

# Adoption and Special Guardianship Quarterly Data Collection

**Headline Measures: Q3 2025/26**

**March 2026**

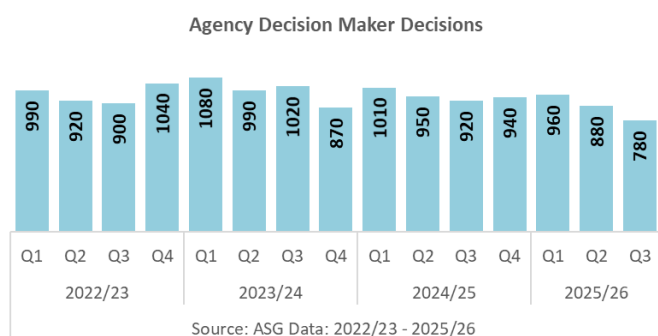
Note: The Department for Education's annual figures on adoptions and timeliness for children who have been adopted are published in the [Children looked after in England including adoption](#) SFR. This is the most robust source of information on adoption.

## CHILDREN

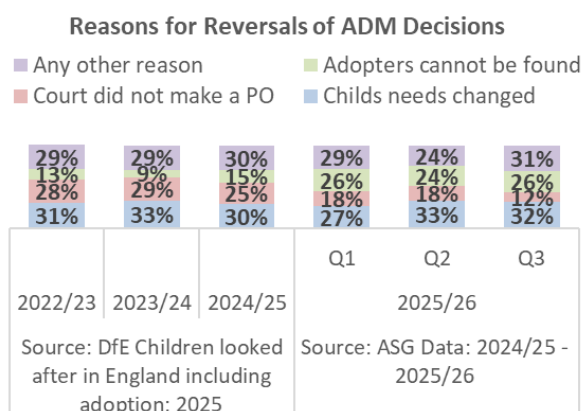
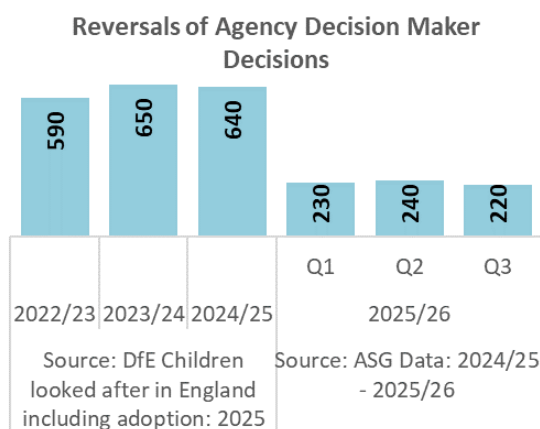
In Q3 2025/26 (31 December 2025) the number of ADM decisions for adoption, Placement Orders, Children Matched and Placed, Adoption Orders and SGOs granted all decreased when compared to last quarter.

In Q3 2025/26 there were:

- **780** Agency Decision Maker decisions, a decrease of **11% (100n)** from Q2 2025/26, and a decrease of **15% (140n)** when compared to Q3 2024/25
- **700** Placement Orders granted, a decrease of **11% (90n)** from Q2 2025/26, and a decrease of **11% (90n)** when compared to Q3 2024/25



- **220** ADM reversals, a decrease of **8% (20n)** from Q2 2025/26
- **32%** of reversals were due to 'Child's needs changed', **12%** 'Court did not make a PO', **26%** 'Adopters cannot be found', and **31%** were due to 'Any other reason'

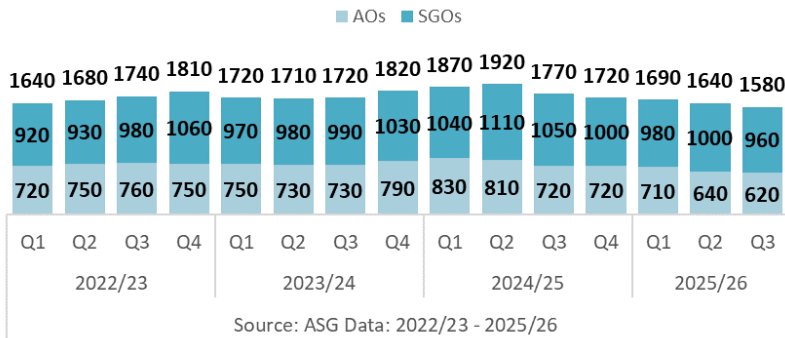


The numbers of Adoption Orders and Special Guardianship Orders granted both decreased when compared to the last quarter.

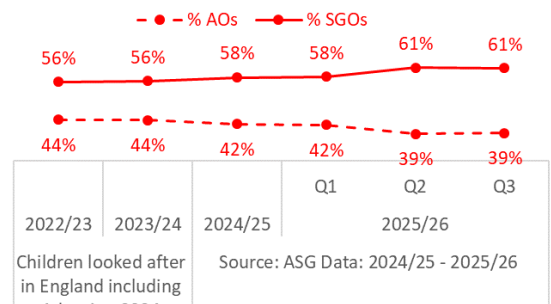
In Q3 2025/26 there were:

- **620** Adoption Orders granted, a decrease of **3% (20n)** from Q2 2025/26, and a decrease of **12% (100n)** when compared to Q3 2024/25
- **960** Special Guardianship Orders granted, a decrease of **4% (40n)** from Q2 2025/26, and a decrease of **8% (90n)** when compared to Q3 2024/25
- **1580** total permanence orders granted (AOs & SGOs), a decrease of **4% (60n)** from Q2 2025/26, and a decrease of **10% (190n)** when compared to Q3 2024/25
- SGOs accounted for **61%** of all permanence, the same when compared to the last quarter
- **380** children were placed in an FFA/CP arrangement in total for the first three quarters of 2025/26.

### Adoption Orders and Special Guardianship Orders

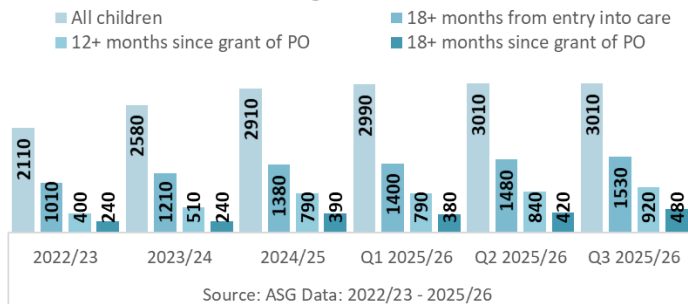


### Total Permanence (AOs and SGOs)

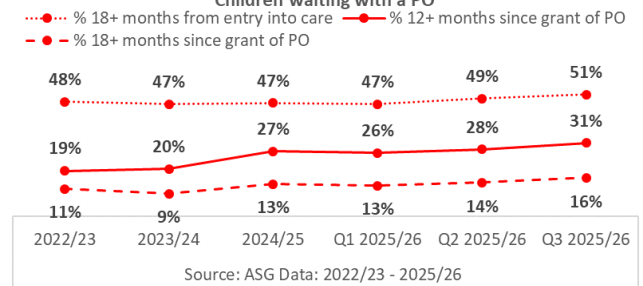


The number of children waiting longer with a Placement Order has increased.

### Children Waiting with a Placement Order



### Children waiting with a PO



In Q3 2025/26 there were:

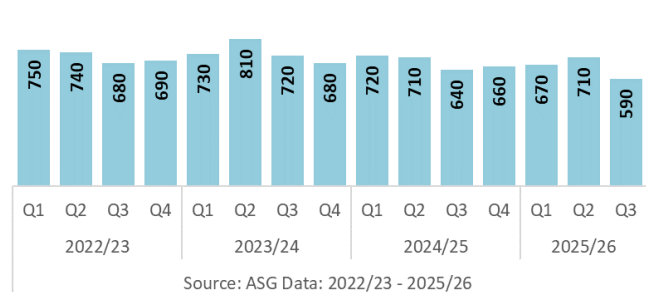
- **3010** children with a PO waiting to be placed, the same as Q2
- **1530** children with a PO waiting to be placed 18+ months since entering care, an increase of **3% (50n)** from Q2
- **51%** of children with a PO have been waiting to be placed 18+ months since entering care
- **920** children with a PO waiting to be matched 12+ months since grant of PO, an increase of **10% (80n)** from Q2
- **31%** of children with a PO have been waiting to be matched 12+ months since grant of PO
- **480** children with a PO waiting to be matched 18+ months since grant of PO, an increase of **14% (60n)** from Q2
- **16%** of children with a PO have been waiting to be matched 18+ months since grant of PO

The number of children matched increase, and the number placed with an adoptive family decreased this quarter.

### Children Matched



### Children Placed



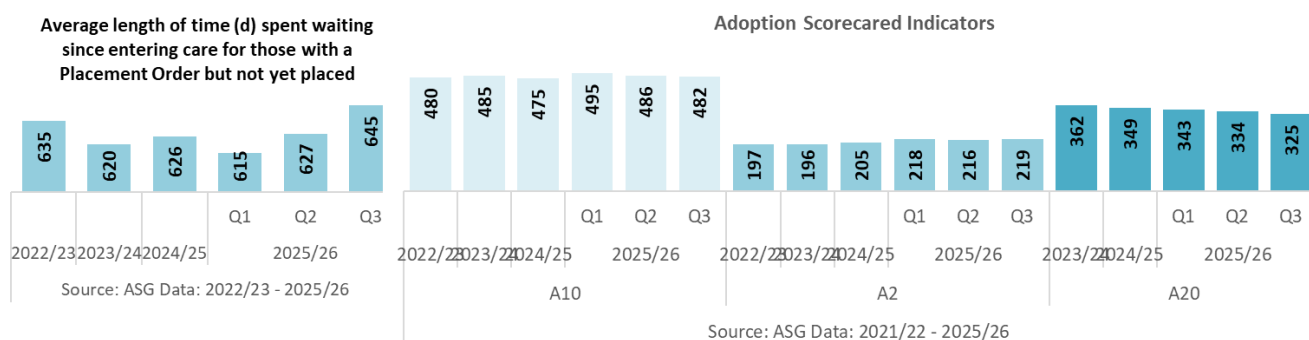
In Q3 2025/26 there were:

- **650** children matched with an adoptive family, a decrease of **3% (20n)** from Q2 2025/26, and a decrease of **10% (70n)** when compared to Q3 2024/25
- **590** children placed with an adoptive family, a decrease of **17% (120n)** from Q2 2025/26, and a decrease of **7% (50n)** when compared to Q3 2024/25

Timeliness has improved for some children and slowed for others.

In Q3 2025/26:

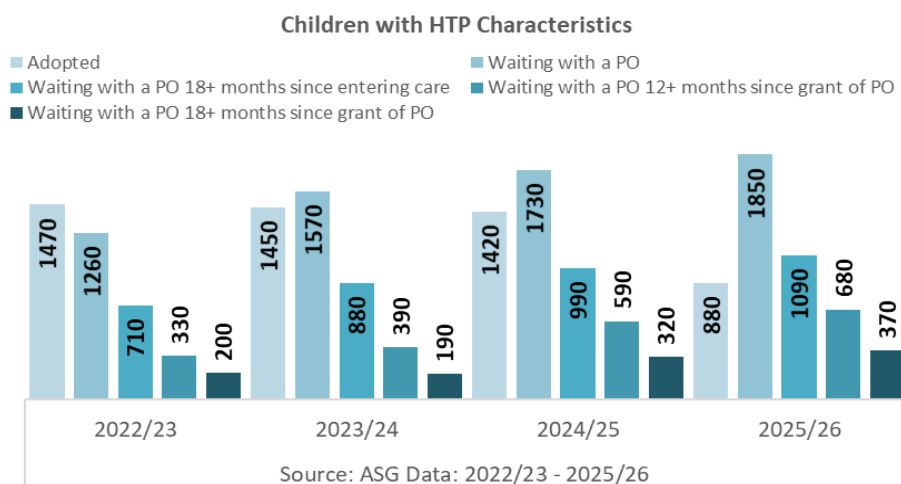
- The average number of days spent waiting to be placed with Placement Order since entering care was **645 days**, an increase of **18 days** from Q2
- Scorecard Indicator A10 (average number of days between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family adjusted for foster care adoptions) was **482 days**, a decrease of **4 days** from Q2
- 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 **219 days**, an increase of **3 days** from Q2
- Scorecard Indicator A20 (average time between a child entering care and an LA receiving court authority to place a child) was **325 days**, a decrease of **9 days** from Q2



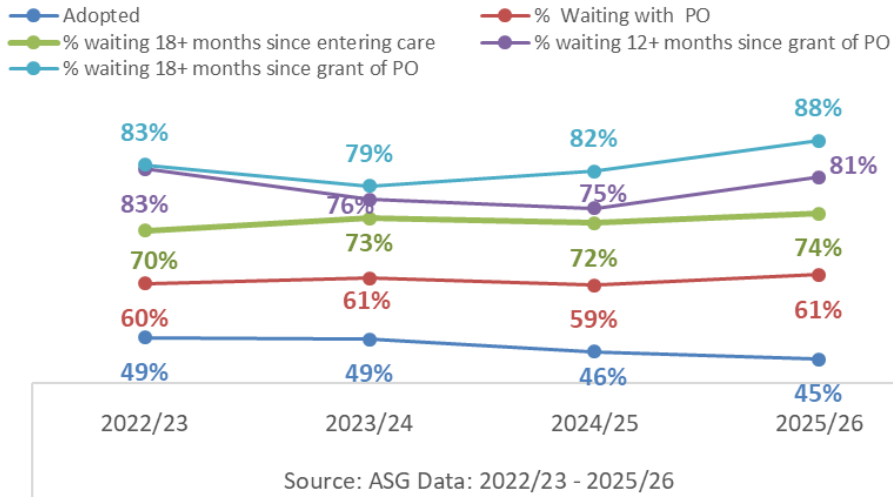
There has been a decrease in children with HTP characteristics being adopted, and an increase in those waiting longer to be placed for adoption.

As at Q3 2025/26 there were a total of:

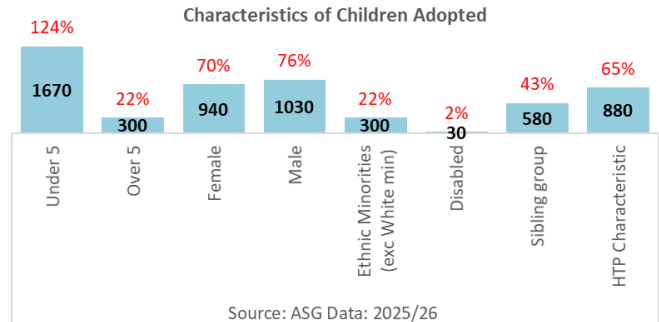
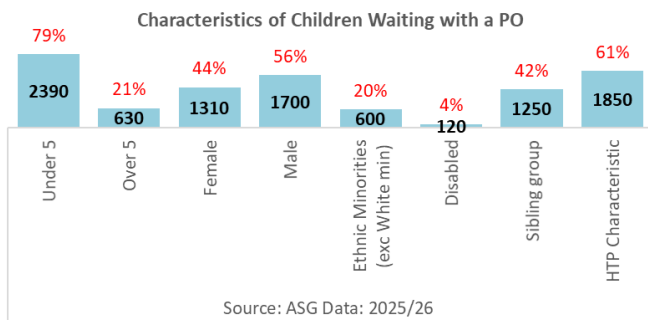
- **880** children with HTP characteristics adopted, **45%** of all children adopted
- **1850** children with HTP characteristics waiting with a PO, **61%** of all children waiting with a PO
- **1090** children with HTP characteristics waiting with a PO 18+ months since entering care, **74%** of all children waiting with a PO
- **680** children with HTP characteristics waiting 12+ months since grant of PO, **81%** of all children waiting 12+ months since grant of PO
- **370** children with HTP characteristics waiting 18+ months since grant of PO, **88%** of all children waiting 18+ months since grant of PO



### Children with HTP Characteristics



The charts below give a breakdown of the number of children waiting with a PO, and adopted by characteristics.



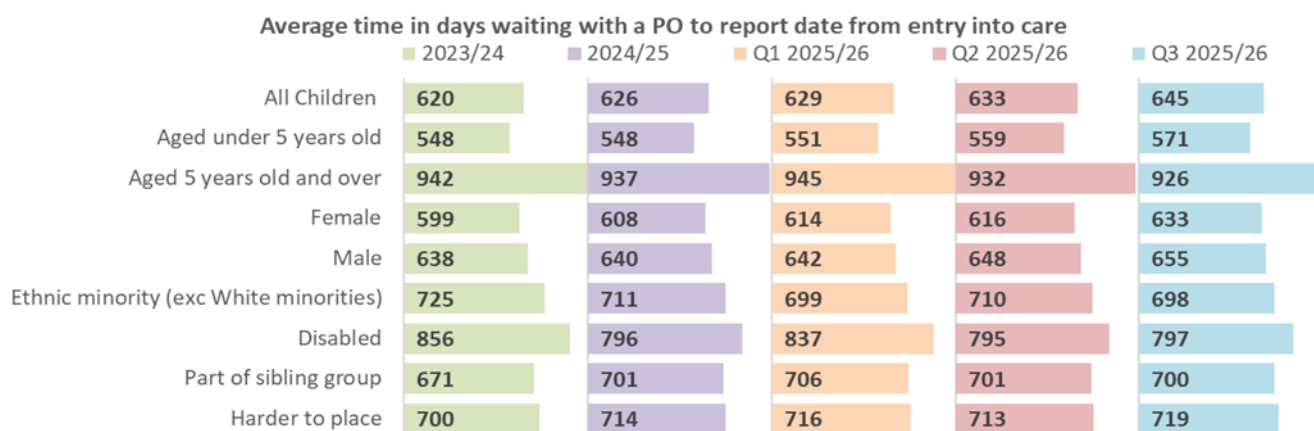
In Q3 2025/26:

- Children who were aged under 5, female and not from an Ethnic Minority (excludes White minorities) background continue to be more likely to be adopted and less likely to be waiting with a PO
- Children aged over 5, male, from an Ethnic Minority (excludes White minorities) background, with a disability and in a sibling group continue to be more likely to be waiting with a PO and less likely to be adopted

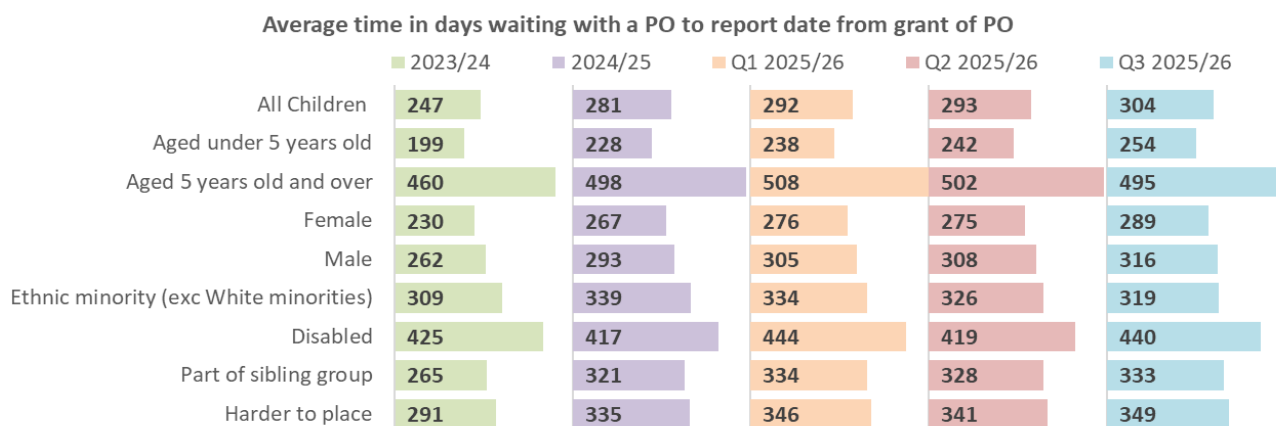
NB: "Harder to place" is defined as a child who is any of the following: 5 years or over, with an Ethnic Minority (excludes White minorities) background, disabled, or part of a sibling group. Children with more than one harder to place characteristic will be counted in each characteristic.

## CHILDREN'S TIMELINESS BY CHARACTERISTIC

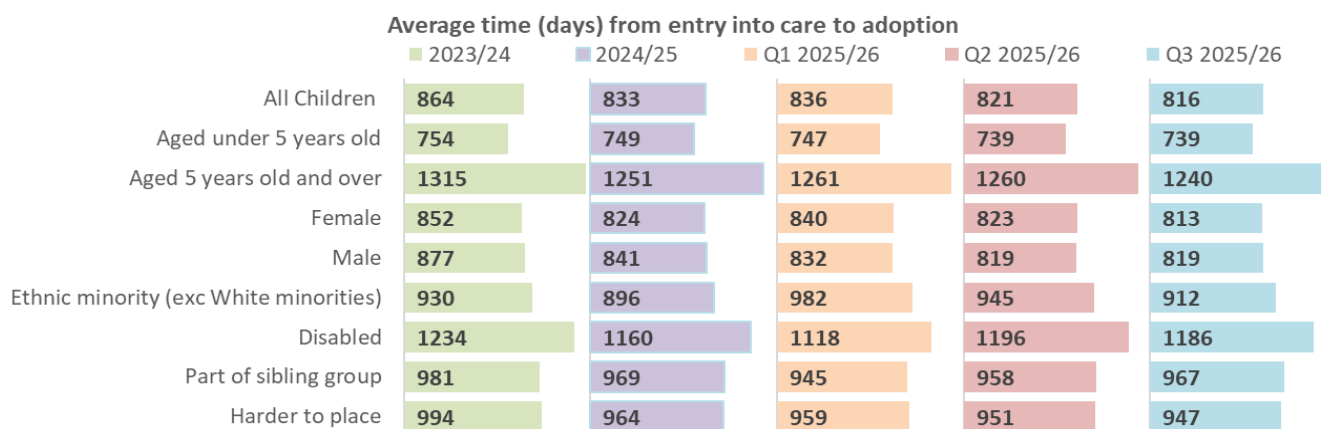
In Q3 2025/26, the average time from entry into care to waiting with a PO for all children was **645** days, **12** days longer than in Q2. Children aged 5 year and over waited the longest; **926** days, followed by children with a disability: **797** days, and children in a sibling group: **700** days.



The average time from grant of PO and waiting for all children was **304** days, **11** days longer than in Q2. Children aged 5 year and over waited the longest since grant of PO; **495** days, followed by children with a disability: **440** days, and children in a sibling group: **333** days.



The average time from entry into care to adoption for all children was **816** days, **5** days shorter than in Q2. Children aged 5 year and over had the longest journey to adoption; **1240** days, followed by children with a disability: **1186** days, and children in a sibling group: **967** days.

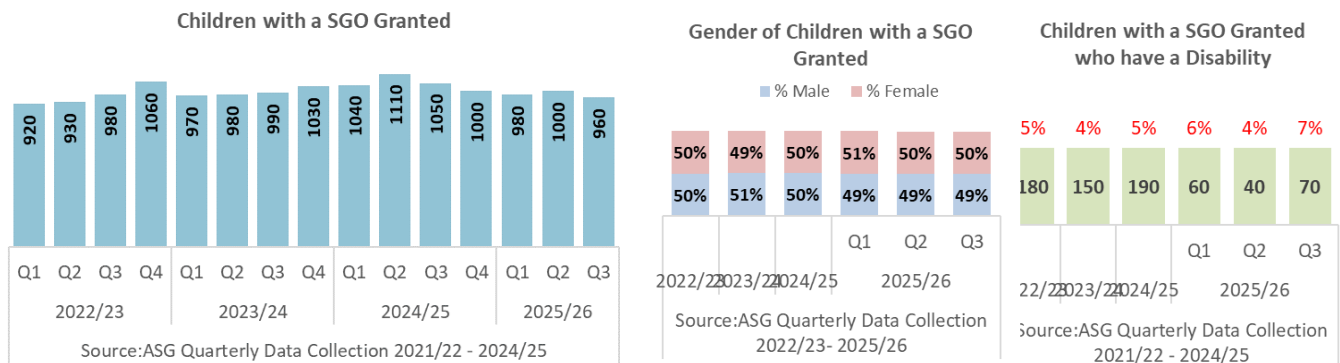


## SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP ORDERS

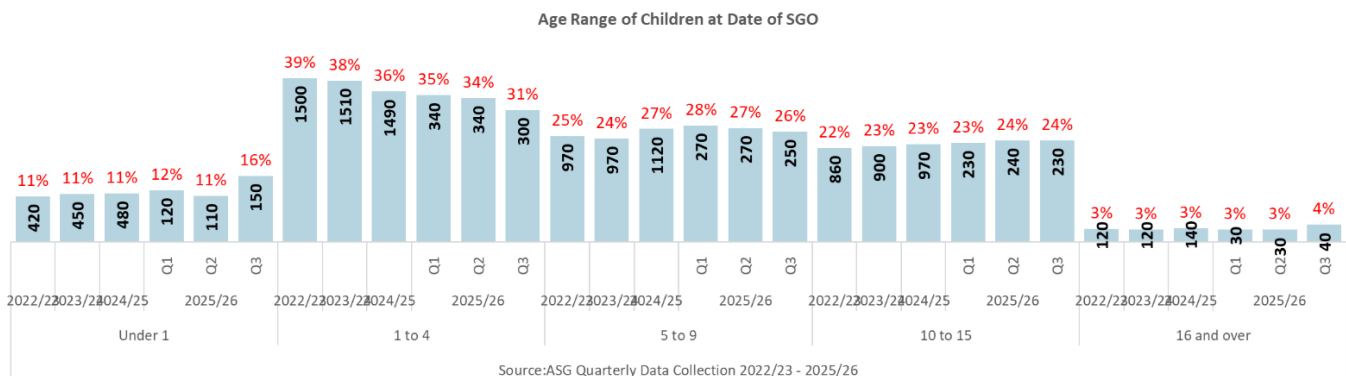
The number of Special Guardianship Orders granted In Q3 2025/26 decreased when compared to Q2. More children are still leaving care with via a SGO than an adoption order, with SGOs accounting for **61%** of all permanence.

In Q3 2025/26, there were:

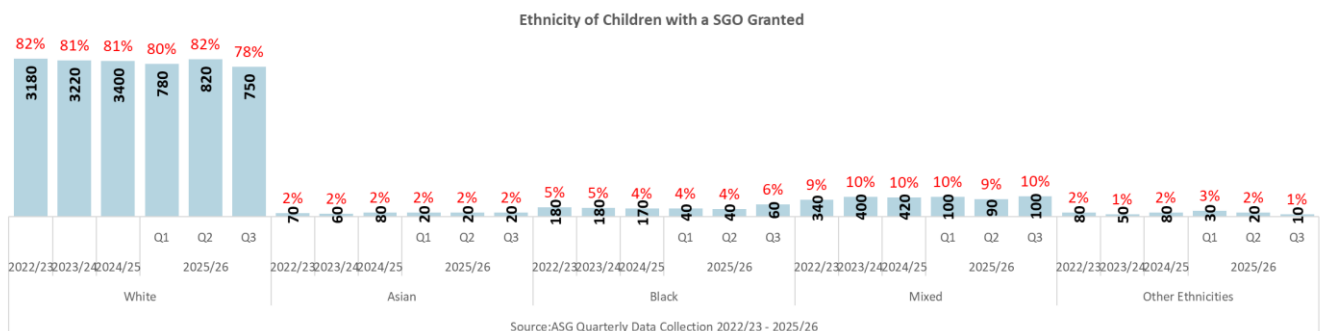
- **960** Special Guardianship Orders granted, a decrease of **4% (40n)** from Q2 2025/26, and a decrease of **8% (90n)** when compared to Q3 2024/25
- **49%** of the children were male, **50%** female, **7%** had a disability, **22%** were from an Ethnic Minority (excluding White minorities), and **43%** were in a sibling group



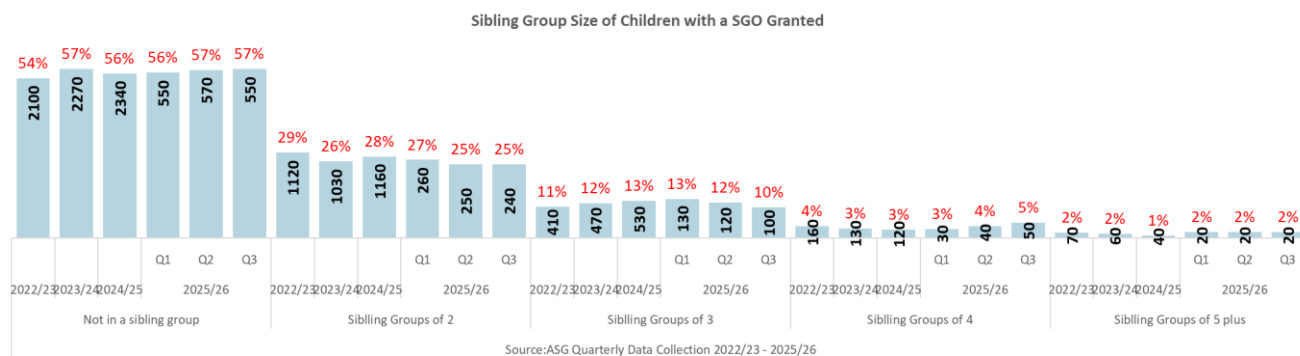
Children aged 1 to 4 are the largest group of children who leave care with an SGO (**31%**), followed by children aged 5 to 9 (**26%**) and children aged 10 to 15 (**24%**)



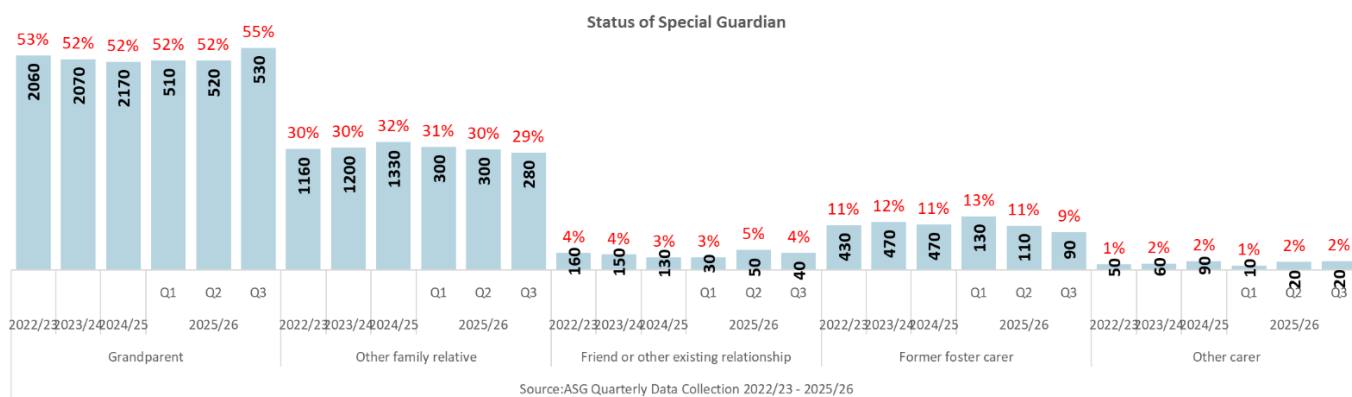
- **22%** of SGOs were granted for children from an Ethnic Minority (excludes White minorities, with children with a Mixed and Multiple Ethnicity are the biggest represented Ethnic Minority)



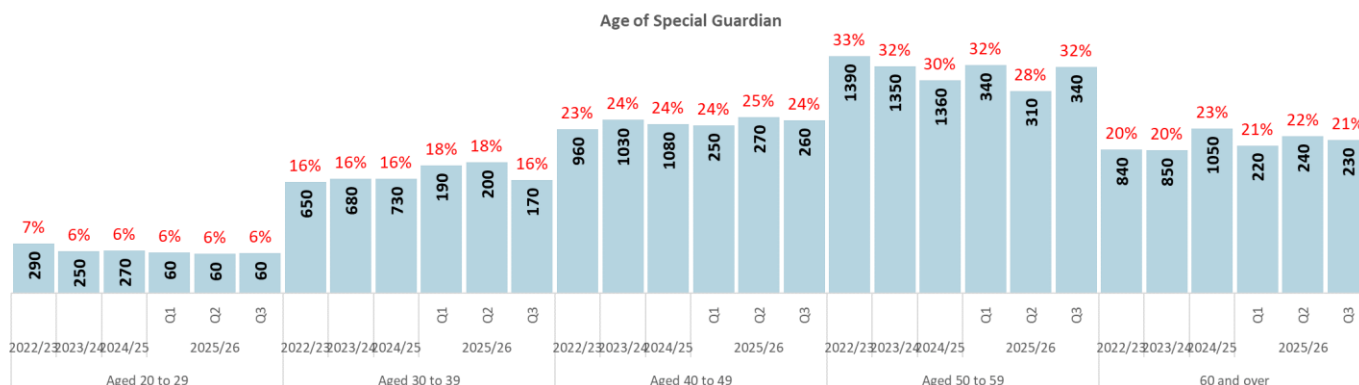
- Children not in a sibling group continue to be the largest group of children who leave care with an SGO (57%), followed by children in a sibling group of 2 (25%)



- Grandparents are the largest represented group of Special Guardians, with 55% of SGOs granted to grandparents, followed by other family relatives (29%)



- Special Guardians aged 50 to 59 are the largest represented age group (32%), followed by and special guardians aged 40 to 49 (24%), and aged 60 and over (21%)

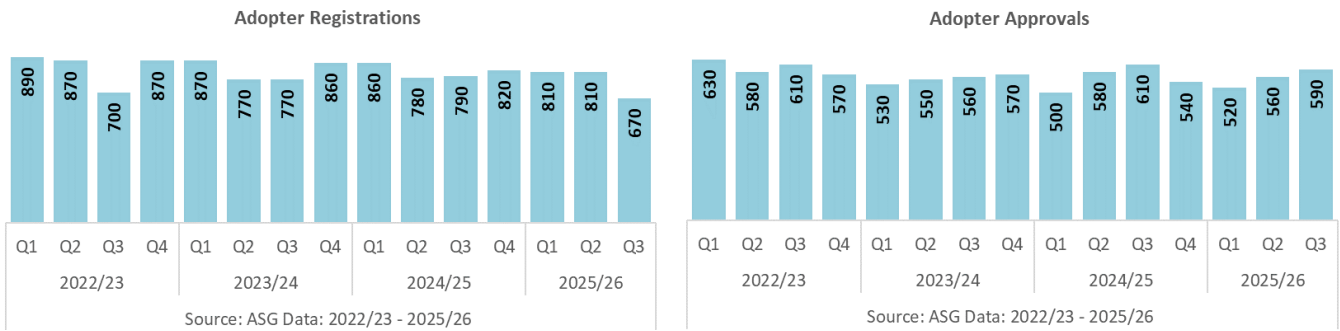


## ADOPTERS

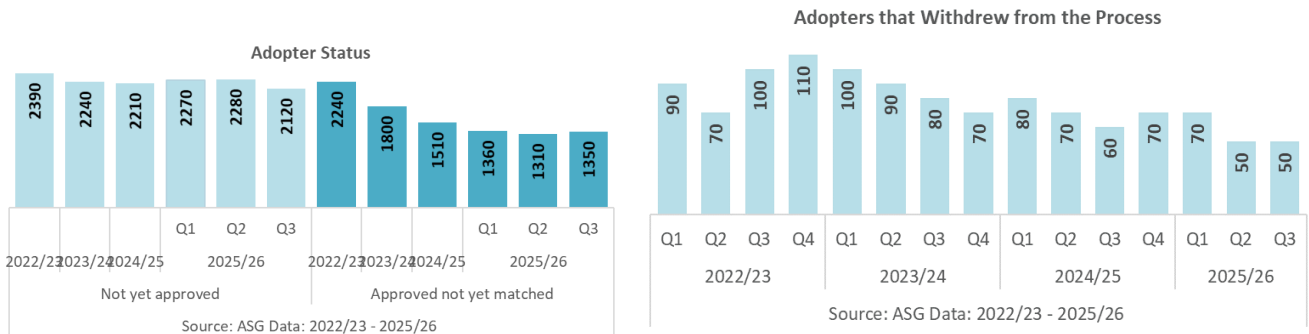
Adopter recruitment continues to decline, reducing the number of available approved adoptive families to be matched with the children waiting with a PO.

In Q3 2025/26 there were:

- **670** Registrations, a decrease of **17% (140n)** from Q2 2025/26, and a decrease of **15% (120n)** when compared to Q3 2024/25
- **590** Approvals, an increase of **5% (30n)** from Q2 2025/26, and a decrease of **3% (20n)** when compared to Q3 2024/25



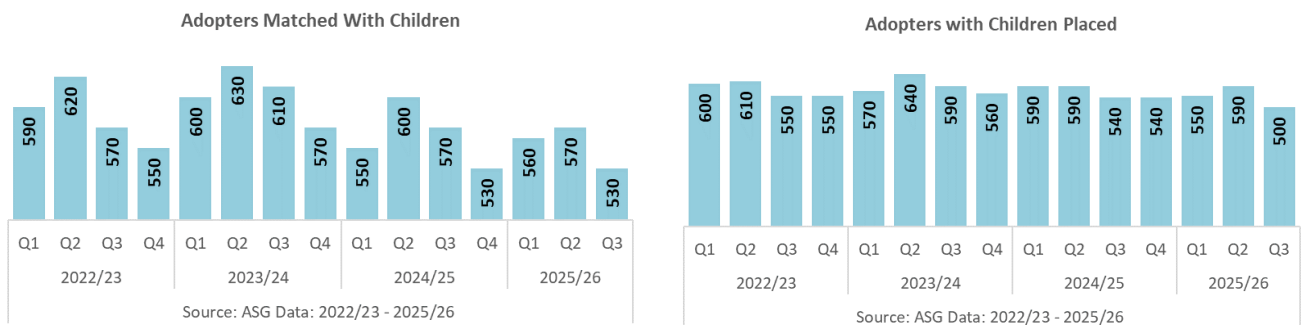
- **2120** Prospective adoptive families not yet approved, a decrease of **7% (160n)** from Q2
- **1350** Approved adoptive families waiting to be matched, an increase of **3% (40n)** from Q2
- **170** approved adopters withdrew from the process after approval in total for Q1, Q2 and Q3



The number of adopters being matched with a child, and having a child placed with them were lower this quarter.

In Q3 2025/26 there were:

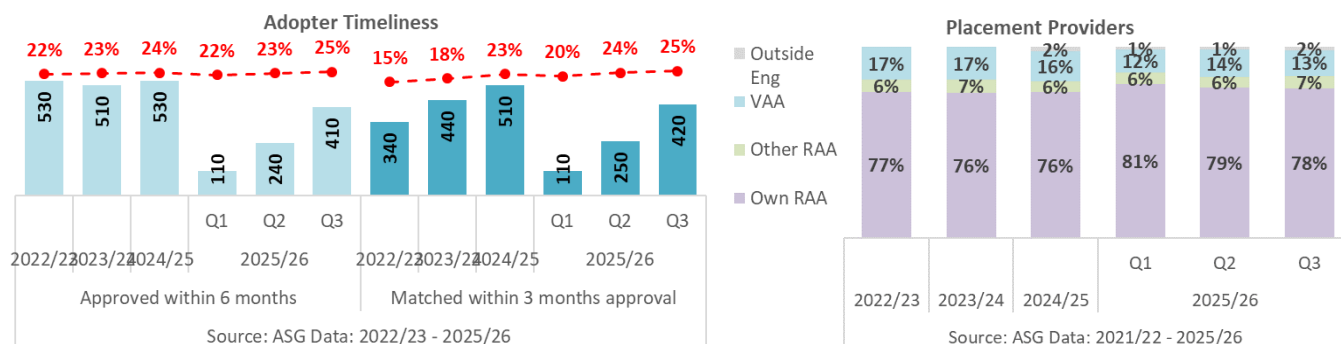
- **530** Adoptive families matched to children, a decrease of **7% (40n)** from Q2 2025/26, and a decrease of **7% (40n)** when compared to Q3 2024/25
- **500** Adoptive families with a child placed, a decrease of **15% (90n)** from Q2 2025/26, and a decrease of **7% (40n)** when compared to Q3 2024/25



More adopters are being approved within six months of approval and matched within three months of approval.

In Q3 2025/26:

- **25%** of adoptive families were approved within 6 months of registration, an increase of **2** percentage points when compared to Q2
- **25%** of approved adoptive families had a child matched with them within 3 months of approval, an increase of **1** percentage point when compared to Q1



There has been a decrease in the proportion of children placed in-house, the proportion placed interagency with other RAAs and VAAs has remained the same as Q2, and there has been an increase in the proportion of children placed with adopters outside of England.

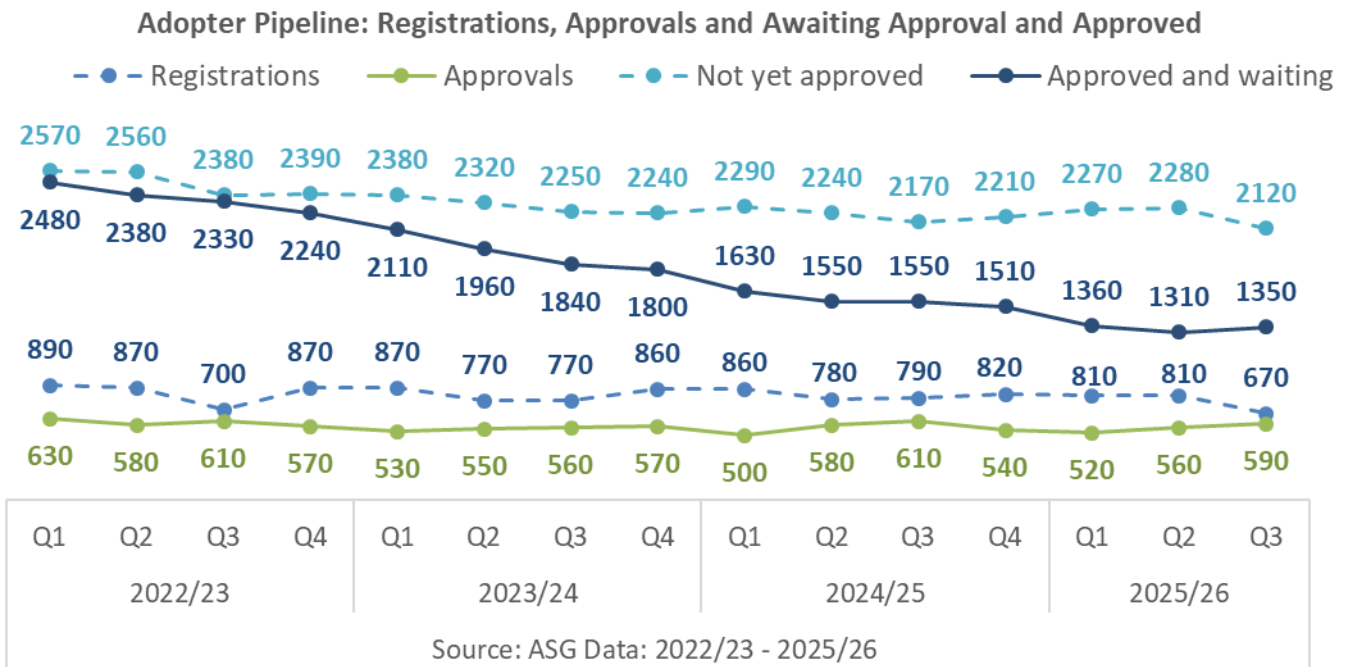
In Q3 2025/26:

- **78%** of placements were provided by LAs themselves (via their RAAs)
- **7%** of placements were provided by other LAs (other RAAs)
- **13%** of placements were provided by VAAs
- **2%** of placements were provided by agencies outside England

*NB: Percentages may not add due to rounding of numbers*

## SUFFICIENCY OF ADOPTERS

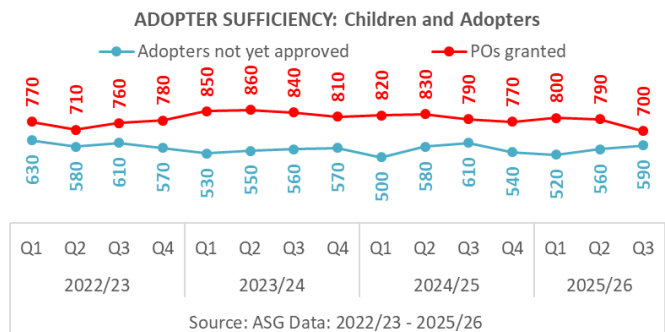
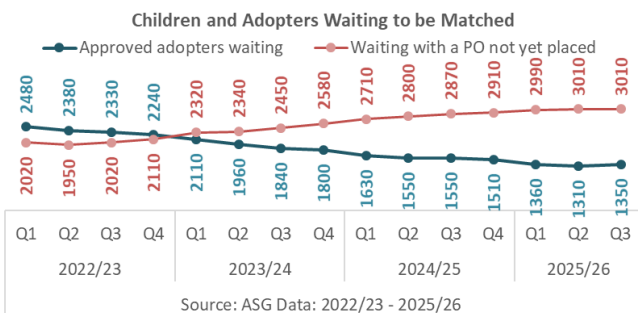
Adopter Recruitment is declining, reducing the number of approved adopters available for the children waiting with a PO. This quarter there has been a decrease in adopter registrations, prospective adopters not yet approved, and an increase in the number of adopter approvals and adopters approved and waiting.



Adopter sufficiency continues to decline, with more children waiting with a PO to be placed with a family than approved adopters waiting. There are more POs granted each quarter than adopters approved, resulting in a higher number of children reaching the matching stage compared to adopters.

In Q3 2025/26 there were:

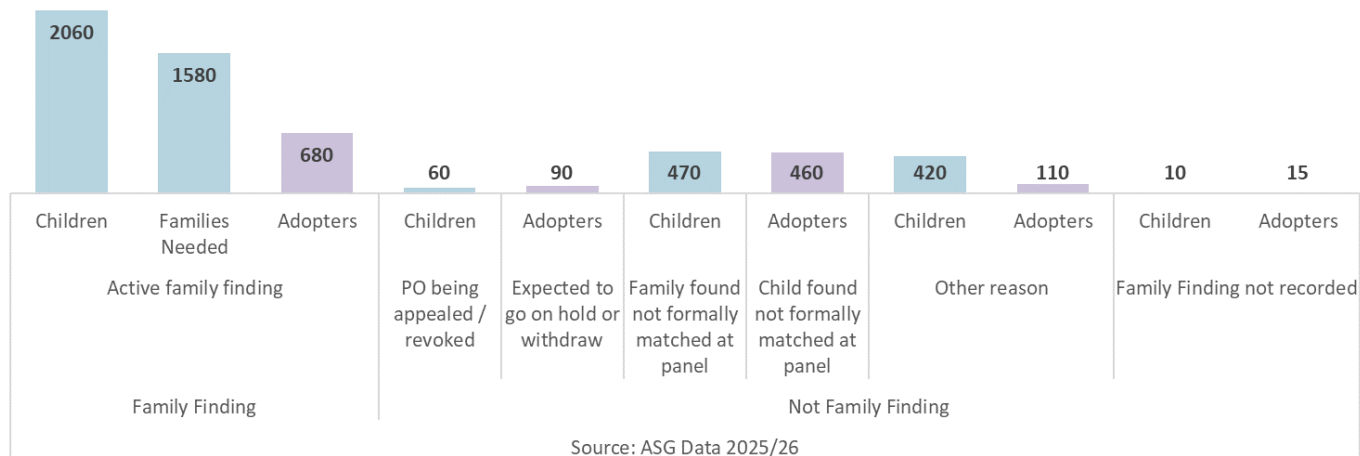
- **3010** children waiting with a PO not yet placed, and **1350** approved adopters waiting for a child to be placed; a gap of **1660**
- **700** POs granted, and **590** adopter approvals; a gap of **110**



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

- **2060** children with active family finding
- **1580** adopter families need *number of single children and sibling groups waiting to be placed with family finding*)
- **680** adopter families with active family finding
- **900** shortfall of adopter families

Status of Family Finding for Children and Adopters



## DATA SOURCES

### ASG Quarterly Data Collection

In quarter 3 2025/26 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 adopters 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 \(SFR\)](#). The most recent data covers the year ending 31 March 2025.

## ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

This publication was produced by The ASG Data Management Services, delivered by Coram on behalf of the Department for Education.

download: [ASG Quarterly Data](#)

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