

RAA Joint Scrutiny Group Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

The Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) Joint Scrutiny Group is an informal meeting of representative Scrutiny Members from Cornwall Council, Devon County Council, Plymouth City Council, Somerset Council, and Torbay Council, those councils which form Adopt South West.

This Terms of Reference has no constitutional standing, but simply serves as a guide to support the running and work of this group.

2. Scope and remit

The main focus of the RAA Joint Scrutiny Group is to maintain a strategic overview of the activity and performance of Adopt South West across the RAA area and report any significant findings or recommendations back to individual local authority scrutiny committees.

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 Cornwall, Devon, Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay Councils but has no decision-making powers, or powers to make formal recommendations directly to any of the five local authorities' Executive/Cabinets or to Adopt South West.

3. Membership and attendance

Membership of the RAA Joint Scrutiny Group:

- Cornwall Council: Chair and Vice Chair of Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Devon County Council: Chair and Vice Chair of Children's Scrutiny Committee
- Plymouth City Council: Chair and Vice Chair of Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel.
- Somerset Council: Chair and Vice Chair of Scrutiny Committee - Children and Families
- Torbay Council: Chair or Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board and the Chair of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board.

Members of each constituent authority may nominate a substitute to attend in their absence. Any substitutions must be non-executive Members.

Other Attendance:

- Chair of the Adopt South West Strategic Partnership Board
- Chair of the Adopt South West Operational Board

- Head of Service - Adopt South West
- Scrutiny/Democratic Services Officers (to support the running of the group)

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.

Where business requires, additional meetings and training sessions may be held in consultation with the nominated Chair, hosting authority and Head of Service, 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. The 'Election of the next meeting's Chair' will be listed on the agenda at the main annual meeting.

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).

It is expected that meetings would take place virtually, although Members may decide to meet in person if necessary.

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 individual local authority scrutiny committees to be considered at their next meeting of their usual 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 e.g. Each of the local authority Scrutiny committees can 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 can receive a report on adoption in Devon).

Created: February 2020

Updated: July 2024

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