

Report of the Deputy Director (Children's Social Care) to the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel to be held on 8th November 2017.

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Subject:

One Adoption West Yorkshire. Report of Progress in the first 6 months

Summary statement:

1. Bradford adoption functions as specified in the partnership agreement were delegated on the 1st April 2017 to Leeds City Council and One Adoption West Yorkshire formally opened.
2. This report provides a summary of the developments of the service in the first six months of becoming established

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Portfolio:

Children's Services

Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Children's Services

1. SUMMARY

Bradford adoption functions as specified in the partnership agreement were delegated on the 1st April 2017 to Leeds City Council and One Adoption West Yorkshire formally opened.

This report provides a summary of the developments of the service in the first six months of becoming established

2. BACKGROUND

Bradford, Kirklees, Calderdale and Wakefield adoption functions as specified in the partnership agreement were delegated on 1st April 2017 to Leeds City Council and the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), One Adoption West Yorkshire formally opened on that date.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Main Issues

Staffing

3.1 Senior Leadership Team

One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY) opened as Regional Adoption Agency on Monday 3 April 2017. It is led by the Senior Leadership Team of:

- Sarah Johal, Head of Service
- Mary Brudenell, Service Delivery Manager
- Julie Chew, Service Delivery Manager
- Mandy Prout, Service Delivery Manager
- Aretha Hanson, Business Support Manager

3.2 Sarah has overall responsibility for the operations of One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY) and she will undertake the role of the agency decision maker for adopters. Mary will take a strategic lead on family finding, while taking on the line management of staff in the Bradford and Wakefield offices and links with those Local authorities. Julie will take a strategic lead on adoption support, with line management for staff in the Leeds office and linking with that Local Authority (LA). Mandy will take a strategic lead on recruitment and assessment, line manager for staff in the Halifax and Huddersfield offices and linking with Calderdale and Kirklees LA. Aretha will manage the administrative business support to all of the teams based in the 5 offices. She will have the strategic lead on seeking rationalisation of business processes, where beneficial and practicable.

3.3 The collaboration between the Leeds HR business partner and his counterparts in the other 4 LA's enabled as smooth a transition as possible.

- 3.4 The agency started off with a high number of vacancies across business support and some other roles. Recruitment to posts has continued over the last 6 months with the majority of positions being filled or about to be filled.
- 3.5 There are 3 members of staff retiring or leaving in the next two months, and a number of staff on maternity leave. Additional temporary social worker vacancies have been advertised and recruited to, to assist with demand in family finding and adoption support, rather than using agency cover.
- 3.6 All staff have been provided with a One Adoption mobile phone, which will assist in enabling them to access the Leeds ICT system, including Mosaic the integrated children's case recording system utilised by OAWY. All staff now have a your.name@oneadoptionwy.leeds.gov.uk e mail address.
- 3.7 Key IT training was undertaken throughout June and July on the Mosaic case recording system for all staff & induction training for staff regarding the self service, Performance and Learning system (PALS) and finance system took place from June through to mid-July.

Establishing the culture

- 3.8 Further work has been undertaken with the senior leadership team, the management team and with all staff to establish the vision and values of One Adoption West Yorkshire. The mission statement is clear: "To be an outstanding adoption service achieving outcomes for children without delay; recruit adopters for all children who need adoption with an excellent adoption support service for all affected by adoption."
- 3.9 The vision is to be a listening service; a learning service and a responsive service. This is underpinned by 3 behaviours: Children are the client; a sense of urgency to avoid unnecessary delay and working with families every step of the way.
- 3.10 Work continues with the staff regarding the importance of relationships as we build the OAWY identity with the teams, working in a culture of high support and high challenge.

Practice Focus

Adoption Support

- 3.11 We held a workshop in July with the Adopted Teenagers, At_Id group to get their ideas about how we communicate and develop our work with young people to improve services. An action plan to take this work forward within One Adoption is being developed.
- 3.12 We are progressing the re-commissioning of independent adoption support services for birth parents, adoptive families and adopted adults. We will commission this jointly with North Yorkshire and Humber Regional Adoption Agency. North Yorkshire Council will take a lead on this as they currently oversee the approved provider list for adoption support across Yorkshire & Humber. South Yorkshire are involved in this and have given a commitment in principal to be involved, pending formal agreement from their local authorities. This is with a view to commence from October 2018 with current contracts being extended from March 18- October 18.

Practice Improvement Fund projects

- 3.13 Adoption Support Fund (ASF) - One Adoption West is piloting a regional adoption support fund. The aim of this to improve adoption support across an RAA by: regional commissioning of the ASF and engaging users in the development and testing of regionalised support services; test out how the ASF could be managed in a regionalised structure including how human and financial resources for adoption support will be deployed and to inform future national policy and delivery of ASF and share emerging practice with other RAAs. We have recruited a project manager to oversee this work.
- 3.14 *Centre of Excellence* – this is due to start as a pilot in the west with a view to rolling this out across the wider Yorkshire & Humber region with funding for 2 years. We will be recruiting 3 sector led specialists to lead the development work: a senior clinical psychologist, adoption manager and an education specialist. The objectives of this are to look at a framework for assessment of support needs; to develop multi- disciplinary support for adoptive families and to develop a training and development programme for professionals in the sector.
- 3.15 *Early Permanence Placements (EPP)* - the Voluntary Adoption Alliance have been successful with the practice improvement bid for developing early permanence across the Yorkshire & Humber region and to look at concurrency within the West. This will help us improve our ability to place children earlier for permanence. The objectives of the bid are to:
- Build awareness of EPP including concurrency across the whole region and building a champions network
 - Developing concurrency placements based on model from North West
 - Developing a fostering to permanence pilot for 'harder to place' children

Marketing, Recruitment & Assessment

- 3.16 The One Adoption website has been launched and marketing activity has been undertaken to raise its web profile. The website has been changed and is much improved. There is still work to do and development of this will continue. The enquiries in July were higher than June which is promising. A marketing campaign began across the wider Y & H region from the first week in October in the lead up to national adoption week with an Outdoor campaign and radio campaign.
- 3.17 In West Yorkshire we undertook additional marketing during the last two weeks of September across bus backs and fleet vehicles with posters and billboards to generate more awareness of the brand locally in a run up to the wider campaign.
- 3.18 Prospective adopters are making contact with One Adoption WY and attendance at the information evenings across the area has improved and we are currently exploring bigger venues in the Halifax, Bradford and Wakefield areas.
- 3.19 All recruitment staff have now been trained to use the Attachment Style Interview tool. It will take time to embed the learning from this into the assessment work undertaken it will assist staff in being clear about how we effectively support adopters moving forward.

- 3.20 The teams have made real progress in agreeing the practice across the teams. In summary we now have the following: Standardised information sessions & pre-approval training; a clear stage one process with all new applications on MOSAIC; agreed criteria for recruitment of adopters, templates agreed for case work and a system for the allocation of assessments and booklets produced for adopters.

Children's Planning and Matching

- 3.21 The family finding teams identified that a significant number of children required placements at the outset of the agency . Prompt matches have been identified for panels to consider and profiles of children and adopters are regularly completed and shared at the regional placement group within one adoption. The system has been set up and is now in place with Adoption Match (previously called the Adoption Register) for all children to go on this, allowing us a regional view of the children and families available. A system has been established with the voluntary adoption alliance across the region helping us family find for children to avoid any delay. The Agency are currently planning a series of Family Finding events with the other Yorkshire and Humberside Local Authorities and Voluntary agencies, the first of which is taking place in November .
- 3.22 Operational leads group:- The first meeting took place between Local Authority leads on adoption and the senior leadership team with terms of reference agreed and principles agreed regarding the interface between the local authority and one adoption regarding children's planning and family finding .Following this further work has been undertaken in one adoption and the family finder role within One Adoption has been clarified, with staff having a clear understanding of their role which will assist moving forward.

Business Support

- 3.23 The business support functions of OAWY have now been agreed and progress has been made in setting up systems to support the work of the agency with key processes around the panel work, children's planning and children's tracking developing well.

Information Management and Technology

- 3.24 The migration of existing cases is continuing. This has been slower than anticipated due to issues with business support capacity and IT issues. The transfer of cases is a key priority for the next two months with an aim for all records to be moved over by the 30th November 2017.
- 3.25 The tracker for monitoring children through the adoption process from legal gateway is in place and the data is improving. We have a new URN (Unique Reference Number) (RAA1) and provided the first Adoption Leadership Board (ALB) quarterly data return.
- 3.26 However, IT issues have been problematic with the issues being complex and technical .The difficulties are more pronounced for those staff who have moved

offices and for staff who work across office bases. In summary, the issues are with connectivity and the reliance on Wi-Fi and the intermittent strength; use of the guest Wi-Fi and timescales in requiring login back in; printing; slowness and freezing screens.

- 3.27 Staff based in Bradford have moved to an alternative office base that has temporarily resolved some issues regarding connectivity and the longer term location of these staff is being discussed with colleagues in Bradford.
- 3.28 The regional IT group continues to meet to resolve the issues.

Duty

- 3.29 On the 1st July a One Adoption Duty system was implemented working out of Kernel House following a transitional period. This has been very effective and this service operates from 10am- 4pm each day (3.30pm on Friday) to allow time for staff to get to Kernel House and be ready, with IT support, to take calls from 10am. This will be reviewed in 6 months. The majority of calls on duty relate to adoption support, enquiries from professionals about staff across the region and recruitment enquiries. There are qualified social workers, adoption advisors and business support staff operating duty with a team manager and service manager on a rota basis to ensure the service is effective.

Adoption Panels

- 3.30 Adoption panels have been rationalised to 7 per month sitting in Bradford, Leeds and Huddersfield. They are chaired by two independent adoption panel chairs, Julie Archer and Julia Pearmain. The panel operate out of the OAWY bases (Bradford, Huddersfield and Leeds). The panels make recommendations about proposed matches for all 5 partner LA children, which will be decided upon by the agency decision makers in the 5 LA's. The panels will make recommendations regarding the suitability of prospective adopters to be approved, which will be decided by the OAWY agency decision maker.
- 3.31 Adoption Panels training was undertaken in June and the panel protocol has been agreed with guidance for staff across One adoption and the local authorities been issued.
- 3.32 The process of moving to electronic panel has been completed and panel members have received training and can access ongoing support as they become familiar with using the new system.
- 3.33 A second Adoption Panel Training Day is arranged for 9th November 2017.

Links with Health

- 3.34 The first meeting with health commissioners and providers across west Yorkshire was undertaken to discuss the medical advisor role, now working across the region on adoption panels. Issues around consistency of practice & information provided &

ability to meet demand was discussed. Agreement was reached about developing key standards and performance indicators regarding the role and the merits of considering a West Yorkshire specification about this role. Discussions were also opened at this meeting regarding the centre for excellence and the adoption support fund and this work will continue.

Links with Education

- 3.35 Following early meetings with virtual heads across the region, we have agreed with the virtual head in Leeds will work with us to arrange an Outcomes Based Accountability workshop with key stakeholders across the west with a view to developing a clear action plan for taking this work forward.

Performance Data

- 3.36 Performance Data relating to Bradford Children for quarter 1 and Quarter 2

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2*
Number of ADM Decisions	15	5
Number of Placement Orders Granted	9	10
Number of children matched	6	6
Number of children placed	9	8
Number of children adopted	6	9
%of children leaving care who were adopted	9%	11.5%
Number of disruptions	0	0

*Quarter 2 Data has been provided by the Bradford Performance Team and is still in the process of being verified for the ALB return.

A practice improvement framework has been agreed and attached is the first quarterly performance report for West Yorkshire for your information.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

- 4.1 There are no budget pressures at the current time. Staffing of the agency including the additional temporary staff recruited has been achieved within the existing budget. The Interagency Budget is not predicting an overspend at the current time, however we are aware of the need for placements so this will be kept under review.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

- 5.1 The Head of Service reports to a Management Board made up of senior officers from each local authority. The board meets quarterly and has representation from service users and the voluntary adoption alliance. There is also a Joint Committee of lead elected members who oversee the work of the agency and have met on three occasions to date.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

- 6.1 The Partnership Agreement has been signed by all Directors of Children's Services for Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield. This agreement forms the contractual basis upon which the agency will function. It has key schedules which cover:

- Service specification
- Function of the Joint Committee
- Information Sharing protocol
- Legal context
- Management Board governance arrangements
- Financial protocol
- Assets

- 6.2 Ofsted were notified of the changes to the arrangements in West Yorkshire advising them of the arrangements for Registered Manager status and Adoption Support Services Advisor (ASSA) arrangements.

- 6.3 A Statement of Purpose has been drafted (Appendix 2) and is published on the website.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

There are no implications for this report

7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no implications for this report

7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

There are no implications for this report

7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

There are no implications for this report

7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

There are no implications for this report

7.6 TRADE UNION

There has been ongoing consultation and engagement with affected staff who have transferred into the agency as well as formal consultation with the trade unions. This is ongoing.

7.7 WARD IMPLICATION.

There are no implications for this report

7.8 AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS (for reports to Area Committees only)

Not applicable to this report.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None.

9. OPTIONS

Please refer to recommendations

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporate Parenting Panel is requested to

- a) Note the progress of the agency
- b) Support the progression of these arrangements

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Performance Quarter 1 Report.

Appendix 2 – Statement of Purpose

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None.