

INFORMATION  
ANALYSIS  
DIRECTORATE



# Children Adopted from Care in Northern Ireland 2014/15



Department of  
**Health, Social Services  
and Public Safety**

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## Reader Information

Document purpose	This bulletin details statistical information relating to children adopted from care in Northern Ireland during the year ending 31 March 2015.
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Target Audience	Directors of Children's Services, Chief Executives of Boards and HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland, health care professionals, academics and social care stakeholders.
Main uses of document	The main uses of these data are to monitor the delivery of social care services to children, to help assess Trust performance, corporate monitoring, to inform and monitor related policy, and to respond to parliamentary/assembly questions. The bulletin is also used by academics/researchers, the voluntary sector and those with an interest in children in care.
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- *Provide up-to-date, quality information on children and adult social services and community health;*
- *to 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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We collect, analyse, and publish 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 HSC 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 online.

## Key findings

**This bulletin details statistical information relating to children adopted from care in Northern Ireland during the year ending 31 March 2015. The tables within the bulletin present a range of information about these children and their adopters, and durations between different stages in the adoption process. The bulletin is based on the DHSSPS statistical return AD1 2014/15, which was collected from each of the five Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland.**

- Seventy two children were adopted from care during the year ending 31 March 2015, seventeen less than in 2014 (89);
- The average age of children at the time of adoption was 4 years 1 months;
- From the last entry into care, the average length of time for a child to be adopted in 2014/15 was 3 years 1 month. This was 2 months longer than in 2013/14;
- For children adopted in 2014/15, the average duration from the Trust LAC<sup>1</sup> Best Interest Proposal to adoption was 2 years 4 months, one month more than in 2013/14;
- Thirty eight children were adopted by their foster carers in 2014/15. This represented 53% of the overall number of adoptions;
- Children adopted by their foster carers were in general slightly older at the time of adoption than the other adopted children and the duration of the adoption process was generally longer.

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<sup>1</sup> LAC – Looked After Child

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# Introduction

Adoption, unlike any other permanence option, involves the ending of a child's legal relationship with their parents and family and the creation of a lifelong relationship with new parents. The facilities to be provided as part of the adoption service, including arrangements for assessing children and prospective adopters and placing children for adoption, and the particular procedures to be followed before and after a child is placed for adoption are therefore specified in legislation – the Adoption (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 and the Adoption Agencies Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1989.

This legal framework and the processes that Social Workers are expected to adhere to in carrying out their duties in relation to Adoption Services are further explained in the Adoption Regional Policy and Procedures<sup>2</sup>.

Where, as part of review of the child's care plan, it is decided that adoption is the preferred option for permanence, the Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust must follow statutory processes from providing information and counselling to the child and parents, gathering information (including ascertaining the wishes and feelings of the child and parents) and referring a report to the Adoption Agency Decision-maker and Adoption Panel for consideration of the Best Interests Decision (whether the child should be placed for adoption). The HSC Trust will work to find a suitable match for the child with prospective adopters whilst Freeing Order proceedings are commenced. Following placement of the child with the prospective adopters, the adopters can apply to the Court for an Adoption Order to be made.

In respect of applications to apply to adopt, the Adoption Agency must follow prescribed processes in relation to the applicant, from the Initial Enquiry/ Counselling Interview through to the Preliminary Checks, Preparation Course, Pre-Assessment Checks, the Assessment Process and finally, a consideration by the Adoption Agency's Adoption Panel as to the suitability of the applicant.

Work is currently underway to introduce new Adoption legislation for Northern Ireland, an Adoption and Children Bill. It is intended that the Bill will largely replace the 1987 Order, effecting most of the proposals outlined in the Department's draft adoption strategy, *Adopting the Future 2006*. The Bill will also amend the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, which is the primary law relating to the care and protection of children in Northern Ireland. As most children are adopted from the care system, the amendments are designed to improve planning and permanence for children in care.

**Family and Children's Policy Directorate  
DHSSPSNI  
November 2015**

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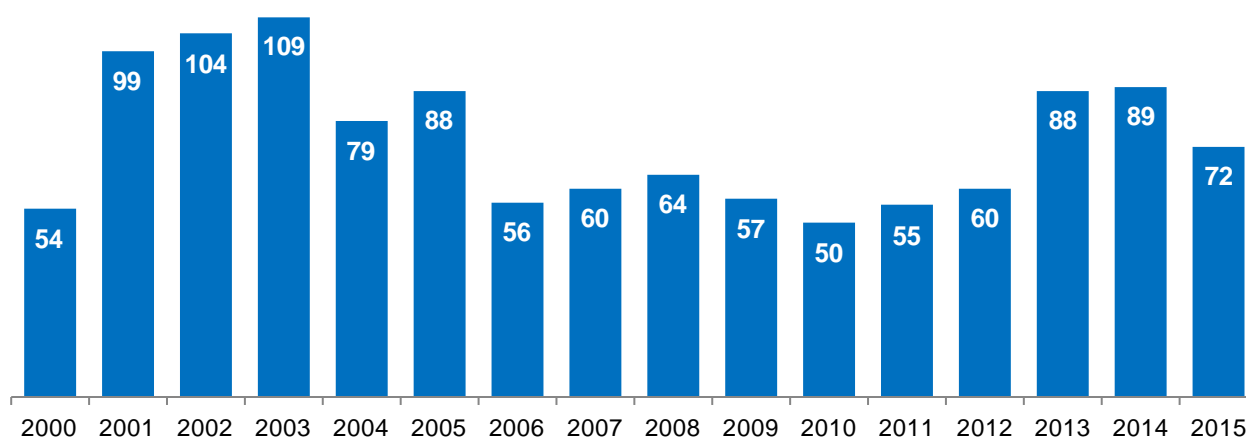
<sup>2</sup> The Adoption Regional Policy and Procedures Dec 2010 [http://www.baaf.org.uk/webfm\\_send/2565](http://www.baaf.org.uk/webfm_send/2565)

# Children Adopted from Care in Northern Ireland 2014/15

During the year ending 31 March 2015, 72 children were adopted from care in Northern Ireland<sup>3</sup>. This was less than in the previous year when 89 children were adopted from care.

Figure 1 sets out the yearly number of adoptions from care. It shows that adoption numbers were notably higher between 2001 and 2003 – this is thought to be due to an emphasis by all Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts on encouraging prospective adopters to register as foster carers, resulting in a placement for children at the earliest juncture with foster carers who would then go on to adopt the child<sup>4</sup>. Between 2005/06 and 2011/12, the numbers of adoptions were steady, however somewhat lower (between fifty and just over sixty children a year). The increase from 2013 could be linked with renewed focus on adoption and the timeliness of the adoption process, for example with the establishment of Adoption Regional Information System to quicker identify suitable parents for the children.

Figure 1 Number of children adopted from care in Northern Ireland year ending 31 March



Source for years 2000 and 2001: *Adopting Best Care*, Social Services Inspectorate, DHSSPS May 2002

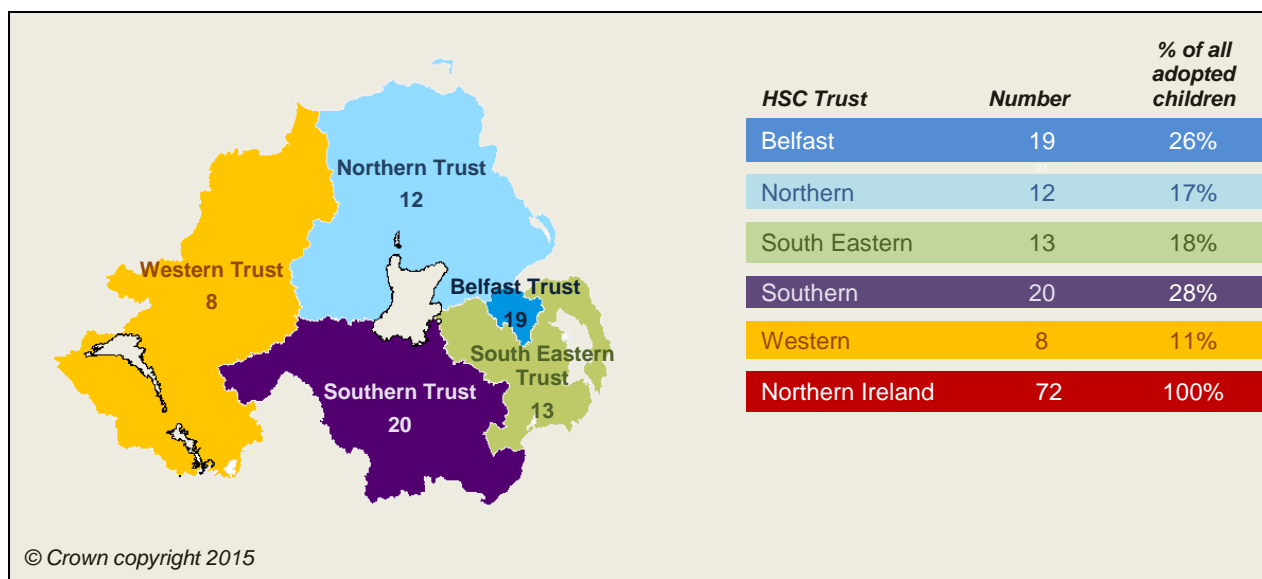
Source from 2003: AD1 Surveys <http://dhssps.nigov.net/articles/children-adopted-care>

Note: Number of adoptions has been estimated for the years 2002, 2007, 2009 and 2011.

<sup>3</sup> This figure may be different from other sources, e.g. NIGALA, due to categorisation.

<sup>4</sup> *Adopting Best Care*, Social Services Inspectorate, DHSSPS May 2002

Figure 2 Number of children adopted from care by HSC Trust year ending 31 March (percentage of all children adopted from care)



The Southern Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust had the largest number of looked after children adopted from care in 2014/15 (20 children), followed by the Belfast HSC Trust where 19 looked after children were adopted. In the South Eastern and the Northern HSC Trusts 13 and 12 looked after children were adopted respectively. In the Western HSC Trust 8 children were adopted from care (Figure 2)<sup>5</sup>.

The majority of the looked after children (65%) were adopted as a single child adoption whereas 35% were adopted as part of a sibling group. Just over half of the 72 children were adopted by their former foster carers<sup>6</sup> (53%); six of these were kinship foster carers (person related or connected to the child).

**1 in 3**  
children were adopted as part of a sibling group

Some 92% of adopters were married couple adopters, the remaining 8% was made up of single female adopters, same sex couples adopters and unmarried different sex couples adopters. Of the adopters, 14% had previously adopted a child or children<sup>7</sup>, and 25% had dependent birth children in the household. The age of the adopters<sup>8</sup> ranged from late twenties to late fifties, with the majority of the adopters being in their forties at the time of the adoption (57%).

<sup>5</sup> Due to the small numbers involved, no further analysis will be provided at HSC Trust level.

<sup>6</sup> Please also see section "Foster Care Adoptions" below.

<sup>7</sup> Please note that this is based on the 72 adoptions taken place in 2015, hence adopters who have adopted more than one child in 2015 will have been counted more than once.

<sup>8</sup> Age is based on both adoptive parents for the married couple adopters.



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

	Number					Percentages				
	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015
<b>All children</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>72</b>					
Boys	24	32	49	47	33	48%	53%	56%	53%	46%
Girls	26	28	39	42	39	52%	47%	44%	47%	54%
<b>Age at adoption</b>										
Under 1	<5	<5	<5	<5	52*	-	-	-	-	72%*
1-4	30	26	50	53		60%	43%	57%	60%	
5-9	17	30	35	34	20	34%	50%	40%	38%	28%
10-15	<5	<5	<5	<5	0	-	-	-	-	0%
16+	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Average age (yrs:months)	4:8	5:0	4:10	4:4	4:1					
Minimum age (yrs:months)	1:0	0:9	11	0:12	0:11					
Maximum age (yrs:months)	10:7	10:8	15:8	11:9	9:1					

*In order to avoid personal disclosure, some cells have been suppressed or merged 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.*

*Note: The AD1 survey was not carried out in 2010/11*

*\*Please note that age categories under and 1 - 4 have been merged due to small numbers*

Table 1 sets out the main characteristics of looked after children adopted from care in Northern Ireland from 2009/10 to 2014/15. There were more girls than boys adopted during 2014/15, a change in the trend of the previous three years. In 2014/15, the age of children adopted from care ranged from 11 months to 9 years 1 month. The majority of the children were aged between 1 and 4 years at the time of adoption.

The average length of time of the last period of care for the children adopted in 2014/15 was 3 years 1 month. This was two months longer than the previous year but four months shorter than in 2010 to 2013 (3 years 5 months). For just over half of the adoptions the final period of care lasted less than 3 years.

**3 years 1 month**  
*the average length of time from  
last period of care to adoption*

As the number of adoptions are relatively small, outliers (extreme values) may have an impact on the figures. If those whose final period of care lasted five years or more<sup>9</sup> are excluded, the average last period of care for the remaining 66 children dropped to 2 years and 10 months.

**Table 2** Duration of final period of care year ending 31 March

Duration of final period of care	Number					Percentages				
	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015
Under 2 years	7	11	7	20	14	14%	18%	8%	22%	19%
2 years to under 3 years	13	17	30	34	20	26%	28%	34%	38%	28%
3 years to under 5 years	24	21	46	33	32	48%	35%	52%	37%	44%
5 years & Over	6	11	5	2	6	12%	18%	6%	2%	8%
	50	60	88	89	72	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Average duration (yrs:months)	3:5	3:5	3:5	2:11	3:1					
Minimum duration (yrs:months)	0:7	0:9	0:12	0:5	0:9					
Maximum duration (yrs:months)	7:4	7:11	15:3	10:7	7:11					

*Note: The AD1 survey was not carried out in 2010/11*

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 2014/15 was 1 year 1 month, slightly higher than in 2013/14 (11 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 (Best Interest Decision); this period ranged from 2 months to 2 years 9 months for the children adopted. Furthermore, the average 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 6 months, ranging from a minimum of 2 months to a maximum of 3 years and 5 months.

For children adopted in 2014/15, the average duration from the Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal to adoption was 2 years 4 months, slightly longer than in 2013/14 (2 years 3 months). This ranged from 11 months to 5 years.

<sup>9</sup> All of these children were adopted by their foster carers

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

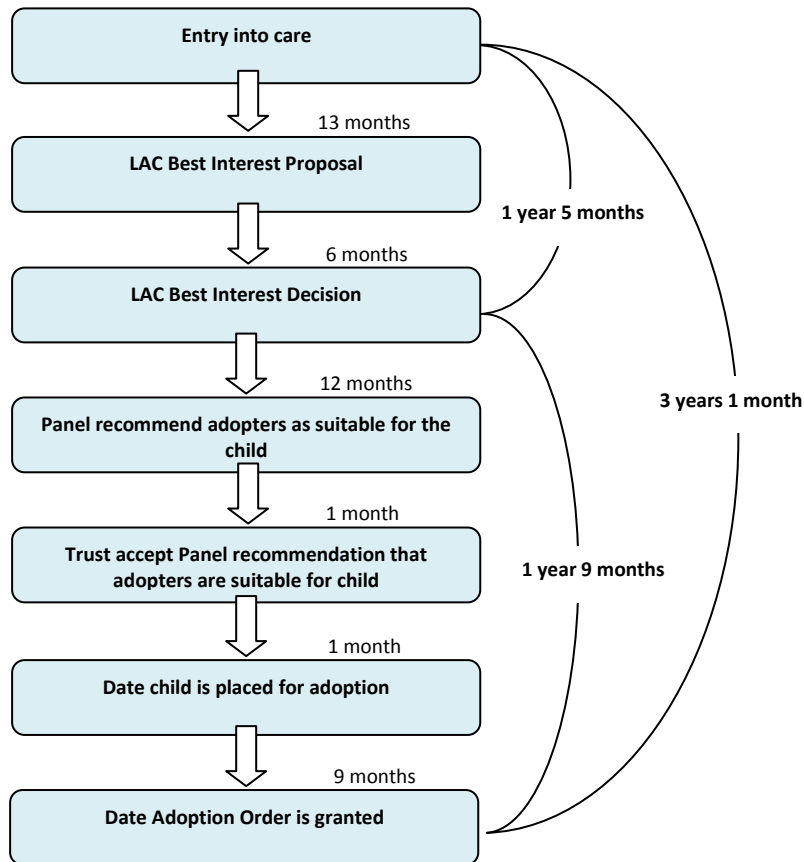
Stages of the adoption process	Average Duration (Years : Months)				
	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015
<b>Last admission into care to Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal</b>	1:4	1:1	0:12	0:11	1:1
<b>Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal to:</b>					
Trust Best Interest Decision	0:5	0:6	0:7	0:6	0:6
Date Panel recommend adopters as suitable for child	1:5	1:5	1:9	1:6	1:5
Date Trust accept Panel recommendation that adopters are suitable for child	1:6	1:7	1:10	1:7	1:6
Date child placed with adopters for adoption	1:6	1:9	1:11	1:8	1:7
Date Adoption Order granted	2:4	2:4	2:7	2:3	2:4

*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.*

*Note: The AD1 survey was not carried out in 2010/11*

Figure 3

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



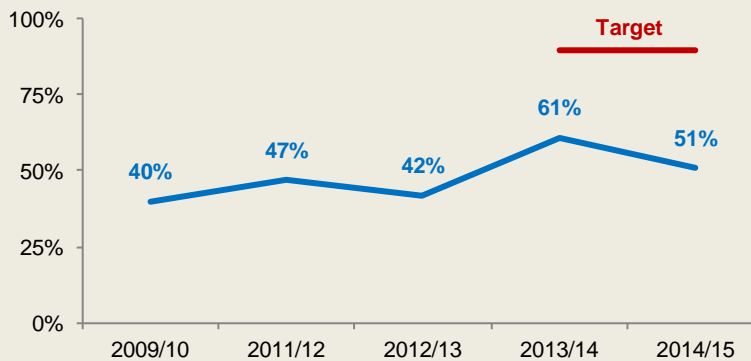
Note: The time between different stages of the adoption process may not add to the total time as a small number of cases have been excluded from some of the in-between calculations.

## DEPARTMENTAL TARGETS AND INDICATORS

Adoption is not necessarily the best option for every child who is in care; however for those children where adoption would be in their best interest, it is important that this is identified early to ensure that the child can be placed in a stable family setting. Ensuring the timeliness of the adoption process is a priority for the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. This is reflected in the Commissioning Plan Direction for 2015 where a target was set for the length of time for adoptions from care. In addition, two indicators have been included in the Indicators of Performance Direction for 2015.

### The Health and Social Care (Commission Plan) Direction (Northern Ireland) 2015

**Percentage of all children adopted from care who were adopted within 3 years of last entering care**



**Target 24 – By March 2016 ensure a 3 year time frame for 90% of children who are adopted from care.**

From 2009/10 to 2012/13 the percentage of children adopted from care within 3 years was between 40-50% of the children. In 2013/14 this figure rose nineteen percentage points to 61%. However there has been a fall of ten percentage points to 51% during 2014/15. The target set specifies that 90% of all adoptions should be within this time frame. The average length of time of the last period in care for those adopted in 2014/15 was 3 years 1 month.

### The Health and Social Care (Indicators of Performance) Direction (Northern Ireland) 2015

**Percentage of children with an adoption best interest decision who are notified to the Adoption Regional Information System (ARIS) within 4 weeks of the HSC Trust approving the adoption panel's decision that adoption is in the best interest of the child.**

Quarter ending 30-Sep- 14	95%
Quarter ending 31 Dec – 14	100%
Quarter ending 31 Mar – 15	100%
Quarter ending 30 Jun – 15	100%
Quarter ending 30 Sep - 15	85%

Source: Health and Social Care Board

The Adoption Regional Information System (ARIS) is a regional database that stores the details of children waiting for adoption and approved adopters in Northern Ireland. The purpose of this database is to improve the chances of children finding an adoptive family by suggesting links where Agencies have not been able to place children locally with a suitable family. Once the adoption panel's recommendation (that adoption is in the best interest of the child) is accepted by the Agency's decision-maker, the Health and Social Care Trust are to inform ARIS about this child within four weeks.

**Length of time for Best Interest Decision to be reached in the adoption process.**

	Years: Months
2009/10	1:9
2011/12	1:7
2012/13	1:6
2013/14	1:4
2014/15	1:5

The overall adoption process involves court activity which may affect delays in the adoption process. This indicator reflects the part of the adoption process that is solely down to the HSC Trusts. As set out in the table, the time from the start of the final period in care to the Trust's decision that adoption is in the best interest for the child was under one and a half years in 2014/15.

Table 4 sets out the average age of the child at different points in the adoption process. In 2014/15, the average age of children at the time of their last admission into care was 1 year 1 month ranging from between less than one month to 4 years 10 months, whilst the average age at adoption was 4 years 1 month. The age at the time of adoption was lower than in any of the previous four survey 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)				
	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015
Last admission into care	1:3	1:7	1:5	1:6	0:12
Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal	2:5	2:8	2:4	2:3	2:1
Trust Best Interest Decision	2:11	3:2	2:11	2:8	2:4
Date panel recommend adopters as suitable for child	3:9	4:2	4:0	3:7	3:3
Date Trust accept Panel recommendation that adopters are suitable for child	3:11	4:3	4:1	3:7	3:4
Date child placed with adopters for adoption	4:0	4:6	4:2	3:9	3:5
Date Adoption Order granted	4:8	5:0	4:10	4:4	4:1

*Note: The AD1 survey was not carried out in 2010/11*

## ADOPTION PROCESS BY AGE GROUP

Of the children adopted in 2014/15, almost two thirds (63%) had entered their final period of care under one year of age. Nineteen percent entered the final period of care when they were aged 1, eight percent when aged two and ten percent were aged 3 or over. Table 6 (overleaf) sets out the adoption process broken down by the age of the child at the time of entering the last period of care.

Although there was a variance of up to 8 months for the different age groups of the time between last entry to care and the Adoption Order, there was no major difference in the duration of the stages of the adoption process. It is however worth noting that the numbers involved are small which can make them both quite volatile year on year and influenced by extreme values. In general, no specific trend by age can be seen in the data presented in Table 6 (overleaf).

The average duration from the Trust LAC Best Interest Proposal to adoption is set out in Table 5 below by the age of the child at the time of the LAC Best Interest Proposal. This shows that duration increases with the age of the child. However we must be careful in drawing conclusions due to the small numbers involved in some categories.

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	Number of Children <sup>1</sup>	Average Duration from LAC Best Interest Proposal to Adoption (Years:Months)
Under 1	23	2:2
1	17	2:4
2	6	2:4
3 & Over	19	2:5
<b>All Children</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>2:4</b>

<sup>1</sup> Seven children have been excluded from these analyses.

Table 6 Average duration between different stages of the adoption process by age at the start the last period in care, year ending 31 March

(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			
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2012	2013	2014	2015	2012	2013	2014	2015	2012	2013	2014	2015	2012	2013	2014	2015
Under 1	1:2	1:1	0:11	0:11	1:7	1:9	1:4	1:6	0:0	0:1	0:1	0:1	0:11	0:8	0:8	0:9	3:7	3:4	2:8	2:11
1	1:1	0:11	0:10	1:3	2:0	2:1	1:12	1:6	0:0	0:1	0:0	0:1	0:10	0:8	0:8	0:9	3:8	3:10	3:1	3:7
2	1:3	0:10	0:11	1:2	1:4	1:9	1:9	1:7	0:4	0:1	0:2	0:1	0:11	0:9	0:7	0:8	3:7	3:4	2:11	3:0
3 & over	0:8	0:11	1:2	1:4	1:5	2:1	1:6	1:7	0:1	0:1	0:1	0:0	0:8	0:9	0:8	0:8	2:8	3:6	3:1	3:7
<b>All Children</b>	<b>1:4</b>	<b>0:12</b>	<b>0:11</b>	<b>1:1</b>	<b>1:7</b>	<b>1:10</b>	<b>1:7</b>	<b>1:6</b>	<b>0:1</b>	<b>0:1</b>	<b>0:1</b>	<b>0:1</b>	<b>0:10</b>	<b>0:8</b>	<b>0:8</b>	<b>0:9</b>	<b>3:5</b>	<b>3:5</b>	<b>2:11</b>	<b>3:1</b>

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.  
0:0 is less than 1 month



## FOSTER CARE ADOPTIONS

The length of the adoption process may be different according to whether the child is being adopted by their foster carers or people who are strangers. As a child who is to be adopted by its foster carers is already living with his or her proposed adoptive parents and therefore is in a stable home situation, there may not be the same urgency going through the stages of the adoption process.

Thirty eight looked after children were adopted by their foster carers in 2014/15, less than in 2013/14 (55 children). Of these, 18 were boys and 20 were girls.

**53%**  
of adoptions were  
foster care adoptions

Table 7 Foster care adoptions year ending 31 March

	Numbers		Percentages	
	Not adopted by foster carers	Adopted by foster carers	Not adopted by foster carers	Adopted by foster carers
<b>All Children</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>53%</b>
Boys	15	18	47%	53%
Girls	19	20	47%	53%
<b>Age at adoption*</b>				
4 and under	31	21	60%	40%
5 & Over	3	17	15%	85%
Average age (yrs:months)	3:4	4:9		
Minimum age (yrs:months)	0:11	1:9		
Maximum age (yrs:months)	7:10	9:1		

\*Age categories have been suppressed to avoid personal disclosure

The average age of children adopted by their foster carers was higher than those who were adopted by non foster carers (4 years 9 months compared with 3 years 4 months). For both groups however, the largest proportion of the children were aged 4 and under at the time of adoption.

In general, the duration from last entry into care to adoption for children adopted by non-foster carers was shorter than for foster care adoptions (Table 8). The average length of time of the last period of care for non-foster care adoptions was 2 years 7 months, 12 months shorter than for foster care adopted children (3 years 7 months). Furthermore, the final period of care was longer than 3 years for 66% of the foster care adoptions compared with 38% of the other adoptions. It is also worth noting that of all the adoptions in 2014/15, six took longer than 5 years, and all of these were foster care adoptions.

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

	Numbers		Percentages	
	Not adopted by foster carers	Adopted by foster carers	Not adopted by foster carers	Adopted by foster carers
<b>Duration of final period of care</b>				
Under 1 year	-	-	-	-
1 year to under 2 years	-	-	-	-
2 years or under 3 years	11	9	32%	24%
3+	13	25	38%	66%
<b>All</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Average duration (yrs:months)	2:7	3:7		
Minimum duration (yrs:months)	0:9	1:7		
Maximum duration (yrs:months)	4:11	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.*

A third of foster care adoptions were placed for adoption within 12 months of the Trust Best Interest Decision in 2014/15 (Table 9). This compares with just over two thirds of the non-foster care adoptions. Although there has been some variation in the proportions year on year, the same trend can be seen in previous years.

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	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015
<b>All adoptions</b>	60%	55%	39%	54%	51%
Foster Care Adoptions	50%	47%	32%	47%	34%
Non-Foster Care Adoptions	81%	65%	50%	65%	71%

*Note: The AD1 survey was not carried out in 2010/11*

## UK 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<sup>1</sup> and Wales<sup>2</sup> at year ending 31 March 2015

	Northern Ireland	England <sup>1</sup>	Wales <sup>2</sup>
<b>Number of children adopted from care</b>	72	5,330	383
<b>Adoptions per 1,000 children in Care at 31 March 2015</b>	25	77	68
<b>Age at adoption</b> (proportions)			
Less than one	3%	4%	<1%
1-4	69%	76%	81%
5-9	28%	19%	18%
10-15	0%	1%	<1%
16 and over	0%	0%	<1%
<b>Average time of last period of care</b> (years : months)	3:1	2:3	2:3
<b>Proportion of children placed for adoption within 12 months of LAC Best Interest Decision</b>	51%	71%	°°
<b>Proportion of foster care adoptions</b>	53%	°°	11%

°° Not published

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

<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption--2>

<sup>2</sup> Source: <http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/adoptions-outcomes-placements-children-looked-after/?lang=en> (Figures also extracted from Annex 3, web based tables)

Note: 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.

Over three quarters of the children adopted from care in both England and Wales in 2014/15 were in the age group 1-4 years. This compares with 69% in Northern Ireland (Table 10).

The average duration from last entry into care to the granting of the adoption order was 2 years 3 months in England and Wales. In Northern Ireland the average duration was 3 years 1 month. Breaking the process down further, 71% of children adopted from care in England were placed within one year of the LAC Best Interest Decision whereas the same proportion in Northern Ireland was 51% (these figures are not published for Wales).

Just over half 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).

## APPENDIX – Technical Notes

### **Data Collection**

The figures for “Children adopted from care in Northern Ireland 2014/15” are derived from the eighth ‘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.

The AD1 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. It 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](#).

### **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**

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 submitted to CIB within the DHSSPS. CIB perform further checks, using historical data to monitor annual variations and emerging trends.

A detailed quality report for the AD1 survey statistics is available on our [website](#).

### **Main Uses of Data**

The main uses of these data are to monitor the delivery of social care services to children, to help assess Trust performance, corporate monitoring, to inform and monitor related policy, and to respond to parliamentary/assembly questions. The bulletin is also used by academics/ researchers, the voluntary sector and those with an interest in children in care.

### **Key Definitions**

The Trust Looked After Children (LAC) Best Interest Proposal is when the Health and Social Care Trust refers the child’s circumstances to its Adoption panel for consideration and recommendation as to whether adoption is in the best interest of the child.

The Trust Best Interest Decision is the date when the Health and Social Care Trust (the equivalent of a local authority in the rest of the UK) accepts the Adoption Panel's recommendation that adoption is in the best interests of the child.

### ***Related Publications***

Statistics on all children adopted in Northern Ireland (from care and not from care) can be sourced from the Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency annual reports.

<http://www.nigala.hscni.net/publications.htm>

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 2015 are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2014-to-2015>

#### *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 2015 are available through the link below:

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/adoptions-outcomes-placements-children-looked-after/?lang=en>

#### *Scotland*

'Children's Social Work Statistics Scotland' is published on an annual basis by the Scottish Government, with the latest published figures relating to year ending 31 July 2014. Figures relating to adoption can be found in Tables 1.1 and 1.5 of the additional tables at the following link:

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/03/4375>

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

<http://dhssps.nigov.net/articles/children-adopted-care>

For further information on children adopted from care in Northern Ireland please contact:

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