

SOCIAL SERVICES AND HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW SCRUITNY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	11 November 2019
Report Subject	North Wales Adoption Service progress report (April 2018 – March 2019) & update on Service development.
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Social Services
Report Author	Chief Officer (Social Services)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report identifies the key activities for the period, April 2018 – March 2019, to update on the re-design/re-structuring of the North Wales Adoption Service (2019/2020) and the introduction of the new service element for post adoption from the spring of 2020.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That members receive the Annual Report (April 2018 – March 2019)
2	That progress is noted in relation to the Review of the North Wales Adoption Service (Autumn 2019).

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE NORTH WALES ADOPTION ANNUAL REPORT AND REVIEW OF THE SERVICE (AUTUMN)
1.01	The North Wales Adoption Service has been in operation since April 2010. It provides adoption services to all involved or have been impacted by adoption. This includes children who require adoption, assessment of prospective adopters, support following adoption and to adults effected by adoption. This is a service which responds to children to adults in their late 70's. It is wide ranging and therefore responsive to a very diverse population.

	<p>The diversity of adoption work is further complicated by a very detailed scrutiny panel, the role of an individual officer (called Agency decision makers) with legal and court overview which has intensified with land mark legal rulings from 2014 onwards.</p> <p>There is also the unique challenges associated with wider media interest in Adoption which has generated increased requests and demands for those effected by adoption to access records and receive support when accessing such sensitive family history.</p>
1.02	<p>The Annual Report and Quality of Care Review is a wide ranging document which seeks to capture the work undertaken of the service, to its legal, financial and staffing arrangements.</p> <p>To assist the reader I have attempted to identify a number of the key areas reported on;</p>
1.03	<p>CHILDREN PLACED FOR ADOPTION</p> <p>Children were on average placed within 19.3 months from becoming looked after. The current benchmark/government guidelines is 13 months. These delays are characterized by placing children with complex needs or late, delayed or lengthy assessments of foster carers as adopters.</p>
1.04	<p>WHERE PLACEMENTS ARE BEING MADE</p> <p>NWAS placed 69% of their children within region, a further 5% elsewhere in Wales and 26% outside of Wales (these being neighbouring English/Border Authority areas).</p>
1.05	<p>ADOPTER RECRUITMENT</p> <p>The number of enquiries to NWAS from potential adopter's reduced by 7% to 163 (compared to 2017/18). This was impacted as the Marketing Officer post for most of 2018/19 has remained unoccupied. These figures also indicate that across Wales recruitment is reporting similar levels of recruitment activity.</p>
1.06	<p>ADOPTION ASSESSMENT TIME FRAMES</p> <p>The average time from enquiry to approval for a NWAS adopter is 7.7 months which is close to Welsh Government guidelines and the National Adoption Service benchmark.</p>
1.07	<p>LIFE JOURNEY WORK</p> <p>All children who cannot be cared for by their birth families, need to have an understanding of their family history and their unique journey. Life Journey Work is designed to help a child make sense of their past and understand their current situation in order to help them move into the future.</p> <p>It was reported that 46% of children placed this year had their life journey materials in line with the review process. This compares as the lowest cohort when compared to other regional services (Mid and West Wales at 83%) with the average at 56%. This is a priority area for improvement and work has taken place with an expert to implement the Life Story Framework</p>

1.08	<p>POST ADOPTION SERVICES</p> <p>We received a total of 46 requests to access birth records. A significant increase of 40 on previous year and requests for tracking support increased from 24 to 37. A number of these adults had been adopted in the 1950's and demonstrates the lifelong impact of adoption.</p>
1.09	<p>OVERVIEW</p> <p>The trend indicates that NWAS is placing fewer children and the number of children waiting has increased (48). This compares to 34, 39 and 46 at the end of the last three years. A slight decline in the numbers assessed 28 compared to 31 last year. The Annual Report provides detailed account of annual performance and activity.</p> <p>The service has been subject to significant changes during 2018/19 with the long standing Manager retiring in May 2019, the need to review the service (see below), the introduction of a post adoption support service (from 2020) and a newly redesigned management structure (2020) being the priority of the service for 2020/21.</p> <p>The themes identified (above) indicate the current challenges of the service, to which the second part of this report will address.</p>
1.10	<p>REVIEW OF NORTH WALES ADOPTION SERVICE AUTUMN 2019</p> <p>The needs and challenges faced by children presenting for adoption are changing rapidly and there is an on-going need to respond more consistently and effectively particularly in the areas of recruitment of adopters and ongoing support. We also want to modernise the service to make adoption experience better for children, young people, and their adopters as well as others affected by adoption.</p> <p>To this end we have reviewed the Adoption Service in North Wales and the report for the 'BUSINESS CASE' is attached as an appendices. This provides a detailed analysis of the contemporary state of the service and offers a reason for change rationale, these include the following proposals;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction of a new management re-structure which seeks to respond to national demands, major significant legislative changes and to assist in the implementation of new funds to deliver Post-adoption support services from 2020. • The transfer of seconded staff under a T.U.P.E. arrangement to ensure that staff receive a consistency of support, supervision and management direction as Wrexham employees. <p>The consistency of service seeks to ensure that adopters, adoptees and those effected by adoption will receive a consistency of service delivery and customer focused outcomes.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	Following a comprehensive review of the Service, Flintshire's annual financial contribution towards the cost of the North Wales Adoption Service in 2020/21 will be £116,444. This is an increase of £21,804 on the contribution set in 2010 and a proportion of the sustained financial pressure on the Service and need to deliver the model outlined in the business case (see 1.10)
2.02	In addition to the financial contribution Flintshire will, in line with all other North Wales authorities, continue to meet the costs of existing staff who will have the opportunity to TUPE over to the regional service. As of 06.11.19 all staff have been fully consulted in line with human resources procedures.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	It is imperative that the service meets statutory obligations and the ability to meet Welsh Government and National Adoption guidelines and benchmarks. The proposed change model sets out to mitigate the service not meeting its financial, staff and resourcing challenges. The new model seeks to deliver consistency alongside meeting the challenges of adoption over the next decade.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	This represents two elements, as a regional service all relevant parties have been actively involved in the proposed changes, staff as part of the TUPE have been engaged according to legal and human resources practices. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Annual Report & Quality of Care Review (2018/19) • Business case for the review of North Wales Adoption Service autumn 2019

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	The Annual Report & Quality of Care Review (2018/19)
5.02	Business case for the review of North Wales Adoption Service autumn 2019

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Neil Ayling Telephone: 01352 704511 E-mail: neil.ayling@flintshire.gov.uk

