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AN ROINN

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

MÄNNYSTRIE O

**Poustie, Resydènter Heisin
an Fowk Siccar**

**Statistical First Release
The Adoption of Looked After Children in
Northern Ireland
2005-06**

Reader Information

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About Community Information Branch

The purpose of Community Information Branch is to promote effective decision making in children and adult social services by providing quality information and analysis. We collect, analyse, and disseminate 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 Trust performance, for corporate monitoring, policy evaluation, and to respond to parliamentary / assembly questions. Information is widely disseminated through a number of regular key statistical publications and ad hoc reports, details of which are available by clicking on the link below.

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Our Vision and Values

Community Information Branch aims to:

- provide up-to-date, quality information on children and adult social services and community health;
- 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.

This Statistical First Release provides the earliest information about children adopted from care in Northern Ireland during the year ending 31 March 2006. The data were collected in respect of former Health and Social Services Trusts during the period from August 2006 to October 2007. The tables in this first release bulletin detail a range of information relating to children adopted from care, including gender and age, and the durations between different stages in the adoption process. Information was collected using the annual AD1 statistical return.

January 2008

Theme:

Health and Care:
Adoption of Looked After Children
in Northern Ireland 2005-06

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Main Findings

- Fifty-six children were adopted from care during the year ending 31 March 2006, just under 30% less than the number adopted in 2004 (79).
- The percentage of looked after children adopted from care fell from 3.2% in 2004 to 2.2% in 2006. In England, 6% of looked after children were adopted from care in 2006.
- The average age of children when adopted was 5 years 4 months (2006).
- From last entry into care, the average duration to adoption for children adopted in 2006, was 4 years 1 month. In 2004, the average was 3 years 10 months, and 3 years 4 months in 2003.
- The average duration from last admission into care to the Trust LAC best interest proposal for children adopted in 2006, was 1 year 4 months, and 1 year 8 months for children adopted in 2004.
- In 2006, on average it was 7 months from the Trust LAC best interest proposal to when the Trust accepted the adoption panels recommendation that adoption was in the best interest of the child.
- For children adopted in 2006, the average duration from the Trust LAC best interest proposal to adoption was 2 years 8 months, compared with 2 years 3 months in 2004.
- In 2006, 26 (46%) children were adopted by foster carers, less than half that in 2004 (54). For Wales in 2006, 15% of children adopted from care were adopted by former foster carers.
- Of the 26 children adopted by foster carers in 2006, 12 (46%) were placed for adoption within 12 months of the Trust best interest decision, and 14 (54%) were placed 12 months or longer after the best interest decision.
- The average age of children at the time of adoption by foster carers was 6 years 11 months, compared with 3 years 11 months for other adopted children.
- From last entry into care, the average duration to adoption for foster carer adoptions was 5 years 6 months, 2 years 9 months longer than for other adopted children (2 years 9 months).
- In 2006, 54% (30) of children adopted from care in Northern Ireland were placed for adoption within 12 months of the best interest decision, which is almost 25 percentage points lower than the equivalent figure for England (77%).

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Table 1
Looked after children adopted during the year ending 31 March

	Number			Percentages		
	2003	2004	2006	2003	2004	2006
children	109	79	56	100	100	100
Percentage of looked after children adopted from care¹	4.4%	3.2%	2.2%	-	-	-
Gender	109	79	56	100%	100%	100%
Boys	55	48	29	50%	61%	52%
Girls	54	31	27	50%	39%	48%
Age at adoption	109	79	56	100%	100%	100%
Under 1	14	0	0	13%	0%	0%
1 to 4	47	45	31	43%	57%	55%
5 to 11	44	28	19	40%	35%	34%
12 to 15	4	4	6	4%	5%	11%
16+	0	2	0	0%	3%	0%
Average age (yrs:months)	4:10	5:6	5:4			
Minimum age (yrs:months)	0:9	1:1	1:2			
Maximum age (yrs:months)	15:9	16:7	15:6			
Duration of final period of care	109	75	56	100%	100%	100%
Under 1 year	20	0	0	18%	0%	0%
1 year to under 2 years	20	22	12	18%	29%	21%
2 years to under 3 years	19	21	15	17%	28%	27%
3 years to under 5 years	27	13	18	25%	17%	32%
5 years to under 10 years	17	17	5	16%	23%	9%
10 years and over	6	2	6	6%	3%	11%
Average duration (yrs:months)	3:4	3:10	4:1			
Minimum duration (yrs:months)	0:7	1:1	1:1			
Maximum duration (yrs:months)	12:4	16:6	14:11			

¹ Percentage of total looked after at 31 March the previous year

² Children Looked After in England (Including Adoptions and Care Leavers), 2005-06

Main Points

- Fifty-six children were adopted from care during the year ending 31 March 2006, just under 30% less than the number adopted in 2004 (79).
- The percentage of looked after children adopted from care fell from 3.2% in 2004 to 2.2% in 2006. In England, 6% of looked after children were adopted from care in 2006².
- Of the children adopted in 2006, 29(52%) were boys and 27(48%) were girls.
- The average age of children adopted in 2006, was 5 years 4 months, ranging from 1 year 2 months to 15 years and 6 months.
- From last entry into care, the average duration to adoption for children adopted in 2006, was 4 years 1 month. In 2004, the average was 3 years 10 months, and 3 years 4 months in 2003.

Table 2
Average durations between different stages of the adoption process, and average ages of children at each stage of the adoption process, year ending 31 March

Stages of the adoption process	Average Duration (Years : Months)		
	2003	2004	2006
Last admission into care to Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal	1:5	1:8	1:4
Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal to:			
Date panel recommend adopters as suitable for child	1:3	1:4	1:9
Date Trust accept Panel recommendation that adopters are suitable for child	1:3	1:5	1:10
Date child placed with adopters for adoption	1:8	1:8	1:10
Date Adoption Order granted	2:1	2:3	2:8

Stages of the adoption process	Average Age (Years : Months)		
	2003	2004	2006
Last admission into care	1:5	1:4	1:3
Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal	2:9	2:11	2:8
Trust Best Interest Decision	3:5	3:6	3:3
Date panel recommend adopters as suitable for child	4:1	4:3	4:5
Date Trust accept Panel recommendation that adopters are suitable for child	4:1	4:3	4:6
Date child placed with adopters for adoption	5:1	4:11	4:6
Date Adoption Order granted	4:10	5:6	5:4

Main Points

- The average duration from last admission into care to Trust LAC best interest proposal for children adopted in 2006 was 1 year 4 months, and 1 year 8 months for children adopted in 2004.
- In 2006, on average it was 7 months from the Trust LAC best interest proposal to when the Trust accepted the adoption panels recommendation that adoption was in the best interest of the child (this duration is not detailed in Table 2).
- For children adopted in 2006, the average duration from the Trust LAC best interest proposal to adoption was 2 years 8 months, compared with 2 years 3 months in 2004.
- The average age of children adopted in 2006, at the time of last admission into care was 1 year 3 months, and 2 years 8 months at the Trust LAC best interest proposal.

Table 3

Average duration between different stages of the adoption process by age at the start the last period in care, year ending 31 March

Age at start of last period of care	Average duration between entry into care and Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal			Average duration between date of Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal and matching of child and adopters			Average duration between date of matching and date placed for adoption			Average duration between date placed for adoption and granting of the adoption order			Average duration between last entry into care and adoption		
	2003	2004	2006	2003	2004	2006	2003	2004	2006	2003	2004	2006	2003	2004	2006
Under 1	0:11	1:2	1:3	1:0	1:2	1:10	0:1	0:2	0:1	0:7	0:10	0:9	2:8	3:2	4:0
1	1:9	1:5	1:10	1:11	1:8	1:11	0:1	0:3	0:0	0:10	0:8	0:8	4:5	3:11	4:6
2	1:3	4:2	2:1	1:4	1:8	2:1	0:1	0:3	0:1	0:9	0:11	1:1	3:7	7:0	5:2
3	3:9	1:7	0:9	1:6	1:10	1:4	0:3	0:4	0:1	0:8	0:5	0:9	5:9	4:0	2:11*
4	0:11	2:3	-	1:5	0:11	-	0:1	0:0	-	0:8	0:9	-	3:1	4:0	-
5 & over	1:2	1:5	-	1:3	1:4	-	0:5	0:0	-	0:6	0:5	-	3:4	3:7	-
All Children	1:3	1:7	1:4	1:3	1:5	1:10	0:2	0:2	0:1	0:8	0:9	0:10	3:4	3:10	4:1

- Not applicable for 2006

* Includes children aged 3 and older

Main Points

- For children adopted in 2006, the average duration between last entry into care and the Trust LAC best interest proposal was 1 year 3 months for children aged under 1 at the time of last admission into care, 1 year 10 months for children aged 1, and 2 years 1 month for children aged 2.
- The average duration between last entry into care and adoption in 2006 was 4 years 0 months for children under 1 at last admission into care, 4 years 6 months for children aged 1, and 5 years 2 months for children aged 2.
- The average duration between the Trust LAC best interest proposal and matching the child with adopters increased from 1 year 5 months in 2004, to 1 year 10 months in 2006.

Table 4
Average duration between Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal and adoption by age, year ending 31 March

Age at Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal	(Years : Months)		
	Average duration of adoption process, from time of Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal		
	2003	2004	2006
All Children	2:1	2:3	2:8
Under 1	1:5	1:8	2:8
1	2:11	2:4	2:8
2	2:10	2:7	3:0
3	2:6	2:7	2:1*
4	2:0	3:9	-
5 & over	2:4	2:6	-

- No applicable for 2005/06

* Includes children aged 3 and older

Table 5
Foster care adoptions, year ending 31 March

	2003	2004	2006
All Children	65	54	26
Placed within 12 months of Trust Best Interest Decision	20	14	12
%	31%	26%	46%
Placed after 12 months of Trust Best Interest Decision	45	40	14
%	69%	74%	54%

Main Points

- In 2006, the average duration from the Trust LAC best interest proposal to adoption, was 2 years 8 months, compared with 2 years 3 months in 2004, and 2 years 3 months in 2004.
- There was little difference in the average duration from the Trust LAC best interest proposal to adoption, for children aged under 1 (2 years 8 months), children aged 1 (2 years 8 months), and children aged 2 (3 years 0 months) at the time of the best interest LAC proposal in 2006.

Main Points

- In 2006, 26 (46%) children were adopted by foster carers, less than half that in 2004 (54). For Wales in 2006, 15% of children adopted from care were adopted by former foster carers¹.
- Of the 26 children adopted by foster carers in 2006, 12 (46%) were placed for adoption within 12 months of the Trust best interest decision, and 14 (54%) were placed 12 months or longer after the best interest decision.

¹Adoptions, Outcomes and Placements for Children Looked After by Local Authorities: year ending 31 March 2006

Table 6

Foster care adoptions by age and duration of final period in care, year ending 31 March 2006

	Numbers		Percentages	
	Not adopted by foster carers	Adopted by foster carers	Not adopted by foster carers	Adopted by foster carers
Gender	30	26	100%	100%
Boys	15	14	50%	54%
Girls	15	12	50%	46%
Age at adoption	30	26	100%	100%
Under 1	0	0	0%	0%
1 to 4	20	11	67%	42%
5 to 11	10	9	33%	35%
12 to 15	0	6	0%	23%
16+	0	0	0%	0%
Average age (yrs:months)	3:11	6:11		
Median age (yrs:months)	3:1	5:6		
Minimum age (yrs:months)	1:2	1:8		
Maximum age (yrs:months)	8:1	15:6		
Duration of final period of care	30	26	100%	87%
Under 1 year	0	0	0%	0%
1 year to under 2 years	8	4	15%	13%
2 years to under 3 years	10	5	19%	17%
3 years or longer	12	17	65%	57%
Average duration (yrs:months)	2:9	5:6		
Median duration (yrs:months)	2:8	3:5		
Minimum duration (yrs:months)	1:1	1:7		
Maximum duration (yrs:months)	5:0	14:11		

Main Points

- In 2006, of the 56 children adopted, 26 (46%) were foster care adoptions.
- Of the 26 children adopted by foster carers, 14(54%) were boys and 12(46%) were girls.
- The average age of children at adoption by foster carers was 6 years 11 months, compared with 3 years 11 months for other adopted children.
- From last entry into care, the average duration to adoption for foster carer adoptions was 5 years 6 months, 2 years 9 months longer than for other adopted children (2 years 9 months).

Table 7

Timing of adoption placements in 2006, for Northern Ireland & England¹

	Percentages	
	Northern Ireland	England
Placed within 12 months of best interest decision	54%	77%
Placed over 12 months of best interest decision	46%	23%

Main Points

- In 2006, 54% (30) of children adopted from care in Northern Ireland were placed for adoption within 12 months of the best interest decision², which is almost 25 percentage points lower than the equivalent figure for England (77%).
- Conversely, 46% (26) of children in Northern Ireland were placed for adoption 12 months or longer after the best interest decision, compared with 23% in England

¹Children Looked After in England (Including Adoptions and Care Leavers), 2005-06

²The best interest decision is when the Trust (Local Authority in England) accepts the Adoption Panel's recommendation that adoption is in the best interests of the child.

Technical Notes

The AD1 return

The figures for children adopted from care in Northern Ireland were derived from AD1 statistical returns for relevant years. These returns were submitted to the DHSS&PS by each of the 11 Health & Social Services Trusts, as they were prior to April 2007.

The AD1 statistical return collects individual level figures for children adopted from care. The survey 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.

Validation checks

Some Trusts continued to have difficulty providing parts of the information requested, which led to lengthy delays in submitting their returns to the Department. It is expected that the timeliness and quality of AD1 survey returns will improve significantly for future years.

The AD1 survey returns for 2005/06 were quality assured by nominated staff within Trusts prior to submission to the Department, and Trusts were afforded every opportunity to amend or comment on the information provided in the return.

Calculations

Calculations relating to average durations within and between key dates in the adoption process are based on information available from Trust survey returns. 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.

Figures on the Internet

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http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/stats-cib/stats-cib_pubs/statistics_and_research-cib_ad1.htm