

Appendix D: The Benefits of Regionalisation

Benefits

There are a number of new benefits / advantages associated with a reduced, four borough footprint:

- The national feedback on live RAA's is that larger geographical boundaries can lead to far more complex models of delivery. Smaller geographical areas (as the east will be) are able to be more focussed on the demands and needs of the region.
- Smaller teams will be easier to manage. Building strong relationships with smaller dedicated teams of staff will help the RAA reach a positive culture of performance improvement and impact for children.
- Having fewer local authorities as part of the model will mean less (often conflicting) local authority priorities to concentrate on. A smaller number of local authorities lends itself to the achievement of stronger partnership working.

Early evaluation of established Regional Agencies

Although regional adoption agencies have only recently been established; a number of early research studies have been undertaken and the findings are positive.

Adoption service staff consistently report that once embedded into a regional agency, they have greater job satisfaction and feel more able to make a difference. Adopters report they feel they have a more responsive support offer and improved training from a service with a sole focus on adoption work.

Adoption service data and performance information were used well to inform service delivery. In some early adopters performance initially declined but all report improved performance in terms of adopter recruitment and child placement. Lessons from the early adopters have been learned and incorporated into the Adopt London East model. Strong regional partnerships have been developed. A number of partnerships involved innovative practice

Ofsted have now inspected 14 Local Authorities who have adoption services provided through a regional adoption agency. All note improved services and in 7 specific positive comments have been made about the regional adoption agency.

Benefits of regionalisation in East London

Adoption services across all East London agencies are small and Individual Local Authorities struggle to provide the full range of adoption services. Detailed evaluation of adoption services has identified a number of challenges (see table below) all of which will benefit from a regional approach within East London.

The performance section of this report details target performance improvements in years 1 to 3. These have been developed using a cautious model of service delivery working towards best practice models.

The East London Adoption services already work together through the ELPAC consortium in order to ameliorate some of these challenges. Working in cooperation has provided many benefits and these existing working relationships will be built upon to ensure a smooth transition into one organisation

Challenge	Regional solution	Benefits
Against a background of intensive challenge from the voluntary sector adopter recruitment has not been maximised	Working in partnership with the Pan London Adopt London brand brings a dedicated service communications budget a large single brand and an ability to develop both London wide and East London specific campaigns	Improved adopter base for child matches maintaining their connection to the local area Savings against the Inter-agency fee budget
Some delays in assessment due to worker availability	One recruitment and assessment team will undertake all assessments, work will be allocated more effectively. Should demand for assessments increase Independent social workers may be used	Increased number of adopters Adopters do not apply elsewhere Savings as above
Numbers of children with a placement order for adoption are relatively low across East London.	An East London regional adoption agency will provide a forum for effective working relationship with the East London courts	Increased number of children benefit from the stability offered through adoption In LA savings against the LAC budget
Some matches of harder to place children take longer than they should	A single family finding team working across East London and beyond will pool resources to work more effectively. Local relationships with children's social workers will be maintained through maintenance of a partial base in each Local Authority	Children benefit from the stability offered through adoption at the earliest opportunity In LA savings against the budget
The adoption support offer is underdeveloped.	A single adoption support service will pool all resources and enable	Adoptive families benefit from improved support.

<p>A small local adoption support service is unable to provide the range of services needed.</p>	<p>the service to develop a clear core offer to all adopters and maximise usage of the Adoption Support Fund</p>	<p>Outcomes improve Placement disruptions decline</p>
<p>Regional partnerships are under developed</p>	<p>A single agency operating in a coterminous region to key partner agencies will engage with agencies in development of innovative partnership working, clear referral pathways and co-working relationships</p>	<p>Adoptive families benefit from a clear shared offer Children are better supported in education and health services Maximisation of the partnership offer will impact positively on budgets</p>
<p>Courts delay and often block the progress of the adoption process</p>	<p>A single agency, operating under a single head of service, led by a partnership of local authorities will be far better placed to influence court decision making processes</p>	<p>Speedier processes and improved performance Enhanced regional reputation</p>
<p>No joined up commissioning</p>	<p>A single commissioning framework and quality assurance process across the region and potentially across London</p>	<p>Commissioned services are better aligned to the needs of children and young people Value for money and reduced overall spend on commissioned contracts</p>