

**Report of One Adoption South Yorkshire (OASY)  
to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC)  
on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

**One Adoption South Yorkshire (OASY)**

**1.0 Introduction**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the progress of One Adoption South Yorkshire (OASY), the new regional adoption agency in South Yorkshire, since the 'go-live date' of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021.

**2.0 Background**

Core Purpose

2.1 The purpose of One Adoption South Yorkshire (OASY) is to find loving, stable, permanent homes for children in local authority care in the region. It provides training and support for those wanting to adopt a child right the way through the process. It has expert social work staff on hand to provide guidance and advice for those wanting to know more about adoption and carries out assessment and training for those wishing to adopt, as well as finding families for children needing adoption and providing adoption support. It also works with adopters, adopted children, birth families, and the voluntary and private sectors to deliver a range of adoption support services.

2.2 The organisation has developed a strategic plan to cover the years 2021 – 24 (Item 5b attached).

2.3 The plan on a page outlines the priorities for the partnership, the outcomes it wants to achieve, and outlines how it plans to achieve them. It is hoped that this will lead to:-

- A broad range of adoptive families to meet the needs of children
- Children spending less time in care before going to live with their adoptive families
- Adoptive families being supported and children remaining secure in their care

Organisation

2.4 OASY is a 'partnership' model Regional Adoption Agency (RAA). There are now 31 Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs) in England rather than the 180 original adoption agencies. There are only five or six local authorities that remain unaligned, but they have plans to join a RAA in the future. The 'partnership' model is used by many of the more recently created RAAs.

2.5 Doncaster Children's Services Trust (DCST) is the host agency. There is a very small 'Hub' team comprising of the Head of Service, a full-time Business Support Officer and a planned, but not yet available, half-time Data and Performance Analyst. As host agency, DCST is responsible for employing the 'Hub' staff and supporting the management of those aspects of the budget which are held centrally.

2.6 As a partnership model all the teams remain employed by their previous employing authority. Practitioners and Business Support staff remain locally based, as do the Panel Advisors and Panel Administrators.

- 2.7 The Adoption Panels were re-configured in May 2021 into East and West panels. The East panel covers Rotherham and Doncaster and the West panel covers Barnsley and Sheffield. There are a minimum of two panels per month in each area and each Panel has a Chair and two Vice-chairs to ensure there is sufficient capacity to cover all the expected approvals and matches each year. The intention is to engage both Chairs centrally through DCST and have a 'central list' of panel members to meet at least once per month in each of the four localities.
- 2.8 Each local authority has made a 'contribution in kind' for support services such as Human Resources, Finance, Communications, Business Intelligence and Commissioning.
- 2.9 The main marketing and communication strategy is managed through a commissioned service from Leeds City Council which covers the management of the One Adoption website on behalf of all three of the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Adoption Agencies.
- 2.10 At national level the Regional Adoption Agencies are well supported with regular leadership meetings and developmental opportunities for practitioners and adopters.

### Finance

- 2.11 One Adoption South Yorkshire was created by bringing together the Adoption budgets from the four partner agencies. These budgets have now been configured into three sections:-
- **The Staffing budgets** – all staff continue to be employed by their previous employing authority. There have been no secondment arrangements or TUPE arrangements. The staffing complement remains exactly as it was and the budgets remain with the local authorities with recruitment and other employment activities managed through the respective Human Resources teams. The staffing budgets are managed locally and no overspends are possible. However any underspends can be re-cycled into the RAA staffing arrangements with the agreement of the employing Local Authority.
  - **The Locality Budgets** – each of the four localities has retained an element of their original adoption budget which covers staff mileage, local Adoption Panel expenses, support funds for adopters and adopter expenses.
  - **The Central Budget** – included within the central budget are the employment costs of the very small group of hub staff, the Head of Service, a full-time business support officer and a part-time data and performance analyst. There is no additional funding for these posts, the cost has to be found through underspends on the existing budget. The Central budget includes the inter-agency budgets for all 4 areas, the budget which covered the commissioned services for all 4 areas and a small central marketing budget for local events and activities.

### Adoption Support Fund

- 2.12 The Adoption Support Fund is a substantial funding commitment by central government to adoptive families and the management of this fund is a substantial undertaking. In 2020/21 the area now covered by One Adoption South Yorkshire claimed around £1.5 million for therapy for individual families.
- 2.13 The Adoption Support Fund was transferred from the four local agencies to the Central RAA portal on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021. This has been a substantial piece of work involving setting up new contracting and payment processes.

2.14 Currently the funding is agreed from year to year which makes forward planning extremely difficult but there are already clear opportunities arising from bringing the arrangements together under the RAA, as it is much easier to oversee the kinds of therapies being sought and the range of providers and in the future it should be much better planned and better coordinated enabling us to make the best use of the funds available. In March 2022 the DofE guaranteed ASF funding for a further 3 years.

### **3.0 Current Position - Performance**

3.1 Performance data is collected both for the individual authorities and for the RAA as a whole and is split between adopter data and children's data. At the present time the organisation is able to produce reliable data based on the requirements of the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board, but there are some areas of data collection, particularly around post adoption support and the stability of adoptive families, that the organisation will need to develop further in the future.

#### Adopter Data

- 3.2 National Adoption Regulations have specific expectations regarding the length of each element (stage 1 and stage 2) of the journey to approval for adopters
- 3.3 Stage 1 starts when a completed Registration of Interest form is received and the potential adopter has consented to starting the formal adoption process, which includes obtaining references and background checks. This stage should take no longer than 2 months.
- 3.4 Stage 2 is an in-depth assessment where a social worker works with the potential adopter and their family to assess their strengths and discuss the sort of children they feel they could adopt, before presenting it in a report to the Adoption Panel. This is the point where individuals are formally approved to adopt and this process should be completed within 4 months.

#### **No. at Stage 1 (Start date and no end date)**

	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22
Barnsley	9	6	6	5	4	5	7	8	8	7		
Doncaster	6	7	7	5	5	5	7	8	10	12		
Rotherham	5	3	8	9	7	7	2	2	4	5		
Sheffield	7	8	7	5	9	9	7	7	6	3		
<b>One Adoption SY</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

#### **No. at Stage 2 (start date and no end date)**

	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22
Barnsley	10	12	9	5	6	6	4	1	2	4		
Doncaster	7	9	8	11	8	7	9	6	7	6		
Rotherham	11	12	9	8	5	3	5	7	7	8		
Sheffield	8	11	9	9	10	6	8	12	10	9		
<b>One Adoption SY</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>		

**Ave days between Application (Stage 1 Start)/(Stage 2 Start) and Approval**  
**Good performance <183 days, shaded orange**  
**if greater than 183**

	Qtr 1 21_22	Qtr 2 21_22	Qtr 3 21_22	Qtr 4 21_22	Full Year
Barnsley	221.7	231.2	240.8	-	230.0
Doncaster	218.7	215.2	189.2	300.0	218.3
Rotherham	158.7	162.3	184.0	-	163.6
Sheffield	235.7	214.8	285.6	118.0	233.9
<b>One Adoption SY</b>	<b>207.2</b>	<b>203.4</b>	<b>231.6</b>	<b>239.3</b>	<b>212.8</b>

- 3.5 The annual average across the RAA is longer than the expected target of 186 days from Registration of Interest to Approval and the table shows that, in some months, specific adopters in specific teams have taken longer than the average. This kind of individual variation is very hard to avoid due to the specific circumstances of individual adopters, but the table shows an acceptable level of performance across all teams especially during the covid pandemic, although there remains scope for improvement.

Number of Adopters Approved

- 3.6 The four offices have been very similar in performance over the last year. This has been consistent with their performance as individual agencies in previous years. The business case for the RAA indicated that there would need to be 92 adopter approvals per year to meet the needs of the children needing families across South Yorkshire. In 2021-22 we are likely to be just under that target but as there were fewer children to be placed in 21-22 there are still more adopters than children needing families in South Yorkshire. This picture is reflected nationally as there has been a national decline in children needing adoptive placements over the last three years.

**No. of Adopters Approved**

	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Total
Barnsley	2	1	3	3	2	1	2	0	2	0	0	0	16
Doncaster	0	0	3	0	4	2	1	3	1	2	0	0	16
Rotherham	2	1	3	2	2	4	0	0	2	0	0	0	16
Sheffield	3	0	3	3	1	4	1	1	3	1	0	0	20
<b>One Adoption SY</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>68</b>

- 3.7 There are early indications that one of the challenges for OASY, as for many RAAs, is to recruit adopters who will be a good match for the children needing families. A very basic illustration of this is if we compare this table of the ethnic characteristics of adopters within the RAA with the ethnic characteristics of children needing families.

	ABAN	AIND	AOTH	BAFR	CHNE	MOTH	MWAS	NOBT	WBRI	WIRI	WOTH	Total
Barnsley	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	89	1	1	92
Doncaster	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	68	0	2	70
Rotherham	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	76	0	3	82
Sheffield	3	2	0	2	1	1	0	3	112	0	2	126
<b>One Adoption SY</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>370</b>
% Barnsley	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	97%	1%	1%	
% Doncaster	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	97%	0%	3%	
% Rotherham	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	93%	0%	4%	
% Sheffield	2%	2%	0%	2%	1%	1%	0%	2%	89%	0%	2%	
<b>% One Adoption SY</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>2%</b>	

#### Ethnicity of Children

	ABAN	AIND	AOTH	BAFR	BOTH	CHNE	MOTH	MWAS	MWBA	MWBC	NOBT	WBRI	WIRI	WIRT	WOTH	WROM	Total
Barnsley	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	40	0	0	0	0	44
Doncaster	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	0	0	0	0	25
Rotherham	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	6	0	1	0	46	0	0	0	7	62
Sheffield	0	0	7	0	4	0	1	0	4	3	0	43	0	2	4	5	73
<b>One Adoption SY</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>204</b>
% Barnsley	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%	2%	2%	0%	0%	0%	91%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
% Doncaster	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
% Rotherham	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	10%	0%	2%	0%	74%	0%	0%	0%	11%	
% Sheffield	0%	0%	10%	0%	5%	0%	1%	0%	5%	4%	0%	59%	0%	3%	5%	7%	
<b>% One Adoption SY</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>6%</b>	

- 3.8 At the outset of the RAA in January 2021 the organisation had 20 more adopters available than we had children to place. Early analysis would suggest that this was partly due to adopters having different characteristics and different expectations about the children they felt able to care than the children needing to be placed. But this was also possibly due to the impact of covid on both the courts and social work practice meaning that care proceedings were taking longer, and fewer children were available for adoption. In the early months of the RAA many of these adopters were matched with children from within the RAA and in some cases externally so the current position is much improved but there are still more adopters than children needing placements and there is still a mis-match between the available adopters and the children. Now that Covid seems to be at an end and the teams can get out more to spread the word the aim of the RAA has to be to identify adopters with more diverse backgrounds to meet the needs of children. This is not just adopters from minority ethnic backgrounds but adopters who would consider brother and sister groups and children with more complex needs

#### Children Placed for Adoption 2021-22

- 3.9 The RAA Business Case expected that across South Yorkshire 154 children would be placed for adoption each year. Therefore, the figures below would indicate that the figure last year was lower than expected. In previous years the four areas were very similar in the number of children placed. In all 4 areas the number of children placed have fallen this year with a likely explanation being the impact of covid where the courts have been moving more slowly. However the table this year shows a greater decline in children placed in two of the local authorities which might indicate a change in practice in those areas. As we emerge from the pandemic it should be possible to investigate these apparent changes more closely.

## **Children who were placed during (includes those later Adopted or no longer placed)**

	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Total
Barnsley	1	1	1	3	3	2	0	4	0	0	0	0	15
Doncaster	1	0	1	0	1	4	1	2	1	1	0	0	12
Rotherham	3	3	3	0	4	2	0	6	0	1	0	0	22
Sheffield	5	1	6	1	2	2	2	2	0	1	0	0	22
<b>One Adoption SY</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>71</b>

### Children Placed Within the RAA

- 3.10 This is obviously a key area of interest for the new RAA. The aim would be to place as many children as possible with the organisation's own adopters. There is a financial element to this as every external placement incurs a cost. The local authorities have maintained the cost of an adoption placement at the same level for several years, but the Voluntary Adoption Agencies have been increasing their charges in recent years. However, the aim to place as many children with in-house adopters is not just about costs. The RAA know the organisation's own adopters much better than those from other agencies, so the RAA can more confidently match them with children in the RAA. The organisation is in a much better position to support adoptive families when they are within the local area rather than hundreds of miles away, and a key aim of the SYRAA is to create a local adoption community where the organisation can support RAA adoptive families, RAA adopters can support each other, and the organisation has good relationships with partners in education, health and community services which can offer additional support where needed.
- 3.11 In order to support good matching within the RAA one of the very first actions back in January 2021 was to set up a monthly matching panel where any child needing more careful consideration for matching or where they may have to search externally for a family could be considered. At the same time, the RAA began negotiations with Link-maker, the national matching agency to re-configure the four agencies into one on their system. As everyone is on different recording systems and different communication systems the single area on Link-maker has been the key to successful matching. Across the RAA everyone can see all the adopters' profiles and all the children's profiles at any time. Even at this early-stage practitioners have made real efforts to move away from familiar ways of working such as looking first at what adopters are available within their own locality and are now looking much more broadly across all four teams from the earliest opportunity. The South Yorkshire RAA is a good size, with a total population of 1.4 million to give sufficient choice and a broad enough geographical sweep for the organisation to find the right families for RAA children.
- 3.12 There has been an increase in the percentage of children being placed within the RAA since we went live in January 2021. In 2020-21 52% of children were placed with in-house adopters whereas so far in 2021-22 the figure is 66%.

### **Children who were placed from within the RAA (includes those later Adopted or no**

	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Total
Barnsley	1	0	1	3	2	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	11
Doncaster	1	0	1	0	1	2	0	1	1	1	0	0	8
Rotherham	3	3	1	0	2	1	0	6	0	0	0	0	16
Sheffield	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	0	1	0	0	12
<b>One Adoption SY</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>47</b>
% Barnsley	100%	0%	100%	100%	67%	0%	-	100%	-	-	-	-	73%
% Doncaster	100%	-	100%	-	100%	50%	0%	50%	100%	100%	-	-	67%
% Rotherham	100%	100%	33%	-	50%	50%	-	100%	-	0%	-	-	73%
% Sheffield	20%	100%	17%	100%	100%	100%	100%	50%	-	100%	-	-	55%
% One Adoption SY	60%	80%	36%	100%	70%	50%	67%	86%	100%	67%	-	-	66%

### Timeliness

- 3.13 The national target for the A2 indicator is 121 days. As is evident from the table below there have been periods where this target has been achieved by most of the partner agencies and there has been one quarter where the RAA average was below the national target. This is because there are relatively small numbers of children involved and for most very young children this target can be achieved by most agencies. So, the months where an agency has only placed babies will be the ones under target. The months where an agency has placed older children they are likely to exceed the target. The aim is always to reduce the waiting times for all children and the RAA will continue to do work on the timeliness of placements.

### **Average time from Placement Order to Matching (A2 Indicator) (for those children adopted)**

	Qtr 1 21/22	Qtr 2 21/22	Qtr 3 21/22	Qtr 4 21/22	Full Year
Barnsley	142.6	57.0	88.0	50.0	117.3
Doncaster	220.0	149.0	53.0	-	144.0
Rotherham	282.3	174.1	401.8	112.8	239.7
Sheffield	193.9	200.8	158.5	157.0	186.2
<b>One Adoption SY</b>	<b>191.7</b>	<b>151.4</b>	<b>213.2</b>	<b>125.4</b>	<b>177.9</b>

### Average Time Between Entering Care and Being Placed with Adoptive Family

- 3.14 The national target for this measure is 426 days, and as this table demonstrates the full-year average for the RAA is under this target and there are some quarters where many of the individual teams are well under it. As above this depends on the ages and characteristics of the children whether they are very young or not, whether they are part of a sibling group or not, whether they have complex needs or not. However as with the A2 measure improvements can always be made and this particular target is a measure of how well the RAA is working with the local authorities as they are the ones responsible for initiating care proceedings and making the decisions in respect of the children.
- 3.15 The table below shows all the children where an adoption order has been made in the last year but does not show the improved timeliness figure for those children adopted by foster carers. Where this happens the time period is reduced to the date the child was first placed with the

foster carers which obviously results in much shorter period between entering care and being placed with a permanent family.

## Average time from entering care to being placed with foster carer (A10 Indicator) (for those children adopted)

	Qtr 1 21 22	Qtr 2 21 22	Qtr 3 21 22	Qtr 4 21 22	Full Year
Barnsley	315.1	401.6	477.0	358.0	350.7
Doncaster	437.0	389.7	524.0	-	426.0
Rotherham	475.4	506.8	316.8	296.3	431.4
Sheffield	341.3	535.7	731.3	737.0	471.9
<b>One Adoption SY</b>	<b>359.0</b>	<b>474.8</b>	<b>512.3</b>	<b>499.0</b>	<b>421.7</b>

### 4.0 Post Adoption Support

- 4.1 Ultimately the key to any Regional Adoption Agency's success will be the quality of its post adoption support. The aim of any RAA is to provide permanent loving and supportive homes for children and supporting families into the future will be necessary to ensure their success. Potential adopters will chose the agency they wish to go with according to what they have heard about the quality of the assessment, the success in placing children but also according to what they have heard about the support for families after the adoption order has been made.
- 4.2 The One Adoption South Yorkshire vision is to contribute towards making South Yorkshire a great place to raise children in general but in particular to create a supportive community for adopters and adopted children. For this vision to become a reality requires commitment from all partners as well as the ongoing efforts of RAA practitioners.
- 4.3 Families who adopt a child or young person may need continued support and assistance. Children who are adopted can have ongoing needs and adopters may benefit from ongoing support. They are entitled to receive support from the local authority which placed the child for up to three years after the Adoption Order is made. After that the responsibility to access support passes to the local authority where the family lives. Adoption Support Workers provide support and advice when it is needed. They support the adopter and the child throughout their lives, making sure they have the help needed to tackle the most difficult issues and connecting them with the services that can provide the most help.
- 4.4 A range of events, training and support groups are available including:-
- Help and advice with social workers over the phone or in person
  - Support groups where adopters can meet each other and children can play
  - Workshops and training on a range of topics
  - Free membership for Adoption UK for one year post adoption order
  - Peer mentoring from other adopters
  - Support for adopted children in school. Every adopted school age child is eligible for pupil premium.

- Teenagers support groups
- Letterbox exchange, a confidential service to facilitate the exchange of letters between adopters and birth families
- Help and advice about future contact between the child and birth family including the role of social media
- Lifestory Work – children may want more information and support around understanding their birth family history

- 4.5 However, capacity is uneven across the four South Yorkshire teams, and this is an area where the RAA needs to develop more consistency as it starts to work together as a single service.
- 4.6 The RAA needs to work closely with the four virtual heads and local schools to ensure that children's needs are recognized in schools, staff are well prepared to respond to individual need and the pupil premium is well spent. The organisation needs to work closely with colleagues in children and young people's mental health services right across the spectrum, public, private, school-based, community based, supported by the Adoption Support Fund, provided by voluntary agencies or free from the NHS. The RAA needs to work closely with adopters and adopted children so the organisation knows what works and what they think would best meet their needs. Also, the RAA needs to get involved with its local communities so that adopted children are involved in universal activities such as local sporting and cultural activities. The organisation needs to work with colleagues in Children's Social Care and local Youth Services to ensure that where these specialist services are needed adopted children get the support they need.
- 4.7 The RAA has existing commissioned services which support the Post-Adoption offer and in the first year the organisation has been reviewing these and considering whether they meet the needs in their current form or whether the RAA might want to think about using these services differently.
- 4.8 In the early stages of the RAA the organisation has been focussing Post Adoption Support development on two key areas:-
- The initial post placement offer to new adopters – at the moment this is very different in each of the 4 areas. In the coming months the organisation will be consulting with practitioners, with adopters, with partners and with colleagues in Finance to develop an appropriate and consistent offer. From April 2022 we will be introducing a standardised initial offer for all adopters across the 4 authorities.
  - The longer-term multi-disciplinary offer which could, if required, support a family and a child into early adulthood.
- 4.9 The organisation intends to put together both offers using a combination of in-house RAA resources, commissioned services, support from local authority colleagues and support from partner agencies.

## **5.0 Future Plans & Challenges**

- 5.1 The basis of the South Yorkshire Regional Adoption Agency was to start out with everything as it was in December 2020; with minimal disruption to staff, to agencies, to adopters and most importantly to children. There were clear benefits to working together but these had not yet been translated into practice at the point of implementation.

5.2 After a year in operation matching is well-established across the RAA and everyone is using the national data-base, Link-maker, to identify suitable matches across the sub-region rather than just within their own team. Children are being placed more quickly, and the reduction in waiting times for adopters is beginning to be evident. The introduction of the central website and the electronic expression of interest has seen a significant increase in the number of adopters coming forward. Training has been offered centrally for some time and the service is now offering joint marketing and joint introduction meetings. With the basic service functioning well, the organisation can now move on to consider those areas where it needs to improve:-

- **Recruiting a more diverse range of adopters to meet the specific needs of many of the children the RAA is family-finding for** - There are multi-ethnic and multi-cultural communities in South Yorkshire and the RAA needs to be promoting the organisation, making the service more approachable if that is the issue and finding the right families for children.
- **Post Adoption Support** – the quality of the RAA's post adoption support is key to adopters having confidence to adopt with the organisation in the first place and key to keeping families together as life takes its course. At the moment each area team has its own approach to settling in grants, allowances, training, and initial support – the service needs to come together with a consistent offer right across the RAA. The shared initial offer will be in place from April 2022 but there is much to do to standardise the ongoing support offer across the 4 localities.
- **Support for birth parents and more direct approaches to post adoption contact** - At the moment most arrangements for post adoption contact is via the letter-box scheme but with the advent of social networking and the increased use of Early Permanence Placements where adopters have more contact with birth parents the service needs to be considering and refining the approach used. From April 2022 OneAdoptionSouthYorkshire will be trialling, along with 4 other Regional Adoption Agencies, a new electronic system which should support safer, more regular and more frequent communication between adoptive and birth families

5.3 Throughout 21-22 the organisation has been reviewing its performance, reviewing the budgets, receiving feedback from adopters and considering what changes it could and should be making. At the start of the second financial year we now have proposals agreed by the RAA Governance Board which includes senior officers from all 4 authorities to strengthen key areas of activity and help us move towards becoming the outstanding RAA we intend to be.

## 6.0 Background Papers and Useful Links

- Item 5b (attached) One Adoption South Yorkshire Strategic Plan 2021-24
- Department for Education Statutory Guidance on Adoption 2013:-  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/270100/adoption\\_statutory\\_guidance\\_2013.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/270100/adoption_statutory_guidance_2013.pdf)
- One Adoption South Yorkshire website:-  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/270100/adoption\\_statutory\\_guidance\\_2013.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/270100/adoption_statutory_guidance_2013.pdf)

## 7.0 Glossary

NHS National Health Service

OASY One Adoption South Yorkshire  
RAA Regional Adoption Agency  
SYRAA South Yorkshire Regional Adoption Agency  
TUPE Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) regulations