

SSA EQUALITY IMPACT AND NEEDS ANALYSIS

Directorate	Children's Services
Service Area	Adoption
Service/policy/function being assessed	Adoption and Permanence Service
Which borough (s) does the service/policy apply to	Wandsworth
Staff involved	Staff in the Adoption and Permanence Service (staff 5.5 FTE)
Date approved by Directorate Equality Group (if applicable)	
Date approved by Policy and Review Manager All EINAs must be signed off by the Policy and Review Manager	
Date submitted to Directors' Board	

SUMMARY

The Department for Education's (DfE) requirement is for all local authorities to be part of a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) by 2020. It is proposed that Wandsworth joins the Adopt London South Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) along with nine other South London boroughs. It is anticipated that joining an RAA will increase the number of children who benefit from adoption; improve timeliness of matching children to adoptive families; and improve support to adoptive families. This change is targeted at improving support for some of the most vulnerable children and young people and therefore overall will have a positive impact on equalities. Like the current Adoption and Permanence Team, the RAA will operate within clear standards laid down by law which means that prospective adopters are not discriminated against on the basis of age, disability, culture, religion or ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or other socio-economic factors. Pooling resources between the 10 local authorities is likely to increase capacity to recruit adopters and undertake targeted and specialist recruitment for underrepresented groups. Despite this, there could be a risk that other local authorities place less priority on protected groups that are overrepresented in Wandsworth, e.g. children with disabilities and children from BME backgrounds. To address this, Wandsworth will work with Adopt London South to ensure there is a continued focus on recruiting a diverse pool of adopters which meet the needs of children being placed for adoption in Wandsworth.

Staff affected (likely 5.5 FTE) will retain their existing Terms and Conditions, including pension rights, holiday entitlements and sick pay policies. Staff will be transferred to the host authority under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment regulations (TUPE). It is not anticipated that there will be any staff redundancies.

1. Background

Wandsworth's Adoption and Permanence Team provides permanency services to children in the context of adoption and permanence via fostering. The primary function of the service is to seek alternative primary care for children who are unable to remain in the primary care of their birth parents, birth family or connected persons network. The Education and Adoption Act 2016 gives the Secretary of State a new power to direct one or more named local authorities to make arrangements for any or all of their adoption functions to be carried out on their behalf by one of the local authorities named, or by another agency. The government's view is that structural change will improve the process for children and adopters leading to:

- Increase in the numbers of children being adopted
- Increased efficiencies in adoption services
- Reduction in the amount of time a child waits to be matched to an adoptive family
- Improved adopter recruitment and provision of post-adoption support
- Improved life chances of some of the most vulnerable children

It is proposed that a new Adopt London South Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) is created through combining the adoption services for the ten South London boroughs of Croydon, Greenwich, Kingston, Wandsworth, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton, Richmond, Southwark and Sutton. Southwark will act as the host borough for the RAA. It is expected that the majority of the aspects of the new service will go live before the new financial year (April 2019).

2. Analysis of need and impact

Protected group	Findings								
Age	<p>The Adoption and Permanence team provides a service to children (0-18 years) who are unable to remain in the primary care of their birth parents, birth family or connected persons network. In 2017/18, the Adoption and Permanence service supported 9 children who were made subject to Adoption Orders, who ranged in age from two to seven years old.</p> <p>Prospective adopters are considered from the age of 21 and there is no upper age limit.</p>								
Disability	<p>Wandsworth has a comparably higher proportion of school aged children looked after who have a special educational need than regional and national averages (see below).</p> <p><u>% of CLA who had been looked after for more than 12 months and were school aged, who had a special educational need</u></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Wandsworth</th> <th>Inner London</th> <th>London</th> <th>England</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>67.1%</td> <td>57%</td> <td>58%</td> <td>57%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><i>(Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England, 2015-16 – DfE, March 2017)</i></p>	Wandsworth	Inner London	London	England	67.1%	57%	58%	57%
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	<p>Additionally, there are a higher proportion of children looked after with special educational needs than the general child population in Wandsworth. Department for Education data shows that in 2016, 3.9% of pupils had statements or EHC plans; whereas, internal reporting shows that 17% of school aged children looked after had an EHCP (see Wandsworth's Sufficiency Strategy).</p> <p>Matching disabled children for adoption can be complex, but the Wandsworth Adoption and Permanence Team aspire to place children with more complex needs, such as children with SEN.</p> <p>Prospective adopters who have a disability are not excluded from becoming an adopter. Adults with disabilities can provide a very loving home for a child and their life experiences can give them unique insight into the lives of children in care, who often have a sense of themselves as 'different' or who may also have a disability.</p>
Gender (sex)	<p>In 2017/18, of the nine children who were placed for adoption, six (66.6%) were male and three (33.3%) were female. This is a very small cohort; when accounting for all children adopted from 1 April 2013 to March 2018, 55.9% (22 children) of adopted children were male and 40.5% (15 children) female. This is roughly comparable to the make-up of the CLA population (57% of CLA at March 2017 were male). However, the gender profile of the CLA population shows a higher percentage of males than in the 0-19 population in the borough (51%) (see Wandsworth's Sufficiency Strategy)</p>
Gender reassignment	N/A
Marriage and civil partnership	<p>Adopters who are single, married or in a registered civil partnership are all considered. For example, of the 13 prospective adopter family units that were approved in 2017/18, eight were married couples, two were single, two were in civil partnerships and one couple were cohabiting.</p>
Pregnancy and maternity	N/A
Race/ethnicity	<p>Nationally 84% of children adopted are White, 11% are Mixed, 1% are Asian or Asian British, 2% are Black or Black British and 1% are from other ethnic groups (Department for Education). In Wandsworth, according to the 2011 Census, 44% of the 0-19 population was BME. BME children are overrepresented in Wandsworth's CLA population; 69% of the Wandsworth CLA population was Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) at March 2017 (see Wandsworth's Sufficiency Strategy). This means that any changes affecting CLA will impact more on BME children.</p>

Of the nine children who were adopted in Wandsworth in 2017/18, three (33.3%) were White British, three (33.3%) were Dual Heritage (Black Caribbean and White British), two were Dual Heritage (Black and White British) and one is Asian (other). The below table shows the number of children adopted by ethnicity since 2013/14.

YEAR AND ETHNICITY	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	TOTAL
White British	27%	36%	17%	40%	33%	32%
Black Caribbean	27%	0%	0%	0%	0%	6%
Black African	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Black	0%	9%	0%	0%	0%	2%
Asian	0%	9%	0%	0%	11%	4%
White Other	0%	0%	0%	40%	0%	9%
Black Caribbean & White British	9%	9%	17%	10%	33%	15%
Black African & White British	9%	0%	33%	0%	0%	6%
Black & White British	9%	18%	0%	10%	22%	13%
Dual Heritage Other	18%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%

	Asian White British	0%	9%	0%	0%	0%	2%
	Other European Group	0%	9%	0%	0%	0%	2%
	Non Specified	0%	0%	33%	0%	0%	4%
	<p>Prospective adopters from diverse backgrounds are also considered and encouraged to apply. For example, in 2017/18, adopters were recruited from a range of ethnic backgrounds, as follows:</p> <p>1 x white British & white French 1 x Dual Heritage Black Caribbean & White British, Jewish, dual heritage, white Irish heterosexual 1 x Dual heritage British Filipino Indian & White British 1 x British Black Caribbean & White British 1 x White British & white British 1x White Canadian & White British 1 x Black British (single) 1 x White British & white British 1 x White British & Black African, Nigerian 1 x White Australian & White British 1 x White Spanish & White Polish 1 x Black British (single) 1 x Black British Caribbean & White British</p>						
Religion and belief, including non belief	N/A						
Sexual orientation	Prospective adopters are considered regardless of sexual orientation. In 2017/18, of the 13 prospective adopter family units approved, there were two same-sex partnerships.						
Across groups i.e older LGBT service users or bme young men							

Data gaps.

Data gap(s)	How will this be addressed?

3. Impact

Guidance

Protected group	Positive	Negative
Age	<p>The team will continue to provide a service to children who are unable to remain in the primary care of their birth parents, birth family or connected persons network. Regionalisation of adoption agencies is expected to remove 'competition' and improve Wandsworth's ability to find adoptive families for children and to place children for adoption more quickly than as a single agency. As Wandsworth will have immediate access to adoptive families across the London South partnership it is likely that more children will benefit from adoption.</p> <p>The RAA will operate within clear standards laid down by law regarding the recruitment of adopters.</p>	<p>The Adoption Service is targeted at children under 18 who are unable to remain the primary care of their birth parents. This will not change as a result of the policy, so there is no change in age cohort targeted.</p> <p>It is possible that the regional approach will increase the chance of a child being placed for adoption further afield from their previous placement, which may include their school. While the change is unlikely to affect a large number of school aged children due to the nature of adoption as a permanence option, the Council will maintain a focus on maintaining stability for these children post placement. The Virtual School has secured additional funding from the Government to support children who have been adopted. This is being used to recruit a specialist staff member to support children post-adoption. It is also anticipated that post-adoption support will improve under the RAA due to the pooling of resources and efficiencies made.</p> <p>Similarly, as the RAA will operate within clear standards laid down by law regarding the recruitment of adopters, there will not be a policy change regarding the age of prospective adopters and so there will be no negative impact.</p>
Disability	<p>An anticipated increase in prospective adopters and diversified pool of adopters is likely to offer more choice of adoptive family for children, which will benefit children with disabilities. Expected increases in the</p>	<p>Although overall it is expected that this policy change will lead to a larger and more diverse pool of adopters, there could be a risk that placing children with disabilities is less of a priority for other councils in the RAA where they have a lower proportion of children with disabilities. Although full details</p>

	number of prospective adopters and adoptive placements will also benefit children with disabilities, who are overrepresented in the CLA population.	on governance and scrutiny have not yet been established for the RAA, Wandsworth Council will continue to collect data and monitor the effectiveness of the RAA to provide placements for children with complex needs.
Gender (sex)	There is an underrepresentation of female children who are being adopted, but the cohort of children who are adopted is very small. The overall benefits of this change (highlighted above) are likely to benefit vulnerable children regardless of gender.	There is no negative impact anticipated with regards to gender, but this will be monitored in future in case of any change.
Gender reassignment	N/A	N/A
Marriage and civil partnership	The RAA will operate within clear standards laid down by law regarding the recruitment of adopters.	The RAA will operate within clear standards laid down by law regarding the recruitment of adopters, as the Wandsworth service does currently. Therefore no negative impact is anticipated.
Pregnancy and maternity	N/A	N/A
Race/ethnicity	An anticipated increase in prospective adopters and diversified pool of adopters is likely to offer more choice of adoptive family for children, which will benefit children from all ethnic backgrounds. Expected increases in the number of prospective adopters and adoptive placements will also benefit BME children, who are overrepresented in the CLA population.	Although overall it is expected that this policy change will lead to a larger and more diverse pool of adopters, there could be a risk that placing children who are BME is less of a priority for other councils in the RAA where they have a lower proportion of children with BME. Although full details on governance and scrutiny have not yet been established for the RAA, Wandsworth Council will continue to collect data and monitor the effectiveness of the RAA to provide placements for children with from BME backgrounds.
Religion and belief, including non belief	An anticipated increase in prospective adopters and diversified pool of adopters is likely to offer more choice	Although overall it is expected that this policy change will lead to a larger and more diverse pool of adopters, there could be a risk that other local

	of adoptive family for children, which will benefit children from all religious backgrounds.	authorities have a less diverse population from which to recruit adopters. Although full details on governance and scrutiny have not yet been established for the RAA, Wandsworth Council will continue to collect data and monitor the effectiveness of the RAA to provide placements for children from different religious backgrounds and the recruitment of a diverse pool of adopters. .
Sexual orientation	The RAA will operate within clear standards laid down by law regarding the recruitment of adopters.	The RAA will operate within clear standards laid down by law regarding the recruitment of adopters, as the Wandsworth service does currently Therefore no negative impact is anticipated.

4. Actions

Action	Lead Officer	Deadline
To continue to monitor adoption data to ensure the effectiveness of the Adoption Service, as it transitions over to the RAA, in recruiting adopters from diverse backgrounds, particularly those that will benefit children at Wandsworth waiting for a match.	AD Children and Families	April 2019
To continue to monitor adoption data to ensure the effectiveness of the Adoption Service, as it transitions over to the RAA, in placing children for adoption who can be more difficult to place, including children with disabilities, children from ethnic minority backgrounds, sibling groups etc.	AD Children and Families	April 2019

5. Consultation. (optional section– as appropriate)

Where a significant change is proposed to a service or where a new policy/service/service specification is being developed it is best practice to consult on the draft findings of an ENIA in order to identify if any impact or need has been missed.

Staff have been consulted about the changes and there are additional consultation events with staff involved and affected on the 15 and 30 October 2018. Further consultation events are planned in January 2019.