

NATIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE

Achieving More Together /
Cyflawni Mwy Gyda'n Gilydd

REVIEW OF SERVICE AND ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

For Period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016



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Appendix

Western Bay Adoption Service Review of Service / Annual Report 2015/16

1. Introduction

The requirement to provide an annual review of the Adoption Service is set out in Regulation 22 of the Adoption Service (Wales) Regulations 2007 and Section 15 2c of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015. The aim of this report is to bring into one document a presentation and analysis of the activity of each of the three local authority adoption agencies, operating as a regional service, Western Bay Adoption Service. The report will be used for:

- The Review of Service (Regulation 22 report).
- Given the broad content of this report it will be used for informing senior managers, cabinets and scrutiny committees.

This report is in respect of the period 01.04.15 to 31.03.16. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information presented is an accurate record of the activity and quality of the Adoption Service.

2. Background

In February 2013 the document “Sustainable Social Services: A Framework for Action” the Welsh Government makes it clear and explicit what it expects and if necessary will require that some services, including adoption, will be provided nationally. In April 2013, the Deputy First Minister for Social Service issued a written statement in which it was acknowledged the progress made to date by the Expert Advisory Group in reaching consensus and delivery, through the Association of Directors of Social Services and the Welsh Local Government Association, of a functional model for a National Adoption Service.

Further detail proposed five regional collaborative regions, configured on existing and emerging networks. This specification related to the proposed Western Bay Regional Adoption Service consisting of Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea with Swansea local authority acting as the Host for the delivery of all regional responsibilities and functions.

Irrespective of the Welsh Government’s willingness to legislate for regional collaboration the Western Bay partners have recognised that there are some specific advantages in developing a regional adoption service. By far the most compelling

advantage will be the ability to flex resource to address any and all of the statutory requirements placed on Adoption Agencies in a timely manner. In addition the ability to utilise a pooled resource to undertake multiple tasks simultaneously will inevitably impact on reducing any unnecessary delay in the process and improve performance in each of the statutory areas. More critically this will also impact positively on the child's journey, shortening the time spent in temporary placements. Potential adopters will also experience a more robust and timely process that will keep them engaged and committed to the Western Bay Adoption Service, therefore reducing the possibility of losing them to a competing agency. Consideration will need to be given to the needs of the service user as to which services should be delivered on a regional and local basis. This specification is, therefore founded on the premise that current performance cannot afford to slip and must improve where possible

In February 2015 all three adoption teams moved to a venue provided by Neath Port Talbot, at Port Talbot Civic Offices. This venue is largely central to the region and provides ease of access to all staff employed to operate the service. In addition, the offices have close proximity to bus and train stations as well as ample local car parking giving ease of access to service users who wish to undertake visits to the offices.

Although co-location commenced in February 2014, the reality remained that delivery of adoption continued on a local basis given the brevity of time before the commencement of the financial year. As such, the service became 'operational' in its truest sense on 01.04.16.

3. Current Position

Since being operational, Western Bay has weathered the inevitable impact of significant change. The greatest resource available to the service is staff and enabling the three original local authority teams to adapt quickly and adeptly to deliver on both local and national objectives has been a significant focus. The service model and management arrangements (Appendix A) has facilitated this to some extent but the staff buy-in and engagement has been essential to enable the delivery of strategic objectives in what has been an evolving organisation.

Despite the challenges, in the first year there have been some encouraging results and considerable strides towards achieving improvements in all areas. There is much work to be done however, and although early days the initial signs are demonstrating delivery through economies of scale has proved beneficial. In order to report to each member agency however, there remains a need to collate and measure, in particular for children, performance for each of the local authority areas. That said, to enable a comparison on previous years, there has been a need at

times to use the aggregated data from the three local authorities in order to measure and review the service.

In noting areas of improvement, it goes without saying that there are areas where additional focus is needed. In the main, 2015/16 saw most effort placed on increasing the number of adopters being approved and reducing delays for children; placing children in shorter time scales. We achieved on both these broad objectives which was in line with the directional steer from the National Adoption Service and our own service plan (Appendix B). However, adoption support, with all its various facets has not been given as much attention and will be the focus for 2016/17.

Alongside the creation of the Western Bay Adoption Service, there has been a keen aim to play a leading role within the National Adoption Service and the Operational Team Managers, the Business Support Manager and the Regional Manager have active roles in the 4 working groups, thus progressing key priorities for 2015/16. Western Bay has taken the lead on two key areas, the creation of a family finding process as well as the review of recruitment and assessment of adopters.

4. Staffing

The service is divided into a 'functional' model (Appendix A), with three distinct operational teams, and one Business Support team namely

- (1) Recruitment and Assessment
- (2) Twin Tracking and Family Finding and
- (3) Adoption Support.
- (4) Business Support Team

The teams within the model are made up of workers from each of the three local authorities. Prior to co-locating into Western Bay as a Regional Service, staff 'opted' to enter specific teams based on preference, skills or interests. Seniors Practitioners and Managers were appointed to the roles following competitive semi-formal interviews, based evidencing skills and preferences for specific roles.

The model has within it a flexible approach that enables the movement of the very skilled and experienced staff and resources to whichever team or function needs resources at a given time. This in turn enables staff to maintain their skills across all aspects of adoption or can enable the development of skills for members who are less confident in some areas. This flexible and proactive approach can be used for either short or longer term solutions to workload pressures and has been utilised to some extent in the first year of operation, as detailed later in the report.

The functional model is supported by a Regional Manager and a Business Support Team.

The Regional Manager, Val Jones provides strategic direction to the service, based on both the aims of the National Adoption Service and the member local authorities' priorities. Employed by the host agency, Swansea, the Regional Manager has accountability on a day to day basis to the Host Chief Social Services Officer and to the Management Board. The Management Board consists of a Chairperson currently the Director from NPT, representatives from all three local authorities' at Head of Service level, health representatives (a Strategic senior Manager, Dean Packman and Medical Advisor ABMU – Dr Peter Barnes), an educational representative (Ms Deb Hutchinson) and a representative from the voluntary sector (Ann Bell of Adoption UK) thus compliant with the Directions Powers.

Within this role, the Regional Manager meets on a regular basis with counterparts from the National Adoption Service to ensure adherence to and input into the National Adoption Service Annual Priorities. Holding fortnightly management meetings, monthly supervision of the three managers and providing regular staff meetings, enables the manager to cascade the vision for the service both regionally and nationally to all staff and enables staff to provide feedback to the Regional Manager on priorities, achievements and directions to the Management Board and to the central team of the National Adoption Service.

The manager of the Business Support Function, Tracy Willis, has been in post since December 2015. The previous post holder commenced in March 2015 but left in September 2015. Interim arrangements were put in place by the host agency, with a senior Business Support Manager providing interim cover while the permanent post was advertised and interviews held.

The Business Support manager role is central to the day to day functioning of the service and to the collation of data for the various monthly, quarterly and annual reporting. In addition, this post ensures the administration of the service is prompt, reliable and enabling the three operational teams in delivering aspects of the adoption service.

The Business Support team has been significantly depleted over the majority of the first year of operation due to a number of staff either not joining the service on co-location or leaving during the first year. In all, 5 members of staff have left this team, resulting in a significant amount of effort to recruit for the vacant posts. At the time of completing the report, the team holds one vacancy with recruitment underway.

The team which concentrates largely on children where adoption is being considered (Twin Tracking) or where there is a plan for adoption (Family Finding) is managed by Di Chancer and supported by two senior practitioner posts. There are a further seven social work posts in the team, all full time save for one member who works 4 days.

This team provides a number of key functions to each of the local authority member agencies and in the main is at the interface between the three local authorities and the adoption service.

Largely divided into two key areas, the team works with the children where adoption is being considered or where a plan has been made for adoption. Firstly, the role of twin tracking which ensures that during care proceedings, the local authority has the input for the adoption service advising on the feasibility and viability of adoption, time tabling, care planning and preparation of children. Where the local authority concludes that they intend to recommend adoption to the Agency Decision Maker, the manager or either of the Senior Practitioners will provide the role of Agency Advisor. Secondly, where the court has concluded that adoption is the primary plan for the child, the case is allocated to one of the 6 family finders who begin the searches for suitable adoptive families, working with the childcare social worker and the worker for the adopters, they facilitate the exploration of the suitability of the links and co-ordinate the case being presented to the adoption panel. Thereafter, supporting the transition of the child to the adoptive home and monitoring through to the granting of the adoption order.

The Twin Tracking and Family Finding team has been largely stable with one senior practitioner leaving in December 2015 to explore other career options and one member of the social work cohort leaving to take up a role as an independent reviewing officer (IRO). Recruiting to the post of social worker was successful. The recruitment to the role of Senior Practitioner has not been without its challenges, with no suitable candidates available at the first round of adverts. However, a very successful interim arrangement is in place with one highly experienced social worker acting up in this role until the post is filled. The post is again out to advert.

The Recruitment and Assessment of Adopters is managed by Karen Williams, and is supported by one senior practitioner and 7 social workers. Within the team, 4 of the social workers are full time and three work for 4 days each. In addition to the recruitment, screening, assessment and support of adopters, this team also undertake the assessment of non-agency applications. This has been a very stable team in the first year of operation, with one member flexing into the adoption support team to boost skills in this area. This post is being covered in the interim by a secondment of a frontline social worker with adoption experience.

The management of the Adoption Panel sits within this team manager's role, and has enabled the careful time tabling and planning of assessments to ensure priority is given to Children and matches but that impact on adopter assessments is not compromised.

Adoption Support, as outlined in the introduction will be the focus in the coming year and this is based on not only the national agenda but also the evolving regional service. In the first year of operation, the Adoption Support Team has had a very

difficult journey. The team manager, shortly after co-location resigned to progress a career in training. The team establishment is 1 manager, 1 senior and 3.5 full time equivalents, the latter being two full time social workers and 3 part time (see Annex A). As an interim measure, the senior practitioner assumed an acting up role until the end of December 2015, participating in all management decision making and management meetings. This provided a degree of stability to the team and much needed continuity given this individual had previously worked alongside the departing manager as her deputy. However, throughout the year morale was understandably low and a further two, highly experienced members resigned; one to take up the option of early retirement and the other to pursue her already established independent social work agency.

In September 2015 interim arrangements were made, utilising the flexing model inherent in the structure and one member of Recruitment and Assessment flexed across into the full time role. This has proved to be a highly successful example of the flexible model and that worker has opted to remain in this post on a permanent basis. Through an innovative approach, working closely with voluntary partners, a secondment opportunity was realised and the part time vacancy was filled by a secondment from After Adoption.

In February 2016, the management of Adoption Support was taken on by Karen Williams. This is part of a wider management agenda of developing an adoption support model that embeds a culture and skill base throughout the service as a whole and in particular, adoption support where a sound therapeutic model of intervention underpins practice. Training on assessments and direct work followed shortly after, with adoption support having a renewed and much needed management focus.

The culture within the service as a whole has been slowly improving throughout the year. The initial challenges faced by co-locating, flexible and agile working, changing teams, managers and adapting to regional working inevitably impacted adversely on culture and morale. The sheer pace, frequency and depth of change in such a short period of time tested the staff and management considerably. However, over the year there have been significant improvements, aided by a common purpose, reflecting on achievements and celebrating successes. Opportunities for staff to share views have been through function or team meetings as well as in the service meetings but no formal consultation has taken place to date.

Towards the latter part of the year, staff across the service reported a lack of formal training opportunities, despite there being access to each local authority training provision. Further exploration of this revealed a general lack of targeted adoption related training. This was particularly acute in adoption support where the emphasis will be on delivering high quality assessment, interventions and support and reducing the reliance on external interventions. The views of staff and the audit of skills and

training needs added impetus to the already developing training plan (see Annex C). this plan started to be rolled out in the latter part of 2015/16 but will take shape more fully in 2016/17.

5. Adoption Panel Membership / Advisors and Training

The adoption panels in all three local authority areas were running well prior to regionalisation. A consultation and training activity session with panel members took place in the October before co-location to explore the new requirements on regions and on panels. This included the concept of a central list, locations of panels and the management arrangements of panel. What was evident was that there were considerable differences in panel expenses, administration and there were strong views expressed by panel members of not wanting to lose existing good practice.

Considering the views of social workers presenting cases to panel, the sheer size of the region and the need to slowly evolve panel, it was decided to retain the three locations where panels were run; Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea. This would cut down on travel time for social workers presenting cases, panel members' travel and would utilise already booked venues. However, the central list was established with all new members being recruited, and many of the existing members being encouraged to sit on panels that were not their usual one. This has been an evolving process but has been hugely successful.

A new Chair for the Western Bay Adoption Service was appointed in December 2015 following competitive interviews. Ruth Peggrem commenced by working closely with the Panel Advisor, Karen Williams to create a panel protocol which outlined how the central panel would operate, albeit in three locations. This immediately had the impact of ensuring a cohesive approach to panel delivery, ensuring that irrespective of which panel venue a worker presented to, the approach would be identical. The process was largely a hybrid of Bridgend and Swansea processes and has been implemented without issue.

Aligning panel fees and expenses was a priority to ensure panel members were not disadvantaged if they attended a panel in a different local authority area to the one they were used to attending. Again, panel members accepted readily the alignment which followed exploration of what other regions were paying and ensuring a competitive rate for Western Bay.

New panel members have been recruited throughout the year due to there being a number of vacancies inherited by Western Bay from the existing panels. In addition to recruitment, panel has lost a number of members who were either at the end of their tenure or who have had other pressures, such as work which has not enabled them to be as active as they would have liked. Recruitment is an on-going activity

with a section on the Western Bay Website, inviting interested applicants to contact the service.

Western Bay Adoption Service is served by two Medical Advisors, Dr. Janet Harris and Dr. Peter Barnes. Both are long standing and highly valued panel members, with Dr Harris formerly being on Bridgend Panel and Dr Barnes on both Neath Port Talbot and Swansea panels. As such, we have been fortunate enough to retain the services of both Medical Advisors. There have been some challenges in relation to planning cases for presentation to panel in that the preference has been to ensure the Medical Advisor that undertook any medical report is the one present at panel to advise on any medical issues. This has not always been possible, for example if the Medical Advisor is on leave or if there would be delay in progressing a case. However, these issues have been minimal and where there is a need to present a case to an alternative panel, the Medical Advisor has been informed and invited to attend.

Panel appraisals have not been carried out in the first year, despite an intention to do so. The sheer volume of work, improving how panels run and brevity of time has meant this has been a challenge to achieve in this year. However, the panel appraisal documentation has been reviewed by the panel advisor and improved to be fit for purpose. It has been shared with the panel chair and panel members for comment. Also, panel appraisal documentation was shared widely with the National Adoption Service for others to use as a basis for their appraisals. Panel members were consulted about how appraisals could be undertaken and it was felt that a selection of group and individual appraisals would be welcomed by panel members. Appraisals for panel members are planned for 2016/17.

Panel training has, likewise been lacking in 2015/16 along with the staff training. However, numerous opportunities have been taken to provide panel members with updates on changes in legislation, practice issues, performance and developments. This is not an alternative for training, but has been essential to equip panel with an understanding for the challenges and progress of the regional service. Training is planned for 2016/17 and was placed on the training needs analysis, completed at the end of the year. The training proposed follows collation throughout the year of issues panel wished to be covered. It has been agreed that, given the changes and new membership, the focus on the formal training will be 'back to basics' thus looking at panel members' roles and responsibilities together with their quality assurance role.

A panel membership chart is included in Appendix D. In addition to the panel members, Western Bay Panel has been fortunate to retain the services of Independent Social Worker Artie Meakin as the advisor on Inter Country Adoption.

6. Adoption Panel Activity/Workload Management

Panel operated for three out of the four weeks of a month, utilising the existing panel time table for each of the three local authorities. Prior to co-locating, an analysis of the number of cases to be presented (allowing for an increase in approvals and matches) was undertaken. It was evident that there was sufficient capacity within the existing frequency and duration of panels to accommodate up to a 30% increase in work. However, as one panel, namely Bridgend was only a half day panel; it was felt that any increase would necessitate this panel to run as full days if needed.

In the main, panels run on the first Monday of the month in Swansea, the second Wednesday in Bridgend and the third Tuesday in Neath Port Talbot. This allows flexibility for panel members who have other commitments to attend on days that are convenient for them, replicates to some extent already established patterns for the three local authorities and enables the panels to be spread out over the month, thus ensuring no case is delayed in that they can be moved to a panel within a week or so of the original panel proposed if needed.

Where extra panel capacity is needed, there is scope to extend the Bridgend panel to a full day or run extra panels in the fourth week of the month. Both of these options have been used in 2015/16 to ensure delays through quick or a sudden increase in cases can be accommodated.

As can be seen in Table 1, there were 35 pre-planned and 2 extra panels held in the year. Only 2 panels were cancelled in the year due to insufficient cases to present. Panels have continued even where there were one or two cases, to ensure no delay. The aim of avoiding delay has been evident throughout the year with panel members readily making themselves available to sit on panels and to convene the extra 2 panels that were needed due to increased work. Only one panel was cancelled due to quorate issues, this could not be foreseen and was unavoidable as a number of panel members were sick at short notice and other members were therefore unable to step in at the last minute and have time to read the pack. However, an extra panel was reconvened one week later, therefore minimising the potential for delay and this panel was made up of members for the central list, evidencing the ability to be responsive and proactive as needed.

Number of Panels held

| | Period 2015/16 |
|---|-------------------|
| Number of Planned Panels held | 35 |
| Number of extra, replacement or emergency panels | 2 |
| Number of Panels cancelled due to lack of quoracy | 1 |
| Number of Panels cancelled for other reasons* | 2 |

Table 1 – Number of Panels held

Panel members have been involved in one consultation event since co-location; this was in relation to the running of panel, timings etc. and not regarding the service as a whole. There are plans to include panel member consultations as part of the review of service for the coming year.

Panel is made up of a range of members, from all walks of life and includes adopters, adoptees, independent members, social workers and representatives from health and education. There is a low representation of men on panel, with just 4 male members and there is a desire to actively recruit more men to attend panel.

7. Advertising and Marketing

Marketing in Western Bay is not vested in a marketing officer but has been seen as the responsibility of the Recruitment and Assessment Manager and the Business Support Manager as it fits more comfortably within their specific roles. Becoming a regional service meant particular attention needed to be given to the design of the logo and brand of the region. To enable this, focus was initially on the redesign of the Western Bay Adoption Service Website. This was completed as a collective effort by the Marketing Officer from one of the local authorities, an external design and marketing company and the Recruitment and Assessment Manager under the oversight of the Regional Manager. The content and colours were designed to be harmonious with the National Adoption Service as was the Western Bay Logo and 'brand'. A number of visual designs were created by the marketing agency and shared with staff who actively participated in agreeing the final design for the logo. The themes and colour scheme has been carried out into letter headed paper, information sheets, and documents thus providing a regional identity.

The Website has the capacity to be updated, added to and changed to suit the emerging needs of the service, trends in adoption and to raise awareness of any

issues or events that the service feel necessary. The Website has been cited by a number of enquirers as the route to locating Western Bay as an adoption service, although actively consulting on this is not consistent. Tied in with the Website the service has capacity to run both Facebook and Twitter accounts but although both have been set up they have been underutilised due in part to the transient management situation in Business Support. 2016/17 will see this change with the appointment of the new manager and a desire to use more social media.

In the main, Western Bay Adoption Service has been involved in low key advertising in the first year of service. This is due, in part, to the excellent reputation of the three member agencies and the already high number of enquiries received historically. The aggregated data from the three local authority regions indicates that in 2014/15 there were just 138 enquiries where as in 2015/16 this rose to 177. The increase in enquiries has helped with efforts to 'change the culture' of those enquiring to encourage them to consider the types of children waiting for placements both regionally and nationally. This has been achieved without depletion in approvals and has led to more children within the region, including two sibling groups of three and harder to place children being placed locally as the scope and skill base of adopters has increased.

8. Children

Western Bay Adoption Service continues to provide information and data to each of the three local authority members as children remain the responsibility of the local authority. That said, the data collected demonstrates performance that is encouraging despite a number of external factors, not least the reduction in placement orders in the year. Despite the fairly consistent picture on referrals, there has been a decrease in the delay experienced by children in adoption, an increase in placing complex children and those within larger sibling groups.

During 2015/16 the number of children being referred for twin tracking was down by just 2 children on the previous year (Table 2) to 201.

Number of Children Referred for Twin Tracking

| Number of children referred to adoption for twin tracking | BCBC | NPT | Swansea | Regional Total |
|---|------|-----|---------|----------------|
| 2014/15 | 68 | 56 | 79 | 203 |
| 2015/16 | 64 | 43 | 94 | 201 |

Table 2 - Number of Children Referred for Twin Tracking

The issue of Placement Orders and legal issues is discussed later in the report (Section 10). However, of the children where adoption is the plan, 90 were placed with approved adopters in the year, a slight reduction on the previous year of 93 (Table 3). However, of the children placed, more were harder to place children, those in sibling groups and those where there had been considerable delays in achieving a placement.

Number of Children with Placed for Adoption

| Number of children placed for adoption | BCBC | NPT | Swansea | Regional Total |
|--|------|-----|---------|----------------|
| 2014/15 | 28 | 28 | 37 | 93 |
| 2015/16 | 22 | 39 | 29 | 90 |

Table 3 - Number of Children Placed for Adoption

In addition to the 90 children placed there were 3 children with placement orders who had been waiting considerable periods who were adopted by former foster carers through the non-agency route, bringing our total of children placed to 93.

One of the benefits of regionalisation has been much closer working arrangements with the three individual local authorities. In addition, bringing adopter recruitment into one service and close working between the family finding and recruitment and assessment teams has had the impact of significantly reversing the trend of where children are placed. As can be seen in Table 4 and almost opposite result has been evidenced on the previous year. Of the 90 children placed with approved adopters in the previous year almost 2/3 were placed out of the region, whereas now almost 2/3 are placed within the region. This has been achieved only where it has been safe and appropriate to do so. Whilst there is still a use for and reliance on external

placements, mainly provided through voluntary agencies, 2015/16 saw an increase of local placements as can be seen in Table 4.

Location of children Placed for Adoption

| | BCBC | NPT | Swansea | Regional Total |
|--|------|-----|---------|----------------|
| Placed in Western Bay region in 2015/16 | 15 | 19 | 22 | 56 |
| Placed in Western Bay region in 2014/15 | 7 | 9 | 18 | 34 |
| Placed outside of Western Bay Region 2015/16 | 7 | 20 | 7 | 34 |
| Total Placed outside of Western Bay Region 2014/15 | 24 | 20 | 7 | 51 |

Table 4 – Location of Children placed for adoption

The majority of the children being placed for adoption are under 5 years of age, with a significant proportion being under one. Nationally there is a drive to recruit adopters for older children and sibling groups, with Western Bay also supporting this premise to a large extent. However, we have evidenced in the year that within this region, it has been vitally important to also maintain the steady stream of approvals for children under two. In total, 52 children were one year old or under at the time of placement, which is over half of the children placed in the year.

Ages of children Placed for Adoption

| | BCBC | NPT | Swansea | Regional Total |
|--------|------|-----|---------|----------------|
| 0-1 | 13 | 19 | 19 | 52 |
| 2-3 | 4 | 8 | 4 | 16 |
| 4-5 | 4 | 7 | 5 | 16 |
| 6-7 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 6 |
| Over 7 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 22 | 38 | 28 | 90 |

Table 5 – Ages of Children Placed for Adoption

9. Matches

There is a strong and dedicated family finding team who work proactively in securing links which may lead to matches for the children where adoption is the plan. The children placed in the period have included a number of highly complex children where there have been considerable delays in securing the right adoptive placement. The reasons for the delays have included the child having additional needs, being part of sibling groups, or older children. However, it has been evident that the time taken to place children from the time of the 'Should be Placed' decision has reduced slightly. This is however an encouraging figure that belies factors outside of the control of the adoption service, such as complex and delayed care proceedings and late challenges to any agreed care plans by birth parents. The management team have been encouraged by the improvement in this area but aware that close monitoring of performance on a quarterly basis is needed to enable feedback to the three local authority areas and the National Adoption Service in terms of performance. Despite the improvements in placing siblings with adopters from within the region, additional work is needed in this area. A total of 16 sibling groups were placed in the period, 6 within the region and 10 externally (Table 6). This is however seen as a move in the right direction and reflects the progress being made within the recruitment of adopters, matching of children and supporting the placements.

Number of Sibling Groups Placed for Adoption

| | BCBC | NPT | Swansea | Regional Total |
|--------------------------------------|------|-----|---------|----------------|
| Placed in Western Bay region | 0 | 2 | 4 | 6 |
| Placed outside of Western Bay Region | 2 | 6 | 2 | 10 |

Table 6 – Number of Sibling Groups Placed for Adoption

One aspect of matching and placing children that continues to need monitoring is the number of children matched and placed but where there is yet to be an adoption order. Largely speaking this is outside of the control of the adoption service but supporting the placement continues to be a role of the allocated family finder. At the time of reporting the figure was 72 children where orders are yet to be achieved (Table 7). There are a number of reasons for this position including recent placements, or where it is too early to apply for an adoption order, there are

increased or emerging support needs so it is not appropriate to apply for an adoption order at this stage, or where an application has been made but there is a contested and as such any adoption order is delayed.

Matches and Placements but not yet Adopted

| | BCBC | NPT | Swansea | Regional Total |
|---|------|-----|---------|----------------|
| Number of children matched but not yet placed at 31.3.16 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Number of children in placement but where adoption order has not yet been granted | 17 | 30 | 25 | 72 |

Table 7 - Matches and Placements but not yet Adopted

The length of time it has taken for children to be placed from the making of a 'should be placed' decision has significantly improved in the last year. The previous year saw 67% of children taking longer than 6 months however, in 2015/16 this figure had reduced to 34%, a marked improvement and evidence of timely and proactive family finding as soon as a placement order is granted.

10. Legal issues /Placement Orders/Placements

Whilst adoption is being promoted, this is in the context of decreasing placement orders. Western Bay has available to it data for the last 5 years and it is noteworthy that since 2012/13 where the aggregated regional data indicates that there were 131 placement orders granted, this picture has reduced year on year with just 83 being granted in 2015/16 (table 8), this reflects the national trend of less placement orders being granted.. That said, the number of referrals being made to the service has not changed significantly. As such this is a figure that requires close monitoring on a quarterly and annual basis.

Number of Placement Orders granted

| | BCBC | NPT | Swansea | Regional Total |
|--|------|-----|---------|----------------|
| Number of Placement Orders granted 2014/15 | 25 | 36 | 33 | 94 |
| Number of placement orders granted 2015/16 | 31 | 26 | 26 | 83 |

Table 8- Number of Placement Orders granted

Although this is the first year for Western Bay Adoption Service being fully operational, it has been possible to look at data collected over previous years from each local authority and aggregation of that data has enabled the management team to consider if there have been any trends. Whilst it is fair to say that there has been a reduction in the number of placement orders both nationally and regionally, recent activity in the region may indicate this is not a continuing trend. Close monitoring of this will continue through both monthly and quarterly reporting mechanisms.

11. Disruptions & Breakdowns of Placement

Within Western Bay in the reporting period there have been two placement disruptions and two placement breakdowns involving 4 children. The two placement breakdowns were already at the latter stages when the region formed but have been included for accuracy. In each of the incidents, there has been a careful consideration of the impacts of this disruption and the lessons learnt from it.

Placement 1.

The breakdown occurred shortly following the granting of the adoption order. The child was placed with adopters outside of the agency. There were increased pressures on the placement prior to and post adoption order, with the child placed exhibiting behaviours associated with anxiety and insecurity. The escalation in the child's behaviour proved difficult for, in particular one of the adoptive parents to manage with the other parent managing intermittently. The couple had a birth son already and as the child's behaviours escalated, with targeting of the birth son the adoptive parents indicated they could no longer manage.

Placement 2

Siblings were placed with adopters outside of the region, provided by another agency. Shortly following placement it became evident that the prospective adopters were struggling to bond with the children and the placement came to an end. What has been apparent is that, although the adopters indicated in their assessment and through matching that they wished to be matched with older children, the reality of this brought up their desire to have much younger children.

Placement 3

The child was placed with adopters outside of the region and shortly after adoption order was granted the placement broke down. There were known to be adoption support needs throughout the placement with the child's behaviour showing signs of an attachment difficulty. Post adoption order the challenges in the placement escalated with both adoptive parents feeling unable to continue. Later exploration of the matching and placing process identified key practice and process issues that are being explored and addressed within Western Bay as a region.

Disruptions

| | BCBC | NPT | Swansea | Regional Total |
|--|------|-----|---------|----------------|
| Number of children matched but where, following panel and prior to placement the match does not proceed. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Number of children placed or adopted but where the placement disrupts/breaks down. | 2 | 2 | 0 | 4 |

Table 9 - Disruptions

12. Adopters

Western Bay Adoption Service has been in the fortunate position to be attracting an increased number of prospective adopters who have enquired from both word of mouth and through accessing the Website. At the start of the period, a number of enquiries were forwarded by the National Adoption Service, but this has not been sustained and it is thought that the links to the Website have addressed this.

In the year, very little specific recruitment activity was undertaken. However, engaging in National Adoption Week was felt to be a good opportunity to explore what impact recruitment may have. As such, a stall was set up in a busy shopping area in Swansea, manned by a number of adoption staff. In addition a radio advert was commissioned and ran for the duration of the campaign, played on popular local radio covering the whole region. The impact of the recruitment activity was poor with no noticeable increase in enquiries. That said, research indicates that it is often months later that someone might apply to adopt. There has been no indication from the feedback from adopters that enquiries were as a result of the two recruitment activities undertaken.

A number of research papers and the findings of Western Bay Adoption Service supports the view that many of the applicants applying to adopt do so as they wish to have a child and cannot conceive naturally. However, despite there being a need for adopters in the region of very young children, considerable effort has been made to help raise awareness amongst applicants of the need for adopters to consider older children, sibling groups and harder to place children. The impact in the region has been encouraging with more adopters being approved for siblings and two families being approved for three.

Progressing enquiries and assessments has been a significant focus in the reporting period. Unfortunately the average time to progress assessments increased but this was due in part to a number of complex and long standing assessments that transferred to Western Bay which were only part completed.

The quality of assessments has been a specific focus and these have improved over the year, with panel commenting on this. The use of peer reading, fortnightly team meetings (initially, now monthly) a staff development day where quality, evidence based assessments and analysis was covered at length have all contributed to driving up standards. Regular team meetings where practice issues are discussed reinforce the learning in the first year of operation and good examples of complex issues are discussed in these meetings, thus further developing the learning opportunity of team members.

In 2015/16 there was an increase in approvals from 45 to 53 being approved generating a potential 63 placements (Table 10). Although initially the service was on target to achieve an increase of more than 25% (National Adoption Service target set), only 15.6% increase was realised. This was in part due to a number of complex cases that took longer to be assessed, a number withdrawing following their assessment but prior to panel (due to pregnancy, bereavement or house moves/economic changes). The average time also increased in the last quarter impacting adversely on the overall figures for the year. Addressing this will be a significant focus in 2016/17.

Number of adopter enquiries and approvals 2015/2016

| | 2014/15 | 2015/16 |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|---------|
| Number of adopter enquiries | 138 | 177 |
| Number of adopter approvals | 45 | 53 |
| Number of Placements Generated | Not collated | 63 |
| Number of unsuccessful applications | Not collated | 0 |

Table 10 - Number of adopter enquiries and approvals

For the first time it has been important to also collate the types of households who come forward and how many placements have been generated (Table 10). This has enabled closer monitoring of the demographic of adopters attracted to Western Bay in order for us to, when needed target unrepresented groups. Analysis of the types of placements generated (Table 11) has enabled greater clarity of placement capacity. For example, it was noteworthy that just three former foster carers were approved to adopt children in their care, a much lower figure than anticipated.

Types of Adoptive Placements Approved

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of adopters approved for one child | 43 |
| Number of adopters approved for siblings | 10 |
| Number of adopters approved for children over 4 | 4 |
| Number of adopters who were former foster carers | 3 |

Table 11 – Types of Adoptive Placements Approved

The pre-approval training offered to adopters consists of three full days provided by Mary Jones, run on a bi-monthly basis centrally in the region. In addition, two members of the recruitment and assessment team facilitate the fourth day which includes a session by Dr Peter Barnes, Medical Advisor, adopters who have gone through the process recently, staff talking about contact and adoption support and where possible birth relatives. Feedback is collated from each adoptive applicant on the training and report positively about the experience.

The second time adopters training is run three or four times a year, depending on need. If there are insufficient members to participate places can be purchased from other regions or from the Association of Fostering and Adoption AfA, formerly BAAF Cymru.

In line with the implementation of the Social Services and Well Being Act 2014, greater emphasis is being placed on assessing and evaluating the support networks available to adoptive families. Part of this includes introducing family group meetings where support needs and scenarios are discussed with family present to explore and examine what emotional and practical support will be available to the adopters post placement.

13. Adoption Support

The structure of the Western Bay Adoption Service provides for the range of adoption support activities to be delivered, in the main by the Adoption Support Team. This team has largely the responsibility for the assessment of adoption support, provision of interventions to individuals and families, direct work with children around their life story and contact, birth records counselling and intermediary services. Letterbox contact has been anchored within this team but a decision was taken in September 2015 to distribute this across the three teams given the pressures on Adoption Support Team and in light of a number of representations indicating that the model in place was not meeting needs and adopters in particular wished to have a named person to manage their letterbox contact.

As outlined previously in this report, there have been considerable issues in the first year in relation to adoption support. The lack of permanent management, vacancies and loss of staff has impacted adversely on morale. Despite this, staff in the team remained committed and eager to deliver on and improve services.

Measuring performance in relation to the range of adoption support has been highly problematic. There have been no set performance indicators relating to adoption support and the implementation of the IT system for the service did not build in any mechanisms to filter or evaluate demand on the service. All referrals for example, irrespective of need were categorised as post adoption support assessments. In the latter part of the year this has been rectified, but not in sufficient time to be able to

run meaningful statistics on last year's performance. This is a priority for the coming year.

Staff and team development has been high on the agenda in the last two months of the year. A staff audit on training and skills identified considerable need for a range of training and support in order to deliver on the therapeutic model of service delivery proposed. Training started on direct work with children, providing staff with a toolkit of resources and comprehensive training to use the materials. Advanced attachment and parenting with PACE have been identified as priority basic training needed for the team as well as more specialist training to be rolled out over the coming year.

Within the team there has been a heavy reliance on externally provided therapeutic interventions such as Theraplay, play therapy and DDP (Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy). In addition to these formal approaches, there has been a reliance on therapists to provide less specialist interventions such as direct work with children on transitions and life story work. These have been provided on a spot purchase basis rather than through any service level agreement. The rationale for this has been multi-faceted and in part will be addressed through the implementation of the whole service therapeutic model and the upskilling of the adoption support team.

The first year as a regional service has seen the development of a range of support groups operating across the region. These have been based on both existing activities and on creating new services. Currently the adopter and toddler groups run in both the east and the west of the region, facilitated by members of the adoption support team. These are highly effective and are well attended.

Efforts to set up a birth parent support group have been without success. In the absence of a dedicated resource to achieve this, some collaborative arrangements have been made with a neighbouring regional service to enable families local to them to attend this group. As with other areas of development, 2016/17 will see particular developments to support and engage with birth families.

Across the region, the provision of an adopter support group has built on existing provisions. In the main these sessions include guest speakers such as Adoption UK, health visitors and workers talking about using life story books and engaging in letterbox. There has been a mixed take up of these groups but those who do attend have reported that they find them helpful and informative.

14. Development of Adoption Service

The first year of Western Bay Adoption Service has seen a focus on both the recruitment of adopters and reducing delays for children where adoption is the plan. The service has delivered on both these broad objectives. However, further developments are needed to refine activities to ensure continued improvements,

such as reducing the time taken to assess and approve adopters, increasing the number of children where life journey materials are provided by the second review if not sooner and ensuring delays for children are maintained at the current level, if not improved upon.

Adoption support has been an under resourced aspect of the Western Bay Service and consequently the coming year there will be specific focus on this aspect of the service. The vision is to create a therapeutic model across the service, training not only adoption support staff but representatives of the other two operational teams in order to deliver a high quality and responsive model of intervention. A robust and comprehensive training plan has been developed which commits significant expenditure in the next twelve months on basic and advanced training modules. The training aims to equip staff to undertake robust, evidenced based and analytical assessments where an identified need is accurately assessed and matched by the appropriate level and timeliness of provision.

The introduction of 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.

Policies and procedures, whilst important have not been able to have the priority needed and will be high on the agenda for completing in the coming year.

15. Policies and Procedures

The first year of operation has seen great strides in delivering a service that meets objectives set both locally and nationally. While there have been numerous examples of regionalising the paperwork, processes and systems, the development of general policies has been limited due to capacity. Considerable work is needed to address this in the coming year.

There have been examples where Western Bay has taken a lead nationally such as the development of a national family finding procedure and a review of the recruitment and assessment of adopters. Participating in both these initiatives enabled the respective managers to reflect on local practice and make changes as needed.

The development of an Adoption Allowance Policy has been a significant achievement in 2015/16. Based largely on the Bridgend model and adapted to reflect the additional subtleties of regional working, such as the different levels of allowances paid, the policy is being implemented across all three local authorities.

16. CSSIW

Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend adoption agencies were last inspected in 2012 and Swansea the year after. In 2015/16 there was no inspection but members of the management team attended a workshop regarding the implementation of a new inspection process. Within this event it was announced that all regional services were to complete their Self-Assessment Form by the end of February 2016, which was achieved.

17. Local Monitoring and Governance

The Management Board is fully compliant with the Directions Powers Regulations, the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) 2015, with health and education representatives having now joined the Board. There are terms of reference in place which is included in the Partnership/Interagency Agreement.

Monitoring and governance of the service is the responsibility of the Management Board, which meets every two months and interrogates data provided on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis. Strategic decisions are shared with the board for approval whereas, in the main, operational decisions are overseen by the Regional Manager who is supervised by the Host authority Chief Social Services Officer. The service is measured on both the service plan and the national performance indicators through regular reports which present the achievements of the service compared to previous years and where data is available, with other regions across Wales.

An annual report is presented to Scrutiny Committees in all three local authorities. Periodically, reports are submitted and shared with Cabinet, Scrutiny Panels and Corporate Parenting Cabinets/Committees. These include reports such as, the adoption allowance policy, the end of year performance report and partnership arrangements.

In addition the regional adoption service has a management by exception route to the Western Bay Programme Team/Leadership Group if there is ever a need to resolve issues at a regional strategic level.

Performance indicators are reported to the National Adoption Central team on a quarterly basis, this information is provided to the Advisory Group and the Governance Board of the National Adoption Service.

18. Consultations

There has not been robust and formal consultation process in the first year of operation. However, consultations have taken place with panel members, adopters accessing adoption support and with staff on the creation of the Western Bay Logo and periodically through service meetings. In addition to these events, Western Bay jointly engaged in consultation with Adoption UK and with the National Adoption Service, in both events inviting adopters to participate in sharing their views, thus shaping the services both locally and nationally.

19. Compliments, comments, complaints and representations

Compliments and complaints received by the Western Bay Service are dealt with at the informal stage by the service and registered with the relevant local authority within the region. It has been agreed by the Complaints Officers in the partner agencies that complaints at the formal stage will be dealt with by each local authority responsible for the child or if it relates to a staff member or the service they have provided their employing authority. Where a complaint relates to more than one local authority a joint investigation will be undertaken with one local authority agreeing to take the lead. The regional team aims to deliver a responsive, proactive and customer focussed service wherever possible. During the first year and transition into working on a regional collaborative basis it was likely that the number of complaints would perhaps be higher given the adjustments both service users and staff would experience. We aim to use complaints proactively as a means to learn from errors and likewise use the compliments we receive to replicate practice, improving service delivery or developments.

Compliments:

There have been 7 compliments during the period covered

From Adopters

- “Raised a concern with NAS and Western Bay Adoption and I must say their responses have been full, open and reassuring. Many thanks.”
- “Many thanks to all. Also to the ladies I have spoken to on the telephone.”
- “A massive thank you for everything you have done for us and having faith in us to adopt X. She is an amazing little girl who we love to bits and will do everything to make her life the best. Please say thank you to D&G for their help also.”
- “You've been with us every step of the adoption journey. We are very grateful for your support and thank you very much.”

- “Just wanted to say a massive thank you for everything. You have made the whole process easy and understandable. X is just totally amazing. We spend all day laughing and smiling and that is thanks to you and the amazing job you have done finding her. We really can't thank you enough.”

From Professional Colleagues

- I was really impressed by the social worker reports - really clear and comprehensive, but also human - the warmth of the work that had gone on with the couples was evident. And it contributed to me feeling privileged to have become, at least in a small way, part of the team!
- Compliment passed on to Family Finding -Manager via EDT in email. "Police Constable X. began by telling me that he has adopted a little girl with the support of your team. He told me his back ground (which I know you will be aware of) and how he and his wife decided to adopt. He told me this has been the most rewarding and satisfying experience of his life. He told me that it was (is?) not without some emotional difficulties but with the support of your team – and you in particular ☐ – it has made him happy beyond his wildest dreams. He was positively beaming when speaking of how you had helped him, his wife and (now) daughter. If social work intervention can be measured by empowering people and helping them to achieve positive lives I rate this in the Gold medal spot! Glad to pass on great news.

Complaints:

There have been five complaints received by the service all but one were dealt with at the informal stage. There was one case dealt with at stage 2 by the relevant local authority with involvement by Western Bay Adoption staff. This complaint related to late provision of life story work and as such, is not compressively reported in this review of service as it predated the co-location of Western Bay as a regional service.

What is apparent is that the newly emerging Western Bay Adoption Service struggled initially with cohesive communication. Certainly all of the complaints have a communication aspect and this related to either a lack of clarity around processes, personnel or accountability and as such it is anticipated that there would be a reduction in these moving forward. Certainly the latter half of the initial year indicates this to be the case.

Of the 5 that were received, 4 were dealt with at an informal stage and were resolved satisfactorily. The majority were in relation to in the main letterbox/contact/ adoption support. It is evident that the model we initially intended using to operate the letterbox system was not as responsive and proactive as recipients had previously experienced. Therefore, in terms of learning, the views of those making

representations have been considered and a redesigned and implementation of the letterbox system is underway. In addition, as indicated elsewhere in the report the issues around adoption support (and the late provision of life story/journey material) are being addressed through the work that is underway in the design and implementation of a therapeutic model for the service as a whole and on focussed activity around the performance indicators.

20. Agenda for Change/Future Challenges

One of the understated but effective achievements for the first year was the formation of the Western Bay Adoption Service. The sheer size of the task, though often taxing has been largely successful. Therefore, as well as the specific agenda for change and future challenges, for Western Bay Adoption Service it will be important to bed in the excellent ground work, building on the strengths of the service. The coming year will be an opportunity to refine what works well and focus on tackling new priorities.

For the first year of operation the Service created a regional plan based on the 8 key points of the National Adoption Service and the key priorities for change. The priorities for NAS and for the region included reducing delays for children and increasing the number of adopters approved. This was achieved therefore, the coming year will see consolidation of these achievements as well as a particular focus on adoption support.

In respect of adopters, the aim in the coming year is to increase our pool of adopters again, this year it will be in line with the NAS target. A particular focus in the region will be to address the length of time taken to assess and approve adopters, aiming to reduce this to within the NAS targets. This will be a particular challenge as the service has had a number of staff challenges and this may impact on timescales. Whilst the last year has seen a broad range of adopters available in the region, thus meeting many children's needs including the placement of older children, sibling groups and more complex children, the service has not needed to undertake specific targeted recruitment. In the coming year this will continue to be closely monitored to ensure any emerging local or national trend is translated into recruitment and assessment activity.

In respect of children, whilst the numbers of children being placed remained relatively static, the achievement of reducing delays remains a priority. In addition the coming year will be focus on improving the preparation of children and the

receipt of life journey materials. This will involve close working with the three local authority areas to improve awareness and compliance.

General planned improvements have been outlined in section 14, but the main focus next year will be on the creation of a therapeutic model for the service as a whole and a robust overhaul of the assessment and delivery of adoption support. To achieve these general and specific aims, there are many component parts but the broad aims include:

- Developing a skilled, trained and well supported adoption support team who can proactively deliver adoption support which has improved assessments of need, earlier and more robust support interventions and a reduction on the reliance of external provisions.
- Involvement of a wide range of service user's and other stakeholders in the design, creation, delivery and review of a proactive and responsive adoption support service.
- Expand the use of preventative services, such as improved adopter assessments, provision of a wider range of support groups and activities.
- Improve the communication and advertising of adoption support in the region.
- The introduction of local and national performance indicators in all aspects of adoption support. This will require additional and effective IT and data capture systems.
- Build on existing educational links to increase the interface between education colleagues and adoption support workers.
- Continue to work collaboratively with partner agencies to deliver services, such as 'Talk Adoption.
- Develop the relationship with colleagues in CAMHS with an aim of accessing the expertise and interventions available more consistently.
- Continue to have a strong presence within the NAS working groups, continuing to work on the creation of a two stage adoption recruitment model, expanding adoption support developments and improving adoption nationally.
- Improve the engagement with birth parents, looking at ways to encourage take up of adoption support both pre and post placement of their child for adoption.
- Work collaboratively with the three local authorities to improve the information available to the service, most notably the CARB.
- Working with the three local authorities, advise, guide and support the improvement in the preparation of children for adoption and improve the quality and quantity of life journey materials provided to children.

There is a robust and comprehensive training program in place which is being rolled out in the coming year for staff across the service. This will include routine and basic training as well as a comprehensive suite of specialist training aimed at improving

the adoption experience of all those engaged with the Western Bay Adoption Service. This training includes;

- Toolkit Training – the provision of a toolkit of materials and assessment/ intervention methodologies for working directly with children both on their own and with adoptive parents.
- Theraplay training for a significant number of staff across the service.
- PACE training at a basic and advanced level.
- Advanced Attachment training.
- Non Violent Resistance training.
- Task Centred intervention approaches.
- Solution Focused Intervention approaches.
- Motivational Interviewing Techniques.
- DDP level 1.
- Evidenced Based Assessments.

The training program is aimed at ensuring sufficient staff in all three functions are trained to a high standard which will improve all aspects of service user experience. This will include the assessment of adopters, the matching and placement of children and the delivery of low level and complex adoption support.

21. Conclusion

The focus in 2015/16 has been on the placement of children, avoiding delays and on the recruitment and assessment of adopters. Western Bay has largely delivered on these two broad aims, with particular success in terms of:

- Reducing the reliance on interagency placements.
- Increasing local placements.
- Reducing the number of children waiting 6 months or more from 'Should be Placed' decision to an approved match.
- Successful placement of a number of harder to place children, older children and sibling groups, including two groups of three children.
- Increasing the number and range of adopters available.
- Development of a coherent and 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.

There has been recognition that the coming year will need to focus more on adoption support, which is both a local and national agenda priority. This will commence with

training and a review of the IT arrangements for adoption support and will include revising the assessment process and intervention plans. Engaging more fully with stakeholders, in particular service users in the shape of and delivery of services will be an integral part of the development of adoption support in 2016/17.

Appendices

Appendix

A. Staffing Structure / functional model

B. Service Plan 2015/16

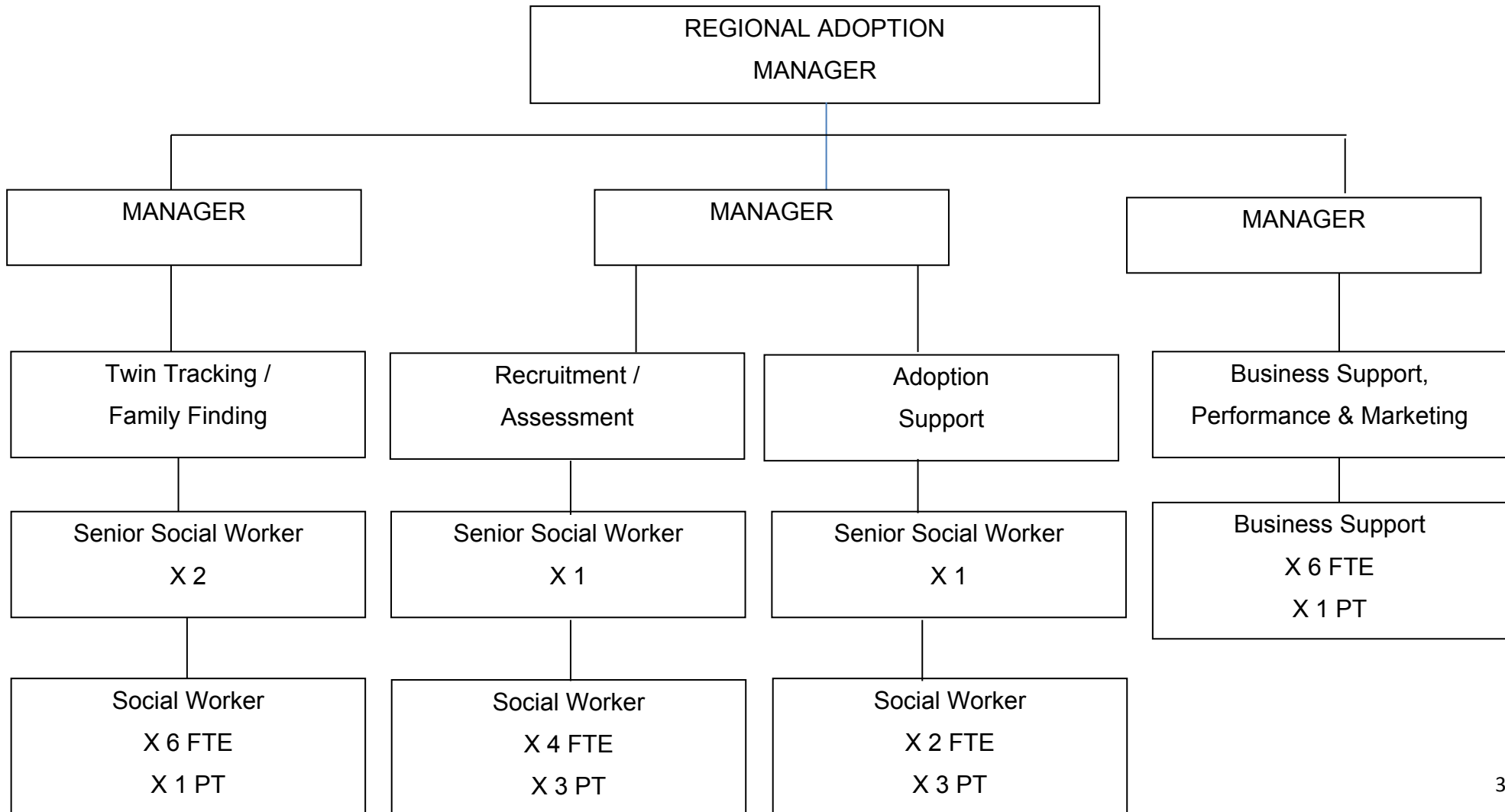
C. Panel Membership Chart

Date completed: 3rd June 2016

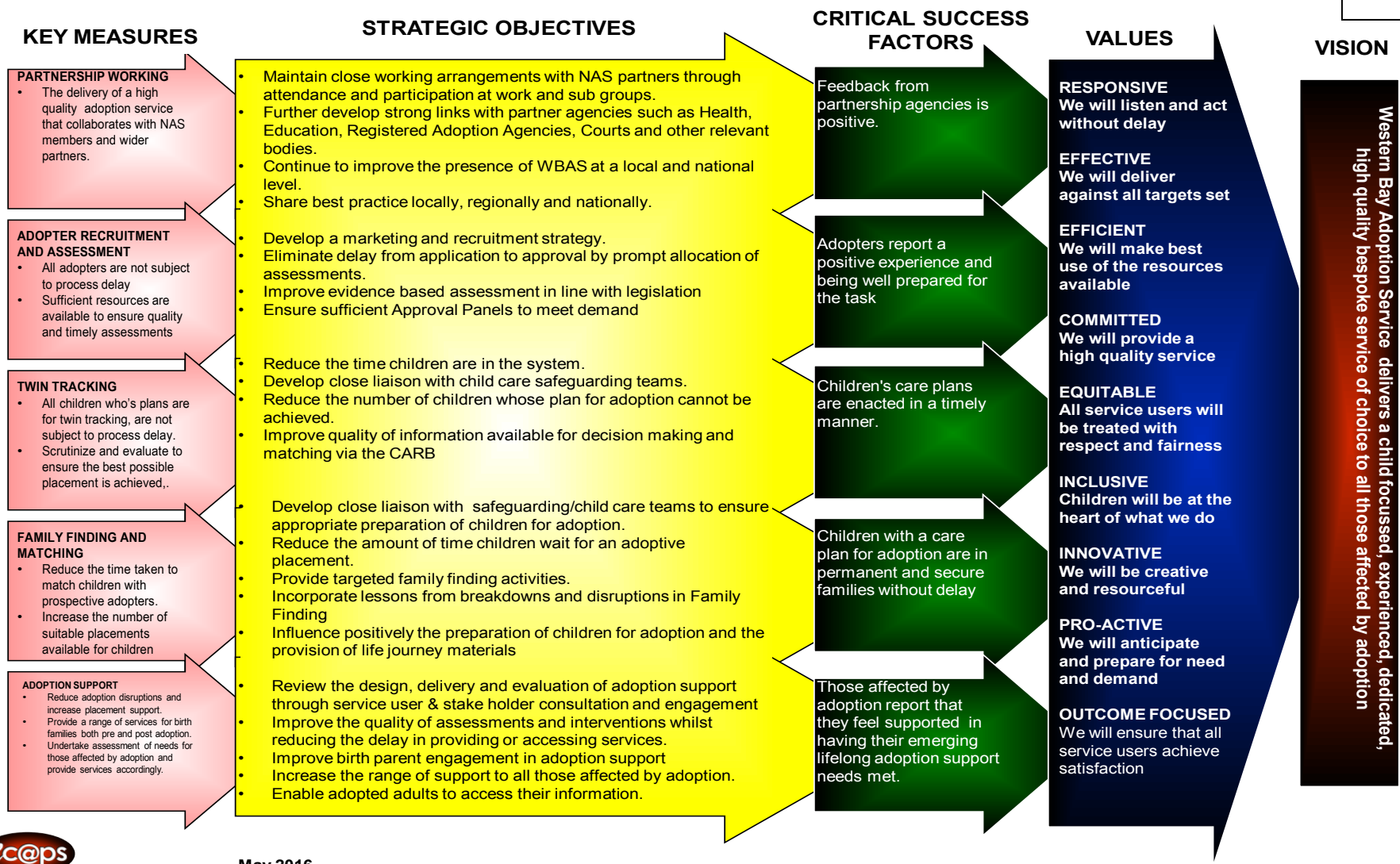
Authors: Val Jones, Regional Adoption Manager
Karen Williams, Adoption Manager, Recruitment /Assessment & Adoption Support

APPENDIX A

WESTERN BAY ADOPTION SERVICE



APPENDIX B



May 2016

APPENDIX C**Western Bay Adoption Service Central List**

WBAS runs one panel which is chaired by an Independent Chair. The panel is conducted in three venues spread across the region ensuring ease of access for adopters, presenting social workers and panel members.

| | Name | Role on Panel | Comments |
|----|---------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| | Ruth Peggrem | Chair | |
| 1 | Dr Peter Barnes | Medical Advisor | |
| 2 | Dr Janet Harris | Medical Advisor | |
| 3 | Cllr Jan Curtis | Independent Member | |
| 4 | Cllr Peter Richards | Independent Member | |
| 5 | Dodie Thomas | Social Work Member | |
| 6 | Wendy Kreppel | Independent Member | |
| 7 | Leslie MacGregor | Independent Member | Adoptee |
| 8 | Deborah Hutchinson | Independent Member | Education |
| 9 | Rita Heady | Independent Member | |
| 10 | Julie Barker | Independent Member | Special Needs |
| 11 | Debbie Doogue | Social Work Member | |
| 12 | Samantha Jones | Independent Member | Education |
| 13 | Teresa Griffiths | Independent Member | |
| 14 | Helen Lewis | Independent Member | Adopter |
| 15 | Rachel Jones | Social Work Member | |
| 16 | Joanne Antony | Independent Member | |
| 17 | Dave Lawson | Independent Member | Adoptee |
| 18 | Davina Ennis | Social Work Member | |
| 19 | Carly Crocker | Social Work Member | |
| 20 | Ian Ambrose | Independent Member | Adopter |
| 21 | Sarah Young | Social Work Member | |
| 22 | Sarah Webb | Social Work Member | |
| 23 | Nicky Sneezum | Independent Member | Education |
| 24 | Jodie Williams | Social Work Member | |
| 25 | Sharon James | Social Work Member | |

Panel members for 2015/16