

## Due Regard Statement

Please use this statement to evidence how 'due regard to' the three aims of the public sector equality duty has been made (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) during the development of the 'policy'.<sup>1</sup>

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the ACT:
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic

Name of the 'policy':	Adoption West – Proposals for Gloucestershire County Council with 5 other councils (Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire, and Wiltshire) to develop the Adoption West Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) to comply with new government policy requirements.
Person(s) responsible for completing this statement	Helen Price
Briefly describe the activity being considered including aims and expected outcomes	<p>The development of Regional Adoption Agency proposals is part of the national regionalising adoption agenda as set out in 'Regionalising Adoption' (July 2015), and further developed in 'Adoption; A Vision for Change' (March 2016). Proposals are also informed by the Education and Adoption Act 2016. These policies set out government proposals to move to Regional Adoption Agencies (rather than individual council adoption services) by the end of the Parliament in 2020.</p> <p>The Adoption West project has developed from a steering group that formed in July 2013 to consider the possibility of more collaborative working to improve adoption and permanence service delivery across six local authorities (Bath &amp; North East Somerset, Bristol, Gloucestershire, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire, and Wiltshire.). Following the publication of 'Regionalising Adoption' (July</p>

<sup>1</sup> For 'policy': any new and existing policy, strategy, services, functions, work programme, project, practice and activity. This includes decisions about budgets, procurement, commissioning or de-commissioning services, service design and implementation.

	<p>2015). Adoption West refocused to meet these requirements. South Gloucestershire Council are leading this work on behalf of the other councils. It was agreed that 6 Voluntary Adoption Agencies would be contributors to the design and development of Adoption West.</p> <p>Following detailed analysis, independent legal advice and outline business case appraisal a wholly local authority owned joint venture entity is proposed to become the organisation through which Adoption West is delivered. All participating councils are now seeking endorsement of the proposals and approval to engage and consult with stakeholders.</p>
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## Documenting use of sufficient information

**Service information (if applicable) or Needs analysis (if applicable)**

*(please note x denotes suppression due to low numbers)*

<b>Who is responsible for delivering the service?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently the adoption service with Gloucestershire county council delivers the adoption service, the proposals will mean that they will be delivered by Adoption West in the future.</li> </ul>
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### Service user data/Needs analysis information

	Adopted children		Adopters		Adoption support	
Age	<b>0-4</b>		<b>Under 30</b>		<b>Under 30</b>	
	46		x		629	
	<b>5-8</b>		<b>30-40</b>		<b>30-40</b>	
	26		49		296	
	<b>9-12</b>		<b>41-50</b>		<b>41-50</b>	

	x	88 Over 50 9	509 Over 50 424
Disability	x	None declared	35
Sex	Male 44 Female 30	Male 76 Female 74	Male 950 Female 808
Race (including Gypsy & Traveller)	White British – 67 Dual heritage – x White other – x	White British – 143 Indian – x Chinese – x White Other – x White Irish - x	BME communities - 44
Gender reassignment	Not collected (no plans to collect due to the age of the children)	None declared	x
Marriage & civil partnership	Not applicable	Married – 130 Civil Partnership - x Single – x Other – x Same Sex Partnership - x Cohabiting - x	Married – 1040 Civil Partnership - 28 Single – 29 Cohabiting - 1144
Pregnancy & maternity	Adopters are entitled to leave and benefits that are similar to pregnancy and maternity rights.		
Religion or Belief	Not available in collated form, available for individual children (plans to collate this data)	C of E - x None – 73 Baptist – x Catholic – x Hindu – x Christian – 65 Muslim - x	C of E - 75 Catholic – 15 Muslim - x

Sexual Orientation	Not collected (no plans to collect due to the age of the children)	Heterosexual - 138 Lesbian – x Gay - x	Lesbian – 17 Gay - x
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**Other information**

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**Workforce data**

*(please note x denotes suppression due to low numbers)*

<b>Total number of GCC staff affected</b>  18	<b>Not affected</b>			
Age				
	<b>Under 30</b>	<b>30-40</b>	<b>41-50</b>	<b>Over 50</b>
	x	5	7	5
Disability	None declared			
Sex	all female			

Race (including Gypsy & Traveller)	White British – 15 White Asian Other – x Anglo/Arabic – x White African -x
Gender reassignment	None declared
Marriage & civil partnership	Married - 11 Single - x Cohabiting - x
Pregnancy & maternity	2 staff currently on maternity leave
Religion or Belief	C of E – 5 None - 11 Muslim - x
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual - 16 Lesbian - x

## Consultation and engagement

Service users	<p>The adopter voice is provided through adopter champion representation within the governance structure of Adoption West. Plans are in place for more thorough engagement with adopted children, birth families and adopters working with Adoption UK to facilitate surveys, focus groups and various forums to ensure proposals are informed by adopters, birth parents and adopted children. This consultation will run for 10 weeks from Monday 25<sup>th</sup> July to Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2016. The outcomes of this engagement process will inform the development of proposals for a decision paper to return to cabinet later this year.</p>
Workforce	<p>Staff have supported the process through an engagement event in November 2015 and ongoing communication with service managers and the project team through operational team meetings. Trade Unions have been informed of outline proposals and arrangements are in place for on-going consultation as proposals are developed further. More detailed engagement and consultation with staff is planned (Monday 25<sup>th</sup> July to Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2016). The outcomes of this engagement process will inform the development of proposals for a decision paper to return to cabinet later this year.</p>
Partners	<p>The NHS is fully engaged with these developments with a specific work group which comprises all the relevant CCGs and provider organisations. They are represented as part of the governance group.</p> <p>Other partners (including education providers) will be consulted through the planned 10 week consultation and engagement from Monday 25<sup>th</sup> July to Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2016. The outcomes of this engagement process will inform the development of proposals for a decision paper to return to cabinet later this year.</p>
External providers of services	<p>Following market testing, an engagement event with voluntary sector providers and expressions of interest, it was agreed that 6 VAA / ASAs would be contributors to the design and development of Adoption West. The Voluntary Adoption Agencies and Adoptions Support Agencies involved in Adoption West include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action for Children</li> <li>• Adoption UK</li> <li>• After Adoption</li> <li>• Barnardo's</li> <li>• CCS Adoption</li> <li>• PAC UK</li> </ul> <p>A wider group of providers will also be included in the 10 week consultation and engagement from Monday 25<sup>th</sup> July to Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2016. The outcomes of this engagement process will inform the development of proposals for a decision paper to return to cabinet later this year.</p>

## Equality analysis: Summary of what the evidence shows and how has it been used

This section will allow you to outline how the evidence has been used to show 'due regard' to the three aims of the general equality duty. It is important that this consideration is thorough and based on sufficient information. Consideration should be relevant and proportionate.

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Promote good relations

Protected group	Challenge or opportunity considered and what we did
<b>Age(A)</b>	<p><b>Service user</b>            These proposals and consultation target support for the most vulnerable young children, who require permanent families and therefore will have a positive impact on this group. The majority of adopters tend to be drawn from the 41-50 age group, the majority of children are aged 9 and under. Older children (over 4) tend to be less likely to be adopted; Adoption West will seek to build on the good Gloucestershire practice which finds a larger number of older children adoptive families. Consultation with adopted children is planned and will be sensitively managed in order that their experiences are fully informing the development of Adoption West.</p> <p><b>Staff</b>            Staff are evenly spread across the age bands, reflecting a balanced workforce in terms of age and experience. It is anticipated that the proposals for Adoption West and the planned consultation will not impact negatively on staff in terms of age.</p>
<b>Disability (D)</b>	<p><b>Service user</b>            A small number of children who are identified as disabled are adopted, this number of children identified as disabled in the adoption support cohort is significantly larger. This may be due to disabilities becoming apparent as children become older. Consultation with adopted children and adopters is planned and will be sensitively managed in order that their experiences are fully informing the development of Adoption West. Consideration within the consultation will be given to how disabled children and adopters views can be captured in ways that enable them to fully contribute.</p>

	<p><b>Staff</b> No staff identify they are disabled, a variety of consultation methods will be used to ensure that staff can contribute and would not be disadvantaged should they have any undisclosed disability</p>
<b>Sex (S)</b>	<p><b>Service user</b> More boys are adopted than girls, this position accords with national rates, where 53% of children adopted are boys (Adoption UK:2016). It reflects the national position that there are more boys (55%) than girls in care (Children in Care Statistics, House of Commons: 2015). Any improvements in adoption would not disproportionately affect either gender. In terms of adopters the split between male and female is broadly similar, likewise any improvements would not disproportionately affect either gender.</p> <p><b>Staff</b> The staff who deliver Gloucestershire's adoption service are all female. Any changes to service delivery through adoption west would therefore impact on this group. Extensive consultation is planned with all staff across the adoption west councils. As it is predominantly females who may have additional caring responsibilities, times and dates of engagement and consultation -will need to be sensitive to this.</p>
<b>Race (including Gypsy &amp; Traveller)(R)</b>	<p><b>Service user</b> The majority of children who are adopted are white British, a small number are of dual heritage and from the range of BME backgrounds (9.5%). Nationally 16% of children adopted are from BME backgrounds (Adoption UK: 2015). Adopters likewise reflect the majority white British community with a small number from the range of BME backgrounds (4.7%). The development of Adoption West offers opportunities to extend the diversity of adopters. The consultation will actively seek to engage the range of BME adopters and prospective adopters that live in the wider Adoption West region. Sensitive consultation methodology will take account of the need to make sure that the full range of BME communities that live within the region are reached.</p> <p><b>Staff</b> Staff in the adoption service reflect a range of BME backgrounds. The majority of staff are white British. The proposals and consultation will have a neutral impact on staff drawn from BME groups.</p>
<b>Gender reassignment (GR)</b>	<p><b>Service user</b> Very few adopters report they are transgender or have undergone gender reassignment. The proposals and consultation will have a neutral impact on this group. Transgender adopters will be offered the opportunity to shape Adoption West through the consultation process.</p>



	<p><b>Staff</b> No staff report they are transgender or have undergone gender reassignment. The proposals and consultation will have a neutral impact on this group.</p>
<p><b>Marriage &amp; civil partnership (MCP)</b></p>	<p><b>Service users</b> Most adopters are either married, in civil partnerships or cohabiting. The proposals and consultation will have a neutral impact on this protected characteristic.</p> <p><b>Staff</b> Most staff are either married or cohabiting. The proposals and consultation will have a neutral impact on this protected characteristic.</p>
<p><b>Pregnancy &amp; maternity (PM)</b></p>	<p><b>Service Users</b> Adopters are now entitled to similar rights to birth parents. Adoption leave is now a 'day 1 right' adopters do not need to have a qualifying period of employment to get adoption leave. Statutory adoption pay mirrors the arrangements for statutory maternity pay. These rights will be unaffected by the proposals. Given that many adopters will have young children, who may have additional needs relating to their early life experiences (such as developing attachments) the consultation proposals will need to be flexible. They will need to offer a range options that enable adopters to get involved, without compromising their developing parenting relationships and responsibilities.</p> <p><b>Staff</b> All staff are female, some are currently on maternity leave. Given the age range many will have family responsibilities and be caring for children. The consultation proposals will need to take account of this and be sensitive to caring or family responsibilities staff may have. The consultation will ensure that the staff who are currently taking maternity leave are offered the opportunity to contribute.</p>
<p><b>Religion and/or Belief (RAOB)</b></p>	<p><b>Service users</b> Adopters span religious groups, most report no religion. The proposals will seek to ensure that diversity of beliefs is maintained. The impact of the proposals could be positive with the involvement of faith based adoption societies and larger communities drawn from the range of faiths. Consultation proposals will take account of the need to involve adopters from the range of religious traditions and beliefs.</p>

	<p><b>Staff</b> Neither the proposals nor the consultation will impact negatively on staff who have a particular religious belief. Staff hold a range of religious beliefs and some report no religious beliefs.</p>
<b>Sexual Orientation(SO)</b>	<p><b>Service users</b> A small number of adopters are gay or lesbian. The impact of the proposals would be broadly neutral. There is potential to grow the number of adopters from gay and lesbian communities (get research), the planned consultation could offer opportunities to engage and offer opportunities for them to shape adoption West.</p> <p><b>Staff</b> The majority of staff report their sexuality as heterosexual. The proposals will have a neutral impact on this group, the consultation will enable staff who are gay or lesbian to shape the adoption west plans.</p>

## Strengthening actions: Planning for further improvements

Please outline here what actions are required for further improvements to address challenges or opportunities, for example:

- Arrangements for continued/new engagement with stakeholders, staff, service users
- Plans to close data gaps across any of the protected characteristics through reviewed contract management arrangements
- Identify other plans already underway to address the challenges or opportunities identified in this statement
- Share findings with partner organisations.

If none, state 'none' below.

### Action Plan

Action	Who is accountable	Time frame
Ensure that information about children's religious beliefs is available in collated	Delia Amos	Within 1 year

form.		
<p>Through the Directors, Governance and Service Leader decision making boards for Adoption West (with the other participating councils and adoption agencies) ensure that the planned consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeks to engage protected characteristic groups</li> <li>• Consultation methodology takes account of any requirements that are relevant to the protected characteristics</li> </ul>	<p>Linda Uren – DCS board Helen Price and Delia Amos (Governance and Service Leader Boards)</p>	<p>3 months</p>

## Monitoring and Review

Please indicate what processes/actions will be put in place to keep this 'activity' under review. For example will progress be monitored/ reported to a board, scrutiny committee, project board etc


This Due regard Statement will be reviewed following the consultation period (November 2016)

## Sign off and Scrutiny

By signing this statement off as complete you are confirming that 'you' have examined sufficient information across all the protected groups and used that information to show due regard to the three aims of the general duty. This has informed the development of the activity

<b>Senior level sign off:</b> <i>Linda Wen</i>	<b>Date:</b> <i>11.7.16</i>
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I am in agreement that sufficient information and analysis has been used to inform the development of this 'activity' and that any proposed improvement actions are appropriate and I confirm that I as the decision maker have been able to show due regard to the needs set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

<b>Name of relevant Portfolio Holder/Cabinet Member:</b> <i>PAUL McCAIN</i>	
<b>Signed by Portfolio Holder/Cabinet Member:</b> 	<b>Date:</b> <i>11.7.16.</i>

## Publication

If this statement accompanies cabinet paper it will be published as part of the cabinet report publication process. Statements accompanying cabinet reports are also published on our website. If this statement is not to be submitted with a cabinet paper please maintain a copy for your own records that can be retrieved for internal review and also in case of future challenge.