

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The **Equality Act 2010** places a '**General Duty**' on all public bodies to have '**due regard**' to the need to:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- Advancing equality of opportunity between those with a 'relevant protected characteristic' and those without one;
- Fostering good relations between those with a 'relevant protected characteristic' and those without one.

1. Responsibility for the Equality Impact Assessment

Name of proposal	Adopt London North: a North London regionalised adoption service
Service area	Adoption
Officer completing assessment	Colette Elliot-Cooper
Equalities/ HR Advisor	Lucy Fisher
Cabinet meeting date (if applicable)	
Director/Assistant Director	Ann Graham

2. Summary of the proposal

In June 2015 the Department for Education (DfE) published a paper, 'Regionalising Adoption', setting out proposals for the establishment of Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs). The paper gave a very clear directive to local authorities that it was the expectation for all authorities to be part of a Regional Adoption Agency by 2020.

There will be four RAAs across London: Adopt London South, Adopt London East, Adopt London West and Adopt London North.

This proposal is therefore for the London Borough of Haringey to enter into the new North London Regional Adoption Agency to be known as "Adopt London North" with the London Boroughs of Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey and Islington. The London Borough of Islington will host the new Regional Adoption Agency.

Regionalisation is intended to:

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

3. What data will you use to inform your assessment of the impact of the proposal

on protected groups of service users and/or staff?

Protected group	Service users	Staff
Sex	Data held on children awaiting adoption and adopters	
Gender Reassignment	Data not currently collected	
Age	Data held on children awaiting adoption and adopters	
Disability	Data held on children awaiting adoption Disability is not a barrier to adoption for adopters but no data is routinely held as it forms part of the assessment and a medical is required to ascertain whether an adopter is fit to adopt.	
Race & Ethnicity	Data held on children awaiting adoption and adopters	
Sexual Orientation	Data held on approved adopters Children who have been adopted or are awaiting adoption are too young for it to be appropriate to discuss sexual orientation.	
Religion or Belief (or No Belief)	Data held on children awaiting adoption and approved adopters	
Pregnancy & Maternity	Data held on approved adopters	
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Data held on approved adopters	

Outline the key findings of your data analysis. Which groups are disproportionately affected by the proposal? How does this compare with the impact on wider service users and/or the borough's demographic profile? Have any inequalities been identified?

The numbers of children affected by these proposals in Haringey is small. In Haringey during 2017/18 the Adoption Panel considered matches for 14 children – this figure includes 12 children placed individually and one set of a sibling group of two.

The following is the age of the children at the time of panel:

- One 0 year old
- Four 1 year olds
- Two 2 year olds
- One 3 year old
- One 4 year old
- One 11 year old

Five of these children were female and nine were male.

There were no children with a known disability, however we have had children that have waited to be matched.

The ethnicity of the children was:

- Five White UK
- Four Mixed Black Caribbean/African
- Two Mixed White/Caribbean
- One White Other
- One Mixed Black Caribbean/Turkish
- One Mixed Black Caribbean/Indian

For the majority of these children their religion is recorded as 'Christian' with one explicitly Catholic. The rest had no religion recorded. With regards to adopters the majority are non-practising Christians, one couple waiting is Jehovah Witness.

4. a) How will consultation and/or engagement inform your assessment of the impact of the proposal on protected groups of residents, service users and/or staff?

Consultation with stakeholders is an integral part of the Regional Adoption Agency project and the following have taken place:

- task and finish groups with practitioners across North London have taken place to acquire the views and experience of staff and the adopters they work with;
- Specific 'Listening and Sharing' events have been and continue to be instrumental in ensuring the views of staff and adopters are being sought to inform the development of the service model;
- Views ascertained in the Adopter Voice North London consultation in 2018 have been taken into account when developing the service specification and have informed agenda items at task and finish groups.

Feedback included the following: "In London, more understanding of its diverse communities is needed to reach out to potential adopters and support them effectively." It was felt that this understanding would "allow more Londoners in our diverse city to become adopters". And the report recommended that RAAs "create a well-publicised, easily accessible, centralised, online knowledge base for prospective and approved adopters. As part of this to provide a simple flow chart that shows the different steps inherent in the approval and matching process with associated approximate timescales" and RAAs should "provide funding and support for peer groups and adoption coaches/ mentors". (Adopter Voice Report, for London Adoption Board on 6th March 2018)

All boroughs in North London have experienced similar ongoing difficulties with the recruitment of adopters specifically for our Black and minority ethnic (BME) children over many years, in part due to the over-representation of black and minority ethnic children in the care population and in those with a plan for adoption.

The RAA project team have undertaken scoping with regard to running focus groups with BME prospective adopters who have attended our information sessions and who have

both gone on to be assessed or chosen not to go forward for assessment with us. These focus groups will provide information which can be used to further specifically target the recruitment of BME adopters and remove potential barriers to their progress into the assessment stages. Furthermore, as we come together into one regional agency we will have greater scope to scale up our attempts to target recruitment and to consider potential family finding alliances with RAAs in other parts of the country. The recruitment of adopters to meet the needs of our BME children will be an ongoing priority for the RAA. Whilst there are no 'quick fixes' we believe that being one larger and unified agency will enable us to respond to opportunities and demand more quickly, flexibly and creatively than we are each able to do as small borough adoption teams. Plans that we already have to increase recruitment in general through a focus on a strong life-long Adoption Support model will, we hope, improve recruitment across the board over time as we aim to build a strong and trustworthy reputation.

4. b) Outline the key findings of your consultation / engagement activities once completed, particularly in terms of how this relates to groups that share the protected characteristics

The recruitment of adopters continues to be both within the Adoption North London Consortium and as part of the tri-borough collaboration with the London Boroughs of Enfield and Barnet. The tri-borough collaboration yielded 210 enquiries last year, with only 4 converted to approval for 2017/18 for the London Borough of Haringey. There is risk, even regionally, of not being able to recruit adopters able to meet the needs of the children waiting, leading to more interagency placements and financial viability issues. More coordinated and targeted recruitment activity is expected to address this and scope for enhanced recruitment and assessment has been built into the delivery model.

5. What is the likely impact of the proposal on groups of service users and/or staff that share the protected characteristics?

1. Sex

Nationally slightly more boys than girls are awaiting adoption and this trend is reflected in 17/18 data for Haringey with 9 males and 5 females.

Single male adopters do not often put themselves forward for adoption and there were none approved in Haringey for 17/18. Other boroughs have had single male adopters approved and having a wider geographic pool will be positive for this characteristic.

Positive	X	Negative		Neutral impact		Unknown Impact	
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2. Gender reassignment

Data on gender reassignment is not routinely recorded.

Positive		Negative		Neutral impact		Unknown Impact	X
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3. Age

Pre-birth and babies - Nationally only 1% of looked after children are in placements

where the carer is also an approved adopter (fostering for adoption) or where they were subject to concurrent planning. Haringey Children and Young People Services are improving early permanency planning so that babies who are placed with foster carers who then go on to adopt these children can have a secure and stable start.

Older children – Nationally and in Haringey, children aged 5 and over are less likely to be placed for adoption. Data from the 17/18 annual adoption report shows that only one out of 14 children adopted was over 5.

The proposal to join Adopt London North will continue with the approach to trying to find adopters for all children waiting and the Government’s minimum expectation is that RAAs use a wider geographical base audience to increase the scope for more matching and ultimately increasing placement opportunities. This will be particularly helpful in assessing adopters for older children who can be harder to place children.

There is no upper age limit for adopters and the age of approved adopters is monitored. This proposal is designed to increase the opportunities for recruiting adopters and will therefore have a positive effect.

Positive	x	Negative		Neutral impact		Unknown Impact	
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4. Disability

Nationally, the vast majority of the children who are placed for adoption will have some sort of complex need. There may be physical disabilities, but often there are issues relating to trauma, mental health including anxiety and attachment issues and developmental delay or developmental uncertainty. In Haringey there were no children with a known disability that were adopted in 17/18, however we have had children that have waited to be matched.

Through Adopt London North, instead of there being small teams of staff, there is proposed to be a single organisation with a concentration of expertise in the highly specialised area of adoption and adoption support. The scope and vision for the RAA as set out in the business case is to target recruitment and establish a wider and more diverse pool of prospective adopters. As noted above, one of the Government’s minimum expectations of RAAs is that they use a wider geographical base audience to increase the scope for more matching and ultimately increasing placement opportunities. It is believed that this will be particularly helpful in assessing adopters for harder to place children.

Positive	x	Negative		Neutral impact		Unknown Impact	
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5. Race and ethnicity

In Haringey 10 children of black and ethnic minority background are awaiting adoption.

In 17/18, 57% (8) of children adopted were from a black or minority ethnic group:

- Four Mixed Black Caribbean/African
- Two Mixed White/Caribbean
- One Mixed Black Caribbean/Turkish

- One Mixed Black Caribbean/Indian

As noted above, Adopt London North is proposed to be a single organisation with a concentration of expertise in the highly specialised area of adoption and adoption support and the scope and vision for the RAA as set out in the business case is to target recruitment and establish a wider and more diverse pool of prospective adopters.

The business case sets out how the RAA will use performance data to ensure targeted recruitment for those children coming through the system in all 6 Boroughs. In particular Adopt London North will develop specific recruitment strategies (and support packages) for black and ethnic minority adopters and children as set out above. The lead partner is already in conversation with the Voluntary Adoption Agencies across London about how they might assist with this and we will be using our Network of RAA colleagues to help us identify examples of good practice and what is working well in order that we can continually develop practice and produce good outcomes for all of our children and adopters.

Haringey Council will monitor the success of the RAA in matching and securing adoption for our black and ethnic minority children.

Positive	x	Negative		Neutral impact		Unknown Impact	
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6. Sexual orientation

In Haringey we matched children with 3 same sex couples in 17/18 and have two currently waiting to adopt. As noted above the operating model of the RAA will continue to identify adopters from a wide and diverse pool of prospective adopters and the ongoing impact is likely to be positive.

Positive	x	Negative		Neutral impact		Unknown Impact	
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7. Religion or belief (or no belief)

For the majority of these children their religion is recorded as ‘Christian’ with one explicitly Catholic. The rest had no religion recorded.

With regards to adopters the majority are non-practising Christians, one couple waiting to adopt is Jehovah Witness.

It is not anticipated that the move to an RAA will have any impact on either the children waiting to be adopted or on adopters. Successful matching relies on being able to access a wide range of potential adopters from the beginning and operating at a greater scale would allow social workers to do this. Adopt London North will follow statutory guidance in relation to matching adopters.

Positive		Negative		Neutral impact	x	Unknown Impact	
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8. Pregnancy and maternity

This is not relevant to this proposal as it is not anticipated that there will be any impacts

in relation to pregnancy or maternity.

Positive		Negative		Neutral impact	x	Unknown Impact	
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9. Marriage and Civil Partnership

Nationally 90% of children were adopted by couples and 10% by single adopters. Specific work will be delivered through Adopt London North to encourage and support adopters from a wide and diverse pool of prospective adopters and the ongoing impact is likely to be positive including more single adopters.

Positive	x	Negative		Neutral impact		Unknown Impact	
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Outline the overall impact of the policy for the Public Sector Equality Duty:

- Could the proposal result in any direct/indirect discrimination for any group that shares the relevant protected characteristics?
- Will the proposal help to advance equality of opportunity between groups who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not?

This includes:

- a) Remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons protected under the Equality Act
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons protected under the Equality Act that are different from the needs of other groups
- c) Encourage persons protected under the Equality Act to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low
- Will the proposal help to foster good relations between groups who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not?

As noted above the Government's policy to regionalise adoption services is intended to:

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

The overall impact of this approach is designed to be positive for vulnerable children and adopters.

6. a) What changes if any do you plan to make to your proposal as a result of the Equality Impact Assessment?

Outcome	Y/N
No major change to the proposal: the EqIA demonstrates the proposal is robust and there is no potential for discrimination or adverse impact. All opportunities to promote equality have been taken.	Y

Adjust the proposal: the EqlA identifies potential problems or missed opportunities. Adjust the proposal to remove barriers or better promote equality.	
Stop and remove the proposal: the proposal shows actual or potential avoidable adverse impacts on different protected characteristics. The decision maker must not make this decision.	

6 b) Summarise the specific actions you plan to take to remove or mitigate any actual or potential negative impact and to further the aims of the Equality Duty

Impact and which relevant protected characteristics are impacted?	Action	Lead officer	Timescale
No negative impacts.			

Please outline any areas you have identified where negative impacts will happen as a result of the proposal but it is not possible to mitigate them. Please provide a complete and honest justification on why it is not possible to mitigate them.

None.

6 c) Summarise the measures you intend to put in place to monitor the equalities impact of the proposal as it is implemented:

The annual adoption report will continue to analyse the characteristics of both adopters and children who are adopted to ensure that there is no equalities impact for children and adopters.

7. Authorisation	
EqlA approved by: Ann Graham (Director)	Date: 26.02.2019

8. Publication <i>Please ensure the completed EqlA is published in accordance with the Council's policy.</i>