



Children Adopted from Care in Northern Ireland 2011/12

This bulletin details statistical information relating to children adopted from care in Northern Ireland, during the year ending 31 March 2012. 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 the DHSSPS statistical return AD1 2011/12, which was collected from each of the five Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland.

Summary

- Sixty children were adopted from care during the year ending 31 March 2012, ten more than in 2010 (50);
- In 2011/12, the average age of children adopted from care was 5 years;
- As in 2009/10, from the last entry into care, the average length of time for a child to be adopted in 2011/12 was 3 years 5 months;
- For children adopted in 2011/12, the average duration from the Trust LAC best interest proposal to adoption was 2 years 4 months, the same as in 2009/10;
- The same number of children were adopted by their foster carers in both 2009/10 and 2011/12 (34 children). The proportion of foster care adoptions of the overall number of adoptions did however reduce from 68% to 57% in 2011/12;
- The average age of children adopted by their foster carers was 5 years 5 months compared with 4 years 6 months for other adopted children;
- The average length of time from last entry into care to adoption for foster care adoptions was 3 years 9 months, 10 months longer than for other adopted children;
- Of the 34 children adopted by foster carers in 2011/12, 47% were placed for adoption within 12 months of the Trust best interest decision.

Contents	Page
Reader Information	2
About CIB	3
Technical Notes	4
List of Tables	6
Children Adopted from Care 2011/12	7

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Reader Information

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About Community Information Branch

The purpose of Community Information Branch (CIB) 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.

A National Statistics Publication

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods; and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

If you have any comments on this publication, please complete our questionnaire at the following link:

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

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Technical Notes

Data Collection

The information collected in this bulletin derives from the fifth 'AD1' survey of children adopted from care in Northern Ireland. The AD1 survey return was 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) are produced annually by the Department for Education. Figures for the year ending 31 March 2012 are available at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001084/>

Wales

Statistics on Adoptions, Outcomes and Placements for Children Looked After by Local Authorities are produced annually by the Welsh Assembly Government. Figures for the year ending 31 March 2012 are available through the link below (including Annex 3 which provides web based tables):

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/health2012/120927/?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.

List of Tables

Chart 1	Number of Children Adopted from Care year ending 31 March	8
Figure 1	Number of Children adopted from care by HSC Trust year ending 31 March 2012	9
Table 1	Looked after children adopted during the year ending 31 March	10
Table 2	Duration of final period of care (year ending 31 March).....	10
Table 3	Average durations between different stages of the adoption process during year ending 31 March	11
Table 4	Average ages of children at each stage of the adoption process, year ending 31 March	11
Table 5	Average duration between different stages of the adoption process by age at the start the last period in care, year ending 31 March	12
Table 6	Average duration between Trust LAC best interest proposal and adoption by age, year ending 31 March	13
Table 7	Foster care adoptions year ending 31 March 2012	14
Table 8	Foster care adoptions by duration of final period in care, year ending 31 March 2012	15
Table 9	Foster care adoptions: Placement within 12 months of Trust Best Interest Decision, year ending 31 March.....	15
Table 10	Adoption statistics for Northern Ireland, England and Wales at year ending 31 March 2012	16

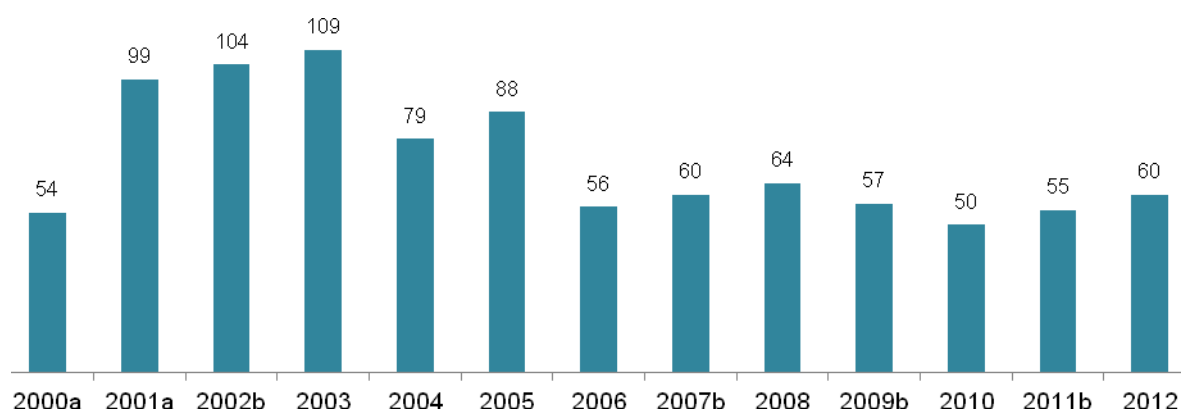
Children Adopted from Care in Northern Ireland 2011/12

Adoption is the legal process by which a child or a family group of children who cannot be brought up within their birth family become full, permanent and legal members of their new family. The adoption process in Northern Ireland is governed by robust legislation and guidance which promotes the lifelong welfare and best interests of these children when professionals are making decisions about their future. For adopters entering into the adoption arena it is about making a lifelong commitment to provide a loving family home for these children. Policy makers and practitioners review and monitor how the current adoption process best serves the needs of these vulnerable children. Statistics and other data are a means of doing this.

ADOPTION STATISTICS 2012

The number of looked after children adopted in Northern Ireland has stayed between fifty and just over sixty children since 2006 (Chart 1). In the year ending 31st March 2012, 60 children had been adopted from care in Northern Ireland¹, an increase of 10 adoptions from that in 2010.

Chart 1 Number of Children Adopted from Care year ending 31 March²



Source: AD1 Surveys http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/stats-cib.htm

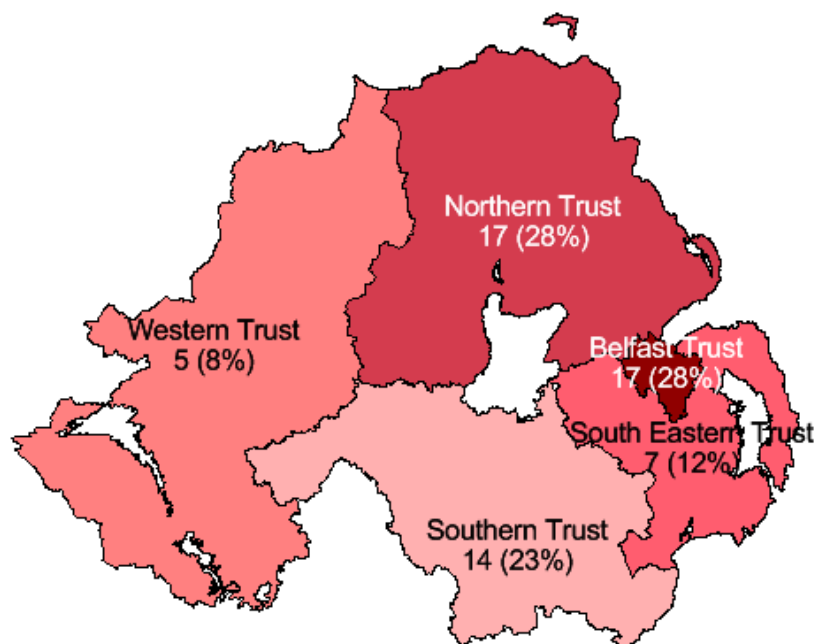
a - Source: *Adopting Best Care*, Social Services Inspectorate, DHSSPS May 2002

b - Number of adoptions has been estimated for the years when the AD1 survey was not collected.

¹ This includes adoptions of looked after children to both families in NI and other UK countries.

² The increase from 2001 may be due to an emphasis by all Trusts on encouraging foster carers to adopt foster children (*Adopting Best Care*, Social Services Inspectorate, DHSSPS May 2002).

Figure 1 Number of Children adopted from care by HSC Trust year ending 31 March 2012
(percentage of all children adopted from care)



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The Belfast HSC Trust and the Northern HSC Trust had the largest number of looked after children adopted from care in 2012 (17 children each), followed by the Southern HSC Trust where 14 looked after children were adopted. In the South Eastern and the Western HSC Trusts less than ten looked after children were adopted (Figure 1)³.

The majority of the looked after children (65%) were adopted as a single child adoption, where as 35% were adopted as part of a sibling group, ranging from 2 to 4 children in each sibling group. All adopters were either married couple adopters or single female adopters. Of the adopters, 13% had previously adopted a child or children⁴.

Table 1 sets out the main characteristics of looked after children adopted from care in Northern Ireland from 2006 to 2012. The proportion of boys compared with girls adopted has consistently been similar, with a 53% - 47% proportion split in 2012. In 2012, the age of children adopted from care ranged from 9 months to 10 years 8 months. The majority of the children were aged between 5 and 9 years, in contrast to previous years when the majority of the children were aged between 1 and 4 years.

³ Due to the small numbers involved, no further analysis will be provided at Trust level.

⁴ Please note that this is based on the 60 adoptions taken place in 2012, hence adopters who have adopted more than one child in 2012 will have been counted more than once.

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

	Number				Percentages			
	2006	2008	2010	2012	2006	2008	2010	2012
All children	56	64	50	60				
Boys	29	32	24	32	52%	50%	48%	53%
Girls	27	32	26	28	48%	50%	52%	47%
Age at adoption								
Under 1	0	<5	<5	<5	0%	-	-	-
1-4	31	35	30	26	55%	55%	60%	43%
5-9	18	21	17	30	32%	33%	34%	50%
10-15	7	<5	<5	<5	13%	-	-	-
16+	0	<5	0	0	0%	-	0%	0%
Average age (yrs:months)	5:4	4:11	4:8	5:0				
Minimum age (yrs:months)	1:2	0:9	1:0	0:9				
Maximum age (yrs:months)	15:6	16:4	10:7	10:8				

In order to avoid personal disclosure, some cells have been suppressed when the actual figure is less than 5.

" - " Represents a percentage that has been suppressed in order to prevent the actual figure from being calculated.

The final period of care for most of the children adopted from care in 2012 (35%) lasted between 3 years and 5 years with the average length of time being 3 years 5 months (Table 2). This was the same as in 2010. For 18% of the children, the last period of care lasted less than two years.

Table 2 Duration of final period of care (year ending 31 March)

	Number				Percentages			
	2006	2008	2010	2012	2006	2008	2010	2012
Duration of final period of care	56	64	50	60	100%	100%	100%	100%
Under 2 years	12	18	7	11	21%	28%	14%	18%
2 years to under 3 years	15	12	13	17	27%	19%	26%	28%
3 years to under 5 years	18	23	24	21	32%	36%	48%	35%
5 years & Over	11	11	6	11	20%	17%	12%	18%
Average duration (yrs:months)	4:1	3:6	3:5	3:5				
Minimum duration (yrs:months)	1:1	0:5	0:7	0:9				
Maximum duration (yrs:months)	14:11	15:7	7:4	7:11				

Table 3 sets out the duration between different stages of the adoption process. The average duration from last admission into care to Trust LAC best interest proposal for children adopted in 2012 was 1 year 1 months, slightly lower than in 2010 (1 year 4 months). In general it took 6 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 period ranged from 1 month to close to 2 years for the children adopted. Furthermore, the general duration from LAC Best Interest Proposal to the date

the Trust accepted the Panel's recommendation that adopters were suitable for the child was 1 year 7 months.

For children adopted in 2012, the average duration from the Trust LAC best interest proposal to adoption was 2 years 4 months, the same as in 2010.

Table 3 Average durations between different stages of the adoption process during year ending 31 March

Stages of the adoption process	Average Duration (Years : Months)			
	2006	2008	2010	2012
Last admission into care to Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal	1:4	1:1	1:4*	1:1
Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal to:				
Trust Best Interest Decision	0:7	0:6	0:5	0:6
Date panel recommend adopters as suitable for child	1:9	1:7	1:5	1:5
Date Trust accept Panel recommendation that adopters are suitable for child	1:10	1:8	1:6	1:7
Date child placed with adopters for adoption	1:10	1:9	1:6	1:9
Date Adoption Order granted	2:8	2:5	2:4	2:4

* Figure has been revised from the 2010 publication.

Note: The time between different stages of the adoption process may not add to the total time as some cases may be excluded from the in-between calculations.

Table 4 sets out the age of the child at different points in the adoption process. In 2012, the average age of children at the time of their last admission into care was 1 year 7 months, whilst the average age at adoption was 5 years. Despite the fact that, in general, the average age of the children at the different stages of the adoption process were somewhat higher in 2012 than in previous years, the duration of the adoption process was the same or slightly shorter than previous years.

Table 4 Average ages of children at each stage of the adoption process, year ending 31 March

Stages of the adoption process	Average Age (Years : Months)			
	2006	2008	2010	2012
Last admission into care	1:3	1:5	1:3	1:7
Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal	2:8	2:6	2:5	2:8
Trust Best Interest Decision	3:3	3:0	2:11	3:2
Date panel recommend adopters as suitable for child	4:5	4:1	3:9	4:2
Date Trust accept Panel recommendation that adopters are suitable for child	4:6	4:2	3:11	4:3
Date child placed with adopters for adoption	4:6	4:3	4:0	4:6
Date Adoption Order granted	5:4	4:11	4:8	5:0

Table 5 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			
	2006	2008	2010	2012	2006	2008	2010	2012	2006	2008	2010	2012	2006	2008	2010	2012	2006	2008	2010	2012
Under 1	1:3	1:0	1:1	1:2	1:10	1:5	1:5	1:7	0:1	0:1	0:1	0:0	0:9	0:8	1:1	0:11	4:0	3:1	3:4	3:7
1	1:10	1:0	1:3*	1:1	1:11	2:2	1:9*	2:0	0:0	0:1	0:1	0:0	0:8	0:11	1:4*	0:10	4:6	3:9	3:6	3:8
2	2:1	1:3	1:4*	1:3	2:1	2:5	1:4	1:4	0:1	0:2	0:2	0:4	1:1	1:1	0:8	0:11	5:2	4:11	2:11	3:7
3 & over	0:9	1:6	1:11	0:8	1:4	1:8	1:7	1:5	0:1	0:1	0:0*	0:1	0:9	0:5	1:0	0:8	2:11	3:7	4:3	2:8
All Children	1:4	1:1	1:4	1:1	1:10	1:8	1:6	1:7	0:1	0:1	0:1	0:1	0:10	0:8	1:1*	0:10	4:1	3:6	3:5	3:5

0:0 refers to less than 1 month.

Note: The time between different stages of the adoption process may not add to the total time as some cases may be excluded from the in-between calculations.

* Figures have been revised from the 2010 publication.

ADOPTION PROCESS BY AGE GROUP

Table 5 sets out the adoption process broken down by the age of the child at the time of entering the last period of care. Of the sections set out, for all the age groups, the duration between the Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal and the matching of child and adopters takes generally the longest.

For children aged 3 and over at the time of the last entry into care, the adoption process was around one year shorter than for the younger age groups. This was however not the case in previous years, in fact, in 2010, this age group had on average the longest duration of final period of care. It is however worth noting that the numbers involved are very small which can make them quite volatile year on year. In general, no specific trend by age can be seen in the data presented in Table 5.

In 2012 for children aged 3 and over at the time of last entry to care, the average duration from the Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal to adoption was 2 years 2 month whereas the same period lasted in general 2 years 7 months for children aged 1 (Table 6).

Table 6 Average duration between Trust LAC best interest proposal and adoption by age, year ending 31 March

Age at last entry to care	(Years : Months)			
	Average duration of adoption process, from time of Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal			
	2006	2008	2010	2012
Under 1	2:8	2:1	2:3	2:5
1	2:8	3:2	2:8	2:7
2	3:0	3:7	2:1	2:4
3 & Over	2:1	2:2	2:4	2:2
All Children	2:8	2:5	2:4	2:4

FOSTER CARE ADOPTIONS

The same number of looked after children were adopted by their foster carers in both 2010 and in 2012 (34 children). The proportion of the overall number of adoptions did however reduce from 68% to 57% in 2012. Of these children, 18 (53%) were boys and 16 (47%) were girls, similar proportions as for non-foster care adoptions (Table 7).

Table 7 Foster care adoptions year ending 31 March 2012

	Numbers		Percentages	
	Not adopted by foster carers	Adopted by foster carers	Not adopted by foster carers	Adopted by foster carers
All Children	26	34		
Boys	14	18	54%	53%
Girls	12	16	46%	47%
Age at adoption*				
4 and under	16	13	62%	38%
5 & Over	10	21	38%	62%
Average age (yrs:months)	4:6	5:5		
Minimum age (yrs:months)	0:9	1:0		
Maximum age (yrs:months)	9:2	10:8		

**Age categories have been suppressed to avoid personal disclosure*

Contrary to non-foster care adoptions, where the main proportion of the children were aged 4 and under, a larger proportion of the foster care adoptions were of children aged 5 years or older at the time of adoption. The average age of children adopted by their foster carers was 5 years 5 months, compared with 4 years 6 months for other adopted children.

In general, the duration from last entry into care to adoption for foster care adoption was longer than for other adoptions (Table 8). The average length of time of the last period of care for foster care adoptions was 3 years 9 months, 10 months longer than for other adopted children (2 years 11 months). Furthermore, the final period of care was longer than 3 years for 65% of the foster care adoptions compared with 38% of the other adoptions.

Table 8 Foster care adoptions by duration of final period in care, year ending 31 March 2012

Duration of final period of care	Numbers		Percentages	
	Not adopted by foster carers	Adopted by foster carers	Not adopted by foster carers	Adopted by foster carers
Under 1 year	<5	<5	-	-
1 year to under 2 years	<5	<5	-	-
2 years or under 3 years	10	7	38%	21%
3+	10	22	38%	65%
Total	26	34	100%	100%
Average duration (yrs:months)	2:11	3:9		
Minimum duration (yrs:months)	0:9	1:0		
Maximum duration (yrs:months)	5:0	7:11		

In order to avoid personal disclosure, some cells have been suppressed when the actual figure is less than 5.

" - " Represents a percentage that has been suppressed in order to prevent the actual figure from being calculated.

Just under half of all children adopted from their foster carers were placed for adoption within 12 months of the Trust Best Interest Decision (Table 9). This compares with 65% of the non-foster care adoptions.

Table 9 Foster care adoptions: Placement within 12 months of Trust Best Interest Decision, year ending 31 March

Placed within 12 months of Trust Best Interest Decision	2006	2008	2010	2012
All adoptions	52%	45%	60%	55%
Foster Care adoptions	46%	36%	50%	47%
Non-Foster Care Adoptions	57%	60%	81%	65%

ADOPTION STATISTICS COMPARISONS

There is no common legislative framework operating across the United Kingdom relating to adoption, hence any statistics will not necessarily provide like-for-like comparisons. Bearing this in mind, Table 10 below sets out a comparison of some of the statistics published in Northern Ireland, England and Wales.

Table 10 Adoption statistics for Northern Ireland, England and Wales at year ending 31 March 2012⁵

	Northern Ireland	England	Wales
Number of children adopted from care	60	3,450	246
Age at adoption (proportions)			
Less than one	-	2%	-
1-4	43%	74%	75%
5-9	50%	21%	20%
9-15	-	2%	2%
16 and over	0%	<1%	-
Average time of last period of care (years : months)	3:5	2:7	2:3
Proportion of children placed for adoption within 12 months of LAC best interest decision	55%	72%	°°
Proportion of foster care adoptions	57%	°°	11%

" - ' Represents a percentage that has been suppressed in order to prevent the actual figure from being calculated.

°° Represents that this figure has not been published.

Around three quarters of the children adopted from care in England and Wales in 2012 were in the age group 1-4 years. This compares with only 43% in Northern Ireland, where the majority of the children were in the 5-9 age group (Table 10). Almost three-fifths of all adoptions in Northern Ireland were foster care adoptions compared with about one in ten in Wales (the proportion of foster care adoptions is not published for England).

The average duration from last entry into care and the adoption order was 2 years 3 months in Wales, followed by England (2 years 7 months). In Northern Ireland the average duration was 3 years 5 months. Breaking the process down further, 72% of children adopted from care in England were adopted within one year of the LAC Best Interest Decision whereas the same proportion in Northern Ireland was 55% (these figures are not published for Wales).

⁵ Link to publications for England and Wales can be found in the Technical Notes section of this publication.

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

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

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