



North London Adoption & Fostering Consortium

**Annual Report
2014-2015**

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Welcome to the Annual report of the North London Adoption and Fostering Consortium

Dear Members,

I am delighted to introduce the Annual Report of the NLAFC, it has been another successful year for us that has seen our partnership maintain stability and adapt to new challenges in the changing landscape of adoption. Following the consortium's innovative regional approach to adopter recruitment and the launch of Adoption North London, the project has now evolved into North & South teams. This change has enabled us to manage more local demand and interest in a timely and efficient way. In addition, we have further developed our partnership with We are Family an adopter led support organisation for adopters.

As a consequence of the impact of two significant court judgements in adoption cases, there are fewer children with placement orders and available for adoption. We are hopeful that this will change but for now, there are more adopters approved and waiting than we have seen in the past. We recognise that this is an anxious time for adopters and, in response; we will be establishing a support group for this group.

A new and exciting project during this year has been the work to develop our support to Special Guardians. A series of workshops, in partnership with the Coram Research Unit, has seen a lively group of social workers, Special Guardians, and managers explore the issues that are unique to these arrangements and make shared commitments to further developing our support offer.

Our work to recruit Muslim Foster Carers has seen some very successful community events and real engagement from foster carers across the Consortium to actively and positively promote fostering within their communities. It has been a privilege and a pleasure to share a platform with religious and community leaders and to be so warmly welcomed. As we move into 2015/16 we anticipate the benefits of the Adoption Support Fund and are keen to submit applications to enable additional packages of support to those families most in need.

We will continue to develop our joint recruitment initiatives in fostering and strengthen our partnership with the North London Efficiency Programme.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my personal thanks to Peter Stevens who continues to do such an excellent job in managing the consortium partnership. Peter is extremely hard working and is always looking for the next challenge, and opportunity, to develop our excellent Consortium still further. On behalf of all of the member boroughs I would also like to congratulate our colleagues in Enfield on their well-deserved judgement of "Good" in their recent Ofsted inspection, it is very fitting that Linda Hughes will be next years Chair of NLAFC and I wish her, and all of the Consortium members, all good wishes for another successful year.

Debbie Gabriel

Former Service Manager, Social Care
London Borough of Barnet

Report from Peter Stevens, NLAFC Manager

“A networked learning community” – Professor Louise Stoll, Institute of Education.

Each year I seem to start by saying this has been the busiest year yet in the Consortium, and each year it is true as we continue to work to develop and change to meet the needs of our children and the adults who care for them. We awarded our contract for overseas Adoption services to the InterCountry Adoption Centre, and our post adoption support contract to PAC-UK and have established a productive working relationship with both agencies.

The Government’s Adoption reform agenda continues apace and May 1st sees the introduction of the Adoption Support Fund, which we hope will provide additional therapeutic support services over and above the wide range of services already provided by our Consortium Adoption Support Teams. Encouragingly, our Consortium is increasingly being seen as a model of good practice by other Local Authorities, in London and nationally, and a way of local authorities working together to provide a greater choice of high quality services for the staff, children and families who use them.

In adoption, we continue to be innovative in finding families for our children and our recruitment teams continue to successfully recruit new adoptive families. Our adoption support services have also developed in response to adopters needs as shown by the new Education Support services provided for us by PAC-UK. We are also working closely with our adopters via our Adopter Forum and We Are Family, to ensure we monitor and develop these appropriately.

In Fostering, too, our work together in the Consortium has seen considerable developments. The sharing of foster placements has resulted in 40 children being placed locally with Consortium foster carers, rather than having to be placed away from their families and communities, in the private fostering agencies. This also resulted in savings of over £250,000 to our member boroughs. We share foster carer preparation and training and are developing specialist Consortium training. The work with “Fostering Under 2’s” led by John Simmonds OBE, Head of Policy and Research at BAAF, has been well received and will hopefully contribute to improved practice in this area of Fostering. This report also details exciting plans to develop our shared work in Fostering in line with developments in the North London Children’s Efficiency Programme.

Finally, our developments in Special Guardianship are detailed, particularly plans to meet the increasing needs of Special Guardians for training, support and a voice in how services are to be developed. Special praise should go to Professor Louise Stoll and Dr Emily Monroe, from the Coram Research Unit, at the Institute of Education, who have been leading our SG project Workshops , and the Special Guardians, staff and Managers who have given up so much of their time and energy in making things happen in such a productive and innovative way.

None of this could have been achieved without the trust and goodwill built up within the Consortium. So I would like to, again, extend my thanks to the Heads of Service, Managers and team members who have built such effective collaborative working relationships. Finally, my particular thanks go to Debbie Gabriel for chairing the Consortium over the last year.

Peter Stevens

NLAFC Manager

The Consortium

The 2013 - 2014 Annual Report set out a Development Plan identifying key areas of work that needed to be progressed in 2014/15:

Adoption

- Implement NLAFC Post Adoption Scoping Project recommendations – **in progress**.
- Procedure for assessing and reviewing Adoption Allowances across the Consortium – **done**.
- Joint commissioning – put together Tender for services currently provided by PAC and Adoption Plus for when contracts expire in September 2014 – **done**.
- Pilot Adoption Link matching programme and report back to LSAG - **done**
- Participate in Pan London Activity Day, coordinated by BAAF, in June 2014 – **done**.
- Continue Education Project for adopted children with PAC – **done**.
- Set up meetings of Adoption Panel Chairs and Advisors in the Consortium – **done**.

Fostering

- To recruit more foster carers across the Consortium and progress joint publicity and recruitment initiatives – **in progress**.
- To share foster carers better across the Consortium and expand the number of cross-Consortium foster placements for children – **done**.
- To look at the initial response to enquiries to foster across the Consortium.
- Share training opportunities and programmes– online training; Skills To Foster; Foster Carer Training Programmes - **done**
- To deliver a Consortium Fostering Changes course – **only partly done**.

- To implement and monitor the Consortium Parent and Child Fostering and Remand Fostering Schemes – **done**.
- To develop a Consortium Delegated Responsibility Policy – **not done**.

Special Guardianship

- To run 2 courses for Special Guardians in the Consortium per annum - **done**.
- To support Coram Research Project into the Support Needs of SG's. – **In progress**.

General

- Increased links with London Strategic Adoption Group and National Forums to share best practice arrange training; promote matching for children and adopters etc. – **ongoing**.

NLAFC Numbers of LAC – March 2015

	Nos of LAC
Barnet	307
Camden	180
Enfield	343
Hackney	342
Haringey	470
Islington	366
Total	2008

Membership and Organisation

Membership

The North London Adoption and Fostering Consortium are constituted by a Memorandum of Understanding which was updated and agreed on 4 December 2013. The Consortium comprises the six London Boroughs of Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey and Islington. PAC-UK continues to be an Associate Member and there is a vacancy for one other Associate Member. In 2014/15, the Consortium was chaired by Debbie Gabriel, Service Manager, Social Care, Barnet, and in 2015/6 it will be chaired by Linda Hughes, Head of Looked After Children's Services, Enfield.

Meetings

The Consortium meets at various levels and in relation to various functions, with ongoing meetings in place for:

- Heads of Service
- Adoption Team Managers
- Fostering Team Managers
- Special Guardianship responsible Managers
- Adoption Support Team Managers
- Adoption Preparation Group Organisers
- Adoption Family Finders
- Adoption Panel Chairs and Advisors
- Adoption and Fostering Publicity and Recruitment Coordinators
- Fostering Recruitment Managers
- Fostering Training Managers and Coordinators

The work of these groups is detailed later in this Report.

Websites

The North London Adoption Consortium website is fully administered by the Consortium Publicity and Recruitment Group Organisers. The website can be found at www.adoptionnorthlondon.co.uk

The North London Fostering Consortium website is also fully administered by the P & R Group Organisers. It can be found at www.fosteringnorthlondon.co.uk

The websites are used as recruitment and information resources to the public, and as tools for communication and information sharing across the Consortium.

In addition, the Consortium has a Facebook page to aid in the recruitment of adopters and foster carers. A website for Special Guardians is being constructed and will be found at www.specialguardiansnorthlondon.co.uk

Consortium Activity

ADOPTION

Information Exchange

One of the key functions of the Consortium is to exchange information about approved adopters and children waiting for adoption, and approved foster carers and children looking for foster homes. This is done in a variety of ways:

- On regularly updated spreadsheets which are circulated by the Consortium Manager to all the adoption and fostering teams. The spreadsheet of approved adopters is also shared with the S London Consortium and the plan is to have a pan-London spreadsheet of adopters shortly.
- In Adoption Family Finder meetings where profiles of children to be placed, and approved adopters, are shared. The Inter Country Adoption Centre now attend these meetings to try and make links between our children and their vacant BME adopters.
- By circulating profiles by email among Consortium Managers and Adoption Social Workers.
- On occasions, profiles of children are circulated to all the London Consortium Managers
- From April, 2014, we set up a Consortium contract with Adoption Link (www.adoptionlink.co.uk), The following Table shows the outcome of this contract to date:

Table 1**Children Placed/Adopters Placed via Adoption Link**

	Barnet	Camden	Enfield	Hackney	Haringey	Islington	TOTAL
Children Placed	0	0	4	0	4	0	8
Adopter Placed	1	0	0	0	1	0	2

8 children have been placed with adopters and 2 of our adopters had children placed from other LA's. This is very encouraging, particularly as none were made through the Adoption Register and other routes for finding match e.g. Be My Parent, Adoption Activity Days are achieving very limited or no potential links.

In 2014/5, 8 children needing adoptive families were placed with approved adopters from other Borough members in the Consortium. This is 4 more than 2013/4 and 3 more than the previous year. The following Table shows the breakdown of children placed for adoption with other teams in the Consortium in 2014/5, showing details of the 8 placements i.e. a 100% increase on the previous year:

Table 2**Children placed for adoption within the NLAFC for the last 2 financial years**

Borough	2013-2014	To which boroughs	2014-2015	To which borough
Barnet	1	Haringey	1	Enfield
Camden	3	Barnet	0	
Enfield	0		2	Barnet
Haringey	0		2	Camden
Islington	0		2	Hackney
IAC	NA		0	
Hackney	0		1	Barnet
Total	4		8	

Credit for this achievement must go to the Consortium Adoption Family Finders who work so well together and share responsibility for finding families for all our children in the Consortium.

Table 3 shows the number of children placed for Adoption in the Consortium by borough in 2014/5. This was 90, compared to 108 in 2013/4. This means that the numbers of adoption orders are reduced by 18, or a 17% reduction. Over the previous 3 years the number of adoption orders had increased by 100%. The reason suggested is the decline, nationally, in the number of children available for adoption

Table 4 shows the number of adopters approved in 2014/5 in the Consortium. The Consortium boroughs approved 91 adopters in 2014/5, which is 24 less than last year. Having increased our numbers approved by 75% in the previous 2 years, it was anticipated that numbers would reduce at some stage. Although the reasons for this reduction have not been analysed, the reduction in children needing adoption and increased selectivity in types of adopters needed for our children, and the time lapse until the Recruitment Team became fully operational, may account for most of it.

Tables 5 and 6 on Approved Adopters and Children show there are 53 approved adopters waiting for a child. In contrast, there are only 19 unmatched children. This is the reverse of the situation in previous years when there were more children waiting than approved adopters, and the gap is widening. When the differences in type of child (ren) adopters are wanting to be matched with, and the type of children waiting, is factored in, there is clearly an issue arising in terms of adopter recruitment, which is reflected nationally. Most of the children waiting in the Consortium are BME children, sibling groups or children with significant special needs. Most of the adopters are White UK/European, seeking one child with not too many special needs.

Table 3**NLAFC Children Adopted 2014 - 2015 (2013 – 2014 in brackets)**

	Barnet	Camden	Enfield	Haringey	Islington	Hackney	Total
Children Adopted	18 (12)	11 (21)	18 (20)	21 (38)	10 (17)	12 (16)	90 (124)

Table 4**NLAFC Adoption Recruitment 2014 - 2015 (2013 – 14 in brackets)**

	Barnet	Camden	Enfield	Haringey	Islington	Hackney	Total
Adoption Enquiries	84	85 (130)	69 (94)	54 (72)	143 (149)	100	535 Includes 302 Recruitment Team
Information Evenings	3 (8)	3 (6)	3 (3)	6 (9)	4 (7)	3 (4)	22 (30)
Adopters Approved	18 (15)	15 (20)	19 (23)	18 (22)	10 (14)	12 (12)	92 (114)

Table 5**NLAFC Approved Adopter Households Waiting for a Child to be placed – March, 2015**

Barnet 12	11 White UK/Eur 1 Black Carr.	12 – 1 child
Camden 6	5 White UK/Eur 1 Black Carr.	3 – 1 child 3 – 1 or 2 siblings
Enfield 9	7 White UK/Eur 1 Black Afr. 1 Iranian	8 – 1 child 1 – 1 or 2 siblings
Hackney 6	3 White UK 1 White Other 1 Black Afr. 1 W.UK/B.Carr.	5 – 1 child 1 – 2 siblings
Haringey 12	7 White UK/Eur 2 Black Carr. 1 Black Afr. 1 W.UK/Asian 1 White Other	11 – 1 child 1 – 1 or 2 siblings
Islington 8	3 White UK 2 W. UK/Asian 3 W.UK/B.Carr	8 – 1 child
Total 53	36 White UK/Eur 2 White Other 3 Black Afr. 4 Black Carr. 4 W.UK/B.Carr 3 W.UK/Asian 1 Iranian	47 – 1 child 5 – 1 or 2 siblings 1 – 2 siblings

NLAFC Approved Adopters - ethnicity

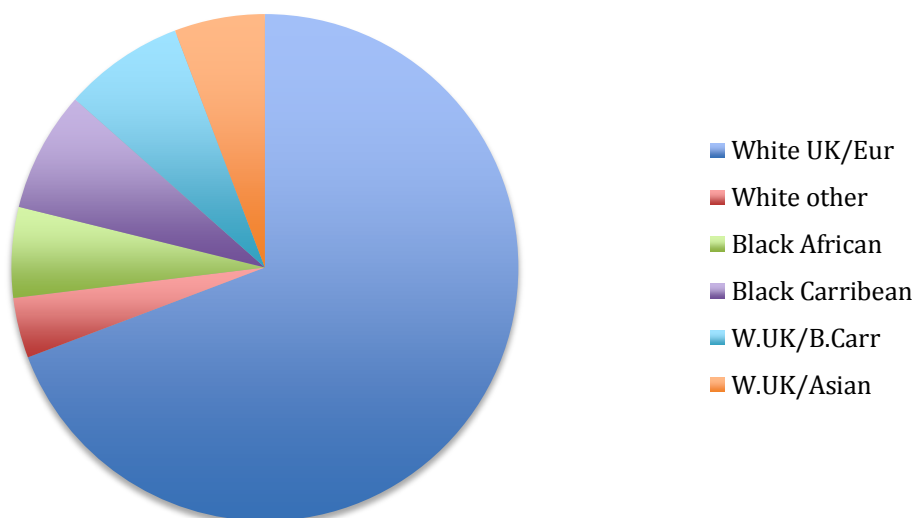
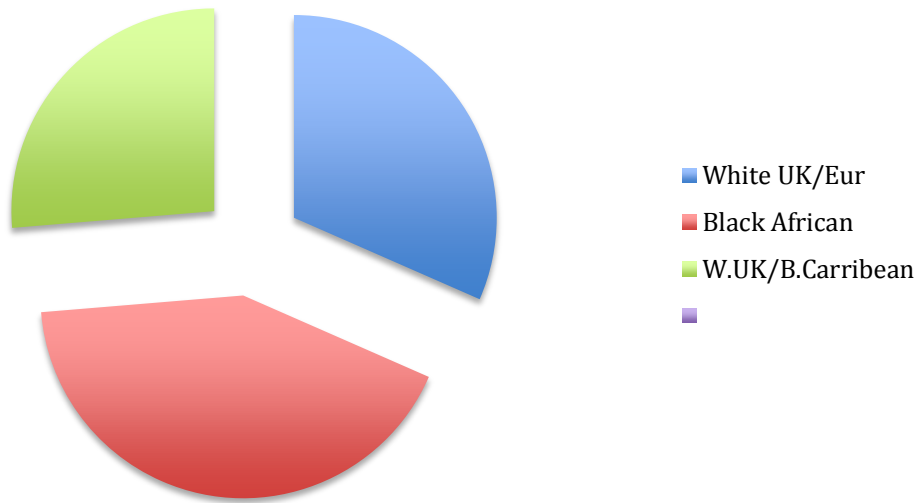


Table 6

NLAFC Children with a Placement Order Waiting to be Placed (not linked) – March, 2015

Barnet 1	1 W.UK/B.Carr
Camden 3	2 White UK – sibling group of 2 1 W.UK/B.Carr.
Enfield 5	2 White UK 1 Black Afr. 2 W.UK/B.Afr.
Hackney 0	
Haringey 6	1 White Eur. 4 Black Afr. – Sibling group of 4. 1 W.UK/B.Carr
Islington 4	3 Black African – sibling group of 3 1 White Eur.
Total 19	4 White UK 2 White Eur. 8 Black Afr. 5 W.UK/B.Carr

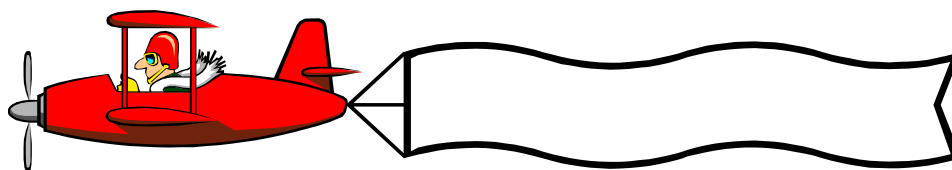
NLAFC Children Waiting (19) - ethnicity



The North London Adoption Consortium Manager also links in with other London Adoption Consortium Managers to exchange information about children needing adoptive homes, and to organize a London Exchange Event, which took place on 7th October, 2014, and attracted over 50 potential adopters from across London.

The Consortium also participates in 2 London Adoption Exchange Events, organised by the Adoption Register, each year and has started attending Regional Events.

Publicity, Advertising and Recruitment



The Publicity and Recruitment Group consists of six publicity and marketing officers from each of the six Boroughs comprising the Consortium. The Group is in charge of planning and co-ordinating the Consortium's Annual Adoption Recruitment Event; fostering recruitment events; organising and attending other adoption recruitment events; managing the Consortium websites and Facebook pages; and producing the Consortium leaflets and the new Consortium Newsletter. Their behind the scenes work is crucial to the smooth running of many Consortium activities.

"This newsletter is great. Thanks to the team who produced it." (Head of Service, Hackney)

The Adoption North London Recruitment Team: (written by Susanna Daus, Operational manager CLA placements, Islington, April 2015)

"Introduction

This report summarises the progress and outcomes of the Adoption North London recruitment team which ran from November 2013 to November 2014. The team managed all enquiry and stage One adopter recruitment for the 6 boroughs. The team consisted of a social worker from each of the six boroughs, a team manager.

Data analysis

Following advertising and rebranding, enquiries for the 12 month period exceeded expectations of 750 enquiries. 970 families enquired at least once. Almost all the enquiries were through the website. As expected the most enquiries were from people aged 36 to 45 although 362 did not give their age. 382 people attended information events, highlighting the importance of fortnightly sessions so people did not have to wait as well as compliance with regulatory timescales. 69 families progressed to stage 2. There were some DBS delays but there were more delays in relation to medicals with different medical advisors having different arrangements.

This lower conversion from enquiry to stage 1 was unexpected. Many enquiries were simply a question and when followed up, they did not respond. It is likely that the rebranded advertising provoked initial response from people not ready to go ahead. ICS, data reporting and internet across boroughs remained a challenge.

Rebranding as Adoption North London

Rebranding took place in November 2013 and the Consortium chose to retain the brand when the team ended. The brand has an excellent reputation but this remains precious and all teams are adversely affected if any of the partners is slow in responding.

A new website was produced in 2014, which set a model for the Fostering and Special Guardianship websites. 85% of enquiries came through the website.

Department for Education

The DFE adoption team showed interest in the team and how it was working. Owen McConnell from the adoption policy team visited to discuss the team and statutory compliance. We highlighted the dilemma of being an open adopter led service which would inevitably have to accept adopters which the Consortium could not use, risking failing the most vulnerable children waiting the longest for families, in particular children with BME heritage. The DFE was at that time keen that we contribute to a nationwide adoption supply for all UK children, but we explained that this would leave our children behind. The Consortium now faces a critical dilemma as the surplus of adopters for white children in London means that child finding for these surplus families will absorb valuable adoption staff time.

Communication and decision making across 6 different councils

The project highlighted the different political, strategic and decision making differences between the 6 councils. These differences made a significant impact on the project and the decision to make changes. These differences will need to be taken into account in any future projects.

The different structures in different boroughs meant that marketing and publicity decisions and strategies were not always communicated to adoption teams.

Achievements

- Consistent high quality messages which reflected DFE /Ofsted requirements
- One message across 6 boroughs clear strategic approach to attracting adopters
- Strong brand awareness of Adoption North London as a quality adoption service
- Strategic leadership of Comms to simplify and reduce duplication across the 6 boroughs
- High quality film produced now on websites and Youtube, which can be used in segments and was shown at DFE staff awayday.
- Successful annual event at the end of the process very well attended by enquirers and a full complement of staff on a Sunday
- Significant rise in enquiries
- Quality of work endorsed by First4adoption mystery shopper

'Overall the service received from Adoption North London was above average when compared to all agencies. The team should be congratulated for provided a fantastic service, welcoming perspective adopters and making the time to listen and treat them as individuals.'

- Good feedback from applicants

Other challenges

- Demand for adopters fell significantly through this period for adopters in some of the boroughs, reducing by 50% nationally
- The exponential rise in demand for friends and family solutions instead of adoption was a parallel factor
- Some LAs were considering shifting staffing and resource allocation in response to falling demand for adoption and the stage 1 team seemed resource heavy in terms of demand.

North and South teams

In the light of the challenges presented, the decision was made to separate into North and South teams but to continue with the joint branding and adoption support information and publicity.

Recommended actions for heads of service

- 1 Ensure the brand is maintained to give one strong adoption message in North London , supported by the Website and adoption support literature.
- 2 That all partners protect the brand by monitoring the standard of response to adopters and ensure team managers work together to give consistent messages.
- 3 Consider lessons learnt from 6 borough working to any new Consortium projects - in particular the organisational, financial, political and structural contexts.
- 4 Review our working together agreement to ensure unequal contributions do not not affect partnership working or effectiveness. All partner Heads of Service to monitor whether their service is putting their fair share into the services.
- 5 Take note of the implications for any projects of data, IT and data protection across 6 services
- 6 Understand the impact of political strategies in each partner and the effect of this on any project
- 7 Prioritise trusting relationships across the Consortium to enable effective partnership and continued sharing of scarce resources.“

Consortium Training

The NLAFC Manager arranges a regular training programme for adoption and fostering team members from the Consortium. The programme for 2015 is attached as Appendix 1. All courses are well attended and feedback has always been positive. Certificates can be issued to attendees to evidence continuing professional development. Because we buy in our training for all six Consortium boroughs, which are attended by up to 60 staff, we can buy high quality training at affordable prices, rather than staff attending high cost external courses. Most training costs £20 - £30 per attendee.

The London Consortia Managers arrange a large training event each year. In 2014 a Conference was held with Kate Cairns Associates, on 21 November, 2014, on “Supporting Permanently Placed Children at Home and at School” for 300+ delegates with 80 spaces allocated to the NLAFC. Feedback was very positive and delegates found the day helpful and informative. One adopter wrote – “Just have to say it was a really great course and the speaker was mesmerizing (I could have listened to her speaking for hours more). Truly informative about a child's mind and how it works. Lots of thing we can download and use and (have already started a file). We will use the information, if not now certainly in the future!”

The London Consortia Managers are increasingly working together to provide high quality training at low cost to Adoption and Fostering Panel members. An Induction course was held in February,

and further courses on the "Impact of the Changes in Adoption" and "Connected Persons" are planned in 2015.

Each Consortium member Borough arranges a training course for approved adopters from across the Consortium. As such there are 6 courses per annum attended by 20-25 adopters. The 2015 programme is shown in Appendix 2.

The Consortium put on an Adopting Changes Leaders Training in September 2014, and 4 Adopters, 1 Foster Carer and 5 Adoption Social Workers were trained up as course leaders. In February we ran our first course led by 2 adopters, Miranda and Tony, and Jo an Adoption Social Worker. Feedback has been outstanding:

"More confident as a parent. The adoptive parent facilitators were excellent. It was great"

"I feel more empowered. I am more positive and emotionally aware. The opportunity to talk and listen to other adopters has been invaluable."

"It has helped me refocus on relevant parenting and give me positive feelings. I feel I am more equipped to face the future."

"I liked the opportunity to learn about parenting skills in an open, discrete forum. The personal exchange from teachers and attendees gave much of the teaching a "bespoke" feel. I feel that I am able to learn and change – I feel more prepared for the future. The course was fantastic. The facilitators being adopters themselves made the teaching particularly focused and empathetic."

The course represents value for money for the Consortium insofar as places on externally commissioned courses cost £2,000 per person. Particular thanks go to Sue Bineham, Camden Adoption, for her work on developing this course.

Finally, our course for newly approved adopters called "Going Back to Go Forwards." The course was held 3 times this year and each was attended by 20 - 26 new adopters. It is run by Louis Sydney, a Psychotherapist with lengthy experience of working in adoption. The course is designed to help

adopters, after the approval process, refocus on the children needing placement and the issues that could arise early on in adoption. Our Hackney Adoption Manager emailed – “I just wanted to pass on that the feedback we had from all our adopters who attended Louis' training this week was excellent - they are all raving about it and appear to have also taken lots on board and now full of therapeutic ideas!”



(Kate Cairns – “Supporting Permanently Placed Children at Home and at School”
– Hammersmith Town Hall, 21st November, 2014

Heads of Service Meetings

This is the steering group of the North London Adoption Consortium and meets bi-monthly to plan and develop the work of the Consortium at a strategic level. During the year this group has overseen:

- The redrafting and signing of the Consortium Memorandum of Understanding and Statement of Purpose.
- The Tendering, contracting and monitoring of the pre-and post-adoption counselling services provided by PAC – UK, and the inter-country adoption service provided by IAC.
- The planning, development and implementation of all Consortium adoption, fostering and special guardianship activities
- The sharing of service policies, procedures and developments.
- Providing the Consortium Chairperson.
- Linking with the National and London Adoption Boards and the North London Children's Efficiency Programme.

The HOS and Managers meet annually to plan the development of the Consortium.

There has been the following change in membership this year:

- Brigitte Jordaan and Sarah Wright have joined the group as Heads of Service for Hackney, and Paulette Thompson-Omenka for Barnet.

Adoption Managers Meetings

This is the NLAFC operational management group for adoption and meets six weekly. The meetings have been used to:

- Oversee all aspects of the NLAFC operations.
- Help develop and co-ordinate the Annual Training programme.
- Monitor the implementation of the pre- and post- adoption contract-with PAC-UK, and monitor the inter-country adoption contract with IAC.
- They also monitor the Consortium joint membership arrangements with New Family Social and
- Adoption Link.
- Exchange information about best practice, policies and procedures, Ofsted inspections; etc.

- Oversee developments in the Consortium, including the Adoption Recruitment Teams; initiatives with partner agencies etc.
- Discuss issues arising from Ofsted inspections, new legislation, guidance and standards.
- Develop further joint commissioning.

Fostering Managers Meetings

This group is comprised of the six Fostering Managers from Consortium Borough teams who meet 6 weekly to:

- Share information about best practice, policies and procedures in Fostering and Private Fostering.
- Discuss issues arising from Ofsted inspections, new legislation, guidance and National Minimum Standards.
- Protocols and procedures have been developed for the sharing of Foster Carers across the Consortium. Managers are continuing to share information about vacant foster carers and children waiting for carers.
- Managers have exchanged contact information about themselves and their teams so that, when placements are urgently required by other Consortium teams, they can be contacted before going to IFA's.
- Managers are developing areas of joint commissioning of services such as parts of foster carer training, a Consortium Outreach Project, sharing fostering services for children with a disability etc.
- Oversee the Consortium Parent and Child fostering scheme
- They monitor the support service for foster carers who have had an allegation/complaint made against them.
- Monitor Consortium Fostering Recruitment initiatives.

Adoption in the NLAFC

Adoption Support

We are proud of the wide- ranging Adoption Support services our Teams provide in the NLAFC. We are closely involved with Pan London developments and have had representation on the DfE Expert Advisory Group overseeing and advising on the plans for the development of the Adoption Support Fund; the DfE Adoption Stakeholder Advisory Group; and the London Adoption Board.

We have established an **Adopter Forum**, with representation of 3 adopters from each Consortium borough, to “act as a reference / consultative group for the North London Adoption and Fostering Consortium, to represent the views of adopters, and to provide ideas, information and feedback to inform the work of the Consortium in helping shape and influence adoption services and how these are provided in its 6 member boroughs, and in the Consortium.

The group will be a business forum, meeting twice per annum. Representative members will be invited to attend the London Adoption Board Adopters Forum, which meets quarterly.” The first meeting took place in February, 2015.

A **Consortium Adoption Support Group** meets bi-monthly to plan and develop collaborative working initiatives and share best practice. As a result, a number of exciting and productive ventures continue to be run on a Consortium basis.

The NLAFC Adopted Adults Group

“As an adoptee searching for my birth parents, I joined the North London Adoption Consortium Group for Adopted Adults to draw on the experience of like minded individuals. That shared support has changed my life. I have made new friends and now I am helping other adoptees.”

“A platform for thoughtful & considerate, interactive comments”

“An opportunity to connect with other adopted adults and share experiences and hope”

"I really enjoy the time I spend with other adults who have had similar experiences to myself. Understanding others situations and how it has affected them has helped me to come to terms with the aspects of my personality that may have been a result of moving family a lot as a child."

Adults who have been adopted who live in North London can now attend a Consortium bi-monthly support group. This very successful group has been running for 5 years in a comfortable centre in Holloway. It provides an opportunity for attendees to discuss how adoption has influenced their lives, to consider the impact of searching for birth family members and hear other peoples' stories. The group also runs its own website.

The group is run by a Steering Group of adopted adults and supported by a small group of adoption support social workers from across the Consortium.

Support to Adopted Adults

Table 8

Number of adopted adults supported by Adoption Support Teams in the NLAFC 2014/5

Barnet	10
Camden	50
Enfield	50
Hackney	Don't know
Haringey	21
Islington	30

The above figures suggest that around 180 or 200 adopted adults ask for support from our Adoption Support Teams over the period of a year.

The NLAFC group for the parents of adopted teenagers

The Consortium runs a monthly support group for the parents of adopted teenagers. The group focuses on challenges the parents face in adoption and how to manage these. The following is feedback from this group:

"To know that other parents with teenagers are going through similar experiences has been absolutely invaluable."
"It has been brilliant listening to the experiences of others and talking through my own experiences. It is so helpful to understand the common threads and recognize the difficult behaviour that is a result of our children's early experiences."

"The facilitators are brilliant, knowledgeable and supportive. The rest of the group are also great- not judging but listening and helpful."

"The insight and understanding I have gained from participating in the group has been priceless to me and my relationship with my child."

The group is facilitated by Rachel Staff, Val Forrest and Jo Gordon. Rachel works as an Independent Social Worker and Trainer in the field of Adoption Support. Val is a Senior Social Worker based with Camden's Adoption Team & Jo is the Deputy Team Manager for Islington's Adoption Team. Thanks, again, to all of them for their amazing work this year.



The NLAC/PAC-UK Education Support Group for Permanent Carers

This is a new group which meets monthly at PAC-UK. Adopters currently attend.

Support Groups for Adopters

Three bi-monthly support groups are run in the Consortium for the parents of adopted children.

Joint Training of adopters

Six Consortium training courses are run each year for approved adopters, one by each Borough Adoption Support Team. Feedback from staff is very positive as to how these are working. The courses for 201/4 are detailed in Appendix 2.

Intensive Support for Adoptive families

The service is run by Rachel Staff and Elsie Price, Independent Adoption Social Workers. Rachel writes – “The aim of this project was to provide a fast and flexible response to adoptive families who required additional support because of the nature of their children’s needs. Our work with families’ focuses, in the main, with adoptive parents in providing parenting support. This work is focused on helping parent’s to interpret the emotional needs underneath their children’s behaviour and to provide strategies to help them meet their children’s needs. A great deal of parenting support is also focused on the parent’s own attachment histories, style of parenting and consequent emotional needs in order that they are able to adapt to their children’s needs. A part of parent support also often involves supporting couple relationships and liaising with other professionals involved with the child and the family [such as school and mental health services].”

Adopter - *As a family we have had adoption support through (other organisations) in this last year, but Rachel has been the person that we thought really understood the complexities of our family best, and has offered us the most constructive and consistent support and understanding through this very troubled time.*

Adopter - *The support X is getting from Rachel is beginning to have a positive effect. X is at last actually willing to engage with a counsellor which she hasn't been able to do previously and I feel this is because Rachel has gained X's trust and is willing to go at a speed that X can manage. X is starting to ask about her own feelings and emotions and question her past a bit more and Rachel is able to provide her with reassurance and information about why she feels and acts as she does.*

NLAFC Adoption Support Handbook

This has been updated for 2015 with additional sections added from Adoption UK and Bristol Adoption Service. It is given to all new and existing adopters and can also be found on the NLAFC website – www.adoptionnorthlondon.co.uk

Adoption Support Allowances and Payments

In February 2014 the six Consortium Heads of Service agreed a Consortium payments schedule for Adoption payments and allowances. In February, 2015, this was updated to include how the payments would be administered and reviewed.

Adoption Support

Table 9

NLAFC Number of adopters supported 2014/5

Local authority	Number currently supported	Average number supported in one year	Average length of support
Barnet	89 (but about 50% of these just monitored not actively supported) 6 direct contact arrangements 150 adopters receive newsletter	Not available	About 18 months
Camden	48 (62) 9 (10) direct contact arrangements 77 (42) letter box contact(allocated) 148 (150) letter box 100 (190) receive newsletter	100 – 120 (100)	From one week to two years
Enfield	42 (27)	65 (60)	From 3 months to 2 years
Hackney	13	30	Don't know
Haringey	20	20-25	From 1 to 3 years
Islington	30 (16) 17 (20) direct contact 93 (60) letter box 200 receive newsletter	45 (25)	6 months - 2 years on average

For the first time we have a picture of Adoption Support service usage across the Consortium.

“We have an excellent standard of support - it’s brilliant – we don’t want it to go.”(Adopter)

Work with other Agencies involved in Adoption Support

We Are Family is a post adoption support community started in June 2013 by a group of adopters in the south of the Consortium. They offer a playgroup, parent meetings and social activities to adopters and we are working closely with them to help them develop their network in London, and provide more services direct to adoptive families. This aspect of the Consortium work i.e. supporting adopters to provide services and support for themselves is something we are hoping to increasingly develop as we respond to support needs identified by adopters themselves.

PAC-UK



Since 1st October, 2014, the Consortium has had a contract with PAC-UK to provide a comprehensive range of pre- and post-adoption support services. PAC-UK is a nationally known and well-respected adoption agency and we are very pleased to be working collaboratively with them.

The service includes:

- Pre- and post-adoption order birth parent counselling
- Counselling to all service user groups involved in adoption
- Parent and Family consultations
- Adoption Advice Line 5 days per week
- Education Help Line one day per week
- Education counselling sessions
- A monthly education support group for permanent parents
- Staff and adopter training in adoption and education issues

The contract is innovative in that the services are also available to all permanent carers in the Consortium – adopters, Special Guardians and long-term foster carers. Further, it includes the new Education service developed by PAC-UK following the groundbreaking research project they undertook with the NLAFC in 2014, to find out the educational needs of adopted children in the Consortium, and how best to meet these. The Pupil Premium has been designed to help schools

develop services to meet the needs of permanent children and our service has been developed to meet the needs of those who permanently care for the children.

The NLAC Adoption Preparation Group Organisers Meetings

These are held bi-monthly and involve the Adoption Preparation Training Organisers from all the Consortium members. They share information, ideas and resources. Each Borough runs Preparation Training Groups, on a rota basis, for adoptive applicants from the whole Consortium area, resulting in a total of 12 Groups per annum. There is an agreed protocol in place for the content and management of these Groups. Feedback from the Organisers is that this is working well.

Preparation Groups are delivered in Stage 2 of the Adoption Process.

The Adoption Family Finders

This Consortium group meets monthly and has responsibility for:

- Updating and exchanging information on children waiting, and adopters approved, in the Consortium. This is done at their monthly meetings; via the Consortium and London spreadsheets; and by updating and monitoring Adoption Link. We are very excited to now have the Intercountry Adoption Centre as part of this group to help find placements for our BME children.
- Attending Adoption Exchange Events.
- Coordinating and monitoring Adoption Activity Days. BAAF organised a second Activity Day in June 2014, and our 3 Consortium boroughs attended. Although these Days have proved very successful nationally in linking children with potential adopters, this has not been the experience in London, where few links are made. One reason put forward for this is the mismatch between the adopters who attend and the children.
- Linking with the Adoption Recruitment Team to inform them of children waiting and adopters approved.

Inter Country Adoption

From 1st April, 2014 the NLAFC has had a new contract with The Intercountry Adoption Centre to provide this service.

IAC provide:

- An Advice Line for anyone needing information about inter-country adoption.
- Legal and medical advice services.
- Information sessions and a counselling interview for prospective inter – country adopters
- Provide all Stage 1 preparation and assessment services to NLAFC inter country adopters
- Provide support and training groups for approved inter – country adopters.

The costs of Stage 2 assessments are met by applicants themselves and Welfare Supervision can be contracted on a case by case basis. The contract is monitored quarterly and is working well.

In addition IAC are partnering up with the Consortium to try and find more adoptive homes for our BME children.

Fostering in the NLAFC



“You’re a smiley one, aren’t you? Little Naya enchants the Duchess of Cambridge on her recent visit to Islington Fostering Service

Consortium Foster Placements

The sharing of foster placements has resulted in 40 children being placed locally with Consortium foster carers, rather than having to be placed further afield in the private sector. This meets the needs of the children and their families, the legal requirement of Sufficiency, and has also resulted in very great savings to our member boroughs. Many of these placements were initially for infants and of short to medium term duration, but now boroughs are sharing long-term and older children placements. The breakdown of placing and receiving boroughs is shown in the following Table:

Table 10

Consortium placements by Borough showing number of placements purchased and number provided, 2014/5 (2013/4)

BOROUGH	PLACEMENTS PROVIDED	PLACEMENTS PURCHASED
Barnet	5 (3)	10 (4)
Camden	5 (4)	7 (6)
Enfield	6 (0)	7 (2)
Hackney	1 (2)	3 (1)
Haringey	12 (3)	4 (6)
Islington	13 (9)	11 (2)
TOTAL	42 (21)	42 (21)

In 2014/5 we increased the number of placements of children between boroughs from 21 to 42, by 100%. On the basis that each placement within the NLAFC saves the placing borough £200 per week, if that child was placed with an Independent Fostering Agency, in 2012/3, the Consortium saved £70,720 by children being placed with foster carers in other Consortium boroughs rather than having to go to IFA's. In 2013/4, the Consortium saved £150,100, more than double the previous year. In 2014/5, the savings are just over £250,000. Considerable credit needs to go to the Fostering and Placement Teams for the almost seamless way in which this sharing between the Consortium LA's works.

Fostering Training

Staff

The Consortium put on 2 courses attended by Fostering staff in 2014/5 –

- “Supporting Permanently Placed Children at Home and at School” with Kate Cairns which 30 staff and carers attended
- “The Role of the Supervising Fostering Social Worker” with Sarah Borthwick which 35 staff attended.

Both courses received good feedback. In 2015 the Consortium will be running courses on “Carrying out Reviews in Foster Care” and “Trans-racial placements.”

Panel

In 2014 the Consortium, in partnership with the 3 other London Consortia, ran 2 panel Induction Training workshops for Panel Members

Foster Carers

In 2015 John Simmons, Director of Policy , Research and Development at BAAF, has run 2 Briefings and 6 Workshops for Managers , staff and foster carers from across the Consortium on “The Challenges of Looking After Under 2’s in Foster Care.” This is part of a charitably funded project to roll out learning undertaken from research undertaken by BAAF with Southwark CAMHS. Initial reports from John and attendees are positive.

The 6 Consortium Foster Carer Training Managers/Coordinators have started to meet regularly and the following have been achieved:

- A Consortium Protocol for the Sharing of Training, at no cost, has been agreed. Teams now routinely share training programmes with other boroughs.
- Boroughs now share places on their Skills to Foster preparation courses and an annual programme is prepared across the Consortium. Manager’s report that at least one other borough foster carer is present on every course. In 2015 it is planned that we will run 2 Consortium – based preparation days for Connected Persons.
- In 2015 it is also planned that each borough will host one course for foster carer from across the Consortium. We will also explore more advanced learning possibilities for foster carers post Level 3.
- In 2014 the Consortium ran a Workshop for foster carers who wanted to assist in recruitment events, and in 2015 a further Workshop is being planned for carers wanting to co-lead Information Sessions and help support applicants in the recruitment and assessment process.

Consortium Specialist Fostering Schemes

Parent and Child Assessment Fostering Scheme

The Scheme started in July 2013 and now has 7 approved foster carers. Further recruitment will be taking place to find carers for Hackney and Camden.



2013 Parent Child Foster Carer Support Group

During 2014/5, 9 Parents and Children were in assessment placements (8 were new placements made and 1 was carried over from the previous year). 7 successfully moved to independent living with their child, and 1 went to live with relatives with their child and 1 abandoned their child in placement. This amounted to 89 weeks placement occupancy, 24 weeks more than 2013/4. Our aim in the initial proposal for the Scheme was an occupancy rate of 80%. But we are only achieving 50+ % at present. The feedback is generally good, although there have been 2 issues arising from placing social workers not understanding the referral criteria and roles and responsibilities of the Scheme sufficiently. 2 workshops for social workers were held to inform them about the scheme but attendance was low.

However, we have also been able to use 2 placements for non-scheme, parent and child holding placements of longer duration.

At present there are 6 approved Parent/Child assessment foster carers. 1 resigned and 1 was not available in 2014/5.

Parent – 16.1.15 – *“It has really helped me because when I arrived I was making a few mistakes and X pointed out it was wrong and how to put it right. Also, it’s prepared me to live independently. What I found most helpful was the space. It was much different from the unit and really prepared me for independent living. The foster carers advice was very helpful and wasn’t as if I was doing it wrong but perhaps a better way to do it.”*

Fostering Social Worker – *“When it works it really works, but there can be real issues. The parents can see the human face of social work and have the opportunity to build relationships.”*

Remand Fostering

2 foster carers were approved for the Scheme and placements made. However, serious risk issues arose when placements were made across local authority boundaries, when the placing Youth Offender Teams tried to transfer support of the young people to the YOT of the LA in which the young persons were placed. As a result, the Consortium Scheme was ended and boroughs advised to continue to develop their own in-borough schemes. To date, one borough has successfully done this and has 2 remand foster carers.

Fostering Recruitment

This year we carried out 1 recruitment event at IKEA, in Edmonton, in April.

We have also focused Consortium fostering recruitment specifically on the Muslim community in North London – and had a stall at a Muslim Family Fun Day in May, and held 2 Recruitment Evenings at Mosques in Edmonton and Barnet. A further event is planned for April, 2015, in Camden.

Finally we have nearly completed the update of our website and recruitment materials, and now operate a Facebook page to promote Fostering.

Table 11

NLAFC Fostering Statistics – 2013- 2015 (by financial year)

Borough	Fostering Enquiries	Number of approvals Task Connected Other Centred Persons			Total Number of Foster Carers Task Connected Other Centred Persons			Total Number of children in LA foster placements Short Long Kinship Respite Term Term			
Barnet											
2012/3	244	9									
2013/4	271	10									
2014/5	300	15			97	29		59	24	43	
Camden											
2012/3	108	14									
2013/4	130	9									
2014/5	150	10	5	0	90	5L&SB			28		
Enfield											
2012/3	187	6									
2013/4		15	4								
2014/5	250	14	2	0	108	14		108	30	21	4
Hackney											
2012/3											
2013/4											
2014/5	177	10	5	0	80	26	6	48	32	26	0
Haringey											
2012/3	217	8									
2013/4	236	21									
2014/5	222	24	12	0	104	57	0	104		57	
Islington											
2012/3											
2013/4		9									
2014/5	195	13	25	3	114	25	9	109	40	21	10
TOTAL											
2012/3											
2013/4		64(less Hackney)									
2014/5	1,294	86									

SB = Short Break/L = Lin

86 new task centred foster carers were recruited in 2014/5. Although data is not complete in Table 10, the 5 boroughs who were able to provide data for the last 2 years show an increase in recruitment. This is encouraging when we know there is a limited pool of available potential foster carers in London, and most boroughs are recruiting about 10/12 new task centred foster carers each year (W. London Children's Efficiency Programme research.) The on-going need is for foster carers for teenagers and 2 boroughs now run specialist teenage fostering schemes and agreement is in place for all Consortium Fostering Teams to develop similar schemes.

Special Guardianship in the NLFAC

Special Guardianship Managers Meetings

These Managers meet six times per annum and focus on sharing best practice, policies and procedures, and organisational issues. A Protocol for allowances to Special Guardians in the London area has been developed and circulated to all the London Boroughs.

The Thomas Coram Research Unit, at the London University Institute of Education, has been carrying out a research into practice programme on The Support Needs of Special Guardians in the NLAFC. The draft Research Proposal is attached as Appendix 5. To date 5 Workshops have been run by Professor Louise Stoll and Dr Emily Munroe, attended by Managers, staff and Special Guardians from each of the boroughs in the Consortium. Some boroughs had already provided specific services for AG's e.g. Islington and Camden both had support groups; Islington also had arranged a social event and Newsletter and conducted a survey of SG's service needs.

In addition the Consortium had included SG's in the service provision of the PAC - UK contract, but the take up had been low. The work with Coram has stimulated interest in the needs of SG's in the boroughs and highlighted the urgency of providing a framework of coordinated services to all Special Guardians in the Consortium. The involvement of SG's as an active, well informed, user group in this process has been a revelation. The following work has been identified and is being undertaken:

- Collation of the numbers of SGO's being made in each Consortium borough to establish a picture of demand for services

Table 12**Special Guardianship Orders in the NLAFC 2012-2015**

	2012 - 2013	2013 - 2014	2014 - 2015
Barnet	22	27	21
Camden	17	24	16
Enfield	12	11	7
Hackney	37	21	21
Haringey	26	31	30
Islington	17	35	33

Data on all the Special Guardians receiving support in each borough:

Table 13**Special Guardianship Support in the NLAFC 2015**

	Camden	Enfield	Hackney	Haringey	Islington	Barnet
SG Allowance	119	81	190	212	109	150
SG worker support	19	12	45	27	22	15-20
Contact	24	10	22	10	19	5 approx

- High quality forms are being produced for use by all Consortium teams – for assessing and reviewing support needs, and for transfer after 3 years.
- A leaflet on Special Guardianship in the Consortium detailing services provided and support available.
- A support group in the north of the Consortium to complement the 2 in the south, and making the latter open to SG's from other boroughs.
- A Consortium – based training programme for Special Guardians:

Training for new Special Guardians – 2 courses have been run in 2014/5, and it is planned to run 3 per annum each year from now on. These courses have been attended by 12 SG's at each to date

and feedback has been very good. We shall be holding a Leaders Course, in July, to train up a group of 10 leaders (5 SW's and 5 SG's) to run this course in the future.

3 training days per annum for SG's, hosted by Consortium boroughs, and run by a specialist trainer on Contact and Family Dynamics; Trauma and Attachment Issues; and Talking to Your Child – all topics requested by SG's.

- A Consortium Special Guardianship website – the domain name has been purchased – www.specialguardiansnorthlondon.co.uk - and a Workgroup is developing this.
- A Showcase Event is planned for 3rd July, at the Institute of Education, to highlight the work undertaken by the project with Coram.

Future Plans in the NLAFC



Adoption

- **The Adoption Support Fund** will be introduced in May 2015. The Consortium is putting on half day workshops for adopters and staff, led by John Simmonds, on 30th April, in preparation for this. We shall be looking at how we can use the fund to further develop adoption support services.
- A workshop for adopters who are waiting for children to be placed with them is being planned
- Our adopters are now very involved in service development and monitoring, but we will be considering how better to involve adopted young people.
- A leaflet for Rising 18's in Adoption is being developed.
- A proposal is planned, with We Are Family, to introduce a buddying scheme for adopters.

Fostering

The North London Adoption and Fostering Consortium Heads of Service are focusing on Consortium fostering developments in 2015/6, and have agreed the following

- To formalize a partnership between the North London Child Efficiency Programme and the NLAFC to develop and enhance all aspects of the member boroughs' Fostering Services and procurement arrangements. This would include plans for Residential provision, to ensure developments can link with plans in fostering in the Consortium, where possible e.g. proposed residential assessment plans, could be tailored to fit with foster placements to continue to assess children and enable their move back into the community.

Recruitment

- Develop use of Foster Carer Associations to help in recruitment, training and support of foster carers. Develop and train a group of foster carers in the Consortium to recruit, appraise, support & buddy new applicants. Develop borough based recruitment materials for use by foster carers. Develop foster carers to assist in recruitment in specific communities.

Placement

- To maximize use of Consortium fostering vacancies by having a weekly spreadsheet of all borough vacancies distributed to Placement & Fostering Managers in the Consortium.
- To develop a Consortium based approach to placements for children with a disability - short break, respite, fostering.
- To develop a Consortium out of Hours Foster Carer Support Scheme and consider possibilities for OOH placements... At present the NLCEP provides a list to member boroughs Placement Teams of IFA's who provide emergency and out-of-hours placements.
- To develop Teenage Fostering Schemes in each borough. To include wrap around scheme for proposed residential developments.
- Develop strategies to help migrate children back from IFA's

Support & Training

- To develop Outreach work to use foster carers to support other boroughs carers as well as their own e.g. with transport; respite or day care etc.
- To have an Annual Consortium Foster Carer Conference/Celebration
- To develop post level 3 Consortium training for foster carers;
- To run Consortium-based Connected Persons training two times p.a
- Each borough to host and run 1 training day for Consortium foster carer's p.a.

Other

- To develop working relationships with West London Childrens Efficiency Programme to exchange information and promote any mutually beneficial partnership arrangements where possible.

Special Guardianship

- Developments are outlined earlier in this report.

Peter Stevens

Manager,

North London Adoption and Fostering Consortium

“Ubuntu” “It takes a whole village to bring up a child” – Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Appendix 1

North London Adoption and Fostering Consortium Staff Training 2015



29th January, 2015 – “The Role of the Supervising Fostering Social Worker” – Sarah Borthwick

5th March, 2015 – “The Importance of Mid-Childhood in Adoption” – Rachel Staff

23rd April, 2015 – “Introduction to Theraplay Techniques” – Julia Davis

30th April, 2015 – “The Adoption Support Fund” – John Simmonds, BAAF

14th May, 2015 – “The Changing Face of Special Guardianship” – Emily Munroe

25th June, 2015 – “Learning from the Adopters Perspective of Stage 1 & 2 and Post Adoption Support” – Sally Donovan

25th September, 2015 – “Landmark Changes in Adoption Law Re BS – The Practice Implications” – Prity Patel, PAC

22 October, 2015 – “Transracial Placements” – Jan Way, IAC

19th November, 2015, - “Assessments and Reviews in Fostering” – Sarah Borthwick

Appendix 2

NLAFC Adopters Learning Pathway



1. Stage 2 – Adopter Preparation Groups – these are shared by boroughs and run on a monthly basis.

2. Newly Approved Adopter Training: (0-12 months)

3rd February, 2015

9th June, 2015

6th October, 2015

A one day course to help adopters refocus on the adopted child following their approval, covering:

- Transitions and loss
- Building a positive relationship (including attachment)
- Developing a child's identity (including contact)
- Trainer – Louis Sydney, Child Psychotherapist

3. 2015 Training Programme for adopters:

15th January – Camden – Therapeutic Parenting – Rachel Staff

6th March – Barnet – Talking to Your Adopted Child – Judith Ellis and Liz Segal.

18th May – Islington – Managing transitions in Education - PAC-UK

20th July – Hackney – Parenting adopted siblings – Louis Sydney

25th September – Enfield – Managing Contact

28th November – Haringey – Adoption and Teenage – Elsie Price

4. 2015 Specialist training for adopters - Adoption Changes:

Leaders Course 2014

On 6th & 29th September, 2014, we held a Leaders Training Course for 10 new leaders to run the course for the Consortium. Excitingly, this was attended by 6 Adoption Support Staff, 4 Adopters and 1 Foster Carer for the Consortium, who are now ready to run future courses.

Adoption Changes 2015

The first course was held for 8 Consortium adopters from January to March, 2015. Feedback was excellent and the combination of 2 Adopter Leaders and 1 Adoption Support Worker leader contributed to its success. A further course will be held in September, 2015.

The Adopter Forum and other feedback from adopter consultations has highlighted the value of this training course for adopters.

Appendix 3

2014/5 NLAFC Adoption Support Group Programme

Adopted Adults Group

6 meetings per annum + an annual Social. Run by service users supported by social workers from the Consortium Adoption Support Teams. Feedback from 5 attendees highlights the need for this group:

"Companionship and a bond – all in the same boat"

"To meet people with a common thread who can share their experiences, give advice, understand our perspective that only other adoptees can understand."

"I was in the process of seeking a reunion with my birth mother and wanted to compare notes with others of the same experience."

"Opportunities to meet with group to discuss current personal issues"

"The stories other people share....all fascinating"

Education Support Groups for all permanent carers

Commissioned from, and run by, PAC-UK, as part of the PAC-UK contract. A monthly group is held. Attendance is low, but this is a new group which is now being advertised.

Teenage Adopters Support Group

10 monthly Saturday am sessions per annum, for parents of teenagers – for up to 20 adopters.

Led by Rachel Staff, Val Forrest and Jo Gordon. On-going group. This continues to be a key support group for adopters managing the complex issues that their adopted teenagers challenge them with on a daily basis.

Appendix 4

London Adoption Consortia Fostering and Adoption Panel Training 2015.

27 March, 2015

“Induction Training for New Adoption Panel Members” - for Adoption Panel Members

9.30 to 4.30 p.m. (6 places)

Rooms 5/6 Westminster City Hall.

15th May, 2015

“Panel Administrators Training”

Venue tba.

26th June, 2015

“Foster to Adopt” for Adoption Panel members

9.30 to 4.00 (6 places)

Venue tba

25th September, 2015

“Induction Training for New Panel Members” - for Adoption & Fostering Panel Members

9.30 to 4.30

Venue tba

29th January, 2016

“Trans racial placements.”

9.30 to 4.30

Inter Country Adoption Centre. (35). Trainer Jan Way.

Most of the training is delivered by Ray Wright, an experienced Local Authority Adoption Manager & trainer, and is free to Consortium Panel members.

Appendix 5

NLAFC Foster Carer Training Programme 2014/5

Skills to Foster Preparation Groups

A group is run monthly by boroughs in turn, which can be accessed by fostering applicants from across the Consortium. On average, one set of applicants from another borough attends each boroughs STF groups.

Borough Foster Carer Training Programmes

There is agreement that boroughs will share any spare places on their training courses with other Consortium boroughs at no cost. This ensures courses are full and increases choice of training.

- In 2015/6 each borough will host a specialist training course open to foster carers from across the Consortium
- Foster Carer Conference – in 2015/6 there will be a Conference for foster carers from across the Consortium
- Children under 2 in Foster Care; Briefings and Workshops for Foster Carers and Staff in the NLAFC led by John Simmonds OBE, BAAF.

Children who are placed in foster care under 2 are a very special group. It is very important that what makes them special is properly understood and becomes part of their day to day care. There are two combined aspects to this.

Firstly there is their vulnerability. Young children are almost completely dependant on the adult/s who care for them. These are the obvious things like food, warmth, protection from infection, cleanliness but this includes responsiveness to the child's needs for sensitive and lively interaction embedded in the relationship they have with their primary carers. If adults do not make sure that these needs are addressed, there is very little that the child can do to meet these needs themselves. The one thing they can and do is communicate their vulnerability and they have powerful ways of doing this in their cries and related behaviour. But these signals need to be responded to by adults in a sensitive and appropriate way. These issues apply to all young children.

Secondly, there are the particular issues that are likely to be an additional part of the vulnerability of young children in foster care. There is a combination of factors. The child is likely to be at heightened risk of adverse genetic factors, poor antenatal care including exposure to legal and illegal drugs and alcohol. The effect of these may or may not be known at birth or for some time afterwards. There will also be the impact of any adverse early care from neglect or abuse including changes in primary carers. Children will adapt to these adverse circumstances as best they can but how they do this will depend on a variety of factors but the instinct is always to adapt to survive. Foster carers are therefore faced with a combination of primary tasks. They will need to create an environment that enables and responds directly and in a timely way to the child's various needs.

This means understanding those needs and particularly the individual nature of these needs. This is so for all young children but for children in foster care this includes understanding the way the child has adapted to the adverse care they have received prior to placement. This may influence the way the child responds to care – they may be wary or unresponsive or the way they signal or communicate their needs may be the opposite of what they need. These can be seriously challenging issues for foster carers. A combination of sensitivity, engagement and the intensity of loving care that all young children both expect and require is the solution. But the dilemma for the foster carer is that also have major adjustments to make in committing themselves to the individual child while facing the fact that this commitment is temporary. At some point the child will move and this will be felt in profound ways by both the child and the foster carer. Foster carers need training and support to help with these issues.

Briefings and Workshops have been led by John Simmonds in each borough to test the effectiveness and potential of brief one off workshops (3 hours) and provide opportunities to explore the issues. The workshops have combined foster carers, children's social workers and supervising social workers and are being run from January to May 2015. Initial feedback has been good.

Workshop for foster carers helping in the recruitment process

In November, 2014, the Consortium and Barnet fostering delivered a Workshop to train 8 foster carers from the Consortium boroughs in how to assist at Recruitment Events. This was well received and the foster carers have been helping in Recruitment activities. A second Workshop is being planned, in 2015, to train foster carers to co-lead Information Sessions and provide support to fostering applicants.

Appendix 6

Research-practice bridging network: Special Guardianship Support

Background

Thomas Coram Research Unit and the London Centre for Leadership in Learning at the Institute of Education, University of London have obtained a small grant from the Higher Education Initiative Fund to support the development of research-practice bridging networks. These are intended to support evidence-informed policy and practice and develop links with London Boroughs.

Proposal

The research-bridging networks will involve strategic managers and frontline social workers from each of the Boroughs in the North London Adoption Consortium. A series of workshop style meetings will be convened over a 16 month period, to include a combination of tailored sessions for, a) managers and, b) for frontline social workers, as well as joint sessions to share learning and facilitate knowledge exchange.

Rather than simply provide research findings or engage in a one-way process of knowledge 'transfer' (Levin, 2011), we will seek to engage in an iterative and interactive process where we both assist professionals in constructing knowledge suitable to their context, whilst also undertaking new research to continually aid and feed into this construction process.

The sessions will build on Stoll's notion of *knowledge animation* (Stoll, 2008; 2010), a social process by which practitioners and/or policy makers make learning connections when engaging with research findings. Knowledge animation is concerned with finding ways of making knowledge accessible so that it stimulates conversation that challenges thinking, promotes new understanding, and helps them generate new knowledge that will enhance their practice and policy.

Overview of potential programme

Session one: Special guardianship: setting the scene

- Presentation of key research findings on special guardianship (e.g. profile of children and families, key benefits and challenges)
- Exploration and discussion of how these findings apply in your authorities and current use of special guardianship and models of delivery

Session two: Messages from special guardians

- Presentation of key research findings on the services and support that special guardians and their children say they want and need
- Mapping and exploring current service provision against this evidence and identification of strengths and limitations in policy and practice in participating authorities

Session three: Developing a best practice special guardianship policy and support plan/offer to families

- Presentation of 'best practice' examples of policies and offers to families
- Development of a best practice policy and support plan/offer to families tailored for the Consortium

Session four: Policy implementation and designing an evaluation framework

- Presentation of findings on policy implementation and evaluation tools
- Development of an implementation strategy and evaluation framework tailored for the Consortium.
- Extra activities that **would require additional resources** but that could be integrated to inform the development of a best practice policy and support plan:
 - Focus groups with special guardians to explore perspectives on training, help seeking, support needs and contact issues;
 - Focus groups with young people about special guardianship and their support needs;
 - Focus groups to examine stakeholder perspectives on a support plan/offer to families;
 - Evaluate the effectiveness of special guardianship training (knowledge, attitudes and self-efficacy).

TCRU could either a) provide consultancy to support the development of research tools and analysis (with members of the research-bridging network undertaking the work), or, b) conduct the research on behalf of the Consortium.

Appendix 7

NLAFC Draft Budget 2014 –15



Item	Cost - £	Justification/ notes
Adoption & Fostering Programme Manager including expenses etc.	54,000	£45,000 + 5,000 pension + 2,000 NI + 2,000 expenses.
Administrative Assistant	4,000	
PAC-UK contract	100,851	
Inter-country Adoption contract	8,324.83	
New Family Social Membership	2,160	
Adoption, Fostering & SG Staff training	15,000	As per 2014/15
Adoption & Fostering Panel member training	1,000 1,000	
Parent/Child Scheme training		
SG/Coram Development Workshops	3,300	
Special Guardians Training	1,500	
2 Connected Person preparation courses	1000	
Adoption support	10,500	£1,000 Adopted Adults Group £1,000 Adopted Children and £3000 Parents of Teenagers' groups £4,500 NLAC Adopters training – 6 sessions + New Adopters Training 3 days £1,000 Adoption Changes training.
Publicity and Recruitment	2,000 2,000 1,600 5,000 2,630 300 1000	Consortium Showcase Event Consortium Fostering Conference Consortium Fostering Advertising Muslim Fostering Recruitment Evening Adoption/SG and Fostering Leaflets and materials Consortium Adoption Newsletter Foster Carer Recruitment Workshop Teenage Fostering Project development
Websites:	150	Website provider fees
Fees	75 500	Domain name fees Website upgrade consultancy
Islington Admin. Fee	5,000	As per 2013/14
TOTAL	£222,889.83	£37,148 per member borough

Consortium members' contributions now include the PAC-UK contract; Inter-Country Adoption contract; and New Family Social contract.