



ANNUAL REPORT

YOUNG PEOPLE'S SUMMARY

OCTOBER 2019 – MARCH 2021

- **Who we are:** We are a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) formed in October 2019 to deliver the local authority adoption services for six north London boroughs – Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, and Islington. Islington are the host borough, all ALN staff are employed by Islington. We are funded and governed by all six boroughs through a Governance Board. RAA's have been formed over the whole of England as a result of a change in the law in 2016.
- **What we do:** We support with permanency planning for children, and we find adoptive families for children with an adoption care plan; we find, train, and approve prospective adopters; we provide adoption support services to adoptive families with children of any age, and to adopted adults, and the birth parents of children who have been adopted.
- **About Adopt London:** We work as partners with three other Adopt London RAAs in London – South, East, & West so that people who are considering adopting a child or looking for support can find the information they need in one place. Together we cover 23 of the London boroughs.
- **How we find adoptive parents:** We focus our efforts online through our website, search engine optimisation, and through social media. We want everyone in London who is considering adopting a child to come to one of our information sessions, and we want to encourage people who haven't yet thought about adopting to consider it. Last year our website and social media growth was strong and we want this to keep growing in 2021/22. Our enquiries about adopting represent around a 50% increase on those received prior to Adopt London North (ALN). We run sessions online for people to hear about adoption directly from adoptive parents, and these have been really successful in 2020/21 at deepening people's understanding from an early stage.
- **New adoptive families:** We didn't approve as many new families this year as we had in previous years, partially as a result of the pandemic. We are already seeing strong signs of this being much better in 2021/22, and we hope to return to the levels of approvals seen before services were disrupted by the transition to Adopt London North.

- **More black and black dual ethnicity families are needed:** Around 40-45% of the children we place for adoption are of black or black dual ethnicity. Although over 40% of prospective adopters starting their assessment in 2020/21 had at least one parent of black or black dual ethnicity, because our number of families approved was low this is still not enough families to ensure that we can quickly and appropriately place all of our children with an adoptive family. We are launching a long-term project in 2021/22 to better understand how we need to change in order to achieve this, and to work out a plan to implement those changes.
- **Adoption plans for children:** Fewer children across north London had plans made for adoption in 2020/21 and a large factor in this is delays to final hearings in court proceedings, caused by the pandemic. ALN has a role in supporting the children's social work teams to plan for children and make sure that adoption is being considered wherever appropriate.
- **Finding adoptive families for children:** We use lots of different ways to find families for children with an adoption plan and have pioneered new approaches during the pandemic. We want to try to increase the number of children who move to live with ALN families, and where this is not possible with families who live in London and the surrounding areas. These placements make it easier for us to resolve any problems that come up, and to offer really excellent support. In 2020/21 a third of children went to live with ALN-approved adoptive families.
- **Moving children to new families:** We have introduced a new, research-based model to guide us when planning how to move children into their new families. This recognises the need for a longer planning phase before the main introductions take place, and more supported contact with their foster carers after they first move. In 2021/22 we have more work to do to support the children's social work teams in their understanding of this model.
- **Characteristics of children placed for adoption:** In 2020/21 a third of children were placed for adoption with their sibling, two thirds were individual children. Children were aged from under 1 to 6 years old at the time they went to live with their new family, with 60% of children being under 3 years old. There were 12 different official ethnicity categories recorded for our children.
- **Providing support to adoptive families:** We provide lots of different levels of support, from a duty service through to accessing therapeutic services and longer term social work support. In the first wave of the pandemic we were able to access government funds to deliver around £1million of virtual therapeutic services to adoptive and special guardianship families, which was only possible because we worked together across Adopt London to pool our funds and our resources. We have a partnership with a charity called We Are Family, run by adopters for adopters to provide peer support. During 2020/21 we delivered a webinar programme in partnership with them so that parents could access expert advice and support from home.

