



Department  
for Education

# Quarterly adoption survey

Quarter 4 2011-12 (Jan to Mar 2012)  
to quarter 2 2012-13 (July to Sept 2012)

March 2013

# Quarterly Adoption Survey

## Quarter 2 of 2012-13 update

### Summary

- Between quarter 4 of 2011-12 and quarter 2 of 2012-13 there was a decrease in the number of new decisions (-12%), but there were increases in the number of matches and placements (4% and 10% respectively). Further analysis is needed to investigate whether these patterns are representative of seasonal differences, delays in recording information or genuine changes in trends.
- 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 or if the child is considered for adoption as part of a sibling group and an extra 2 months for BME children.
- In the second quarter of 2012-13 more children aged 5 and over were placed with adoptive parents compared to the last quarter of 2011-12 (increasing by over 30%) but this was a decrease of over 15% from the first quarter 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.
- The time from entering care to placement with adoptive parents saw a 7% increase between quarter 4 of 2011-12 and quarter 1 of 2012-13 but then a 6% decrease in quarter 2. Some of this decrease could be explained by the lower number of older children placed in the second quarter of 2012-13.
- On 30 September 2012 there were considerably more children awaiting adoption than there were adopters awaiting a child/children (approximately 6,300 compared to 1,700). When considering this apparent difference it should be noted that some adopters will adopt more than one child and many LAs find adopters through voluntary adoption agencies. Figures from voluntary adoption agencies were not included in this survey.
- The number of applications to be adopters saw a 9% increase overall from the last quarter of 2011-12 but there was an 8% decrease between the first two quarters of 2012-13. The number of approvals for new adopters has increased each quarter (15% higher than in the last quarter of 2011-12), however the number of initial enquiries has continued to fall.
- The timeliness for application to approval and from approval to matching has improved slightly between the two quarters for prospective adopters.

### Key findings

This report contains analysis of the data collected, 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. This report shows the findings for the local authorities who provided data of all three quarters, so that comparisons can be made over. The data from local authorities who have not provided data for all quarters are incorporated in internal analyses and this report will be developed accordingly.

## Number of children

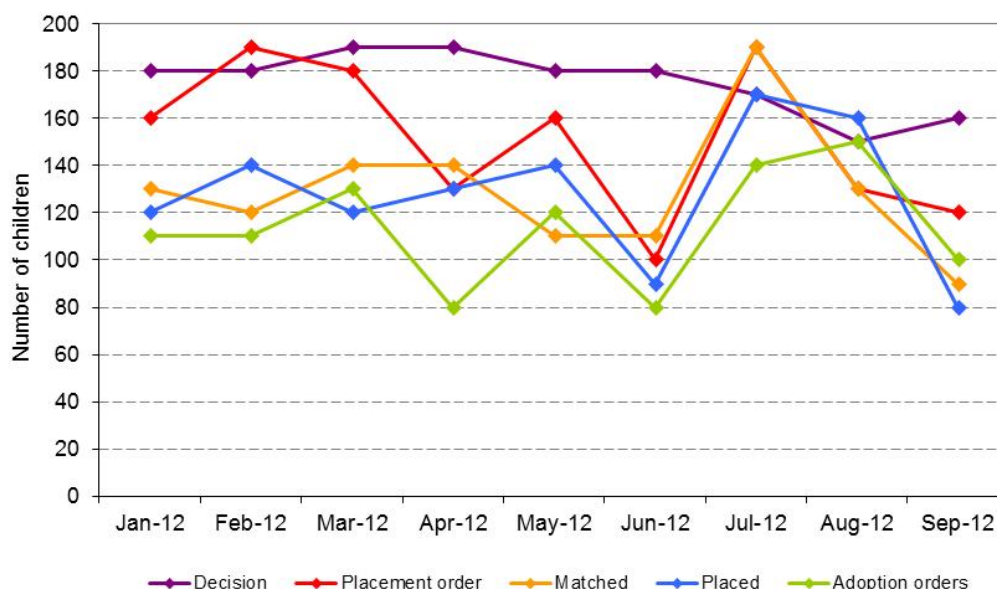
Returns from 73 local authorities for the quarterly adoption survey showed information for approximately 4,000 children who were at some stage in the adoption process during each of the three quarters of the survey, quarter 4 of 2011-12 and quarters 1 and 2 of 2012-13. A total of 1,580 children had been the subject of a decision that adoption was the best option between January and September, with a decrease of 12% across the three quarters. During the same period, 1,180 new placement orders were made, 1,360 children were matched with prospective adopters and a further 1,140 were placed with an adoptive family.

The number of children with new placement orders fell by 26% between quarter 4 and quarter 1 but rose by 12% in quarter 2 (overall drop of 12% across all quarters), the number of children matched rose by 12% between quarters 1 and 2 (overall increase of 4% across all quarters) and the number of children placed increased by 14% between quarters 1 and 2 (overall increase of 10% across all quarters). The number of adoption orders also rose by 37% to give an overall increase of 9% across all three quarters. The survey data shows that the number of matches is approximately 25% lower than the number of decisions and the number of placements is 28% lower than the number of decisions.

It is difficult at this early stage in the voluntary quarterly survey to know if these changes represent seasonal differences, delays in recording information or genuine changes in trends. Further work will be undertaken to investigate this aspect.

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:

- 400 children each month who have decisions that adoption is the best option for them, an average of 1,300 each quarter (decreasing numbers across the quarters).
- 400 placement orders made each month, and average of 1,100 each quarter (decrease between quarter 4 2011-12 and quarter 1 2012-13 followed by an increase

between quarters 1 and 2 of 2012-13).

- 300 children matched each month to their adoptive family, an average of 1,000 each quarter (decrease between quarter 4 2011-12 and quarter 1 2012-13 followed by an increase between quarters 1 and 2 of 2012-13).
- 300 children placed with their adoptive families, an average of 900 each quarter (decrease between quarter 4 2011-12 and quarter 1 2012-13 followed by an increase between quarters 1 and 2 of 2012-13).
- 300 adoption orders made each month, an average of 800 each quarter (decrease between quarter 4 2011-12 and quarter 1 2012-13 followed by an increase between quarters 1 and 2 of 2012-13).

Timeliness from entering care to being placed with an adoptive family

On 30<sup>th</sup> November, adoption scorecards were published following the initial publication in May 2012. These scorecards showed that the average time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family is 1 year and 9 months for the three years 2009-10 to 2011-12 (636 days).

Of the 1,140 children in the quarterly survey who moved in with their adoptive families (i.e. children who were placed within the 9 month period), on average they entered care 1 year and 8 months earlier (623 days). This is very similar to the timeliness seen in the scorecards.

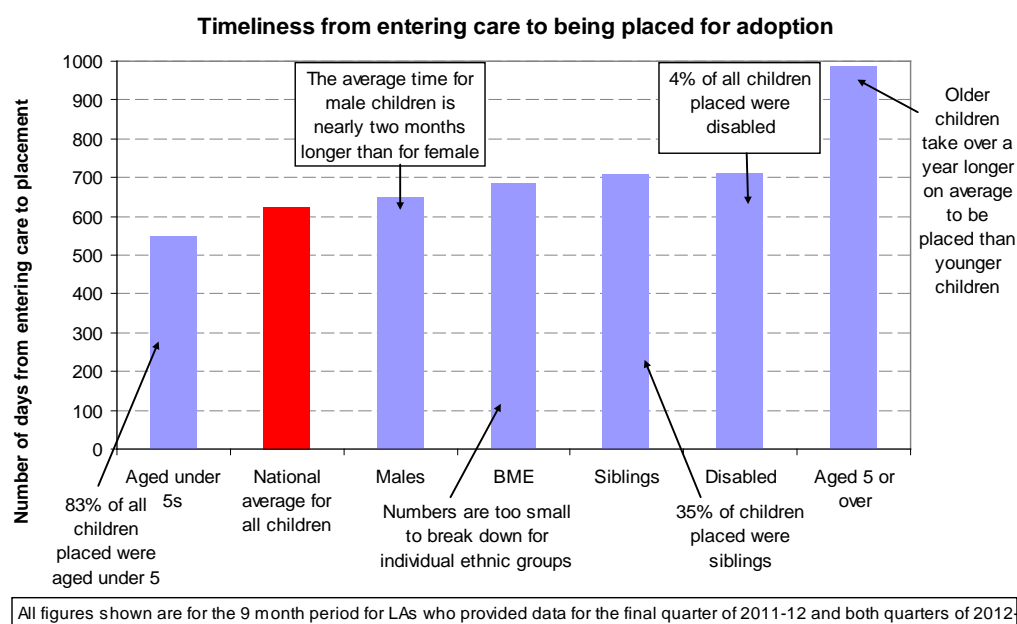
The average time for the children who moved in with their adoptive family between January and March was 608 days, increasing to 652 days between April to June before falling to 611 days between July and September resulting in negligible change when comparing quarter 4 with quarter 2.

*Figure 2 - Survey data*

*Time from entering care to date placed with adoptive families, for children placed within the 6 months between January 2012 and September 2012*



Figure 3- Survey data (average time across the 9 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 9 month period represented 17% (190 children) of all adoptions. The number of older children who were placed with their adoptive family in quarter 2 of 2012-13 was lower than in the previous quarter but higher than in quarter 4 of 2011-12, with an increase of 11% more children being older children across all quarters. 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.

### Siblings

The survey found that the adoption process for sibling groups is slightly longer than for all children, taking on average 1 year and 11 months. Over a third of children who were placed with their adoptive families in the 9 month period were considered for adoption as part of a sibling group (35%, 400 children). Sibling groups represented 42% of all the decisions in the 9 month period and 37% of all the children matched in the period. The number of children placed in quarter 2 of 2012-13 who were part of a sibling group was higher than in the previous quarter (12% higher), but the number of new decisions for children who are part of a sibling group was lower than the previous quarter (28% lower).

When scaling to the national average the survey data suggests that in each quarter approximately 500 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 300 children who were considered for adoption with their siblings are placed with an adoptive family in each quarter.

### Disability

The adoption process for disabled children is slightly longer than for all children, taking 1 year and 11 months. 4% of children placed with their adoptive parents in the 9 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%), 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 3% of all children who had a decision in the 9 month period and for a further 3% of children it was unknown if the child was disabled. The number of decisions for disabled children is very small each quarter, around 20, 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 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 11 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 15% of all children who are placed with their adoptive family in the 9 month period and 17% of all children who have a decision within the 9 month period. The number of BME children who were newly placed for adoption increased by a third (17 children) in quarter 2.

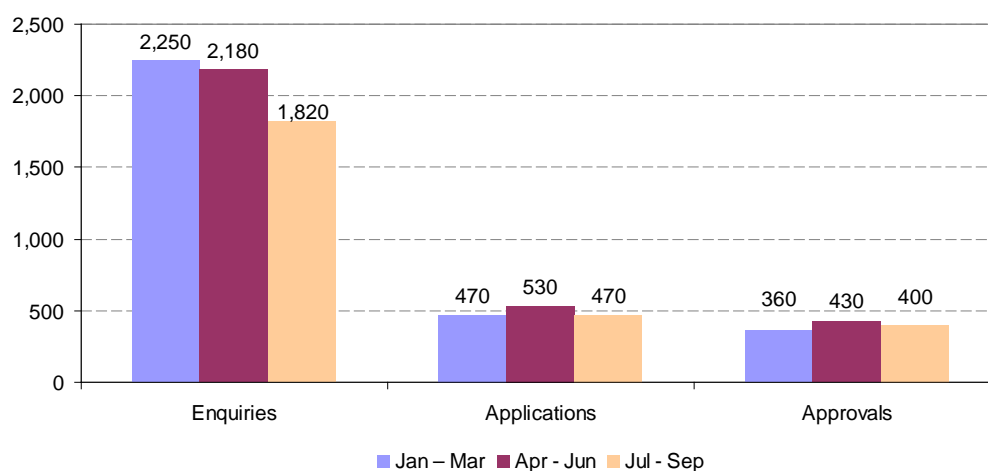
### Children who are awaiting adoption and have not yet been placed

At 31 March 2012 there were 2,320 children who had not yet been placed with their adoptive family. This number increased by 10% to 2,560 at the end of September 2012. Children who had not yet been placed by the end of September had on average entered care 22 months before. This average is already beyond the threshold set in the adoption scorecards of 21 months (640 days). Of the children awaiting adoption, who had not yet been placed at the 30 September, 6% are disabled, 47% are sibling groups, 31% are aged 5 and over at the end of the quarter and 17% were from black minority ethnic groups. The proportion of children awaiting adoption who were also disabled or part of a sibling group or older children was higher than the proportions seen in the children placed with their adoptive family. (Of the children placed in the 9 month period 4% were disabled, 35% were siblings and 15% were aged 5 and over. The proportion of BME children placed is the same as the proportion waiting to be placed).

## Adopters

Figure 4 - Survey data

Numbers of prospective adopters in each quarter in each part of the system from survey<sup>1</sup>



Returns from 79 LAs for the quarterly adoption survey showed that the number of initial enquiries fell across all quarters, but most significantly between the first two quarters of 2012-13 (19%). However this has not majorly impacted on the number of applications or approvals yet. The number of applications from potential adopters rose by 12% between quarter 4 of 2011-12 and quarter 1 of 2012-13 but then returned to roughly the same level in quarter 2 of 2012-13. In total there were 1,190 adopters approved between January and September 2012 and the number of adopters approved between July and September was 8% lower than in the previous quarter.

The number of approved adopters who were matched by the end of each quarter has increased by 9% from quarter 4 of 2011-12.

As we have no previous data on adopters it is difficult to say if these changes represent genuine changes or if they reflect existing seasonal changes.

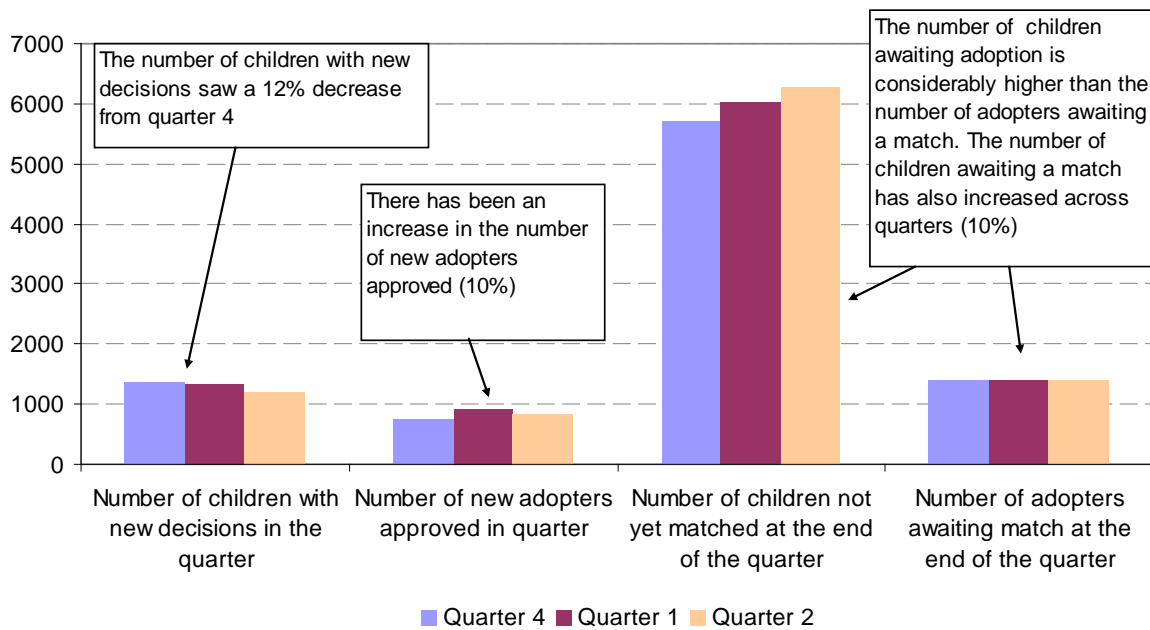
Scaling the findings above to the national level the survey data suggests that there are on average:

- 4,400 new initial enquires each quarter (decreasing numbers between quarters, from 4,800 to 3,900)
- 1,000 new applications to be an adopter each quarter (an increase between quarter 4 and quarter 1, then a return to the same number in quarter 2)
- 800 new adopters are approved each quarter (a small increase between quarter 4 and quarter 1, then a return to the same number in quarter 2)
- 1,700 adopters at the end of the quarters who have been matched to a child/children (increasing from 1,600 to 1,800 between quarters)
- 1,500 adopters at the end of the quarters who have not yet been matched to a child/children (increasing from 1,400 to 1,700 between quarters)

In quarter 2 there were 3.9 times as many enquiries as applications (down from 4.8 in quarter 4), and a little under 1.2 times as many applications as approvals (1.3 in quarter 4).

<sup>1</sup> Note this does not include any adopters who are found by agencies other than the local authority

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

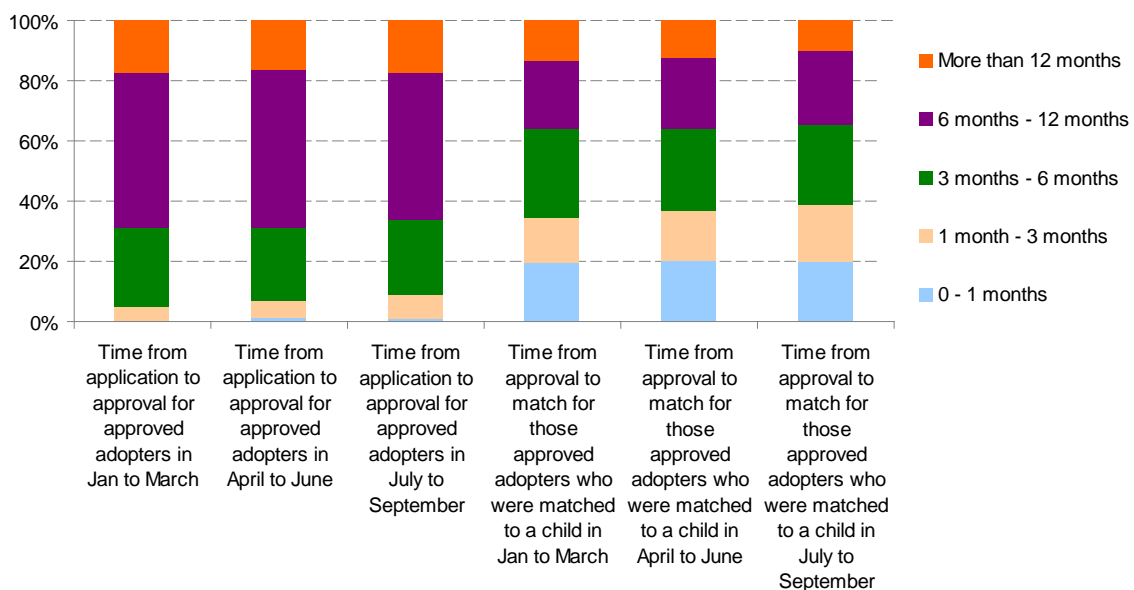


**Note:** these figures are for local authorities only and do not include data from voluntary adoption agencies

### Prospective adopters: timeliness of approval and matching

The quarterly survey suggests timeliness improved slightly between quarter 4 and quarter 1 but returned to the original state in quarter 2 in terms of time from application to approval (17% of adopters taking more than 12 months in quarters 4 and 2, 16% in quarter 1). With regards to time from approval to match, timeliness improved between the two latest quarters - 13% of adopters taking more than 12 months in quarters 4 and 1, dropping to 10% in quarter 2). Also, 39% of matches happened within 3 months of approval compared to 35%.

Figure 6 - Survey figures  
Timeliness from application to approval and approval to match for prospective adopters





The time from application to approval is 6 to 12 months for the majority of adopters. There is more variation in the time from approval to match, but for the majority of adopters this stage of the process is complete within 6 months. Therefore for the majority of adopters the time from application to being matched with a child will be between 6 and 18 months.

### **Next survey data**

Data for October to December 2012 has recently been collected and findings will be published in Spring 2013.

### **Background**

Voluntary data was requested from all 152 local authorities in England on the number of children and adopters at any stage in the adoption process between 1 July 2012 and 30 September 2012. This follows the initial collection for data and report<sup>2</sup> regarding the adoption process between 1 April 2012 and 30 June 2012, along with data for the final quarter of 2011-12 for comparison purposes (i.e. between 1 January 2012 and 31 March 2012). Aggregate data was collected on adopters and child level information was collected on children.

108 local authorities provided a response to the survey for quarter 2 (some who had not already done so also provided data for previous quarters), compared to 96 local authorities for the previous round. This represents over 70% of all local authorities, however there were issues identified in several responses, therefore not all returns were usable. The findings reported in this report are based on the usable returns only and show the findings for the local authorities who provided data of all three quarters, so that comparisons can be made.

- 73 returns were used to compare data on adopted children
- 79 returns were used to compare data on adopters

Usable child level response rates varied greatly with 64% of local authorities in Inner London providing data, at least half of the local authorities in the North East, East Midlands, West Midlands, Outer London and the South West provided responses for all three quarters, with less than half of all other regions providing a response (with a minimum response rate of 26% in the North West). The rates varied greatly across the three quarters, with returns generally becoming more popular each quarter. In the latest quarter, the response rates varied from 47% for the South East to a full 100% return for the East of England, with all other regions having a response rate of more than 50%.

Usable adopter level response rates (for those returning data for all three quarters) also varied, from 30% in the North West to 75% in the North East. Seven out of the ten regions have shown an increase in returns from quarter one. In quarter two, four regions have a return rate of 75% or more, including 100% from local authorities 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 2011-12 according to the SDA903 as a multiplying factor. Estimates of national figures and of

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/adoption/a00217712/voluntary-survey-on-adoption-and-adopters>

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.