
**VALE, VALLEYS & CARDIFF REGIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE – ANNUAL
REPORT 2018-2019**

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 2018/19 (copy attached at **Appendix A and Appendix 1, 2, 3**). The report sets out the key information about the Regional services together with monthly and quarterly performance information for the period 2018 – 2019.

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 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.
 4. 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.
 5. 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.
 6. The report, copy attached at **Appendix A** focusses on the following areas of the regions work:
 - a. Service Development and Governance
 - b. Service Functions

- c. Family Finding
 - d. Recruitment & Assessment of Adopters
 - e. Adoption support
 - f. Adoption Panel
 - g. Complaints and Compliments
 - h. Conclusion and 2019-20 priorities
7. A copy of the Region's performance data for each Local Authority in the Collaborative, together with monthly and quarterly data for the year is attached at **Appendix 1** to the Annual Report. A copy of the Recruitment assessments is attached at **Appendix 2** and information on Adoption support is attached at **Appendix 3**.
8. 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.
9. The Committee scrutinised the 2017/18 Regional Adoption Service proposals in December 2018. Members welcomed the 2017/18 Annual Report and agreed to commend it to the Management Board and Joint Committee. In a letter to the Head of Service in the Vale of Glamorgan, the Committee made a number of comments (see **Appendix B** and a full response was provided, copy attached at **Appendix C1 & C2**).
10. The Collaboration's Annual Report for last year, 2018- 2019, included a number of specific improvements and priorities for implementation during the year, these are listed below.
- a. The priorities we have set for 2018-19 focus upon completing the actions arising from the Best Value Review which have been endorsed by the Management Board. Particular emphasis for the remainder of the year will focus upon driving up the conversion rate of adopter enquiry to application with the intention of increasing the rate of adopter approvals. Some systems have already been put in place to improve our initial response following the recent

appointment of the Marketing and Recruitment Co-ordinator and so it is hoped that these can be developed further once the additional resources in Recruitment and Assessment are in place.

- b. The other focus of activity and priority for VVC during this current year has been managing the recent relocation of the service to Barry. In order to achieve as smooth a transition as possible and to minimise service disruption, this has required careful planning and preparation by VVC staff and the development of some new systems of working to meet the needs of the whole region. The permanent location will have benefits longer term but the service is still in a settling in period so it is important that our priorities remain delivering our core business and service improvements

Scope of the Scrutiny

11. 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 9.
 - c. What are the plans for the future for the VVC Region.

Way Forward

12. 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, Claire Marchant, Director of Social Services and Deborah Driffield, Assistant Director Children's Services will also be available to answer any questions.

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, 1, 2 & 3** 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

11 December 2019