

Corporate Parenting Panel

21 June 2024

Adopt Coast to Coast



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 3rd year of the Regional Adoption Agency, in respect of the activity for the Durham spoke.

Executive summary

- 2 Adopt Coast to Coast has started to re-establish its branding across the North East following a recruitment gap for the communications and marketing officer post.
- 3 Adopt Coast to Coast is a partnership RAA for Durham County Council and Together for Children who deliver children's services on behalf of Sunderland City Council.

Recommendation

- 4 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to receive the presentation and marketing activity update, for the 3rd year of operation from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

Background

- 5 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 due to a vacancy within the role of marketing and communications officer between 1 March and 12 June 2023. This was further delayed while the new post holder settled into the role. Advertising recommenced in September 2023. The impact of this was a significant decrease in the number of enquiries during this period and the following months.
- 6 The cost-of-living crisis has had an understandable detrimental effect on incoming enquiries. We are aware this is also the experience of most other RAAs and VAAs across England.

Learning from marketing activity

- 7 Note the learning from marketing activity carried out to date:
- Google ads are essential to maintaining incoming enquiries and remain our biggest recruitment tool
 - Real stories resonate with people
 - Videos are engaged with the most
 - Profiles of real children increases engagement
 - Social media and digital activity support awareness raising
 - Sponsored content with local publications is successful
 - Targeted campaigns e.g. brother and sister groups adoption throughout the year works well
 - Adopter 'type' specific recruitment activity is well received e.g. LGBTQ+ and single parent adopters

Performance

- 8 The enquiry numbers across the RAA have decreased by 66, and majority of these (63) were from the Durham spoke. The percentage of the enquiries referred to Durham reduced by 10% to 51%.
- 9 Across the RAA, the approval numbers decreased by 31, the majority of these in the Durham spoke where approvals decreased by 26 to 15 prospective adoptive families. The conversion rate from enquiry to approval has also decreased from 23% (in the previous year) to 13% for the Durham Spoke.
- 10 The RAA had 33 prospective adopters in stage 1 and 2 at 1 April 2024; Durham has a 52% share of these.

Main implications

Marketing activity objectives for 2024/25 are:

- 11 To return enquiry numbers in line with 2022/23 enquiries
- 12 To recruit a pool of suitable prospective adopters from within and beyond our geographical footprint who are able to adopt our children. Prospective adopters who have a range of skills and experiences to provide the loving homes needed amongst the children cared for across both spokes, for whom securing permanency via adoption is the preferred outcome.
- 13 Recruitment will balance the continued need for prospective adopters seeking to adopt a younger single child against child specific recruitment and key campaigns for children with the following

characteristics which are more likely to result in them waiting longer to be matched and subsequently adopted:

- Single children aged five years and over
- Brother and sister groups of two or more children
- Children who have developmental uncertainty due to either possible genetic or environmental factors
- Children who have identified health/medical conditions and/or developmental delay and who are likely to need a significant level of ongoing health/medical care or learning support
- Children whose background histories include having a parent(s) diagnosed as having significant mental health difficulties and/or a personality disorder
- Children who are at a higher risk of having complex needs relating to their experiences in utero and in the birth family
- Children with a plan for Early Permanence

- 14 Continue to build brand recognition and awareness through activities in areas both inside and outside of our geographical footprint via suitable regional and local media outlets.

Conclusion

- 15 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.
- 16 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

Legal Implications

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

Finance

There are no financial implications.

Consultation

Adoptive families are regularly engaged with recruitment activity and support Adopt Coast to Coast in recruiting prospective adopters.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Adopt Coast to Coast welcomes and actively encourages enquiries from everyone and recruitment activity supports this.

Climate Change

There are no climate change implications.

Human Rights

Securing adoptive families for children with plans of adoption approved by the Court supports the child's Article 8 rights - protects your right to respect for your private and family life

Crime and Disorder

There are no crime and disorder implications.

Staffing

There are no staffing implications.

Accommodation

There are no accommodation implications.

Risk

There are no risk implications.

Procurement

There are no procurement implications.

Appendix 2: Marketing Activity

Attached as a separate report