



Vale, Valleys  
and Cardiff  
**Adoption** | **Mabwysiadu**  
yn y Fro, y Cymoedd  
a Chaerdydd

**Date/Dyddiad: 15 November 2017**  
**Ask for/Gofynwch am: Angela Harris**  
**Telephone/Rhif ffôn: 01443 490460**

County Councillor Lee Bridgeman  
Chairperson  
Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee  
County Hall  
Cardiff  
CF10 4UW

Dear Councillor Bridgeman

**Re: Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Adoption Collaborative Annual Report 2016-17**

Thank you for letter dated 13 October 2017 concerning the presentation of the above report to your Scrutiny Committee on 6 October 2017. I will address the points upon which you seek further clarification as follows:

1. Actions from 2015-16 Report:

*To develop opportunities for engagement and obtaining feedback from service users*

VVC currently facilitates two family fundays and a monthly toddler group for adoptive families. Adoptive parents have been involved in the preparation and delivery of these activities. In addition the service provides a quarterly support group which has focused upon topics of interest and issues raised by families.

Adoptive families within the region have been encouraged to engage in consultation events held by the National Adoption Service (NAS). In the spring of 2017 NAS commissioned the Institute of Public Care to undertake a web based survey of adoptive families in respect of adoption support services. VVC had the highest participation rate in Wales and these findings have now been fed back to the region to inform service development.

VVC has now developed its' website which provides a ready means of contact with the service for potential adoptive parents. VVC has also funded membership of Adoption UK for the past two years which provide opportunities for engagement. Adopted children 7 + are also referred to Talk Adoption which provides support for children and young people. Talk Adoption provide activities as part of our fundays.

The service has recognised the need to obtain more direct means of obtaining feedback upon the services delivered and has worked with the Participation Officer in

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developing questionnaires. Capacity issues within the service has impacted upon embedding the use of these questionnaires into practice and so this still remains an area for development.

*To improve efficiency and administrative costs of the Adoption Panel by implementing a paperless Panel system.*

The development of a paperless digital Panel system remains a key priority for VVC. As indicated previously tablets have been purchased for members alongside a licence to use a secure web portal, Egress. Panel members and staff have received training in the use of Egress and as part of an implementation plan, have trialled the use of tablets to access the Panel information. As a result of these trials some technical difficulties have been identified which are being worked on by the IT Department. It is anticipated that once these are resolved then full implementation of the system can be put in place. It is anticipated the digital Panel will be launched within this financial year.

The efficiencies and benefits of moving to a digital Panel system have been considered as part of the Best Value Review.

## 2. Birth Parent Counselling

The provision and take up of birth parent counselling is monitored closely as part of the Performance Management Framework and regions have to report on a quarterly and annual basis in respect of these measures. VVC's performance is not unusual in respect of this work and is comparable to other regions with a similar workload.

Nonetheless, Social Workers continue to strive through their individual practice to explore ways of engaging parents more effectively by utilising planned contact sessions, home visits and other venues to meet parents. The region is also trialling a birth parent support group to try another means of engagement.

## 3. Resources

The five vacancies outlined in the report have all been recruited to. Staff were appointed from late May – mid July 2017 and all have remained in post. Three of the staff have been employed in Family Finding and two in Adoption Support. Some temporary agency cover was put in place to cover Family Finding which ceased prior to the last appointment.

## 4. Best Value Review

The timetable for conclusion of this process is planned for December 2017 when the final report is scheduled to be presented to VVC's Joint Committee. This will provide

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a mechanism for feedback into the respective local authority by the nominated elected member who sits on the Joint Committee. The presentation of this Review to the four Scrutiny Committees will be considered with a view to seeking common agreement as to the most appropriate approach to this.

#### 5. Link Maker and Activity Days.

Link Maker has been endorsed by NAS and is a service which all regions subscribe to. It is also widely used by English authorities, where it originated. VVC subscribes to Link Maker, although the subscription this year has been funded by Welsh Government pending the outcome of the tendering exercise in respect of the Welsh Adoption Register. Link Maker provides a useful platform for profiling children and for adopters to access directly. NAS undertook an early evaluation of the effectiveness of Link Maker and it is possible to obtain regional reports to assist in analysing usage and potential matches. Some of this can be incorporated in this year's Annual Report.

The use of Activity Days are in their infancy in Wales but again much more developed practice in England. Nevertheless, the region has been proactive in engaging with this process as an alternative means of securing adoptive placements. A further Welsh day is being planned by the Wales Adoption Register in March 2018. This will provide more data and a further opportunity to evaluate their effectiveness which can then form part of this year's annual report.

I trust this addresses the points you have raised in addition to our attendance at Committee.

Yours Sincerely



Angela Harris  
Regional Adoption Manager.

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