

<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 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>	

<p>4.1.1 Division of part of the service into spokes and Hubs will lose valuable working relationships</p> <p>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.</p> <p>4.1.3 Division of part of the service into spokes and Hubs will lose valuable working relationships</p> <p>4.1.4 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.</p> <p>4.1.5 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</p>	<p>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</p>
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between Duty, Recruitment, Assessment, Family Finding, Panel, Pre-Order and 12 months post-order support, letterbox and then Post Order Support.

4.1.6 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.



<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. CAF/CASS 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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