
**NATIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE AND VALE, VALLEYS & CARDIFF
REGIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE - PROGRESS REPORT**

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update on the National Adoption Services for Wales which is hosted by the City of Cardiff Council and the opportunity to review and comment on the implementation and operations of the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff (VVC) Regional Adoption Collaborative (copies attached at **Appendix A & B**). The briefing report sets out the key information about the National and Regional services together with some performance information for the period 2011 – 2014 and specific performance information for 2014 – 15.

Background

2. The Committee has previously scrutinised the National and Regional Adoption Service proposals at its meeting in December 2014. Members supported the key principles contained within the proposals, but expressed some concern about the role of this scrutiny committee in the governance of the National and VVC Regional Adoption Service, to ensure that plans are put in place to optimise performance monitoring and future service delivery.
3. As a key part of the implementation of the Social Services and Well Being Act (Wales) 2014, the National Adoption Service for Wales has been created to bring together existing local government services into a three tier system, with partnership arrangements for services provided in other sectors, to co-ordinate and deliver adoption services in a different way. These tiers are:

- local authority level – where all local authorities will continue to identify and meet needs of children for whom adoption is the most appropriate plan;
- regional level – where five local authority collaboratives have been created to deliver agreed adoption functions and develop operational links, as appropriate, with voluntary sector and other services to develop and improve service delivery; and at
- national level – a small team to co-ordinate and drive improvement and consistency, while maintaining strategic and planning links with Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) and the delivery of certain national functions.

The National Adoption Service is probably most accurately described as a network of interdependent services operating at local, regional and national levels through local government and the voluntary sector.

4. A task group, led by the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru and the Welsh Local Government Association, developed the necessary arrangements for the National Service. Shortly afterwards the City of Cardiff Council was awarded the host status for the central team.

National Adoption Service for Wales

5. A briefing papers on the National Adoption Service for Wales is attached at **Appendix A** and provides a detailed description of:
 - **Structure and Role of the Central Team.** This includes a description of the main functions of the central team as set out in the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) directive 2015.
 - **Governance Arrangements** for the Governance Board and an Advisory Group, and their respective roles and reporting / scrutiny arrangements.

- **Performance of the National Adoption Service**, this provides details for the service's first year, April 2014 – 2015 and is based on primary data collated for the Adoption Performance Management Framework procured from the Welsh Government.
6. The Performance data compares each of the regional collaborations: Mid and West Wales (MWW), North Wales (NW), South East Wales (SE), Vale, Valleys & Cardiff (VVC), and Western Bay (WB). The Service has used the data to inform service targets, which link to the key priorities for 2015 / 16.
 7. The British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) Cymru announced on 31 July 2015 that in the face of significant changes and prevailing economic conditions, it has sadly not been possible to sustain the Wales Adoption Register and the Independent Review Mechanism Cymru. Subsequently the work and staff from BAAF Cymru have become part of the National Adoption Service for Wales.

Vale, Valleys and Cardiff (VVC) Regional Adoption Collaborative

8. The VVC Collaborative which comprises of the City of Cardiff Council, Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC, Merthyr Tydfil CBC and the Vale of Glamorgan Council is one of the five regional collaboratives. In March 2015, the Welsh Government published the Joint Adoption Arrangements (Wales) Directive 2015, which prescribed the regional areas and the governance structures for the Service.
9. The report summarises of the overall performance of the regional service and relevant targets, copy attached at **Appendix B**. The report also includes:
 - a. Governance Structure
 - b. Staffing and resources
 - c. Service delivery
 - d. Performance management
 - e. Budget & financial considerations.

Scope of the Scrutiny

10. The Report will provide the Members with the opportunity to review the progress made in the management and operation of the National and Regional Adoption Service. Members may wish to evaluate the following aspects of the reports:
- a. What are the key outputs and outcomes measures being used;
 - b. How well has the VVC Regional Service progressed against the targets and performance measures;
 - c. What has changed as a result of the new model and how do we know;
 - d. Whether the role of this Committee in scrutinising the performance of the VVC Regional Collaborative is appropriate;
 - e. What are the plans for the Wales Adoption Register now it is managed by the National Adoption Service and
 - f. What are the plans for the future for the VVC Regional and National Adoption Service.

Way Forward

11. Suzanne Griffiths, Director of Operations, National Adoption Service for Wales will present the National Adoption briefing and performance report, and Angela Harris, Regional Adoption Manager, VVC, will present the report on the implementation and performance of the regional collaborations following which they will all be available to answer questions Members may have. Councillor Sue Lent, Cabinet Member for Families, Children and Early Years, and Tony Young, Director of Social Services will also be available to answer any questions.
12. Cardiff's Scrutiny Function is piloting arrangements for third sector organisations to ask questions on relevant topics at Scrutiny Committee meetings. If a third sector organisation submits a question around adoption at this meeting and the Chair is willing for the question to be asked, a representative of the third sector organisation will be invited to the Committee to ask the question at the start of this agenda item.

Legal Implications

13. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

14. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. These financial implications will need to be considered before any changes are implemented. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members review the information contained in **Appendices A and B** together with any additional information provided at the meeting and submit any comments, concerns or recommendations about the services to the Cabinet Member for discussion with the Director of Operations and or Regional Manager.

MARIE ROSENTHAL

Director of Governance and Legal Services

6 October 2015