

Adoption Leadership Board Core Brief

What are the aims and objectives of the Board?

The Adoption Leadership Board (ALB) is a new national board with a remit to drive significant improvements in the performance of the adoption system in England. It has a particular focus on supporting and challenging the adoption system to maximise the likelihood that:

- children for whom adoption is the best way of achieving permanence are adopted without unnecessary delay;
- there are enough prospective adopters to provide homes for all the children approved to be adopted; and
- adoptions do not break down through the right adoption support being readily available to all people who need it.

Why is the Board needed?

The Board has been jointly developed by Government, local authorities and the voluntary sector to provide national leadership to the adoption system, improve its performance and tackle the key challenges it currently faces. For example, a significant issue is the growing gap between the number of prospective adopters and the number of children who are waiting to be adopted. At the end of March 2013, there were 6,000 children cleared by the courts for adoption but waiting to be placed with a permanent family. The Department for Education estimated that we needed around 3,100 more adopters than were approved as at 31 March 2013 to meet the needs of those children.

Who is on the Board?

Board members are the most senior officials from key organisations in the adoption system in England. They have been appointed to represent their sector or constituency and to take responsibility for galvanising performance improvements within their respective areas. The list of current Board members is shown at Annex A and will be kept under review. Where appropriate, the Board will engage with other key stakeholders from the adoption and wider children's services sectors.

Who is the Board's Chair?

Sir Martin Narey, recruited through an open competition and appointed by Ministers, is the Chair of the Board. The Chair is supported by a Board Manager and Secretariat, and the Board will have access to analytical input and expertise from the Department for Education.

How does the Board work?

Board members work together collectively to achieve the Board's objectives. This principle of cross-agency working is critical to ensuring that the Board delivers its overall aim of driving significant improvements in performance.

Key aspects of the Board's work programme are led by sub-groups, for example on adopter recruitment and adoption support. Sub-groups are chaired by Board members and report directly to the Board on a regular basis.

The Board will interact with individual adoption agencies through Regional Adoption Boards which will have designated ADCS regional leads and VAA representation. The collection, analysis and dissemination of timely performance data and the sharing of best practice will be central to this interaction. Each Regional Adoption Board will be sponsored by a member of the ALB.

The Board's success is contingent on regular two way communications with the sector and with those who come into contact with the adoption system. It will therefore be considering carefully how it can best conduct such communications.

To whom is the Board accountable?

The Board is collectively accountable to the Secretary of State for Education. The Chairman will provide regular updates to Ministers and a formal annual report. Central to the accountability arrangements is a set of headline success measures that the Board has developed to monitor improvements in system performance.

How often will the Board meet?

The Board will typically meet on a quarterly basis but may meet more frequently if required. The first and second meetings were held in February and April.

Annex A - ALB Membership

Chair

Sir Martin Narey

Members

| <u>Organisation</u> | <u>Position</u> | <u>Name</u> |
|--|---|------------------------|
| Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) | President | Alan Wood |
| ADCS | Chair of Health, Care and Additional Needs Policy Committee | Andrew Christie |
| Adoption UK | Chief Executive | Hugh Thornbery |
| British Association for Adoption and Fostering | Chief Executive | Srabani Sen |
| Consortium of Adoption Support Agencies | Chair | Peter Sandiford |
| Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies | Chief Executive Officer | Mark Owers |
| Department for Education | Director Children's Social Care | Paul Kissack |
| Department of Health | Director for Children, Families & Maternity and Health Inequalities | Flora Goldhill |
| First4Adoption | Representative | Carol Homden |
| Local Government Association (LGA) | Chair of the Children and Young People's Board | David Simmonds |
| LGA | Senior Adviser | Ian Dean |
| Society of Local Authority Chief Executives | Representative | Kim Bromley-Derry |
| University of Bristol - Hadley Centre for Adoption and Foster Care Studies | Professor of Child and Family Social Work | Professor Julie Selwyn |