



Department  
for Education

# Quarterly Adoption Survey

**Quarter 4 2012/13 (Jan to March 2013) to  
Quarter 3 2013/14 (October to December 2013)**

**April 2014**

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## Summary

<b>Decisions fell by 21%</b>	The number of new decisions saw an overall decrease of 21% between quarter 4 2012-13 and quarter 3 2013-14, having initially increased by 22% between the first two quarters.
<b>New placement orders granted fell by 29%</b>	The number of new placement orders granted fell by 29% between quarter 4 2012-13 and quarter 3 2013-14, having initially increased by 10% between the first two quarters.
<b>Adoption orders have risen by 23%</b>	The number of adoption orders rose by 23% across all four quarters, but has been decreasing since quarter 1 2013-14.
<b>Timeliness varies by characteristics</b>	The adoption process takes longer for children with certain characteristics. It takes an extra 12 months for children aged 5 and over at placement, an extra 11 months if the child is disabled <sup>1</sup> , and an extra 2 months if the child is considered for adoption as part of a sibling group or for BME children.
<b>Placements of BME children rose</b>	The number of BME children who were newly placed for adoption saw an increase in the first two quarters of 2013-14 but in the third quarter returned to similar level seen at the end of 2012-13.
<b>Child timeliness has improved</b>	The time from entering care to placement with adoptive parents saw a 16% decrease between quarter 4 2012-13 and quarter 3 2013-14 (585 days to 494 days).
<b>Applications have remained steady</b>	The number of applications to local authorities from potential adopters remained steady for the first two quarters of the period.
<b>New two stage process</b>	Since the introduction of the new two stage approval process on 1st July, combining applications made through the original process with registers of interest (Stage One) saw an 18% increase during quarters 2 and 3 2013-14, with additional numbers starting the assessment stage (Stage Two).
<b>Approvals have increased by 27%</b>	The number of adopters approved by local authorities saw a 27% increase between quarter 4 2012-13 and quarter 3 2013-14. 7% of those approved in quarter 3 2013-14 came through the new two stage approval process
<b>Adopter timeliness has improved</b>	<p>Between quarter 4 2012-13 and quarter 3 2013-14, the proportion of applications approved by local authorities within 6 months of application increased by 11 percentage points (from 36% to 47%).</p> <p>The proportion of approved adopters matched within 6 months of approval has increased by 2 percentage points (73% to 75%).</p>

<sup>1</sup> This is longer than in previous reports but note that the number of placements for disabled children is low.

# Key Findings

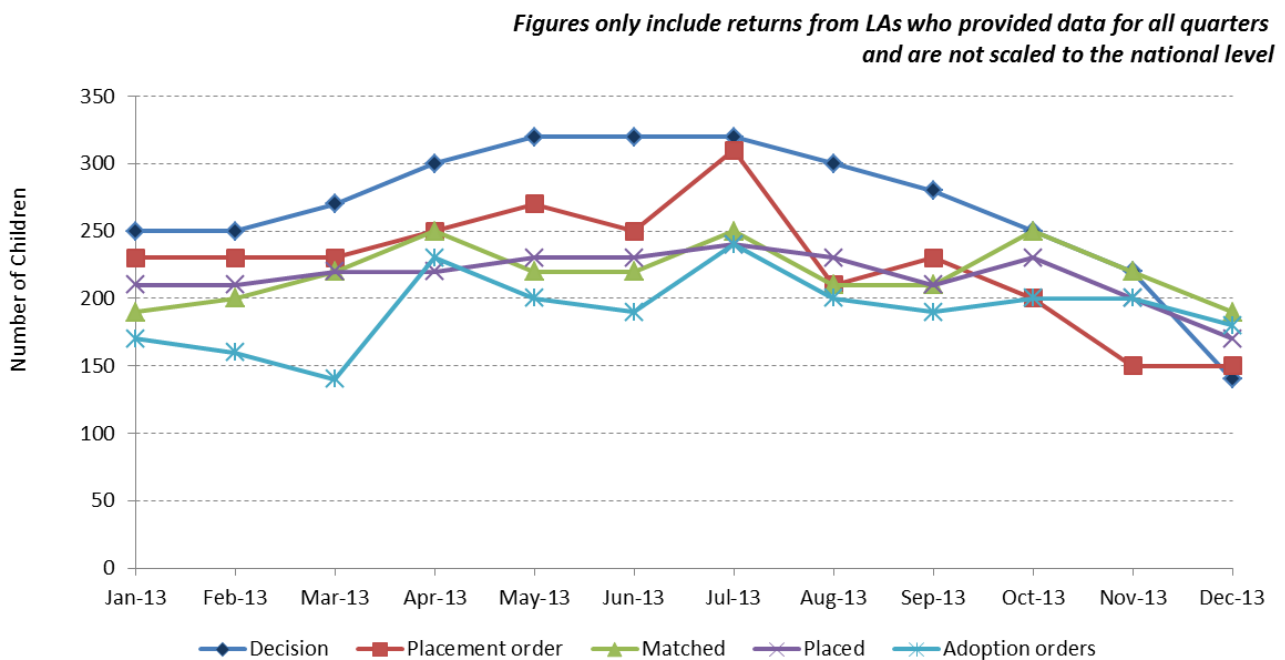
This report contains analysis of the data collected through a voluntary quarterly survey and covers the characteristics of children who were at any stage in the adoption process and analysis of the timeliness of their progress in the adoption system. Findings for the local authorities who provided data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

## Number of children

Returns from 75 local authorities (50%) showed information for approximately 8,200 children who were at some stage in the adoption process between quarter 4 2012-13 and quarter 3 2013-14 (January 2013 and December 2013). Of these, 3,220 children had been the subject of a decision during this time period that adoption was the best option. During the same period, 2,700 new placement orders were made, 2,620 children were matched with prospective adopters and 2,580 were placed with an adoptive family.

Figure 1 shows the number of children at each stage of the adoption process over the course of January to December 2013.

**Figure 1: Number of children with new decisions, placement orders, matches to adoptive families, placements with adoptive families and adoption orders, by month**



Scaling the findings above to the national level the survey data suggests that in each quarter there were on average:

**1,600 decisions** Or 530 children each month who have decisions that adoption is the best option for them. The number of decisions decreased by 21% between quarter 4 2012-13 and quarter 3 2013-14 having initially increased between the first two quarters.

**1,340 placement orders** Or 450 placement orders made each month. The number of children with new placement orders saw an increase between quarter 4 2012-13 and quarter 1 2013-14 but was then followed by decreases to quarter 3 2013-14, resulting in an overall decrease of 29%.

**1,300 matches** Or 430 children matched each month to their adoptive family. The number of children matched increased between quarter 1 2013-14 followed by steady decreases, but the overall change across the four quarters was a 7% increase.

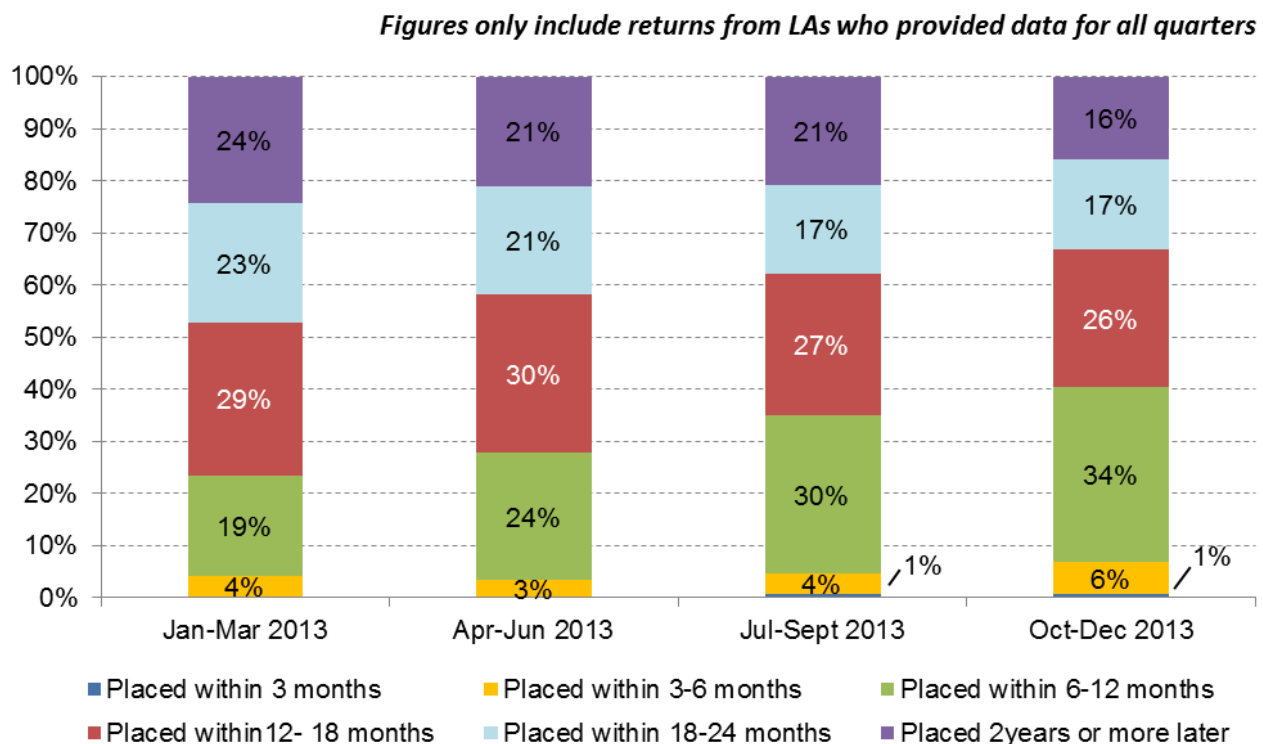
**1,280 placements** Or 430 children placed with their adoptive families. The number of placements decreased by 6% between quarter 4 2012-13 and quarter 3 2013-14 having initially increased between the first two quarters.

**1,130 adoption orders** Or 380 adoption orders made each month. The number of adoption orders increased by 23% between quarter 4 2012-13 and quarter 3 2013-14. This was driven by a 34% increase between the first two quarters as this was followed by decreases each subsequent quarter.

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

For the 2,580 children placed with their adoptive families, the average time between entering care and being placed with their adoptive families was 1 year and 6 months (543 days). Timeliness fell by 16% over the four quarters, from 585 days in in quarter 4 2012-13 to 494 days in quarter 3 2013-14. Figure 2 shows how timeliness has improved over the time period.

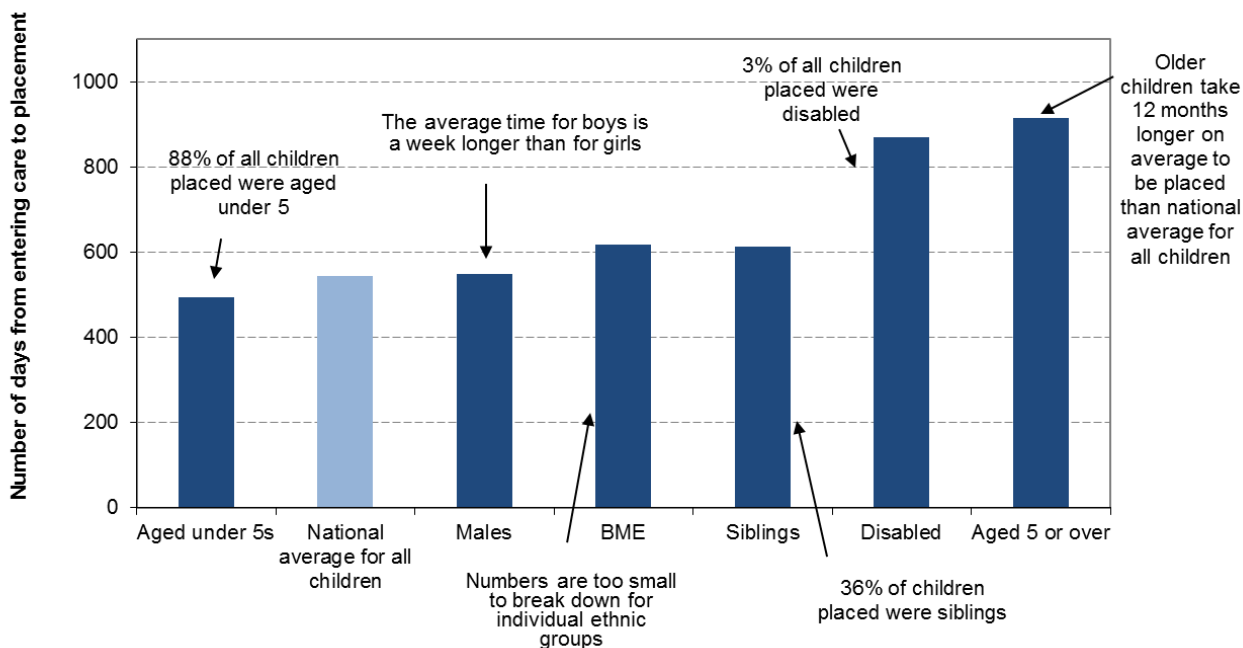
**Figure 2: Time from entering care to date placed with adoptive families, for children placed between January 2013 and December 2013**



The timeliness of the adoption process varies for children with different characteristics. Figure 3 on the following page shows the average time between entering care and being placed with their adoptive families for children who were placed between January 2013 and December 2013, broken down by characteristics.

**Figure 3: Timeliness of the adoption process by child characteristics, for children placed between January 2013 and December 2013**

*Figures are for the 12 month period and only include returns for LAs who provided data for all quarters*



### Age

Information from the quarterly survey suggests that the adoption process takes considerably longer for older children. Children aged 5 years and over at time of placement took on average 2 years and 6 months to be placed with their adoptive family, over a year longer than children under 5 years old.

When scaling to the national level the survey data suggests that in each quarter an average of 160 children aged 5 years and over and an average of 1,440 children under 5 years old had a new decision that adoption is the best option for them. Approximately 150 children aged 5 and over and 1,130 children under 5 were placed with an adoptive family in each quarter.

The number of older children placed with an adoptive family saw a 43% decrease between quarter 4 2012-13 and quarter 3 2013-14.

Please note that the number of older children placed each quarter in the data is relatively low (fewer than 100) therefore this percentage change should be treated with caution.

### Siblings

Information from the quarterly survey suggests that the adoption process takes for sibling groups took on average 1 year and 8 months.



When scaling to national level:

1,840 children (36%) who were placed with their adoptive families in the 12 month period (January to December 2013) were considered for adoption as part of a sibling group. There was a 14% decrease in the number of children placed who were part of a sibling group between quarter 4 2012-13 and quarter 3 2013-14. Sibling groups represented 36% of all the decisions in the 12 month period and 36% of all the children matched.

An average of 570 children each quarter had a new decision made that they should be adopted and done so as part of a sibling group. Approximately 470 children in sibling groups were matched each quarter and 460 children in sibling groups were placed with an adoptive family in each quarter.

## **Disability**

The adoption process for disabled children is longer than for all children, taking 2 years and 5 months from entering care to being placed with their adoptive family. 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%)<sup>2</sup> 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 2% of all children who had a decision in the 12 months however the number of decisions reported for disabled children is very small each quarter (fewer than 30), with even fewer disabled children being placed, therefore it is difficult to make meaningful comparisons between quarters.

When scaling to national level the survey data suggests that each quarter an average of around 40 disabled children had a decision made that they should be adopted and approximately 30 disabled children were placed with an adoptive family.

## **Ethnicity**

Children from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups took on average 1 year and 8 months to be placed for adoption. Unfortunately due to the small number of BME children within the survey it is not possible to break down the timeliness for the different ethnic groups and make meaningful comparisons. BME children represent 3% of all children who are placed with their adoptive family and 14% of all children who have a decision within the 12 month period. The number of BME children who were newly placed for adoption saw a decrease of 3% between quarter 4 2012-13 and quarter 3 2013-14.

When scaling to national level the survey data suggests that an average of around 220 BME children had a decision made that they should be adopted each quarter and around 170 BME children were placed with an adoptive family.

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<sup>2</sup> [Statistics on the characteristics of children in need](#) can be found on GOV.UK.

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

When scaled to the national level, quarterly data suggests that there were 6,870 children with an adoption decision but who had not yet been placed with their adoptive family at 31 March 2013. This increased by 14% to 7,860 at the 31 December 2013.

Children who had not yet been placed by the end of December 2013 had been waiting on average 22 months since entering care (an increase of 2 months over those waiting at the end of March 2013). Of the children with a decision awaiting adoption who had not yet been placed at 31 December 2013, 6% were disabled, 45% were sibling groups, 32% were aged 5 years and over and 16% were from BME groups. All of these proportions are higher than the proportions of children who were placed with an adoptive family belonging to these groups. (Of the children placed in the 12 month period: 3% were disabled, 35% were siblings, 9% were aged 5 and over and 12% were BME children).

## Local authority adopter recruitment

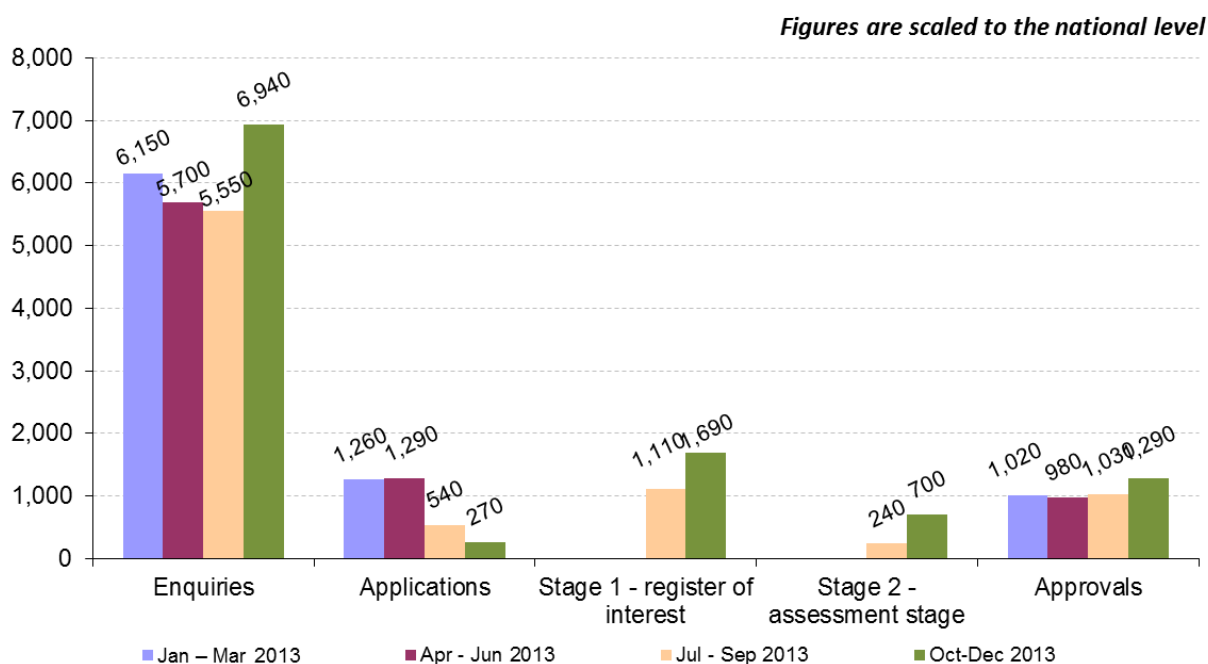
Returns from 75 LAs for the quarterly adoption survey showed that the number of initial enquiries<sup>3</sup> has increased by 13% over all four quarters despite the decreasing trend between quarter 4 2012-13 and quarter 2 2013-14. This fluctuation does not seem to have majorly impacted on the number of applications or approvals.

The number of applications from potential adopters remained steady for quarter 4 2012-13 and quarter 1 2013-14. Since the introduction of the new two stage approval process on 1<sup>st</sup> July, combining applications made through the original process with registers of interest (stage 1) saw an 18% increase during quarters 2 and 3 2013-14, with additional numbers starting the assessment stage (Stage Two). In quarter 2 around 47% of those starting the assessment stage were adopters who had been fast-tracked, which decreased to 26% in quarter 3 2013-14.

The number of adopters approved saw a 27% increase between quarter 4 2012-13 and quarter 3 2013-14. 7% of those approved in quarter 3 2012-13 were as a result of the new two stage approval process.

Scaling the findings above to the national level the survey data suggests that in each quarter there were on average 6,080 initial enquiries, 1,400 registers of interest (Stage One of the new two stage process), 1,270 new applications and 1,080 adopter approved.

**Figure 4: Numbers of prospective adopters in each quarter in each part of the system from survey<sup>4</sup>**

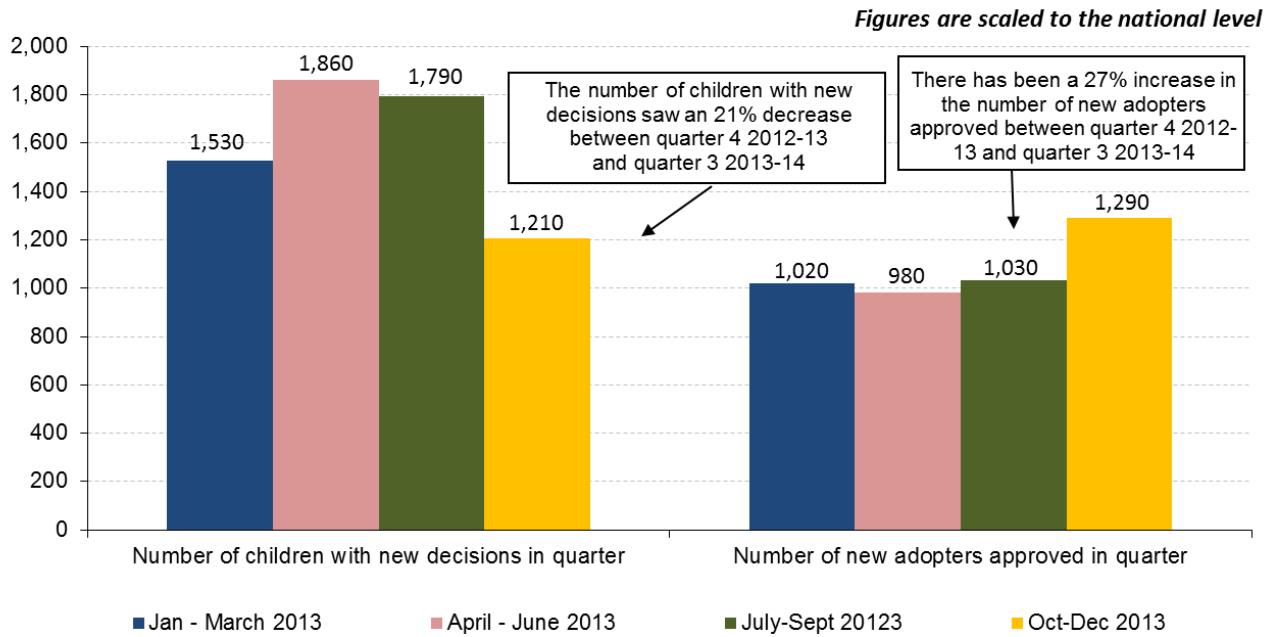


<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the number of enquires is not the same as the number of people who have enquired, as there may have been multiple enquires from the same person.

<sup>4</sup> Note this does not include any adopters who are found by agencies other than the local authority.

Figure 5 combines information from this section on local authority adopter approvals with the number of children with new decisions in each quarter.

**Figure 5: Comparing supply of adopters and number of children with new decisions**



*(Note: these figures are for local authorities only and do not include data from voluntary adoption agencies)*

## Prospective adopters: timeliness of approval and matching

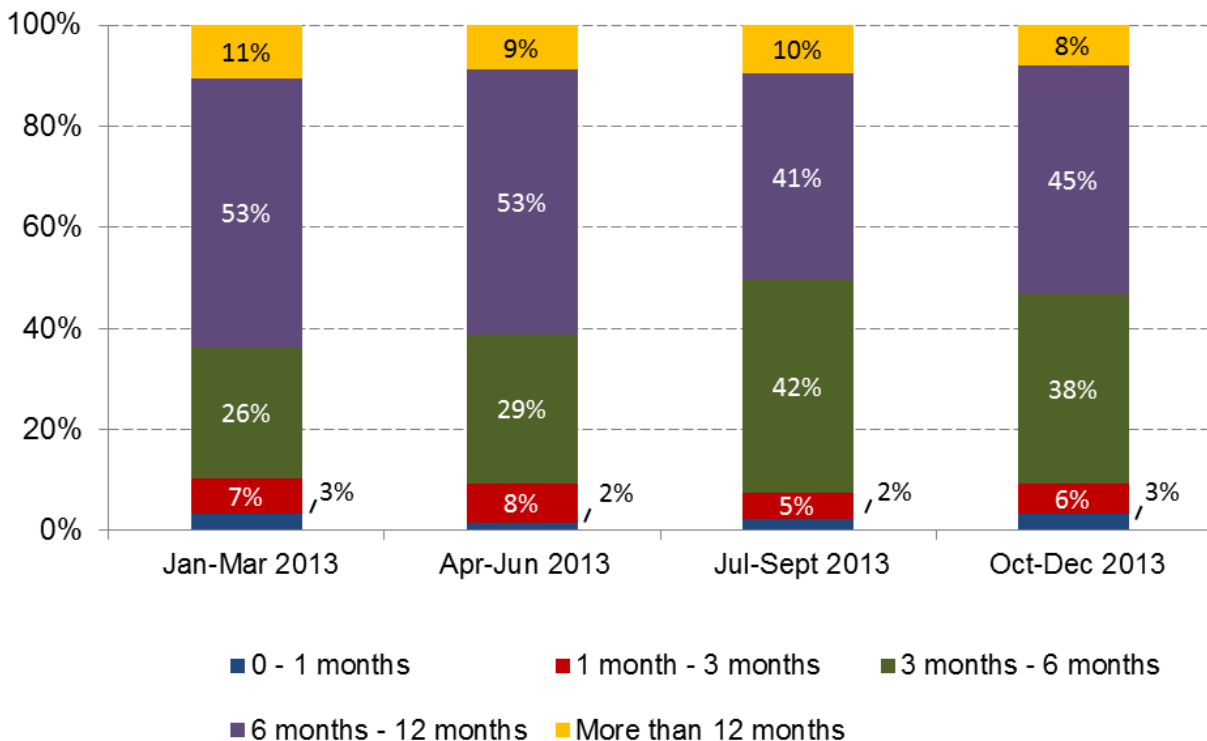
The quarterly survey suggests timeliness improved between quarter 4 2012-13 and quarter 3 2013-14 with the proportion of applications approved within 6 months having increased by 11 percentage points across the quarters (36% to 47%).

Timeliness has also improved for the time taken from approval to match: the proportion of approved adopters matched within 6 months has increased by 2 percentage points during 2012-13 (73% to 75%). This was mainly driven by the increase shown between quarters 2 and 3 2013-14.

Figures 6 and 7 show timeliness between application to approval and approval to match has changed for each of the four quarters. The majority of approvals in quarter 3 2013-14 occurred within 3 to 12 months of application (83%). There is more variation in the time from approval to match.

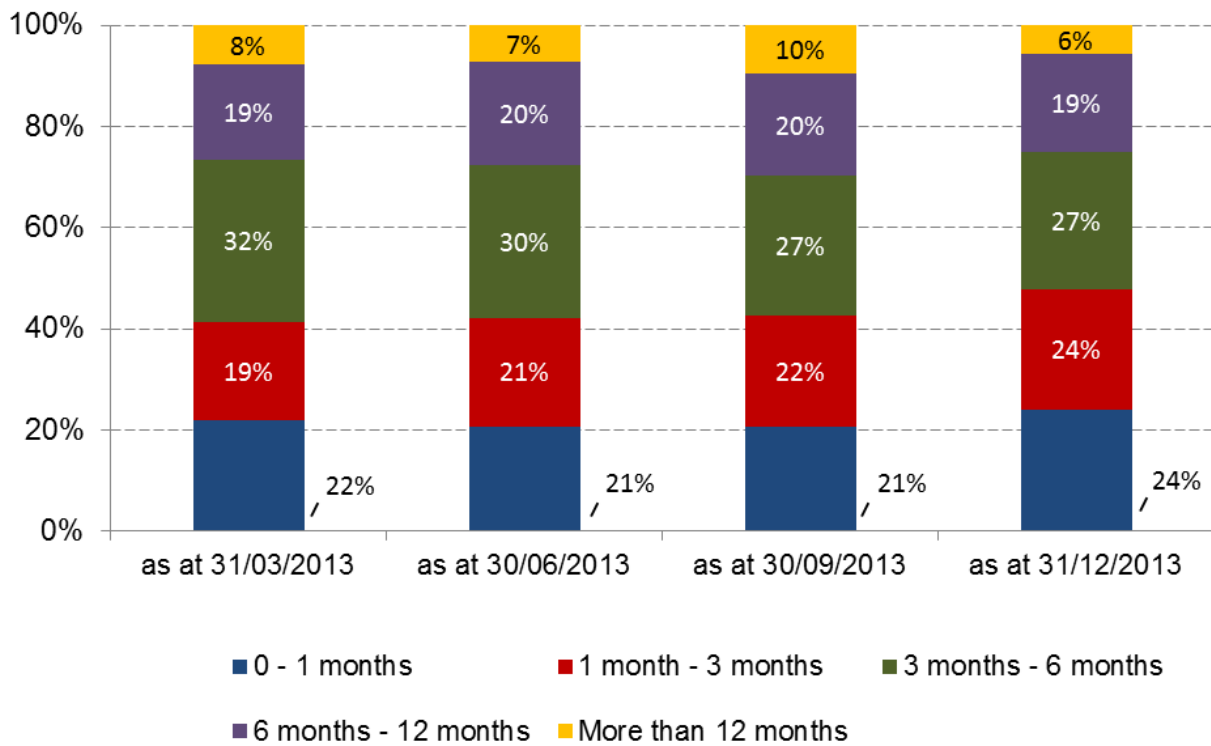
**Figure 6: Timeliness from application to approval for approved adopters**

*Figures only include returns from LAs who provided data for all quarters*



**Figure 7: Timeliness from approval to match for those approved adopters who were matched to a child as at the end of each quarter**

*Figures only include returns from LAs who provided data for all quarters*



## Background

This follows the latest round of requesting voluntary data from all 152 local authorities in England. New data for this round relates to quarters 2 and 3 2013-14 but the period 1 January to 31 December 2013 is analysed here for comparative purposes. The data collected covered information on the number of children and adopters at any stage in the adoption process. Aggregate data was collected on adopters and child level information was collected on children.

99 local authorities (65%) provided a response to the survey for quarter 2 2013-14 and 102 local authorities (67%) provided a response for quarter 3 2013-14. The findings reported in this report are based the returns made by local authorities who provided data for all quarters of January to December 2013, so that comparisons can be made. Therefore 75 returns (50% of local authorities) were used to compare data on adopted children and 75 returns were used to compare data on adopters.

Child level response rates (for those returning data for all four quarters analysed in this paper) varied greatly by region from 35% of local authorities in the North West to 91% in the East of England. The rates varied greatly across the quarters, with eight regions showing a decrease in their returns from the previous quarter.

Adopter level response rates (for those returning data for all four quarters) also varied, from 32% in the South East to 91% in the East of England.

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 2013 according to the SSSA903 data collection as a multiplying factor.

Figures have been rounded to the nearest 10.



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