

INFORMATION
ANALYSIS
DIRECTORATE



Children Adopted from Care in Northern Ireland 2021/22



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Reader Information

Document purpose	This bulletin details statistical information relating to children adopted from care in Northern Ireland during the year ending 31 March 2022.
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The statisticians within IAD are out posted from the [Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency](#) (NISRA) and the statistics are produced in accordance with the principles and protocols set out in the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#).

IAD comprises four statistical sections: Hospital Information, Community Information, Public Health Information & Research and Project Support Analysis. This publication is produced by Community Information Branch.

About Community Information Branch: The purpose of Community Information Branch (CIB) is to promote effective decision making in children and adult social services by providing quality information and analysis.

We collect, analyse, and publish a wide range of community information that is used to help monitor the delivery of personal social services policy. Information collected by CIB is used to assess HSC Trust performance, for corporate monitoring, policy evaluation, and to respond to parliamentary/assembly questions. All publications can be found on the [Department of Health's website](#).

Our Vision and Values

- Provide up-to-date, quality information on children and adult social services and community health;
- to disseminate findings widely with a view to stimulating debate, promoting effective decision-making and improvement in service provision; and
- be an expert voice on social care information.

Key findings

This publication details statistical information relating to children adopted from care in Northern Ireland during the year ending 31 March 2022, including a range of information about these children and their adopters, and durations between different stages in the adoption process. The publication is based on the Department of Health's statistical return AD1 2021/22¹, collected from each of the Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland.

- During the year ending 31 March 2022, 89 children were adopted from care in Northern Ireland;
- The average age of children at the time of adoption was at 4 years 6 months, and ranged from a year and a half to close to 11 years old;
- From the child's last entry into care, the average length of time for a child to be adopted in 2021/22 was 3 years 4 months. This was slightly higher than in recent years;
- For children adopted in 2021/22, the average duration from the HSC Trust proposal that adoption was in the best interest for the child (the Looked After Child Best Interest Proposal) to the Adoption Order was 2 years 6 months; and
- In 2021/22, children adopted by Concurrent Carers² were younger at the time of adoption (3 years 11 months compared with the national average of 4 years and 6 months) and they also had a shorter last duration in care (3 years 2 months compared with the regional average of 3 years 4 month).

¹ Please see Appendix for details of the return.

² The child is placed with carers who are approved as foster carers and adopters while the future of the child is still being decided.

Introduction

Adoption, unlike any other permanence option, involves the ending of a child's legal relationship with their birth parents and family and the creation of a lifelong relationship with new parents and family. The facilities to be provided as part of the adoption service, including arrangements for assessing children and prospective adopters, placing children for adoption, and the particular procedures to be followed before and after a child is placed for adoption are all specified in legislation – the Adoption (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 and the Adoption Agencies Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1989.

The Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, which received Royal Assent on 27 April 2022, will modernise existing adoption legislation. Work has now commenced to implement the provisions contained within the Act with a five-year phasing plan in place. Once implemented, the Act will largely replace the 1987 Order, effecting most of the proposals outlined in the Department's draft adoption strategy, *Adopting the Future 2006*. The Act will also amend the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, which is the primary law relating to the care and protection of children. As most children are adopted from the care system, the amendments are designed to improve planning and permanence for children in care.

***Family and Children's Policy Directorate
Department of Health
September 2022***

Children Adopted from Care in Northern Ireland 2021/22

1. Adoptions from care

During the year ending 31 March 2022, 89 children were adopted from care in Northern Ireland.

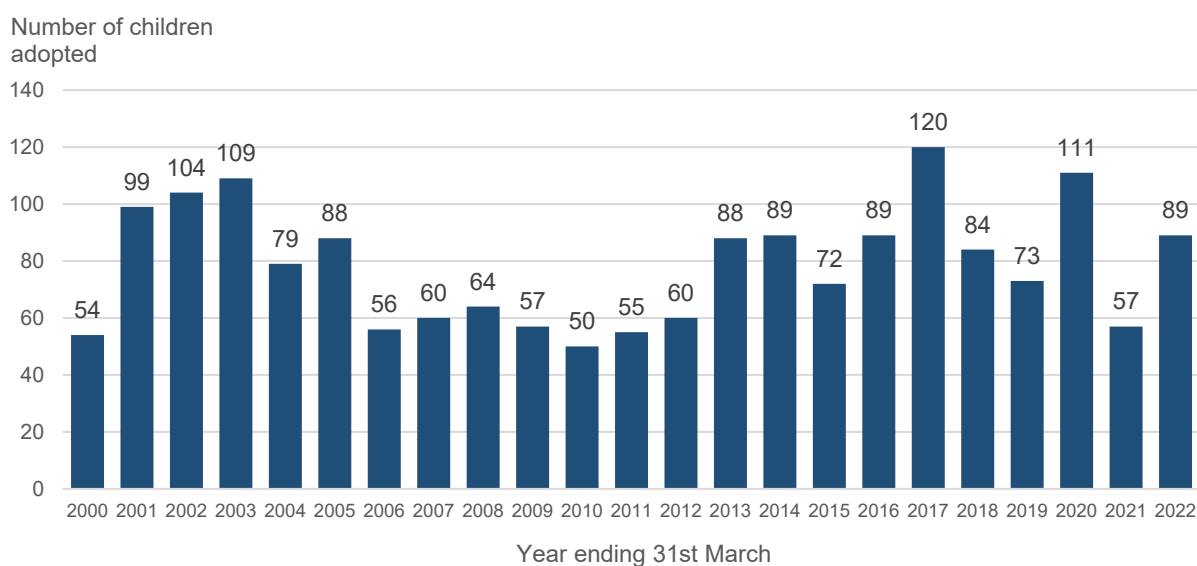
Figure 1 sets out the yearly number of adoptions from care. It shows that adoption numbers were notably high between 2001 and 2003 – this is thought to be due to an emphasis by all Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts on encouraging prospective adopters to register as foster carers, resulting in a placement for children at the earliest juncture with foster carers who would then go on to adopt the child³. Between 2005/06 and 2011/12, the numbers of adoptions were steady, however somewhat lower than in recent years (between fifty and just over sixty children a year). The increase from 2013 could be linked with renewed focus on adoption and the timeliness of the adoption process, for example with the establishment of Adoption Regional Information System to help identify suitable parents for children in a timely fashion. The drop in number of adoptions during 2020/21 could be linked to the impact of Covid 19 on services.

Figure 1 Number of children adopted from care in Northern Ireland (year ending 31 March)

Source for years 2000 and 2001: Adopting Best Care, Social Services Inspectorate, DHSSPS May 2002

Source from 2003: AD1 returns, DoH <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/children-adopted-care>

Note: Number of adoptions has been estimated for the years 2002, 2007, 2009 and 2011.



³ Adopting Best Care, Social Services Inspectorate, DHSSPS May 2002

The Belfast HSC Trust had the largest number of looked after children adopted from care in 2021/22 (25 children), followed by the Southern and South Eastern HSC Trusts where 22 and 21 children respectively were adopted. As the number of children adopted in each HSC Trust is quite small, care must be taken when making between-Trust or year on year comparisons⁴.

Table 1 Number of children adopted from care by HSC Trust year ending 31 March 2022

HSC Trust	Number	% of all children adopted from care
Belfast	25	28%
Northern	11	12%
South Eastern	21	24%
Southern	22	25%
Western	10	11%
Northern Ireland	89	100%

2. The adopters

Just under three quarters (73%) of adopters were different sex married couple adopters, 10% were same sex married couples and a further 11% were single adopters (male or female). The remaining adoptions (five adoptions) were by unmarried couples or couples in a civil partnership,

Of all the adopters, 10 had previously adopted a child or children⁵, and around one in five (19 adopters) had dependent birth children living in the household.

The age of the adopters ranged from late-twenties to early sixties, with the largest proportion of the adopters being in their forties at the time of the adoption (64%).

⁴ Please see Appendix for yearly trend figures.

⁵ Please note that this is based on the 89 adoptions during 2021/22, hence adopters who have adopted more than one child in 2021/22 will have been counted more than once.

3. Children adopted from care

Table 2 sets out the main characteristics of children adopted from care in Northern Ireland in 2021/22⁶. The average age of children adopted from care was 4 years and 6 months, and ranged from 1 year and 5 months to 10 years and 9 months.

Table 2 Children adopted from care year ending 31 March 2022 by gender, age and religion

Children adopted from care	Number	Percentage
All children adopted	89	
Females adopted	41	46%
Males adopted	48	54%
Age 1 and 2 years old at adoption	25	28%
Age 3 and 4 years old at adoption	30	34%
Age 5 to 6 years old at adoption	23	26%
Age 7 to 10 years old at adoption	11	12%
Roman Catholic background	43	48%
Protestant background	29	33%
Other, no or not known religious background	17	19%

During 2021/22, more children from catholic religious backgrounds were adopted from care than from protestant religious backgrounds (43 and 29 children respectively). Some 17 children (19%) came from other, no or not known religious background.

The majority of the children adopted from care were of white ethnic background (82%). This was lower than in previous years. Some sixteen children (8%) were Irish or Roma Traveller, black African or mixed or other ethnicity.

Twelve children (13%) had special needs or a disability. This included emotional or behavioural difficulties, sensory impairment, autism and learning disability.

In 2021/22, 51 of the children (57%) were adopted as a single child adoption whereas 38 children (43%) were adopted as part of a sibling group.

⁶ Please see Tables for yearly trend figures.

4. Duration of the adoption process

In 2021/22, the average length of time between the date of the child's last period of care started to the Adoption Order was granted was 3 years and 4 months. Some 9 of the children (10%) were adopted within two years of entering the final period of care and for just over half of the children (52 children, 58%), the last period of care lasted three years or longer.

For some children who enter care, adoption is the preferred means to secure permanency and stability and the agreed care plan would be identified at an early juncture. For other children, adoption may not be considered until the child has spent some time in care, for example after changes to the child's family situation which makes it unlikely that the child can return home to birth parents. This will in some cases explain variation in durations, where the shortest time from entering care to adoption was ten months and the longest time was 6 years 11 months.

Although every child's situation is unique, with regards to the children adopted during, 2021/22, the average length of the adoption process was longer than in recent years (see Table below). There are a number of factors, however, that may cause delays to the duration of the adoption process, and in 2021/22, some 13% of the adoptions noted a delay due to COVID-19. Other delays were influenced by delays within the court system (for example appeals being lodged or delays in judgements being made) or further options were being explored.

Table 3 Duration of final period of care (year ending 31 March)

Duration	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Average duration (yrs:months)	3:5	2:11	3:1	2:11	3:0	3:2	3:1	3:1	3:2	3:4
Minimum duration (yrs:months)	1:0	0:5	0:9	0:7	0:10	0:11	1:3	1:1	1:3	0:10
Maximum duration (yrs:months)	15:3	10:7	7:11	6:5	7:5	9:6	8:2	9:8	9:6	6:11

5. Average duration between different stages of the adoption process

Figure 2 and Table 4 sets out the duration between different stages of the adoption process. The Best Interest Proposal is the child's Looked After Child Review where it is agreed to pursue adoption as an option and refer the child's circumstances to the Adoption Panel for recommendation. The average duration from last admission into care to the Best Interest Proposal for children adopted in 2021/22 was 10 months. The average duration has stayed between 9 and 11 months the last ten years.

In general it took 7 months from the Best Interest Proposal to when the Trust accepted the Adoption Panel's recommendation that adoption was in the best interest of the child (Best Interest Decision); this period ranged from less than 1 month to 3 years 3 months for the children adopted. Furthermore, the average duration from Best Interest Proposal to the

date the Trust accepted the Panel's recommendation that the adopters were suitable for the particular child was 1 year 9 months.

For children adopted in 2021/22, the average duration from the Trust Looked After Child Best Interest Proposal to adoption was 2 years 6 months, same as the previous year. In 2021/22, this ranged from 13 months to 5 years 7 months.

Figure 2 Average durations between different stages of the adoption process (year ending 31 March 2022)

Note: The time between different stages of the adoption process may not add to the total time as a small number of cases have been excluded from some of the interim calculations due to missing values or dates.

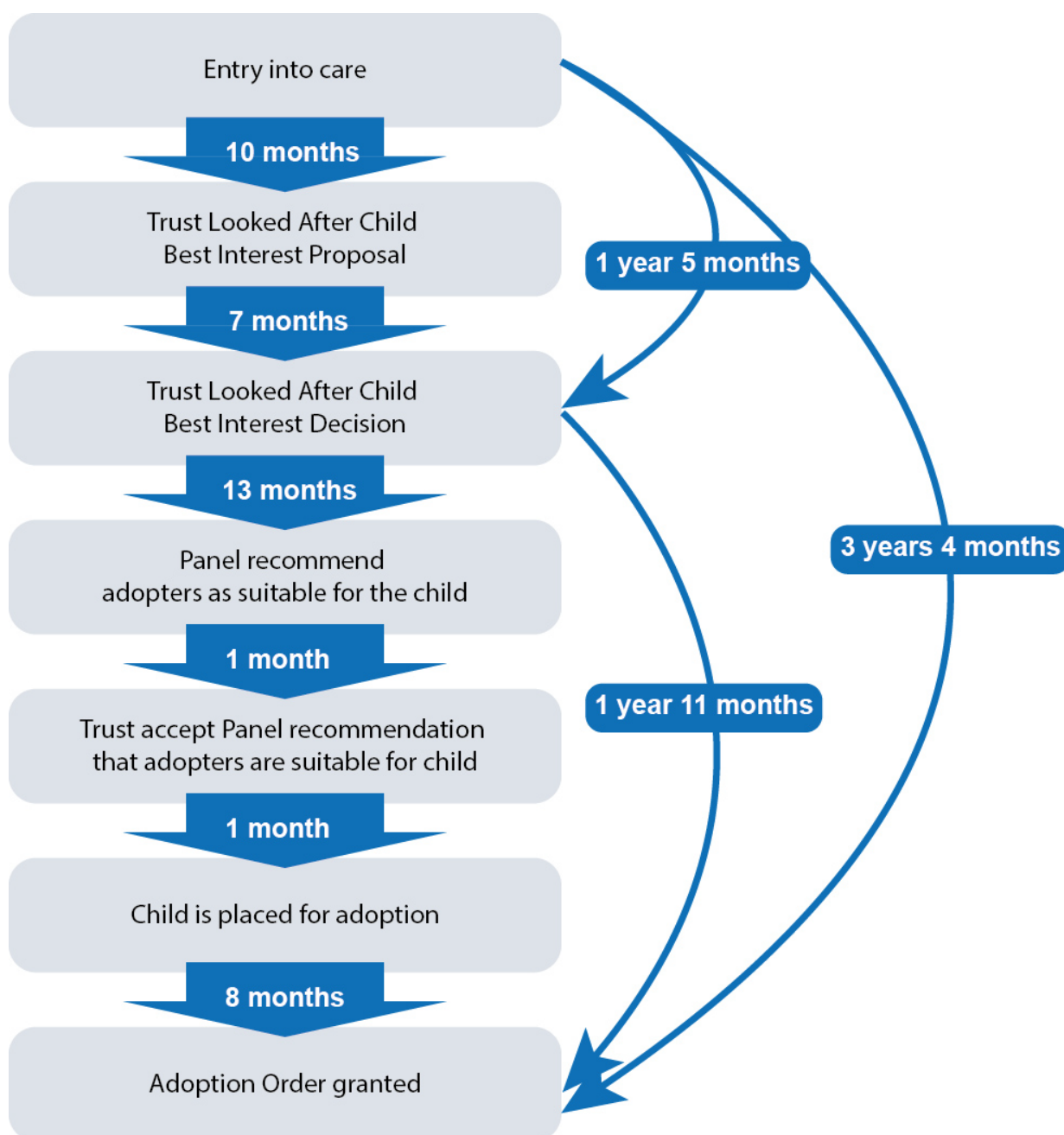


Table 4 Average durations between different stages of the adoption process (year ending 31 March)

Note: Durations are displayed as years:months

Note: Some children may be excluded from calculations due to missing values

Stages in the adoption process	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Last admission to care to Trust Looked After Child Review Best Interest Proposal	1:0	0:10	0:11	0:9	0:10
Trust Looked After Child Best Interest Proposal to Best Interest Decision	0:6	0:6	0:7	0:8	0:7
Trust Looked After Child Best Interest Proposal to Panel recommend adopters as suitable for child	1:5	1:6	1:5	1:7	1:8
Trust Looked After Child Best Interest Proposal to Trust Accept Adopters Suitable	1:6	1:7	1:6	1:9	1:9
Trust Looked After Child Best Interest Proposal to Placement	1:7	1:9	1:8	1:9	1:10
Trust Looked After Child Best Interest Proposal to Adoption Order	2:2	2:3	2:3	2:6	2:6

Table 5 sets out the average age of the child at different points in the adoption process. In 2021/22, the average age of children at the time of their last admission into care was 1 year, older than in 2020/21 but the similar to that in 2019/20. At every stage in the adoption process, the children adopted in 2021/22 were older than in the previous year, down to the age at the granting of the Adoption Order. This may in part be down to the larger proportion of concurrent carers adoptions in 2020/21 compared with the current year as children in these type of placements tend to be younger than other adoption placements⁷.

Table 5 Average ages of children at different stages of the adoption process (year ending 31 March)

Note: Some children may be excluded from calculations due to missing dates or values.

Average age (years:months)	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
- at last admission into care	1:1	1:2	1:1	0:8	1:0
- at Best Interest Proposal	2:1	1:11	1:11	1:4	1:10
- at Best Interest Decision	2:6	2:5	2:6	2:1	2:6
- when Panel recommended adopters as suitable for child	3:5	3:5	3:4	2:11	3:7
- when Trust accept recommendation that adopters are suitable for child	3:6	3:7	3:5	3:1	3:8
- when placed for adoption	3:7	3:8	3:7	3:1	3:9
- at Adoption Order	4:2	4:3	4:2	3:10	4:6

⁷ See [Chapter 7](#) for further information about the different type of adopters.

6. Adoption process by age group

Of the children adopted in 2021/22, 58% (52 children) had entered their final period of care when they were under one year of age. Some 26 children (29%) entered the final period of care when they were aged one or two and 11 children (12%) were aged between three and five years.

Table 6 sets out the adoption process broken down by the age of the child at the time of entering the last period of care. There was a variance of up to eight months for the different age groups of the time between last entry to care and the Adoption Order in 2021/22. It is however worth noting that the numbers involved are small and care must be taken when making in-year or year on year comparisons.

Table 6 Average duration between different stages of the adoption process by age at the start of the last period in care (year ending 31 March 2022)

The time between different stages of the adoption process may not add to the total time as some cases may be excluded from the in-between calculations.

0:0 means less than one month.

Note: Some children may be excluded from calculations due to missing values.

Average durations	Age under 1 year	Aged 1 year	Aged 2 years	Aged 3 years or over	All children
Average duration between entry into care and Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal	0:10	1:3	0:7	0:7	0:10
Average duration between date of Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal and matching of child and adopters	1:6	1:10	2:6	1:11	1:10
Average duration between date of matching and date placed for adoption	0:2	0:0	0:1	0:0	0:2
Average duration between date placed for adoption and granting of the Adoption Order	0:7	0:9	0:6	1:3	0:8
Average duration between last entry into care and adoption	3:2	3:10	3:3	3:6	3:4

Adoption may not have been identified as a permanency plan for the child at the time of entering care, therefore, the below table sets out the average duration from the Trust Looked After Child Best Interest Proposal to adoption by the age of the child at the time of the Best Interest Proposal. This shows that, in 2021/22, the average duration got progressively longer the older the child was at the time of the Best Interest Proposal.

Table 7 Average duration between Trust LAC best interest proposal and adoption by age, year ending 31 March 2022

Note: Some children may be excluded from calculations due to missing values

Age at Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal	Number of Children	Average duration between date of Trust Looked After Child Best Interest Proposal and Adoption Order (Year : Months)
Under 1	28	2:2
1	25	2:6
2	19	2:9
3 and over	17	2:11
All children	89	2:6

7. Type of adopters

Recent years have seen a change in the way adoptions are processed prior to the Adoption Order is granted. In general, there are four pathways that can be followed, from the traditional route where a child is placed with approved adopters for the purpose of adoption, to being placed with concurrent carers while the future of the child is being decided⁸. In the latter case, social services will work with birth parents to assess if the child can return to their care, and if the child cannot return safely to their birth family's care (and pending the approval of the courts) then the child goes on to be adopted by the concurrent carers.

Like concurrent carers, dual approved carers are also approved as both foster carers and adopters. Dual approved carers take the placement of a child after the Trust has agreed that the care plan for the child is adoption but prior to the court's decision whether to free the child for adoption. So in this instance the child is also initially placed on a fostering basis. Both the options above reduces the time it will take to reach the Adoption Order and as such, permanency and stability for the child will potentially be achieved at an earlier stage. Finally, children who are adopted from care can be placed on a fostering basis with foster carers or kinship foster carers. When the child's care plan changes to adoption, the foster carers, at that point, seek to become approved adopters to enable them to provide permanence for that specific child.

⁸ The distinction between these four types of carers/adoption pathways was included in these returns for the first time in 2016/17.

Table 8 Type of adopters / pathways to adoption (year ending 31 March)

Type of adopters / Description	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Adopters Only: The child is placed with approved adopters for the purpose of adoption after Freeing Order has been granted by the courts.	6 (7%)	7 (10%)	15 (14%)	4 (7%)	2 (2%)
Concurrent Carers: The child is placed with carers who are approved as foster carers and adopters while the future of the child is still being decided. Social services will work simultaneously with the birth parents and the prospective adopters. The primary plan is for the child to return home, but if this is not possible, the carers adopt the child.	26 (31%)	26 (36%)	50 (45%)	32 (56%)	34 (38%)
Dual Approved Carers: The carers are both approved as foster carers and adopters. The child is placed with the dual approved carers after Best Interest Decision is made by the Trust, and the carers act as the child's foster carers up until the point when the child's legal status is changed to 'placed for adoption'.	29 (35%)	27 (37%)	29 (26%)	15 (26%)	35 (39%)
Former Foster Carers: The child is initially placed in foster care and foster carers, who subsequently become approved as adopters for the child, go on to adopt the child.	23 (27%)	13 (18%)	17 (15%)	6 (11%)	18 (20%)
All adoptions	84 (100%)	73 (100%)	111 (100%)	57 (100%)	89 (100%)

The choice of the kind of carers the child is placed with will depend on the child's unique circumstances. For a child to be placed with concurrent carers, it must be identified that there is likelihood, based on past history that the child may not be able to safely return home to the care of birth family. However the birth parents are afforded an opportunity to engage with service to demonstrate their parenting capacity and have their child returned. Another child may be placed in foster care, however the pathway of adoption may not be relevant for the child until sometime down the line. Because of these differences, it is expected that the time from a child's last entry into care to the Adoption Order will differ between the four adoption routes. Table 9 indeed sets out that Concurrent Care adoptions has in general had some of the lowest durations from entering care to adoption whereas children adopted by former foster carers have consistently had the longest duration in care prior to adoption.

Table 9 Average durations (years:months) from last entering care to Adoption Order by type of adopters (year ending 31 March)

Note: Some durations may be based on small number of adoptions.

[S] Figure excluded due to very small number of adoptions.

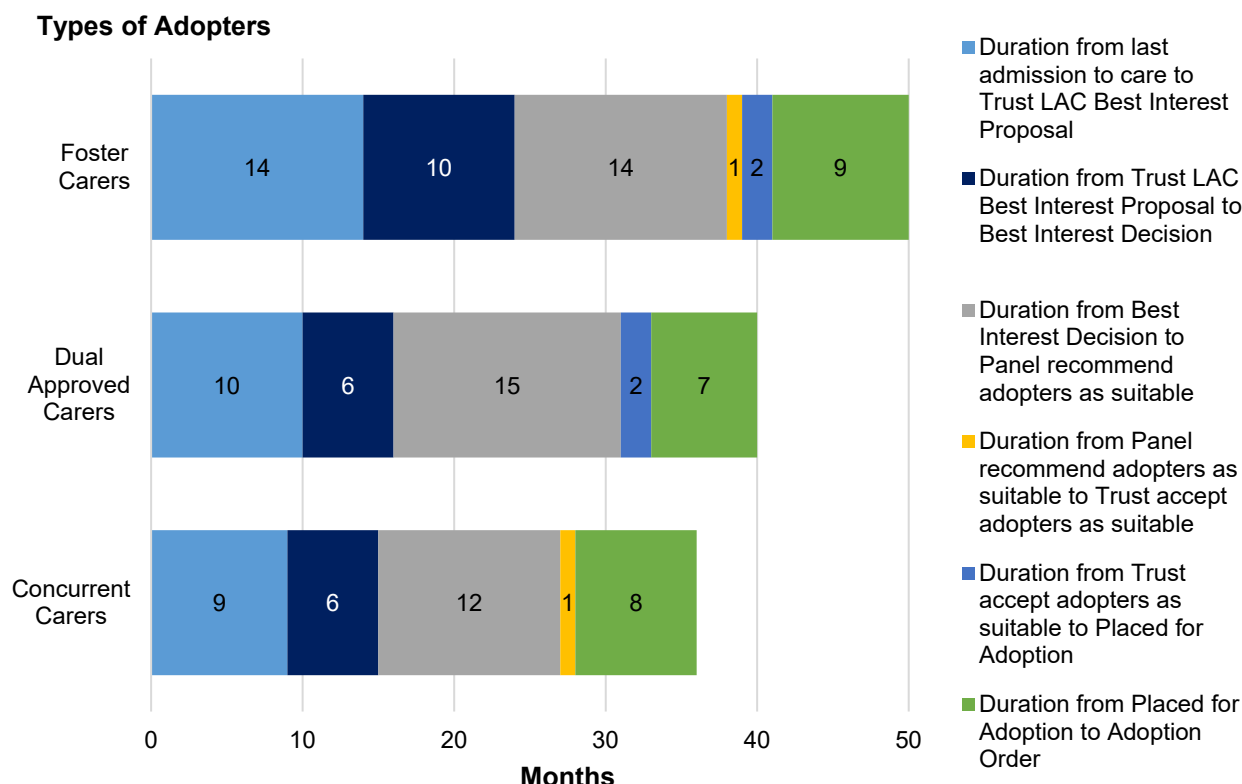
Type of adopters	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Adopters Only	2:10	2:3	3:1	3:7	[S]
Concurrent Carers	2:3	2:4	2:7	2:9	3:2
Dual Approved Carers	2:11	3:5	3:2	3:4	3:4
Former Foster Carers	4:7	4:4	4:8	4:5	4:1
All adoptions	3:2	3:1	3:1	3:2	3:4

Figure 3 sets out the duration of stages of the adoption process for 2021/22 for the different type of adopters⁹. Care must however be taken when interpreting and comparing these figures, due to the small number of children.

Figure 3 Average durations of different stages of the adoption process by type of adopters, year ending 31 March 2022 (months)

Note: Some children may be excluded from calculations due to missing values or dates.

Note: "Adopters Only" has not been included in this overview due to very small number of adoptions.



⁹ 'Adoption only' has been excluded from the overview due to small numbers.

Table 10 Average ages of children at different stages of the adoption process by type of adopters (year ending 31 March 2022)

Note: Some children may be excluded from calculations due to missing values or dates.

[S] "Adopters Only" has been excluded from this overview due to very small number of adoptions.

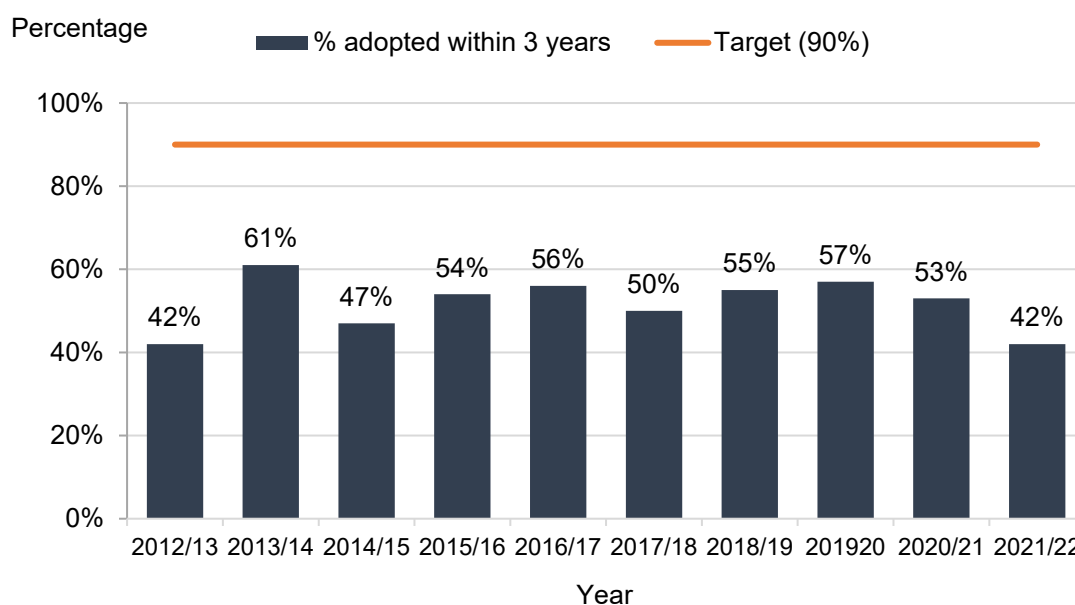
Average age (years:months)	Adopters Only	Concurrent Carers	Dual Approved Carers	Foster Carers	All adoptions
- at last admission into care	[S]	0:9	1:4	1:3	1:0
- at Best Interest Proposal	[S]	1:6	2:0	2:6	1:10
- at Best Interest Decision	[S]	2:1	2:6	3:5	2:6
- when Panel recommended adopters as suitable for child	[S]	3:0	3:10	4:7	3:7
- when Trust accept recommendation that adopters are suitable for child	[S]	3:3	3:10	4:9	3:8
- when placed for adoption	[S]	3:3	4:0	4:8	3:9
- at Adoption Order	[S]	3:11	4:8	5:5	4:6

It is expected that children in the four adoption routes may relate to somewhat different cohorts when looking at the age of the child at different stages of the adoption process. As can be seen in Table 10, children adopted by concurrent carers were on average younger at the time of last entering care and at the granting of the Adoption Order.

8. Timing of the adoption process

Adoption is not the best option for every child in care; however for those children where adoption would be in their best interest, it is important that this is identified early to ensure that the child can be placed in a stable family setting. Ensuring the timeliness of the adoption process is a priority for the Department of Health, and the Department has an ongoing target that 90% of all adoptions from care should be completed within three years of the child's last admission to care.

Figure 4 Percentage of children who were adopted within three years of last entering care (year ending 31 March)



The target has not been met in recent years, and was in 2021/22 the lowest since 2012/13. It is worth noting that in 2021/22, some 13% of the adoptions noted a delay due to COVID-19. Furthermore, the timing of the adoption relates to many factors and is unique for each individual child. Two factors that may influence the adoption journey are the child's age when entering care and if the child has a disability. The type of adopters that the child can suitably be placed with is a reflection of the child's care history and its personal circumstances and can also be an indication of the timing of the adoption process.

As can be seen in Table 11, a higher proportion of younger children; those without disabilities; and those who were placed with concurrent carers were adopted within three years of last entering care.

Table 11 Percentage of children who are adopted within three years of last entering care by category of adoption, disability and age when entered care (year ending 31 March 2022)

Note: Some of these calculations are based on very small number of adoptions.

Category of adoption / cohort of children	Percentage adopted within three years of last entering care
Concurrent Carers	59%
Dual Approved Carers	34%
Foster Carers	17%
Child with no disability	45%
Child with a disability	17%
Aged under 1 when last entered care	54%
Aged 1 when last entered care	24%
Aged 2 when last entered care	33%
Aged 3 and over when last entered care	18%

The overall adoption process involves court activity which may contribute to delays in the adoption process. The time up to the Best Interest Decision however, reflects the part of the process that is mainly down to the HSC Trusts. As set out in Table 12, the time from the start of the final period in care to the Trust's decision that adoption is in the best interest for the child was one year five months in 2020/22. The average time has stayed between one year three months and one year six months in recent years.

Table 12 Average length of time for Best Interest Decision to be reached in the adoption process (Years: Months)

Note: Some children may be excluded from calculations due to missing values or dates.

Year ending 31 March	Average length of time between entering care and Best Interest Decision
2015	1:5
2016	1:4
2017	1:3
2018	1:6
2019	1:3
2020	1:5
2021	1:4
2022	1:5

9. UK adoption statistics comparison 2020/21

There is no common legislative framework operating across the United Kingdom relating to adoption, hence any statistics showing data for the four jurisdictions will not necessarily provide like-for-like comparisons. Bearing this in mind, Table 13, below, sets out some of the statistics published in Northern Ireland, England and Wales. Please note that as adoption figures England and Wales for 2021/22 have not yet been published, only figures relating to 2020/21 are compared.

Table 13 Adoption statistics for Northern Ireland, England and Wales (year ending 31 March 2021)

Source: [Children adopted from care in Northern Ireland 2020/21](#)

Source: [Children looked after in England including adoption: 2020 to 2021](#)

Source: [Stats Wales - Adoptions](#)

[S] Figure has been suppressed.

Note: there is no common legislative framework operating across the United Kingdom relating to adoption, hence any statistics will not necessarily provide like-for-like comparisons.

Key statistics	Northern Ireland	England	Wales
Number of children adopted from care	57	2,870	265
Rate of children adopted per 1,000 children in care (31 March)	16	35	36
Aged at adoption under 1 year old	0%	4%	[S]
Aged at adoption 1-4 years old	79%	78%	85%
Aged at adoption 5-9 years old	21%	17%	13%
Aged at adoption 10+ years old	0%	1%	[S]
Average age at adoption (years:months)	3:10	3:3	3:1
Average duration of last period of care prior to Adoption Order (years:months)	3:2	2:2	2:3

In general, children adopted from care in Northern Ireland were on average older and had spent longer time in care than that of children adopted from care in England and Wales.

The average duration from last entry into care to the granting of the adoption order in 2020/21 was two years and two months in England and two years three months in Wales. In Northern Ireland the average duration was three years two month in 2020/21.

Appendix A – Technical Notes

Data Collection

The figures for “Children adopted from care in Northern Ireland 2021/22” are derived from the ‘AD1’ data collection of children adopted from care in Northern Ireland. The AD1 data collection return was provided by each of the five Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts in Northern Ireland to Community Information Branch (CIB) within the Department of Health (DoH).

The AD1 data collection was introduced in 2004, and its primary aim is to monitor the numbers of children adopted from care and the timescales between different stages in the adoption process. It is an individual level return, with one record for each young person fitting the parameters for the collection. Returns are completed online by nominated HSC Trust staff using a secure web-based application. Records are pseudoanonymised to protect the confidentiality of the young people whose details are included in the return.

Guidance notes and other documents associated with the completion of the AD1 returns are available to view or download from the DoH [website](#).

Methodology

The adoption process is set out in stages, where one event, recommendation or decision would naturally follow the next. However, with the focus on improving the timing of the somewhat lengthy adoption process, the natural order of the events may not be followed. This may cause, when calculating duration between different stages of the adoption process, a 'negative' duration to be calculated. This mainly relates to the Trust Looked After Child Best Interest Proposal occurring prior to last entry into care.

Instead of excluding these negative values from analysis (eg treat as 'missing'), the negative values are recoded to '0' as the negative value may be a reflection of efficiency and improved service. This means that, for the example above, where the Best Interest Proposal was agreed prior to the last entry to care, the calculations show that no time passed between the child entered its last period of care and the Best Interest Proposal was in place (time = 0 months).

Format of historic figures

Any historic figure including '12 months' has been revised to the format of '1 year'. For example '0:12' is now displayed as '1:0' and '2:12' is displayed as '3:0'.

Missing dates and Rounding

Some children may not have all the key dates referred to in this publication. For example, children adopted from care with parental consent (Article 16) may not have a Trust Looked After Child Best Interest Proposal date. Children with missing dates will be excluded from analysis involving those specific dates but included in all other calculation. The total number of children included in each stage of the adoption process may therefore vary. Furthermore, due to missing dates, summing average durations between key dates may

give a different result when the same duration is calculated directly without using intervening dates. These differences may be further compounded through rounding.

Change to calculating timing between two dates

Community Information Branch is currently applying a new methodology for calculating the time between two dates which removes some estimation and rounding, and as such produces a more accurate result. This has been applied to the 2021/22 dataset with only minor adjustments compared with the previously used methodology. It is expected that the new methodology will be applied to historic figures for the next publication.

Data Quality

All information submitted by HSC Trusts was validated at the point of entry, where Trust staff correct or amend data as required, and provide appropriate explanations if information is missing. AD1 returns are checked and quality assured by HSC Trust managers before being submitted to CIB within the DoH. CIB perform further checks, using historical data to monitor annual variations and emerging trends.

A detailed quality report for the AD1 statistical return is available on the [DoH website](#).

A National Statistics Publication

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is the Department of Health's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

These statistics were designated as National Statistics in November 2013 following a [full assessment](#) against the [Code of Practice](#).

If you have any comments on this publication, please contact Community Information Branch cib@health-ni.gov.uk.

Related Publications

Statistics on all children adopted in Northern Ireland (from care and not from care) can be sourced from the Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency annual reports.

<http://www.nigala.hscni.net/publications.htm>

Details of statistics on children adopted from care published by other countries within the UK (United Kingdom) can be found as detailed below.

England: [Children looked after in England including adoption: 2020/9 to 2021](#)

Wales: [Stats Wales - Adoptions](#)

User Feedback

Any comments you have regarding this or any other publication produced by CIB are welcome. Your views help us to improve the service we provide to users of this information and to the wider public.

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Appendix B - Additional Tables

Table 14 Number of Children adopted from Care in Northern Ireland (year ending 31 March)

Source for years 2000 and 2001: Adopting Best Care, Social Services Inspectorate, DHSSPS May 2002

Source from 2003: AD1 Returns, DoH <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/children-adopted-care>

Note: Number of adoptions has been estimated for the years 2002, 2007, 2009 and 2011.

Year	Number of children adopted from care
2000	54
2001	99
2002	104
2003	109
2004	79
2005	88
2006	56
2007	60
2008	64
2009	57
2010	50
2011	55
2012	60
2013	88
2014	89
2015	72
2016	89
2017	120
2018	84
2019	73
2020	111
2021	57
2022	89

Table 15 Number of Children adopted from Care by HSC Trust (year ending 31 March)

HSC Trust	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Belfast	19	13	23	12	22	25	9	25
Northern	12	31	40	15	16	32	16	11
South Eastern	13	10	17	22	9	12	11	21
Southern	20	19	15	16	8	26	4	22
Western	8	16	25	19	18	16	17	10
Northern Ireland	72	89	120	84	73	111	57	89

This statistical bulletin and other statistical bulletins published by Community Information Branch (CIB) are available to download from the [Department of Health website](#)

For further information on children adopted from care in Northern Ireland, please contact:

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