



## Report of the Director of Children's Service

### Scrutiny Board (Children's Services)

Date: 5th February 2009

Subject: Recommendation Tracking Further Detail – Adoption In Leeds: Staff Recruitment

<b>Electoral Wards Affected:</b> All
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<b>Specific Implications For:</b>
Equality and Diversity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Community Cohesion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Narrowing the Gap <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### 1.0 Background

- 1.1 Scrutiny Board's regularly carry out detailed reviews of particular areas of work in Leeds to establish a better understanding of them and make recommendations for improvement in the future.
- 1.2 In March 2007 the Children's Services Scrutiny Board published a report on Adoption in Leeds following a review of the service. This had included researching the adoptions work of other local authorities and as a result of this the Board made a recommendation that:  
  
'the Director of Social Services considers whether a similar organisational approach to that taken in Liverpool would benefit adoption in Leeds, and reports back to us with a view within three months'.
- 1.3 In response to this recommendation the Board received a number of updates as part of their regular recommendation monitoring process. The full chronology of responses received is attached at appendix 'A'.
- 1.4 At its January 2009 meeting the Board raised concerns over the time taken for the recruitment of additional adoption officers, originally discussed in the July 2008 report to the Board. Members requested that details be provided to explain the time taken from the original proposal to make the additional appointments, up to advertising for the posts.

## **2.0 Main Issues**

- 2.1 In the July 2008 update to the Scrutiny Board, members were informed that to help to shorten the timescales for assessments, 3 additional adoptions officers were to be appointed.
- 2.2 Following the reporting to scrutiny of the intention to recruit the new posts, work commenced to draw up the necessary paperwork and proposals. The delegated officer decision, taken by the then Chief Officer for Children and Young People's Social Care, which endorsed the original proposal, was taken in August 2008.
- 2.3 After this however, further thought had to be given to the best way to carry forward the plans in view of emerging work necessary at the time to consider capacity and effectiveness within the fostering service (whose work links closely to that of the adoptions service) and particularly in light of financial pressures emerging during the year. This led to the update provided to scrutiny in October 2008 outlining the necessity to reduce the original proposal of three posts down to two and a half.
- 2.4 Once this refined proposal was in place and consideration had been given to the wider implications for the existing fostering and adoption team structures, work could then move ahead to complete the necessary paperwork to carry out the recruitment process. This did not take place as efficiently as should have been the case. The Chief Officer for Children and Young people's Social Care approved the revised proposals in October 2008 shortly before leaving the authority. The transition period between the former Chief Officer for Children and Young People's Social Care's departure, and the full implementation of the interim arrangements that replaced this, meant that the next stage of the process was not carried out as quickly as officers would have wished.
- 2.5 Once the interim arrangements had been fully established the necessary HR paperwork was completed and two of the posts have now been advertised.

## **3.0 Key Learning**

- 3.1 Officers recognise that this process could and should have been completed more efficiently. It was however necessary to review the original proposals (for 3 posts) in light of emerging issues within the fostering service and particularly the changing in-year financial situation.
- 3.2 In establishing the interim leadership arrangements for Children and Young People's Social Care and as part of the wider review of systems in place, the delegated decision-making process in this area has been considered and arrangements are now in place to ensure it operates more efficiently and consistently.

## **4.0 Conclusion**

- 4.1 The recruitment of additional officers will create valuable extra capacity within the Adoptions Service in Leeds. The process to ensure this recruitment takes place has not been as efficient as officers would want, there has been learning from this and arrangements are in place aiming to ensure similar decisions run more smoothly in future. Recruitment to these posts will now be finalised as soon as possible, with the closing date for applications being 5<sup>th</sup> February.

## **Background Papers**

Children's Services Scrutiny Board Report : Adoptions in Leeds - March 2007