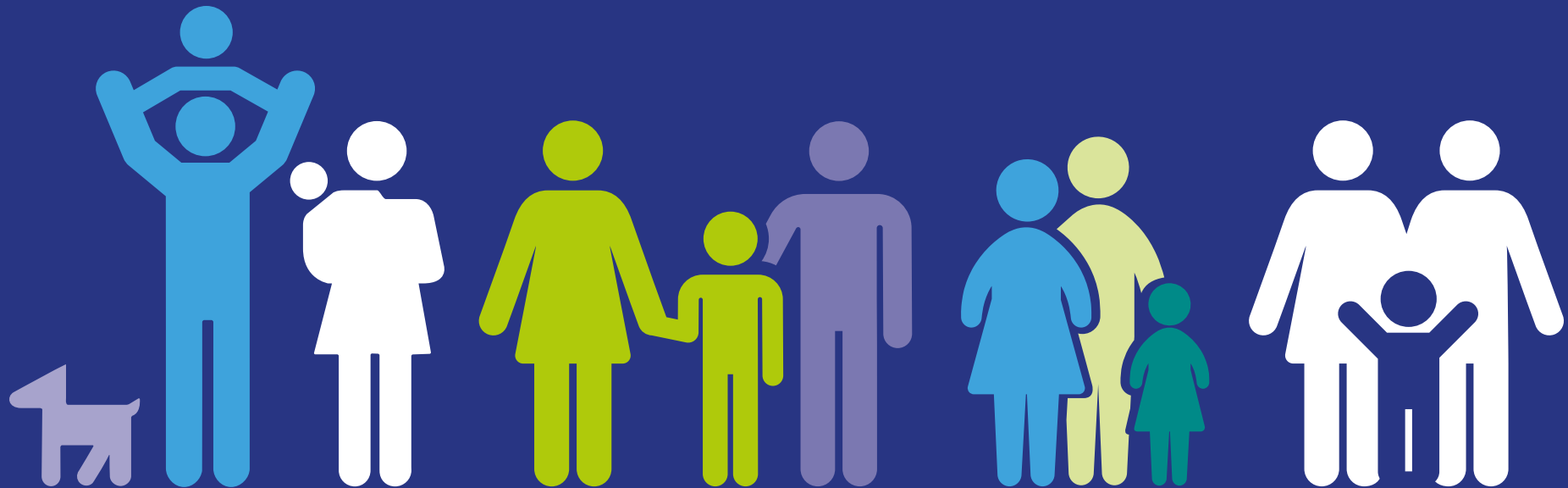


October – December 2019

Bridgend County Borough Council



Regional Adoption Arrangements: Appraisal of Existing Options



1. Purpose of the Project

To help with the alignment of decision-making across health and local government, from 1st April 2019 healthcare services for people in the area of Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) have been provided by Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board instead of Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University (ABMU) Health Board.

From a local authority perspective, whilst the disruption to general services may not be as significant as that to be experienced by the Health Boards, the boundary changes do impact on a number of BCBC services. To ensure that BCBC has not been disadvantaged by the change of regions, there are a number of essential services that BCBC continues to receive under the auspices of the West Glamorgan (previously Western Bay) footprint. A number of these services have been developed under the aegis of regional decision-making and they are being maintained under Transitional arrangements. One of the services which BCBC continues to receive/contribute to is the West Glamorgan Adoption Service, the boundaries of which were defined on a statutory basis by the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales).

BCBC has a strategic intent to align most, if not all its services, with the Health Board footprint. This paper is the outcome of a project designed to scope the implications of such a change for their Adoption Services and to inform decision-making.

The primary purpose of this project is to undertake an evaluation of the existing Regional Collaborative Adoption arrangements of which the Cwm Taf Morgannwg local authorities are part and assess their suitability in line with the creation of the new Cwm Taf Morgannwg Region. The evaluation must be limited to 3 related options, as follows:

OPTION 1:

Continue with existing Regional collaborative arrangements for the provision of adoption services: Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil CBCs remain part of the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Region and Bridgend CBC remains part of the former Western Bay Region (now West Glamorgan).

1

OPTION 2:

Bridgend CBC leaves the West Glamorgan Regional collaborative and joins the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Regional (Adoption) collaborative.

2

OPTION 3:

Bridgend, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil CBCs create a new Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional (Adoption) Collaborative

3

The full Project Specification can be found in Appendix One

2. Executive Summary & Recommendations

All colleagues who have contributed to this work have done so with openness, a real willingness to engage and to share their expertise to inform this work and have given give their time freely. There were no ‘closed minds’.

This Project, commissioned by Bridgend CBC, has been prompted specifically by the changes to the Health Service footprint in April 2019; Bridgend CBC is now part of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board footprint. Bridgend CBC’s commissioning this Project is not in any way a reflection on the success of existing Western Bay Regional Adoption Service. It is acknowledged that Bridgend CBC has a strategic intent to align most, if not all of their services with the Health Board footprint and that much of planning for Children’s Services is within the Cwm Taf Region. In these circumstances, it is proper that Bridgend CBC is proactively reviewing its existing regional services to reach the correct decision for each service area.

OPTION 1:

Continue with existing Regional collaborative arrangements i.e. Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil CBCs remain part of the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Region and Bridgend CBC remains part of the former Western Bay Region.

From a service delivery/operational perspective, there was an overwhelming consensus that Bridgend should remain within the existing WB Regional Adoption Collaborative. Creation of the National Adoption Service and the Regional Adoption Collaboratives in November 2014 (and the impact of the extent and depth of these changes) remains very fresh in colleagues’ minds. It is only in the last six months that WB staff consider themselves to be a truly regional service, with all policies, procedures, good practice guidelines, template letters, etc. now fully aligned. Particularly with the additional regional

posts from the NAS Adoption Support monies, staff now believe that they are on the verge of delivering a ‘gold star service’. Other Regional Adoption Collaboratives across Wales will have experienced a similar journey.

Similarly, all those who made a contribution to this Project were very aware that the significant structural and organisational changes required by Options Two or Three would divert energy, time and limited resources away from service improvements for children and their adoptive families. Both Western Bay and Vale, Valleys and Cardiff remain acutely aware of the long, complex and complicated journey they have been on in the last five years. Having ‘come through’ this, there is no immediate appetite to go so quickly down the same road again, particularly as the focus is now very clearly on improvements for children and their families with clear direction from the National Adoption Service Central Team and the Governance Board.

WVC Regional Collaborative undertook a Best Value Review in 2018 which resulted in a number of changes being made to the service, a revised financial model for the Collaborative and a relocation of all staff from Pontypridd to Barry in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Both Western Bay and the WVC Regional collaboratives consider themselves to be in a similar overall position. Having come through enormous organisational change, the focus over the last twelve months has now shifted to service improvements, both Regional Collaboratives face some similar and some different challenges. Both collaboratives are now very much engaged in plans to recruit more adopters and, where possible and in their best interests, place more children within their regions.

From a service delivery perspective, there is little doubt that the existing arrangements need to remain in place for the medium term at least. However, this has already and will continue to pose some challenges for Bridgend CBC in its strategic planning and partnership arrangements.

As all other partnership arrangements and other initiatives are currently being done with RCT and Merthyr CBCs, retaining the status quo means the Regional Adoption Service will be something of an 'outlier'. Regional Partnership Boards are being encouraged to become more involved in the strategic planning for Children's Services. Although this is not currently having an impact on service delivery, it may well do so in the future. Across the Social Care sector as a whole, these regional arrangements for adoption services will be unique.

Whilst there are excellent working relationships between the Heads of Service in Western Bay and strenuous efforts would be made for this to continue, it is likely that the local authorities will become more divergent and that there will be fewer opportunities for the informal encounters which help reinforce working relationships.

OPTION 2:

Bridgend CBC leaves the West Glamorgan Regional collaborative and joins the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Regional (Adoption) collaborative

With the experience of significant organisational change still 'fresh in people's minds', colleagues were able to identify easily some of the challenges Option 2 & 3 would pose. These are reflected in the Views Expressed section on page 9 and 10.

From a Bridgend perspective, this would mean the authority joining a collaborative that was not solely co-terminous with the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board boundary, which was the main impetus behind this work being commissioned. This in itself would create a different set of challenges. However, it would provide a larger geographical area with in which to place children and potentially a larger pool of approved adopters for matching with Bridgend children.

Option Two, would require some organisational and structural change. It would also result in a further imbalance between the size of the Regional Collaboratives across Wales. Please refer to Option Two Performance information table on page 13.

Swansea and Neath Port Talbot would become the smallest Regional Collaborative, certainly in terms of geographical area. It would raise questions regarding the viability of Swansea and Neath Port Talbot continuing as a Region in its own right.

Vale, Valleys and Cardiff is currently the largest Regional Adoption Collaborative. It has the highest numbers of children in need of adoptive families and the highest numbers of enquiries from those interested in adoption. If Bridgend were to joining this collaborative, it would further increase the imbalance in the size of the Regional Collaboratives across Wales. Cwm Taf currently has two local authorities with the highest level of demand for adoption placements and looked after children populations.

The way in which the staffing budget is constructed, i.e. each local authority still employing 'their own staff', would make it relatively straightforward for the budget to be disaggregated. The more recently permanent regional posts, currently employed by Swansea would require more attention. The way in which the Regional Adoption is constructed is different across the two Collaborative. Seven local authorities would be impacted by this option. It would be advisable prior to any decision is reached to proceed with Option Two that each local authority undertakes a detailed business and outcome focussed analysis so the implications are specific and clear for each authority.

Detailed proposals would require initial consideration by the Management Boards of both Regional Collaboratives. Engagement with the National Adoption Service Governance Board and the Director of Operations would be necessary. Bridgend would be required under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015 para 7(p) to inform the Chairperson of the Management Committee and the Chairperson of the Governance Board of their intention to withdraw from the Regional Collaborative, giving a minimum of 12 months' notice.

OPTION 3:

Bridgend, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil CBCs create a new Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional (Adoption) Collaborative

Many of the challenges that would need to be addressed if Option Two were the preferred route apply equally to Option Three.

It is the one Option that would achieve co-terminosity with the Health Board footprints of West Glamorgan, Cwm Taf Morgannwg and Cardiff & the Vale for the seven local authorities impacted by this option. The organisational change required to bring about this option would be very significant. It does raise the more fundamental question of whether all the Regional Adoption Collaboratives should be co-terminous with the Health Board boundaries. If Bridgend consider pursuing this option further then formal discussions would be necessary with WG and the NAS Governance Board. It would increase the total number of Regional Adoption Collaboratives across Wales, the implications of which would need further detailed consideration. The VVC Regional Adoption Collaborative have not initiated proposals of their own for this option to be considered and again a detailed business and outcome focused analysis would be advisable for each local authority to ensure decision making is evidenced based.

Some of the fundamental challenges that would need addressing are:

- Which Local Authority would host Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Adoption Collaborative?
- This option would create 3 new Regional Adoption Collaboratives and so the full implementation process may take up to five years once an 'in principle' decision had been reached.
- It is likely to increase the number of children placed out of Region, thus requiring inter- region fees for at least Swansea and Neath Port Talbot and Cwm Taf Morgannwg .

THE NATIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE PERSPECTIVE

The Chairperson of the NAS Governance Board and the Chair of the NAS Advisory Group have provided a written contribution to this Project. The letter outlines the NAS Governance Board's views on this work. The Board and Advisory Group have identified a number of concerns. These centre around:

- The significant disruption that would be caused by any changes to the existing Regional Adoption Collaborative.
- The negative impact that structural changes would potentially have on the outcomes for children requiring adoptive homes and those adopted.
- The NAS Improvement Agenda could be adversely affected by any structural change.
- The diversion of time and energy away from service delivery and improvement that any structural change would cause.
- The concern that the Review of the NAS Government Arrangements is nearing completion and that the outcome of the Review could be compromised should there be further uncertainty and plans for change as a result of this Review.
- The Board's view is that the only body in Wales that has the authority to take a broad view on the issue of Regional Adoption Collaboratives and Health Board co-terminosity is the Welsh Government.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Across Wales, there is a plethora of regional, sub-regional, cross boundaries arrangements in Children's Services. While we all strive for 'neatness and order', often this is not the context within which services are delivered. Bridgend CBC does face specific challenges in its partnership working brought about by the changes to the Health Board boundaries. Strategic planning is more complex, and the issues are likely to grow.

It is a question of balancing the strategic challenges this places on Bridgend and the inevitable disruption to service delivery and improvements for children and adopters that would be caused by any structural changes to the existing Regional Adoption Collaborative. All parties have been willing to take a positive, problem-solving approach to minimise some of these challenges. There is a clear consensus from all those colleagues directly involved in the delivery of services to children and their adoptive families that, in order to maintain the focus on service improvement, the existing arrangements should remain. For children and their adoptive families changing the existing arrangements at present would involve far more losses than gains.

The recommendations of this Project are:

- Continue with existing Regional collaborative arrangements: i.e. Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil CBCs remain part of the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Region and Bridgend CBC remains part of the former Western Bay Region (now West Glamorgan).
- These Arrangements remain in place for a period of a minimum of 3 years. This will allow time for consultation with key stakeholders and early planning for the longer term
- Begin work with key stakeholders to identify the specific challenges for Bridgend CBC remaining as part of the WB Regional Collaborative and to develop strategies for mitigating some of these issues.
- Inform the Chairperson of the WB and WVC Management Boards, the Chairperson of the NAS Governance Board and the NAS Director of Operations about the outcome of the Project.

3. Methodology

This project was informed by a series of face to face interviews with individuals and small groups, a staff workshop, a conference call and the reading and analysing of a number of documents.

The following staff made a contribution to this Review:

- Set up meeting with Head of Childrens Social Care, Bridgend CBC
- The Director of the National Adoption Service
- The Regional Adoption Manager WB
- The Regional Adoption Manager VVC
- The Heads of Service VVC
- The Head of Service Swansea, Principal Officers from Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend
- Chair of WB Regional Collaborative Board (telephone call)
- Telephone call/email exchanges with Finance Officers for WB and VVC
- Letter from the Chairpersons of the NAS Governance Board and the NAS Advisory Group



4. Some Views Expressed

OPTION ONE:

Continue with existing Regional collaborative arrangements i.e. Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil CBC to remain part of the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Region and Bridgend CBC remain part of the former Western Bay Region (now West Glamorgan)

Benefits

- The existing Regional collaborative has taken the last 4/5 years to establish itself
- Allow the Adoption Collaborative to focus on service improvement as opposed to energy and time being spent on another 're-organisation'
- Existing Regional Collaborative is very positive about emerging and future developments, on the verge of a 'gold standard service'
- The NAS Adoption Support monies and the ICF funding are just beginning to make a significant difference
- Policies, procedures, processes, forms, letters are now finally uniform
- Adoption Panels are working well and soon to move to paperless Panels
- The court work for Bridgend has recently transferred from Cardiff to Swansea, so all three authorities are working to the same court
- Links with Children's Services teams are well established
- The other local authorities in the existing Adoption Collaborative wish Bridgend to remain

Issues

- Not consistent with Bridgend's strategic intent to align with the Health Board footprint
- A disconnect for health colleagues
- Not consistent with other partnership arrangements
- Strategic and partnership working more complex
- Pay and terms and conditions are not uniform across the Region
- Inadequate office accommodation



OPTION TWO:

Bridgend CBC leave West Glamorgan Regional collaborative and join the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Regional (Adoption) collaborative

Benefits	Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potentially provides a larger pool of adopters for Bridgend children• Larger geographical area for Bridgend children to be placed in• The staffing structure along a functional split is a similar structure in both Western Bay and VVC• Swansea & NPT would be consistent with the West Glamorgan Health Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does not align Bridgend with the Cwm Taf Morgannwg footprint which was the primary purpose of this review• Would require detailed negotiations with VVC, WG & NAS• VVC is currently by far the biggest Regional Adoption Collaborative, Bridgend joining would further enhance the imbalance in the size of the Regions• Bridgend would be a 'very small fish in a very large pond'• Swansea and Neath Port Talbot would be the smallest region across Wales, its viability would be brought into question• Would increase the inter-agency fees for Swansea and Neath Port Talbot• Bridgend has more children needing adoptive placements than adopters they approve, joining VVC would increase the number of authorities with this imbalance.• VVC would continue to provide a service across two health boundaries• An increase in the numbers of Children's Services teams to develop and maintain close working relationships• All VVC staff have in the last year, following a Best Value Review, moved from accommodation in Pontypridd to the Docks office in Barry. There is no capacity there to accommodate Bridgend staff• Transitional arrangements would detract from service delivery improvements to re-align again of new policies, procedures, processes• The disaggregation of posts from Western Bay to VVC would prove problematic. Particularly the newly created regional posts- Marketing Officer, TESSA Co-ordinator• Public perception of this change would need careful management. Coming relatively soon after the creation of the National Adoption Service it could be seen as a 'failure' that has needed fixing



OPTION THREE:

Bridgend CBC, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil create a new Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional (Adoption) Collaborative

Benefits

- Cwm Taf Regional Adoption Service would have a clear identity
- The Regional service would be co-terminus with the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board
- Consistent with a number of other Cwm Taf partnership arrangements
- Would help create Regional Adoption Services of a more similar size across Wales

Issues

- The disruption to both VVC and WB would be significant and would undoubtedly have a negative impact on Service delivery
- Likely to be a lengthy implementation period, following a 'in principle decision'
- Who would be the host authority for Cwm Taf?
- Location for new service?
- Do VVC want to split?
- This would require detailed negotiations with WG and NAS
- New policies/procedures/processes required
- New IT system needed
- Resource implications of establishing a completely new Regional Adoption Service
- How would Regional posts in VVC and WB be disaggregated to form the new Regional Adoption Collaborative?
- All three authorities - Bridgend/RCT/Merthyr currently have more children requiring placements than adopters approved- an increase in inter-agency fees for all three authorities?
- Significant disruption to two Regional Adoption Collaboratives
- Seven Local Authorities would be impacted by this option
- Public perception of this change would need careful management. Coming relatively soon after the creation of the National Adoption Service it could be seen as a 'failure' that has needed fixing
- Disaggregation of managers/staff/resources from two existing adoption Collaboratives
- The creation of a new Regional Adoption Collaborative, CWM Taf would likely to take some 5 years to be fully established. This estimate is based on the North Wales experience prior to the National Adoption Service being created and the creation of the remaining Regional Adoption Services



5. Governance, Resource & Performance Issues

- The financial arrangements for the WB regional Adoption Service have largely remained the same since the creation of the Regional Service and are working well. Each of the three local authorities contribute the same amount at the beginning of each financial year, the total budget being £2,847m, until this financial year there has always been an underspend with each authority receiving a 'rebate' at the end of each financial year. This year the picture may be different this year with more placements attracting an inter-agency fee being made.
- The WB Regional Adoption Service is hosted by Swansea, but the staff teams are located in Port Talbot, subsequently NPT receive a reimbursement each year for the cost of the office accommodation and overheads.
- At the end of each financial year a formula is applied using the numbers of children placed by each authority, this results in each authority receiving a 'rebate' or needing to make an 'additional contribution'. The Finance Officers from each authority meet on a quarterly basis and the Finance Officer from Swansea reports to the Management Board. This close working across the three authorities ensures there are 'no surprises' at the end of the year.
- Staff in the WB Regional Adoption Service remain employed by the authority they were originally, this has perpetuated the continuation of slightly different terms and conditions for staff. When any vacancies arise, permission to advertise is approved by the Management Board and then goes back to the authority where the vacancy has arisen. Operationally working with three authorities with different human resource policies adds an additional layer of operational complexity. Plans for staff to be typed across to the host authority are placed on hold pending the outcome of this review.
- If Bridgend were to leave the existing Regional Adoption Collaborative it would be relatively simple from a staffing budget perspective for this to be achieved, the separation of the newly created regional posts would prove more complex.
- Staff employed via the WG Adoption Support Grant have been employed by Swansea as the host authority and are not included in the Regional Adoption Support budget.
- The WB Regional Management Board functions well, there is a positive working relationship between the three Heads of Service and there is a firmly held view that considerable progress has been made during 2019 to the point where it is seen as a truly 'regional' service.
- The WVC Collaborative undertook during 2016/17 a Best Value Review. It was commissioned by the Directors of the four local authorities. This provided a real opportunity to review the strengths and weaknesses of the collaborative. To date there had been no change to the apportionment of contributions made by each partner. The Best Value Review recommended that the existing funding formula should be reviewed and updated. A funding formula based on activity and usage of each partner would be more realistic as a way of apportioning costs.
- It has been agreed that from 2019/20 onwards 20% of the costs are to be treated as fixed with 80% of the costs being classed as variable. The following factors LAC numbers, referrals into the service, children placed for adoption, and requests for adoption support services have been used to determine the variable element as they were considered to be the main cost drivers for the service. An average of the last 3 years activity has been used i.e. 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18. Going forward it is proposed that the formula used will be based on the previous 3 years activity which again will smooth any peaks and troughs in activity. The budget for 2019/20 is £1.663m.

- All WVC staff have been typed or employed by the host authority, the Vale of Glamorgan. From an operational perspective this makes the employment of staff and all the subsequent human resource issues more straightforward.
- The WVC Management Board meets bi-monthly, Board meetings are well represented and supported by Heads of Service from the partner authorities and wider membership. The representative from the Voluntary Adoption Agency, St David's has changed to their Director of Operations and the Chair of the Management Board rotates amongst the 'non host' Directors.
- The governance issues for Options Two, would in all probability be relatively simple as it is likely Bridgend would be absorbed into the WVC arrangements. The budgetary implications would require further detailed work given the different funding formulas used across the two Regional Collaboratives as described above.
- If Option Two were to be considered in any detail then a detailed financial analysis would be needed to cover the budgetary implications for the Bridgend in relation to: the regional budget (Bridgend's contribution), projected inter agency fees, staff transfer costs, IT costs, accommodation costs.
- If Option Three were to be considered, similarly, a detailed financial analysis would be required. It would have budgetary implications for all seven authorities affected by this option. The complexities of implementing this option would be immense, likely to have budgetary implications for all seven authorities and take a minimum of three years to achieve.
- Option One would have the least financial implications for Bridgend, the cost of staff being employed by one local authority, achieving consistent terms and conditions for all staff would need to be costed.

Work has been compiled to identify some of the high-level performance measures across the three options under consideration. It provides just a glimpse of how these performance measures would look like following a re-configuration of Regional Adoption Collaboratives.

PERFORMANCE INFORMATION 2018-19

Table Key

1. Number of children referred to the service
2. Adopters Approved
3. Number of children placed for adoption
4. Number of children placed for adoption outside of the Region

Options

1. Continue with existing Regional collaborative arrangements i.e. Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil CBC remain part of the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Region and Bridgend CBC remain part of the former Western Bay Region (now West Glamorgan)
2. Bridgend CBC leave West Glamorgan Regional collaborative and join the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Regional (Adoption) collaborative
3. Bridgend CBC, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil create a new Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional (Adoption) Collaborative

Option One					
	Western Bay	Vale, Valleys & Cardiff	North Wales	Mid & West	SEWAS
1	170	218	53	69	188
2	42	51	18	21	47
3	67	100	39	35	70
4	22	35	12	13	29

Option Two					
	West Glamorgan Collaborative (Swansea & NPT)	VVC & Bridgend	North Wales	Mid & West	SEWAS
1	129	259	53	69	188
2	33	60	18	21	47
3	41	126	39	35	70
4	11	42	12	13	29

Option Three						
	West Glamorgan	Cwm Taf Morgannwg	Cardiff and Vale	North Wales	Mid & West	SEWAS
1	129	130	129	53	69	188
2	33	26	30	18	21	47
3	41	71	55	39	35	70
4	11	NA	N/A	12	13	29

Appendix One

Regional Adoption Arrangements: Appraisal of Existing Options

OUTLINE PROJECT SPECIFICATION BRIEF

PURPOSE OF DOCUMENT

The purpose of this document is to provide a Brief that outlines the requirements of a project that assists Bridgend CBC to evaluate existing regional Adoption arrangements and their appropriateness with the creation of the new Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership.

BACKGROUND

From 1st April 2019 healthcare services for people in the area of Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) have been provided by Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board instead of Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University (ABMU) Health Board to align decision-making across health and local government.

From a local authority perspective, whilst the disruption to general services may not be as significant as that to be experienced by the Health Boards, the boundary changes impact on a number of BCBC services. To ensure that BCBC have not been disadvantaged by the transfer of regions, there are a number of essential services that BCBC continue to receive under the auspices of the West Glamorgan (previously Western Bay) footprint. A number of these services have been developed under Regional decision making and are being maintained under Transitional arrangements. One of the services that BCBC continue to receive/contribute to is the West Glamorgan Adoption Service, which was nationally defined as a result of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales).

CURRENT SITUATION/PROPOSAL

The creation of a National Adoption Service is one of the key policy strands of the Welsh Government, as enacted in the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014. This Act provides powers, under Section 9, for Ministers to direct local authorities to collaborate in relation to adoption services and to prevent any local authority from withdrawing from these collaborations in the future. Consequently, five Adoption Regional “Collaboratives” Regions and the National Adoption Service were created in Wales and the Regions became fully operational in 2015.

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015 came into force on 13th March 2015. The primary purpose of these Directions is to ensure effective joint arrangements are in place between local authorities in Wales for the delivery of adoption services.

Schedule 1 of the Directions sets out which local authorities must collaborate with each other. For the former Western Bay region the local authorities are Swansea, Bridgend and Neath Port Talbot. Swansea host and manage the regional service on behalf of the partner agencies. However the Cwm Taf Local Authorities of Merthyr and Rhondda Cynon Taf were joined to Cardiff, and the Vale of Glamorgan to create the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Regional collaborative.

The regional adoption service provides a range of services and interventions across the five key domains to those affected by adoption. Those being:

- Assessing and supporting prospective adopters
- Assessing non-agency (parent/carer, formerly step parent adoptions)
- Birth Record Counselling and Intermediary Services (BRC &IS)
- Adoption support (assessments and support services to anyone affected by adoption)
- Twin tracking and Family Finding (TT&FF), which involves working with birth families of children in or following care proceedings and once a Placement Order has been granted by court in searching for an adoptive placement

The recent transfer of BCBC from the former Western Bay Region to Cwm Taf Morgannwg requires not just BCBC but the new Cwm Taf Morgannwg Region to evaluate the current Regional Adoption collaborative arrangements against alternative options. The evaluation will result in identification of the preferred option.

However, as indicated above any potential changes to Regional collaborative arrangements would have to be considered in the context of The Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015 (“the 2015 Directions”).

PROJECT SCOPE

The purpose of this project is to undertake an evaluation of the existing Regional Collaborative Adoption arrangements that the Cwm Taf Morgannwg local authorities are part of, and assess their suitability in line with the creation of the new Cwm Taf Morgannwg Region. The evaluation must be limited to 3 related options as follows:

Option 1: Continue with existing Regional collaborative arrangements i.e. Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil CBC remain part of the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Region and Bridgend CBC remain part of the former Western Bay Region (now West Glamorgan)

Option 2: Bridgend CBC leave West Glamorgan Regional collaborative and join the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Regional collaborative

Option 3: Bridgend CBC, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil create a new Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional (Adoption) Collaborative

The evaluation will consider existing arrangements, taking into account performance, issues and costs (including staffing). In addition, the evaluation will also identify potential issues and benefits with each of the options above and should also include potential structures costs (including financial) and specific benefits.

The evaluation will be concluded in a report that will fully consider the information gathered and provide balanced and objective conclusions that lead to a recommendation as to which of the three options provides the best arrangement and how this could be implemented.

DELIVERABLES

The deliverables expected from this project include a report that provides:

- an analysis of the Findings
- Conclusions
- Recommendations

In addition to a summary that can support a presentation of the findings.

REQUIRED FIELDWORK AND WORK PLAN

The fieldwork required to deliver the project and estimated time is set out below. The estimated time is based on a 7 hour day therefore a half day equates to 3.5 hours and where appropriate will be inclusive of travelling time. Travelling expenses will be paid at 0.45 pence per mile.

Task	Estimated time
Set up meeting with Laura Kinsey, Head of Childrens Social Care, Bridgend CBC	0.5 day
Presentation to each Regional (Adoption) Collaborative Board	0.5 day
Create Presentation and Deliver to both Boards (0.5 day per Board)	1.0 day
Identification and Request of required documents	0.5 day
Development of Interview Questions	1.0 day
Interviews with Regional Collaborative Board Chairs (0.5 day per interview)	1.0 day
Group interviews with each Region's Heads of Children Services (0.5 days per interview)	1.0 day
Interview with the Director of the National Adoption Service	0.5 day
Interviews with Regional Adoption Managers (0.5 days per interview)	1.0 day
Analysis of documentation	2.0 days
Analysis of Performance data	1.0 day
Identification of staffing structures and related costs	1.0 day
Analysis of all information	2.5 days
Report Write up	2.5 days
Development of summary and presentation of Findings	1.0 day
Administrative Time	1.0 day
Total days	18 days

REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

Commencement of the fieldwork will include a set up meeting with Laura Kinsey, Head of Childrens Social Care in Bridgend CBC, which will discuss the scope and expectations of the project. Following the set up meeting, the project officer is expected to provide weekly updates and any concerns presented during the project should be reported to Laura Kinsey as necessary.