ADOPT SOUTH WEST
REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY
BUSINESS CASE

March 2018

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this business case is to outline the response to the Governments requirement for adoption agencies to come together and form Regional Adoption Agencies.

The business case describes-

- the Government drive to Regional Adoption Agencies
- the benefits of 4 Local Authorities, Devon County Council, Somerset County Council, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council, coming together as a regional service
- options considered for the Adopt South West Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) model and the outcome
- what does a "hosted model" mean for Devon as the host authority, for those Local Authorities delegating adoption services to Devon
- the staffing transferring to enable delivery of services, and the related budget
- the apportionment of the budget across the 4 authorities & financial risk management
- the core content of the required Inter Authority Agreement to support the RAA

Approval of the business case by the Authority Cabinets will enable transition from 4 separate adoption services to a single service hosted by Devon with effect from October 2018

1.1 Benefits

The RAA will be pooling resources, knowledge and expertise of 4 Services, this means a the least the best practice from across the region can be adopted and in practice further improvements sought. Further, this will provide consistency to the adopter experience, a clear message from all involved in the process of adoption.

The RAA vision is that a "a good Regional Adoption Agency is"-

- focussed on the quality of work and the outcomes achieved for adopters and children at each stage of the adoption process.
- applying best practice consistently and encouraging further innovation
- a high performing service, evidenced in national reporting
- achieving value for money from contracts for services
- achieving transparent, consistent and efficient Adoption Panels
- improving recruitment level of adopters and preparing them well
- commissioning marketing and recruitment with clear requirements about volume and quality of adopters for hard to place children
- creating a system where children are matched with the most suitable adopter as quickly as possible
- more children achieving permanence through adoption
- providing sufficient, high quality adoption support services that meets demand
- making best use of the existing market and enabling the market to grow in scope and scale for sustainability of adoption support services

1.2 Outcomes:

The outcomes required of the RAA services are to be monitored and reported through to each Local Authority to track performance. There are listed below:

- Improve the number of placements available for harder to place/ priority children through the cumulative impact of 5 strategies;
    - Improve timescales for second time adopter assessments with access to the original assessment and update the changes since the last approval. The target is to complete this in 3 months.
    - See a higher conversion rate from enquiry to approval of prospective adopters through a Marketing and Recruitment contract focussed on quality of adopters and the quality of early assessment to create a larger pool of quality adopters. The target is a 10% improvement in the conversion rate.

  - Early identification of children with potential adoption plans through improvement and consistency in joint working, attending permanence planning meetings / gateway meetings / tracking meetings and regular consultation with Team Managers / Social Workers in the authorities to identify children at the earliest opportunity. The target is for children to be linked with a prospective adopter within 1 month of a Placement Order being made.
  - More children placed on an Early Permanence (Fostering to Adopt) basis through improvement in the interface with authorities' teams, every child will be considered for a Fostering for Adoption placement
  - Reduction in the number of children with a Placement Order revoked by the improved quality of adopters identified through the marketing and recruitment contract. The target is a 5% reduction

- Reduce the number [cost] of Inter Agency placements outside the RAA. There is significant challenge and also an opportunity in delivering to this target. Currently the 4 authorities spend more on placements outside the region than those achieved within the region.
- To improve the stability of placements and retention of recruited adopters through the cumulative impact of 5 strategies
  - More timely matching of approved adopters through improved processes and interfaces with the authorities, the target is for an adopter to be linked with prospective children within 1 month from the Authority Decision Maker (ADM) decision
  - Reduce the length of time from adoption placement to adoption order for children with early support offered to adopters prior to children being placed and reduction in delays of the Adoption Support Fund application being completed by the social worker.
  - Reduction in the number of placement breakdowns providing better early support for Adopters, for example identifying therapeutic support at the earliest opportunity. The target is a 5% reduction in breakdowns.
  - Fewer Adoption de-registrations because a match has not been identified for the family. Recruiting the adopters for the children we have waiting within the RAA through the Marketing and Recruitment contract; being transparent with adopters about the complexities children can bring and the range of support available. The target is a 10% reduction in de-registrations.
- Further improvements:
  - Increase in birth family referrals. By having one provider offering all the support to birth families, this is likely to increase birth family engagement as they only need to make one relationship. The target is a 10% increase.
  - More timely information, advice and counselling to Step-parents interested in adoption on the range of options available that may be more appropriate and enable the child relationship with the wider family to be maintained.
  - Should adoption be the preferred route then Step-parent assessments will set clear expectations on the completion date for submission of applications to the Court to minimise Court delays. The target is that assessments will be completed with 6 months of referral.

- Improved data collection for performance measurement and management effectiveness across the service; to have a system which accepts all key data required for reporting; minimise manual inputting; generates required reporting with minimal manual intervention; handles imported data safely and securely; supports matching.

1.3 Key features of the RAA proposal

- **Governance**

RAA Business case

A single host Local Authority model means that adoption service functions for the partner authorities of Somerset County Council, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council will be delegated to Devon County Council.

There will be an RAA Operational Board led by senior managers from the Local Authorities to oversee service performance and have responsibility for the annual plan and budget. There is also a Strategic Partnership Group, which has a broader more strategic role bringing together partners and key stakeholders, including Lead Members from the four Councils, to forge the strategic direction for improvement of the RAA, reflecting national policy as well as local considerations.

- **Structure and staffing**

The Devon hosted solution sees a RAA under one management structure. The structure has the required governance to focus both on the immediate operation and performance of the single service, whilst acknowledging the need to determine the most appropriate strategies for future development and improvement of adoption services.

The operational structure clearly defines the RAA Service Manager role with a focus on the future development and improvement and involving closer working with partners, for example in health and education. This role is supported by Locality Managers focussed on day to day management and operational performance of the hosted service.

Stability and assurance of outcomes is critical to success of the RAA and the greatest asset of any service is its staff. The option of secondments of staff from other authorities was considered, however this is normally used for short term or project assignments and key learning from other such situations is that whilst this approach can work it brings complexity and crucially does not encourage the feeling of being part of a new dedicated service, nor does it best prepare staff for changes that will be required of them, for example practice alignment. These are better addressed by providing a feeling of unity created by a single employer model.

Accordingly, it is proposed that the RAA operates with those staff transferring from Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay to Devon under TUPE delivering and supporting the adoption services being transferred[1] . TUPE will afford protection to the staff regarding dismissal and their terms and conditions of employment.

The staffing arrangement, to TUPE transfer staff from the partners to Devon County Council will ensure a consistent way of operating, processes, policies and practice to optimise performance. This also ensures any interface with the RAA by Children's social workers or Voluntary Agencies or indeed health and education sees a consistent response. This arrangement also responds to feedback from Adopters about a confusion of processes and paperwork and adoption panel procedures across the region with different guidance and support from across the region.

The staffing structure and allocation of staff across the region reflects the location of demand rather than historic arrangements, and will exhibit, commitment to opportunities for career progression, whilst acknowledging the reality of changing locations of operation.

- **Budget**

The principles of the financial arrangements are on the critical path to approval of the RAA. The challenge is how to balance the goals of the RAA to increase the number of adoptions, driving up demand on all aspects of the service (assessments, support) whilst all funding LAs' are under budgetary pressures. The commitment is that the base budget set for the RAA 'does not exceed the cumulative budgets 'of the constituent authorities, including costs attributable to the Host.

[1] "Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006" as amended by the "Collective Redundancies and Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (Amendment) Regulations 2014". The TUPE rules apply to organisations of all sizes and protect employees' rights when the undertaking or service they work for transfers to a new organisation.

RAA Business case

The common starting point for the development of the budget is that-

- The RAA is stable and sustainable;
- An agreed funded budget with apportionment of that budget that is transparent and accepted by all.
- Corporate service overhead costs (titled 'new overheads') will be surfaced by creating the RAA budget e.g. finance, HR and other support functions, these costs will be apportioned as part of the overall budget; There will be corresponding reductions in each of the individual authorities and the opportunity exists to realise these as tangible savings, however each authority will need to consider the local issues to determine if they will be realised.
- Risk management mechanisms will be required to address budget overspend and underspend driven by significant variation in activity/ demand/ funding because of Local Authority initiatives/ strategies or Government policy/ direction
- Set up costs will be incurred;

The resulting budget is outlined below and shown over 2 full years of operations, it should be noted that the service plan and budget will be reviewed annually under the terms of the Inter Authority Agreement.

Table 1- RAA budgets 2018/19 and 2019/2020

Regional Adoption Agency	DRAFT BUDGET				
Budget heading	2018/19 LA Budgets £	2018/19 Draft RAA Budget £	Change £	2019/20 Draft RAA Budget £	Change 2018/19 to 2019/20 £
Staffing costs	£3,561,467	£3,145,900	(£415,567)	£3,210,462	(£351,005)
Other staffing related costs	£264,003	£217,063	(£46,940)	£217,063	(£46,940)
Other Non Staffing Related Costs	£358,994	£358,994	£0	£358,994	£0
Inter-Agency Fees (net)	£588,200	£601,815	£13,615	£601,815	£13,615
Additional Adoption Panel Costs	£0	£89,338	£89,338	£64,240	£64,240
New Overheads	£0	£253,154	£253,154	£254,389	£254,389
	£4,772,664	**£4,666,263**	**(£106,401)**	**£4,706,963**	**(£65,701)**

The full year comparison for the individual authorities is illustrated below; as the RAA will be implemented mid financial year there will be a final version refreshed prior to October 2018 to reflect the actual position at that time.

The proposed RAA budget and model in the first year as an RAA sees an overall full year reduction of £ 106,401 when directly comparing all four current Local Authority budgets for 2018/19 and £ 65,701 in 2019/20. Full detail is provided in section 8.
This also indicates

Table 2- RAA full year budget compared to individual authorities 18/19 budgets

	Revised budget based on a weighted formula approach	£ value change to18/19 Budget	%age change to 18/19 Budget	Pressure	£ value change to 18/19 Budget plus pressure	%age change to budget plus pressure	Proportion of New Budget
Devon	1,695,361	(51,089)	-2.93%	0	(51,089)	-2.93%	36.33%
Plymouth	1,027,168	(46,022)	-4.29%	0	(46,022)	-4.29%	22.01%
Somerset	1,138,707	25,103	2.25%	61,080	(35,977)	-3.23%	24.40%
Torbay	805,026	(34,395)	-4.10%	0	(34,395)	-4.10%	17.26%
	4,666,262	**(106,402)**		**61,080**	**(167,482)**		

Table 3- funding formula summary- apportionment of RAA budget to Local Authority

RAA Business case

The apportionment of the RAA budget across the local authorities is driven by an agreed formula, this is described in section 8.3 of the report and will be formalised in the Inter Authority Agreement created following approval of the RAA by each Local Authority Cabinet.

Authority	Revised budget based on a weighted formula approach	Proportion of New Budget
Devon	£1,695,361	36.33%
Plymouth	£1,027,168	22.01%
Somerset	£1,138,707	24.40%
Torbay	£805,030	17.26%
	£4,666,266	

There will be set-up costs of between £90,000 and £120,000. This is largely for DCC devices and phones for staff not already provided with DCC equipment, also the technical ability for RAA staff to operate out of any of the partner offices. There is also some work around RAA specific statutory reporting, and local reporting for partners to monitor performance of the RAA. There is also a small sum to handle removals and similar transition arrangements. This is covered by the full year savings, however the RAA is only operating for 6 months in the first financial year so arrangements will be made to manage this potential shortfall ahead of the October launch.

- **Legal agreement**

The Inter Authority Agreement is the legal representation of the form and function of the RAA and incorporates but is not limited to the following:

- arrangements that enable all partners to meet statutory duties & responsibilities
- operational responsibilities across the Local Authorities and RAA
- financial arrangements including the management of exceptions, short-fall or surplus
- entry and exit strategies for members of the RAA
- RAA governance, staffing and structure
- Information Governance to enable information sharing to support a “single service” operation and required national and statutory reporting.

1.4 Next steps

Following approval of the Devon hosted RAA by the partner Cabinets the summary actions are -

- April 2018 onwards- implementation of joint working in identified areas of practice e.g. Joint Panels, Joint Matching and other improvements identified so there is no “standing start” for the RAA, but that it is a continuation of improvements
- Apr - Jul 2018 commence the TUPE transfer process
- Jul - Sept 2018 preparation and transition to the new service, completing HR processes; office moves completed and IT rolled out
- **OCTOBER 2018- DfE “requirements of a RAA” achieved- pooled budget, joint practice under single management.**
- November 2018 first formal meeting of new Operation Board and Strategic Partnership Group

This concludes the executive summary.

2 PURPOSE

The purpose of this business case is to outline the Devon County Council, Somerset County Council, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council response to the Governments requirement for adoption agencies to come together and form Regional Adoption Agencies by forming the Adopt South West Regional Adoption Agency.

The business case describes-

- the benefits of 4 Authorities coming together as a regional service
- options considered for the RAA model and the preferred outcome
- what this means for Devon as the host authority and the functions delegated to Devon
- the staffing transferred to enable delivery of services, and the related budget
- the apportionment of the budget across the 4 authorities & financial risk management
- the core content of the legal Inter Authority Agreement required

Approval of the business case by the Authority Cabinets will enable transition from 4 separate adoption services to a single local authority hosted [Devon] Regional Adoption Agency by October 2018.

The business case describes the background and context of the National Regional Adoption Agency programme, outlining the models defined by the Department for Education and considered by the partner Local Authorities and the Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the subsequent selection of a Devon hosted model. The regional context is then set out describing the current Ofsted performance, scale of staffing and 2018/19 adoption budgets of the partner local authorities. The required budget for operation of the RAA is then outlined and a description of the variance to the Local Authority budgets and the management of the required set up costs.

The goals of the hosted RAA are outlined and then operationalised with clear targets described that are both transparent and measurable. There follows a description of constituent service elements delivered by the RAA and the treatment of existing contracts.

The supporting governance arrangements to maintain accountability and scrutiny are laid out together with the planned organisation of the RAA and staff employment arrangements.

The ability of RAA staff to operate as a single service across the region drives the need for technology solutions as well as a specific information governance agreement. There is a description of key principles adopted in defining appropriate office bases i.e. that retain the key interfaces with Child Care social workers, and that are accessible to the public for required meetings with potential adopters to support them through the Adoption journey. The details of who works where will be finalised through consultation with staff and Trades Unions as part of the TUPE work following approval of the Business Case by all authorities.

The Business Case then moves on in section 8 to describe the detail of the funding model and risk sharing protocols that will underpin a stable and sustainable arrangement, with section 9 providing the definition of the legal agreement that addresses statutory duties, responsibilities and accountabilities of the Regional Adoption Agency and the Local Authorities, the funding arrangements together with the exit strategy to reflect changes in policy or direction of travel at local or national level

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 National context

In June 2015, the Department for Education (DfE) published ‘Regionalising Adoption’ and asked all adoption agencies in England to consider how to work much more closely together on a regional basis. The Adoption and Children Act 2002 makes provision for authorities and voluntary adoption agencies to join together to form Regional Adoption Agencies (RAA).

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The Section 15 of the Education and Adoption Act 2016 once fully in force will give the Secretary of State a new power to direct one or more named local authorities to make arrangements for any or all of their adoption functions to be carried out on their behalf by one of the local authorities named, or by another agency.

The Government's view is that structural change will improve the process for children and adopters. Key elements will be:

- service delivery has at its heart innovation and practice excellence;
- highly skilled professionals who make high quality, evidence based decisions and do not tolerate delay for children in their care; matches are made without unnecessary delay;
- Regional Adoption Agencies provide a large pool of adopters for every child in need of a new family;
- where a match is not immediately available within the Regional Adoption Agency, the search is extended nationally without delay;
- every adoptive family has access to an on-going package of appropriate support with a right to a high quality, specialist assessment of need. This support is delivered from day one and continues throughout childhood whenever it is required;
- the voice of adopters and their children is at the heart of national and local policy decision making and delivery of services.

The DfE expects the Regional Adoption Agency programme to deliver consistently good and innovative adoption practice that ensures improved life chances for children.

The National Adoption Leadership Board, who collate and analyse adoption statistics of all adoption agencies, reported the following trends[2]

- **Adoption numbers are falling.** Data suggest that the number of adoptions fell slightly between quarter 4 2015-16 and quarter 1 2016-17, from 1,120 to 1,060. 4,690 adoptions in 2015-16 is a decrease of 670 from 5,360 in 2014-15
- Data suggests that the **number of new decisions has continued to fall** from 1,850 in quarter 2 2013-14 to 1,080 in quarter 1 2016-17, a decrease of 42%
- Quarterly data also suggest **new placement orders granted have continued to fall** from 1,630 in quarter 2 2013-14 to 890 in quarter 1 2016-17, a decrease of 45%
- Projected uplifts suggest that new decisions and placement orders may have plateaued between quarter 4 2015-16 and quarter 1 2016-17
- The number of **adopter registrations decreased** by 14% between quarter 4 2015-16 and quarter 1 2016-17, from 840 to 730. The number of adopter approvals increased by 1% from 700 to 710.

Alongside the Regional Adoption Agency agenda, the national challenges facing the sector outlined through analysis by the National Adoption Leadership Board are:

- Since September 2013, the number of decisions for adoption has almost halved because of the impact of recent court cases.
- The number of Placement Orders granted has also declined nationally. The Government argues this "highlights weaknesses in the way permanence decisions are being made, and raises questions about whether social workers are being supported to develop the skills and knowledge they need to make and defend robust professional judgments".
- Workforce development and close work between the Regional Adoption Agencies, the children's social care teams, and Local Family Justice Boards will be key to addressing this issue, and to the success of Regional Adoption Agencies.

[2] ALB Headline Measures and Business Intelligence Ref: DFE-00038-2017 Accessed 16/03/2017 at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/584616/ALB_Business_Intelligence_Quarter_1_2016_to_2017.pdf

3.2 Regional Context

The Adopt South West regional adoption partnership was launched in April 2015. The adoption agencies in the Adopt South West partnership are Devon County Council, Plymouth City Council, Torbay Council, Somerset County Council, Barnardo's and Families for Children. The scope of the Adopt South West partnership has been the co-operation and co-delivery in marketing and recruitment of adopters and the running of information days and training events for adopters to develop the support available for adopters and improve the matching of children. All other adoption services remained within the discrete organisations.

3.3 Performance

It is not possible to compare the performance of the group of 4 Local Authorities to national performance more recently that 2015/16 due to the way that the National Adoption Leadership Board reports, current data is only available for 2015/16.

Across the Adopt South West region, between 2012 and 2017, there has been a 43% increase in the number of looked after children to 2,692 and a 31% increase in the number of adoptions; however, in line with national trends the number of adoptions over the past 3 years are declining, this is evidenced in Table 1 below that depicts the number of Children approved for placement and the number of Adopters approved over the past 3 years.

Table 1:

Data for the Region	**2013/14**	**2014/15**	**2015/16**	**2016/17**
Children needing placements	165	139	150	140
Adopters approved	126	127	104	74

It is evident that there is more capacity is required to increase the pool of adopters for children needing placement, as performance has dropped consistently across the area since 2015. This is an example where best practice will be sought out, looked at for improvement and then become standard practice across the area.

Over the past 3 years the number of Looked after Children has continued to increase whilst the number of Looked after Children adopted has reduced by 4.13% returning to levels seen in 2013/14 from a peak in 2014/15. This is in line with government expectations that no more than 10% of Looked After Children be adopted, with the majority supported to remain in the birth family environment.

Table 2: Looked After Children adopted

	2015	**2016**	**2017**	**% LAC adopted 3yr Variance**
Plymouth	10.13%	5.98%	7.30%	-2.83%
Devon	8.57%	3.72%	4.85%	-3.72%
Somerset	11.22%	6.99%	4.67%	-6.55%
Torbay	6.56%	7.50%	3.58%	-2.98%
Total	9.26%	5.59%	5.13%	-4.13%

Statistically the region overall is performing better than 3 years ago, and this trend will look to be continued.

Similar trends in statistical performance are being seen across the partners in the Adopt South West Region, however one of the key issues for the development of a RAA is the current differential in adoption performance across the Local Authorities with varying grades in Ofsted Inspection; Torbay, Plymouth 'Require Improvement' with Devon and Somerset judged 'Good'. None the of the Adopt South West local authorities are rated 'outstanding' in this area, in

comparison to 1 in 10 nationally. The Voluntary Adoption Agencies in the region perform well and will remain an important partner of the RAA.

It is clear there is a need to secure best practice and outcomes and share this across the region, whilst guarding against any deterioration in performance for individual agencies. This is a key outcome for the RAA.

3.4 Current budgets 2018/19

The current position regarding budgets for Adoption Services across the Local Authorities is provided to illustrate the scale of spend involved in the RAA proposal.

The total adoption budget for Devon, Torbay, Plymouth and Somerset in 2018/19 is £16.01m, excluding corporate overheads. Generally, budgets remain under pressure across all four Local Authorities.

Table 3: Combined budgets 2018/19

	18/19 Budget (Exc Overheads)
Devon	1,746,450
Plymouth	1,073,190
Somerset	1,113,604
Torbay	839,421
	4,772,664

3.5 Current Staffing

At 31st December, the numbers of staff estimated to be specifically delivering adoption services to be delivered by the RAA within the 4 authorities is 84.75 FTE.

Table 4: Combined staffing-

Existing FTE by Role	Devon	Plymouth	Somerset	Torbay	Total FTE
Team/ Practice manager	1.86	2.00	1.56	2.00	**7.43**
Advanced Practitioner	0.00	1.60	0.00	0.00	**1.60**
Social Worker	18.61	7.68	12.74	3.23	**42.26**
Professional support	3.19	2.00	1.61	3.10	**9.90**
Business support	5.98	3.50	4.65	1.07	**15.20**
Total Fte [rounded]	**29.64**	**16.78**	**20.57**	**9.40**	**76.39**
Senior Management attributed to Adoption services and Adoption Panel staff					8.36
					84.75

- *Estimation is required due to the number of staff working in closely related children's services functions in each authority, figures will be further refined through the TUPE process*

4 2016 OPTIONS APPRAISAL

4.1 Model Options

The work began early in 2016 with an appraisal of the four models for a Regional Adoption Agency defined by Government, using the prescribed scoring tools. This was completed by the Director/ Heads of Service in Plymouth, Torbay, Somerset and Devon together with Families for Children and Barnardo's the leading Voluntary Adoption Agencies in the area and informed by engagement with adoption services staff, adopters and Adoption Panel Chairs.

The option preferred was a Single Local Authority Hosted Regional Adoption Agency with Devon identified as the most appropriate host. The submission to DfE for grant funding of the development of this solution by 1st April 2018 was accepted and £607,000 grant funding achieved for 2016/17 and 2017/18. The release of the allocation for 2017/18 was subject to acceptable progress being made by March 2017, this checkpoint was successfully achieved.

The Devon hosted model sees certain Adoption services transfer from Torbay Council, Plymouth City Council and Somerset County Council to Devon as the host of the Regional Adoption Agency. The "Adopt South West" brand has been retained as it is known and understood by adopters and the public; this was previously used for partnership arrangements between the local authorities and Voluntary Adoption Agencies for the purpose of marketing for, and recruitment of, Adopters that expired in March 2017.

Adopt South West is one of 19 such groups funded to achieve a Regional Adoption Agency, and one of the early decisions required was which delivery model to select. The DfE prescribed four possible options for a delivery model for a Regional Adoption Agency and provided a national scoring system as a tool to aid discussions, the purpose of which was to examine the desirability, feasibility and viability of each option.

DfE Prescribed Options:

1. A Local Authority single host, on behalf of several Local Authorities e.g. Aspire, Dorset hosts services for three Local Authorities.
2. Joint Venture between Local Authorities; a new public sector owned Local Authority Trading Co. e.g. Achieving for Children, Kingston and Richmond's Children's Services
3. A new Voluntary Adoption Agency; possibly a Joint Venture with flexibility for public & third sector ownership, e.g. Entrust Schools Service in Staffordshire.
4. Existing Voluntary Adoption Agency; Local Authorities involved commission an existing Voluntary Adoption Agency to deliver the RAA, e.g. Coram.

4.2 Preferred Option

The six partners in the Adopt South West adoption agency partnership scored the benefits of each option against an agreed set of assessment criteria (for a summary see Appendix 1). This was completed by the Regional Adoption Agency project governance group, consisting of the Local Authorities Director/ Heads of Service, Executives of Families for Children and Barnardo's Voluntary Adoption Agencies and Chaired by the Director of Children's Services from Somerset.

Following consideration of each possible model, the preference was for Option 1: A Local Authority single host on behalf of several Local Authorities. See Appendix 1 for further detail.

There has been consideration of this arrangement as an interim step to considering Option 2 further, however this has been further reflected upon drawing on others experience and DfE learning from the broader Nation RAA Programme in the autumn of 2017 and is not to be progressed.

The clear benefit of the Local Authority Hosted model identified would be to achieve the integration of the four Local Authority adoption services into one service, providing a best practice model that maintains and develops the current relationship with Voluntary agencies established in the delivery of the Adopt South West partnership.

Further to this, it was proposed that Devon County Council host the interim Regional Agency Adoption as Devon;

- Operates an adoption service rated Good;
- Has successfully innovated in many areas (e.g. foster to adopt, young people's engagement);

- Has the capacity to deliver given the size of the agency and the Local Authority;
- Has the experience of developing other services that Devon hosts for the region;
- Is centrally placed geographically.

The development of the RAA will not absolve each Local Authority of its statutory responsibilities but will allow for certain functions to be delegated to Devon as the host authority. Devon will then become responsible for the performance of those functions, on behalf of the partner Local Authorities, subject to the governance arrangements set out later in this document.

By becoming the 'host' Devon allows for all relevant functions and resources of each Local Authority to be transferred to it as host in 2018 and is responsible for ensuring effective arrangement for, and the transfer of, services to the RAA within the expected timescales as set out to the Department for Education.

4.3 Delegated functions

In summary after the required agreements are in place, the host becomes responsible for;

- Providing leadership for all adoption services across the RAA
- Recruitment, assessment and training of adopters
- Post Adoption support for all children within the designated boundaries.
- Oversight of Adoption Support Fund applications
- Family finding and matching child with adopter
- Agency Decision Maker for the adopters
- Adoption support for any child that moves out the RAA area, for a period of 3 years.
- Quality assurance framework for adoption
- Accountability for the adoption service aspect of a Local Authority Ofsted inspection framework.

Full detail of responsibilities remaining with the Local Authorities and those transferring to the Regional Adoption Agency can be found in Appendix 2 'Responsibility Matrix'.

The details of the functions being delegated to Devon by the other three authorities will be recorded in the Inter Authority Agreement.

5 VISION FOR THE DEVON HOSTED REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY

5.1 Vision

The Government's view is that structural change will improve the process for children and adopters. The Department for Education expects the Regional Adoption Agency programme to deliver consistently good and more innovative adoption practice that ensures improved life chances for children, through:

- Improved adopter recruitment
- Improved timeliness of placing children
- More children achieving permanence through adoption
- Improved adoption support

The stated vision agreed by the partner authorities for the RAA to achieve improved outcomes for children and families is to-

- Create a system where children are matched with the most suitable adopter as quickly as possible.
- Achieve sufficient scale of Adopter recruitment to provide a pool of adopters, well prepared and well matched to the needs of children waiting.
- Offer sufficient, high quality adoption support services; effective short-term interventions, sign posting and enabling access to appropriate support

This will be achieved with a value for money service, that

- encourages innovation in practice;
- actively listens to and learns from children, adopters and staff to develop and improve the services provided;
- draws on the best practice across the region and make this the standard; and
- delivers consistently across the region.

The RAA will create a system where recruitment takes place at a sufficient scale to provide a pool of 'adoption ready' adopters that are well matched to the needs of children waiting; that is large enough so that children are matched with the most suitable adopter as quickly as possible and that offers an adoption support service that is of a high quality.

5.2 Outcomes

The key outcomes set for the RAA reflect DfE intentions for the Regional Adoption Agencies programme, national performance standards as well by what a successful adoption service looks like as told by partners, children and adopters-

- Improved life chances for children
- Developing services with Adopters to achieve better outcomes for Children
- Reduced delays for children and adopters throughout the Adoption journey
- Taking what we do best and making it consistent across the region;
- Taking opportunities for innovative practice across the spectrum
- A cost-effective service for all Local Authorities
- Improved practice and support, regardless of the permanence option
- Improved support for Adopters, Birth Parents and their families
- Place children with families more effectively and with minimal disruption
- The RAA will work together with Voluntary Adoption Agencies, Adopters and Parents to improve practice

The achievement of these outcomes for children and adults affected by adoption will see benefits for each Local Authority. There will be benefits reflected in LAC performance and budgets and there will be a clear link to the Early Permanence agenda and strategies.

Ofsted will not inspect the RAA as an entity but as the provider of services to the Local Authority being inspected.

5.3 Success measures

The RAA will target improved performance in areas that will reflect the vision and outcomes described for the RAA at national and local level. The planned process of building RAA data from the ground up will ensure robustness of data provided for national reporting purposes.

Each service area has a clear target set for Year 1 and a method of measurement identified and agreed. A further target is to improve the collection of key data to improve reporting across the service supporting managers in early identification of success or of areas for rapid improvement focus.

The outcomes described in section 5.2 have resulted in the following measures being selected-

- Improved timescales for second time adopter assessments
- Higher conversion rate from enquiry to approval of prospective adopters
- Early identification of children with potential adoption plans
- More children placed on an Early Permanence (Fostering to Adopt) basis
- Reduction in the number of children with their placement order revoked
- More timely matching of approved adopters

- Reduced length of time from adoption placement to adoption order for children
- Improve the percentage of children adopted from care
- Fewer Adoption de-registrations because a match has not been identified for the family
- Fewer Adoption placement disruption
- Increase in birth family referrals
- Improved number and quality of adopters
- More timely step-parent adoption assessments
- Improvement in number of placements available for harder to place/ priority children
- Improved performance measurement and management across the service

These measures will deliver into the National Adoption Scorecard, Adoption Leadership Board records or act as quality makers for the RAA. This is detailed in Appendix 3

6 THE RAA OPERATING MODEL

6.1 Operating model

The operating model describes the services that will be delivered by the RAA. The services remaining the responsibility of the Local Authority are dictated by statute, namely responsibility for Special Guardianship work as well as responsibility for Life Story Books for the child (RAA will continue to contribute).

Table 5: Regional Adoption Agency functions

Service Area	RAA Service
Marketing & recruitment	Recruitment
	Marketing
	Information days
Assessment & Training	Assessment
	Step parent adoption counselling
	Adopter training
	Preparation
	Adoption Panel
Matching & Family Finding	Matching
	Family finding
	Foster to adopt
Adoption support	Early placement support
	Post order support
	Birth Family work; post adoption contact;letterbox; counselling (Adoptees)
	Therapeutic support (ASF)
Intercountry adoption	Assessment

Note: **SGO Assessment & Support** is retained by LA's. **Life Story Books** responsibility retained in the LA's

Regional Adoption Agency and Local Authority respective responsibilities are further detailed in Appendix 2.

6.2 Service provision

Currently the Local Authority partners directly provide or commission various aspects of service in different ways. The agreed operating model for the RAA sees alignment of Adoption services that will be directly delivered and others that will be secured from the voluntary sector/ adoption services market.

In defining the source and scale of services commissioned, the focus on early support to Adopters by all Local Authorities will shape the future estimated of demand for post adoption support. There will also be consideration of improvements in accessing existing support such as CAMHS that can impact on the demand for commissioned service.

The interface and close working with local authority child social workers influence on the early permanence agenda will be reflected in the staffing structure proposed for the RAA.

6.3 Commissioning

Any existing contracts will either be novated to Devon County Council as host of the RAA or ended and then re-tendered. The most cost-effective approach will be taken dependant on individual contract terms and conditions.

A function delegated to Devon as the host is the commissioning of service elements from Voluntary Adoption Agencies, other voluntary organisations and the wider provider market. The focus of such contracts, in line with the outcome based strategy, will be on the outcomes to be achieved for each individual or family.

The timing of such commissions is to be assessed noting that some types of support services have not previously been sought from the market and will require early engagement and potentially partnership working to develop a market with requisite skills and capabilities.

The market place for therapeutic support services is more developed with an extensive network of therapists currently offering services across the RAA area. This market has not however been actively managed as a whole to date, this is to be addressed by an Adoption Support Framework arrangement with tender preparations now in the final stage.

7 RAA ORGANISATION

7.1 Governance

The Governance of the RAA will be arranged to ensure strategic roles for the Voluntary agencies, Local Authority Lead Members, Health and other partners and User Group representation, whilst also reflecting the operational oversight required by the host and partner authorities, through a Board structure.

There will be terms of reference developed for both forums reflecting responsibilities and accountabilities for the operation of the RAA, a summary is provided below.

- **RAA Operational Board**: consisting of Heads or Directors of service, with responsibilities agreed between the four authorities and documented in the Inter Authority Agreement.

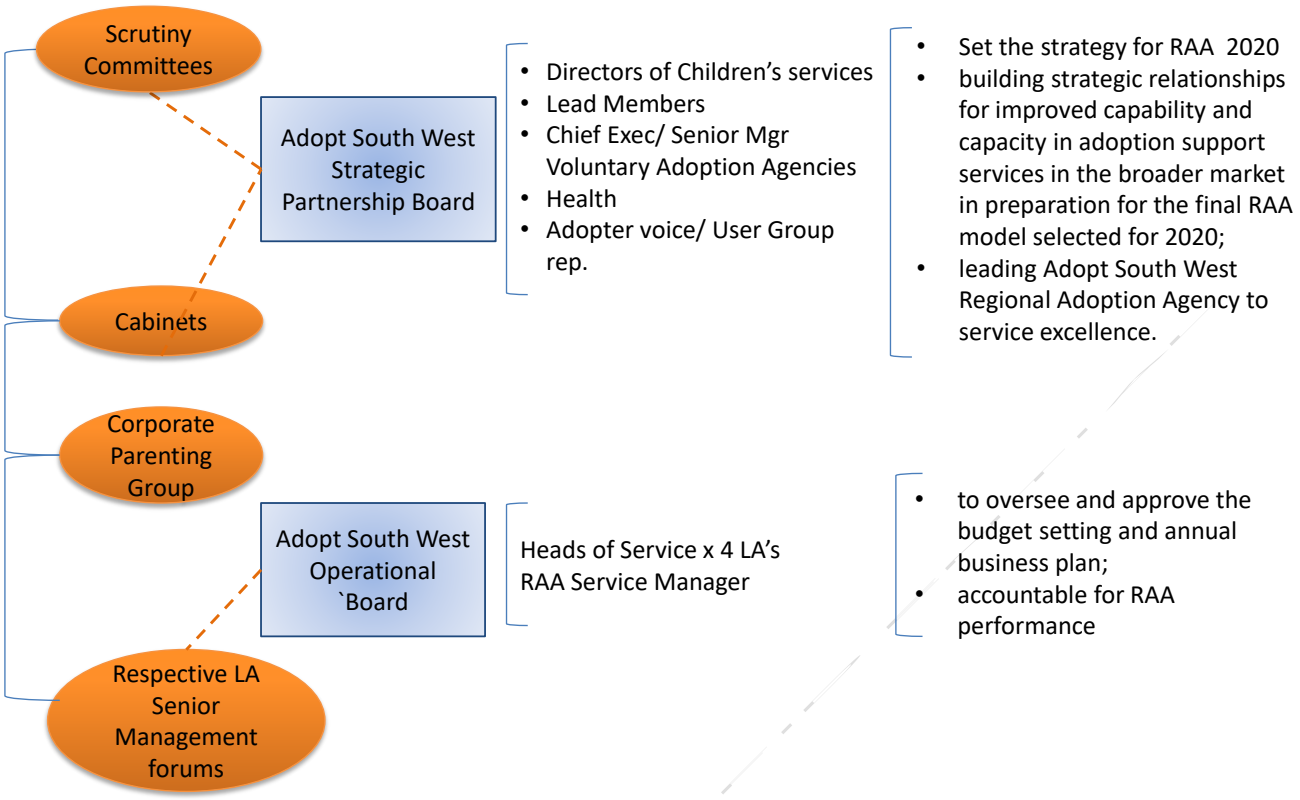
Purpose: to oversee and approve the budget setting and annual business plan; accountable for the performance of the RAA, reporting to the relevant scrutiny panel of each participating authority.

This means that day-to-day operational decisions will be taken by the RAA Service Manager and other 'reserved' decisions (a strategic or financial nature) will be referred to the Operational Board. As participants on the Operational Board, each authority would need to make its own decision and therefore the Board could only act by unanimous agreement of the authorities. The Operational Board would only be able to make decisions to the extent that the members and officers on the Operational Board have the requisite authority from their appointing Local Authority. Certain decisions referred to the Operational Board may then be referred to each of the authorities for further consideration.

- **RAA Strategic Partnership Board**: comprising the relevant executive officer and Cabinet member for each authority, involving Voluntary Adoption Agency and User group representation and other strategic partners e.g. health.

Purpose: To set the strategy for RAA 2020, building strategic relationships for improved capability and capacity in adoption support services in the broader market, reflecting national priorities and leading Adopt South West RAA to service excellence.

Illustration 6: Summary view of RAA Governance



7.2 Staff employment arrangements

As host Local Authority of RAA Devon County Council will be assuming many responsibilities for service delivery. Stability and assurance of outcomes is critical to success and the greatest asset of any service is its staff.

The ability to determine when to recruit, who to appoint, to have clear lines of management for the staff, and a consistent way of working, is required. Achieving change is always a challenge, so a clear leadership statement of commitment to the RAA by each of the Local Authorities is important to help staff adjust to new ways of working and create a "single service" identity.

The option of secondments of staff from other authorities was considered however this is normally used for short term or project assignments rather than long term arrangements. There are also complexities with continued commitment to existing Local Authorities whilst operating on behalf of another. Key learning from other such situations is that whilst this approach can work it brings complexity and crucially does not encourage the staff feeling part of a new dedicated service, nor does it best prepare staff for changes that will be required of them whether to practice, or organisational and management arrangements. These are better addressed by providing a feeling of unity created by a single employer model.

Accordingly, it is proposed that the RAA operates with those staff transferring from Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay to Devon under TUPE delivering and supporting the adoption services being transferred[3] . TUPE will afford protection to the staff regarding dismissal and their terms and conditions of employment.

[3] "Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006" as amended by the "Collective Redundancies and Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (Amendment) Regulations 2014". The TUPE rules apply to organisations of all sizes and protect employees' rights when the undertaking or service they work for transfers to a new organisation.

This will see staff equivalent to an estimated 45 FTE transfer to Devon as the host of the RAA. At this point the FTE number is estimated as the detail of staff currently undertaking split roles needs to be worked through as part of the formal TUPE process.

7.3 Structure and locations

The structure and location of offices will be finalised in consultation with the staff and Trade Unions. The key principles of the structure will reflect best practice and support innovation, these include-

- listening to Adopters and Children's wish to have consistent support throughout [the end to end adoption journey]
- application of the 'right skills for the right work'
- maintaining key interfaces with Child Care Social Workers
- flexibility; proportionate response to demand
- support consistency and embed quality in practice;
- providing staff development opportunities
- a career progression pathway
- outcome based commissioning

The corporate support functions of Finance, IT and HR will be provided by DCC as host, and operate out of Exeter where they are currently located.

7.4 Technology and estates

The local authorities operate a range of children's service systems and multiple spreadsheets to support the adoption service activity. It is not feasible or practical to effect a whole scale integration of four Children's social care systems.

The agreed practical solution is that the Regional Adoption Agency case management system will be Devon's Eclipse system.

The principles adopted to support the interim working arrangements are as follows-

- all RAA staff to receive and operate Devon devices
- on site secure access to relevant Child Services systems across Local Authorities for named RAA staff is to be enabled
- ability for RAA staff to access Eclipse and Devon email from partner authorities named premises
- physical space/ work stations enabled for RAA staff to work out of named partner authority premises, or hot desk, as required

There are precedents for these arrangements across the Local Authorities and/ or Health partners.

7.5 Information Governance

Data and information will be required for the day to day operation and management of the RAA.

The information governance implication has been recognised by Government and there will be new legislation introduced in April 2018 to support and simplify RAA operations.

Nationally

- Ofsted
- Adoption Leadership Board
- Department for Education

Management Information also is required to be presented to:

- the RAA management team
- the RAA Operations Board and Strategic Partnership Board
- Local Authority senior managers and elected members

An initial data transfer from Local Authority systems of live Adopter cases will be required; historic data will remain with the Local Authorities. Similarly, current case paper records will transfer to the RAA and historic records retained and archived by the Local Authorities.

An Information Governance agreement is being developed to enable Adopt South West Regional Adoption Agency staff to operate effectively and within legislation e.g. transfer of historic and current Adopter records, view and view/edit access to Child records.

This will be completed and approved by the Caldicott Guardians and then incorporated into the Inter Authority Agreement before the RAA becomes operational.

8 RAA BUDGET

8.1 2018/19 position

The current position regarding budgets for Adoption Services across the Local Authorities is provided to illustrate the scale of costs involved in the Adopt South West Regional Adoption Agency proposal.

Table 7: Combined budgets 2018/19

Budget heading	2018/19 LA Budgets £
Staffing costs	£3,407,767
Other staffing related costs	£347,650
Other Non Staffing Related Costs	£429,047
Inter-Agency Fees (net)	£588,200
	£4,772,664

Note: There are current budget pressures that have also been reflected appropriately in the preparation of the Regional Adoption Agency budget, see table 11.

8.2 Budget for Adopt South West RAA from 2018

The Adopt South West Regional Adoption Agency budget is produced based on a principle of 'no additional Adoption revenue budget cost to any Local Authority or the Host', for example with inflation and staff pay awards addressed through delivery of efficiencies.

The proposed budget for the RAA operation has been defined reflecting the planned operating model and staffing structure, also recognising corporate overheads not normally applied in the Adoption budgets but now exposed and attributed to Devon as the RAA Host that include but are not constrained to-

- HR support services for staff; local authorities will transfer budget to the host e.g. additional Payroll activity, Pensions overheads, related to the staff transfer
- Training and professional development of staff
- IT, the requirement of Devon equipment for all transferred staff; set up and training and ongoing costs associated to furnishing laptops/Desktop/ Phones and for staff to be able to access Devon's network from other Local Authority premises.
- Estates, any addition/ change to infrastructure e.g. work stations, for Adopt South West Regional Adoption Agency staff to operate effectively from other Local Authority premises.
- Finance support for Adopt South West Regional Adoption Agency operation
- Legal support for Adopt South West Regional Adoption Agency operation, assumed minimal as this largely fall on the local authorities as it does now

- Insurance for Adopt South West Regional Adoption Agency operation; assumes Devon will not incur any additional costs for insurance and can absorb the costs within current arrangements
- Pension liabilities, future pension cost liabilities transfer to Devon as the Host of Adopt South West Regional Adoption Agency as staff are TUPE'd over, any past deficit liabilities will remain with the Local Authorities

There are also one off set up costs, primarily IT and Estates related. The budget plus set up costs are subject to the agreed funding formula.

The costs of running a Devon hosted Regional Adoption Agency includes budget for the 2018/2019 financial year, and a projection for 2019/2020 using estimated inflation indicators, based on the standard approach taken by all four Local Authorities in setting their budgets. As with any service area the Medium Term Financial Plan will be provided with a 5-year horizon.

There are also clearly stated intentions of the Regional Adoption Agency reflected in the budget:

- Staffing adjustments to reflect efficiencies of a single service and the service strategies and intentions; estimated 2% pay award included in 2018/19 and 2019/20.
- Acknowledging that overheads previously "below" the line become exposed in a hosted model and corresponding efficiencies within each authority may not be easily realised
- Inter agency fees and a target reduction [6 cases] to reflect improved working between the constituent Authorities
- Support post adoption orders will be short term interventions, sign posting and supporting access to services.
- Contracts- estimated; some efficiencies may be achieved by going out as 4 authorities in the RAA, but this has not been assumed as market rates for 18/19 are not known and may negate efficiencies.
- Improvement to Adoption Panel operations supporting more timely adoptions

Table 8: Adopt South West Regional Adoption Agency budget

Regional Adoption Agency		**DRAFT BUDGET**	
Budget heading	**2018/19 LA Budgets** (excl overheads) **£**	**2018/19 Draft RAA Budget** (incl overheads) **£**	**Change £**
Staffing costs	£3,561,467	£3,145,900	(£415,567)
Other staffing related costs	£264,003	£217,063	(£46,940)
Other Non Staffing Related Costs	£358,994	£358,994	£0
Inter-Agency Fees (net)	£588,200	£601,815	£13,615
Additional Adoption Panel Costs	£0	£89,338	£89,338
New Overheads	£0	£253,154	£253,154
	£4,772,664	**£4,666,263**	**(£106,401)**

This excludes:

- Set up costs impacting 2018/19 only; relating primarily to IT devices, a Case Management system accessed from any partner office, reporting requirements and basic transition costs such as removals - estimated £90,000-£120,000.

Project costs to October 2018 are separately funded by the Department for Education grant

8.3 Funding model

The learning from other Regional Adoption Agencies has been collated by the DfE and identifies that a simple approach is best, to agree and allocate a % contribution per Authority model.

RAA Business case

The proposed funding has been produced by reflecting the budgets for 18/19 as 50% of the formula, the remaining 50% consists of weighting 4 key activity criteria [3 years historic trend information]. Inter Agency Fees are included as a weighted criterion to better reflect Authority budget pressures

Criteria

- LAC 9 and under [a nationally published statistic]
- ADM decisions [a nationally published statistic]
- Adoption Support instances [locally recorded statistic]
- Inter Agency Fees [locally recorded statistic]

Weighted Criteria - The breakdown of the criteria weightings is outlined below:

Table 9: Funding apportionment under the agreed formula

		Budget Weighting 50%	Activity Weighting 50%				
Total Budget	**4,666,263**	**2,333,132**	**699,938**	**699,941**	**349,969**	**583,283**	
		100%	30%	30%	15%	25%	
	18/19 Budget (Exc Overheads)	18/19 Budget	Children in care 9 & under in year	Number of ADM decisions in year	Adoption Support - open cases	Inter Agency "Other" Exp 3 Year Avg	**Revised budget based on a weighted formula approach**
Devon	1,746,450	853,757	234,952	261,498	139,010	206,144	1,695,361
Plymouth	1,073,190	524,632	154,450	168,966	62,869	116,251	1,027,168
Somerset	1,113,604	544,389	185,661	189,054	121,546	98,057	1,138,707
Torbay	839,421	410,353	124,875	80,423	26,545	162,830	805,026
	4,772,664	**2,333,131**	**699,938**	**699,941**	**349,970**	**583,282**	**4,666,262**

Resulting model- The formula applied to the RAA 2018/19 budget results in the following apportionment of full year funding to each of the Authorities [rounding issue]

Table 10: Funding model

Authority	Revised budget based on a weighted formula approach	Proportion of New Budget
Devon	£1,695,361	36.33%
Plymouth	£1,027,168	22.01%
Somerset	£1,138,707	24.40%
Torbay	£805,030	17.26%
	£4,666,266	

The challenge of estimating demand sees the need for regular reporting of the budget position and of budget arrangements as outlined in the Inter Authority Agreement.

8.4 Risk sharing

The challenge of estimating demand also means risk sharing mechanisms are required, with clear triggers to action, to address the potential for surplus, or shortfall, in the budget.

The funding model proposed includes mechanisms to address the following instances:

- budget overspend or underspend
- significant variation in activity/ demand/ funding because of Local Authority initiatives/ strategies or Government policy/ direction
- any initial redundancy cost; future redundancy costs

The risk sharing will be applied using the core budget funding model outlined in 8.3 above. This arrangement will be recorded in the Inter Authority Agreement to be approved before the RAA goes live.

As part of the business planning process for the Regional Adoption Agency the funding arrangement is proposed to be regularly reviewed and the mechanisms for changes to funding will be built into the Inter Authority Agreement partnership within the funding model.

8.5 Summary of Financial arrangements

Comparison to 18/19 planned budget

The aim was to provide the RAA at 'no additional spend to each authority including to Devon as the Host'. This is challenging with overheads normally 'below the line' being exposed and the cost of equipping staff to operate as one service, achieve required access to children's records across the LA's and to operate effectively out of each other's offices.

There is also the pay award and incremental 'point' increases in staff pay to address. The staffing aspect has been addressed through assumed efficiencies.

The position for each individual Authority budget in 2018/19 and the overall RAA outcome is illustrated below:

Table 11:

	budget based on a weighted formula	£ value change to18/19 Budget	%age change to 18/19 Budget	Pressure	change to 18/19 Budget plus	%age change to budget plus pressure	Proportion of New Budget
Devon	1,695,361	(51,089)	-2.93%	0	(51,089)	-2.93%	36.33%
Plymouth	1,027,168	(46,022)	-4.29%	0	(46,022)	-4.29%	22.01%
Somerset	1,138,707	25,103	2.25%	61,080	(35,977)	-3.23%	24.40%
Torbay	805,026	(34,395)	-4.10%	0	(34,395)	-4.10%	17.26%
	4,666,262	**(106,402)**		**61,080**	**(167,482)**		

The proposed RAA budget including overheads in the first full year of operation sees an overall reduction on 2018/19 planned budget, excluding overheads, of £ 167,482 this illustrates that in a full year the set-up costs estimated at £90,000 - £120,000 can be met.

However, with the RAA live date falling on the half year, yet set up costs required in full, there is the potential of a short fall of £6,000 to a maximum of £36,000, a minimal % of the overall budget involved. The risk is deemed low as it can be mitigated either by one, or more likely a mix of, the following:

- in year under spend April – October 2018- all LAs are carrying vacancies in Adoption
- deferring some IT capital cost to 2019/20 under agreement by Devon
- there is also opportunity in commissioning [new contracts not let until April 2019]
- a worst case RAA staff budget has been set, using an assumed maximum salary point in each role, by October the actual staff cost will be known following the TUPE process
- vacancies, likely to emerge following the TUPE process.

The final re-fresh of the financial picture approaching Octobers live date, used to inform the Inter Authority Agreement approval, will finalise these arrangements.

9 INTER AUTHORITY AGREEMENT

9.1 Scope of agreement

As indicated in the summary, lawyers from the participating authorities are in discussions on the terms of the Inter Authority Agreement. The IAA will need to deal with the issues highlighted in this document, including, but not limited to the adoption functions to be delegated to Devon and those to be retained by each Authority; the governance arrangements; the financial arrangements; staffing and information governance.

Following this, activity such as TUPE consultation can be undertaken to provide the detail of staffing, and final pension strain information to enable formal approval of the Inter Authority Agreement, to be achieved by 1st April 2018.

The Inter Authority Agreement includes, but not restricted to, the following

Agreement content	Status
Legal and statutory responsibilities	Agreed- ready for IAA inclusion
Administrative arrangements and associated governance model	Agreed- ready for IAA inclusion
Funding model; risk management strategies	Agreed- ready for IAA inclusion
Use of assets, including property	Agreed- ready for IAA inclusion
Public procurement requirements and relevant exemptions	Agreed- ready for IAA inclusion
Future proofing the arrangements to account for any local government reorganisation, participation by additional local authorities and dissolution of the RAA	Agreed- ready for IAA inclusion
TUPE transfer of staff and related employment matters;	Requires completion of TUPE consultation, post Cabinet approvals
Information and data management/ sharing protocols	Requires IG agreement- in progress

9.2 Final approval of Inter Authority Agreement

The finalisation of the agreement will require completion of the TUPE transfer of staff, at this point the final information on staff budget and pensions will be completed.

It is proposed the approval of the Inter Agency Agreement is delegated to the Directors of Children's Services, County Solicitors, Directors of Finance and Lead Members for Children's Services.

10 KEY RISKS

The key risks to Devon as host, to Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay as those delegating adoption functions, together with the mitigation activity are outlined below:

Ref	Risk description	Mitigation
1	PACE OF CHANGE AND INNOVATION: The Local Authority Hosted model may not offer the same opportunities for pace of innovation and change if the adoption agencies are still subject to Local Authority control, because of the complexity of sign off processes in large organisations	• Devon as the Host Local Authority will have appropriate functions and decisions delegated by the Local Authorities under the Inter Authority Agreement. • As work is progressed to standardise best practice a focus on opportunity for innovation is paramount; similarly, when considering best delivery mechanism for services innovation is a key consideration • Appropriate and effective Governance arrangements

Ref	Risk description	Mitigation
2	EXTERNAL FUNDING: The Local Authority Hosted model may not offer the same opportunities to attract additional external funding that setting up an independent sector social enterprise would offer	• Risk share agreement to include a mechanism for addressing any reduction in funding streams; • Through Commissioning of services from Voluntary Adoption Agencies that do access external funding the RAA can benefit from innovation and improvement of services in the wider market
3	PERFORMANCE: Opting for a Local Authority hosted model may detract from better performers, rather than improving the poorer performers. This may impact the Host seeing a decline and the partner Local Authorities not seeing required improvement.	• Appropriate Staff employment arrangements; • Comprehensive change management will be undertaken to ensure all staff are engaged fully and committed to improving practice and outcomes for families and children.
4	RESPONSIBILITIES: Devon will become accountable for statutory duties post adoption order. This may impact on reputation, or potentially attract a financial cost, for example if there are legal costs related to a complaint	• Clear Governance and effective Inter Authority Agreement e.g. delegation and financial arrangements. • Ultimate responsibility for performance and inspection remains with the Childs Local Authority in the same way an authority retains responsibility for commissioned services.
5	VOLUNTARY ADOPTION AGENCY INVOLVEMENT: The Local Authority hosted model may reduce the benefit of the Voluntary Adoption Agencies involvement in service design and practice improvement. Voluntary Adoption Agency involvement in Regional Adoption Agencies such as Adopt South West is a requirement by DfE	• The governance arrangement ensures continued strategic partnership between the Local Authorities and Voluntary Adoption Agencies; • Voluntary Adoption Agencies continue to be fully included in the development of design & practice;
6	COST: Devon as the Host of the RAA will attract additional costs e.g. corporate service functions such as IT and HR	• Funding Model has appropriate mechanisms so the Host does not wholly bear additional cost and • appropriate mechanisms to manage financial risks agreed by all authorities
7	COST: Local Authorities may see increase in cost of service	
8	COST: The cost of a second development to the final model	• Provide capacity in the structure and governance to lead the work; • Budget holders within governance to enable direction for resources required without further cost. • Agreement at outset that any surplus achieved will be pooled for future development
9	STAFFING: Devon as Host Local Authority may see vacancies arise as staff employment arrangements are completed.	• Leadership and commitment demonstrated in each Local Authority to the “single service” concept and strategy to staff to reduce likelihood of resignations • Early quantification of risk through robust HR processes; scope actual

Ref	Risk description	Mitigation
		staffing requirement for the Regional Adoption agency; address any gap with intensive recruitment campaign
10	STAFFING: Local Authorities may see staff leaving their adoption services in anticipation of changes to their work bases and practice;	• Early decision on Staff employment arrangements so staff are aware of the position; • Communication of the benefit of a "single" service for children and families and what this means for staff; • Transparent and timely consultation to inform working arrangement e.g. teams, locations, work base;
11	OFSTED; Local Authorities may see the change as untimely if Ofsted inspections are due	• Robust leadership and change management to establish a clear time table, raise staff awareness of what will change and when and the expectation of them in the interim • The DfE Regional Adoption Agency group and Ofsted are in discussion on the new reporting regime requirements and are using early Regional Adoption Agencies as a learning opportunity; both are aware of the risk any change programme poses to staff and authority performance

11 EARLY IMPROVEMENTS

11.1 Approach

Throughout the Regional Adoption Agency Project there has been good engagement across the stakeholders, partners and staff

- **Adopters**

The Adopter's feedback is that the first priority is to ensure adequate support is available throughout the whole adoption process and beyond. They also prioritise improving support on offer and awareness of adoption in schools and CAMHS services and would like to be recognised as experts on the needs of their children. Adopters also mentioned getting rid of the post code lottery across the region because of funding variations, and ensuring the RAA adds value, rather than an additional layer of bureaucracy.

- **Staff**

The staff group have, and continue to be, engaged with many events held. They have welcomed the opportunity to be involved in the plans for the development of an RAA. Staff from the Local Authorities and the two Voluntary Adoption Agencies are working together to design the service improvements.

The staff priorities are to have respect for the adopter at the forefront of the re-design of process and consideration of new/ different support services. The key benefit is the ease of looking for the best match for children and adopters in the region together with breaking down of barriers between organisations.

Early permanence and joint working with child care social workers will bring improved outcomes for the child and families and they are keen to work on breaking down any barriers to this whilst designing the Regional Adoption Agency way of working and protocols.

- **Adoption Panel Chairs**

The Adoption Panel chairs expect that the shift to a Regional Adoption Agency will lead to better outcomes for children and higher quality services. They welcome the opportunity to work together and focus on what works well e.g. foster carers updating the panel can bridge the gap between foster carer and adopter and what can be improved e.g. involvement in shaping plans for the child and focus on outcomes.

11.2 Joint Panels

An outcome of this engagement across stakeholder groups is an agreement to progress with Joint Adoption Panels from October 2017 and arrangements to achieve this are well progressed. The Panels began operating paperless with a single IT solution in October 2017. An MOU and IG agreement is in place and the panels will begin to take any LA case from 1st March 2018 to speed the adoption process ahead of the RAA. Staffing arrangements remain unchanged pending the creation of the RAA.

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11.3 Quick wins

Similar simple and quick to apply improvements have been identified and a plan to roll these out across the Local Authorities is currently being implemented. This is important as it keeps staff engaged and working together to deliver improvement that is tangible.

End of report

Appendix 1- Option Appraisal 2016-Summary of Regional Adoption Agency Model

Assessment Criteria Options were assessed against whether the option for the delivery vehicle for the RAA can -					
	1. Hosted by a single Local Authority on behalf of a number of Local Authorities	**2. Joint Venture between Local Authorities – a new public sector owned entity**	**3. Creation of a new Voluntary Adoption Agency**	**4 Outsourcing to an existing Voluntary Adoption Agency**	**5 No action**
	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score
Improve outcomes for children in all areas of Adopt South West region whether rural, urban, more affluent or deprived	420	420	310	250	80
Maximise opportunities for practice improvement across the area so that Adopt South West becomes a centre of excellence and Ofsted scores improve across the region	380	390	340	260	60
Improves adopter support	400	370	290	300	120
Creates an RAA that can deliver placements for harder to place priority children i.e. aged over 4, bme, siblings, disabled children	140	135	100	100	30
Facilitates an adequate level of partnership and control for the local authorities to manage risk to Local Authorities	105	70	55	45	45
Facilitates Voluntary Adoption Agency involvement	70	50	115	135	20
Facilitates recruitment and retention of skilled staff	130	120	85	85	45
Minimises service disruption in the transition period	140	65	55	55	55
Minimise risks (e.g. challenge, additional VAT costs for example)	140	95	55	55	40
Delivers value for money	135	105	85	90	30
Is an organisation willing to deliver this option or is there a market already?	95	70	40	80	45
Facilitates data and record sharing, with the potential to deliver IT compatibility	125	95	75	70	10
Has affordable set up costs	145	85	75	95	50
Financially sustainable in the longer term	520	330	160	190	130
Facilitates access to sources of funding such as grants, social finance or other fundraising possibilities, and income from matching with children from beyond the area	80	120	95	95	35
Potential to realise economies of scale and deliver cost effectiveness	130	125	70	120	25
Develops an RAA that can adapt to change	100	100	85	70	10
TOTAL	**3255**	**2745**	**2090**	**2095**	**830**

Appendix 2: Responsibility Matrix

FUNCTIONS/ RESPONSIBILITY MATRIX

THE CHILD

SERVICE AREA	RETAINED FUNCTIONS/ RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	DELEGATED FUNCTIONS/ RESPONSIBILITIES TO DCC (acting as host of the interim RAA)
Case Responsibility	The local authority will retain case management responsibility for the child until the making of the Adoption Order The local authority will be responsible for all statutory functions including but not limited to: • Statutory Visits and Reviews • Management and supervision of contact between child and family members. • Administration and finance of foster placements and communication with foster carers who care for children under Fostering for Adoption arrangements.	The RAA will provide specialist advice and support to assist LA staff to fully understand the adoption process, influencing and promoting best practice The RAA will provide the supervision to foster carer's caring for a child under Fostering for Adoption arrangements.
Early identification of children requiring adoption	The local authority is responsible for identifying, at the earliest possible stage, the children who may require adoption and making them and their needs known to the RAA, providing relevant and timely information. Birth parents to be referred to the Birth Parent support service at an early stage. Future potential contact arrangements to be considered at an early stage	The RAA will designate a Family Finder to each child identified as possibly requiring adoption to liaise with children's social workers The RAA aims to develop working practises with each LA to ensure involvement in care planning to assist with the earliest identification. Making sure siblings placed with other adopters are considered by the LA. Staff from the RAA will be involved in identifying children for early permanence placement.
Communication during the family finding process	It will be the responsibility of the LA to keep the Child Permanence Report updated and to inform the family finder of any changes in the child's development or circumstances (e.g. change of placement).	The RAA will keep the LA regularly updated about progress on family finding.

SERVICE AREA	RETAINED FUNCTIONS/ RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	DELEGATED FUNCTIONS/ RESPONSIBILITIES TO DCC (acting as host of the interim RAA)
Early Placement	The LA will arrange the Administration and finance of fostering for adoption placements and communication with foster carers who care for children under Fostering for Adoption arrangements as necessary. The LA Social Worker will understand the statutory responsibilities i.e. visits / reviews to the child whilst the child is in Early Permanence Placement The LA will be responsible for financial allowances for Early Permanence Placement carers.	Where appropriate, and in agreement with the local authority, the RAA will make available an Early Permanence Placement (EPP) e.g. a Fostering for Adoption Service for children who may benefit from the possibility of early placement with potential adopters. If there are no RAA Fostering for Adoption placements available, the RAA has a responsibility to search for a placement outside of the RAA. The RAA will support these carers whilst caring for these children in an Early Permanence Placement
Multitracking of children requiring adoption	The local authority will track the progress of children in care proceedings or looked after under section 20 (Children Act 1989) to maintain an up-to-date knowledge of their potential need for an adoption placement	The RAA will also actively track all children for whom initial information indicates that adoption may be a likely plan
Pre-placement Reports	The LA will be responsible for the completion and cost of all reports prior to an adoption placement being made including: • Child Placement Reports • QA reports • Sibling Assessments • Support Plans LA responsible for completing the profiles of the child once an ADM decision is made The LA will liaise with the RAA before the final Care plan is completed and the Adoption Support plan to agree the plan specifically around birth family and sibling contact and ongoing support for the child/ren and Adopters. Final Care plans are to be completed by the LA but the RAA to be consulted on any support needs / contact arrangements post order.	The RAA can advise on and support the completion of the Child Placement Report and early profile of the child. The RAA will provide support and challenge to help ensure that the CPR's are of a consistent high quality across the partnership. The RAA will provide additional information and advice on the placement needs of the child and the likely need for post adoption support services, including financial support

SERVICE AREA	RETAINED FUNCTIONS/ RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	DELEGATED FUNCTIONS/ RESPONSIBILITIES TO DCC (acting as host of the interim RAA)
		RAA to endorse Support plans and final care plans specifically around future contact and support needs to the LA on final care plans
	The local authority will be responsible for assessing the child's needs in respect of a future placement and in ensuring that any required financial support for a future adoptive placement is available prior to the Adoption Order	It will be necessary for the RAA and LA to work closely and collaboratively to ensure that the needs of the child can be met and that training support is sustainable. The training will be provided by the Panel Advisor to child Care Social workers to continuously improve practice.
Medical Information	The Local Authority will be responsible for obtaining all required medical information in respect of children who are being considered for adoption and will meet with prospective adopters to ensure they are fully aware of the child's future medical needs as appropriate. The LA will be responsible for organising for the prospective adopters to have a consultation by phone / face to face prior to Adoption Panel to discuss the Childs current and future needs.	The RAA adoption co-ordinator / social workers will support the Prospective Adopters to attend appointments to fully understand the Childs needs.
Decision that adoption should be the child's plan	The Agency Decision Maker in each LA will be responsible for the 'Should be placed for adoption' decision. The LA will undertake a regular review of this decision and associated plans and keep the family finder in the RAA informed of any changes. LA to refer children with a possible plan of being relinquished to the RAA at the earliest opportunity. The LA with advice from the RAA will refer birth family members to independent birth family support at the earliest opportunity.	The RAA will support the decision-making process as requested, particularly in the provision of Professional Advice to the LA's ADM. The RAA will provide an adoption panel for relinquished children's plans to be heard. Panel Advisor to provide panel minutes to the LA ADM. Independent birth family support is the responsibility of the RAA.
'Hard to Place'/Priority Children	The LA is responsible for identifying at the earliest opportunity where a child is: • Aged four or over • From a BME heritage	RAA to track all children and all possible options explored, documented and shared with the LA. The RAA will either provide a service for Priority children which may involve some or all of the following:

SERVICE AREA	RETAINED FUNCTIONS/ RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	DELEGATED FUNCTIONS/ RESPONSIBILITIES TO DCC (acting as host of the interim RAA)
	• Part of a sibling group of two or more • Has uncertainty about their development • Has a disability or medical condition • Sibling matches for new-born The LA will gather the relevant information, assess and forward to the RAA as soon as possible. LA to contribute to the learning to explore how children can be placed in permanent placements.	• Increased publicity – DVD, Photos etc. • Profile the child at specific events • Press and digital media advertising • Attempt to recruit Adopters specifically for the child • Provide additional training and preparation for potential Adopters • Advise on or assist with additional preparation work with the child. RAA to contribute to the learning to explore how children can be placed in permanent placements.
Preparation of the child	The LA will be responsible for preparing the child for an adoptive placement. The LA will be responsible for the preparation of the child's Life story Book/ work. This often needs to start early in the child's looked after career and will contain information to which the LA has immediate access.	The RAA will provide advice and guidance & potentially training to the LA in the preparation of the child, particularly in respect of the future placement. The RAA will provide advice regarding completing a life story work/ later life letter.
	The LA will be responsible for producing the Later life letter	The RAA will provide advice and written guidance
Linking and Matching	The LA, by agreement, will meet the costs of introductions between children and Adopters.	The RAA will take lead responsibility for all aspects of the linking and matching process, but will always involve the LA in the decision-making process. The RAA will chair linking/ matching meetings as part of the process.
	The LA is responsible for updating of the Child Permanence Report, Delegation of Parental Responsibility report and the Adoption Placement Report, the section on the Child.	The RAA will be responsible for completing the Adoption Placement Report, apart from the section on the child. The RAA will organise the Matching Panel

SERVICE AREA	RETAINED FUNCTIONS/ RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	DELEGATED FUNCTIONS/ RESPONSIBILITIES TO DCC (acting as host of the interim RAA)
		The RAA will chair and organise life appreciation days for children over 3 years old.
MATCHING DECISIONS	The Agency Decision Maker in each LA will be responsible for the Matching decision for the child.	The RAA will support the process with information as required, including Panel Minutes and administrative support including letters regarding the decision.
PLACEMENT	The Local Authority is responsible for Placing the child/ren with prospective adopters. The LA will commission the Letterbox function from the RAA.	The RAA will offer support and advice to the LA The RAA will support the LA when a child is placed. The RAA to work closely with the LA pre-order and can offer independent support to birth family. The RAA will set up the Letterbox pre-adoption order and will be responsible for managing this day to day post order.
Adoption Support Fund	LA to work closely with the RAA to provide the information to complete the ASF application for families/children who don't meet the criteria for CAMHS services. .	RAA to submit the ASF application for families/children who don't meet the criteria for CAMHS services on behalf of the LA. RAA will provide the administration and contracting support to implement the operation of ASF funding.
ADOPTION ALLOWANCES	Allowances / One off payments will be paid by the LA - e.g. vehicles for larger sibling groups, Adoption / Child Arrangement Orders	The RAA will complete assessments and will review these every 2 years and forward the assessments to the LA to consider.
Applications to the DfE Interagency Fund (for hard to place children)	LA to work closely with the RAA to provide the information to complete the ASF application for families/children who don't meet the criteria for CAMHS services. .	The RAA will make the application to the fund where relevant

ADOPTER RECRUITMENT

	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY
RECRUITMENT OF ADOPTERS	The LA will signpost any enquiries from potential adopters to the RAA.	The RAA will signpost fostering enquiries to the LA.

	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY
	The LA will ensure that information relevant to potential adopters is included in its own marketing materials and on its website, clearly signposting potential adopters to the website of the RAA.	The RAA will be responsible for recruiting adopters appropriate to the needs of children waiting in each LA. Marketing information will reflect the fact that the RAA is delivering the service on behalf of partnering LAs. This information will be provided on the website or prospective applicants can email or telephone and speak with a worker for further information.
Enquiries		The RAA will provide a centralised enquiry process for the region to meet all statutory requirements. Adopters can enquire via telephone / email / or by completing a Registration of Interest form. The RAA will provide written information to potential adopters and will hold information events. The RAA may at times signpost potential adopters to other agencies/ return to Fostering in LA's if they are unlikely to be able to meet the needs of the children needing placement.
Stage One	The LAs will provide all information required for statutory checks of potential adopters resident in the LA.	The RAA will undertake all Stage one functions
Stage Two		The RAA will undertake all Stage Two functions
		The RAA will complete the Prospective Adopters Report (PAR)
Approvals		The RAA will manage the Adoption Panel. The RAA Agency Decision Maker will be responsible for all approvals
POST APPROVAL SUPPORT AND TRAINING		The RAA will provide post approval support and training to approved adopters

POST ADOPTION SUPPORT SERVICES

	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY
ADOPTION SUPPORT ASSESSMENTS/ PLANS & SERVICES	The LA will consider funding requests for adoption support services which are not included in the core offer e.g. Therapeutic support. Match Funding – Pre 3 years of adoption order – LA responsible for match funding. Respite / Short term breaks – if this service is required the case will need to be open and family supported by the LA.	The RAA will undertake assessments of adoption support needs. The RAA's core offer will provide general adoption support services: newsletter, social events for children and young people; social/training events for adoptive parents; advice and signposting for adoptive families; independent support and advice to birth relatives; post box services etc The RAA will undertake applications to the Adoption Support Fund for children and commission services agreed by ASF for families/children who don't meet the criteria for CAMHS services. . Match funding – post 3 years of adoption order – RAA responsible for Match funding.
	The LA will signpost requests from adoptive families for adoption order support to the RAA. Alongside needs directly related to adoption, a family may have needs best met by services within the LA e.g. CIN services. The LA will be responsible for providing these services Where a safeguarding referral is made to the LA the LA will conduct any appropriate section 47 enquiry and will allocate an LA social worker where thresholds are met, but will notify the RAA of any referral involving an adopted child. If adopted child/young person accommodated, LA will be responsible for social work support to child/family.	The RAA will undertake the assessment of adoption support needs of the child and family and produce an adoption support plan. The RAA will liaise with LA to agree which services will be provided by RAA and which by LA for families whose needs are complex. Where appropriate, the RAA will offer support to the adoptive family during any section 47 enquiry if the case is open to the RAA. RAA will complete any specific work needed e.g. Life Story work or application to ASF for therapeutic support for families/children who don't meet the criteria for CAMHS services.

	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY
Out-of-hours services	All adopters will have access to the LA's Emergency Duty Team out of core hours.	
Indirect/ Letterbox contact		The RAA / commissioned service will post/Letterbox contact between adopted children and birth families. This commissioned service will carry out ongoing assessments to consider whether contact is in the best interest of the child.
Supervised & Sibling Direct Contact	Cost of arrangements agreed in the pre- adoption support plan e.g. travel & accommodation expenses will remain with the LA.	Responsibility for arranging / supervising Direct Contact requirements will transfer to the RAA / commissioned service
ADOPTION ALLOWANCES	Adoption allowances will be paid for by the LA	RAA to undertake appropriate assessment
ADOPTION SUPPORT FUND		The RAA will be responsible for undertaking all funding applications to the Adoption Support Fund and all contracting arrangements Existing contracting resources to transfer to the RAA
ACCESS TO CHILDREN'S ADOPTION CASE RECORDS	LA to store historic children's adoption case records. For RAA adoptions the LA will have access to records if the case becomes open to them as a CIN / LAC / Safeguarding.	RAA to store and hold new files Existing record keeping resources to transfer to RAA
BIRTH RECORDS COUNSELLING	Existing budget to transfer to the RAA	RAA will be responsible for delivery of counselling.
INDEPENDENT SUPPORT TO BIRTH PARENTS	Existing budget to transfer to the RAA	RAA will be responsible for delivery of support.
ACCESS TO ADOPTERS RECORDS	LA to signpost Adoptees to the RAA where appropriate	RAA to store and hold new files
STEP PARENT ADOPTION ASSESSMENT	LA to sign post adopters to the RAA	RAA to be responsible for assessments

SERVICE USER ENGAGEMENT

	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY
Adopters		The RAA / commissioned agency will engage with adopters, individually and in groups, with the aim of improving the services available
Adoptees		The RAA / commissioned agency will engage with adoptees, individually and in groups, with the aim of improving the services available
Birth parents		THE RAA / commissioned service will engage with and birth parents individually and in groups with the aim of improving the services available
Special Guardians	Initial assessment, placement, the support plan and payments and allowances are the responsibility of the LA including contact arrangements and the cost of any supervised contact.	The RAA has no responsibilities in support of Special Guardians

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT & INSPECTION -

	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY
Data provision	Each LA will need to provide specified key data to the RAA on performance. Each LA is responsible for the ALB Child return	RAA is responsible for production of ALB Adopter return
Data analysis		The RAA will produce a 3-monthly report to each LA on performance against an agreed set of indicators
OFSTED	The future role of OFSTED in adoption is currently under review and future requirements are currently unclear.	
Freedom of Information applications	The LA / RAA will cooperate within the timescales to enable information to be made available to the applicant	The LA / RAA will cooperate within the timescales to enable information to be made available to the applicant

MISCELLANEOUS SERVICES

	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY
STATEMENT OF PURPOSE		The RAA will provide take responsibility for updating this for the functions that have been delegated to the RAA. The RAA will take responsibility for completing each LA statement of purpose regarding the functions left with the LA, in consultation with the LA.
REGISTERED MANAGER		The RAA will provide a registered manager for their adoption functions.
ADOPTION SUPPORT SERVICE ADVISOR		The RAA will undertake the role of Adoption Services Advisor for each LA.
CHILDREN'S GUIDE FOR ADOPTION	Each LA has a responsibility for this	The RAA could provide advice and guidance
ANNUAL SERVICE REPORT		RAA to complete an annual public facing service report
CHILDREN'S GUIDE FOR ADOPTION SUPPORT		The RAA will update the Children's guide for adoption support
STEP PARENTS/RELATIVES WHO WISH TO ADOPT (NON-AGENCY ADOPTIONS)		RAA to be responsible for providing this service – this service will be commissioned out.
INTER-COUNTRY ADOPTION		RAA will provide this service; it will commission advice and information on inter-country adoption from a specialist agency. Service users will have to meet cost of assessment and approval process in the commissioned agency

	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY
ADOPTION PANELS	The three larger LA's to provide a social work representative to sit on panel twice a month and the smaller LA once a month.	The RAA will provide adoption panels across the region and will appoint Independent panel chairs and retain a central list and will provide training and support for panel members. The adoption panel will provide a quality assurance report for the partnership on a 6-monthly basis
TRAINING FOR LA staff		The RAA can provide training for social workers regarding the adoption process/ writing of CPR's/APR'S/Support plans and preparing for Adoption Panel
ADOPTEE COUNSELLING		The RAA will signpost applicants to independent services and will not provide an intermediary service.
DISRUPTIONS	LA to contribute to the disruption process	RAA to undertake the disruption process. Panel Chairs and other professionals will be invited to contribute to this process.
ALLEGATIONS	LA is responsible for initiating this process prior to the Adoption order being granted. The RAA will contribute to this process.	RAA is responsible for initiating this process post the Adoption order being granted. The LA will contribute to this process if necessary.

Appendix 3: Performance Measures

Ref:	Adoption Scorecard	ALB return	Quality marker	Objective	How	Target for 18/19	Measure
1	✓			Improved timescales for second time adopter assessments	Either already have original assessment or obtain from the LA / RAA and update the changes since the last approval. This can be completed in 3 months.	3 months	Adopter contact date to ADM sign off
2	✓			Higher conversion rate from enquiry to approval of prospective adopters;	Targeted marketing and recruitment contract focussed on quality of adopters	10%	Reduce number of children waiting for placement
3	✓	✓		Early identification of children with potential adoption plans	Attend permanence planning meetings / gateway meetings / tracking meetings and regular consultation with Team Managers / Social Workers in the LA to identify children at the earliest opportunity.	Children to be linked with prospective adopter within 1 month of placement order being made	Date of Placement order tracked to 1 calendar month.
4		✓		More children placed on an Early Permanence (Fostering to Adopt) basis	good interface as above with the LA's to identify which could be placed for FFA	Every child will be considered for a Fostering for Adoption placement	Number with ADM decisions tracked to Foster to Adopt register.
5	✓			Reduction in the number of children with placement order revoked	Targeted marketing and recruitment contract focussed on quality of adopters	5%	Reduce number of children waiting for placement
6	✓			More timely matching of approved adopters	RAA to have regular resource meetings to discuss the children coming through with a plan of adoption and adopters being assessed to link children and adopters at the earliest opportunity.	Adopter to be linked with prospective child/en within 1 month from ADM decision	ADM decision date plus 1 month
7	✓			Reduce the length of time from adoption placement to adoption order for children	Early support offered to adopters prior to children being placed and the no delay in the ASF application being completed by the social worker.	5%	Status “place for adoption” to Adoption Order granted
8		✓		Reduction in the number of placement breakdowns	Better early support for Adopters - identify therapeutic support at the earliest opportunity.	5%	Reduce number of placement breakdowns
9			✓	Fewer Adoption de-registrations because a match has not be identified for the family	Recruiting the adopters for the children we have waiting within the RAA; supported by Marketing and Recruitment contract specification; being transparent with adopters about the complexities children can bring and the range of support available.	10%	Number of ADM de-registrations

Ref:	Adoption Scorecard	ALB return	Quality marker	Objective	How	Target for 18/19	Measure
10			✓	Increase in birth family referrals; quality of contract specification	By having one provider offering all the support to birth families, this is likely to increase birth family engagement as they only have to make one relationship.	10%	Contract reporting performance measure
11	✓		✓	Improved number and quality of adopters	better targeted recruitment, to ensure we are recruiting the right adopters for the children we have waiting.	10%	Increased enquiries; more enquiries reaching Stage 2
12			✓	More timely Step parent adoption assessments	the provider to set out pre-arranged meetings with the applicants with clear expectations on engagement and completion date. Also an expectation that the applications submit their adoption application to the Court once accepted for a full assessment, as Court timescales often delay this process.	Assessments completed with 6 month of referral	Contract reporting performance measure
13		✓		Improvement in number of placements available for harder to place/ priority children	better, targeted marketing and recruitment.	5%	Number of adoptions achieved for children in this group
14			✓	Reduce no. [cost] of Inter Agency placements outside the RAA	Meet key target for local introduction of RAA	20%	Budget line in financial reporting.
15			✓	Improved performance measurement and management across the service; improved data collection analysis	To have a system which accepts all key data required for reporting; minimise manual inputting; generates required reporting with minimal manual intervention; handles imported data safely and securely; supports matching	From October 2018	Reporting available to support management/ performance of the RAA; List 11 & ALB