

## **Update report on Adopt London South, (ALS) December 2019**

### **Introduction**

The transfer to Adoption London South began on the 1st July 2019 when all the staff in scope transferred to the LB of Southwark but remained at the LB of Croydon offices until the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2019.

The legal agreement and data transfer agreements for the LB of Southwark taking over the full adoption functions were signed in June 2019.

ALS has taken on all the statutory adoption functions on behalf of the LB of Croydon. As a result of this the LB of Croydon Adoption Panel ceased to function in August 2019. The LB of Croydon adoption service officially ceased to function as an agency on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2019.

The LB of Croydon maintains the functions to decide which children have an adoption plan, the agreement to a match between prospective parents and children, financial responsibility for adoption support and interagency fees.

There will be an event for lead members and Directors of Children's Services in June 2020.

### **Governance**

ALS will supply quarterly reports on the performance of the adoption agency to each of the London Boroughs.

All the four Regional Adoption Agencies in the London area report to the Pan London Adoption Leadership Board.

There are monthly Board meetings for Adoption London South attended by Directors/Head of Service to discuss strategic issues and performance.

Monthly quality assurance meetings are attended by Service leads for Permanence/Adoption. These meeting focus on practice and quality of work undertaken by ALS.

The legal agreement sets out the duties to be undertaken by the LB of Southwark in terms of operating as an Adoption Agency and management of the agency.

There is good collaboration between the 8 London Boroughs within ALS. The 8 London Boroughs are Croydon, Southwark, Merton, Lewisham, Sutton, Wandsworth, Kingston, Lambeth and Richmond.

### **Staffing**

All the 6.22 staff who transferred to ALS from the LB of Croydon were successful in their first choice options.

This was a difficult time for the staff members due to the complex nature of TUPE and the reorganisation that followed their transfer.

Staff in the LB of Croydon had regular meetings with the Director and HR to address any concerns.

The complex nature of the transfer impacted on the total number of staff that TUPE to ALS from all the London Boroughs and at its launch there were a number of vacancies. These are gradually being filled.

I have regular contact with the staff members who have TUPE from the LB of Croydon and they are all reporting to be satisfied and enjoying their new roles.

ALS has allocated to the LB of Croydon has 2 dedicated Family Finders allocated to support children with a plan for adoption and ensure effectiveness in terms of time scales and quality of families. These family finders are ex-Croydon staff and base themselves in the Croydon offices 2 approximately 2 days per week.

### **Performance.**

The first quarter of data has been published, the next set of data is due at the end of December 2019. The LB of Croydon will be provided with its own data set on children as well as the overall data set for all children in South London region.

The overall data for ALS is detailed in the table below.

#### Children adopted 2019/20

	Number of children	Commentary
Year to date	52	Adoption rising
Full year 2018/9	56	Adoption fell
Full year 2017/8	101	

#### Q2 data analysis

Adoption orders	27	
Placed but not yet adopted	63	
New placement orders	16	
Matches agreed	14	
Waiting with placement order	43	Some children have alternative plan
With ADM Best interest decision	89	

The data below reflects the picture in the LB of Croydon. The biggest challenge is older children, BME children and children with a disability.

Analysis of ALS Children still waiting, by days waiting as at Q2

Child characteristics	Average days waiting	Commentary
Babies under 1 year	222	Adopters are waiting for babies including Early permanence carers.
White 3 sibling groups	1103	New approaches proposed
Single BME child with disability	1286	New approaches proposed
BME child aged 5	1592	New approaches being implemented

35 children have been waiting at least 18 months. Decisions will need to be made as to whether revocation of the Placement Order needs to take place. However it also reflects that a more ambitious adopter recruitment programme needs to take place.

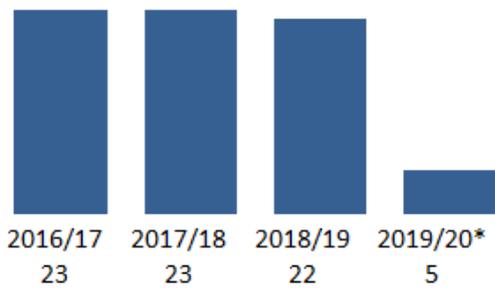
ALS are working across London and nationally with a variety of organisations to attract a more diverse range of Adopters and Adopters who can take a more diverse range of children such as older children and children with additional complex needs.

#### ALS Adopter journeys in Q2

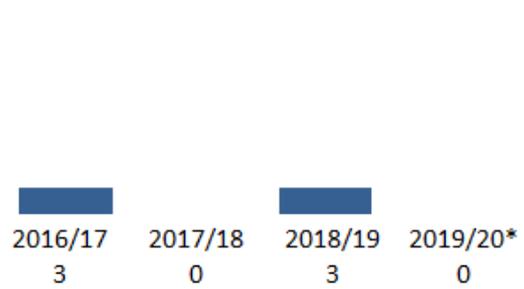
Families needed for current children waiting	48	Coram projection data
Adoption orders made to ALS Adopters	14	
Children placed	13	
Matched this quarter	14	
Approved this quarter	13	Improve identification of early ALS children
Waiting to be matched	31	Improve identification of early ALS children
In assessment	37	Improve identification of early ALS children
Adopters approved in 2018/9	44	Transition challenges, not all adoption ready.

The LB of Croydon's performance is displayed below. This data is up to the second quarter eg the end of September 2019.

**Number of adoptive placements by year**

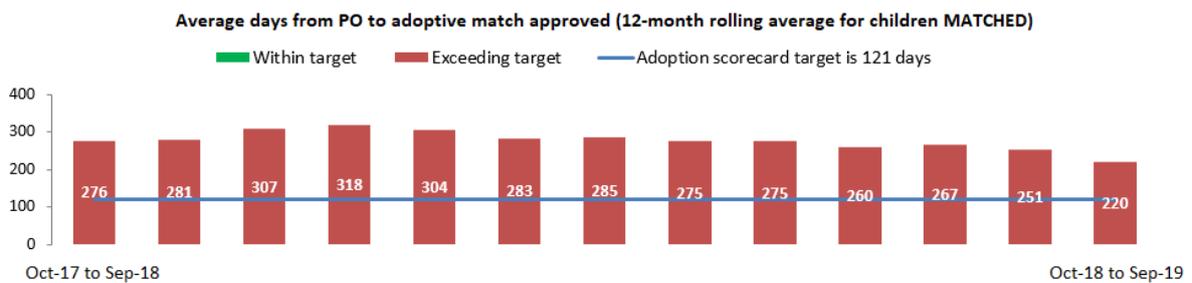


**Early permanency placements by year**



The table below displays the activity of the service for the LB of Croydon’s children.

Number of...		2018/19	2018/19	2019/20	2019/20	Total 2019/20* (* = YTD)
		Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	
Adoption Orders		3	8	9	4	13
Placements		7	9	2	3	5
Matches		8	6	3	4	7
Placement Orders		4	4	5	4	10
Plan for Adoption		8	2	7	7	14
Early Permanence Placements		1	1	0	0	0
Changes of Plan		0	0	0	0	0



The data indicates that there has been consistency in terms of activity and that the average time scales for children from Placement Order to being placed for adoption

is improving. There has been an impact on the number of children placed. This will improve in quarter 3.

## **Summary**

It was expected that the transition to ALS would have some impact on the performance of adoption in the region and this has been the case.

The challenges remain the same for the placing of children who have a disability, are of ethnic minority or are older. There is opportunity to engage with the public with larger resources across the whole of London in order to meet the variety of needs of adopted children in region.

The communication with Adopters could have been improved. The ALS website was not ready until November 2019 and there was not clear routes for adopters to contact ALS. This lead to some service dissatisfaction from service users. This has been addressed now but could have been avoided with a longer transition period.

ALS staff and management are committed to improving adoption practice, recruitment and support and I am confident that this will happen. As part of a pan-London structure the resources are much enhanced.

Good governance arrangements are in place and there is a commitment to make ALS work.