

# BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE

20 JULY 2016

### REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

#### MONITORING THE PERFORMANCE AND PROGRESS OF THE WESTERN BAY REGIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE

##### 1. Purpose of Report.

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with information about the performance and progress of the Western Bay Regional Adoption Service, including:
- Annual Report on PI Performance 2015/16 (**Appendix A**)
  - Regulation 22 Quality of Care Review report 2015/16 (**Appendix B**)
  - National Adoption Service Quarter 4 Year End Performance Report 2015/16 (**Appendix C**)

##### 2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority.

- 2.1 The report links to the following corporate priorities:
- Helping people to be more self-reliant;
  - Smarter use of resources.

##### 3. Background

- 3.1 Adoption has, and continues to receive, high levels of attention from both the UK and the Welsh Government. Members will be aware that 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 Part 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.
- 3.2 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
- 3.3 Schedule 1 of the Directions sets out which local authorities must collaborate with each other. For the 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, this having been approved by Cabinets in all three local authorities in April 2014.
- 3.4 The Western Bay regional service is integrated into the National Adoption Service as one of the five identified regional collaboratives. The National Service is

underpinned by the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015.

3.5 The broad aims of the joint adoption arrangements across Wales as specified in the Directions include:

- Consistent and high quality service;
- Keeping delay to a minimum;
- Widest choice possible of placement;
- Eliminating waiting lists for training and assessments;
- Improving the matching process;
- Streamlining adoption services improved liaison between adoption social workers;
- Keeping breakdowns to a minimum by providing adequate adoption support;
- Collaborative working between local authorities, voluntary agencies, health and education services.

3.6 The Management and oversight arrangements of the National Service consist of:

#### **Governance Board**

Includes representatives from each agency:

- Spokesperson and Deputy Spokesperson from WLGA for Health & Social Services
- Mayor or executive leader by the Lead Authority
- Independent Chairperson of the Advisory Group
- Representative on behalf of the voluntary agencies

3.6.1 The functions of the Governance Board include: strategic direction, approval of annual work programme, ensuring the views of stake holders are represented and the monitoring and oversight of performance, complaints, engagement with voluntary agencies, service user representatives, budget and financial, Welsh language and reporting to the Welsh Ministers.

3.6.2 It is confirmed that Councillor Peter Richards from Neath Port Talbot has accepted the elected member position on this group. He has a significant amount of knowledge regarding adoption and looked after children, having been a member of adoption panels for number years.

#### **Advisory Group**

3.6.3 Includes the following representatives from:

- each collaborative Head of Children's Service
- the Association of the Directors of Social Services Cymru
- the Association of Directors of Education in Wales
- the WLGA
- 3 from voluntary organisations
- Legal adviser from the lead local authority
- Health professional for Looked After Children
- Medical advisor to an adoption panel
- CAMHS

- Service User
- Social Research Centre

3.6.4 The functions of the Advisory Group include:

- Provision of professional advice and
- Support to the Governance Board
- Supporting the effective operation of the service
- Notifying the Welsh Minister of any issues

3.6.5 The City of Cardiff Council has been given the role of Lead Authority for the National Adoption Services and as host authority will work with key partners to run an all-Wales adoption website, develop a centre of excellence for adoption services and employ a Director of Operations for Wales.

#### **Director of Operations and Central Team:**

3.6.6 The National Adoption Service has appointed Suzanne Griffiths as Director of Operations, along with a Business and Performance Manager, Policy and Practice Officer and Administrative Assistant.

3.6.7 The functions of the Director of Operations and Central Team include:

- Production of an annual work programme to include priorities and targets
- Financial plans and budget responsibilities
- Monitoring and analysis of performance data
- Determine actions to address issues arising
- Improvements and developments of the service
- Submission of a 6 monthly and annual progress and financial report
- Analysis of reports from regional collaboratives
- Establish and maintain website
- Co-ordination of pre-approval training and adoption support services

3.6.8 In addition to the development of the National Service and the Central Team, a Wales Adoption Register has been developed which is hosted by the Central Team operating on the principle of keeping Welsh children in Wales.

#### **4. Current situation/Proposal.**

4.1 Western Bay Regional Adoption Service (WBAS) became fully operational from April 2015. Prior to this adoption services were delivered locally via the three local authorities.

4.2 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/care, 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, 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

#### 4.3 The key achievements of the regional adoption service has been:-

- Reduction of the use of Interagency Placements and increase in placements within Western Bay providing a significant saving. For this last financial year, Bridgend had 15 placements in the region as opposed to 7 in the year 14/15.
- For inter-agency placements Bridgend made 24 for 14/15 and only 7 this year. Almost two thirds of all the children placed in 2015/16 were within WB.
- Reducing the number of children who wait longer than six months from Should Be Placed Decision (SBPD) to approved match. Reduction from 67% to 34%.
- Maintaining the number of children placed across the Western bay region totalling 93, despite there being a regional drop in the number of Placement Orders granted. Bridgend had an increase from 25 Placement Orders granted in 14/15 up to 31 in 15/16.
- An Increase in the number and range of prospective adopters approved up from 45 in 2014/15 to 53.
- Reduction in the number of children whose plan for adoption changed 21 in 2014/15 to 4 in 2015/16.
- Development and approval of a unified Adoption Allowance Policy.
- Creation of a central list and well organised adoption panel.
- Expansion of routine and basic adoption support groups for children and adopters

#### 4.4 There are a number of challenges that the service will need to undertake in the coming year and these include:

- The performance reporting requires further development in light of new PIs and to ensure we are accurately reporting on all data sets. The introduction of local, national and regional performance indicators in adoption support will enable the capture of accurate data on all aspects of adoption support. This will be supported by the redesign of the adoption support IT module so that referrals can be accurately categorised, tracked and outcomes evaluated. In Bridgend this will be overseen and monitored by the Senior management WBAS link officer and management team
- Policies and procedures, whilst important have not been able to have the priority needed due to capacity and will be high on the agenda for completing in the coming year
- Performance in relation to life story work presents considerable challenge to achieve the required target set by NAS i.e. 75% of the number of children placed in the quarter where life journey material has been provided by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Adoption review. The service is working with the three local authorities to improve on this indicator which includes training child care social workers in Life Journey/story work. In Bridgend specific training has been provided to safeguarding staff to ensure we attain those targets.
- Adoption Support is a key focus and priority for the coming year and is high on the national agenda following research and analysis of adoption support provision across Wales. It is clear from this work that the types and level of adoption support provision across Wales varies considerably. The aim and focus of development in this area both nationally and regionally is to ensure that adoptive families receive timely and appropriate support. As part of the wider management agenda in WBAS we are developing an adoption support model that embeds a culture and skill base throughout the service as a whole and in particular, in the adoption support function where a sound therapeutic model of intervention underpins practice. Training on assessments and direct work is

currently taking place for staff and this will result in adoption support having a renewed and much needed management focus where the emphasis will be on delivering high quality assessment, interventions and support and reducing the reliance on external interventions.

- 4.5 The service plan reflects the key priorities for the coming year with the focus being on improving the number of children who have life story work provided at placement and developing the WBAS therapeutic adoption support model which are both national agenda priorities. Alongside this there will be work on engaging more fully with stakeholders, in particular service users in shaping service delivery and there are also plans for consultation events.

## **5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.**

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## **6. Equality Impact Assessment**

- 6.1 This report is concerned with performance information rather than policy or decision making therefore an equality impact assessment is not applicable.

## **7. Financial Implications.**

- 7.1 There are no specific financial implications arising directly out of this report.

## **8. Recommendation.**

- 8.1 That the corporate parenting committee notes the performance and review of the adoption service and its ability to meet the needs of those affected by adoption within the region.

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**June 2016**

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## **Background documents**

None