TITLE Name / description of the issue being assessed	Creation of a Regional Adoption Agency with London Borough of Bexley and Kent County Council.
DATE Date the DIA is completed	30/06/2020
LEAD OFFICER Name, title and dept of person responsible for carrying out the DIA.	

1 Summary description of the proposed change

- What is the change to policy / service / new project that is being proposed?
- How does it compare with the current situation?

In March 2016, the government announced changes to the delivery of adoption services setting a very clear direction that all local authorities' adoption services must be delivered on a regionalised basis by 2020. This followed a range of national policy changes since 2012, including the 2015 'Regionalising Adoption' paper by the DfE that sought improvements in adoption performance. Following the general election in June 2017, the Minister of State for Children and Families reaffirmed commitment to this policy. In March 2018, the DfE commenced the legislation that allows them to direct a local authority into a RAA if there is no progress being made.

The premise of regionalisation is to:

- Promote early permanence planning across the region.

- Improve the timeliness of children's adoption journeys and reduce the length of time children wait to be adopted

- Improve post-adoption support services to families who have adopted children from care

- Reduce the number of agencies that provide adoption services thereby improving efficiency & effectiveness.

To this end Medway Council are pursuing a formal partnership arrangement with Bexley Council and Kent County Council for the delivery of a RAA service. The partnership model requires no physical transfer of staff but operates under a robust governance structure where each local authority will delegate to the Head of the Regional Adoption Agency responsibilities for finance and staffing matters, to ensure the effective operation of the partnership and our adoption practice.

Through the RAA model, the three authorities aim to place themselves at the forefront of adoption services nationally, combining services to achieve the highest possible quality outcomes for all children and young people with adoption plans in the region, and for their adoptive families.

The intention is to ensure that in year 1 of the RAA going live, performance continues at the very least in line with the previous year's performance. By year 2 of the model

it is intended that all local authority performance moves towards the best performing local authority in the partnership to ensure regional performance that competes with the highest performing RAA's nationally.

The following provisional data is for the latest unpublished adoption performance indicators (2018-19 data), incorporating Bexley, Kent and Medway data. This suggests that performance continues to significantly exceed national averages in both Bexley and Kent in relation to all three A1, A2 and A3 indicators. In Medway, however, timescales have increased against the A1, A2 and A3 indicators, as shown in the table below:

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		A1: Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family (days) DfE Target 425	A2: Average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family (days) DfE Target 121	A3: Children who wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive
Medway	LA's 3-year average (2015-18)	469	184	75 (51%)
	18-19 Average	569	217	8 (37%)
Bexley	LA's 3-year average (2015-18)	339	120	55 (81) %
	18-19 Average	340	74	- (100%)
Kent	LA's 3-year average (2015-18)	392	151	285 (73%)
	18-19 Average	363	120	73 (77%)
National	England 3-year average (2015-18)	486	201	11010 (56%)
	18-19 Average	558	226	47%

When the RAA goes live, its performance will be measured through a new framework which will consider the performance of both the RAA and each local authority in relation to different aspects of the child and adopter journey, as set out below:

Timeliness*	Local Authority	Matching (RAA)	Recruitment (RAA)	Support (RAA)
LA and RAA Average time (in days) between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family adjusted for foster carer adoptions. (A.10) RAA Average time (in days) between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family. (A.2) LA Average time (in days) between entering care and placement order. (New) * Both a single year average and a three yearly average.	Number of ADM decisions. (A.15) Number of new placement orders granted. (A.16) Children for whom permanence decisions has changed away from adoption. (A.5) Number of children in a Fostering for Adoption / Concurrent Planning foster placement. (A.17)	Total number of children not placed after placement order after 3, 6, 12, 18 months. (New) Number of approved adoptive families waiting to be matched after 3, 6, 12, 18 months. (New) Percentage of adoptive families matched to a child who waited at least 3 months from approval to matching decision. (A.12)	Number of applications to become an adoptive family still to be assessed (not yet approved or rejected). (A.13) Number of adopter approvals. (New) Number of applications commencing Stage 1. (New)	Average time (in days) from request from adopter to assessment. (New - subject to ASGLB data collection) Number of disruptions. (New - subject to ASGLB data collection)

Through coming together to form the RAA it is the intention that the strengths of each local authority will be drawn upon to drive improved performance and outcomes for child and adoptive families across the region, including in relation to issues of equality.

2   Summary of evidence used to support this assessment
- Eg: Feedback from consultation, performance information, service user records etc.
- Eg: Comparison of service user profile with Medway Community Profile

The proposed service delivery model for the RAA is based on evidence of what works in Adoption; and a series of consultations that have informed a co-production approach to service design, including:

- Consultation with the Heads of Service for adoption in all 3 LA's.
- Consultation with adoption staff from all 3 LA's through a series of workshops to inform the delivery model, between October 2019 and March 2020.
- Consultation with adopter voice representatives.
- Consultation with stakeholders who provide services to each existing adoption service, including: Panel Chairs, Virtual School Heads and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG's).
- In depth analysis of current performance across all Local Authorities has been completed. This will provide the means of identification of best practice within the region and areas where improvements can be made.

The profile for Medway's adoption service

Medway's overall population is comprised of mostly residents who are classed as white British in ethnic origin, at 86% of the population according to the 2011 Census (note: the census is coming to the end of its useful cycle and will be refreshed in 2021). This is broadly in-line with the national figure, but significantly higher than that for London, at 45%. The 2018-based subnational population projections show that Medway's 0-19 population for 2020 is 71,467, which equates to 26% of the total population. This is slightly higher than that for England as a whole, at 24%. Of Medway's 0-19 population 52% are male and 48% are female. This is in-line with the national figures.

The following data relates to the child level and adopter level year-in data for the reporting years 2017/18 to 2019/20. Comparison data for Bexley and Kent has also been provided where available.

Note: Data in the tables has been suppressed due to low numbers. Where a value is less than 5 it is denoted as '<5' and totals have been removed to prevent identification.

Child level data:

Number of Adoptions (in-year):

For the 2019/20 reporting period there were 17 children adopted in Medway. This is a reduction on the previous year of 29% (down from 24 in 2018/19) and a reduction of 18 children from the 2017/18 figure of 35 (equal to a percentage change of 51%). Similarly, over the three-year period, Bexley and Kent have also seen a year on year reduction in the number of children placed for adoption, as indicated in the table below:

Year	Medway	Bexley	Kent
2017/18	35	15	102
2018/19	24	8	95
2019/20	17	<5	62

Gender of adopted children:

National adoption data for the period 2015-2019 shows that more boys are placed for adoption than girls. Medway data shows that of those children adopted in 2019/20 65% were male (11 children) and 35% were female (6 children). This compares to 42% males (10 children) and 58% females (14 children) in 2018/19 and 51% males (18 children) and 49% females (17 children) in 2017/18. Over the three-year period from 2017/18 to 2019/20 just over half of those adopted were male (51% males and 49% females)

Gender (Medway)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Female	17	14	6
Male	18	10	11

When we consider the Bexley and Kent data, we see that over the three-year period from 2017/19 to 2019/20 of those children adopted in Bexley 74% were male and 26% were female and for Kent the figures are 54% male and 46% female (as shown in the tables below):

Gender (Bexley)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Female	6	<5	<5
Male	9	<5	<5

Gender (Kent)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Female	49	47	24
Male	53	48	38

An extended adopter pool will have a potentially positive impact for children waiting to be adopted, regardless of their gender, by helping to enable timelier matching and placement.

Age at adoption:

Older children waiting for adoption may be positively impacted by an extended adopter pool. Nationally, children aged 5 and over are less likely to be placed for adoption. Data from the 18/19 annual adoption report shows that of the 3,570 children adopted that year only 18% were aged 5 and above. For Medway, the most recent data for 2019/20 shows that of those children placed for adoption 77% were aged under 5. This compares to 67% for the 2018/19 year and 71% in 2017/18.

Age at Adoption (Medway)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
0	<5	<5	<5
1	8	9	<5
2	6	<5	<5
3	<5	<5	<5
4	<5	<5	<5
5	<5	<5	<5
6	<5	<5	<5
7	<5	<5	<5
8	<5	<5	<5
9	<5	<5	<5
10	<5	<5	<5
12	<5	<5	<5
15	<5	<5	<5
16	<5	<5	<5

When we consider the corresponding figures for Bexley and Kent, for the 2019/20 reporting period of those children placed for adoption 100% placed by Bexley were aged 5 and under and 92% of Kent's were aged 5 and under. This compares to 75% and 92% in 2018/19 and 100% and 85% in 2017/18 were aged 5 and under, for Bexley and Kent respectively.

Age at Adoption (Bexley)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
0	9	<5	<5
1	<5	<5	<5
2	<5	<5	<5
3	<5	<5	<5
4	<5	<5	<5
5	<5	<5	<5
6	<5	<5	<5
7	<5	<5	<5

Age at Adoption (Kent)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
0	17	12	11
1	27	31	18
2	15	16	12
3	13	14	6
4	7	7	6
5	8	7	<5
6	6	<5	<5
7	<5	5	<5
8	<5	<5	<5
9	<5	<5	<5

This shows that in-line with the National picture most children placed for adoption across all three Local Authorities tend to be those aged 5 and under. The move to the RAA model will see a pooling of the adoptive families for matching with children placed for adoption. This may mean that younger children across all three Local Authorities are able to be placed in a timelier manner, due to the preference for adopting at the younger end of the age spectrum. It is unlikely that this will be to the detriment of older children, as the adoptive families seeking/willing to adopt an older child are likely to be markedly different to those looking to adopt a younger child (for example foster to adoption, conversion from SGO and adoption by step-parent etc.)

Furthermore, Adoption agencies are charged, under statutory guidance, to develop a plan to secure enough potential adopters to meet the needs of children waiting for adoption and those likely to need adopting in the future. This includes considering how prospective adopters might be encouraged and supported to meet any needs of children, including older children, who they might not have initially considered themselves able to adopt.

The Government's minimum expectation is that RAA's use a wider geographical base to increase the scope for matching and ultimately increasing placement opportunities. This will be particularly helpful in assessing adopters for older children who can be harder to place.

Ethnicity of adopted child:

Nationally, 17% of children adopted during 2018/19 were from a Black or ethnic minority background. For Medway, in the 2018/19 reporting period the percentage of children placed for adoption in-year who were classed as being of a Black or ethnic minority background was less than 20%. For the most recent reporting year 2019/20, the figure was less than 10% (note actual percentages suppressed due to low numbers).

When we take the last three reporting periods, the percentage of children placed for adoption by Medway who were classed as of a Black or ethnic minority background is 12%. The corresponding percentages for Bexley and Kent are 33% and 13% respectively. This is largely a reflection of the demographic composition of the wider population of children in each Local Authority area.

An extended adopter pool will provide more opportunities for children to be adopted, including those from Black and ethnic minority backgrounds. In addition, working with other authorities who place comparatively more children from Black and ethnic minority backgrounds into adoption may provide additional knowledge and experience that can be drawn upon.

Ethnicity (Medway)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
A1 - White British	31	20	16
A2 - White Irish	<5	<5	<5
A3 - Any other White background	<5	<5	<5
B1 - White and Black Caribbean	<5	<5	<5
B3 - White and Asian	<5	<5	<5
B4 - Any other mixed background	<5	<5	<5

Ethnicity (Bexley)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
A1 - White British	12	<5	<5
A3 - Any other White background	<5	<5	<5
B1 - White and Black Caribbean	<5	<5	<5
B2 - White and Black African	<5	<5	<5
B4 - Any other mixed background	<5	<5	<5
D2 - African	<5	<5	<5

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Ethnicity (Kent)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
A1 - White British	90	85	50
A2 - White Irish	<5	<5	<5
A3 - Any other White background	<5	<5	<5
A4 - Traveller of Irish Heritage	<5	<5	<5
A5 - Gypsy/Roma	<5	<5	<5
B1 - White and Black Caribbean	<5	<5	<5
B2 - White and Black African	<5	<5	<5
B3 - White and Asian	<5	<5	<5
B4 - Any other mixed background	<5	<5	<5
D2 - African	<5	<5	<5
E2 - Any other ethnic group	<5	<5	<5

Adopted children and disability:

Children who are placed for adoption can have a range of complex needs. This could include a physical disability, but often these are issues relating to trauma and mental health, including anxiety and attachment issues. Data on SEMH disorders and SEN is a gap in this analysis, this may in part be due to the age of some of the children and timing of assessment and diagnosis.

Within Medway, for the 2019/20 reporting year less than 10% of the children adopted had a known disability. Similarly, for the previous two reporting years there were less than 10% of children with a known disability adopted. In comparison, over the three-year period 2017/18 to 2019/20, in Kent less than 5% of all children adopted had a known disability. While for Bexley, none of the children adopted had a known disability.

For children with disabilities the chance of being matched for adoption may increase given a larger and more diverse adoption pool and greater scope to learn and develop specialist expertise in placing children with disabilities. However, it should be noted that those put forward for adoption tend to be those with minor disabilities.

Disability (Medway)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
No	33	22	16
Yes	<5	<5	<5

Disability (Bexley)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
No	15	8	<5
Yes	<5	<5	<5

Disability (Kent)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
No	102	93	62
Yes	<5	<5	<5

Adopter level data

Number of approved adopters:

There were 16 adopters approved in Medway for the 2019/20 reporting period. This shows a slight increase in the overall numbers of adopters compared to the previous two years. Conversely, Bexley and Kent have seen a slight reduction in the number of adopters approved in-year, a percentage change of 22% and 19% respectively on the previous year (as shown in the table below). However, through pooling adopters there will be increased access to potential adoptive family units overall.

Year	Medway	Bexley	Kent
2017/18	14	18	88
2018/19	11	18	81
2019/20	16	14	66

Sexuality:

Statutory guidance states that adoption agencies must not refuse to accept a registration of interest to adopt on the grounds of a prospective adopter's sexual orientation.

Potential adopters can be single or part of a couple, including same sex couples. For the 2018/19 period, of the 3,570 children who were adopted nationally, 430 were adopted by single adopters, of which 93% were single females and 7% were single males. Most children were adopted by couples, of which 15% were same sex couples.

For Medway, during the 2019/20 reporting period approximately 20% were recoded as being gay/lesbian. For the 2018/19 reporting period this was approximately 10% and for 2017/18 there were no gay/lesbian adopters registered. The corresponding 2019/20 figures for Bexley and Kent were approximately 15% and 21% recorded as gay/lesbian respectively (exact percentages suppressed due to low numbers).

Sexuality (Medway)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Gay/Lesbian	<5	<5	<5
Heterosexual	14	9	11
Unknown	<5	<5	<5

Sexuality (Bexley)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Gay/Lesbian	<5	9	<5
Heterosexual	16	9	12

Sexuality (Kent)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Gay/Lesbian	13	10	13
Heterosexual	75	71	52
Not recorded	<5	<5	<5

Relationship status

Adopters can be single, co-habiting, or in a more formal relationship status. Nationally, for the 2018/19 reporting period, 12% of children were adopted by single adopters and 88% by couples (of one form or another). Of the 3,570 children who were adopted in 2018/19 15% were adopted by same sex couples.

With regards to marital status, for the 2019/20 reporting period most adopters approved by Medway were classed as married (62.5% or 10 adopters). This represents a slight year-on-year reduction in the proportion of married couples compared to other forms of marital status (85.7% in 2017/18 and 63.6% in 2018/19), therefore indicating a slight widening of diversity amongst this protected characteristic. The remaining 37.5% of statues for 2019/20 is comprised of those in civil partnerships, co-habiting and single (exact figures suppressed due to low numbers). The corresponding percentage of approved adopters in married couples for Bexley and Kent during the 2019/20 reporting year were under 80% and 65% respectively.

The move to a RAA will have a potentially positive impact for all potential adopters regardless of relationship status, by increasing opportunities for a match to be made.

Relationship status (Medway)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Civil Partnership	<5	<5	<5
Co-habiting	<5	<5	<5
Common law marriage	<5	<5	<5
Divorced	<5	<5	<5
Married	12	7	10
Same sex partnership	<5	<5	<5
Single	<5	<5	<5

Relationship status (Bexley)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Civil Partnership	<5	<5	<5
Co-habiting	<5	<5	<5
Common law marriage	<5	<5	<5
Divorced	<5	<5	<5
Married	<16	18	11
Same sex partnership	<5	<5	<5
Single	<5	<5	<5

Relationship status (Kent)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Civil Partnership	<5	<5	<5
Co-habiting	13	8	17
Common law marriage	<5	<5	<5
Divorced	<5	<5	<5
Married	59	67	43
Same sex partnership	<5	<5	<5
Single	10	<5	6

Ethnicity

In relation to approved adopters, for the 2019/20 reporting period Medway had over 90% of first approved adopters recorded as white British and approximately 90% of second adopters. This compares to 100% and over 80% for the 2018/19 period and over 85% and under 80% for the 2017/18 period. This is broadly reflective of the composition of the wider population of Medway. The corresponding 2019/20 figures for ethnicity of approved adopters for Kent and Bexley shows that 89% of first listed approved adopters were white British and 74% of second listed approved adopters were white British for Kent; and 57% of first listed approved adopters and 30% of second listed approved adopters were recorded as white British for Bexley.

The RAA will still be required to abide by statutory guidance for adoption, which states that adoption agencies must not refuse to accept a registration of interest for adoption on the grounds of a prospective adopter's ethnicity or because they do not share the same ethnicity or culture as the children waiting for an adoptive family.

Whilst racial origin and cultural background are among the matters to be considered in determining the appropriate match for a child, only in very exceptional circumstances should matching a child with prospective adopters be delayed solely on the ground that the available prospective adopters do not match the child's racial origin or cultural or linguistic background. The agency must assess a prospective adopter's ability to parent, and meet the needs of, the child throughout childhood, whether they share all or any of those characteristics. Where the child is matched with prospective adopters who do not share those characteristics, the agency must provide them with flexible and creative support as necessary.

It is an aim of the development of RAA's that they will be able to develop greater specialisms and more innovative practice, which will help to support recruitment (including that from particular communities) and the pre and post adoption process.

Adopter 1 Ethnicity (Medway)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
A1 - White British	12	11	15
A3 - Any other White background	<5		
C4 - Any other Asian background			<5
D2 - African	<5		

Adopter 2 Ethnicity (Medway)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
A1 - White British	11	9	13
B4 - Any other mixed background	<5	<5	
C4 - Any other Asian background			<5
E2 - Any other ethnic group	<5		
Not recorded	<5	<5	<5

Adopter 1 Ethnicity (Bexley)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
A1 - White British	14	15	8
A3 - Any other White background	<5		<5
C1 - Indian	<5	<5	
D2 - African	<5	<5	<5

Adopter 2 Ethnicity (Bexley)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
A1 - White British	11	10	<5
A3 - Any other White background	<5	<5	<5
B1 - White and Black Caribbean	<5		<5
C1 - Indian		<5	
C4 - Any other Asian background			<5
D2 - African	<5	<5	<5
E1 - Chinese	<5		
E2 - Any other ethnic group		<5	

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Adopter 1 Ethnicity (Kent)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
A1 - White British	79	71	59
A3 - Any other White background	7	5	<5
B4 - Any other mixed background	<5	<5	<5
C1 - Indian	<5	<5	<5
C2 - Pakistani	<5	<5	<5
D1 - Caribbean	<5	<5	<5
D2 - African	<5	<5	<5
D3 - Any other Black background	<5	<5	<5
E2 - Any other ethnic group	<5	<5	<5

Adopter 2 Ethnicity (Kent)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
A1 - White British	70	67	49
A3 - Any other White background	5	7	6
B4 - Any other mixed background		<5	
C1 - Indian	<5		
C4 - Any other Asian background	<5		<5
D2 - African		<5	
D3 - Any other Black background			<5
E2 - Any other ethnic group			<5

Religion

With regards to data on religion or belief, most Medway approved adopters are either of a Christian faith or no faith. For the 2019/20 reporting period this equated to over 80% for first adopters and just under 80% of second adopters. For the 2018/19 reporting period the figures were just over 90% for first adopters and just under 90% for second adopters; and for the 2017/18 period this was 100% of first and second adopters.

The corresponding 2019/20 figures for Bexley and Kent were almost 90% of first and second listed adopters were either of Christian faith or no faith for Bexley; and almost 100% of first listed adopters and just under 90% of second listed adopters were either of Christian faith or no faith for Kent (exact percentages suppressed due to low numbers).

An extended adopter pool will provide greater opportunities to meet the needs of children with wide ranging religious beliefs.

Statutory guidance on adoption states that whist religious persuasion is among the matters to be considered in determining the appropriate match for a child, the agency must assess a prospective adopter's ability to parent and meet the needs of the child throughout childhood, whether or not they share the same religious persuasion.

Adopter 1 religion (Medway)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Christian	5	5	5
Hindu	<5		
Buddist		<5	
None	8	5	7
Other Religion or Belief			<5
Unclassified			<5

Adopter 2 religion Medway)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Christian	7	<5	<5
Hindu	<5		
None	5	5	7
Other Religion or Belief		<5	<5
Unclassified	<5	<5	<5

Adopter 1 Religion (Bexley)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Christian	14	9	12
Hindu		<5	
Jewish			<5
None	<5	8	
Other			<5

Adopter 2 Religion	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Christian	13	8	10
Hindu		<5	
Jewish		<5	
Muslim			<5
None	<5	8	
Other			<5

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Adopter 1 Religion (Kent)	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Christian	34	28	24
Church of England	<5	<5	<5
Hindu	<5	<5	<5
Jewish	<5	<5	<5
Muslim	<5	<5	<5
None	49	45	40
Other Religion or Belief	<5	<5	<5
Unclassified	<5	<5	<5

Adopter 2 Religion (Kent	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Christian	27	32	18
Church of England		<5	
Hindu		<5	
Jewish	<5		
Muslim	<5		
None	46	39	40
Other Religion or Belief	<5	<5	<5
Unclassified		<5	

3   What is the likely impact of the proposed change?

Is it likely to:

- Adversely impact on one or more of the protected characteristic groups
- Advance equality of opportunity for one or more of the protected characteristic groups?
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't?

(insert ✓ in one or more boxes)

Protected characteristic groups (Equality Act 2010)	Adverse impact	Advance equality	Foster good relations
Age		✔	✔
Disabilty		✔	✔
Gender reassignment		✔	✔
Marriage/civil partnership		✔	✔
Pregnancy/maternity		✔	

Race			✔	✔
Religion/belief			✔	✔
Sex			✔	✔
Sexual orientation			✔	✔
Other (eg low income groups)		✔		

4   Summary of the likely impacts
- Who will be affected?
- How will they be affected?

The creation of a Regional Adoption Agency will have potential implications for both those children seeking permanency though adoption and those who are seeking to adopt, which are anticipated to be either positive or neutral (note a separate DIA is being completed in relation to staff).

The Regional Adoption Agency arrangement is intended to:
- Increase the number of adopters
- Improve the matching of children with adopters
- Increase the number of children adopted
- Improve the timeliness of the adoption process.

Therefore, the new arrangement is expected to have a positive or neutral impact across the protected characteristics. Through bringing together the three adoption services of Medway, Bexley and Kent it will create a larger pool for being able to meet the needs of both children requiring adoption and those seeking to adopt, including in relation to matters of equalities.

Combing the skills, expertise and best practice from across the authorities will enable greater innovation and specialisation, which could help to better meet the needs of children waiting to be adopted; especially older children, those in sibling groups and those with complex developmental or trauma related needs. In addition, it may help with the recruitment of potential adopters from particular communities who may be under-represented in relation to the different protected characteristics and/or those children waiting to be adopted.

5   What actions can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impacts, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations?
- What alternative ways can the Council provide the service?
- Are there alternative providers?
- Can demand for services be managed differently?

The provision of adoption services through a RAA is a requirement of central government. With all local authorities expected to be part of an established RAA by October 2020. The proposed partnership arrangement, with London Borough of Bexley and Kent County Council, builds on existing working relationships to provide an improved service across the region for children requiring permanency and potential adopters.

There are no anticipated adverse impacts for equalities through the move to a RAA model. By combining the services provided by the three authorities it is envisioned that there will be increased prospects for improving equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between those with a protected characteristic and those without.

However, additional assurances will be guaranteed through policies, procedures and statutory guidance that govern practice and promote equalities.

6   Action plan
- Actions to mitigate adverse impact, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations and/or obtain new evidence

Action	Lead	Deadline or review date
Statutory guidance for adoption will remain in place, which provides clear intent to show due regard to issues of equality in carrying out practice.	Head of the RAA	Ongoing
The annual adoption report will continue to analyse the characteristics of both adopters and children who are adopted. This can be used to identify and address and adverse impacts on equalities relating to children and/or adopters.	Head of the RAA	Annually
Policies and procedures held by individual authorities will be updated to reflect the new working arrangements for the RAA, including how they relate to issues of equalities.	Head of the RAA	October 2020

7   Recommendation

The recommendation by the lead officer should be stated below. This may be:

- to proceed with the change, implementing the Action Plan if appropriate
- consider alternatives
- gather further evidence

If the recommendation is to proceed with the change and there are no actions that can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impact, it is important to state why.

The recommendation is to proceed with the creation of a RAA with the London Borough or Bexley and Kent County Council and to ensure the implementation of the above action plan to make sure the impact on diversity is regularly considered and reviewed within the delivery of the service.

8   Authorisation

The authorising officer is consenting that:

- the recommendation can be implemented
- sufficient evidence has been obtained and appropriate mitigation is planned
- the Action Plan will be incorporated into the relevant Service Plan and monitored

Assistant Director	
	L Farah .
Date	17th August 2020

Contact your Performance and Intelligence hub for advice on completing this assessment