

# NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION CABINET BOARD

*30<sup>TH</sup> June 2016*

### REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES HEALTH AND HOUSING - N JARMAN

#### MONITORING THE PERFORMANCE AND PROGRESS OF THE WESTERN BAY REGIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE

#### MATTER FOR MONITORING

#### WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

##### 1. Purpose of Report

This report updates the Committee on the progress and performance of the Regional Adoption Service since becoming operational in April 2015. The purpose of this report is to advise elected members of the Child and Family Services Scrutiny Panel of key performance management information and activity within the Regional Adoption Service for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016. Where appropriate, comparison data such as Welsh averages has also been included. The data provides elected members with the opportunity to monitor performance and discuss any issues that relates to the information provided.

##### 2. Executive Summary

Western Bay Regional Adoption Service (WBAS) became fully operational from April 2015. Prior to this adoption services were delivered locally via the three local authorities.

The regional adoption service provides a range of services and interventions across the five key domains to those affected by adoption. Those being:

- Assessing and supporting prospective adopters
- Assessing non-agency (parent/care, formerly step parent adoptions)
- Birth record counselling and intermediary services (BRC &IS)
- Adoption support (assessments and support services to anyone affected by adoption)

- Twin tracking and family finding, which involves working with birth families of children in or following care proceedings and once a Placement Order has been granted by court in searching for an adoptive placement

The attached Regulation 22-Quality of Care Review report and the annual performance report outline both the performance and activity within the newly formed regional adoption service for 2015/16. This is the first time the regional performance and activity has been presented to Scrutiny Panels within the partner agencies.

Key achievements for the year include:

- Reduction of the use of Interagency Placements and increase in placements within Western Bay providing a significant saving. Almost two thirds of the children placed in 2015/16 were within Western Bay.
- Reducing the number of children who wait longer than six months from Should Be Placed Decision (SBPD) to approved match. Reduction from 67% to 34%.
- Maintaining the number of children placed 93, despite there being a drop in the number of Placement Orders granted.
- Successful in placing a number of harder to place children & older children who had been Looked After for an extended length of time which is a positive and successful outcome for those children.
- Successful placement of a number of sibling groups, including two groups of three children.
- An Increase in the number and range of prospective adopters approved up from 45 in 2014/15 to 53.
- Improvement in the number of sibling groups placed within the region.
- Reduction in the number of children whose plan for adoption changed 21 in 2014/15 to 4 in 2015/16.
- Development and approval of a unified Adoption Allowance Policy.
- Creation of a central list and well organised adoption panel.
- Expansion of routine and basic adoption support groups for children and adopters.

There are a number of challenges that the service will need to undertake in the coming year and these include:

- The performance reporting requires further development in light of new PIs and to ensure we are accurately reporting on all data sets. The introduction of local, national and regional performance indicators in adoption support will enable the capture of accurate data on all aspects of adoption support. This will be supported by the redesign of the adoption support IT module so that referrals can be accurately categorised, tracked and outcomes evaluated.

- Policies and procedures, whilst important have not been able to have the priority needed due to capacity and will be high on the agenda for completing in the coming year
- Performance in relation to life story work presents considerable challenge to achieve the required target set by NAS i.e. 75% of the number of children placed in the quarter where life journey material has been provided by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Adoption review. The service is working with the three local authorities to improve on this indicator which includes training child care social workers in Life Journey/story work.
- Adoption Support is a key focus and priority for the coming year and is high on the national agenda following research and analysis of adoption support provision across Wales. It is clear from this work that the types and level of adoption support provision across Wales varies considerably. The aim and focus of development in this area both nationally and regionally is to ensure that adoptive families receive timely and appropriate support. As part of the wider management agenda in WBAS we are developing an adoption support model that embeds a culture and skill base throughout the service as a whole and in particular, in the adoption support function where a sound therapeutic model of intervention underpins practice. Training on assessments and direct work is currently taking place for staff and this will result in adoption support having a renewed and much needed management focus where the emphasis will be on delivering high quality assessment, interventions and support and reducing the reliance on external interventions.

The service plan reflects the key priorities for the coming year with the focus being on improving the number of children who have life story work provided at placement and developing the WBAS therapeutic adoption support model which are both national agenda priorities. Alongside this there will be work on engaging more fully with stakeholders, in particular service users in shaping service delivery and there are also plans for consultation events.

### 3. **Background**

Adoption has and continues to receive high levels of attention from both the UK and the Welsh Government. Members will be aware that the creation of a National Adoption Service is one of the key policy strands of the Welsh Government, as enacted in the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014. This Act provides powers, under Section 9, for Ministers to direct local authorities to collaborate in relation to adoption services and to prevent any local authority from withdrawing from these collaborations in the future.

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015 came into force on 13th March 2015. The primary purpose of these Directions is to ensure effective joint arrangements are in place between local authorities in Wales for the delivery of adoption services

Schedule 1 of the Directions sets out which local authorities must collaborate with each other. For the Western Bay region the local authorities are Swansea, Bridgend and Neath Port Talbot. Swansea host and manage the regional service on behalf of the partner agencies, this having been approved by Cabinets in all three local authorities in April 2014.

The Western Bay regional service is integrated into the National Adoption Service as one of the five identified regional collaborates. The National Service is underpinned by the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2015.

The broad aims of the joint adoption arrangements across Wales as specified in the Directions include:

- Consistent and high quality service
- Keeping delay to a minimum
- Widest choice possible of placement
- Eliminating waiting lists for training and assessments
- Improving the matching process
- Streamlining adoption services improved liaison between adoption social workers
- Keeping breakdowns to a minimum by providing adequate adoption support
- Collaborative working between local authorities, voluntary agencies, health and education services

4. **Financial Impact**

After consideration this is not applicable

5. **Equality Impact Assessment**

After consideration this is not applicable

6. **Workforce Impacts**

After consideration this is not applicable

7. **Legal Impacts**

After consideration this is not applicable

8. **Risk Management**

After consideration this is not applicable

9. **Consultation**

After consideration this is not applicable

10. **Recommendation**

After consideration this is not applicable

11. **Reason for Proposed Decision**

After consideration this is not applicable

12. **Implementation of Decision**

After consideration this is not applicable

13. **Appendices**

**Appendix A      Annual report on PI Performance 2015/16**

**Appendix B      Regulation 22 Quality of Care Review Report  
2015/16**

**Appendix C      National Adoption Service Quarter 4 Year End  
Performance Report 2015/16**

14. **List of Background Papers**

15. **Officer Contract**

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