

INFORMATION
ANALYSIS
DIRECTORATE



Children Adopted from Care in Northern Ireland 2020/21



Department of
Health
An Roinn Sláinte
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NISRA
Northern Ireland
Statistics and Research Agency
Gníomhaireacht Thuaisceart Éireann
um Staitistící agus Talghde

Published 30 September 2021

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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 2021.
Reporting period	1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021
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Publication Date	30 th September 2021
Issued by	Community Information Branch Information & Analysis Directorate, Department of Health Stormont Estate, Belfast, BT4 3SQ, Northern Ireland Tel (028) 90522580 Email cib@health-ni.gov.uk www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/children-adopted-care
Target Audience	Directors of Children’s Services, Chief Executives of Boards and HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland, health care professionals, academics and social care stakeholders.
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Price	Free

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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.

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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 2021, 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 2020/21¹, collected from each of the Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland.

- During the year ending 31 March 2021, 57 children were adopted from care in Northern Ireland, almost half the number of the year before (111);
- The average age of children at the time of adoption was at 3 years 10 months, somewhat younger than in previous years;
- From the child's last entry into care, the average length of time for a child to be adopted in 2020/21 was 3 years 2 months. This was similar to the last three years;
- For children adopted in 2020/21, 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, slightly longer than in recent years; and
- In 2020/21, children adopted by Concurrent Carers² were younger at the time of adoption (3 years 3 months compared with the national average of 3 years and 10 months) and they also had a shorter last duration in care (2 years 9 months compared with the regional average of 3 years 2 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.

Work is currently underway to modernise adoption legislation through the introduction of a new Adoption and Children Bill. It is intended that the Bill will largely replace the 1987 Order, effecting most of the proposals outlined in the Department's draft adoption strategy, *Adopting the Future 2006*. The Bill 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 2021***

Children Adopted from Care in Northern Ireland 2020/21

1. Adoptions from care

During the year ending 31 March 2021, 57 children were adopted from care in Northern Ireland. This was almost half the number of adoptions from the previous year (111 adoptions in 2019/20).

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.

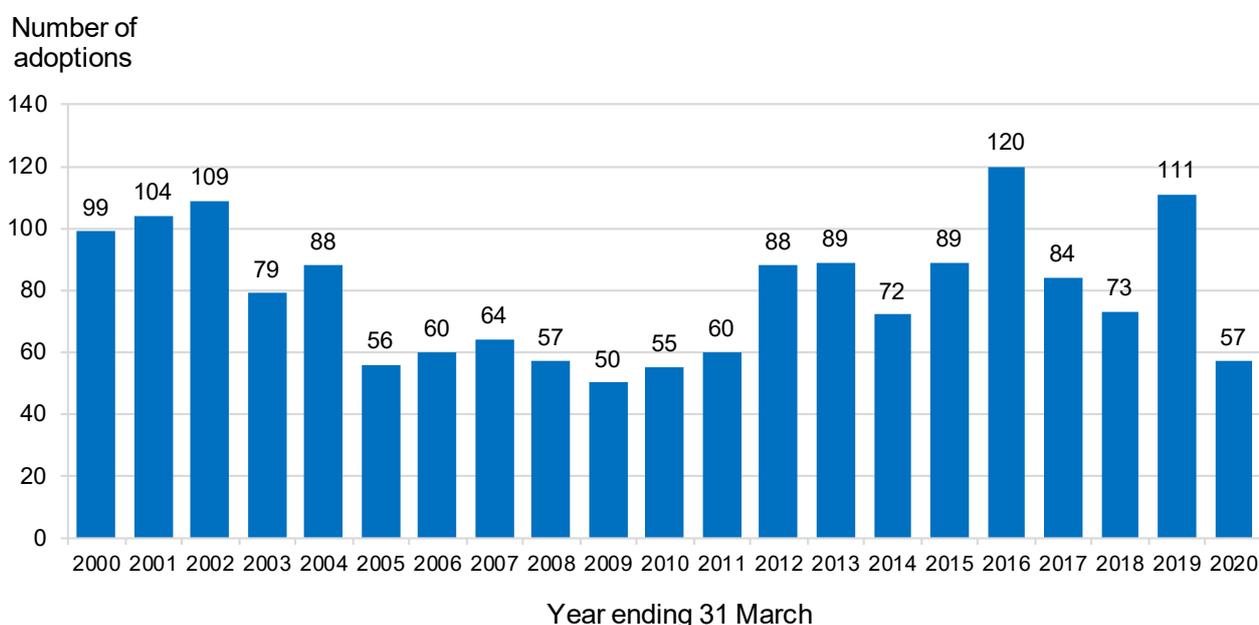


Figure 1 sets out the yearly number of adoptions from care. It shows that adoption numbers were notably high between 2001 and 2003 – this is thought to be due to an emphasis by all Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts on encouraging prospective adopters to register as foster carers, resulting in a placement 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

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

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.

The Western HSC Trust had the largest number of looked after children adopted from care in 2020/21 (17 children), followed by the Northern HSC Trusts 16 children adopted. Some four children were adopted from the Southern HSC Trust. 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 2021

HSC Trust	Number	% of all children adopted from care
Belfast	9	16%
Northern	16	28%
South Eastern	11	19%
Southern	4	7%
Western	17	30%
Northern Ireland	57	100%

2. The adopters

Some 84% of adopters were different sex married couple adopters and 11% were single females adopters. The remaining adoptions (less than five) were of same sex or different sex unmarried couples.

Of all the adopters, six had previously adopted a child or children⁵, and around a quarter (26%) had dependent birth children in the household.

The age of the adopters ranged from mid-twenties to early sixties, with the largest proportion of the adopters being in their forties at the time of the adoption (51%).

⁴ Please see Appendix for yearly trend figures.

⁵ Please note that this is based on the 57 adoptions during 2020/21, hence adopters who have adopted more than one child in 2020/21 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 2020/21⁶. The average age of children adopted from care was 3 years and 10 months, and ranged from 1 year and 3 months to 9 years and 6 months. The majority of the children were between one and four years at the time of adoption.

Table 2 Children adopted from care year ending 31 March 2021

Children adopted from care	Number	Percentage
All children adopted	57	
Females adopted	23	40%
Males adopted	34	60%
Age 1 and 2 years old at adoption	21	37%
Age 3 and 4 years old at adoption	24	42%
Age 5 to 9 years old at adoption	12	21%
Roman Catholic background	23	40%
Protestant background	25	44%
Other, no or not known religious background	9	16%

Similar number of children came from protestant or catholic community backgrounds (25 and 23 children respectively). The majority of the children adopted from care were of white ethnic background (95%).

Nine children (16%) had special needs or a disability. This included emotional or behavioural difficulties, sensory impairment and learning disability.

In 2020/21, 47 of the children (82%) were adopted as a single child adoption whereas 18% were adopted as part of a sibling group (10 children).

⁶ Please see Tables for yearly trend figures.

4. Duration of the adoption process

In 2020/21, 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 2 months. The average length has stayed just over three years since 2017/18. Some 9 of the children (16%) were adopted within two years of entering the final period of care and for just under half of the children (27 children, 44%), 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 1 year and 3 month and the longest time was 9 years 6 months.

There are a number of factors, however, that may cause delays to the duration of the adoption process. Although every child's situation is unique, with regards to the children adopted during 2020/21, it has been highlighted that some delays were related to Covid 19 issues. Others 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)

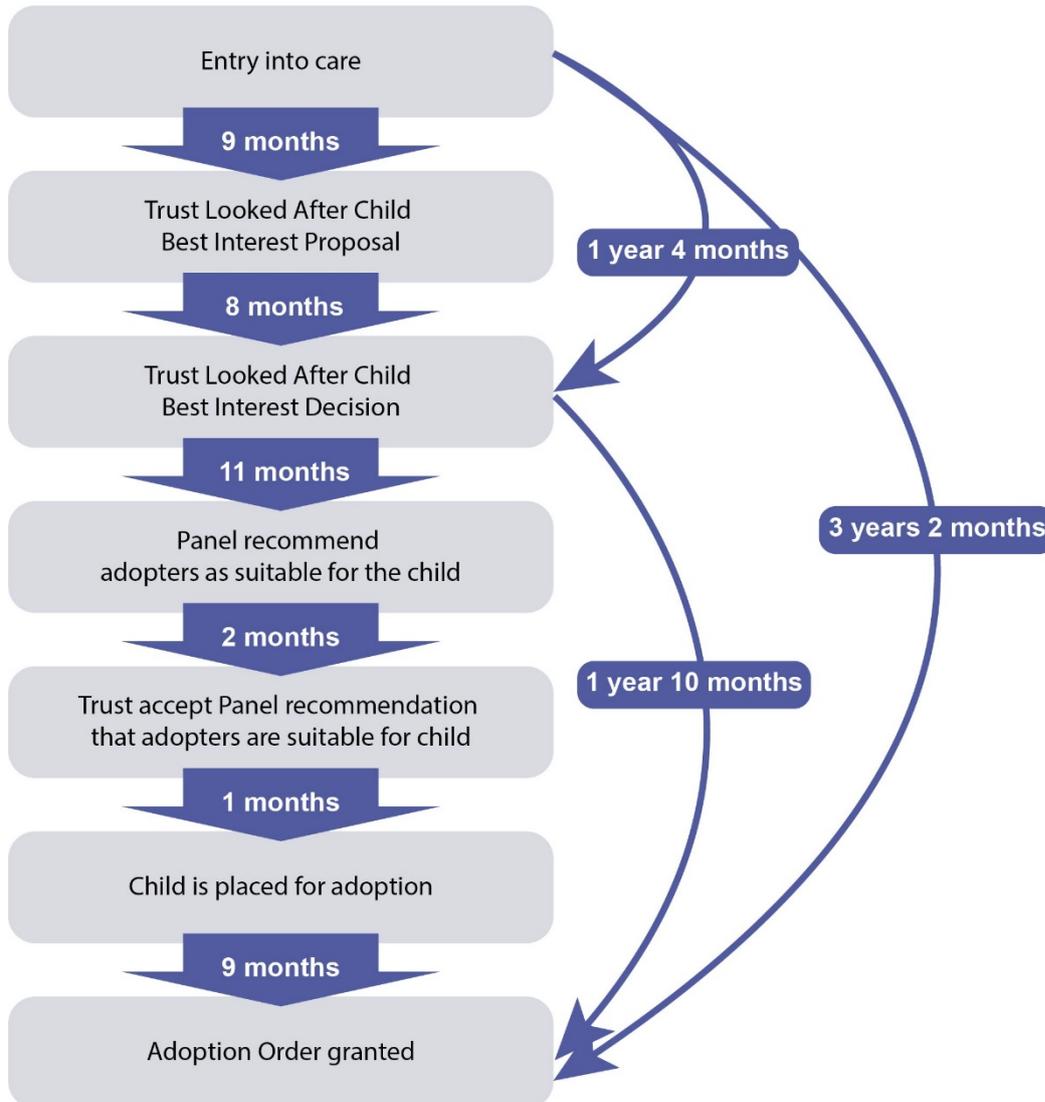
Duration	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Average duration (yrs:months)	3:5	2:11	3:1	2:11	3:0	3:2	3:1	3:1	3:2
Minimum duration (yrs:months)	1:0	0:5	0:9	0:7	0:10	0:11	1:3	1:1	1:3
Maximum duration (yrs:months)	15:3	10:7	7:11	6:5	7:5	9:6	8:2	9:8	9:6

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 average duration from last admission into care to Trust Looked After Child Best Interest Proposal for children adopted in 2020/21 was 9 months, two months shorter than in 2019/20. 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. In general it took 8 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 2 years 6 months for the children adopted. Furthermore, the average duration from Best Interest Proposal to the date the Trust accepted the Panel's recommendation that adopters were suitable for the particular child was 1 year 7 months.

Figure 2 Average durations between different stages of the adoption process (year ending 31 March 2021)

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.



For children adopted in 2020/21, the average duration from the Trust Looked After Child Best Interest Proposal to adoption was 2 years 6 months, three months longer than the previous year. In 2020/21, this ranged from 12 months to eight years 1 month.

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	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Last admission to care to Trust Looked After Child Review Best Interest Proposal	0:9	1:0	0:10	0:11	0:9
Trust Looked After Child Best Interest Proposal to Best Interest Decision	0:6	0:6	0:6	0:7	0:8
Trust Looked After Child Best Interest Proposal to Panel recommend adopters as suitable for child	1:7	1:5	1:6	1:5	1:7
Trust Looked After Child Best Interest Proposal to Trust Accept Adopters Suitable	1:8	1:6	1:7	1:6	1:9
Trust Looked After Child Best Interest Proposal to Placement	1:9	1:7	1:9	1:8	1:9
Trust Looked After Child Best Interest Proposal to Adoption Order	2:4	2:2	2:3	2:3	2:6

Table 5 sets out the average age of the child at different points in the adoption process. In 2020/21, the average age of children at the time of their last admission into care was 8 months, 5 months younger than in 2019/20. At every stage in the adoption process, the children adopted in 2020/21 were younger than in previous years, 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 where 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)	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
- at last admission into care	1:6	1:1	1:2	1:1	0:8
- at Best Interest Proposal	2:2	2:1	1:11	1:11	1:4
- at Best Interest Decision	2:8	2:6	2:5	2:6	2:1
- when Panel recommended adopters as suitable for child	3:8	3:5	3:5	3:4	2:11
- when Trust accept recommendation that adopters are suitable for child	3:9	3:6	3:7	3:5	3:1
- when placed for adoption	3:10	3:7	3:8	3:7	3:1
- at Adoption Order	4:5	4:2	4:3	4:2	3:10

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

6. Adoption process by age group

Of the children adopted in 2020/21, 74% (42 children) had entered their final period of care when they were under one year of age. Some 7 children (12%) entered the final period of care when they were aged 1 and 8 children (14%) when aged two.

Table 6 sets out the adoption process broken down by the age of the child at the time of entering the last period of care⁸. There was a variance of up to five months for the different age groups of the time between last entry to care and the Adoption Order in 2020/21 substantially less difference than in the previous year where the variance was up to 15 months. It is however worth noting that the numbers involved are small and care must be taken when making 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)

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 is less than 1 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	All children
Average duration between entry into care and Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal	0:9	0:7	0:8	0:9
Average duration between date of Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal and matching of child and adopters	1:7	2:0	2:3	1:9
Average duration between date of matching and date placed for adoption	0:1	0:0	0:0	0:1
Average duration between date placed for adoption and granting of the Adoption Order	0:9	1:1	0:9	0:9
Average duration between last entry into care and adoption	3:1	3:4	3:6	3:2

The average duration from the Trust Looked After Child Best Interest Proposal to adoption is set out in Table 6 below by the age of the child at the time of the Best Interest Proposal. This shows that duration for a child aged one year or under at the time of the Best Interest Proposal was generally shorter than those aged two years and older.

⁸ Yearly trend figures are included in the current publication's [excel tables](#)

Table 7 Average duration between Trust LAC best interest proposal and adoption by age, year ending 31 March 2021

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 (Year : Months)
Under 1	25	2:2
1	18	2:9
2	9	2:5
3 and over	5	2:11
All children	57	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 decided⁹. 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.

⁹ 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	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Adopters Only: The child is placed with approved adopters for the purpose of adoption after Freeing Order has been granted by the courts.	12 (10%)	6 (7%)	7 (10%)	15 (14%)	4 (7%)
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 this not possible, the carers adopt the child.	23 (19%)	26 (31%)	26 (36%)	50 (45%)	32 (56%)
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'.	67 (56%)	29 (35%)	27 (37%)	29 (26%)	15 (26%)
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.	18 (15%)	23 (27%)	13 (18%)	17 (15%)	6 (11%)
All adoptions	120 (100%)	84 (100%)	73 (100%)	111 (100%)	57 (100%)

Over the last four years, there has been a gradual increase in the proportion of children adopted by Concurrent Carers, from 19% in 2016/17 to 56% in 2020/21. Over the same period, there has been a reduction in the proportion of children adopted by Dual Approved Carers, from 56% to 26%.

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 very small number of adoptions.

Type of adopters	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Adopters Only	3:1	2:10	2:3	3:1	3:7
Concurrent Carers	2:3	2:3	2:4	2:7	2:9
Dual Approved Carers	3:0	2:11	3:5	3:2	3:4
Former Foster Carers	3:7	4:7	4:4	4:8	4:5
All adoptions	3:0	3:2	3:1	3:1	3:2

Figure 3 Average durations of different stages of the adoption process by type of adopters, year ending 31 March 2021 (months)

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

Note: "Adopters Only" and "Foster Carers" are based on very small number of adoptions.

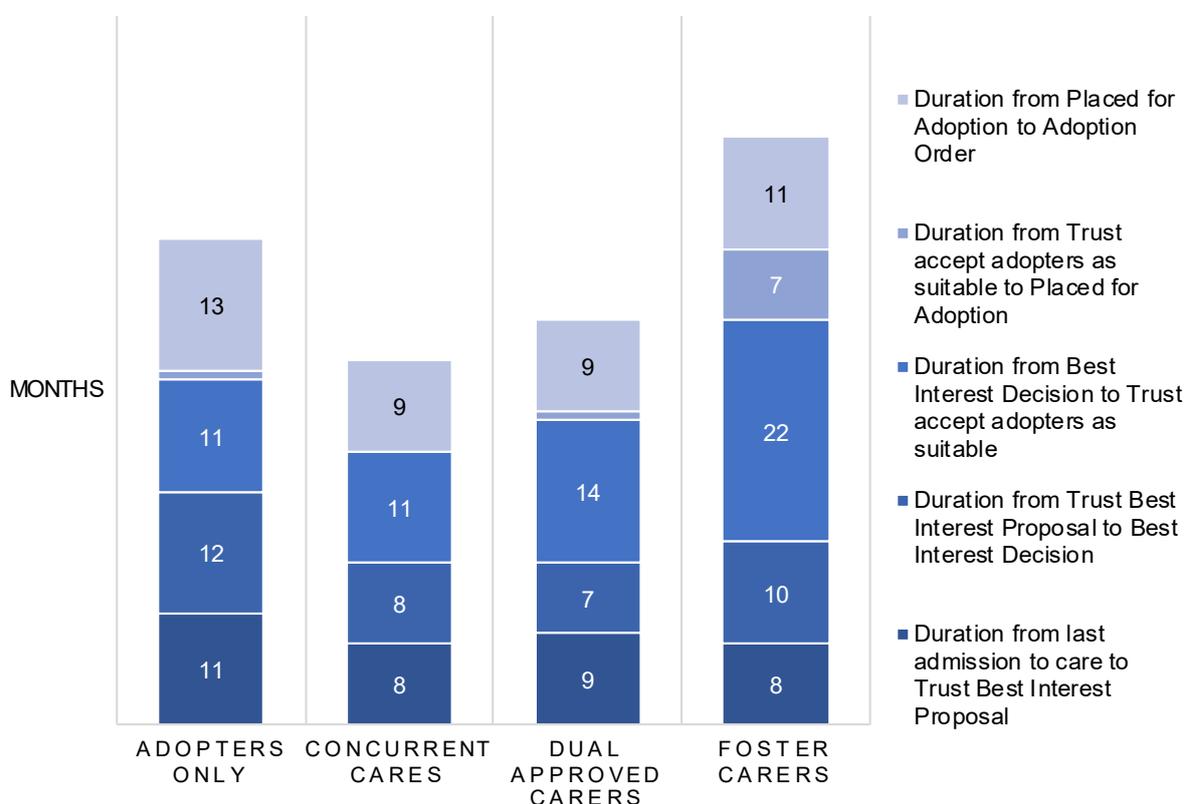


Figure 3 sets out the duration of the different stages of the adoption process for 2020/21. Care must however be taken when interpreting and comparing these figures, due to the small number of children, in particular for the categories "Adopters Only" and "Foster Carers".

Table 10 Average ages of children at different stages of the adoption process by type of adopters (year ending 31 March 2021)

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

Note: "Adopters Only" and "Foster Carers" are based on very small number of adoptions.

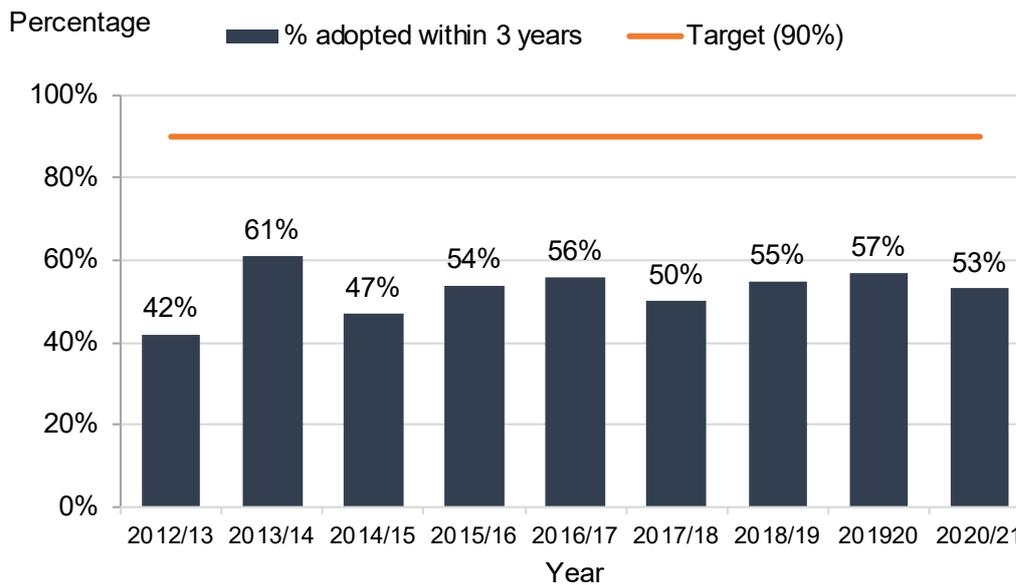
Average age (years:months)	Adopters Only	Concurrent Carers	Dual Approved Carers	Foster Carers	All adoptions
- at last admission into care	0:11	0:6	1:2	0:7	0:8
- at Best Interest Proposal	1:6	1:2	1:11	1:3	1:4
- at Best Interest Decision	2:6	1:9	2:6	2:1	2:1
- when Panel recommended adopters as suitable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

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 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. 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.

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 2021)

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
Adopters Only	0%
Concurrent Carers	69%
Dual Approved Carers	33%
Foster Carers	50%
Child with no disability	58%
Child with a disability	22%
Aged under 1 when last entered care	60%
Aged 1 when last entered care	43%
Aged 2 when last entered care	25%

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 four months in 2020/21. This is similar to previous years.

Table 12 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	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

9. UK adoption statistics comparison

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 Wales¹⁰.

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

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

Source: [Children looked after in England including adoption: 2019 to 2020](#)

Source: [Stats Wales - Adoptions](#)

[P] – Figure is provisional and subject to change.

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 (2020/21)	England (2019/20)	Wales (2019/20)
Number of children adopted from care	57	3,440	295
Rate of children adopted per 1,000 children in care (31 March)	16[P]	43	41
Aged at adoption under 1 year old	0%	6%	2%
Aged at adoption 1-4 years old	79%	77%	81%
Aged at adoption 5-9 years old	21%	15%	15%
Aged at adoption 10+ years old	0%	1%	2%
Average age at adoption (years:months)	3:10	3:0	3:1
Average duration of last period of care prior to Adoption Order (years:months)	3:2	2:0	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 was two years in England and two years three months in Wales. In Northern Ireland the average duration was three years two month.

¹⁰ Figures for England and Wales are the latest available at time of publication.

Appendix A – Technical Notes

Data Collection

The figures for “Children adopted from care in Northern Ireland 2020/21” 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 anonymised 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.

Historically, within the AD1 calculations, these negative values have been excluded from analysis (eg the value has been treated as 'missing'). However, as the negative value may be a reflection of efficiency and improved service, it may be considered unfair not to include them in overall performance evaluations. The methodology was therefore revised.

As a result, negative values are treated as the value '0' and are included in calculations. This means that, for the example above, where the Best Interest Proposal was agreed prior to the last entry to care, is in the calculations interpreted as if no time passed between the child entered its last period of care and the Best Interest Proposal was in place (time = 0 months).

All time series included in this publication have been revised using this methodology.

Format of historic figures

Any historic figure including '12 months' has been changed 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 errors.

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.

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: 2019 to 2020](#)

Wales: [Stats Wales - Adoptions](#)

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

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

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

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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