



Family Court Statistics Quarterly, England and Wales, April to June 2017

Main points

<p>Decrease in number of cases starting in Family courts</p>		<p>63,381 new cases started in family courts in April to June 2017, down 4% on April to June 2016, due to decreases in matrimonial matters and adoption cases (down 10% and 7% respectively).</p>
<p>On average, care proceedings took longer with fewer disposals within 26 weeks</p>		<p>The average time for a care or supervision case to reach first disposal was 28 weeks in April to June 2017, maintaining the rise seen in the previous quarter.</p>
<p>Increase in the number of Private law applications</p>		<p>The number of Private law applications increased by 3% compared to the equivalent quarter in 2016, whilst the number of disposals decreased 4% over the same period.</p>
<p>Number of adoption applications and orders continues downward trend</p>		<p>In April to June 2017, there were 1,269 adoption order applications, down 12% on the equivalent quarter in 2016. Similarly, over the same period the number of adoption orders issued decreased 7% to 1,389.</p>
<p>Continued increase in applications and orders made in relation to deprivation of liberty</p>		<p>There were 919 applications relating to deprivation of liberty in April to June 2017, up 24% on the equivalent quarter in 2016. Deprivation of liberty orders made almost doubled between over the same period from 375 to 689.</p>

This publication presents statistics on activity in the family courts of England and Wales and provides figures for the latest quarter (April to June 2017). For further information and technical details please refer to the accompanying Guide to Family Court Statistics.

We are changing how our quarterly bulletins look, and would welcome any feedback to commentary.champions@justice.gsi.gov.uk

For other feedback related to the content of this publication, please let us know at Statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk

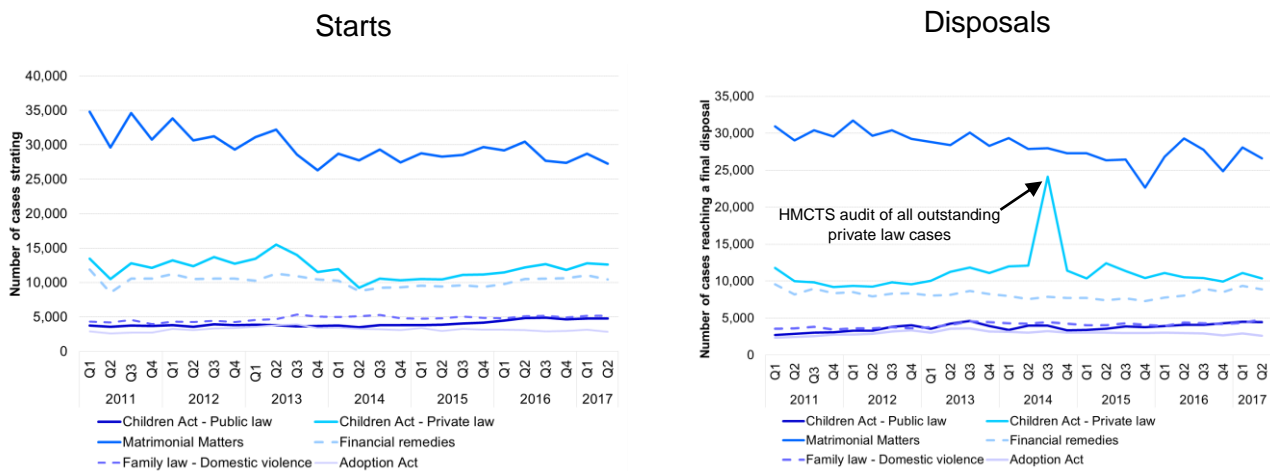
1. Overview of the Family Justice System

Decrease in both number of cases starting and disposals in Family Courts

In April to June 2017, 63,381 new cases started in family courts, down 4% on the equivalent quarter in 2016, due to decreases in matrimonial matters and adoption applications (down 10% and 7% over the same period respectively).

There were 57,884 cases disposed in April to June 2017, down 3% on the equivalent quarter of 2016, also due a decrease in matrimonial matters and adoptions (down 9% and 11% respectively).

Figure 1: Cases starting and concluding, by case type, January to March 2011 to April to June 2017 (Source: Table 1)



In April to June 2017, 43% of new cases within family courts related to matrimonial matters – a drop of 3 percentage points compared to the same period in 2016.

Timeliness by Case Type

Average time to first disposal varies by case type – Public law cases generally take the longest and in 2011 on average, they took nearly a year to reach a first disposal (50 weeks). Since 2011, this fell steadily and by 2016, almost halved to reach 26 weeks. In the second quarter of 2017, there has been an increase to 28 weeks (up two weeks). The average time for other case types remained fairly stable between 2011 and 2016 (Table 8).

2. Public Law

Steady trend in Public law cases started, but cases disposed up

The number of Public law cases starting in April to June 2017 was the same as the equivalent quarter in 2016, whilst case disposals were up 9%.

Timeliness for care proceedings increased in the latest quarter

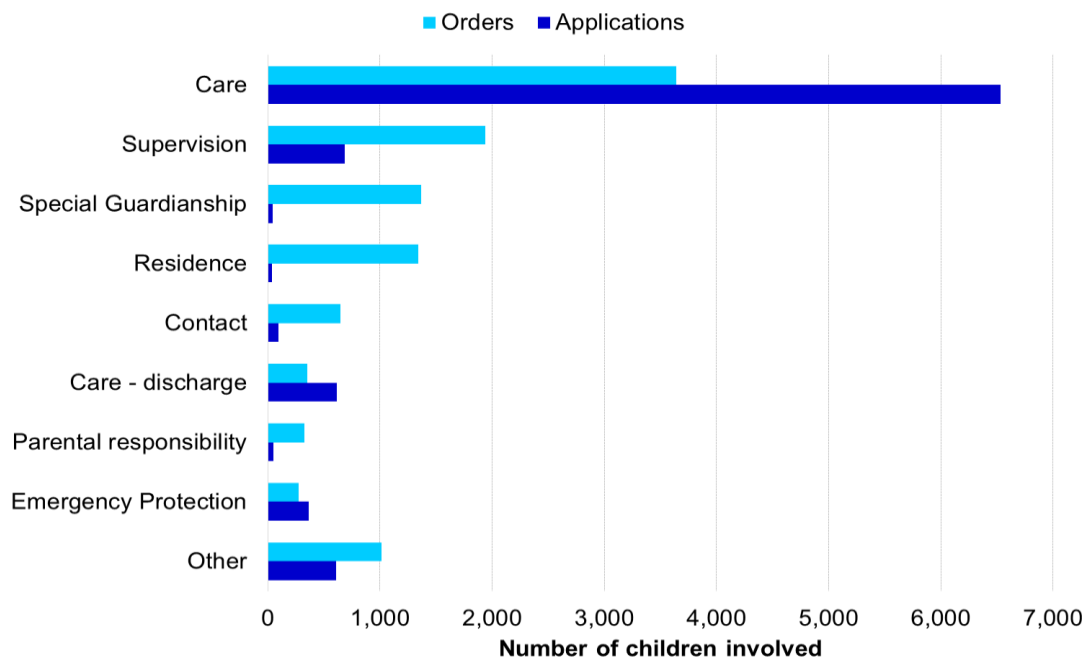
The average time for a care and supervision case to reach first disposal was 28 weeks in April to June 2017, maintaining the rise seen in the previous quarter. 56% of these care proceedings were disposed of within the 26 week limit introduced in the Children and Families Act 2014.¹

There were 5,057 new Public law applications in April to June 2017, down 2% on the equivalent quarter in 2016. There were 9,036 children involved in those applications in April to June 2017, meaning that on average, there were 1.8 children involved in each application.

In comparison, there were 10,901 children involved in Public law orders made in April to June 2017, down 3% on the same quarter in 2016.

Figure 2 shows the most common types of Public law orders applied for and made in April to June 2017, illustrating the different pattern between the types of orders applied for and the orders that are given, i.e. an application for one type can result in an order of a different type being made.

Figure 2: Public law applications and orders made, showing the number of children involved in each order type, April to June 2017 (Source: Tables 3-4)



¹ See the accompanying technical guide for more information.

3. Private Law

Increase in the number of Private law case starts and applications

The number of Private law **cases**² **started** increased by 4% in April to June 2017 compared to the equivalent quarter in 2016. The number of **applications** also increased by 3% over the same period.

In comparison, the number of Private law **cases disposed** in April to June 2017 was down 1% on the equivalent quarter in 2016, with the number of **disposals** down 3%.

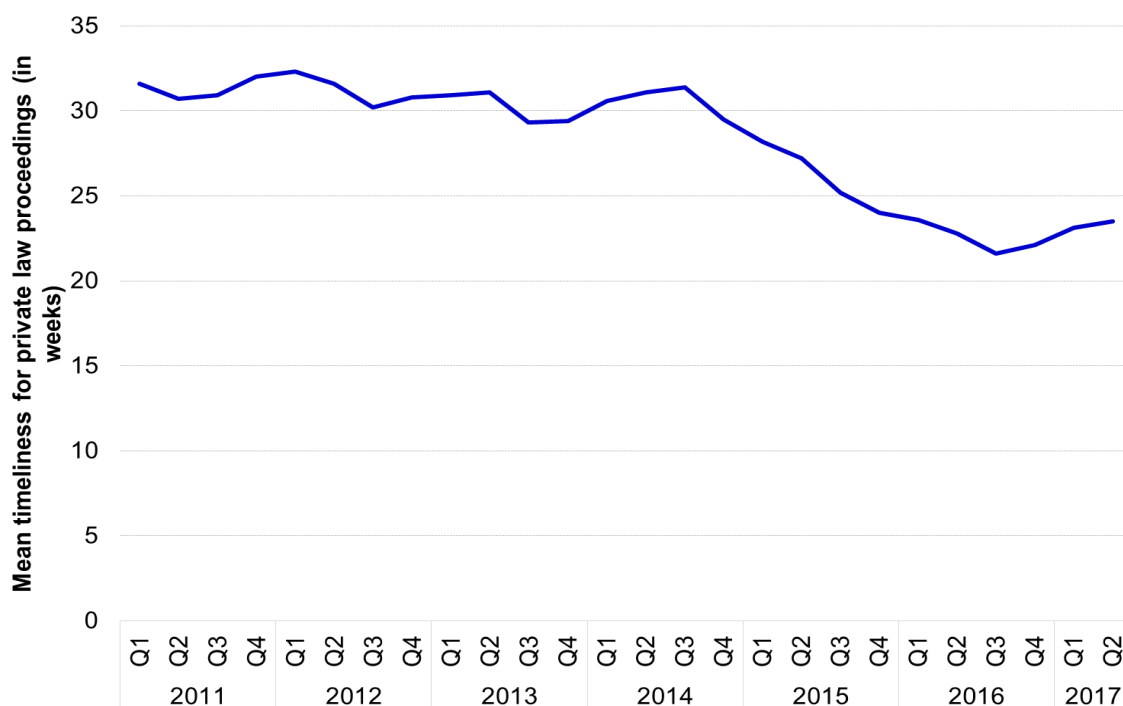
There were 13,029 new Private law applications in April to June 2017, up 3% on the equivalent quarter in 2016 – these applications involved 28,278 children; on average, there were 2.2 children involved in each application.

The number of Private law disposals in April to June 2017 was 18,300, down 4% on the equivalent quarter in 2016, whereas the number of children involved was up 1% to 41,651 in April to June 2017. Therefore the average number of children involved in each disposal increased from 2.2 to 2.3 between April to June 2016 and April and June 2017.

Timeliness of Private law cases

In April to June 2017, it took on average 24 weeks for Private law cases to reach a final order, i.e. case closure, up slightly on the same period in 2016. There are continued signs of a reversal in the downward trend seen since the middle of 2014.

Figure 3: Private law timeliness from case start date to final order in the family court, January to March 2011 to April to June 2017 (Source: Table 7)



² The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) also publishes (England only) data on the number of private law cases. A comparison of Cafcass and MoJ data and further information can be found in the accompanying guide.

4. Legal representation

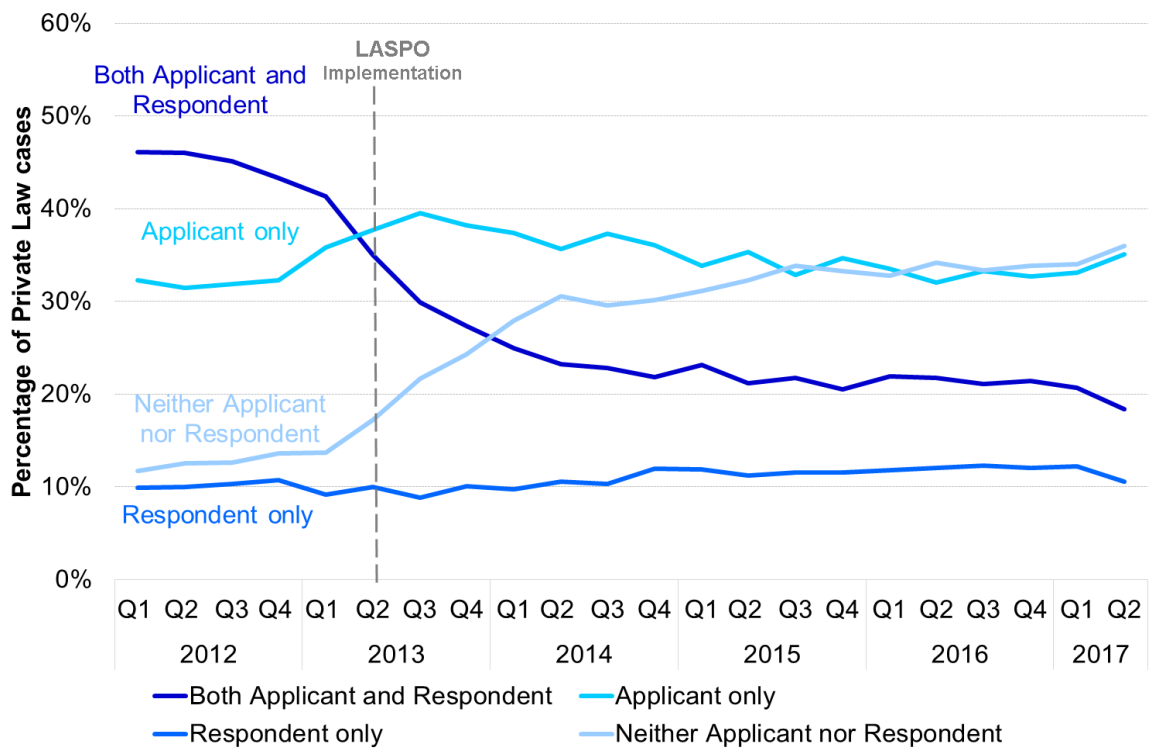
In general, across all family case types, cases where either both parties or the respondent only had legal representation took longer to be disposed than those cases where only the applicant was represented or where both parties were without legal representation (Table 8).

The proportion of parties with legal representation in cases with at least one hearing varies by case type, from around 75% for Public law to 2% for adoption cases (Table 9).

Legal representation in Private law cases

The removal of legal aid for many Private law cases in April 2013 resulted in a change in the pattern of legal representation over time³. In April to June 2017, the proportion of disposals where neither the applicant nor respondent had legal representation was 36%, an increase of 19 percentage points since April to June 2013. Correspondingly, the proportion of cases where both parties had legal representation dropped by 17 percentage points to 18% over the same period (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Proportion of private law disposals by type of legal representation of the parties, January to March 2012 to April to June 2017 (Source: Table 8)



The change seen in the pattern of legal representation is also demonstrated in Private law cases with at least one hearing where the proportion of parties with legal representation dropped from 59% in 2012 to 33% in April to June 2017.

³ Please see the accompanying guide for further details.

5. Divorce

Decrease in the number of divorce petitions, with a continuing stable trend in timeliness of proceedings

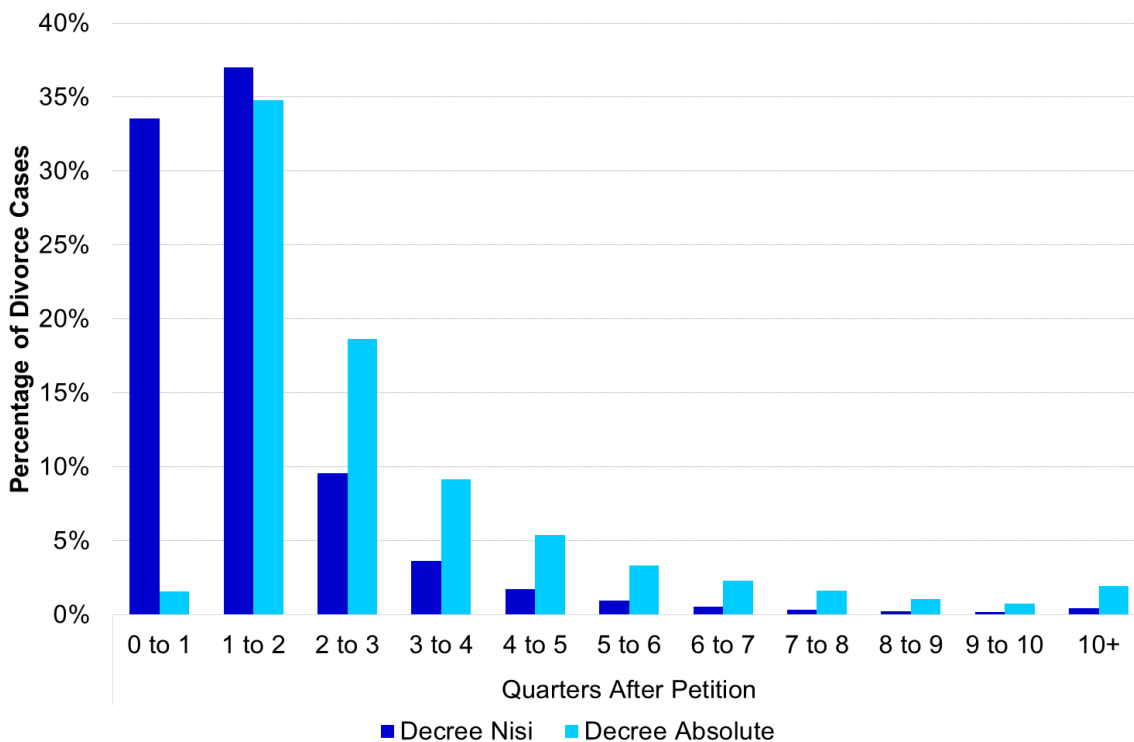
Divorce petitions down 10% in April to June 2017 compared to same period in previous year.

There were 27,291 divorce petitions made during April to June 2017, down 10% on the same quarter in 2016, whilst there were 26,626 Decrees Absolutes granted, down 9% over the same period (Table 10).

For those granted Decree Nisi in April to June 2017, the average time from the date of petition was 23.3 weeks, whilst the average time from petition to Decree Absolute was 48.2 weeks.

Table 12 and Figure 5 shows how long it takes, on average, for petitions to reach certain stages in the process, counted by the number of quarters elapsed.

Figure 5: Percentage of divorce cases started between Q1 2011 to Q2 2017 reaching Decree Nisi or Decree Absolute, by the number of quarters since petition (Source: Table 12)



Just over one-third (34%) of divorce petitions made between 1 January 2011 and 30 June 2017 reached Decree Nisi in the first quarter after the petition was made, with just over a further third (37%) reaching this stage within the second quarter. Over half the petitions reached Decree Absolute within three quarters after petition (2% in the first quarter, 35% within 1 to 2 quarters and 19% within 2 to 3 quarters).

6. Financial remedy

Decrease seen in financial remedy applications, with a slight increase in disposals

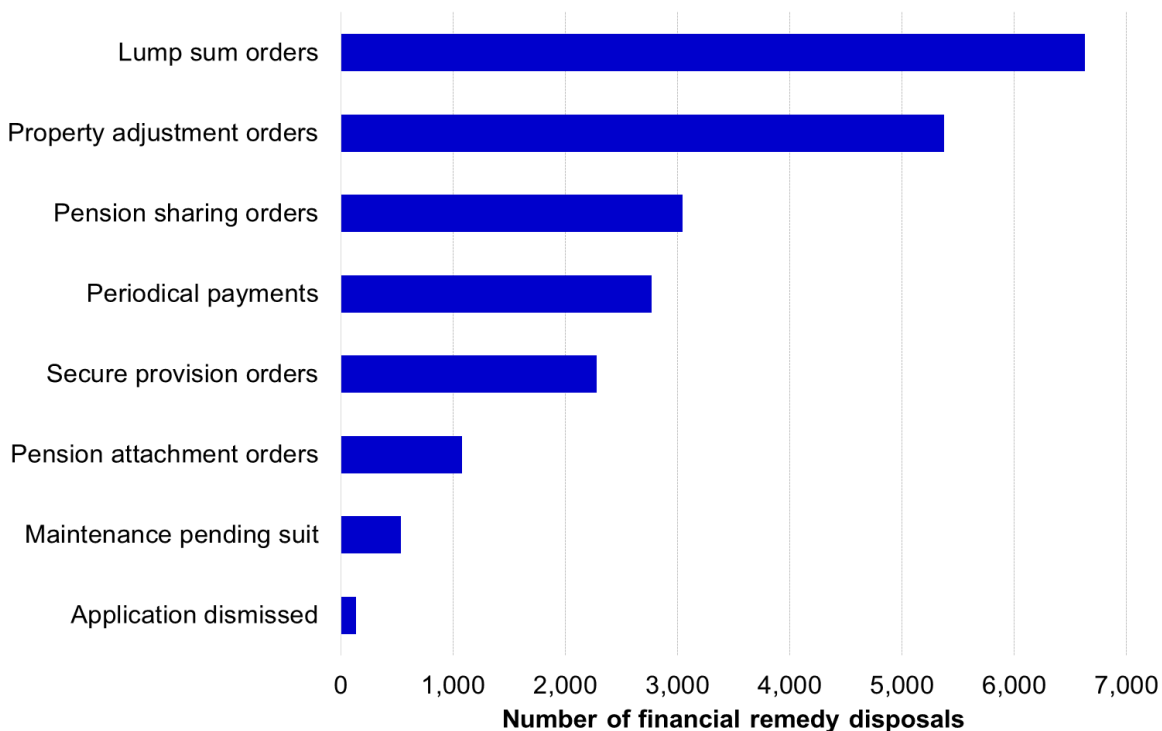
Number of financial remedy applications down 3% to 11,517. However, disposals up 4% over the same period.

There were 11,517 financial remedy applications in April to June 2017, down 3% on the equivalent quarter in 2016 (Table 13).

In April to June 2017, there were 10,467 financial remedy disposals, up 4% on the equivalent quarter in 2016. During this period, 72% of disposals were uncontested, 20% were initially contested and 8% were contested throughout.

In April to June 2017, lump sum and property adjustment orders were the most common types of order given, accounting for over half (55%) of all financial remedy disposal types (Table 14 and Figure 6).

Figure 6: Financial remedy disposal types, April to June 2017 (Source: Table 14)



7. Domestic violence remedy orders

Number of domestic violence remedy order applications remains stable

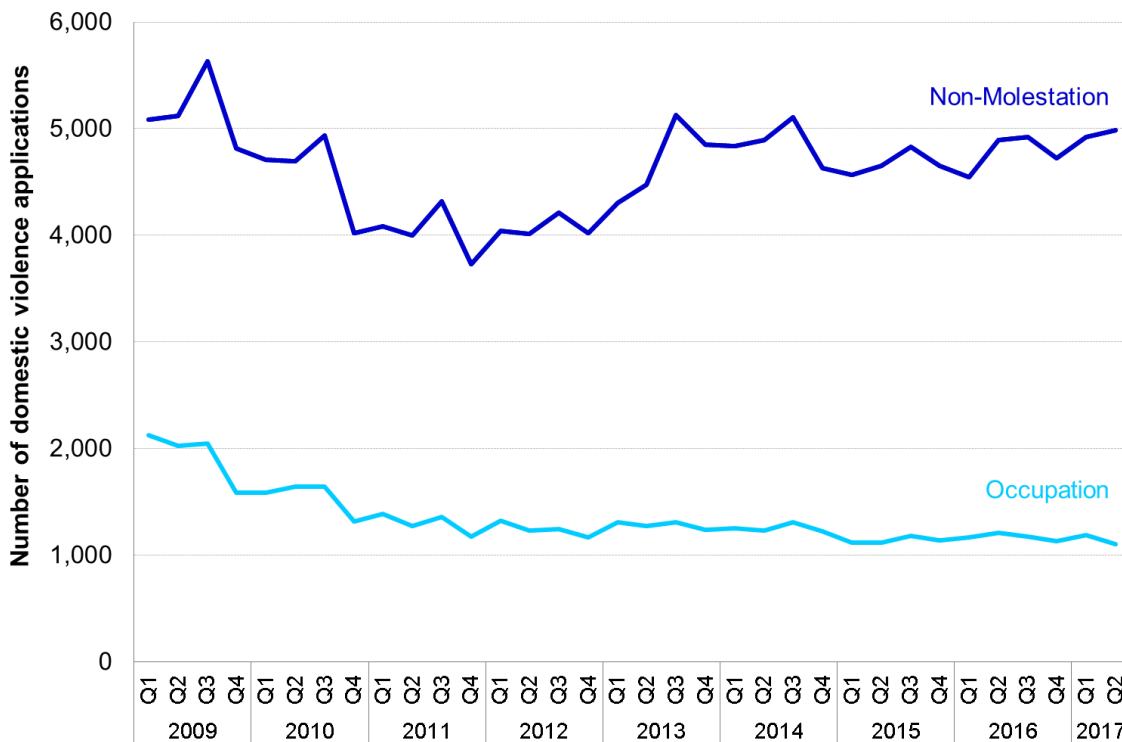
In April to June 2017, number of applications remained stable compared to the same period in 2016.

In April to June 2017, there were 6,094 applications made for a domestic violence remedy order, unchanged from the same quarter in 2016 (Table 15). The majority of applications were for non-molestation orders (82%) compared to occupation orders (18%).

Similarly, of the 6,827 domestic violence orders made in April to June 2017, 91% were non-molestation orders compared to 9% which were occupation orders.

Figure 7 below shows that, since 2011 the number of occupation applications has remained fairly steady, whilst for non-molestation applications there was a general increasing trend until the end of 2013, but since then, although fluctuating on a quarterly basis the trend has slowed down considerably, and stabilised around 4,500.

Figure 7: Applications for domestic violence remedy orders, January to March 2009 to April to June 2017 (Source: Table 15)

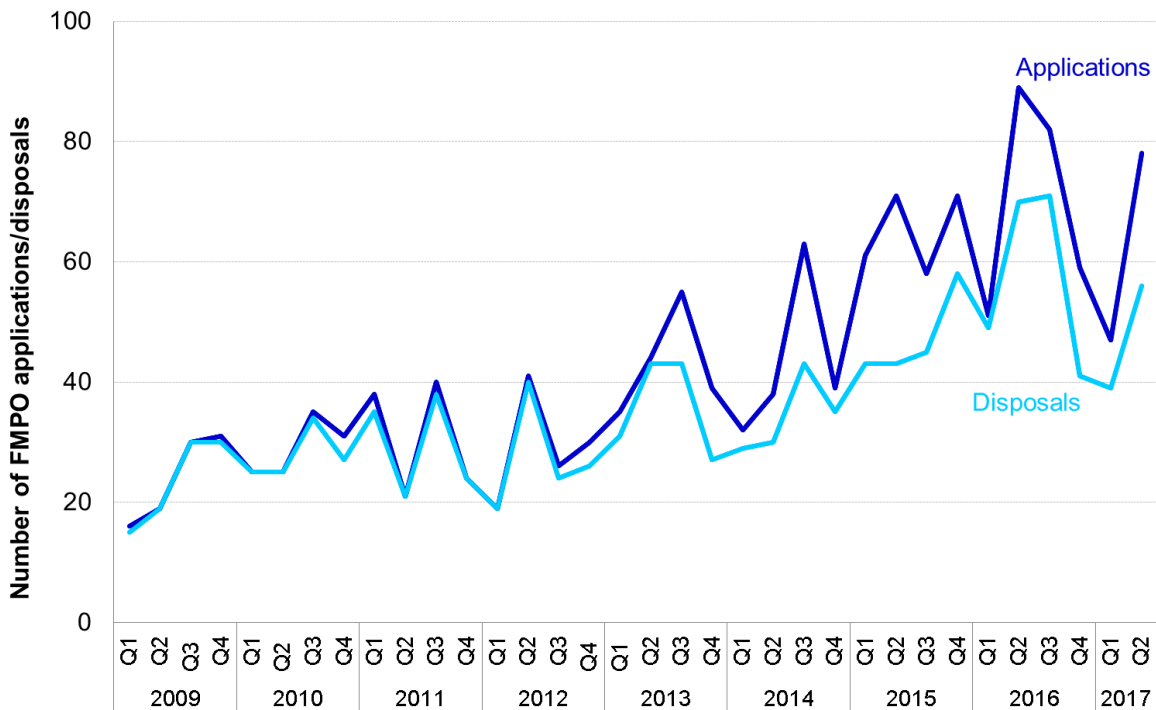


8. Forced Marriage Protection Orders and Female Genital Mutilation Protection Orders

General upward trend in number of forced marriage protection orders and female genital mutilation orders

The number of applications and orders made for Forced Marriage Protection Orders (FMPOs) is very small. Consequently, as Figure 8 shows, numbers fluctuate each quarter but overall there has been a general upward trend since their introduction in November 2008. In April to June 2017, there were 78 applications and 72 orders made (Table 16). Of those applications, 77% of the applicants were aged 17 and under, compared to 21% aged over 17.

Figure 8: Applications and disposals of Forced Marriage Protection Orders, January to March 2009 to April to June 2017 (Source: Table 16)



As with FMPOs, the number of applications and orders made for Female Genital Mutilation Protection Orders (FGMPOs) is very small with only 26 and 32 made respectively in April to June 2017 (Table 17). In total there have been 163 applications and 145 orders made up to the end of June 2017 since their introduction in July 2015.

9. Adoptions

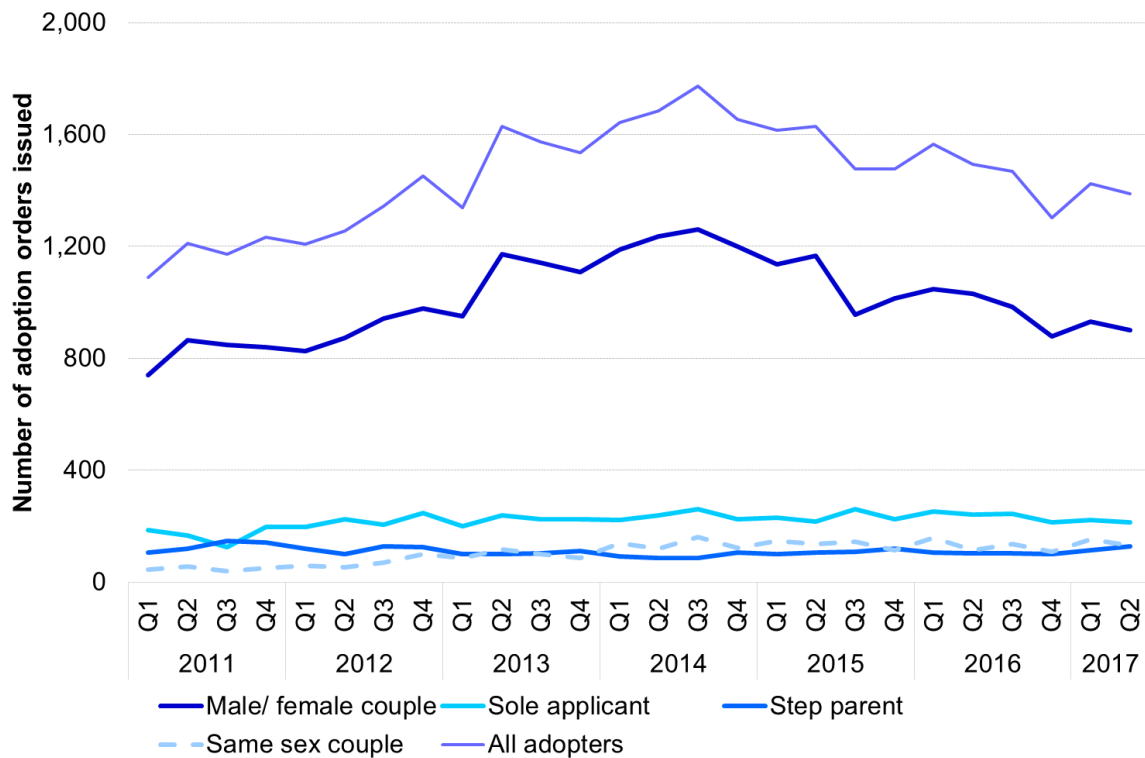
Number of adoption applications and orders continues downward trend

During April to June 2017, there were 1,269 adoption order applications made, down 12% from the equivalent quarter in 2016. Similarly, over the same period the number of adoption orders issued decreased 7% to 1,389 (Table 19).

There were 2,909 applications under the Adoption and Children Act 2002, including placement orders during April to June 2017, a 7% decrease on the same quarter in the previous year. Total disposals also dropped 11% to 2,677 over the same period.

Figure 9 below shows the trend of adoption orders by the type of adopter. This shows that during April to June 2017, two-thirds (65%) of all adoption orders were issued to male/female couples, 15% to sole applicants, 10% to same-sex couples and a further 9% to step-parents.

Figure 9: Adoption orders issued, by adopter, January to March 2011 to April to June 2017 (Source: Table 19)

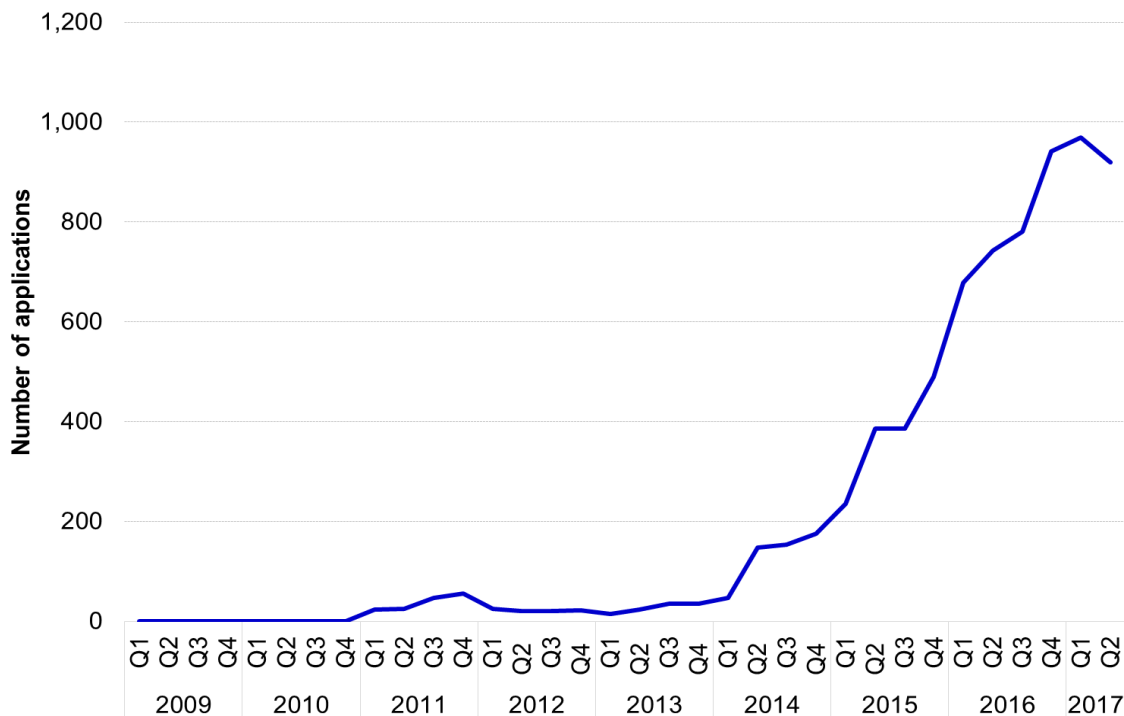


10 Mental Capacity Act - Court of Protection

Continued increasing trend in applications and orders made in relation to deprivation of liberty

There were 919 applications relating to deprivation of liberty made in the most recent quarter, up 24% on the number made in April to June 2016. Similarly, orders made for deprivation of liberty almost doubled over the same period, from 375 to 689 respectively.

Figure 10: Deprivation of Liberty applications, January to March 2008 to April to June 2017 (Source: Table 20)



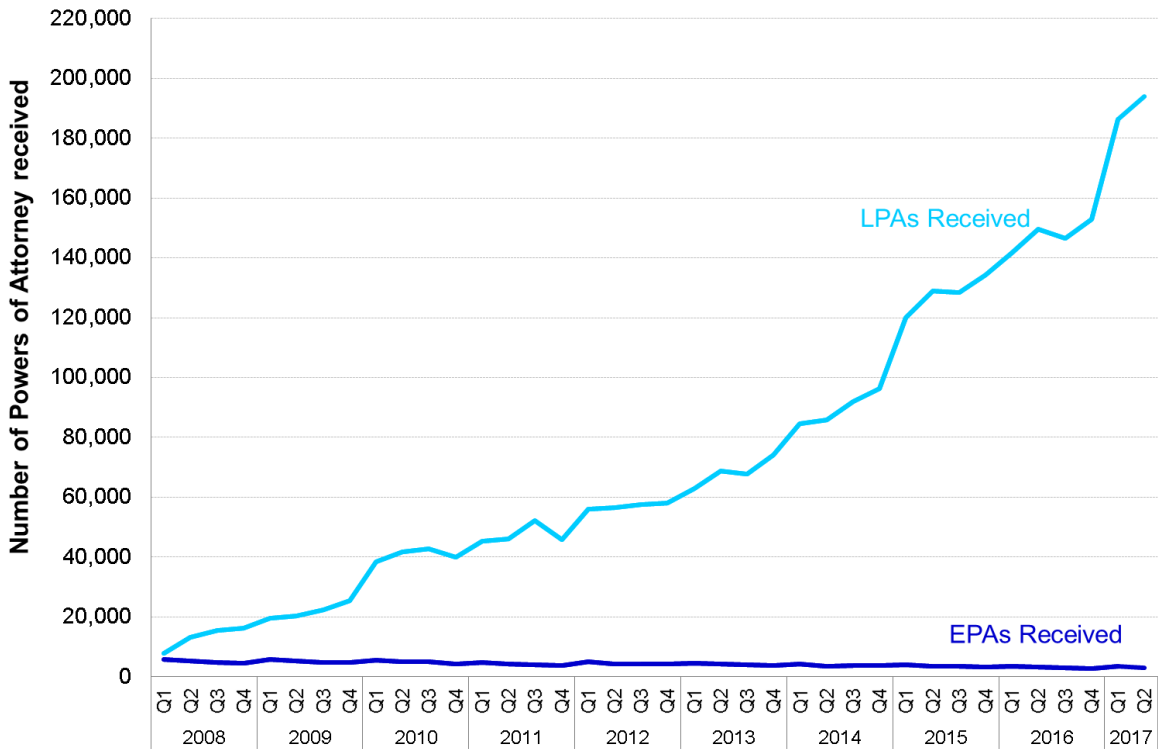
In April to June 2017, there were 7,623 applications made under the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA), unchanged from the equivalent quarter in 2016 (7,616 applications). Just under half (49%) related to applications for appointment of a property and affairs deputy (Table 20).

In comparison, there were 10,205 orders made under the MCA, 52% more than the same quarter in 2016, driven by a clearance of outstanding cases and an increase in the number of cases being dealt with by regional courts. Almost half (41%) of the orders related to the appointment of a deputy for property and affairs (Table 21).

11 Mental Capacity Act - Office of the Public Guardian

There were 194,012 Lasting Powers of Attorney (LPAs) received in April to June 2017, up 30% on the same quarter for 2016 and maintaining the strong upward trend (Table 22). The increase seen in recent years is largely due to increased publicity and new online forms which were introduced in July 2015 making it simpler and faster to apply for LPAs. There were 2,953 Enduring Powers of Attorney (EPAs) in April to June 2017, down 9% on the equivalent quarter in 2016.

Figure 11: Powers of attorney received, January to March 2008 to April to June 2017 (Source: Table 22)



Further information

The data presented in this publication are from live administrative databases. Therefore previously published data is liable to be updated in the latest bulletin, following any further data cleaning or the incorporation of additional cases not available in the extracts used to produce previous bulletins.

Accompanying files

As well as this bulletin, the following products are published as part of this release:

- A technical guide providing further information on how the data is collected and processed, as well as information on the revisions policy and legislation relevant to family court and background on the functioning of the family justice system
- A set of overview tables and CSV files, covering each section of this bulletin
- A family court statistics visualisation tool available at public.tableau.com/profile/moj.analysis#!/vizhome/FamilyCourtstatistics2017Q2/Frontpage.



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