



Department  
for Education

# Quarterly adoption survey

Quarter 4 2011-12 (Jan to Mar 2012)  
to quarter 3 2012-13 (Oct to Dec 2013)

July 2013

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## Summary

- Between quarter 4 of 2011-12 and quarter 3 of 2012-13 there was a decrease in the number of new decisions (-18%), but there were increases in the number of matches and placements (13% and 15% respectively).
- The adoption process for older children, disabled children, children from black or minority ethnic (BME) groups and sibling groups takes longer than the national average. It takes an extra 13 months for children aged 5 and over at placement and an extra 2 months if the child is disabled, if the child is considered for adoption as part of a sibling group or for BME children.
- In the third quarter of 2012-13 more BME children were placed with adoptive parents compared to the last quarter of 2011-12 (increasing by over 30%) but this showed a slight decrease of 3% from the second quarter of 2012-13. Please note however that the number of BME children placed each quarter is relatively low (less than 100) therefore this percentage change should be treated with caution.
- The time from entering care to placement with adoptive parents saw a 7% decrease (around 43 days) between quarter 4 of 2011-12 and quarter 1 of 2012-13, driven by decreases across the three quarters of 2012-13. Some of this decrease could be explained by the lower number of older children placed in the second and third quarters of 2012-13.
- On 31 December 2012 there were considerably more children awaiting adoption than there were adopters awaiting a child/children (approximately 6,600 compared to 1,800). When considering this apparent difference it should be noted that some adopters will adopt more than one child and many LAs find adopters through voluntary adoption agencies. Figures from voluntary adoption agencies were not included in this survey.
- The number of applications to be adopters saw a 4% increase overall from the last quarter of 2011-12. The number of approvals for new adopters has increased by 25% despite a drop between the first two quarters of 2011-12, and also the number of initial enquiries has seen an increase of 10% despite a decline earlier in the year.
- The timeliness for application to approval and from approval to matching has improved across all quarters for adopters.

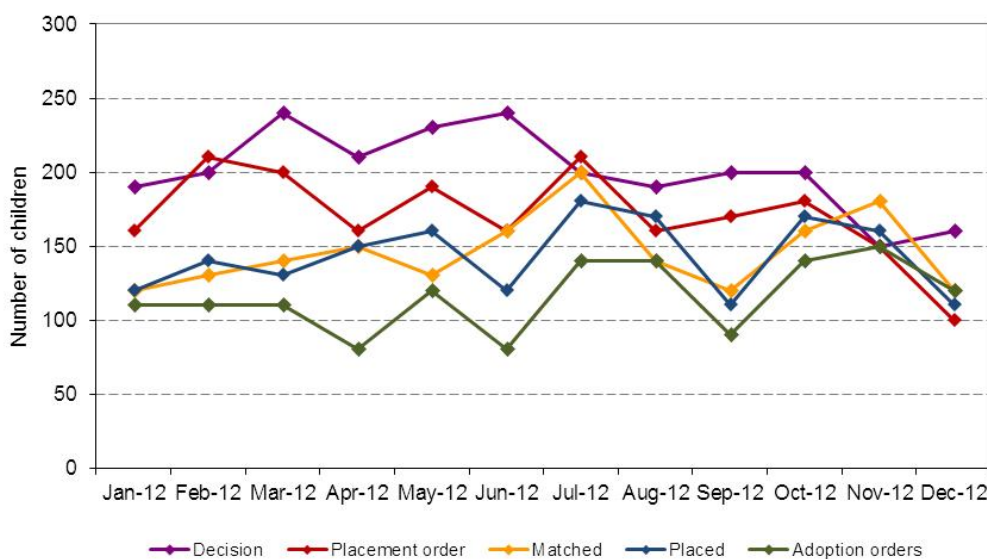
## Key Findings

This report contains analysis of the data collected through a voluntary quarterly survey, covering the characteristics of children who were at any stage in the adoption process and analysis of the timeliness of their progress in the adoption system. Findings for the local authorities who provided data of all four quarters are shown, so that comparisons can be made over the time period. The data from local authorities who have not provided data for all quarters are incorporated in internal analyses and this report will be developed accordingly.

## Number of children

Returns from 73 local authorities for the quarterly adoption survey showed information for approximately 5,000 children who were at some stage in the adoption process during each of the quarters of the survey, quarter 4 of 2011-12 and quarters 1, 2 and 3 of 2012-13. A total of 2,410 children had been the subject of a decision that adoption was the best option between January and December, with a decrease of 18% across the four quarters. During the same period, 2,050 new placement orders were made, 1,750 children were matched with prospective adopters and 1,700 were placed with an adoptive family.

The number of children with new placement orders saw a 5% increase between quarters 1 and 2 of 2012-13 but overall saw a drop of 25% across all quarters, the number of children matched saw a slight drop of 2% between the last two quarters but saw an overall increase of 13% across all quarters and the number of children placed decreased by 5% between quarters 2 and 3 but an overall increase of 15% across all quarters). However the number of adoption orders rose by 10% to give an overall increase of 25% across all quarters. The survey data shows that the number of matches is approximately 27% lower than the number of decisions and the number of placements is 29% lower than the number of decisions.



**Figure 1: Survey data - Numbers of children with new decisions, placement orders, matches to adoptive families, placements with adoptive families and adoption orders each month**

Scaling the findings above to the national level the survey data suggests that there are on average:

- 500 children each month who have decisions that adoption is the best option for them, an average of 1,400 each quarter (generally decreasing numbers across the quarters but with a slight increase in quarter 1 2012-13).
- 400 placement orders made each month, and average of 1,200 each quarter (generally decreasing numbers across the quarters but with a slight increase in quarter 2 2012-13).
- 300 children matched each month to their adoptive family, an average of 1,000 each quarter (generally increasing numbers across the quarters but with a slight decrease in quarter 3 2012-13).
- 300 children placed with their adoptive families, an average of 1,000 each quarter (generally increasing numbers across the quarters but with a slight decrease in quarter 3 2012-13).
- 300 adoption orders made each month, an average of 800 each quarter (generally increasing numbers across the quarters but with a decrease in quarter 1 2012-13).

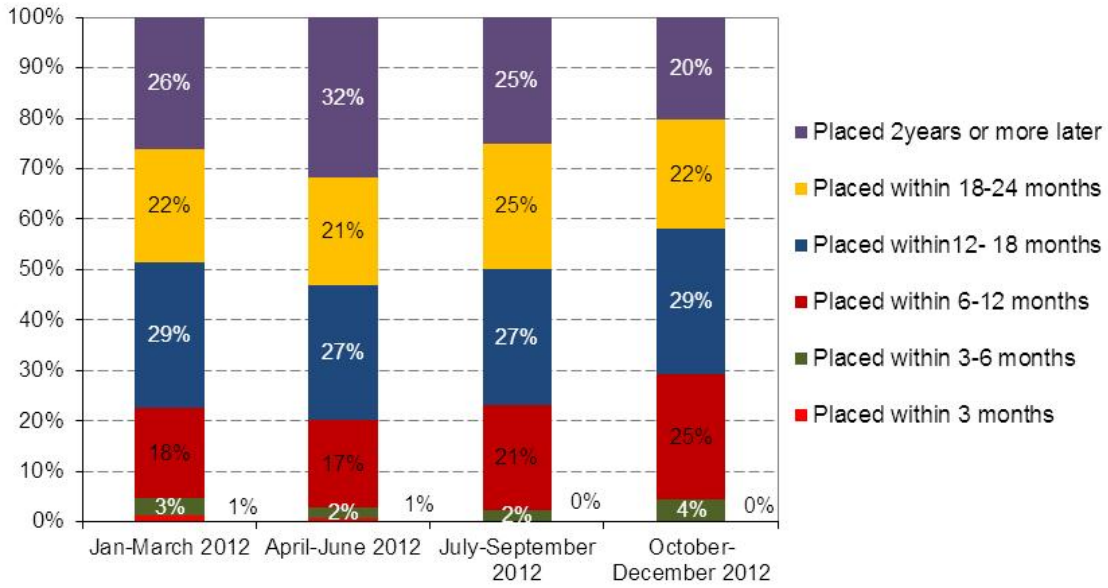
### **Timeliness from entering care to being placed with an adoptive family**

Of the 1,700 children in the quarterly survey who moved in with their adoptive families (i.e. children who were placed within the 12 month period), on average they entered care 1 year and 8 months earlier (605 days). This is around a month quicker than the timeliness seen in the 2009-2012 adoption scorecards published in November 2012<sup>1</sup> (636 days).

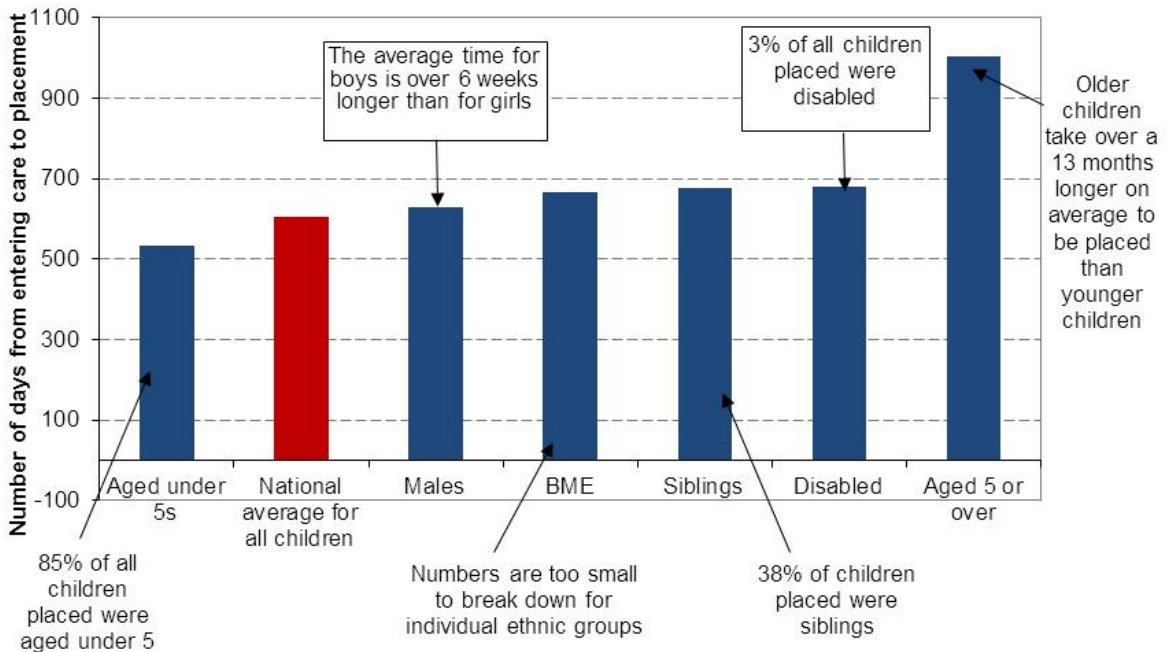
The average time for the children who moved in with their adoptive family between January and March 2012 was 599 days, increasing to 658 days between April to June before falling to 607 days between July and September and falling again between October and December to 566 days. This resulted in a 7% decrease across all quarters.

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<sup>1</sup> [Adoption scorecards](#)



**Figure 2: Survey data – Time from entering care to date placed with adoptive families, for children placed within the 6 months between January 2012 and December 2012**



All figures shown are for the 12 month period for LAs who provided data for all quarters).

**Figure 3: Survey data – (average time across the 12 month period) Timeliness of the adoption process by child characteristics**

## Age

Information from the quarterly survey suggests that the adoption process takes considerably longer for older children. Children aged 5 and over at time of placement take on average 2 years and 9 months to be placed with their adoptive family, over a year longer than children aged under 5. The number of older children being placed for adoption in the 12 month period represented 15% (260 children) of all placements. The number of older children who were placed with their adoptive family saw an increase between quarter 4 2011-12 and quarter 1 2012-13 but has decreased in subsequent quarters, with a decrease of 10% in the number of older children being placed across all quarters. Please note however that the number of older children placed each quarter is relatively low (less than 100) therefore this percentage change should be treated with caution.

## Siblings

The survey found that the adoption process for sibling groups is slightly longer than for all children, taking on average 1 year and 10 months. Over a third of children who were placed with their adoptive families in the 12 month period were considered for adoption as part of a sibling group (38%, 640 children). Sibling groups represented 44% of all the decisions in the 12 month period and 38% of all the children matched in the same period. The number of children placed in quarter 3 of 2012-13 who were part of a sibling group was 9% lower than in the previous quarter (following increasing numbers since quarter 4 2011-12), and the number of new decisions for children who are part of a sibling group was lower than the previous quarter (3% lower).

When scaling to the national average the survey data suggests that in each quarter approximately 600 children who are part of a sibling group have a new decision made that they should be adopted and they will be considered for adoption as part of a sibling group. Approximately 400 children who were considered for adoption with their siblings are placed with an adoptive family in each quarter.

## Disability

The adoption process for disabled children is slightly longer than for all children, taking 1 year and 10 months. 3% of children placed with their adoptive parents in the 12 month period were disabled. This proportion seems low compared to the proportion of children in need (i.e. receiving a social care service) who are disabled (14%), however it is not possible to determine if this is due to underreporting or if adoptions of disabled children are disproportionately low. Disabled children represented 4% of all children who had a decision in the 12 months however the number of decisions for disabled children is very



small each quarter (between 15-30), with even fewer disabled children being placed, therefore it is difficult to make meaningful comparisons between quarters.

When scaling to the national average the survey data suggests that each quarter around 60 disabled children have a decision made that they should be adopted and 30 disabled children are placed with an adoptive family each quarter.

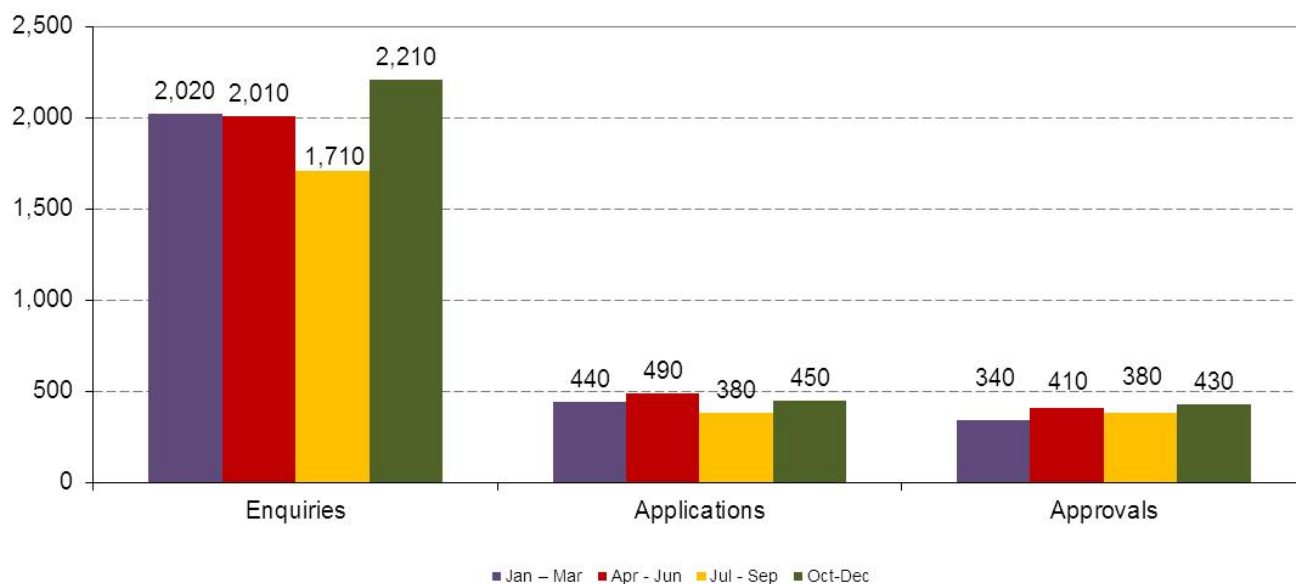
## **Ethnicity**

Children from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups took on average 1 year and 10 months to be placed for adoption. Unfortunately due to the small number of BME children within the survey local authorities it is not possible to break down the timeliness for the different ethnic groups and make meaningful comparisons. BME children represent 15% of all children who are placed with their adoptive family in the 12 month period and 17% of all children who have a decision within the 12 month period. The number of BME children who were newly placed for adoption in quarter 3 2012-13 saw little change from the number placed in quarter 2.

## **Children who are awaiting adoption and have not yet been placed**

At 31 March 2012 there were 2,400 children who had not yet been placed with their adoptive family. This number increased by 19% to 2,860 at the end of December 2012. Children who had not yet been placed by the end of December had on average entered care 24 months before (an increase of 2 months from those waiting at the end of March 2012). This average is already beyond the threshold set in the adoption scorecards of 21 months (640 days). Of the children awaiting adoption, who had not yet been placed at 31 December, 7% are disabled, 49% are sibling groups, 36% are aged 5 and over at the end of the quarter and 17% were from BME groups. The proportion of children awaiting adoption who were disabled, part of a sibling group, BME or older children was higher than the proportions seen in the children placed with their adoptive family. (Of the children placed in the 12 month period 3% were disabled, 38% were siblings, 15% were aged 5 and over and 15% were BME).

## Adopters



**Figure 4: Survey data - Numbers of prospective adopters in each quarter in each part of the system from survey2**

Returns from 72 LAs for the quarterly adoption survey showed that the number of initial enquiries fell across three quarters, but saw a large increase between quarters 2 and 3 2012-13 (29%). It is possible that the lull in quarter 2 could have been caused by the summer period. This fluctuation does not seem to have majorly impacted on the number of applications or approvals. The number of applications from potential adopters saw a drop of 22% between quarters 1 and 2 2012-13 but increased in subsequent quarters. In total there were 1,600 adopters approved between January and December 2012 and the number of adopters approved between October and December was 14% higher than in the previous quarter.

Around 53% of approved adopters were matched to a child as at the end of quarter December 2012, which is a return to near the 54% matched as at the end of March 2012 following a drop to 50% in quarter 2 2012-13. We would not expect all approved adopters to be matched as some would only have just completed the approval process.

As we have no previous data on adopters it is difficult to say if these changes represent genuine changes or if they reflect existing seasonal changes.

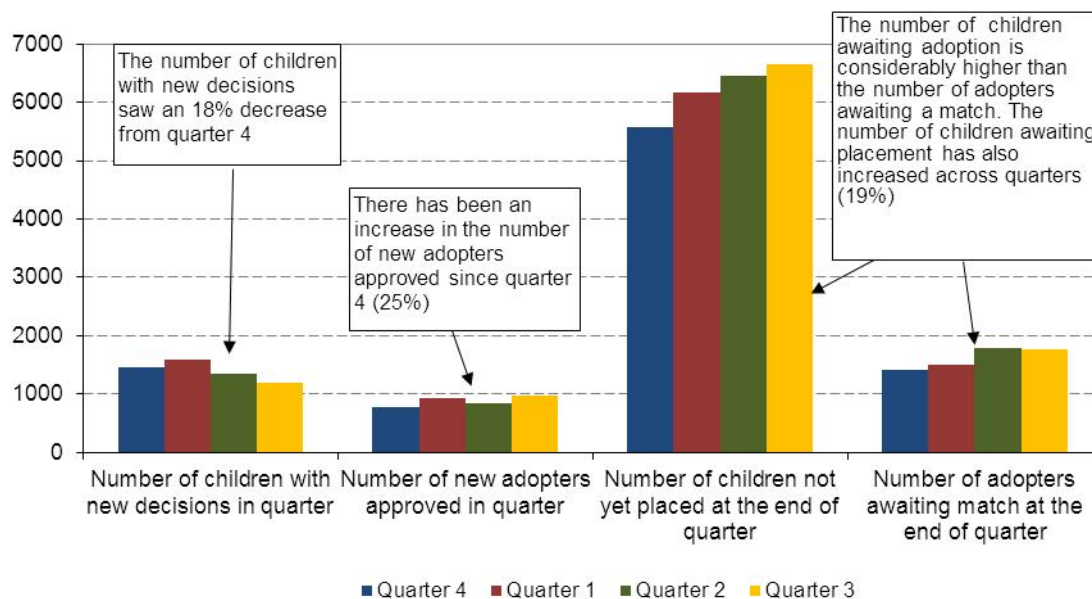
Scaling the findings above to the national level the survey data suggests that there are on average:

- 4,500 new initial enquires each quarter (generally decreasing numbers across the quarters but with a 29% increase in quarter 3 2012-13)
- 1,000 new applications to be an adopter each quarter (with oscillating totals between each quarter)

<sup>2</sup> Note this does not include any adopters who are found by agencies other than the local authority

- 900 new adopters are approved each quarter (generally increasing numbers across the quarters but with a slight decrease in quarter 2 2012-13)
- 1,800 adopters at the end of the quarters who have been matched to a child/children (increasing from 1,700 to 2,000 between quarters)
- 1,600 adopters at the end of the quarters who have not yet been matched to a child/children (generally increasing numbers across the quarters but with a slight decrease in quarter 3 2012-13).

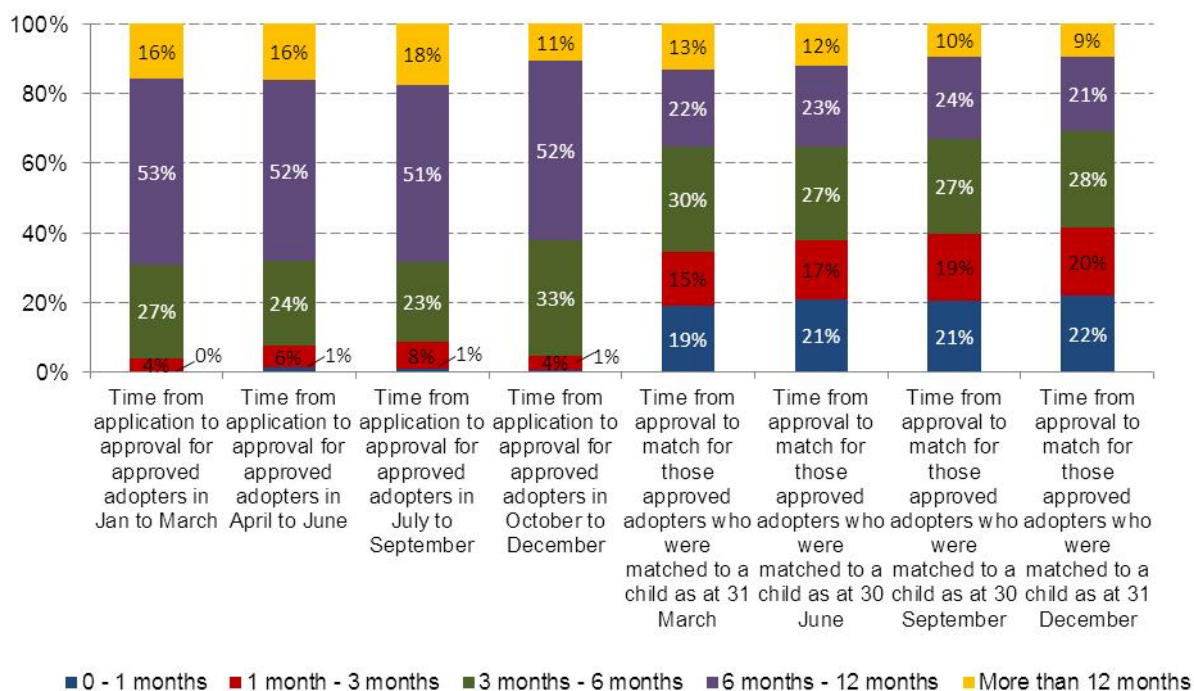
In quarter 3 there were 4.9 times as many enquiries as applications (down from 4.6 in quarter 4), and a little under 1.1 times as many applications as approvals (1.3 in quarter 4).



**Figure 5: Survey figures scaled to national level - Comparing supply and demand for adoption**  
 (Note: these figures are for local authorities only and do not include data from voluntary adoption agencies)

## Prospective adopters: timeliness of approval and matching

The quarterly survey suggests timeliness improved between quarter 4 2011-12 and quarter 3 2012-13 with the proportion of applications taking more than 6 months to approval having decreased by 7%pts across the quarters. With regards to time from approval to match, timeliness has also improved - the proportion of approved adopters taking more than 6 months to be matched has decreased by 5%pts between 31 March and 31 December 2012. Also, 42% of matches happened within 3 months of approval compared to 35%.



**Figure 6: Survey figures – Timeliness from application to approval and approval to match for prospective adopters**

The time from application to approval is 6 to 12 months for the majority of adopters. There is more variation in the time from approval to match, but for the majority of adopters this stage of the process is complete within 6 months. Therefore for the majority of adopters the time from application to being matched with a child will be between 6 and 18 months.

## **Next survey data**

Data for January to March 2012 has recently been collected and findings will be published in Autumn 2013.

## Background

This is the third round of requesting voluntary data all 152 local authorities in England, covering information on the number of children and adopters at any stage in the adoption process between 1 January 2012 and 31 December 2012. Aggregate data was collected on adopters and child level information was collected on children.

105 local authorities provided a response to the survey for quarter 3 (some who had not already done so also provided data for previous quarters), compared to 108 local authorities for the previous round, which represents 69% of all local authorities. The findings reported in this report are based on usable returns only and show the findings for the local authorities who provided data of all quarters, so that comparisons can be made.

- 73 returns were used to compare data on adopted children
- 72 returns were used to compare data on adopters

Usable child level response rates (for those returning data for all quarters) varied greatly with 69% of local authorities in the South West providing data, with the lowest response rate of 26% in the North West. The rates varied greatly across the quarters, with an even split across the ten regions showing an increase/decrease in their returns from the previous quarter.

Usable adopter level response rates (for those returning data for all quarters) also varied, from 30% in the North West to 67% in the North East and the East Midlands, with two regions showing an increase in the number of returns from quarter two but five showing a decrease.

Estimates of the national figures have been calculated by scaling the survey figures up. To do this we have used the number of children adopted in each local authority in 2011-12 according to the SSDA903 as a multiplying factor. Estimates of national figures and of monthly and quarterly averages have been rounded to the nearest 100. Figures which show the data from the local authorities who provided a response to the survey have been rounded to the nearest 10.



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