

Adoption and Special Guardianship Quarterly Data Collection

Headline Measures: Q4 2023/24

September 2024

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.

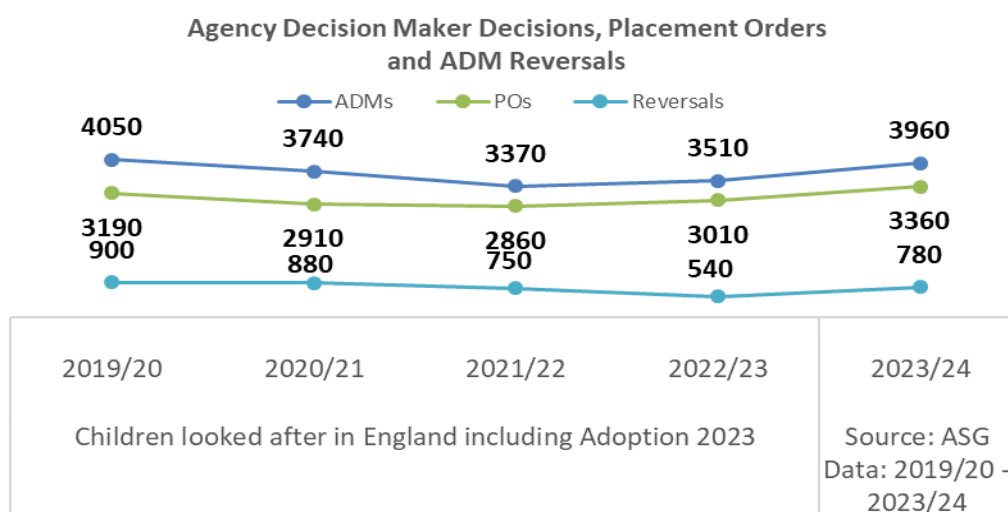
CHILDREN

The number of decisions for children moving into and through the adoption process and all increased this year. The total number of Agency Decision Maker Decisions, Placement Orders, Matches, Placements and Adoption Orders all increased when compared to last year. There was an increase in the number of ADMs reversals away from adoption, and the number of children placed in an Early Permanence placement 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.

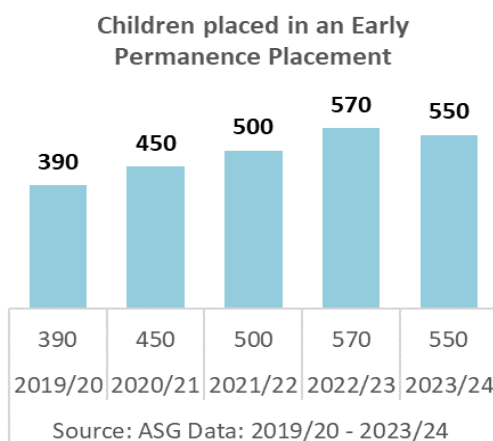
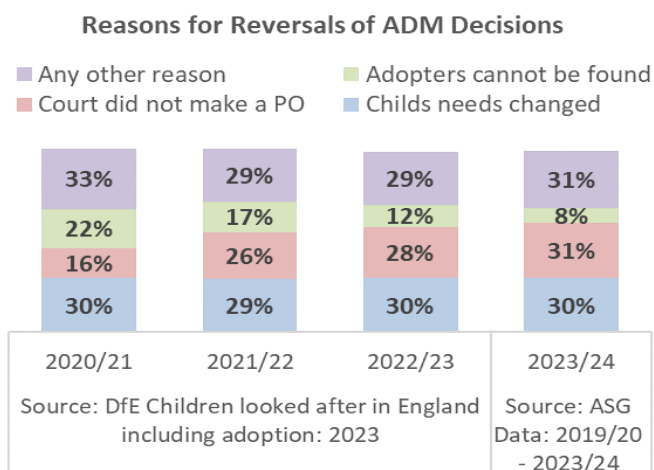
Decisions for Children

In 2023/24, the number of ADMs, POs, ADM reversals increased, and children placed in Early Permanence decreased. When compared to last year there were:

- **3960** Agency Decision Maker decisions, an increase of **13% (450n)**, compared to the DfE's Children looked after in England including Adoption 2023 data (shown below), and an increase of **3% (120n)** when compared to the ASG total of **3840** for 2022/23
- **3360** Placement Orders granted, an increase of **12% (350n)**
- **780** ADM Reversals, an increase of **44% (240n)** when compared to the DfE's Children looked after in England including Adoption 2023 data (shown below), and an increase of **11% (80n)** when compared to the ASG total of **700** for 2022/23

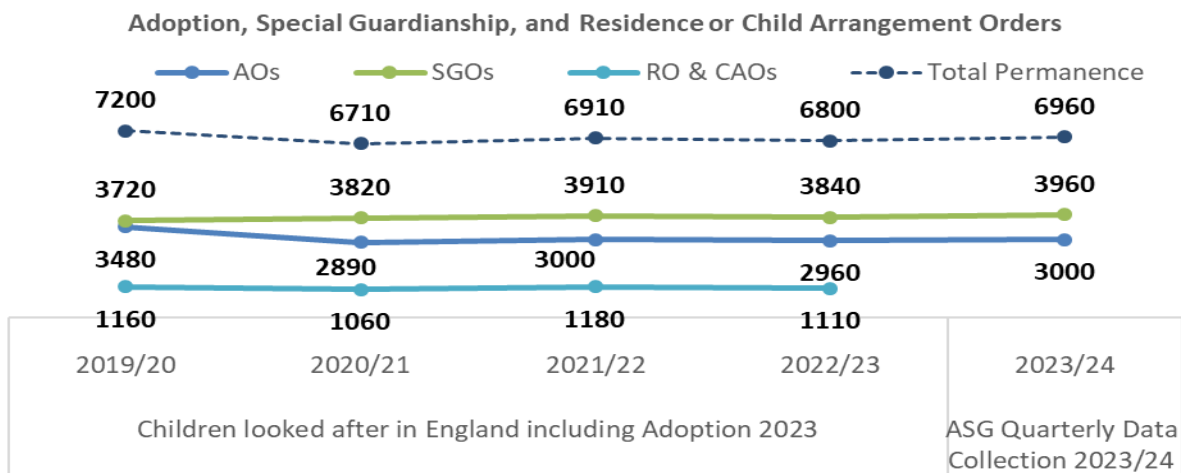


- **31%** of ADM reversals were due to 'Court did not make a PO', an increase of **3** percentage points
- **550** FFA/CP placements, a decrease of **4% (20n)**

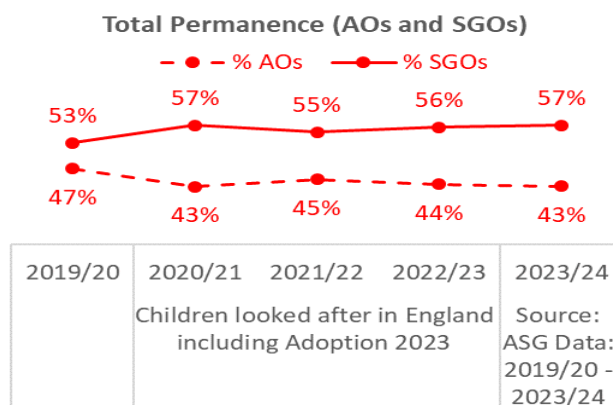
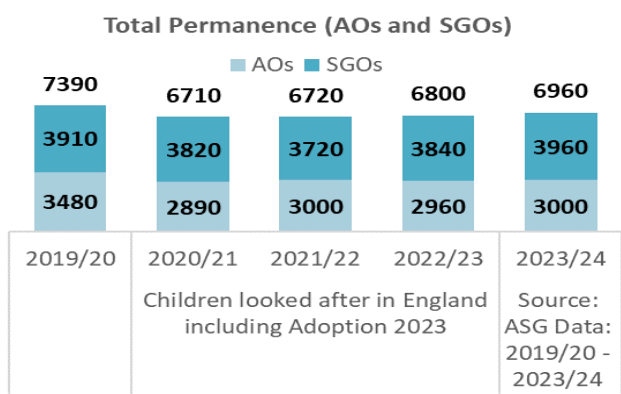


In 2023/24, the number of Adoption Orders and Special Guardianship Orders increased. When compared to last year there were:

- **3000** Adoption Orders granted, an increase of **1% (40n)**
- **3960** Special Guardianship Orders granted, an increase of **3% (120n)**
- In total there were **6960** permanence orders (AOs and SGO), an increase of **2% (160n)**

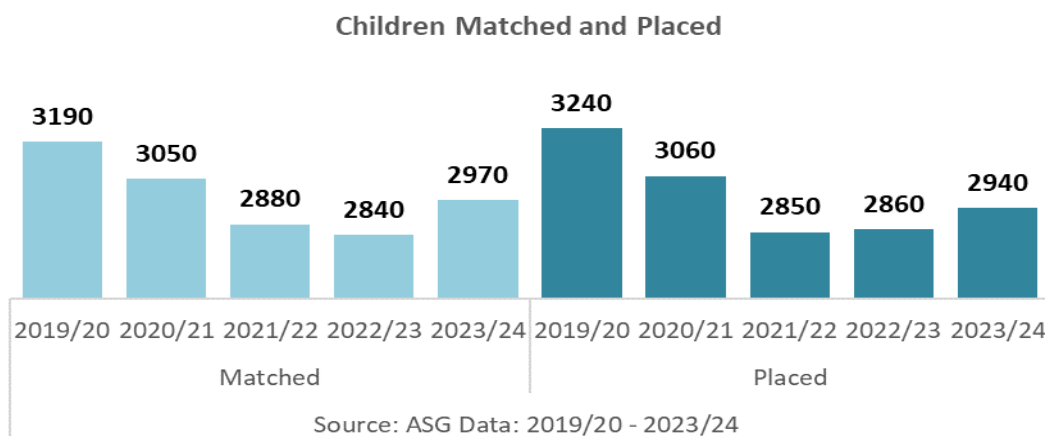


There continues to be more SGOs granted than AOs granted, with SGOs accounting for **57%** of permanence orders.



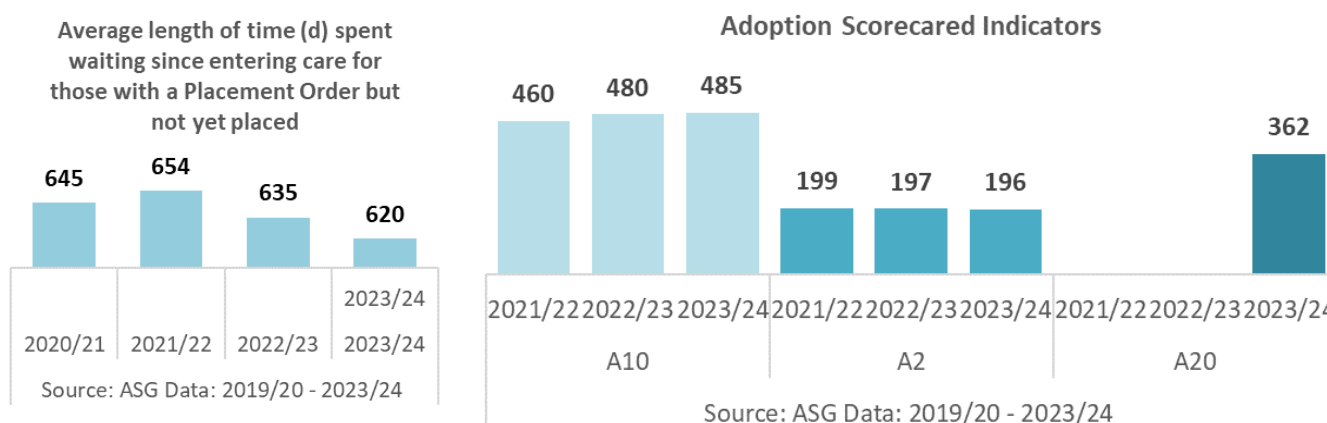
In 2023/24 the number of children matched and placed with an adopter family increased. When compared to last year there were:

- **2970** Children matched with an adopter family, an increase of **5% (130n)**
- **2940** Children placed with an adopter family, an increase of **3% (80n)**



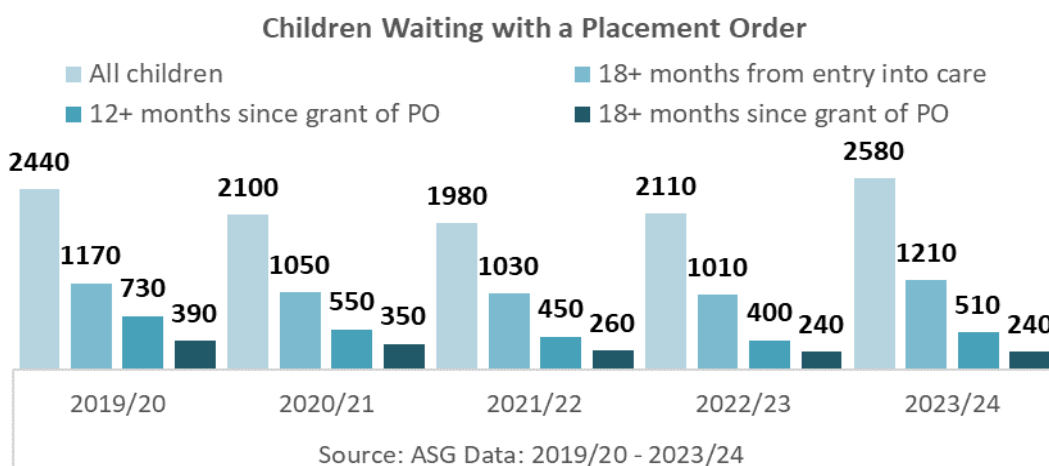
For some children, the journey to adoption is getting quicker. When compared to last year:

- The average number of days spent waiting to be placed with placement order since entering care was **620** days, a decrease of **15** 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 **485** days, an increase of **5** 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 **196** days, a decrease of **1** day
- Scorecard Indicator A20 (average time between a child entering care and an LA receiving court authority to place a child) was **362** days



Children Waiting

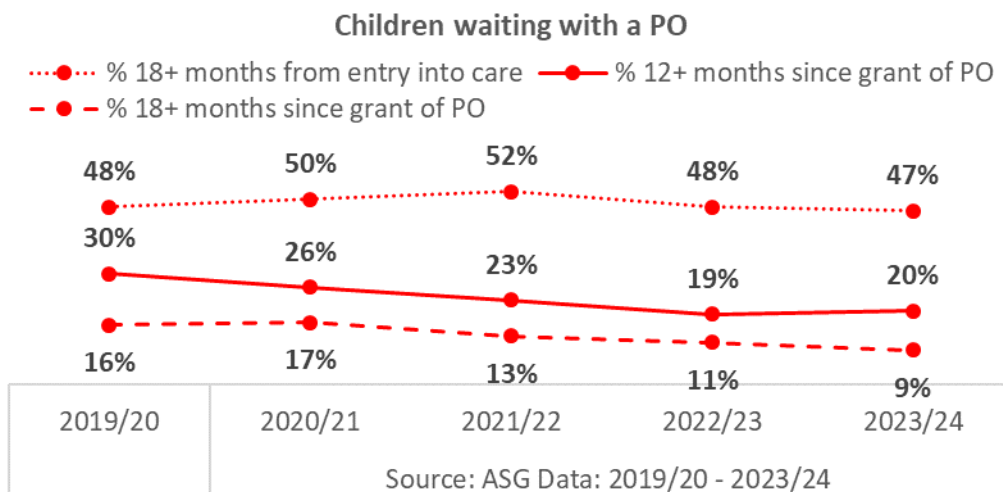
In 2023/24 the number of children waiting with a PO not yet placed increased, and more children were waiting 18+ months since entry into care, and 12+ months since grant of PO.



When compared to last year there were:

- **2580** Children with a PO waiting to be matched, an increase of **22% (470n)**
- **1210** Children with a PO waiting to be matched 18+ months since entering care, an increase of **20% (200n)**
- **510** Children with a PO waiting to be matched 12+ months since grant of PO, a decrease of **28% (110n)**
- **240** Children with a PO waiting to be matched 18+ months since grant of PO

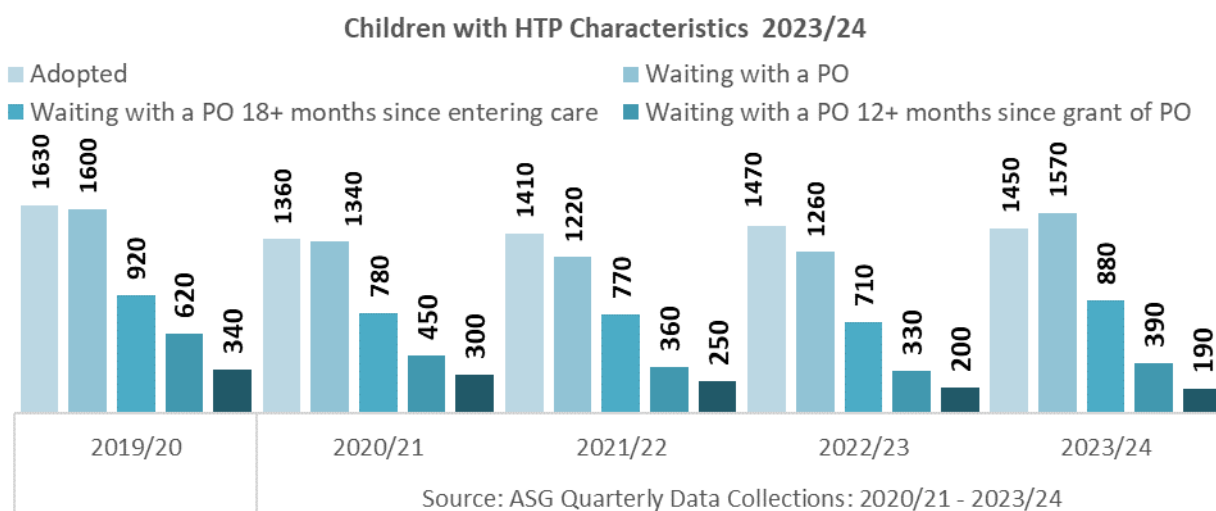
The increase in the number of Placement Order granted this year, together with the overall increase in the number of children waiting with a PO has impacted on the proportions of children waiting longer. More children are waiting longer but the proportion of children who are waiting 18+ months since entry into care and 18+ months since grant of PO decreased.



- **47%** of children with a PO have been waiting to be matched 18+ months since entering care, a decrease of **1** percentage point
- **20%** of children with a PO have been waiting to be matched 18+ months since grant of PO, an increase of **1** percentage point
- **9%** of children with a PO have been waiting to be matched 12+ months since grant of PO, a decrease of **2** percentage points

Characteristics of Children Waiting and Adopted

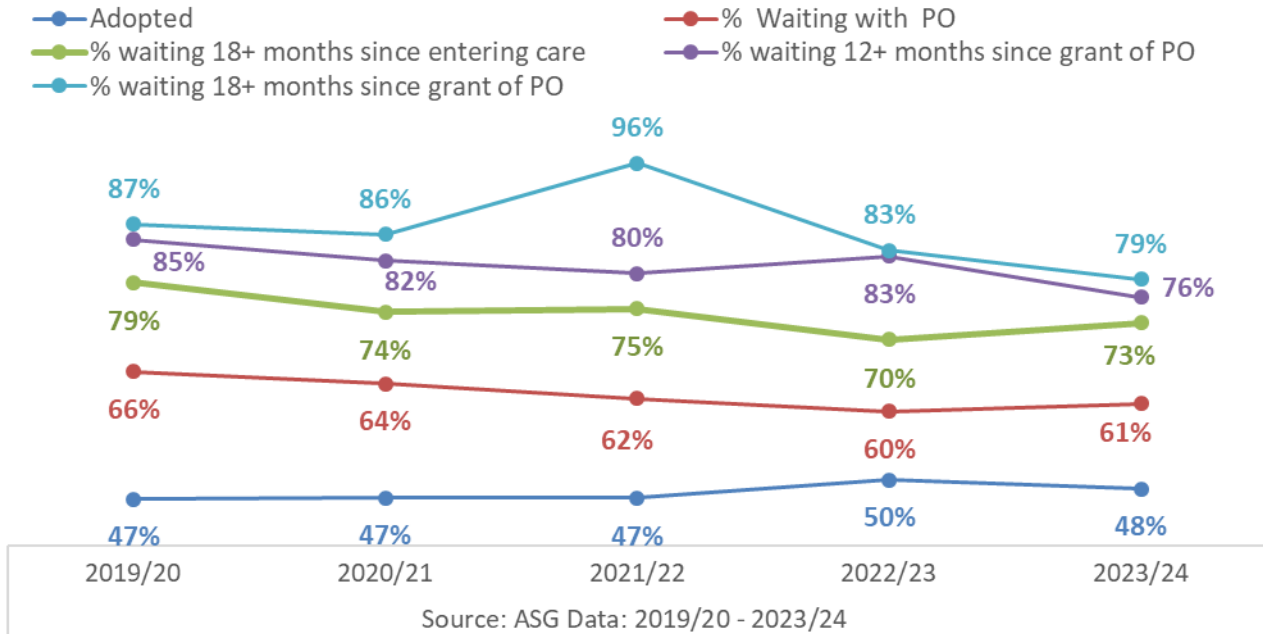
Children with one or more Harder to Place characteristics (*aged over 5, have a disability, in a sibling group, from an Ethnic Minority (excludes White Minorities)*) wait longer for adoption.



In 2023/24 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 and waiting 18+ months since entering care. When compared to last year there were:

- **1450** children with HTP characteristics adopted, a decrease of **1% (20n)**
- **1570** children with HTP characteristics waiting with a PO, an increase of **25% (310n)**
- **880** children with HTP characteristics waiting with a PO 18+ months since entering care, an increase of **24% (170n)**
- **390** children with HTP characteristics waiting with a PO 12+ months since grant of PO, an increase of **18% (60n)**
- **190** children with HTP characteristics waiting with a PO 18+ months since grant of PO, a decrease of **5% (10n)**

Children with HTP Characteristics 2023/24

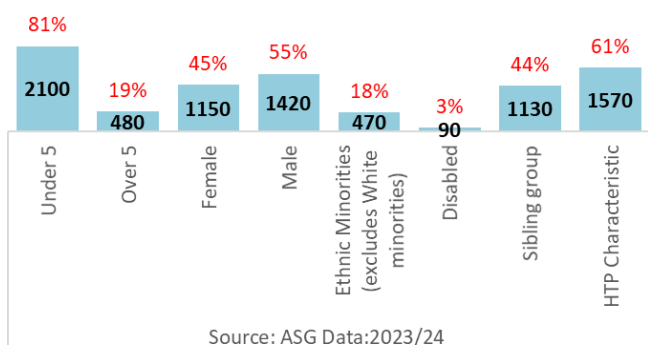


This year, for children who had one or more harder to place characteristic, there was a decline in the proportion of children adopted, an increase in the proportion of children waiting 18+ months since entry into care, and a decrease in the proportion of children waiting longer since grant of PO. When compared to last year:

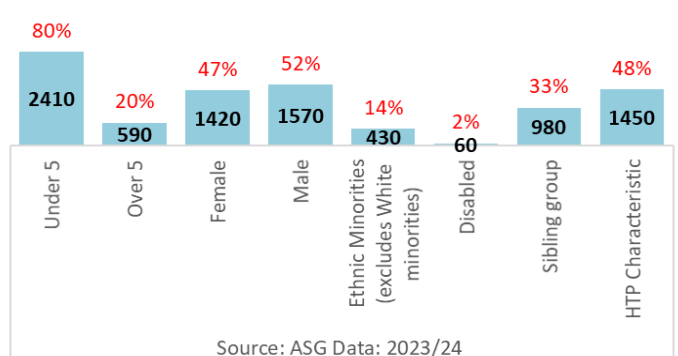
- **48%** of all children adopted had HTP characteristics, a decrease of **1%**
- **61%** of all children waiting with a PO had HTP characteristics, an increase of **1%**
- **73%** of all children waiting with a PO 18+ months since entering care had HTP characteristics, an increase of **3%**
- **76%** of all children waiting with a PO 12+ months since grant of PO had HTP characteristics, a decrease of **7%**
- **79%** of all children waiting with a PO 18+ months since grant of PO had HTP characteristics, a decrease of **4%**

The two charts below show a breakdown of children waiting and adopted in 2023/24 by characteristics.

Characteristics of Children Waiting with a PO as at 2023/24

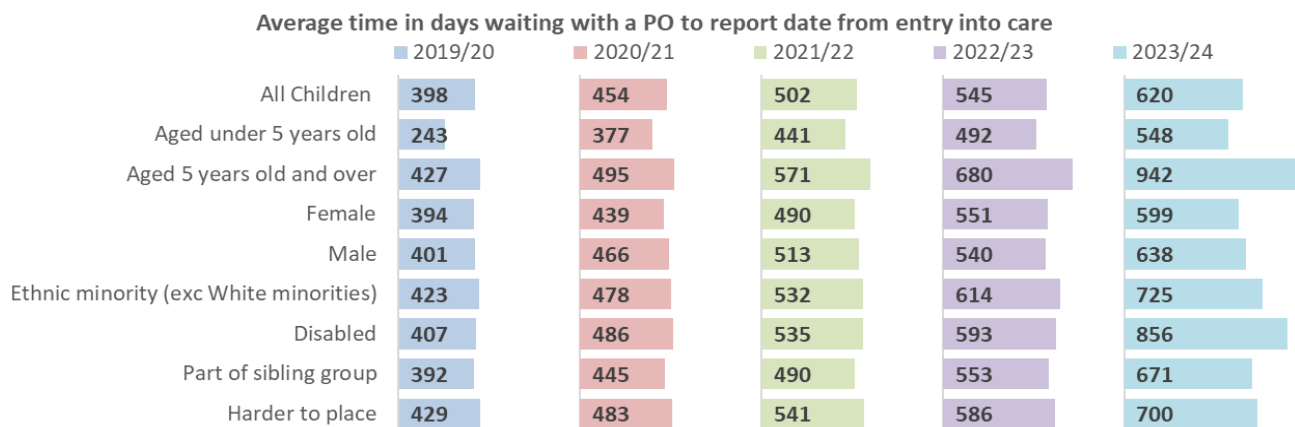


Characteristics of Children Adopted 2023/24

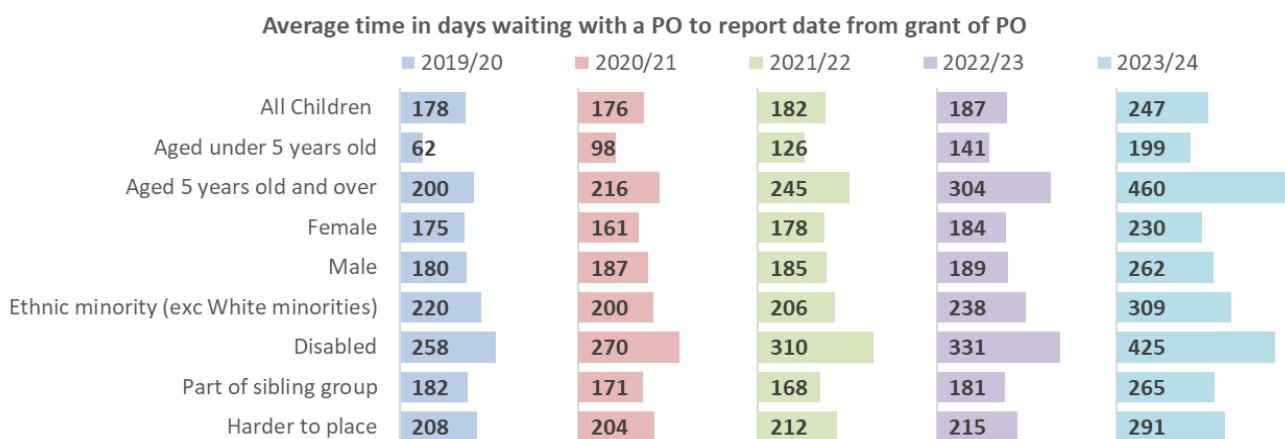


Children’s Timeliness by Characteristics

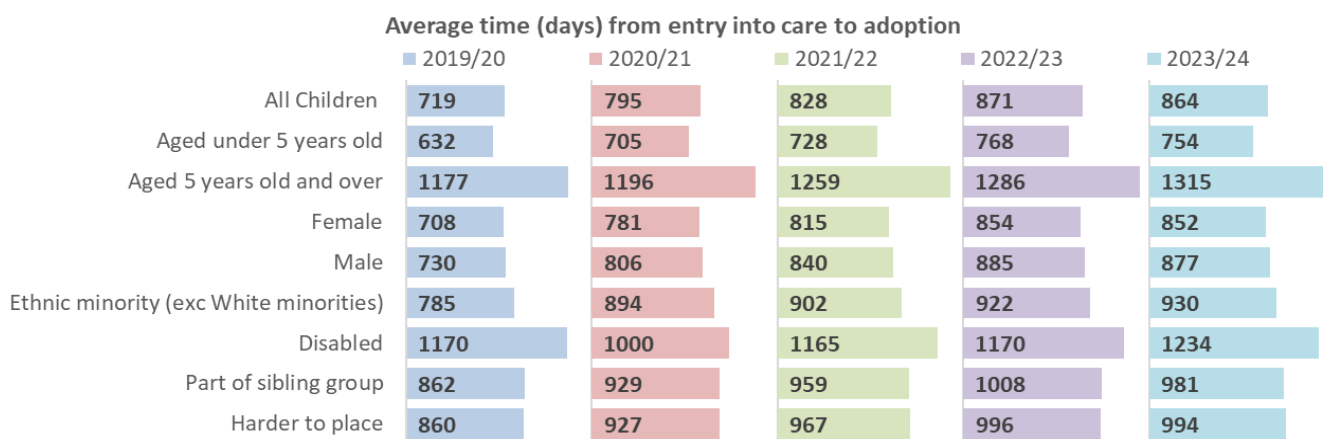
In 2023/24, the average time from entry into care to waiting with a PO for all children was **620** days, **75** days longer than last year. Children aged 5 year and over waited the longest; **942** days, followed by children with a disability: **856** days, and Ethnic Minority children: **725** days.



The average time from grant of PO and waiting for all children was **247** days, **60** days longer than last year. Children aged 5 year and over waited the longest since grant of PO; **460** days, followed by children with a disability: **425** days, and Ethnic Minority children: **309** days.

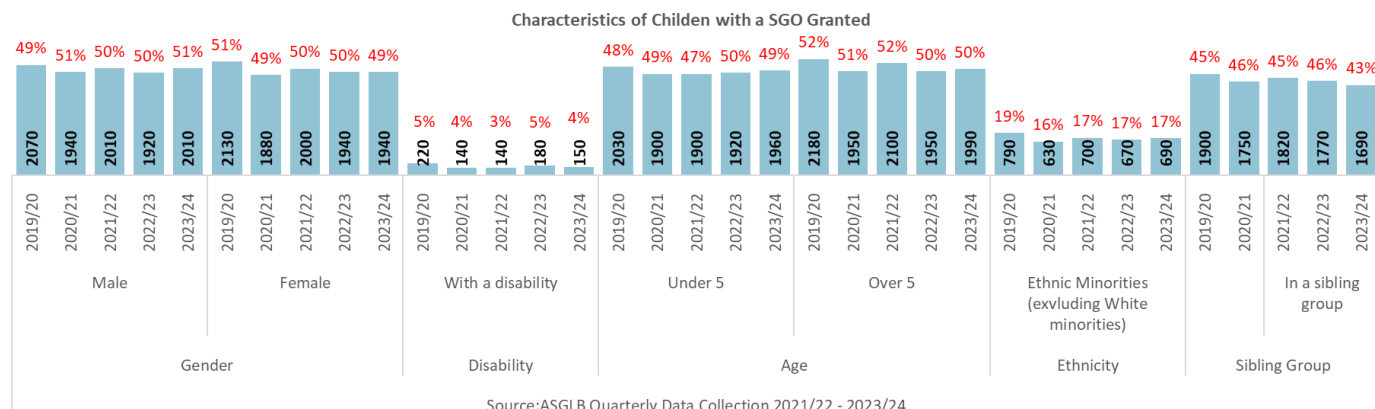


The average time from entry into care to adoption for all children was **864** days, **7** days less than last year. Children aged 5 year and over had the longest journey to adoption; **1315** days, followed by children with a disability: **1234** days, and children in a sibling group: **981** days.



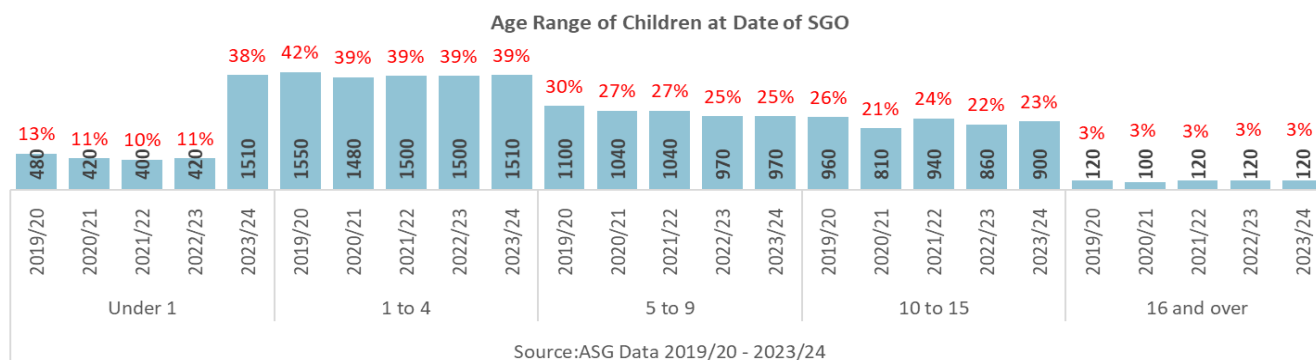
SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP ORDERS

In 2023/24 the number of Special Guardianship Orders granted increased to **3960, 3% (120n)** higher when compared to last year. The demographic of children subject to a Special Guardianship order remains the same as previous years.

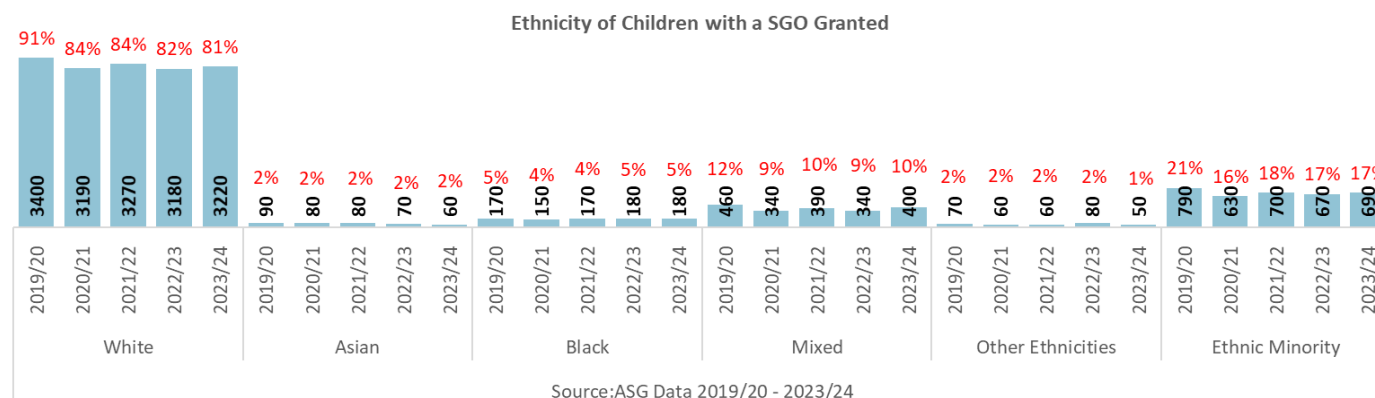


- **51% (2010n)** of the children were male, **49% (1940n)** were female
- **4% (150n)** SGOs were granted for children with a disability
- **50% (1960n)** SGOs were granted for children under 5 years, **50% (1990n)** were for children aged 5 and over
- **17% (690n)** SGOs were granted from children from an Ethnic Minority (excludes White minorities)
- **43% (1690n)** children were in a sibling group of two or more

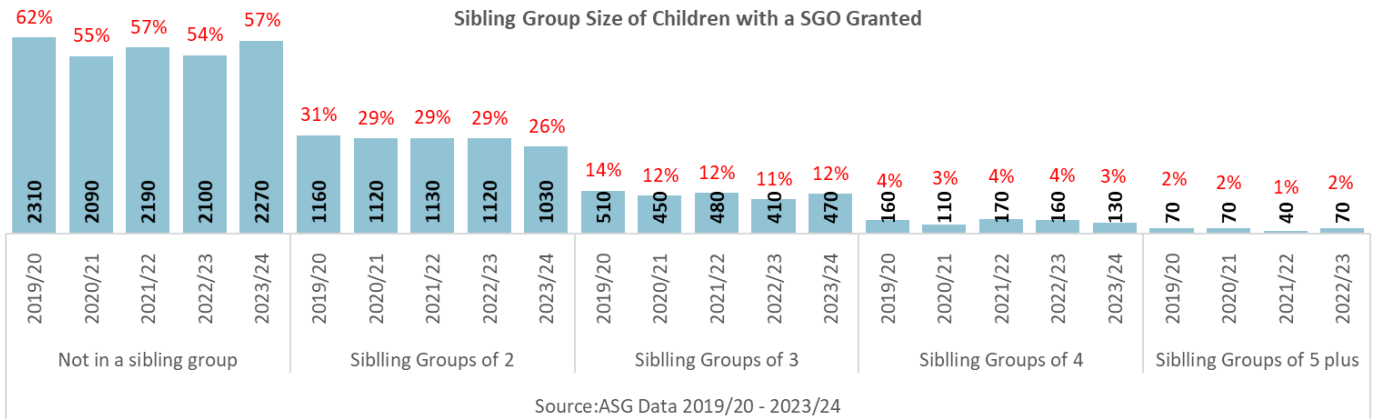
Special Guardianship Orders were more likely to be granted to children aged 1 to 4 years old, with a White ethnic background, and be single children not in a sibling group.



- **39% (1510n)** of children with an SGO granted were aged 1 to 4 years old

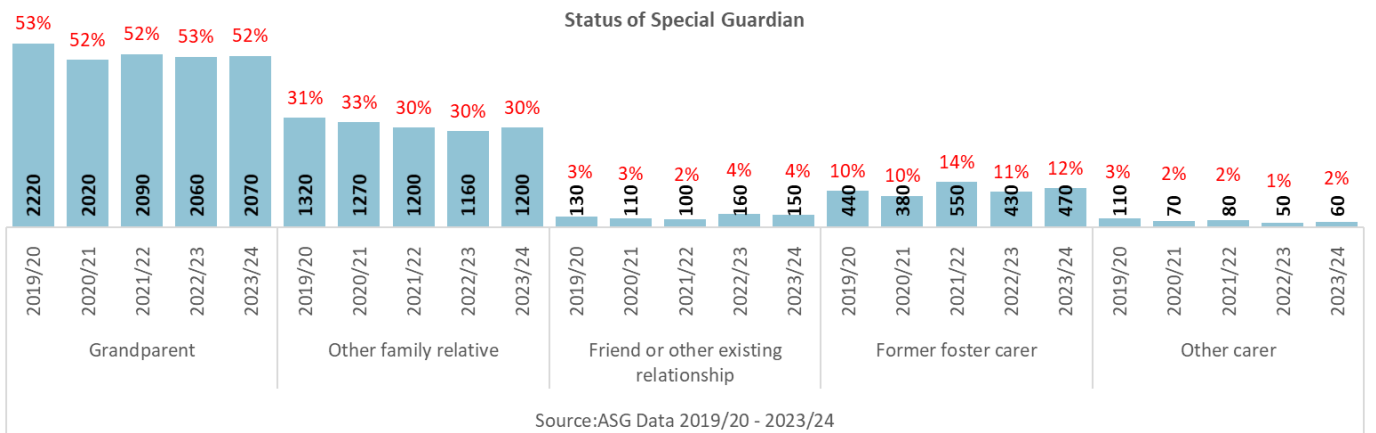


- **81% (3220n)** of children with an SGO granted had a White ethnic background, and **17% (690n)** were from an Ethnic Minority

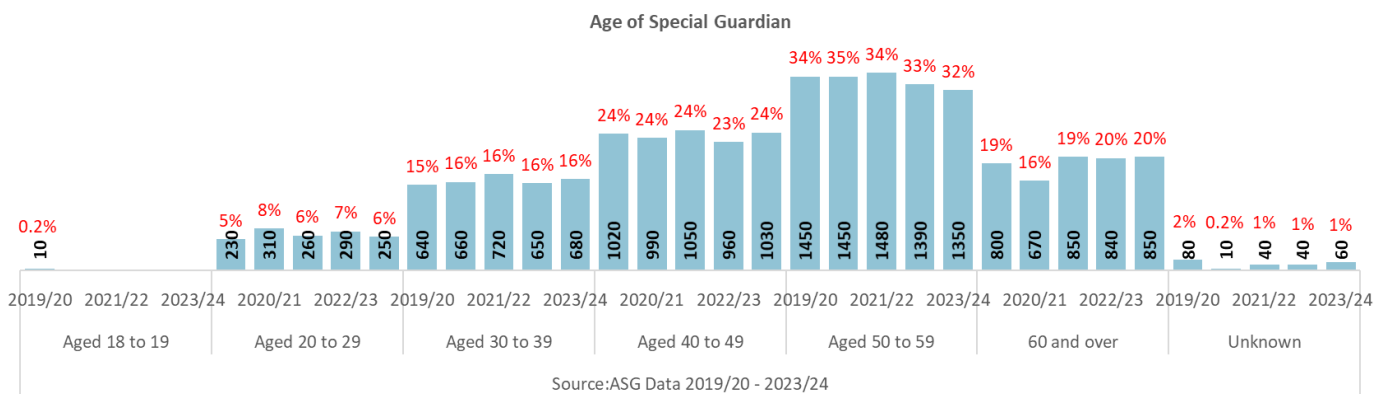


- **57% (2270n)** of children with an SGO granted were not in a sibling group

Special Guardians were more likely to be grandparents, and more likely to be aged 50 and over.



- **52% (2070n)** of children with an SGO granted, had a special guardian who was a grandparent



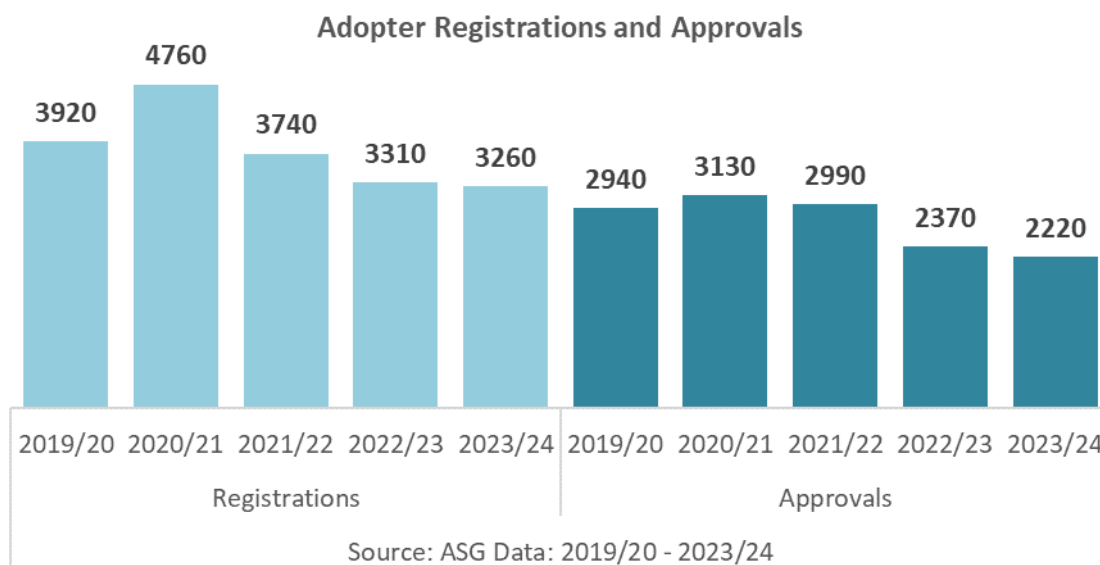
- **32% (1350n)** of children with an SGO granted, had a special guardian who was aged between 50 to 59

ADOPTERS

The number of adopter registrations and approvals continued to decline this year, whilst the number of adopter families with a child matched and placed with them increased. This has impacted on the number of prospective adopters not yet approved, and approved waiting to be matched, by reducing the number of available adopter families. A higher proportion of adopters were approved within six months, and matched with three months of approval. This increase in timeliness may be driven to meet the demand for available adopters.

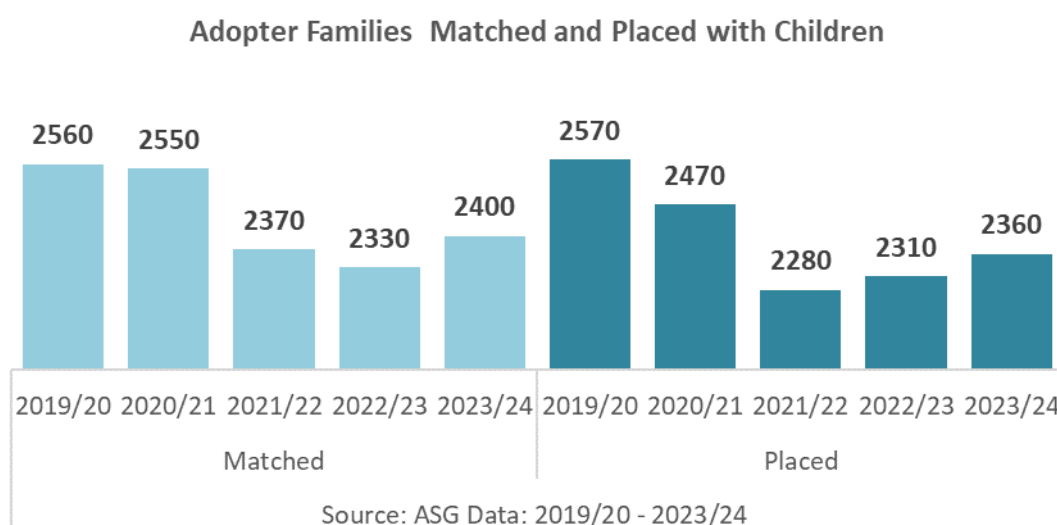
In 2023/24 the number of adopter registrations and approvals decreased. When compared to last year there were:

- **3260** Registrations, a decrease of **2% (50n)**
- **2220** Approvals, a decrease of **6% (150n)**



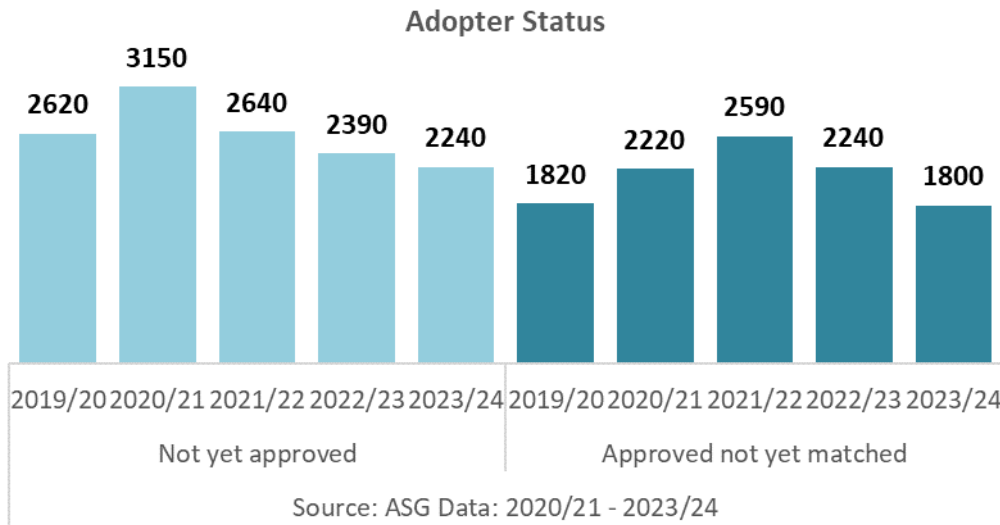
More adopters were matched with, and had a child placed with them. When compared to last year there were:

- **2400** Adopter families matched to children, an increase of **3% (70n)**
- **2360** Adopter families with a child placed, an increase of **2% (50n)**



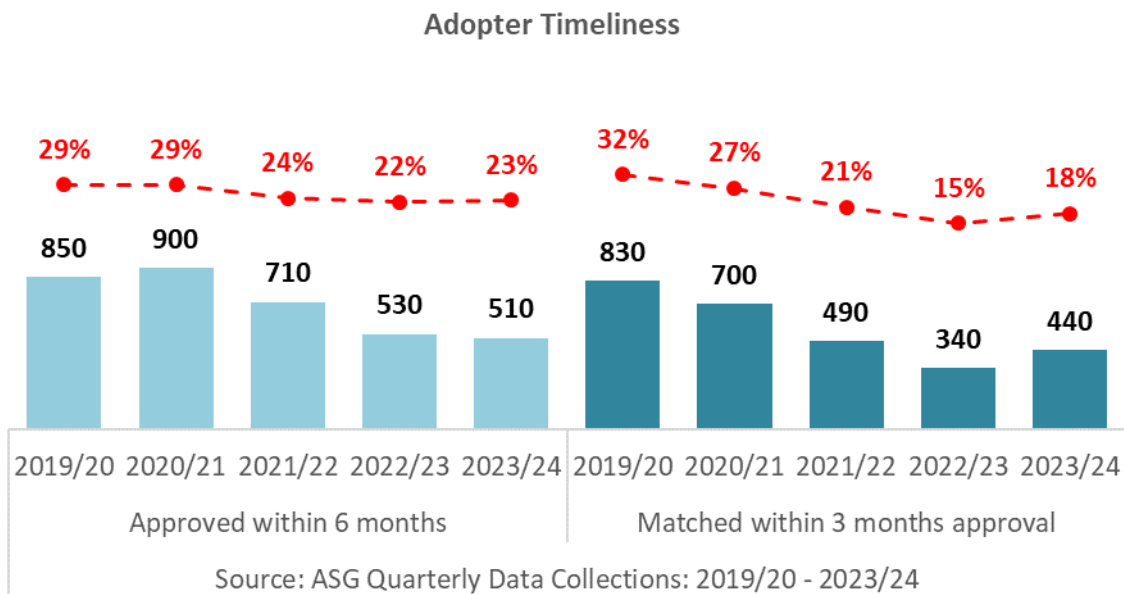
Both the number of adopters not yet approved, and approved and waiting declined. When compared to last year there were:

- **2240** Prospective adopter families not yet approved, a decrease of **6% (150n)**
- **1800** Approved adopter families waiting to be matched, a decrease of **20% (440n)**

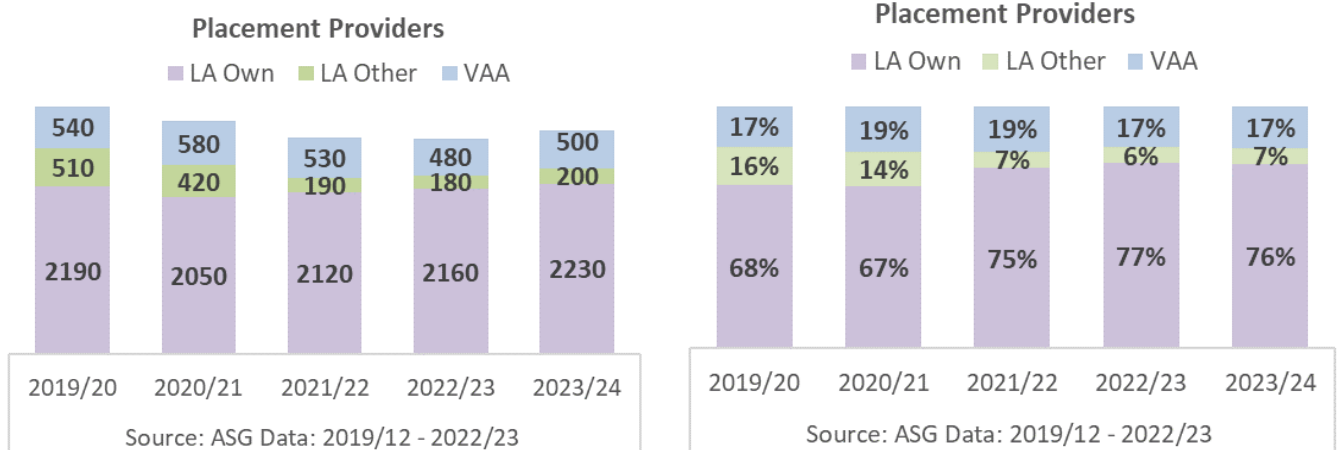


Timelines for adopters improved, with a higher proportion of adopters approved within six months, and matched with three months of approval. When compared to last year:

- **23%** of adopter families were approved within 6 months of registration, an increase of **1** percentage points
- **18%** of approved adopter families had a child matched with them within 3 months of approval, an increase of **3** percentage points

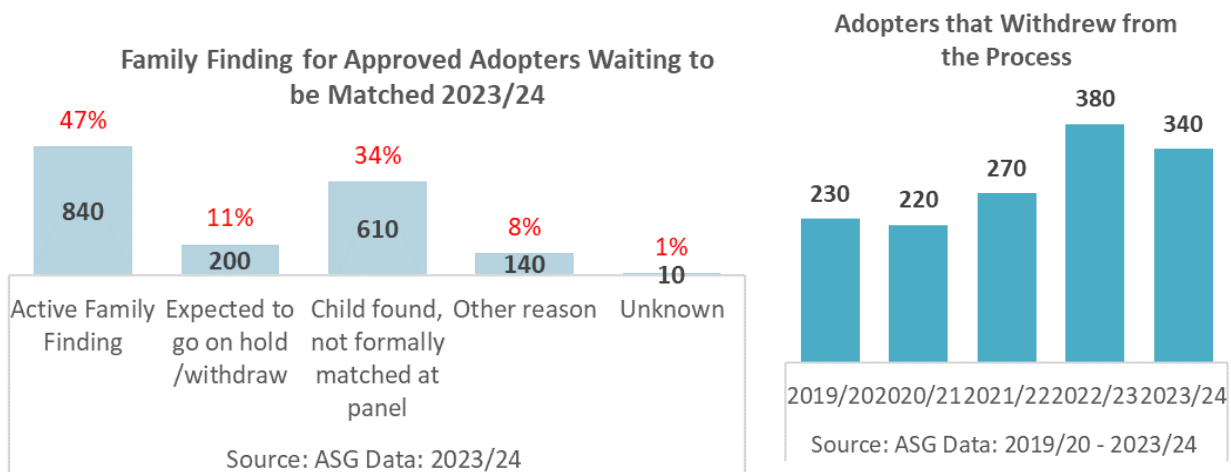


The proportion of children placed with VAA adopters remained at **17%** this year, with the total number of children placed rising to **500, 20** more when compared to last year.



Family Finding codes for adopters were introduced into the ASG data collection in 2023/24 to provide a measure of how many approved adopter families waiting to be matched were actively family finding. As at Q4 2023/24:

- **47% (840n)** adopter families had active family finding
- **34% (610n)** had a child found but were not formally matched with panel
- **11% (200n)** adopter families were expected to go on hold or withdraw



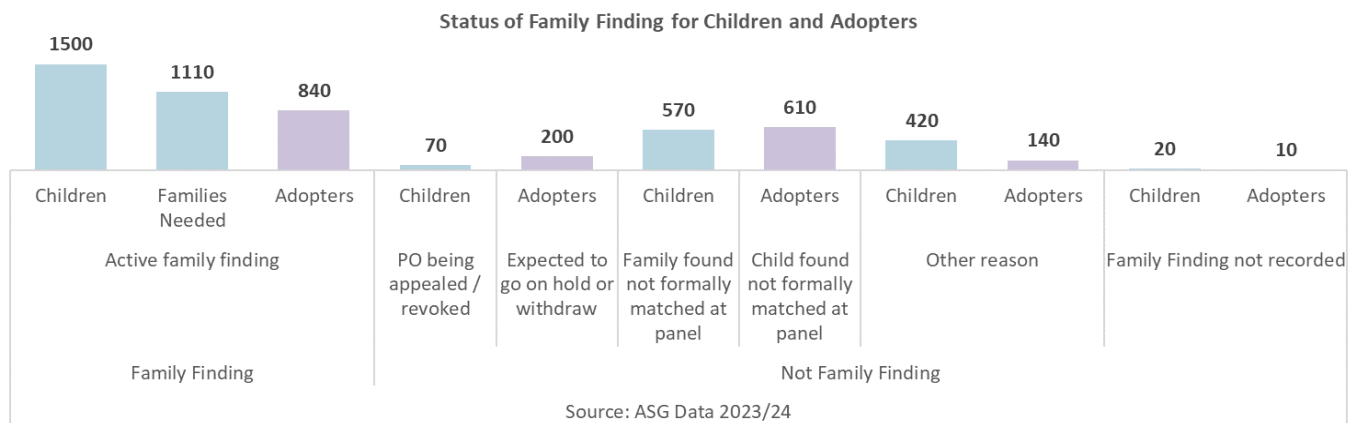
This year there has been a decline in the number of adopters leaving the adoption process. When compared to last year:

- **340** adopters withdrew from the process after approval, a decline of **11% (40n)**

Sufficiency of Adopters

The decrease in the number of adopter registrations and approvals has reduced the number of adopters approved and waiting to be matched with a child. At the same time, the increase in the number of ADMs and POs for children has resulted in more children waiting to be placed with an adopter family.

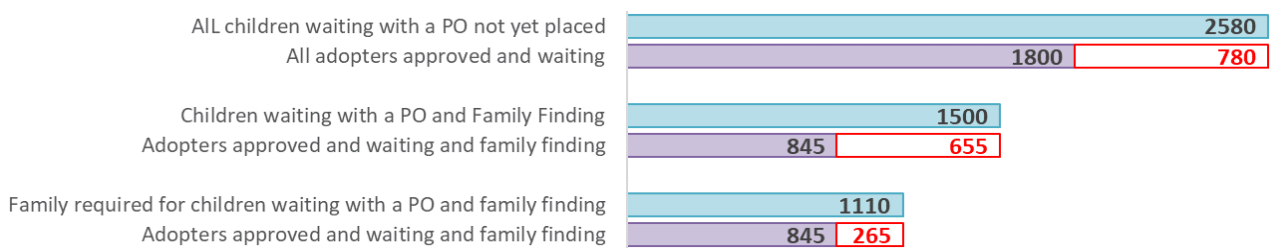
There are more children waiting with a PO to be placed with a family than approved adopters waiting.



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

- **1500** children with active family finding
- **1110** adopter families are need (*based on the number of single children and sibling groups waiting to be placed*)
- **840** adopter families with active family finding
- **270** shortfall of adopter families

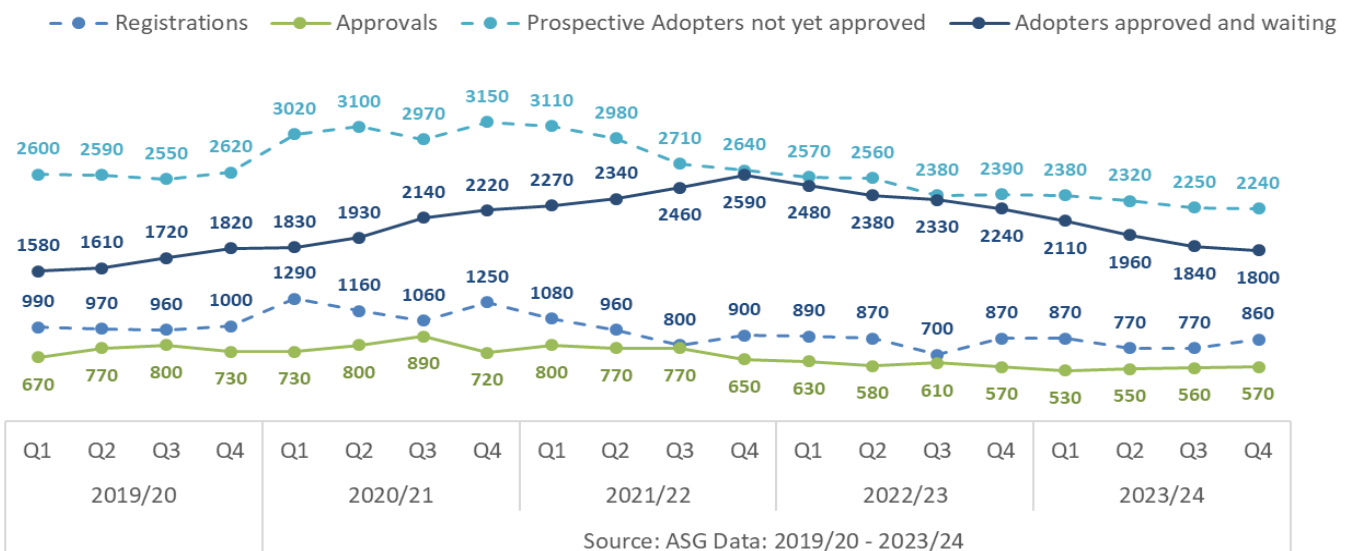
Sufficiency of Adopters: Q4 2023/24



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.

Adopter Pipeline: Registrations, Approvals and Awaiting Approval and Approved



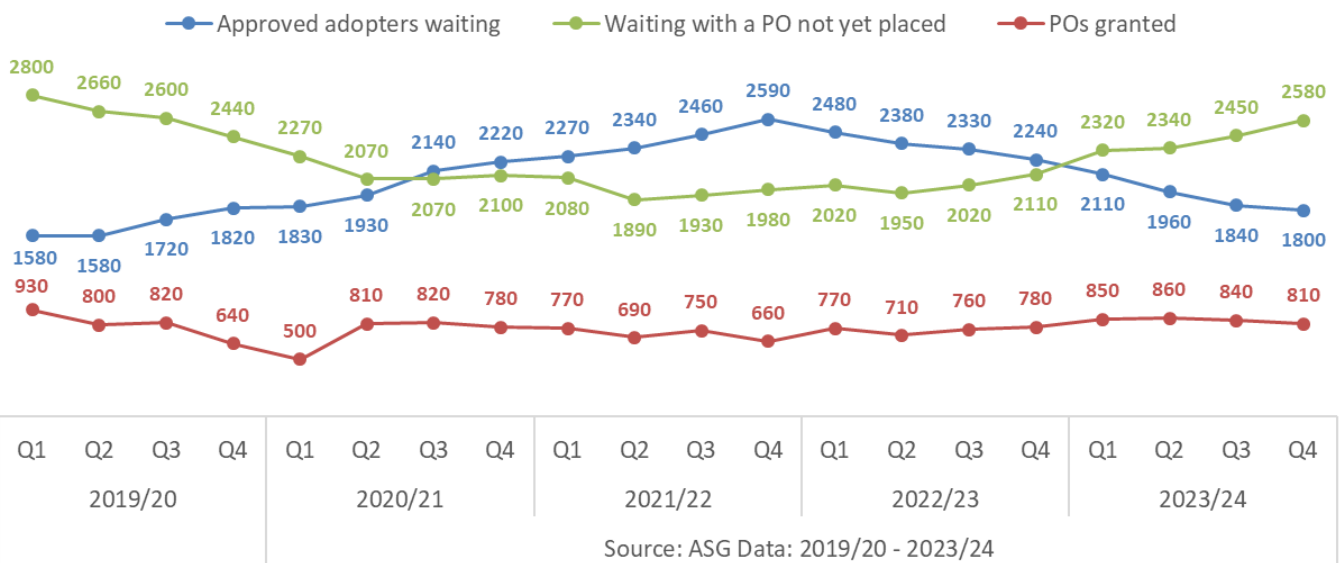
Quarterly comparisons indicate that adopter registrations and approvals are at the same level as Q4 last year, with adopters not yet approved, and approved and waiting lower when compared to the same time period.

In Q4, there was an increase in the number of adopter registrations and approvals. Adopter registrations increased by **90n**, and adopter approvals increased by **10n** when compared to the previous quarter (Q3).

Over the last two years, the gap between the number of children waiting with a PO, and the number of adopters approved and waiting has been closing each quarter. There is now **780** more children waiting with a PO not yet placed with a family than adopters approved and waiting to have a child placed.

The gap between the number of POs granted and approved adopters waiting is also closing.

Sufficiency of Adopters: POs granted, Children with a PO, and Adopters Waiting to be Matched



Looking at both charts above, over the last two 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.

DATA SOURCES

ASG Quarterly Data Collection

In quarter 4 2023/24 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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