

# Supporting the Tees Valley Regional Adoption Agency



## 1. The Spark

Local authorities in Tees Valley all have 'good' (Ofsted) adoption services and even prior to Department of Education's (DfE) 'regional adoption' programme (announced in early 2016), had explored regionalising their adoption offer. As such, this group of local authorities were keen to be on the front-foot with this policy agenda, and develop rigorous and realistic plans for making this happen.

As a trusted partner (having already worked with Hartlepool on various projects), Hartlepool asked iMPOWER, on behalf of five authorities, to support the Tees Valley to design and develop a Tees Valley Regional Adoption Agency (RAA). This included delivering the Transition Plan, as requested by DfE by March 2016, and subsequently the business case for delivering the RAA.

## 2. The Chemistry

Co-designing a new delivery model meant starting with a blank page and working from the bottom-up; establishing a vision and strategic objectives, informed by views of adopters, staff, Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) and performance data.

iMPOWER worked with the five local authorities and the five VAAs to deliver:

- Vision, strategic objectives and scope of the RAA
- Finance and performance baseline
- A detailed 'ideal journey map' co-designed with staff and carers
- A cost/benefit analysis that models the financial opportunity of establishing the RAA
- An implementation plan

## 3. The Revelation

As a result of the surveys and the co-design approach, some interesting insights emerged:

- 61% adopters feel positive about adoption services being delivered regionally
- Existing services are rated highly by users (with post-adoption support and timeliness lower scoring than other areas)
- Experience of involvement in service design to date is limited but 46% of adopters are prepared to be involved in focus groups
- 60% of all staff think regionalising adoption is a good idea
- Staff feel that bureaucracy, lack of continuity in process and limited opportunities for training are key barriers to improvement

## 4. The Results

The Tees Valley submitted an in-depth Transition Plan to the DfE, outlining their vision of a regional adoption delivery model, and an in-depth plan of how they plan to achieve it. This was recognised as 'best in class' by the DfE.

iMPOWER also worked with the Tees Valley to develop an outline business case, setting out a common vision, principles and strategic objectives across local authorities. The outline business case starts to bring the implementation phase to life, with details on the formation of - and transition to - the new model.

Consequently, the Tees Valley are on track for the RAA to go live in Autumn 2017.

## 5. The Impact

*'Having previously worked with iMPOWER, I was confident they were the right organisation to support the sub region to achieve our objectives of designing and developing a first-class adoption service.'*

*To realise our ambition, we knew we would require external expertise to design a new entity across five local authorities and secure the effective collaboration of all partners. This has become more apparent as the project has progressed. The outputs from iMPOWER have been of an outstanding quality and ensured that the TVRAA is on track to deliver this ambitious change programme.'*  
– Sally Robinson, Director Child and Adult Services

### CONTACT

For more information on this case study or our wider work in Children's Services, please contact Olly Swann at [Oswann@impower.co.uk](mailto:Oswann@impower.co.uk) / 020 7017 8030

# Our approach

iMPOWER develops solutions to complex social challenges that are bespoke to each client. However, our approach and our values remain constant

People with first hand **experience** in their field

Using behavioural insight to **manage demand**

**Sustainable** change

**Impact:** improving practice, saving money

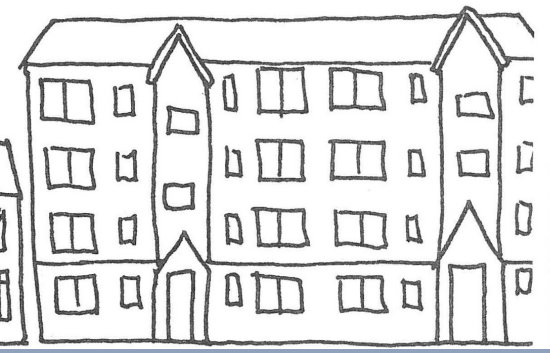
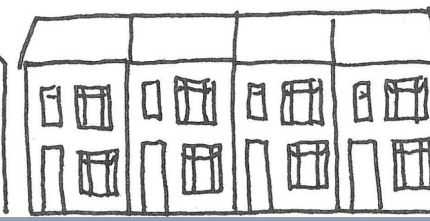
**Openness:** sharing our emergent thinking

Understand the **whole system**

**Users** at the heart of design and delivery

Always **co-designed**

Clients **better equipped** to take on challenge of 21st Century public services



Project runs from July-October 2016

Made sure the new ways of working were embedded across the service with the five authorities

Steering people towards support and services that build independence

Centred around the child and adopter to underpin the RAA's process, roles and functions

Sustainable and appropriate model co-designed for Tess Valley

Detailed 'ideal journey map' co-designed with staff and carers

Transition Plan recognised as 'best in class' by DfE

Tees Valley are on track for the RAA to go live in Autumn 2017

Case study to share learning and results