
**VALE, VALLEYS & CARDIFF REGIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE – ANNUAL
REPORT**

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a copy of the Vale, Valleys and Cardiff (VVC) Regional Adoption Collaborative's Annual Report 2016/17 (copy attached at **Appendix A and A1**). The report sets out the key information about the Regional services together with quarterly performance information for the period 2016 – 2017.

Background

2. 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.
3. The previous Committee scrutinised the National and Regional Adoption Service proposals 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.
 4. The Regional Adoption Service agreed to provide its annual report to committee to enable Members to review performance and assess the services future priorities.
 5. The Collaboration's Annual Report for last year, 2015- 2016, included a number of specific improvements and priorities for implementation during the year 2016-17, these included:
 - To review the feasibility of implementing a more specialised, functional model of service delivery.
 - To improve efficiency and reduce administrative costs of the Adoption Panel by implementing a paperless Panel system.
 - To develop VVC's website and to improve the range of information available for users of our service.
 - To develop the family finding process within the region to improve practice in relation to the timely placement of children
 - To target the recruitment and assessment of adoptive families to better meet the needs of children awaiting placements within the region and reduce reliance upon external sources of placement.
 - To develop the plan to enhance the Adoption Support service in the short term and evaluate its' effectiveness to inform future planning of the service

- To further develop processes, procedures and guidance to support the work of the Collaborative ensuring compliance with Welsh language requirements.
- To develop opportunities for engaging and obtaining feedback from service users.

Vale, Valleys and Cardiff (VVC) Regional Adoption Collaborative

6. The Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Adoption Collaborative (VVC) brings together the adoption services of the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Cardiff Council and Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council. It is one of the five regional Collaborative's which form part of the National Adoption Service in Wales (NAS) .The Vale of Glamorgan Council host the Regional Collaborative.
7. In March 2015 Welsh Government published the (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015, known as “ The Directions Powers “ , which prescribe the regional areas and the governance structure for the service at a national and regional level. The merger of the adoption services within the region in June 2015 was the culmination of much co-ordinated effort and joint working on the part of all partners in progressing the plan to implement the service.
8. The Annual report brings together into one document a review and analysis of the activities of the collaborative, together with a number of performance measures which monitor performance in relation to the key stages in the adoption process for children with particular emphasis upon the overall timeliness off the process. The report also provides the annual review of the service as required by Regulation 22 of the Local Authority Adoption Service (Wales) Regulations 2007 and section 15 (c) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Direction 2015.

9. The report, copy attached at **Appendix A** focusses on the following areas of the regions work:

- a. Service and Governance Structure
- b. Service Areas
- c. Family Finding
- d. Recruitment & Assessment of Adopters
- e. Adoption support
- f. Adoption Panel
- g. Complaints and Compliments
- h. Conclusion
- i. Future priorities

10. Also attached at **Appendix A1** to the Annual Report is a copy of the Region's performance data for each Local Authority in the Collaborative together with quarterly data of the year.

11. The Regional report also acts as the Regions Annual Report to the Director of Operations for the National Adoption Service, the Management Board and Joint Committee.

Scope of the Scrutiny

12. The Report will provide the Members with the opportunity to review the progress made in the management and operation of the Regional Adoption Service. Members may wish to evaluate the following aspects of the reports:

- a. How well has the VVC Regional Service progressed against the targets and performance measures;
- b. The progress that the VVC Region has made in addressing the improvements and priorities highlighted in paragraph 5.
- c. What are the plans for the future for the VVC Region.

Way Forward

13. Rachel Evans, Head of Children's Services , Vale of Glamorgan County Council, 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 Graham Hinchey, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Tony Young, Director of Social Services and Irfan Alam Assistant Director Children's Services will also be available to answer any questions.

Legal 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 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

15. 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 & A1** 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 Regional Manager.

Davina Fiore

Director of Governance and legal Services

3 October 2017