



Department
for Education

Quarterly adoption survey

**Quarter 4 2011-12 (Jan to Mar 2012) to
quarter 1 2013-14 (April to June 2013)**

January 2014

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Summary

- The number of new decisions saw a decrease by 23% across the four quarters of 2012-13, with no change seen in quarter 1 2013-14.
- The number of children with new placement orders has been falling from a peak in quarter 2 (Jul-Sept) 2012-13. It saw a drop of 4% between the start and end of 2012-13) and a further decrease of 17% in quarter 1 of 2013-14 from the end of 2012-13.
- The number of adoption orders rose by 23% across all four quarters in 2012-13 and a further increase in quarter 1 2013-14, despite the dip seen in quarter 4 2012-13 (42% increase between quarter 4 2012-13 and quarter 1 2013-14).
- The adoption process for older children, disabled children, children from black or minority ethnic (BME) groups and sibling groups takes longer than the national average. It takes an extra 12 months for children aged 5 and over at placement, an extra 3 months if the child is disabled, and an extra 2 months if the child is considered for adoption as part of a sibling group or for BME children.
- The number of BME children who were newly placed for adoption saw a decrease of 25% between quarter 1 2012-13 and quarter 4 2012-13; however it saw an increase of 33% in quarter 1 2013-14 from the end of 2012-13. Please note however that the number of BME children placed each quarter is relatively low (less than 100) therefore this percentage change should be treated with caution.
- The time from entering care to placement with adoptive parents saw a 15% decrease (around 97 days) between quarter 1 2012-13 and quarter 4 2012-13 (661 days and 564 days respectively). In quarter 1 2013-14 the time from entering care to placement had increased slightly by 1% (567 days) from the end quarter 4 2012-13.
- The number of applications from potential adopters saw a 3% increase during 2012-13, followed by an 11% increase in quarter 1 2013-14. Around 440 applications were made in quarter 1 2013-14, the highest across all quarters.
- The number of adopters approved saw a 16% increase during 2012-13, followed by a 3% increase in quarter 1 2013-14. Around 360 applications were approved in quarter 1 2013-14, the highest across all quarters.
- The timeliness for application to approval has improved across all quarters for adopters. Across 2012-13 the proportion of applications approved within 6 months increased by 8 percentage points (from 27% to 35%) followed by an increase by around 5 percentage points (to 41%) in quarter 1 2013-14.

- The timeliness from approval to matching has improved across all quarters for adopters. Across 2012-13 the proportion of approved adopters matched within 6 months has increased by 5 percentage points during 2012-13 (67% to 72%). However data from the start of 2013-14 shows that this decreased by 2 percentage points to 70%.

Key Findings

This report contains analysis of the data collected through a voluntary quarterly survey, covering the characteristics of children who were at any stage in the adoption process and analysis of the timeliness of their progress in the adoption system. Findings for the local authorities who provided data of all six quarters are shown, so that comparisons can be made over the time period. The data from local authorities who have not provided data for all quarters are incorporated in internal analyses.

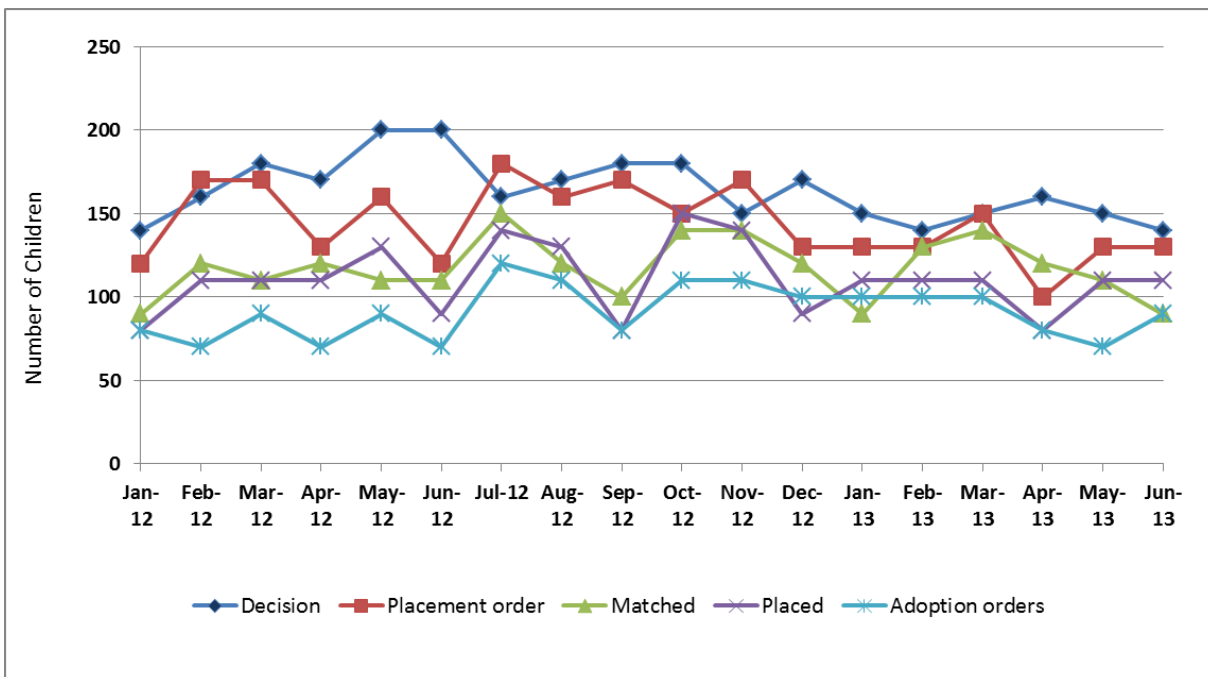
Number of children

Returns from 55 local authorities for the quarterly adoption survey showed information for approximately 5,500 children who were at some stage in the adoption process between quarter 4 2011-12 and quarter 1 2013-14. A total of 2,960 children had been the subject of a decision that adoption was the best option between January 2012 and June 2013, with a decrease of 23% across the four quarters of 2012-13 (no change seen in quarter 1 2013-14). During the same period, 2,540 new placement orders were made, 2,090 children were matched with prospective adopters and 2,030 were placed with an adoptive family.

The number of children with new placement orders saw a small drop of 4% across 2012-13 and a further decrease of 17% in quarter 1 of 2013-14 from the end of 2012-13. The number of children matched saw a 7% increase across 2012-13, however it decreased by 10% in quarter 1 of 2013-14 from the end of 2012-13.

The number of adoption orders rose by 23% across 2012-13 and again rose by 42% in quarter 1 of 2013-14 from the end of 2012-13.

Figure 1: Survey data - Numbers of children with new decisions, placement orders, matches to adoptive families, placements with adoptive families and adoption orders each month



Scaling the findings above to the national level the survey data suggests that there are on average:

- 500 children each month who have decisions that adoption is the best option for them, an average of 1,500 each quarter (generally decreasing numbers across the quarters but with a slight increase in quarter 1 2012-13).
- 400 placement orders made each month, and average of 1,300 each quarter (generally decreasing numbers across the quarters but with a slight increase in quarter 2 2012-13).
- 400 children matched each month to their adoptive family, an average of 1,100 each quarter (generally increasing numbers to quarter 3 2012-13 but decreasing since then).
- 300 children placed with their adoptive families, an average of 1,000 each quarter (generally increasing numbers to quarter 3 2012-13 but decreasing since then).
- 300 adoption orders made each month, an average of 900 each quarter (these numbers have fluctuated across the reporting period, with the highest number of 1,200 adoption orders reported in quarter 1 2013-14).

Timeliness from entering care to being placed with an adoptive family

Of the 2,030 children in the quarterly survey who moved in with their adoptive families (i.e. children who were placed within the 18 month period), on average across the full six quarters of this data collection they entered care 1 year and 7 months earlier (588 days). Timeliness has been falling by 15% from a peak in quarter 1 2012-13 to quarter 4 2012-13 (from 661 days to 564 days respectively). There was little change (1% increase) on the average time for the children who moved in with their adoptive family between quarter 1 of 2013-14 (567 days) and the end of 2013.

Figure 2: Survey data – Time from entering care to date placed with adoptive families, for children placed within the 18 months between January 2012 and June 2013

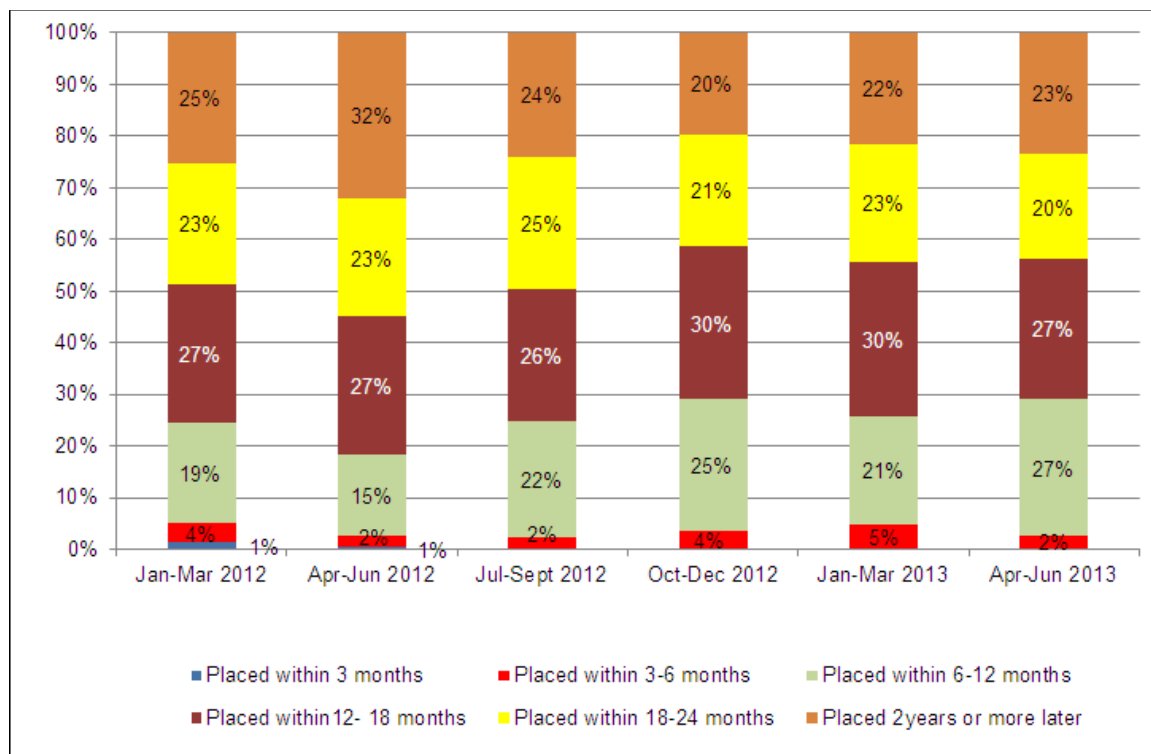
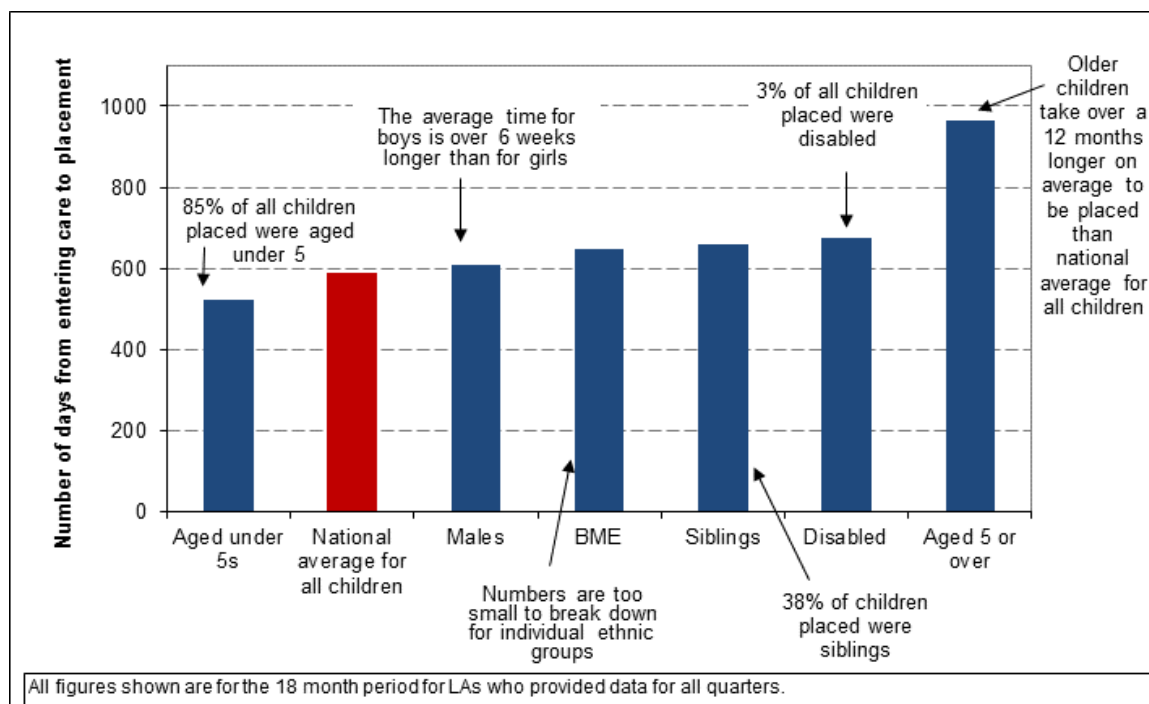


Figure 3: Survey data – (average time across the 18 month period) Timeliness of the adoption process by child characteristics



Age

Information from the quarterly survey suggests that the adoption process takes considerably longer for older children. Children aged 5 and over at time of placement take on average 2 years and 8 months to be placed with their adoptive family, over a year longer than children aged under 5. The number of older children being placed for adoption in the 18 month period represented 15% (300 children) of all placements. Children aged under 5 represented 85% (1,700 children) of all placements. The number of older children who were placed with their adoptive family saw a 23% decrease across all quarters of 2012-13 but then increased by 7% in quarter 1 of 2013-14 from the end of 2012-13.

Please note however that the number of older children placed each quarter is relatively low (less than 100) therefore this percentage change should be treated with caution.

When scaling to the national average the survey data suggests that in each quarter an average of 210 children aged 5 and over and on average of 1,310 children under 5 have a new decision made that they should be adopted and they will be considered for adoption. Also, approximately 150 children aged 5 and over and 890 children under 5 who were considered for adoption are placed with an adoptive family in each quarter.

Siblings

The survey found that the adoption process for sibling groups is taking on average 1 year and 10 months. Over a third of children who were placed with their adoptive families in the 18 month period were considered for adoption as part of a sibling group (38%, 880 children). Sibling groups represented 41% of all the decisions in the 18 month period and 39% of all the children matched in the same period.

There was a 13% increase in the number of children placed who are part of a sibling group across quarter 1 and quarter 4 of 2012-13, but there was no change between quarter 4 2012-13 and quarter 1 2013-14.

When scaling to the national average the survey data suggests that in each quarter an average of 620 children who are part of a sibling group have a new decision made that they should be adopted and they will be considered for adoption as part of a sibling group. Approximately 420 children who were considered for adoption with their siblings are matched and 400 of children are placed with an adoptive family in each quarter.

Disability

The adoption process for disabled children is slightly longer than for all children, taking a little bit more than 1 year and 10 months. 3% of children placed with their adoptive parents in the 18 month period were disabled. This proportion seems low compared to the proportion of children in need (i.e. receiving a social care service) who are disabled (14%)¹, however it is not possible to determine if this is due to underreporting or if adoptions of disabled children are disproportionately low. Disabled children represented 4% of all children who had a decision in the 18 months however the number of decisions for disabled children is very small each quarter (less than 25), with even fewer disabled children being placed, therefore it is difficult to make meaningful comparisons between quarters.

When scaling to the national average the survey data suggests that each quarter around 50 disabled children have a decision made that they should be adopted and approximately 30 disabled children are placed with an adoptive family each quarter.

Ethnicity

Children from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups took on average 1 year and 9 months to be placed for adoption. Unfortunately due to the small number of BME children within the survey local authorities it is not possible to break down the timeliness for the different ethnic groups and make meaningful comparisons. BME children represent 16%

¹ [Statistics on the characteristics of children in need](#) can be found on GOV.UK.

of all children who are placed with their adoptive family in the 18 month period and 16% of all children who have a decision within the 18 month period. The number of BME children who were newly placed for adoption saw a decrease of 25% between quarter 1 2012-13 and quarter 4 2012-13; however it saw an increase of 33% in quarter 1 2013-14 from the end of 2012-13.

When scaling to the national average the survey data suggests that each quarter around 240 BME children have a decision made that they should be adopted and approximately 160 disabled children are placed with an adoptive family each quarter.

Children who are awaiting adoption and have not yet been placed

At 31 March 2012 there were 1,850 children with an adoption decision but who had not yet been placed with their adoptive family, increased to 2,090, at the beginning of the 2012-13 (quarter 1) and further increased to 2,460 children at the end of 2012-13 (quarter 4). Thus, there was an 18% increase across 2012-13. The number of children with an adoption decision but who had not yet been placed was further increased by 5% (2,590 children) in quarter 1 of 2013-14 from the end of 2012-13.

Children who had not yet been placed by the end of June 2013 had on average entered care 25 months before (an increase of 2 months from those waiting at the end of March 2012). Of the children with a decision awaiting adoption, who had not yet been placed at the end of quarter 1 2013-14, 6% are disabled, 46% are sibling groups, 38% are aged 5 and over at the end of the quarter and 16% were from BME groups. The proportion of children awaiting adoption who were disabled, part of a sibling group, or older children was lower than the proportions seen in the children placed with their adoptive family. (Of the children placed in the 18 month period 3% were disabled, 38% were siblings and 15% were aged 5 and over). This does not apply for the BME groups where the proportion of children awaiting adoption was the same as the proportion seen in the children placed with their adoptive family (16%).

Adopters

Returns from 54 LAs for the quarterly adoption survey showed that the number of initial enquiries² has increased since the lowest point seen in quarter 2 2012-13, with an in-year increase for 2012-13 of 29%. There has since been a slight decrease of 5% in the first

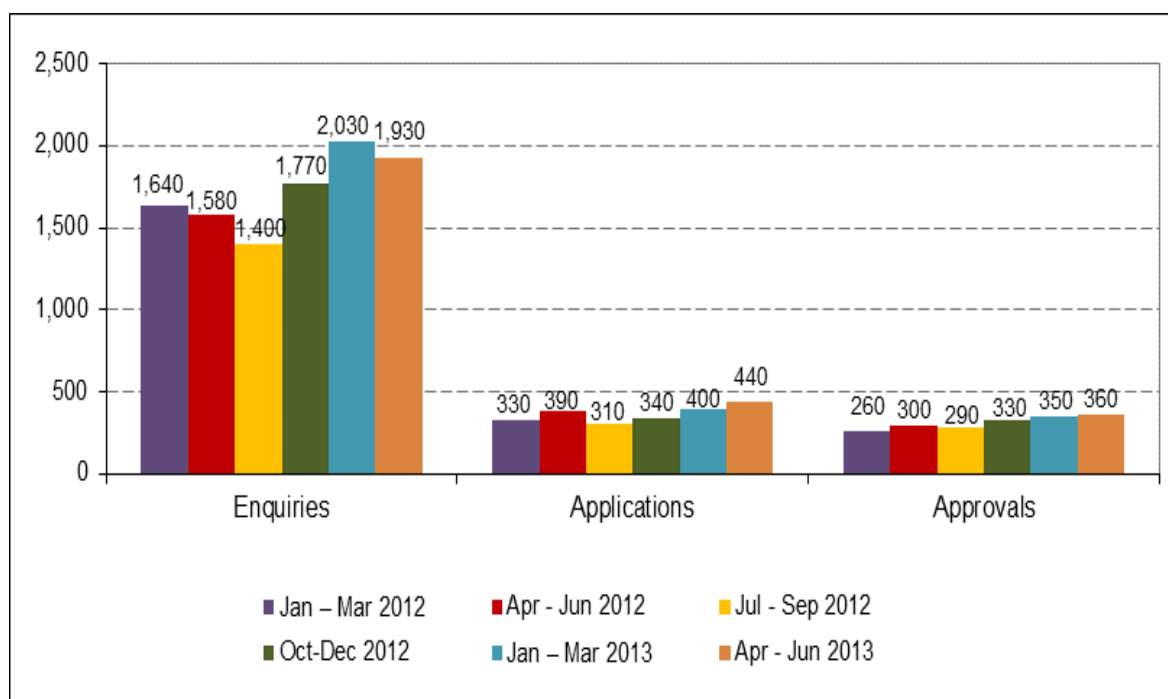
² It should be noted that the number of enquires is not the same as the number of people who have enquired, as there may have been multiple enquires from the same person.

quarter of 2013-14. This fluctuation does not seem to have majorly impacted on the number of applications or approvals.

The number of applications from potential adopters saw a 3% increase during 2012-13 and an additional increase was seen in quarter 1 2013-14 (11%), with a total of around 1,440 applications made in 2012-13 and an additional 440 made in quarter 1 2013-14 (the highest across all quarters).

The number of adopters approved between quarter 1 and quarter 4 2012-13 increased by 16% and an additional increase was seen in quarter 1 2013-14 (3%). Around 1,270 adopters were approved across 2012-13, and an additional 360 were approved in quarter 1 2013-14 (the highest across all quarters).

Figure 4: Survey data - Numbers of prospective adopters in each quarter in each part of the system from survey³



57% of approved adopters were matched to a child as at the end of quarter 1 2013-14, a decrease by 0.2 percentage points from the peak at the end of quarter 4 2012-13.

Scaling the findings above to the national level the survey data suggests that there are on average:

- 5,180 new initial enquires each quarter, generally decreasing numbers across the first three quarters (January-March 2012 to July-September 2012), but with a 18% increase across the full six quarters of the data collection. The number of initial enquiries increased by 29% between the start and the end of 2013-14 (peak at the

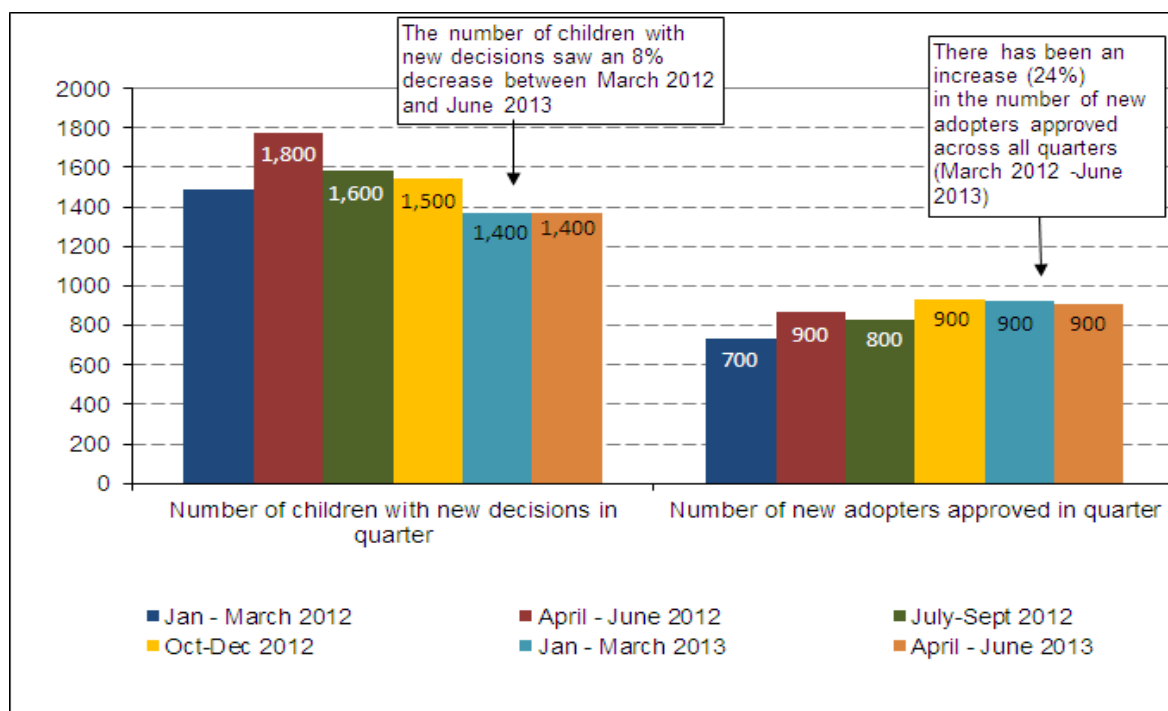
³ Note this does not include any adopters who are found by agencies other than the local authority.

end of quarter 4 2012-13) but again decreased by 5% in the last quarter 1 2013-14.

- 1,110 new applications to be an adopter each quarter across the full six quarters of the data collection (1,080 new applications in each quarter of 2012-13). There was a peak at the start of quarter 1 1213-14 with 1,330 new applications to be an adopter, an increase by 11% from the end of 2012-13.
- 950 new adopters are approved each quarter. Numbers have seen a small fluctuation across the first three quarters of the data collection (Jan-March 2012 to Oct-Dec 2012). There was a 16% increase across 2012-13, and a further 3% increase seen at the start of 2013-14 (peak at the start of quarter 1 2013-14 with 1,080 new adopters been approved).

In quarter 1 2013-14 there were 4.3 times as many enquiries as applications (up from 4.1 in quarter 1 2012-13), and 1.2 times as many applications as approvals (1.3 in quarter 1 2012-13).

Figure 5: Survey figures scaled to national level - Comparing supply for adoption



(Note: these figures are for local authorities only and do not include data from voluntary adoption agencies)

Prospective adopters: timeliness of approval and matching

The quarterly survey suggests timeliness improved across 2012-13 with the proportion of applications approved within 6 months having increased by 8 percentage points across the quarters (27% to 35%). Data from the start of 2013-14 shows that this total has increased further to 41%.

With regards to time from approval to match, timeliness has also improved - the proportion of approved adopters matched within 6 months has increased by 5 percentage points during 2012-13 (67% to 72%). However data from the start of 2013-14 shows that this decreased by 2 percentage points to 70%.

The time from application to approval is 6 to 12 months for 54% of the adopters in quarter 1 2013-14. There is more variation in the time from approval to match. In quarter 1 2013-14 70% of the adopters this stage of the process was completed within 6 months (70% in quarter 1 2013-14). Therefore for the majority of adopters the time from application to being matched with a child will be between 6 and 18 months.

Figure 6: Survey figures – Timeliness from application to approval for prospective adopters

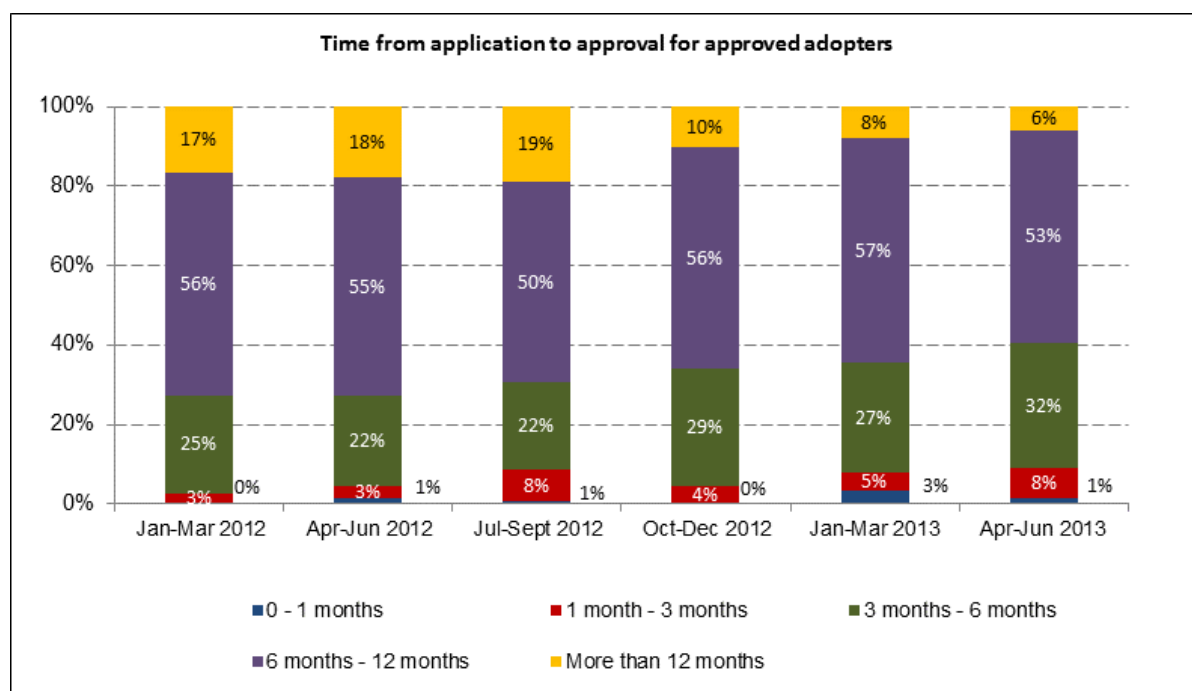
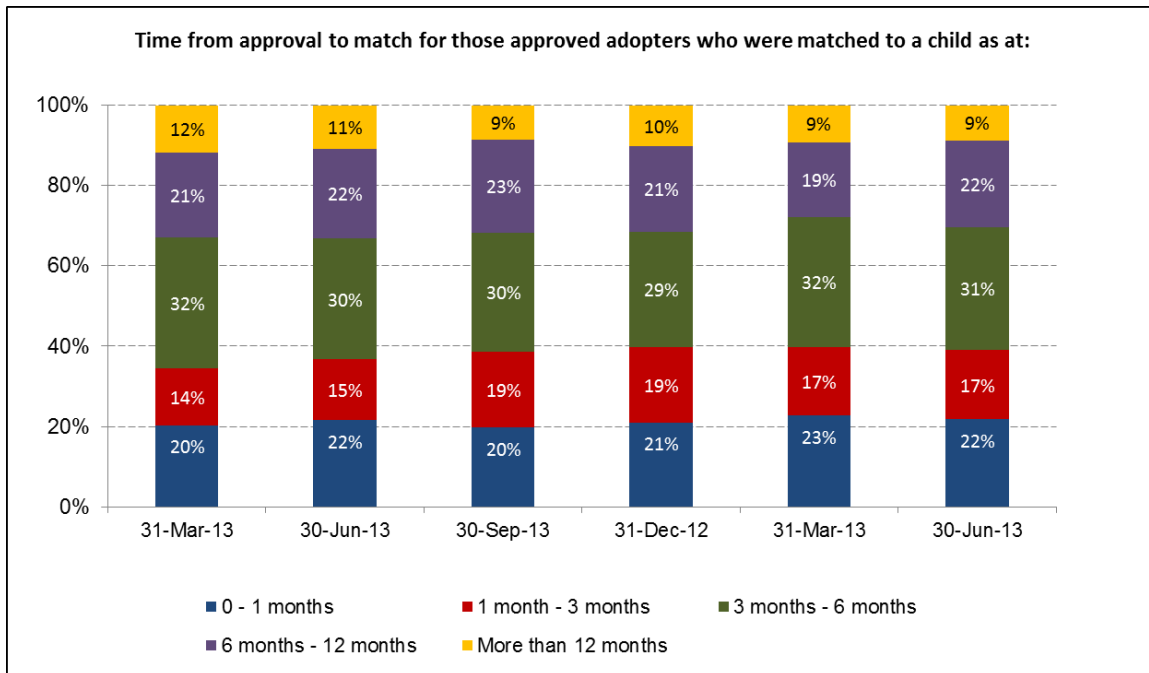


Figure 7: Survey figures – Timeliness from approval to match for prospective adopters



Next survey data

Data for July to September 2013 has been collected and findings will be published in Spring 2013.

Background

This is the fifth round of requesting voluntary data all 152 local authorities in England, covering information on the number of children and adopters at any stage in the adoption process between 1 January 2012 and 30 June 2013. Aggregate data was collected on adopters and child level information was collected on children.

100 local authorities provided a response to the survey for quarter 1 2013-14 (some who had not already done so also provided data for previous quarters), compared to 91 local authorities for the previous quarter 4 2012-13, which represents 66% of all local authorities. The findings reported in this report are based on usable returns only and show the findings for the local authorities who provided data of all quarters, so that comparisons can be made.

- 55 returns were used to compare data on adopted children
- 54 returns were used to compare data on adopters

Usable child level response rates (for those returning data for all quarters) varied greatly with 50% of local authorities in the North East, Inner London and South West providing data, with the lowest response rate of 13% in the North West. The rates varied greatly across the quarters, with an even split across the ten regions showing an increase/decrease in their returns from the previous quarter.

Usable adopter level response rates (for those returning data for all quarters) also varied, from 14% in the West Midlands and 22% in the North West to 64% in the East of England.

Estimates of the national figures have been calculated by scaling the survey figures up. To do this we have used the number of children adopted in each local authority in 2013 according to the SSDA903 as a multiplying factor. Estimates of national figures and of monthly and quarterly averages have been rounded to the nearest 100. Figures which show the data from the local authorities who provided a response to the survey have been rounded to the nearest 10.



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