

Children Adopted from Care in Northern Ireland 2009/10

This biennial bulletin details statistical information relating to children adopted from care in Northern Ireland, during the year ending 31 March 2010. The tables within the bulletin present a range of information about these children, including gender and age, and durations between different stages in the adoption process. The bulletin is based on DHSSPS statistical return AD1 2009/10, which was collected from each of the five Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland.

Summary

- Fifty children were adopted from care during the year ending 31 March 2010, fourteen less than in 2008 (64);
- Between 2008 and 2010, the percentage of looked after children adopted from care dropped slightly from 2.7% to 2.0%;
- In 2010, the average age of children adopted from care was 4 years 8 months;
- From last entry into care, the average length of time for a child to be adopted in 2010, was 3 years 5 months, 1 month less than the time taken in 2008 (3 years and 6 months);
- For children adopted in 2010, the average duration from the Trust LAC best interest proposal to adoption was 2 years 4 months, compared with 2 years 5 months in 2008;
- In 2010, 68% (34) of children were adopted by foster carers, seven percentage points higher than in 2008 (61%);
- Of 34 children adopted by foster carers in 2010, 17 (50%) were placed for adoption within 12 months of the Trust best interest decision, and 17 (50%) took 12 months or longer to be placed for adoption;
- The average age of children at adoption by foster carers was 5 years 4 months, compared with 3 years 6 months for other adopted children;
- The average length of time from last entry into care to adoption for foster carer adoptions was 3 years 11 months, 1 year 5 months longer than for other adopted children (2 years 6 months);

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Reader Information

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Copyright	This publication is Crown copyright and may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium. Any material used must be acknowledged, and the title of the publication specified.
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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.

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/stats-cib-3.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.

Technical Notes

Data Collection

The information collected in this bulletin derives from the fourth 'AD1' survey of children adopted from care in Northern Ireland. AD1 survey returns were provided by each of the five Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland to Community Information Branch within the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

AD1 is an individual level survey, with one record for each young person fitting the parameters for the collection. Returns are completed online by nominated HSC Trust staff using a secure web-based application. Records are anonymised to protect the confidentiality of the young people whose details are included in the return.

Guidance notes and other documents associated with the completion of the AD1 survey are available to view or download from the DHSSPS website:

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/stats-cib-3/statistics_and_research-cib-survey/children_social_care_returns.htm

Rounding/Disclosure Conventions

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.

Data Quality

The South Eastern HSC Trust indicated that ten children were adopted from care during the survey period, but provided information for nine children only within their AD1 return.

All information submitted by HSC Trusts was validated at the point of entry, where Trust staff correct or amend data as required, and provide appropriate explanations if information is missing. AD1 returns are checked and quality assured by HSC Trust managers before being returned to CIB within the DHSSPS. CIB perform further checks, using historical data to monitor annual variations and emerging trends.

A detailed quality report for children's community statistics is available on our website at: http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/quality_report_for_childrens_statistics-3.pdf

Main Uses of Data

The main uses of these data are to monitor adoption process over time, for corporate monitoring, to inform and monitor policy and to respond to parliamentary/assembly questions and ad-hoc queries from users of these data.

Key Definitions

The Trust Looked After Children (LAC) Best Interest Proposal is the date when the Health and Social Care Trust decide that adoption is in the best interest of the child.

The Trust Best Interest Decision is the date when the Health and Social Care Trust (Local Authority in England) accepts the Adoption Panels recommendation that adoption is in the best interests of the child.

Related Publications

Details of statistics on children adopted from care published by other countries within the UK (United Kingdom) can be found as detailed below.

England

Statistics on 'Children looked after in England' (including adoption and care leavers) year ending 31 March 2010 are produced annually by the Department for Education. Figures for the year were published on 30th September 2010 and are available at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000960/index.shtml>

Wales

Statistics on Adoptions, Outcomes and Placements for Children Looked After by Local Authorities: Year ending 31 March 2010 are produced annually by the Welsh Assembly Government. Figures for the year were published on 16th September 2010 and are available at:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/health2010/100916/?lang=en>

AD1 Statistical 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 DHSSPS by each of the five Health & Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland.

AD1 collects individual level figures for children adopted from care. This 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 continue to have difficulty providing parts of the information requested, which led to lengthy delays in submitting returns to the DHSSPS. It is expected that the timeliness and quality of AD1 survey returns will improve significantly for future years.

The AD1 survey returns for 2009/10 were quality assured by nominated managers 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.

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

	Number				Percentages			
	2005	2006	2008	2010	2005	2006	2008	2010
All children	88	56	64	50	100	100	100	100
Percentage of looked after children adopted from care¹	3.5%	2.2%	2.7%	2.0%				
Gender	88	56	64	50	100%	100%	100%	100%
Boys	46	29	32	24	52%	52%	50%	48%
Girls	42	27	32	26	48%	48%	50%	52%
Age at adoption	88	56	64	50	100%	100%	100%	100%
Under 4	53	31	38	30	60%	55%	59%	60%
5 & Over	35	25	26	20	40%	45%	41%	40%
Average age (yrs:months)	4:8	5:4	4:11	4:8				
Minimum age (yrs:months)	1:0	1:2	0:9	1:0				
Maximum age (yrs:months)	13:9	15:6	16:4	10:7				
Duration of final period of care	88	56	64	50	100%	100%	100%	100%
Under 2 years	13	12	18	7	15%	21%	28%	14%
2 years to under 3 years	38	15	12	13	43%	27%	19%	26%
3 years to under 5 years	29	18	23	24	33%	32%	36%	48%
5 years & Over	8	11	11	6	9%	20%	17%	12%
Average duration (yrs:months)	3:1	4:1	3:6	3:5				
Minimum duration (yrs:months)	1:0	1:1	0:5	0:7				
Maximum duration (yrs:months)	9:6	14:11	15:7	7:4				

Main Points

- Fifty children were adopted from care during the year ending 31 March 2010, fourteen less than in 2008 (64).
- Between 2008 and 2010, the percentage of looked after children adopted from care decreased from 2.7% to 2.0%.
- In 2010, the average age of children adopted from care was 4 years 8 months, ranging from 1 year to 10 years 7 months.
- From last entry into care, the average length of time for a child to be adopted in 2010, was 3 years 5 months, one month less than that for 2008 (3 years and 6 month), and eight months less than the 4 years 1 month in 2006.

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)			
	2005	2006	2008	2010
Last admission into care to Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal	0:9	1:4	1:1	1:3
Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal to:				
Date panel recommend adopters as suitable for child	1:6	1:9	1:7	1:5
Date Trust accept Panel recommendation that adopters are suitable for child	1:8	1:10	1:8	1:6
Date child placed with adopters for adoption	1:8	1:10	1:9	1:6
Date Adoption Order granted	2:4	2:8	2:5	2:4

Main Points

- The average duration from last admission into care to Trust LAC best interest proposal for children adopted in 2010 was 1 year 3 months, slightly higher than the average duration in 2008 (1 year 1 month).
- In 2010, on average it was 5 months from the Trust LAC best interest proposal to when the Trust accepted the adoption panel's recommendation that adoption was in the best interest of the child (this duration is not detailed in Table 2).
- For children adopted in 2010, the average duration from the Trust LAC best interest proposal to adoption was 2 years 4 months, compared with 2 years 5 months in 2008.
- In 2010, the average age of children at the time of their last admission into care was 1 year 3 months, whilst the average age at adoption was 4 years 8 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)			
	2005	2006	2008	2010
Last admission into care	1:6	1:3	1:5	1:3
Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal	2:4	2:8	2:6	2:5
Trust Best Interest Decision	2:11	3:3	3:0	2:11
Date panel recommend adopters as suitable for child	3:9	4:5	4:1	3:9
Date Trust accept Panel recommendation that adopters are suitable for child	3:11	4:6	4:2	3:11
Date child placed with adopters for adoption	3:11	4:6	4:3	3:12
Date Adoption Order granted	4:8	5:4	4:11	4:8

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

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			
	2005	2006	2008	2010	2005	2006	2008	2010	2005	2006	2008	2010	2005	2006	2008	2010	2005	2006	2008	2010
Under 1	0:9	1:3	1:0	1:1	1:6	1:10	1:5	1:5	0:1	0:1	0:1	0:1	0:9	0:9	0:8	1:1	2:11	4:0	3:1	3:4
1	0:7	1:10	1:0	1:2	1:6	1:11	2:2	1:8	0:2	0:0	0:1	0:1	0:9	0:8	0:11	1:2	2:9	4:6	3:9	3:6
2	0:9	2:1	1:3	1:5	2:0	2:1	2:5	1:4	0:0	0:1	0:2	0:2	1:0	1:1	1:1	0:8	3:8	5:2	4:11	2:11
3 & over	1:0	0:9	1:6	1:11	1:7	1:4	1:8	1:7	0:0	0:1	0:1	0:1	0:7	0:9	0:5	1:0	3:4	2:11	3:7	4:3
All Children	0:9	1:4	1:1	1:4	1:8	1:10	1:8	1:6	0:1	0:1	0:1	0:1	0:10	0:10	0:8	1:0	3:1	4:1	3:6	3:5

Main Points

- For children adopted in 2010, the average duration between last entry into care and the Trust LAC best interest proposal was 1 year 1 month for children aged under 1 at the time of their last admission into care, 1 year 2 months for children aged 1, 1 year 5 months for children aged 2, and 1 year 11 months for children aged 3 & over.
- In 2009/10, the average duration between last entry into care and adoption was 3 years 4 months for children aged under 1 at the time of their last admission into care, 3 years 6 months for children aged 1, 2 years 11 months for children aged 2, and 4 years 3 months for children aged 3 & over.
- Since 2008/09, the average duration between the date placed for adoption and the date the adoption order was granted increased from 8 months in 2008/09 to 1 year in 2009/10.

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	Average duration of adoption process, from time of Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal			
	2005	2006	2008	2010
Under 1	2:3	2:8	2:1	2:3
1	2:1	2:8	3:2	2:8
2	2:10	3:0	3:7	2:1
3 & Over	2:4	2:1	2:2	2:4
All Children	2:4	2:8	2:5	2:4

Main Points

- In 2010, the average duration from the Trust LAC best interest proposal to adoption, was 2 years 4 months, slightly less than the time taken in 2008 (2 years 5 months);
- The average duration from the Trust LAC best interest proposal to adoption ranged from, 2 years 1 month for children aged 2 at the time of the best interest LAC proposal, to 2 years 8 months for children aged 1;

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

	2005	2006	2008	2010
All Children	42	26	39	34
Placed within 12 months of Trust Best Interest Decision	21	12	14	17
%	50%	46%	36%	50%
Placed after 12 months of Trust Best Interest Decision	21	14	25	17
%	50%	54%	64%	50%

Main Points

- In 2010, 68% (34) of children were adopted by foster carers, seven percentage points more than in 2008 (61%);
- Of 34 children adopted by foster carers in 2010, 17 (50%) were placed for adoption within 12 months of the best interest decision, and 17 (50%) took longer than 12 months to be placed for adoption following the best interest decision;

Table 7:- Foster care adoptions by age and duration of final period in care, year ending 31 March 2010 ¹

	Numbers		Percentages	
	Not adopted by foster carers	Adopted by foster carers	Not adopted by foster carers	Adopted by foster carers
Gender	16	34	100%	100%
Boys	9	15	56%	44%
Girls	7	19	44%	56%
Age at adoption	16	34	100%	100%
Under 4	13	18	81%	53%
5 & Over	3	16	19%	47%
Average age (yrs:months)	3:6	5:4		
Median age (yrs:months)	3:5	4:7		
Minimum age (yrs:months)	1:0	1:10		
Maximum age (yrs:months)	6:8	10:7		
Duration of final period of care	16	34	100%	100%
Under 1 year	2	0	13%	0%
1 year to under 2 years	2	3	13%	9%
2 years to under 3 years	12	31	75%	91%
Average duration (yrs:months)	2:6	3:11		
Median duration (yrs:months)	2:10	3:7		
Minimum duration (yrs:months)	0:7	1:5		
Maximum duration (yrs:months)	4:5	7:4		

Main Points

- In 2010, of the 50 children adopted, 34 (68%) were foster care adoptions;
- Of the 34 children adopted by foster carers, 19 (56%) were girls and 15 (44%) were boys;
- The average age of children at adoption by foster carers was 5 years 4 months, compared with 3 years 6 months for other adopted children;
- The average length of time from last entry into care to adoption for foster carer adoptions was 3 years 11 months, 1 year 5 months longer than for other adopted children (2 years 6 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	50%	72%
Placed over 12 months of best interest decision	50%	28%

Main Points

- In 2010, 50% (25) of children adopted from care in Northern Ireland were placed for adoption within 12 months of the best interest decision², 22 percentage points lower than the corresponding figure for England (72%).
- Conversely, 50% (25) of children in Northern Ireland were placed for adoption 12 months or longer after the best interest decision, compared with 28% in England.

¹ Information for England refers to 2009/10, the latest available at the time of publication.

Additional Information

Further information on children adopted from care in Northern Ireland, is available from:

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Alternatively, this statistical bulletin and other statistical bulletins published by Community Information Branch (CIB) are available to download from the internet at:

Internet address: http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/stats-cib-3.htm