

**TRANSFORMING OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN IN CARE: REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY**

*To:* **Children and Young People**

*Meeting Date:* **10 July 2018**

*From:* **Executive Director People and Communities.**

*Electoral division(s):* **All**

*Forward Plan ref:* **n/a** *Key decision:* **No**

*Purpose:* **At this stage, the Committee is being informed of developments taking place to meet the requirements for all top tier local authorities to develop a Regional Adoption Agency.**

*Recommendation:* **Committee are asked to:**  
**a) note the content of the report.**

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## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 In 2015, the Government announced its intention to establish new Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs) across the country by 2020. The rationale for introducing RAAs is based around the belief that existing structures have in-built inefficiencies linked to their scale of operation, and that there are barriers around adoption created by individual local authorities and voluntary adoption agencies working separately to deliver the same core aspects of adoption provision.
- 1.2 The government has said that Regional Adoption Agencies must be fully operational by 2020 at the latest. Every top tier Local Authority must be able to demonstrate significant progress by early 2019.
- 1.3 The Department for Education has confirmed that a Regional Adoption Agency consisting of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough passes the necessary tests. A small amount of funding has been allocated to support some implementation costs including legal costs.

## **2. MAIN ISSUES**

- 2.1 The government expects that establishing Regional Adoption Agencies will deliver a system with a larger footprint, improving adoption recruitment, matching and support and avoiding duplication. More formalised collaborative working should help drive innovation, sharing of best practices and staff development. It is also anticipated that the new structure will give a stronger voice to children and adopters.
- 2.2 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough councils have both committed to exploring closer working relationships and the development of shared services where to do so improves outcomes for children and young people, increases the resilience of services and/or increases efficiency. We believe that developing a Regional Adoption Agency across the two authorities will achieve all of these aims.
- 2.3 Peterborough and Cambridgeshire have already and separately commissioned their adoption services from Voluntary Adoption Agencies; Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption Service in Cambridgeshire and the TACT Permanency Service in Peterborough. This demonstrates the commitment of both local authorities to innovation in securing improved outcomes for adopted children and their families.
- 2.4 Both adoption services are recognised as 'good' by Ofsted. Our vision is to build on the strengths of each authority, share best practice and develop an outstanding adoption service across the region and beyond.
- 2.5 Developing the proposed Regional Adoption Agency will require the development of a shared service specification and an open procurement process. Relevant officers from both local authorities will form a delivery board in order to complete the necessary preparatory work.
- 2.6 The contract with Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption comes to an end in summer 2019, meaning that we would need to explore options for continued delivery of adoption

services in Cambridgeshire from this point in any event. We will do all we can to ensure that we are able to complete the procurement process before the end of the contract with Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption.

- 2.7 Clearly, it is important that adoption performance is not affected in the intervening period. We will continue to work with Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption to ensure that performance continues to be good. As noted above, the current contract is due to end in any case, meaning that we would be needing to either re-procure the service or bring the service back in-house.

### **3. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

#### **3.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all**

There are no significant implications for this priority.

#### **3.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives**

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- Children and young people who live in permanent family arrangements have much better lifelong healthy outcomes and develop greater resilience, helping them to live successfully and independently as adults.

#### **3.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people**

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- Children and young people in care are highly vulnerable;
- Good quality adoptive placements result in some of the best long term outcomes when compared with other types of placement;
- Children and families affected by adoption do require good quality support, and this element of our adoption service will be included within the RAA.

### **4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

#### **4.1 Resource Implications**

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- There are no implications for Cambridgeshire County Council members of staff;
- Implications for adoption staff currently working within Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption will depend on the outcome of the procurement exercise.

#### 4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

- New contracts resulting from this development will be procured in line with the Contract Procedure Rules of the authority leading the Procurement, which in this case is Cambridgeshire County Council

#### 4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- The Government is requiring local authorities to develop Regional Adoption Agencies; the Council would suffer reputational damage if it does not seek to comply with government requirements.

#### 4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

*There are no significant implications within this category*

#### 4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- As noted above, these proposals have no direct implications for Cambridgeshire staff;
- There are clear potential implications for Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption and staff employed by the organisation. As noted above, however, the contract with Coram to provide this service is ending in summer 2019, meaning that a re-procurement exercise is inevitable;
- Engagement with Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption will continue within procurement rules to ensure that services continue to be delivered effectively.

#### 4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

*There are no significant implications within this category.*

#### 4.7 Public Health Implications

*There are no significant implications within this category.*

Implications	Officer Clearance
<b>Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?</b>	Yes Name of Financial Officer: Martin Wade 25/06/18
<b>Have the procurement/contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by Finance?</b>	Yes Name of Officer: Paul White - 22/06/18

<b>Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by LGSS Law?</b>	No response. Sent to Virginia Lloyd on the 22/06/18.
<b>Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?</b>	Yes Name of Officer: Lou Williams
<b>Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?</b>	Yes Name of Officer: Jo Dickson - 22/06/18
<b>Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact?</b>	Yes Name of Officer: Lou Williams
<b>Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health</b>	Yes Name of Officer: Tess Campbell - 25/06/18

**SOURCE DOCUMENTS**

<b>Source Documents</b>	<b>Location</b>
n/a	