

## **West Yorkshire Regional Adoption Agency**

In June 2015 the Government announced that it wanted to move towards regional provision of adoption services, encouraging local authorities and Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) to come together with the aim of:

- Speeding up matching;
- Improving the life chances of children;
- Improving adopter recruitment;
- Improving adoption support; and
- Reducing costs.

There are currently 180 individual adoption agencies across England, which, at their height, placed 5050 children in a 12 month period. Currently each agency has its own infrastructure and there are wide variations in performance and practice between agencies. Regional adoption agencies would offer an opportunity for a greater level of consistency with the aim of raising all agencies to the highest standards of practice, improving the experiences of all parties involved in the adoption journey and also economies of scale regarding ongoing costs.

The Government made a sum of money available to help with setting up costs for regional agencies.

Leeds City Council's adoption service has been part of the Yorkshire and Humber adoption consortium. It consists of 15 Local Authorities, 5 VAAs (including Doncaster Trust) and 2 adoption support agencies that already work closely together. There was strong agreement across the region that the Yorkshire and Humber Consortium should pro-actively move to a regional model of delivering adoption services and a bid was successfully submitted to the Government proposing the creation of:

- One regional adoption hub for the Yorkshire and Humberside region, with
- 3 sub-regional adoption agencies - North, South and West
- The West sub-region would include 5 Local Authorities - Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield

Leeds City Council is acting as the lead agency for this sub-region as they are already delivering adoption services on a large scale and is likely to host the regional adoption service once it is up and running.

A West Yorkshire regional adoption agency would provide:

- Recruitment and assessment of adopters;
- Family finding for children;
- A range of adoption support services;
- Panel management;
- Education support for adopted children;
- Increase adopter involvement; and
- Would be funded by contributions from individual agencies.

Since the bid was approved a project manager has been appointed and there are a number of working groups looking at the many and complicated issues of bringing 5 different adoption services together. It is hoped the new agency will be in place by 1st April 2017.