	<p align="center">Corporate Parenting Committee 13 April 2026</p>
	<p align="center">Report from the Corporate Director of Children and Young People and Community Development</p>
	<p align="center">Lead Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Education and Employment - Cllr Gwen Grahl</p>
<p>Brent Adoption Report 6-monthly report: 1 October 2025 to 31 March 2026</p>	

Wards Affected:	ALL
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
<p>Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</p>	<p>Under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the duration of the meeting, on the grounds that the attendance of representatives from the council’s Children in Care council, necessitated the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 2, Part 1 of Schedule 12A, as amended, of the Act, namely: Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.</p>
List of Appendices:	N/A
Background Papers:	N/A
<p>Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)</p>	<p>Debbie Gabriel, Head of Service, Adopt London West Brent’s Regional Adoption Agency GabrielD@ealing.gov.uk</p> <p>Kelli Eboji Head of Service for Looked After Children and Permanency Kelli.eboji@brent.gov.uk</p> <p>Palvinder Kudhail Director, Early Help and Social Care Palvinder.Kudhail@brent.gov.uk</p>

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 – 31 March 2026

- 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 CYP; the remainder of this report includes the progress and activity of Adopt London West.

- 1.2 This is the twelfth 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. 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

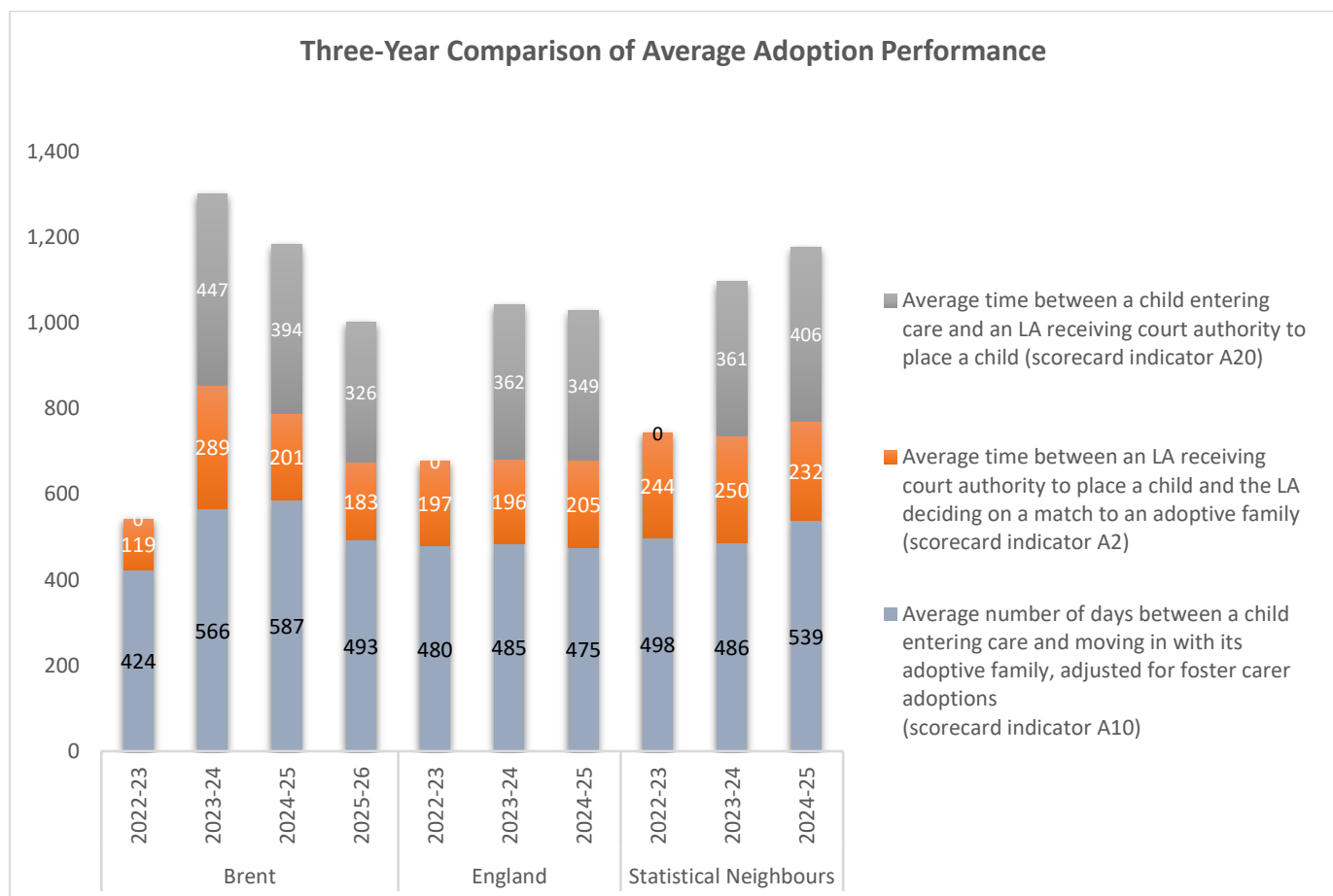
- 4.1 As delegated in the partnership agreement between Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham and Hounslow, Ealing (as the host Local Authority for ALW) is responsible for ensuring that children whose permanence plan is adoption in all four partner Local Authorities are matched in a timely way with adopters 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 Coram 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 consider and ratifies any adoption plans.

5.0 Performance Data

- 5.1 Brent's 3-year performance for 2023-26 is:

- **A1** (The average time taken for a child entering care to being placed for adoption): 554 days (3-year average) (493 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): 212 days (3-year average) (183 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): 383 days (3-year average) (326 days in the last 12 months).

5.2 The below graph provides a comparison across Brent, England and statistical neighbours performance in relation to the A1, A2, and A20 indicators. This demonstrates a comparative and improving performance picture for adoption timeliness for Brent children.



5.3 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 have been 6 Adoption Orders granted so far in this reporting year. One adoption was a non-agency adoption of a child who had been living within a kinship placement.
- 6.2 There have been 5 children placed for adoption and 3 who were placed in Early Permanency placements, since April 2025, compared to 10 children last year (2024-25) Whilst numbers this year are slightly lower than last year, the number is still higher than the previous 4 reporting years.
- 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:
- 10 children are placed with their new families, 7 of those are placed with adopters approved by ALW; 3 children were placed in 2024/25 but the Adoption Orders have not yet been granted.
 - 4 children are subject of a Placement Order but are not yet placed, two have been linked or matched with their new family and introductions and transitions are due to start imminently. Three 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 children who are subject to a Placement Order. Of the eight children placed this year, seven have been placed with families who reflect their racial and cultural background and identity. The other child has been placed with a family who have been assessed to be suitable to promote and support the child's understanding of their background and ensure they grow up with a positive sense of their story and identity

7.0 Adopter Recruitment

- 7.1 20 Adopter households have been approved so far in 2025/26, by the end of March it will be 23 households, the highest number of approvals since ALW commenced and an improvement on 18 households in 2024/25

Of the families approved, 14 households are White/British or White European, 5 households are Black African or households of mixed black identity and 2 families are Asian.

- 7.2 There are currently 37 ALW approved adopters: 9 of whom already have a child/children placed with them, 17 are in the active family finding stage, 6 of these families are already matched or linked with children 5 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 2025/26 in Quarter 2 shows the England average for Stage 1 was 128 days, the London average was 130 days, and ALW average for those adopters approved is 116 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 Q2 of 2025/26 shows the England average for Stage 2 was 147 days, the London average was 173 days, the average for ALW is = 145 days
- 7.5 There are 25 prospective adopters in the formal stages of assessment. 15 households are in Stage 1 and 9 are in Stage 2.

8.0 Casework and partnership with Local Authority

- 8.1 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, 24 are receiving a social work support service, a further 52 are receiving an Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF) therapeutic service that is under review. 38 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.
- 8.3 Adoption and Special Guardianship support services offer a range of individual support and advocacy to families who are dealing with a variety of issues including CAMHS liaison for, emotional support for parents, school meetings for child including advocacy and knowledge of his needs and being dynamic with the therapeutic plan which was 1:1 therapy for the child alongside Non-Violence Resistance (NVR) for parents.
- 8.4 In relation to maintaining lifelong links – as an example, ALW are in the process of organising a video meet up between an adoptive mother and birth mother. While the child does not currently want any further contact, the service is being proactive in setting up a safe base for the adults to begin building a relationship with one another.

9.0 LA training

- 9.1 ALW offer monthly Lunch and Learn training events for social workers on 5 key topics, Keeping in Touch, Early Permanence, Honesty in Adoption, Purposeful Child Permanence Reports and Enabling and managing transitions).

10.0 Group support

- 10.1 In 2025/26, the following group support has been offered to children and their families:

- 10.2 Children's events/activities:** As a result of a previous consultation with young people, in June a pilot offering 3 (1/month) friendship groups to allow children both adopted and in special guardianship placements to come together, share experiences, ask questions and have fun. Some parents/carers also attended and found the peer support helpful. There were also some older adopted people who co-facilitated the groups. As a result of this pilot and consultations with the young people who attended, further events at each term holiday took place. These focused on topics such as identity, teamwork, school and families for example.
- 10.3 Education support group** – These support sessions are co-facilitated by an Educational Psychologist and a support social worker and take place six times per school year, focusing on topic relevant to families' lives. So far, since April, eight Brent families have attended.
- 10.3.1 Parents and carers tell us that the group is a helpful place to understand how to meet their children's educational needs and get the best out of school, as well as meeting people and learning from their experiences. Those who attend have expressed that they find the sessions greatly beneficial, and parents of siblings may attend the same topic twice. We also have adopters who have moved out of our support area that choose to continue attending, advising us that they find our support helpful, as suppose to the offer through their residing LA.
- 10.4 Kinship Reach referrals** – Since April 2025, 12 Brent family have been referred.
- 10.5 Non-Violent Resistance training** – this was supported via Ealing's training department, in which an ALW support social worker delivered the weekly training for 10 weeks from Sept 2026. Out of the 10 ALW families who attended, three were Brent families.
- 10.5 Foundations for Attachment therapeutic parenting course** - This is an evidence-based Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) informed programme, based on the DDP practice model developed by Dan Hughes (2009, 2011). The aim is to provide carers/parents with an opportunity to hear ideas, learn new strategies and to meet other carers in a similar situation to themselves. A Clinical Psychologist and Adoption Support Social Worker co facilitate the sessions and aim to provide a safe sharing environment and help the carers/parents become more confident in getting to know their child's inner world, explore therapeutic parenting while also help the adults looking after oneself. Out of the 18 families who attended, three were from Brent.
- 10.6 Chorus Adoption Parent-Toddler Group (APTG)** started in October 2025 and ran for five months, offering weekly therapeutic playgroup sessions to families. The families met for an hour and a half, along with two child psychotherapists and two assistants. The weekly structure includes hello and goodbye songs, a reflective discussion guided by parents' needs and experiences, and a snack. Aside from this, parents and toddlers play freely, allowing for professional observation to think about the children's feelings and behaviours, what they might be trying to tell others, and the different ways adults can respond. The

APTG is designed with toddlers who have experienced separation and loss and developmental trauma. By providing a consistent, predictable, child-led space for a small number of families, it helps to:

- Support children's development and emotional wellbeing
- Strengthen parent-child relationships
- Increase parents' confidence in their ability to understand and sensitively respond to children's feelings and behaviours

The group was funded via the Adoption Support Fund and one Brent family attended this.

10.7 Special Guardians Family Fun Day – annual fun event at which children play together and carers exchange stories with one another. ALW social workers are on hand to offer advice and support and to ensure that the event runs smoothly. This year there were 8 family units that attended, including 13 children.

10.8 Adolescents' parenting workshop – this took place in November 2025 and was facilitated by a clinical psychologist and a social worker from ALW. It began a conversation about the changing needs of a young person and how their brain chemistry alters as they get older, inviting parents to consider how attachment needs may change through this developmental stage and mentalizing (a preconscious, imaginative mental activity that helps parents interpret and develop an understanding of their child's behaviour) for their young person. A follow up session took place a week later to think further about some of the dilemmas discussed. Two Brent families benefited from this.

11.0 Feedback from adopters:

"We cannot thank S enough for the help, support, advocacy, compassion, and genuine care she has shown our family. She has created a safe and supportive space where we feel truly seen and heard. This has strengthened our confidence and helped us continue developing our skills as parents, despite the challenges we are currently facing. We are deeply grateful for the patience, dedication, and empathy S has consistently demonstrated in supporting our family to grow stronger together, even in the most difficult circumstances."

"We would also like to take this opportunity to extend our sincere gratitude to M. Her perseverance, commitment, and selflessness in helping us maintain a consistent and positive connection with our children's birth families mean a great deal to us. Her support, as we continue to navigate our adoption journey, is invaluable and very much appreciated."

Feedback from a birth father –

“Throughout my recent interactions with Adopt London West, S has been consistently professional, supportive, and transparent. I appreciated her honesty and clarity when explaining that she had consulted with her manager regarding potential mediation work and that a decision would need to be agreed at management level. Her communication was thoughtful, respectful, and reassuring, and it was clear that she was advocating in good faith while remaining mindful of professional boundaries.”

Feedback from an adopter of a Brent placed child

“...how helpful and ‘life changing’ the support team at ALW have been for S (and them as a family). S is currently engaging with sensory integration support which has supported him in transitioning to reception ‘seamlessly’. They said when there was an issue from the provider, ALW sorted it out within hours. They know of another family from a different area who do not get the same support as them and they feel this should be fed back as ‘they are so happy they are with ALW, the support being one of the main reasons.’”

“S has taken the time to listen, to keep me informed, and to explore supportive options with care and sensitivity. Her approach has helped me feel heard and supported during what can be a complex and emotionally significant process. She has also been proactive in sharing relevant resources and opportunities that may be beneficial.”

Feedback from an adopter of a Brent placed child in relation to Foundations to Attachment course

“As adopters, we wanted to share some feedback regarding our recent participation in the 'Foundation for Attachment' course, as well as our experience of starting therapy shortly after adopting our son. We found the course incredibly useful, insightful and resourceful, and it was genuinely helpful. It provided us with a clear and compassionate understanding of how early experiences shape a child's emotional development and gave us practical tools for building secure connections. The focus on therapeutic parenting, attunement, emotional regulation and creating a playful and empathetic environment has been particularly valuable in supporting our son's transition into our family. Starting therapy soon after the adoption has also been extremely beneficial. It enabled us to recognise and respond to our son's needs promptly, helping us to strengthen our relationship with him through guided strategies and professional insight. The combination of the course and early therapeutic support has meaningfully impacted our journey as a family.”

“I wanted to formally acknowledge the positive impact of her work and to express my appreciation for the support she has provided. She has been excellent to work with, and her professionalism reflects very positively on the service.”

12.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

12.1 There are currently no additional stakeholder and ward member consultation considerations arising from this report.

13.0 Financial Considerations

13.1 Brent Council's contribution to the cost of running the functions of ALW in 2025/26 was £0.403m.

13.2 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.

14.0 Legal Considerations

14.1 There are no additional legal considerations arising from this report.

15.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

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

16.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

16.1 There are no climate change or environmental considerations.

17.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

17.1 There are no human resource or property considerations.

18.0 Communication Considerations

18.1 Considered within the main body of the report.

Report sign off:

Nigel Chapman

Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Community Development