



## CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE AGENDA

7.00 pm	Tuesday 23 November 2021	Town Hall
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Members 9: Quorum 3

### **COUNCILLORS:**

Judith Holt (Chairman)  
Robby Misir (Vice-Chair)  
Sally Miller

Carol Smith  
Gillian Ford  
Tele Lawal

Reg Whitney  
Tony Durdin

### **CO-OPTED MEMBERS:**

#### **Statutory Members representing the Churches**

Lynne Bennett, Church of  
England  
Jack How, Roman Catholic  
Church

#### **Statutory Members representing parent governors**

Julie Lamb, Special Schools  
Kathy Freeman, Primary  
Schools

Non-voting members representing local teacher unions and professional associations:  
Ian Rusha (NEU)

**For information about the meeting please contact:**

**Taiwo Adeoye - 01708 433079  
taiwo.adeoye@onesource.co.uk.**

## **Protocol for members of the public wishing to report on meetings of the London Borough of Havering**

Members of the public are entitled to report on meetings of Council, Committees and Cabinet, except in circumstances where the public have been excluded as permitted by law.

Reporting means:-

- filming, photographing or making an audio recording of the proceedings of the meeting;
- using any other means for enabling persons not present to see or hear proceedings at a meeting as it takes place or later; or
- reporting or providing commentary on proceedings at a meeting, orally or in writing, so that the report or commentary is available as the meeting takes place or later if the person is not present.

Anyone present at a meeting as it takes place is not permitted to carry out an oral commentary or report. This is to prevent the business of the meeting being disrupted.

Anyone attending a meeting is asked to advise Democratic Services staff on 01708 433076 that they wish to report on the meeting and how they wish to do so. This is to enable employees to guide anyone choosing to report on proceedings to an appropriate place from which to be able to report effectively.

Members of the public are asked to remain seated throughout the meeting as standing up and walking around could distract from the business in hand.

### **What is Overview & Scrutiny?**

Each local authority is required by law to establish an overview and scrutiny function to support and scrutinise the Council's executive arrangements. Each overview and scrutiny sub-committee has its own remit as set out in the terms of reference but they each meet to consider issues of local importance.

The sub-committees have a number of key roles:

1. Providing a critical friend challenge to policy and decision makers.
2. Driving improvement in public services.
3. Holding key local partners to account.
4. Enabling the voice and concerns to the public.

The sub-committees consider issues by receiving information from, and questioning, Cabinet Members, officers and external partners to develop an understanding of proposals, policy and practices. They can then develop recommendations that they believe will improve performance, or as a response to public consultations. These are considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Board and if approved, submitted for a response to Council, Cabinet and other relevant bodies.

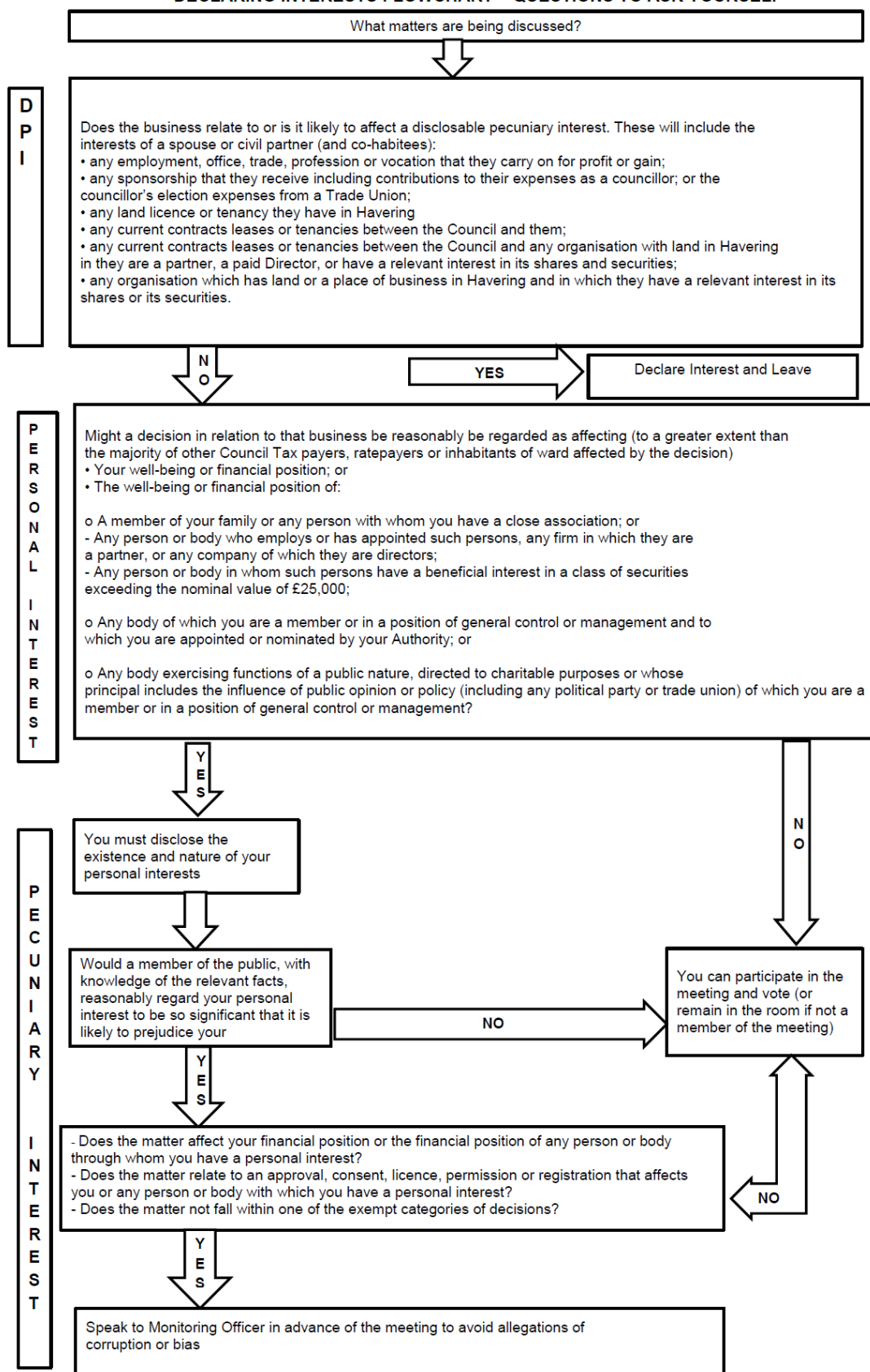
Sub-Committees will often establish Topic Groups to examine specific areas in much greater detail. These groups consist of a number of Members and the review period can last for anything from a few weeks to a year or more to allow the Members to comprehensively examine an issue through interviewing expert witnesses, conducting research or undertaking site visits. Once the topic group has finished its work it will send a report to the Sub-Committee that created it and will often suggest recommendations for the Overview and Scrutiny Board to pass to the Council's Executive.

## **Terms of Reference**

The areas scrutinised by the Committee are:

- Pupil and Student Services (including the Youth Service)
- Children's Social Services
- Safeguarding
- Adult Education
- Councillor Calls for Action
- Social Inclusion

**DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF**



## **AGENDA ITEMS**

**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

(if any) - receive.

**2 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Members are invited to disclose any interests in any of the items on the agenda at this point of the meeting. Members may still declare an interest in an item at any time prior to the consideration of the matter.

**3 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman will announce details of the arrangements in case of fire or other events that might require the meeting room or building's evacuation.

**4 MINUTES** (Pages 1 - 6)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 30 September 2021 and authorise the Chairman to sign them.

**5 PERFORMANCE INFORMATION - QUARTER TWO** (Pages 7 - 22)

Report attached

**6 ADOPT LONDON EAST ANNUAL REPORT** (Pages 23 - 66)

Report attached

**7 ADAPTIONS DUE TO COVID AND COVID RECOVERY** (Pages 67 - 76)

Report attached

**Andrew Beesley**  
**Head of Democratic Services**

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE  
Town Hall  
30 September 2021 (7.00 - 8.45 pm)**

**Present:** Councillors Judith Holt (Chairman), Robby Misir (Vice-Chair), Carol Smith, Gillian Ford and Reg Whitney

Co-opted Members:

Church Representatives:  
Lynne Bennett - Attended Virtually

Non-voting Member:  
Ian Rusha

Apologies for absence were received from,  
Councillor Sally Miller BCAC, Jack How and Julie Lamb.

The Chairman advised those present of action to be taken in the event of an emergency evacuation of the building becoming necessary

**62 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

There was no disclosures of interest at the meeting.

**63 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**64 PERFORMANCE INFORMATION - QUARTER ONE**

The Sub-Committee received a report and presentation that updated on the Quarter One 2021/22 (April to June 2021) performance information.

The report provided an overview of the services performance against the 13 performance indicators that have been selected for monitoring by the Sub-Committee.

It was noted that 7 of the indicators have been given a Red Amber Green status; RAG status. Five (72%) have a status of Green, One (14%) had a status of Amber and one (14%) had a status of Red.

The presentation highlighted the following areas of strong performance.

The report indicated that in the academic year 2019/20, 9 school inspections were undertaken of Havering schools between September 2019 and March 2020, pre the COVID-19. It was stated that the seven primary schools that were inspected retained their 'Good' outcomes and the two secondary academies inspected improved from 'Requires improvement' to 'Good'. This also resulted in an overall percentage of providers judged to be Good or Outstanding by OFSTED increasing by 2 percentage points, which was 5.2 percentage points above the national figure.

The Sub-Committee noted that the rate of both fixed term and permanent exclusions in Havering have remained below the rates for England as a whole in both primary and secondary based on the latest available published data.

It was explained that as a result of the Inclusions Service working very closely with Havering head teachers, and the new roll out of the Inclusions policy, there have been no permanent exclusions. The Sub-committee was informed that the Inclusions policy has been designed with an extra measures put in place to support schools to find alternatives to fixed term and permanent exclusions.

The percentage of looked after children with 2 or more changes of social worker in the last 12 months was noted as within target as at the end of the quarter. The Sub-Committee was informed that since the start of the pandemic, Havering has seen an increased turnover of social work staff, which particularly impacted on social worker changes for looked after children during the fourth quarter of 2020/21.

It was stated that there are still a number of vacant posts in the long term teams and staff recruitment and retention remains a high priority for the service in 2021/22. It Actions that have been taken to date include a review of pay rates to ensure Havering remains competitive; faster turnaround times for interviews when locum CVs come in (due to the increasingly competitive market); further expansion of the 'grown your own' ASYE programme; and working with colleagues in Communications to explore how 'Choose Havering' could be used as an external branding for recruitment purposes.

The service has also launched a robust permanent recruitment campaign and over the longer term, there are plans to look more broadly at pay, terms and conditions and career progression for the social work workforce to ensure that Havering is presented as an employer of choice for the profession.



The following areas that required improvement was outlined:

It was explained that the percentage of looked after children aged under 16 who have been looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years and living in the same placement for at least 2 years remained relatively stable throughout 2020/21 but was lower than in previous years and remains below the London average (currently 67%).

It was stated that an improvement during the first quarter of 2021/22 was currently within the accepted tolerance level. A number of initiatives have been implemented over the last year with the aim of improving placement stability for looked after children.

A weekly high concern discussion also takes place within ISS, with similar aims but discussing the most complex cases and how to best support these children and their carers.

The percentage of looked after children who ceased to be looked after as a result of permanency (Adoption and Special Guardianship Order) was noted as below target at the end of the first quarter.

It was explained that the primary cause of delay in adoption orders throughout the Covid-19 pandemic has been delays in court processes and Adopt London East (ALE) continues to work with courts to progress and chase Adoption Order hearings. The number of children with a placement order for adoption has traditionally been small in Havering but increased from two in 2019/20, to seven in 2020/21.

It was noted that timescales for conversion from placement order to adoption vary according to complexity, so the impact of this upturn in adoption orders may not be felt until later in 2021/22 or into 2022/23.

It was stated that the number of cases within the court service reduced during Covid pandemic however the Special Guardianship Order team continued to work with private and public law cases to support permanency within the family.

Officers were asked to provide future performance update that had been benchmarked with the statistical neighbours and also with the Borough of Barking and Dagenham. It was also felt that the report required to elaborate further on financial pressures that the service was facing.

In response to the school performance and improvement, the Sub-Committee was informed that all trajectory indicated that Havering schools were all performing above the national average.

The Sub-Committee asked for the Inclusion Policy that was recently reviewed to be presented at a future meeting.

A Member sought numbers of cases going through the court and suggested that the Cabinet Member for Children Services be urged to pressure the courts to extend seating and resolve the back log of adoption cases.

It was suggested to officers that the service lobby government for additional funding to cover the current financial pressures.

The Sub-Committee noted the contents of the report and presentation

## **65 SCHOOL QUALITY ASSURANCE UPDATE**

At the request of the Sub-Committee, officer provided Members with a report that detailed an overview of the statutory responsibilities of the Local Authority (LA) with regard to ensuring education excellence.

The report explained that the service recognised and respects the diverse educational landscape and models of governance that now exist within the borough, which currently included:

- a range of early years settings;
- infant, junior, primary, secondary, tertiary and special provisions;
- LA-maintained, academies, free-schools, stand-alone/local/national MATs, federations and faith schools.

It was explained to Members that additional quality assurance processes are likely to be taking place right across the sector (eg Ofsted, the Regional Schools' Commissioner, MATs) and the service was keen to ensure that its quality assurance processes are proportionate, work in synergy with other regulators, and minimise any burden of duplication.

The report detailed that the Education Act 2011 outlined that the role of Local Authority in relation to all children and young people under the following 3 headings:

- champions of vulnerable children and young people;
- ensuring fair access to services; and
- ensuring educational excellence.

In keeping with these principles, the service improve the well-being of young children and 'reduce inequalities between young children in the borough. It was stated that this also included young children's physical and mental health and emotional well-being; protection from harm and neglect; education, training and recreation.

Officers informed that the duties and related powers of the service with regard to settings, schools and colleges in the area are set out in the London Borough of Havering Quality Assurance Framework: Education Providers.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the service provides, challenge and support through direct provision or brokerage where needed to all providers in order to improve educational performance.

Officers explained that all the quality assurance processes are compatible with the service statutory responsibilities and are aligned with the latest DfE Schools Causing Concern guidance.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the service operates a flexible programme of quality assurance, proportionate to the quality of provision within any given institution. The service reserves the right to exercise its powers flexibly and with discretion, depending on changing circumstances and the picture emerging from a wide range of evidence.

The following quality assurance processes are administered by the service:

#### Desktop Risk Assessment

A desktop risk assessment is applied to all provisions to determine the extent of quality assurance scrutiny, based on a range of factors including:

- Outcomes (standards and progress) in statutory tests or examinations, including trajectory / direction of travel
- Other data (eg attendance; persistent absence; exclusions; financial management, etc)
- Previous Ofsted and likely proximity to next inspection
- Trajectory / direction of travel in relation to outcomes
- Local Intelligence (e.g. quality of leadership and governance; complaints; safeguarding concerns, admissions and popularity; financial management, record with vulnerable children, etc)

#### Quality Assurance Visit(s)

All schools, irrespective of governance, are entitled to receive an on-site QA visit with an experienced and qualified Quality Assurance Inspector from the LA, once each year (academic cycle). The LA is, however, mindful of the extent of scrutiny and accountability currently within the system (e.g. Ofsted, HMI, RSC, MAT quality assurance, etc). With this in mind, the following alternatives may be adopted via consultation between the LA and school(s):

- The LA will not undertake a full QA visit within 6 months of an Ofsted inspection, to any school receiving a Good or Outstanding judgement.
- The LA is willing to consider a request from a MAT or a Federation to 'quality assure' the MAT/Federation's own quality assurance processes (this is likely to include joint on-site visits and discussions about each school in the MAT/Federation).

- If the desktop risk assessment identifies minimal risk, the LA will be happy to accept any credible and comprehensive QA report undertaken by another source (e.g. DfE; independent audit, etc).

It was explained that following the process, the service will assign its own categorisation to the school or academy and determine whether the school should receive additional quality assurance visits over the course of the year.

Officers explained that where there are concerns around an academy, free school or MAT, the service has a duty to relay its concerns to the Regional School Commissioner (RSC) who has regulatory responsibility for provision outside of the maintained sector. It was clarified that the service has no intervention powers over academies except for safeguarding or equalities reasons or if statutory processes are being breached.

The Sub-Committee noted the report.

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**Chairman**

## NAME OF COMMITTEE

<b>Subject Heading:</b>	Quarter 2 performance information
<b>SLT Lead:</b>	Jane West, Chief Operating Officer
<b>Report Author and contact details:</b>	Lucy Goodfellow, Policy and Performance Business Partner (Children, Adults and Health) (x4492)
<b>Policy context:</b>	The report sets out Quarter 2 performance relevant to the Children and Learning Sub-Committee
<b>Financial summary:</b>	<p>There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However adverse performance against some performance indicators may have financial implications for the Council.</p> <p>All service directorates are required to achieve their performance targets within approved budgets. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is actively monitoring and managing resources to remain within budgets, although several service areas, including Children's Services, continue to experience financial pressure from demand led services.</p>

### The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Communities making Havering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Places making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities making Havering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Connections making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>

## SUMMARY

This report supplements the presentation attached as **Appendix 1**, which sets out the Council's performance within the remit of the Children and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee for Quarter 2 (July to September 2021).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Children and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee:

- notes the contents of the report and presentation and makes any recommendations as appropriate.

## REPORT DETAIL

1. The report and attached presentation provide an overview of the Council's performance against the 13 performance indicators that have been selected for monitoring by the Children and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee in 2021/22. The presentation, attached at Appendix 1, highlights areas of strong performance and potential areas for improvement.

2. Tolerances around targets have been agreed for 2021/22 performance reporting and performance against each performance indicator has therefore been classified as follows:

- **Red** = outside of the quarterly target and outside of the agreed target tolerance, or 'off track'
- **Amber** = outside of the quarterly target, but within the agreed target tolerance
- **Green** = on or better than the quarterly target, or 'on track'

3. Where performance is rated as '**Red**', '**Corrective Action**' is included in the report. This highlights what action the Council will take to improve performance.

4. Also included in the report are Direction of Travel (DoT) columns, which compare:

- Short-term performance – with the previous quarter (Quarter 1, 2021/22)

- Long-term performance – with the same time the previous year (Quarter 2, 2020/21)

5. A green arrow (↑) means performance is better and a red arrow (↓) means performance is worse. An amber arrow (→) means that performance has remained the same. From this quarter, the report also shows the latest available London average, for context.

6. In total, 13 performance indicators have been selected for the sub-committee to monitor and all 13 are available for reporting this quarter. Seven indicators have also been assigned a RAG status.

In summary, of the 7 indicators:

5 (71%) have a status of **Green**  
0 (0%) have a status of **Amber**  
2 (29%) have a status of **Red**

## IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

### **Financial implications and risks:**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However adverse performance against some performance indicators may have financial implications for the Council.

All service directorates are required to achieve their performance targets within approved budgets. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is actively monitoring and managing resources to remain within budgets, although several service areas continue to experience significant financial pressures in relation to a number of demand led services, such as Children's Services. SLT officers are focused upon controlling expenditure within approved directorate budgets and within the total General Fund budget through delivery of savings plans and mitigation plans to address new pressures that are arising within the year.

### **Legal implications and risks:**

Whilst reporting on performance is not a statutory requirement, it is considered best practice to regularly review the Council's progress.

### **Human Resources implications and risks:**

There are no HR implications or risks arising from this report.

### **Equalities implications and risks:**

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to:

- (i) The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (ii) The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- (iii) Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Note: 'Protected characteristics' are age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

Equality and social cohesion implications could potentially arise if performance against the following indicators currently rated as Red does not improve:

- the percentage of Children in Care who ceased to be looked after as a result of permanency (Adoption and Special Guardianship Order); and
- The percentage of Children in Care with 2+ changes of social worker in the last 12 months

The attached presentation provides further detail on steps that will be taken to improve performance and mitigate these potential inequalities.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Appendix 1: Quarter 2 Children and Learning Performance Presentation 2021/22.





# Havering

LONDON BOROUGH

# **Quarter 2 Performance Report 2021/22**

## **Children and Learning O&S Sub-Committee**

# About the Children and Learning O&S Sub-Committee Performance Report

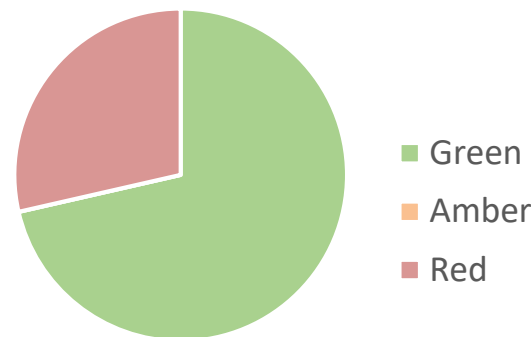
- Overview of the Council's performance against the indicators selected by the Children and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee
- The report identifies where the Council is performing well (**Green**), within target tolerance (**Amber**) and not so well (**Red**).
- Where the RAG rating is '**Red**', '**Corrective Action**' is included in the presentation. This highlights what action the Council will take to improve performance.

## OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND LEARNING INDICATORS

- 13 Performance Indicators are reported to the Children and Learning Overview & Scrutiny sub-committee
- Performance data is available for all 13 indicators this quarter
- 7 of the indicators have been given a RAG status

Page 14

Quarter 2 Indicator Summary



In summary, of the 7 indicators:  
**5 (71%)** have a status of **Green**  
**0 (0%)** have a status of **Amber**  
**2 (29%)** have a status of **Red**

## Quarter 2 Performance – Primary Education

Indicator and Description	Value	Tolerance	2021/22 Annual Target	2021/22 Q2 Performance	Short Term DOT against Q1 2021/22		Long Term DOT against Q2 2020/21		Latest London Average
% of providers judged to be Good or Outstanding by OFSTED	Higher is better	+/-4%	96.0%	96.6% (GREEN)	↓	96.7%	↓	96.7%	94.0%
% of pupils attending a Good or Outstanding provider	Higher is better	+/-4%	97.0%	97.4% (GREEN)	→	97.4%	→	97.4%	94.2%
Permanent exclusion rate* (annual)	Lower is better	Not set	Not set	0.0% (2020/21 AY)	→	0.0% (2020/21 AY)	→	0.0% (2019/20 AY)	0.00% (2019/20 AY)
Fixed term exclusion rate* (annual)	Lower is better	Not set	Not set	0.5% (2020/21 AY)	→	0.5% (2020/21 AY)	↑	0.61% (2019/20 AY)	0.56% (2019/20 AY)
One or more fixed term exclusion rate* (annual)	Lower is better	Not set	Not set	0.27% (2020/21 AY)	→	0.27% (2020/21 AY)	↑	0.30% (2019/20 AY)	0.33% (2019/20 AY)

\*2020/21 Academic Year figures are provisional and based on local data. Published data for this period will be available in Summer 2022.

## Quarter 2 Performance – Secondary Education

Indicator and Description	Value	Tolerance	2021/22 Annual Target	2021/22 Q2 Performance	Short Term DOT against Q1 2021/22		Long Term DOT against Q2 2020/21		Latest London Average
% of providers judged to be Good or Outstanding by OFSTED	Higher is better	+/-6%	77.0%	77.8% (GREEN)	→	77.8%	→	77.8%	88.7%
% of pupils attending a Good or Outstanding provider	Higher is better	+/-6%	85.0%	85.4% (GREEN)	→	85.4%	→	85.4%	91.5%
Permanent exclusion rate* (annual)	Lower is better	Not set	Not set	0.00% (2020/21 AY)	→	0.00% (2020/21 AY)	↑	0.25% (2019/20 AY)	0.09% (2019/20 AY)
Fixed term exclusion rate* (annual)	Lower is better	Not set	Not set	2.89% (2020/21 AY)	→	2.89% (2020/21 AY)	↑	3.64% (2019/20 AY)	5.28% (2019/20 AY)
One or more fixed term exclusion rate* (annual)	Lower is better	Not set	Not set	1.41% (2020/21 AY)	→	1.41% (2020/21 AY)	↑	2.38% (2019/20 AY)	3.45% (2019/20 AY)

\*2020/21 Academic Year figures are provisional and based on local data. Published data for this period will be available in Summer 2022.

## Quarter 2 Performance – Children’s Services

Indicator and Description	Value	Tolerance	2021/22 Annual Target	2021/22 Q2 Performance	Short Term DOT against Q1 2021/22		Long Term DOT against Q2 2020/21		Latest London Average
% of Children in Care aged under 16 who have been looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years and living in the same placement for at least 2 years*	Higher is better	+/-10%	65%	65.2% (GREEN)	↑	60%	↑	56.6%	67% (2021/22, Q1)
% of Children in Care who ceased to be looked after as a result of permanency (Adoption and Special Guardianship Order)	Higher is better	+/-10%	14%	10.2% (RED)	↓	11.5%	↑	7.9%	15% (2019/20)
% of Children in Care with 2+ changes of social worker in the last 12 months	Lower is better	+/-5%	15%	22.4% (RED)	↓	10.9%	↓	11.7%	N/A

\*Also includes children who are placed for adoption and whose adoptive placement together with their previous placement last for at least 2 years

## Highlights

The Academic Year 2019/20 saw 9 inspections in Havering schools between September 2019 and March 2020, before the first COVID-19 lockdown halted the schools inspection framework. All seven primary schools that were inspected retained their 'Good' outcomes and the two secondary academies inspected improved from 'Requires improvement' to 'Good'. This resulted in Havering's overall **percentage of providers judged to be Good or Outstanding by OFSTED** increasing by 2 percentage points, which is 5.2 percentage points above the national figure. Since then, Ofsted has only undertaken monitoring visits, resulting in percentages remaining unchanged. Please note, the percentage of Primary phase providers judged to be Good or Outstanding by OFSTED has reduced by 0.1 percentage point when compared with last quarter, due to the merging of one Infant and one Junior school into a Primary. The **percentage of pupils attending a Good or Outstanding provider** remains above target for both phases, and for Primary is better than the London average.

The **rates of both fixed term and permanent exclusions** in Havering have remained well below the rates for England as a whole and better than London - both for primary and secondary phases - based on the latest available published data. There were four permanent exclusions from secondary schools in the academic year 2019/2020; however, due to the Inclusions Service working very closely with Havering head teachers, and following a new roll out of the Inclusions policy, there were no permanent exclusions in Havering's primary or secondary schools in the academic year 2020/2021.

Although there have been significant challenges with head teachers wishing to permanently exclude in the first term of the new academic year, as reported previously, the Inclusions policy has been designed with extra measures put in place to support schools to find alternatives to fixed term and permanent exclusions. This has resulted in 90% of submissions for permanent exclusions being subsequently withdrawn by schools at the time of writing.



## Highlights (contd.)

The **percentage of looked after children aged under 16 who have been looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years and living in the same placement for at least 2 years** has improved in the second quarter of the year to 65.2%, which is in line with the average for Outer London and just below the overall London average, based on the latest available data.

Havering has, however, a higher proportion of children in care experiencing 3 or more placements within a 12 month period, and the previously identified rise in placement moves has continued in the second quarter. We do know that there is a cohort of older children who are presenting with complex mental health/emotional needs, which is challenging placement stability. To fully understand the reasons for the high number of placement moves, deep dives into the casework have been conducted by an active working group including the Assistant Director, using a constructed audit tool to identify causation, themes and areas for improvement. Following this, steps are being taken to address issues of matching and support for placement stability, including sufficiency and process. A new Placement Referral Form will be going live in December 2021. Other mechanisms that have been outlined previously also remain in place, namely fortnightly placement stability meetings and a weekly 'high concern' meeting where the most complex cases are discussed. Improving placement stability and sufficiency will remain a top priority for the service this year.

## Improvements Required

The **percentage of looked after children who ceased to be looked after as a result of permanency (Adoption and Special Guardianship Order)** is below target at the end of the second quarter, with 3 Adoption Orders and 2 Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) granted in April to September. National figures for children ceasing to be looked after as a result of adoption peaked in 2015 with a total figure of 5,360 children. Since then, numbers have reduced considerably year on year as a result of two court rulings in 2013, which emphasised the need to ensure all family options are explored before adoption is considered. The latest national figures available are for 2020, when 3,440 children of a total children in care population of 80,080 (4.3%) ceased care for adoption. Havering set a higher target of 6% of children in care leaving care for adoption, and this is currently being achieved. Numbers in care and numbers ceasing care for adoption remain low however, and this figure will be subject to a high degree of volatility as a result.

While nationally there has been a fall in the number of children leaving care through adoption, there has been a rise in children leaving care through Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs). In 2015, the number of children leaving care due to SGOs was 3,550 and with the exception of 2017-18, there have been steady year on year increases since. Havering is currently supporting 155 children post-Special Guardianship Order and there have been 2 Special Guardianship Orders granted in the first six months of this financial year. Due to court delays during the period of lockdown, some care proceedings have been extended and not concluded in the timeframe expected or hoped for children. However as court cases are now progressing, we anticipate an increase in this number. SGO is usually the favoured outcome within care proceedings as these enable children to remain with family and access support as and when required. Annual financial reviews are undertaken of all SGO arrangements in conjunction with a light touch review of the plan. There have been no SGO disruptions this financial year.

## Improvements Required (contd.)

As reported at the last meeting, we saw a significant turnover of staff over the summer period and this has impacted on the **percentage of Children in Care with 2+ changes of social worker in the last 12 months**. We currently have 36 agency staff covering posts, and 2 vacant posts. Adverts are being placed in December for some of the social work posts covered by agency workers, which may further impact on social worker changes as we recruit to a more permanent and stable workforce.

# Any questions?





## CHILDREN AND LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

23 November 2021

<b>Subject Heading:</b>	Adopt London East Annual Report
<b>SLT Lead:</b>	Robert South
<b>Report Author and contact details</b>	Sue May; Head of Service Adopt London East. <a href="mailto:Sue.may@havering.gov.uk">Sue.may@havering.gov.uk</a>
<b>Policy context:</b>	<b>This report provides the Annual Report of Havering hosted Adopt London East</b>
<b>Financial summary:</b>	The service is financially self-sufficient and funded through joint arrangements with each partner Local Authority. There are no direct financial implications for consideration within this report.

**The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives**

Communities making	
Havering	[x]
Places making Havering	[]
Opportunities making	
Havering	[x]
Connections making	
Havering	[x]

## SUMMARY

Adopt London East was formed in response to a 2015 government directive to all Local Authorities to streamline adoption services through the development of regional arrangements by 2020. Adopt London East is a regional adoption agency, hosted by Havering; providing adoption services for Havering, Tower Hamlets, Newham and Barking and Dagenham. The agency works in close collaboration with Adopt London North, South and West. Together these agencies provide services for 24 London Local Authorities. The majority of the remaining London Authorities joined a regional agency hosted by Coram BAAF

This report fulfils the statutory requirements to report to the executive body on an annual basis. It provides information on Adopt London East business, performance, successes and challenges in 2020/2

Adopt London East has been successful in increasing overall numbers of children placed for adoption and in improving timeliness of placement. This success has been in sharp contrast to a decline in overall numbers nationally. The number of matches per Local Authority in Adopt London East was significantly higher than matches in all other London RAAs.

Adopter recruitment suffered a small downturn following the transition period. Covid restrictions added further challenge to recruitment and assessment work. We have worked hard to address challenges and the numbers of adopters approved and in assessment has grown steadily since

The number of families supported by Adopt London East has grown markedly. Adopters express a high level of satisfaction with the service. Partnerships with other organisations including 'We are Family' an adopter peer led organisation has helped us to deliver on-line support creatively.

Havering led on the Adopt London response to Covid. Supported by a substantial grant we engaged with 13 different providers who offered support to adoptive families and families with a Special Guardianship Order. Support included a help-line, therapeutic interventions, training and group work. An independent evaluation of the service rated it as outstanding. The recent government paper comments positively on our work in partnership.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Committee members are asked to receive and endorse the report

## REPORT DETAIL

### Background Information

All adoption agencies are required to provide an annual report to their governing bodies. Regional Adoption Agencies (RAA's) must provide a report to their partnership board and to elected members in all partnership Local Authorities. The report is the second Annual Report of Adopt London East and provides information on service development and performance in 2020/21. Appendix 1 attached to the report provides information on adoption performance in Havering throughout 2020/21 based on the Adoption and Special Guardian Leadership Board (ASGLB) data returns.

## IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

### Financial implications and risks:

The initial service budget was approved by Havering Cabinet on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2019. The full budget and individual partner contributions were subsequently approved by all partner cabinets.

The partnership agreement signed by all Local Authorities includes the mechanism for annual and in-year review of the budget.

Overview of the budget is undertaken on a quarterly basis through the partnership board.

There are currently no identified risks in respect of this budget

### Legal implications and risks:

All legal implications and risks have been subject to scrutiny by legal and governance leads in each Local Authority. Expert advice has been taken where necessary.

The partnership agreement includes

- Budget setting and monitoring
- Staffing
- Data sharing and GDPR
- Contracting and commissioning
- Dispute resolution
- Renewal and termination of the agreement
- Insurance and limitations to liability

- Governance

The detailed partnership agreement was signed by each Local Authority DCS prior to service go-live under powers delegated following Cabinet approval for the Adopt London East Business case.

**Human Resources implications and risks:**

A full consultation exercise was undertaken under TUPE regulations between May 2019 and July 2019. All adoption staff eligible to transfer under TUPE regulations successfully transferred on 1<sup>st</sup> October.

Informal consultations with staff have continued and all minor teething problems (for example ICT issues) have been resolved in cooperation. Periodic meetings are held with TU representatives whenever requested.

No outstanding issues have been identified

**Equalities implications and risks:**

An Equalities and Health impact assessment was undertaken prior to the presentation of the Cabinet report as presented on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2019. This considered all equality dimensions. As Adopt London East has been developed to improve the service offered to our adoptive families and widen opportunities to adopt: the assessment was largely positive. Where any potential issues were identified measures were put in place.

The primary potential issue was in respect of distance from service delivery, which may impact on adoptive families less able to travel through differing ability, childcare or financial issues. This was resolved through an ongoing commitment to local delivery of services.





# **Adopt London East Annual Report April 2020 to March 2021**

## **Background information**

The Department for Education (DfE) paper, Regionalizing Adoption proposed the move to Regional Adoption Agencies [RAA] in order to:

- Speed up matching.
- Improve adopter recruitment and adoption support.
- Reduce costs.
- Improve the life chances of vulnerable children.

All Local Authorities must join a Regional Adoption Agency by April 2020. Feedback from Regional Adoption Agencies in operation for a year or more is positive. Adopters report on improved services and staff on improved job satisfaction. Ofsted reports on Local Authorities with adoption services delivered regionally have been universally positive.

The government continues to drive forward with the structural reform programme regarding regionalising adoption and all but a handful of authorities are either in a live Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) or in an RAA which will go live by October 2020. The government have noted the significant progress in cutting the time children wait to be placed with their adoptive parents and this is a positive outcome for children. However, both the number of registrations of interest and approved adopters nationally, regionally and locally within East London have fallen in recent years. An increase in expressions of interest has been sustained since the service went live last October and we anticipate this will increase the number of adopters approved in 2020/21

The adoption functions of Tower Hamlets, Newham and Barking and Dagenham were delegated on the 1st October 2019 to the London Borough of Havering within terms drawn up in a detailed partnership agreement. Adopt London East (ALE) formally commenced operational activity on this date.

Adopt London East works in close collaboration with the 'Adopt London' adoption agencies who provide services for 23 Local Authorities in total. In this way we are able to develop a London wide profile, develop economies of scale and share best practice.

## **Outcomes**

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

- Increase in the percentage of children adopted from care
- Improved timescales for placing children with adoptive families
- Fewer adoption placement disruptions
- More children placed in an early permanence placement



- Reduction in the number of children for whom the permanence plan has changed from adoption
- Improved timescales for adopter assessments
- Higher conversion rate from enquiry to approval
- Fewer prospective adopter approvals rescinded
- More timely matching of approved adopters

### **Scope of service**

Adopt London East has responsibility for all adoption led services:

- Recruitment and assessment of adopters.
- Family finding and matching
- Adoption support.

Responsibility for the child remains with the Local Authority. The Local Authority will therefore remain responsible for the child's progress through the court system and for final decisions in respect of care and adoption planning.

Adopt London East has a responsibility for support to Local Authority social workers including dissemination of information on regulation and best practice

### **Design Principles**

The Board agreed the following design principles

- Local delivery - Responsive to the needs of the community
- Close relationships with children's social workers
- Economies of scale
- Cross local authority working
- Innovation and service improvement
- Evolving service design – one size may not fit all
- Provide value for money
- Service informed through the voice of adoptive families

### **Adopter Voice**

Adopters in East London contribute to service development through the Adopt London commissioning arrangements with 'We are Family', a London wide peer-led organisation delivering support to adopters.

The voice of our adopted children was captured through a partnership with 'Body and Soul'. We plan to re-commission this service in 2021/22



## **Service development post go-live**

### **Governance**

All service functions and relationships are detailed within the partnership agreement. The agreement includes:

- Governance
- Finances and Budget setting
- Data sharing agreement
- Dispute resolution
- Termination of agreement

The Ale Partnership board has met on 4 occasions in 2020/21.

The partnership board comprises of ADCS or their representatives with delegation of authority. These members have responsibility for all partnership decisions

### **Service delivery**

The central head office is in Havering but staff also have a local base in each Local Authority. In this way we aim to ensure that the existing close working and supportive relationships with children's social work staff and partner agencies remain absolutely central to our practice.

Throughout 2020/21 due to Covid restrictions all staff have primarily worked from home. Adopt London East has followed national and local guidance and as such working practices have adapted to periods of lockdown and easement. The service has continued to provide all services and to undertake face to face work where necessary and safe to do so. Working from home has proven to be highly efficient and where it benefits the service, workers will continue to be able to home work. Plans are in place for a partial return to face to face staff meetings in 2021 following further easement of restrictions.

Adopt London East and the Havering Liquidlogic support team worked jointly on a project to develop Liquidlogic capacity to operate an adoption file system. This work identified that the Havering Liquidlogic LCS system was unable to host easily retrievable and secure adoption files. A solution has been identified and a workspace purchased. Further work is ongoing to develop appropriate pathways and generate forms. Family finding and adoption support case files are currently held on a secure drive. Recruitment and Assessment files are now held on Liquidlogic.

We also have agreements in place that locally based adoption staff will continue to be able to access LA systems. The practicalities of access have proven challenging but work is underway to resolve this

Although services are delivered locally we are also able to work together to develop a more responsive service. This helps us to recruit more adopters to meet our children's identified needs and to provide better support through a core offer delivered by the adoption support workers in partnership with local agencies.

The central ALE panel was developed in phase 2 of go-live. In-house panels have been in operation since by the end of May 2020. Two panel chairs ensure panels are able to meet



every 2 weeks in order to support timeliness. The panel makes recommendations in respect of both adopter approval and child matches. Decisions in respect of child matches continue to be made by the Agency Decision Maker in the LA with responsibility for the child. The ALE HOS acts as ADM for decisions in respect of approval of adopters.

The panel has met virtually since commencement of operation. This has provided some benefits for panel members and adopters alike in terms of ease of attendance. All but one prospective couple responded positively about the virtual experience. Decisions regarding continuation of virtual or direct panels will be made in line with easement of regulations and consideration of the costs and benefits.

## **Staffing**

Adopt London East has permanent managers in all posts and has only one agency worker covering maternity leave. Three posts are vacant. Two have been successfully recruited to and the third will be re-advertised as soon as possible. A further agency or seconded worker will be required to cover maternity leave.

Service demand has been high and three additional posts were created within budget in 2020/21.

- Stage 1 recruitment and assessment coordinator – to ensure a speedy response to all enquirers and efficient transition through the early stages of assessment
- Family finding social worker – to assist in response to an increasing volume of work. We have been unable to recruit to this post to date
- Contact coordinator – to assist in response to increasing demand for this work

All staff have responded positively to the challenge of working from home during Covid restrictions. All staff had previously been issued with portable tablets and headphones to assist in home working. Risk assessments have been used to ensure individual staff needs are met. Social work is a face to face activity and although many meetings were held virtually, where necessary and safe to do so direct visits have continued to take place. Some workers are now partially office based in order to ensure letterbox contact continues. This service was placed on temporary hold during full lockdown. All visits including office visits are subject to individual risk assessment.

We have learned a lot during this period of enforced remote working and will continue to undertake many functions remotely where it is efficient to do so without detriment to the quality of service provided.

Work was undertaken with the senior leadership team, the management team and with all staff to establish the vision and values of Adopt London East. We have worked to maintain this whilst working remotely.

Ongoing development work has continued with all staff regarding the importance of relationships as we build the Adopt London East profile within all Local Authorities, working in a culture of high support and high challenge. Remote visits have taken the place of direct office bases but have worked well



Weekly remote team meetings and fortnightly service meetings have ensured we maintain a clear service focus and provide mutual support. We provide space for informal conversations, mirroring 'coffee break' spaces as far as possible. At times of challenge other means of coming together have been used.

Sadly one valued social worker in the family finding team died in January following a brief battle with Covid. She has been sorely missed by all. Additional support was offered to all staff. The strength of the service was reflected in the ways in which all supported each other and also ensured her work was completed in her memory.

### **Business and Service support**

Adopt London East has three Business Support Officers (BSO's) who provide a dedicated service. The BSO's are line managed within Havering Business support teams.

### ICT and systems development

All staff have use of a Havering supplied laptop and mobile phone. Laptops have Skype and Teams connectivity and mobile headsets.

Social work staff also need access to constituent Local Authority ICT systems in order to access information for the purposes of family finding and adoption support. This has proven to be challenging. Interim arrangements are in place in all LA's and more permanent solutions are in development.

The migration of casework data onto Liquid Logic (LL) was hampered by challenges in system development. Development work was complicated by an incomplete transfer from the development team to the permanent LL support team. Recruitment and Assessment files are completed and uploaded. It was essential to develop a new pathway for family finding and adoption support files. Work on adoption support files has nearly concluded. The family finding work involves a restructure of the Havering pathway and is being managed through a task and finish group chaired by the ALE HOS.

### Service accessibility

Adopters, prospective adopters, birth families and professionals may access the service through the Adopt London website, by email or by telephone. The duty telephone is staffed by Business Support Officers (BSO's) between 9 and 5 each weekday. The BSO's have been trained in telephone response. Each team operates a duty response system and calls forwarded from BSO's are usually answered quickly. A high turn-over and vacancy rate within the BSO service has impacted on our response rates and also on social work staff who answer calls in the absence of the BSO. Work is ongoing to resolve this.

### Adoption Panel

Adoption panels initially remained in Local Authority in order to allow other aspects of the service to bed in prior to go-live of panels. Adopt London East panels became operational on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2020. All panel members also attended webinar training prior to panel. This included an overview of Adopt London East, updates on regulation and best practice and a welcome from the panel chairs.

Two highly experienced panel chairs have been recruited together with a central list of panel members. Panel member expertise includes adoption experienced social workers, adopters,



care leavers and professionals from a range of backgrounds. Two panels operate per month with additional panels where necessary. Panels are currently held virtually. Panel papers are sent securely through egress.

Medical advisors provide advice to panel on their own children either in writing or directly to panel.

Legal advice to panel is provided by the Havering legal team though legal advice in respect of an individual child's care plan remains with the Local Authority.

### **Partnership work**

Adopt London East coordinated a London wide group of virtual school heads, teachers and therapeutic service providers aiming to promote a pan London approach to trauma informed schools. This has encouraged conversations and supported development of professional networks. A Pan London virtual training session with Louise Bomber an expert in the field was attended by over 100 professionals.

It has proven difficult to engage with the CCG's at a strategic level during times of Covid but positive operational service relationships have developed. The panel advisor has positive relationships with all designated Doctors and individual social workers have developed positive working relationships with providers. A more strategic approach will bring dividends and will be followed when capacity allows.

We have commissioned Cornerstone, an adopter led organisation to provide a specialist virtual reality tool to assist in one to one support and training for our adopters.

We have also commissioned PAC-UK to provide a helpline and one to one counselling. This service is also available to birth families. We plan to re-commission the birth family support service as a pan London service in 2021/22

All Inter-country adoption assessments are undertaken by 'Inter Country Adoption'. This commissioned service provides specific expertise and value for money in provision of a highly complex area of adoption work. Some post assessment work remains in-house.

We work closely with We are Family, an adopter led support group providing support to families across London. We are Family have adapted to Covid requirements through development of an online webinar and podcast based service. Adopt London has partially funded these highly successful initiatives. We also work in partnership with New Family Social who support LGBTQ adopters.

Adopt London HOS meet with the Voluntary sector stakeholder group on a quarterly basis. We also purchase bespoke therapeutic provision through use of the Adoption Support Fund. This work is commissioned from a range of registered adoption support providers.

A separate sub group considers the means to promote adopter sufficiency.

### **Covid fund response**

The DfE funded Adoption Support Fund was extended in 2020 to allow regional adoption agencies to provide enhanced support to adoptive families and those caring for children on a Special Guardianship Order. In total Adopt London had £800,000 in funds to provide a flexible and immediate response. Special Guardians are supported by individual Local





Authorities in all but one of the RAAs. We worked closely with our LA partners to ensure we provided comprehensive support for all our families.

We commissioned services from 13 agencies. These included:

- Helpline
- Brief interventions
- Counselling and support
- Practical support for special guardians
- Direct support for adoptive children and teens
- Training and group support

The four Adopt London head of service worked jointly with all Voluntary sector partners to provide an innovative and flexible service whereby adopters accessing the helpline could be referred onto a number of differing interventions on the basis of an immediate assessment of need.

Feedback in respect of these services was extremely positive. An evaluation of this approach was undertaken by Hugh Thornberry, a renowned expert in adoption in the UK. Hugh reflected the positive experience of our adoptive families and also the added value felt by our voluntary sector partners in this permissive approach.

This work was fed into the DfE review of the Adoption Support Fund and was commented on positively. We hope this will inform decisions as to how to allocate funds in the future.

## Performance information 2020/21

### Best Interest/SJOBPA decision



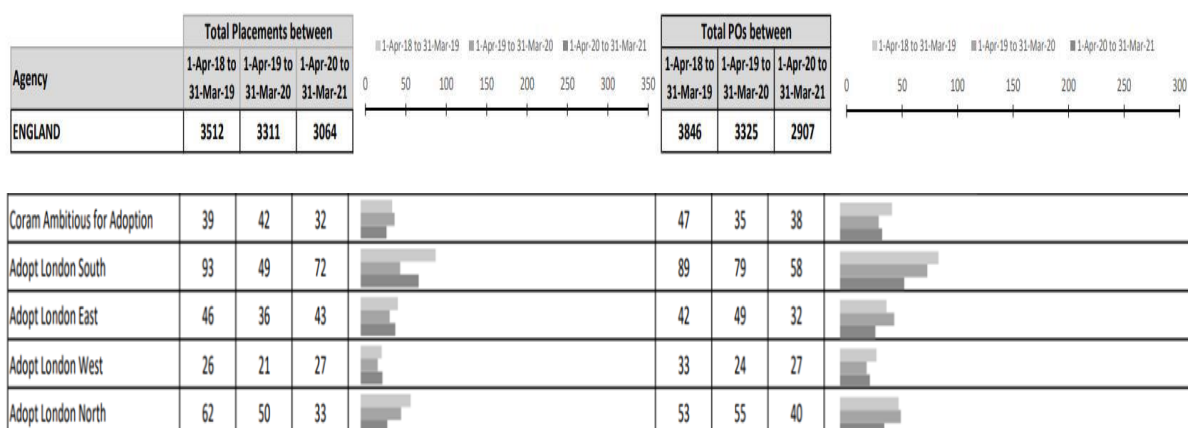
The number of decisions made in each Local Authority by the Agency Decision Maker that a child should be placed for adoption (SJOBPA) have decreased overall over the last three years in all London RAA's. Three of the five (including ALE) saw an increase in 2019/20 and



subsequent decrease. It may be that Covid regulations impacted on the LA's ability to progress cases. The decline in numbers echoes the England figures.

In all cases the number of SHOBPA decisions per 10,000 of the population is lower than the England average (London LA's typically place more children in extended family placements under a Special Guardianship Order). ALE has roughly the same percentage of children placed as all other London RAAs except ALW where the placement rate is considerably lower.

## Placement orders and children placed



Placement orders are granted by the court during care proceedings following review of the ADM decision that the child should be placed for adoption. Care proceedings are complex and not all children with an agency decision will be granted a placement order, however the number of placement orders made roughly mirrors the number of SHOBPA decisions made as would be expected.

The overall number of adoptive placements made in England has decreased over the course of the last 3 years. All Adopt London agencies went live in mid-2019/20 and the number of placements made dipped as a result of the transition. Adopt London East and West have both placed numbers comparable to 2018/19 in 2020/21 all other services have seen a significant reduction.

Overall numbers placed across each RAA vary considerably and are largely dependent on the number of LA's the RAA serves. ALE performance equates to an average of 11 placements per LA. The other RAA's average is considerably lower and ranges from 3.5 to 8 placements per LA

RAA	Number placed	Number of LA's	Average per LA
Coram	32	9	3.5
AL South	72	9	8
AL East	43	4	11
AL West	27	4	7
AL North	33	6	5.5





## Adoption Orders

Agency	Total AOs between			1-Apr-18 to 31-Mar-19	1-Apr-19 to 31-Mar-20	1-Apr-20 to 31-Mar-21
	1-Apr-18 to 31-Mar-19	1-Apr-19 to 31-Mar-20	1-Apr-20 to 31-Mar-21			
ENGLAND	3521	3427	2863			

Coram Ambitious for Adoption	51	33	35	
Adopt London South	80	91	51	
Adopt London East	50	44	42	
Adopt London West	19	30	25	
Adopt London North	76	45	37	

The number of adoption orders granted in each year will follow the number of placements made.

The England numbers have shown a steady decline in reflection of the reduction in placements made. The decline steepened in 2020/21 at least partially due to delays in court following Covid restrictions.

Numbers across London have also declined. The decline in ALE is not as steep as elsewhere following concerted work with the East London Courts.

## Childs journey timescales

Agency	BIA to ADM	# ADMs	ADM to PO	# POs	PO to match	# matches	Match to placement	# placed	Placement to AO	# AOs
Target timescale (days)*	182		91		121		31		274	
ENGLAND	255	3731	117	2907	210	2946	28	3064	299	2863

Coram Ambitious for Adoption	261	56	114	38	161	29	23	32	308	35
Adopt London South	251	72	86	58	228	70	36	72	309	51
Adopt London East	236	38	163	32	215	40	21	43	364	42
Adopt London West	205	25	105	27	192	22	31	27	373	25
Adopt London North	232	56	105	40	256	29	57	33	420	37

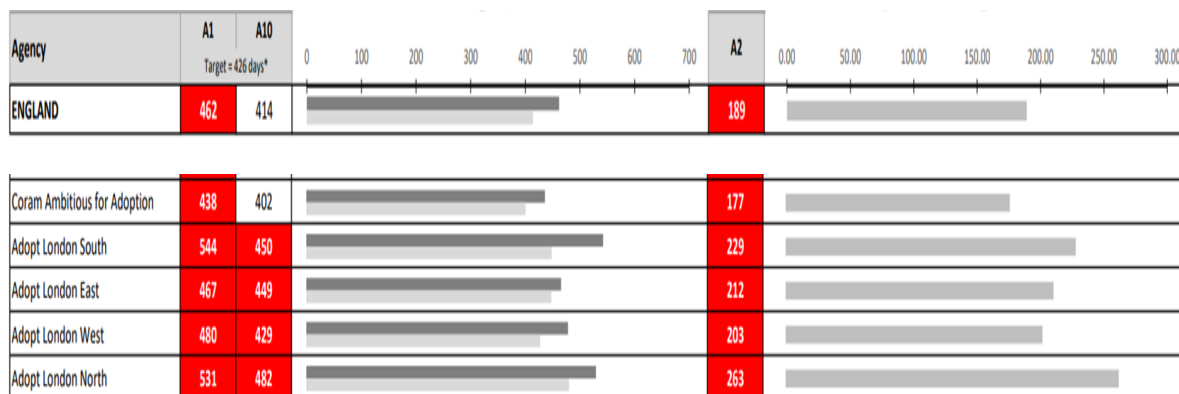
Timescales for each individual child will vary considerably and a lengthy journey to adoption for a single child will impact on overall figures.

As can be seen most government set targets are not met by any RAA.

ALE achieves the set targets in timescales from match to place and performs better than England average and London RAAs in this field. Overall however ALE timescales are higher than England averages. Timescale delays are most marked in the early stages of decision making and in the time taken from placement to adoption order. Timescales here are affected by complexity of adoption cases and in court delays. We are working with LA's and courts to ensure delays are kept to a minimum.



## Adoption Scorecard indicators – Reflecting 3 year average, all figures based on completed adoptions



The three year average figures form part of the Adoption Scorecard. The scorecard provides a means of comparing performance across England. ALE is performing roughly in line with England and London averages. This reflects positively on the service as ALE LA's have a significantly larger percentage of children with complexity in need of placement.

## Characteristics of children waiting at the close of 2020/21



Typically white British children aged under 5 are deemed to be the easiest children to place. Timescales for all harder to place children are usually longer. London has higher rates of harder to place children than England averages. Even within London averages ALE children are most likely to be in the harder to place category. Only 13% of our children are deemed easy to place. All other London areas operate within a range closer to the England average (between 24% and 39%).

Newham and Tower Hamlets have some of the highest incidences of poverty in the UK. All LA's with the exception of Havering have significantly higher number of children from BME backgrounds including 60% of children in Newham and 50% in Tower Hamlets. 60% of all children waiting for a placement in ALE are children in sibling groups. Of these 14% are in a sibling group of 3 or more.



## Analysis of Adopt London East

### Outstanding adopters meet the needs of our children

#### Adopter approvals – historical performance analysis across each Local Authority

LA	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
Newham	3	1	6	4	
Tower Hamlets	5	7	10	4	
Havering	7	9	8	4	
LBBB	3	3	12	6	
<b>Total</b>	18	20	36	18	19

The numbers of adopters approved varies considerably across all LA's. Numbers approved in 2019/20 declined to 2016/17 levels as is consistent with all RAAs in their year of go-live. The general pattern of adopter approval prior to this decline was an increasing pattern from 18 in 16/17 to 36 in 18/19

Please note that as all adopters approved in 20/21 were approved in ALE there is no breakdown by LA

ALE service modelling was based on a commitment to improving on 17/18 figures of 20 approvals per year.

In 2020/21 ALE achieved the results below

- Number adopters approved last year in total = 19
- Number of adopters matched last year in total = 14

Stage	Number	Comment
Enquiries	8	Initial Enquiries Completed April 21
Stage 1	42	Stage 1 Assessments
Stage 2	37	Stage 2 assessments
Approved in ALE and waiting for placements	9	
Approved pre-ALE and waiting for match	4	All have been subject to review by HOS

#### Other assessments



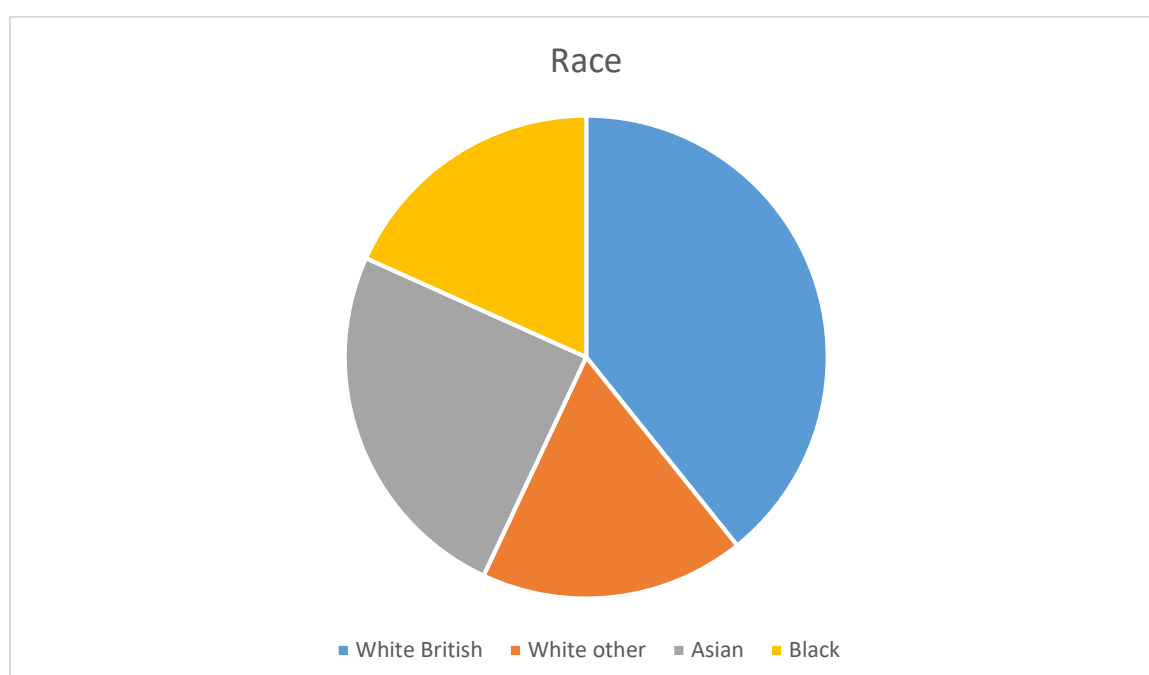
Type	Number	Comment
Step parent (family) adoptions	38	6 were passed from LA's
Inter-country	15	5 in court 1 CP concerns 3 complex cases – all related to children being brought into the country without following regulation

### Characteristics of prospective adopters

We work hard to engage with our local communities, especially our black communities as black children often wait the longest for placement

Factors such as lower average pay and poorer housing opportunities can impact on adopter availability from our black communities. Covid has also disproportionately affected our less financially secure communities; prospective adopters from these communities are more likely to have lost employment or decreased hours/income. We continue to work creatively to extend opportunities wherever necessary.

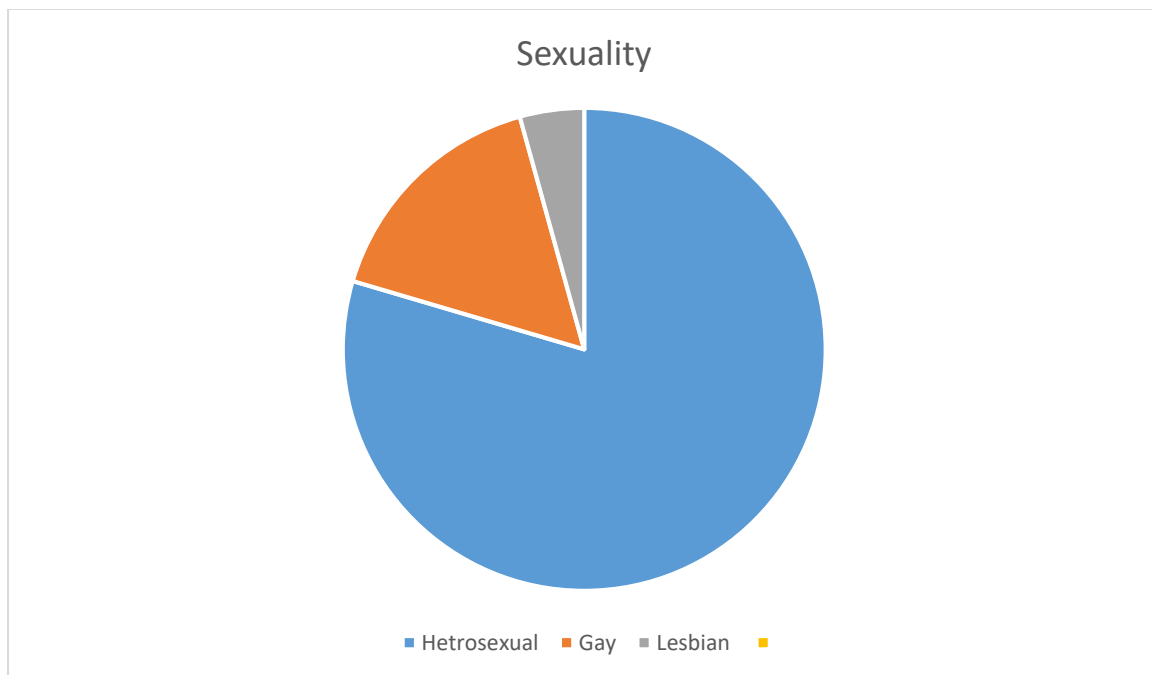
### Characteristics of all prospective adopters





Although White British adopters continue to be the largest single group, a wider span of adopter applications has resulted in greater diversity. Last year 69% of prospective adopters were White British: this has decreased to 39% in one year. The percentage identifying as Black has increased from 7% to 39% in the same timescale. This also only captures individual characteristics of each applicant. Many applications are from couples with diversity.

There is an oversupply of adopters from Asian communities nationally as Asian children are often cared for within family and community networks. We work with prospective Asian adopters to ensure they are able to accept a diverse range of children.



Heterosexual adopters remain the majority but increasing numbers of gay and lesbian people apply. The number of Gay men applying has increased from 9% to 15% and lesbian applicants have increased from 6% to 8%. We continue to ensure we have a presence in pride events and work with the specialist support group New Family Social to raise awareness of our offer.

## Summary

Adopter approvals have taken longer to turn the curve than placements made. The reasons for this are varied

- The lead in time for adopter approval is lengthy and the amount of other work especially in private adoptions and complex inter-country work which sits outside the IAC contract has increased.
- Initial uncertainties following Covid restrictions resulted in a decrease in adopter applications
- Covid restrictions had a disproportionate impact on adopter approval timescales due to lengthy delays in medical assessments and in checks from overseas. This had a greater impact in ALE as we actively promote applications from our incoming communities



ALE achieved 19 adoptions in 2020/21. This still placed ALE as one of the higher achieving RAA's in 2020/21.

Campaigns have been successful and the new National 'you can adopt' campaign which launched on 16<sup>th</sup> September has brought more interest.

We continue to face a number of challenges in improving our adopter approval rate but are progressing with a clear action plan as detailed below

Challenge	Description	Action
Staffing	High vacancy rate 3 agency workers failed to meet standards One successful applicant not progressed due to poor reference Capability issues	Continued attempts to recruit both to permanent and interim positions One permanent staff member recruited – commenced in November Further staff member recruited – to commence in July 2021
Early stage processes	Inefficient early stage processes Back log of enquiries	Review of processes Initial enquiry coordinator post created Worker in place since early December New processes and close monitoring Improvements across the board
Enquirer suitability	Enquirers unsuitable to adopt Adopter offer gap See below for National availability	Improved website information Information evenings and meet the adopter evenings Counsel out at initial enquiry or initial visit Development of a self-select adopter readiness tool using the website (in progress)
Service capacity	Insufficient staffing to allocate all assessments	Development of ISW role Recruitment of flexible workforce of ISW's
Covid related issues	Medicals  International certificate of good conduct – police do not take fingerprints  Health and safety visits – adopter approval to visit  Inability to undertake direct training  Virtual Panel cannot hear all cases	GP's undertaking virtual medicals  Use of specialist agency – adopter funded  A challenge in a small number of cases  Development and delivery of virtual preparation and training sessions  Use of Covid regulations for straight to ADM approval. Now ceased



Private adoptions	38 families awaiting assessment (highest in London)  4 allocated	Urgent allocations to be made  Letter to all others to state will not be allocating until at least April 2022 – information about other options
Inter-country adoptions	15 cases – some highly complex Court delays	ICA contract – for assessments Continue to undertake supervision and Annex A Some further work contracted out

### Timely matching of children with outstanding adopters

### Placements made – Historical performance analysis across each Local Authority

LA	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
Newham	10	27	5	10	14
Tower Hamlets	8	19	10	7	14
Havering	8	7	11	4	4
LBBB	15	13	21	8	13
<b>Total</b>	41	66	47	29	44

### Placement orders

LA	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
Newham	24	18	11	12	8
Tower Hamlets	21	9	12	11	11
Havering	7	15	2	2	7
LBBB	13	21	16	13	6
<b>Total</b>	65	63	41	38	32

The numbers of placement orders and placements made varies considerably from year to year and across each Local Authority. A down turn was noted in 2019/20 as is consistent with all RAA's in the year of go-live.

Most LA's saw an increased number of placements made in 20/21 with the exception of Havering where relatively few placement orders had been made. 7 placement orders were made in Havering in 202/21 and an upturn in placements made is expected in 21/22.





The number of placement orders made reduced considerably in 2 LA's, increased in 1 and remained consistent in one. The national background rate is of a reduction in placement orders.

### Family Finding workload breakdown on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021

The chart below details a snapshot of the workload of the family finding team at the end of the 20/21 financial year.

	Placed for Adoption	Matched not yet placed	Linked not yet matched	Family finding post PO	Post ADM no PO	Early Monitoring	Total Children in tracking	Children in EP prior to formal matching
Newham	14	2	3	3	3	8	14	2
Havering	4	2		3	7	2	9	
Tower Hamlets	14		3	9	19	12	25	
LBBB	13	1	3	8	7	4	18	
total	45	5	9	21	36	26	66	2

Newham, Tower Hamlets and LBBB continue to have a remarkable degree of consistency in terms of placements made. Havering has traditionally had a lower level of demand and only 4 placements were made in 2020/21. A further 14 are either linked or matched and awaiting placement. Numbers in this cohort are fairly consistent across all Local Authorities. Numbers in Tower Hamlets in pre PO stages remain comparatively high and this requires further exploration.

### Placement statistics

44 matches were made in 2020/21 with an additional three children placed in early permanence placements but not yet matched. A total of 10 children were placed through early permanence. This is the highest performance per number of Local Authorities in London by a considerable margin.

Each Local Authority has a lead worker but workers are also paired to ensure cover for each Local Authority at all times and to allow a more flexible response in times of higher demand. Tower Hamlets and Newham are paired as are LBBB and Havering.

All workers attend placement planning and tracking meetings, offer support and guidance to children's social work staff and give additional support to complete paperwork and drive progress where necessary

One Advanced practitioner takes lead responsibility for relinquished children and early permanence.

It was agreed in the Board meeting in November 2020 that a further temporary position could be created. A further vacancy was created through the sad death of a worker; Anne Fitzgerald in January. A further temporary vacancy was created due to a worker going on early maternity leave. Two workers are currently providing cover for a team of five. The service has continued to provide



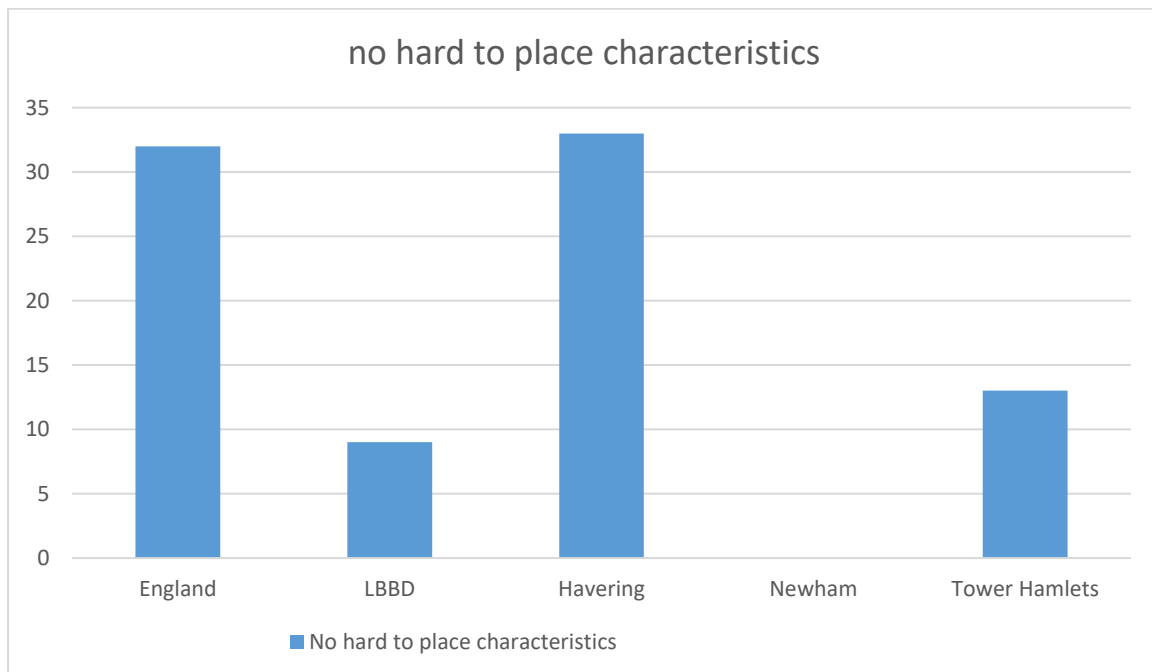


support for all children requiring a match but has temporarily ceased direct attendance at legal and permanency planning meetings.

The service has advertised permanent and temporary posts and has found it difficult to recruit to these posts. We have successfully recruited to one post and are offering a secondment opportunity for the temporary post. A further advert has gone out.

## Children in active family finding

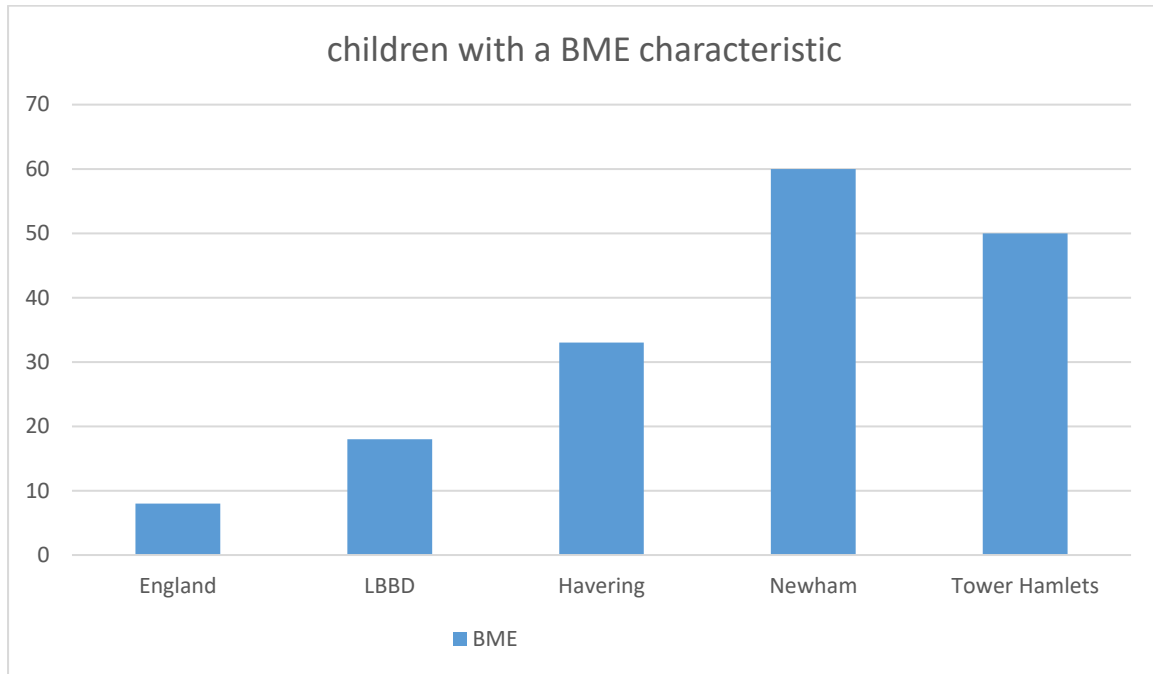
**Percentage of children in active family finding at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 who were categorised as having no hard to place characteristics**



On average in England 32% of children have no hard to place characteristics. These children are usually placed more quickly than children deemed harder to place. Only Havering equals this percentage. All other Local Authorities have much lower numbers of children ranging from 13% in Tower Hamlets to no children in Newham



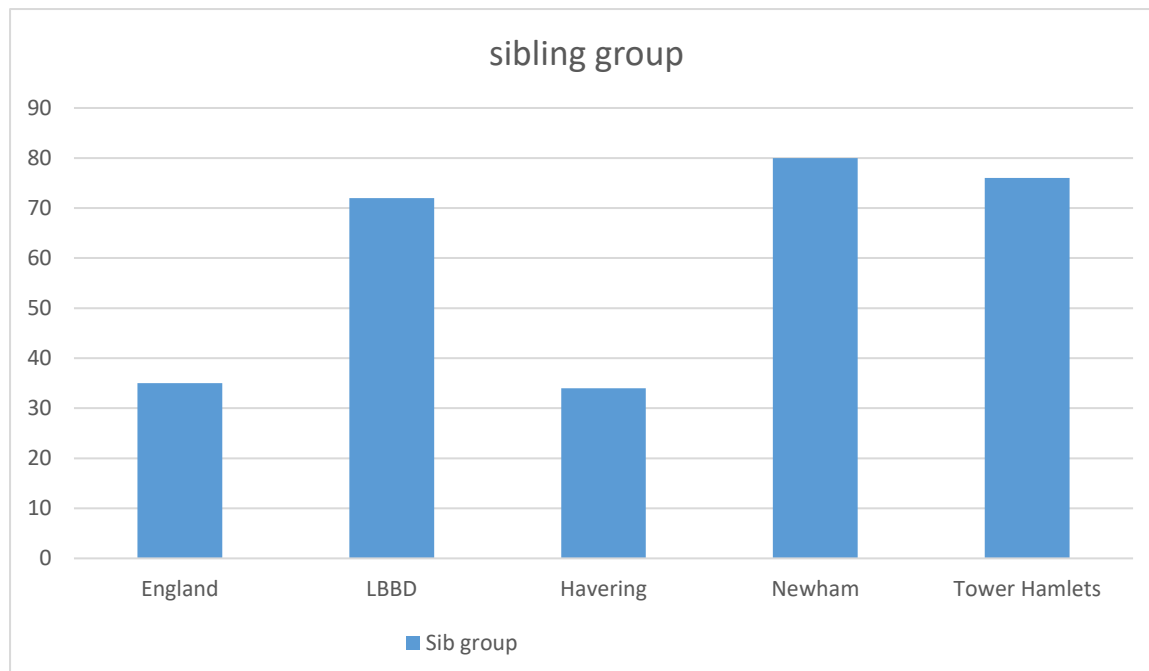
**Percentage of children in active family finding on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 from a BME background**



Children from a BME family are often harder to place. Adopt London works with all BME communities to promote adoption and a number of successful campaigns have increased the number of applications considerably. The England average of 8% of children waiting is much lower than averages from all ALE Local Authorities. In Newham 60% of all children waiting are from a BME heritage.



### Percentage of children waiting at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 who are part of a sibling group



The number of children waiting to be placed in a sibling group in Havering reflects the England average. In all other Local Authorities up to 70% of children waiting are in a sibling group.

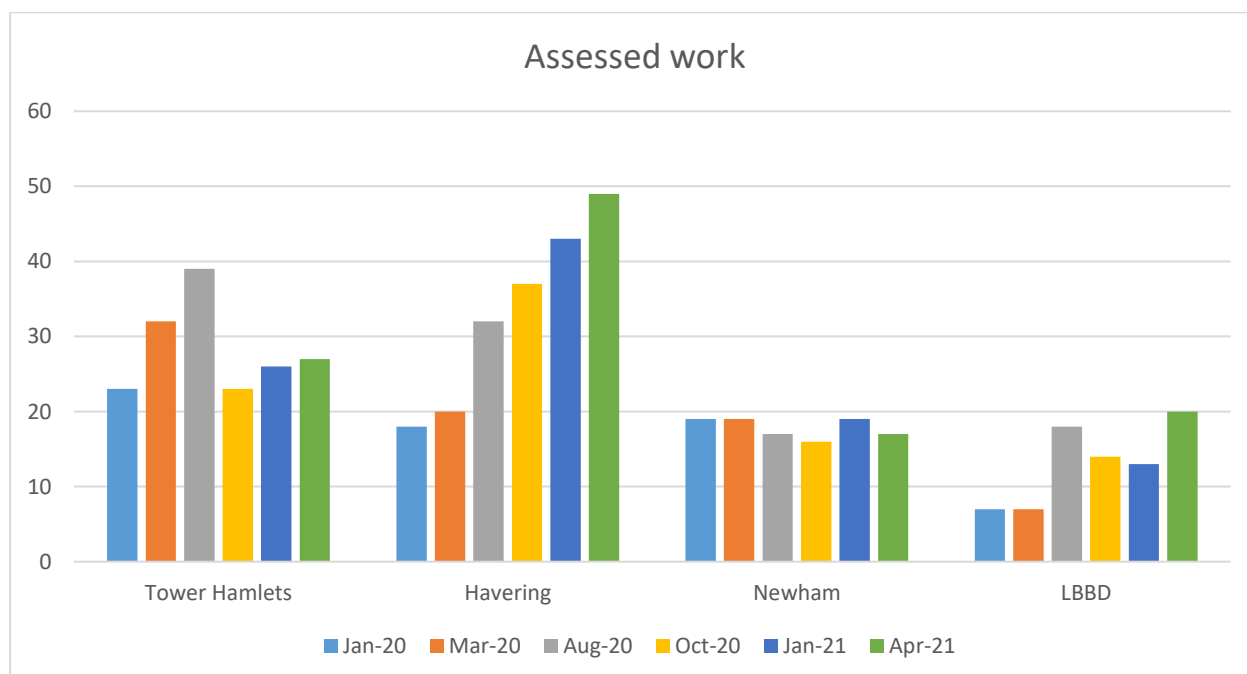
### Service Plan

Development area	Action	Comment	Progress
Staffing	Full staffing. Back fill for maternity leave  Staffing insufficient to meet demand	Increase in core staffing from 4 to 5 workers achieved in budget  Difficulty in recruitment	3 permanent staff 1 post temporarily covered for maternity leave 1 post remains vacant
LA relationships	Locally based staff  Agree strategic and operational leads in all LA's  Develop positive working relationships	Covid restrictions resulted in WFH for most staff  Relationship building through online platforms	Development of pairing system to allow for named worker support with flexible response



Access to LA records	Identify solutions to access LA records on read only basis to ensure information flow is seamless	This has proven difficult Further work ongoing	Access in place in 2 LA's and partial access in one other
Protocols	Protocols developed and shared with LA services	High staff turnover – to review and re-issue	Further protocols to be developed Operational sub group of the Board to be developed
Relinquished babies And Early permanence	AP to take lead role in development and delivery		Lead role progressing EP increasing to 10%
Tracker	Develop effective tracker  ASGLB compliant	System glitches	Completed – to further review

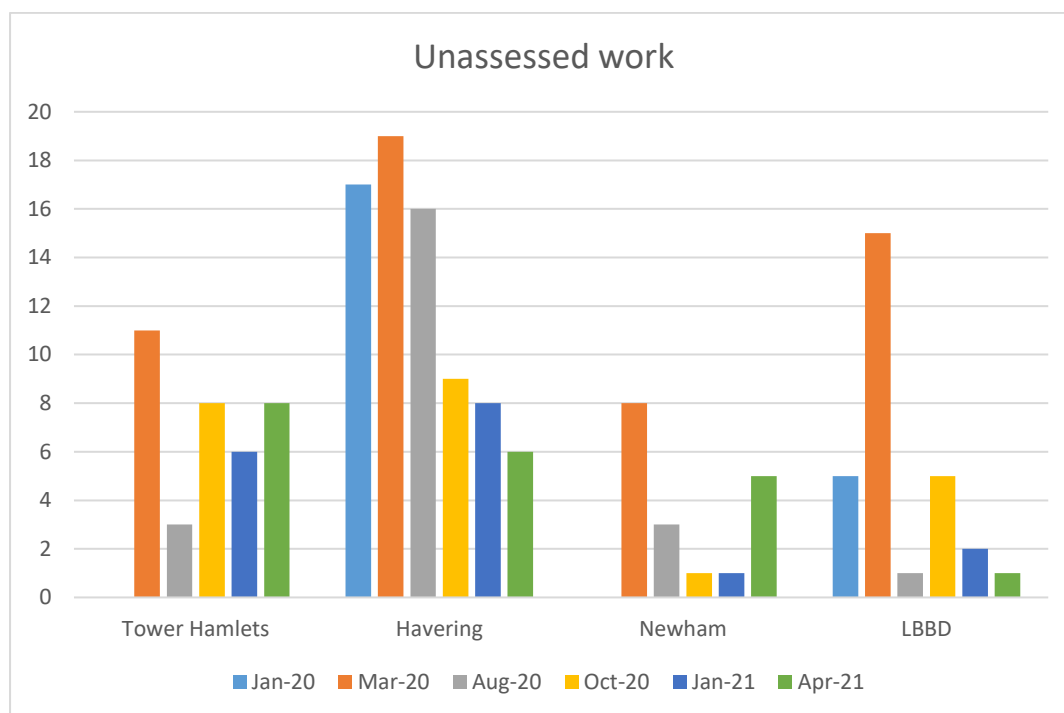
### Adoptive families are supported to achieve happiness and the best outcomes



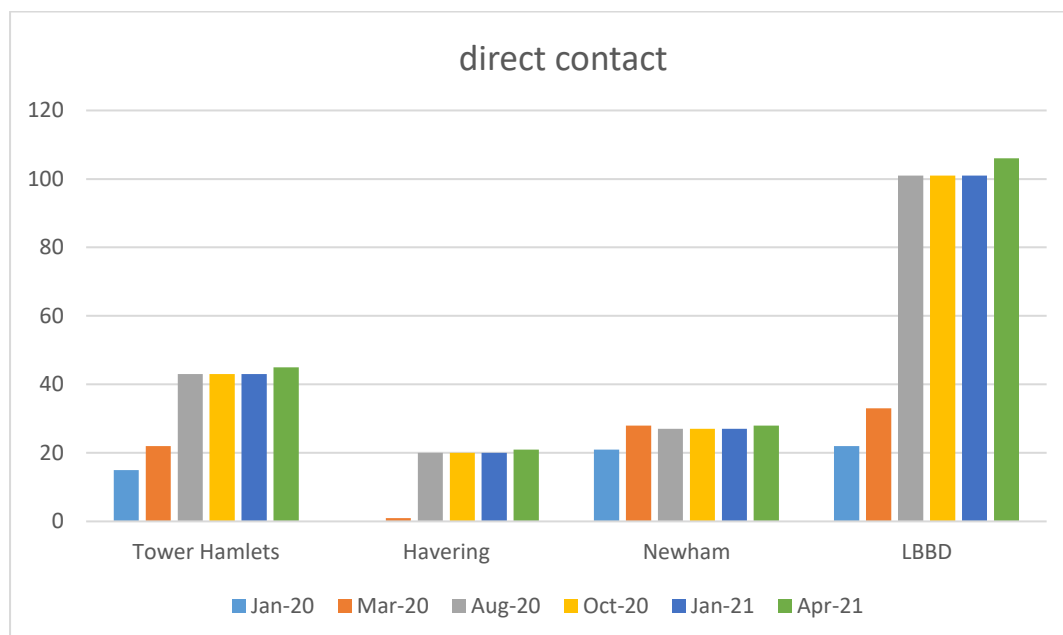
With the exception of Havering, assessed adoption support work has begun to stabilise although overall assessed work continues to increase. There are a larger number of adoptive families living in Havering and entitled to a service. Many were not recruited in



Havering and therefore were previously unaware of their entitlement. As can be seen below this increase in demand in Havering initially resulted in an increase in unassessed work being held prior to assessment. This has now been addressed



A low number of cases will continue to be held as unassessed work. 5 cases are awaiting adoption support (down from 9 cases in January); 15 adopted adults are also receiving support. A further cohort of adopters receive one off advice and support through the duty system and are not included in these figures. Other adopters may access our universal services provided through PAC-UK, 'We are Family', Adopter Hub and National Association of Therapeutic Parents.



As can be seen supported direct contact has stabilised. We are now confident that we have identified all families in need of support. Some direct contact was supported during the summer months but almost all supported direct work has been undertaken virtually this year. Direct work plans have resumed in line with government guidance.

LBBD traditionally supported all direct contact. Direct supported contact will be subject to continuous review with the aim of preparing families to meet safely without support wherever possible.

### Overview

Although numbers of adopters being offered a service has stabilised, demand for adoption support continues to rise. We continue to support adopters to access other support services such as those provided by We are Family and the Adopter Hub in order to ring-fence support services for those families most in need. Our duty service provides an immediate source of support for our adoptive families prior to allocation and following completion of allocated work.

Most families receiving direct support from ALE have high levels of need. ALE social workers work in partnership with workers from a range of organisations to support children on the edge of care and in need of safeguarding. In many cases ALE social workers take a lead role in provision of direct support. Levels of need have increased through

- the impact of Covid,
- post Lockdown reintegration into education
- community issues (including county lines)
- impact on mental health



## Service plan

Development area	Action	Comment	Progress
Staffing	Temporary cover for maternity leave	Workload high and resources must be restricted	Fully staffed
ASF	<p>Ensure compliance with new ASF requirements</p> <p>All providers to be subject to compliance checks</p> <p>Annual returns to be signed off by lead finance officer</p> <p>Historical issues to be addressed in LA</p>	Some challenge with historical returns	<p>All new contracts issued only after compliance</p> <p>Annual return ready to complete</p>
Adopter led support	<p>Liaise with existing peer support networks</p> <p>Work with WAF Pan London</p>	<p>Formal consultation with adopters through WAF</p> <p>Links and relationships in Local area made and maintained</p>	WAF offer well established
Develop immediate access service	Duty system to be developed	Managed by TM with close oversight	System developed and operating well High levels of customer satisfaction
Develop core offer	<p>80% direct work to be assessed</p> <p>Improve early offer to all adopters</p>	<p>Develop structure for planned interventions</p> <p>Some commissioned services offer direct access</p> <p>Improved working with peer support networks</p>	Some delay in assessments due to staffing challenges
Develop core adopted adult/birth family offer	<p>Develop protocol for clarity of role</p> <p>Develop effective commissioned offer</p>	This aspect of work has been delayed due to pressure on the adoption support offer	Commissioning of pan London birth family service being led by ALS



		Birth family support undertaken wherever possible	
Improve partnership offer	Develop effective working relationships with key partners  Undertake joint delivery/programmes where appropriate	Challenge with health services due to differing CCG's	Training for Virtual schools and LAC designated teachers Pan London  Local operational networks developing
Review commissioned services	Review and develop effective commissioning strategy	Pan London approach wherever possible commencing with Adopted adult and birth family services	Delay in Adopted adult services – Pan London Southwark commissioning service lead

### Adopter consultation

Adopt London services work closely with We are Family an adopter led peer support organization.

All adopters and prospective adopters are invited to enroll with We are Family (WAF) at the point they enter stage 2 assessment. Take up of the service is high. During Covid restrictions WAF re-modelled their service to a more centralized webinar and podcast based model with presentations from a number of expert speakers. This work was funded by Covid funds, charitable funding streams and Adopt London.

WAF conducted consultation with their members on their needs during Covid lockdown. This informed our spending priorities. Further consultation is now built into our annual cycle.

Adopt London also sent out adopter consultation questionnaires to all adopters on approval and to all adopters on our newsletter list regarding our support to them.

We have had some teething problems with staffing in the adopter recruitment team and as a result although most comments were positive we also recognized we needed to ensure consistency of approach

Overall comments were positive and included the following

- Overall, we found the experience straightforward. Built a very good rapport with our social worker. Had no issues speaking to anyone. No issues with Zoom meetings or skype. We were well informed about all stages of the Assessment and what was expected. The information days were informative. Our experience of the process has been positive overall





- We felt that our assessment was very thorough + professional and that xx had really prepared for each session.
- xx was able to explore our backgrounds and difficult topics whilst making us feel at ease and confident in our application. Whenever xx left, we always felt positive and looking forward to our next session with her.

Comments suggesting improvements included the following

'After this prep course I think you should help people set up a what's app group so people can keep in contact after prep course. We did this on my recommendation after the previous prep course & we still communicate nearly a year later.'

- Since Covid restrictions Preparation groups operate online and include as homework small group discussions with the participants on subjects delivered in podcast form. WhatsApp groups facilitate this process and are now an integral part of the offer

'I would suggest that after the prep course that for stage 2 you work out all the prior dates and times in advance between SW and potential adoptee'.

- It is a service expectation that work is structured in this way. We have ensured all social workers whether employed or Independent assessing social workers understand this expectation

'I think you should very seriously consider & put in place a buddying up process. So all potential adopters would buddy up with a person who has already adopted through you so all the basic questions they have could be answered. '

- We work in partnership with We are Family who now offer a range of forums for adopter to adopter communication and support

'Very long. Communication with the social worker was chaotic, what made us very anxious and insecure with the whole progress . Assessment with (team manager) was great, excellent communication and guidance for the preparation for the Panel day.'

- These individual issues have been addressed

We received only 7 responses to the questionnaire in respect of adoption support. All seven were highly positive. Comments included

- In the short time that we've known xx, she quickly had a clear understanding of what our Son is like, which is such a relief.
- She is incredibly efficient in getting her work done.
- xx has helped us in contacting the school which has helped move them along in their complacency.
- Xx (manager) who was the first person to contact us was very supportive.



- xx was available when we needed her, reminded us of what needed doing and in what order and responded to us, quickly going to find information and get back to us with it much faster than we expected.

One adoptive couple whilst praising the service also made some suggestions for improvement as below

'One thing that would be positive for future adopters is to have a rough guide of the approximate foreseeable costs of adoption right from the outset to the final costs of ordering certificates. Though we knew that some of them would be coming, we were still surprised by some of the costs. It would be a way to improve the information given to adopters'.

- The offer varies from Local Authority to Local Authority. We plan to work on clarifying the offer in partnership

'We would have loved to have had more opportunities to talk to current adopters during training days as, when this did happen, there was a really nice balance of being able to have trainers/social worker's professional responses to questions alongside an adopters' more personal take on it. It also gives prospective adopters an opportunity to ask questions in a way they might not when talking to adopters in a social setting.'

- This couple undertook training commissioned from Barnardos in the previous LA model of practice. Training has since been delivered by ALE. We have delivered training remotely since Covid restrictions commenced. Training sessions include an adopter led session and a session with contributions from a birth mother. Training will continue to be subject to review.

## **Complaints and compliments**

The service has had two complaints in 2020/21. Both complaints were from prospective adoptive parents. One complaint was in respect of a decision not to proceed following receipt of statutory checks. The other was in respect of timescales for approval. Both complaints were resolved in stage 1.

Some lessons were learned as a result of these complaints. We have improved our information giving re time-scales and provide more clear information following a decision not to proceed on other options available.

The service has received numerous informal compliments and has logged numerous compliments from adopters, birth families and professionals.

In addition to the compliments noted in adopter feedback compliments include:

Adopter on direct support: Thank you so much for your time and support today. We really appreciated having you there

Adoption panel members: The panel members wished me to pass on that they felt your presentation of your case at panel today was "excellent".

LA Team Manager: I would like to compliment (worker) for her amazing partnership work and supporting us today with a very complicated COVID-19 situation. (the worker) is



amazing, she is such a hard worker, she is driving things forward and I could not be happier to have such member in our extended partnership team.

LA Social worker: (worker) is always supportive, positive, quick to find solutions and moving things quickly and providing high quality work.

## **Summary of current achievements**

Adopt London East has been operational for 18 months. 12 of these months have been in Covid related lockdown. Despite this much has been achieved:

- The highest rate of children placed in all London RAA's
- Adopter approval in line with or higher than all London RAA's
- A large increase in the percentage of black and LGBT adopters
- A new adopter support offer both locally and pan London
- A Covid support offer independently evaluated as outstanding and praised by the DfE
- Rapid response to Covid including quick development of online training and support
- A productive partnership with We are Family delivering webinars and podcasts as well as direct support
- A clear and positive website showcasing our work

## **Future challenges**

The service is still new and has primarily operated within Covid related restrictions. These restrictions have affected the service, partners and our adoptive families.

### Infrastructure development

Certain aspects of infrastructure development have been delayed and a primary focus in 2021/22 will be in this field. Development areas include:

- A Liquidlogic based software tool for use across the service
- An ASF supplier accreditation tool
- Digital read only access to LA files to ensure easy transfer of information
- Improved financial reporting systems through separation of cost centres
- Pan London commissioning of a birth parent service
- Improvements to the website including a readiness tool for prospective adopters and adopter led access to services
- Consolidation of new ways of working post Covid restrictions

### Adopter approval

Due to the long lead in time and the impact of Covid restrictions: adopter approval has taken longer to turn the curve than other sectors. Approvals have begun to increase and 21/22 will see increased numbers of adopters improved. Development areas include:

- Higher ratio of adopter applications from target groups such as black adopters
- Increase in applications from adopters able to care for more hard to place children
- Increase in the number of adopters willing to consider early permanence
- Improvement in timeliness in all aspects of the approval process



### Family finding

Family finding continued throughout restrictions and the number of children placed increased. Development areas include:

- Production of further tools to assist LA social workers to understand adoption and adoption processes
- Streamlining processes to ensure each LA has the same offer and best practice is shared
- Further embedding the Beth Neil approach to introductions
- Increase in the use of in-house adopters

### Adopter support

Prior to the development of ALE the adoption support offer was underdeveloped. Many adopters were not aware of the offer available. The support offer is now much more readily available and demand for services is high. The offer has been streamlined with an immediate duty offer triaging into a social work allocated offer. Development areas include:

- Improved management of the ASF offer through dedicated administrative support
- Improved management of direct contact through review of contracts and safe transition to adopter led contacts where safe to do so
- Further development of the partnership with We are Family and other local peer led adopter support groups
- Improved adopted adult and birth family support through re-negotiated contracts and focussed support

## **Financial statement**

<b>Category of Expenditure</b>	<b>20-21 Budget</b>	<b>Actual Expenditure 2020/21</b>	<b>Variance 2020/21</b>
Staffing Costs	1,161,566.80	1,161,567	0
Agency Staffing	282,421.03	282,421	0
Other Staff Costs	69,370.12	69,370	0
Travel/Transport	2,805.12	2,805	0
Office Expenses	39,749.13	39,749	0
Premises Related Costs	944.55	945	0
Commissioned Services	102,634.32	102,634	0



Communication/Publicity/Market Engagement	169.59	170	0
Internal Recharges	42,772.06	42,772	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>1,702,433</b>	<b>1,702,432</b>	<b>0</b>

Category of Income	20-21 Budget	Actual Income 2020/210	Variance 2020/21
DFE Income carried-forward from 18/19	-48,931	-48,931	0
LA Contributions:			0
LB Barking & Dagenham	-463,041	-463,041	0
LB Newham	-479,690	-479,690	0
LB Tower Hamlets	-337,051	-337,051	0
LB Havering	-373,720.00	-373,720.00	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-1,702,433</b>	<b>-1,702,433</b>	<b>0</b>

#### Net Expenditure 20/21

	Adjusted Budget 20-21	Actuals 2020/21	Variance 2019/20
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Sue May

HOS Adopt London East

1<sup>st</sup> September 2021

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# Adopt London East Board Report



Presentation to Children's Scrutiny Sub Committee

# Adopt London East



- Regional Adoption Agency
- Hosted by Havering: with Newham, Tower Hamlets and Barking and Dagenham
- Part of Adopt London group – 23 Local Authorities
- Working together to improve outcomes for adopted children in London
- Go Live 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019
- Service delivered since March 2020 under Covid restrictions
- Second Annual report



# The Annual report 2020/21



Page 59

- Statutory requirement
- Presented to ALE Partnership Board and elected members in all 4 LA's
- Information on all aspects of service
- Focus on performance
- Having specific addendum report
- Financial statement: service managed within budget

# Number of placements made



Page 60

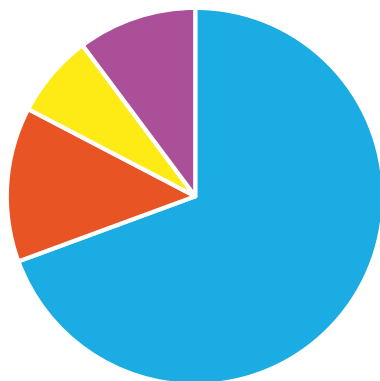
RAA	Number placed	Number of LA's	Average per LA
Coram	32	9	3.5
AL South	72	9	8
AL East	43	4	11
AL West	27	4	7
AL North	33	6	5.5

Overall numbers placed across each RAA vary considerably and are largely dependent on the number of LA's the RAA serves. ALE performance equates to an average of 11 placements per LA. The other RAA's average is considerably lower and ranges from 3.5 to 8 placements per LA

# Profile of adoptive enquirers

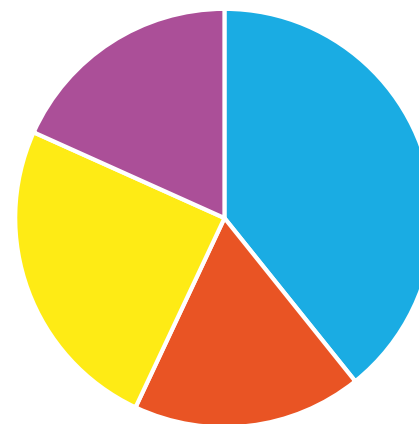


## Ethnicity 2019/20



■ White British ■ Asian  
■ Black African/Caribbean ■ White Other

## Ethnicity 2020/21



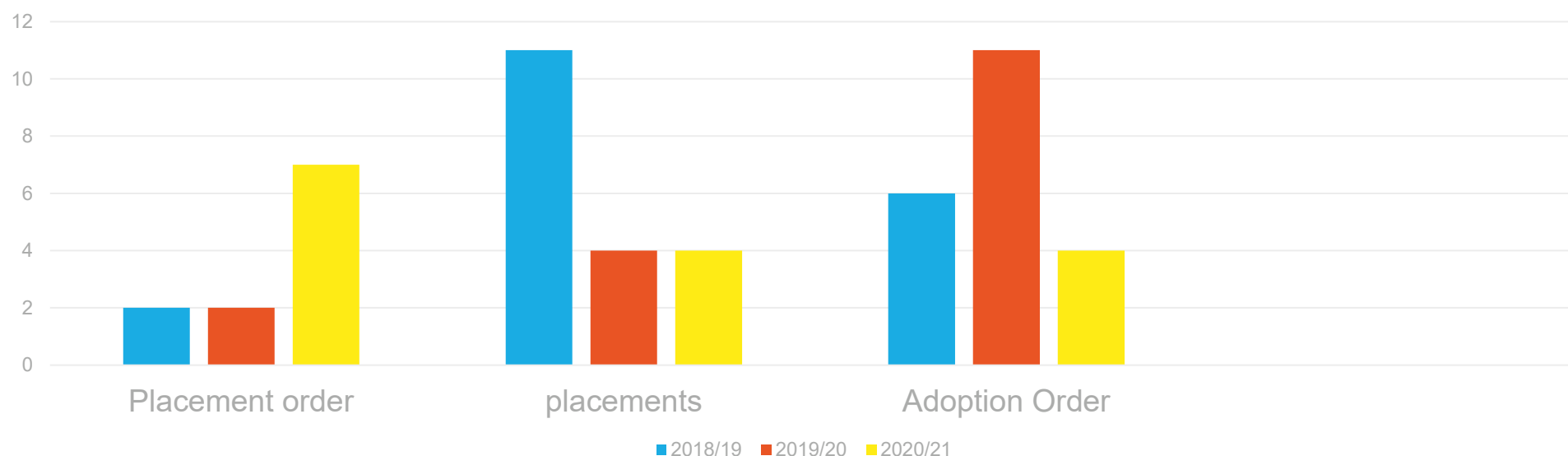
■ White British ■ White other ■ Asian ■ Black

Although White British adopters continue to be the largest single group, a wider span of adopter applications has resulted in greater diversity. Last year 69% of prospective adopters were White British: this has decreased to 39% in one year. The percentage identifying as Black has increased from 7% to 39% in the same timescale.

# Havering adoption performance



## Adoption

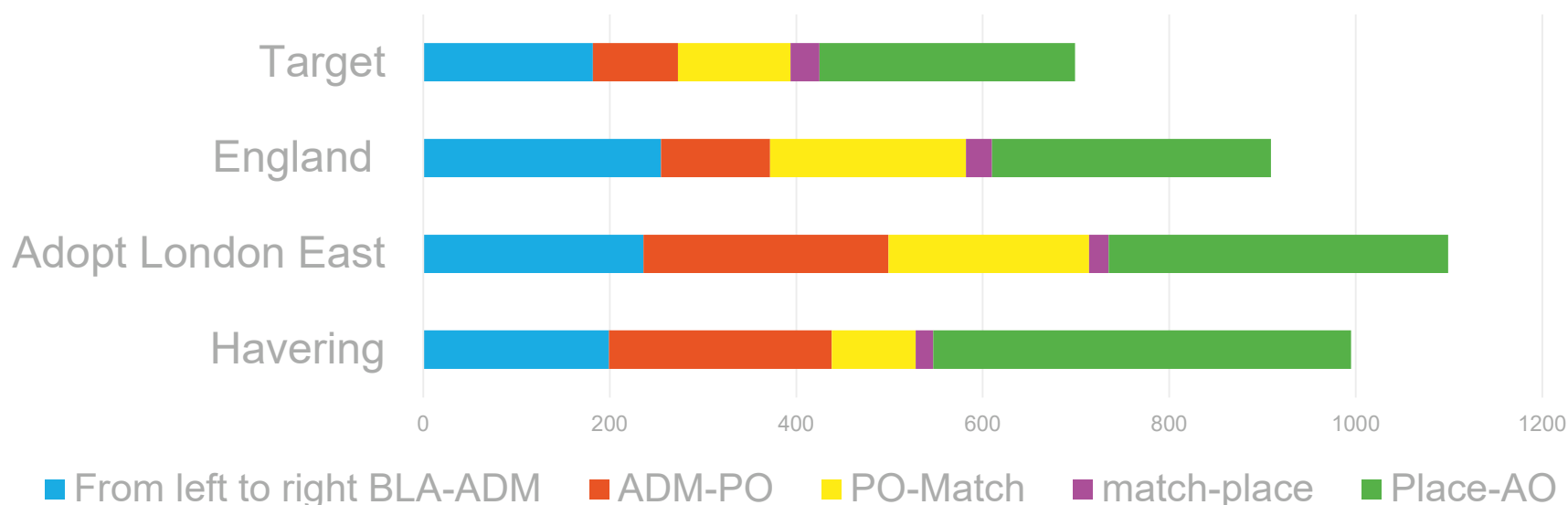


- The number of placement orders increased from 2 to 7 in 2020/21. This will result in an increase in adoptions in 2021/22.
- The number of placements made has decreased in 2019/20 and 2020/21 this reflects the number of children available for adoption.
- The number of children adopted increased in 2019/20 following the increase in placements made in 2018/19. The number then fell in 2020/21 as fewer children were made subject of a placement order and placed.

# Havering adoption timeliness



Timeliness of Adoption



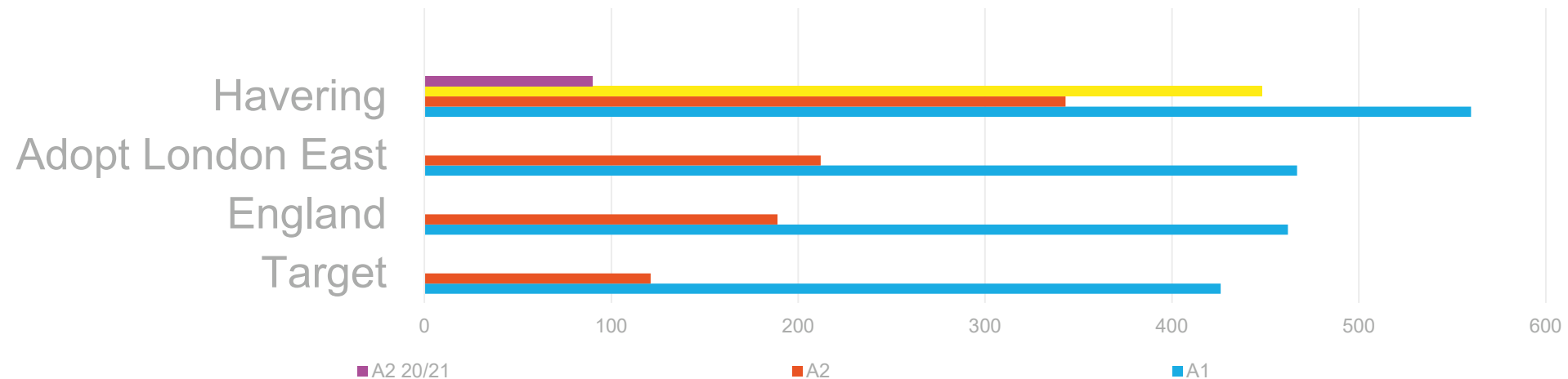
Page 63

- Havering performance lower than the England average in BLA to ADM decision.
- Delays in ADM decision to placement order due to complications in court processes in 2 of the cases.
- Timeliness in placement order to place is better than both the target and England average.
- Once placed Havering children have waited the longest to be formally adopted due to lengthier court times in East London addressed by joint work with the courts
- Children in Havering are placed quicker than Adopt London East and England averages.

# A1 and A2 indicator: three year averages



## A1 and A2 indicators



Page 64

Bottom line: A1: Line 2 A2: Line 3 Havering A1 20/21: Line 4 Havering A2 20/21

A1 timeliness from BLA to place for adoption

- Performance in 20/21 improved on the A1 3 year average, from 560 days to 448. - improved timeliness through working in partnership.

A2 Timeliness from placement order to match

- Performance in 20/21 improved from a 3 years rolling average of 343 days to 90 days, lower than the DfE set target and England averages.

# Summary of Achievements



- The highest rate of children placed in all London RAA's
- Adopter approval in line with or higher than all London RAA's
- A large increase in the percentage of black and LGBT adopters
- A new adopter support offer both locally and pan London
- A Covid support offer independently evaluated as outstanding and praised by the DfE
- Rapid response to Covid including quick development of online training and support
- A productive partnership with We are Family delivering webinars and podcasts as well as direct support
- A clear and positive website showcasing our work

# Achievements 2021/22



- Increase in adopter approval : 17 to date projected 32 in year
- Continued improvement in numbers of enquiries from black prospective adopters
- Increase in Early Permanence placements: 10 to date across ALE
- Improvement in timeliness of court procedures through joint work
- 33% increase in adoption support cases in Havering since 20/21
- Strengthened local partnerships
- Operational group working together to improve adoption work
- Black adoption project with Adopt London





## CHILDREN AND LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE 23 November 2021

<b>Subject Heading:</b>	Adaptions due to Covid and Covid Recovery
<b>SLT Lead:</b>	Robert South, Director of Children's Services
<b>Report Author and contact details:</b>	Susan Sutton, Head of Education Quality and Assurance; 01708 434142; susan.sutton@havering.gov.uk
<b>Policy context:</b>	Education
<b>Financial summary:</b>	None immediately arising from this report

### The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Communities making Havering	[x]
Places making Havering	[]
Opportunities making Havering	[x]
Connections making Havering	[]

### SUMMARY

1. Since March 2020, schools have been required to make huge changes to their operations in all areas. They have made many adaptions to both the content of their curriculum and most notably to the delivery of the curriculum.
2. These adaptions broadly fall into four phases: first lockdown from March 2020 through to Summer 2020, Autumn term 2020, interrupted education, when schools had many pupils self-isolating and many class and year group

bubbles closing, second lock down from January 2021 through to the Summer term 2021. Finally the last phase from summer 2021 and continuing, the Covid Recovery phase.

3. There is as yet no definitive date when we will be able to say “we have recovered”, as the impacts are wide and various.
4. Throughout, members of the Havering School Improvement team have had regular conversations with school leaders as every school was allocated a lead officer. Our conversations with schools through this time show a rapid advancement in both staff and pupils’ capabilities to engage with remote teaching and learning and rapid learning about utilising new technologies in a positive way.
5. Schools have played a major role and are continuing to play a role in community and family support and well-being.
6. There has been much discussion regarding the difficulties involved and the pupils who have suffered detriment, but our schools also talk about the positive gains made and the impact these will have on delivery in the future and some transformative teaching.
7. Schools have responded to the challenges in many different and unique ways. There is no single response as they have sought the best often bespoke options for their communities and circumstances. This gives a flavour of the responses and their impacts.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

8. Members of the OSSC are asked to note the content of the report.

## REPORT DETAIL

### First Phase

9. The majority of schools focused primarily on maintaining close contact with pupils and their families and ensuring that some work was provided to do at home. Schools remained open throughout for the children of Key Workers and pupils deemed vulnerable because of Special Educational needs, additional needs, safeguarding, or because they were considered so by their school for other reasons. Leaders talked of schools taking a central role in their communities, signposting parents to wider health and well-being and financial support.
10. This has led to a greater link between schools and wider community services. Most schools remained open during the holiday periods to provide for children

of Key worker and vulnerable children. Schools took a leading role in food distribution programmes.

11. At the outset the capabilities of different schools to utilise technology to provide home learning was extremely variable. There was also variability in the availability of IT resources that schools were able to obtain, or re-purpose. In general, secondary schools were better resourced and more used to this type of provision. Most already had well-established learning platforms to provide work and pupils were familiar with submitting homework virtually, so the transition was easier. This applied to primary schools to a lesser degree, although some were well advanced in this respect. In this phase access and the digital divide amongst families was the main issue schools had to overcome.
12. Schools rapidly developed their systems and invested in technology to support pupils who had little or no access at home, making use of government supplied devices and a wide variety of innovative ways to provide more machines and to utilise technology in the home. This included mobile phones, tablets, gaming machines and smart TVs. Schools provided internet access for some families, through SIM card, dongles etc. Leaders used school websites to post key messages, including video messages and “how to” information. Other tools/apps e.g. Class Dojo, Purple Mash and Seesaw were used by some schools as a point of contact with pupils and parents.
13. Most schools offered a blend of textbooks, customised work packs, generic projects and some on-line access to pre-prepared materials made by their teachers, or websites provided by third parties, such as “BBC Bitesize”, “Bounce Back” (Well-being), “Spelling shed”, “Maths factor”, “Bug Club” (reading).
14. During this phase the curriculum often tended to be focused on the core areas or reading, writing, and mathematics, with projects set that could be accessed at pupils’ own pace and level and often worked on in families for primary age pupils.
15. Teachers set work and broadly speaking pupils in school were following the same work as pupils at home usually supported by their TAs. This meant that not all pupils were provided with work at the correct level for themselves.
16. Technology changed the way of working and communicating in schools-virtual meetings for staff, parent teacher meetings, meetings with other Head Teachers, clubs, staff socialising and peer support and assemblies.
17. Pupils returned to school in late summer 2020 and schools reported they were happy to do so and keen to engage with learning initially. Schools felt that while some learning time had been lost this would be quickly made up and set about beginning to deliver business as usual for most, although some families were reluctant to send their children back.
18. There was initially a focus on exam classes and year six, and early years, who would be transitioning to their next phases of education. Some schools

created return to school videos to support pupils' when transition preparation plans interrupted. In one school for example, children returned in the September to their class teacher from the previous year and after one week moved to their next classroom, class teacher. Head teachers reported these strategies were successful and well received by parents.

## **Second Phase**

19. It quickly became apparent that it was not business as usual with rapidly increasingly large numbers of pupils missing sometimes multiple segments of their education. Schools report that this was the most difficult period as they were struggling with staff absences and teaching classes and those at home. Some pupils were missing repeatedly chunks of learning and this was uneven.
20. Providing the home learning to keep absent pupils in line with attending pupils was extremely difficult. This led to greater personalisation of teaching. There was a rapid growth in provision of on-line resources to support schools and parents and carers and carers. Many schools adopted Google Classroom and Teams or Zoom for the delivery of remote learning and teachers quickly developed resources so that they were available online.
21. There was an urgent need to ensure that staff themselves were trained and confident in using the technology. This was an unprecedented period of rapid staff development and innovation. Much work was done regarding the protocols and safety of teaching remotely.

## **Third Phase**

22. It was evident that by the time of the second lockdown in January 2021 that staff were generally confident and very adept at offering a variety of virtual opportunities for pupils. By this stage, Schools worked hard to engage pupils with online learning. There were a growing bank of high quality on-line resources provided both by the schools themselves and by third parties. Schools made good use of the Oak Academy materials, Jo Wickes PE, Charanga Music and numerous other resources to support specific areas of the curriculum.
23. The curriculum began to be broader in scope and most schools were providing the full range of subjects. During this period schools were instructed to provide live on-line lessons. Although many teachers had already been doing some, this was new for some and most extended their offer. Schools managed this very well, usually through teachers teaching from home, live-streaming lessons, usually providing opportunities for pupils to interact with the teacher and each other and teaching assistants were able to join the pupils they support in virtual classrooms.
24. During this period many schools personalised timetables to ensure that where families were sharing a device, pupils of different ages were able to access the learning. There were some cross-phase collaborations on this, demonstrating the extent of leaders' flexibility. By the end of second lock-

down provision was much broader and better matched to both the curriculum and pupils' own needs. Schools prioritised getting their most vulnerable pupils in schools and worked hard with families to achieve this.

25. During this period schools developed methods of on-line individual marking and feedback and leaders monitored the quality of teaching and pupils' work. Monitoring was variable in quality. Some schools have permanently changed the way they respond to pupils' work as a result, finding that pupils have responded very well to more immediate feedback. Schools report that virtual attendance was in the main good.
26. There was a strong focus throughout the period on engagement of pupils. Schools reported that poor engagement of parents and carers and carers, or their feeling unable to support their children, was a major barrier and they worked hard to support both pupils and parents and carers- often beyond matters of curriculum. Many schools reported that their relationships and engagement with parents and carers has never been better. Schools checked in regularly on the safety and well-being of their pupils, especially those who were absent, not fully engaged or of concern, at risk, or disadvantaged.
27. Most schools put a strong emphasis on well-being, as they reported a rise in poor mental health. Many schools ensured that the curriculum included support for aspects of well-being and healthy living. Schools also made extensive and highly innovative adaptations to the curriculum in practical subjects, such as music, art, PE, drama, science and design technology, but nonetheless many aspects of these subjects simply could not be delivered remotely, due to the lack of group activity, lack of equipment and safety concerns. Many of these subjects therefore front-loaded the theoretical aspects of the curriculum, which led to some disengagement amongst pupils. Covering the practical requirements of exam subjects was a particular issue for secondary school teachers.
28. Schools have been very conscious of the strain on staff and often adopted rotas to spread the workload. The LA offered access to a well-being and exercise programme, which was well-attended. Staff training continued, either in Covid-secure environments or virtually. Havering Education Services courses continued to offer a very wide range of training opportunities, including training designed to support remote learning and curriculum adaptation and safety and safeguarding.

### **Current Phase**

29. Upon return after second lock down, schools reported that although initially pupils were pleased to return and most were happy and very resilient, some were anxious and some parents were also reluctant. Some pupils exhibited poor behaviours for learning, found it difficult to engage with peers, exhibited anxiety and were often tired.
30. Amongst younger pupils, they reported regression in aspects of socialisation, early reading/phonics, and physical capability. Schools reported that many pupils had also become physically less healthy, due to disrupted sleep

patterns, poor diet and physical inactivity. Some pupils had not left their homes in months. Early years leaders reported lower than usual levels of language development and lower levels of independence. Some pupils were very anxious about returning. Many schools initially adapted their curriculum to ensure there was a transition back into school.

31. For example, one school reported using the “SWAN”( S – safe W – welcoming A – all together N – nurturing) framework (Dr Pooky Knightsmith) to support a safe and successful return to school. Videos and guided discussion for staff in preparation for children’s return.
32. Schools have undertaken a variety of assessment approaches to provide a comprehensive baseline on return to school so that gaps in pupils’ understanding can be addressed alongside the obvious gaps in curriculum provision. These methods have included past national tests and exam papers, commercially produced assessments, standardised tests such as PIRA/PUMA or NFER and school-based assessments, quizzes and low stakes testing.
33. Extended writing, has been cited by many head teachers as being most impacted in terms of learning and achievements amongst primary pupils. Leaders report that, as nationally, vulnerable pupils seem to have fallen behind more than their peers, however they report that some nervous, quiet and “unseen” pupils, as well as some middle attaining boys and very able pupils have flourished within the online learning environment.
34. Schools are now far better equipped and ready to implement effective remote learning at any point and better attuned to the ways different pupils like to learn and work. Some schools report that they have made learning more flexible to better meet the varied needs of their pupils. They also say that this has improved the quality of work that can be offered to pupils who are absent for an extended period of time.
35. Most school leaders say that they have made lasting changes to the way they operate in many areas as they have found better alternatives to traditional received practice. Leaders spoke about using technology going forward e.g. parent teacher meetings, cluster meetings, providing home learning/work, virtual meetings, CPD and governing body meetings. Many of these have been better attended and more effective than when they were held at night after work. There is a perception that the impact has been a better work-life balance for teachers and greater engagement with others.
36. Initially, in summer 2020 and refreshing in summer 2021, our schools were asked to develop curriculum recovery plans. These plans typically focus on recapping key building blocks of knowledge which cohorts appeared to have understood less well, in some cases taking pupils back a stage, filling gaps in practical subjects, enhancing the wider cultural curriculum and enhancing personal development opportunities that have not been available for 4 terms. These plans are continuing through the current academic year.

37. Steps to ensure Covid-safe environments such as one-way systems, social distancing, enhanced cleaning, sanitisers etc were universal in line with the government guidance. These measures were a big focus for school leaders in 2020-2021 as the grappled with ever-changing government guidance. Latterly this has been the production of ventilation plans and risk assessments which are currently in place supported by HES health and safety team. It is hoped that this, along with the vaccination programmes for older pupils will keep pupils in school.
38. The government suspended all statutory assessments and exams due to Covid, so schools applied teacher assessments to pupils or did their own tests. In primary schools, these were internally moderated, due to difficulties in moderating with other schools, though this did take place in some schools (e.g.in federations and MATs and amongst some neighbourhood clusters). For national examinations in secondary schools, our schools rigorously followed national and exam board requirements and all produced clear plans working together to ensure that the grades awarded were fair and accurate. Assessments have been analysed to feed into curriculum planning and catch up programmes which are in place.
39. A range of approaches have been used to target catch up funding, for example, it has been used for equipment such as Chromebooks, teacher/TA time for extra targeted interventions for pupils who have fallen behind where they should be, resources, commercial catch-up programmes, or for tutoring costs. While a minority of schools made use of the government National Tutoring Scheme, most schools used already known tutors or their own staff, as they felt this enabled better links to learning in lessons. These catch up programmes have been reported to have variable impact. Leaders feel the hours of tuition funded are not adequate and teachers will need to implement in-school catch-up this coming year and for some pupils possibly beyond that.
40. Many schools ran summer schools. These typically targeted pupils at transition points, e.g. year 6 into year 7, SEND and pupil premium pupils, pupils who were considered vulnerable. These summer programmes were generally a mix of academic catch-up and team building with fun activities and sports. There we also some which targeted year 10 and 12 pupils who are likely to be taking formal exams this academic year but who may have gaps in the required learning.
41. Schools are continuing to focus on supporting the mental health of pupils and some schools have offered enhanced PSHE programmes to meet mental health needs of pupils. These needs are likely to remain elevated for some time.

## **Safeguarding**

42. From day one of the first lockdown all schools established a list/community of designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) in schools (every school has to have a DSL). This list was shared in order to provide a network of support. This very active group met fortnightly and has continued throughout. Hsis organised these virtual network events.

43. There was a big focus on safety online and schools worked with Havering Education Services to ensure that all aspects around safe use of technology were in place. This has also led to an increased understanding of these matters amongst teachers and teaching assistants as well as parents and carers.
44. Safeguarding was a huge focus for all schools. Most school leaders report that cases increased and that they were in constant contact with vulnerable pupils and families. They also report that they developed better and more productive working with social care and social workers.
45. The required annual whole school safeguarding training for staff, which is usually delivered face-to-face, was offered by the LA as a film. Schools were advised and supported in how they might roll out safeguarding messages to all staff, while maintaining social distancing. The themes in required training have reflected the issues of increasing concern during the pandemic and included guidance around conspiracy theories, Prevent, increased domestic abuse etc. New updated content is provided each year to reflect risks and issues. This year schools are focussing on peer on peer abuse, following the recent Ofsted report, which exposed the extent of this and the increased prevalence during the last few terms and the specific risks with more time being spent online.
46. Schools put policies and processes in place to support safe virtual learning environments for all pupils and staff at home. There has been a continual roll out of devices (some DfE funded, some school funded or school equipment repurposed for home use) to vulnerable children.
47. The setup of these devices included safety features such as appropriate filtering and monitoring, this identified a child at risk of abuse in their home by the monitoring alerts raised on a school-supplied laptop.
48. Schools were making welfare phone contact – the class teacher in Primary and the form tutor in secondary schools- with families on a regular basis depending on the need of child, the needs of parents and carers and level of vulnerability or concern. In some cases heightened engagement is continuing.

## **IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

### **Financial implications and risks:**

49. There are no direct financial implications from this report, as it is for information only. However, the teams responsible for undertaking the quality assurance functions identified above are funded from DfE grants and core Council funding.



**Legal implications and risks:**

50. There are no direct legal implications from this report.

**Human Resources implications and risks:**

51. There are no direct human resources implications from this report.

**Equalities implications and risks:**

52. There are no direct equalities implications from this report, and an Equalities Assessment has not been completed as this report is for information only.

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