

Adoption and Special Guardianship Quarterly Data Collection

Headline Measures: Q4 2024/25

July 2025

Note: The Department for Education's annual figures on adoptions and timeliness for children who have been adopted are published in the [Children looked after in England including adoption](#) SFR. This is the most robust source of information on adoption.

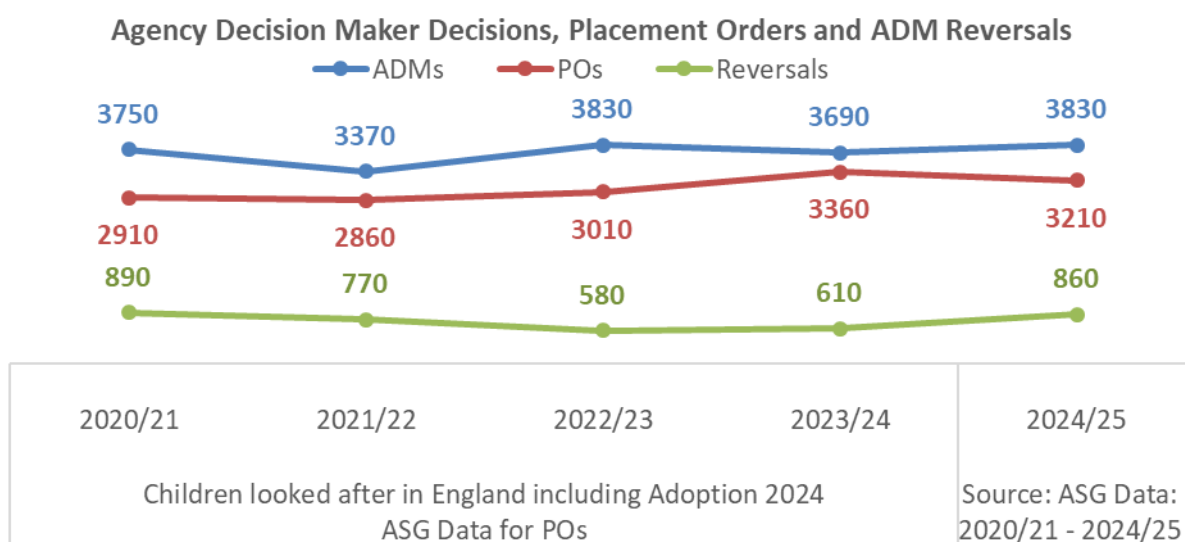
CHILDREN

There have been both increases and decreases in the numbers of decisions for children moving into and through the adoption process. The number of Agency Decision Maker Decisions, ADMs reversals away from adoption, Adoption Orders and Special Guardianship orders all increased, while the number of POs, children placed in an Early Permanence placement, and children matched and placed all decreased. More children were waiting with a Placement order, and waiting longer this year. For some children the journey to adoption was quicker, while for others it is taking longer.

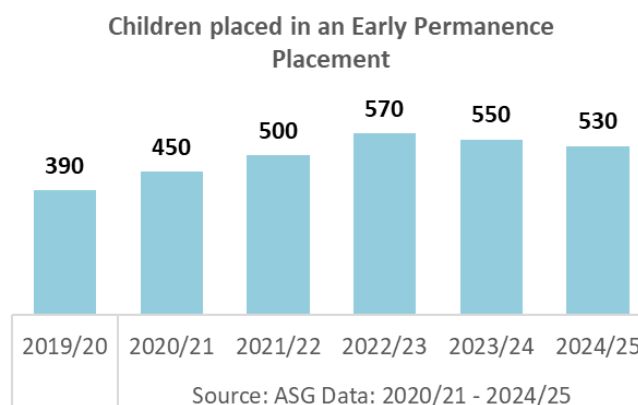
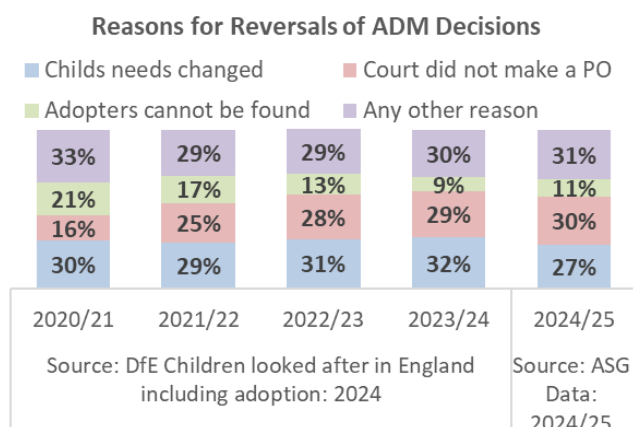
Decisions for Children

In 2024/25, the number of ADMs, ADM reversals increased, and the number of POs and children placed in Early Permanence decreased. When compared to last year there were:

- **3830** Agency Decision Maker decisions, an increase of **4% (140n)**, compared to the DfE's Children looked after in England including Adoption 2024 data (shown below), and a decrease of **3% (130n)** when compared to the ASG total of **3960** for 2023/24
- **3210** Placement Orders granted, a decrease of **4% (150n)**
- **860** ADM Reversals, an increase of **41% (250n)** when compared to the DfE's Children looked after in England including Adoption 2024 data (shown below), and an increase of **10% (80n)** when compared to the ASG total of **780** for 2023/24

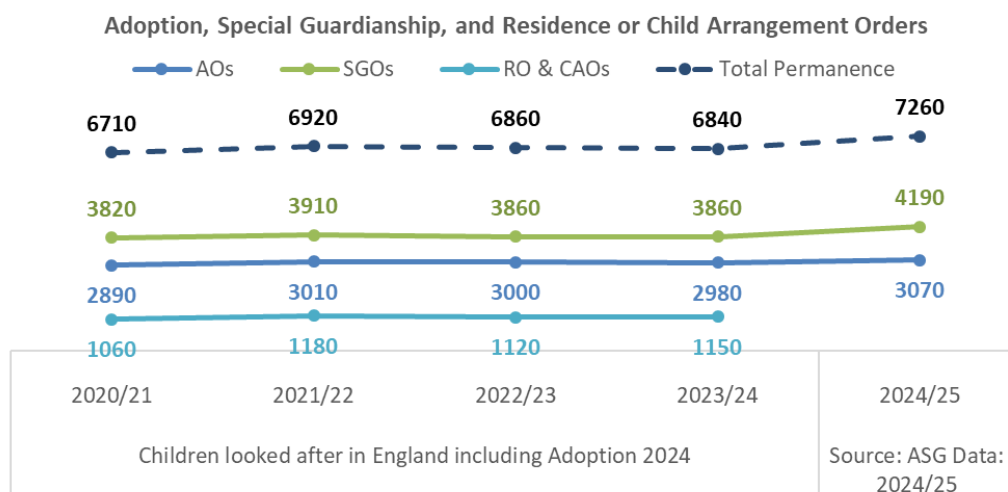


- **30%** of ADM reversals were due to 'Court did not make a PO', an increase of **1** percentage point
- **530** FFA/CP placements, a decrease of **4% (20n)**

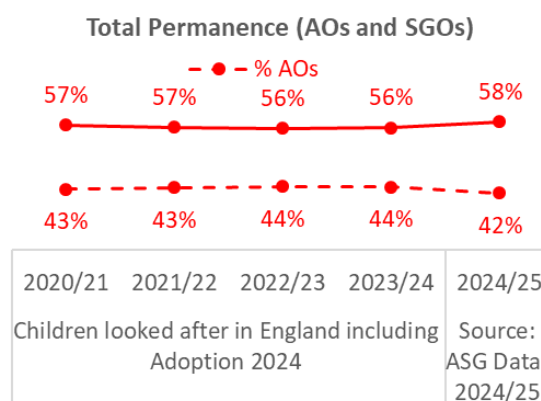
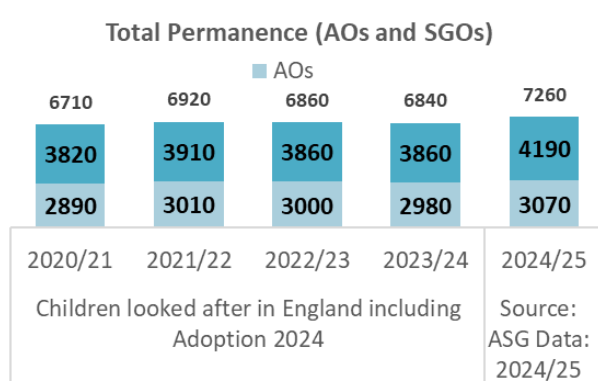


In 2024/25, the number of Adoption Orders and Special Guardianship Orders increased. When compared to last year there were:

- **3070** Adoption Orders granted, an increase of **3% (90n)**
- **4190** Special Guardianship Orders granted, an increase of **9% (330n)**
- In total there were **7260** permanence orders (AOs and SGO), an increase of **6% (420n)**

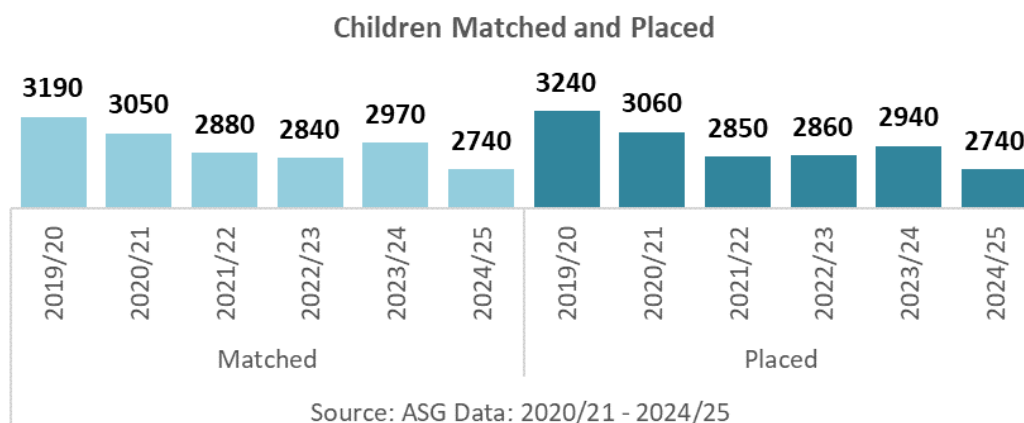


There continues to be more SGOs granted than AOs granted, with SGOs accounting for **58%** of permanence orders.



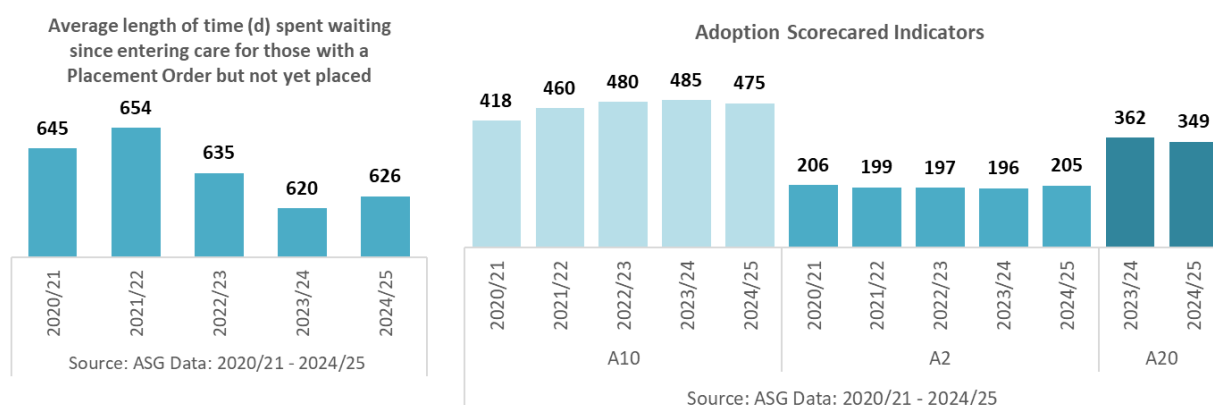
In 2024/25 the number of children matched and placed with an adopter family decreased. When compared to last year there were:

- **2740** Children matched with an adopter family, a decrease of **8% (230n)**
- **2740** Children placed with an adopter family, a decrease of **7% (200n)**



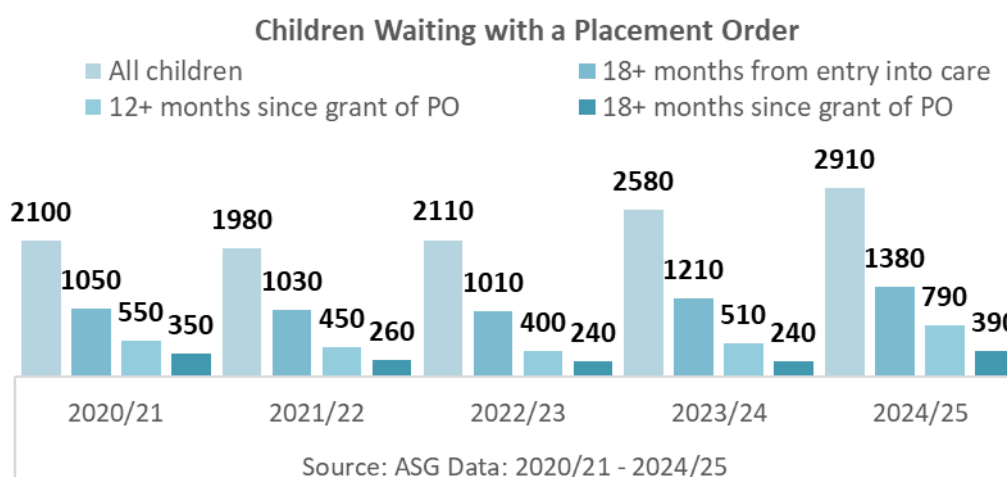
For some children, the journey to adoption is getting quicker, and for others it is taking longer. When compared to last year:

- The average number of days spent waiting to be placed with placement order since entering care was **626** days, an increase of **6** days
- Scorecard Indicator A10 (*average number of days between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family adjusted for foster care adoptions*) was **475** days, a decrease of **10** days
- Scorecard Indicator A2 (average time between an LA receiving court authority to place a child and deciding on a match to an adoptive family) was **205** days, an increase of **9** days
- Scorecard Indicator A20 (average time between a child entering care and an LA receiving court authority to place a child) was **349** days, a decrease of **13** days



Children Waiting

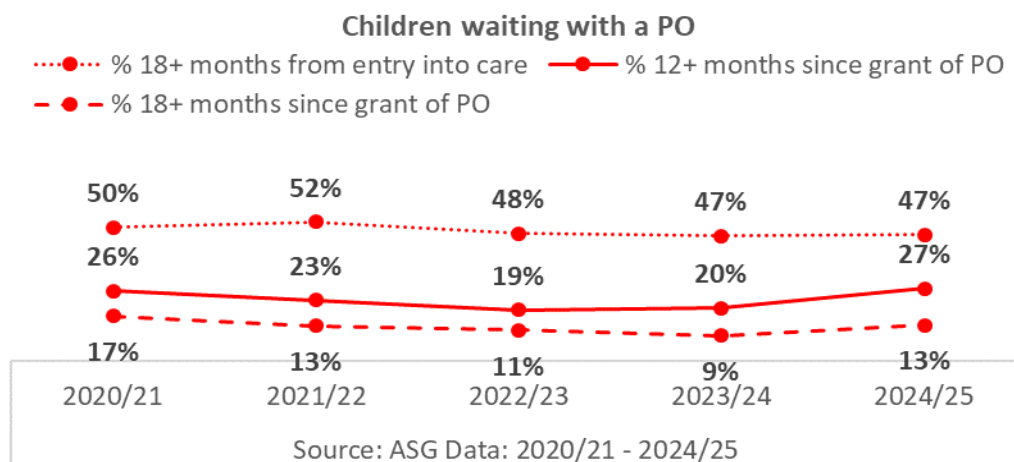
In 2024/25 the number of children waiting with a PO not yet placed increased, and more children were waiting 18+ months since entry into care, and 12+ and 18+ months since grant of PO.



When compared to last year there were:

- **2910** Children with a PO waiting to be placed an increase of **13% (330n)**
- **1380** Children with a PO waiting to be placed 18+ months since entering care, an increase of **14% (170n)**
- **790** Children with a PO waiting to be placed 12+ months since grant of PO, an increase of **55% (280n)**
- **390** Children with a PO waiting to be placed 18+ months since grant of PO, an increase of **63% (150n)**

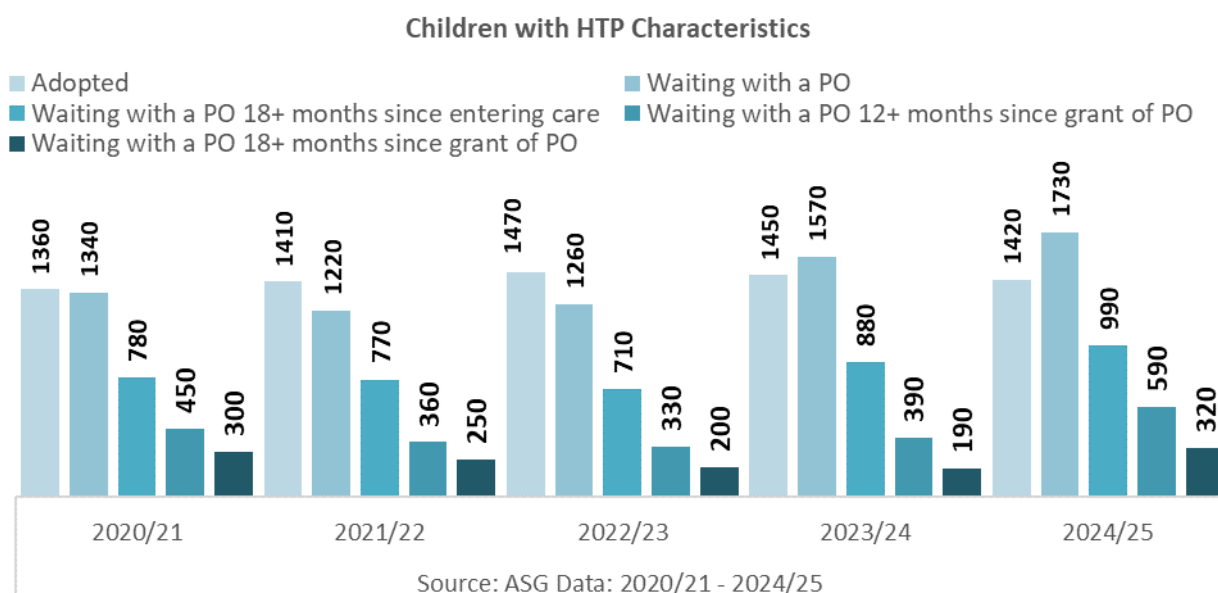
There has been an increase in the proportion of children waiting with a PO 12+ and 18+ months since grant of PO.



- **47%** of children with a PO have been waiting to be placed 18+ months since entering care, the same proportion as last year
- **13%** of children with a PO have been waiting to be placed 12+ months since grant of PO, an increase of **4** percentage points
- **27%** of children with a PO have been waiting to be placed 18+ months since grant of PO, an increase of **7** percentage points

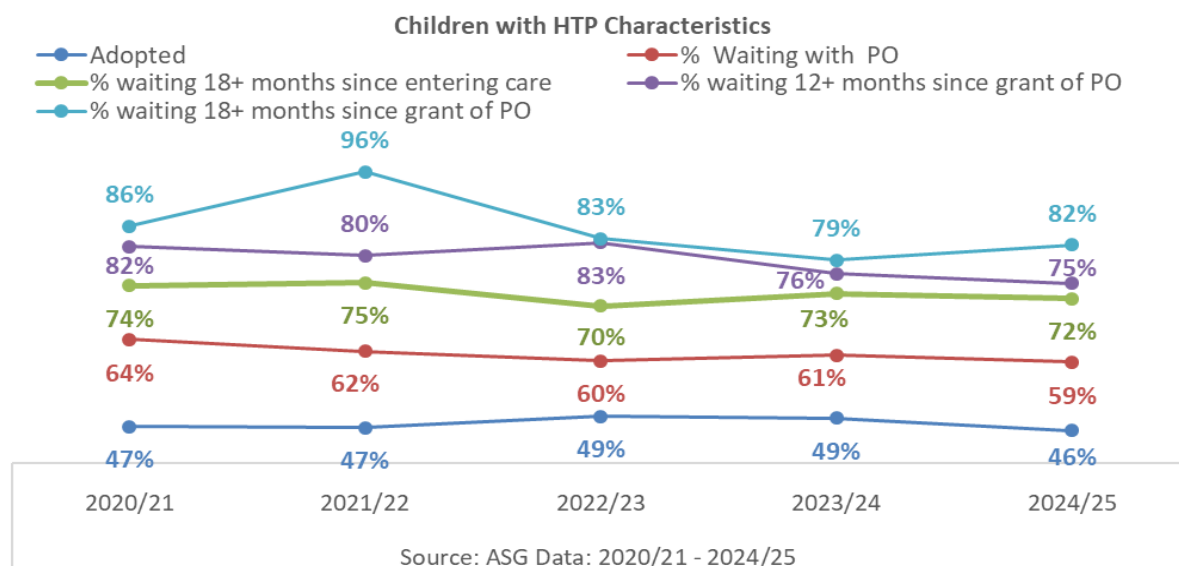
Characteristics of Children Waiting and Adopted

Children with one or more Harder to Place characteristics (*aged over 5, have a disability, in a sibling group, from an Ethnic Minority (excludes White Minorities)*) wait longer for adoption.



In 2024/25 there was a decrease in the number of children with one or more Harder to Place (HTP) characteristics adopted, and an increase in the number of children waiting with a PO, waiting 18+ months since entering care, and 12+ and 18+ months since grant of PO. When compared to last year there were:

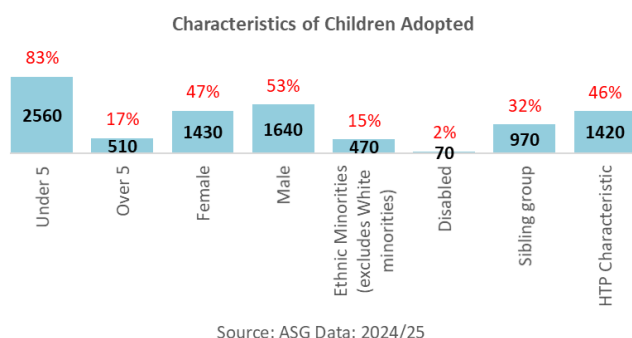
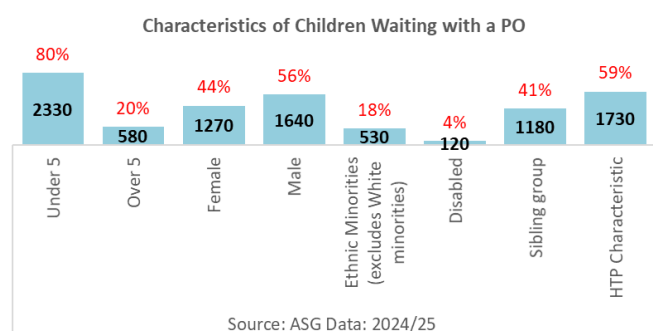
- **1420** children with HTP characteristics adopted, a decrease of **2% (30n)**
- **1730** children with HTP characteristics waiting with a PO, an increase of **10% (160n)**
- **990** children with HTP characteristics waiting with a PO 18+ months since entering care, an increase of **13% (110n)**
- **590** children with HTP characteristics waiting with a PO 12+ months since grant of PO, an increase of **51% (200n)**
- **320** children with HTP characteristics waiting with a PO 18+ months since grant of PO, an increase of **68% (130n)**



There was a decline in the proportion of children with a HTP characteristic adopted, a decrease in the proportion waiting with a PO, waiting 18+ months since entry into care, waiting 12+ months since grant of PO, and an increase in the proportion waiting 18+ since grant of PO. When compared to last year:

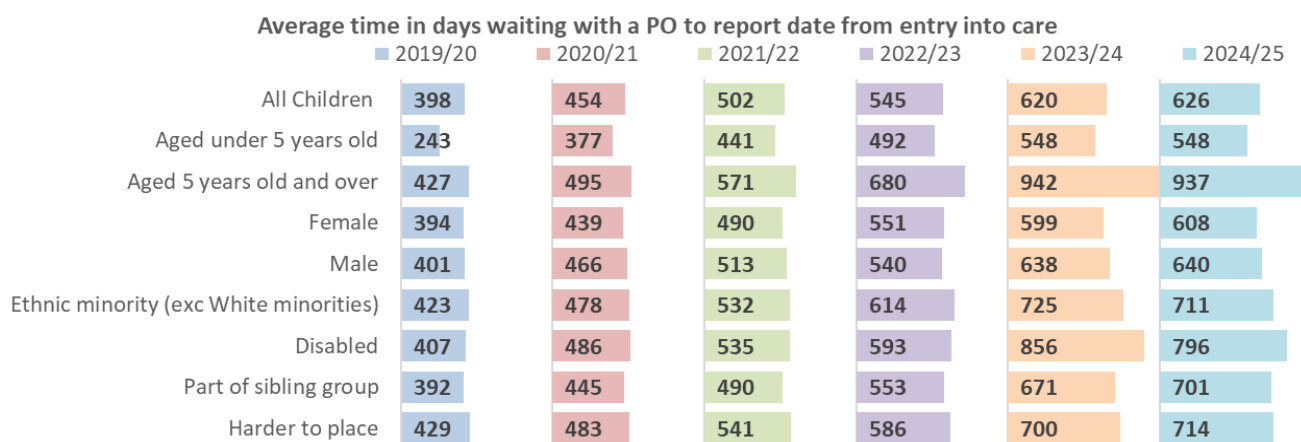
- **46%** of all children adopted had HTP characteristics, a decrease of **3** percentage points
- **59%** of all children waiting with a PO had HTP characteristics, a decrease of **2** percentage points
- **72%** of all children waiting with a PO 18+ months since entering care had HTP characteristics, a decrease of **1** percentage point
- **75%** of all children waiting with a PO 12+ months since grant of PO had HTP characteristics, a decrease of **1** percentage point
- **82%** of all children waiting with a PO 18+ months since grant of PO had HTP characteristics, an increase of **3** percentage points

The two charts below show a breakdown of children waiting and adopted in 2024/25 by characteristics.

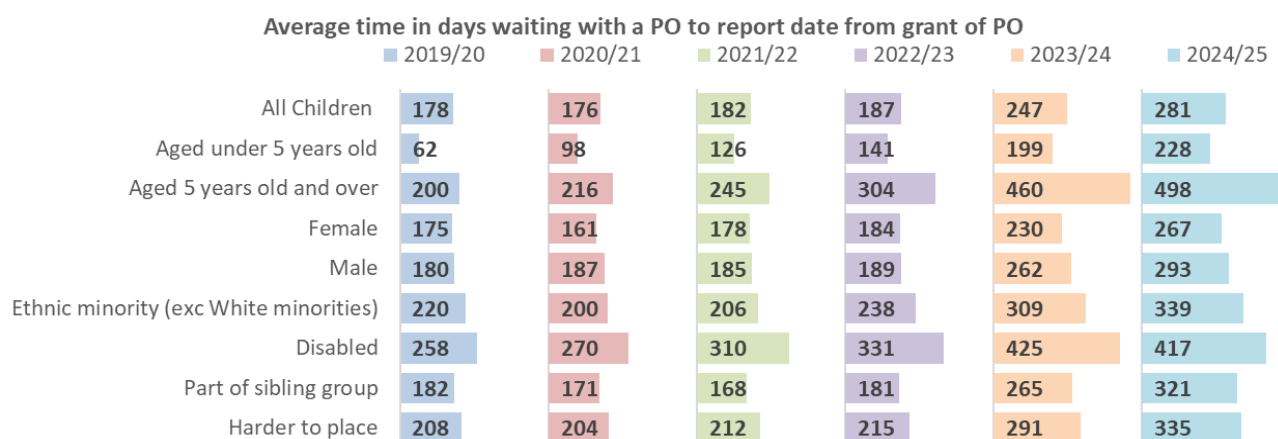


Children's Timeliness by Characteristics

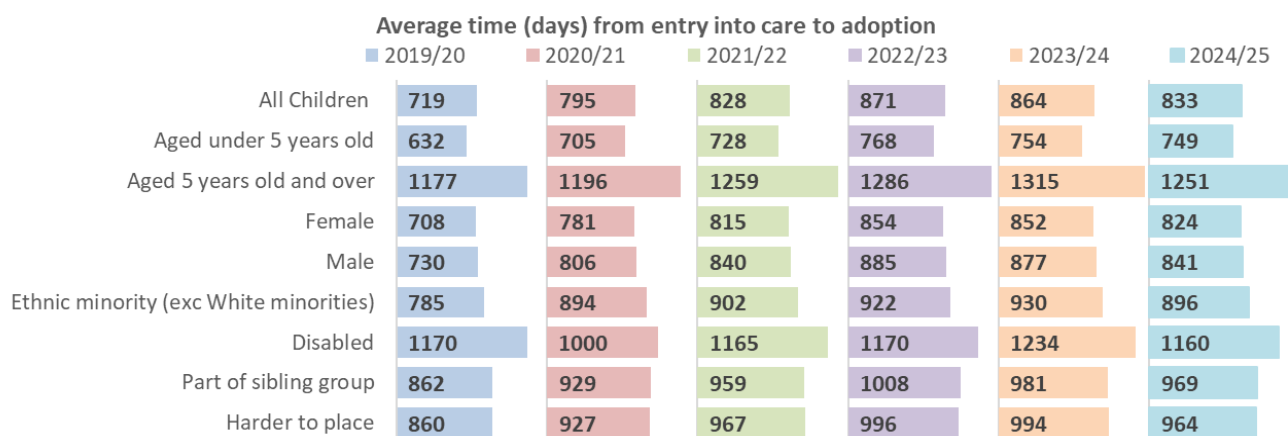
In 2024/25, the average time from entry into care to waiting with a PO for all children was **626** days, **6** days longer than last year. Children aged 5 year and over waited the longest; **937** days, followed by children with a disability: **796** days, and Ethnic Minority children: **711** days.



The average time from grant of PO and waiting for all children was **281** days, **34** days longer than last year. Children aged 5 year and over waited the longest since grant of PO; **498** days, followed by children with a disability: **417** days, and Ethnic Minority children: **339** days.

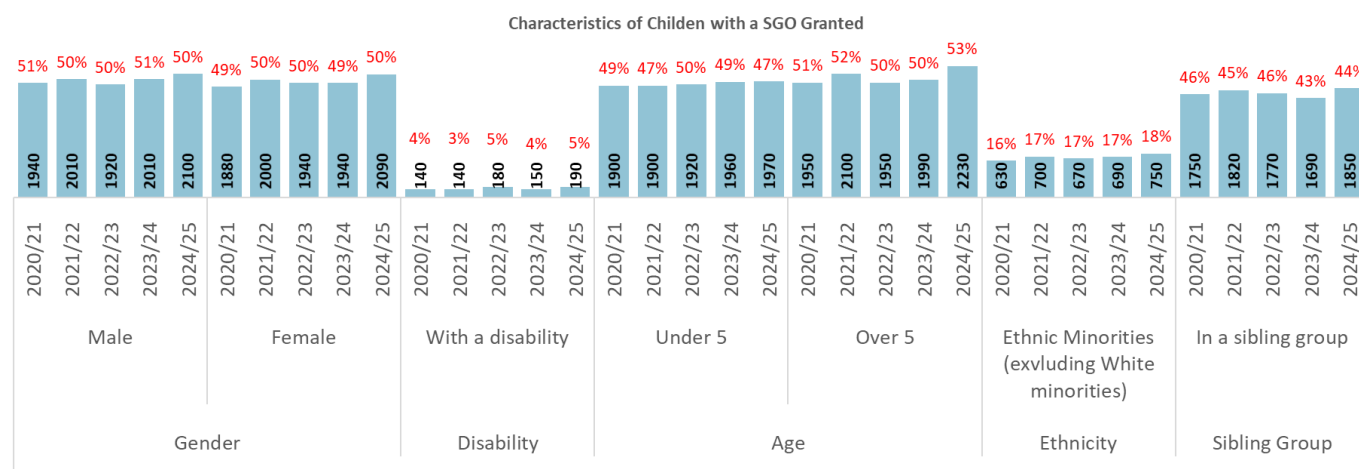


Children aged 5 year and over had the longest journey to adoption; **1251** days, followed by children with a disability: **1160** days, and children in a sibling group: **969** days.



SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP ORDERS

In 2024/25 the number of Special Guardianship Orders granted increased to **4190, 9% (330n)** higher when compared to last year. The demographic of children subject to a Special Guardianship order remains the same as previous years.

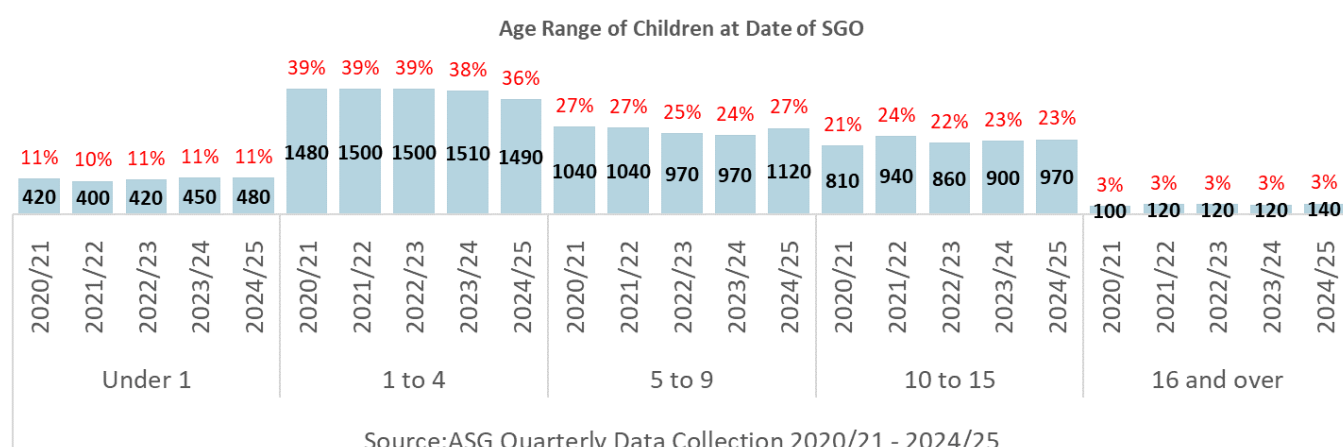


There has been an increase in the number and proportion of Special Guardianship Orders granted to children with a disability, over 5, from an ethnic minority and in a sibling group

- **50% (2100n)** of the children were male, **50% (2090n)** were female
- **5% (190n)** of SGOs were granted for children with a disability
- **47% (1970n)** of SGOs were granted for children under 5 years, **53% (2230n)** were for children aged 5 and over
- **18% (750n)** of SGOs were granted from children from an Ethnic Minority (excludes White minorities)
- **44% (1850n)** of children were in a sibling group of two or more

There has been a decrease in the number and proportion of children aged 1 to 4 with an SGO granted, and an increase from **24% (970n)** in 2023/24 to **27% (1120n)** in 2024/25 of SGOs granted to children aged 5 to 9.

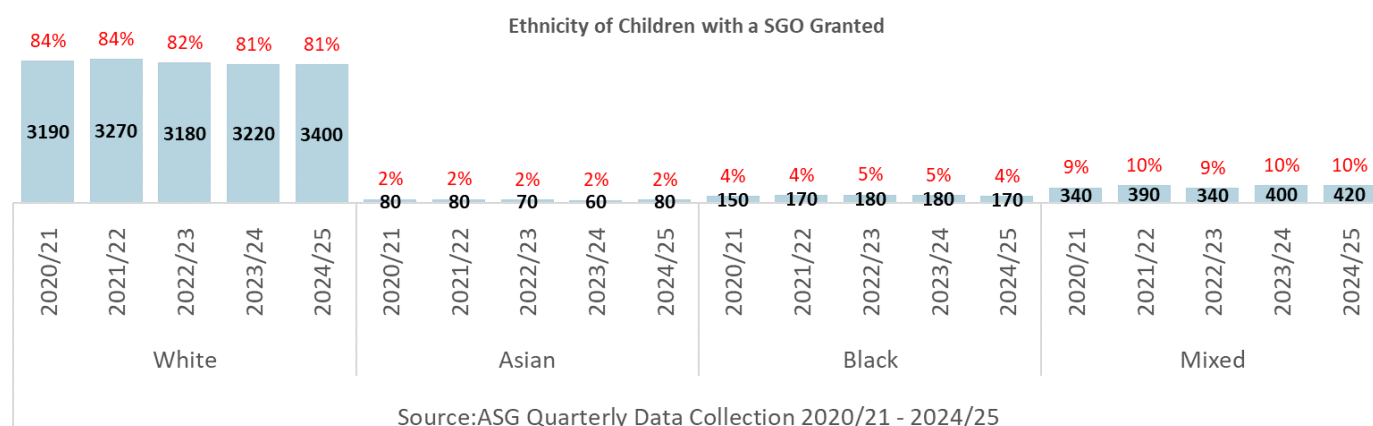
Children aged 1 to 4 remain the largest group of children with an SGO granted, **36% (1490n)**.



Source: ASG Quarterly Data Collection 2020/21 - 2024/25

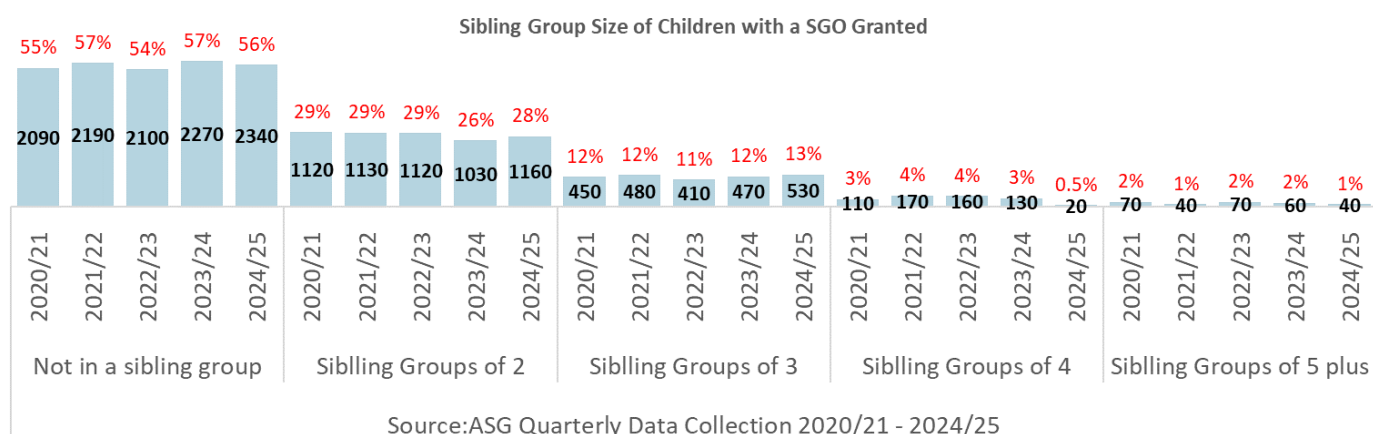
The average time from entry into care to adoption for all children was **833** days, **31** days less than last year.

The ethnic breakdown of children with an SGO granted has remained similar to last year, and children with a White ethnicity remaining the largest group of children with an SGO granted, **81% (3400n)**.



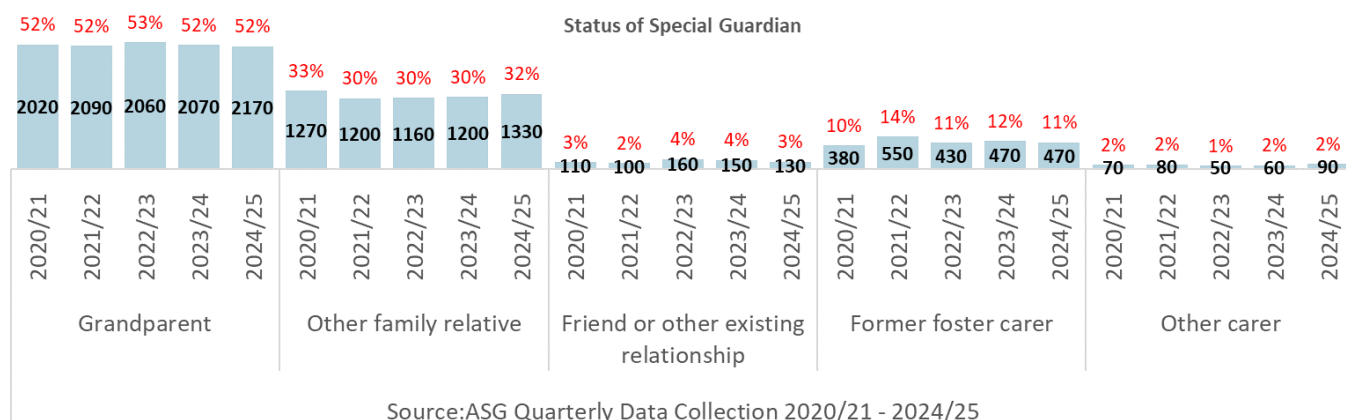
There has been an increase in the number and proportion of SGOs granted to children in a sibling group of 2, from **26% (1030n)** in 2023/24 to **28% (1160n)** in 2024/25; sibling group of 3, from **12% (470n)** in 2023/24 to **13% (530n)** in 2024/25, and a decrease of children in a sibling group of 4 and 5.

Children not in a sibling group remain the largest group of children with an SGO granted, **56% (2340n)**.



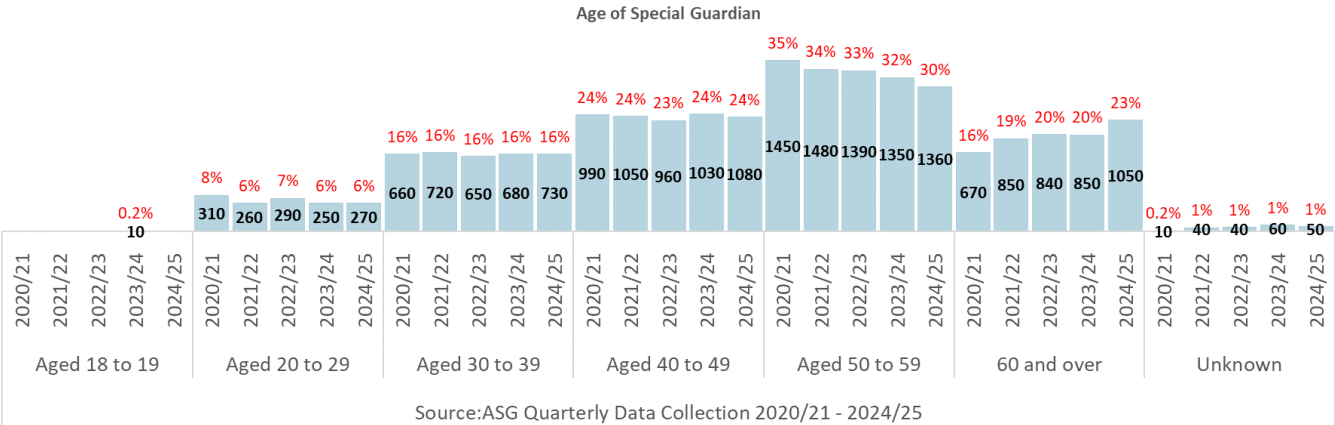
There has been an increase in the number and proportion of special guardians who are ‘other family relative’, from **30% (1200n)** in 2023/24 to **32% (1330n)** in 2024/25, and a decrease in special guardians who are ‘friend or other existing relationship’ or ‘former foster carer’.

Grandparents remain the largest group of special guardians, **52% (2170n)**.



There has been an increase in special guardians aged 60 and over, from **20% (850n)** in 2023/24 to **23% (1050n)** in 2024/25, and a decrease in special guardians aged 50 to 59.

Special guardians aged 50 to 59 remain the largest group of special guardians, **30% (1360n)**.



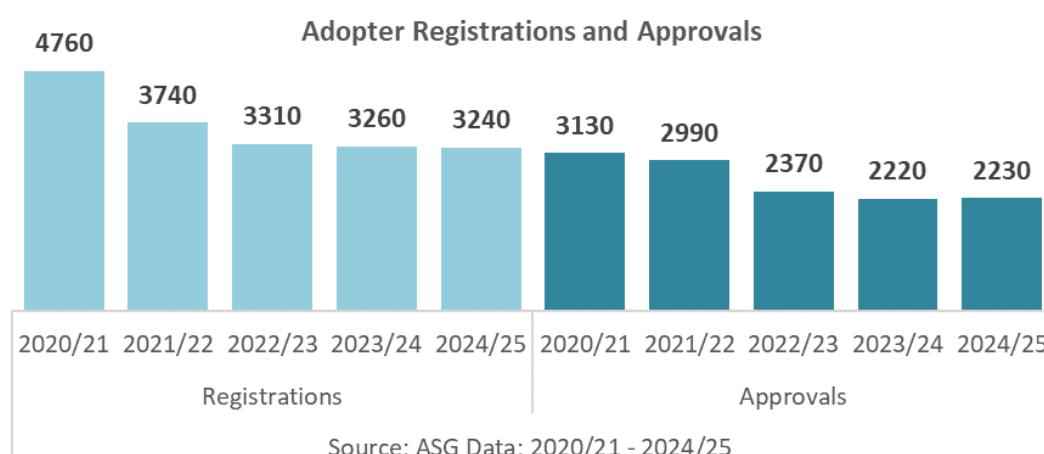
ADOPTERS

The number of adopter registrations, adopter families with a child matched and placed with them, adopters not yet approve, and approved and waiting all decreased this year, and the number of adopter approvals increased slightly. Adopter activity is at it's lowest for the last five years.

The proportion of adopters who were approved within six months, and matched with three months of approval increased indicating the demand for approved adopters.

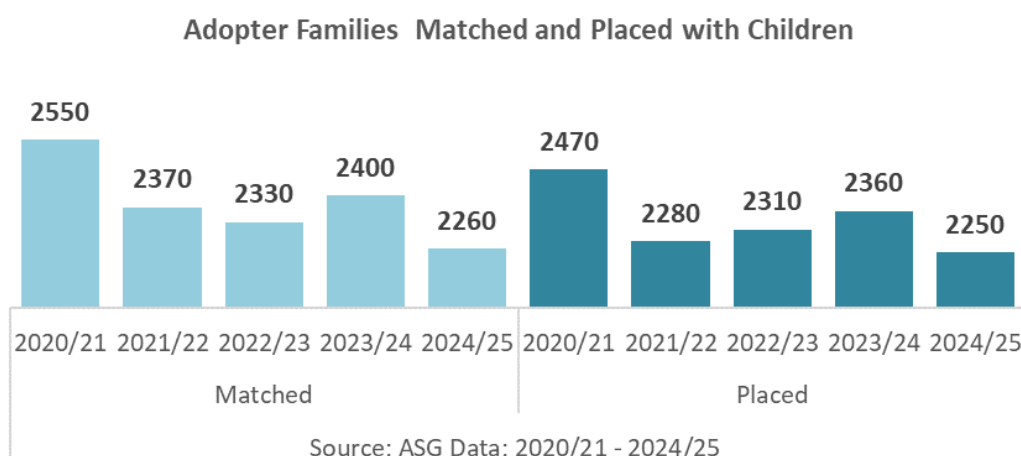
In 2024/25 the number of adopter registrations decrease and the number of approvals increased. When compared to last year there were:

- **3240** Registrations, a decrease of **0.6% (20n)**
- **2230** Approvals, an increase of **0.5% (10n)**



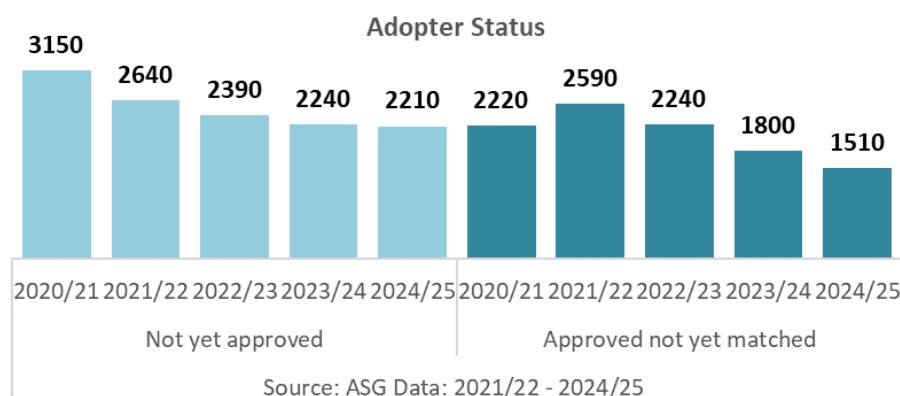
There was a decline in adopters who were matched with, and had a child placed with them. When compared to last year there were:

- **2260** Adopter families matched to children, a decrease of **6% (140n)**
- **2250** Adopter families with a child placed, a decrease of **5% (110n)**

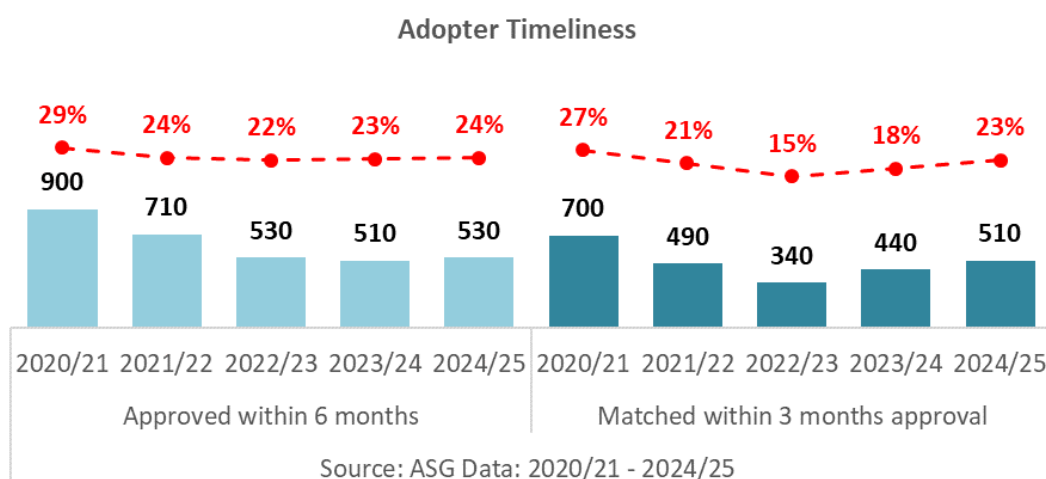


Both the number of adopters not yet approved, and approved and waiting declined. When compared to last year there were:

- **2210** Prospective adopter families not yet approved, a decrease of **1% (30n)**
- **1510** Approved adopter families waiting to be matched, a decrease of **16% (290n)**



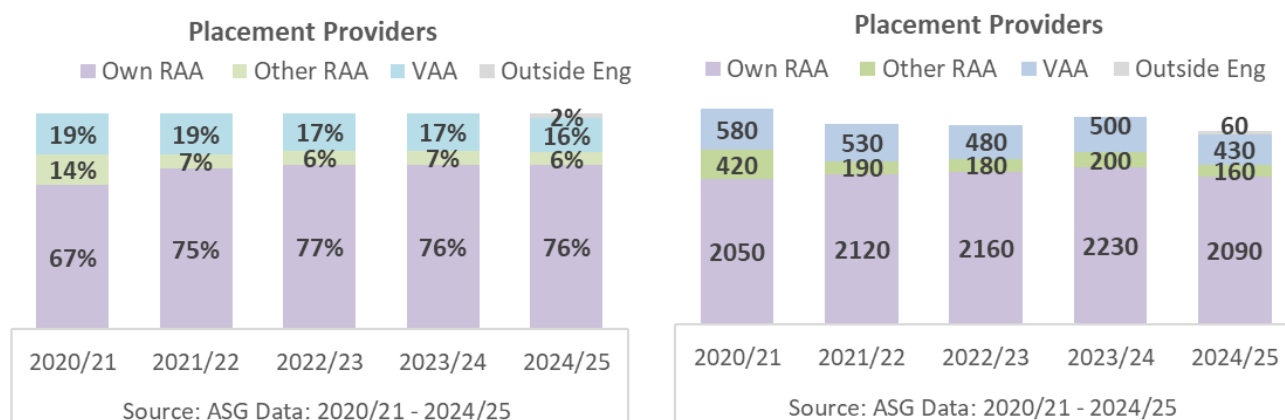
Timelines for adopters improved, with a higher proportion of adopters approved within six months, and matched with three months of approval. When compared to last year:



- **24%** of adopter families were approved within 6 months of registration, an increase of **1** percentage point
- **23%** of approved adopter families had a child matched with them within 3 months of approval, an increase of **5** percentage points

The proportion of children placed with 'Own RAA' has remained the same when compared to last year, **76% (2090n)**, and the proportion placed with 'Other RAA' has decreased to **6% (160n)**, and the proportion placed with 'VAA' has decreased to **16% (430n)**.

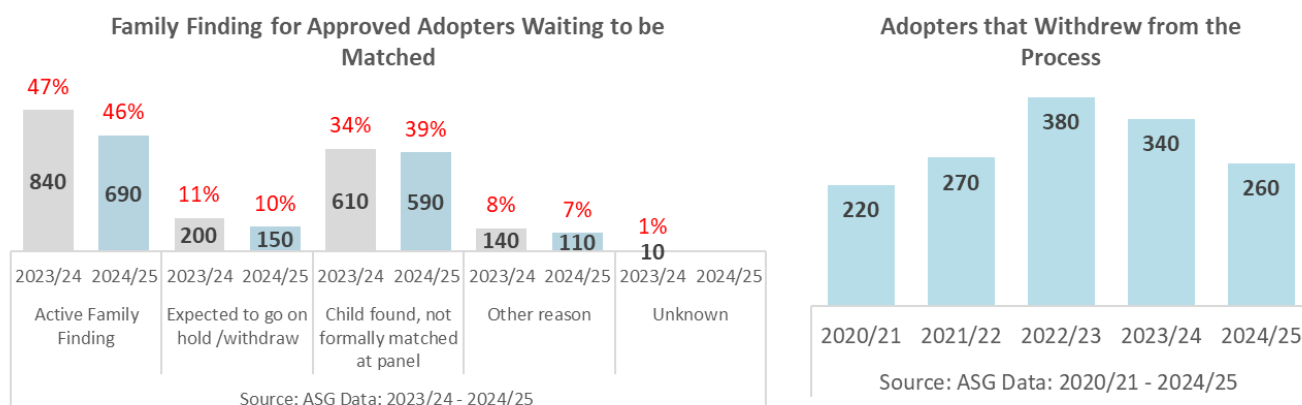
In 2024/25, **2% (60n)** of children were placed with Local Authorities or VAAs outside England



There has been a decline in the proportion of adopters with active family finding and, an increase in adopters not family finding as they have a match with a child.

In 2024/25:

- **46% (690n)** adopter families had active family finding
- **39% (590n)** had a child found but were not formally matched with panel

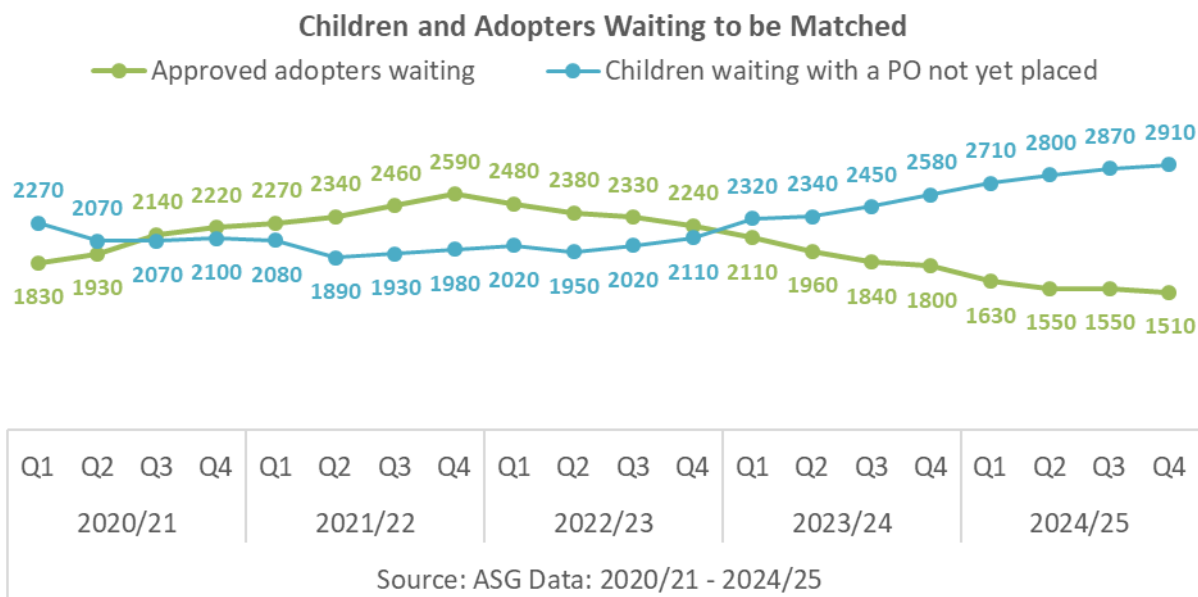


This year there has been a decline in the number of adopters expected to go on hold or withdraw, and adopters leaving the process:

- **150 (10%)** are expected to go on hold, a decline of **25% (50n)** when compared to last year
- **260** adopters withdrew from the process after approval, a decline of **24% (80n)** when compared to last year

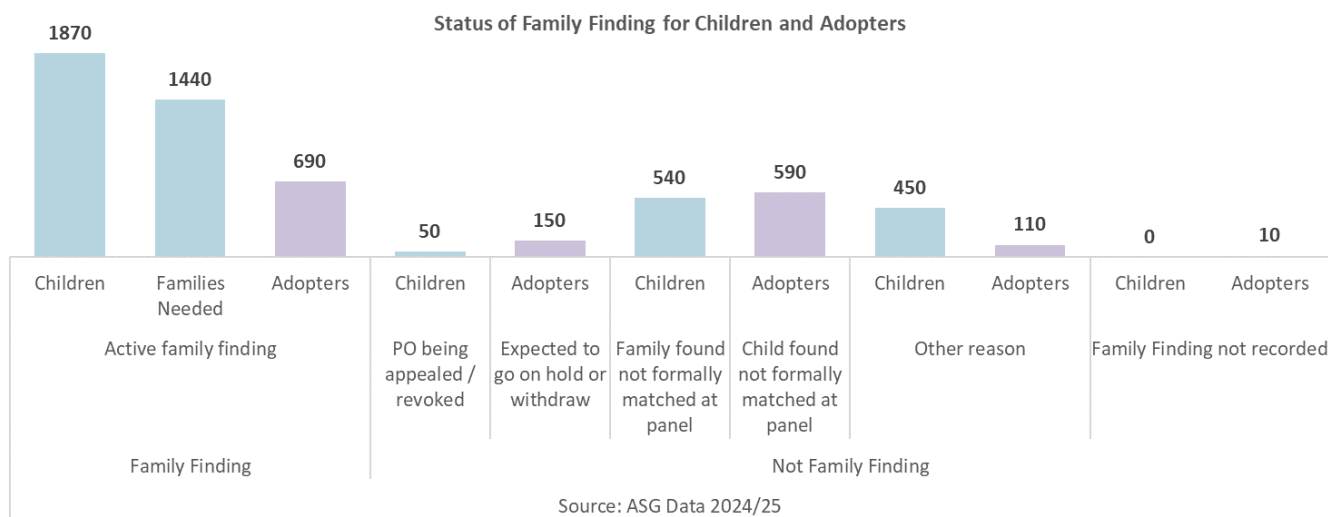
Sufficiency of Adopters

There continues to be more children waiting with a PO to be placed with a family than approved adopters waiting. The gap between the number of all children waiting with a PO to be placed, and all approved adopters waiting has increased to **1440**, the largest it has been in the last five years.



Comparison of the family finding status for all children and all adopters waiting show that there are:

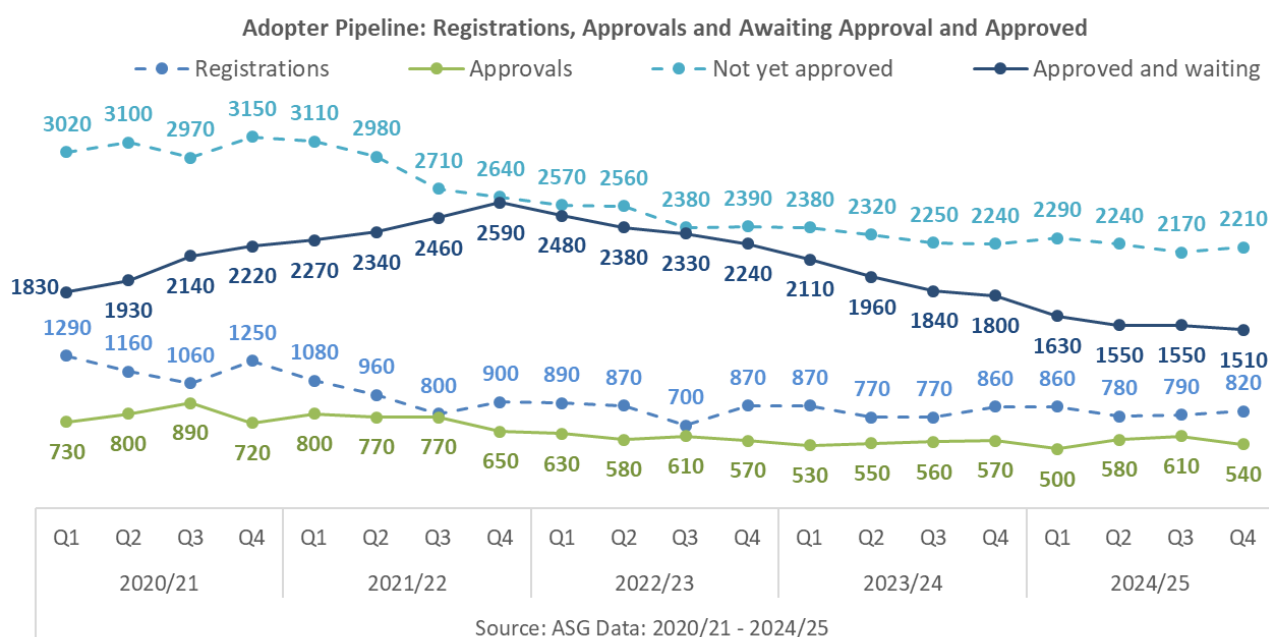
- **1870** children with active family finding
- **1440** adopter families are need (*based on the number of single children and sibling groups waiting to be placed*)
- **690** adopter families with active family finding
- **750** shortfall of adopter families



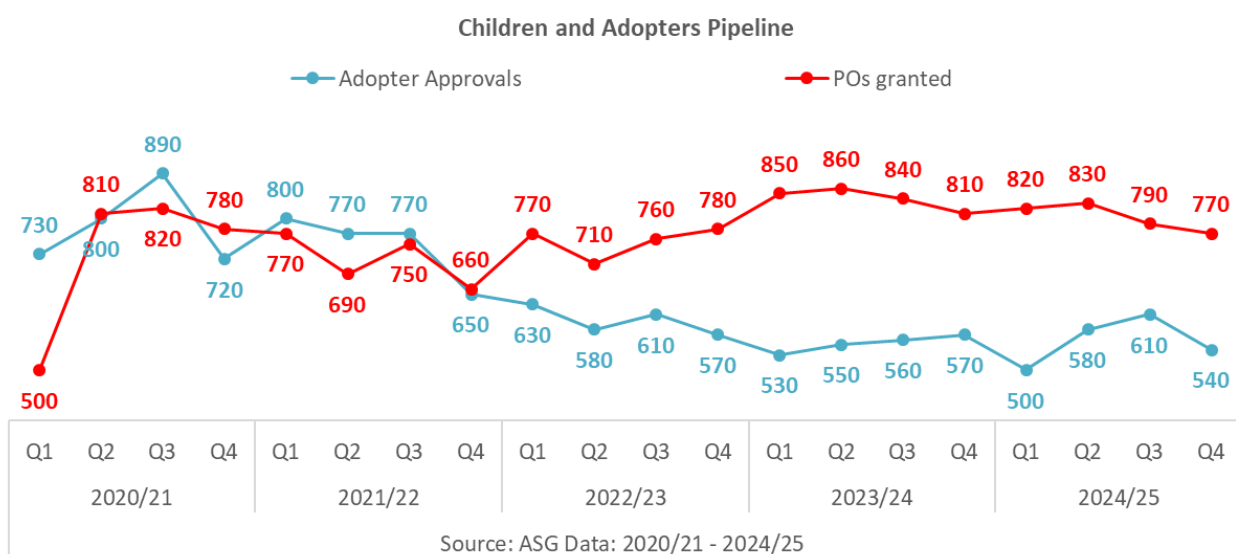
Adopter Pipeline

The total number of adopter registrations, approvals, prospective adopters not yet approved, and adopters approved and waiting are all lower when compared to last year. Quarterly comparisons for 2024/25 indicate that:

- Adopter registrations are lower when compared to Q1, but higher when compared to Q2 and Q3
- Adopter approvals are higher when compared to Q1, but lower when compared to Q2 and Q3
- Adopters not yet approved are lower when compared to Q1 and Q2, but higher when compared to Q3
- Adopters approved and waiting declined each quarter this year



Over the last three years there have been more POs granted than adopter approvals meaning that children have been entering the adoption process at a higher rate than adopters. The decline in POs granted in 2024/25 has closed this gap from **320** in Q1 to **230** in Q4.



DATA SOURCES

ASG Quarterly Data Collection

In quarter 4 2024/25 the response rate from local authorities for the child level section was 100% and the adopter level sections was 100%. The response rate for the adopter level section from Voluntary Adoption Agencies was 100%. Therefore, national and regional figures on adoptions and adopter do not include estimates made for non-responses.

SSDA 903 Data Collection

Local authorities provide data on their looked after children using the SSDA903 collection. Data are collected from all local authorities. The information is collected at child level and includes information about the child's characteristics and their dates for each stage of the care process, including adoption. The data goes through thorough quality assurance and local authorities are able to update their historic data annually. We therefore view this as the most robust source of information on adoption. It is used to produce the [Children looked after in England including adoption](#) (SFR) and the [Adoption Scorecards](#). The most recent data covers the year ending 31 March 2020.

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

This publication was produced by The Children and Social Care Secretariat, delivered by Coram-i on behalf of the Department for Education.

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