

New statistics obtained from DCFS and released by John Hemming MP, Chairman of Justice for Families show that 60% of the numbers of children under 5 taken into care are now adopted.

"The system", he said, "is supposed to try to reunite families rather than simply drive towards adoption. However, in 2006 4,160 children under 5 were taken into care and 2,490 were adopted. There will be a small number that have not been adopted at that time and remain in care for a while. That means that the 60% figure is in fact an under estimate rather than an over estimate as the lag is in the numbers adopted."

"Looking at individual cases," he said, "it is clear that the government's forced adoption machine is substantially a one way conveyor belt. We know of a number of miscarriages of justice like the Webster Case in Norfolk where children are wrongly taken off their parents. With these figures it is not surprising that children are taken into care because of the demand for young children to adopt. The comparable figures for 1995 were 910 children adopted and 2870 taken into care. This gives an adoption ratio of 32%.

"The error the government have made," he said, "was to look at the proportion of children in care at any one time that get adopted. There are two problems with this. Firstly, children that are taken into care do not get adopted (and should not get adopted) that quickly when the parents are fighting to keep them. Secondly, there are larger numbers of children that it is very difficult to get adopted and adoptions normally fail with older children so it is an error to attempt to force adoptions of 10 year olds."

"It has taken me a few months to get figures from the DfES as to how many children are actually taken into care (the flows) rather than numbers that are actually in care. However, I have now got figures for 1995 and 2006. The really disturbing trend is in the large numbers of newborn babies taken into care. I am aware of cases where babies are put in care because their mothers might get post natal depression. This is simply an evil way of working. We do need to think first of the children and their wider families rather than responding to the government's demand for more and more adoptions. England and Wales (and probably Northern Ireland, but not Scotland) have struck out in a way which is alien to human nature. This needs to come to an end."

"I regret the government's decision to increase the secrecy in the Family Courts. These statistics and the reported cases clearly demonstrate the need for more scrutiny rather than less."

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