

Regionalising Adoption Vision for London

Background

The DfE paper *Regionalising Adoption* proposes the move to regional adoption agencies in order to speed up matching, improve adopter recruitment and adoption support, reduce costs, and improve the life chances of London's most vulnerable children. London is committed to ensuring that regionalisation delivers the best, most timely outcomes and experiences for both children and adopters.

This paper sets out the vision for London based on extensive consultation.

Vision

Our vision is to ensure that all London's children who require adoptive families receive excellent services that meet their needs leading to excellent outcomes for them and their adoptive family.

For children where adoption is the best option, we will:

- Ensure that the child and the child's journey is foremost in the new service design.
- Maximise the opportunity to find a loving family as quickly as possible.
- Provide support from the start of their journey through to adulthood, with a proactive and flexible offer to meet their educational, health and emotional needs.
- Involve children and young people in the development of the regionalised service.

For prospective adopters and adopters, we will:

- Provide clear, realistic and welcoming communication from first enquiry to post-adoption.
- Ensure that they are equipped to meet their children's current and future needs through high quality training and guidance.
- Deliver evidence-based assessment and approval processes within a consistent timeframe.
- Reduce time taken from approval to matching.
- Provide consistent post-adoption support across the region.
- Increase the diversity of adoptive parents.
- Engage with potential adopters and adoptive parents in the design of the regionalised service.

For birth parents of children being adopted, we will:

- Provide consistent access to support throughout London e.g. counselling and contact.

For local authorities (LAs), we will:

- Share learning across the region, and between the local authority and voluntary sector.
- Achieve savings and cost efficiencies, making the best use of public money.
- Match the supply of adopters to the children awaiting adoption across the region.
- Minimise complexity and ensure that barriers are not created between organisations.
- Be adaptable and responsive to manage future changes e.g. demand, legislation.
- Develop a model that allows flexibility in the level of service for individual LAs.
- Engage with universal services to enable consistent provision of adoption support.
- Identify opportunities for regionalised services to support other routes to permanence.
- Involve practitioners working in adoption services in the development of the model.
- Engage with VAAs and ASAs throughout the development of the regionalised model.

For voluntary adoption agencies (VAAs) and adoption support agencies (ASAs), we will:

- Create an organisation that recognises and utilises the expertise within the voluntary sector.
- Recognise and respond to demand and funding challenges in the voluntary sector.
- Engage with VAAs, ASAs and LAs throughout the development of the regionalised service.

Key Design Criteria of model

- Child-centred, focussed on achieving the best outcomes for all London's children in need of an adoptive placement.
- Pan-London solution ensuring sufficient numbers of children and reducing any "postcode lottery" of provision across the capital and improving support for adopters.
- Regional focus on capacity and sufficiency ensuring equality of provision.
- Effective and high quality delivery of all statutory duties in relation to adoption and adoption support across London, utilising "Freedoms and Flexibilities" available to local authorities enshrined in amendments to the Children and Young Persons Act 2008.
- Creates an ability to work flexibly around a new London offer.
- Encompasses aspects of other permanency options into the future.
- Commits to close collaboration between all stakeholders.
- Considers the options for pooling resources and sharing responsibilities, including the legal functions currently performed by individual boroughs.
- Maintains and builds a clear relationship with London boroughs who remain responsible for the journey of the child.
- Works closely with VAA partners.
- A cost efficient and effective delivery approach enabling local authorities to deliver significant cost savings in adoption services whilst maintain high quality provision to children and families.
- The majority of funding for the regionalised model will go towards direct work to increase stable, secure, adoptive families for London's children.

Governance

Partners will work together under the strategic leadership of ALDCS, LAB as the multi-agency responsible body, and an executive steering group made up of representatives from LAs, VAAs and London Councils.