

Adoption of Looked After Children in Northern Ireland (2007/08)

This statistical bulletin provides information about children adopted from care in Northern Ireland during the year ending 31 March 2008. The tables in the 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 from HSC Trusts using the annual AD1 statistical return.

Summary

- Sixty-four children were adopted from care during the year ending 31 March 2008, eight more than the number adopted in 2006 (56).
- Between 2006 and 2008, the percentage of looked after children adopted from care increased slightly from 2.2% to 2.7%.
- In 2007/08, the average age of children adopted from care was 4 years 11 months.
- From last entry into care, the average length of time for a child to be adopted in 2008, was 3 years 6 months, 7 months less than the time taken in 2006 (4 years and 1 month).
- For children adopted in 2008, the average duration from the Trust LAC best interest proposal to adoption was 2 years 5 months, compared with 2 years 8 months in 2006.
- In 2008, 39 (61%) children were adopted by foster carers, 13 more than the number in 2006 (26).
- Of the 39 children adopted by foster carers in 2008, 14 (36%) were placed for adoption within 12 months of the Trust best interest decision, and 25 (64%) were placed 12 months or longer after the best interest decision.
- The average age of children at adoption by foster carers was 6 years, compared with 3 years 3 months for other adopted children.
- The average length of time from last entry into care to adoption for foster carer adoptions was 4 years 1 month, 1 year 6 months longer than for other adopted children (2 years 7 months).

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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.

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/stats-cib/stats-cib_pubs.htm

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.

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Table 1:- Looked after children adopted during the year ending 31 March^{1, 2}

	Number				Percentages			
	2004	2005	2006	2008	2004	2005	2006	2008
All children	79	88	56	64	100	100	100	100
Percentage of looked after children adopted from care	3.2%	3.5%	2.2%	2.7%				
Gender	79	88	56	64	100%	100%	100%	100%
Boys	48	46	29	32	61%	52%	52%	50%
Girls	31	42	27	32	39%	48%	48%	50%
Age at adoption	79	88	56	64	100%	100%	100%	100%
Under 4	45	53	31	38	57%	60%	55%	59%
5+	34	35	25	26	43%	40%	45%	41%
Average age (yrs:months)	5:6	4:8	5:4	4:11				
Minimum age (yrs:months)	1:1	1:0	1:2	0:9				
Maximum age (yrs:months)	16:7	13:9	15:6	16:4				
Duration of final period of care	75	88	56	64	100%	100%	100%	100%
Under 2 years	22	13	12	18	29%	15%	21%	28%
2 years to under 3 years	21	38	15	12	28%	43%	27%	19%
3 years to under 5 years	13	29	18	23	17%	33%	32%	36%
5 years and over	19	8	11	11	25%	9%	20%	17%
Average duration (yrs:months)	3:10	3:1	4:1	3:6				
Minimum duration (yrs:months)	1:1	1:0	1:1	0:5				
Maximum duration (yrs:months)	16:6	9:6	14:11	15:7				

Main Points

- Sixty-four children were adopted from care during the year ending 31 March 2008, eight more than the number adopted in 2006 (56).
- Between 2006 and 2008, the percentage of looked after children adopted from care increased slightly from 2.2% to 2.7%.
- In 2007/08, the average age of children adopted from care was 4 years 11 months, whilst the age at which children were adopted ranged from 9 months to 16 years and 4 months.
- From last entry into care, the average length of time for a child to be adopted in 2008, was 3 years 6 months, 7 months less than the time taken in 2006 (4 years and 1 month).

¹ A number of categories have been suppressed to avoid personal disclosure.

² Percentage of looked after children adopted is based on the looked after children population from the previous year.

Table 2:- Average durations between different stages of the adoption process during year ending 31 March

Stages of the adoption process	Average Duration (Years : Months)			
	2004	2005	2006	2008
Last admission into care to Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal	1:8	0:9	1:4	1:1
Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal to:				
Date panel recommend adopters as suitable for child	1:4	1:6	1:9	1:7
Date Trust accept Panel recommendation that adopters are suitable for child	1:5	1:8	1:10	1:8
Date child placed with adopters for adoption	1:8	1:8	1:10	1:9
Date Adoption Order granted	2:3	2:4	2:8	2:5

Main Points

- The average duration from last admission into care to Trust LAC best interest proposal for children adopted in 2008 was 1 year 1 month, slightly less than the average duration in 2006 (1 year 4 months).
- In 2008, on average it was 6 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 2008, the average duration from the Trust LAC best interest proposal to adoption was 2 years 5 months, compared with 2 years 8 months in 2006.
- In 2008, the average age of children at the time of their last admission into care was 1 year 5 months, whilst the average age at adoption was 4 years 11 months.

Table 3:- Average ages of children at each stage of the adoption process, year ending 31 March

Stages of the adoption process	Average Age (Years : Months)			
	2004	2005	2006	2008
Last admission into care	1:4	1:6	1:3	1:5
Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal	2:11	2:4	2:8	2:6
Trust Best Interest Decision	3:6	2:11	3:3	3:0
Date panel recommend adopters as suitable for child	4:3	3:9	4:5	4:1
Date Trust accept Panel recommendation that adopters are suitable for child	4:3	3:11	4:6	4:2
Date child placed with adopters for adoption	4:11	3:11	4:6	4:3
Date Adoption Order granted	5:6	4:8	5:4	4:11

Table 4:- Average duration between different stages of the adoption process by age at the start the last period in care, year ending 31 March ¹

(Years : Months)

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			
	2004	2005	2006	2008	2004	2005	2006	2008	2004	2005	2006	2008	2004	2005	2006	2008	2004	2005	2006	2008
Under 1	1:3	0:9	1:3	1:0	1:3	1:6	1:10	1:5	0:0	0:1	0:1	0:1	0:10	0:9	0:9	0:8	3:2	2:11	4:0	3:1
1	1:6	0:7	1:10	1:0	1:8	1:6	1:11	2:2	0:3	0:2	0:0	0:1	0:8	0:9	0:8	0:11	3:11	2:9	4:6	3:9
2	4:2	0:9	2:1	1:3	1:8	2:0	2:1	2:5	0:3	0:0	0:1	0:2	0:11	1:0	1:1	1:1	7:0	3:8	5:2	4:11
3 & over	1:7	1:0	0:9	1:6	1:6	1:7	1:4	1:8	0:2	0:0	0:1	0:1	0:6	0:7	0:9	0:5	3:10	3:4	2:11	3:7
All Children	1:8	0:9	1:4	1:1	1:5	1:8	1:10	1:8	0:2	0:1	0:1	0:1	0:9	0:10	0:10	0:8	3:10	3:1	4:1	3:6

Main Points

- For children adopted in 2008, the average duration between last entry into care and the Trust LAC best interest proposal was 1 year for children aged under 1 at the time of their last admission into care, 1 year for children aged 1, 1 year 3 months for children aged 2, and 1 year 6 months for children aged 3 & over.
- In 2007/08, the average duration between last entry into care and adoption was 3 years 1 month for children aged under 1 at the time of their last admission into care, 3 years 9 months for children aged 1, 4 years 11 months for children aged 2, and 3 years 7 months for children aged 3 & over.
- Since 2005/06, the average duration between the date placed for adoption and the date the adoption order was granted decreased from 10 months in 2005/06 to 8 months in 2007/08.

¹ 0:0 refers to less than 1 month.

Table 5:- 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			
	2004	2005	2006	2008
Under 1	1:8	2:3	2:8	2:1
1	2:4	2:1	2:8	3:2
2	2:7	2:10	3:0	3:7
3 & Over	2:7	2:4	2:1	2:2
All Children	2:3	2:4	2:8	2:5

Main Points

- In 2008, the average duration from the Trust LAC best interest proposal to adoption, was 2 years 5 months, slightly less than the time taken in 2006 (2 years 8 months).
- The average duration from the Trust LAC best interest proposal to adoption ranged from, 2 years 1 month for children aged under 1 at the time of the best interest LAC proposal, to 3 years 7 months for children aged 2.

Table 6:- Foster care adoptions, year ending 31 March

	2004	2005	2006	2008
All Children	54	42	26	39
Placed within 12 months of Trust Best Interest Decision	14	21	12	14
%	26%	50%	46%	36%
Placed after 12 months of Trust Best Interest Decision	40	21	14	25
%	74%	50%	54%	64%

Main Points

- In 2008, 39 (61%) children were adopted by foster carers, 13 more than the number in 2006 (26).
- Of the 39 children adopted by foster carers in 2008, 14 (36%) were placed for adoption within 12 months of the Trust best interest decision, and 25 (64%) were placed 12 months or longer after the best interest decision.

Table 7:- Foster care adoptions by age and duration of final period in care, year ending 31 March 2008 ¹

	Numbers		Percentages	
	Not adopted by foster carers	Adopted by foster carers	Not adopted by foster carers	Adopted by foster carers
Gender	25	39	100%	100%
Boys	13	19	52%	49%
Girls	12	20	48%	51%
Age at adoption	25	39	100%	100%
Under 4	21	17	72%	44%
5 & over	4	22	-	-
Average age (yrs:months)	3:3	6:0		
Median age (yrs:months)	2:6	5:1		
Minimum age (yrs:months)	0:9	2:0		
Maximum age (yrs:months)	9:4	16:4		
Duration of final period of care	25	39	36%	100%
Under 1 year	4	0	-	0%
1 year to under 2 years	9	5	36%	13%
2 years or longer	12	34	-	87%
Average duration (yrs:months)	2:7	4:1		
Median duration (yrs:months)	2:0	3:5		
Minimum duration (yrs:months)	0:5	1:0		
Maximum duration (yrs:months)	5:3	15:7		

Main Points

- In 2008, of the 64 children adopted, 39 (61%) were foster care adoptions.
- Of the 39 children adopted by foster carers, 20(51%) were girls and 19(49%) were boys.
- The average age of children at adoption by foster carers was 6 years, compared with 3 years 3 months for other adopted children.
- The average length of time from last entry into care to adoption for foster carer adoptions was 4 years 1 month, 1 year 6 months longer than for other adopted children (2 years 7 months).

¹ A number of categories have been suppressed to avoid personal disclosure.

Table 8:- Timing of adoption placements in 2008, for Northern Ireland & England ¹

	Percentages	
	Northern Ireland	England
Placed within 12 months of best interest decision	45%	77%
Placed over 12 months of best interest decision	55%	23%

Main Points

- In 2008, 45% (29) of children adopted from care in Northern Ireland were placed for adoption within 12 months of the best interest decision ², over 30 percentage points lower than the corresponding figure for England (77%).
- Conversely, 55% (35) of children in Northern Ireland were placed for adoption 12 months or longer after the best interest decision, compared with 23% in England.

¹ Information for England refers to 2005/06, the latest available at the time of publication.

² The best interest decision is when the HSC 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 5 Health & Social Services Trusts.

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 2007/08 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.

Additional Information

Further information on adults receiving domiciliary care services in Northern Ireland, is available from:

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