

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

DONCASTER METROPLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Due Regard Statement

How to show due regard to the equality duty in how we develop our work and in our decision making.

Due Regard Statement

A **Due Regard Statement** (DRS) is the tool for capturing the evidence to demonstrate that due regard has been shown when the council plans and delivers its functions. A Due Regard Statement must be completed for all programmes, projects and changes to service delivery.

- A DRS should be initiated at the beginning of the programme, project or change to inform project planning
- The DRS runs adjacent to the programme, project or change and is reviewed and completed at the relevant points
- Any reports produced needs to reference “Due Regard” in the main body of the report and the DRS should be attached as an appendix
- The DRS cannot be fully completed until the programme, project or change is delivered.

<p>1</p>	<p>Name of the ‘policy’ and briefly describe the activity being considered including aims and expected outcomes. This will help to determine how relevant the ‘policy’ is to equality.</p>	<p><i>Local Authorities were directed to join a Regional Adoption Agency through the Education and Adoption Act 2016 by 2020. The main impetus behind the regionalisation of adoption services is that, on a national level, children are waiting far too long to be matched and placed with their adoptive families. By pooling resources, adoption agencies are able to increase the choice of prospective adopters, identify suitable matches more quickly and reduce the time that children remain looked after by the local authority. The driving force behind the initiative was to improve outcomes for those looked after children with a permanence plan of adoption.</i></p> <p><i>It was agreed that the South Yorkshire Local Authorities, i.e. Barnsley, Rotherham, Sheffield and Doncaster should endeavour to form the South Yorkshire Regional Adoption Agency (SYRAA). A representative project group was set up to drive implementation. The Doncaster Children Services Trust (DCST) was identified as the host agency as the status of the Trust meant that it was considered to be an independent adoption agency and was rated as being “Outstanding” by Ofsted at that time.</i></p>
<p>2</p>	<p>Service area responsible for completing this statement.</p>	<p><i>Director of Learning, Opportunities, Skills and Culture and as statutory DCS on behalf of DMBC.</i></p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Summary of the information considered across the protected groups.</p>	<p><i>This change proposes to enhance the experience of children who are waiting to be adopted. The move to a regional adoption agency across South Yorkshire will provide access to a numerically far greater and demographically more diverse pool of potential adopters.</i></p> <p><i>The expected numbers involved will be around 150 children who are placed for adoption across the four agencies on average each year and approximately 100 adopter families who will be needed to provide homes for the children.</i></p>

Service users/residents across South Yorkshire including Doncaster

Adoption work force across South Yorkshire including Doncaster Workforce

Early analysis of the available data would indicate that more adopters are needed from protected groups particularly on the basis of race and diverse religious faith. The Adoption Service will also support potential adopters who may be single parents of either gender and same sex couples.

A very approximate initial analysis would suggest that around 10% of children needing adoptive families will need families where there is a 'match' with protected characteristics.

A very approximate initial analysis would suggest that around 25% of current adopters are either single carers of either gender or same sex couples.

The table below summarises the expected impact across the protected characteristic groups.

Protected characteristic	Negative Impact	Positive Impact	No Impact	Don't know	Details
Age		X			<p>One of the explicit aims of the new adoption agency will be to ensure that all suitable candidates are able to adopt regardless of any specific protected characteristics. There is no upper age limit on adoption although there must be a consideration of ability to meet a child's needs into the future.</p> <p>Equally, all children who require and adoptive placement are placed regardless of any specific protected characteristics.</p>
Disabled		X			<p>One of the explicit aims of the new adoption agency will be to ensure that all suitable candidates are able to adopt regardless of any</p>

	<p><i>Learning disability, Physical disability, Sensory Impairment, Deaf People ,invisible illness, Mental Health etc</i></p>				<p>specific protected characteristics. Disabled adults are not excluded from adoption and many have specific skills and knowledge, which make them excellent matches.</p> <p>Equally, all children who require and adoptive placement are placed regardless of any specific protected characteristics. Many children needing adoptive placements have disabilities.</p>
	<p>Race</p>		<p>X</p>		<p>One of the explicit aims of the new adoption agency will be to ensure that all suitable candidates are able to adopt regardless of any specific protected characteristics.</p> <p>Equally, all children who require and adoptive placement are placed regardless of any specific protected characteristics.</p> <p>Every effort is made to match a child's background but the guidance is clear that a child must not remain in care awaiting a suitable match</p>
	<p>Religion & Belief</p>		<p>X</p>		<p>One of the explicit aims of the new adoption agency will be to ensure that all suitable candidates are able to adopt regardless of any specific protected characteristics.</p>

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	Sexual orientation		X			<p>One of the explicit aims of the new adoption agency will be to ensure that all suitable candidates are able to adopt regardless of any specific protected characteristics.</p> <p>Equally, all children who require and adoptive placement are placed regardless of any specific protected characteristics.</p>
	Gender Reassignment		X			<p>One of the explicit aims of the new adoption agency will be to ensure that all suitable candidates are able to adopt regardless of any specific protected characteristics.</p> <p>Equally, all children who require and adoptive placement are placed regardless of any specific protected characteristics.</p>
	Marriage / civil partnership		X			

	Pregnancy / maternity		X			Pregnancy and maternity are obviously key areas to consider in adoption. Being pregnant would not be a specific barrier but the needs of both the unborn child and the child needing adopters would need to be considered and the timing of any adoption
4 Summary of the consultation/engagement activities	<p><i>The proposal has been written collaboratively between RMBC, DMBC, DCST, SCC and BMBC as led by the project manager, Alasdair Kennedy, appointed by DCST and funded by the DfE. In addition, the DfE have been fully consulted to ensure that the proposed model fits their requirement for a regional model. There have also been regular meetings held with all Adoption Teams to update them with any progress of the developments and the Trades Unions have been fully consulted and updated throughout the process. Adoptive parents have been involved in the consultation process throughout the development of the model to ensure it meets their needs.</i></p>					
5 Real Consideration: Summary of what the evidence shows and how has it been used	<p><i>Local Authorities were directed to join a Regional Adoption Agency through the Education and Adoption Act 2016 by 2020. The key impetus behind the regionalisation of adoption services was that, on a national level, children were waiting too long to be matched and placed with adoptive families. By pooling resources, Regional Adoption Agencies will increase the range of prospective adopters and it will be possible to identify suitable matches more quickly and reduce the time that children remain looked after by the local authority. The driving force for the initiative was to improve outcomes for those looked after children with a permanence plan of adoption both in terms of the timeliness of the move to adoption but also the long term security and stability of their new families.</i></p> <p><i>Across South Yorkshire, all four local authorities have been performing well in terms of timeliness of placements and suitability of placements but there is always room for improvement and the move to the Regional Adoption Agency will add values in these areas. However, the real test will be on the support for adoptive families and the stability of the</i></p>					

		<p><i>placements. As yet, this kind of data has not been collected locally although national studies have been conducted around what works and what is needed. The move to the Regional Agency will support the local collection of long-term data and will allow greater flexibility in the use of resources to support adopters and adopted children.</i></p> <p><i>By 2021, most local authorities across England are now part of Regional Adoption Agencies and current evidence from the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board does indicate the expected improvement in timeliness and availability of adoptive placements.</i></p> <p><i>It was agreed that the South Yorkshire Local Authorities, i.e. Barnsley, Rotherham, Sheffield and Doncaster should endeavour to form the South Yorkshire Regional Adoption Agency (SYRAA). A representative project group was set up to drive implementation. The Doncaster Children Services Trust (DCST) was identified, as the host agency as the Doncaster Adoption Service, due to the nature of the Trust, was the only agency that existed as an independent voluntary agency and was rated as being “Outstanding” by Ofsted at the time.</i></p> <p><i>The service will ‘go live’ on the 1st of January 2021 in line with Statutory direction. Evidence to shape the development of the Regional Adoption Agency has been drawn from the regular data collected by the four individual teams to inform their services particularly the returns to the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board which are collected on a quarterly and annual basis.</i></p>
<p>6</p>	<p>Decision Making</p>	<p><i>The three Local Authorities and the Doncaster Children’s Services Trust have all been party to the decision to create the Regional Adoption Agency. These four agencies will be members of the ongoing Regional Adoption Agency Governance Board. Decisions regarding future development will be proposed by the RAA Head of Service and ratified by the Board.</i></p>
<p>7</p>	<p>Monitoring and Review</p>	<p><i>There is a South Yorkshire Governance Board which will oversee the SYRAA and this is captured in the relevant legal documents and in particular the governance schedule. The Board will meet on a monthly basis throughout the first year and will receive quarterly and annual reports on progress.</i></p>

<p>8 Sign off and approval for publication</p>	 <p>Riana Nelson Director of Learning Opportunities, Skills and Culture (DCS) 05/03/2021</p>
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