

## Corporate Parenting Panel

19 May 2023

Adopt Coast to Coast



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### Report of Paula Gibbons, Head of Service, Adopt Coast to Coast

#### Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

#### Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide an update on the second year of the Regional Adoption Agency, in respect of the activity for the Durham spoke.

#### Executive summary

- 2 Adopt Coast to Coast successfully established its branding across the North East and Cumbria.
- 3 Until the 31 March 2023, Adopt Coast to Coast was a partnership RAA with Cumbria County Council, Durham County Council and Together for Children who deliver children's services on behalf of Sunderland City Council.
- 4 From the 1 April 2023, Adopt Coast to Coast now has two partners, Durham County Council and Together for Children.

#### Recommendation

- 5 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to receive the presentation and marketing activity update, for the second year of operation from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

## Background

- 6 In this reporting year we have had some periods of time where we have been less-visible which has in-turn affected enquiry numbers. Marketing activity was reduced during the criminal trial of the prospective adopters following the death of Leiland-James Corkhill in Cumbria, when the verdict was announced and when the safeguarding review report was released. This was the appropriate action to take but the impact of this can be seen on the enquiry numbers.
- 7 We also faced challenges in the later part of the year, firstly due to the passing of Queen Elizabeth II where we were unable to do marketing activity at a key 'back to school' time.
- 8 Secondly, we believe the cost-of-living crisis has had an understandable detrimental effect on incoming enquiries. We are aware this is also the experience of other RAAs and VAAs across England.

## Learning from marketing activity

- 9 Note the learning from marketing activity carried out to date:
  - Real stories resonate with people
  - Videos are engaged with the most
  - Profiles of real children increases engagement
  - Social media activity about post-adoption support such as events significantly helps engagement with adopters and target audience
  - Google ads are essential to maintaining incoming enquiries
  - Social media and digital activity support awareness raising
  - Sponsored content with local publications is successful
  - Our website remains our biggest recruitment tool
  - Targeted campaigns e.g. sibling adoption throughout the year works well
  - Adopter 'type' specific recruitment activity is well received e.g. LGBTQ+ and single parent adopters

## Performance

- 10 The enquiry numbers across the RAA have decreased by 102, and though the Durham spoke's was a reduction of 38 enquiries to 178, the percentage of the enquiries referred to Durham remained consistent.
- 11 Across the RAA, the approval numbers increased by 8 to 86 and the Durham spoke increased their approvals by 1 to 41 prospective adoptive families. This is very positive performance and the conversion rate from enquiry to approval has increased to 23% for the Durham Spoke (from 19% the previous year).

- 12 The RAA already has a further 42 prospective adopters in stage 1 and 2 at the 1 April 2023.

## **Main implications**

### **Marketing activity priorities for 2023/24**

- 13 The change in partnership model could appear that we have access to less children and therefore prospective adopters will wait longer to be matched. We need to tackle this potential threat by counteracting it with positive stories, releasing figures on timescales for matching and using figures about the number of children waiting (to show there are always children available).
- 14 Stories about increasing costs continues to dominate the media and impacting families of all incomes. Whilst this may ease towards the latter part of the year, we need to reiterate messages surrounding the support available to adopters and remove any other perceived barriers which may add to uncertainty about applying. Some marketing activity could also be targeted towards higher earners.
- 15 There will always be groups of children who wait longer to be matched in their forever homes, targeted marketing activity needs to be run alongside general recruitment focused on recruiting prospective adopters for these children. To do this we need to continue to create video, profiles, press releases and website articles which show the reality of life for these children and take away some of the fear.

## **Conclusion**

- 16 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel will have an overview of the marketing activity undertaken in this reporting period and be aware of the next steps for Adopt Coast to Coast.
- 17 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel will understand how they are able to support the service and be advocates for adoption.

## **Author**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

Relevant legislation is adhered to within the spokes, in relation to adoption.

### **Finance**

None.

### **Consultation**

None.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

None.

### **Climate Change**

None.

### **Human Rights**

None.

### **Crime and Disorder**

None.

### **Staffing**

None.

### **Accommodation**

None.

### **Risk**

None.

### **Procurement**

None.

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## **Appendix 2: Marketing Activity**

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Attached as a separate report