

Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee

26 September 2019

Regional Adoption Agency

In March 2016 the Department for Education published Adoption – A Vision for Change. In this document they stated the intention that all individual local authority and voluntary adoption agencies be combined into Regional Adoption Agencies (RAA) by 2020.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/512826/Adoption_Policy_Paper_30_March_2016.pdf

The principles and aims of RAAs as enshrined in the Vision for Change are:

- To provide all children with an adoptive family that meets their needs.
- To ensure that those affected by adoption receive the information, support and advice that they need to understand their adoption journey.
- To ensure that families are well prepared, enabled and supported to care for the children with plans for adoption.
- Early identification of children for whom adoption is the right option
- Timely placement of children including sibling groups and older children
- Sustainable placements with timely and appropriate support as needed
- A sufficient range and number of adopters to meet children's needs
- A range of different adoption placement types e.g. foster to adopt
- A well performing and improving service, evidenced in the adoption scorecard, productivity and timeliness families.

In line with the Government agenda for the regionalisation of adoption, we are one of nine Local Authorities and three Local Voluntary Agencies who will be members of the East Midlands Regional Adoption Agency, the aim of which is to bring adoption resources together across the region leading to improvements in adoption planning for children.

Nottingham City Council has worked with Derbyshire County Council, Derby City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council to form Adoption East Midlands (AEM) which went live on 3rd April 2019. 16 employees from Nottingham City Council Adoption and Post Adoption team have transferred under TUPE regulations to Adoption East Midlands. Whilst the 16 colleagues remain based at Isabella Street, Nottinghamshire County Council are the host authority. Importantly the responsibility for the child, their care plan and support needs remains with Nottingham City Council.

Nottingham City Council is committed to finding adoptive families for children who can no longer remain within their birth family. In 2018/19, we successfully placed 49 children for adoption, ensuring that they left care to a forever family. This is undoubtedly the best outcome for children who cannot return to their home. This commitment and success will be further enhanced by being a part of the RAA. Each of the four Councils have different areas of expertise and best practice and over the last

12 months work has been undertaken to combine services, streamline processes and share best practice. It is intended that this will lead to efficiencies, speeding up the adoption process and saving money across the Councils. As an example there are currently five Adoption Panels across the D2N2 area.

Adoption East Midlands, as a minimum, will provide the following adoption services:

- Tracking children for whom adoption is considered to be the best plan for permanency.
- Recruitment of adopters to meet the needs of AEM children for whom adoption is the plan for permanence. Experience in Nottingham City has shown that many of our children are placed at a distance from the City in order to find the best matched family. Adoption East Midlands will be recruiting across a larger area, which means that we will have a much greater pool of prospective families to meet the needs of our children.
- Support after adoption has moved over to AEM this includes Letterbox contact, and management of the adoption support fund to access therapeutic provision for children and families.

Governance

A monthly Partnership, Performance and Quality Assurance Board (PPQ) has been established that will govern the work of Adoption East Midlands. The board consists of Directors and Assistant Directors of Childrens Services, the Head of Adoption East Midlands, with Health and Virtual schools representatives by invitation.

In addition a regular finance performance working group has been established to oversee the combined budget and jointly manage any emerging financial risks.

For further information on the RAA please note the two Executive Board reports detailed below:

<https://committee.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/documents/s74126/The%20Development%20of%20the%20Regional%20Adoption%20Agency.pdf>

<https://committee.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/documents/s79989/The%20Development%20of%20a%20Regional%20Adoption%20Agency.pdf>