

Regional Adoption Agency -Equality Analysis.

Directorate: People Service Area: Children & Young People	Lead Officer: Emma Bennett Date completed: 18.04.17
Service / Function / Policy / Procedure to be assessed: This Equality Analysis is for the proposed introduction of a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA). This is bringing together four separate Adoption Agencies (Wolverhampton, Walsall, Dudley & Sandwell).	
Is this: New / Proposed Existing/Review Changing	Review date: <div style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">Yes</div>

Part A – Initial Equality Analysis to determine if a full Equality Analysis is required.

What are the aims and objectives/purpose of this service, function, policy or procedure?

The aim is to take a regional approach to the functions of an adoption agency. The proposal entails bringing together four separate functions into one Service that serves the Wolverhampton, Walsall, Dudley & Sandwell area. The agency will be responsible for all adoption functions including recruitment and approval of adopters, family finding and matching, and support for all those affected by adoption.

Please indicate its relevance to any of the equality duties (below) by selecting Yes or No?

	Yes	No
Eliminating unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment		No
Advancing equality of opportunity	Yes	
Fostering good community relations	Yes	

If not relevant to any of the three equality duties and this is agreed by your Head of Service, the Equality Analysis is now complete - please send a copy to the Equality & Diversity Team. **If any of the three equality duties are relevant**, a Full Equality Analysis will need to be undertaken (PART B below).

PART B: Full Equality Analysis.

Step 1 – Identifying outcomes and delivery mechanisms (in relation to what you are assessing)

What outcomes are sought and for whom?	The overall outcome is to ensure that where the plan for a Looked After Child (LAC) is Adoption that we are able to provide an adoptive family who is well matched to the needs of the child. This is to provide them with a permanent family where they thrive and achieve the best possible outcomes in life.
Are there any associated policies, functions, services or procedures?	Yes each agency already has their own established policies, procedures & protocols to allow their Service to run.
If partners (including external partners) are involved in delivering the service, who are they?	The partners in the proposal will be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City of Wolverhampton Council • Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council • Walsall Council • Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Step 2 – What does the information you have collected, or that you have available, tell you?

What evidence/data already exists about the service and its users? (in terms of its impact on the ‘equality strands’, i.e. race, disability, gender, gender re-assignment, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, maternity/pregnancy, marriage/civil partnership and other socially excluded communities or groups) and **what does the data tell you?** e.g. are there any significant gaps?

We have data for all of the four authorities around the protected characteristics. We do not hold data on maternity/pregnancy, gender re-assignment and sexual orientation.

Each of the four local authorities holds data on the number and characteristics of approved adopters, applicants applying to become adopters and those approved. This also includes the reasons for not making it through to assessment or full approval.

Data on the make-up of each authorities Looked After Children (LAC) population is also readily available.

Has there been any consultation with, or input from, customers / service users or other stakeholders? If so, with whom, how were they consulted and what did they say? If you haven’t consulted yet and are intending to do so, please list which specific groups or communities you are going to consult with and when.

Yes all four local authorities have undertaken a wide range of consultation both jointly and independently.

Consultation with stakeholders is an integral part of the Regional Adoption Agency project. Key stakeholders including council elected members, adopters, and staff have been engaged in the development of proposals. A stakeholder engagement strategy is in place, identifying all stakeholders and the approach to engagement with each.

A quarterly newsletter is distributed to Local Authority, Voluntary Adoption Agency and Adoption Support Agency staff and adopters setting out progress with the project. A website www.adoptionheart.org.uk provides general information about Adoption@Heart and has a members' area for staff where "Frequently Asked Questions" about the project are answered.

Engagement events have taken place with adoption team staff and adoption Panel members in October 2016, November 2016 and April 2017. Staff also have ongoing communication with service managers and are involved in a range of workstreams related to the detailed design of the new service. There are plans to engage with Children's Social Care staff, who already receive the quarterly newsletter. Trade Unions have been informed of outline proposals and arrangements are in place for ongoing consultation as proposals are developed further.

Lead Members were consulted at a workshop in March 2016 and since then have been kept informed of project progress directly by officers.

Adopters are directly involved with the project via a number of means. 43 adopters and prospective adopters responded to a web based survey in August 2016 expressing an interest in being involved in the plans to develop the RAA. The views of adopters are integral to the service design and will continue to be central to the operation of regional adoption services. There is adopter representation on the service design group and an Adopter Advisory Group is now being established through Adoption UK to contribute adopter views and ensure that proposals are informed by service users. Key messages that adopters have contributed to date include the importance of services being local, with travel kept to a minimum, especially as the geographical area of the organisation is seen to be growing; continuity of staff; and the need for adoption support services to be accessible post adoption and throughout family life.

There are plans to consult with adopted children directly and a report prepared by one of our VA partners, After Adoption in August 2016, *The Big Consult*, set out the results of their consultation work with young adopted people to identify the issues they find important to incorporate into the development of Regional Adoption Agencies.

We also consulted with the Family Justice Board in October 2016 and there are plans to involve birth families, health service commissioners and providers and Virtual Schools.

Are there any complaints, compliments, satisfaction surveys or customer feedback that could help inform this assessment? If yes, what do these tell you?

Each of the four local authorities gathers various forms of feedback from all those affected by adoption. Each authority also has a complaints procedure where formal complaints are made. As the proposal is a new service a clear compliments and complaints procedure will be implemented in consultation with the current adoption agencies to ensure any issues/concerns are correctly addressed.

Step 3 – Identifying the negative impact.

a. Is there any negative impact on individuals or groups in the community?

<p>Each Local Authority has a Corporate Parenting responsibility to ensure we are able to provide LAC with a permanent placement and experience a normal family life to enable them to achieve the best possible outcomes.</p> <p>Each prospective adopter is assessed based on their own individual circumstances.</p> <p>The Service will have a robust Marketing and Communications Plan to ensure that all groups are able to apply inline with the makeup and needs of the LAC population</p> <p>Any impacts on staff recruited or working within the RAA around the protected characteristics should be considered. All staff recruited will be in line with HR procedures.</p>	<p>Barriers:</p> <p>What are the potential or known barriers/impacts for the different ‘equality strands’ set out below? Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where you provide your service, e.g. the facilities/premises; • Who provides it, e.g. are staff trained and representative of the local population/users? • How it is provided, e.g. do people come to you or do you go to them? Do any rules or requirements prevent certain people accessing the service? • When it is provided, e.g. opening hours? • What is provided, e.g. does the service meet everyone’s needs? How do you know? <p>* Some barriers are justified, e.g. for health or safety reasons, or might actually be designed to promote equality, e.g. single sex swimming/exercise sessions, or cannot be removed without excessive cost. If you believe any of the barriers identified to be justified then please indicate which they are and why.</p> <p>Solutions:</p> <p>What can be done to minimise or remove these barriers to make sure everyone has equal access to the service or to reduce adverse impact? Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other arrangements that can be made to ensure people’s diverse needs are met; • How your actions might help to promote good relations between communities; • How you might prevent any unintentional future discrimination. 		
Equality Themes	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts identified	Solutions (ways in which you could mitigate the negative impact)
<p>Age (including children, young people and older people)</p>	<p>The RAA will be designed to improve the prospects of adoption for children who have additional characteristics (e.g. older, BME, disabled, in a sibling group) that may mean it is more difficult to find suitable adopters</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Ensure we have a robust marketing and communications plan in place.</p> <p>Ensure performance data is regularly reviewed around the makeup of LAC, prospective and approved adopters to</p>

			ensure any gaps are identified, reviewed and actioned.
Disability (including carers)	As above.	If the location of the Service is going to change then consideration around access for staff needs to be considered and minimised.	Ensure the site accessible for any staff with mobility issues.
Gender (men and women)	As above.	N/A	As above.
Race (including Gypsies & Travellers and Asylum Seekers)	As above	N/A	As above.
Religion or belief (including people of no religion or belief)	As above.	N/A	As above.
Gender Re-assignment (those that are going or have gone through a transition: male to female or female to male)	As above.	N/A	As above.
Pregnancy and Maternity	As above.	N/A	As above.
Sexual orientation (including gay, lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual)	As above.	N/A	As above.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	As above.	N/A	As above.
Human Rights	As above.	N/A	As above.

Step 4 – Changes or mitigating actions proposed or adopted

Having undertaken the assessment are there any changes necessary to the existing service, policy, function or procedure?

Ensure that the new Service's marketing and communications plan is fully reflective of the makeup of each area's looked after children population.

Ensure that a robust performance framework is in place.

Step 5 – Monitoring

How are you going to monitor the existing service, function, policy or procedure ?

A robust performance framework will be set up to capture of the required data.

This data will then be regularly reviewed to ensure the Service is meeting the need of the LAC population where a plan of adoption is in place.

The marketing and communications plan will also be reviewed in line with the Performance data.

Part C - Action Plan

Barrier/s or improvement/s identified	Action Required	Lead Officer	Timescale
Ensure the new Service has data to show it's effectiveness/gaps against the LAC population with a Plan for Adoption	Robust Performance Framework that is regularly reviewed.		
Ensure the new Service has a robust Marketing and Communications Plan to evidence how all groups will be reached in line with the make-up of the LAC population in all four areas.	Robust Marketing and Communications Plan that is regularly reviewed and monitored.		

Equality Analysis approved by:

Emma Bennett, Service Director – Children & Young People

Date: