



Regional Adoption Agency (One Adoption South Yorkshire)

RAA Business Case V14

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Drive towards Regionalisation

In June 2015, the Department for Education (DfE) published their plans for 'Regionalising Adoption,' setting out the proposals for the establishment of Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs) across the country. The paper gave a clear direction that it is the expectation for all authorities to be part of a RAA by 2020. Further policy statements since then (and following the general election in June 2017) have continued to promote the proposed reforms to adoption services. Indeed, several RAAs are now live including within One Adoption here in Yorkshire and Humber (One Adoption West). In addition, a new wave of local authorities are currently joining the RAA programme. The move towards the creation of RAAs is led by a national agenda to increase the targeted recruitment of prospective adopters and improve timeliness for matching and placement of children with a plan for adoption by creating larger entities with the benefits of scale. There is a risk to authorities that fail to join a regional agency; this would include the government directing how its adoption services would be delivered, in line with other recent interventions in to Children's Services. The South Yorkshire RAA (SYRAA) Implementation Board has been explicit that these structural changes must deliver improved outcomes for service users and their families at same or less cost. This is the expectation of the DfE.

This document describes how establishing a single agency will allow the four authorities to provide a more cohesive, efficient and effective use of resources and development of practice to the benefit of children, adopters and others who gain from adoption services. It proposes that Doncaster Children's Trust will host the RAA, the cost of implementation to be funded by the Department for Education. This document also sets out how the RAA will work with its partners to deliver Adoption Services.

Legislative Requirements:

The provision of an adoption service is a statutory requirement for all unitary authorities. The Adoption and Children Act 2002 provides the structure for an adoption service. Under section 3 of the Act each Council must maintain within its area an adoption service designed to meet the needs of children who may be adopted, their parents, natural parents and former guardians. The development of RAAs does not absolve each local authority of its statutory responsibilities. However, as Barnsley, Rotherham and Sheffield (BRS) and the Trust are public contracting Authorities they are permitted to delegate their functions or cooperate in the discharge of their functions, enabling the development of regional arrangements for the delivery of an adoption service. Further detail of the legal and governance issues is provided in section 3.7.

Delivery Model:

The delivery model identified for the South Yorkshire Regional Adoption Agency (SYRAA), following a detailed options appraisal (2016-18) is that of a co-operative venture between the Four South Yorkshire Adoption Agencies. The RAA will be hosted by Doncaster Children's Services Trust (DCST). This decision is supported by the DfE who have strongly promoted RAAs hosted by Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) or by Local Authorities judged Good or Outstanding by Ofsted. Doncaster Children's Services Adoption service has a judgement of Outstanding. The operating model detailed in this report is informed by best practice, national research findings and analysis of performance within the four South Yorkshire agencies. The 2020/21 objectives of the RAA is to deliver 130 approved adopters and place 154 children annually. Other local RAA's delivery models have meant relocation of staff and staff turnover has been high. Staff in the SYRAA will not move from their current locations, will remain employees of their own authority, only their senior management could change and some reporting lines, but no great changes would occur to disrupt current operations in the short-term, which improves timeliness in the longer term. Indeed, each Local Authority Adoption team will continue their current adoption support, adoption assessments, and family finding until such times as new work streams filter through, which according to other RAA's experience could take up to 12-18 months. Therefore, this gives the SYRAA time to analyse operational issues, to provide staff reassurance, and for the assessment of performance. The financial model detailed in this business plan assumes that each Local Authority and Trust transfer their operational budget for Adoption for 2020/21 into the RAA.

Budget:

The principles of the financial arrangements are on the critical path to approval of the RAA. The challenge is how to balance the goals of the RAA to increase the number of adoptions, driving up demand on all aspects of the service (assessments, support) whilst all funding LAs' are under budgetary pressures. The RAA is expected to deliver 130 approved adopters and place 154 children annually. It is proposed that the Regional Adoption Agency would be funded at the current agreed budgets in year one detailed below:

	Operational Budget with business support £'000	Business Support £'000
Rotherham	1.392m	39K
Barnsley	1.003m	31K
Doncaster	1.240m	35k
Sheffield	1.432m	30K
Total	5.067m	135K

These budgets equate to an existing staff structure of 63.2 to 66 FTE's (across the current four adoption agencies) excluding Business Support. The budgets above for Business Support are the amounts identified by each contributing organisation for business support applicable to the Adoption service.

Start-up Costs The proposed staffing structure for the RAA includes essential additional senior management and business support posts.

- Head of Service up to 86K (hired only in Q4 so 21.5k) Total Cost for 65K from April 2020.
- Performance Analyst up to 35k
- Business Support Manager up to 30k
- Service Manager – cost absorbed by Doncaster (not included in P&L as current resource could be used.)

These new posts place an additional cost of £86.5k but represent the necessary costs of setting up a new service and are essential for the management and governance of the Organisation. Further costs have been identified including an additional pension contribution of 0.9% costing approximately £22k.

Savings/Direct Cost Efficiencies

The spend outlined above of £108k: - the additional staffing, the additional pension contribution can be offset by consolidating costs for example:

Costs	Combined Savings
Panel	46K Based on Panel reduction by 23 & paperless
Assessments	40K Internal/External assessments reduce costs
Subscriptions	136K Subs to external Linkmaker, PAC, BAAF
Medicals & DBS	45K 260+ medicals/DBS
Marketing	25k 10-12K recruit adopter, reduce timescales
Misc	22K average spend reduction
Total	314K

2. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

2.1 SCOPE AND VISION OF THE NEW RAA

The proposed Regional Adoption Agency would encompass all four Local Authority areas in South Yorkshire. It is estimated that approximately 154 children annually will be placed by the RAA (some in sibling groups) and 130 adopters recruited. The RAA will operate in partnership with two other RAA's and a central Hub in the Yorkshire and Humber area.

"One Adoption Hub provides a coordination function across the Yorkshire and Humber adoption services from RAAs, LAs and partners in the Voluntary Adoption alliance. It is a business arm undertaken by the Barnardo's East Region (distinct from Barnardo's own adoption service) It is funded by annual contributions of £7,000 per local authority and £7,000 from the VA alliance. There is a formal contract which outlines the valuable functions undertaken by the Hub, which ensure that all partners benefit from the economies of scale achieved by doing things once rather than several times across the region. The Hub will provide a Forum for the VAA and ASA sector activity and will undertake a centralised communications and marketing role. The function of the hub will develop over time.

The project has been successful in acquiring further funding (in conjunction with the other 2 RAAs) for a pilot project to originally to manage a wholly delegated regional Adoption Support Fund. However, now with proposed changes in the fund there may be some uncertainty this will continue.

The vision is to achieve excellent outcomes for children and adults affected by adoption through:

- Working closely with the Local Authorities and partners to ensure that children's best interests are at the heart of placement decisions which will fully meet their needs;
- Targeting recruitment and establishing a wide and diverse pool of prospective adopters;
- Matching so that children are placed without delay in secure, loving families;
- Providing creative and outstanding adoption support services;
- Investing in the workforce to ensure they have the right skills and capacity to deliver excellent services;
- Continually seeking to apply best practice and innovation to our ways of working;
- Actively listening to and learning from children, adults and staff to develop and improve the services provided.

2.2 OVERVIEW OF THE OPERATING MODEL

From a local perspective, the four agencies have a long history of working together and South Yorkshire has a clear identity. Past project work included, the Sheffield led 'Empower and Protect' CSE Fostering project, which further established key working relationships. Adoption services have also worked collaboratively in sharing practice and training opportunities. This has enabled constructive working together in developing the target-operating model.

Work undertaken by performance leads across the South has enabled the identification of best practice at a number of different stages of the child's journey to adoption. One Adoption, South Yorkshire will combine best practice from the LAs and the VAA while providing the opportunity to create clear practice improvements and enable a viable future market for recruitment. Approximately 63-66 LA staff, many of whom work part time, are expected to become part of the new organisation to deliver the following main services across South Yorkshire:

- Recruitment and Assessment – to provide the prospective adopters;
- Permanence Planning – ensuring that children identified as requiring adoption achieve a placement;

- Matching and Placement – to match prospective adopters with children in need of adoption;
- Adoption Support – to help all affected by adoption;

2.3 STRATEGIC BENEFITS

The key aims for combining services to create a single Regional Adoption Agency is to improve timeliness and achieve better outcomes for all children and young people with adoption plans in the region. Local Authorities and Voluntary Adoption Agencies will combine adoption services into a new regional agency to benefit children and their adoptive families, with larger operating areas giving access to a wider pool of adopters and children, more effective matching and better support services.

The Government set out the challenges they are seeking to address nationally through the creation of Regional Adoption Agencies in the paper 'Regionalising Adoption', published in June 2015. In summary, these are:

Inefficiencies

A highly-fragmented system with around 180 agencies recruiting and matching adopters for only 5,000 children per year (this number has subsequently decreased). The majority of agencies are operating on a small scale with over half recruiting fewer than 20 adopters. This is not an effective and efficient scale to be operating at and is likely to mean that costs are higher because management overheads and fixed costs are shared over a smaller base. Having a system that is fragmented in this way reduces the scope for broader, strategic planning, as well as specialisation, innovation and investment. Large numbers of small agencies render the system unable to make the best use of the national supply of potential adopters, more vulnerable to peaks and troughs in the flow of children, and less cost effective.

Matching

The system needs to match children with families far more quickly. Nationally, the data also shows that, between January and March 2019, 4,620 children required adoptive placements. In South Yorkshire (2018/19), 89 adoptive families were approved when 140 children required placements. ALB analysis of trend data 2019 confirms that significantly more children 170+ are entering the system. The costs of delay, both to children and to the system, are high. It is vital that children are given the best and earliest possible chance of finding a family, irrespective of authority boundaries and lack of trust of other agencies' adopters. It is unacceptable that children are left waiting in the system when families can be found. Successful matching relies on being able to access a wide range of potential adopters from the beginning and operating at a greater scale would allow social workers to do this, thus reducing delay in the system. It could also reduce the number of children who have their adoption decisions reversed. During 2018/19 there have been 32 reversals of SBPFA decisions across South Yorkshire, this represents a 28% increase since 2017/18 (a 92% increase was seen from 2016/17 to 2017/18). Furthermore, the opportunity for practice innovation created by moving to a new delivery model also has real potential to improve matching.

Recruitment

Whilst there has been growth in adopter recruitment there are still too few adopters willing and able to adopt 'priority' children. Recruitment from a wider geographical base as part of a regional recruitment strategy will go some way to addressing this. Incentives also need to be better aligned so that agencies are encouraged to recruit the right kind of adopters given the characteristics of the children waiting. Recruitment from a wider geographical base than an individual local authority, that takes account of the needs of children across a number of those local authorities in a regional recruitment strategy and uses specialist techniques for recruiting adopters for hard to place children, would potentially lead to fewer children waiting. ALB data states that during 2018/19 the South has seen an overall reduction in the number of enquiries (a 20% decrease from the previous year) to 310, with Sheffield having the biggest decrease, followed by Rotherham. However, adoption applications increased to 93, with approvals at 89.

Adoption Support

Currently adoption support services are provided by a mix of local authority provision, the NHS and independent providers (voluntary adoption agencies, adoption support agencies and small independent providers). There is a risk that the public and independent sectors are unlikely to be able to grow sufficiently to meet increased demand for adoption support. There are regional gaps in the types of services on offer and little evidence of spare capacity. The sector is currently dominated by spot purchasing and sole providers. This is not an efficient way to deliver these services. For providers to expand and therefore operate at a more efficient scale, services need to be commissioned on bigger and longer-term contracts. RAAs should enable this to be done. It is envisaged that the Hub will act as a conduit to the wider voluntary sector, providing economies of scale and opportunities for innovation.

The Local Perspective

The statutory functions required of local authorities in respect of adoption are provided by each of the three local authorities and the Trust within their own geographic areas. There is already a great deal of joint working between the 4 adoption agencies to provide parts of the current service.

Combining the three local authority services and, the Trust together within One Adoption South Yorkshire, will enable efficiencies to be achieved and improvements to services for all those affected by adoption. This larger organisation will provide resilience and improved outcomes at the same or less cost than currently.

In terms of recruiting adoptive parents all the agencies are currently competing. There is a duplication of effort and associated costs with the risk that people wanting to be considered as adoptive parents are confused about where and how to proceed with their enquiry. One Adoption will have a single point of contact for prospective adopters, reducing the current fragmentation of services. Similarly, a single point of entry to the adoption service locally will improve access to adoption support services for adoptive families, and for adopted adults and birth family members, who have a statutory entitlement to receive a service.

It is expected that by pooling resources to create a single service management overheads and fixed costs will be reduced over time. The new service will allow for the more efficient use of staff time, for example prospective adoptive parents are provided with training as part of the assessment process. One Adoption, South Yorkshire will deliver training courses across the whole area resulting in less duplication and more timely access to the training courses for prospective adopters. There will also be the opportunity for trialling new approaches, including the use of experienced adoptive parents as trainers/mentors.

There are currently four Adoption Panels operating across the three Local Authorities and the Trust. Proposals in relation to One Adoption South Yorkshire will result in the standardising and regularising of panels which whilst still held locally will reduce in number (and therefore cost) from 71 to 48. Panels will consider applications from prospective adopters and placements of children with approved adopters. Agency Decisions in relation to prospective adopter approvals will be made by the Agency Decision Maker for the RAA. Each agency will continue to have a designated Agency Decision Maker for considering and agreeing the plan that a child should be placed for adoption and agreeing the match to appropriate adopters. Eventually the plan would be to reduce to one ADM preferably the Head of Service.

The new combined service provides the opportunity for the provision of a service of excellence for adoption support. This will be a multi-disciplinary service in partnership with colleagues from health and education and providing comprehensive and high level targeted support for adopted children, adoptive parents, adopted adults and birth family members.

The RAA will build on the existing local expertise among managers and social workers to improve on the identification of children at an early stage. Early identification of children will enable fuller and more accurate assessments of an individual child's needs to inform matching, and prepare the child. Being

more strategic in terms of recruitment will also widen choice of potential adoptive families for children, which again should lead to better and more sustainable matching.

Benefits will be delivered through adopting the “best practice” from the four contributing organisations. This will be of value in delivering benefits from the areas of Early Permanence (concurrency and fostering to adopt), improved adoption support, making optimal use of colleagues in health and education as well as those in One Adoption registered as social workers and those without social work qualifications but with other relevant knowledge, skills and experience.

2.4 REALISING THE BENEFITS OF THE RAA

Benefits expected to be realized through the project are listed below.

A detailed performance framework has been shared with the board and is available on request.

- Improved timescales for adopter assessments
- Higher conversion rate from enquiry to approval as a result of prompt recruitment team response and consolidated training.
- Working in partnership but led by Local Authorities the early identification of children with potential adoption plans and more children placed on an Early Permanence (Fostering to Adopt or concurrency) basis
- Reduction in the number of children for whom the permanence plan has changed away from adoption
- Increase in the percentage of children adopted for care
- More timely matching of approved adopters
- Improved timescales for placing children with their adoptive families
- Fewer prospective adopter approvals rescinded as approved adopters are not matched with a child
- Fewer adoption placement disruptions pre-and post-adoption order
- Improved performance measurement and management across the service

Early Gains of collaborative working include:

- Improvements in the tracking of children with a plan of adoption leading to a reduction in timescales
- Joint profiling events and early alert system, which has resulted in EPP placements and the early identification of adopters for two sibling groups.
- Rescheduling of information evenings to maximise resource across the South resulting in reduced waiting time for people wanting to adopt.
- Development of combined information re enquiries to inform marketing and recruitment work.

2.5 STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED

Consultation with stakeholders is an integral part of the Regional Adoption Agency project.

There has been ongoing development work undertaken by staff from across the adoption agencies in the South. The business case reflects the effort that staff in all agencies have invested which is already delivering positive results. The level of engagement of all staff has been commendable and their comments, concerns and contributions have very much informed the business case.

Additionally, the following groups have been consulted and contributed to discussions about service delivery/development throughout the duration of the project:

- Teen groups in Barnsley and Doncaster
- Adopter Voice (Yorkshire and Humber) undertook a robust in-depth survey of the timeline and experience of adopters within the adoption process and beyond. The resulting timeline is recognised as a national exemplar for agencies developing Adoption services.
- Leeds Beckett University were commissioned in October 2016 to deliver workshops involving a cross section of staff. The formal research report identifies both opportunities and challenges from a staff perspective all of which have been taken account of in the proposed structure of the RAA.
- Adopters have participated well in the Leeds Beckett workshops and the Adopter Development coordinator in the South has established a good network of adopters who have contributed to the task and Finish groups etc.
- The Adoption Development Coordinator (ADC) role (1 ADC in North & Humber, South and West Yorkshire) centres on giving Adopters a 'voice' as part of the 'One Adoption' process. The views and experiences of these adopters will be represented by ADCs in service development groups and other forums to ensure the Voice of the Adopter is appropriately represented.

Key topics raised by service users and staff have been incorporated into the task and finish groups.

Ongoing stakeholder engagement and feedback are included in plans for the implementation phase of the project. A Stakeholder Communications plan has been developed to ensure effective engagement with various stakeholder groups including Executive Level Officers, Adoption Teams, wider Children's Social Care staff, Service Users and Partners.

Elected members and portfolio holders have been consulted in all four local authorities, as well as the Doncaster Children's Services Trust Board.

3 RAA OPERATING MODEL

3.1 PROCESS

The target operating model for the new RAA considers its role in the delivery of the following main services across South Yorkshire:

- Recruitment and Assessment – to provide the prospective adopters;
- Permanence Planning – Identifying children who need adopting;
- Matching and Placement – to match prospective adopters with children in need of adoption;
- Pre-and Post-Placement Support – to help all affected by adoption.

3.1. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The table below sets out the RAA and LAs will work together, summarising roles and responsibilities for each:

Function	Regional Adoption Agency	Local Authority
RECRUITMENT AND ASSESSMENT		
Marketing and Recruitment Strategy	✓	
Adopter Recruitment and Enquiries	✓	
Assessment of Prospective Adopters – all Stage One and Stage Two functions	✓	
Completion of Prospective Adopter Report	✓	
Agency Decision Maker for approval of adopters	✓	
Post approval training	✓	
Matching	✓	
Post Placement training for Prospective Adopters	✓	
PERMANENCE PLANNING		
Early identification of a child possibly requiring adoption		✓
Tracking and monitoring the child possibly requiring adoption	✓	✓
Support and advice to child care social worker on the adoption process	✓	✓
Sibling or other specialist assessments if commissioned by LA	✓	
Direct work to prepare child prior to placement	✓	
Preparation of the Child Permanence Report		✓
Agency Decision Maker for “Should be placed for Adoption” decisions		✓
Case management prior to the point agreed by the LA ADM		✓
Case management from point agreed by the LA ADM		✓
MATCHING AND PLACEMENT		
Family finding	✓	
Looked After Child reviews	✓	✓
Shortlist and visit potential families	✓	
Organising child appreciation day	✓	
Ongoing direct work to prepare child prior to placement	✓	
Adoption Panel administration and management	✓	
Agency adviser role	✓	
Agency Decision Maker for Matching prospective adopters and child		✓

Function	Regional Adoption Agency	Local Authority
Placement Planning meeting administration and management of introductions	✓	
Support to family post placement and planning and delivery of adoption support	✓	
Ongoing life story work and preparation of Life story book	✓	✓
Independent Review Officer monitoring of quality of child's care and care plan		✓
Support prospective adopters in preparation and submission of application for Adoption Order – including attending at court	✓	
Preparation of later life letter		✓
ADOPTION SUPPORT		
Assessment for adoption support	✓	
Developing and delivering adoption support plans	✓	
Agree and administer financial support to adoptive families pre- and post-Adoption Order		✓
Adoption support delivery including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support groups • Social events • Post adoption/special guardianship training • Independent Birth Relative services • Support with ongoing birth relative contact • Adoption counselling and training 	✓	
Financial support to adopters including adoption allowances		✓
NON-AGENCY ADOPTIONS		
Step parent/partner adoption assessments		✓
Inter-country adoption assessments and post approval and post order support	✓	

As part of implementation the project team will explore potential areas for the VAA to partner with SYRAA to support service delivery including consideration of the following areas:

- ✓ Targeted recruitment activity focusing on Early Permanence and targeted assessments for priority children
- ✓ Specialist adoption support training
- ✓ Specialist practical or therapeutic support services for children and families post placement and post order
- ✓ Adoption counselling and services to adopted adults
- ✓ Continued provision of VAA families
- ✓ Life Story Work and book

Practice improvements will be delivered through the implementation of new ways of working. One Adoption South Yorkshire will work jointly with the other RAA's and the Hub in Yorkshire and Humber to seek to explore further sources of funding to work jointly with the VAA and ASA sector, for example, in the areas of Early Permanence and adoption support to design and deliver practice improvements.

3.2 OVERVIEW OF THE PROPOSED RAA ORGANISATION

What Research and Best Practice Tells us

Research identifies several factors which contribute to timely, successful family finding and matching outcomes for children with a plan of adoption.

The University of Bristol, (June 2010) and Oxford University (Feb 2015) identified within research briefs, key factors seen to enhance the adoption journey for both children and their prospective adopters.

Quality of information – all information at all parts of the process must be of high quality, factual and comprehensive. Poor quality information is identified as a direct correlation to disruption.

Local authorities with access to a **wider pool of prospective adopters** experienced less delay in their family finding and matching processes.

Family finding done at the point of **ADM decision** (rather than at the granting of the placement order) resulted in children experiencing less delay.

Delay was reduced when **case responsibility for children transferred to adoption service** at point of placement order.

Delay was also reduced when **early family finding strategies** were agreed for individual children deemed to have complex needs.

Tracking of children throughout their journey is critical and adoption workers involved in this can drive and empower the process.

Timely joint decision making regarding whether to pursue ethnic matches or sibling separation also reduced delay for children.

Post placement support (in a variety of formats) is particularly valued by adopters, contributes to positive transitions and reduces the risk of disruptions.

Proposals contained within this report have taken account of these key factors alongside the need for quality and efficiency.

Staffing, 63-66 Adoption staff would become part of One Adoption South Yorkshire to deliver Adoption services across South Yorkshire.

HUB Roles (DONCASTER)

The only new roles (Appendix B 1&2) in the establishment of the new organisation are:

- 1 FTE Head of Service (also ADM)
- 1.5 FTE Business Support Manager

Other posts will be managed over time:

- 1 FTE Service Manager (funded separately by Doncaster or using existing resource)
- 1 FTE Performance Analyst (this post may not be part of the RAA) to be reviewed.

These staff will be centrally based in the HUB, Doncaster.

The **Head of Service** is expected to provide leadership and vision for the continuous development of the SYRAA, leading the strategic planning, development and management of all aspects of the SYRAA to ensure the delivery of high quality, effective and legally compliant Adoption services. They will manage the operational relationship with Local Authorities through interaction at Senior Management level. An

ability to work in a transformation role will be essential as part of this role to drive the practice improvement and cultural change required to deliver on these.

The **Service Manager** will be responsible for all of the social work teams and the monitoring and driving of performance. They will deputise for the Head of Service when necessary. This will involve travel in the South Yorkshire area, but could be supported by the other service managers in the partner authorities (When appropriate).

As the staffing design does not use TUPE, there is no preferred option for the staffing structure in the future. Any staffing structure at this point in the business case progress could only be a potential structure. A full staffing structure based on assessment of need, aspiration and on achieved targets could be created in the first 24 months and then logically examined over time to meet the organisation's needs.

3.3 PROPERTY AND IT IMPLICATIONS

All LA's and the Trust have been working in partnership to ensure Adoption teams are based in appropriate workspaces in all four LA areas. The initial working model is that most adoption teams will remain sited in their current workplaces with accommodation provided at nil cost. A small centralised team of up to 4.5 staff members will require accommodation in Doncaster.

Premises costs have assumed that One Adoption, South Yorkshire can be accommodated within existing LA premises.

With regards to IT costs, decisions on this can be made when the project goes live, it is envisaged as in the West RAA that interim arrangements re data sharing platforms whilst more detailed analysis of need and revenue is undertaken.

3.4 HR IMPLICATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

A Human Resources work stream was established during 2016 with representatives from Doncaster Children's Services Trust (the Trust), Sheffield City Council, Rotherham MBC and Barnsley MBC. In the original business cases, TUPE of staff was the plan, but after discussion with all partners, TUPE was found to be not appropriate. The project manager met with HR reps in May 2019 and again in June and July 2019. The preferred option for the staff was to create a secondment like model with a Service Level Agreement/Memo of Understanding (intention of change) issued in the initial stages of the business planning. The HR group agreed the overarching HR plan agreed by DCS in 2018, but have added some detail that is explained below.

The process of staff becoming part of the RAA is relatively simple. No one is actually moving office. Their terms and conditions remain with the Local Authority they work for. It is the senior line management that changes, the Head of Service would change.

An overall project plan and service level agreement/Memo of Understanding (intention of change) will be created after this business case is agreed and will include nuances of the HR activity that is required and will set out the responsibilities for each party to ensure that legal and operational requirements are met.

During thorough discussions with the HR workgroup (July 2019) it was agreed (as the DCS had in 2018) that the terms and conditions of employment will remain unchanged when the RAA "goes live" in 2020. This does not mean there will be an immediacy in the day-to-day workload, for example, an assessment social worker, will have to finish the assessment from their previous caseload, which could take up to a year, giving the HR group and Local Authorities time to conclude staffing arrangements.

In the first instance there will be a period of discussion with staff and trade unions with the new Head of Service and HR reps which will take place over a three-week period, at each partner's location, therefore, lessening the impact on staff operational tasks. These discussions will reassure staff that in

reality there will be no direct changes; reassurance will be the key to their co-operation. With an April 2020 start date, this would need to occur in Nov 2019 to Feb 2020.

The group agreed that the best course of action, as the RAA matures and the four local authority teams become more integrated and work even more closely, the operating model could be reviewed in conjunction with staff, DCS, elected members and Heads of Service. This would ensure that the RAA is delivering the best possible outcomes for young people and families in South Yorkshire and that the project is respecting the different terms and conditions of employment of the respective partners.

This approach ensures no/minimal impact on staff and it mitigates against issues that could arise by the four local authorities' having different terms and conditions of employment, including different rates of pay. However, on examining differing rates of pay across the group, there were no large inequalities in pay. For example, most Team Managers across the group are on similar pay levels, so there is low risk of an equal pay claim in most regards. However, a suggestion would be to complete a full staffing review.

If full realisation of the RAA benefits and economies of scale means more formal integration of staff then this will be explored appropriately with all four partners. Experience from other Local Authorities who have established RAAs suggests that it takes up to 36 months for the operational model to become fully embedded. During this period any vacancies that arise within each of the 4 respective teams would be recruited to by the relevant local authority, i.e. if a Barnsley Social Worker supporting the Adoption Team were to leave then Barnsley would recruit the replacement. Furthermore, when there was a staff vacancy, each partner would agree where the resource would be best placed to service the objectives of the RAA and that could be within another Local Authority.

Whilst staff are working under the RAA approach, the policies, procedures and terms/conditions of employment for their employing local authority will apply, e.g. if an employee wishes to apply for discretionary leave it will be under the relevant policy of the employer. It is envisaged that where appropriate, the RAA Head of Service would maintain an oversight of relevant employment matters that arise. Of course, the RAA would be notified of any changes to any staffing conditions.

If during the establishment of the RAA it becomes appropriate or necessary to enter into more formal arrangements for staff supporting the RAA this would be consulted upon as required with employing organisations and relevant staff representatives, leaders and managers. Should formal arrangements be agreed to be put in place it is recognised that such arrangements should be time limited with a clear end date with accompanying rationale. In the event that formal agreements suggest "secondment" as an option, further work and agreement would be required with the four local authorities to manage the impact and risk, i.e. differing terms and conditions (including pay) across South Yorkshire.

It should be noted that after 4 years in a post (such as a secondment) employment rights to that post might be established. Therefore, it is imperative that a clear plan is developed and refined during the project-planning phase of the RAA (from inception to 36 months) around how the RAA is staffed in a long term and sustainable manner.

It is envisaged that a service level agreement/ Memo of Understanding (intention of change) would be mutually agreed between all four local authorities prior to the RAA launch to clarify working arrangements, accountabilities, responsibilities and risk.

There are risks and these can be mitigated by working through HR issues proactively. That is, when the project "goes live" by analysing staff welfare regularly through questionnaires, supervision, and quarterly analysis of leavers, noting disciplinary issues and feedback from staff summits, a successful integration can be measured.

Engagement and communication activity is essential to keep staff informed of progress and developments and to respond quickly to questions and concerns. The HR leads will work with the communications work stream to ensure this happens.

3.5 DATA AND INFORMATION

Data and Information Sharing arrangements will be required for the day-to-day operation and management of the RAA. Management Information will be generated automatically from core systems where possible. Information is required to be presented to the RAA Management team, Ofsted, Local Authorities including senior management teams and elected members, the Adoption Leadership Board, the Department for Education and other partners.

3.6 COMMUNICATIONS, MARKETING AND PR

Marketing and recruitment campaigns to attract new adopters, particularly for the harder to place priority children, are of paramount importance to the success of One Adoption South Yorkshire.

An integrated Yorkshire and Humber brand has been developed following extensive consultation with staff and adopters “One Adoption” has been approved by all DCS’s in Yorkshire and Humber. Within this overarching brand for the hub, logos for South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and North & Humber have also been created.

The website is fully launched, as a recruitment tool, with separate areas for each of the three RAAs detailing their information evenings. SYRAA will be added to the website on Jan 2020 after staff and carer consultations.

A Twitter feed for One Adoption has been in operation since the beginning of August 2018 and Facebook began in September 2018— both with recruitment as the main objective.

Media activity will increase around National Adoption Week in October 2019

Branded One Adoption marketing materials have been created.

It is envisaged that the Hub will manage a centralised budget for promotion of adoption in the region with a retained budget for local promotion. This will enable the agency to effectively target regional and sub-regional campaigns and achieve a high profile with clear VFM

3.7 PROPOSED GOVERNANCE AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Legal Brief

Senior lawyers from the in-house legal service of each of Barnsley, Rotherham and Sheffield Councils (BRS) have been engaged in a work stream to design and develop the legal framework for the delivery of the new service, having regard to the preferred delivery option identified in paragraph 2.3, i.e. that the regional agency be delivered through Doncaster Children’s Services Trust. Specialist external legal advice has been procured where appropriate to support the work of the legal team.

Procurement/Cooperation Agreement

The carrying on of adoption services by the Trust on behalf of BRS is a ‘Procurement’ caught by the application of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (the Regulations). Accordingly, the Trust would normally be expected to compete for the right to be awarded the work, as part of a procurement exercise under the Regulations. There is no guarantee that this would result in the preferred arrangement.

The Trust currently carries out Adoption Services functions on behalf of Doncaster MBC under the Direction of the Secretary of State. It is an adoption agency and a ‘public contracting authority’ for the purposes of the Regulations. Detailed consideration has been given as to whether the Trust can be directly appointed to carry out the adoption services for BRS, as opposed to having to bid as part of a procurement exercise. The conclusion of BRS legal advisors is that they may rely on an exemption set out in Regulation 12(7), which was enacted to capture the essence of the ECJ judgment in *Commission v Germany* (Case C-480/06), known as the *Hamburg* exemption. Under this exemption BRS will be able

to enter into a cooperation arrangement with the Trust, on the proviso that all the requirements set out in Regulation 12(7) are met and the general principles of the *Hamburg* judgment are satisfied.

- There is no private sector party to the agreement;
- The co-operation is governed solely by considerations and requirements relating to the pursuit of objectives in the public interest;
- The character of the agreement is that of real co-operation aimed at the joint performance of a common task, as opposed to a normal public contract;
- It enables the public service activity to be carried out more effectively;
- There are mutual requirements for co-operation with “give or take” between the parties;
- Payment is related to the reimbursement of costs (and is not based on the generation of profit);
- The arrangements are not contriving to circumvent the procurement rules.

Regulation 12(7) states that a contract concluded exclusively between two or more contracting authorities shall fall outside the scope of Part 2 of the Regulations (and therefore outside the requirement to advertise and procure the opportunity) where all the following conditions are fulfilled:

Condition 1: The contract establishes or implements a co-operation between the participating contracting authorities with the aim of ensuring that public services they must perform are provided with a view to achieving objectives they have in common.

Condition 2: The implementation of that co-operation is governed solely by considerations relating to the public interest.

Condition 3: The participating contracting authorities perform on the open market less than 20% of the activities concerned by the co-operation. (Regulation 12(8) provides that turnover will be calculated using the average total turnover, or an appropriate alternative activity-based measure such as costs incurred by the relevant legal person or contracting authority with respect to services, supplies and works for the three years preceding the contract award.)

In order to ensure and demonstrate the integrity of proposed arrangement the documentation will be drafted to ensure that conditions consistent with the requirements of Regulation 12(7) are properly prescribed (and duly agreed to) and that there are provisions for monitoring that they are maintained throughout the life of the agreement.

State Aid

Consideration has had to be given as to whether the direct appointment of the Trust would comply with the rules against state aid. These rules prohibit selective support for an undertaking, where the benefit flows from state resources, and may affect trade between member states and may also distort competition. A challenge can be brought either by a third party or the European commission within ten years of the support being provided and can result in an order to repay the aid plus interest. There are however potential options for ensuring compliance with the rules in this project. The most suitable one is that the Trust is, on inception, not an ‘undertaking’ as it is not trading externally, but is instead exercising public powers on behalf of the State.

This position is supported because

- the services are a statutory function of BRS and are being delegated by BRS to the Trust;
- payment will reflect the funding available to BRS for these services;
- it is only providing services back to BRS;

This argument is robust where the RAA is genuinely only operating in effect on behalf of the Councils and is not trading externally. Unlike the provisions for the Hamburg exemption in Regulation 12 of the Regulations 2015, there is no 20% margin for trading with third parties.

Once any material third party activity is undertaken, which could include services to free schools or other non-Council controlled educational establishments, it is therefore necessary to include provisions in the proposed agreement requiring the consent of RMS before any contracts with third parties are entered into by the Trust.

Pension Liabilities

There was considerable concern that the proposed arrangement had the potential to incur prohibitive costs for BRS in the event of the ill health retirement of any employees transferred from BRS to the Trust under secondment. Negotiation with the SYPA and their actuary has resulted in a resolution to this issue, which in essence will replicate the existing arrangements between Doncaster MDC and the Trust, where Doncaster MDC do not become liable for payment of strain costs in the event of an ill-health retirement of former employees who transferred to the Trust.

The Fund will establish a process, with the agreement of the parties whereby the Trust are essentially treated in the same way to those employers in the captive arrangement. Under this process, the Trust would pay contributions to the Fund including a nominal allowance for ill-health retirements. As and when retirements occur, the Trust would not be liable for immediate payment of any strain costs emerging at the point of retirement. Neither would such strain costs offset against the allowance set for the relevant district council as part of the prior actuarial valuation given that this allowance relates to the council's own employees only. Instead, at the subsequent actuarial valuation assessment, any strain costs emerging over the prior period would be met by the relevant district council by way of a notional transfer of assets to the Trust.

In short at no point is anyone going to receive an invoice in respect of an ill health retirement no matter how large that liability is.

Governance

It is proposed that formal governance of the Regional Adoption Agency will be through the South Yorkshire Regional Adoption Agency Partnership Board (SYRAAPB), a body which is accountable to BRS and Doncaster Children's Services Trust. The SYRAAPB will work with the Yorkshire & Humber Regional Adoption Board and through this mechanism will co-operatively engage with and work alongside the West Yorkshire Regional Adoption Board and the North Yorkshire Regional Adoption Board. The SYRAAPB will be responsible for providing oversight of the Cooperation Agreement and the hosting of adoption services by the Trust.

The contracting Authorities for SYRAA have agreed a governance framework which will form part of a Cooperation Agreement. This allows 4 agencies to have equal voting rights in respect of RAA functions.

Appendix D details the proposed Governance framework for the SYRAA.

More detailed work will be undertaken in respect of governance arrangements but the all parties have agreed the principle of accountability and decision making through co-operative agreement.

4. FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT

4.1 FINANCIAL COSTS

The initial budget for delivering the adoption service in 2020/21 available to the RAA is forecast to be £5.067m based on each partner's 19/20 budget for adoption services. This figure is based on the operational staff delivering the adoption service, the running costs of providing an adoption service and the inter-agency adoption fees (which will vary). Each of the LA's and the Trust also added to this operational budget business support and panel administration applicable to the adoption service. In most area's this is "non-cashable", however, it is agreed by finance leads that this cost should be identified and transferred to the RAA and that the subsequent savings required to mitigate this will be achievable.

This budget excludes non-cashable items such as professional support costs (Finance, HR, ICT etc.) as these are harder to isolate and identify for such a small service and it has been agreed that the RAA will have to pick up these additional costs. It also excludes service management, as this is non-cashable for each organisation although these costs have been identified for each LA and the Trust at £99.3k.

4.2 FINANCIAL RISKS

Inter-Agency – The financial model above assumes that a reduction in inter agency placement fees will be achieved to mitigate the additional costs for the RAA. This assumption will need to be carefully managed and monitored as part of the performance and financial framework.

Redundancy – No allowance has been made for any costs of redundancy. This is believed to be a prudent assumption at this stage given vacancies within some of the area's and the overall shortage of social workers across the four organisations e.g. it is assumed no qualified social workers will be made redundant as the demand for these workers currently exceeds the supply nationally.

Underfunding The primary risk is that the agency is underfunded and therefore unable to deliver adequately for the children of South Yorkshire. This will also influence timescales for children waiting and influence Ofsted judgements about the service provided to Children in Care.

Host Costs There is a further risk to the host authority around the hosting overhead costs. It is also unclear at present, as to accommodation arrangements, which may lead to additional costs.

Financial risks can be part mitigated by an inclusionary note in the Partnership Agreement explaining the treatment of any over (and under) spends. This reduces the risk to the host but would not affect the overall financial pressure.

4.3 FINANCIAL ASSUMPTIONS

VAT

It should be noted that the Trust's VAT status has now been resolved and there are no outstanding tax implications or cost pressures from VAT.

Inflation

There are inflationary pressures that the RAA will be subject to in 2020/21 such as an assumed pay award of 2% and the introduction of the Apprenticeship levy – however, these pressures would exist for LA's / Trust whether the RAA is implemented.

Services not in Scope

Adoption Allowances are not in scope of the SYRAA and all costs and benefits have been excluded from the Business Case. These allowances will remain with the LA's / Trust. It is anticipated that allowances across South Yorkshire will be reviewed and recommendations made to each Local Authority to regularise allowances at the second annual review. Further Local Authority savings are anticipated because of this review.

Underspends & Overspends

It is proposed that governance structure will be established with representation from the three local authorities and Doncaster Children's Services Trust as set out in the Governance section of this Business Case and that this decision-making function will authorise the treatment of under and over spends. It is envisaged that any underspends will be redistributed to each of the SYRAA partners at appropriate time points and as agreed by SYRAA Governance Board. Overspends will need to be reviewed, for example legacy inter-agency costs should likely be borne by the relevant local authority/Trust. The Partnership Agreement will consider and incorporate these arrangements. However, with tight forecasting each quarter and hiring a Head of Service with sound financial acumen overspends will not occur. If further money is required to meet objectives, then a short business case will be distributed to partners for agreement but ideally these objectives would be for new initiatives or for increasing staffing due to recruitment success.

Performance Framework

A performance framework will be developed to allow that Governance Board to be able to approve a budget for future years that considers this framework and the funding of any deficits. The funding for the

RAA in future would move away from 100% historical costs to a methodology that reflects some element of service activity, e.g. having a fixed element to the funding with a variable element dependent upon the number of adoptions delivered.

Inter-agency Fees

Initially inter agency fees would continue inside South Yorkshire across the four Local Authorities. As stated before it takes at least 36 months to embed a RAA so it is envisaged that these fees would continue. With the 4 regions of South Yorkshire combined it is assumed in the future that there is potential to reduce the number of children placed outside of South Yorkshire and reduce inter-agency costs via increasing the prospective adopter pool across a wider geographic area.

Adoption Support Fund

It is assumed that this fund continues and there will be no increase to the RAA for costs associated with adoption support. The indications from Central Government are that this fund will continue and be mindful of the move towards regionalisation.

Staff Structure

The staffing budget for 2020/21 will be based on the current staffing structure but with additional monies for the HUB posts. It is acknowledged that this might not be fully operational initially but several new posts are required for the RAA to be operational from 1st April 2020 such as Head of Service, business support, for the status quo of existing structures to be maintained. It needs to be acknowledged that 2020/21 will be a transitional year within which some posts may need to be recruited to ensure that the RAA is operational at "go live" date.

Direct Cost Efficiencies

The coming together of the four organisations and the streamlining of practices should lead to efficiencies on areas such as Panel Expenses, Subscriptions / Licences and other overheads. Further work needs to be in identifying these.

Marketing Costs

Costs are included in the Business Case in line with existing spend.

Professional Support costs

These are deemed to be non-cashable and have been excluded from the budgets used in producing the Business Case. Any new costs will fall within the RAA and have not been included as a cost pressure as it is assumed they will be absorbed by the Trust.

Business Support and Panel Administration costs

Business Support and Panel Administration costs are included as budgets transferred in the first year of operation 2020/21.

Redundancies

No allowance has been made for redundancies. Should any redundancy costs arise these will have to be borne by the LA's / Trust from which they were initially employed. However, no redundancies should occur.

Staffing

The proposed staffing structure allows for 63 to 66 FTE including Business Support and the new posts of Service Management, Performance analyst, Business Support Manager.

Pension Liabilities

The ill health provision required by South Yorkshire Pension Authority has been covered by an agreed additional 0.9% pension contribution for eligible staff. By 2020 this may have risen and is noted by the finance work stream.

Cash flow Payments to the SYRAA from Local Authorities

It is proposed that each partner will pay their budget contribution three months in advance starting from the 'Go Live' date forecast to be 1st April 2020 to ease the RAA's cash flow. Advance payments will

minimise any cash flow issues and an unnecessary administrative burden on governance. This will need to be agreed within the Partnership Agreement.

5. COMMISSIONING ARRANGEMENTS AND OTHER RELATIONSHIPS

Service Delivery of the following areas will be covered:

- Targeted recruitment activity focusing on Early Permanence and targeted assessments for priority children;
- Partner (non-agency) adoption assessments;
- Specialist adoption training;
- Specialist practical or therapeutic support services for children and families post placement and post order;
- Adoption counselling and services to adopted adults;
- Continued provision of VAA families.

As part of the implementation phase of the project, the Commissioning lead has reviewed current commissioning arrangements and will advise on future commissioning to achieve service improvements at best value. Ad hoc partnership work will also be formalised and the most appropriate commissioning and procurement arrangements will be determined during this period.

6. IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

At the SYRAA Partnership Board of February 1st 2019 a “go live” date of April 2020 was identified. This is dependent on DCS/Cabinet sign off in all agencies by end of October 2019.

7. NEXT STEPS

Agree the details in this report and move to Project planning phase.

Alasdair Kennedy Project Manager SYRAA

FAQ's

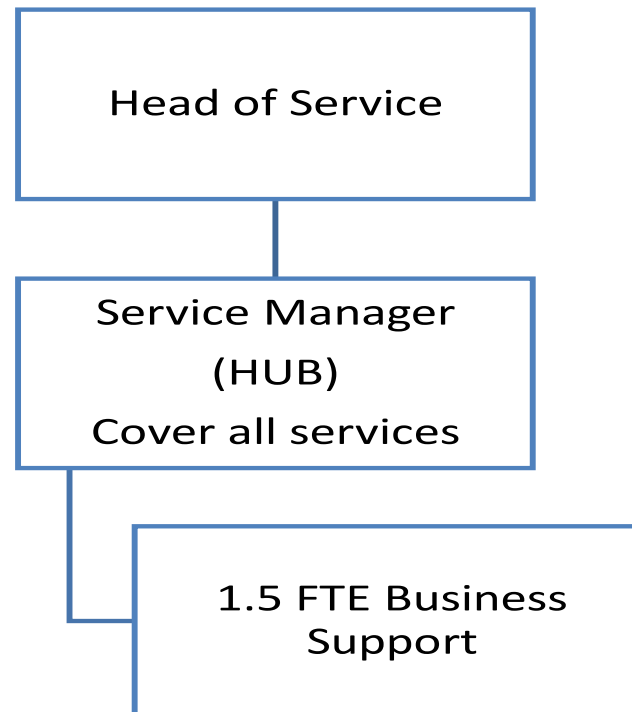


Appendix A

- Staff will not be TUPE and no one is moving office.
- 130 adopters is achievable and is comparable with commercial/charitable agencies
- Current workloads for staff will take at least a year to clear, given the SYRAA time to establish and time to work out the operational nuances.
- Doncaster is an ALMO
- VAT issue was agreed in 2016
- A service/performance agreement end date will need to be set
- A service/performance agreement will be drawn nearer “go live” date.
- Staff will remain on their own contracts
- New person specs will be developed for any new roles
- Only the HUB (Doncaster) has new staff
- Staff insurance will be managed by increasing premiums in HUB
- GDPR needs explored in HR workgroup
- Salaries inconsistencies are not a risk in the model being proposed.
- Adoption Support Fund allocation can be agreed after “going live”
- ICT support and integration is not agreed, but as with West RAA this can be agreed within project planning stage and during first year of operation.
- RAA will be Ofsted inspected, Service Manager will be Registered, with Head of Service, Responsible Individual.
- Overspends will not occur due to strict forecasting and business reviewing. If extra finance is required a full business case sign off from all parties will be required. Strict Spending Limits will be applied to Heads of Service.

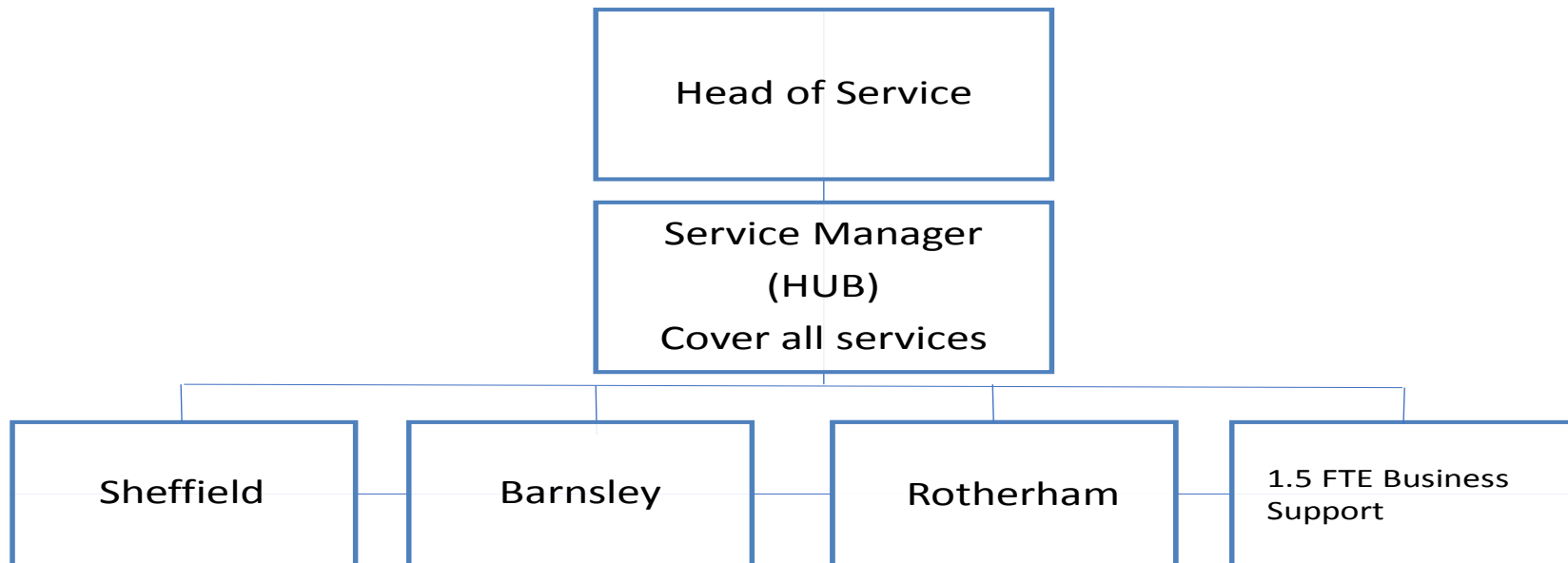


HUB (Doncaster)(NEW POSTS)





Combined structure



@AGFK.CO.UK

GOVERNANCE PROPOSALS

APPENDIX C

Context

The Governments Adoption Reform Agenda requires all adoption services to be reorganised under regional arrangements. There is an expectation that local authorities and voluntary adoption agencies will collaborate to provide services in a newly formed Regional Adoption Agency (RAA). The driver for this proposed change is to improve outcomes for children with a plan of adoption – timelier placements, increased recruitment of appropriate adopters and improved matching of children with families. There is also an expectation that support provided to children and adopters throughout the adoption process is timely and of high quality.

The current SYRAA Implementation Board is overseeing and approving the process by which regionalisation will happen in South Yorkshire. Following final approval for the project from all parties there will need to be agreed governance arrangements in place to ensure performance accountability, budget setting, impact and future demand.

This report describes the governance structure proposed to manage the relationship between Doncaster Children's Services Trust (DCST) and the partner local authorities of Barnsley, Rotherham and Sheffield in the delivery of the South Yorkshire Regional Adoption Agency (SYRAA).

It is proposed that the Governance arrangements for SYRAA will be underpinned by a memo of understanding which will be reviewed annually.

Monitoring arrangements will be agreed between the Chief Executive of the Doncaster Children's Services Trust (Host organisation) and the Director of Children's Services, Barnsley, as the project sponsor on behalf of the partner local authorities

Proposals

1. South Yorkshire Regional Adoption Agency Partnership Board

Status of the Board

The South Yorkshire Regional Adoption Agency (SYRAA) Partnership Board is fully accountable to: Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Doncaster Children's Services Trust, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council; and Sheffield City Council.

The SYRAA Partnership Board will report to the Yorkshire & Humber Regional Adoption Board, and will co-operatively engage with and work alongside the West Yorkshire Regional Adoption Board and the North Yorkshire Regional Adoption Board.

Purpose of the Board

The SYRAA Partnership Board will be responsible for providing effective oversight of the partnership agreement and the hosting of adoption services by Doncaster Children's Services Trust (DCST, the 'Trust').

The Board will present the Annual Report of the SYRAA Partnership Board to the local authority partner Cabinets and to the Trust Board, with the support of the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the SYRAA Partnership Board.

The Board will also enable effective overview and support for the collaborative working arrangements between the Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAA's), Adopters, partner local authorities and the Trust.

The Board will set and review the strategic objectives of the SYRAA and monitor service delivery of the key priorities of the partnership that is to:

- Place more children in a timelier way;
- recruit more of the right families for the children waiting, preparing them consistently and well;
- improve the range, accessibility and quality of post adoption support; and
- improve the outcomes for children and families.

Roles and responsibilities of the SYRAA Partnership Board

The Trust will provide the SYRAA Partnership Board with a report on a quarterly basis detailing summary management information as part of the performance monitoring agreement that will include:

- Service delivery performance
- Financial performance
- Audit and assurance activities

Partner Councils will individually provide the SYRAA Partnership Board with a report on a quarterly basis detailing their Council's performance of the co-dependencies that will include:

- Key performance indicators relating to safeguarding pressures and overall children's services demand; and
- pre-court proceedings activities and performance

The Trust and the partner Councils will produce a joint update on:

- Joint working arrangements
- Inspection readiness

The SYRAA Partnership Board will also:

- Provide a forum to discuss and agree strategic issues relating to the delivery of adoption services.
- Provide a forum to discuss and agree future budget setting
- To provide constructive support and challenge of the adoption system within the South Yorkshire region, with reference to national best practice / emergent practice, to provide an opportunity for sharing, learning and continuous improvement.
- To engage with national adoption services providers, voluntary adoption agencies and broader stakeholders, to inform regional service development.
- Review and consider reports presented by the SYRAA Advisory Group
- Authorise the commissioning and initiation of new business cases and assess opportunities for future service development.
- Confirm appropriate adjustments to the Contract Baseline regarding Target Performance Levels so that they are aligned with the updated Statistical Neighbourhood data.
- Consider any changes to the services that arise out of proposals and ensure that they are dealt with as a Variation in accordance with the Partnership Agreement

Ways of Working

The Board will meet four times a year

Decision Making

Made by consensus between, the Chief Executive of the Doncaster Children's Services Trust and the three Directors of Children's Services (Barnsley, Rotherham and Sheffield Councils or their appointed deputies).

This cohort are primary funding partners and have shared responsibility for performance of adoption services as measured in published statutory performance information and in Ofsted inspection. They therefore form the voting members of the group.

In the event of a continuing dispute, the Board will refer to the formal dispute resolution process detailed within the Partnership Agreement.

Chair

The Board will be chaired by a rotating Chair from each of the three Local Authorities and Doncaster Children's Services Trust.

Membership

Voting representatives

Chief Executive of Doncaster Children's Services Trust
 Director of Children's Services – Barnsley
 Director of Children's Services – Rotherham
 Director of Children's Services – Sheffield

Advisory Representatives

Director of Children's Services - Doncaster
 Chief Operating Officer - DCST
 Director of Finance – partner authority
 Head of Finance - DCST
 Head of Performance and Business Intelligence - DCST
 VAA representative
 Adopter representative
 HUB representative

2. Quality Assurance Group

Purpose of the Group

The Quality Assurance Group will be responsible for monitoring performance and identifying performance issues at an early stage so that potential issues can be resolved in an efficient and effective manner.

The Quality Assurance Group will be responsible for holding all partners to account in respect of performance outcomes for children and adopters and financial management.

The purpose of the group is:

- Ensure that all work undertaken is compliant with national standards, legislation and inter authority partnership agreements.
- To ensure that all work undertaken is carried out with the best interests of the child/young person at its core.
- To secure and promote good working relationships amongst the SYRAA, partners and stakeholders.
- To ensure effective efficient delivery of the objectives as agreed at the SYRAA Partnership Board.
- To support joint working practices across the SYRAA to improve timeliness and outcomes for children and adopters.
- To compare, contrast and report on the work of other RAAs across the region and nationally.
- To ensure all work is underpinned by best practice recommendations and research findings.
- To ensure discussions/decisions align with those reflected within the Yorkshire and Humber RAAs.
- To ensure an annual health check for adoptive families is undertaken

Roles and responsibilities of the SYRAA Quality Assurance Group

- Ensure appropriate preparation for the SYRAA Partnership Board to enable comprehensive oversight of the delivery of adoption services across South Yorkshire.
- Receive and review the monthly performance reports from across the four partner agencies on matters such as issues relating to the delivery of services and performance against service standards (including possible future developments).

- Review and consider benchmark reports.
- Review the implications of any recently issued national policy and or guidance
- Review the general inspection readiness of the SYRAA, and monitor progress of actions to address areas of concern.
- Receive and review the SYRAA service delivery risk management matrix, together with identified mitigating actions.
- Report to the SYRAA Partnership Board any future service specific requirements or other significant issues requiring discussion and decision by the SYRAA Partnership Board.
- Scrutinise service quality via:
 1. Anonymised case audits
 2. Findings from service led case audits and staff file audits
 3. Customer feedback (including complaints, concerns and compliments)
 4. Stakeholder feedback including health, schools, courts etc.
 5. Panel recommendations, panel schedules and panel chairs' appraisals
 6. Findings from LA and VAA case reviews
 7. Ofsted inspection outcomes and action plans from other agencies.

Ways of Working

The group will meet quarterly

Chair

The Quality Assurance Group will be chaired by - Head of Performance and Business Intelligence – DCST

Membership

Members of the quality assurance group include:

- RAA staff reps
- LA officers (e.g. IROs, principal managers etc.)
- Virtual head teacher representatives
- VAA representatives
- Service user representatives
- Other stakeholders including panel chairs, health.

3. Annual Review Meeting

Purpose of the Group

The Annual Review Meeting will be an expansion of the SYRAA Partnership Board meeting that will include Cabinet Lead Members and Trust Chair representation. This meeting will act as the primary vehicle to discuss, further develop and agree the strategic and specific objectives for the year ahead.

The Annual Review meeting will be held in accordance with the terms detailed within the Partnership Agreement. Past performance will be reported, with summary of the highlights

and lowlights of the year, but the focus will be on supporting the continued development of adoption services within the South Yorkshire region, whilst ensuring alignment with partner organisations aims, objectives, and budgetary capacity.

Aims of the Annual Review Meeting

- Assess whether the Partnership Agreement is operating in the most satisfactory manner
- Assess whether the services are being delivered to the Partnership Agreement standard
- Review the Trust's performance of adoption services in the previous Contract Year against the performance indicators and its performance against the annual budget for the previous Contract Year, together with a review of the proposed budget for the following contract year.
- Review the Councils' performance of the co-dependencies that affect the overall performance of adoption services within the South Yorkshire region.
- Consider any proposals from the Trust or partner Councils relating to possible contract variations, and note any variations agreed at the quarterly SYRAA Partnership Board meetings.
- Agree any proposed changes to the Services Specification, the Financial Mechanism, and the Performance Indicators for the following Contract Year
- Confirm the Contract Sum payable by the respective Councils to the Trust for the next contract year

Ways of Working

- The Annual Review Meeting of the SYRAA Board will be held no later than one full calendar month following the expiry of twelve (12) months from the Services Commencement Date
- Members of the Board will receive papers two weeks before the Annual Review Board meeting

Chair

The Annual Review Meeting of the SYRAA Board will be chaired by an independent Chair yet to be determined.

Membership

Chief Executive of Doncaster Children's Services Trust (DCST) (Vice Chair)
 Chair of DCST Board
 Director of Children's Services – Barnsley
 Cabinet Lead Member Children's Services - Barnsley
 Director of Children's Services – Rotherham
 Cabinet Lead Member Children's Services - Rotherham
 Director of Children's Services – Sheffield
 Cabinet Lead Member Children's Services - Sheffield
 Chief Operating Officer - DCST
 Director of Finance – partner authority
 Head of Finance - DCST
 Head of Performance and Business Intelligence - DCS



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