

Item No. 12.	Classification: Open	Date: 11 December 2018	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Adopt London South, Regional Adoption Agency	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
Cabinet Member:		Councillor Jasmine Ali, Children, Schools and Adult Care	

FOREWORD - COUNCILLOR JASMINE ALI, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND ADULT CARE

The following report seeks approval from the cabinet to go forward with the council's plan to lead the Adopt London South Regional Adoption Agency. The regionalisation of adoption services forms a key part of the government's policy to optimise adoption performance, promote cost efficiency and share expertise.

Following the DfE's paper on Regional Adoption Agencies in 2016, the agencies have and are being established across the country. They bring together local authorities and voluntary organisations. The Regional Adoption Agencies are tasked with the recruitment of adopters, family finding, matching and delivering adoption support.

This paper recommends that Southwark Council becomes the lead local authority for the Adopt London South Regional Adoption Agency (RAA). This will mean Southwark taking the lead for what is to become the largest RAA in the country. Southwark will be at the helm and nine other local authorities will be a part of the RAA. They are Merton, Sutton, Kingston, Wandsworth and Richmond in the South West and Lambeth, Lewisham and Greenwich and Croydon in the South East.

The paper outlines the scope of this work and the issues for consideration. It is expected that 50 staff will make up the South London RAA. The purpose is to drive up the recruitment of adopters, ensure that all children requiring adoption get matched quickly and access a placement, successfully match children and families and provide them with adoption support.

There is a schedule of finance in the report. All money spent on forming this agency will be reimbursed by the government.

The role of Southwark as lead authority is a positive move and reflects the outstanding status of our existing adoption service. This lead role not only speaks to the excellence of this borough's service, it will also benefit Southwark adopters and children in care who need adoptive parents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

1. Agrees that Southwark enter into regional adoption arrangements as part of Adopt London South with ten participating authorities identified in this report.
2. Agrees that Southwark is the host for Adopt London South. This means Southwark hosts staff and resources from up to nine other boroughs in South London to deliver a regional adoption agency for South and South West London

3. Delegates authority to the strategic director for children's and adults' services to make more detailed decisions around the implementation of this proposal including signing off the inter-authority agreement between Southwark and the other boroughs involved in Adopt London South and the finalisation of governance arrangements.
4. Notes that the governance arrangements will operate by the other local authorities in Adopt South London delegating adoption functions to the council and that the Leader of the council will need to formally accept the delegation of the relevant functions once these have been delegated by the other councils.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The National Picture

5. In March 2016, the government announced intended changes to the delivery of adoption services, setting a clear direction that all local authorities' adoption services must be delivered on a regional basis no later than 2020. This followed a range of national policy changes since 2012, including the 2015 'Regionalising Adoption' paper by the Department for Education (DfE) that sought improvements in adoption performance. Following the general election in June 2017, the Minister of State for Children and Families reaffirmed commitment to this policy, through provisions made in the Education and Adoption Act 2016. In March 2018, the DfE commenced implementation of that legislation allowing them to direct a local authority into a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) no progress is being made by the authority in becoming part of a RAA. There will be four RAAs across London: Adopt London South; Adopt London East; Adopt London West; and Adopt London North.
6. The regionalisation programme is founded on the belief that it will:
 - a. Increase the number of children adopted
 - b. Reduce the length of time children wait to be adopted
 - c. Improve post-adoption support services to families who have adopted children from care; and
 - d. Reduce the number of agencies that provide adoption services thereby improving efficiency & effectiveness.

Adopt London South (ALS)

7. The South and South West London RAA will be known as Adopt London South (ALS). Adopt London South will build upon the previous positive practice established within the two South London consortia – South London Adoption and Permanence Consortium (SLAPC) and South West Consortium which have acquired over the years good reputations for delivering effective services.
8. Currently 10 boroughs are at different stages of decision making in their journey to become part of Adopt London South (ALS).

Croydon	Greenwich
Kingston *	Lewisham
Merton	Richmond *
Lambeth	Wandsworth
Sutton	Southwark

*(*Note Kingston and Richmond are already combined under an organisation called Achieving for Children)*

9. Each borough wishes to build on the success of their existing services and seeks to improve performance further in relation to children whose needs will be best met through adoption by bringing together the best practice from each authority within the RAA. Establishing a single agency will allow the ALS authorities to provide a more coordinated and cohesive service, alongside more efficient and effective use of resources and development of practice to the benefit of children, adopters and others who gain from adoption services. The RAA development costs for the RAA have been funded by the Department for Education (DfE). The creation of ALS forms part of an overarching project to develop four RAAs across London.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

The London wide RAA Approach

10. The decision to pursue four RAAs in London (Adopt London South; Adopt London East; Adopt London West; and Adopt London North), was agreed by the Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS), with endorsement given in May 2018 for this approach by the DfE. ALDCS delegated decision making to the Adopt London Executive Board to oversee the development of these four London Regional Adoption Agencies. The executive set out a number of key principles that will shape the formation of regional adoption for London. These have been endorsed by the DfE. The principles are:
 - a. Local authorities involved in Adopt London and each of the four RAAs are committed to collaborating adoption arrangements so that the best interests of children and their adoptive families are secured and kept at the forefront of decision-making;
 - b. Adopt London will provide an overarching framework for enabling effective coordination, coherence and partnership working across London;
 - c. Adopt London authorities, and the four RAAs will make sure that there is consistency of approach in relation to key strategic and operational decisions. For example staffing issues and how transfers of staff from authorities will be appropriately managed within relevant employment legislation, and the design and deliver of operating models that suit each of London RRA's needs.
 - d. Adopt London authorities are committed to working effectively together with Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs), making sure that their unique and important contribution is maximised and that VAAs are involved in the development of the RAAs and Adopt London.

Adopt London South: Moving Forward

11. Subject to appropriate approvals by each of the prospective participating authorities development of Adopt London South RAA will be undertaken during 2019 with a fully operational service being up and running by no later than April 2020, the DfE deadline.
12. Various work streams will be taken forward by officers within Southwark working in close collaboration with officers in the other prospective participating authorities. The work streams will include areas such as transferring of staff to form the new service from across the prospective participating authorities in line with relevant employment

legislation; this will include as appropriation consultation with recognised Trades Unions. The physical location of the new service is likely to be in more than one location, subject to development of the service delivery model.

13. Governance for ALS will operate through an Executive Board established by the participating authorities and comprising of senior representatives from all councils with executive voting powers, with non-executive advisory representation from Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs), adopters and adoptees. The RAA will continue to be accountable to each council's corporate parenting committee, and overview and scrutiny committee or equivalent in other authorities.
14. Adopt London South will deliver the following main services across South London:
 - a. Recruitment and Assessment will provide the prospective adopters;
 - b. Permanence Planning ensures that children identified as requiring adoption achieve a placement;
 - c. Matching and Placement matches prospective adopters with children in need of adoption; and
 - d. Adoption Support helps all affected by adoption.

Policy implications

15. The decision to join Adopt London South Regional Adoption Agency would support several of the council's existing policies and strategic objectives.
16. The Council Plan for 2018 – 2022 sets out the council's vision of a "*fairer future for all*", including a great start in life. The plan says as follows:

Every child deserves the best start in life. We want all children and young people in the borough to grow up in a safe, healthy and happy environment where they have the opportunity to reach their potential.

17. The decisions in this report enable the council to lead the regional arrangements and therefore ensure Southwark children, for whom there is a need for adoption, continue to get the best possible chance to reach their potential.
18. The decision to join Adopt London South RAA will also enable the council to comply with national policy objectives announced by the DfE in March 2016, which requires adoption services to be delivered on a regional basis by 2020.

Community impact statement

19. There is likely to be a positive equalities impact as a result of the implementation of these proposals. Southwark will give due consideration to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as a positive duty to consider the promotion of equality throughout the work of the ALS.
20. There will be an impact on residents who possess one or more of the protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, ALS will exercise of all its functions, and will have due regard (section 149 Equality Act 2010) to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct, (b) to advance equality of opportunity and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

21. Regionalisation is intended to improve:
 - a. Post-adoption support;
 - b. Adopter recruitment for harder to place children (older children, larger sibling groups, substance addicted babies, disabled children, those with special educational needs, and children from black and other ethnic minority backgrounds; and
 - c. A consistent adopter experience across south London from initial contact and recruitment through to training and post-adoption support.
22. These aims should particularly benefit children and families from ethnic minority groups, with disabilities and complex needs.
23. An equalities impact assessment has been completed and attached to this report as Appendix 1.

Resource implications

24. There are staffing implications for the staff currently with prospective participating authorities that currently undertake work which will now be the responsibility of the RAA. These staffing implications will be managed within the context of appropriate employment legislation including appropriate consultation with recognised Trades Unions. Southwark will in due course become the employer for staff of Adopt London South.

Legal implications

25. Please see concurrent from the director of law and democracy.

Finance implications

26. Please see concurrent from strategic director of finance and governance.

Consultation

27. There are a wide-ranging set of engagement, consultation and co-design mechanisms in place to ensure that stakeholders are being involved in shaping the proposed Adopt London South approach. These have included:
 - a. Establishing pan-agency project organisation and project governance arrangements including establishment of a Project Board and operational group;
 - b. Eight separate practice workshops have been held, and task and finish groups setup to engage a wide range of staff and stakeholders in the practice approaches to be applied in Adopt London South;
 - c. Staff conferences took place in October 2018 and are planned again for January 2019.
 - d. Elected members and portfolio holders have been consulted in all local authorities. Portfolio holders have had the opportunity to attend a conference in October 2018. The Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Adult Care attended this event.

- e. London VAAs and London-wide unions have been engaged at a pan London level through the Adopt London executive board;
- f. Continued stakeholder engagement through web-based surveys, staff newsletters and face-to-face events including detailed engagement work with adopters and adoptees;
- g. Options appraisal and evaluation of delivery model options, including obtaining independent external legal advice on the options available;
- h. Baseline statistical data was obtained to inform the development of a target operating model.

Implementation

- 28. Adoption regionalisation in South and South West London is a large and complex project involving ten councils. As such the implementation approach will be flexible in order to ensure we achieve the best possible regional adoption service in line with the statutory deadline of 2020. It is therefore proposed that detailed decision making is given to the strategic director for children's and adults' services.
- 29. The broad outline for implementation will follow development and endorsement of the delivery model by prospective participating authorities by early 2019, a draft operational structure for Adopt London South RAA will be subject to formal trade union and staff consultation under relevant employment legislation during the first half of 2019. The following phase of implementation will begin once the consultation processes concludes, with the operational start date of the service within the new financial year (2019-20).

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Head of Human Resources

- 30. Agreement to join Adopt London South as outlined in this paper will have implications in employment terms for existing Council staff. As appropriate consultation will need to be undertaken with our recognised trades unions and the affected staff group. Any resulting reorganisation of staff within the children social care teams to accommodate service changes will be undertaken in accordance with the council's management of change policies and procedures (Reorganisation, Redeployment and Redundancy Procedure).
- 31. Agreeing to be the host authority for Adopt London South will require detailed discussion, consultation and planning with other boroughs joining Adopt London South to ensure employment obligations for all affected staff within those authorities are fully met. It is important that the engagement with the other authorities is started at the earliest possible opportunity to ensure the agreed operating model for delivery of the services of Adopt London South can be operationally in place for all participating boroughs from the agreed start date of operations.

Director of Law and Democracy

- 32. This report seeks the approval of cabinet for the recommendations highlighted in paragraphs 1 to 4 of this report regarding the proposed establishment of the Adopt London South, Regional Adoption Agency.

33. Local authorities' principal functions in relation to adoption services are set out in the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (ACA 2002). Section 2 of the ACA 2002 sets out details of the relevant adoption service which each relevant local authority is required to maintain under section 3 of the ACA 2002. Section 3 of the ACA 2002 together with regulation 5(1)(a) of the Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005 permit relevant local authorities' to provide any of the requisite facilities by securing their provisions by (among others) another local authority.
34. In entering into these arrangements the cabinet needs to be satisfied that it will be complying with its own statutory duty to maintain the requisite adoption services.
35. Under the Local Government Act 1972 and Local Government Act 2000, a local authority can arrange for the discharge of any of its functions by another local authority. For Southwark as host authority, these will be executive functions, and therefore any delegation from another local authority will need to be accepted by the Leader of the Council at Southwark, or anyone he delegates this task to in accordance with Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities (Arrangements for the Discharge of Functions) (England) Regulations 2012. This will need to be done formally once all the other local authorities have themselves delegated their functions and to take effect on a date to be agreed between the authorities.
36. Although these functions will be delegated to Southwark, each local authority will retain its overall statutory duty to maintain within their area an adoption service as defined in the ACA 2002.
37. In proceeding with the implementation of the RAA, the RAA will be overseen by a board including representatives from each of the relevant local authorities and be subject to an Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) which will set out the terms of the arrangement. The IAA should not be drafted to include features of a services contract such as payment mechanisms and performance criteria which enable performance deductions to be made for specific failures. Any IAA should set out for the purposes of certainty the scope and specification of what is delegated and may include indicators, not for the purpose of applying a deduction regime, but to provide information to include but not limited to the worth of the arrangements, insurance and indemnities, governance, staffing and TUPE, pensions, assets, funding and potentially to provide a basis for termination if the arrangements are not delivering benefits intended.
38. Where the arrangement involves the transfer of power to perform a public task from one public entity to another public entity, the European Courts have held that those arrangements do not involve the award of a public contract and are therefore not subject to the procurement rules. This means that the proposal to delegate the functions to Southwark will not amount to an award of public services contracts and is therefore not subject to procurement rules.
39. It is reported that the adoption services of Richmond and Kingston are combined under a social enterprise company called Achieving for Children. Following delegation of the adoption services of Richmond and Kingston to Southwark, the contracts between Richmond, Kingston and Achieving for Children will need to be transferred to Southwark by way of a novation agreement. This releases Richmond and Kingston from their obligations and rights under the contract and Southwark will assume these obligations and rights. It is important that Southwark is aware of the obligations before the novation takes place.
40. There is no specific statutory duty to carry out any public consultation in relation to the proposals. The cabinet is referred to paragraph 27 which sets out the consultation that

has taken place. The cabinet should take into account the outcome of that consultation when approving the proposals in this report.

41. The cabinet's attention is drawn to the Public Sector Equality duty (PSED General Duty) under the Equality Act 2010, and when making decisions to have regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct, (b) to advance equality of opportunity and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. The relevant characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The duty also applies to marriage and civil partnership but only in relation to (a). The cabinet is specifically referred to the community impact statement at paragraphs 19 to 23 setting out the consideration that has been given to equalities issues which should be considered when approving the proposals in this report, and at each stage of the process and to the equality impact assessment that has been completed.
42. In order to deliver the services, the affected staff will be subject to a TUPE transfer to Southwark. The employment law considerations relevant to the proposal in this report are referred to in the Comments from the Head of HR at paragraphs 30 and 31.
43. It is likely that, if Southwark hosts the RAA, the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE) will apply to transfer to the council the employment of those employees of the other participating authorities and or of organisations that currently undertake those authorities' relevant adoption services (Transferor Organisations), and who are permanently assigned to the services being transferred.
44. Consideration will need to be given to the applicable trade union recognition arrangements and agreement reached on what the consultation requirements will be before and after the commencement of the RAA .
45. If TUPE applies and or the result of hosting the RAA is that a reorganisation is considered necessary, the relevant legislative requirements, policies and procedures will need to be complied with to mitigate against potential claims in the Employment Tribunal by any affected parties. Affected parties potentially include the Transferor Organisations, their employees and employees of the council and relevant Trade Unions.

Strategic Director of Finance and Governance (REF: CAS18/006)

46. Of the adoption service budget at Southwark in 2017-18 the allowances aspect of the budget of £1,319k and there is also a £50k gross budget of the adoption support fund. These budgets will be outside the scope of the arrangement. However, within the scope of the arrangements are £503k of staffing budgets for Southwark staff, some sundry expenses, as well as Panel costs of £13k.
47. The budget for the RAA has been built through each of the 10 authorities considering the agreed scope and outcomes for the RAA and identifying the existing budget available to deliver these activities. LAs have ensured that sufficient resource is retained to deliver the activities which will remain the responsibility of the local authority. These figures are currently subject to due diligence and review by independent auditors.
48. It is proposed that the budget agreed is reviewed regularly by the Adopt London South board (comprised of the funding local authorities) to ensure that contributing boroughs

are funding on the basis of demand. Southwark has identified a budget of £503k plus £13k for the Panel which will transfer to the hosted service within the Authority.

49. Data has been collected on boroughs' adoption allowances, including the proportion funded by the Adoption Support Fund and the proportion funded by LAs. However, this is not included in the proposed base budget which will be transferred to Southwark as it will be retained by the boroughs. However, expertise in securing ASF will sit within the RAA and the RAA will have a role in the future in reviewing the approach to allowances across 10 boroughs. In total the approximate budget for Adopt London South to deliver all the services within scope is likely to be in the region of £3-£3.5 million.
50. By Southwark hosting the arrangement there will be estimated costs of £291k (10% of estimated staffing costs) which will be met by the funding partners as per the arrangements set out above and by a notional contribution from the host. Southwark will use no more than £6,000 per FTE of the funding being transferred to cover hosting charges incurred (for example HR, IT, legal, finance, insurance, facilities and buildings), the remainder will be used to resource Adopt London South. This level of funding is commensurate with other RAAs nationally and is in line with the other London RAAs.
51. These arrangements are by their nature still under development and there will need to be assurance built in to the arrangement that the council's financial interests are protected and that there is not any cross subsidisation and moreover that there are adequate arrangements to share any risk/reward between the partners. Furthermore there will also need to cover areas such as pay inflation, harmonisation of terms and conditions and also workloads. Finance staff will be involved in shaping the agreement that underpins the arrangement, using the learning from other RAA arrangements outside London. As stated above additional assurance will be obtained by due diligence and independent audit.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Equality Impact Assessment

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councillor Jasmine Ali, Children, Schools and Adult Care		
Lead Officer	David Quirke-Thornton, Strategic Director for Children’s and Adults’ Services		
Report Author	Alasdair Smith, Director, Children and Families		
Version	Final		
Dated	28 November 2018		
Key Decision?	Yes		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER			
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included	
Director of Law and Democracy	Yes	Yes	
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	Yes	Yes	
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes	
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		28 November 2018	

APPENDIX 1

Equality Impact Assessment		Please enter responses below in the right hand columns
Date	November 2018	
Sign-off path for EIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Head of Legal• Cabinet	
Title of Project, business area, policy/strategy	Adoption Regionalisation	
Author	Rebecca Eligon/Pam Walton	
Job title, directorate	Project Manager, Practice Lead Adopt London South	
Contact email and telephone	Pam.walton@southwark.gov.uk	
Strategic Director Sponsor	David Quirke Thornton	

Equality Impact Assessment		Please enter responses below in the right hand columns.
1.0 Introduction		
1.1 Business activity aims and intentions <i>In brief explain the aims of your proposal/project/service, why is it needed? Who is it aimed at? What is the intended outcome? What are the links to political priorities, and outcomes?</i>	<p>This Equality Impact Assessment relates to the proposed regionalisation of adoption services across ten boroughs in South London – Kingston, Richmond, Merton, Croydon, Lambeth, Greenwich, Lewisham, Wandsworth, Sutton and Southwark. Together they are responsible for about 110 adoptions each year. Adoption services are statutorily required to become regionalised by 2020.</p> <p>Regionalisation is intended to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Increase the number of children adopted; b. Reduce the length of time children wait to be adopted; c. Improve post-adoption support services to families who have adopted children from care; and d. Reduce the number of agencies that provide adoption services thereby improving efficiency & effectiveness. 	
2.0 Analysing your equalities evidence		
2.1 Evidence <i>Any proposed business activity, new policy or strategy, service change, or procurement must be informed by carrying out an assessment of the likely impact that it may have. In this section please include both data and analysis which shows that you understand how this decision is likely to affect residents that fall under the protected characteristics enshrined in law.</i>		
Protected characteristics	Impact analysis For each characteristic please indicate the type of impact (i.e. positive, negative, positive and negative, none, or unknown), and: <i>Please explain how you justify your claims around impacts.</i> <i>Please include any data and evidence that you have collected including from surveys, performance data or complaints to support your proposed changes.</i>	
Overall	<p>Southwark's adoption service, whilst high performing, is a small and relatively specialist. In Southwark in 2017/18 there were 10 assessments and 14 adoptions.</p> <p>Across London there is a highly-fragmented system with around 180 agencies recruiting and matching adopters for relatively small numbers of children per year. Across the 10 south London authorities proposed to be part of Adopt London South 113 adoptions took</p>	

Equality Impact Assessment	Please enter responses below in the right hand columns.
	<p>place in 2017/18 an average of 11 per borough.</p> <p>Across the 10 south London authorities 89 families were assessed in 2017/18 an average of nine per local authority area. Projections for 2018/19 and 2019/20 are at similar levels with the numbers of assessments being outstripped by the numbers of children requiring adoption</p> <p>Recent data from the London Adoption Board shows that, at the end of June 2018 there were 68 London prospective adopters and 78 children waiting with placement orders. Seven of the children waiting with placement orders were Southwark children.</p> <p>In London 6% of children leave care through adoption, compared with the national average of 14%</p>
Race	<p>Positive</p> <p>63% of ethnic minority children awaiting adoption are from mixed race backgrounds, and this proportion is much higher in south London¹. The vast majority of south London children where the plan is adoption are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Specific work is already underway through the Adopt London South project team to encourage and support more BME and transracial adopters. The proposed new ALS recruitment and marketing team will have a particular focus on recruiting BME adopters and adopters with trans-racial placements.</p> <p>Research with BME communities shows that most critical in their consideration of becoming adopters is word of mouth, hearing from others. And the key message from current adopters (including BME and those with trans-racial placements) is that post-adoption support, and peer networks are vital to prevent adoption breakdown and ensure stability.</p> <p>Therefore, BME and transracial adopters peer support is under development with postcode cafes for people to come together informally, and camping trip being set up. A successful BME, transracial adopters party was held in November 2018 and over 54 existing adoptive families attended. Many of them were keen to share their story with</p>

¹ <https://www.adoptionmatch.org.uk/statistics/>

Equality Impact Assessment		Please enter responses below in the right hand columns.
		others and the ALS project team is currently following up to involve existing adopters in future marketing and recruitment.
Gender		<p>Positive</p> <p>Nationally, slightly more boys than girls are awaiting adoption, and this is a trend mirrored in South London.</p>
Gender re-assignment		<p>Unknown</p> <p>It is not known how many children are placed with families where a parent has undergone gender reassignment.</p>
Disability		<p>Positive</p> <p>The vast majority of the children who are placed for adoption 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.</p> <p>Through ALS instead of there being small teams of a handful 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. Through a specialist pan-South London post-adoption team it is anticipated that the quality and consistency of support to families and children with complex needs will improve, preventing adoption breakdown and ensuring good outcomes for children. Through a specialist marketing and recruitment team ALS will be specifically looking to recruit families, and then support them through the assessment and matching process to ensure they are trained, supported and able to give a permanent loving home to some of our most complex children.</p>
Age		<p>Positive</p> <p>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. Through Southwark's well-regarded practice in early permanence two further social workers from Greenwich and Merton are being supported to further develop their expertise in this area with a view to increasing these sorts of placement where they are appropriate. By placing babies from birth with foster carers who then go on to adopt those children can have a secure and stable start.</p> <p>Older children Nationally and in south London children aged over 5 are less likely to be</p>

Equality Impact Assessment		Please enter responses below in the right hand columns.
	<p>placed for adoption. Indicative data from adoption match shows that 81% of children awaiting adoption are aged under 6. Through ALS a practice model to support placement of older children, (where adoption may be a good route to permanence), in foster to adopt arrangements.</p> <p>Sibling groups: Nationally 64% of children awaiting adoption are part of sibling groups. Through ALS there will be a particular focus on supporting and preparing potential adoption families to consider sibling groups.</p>	
Sexual orientation	<p>Positive</p> <p>9.7% (420) of children were adopted by same sex couples (either in a civil partnership, married or neither). Specific work is already underway through the Adopt London South project team to encourage and support more LGB adopters. An LGB adopters peer support network is being set up, and existing LGB adopters are already starting to volunteer to share their experiences to encourage and support others who may be considering adoption.</p>	
Religion and belief	<p>Positive</p> <p>There is no centrally collected data on the faith and belief or non-belief of adopters, or the birth families. It will be important to gather and map this information to better inform both post-adoption support in ALS and to enable targeted recruitment of families.</p>	
Pregnancy and maternity	<p>Positive</p> <p>ALS will continue to link with Southwark's successful Pause project to identify women who may benefit from participating.</p>	
Marriage and civil partnership	<p>Positive</p> <p>Nationally, 90% (3,920) of children were adopted by couples and 10% (420) by single adopters. Specific work is already underway through Adopt London South to encourage and support more single adopters. A single adopters peer support network has been set up, and existing single adopters are already starting to volunteer to share their experiences to encourage and support other single people who may be considering adoption.</p>	
4.0 Conclusions, justification and action		

Equality Impact Assessment		Please enter responses below in the right hand columns.
4.1 Conclusions and justification <i>What are the main conclusions of this EIA? What, if any, disproportionate negative or positive equality impacts did you identify at 2.1? On what grounds do you justify them and how will they be mitigated?</i>		<p>Adoptees: On balance the intended outcome of regionalisation should have a positive equalities impact particular for children from ethnic minority backgrounds, older children, those in sibling groups, those with disabilities, developmental delay and uncertainty and other complex needs. For adult adoptees there should be increased consistency in accessing birth records.</p> <p>Adopters: It should also have a positive impact for adoptive families, in particular improving support to single, ethnic minority, transracial and LGB families.</p> <p>Birth families: Finally, ALS is intended to have a positive impact on birth families. There is proposed to be a single approach to letterbox and contact arrangements; and increased consistency around post-adoption is also intended to improve support to birth families in south London. There is a practice steering group which has been set up to specifically look at how ALS can better support birth families.</p> <p>Staff: A separate staffing EIA will be undertaken once it is clear the staff likely to be affected by the creation of Adopt London South. The template it is proposed will be completed is attached. This will be completed and shared at consultation, and again prior to implementation of the new ALS staff structure. Where possible a similar analysis will be undertaken to understand the impact on adoption panel members.</p>
4.2 Equality Action plan <i>Please list the equality issue/s identified through the evidence and the mitigating action to be taken. Please also detail the date when the action will be taken and the name and job title of the responsible officer.</i>		
Equality Issue	Mitigating actions	
That the equality analysis may not have accurately covered all the equality impacts; and the mitigations may not act to reduce disproportionate impact	Review the EIA and assess whether the mitigating actions were sufficient.	
Limited analysable faith and belief data	Collect further data on faith and belief	
Lack of detail about the protected characteristics of the projected 110 children where the plan is adoption	Collect data from all ten local authorities to ensure ALS is developing appropriately targeted approaches to marketing and recruitment	

Equality Impact Assessment		Please enter responses below in the right hand columns.
5.0 Publishing your results		
The results of your EIA must be published. Once the business activity has been implemented the EIA must be periodically reviewed to ensure your decision/change had the anticipated impact and the actions set out at 4.2 are still appropriate.		
EIA publishing date	November 2018	
EIA review date	April 2020	
Assessment sign off (name/job title):	Alasdair Smith	