
Adoptions and special guardianship orders (SGOs)

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CLA who were adopted

The number of CLA who were adopted fell by 18% in 2021. The large decrease in CLA adopted this year is likely a result of the impact on court proceedings during the pandemic, where cases progressed more slowly or were paused.

Adoptions rose sharply from 2011 to a peak in 2015 but have since been falling. This decrease follows two court rulings in 2013, which stated that adoption orders should be made only when there was no other alternative, such as placing a child with birth relatives.

On average, it takes 2 years and 2 months for a child to be adopted and this time has been increasing, up from 1 year and 11 months in 2018. In 2021, the average time between a child entering care and being placed for adoption was 1 year and 4 months, it then takes a further 10 months for an adoption order to be granted and the adoption to be completed.

The average age of a child at adoption has risen by 3 months to 3 years and 3 months, back to the same level as in 2018.

CLA who left care as the subject of a special guardianship order (SGO)

CLA ceasing during the year as the subject of a SGO increased by 2% to 3,800. 1 in 7 CLA ceasing in 2021 left through a SGO, up slightly from last year.

Most SGOs were granted to relatives or friends – 88% - the remainder were largely to other former foster carers – 10%.

The average age at SGO increased by 3 months to 6 years and 1 month.

Further information on CLA ceasing due to adoption or through being the subject of a SGO can be found in the 'E' highlight tables accompanying this release.