

## **Report to Health & Wellbeing Boards**

### **- Manchester, Stockport, Trafford, Salford, Cheshire East**

#### **1. Introduction**

Adoption Counts is a new regional adoption agency set up under the Education and Adoption Act 2016 and is only the second regional adoption agency to become operational in this country. Adoption Counts incorporates the adoption services of Stockport (the host agency), Manchester, Trafford, Salford and Cheshire East local authorities. The agency will service the region via a Hub and Spoke model with offices in Salford, Wythenshawe and Middlesbrough.

By 2020, the government expects all adoption services to be delivered via regional adoption agencies. The new agency will provide a range of pre and post adoption support services in conjunction with statutory and voluntary sector providers.

The Department for Education is keen for local Health and Well-Being Boards to be engaged in these developments, particularly in the support provided to adoptive families. The most recent research on adoption breakdown and disruption indicates that 20 to 25% of adoptive families experience 'major difficulties' with approximately a further 30% experiencing 'difficulties' and 'challenges' (Selwyn 2015)<sup>1</sup>. This research also found that the majority of adoptive parents were critical of the support provided, of unhelpful advice, and of the failure to provide appropriate services when needed.

#### **2. Adoption Support**

The development of Adoption Counts provides an opportunity to develop a multi-disciplinary approach to delivering adoption support services which will actively contribute to improving the health and well-being of adoptive families in Cheshire East, Stockport, Trafford, Salford and Manchester.

The newly created Adoption Support Team integrates adoption support social workers and family support workers from each authority into one service, led and managed by an experienced, dedicated manager. The team will work closely with a range of professionals to ensure the child's needs are met at each stage of their adoption journey and that support is quick and easy for families to access.

It is planned for the service to build on the current Adoption Psychology Service delivery model in both Manchester and Salford CAMHS, where families have access to psychology, psychiatry and educational psychology services as part of early intervention. Adoption Counts will promote the integration of health and care services, working together to provide access for families to a range of both universal, targeted and therapeutic services for families, whenever they feel they need it in a locality that suits them (see appendix one). We will deliver these services through 1-1 support and group work. The aim is for these services to be available to all adopted children from the five local authorities in their first 3 years of placement and to any adopted family's resident in the five local authorities after this time period. Some specialist support services will be commissioned via the voluntary sector.

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1 Beyond the Adoption Order - Challenges, interventions and adoption disruption  
Julie Selwyn, Sarah Meakings and Dinitha Wijedasa BAAF 2015

A key priority will be the involvement of the service prior to the placement of the child, during the care planning stage, profiling and matching stages. This will lead to a higher likelihood of increased stability for the whole family, thus preventing disruption for the child. The RAA will work with each Local Authority towards ensuring that adoption support services are accessible and easy for adopters to understand. When safeguarding issues arise we will work closely with the local social work teams to jointly assess the family. When families request an assessment of their adoption support needs we will use a single assessment tool and endeavour to ensure a single point of access for adopters.

We will also provide support to:

**Birth Families** - through our 'letterbox' service enabling ongoing communication between birth families and adoptive families where appropriate. There will be independent support for birth parents commissioned from a single voluntary sector provider.

**Adult Adoptees** - through Birth Records Counselling, and signposting to Intermediary and Tracing services.

The voice of adopters will be at the centre of our service delivery, from representation on the board to gathering individual feedback on a regular basis.

### **3. Performance & Improvement bid to the Department for Education**

Adoption Counts has made an application for additional funding to the DfE's Practice and Improvement Fund. If successful we will be able to further develop an Adoption Support Service/Centre of Excellence which enhances, expands and coordinates existing services currently delivered by a variety of organisations. The emphasis will be on an integrated professional network and support system which works for adoptive families rather than on a physical 'centre'. We will focus on prevention rather than crisis driven services, expanding the network of universal, targeted and specialist provision available across the region from a range of providers (See appendix two).

We plan to achieve the following outcomes;

- Increased early engagement in accessing support, leading to a reduction in crisis intervention and placement breakdown.
- Improved experience for the service user by reducing duplication of assessments.
- Improved adopter skills and confidence.
- Improved emotional security of children.
- Increased levels of satisfaction for adopters and young people.
- Higher levels of service value and cost effectiveness

The outcome of this bid has been delayed by the General Election, but it is hoped that the outcome will be known by the end of August/beginning of September. Whilst this would provide an additional £500,000 over two years, a major concern of the DfE is that effective services will be mainstreamed at the end of the grant period.

### **4. Adoption Support Fund**

The Adoption Support Fund (ASF) was established to help pay for essential therapy services for adoptive families as and when they need them. It has been set up because many families need some kind of support during and following adoption and too many have struggled to get the help they

need in the past. The ASF enables adoptive families to access the services they need more easily, up to a fair access limit of £2,500 for a complex assessment and £5,000 for ongoing therapy. The therapies funded are those identified to help achieve the following positive outcomes for adopted children;

- Improved relationships with friends, family members, teachers and school staff
- Improved engagement with learning
- Improved emotional regulation and behaviour management
- Improved confidence and ability to enjoy a positive family life and social relationships

To achieve these outcomes the Fund will pay for therapeutic support and services including but not restricted to:

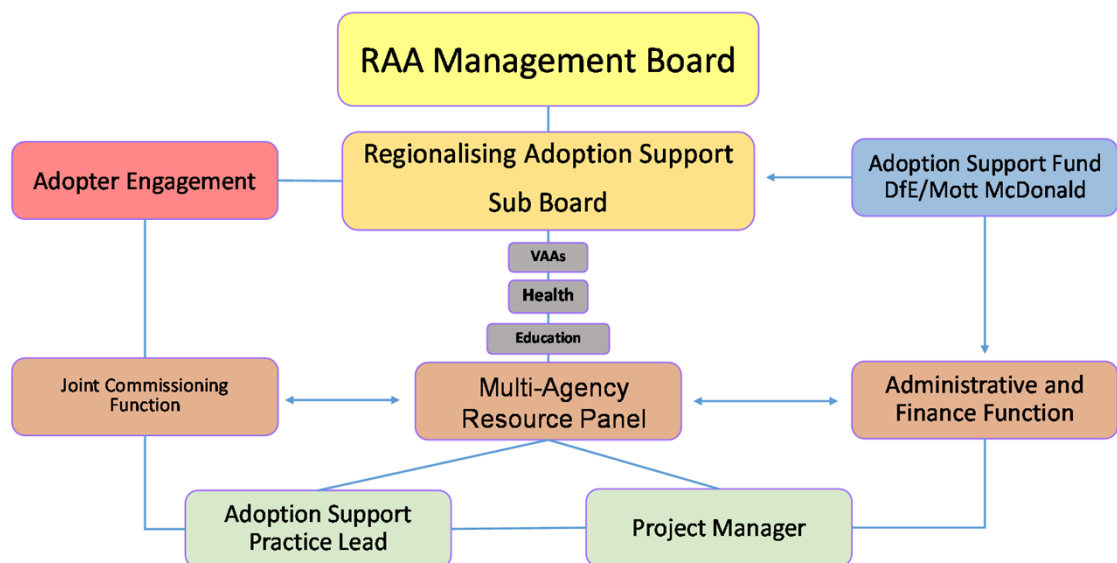
- Therapeutic Parenting training
- Further more complex assessment (e.g. CAMHS assessment, multidisciplinary assessment including education and health, cognitive and neuropsychological assessment, other mental health needs assessment.)
- Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy
- Theraplay
- Filial Therapy
- Creative Therapies e.g. art, music, drama, play
- Eye Movement Desensitization and reprocessing Therapy ( EMDR)
- Non- violent resistance ( NVR)
- Sensory integration therapy / sensory attachment therapy
- Multi systemic therapy
- Mentalisation based therapy
- Psychotherapy
- Specialist clinical assessments where required (e.g. Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder)
- Extensive life story work with a therapeutic intervention (where therapy is used to help the young person understand and cope with the trauma and difficulties that their life story work might revisit)
- Respite care (where it is part of a therapeutic intervention)

The current fund is centralised and administered by Mott McDonald. Adoption Counts is one of 3 Regional Adoption Agencies that have been chosen by the DfE to pilot the regionalisation of the ASF. This will allow us to implement new ways of working to:

- Align the funding with regional strategic objectives as defined by adopters and partner agencies
- Ensure smooth and easy access to appropriate funding for adoptive families
- Maximise value for money by reducing duplication and increasing efficient procurement
- Ensure that the use of the fund is consistent through the application of eligibility criteria and a multi-agency gate-keeping panel
- Improve service and practice standards
- Prevent the escalation of difficulties and reassure families that they can access support when they need it.

Whilst we are still awaiting the arrival of the funding post the election, we have begun work to establish this project, which would be combined with the development of the Centre of Excellence, if we are successful in that bid – see project structure below.

## ADOPTION COUNTS Regionalising Adoption Support - Project Structure -



Concurrent with this work, we are developing an Adoption Support Framework to commission therapeutic providers which will ensure the quality of services provided ,reducing the social work time spent identifying appropriate providers and offering adopters a better choice of therapists, from a variety of settings; reducing delay for families in accessing these additional services.

The multiagency panel will focus on practice issues, scrutinising and gate-keeping assessments and approving specialist therapeutic services within scope of the ASF. It will regularly review the services provided and monitor how the ASF adds value and enhances our existing in-house services.

### 5. Recommendations:

Each Health and Well-Being Board is asked to:

1. Note the contents of the report.
2. To receive at least an annual update on the development and effectiveness of the service
3. To nominate a representative to the Adoption Support Sub Board of Adoption Counts.

### For further information please contact:

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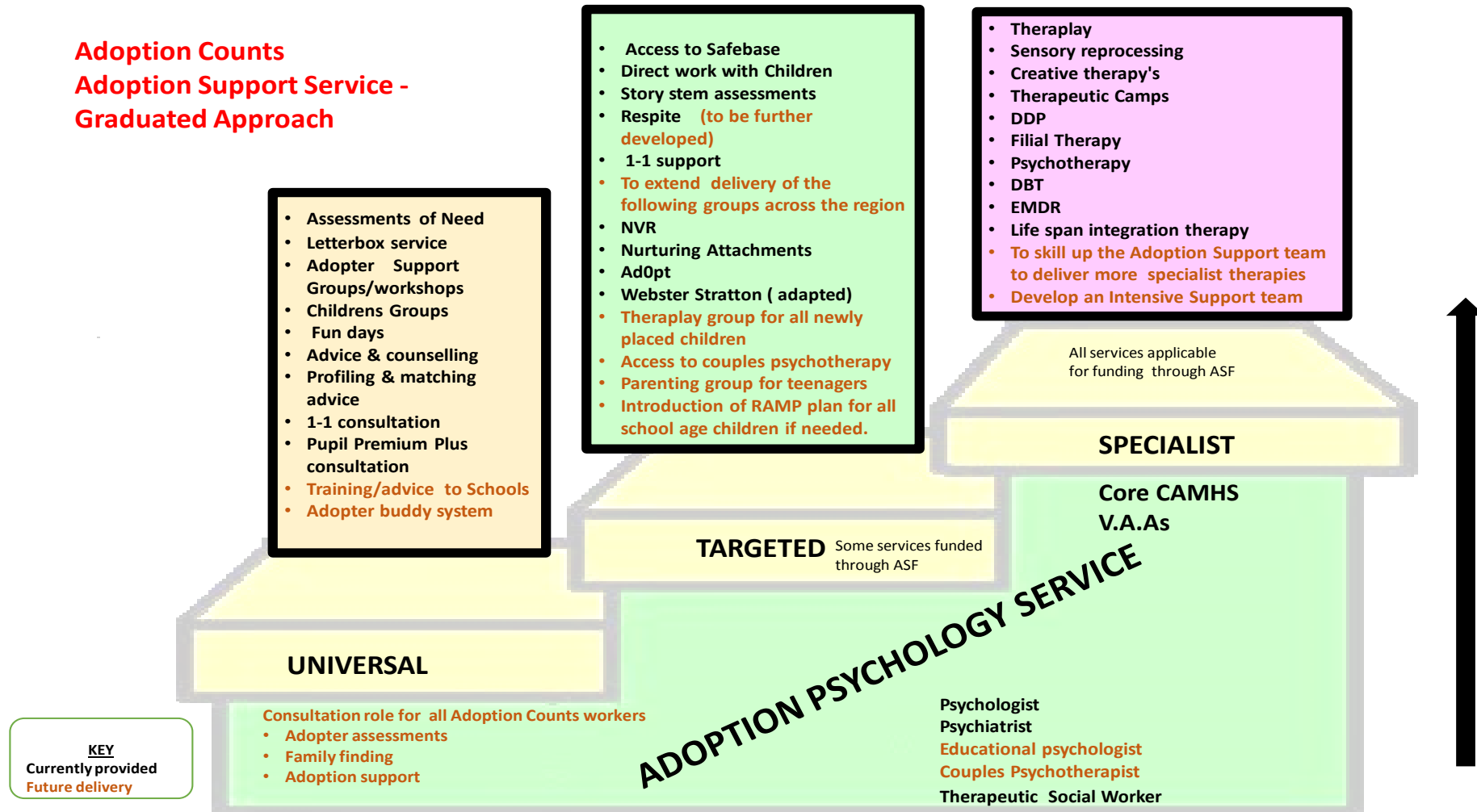
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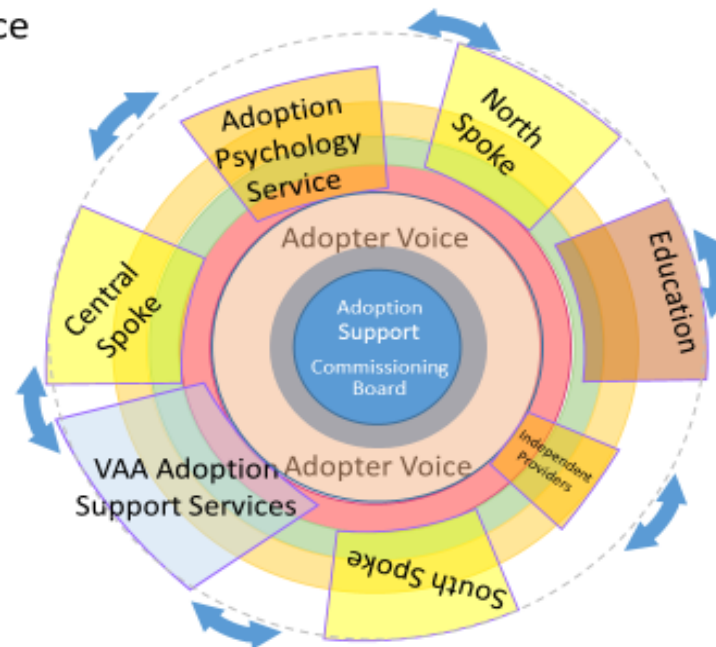
Appendix One

**Adoption Counts  
Adoption Support Service -  
Graduated Approach**



## Appendix Two

### Adoption Counts Adoption Support Centre/System of Excellence



| Key   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #f08080; border: 1px solid black;"></span> | Specialist/Possibly ASF funded |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #90ee90; border: 1px solid black;"></span> | Targeted/Possibly ASF funded   |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #ffdab9; border: 1px solid black;"></span> | Assessment                     |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #fffaf0; border: 1px solid black;"></span> | Universal                      |

