**South East Region Adoption Leadership Board**

**Minutes of Meeting held on**

**Friday 10th October 2014, at 11.30am in Fountain House, Reading**

**Present:** Judith Ramsden (DCS Wokingham, Chair); Lorna Hunt (ADCS Bracknell Forest); Teresa Leavy (Interim DCS Southampton); Hilary Brooks (Interim Chief Executive Cabrini); Alastair Lee (Data and Information Manager, East Sussex); Rosemary Perry (Sector Led Improvement Programme)

**Apologies for Absence:** Annie McIver (ADCS West Sussex); Lucy Butler (ACDS Oxfordshire)

**Where the Board Fits In:**

For the benefit of the member of the Board, JR explained the wider context and the links to the National Board; the South East region has a link through Kim Bromley-Derry, Chief Executive of Newham. Successful contact with him has already been made. JR emphasised the importance of this Board being linked back to and endorsed by the South Regional Directors Group. Key messages received so far from the national Board were the importance of good quality data and the need to establish a regional position from which to make decisions about future work.

HB reported on developments in the voluntary sector; it was noted that VAAs had challenging targets with government funding linked to growth in the sector. The larger VAAs were becoming larger and there was a danger that the smaller ones would cease to exist. With the introduction of the Adoption Grant to LAs, VAAs were now finding an increased demand around harder to place children (older, special needs and/or with siblings).

It was generally felt that VAAs were moving back to specialist work, such as harder to place children and Post Adoption Support. It was also felt that there were some aspects of adoption work that VAAs do better than LAs and that LAs ought to be in a better position to shape and influence the market to best meet needs.

HB reminded the group that VAAs are fundraising organisations and that campaigns can be used to obtain funding for initiatives such as post adoption support; this can be a useful support to LAs who cannot raise funds in this way.

**Terms of Reference:**

The group considered the draft terms of reference of the Board. It was noted that Jan Fishwick from PACT had been recommended to attend but had not yet responded. Also contact had been made with BAAF but also no response received. RP to chase both up. **Action RP**

It was agreed by the group that further statements around “ambition and shape” and taking a commissioning approach would be added, as well as a specific mention about adoption vs permanency. The group also felt that SGOs were becoming increasingly important and should be mentioned in the TofR. It was agreed that the section on Impacts would be re-visited in 3 months time.

It was noted that the revised TofR would be shared with the South East Region Directors Group. **Action JR.** RP to make amendments to the document and circulated to the group with the minutes. **Action RP**

**Regional Position Statement**

RP reported that a request for information had been sent to all 19 authorities in the South East region; so far 12 authorities had responded. The group felt that this was helpful in understanding the position in the region and made some suggestion for some supplementary questions, as follows:

* What work LAs currently commission from VAAs and why
* What feedback mechanisms are in place from adopters and adoptees; how are experiences different between the VAAs and LAs
* What proportion of LA spend is allocated to adoption services and will this change for next year
* Have local authorities/VAAs collected any data or information from people who have dropped out of the process – what stage; why. Is there an issues about independent reviewing mechanisms and decisions being overturned
* Issue of fostering to adoption and impacts on timeliness of the process
* What are all the existing or proposed consortia arrangements across the region and what is their shape.

It was noted that some of this information would need to come from the VAAs and HB expressed an interest in asking colleagues if a similar data and information collection exercise could be conducted.

It was agreed that RP would continue to chase the outstanding authorities, send a list of supplementary questions towards end of October/beginning November and work with HB to identify whether a similar exercise could be conducted within VAAs. **Action RP.** HB would sound out colleagues. **Action HB**

**Benchmarking Data:**

AL circulated a sample of benchmarking data relating to adoption. It was noted that this is collected from all 19 LAs at the same time that it is submitted nationally so that the region can analyse the data in advance of national publication. It was noted that there are data sharing protocols in place to protect sensitive data sets. It was agreed that RP and AL would work together to produce a written profile for the next meeting. **Action RP/AL.**

It was further noted that there was some national work being undertaken on SGO/RO data sets and agreed that AL would speak to Carol Brooks about this. **Action AL**

**Work Programme:**

It was agreed that the work programme would emerge as the programme progressed; key elements for the time being would be:

* Capture key data and information
* Send out supplementary questions to LAs
* Propose some kind of regional event to identify key issues and share good practice
* Collect information from VAAs.

A draft work programme would be added to the agenda for the next meeting. **Action RP**

RP would pull together the data and the information from LAs into a position statement for the next meeting. **Action RP**

**Meeting with National Board:**

It was noted that JR and RP would be meeting with the National Board on 21st October 2014 agreed that anything of significance would be circulated to the group. **Action JR/RP.**

**Communication:**

It was agreed that a view of how the group communicates with key stakeholders across the region would be added to the agenda of the next meeting. **Action RP**

**Date of Next Meeting:**

Monday 1st December 2014 at 10.30am. RP to see if same venue can be organised. **Action RP**