

Regional Adoption Agencies



Welcome

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View from the Adoption Leadership Board

Andrew Christie, Chair, Adoption Leadership Board



ADCS Annual Conference 2016

ADCS
Leading Children's Services

REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCIES

THE AMBITION, CONTEXT AND LESSONS LEARNT [THUS FAR]

THE CASE

- **Better Outcomes for Children & Adopters**
- Bigger range of matches
- Speedier matches especially for older children and children with special needs
- Better Post Adoption Support
- Reduce the risk of post-code/LA lottery
- Resilience from Scale
- A cadre of (C 20) systems leaders
- **Efficiencies/Savings**

THE CONTEXT

ADOPTIONS FROM CARE

SGOs FROM CARE

13/14

5,050

3,360

14/15

5,330

3,520

15/16

?

?

CHILDREN AWAITING A PLACEMENT

MARCH 14	4,770
MARCH 15	3,066
MARCH 16	TBC

ADM

PLACEMENT ORDER

12/13

6,520

5,950

14/15

4,316

3,590

15/16

TBC

IMPACT ON VAAs

- 25 in total
- 7 part of much bigger organisation (e.g. Barnardo's)
- 18 varying in size, many specialist, many regional, biggest makes c. 100 placements/year
- Significant contribution to Adoption. The expectation is they play a significant part in RAAs (partners/commissioned providers?)

RAA DEVELOPMENTS THUS FAR

- 19 being planned involving 129 LAs
- 23 not signed up. Expectation is all will have plans in place by 2017 (Secretary of State has powers to direct)
- Funding of set up costs an issue.
- Allocated £1.4m in 'bridging' finance. £14m available for next 2 years + access to £7m in the Practice & Innovation Fund
- We need to use this funding carefully and avoid duplication of spend, where possible

5 EXEMPLARS

- Mark Owers – Professional Advisor to ALB
- 5 exemplars in Programme Board: Adopt Central England; Adopt Wessex; Coram East; Greater Manchester; Yorks & Humber
- Advice and support
- ALB & Regional Adoption Boards (social work practice, adoption & permanence) - understanding the data

Regional Adoption Agencies

Mark Owers,
Professional Advisor to the Adoption Leadership Board



Working with Demonstration Projects....

The Professional Advisor to the Adoption Leadership Board has been tasked with supporting and challenging the 5 RAA Demonstration Projects to:

- Design and implement RAAs that unleash the power of innovation and deliver continuous improvements in practice
- Ensure VAAs are fully involved in the design and delivery of RAAs
- Have funding mechanisms and arrangements that enable children to be placed without unnecessary delay
- Understand the regulation and inspection implications of new delivery models and structures to inform any necessary revisions to the statutory guidance and the Ofsted inspection framework
- Consider IT and data collection issues so that the ALB can fully understand the performance of the whole system in a timely manner
- Understand the legal form RAAs will take

Shaping the system

- The 5 demonstration projects together makeup 46 adoption agencies which is a quarter of all agencies
- A RAA Change and Practice Board will be established to allow all RAA projects the opportunity to help shape the reformed system
- All RAAs and national stakeholders will have an opportunity through this new ALB Sub-board to share their issues and proposed solutions
- The Board will report to the ALB quarterly

Regionalising Adoption Yorkshire & Humber

Joanne Hewson, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services, North East Lincolnshire Council and Nic Haughton, Regional Adoption Consortium Manager, Yorkshire and Humber

Yorkshire and Humber Context

- The region is made up of mix of 15 LAs with widely varied demographic, shire county, large and small city and district councils, with an average regional LAC population of around 7,200 which equates to about 65 per 10,000.
- Adopted children numbers have broadly followed the national trend: from 450 during 2011-12, through 520, 630 to 696 during 2014-15 and likely to drop to around 600 during 2015-16.
- The Y&H adoption consortium began in 1993 as an informal family/child information exchange mechanism between 4 LAs and has grown to a membership of 15 LAs, 5 VAAs and 2 ASAs, supported by business contract since 2012.
- North Lincs Council holds the contract as provider of the consortium whose aim was to increase choice, facilitate shared solutions, and add value to individual members activity.
- The consortium is staffed by an administrator and manager, is governed by an Executive Board which meets as the Regional ALB, and is operationally steered by Regional Adoption Managers meetings.

Regionalisation

- The regional DCS group agreed in July 2015 to submit an EOI for 3 RAAs with a coordinating centre – Hub. Hub and RAA planning with all stakeholders took place over July and August, with draft EOI iterations circulated and signed off by all LA and VA partners in September.
- The Regional Project Board first met in September and monthly thereafter, and a series of thematic task groups were established – Finance, HR, IT, Governance, Service standards and Communications.
- Individual RAA boards were established over the development phase to March 2016, carrying out options appraisals and begin staff and financial modelling.
 - South RAA: Sheffield, Rotherham, Doncaster and Barnsley, hosted by Doncaster
 - West RAA: Leeds, Bradford, Kirklees, Calderdale and Wakefield, hosted by Leeds
 - North and Humber RAA: North Yorks, York, East Riding, Hull, North Lincs and North East Lincs, jointly hosted by York and North Yorks
 - VA Alliance, working as a coordinated groups of VAAs and ASAs

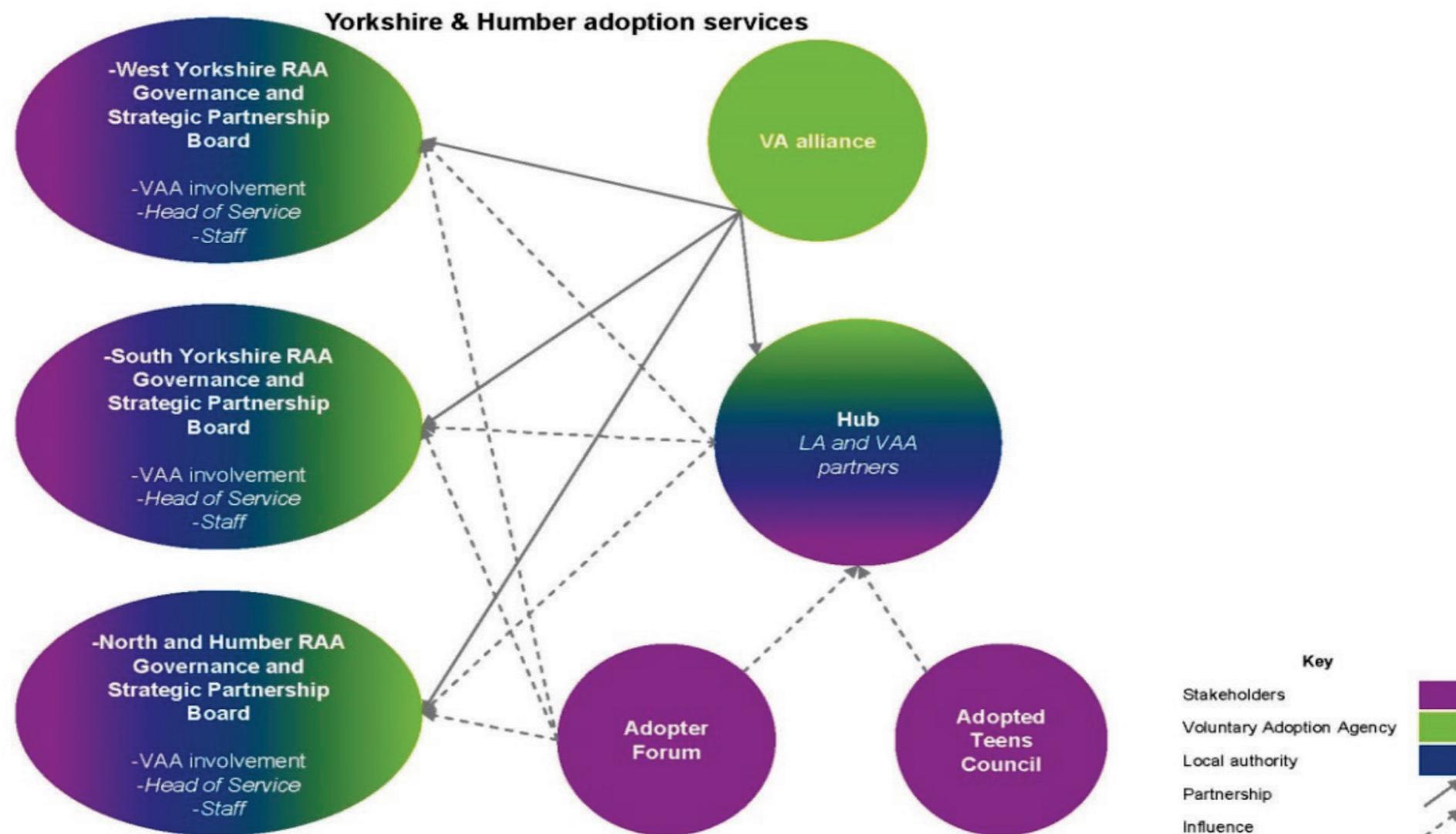
Regionalisation

- The functions provided by RAAs and the Hub have and are being considered alongside models of equal partnership between LAs and VAs using the measure: Does it improve Outcomes for Children and does it provide Value for Money.
- Regional Adopter and Adopted Teen Forums meet regularly and are represented on Boards and some task groups.
- A Centre of Excellence is being developed, with additional submission for Innovation Program Funds, to provide a coordinating focal point for information, learning and practice development, multi-agency assessment and therapeutic work, and a range of service areas.
- A submission has been made to pilot a Social Impact Bond project to broaden the support market and funding sources.

Regionalising Adoption

Yorkshire & Humber

Regional organogram



Bumps in the road

- Overarching were concerns and tensions about change, loss of local control, identity and maintaining quality, all experienced and expressed in different ways at all levels from staff group to political leaders. Mainly addressed through underlining the potential benefits and highlighting the voices of Adopters and Adopted Teens.
- In that context, reaching a consensus on which functions sit best in the LAs, RAAs and the Hub has and continues to be a delicate balancing act. The base line measure, **“Does it improve Outcomes for Children and does it provide Value for Money”** has been helpful in anchoring these discussions.
- Describing the specific value the VA sector brings and translating a wish for equal partnership into legal and technical structures has and continues to be a challenge. The VA sector forming a VA Alliance with a coordinated “offer” and voice has been very helpful in this, as has reference to the Improved Outcomes and Best Value measure.
- The RAA boards have developed at different speeds and in different ways, all adjusting to the new relationships between LAs and with VA sector. The role of the DCS sponsors in assuming active leadership roles of each RAA was key to unblocking what had at times become circular and unproductive discussions and providing a clear direction for individual LAs as well as speaking as a regional voice.
- Different staff terms and conditions, particularly pensions, are presenting significant TUPE challenges, which are being addressed by individual RAA boards but with regional coordination to avoid duplication and increase shared learning and approaches.

Strengths and Advantages

- The longstanding consortium and history of collaboration meant that the regionalisation program was building on pre-existing experience, with an inclusive planning and decision making structure and a culture of joint working between LAs, and increasingly with the VA sector.
- Having staff specifically designed to develop and realise collaborative potential, enabled the region to respond quickly to the Regionalisation program, using the above framework to galvanise energies.
- The growth of a challenging but constructive Adopter Voice and a strong regional Teens Voice have increased professionals understanding, and allowed a real sense of partnership and co-ownership to develop.
- Appointing an independent Regional Board chair helped to build confidence in the growing LA/VA relationship and provided challenge to all parties.
- Early and ongoing briefings to the regional Lead Members forum has helped to support the individual LA discussions and reinforce the collective benefits.
- The pre-existing strength of the DCSs as a regional group enabled them to respond quickly to the need for RAA sponsors and a clear direction and leadership in Jan/Feb and reinforced the focus on outcomes for children and best value.

Key issues going forward

- Funding – managing long term plans and short term funding support
- Translating a wish for equal LA/VA partnership into structural/legal form
- Navigating the commissioning/procurement landscape
- Financial and Staff structure modelling and detailed planning
- Combining or coordinating output from different ICS systems
- Coordination of funding streams and public, third and private sector providers: RAAs and Hub, a Centre of Excellence and Social Impact Bond potential
- Recognising much of these developments an incremental approach to ensure a dynamic and listening change process.
- Ensuring continuity of service and quality and securing a seamless experience for children and adopters in which key understanding of them and their needs moves with them through all stages.
- Supporting birth parents and breaking the cycle.

EAST MIDLANDS RAA

ADCS Regional Adoption Agency Workshop

7th July 2016

Jane Parfremment

Strategic Director of Children's Service, Derbyshire County Council

Bryan Glover

EMRAA Project Lead



Overview

- Background to East Midlands RAA
- Progress so far
- Lessons learned
- Key enablers
- Challenges
- Current questions

Background

- RAA covers 8 LA's Adoption Agencies and 3 VAA's
- At the time the expression of interest was submitted we were placing 350 children annually across the region
- Performance - the majority of the RAA partners are solidly or strongly performing LA's and VAA's
- The existing consortium had a strong VAA presence who contributed to the shape of the bid from the outset
- Consortium functioned as peer network - had a history of working innovatively together e.g. piloting regional activity days
- 2014 appointed a Business Development Manager to develop the work of the consortium at a strategic level across the region

Services in Scope

- Marketing and recruitment
- Adopter – assessment, preparation and support
- Matching and placement
- Adoption support
- Children's plans for adoption

Progress so far

- Successful EOI in the 'scope and define' category
- Established project team and project governance arrangements
- Agreed vision
- Initial engagement of DCS's, Lead Members and other key stakeholders through a series of briefings
- Adopter Voice
- Emphasis on how RAA would improve outcomes for children not structures
- Mapping current processes and performance
- Case for change

The Case for Change

The Case for Change - 5 key benefits

- Remove performance and practice inconsistencies
- Effective strategic management of the service
- Improve strategic development of adoption services
- Create a powerful regional voice for adoption
- Ensure a culture of excellence in adoption practice across the region through strong LA and VAA partnership

Ongoing Work

- Staff Engagement
- Adopter and adoptee voice
- Agree delivery model
- Financial, legal and political governance impacts of the RAA

Lessons Learned

- Creating sufficient political consensus
- Wider narrative of central government view of the role of local government
- DfE's position and national drivers / judicial view of adoption has changed and is changing
- Primary focus on improved outcomes for children rather than structure
- Children's plans for adoption are critical to improving adoption quality and performance
- Understanding current political context

Key Enablers

- Pre-existing consortium - shared vision, good working relationships and trust
- Capacity to allocate project resource at the time of the EOI
- Strong existing VAA partnership - used to working together
- DCS's used to working together in a range of forums, such as peer reviews etc.
- Most RAA partner authorities already delivering strong adoption services

Challenges

- Most RAA partner authorities already delivering strong adoption services!
- Complexity of the scope and scale of the project
- Complexity of managing political environment across 8 LA's
- Durability of governance
- Lack of clarity within DfE
- Separating care proceedings and adoption proceedings without impacting on performance
- Lack of clarity relating to inspection arrangements – not addressed within current consultation

Current Questions

- Role of the VAA - DfE view of them as leaders in practice excellence
- Ofsted (local), *'many more LA's would be outstanding for adoption if they were only inspected as VAA's '*
- Ofsted (national), *'Adoption remains the most positively judged area in social care practice in local authorities. Where practice is good, social workers are tenacious about finding and supporting the right family, with high quality and timely preparation and work with the courts'* (Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2016)
- Specifics around the delivery and funding models
- Interdependencies - interface issues

Questions?

Have you considered joining the ADCS Health, Care and Additional Needs Policy Committee?

Visit www.adcs.org.uk/committees or email esther@adcs.org.uk for further details.

