

# ASGLB data Q4 2019/20

## Briefing for CVAA members

The full data publication can be found on the [ASGLB secretariat's website](#).

Change is in relation to 2018/19. Some 2018/19 figures are taken from the [SSDA903 statutory publication](#), which is the most robust data on adoption.

In 2019/20, there were:

**4,010 ADMs ↓ 4%**

**3,190 POs ↓ 14%**

**3,240 children placed ↓ 7%**

**3,410 children adopted (AOs) ↓ 4%**

**2,440 children waiting ↓ 13%**

**1,170 children waiting > 18 months ↑ 3%**

**1,070 ADM reversals\* ↑ 41%**

The average length of time spent waiting since entering care for those with a PO but not yet placed as of 31 March 2020 was

**612 days**

an increase of 46 days from 31 March 2019

Children waiting with a PO longer than 18 months since entering care:

**48%** of total children waiting **↑ 7%**

**79%** (920 children) of these have 'harder to place' characteristics (5+, BME, disability, sibling group) **↓ 3%**

In 2019/20 there were:

**3,890 registrations ↓ 3%**

**2,920 approvals ↓ 1%**

**2,600 prospective adopters in stages 1 and 2 ↓ 9%**

**1,810 approved adopters waiting ↓ 5%**

The stock of adopters has been slowly decreasing since Q1 2015/16, a trend that continued in 2019/20. After increased recruitment efforts in 2018/19, **there are now fewer adopters coming into the system.**

**There are fewer children waiting** because fewer children are being given placement orders.

**More children are increasingly waiting longer**, a trend which has been increasing since 2016/17. The number of children waiting 18+ months with 'harder to place' characteristics has barely decreased, and is almost double the number in 2015/16.

If the system were recruiting the **right adopters**, we would expect to see decreased waiting times overall, fewer children waiting, and a decrease in the percentage of children waiting with 'harder to place' characteristics.

The number of ADM reversals should be of concern. While it is important to note that ADM decisions may be made in one year and reversed in another, **the ratio of reversals to decisions in 2019/20 was more than 1:4.**

*\*The ASGLB is comparing its own figures for 2019/20 to official DfE statistics for 2018/19. The ASGLB recorded 1,020 ADM reversals in 2018/19, which would signify an increase of 5% (n50).*

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## *The VAA position*

In 2019/20, VAAs:

**Registered 790 prospective adopters ↓ 16%**

**Approved 600 adopters ↓ 5%**

**Placed children with 490 families ↓ 22%**

**Placed 540 children ↓ 21%**

In 2019/20, VAAs:

**Registered 20% of all prospective adopters ↓ 6%**

**Approved 20.4% of all adopters ↓ 2.6%**

**Made 23% of all placements ↓ 1%**

After a very good year in 2018/19, VAAs saw their share of the market decrease in 2019/20. This is due, in part, to the closure of four VAAs between August 2018 and December 2019.

**It is clear that children are waiting longer, and that waiting times have been increasing since 2016/17.** Furthermore, the percentage of children waiting longer than 18 months (out of all children waiting with a placement order) has been increasing since 2016/17 as well and is now as high as it was in 2014/15. VAAs are well placed to improve this situation with the strong adopter recruitment that most have achieved in the first half of 2020/21.

**It is also likely that some of the decrease in the voluntary sector's market share is due to an ever-greater focus on 'in-house' placements as RAAs embed,** as described in the [October 2020 RAA evaluation report](#). This is especially concerning when considered alongside the rising number of ADM reversals. There are many reasons for reversing an ADM decision, one of which is an inability to find a suitable match. This gives rise to questions about the ability of statutory agencies to undertake sufficiently ambitious and creative family-finding for the children in their care, and the degree to which this is affected by squeezed LA budgets.