APPG on Adoption and Fostering
16th October 2012

The Recruitment Challenge in Adoption: What the statistical data really tells us

Overview

- Data must be seen in context or it will be misunderstood
- We need to understand what we are looking at
- We need to notice local and regional variation
- Triangulation is vital
- How data can help with the recruitment challenge

Data must be seen in context or it will be misunderstood

Looked after children adopted during the year ending 31 March 2011

Source: Westminster Government

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Looked after children adopted during the year ending 31 March
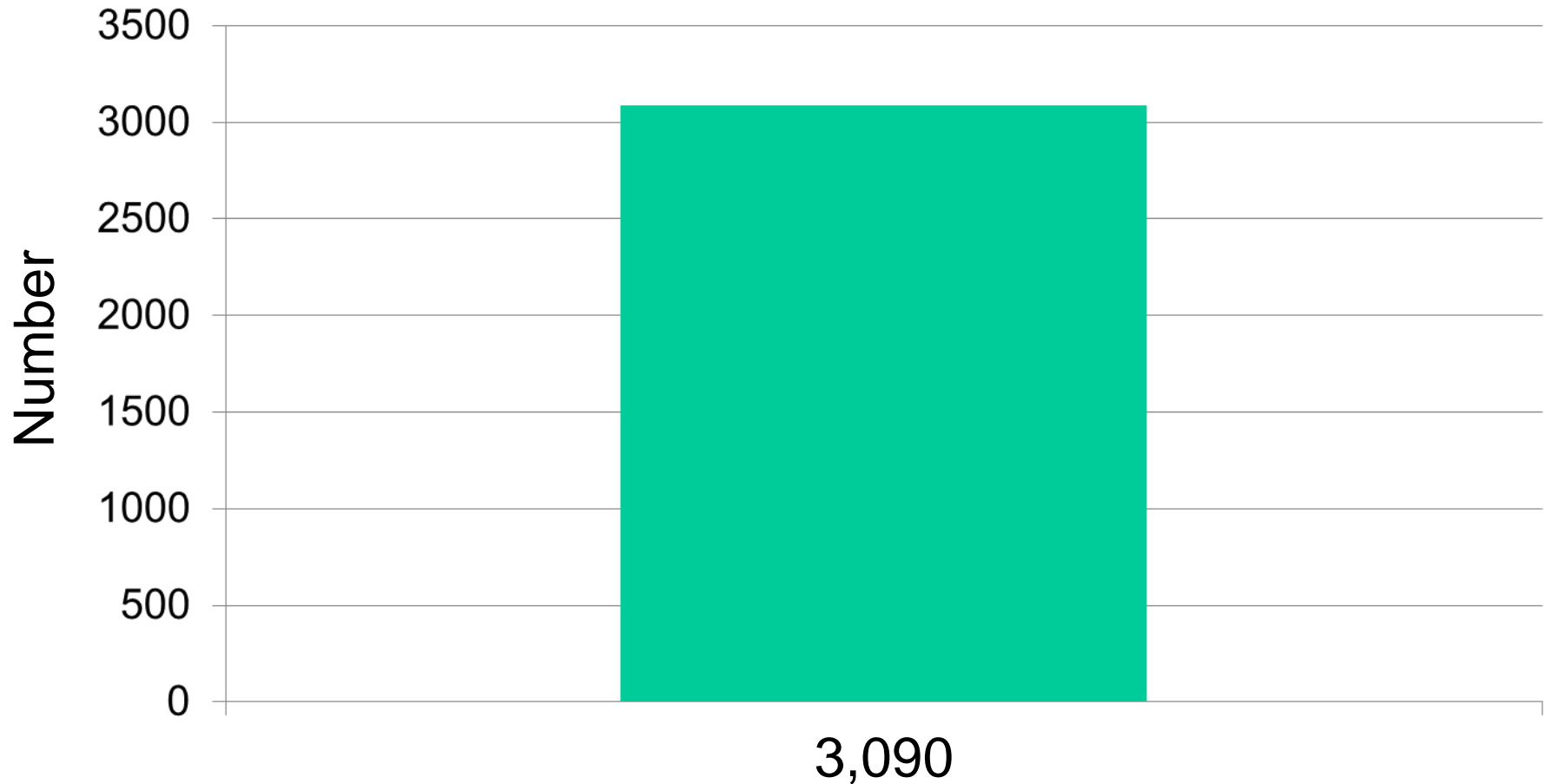
Source: Westminster Government

Looked after children adopted during the year ending 31 March

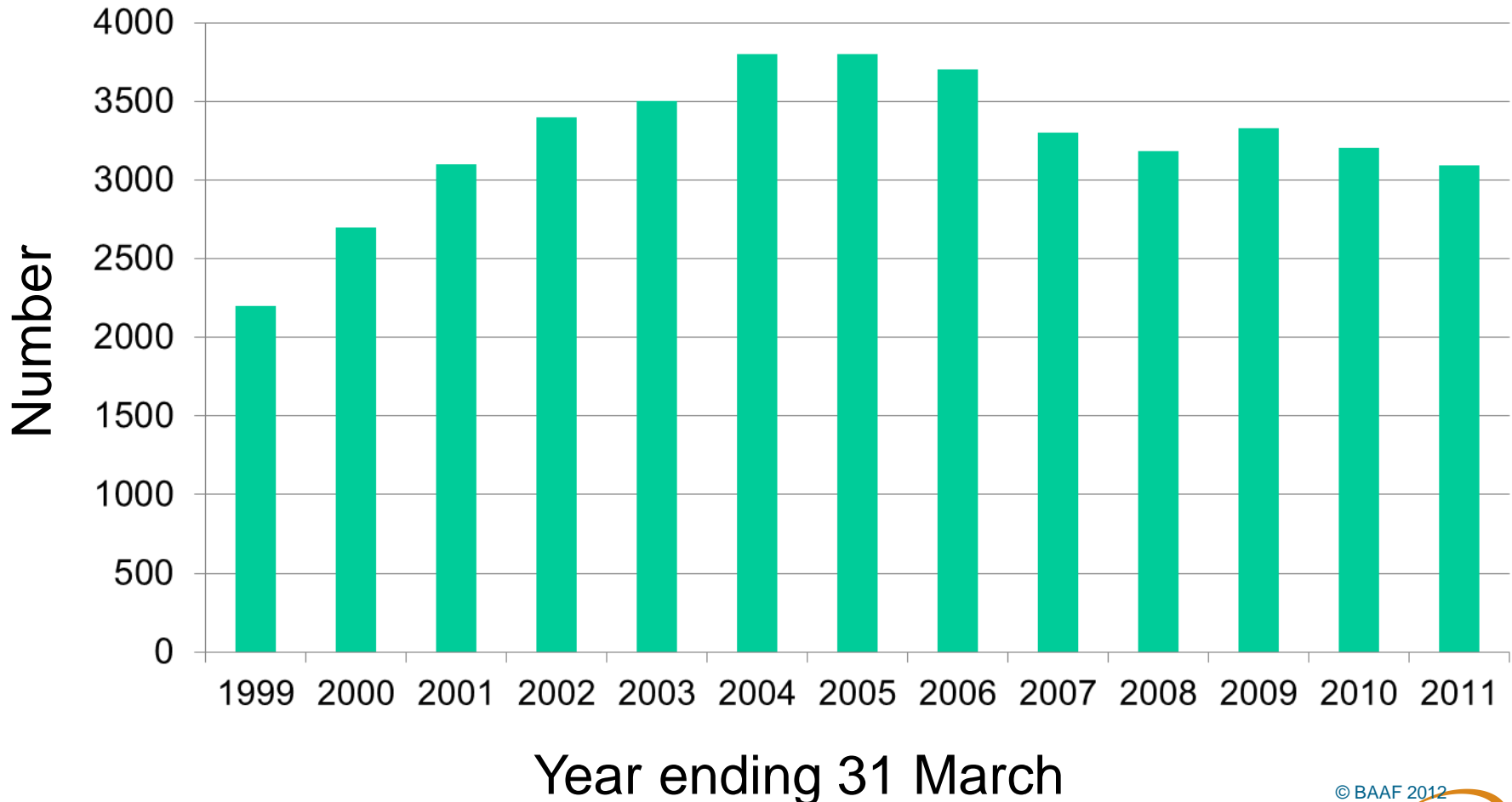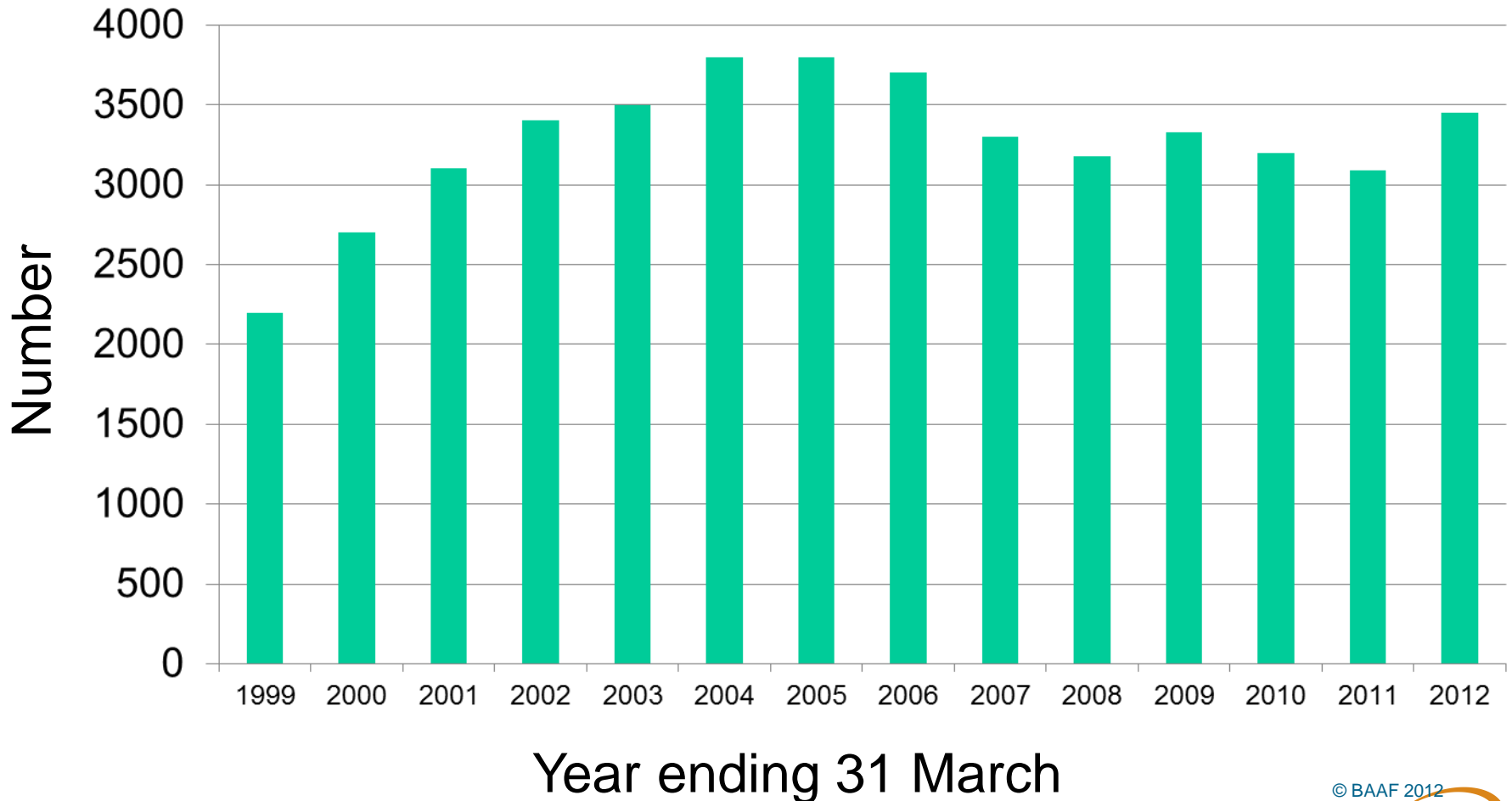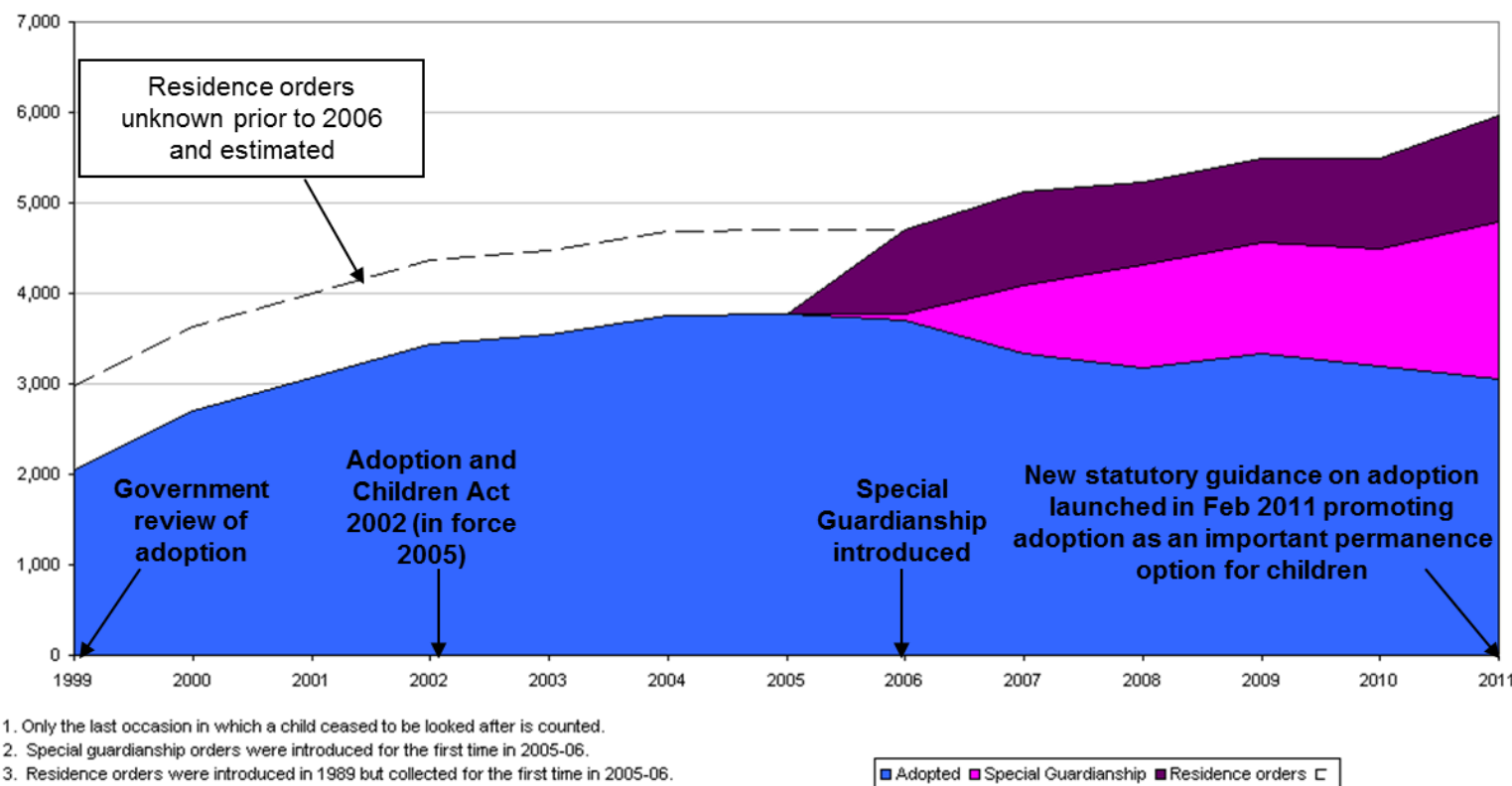Source: Westminster Government

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Looked after children adopted during the year ending 31 March

Source: Westminster Government

Since 1999 the number of children adopted from care has increased. But adoption numbers have fallen in recent years. Since the introduction of special guardianship and residence orders, the combined numbers leaving care for adoption, special guardianship and residence orders are currently at their highest ever level.

Children who ceased to be looked after through adoption[1], special guardianship[2] and residence orders[3] - 1999 to 2011

Residence orders unknown prior to 2006 and estimated

Government review of adoption

Adoption and Children Act 2002 (in force 2005)

Special Guardianship introduced

New statutory guidance on adoption launched in Feb 2011 promoting adoption as an important permanence option for children

1. Only the last occasion in which a child ceased to be looked after is counted.
2. Special guardianship orders were introduced for the first time in 2005-06.
3. Residence orders were introduced in 1989 but collected for the first time in 2005-06.

Adopted Special Guardianship Residence orders

Source:
Westminster
Government

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We need to understand what we are looking at

Discussion

- Adoption is increasing (12% up on 2010/2011 figures)

- So is the number of children in care (up 2% over 2010/2011 figures and note a 10% increase in under 1s coming into care over the last year)

- Most commonly quoted data is Adoption Orders made in the previous statistical year

- Adoption Orders are made on average 9 months after the child is placed for adoption

Example

- Child A comes in to care in December 2009
  - Plan for adoption agreed by the 4 month review in in April 2010.
  - Placement Order granted in January 2011 (assumes standard 55 week court process).
  - LA then takes 4 months to find a family.
  - Match goes to panel in June 2011, introductions follow and child moves into new adoptive family in July 2011.
  - Family applies for Adoption Order after child has lived with them for 4 months (November 2011).
  - Adoption Order eventually granted by court in April 2012 (9 months is the average gap between being placed and order being granted).
  - This child's adoption will appear in the 2012/2013 statistics but the adoption plan was made in the 2009/2010 statistical year and the placement in the 2011/2012 statistical year.

So…..
We must always look at the number of children placed for adoption as well as the number of children who are the subject of adoption orders

Children looked after at 31 March placed for adoption

Source: Westminster Government

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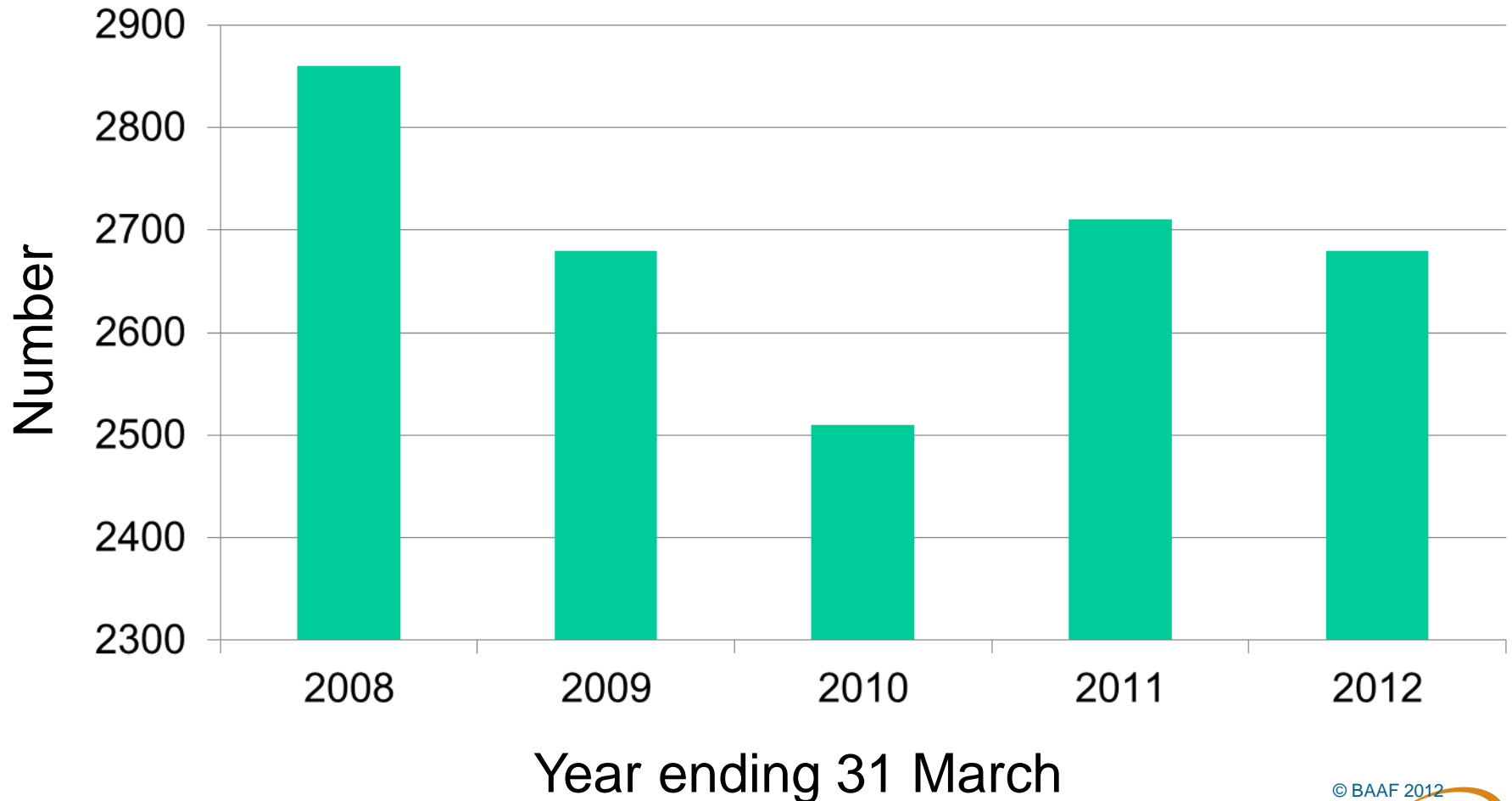
Commentary

- Is the decrease in children placed for adoption in 2011/2012 significant?

- Can we expect further increases in the numbers of children adopted (i.e. with adoption orders) in 2012/2013?

- Does the data give us any clues?

We need to notice local and regional variation

Local trends

Local Authority	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
Durham	40	35	15	30	35
Redcar & Cleveland	10	10	10	10	15
Bury	25	10	15	10	10
Liverpool	20	35	45	40	35
Leeds	65	60	75	60	50
York	10	10	10	10	20
Birmingham	65	70	85	70	85
Essex	75	65	45	55	45
Newham	25	30	45	20	30
East Sussex	45	35	15	30	35

Regional trends

Region	2006/2007	2010/2011
North East	240	240 (static)
North West	490	510 (4% increase)
Yorks/Humber	390	390 (static)
East Midlands	240	230 (4% decrease)
West Midlands	380	360 (5% decrease)
East of England	380	280 (26% decrease)
Inner London	260	170 (35% decrease)
Outer London	230	220 (4% decrease)
South East	430	370 (14% decrease)
South West	300	270 (10% decrease)
National figures	3,330	3,050

Source: Table LAEI Years ending 31 March 2007 – 2011, DfE

Commentary

- Huge variation at local level year by year – what does this tell us?

- Regional trends do not always follow national trends

- The perils of small volumes and data volatility
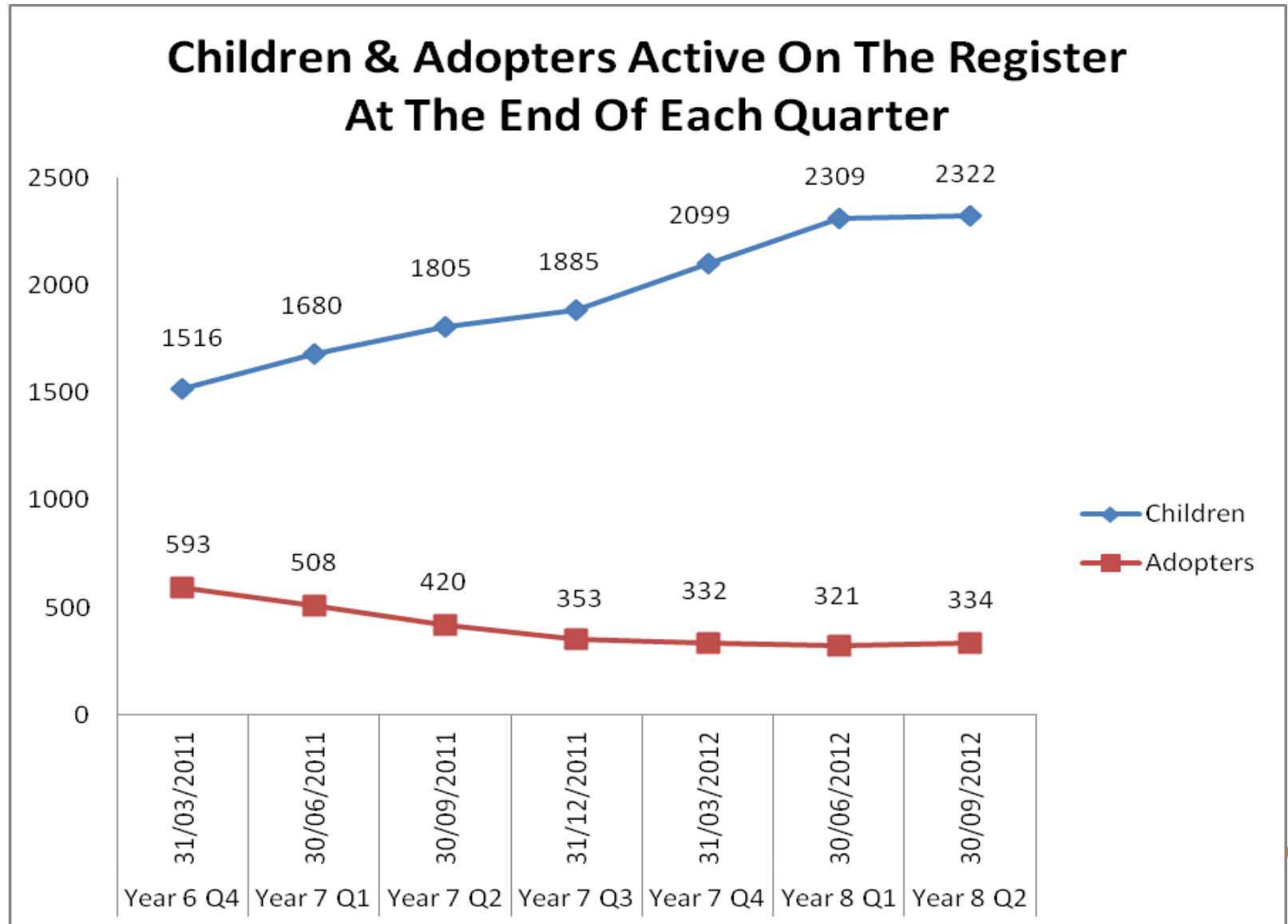
Triangulation is vital

So…

- We have seen the limitation of only focusing on adoption orders

- We understand the need to look at numbers of children placed for adoption too

- We have factored in other routes to permanence

- What else should we be looking at?

- Department for Education now starting to collect adopter level data via a quarterly survey – shows e.g. numbers of adopters in system at different stages

- The Adoption Register also contains important national level data about approved prospective adopters waiting and children waiting

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# Trends seen by the Adoption Register

- Increase in number of children - 70% over past 2 years

- Decrease in number of adopters - 35% in past 2 years

- Change in special needs of children referred

- Situation of sibling groups

- Adopters in demand

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Variance between families available and children

Children & Adopters Active On The Register At The End Of Each Quarter

	Year 6 Q4	Year 7 Q1	Year 7 Q2	Year 7 Q3	Year 7 Q4	Year 8 Q1	Year 8 Q2
Date	31/03/2011	30/06/2011	30/09/2011	31/12/2011	31/03/2012	30/06/2012	30/09/2012
Children	1516	1680	1805	1885	2099	2309	2322
Adopters	593	508	420	353	332	321	334

What happens if we look at numbers of children with placement orders too?

The number of looked after children placed for adoption and on a placement order and the number adopted during the year ending 31 March
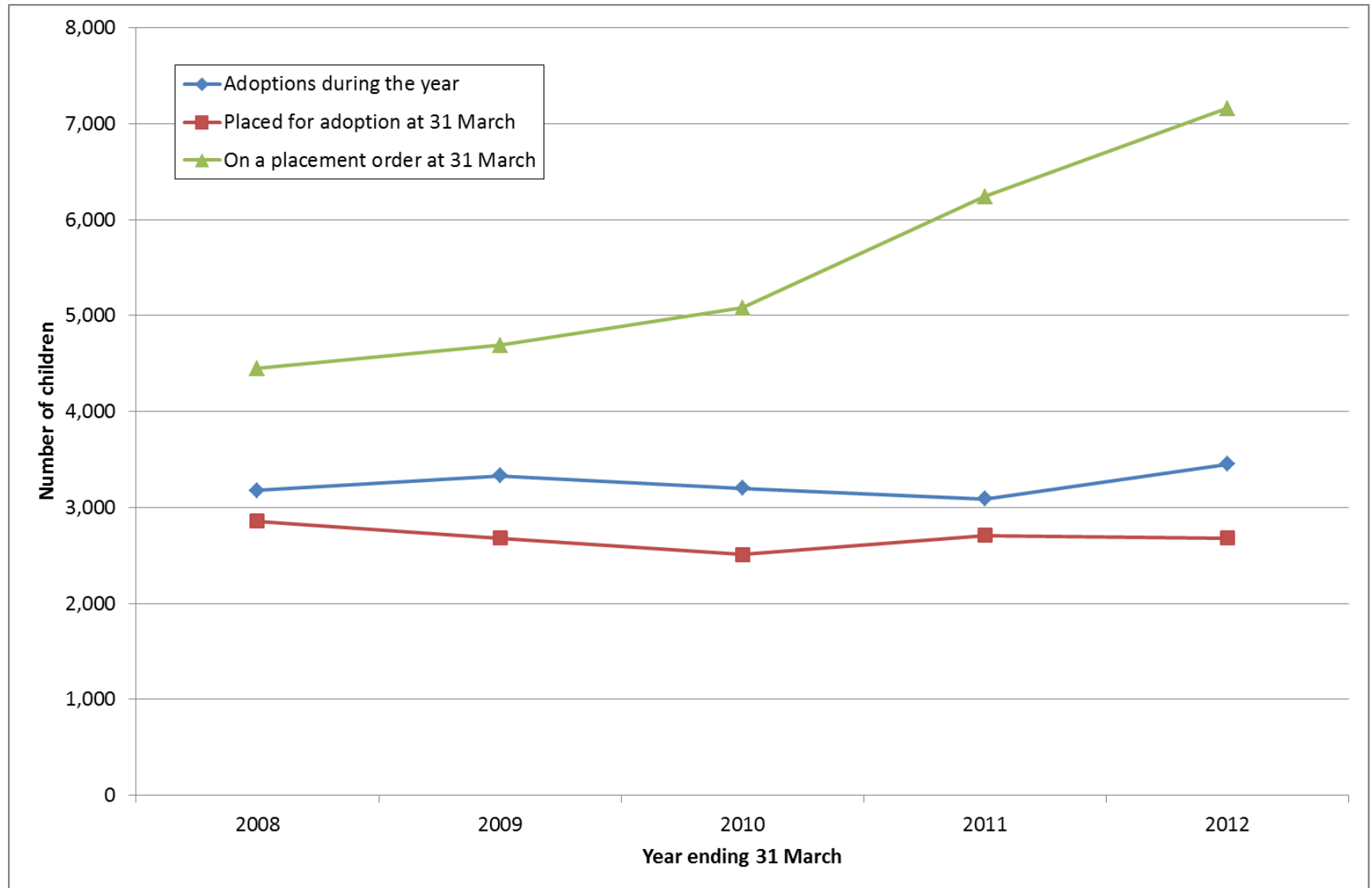
- Note a 10% increase in number of children with a Placement Order in a single year
- 7,160 children currently have a Placement Order
- What would happen to the adoption statistics if all these children were placed for adoption?
- What would it take to place all these children for adoption?
- What does this mean for recruitment strategy?
- What does this mean for the adoption workforce?

How data can help with the recruitment challenge

- The data evidences the recruitment crisis in adoption but also the workforce challenge for the system to assess, approve, match and support more adopters
- Need to accelerate the recruitment, assessment and approval of adopters to meet demand
- Need to recruit to address both "stock" and "flow" issues in adoption
- We can use data both to evidence need and focus our efforts
- Huge opportunity to achieve permanence for thousands more children