strategies, policies, services and functions. Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.
 - whether or not equality, diversity, cohesion and integration is being/has already been considered, and
 - whether or not it is necessary to carry out an impact assessment.

Directorate: Children and Families	Service area: National Adoption team
Lead person: Sarah Johal	Contact number: 07891277316

1. Title:	Increase staffing establishment of national adoption team		
Is this a:			
<input type="checkbox"/> Strategy / Policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> S ^x e / Function	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
If other, please specify			

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening

Decision to increase the staffing in the national adoption team

3. Relevance to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration

All the council's strategies/policies, services/functions affect service users, employees or the wider community – city wide or more local. These will also have a greater/lesser relevance to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.

The following questions will help you to identify how relevant your proposals are.

When considering these questions think about age, carers, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and any other relevant characteristics (for example socio-economic status, social class, income, unemployment, residential location or family background and education or skills levels).

Questions	Yes	No
Is there an existing or likely differential impact for the different equality characteristics?		x
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns about the policy or proposal?		x
Could the proposal affect how our services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom?		x
Could the proposal affect our workforce or employment practices?		x
Does the proposal involve or will it have an impact on <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eliminating unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment• Advancing equality of opportunity• Fostering good relations		x

If you have answered **no** to the questions above please complete **sections 6 and 7**

If you have answered **yes** to any of the above and;

- Believe you have already considered the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration within your proposal please go to **section 4**.
- Are not already considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration within your proposal please go to **section 5**.

4. Considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration

If you can demonstrate you have considered how your proposals impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration you have carried out an impact assessment.

Please provide specific details for all three areas below (use the prompts for guidance).

- **How have you considered equality, diversity, cohesion and integration?**

(think about the scope of the proposal, who is likely to be affected, equality related information, gaps in information and plans to address, consultation and engagement activities (taken place or planned) with those likely to be affected)

- **Key findings**

(think about any potential positive and negative impact on different equality characteristics, potential to promote strong and positive relationships between groups, potential to bring groups/communities into increased contact with each other, perception that the proposal could benefit one group at the expense of another)

- **Actions**

(think about how you will promote positive impact and remove/ reduce negative impact)

5. If you are **not** already considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration you **will need to carry out an impact assessment.**

Date to scope and plan your impact assessment:	
Date to complete your impact assessment	
Lead person for your impact assessment (Include name and job title)	

6. Governance, ownership and approval

Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening

Name	Job title	Date
Sarah Johal	National Adoption Strategic Lead	31.5.22

7. Publishing

This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given. If you are not carrying out an independent impact assessment the screening document will need to be published.

If this screening relates to a **Key Delegated Decision, Executive Board, full Council or a Significant Operational Decision** a copy should be emailed to Corporate Governance and will be published along with the relevant report.

A copy of **all other** screening's should be sent to equalityteam@leeds.gov.uk. For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file (but not published).

Date screening completed	31/5/2022
If relates to a Key Decision - date sent to Corporate Governance	
Any other decision – date sent to Equality Team (equalityteam@leeds.gov.uk)	