

# **North Somerset Council**

## **Report to the Children and Young People's Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel**

**Date of Meeting: 16 June 2022**

**Subject of Report: Ofsted's inspection of Adoption West**

**Town or Parish: All**

**Officer/Member Presenting: Sheila Smith, Director of Children's Services**

**Key Decision: No**

### **Reason:**

It does not meet the criteria for a key decision.

### **Recommendations**

- i) That the Panel notes the outcome of Ofsted's inspection of Adoption West.
- ii) That the Panel highlights any risks or areas for further scrutiny.
- iii) That the Panel considers feedback it would wish to give to Adoption West via the current joint scrutiny arrangements.

## **1. Summary of Report**

- 1.1 Adoption West is the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) commissioned to deliver adoption services by six local authorities: Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, Gloucestershire, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. The agency is a company limited by guarantee and is registered with Ofsted as a voluntary adoption agency. The local authorities make up the controlling committee of company members with ultimate responsibility for organisational performance and appointment and dismissal of directors.
- 1.2 The service operates from three hubs in Wiltshire, Bristol and Gloucestershire. Each hub comprises a multidisciplinary team of recruitment, assessment, family finding and support staff. The adoption panel is made up of a single central list and operates three panels with three chairs, linked to the three hub offices. The agency was first registered with Ofsted in March 2019. This was the agency's first inspection and it took place between January 24th and 28th with the report being published on March 15th.
- 1.3 The overall outcome of the inspection is that Adoption West provides effective services that meet the requirements for 'good.' The sub judgement of how well children, young people and adults are helped and protected is 'good.' The second

sub judgement of the effectiveness of leaders and managers is that it 'requires improvement to be good'.

## **2. Policy**

- 2.1 The development of Regional Adoption Agency proposals was part of the national regionalising adoption agenda as set out in 'Regionalising Adoption' (July 2015). They were further developed in 'Adoption; A Vision for Change' (March 2016) and informed by the Education and Adoption Act 2016.

## **3. Details**

- 3.1 The inspection report is Appendix 1 below. It is a short report in which three and a half pages outline the inspectors' findings and a further page sets out the statutory requirement which needed to be met by February 28th 2022 and a further five recommendations. The requirement related to the need for the agency to ensure that the medical practitioners are suitably qualified to undertake the task of agency medical adviser.

## **4. Consultation**

None.

## **5. Financial Implications**

None.

## **6. Costs**

None.

## **7. Funding**

None.

## **8. Legal Powers and Implications**

- 8.1 The Education and Adoption Act 2016 amended the Adoption and Children Act 2002 to include:

1) The Secretary of State may give directions requiring one or more local authorities in England to make arrangements for all or any of their functions within subsection (3) to be carried out on their behalf by—

- (a) one of those authorities, or
- (b) one or more other adoption agencies.

2) A direction under subsection (1) may, in particular—

- (a) specify who is to carry out the functions, or
- (b) require the local authority or authorities to determine who is to carry out the functions.

3) The functions mentioned in subsection (1) are functions in relation to—

- (a) the recruitment of persons as prospective adopters;
- (b) the assessment of prospective adopters' suitability to adopt a child;
- (c) the approval of prospective adopters as suitable to adopt a child;
- (d) decisions as to whether a particular child should be placed for

adoption with a particular prospective adopter;  
(e) the provision of adoption support services.

4) The Secretary of State may give a direction requiring a local authority in England to terminate arrangements made in accordance with a direction under subsection (1).

5) A direction under this section may make different provision for different purposes.

6) The Secretary of State may by regulations amend subsection (3).

## **9. Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

9.1 Adoption West is a company owned by six local authorities. While their geographical patch is large many of the workers had adopted a hybrid model of working from home for parts of the week even before the pandemic. They work from hubs supplied by three of the local authorities and so benefit from the policies of those authorities in relation to the quality of the buildings, heating etc.

## **10. Risk Management**

Not applicable.

## **11. Equality Implications**

Have you undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment? No.

## **12. Corporate Implications**

None.

## **13. Options Considered**

Not applicable.

### **Author:**

Sheila Smith, Director of Children's Services

### **Background Papers:**

Appendix 1

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