

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

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

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

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

SUMMARY

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

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

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

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

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

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

Committee members are asked to receive and endorse the report

REPORT DETAIL

Background Information

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

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

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

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

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

There are currently no identified risks in respect of this budget

Legal implications and risks:

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

The partnership agreement includes

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

- Governance

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

Human Resources implications and risks:

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

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

No outstanding issues have been identified

Equalities implications and risks:

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

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