Adopt London East Regional Adoption Agency

BUSINESS CASE

Final VERSION 1.0

November 2018

Project information

Project name	Adopt London East : An East London regionalised adoption service
Project ID	
Project Sponsor	Tim Aldridge
Project Manager	James Boxer

Document revision history

Date	Version	Summary of changes	Revised by

Document approval

Date	Version	Approved by	Role of approver

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is proposed that a new East London Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) is created through combining the adoption services for the four East London Boroughs of Havering, Tower Hamlets, Newham and Barking and Dagenham. These agencies wish to build on the success of their existing services to improve performance in meeting the needs of children who require permanence through adoption, by bringing together the best practice from each authority within the RAA. This proposal forms part of an overarching project to develop four RAAs across London.

This document describes how establishing a single agency will allow the four authorities to provide a more cohesive, efficient and effective use of resources and development of practice to the benefit of children, adopters and others who gain from adoption services. It proposes that the London Borough of Havering will host the RAA, the cost of development to be funded by the Department for Education. This document also sets out how the RAA will work with its partners to deliver Adoption Services.

In March 2016, the government announced changes to the delivery of adoption services setting a very clear direction that all local authorities' adoption services must be delivered on a regionalised basis by 2020. This followed a range of national policy changes since 2012, including the 2015 'Regionalising Adoption' paper by the DfE that sought improvements in adoption performance. Following the general election in June 2017, the Minister of State for Children and Families reaffirmed commitment to this policy. In March 2018, the DfE commenced the legislation that allows them to direct a local authority into a RAA if there is no progress being made.

The premise of regionalisation is to:

- Increase the number of children adopted
- Reduce the length of time children wait to be adopted
- Improve post-adoption support services to families who have adopted children from care
- Reduce the number of agencies that provide adoption services thereby improving efficiency & effectiveness.

The implementation of the new RAA for East London follows substantial project work from March 2018 where the decision was taken and agreed with the DfE to pursue four separate RAAs in London, not a single RAA as had been discussed through 2016-17. The East London project has the benefit of being able to access previous learning from those RAAs across the country that are already live. Project Managers across London have also worked together to ensure as much consistency pan-London as possible whilst retaining an awareness and consideration of the specific demographics and other issues specific to their region and within their region.

The East London RAA will be known as Adopt London East (ALE) and will build upon the previous positive practice established within the East London consortium – East London Adoption and Permanence Consortium (ELPAC) which is already delivering services effectively across the East region.

Over the summer 2018, and prior to formal agreement of this business case in autumn 2018 further work has begun to develop a service delivery model and engage staff in c-production of the model which enable East London to move towards regionalisation in specific areas where it makes sense to do so. Over the summer more detailed planning work has also been underway to support the successful implementation of ALE. This work will continue with the four member boroughs through the winter with transition planning and implementation beginning as soon as the business case is formally agreed.

This business case is founded on a number of key assumptions:

- There is one host for the East London RAA and it is proposed this is Havering; however, it is expected that staff will be located across all four LA sites.

- There is one Head of Service and some functions, still to be determined, that may be centrally located. Any centrally located functions, likely senior management and back office will be located in Havering.
- Adoption practices and processes will be the same across all four local authority areas
- All agencies have the resources available to actively lead on and participate in agreed work streams and achieve the deliverables within agreed timescales set out in the plan;
- Adopt London East (ALE) will work in partnership with the child's social worker at the earliest possible point, at the discretion of each Agency Decision Maker but in most cases at the point of the Placement Order being granted
- Staff affected transfer to Havering's Terms and Conditions, including pension rights, holiday entitlements and sick pay policies. Staff will be transferred to the host authority under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) regulations (TUPE);
- Any applicable redundancy costs will be underwritten by the currently employing LAs as this will not be funded by the DfE or the host;
- Premises – ALE will be delivered from office bases in all four locality areas. This will ensure: continuity of provision as far as possible; close working relationships with children's social workers and easy access for local communities to a service within their community. A small number of workers undertaking central functions (mainly senior management and back office staff) will work from a central base in the Host authority. All RAA workers will also be expected to attend meetings within the central base in the host authority for some portion of the working week.
- All RAA workers will also be expected to work across all of the four local bases if the needs / demands of the service require it

The Principles

The principles which this business case has followed were agreed by the Adopt London Executive Board which was delegated by the Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS) to oversee the development of the four London Regional Adoption Agencies. These principles have been endorsed by the DfE:

1. Local authorities involved in Adopt London and each of the four RAAs are committed to collaborating adoption arrangements so that the best interests of children and their adoptive families are secured and kept at the forefront of decision-making.

2. Adopt London will provide an overarching framework for enabling effective coordination, coherence and partnership working across London.

3. Adopt London authorities, and the four RAAs will make sure that there is consistency of approach in relation to key strategic and operational decisions, e.g. about whether staff are transferred under TUPE arrangements or seconded. Project teams in the four RAAs and RAA governance arrangements should reflect the ambition to promote such consistency of approach.

4. We are committed to working effectively together with Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs), making sure that their unique and important contribution is maximised and that VAAs are involved in the development of the RAAs and Adopt London.

5. The focus of work over the next 18 months will be on establishing the four RAAs; in phase two, developmental work on the Adopt London hub will progress. We will use the Adopt London Executive Board to operate a virtual Hub in the coming period, with a view to exploring options for joint commissioning across London, maintaining common design principles for the spokes and exploring opportunities for further development of the Hub in phase 2.

Service delivery model, performance targets and budget

Adopt London East is committed to designing services capable of improving outcomes for children for whom the plan is adoption through:

- Placing more children more quickly
- Placing more children in an early permanence placement
- Providing quality support to ensure fewer placement disruptions and happier families
- Improving timescales for adopter assessments

- Assessing adopters well; leading to good and speedy matches

The proposed service delivery model is based on an evidence base of what works in Adoption and on initial consultation with adopters and key stakeholders. The detailed service design will be developed through co-production with staff and all key stakeholders as detailed in section 2.3. The rationale for the design principles is explored in more detail in section 3.3

Proposed service delivery model

The proposed service delivery model is based on an evidence base of what works in Adoption and on initial consultation with adopters and key stakeholders. The detailed service design will be developed through co-production with staff and all key stakeholders as detailed in section 2.3. The rationale for the design principles is explored in more detail in section 3.3

The service delivery model includes one head of service and three team managers who manage the three key thematic areas in Adoption; recruitment and assessment; family finding and matching and adoption support.

Team managers will manage teams who will have workers allocated to local areas but operate as a pan East London service. All workers will be expected to operate outside specific Local Authority boundaries according to need and to meet regularly as a team.

Performance expectations and accountabilities of the RAA, Local Authority, each team and each worker must be clear.

This outline structure will be subject to further modelling and may change in some aspects of detail through the next phase of development; thematic operational Task and Finish Groups. These groups will involve first line managers, adoption social workers and adopter representatives in co-production of the working model.

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RAA performance targets A detailed analysis of current performance has been undertaken (see section 2.4). This has been reviewed against best practice nationally and in the region. This has informed the setting of SMART performance targets for ALE. (See section 3.6)

Target	Current	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Improved Outcomes
Adopter recruitment	29	36	40	45	- Children placed within East London - Improved placement choice - Improved adopter confidence
Family finding and matching	57	60	65	70	- Children placed in East London - Increased number of children adopted - Improved placement choice - Improved matching through placement with adopters known to agency
Adopter support (no established numerical baseline)	Individual worker offer	Development of core offer Improved engagement with providers Improved use of grant funding			- Fewer adoption disruptions - Improved outcomes for adopted children - Improved adoptive family satisfaction

Budget

The current budget reflects staffing to the top of the scale at all grades. It is likely that the budget will reduce following more detailed analysis

A detailed rationale for budget setting and predicted savings is presented in section 4 of the report

Current adoption budgets	
Havering	313,929
Tower Hamlets	284,566
LBBD	392,646
Newham	407,042
TOTAL	**1,398,183**
Cost of regionalised model	
Staffing costs	£1,327,960
Non Staffing costs	£279,396
TOTAL	**£1,607,356**
Variance	
TOTAL	**£209,727**

- The total shortfall between the current contributions and the proposed RAA budget is £209,727
- It is important to note that this is the maximum possible shortfall between current budgets and the proposed RAA budgets as salaries have been costed at the highest possible spinal point. As such, the RAA partnership board will concentrate on partnership and risk sharing agreements to ensure that any underspend and savings are redistributed equitably among its member local authorities
- This business case sets outs a "highest possible cost" funding model and ensures that the amount spent on the model in years 1,2 and 3 can be no more than the stated figure
- As such, the outline cost of the model is the same for years 1,2 and 3, in the knowledge that the spend will definitely be lower than the agreed amount
- The methodology for meeting the shortfall is based on reducing the number of interagency placement fees paid out for children in the RAA footprint. Effectively, the additional investment will be funded by performance improvements across the region.
- A conservative estimate of 7 (£217k at a cost of 31k per placement) additional placements made in house would cover the costs of the shortfall between the current and future budgets
- The RAA performance targets also aim to reduce interagency placements by a total of 16 by year 3 at a potential cost saving of £496k
- In the event that the RAA does not meet its targets, the extra investment in the RAA model will still be needed. The partnership and risk sharing agreements will agree how this funding will be sourced in an equitable way through each of the four local authorities
- There is also significant scope for increasing income from providing East London RAA adopters to other RAA's
- The risk sharing and partnership agreements will set out clear methodologies for budget setting and benefits (financial and other) sharing as a result of the RAA achieving its targets.
- Further savings against Children in Care budgets by each Local Authority through improved rates of leaving care for adoption and improved timeliness of placement (see section 4)

2. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

2.1 Purpose of this document

This document sets out the case for creating a new Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) to be named *'Adopt London East'* through combining the adoption services for four local authority areas in East London. It describes how establishing a single agency will allow the four authorities to provide a more cohesive, efficient and effective use of resources and promote the development of practice to the benefit of children, adopters and others who gain from adoption services. It proposes that London Borough of Havering will host the new adoption agency, the cost of implementation to be funded by the Department for Education. This document also sets out how Adopt London East will work with other RAAs pan-London to develop a Regional Hub for the provision of some services yet to be determined.

2.2 Background and case for change

Current measures show that performance across London is variable but, even where performance and outcomes are good, there is a case to be made that further improvement can be achieved. The current average number of children being adopted by each London borough is 11 per annum, and is also 11 in East London, which reflects the fact that each borough is trying to deliver a small specialist service for a small number of children.

Following the publication of the DfE paper, Regionalising Adoption (June 2015), the Department invited local authorities and Voluntary Adoption Agencies to submit Expressions of Interest in becoming part of new regionalised arrangements. Following the scoping phase, twenty-six London boroughs signed up in principle to joining the London RAA between November 2016 and March 2017.

London Councils hosted project resources funded via the DfE to develop the case for change that addressed London's requirements for a new model. The brand "Adopt London" was created.

The initial focus was on a London wide RAA. However, in October 2016 an Outline Business Case was approved by the member authorities and agreed by the DfE that set out a revised model that proposed four separate RAAs to be established with an option for a central hub to be iteratively developed for shared functions. The role of the hub will become clear as the programme evolves.

The recommendation was not to create a new entity or entities, but to take forward a model in which the RAA adoption service is hosted directly by London boroughs. The costs of creating a new entity were considered to be prohibitive; this was also the conclusion of other pilot RAAs around the country.

The recommendation is to create four additional RAAs to cover London, with programme coordination to deliver those functions most effectively carried out once. A fifth RAA is being developed by Harrow working with Coram. This fifth London RAA includes the south London boroughs of Wandsworth and Bromley.

The rest of this document builds on the work that has gone before to develop a more detailed business case for the East London RAA – Adopt East London.

2.3 Work undertaken to date and proposed methodology going forwards

Through the development of this business case a number of priority areas have emerged, some at an East London regional basis, and some pan-London which put the ambitions of regional working into practice. Taking forward these smaller projects over the last few months has helped develop and iterate our thinking, both making the case for regional working, but also creating a sense of momentum, moving to regional working where it makes sense to do so more quickly.

Methodology for service development

The service development plan aims to model a service capable of delivering the best possible outcomes for children and adoptive families. In order to achieve this the methodology includes:

- Co-production with front line adoption staff: who know and understand the challenges in their services
- The voice of adopters and adopted young people: who know what support they need and what works for them
- Consultation with key partners and stakeholders; especially those who influence outcomes such as the East London Courts
- An understanding of current research and evidence based practice
- An understanding of current performance: locally and nationally
- Development of a learning culture of support and challenge

It is important to note the evolutionary nature of the process. An outline service delivery model has been included in the business case. This provides assurance that an effective service may be provided within an agreed budget. The design will be subject to further scrutiny through the methodology described above and may be subject to change if other models are proposed which are capable of providing improved outcomes for children and adoptive families.

Progress to date

The service delivery model has been developed in collaboration with the service leads in each Borough. The service leads know their services well: all have been honest in appraisal of their service and open to radical change in service delivery. All service leads have agreed in broad terms the outcomes, principles and evolutionary model of service delivery as detailed in the body of the business case.

A staff engagement event will take place on 12th September 2018 and a preparatory briefing has been sent to service leads for dissemination

Service leads have identified key staff for each of three task and finish groups on: recruitment and assessment; family finding and matching and adoption support. These will meet monthly from September to December.

Initial consultation has been undertaken with adopter voice and contact made with the coordinator to establish a process for adopter comment and review of proposals from the task and finish groups

The practice lead will meet with the adopted child peer support volunteer in Havering to identify means of capturing the voice of adopted young people

The practice lead is also in the process of establishing a number of specialist consultation groups including; Panel Chairs; Virtual School Heads and CAMHS services

In depth analysis of current performance across all Local Authorities has been completed. This will provide the means of identification of best practice within the region and also areas where improvements can be made

A shared research library for use in the task and finish groups is in development

A pan London union meeting was held on 11th September 2018 and a early heads up briefing note was sent to the recognised unions across the four boroughs with follow up meetings booked.

2.4 Current performance

**Rate of children Leaving care for adoption**

National rates of leaving care for adoption have fallen. The DfE statistical return 'Children looked after in England (including adoption), year ending 31 March 2017' Concludes that 'The number of looked after children who were adopted in 2017 decreased, continuing a decline we saw last year from a peak 5,360 in 2015. This fall was expected as since 2015 the number of looked after children with a placement order has decreased, as has the number of looked after children who were placed for adoption.'

All London Local Authorities have nevertheless performed below national averages in respect of rate of leaving care for adoption. The national average is 15% with highest performing authorities achieving 25% plus. There are a number of factors involved in this, some positive: including a high rate of placement of children with extended family members under Special Guardianship Orders

There remains a high level of fluctuation in demand for adoption and two London Local Authorities (Tower Hamlets and Newham) have seen a considerable increase in their rate over the last year, LBBD remains stable and Havering has a lower rate.

The London Courts are perceived to have a negative view of adoption. There is some evidence, however that improved parenting assessments, comprehensive early viability assessments and confident challenge to the court has positively affected the court position.

2016/17

Tower Hamlets   Havering   Newham   LBBD

2017/18

Tower Hamlets   Havering   Newham   LBBD
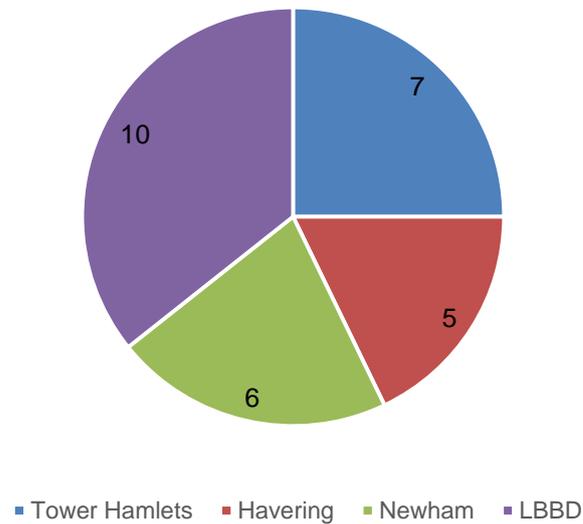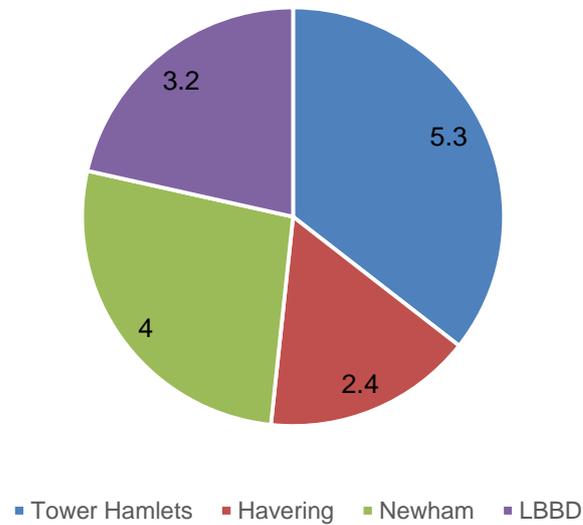
Timeliness of Adoption

A review of timeliness of adoption has been undertaken using the unpublished ALB 2017/18 return from all ALE Local Authorities.

This considered all stages from Care order to placement for all children and separately for children in each Hard to Place group.

Not surprisingly, those Local Authorities who place more children in hard to place groups performed less well in timeliness.

Numbers are low and individual children may have a high effect on performance. There are nevertheless, some interesting findings and the data provides a useful baseline for discussion.

All points in the process are subject to differing pressures. It is important to note that responsibility for the child remains with the Local Authority throughout. Early communication

and preparation is essential but involvement of ALE and shared responsibility for timeliness commences at the Placement order stage.

All children
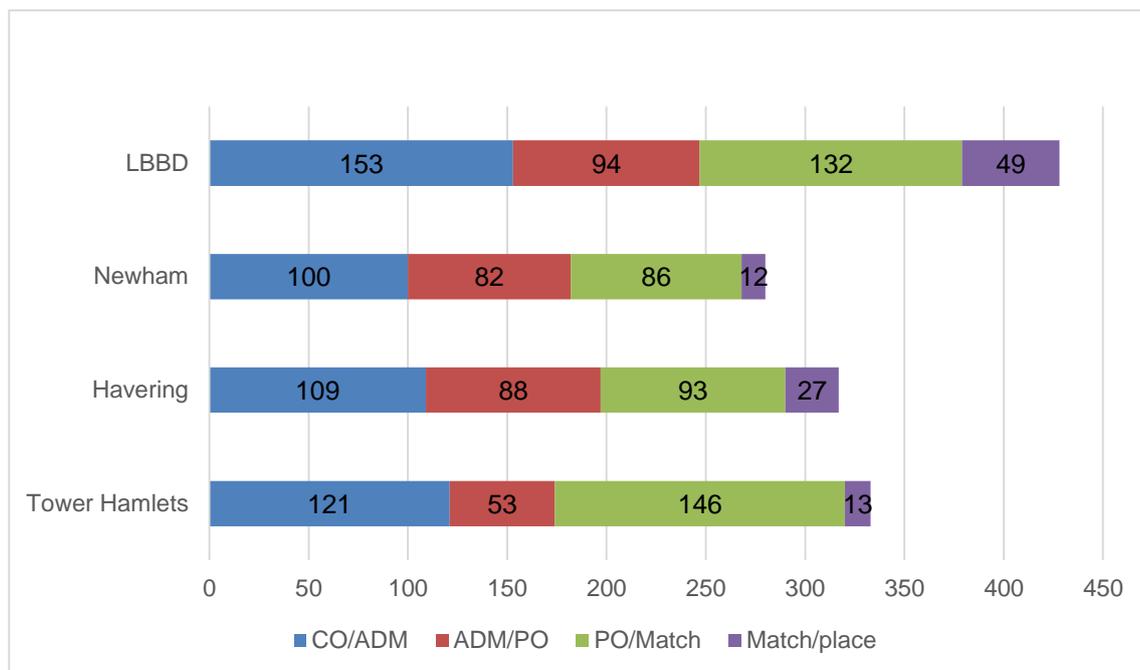
The table above shows average times in all stages for all children placed for adoption in 2017/18.

All Local Authorities except LBBD show similar times for Care Order to the Agency Decision that the child should be placed for adoption. The time taken to match children is the dimension which is most likely to be affected by placement of hard to place children. In this respect Newham performs especially well as Newham has a higher rate of leaving care for adoption and has identified placements in a timely manner. The time from Match to placement is the shortest period and therefore improvements in this field will only be marginal at best.

The last published ALB data (see Appendix 1) shows three year trends and therefore cannot be used to accurately benchmark one year averages, however from this information it appears that the ALE authorities are improving against National Averages.

BME Children
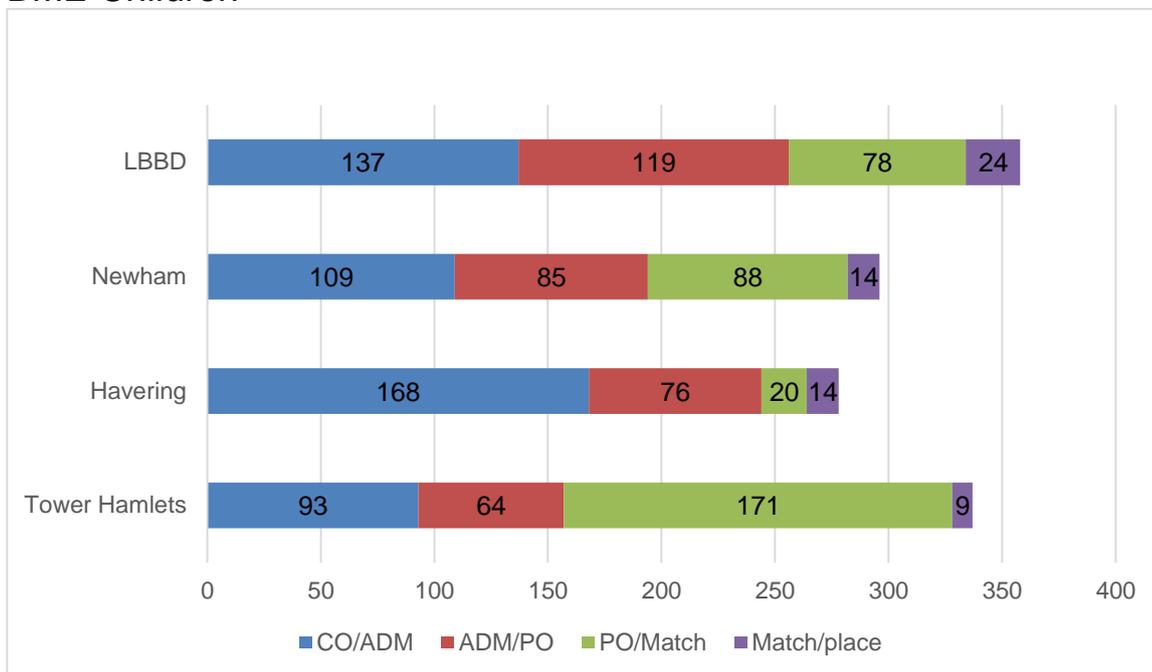
The percentage of children placed for adoption from BME populations varies from 75% in Newham with LBBD and Tower Hamlets both reporting approximately 50% to 17% (one child) in Havering. This is largely representative of the local population and the children available for adoption through having a placement order. Children from BME populations are typically seen to be harder to place.

Analysis of the above information shows in East London this is not the case. All authorities except Tower Hamlets show shorter timescales for PO to Match. In the case of Tower Hamlets a single lengthy search for a BME child has had a disproportionate effect.

Sibling Groups
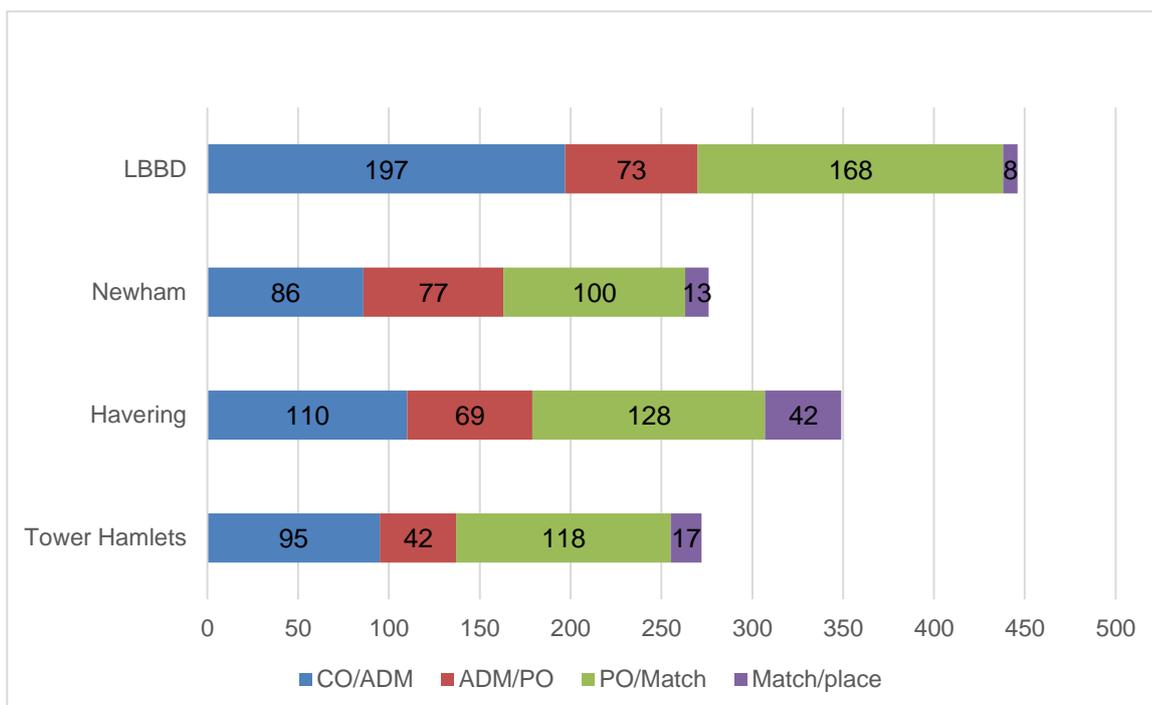
All Local Authorities placed a roughly similar percentage, between 31% (LBBD) and 44% (Newham) Newham placed the only sibling group of 3. In Newham, Havering and Tower Hamlets at least one sibling group also contained a child over 5. Despite sibling groups and older children being considered to be hard to place all authorities except LBBD placed children in sibling groups quicker than the all children count. LBBD placed 3 sibling groups one of

which took considerably longer to identify a match. If this group is excluded their timescales would reflect the pattern seen elsewhere.

Children Over 5
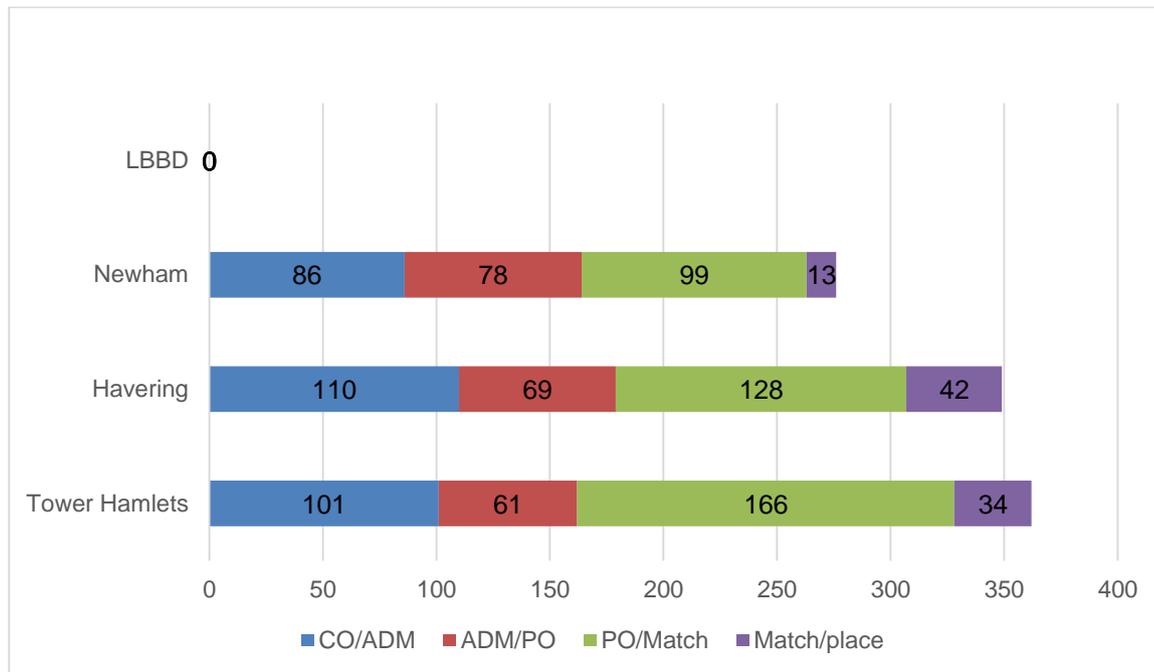
LBBD placed no children over the age of 5. All children over 5 who were placed by any authority, were placed as part of a sibling group together with a child under the age of 5. The Newham average time for children over the age of 5 is roughly in line with the all children average. In Havering and Tower Hamlets the average time is longer but in line with expectations for this more complex to place group. In both cases the additional time taken sits within PO to Match and is indicative of the challenge of a match of both a sibling group and a child over 5.

Disability
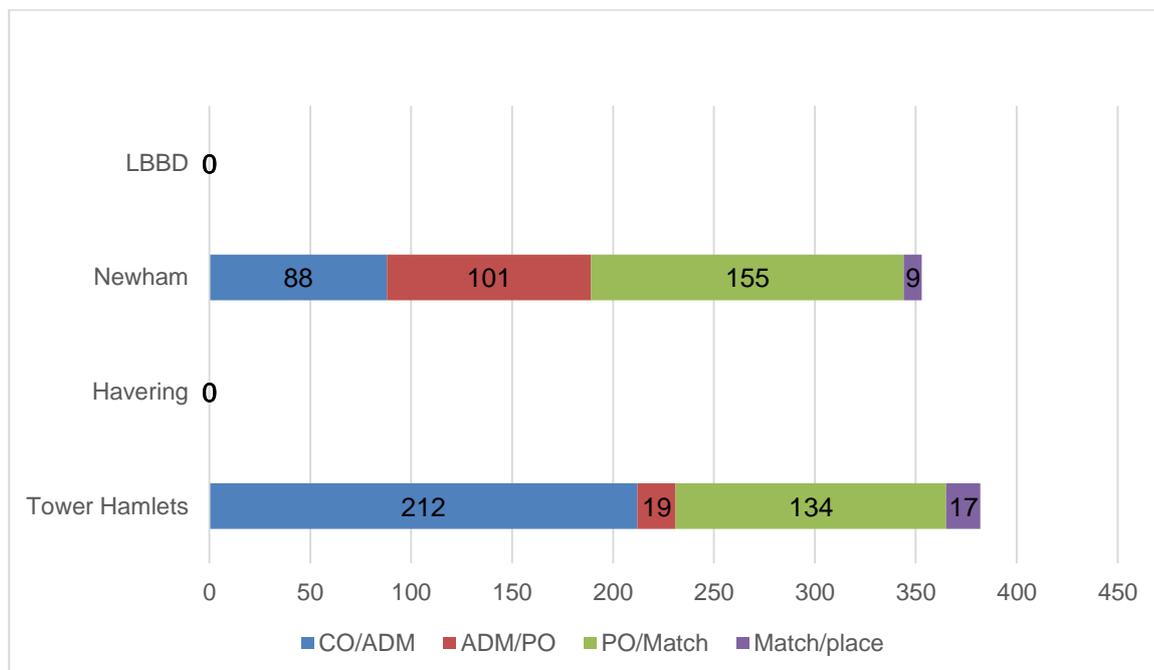
Only Newham and Tower Hamlets placed a child with a disability. Newham placed one child and Tower Hamlets 2. The child placed by Newham was also from a BME Population as was one of the children placed by Tower Hamlets.

The lengthy time from CO to ADM for Tower Hamlets reflects a disproportionate time taken for one child. In other respects the time from PO to Match is only slightly longer than the all child average and reflective of the harder to place dimension of this group.

<u>Early Permanence</u>

Only three children were placed in early permanence placements across the ALE Authorities. From discussion with Service leads, all were either relinquished or children where risk was deemed to be negligible. It appears that progress in respect of early permanence has been slow across East London as a result of a perception of increased risk through the stance taken by the East London Courts.

Early permanence provides children with stability at an earlier age and reduces the number of placement moves. It affords adopters the opportunity to parent their child from birth or from an early age. The evidence base for the importance of early bonding and nurture is clear. There are risks but where services have developed and embedded strong early permanence offer, adopter satisfaction and child development are seen to have improved.

This is an area for focussed attention and improvement action.

Adopter level performance Analysis

Adopter Approval

<u>Numbers of adoptive families approved and numbers of placement families of children placed for adoption in 2017/18</u>
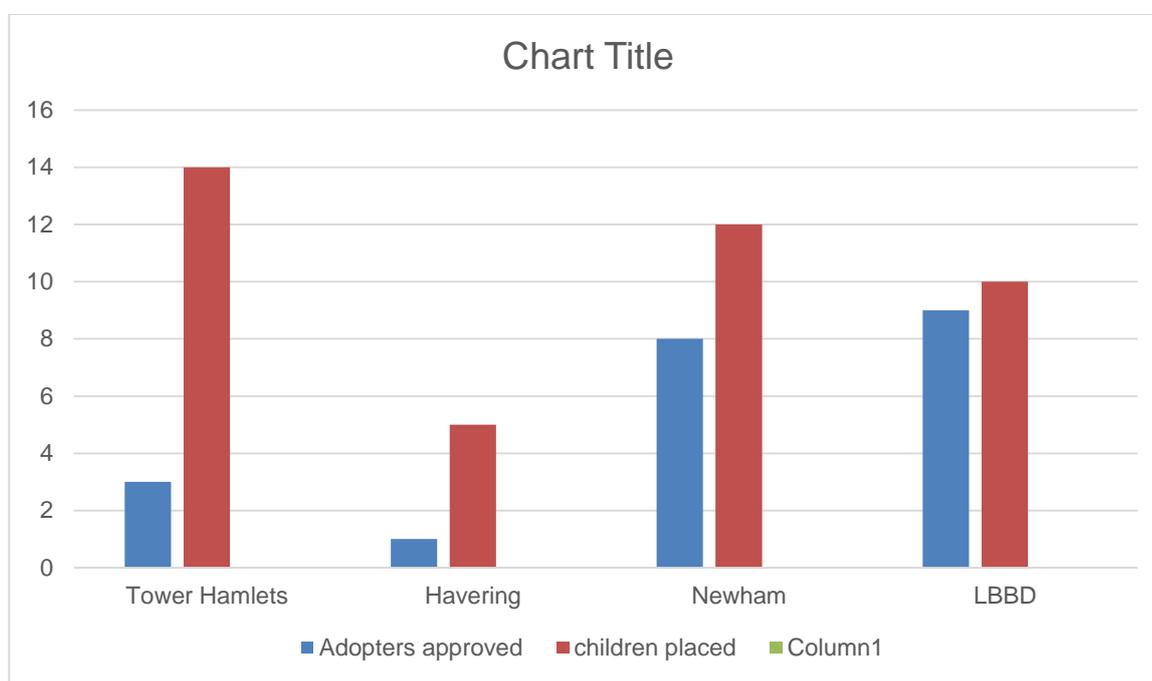
All Local Authorities approved fewer adopters than the number of families of children placed for adoption in 2017/18(all sibling groups identified to be placed together have been calculated as one placement family as opposed to individual children). Statistics produced by ELPAC (which includes Redbridge) also identifies a 45% decrease in adopters recruited from the previous year and a 46% decrease in conversion rates.

Service leads have confirmed a decreased focus on adopter recruitment. A variety of reasons were given but difficulties in placing children within the immediate local area and a perception that the demographics of the local population did not fit profiles of adopters in national demand.

Numbers of approved adopters who had a child placed in 2017/18
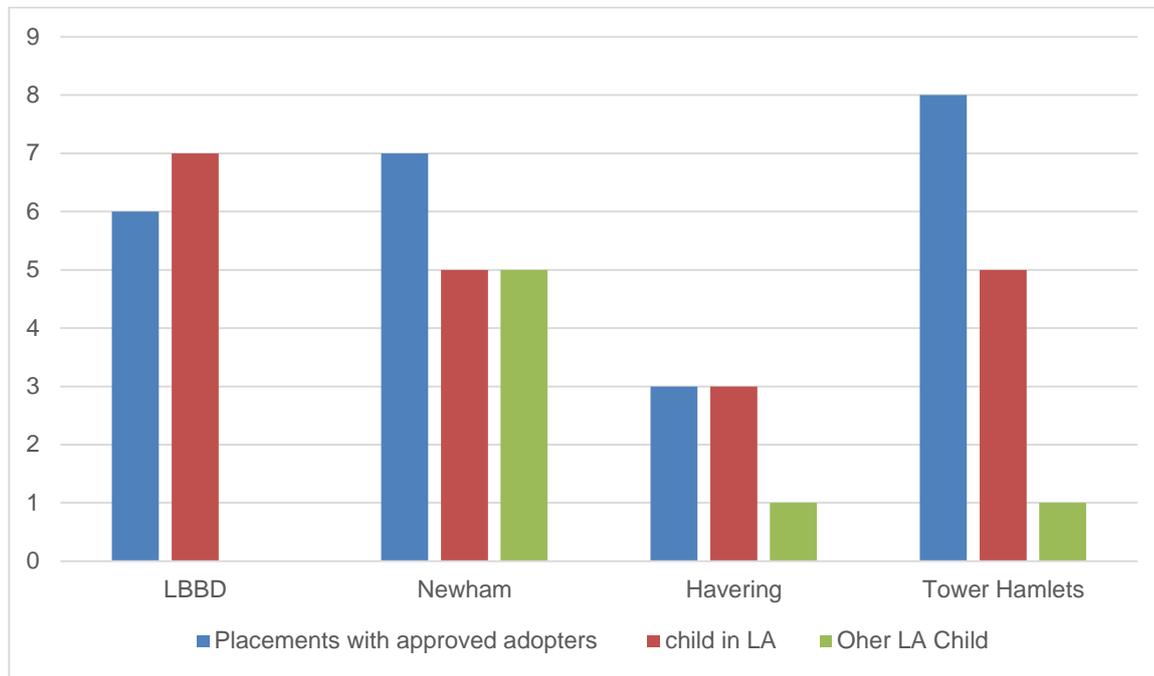
The numbers of approved adopters who had a child placed in year has been used as a measure as it evidences usability of the adopter cohort.

All Local Authorities used adopters approved in previous years and all had outliers who had been waiting some time (up to 1,646 days). In total 34 adoptive families had a total of 39 children placed. This was in excess of the 25 adopters (not including foster carers) recruited across ALE authorities.

The Local Authority breakdown of adopters who had a placement in 2017/18 ranges from 8 in Tower Hamlets to 3 in Havering. There is a large range in use of adopters in-house. LBBD used all recruited adopters for in-house children.

Adopters with a child placed in 2017/18 by type
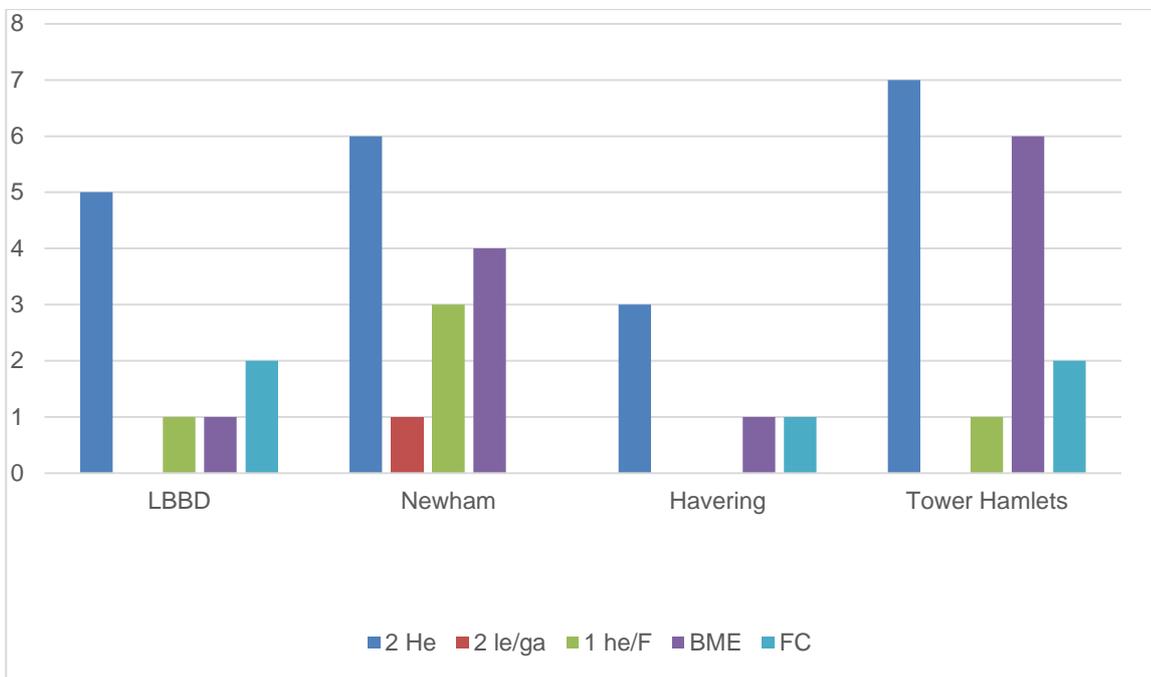
Family Types - All Local Authorities primarily recruited adopters who were a heterosexual couple. The next most common adopter type was single female heterosexual. Only two same sex couples were recruited, one gay and one lesbian. No single males, single gay men or single lesbian women were recruited. Gay and Lesbian people have been identified as a potential target market for adoption and recruitment in this area appears to be underdeveloped across ALE authorities.

BME and disability - The number of adopters from BME populations and with an identified disability has been collated from all family types. For the purposes of this exercise, if either adopter in a couple is identified as BME the adoptive family has been recorded as BME. The Percentage of adopters from BME populations varies from 75% in Tower Hamlets to 25% in Havering and17% in LBBD. No adopters were identified as having a disability. This variability is not in line with BME populations in ALE Local Authorities and it is likely that improved targeted recruitment could improve the adopter base

Adopter Timeliness Approval to Placement
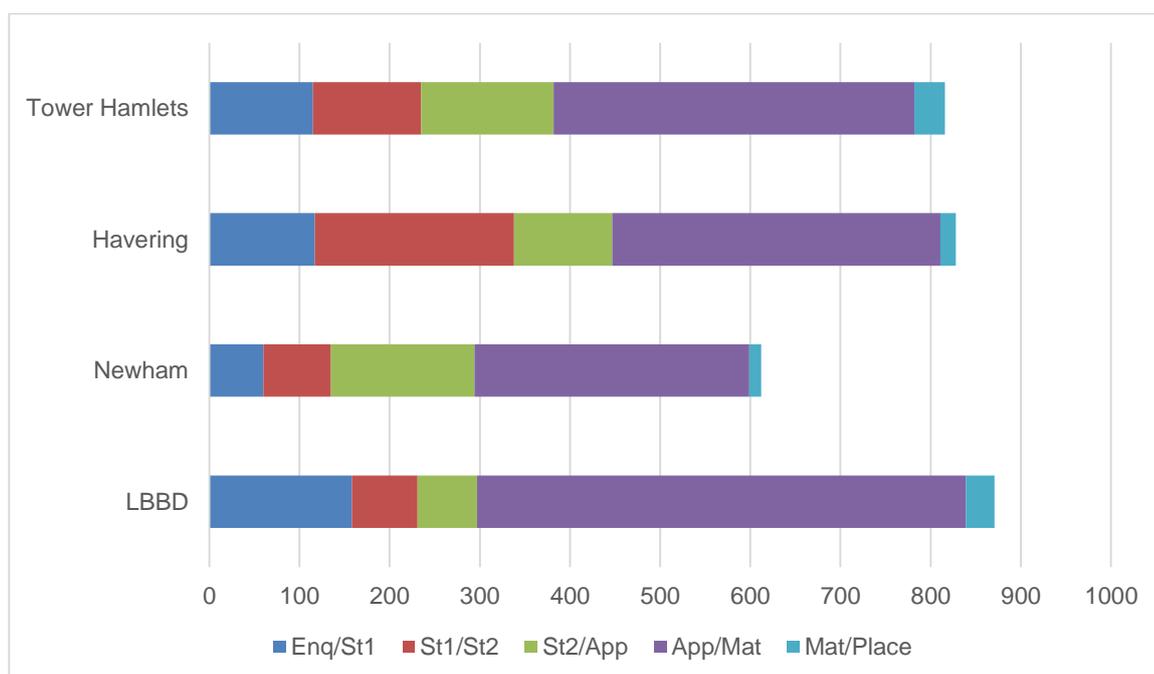
All Local Authorities had a significant outlier of an adoptive family who had waited considerably longer for a placement. The following chart therefore excludes the significant outliers in the yellow approval to match timescale only.

Adopter timeliness recruitment to placement without significant outliers
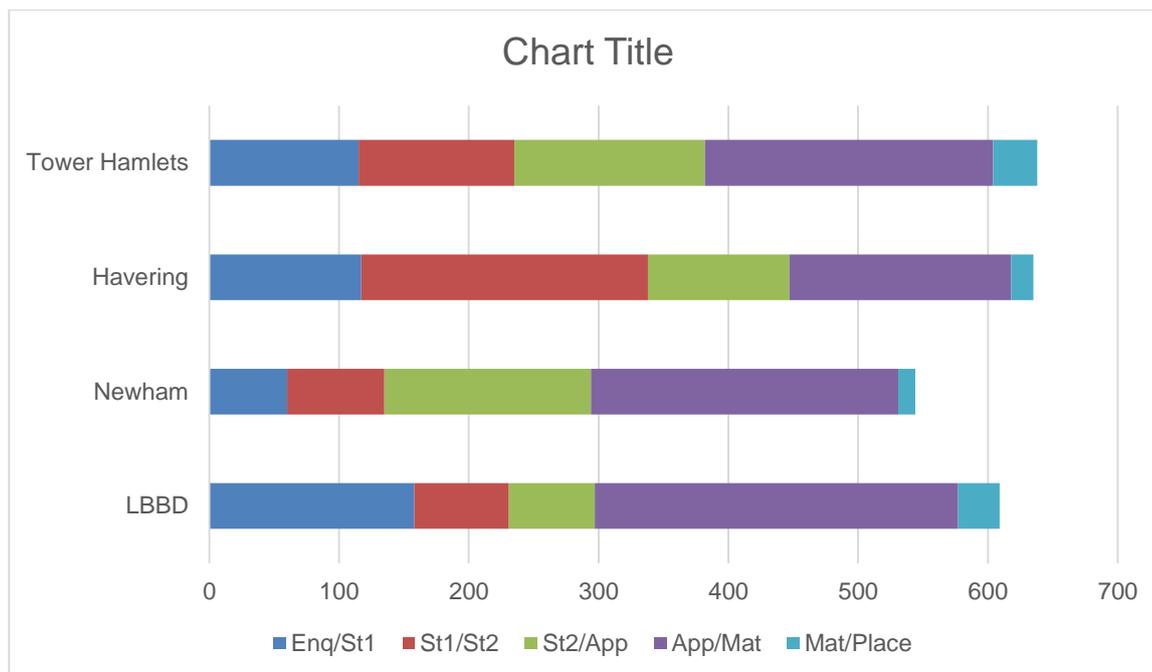
The task and finish groups will be used to understand Local Authority processes and will add to an understanding of the raw data. It is likely that differences in the enquiry to stage 1, stage 1 to 2 and stage 2 to approval phases are at least in part due to differences in recording and processing adopters through each stage.

Nevertheless there are considerable differences in timescales for approval and all are higher than the national thresholds. Both Newham and LBBD have approval timescales under 300 days. Havering have timescales a third higher (469 and 447 days respectively). There is evidence in both authorities of improved timescales in more recent practice.

Some adopters have waited too long for a placement in all Local Authorities. Discussion with service leads has indicated that this is likely to be as a result of a mis-match between the adopter offer and the needs of children waiting. This has led in all ALE Local Authorities to a down turn in recruitment

Conclusion

This data will be used in the Adoption Recruitment Task and Finish Group to assist further exploration

From a statistical analysis of the data and conversations with service leads it appears that adopter recruitment is underdeveloped in ALE authorities

- Processes vary but are slower than national standards
- Some adopters wait too long for a match
- There is a mis-match between the adopter offer and child needs
- Some groups (e.g. Gay men and lesbian women) are under-represented
- Recruitment of adopters has not been a priority in any ALE Local Authority
- Early Permanence is under-develop and adopters not fully engaged in this option.

2.5 Vision of the new RAA

The proposed Regional Adoption Agency would encompass four Local Authority areas in East London. The high level targets for numbers of children placed (including sibling groups) and numbers of adopters recruited are as follows. These targets are based on 17/18 outturn data, predicted 18/19 outturn data and some conservative assumptions about what is achievable in years 1, 2 and 3.

The RAA will operate in partnership with three other RAAs and a developing Hub in London. Additional adoption functions will be provided by the Hub as regionalisation plans develop, where they can further improve the outcomes for children and achieve better value.

Across all of London the four RAAs have a shared vision to achieve excellent outcomes for children and adults affected by adoption through:

- Working closely with the Local Authorities and partners to ensure that children's best interests are at the heart of placement decisions which will fully meet their needs;
- Targeting recruitment and establishing a wider and more diverse pool of prospective adopters;
- Matching so that children are placed without delay in secure, loving families;
- Providing creative and outstanding adoption support services;
- Investing in the workforce to ensure they have the right skills and capacity to deliver excellent services;
- Continually seeking to apply best practice and innovation to our ways of working;
- Actively listening to and learning from children, adults and staff to develop and improve the services provided.

In East London further work has been undertaken to tailor the pan-London vision to the specific priorities for the region. The areas of practice improvement identified as priorities for the ALE are:

- Post-adoption support
- Development of a positive and pro-active early permanence service
- Adoptive family recruitment for harder to place children (older children, larger sibling groups, substance addicted babies, disabled children and those with special educational needs, and children from black and other ethnic minority backgrounds)
- A consistent adopter experience across East London from initial contact and recruitment through to training and post-adoption support.
- More coordinated, innovative, different and potentially larger scale contracts with voluntary sector and VAAs (better commissioning and understanding of placement providers)
- A longer-term ambition for the RAA to undertake lobbying/stakeholder work with the legal system to be more receptive to adoption
- Generally, increasing profile of and respect for the East as a region
- Ensuring the adopter and child voice is always built into the model / service
- To provide innovative and different ways of offering therapeutic and specialist support
- Ensuring that the region continues to place hard to place children, especially those in older age groups.

2.6 Delivery model

The decision to pursue four RAAs in London was agreed by ALDCS, and endorsed by the DfE in May 2018. This business case does not revisit that decision, but provides more detail for how the agreed delivery model will work in East London.

Whilst a number of options were considered early on including the creation of a new single entity to deliver adoption services across East London, the preferred option is to combine the four London boroughs with one borough becoming the host authority. Creation of new single entities is time consuming and costly and not a preferred option elsewhere with RAAs already live.

Governance of the RAA will operate through a board comprising of senior representatives from all LAs with representation from VAAs, adopters and adoptees. The RAA will continue to be accountable to Corporate Parenting Boards and other Local Authority bodies.

The RAA will aim to provide a high quality service to adopted children with improved

outcomes; taking the best models of delivery from each of the four services, and considering the best level of geography on which to deliver (sub-regional, regional or pan-London). The RAA will also aim to provide savings through economies of scale.

The delivery model for the RAA addresses the five areas set out by the DfE as their minimum expectations of a Regional Adoption Agency:

1. A single line of authority with the ability to act as a single service and a head of service in place.
2. Transfer of staff into the organization.
3. Inclusion of core adoption functions of recruitment and assessment of adopters, early permanence and family finding, and adoption support.
4. Pooled funding from local authorities into the RAA.
5. Pan-regional approach to matching i.e. one pool of children and adopters.

The preferred option for East London addresses these requirements and proposes to work collaboratively with 3 other RAAs across London namely:

- Adopt London West – Ealing
- Adopt London North – Islington
- Adopt London South – Southwark

2.7 Strategic benefits

The key aim in combining services to create a single Regional Adoption Agency is to achieve better outcomes for all children and young people with adoption plans in the region. Local Authorities and Voluntary Adoption Agencies will come together and combine adoption services into a new regional agency to benefit children and their adoptive families, with larger operating areas giving a wider pool of adopters and children, more effective matching and better support services.

The Government set out the challenges they are seeking to address nationally through the creation of Regional Adoption Agencies in the paper 'Regionalising Adoption', published in June 2015.

In summary, these are:

Inefficiencies
Across London there is a highly-fragmented system with around 180 agencies recruiting and matching adopters for only 5,000 children per year (this number has subsequently decreased). The majority of agencies are operating on a small scale with over half recruiting fewer than 20 adopters in the first three quarters of 2014/15. This is not an effective and efficient scale to be operating at and is likely to mean that costs are higher because management overheads and fixed costs are shared over a smaller base. Having a system that is fragmented in this way reduces the scope for broader, strategic planning, as well as specialisation, innovation and investment. Large numbers of small agencies render the system unable to make the best use of the national supply of potential adopters, more vulnerable to peaks and troughs in the flow of children, and less cost effective.

Matching
The system needs to match children with families far more quickly. Nationally, the data also shows that, as at 30 September 2015, there were 3,060 children with a placement order waiting to be matched. 38% of these children had been waiting longer than 18 months. The costs of delay, both to children and to the system, are high. It is vital that children are given the best and earliest possible chance of finding a family, irrespective of authority boundaries and lack of trust of other agencies' adopters. It is unacceptable that children are left waiting in the system when families can be found. Successful matching relies on being able to access a wide range of potential adopters from the beginning and operating at a greater scale would allow social workers to do this, thus reducing delay in the system. It could also reduce the number of children who have their adoption decisions reversed. In 2015-16, this happened to

900 children nationally. Furthermore, the opportunity for practice innovation created by moving to a new delivery model also has real potential to improve matching.

Recruitment

Whilst there has been growth in adopter recruitment there are too few adopters willing and able to adopt children with a range of different backgrounds and life circumstances. Recruitment from a wider geographical base as part of a regional recruitment strategy. Incentives also need to be better aligned and recruitment activity more nuanced and targeted so that agencies are encouraged to recruit the right kind of adopters given the characteristics of the children waiting. Recruitment from a wider geographical base than an individual local authority, that takes account of the needs of children across a number of those local authorities in a regional recruitment strategy and uses specialist techniques for recruiting adopters for hard to place children, would potentially lead to fewer children waiting.

Adoption Support

Currently adoption support services are provided by a mix of local authority provision, the NHS and independent providers (voluntary adoption agencies, adoption support agencies and small independent providers). There is a risk that the public and independent sectors are unlikely to be able to grow sufficiently to meet increased demand for adoption support. There are regional gaps in the types of services on offer and little evidence of spare capacity. The sector is currently dominated by spot purchasing and sole providers. This is not an efficient way to deliver these services. For providers to expand and therefore operate at a more efficient scale, services need to be commissioned on bigger and longer term contracts. RAAs should enable this to be done. It is envisaged that the Hub will act as a conduit to the wider voluntary sector, providing economies of scale and opportunities for innovation

The Local Perspective

The statutory functions required of local authorities in respect of adoption are provided by each of the four local authorities within their own geographic areas. There is already a great deal of joint working between the four adoption agencies to provide parts of the current service.

Joining the four local authority services together within Adopt London East will enable efficiencies to be achieved and improvements to services for all those affected by adoption.

In terms of recruiting adoptive parents some of the agencies are currently competing with each other. There is a duplication of effort and associated costs with the risk that people wanting to be considered as adoptive parents are confused about where and how to proceed with their enquiry. Adopt London East will have a single point of contact for prospective adopters, reducing the current fragmentation of services. Similarly, a single point of entry to the adoption service locally will improve access to adoption support services for adoptive families, and also for adopted adults and birth family members, who have a statutory entitlement to receive a service.

Combining the services should ensure that management overheads and fixed costs will be reduced over time. The new service will allow for the more efficient use of staff time, for example Adopt London East may deliver training and preparation courses at stage one and two of the adoption process across the whole area resulting in less duplication and more timely access to the training courses for prospective adopters. adoptive parents as trainers.

There are currently four Adoption Panels (some of which are joint fostering / adoption) operating across the four Local Authorities. ALE will have one Adoption Panel which will consider applications from prospective adopters. These will be held more regularly and across all four boroughs. Agency Decisions in relation to prospective adopter approvals will be made by the Agency Decision Maker for the RAA. Therefore it will no longer be necessary for the four Local Authorities to retain their individual Adoption Panels, but each will continue to have a designated Agency Decision Maker for considering and agreeing the plan that a child should be placed for adoption and agreeing the match to appropriate adopters.

The new combined service provides the opportunity for the provision of a service of

excellence for adoption support. This will be a multi-disciplinary service in partnership with colleagues from health and education and providing comprehensive and high level targeted support for adopted children, adoptive parents, adopted adults and birth family members

ALE will aim to reduce the proportion of children whose plans are changed from adoption because an adoption placement cannot be found as well as reduce the number of adoption placement disruptions. The RAA will bring the existing local expertise among managers and social workers together in respect of what makes a good match. Good permanence planning and tracking processes will ensure a high proportion of children are referred to the RAA prior to the point of Placement Order. Early identification of children with likely adoption plans and effective liaison with the child's social worker during the court proceedings will enable fuller and more accurate assessments of an individual child's needs to inform matching, and prepare the child. Stretegic needs-led recruitment will also widen choice of potential adoptive families for children, which will lead to better and more sustainable matching.

Benefits will be delivered through adopting the "best practice" from the four contributing organisations. This will be of particular value in delivering benefits from the areas of Early Permanence (concurrency and fostering to adopt), improved adoption support, making optimal use of colleagues in health and education as well as those in ALE registered as social workers and those without social work qualifications but with other relevant knowledge, skills and experience.

2.8 Strategic risks

- There is a risk to all Local Authorities who fail to join a regional agency. This would include central government directing how its services would be delivered. .
- Major reorganisation of adoption services in the region may have an impact on service delivery to children and adoptive families in the short term. To mitigate these risks, practice is being regionalised more quickly where it makes sense to do so, and implementation will be on a phased basis. Performance measures aligned with the revised operating model and regular monitoring arrangements will be established between the host and non-host authorities as quickly as possible and before go-live for the new arrangements. This approach to governance, quality assurance and performance management will draw on lessons learned and best practice
- Separation of functions could cause delay through ineffective communication. The service delivery model promotes co-location and local delivery in all four Local Authority areas. Effective information sharing agreements and close working relationships between children's and adoption social workers will mitigate against this risk
- Any future difference in opinion across the LAs as to the role and scope of ALE and future governance arrangements could delay implementation.
- The organisational staffing levels proposed in this business case have been based on actual demand experienced over the past three years, however because of the current difficulties in predicting the levels of activity (e.g., numbers of children with adoption plans) there is a risk that suggested staffing levels might not be consistent with demand.
- There is risk, even regionally, of not being able to recruit adopters able to meet the needs of the children waiting, leading to more interagency placements and financial viability issues. More coordinated and targeted recruitment activity is expected to address this, scope for enhanced recruitment and assessment has been built into the delivery model.
- Any change management process can be unsettling for staff.   The proposed changes to ways of working could lead to a risk of recruitment challenges and the retention of existing experienced and qualified adoption team workforce for the ALE.   The engagement of staff directly involved in the delivery of adoption services, and the involvement of current service users will be essential mitigation alongside keeping colleagues in partner organisations informed. The project team have been engaging

with staff at service and operational levels to ensure they are engaged and enthused about the opportunities of a joint agency.

All of the above risks and specific local risks will be considered during set and implementation of the RAA. The partnership board will review and mitigate for both new and existing risks and issues as they arise.

2.9 Realising the benefits of the RAA

Benefits expected to be realised through the project include:

- Improved timescales for adopter assessments
- Higher conversion rate from enquiry to approval of prospective adopters based on better understanding of the most successful routes to adoption
- Early identification of children with potential adoption plans and more children placed on an Early Permanence (Fostering to Adopt or concurrency) basis
- Reduction in the number of children for whom the permanence plan has changed away from adoption
- Increase in the percentage of children adopted for care
- More timely matching of approved adopters
- Improved timescales for placing children with their adoptive families
- Fewer prospective adopter approvals rescinded as approved adopters are not matched with a child
- Fewer adoption placement disruptions pre and post adoption order
- Improved performance measurement and management across the service
- Reduced interagency placements and fees

Section 3.7 contains the proposed performance and QA approach which would enable us to understand whether the RAA is delivering the strategic benefits as envisioned.

2.10 Stakeholder engagement and involvement

Consultation with stakeholders is an integral part of the Regional Adoption Agency project. The section below sets out the stakeholders engaged during the course of the project so far. Their feedback has been incorporated into the future model and will continue to lay the basis for service design and amendments going forwards.

Adopters

Adopters in East London Boroughs have contributed to service development through two Adopter Voice forums. Key themes from the forums include the importance of:

- A supportive social worker at all stages of the process
- Continuity of service delivery both pre and post adoption
- Early intervention and support from a known person
- Peer networks and safe places for adopters and adopted children to meet
- Support with family contact
- Schools informed about attachment and use their pupil premium well.
- Responsive and understanding health services
- All services working together well. A 'one stop shop' for service delivery

Service Directors - Since April 2018,

an RAA Project Board has been set up to oversee the successful implementation of Adopt London East. The board is chaired by the Director of Children's Services in the host authority and consists of Assistant Directors and Heads of Service in respective local authorities; thus providing senior leadership and governance. The RAA Project Board meet regularly every six weeks. So far, representation from senior stakeholders has not only sustained interest in the project but it has also been fundamental to driving the project forward by making key decisions and unblocking problems.

Adoption staff

All adoption staff have been provided with a brief information document to keep them abreast of our current position and explain the draft proposed model. In addition to this, an upcoming Staff Engagement Event is set to take place on 12th September, 2018. Staff will have the opportunity to learn more about the benefits of regionalisation and participate in a workshop to discuss elements of the model. Service Managers have nominated staff to be involved in Task and Finish groups to focus on Recruitment and Assessment, Family Finding & Matching and Adoption Support. Staff involved in these task and finish groups will act as champions and will help design and co-produce the new RAA. By adopting a co-production approach of doing things "with" and not "to" our adoption staff Adopt London East will be a highly desired place where staff want to work.

Wider Staff across Children's services

Newsletters are distributed every six weeks to all staff across Children's Services to provide brief information on updates and an overview on anticipated changes to the service.

In addition to this the following Workstreams have been developed to involve wider staff in specialist areas:

- Practice: This worksteam is made up of Heads of Service/Service Managers and includes developing the practice model of the RAA through process mapping.

- HR: This workstream includes mapping the as-is workforce, identifying roles, partial roles and functions that will move to the RAA, developing a new structure and job descriptions.

- IT: This includes mapping as-is IT systems, developing a practical and immediate solutions drawing on learning from other RAAs where different IT systems are used, develop approach to data sharing, scope future IT solution.

- Commissioning: This includes identifying existing externally commissioned services across the authorities within the scope of the RAA and making recommendations about transition arrangements.

- Finance: This includes mapping existing cost of in-scope functions, developing financial model for new RAA and proposals for reviewing the financial arrangements.

- Legal and governance: This includes ensuring new proposed approach meets legal requirements, developing the governance structure of the new RAA.

- Accommodation and logistics: This includes reviewing whether collocation of RAA staff is appropriate, and if it is, where they should be collocated, when they should move, how this will be funded.

- Communications and engagement: This workstream is about ensuring that all key stakeholders are kept up to date and are engaged in the design of the new RAA arrangements. It will include delivery of events, newsletters, workshops etc.

These on-going workstreams have multiple representations from each local authority. The involvement of staff across the wider service has been an effective way of extracting specialist knowledge, skills and tools into the development of this model in order to develop a realistic implementation plan.

3. RAA OPERATING MODEL

3.1   Learning from best practice

Research identifies several factors which contribute to timely, successful family finding and matching outcomes for children with a plan of adoption. The University of Bristol (June 2010)

and Oxford University (Feb 2015) identified within research briefs, key factors seen to enhance the adoption journey for both children and their prospective adopters.

- Quality of information – all information at all parts of the process must be of **high quality, factual and comprehensive.** Poor quality information is identified as a direct correlation to disruption.
- Local authorities with access to a **wider pool** of prospective adopters experienced less delay in their family finding and matching processes.
- **Family finding done at the point of ADM** decision (rather than at the granting of the placement order) resulted in children experiencing less delay.
- Delay was reduced when case responsibility for **children transferred to adoption service** at point of placement order.
- Delay was also reduced when **early family finding strategies** were agreed for individual children deemed to have complex needs.
- **Tracking** of children throughout their journey is critical and adoption workers involved in this can drive the process.
- **Timely joint decision making** re whether to pursue ethnic matches or sibling separation also reduced delay for children.
- **Post placement support** (in a variety of formats) is particularly valued by adopters, contributes to positive transitions and reduces the risk of disruptions.

Proposals contained within this business case have taken account of these key factors alongside the need for quality and efficiency.

3.2 Scope

The target operating model for the new RAA considers its role in the delivery of the following main services across East London:

- Recruitment and Assessment – to provide the prospective adopters;
- Permanence Planning – Identifying children who need adopting;
- Matching and Placement – to match prospective adopters with children in need of adoption;
- Pre and Post Placement Support – to help all affected by adoption.

3.2.1 Roles and Responsibilities

The table below sets out the RAA and LAs will work together, summarising roles and responsibilities for each:

Function	Regional Adoption Agency	Local Authority
RECRUITMENT AND ASSESSMENT		
Marketing and Recruitment Strategy	✓	
Adopter Recruitment and Enquiries	✓	
Assessment of Prospective Adopters – all Stage One and Stage Two functions	✓	
Completion of Prospective Adopter Report	✓	
Agency Decision Maker for approval of adopters	✓	
Post approval training	✓	
Matching	✓	
Post Placement training for Prospective Adopters	✓	
PERMANANCE PLANNING		
Early identification of a child possibly requiring adoption	✓	✓
Tracking and monitoring the child possibly requiring adoption	✓	✓

Function	Regional Adoption Agency	Local Authority
Support and advice to child care social worker on the adoption process	✓	✓
Sibling or other specialist assessments if commissioned by LA	✓	✓
Direct work to prepare child prior to placement	✓	✓
Preparation of the Child Permanence Report		✓
Agency Decision Maker for "Should be placed for Adoption" decisions		✓
Case management prior to the point agreed by the LA ADM		✓
Case management from point agreed by the LA ADM		✓
MATCHING AND PLACEMENT		
Family finding	✓	
Looked After Child reviews	✓	✓
Shortlist potential families	✓	
Visit potential families	✓	✓
Organising child appreciation day	✓	
Ongoing direct work to prepare child prior to placement	✓	
Adoption Panel administration and management	✓	✓
Agency adviser role	✓	
Agency Decision Maker for Matching prospective adopters and child		✓
Placement Planning meeting administration and management of introductions	✓	
Support to family post placement and planning and delivery of adoption support	✓	
Ongoing life story work and preparation of Life story book		✓
Independent Review Officer monitoring of quality of child's care and care plan		✓
Support prospective adopters in preparation and submission of application for Adoption Order – including attending at court	✓	
Preparation of later life letter	✓	✓
ADOPTION SUPPORT		
Assessment for adoption support	✓	
Developing and delivering adoption support plans	✓	
Agree and administer financial support to adoptive families pre and post Adoption Order		✓
Adoption support delivery including: • Support groups • Social events • Post adoption training • Independent Birth Relative services • Support with ongoing birth relative contact • Adoption counselling and training	✓	
Financial support to adopters including adoption allowances		✓
NON-AGENCY ADOPTIONS		
Step parent/partner adoption assessments	✓	

Function	Regional Adoption Agency	Local Authority
Inter-country adoption assessments and post approval and post order support	✓	

3.3   Overview of the Proposed Organisation and design principles of ELRAA

Adopt London East is committed to designing services capable of improving outcomes for children for whom the plan is adoption through:

- Placing more children more quickly
- Placing more children in an early permanence placement
- Providing quality support to ensure fewer placement disruptions and happier families
- Improving timescales for adopter assessments
- Assessing adopters well; leading to good and speedy matches

Design Principles

The proposed service delivery model is based on an evidence base of what works in Adoption and on initial consultation with adopters and key stakeholders. The detailed service design will be developed through co-production with staff and all key stakeholders as detailed in section 2.3.

A number of principles have influenced the delivery model

A base in each Local Authority. This ensures a visible presence in each area and promotes local adopter recruitment. The adopter voice tells us of the importance for them of continuity of existing relationships and a 'one stop shop' for support in their local area.

Close relationships with children's social workers. These will be promoted through maintenance of the local base. In order to ensure identification of children who may require adoption, a single permanence tracker and information sharing process will be developed on best practice principles. Adopt London East will aim to provide a seamless service working in partnership with children's social workers. The service will also provide training, advice and support for workers in each Local Authority on all adoption matters, including completion of Child Permanence Reports and Life Story Books.

Specialist responsive teams working across all Local Authorities. Currently each Local Authority has a small adoption team and most are integrated within other permanence services. In some Local Authorities adoption social workers undertake all adoption associated tasks. The evidence base tells us that specialism of adoption workers to specific functions improves timeliness and quality of work. The service will develop three teams: Adoption recruitment and assessment; family finding and matching and adoption support. Workers in these teams will have a local base but will work across East London as a single team. Workers may take on work outside their Local Authority boundary as a result. This is not a radical change in working practice as adopters are often recruited and supported outside Local Authority boundaries.

Innovation and service improvement. The increased size of the service allows for innovation in all areas. Recruitment of adopters across a wider geographical area allows for a targeted approach based on an understanding of local need. A dedicated communications service will be able to provide low cost and effective promotions. As well as improved options for matching, the family finding team will be able to focus on development and promotion of early permanence options. Adoption support will benefit from development of a core early intervention offer as requested by our adopters through use of a team of workers with specialist skills and the ability to deliver joint packages of support. Innovation through co-

production; investment in staff and an understanding of research and the evidence base will be developed as part of a learning culture within the organisation.

Flexible and responsive service. Demand for placements and supply of adopters is subject to considerable fluctuation. All agencies are also reporting increased demand for adoption support. Adoption regulations are subject to review and court decisions subject to developing case law. Incoming populations place new demands on services. The service will develop an ability to provide a flexible response through: service review; innovation; cross team working and development of strong partnerships.

Investment in Staff. Development of a Regional Adoption Agency allows staff to develop skills within a larger organisation with a single focus on Adoption. The larger service also provides a clear promotion route for adoption specialist workers. The organisation will embed a learning culture and ensure investment in staff to meet the ever changing demands for adoption services. The service commitment to co-production of service development is a reflection of the value placed on the staff voice.

Adopter Voice and the voice of the child. The service will incorporate the adopter and child voice at the heart of all activity. All best practice evidence shows that development of direct and virtual adopter forums and means of direct communication with children improves service delivery and has a positive effect on adoptive family satisfaction. Our own adopters commented in consultation on the importance for them of peer networks and safe places for adopters and adopted children to meet.

Positive engagement with all partners and stakeholders. The service will engage positively with all partners in both statutory and voluntary sectors to ensure service providers meet their obligations and provide the best possible services to our adopters. The service will also work with agencies such as the courts and CAFCAS to develop mutual understanding, improve services and challenge where appropriate.

Provision of Value for Money. Economies of scale will reduce spend on areas where efficiencies may be made. Improved adopter recruitment will substantially reduce spend on inter-agency fees. Improved rates of leaving care for adoption and timeliness in placement for adoption will provide savings in in-house budgets for all Local Authorities. Further savings will be made through the Pan London approach to commissioning. The service will also aim to expand service provision through bidding for ASF, PIF and other funds.

Proposed service delivery model

The proposed service delivery model is based on an evidence base of what works in Adoption and on initial consultation with adopters and key stakeholders. The detailed service design will be developed through co-production with staff and all key stakeholders as detailed in section 2.3. The rationale for the design principles is explored in more detail in section 3.3

The service delivery model includes one head of service and three team managers who manage the three key thematic areas in Adoption; recruitment and assessment; family finding and matching and adoption support.

Team managers will manage teams who will have workers allocated to local areas but operate as a pan East London service. All workers will be expected to operate outside specific Local Authority boundaries according to need and to meet regularly as a team.

Performance expectations and accountabilities of the RAA, Local Authority, each team and each worker must be clear.

This outline structure will be subject to further modelling and may change in some aspects of detail through the next phase of development; thematic operational Task and Finish Groups. These groups will involve first line managers, adoption social workers and adopter representatives in co-production of the working model.

1 Advanced Practitioner 4 Social Workers ISW Pool 1 administrator	4 Social Workers 1 Letterbox Coordinator	4 Social Workers Panel coordination and administration

3.4 Property and IT Implications

Property implications

The property implications for each of the local authorities, with the exception of Havering (as the lead authority) remain unchanged. The expectation is that there will be a maximum of 4 adoption specific workers per local authority based on site at any one time and their space will be provided through existing resources.

Havering as the lead authority will need to provide extra space for some centralised functions:

- The RAA head of service
- Up to 3 team managers for some portion of the week
- 3 administration posts
- Up to 3 letterbox co-ordination posts
- Accommodation for all RAA staff at least one day per month for service meetings, team building and other all staff events.
- Accommodation for thematic team meetings for 6-7 people, half a day, per team, per month.

IT implications

- The proposal is that all RAA staff will transfer across to Havering's IT system (Liquid Logic) as permanent employees of Havering council. There will be no costs for the transfer over and above the costs for IT which are covered by both the on-costs / staff overheads and hosting costs included in the full financial business model

3.5 HR Implications and Activities

The HR comments of this report set out the current position with regard to the applicability of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE). In line with the minimum expectation of the DfE, staff in scope of this new East London Regional Adoption Agency are expected to transfer into the host borough, Havering Council, under TUPE regulations.

It is envisaged that these proposals will initiate significant changes to the way Adoption services are delivered across the four boroughs and ultimately new ways of working.

The TUPE regulations impose limitations on the ability of the new employer and employee to agree a variation to the terms and conditions unless there is a genuine Economic, technical or organisational (ETO) reason:

- There needs to be a valid business reason for the change
- The ETO reason must ' entail changes to the workforce'. This means that changes to workforce numbers or job functions must be the objective of plan
- Changes to location of work are now covered as an ETO reason under TUPE. This means that TUPE-related relocations will not be treated as automatically unfair but should still be treated in line with the normal employment principles in terms of formal consultation.

Therefore , it is likely that as well as informing/consulting as part of the TUPE process, formal consultation will take place with staff and unions on the new structure, location and job descriptions triggering a change management process.

It is recognised that all local authorities are likely to follow a similar change management process. However, a proposed Change Management "Terms of Agreement" has been developed and aims to provide clarity and equity between the boroughs throughout the management of the change process. This agreement has been consulted upon with HR leads across the boroughs and will then be shared with the unions.

Both the TUPE and restructuring consultation processes will be managed in line with the ACAS guidelines and will run concurrently.

Where possible, the existing boroughs will seek to redeploy their own employees prior to the transfer date. Any redundancy costs will be the responsibility of the incumbent borough. The host borough will need to consider additional ongoing liability cost which may not be cover in on-cost i.e. Barrister costs associated with an employment tribunal and who will be responsible for those costs.

Pensions:

All local authorities, pensions provisions are provided under the Local Government Pensions Scheme. The actuary have confirmed that a bulk transfer is only applicable if 10 or more members are transferring from any one previous organisation.

Each local authority is unlikely to be transferring 10 or more members, therefore, the process for bulk transfers is not applicable. The process that will need to be followed is that of a normal transfer from a previous Local Government Pension Scheme i.e.:

- The members will be admitted to the London Borough of Havering pension scheme and will then be subject to 22% employer contribution rate (the employee rate is dependant upon their salary)
- The pension team will write to the previous authorities requesting transfer estimates, calculated in accordance with actuarial guidance issued by the Secretary of State
- Once the details are received, the pensions team will write to the members, highlighting the 'pros and cons' of transferring and ask them to make their decision.
- If members elect to transfer, the pension team will ask the previous authority to make the payment of the relevant transfer value.
- The transfer value, paid from the pension fund, should be enough to cover previous pension liabilities so there is no need for any budget from individual services for pension costs.

However, if any local authority exceeds the bulk transfer number of 10 members, then the process will need to be reviewed and could impact on timescales and costs. The above process will be factored into the formal consultation period.

3.6   RAA Performance and Outcomes

Targets

More details, including exact targets and outcomes, will be worked up with staff as part of the task and finish group process. Initial work undertaken across the four authorities suggests that there are some meaningful and very achievable targets in the three key areas listed below:

Adopter Recruitment and Assessment

It is a generally accepted national standard that each adoption assessment worker is able to undertake 9 completed full assessments per year in addition to stage 1 work. Two of the London Boroughs have indicated there is potential for further Adopter recruitment in their area, no Borough actively recruits adopters and several Boroughs have indicated adopter recruitment is not a priority given their difficulty in placing within the immediate local area. There are therefore strong indications that a focussed and cost effective recruitment campaign and a dedicated team will be able to increase adopter recruitment from the current figure of 29 approvals in year to a target of 45 over three years. This would result in a saving of at least £496,000 in interagency fees. If sibling groups were placed savings would be considerably higher.

Family finding and matching

The rate of children leaving care for adoption across the East London Boroughs remains low. The use of placement with family members under an SGO is well embedded and some local communities have positive extended family networks which promoted this model. It is unlikely that the East London Authorities will achieve national average rates of leaving care for adoption, nevertheless early indications from review of hard to place children indicates that more children could be placed for adoption. 57 children were placed in 2017/18, a considerable increase on previous years. ALE would have the capacity to family find and match 70 children.

Adoption support

Adoption support is under-developed in all Boroughs. The adoption support team would have capacity to provide a small but good quality core service, working with local adopters and adopter voice as well as local providers to provide:

- Advice guidance and support including sign-posting
- Adoption Support Assessments (up to 100 PA)
- Adopter support groups
- Adopter training
- Applications to the ASF
- Some direct work

The outline outcomes framework below sets out the targets listed above, alongside some key outcome improvement areas:

Target	Current	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Improved Outcomes
Adopter recruitment	29	36	40	45	- Children placed within East London - Improved placement choice - Improved adopter confidence
Family finding and matching	57	60	65	70	- Children placed in East London - Increased number of children adopted - Improved placement choice - Improved matching through placement with adopters known to agency
Adopter support (no established	Individual worker offer	Development of core offer Improved engagement with			- Fewer adoption disruptions - Improved outcomes for adopted children - Improved adoptive family satisfaction

numerical baseline)		providers Improved use of grant funding	

The Department for Education are also providing ongoing guidance around performance monitoring and quality assurance. The RAA will make sure it continues to monitor it's outcomes in line with both local and national best practices.

3.8   Communications, Marketing and PR

The key aim in merging adoption services is to have a wider pool of prospective adopters from various backgrounds to ensure even the most hard-to-reach children can enjoy stability with loving families. Adopt London East seeks to increase the quality and quantity of adoption applicants across the sub-region and drive the placement of our most hard-to-reach children including: sibling groups, adolescents, BME children, and children with learning difficulties. To achieve this, effective communication and marketing is required.

In 2013, the Department for Education commissioned Kindred to carry out a research study to identify effective communication and marketing channels that should be used when engaging with potential adopters in order to, ultimately, encourage them to adopt a child. Their findings provide insight into the common demographics, motivations and attitudes towards adoption. They have also developed six key phases of the adoption journey and have recommended the use of different channels and messages for each phase. The idea being, an appropriate mix of channels is an important factor to a successful marketing campaign. For example, one agency ran a press advertising campaign in local newspapers and lifestyle magazines. A radio and digital advertising campaign ran alongside this; all contributing to a 65% increase in enquiries on same period in the previous year.

Kindred's Journey Phase:

Role of marketing/communications	Key channels
PHASE ONE: Initial trigger/motivation	
Raise awareness to prompt consideration	Editorial coverage Advertising Friends and family
PHASE TWO: Fact-finding and research	
Inform potential adopters about the process	Websites Online search Information packs Information events
PHASE THREE: Deeper engagement	
Provide information about the realities of adoption	Social media Online forums
PHASE FOUR: The decision	
Reinforce a positive decision	May revisit channels and information

	accessed previously 'Keeping in touch' channels e.g. newsletters
PHASE FIVE: The process and adoption	
Keep updated and provide emotional support	Agency channels Peers
PHASE SIX: After care	
Create advocates for use in future communications	Mentor schemes Networking opportunities

Kindred's findings have been used to benchmark the effectiveness of marketing campaigns in reaching key audiences, tackling their barriers towards adoption and motivating them to engage. Drawing on best practice from Kindred's evidence based research and in line with our regionalised model, Adopt London East will facilitate a coordinated delivery of marketing and recruitment and use a number of communication platforms to appeal to prospective adopters. This will include:

- **Radio advertising:** A call-to-action via a local radio station that matches Adopt London East's target audience.

- **Poster campaigns:** Posters placed in local libraries, community centres and other areas with a community focus. There

- **Direct mail/leafleting:** Distributed at libraries, sports centres, cultural venues, post offices and doctors' surgeries, religious or community groups.

- **Branding:** Adopt London East logo has been developed and this will be followed with a catchy strapline to be used on all marketing materials.
-
- **Editorial content:** Feature in magazine articles and newspapers.

- **Single door:** A centralised specialist marketing team to receive all recruitment enquiries via the website, email dedicated phone line.

- **Website:** A centralised, digital platform for potential adopters to have access to information, advice and guidance as well as connect with other adopters. Based on best practice research the website will feature:
  - Networking forum for adopters/potential adopters
  - FAQ page
  - Use of visual images for adoption processes
  - Information on upcoming events & training sessions
  - Adoption support tools & techniques
  - Search engine optimisation
  - Engaging Blogs posted by adopters
  - Sophisticated, modern design and layout
  - Bitesize information with easy to understand language
  - Real life stories & experiences of people who have successfully adopted
  - Videos/vlogs

- **Other Social media Channels:** Strong emphasis on digital marketing via social media channels including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

- Facebook & Twitter: Interactive platform to share real-life stories and facilitate deeper engagement use of visual images, blogs and hashtags.
- The most used adoption-related hashtags over the past 12 months on social media in the UK are:
- #adoption (208,000 mentions)
- #familylaw (50,900 mentions)
- #adoptionprocess (35,600 mentions)
- #adoptionawareness (12,000 mentions)
- #nationaladoptionweek (3,500 mentions)

YouTube: based on Kindred's recommendations, YouTube can have a key

3.9   Proposed Governance Arrangements and Legal Implications

Governance Arrangements

The governance structure and arrangements will be comprised of the following forums:

1) ELRAA partnership board

Status of the Board

The East London Regional Adoption Agency (ELRAA) Partnership Board is fully accountable to: the London Boroughs of Havering, Barking and Dagenham, Newham and Tower Hamlets.

The ELRAA Partnership Board will report to the London Adoption Board and will co-operatively engage with and work alongside the North, West and South Regional Adoption Governance Boards.

Purpose of the Board

The ELRAA Partnership Board will be responsible for providing effective oversight of the partnership agreement and the hosting of adoption services by London Borough of Havering.

The Board will present the Annual Report of the ELRAA Partnership Board to the local authority partner Cabinets, with the support of the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the ELRAA Partnership Board.

The Board will also enable effective overview and support for the collaborative working arrangements between the Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAA's), Adopters and partner local authorities.

The Board will set and review the strategic objectives of the ELRAA and monitor service delivery of the key priorities of the partnership, that is to:

- Place more children in a timelier way;
- recruit more of the right families for the children waiting, preparing them consistently and well;
- improve the range, accessibility and quality of post adoption support; and
- improve the outcomes for children and families.

Roles and responsibilities of the ELRAA Partnership Board

Havering Council will provide the ELRAA Partnership Board with a report on a quarterly basis detailing summary management information as part of the performance monitoring agreement that will include:

- Service delivery performance
- Financial performance

- Audit and assurance activities

Partner Councils will individually provide the ELRAA Partnership Board with a report on a quarterly basis detailing their Council's performance of the co-dependencies that will include:

- Key performance indicators relating to safeguarding pressures and overall children's services demand; and
- pre-court proceedings activities and performance

Partner Councils will produce a joint update on:

- Joint working arrangements
- Inspection readiness

The ELRAA Partnership Board will also:

- Provide a forum to discuss and agree strategic issues relating to the delivery of adoption services.
- Provide a forum to discuss and agree future budget setting
- To provide constructive support and challenge of the adoption system within the North London region, with reference to national best practice / emergent practice, to provide an opportunity for sharing, learning and continuous improvement.
- To engage with national adoption services providers, voluntary adoption agencies and broader stakeholders, to inform regional service development.
- Review and consider reports presented by the ELRAA Advisory Group
- Authorise the commissioning and initiation of new business cases and assess opportunities for future service development.
- Confirm appropriate adjustments to the Contract Baseline regarding Target Performance Levels so that they are aligned with the updated Statistical Neighbour data.
- Consider any changes to the services that arise out of proposals and ensure that they are dealt with as a Variation in accordance with the Partnership Agreement

Decision Making

Made by consensus between the Director of Children's Services London Borough of Havering and the four Directors of Children's Services from Tower Hamlets, Barking and Dagenham and Newham.

This cohort are primary funding partners and have shared responsibility for performance of adoption services as measured in published statutory performance information and in Ofsted inspection. They therefore form the voting members of the group.

In the event of a continuing dispute, the Board will refer to the formal dispute resolution process detailed within the Joint Partnership Agreement.

Chair

The Board will be chaired by the Director of Children's Services Havering as host authority.

Membership

Voting representatives

Director of Children's Services - Havering
Director of Children's Services – LBBD
Director of Children's Services – Newham
Director of Children's Services – Tower Hamlets

Advisory Representatives

Director of Finance – partner authority
Head of Finance - Havering
Head of Performance and Business Intelligence - Havering
VAA representative
Adopter representative
HUB representative
Head of Service - ALE

2) Quality assurance group

Purpose of the Group

The Quality Assurance Group will be responsible for monitoring performance and identifying performance issues at an early stage so that potential issues can be resolved in an efficient and effective manner.

The Quality Assurance Group will be responsible for holding all partners to account in respect of performance outcomes for children and adopters and financial management.

The purpose of the group is:

- Ensure that all work undertaken is compliant with national standards, legislation and inter authority partnership agreements.
- To ensure that all work undertaken is carried out with the best interests of the child/young person at its core.
- To secure and promote good working relationships amongst the ELRAA, partners and stakeholders.
- To ensure effective efficient delivery of the objectives as agreed at the ELRAA Partnership Board.
- To support joint working practices across the ELRAA to improve timeliness and outcomes for children and adopters.
- To compare, contrast and report on the work of other RAAs across the region and nationally.
- To ensure all work is underpinned by best practice recommendations and research findings.
- To ensure discussions/decisions align with those reflected within the London RAA's
- To ensure an annual health check for adoptive families is undertaken

Roles and responsibilities of the ELRAA Quality Assurance Group

- Ensure appropriate preparation for the ELRAA Partnership Board to enable comprehensive oversight of the delivery of adoption services across East London.
- Receive and review the monthly performance reports from across the four partner agencies on matters such as issues relating to the delivery of services and performance against service standards (including possible future developments).
- Review and consider benchmark reports.
- Review the implications of any recently issued national policy and or guidance
- Review the general inspection readiness of the ELRAA, and monitor progress of actions to address areas of concern.
- Receive and review the ELRAA service delivery risk management matrix, together with identified mitigating actions.

- Report to the ELRAA Partnership Board any future service specific requirements or other significant issues requiring discussion and decision by the ELRAA Partnership Board.
- Scrutinise service quality via:
  1. Anonymised case audits
  2. Findings from service led case audits and staff file audits
  3. Customer feedback (including complaints, concerns and compliments)
  4. Stakeholder feedback including health, schools, courts etc.
  5. Panel recommendations, panel schedules and panel chairs' appraisals
  6. Findings from LA and VAA case reviews
  7. Ofsted inspection outcomes and action plans from other agencies.

Chair

The Quality Assurance Group will be chaired by - Head of Performance and Business Intelligence – London borough of Havering

Membership

Members of the quality assurance group include:

- RAA staff reps
- LA officers (e.g. IROs, principal managers etc.)
- Virtual head teacher representatives
- VAA representatives
- Service user representatives
- Other stakeholders including panel chairs, health.

3) Annual review meeting

Purpose of the Group

The Annual Review Meeting will be an expansion of the ELRAA Partnership Board meeting that will include Cabinet Lead Members. This meeting will act as the primary vehicle to discuss, further develop and agree the strategic and specific objectives for the year ahead.

The Annual Review meeting will be held in accordance with the terms detailed within the Joint Partnership Agreement. Past performance will be reported, with summary of the highlights and lowlights of the year, but the focus will be on supporting the continued development of adoption services within the North London region, whilst ensuring alignment with partner organisations aims, objectives, and budgetary capacity.

Aims of the Annual Review Meeting

- Assess whether the Partnership Agreement is operating in the most satisfactory manner
- Assess whether the services are being delivered to the Partnership Agreement standard
- Review the Trust's performance of adoption services in the previous Contract Year against the performance indicators and its performance against the annual budget for the previous Contract Year, together with a review of the proposed budget for the following contract year.

- Review the Councils' performance of the co-dependencies that affect the overall performance of adoption services within the East London region.
- Consider any proposals from the Trust or partner Councils relating to possible contract variations, and note any variations agreed at the quarterly ELRAA Partnership Board meetings.
- Agree any proposed changes to the Services Specification, the Financial Mechanism, and the Performance Indicators for the following Contract Year
- Confirm the Contract Sum payable by the respective Councils to the ELRAA for the next contract year

Ways of Working

- The Annual Review Meeting of the ELRAA Board will be held no later than one full calendar month following the expiry of twelve (12) months from the Services Commencement Date
- Members of the Board will receive papers two weeks before the Annual Review Board meeting

Chair

The Annual Review Meeting of the ELRAA Board will be chaired by an independent Chair yet to be determined.

Membership

Directors of Children's Services (All LA's)
Cabinet Lead Member Children's Services (All LA's)
Head of Finance - HAvering
Head of Performance and Business Intelligence - Havering
VAA Representative
Adopter representative
HUB representative

4) **RAA staff meetings**

There will a number of internal staff meetings within the RAA that will feed into all aspects of the strategic and quality assurance governance. Exact details of these meetings including, memberships, frequency, purpose and standing agendas, will be co-design and agreed with staff through the task and finish groups process.

Governance structure

Adopt London Executive board

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┌──────────────────────┐       ┌────────────────────────────┐       ┌──────────────────────────┐
│    Stakeholdesr      ├───┐   │   East London London       │   ┌───┤      DCS - Newham        │
└──────────────────────┘   │   │   Regional Adoption Agency │   │   └──────────────────────────┘
                           ├───┤   Partnership Board –      ├───┤   ┌──────────────────────────┐
┌──────────────────────┐   │   │   Chaired by Havering DCS  │   │   │    DCS – Tower Hamlets   │
│   VAA Representatives ├───┘   └────────────────────────────┘   │   └──────────────────────────┘
└──────────────────────┘                                         │   ┌──────────────────────────┐
                                                                 └───┤       DCS - LBBD         │
                                                                     └──────────────────────────┘
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East London London Regional Adoption Agency Partnership Board – Chaired by Havering DCS

Stakeholdesr

VAA Representatives

DCS - Newham

DCS – Tower Hamlets

DCS - LBBD

Quality Assurance Group

Chair – Head of Performance - Havering

LA representatives/Panel Chairs

Virtual School/LAC reps

Service User reps

RAA staff meeting(s) chaired by ELRAA Head of Service

ELRAA staff

Partnership working and risk sharing

The RAA governance will be underpinned by clear partnership and risk sharing agreements. It is proposed that the formation of these agreements will be agreed through the project board prior to implementation. The suggested content for the document will likely be made up of but not limited to the following sections

1   DEFINITION AND INTERPRETATION
2   COMMENCEMENT AND DURATION
3   EXTENDING THE INITIAL TERM
4   OAWY ARRANGEMENTS
5   DELEGATION OF FUNCTIONS
6   SERVICES
7   ANNUAL OAWY PLAN
8   FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

A Focus on Risk Sharing

The partnership agreement will also have a strong focus on risk sharing and financial equitability. It is crucial that no authority stands to benefit or lose out significantly as a result of the new model. The detail of the agreement will include but not be limited to the following:

- Budget setting and review
- How targets are affecting financial contributions
- Financial equitability (at the outset and over time)
- Savings reviews
- How surpluses/savings/efficiencies will be managed, drawn down and reinvested in the model

A Focus on Information sharing

The IT and governance work stream will establish a clear information sharing agreement alongside the IT transition plan. With all RAA staff moving to Havering's IT system, the agreement will focus on how data flows will be managed in the new system to ensure timely and accurate information continues to inform the RAA performance and outcomes framework.

3.10   Commissioning arrangements

There are two commissioned services across the East London footprint:

- PAC-UK
- Spot purchases from Barnardo's' UK

The funding for both of these contracts has been considered as part of the non-staff budget for the RAA. The project team will work with service managers and commissioners during set-up and implementation to review current contracts with a view to extending, modifying or de-commissioning if appropriate.

There are also some longer term considerations around commissioned services across the whole of London. The west London alliance are undertaking an exercise to ascertain what is commissioned across the whole of London with a view to potentially moving to some pan-London commissioning of services. This exercise will be considered alongside the local arrangements during the set-up and implementation of the RAA

4 FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT

Total cost of RAA

The total cost of the RAA will be £1,607,910

This figure is made up of, the following staff budget:

Havering Grade	FTE	TOTAL
G12	1.00	110,000
G10	3.00	234,818
G9	1.00	71,545
G8	12.00	747,659
G4	2.00	65,576
G4	3.00	98,363
		0
	22.0	1,327,961

And a non-staff budget of £297,396 to cover the following:

Staff travel expenses
Subscriptions
Marketing
Comms staffing
Panels
Printing and postage
Adopter training
Medicals
Legal Costs

Adoption Database
Accommodation costs
Hosting costs

Interagency placement budget

Adopt London East (ALE) has clear SMART targets to increase the number of in-house available adopters for all our children (see Outcomes fact sheet). Should the agency achieve the targets set; overall spend on inter-agency placements will reduce considerably. However, some children will require placement with adopters from other agencies and some adopters recruited by ALE may accept children from other Local Authorities generating an income for the agency.

In order to ensure children are placed quickly with the best possible adopters, the agency will operate a policy of priority search for in-house adopters. This search will include horizon scanning for adopters in stage 2 assessment. Should this search not be successful; following sign off from the family finding team manager and children's social work team manager, the search criteria will be immediately widened to include adopters from other agencies.

ALE will maintain a virtual fund for inter-agency income and expenditure. All Local Authorities will agree to a risk sharing matrix. A quarterly financial report will be produced. This will detail all placements made with in-house adopters and all children placed both in-house and in inter-agency placements.

The balance will be apportioned to all agencies according to the overall number of children placed, whether in-house or in inter-agency placements. The partnership board will formulate and equitable procedure for both the redistribution of income and sharing of costs. This formula will be based on a number of criteria, including but not limited to:

- The local authority the children / adopters are from
- Previous years income / costs for each local authority (pre-RAA formation)
- Previous years income / costs for each local authority (post-RAA formation)

As mentioned above, the costs / income from interagency fees is unpredictable, particularly across four local authorities, so the RAA will operate a virtual budget which draws down and apportions money quarterly to the constituent authorities. The business case model aims to ensure that the spend across the region reduces significantly across the first 3 years of implementation

Individual contributions

How they have been worked out

The project team has worked in consultation with service / HR and finance leads to work out what is currently spent on adoption in each of the local authorities. The challenges with this exercise are that most authorities have split roles across a number of services. (For example, across both fostering and adoption) Also that demand shifts and moves from year to year and so then, will the amount of time each member of staff spends directly on adoption focussed work. For these reasons, we have used the following method and data to work out the total FTE staff and costs for each of the local authorities:

- Taking the total number of FTE staff whose roles include some aspect of adoption focussed work
- Working with service managers to calculate reasonable percentages for the amount of time each staff member spends solely on adoption

- Cross checking the total figures with both the total number of adoptions (per local authority) and the total Lac population (per local authority) to ensure there is financial equitability at the outset
- Calculating the current not staffing budget

It is worth noting again here that demand is not completely predictable so total equitability is not possible. The mitigation for this will be covered by the risk sharing and partnership agreements (sections below), which will ensure that the necessary governance is put in place to make sure no authority loses out or benefits in relation to another.

The individual contributions

The table below sets out the proposed individual total contributions from each local authority. This is made up of the current staffing contribution (above) and the current non staffing budget for each local authority. The figures also take into account the fact that the head of service is non-cashable.

Local Authority	Contribution to RAA
Havering	£313,929
Tower Hamlets	£284,566
LBBD	£392,646
Newham	£407,042
Total	£1,398,183

Rationale for budget model

The Regionalisation Demonstrator projects developed a number of budget models using a variety of assumptions and processes. The most consistently used model worked from actual spend as this is already budgeted within each LA towards budgets based on service delivery over 3 to 5 years. This model also allows performance in each Authority to develop to the best prior to full remodelling of budgets. As numbers of children adopted are low and unit costs high, this has a radical effect on unit costs per adoption.

Each Local Authority has raised concerns about cross subsidy of other Authorities.

Unit costs may be modelled on numbers of children placed for adoption or on LAC population. The former figure links costs more closely to delivery but is subject to large scale change as performance improves. The latter gives a more stable base rate.

Unit costs per child placed for adoption

Current costs per each child placed vary considerably. Tower Hamlets have seen a considerable rise in numbers of children placed; the unit cost per child placed is 22.7K.

Unit costs per LAC population

The difference in unit costs is low when measured by LAC population with Havering being the highest at £1433. Barking and Dagenham and Tower Hamlets both achieve £1220.

The Shortfall

- The total shortfall between the current contributions and the proposed RAA budget is £209,727
- It is important to note that this is the maximum possible shortfall between current budgets and the proposed RAA budgets as salaries have been costed at the highest possible spinal point. As such, the RAA partnership board will concentrate on partnership and risk sharing agreements to ensure that any underspend and savings are redistributed equitably among its member local authorities
- This business case sets outs a "highest possible cost" funding model and ensures that the amount spent on the model in years 1,2 and 3 can be no more than the stated figure

- As such, the outline cost of the model is the same for years 1,2 and 3, in the knowledge that the spend will definitely be lower than the agreed amount
- As shown above; each authority will make an upfront extra commitment of 15% of their total budget to fund the shortfall made up by the non-cashable elements of their budgets and the extra costs of the RAA in year 1
- The methodology for meeting this shortfall is based on reducing the number of interagency placement fees paid out for children in the RAA footprint.
- A conservative estimate of 7 (£217k at a cost of 31k per placement) additional placements made in house would comfortably cover the costs of the shortfall between the current and future budgets
- The RAA performance targets also aim to reduce interagency placements by a total of 16 by year 3 at a potential cost saving of £496k
- There is also significant scope for increasing income from providing East London RAA adopters to other RAA's
- The risk sharing and partnership agreements (above) will set out clear methodologies for budget setting and benefits (financial and other) sharing as a result of the RAA achieving its targets.
- Further savings against Children in Care budgets by each Local Authority through improved rates of leaving care for adoption and improved timeliness of placement

Potential savings

Impact of timeliness on Value for Money
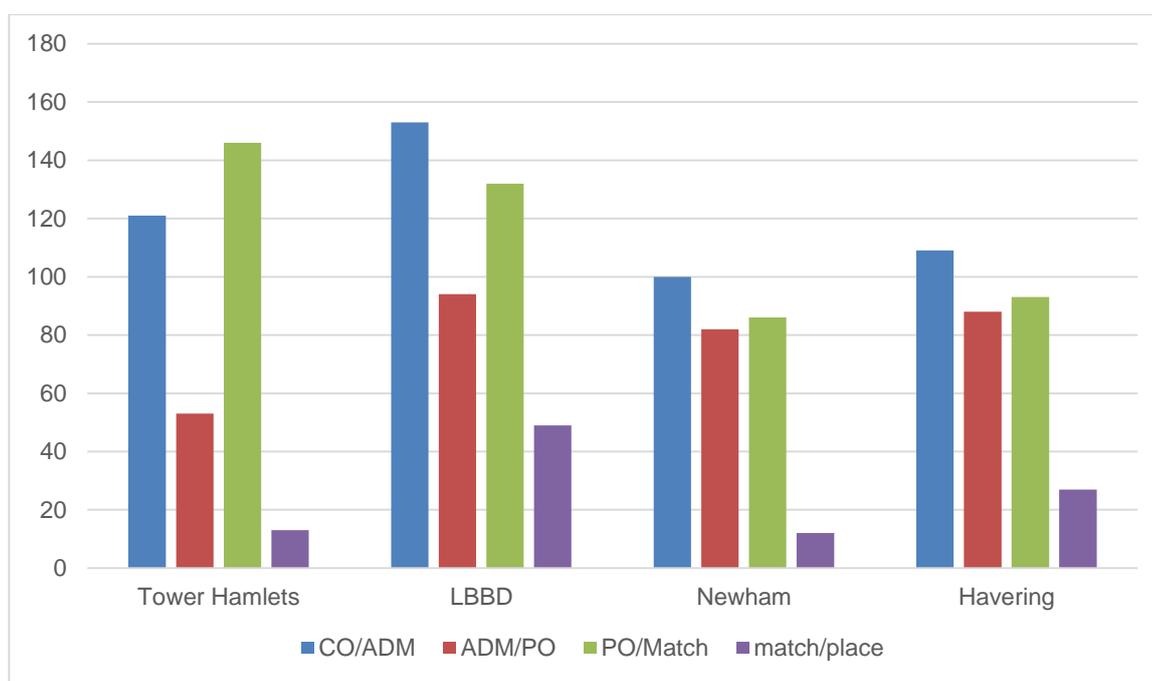
Savings in Local Authority may be made through development of efficient and effective systems. If all services are benchmarked against the best performing Local Authority in the ALE region the number of days a child is in care is reduced by the following amounts.

	Tower Hamlets	LBBD	Newham	Havering	Total
CO/ADM	21	53	0	9	**97**
ADM/PO	45	41	73	80	**239**
PO/Match	60	46	0	7	**124**
Match/Place	4	15	4	19	**42**
Total	**130**	**155**	**77**	**115**	**502**

Calculation assumptions

- All ALE authorities perform well in respect of hard to place dimensions impact of these dimensions has not therefore been separately calculated
- The highest performing authority in the pathways most affected by placement of hard to place children has one of the highest rates of leaving care for adoption and one of the highest rates of placement of hard to place children. The potential impact of rates of leaving care on timeliness is therefore minimised
- As numbers are low: placement of individual children may have a disproportionate effect on figures, an assumption has therefore been made of 50% improvement for all Local Authorities
- An average daily cost of £80 per child in care has been used for calculation purposes

Savings Per Local Authority	
Tower Hamlets	£5,200
LBBD	£6,200
Newham	£3,800
Havering	£4,600
Total	**£20,800**

Rates of Leaving care for adoption

Current rates of leaving care for adoption are low across all ALE authorities

Tower Hamlets, followed by Newham and LBBD have higher rates than Havering. As LBBD has a higher LAC population the overall improvement opportunities are potentially higher in numbers

	Placed 2017/18	Improvement to best	Gain
Havering	6	13	7
Tower Hamlets	18	18	0
LBBD	13	22	9
Newham	16	21	5
Total	**57**	**89**	**32**

Calculation assumptions

- The in-year placement costs of a child in care roughly equate to costs of an adoptive placement should this be purchased through an inter-agency agreement.
- Assumption of 50% improvement in the number of placements made
- Assumption that 50% of placements are externally purchased (see adopter recruitment performance in outcomes tracker)
- Lifetime in care is conservatively estimated on an assumption that the child is 3 when adopted and care costs will remain the same

	50)% gain (rounded down	Savings in year	Lifetime savings
Havering	3	45K	40,500K
Tower Hamlets	0	0K	0K
LBBD	4	60K	54,000K
Newham	2	30K	27,000K
Total	**14**	**210K**	**189,000K**

NB: this is based on improvement to the best in ALE Authorities, further improvement to national averages will result in further cost savings for all

Conclusion

All Local Authorities place fewer children from care than national averages. It is likely that ALE authorities will continue to place fewer children due to local demographics and effective use of SGO with extended families, however there are clear indications that the East London court will work with Local Authorities to ensure more children are granted a placement order.

There are considerable differences in timeliness across the Local Authorities. As would be expected the Local Authorities who place more children take longer on average, however some aspects of positive practice do emerge and these will be explored further in the task and finish groups.

Interestingly the impact of placement of children from typically hard to place groups is lower than seen in other areas. This indicates a commitment to strive for placement, especially of children from BME populations where average timescales fall. It may also indicate the effect of the East London Courts on granting of placement orders for children seen to be too hard to place. This requires further exploration but the low rate of children over 5 being placed (and only when in a sibling group) may be indicative of this.

5 IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

Adopt London East - Regionalisation Plan										
Month	Sep-18	Oct-18	Nov-18	Dec-18	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	May-19	Jun-19
Staff engagement event (1)	▓									
Business case signed off by RAA board	▓									
Cabinet meetings & decisions for all councils		▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓			
Staff task & finish groups		▓	▓	▓	▓					
Staff engagement event (2)			▓							
Formal consultation with unions and staff					▓	▓				
Recruitment of permanent HoS					▓					
Staff transfer procedure						▓	▓	▓	▓	
All other set up procedures – IT systems, finance, partnership and risk sharing agreements					▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	
Regionalised Service is in place										▓