

## **RAA Joint Scrutiny Group Terms of Reference**

The RAA Joint Scrutiny Group is an informal meeting of representative Scrutiny Members from Devon County Council, Somerset County Council, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council. This Terms of Reference has no constitutional standing, but simply serves as a guide to support the running and work of this group.

### **1. Purpose**

The RAA Joint Scrutiny Group will maintain a strategic overview of the activity and performance of Adopt South West, the Regional Adoption Agency for Devon, Somerset, Plymouth and Torbay, and report any significant findings or recommendations back to individual local authority scrutiny committees.

### **2. Scope and remit**

The main focus of the RAA Joint Scrutiny Group will be the monitoring of the performance of Adopt South West across the RAA area. This may include:

- adopter sufficiency and recruitment/retention of adopters
- adoption success/breakdown data
- adoption timescales
- sufficiency of adoption support services
- outcomes for adopted children and families

The RAA Joint Scrutiny Group will also receive and consider the Adopt South West Annual Report.

The RAA Joint Scrutiny Group may make recommendations to the relevant scrutiny committees of Devon, Somerset, Plymouth and Torbay Councils but has no decision-making powers, or powers to make formal recommendations directly to any of the four local authorities' Executive / Cabinet / Executive Mayor or to Adopt South West.

### **3. Membership and attendance**

Membership of the RAA Joint Scrutiny Group:

- Devon County Council: Chair and Vice Chair of Children's Scrutiny Committee
- Somerset County Council: Chair and Vice Chair of Policies, Children and Families Scrutiny Committee
- Plymouth City Council: Chair and Vice Chair of Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Torbay Council: Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services Scrutiny and Chair or Vice Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Any substitutions must be non-executive Members.

The Chair will rotate between the constituent authorities and be elected on an annual basis.

Other Attendance:

- Chair of the Adopt South West Strategic Partnership Board
- Chair of the Adopt South West Operational Board
- Adopt South West Service Manager
- Scrutiny/Democratic Services Officer (of the incumbent Chair's local authority)

#### **4. Frequency of meetings**

The RAA Joint Scrutiny Group will hold its main meeting annually in July, to consider the draft Adopt South West Annual Report, and where business requires, will hold an additional meeting at a date to be agreed by the Group. Additional meetings and training sessions may be held at the discretion of the Chair, and subject to resourcing.

#### **5. Hosting and resourcing**

The RAA Joint Scrutiny Group meeting will be hosted by the local authority of the incumbent Chair, and as such will rotate annually. Agenda preparation, note taking and scrutiny support will be provided by the Scrutiny/Democratic Services officer from the hosting authority. The Scrutiny/Democratic Services Officer will also draft a report on behalf of Members (referenced in paragraph 7 below).

Each constituent authority will be responsible for meeting any travel expenses incurred by its own Members and officers.

#### **6. Agendas and reports**

The agenda will be drafted by the Scrutiny/Democratic Services Officer in consultation with the Chair and the Adopt South West Manager, and will reflect the RAA Scrutiny Group's scope and remit. Additional items may be included at the discretion of the Chair.

The agenda and relevant reports will be circulated by email to Members and other attendees, five working days in advance of the meeting.

It is expected that the majority of the reports considered at the meeting will be produced by Adopt South West.

#### **7. Reporting and local scrutiny arrangements**

The RAA Joint Scrutiny Group will provide a brief report to the four individual local authority scrutiny committees to be considered during the Autumn Scrutiny Committee cycle. The report will summarise the information shared and any pertinent discussion points from the annual meeting of the group.

Where appropriate, papers considered by the RAA Joint Scrutiny Group will be made available online.

The report may include recommendations or suggestions for the future work programmes of the individual local authority scrutiny committees.

Local arrangements for scrutinising adoption will be retained by individual local authority scrutiny committees.

In the Spring Scrutiny Committee cycle it is suggested that each of the four local authority scrutiny committees receive a report from the RAA Service Manager on adoption performance and outcomes for children in their local authority area (i.e. Devon's Children's Scrutiny Committee will receive a report on adoption in Devon).

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