

 Brent	Corporate Parenting Committee 13 October 2025
	Report from the Corporate Director of Children and Young People and Community Development
	Lead Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools - Cllr Gwen Grahl
Brent Adoption Report 6-monthly report: 1 April 2025 to 30 September 2025	
Wards Affected:	ALL
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	OPEN
List of Appendices:	Appendix 1 - ALW Annual Report 2024-2025
Background Papers:	N/A
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1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a briefing to the Corporate Parenting Committee in relation to:
- adoption performance data for the period 1 April 2025 – 30 September 2025
 - the progress and activity of Adopt London West
 - how good outcomes are being achieved for children.

Information and child level data presented in Section 5 of this report is provided by Brent CYPCD; the remainder of this report includes the progress and activity of Adopt London West.

- 1.2 This is the eleventh report presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee in this format as Cabinet gave approval in April 2019 for Brent council to:
- a) join the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), Adopt London West (ALW) consisting of the London boroughs of Ealing, Hounslow and Hammersmith and Fulham for the provision of Adoption services and Special Guardianship Support; and
 - b) delegate authority to the Strategic Director, Children and Young People, in consultation with the Lead Member for Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care to agree and enter into a Partnership Agreement with participating boroughs.
- 1.3 The Key Decision was made on 2 September 2019 and, following the TUPE of those Brent staff members who chose to move to Ealing, Adopt London West has been a 'live' RAA since October 2019.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 The Corporate Parenting Committee is requested to note, review, comment on, and question the contents of this brief report and the 2024/25 annual report that is an appendix to this report. This is to provide evidence that the management of the adoption service is being monitored and challenged in order to promote good outcomes for children. This is in line with standard 25.6 of the Adoption National Minimum Standards (2014).

3.0 Detail

3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

- 3.1.1 This report sets out the provision and management of the local authority's adoption service and the developments that have taken place in the reporting period. The work of ALW contributes to the following borough priorities:

- **The Best Start in Life**
- **Prosperity and Stability**
- **A Healthier Brent**
- **Thriving Communities**

In order for care experienced young people to have the best start in life, prosperity and stability, safety, and good health they need safe, stable, permanent homes with primary carers who love them and who are able to meet their holistic needs throughout their minority. The work of ALW and the LAC and Permanency service contribute to these priorities by ensuring permanency is achieved for children and young people either via a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) or Adoption. Providing safe, stable, permanent, loving placements for children and young people when they are unable to remain with their parent/s, means that they will have the best life chances.

3.2 Background - Adopt London West

- 3.2.1 Previous reports have set out the background and circumstances leading to the formation of Adopt London West Regional Adoption Agency in October 2019.
- 3.2.2 The partnership continues to mature and evolve, relationships between all partners remain positive with consistent attendance of Directors and senior leaders at the quarterly partnership board meetings.

4.0 Responsibilities

- 4.1 As delegated in the partnership agreement between Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham and Hounslow, Ealing (as the host Local Authority for ALW) is responsible for ensuring that children whose permanence plan is adoption in all four partner Local Authorities are matched in a timely way with adopters who best meet the needs of those children. This involves featuring children in various profiling events, via national linking websites, supporting them in adoption activity days and networking events with other Regional Adoption Agencies in London and nationally. ALW is also responsible for the preparation and assessment of prospective adopters, supporting adopters with family finding following approval, and the on-going post placement support to adopters and special guardians. ALW is also responsible for the provision of services to adopted adults and all those affected by adoption who request a specific service or an assessment of need.
- 4.2 ALW provides a service to Brent residents who wish to make a private application to adopt their partner's child. These are non-agency adoptions and often referred to as "step-parent" adoption, or special guardians who may wish to adopt the child in their care. The team is also involved in completing adoption reports on children who may have travelled from and been adopted abroad; there is a legal requirement for these adoptions to be made lawful in the UK.
- 4.3 Inter-country adoption referrals continue to be referred to the Inter-Country Adoption Centre, a specialist Voluntary Adoption Agency (VAA), with whom a service level agreement is in place.
- 4.4 Statutory social work in relation to children needing adoptive placements remains the responsibility of Brent CYP. The care plans for children are formulated by the social work teams and agreed by Head of Service for LAC and Permanency. The Director, Early Help and Social Care then considers and ratifies any adoption plans.

5.0 Performance Data

- 5.1 Brent's 3-year performance for 2022-25 is:

- **A1** (The average time taken for a child entering care to being placed for adoption): 522 days (3-year average) (563 in the last 12 months) compared with 503 days in 2024-25.
- **A2** (The average time taken from the Local Authority receiving court authority to place a child for adoption and a match being approved): 184 days (3-year average) (208 in the last 12 months) compared with 180 days in 2024-25
- **A20** (The average time between a child entering care and the Local Authority receiving court authority to place a child): 371 days (3-year average) (362 days in the last 12 months).

5.2 Performance variance in this small cohort of children is caused by a range of factors, and can be the result of significant delays for just one child, due to extended complex care proceedings, the individual needs of the child impacting on the availability of suitable adopters and therefore 'family finding' taking longer than hoped, these factors affect the average timescale for all children placed, some of whom may have been placed very quickly

6.0 Child related data

6.1 There has been 3 Adoption Orders granted in this reporting period (Q1 and Q2, 2025-26).

6.2 There have been 3 children placed for adoption since April 2025, compared to 5 children placed for adoption at the end of Q2 in 2024/25. It is expected that a further 2 children will be placed by the end of November 2025.

6.3 There are currently 17 children with an adoption plan who have not yet been adopted. The details of these children's cases are as follows:

- 8 children are placed with their new families, 4 of those are placed with adopters approved by ALW.
- 2 children are subject to a Placement Order but are not yet placed but have been linked or matched with their new family, and introductions and transitions are due to start imminently.
- 3 of the children are likely to have a change of care plan due to an updated assessment of their needs.
- ALW and Brent are exploring potential families for the remaining 4 children who are subject to Placement Orders.

7.0 Adopter Recruitment

7.1 8 Adopter households have been approved so far in 2025/26,

75% are White British, 25% are Black, or mixed Black households.

The profile of adopters recruited in this period does broadly match the needs of Brent children, with the exception of sufficiency of Black Adopters. The lack

of Black adopters is well documented and the reason why the Black Adoption Project was established. Please see 2024/25 annual report for more detail on the activity in the Black Adoption Project

- 7.2 There are currently 36 ALW approved adopters: 11 of whom already have a child/children placed with them, 10 are in the active family finding stage, 5 of these families are already matched or linked with children 6 families are on hold due to their personal circumstances, 2 are likely to resign as adopters.
- 7.3 The adoption assessment process comprises 2 stages. Stage 1 assessments should take place within 2 months (60 days), this stage is described as "adopter led", where adopters work through exercises and complete various tasks that contribute to a full and thorough assessment of their suitability. Department for Education (DfE) Adoption and Special Guardianship data for 2023/24 shows the England average for Stage 1 was 134 days, the London average was 193 days, ALW average for those adopters approved in 2024/25 = 131 days.
- 7.4 Stage 2 should take a maximum of 4 months (120 days), this is a detailed assessment that is both reflective and analytical. In total, the comprehensive assessment process should be completed within 6 months. DfE data for 2023/24 shows the England average for Stage 2 was 150 days, the London average was 160 days, for those adopters approved in 2024/25 the average for ALW is = 184 days, this is due to 2 households taking a break in their assessment due to a significant health issue and personal matter for the other applicant, without these delays, the ALW average would have been 153 days.
- 7.5 There are 26 prospective adopters in the formal stages of assessment. 15 households are in Stage 1, 11 in or about to commence Stage 2.

8.0 Casework

- 8.1 At the end of August 2025 In this reporting year so far ALW has offered a service to 176 Brent children, families or individuals who are accessing their adoption records – 33 children are open to a social worker and at various stages of family finding, 20 are receiving a social work support service, a further 44 are receiving an Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF) therapeutic service that is under review. 32 requests have been made for access to adoption records held by Brent.
- 8.2 In addition, there are 235 keeping in touch arrangements (formerly referred to as contact) being facilitated for Brent families - 59 direct contact arrangements and 176 active letter exchanges.

9.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

- 9.1 There are currently no stakeholder and ward member consultation considerations arising from this report.

10.0 Financial Considerations

10.1 Brent Council's contribution to the cost of running the functions of ALW in 2024/25 was £0.424m.

10.2 The overall benefits of a shared service are also realised through the practice improvement and opportunities that are possible now that small individual services have become part of the wider Adopt London collaboration and the national RAA network. It was previously not possible for LA Adoption services to offer the range of support and services that can now be delivered as a Regional Adoption Agency.

11.0 Legal Considerations

11.1 There are currently no legal considerations arising from this report.

12.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

12.1 There are currently no Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) considerations arising from this report.

13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

13.1 There are no climate change or environmental considerations.

14.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

14.1 There are no human resource or property considerations.

15.0 Communication Considerations

15.1 At this stage there are not any communication considerations.

Report sign off:

Nigel Chapman

Corporate Director of Children, Young People and
Community Development