

Adoption and Special Guardianship Quarterly Data

Foster Care Adoptions: 2021/2022

March 2023

FOSTER CARE ADOPTIONS - CHILDREN

INTRODUCTION

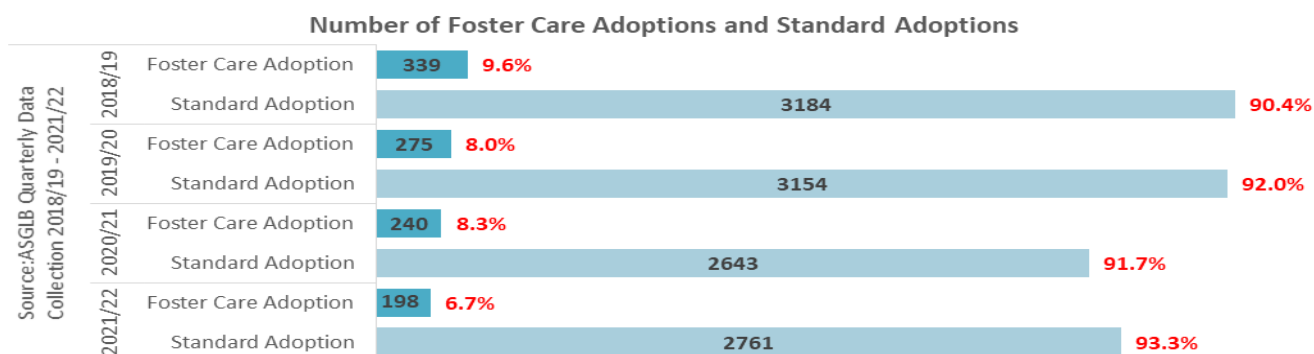
Analysis has been undertaken on foster care adoptions for the last four years to see if the data can tell us anything useful about these children’s journeys to permanence. This analysis focuses on timeliness by stage, regional differences and children’s characteristics

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The decline in the number of foster care adoptions is continuing. In 2021/22, foster care adoptions accounted for **6.7%** of all adoptions, a **1.6%** decrease on last year.
- In 2021/22, the average time from entry into care to adoption for foster care adoptions was **39** months, **13** months longer than the average for standard adoptions.
- On average, foster care adoptions took longer than standard adoptions from entry into care to ADM, ADM to PO, PO to match and match to placement, but were quicker from placement to AO.
- In 2021/22, **45%** (89n) of foster care adoptions were for children who had the same date entering care and date placed with the foster carer who adopted, indicating stability for these children as their foster carers became their adoptive family
- In 2021/22, West Midlands had the highest number (40n) and East Midlands had the highest proportion (10%), and London had the lowest number (7n), same as 2020/21, and the lowest proportion, along with East of England, (3%) of foster care adoptions.
- In 2021/22, East Midlands had the longest average times from entry into care to adoption for foster care adoption; **54** months, **2** years longer than the average time for standard adoptions.
- Children in foster care adoptions were more likely than standard adoptions to be over the age of 5, from an ethnic minority, have a disability and have a harder to place characteristics, but less likely to be from a sibling group.

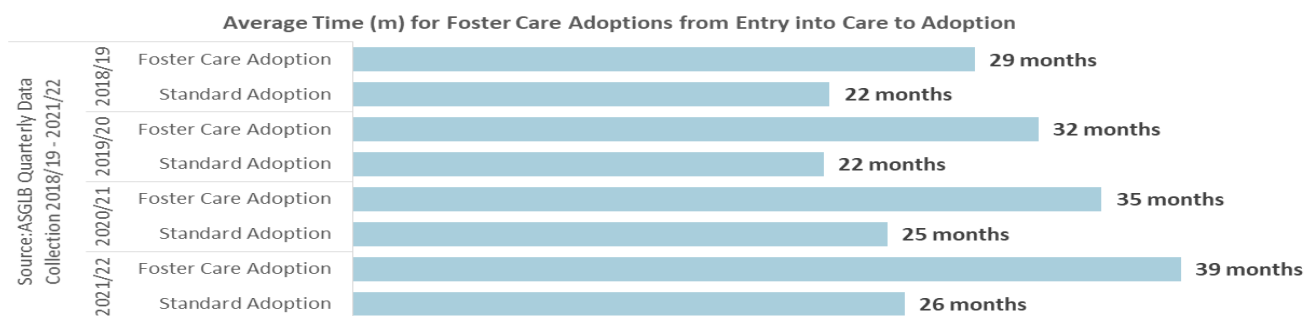
FOSTER CARE ADOPTIONS

The number and proportion of foster care adoptions is declining. In 2021/22, foster care adoptions declined again, from for **8.5%** (242n) of all adoptions in 2020/21 to **6.7%** (198n).

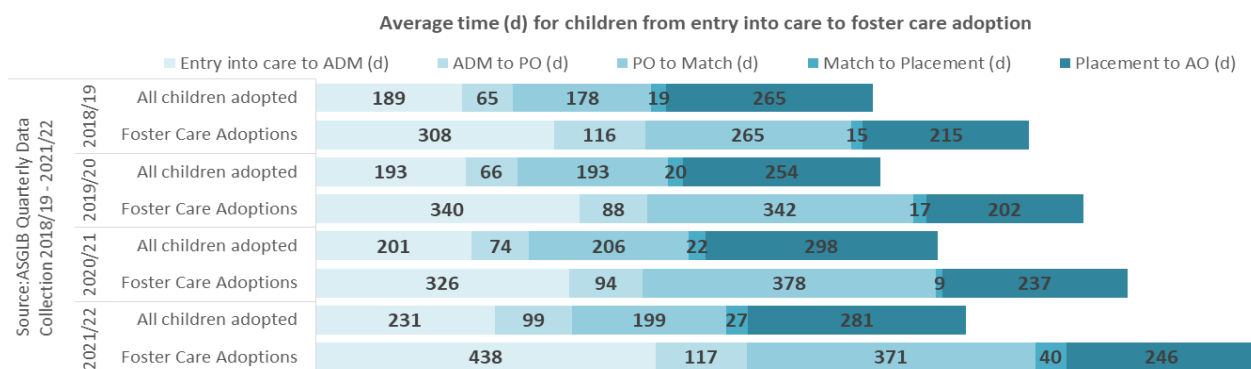


TIMELINESS

The average times for foster care adoptions is increasing. In 2021/22, the average time from entry into care to adoption for foster care adoptions was **39 months**, **13 months** longer than the average for standard adoptions and an increase of **4 months** from 2020/21 and **10 months** from 2018/19.



In 2021/22, foster care adoptions took longer than standard adoptions from entry into care to ADM, ADM to PO, PO to match and match to placement, but were quicker from placement to AO.

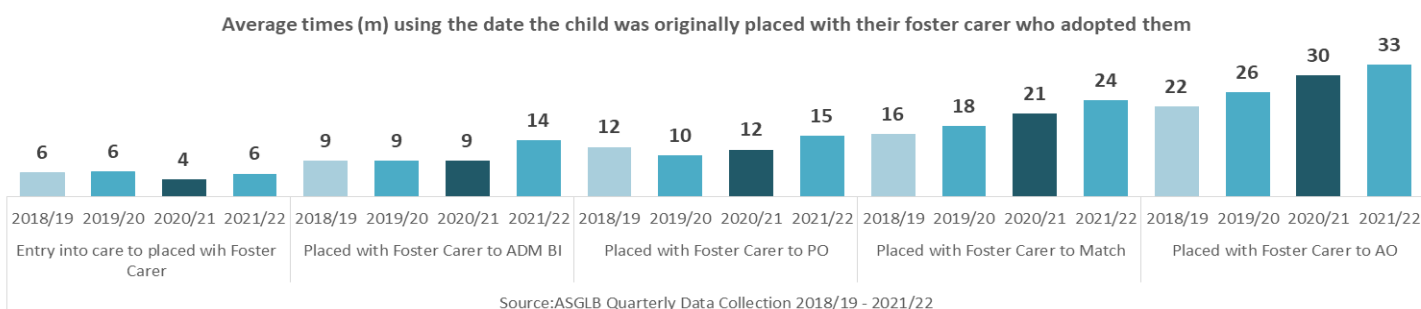


In 2021/22, the average time for a child in foster care adoption

Over the last three years the average time for child in foster care adoption has from:

- Entry into care to ADM has increased by **111** days, 93 days more than the increase from 2018 to 2021
- ADM to PO has increased by **23** days (compared to the decrease **21** days from 2018 to 2021)
- PO to match has decreased by **6** days (compared to the increase of **109** days from 2018 to 2021)
- Match to placement has increased by **31** days (compared to the decrease of **8** days from 2018 to 2021)
- Placement to AO has increased by 9 days (compared to the increase of **21** days from 2018 to 2021)

The average times for foster care adoptions have been calculated using the date placed with the foster carer (who adopted the child) as a start/end point.



In 2021/22 the average time from;

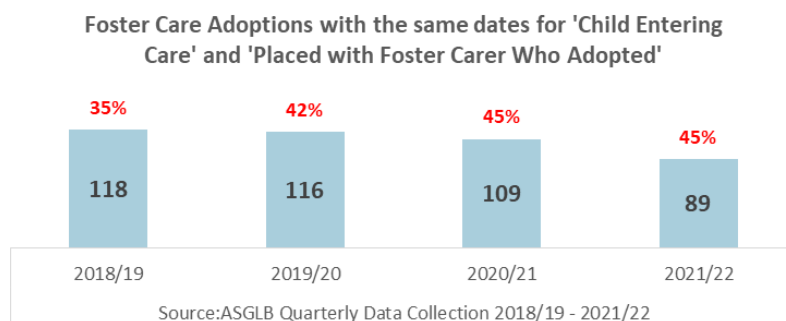
- Entry into care to placed with foster carer was 6 months, an increase of 2 months when compared to the previous years.
- Placed with foster carer to ADM was 14 months, an increase of 5 months when compared to 2020/21.
- Placed with foster carer to PO was 15 months, an increase of 3 months when compared to 2020/21
- Placed with foster carer to match was 24 months, an increase in 3 months when compared to 2020/21, and showing a continuous increase since 2018/19.
- Placed with foster carer to AO was 33 months, also showing a continuous increase, with an increase of 3 months when compared to 2020/21.

These average timescales may give some indication of stability for the children and the point at which the foster carer decides to adopt the child, for example;

- lower average times from entry into care to placed with the foster carer who then goes onto adopt them indicating children more likely to be adopted by their original foster carer/had less foster care placements, and the average length of time from placed with the foster carer who adopts them to ADM may give an indication that foster carers are making the decision to adopt children they are caring for prior to the ADM for adoption
- the increase in the average time from placed with foster carer to PO may indicate that foster carers are making the decision to adopt after the ADM for adoption (or could still be delays due to the pandemic)
- the increase in the average time from placed with foster carer to AO indicating either longer time spent matching before the foster carer makes the decision to adopt (or could be delays due to the pandemic)

In 2021/22, **45%** (89n) of foster care adoptions were for children who had the same date entering care and date placed with the foster carer who adopted, remaining the same as in 2020/21.

This may be another indicator of stability, i.e. more foster care adoptions being with the child's original foster carer from the date the child entered care.

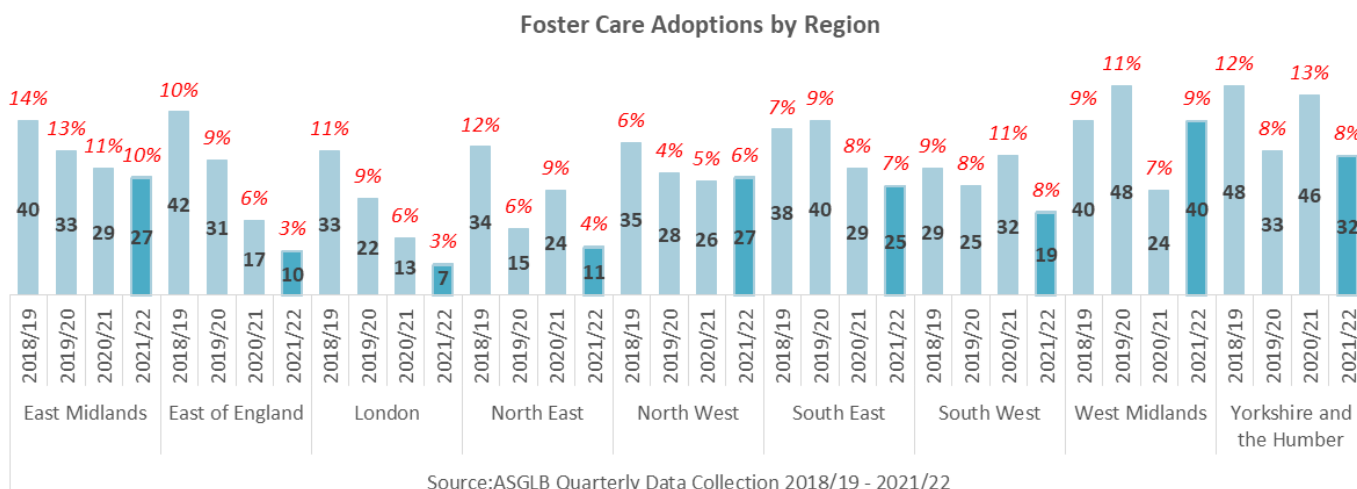


It is not possible from the data to distinguish between the children whose foster carers make the decision to adopt them at the start of the adoption process, i.e. the child is in their foster care and they make the decision to adopt them, and those children whose foster carers make the decision to adopt them during the matching stage, i.e. if a suitable adopter cannot be found.

This lack of distinction maybe impacting on the timeliness for foster care adoptions in a way that the analysis cannot accommodate for. However, the initial analysis on timeliness does indicate some interesting trends that would benefit from further discussion.

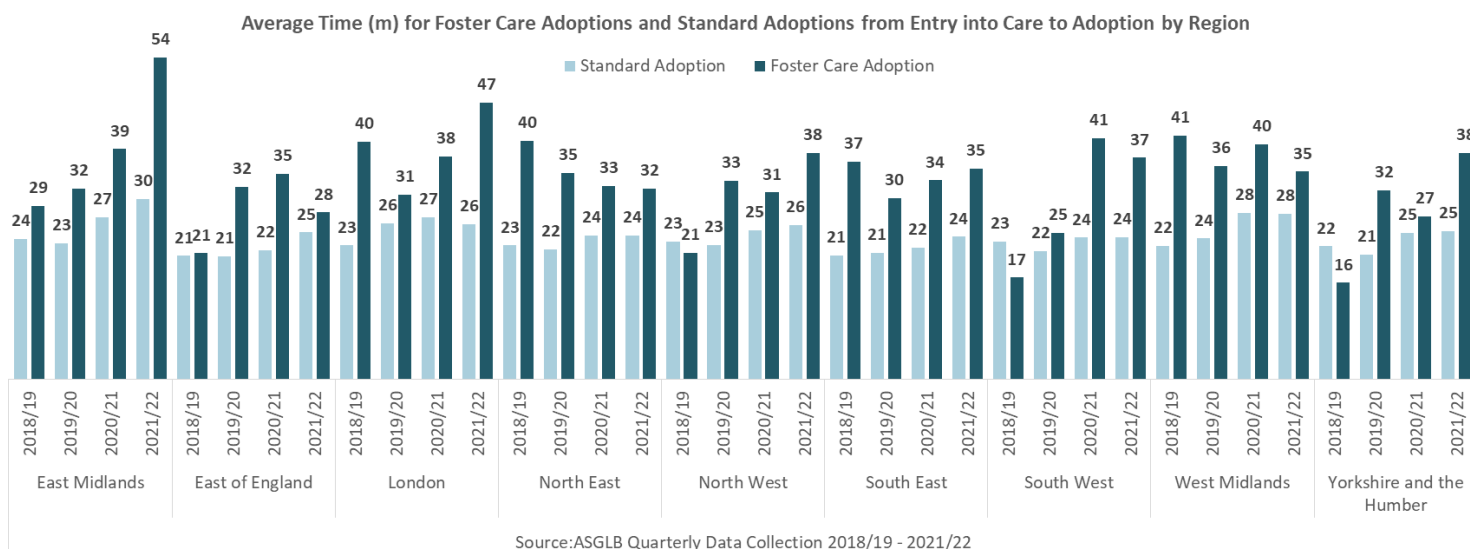
REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION

The following chart shows the number and proportion of adoptions that were foster care adoptions by region.



- In 2021/22, West Midlands had the highest number (40n) and East Midlands had the highest proportion (10%), and London had the lowest number (7n), same as 2020/21, and the lowest proportion, along with East of England, (3%) of foster care adoptions.
- South West saw the biggest decrease in foster care adoptions, and North East and Yorkshire and the Humber saw the biggest decrease in proportion of foster care adoption from 2020/21 to 2021/22.
- West Midlands saw the biggest increase in number and proportion of foster care adoptions from 2020/21 to 2021/22.

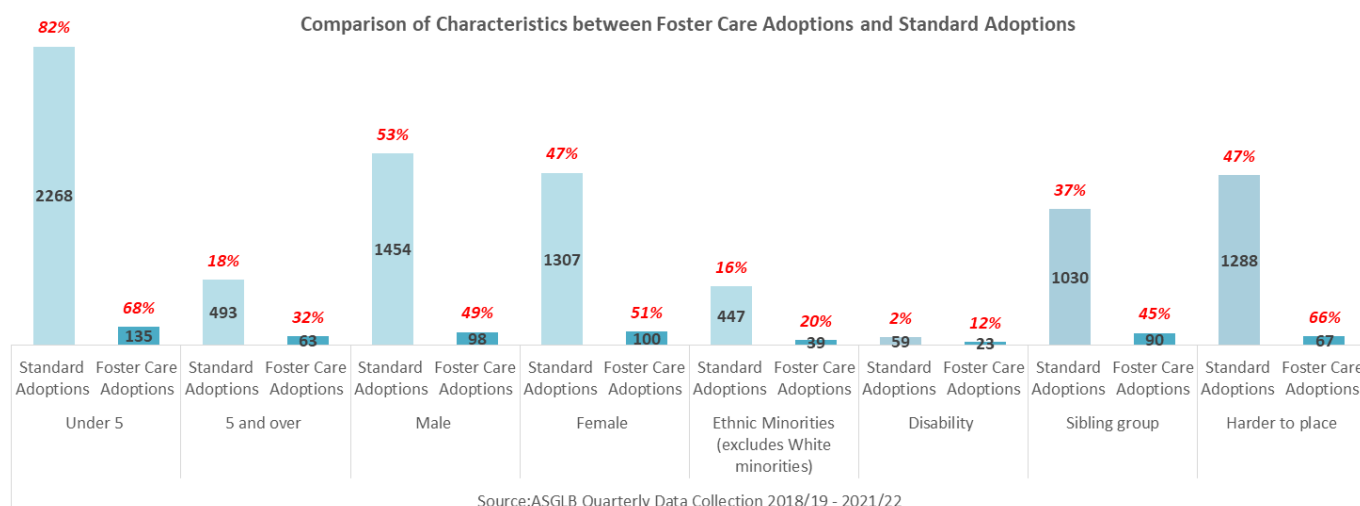
The chart below shows the average time for foster care adoptions compared to standard adoptions by region



- In 2021/22, East Midlands had the longest average times from entry into care to adoption for foster care adoption; **54** months, **2** years longer than the average time for standard adoptions.
- The East Midlands also saw the biggest increase from 2020/21 to 2021/22 in the average time from entry into care to adoption for foster care adoptions, where East of England saw the biggest decrease.
- Foster care adoptions had a longer average time from entry into care to adoption than standard adoptions across all regions in England in 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE ADOPTIONS

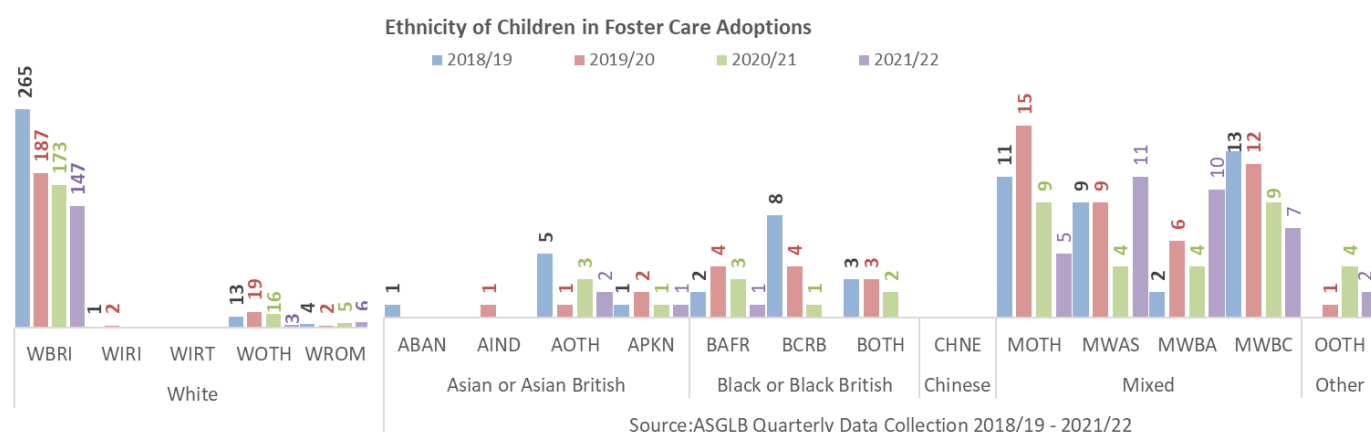
The chart below shows the 2021/22 breakdown of the characteristics of foster care adoptions, and the percentage of children by characteristic compared to the England averages for standard adopted. Standard adoptions remained similar to 2020/21, whereas the characteristics for foster care adoptions differed; an increase of 8% of children over 5, a 5% increase of children with a disability, a 11% increase of those in a sibling group and a 15% increase of those with a harder to place characteristic.



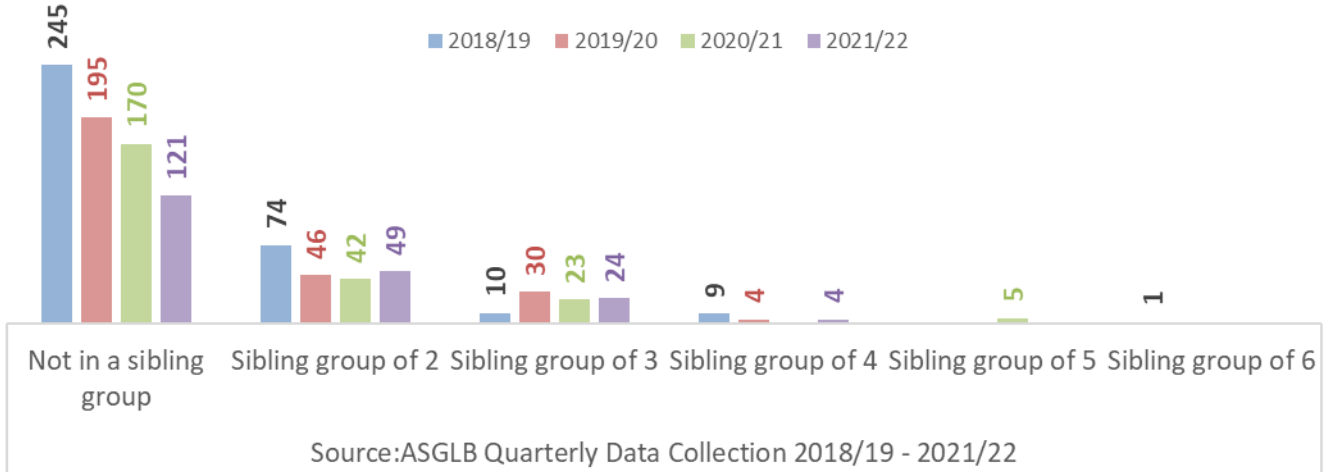
In 2021/22 children in foster care adoptions were more likely than standard adoptions to:

- be aged over 5 - by **14%**
- be female – by **4%**
- be from an ethnic minority – by **4%**
- have a disability – by **10%**
- be in a sibling group – by **8%**
- have a harder to place characteristic – by **19%**

The following charts show the breakdown of ethnicity, sibling group size and age of children for foster care adoptions.



Sibling Group Size For Foster Care Adoptions



Age Breakdown of Children in Foster Care Adoptions

