

Date: 21 December 2020

My Ref: SS/CYP/VVCAR19_20



County Hall
Cardiff,
CF10 4UW
Tel: (029) 2087 2087

Neuadd y Sir
Caerdydd,
CF10 4UW
Ffôn: (029) 2087 2088

Councillor Graham Hinchey
Cabinet Member for Children & Families
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
CARDIFF
CF10 4UW

Dear Graham,

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 15 DECEMBER 2020
– VALLEYS, VALE & CARDIFF ADOPTION COLLABORATIVE ANNUAL
REPORT 2019/20**

Please accept my thanks for attending the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee to facilitate the consideration of the VVC Annual Report 2019/20. Please also pass on our thanks to Angela Harris and Deborah Driffield. The comments, observations and recommendations below were captured during the Committee's discussion at the Way Forward.

We welcomed the Annual Report for 2019/20 and would like to commend the range of improvements set out within the report, the work of the team and the response and adaptations made to address the Covid-19 pandemic.

Children Looked After

Members asked questions around the Annual Report stating that there had been a decrease in referrals into the adoption service despite a rising number children looked after. Whilst it was noted that other options such as kinship are now available, we would request that further information be provided on this, to provide clarity on how this explains the situation in Cardiff.

Linked to this, Members would also welcome further information on what strategies are being put forward to address increasing the diversity of adopters, including those from BAME and LGBTQ+ groups.

Raising the Profile

Members appreciated the progress made in relation to attracting new adopters, through supporting national campaigns, events, information evenings and raising the profile of the adoption services generally. We were also pleased to hear that the increased use of social media was also having a positive impact in this area.

Members would request further information on what grassroots and community level events are being planned in the future to continue to this work.

Data/Information

Members asked a range of questions regarding the data and information collected by the service, including those arising from the events outlined in the previous section of this letter. Angela assured us that a range of data was being collected in relation to issues such as how potential adopters had heard about the service; why they reached out to the service; and why people choose not to continue in the process. Angela also referred to the service now being able to monitor hits via social media and enquiries coming through that medium.

Therefore, we request that a briefing be provided to us, to include the following data/information:

- Overview profile of adopters and children looked after currently in the system, including ethnicity of current approved adopters;
- Q2 Performance for 2020/21 as suggested by yourself;
- Where prospective adopters are coming from – through what events/medium etc.
- How potential adopters had heard about the service;
- Why people reached out to the service;
- Why people choose not to continue in the process;
- How the service will increase numbers of BAME adopters;
- How the service will increase numbers of LGBTQ+ adopters;
- How the service will increase numbers of adopters in the 20-29 and 50-59 age groups; and
- Further information on how the service is capturing feedback from young people and outputs from any consultation with young people, outlining their views of the service and their experiences.

Any further information in addition to the above you have that may assist us would be very welcomed.

Impact of Covid-19 on the Service, Workloads and Pressures

We asked questions around the impact of Covid-19 on the service and noted that the service was following the NAS Risk Assessment, the VVC risk assessment more locally and the continuation of the Adoption Panel in Cardiff. We appreciate that the service has adapted during 2020, and commend management and staff for continuing to work in challenging circumstances during this period. We also welcome the work of the Collaborative in ensuring that there has been a consistency in practice across the region.

We would request that you provide further information on the process for adopters, containing typical timescales and to include when they are likely to be allocated a social worker. Given the “spike” in referrals during Q2 this year, we are mindful of pressures and workloads placed on the service, as well as potential delays and uncertainty for adopters. We would therefore seek some clarity on what the process looks like.

To recap, the Committee **is requesting**:

- i. Further information and clarity on explaining the reduction of referrals into adoption against the rising numbers of children looked after in Cardiff;
- ii. Further information on what strategies are being put forward to address increasing the diversity of adopters, including those from BAME and LGBTQ+ groups;
- iii. Further information on what grassroots and community level events are being planned in the future in relation to recruiting new adopters;
- iv. A briefing be provided to us, to include a range of data and information as outlined earlier in this letter; and
- v. Provide further information on the process for adopters including typical timescales.

There are no formal recommendations arising from this letter.

Once again, on behalf of the Committee, please pass my sincere thanks to all who attended Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee. I look forward to a response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. BRIDGEMAN', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

COUNCILLOR LEE BRIDGEMAN
Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

CC: CYPSC Members
Angela Harris, Regional Adoption Manager, VVC
Deborah Driffield, Assistant Director Children's Services
Gary Jones, Head of Democratic Services
Alison Taylor, Cabinet Support Office
Kim Thorpe, PA to the Director of Social Services