

**Commenting on figures showing the arrangements made for children looked after by local authorities, Matt Dunkley, President of ADCS, said:**

“More children coming into care puts pressure on the resources available to support these vulnerable children and local authorities will be seeking permanent and stable alternatives for care wherever this is appropriate. Anecdotally local authorities are applying for more adoption orders in the last year in order to achieve this. This may not be reflected in the figures for the number of adoption orders this year due to the delays within the court system meaning that such decisions can take over a year to be made.”

“Adoption is not the only option and sometimes is not the best one for a particular child – staying with family or friends can reduce the turmoil in these children’s lives. These alternatives have only been available for a few years and are increasingly being used by local authorities to offer a stable placement.

We agree that there are changes required to the adoption process to speed up the recruitment and matching of vulnerable children with potential adopters, as well as the decision that children should be put up for adoption, but not at the expense of depth and quality of decisions that risks adoption breakdown. These delays are as much a consequence of the court system that demands expert witnesses and endless assessments as it is about problems in local authorities, where we acknowledge there is some variable practice. We look forward to working with government on how the whole system can be improved, and have hopes that the Family Justice Review will confirm its interim recommendations about reform of the court process.”

**Notes to editors:**

- 1) The statistics on looked after children can be found here:  
<http://www.education.gov.uk/researchandstatistics/datasets/a00195071/children-looked-after-by-local-authorities-in-engl>

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