

Central East Regional Adoption Agency

August 2018

National Context

In 2015, DfE launched the Regionalising Adoption programme, encouraging all LAs to work with other LAs and voluntary adoption agencies (VAAs) to regionalise their adoption services, and consider alternative delivery models.

This followed a policy push by the previous administration to improve the timeliness and level of adoption. Alongside reforms to adopter recruitment and support, and to the process for moving children through the system in readiness for adoption, grants were provided to both LAs and VAAs.

Many RAAs are working towards an LA-hosted model which involves a LA delivering the RAA on behalf of other LAs without the establishment of a new entity.

As of May 2018 there were 10 operational RAAs incorporating 49 LAs. The projects under development cover a total of 90 LAs, leaving only 13 LAs which are not part of an RAA.

National Context cont.

The aim is for RAAs to offer greater scale and consistency across adopter recruitment, matching and support to improve the extent and timeliness of adoption for children where it is in their best interest. In practice this means integrated delivery of these functions across a number of, under a single brand and management structure, and by a single organisation. The DfE have seven criteria for forming an RAA:

- Single line of accountability
- Core functions are transferred to the RAA
- Pan-regional approach
- Recruitment, support and matching
- Management responsibility
- Pooled funding
- Partnership with the voluntary sector.

Central East RAA

- Under an initial development led by Coram, Central East RAA was made up of Central Bedfordshire, Bedford, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Cambridgeshire and Norfolk.
- Until January 2017 development was led by Coram and focused on establishing best practice across the region through a hub and an appraisal of potential contractual/ legal arrangements.
- In June 2017 Central Bedfordshire took on the lead role and worked with other LAs to develop an Outline Business Case to support an LA hosted model completed in October 2017. After considering the outline business case it was decided that Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire would explore other options.
- Central Bedfordshire, Bedford Borough and Milton Keynes worked together with the DFE to prepare a full Business Case for an RAA hosted by Central Bedfordshire. At this juncture Bedford Borough requested more time to reflect on their position whilst maintaining close links and joint working where appropriate.
- CBC and Milton Keynes have produced an implementation plan with a view to others joining once the RAA has become established.
- The plan is to 'go live' in April 2019.

Central East RAA – Agreed vision and design principals

Vision

‘To achieve the best possible outcomes for children, and local areas - through high quality services that place children with the right adopters at the right time with the right support’

Better life long outcomes for children and adopters

The experiences and life long outcomes of children and adopters will improve

Adoption will be an option for a wider range of children (including older children and those with complex needs)

More families will be able and willing to adopt

The RAA will recruit adopters in line with children’s needs

A better environment and opportunities for the adoption workforce

RAA will retain and develop the right skills, experience and talent in support of high quality services

RAA will support and encourage professional and career development

Design Principles

Better value for money

Investment will be efficiently and effectively managed

Opportunities to reduce cost will be identified and acted on

Outcomes will be clearly defined and measured

Set up and implementation costs will be low

Adoptions services will be transparent and collaborative

What RAA is and what it does will be clear and understandable

Local authorities will have influence over service delivery

There will be local presence of skilled adoption expertise

RAA will work collaboratively with local authorities and maintain regular and open communication

Central East RAA – Implementation Plan



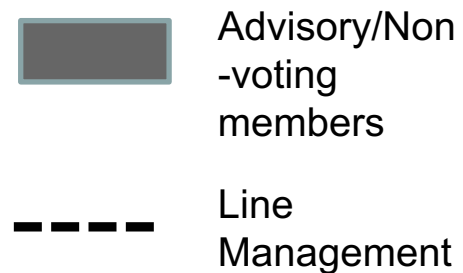
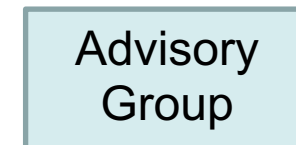
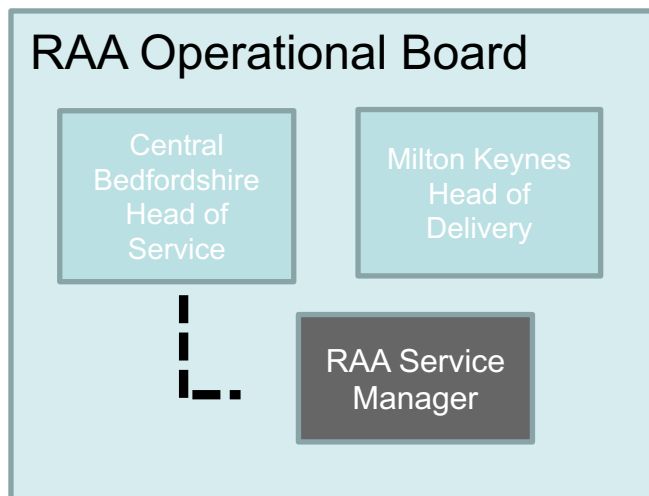
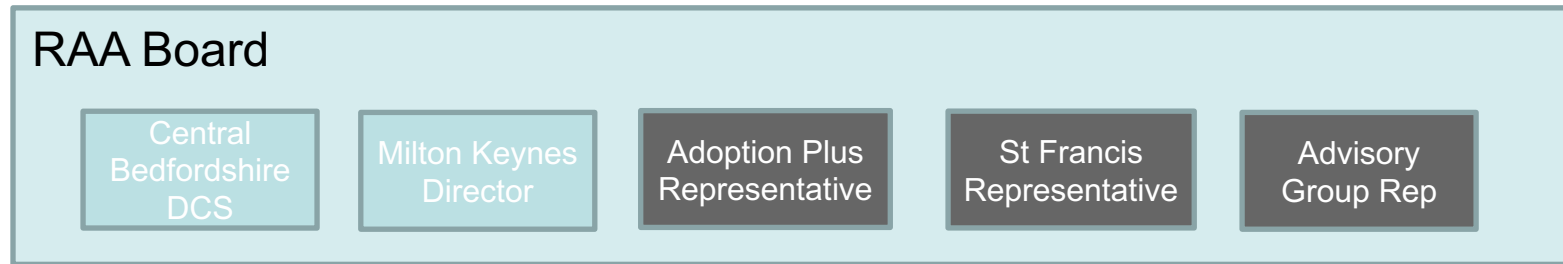
June 2018 to March 2019

Six workstreams have been identified:

- Legal and governance
- Finance
- Operations
- Human resources
- IT and performance
- Marketing

Staff engagement in the process from both Milton Keynes and CBC has been very positive with front line staff and managers co-constructing the design for our RAA.

RAA Governance Structure



Benefits of working in a RAA

- CBC and Milton Keynes both have very strong adoption teams which would benefit by working together to develop greater specialisms and commission services on a wider scale
- CBC already hosts a joint adoption panel with Bedford Borough which works very well. Milton Keynes will join this arrangement.
- CBC's performance with adoption timescales is very good but there is always room for improvement and the less time children spend waiting for their 'forever' families is better for them
- Why CBC hosts?
- CBC's 2018 Ofsted report judged adoption and leadership in CS to be good.
- Meet statutory requirement to join an RAA by 2020 as set out in the Children and Families Act

Mitigated Risks

- Costings in the full business case demonstrate that the RAA will be cost neutral giving better performance for the same financial investment
- The RAA will need to grow to develop sustainability going forward and we are in discussions with the DFE to progress this.

TIMELINE

CBC

29/08/2018	CMT
11/09/2018	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
09/10/2018	Executive Board
Autumn 2018	Children's Leadership Board and LSCB for information
April 2019	GO LIVE