

Fostering and adoption 2017–18

A statistical bulletin

Published March 2019



Contents

Key points	3
Introduction	5
Background	5
Data quality note	6
Foster care	7
<i>Fostering services</i>	7
<i>Foster care households</i>	7
<i>Care experienced children and young people</i>	13
<i>Fostering service capacity</i>	18
<i>Fostering service evaluation</i>	20
<i>Summary of foster care</i>	22
Adoption	23
<i>Adoption services</i>	23
<i>New adoptive households</i>	23
<i>Children and young people</i>	26
<i>Other services</i>	31
<i>Adoption service evaluation</i>	32
<i>Summary of adoption</i>	34

Adoption in Scotland

At 31 December 2017 there were:



32 local authority adoption services
6 independent adoption services

Quality is high across all services



evaluated as very good or excellent across all quality themes



evaluated as good or better across all quality themes



evaluated as adequate or lower in at least one quality theme



evaluated as adequate or lower across all quality themes

Children and young people

In 2017:

375 children and young people approved for adoption **403** in 2016

352 children and young people were placed with their new adoptive family **362** in 2016

328 children and young people were legally adopted **309** in 2016

At 31 December 2017:



25% were waiting for over one year

Children/young people approved for adoption were waiting to be matched with approved adopters



228 in 2016

43% were part of a sibling group

Adoptions that breakdown

In 2017:



adoptions broke-down (disrupted) in local authority approved households

24 in 2016

Adoptive households

In 2017:

317 new adoptive households were approved across **33** adoption services **326** in 2016

Sibling group approval



28%

Approved to adopt sibling group of two



<5%

Approved to adopt sibling group of three



0%

Approved to adopt sibling group of four +

Foster care services in Scotland

At 31 December 2017 there were:



32 local authority fostering services
28 independent fostering services

Quality is high across all services

46%

evaluated as very good or excellent across all quality themes

93%

evaluated as good or better across all quality themes

7%

evaluated as adequate or lower in at least one quality theme

0%

evaluated as adequate or lower across all quality themes

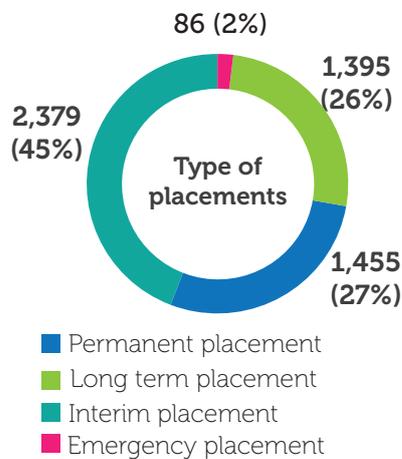
Children and young people in foster care

At 31 December 2017:

5,315

children and young people in foster care placements

5,423 in 2016



224

children identified as being in a placement but needing a permanent one

209 in 2016

23

children and young people waiting at home for a placement to become available

25 in 2016

Sibling groups

At 31 December 2017:

1,012

sibling groups using fostering services

Overall **23% (232)** were separated

Main reasons cited: following assessment, lack of resources and emergency situation.

1,037 in 2016, of which **20% (211)** were separated

Unplanned endings

In 2017:

355

placements ended on an unplanned basis, across **47** services

387 in 2016



20% were permanent placements

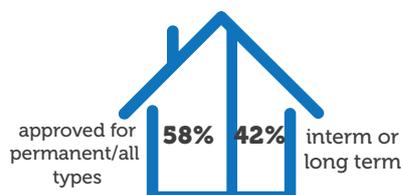
Foster care households

At 31 December 2017:

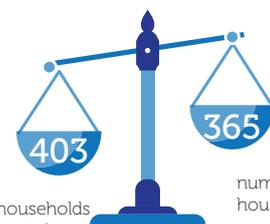


3,823

approved foster carer households **3,970** in 2016



In 2017:



number of households that de-registered

number of new households approved

Introduction

This report sets out data we collected from service providers in their annual returns, covering the period 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2017. It also includes grading information correct at 31 March 2018.

The Care Inspectorate regulates around 13,500 care services in Scotland, including 38 adoption and 60 fostering services. These are provided by the local authority and the voluntary / not-for-profit sector. In order to provide scrutiny and improvement support, we hold a significant amount of data about these services.

The data in this report provides insight into the operation of fostering and adoption services in Scotland. We hope this data is of use to providers of fostering and adoption services, and other interested parties, who invest significant time in providing information to us each year.

Background

Foster care and adoption services are vital in assessing, approving and supporting foster carers and prospective adoptive parents to care for some of our most vulnerable children. Children who are placed away from their home require high-quality care that addresses their emotional and wellbeing needs. Matching children to families who can provide high quality care is essential to supporting improved outcomes for children. Ongoing assessment and planning are crucial to make sure children are being looked after in families, either their own or alternative family placements, that address their best interests throughout childhood. Where permanency is required, planning should not be delayed so that children have the best opportunity to make new attachments within an alternative family placement where they can start to feel secure and cared for. Local authorities have a legal responsibility for ensuring that children in need of foster care and adoption are safe and placed in appropriate placements. Local authorities in Scotland are legally required to provide fostering and adoption services within their areas but can also work with voluntary / not-for-profit fostering and adoption services to place children with carers assessed by them (where that is in the child's interest).

Over the summer of 2015, we worked with colleagues in the Scottish Government, service providers and their representative bodies, to review the content of the Care Inspectorate annual returns. This work has enabled us to collate a meaningful summary of adoption and fostering statistics across Scotland. This is the second in the series of such summaries; the first was published in November 2017 ([Fostering and Adoption 2016/17 statistical bulletin](#)).

A national review of foster care was completed in 2013. One of the outcomes of which was the creation of National Placement Descriptors to be used consistently by all fostering services to standardise the description of the types of fostering placements they make available. The placement descriptors were published in 2015 with the expectation that, going forward, all fostering placements are classified and recorded according to the defined descriptors. We incorporated the descriptors into the 2017 annual return and this is the first time we have reported on them. For a full glossary of the placement descriptors follow the link below.

[Foster care glossary placement descriptions](#)

Data quality note

All data, with the exception of grading information, was provided directly by service providers. In this publication, in order to accurately reflect trends over time and to allow year-on-year comparisons to be made, data has been imputed where a service has not completed an annual return. Data has been imputed from information provided by the service in another year.

The distribution of foster carer households by the type of placement they are approved to provide cannot be compared to previous years due to a change in recording and reporting practices to accommodate the new placement descriptors. This also affects the breakdown by placement type of the number of children and young people in foster care.

This year we have excluded the adoption service - Birthlink¹ from all of the adoption statistics that follow (except the evaluation statistics). This means that the 2015 and 2016 figures published in table 25 of this report do not match those published in the Fostering and Adoption 2016/17 statistical bulletin.

This year we have also excluded two fostering services – Scottish Adoption - Fostering Service and St. Margaret’s Children and Family Care Society² from all of the foster care figures apart from the evaluation statistics. This means that some of the 2015 and 2016 foster care statistics presented here do not match those published in the Fostering and Adoption 2016/17 statistical bulletin. Tables are footnoted where this is the case.

¹ Birthlink is an adoption support service and is not involved in the approval of households or children for adoption

² These services are predominantly adoption services that provide a limited fostering service and require two registrations one for fostering and one for adoption. The focus of these services is the recruitment, approval and support of pre-adoptive and adoptive parents and of post placement and post adoption work with families and adopted adults. The fostering and family placement part of the service is for children who require a fostering placement prior to adoption - in these cases the adoptive household is given dual approval (foster care approval and adoption approval). The foster care households do not add to the pool of foster carers in Scotland. See Dual Approval Status section in Chapter 19 of [Guidance on the Looked After Children \(Scotland\) Regulations 2009 and the Adoption and Children \(Scotland\) Act 2007](#).

Foster care

Fostering services

At 31 December 2017 there were 60 fostering services in Scotland registered with the Care Inspectorate, 32 local authority run services and 28 voluntary / not-for-profit organisations (referred to as independent services in the statistics that follow).

Of the 60 registered services, 58 submitted an annual return for 2017. All of the 2017 data presented in this report relates to the data supplied in these completed annual returns along with data from the 2016 annual return for services that did not provide annual returns in 2017.

This report covers four different aspects of fostering services:

- foster care households
- care experienced children and young people
- fostering service capacity
- fostering service evaluation

Foster care households

At 31 December 2017, there were 3,823 approved foster carer households in Scotland³ down 4% from 3,970 in 2016 and 13% from 4,414 in 2015. The small decrease between the years 2016 and 2017 is driven by decreases in the local authority sector.

The majority of households (68%) were provided by local authority services and 32% were provided by independent services. This split is similar to the two previous years.

Table 1. Number of approved foster carer households¹, at 31 December, split by sector

	2017	2016	2015
Local authority	2,618	2,765	2,742
Independent	1,205	1,205	1,672
Total	3,823	3,970	4,414

1 Excludes those approved exclusively for short breaks.

2 The 2015 and 2016 figures presented here for Independent and total services have been revised to exclude Scottish Adoption (fostering service) and St. Margaret's Children and Family Care Society and therefore do not match the figures published in the Fostering and Adoption 2016/17 statistical bulletin.

Of the fostering services that submitted an annual return, 48 said they had incorporated the descriptors into their recording system and 8 said they had not. Of the 8 services that were not yet recording placements according to the agreed descriptors, they appear to have used a best

³ This may be subject to some double counting. Regulations allow a foster carer to be 'registered' with more than one agency, however this is intended as an enabling provision in certain circumstances not one which should be regularly used ([Guidance on the Looked After Children \(Scotland\) Regulations 2009 and the Adoption and Children \(Scotland\) Act 2007 – Chapter 11 The Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers](#))

fit approach to record the number of approved carer households broken-down by placement type.

The proportion of foster carer households offering permanent, long-term, interim, emergency or all types of placement differed across sectors.

In local authority fostering services just over a third of households (39%) were approved for interim placements only, and 34% had approval to provide all types of placement. A further 14% of foster carer households were approved to provide permanent placements only, meaning that in total 1,260 local authority households (48% of all local authority households) were approved to provide permanent placements.

Of independent services 62% of households had approval to provide all types of placements, with a further 17% approved to provide permanent placements only; meaning that 952 (79%) of all independently approved households could provide permanent placements.

In total, less than 1% of all households were approved for emergency placements only.

Table 2. Number of approved foster carer households¹ at 31 December 2017, split by sector and placement type².

	Number of approved carer households ¹	Approval to provide all types of placements		Permanent placements only		Long Term placements only		Interim placements only		Emergency placements only	
		no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Local authority	2,618	883	34%	377	14%	333	13%	1,017	39%	8	0.3%
Independent	1,205	750	62%	202	17%	142	12%	100	8%	11	0.9%
Total	3,823	1,633	43%	579	15%	475	12%	1,117	29%	19	0.5%

1 Excluding those approved exclusively for short breaks.

2 Placements are categorised based on the National Placement Descriptors, information on which can be found in the introduction page.

3 Because the most recent placement categories differ from the previous year's categories comparisons between the years cannot be made.

4 Data for the two non-submissions has been imputed from the previous year's return using best match. 'Both temporary and permanent' best matches to 'Approval to provide all types of placements', 'Permanent' to 'Permanent' and 'Temporary' to 'Interim'.

5 The 2015 and 2016 figures presented here for Independent and Total services have been revised to exclude Scottish Adoption (fostering service) and St. Margaret's Children and Family Care Society and therefore do not match the figures published in the Fostering and Adoption 2016/17 statistical bulletin.

On the 31 December 2017, there were 423 households approved only to provide short breaks – two thirds across 26 local authority services and a third across 17 independent services.

Table 3. Number of foster carer households approved only to provide short breaks, at 31 December 2017, split by sector

	number of households approved for short breaks only	number of services that have approved short break households
Local authority	285	26
Independent	138	17
Total	423	43

1 This data was not collected prior to the 2017 annual return.

Of the 3,823 approved households, 886 (23%) had approval to care for children of any age. As in previous years, this was more likely to be the case for households registered by independent services (45%) than local authority approved households (13%).

Table 4. Number of households that have approval for any age range of child or young person, at 31 December, split by sector

		number	% of all households
2017	Local authority	342	13%
	Independent	544	45%
	Total	886	23%
2016	Local authority	269	10%
	Independent	643	53%
	Total	912	23%
2015	Local authority	271	10%
	Independent	614	37%
	Total	885	20%

1 The 2015 and 2016 percentages presented here for Independent and Total services have been revised to exclude Scottish Adoption (fostering service) and St. Margaret's Children and Family Care Society and therefore do not match the figures published in the Fostering and Adoption 2016/17 statistical bulletin.

Private fostering

Private fostering is an arrangement where a parent makes an agreement with someone who is not a close relative of the child, to care for that child for more than 28 days. These arrangements are not facilitated by the local authority or a registered service. It is very possible that private foster carers will not be aware of their responsibility to notify the local authority of these arrangements or that local authorities do not recognise these arrangements as private fostering. We suspect that there are more private fostering arrangements taking place than we and local authorities are being notified of.

There were only five notifications of private fostering in 2017 across less than five different services.

Table 5. Number of notifications of private fostering arrangements in place at 31 December, split by sector

		Number of notifications of private fostering	% of all notifications of private fostering
2017	Local authority	5	100%
	Independent	0	0%
	Total	5	
2016	Local authority	<5	50%
	Independent	<5	50%
	Total	<10	
2015	Local authority	12	63%
	Independent	7	37%
	Total	19	

1 Services were asked to provide an estimate if unable to give an exact number.

2 Values with fewer than five observations have been removed and replaced with “<5”. These revised values have been excluded from the overall total.

Recruitment and de-registration

Throughout 2017 there were 365 new foster carer households approved, down 13% from 419 in 2016 and 19% from 453 in 2015. Almost two thirds (62%) were approved by local authority services and 38% were approved by independent services.

[Guidance on the Looked After Children \(Scotland\) Regulations 2009 and the Adoption and Children \(Scotland\) Act 2017](#) states that authorities should normally aim to complete an assessment within six months of receiving an application. The length of the assessment is measured as the time between when the application was received and approval by the agency decision maker.

The majority (52%) of new foster carer assessments were completed within six months (similar to previous years), with 40% completed between six months and a year. A small amount (26 assessments (7%)) took a year or more to complete. Comparing across years, local authority services seem to have shown an improvement in terms of the number of assessments with delays to completion whereas for independent services the number of assessments taking a year or more to complete has risen (albeit low to begin with) from seven in 2016 to 12 in 2017.

Table 6. Number of new foster carer households approved between 1 January and 31 December, split by sector and length of assessment completion

		Up to six months		Between six & 12 months		12 months or more		Total new carer households
2017	Local authority	115	51%	94	41%	14	6%	227
	Independent	73	53%	51	37%	12	9%	138
	Total	188	52%	145	40%	26	7%	365
2016	Local authority	122	47%	105	41%	32	12%	259
	Independent	90	56%	63	39%	7	4%	160
	Total	212	51%	168	40%	39	9%	419
2015	Local authority	125	46%	71	26%	26	9%	274
	Independent	114	64%	57	32%	8	4%	179
	Total	239	53%	128	28%	34	8%	453

- 1 The 2015 and 2016 figures presented here for Independent and total services have been revised to exclude Scottish Adoption (fostering service) and St. Margaret's Children and Family Care Society and therefore do not match the figures published in the Fostering and Adoption 2016/17 statistical bulletin.
- 2 The number of new households may include a small amount of double-counting at the national level, owing to the rare situation where households register with more than one fostering service.

Evidence from research relating to the placement of children in foster care demonstrates that sibling relationships are important in nurturing continuity, security and stability for children. It is good practice to place siblings together and where this is not considered to be in children's best interests the assessment of this should be well evidenced and clear.

Recruiting households that would foster sibling groups was a challenge for 26 fostering services (45% of all services). As in the two previous years, this was particularly the case for local authority services, with 63% of services struggling compared to 23% of independent services.

The main reason described by services was accommodation constraints.

Table 7. Number of services that have difficulties recruiting households that will take sibling groups, split by sector

		Number	% of all services
2017	Local authority	20	63%
	Independent	6	23%
	Total	26	45%
2016	Local authority	19	59%
	Independent	5	19%
	Total	24	41%
2015	Local authority	19	59%
	Independent	6	23%
	Total	25	43%

- 1 The 2015 and 2016 percentages presented here for Independent and Total services have been revised to exclude Scottish Adoption (fostering service) and St. Margaret's Children and Family Care Society and therefore do not match the figures published in the Fostering and Adoption 2016/17 statistical bulletin.

Foster care households may choose to de-register, which may impact negatively on capacity if services struggle to recruit new foster carer households – a challenge faced by many services.

In local authority fostering services the number of households that de-registered in 2017 was 228 (up from 194 in 2016 and 180 in 2015). In independent services 175 deregistered (down from 188 the previous year).

In total, at the national level, 403 households de-registered and 365 new households registered. This suggests there was a net decrease of 38 foster care households across Scotland in 2017. However, there is some uncertainty around these figure owing to double counting of new households at the national level and the likely-hood that some foster care households when relocating do not de-register with their previous fostering service.

At an individual service level, where double counting is removed, the data suggests that 26 fostering services (45%) experienced a net loss in foster carer households in 2017. In 21 services (36%) the number of new households exceeded the number that de-registered suggesting a net increase in their pool of foster care households.

Table 8. Number of foster carer households that de-registered between 1 January and 31 December, and the percentage of services that experienced a net loss of foster carer households in 2017, split by sector

		Number of households that de-registered	Percentage of services that experienced a net loss in foster carer households over the year
2017	Local authority	228	50%
	Independent	175	38%
	Total	403	45%
2016	Local Authority	194	
	Independent	188	
	Total	382	
2015	Local Authority	180	
	Independent	139	
	Total	319	

1 The number of households that de-register may include a small amount of double-counting at the national level, owing to the rare situation where households are registered with more than one fostering service.

In 2017, fostering services across Scotland received approximately 4,132 enquiries from potential foster carers, 7% of which led to applications, of which 42% were approved. Whilst local authority services received considerably less enquiries than independent services they received more applications and approved approximately the same percentage as independent services – 42%.

Overall in the local authority sector the rate of applications approved has increased compared to the previous two years. In the independent sector the total has only fluctuated slightly.

Table 9. Recruitment of foster carer households: Approximate number of enquiries received between 1 January and 30 June, enquiries that became applications and approved households, split by sector

		Enquiries	Applications	Approvals	% of enquiries to applications	% of applications approved
2017	Local authority	1,038	173	73	17%	42%
	Independent	3,094	131	55	4%	42%
	Total	4,132	304	128	7%	42%
2016	Local authority	937	146	41	16%	28%
	Independent	2,859	133	64	5%	48%
	Total	3,796	279	105	7%	38%
2015	Local authority	1,165	152	39	13%	26%
	Independent	4,140	138	59	3%	43%
	Total	5,305	290	98	5%	34%

Care experienced children and young people

The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 place a duty on local authorities to provide fostering and adoption services. They are responsible for assessing and making arrangements for children who, as an outcome of this assessment, require alternative care, either through voluntary arrangements or compulsory measures of care. Local authorities, through service level agreements with independent fostering and adoption services, may place children with carers through these services. Independent fostering and adoption services also recruit, assess and provide training and support to carers to ensure that they are providing a high-quality service to children and young people. When children are placed with an independent agency it remains the responsibility of the local authority to support the child and review the arrangement in place to ensure that it continues to meet the child's needs. Where permanency is required, this may be provided through a permanent foster placement or through adoption.

Placements

In the 2017 annual return services were asked to record the number of children and young people using their service using the new placement descriptors. Of the fostering services that submitted an annual return, 48 said they had incorporated the descriptors into their recording system and 8 said they had not. Of the 8 services that were not yet recording placements

according to the agreed descriptors, they appear to have used a best fit approach to record the number of children and young people in each placement type.

According to figures published in the Scottish Government’s [Children’s Social Work Statistics 2016-17](#), at 31 July 2017 there were 5,252 children and young people looked after by foster carers. This is very close to the total number recorded in our annual returns, see table below.

According to our 2017 annual return, 5,315 children and young people were in a placement with an approved foster carer household at 31 December 2017 (down 2% from 5,423 in 2016 and 9% from 5,853 in 2015). Of these 5,315 children and young people 70% (3,740) were placed in local authority approved households and 30% (1,575) were placed in households approved by independent services.

Table 10. Total number of children and young people using fostering services at 31 December, split by sector

	2017	2016	2015
Local authority	3,740	3,871	4,672
Independent	1,575	1,552	1,181
Total	5,315	5,423	5,853

- 1 'Using fostering services' means children who were placed by services into one of their approved foster carer households. The data is gathered in a way that reduces double counting.
- 2 The 2015 and 2016 figures presented here for Independent and Total services have been revised to exclude Scottish Adoption (fostering service) and St. Margaret’s Children and Family Care Society and therefore do not match the figures published in the Fostering and Adoption 2016/17 statistical bulletin.

One third (1,769) of the total number of children and young people were in an interim foster care placement provided by a local authority service; and 27% (1,455) were in a permanent placement – two thirds of whom (981) were in local authority approved households and one third (474) were in households approved by independent services.

According to the returns, 86 children and young people were in emergency placements at 31 December 2017 across 16 different services. Seventy, the vast majority at 81%, of these children and young people were in households approved by the local authority; 16 were in households approved by independent services.

Table 11. Children using fostering services¹ at 31 December 2017, split by sector and placement type²

	Permanent placement			Long Term placement			Interim placement			Emergency placement		
	No.	% of sector	% of total	No.	% of sector	% of total	No.	% of sector	% of total	No.	% of sector	% of total
Local authority	981	26%	18%	920	25%	17%	1,769	47%	33%	70	2%	1%
Independent	474	30%	9%	475	30%	9%	610	39%	11%	16	1%	0%
Total	1,455		27%	1,395		26%	2,379		45%	86		2%

- 1 'Using fostering services' means children who were placed by services into one of their approved foster carer households. The data is gathered in such a way as to eliminate double counting.
- 2 Placements are categorised based on the National Placement Descriptors, information on which can be found in the introduction page.
- 3 Because the most recent placement categories differ from the previous year's categories comparisons between the years cannot be made.
- 4 Data for the two non-submissions has been imputed from the previous year's return using best match. 'Permanent' matched to 'Permanent' and 'Temporary' matched to 'Interim'.

Children awaiting permanent placement

At 31 December 2017, there were 224 children and young people identified by 20 fostering services as needing a placement secured by a Permanence Order that were not in or not moving towards such a placement (around the same number as previous years). That's 6% of the children and young people using fostering services, around the same proportion as the two previous years. Glasgow City Council and Highland Council fostering services had the biggest share of children in need of permanent placement (27% and 18%, respectively).

At the same time there were 23 children and young people, across seven services (mainly in northern parts of Scotland) waiting on a foster care placement to become available.

Table 12. Number of children using local authority fostering services at 31 December, that were not in, or not moving towards, a placement secured by a Permanence Order but identified as needing such a placement, and the number of children living at home or with kinship carers at 31 December that were waiting for a foster care placement to become available.

	Children not in or moving towards permanent placement		Waiting for placement to become available	
	Number of children	Number of services	Number of children	Number of services
2017	224	20	23	7
2016	209	18	25	6
2015	297	22	28	10

- 1 Only includes children and young people where a decision has been made to place them in foster care.

Placements ending on an unplanned basis

The table below shows that 355 placements of children and young people ended on an unplanned⁴ basis throughout 2017, down 8% from 387 in 2016. Around two thirds of the endings were in the local authority sector and a third in the independent sector. The majority were in households approved by the placing authority. Of the placements that ended, 20% (71) were permanent placements (up slightly from 18% last year).

In 2017, 28 local authority fostering services experienced unplanned endings and 19 independent fostering services experienced unplanned endings.

Table 13. Number of foster placements that ended on an unplanned basis, between 1 January and 31 December, split by sector

	Number of placements ended			Number of permanent placements that ended			Number of services where placements ended		
	2017	2016	2015	2017	2016	2015	2017	2016	2015
Local authority placements	232	255	212	43	47	36	28	27	28
Household provided by placing authority	203	232	182	43	42	36	27	26	27
Household approved by another local authority, purchased by placing authority	29	23	30	<5	5	<5	10	7	8
Independent placements	123	132	145	28	23	27	19	17	17
Total	355	387	357	71	70	63	47	44	45

- 1 Where the placement was a sibling group, each child or young person has been counted separately.
- 2 Placements that end on an unplanned basis are ones where removal of a child from a foster placement stemmed from a crisis or unexpected event occurring.
- 3 Values with fewer than five observations have been removed and replaced with "<5". These revised values have been excluded from any totals and subtotals.

Local authority commissioned placements

Throughout 2017, 569 children were placed in a foster care placement purchased by a local authority, down 34% from 864 in 2016. Fife Council Fostering Service accounted for 78% of the decrease. All local authority fostering services, other than Shetland Islands Council Fostering Service, purchased places in another fostering service.

⁴ Unplanned is defined as 'when removal of a child from a foster placement stemmed from a crisis or unexpected event occurring'.

Just over half of the places (56%) were purchased through the national contract, compared to 44% in 2016 and 53% in 2015; 2% were exclusively short breaks.

Table 14. Number of children and young people placed by a local authority into a foster carer household approved by another service, between 1 January and 31 December

	number of children and young people placed ¹	Number of placements purchased through the national contract (and percentage of placed)	Number of placements that were exclusively short breaks
2017	569	317 (56%)	9 (2%)
2016	864	382 (44%)	21(2%)
2015	694	369 (53%)	22(3%)

- 1 Includes placements that were exclusively short break situations, as well as temporary placements, permanent placements and any other type of placement.
- 2 The 2015 and 2016 data presented here differs from that published in the Fostering and Adoption 2016/17 Statistical Bulletin owing to a change in the way we have interpreted the data.
- 3 The rise in the number of children and young people placed between 2015 and 2016 can be explained by a large increase in the number recorded by Glasgow City Council Fostering Service in 2016 compared to 2015.

Asylum seekers and refugees

There are a number of children and young people placed in care services, who have come to Scotland without the support of an adult and have the status of being asylum seeking and refugee children and young people. In order to get a picture of the extent of this in the foster care system we asked in the 2016 and 2017 annual return if services had any children or young people with refugee or asylum seeking status using their service.

In 2017, ten fostering services reported that they had placed children with refugee or asylum seeking status. Seven were local authority and three were independent fostering services.

Fourteen children and young people with asylum seeking and refugee status were using local authority fostering services at 31 December 2017. Fewer than five were using independent services.

Table 15. Breakdown of whether services had placed children and young people with asylum seeking and refugee status at 31 December 2017, split by sector

			Had placed	Had not placed
2017	Local authority	Number	7 (22%)	25 (78%)
	Independent	Number	3 (11%)	25 (89%)
	Total	Number	10 (17%)	50 (83%)
2016	Local authority	Number	7 (22%)	25 (78%)
	Independent	Number	2 (7%)	25 (93%)
	Total	Number	9 (16%)	50 (85%)

Table 16. Number of children and young people with asylum seeking and refugee status using fostering services at 31 December 2017, split by sector

	2017	2016
Local authority	14	16
Independent	<5	<5
Total	14	16

1 Values with fewer than five observations have been removed and replaced with “<5”. These revised values have been excluded from any totals and subtotals.

Fostering service capacity

Between 1 January and 31 December 2017 the number of children coming into foster care exceeded the number of new foster carer households in 29 of the 32 local authority services. This is up slightly from the two preceding years.

Table 17. Number of local authority services where the number of children coming into foster care between 1 January and 31 December exceeded the number of new foster carer households

	2017	2016	2015
Total number of services:	29	25	27
Percentage of local authority services	91%	78%	84%

In situations where the number of children exceeds the number of available foster carer households, an option for local authority services is to commission places with independent fostering services. Where this is not feasible or possible the local authority services may approve placements with their own foster carer households that result in the household exceeding their approval range.

The table below shows that throughout 2017, households exceeded their approval range on 749 occasions across all of 32 local authority fostering services and 11 independent fostering services. Services reported in their annual return that households exceeded their approval range for a variety of reasons. The main reason was to keep siblings together, and to facilitate emergency placements. Other common reasons included: to enable child/young person to remain close to their home community and school; to minimise placement moves; to make the most appropriate match between child/young person and their foster carer.

Table 18. Number of occasions and number of services where children and young people placed in foster carer households resulted in the household going out-with their approval range, split by sector

		Number of occasions	Number of services
2017	Local authority	619	32
	Independent	130	11
	Total	749	43
2016	Local authority	635	31
	Independent	89	10
	Total	724	41
2015	Local authority	596	30
	Independent	38	7
	Total	634	37

1 Note that approval range can be age, gender, numbers or other.

Sibling group separation

At 31 December 2017, there were 1,012 sibling groups in foster care, 23% of which were separated upon placement (a similar percentage to the two years previous). Twenty-eight percent of the 703 sibling groups placed in local authority approved households were placed separately as were 11% of the 309 sibling groups that were placed in independently approved households.

The most common reason, selected by 24 local authority services, for separating sibling groups was due to lack of resources. For independent services the most common reason was 'following assessment', which was selected by eight services. Five independent services and 17 local authority services sited Emergency Situation as a reason for separating siblings.

Table 19. Number of sibling groups using fostering services at 31 December 2017 and the number that were placed separately.

		Number of sibling groups	Number of sibling groups separated	% placed separately
2017	Local authority	703	199	28%
	Independent	309	33	11%
	Total	1,012	232	23%
2016	Local authority	755	189	25%
	Independent	282	22	8%
	Total	1,037	211	20%
2015	Local authority	561	181	32%
	Independent	301	21	7%
	Total	862	212	25%

1 The 2015 and 2016 figures presented here for Independent and total services have been revised to exclude Scottish Adoption (fostering service) and St. Margaret's Children and Family Care Society and therefore do not match the figures published in the Fostering and Adoption 2016/17 statistical bulletin.

Table 20. Reasons for separating sibling groups, broken down by the number of services that selected each option.

		Following Assessment	Lack of Resource	Emergency Situation	Other
2017	Local authority	23	24	17	6
	Independent	8	<5	5	<5
	Total	31	24	22	6
2016	Local authority	22	22	17	5
	Independent	9	<5	<5	<5
	Total	31	22	17	5
2015	Local authority	20	20	13	7
	Independent	7	<5	<5	<5
	Total	27	20	13	7

1 Services were able to select as many reasons as were applicable.

Fostering service evaluation

Fostering services are graded by our inspectors, using a six-point scale, across three quality themes – Care and Support, Staffing, and Management and Leadership. Information on the evaluation criteria can be found in the document: [How we inspect](#). The following evaluation is correct for fostering services as of 31 March 2018.

Overall the quality of fostering services was high. At 31 March 2018, 59 of the 60 fostering services registered with the Care Inspectorate had been inspected and 93% of these services had evaluations of ‘good’ or better across all quality themes. No services were evaluated as ‘adequate’ or lower across all quality themes. Furthermore, 46% were evaluated ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’ across all quality themes. This grading profile is very similar to (if not slightly better than) the previous year.

Table 21. Overview of fostering service grades at 31 March 2018, split by sector

	Local authority		Independent		Total	
	number of services	% of all graded services	number of services	% of all graded services	number of services	% of all graded services
Grades of very good and excellent for all quality themes	12	38%	15	56%	27	46%
Grades of good or better for all quality themes	30	94%	25	93%	55	93%
Grades of adequate or lower for at least one quality theme	2	6%	2	7%	4	7%
Grades of adequate or lower for all quality themes	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

The grading profile of fostering services for the quality theme Care and Support is very positive, with the majority of services (38 of 59) being evaluated as ‘very good’. Four services in the independent sector were evaluated as ‘excellent’, in the previous year these services were

rated 'very good'. One local authority service was rated 'adequate' for Care and Support (down from an evaluation of 'good' the previous year).

Likewise, for staffing, five independent services were evaluated as 'excellent'; the majority were rated 'very good'.

Two independent services and one local authority service were rated 'adequate' for management and leadership (down from an evaluation of 'good' the previous year) and the rest were evaluated as 'good' or 'very good'.

Table 22. Breakdown of grades given for quality theme Care and Support, at 31 March 2018

	Local authority		Independent	
	number of services	% of all graded services	number of services	% of all graded services
Unsatisfactory	0	0%	0	0%
Weak	0	0%	0	0%
Adequate	1	3%	0	0%
Good	12	38%	4	15%
Very Good	19	59%	19	70%
Excellent	0	0%	4	15%

Table 23. Breakdown of grades given for quality theme Staffing, at 31 March 2018

	Local authority		Independent	
	number of services	% of all graded services	number of services	% of all graded services
Unsatisfactory	0	0%	0	0%
Weak	0	0%	0	0%
Adequate	0	0%	0	0%
Good	10	31%	3	11%
Very Good	22	69%	19	70%
Excellent	0	0%	5	19%

Table 24. Breakdown of grades given for quality theme Management & Leadership, at 31 March 2018

	Local authority		Independent	
	number of services	% of all graded services	number of services	% of all graded services
Unsatisfactory	0	0%	0	0%
Weak	0	0%	0	0%
Adequate	1	3%	2	7%
Good	13	41%	10	37%
Very Good	18	56%	15	56%
Excellent	0	0%	0	0%

Summary of foster care

At 31 December 2017 there were 3,823 approved foster carer households (down 4% from 3,970 in 2016 and 13% from 4,414 in 2015). Over half (58%) were approved to provide permanent placements.

At the same time there were 5,315 children and young people in foster placements (down 2% from 5,423 in 2016 and 9% from 5,853 in 2015). Of the children and young people in foster placements 27% (1,455) were in a permanent placement and 4% (224) were identified as needing a placement secured by a Permanence order but not in or not moving towards such a placement. There were also 23 children and young people, identified by seven services, living at home or in kinship care and waiting for a foster care placement to become available.

In 2017, 355 placements ended on an unplanned basis (down 8% from 387 in 2016), 20% (71) of which were permanent ones.

Throughout 2017 there were 365 new foster carer households approved (down 13% from 419 in 2016 and 19% from 453 in 2015). Timescales to approval were similar to the two years preceding - half were approved within six months and for 7% the assessment took 12 months or longer to complete.

Despite new foster carers being approved, the data suggests that 26 services (45% of all services) experienced a net loss in the number of foster carer households in 2017, when the number of households that de-registered is taken into account. Throughout 2017, a total of 403 foster care households de-registered (up 5% from 382 in 2016 and 26% from 319 in 2015).

Throughout 2017, households exceeded their approval range on 749 occasions, up 3% from 724 in 2016 and 18% from 634 in 2015. The main reason was to keep siblings together, and to facilitate emergency placements.

At 31 December 2017 there were 1,012 sibling groups in foster care, 23% of which were separated upon placement (consistent with the two previous years). Whilst some were separated following assessment, the most common reason was sighted as lack of resource to keep them together.

Similar to the two years previous, recruiting households that would foster sibling groups was a challenge for 26 fostering services (45%). Accommodation constraints were commonly cited by services as a reason for households not fostering sibling groups.

Despite the challenges faced by fostering services, quality continues to be high across the country with 98% of the 59 fostering services that had been inspected at 31 March 2018 evaluated as 'good' or better for Care and Support; 100% evaluated as 'good' or better for Staffing; and 95% evaluated as 'good' or 'very good' for Management and Leadership.

Adoption

Adoption services

At 31 December 2017, there were 38 registered adoption services in Scotland: 32 run by local authorities and six voluntary / not-for-profit organisations (referred to as independent services in this report).

Of the 38 registered services, 37 submitted an annual return.

One independent service (Birthlink) operates as a support service for those who have been affected by adoption in Scotland and doesn't offer an adoption service as such, therefore this service has been excluded from the statistics that follow. The 2015 and 2016 data in table 25 has been revised to exclude Birthlink and therefore does not match the data published in the [Fostering and Adoption 2016/17 statistical bulletin](#)

The 2017 data in this report is therefore based on the data submitted by 36 adoption services in their 2017 annual return, together with data from the 2016 annual return for the service that did not provide a 2017 annual return.

This report covers three different aspects of adoption services:

- new adoptive households
- children
- other services
- adoption service evaluation

New adoptive households

In 2017, 317 new adoptive households were approved across 33 adoption services (down 3% from 326 in 2016 and 11% from 355 in 2015). Whilst the majority of these new households (72%) were approved by local authority services, 12% of local authority adoption services did not approve any new households and all five independent services approved new households.

The table below shows that the most services (82% of the services that approved new households in 2017) approved some of their new households within six months⁵. Sixteen services (48%) took a year more to approve some households – 46% of local authority services (13) and three of the five independent services.

⁵ The National Care Standards: adoption agencies, (March 2005) Standard 23.1 specified that the assessment should be completed within six months from the date of initial interview to recommendation to adoption panel (as cited in Chapter 19 of [Guidance on the Looked After Children \(Scotland\) Regulations 2009 and the Adoption and Children \(Scotland\) Act 2007](#))

Table 25. Number and proportion of adoption services split by length of time to approve new adoptive households between 1 January and 31 December, split by sector

		Some cases completed within six months		Some cases completed over six months but less than a year		Some cases completed in a year or more	
		number	%	number	%	number	%
2017	Local authority	22	79%	23	82%	13	46%
	Independent	5	100%	5	100%	3	60%
	Total	27	82%	28	85%	16	48%
2016	Local authority	21	66%	25	78%	13	41%
	Independent	4	80%	5	100%	2	40%
	Total	25	68%	30	81%	15	41%
2015	Local authority	23	72%	25	78%	15	47%
	Independent	3	60%	4	80%	1	20%
	Total	26	70%	29	78%	16	43%

1 The 2015 and 2016 percentages for Independent services and Total services presented here have been revised to exclude Birthlink and therefore do not match the percentages published in the Fostering and Adoption 2016/17 statistical bulletin.

Age groups

In local authority services the majority of the new households were approved to adopt children less than six years of age (56% approved to adopt children younger than two years old and 55% approved to adopt two to five year olds). Twelve percent were approved to adopt children aged six to 10 years old and 3% were approved to adopt children aged 11 years old or older.

In independent services, the majority of new households (83%) were approved to adopt children aged two to five years old. Nineteen percent were approved to adopt children younger than two (down from 50% in 2016) and 18% were approved to adopt six to 10 year olds. None were approved to adopt children aged 11 or older.

Table 26. Number of new adoptive households approved between 1 January and 31 December, split by age range approval

		number of new households	approved to adopt children in the age range:							
			less than two years old		two years old or more but less than six		six years old or more but less than 11		11 years old or more	
2017	Local authority	229	128	56%	125	55%	28	12%	6	3%
	Independent	88	17	19%	73	83%	16	18%	0	0%
	Total	317	145	46%	198	62%	44	14%	6	2%
2016	Local authority	244	129	53%	138	57%	27	11%	<5	<1%
	Independent	82	41	50%	63	77%	12	15%	0	0%
	Total	326	170	52%	201	62%	39	12%	<5	<1%
2015	Local authority	252	104	41%	134	53%	22	9%	<5	<1%
	Independent	103	37	36%	85	83%	10	10%	0	0%
	Total	355	141	40%	219	62%	32	9%	<5	<1%

1 Values with fewer than five observations have been removed and replaced with "<5" and "<1%". These revised values have been excluded from any totals and subtotals.

Sibling groups

Of the 317 new adoptive households, just over a quarter (28%) were approved to adopt sibling groups of two children. Broken down by sector – a quarter of local authority approved adoptive households and a third of the independently approved adoptive households were permitted to adopt sibling groups of two. A very small number of households were approved to adopt sibling groups of three children. No households were approved for sibling groups of more than three children.

Table 27. Number of new adoptive households approved between 1 January and 31 December, split by sibling group approval

		sibling group of two children / young people		sibling group of three children / young people		sibling group of more than three children / young people	
2017	Local authority	59	26%	<5	<5%	0	0%
	Independent	30	34%	<5	<5%	0	0%
	Total	89	28%	<5	<5%	0	0%
2016	Local authority	50	20%	<5	<5%	0	0%
	Independent	28	34%	<5	<5%	0	0%
	Total	78	24%	<5	<5%	0	0%
2015	Local authority	63	25%	5	2%	0	0%
	Independent	33	32%	<5	<5%	0	0%
	Total	96	27%	5	2%	0	0%

1 Values with fewer than five observations have been removed and replaced with "<5" and "<1%". These revised values have been excluded from any totals and subtotals.

At the 31 December 2017, 215 households, across 34 adoption services, were waiting for children to be placed. The majority of households (74%) that were waiting for children to be placed were local authority ones - 159 adoptive households across 29 local authorities. Fifty-six households across all of the five independent services were waiting for a child to be placed.

Table 28. Number of adoptive households, at 31 December 2017, that were waiting for children to be placed

		number of households	% of total	number of services
2017	Local authority	159	74%	29
	Independent	56	26%	5
	Total	215	100%	34
2016	Local authority	155	76%	
	Independent	50	24%	
	Total	205	100%	
2015	Local authority	142	72%	
	Independent	54	28%	
	Total	196	100%	

1 Excludes those approved exclusively for inter-country adoptions.

Recruitment

An estimated 771 enquiries from potential adoptive households were received across 30 adoption services between 1 January and 30 June 2017; 18% of these progressed to applications to become an adoptive household of which 37% were approved. Whilst a higher proportion of enquiries received by local authority services led to applications (24%) compared to the proportion received by independent services (13%), independent services had a higher rate of successful applications (in that more become approved adoptive households) – 56% compared to 25% of applications considered by local authority services.

Table 29. Recruitment of adoptive households, showing approximate numbers of enquiries received, applications received and applications approved between 1 January and 30 June.

		enquiries	applications	Approvals	% of enquiries to applications	% of applications approved	services with enquiries
2017	Local authority	372	89	23	24%	26%	27
	Independent	399	52	29	13%	56%	3
	Total	771	141	52	18%	37%	30
2016	Local authority	520	119	46	23%	39%	
	Independent	465	47	37	10%	79%	
	Total	985	166	83	17%	50%	
2015	Local authority	432	128	35	30%	27%	
	Independent	327	47	28	14%	60%	
	Total	759	175	63	23%	36%	

Children and young people

Children and young people approved for adoption

The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 places a duty on local authorities to provide an adoption service. They are responsible for assessing and making arrangements for children who, as a result of this assessment, require alternative permanent care. Local authorities may, after following robust legal and matching processes, place children with adopters approved by them or by independent adoption services. Local authority and independent adoption services recruit, assess and provide training and support to prospective adopters to ensure that they can meet the needs and provide high quality care to children.

In 2017 there were 375 children approved for adoption (across 30 local authority adoption services), down on the two years previous (from 403 in 2016 (7%) and 510 in 2015 (26%)). Forty-four percent were younger than two years old when they were approved. Almost half

(47%) of the children were age two to five. Eight percent were age six to 10 years old and less than 1% were 11 years or older. These proportions are similar to the years preceding, except for a slight shift in the balance of children younger than years old versus children aged two to five.

Table 30. Number of children approved for adoption¹ by local authority services, between 1 January and 31 December, broken down by the age of the child at the time of approval

		2017	2016	2015
Total number of children approved for adoption		375	403	510
Age less than two years old	number	166	207	269
	% of total	44%	51%	53%
Age two years old or more but less than six	number	175	167	208
	% of total	47%	41%	41%
Age six years old or more but less than 11	number	30	29	33
	% of total	8%	7%	6%
Age 11 years old or more	number	<5	<5	<5
	% of total	<1%	<1%	<1%

1 'Approved for adoption' means that the child has an approved plan for permanence, which recommends adoption. Includes all such children, whether placed or not placed, within the year.

2 Values with fewer than five observations have been removed and replaced with "<5" and "<1%". These revised values have been excluded from any totals and subtotals.

Timescales to approval

Research has found that it is the early stages of care and permanence planning following a child being accommodated that take the longest time in the overall process⁶.

Once it has been identified that a child should be permanently placed away from home, the Adoption and Permanence Panel decide whether to formally recommend adoption.

The table below shows that in 17 local authorities (just over half of all local authorities) there were cases where it took six months or more for this part of the process to be completed. This is down from 23 local authorities in the two years preceding.

Twenty-six local authorities reported that for some cases this part of the process took less than 12 weeks, which is a higher number than in the two preceding years.

⁶ Permanence Planning and Decision Making for Looked After Children in Scotland: Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007, published by the Children's Reporter and Scottish Government, 3 December 2015.

Table 31. Number and percentage of local authority services, by the length of time between agreeing the need for permanence and the adoption panel approving the child for adoption

		2017	2016	2015
Less than three months weeks	number	26	16	17
	%	87%	50%	53%
Three months or more, but less than six months	number	24	25	28
	%	80%	78%	88%
Six months or more	number	17	23	23
	%	57%	72%	72%

Children and young people approved and placed with families

In 2017, 352 children were placed with their new adoptive family (across 30 local authority adoption services). This includes children approved for adoption in 2017 or in the previous year(s). The number of children placed is down 3% from 362 in 2016. Forty-three percent (151) of the placements were interagency.⁷

The Adoption and Permanence Panel find a 'match' to the child in terms of who their long-term carer should be. The table below shows that in 17 local authority services there were some cases that took less than three months to match a child with a family; however, in 18 local authority services there were some cases that took 12 months or more to match a child.

Where cases took longer than 12 months, services reported in their annual return the following reasons: Timescales for interagency adoptions are longer; complex history/needs of child and the legal situation made it difficult to match with a family; adopters withdrawing due to length of time of legal process; legal barriers; keeping sibling groups together.

Table 32. Number and percentage of local authority services, split by length of time placements took from registration at panel to matching at panel, in the year ending 31 December

		2017	2016	2015
Less than three months to match a child with a family	number	17	12	14
	%	57%	38%	44%
Three months or more but less than six months to match a child with a family	number	18	15	17
	%	60%	47%	53%
Six months or more but less than 12 months to match a child with a family	number	21	15	15
	%	70%	47%	47%
Twelve months or more to match a child with a family	number	18	15	16
	%	60%	47%	50%

⁷ The way this is reported this year is different from the way we reported on it in the Fostering and Adoption 2016/17 statistical bulletin due to changes in the way we interpreted the annual return data submitted by services.

Children and young people adopted

In 2017, 328 children were legally adopted across 27 local authority services, up slightly on the two years preceding (309 in 2016 and 276 children in 2015).

This is lower than the 527 adoptions reported in the National Records for Scotland's (NRS) Vital Events Reference Tables 2017. The difference is due to the way in which the statistics are compiled. NRS include in their count children adopted by step-parents which are not included in the Care Inspectorate figures because this type of adoption does not involve a registered adoption agency. NRS also count adoptions on the basis of the date on which they register the adoption, after receiving an Adoption Order from the court whereas the Care Inspectorate data is based on an aggregation of values submitted by individual services in answer to the question "How many children were adopted between 1 January and 31 December (meaning through an order by a court, transferring parental rights and responsibilities)".

The Scottish Government reported in their [Children's Social Work Statistics 2016-17](#) report that during 1 August 2016 and 31 July 2017, 367 children ceased to be 'looked after' by the local authority because they were adopted.

All three sources show a pattern of an increase over time in the number of children being adopted.

The table below shows that in 19 local authority services (70% of the services that completed adoptions) for some cases the time between placement with an adoptive family and granting the full adoption order was less than six months, however in 25 local authority services (93%) some cases took between six and 12 months to grant the full order and 24 services (89%) had cases that took longer than 12 months for the full adoption order to be granted.

Table 33. Total number of children adopted between 1 January and 31 December, and the number and percentage of services by the length of time between placement and granting of full adoption order

		2017	2016	2015
Total number of children adopted		328	309	276
Services where there were placements that took:				
Less than six months to grant the full adoption order	Number	19	13	17
	%	70%	41%	53%
Between six and 12 months to grant the full adoption order	Number	25	24	28
	%	93%	75%	88%
More than 12 months to grant the full adoption order	Number	24	21	24
	%	89%	66%	75%

Children and young people awaiting placement

At the 31 December 2017 there were 217 children across 26 services that had been approved for adoption and were waiting to be matched with approved adopters (down 5% from 228 in 2016). A quarter – 54 children – had been waiting for over one year, the same as the previous year.

Of the 217 children waiting to be matched 43% were part of a sibling group (94 children across 48 sibling groups). This is similar to the two years prior.

Table 34. Numbers of children approved for adoption waiting to be matched with approved adopters at 31 December, the number that were part of a sibling group that services were trying to keep together, and the number that had been waiting for over one year

		2017	2016	2015
Total number of children approved and waiting		217	228	210
Waiting and are part of a sibling group	number	94	90	86
	per 100 children waiting	43%	39%	41%
Total number of sibling groups waiting		48	45	42
Waiting for over one year	number	54	57	41
	per 100 children waiting	25%	25%	20%

1 'Approved' means that the child has an approved plan for permanence which recommends adoption

2 'Matched' refers to the making of a recommendation by the adoption panel.

3 Services were instructed to count children individually, so two children who are siblings were counted as two.

We asked local authority services about the ages of the children who were waiting to be matched. The figures for 2017 were very similar to the previous years. The table below shows that seventeen local authority services (53% of all local authorities) had children waiting to be matched who were less than two years old, 24 (75%) had children who were between two and five years old; 14 (44%) had children who were aged six to 10 years old and no local authorities had children waiting to be matched with an adoptive family who were age 11 or older.

Table 35. Number and percentage of services with children waiting to be matched, split by the age category of the children

		2017	2016	2015
Less than two years old	number	17	16	16
	%	53%	50%	50%
Two or over but under six years old	number	24	24	24
	%	75%	75%	75%
Six or over but under 11 years old	number	14	13	9
	%	44%	41%	28%
Eleven years old or over	number	0	0	0
	%	0%	0%	0%

1 'Matched' refers to the making of a recommendation by the adoption panel.

Adoptions that break-down

In 2017, 16 adoptions broke-down (disrupted) across 10 local authority services before the adoption order was granted. These breakdowns took place in placements where the child and the adoptive family were approved by the same service. There were less than five adoptions by households approved by independent services that broke-down.

Less than five adoptions broke-down (disrupted) in local authority adoptive households after the adoption order was granted.

Table 36. Adoption breakdowns between 1 January and 31 December, by timing of placement and type of placement

		2017	2016	2015
Before adoption order was granted	in households approved by placing local authority	16	17	14
	in LA households approved by another local authority	0	<5	<5
	in households approved by independent services	<5	<5	<5
After the adoption order was granted	in households approved by placing local authority	<5	7	5
	in LA households approved by another local authority	<5	<5	<5
	in households approved by independent services	0	0	0
Total	in households approved by placing local authority	16	24	19
	in LA households approved by another local authority	0	<5	<5
	in households approved by independent services	0	0	0

1 Values with fewer than five observations have been removed and replaced with "<5". These revised values have been excluded from the overall total.

Other services

Post-adoption support

Local authorities have a duty to provide post-adoption support to families who adopt and children who are adopted. They also have a duty to provide support and guidance to adult adoptees who wish to obtain their birth records.

Adoption service reported that, in 2017, they provided 2,717 households with post-adoption support, very similar to the 2016 figure (2,716 households). Local authority services provided support to 2,069 households, whilst independent services provided support to 648 households, post-adoption.

Services outside Scotland

There were 13 children from elsewhere in the UK placed in adoptive households in Scotland in 2017, up 117% from six in 2016, and 31 children placed elsewhere in the UK by Scottish local authorities (up 11% from 28 in 2016).

Table 37. Number of children from elsewhere in the UK placed in adoptive households in Scotland and the numbers of children from Scotland placed in adoptive households elsewhere in the UK, between 1 January and 31 December

	2017	2016	2015
Placed in Scotland from elsewhere in the UK	13	6	7
Placed elsewhere in the UK by Scottish local authorities	31	28	33

Adoption service evaluation

Adoption services are graded by our inspectors, using a six-point scale, across three quality themes – Care and Support, Staffing, and Management and Leadership. Information on the evaluation criteria can be found in the document: [How we inspect](#).

The following grading information is correct for fostering services as of 31 March 2018.

Overall the quality of adoption services was high. At 31 March 2018, all of the adoption services registered with the Care Inspectorate had been inspected and 97% of these services had evaluations of ‘good’ or better across all quality themes. No services were evaluated as ‘adequate’ or lower across all quality themes. Furthermore, 45% were evaluated as ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’ across all quality themes. This grading profile is very similar to the previous year.

Table 38. Overview of adoption service grades at 31 March 2018, split by sector

	Local authority		Independent		Total	
	number of services	% of all graded services	number of services	% of all graded services	number of services	% of all graded services
Grades of very good and excellent for all quality themes	14	44%	3	50%	17	45%
Grades of good or better for all quality themes	31	97%	6	100%	37	97%
Grades of adequate or lower for at least one quality theme	1	3%	0	0%	1	3%
Grades of adequate or lower for all quality themes	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

A breakdown of grades for each quality theme is provided in the tables below.

The grading profile of adoption services for the quality theme Care and Support is very positive, with the majority of services (22 of 38) being evaluated as ‘very good’. Two independent services were evaluated as ‘excellent’. One local authority service was rated ‘adequate’ for Care and Support (down from an evaluation of ‘good’ the previous year).

For the quality theme staffing, one independent service was evaluated as ‘excellent’; and another was rated ‘excellent’ for management and leadership.

All 32 local authority adoption services were evaluated 'good' or 'very good' for staffing and for management and leadership 31 were evaluated 'good' or 'very good' and one 'excellent'.

Table 39. Breakdown of grades given for quality theme Care and Support, at 31 March 2018

	Local authority		Independent	
	number of services	% of all graded services	number of services	% of all graded services
Unsatisfactory	0	0%	0	0%
Weak	0	0%	0	0%
Adequate	1	3%	0	0%
Good	12	38%	1	17%
Very Good	19	59%	3	50%
Excellent	0	0%	2	33%

Table 40. Breakdown of grades given for quality theme Staffing, at 31 March 2018

	Local authority		Independent	
	number of services	% of all graded services	number of services	% of all graded services
Unsatisfactory	0	0%	0	0%
Weak	0	0%	0	0%
Adequate	0	0%	0	0%
Good	13	41%	1	17%
Very Good	19	59%	4	67%
Excellent	0	0%	1	17%

Table 41. Breakdown of grades given for quality theme Management & Leadership, at 31 March 2018

	Local authority		Independent	
	number of services	% of all graded services	number of services	% of all graded services
Unsatisfactory	0	0%	0	0%
Weak	0	0%	0	0%
Adequate	0	0%	0	0%
Good	14	44%	3	50%
Very Good	17	53%	2	33%
Excellent	1	3%	1	17%

Summary of adoption

In 2017, there were 317 new adoptive households approved, down 3% from 326 in 2016, and 11% from 355 in 2015. The majority of services (82%) approved some of their new households within six months, up from 66% in 2016. Almost half took a year or more to approve some households.

As was the case in 2016, the new adoptive households were mainly approved to adopt younger children; 3% (all local authority) were approved to adopt children age 11 years or older. Whilst there were no new adoptive households approved for sibling groups of more than three children, 28% were approved to adopt sibling groups of two or three children.

In 2017 there were 375 children approved for adoption, the vast majority (91%) were younger than six years old. The number approved for adoption has fallen in each of the last two years, by 7% from 403 in 2016 and by 26% from 510 in 2015.

At the 31 December 2017, there were 217 children across 26 services that had been approved for adoption and were waiting to be matched with approved adopters. A quarter had been waiting for over one year.

Also in 2017 there were 352 children placed with their new adoptive families (having been approved for adoption), down very slightly from 362 in the two years previous.

Whilst the number of children approved for adoption has decreased over the past 2 years, the number of children legally adopted has risen - from 276 in 2015, to 309 in 2016 to 328 in 2017.

Throughout 2017, sixteen adoptions broke-down (disrupted) before the adoption order was granted. There were less than five break-downs involving households approved by independent services. A very small number of adoptions broke-down after the adoption order was granted (less than five).

Despite the challenges faced by adoption services, quality continues to be high across the country. At 31 March 2018, all of the adoption services registered with the Care Inspectorate had been inspected and 97% of these services were evaluated as 'good' or better across all quality themes. No services were evaluated as 'adequate' or lower across all quality themes.

Headquarters

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY
Tel: 01382 207100
Fax: 01382 207289

Website: www.careinspectorate.gov.scot
Email: enquiries@careinspectorate.gov.scot
Care Inspectorate Enquiries: 0345 600 9527

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