



Doncaster
Children's
Services Trust

South Yorkshire Regional Adoption Agency (SYRAA)

Business Case V15

Refreshed August 2020 updated by
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Drive towards Regionalisation

In June 2015, the Department for Education (DfE) published their plans for 'Regionalising Adoption,' setting out the proposals for the establishment of Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs) across the country. The paper gave a clear direction that it is the expectation for all authorities to be part of a RAA by 2020. The South Yorkshire RAA (SYRAA) Implementation Board has been explicit that these structural changes must deliver improved outcomes for service users and their families at the same or less cost. This is the expectation of the DfE. Further new research has been produced, the "Evaluation of Regional Adoption Agencies, (July 2019)." This was DfE research from the 3-year evaluation of RAA's highlighted that despite some difficulties and frustrations "going live" now 75% of all Local Authorities in the UK are part of a RAA.

This document describes how establishing a single agency will allow the four authorities to provide a more cohesive, efficient, and effective use of resources and development of practice to the benefit of children, adopters and others who gain from adoption services. It proposes that Doncaster Children's Services Trust will host the SYRAA, the cost of implementation to be funded by the Department for Education. This document also sets out how the SYRAA will work with its partners to deliver Adoption Services.

Legislative Requirements:

The provision of an adoption service is a statutory requirement for all unitary authorities. The Adoption and Children Act 2002 provides the structure for an adoption service. Under section 3 of the Act each Council must maintain within its area an adoption service designed to meet the needs of children who may be adopted, their parents, natural parents, and former guardians. The development of RAAs does not absolve each local authority of its statutory responsibilities. However, as Barnsley, Rotherham and Sheffield (BRS) and Doncaster Children's Services Trust are public contracting Authorities they are permitted to delegate their functions or cooperate in the discharge of their functions, enabling the development of regional arrangements for the delivery of an adoption service. Further detail of the legal and governance issues is provided within this document.

Delivery Model:

The delivery model identified for the South Yorkshire Regional Adoption Agency (SYRAA), following a detailed options appraisal (2016-19) is a **Partnership model** between the four South Yorkshire Adoption Local Authorities. The SYRAA will be hosted by Doncaster Children's Services Trust (DCST). This decision is supported by the DfE who have strongly promoted RAAs hosted by Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) or by Local Authorities judged "Good" or "Outstanding" by Ofsted. DCST's Adoption service has a judgement of "Outstanding". The operating model detailed in this report is informed by best practice, national research findings and analysis of performance within the four South Yorkshire agencies.

The 2021/22 objectives of the SYRAA is to approve 92 adopters and place 154 children. The 92 SYRAA approved adopters will provide adoptive placements for 108 children. With the 46 adoptive placements that can be purchased using the combined inter-agency placement budget, this will meet the estimated need to place 154 children for adoption in year. Given that in 2019/20 across the four LA's 88 adopters were approved this is seen by all Local Authorities as an achievable target.

To ensure continuity of service, staff in the SYRAA will not move from their current locations, and will remain employees of their own authority, which is within the ethos of a Partnership Model. Other local RAA's delivery models have meant relocation of staff and subsequently staff turnover was high.

Some senior reporting lines will change, in that, a Head of Service role will be created and senior adoption staff within the four LA's will need to collectively work with the HoS. The Head of Service will manage the function through a Matrix Management approach (See Appendix E). To support the Matrix Management approach and to ensure smooth partnership working it is proposed that a Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will be established. The SLT will be responsible for ensuring that strong and effective links are developed and maintained between the SYRAA and the Local Authorities. The SLT will be chaired by the SYRAA

Head of Service and will include as a minimum, the four local authority Adoption Service Managers (or other named individuals). It will also include a representative from a VAA (if appropriate).

The SLT Operational Board will:

- Meet monthly.
- Consider sufficiency and volumetric data to ensure effective forward planning.
- Be responsible, in partnership with the local authorities, for ensuring that Early Permanence is embedded across the partnership.
- Will agree procedures and ways of working including those which impact on the local authority, consistent with the SYRAA agreed policies.
- Will ensure quality of practice is consistently delivered across the SYRAA.
- Provide feedback from all LA's on what is working and what is not.

Each Local Authority Adoption team will continue their current adoption support, prospective adopter assessments, and family finding activity.

There will be a small Hub with only three employees:

- SYRAA Head of Service FT – to be employed 2021
 - Business Support worker FT- to be employed 2021
- Posts to be hired late 2021/22**
- Performance analyst – not included in Hub Costs.

All other staff will be employed by their localities.

Budget:

All four partners in the SYRAA have determined that it should cost no more financially than the current services. The challenge is to achieve the goals of the SYRAA, to increase the number of adoptions, driving up demand on all aspects of the service (assessments & support) whilst ensuring overall spend is no more than is currently spent on the four separate services. The key to this will be to ensure the SYRAA approves enough suitable adopters to meet the needs of potential adoptees.

	Operational Budget £'000
Rotherham	1.229m
Barnsley	0.967m
Doncaster	1.163m
Sheffield	1.558m
Total	4.949m

Each of the four South Yorkshire services has an identified inter-agency placement budget that will be pooled in the SYRAA and is included in the above budgets. In total the pooled inter-agency placement budget is £1.431m. It was agreed by the Implementation Board that the purchase of interagency placements will cease, when the SYRAA goes live and no individual LA will then have a budget to purchase inter-agency placements. It was agreed from the "go live" date that all approved adopters are owned by the SYRAA will be matched with children across the region according to need and matching criteria in the spirit of partnership working. Utilising the inter-agency budget, the SYRAA can afford to buy 46 inter-agency placements meaning it has to approve 92 adopters to supply the remaining 108 placements. Furthermore, this approach should not impact on the overall budget being pooled, it is simply setting out how some of it will be spent. In addition, if the SYRAA secures improved timeliness in adoption, there will be other financial benefits such as children spending less time in care and therefore requiring less social work and Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) resources.

Hub Costs

The proposed staffing structure for the RAA includes essential additional senior management costs and business support costs:

Estimated Annual Core Budget	
Head of Services	£ 68,000
	(Top scale)
Misc.	£ 3,000
Mobile	£ 1,200
Mileage	£ 2,000
ICT	£ 2,000
Total	£ 76,200

Estimated Annual Core Budget	
Business Support	£ 19,000
	(Top scale)
Misc.	£ 3,000
ICT	£ 2,000
Total	£ 24,000

Savings/Direct Cost Efficiencies

This spend outlined from April 2021/22 above equates to £100,200, (minus the performance analyst) with staff costs on top scales, if hired on lower scales this would equate to £91,000. The in year costs for the Head of Service if in post by January 2021 will need to be agreed by the Implementation Board but would equate to 20K split between the Local Authorities.

The additional staffing can be offset by consolidating costs for example, by a reduction of adoption panels, by consolidating adoption external subscriptions such as Link maker and by reducing marketing spend by using social media. For more information and examples, please see Appendix E.

2. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

2.1 VISION OF THE NEW SYRAA

The vision for the SYRAA is to achieve excellent outcomes for children and adults affected by adoption through:

- Ensuring that children's best interests are at the heart of placement decisions which will fully meet their needs.
- Targeting recruitment and establishing a wide and diverse pool of prospective adopters.
- Secure matching so that children are placed without delay in secure, loving families.
- Providing creative and outstanding adoption support services.
- Investing in the workforce to ensure they have the right skills and capacity to deliver excellent services.
- Continually seeking to apply best practice and innovation to our ways of working.
- Actively listening to and learning from children, adults, and staff to develop and improve the services provided.

2.2 OVERVIEW OF THE OPERATING MODEL

From a local perspective, the four agencies have a long history of working together and South Yorkshire has a clear identity. Past project work included, the Sheffield led 'Empower and Protect' CSE Fostering project, which further established key working relationships. Adoption services have also worked collaboratively in sharing practice and training opportunities. This has enabled constructive working together in developing this target-operating **Partnership** model.

Work undertaken by performance leads across the South has enabled the identification of best practice at several different stages of the child's journey to adoption. South Yorkshire Adoption Agency will combine best practice from the LAs and the VAA while providing the opportunity to create clear practice improvements and enable a viable future market for recruitment.

- Recruitment and Assessment – to provide the prospective adopters.
- Permanence Planning – ensuring that children identified as requiring adoption achieve a placement.
- Matching and Placement – to match prospective adopters with children in need of adoption.
- Adoption Support – to help all affected by adoption.

2.3 STRATEGIC BENEFITS

The key aims for combining services to create a single Regional Adoption Agency is to improve timeliness and achieve better outcomes for all children and young people with adoption plans in the region. Local Authorities and Voluntary Adoption Agencies will combine adoption services into a new regional agency to benefit children and their adoptive families, with larger operating areas giving access to a wider pool of adopters and children, more effective matching, and better support services.

The Government set out the challenges they are seeking to address nationally through the creation of Regional Adoption Agencies in the paper 'Regionalising Adoption', published in June 2015. In summary, these are:

Inefficiencies

A highly fragmented system with around 180 agencies recruiting and matching adopters for only 5,000 children per year (this number has subsequently decreased). Most agencies are operating on a small scale with over half recruiting fewer than 20 adopters. This is not an effective and efficient scale to be operating at and is likely to mean that costs are higher because management overheads and fixed costs are shared over a smaller base. Having a system that is fragmented in this way reduces the scope for broader, strategic planning, as well as specialisation, innovation, and investment. Large numbers of small agencies render the system unable to make the best use of the national supply of potential adopters, more vulnerable to peaks and troughs in the flow of children, and less cost effective.

Matching

The system needs to match children with families far more quickly. Nationally, the data also shows that, between January and December 2019, 4,620 children required adoptive placements. In South Yorkshire (December 2019), 140 children had required placements in the 12 months previously while our latest data indicates that we approved only 88 adoptive families in 2019/20. ALB analysis of trend data 2019 confirms that significantly more children 170+ are entering the system. The costs of delay, both to children and to the system, are high. It is vital that children are given the best and earliest possible chance of finding a family, irrespective of authority boundaries and lack of trust of other agencies' adopters. Successful matching relies on being able to access a wide range of potential adopters from the beginning and operating at a greater scale would allow social workers to do this, thus reducing delay in the system. It could also reduce the number of children who have their adoption decisions reversed

Recruitment

Whilst there has been growth in adopter recruitment there are still too few adopters willing and able to adopt 'priority' children. Recruitment from a wider geographical base as part of a regional recruitment strategy will go some way to addressing this. Incentives also need to be better aligned so that agencies are encouraged to recruit the right kind of adopters given the characteristics of the children waiting. Recruitment from a wider geographical base than an individual local authority, that takes account of the needs of children across a number of those local authorities in a regional recruitment strategy and uses specialist techniques for recruiting adopters for hard to place children, would potentially lead to fewer children waiting.

ALB data states that during 2019/20 the South has seen an overall reduction in the number of enquiries (a 20% decrease from the previous year) to 310, with Sheffield having the biggest decrease, followed by Rotherham. However, adoption applications increased to 93, with approvals at 88 for the full year 2019/20. Anecdotal information from other local RAA's suggests because of the pandemic enquiries have doubled in RAA's and VAA's and has meant waiting lists being established.

Adoption Support

Currently adoption support services are provided by a mix of local authority provision, the NHS, and independent providers (voluntary adoption agencies, adoption support agencies and small independent providers). There is a risk that the public and independent sectors are unlikely to be able to grow sufficiently to meet increased demand for adoption support. There are regional gaps in the types of services on offer and little evidence of spare capacity. The sector is currently dominated by spot purchasing and sole providers. This is not an efficient way to deliver these services. For providers to expand and therefore operate at a more efficient scale, services need to be commissioned on bigger and longer-term contracts. RAAs should enable this to be done. It is envisaged that the Hub will act as a conduit to the wider voluntary sector, providing economies of scale and opportunities for innovation

2.4 REALISING THE BENEFITS OF THE SYRAA

Benefits expected to be realised through the project are listed below:

A detailed performance framework has been shared with the board and is available on request.

- Improved timescales for adopter assessments.
- Higher conversion rate from enquiry to approval because of prompt recruitment team response and consolidated training.
- Working in partnership but led by Local Authorities the early identification of children with potential adoption plans and more children placed on an Early Permanence (Fostering to Adopt or concurrency) basis.
- Reduction in the number of children for whom the permanence plan has changed away from adoption.
- Increase in the percentage of children adopted for care.
- More timely matching of approved adopters.
- Improved timescales for placing children with their adoptive families.
- Fewer prospective adopter approvals rescinded as approved adopters are not matched with a child.
- Fewer adoption placement disruptions pre-and post-adoption order.

Early Gains of collaborative working include:

- Improvements in the tracking of children with a plan of adoption leading to a reduction in timescales.
- Joint profiling events and early alert system, which has resulted in EPP placements and the early identification of adopters for two sibling groups.
- Rescheduling of information evenings to maximise resource across the South resulting in reduced waiting time for people wanting to adopt.
- Development of combined information re enquiries to inform marketing and recruitment work.

2.5 STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED

Consultation with stakeholders is an integral part of the South Yorkshire Regional Adoption Agency project.

There has been ongoing development work undertaken by staff from across the adoption agencies in the South. The business case reflects the effort that staff in all agencies have invested which is already delivering positive results. The level of engagement of all staff has been commendable and their comments, concerns and contributions have very much informed the business case.

Additionally, the following groups have been consulted and contributed to discussions about service delivery/development throughout the duration of the project:

- Teen groups in Barnsley and Doncaster (2016)
- Adopter Voice (Yorkshire and Humber) undertook a robust in-depth survey of the timeline and experience of adopters within the adoption process and beyond. The resulting timeline is recognised as a national exemplar for agencies developing Adoption services. (2017)
- Leeds Beckett University were commissioned (October 2016) to deliver workshops involving a cross section of staff. The formal research report identifies both opportunities and challenges from a staff perspective all of which have been taken account of in the proposed structure of the RAA.
- Adopters have participated well in the Leeds Beckett workshop (2016). The Adopter Development coordinator in the South established a good network of adopters who have contributed to the task and Finish groups.
- Key topics raised by service users and staff have been incorporated into the task and finish groups (2018-2019)

Ongoing stakeholder engagement and feedback are included in plans for the implementation phase of the project. A Stakeholder Communications plan has been developed to ensure effective engagement with various stakeholder groups including Executive Level Officers, Adoption Teams, wider Children's Social Care staff, Service Users and Partners.

Elected members and portfolio holders have been consulted in all four local authorities, as well as the Doncaster Children's Services Trust Board.

3 SYRAA OPERATING MODEL

3.1 PROCESS AND ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The target operating model for the new SYRAA considers its role in the delivery of the following main services across South Yorkshire:

- Recruitment and Assessment – to provide the prospective adopters.
- Permanence Planning – Identifying children who need adopting.
- Matching and Placement – to match prospective adopters with children in need of adoption.
- Pre-and Post-Placement Support – to help all affected by adoption.

The table below sets out the RAA and LAs will work together, summarising roles and responsibilities for each. This table is used by all RAA's across the UK and therefore is not unique to the SYRAA.

Function	Regional Adoption Agency	Local Authority
RECRUITMENT AND ASSESSMENT		
Marketing and Recruitment Strategy	X	X
Adopter Recruitment and Enquiries	X	X
Assessment of Prospective Adopters – all Stage One and Stage Two functions	X	X
Completion of Prospective Adopter Report	X	X
Agency Decision Maker for approval of adopters		X
Post approval training	X	X
Matching	X	X
Post Placement training for Prospective Adopters		X
PERMANENCE PLANNING		
Early identification of a child possibly requiring adoption	X	X
Tracking and monitoring the child possibly requiring adoption	X	X
Support and advice to childcare social worker on the adoption process	X	X
Sibling or other specialist assessments if commissioned by LA	X	X
Direct work to prepare child prior to placement		X
Preparation of the Child Permanence Report	X	X
Agency Decision Maker for “Should be placed for Adoption” decisions		X
Case management prior to the point agreed by the LA ADM		X
Case management from point agreed by the LA ADM		X
MATCHING AND PLACEMENT		
Family finding	X	X
Looked After Child reviews		X
Shortlist and visit potential families	X	X

Function	Regional Adoption Agency	Local Authority
Organising child appreciation day	X	X
Ongoing direct work to prepare child prior to placement		X
Adoption Panel administration and management	X	X
Agency adviser role		X
Agency Decision Maker for Matching prospective adopters and child		X
Placement Planning meeting administration and management of introductions	X	X
Support to family post placement and planning and delivery of adoption support	X	X
Ongoing life story work and preparation of Life story book	X	X
Independent Review Officer monitoring of quality of child's care and care plan		X
Support prospective adopters in preparation and submission of application for Adoption Order – including attending at court	X	X
Preparation of later life letter		X
ADOPTION SUPPORT		
Assessment for adoption support		X
Developing and delivering adoption support plans		X
Agree and administer financial support to adoptive families pre- and post-Adoption Order		X
Adoption support delivery including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support groups • Social events • Post adoption/special guardianship training • Independent Birth Relative services • Support with ongoing birth relative contact • Adoption counselling and training 	X	X
Financial support to adopters including adoption allowances		X
NON-AGENCY ADOPTIONS		
Stepparent/partner adoption assessments		X
Inter-country adoption assessments and post approval and post order support		X

3.2 OVERVIEW OF THE PROPOSED SYRAA ORGANISATION

What Research and Best Practice Tells us

Research identifies several factors which contribute to timely, successful family finding and matching outcomes for children with a plan of adoption.

The University of Bristol, (June 2010) and Oxford University (Feb 2015) identified within research briefs, key factors seen to enhance the adoption journey for both children and their prospective adopters.

Quality of information – all information at all parts of the process must be of high quality, factual and comprehensive. Poor quality information is identified as a direct correlation to disruption.

Local authorities with access to a **wider pool of prospective adopters** experienced less delay in their family finding and matching processes.

Family finding done at the point of **ADM decision** (rather than at the granting of the placement order) resulted in children experiencing less delay.

Delay was reduced when **case responsibility for children transferred to adoption service** at point of placement order.

Delay was also reduced when **early family finding strategies** were agreed for individual children deemed to have complex needs.

Tracking of children throughout their journey is critical and adoption workers involved in this can drive and empower the process.

Timely joint decision making regarding whether to pursue ethnic matches or sibling separation also reduced delay for children.

Post placement support (in a variety of formats) is particularly valued by adopters, contributes to positive transitions, and reduces the risk of disruptions.

Proposals contained within this report have taken account of these key factors alongside the need for quality and efficiency.

Staffing for the SYRAA would include all Adoption staff remaining in their own localities to deliver Adoption services across South Yorkshire. The employees in each of the four organisations in the SYRAA will continue to be directly employed by their respective current employer. There will be no changes to their terms and conditions of employment. Only the existing service managers in each of the 4 adoption teams will experience a change in reporting as they will be matrix managed by the new Head of Service within the SYRAA. The line management for the service managers for routine management matters (1:2:1's, authorising leave, performance management and so on) remains with their substantive line managers within their employing organisation

HUB Roles (DONCASTER)

There will be a small Hub with only three employees:

- SYRAA Head of Service FT – to be employed 2021
- Business Support worker FT- to be employed 2021

Posts to be hired late 2021/22

- Performance analyst

When the SYRAA launches the incumbent Service Managers in each of the 4 organisations will continue to manage their respective adoption services and will report in a matrix management arrangement to the new **Head of Service** employed by the SYRAA.

The **Head of Service** is expected to provide leadership and vision for the continuous development of the SYRAA, leading the strategic planning, development and management of all aspects of the SYRAA to ensure the delivery of high quality, effective and legally compliant Adoption services. They will manage the operational relationship with Local Authorities through interaction at Senior Management level.

An ability to work in a transformation role will be essential as part of this role to drive the practice improvement and cultural change required to deliver on these. This is a new role and is considered sufficiently different from any existing role across the 4 organisations that it will be filled using open,

competitive recruitment. The Head of Service will manage the function through a Matrix Management approach as set out below:

- HoS will have control of the elements which are clearly the RAA i.e. the core budget and staffing
- HoS will line manage the lead adoption person (referred to as Service Manager but that isn't the title used in all organisation) in each spoke for the delivery of the RAA function - but some 1:1s and appraisals will be done jointly with the LA line manager
- If there are any major changes to staffing (i.e. beyond vacancy management) these would come back to Implementation Board or governance board for approval
- There will be an element of the budget such as Adoption Support which are jointly controlled LA and RAA

Further details of the matrix management approach will work are set out in Appendix E.

The existing **Service Managers** across the 4 organisations will be responsible for all the social work teams and the monitoring and driving of performance. They will deputise for the Head of Service when necessary. This will involve travel in the South Yorkshire area, but could be supported by the other managers in the partner authorities

When the SYRAA is initially established, the existing staffing structures from the four organisations will remain unchanged, below service manager level, other than reporting lines at the service manager level because the service managers will report to the new SYRAA Head of Service under a matrix management arrangement. A full staffing structure based on assessment of need, aspiration and on achieved targets could be created once the SYRAA is established and embedded to ensure that it meets the organisation's needs.

3.3 PERFORMANCE

In respect of performance, each area Adoption Team will continue to provide adoption assessments, family finding and post-adoption support whilst the local authority will retain responsibility for 'Should be Placed for Adoption' and matching decisions as well as for any adoption allowances. However, by having a larger pool of adopters to select from it is envisaged that the timescales especially for the 'Hard to Place' children, including sibling groups, older children and children with a disability or from a BAME background will be reduced. Where specific legal or HR advice is required this will be provided by the local authority within which the issue has arisen i.e. where specific legal advice is required this will be provided via the case managing local authority.

It is reasonable to assume that performance within the SYRAA is likely to surpass that of each individual authority given the opportunities to have shared recruitment meetings, joint recruitment campaigns and marketing opportunities and the potential to reach a wider target audience by sharing marketing ideas. Identified best practice models from each individual organisation will also be adopted across the SYRAA to ensure that, as far as can be reasonably expected, performance within all existing measures will be expected to improve.

Other performance enhancers include:

- Reduced Panel overheads.
- Larger scale and more visible advertising at better negotiated cost, regular and larger scale family finding activity days with shared costs.
- Shared drop in/information events which could mean that there are information sessions on a weekly basis providing more choice for potential adopters to attend.
- Shared training to provide adopters with far greater consistency.
- Consistency in respect of adoption allowances across the region.

- Shared resources such as the Children's guides, preparation materials for children and adopters and transition planning.
- Pooling of all recruited adopters to accelerate the matching process and minimise delays.
- Greater understanding of children with an adoptive plan across the region without losing the local knowledge when tracking children.
- A shared tracking of children would improve timeliness of Permanence Plans.
- A greater opportunity for informal post adoption support.
- Shared learning from Best Practice.

3.4 PROPERTY AND ICT IMPLICATIONS

All LA's and the Trust have been working in partnership to ensure adoption teams are based in appropriate workspaces in all four LA areas. The initial working model is that existing adoption teams will remain sited in their current workplaces with accommodation provided at nil cost. Premises costs have assumed that South Yorkshire Regional Adoption Agency can be accommodated within existing LA premises. The SYRAA will operate across a large geography and therefore needs to be fully flexible in the way it delivers its service.

Both staff and customer needs are paramount when looking at options regarding accommodation. Whilst staff will need to be mobile, it will be equally important that there is a clear sense of team. There is also a need for the SYRAA staff to work very closely with all four local authority Children's Social Care teams. Staff will also be part of a wider team and will need to come together for some activity and will also need the ability to meet virtually as a team. Each of the partners will continue to provide accommodation for all the staff they employ.

The features of the ways of working are set out below:

- Most staff need to be fully mobile (laptop and phone)
- Staff need to have the capability of working from home
- Business support / administration staff would be office based
- Staff would need access to the buildings in all four local authorities
- The Head of Service will need the flexibility to work across the geography
- Team meetings could take place face to face or virtually depending on the activity and the needs of the staff
- Supervision would be face to face in most cases but there should be the option for a virtual session where needed

With regards to ICT costs, the ICT work streams are working with the Social Work & Performance work streams to identify the workflow, process flow, performance measures and data outputs for the HoS to be able to access. It has been agreed by the Implementation Board that an "off the shelf" database such as CHARM's would not be cost effective in the short term. Initially an adoption tracker linked to Liquid logic (across three LA's) and linking in with Mosaic in Doncaster could be one option. The ICT are working for a solution for the HoS to access the information to meet their key performance indicators for the service. The IT work stream met for the first time on 23rd July 2020 to discuss a strategy for the IT to support the SYRAA. Their key priorities before the "going live" date of January 2021 are:

- Look at ways of working and responsibilities to be defined to enable LA IT teams to develop systems.
- Information Governance. In terms of system access and data storage / retention needs to be defined. This will need to be actively managed and require some support / Data Quality work.
- Data Controller/Processor relationships need to be defined.
- Data Protection Impact Assessment may be considered.
- Commercial arrangements will need to be defined for any procurement and ongoing support costs.
- Training requirements (if any) need to be determined.

3.5 HR IMPLICATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

In the original business cases, TUPE of staff was considered with all staff being employed directly by the SYRAA. However, after discussion with all partners, the approach was revised and TUPE was judged not to apply by the legal teams of the four Local Authorities and this approach was not agreed at the Implementation Board.

The process of staff becoming part of the SYRAA is relatively simple at the outset. No one is moving office and their employer remains the same. There are no changes to terms and conditions of employment because staff remain with their existing Local Authority or Trust. However, a new Head of Service post would be created in the hub and therefore reporting lines for the service managers in each of the 4 organisations will change because they will report to the new Head of Service under a matrix management arrangement.

A Memo of Understanding (intention of change) has been created which include aspects of the HR activity that is required and sets out the responsibilities for each party to ensure that legal and operational requirements are met. This Memo of Understanding (intention of change) has been provisionally agreed between all four local authorities & prior to the SYRAA launch the Legal & HR work streams will clarify working arrangements, accountabilities, responsibilities, and risk.

There will be a period of discussion with staff and trade unions with HR reps which will take place over a defined period, at each partner's location, therefore, lessening the impact on staff operational tasks. These discussions will reassure staff that there will be no immediate direct changes; reassurance will be the key to their co-operation. With a 2021 start date, consultations will need to start late October/Early Nov 2020 to coincide with the Head of Service recruitment.

The group proposed that the best course of action, as the SYRAA matures and the four local authority teams become more integrated, the operating model could be reviewed in conjunction with staff, DCS, elected members and Heads of Service. This would ensure that the SYRAA is delivering the best possible outcomes for young people and families in South Yorkshire and that the project is respecting the different terms and conditions of employment of the respective partners.

This **partnership** approach ensures minimal impact on staff and it mitigates against issues that could arise by the four local authorities' that is, having different terms and conditions of employment, and different rates of pay. However, on examining differing rates of pay across the group, there were no large inequalities in pay. For example, most Team Managers across the group are on similar pay levels, so there is low risk of an equal pay claim in most regards. However, HR suggest, good practice would be to complete a full staffing review as the SYRAA progresses.

Whilst staff are working under the SYRAA approach, the policies, procedures and terms/conditions of employment for their employing local authority will apply, e.g. if an employee wishes to apply for discretionary leave it will be under the relevant policy of the employer. It is envisaged that where appropriate, the SYRAA Head of Service would maintain an oversight of relevant employment matters that arise and of any changes to any staffing conditions.

There is no fixed, longer-term plan to formally merge staff into a single organisation to deliver the SYRAA; however, closer integration of staff into a single structure is one of several possible future approaches and that could entail TUPE or secondments. As stated, should such changes be considered, appropriate consultation would take place at the time.

Any HR risks can be mitigated by working through issues proactively. That is, when the project "goes live" by analysing staff welfare regularly through questionnaires, supervision, and quarterly analysis of leavers, noting disciplinary issues and feedback from staff, only then can a successful integration be measured and evaluated.

Engagement and communication activity are essential to keep staff informed of progress and developments and to respond quickly to questions and concerns. The HR leads will work with the communications work stream to establish a quarterly HR work stream.

3.6 DATA AND INFORMATION

Data and Information Sharing arrangements will be required for the day-to-day operation and management of the SYRAA. Management Information will be generated automatically from core systems where possible. Information is required to be presented to the SYRAA Management team, Ofsted, Local Authorities including senior management teams and elected members, the Adoption Leadership Board, the Department for Education, and other partners.

3.7 COMMUNICATIONS, MARKETING AND PR

Marketing and recruitment campaigns to attract new adopters, particularly for the harder to place priority children, are of paramount importance to the success of SYRAA. A marketing plan and social media plan has been created and will influence joint marketing in the future, at a lower cost, using social media as the key platform.

3.8 PROPOSED GOVERNANCE AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Legal Brief

Senior lawyers from the in-house legal service of each of the four organisations have been engaged in a work stream to design and develop the legal framework for the delivery of the new service, having regard to the preferred delivery option i.e. that the regional agency be delivered through Doncaster Children's Services Trust in partnership with participating Councils.

Procurement/Cooperation Agreement

The carrying on of adoption services by the Trust on behalf of Barnsley, Rotherham, and Sheffield Councils (BRS) is a 'Procurement' caught by the application of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (the Regulations). Accordingly, the Trust would normally be required to compete for the right to be awarded the work, as part of a procurement exercise carried out by BRS under the Regulations. There is no guarantee that this would result in the preferred arrangement. The Trust currently carries out Adoption Services functions on behalf of Doncaster MBC under the Direction of the Secretary of State. It is an adoption agency and a 'public contracting authority' for the purposes of the Regulations, a view which was reached by external lawyers. Detailed consideration has been given as to whether the Trust can be directly appointed to carry out the adoption services for BRS, as opposed to having to bid as part of a procurement exercise. The conclusion of BRS legal advisors is that they can rely on an exemption set out in Regulation 12(7) of the Regulations, which codified the ECJ judgment in *Commission v Germany (Case C-480/06)* case, referred to as the 'Hamburg exemption'. External legal opinion has concluded that BRS can lawfully enter a cooperation arrangement with the Trust, on the proviso that all the requirements set out in Regulation 12(7) are met, as follows:

Regulation 12(7) states that a contract concluded exclusively between two or more contracting authorities (which includes the Trust) shall fall outside the scope of Part 2 of the Regulations (and therefore outside the requirement to advertise and procure the opportunity) where all the following conditions are fulfilled:

Condition 1: The contract establishes or implements a co-operation between the participating contracting authorities with the aim of ensuring that public services they must perform are provided with a view to achieving objectives they have in common.

Condition 2: The implementation of that co-operation is governed solely by considerations relating to the public interest.

Condition 3: The participating contracting authorities perform on the open market less than 20% of the activities concerned by the co-operation. (Regulation 12(8) provides that turnover will be calculated using the average total turnover, or an appropriate alternative activity-based measure such as costs incurred by

the relevant legal person or contracting authority with respect to services, supplies and works for the three years preceding the contract award).

Each of the Councils legal representatives agree that all three conditions are met, in so far as a partnership agreement will be entered into to ensure the improved delivery of adoption services across each authority. Where each authority has a statutory duty to provide such service, the intention is that the arrangement will improve the adoption services and save money in terms of meeting the public interest element and finally there is no intention to conduct any adoption services other than for participating authorities.

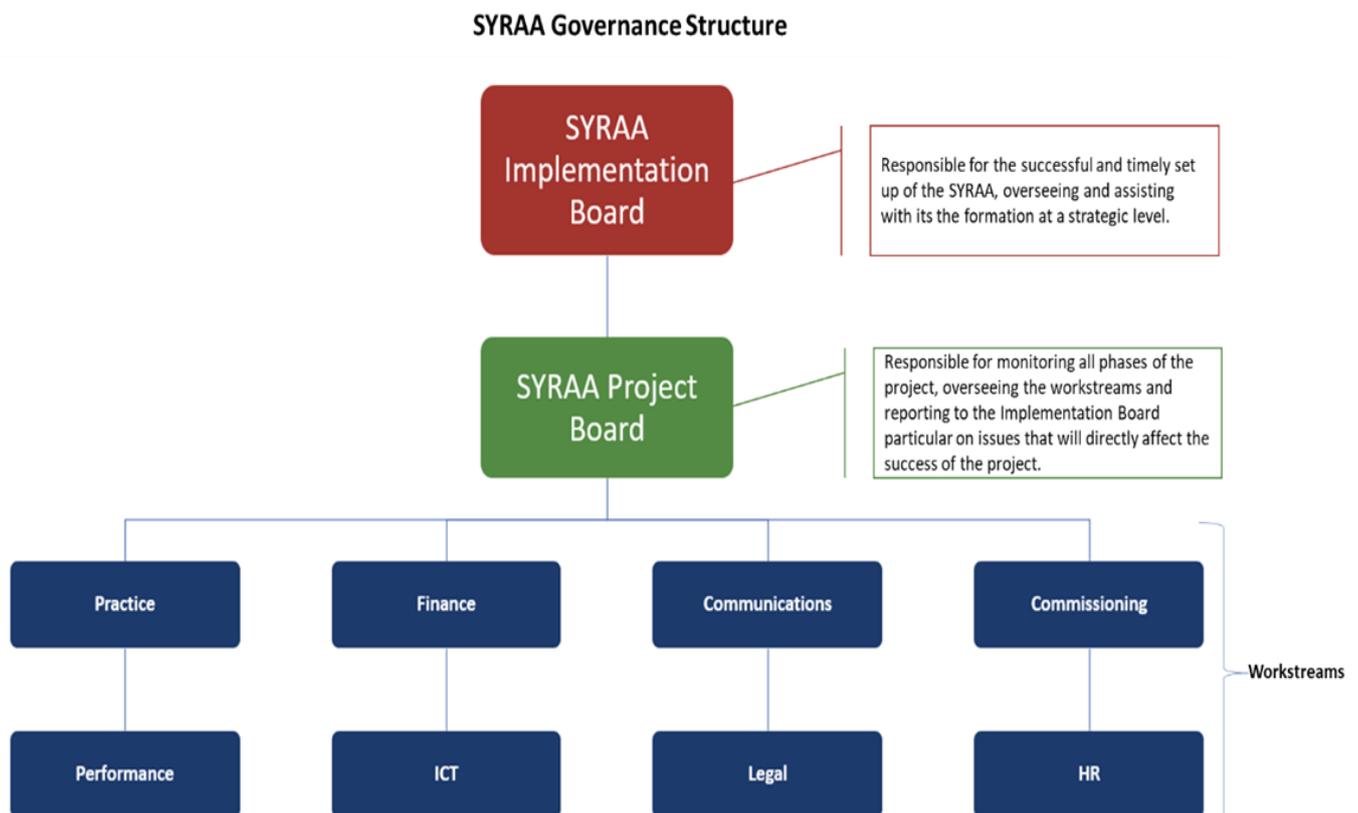
Of note, in order to ensure and demonstrate the integrity of proposed arrangement the partnership agreement will be drafted to ensure that conditions consistent with the requirements of Regulation 12(7) are properly prescribed (and duly agreed to) and that there are provisions for monitoring that they are maintained throughout the life of the agreement.

3.9 Governance

The SYRAA Implementation Board is to be established with the participating LAs, and Doncaster Children's Services Trust (DCST) working in partnership to deliver a South Yorkshire Regional Adoption Agency, hosted by DCST. A service agreement, service specification and budget for a five-year period are to be in place for the service. The SYRAA will begin trading in January 2021. The focus of the Board will be to oversee and assist the formation of the SYRAA. The South Yorkshire RAA Implementation Board will comprise of a representative from each of the involved LA's, DCST, Adopters and VAA alliance representation. Representatives will be at first and second tier senior management within their own organisations - DCS's and Assistant Director. Having sufficient seniority to make decisions, implement change and commit resources within their own agencies.

More detailed work will be undertaken in respect of governance arrangements, but the all parties have agreed the principle of accountability and decision making through co-operative agreement.

The diagram below provides an overview of the proposed SYRAA Governance Structure.



4. FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT

4.1 FINANCIAL COSTS

The initial budget for delivering the adoption service in 2020/21 available to the SYRAA is forecast to be **4.949m** based on each partner's 19/20 budget for adoption services. This figure is based on the operational staff delivering the adoption service and the running costs of providing an adoption service.

4.2 FINANCIAL RISKS

Redundancy - No allowance has been made for any costs of redundancy, as no redundancies are proposed. This is believed to be a prudent assumption at this stage given vacancies within some of the area's and the overall shortage of social workers across the four organisations e.g. it is assumed no qualified social workers will be made redundant as the demand for these workers currently exceeds the supply nationally.

Underfunding - The primary risk is that the agency is underfunded and therefore unable to deliver adequately for the children of South Yorkshire. This will also influence timescales for children waiting and influence Ofsted judgements about the service provided to Children in Care.

Host Costs - There is a further risk to the host authority around the hosting overhead costs. It is also unclear at present, as to accommodation arrangements, which may lead to additional costs. Financial risks can be part mitigated by an inclusionary note in the Partnership Agreement explaining the treatment of any over (and under) spends. This reduces the risk to the host but would not affect the overall financial pressure. (See Risk Mitigation section below for more information).

4.3 FINANCIAL ASSUMPTIONS

VAT

It should be noted that the Trust's VAT status has now been resolved (2018) and there are no outstanding tax implications or cost pressures from VAT.

Inflation

There are inflationary pressures that the SYRAA will be subject to in 2020/21 such as an assumed pay award of 2% and the introduction of the Apprenticeship levy – however, these pressures would exist for LA's / Trust whether the SYRAA is implemented. Given the current impact on the UK's financial markets and inflation rates by COVID19 (June 2020) inflation rates should be an agenda item for every finance meeting until resolved.

Services not in Scope

Adoption Allowances are not in scope of the SYRAA and all costs and benefits have been excluded from the Business Case. These allowances will remain with the LA's / Trust. It is anticipated that allowances across South Yorkshire will be reviewed and recommendations made to each Local Authority to regularise allowances at the second annual review. Further Local Authority savings are anticipated because of this review.

Underspends & Overspends

It is proposed that governance structure will be established with representation from the three local authorities and Doncaster Children's Services Trust as set out in the Governance section of this Business Case and that this decision-making function will authorise the treatment of under and over spends. It is envisaged that any underspends will be redistributed to each of the SYRAA partners at appropriate time points and as agreed by SYRAA Governance Board. Overspends will need to be reviewed, for example legacy inter-agency costs should likely be borne by the relevant local authority/Trust. The Partnership Agreement will consider and incorporate these arrangements. However, with tight forecasting each quarter

and hiring a Head of Service with sound financial acumen overspends will not occur. If further money is required to meet objectives, then a short business case will be distributed to partners for agreement but ideally these objectives would be for new initiatives or for increasing staffing due to recruitment success.

Performance Framework

A performance framework will be developed to allow that Governance Board to be able to approve a budget for future years that considers this framework and the funding of any deficits. The funding for the SYRAA in future would move away from 100% historical costs to a methodology that reflects some element of service activity, e.g. having a fixed element to the funding with a variable element dependent upon the number of adoptions delivered.

Inter-agency Fees

Each LA will make a commitment to **ceasing** with inter-agency placement fees within the RAA as soon as the RAA goes live, with the RAA essentially 'owning' all approved adopters within the region from this point onwards. The RAA would then have control over how the adoptive families are used and matched across the region to best meet children's needs and any sold to councils external to the RAA would be income for the RAA, and offset any placements purchased from outside the RAA.

Adoption Support Fund

It is assumed that this fund continues and there will be no increase to the SYRAA for costs associated with adoption support. The indications from Central Government are that this fund will continue but being mindful of the move towards regionalisation.

Staff Structure

The staffing budget for 2020/21 will be based on the current staffing structure but with additional monies for the HUB posts. It is acknowledged that this might not be fully operational initially but several new posts are required for the SYRAA to be operational before January 2021 such as Head of Service, business support, for the status quo of existing structures to be maintained.

Direct Cost Efficiencies

The coming together of the four organisations and the streamlining of practices should lead to efficiencies on areas such as Panel Expenses, Subscriptions / Licences, and other overheads.

Business Support and Panel Administration costs

Business Support and Panel Administration costs are included as budgets in the first year of operation 2021/22.

Redundancies

No allowance has been made for redundancies because no redundancies are being proposed in relation to establishing the RAA. If any redundancy situation does arise within one of the four Local Authorities / Trusts involved in the RAA, those costs will be borne by the respective employing organisation. Even though no redundancies are proposed, this statement is necessary to provide clarification for financial purposes should the situation arise given that four different organisations are involved.

Cash flow Payments to the SYRAA from Local Authorities

It is proposed that each partner will pay their budget contribution one month in advance starting from the 'Go Live' date forecast of January 2021 to ease the SYRAA's cash flow. Advance payments will minimise any cash flow issues and an unnecessary administrative burden on governance. This will need to be agreed within the Partnership Agreement.

5. COMMISSIONING ARRANGEMENTS AND OTHER RELATIONSHIPS

Service Delivery of the following areas will be covered:

- Targeted recruitment activity focusing on Early Permanence and targeted assessments for priority children.
- Partner (non-agency) adoption assessments.
- Specialist adoption training.
- Specialist practical or therapeutic support services for children and families post placement and post order.
- Adoption counselling and services to adopted adults.
- Continued provision of VAA families.

As part of the implementation phase of the project, the Commissioning lead has reviewed current commissioning arrangements and will advise on future commissioning to achieve service improvements at best value. Ad hoc partnership work will also be formalised, and the most appropriate commissioning and procurement arrangements will be determined during this period.

6. IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

A “go live” date of January 2021 is envisaged

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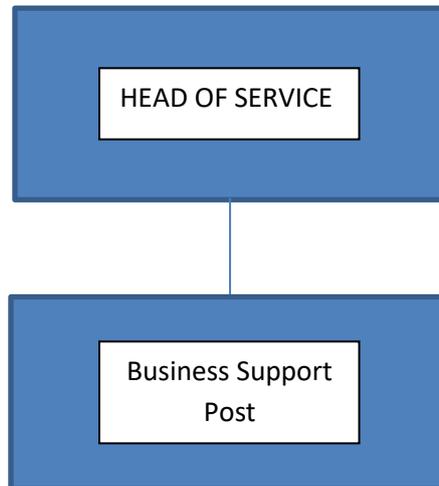
FAQ's

Appendix A

- Staff currently will not be TUPE and no one is moving office.
- The SYRAA is based on a Partnership Model
- 92 adopters is achievable and is comparable with commercial/charitable agencies
- Doncaster is an ALMO
- VAT issue was agreed in 2016
- Staff will remain on their own contracts
- New person specs will be developed for any new roles
- Only the HUB (hosted by Doncaster) has new staff
- Staff insurance will be managed by increasing premiums in the HUB
- GDPR needs explored
- Salaries inconsistencies are not a risk in the model being proposed.
- Adoption Support Fund allocation can be agreed after "going live"
- ICT support and integration are not agreed, but as with West RAA this can be agreed within project planning stage and during first year of operation.
- RAA will be Ofsted inspected, Service Manager will be Registered, with Head of Service, Responsible Individual.
- Overspends will not occur due to strict forecasting and business reviewing. If extra finance is required a full business case sign off from all parties will be required. Strict Spending Limits will be applied to Heads of Service.

Appendix B

THE HUB POSTS



Appendix C

Risk Mitigation Document

	Risk Description	Mitigation
1	<p>PACE OF CHANGE AND INNOVATION: The Local Authority Hosted model may not offer the same opportunities for pace of innovation and change if the adoption agencies are still subject to Local Authority control, because of the complexity of sign off processes in large organisations.</p>	<p>Doncaster will have appropriate functions and decisions delegated by the Local Authorities under the Inter Authority Agreement. As work is progressed to standardise best practice a focus on opportunity for innovation is paramount; similarly, when considering best delivery mechanism for services innovation is a key consideration.</p>
2	<p>EXTERNAL FUNDING: The Local Authority Hosted model may not offer the same opportunities to attract additional external funding that setting up an independent sector social enterprise would offer.</p>	<p>Risk share agreement to include a mechanism for addressing any reduction in funding streams. Through Commissioning of services from Voluntary Adoption Agencies that do access external funding the RAA can benefit from innovation and Improvement.</p>
3	<p>PERFORMANCE: Opting for a Local Authority hosted model may detract from better performers, rather than improving the poorer performers.</p>	<p>Appropriate Staff employment arrangements: Comprehensive change management will be undertaken to ensure all staff are engaged fully and committed to improving practice and outcomes for families and children.</p>
4	<p>COST: Doncaster as the Host of the SYRAA will attract additional costs e.g. corporate service functions such as IT and HR.</p> <p>COST: of a second development to the final model</p> <p>COST: Poor cash flow in the first year the low level of surplus, lack of reserves and contingency could be a potential a concern.</p>	<p>Funding Model has appropriate mechanisms so the Host does not wholly bear additional cost and appropriate mechanisms to manage financial risks agreed by all authorities.</p> <p>Provide capacity in the structure and governance to lead the work. Budget holders with governance to enable direction for resources required without further cost. Agreement at outset that any surplus achieved will be dispersed, if appropriate. Create cash flow projections, arrange draw down facilities, close monitoring.</p>
5	<p>STAFFING: All Local Authorities may see vacancies arise as staff employment arrangements are completed.</p>	<p>Leadership and commitment demonstrated in each Local Authority to the “single service” concept and</p>

		<p>strategy to staff to reduce likelihood of resignations</p> <p>Early quantification of risk through robust HR processes; scope actual staffing requirement for the Regional Adoption agency; address any gap with intensive recruitment campaign</p>
6	<p>OFSTED: Local Authorities may see the change as untimely if Ofsted inspections are due</p>	<p>Robust leadership and change management to establish a clear time table, raise staff awareness of what will change and when and the expectation of them in the interim</p> <p>The DfE Regional Adoption Agency group and Ofsted are in discussion on the new reporting regime requirements and are using early Regional Adoption Agencies as a learning opportunity; both are aware of the risk any change programme poses to staff</p>
7	<p>TARGETS: Local Authorities may see targets as too ambitious</p> <p>TARGETS: Not being able to recruit enough adopters, leading to more interagency placements and financially viability issues.</p>	<p>Leadership and commitment demonstrated in each Local Authority by the SYRAA Head of Service to the “single service” concept and strategy to inspire staff to meet new targets.</p> <p>Time and Motion study prepared by external assessor to look at internal responses to enquires and assessments.</p> <p>Consideration to outside assessors used by SYRAA to complete adoption assessments.</p> <p>The SYRAA will co-ordinate and target recruitment activity and scope for enhanced recruitment has been built into the model.</p>
8	<p>FRAGMENTATION: there is a risk of this in South Yorkshire Region, if the spokes work too independently of each other. This could confuse potential adopters, children, and stakeholders.</p>	<p>There will be a single Head of Service, single phone number, email and web page or landing page.</p>
9	<p>INNEFFECTIVE COMMS: Separation initially of services could cause delay. IT systems are also different.</p>	<p>Effective local information sharing and close working relationships between children’s and adoption social workers will mitigate against this risk.</p>

APPENDIX D

HoS Matrix Management

Area	Ideas
Strategic Direction / Oversight / Implementation	<p>HoS accountable to Governance Board (GB)</p> <p>HoS Presents ideas to GB</p> <p>HoS Delivers agreed strategy on behalf of the GB</p>
Line Management of HoS 1:1 and Professional Development	<p>Provided by the Head of Service for the employing organisation</p>
Line Management of Adoption Managers	<p>Direct line management is provided by employing organisation – includes all employment issues</p> <p>SYRAA line management (function) is provided by SYRAA HoS</p> <p>SYRAA HoS involved in recruitment to vacant posts</p> <p>SYRAA HoS alongside LA line manager to undertake joint appraisals and joint 1:1 meeting</p>
Line Management of Hub Staff	<p>Provided by SYRAA HoS</p>
Line Management of all other staff teams	<p>Provided by Adoption Managers in the LA</p> <p>SYRAA HoS is responsible for the overall Organisational Development / Team ethos of the organisation</p>

HoS Matrix Management (cont)

Area	Ideas
Workload / Pressures	SYRAA HoS responsible for managing the workload and pressures across the whole.
Resources	<p>Any changes to resources – budget / staffing – will be the responsibility of the SYRAA HoS but managed through SLT. For example, vacancies will be discussed, and approach agreed by SLT.</p> <p>Significant changes to resources will be agreed by GB.</p>
Quality Assurance and Practice	<p>SYRAA HoS will be responsible for Quality Assurance and practice oversight across the whole SYRAA. They will ensure consistency of practice and common standards.</p> <p>Adoption Managers are part of SYRAA SLT with shared responsibility for implementing agreed RAA practice in their teams.</p>
Budget	The budget will be the responsibility of the SYRAA HoS. SYRAA HoS will be responsible to the Governance Board for any variations.
Performance	<p>SYRAA HoS is responsible for ensuring that performance targets set by the GB are met.</p> <p>Collective responsibility through SYRAA SLT</p>
ADM decisions	<p>All ADM decisions will be made by the ADM in the local authority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be placed for Adoption • Adopter approvals • Match approvals
Disputes	<p>SYRAA HoS will have full leadership responsibility for the function of the SYRAA. However, the implementation of the service is the joint responsibility of the SYRAA SLT.</p> <p>Any unresolved issues will be dealt with by Governance Board.</p>

APPENDIX E

SOUTH YORKSHIRE REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY (SYRAA)

Consolidated Savings Examples

Background

This updated table below outlines the combined Local Authority potential savings. The narrative throughout this document will explain the workings behind these savings.

Costs	Combined Savings
Panel	57K Based on Panel reduction by 23 & paperless
Subscriptions	32K Subs to external Link maker and BAAF
Marketing	25K saving by use of social media
Misc.	22K average spend reduction
Total	144k

Proposed panel consolidation saving

In the new SYRAA model, a regional list of panel dates will be available for each agency's reference. It is the intention that the adoption panels will be centrally co-ordinated by the panel Business Support Unit in due course from Doncaster, but panels remain local and that business support staff will undertake the minute taking across the offices. The electronic papers can be shared prior to panel 10 days in advance.

There are currently four independent panel chairs working across the region, one in each agency each charging £500 per day. The role of Agency Advisor varies and in some Local Authorities is an additional responsibility of a Team Manager rather than a specific post but ideally, should be independent of the Local Authority for Ofsted purposes.

Scheduling of panels varies across partners from one panel a month to two in some areas. It is anticipated that the number of panels will reduce from 71 last year to 48 – i.e. one per week (one per month in each area). Although in 2018, there were 98, panels held. In time, the SYRAA will manage and administer all panels. The efficiencies of this action are considerable.

From 2019 panel information and Local Authorities ledgers, adoption panel costs are currently based on 71 panels being held across the four authorities (this excludes extraordinary panels). The consolidated cost of this averages out at 120K (2.5K per panel), linked to panel chair costs, which average £500 per panel and other members costing £80 per day. If these panels are extended in their scope, tasks are booked promptly and are paperless, costs can reduce significantly. For example, panel

business could increase to a maximum of six cases per panel allowing for 288 cases in total to be heard over the year. This will mean a reduction of 23 panels and a potential increase of 71 cases. In addition, if panels are held centrally in the future by the SYRAA parity can be achieved with panel member's costs, by establishing a one-off cost for preparation work, panel attendance, parking, and travel. Currently the panel chair costs are not comparable with charitable adoption agencies or commercial business with each local authority paying £50 to £100 more on panel chairs.

From information, the writer received from all adoption workers, currently panel briefings take 2 hours, which can be reduced to one hour if members are instructed to have examined the papers thoroughly beforehand. Furthermore, the questions to the applicants are taking 2 hours per approval; this can be reduced to 45 to 1 hour, based on current panel practice. The panel still must have a quality assurance function but should ratify assessments do not reassess applicants (Assessment and approval of foster carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services July 2013).

Rotherham and Barnsley are quite like Doncaster in what they pay for panel members and chairs.

The obvious differences between Doncaster and Sheffield are-

- 1) They give separate amounts for reading and sitting on panel, whereas Doncaster provide a set fee.
- 2) Sheffield have two panels per month, where Doncaster have one.
- 3) Sheffield have an Independent Vice Chair who they pay, whereas Doncaster have an internal Vice Chair.
- 4) Doncaster have free parking at the venue for panel, reducing costs further.

Anticipated Efficiencies on Panels

The current spends on panels including printing from expenditure sheets is around £120K. Therefore, a reduction in panels would equate to a 67K saving per annum to 57.5K per annum. Further work is required in relation to clarifying the business support element of the service – initial discussions with Human Resources have indicated there are 15 business support staff across the Local Authorities. A reduction in two-business support equates to a saving of £50K with on costs. Rationalisation and the centralisation of panels will contribute to the standardisation and improved effectiveness. A quality assurance framework will capture best practice examples, learning points and areas for improvement.

It is anticipated that agency advisors and panel administrators will be located centrally but that panels will remain based locally. The provision of one panel each week will allow for cases to be allocated in a timely manner. The business of these panels will relate to the approval of adopters and recommendations about matching. Agency Decision Maker for the RAA will make decisions in relation to the approval of adopters. Any child related decisions would remain the responsibility of the Agency Decision Makers in the local authority/trust.

Consolidated Subscriptions

The writer contacted and met all parties involved in providing subscriptions for a variety of services to each of the local authorities. These included CorumBAAF, PAC, and Link Maker.

British Adoption and Fostering (CorumBAAF) individual Local Authority expenditure will reduce from 5K each to a consolidated group cost of 10K saving 10K. According to the Heads and Leads Group in One Adoption, consideration could be given to whether this expenditure is cost effective. Indeed, in most independent fostering agencies they have cancelled their agreements with CorumBAAF, saving 20K.

With Link maker individual Local Authority expenditure would reduce from 7K to a consolidated group cost 25K, only saving 1K per partner. A better deal will need to be negotiated before April 2020. Unfortunately, as Link maker is a sole provider of this type of matching service for adoption, Local Authorities do not have other cost saving options. The writer is still in discussion with Linda Hill from Link maker who is reluctant to reduce their costs further.

Mike Hancock, Head of Adult Services at PAC stated in an email in October 2019 that PAC-UK has a region wide contract for 3 years with a 2-year potential add on across Yorkshire and Humber. This began in Feb 19. Prior to this, PAC had individual contracts with all the south LAs.

The individual contract amounts have been brought forward into the new contracts:

Barnsley £15,214

Doncaster £26,600

Rotherham £33,460

Sheffield £20,000

Total: £95,274

The contract has two main parts:

Central services: Each LA makes a £6208 contribution from the figures above. This is for Adopteens service, Advice line, Adoption Development Coordinators (PAC-UK subcontracts this to Adoption UK), Management.

Within the framework agreement, PAC provides adult services up to the rest of the contract amount. Statutory support for birth parents, statutory access to records for adopted adults, intermediary services for adopted adults and some birth relatives. The writer has withdrawn this cost from consolidated costs in V14 of the business case, due to the framework agreement. However, in two years, this contract should be negotiated with PAC outlining how this expenditure has influenced quality and met key performance indicators. When the writer discussed KPI's with PAC, they seemed unable to outline how the money is spent monthly, who benefits and how. It would be useful to hold quarterly meetings with PAC and the SYRAA Head of Service to outline spending linked to KPI's. Finally, a break clause would be useful in this contract at year one.

Anticipated Efficiencies on Subscriptions.

The current spend on subscriptions is 161k and is budgeted for 2020/21 to be 180K. Given the PAC subscription, the biggest outlay cannot be negotiated for another two years there are still some savings to be made elsewhere. Only 32K savings can be made on subscriptions compared to 2018/19 budgets and V14 of the business case.

Consolidated Marketing

Currently the consolidated spend on marketing is 60K across all four Local Authorities. According to market trends in fostering and adoption and the National Association of Fostering Providers (NAFP) it costs roughly around 10-12K to recruit adopters/foster carers (if outside assessors are used), 7.5 if not. With targeted digital marketing, this 7.5K cost could be reduced even further, often halved, with speedier responses which, the SYRAA can provide.

Enquiries from adopters across the Yorkshire and Humber region have seen an increase during 2018/19 with 1350 received. There had been a significant reduction since 2013/14 (2233) to 2017/18 (1050). During 2018/19 the South has seen an overall reduction in the number of enquiries (a 20% decrease from the previous year), the North and Humber have seen a significant upturn (49%), the West has also seen an upturn (54%), it should be noted that the West previously saw a significant decrease in enquiry numbers. The table below shows the number of enquiries for each authority and the South totals:

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Barnsley	78	46	31
Doncaster	66	95	93
Rotherham	141	146	127
Sheffield	181	148	95
South Totals	466	435	310

Rotherham and Sheffield have budgeted more for marketing than Barnsley and Doncaster and this reflects the needs within their areas. ALB data states on page 7 of the Business Case that during 2018/19 the South has seen an overall reduction in the number of enquiries (a 20% decrease from the previous year) to 310, with Sheffield having the biggest decrease, followed by Rotherham. However, adoption applications increased to 93, with approvals at 89. One hundred and thirty adopter approvals are required according to the business case, an increase of 41 on last year; therefore, the budget needs to reflect this.

Within South Yorkshire, there has been an increase in the number of approvals from the previous year (89 from 74). All four agencies in South Yorkshire saw an increase in the number of approvals. This increase is the first across South Yorkshire since 2016-17.

The table below shows the number of approvals per quarter for each of the authorities within the region

	Q1 17-18	Q2 17-18	Q3 17-18	Q4 17-18	Q1 18-19	Q2 18-19	Q3 18-19	Q4 18-19
Barnsley	4	6	4	5	4	5	6	1
Doncaster	3	7	5	4	2	10	3	6
Rotherham	1	3	5	5	5	7	5	5
Sheffield	3	7	5	7	2	5	13	10
South sub-region	11	23	19	21	13	27	27	22

Anticipated Efficiencies on Marketing

As well as reducing the cost of using recruitment agencies and local media advertising by over 50% (Fostering Network 2018) Social Media significantly reduces the number of person-hours needed to identify suitable applicants. According to the Fostering Network, social media delivered an average timesaving of four hours per applicant for the line managers (£30 per hour) involved and over seven hours per applicant for in-house recruitment teams (£28 per hour). This could equate to a saving of around 25K in wages for the SYRAA based on the number of new assessments required per year and the marketing strategy (see attached). This would only succeed, if there were a consistent, full time, and experienced in house recruitment or marketing team focussing on using Facebook (34%) and Twitter (22%) as the crux of their Social Media presence. Additional savings could be made through time prioritisation. For example, reducing inappropriate initial home visits based on geographical need linked to individual adoption cases over 3 years old.

Anticipated efficiencies on Medicals & DBS DBS/Medicals

For the new SYRAA to succeed 130 adopters need recruited which equates to 260 couples, give, or take 10 for single applications. The spend for this includes DBS (excluding friends & family) and medicals. This could be up to 40K in expenditure given the average cost of external GP reports are £150. Individual family doctors' prices cannot be challenged, but the use of independent doctors who verify adopter's GP medical reports could be consolidated, using one private provider on a contracted fixed price using an outsourced provider.



Document Revised by AGF Kennedy 2020 V15 refresh AUG 2020

