



# **ADOPT LONDON EAST ANNUAL REPORT April 2021-March 2022**



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## Introduction

This is the third Annual Report for the Adopt London East Partnership and its second full year of functioning, from April 2021 to March 2022. In line with pressures throughout Children Social care, the demand for adoption services has remained extremely high during this period. Services have been further compounded by unpredictable levels of need due to the global pandemic and various lockdowns.

We have seen an increase in the number of families seeking adoption support services, with increased complexity in need. The Contact Service has remained busy with direct face to face contacts being re-established over the course of the year following our use of virtual contacts during the pandemic. There has also been the impact of significant delays within care proceedings, on the number of children that Adopt London East have been able to family find for. To meet the needs of children and families and adopted adults and young people there has been a great deal of flexibility within the Adopt London Service.

A major change during this year was the retirement of Sue May as the Head of Adopt London East in March 2022. Sue had been involved in the conception of Adopt London East and the wider Adopt London group. Despite a close handover between Sue and the incoming Head, the change of leadership has resulted in differences in the working relationships with all of the boroughs. We are currently working to build strong relationships across all the boroughs to support the partnership. Following the impact of the pandemic, we have been given the opportunity to look at all aspects of practice and our return to face to face service rather than virtually.

This annual report provides a summary of the work over the last year, focusing on the innovations and improvements within Adopt London East and insights into challenges we are facing post-pandemic with increase in demand for all areas of the service.

**Sarah Johnson, Head of Adopt London East**



## 1. Context

In June 2015 the Government set out its vision for the future of Adoption Services in the paper 'Regionalising Adoption.' The premise of regionalisation was 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.
- Reduce the number of agencies that provide adoption services thereby improving efficiency and effectiveness

The government continues to drive forward with the structural reform programme regarding regionalising adoption and all but one of Local Authorities in England are now in a live Regional Adoption Agency (RAA). 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, the number children with plans for adoption has been falling over the last number of years.

Adopt London East is a partnership between four London boroughs of Havering, Barking and Dagenham, Tower Hamlets and Newham. The partnership Agreement sets out the legal and financial terms of the arrangements.

Adopt London East has responsibility for all the adoption functions including:

- Recruitment and assessment of adoptive parents
- Family finding for children in need of adoptive parents
- Adoption Support to adoptive families, adopted adults, and others impacted by adoption

These functions were delegated on the 1st October 2019 to the London Borough of Havering. Adopt London East (ALE) formally commenced operational activity on this date.

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 works in close collaboration with the 'Adopt London' adoption agencies who provide services for 24 Local Authorities in total. In this way we are able to develop a London wide profile, develop economies of scale and share best practice.



## 2. Governance Arrangements

All service functions and partnership arrangements are detailed within the partnership agreement. The agreement includes:

- Governance
- Finances and budget setting
- Data sharing agreement
- Dispute resolution
- Termination of agreement

The Adopt London East Governance Board has Director level representation from each of the four partner boroughs and has responsibility for all partnership decisions that need to be made above Head of Service level, and for monitoring performance and budget monitoring.

The Adopt London East Operational Board has membership of Heads of Service, Service Managers and Team Managers. The group monitors performance across the service and considers best practice innovations.

## 2. Staffing

Adopt London East employs around 30 members of staff who work across the service in differing teams areas. The service is managed by the permanent Head of Service, with direct reports of 3 Team Managers and an Adoption Panel Advisor. Overall it is stable team, currently there are 2 temporary workers seconded from other teams in Havering's wider children services to the vacant posts. It is planned that these posts will be permanently recruited to within 2022-23. There was one full time Agency worker from September 2021 in the Panel Advisor role, who was covering maternity leave, up to the return of the permanent worker in September 2022.

There will be some changes to the Business Support posts due to the review that is taking place within the London Borough of Havering. Adopt London East has had the equivalent of 3 Business Support Officers. Following the review whilst the establishment will remain the same, there will be changes to the way that work is managed. Adopt London East financial transactions will continue to be managed via the London Borough of Havering Brokerage Team with a 0.5 post in there. The other two posts will be managed directly by Adopt London East. One of the posts supports all the administrative functions in relation to panel. The other post is a general post working across the service.

During the Covid pandemic, workers adapted well to remote working and continued to provide all the core functions of an Adoption Service. In line with the restrictions being eased more work is being done face to face. Regular service meetings have taken place giving the whole service the opportunity to come together and look at service



development and practice issues. All assessments are now being done face to face, however some work has been very successful being done in a hybrid approach. A hybrid approach to working has developed and have enabled workers to be as efficient as possible.

#### **4. Outcomes**

Adopt London East aims to improve outcomes for adoptive families, and specifically for children. When Adopt London East was set up the following targets were identified: (Data is presented in from section 16 onwards).

- Increase the percentage of children adopted from care
- Improve timescales for placing children with adoptive families
- Fewer adoption placement disruptions
- More children placed in an early permanence placement
- Reduce the number of children for whom the permanence plan has changed from adoption
- Improve timescales for adopter assessments
- Higher conversion rate from enquiry to approval
- Fewer prospective adopter approvals rescinded
- More timely matching of approved adopters

#### **Financial Outturn**

The total budget for Adopt London East is £1,702,433, each borough contributes to the costs. 2021-22 the service was delivered within budget with a carry forward of £40,000 which will be taken towards the additional posts planned in 2022 – 2023.

#### **5. Adopt London**

Adopt London East is part of Adopt London, working in close collaboration with three other RAAs in London and together provides services for 24 London boroughs. During this period the London borough of Greenwich joined Adopt London South in April 2022. Adopt London is unique nationally given our close, consortium approach across a number of RAAs and large number of local authorities. Through this partnership, we aim to develop a London-wide profile, improve services that benefit from economies of scale, and share best practice. The host boroughs for Adopt London are Havering, Islington, Southwark, and Ealing. Heads of Service, Service Managers, Team Managers, and Marketing & Communications leads all work closely with their peers across Adopt London to develop shared services and practice standards.

Heads of Service and the host borough Directors and Directors of Children's Services meet quarterly at the Adopt London Executive Advisory Board chaired by a non-host partner DCS. The Executive Advisory Board oversees the joint project work of Adopt London, supports with problem solving, and considers Adopt London issues that need the support of other senior leaders to resolve.



In 2021 the Executive Advisory Board wrote to all member boroughs to request agreement to work towards an Adopt London legal partnership agreement linked to local agreements. This will formalise the responsibilities of the Executive Board and protect the ownership of our shared brand and online resources. This work is taking longer than anticipated to progress due to the legal complexities however, we hope it will be finalised before the end of the 2022/23 period.



## 6. Adopt London strategy and priorities

The Adopt London Heads of Service work towards a strategic work plan that is supported by the Executive Advisory Board. The plan covers:

- Governance and commissioning arrangements
- Strategic development including opportunities to access national funding
- Operational and practice developments
- The voice of adopters, adopted children, adopted adults, and birth family members, and marketing and communications.

Each practice-based group has a different focus and has made progress in taking forward their priorities during the last year:

### Recruitment & Assessment

The group has launched Family & Friends preparation workshops – an opportunity for those who will be supporting new adoptive families to develop a better understanding of adoption and the needs of adopted children. Staff have been trained to deliver Early Permanence preparation training so we can deliver this in-house for the first time, improving availability of spaces and cost efficiency. The group are receiving training in a new, research-based Prospective Adopter Report tool which they hope to launch across Adopt London in 2022/23.



### Family Finding

The group aims to improve family finding across the RAAs so that children who cannot be matched within their own RAA are more likely to still be placed within the London region. The group are implementing a system to enable them to share information about children and prospective adopters more effectively. They have developed Adopt London networking events for practitioners to share profiles and discuss potential links and are working to establish a more regular pattern of Adopt London 'activity events' for children and prospective adopters to meet.

### Adoption Support

The group have been developing ideas together on managing increases in Adoption Support demand and learning from different models offering triage and duty systems. They have begun to pilot a model for offering specialist therapeutic parenting training to adoptive families together, funded through the Adoption Support Fund, with the aim to increase uptake of preventative support.

## **7. Adoption Panel**

Adopt London East have one central panel which oversees recommendations of the following:

- Approval of prospective adoptive parents
- Adoption decisions for relinquished babies
- Matching recommendations in relation to the placement of a child
- Review or rescindment of approval of prospective of adoptive parents

Panel recommendations relating to individual children are presented to the Agency Decision Maker from the child's borough of origin. Recommendations relating to prospective adopters are dealt with by Agency Decision Maker in Adopt London East.

To support timeliness the panel meets fortnightly with the capacity for an extra panel should the need arise. The panels are chaired by two chairs and supported by a vice chair. There is a central list of all panel members who sit on each panel. Panel membership is diverse in relation to age, gender, relationship status, and ethnicity. The panel have regular training and annual appraisals.

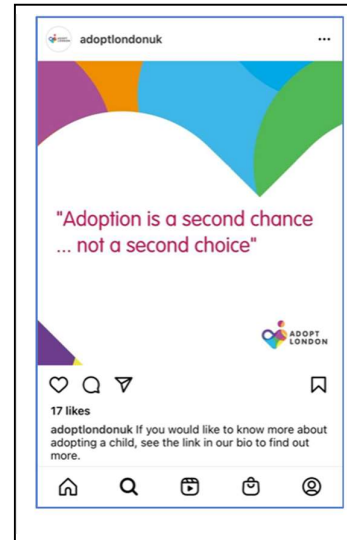
The panel provide feedback in relation to quality assurance to Adopt London East and to the relevant borough. Panel continues to be held virtually, feedback has been largely positive from staff, adopters and panel members. It is planned that virtual panels will continue as it offers convenience to clients who are able to participate in panel from the comfort of their own homes.



## 8. Adopt London Brand

A single brand identity and entry point for prospective adopters covering the 24 Adopt London boroughs remains central to the approach of Adopt London. It is crucial in reaching prospective adopters from all London boroughs and surrounding Home Counties, and means we are more likely to be considered by prospective adopters who are also looking into Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs). Pooling communications resources means we have a greater budget to maintain a professional, creative and up to date online presence.

We have a shared annual marketing strategy. Through the Adopt London brand we aim to celebrate the diversity of London, to demonstrate that London children are central to our agency, and to consistently highlight a range of voices impacted by adoption.



## 9. Adopt London Website

This year we have focused on building the range of support resources available through the Adopt London website and increasing the number and variety of personal blogs and stories about adoption that are available to those researching adoption.

We have undertaken a project to prepare for the transfer of our website to a new provider to ensure that it remains compliant with local government standards and enables us to expand our use of the site in the future – such as using it as a digital gateway for adoption support requests. This move will take place at the beginning of the 2022/23 period and will pave the way for a broader update of the site during the year to ensure it equally serves all those who might need to access it, not just prospective adopters.

Website views have continued to grow this year, with a **2% increase** in all website users and a total of **58,696** website sessions taking place during the period. Most initial enquiries and information session bookings are made through the website, with **2144** prospective adoptive households booking to attend an information session this year through the website.

## 10. Adopt London social media





Adopt London has successfully developed an identity and following on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. We have **over 2000 followers** across social media platforms, an increase from last year (1400 followers in 2020/21).

Growth in new followers and engagement has dropped this year, believed to be due to a reduction in capacity within the Marketing & Communications group by one member of staff and they were required to focus on a website transfer. A social media advisor has undertaken an audit of our activity and is now providing regular advice to the group to improve social media engagement. Developing content for social media and posting regularly is a challenge with the capacity available to the team however it remains a priority as an important way for prospective adopters to develop a connection and sense of loyalty to Adopt London whilst considering their plans to adopt.

Rather than paying for advertising, the Adopt London strategy is to create original content that will be viewed and shared online with the aim to build our social media reach and the numbers of individuals visiting and revisiting our website. Content that people want to share with others is most successful at reaching our audience. This year we created a new original animation entitled 'Our Children' which aims to communicate a sensitive, warm, and realistic message about the needs of our children who are waiting for adoptive families. The **video has been viewed over 5000 times**, demonstrating the potential reach of this type of accessible content. You can click on the image below to watch the video, and [click here to read the story behind the poem in the animation](#).

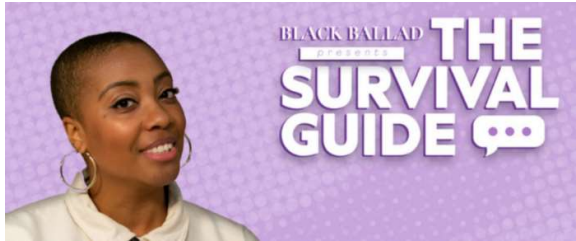




### Adopt London podcasts

This year we broadened our communications approach through the use of podcasts. In partnership with We Are Family adoption peer support community we released the first series of 'Adoption Shared'. This podcast offers a range of perspectives on adoption from adoptive parents and professionals and is designed to be accessible to existing adoptive parents and those currently considering or preparing for adoption. By offering resources that provide a wide range of perspectives on adoption we hope to increase the readiness and resilience of prospective adopters as they enter the assessment process.

There have been **over 1500 downloads** of the podcast during season 1. [The Adoption Shared podcasts can be accessed by following this link](#), or in any podcast app.



This year we also supported Black Ballad, an online lifestyle community for Black women in the UK, to produce a podcast focused on Black adoption. They interviewed Adopt London adoptive parents and an adopted adult, and produced an accessible and informative podcast episode that now forms part of our resources. [You can access the episode here.](#)

### 11. Enquires and providing Information

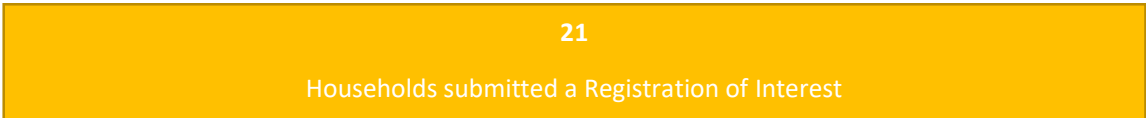
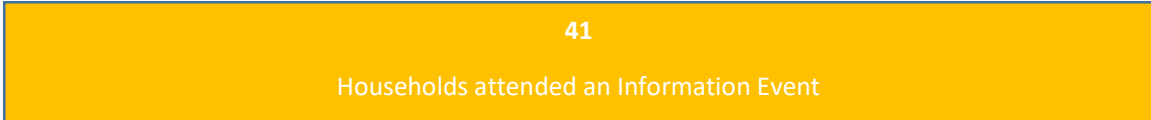
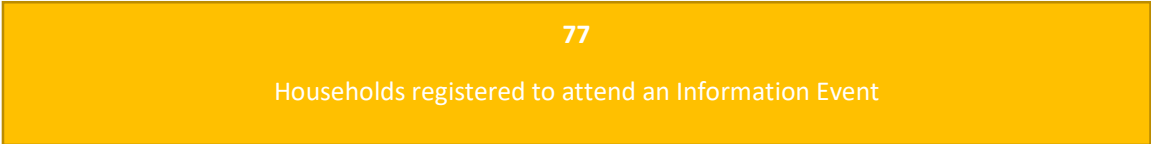
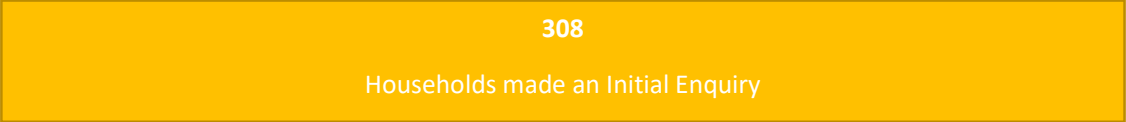


Information sessions have continued to be delivered virtually on a monthly basis and are well attended. In 2021/22 enquiry levels have remained high, with a total of 308 initial enquiries. The Adopt London website is very visible and directs prospective applicants to one of the four RAAs. The website enables applicants to book on to a Information Session.

77 households registered to attend an Information Event, however only 41 households actually attended.

*'The presentation overall was very informative but also didn't overwhelm me.'*  
Information session feedback

*'The whole event was very informative but in particular I found it very insightful to hear the express of the adoptive father.'*  
Information Session feedback



**12. Assessment of Propsective adopters**



The number of approvals has risen to 24 from 19 in 2020/21. Gradually coming out of Covid we are working with adopters with more face to face appointments during the preparation and assessment process. Going forward we will be using a hybrid approach to ensure effective use of social work time.

*Table: Adoptive family approvals by year*

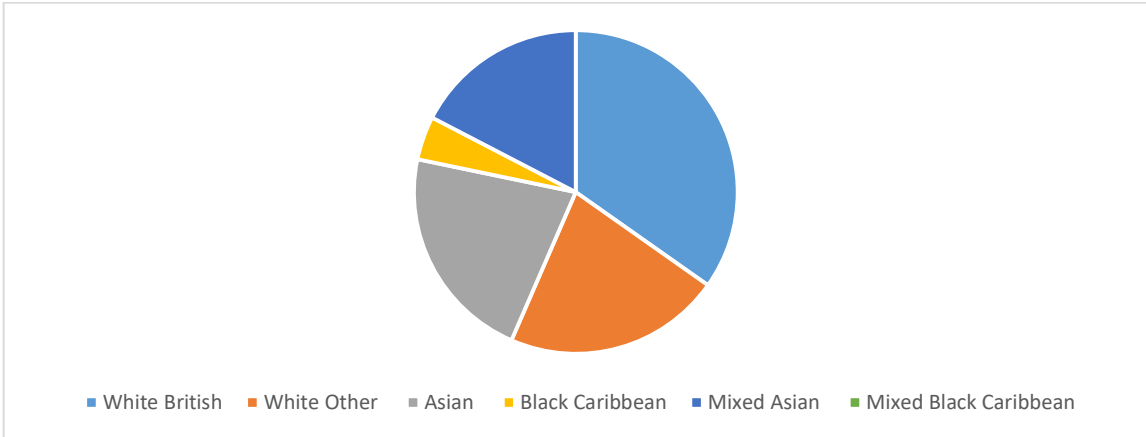
2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
18	19	24

The service modelling prior to ALE going live, gave a target to the number of approvals per year of 20 Households. The Pandemic appeared to have a major impact on people’s readiness to adopt, noted changes within applicants’ employment status, loss and bereavement, illness and mental health difficulties.

*‘Being able to identify the ways that our childhood will affect the way in which we will parent even subconsciously. Having those ideas will enable me to be able to try and support our child through what will be difficult time. Looking at what we maybe did have in our childhood that we might have liked and trying to get to a point where the child feels safe and secure that no topic is off limits to talk about. Our social worker has supported us through the process and we feel prepared.’*

There have been no foster carer assessments and connected people wishing to adopt children already in their care.

**13. Ethnicity of Adoptive Households Approved in 2021-22**





#### **14. Number of Black families**

As part of Adopt London, ALE has launched a new long-term project this year – The Black Adoption Project, in partnership with Laurelle Brown training & consultancy. The project recognises that there is a persistent gap in London between the number of Black adoptive parents and the number of Black children for whom an adoption plan is made. This gap has a significant impact on Black children, who may experience more delay before they move to live with their adoptive family, or who may remain long-term in foster care if an adoptive family cannot be identified. Whilst some adoptive parents of other ethnicities are strongly placed to adopt and support a Black child, and whilst this is right for some children, we need to have as much choice as possible in identifying the best possible adoptive family for every child.

We recognise that Black people may face more barriers to adopting and have more challenges to overcome when they become adoptive parents. We therefore need to take steps to remove obstacles and provide the support that is needed to Black adoptive parents before and after adoption, and to walk alongside and support parents of other ethnicities who have adopted Black children.

We know that many people who are not Black also face barriers to adoption, or don't receive the support they need, for a wide range of reasons. We want to address inequalities and improve our practice across all of these areas. However, the disparities that exist within Black adoption are particularly persistent and we know that we need co-ordinated focus to bring about change.

Our aim is to understand the many complex factors that impact the adoption of Black children. The project began with an analysis of the current situation across Adopt London, including a data analysis, focus groups, survey, and learning from practice examples and contexts. The initial analysis from this work will provide the basis for the project strategy for the coming year. A Steering Committee made up of those with personal and professional experience of adoption has been initiated, and stakeholder groups are being established to ensure we have input from those with a wide range of lived experience of adoption. Staff training and development are also an integral part of the plan for the project.



#### **15. Arrangements for Permanency Planning**

Each Borough is responsible for adoption planning of children and tracking the progress. ALE support the planning process by attending planning meetings for all children where the plan is likely to be adoption. Adopt London East also provide a panel adviser service for all children being presented to the Agency Decision Maker



(ADM) for an adoption decision. Allocation of a family finder takes place around the time that the adoption decision is made. Not all referrals result in a Placement Order being granted

## 16. Numbers of children with a plan for adoption

Table: Best Interests Decisions- data ASGLB rolling 3 year average

Agency	Total ADM Best Interests Decisions			ADM Best Interests Decisions per 10,000 people under the age of 18		
	2019/2020	2020/21	2021/22	2019/2020	2020/21	2021/22
Adopt London East	66	43	34	2.25	1.45	1.15
Newham	12	12	15	1.33	1.33	1.66
Tower Hamlets	24	16	6	3.17	2.06	0.77
Havering	5	9	8	0.82	1.46	1.29
Barking and Dagenham	25	6	5	3.17	3.00	2.59

ASGLB RAA Dashboard - Adopt London East 2021/22 Q4 - Placements and Placement Orders

Agency	Total Placements between			Total POs between		
	1-Apr-19 to 31-Mar-20	1-Apr-20 to 31-Mar-21	1-Apr-21 to 31-Mar-22	1-Apr-19 to 31-Mar-20	1-Apr-20 to 31-Mar-21	1-Apr-21 to 31-Mar-22
Adopt London East	36	46	27	49	34	18
ENGLAND	3256	3125	2867	3294	3027	2846
Barking and Dagenham	14	14	8	19	7	3
Havering	4	4	3	2	7	0
Newham	10	12	6	12	8	9
Tower Hamlets	8	16	10	16	12	6

The ASGLB data shows the reducing numbers children to be granted a placement order. This trend is across the whole of London as well as England. Provisional ASGLB 22-23 data shows that the number of placement orders look set to increase, however it is difficult to predict what the 22-23 numbers will be.

## 17. Family Finding

The Recruitment and Assessment and the Family Finding Teams have continued making links trying to develop the number of children being placed with Adopt London East in house adopters. If there is not an in-house link, a link with another RAA or VAA placement will be sought so that there is no delay for the child.

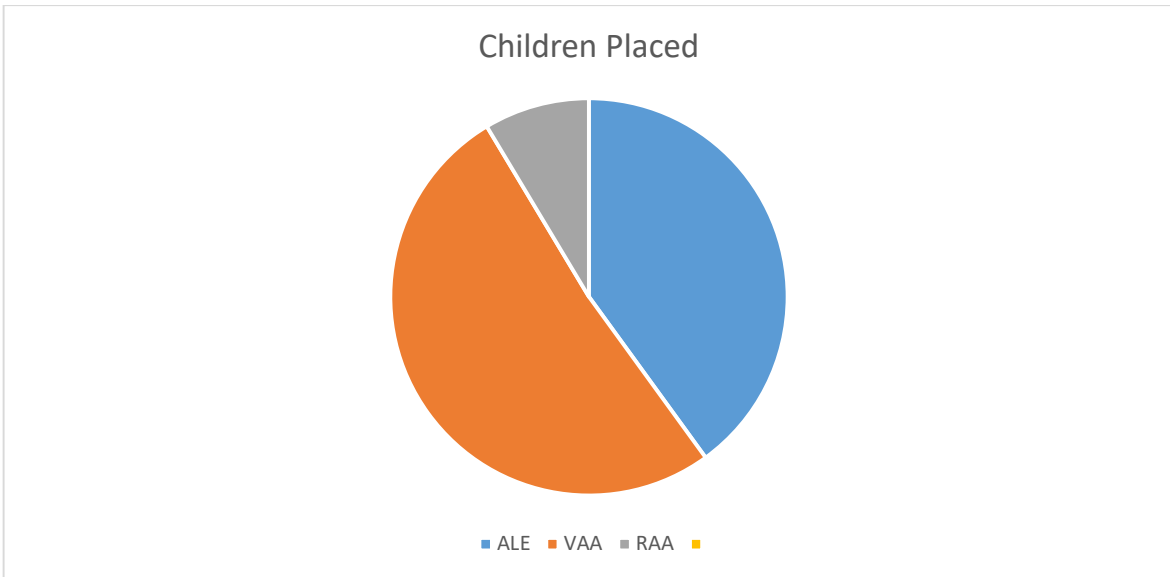


Working together as Adopt London with the four RAA's, we have access to a wider pool of adopters. We have also created a closed group on our national digital family finding platform so we have early access to approved families across London. More face to face family finding methods have been used which complement virtual meetings.

### 18. In House Placements

It is a priority to place as many children with our own adoptive parents as possible. We really understand the strengths and vulnerabilities of the adopters we have approved ourselves, there is clearer and faster communication between the different parties involved, and we can effectively and quickly escalate difficulties if they arise. All of these help to ensure that the match is appropriate, the right early support is in place, the transition is as careful as possible, and the child can maintain contact with their foster carer. It is also easier to provide support to children and adoptive families after placement. In order to grow our in-house placements it is important that we assess the adopters who are most likely to be matched with our children, and that we talk to them from the earliest stages about the benefits of waiting for a link internally. We know that not every adopter will be matched in-house and we support adopters who are ready to begin family finding on a wider basis. We will seek to increase the number of in-house placements used each year.

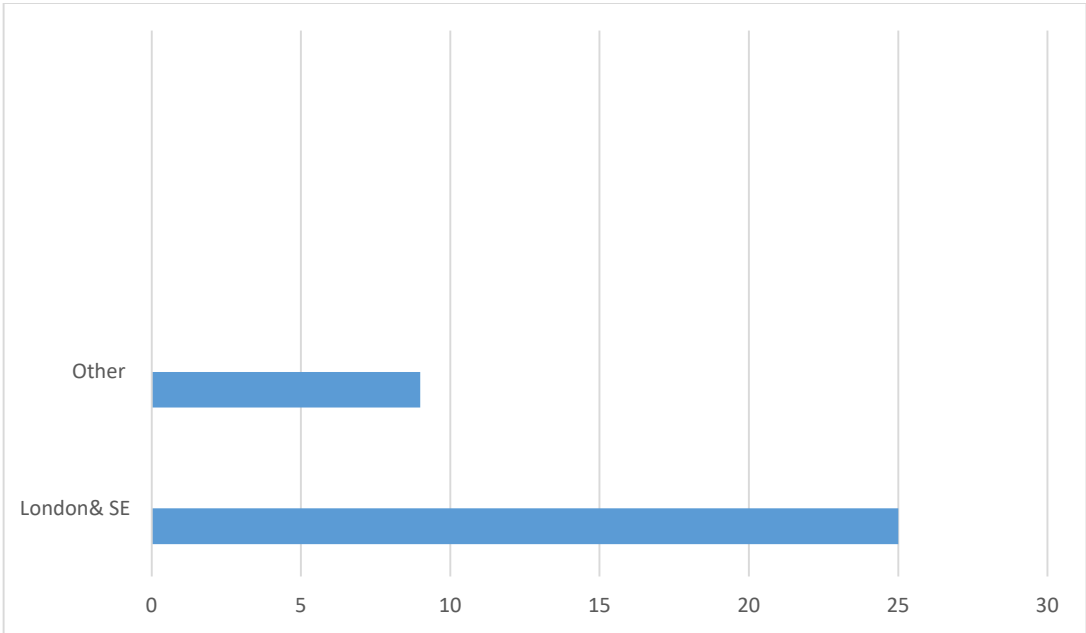
In 2021/22 a total of 35 children were placed. 51.4% were placed with Voluntary Adoption Agencies (18 children), 40% were placed in ALE In house placements (14 children), the remaining 8.6% were placed with other RAA's, Adopt London South, Adopt East, Adoption South East (3 children). Sadly, there was 1 placement breakdown of 2 siblings which was a VAA placement. There is an action plan in place to increase the number of in-house ALE placements for subsequent years.





**19. Location of Placements**

Where in house placements are not possible, we aim to place as many children as possible within London and the South East, this enables us to provide timely adoption support to children and families post placement. This year 73.5% were placed in London and the South East and 26.5% were placed outside of this area



**20. Children awaiting for an Adoptive family**

Adopt London East work closely with the children’s social work teams to ensure that family finding is making good progress. Each Borough has a named family finding worker who links with the borough and regularly review family finding arrangements for each child and to ensure that a plan of adoption is an appropriate one. A regular tracking meeting is held to provide a management overview for children where any concerns can be escalated to senior managers within the borough.

The ALE Panel Adviser is part of ALE core staff and works with each ADM to support Should Be placed for Adoption (SHOPA) decisions being made.





**21. Moving Children to Adoptive Families**

Moving children into their adoptive families gradually became easier during 2021/22 with ending of pandemic restrictions. We have continued to establish the use of ‘Moving to Adoption’, the University of East Anglia’s (UEA) research-based model for transitioning children to adoptive families, which emphasises an extended ‘soft’ getting-to-know-you period prior to the more intense main introductions, and an extended and planned goodbye period with the foster carer after moving to the adoptive home. The model is benefiting children, foster carers and adopters.



**22. Placements Made**

The number of placements of children declined this year:

*Total number of children placed by Adopt London East*

2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021-22
47	29	44	35

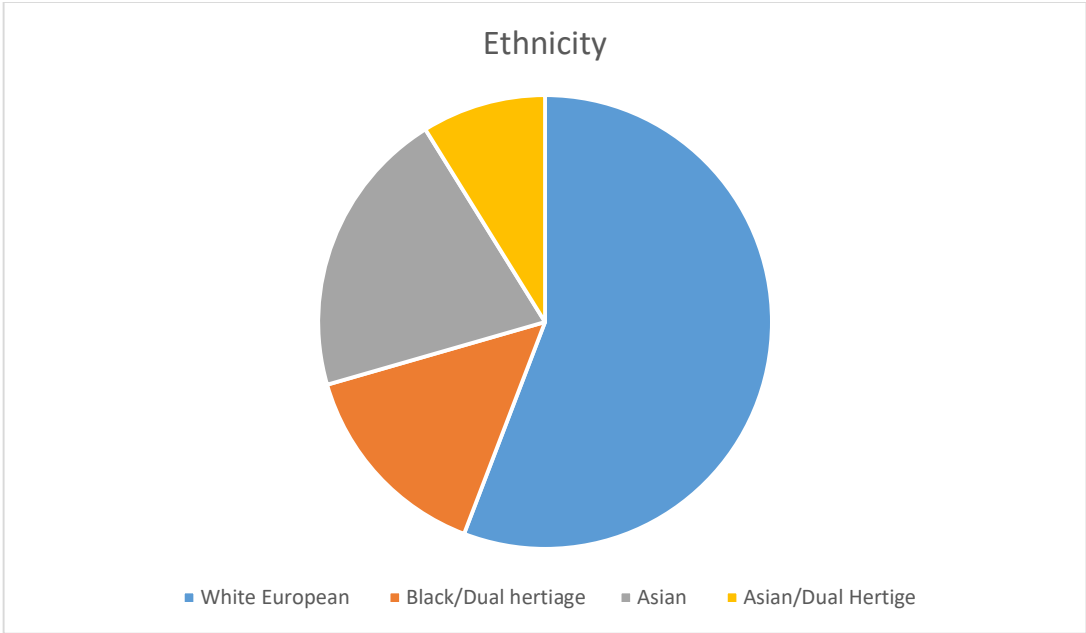
The national trend reflects that of ALE with fewer children being placed for adoption, however this is not the as low in the year 2019-20. Sadly in 21-22 one of the sibling of 2 placement disrupted shortly following placement.

*Table: Children placed by borough*

Borough	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Newham	5	10	14	12
Tower Hamlets	10	7	14	11
Havering	11	4	4	4
LBBB	21	8	13	8
Total	47	29	44	35

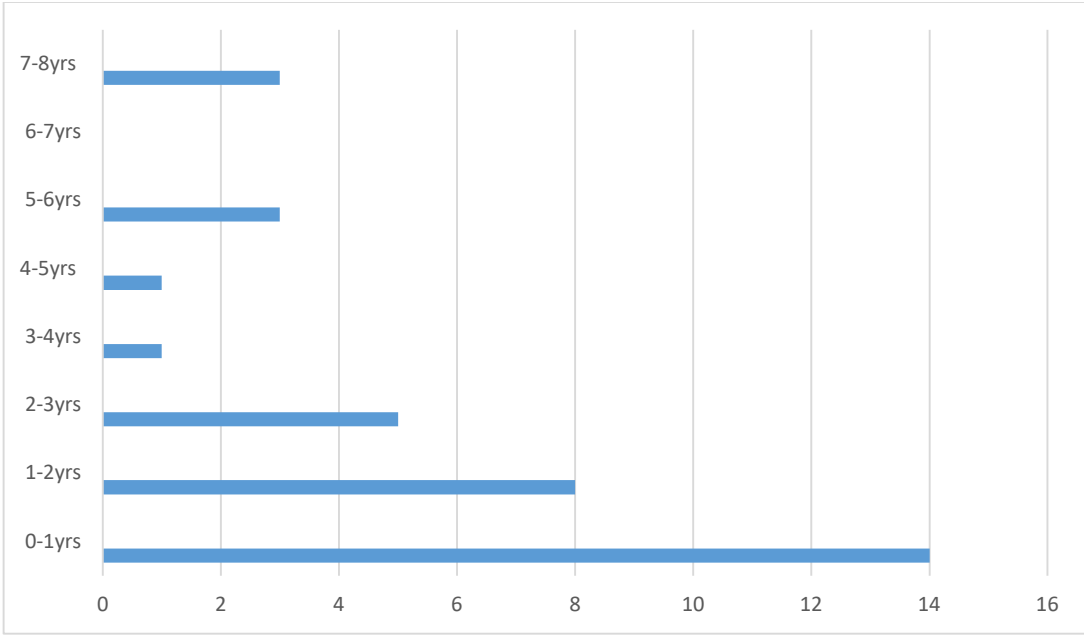
**23. Characteristics of children matched**

In 2021-22 4 children were placed within a sibling group, (2 sets of sibling groups of 2). We have found being part of a sibling group of 2 does not necessarily mean that the children wait longer. There are significantly fewer adopters waiting who are able to take a sibling group of more than 2 children.



The children’s ethnicities have been grouped into broader categories to demonstrate the types of adoptive placements that need to be recruited. In terms of children’s ethnicity the majority of the children were of White European, with Asian being second with Black Dual heritage being just over 14% of the children.





*Table: Age at placement for Adoption*

The majority of children placed continue to be under the age of 2 years, just under 63%. The data demonstrated that just under 20% of children are aged between 5 and 8 years, showing Local Authorities remain aspirational for the children.

There were a total of 8 children who were placed via Early Permanence this represents just under 23%, which is an increase on last year and is much higher than the ASGLB data of an average 4% for London in the 3 year average.

**24. Providing Support to Adoptive Families**

The Adoption Support Team provides support to adoptive families and adopted adults living within one of the boroughs, and contact support between adoptive families and birth families for all adoptive children and young people that were previously placed by one of our boroughs. Access to support is through the duty service who are also able to offer short-term support such as standalone applications to the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) and access to specialist training. Families requiring longer-term or more complex social work support are allocated to a social worker in the main team, who completes an assessment of their needs and recommendations for support. Many of the situations requiring longer-term social work support and coordination are at risk of family breakdown.

There has been an increase in demand for Adoption Support Services and the complexity of the needs is often greater. Every attempt is made to assess families



as soon as possible in order to prevent family breakdown, this has had an impact on the waiting lists for adopted adults (access to record requests) are very challenging to reduce.

Despite the pressure within the service, many families do value the support that they receive from the team and increases confidence in managing their individual family circumstances.

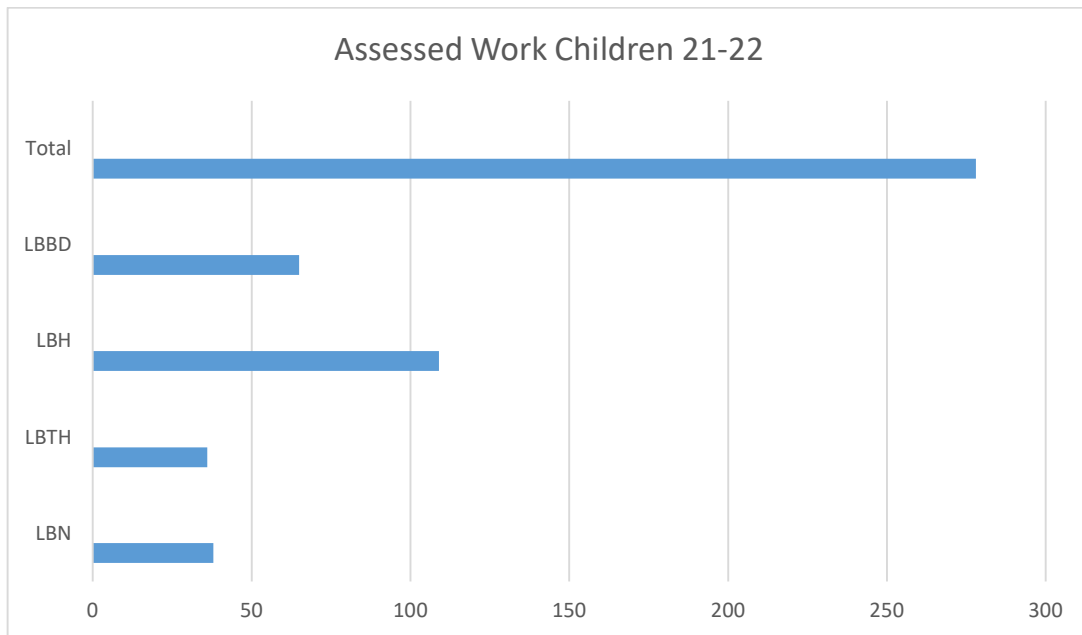
**'The support that has been offered by R (social worker) has made the world of difference to our life and we are very much enjoying the time we spend together.'**

(Feedback from an adoptive parent following intervention by the social worker).

***'Thanks for this E (social worker) your continued support and actively being on the case is brilliant I can't tell you. I do feel like we are in safe hands which hasn't always been the case, as soon as I spoke to B in lock down I had a very good feeling about the post adoption support we would get.'***

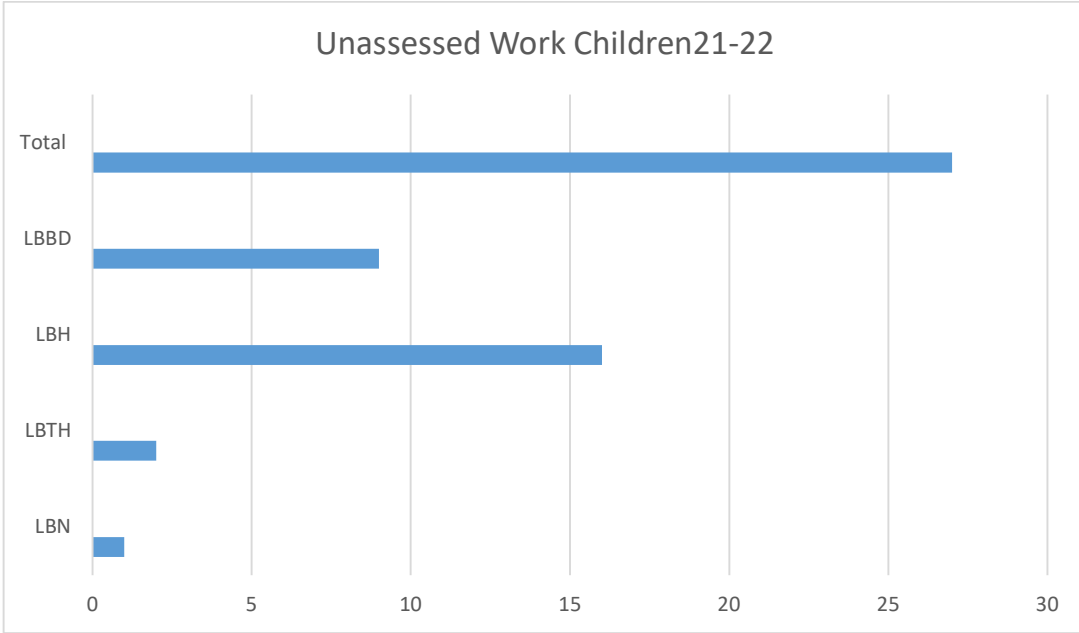
(Feedback from an Adoptive parent)

The below graphs show the breakdown of work completed in Adoption Support

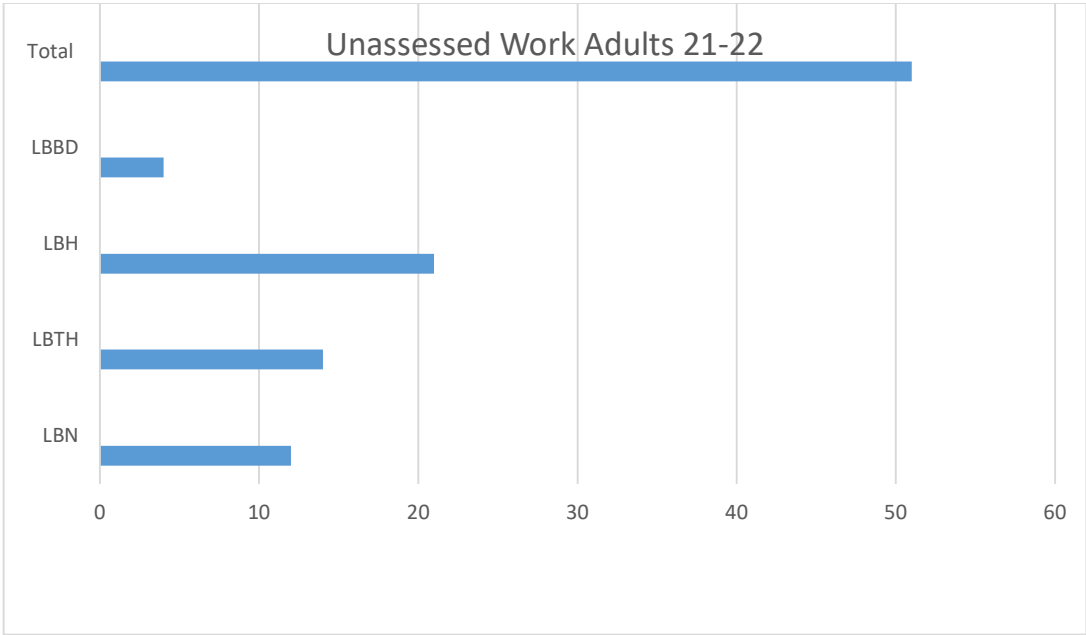
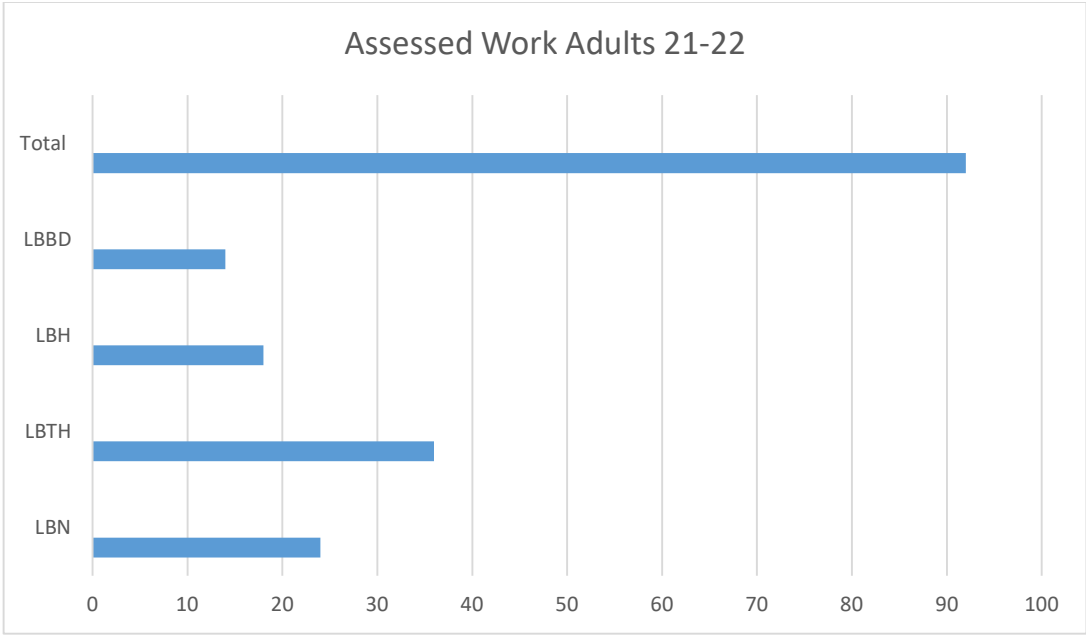




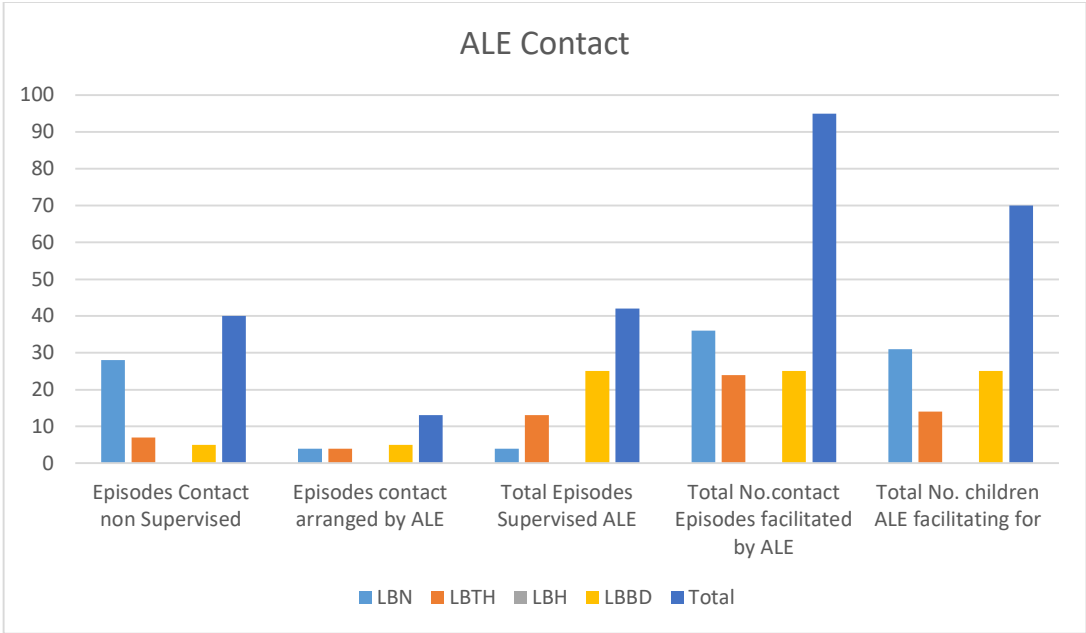
LBH still have many children living in the borough who are entitled for a service however were not previously known to the borough.



Unassessed work usually comes through to the Adoption Support via duty. All cases are subjected to an Initial Assessment. The Team Manager then makes a decision as to the outcome of the assessment. At times advice is given and case closed, other cases will await further allocation, such cases are regularly reviewed by the Team Manager and if there are any urgent issues these are picked up by a duty. Cases are allocated as soon as possible.



Once an Initial Assessment is completed the adult cases are placed on a waiting list to await allocation.



LBBB continue to have the most direct contacts facilitated by ALE. Over the past two years all the supervised contact has been reviewed and the wherever possible the supervision is stepped down.

**Adoption Support Fund 21-22**

Number of Applications	Total Spend	Average Spend per Application
96	£246,377.14	£2,566

Alongside individual work ALE offer other group work programmes including Birth Mothers’ Group, Birth Fathers’ Group and Adoptive Families’ Group. These groups are well attended and effective at offering support.

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 Adopt London East have high levels of need. Adopt London East 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.

### Peer Support for Adoptive Parents

Through Adopt London we have continued our partnership with adopter peer support organisation We Are Family, who provide a comprehensive range of support to over 1000 adoptive parents and prospective adopters throughout London. This year We Are Family have restarted in-person local parent groups and family meet ups, as well as continuing to provide the virtual specialist support groups and specialist webinars that they introduced during the pandemic.



## Recommendations for 22-23

### Identifying, preparing and approving adoptive parents

- 1) Further develop the Black Adoption Project to better understand the needs of Black and mixed Black ethnicity adopters, and to improve our services to them for the long term.
- 2) Build Adopt London reach and engagement levels on social media.
- 3) Re-design stage 1 of the Adoption process for adopters and review preparation training.

### Planning for Children

- 4) Increase awareness of Early Permanence in social work teams, to increase the use of EP for adoptive children.

### Placing children with adoptive parents

- 5) Continue to focus on the number of children placed for adoption in Adopt London East placements.

### Providing support to adoptive families and others





- 6) Increase access to support resources for everyone impacted by adoption through development of the Adopt London website.
- 7) Implement regular monitoring of Adoption Support work so that changes in demand can be reported.
- 8) Launch the ALE Adoption Support Helpline

### **Working as part of Adopt London**

- 9) Strengthen arrangements through a legal partnership agreement for Adopt London.

### **London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Performance**

The National Adoption Insights Data (formerly known as Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board Data)

#### **A10 – Average time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive parents.**

LBBDD standalone performance in 21/22 for A10 was 549 days, an increase on the 435 days in 20/21. Over a three year rolling average it was 492 days, this has decreased from the rolling average 2018-2021 where the average was 503 days. The national target for this measure is 426 days. The national England average is currently standing at 459 days.

#### **A2 – Average time between Court Authority (i.e Placement Order) and a child being matched.**

In 21/22 this was 224 days, an increase from 166 days 20/21. In terms of the three year rolling average is 218 days, and this has remained stable from 2018-21 rolling three year average. The national target for this measure is 121 and the national England average of 196.

It is evident that the pandemic has had an impact upon the timeliness, across the system. There has significantly delays within the court system, backlogs are still continuing particularly within East London Courts. Adoption matching practice has returned to pre pandemic practice.

The overall highlights of data show that the number of children being placed for adoption continues to fall. There are an increased numbers of prospective adopters within the system awaiting a match and a decreasing number of children waiting to be placed. However, there remains a cohort of priority children who take longer to be



matched. These children are mainly older, sibling groups and those with medical needs and developmental uncertainties.