

## **Cabinet**

**9 November 2017**

### **Adoption Central England (ACE) - Go Live**

#### **Recommendations**

That Cabinet:

- 1) Considers the outcomes of the engagement and consultation and the resulting equality impact assessment.
- 2) Agrees that the Council enter into a partnership agreement with Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, Coventry City Council and Worcestershire County Council for Warwickshire County Council as host. This will be to undertake the delivery of each authority's adoption service and some of its Special Guardianship support services as stated in the agreed ACE Service Specification through Adoption Central England (ACE) on terms and conditions satisfactory to the Joint Managing Director (Resources).
- 3) Agrees the provisional financial proposals as outlined in section 10 of this report to fund ACE and authorises the Head of Finance in consultation with the Strategic Director for People Group to agree the final financial arrangements including the value of the total cash limit.

#### **1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek agreement from Cabinet for Warwickshire County Council to become part of a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) via a shared service arrangement with Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, Coventry City Council and Worcestershire County Council. This new Regional Adoption Agency is to be known as Adoption Central England (ACE).
- 1.2 ACE will deliver the adoption agency functions of the four local authorities including the recruitment, assessment, training and approval of prospective adopters, the identification of prospective adopters for children who are in need of an adoptive family, adoption support to adoptive families and some Special Guardianship support services and services to adult adopted people.
- 1.3 It is proposed that Warwickshire County Council becomes the host authority to facilitate the operational delivery of the shared service; however governance arrangements will ensure that all four authorities retain strategic responsibility for performance delivery and outcomes.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 It is the duty of every local authority to establish and maintain within their area a service designed to meet the needs in relation to adoption i.e. an Adoption Service.
- 2.2 A policy paper from the Department of Education (DfE) in January 2013 'Further Action on Adoption: Finding More Loving Homes' identified the need for the re-organisation of the existing adoption system, which is based on each local authority delivering an adoption service, as well as a voluntary adoption sector. The DfE's 'Regionalising Adoption' paper published in June 2015 made it clear that the government's expectations were for all local authorities to become part of regional adoption agencies (RAAs). In April 2016 the DfE published a new policy document "Adoption: A Vision for Change" in which the government committed to deliver radical, whole system redesign by regionalising adoption services to ensure that all local authorities become part of a Regional Adoption Agency by 2020.
- 2.3 In response Coventry City Council, Solihull Metropolitan Council, Warwickshire County Council and Worcestershire County Council came together to work towards the creation of a Regional Adoption Agency to be known as Adoption Central England (ACE). A project team has been established to lead on the design and creation of ACE and has worked closely with the Department for Education, as a demonstrator project. The work is being overseen by a Project Board and Executive Board on which representatives from all the local authorities and key stakeholders sit, including from the voluntary adoption sector and initially Coventry University.
- 2.4 It is envisaged that ACE will deliver excellence in practice through innovation and stakeholder engagement to become an adoption service that is "Better than the Best".
- 2.5 The primary function for ACE will be to achieve permanence for children with a particular focus on enabling a wider range of children to access adoption and it will support local authorities in their permanence decision making and practice in accordance with an agreed service specification.

## **3. Choice of the Partnership/Host Model**

- 3.1 The Executive Board of ACE attended by the Directors of Children's Services for each authority considered the options around different types of delivery structures and the preferred option recommended was a partnership host model which was approved as the preferred model to take forward for engagement and consultation as part of the recommendations agreed by Cabinet on 9 February 2017 (appendix 1):

Recommendations approved were:

- 1) to enter into a contractual shared service arrangement with Coventry City Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council to formalise the creation of Adoption Central England (ACE) as a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA);

- 2) to approve a detailed co-design leading to consultation on a preferred model for ACE RAA delivery via a contractual shared service arrangement alongside Coventry City Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council;
- 3) to approve the arrangements for hosting Adoption Central England;
- 4) to approve a detailed co-design leading to suitable arrangements to secure the Voluntary Adoption Agencies' involvement in delivery of the ACE model; and
- 5) the Joint Managing Director (Resources) be authorised to take any decisions which he considers necessary to implement the recommendations.

3.2 A period of engagement on the proposed new service took place between the 11 July to the 11 August 2017 (the report outcome is appended 2)

#### **4. Financial case**

4.1 A finance group made up of finance leads representing each of the four local authorities have examined current costs and considered future proposals. They have jointly produced the detailed funding proposals which have been considered and agreed in principle by the Executive Board. There is confidence that this detailed financial work will support ACE, once established, to maximise its greater scale and reduce unit costs. This will be achieved if a greater proportion of children are adopted through ACE having a sub-regional recruitment strategy. Further, the timely placement of children for adoption will reduce foster care costs. Also, the development of a more comprehensive adoption support service will enhance stability to these arrangements.

#### **5. Delivery through a Hub and Spoke Model**

5.1 The Hub and Spoke design reflects the two aspects of adoption practice primarily, the recruitment of adoptive families, through a central Hub.

5.2 Secondly, the delivery of services to children with an adoption plan and adoptive families, through Spokes that will be located in each of the local authorities. The adoption social workers within the Spoke will work closely with the social workers within the local authorities to ensure the timely and smooth transition of children to adoption.

5.3 Staff will be supported to work flexibly. Each will have a designated base but will be able to access any of the Spokes, the Hub or work flexibly from other bases dependent on their work at any given time.

#### **6. Governance**

6.1 It is proposed that ACE will be governed by an Executive Board made up of senior representatives from each of the local authorities who will have voting rights. The Executive Board will be the key decision making body of ACE and in summary will have strategic oversight of the operation of ACE, including

reviewing and endorsing the budget. Members of the Board will make decisions on behalf of their respective authorities and shall report back to their own organisation through their respective governance arrangements.

- 6.2 The Executive Board will be supplemented by a Practice and Stakeholder Panel whose primary function will be to develop good practice and joint working between the local authorities and stakeholders, as well as making recommendations in relation to the performance of ACE and reviewing and endorsing proposals produced by the ACE Lead Manager. The Panel will include senior officers from each of the authorities along with key stakeholders.
- 6.3 The current draft of the proposed governance arrangements is appended at appendix 3.

## **7. Staff engagement**

- 7.1 Staff engagement to date has involved sharing information on the proposed model and providing opportunities for staff to give their indicative preferences. They have further been involved in service design opportunities. Along with the trade unions, they have been provided with written information through the series of engagement events held in their local areas between the 11 July and the 11 August 2017. (See appendix 2).

## **8. Staff Implications**

- 8.1 There are approximately 53 staff in scope across the local authorities and approximately 63 posts within the proposed ACE structure. The Executive Board has agreed to a secondment arrangement in order that staff members maintain their current terms and conditions within each of their local authorities. Although new terms may be agreed where needed for the operation of ACE.
- 8.2 From the indicative staffing preference exercise the majority of staff can be accommodated in their first choice.
- 8.3 There is no expectation of redundancies and indeed there will be opportunities within the structure for promotion. Following Cabinet approval formal consultation will be undertaken and arrangements progressed to confirm staff within the new structure.
- 8.4 For Warwickshire County Council the staff members affected are:

- 1 Operational Manager
- 2 Team Managers
- 13 Social workers who are employed for varying hours
- 1 Adoption Letterbox Administrator
- 1 Adoption Panel Secretary
- 2 Clerical officers

There are therefore 20 members of staff in total who are affected by this proposal. An additional two part time staff members who are providing therapeutic interventions which are funded by the government supported

adoption support fund will also be affected.

## 9. Financial Implications

9.1 From the 1 February 2018 to 31 March 2019 each local authority would contribute proportionate funding according to its current in-scope costs:

9.2 Transitional Funding (to 1/03/2019):

TABLE 1

Parties	Per Annum Funding Contribution (£)
Coventry City Council	£923,500
Solihull MBC	£445,000
Warwickshire County Council	£943,000
Worcestershire County Council	£1,065,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>£3,377,000</b>

9.3 This contribution is based on existing in-scope costs (as-is position). The final level up to this value will be negotiated under delegation by the Strategic Director for People Group and S151 officers of each authority. The £943,000 currently spent by the County Council includes £204,000 of spend funded from the Hard 2 Place grant. This grant ceases at the end of 2017/18 and therefore an alternative permanent source of funding will need to be identified as part of the 2018/19 refresh.

9.4 From 1st April 2019 onwards the funding is based on a cost sharing methodology with an in principle fixed cash limit, the 2019/20 cash limit being £3,272,500, the cost sharing methodology and data being reviewed every two years. Again, the final value of the total ACE cash limit will be negotiated by the Strategic Director for People Group and the S151 officers of each authority, up to this value.

9.5 On-going Indicative funding (from 1 April 2019):

TABLE 2

Parties	Cash Limit Funding Share (%)	2019/20 Financial Contribution (2017/18 prices) per Annum (£)
Coventry City Council	29.0%	£949,025
Solihull MBC	11.4%	£373,065
Warwickshire County Council	31.0%	£1,014,475

Worcestershire County Council	28.6%	£935,935
Total ACE Cash Limit	100%	£3,272,500

9.6 The cash limit funding shares have been calculated using methodology, which has been agreed in principle by the Executive board. The data used to calculate the funding shares will be updated, and the methodology reviewed, on a bi-annual basis in order to provide stability for both ACE and the partner authorities.

9.7 Detailed work has been undertaken to identify the current in-scope costs for the services to be provided by ACE, and to develop an equitable cost-sharing methodology for future cost sharing, which have been agreed in principle by the Executive board.

9.8 Each authority will contribute a maximum of its current spend on in-scope activities until April 2019. Therefore there will be no additional spend in 2017/18 or 2018/19.

9.9 From 2019/20 the ACE funding will move to a cost share model, based on activity levels and indicative unit costs. Based on current data, this would result in an increase in costs of approximately £71,475pa (7%) for Warwickshire County Council. This has been agreed in recognition that the unified unit cost is higher than the existing Warwickshire unit cost and a commitment from all partner local authorities to work collectively towards reducing the unit cost over 18/19. Calculating the unit cost is based on 3 years of activity data 14/15, 15/16 and 16/17. Before the 2019/20 year begins the 14/15 data will be replaced by 17/18 data and hence until this is known the increase mentioned is only indicative and in-fact could contribute to a reduction.

9.10 If ACE is successful in delivering an effective “Better than the Best” service then it will produce savings in the longer term, through a combination of a) reducing the unit cost per adoption, b) increasing the number of adoptions per year, and c) increasing the speed of adoption. The latter two would result in savings in the local authority’s fostering placement budget. Any budgetary implications for the County Council in 2019/20 will be brought forward for consideration by members as part of the 2019/2- budget refresh.

## 10. Legal implications

10.1 The Adoption and Children Act 2002 is the principle piece of legislation governing adoption and it includes the duty on local authorities to maintain an adoption service in their area.

10.2 The Children and Families Act 2014 allows for the Secretary of State by order to require all local authorities in England to make arrangement for some specified functions to be carried out on their behalf by one of more other adoption agency.

10.3 These functions include the recruitment of persons as prospective adopters, the assessment of prospective adopter’s suitability to adopt a child and the approval

of prospective adopters as suitable to adopt a child.

10.4 Further the Education and Adoption Act 2016 enables the Secretary of State to require local authorities to make arrangements for their adoption functions to be carried out by a Regional Adoption Agency.

10.5 The proposal to create a shared service arrangement enables Warwickshire County Council to retain its adoption functions whilst having the advantages that a regionalised approach to adoption work brings.

## **11. Other implications**

11.1 These proposals contribute to the Council's core aims by ensuring that children and young people are safe, achieve and make a positive contribution.

## **12. How is risk being managed?**

12.1 The risks for Warwickshire County Council associated with the proposal are that:

(i)The Regional Adoption Agency does not perform to expectations - this will be mitigated by robust business and performance management through the governance structure.

(ii)The inability for the Regional Adoption Agency to operate successfully within the agreed budget - this will be mitigated by a robust financial agreement that includes long term funding arrangements as stipulated in a Partnership and Hosting agreement.

(iii)Changes in adoption activity levels as a result the broader transformation proposal - this will be mitigated by the robust business, performance and financial monitoring proposed

(iv)National changes such as the loss of the adoption support fund for therapeutic interventions – this will be addressed through the delivery of a cogent business case if required and mitigated by the current strategy to develop therapeutic expertise within the service.

## **13. What is the Impact on the Organisation?**

13.1 The preferred model reduces impact on staff by creating a secondment arrangement for staff as opposed to the staff transferring into a separate body. ICT services will be delivered by the host who will also provide the Hub facilities. Each local authority will be responsible for providing a suitable office premises for their Spoke co-located or as near as possible to their children's teams by re-designating part of the existing estate. The Hub will be located in Warwickshire at Saltisford Office Park in Warwick.

13.2 Equalities / Equality Impact Assessment (See appendix 4, attached)

13.3 ACE is designed to promote opportunities for permanence through adoption of a wider range of children and to broaden the potential range of people considered suitable to adopt.

13.4 The main impact on staff will be working in a wider geographical area, but flexible working arrangements will mitigate the potential impact.

## **14. Implications for (or impact on) the environment**

None identified.

## **15. Implications for Partner Organisations**

15.1 The proposals require partnership working and agreement with the other local authorities proposing to share the Regional Adoption Agency and with the voluntary sector. The current Voluntary Adoption Agency (VAA) partnership is for the project period. Following agreement to move into a Regional Adoption Agency a procurement exercise will take place to secure a VAA partnership for ACE. Existing services commissioned from the VAA's will be extended until 30<sup>th</sup> March 2019. During this period the services will be reviewed and an analysis of needs completed to inform future commissioning activity. The current therapeutic framework currently managed by Coventry, has been extended until the end of March 2019.

## **16. Options and Proposal**

### **16.1 Option1**

16.1.1 Cabinet could decide not to proceed any further with a Regional Adoption Agency in partnership with the other identified local authorities.

16.1.2 This is not recommended as the Government has made clear its intention to consider using its power under the Education and Adoption Act 2016 to ensure all local authorities' adoption functions are being provided by an RAA by 2020.

16.1.3 Doing nothing would also lose the opportunity for Warwickshire County Council to join with its neighboring authorities to create a Regional Adoption Agency giving more children the opportunity to find an adoptive family and achieve permanency with more readily access to support services.

### **16.2 Option2**

16.2.1 To enter into a partnership agreement with Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, Coventry City Council and Worcestershire County Council to create a shared service to deliver the adoption functions of the authority. This model will operate as a partnership contractual arrangement with staff seconded into the host authority, Warwickshire County Council. The Executive Board will set the budget and strategy with the contractual agreement covering the nature of the financing and sharing at an operational level.

16.2.2 It is this option that provides for new ways of operating whilst minimising financial and HR risks that is recommended.

## **17. Timescales Associated with the Decision and Next Steps**



17.2 Should Cabinet agree the recommendations proposed, a formal consultation with staff will take place with gradual implementation and a fully operational Regional Adoption Agency going live on the 1 February 2018.

## 18. Appendices

1. Cabinet report 9 February 2017
2. Staff and stakeholder consultation report
3. Draft governance arrangements
4. Equality impact assessment

## Background Papers

None

## Supporting Papers

Adoption: A vision for change

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adoption-a-vision-for-change>

DfE paper, published 27 March 2016, updated 19 December 2016

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Members: N/A

Other Members: Councillors Hayfield, Morgan, Dahmash, C.Williams, C.Davies,

Roodhouse

## Cabinet

9 February 2017

### Arrangements for a Regional Adoption Agency - Adoption Central England

#### Recommendations

That Cabinet agrees:

- 1) to enter into a contractual shared service arrangement with Coventry City Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council to formalise the creation of Adoption Central England (ACE) as a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA);
- 2) to approve a detailed co-design leading to consultation on a preferred model for ACE RAA delivery via a contractual shared service arrangement alongside Coventry City Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council;
- 3) to approve the arrangements for hosting Adoption Central England;
- 4) to approve a detailed co-design leading to suitable arrangements to secure the Voluntary Adoption Agencies' involvement in delivery of the ACE model; and
- 5) that the Joint Managing Director (Resources) be authorised to take any decisions which he considers necessary to implement the recommendations.

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to obtain Cabinet approval of the outline proposals for Warwickshire County Council to become part of a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) through a contract shared service arrangement with Coventry City Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and Worcestershire County; to approve the arrangements for hosting ACE; to agree for a detailed co-design to be undertaken leading to suitable arrangements to secure the Voluntary Adoption Agencies' involvement in delivery of the ACE model and approve a period of co-design and consultation on these outline proposals.
- 1.2 The new RAA will be known as "Adoption Central England" (ACE).

## **2. Background**

- 2.1. The Government's adoption agenda as set out in 'Regionalising Adoption' (July 2015), and further developed in a Department for Education (DfE) paper 'Adoption; A Vision for Change' (March 2016) and the Education and Adoption Act 2016 compels all Adoption Agencies (of which the County Council is one) should be part of a RAA with the involvement of Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) by 2020.
- 2.2. The DfE's Adoption Policy Paper states that if Local Authorities have failed to start transitioning by 2017 consideration will be given to using the powers in the Education and Adoption Act 2016 to require them to do so.
- 2.3. It is the duty of every local authority to establish and maintain within their area a service designed to meet the needs in relation to adoption i.e. an Adoption Service.
- 2.4. A policy paper from the DfE in January 2013 – 'Further Action on Adoption: Finding More Loving Homes' identified the need for the re-organisation of the existing adoption system based as it is on each local authority delivering an adoption service as well as a voluntary adoption sector. The DfE's 'Regionalising Adoption' paper published in June 2015 spelt out the Government's expectations for all local authorities to be part of a RAA. In April 2016 the DfE published a new policy document "Adoption: A vision for Change" in which the Government committed to deliver radical, whole system redesign by regionalising adoption services by ensuring all local authorities were part of an RAA by 2020.
- 2.5. The Government requires local authorities to form regional or sub-regional adoption agencies. The rationale is that this will ensure a wider pool of prospective adopters for those children who need a permanent family through adoption.
- 2.6. RAAs will not take responsibility for the management of children's cases. They will be responsible for the recruitment and assessment of adopters, for matching them with children and for ensuring post-adoption support.
- 2.7. In response Warwickshire County Council, Coventry City Council, Solihull Metropolitan Council and Worcestershire County Council successfully bid for DfE funding to develop a RAA that has been named Adoption Central England (ACE). ACE has an established Project Team that is leading on design and creation. The work is overseen by a Programme Board and Executive Board with representatives from all the partner agencies and key stakeholders, including a number of VAAs.
- 2.8. It is envisaged that ACE will deliver excellence in practise through innovation and stakeholder engagement to become an innovative adoption service that is "Better than the Best".

2.9. The working model for the development of ACE envisages that it will deliver the following services on behalf of the partner local authorities:-

- Adoption recruitment, assessment and training
- Post adoption and SGO support including assessment for support
- Adopted adult support
- Non agency adoptions, overseas adoptions
- Fostering to adopt
- Birth parent support
- Specialist knowledge, consultation and advice
- Matching recommendations
- RAA panels
- Tracking children alongside the Local Authorities

2.10. The primary function for ACE however will be to achieve permanence for children.

2.11. There is a requirement from Government for VAAs to play a central role in any new RAA. ACE has been developing its approach in shadow stage in partnership with two VAAs namely Barnardo's and After Adoption to date. Alongside the work between the Local Authorities and VAAs partnership working is also operating with key stakeholders including Coventry University and adoptive parents.

2.12. Following submission of a transition plan to the DfE, ACE was invited to be one of 5 demonstrator projects out of the 19 pathfinders and development work continued including the need to consider and assess different types of structures and delivery models.

### **3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND RECOMMENDED PROPOSAL**

3.1. The ACE Executive Board of the Directors of Children's Services for each Local Authority partner have considered the options around different types of delivery models for ACE and have collectively identified a preferred model to recommend to Cabinet to take forward to a co-design stage and on which to consult with staff and key stakeholders.

Appendix 1 contains a full breakdown of the benefits and risks associated with each model. The headlines are summarised here:

3.2 **Model 1. Contractual Shared Service.** This model operates as a partnership contractual arrangement. On the assumption that staff are seconded into the service and TUPE does not apply by law, pension costs and risk would remain with the four Local Authorities. A management board would set the budget and strategy with the contractual agreement covering the nature of the financing and sharing at an operational level. It is usual in such arrangements for one Local

Authority to act as the host to facilitate the operational activity of the service. Hosting costs are agreed shared overheads. This is legally and financially the simplest model. It does not preclude a further change but provides the opportunity for the RAA to mature within a simple and low risk framework.

- 3.2.1 Warwickshire and Coventry have expressed interest in being the host local authority. A process for the four Local Authority partners to agree the identity of the host local authority has commenced and will be concluded on 7th February 2017 through the agreement by the four Directors of Children's Services. An outline of proposed host responsibilities and criteria are included in Appendix 2.
- 3.2.2 The Executive Board has also considered and recommends that the Local Authority partners co-design and deliver the ACE services alongside a number of VAAs as is required by the Government. The Board has considered in principle a model in which the Local Authorities look to procure VAA partners to secure VAAs' involvement in delivery of the ACE model through a suitable selection process. In principle, this may be through a 'light touch' procurement which would open up the process to competition given the VAA(s) will be providing adoption support services for a fee. The host local authority would be best placed to lead, on behalf of the ACE partners, to secure the VAA's involvement in delivery of the ACE model through a suitable selection process. If the contractual shared service model is approved, there will need to follow a detailed co-design process leading to the Local Authority partners selecting suitable arrangements to secure the Voluntary Adoption Agencies' involvement in delivery of the ACE model which comply with the Public Contract Regulations 2015.
- 3.3 **Model 2.** A local authority-controlled company. This would be a separate legal entity from the local authorities. Local authorities would be shareholders or members but the VAAs would not. Stand-alone status may bring flexibilities and enable more rapid cultural change. TUPE is likely to apply. Assets and liabilities would transfer to the company. TUPE and pension risks could undermine the financial viability of this model.
- 3.4 **Model 3.** A local authority and VAA-owned company. The issues are similar to those for Model 2, though more complex. Models 2 and 3 are not recommended by the Executive Board as the preferred model given the financial and HR risks associated with the creation of a new company.
- 3.5 **Model 4.** *Not included in the appendix but discussed at the Executive Board.* Cabinet could decide not to proceed any further with a RAA in partnership with the other identified local authorities. This is not recommended as the Government has made clear its intention to consider using its power under the Education and Adoption Act to ensure all local authorities adoption functions are being provided by an RAA by 2020.

- 3.6 Model 1** is the recommended option based on an options appraisal led and approved by the Executive Board made up of Directors of Children's Services from all partner Local Authorities and CEOs of the identified VAAs. In summary, this would be a contractual shared service arrangement with Coventry City Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council with one Local Authority partner acting as host so as to formalise the creation of ACE as a RAA.
- 3.7 Model 1 enables the new RAA to start operations with a relatively simple structure with few of the large asset and liability risks models 2 and 3 would bring. The role of the host authority would be to contribute to the improvement of adoption efficiency and effectiveness anticipated by the arrangements and evaluate over time whether further change is desirable. It does not preclude a future move to another form of organisation if member organisations judge this to be a desirable next step.
- 3.8 The Director of Children's Services for Warwickshire recommends that Warwickshire act as the host local authority. Warwickshire is geographically well placed, has a history of good performance on adoption services and shared services generally, and has a modern and effective social care record system. The Council is large enough to have sufficient management capacity and buildings' infrastructure.

#### **4. CONSULTATION**

- 4.1. Cabinet is being asked to approve a period of detailed co-design by officers followed by a period of consultation on a preferred model for ACE RAA delivery via a contractual shared service arrangement alongside Coventry City Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council. The results of the consultation shall be considered by officers before this matter comes back before Cabinet for a final decision on the regionalisation of the County Council's adoption functions.

#### **5. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTING THIS DECISION**

- 5.1. It is proposed that a detailed service co design stage and consultation exercise takes place between February and May 2017 and, on the assumption that the details of the contractual partnership arrangements can be agreed by the Local Authority partners during this period, a final report coming back to Cabinet in June/July 2017 signing off the partnership arrangements.
- 5.2. The new service is scheduled to go live in Autumn 2017.

## **6. IMPLICATIONS**

### **6.1 Financial implications**

6.1.1 Once established, it is proposed that the move from embedded adoption services within each Local Authority partner to a shared RAA will be at least on a cost neutral basis and may deliver financial efficiencies due to economies of scale, for example through reduced management and back-office functions. Warwickshire County Council finance officers will work with their colleagues from the Local Authority partners and will complete due diligence before the contractual shared service agreement is signed.

### **6.2 Legal implications**

6.2.1 The Adoption and Children Act 2002 is the principal piece of legislation governing adoption and it includes the duty on local authorities to maintain an adoption service in their area.

6.2.2 The Children and Families Act 2014 allows for the Secretary of State by order to require all local authorities in England to make arrangement for some specified functions to be carried out on their behalf by one of more other adoption agency.

6.2.3 These functions include the recruitment of persons as prospective adopters, the assessment of prospective adopter's suitability to adopt a child and the approval of prospective adopters as suitable to adopt a child.

6.2.4 The Education and Adoption Act 2016 enables the Secretary of State to require local authorities to make arrangements for their adoption functions to be carried out by an RAA.

6.2.5 The proposal to create a contractual shared service arrangement, with a host lead, enables the County Council to retain its adoption functions whilst having the advantages that a regionalised approach to adoption work would bring.

6.2.6 Solicitors from the local authorities in the partnership have collaborated in drawing in evaluating and advising on models. They drew up the models appraisal (see Appendix 1).

## **7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

### **7.1. How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement?**

7.1.1 These proposals contribute to the County Council's core aims by ensuring that children and young people are safe, achieve and make a positive contribution.



## **8.2 How is risk being managed?**

- 8.2.1 Any change to how services are delivered brings short term risk of disruption. However, Warwickshire's current adoption practice is good and the Council is well placed to minimise any potential impact.
- 8.2.2 In the medium to long term, the proposed RAA will increase the number and diversity of adopters available to meet the needs of Warwickshire children.
- 8.2.3 The risks associated with the proposal are that the RAA does not perform to expectations. This should be mitigated by robust business and performance management.
- 8.2.4 Further risks can include the ability for RAA to operate successfully within the agreed budget. This can be mitigated by a robust financial agreement that includes long term funding arrangements (see Appendix 1).

## **8.3 What is the impact on the organisation?**

- 8.3.1 The preferred model reduces impact on staff by creating a secondment arrangement for staff as opposed to the staff transferring into a separated body. The IT and estate issues are being considered within the detailed design stage.

## **8.4 Equalities / EIA**

- 8.4.1 The equality duty will be met in line with national adoption legislation and policy and good practice requirements Under the Equality Act 2010, Councils must have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, (b) advance equality of opportunity and (c) foster good relations.
- 8.4.2 The equalities impact assessment of the project was undertaken in May 2016 and is planned to be reviewed following the consultation stage.

## **8.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment**

- 8.5.1 Environmental implications are not clear at this stage, although it is likely that some additional travel will be required.

## **8.6 Implications for partner organisations**

- 8.6.1 Key partners are the four local authorities. There will be a detailed co-design process leading to suitable arrangements to secure the Voluntary Adoption Agencies' involvement in delivery of the ACE model.

## **9.0 Background Papers**

None

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**Supporting Papers:**

Adoption: A vision for change

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adoption-a-vision-for-change>

## APPENDIX 1

### ACE delivery model – Options for consideration and Recommended Model

#### Overview

##### **MODEL 1 – CONTRACT: SHARED SERVICE**

- The bodies involved agree to deliver ACE together – a partnership arrangement
- **Contractual agreement** covering the nature of the financing and sharing at an operational level, which is generally overseen by a Management Board which sets budget and strategy
- Contractual agreement sets out how costs, risks and liabilities are shared
- One local authority usually acts a lead/host (eg. to let contracts)
- Scope for strategic involvement of VAAs through governance structures (eg members of Management Board with defined role)
- Staff generally remain employed by their existing organisations

##### **MODEL 2 –COMPANY: LOCAL AUTHORITY CONTROLLED**

- A separate legal identity from the local authorities but still exposed to political changes within the participant authorities
- Legal documents govern how the company operates – usually standard Memo and Articles of Association enhanced by shareholder’s agreement detailing arrangements between local authority owners
- Each Council owner would normally appoint a director(s) to the company board
- VAAs could play a strategic role (eg by having a non-executive role on the Board but would need to sit out when procurement issues discussed)
- The Council owners would fund the company operating costs and share costs, risks and liabilities
- The Council owners can buy services from the company without a procurement process provided certain requirements are met (the Teckal exemption);
  - Authorities must exercise **control** over the company
  - More than **80%** of company’s activities must be for the councils that own it (so max of 20% traded to third parties)
  - No **private** participation (i.e. VAAs cannot be owners)
- Staff may be seconded to the company, but if long term arrangement, will be TUPE by operation of law (with pension implications)

##### **MODEL 3 –COMPANY: JOINT VENTURE COMPANY**

- Similar to Model 2, but company membership is extended and the company is owned by both the councils and the VAAs
- Both the Councils and the VAAs could appoint directors to the board
- All owners including the VAAs would fund the company operating costs and would share costs, risks and liabilities

- The Councils would need to undertake a procurement process to buy services from the company (no Teckal exemption)
- LA and VAA staff may be seconded to the company, but if long term arrangement, will be TUPE by operation of law (with pension implications)

#### HIGH LEVEL SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS OF EACH MODEL

	MODEL 1	MODEL 2	MODEL 3
Legal set up	Contract	Company (LA owned)	Company (LA and VAA owned)
Ownership and Governance	As run by the LAs, control is created through the contract between the LAs. This would govern governance, strategic decision making and operational delivery	Each LA would be a (probably equal) shareholder/member of the company.  Each LA would probably appoint up to 2 board members. Co-opted directors possible  The VAAs could have strategic influence through non-executive board membership	Control through ownership would be split among the LAs and VAAs  Voting rights could determine the level of influence of each party  The board would likely comprise of LAs and VAAs. Co-opted directors possible
Ease of Establishment	As run by the existing LAs and no new company to set up, there will be reduced time/cost implications  Contract could take time to negotiate as these will be important to the VAAs who will not have an ownership stake  LA internal approval mechanisms will need to be considered  May be simpler and more streamlined to run than a company	Set up of new company will take longer and incur cost  Transfer of assets, contracts from LAs into the company will need to be agreed – Transfer Agreement to be agreed. Staffing arrangements also to be agreed  Due diligence and transfer process will have resourcing and cost implications  LA internal approval mechanisms will need to be considered	As for Model 2, although an added complexity that assets, contracts and staff will also transfer into the company from the VAAs
Duties	Owe duties only to the LAs	Owe duties to its LA shareholders	Owe duties to its LA/VAA shareholders
Scrutiny and strategy setting	Accountability and scrutiny functions agreed through the	LA as shareholders make decisions in relation to the company, other	The company would be accountable to all its key shareholders

	contractual arrangements  A management board may be established comprising LAs and VAAs	stakeholders including the VAAs participate in an advisory capacity  Accountability through contractual rights can be built in for the VAAs through service level agreements	(LAs and VAAs) who will have ownership rights and will sit on the board
Role of VAAs	Contractual party  LAs commission services from VAAs as providers	Non-executive members of the Management Board (and sit out when procurement issues being discussed)  Company commission services from VAAs as providers	Owner of company, share benefits and risks  Company commission services from VAAs as providers
Political engagement	Operational management and delivery at officer level. Role for members at strategic level	Elected members or officers as directors	Elected members or officers as directors
Operational Management	One council may act as lead/host authority	Likely to appoint a Chief Executive (cost implication)	As for model 2
Costs/risk sharing	Flexible - as parties agree within the contract	LA	LA and VAAs
Funding	LA funded	LA funded - although depending on the company's objects/structure may be capable of attracting funding not available to the LAs  LA financial assistance to the company (if not through a procurement process) may breach state aid rules unless one of the exemptions applies	LA and VAA funded  Like Model 2, may be able to attract other funding
Assets and Liabilities	Flexible - as parties agree within the contract  May remain undisturbed	Externalising the service would involve a transfer of assets and liabilities – liabilities previously undisturbed may crystallise (e.g. pensions,	As for Model 2

		premises) and will need funding by the LAs	
Staff	<p>Either delivered with each organisation keeping its employees or their TUPE to another organisation (e.g. host)</p> <p>Councils may simply change line management</p> <p>Secondments can work for time limited projects or shared services - long term secondment may mean TUPE by default</p> <p>No possible just to change terms and conditions to harmonise – need to rely on an ETO reason or dismissal and reengagement</p> <p>HR protocols may be used to aid consistent ways of working</p> <p>Restructuring and redundancies may be necessary if cost savings are significant driver</p>	<p>Long term secondment may mean TUPE by default</p> <p>No possible just to change terms and conditions to harmonise – need to rely on an ETO (economic, technical or organisational) reason; or instead dismissal and re-engagement</p> <p>Restructuring and redundancies may be necessary if cost savings are significant driver</p>	As for Model 2
Pensions	<p>Undisturbed - no crystallising event. Provided the staff remain employed by their existing employers then they would continue their membership of their existing pension schemes.</p>	<p>TUPE and pension risks could undermine financial viability of this model</p> <p>Wholly owned LA company will be a Scheme Employer within the meaning of the Pension Regs.</p> <p>If TUPE applies, the Best Value Direction and the</p>	As for Model 2, except that the VAAs, as owners of the company, could also be exposed to on-going pension liabilities unless where all liabilities underwritten by LA members

		<p>Fair Deal policy 2013 requires the new company to make available LGPS membership or a broadly comparable scheme (presumption is LGPS). This will be costly for the new company (its council owners)</p> <p>Company able to elect whether to offer LGPS membership to all its employees or just a designated group i.e. it can be an open or closed employer</p> <p>Funds will ask LA owners for guarantees/ underwriting by suggesting that the employers contribution rate will be unaffordable otherwise.</p> <p>Decision on whether transferring employees will remain in each of their LGPS and the company will have a series of admission agreements or (perhaps preferably) there will be a bulk transfer of all those employees into one LGPS, with a back to back agreement between the LAs agreeing how any pension underwriting is to be shared between them</p> <p>If company ceases to operate, pension liabilities may crystallise with significant financial implications for the LAs</p>	
Procurement and	The LAs will not be	As for Model 1 – if the	The LAs would not be

commissioning	required to undertake a procurement exercise in order to contract with each other	company is owned by the Councils, the Councils can buy from it without a procurement process	able to contract with the company directly but must instead follow a procurement process
Protection of Assets	The LAs will need to enter into service agreements with other LAs and the VAAs for delivery of specific services it needs to operate. VAAs and other LAs may provide specialist adoption services through contractual arrangements	LAs will want to protect their own assets when establishing the company. It will be important at the outset to carry out due diligence to establish ownership of assets and what will transfer into the company/stay with the LAs	LAs and VAAs will want to protect their own assets when establishing the company. It will be important at the outset to carry out the requisite due diligence to establish ownership of assets and what will transfer into the company/stay with the LAs and VAAs
Property	Need to ensure that physical property is available which the RAA will fit into	As for Model 1	As for Model 1
Cultural change	There may be greater scope for cultural change than if each LA continues to work alone	Capable of establishing a separate identity from the LAs  Cultural change may be more rapid than where internal LA service	As for Model 2
Systems and Processes	Consider compatibility of council IT and finance systems to "talk to each other"	As for Model 1 unless new systems procured (cost implications)	As for Model 1 unless new systems procured (cost implications)
Ability to trade	Limited - although query whether trading is a primary purpose of establishing the RAA or an ancillary benefit if opportunities arise	If LAs wish to do something for a "commercial purpose" (i.e. trade) then company required	As for Model 2
Tax implications	Adoption services are generally not VAT-able  Standard rate supplies may attract VAT	As for Model 1	As for Model 1
Customer/stakeholder engagement	May not be necessary depending on the level of change	Very likely to be needed	As for Model 2



## APPENDIX 2

### Role of the partners and the host in a Shared RAA Service Once Operational - subject to detailed partnership agreement being drawn up

Key role of the partners/ management board:

1. To be represented on the management board and commit to attending meetings at the right level to enable decisions to be taken (i.e. sufficient delegated authority)
2. To make key decisions as members of the management board – for certain identified decisions unanimous agreement will be required. Each authority has 1 vote.
3. To set the strategic direction of ACE, including the interface with Ace Innovate, approving the ICT and the estate management strategy, approving the HR strategy and staff management arrangements, setting and monitoring performance targets
4. To agree the annual financial budgets and distribution of resources including staff and the financial model for sharing of the host costs between partners (the initial financial budget will be a key decisions to be agreed prior to 'go live' by the Executive Group)
5. To take on 'lead partner' roles as agreed by the management board (e.g. VAA lead, University R&D lead, training lead, best practice lead, stakeholder engagement etc.)
6. To promote the continued engagement of the partner VAA(s) and key stakeholders (including adopters) in delivery of the Adoption Service – it is intended that the partner VAA(s) and key stakeholders will be included on the management board as non-executive members with restricted voting rights. There will be provision for this category of member to withdraw from the meeting in the event of a conflict. The relationship between the management board and any 'ACE innovate' arrangements needs to be worked up in more detail
7. To monitor budget performance and expenditure (open book accounting) and take any required financial decisions
8. To monitor performance (of RAA & individual members) and take any required performance management decisions.
9. To monitor compliance with the legislative requirements of maintaining and providing an effective adoption service.
10. To support implementation of the HR model for ACE staff
11. To support and maintain an effective interface between children's social work services and the RAA
12. To support where possible the harmonisation of services between the local authorities and the RAA.
13. Appointments to the statutory officer posts for ACE

Key roles of the host:

1. Be the legal entity for the purposes of the ACE which role would include letting of contracts for and on behalf of all partners
2. To provide support services to support ACE - Legal, HR ,Finance, Insurance, business, administration
3. To be responsible for commissioning and procurement in accordance with decisions of management board
4. To provide, advise on and support ACE ICT requirements
5. To support the ongoing delivery of the estate management strategy as agreed by the management board
6. To hold any agreed budget provision and/or manage implementation of the cost/risk sharing arrangements in accordance with decisions of management board
7. To produce required performance information including such tracking information as the management board requires

8. To administer the management board and operational group

In relation to the role of the host, the expectation is that the host would not incur any additional financial burdens as a result of fulfilling this role and would be reimbursed for costs associated with carrying out the role in accordance with agreed financial principles.

Although the host will be responsible for ensuring the operational delivery of the above, the host will be expected to adopt a facilitative and collaborative approach, agreeing the parameters of the role in each of the areas referred to through discussion and decision at management board level as appropriate, whilst maintaining sufficient pace of delivery. Partners will be expected to engage with the host on issues as they arise as appropriate.

Characteristics of the Host

1. Political and organisational agreement to fulfil the role.
2. Adopt a facilitative and collaborative approach.
3. Commitment to acting as host for duration of arrangement (partnership agreement will set out exit provisions for all partners).
4. Capacity and infrastructure to provide management and leadership to the RAA arrangements and its governance structure.
5. Capacity and infrastructure to provide the support functions of the RAA including ICT, commissioning and procurement.
6. Capacity to produce performance information by RAA & individual members.

<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Meeting date:</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> November 2017
<b>Subject/Report Title:</b>	Summary of responses to staff following ACE staff engagement period.
<b>Report from:</b>	Project Team
<b>Lead Contact Officer:</b>	Michelle Whiting Project Lead/ Rita Chohan Project Manager

### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 ACE has been working to a Go Live deadline of 1/02/18. The final go live decision is subject to cabinet approval by all four local authorities forming the Regional Adoption Agency.
- 1.2 In order to inform the operating model and impact on staff and services, staff engagement and stakeholder consultation events were delivered from 11 July to August 11<sup>th</sup> 2017.
- 1.3 This report gives an overview of the:
- Process followed
  - Views gathered during the staff and stakeholder events period
  - Feedback provided
  - Practice issues resolved.

### 2. Decision(s) Recommended

- 2.1 To acknowledge that there are no substantive issues raised that cannot be resolved through the proposed ACE delivery mode.

### 3. Background

- 3.1 To inform the service redesign and implementation of ACE there has been ongoing engagement events. This process commenced in January 2016:
- To shape the service design there were over 112 practitioners engaged to gain their working knowledge of adoption services and how to implement improvements.
  - 6 initial consultation events for staff and stakeholders were held during January and February 2016 and 3 events for adopters.
  - These were followed up in July 2017 by 6 engagement events for staff directly affected across all the local authority partners.

- 5 general stakeholder engagement events and specific events for Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass, court based social workers) and adoption panel members.
- In June 2017 Adopter Voice delivered events and Adoption UK conducted surveys leading to establishing an Adopter Advisory board.
- All of these groups were invited to comment via email or on the staff preference form (comments are attached, appendix 1).

3.2 The July 2017 events staff were invited within each organisation to go through ACE proposals in more detail and informed of the work that is ongoing and to get their views as to how they feel the service will succeed.

3.3 As part of the events and continuing engagement staff were invited to complete preference forms on where, if proposals are adopted, staff would like to work within the new structure to inform the numbers required within the structure going forward.

3.4 They were also be asked whether they would like to be considered for a promotion into a management role (this would be subject to a selection process). Dependant on these results, this may determine the short term structure with a long term structure to work towards.

3.5 It is expected that any vacancies that arise at any time throughout this hosted agreement will be recruited by Warwickshire County Council and may be recruited to meet the needs of the long term structure.

3.6 It is not expected that contractual roles and responsibilities will change, however as this is a new way of working, it may be that day to day duties will be reconfigured.

3.7 Staff member's personal circumstances, professional knowledge of service area and preferred location will be considered.

3.8 There are no post holders expected to be displaced as part of current proposals. There are sufficient posts for the numbers of staff working in all authorities and there are also vacancies in teams which we hope to recruit to once the preference exercise is finalised and the gaps in the structure are identified.

3.9 Any vacancies within the service will be advertised by Warwickshire County Council and appointees will be recruited on Warwickshire terms and conditions of service.

3.10 Following the cabinet decision there will be formal consultation period to agree roles and locations. Once finalised, recruitment into vacancies will commence.

#### **4. Implications**

- 4.1 Following an analysis and response to views submitted (appendix 1) there are no practice issues that cannot be resolved. The main area was on location which can be addressed through flexible working arrangements and smarter use of technology.

**Staff Engagement Response - September 2017**

**Below are the responses to suggestions/comments made on staff preference forms and joint comments from the Worcestershire adoption team. These were invited during a staff engagement period from July 11- August 11<sup>th</sup> 2017 as part of the ACE project. This will help inform the delivery model and final cabinet decision to commence the Regional Adoption Agency.**

Suggestions / Comments	Lead Response
<b>1. Pathways into ACE &amp; Pathways to Children's Services</b>	
1.1. Post adoption duty calls to be taken / completed by the specialists not duty	It is hard to quantify what the demand will be so the managers will need to keep this area under constant review in the initial period in terms of resourcing this with staff. The hub and each spoke will have a clear entry point which will be drawn up as pathways into the service
1.2. This is before consideration is given to how this will sit within needing to work closely with our colleagues in each LA Safeguarding/LAC Permanency/Early Help (etc.) Department 1.3. Concerned about working relationships with local children's services	There are clear pathways being drawn up and agreements made with each authority as to how adopted and SGO children access Early Help, Children in Need and Child Protection Services which clearly identify the differing responsibilities of the LA & ACE workers. In addition there will be regular meetings with the relevant managers in each authority in addition to the opportunities to raise issues via the Governance mechanisms
<b>2. Administration</b>	
2.1 The letterbox role within Worcestershire currently generates a large amount of birth relative support/adoption support work which requires constant Social work	The consultations and service design have highlighted the importance of back office support in delivering an efficient modern adoption service. Now we are at a point where we are

<p>overview. Our letterbox co-ordinators are extremely experienced in a very specialised role and I would question why this will be managed by a non-social worker manager? This leaves room for risk to be missed as workers are not trained social workers, neither would there be a social worker management overview.</p> <p>2.2 Admin support is always lacking as it is more cost effective than SWs</p> <p>2.3 Admin is especially needed in the HUB as can see it becoming a mini MASH and proving difficult to manage</p> <p>2.4 More admin time would also be helpful as they are currently stretched to the limit. Have already been looking at ways of helping with the work and devising forms that give the relevant information more easily</p> <p>2.5 An allocated admin person has been really important for me and someone who understands the system, especially as I am not in the office regularly. I have been very lucky with my recent supports, though am aware that they are stretched and so try to complete as much as I can on my own</p> <p>2.6 I do feel that the whole process has been very social worker led and the necessary administration processes do not appear, at this stage, to have been considered / communicated thus causing considerable anxieties within the business support team.</p> <p>2.7 One admin worker covering post order support and family finding seems inadequate and will be a huge role.</p>	<p>clearer about ICT delivery timescales and the service specification we will review whether we have sufficient skilled administrators to commence the organisation.</p>
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<b>3 Management/ diversity and salaries</b>	
<p>3.1 Could an ATM post be considered within the spokes due to the number of staff that one manager can supervise (esp. at Solihull with the responsibility for the Therapeutic team)</p> <p>3.2 A reduction in manager roles within the spoke would indicate that there will be a reduced number of staff to provide the same roles across the area. One manager covering post order support and family finding seems inadequate and will be a huge role.</p> <p>3.3 Male / female and diverse ratio of social workers, as you discusses sensitive issues that need a mixed workforce to respond to and meet this need.</p> <p>3.4 Salary indifferences across the LA through ACE, for doing same roles, both this and next year.</p>	<p>The number of management posts have not been reduced there was x team and service managers and in the proposed ACE structure there are y. The proposed structure was designed to ensure that the span of supervision for managers (number of reports) is even and equitable.</p> <p>A larger regional service should support greater diversity but we will need to monitor this.</p> <p>We compared the LA payscales and there are differences across the authorities but the key differences are at the start and end of the pay scales. Most of the staff sit in the middle so there is not a huge variance in the actual pay of staff in scope.</p> <p>We did spend a lot of time considering this but our consultations with you to date led us to believe that at this point maintaining your existing terms and conditions was more important than homogenising the pay scales.</p>
<b>4 Structure</b>	
<p><b>4.1 Why have a hub and a spoke?</b></p>	



- 4.1.1 Division of part of the service into spokes and Hubs will lose valuable working relationships
- 4.1.2 To have assessment worker's based in the Worcestershire Spoke with family finding and children's social worker colleagues. At present, this aids family finding and joint working with children's social worker's. In addition, experience and consultation between colleagues is productive to everyone involved. There is good team work and support. This is valuable in making good placements for children, planning placements, support of children and families after placement. As was mentioned in the joint assessment team statement to ACE, Worcestershire Adoption Service was credited for their function in the recent Ofsted inspection.
- 4.1.3 There is not enough information at this stage regarding how this model will work in practice to comment about how it could be improved. Splitting out the roles in this way raises concerns about efficient working together between Duty, Recruitment, Assessment, Family Finding, Panel, Pre-Order and 12 months post-order support, letterbox and then Post Order Support.
- 4.1.4 I welcome the opportunity to share resources such as training, knowledge and placements with colleagues from other areas and see ACE as an opportunity to share and pool the good practice from each area.

One of the key benefits of scaling up adoption activity from Local authorities to a regional approach via ACE that we identified was the ability to improve recruitment particularly for the 20% of children that we struggle to place and that we revise our assessment processes to broaden our cohort of adopters and bring new ways of working which help them test out whether they might be able to parent a child or children with higher needs. ACE has been awarded practise improvement grant to develop a new approach which includes upskilling our workforce and adopters with evidenced based methodologies

<b>4.2 Should non agency (step parent) adoptions be in the Hub with adopter assessments?</b>	
<p>4.2.1 Move non agency assessments into the HUB and bring the other training post order into the spokes where the connection with the community is</p> <p>4.2.2 Non agency assessments would be undertaken by assessment workers not post adoption workers.</p> <p>4.2.3 Logical sense to put step parent and adoption parent assessments in the same place be it Hub or Spoke</p> <p>4.2.4 Non agency adoptions should be part of the adoption team rather than the adoption support and family finding function</p>	<p>We will reconsider whether non -agency assessments should be in the Hub or the spokes</p>
<b>4.3 Should post adoption and family finding be in the same team?</b>	
<p>4.3.1 Separate out post adoption support from family finding and bring access to birth records into the spokes to be close to post adoption support</p> <p>4.3.2 Not sure how family finding fits in and if it's a separate role to post adoption</p> <p>4.3.3 Need assessment workers in the spokes or at least working in the spokes for the most part of the working week</p> <p>4.3.4 Birth records counselling best placed with adoption support</p> <p>4.3.5 present ACE structure doesn't lend itself to people with post adoption skills</p> <p>4.3.6 Family finding is suited best within the HUB and with the assessment side of the work</p> <p>4.3.7 Completing birth records as part of the HUB</p>	<p>The thinking was that the spokes are predominantly teams undertaking child focused work and that it is critical that they are closely connected with their respective Local Authority Childrens Services which is why they are based in each LA. The hub teams' work is predominantly adult focused. However we appreciate that adoption services are complex and it is critical that the Hub and spoke teams work closely together and the work can be split along different lines. Your comments will be considered by the managers and the structure reviewed.</p> <p>There are 2 schools of thought as to which is most efficient highly specialised staff doing 1 role e.g. post adoption support or a more generic role. As discussed at the consultation one size doesn't fit all and although the same standards will be expected</p>

<p>4.3.8 Would like more information regarding the role/distribution of the social workers in the Hub i.e. will there be sub teams for stage 1 and recruitment?</p> <p>4.3.9 Training for adopters and SGOs (Post Order) will need to remain local to where they live</p> <p>4.3.10 I am not yet fully clear on what the proposed family finding process will look like but I would also be concerned about the family finders and the assessing workers being separated. At present as both are in the same location it allows for valuable discussion and "thinking outside the box" to happen. This has meant that adopters have been allowed the opportunity to consider children outside of their original "criteria" and families can be found for children whom perhaps they wouldn't have been otherwise.</p> <p>4.3.11 Panels – it is not clear where these will be held however I would advocate that these need to remain local to each authority. If they are all held in the Hub this will have significant financial and time implications with many social work hours wasted travelling to and from panel; hours which the children's social workers in particular cannot afford to lose.</p>	<p>from each team there is room for the team managers to consider the skills experience and ambitions of their staff group and deploy the work accordingly. So some workers may choose to have a very specialised case load and others be more generic. But just as now, the team will need to cover the work and there may be times when some flexibility is required.</p>
<p><b>5. Geography</b></p>	
<p>5.1 I think that it is important that Adoption Panels, for matches and suitable to adopt applications, are held at each of the spokes to limit travelling time / expenses for local authority social workers and adopters living locally.</p> <p>5.2 We already have an excellent and effective Adoption Panel within Worcestershire that are committed and passionate to obtain permanency and achieve successful</p>	<p>It is proposed that the ACE panels will be held in each of the authorities on a proportionate basis but that any panel can be accessed thus reducing the need for additional panels. The members of the current central list will be invited to join an ACE central list.</p>

<p>outcomes for Worcestershire children however, if necessary, we could draw upon a larger ACE Central List to increase diversity / knowledge at local Panels as appropriate.</p> <p>5.3 If the regulations allow however for all of the panels to have an "ACE" identity, this could allow for far more flexibility and therefore more approvals and matches to be made in a timely manner. For example if there is a match for a Worcestershire child but no space for a while in the Worcester based panel, but there is a space in the Coventry based panel, then the match could be presented to the Coventry panel to allow the match to proceed without delay.</p> <p>5.4 Understand the need for assessments to be standardised across the whole of ACE but could this not be achieved by the workers being under the same management, attending team meetings and joint training?</p> <p>5.6 Birth parent services – these are to be based in the HUB? Presumably there wouldn't be an expectation that birth parents travel to the Hub? Birth parents find it very difficult for a variety of reasons to travel to local venues so this distance would make it almost impossible for them to engage with this service.</p> <p>5.7 Post adoption support best placed to be in the South of Warwickshire where the majority of adoptive resides</p> <p>5.8 Concerned about the spoke for Warwickshire being in the North when the majority of the adoption work is in the South</p> <p>5.9 However I would like to reiterate that I do have some concerns about the proposal that the assessment workers are based in the Hub.</p> <p>5.10 This would have a significant impact on the amount of</p>	<p>This is what is proposed. In terms of base ACE will support Flexible working but will want also to develop team identities and Cover the work.</p> <p>This is being reviewed by the Lead manager but while the service May be based in the hub there will still be local delivery.</p> <p>The spoke teams need to be large enough to be viable. It is not possible to have workers based in each area of each local authority.</p> <p>We believe that this can be addressed through flexible working. All ACE workers will have a designated base but will also be able To work from any of the hub or spoke offices, home or other</p>
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<p>travel that they would incur which would not only have an impact on them personally financially but will also impact on the amount of time that they have to actually undertake their work as they will be spending more time on the road.</p> <p>5.11 It has the potential to make it more difficult for them to support their adopters because of the distance. I understand that they will not be expected to always be at the Hub but will space be designated for them at the Spokes? If not they could very much feel like they are in no man's land and could become very isolated from other worker</p> <p>5.12 There are improvements that could be made to enable a quicker service, which would mean other equipment which can be used at home.</p> <p>5.13 Is it expected that the Assessing Social Workers in ACE will be allocated assessments in their Local Authority areas, as at present?</p> <p>5.14 "We envisage that employees working within the Hub would be required to work from the Hub for a proportion of the working week": what 'proportion' is envisaged, and for what purpose?</p> <p>5.15 If we are expected to be 'flexible and agile' in our working, though based at the Hub, would there be provision for us to work in other locations, including the Spoke(s), or from home? If the latter, what provision will there be for the costs of agile working (namely heating, Wi-Fi, printing)?</p> <p>5.16 If we are to be 'based' at the 'hub' in Warwick, what is it envisaged we would actually be <i>doing</i> when there, given that most of our work needs to happen where adopters, foster carers and other professionals are?</p>	<p>Suitable sites dependent on service requirements.</p> <p>It is proposed to kit social workers with a lightweight laptop and Smart phone</p> <p>Managers will want to make the best use of their social workers And will endeavour to give them workloads which take of their particular circumstances, experience , interest and ambitions with the caveat that service needs must be met.</p>
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<p>5.17 Therapeutic intervention is provided from one location be it either the HUB or Spoke and may have an impact on preferences for HUB and Spoke</p> <p>I have worked in a team, in another authority, where the central office was a distance away and the teams were based in localities. The teams' were managed centrally by a manager, based at the central office. The team met for monthly team meeting. This model worked well</p>	<p>It is proposed that the therapeutic team is managed by the Solihull spoke in order to balance numbers. They will not all Necessarily be based there</p>
<p><b>6. Workforce</b></p>	
<p>6.1 Difficulty to see how regionalisation will improve service delivery</p> <p>6.2 Thinks regionalisation will create some real positives</p> <p>6.3 Under estimation on how people may feel about location, pay differences, sense of losing team and not knowing who the manager is you are working for</p> <p>6.4 The process of regionalising certain processes and aspects of the model is a significant concern that this could cause delay for the child</p> <p>6.4 Workforce Like to enhance skills within other specialist areas</p> <p>6.5 Would like opportunity to diversify and learn as splitting up the role</p> <p>6.6 Training has been an issue and it has been the case that the work I do is less important than that of others and so I have been the last to get any training. I tend to look at issues in my own time, although there are new systems in place that I can now access.</p> <p>6.7 Training should be integral part of the post adoption work</p> <p>6.8 Training being given by workers in the spoke needs to be</p>	<p>Regionalisation is untested however the work practitioners have completed have identified a number of areas where practice can be improved. The DFE feel that working on a larger scale will Support efficiencies.</p> <p>The impact of change cannot be underestimated and we will continue to work in an inclusive and sensitive manner to help mitigate this and identify key managers as quickly as possible. The Coram I tracking and systems should prevent this. These will start before Go live to ensure that they are robust and are preventing delay</p> <p>A comprehensive workforce development plan is being developed with additional opportunities being offer by the practice improvement grant.</p> <p>This will be for all ACE workers a programme for adopters and some of the local authority social workers</p>

<p>the opportunity for personal development e.g. train the trainer</p> <p>6.9 Workforce Currently, I feel there is a skills shortage and understanding of how best to support Adoptive and SGO families at risk of breakdown through clear understanding of how to improve from attachment focused work. I do feel this is a great opportunity to provide a consistent approach to aiding quick response to support and making clear a pathway of support. I would like a greater focus on this through our main functions of work as this will aid start to finish of adoption from assessment to Adoptive Adult information.</p> <p>6.10 Workforce The future role of in-house therapy- and training for adopters / carers</p> <p>6.11 Additional staff required for SG cases.</p>	<p>Additional social work posts have been included to cover the special guardianship work</p>
<p><b>7. ICT, equipment and parking</b></p>	
<p>7.1 Important to be able to view active records to determine other services involvement and therefore IT systems need to be able to facilitate this.</p> <p>7.2 Related to the above, what will be the arrangements for administrative support and functions, eg printing and distributing reports, receiving and sending post, co-ordinating meetings/diaries and so on?</p> <p>7.3 Is there actually sufficient parking and office accommodation at Saltisford, or might we end up driving up to 90 minutes from home only to find we have nowhere to sit and work, especially as it could happen that many workers from the different areas could be at the office on the same</p>	<p>Independent agencies are not able to view local authority records. There will be robust protocols regarding provision and timeliness of information. Clear pathways for children who are accessing other local authority services are being drawn up. Ace governance gives a platform to continue to develop any areas identified by practitioners.</p> <p>Back office services will be delivered by the HOST. There are detailed project groups addressing these areas</p> <p>We believe that there is sufficient office space and will monitor this closely. There are range of alternative car parking sites around the Saltisford area</p>

<p>day?</p> <p>7.4 Car park passes would be beneficial for all (particularly for Coventry) as this would allow staff to easily travel for meetings etc. to each office.</p> <p>7.5 Given that, if this plan goes ahead, we would be expected to move our base to Warwick, we would expect our additional travelling time to a new base in a different county on us to be absorbed in our working hours, plus our additional travel and parking costs to be met. Would this be part of the secondment arrangements?</p>	<p>Both of these are being addressed by the HR group. There will be clear agreed policy re travel arrangements</p>
<p><b>8. Court</b></p>	
<p>8.1 Sometimes there needs to be a link with the local court that can look at issues relating to cases, but I am led to believe that this liaison no longer happens.</p> <p>8.2 There also needs to access to a legal team and although they rarely get involved, it is a useful service for me in unusual circumstances</p>	<p>ACE will have access to legal services. Ace has connected with the various courts and family justice board and will continue to do so. CAFCASS have agreed to be on the ACE stakeholder governance group</p>
<p><b>9. General</b></p>	
<p>9.1 Birth Parent service is very cost effective.</p> <p>9.2 If the model changes, staff views and indications may change.</p> <p>9.3 Will need to be a smooth transition for new arrangements and how any new arrangements are communicated to birth relatives is key – Letterbox.</p>	<p>There have been no indications that the model itself needs to change although the lead manager is reviewing where some of The functions are best delivered as a result of this exercise. Staff Will be made aware if any proposed changes prior to formal consultation but all services are tweaked and developed over time.</p>



<p>9.4 Clinical supervision will need to be provided to provide quality therapeutic support to families.</p> <p>9.5 It would also be helpful if the Part 5 form could be revised as it is incredibly repetitive, but believe that this would not be possible.</p> <p>9.6 Good model.</p> <p>9.7 As the model stands today, it is hard to comment on improvements as I cannot visualise the details of how it will work. I can and would like to see as mentioned above a greater focus on child and parent support.</p> <p>9.8 Organisation of activities for adoptive children to celebrate and support them questioning their identity through the age ranges.</p> <p>9.9 Ensure that best practise from the working groups is captured and used within ACE.</p> <p>9.10 Will the business support officers also be seconded for 12 months in the first instance?</p> <p>9.11 Data protection how will ace share information e.g. sensitive medical information with other agencies</p> <p>9.12 What is the rationale for us continuing to 'casework' the families for 12 months post-Order?</p>	<p>This is being addressed</p> <p>This is part of the practice improvement bid.</p> <p>The scale of ACE allows this to be further developed.</p> <p>The work of the practice groups is being used to develop the case recording system, policy and procedures. The new service design will be shared through induction sessions</p> <p>Yes all staff will be seconded for 12 months</p> <p>This is being addressed by the ICT group who are setting up an information sharing system which meets data protection requirements</p> <p>OFSTED recognised this as good practise but more importantly is allows adopters to have a worker who knows them and their child supporting the early period of adoption, this may be very</p>
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	<p>light touch in many instances, but where more is required or the support plan needs to change this known worker can then do a tapered hand over to the postadoption support team. This is particularly important as it is ACE ambition to enable more challenging children to be adopted. Therefore we must have robust support systems which reflect the adopters articulated view that they need someone who knows their story and understands their child.</p>
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**SCHEDULE 3  
ACE GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This Schedule sets out the governance structure that shall apply to ACE.
- 1.2 The purpose of this Schedule is to provide clear principles around the functions, roles and responsibilities of ACE.
- 1.3 An overview of the governance of ACE is set out in the diagram at **Schedule 1, Appendix 1 to this Agreement (“ACE Governance Structure Diagram”)**.

**A. THE EXECUTIVE BOARD**

**Membership**

- 1.4 The Executive Board will comprise of the Directors of Children’s Service of each Party or their properly nominated officer and the ACE Lead Manager.
- 1.5 The Board will consult (in so far as it is considers proper and appropriate to do so):
- (a) Representatives from Voluntary Adoption Agencies; and
  - (b) Representatives from other stakeholders
- but these representatives shall have no voting rights on any decision of the Executive Board.

**Terms of Reference**

- 1.6 The Executive Board is the key decision making body of ACE which shall meet on a regular basis to discuss the major issues facing ACE.
- 1.7 The activities of the Executive Board shall include:
- (a) Providing oversight, advice and endorsement of the strategic direction of ACE as reflected in the agreed statement of purpose and in accordance with all relevant legislation;
  - (b) Determining at a strategic level the composition of ACE and the relevant funding arrangements, including making decisions under this Agreement in relation to parties joining and/or withdrawing from ACE;
  - (c) Agreeing at a strategic level the performance framework for ACE and receiving performance information;
  - (d) Monitoring the operation of ACE against the ACE Functions, including the interface and inter-relationships between ACE and the Parties;

- (e) Approving the appointment of the ACE Lead Manager;
- (f) Addressing any issues escalated by the ACE Lead Manager by providing support and challenge;
- (g) Overseeing the formulation of an annual service plan including the workforce development programme;
- (h) Overseeing, reviewing and endorsing the ACE budget setting and addressing financial issues that will impact on the effectiveness of ACE, including any business case for investment and any disposal and/or purchase of Assets;
- (i) Reviewing the ACE staffing arrangements and monitoring whether the secondment model continues to be the most appropriate staffing arrangement;
- (j) Reviewing the governance arrangements set out by the Agreement and agreeing any variations to the Agreement;
- (k) Resolving any conflicts between competing interests of the Parties;
- (l) Resolving any disputes referred to it via the dispute escalation procedure set out in this Agreement;
- (m) All other obligations conferred to the Board as set out in the Agreement.

### **Accountability and Responsibility**

- 1.8 Each Party is responsible for ensuring that their nominated representative(s) (or named substitute) are available to attend each Board meeting.
- 1.9 All members of the Board will be in a position to make decisions within their respective organisation, where appropriate, and save for those matters which shall be referred back to the authorities for resolution in accordance with the terms of this Agreement.
- 1.10 All members of the Board will be responsible for reporting to their organisation, through their respective governance arrangements.

### **Meetings**

- 1.11 The Executive Board shall meet quarterly or at greater or lesser frequency if it so decides.
- 1.12 The Board shall elect a Chair from amongst its Party members to serve for a twelve month period.
- 1.13 The Chair will agree the dates and times for the meetings of the Board, which shall be held at the offices of the Host.

- 1.14 The Chair will be responsible for agreeing meeting agendas and draft minutes for circulation.
- 1.15 Agendas and papers for the meeting will be sent out at least five working days prior to the meeting to provide time for Board members to read them and to identify actions for their own organisations.
- 1.16 Minutes of the meeting will be circulated within 5 working days after the meeting.
- 1.17 Physical presence at meetings is expected, there shall be no provision to dial in or host the meeting remotely to meetings unless expressly agreed by the Chair.

### **Quorum and Voting**

- 1.18 Board members should attend each Board meeting. Each Board member may nominate a substitute to attend to the business of the Executive Board (including attending meetings of the Executive Board) on his/her behalf provided that written notice is provided to the Chair of the Executive Board in advance of any action taken by the substitute or meeting attended by the substitute.
- 1.19 Executive Board membership will work together to try to ensure that decisions whenever possible are made by consensus. Where this cannot be achieved each member present at a meeting shall have one vote.
- 1.20 Voting shall be by show of hands or affirmative confirmation in the event of remotely convened meetings approved by the Chair in advance. Decisions shall be made by simple majority vote.
- 1.21 In the event of an equality of votes the Chair shall have a casting vote. There is no restriction on how the Chair may exercise his/her casting vote
- 1.22 The agenda for each meeting will be prepared and circulated by the Chair three working days prior to the meeting (save for requests in accordance with 11.1 above). Any party may request an item be added to the agenda if this is done at least 24 hours prior to the meeting taking place.
- 1.23 Members of the Executive Board may invite one or more officers from the participating Parties to attend meetings of the Executive Board to be notified to the Chair in advance of the meeting.
- 1.24 The minutes of the proceedings of every meeting shall be drawn up by Chair. Copies shall be circulated to all those in attendance within two weeks after the date of such meeting.

## **B. PRACTICE AND STAKEHOLDERS PANEL**

### **Membership**

- 1.25 The Practice and Stakeholders Panel will comprise of:
  - (a) Senior Officers in each Party responsible for looked after children and the delivery of a range of services;

- (b) The ACE Lead Manager or his/her representative;
- (c) Representatives from Voluntary Adoption Agencies;
- (d) Adoptive parents;
- (e) Representatives from other professional agencies, including CAFCASS, Health and Education;
- (f) Operation Managers of ACE;
- (g) Other representatives nominated by the Parties, which may include any other individuals affected through adoption.

### **Accountability and Responsibility**

- 1.26 Each Party is responsible for ensuring that their nominated representative(s) (or named substitute) on the Practice and Stakeholders Panel are available to attend each meeting.
- 1.27 All members of the Practice and Stakeholders Panel will be expected to:
- (a) be in a position to progress issues on behalf of their respective organisations;
  - (b) be responsible for reporting to their organisation, through their respective governance arrangements;
  - (c) commit time to undertaking specific tasks to develop and improve ACE;
  - (d) be the key point of contact to identify and resolve issues which impact on the operation of ACE, including the timely placement of children;
  - (e) act as a champion for adoption and promoting ACE;
  - (f) take responsibility for the timely sharing of information and data from their agencies as required by ACE.

### **Meetings and Decisions**

- 1.28 The Practice and Stakeholders Panel shall meet every two months and the meeting shall be held within the ACE geographical area of the Parties covered by this Agreement as determined by the membership.
- 1.29 The ACE Lead Manager or his/her representative shall be the Chair of the Practice and Stakeholders Panel.
- 1.30 The Parties shall ensure that they send a representative to each meeting of the Practice and Stakeholders Panel.



- 1.31 The agenda for each meeting will be prepared and circulated by the ACE Lead Manager five days prior to the meeting. Any party may request an item be added to the agenda.
- 1.32 The minutes of the proceedings of every meeting shall be drawn up by the ACE Service Manager. Copies shall be circulated to all those in attendance within two weeks after the date of such meeting.

### **Terms of Reference**

- 1.33 The activities of the Practice and Stakeholders Panel shall include:
- (a) Developing good practice and joint working between the Parties and stakeholders in relation to ACE for approval by the ACE Lead Manager;
  - (b) Monitoring and reviewing the ACE Functions and the performance of ACE against the Service Specification in order to make recommendations to the ACE Lead Manager as to improvements that could be made;
  - (c) Identifying and constructively resolving any operational difficulties or disputes between competing interests of the Parties and stakeholders;
  - (d) Reviewing and endorsing proposals produced by ACE under the direction of the ACE Lead Manager; and
  - (e) Promoting the profile of ACE and maintaining strong communication links between the Parties and stakeholders.

### **ACE LEAD MANAGER**

#### **Appointment**

- 1.34 The Parties have appointed an ACE Lead Manager.

#### **Terms of Reference**

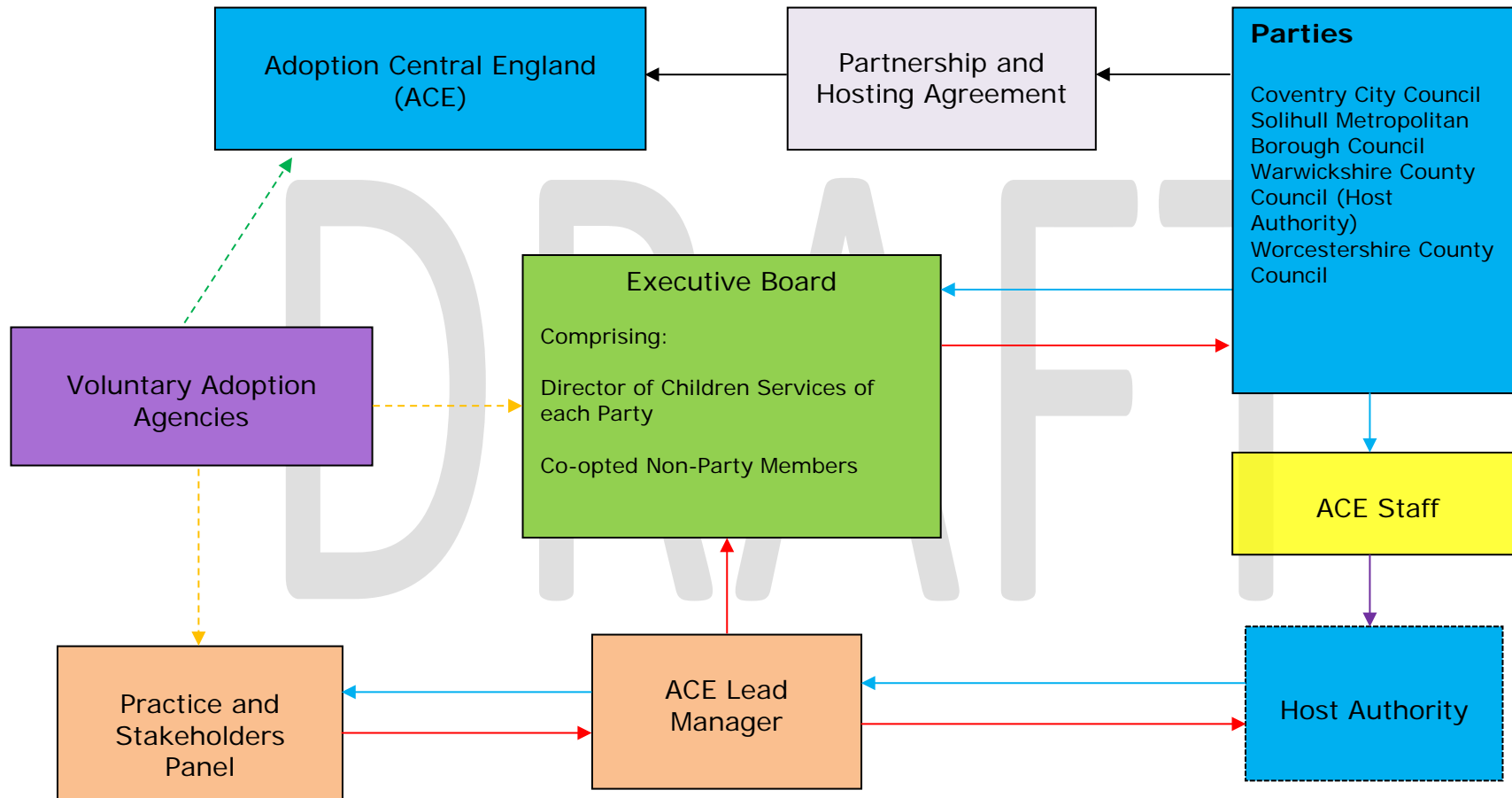
- 1.35 The activities of the ACE Lead Manager shall include but not be limited to:
- (a) Attending and advising the Executive Board and Chairing the Practice and Stakeholders Panel;
  - (b) Providing general day to day management of ACE;
  - (c) Be available as an expert for local authorities to call on as required;
  - (d) Managing ACE Staff and resources;
  - (e) Driving and continuing to improve the performance of ACE teams;
  - (f) Developing and maintaining partner relationships; and

(g) Reporting to the National Adoption Board as required.

1.36 This list is not exhaustive a fuller list of duties and obligations are outlined in the Job Description at Part 1 of Schedule 5 and within the terms of this Agreement.

DRAFT

**SCHEDULE 1, APPENDIX 1  
ACE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE DIAGRAM**



- Key**
- Appointment —
  - Accountability —
  - May Provide Services - - -
  - Membership - - -
  - Secondment —

**EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT/ ANALYSIS**  
**Adoption Central England**  
**Regional Adoption Agency Project**

Incorporates

**PL-CSOC-05**  
**Regional Adoption Agency**

**Warwickshire County Council**

## Equality Impact Assessment/ Analysis (EqIA)

<b>Group</b>	People Group
<b>Business Units/Service Area</b>	Children's & Families
<b>Plan/ Strategy/ Policy/ Service being assessed</b>	Adoption Central England/ Regional Adoption Agency project
<b>Is this is a new or existing policy/service?</b>  <b>If existing policy/service please state date of last assessment</b>	EIA completed 12/04/2016 Reviewed 22/8/16 Reviewed 26/09/17
<b>EqIA Review team – List of members</b>	Michelle Whiting Interim Project Manager Rita Chohan Project manager
<b>Date of this assessment</b>	12/04/2016 Updated 12/08/16 Updated 26/09/17
<b>Signature of completing officer (to be signed after the EqIA has been completed)</b>	
<b>Are any of the outcomes from this assessment likely to result in complaints from existing services users and/ or members of the public?</b> If yes please flag this with your Head of Service and the Customer Relations Team as soon as possible.	No
<b>Name and signature of Head of Service (to be signed after the EqIA has been completed)</b>	Beate Wagner Head of Service Social Care and Safeguarding
<b>Signature of GLT Equalities Champion (to be signed after the EqIA is completed and signed by the completing officer)</b>	Chris Lewington Head of Strategic Commissioning

**A copy of this form including relevant data and information to be forwarded to the Group Equalities Champion and the Corporate Equalities & Diversity Team**





# Form A1

## INITIAL SCREENING FOR STRATEGIES/POLICIES/FUNCTIONS FOR EQUALITIES RELEVANCE TO ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION, PROMOTE EQUALITY AND FOSTER GOOD RELATIONS



High relevance/priority



Medium relevance/priority



Low or no relevance/priority

**Note:**

1. Tick coloured boxes appropriately, and depending on degree of relevance to each of the equality strands
2. Summaries of the legislation/guidance should be used to assist this screening process

Business Unit/Services:	Relevance/Risk to Equalities																										
State the Function/Policy /Service/Strategy being assessed:	Gender			Race			Disability			Sexual Orientation			Religion/Belief			Age			Gender Reassignment			Pregnancy/ Maternity			Marriage/ Civil Partnership (only for staff)		
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ACE/ Regional Adoption Agency Project		X		X			X				X		X			X					X			X			X
Are your proposals likely to impact on social inequalities e.g. child poverty for example or our most geographically disadvantaged communities? <b>The move from local authority adoption services to regional agencies is to enable more children including children for whom it is more challenging to find adopters (who are typically older children , children with additional needs/ disabilities, ethnic backgrounds) to be placed</b>																								YES			
Are your proposals likely to impact on a <b>carer</b> who looks after older people or people with disabilities? <b>If yes please explain how.</b>																								NO			

**Form A2 – Details of Plan/ Strategy/ Service/ Policy**

<b><u>Stage 1 – Scoping and Defining</u></b>	
(1) What are the aims and objectives of Plan/Strategy/Service/Policy?	To make adoption services more efficient and effective for children and their adoptive families by undertaking them on a regional rather than Local Authority basis
(2) How does it fit with Warwickshire County Council's wider objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Our communities and individuals are safe and protected from harm and are able to remain independent for longer.</li> <li>- The health and wellbeing of all in Warwickshire is protected.</li> <li>- Resources and services are targeted efficiently whether delivered by the local authority, commissioned or in partnership.</li> </ul>
(3) What are the expected outcomes?	<p>To improve the number and range of available adopters to meet the needs of children.            To improve the timescales and quality of the adoption service.            To be innovative and meet the needs of children and their adoptive families</p>
(4) Which of the groups with protected characteristics is this intended to benefit? (see form A1 for list of protected groups)	This will primarily benefit the children and their adopters or carers with Special Guardianship Orders
<b><u>Stage 2 - Information Gathering</u></b>	
(1) What type and range of evidence or information have you used to help you make a judgement about the plan/ strategy/ service/ policy?	The project and proposed changes are as a result of Government research and policy as stated in Adoption Time for Change DFE 30/4/2016



<p>(2) Have you consulted on the plan/ strategy/ service/policy and if so with whom?</p>	<p>Initial Consultation processes with staff, decision makers and stakeholders took place over March. The project plan has a 2 step decision making process with consultation planned to support main decision points. In our current plan this the DfE have changed the parameters and the decision making points are now December 16 so that there can be a full consultation over January 2017 with a proposed Go Live point of June 2017. There will be an impact on staff but at this point it is not known what the size of staff composition for the ACE RAA will be nor the methodology as to the staff that will be employed. These options are being worked up for the detailed January consultation The communication plan will include which groups will be consulted and when. The January consultation will be conducted with staff, managers, decision makers and stakeholders.</p> <p>UPATE – A delay in agreeing the host arrangements has led to staff engagement and stakeholder consultation events being delivered slightly later than planned from July 11- August 11 2017. As part of this staff were invited to complete Indicative preference forms to give an early indication of staffs support of the delivery model and preferred locations.</p>		
<p>(3) Which of the groups with protected characteristics have you consulted with?</p>	<p>We plan to consult with staff and the public once the council has agreed the way forward. Equality monitoring of consultation participants will be undertaken, including consideration of all the protected characteristics.</p> <p>UPDATE – Engagement events were delivered to all staff in scope. This will be followed by a formal consultation following cabinet approval of the RAA in November 2017.</p>		
<p><b><u>Stage 3 – Analysis of impact</u></b></p>			
<p>(1) From your data and consultations is there any adverse or negative impact identified for any particular group which could amount to discrimination?</p> <p>If yes, identify the groups and how they are affected.</p>	<p><b>RACE</b></p> <p>No negative impact only positive as the RAA aims to improve adopter numbers for specific race, age and disability groups</p>	<p><b>DISABILITY</b></p> <p>No</p>	<p><b>GENDER</b></p> <p>No</p>

	MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP No	AGE NO	GENDER REASSIGNMENT No
	RELIGION/BELIEF No	PREGNANCY MATERNITY No	SEXUAL ORIENTATION NO
(2) If there is an adverse impact, can this be justified?	N/A. Any adverse impact highlighted through consultations will be worked through for resolution		
(3) What actions are going to be taken to reduce or eliminate negative or adverse impact? (this should form part of your action plan under Stage 4.)	There is no negative or adverse impact identified at present but may be subject to change based on feedback through the consultation. UPDATE – There are number of concerns of the location of the Hub particularly by staff currently based in Worcestershire. This impacts 5-8 staff transferring to Hub functions planned to be delivered in Warwickshire. An agreement has been reached to allow flexible working for all staff and requirement for Worcestershire staff to work from Warwickshire to a minimum. The use of technology will assist in staff communicating with Hub based colleagues.		
(4) How does the plan/strategy/service/policy contribute to promotion of equality? If not what can be done?	The RAA is designed to promote equality in that more harder to place children should have the opportunity of adoption		
(5) How does the plan/strategy/service/policy promote good relations between groups? If not what can be done?	The project is designed so that stakeholders are built into the governance of the new RAA and will have a greater say about the design and running of the RAA		

(6) Are there any obvious barriers to accessing the service? If yes how can they be overcome?	No, We are exploring innovative methods so that different groups can access the new service. As well as having services locally we are looking at how technology can enable accessibility.
(7) What are the likely positive and negative consequences for health and wellbeing as a result of this plan/strategy/service/policy?	Adopters and Carers of children subject to Special Guardianship Orders are, where appropriate, will be offered a range of support in order to meet the child's social, emotional, physical and psychological needs.
(8) What actions are going to be taken to reduce or eliminate negative or adverse impact on population health? (This should form part of your action plan under Stage 4.)	n/a
(9) Will the plan/strategy/service/policy increase the number of people needing to access health services? If so, what steps can be put in place to mitigate this?	NO
(10) Will the plan/strategy/service/policy reduce health inequalities? If so, how, what is the evidence?	NO
<b><u>Stage 4 – Action Planning, Review &amp; Monitoring</u></b>	The proposals towards the move to a Regional Adoption agency will go for decision December 2016 and March 2017 when the EOI will be reviewed UPDATE: These dates changed to February 2017 and November 2017

<p>If No Further Action is required then go to – Review &amp; Monitoring</p> <p>(1) Action Planning – Specify any changes or improvements which can be made to the service or policy to mitigate or eradicate negative or adverse impact on specific groups, including resource implications.</p>	<b>EqIA Action Plan</b>				
<p>(2) Review and Monitoring State how and when you will monitor policy and Action Plan</p>	<p>The project and move to the RAA is monitored by the Project Board with decisions being made in February 2017 and Oct/Nov 2017</p>				

<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Date for completion</b>	<b>Resource requirements</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Update EqIA	Project manager	December 2016	Named worker	
Consultation	Project lead	23 Nov- 23 Dec 2017	Project Admin to co-ordinate	
Respond to consultation to reach resolution	Project lead	Jan 2018	Project Admin to co-ordinate	Managers to monitor impact

Please annotate your policy with the following statement:

**‘An Equality Impact Assessment/ Analysis on this policy was undertaken on 12/4/16 and was reviewed 22/8/16 the next review is due December 2016  
Reviewed and updated 26/09/17**