



# Haverling

L O N D O N B O R O U G H

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

7.00 pm

Tuesday  
29 March 2022

VIRTUAL MEETING

Members 9: Quorum 4

**COUNCILLORS:**

Judith Holt (Chairman)  
Robby Misir (Vice-Chair)  
Carol Smith

Sally Miller (BCAc)  
Gillian Ford  
Tony Durdin

Tele Lawal  
Reg Whitney

**CO-OPTED MEMBERS:**

**Statutory Members  
representing the Churches**

Jack How, Roman Catholic  
Church

**Statutory Members  
representing parent  
governors**

Julie Lamb, Special 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.

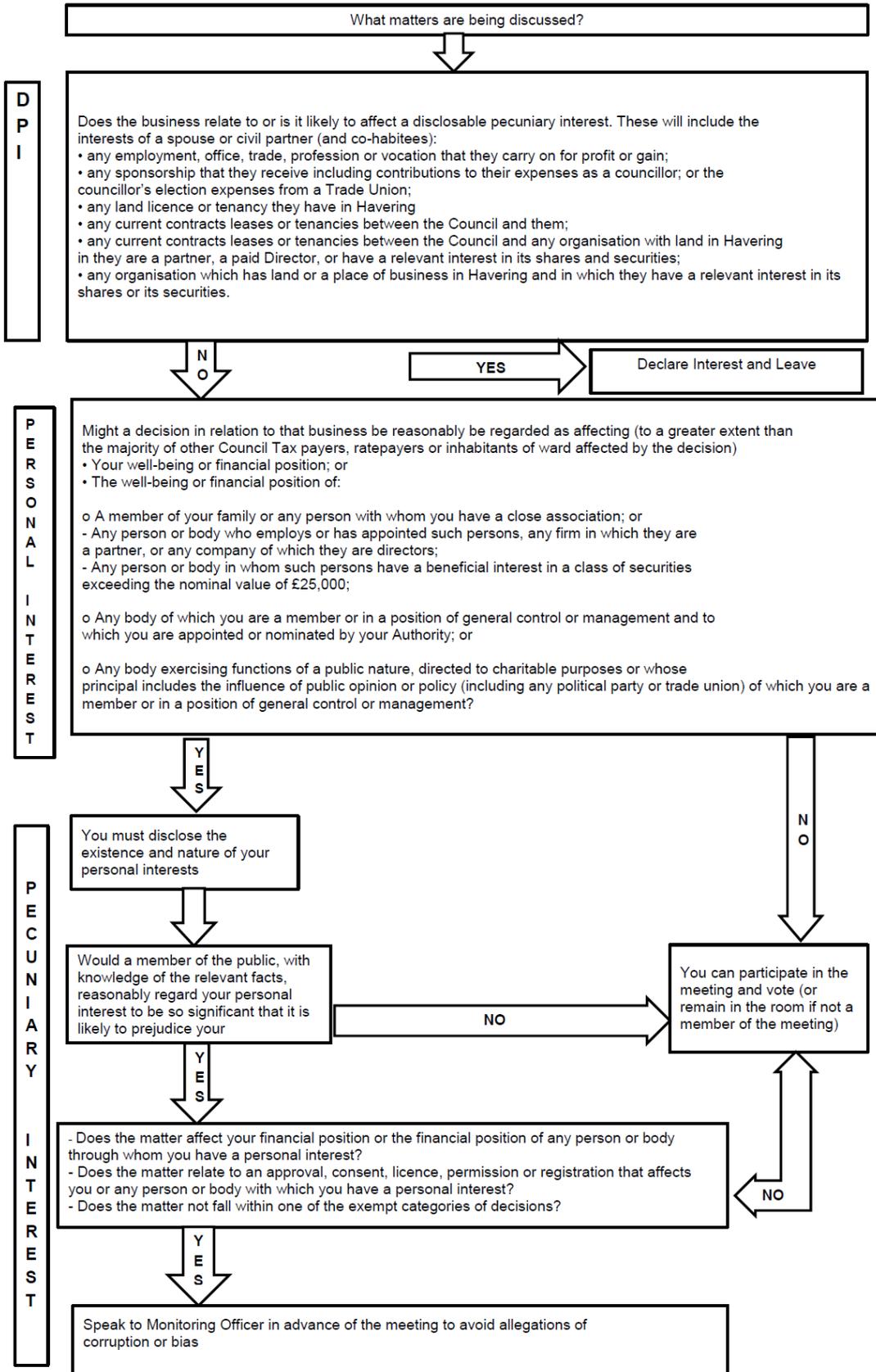
Sub-Committees will often establish Topic Groups to examine specific areas in much greater detail. These groups consist of a number of Members and the review period can last for anything from a few weeks to a year or more to allow the Members to comprehensively examine an issue through interviewing expert 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 meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 20 January 2022 and authorise the Chairman to sign them.

### 5 UPDATE REPORT REGARDING THE 2020-2021 CHILDREN'S COMPLAINT REPORT AND ADOPT LONDON EAST PARTNERSHIP 2021 REPORT PRESENTED AT THE CHILDREN'S OSSC NOVEMBER 2021 (Pages 7 - 64)

Report attached.

### 6 REPORT OUTLING THE INCREASE IN DEMAND AND IMPACT ON COSTS FOR PLACEMENTS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH MULTIPLE, COMPLEX NEEDS. (Pages 65 - 74)

Report attached.

### 7 PERFORMANCE INFORMATION - QUARTER THREE (Pages 75 - 90)

Report attached.

### 8 UPDATE REPORT - ATTENDANCE & EXCLUSION REPORT POST COVID (Pages 91 - 100)

Report attached.

**Zena Smith**  
**Democratic and Election Services Manager**

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE  
VIRTUAL MEETING  
20 January 2022 (8.03 pm)**

**Present:** Councillors Judith Holt (Chairman), Carol Smith,  
Gillian Ford and Reg Whitney

Co-opted Members:

Church Representatives:

Mr Jack How and Lynne Bennett

Non-voting Member: Ian Rusha

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Robby Misir, Councillor Sally Miller BCAC, Councillor Tele Lawal, Robert South (Director of Children's Services), and Julie Lamb (Co-opted Member).

**72 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

There were no disclosures of interest received at the meeting.

**73 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman advised that, in line with current Government guidance, the meeting was being held on a remote basis only and asked everyone to please be patient in case of any issues with the technology. Everyone was asked to ensure their correct name was being displayed on their Zoom screen.

**74 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**75 CHILDREN'S SERVICES ANNUAL COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS REPORT 2020-21**

The Sub-Committee received a report on the Children's Services Annual Complaints and Compliments Report 2021-21.

The report provided the Committee with an update on the Children's Services Annual Complaints and Compliments Report for 2020–21. Appendix 1, set out Children's Services statutory complaints and compliments received during the period, as well as Members' correspondence.

Local authorities had a statutory requirement to set up a complaints process which was set out in section 26 Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 and were required to publish an Annual Report.

The report highlighted areas of performance and potential areas for improvement.

Complaints in 2020-21 had increased by 9% (87) compared to 2019-20 (80). The number of enquiries had increased significantly in 2020-21 compared to 2019-20, by 46%. There continued to be a steady number of complaints escalating to Stage 2 investigations in 2020-21 (6) and was at the same level as in 2019-20. There was one complaint escalated to stage 3 which was escalated to the Ombudsman.

There was a significant increase (36%) in the number of complaints received by Triage/MASH & Assessment in 2020-21 compared to 2019-20. A small increase in the number of complaints to Care Resources, and a decrease for Intervention & Support Services, with 'standard of service' being the highest reason.

The increase in complaints received by Triage/MASH & Assessment were primarily linked to allegations around child contact arrangements and concerns around domestic abuse. The number of contacts received by the service in this category in 2020-21 had more than doubled in comparison in 2019-20, and in line with national trends.

In 2020-21 complaints regarding 'attitude/behaviour of staff' decreased significantly by 50%. As a result of improved recording an ongoing practice developed. However complaints around 'standard of service' had doubled in 2020-21, with significant increase also in 'inaccurate information'.

Throughout 2020-21, demand for children's services increased and continued in the current financial year. The number of contacts received in 2020-21 was at its highest level since 2017/18, and the number of children entering care was at its highest level since 2016/17.

The number of complaints upheld and partially upheld accounted for 39% (6) and (28) respectively of the total complaints. Those upheld or partially upheld resulted in an apology, linked to the need to provide explanation or further information about the reasons for intervention or particular parts of the process that initially may not have been clear. How information was given, and the consistency should be explored. Ombudsman

recommendations were actioned with refresher training commissioned for safeguarding that ensured practitioners adhered to procedures.

Response times had improved in 2020-21 with 31% (27) responded to within the 10 working day timeframe. Efforts would continue to improve response times, while recognising the increased complexities of cases and balancing the priorities of the service. Complaints continued to be received by email (57) and a further 18 received online.

The cost of independent investigations decreased significantly in 2020-21, due to the withdrawal of three Stage 2 escalations, reducing the cost to £6,087.95 from £19,531.65 in 2019-20.

Monitoring information was based on the child(ren) within the family unit in which a complaint was made. There were increases across age groups, 0-5-, 10-24 and 15-17, the highest increase was in the age group of 0-5. Male children were higher across all age groups except 6-9. Children recorded with a disability was low across all ages, and diagnosed with mainly Autism or Aspergers Syndrome. 'White British' children highest representation and reflects the borough's population make up with 'Caribbean' and 'Any other Mixed Background' increasing in 2020-21. Complainants declaring no faith significantly increased in 2020/21(49), compared to 2019-21(6). 'Catholic and 'Christian' faiths showed a slight increase in 2020-21.

The number of compliments received in 2020-21 were lower than preferred (22); however, showed an improvement from 2019-20 (3). Continued efforts to encourage staff within Children's Services to share compliments so these could be logged to reflect more accurately the good work being done.

The Complaints and Compliments action plan had been refreshed and would be monitored at quarterly meetings between the Social Care Complaints and Information Team, and the Children's Services Senior Management Team.

Questions arose from why the various Christian/Catholic categories within the report appeared to be variations of the same thing. Officers confirmed they would enquire about the categories but thought it was likely due to the way people identified on the forms. It was also queried whether multiple complaints were logged on the same day and whether multiple complaints by the same complainant were contained in the report. Officers confirmed that multiple complaints including on the same day and from the same complainants were logged and were included in the data presented.

The Sub-Committee noted the report.

76 **SCHOOL ADAPTATIONS DUE TO COVID AND COVID RECOVERY ON SEND CHILDREN AND MORE ABLE CHILDREN**

The Sub-Committee received a report that provided a further update on the report presented at the November 2021, Children and Learning Overview & Scrutiny sub-committee meeting.

The report contained the adaptations schools made to both the content of their curriculum and most notably to the delivery of the curriculum in response to the impact of COVID-19. The report had now included an update on the specific impact on pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and more-able pupils.

It was reported that the impact on children with SEND had been significant. Schools were required to be flexible in their approach to remote learning when it was necessary, and there had been many examples of providing homework packs tailored to individual children's needs.

Schools, particularly the special schools, had supported families with outreach work, provided support to the whole family and lent equipment for use at home, delivering activities, and even shopped particularly at the height of the pandemic.

Impact on staffing levels due to COVID illness amongst staff was significant. Vaccine uptake was good. However, staffing levels and need for self-isolation continued to affect the levels of attendance at school.

Schools had received support from the Local Authority consisting of health and wellbeing training and managing anxieties. The Educational Psychology service ran a parent helpline and regular support for SENDCos had been provided individually and through borough wide SENDco forums, to answer questions, share good practice to support school in maintaining their offer to children with SEND.

Schools included pupils with SEND in all their welfare call and welfare visits, enabling additional pastoral support to be provided where necessary. It was nationally documented that pupils with SEND or additional needs fell further behind in many cases during the pandemic, and (anecdotal) evidence from schools suggested that this was also true for Havering schools. This was due to both lower online/face-to-face attendance rates than others, and often they were in families that are more economically challenged, resulting in parents struggling to provide the support for home learning. There were often issues such as sharing technology with siblings, and schools worked very hard to mitigate those factors, as evidenced in the previous report.

It was also noted that pupils with SEND and other vulnerabilities were often slower to return to school following the various periods of lockdown and remote learning. In this initial 'recovery' phase, schools put on additional intervention groups to attempt to make up for lost ground where pupils had fallen behind. Many of the pupils with SEND and other vulnerable pupils

were included in these interventions as schools focused their resources on pupils who were significantly below age-expected norms.

In terms of the more-able Pupils, no specific enquiries were made into the impact on their learning. However, many schools provided a core curriculum and additional challenges which would have enabled more-able pupils to take subjects and topics further. Take up was variable and not completely restricted to more-able pupils.

Schools reported, particularly in secondary schools, that some pupils, particularly boys, had related very well to the flexibility of remote learning and did well, making good progress, and in a small number of cases likely better than usual progress. More-able pupils generally had better remote learning attendance, and better work completion rates (as perhaps might have been predictable), therefore would have suffered less loss of learning.

Attendance rates/completion rates varied across schools, and the methods used for accounting these varied, as previously reported, and there was no awareness of any national/regional benchmarking for any of this.

Queries were raised regarding respite care, foster carer retention and recruitment. Officers confirmed that respite had gone back to pre-pandemic levels. There was an increased demand for foster carers and provisions had returned with an increased capacity. In turn, the increase in the assessment process would grow the market further.

Questions and concern were raised around the technology deficient for SEND pupils and what would happen in the future. Officers suggested that due to the government response of providing laptops etc. to schools during the pandemic many were now better equipped with technology. The situation was being monitored and special needs requirements would be specifically considered. Modelling and working with other authorities to increase academy performance and self-improvement would also be pursued. Letters were currently being drafted regarding this topic and would be sent to all school head teachers.

The Sub-Committee noted the report.

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**Chairman**

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## **CHILDREN AND LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE 29 March 2022**

**Subject Heading:**

Update report regarding the 2020-2021 children's complaints report and Adopt London East Partnership 2021 report presented at Children's OSSC November 2021

**SLT Lead:**

Robert South – Director of Children's Services

**Report Author:**

Tara Geere, AD of Children's services

**Policy context:**

The following updates are in relation to the council's responses to complaints against children's services and in relation to the running of the council's adoption services both statutory functions of the local authority

<b>SUMMARY</b>
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Following the presentation of the 2020-2021 annual children's complaints report and the 2021 annual adoption update report at the overview and scrutiny panel on the 23 November, members have requested further information to include -

1. Is there any benchmarking information in relation to children's complaints including statistical neighbours and could there be further clarification re the number of different classification of complainant's religion?
2. Who sits on the Havering Adopt London East (ALE) board?
3. Is there any benchmarking with statistical neighbours on adoption performance?
4. What areas of adoption performance can be improved more?

This report responds to the questions raised with follow up information.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Future children’s services reports to include benchmarking against statistical neighbours where available

## REPORT DETAIL

### **1. Is there any benchmarking information in relation to children’s complaints including statistical neighbours and could there be further clarification re the number of different classification of complainant’s religion?**

As requested the following information shows benchmarking data with statistical neighbours in relation to complaints against Havering.in 2020-2021.

The following Information published by the local government ombudsman shows all complaints listed against Havering, unfortunately it does not break down to show just children’s complaints. The information shows Havering is performing better than similar authorities

### Complaints upheld



- 67% of complaints we investigated were upheld.
- This compares to an average of 72% in similar authorities.

12  
upheld decisions

Statistics are based on a total of 18 detailed investigations for the period between 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

[View upheld decisions](#)

### Compliance with Ombudsman recommendations



- In 100% of cases we were satisfied the Council had successfully implemented our recommendations.
- This compares to an average of 99% in similar authorities.

Statistics are based on a total of 11 compliance outcomes for the period between 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.



The table below shows the % of complaints in 2020/21 that were for Education and Children’s Services, as a % of the total complaints received benchmarked by our statistical neighbours. Showing smaller percentages of complaints against children’s services than neighbours.

Table 1

Authority Name	Education and Children’s Services	Total	Education and Children’s Services as a % of Total
Bury Metropolitan Borough Council	13	38	34%
Essex County Council	48	134	36%
Kent County Council	79	156	51%
Lancashire County Council	55	124	44%
London Borough of Bexley	14	60	23%
Medway Council	15	50	30%
Northamptonshire County Council	27	61	44%
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council	7	39	18%
Swindon Borough Council	9	43	21%
Thurrock Council	9	30	30%
<b>London Borough of Havering</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>15%</b>

In regards to the question from Councillors regarding the numerous classifications of religions in 2020-2021 annual children’s complaints report, this is how the complainant had described their religion.

**2. Who sits on the Havering Adopt London East (ALE) board?**

The ALE board is chaired by Robert South, the Director of Children’s Services (DCS) in Havering. There is Assistant Director representation from Tara Geere (Havering); April Bald (London Borough of Barking and Dagenham - LBBB); Emma Cockerill (Newham); Lissa Marie Minnis (Tower Hamlets). With Adoption lead representatives from Tendai Dooley (Havering); Joanne Tarbutt (LBBB); Carlos Galaz (Newham); Lissa Marie Minnis (Tower Hamlets). Havering also have representatives for performance (Lucy Goodfellow), finance (Amar Barot) and HR (Julian Sivill)

There is an operational sub group chaired by the head of service (HOS) for ALE Sue May (Havering) with adoption Leads; Tendai Dooley (Havering); Joanne Tarbutt (LBBB); Carlos Galaz (Newham); Lissa Marie Minnis (Tower Hamlets) Operational Lead: Eulyn Joseph (Havering); Mercia Jackson (LBBB); Yvonne Michaels (Newham); Leo Major (Tower Hamlets). Joined by the ALE Managers: Belinda Bhatti (Adoption support); Michelle Bakay (Recruitment and Assessment); Anthea Bennet (Family Finding); Nancy Pinthieve (Panel Advisor)

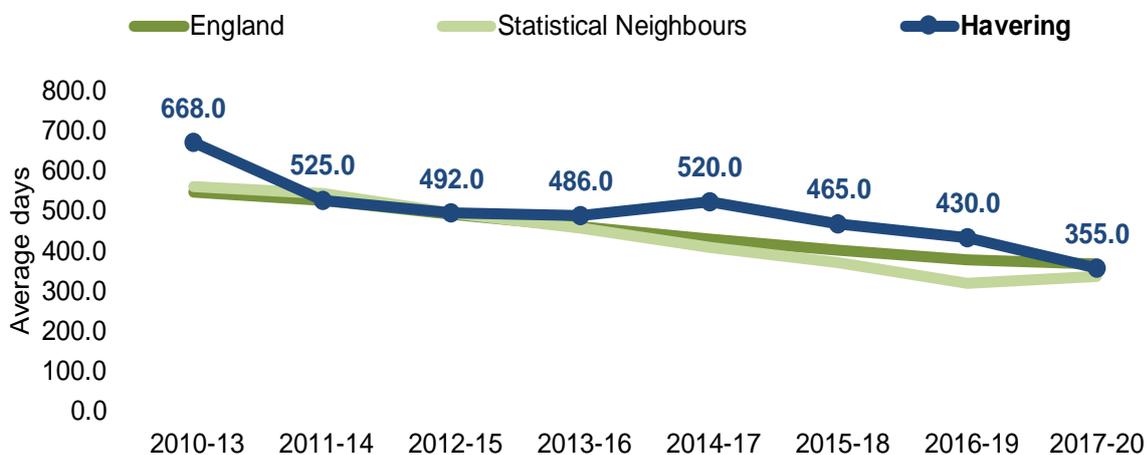
There are also several working groups with varying membership dependent on expertise required to look at current priorities. Currently these are focused on life-story work and Child Permanence reports required as part of adoption work.

**3. Is there any benchmarking with statistical neighbours on adoption performance?**

The adoptions score care benchmarks against statistical neighbours and national data over a three year rolling period. The last published data for the average time between a child entering care and moving to their adoptive family (Graph 1 below) shows our improving performance.

**Graph 1**

**A10: Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family. Where times for children who are adopted by their foster family are stopped at the date the child moved in with the foster family (days)**



**A10: Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family. Where times for children who are adopted by their foster family are stopped at the date the child moved in with the foster family (days)**



**Graph 2** above highlights the performance of the 4 ALE boroughs (the custom group) showing the average performance for the 4 of us over time, compared to England and to just Havering alone

Havering’s performance has improved but remains below the nationally set targets within the adoption scorecard. As noted in the annual adoption report none of the local authorities in Adopt London East has met the targets. Given the low numbers of children leaving care through adoption, one child with any delay can make a large difference to the timescale measurements. On average children in Havering have waited long periods to be adopted.

Children are deemed to be harder to place and are likely to wait longer for an adoptive placement if they are over 5yrs old, are from a Black or minority Ethnic (BAME) heritage, are part of a sibling group or have a disability. On average 66% of children awaiting adoption in England are harder to place. An analysis of the children placed for adoption by Havering in the last three years has shown that the children had at least one harder to place characteristic.

**Table 2**

ASGLB RAA Dashboard - Adopt London East 2021/22 Q2 - Average days to complete key phases of child's journey in the 12 months to 30 September 2021

Agency	BLA 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		
Adopt London East	281	35	168	27	339	36	21	41	320	57	
ENGLAND	260	3562	115	3031	193	2946	24	3059	292	3327	
Barking and Dagenham	439	6	191	5	426	9	24	12	299	19	
Havering	249	6	233	6	93	4	38	4	351	6	
Newham	316	12	110	7	190	8	27	9	316	18	
Tower Hamlets	172	11	157	9	431	15	11	16	341	14	

Table 2 above shows benchmarking against the partners within ALE. There is further work to do to improve the timescales for children. However it can be seen that the average time from becoming looked after to the agency decision maker deciding that adoption is in the best interests of the child has improved and is lower than the England average.

During the pandemic there have been national delays in court proceedings. In Havering there were considerable delays from the agency decision to the court granting a placement order which allows a child to be placed for adoption. This reflects complex and challenging court processes.

Improvements on our timeliness from placement order to matching a child with their prospective adopters was at 93 days, which is better than the target and England averages. This is indicative of pro-active joint working between Havering and Adopt London East.

However, there have been delays between a child being placed with their prospective adopters and the adoption order being granted. Ongoing work with East London Courts has improved this picture considerably in 2021-2022 and this work is now of interest to other London Courts.

#### **4. What areas of adoption performance can be improved more?**

From the information above three areas of improvement are required

##### **4.1 The Timeliness of placement of a child for adoption.**

From the data above and from the annual report we know that timescales are not meeting the national targets. Adoption is a highly specialised area of work that is not a frequent area of work undertaken by social workers in Havering. Adopt London East now provide mandatory consultation sessions for social workers and first line managers at the earliest point of consideration for adoption.

Where the social worker is new to adoption work or the child has complex needs a schedule of consultation sessions is agreed. Support is also available for completion of the Child Permanence Report and other necessary documents.

##### **4.2 Recruitment of adopters**

Currently approximately 50% of our children are placed with adopters recruited by external agencies. Whilst this is comparable with all agencies across London; Adopt London East is working with the other Adopt London Regional Adoption Agencies to recruit more adopters in London and to ensure these adopters are able to meet the needs of our children.

##### **4.3 Adoption pathways in liquid logic**

The current Liquidlogic system adoption pathways does not meet requirements of a separate Local Authority and Regional Adoption Agency. Work is ongoing to improve

the pathway and ensure all recording is timely. Work is also ongoing in Adopt London East to develop appropriate Liquidlogic recording systems for the work of the agency.

### **IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

**Financial implications and risks:** No financial implications noted

**Legal implications and risks:** - There are no apparent legal implications in making the proposed decision.

**Human Resources implications and risks:** The recommendations made in this report do not give rise to any identifiable HR risks or implications that would affect either the Council or its workforce

**Equalities implications and risks:** There are no equalities implications regarding this report

### **ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

*None noted*

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Previous Complaints report and Adoption report.

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# 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 Intercountry 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

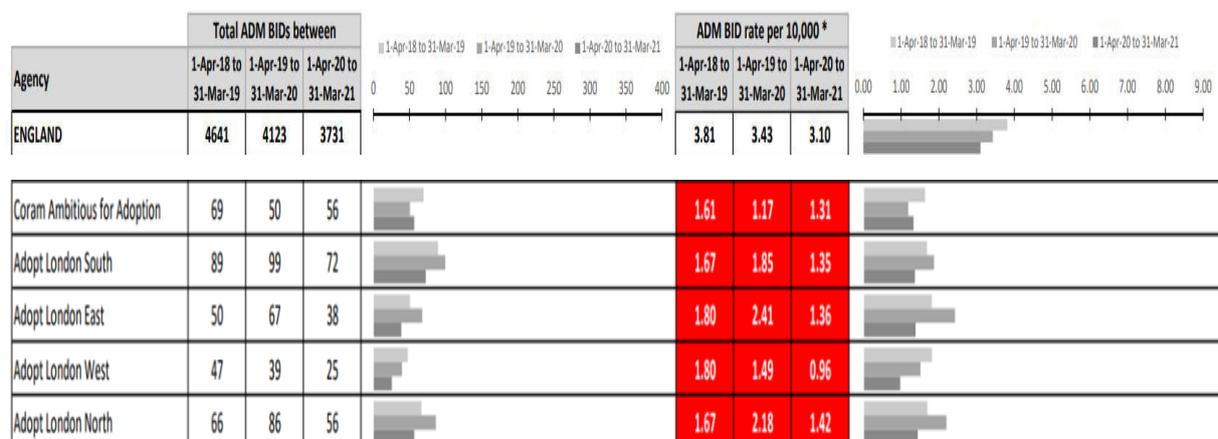
The four Adopt London head of service worked jointly with all Voluntary sector partners to provide an innovative and flexible service whereby adopters accessing the helpline could be referred onto a number of differing interventions on the basis of an immediate assessment of need.

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/SHOBPA decision



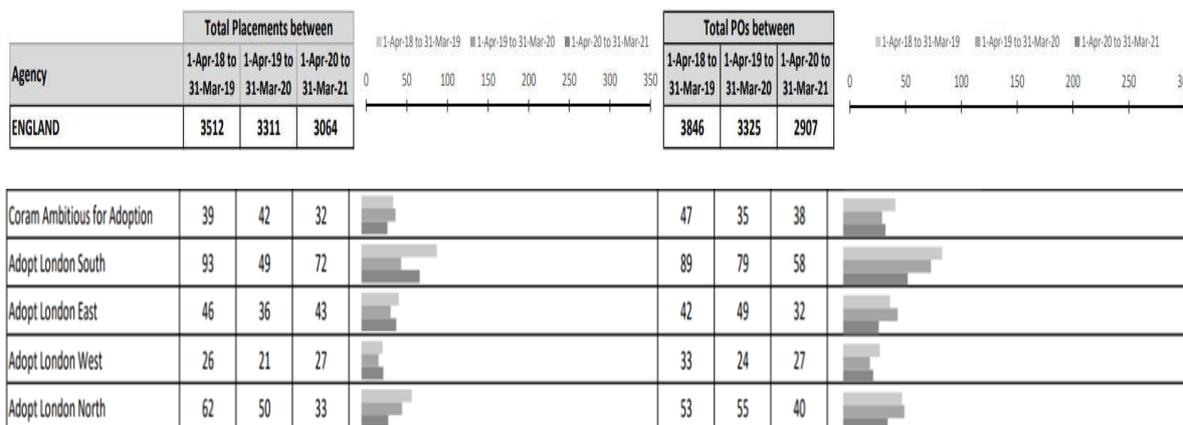
The number of decisions made in each Local Authority by the Agency Decision Maker that a child should be placed for adoption (SHOBPA) have decreased overall over the last three years in all London RAA's. Three of the five (including ALE) saw an increase in 2019/20 and



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
<b>ENGLAND</b>	<b>3521</b>	<b>3427</b>	<b>2863</b>

Agency	1-Apr-18 to 31-Mar-19	1-Apr-19 to 31-Mar-20	1-Apr-20 to 31-Mar-21
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	
<b>ENGLAND</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>3731</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>2907</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>2946</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>3064</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>2863</b>

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.

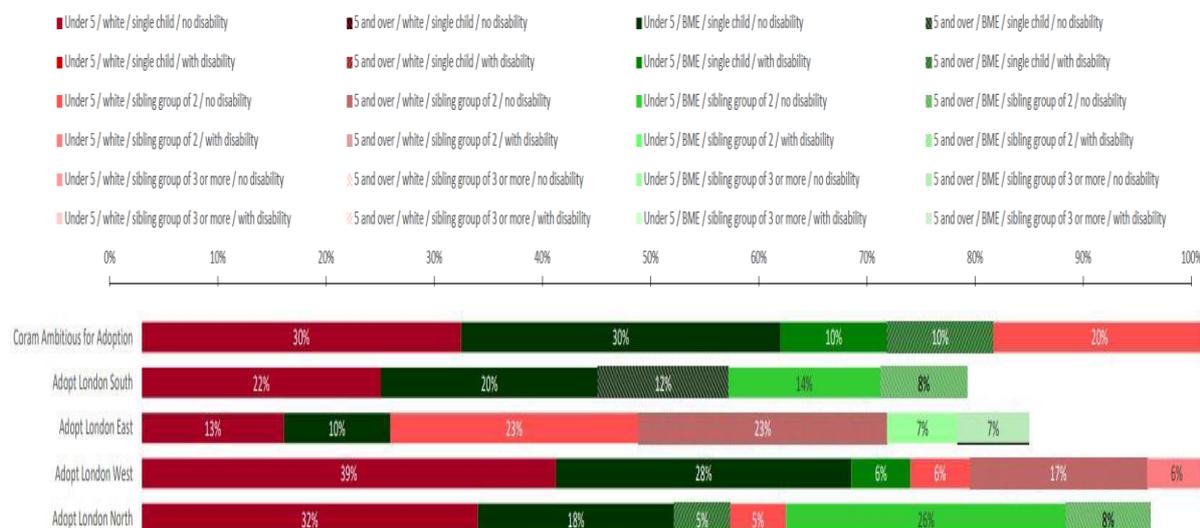


## Adoption Scorecard indicators – Reflecting 3 year average, all figures based on completed adoptions



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



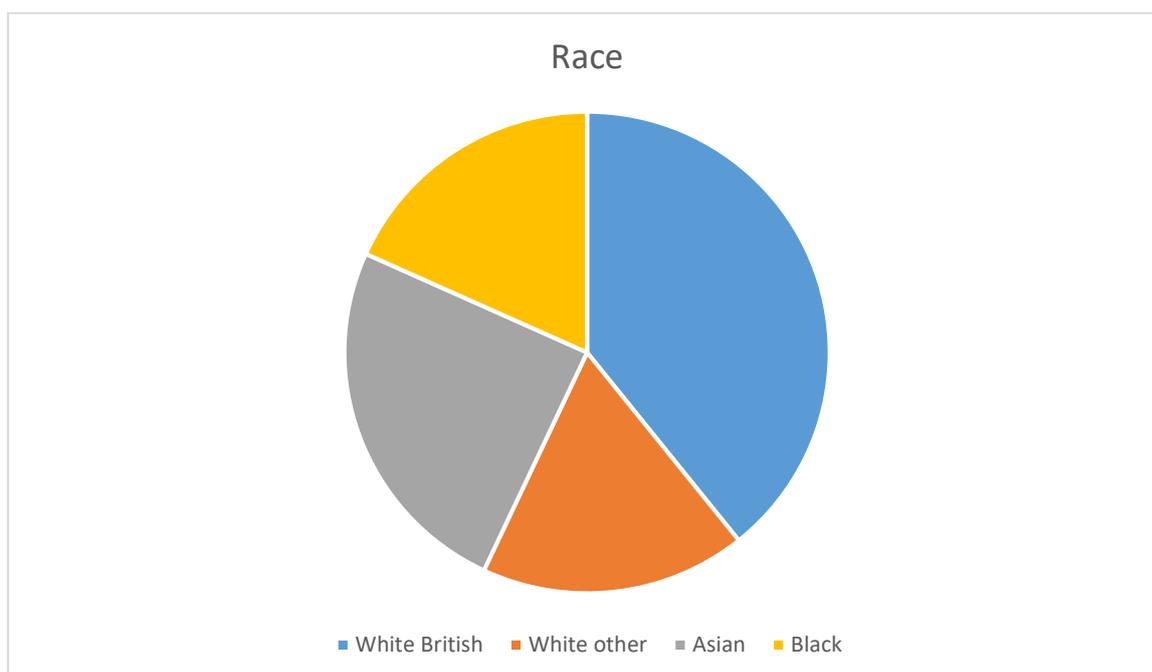
Type	Number	Comment
Step parent (family) adoptions	38	6 were passed from LA's
Inter-country	15	5 in court 1 CP concerns 3 complex cases – all related to children being brought into the country without following regulation

### 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.

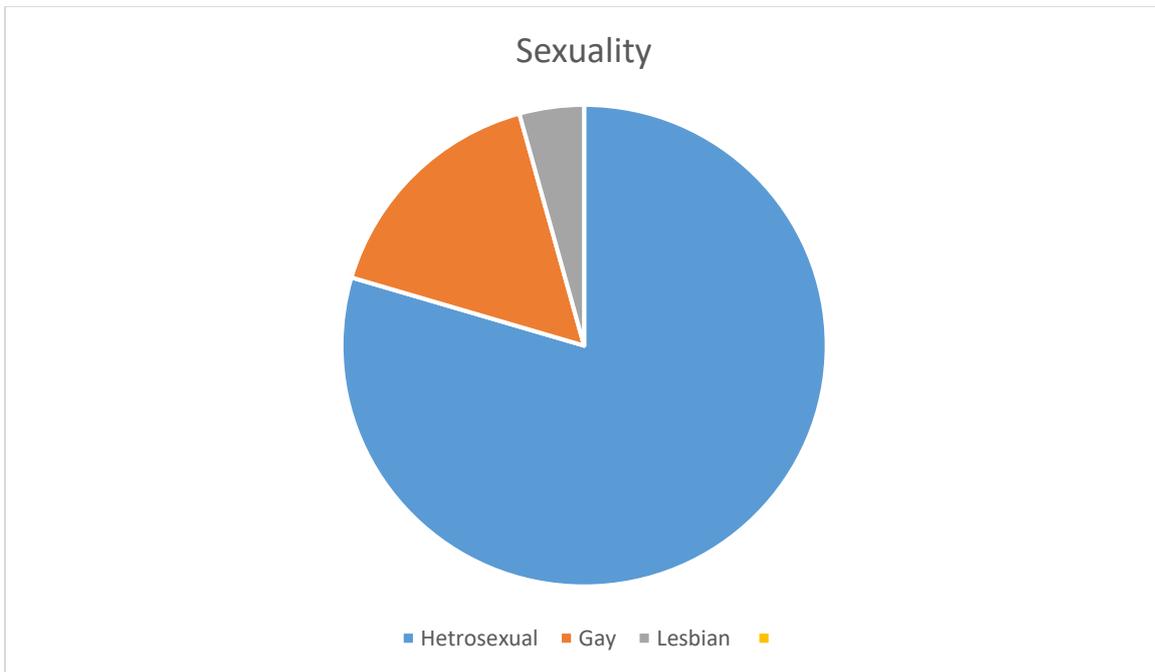
### Characteristics of all prospective adopters





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

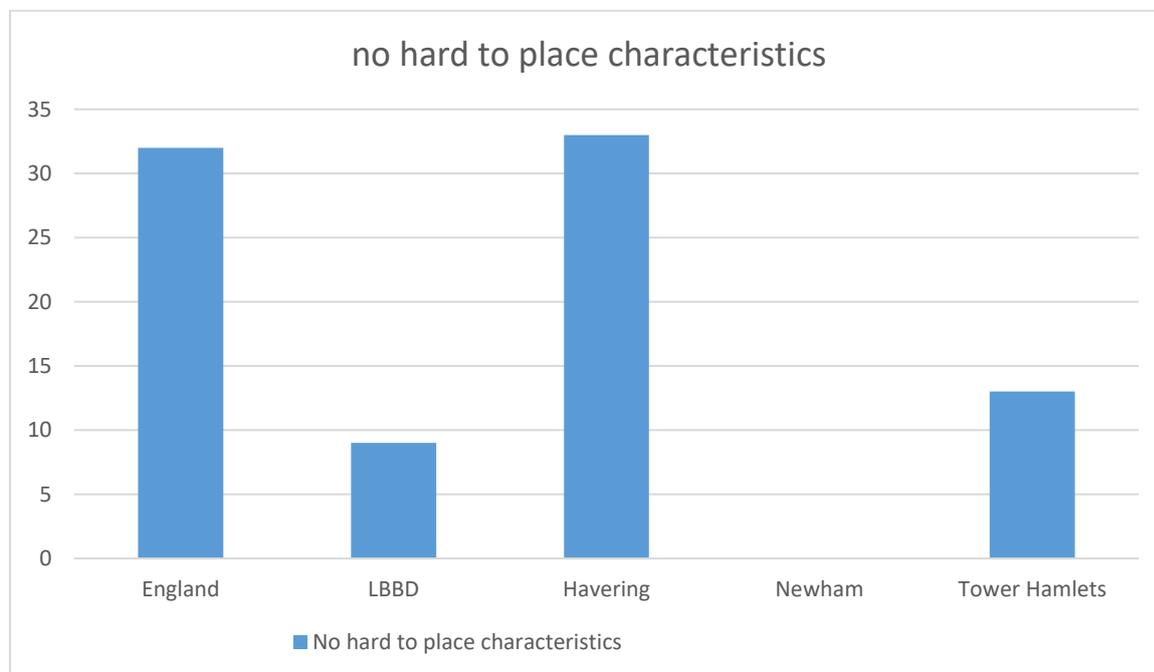


support for all children requiring a match but has temporarily ceased direct attendance at legal and permanency planning meetings.

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

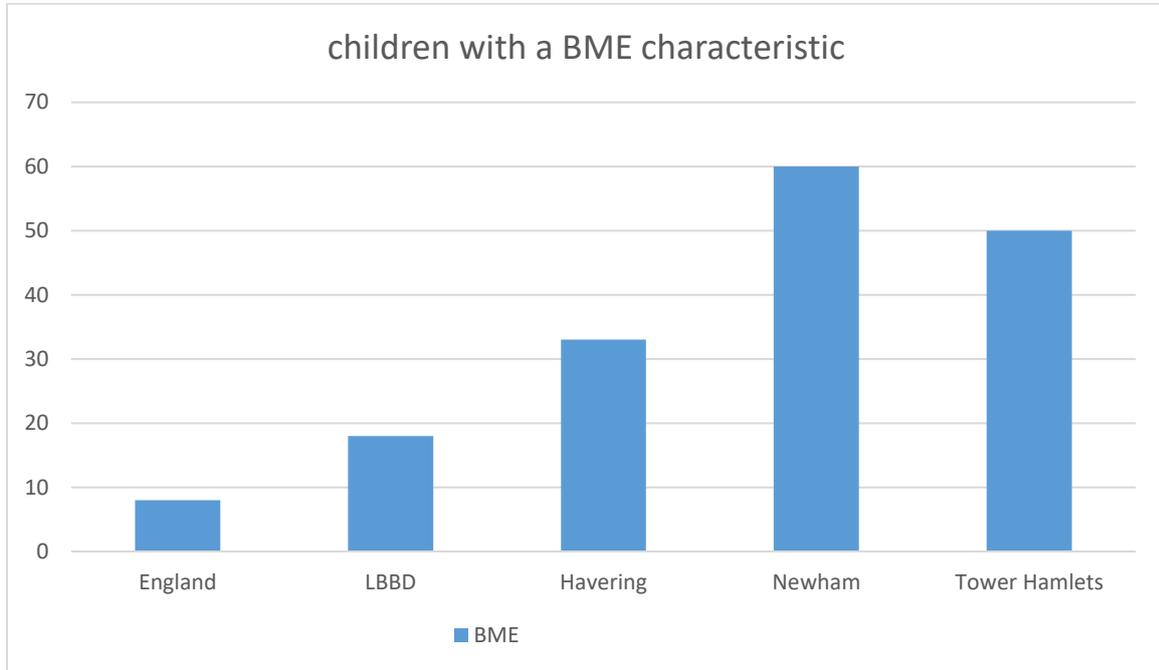
Percentage of children in active family finding at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 who were categorised as having no hard to place characteristics



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



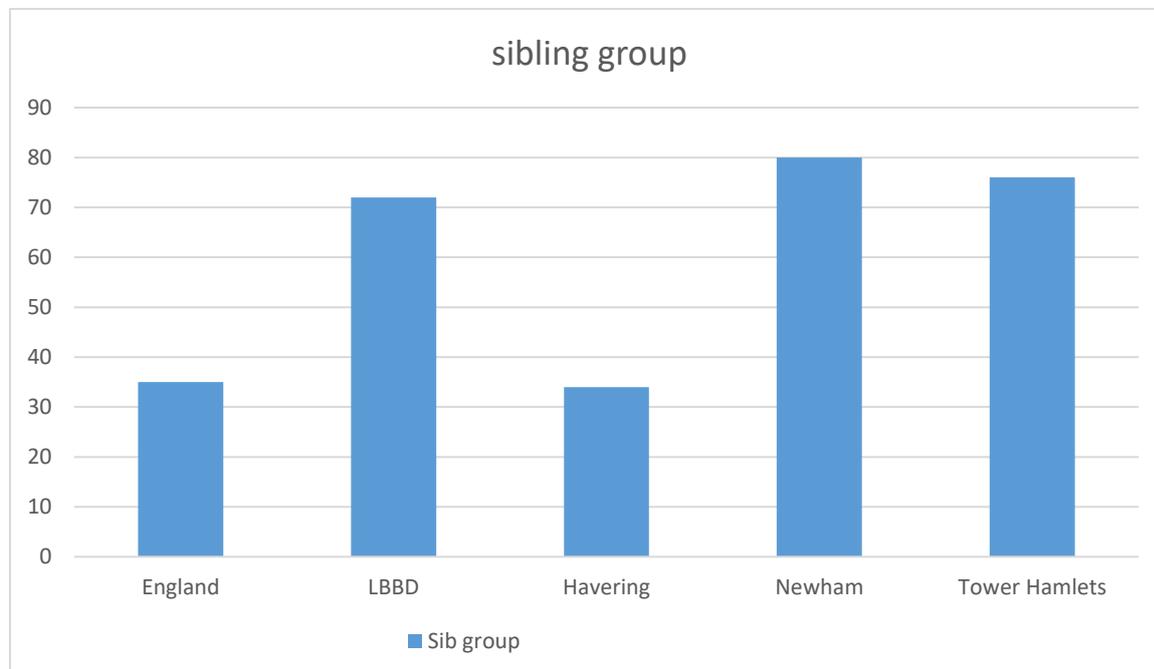
### Percentage of children in active family finding on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 from a BME background



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.

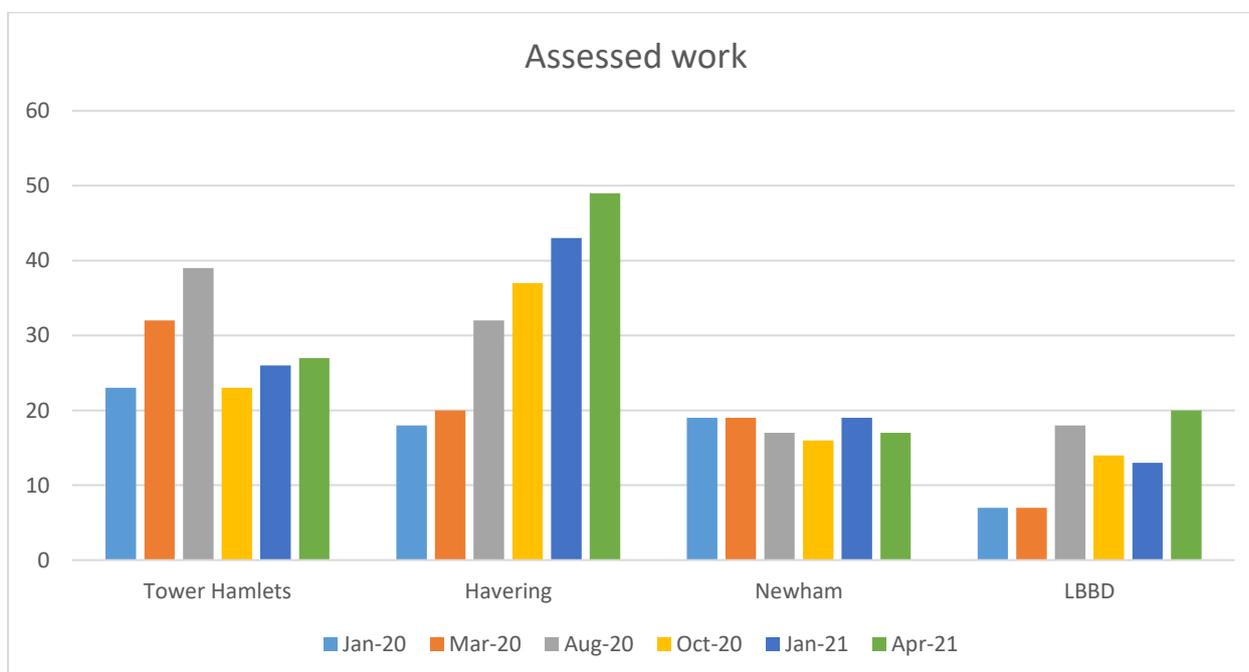
**Service Plan**

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

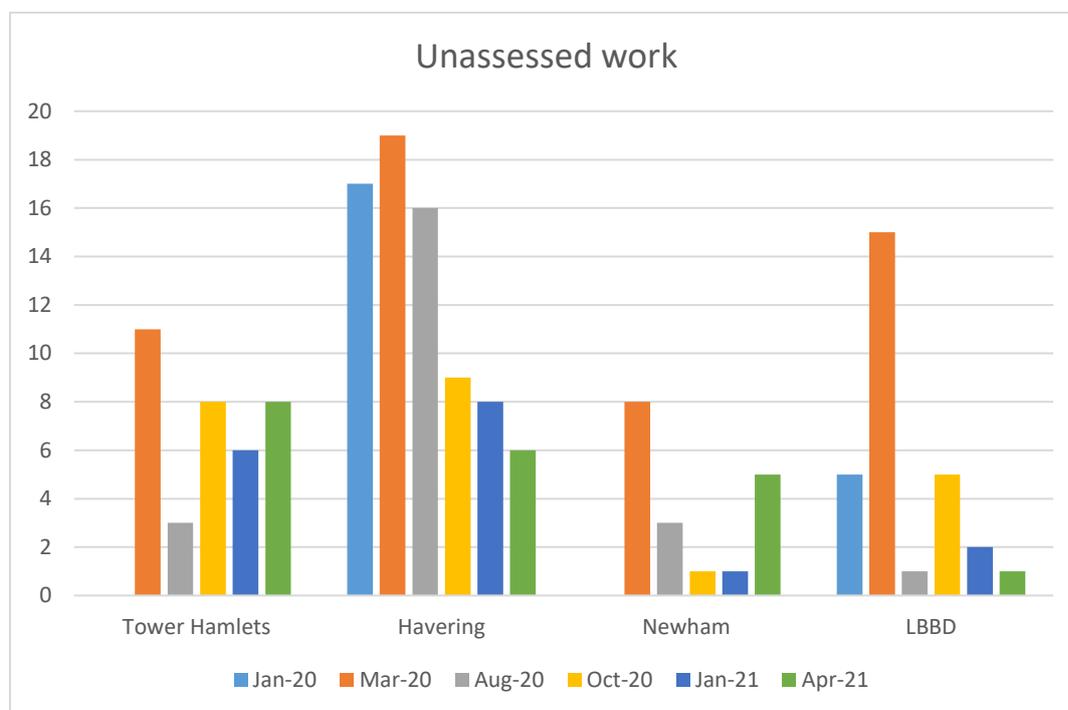
**Adoptive families are supported to achieve happiness and the best outcomes**



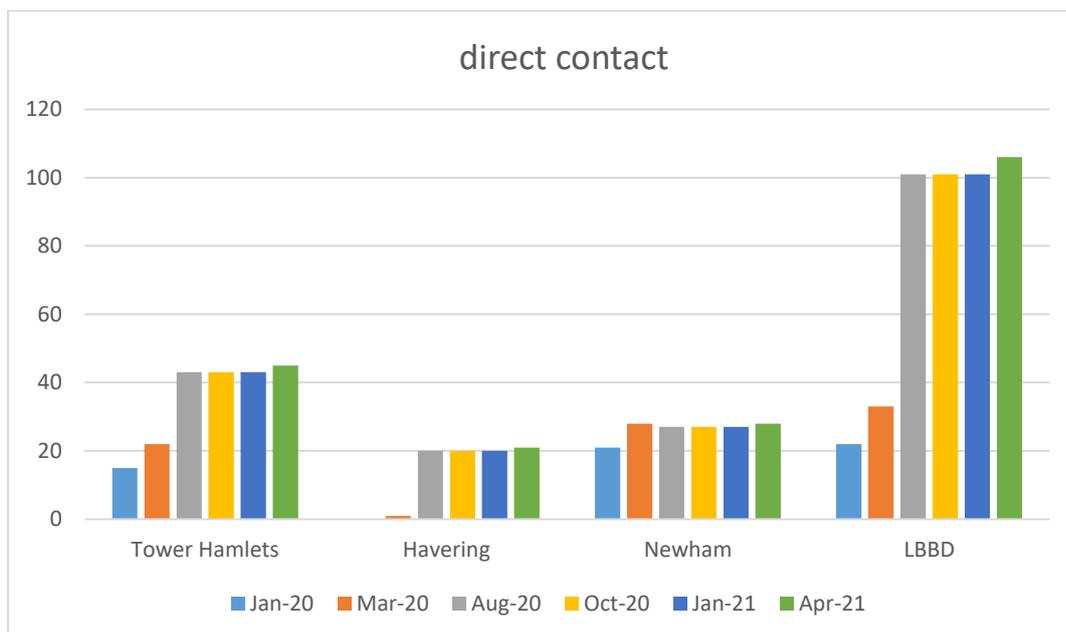
With the exception of Havering, assessed adoption support work has begun to stabilise although overall assessed work continues to increase. There are a larger number of adoptive families living in Havering and entitled to a service. Many were not recruited in



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

Category of Expenditure	20-21 Budget	Actual Expenditure 2020/21	Variance 2020/21
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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## CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 20 JANUARY 2021

<b>Subject Heading:</b>	Children’s Services Annual Complaints and Compliments Report 2020-21
<b>SLT Lead:</b>	Robert South
<b>Report Author and contact details:</b>	Veronica Webb, 01708 432589 <a href="mailto:Veronica.webb@havering.gov.uk">Veronica.webb@havering.gov.uk</a>
<b>Policy context:</b>	As part of the remit of the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006’
<b>Financial summary:</b>	There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However adverse performance against some performance indicators may have financial implications for the Council.

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

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

## SUMMARY

Local authorities have a statutory requirement to set up a complaints process which is set out in section 26 Children Act 1989 and The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 and to publish an Annual Report.

The Children's Services Annual Complaints and Compliments Report for 2020–21, attached as Appendix 1, sets out Children's Services statutory complaints and compliments received during this period, as well as Members' correspondence.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Members note the content of the Children's Services Annual Complaints and Compliments Report 2020-21 attached as Appendix 1.
2. That Members note the continued learning from complaints and the recognition of good practice through compliments.

## REPORT DETAIL

1. Complaints in 2020-21 increased by 9% (87) compared to 2019-20 (80). The number of enquiries increased significantly in 2020-21 compared to 2019-20, by 46%. There continues to be a steady number of complaints escalating to Stage 2 investigations in 2020-21 (6) and is at the same level as in 2019-20. There was one complaint escalated to stage 3 which then escalated to the Ombudsman.
2. There has been a significant increase (36%) in the number of complaints received by Triage/MASH & Assessment in 2020-21 compared to 2019-20. A small increase in the number of complaints to Care Resources, and a decrease for Intervention & Support Services, with 'standard of service' being the highest reason.
3. The increase in complaints received by Triage/MASH & Assessment were primarily linked to allegations around child contact arrangements and concerns around domestic abuse. The number of contacts received by the service in this category in 2020-21 more than doubled in comparison in 2019-20, in line with national trends.
4. In 2020-21 complaints regarding 'attitude/behaviour of staff' decreased significantly by 50% 18 compared to 2019-20 (36) as a result of improved

recording and ongoing practice developed. However 'standard of service' has doubled in 2020-21, with significant increase also in 'inaccurate information'.

5. Throughout 2020-21 demand for children's services increased and this has continued into the current financial year. The number of contacts received in 2020-21 is the highest it's been since 2017/18, and the number of children entering care is the highest it's been since 2016/17.
6. The number of complaints upheld and partially upheld accounted for 39% (6) and (28) respectively of the total complaints. Those upheld or partially upheld resulted in an apology, linked to the need to provide explanation or further information about the reasons for intervention or particular parts of the process that initially may not have been clear. How information is given, and the consistency should be explored. Ombudsman recommendations have been actioned with refresher training being commissioned for safeguarding to ensure practitioners adhere to procedures.
7. Response times improved in 2020-21 with 31% (27) responded to within the 10 working day timeframe. Efforts will continue to improve response times, while recognising the increased complexities of cases and balancing the priorities of the service. Complaints continue to be received by email (57) as the preferred method with the next preferred method being online (18).
8. The cost of independent investigations decreased significantly in 2020-21, due to the withdrawal of three Stage 2 escalations, reducing to 6,087.95 from £19,531.65 in 2019-20.
9. Monitoring information is based on the child(ren) within the family unit in which a complaint was made. There were increases across age groups, 0-5-, 10-24 and 15-17, the highest increase being in the age group of 0-5. Male children were higher across all age groups except 6-9. Children recorded with a disability was low across all ages, and diagnosed with mainly Autism or Aspergers Syndrome. 'White British' children highest representation and reflects the borough's population make up with 'Caribbean' and 'Any other Mixed Background' increasing in 2020-21. Complainants declaring no faith significantly increased in 2020/21(49), compared to 2019-21(6). 'Catholic and 'Christian' faiths showed a slight increase in 2020-21.
10. The number of compliments received in 2020-21 is lower than we would like (22) however shows an improvement from 2019-20 (3). Continued efforts to encourage staff within Children's Services to share compliments so these can be logged to reflect more accurately the good work being done.
11. The Complaints and Compliments action plan has been refreshed and will be monitored at quarterly meetings between the Social Care Complaints and Information Team, and the Children's Services Senior Management Team

## **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:**

As stated in the Report the Authority has a duty to set up a representations process under s 26 (3) Children Act 1989.

There are no legal implications in noting the content of the Annual Report.

**Human Resources implications and risks:**

The recommendations made in this report do not give rise to any identifiable HR risks or implications that would affect either the Council or its workforce.

**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, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex/gender, and sexual orientation.

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. The policy contains a breakdown of complaints received.

## Children's Services

### Annual Report 2020 – 2021 Complaints and Compliments

Prepared for: Robert South, Director Children's Services

Prepared by: Veronica Webb Complaints & Information Team Manager

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## Executive Summary

Children's Services complaints fall within the remit of 'The Children Act 1989' and 'The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006' which includes the requirement to publish an annual report. This report covers the period April 2020 to March 2021.

The number of complaints received during 2020-21 increased slightly with the same level escalating to Stage 2. However through successful virtual meetings and resolutions, two were not progressed. Complaints highlighted that during this period that communication was not as good as it should be, and this may be part due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the difficulties and restrictions at the time. It also highlighted the wider picture nationally where there was an increase in Domestic Violence cases and reflected with increases shown in 2020-21 for complaints related to safeguarding/welfare concerns. This is also reflective of the overall increase in demand, and the increase in the number of children and families requiring help and protection.

As the Covid-19 pandemic took hold, this led to increased pressure across all services within the Council. Resources were redirected to help support the Covid-19 efforts and focused on ensuring that the most at risk or vulnerable children were still seen and low income families were supported with food and care packages. The availability and capacity of staff over the last 18 months has been a challenge. This has been due to staff being unwell, following isolation rules or an increase in social workers leaving the profession. This is the case for many local authorities nationally and is not exclusive to Havering.

Throughout 2020-21 we saw demand increase and this has continued into the current financial year. The number of contacts received in 2020-21 is the highest it's been since 2017/18, and the number of children entering care is the highest it's been since 2016/17. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on many residents is complex and ongoing. We are seeing many families requiring support that have not accessed services before, and may not have done so had it not been for the adverse effects of the pandemic. As with almost all London boroughs, the most common assessment factor in Havering remains 'domestic abuse against the parent', with this increasing year on year. We have also seen an increase of assessments identifying mental health as a factor, as well as increase in contacts relating to neglect.

Alongside this, since children returned to school post-lockdown we have seen an increase in behaviour support requests from schools (42% increase in 2020-21 compared to 2019-20) as well as an ongoing increase in children receiving Education, Health and Care Plans. We are working with our safeguarding partners and third sector colleagues to respond to a decrease in children being 'school ready' as well as a reduction in identification of Young Carers due to a lack of visibility.

Children's Services have continued to use learning from complaints and compliments to help shape services and the increase in compliments are a welcomed shift to acknowledge the good work carried out by those within Children's Services. The 2021-22 complaints action plan identifies how Children's Services will respond to the areas of improvement identified in this report and continue to utilise good practice examples to showcase what works well.

## Introduction

The 'Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006' govern complaints, representations and compliments received about Children's Services.

There are three stages covered within the regulations as follows:

- Stage 1 – Local Resolution

Response times are 10 working days with a further 10 working days if required. If a young person requires an advocate this should be sought for them. If the complainant is not happy with the response at Stage 1 they can request to progress to Stage 2 within 20 working days of receiving the response.

- Stage 2 – Formal Investigation

Response times are 25 – 65 working days. An Independent Investigator and Independent Person are appointed at this stage. The Independent Person must be external to the organisation. Following the independent investigation, the investigation report will be sent to the complainant, along with the adjudication letter giving the decision of the Head of Service. If the complainant is not happy with the response at Stage 2, they can request their complaint to be heard by a Review Panel within 20 working days of receiving the response.

- Stage 3 – Review Panel

The Review Panel is managed independently of the Complaint & Information Team via Democratic Services. The Panel must consist of three independent people, one of whom is the Chair. The Panel must be held within 30 working days from request. Following the Panel Hearing, the recommendations will be issued to the complainant, independent people, advocate and Director within 5 working days. The Director must issue their decision within 15 working days of receiving the recommendations.

## Complaints

### 1.1 Ombudsman Referrals

The number of Ombudsman enquiries stayed at the same level in 2020-21 (6) compared to 2019-20 (6). Two found maladministration with injustice;

- One relating to delay in provision of suitable chair and complaint handling
- One due to failure to properly communicate with parent and partner local authority when considering safeguarding action.

	Apr 20-Mar 21	Apr 19-Mar 20	Apr 18-Mar 19
Maladministration (no injustice)			
Maladministration & Injustice	2	2	1
No maladministration after investigation	1	2	
`Ombudsman discretion			
Investigation with Local settlement			
Outside Jurisdiction			
Investigation Discontinued			
Premature/Informal enquiries	2	1	6
Closed after initial enquiries – no further action	1	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>

### 1.2 Total number of complaints

There has been a slight increase of 9% in the number of complaints in 2020-21(87) compared to 2019-20 (80), however a significant increase in the number of enquiries of 46% in 2020-21(76) compared to

2019-20 (52). Enquiries do not fall within the remit of statutory or corporate complaints and are not included in any further data within this report.

	Enquiries	Stage 1	Stage 1 escalated to Stage 2	Stage 3 Review Panel
2020-21	76	87	6	1
2019-20	52	80	6	

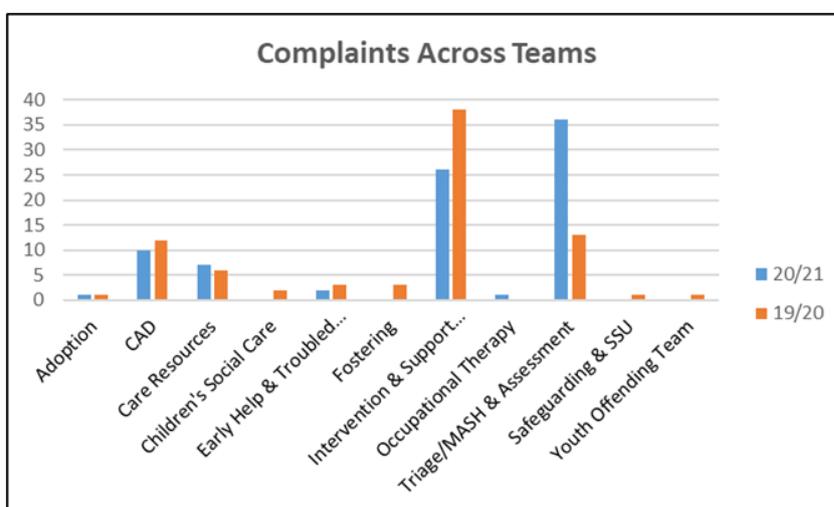
### 1.3 Stages

The number of Stage 1 complaints increased slightly in 2020-21, with the number escalating to Stage 2 at the same level in 2020-21(6) as 2019-20 (6). However, three of the six Stage 2 complaints were not progressed, one due to Court proceedings and two due to successful resolution of complaint. One complaint escalated to Stage 3 and subsequently the Ombudsman.

### 1.4 Teams

There has been a significant increase in the number of complaints received by Triage/MASH & Assessment which has risen by almost three fold in 2020-21 compared to 2019-20.

As a frontline team, the increase shown for Triage/MASH & Assessment were mainly complaints around referrals and allegations being made or child contact arrangements.



The overall number of contacts received by the service in relation to domestic violence more than doubled in 2020-21 compared to 2019-20. During 2020-21 there was a national trend of an increase in domestic abuse concerns and research suggests this can be attributed to families spending more time together during the lockdown and increased pressures and anxieties during the pandemic.

The definitions of domestic abuse have also expanded to include non-violent behaviours including financial abuse, stalking and coercive / controlling behaviour with the case management system being updated to reflect this. Contact arrangements also became more complex for families during the lockdown, with isolation rules in place and residents managing their own anxieties about the transmission of the virus.

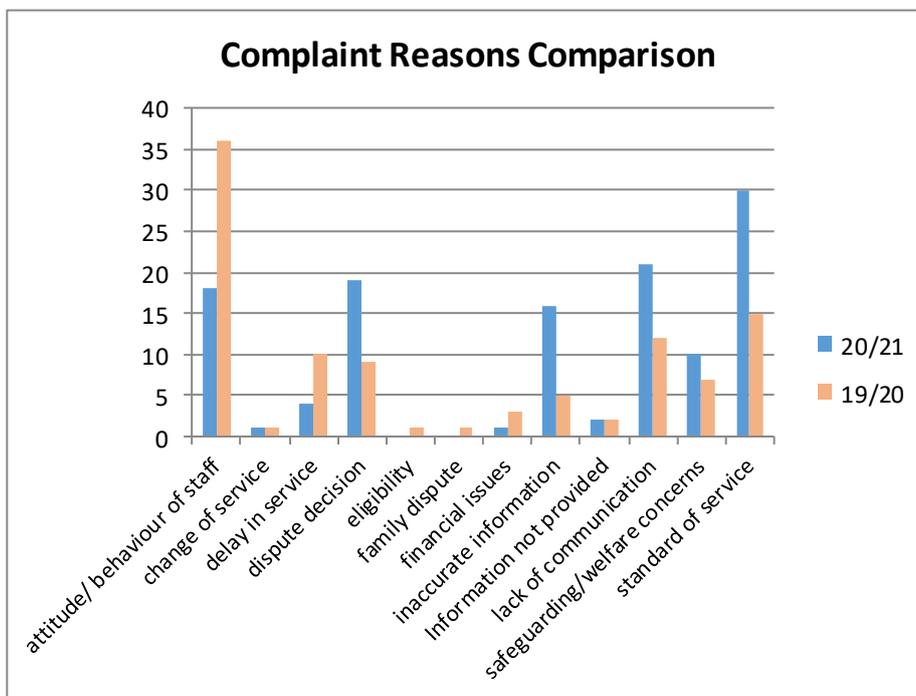
Care Resources saw a very slight increase of 17% in 2020-21(7) compared to 2019-20(6) and Intervention & Support Services saw a decrease of 32% in 2020-21(38) compared to 2019-20(26).

### 1.5 Reasons

'Attitude/behaviour of staff' has decreased significantly by 50%. It has been highlighted that the way this has been recorded previously may have contributed to the high numbers in 2019-20. This is being addressed through review on recording practices and training.

Many complaints giving 'attitude/behaviour of staff' were in relation to parents being unhappy about the decisions that had been made. This is linked to increases shown across 'disputing decisions' which more than doubled in 2020-21 and reflects partly on what could be seen as unwelcomed decisions.

'Standard of service' has doubled in 2020-21(30) compared to 2019-21(15), with 'inaccurate information' also showing an increase three times higher in 2020-21(16) compared to 2019-20 (5). Those relating to inaccurate information tended to be around not agreeing with information within reports/assessments. There was also an increase in 'lack of communication', which may have been impacted during the Covid-19 pandemic with face-to-face contact being restricted and staff resources being stretched. The increase in 'safeguarding/welfare concerns' reflect the increase shown in Triage/MASH & Assessment in relation to referrals.

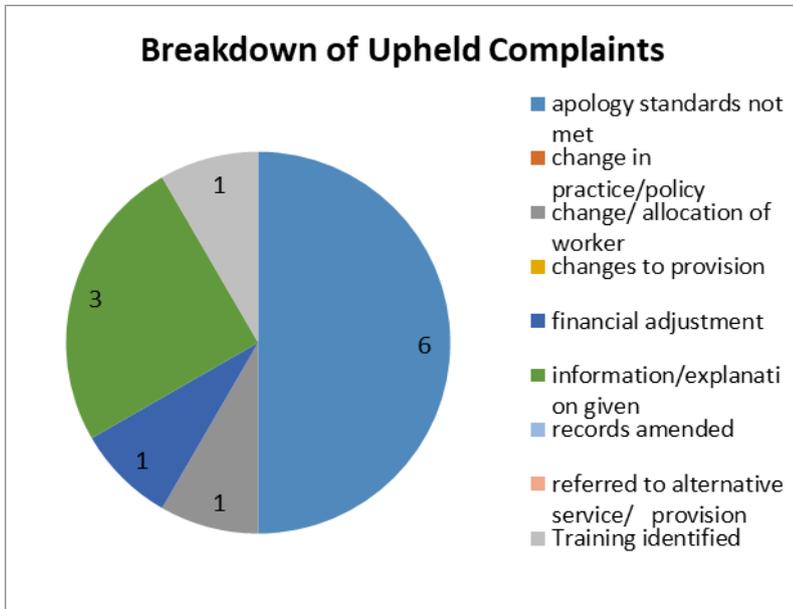


### 1.6 Outcomes & Learning

The number of complaints 'upheld' decreased by more than half, however those 'partially upheld' increased by more than double in 2020-21(28) compared to 2019-20(12). Complaints 'not upheld' rose slightly by 5% in 2020-21(40) compared to 2019-20(38).

For those complaints upheld or partially upheld these resulted in an apology, linked to further information or explanation being provided, as shown in the breakdown of upheld complaints below. This appears to be reflected in the increases shown in 'lack of communication' and 'inaccurate information'. Consideration needs to be given on how information is communicated to ensure this is given in a clear and concise way and that it is understood.

The recommendations from the Ombudsman, highlighted the need for improved cross-border communication and closer working with local authority outside of London and the need for refresher training on Safeguarding. As a result Safeguarding training was commissioned to take into account the learning from the complaint and to ensure practitioners and managers understood and adhered to the Pan London Child Protection Procedures. Cross-border communication with local authority was improved and joint meetings were held, with Head of Quality Assurance contacts being made available in the event of escalation being required outside their individual line management structure.



	upheld	not upheld	partially upheld	withdrawn
20/21	6	40	28	13
19/20	19	38	12	11

During 2020-21 the Covid-19 pandemic diverted Council resources to meet the crisis. It is acknowledged that with the Covid-19 pandemic, came changes to the way of working, with face-to-face contact being restricted, closures of schools and nurseries and the pressures put on families would have an impact.

Children's Services have reflected on these challenges and work is ongoing to refresh the Model of Practice, providing learning and support materials for staff online, including online webinars on Domestic Abuse. Children's Services are also in the process of undertaking a significant amount of work to improve the forms and processes on the case management system to improve accuracy and efficiency.

### 1.7 General Themes and Trends 2020-21

There is a continuation of the general theme regarding parents understanding of the reasons behind intervention from Children's Services. It has highlighted that parents are not always aware of either the legitimate reasons for intervention or the limitations of Children's Services to intervene where there may be discord among separated parents or family members in relation to children. Consideration may need to be given on how information is communicated to parents/families to ensure consistency and to provide awareness of the role of Children's Services when it comes to their intervention.

Inaccurate information showed an increase during 2020-21 and although the pandemic has caused pressures on staff resources, this will need to be revisited through quality assurance and the continued audits of case records. During 2020-21 Children's Services have developed Case Recording Standards which details the roles and responsibilities of all staff in the timeliness and accuracy of records. This is available to all staff and will be further developed as part of a Staff Handbook in 2021-22.

As much as the pandemic has provided accelerated progression in the use of technology in our working lives, it has become evident that the impact of face to face conversations cannot be replicated digitally. As soon as the restrictions allow, it will be the service position that all visits are undertaken in person, unless there is valid reason not to.

### 1.8 Response times

Stage 1 complaint responses within 10 working days improved in 2020-21(27) compared to 2019-20 (19), with a slight decrease of responses within 11-20 working days. 67% of complaints were responded to within 20 working days. With the change of priorities during Covid 19, this did affect response times and efforts will need to be made to improve this going forward.

	Within 10 days		11-20 days		Over 20 days	
	Apr 20-Mar 21	Apr 19-Mar 20	Apr 20-Mar 21	Apr 19-Mar 20	Apr 20-Mar 21	Apr 19-Mar 20
<b>Stage 1</b>	27	19	31	32	29	29
<b>%</b>	31%	24%	36%	40%	33%	36%

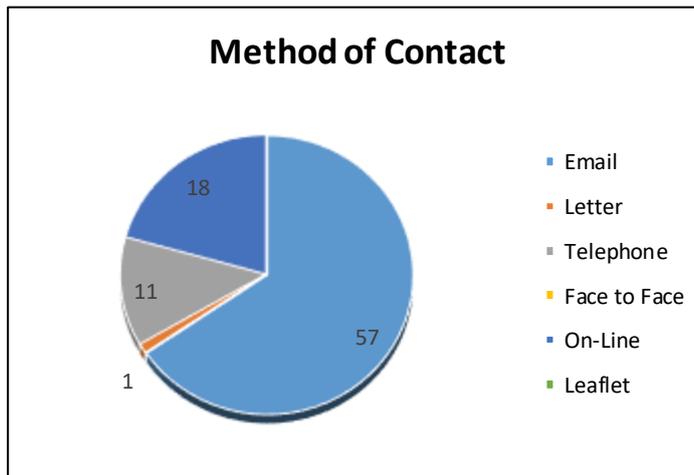
## 1.9 Expenditure

The cost of independent investigations decreased significantly in 2020-21, due to the withdrawal of three Stage 2 escalations. This resulted in a 78% reduction in spend year on year.

	Publicity/ leaflets	Independent investigators	Payments	Total
Apr 2020 – Mar 2021		£6,087.95		£6,087.95
Apr 2019 – Mar 2020		£19,531.65	£8,200	£27, 731.65

## 1.10 How Complaints were received

Email was the preferred method of contact during 2020-21, which increased by 50% compared to 2019-20. The number choosing to complain online has also increased, with a reduction during 2020-21 of those choosing the telephone.



	Letter	E-mail	Complaint Form/Leaflet	Telephone	In Person	Online	Social Media
2020-21	1	57	0	11	0	18	0
2019-20	3	38	2	22	2	13	0

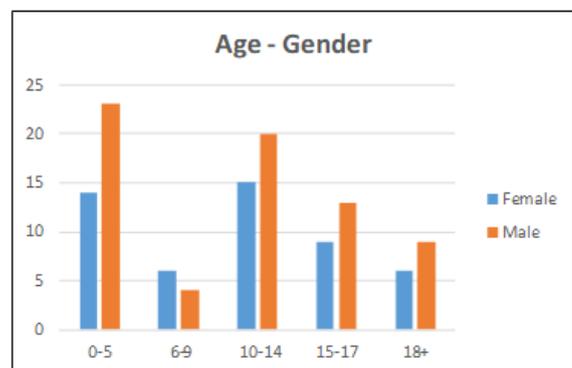
## Monitoring Information

### 2.1 Age and Gender

During 2020-21 there were noticeable increases across ages 0-5, and 10-14 with a slight increase of complaints involving children age 15-17.

It should be noted that data collected for the monitoring information will include all children within a family unit from which a complaint is made.

Across age ranges 0-5, 10-14, 15-17 and 18+ there were a higher number of males in 2020-21 compared to 2019-20, with a higher number of females ages 6-9.



	0-5	6-9	10-14	15-17	18+
20/21	37	10	35	22	15
19/20	19	13	24	17	34

### 2.3 Disability

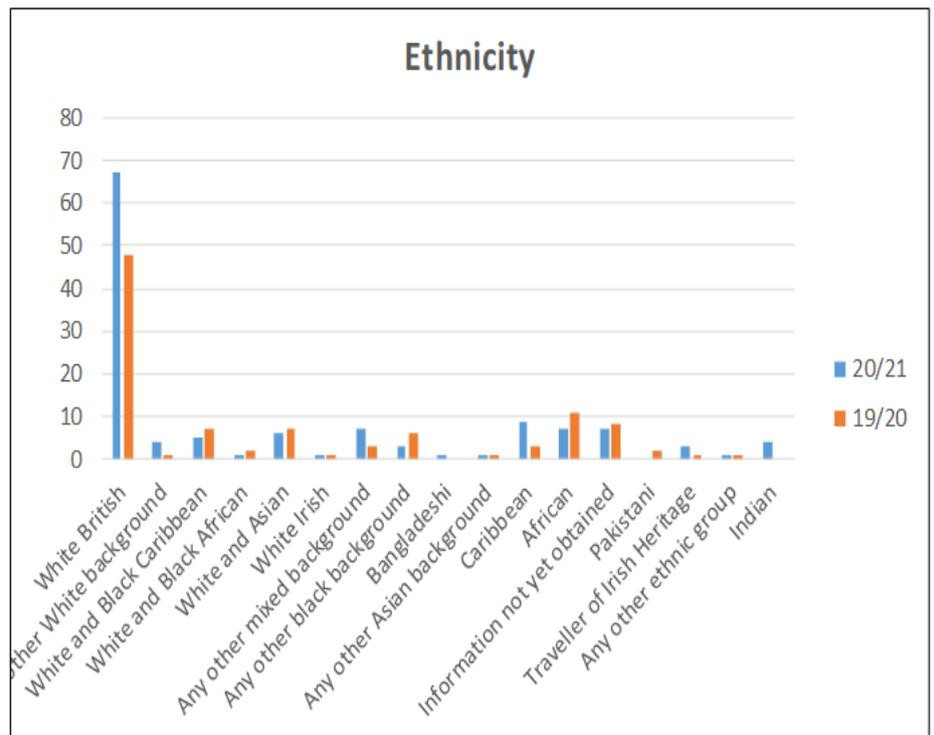
There are a low number of children that had a recorded disability, with the majority having Autism/Aspergers syndrome in 2020-21, which is similar to 2019-20. We know that overall we have low numbers of children accessing SEN Support in Schools, however the number of requests for Education, Health and Care Plan assessments has increased and we expect to see this continue in 2021-22.

Behaviour	Communication	Autism/Aspergers	Hearing
2	2	9	1

### 2.4 Ethnicity

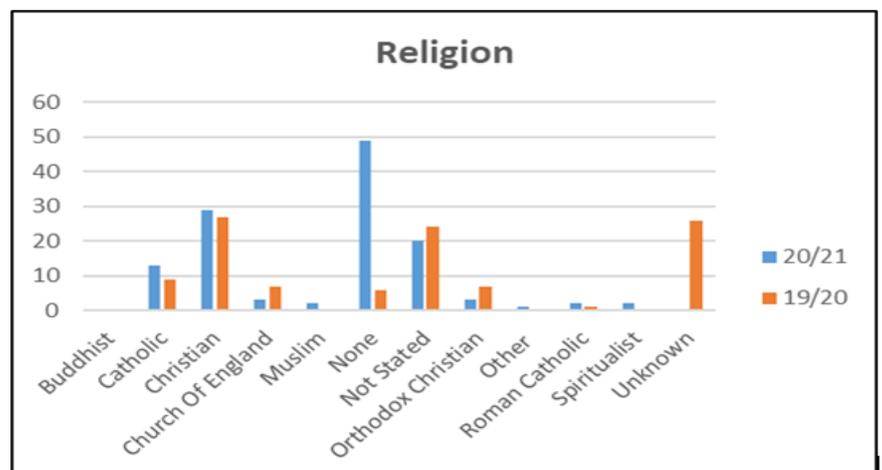
The high number of 'White British' continues to reflect the population within Havering however is not representative of the service users across Children's Services. There are representations across many ethnicities with slight increases shown across 'Any Other White Background', 'Any Other Mixed Background', 'Caribbean', 'Traveller of Irish Heritage' and 'Indian'.

As part of the work being undertaken by the service to understand the disproportionate representation of some BAME groups in our statutory services, we need to ensure that all families and young people feel able and empowered to complain or to share compliments and good news.



### 2.5 Religion

There is a significant increase in those recorded as having 'none' and this may be reflective of the number of children within age-range 0-5. Those recorded as 'Catholic' 'Muslim' 'Roman Catholic' and 'Spiritualist' have had a slight increase in 2020-21.



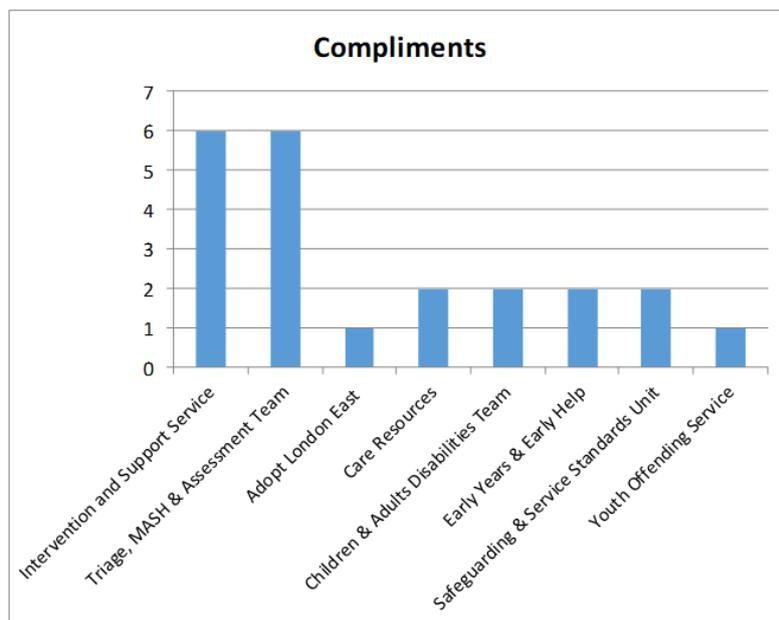
## Members Correspondence

The number of Members correspondence increased by 25% in 2020-21 (69) compared to 2019-20 (55) with 92% being responded to within timeframe.

	2020-21	2019-20
Members Correspondence	69	55

## Compliments

There has been a significant increase in the number of compliments in 2020-21(22) compared to 2019-20(3), which is encouraging with compliments being shared for recording purposes for Children’s Services. It is particularly encouraging to see that the Triage/MASH & Assessment Team received the highest number of compliments, and that even though received the highest number of complaints, that their good work was appreciated.



Some examples of the appreciation shown are given below:

1. A thank you card received from a young person to Independent Reviewing Officer (Safeguarding & Standards Unit)

*“Thank you so much”... “I am really sad that you will not be my IRO anymore” .....“I am really grateful for all the hard work you have done for me”.... “You are one of the most hardworking people I know who shows a true care the work they do”..... “You are the best ever”.*

2. Appreciation shown for a Social Worker (Intervention & Support Services)

*“Please be advised that I have found the Social Worker a breath of fresh air” ... “she heard my struggle”.*

*“I could articulate myself in a relaxed and open environment because she understood. I didn’t have to feel misunderstood or classified/judged”.*

*I was able to explain myself, pains and hurts in this country without judgement. She was extremely professional at all times, and seemed to sense when I am going through financial hardships”.... “I have struggled with asking for what might be considered handouts. She seems to pull this off with ease and tact”.*

### 3. Grateful parents express their gratitude (Early Help)

*"We just wanted to communicate what a great job we think you have done".*

*"We have been impressed with your management, knowledge and ability to pull all together, your constant attention to detail, your openness to considering all the options, your appropriate chasing of people to complete their tasks and by the date they said they would get it done, your identification of any missing things to be done or people that needed to be included (etc. - I could go on).*

*"We are grateful to you and wish you well for the future" –*

### 4. Parents express their appreciation (Children & Adults Disabilities)

*"I thought I'll drop you an email to let you know the exceptional service provided by XX.*

*"As a result of this me and my wife have some breathing space and my son is a happy child again".*

*"XX listened to our concerns, he followed it up, kept us on the loop about the progress and got things done. I'm lucky to have dealt with XX and I really was impressed with his professionalism and I'm extremely grateful for solving our problems".*

### 5. A care leaver showing appreciation for their key worker (Care Resources)

*"I wanted to send this email just to say thank you for all of your support throughout the years. I feel so lucky to have had such a lovely key worker, who never gave up on me, even when I made the most stupid decisions at times haha. Her help and support I was able to keep a roof over my head, become a good parent to my daughter and Finnish at university and give my little girl a mum to be proud of. You really made me feel cared for and was backing me 100 percent and helped me to believe in myself. You made me feel like I was worthy of a good life when my own parents didn't and you will never know how much that means to me".*

*"You gave me so much reassurance and made me feel like I was doing a good job. Thank you so much".*

*"Over the years I have been in care I have felt supported and managed to achieve my potential. Without all of your support I wouldn't be a registered nurse now. Thank you so much! "*

### 6. Parents thanking their Social Workers (Assessment Team)

*"XX and XX met the challenge with honesty and impartiality to matters that was very welcomed. Despite the logistical hurdles of the pandemic, they made active efforts to ensure the views of all parties involved were considered and ensured neutral observations could take place. When the dynamics involved changed, they quickly were able to arrange an additional observation - again this was greatly appreciated.*

*XX kept me apprised of progress during their routine checks and investigations which as a concerned parent helped to allay any concerns I had. I thank them both for their input in my own situation and wish them the best of success in their ongoing work. Being actively involved with my family for a year gave her unique insights into creative approaches to support us. This included a range of measures that sought the input of the various health and education professionals who were involved.*

*The final recommendation made by XX for a shared care pattern ..... initially seemed strange to me and I think the other parties involved. It quickly became apparent that this approach was both a beneficial and a long-sighted one. Due to the dynamics of my own situation, the .... pattern ensured consistent weekday and weekend time with our daughter, whilst not infringing upon the other parent's time-it was welcomed.*

*I would highly recommend this schedule/pattern of contact is trialled wherever it is possible and there is a similar history of parental differences and poor communication (whatever the cause) but both parents are logistically and evidentially able to care for the child/children.”*

## **Conclusion**

Although the number of complaints have increased in 2020-21, the number of Stage 2 investigations have stayed at the same level. Initial meetings with complainants did result in two cases be resolved which were not progressed. We will continue to advocate meetings and monitor the impact this may have on the number of Stage 1 complaints escalating.

Response times were affected during the pandemic, and we will need to improve this as the pressures of the pandemic lessen.

Complaints are playing an important role in service improvements and this is recognised by senior management. Liquid Logic the Social Care case recording system should prove a better tool to record and report complaints. As pressures from the pandemic ease for Children’s Services the use of the complaint module within Liquid Logic will be reviewed.

The recording and monitoring of complaints is continually being reviewed and it is recognised that performance in this area needs to be improved. Further training will be put in place and reviewed regularly. The Children’s Services Improvement Board looks at quality assurance and learning from complaints, while also linking to appropriate training and, going forward, quarterly meetings will be held with the Children’s Services Senior Management Team to review progress against the action plan and any complaints received in the preceding quarter.

Although Children’s Services may be receiving compliments, teams again need to be reminded to forward compliments for recording purposes, as the numbers may not be representative of compliments actually received and the recognised work being done within teams.

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## Complaints and Compliments Action Plan

	Task / Action	Owner	Intended Outcome / Impact	Target Completion Date	Quarterly Update
1	<p>Review and update process for receiving, allocating and responding to complaints within Children's Services including clear roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>Development of a robust structure within the process, as to tasks that should be completed within the ten day response timescale e.g. phone call to complainant.</p>	Tara Geere	Response timescales will be improved with a clear process in place, and regular senior management oversight.	Revised process to be in place by <b>30.01.22</b>	
2	<p>Quarterly meetings between SCCI team and children's senior management team to be diarised.</p> <p>The purpose of this will be to review any complaints and compliments from the preceding quarter, discuss themes/learning and follow up on any current or overdue tasks</p>	Tara Geere	Improved management oversight of complaints will improve timeliness and quality of responses	First meeting to take place by <b>30.01.22</b>	
3	<p>Bi-annual practice week to include a 'lessons learned from complaints' session for all social care staff and managers.</p> <p>Purpose being to come to gather to consider themes and learning from complaints and compliments received in the preceding six months as well as learning from what happened at each stage to prevent escalation.</p>	<p>Lynne Adams / Candice Stephens</p> <p>Practice Development Manager</p>	Learning from complaints becomes a whole service task, with clear evidence for Ofsted as to how we feed learning from complaints back into the service	To be in place for Practice Week <b>March 2022</b>	
4	All managers to ensure that compliments are captured and shared with SCCI team for collation and reporting; to take responsibility for ensuring that a log of all compliments forwarded is kept up to date	All Heads of Service, Group Managers and Team Managers	Compliments are recognised and celebrated with the workforce and any learning from good practice is utilised.	On-going	

5	Children's Services Case Recording Standards to be a regular discussion item at service and team meetings, and case recording to be a standard item within the PDR for all case holding practitioners and managers.	All Heads of Service and Group Managers	Improved case recording should result in fewer complaints regarding improper or inaccurate recording of information.	To be in all PDRs for 2022/23	
6	Introduction of a more formal process for learning from local and national serious case reviews / rapid reviews to be shared consistently across the service	Kate Dempsey / Practice Development Manager	Practice development and learning is disseminated across the service to ensure positive changes occur as a result of serious incidents.	TBC	
7	Sufficient information about the purpose of S47 investigations, along with detail about the process and next steps to be shared with all relevant parents and children. To be evidenced as part of case recording and reviewed in supervision and quality assurance activity.	Sharon Richards/ Helen Harding/ Lynne Adams	Reduction in the number of complaints where families have not been provided sufficient information regarding a S47 investigation taking place	On-going	
Page 63	Process to be developed for families to be notified in writing of any significant changes to service delivery, and the reasons why e.g. new social worker or any significant decisions made (for example, contact arrangements, change of care plan or end of intervention)	Sharon Richards / Helen Harding	Improved communication regarding significant changes should result in fewer complaints regarding poor communication	Process to be in place by <b>March 2022</b>	
9	All managers to be responsible for ensuring compliance with data protection regulation (GDPR) within key documents such as assessments and care plans before they are shared; to be checked through quality assurance processes	All Heads of Service, Group Managers and Team Managers	All information shared is relevant, proportionate and compliant with our duties under data protection regulation, therefore reducing the likelihood of complaints in this area.	On-going	
10	All staff to undertake annual refresh GDPR training, with this included as part of the PDR			To be in all PDRs for 2022/23	





## CHILDREN AND LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE 29 March 2022

<b>Subject Heading:</b>	To outline the increase in demand and impact on costs for placements for children and young people with multiple, complex needs.
<b>SLT Lead:</b>	Robert South, Director Childrens Service
<b>Report Author and contact details:</b>	Priti Gaberria, 01704 431257, priti.gaberria@havering.gov.uk
<b>Policy context:</b>	Childrens Social Care
<b>Financial summary:</b>	This report relates to the increasing placements costs for children with multiple complex needs.

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

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

### SUMMARY

This report provides details of the increase in the number of children and young people with multiple complex needs requiring support from the authority and the impact this is having on the placements budget.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

## **REPORT DETAIL**

Havering is a growing borough, with ONS population projections for the 0-17 population rising from 59,020 currently to 61,369 by April 2024. The changing demography locally will impact on demand over the next five years.

In the years 2008-2019, running up to the pandemic the sector nationally saw a 19% increase in referrals. The number of children subject to a child protection plan increased by 76% in the same period. In 2019 it was estimated that children's social care was facing a £3.1 billion funding gap by March 2025 (LGA). It is estimated that the number of vulnerable children being placed in council care in England could reach almost 100,000 by 2025, up from 69,000 in 2015.

The impact of the pandemic on children has been profound, with increased mental health difficulties and exploitation (both virtual and physical) affecting many. The impact on vulnerable families has also been significant and we are only beginning to understand the long-term impact on these families.

More children have been referred who were not previously known to social care services. Families who were just about managing pre-pandemic and would not normally come to the attention of social care are now in need of significant help. Children are presenting at a later stage, once issues are complex and entrenched and becoming subjects of child protection plans or proceedings.

There has been an increase in the number of children and young people with complex, multiple needs required support and local authority accommodation. In particular placements which can support young people with mental health needs, those involved with criminal activity or at risk of exploitation and/or those out of parental control are more frequently required (see appendix 1). Due to the multiple complexities being presented we have seen an increase in the average cost of a placement.

It is difficult to identify children and young people that are deemed high cost as a static cohort. There are multiple factors to take into account such as being able to quantify and measure interventions which are having a positive impact, thus reducing costs and support needs.

In terms of foster care, despite the numbers of fostering households and foster carers in England being at their highest ever levels, the increases are not keeping up with demand in the sector. Although record levels of enquiries were received from prospective fostering households, the conversion rate from applications continues to fall. (Fostering in England 2020 to 2021: main findings, published 11 November 2021). This picture is mirrored locally.

The Competition and Markets Authority interim report (October 2021) concluded the placements market overall are not providing sufficient appropriate places to ensure that children consistently receive placements that fully meet their needs, when and where they require them. This is resulting in some children being placed in accommodation that, for example, is too far from their home base, does not provide the therapy or facilities they need, or separates them from their siblings. Given the impact that poor placement matches have on the well-being of children, this is a significant concern.

Evidence indicates that some providers are able to earn significant profits, paid for by local authorities, through the provision of children's social care placements. If this market were functioning well, we would not expect to see under-supply and elevated prices and profits persisting over time. Instead, we would expect existing and new providers to create more places to meet the demand from local authorities, which would then drive down prices and profits. The fact that this does not appear to be happening suggests that there must be factors that are acting to deter new provision. We have recently undertaken an analysis of costs paid across the sub-region for sub-regional project and have found that this is a market condition that is being experienced by LA's within the sub-region, and probably beyond. The analysis showed that neighbouring LA's are paying higher rates for placements for young people with multiple complex needs.

The impact of the pandemic has had a significant impact on local expenditure on LAC, which is twofold. Firstly, since the end of the financial year, LAC numbers in high cost placements have increased from 153 in March 2021 to 192 in October 2021. This represents an increase of 25% in just seven months, and includes a 32% increase in Residential placements, 56% in semi-independent placements and 41% in IFAs. Additionally, the costs of placements have also increased significantly, reflecting the higher cost of placements which is a combination of complexity of need, but also availability of places, which is pushing up prices. The average weekly cost of residential places has increased by 14% since March 2021 and weekly costs of semi-independent placements have increased by 26% during the same period.

The forecast expenditure on LAC for 2021/22 is £8.710m, compared to the 2020/21 outturn of £6.834m. This represents an increase of £1.9m this financial year and an overspend against the current budget of almost £1.4m. Once children become looked after, they usually remain in the care system. Consequently, the additional costs that have arisen in 2021/22 will be ongoing in future years.

**Table 1 – Average costs of placements by type**

Placement type	Weekly Cost
Fostering - friend or relative	£375.61
Fostering - in-house	£483.76
Fostering - IFA	£868.65
Residential – sub-regional block	£3,584.49
Residential - external	£3,635.46
Supported accommodation	£1,084.47
Secure home	£2,147.56
Placed with family	£0
Other	£0

It is difficult to assess how long and how severe this spike in cases will continue. Even if cases plateau out now, current spend will remain £1.4m over budget. Excluding the spike in numbers, over a longer period of time the data shows that 5% of referrals end up as LAC after a period of approximately two years.

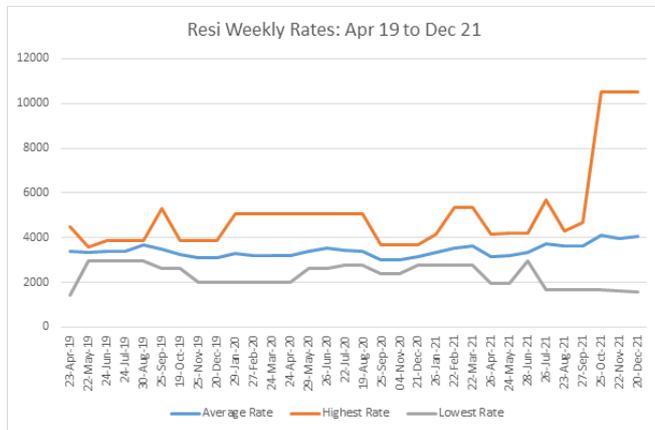
Given the projected significant increase in referrals, it is probable that there will be a longer term increase in LAC numbers. Based on the information above, average referrals will rise to around 290 per month in 2022/23 and 310 per month in 2023/24. This is an extremely prudent estimate and assumes that the current spike in cases will level off. The consequence of this is likely to be an additional 18 LAC in 2022/23 and a further 12 in 2023/24 above the current level. A further 18 LAC in 202/23 will cost approximately £0.9m and 12 approximately £0.6m (based on the current 40 increase in LAC costing an additional £2m).

In order to meet demand and to manage costs and the market Childrens Services and the Joint Commissioning Unit have been working together to develop placement sufficiency by:

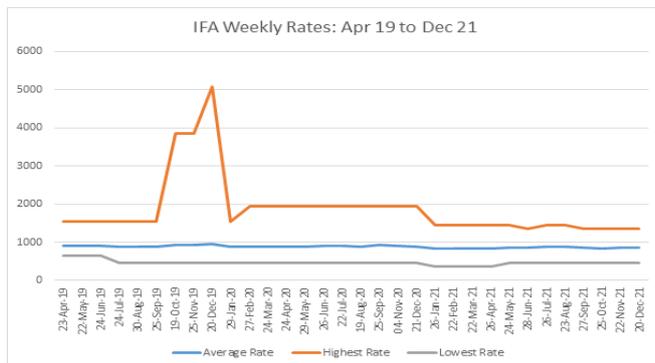
- increasing the number of in-house foster cares;
- developing local accommodation options such as semi-independent provision using council properties;
- introducing sub-regional block contracts;
- developing Dynamic Purchasing Systems (DPS)
- Working with other Local Authorities to share/develop services and provision as appropriate.

We have already started to see some benefits such as better quality provision, stability with costs and improved outcomes for young people from the work outlined above.

**Table 2: Average weekly rates residential**



**Table 3: Average weekly rates Independent Fostering Agency**



**IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

**Financial implications and risks:**

Children Services is experiencing a significant financial pressure mostly due to social care placements. The current pressure has surpassed the pre pandemic one and is forecasted to increase further in 22-23. The pressure is due to a combination of new placements , increased complexity but as well market price inflation which is explained by the under supply point mentioned above. If the market provision continues to be more expensive there will be a significant financial pressure transferred to Children Service’s budget.

**Legal implications and risks:**

There are no apparent legal implications from noting the content of the Report

**Human Resources implications and risks:**

The recommendations made in this report do not give rise to any identifiable HR risks or implications that would affect either the Council or its workforce.

**Equalities implications and risks:**

This report is for information only and therefore there are no equalities implications arising from this report and an EqHIA therefore is not necessary.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS</b></p> <p>None</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b></p>
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None

## **APPENDIX 1: CASE STUDIES**

### **Case Study B: high cost in semi-independent provision.**

B is 17 year old young person on a Full Care Order to Havering since February 2020. Havering has been involved in B's life since 2019, following a disclosure she made of sexual abuse by her step -father.

B presents with a range of needs which include ADHD, possible autism and trauma. This has resulted in Billy demonstrating suicidal ideation and other harmful behaviors, which have required her to have multiple hospital admissions in a mental health hospital. Her longest stay was a period of six months.

B has benefitted from a range of services, including mental health outreach and currently lives in a semi-independent provision. B attends college and is studying Health and Social Care. She is very happy in her current home and wants to remain there until she is 18 years of age. This is her fifth placement in the last 12 months.

Keeping B safe, supported and helping her to transition into safe adulthood is high cost to Children's Service.

Her current home has increased their weekly fee from £700 per week to £1,820 weekly as a result of the ongoing support required from staff to meet her needs. Without this level of support it is likely that the home she lives in will give notice to end her care arrangements with them.

### **Costs to the Local Authority**

Basic package: (Core Cost) £700 per week

8 additional hours of support from Senior staff per day: £160 p/d

Day staff: 10am-6pm

Waking staff: 7pm-10pm to complete waking night staff

Total costing p/w: £1820

### **Case Study I: high cost in a specialist residential children's home.**

I is 15 year old child in care on an Interim Care order to Havering. This care order was obtained in an emergency situation on the 6<sup>th</sup> October 2021 alongside a deprivation of liberty order (DOLS) and a Recovery Order. I was moved that evening to a placement in Scotland as the only placement available in the UK.

I came to the attention of Havering in July 2020 following a breakdown in the relationship with her mother. Following family support intervention, I returned to her mother's care until April 2021. At this point I was removed from her home under Police Protection in to a foster care placement which became a s.20 arrangement.

I has caused considerable concern to all professionals involved in her care due to the high level risk relating to contextual safeguarding which has included missing, criminal and sexual exploitation. It became increasingly apparent that I's risks were increasing to a level where there had to be a decision to keep her safe from very serious harm. The level of harm she suffered included rape, coercion and significant exploitation from adult males.

A decision was made to move I into the most secure care we could provide to her which has been very high cost but has resulted in keeping her safe from harm. The cost of I's care which has now moved to Cumbria as this was the only provider that could offer the security required in accordance with the DOLS.

I is doing very well in her current home and is enjoying the opportunity to be a child with a high level of support. She has also contributed to very significant police information relating to the adults who have exploited her and other children

### **Costs to the Local Authority**

The cost of this placement is £10,500 weekly as she is the only child in the placement.

### **Case Study F - high cost semi independence provision**

F is a 16 year old boy who is looked after by Havering children's services under a section 20 arrangement in a semi-independent provision out of borough for his own safety. This is F's third placement in a year.

F was previously remanded to prison during the summer of 2021 for burglary offences. Current concerns for F are around his involvement in anti-social behaviour, drug misuse, and criminal activity. There are concerns regarding F's undiagnosed mental health issues and possible undiagnosed special needs as he presents with signs of ADHD.

F associates with adults known to be involved in drug dealing and is known to be a cannabis user. There are further concerns as F has links with young adults who are closely linked with gangs/county lines.

F is currently missing from his placements and there is a warrant out for his arrest. He is likely to be given a custodial sentence when located by the Police.

### **Costs to the Local Authority**

Basic package :(Core Cost) £700 per week

Additional staffing £3045

Total costing p/w: £1045

OO is a 16 year old with a diagnosis of ASD, Pathological Demand avoidance, ADHD and Oppositional Defiant Disorder, and Emotional Regulation Disturbance and is a transgender white British female and has mental capacity, however this fluctuates when she is in crisis.

### **Current situation**

O has been supported by the CAMH service and has been admitted under section 20 on 2 occasions in the last year. The most recent admission was after setting fire to the family home and making threats to end her life and that of her family. It was determined that triggers to her behaviours were associated with her relationship with her family. The multiagency team working with her felt that it would not be safe for her to return to the home, however her mental health needs could be met within the community and so O was taken into L/A care and s20 was signed by her parents.

### **Placement**

A placement was identified at semi-independent provider who are set up to provide care and support for adults over the age of 16+ who are living with disabilities: learning disabilities, physical disabilities, autism, mental health disorder and other challenges. She moved into the placement 2:1 ratio, and the current cost of this placement is £5,880 per week.

The placement is generally working well, there have been some episodes of violent and challenging behaviour. Whilst in the community with 2:1 staff she became distressed and heightened and made threats to end her life. This escalated to the point where she physically

assaulted her 2 support workers and caused significant damage to the support workers vehicle. She repeatedly banged her head on the pavement.

An ambulance was called however she remained distressed and the police were called. She was restrained by the police using handcuffs, however after she assaulted one police officer, further officers were called and she was placed in leg cuffs with 4.1 officers attending. She was taken to Queens Hospital and kept overnight, however was discharged the next day back to the care of Home from Home on a 3.1 ratio with the mental health team supporting in the community.

### **Education**

O has an EHCP, but does not attend a school or college any longer due to her not engaging and the risks her behaviour poses. She is currently working with her case officer on remote learning and wants to sit her GCSEs next year. She has music therapy which she enjoys.

### **Focus of work of multi-agency team**

- To help her recognise and manage behaviours
- Ongoing review of medication
- Keep her engaged in education and planning for the future
- Maintain and rebuild relationship with family
- Keep her and others around her safe.

### **Case Study: WL currently residing at home with family**

WL is a 12 year old boy a diagnosis of autism, and profound learning difficulties, sleep deprivation, high sensory needs, difficulties with his communication, which can lead him to being frustrated and displaying challenging and unpredictable behaviour, with him being happy one moment and extremely aggressive and upset the next.

W also has complex health needs that require constant supervision and care. He is under CAMHS, local paediatric services and Royal London for his dental care. He is doubly incontinent; he has a very poor sleep pattern (usually a three hour stretch maximum) and Mother reports he continuously squeals during the night. This has impacted on all family members sleep patterns.

W lives with his Mother and 2 siblings aged 3 and 15.

Mother has mental health problems and is on medication and reports that she just cannot cope with W. She is a single parent and has no family to support her.

### **Short break Support Provided**

Overnight respite takes place for 2 nights per every other weekend at a specialist provider in West London. There are no local providers that meet his complex needs. The costs for this provision are: £475 per night and £160 per trip for transport, so the monthly cost is £2,540,

annual cost of £30,480. Health contribution through continuing health care is to provide 24 hours of support in the home.

**Current situation**

Mother reports that she cannot continue to support her son. The offer of additional respite has been refused and Mother wishes her son to go into residential care. This has not been agreed as yet, but is being explored the likely cost of this will be 4,500 per week or 182,000 per year.

**CHILDREN AND LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
SUB-COMMITTEE  
29 March 2022**

<b>Subject Heading:</b>	Quarter 3 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 3 performance relevant to the Children and Learning Sub-Committee

**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 3 (October to December 2021).

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

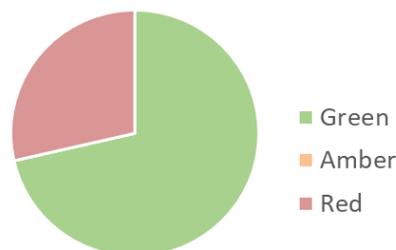
- notes the contents of the report and presentation and makes any recommendations as appropriate.

**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 were 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 2, 2021/22)
  - Long-term performance – with the same time the previous year (Quarter 3, 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. The report also shows the latest available benchmarking data (London and statistical neighbour averages), 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.

**Quarter 3 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**

**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.

**ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

The Council is committed to the principles of sustainability and efficiency at the heart of our decision making. The Council supports the development of sustainable communities and services which will promote positive economic and welfare benefits for Havering residents, businesses and visitors.

There are not considered to be any negative climate change implications arising from the performance indicators included in this report.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Appendix 1: Quarter 3 Children and Learning Performance Presentation 2021/22.



# Haverling

LONDON BOROUGH

# Quarter 3 Performance Report 2021/22

## Children and Learning O&S Sub-Committee

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

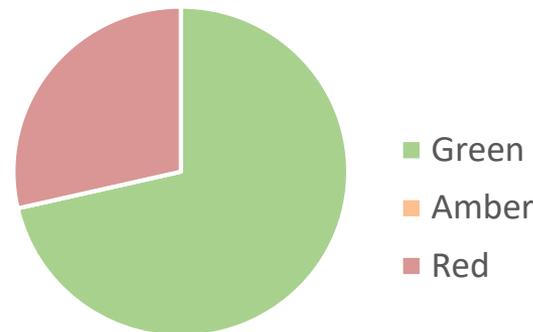
- Overview of the Council's performance against the indicators selected by the Children and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee
- The report identifies where the Council is performing well (**Green**), within target tolerance (**Amber**) and not so well (**Red**).
- Where the RAG rating is '**Red**', '**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

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Quarter 3 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 3 Performance – Primary Education

Indicator and Description	Value	Tolerance	2021/22 Annual Target	2021/22 Q3 Performance	Short Term DOT against Q2 2021/22	Long Term DOT against Q3 2020/21	Latest available London Average	Latest available Statistical Neighbour Average	
% of providers judged to be Good or Outstanding by OFSTED	Higher is better	+/-4%	96.0%	96.6% (GREEN)	→	96.6%	↓ 96.7%	94.3%	87.8%
% of pupils attending a Good or Outstanding provider	Higher is better	+/-4%	97.0%	97.5% (GREEN)	↑	97.4%	↑ 97.3%	94.2%	88.2%
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)	0.01% (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)	0.90% (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)	0.47% (2019/20 AY)

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

## Quarter 3 Performance – Secondary Education

Indicator and Description	Value	Tolerance	2021/22 Annual Target	2021/22 Q3 Performance	Short Term DOT against Q22021/22		Long Term DOT against Q3 2020/21		Latest available London Average	Latest available Statistical Neighbour Average
% of providers judged to be Good or Outstanding by OFSTED	Higher is better	+/-6%	77.0%	77.8% (GREEN)	→	77.8%	→	77.8%	77.7%	71.3%
% of pupils attending a Good or Outstanding provider	Higher is better	+/-6%	85.0%	86.7% (GREEN)	↑	85.4%	↑	85.4%	81.4%	74.0%
Permanent exclusion rate* (annual)	Lower is better	Not set	Not set	0.00% (2020/21 AY)	→	0.00% (2020/21 AY)	↑	0.02% (2019/20 AY)	0.09% (2019/20 AY)	0.11% (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)	6.75% (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)	3.46% (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 3 Performance – Children’s Services

Indicator and Description	Value	Tolerance	2021/22 Annual Target	2021/22 Q3 Performance	Short Term DOT against Q2 2021/22	Long Term DOT against Q3 2020/21	Latest available London Average	Latest available Statistical Neighbour 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%	66.7% (GREEN)	↑ 65.2%	↑ 58.7%	69%	63%
% 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%	11.4% (RED)	↑ 10.2%	↑ 8.6%	13%	20%
% of Children in Care with 2+ changes of social worker in the last 12 months	Lower is better	+/-5%	15%	35.1% (RED)	↓ 22.4%	↓ 13.8%	N/A	31%

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

## Highlights

With the resumption of Ofsted visits in the Academic Year 2021/22, the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter saw 7 inspections of Havering schools in the Autumn term. All five primary schools that were inspected retained their 'Good' outcomes, two of which were their first as academies. The two secondary academies inspected also retained their 'Good' outcome. Havering's **overall percentage of providers judged to be Good or Outstanding by OFSTED** (both phases) is therefore unchanged at 93.1%, which is 4.5 percentage points above the national figure. The **percentage of pupils attending a Good or Outstanding provider** also remains above target for both phases, and better than the London and Statistical Neighbour averages.

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 and statistical neighbours - 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 schools have experienced significant challenges following school closures during COVID-19, head teachers have continued to work closely with the Inclusions Team to avoid exclusions where possible. As reported previously, the Inclusions policy has enabled close working relationships between the LA and schools where alternatives to fixed term and permanent exclusions have been developed and implemented. This has resulted in 100% of 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 third quarter of the year to 66.7%, which is slightly better than the average performance for our statistical neighbours (based on 2020/21 data) but lower than the latest available London average. Performance is 8 percentage points higher than at the same time last year.

The proportion of children in care experiencing 3 or more placements within a 12 month period (not reported here but another key measure of placement stability) remains higher in Havering than the rest of London. Deep dives into casework for older children within this cohort were undertaken during the quarter to identify causes, themes and areas for improvement to increase placement stability. Informed by this, steps are being taken to address issues of matching, and support for placement stability, including sufficiency and process. A new Placement Referral Form (PRF) went live in December 2021 and a workshop to be run by the Head of Service for ISS in March will now focus on the quality of completed forms, with the aim of better matching for children, resulting in increased placement stability. A further audit is also planned for the younger cohort of children who have experienced frequent placement moves to better understand their experiences and identify themes and areas for improvement. Other actions reported previously also remain in place, including fortnightly placement stability meetings and a weekly 'high concern' meeting where the most complex cases are discussed and reviewed.

## 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 third quarter and lower than both comparator groups (London and statistical neighbours). There has been an improvement in the percentage of children ceasing to be looked after who were *adopted* when compared with the same point last year, and performance is now within the target tolerance level. This trend looks likely to continue into 2022 as we see more children in family finding or early monitoring, which is counter to the downward trend being seen nationally. A recent review has highlighted the need for further improvement in practice and a joint ALE / Havering working group is being established. Separately, an East London Court working group aims to improve timescales, especially in early court decisions about relinquished children (called part 19 hearings) and in adoption hearings.

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Havering is currently supporting 155 children post-Special Guardianship Order and there have been 4 Special Guardianship Orders granted so far this period. Due to court delays during the periods 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 during 2022. 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 have seen a significant turnover of Social Work staff over the Summer and Autumn period which impacted on the **percentage of Children in Care with 2+ changes of social worker in the last 12 months.** Since the start of the pandemic, Havering like many other LAs, has seen an increased turnover of social work staff, which particularly impacted on social worker changes for children in care during the fourth quarter of 2020/21 and throughout this year. Where possible, children in care are allocated to permanent social workers to prevent changes. However, there are still a number of vacant posts in the long term teams covered by agency, and staff recruitment and retention remains a high priority for the service. There are now weekly meetings with the Director of Children's Services and Assistant Director in attendance.

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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 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. Adverts were placed in December through to February for most of the social work posts covered by agency workers, which will further impact on social worker changes as we recruit to a more permanent and stable workforce.

# Any questions?



**CHILDREN AND LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
SUB-COMMITTEE  
29 March 2022**

**Subject Heading:**

Attendance and Exclusions

**SLT Lead:**

Robert South, Director of Children's Services

**Report Author and contact details:**

Darren Purdie, Head of Education Provision & Inclusion

**Policy context:**

School Attendance and Exclusions Overview

**SUMMARY**

To be consistent with Havering's vision to ensure a good start for every child to reach their full potential during their educational journey.

This report updates members of the Committee on the progress made to improve School Admissions & Inclusions arrangements, across all Havering's Schools/ Academies and Alternative Provisions.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the content of the report, and they continue to receive updates on attendance and exclusion arrangements.

## REPORT DETAIL

### School Attendance

1. The Attendance and Traveller Support Service, an Early Help Education Service monitors pupil attendance where the attendance of pupils falls below the acceptable level in school. This involves working closely with parents to overcome barriers to school attendance whether it be medical, social, and emotional or for any number of reasons. In 2021, the Attendance Service was successfully integrated into the School Admissions and Inclusion Team.
2. Whilst there are legal routes open to local authorities where parents do not ensure that their children receive a suitable education, these legal sanctions are generally a last resort after a period of working alongside parents and professionals to reduce/remove any barriers to good school attendance. The Early Help Attendance and Traveller Support Service are located in the MASH service every day and perform the school welfare checks for students. Children Missing Education (CME) are monitored and tracked through the Attendance Service as a statutory function.
3. The Attendance Team are ensuring that schools' understanding of Covid Coding on absences is regularly checked, and remains in line with changing guidance from the DfE. During the Pandemic, the team worked to support schools and families, completing remote consultations, telephone/video meetings, with home doorstep visits conducted safely and after completing a Risk Assessment when necessary, where there were concerns that the parent and young person were not engaging with the school and online learning.
4. The Team are providing both remote and onsite support, and report that schools are requiring additional time for consultations due to the increased number of pupils now deemed persistently absent. The number of absence in both secondary and primary schools have been hugely affected by high number of COVID related absence such as; positive cases, recovery/ isolation periods, increased general illness particularly in younger pupils, anxiety around returning to school and mental health is another factor in the rise in absences.
5. The Team are seeing a rise in applications for leave in term time due to rebooking holidays (due to the impact of Covid) and families wishing to take extended travel to re-unite with relatives abroad.
6. All of the above are causing an impact school attendance, and we are noticing higher levels of absence and greater numbers of pupils to monitor. Where appropriate, we have issued Penalty Notices for casework non-attendance and unauthorised leave in term time. Updates to the way in which coding is recorded also impacted from the start of September 2021 as schools were required to code as illness (I code) rather than X codes, , which can now only

be used to the point of positive or negative test result. This has caused these students to drop into PA, even if it is their only absence, particularly where these are COVID related.

7. The team are providing support across all schools by offering increased visits, both remotely and on site and being available to offer advice and support. The team are working with schools to ensure early intervention is completed by school staff, to then enable our service to step in to support the families and signpost them to other agencies who can help, the team complete Home Visits, telephone/meetings with parents and follow the legal process when required. We continue to liaise with support agencies such as AP and Inclusions, Universal Plus, Early Help, Health and CAMHS etc. to ensure good cross agency support for pupils and families.
8. The Team have taken on an additional Traded Education Welfare Officer due to the increased traded work from both in and Out of Borough Schools and have also taken on a Business Administration Apprentice to support with the increased administration that the increase in open cases has brought about and the issuing of Fixed Penalty Fines
9. Attendance and Persistent Absence (PA) levels are closely monitored by the individual School Attendance Officer, targeted intervention for vulnerable groups is identified with schools and close liaison with Children's Services continues to support families and address any safeguarding issues, we are finding the workload has increased and the level of referrals from schools for poor attendance casework has increased during and post Covid Lockdown.

### **The Five Year Trend**

10. Levels of overall absence and PA (persistent absence) has reduced in Havering in the past 5-year period, and only remain slightly higher than London and national averages. However, unauthorised absence was slightly below London average in in both primary and secondary schools over the 5-year trend which is a very positive step in the right direction. This indicates that lower PA rates and lower authorised absence by schools are contributing to reducing overall absence rates, therefore increasing overall attendance levels within our schools and academies.
11. During the last academic year, The Attendance, Behaviour and Traveller Support Service led on an attendance project with the key aim of sharing outstanding practice within schools and academies across key stages with a focus on challenging the rationale for authorising absence; this resulted in an Attendance Summit that was attended by thirty of our Schools and Academies.

The key measures around attendance/absence are set out by the following indicators:

- Overall Absence
- Authorised Absence

- Unauthorised Absence
- Persistent Absence at 90% and below

12. The definition of Persistent Absence or PA is any student with an attendance level below 90% the figures are based on the overall population of the school; this would be made up from the indicators as above. The information is taken via school census data on attendance/absence each year the average figure is collated from national data and Havering schools.

<b>Primary School Absence Data in Havering (Summary Past 5 years):</b>	<b>2020/21**</b>	<b>2019/20*</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2016/17</b>
Overall Absence	2.60%	3.87%	3.90%	4.20%	4.20%
Authorised Absence	2.14%	3.05%	3.10%	3.30%	3.40%
Unauthorised Absence	0.46%	0.83%	0.80%	0.90%	0.90%
Persistent Absence	5.48%	10.07%	8.30%	9.00%	9.20%
<b>Secondary School Absence Data in Havering (Summary Past 5 years):</b>	<b>2020/21**</b>	<b>2019/20*</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2016/17</b>
Overall Absence	3.60%	5.05%	5.10%	5.50%	5.50%
Authorised Absence	2.73%	3.84%	3.90%	4.10%	4.20%
Unauthorised Absence	0.86%	1.21%	1.20%	1.40%	1.40%
Persistent Absence	8.54%	13.33%	12.90%	13.60%	13.80%

13. The team do not have full data for 2019/20 and 2020/21, as DfE were not collecting, nor publishing data during this period; in addition to this, during 2020/21 schools, were able to X code pupils for COVID related absence i.e.: isolation, Covid illness and quarantine. This meant that pupil/school levels for attendance/absence were not impacted during this academic year. Since September 2021, X coding is more restricted to isolation ahead of Positive or Negative test results, thereafter normal absence coding is applied, so we are seeing a natural increase in absence figures during the current academic year.

### **Permanent Exclusions (PEX)**

14. The Local Authority has a statutory duty to provide pupils who have been Permanently Excluded an education from day 6 of the PEX. The Inclusion Team work with schools / academies to avoid PEX where possible and offer other alternative pathways to support pupils and set them back on track to achieve. Schools / academies are expected to work with children and their families to prevent unnecessary transfers happening.

### **In-Year Fair Access Protocol**

15. The Local Authority has a Statutory Duty to provide a Fair Access Protocol. This is managed by the Team who:

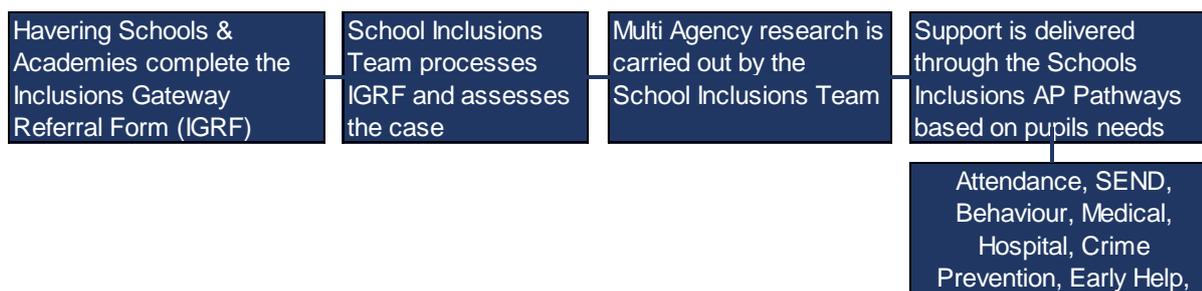
- Assess the real needs of vulnerable young people who are not on the roll of a school and ensures an appropriate placement is identified quickly and pupils/young people are on roll within 10 school days of a Fair Access Panel meeting;
- Seek to find an alternative placement or support for those on roll of a school where it can be demonstrated that they are at risk of permanent exclusion;
- Fairly share the admission of vulnerable students across all schools / academies (where the panel agree that another mainstream school place should be identified);
- Arrange such admissions openly through a process which has the confidence of all;
- Record the progress and successes of the young people placed through this panel.

16. The Admissions & Inclusions Team, coordinates the inclusion of children aged 5-16 into school / academies and alternative provisions to prevent exclusions where possible and offers alternative pathways to support pupils and set them back on track to achieve the best possible outcome from their education.

17. During the COVID-19 school closures, Havering's alternative provision's remained open to support at risk of exclusions, vulnerable and key workers pupils. This strategy resulted in 205 pupils and their families receiving education, support and supplies during this time.

18. One of the Councils approved alternative provisions provided a virtual platform for the School Inclusions teachers and mentors to continue to teach medical pupils face to face and also reach those pupils who were in Queens Hospital. It is through our established 'Inclusions Gateway Referral Process' below that schools request educational support for their pupils as and when the needs arise.

**Flow Chart for Schools & Academies to Access Local Authority Support for Vulnerable Children**



19. The Core Alternative Provision (AP) Offer that the Inclusions Team offer to Schools and Academies to avoid Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions is outlined in the table below:

Programme Name	Impact is to:
Keep Safe & Self Esteem workshops for pupils. These are delivered in primary schools to years 5 and 6 in preparation for secondary school.	Develops an awareness of risks and how to avoid and prevent harm from knife crime, criminal and sexual exploitation. These are planned for summer term 2022
Peace of Mind face-to-face weekly therapeutic intervention in schools or at pupil's home with hypnotherapy if required.	Enables pupils to speak with someone to find clarity and develop resilience around their own mental ill health, social & emotional behaviour, trauma or anxiety that was brought about by COVID-19 or life experiences.
5 Day Direction off site to improve behaviour. This programme covers, reflection, strategies, aspirations and self-management and also includes a weekly parent's session.	Replaces suspensions of 3 days or more to allow pupils to explore their anxieties and behaviours over a 5 day period. Pupils and parents learn strategies to enable them to return to school and maintain their education.
Part time Alternative Provision which includes Medical Provision.	Provides a vocational curriculum with a more suitable learning environment for pupils who were unable to function effectively in a large school setting. This approach is also used as a direction off site to improve behaviour.
Transition Programme for pupils who are at imminent risk of Permanent Exclusions and who are presenting with social & emotional needs.	Supports pupil's full time who were unable to remain in their mainstream school due to presenting with high levels of social and emotional behaviours. 99% of the pupils who accessed the Transition Programme leave with an EHCP.
Full Time AP	Avoids a Permanent Exclusion and provide a smaller setting, where acute needs are able to be met more effectively without disrupting the education of others.

20. The strategies adopted by the School Inclusions Team has resulted in a larger number of vulnerable pupils being supported during COVID-19 and on their return to the face to face world.

21. The increase of referrals through the Inclusions Gateway to avoid exclusions, so far this year (Sep 21 - Feb 22) has resulted in further AP developments around the Raphael Site to increase the number of good or outstanding AP places being made available to meet the immersing needs of the pupils.

<b>Number of pupils placed annually</b>	<b>Autumn</b>	<b>Spring</b>	<b>Summer</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Increase</b>
2018/2019	133	119	49	301	
COVID Schools Closures 2019/2020	202	110	20	332	8%
COVID Schools Closures 2020/2021	138	105	142	385	14%
2021/15 February 2022	433	166		599	26%

22. Permanent exclusions for Havering are still at Zero with 61 withdrawn permanent exclusions reported between 01/09/2020–28/02/2022 (57 secondary & 4 primary). The School Inclusions Team are continuing to work closely with schools and academies both in Havering and cross borders to ensure this trend continues.

23. Suspensions (Fixed Term Exclusions) are reducing year on year as all of the AP programmes are designed to address behaviours early and avoid pupils being suspended and sent home. The 5 Day Direction provides Head Teachers with an alternative option, which means instead of suspending the pupil they can direct them off site, which is in line with government guidelines around good practice.

The 5 Day Direction Programme has avoided 79 suspension between September 2021 and February 2022.

<b>5 Day Direction</b>	
<b>Year Group</b> ▼	<b>Pupils</b>
NC Year 6	8
NC Year 7	4
NC Year 8	18
NC Year 9	17
NC Year 10	12
NC Year 11	20
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>79</b>

## IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

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

Dedicated Schools Grant could be affected if The Attendance Service did not continue to act with due diligence and accuracy especially around safeguarding of vulnerable pupils.

By not administering and tracking Children Missing Education in line with statutory guidance this will result in the Local Authority not meeting its statutory requirements. If high needs pupils are not identified and supported the implications are that the Local Authority's High Needs Grant will be negatively affected

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

There are no apparent legal implications in noting the content of the Report.

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

There are no HR implications arising directly from the recommendations in 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.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

There are no environment and/or climate change implications associated with this Report.

That said, where prolonged absence may be allotted to illness, for example, discussions around home fuel efficiencies could be undertaken.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

N/A

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