

Regional Adoption Agency (RAA)

Report of the Head of Children's Social Care (Deputy Chief Officer)

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

Recommendation:

Members of the committee are requested to:

- Consider the report and proposal to move towards a Regional Adoption Agency, hosted by Devon County Council.
- Indicate how and when they would prefer feedback on the progress of this key activity.

1. **Background to the Report**

- 1.1 In June 2015, the Department for Education (DfE) published '[Regionalising Adoption](#)' and asked all adoption agencies in England to consider how to work much more closely together on a regional basis. This was enacted as the [Education and Adoption Act 2016 which advised authorities and voluntary adoption agencies to join together to form Regional Adoption Agencies \(RAA\)](#).

The Act also gives the Secretary of State a new power to direct one or more named local authorities to make arrangements for any or all of their adoption functions to be carried out on their behalf by one of the local authorities named, or by another agency.

The Government's view is that structural change will improve the process for children and adopters leading to improved numbers of children being adopted, an improved experience for adopters and improved timeliness overall. The DfE expects the RAA programme to deliver consistently good and innovative adoption practice that ensures improved life chances for children.

Devon County Council, as part of the existing Adopt South West partnership, is one of 19 groupings of local authorities and voluntary sector adoption agencies working on the regionalisation agenda nationally. The regional grouping also includes Plymouth, Torbay and Somerset.

The Section 15 of the Education and Adoption Act 2016 once fully in force will give the Secretary of State a new power to direct one or more named local authorities to make arrangements for any or all of their adoption functions to be carried out on their behalf by one of the local authorities named, or by another agency.

The Government's view is that structural change will improve the process for children and adopters. Key elements will be:

- service delivery has at its heart innovation and practice excellence;

- highly skilled professionals who make high quality, evidence based decisions and do not tolerate delay for children in their care; matches are made without unnecessary delay;
- Regional Adoption Agencies provide a large pool of adopters for every child in need of a new family;
- where a match is not immediately available within the Regional Adoption Agency, the search is extended nationally without delay;
- every adoptive family has access to an on-going package of appropriate support with a right to a high quality, specialist assessment of need. This support is delivered from day one and continues throughout childhood whenever it is required;
- the voice of adopters and their children is at the heart of national and local policy decision making and delivery of services.

The DfE expects the Regional Adoption Agency programme to deliver consistently good and innovative adoption practice that ensures improved life chances for children.

The Adoption Leadership Board, who collate and analyse adoption statistics on behalf of the national adoption agencies, reported the following trends:

- Adoption numbers are falling. Data suggest that the number of adoptions fell slightly between quarter 4 2015-16 and quarter 1 2016-17, from 1,120 to 1,060. 4,690 adoptions in 2015-16 is a decrease of 670 from 5,360 in 2014-15
- Data suggests that the number of new decisions has continued to fall from 1,850 in quarter 2 2013-14 to 1,080 in quarter 1 2016-17, a decrease of 42%
- Quarterly data also suggest new placement orders granted have continued to fall from 1,630 in quarter 2 2013-14 to 890 in quarter 1 2016-17, a decrease of 45%
- Projected uplifts suggest that new decisions and placement orders may have plateaued between quarter 4 2015-16 and quarter 1 2016-17
- The number of adopter registrations decreased by 14% between quarter 4 2015-16 and quarter 1 2016-17, from 840 to 730. The number of adopter approvals increased by 1% from 700 to 710.

Alongside the Regional Adoption Agency agenda, the national challenges facing the sector outlined through analysis by the National Adoption Leadership board are:

- Since September 2013, the number of decisions for adoption has almost halved because of the impact of recent court cases.
- The number of Placement Orders granted has also declined nationally. The Government argues this “highlights weaknesses in the way permanence decisions are being made, and raises questions about whether social workers are being supported to develop the skills and knowledge they need to make and defend robust professional judgments”.
- Workforce development and close work between the Regional Adoption Agencies, the children’s social care teams, and Local Family Justice Boards will be key to addressing this issue, and to the success of Regional Adoption Agencies.

- 1.2 A business case for a Regional Adoption Agency hosted by Devon County Council has been developed.

The business case describes:

- the Government drive to Regional Adoption Agencies
 - the benefits of 4 Local Authorities, Devon County Council, Somerset County Council, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council, coming together as a regional service
 - options considered for the Adopt South West Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) model and the outcome
 - what does a “hosted model” mean - for Devon as the host authority, for those Local Authorities delegating adoption services to Devon
 - the staffing transferring to enable delivery of services, and the related budget
 - the apportionment of the budget across the 4 authorities & financial risk management
 - the core content of the required Inter Authority Agreement to support the RAA
- 1.3 Approval of the business case by the Authority Cabinets will enable transition from four separate adoption services to a single service hosted by Devon with effect from October 2018

2. Benefits

- 2.1 The RAA will be pooling resources, knowledge and expertise of four Services, this means at the least the best practice from across the region can be adopted and in practice further improvements sought. Further, this will provide consistency to the adopter experience, a clear message from all involved in the process of adoption.
- 2.2 The RAA vision is that a “a good Regional Adoption Agency is”:
- focussed on the quality of work and the outcomes achieved for adopters and children at each stage of the adoption process.
 - applying best practice consistently and encouraging further innovation
 - a high performing service, evidenced in national reporting
 - achieving value for money from contracts for services
 - achieving transparent, consistent and efficient Adoption Panels
 - improving recruitment level of adopters and preparing them well
 - commissioning marketing and recruitment with clear requirements about volume and quality of adopters for hard to place children
 - creating a system where children are matched with the most suitable adopter as quickly as possible
 - more children achieving permanence through adoption
 - providing sufficient, high quality adoption support services that meets demand
 - making best use of the existing market and enabling the market to grow in scope and scale for sustainability of adoption support services

3. Outcomes

- 3.1 The outcomes required of the RAA services are to be monitored and reported through to each Local Authority to track performance. There are listed below:
- Improve the number of placements available for harder to place/ priority children through the cumulative impact of 5 strategies;
 - Improve timescales for second time adopter assessments with access to the original assessment and update the changes since the last approval. The target is to complete this in 3 months.

- See a higher conversion rate from enquiry to approval of prospective adopters through a Marketing and Recruitment contract focussed on quality of adopters and the quality of early assessment to create a larger pool of quality adopters. The target is a 10% improvement in the conversion rate.
 - Early identification of children with potential adoption plans through improvement and consistency in joint working, attending permanence planning meetings / gateway meetings / tracking meetings and regular consultation with Team Managers / Social Workers in the authorities to identify children at the earliest opportunity. The target is for children to be linked with a prospective adopter within 1 month of a Placement Order being made.
 - More children placed on an Early Permanence (Fostering to Adopt) basis through improvement in the interface with authorities' teams, every child will be considered for a Fostering for Adoption placement
 - Reduction in the number of children with a Placement Order revoked by the improved quality of adopters identified through the marketing and recruitment contract. The target is a 5% reduction
- Reduce the number [cost] of Inter Agency placements outside the RAA. There is significant challenge in delivering to this target. Currently the 4 authorities spend more on placements outside the region than those achieved within the region. Also, the opportunity to maintain the level of income currently achieved will be challenged, with other Regional Adoption Agencies setting a similar target based on improved number of placements within their Regional Adoption Agency, and therefore reducing external placements and income opportunities for this RAA.
- To improve the stability of placements and retention of recruited adopters through the cumulative impact of 4 strategies
 - More timely matching of approved adopters through improved processes and interfaces with the authorities, the target is for an adopter to be linked with prospective children within 1 month from the Authority Decision Maker (ADM) decision
 - Reduce the length of time from adoption placement to adoption order for children with early support offered to adopters prior to children being placed and reduction in delays of the Adoption Support Fund application being completed by the social worker.
 - Reduction in the number of placement breakdowns providing better early support for Adopters, for example identifying therapeutic support at the earliest opportunity. The target is a 5% reduction in breakdowns.
 - Fewer Adoption de-registrations because a match has not been identified for the family. Recruiting the adopters for the children we have waiting within the RAA through the Marketing and Recruitment contract; being transparent with adopters about the complexities children can bring and the range of support available. The target is a 10% reduction in de-registrations.
- Further improvements:
 - Increase in birth family referrals. By having one provider offering all the support to birth families, this is likely to increase birth family engagement as they only need to make one relationship. The target is a 10% increase.
 - More timely information, advice and counselling to Step-parents interested in adoption on the range of options available that may be more appropriate and enable the child relationship with the wider family to be maintained.
 - Should adoption be the preferred route then Step-parent assessments will set clear expectations on the completion date for submission of

applications to the Court to minimise Court delays. The target is that assessments will be completed with 6 months of referral.

- Improved data collection for performance measurement and management effectiveness across the service; to have a system which accepts all key data required for reporting; minimise manual inputting; generates required reporting with minimal manual intervention; handles imported data safely and securely; supports matching.

4. Key features of the RAA Proposal

Governance

- 4.1 A single host Local Authority model means that adoption service functions for the partner authorities of Somerset County Council, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council will be delegated to Devon County Council.
- 4.2 There will be an RAA Operational Board led by senior managers from the Local Authorities to oversee service performance and have responsibility for the annual plan and budget. There is also a Strategic Partnership Group, which has a broader more strategic role bringing together partners and key stakeholders, including Council Members, to forge the strategic direction for improvement of the RAA, reflecting national policy as well as local considerations.

Structure and staffing

- 4.3 The Devon hosted solution sees a RAA under one management structure. The structure has the required governance to focus both on the immediate operation and performance of the single service, whilst acknowledging the need to determine the most appropriate strategies for future development and improvement of adoption services.
- 4.4 The operational structure clearly defines the RAA Service Manager role with a focus on the future development and improvement and involving closer working with partners, for example in health and education. This role is supported by Locality Managers focussed on day to day management and operational performance of the hosted service.
- 4.5 Stability and assurance of outcomes is critical to success of the RAA and the greatest asset of any service is its staff. The option of secondments of staff from other authorities was considered, however this is normally used for short term or project assignments and key learning from other such situations is that whilst this approach can work it brings complexity and crucially does not encourage the feeling of being part of a new dedicated service, nor does it best prepare staff for changes that will be required of them, for example practice alignment. These are better addressed by providing a feeling of unity created by a single employer model.
- 4.6 Accordingly, it is proposed that the RAA operates with those staff transferring from Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay to Devon under TUPE delivering and supporting the adoption services being transferred. TUPE will afford protection to the staff regarding dismissal and their terms and conditions of employment.
- 4.7 The staffing arrangement, to TUPE transfer staff from the partners to Devon County Council will ensure a consistent way of operating, processes, policies and practice to optimise performance. This also ensures any interface with the RAA by Children's social workers or Voluntary Agencies or indeed health and education sees a consistent response. This arrangement also responds to feedback from Adopters

about a confusion of processes and paperwork and adoption panel procedures across the region with different guidance and support from across the region.

- 4.8 The staffing structure and allocation of staff across the region reflects the location of demand rather than historic arrangements, and will exhibit, commitment to opportunities for career progression, whilst acknowledging the reality of changing locations of operation.

Budget

- 4.9 The principles of the financial arrangements are on the critical path to approval of the RAA. The challenge is how to balance the goals of the RAA to increase the number of adoptions, driving up demand on all aspects of the service (assessments, support) whilst all funding LAs' are under budgetary pressures. The commitment is that the base budget set for the RAA 'does not exceed the cumulative budgets' of the constituent authorities, including costs attributable to the Host.
- 4.10 The common starting point for the development of the budget is that:
- The RAA is stable and sustainable;
 - An agreed funded budget with apportionment of that budget that is transparent and accepted by all.
 - Corporate service overhead costs (titled 'new overheads') will be surfaced by creating the RAA budget e.g. finance, HR and other support functions, these costs will be apportioned as part of the overall budget; There will be corresponding reductions in each of the individual authorities and the opportunity exists to realise these as tangible savings, however each authority will need to consider the local issues to determine if they will be realised.
 - Risk management mechanisms will be required to address budget overspend and underspend driven by significant variation in activity/ demand/ funding because of Local Authority initiatives/ strategies or Government policy/ direction
 - Set up costs will be incurred;
- 4.11 The resulting budget has been scrutinised and agreed by the relevant finance officers in each of the four local authorities and by the senior officers representing the Governance group. It should be noted that the service plan and budget will be reviewed annually under the terms of the Inter-Authority Agreement.

Legal agreement

- 4.12 The Inter Authority Agreement is the legal representation of the form and function of the RAA and incorporates but is not limited to the following:
- arrangements that enable all partners to meet statutory duties & responsibilities
 - operational responsibilities across the Local Authorities and RAA
 - financial arrangements including the management of exceptions, short-fall or surplus
 - entry and exit strategies for members of the RAA
 - RAA governance, staffing and structure
 - Information Governance to enable information sharing to support a "single service" operation and required national and statutory reporting.

Functions / responsibility

- 4.13 The designation of functions/responsibilities for DCC and other local authorities within the proposed RAA are laid out in Appendix 1

Performance measures

4.14 Initial performance measures for the proposed RAA are laid out in Appendix 2

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Children's Social Care

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Skills: Councillor James McInnes

Chief Officer for Children's Services: Jo Olsson

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

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Appendix 1: Responsibility Matrix

FUNCTIONS/ RESPONSIBILITY MATRIX

THE CHILD

SERVICE AREA	RETAINED FUNCTIONS/ RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	DELEGATED FUNCTIONS/ RESPONSIBILITIES TO DCC (acting as host of the interim RAA)
Case Responsibility	<p>The local authority will retain case management responsibility for the child until the making of the Adoption Order</p> <p>The local authority will be responsible for all statutory functions including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Visits and Reviews • Management and supervision of contact between child and family members. • Administration and finance of foster placements and communication with foster carers who care for children under Fostering for Adoption arrangements. 	<p>The RAA will provide specialist advice and support to assist LA staff to fully understand the adoption process, influencing and promoting best practice</p> <p>The RAA will provide the supervision to foster carer's caring for a child under Fostering for Adoption arrangements.</p>
Early identification of children requiring adoption	<p>The local authority is responsible for identifying, at the earliest possible stage, the children who may require adoption and making them and their needs known to the RAA, providing relevant and timely information.</p> <p>Birth parents to be referred to the Birth Parent support service at an early stage.</p> <p>Future potential contact arrangements to be considered at an early stage</p>	<p>The RAA will designate a Family Finder to each child identified as possibly requiring adoption to liaise with children's social workers</p> <p>The RAA aims to develop working practises with each LA to ensure involvement in care planning to assist with the earliest identification.</p> <p>Making sure siblings placed with other adopters are considered by the LA.</p> <p>Staff from the RAA will be involved in identifying children for early permanence placement.</p>
Communication during the family finding process	<p>It will be the responsibility of the LA to keep the Child Permanence Report updated and to inform the family finder of any changes in the child's development or circumstances (e.g. change of placement).</p>	<p>The RAA will keep the LA regularly updated about progress on family finding.</p>
Early Placement	<p>The LA will arrange the Administration and finance of fostering for adoption placements and communication with foster carers who care for children under Fostering for Adoption arrangements as necessary.</p>	<p>Where appropriate, and in agreement with the local authority, the RAA will make available an Early Permanence Placement (EPP) e.g. a Fostering for Adoption Service for children who may benefit from the</p>

SERVICE AREA	RETAINED FUNCTIONS/ RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	DELEGATED FUNCTIONS/ RESPONSIBILITIES TO DCC (acting as host of the interim RAA)
	<p>The LA Social Worker will understand the statutory responsibilities i.e. visits / reviews to the child whilst the child is in Early Permanence Placement</p> <p>The LA will be responsible for financial allowances for Early Permanence Placement carers.</p>	<p>possibility of early placement with potential adopters.</p> <p>If there are no RAA Fostering for Adoption placements available, the RAA has a responsibility to search for a placement outside of the RAA.</p> <p>The RAA will support these carers whilst caring for these children in an Early Permanence Placement</p>
Multitracking of children requiring adoption	<p>The local authority will track the progress of children in care proceedings or looked after under section 20 (Children Act 1989) to maintain an up-to-date knowledge of their potential need for an adoption placement</p>	<p>The RAA will also actively track all children for whom initial information indicates that adoption may be a likely plan</p>
Pre-placement Reports	<p>The LA will be responsible for the completion and cost of all reports prior to an adoption placement being made including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Placement Reports • QA reports • Sibling Assessments • Support Plans <p>LA responsible for completing the profiles of the child once an ADM decision is made</p> <p>The LA will liaise with the RAA before the final Care plan is completed and the Adoption Support plan to agree the plan specifically around birth family and sibling contact and ongoing support for the child/ren and Adopters.</p> <p>Final Care plans are to be completed by the LA but the RAA to be consulted on any support needs / contact arrangements post order.</p>	<p>The RAA can advise on and support the completion of the Child Placement Report and early profile of the child. The RAA will provide support and challenge to help ensure that the CPR's are of a consistent high quality across the partnership.</p> <p>The RAA will provide additional information and advice on the placement needs of the child and the likely need for post adoption support services, including financial support</p> <p>RAA to endorse Support plans and final care plans specifically around future contact and support needs to the LA on final care plans</p>
	<p>The local authority will be responsible for assessing the child's needs in respect of a future placement and in ensuring that any required financial support for a future adoptive placement is available prior to the Adoption Order</p>	<p>It will be necessary for the RAA and LA to work closely and collaboratively to ensure that the needs of the child can be met and that training support is sustainable. The training will be provided by the Panel Advisor to child Care Social workers to continuously improve practice.</p>
Medical Information	<p>The Local Authority will be responsible for obtaining all required medical information in respect of children who are being considered for adoption and will meet with prospective adopters to ensure they are fully aware of the child's future medical needs as appropriate.</p>	<p>The RAA adoption co-ordinator / social workers will support the Prospective Adopters to attend appointments to fully understand the Childs needs.</p>

SERVICE AREA	RETAINED FUNCTIONS/ RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	DELEGATED FUNCTIONS/ RESPONSIBILITIES TO DCC (acting as host of the interim RAA)
	The LA will be responsible for organising for the prospective adopters to have a consultation by phone / face to face prior to Adoption Panel to discuss the Child's current and future needs.	
Decision that adoption should be the child's plan	<p>The Agency Decision Maker in each LA will be responsible for the 'Should be placed for adoption' decision.</p> <p>The LA will undertake a regular review of this decision and associated plans and keep the family finder in the RAA informed of any changes.</p> <p>LA to refer children with a possible plan of being relinquished to the RAA at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p>The LA with advice from the RAA will refer birth family members to independent birth family support at the earliest opportunity.</p>	<p>The RAA will support the decision-making process as requested, particularly in the provision of Professional Advice to the LA's ADM.</p> <p>The RAA will provide an adoption panel for relinquished children's plans to be heard.</p> <p>Panel Advisor to provide panel minutes to the LA ADM.</p> <p>Independent birth family support is the responsibility of the RAA.</p>
'Hard to Place'/Priority Children	<p>The LA is responsible for identifying at the earliest opportunity where a child is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aged four or over • From a BME heritage • Part of a sibling group of two or more • Has uncertainty about their development • Has a disability or medical condition • Sibling matches for new-born <p>The LA will gather the relevant information, assess and forward to the RAA as soon as possible.</p> <p>LA to contribute to the learning to explore how children can be placed in permanent placements.</p>	<p>RAA to track all children and all possible options explored, documented and shared with the LA.</p> <p>The RAA will either provide a service for Priority children which may involve some or all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased publicity – DVD, Photos etc. • Profile the child at specific events • Press and digital media advertising • Attempt to recruit Adopters specifically for the child • Provide additional training and preparation for potential Adopters • Advise on or assist with additional preparation work with the child. <p>RAA to contribute to the learning to explore how children can be placed in permanent placements.</p>
Preparation of the child	<p>The LA will be responsible for preparing the child for an adoptive placement.</p> <p>The LA will be responsible for the preparation of the child's Life story Book/ work. This often needs to start early in the child's looked after career and will contain information to which the LA has immediate access.</p>	<p>The RAA will provide advice and guidance & potentially training to the LA in the preparation of the child, particularly in respect of the future placement.</p> <p>The RAA will provide advice regarding completing a life story work/ later life letter.</p>

SERVICE AREA	RETAINED FUNCTIONS/ RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	DELEGATED FUNCTIONS/ RESPONSIBILITIES TO DCC (acting as host of the interim RAA)
	The LA will be responsible for producing the Later life letter	The RAA will provide advice and written guidance
Linking and Matching	The LA, by agreement, will meet the costs of introductions between children and Adopters.	The RAA will take lead responsibility for all aspects of the linking and matching process, but will always involve the LA in the decision-making process. The RAA will chair linking/ matching meetings as part of the process.
	The LA is responsible for updating of the Child Permanence Report, Delegation of Parental Responsibility report and the Adoption Placement Report, the section on the Child.	The RAA will be responsible for completing the Adoption Placement Report, apart from the section on the child. The RAA will organise the Matching Panel
		The RAA will chair and organise life appreciation days for children over 3 years old.
MATCHING DECISIONS	The Agency Decision Maker in each LA will be responsible for the Matching decision for the child.	The RAA will support the process with information as required, including Panel Minutes and administrative support including letters regarding the decision.
PLACEMENT	The Local Authority is responsible for Placing the child/ren with prospective adopters. The LA will commission the Letterbox function from the RAA.	The RAA will offer support and advice to the LA The RAA will support the LA when a child is placed. The RAA to work closely with the LA pre-order and can offer independent support to birth family. The RAA will set up the Letterbox pre-adoption order and will be responsible for managing this day to day post order.
Adoption Support Fund	LA to work closely with the RAA to provide the information to complete the ASF application for families/children who don't meet the criteria for CAMHS services. .	RAA to submit the ASF application for families/children who don't meet the criteria for CAMHS services on behalf of the LA. RAA will provide the administration and contracting support to implement the operation of ASF funding.
ADOPTION ALLOWANCES	Allowances / One off payments will be paid by the LA - e.g. vehicles for larger sibling groups, Adoption / Child Arrangement Orders	The RAA will complete assessments and will review these every 2 years and forward the assessments to the LA to consider.
Applications to the DfE Interagency Fund (for hard	LA to work closely with the RAA to provide the information to complete the ASF application for families/children who don't meet the criteria for CAMHS	The RAA will make the application to the fund where relevant

SERVICE AREA	RETAINED FUNCTIONS/ RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	DELEGATED FUNCTIONS/ RESPONSIBILITIES TO DCC (acting as host of the interim RAA)
to place children)	services. .	

ADOPTER RECRUITMENT

	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY
RECRUITMENT OF ADOPTERS	<p>The LA will signpost any enquiries from potential adopters to the RAA.</p> <p>The LA will ensure that information relevant to potential adopters is included in its own marketing materials and on its website, clearly signposting potential adopters to the website of the RAA.</p>	<p>The RAA will signpost fostering enquiries to the LA.</p> <p>The RAA will be responsible for recruiting adopters appropriate to the needs of children waiting in each LA.</p> <p>Marketing information will reflect the fact that the RAA is delivering the service on behalf of partnering LAs. This information will be provided on the website or prospective applicants can email or telephone and speak with a worker for further information.</p>
Enquiries		<p>The RAA will provide a centralised enquiry process for the region to meet all statutory requirements. Adopters can enquire via telephone / email / or by completing a Registration of Interest form.</p> <p>The RAA will provide written information to potential adopters and will hold information events.</p> <p>The RAA may at times signpost potential adopters to other agencies/ return to Fostering in LA's if they are unlikely to be able to meet the needs of the children needing placement.</p>
Stage One	The LAs will provide all information required for statutory checks of potential adopters resident in the LA.	The RAA will undertake all Stage one functions
Stage Two		The RAA will undertake all Stage Two functions
		The RAA will complete the Prospective Adopters Report (PAR)
Approvals		<p>The RAA will manage the Adoption Panel.</p> <p>The RAA Agency Decision Maker will be responsible for all approvals</p>
POST APPROVAL SUPPORT AND TRAINING		The RAA will provide post approval support and training to approved adopters

POST ADOPTION SUPPORT SERVICES

	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY
ADOPTION SUPPORT ASSESSMENTS/ PLANS & SERVICES	<p>The LA will consider funding requests for adoption support services which are not included in the core offer e.g. Therapeutic support.</p> <p>Match Funding – Pre 3 years of adoption order – LA responsible for match funding.</p> <p>Respite / Short term breaks – if this service is required the case will need to be open and family supported by the LA.</p>	<p>The RAA will undertake assessments of adoption support needs.</p> <p>The RAA's core offer will provide general adoption support services: newsletter, social events for children and young people; social/training events for adoptive parents; advice and signposting for adoptive families; independent support and advice to birth relatives; post box services etc</p> <p>The RAA will undertake applications to the Adoption Support Fund for children and commission services agreed by ASF for families/children who don't meet the criteria for CAMHS services.</p> <p>Match funding – post 3 years of adoption order – RAA responsible for Match funding.</p>
	<p>The LA will signpost requests from adoptive families for adoption order support to the RAA. Alongside needs directly related to adoption, a family may have needs best met by services within the LA e.g. CIN services. The LA will be responsible for providing these services</p> <p>Where a safeguarding referral is made to the LA the LA will conduct any appropriate section 47 enquiry and will allocate an LA social worker where thresholds are met, but will notify the RAA of any referral involving an adopted child.</p> <p>If adopted child/young person accommodated, LA will be responsible for social work support to child/family.</p>	<p>The RAA will undertake the assessment of adoption support needs of the child and family and produce an adoption support plan. The RAA will liaise with LA to agree which services will be provided by RAA and which by LA for families whose needs are complex.</p> <p>Where appropriate, the RAA will offer support to the adoptive family during any section 47 enquiry if the case is open to the RAA.</p> <p>RAA will complete any specific work needed e.g. Life Story work or application to ASF for therapeutic support for families/children who don't meet the criteria for CAMHS services.</p>
Out-of-hours services	All adopters will have access to the LA's Emergency Duty Team out of core hours.	
Indirect/ Letterbox contact		The RAA / commissioned service will post/Letterbox contact between adopted children and birth families. This commissioned service will carry out ongoing assessments to consider whether contact is in the best

	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY
		interest of the child.
Supervised & Sibling Direct Contact	Cost of arrangements agreed in the pre- adoption support plan e.g. travel & accommodation expenses will remain with the LA.	Responsibility for arranging / supervising Direct Contact requirements will transfer to the RAA / commissioned service
ADOPTION ALLOWANCES	Adoption allowances will be paid for by the LA	RAA to undertake appropriate assessment
ADOPTION SUPPORT FUND		The RAA will be responsible for undertaking all funding applications to the Adoption Support Fund and all contracting arrangements Existing contracting resources to transfer to the RAA
ACCESS TO CHILDREN'S ADOPTION CASE RECORDS	LA to store historic children's adoption case records. For RAA adoptions the LA will have access to records if the case becomes open to them as a CIN / LAC / Safeguarding.	RAA to store and hold new files Existing record keeping resources to transfer to RAA
BIRTH RECORDS COUNSELLING	Existing budget to transfer to the RAA	RAA will be responsible for delivery of counselling.
INDEPENDENT SUPPORT TO BIRTH PARENTS	Existing budget to transfer to the RAA	RAA will be responsible for delivery of support.
ACCESS TO ADOPTERS RECORDS	LA to signpost Adoptees to the RAA where appropriate	RAA to store and hold new files
STEP PARENT ADOPTION ASSESSMENT	LA to sign post adopters to the RAA	RAA to be responsible for assessments

SERVICE USER ENGAGEMENT

	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY
Adopters		The RAA / commissioned agency will engage with adopters, individually and in groups, with the aim of improving the services available
Adoptees		The RAA / commissioned agency will engage with adoptees, individually and in groups, with the aim of improving the services available
Birth parents		THE RAA / commissioned service will engage with and birth parents individually and in groups with the aim of improving the services available
Special Guardians	Initial assessment, placement, the support plan and payments and allowances are the responsibility of the LA including contact arrangements and the cost of any supervised contact.	The RAA has no responsibilities in support of Special Guardians

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT & INSPECTION -

	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY
Data provision	Each LA will need to provide specified key data to the RAA on performance. Each LA is responsible for the ALB Child return	RAA is responsible for production of ALB Adopter return
Data analysis		The RAA will produce a 3-monthly report to each LA on performance against an agreed set of indicators
OFSTED	The future role of OFSTED in adoption is currently under review and future requirements are currently unclear.	
Freedom of Information applications	The LA / RAA will cooperate within the timescales to enable information to be made available to the applicant	The LA / RAA will cooperate within the timescales to enable information to be made available to the applicant

MISCELLANEOUS SERVICES

	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY
STATEMENT OF PURPOSE		The RAA will provide take responsibility for updating this for the functions that have been delegated to the RAA. The RAA will take responsibility for completing each LA statement of purpose regarding the functions left with the LA, in consultation with the LA.
REGISTERED MANAGER		The RAA will provide a registered manager for their adoption functions.
ADOPTION SUPPORT SERVICE ADVISOR		The RAA will undertake the role of Adoption Services Advisor for each LA.
CHILDREN'S GUIDE FOR ADOPTION	Each LA has a responsibility for this	The RAA could provide advice and guidance
ANNUAL SERVICE REPORT		RAA to complete an annual public facing service report
CHILDREN'S GUIDE FOR ADOPTION SUPPORT		The RAA will update the Children's guide for adoption support
STEP PARENTS/RELATIVES		RAA to be responsible for providing this service – this service will be commissioned out.

	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY
WHO WISH TO ADOPT (NON-AGENCY ADOPTIONS)		
INTER-COUNTRY ADOPTION		RAA will provide this service; it will commission advice and information on inter-country adoption from a specialist agency. Service users will have to meet cost of assessment and approval process in the commissioned agency
ADOPTION PANELS	The three larger LA's to provide a social work representative to sit on panel twice a month and the smaller LA once a month.	The RAA will provide adoption panels across the region and will appoint Independent panel chairs and retain a central list and will provide training and support for panel members. The adoption panel will provide a quality assurance report for the partnership on a 6-monthly basis
TRAINING FOR LA staff		The RAA can provide training for social workers regarding the adoption process/ writing of CPR's/APR'S/Support plans and preparing for Adoption Panel
ADOPTEE COUNSELLING		The RAA will signpost applicants to independent services and will not provide an intermediary service.
DISRUPTIONS	LA to contribute to the disruption process	RAA to undertake the disruption process. Panel Chairs and other professionals will be invited to contribute to this process.
ALLEGATIONS	LA is responsible for initiating this process prior to the Adoption order being granted. The RAA will contribute to this process.	RAA is responsible for initiating this process post the Adoption order being granted. The LA will contribute to this process if necessary.

Appendix 2: Performance Measures

Ref:	Adoption Scorecard	ALB return	Quality marker	Objective	How	Target for 18/19	Measure
1	✓			Improved timescales for second time adopter assessments	Either already have original assessment or obtain from the LA / RAA and update the changes since the last approval. This can be completed in 3 months.	3 months	Adopter contact date to ADM sign off
2	✓			Higher conversion rate from enquiry to approval of prospective adopters;	Targeted marketing and recruitment contract focussed on quality of adopters	10%	Reduce number of children waiting for placement
3	✓	✓		Early identification of children with potential adoption plans	Attend permanence planning meetings / gateway meetings / tracking meetings and regular consultation with Team Managers / Social Workers in the LA to identify children at the earliest opportunity.	Children to be linked with prospective adopter within 1 month of placement order being made	Date of Placement order tracked to 1 calendar month.
4		✓		More children placed on an Early Permanence (Fostering to Adopt) basis	good interface as above with the LA's to identify which could be placed for FFA	Every child will be considered for a Fostering for Adoption placement	Number with ADM decisions tracked to Foster to Adopt register.
5	✓			Reduction in the number of children with placement order revoked	Targeted marketing and recruitment contract focussed on quality of adopters	5%	Reduce number of children waiting for placement
6	✓			More timely matching of approved adopters	RAA to have regular resource meetings to discuss the children coming through with a plan of adoption and adopters being assessed to link children and adopters at the earliest opportunity.	Adopter to be linked with prospective child/en within 1 month from ADM decision	ADM decision date plus 1 month
7	✓			Reduce the length of time from adoption placement to adoption order for children	Early support offered to adopters prior to children being placed and the no delay in the ASF application being completed by the social worker.	5%	Status "place for adoption" to Adoption Order granted
8		✓		Reduction in the number of placement breakdowns	Better early support for Adopters - identify therapeutic support at the earliest opportunity.	5%	Reduce number of placement breakdowns
9			✓	Fewer Adoption de-registrations because a match has not be identified for the family	Recruiting the adopters for the children we have waiting within the RAA; supported by Marketing and Recruitment contract specification; being transparent with adopters about the complexities children can bring and the range of support available.	10%	Number of ADM de-registrations

Ref:	Adoption Scorecard	ALB return	Quality marker	Objective	How	Target for 18/19	Measure
10			✓	Increase in birth family referrals; quality of contract specification	By having one provider offering all the support to birth families, this is likely to increase birth family engagement as they only have to make one relationship.	10%	Contract reporting performance measure
11	✓		✓	Improved number and quality of adopters	better targeted recruitment, to ensure we are recruiting the right adopters for the children we have waiting.	10%	Increased enquiries; more enquiries reaching Stage 2
12			✓	More timely Step parent adoption assessments	the provider to set out pre-arranged meetings with the applicants with clear expectations on engagement and completion date. Also an expectation that the applications submit their adoption application to the Court once accepted for a full assessment, as Court timescales often delay this process.	Assessments completed with 6 month of referral	Contract reporting performance measure
13		✓		Improvement in number of placements available for harder to place/ priority children	better, targeted marketing and recruitment.	5%	Number of adoptions achieved for children in this group
14			✓	Reduce no. [cost] of Inter Agency placements outside the RAA	Meet key target for local introduction of RAA	20%	Budget line in financial reporting.
15			✓	Improved performance measurement and management across the service; improved data collection analysis	To have a system which accepts all key data required for reporting; minimise manual inputting; generates required reporting with minimal manual intervention; handles imported data safely and securely; supports matching	From October 2018	Reporting available to support management/ performance of the RAA; List 11 & ALB

