

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
MUNICIPAL YEAR 2014/15**

**COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

8TH OCTOBER 2014

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF
COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

Agenda Item No: 5

**DEVELOPMENT OF VALE, VALLEYS
AND CARDIFF REGIONAL ADOPTION
COLLABORATION**

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of the report is to inform and update Members of progress in the development of the Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Regional Adoption Collaborative (formerly referred to as the Mid & South Regional Adoption Collaborative). This report was presented to Cabinet on 31st July 2014.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note the content of this report;
- 2.2 Scrutinise and comment on the information provided;
- 2.3 Consider whether they wish to receive any further information.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Regional Adoption Collaborative is one of the five regional collaboratives which will form part of the National Adoption Service in Wales.
- 3.2 Cabinet were made aware of the proposals for the Service which were outlined in the report of the Group Director Community and Children's Services on 28th October 2013. Members were advised that at the time Merthyr Tydfil did not express an interest in hosting the new Regional Adoption Service and Cardiff and Rhondda Cynon Taf had new post holders at Director of Children's Services level. It was therefore agreed that the Vale of Glamorgan lead the project to develop the Regional Adoption Service.
- 3.3 Given the Vale of Glamorgan's lead role to-date it is therefore proposed that they continue in this capacity and become the host and employing authority for the new Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Regional Adoption Collaborative.

- 3.4 The establishment of a National Adoption Service is a key part of the implementation of the Social Services & Well-Being Act (Wales) 2014. This Act provides the legislative basis for the Service and amends existing primary legislation concerning the provision of local authority adoption services enabling local authorities to enter into "specified arrangements" with other local authorities for the provision of adoption services. This also provides Welsh Government with the power to direct local authorities to collaborate where this is not happening. The Deputy Minister had previously endorsed the ADSS Cymru and WLGA functional model for the delivery of a national adoption service via five regional collaboratives.
- 3.5 As part of the process for establishing the National Adoption Service, a National Task and Finish Group has been established to oversee the implementation of the service comprised of senior officers from the lead local authorities from each collaborative, representatives from the voluntary sector, Welsh Government, Health and Education. Each regional collaborative is required to produce a regional implementation plan and to report upon progress in relation to the plan on a monthly basis.
- 3.6 In June 2014, Cardiff Council was announced as the host of the New National Adoption Service.
- 3.7 Performance measures have also been developed by Welsh Government to underpin the National Service. From April 2014, Regions have been required to report on these measures on a quarterly basis.
- 3.8 Welsh Government has set a clear expectation that the regional collaboratives will become operational in 2014. Three of the collaboratives are already established and are up and running; North Wales, South East Wales & Mid & West Wales.

4. PROGRESS UPDATE – RELEVANT ISSUES AND OPTIONS

- 4.1 Within the Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Region, a part time Project Development Manager has been appointed to oversee the development of the implementation plan. A detailed analysis of the service need within the Region has been undertaken based upon data from the last three financial years, which has provided a basis for consideration of how services can best be planned to meet these needs.
- 4.2 Work has also been undertaken to develop the service specification for the Service and the areas of service which the collaborative will be responsible for and those which will be retained by each local authority.
- 4.3 Local authority adoption services, as they are currently delivered from individual local authority teams, will be delegated to the new Regional Adoption Service. The responsibilities of the Service will centre around three main functions:
- All functions associated with the recruitment, training, assessment and support of prospective adopters. This includes inter country adopters, step parent and relative adopters.

- The provision of a family finding, linking and matching service for all children requiring adoptive placements.
- The provision of a range of adoption support services for children, birth parents and adoptive families pre and post adoption. This function also includes the provision of counselling for adopted persons seeking access to their birth records and the provision of an intermediary service for persons seeking to trace adopted persons.

Each local authority within the collaborative will retain responsibility for:

- The assessment, care planning and review of children in need and referred and placed for adoption.
- Maintaining the functions of the Agency Decision Maker in respect of children requiring an adoption decision.
- Assessing the support needs of children requiring adoption.
- Choosing an adoptive placement and working with the family finder in matching the child with the prospective adopters.

4.4 Against this background, a number of models of service delivery were developed and discussed at workshops with managers and staff. The preferred model of delivery and supported by all four partner local authorities is outlined in Appendix 1. The model is deliverable from within existing budgets and it supports restructuring the adoption service into functional teams which can be largely co-located whilst still supporting local services for family finding.

4.5 The exercise undertaken in analysing the service needs of the new collaborative has identified a number of areas where improvements in the service provided to children, prospective and approved adopters and birth parents are required. The exercise has also highlighted the large number of children in the Region requiring adoptive placements but also the potential to increase the number of adopters being recruited.

4.6 The models of service delivery considered have focused upon the strengths and weaknesses of different structures, acknowledging the areas for improvement and those which need to be maintained. The preferred model attempts to develop the benefits of a specialist focus to the service whilst also ensuring a structure which maintains links with local authority childcare teams and supports local infrastructures.

4.7 The appointment of an overall manager to lead and co-ordinate the new Service is seen as a priority and this would bring the Region in line with service structures being developed in other Regions. The ability to recruit to this post is therefore seen as an important milestone in achieving regional collaboration. A job description and person specification for the post has been drafted.

- 4.8 The performance management framework will require Regions to drive up performance, particularly in respect of the recruitment of adopters and placement of children for adoption and to have a focused approach to their work to ensure that targets are met.
- 4.9 Restructuring of the way adoption services are delivered and pooling of resources should provide opportunities for new ways of working and creative practice in all key areas. Within the region, there are already examples of collaborative practice being developed regarding the joint training of adopters and sharing of adoptive placements which are having a positive benefit upon the service.
- 4.10 In addition, it is anticipated that working collaboratively with our regional partners will increase the pool of potential in-house placements and therefore provide services efficiencies.

5. HUMAN RESOURCE, FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND IT IMPLICATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE CREATION OF A REGIONAL SERVICE

- 5.1 A Finance Technical Group has been established by the Vale of Glamorgan comprised of members from the Finance Directorates of each of the authorities. An exercise has been undertaken in identifying the outline budget based upon submissions from the group.
- 5.2 The proposed managerial and staffing structure to support the preferred service delivery model has been costed against the Vale of Glamorgan salary scales. The outline costs can be met within existing budgets.
- 5.3 A Human Resources (HR) Technical Group has also been established comprised of HR representatives from each of the authorities. Initial advice on staff transfer options has been provided by the Group which has been taken forward by the Vale of Glamorgan. Initial advice received from the HR Technical Group is that TUPE is considered the most appropriate method of staff transfer for those staff affected by the proposed changes. Staff will be fully consulted on this, subject to Cabinet's agreement to the recommendations in this report.
- 5.4 Accommodation options for the Service are currently being explored and costed. A Technical Group to consider Information Technology issues has been established and is due to meet in the near future.
- 5.5 A legal agreement will need to be developed to underpin the role, functions, responsibilities and risks for each of the partner authorities of the regional collaborative and to outline the role and functions of the host. This agreement will be supported by a finalised service specification and the work undertaken to identify those areas of service which will be delegated to the collaborative. It is anticipated that this work will be led by the Vale of Glamorgan, in conjunction with legal representatives from each of the other three local authorities. The work will be informed by the written agreements already in place in other regional collaboratives.

- 5.6 It is acknowledged that a further report will be required detailing the full resource implications; financial, employment and legal implications once a more detailed consultation process has been undertaken with affected staff and Trade Unions and before full implementation of the new service.

6. STAFF CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Workshops were held with managers and staff between November 2013 & January 2014 where potential models of service delivery were discussed prior to the preferred model being agreed.
- 6.2 A staff information briefing meeting was held on 30 June 2014. A written briefing consistent with the information outlined in this Cabinet report was shared with staff on a confidential basis with particular reference to the content of the proposed service delivery model. Staff were given the opportunity to ask questions and to provide feedback on the information provided. Information has also been shared with Trade Union representatives. Future meetings are planned with staff to keep them fully informed.

APPENDIX 1

VALE, VALLEYS & CARDIFF REGIONAL ADOPTION COLLABORATIVE

PROPOSED SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL - CURRENT POSITION - MAY 2014

1. BACKGROUND

The proposed model of service delivery as recommended by the Steering Group was presented to a meeting of Directors on 2 May 2014 where general agreement to proceed was obtained. This paper outlines the current position in terms of proposed implementation.

2. PROPOSED MODEL

The agreed model is contained under **Appendix 1a**. This model proposes a functionally based service which could be largely co-located with localised services for family finding.

3. SERVICE FUNCTIONS

3.1 Recruitment and Assessment Team

- Undertaking and participating in marketing/recruitment campaigns.
- Managing all enquiries from prospective adopters, sending out information packs, providing initial preparation sessions, undertaking counselling visits and arranging training.
- Undertaking assessments of prospective adopters including inter-country adopters.
- Providing support to adopters through to the making of an Adoption Order.
- Undertaking non-agency adoption applications.
- Providing Agency advice to Adoption Panels regarding approval of adoptive parents.

3.2 Family Finding Team

- Providing linkworker between the service and local authority childcare teams from the point of referral of the child for adoption.
- Co-ordinating and managing the ought to be placed process on behalf of the local authority.
- Tracking referrals/attending planning meetings and looked after child reviews as appropriate.
- Providing birth parent & family counselling service.

- Providing placement service for children requiring adoptive placements.
- Providing a searching, linking and matching service for children with adoptive families including Court reports.
- Co-ordinating packages of support to adopters following matching.
- Preparation of letterbox contracts.

3.3 Adoption Support

- Undertaking functions associated with Adoption Support Services Adviser.
- Undertaking assessments of support needs post adoption and reviewing and monitoring of Adoption Support Plans.
- Providing post-adoption support packages for adoptive families.
- Liaising with individual assessment and care planning teams regarding requests for adoption support services.
- Co-ordinating post-adoption training.
- Managing letterbox scheme post-adoption.
- Undertaking counselling of persons seeking access to birth records.
- Providing birth parent and family counselling post adoption.
- Providing an intermediary service.
- Providing support groups.

4. MANAGERIAL STRUCTURE

4.1 Regional Adoption Manager

The appointment of an overall manager to lead and co-ordinate the service is seen as a priority once political agreement on the overall structure is obtained. This will be a new post for the service and the postholder will be employed by the host. The line management and reporting arrangements are yet to be determined.

The proposed grade is at the Vale of Glamorgan K SCP 45-49 (salary with on costs of £55,738).

4.2 Manager Posts (Service Functions)

During the exercise analysing the service delivery models, various proposals for the number of management points have been considered. Two versions of staff costs were presented to the Directors which indicated different numbers of managers to support the teams. Whilst there was overall agreement to the staffing levels, it was felt that as Adoption Social Workers generally operate at an experienced practitioner level, wherever possible the number of managerial positions should be streamlined.

The number of staff to line manage is obviously a significant factor in calculating the number of managers required. This calculation should also take into account:

- Provision of Panel Advisers to support four Panels per month.
- Agency advice regarding ought to be placed decision making.
- Chairing of meetings to consider matches, matching and introductions meetings.
- Promotion and development of innovative practice such as Activity Days, Child Appreciation Meetings etc.
- Provision of Adoption Support Services Adviser role.
- Reviewing mechanism for Adoption Support Plans.

The minimum level should include a:

- Manager for Recruitment and Assessment.
- Manager for Family Finding.
- *Part-time Manager for Adoption Support (consideration as to temporary/permanent status).

5. STAFFING

5.1 Social Workers

The proposed staffing based upon the analysis of need has been calculated as:

Recruitment and Assessment	5 Social Workers
Family Finding	8 Social Workers
Adoption Support	3 Social Workers

The proposed staffing level would be an establishment of 16 Social Workers.

It is recommended that some flexibility is built in to the structure to commission adoption support or to recruit non Social Work staff to support this function.

Following HR advice, TUPE is considered as the most appropriate method of staff transfer but will be subject to a period of staff consultation. A further report will be provided considering the full implications for staff and the service following this.

5.2 Business Support

Essential to the delivery of the new regional service is a sound business support structure. Roles and responsibilities of the business support staff have not been finally agreed, but it is envisaged that sufficient staff will be required to support the functions with a suggested structure given below:

Business Support Manager
Panel Co-Ordinators x 2
Administrators x 2.

6. ACCOMMODATION

Discussion has taken place as to the merits of co-location versus localised bases. The Heads of Service on 28 April 2014 recommended that the overall aim would be to co-locate the service with some functions remaining dispersed, such as the co-ordination of the ought to be placed decisions and some Panel information. Throughout it has also remained essential to maintain and develop links for family finding, which are better delivered locally and so it would be important to maintain some local desk space even if it is possible to co-locate staff.

An exercise in identifying potential accommodation from within the region has been undertaken and options are being considered.

7. BUDGET

The Finance Technical Group has undertaken an exercise in collating information on the Adoption Budget for the region following returns completed by the four regional Finance leads. This information was presented to the four Directors, whilst acknowledging some areas were incomplete. It was agreed that more detailed work on the budget would be required and confirmation of current spending, particularly in relation to placements would be necessary before the regional funding formula could be decided.

8. IMPLEMENTATION

8.1 Key Milestones

Throughout the process, the timetable for full and successful implementation of the collaborative has been considered to be ambitious. A plan to phase the implementation with key priorities being in place by September 2014 was endorsed by the Directors.

These key priorities have been identified as follows:

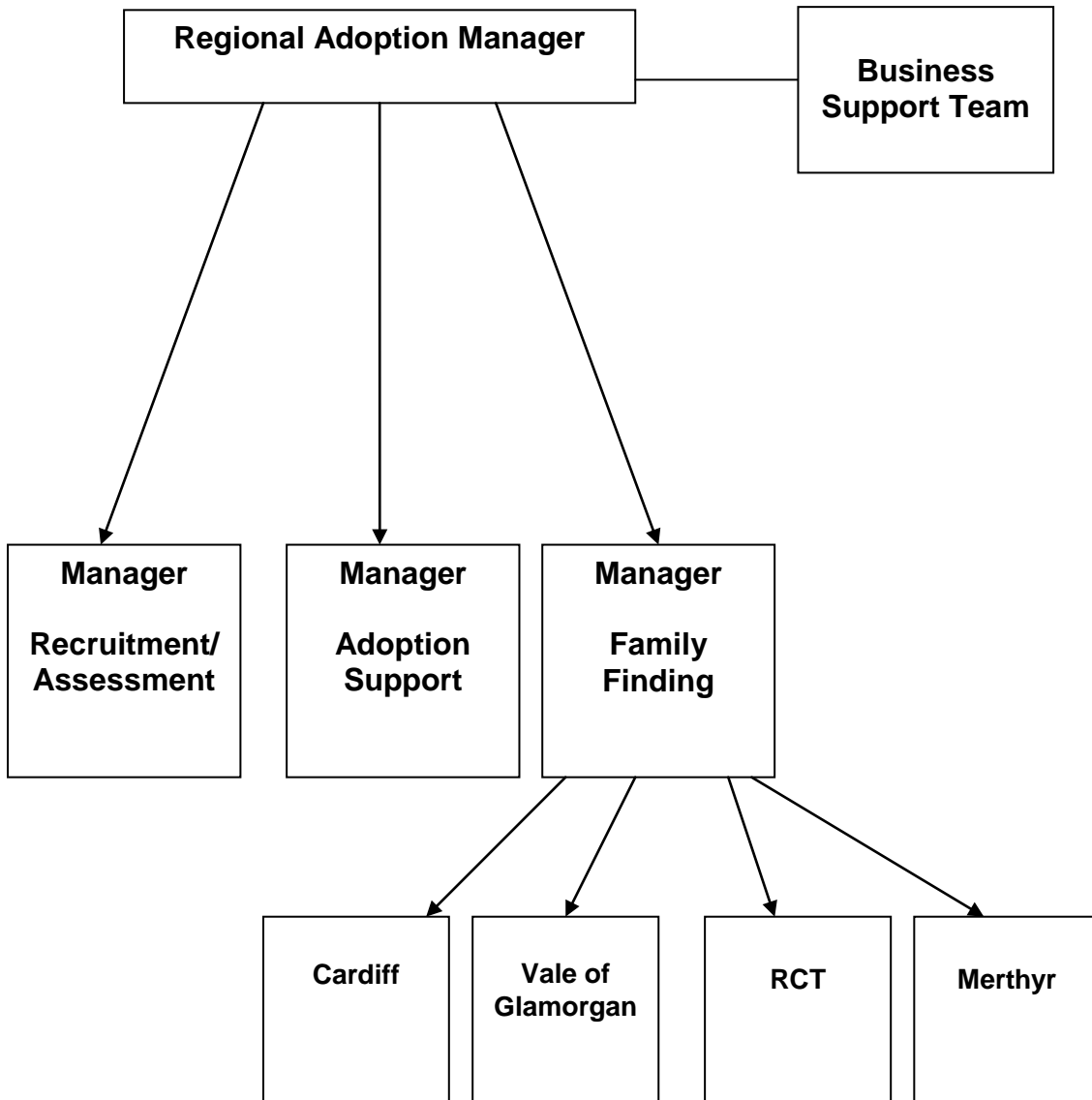
- Securing of political approval for the regional structure, initially via a meeting of lead Cabinet members for the four authorities in May/June. This would be followed by Cabinet approval in July 2014.
- Advertising for the Regional Manager following political endorsement with a view to appointment by September 2014.
- Evidence of joint working arrangements via regional Panels and other areas to be in place by September 2014.
- Accommodation for the new service to be in place by September 2014.

The need for formal staff consultation on the regional structure and the staff transfer arrangements will be required but will be informed by the timing of Cabinet approval for the collaborative. It is anticipated that although these processes can begin, securing and finalising transfer arrangements may take longer to complete and go beyond the implementation date.

Angela Harris
May 2014

APPENDIX 1a

FUNCTIONAL REGIONAL/LOCALISED MODEL



LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

ITEM: Development of Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Regional Adoption Collaboration

Background papers: Service delivery model

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