



Office for Health
Improvement
& Disparities

Child development outcomes at 2 to 2½ years (Experimental Statistics)

2020/2021 Annual Data Statistical Commentary (November 2021)

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Main findings

The proportion of children at or above the expected level in all 5 areas of development in England for 2020/2021 is 82.9% (with confidence intervals 82.7% - 83.0%). This is lower than 2019/2020, based on the final figures published in February 2021.

The proportion of children at or above the expected level in all five areas of development at a PHE Centre level can be published for all PHE Centres.

The proportion of children at or above the expected level in all 5 areas of development can be published for 135 local authorities with complete submissions, and percentages range from 38.8 to 94.6%.

This statistical commentary should be considered alongside the [data tables: child development outcomes at 2 to 2 and a half years, 2020 to 2021](#).

Please treat the figures with caution: where totals are presented for England and PHE centres, these are aggregate totals of the areas that submitted information and passed initial validation.

Indicator	Quarter 1 2020/2021	Quarter 2 2020/2021	Quarter 3 2020/2021	Quarter 4 2020/2021	2020/2021 annual data
C6iii: children who were at or above the expected level in communication skills %	87.2% (87.0 - 87.4)	86.0% (85.8 - 86.2)	87.2% (87.0 - 87.4)	86.8% (86.6 - 87.0)	86.8% (86.7 - 86.9)
C6iv: children who were at or above the expected level in gross motor skills %	91.6% (91.4 - 91.7)	91.7% (91.5 - 91.9)	91.8% (91.6 - 92.0)	92.1% (91.9 - 92.3)	91.8% (91.7 - 91.8)
C6v: children who were at or above the expected level in fine motor skills %	92.2% (92.1 - 92.4)	92.0% (91.8 - 92.1)	91.8% (91.6 - 92.0)	92.1% (92.0 - 92.3)	92.0% (92.0 - 92.1)
C6vi: children who were at or above the expected level in problem solving skills %	92.1% (91.9 - 92.3)	91.8% (91.6 - 92.0)	91.8% (91.6 - 92.0)	92.0% (91.9 - 92.2)	91.9% (91.8 - 92.0)
C6vii: children who were at or above the expected level in personal-social skills %	90.2% (90.1 - 90.4)	90.3% (90.1 - 90.5)	90.2% (90.0 - 90.4)	90.2% (90.0 - 90.4)	90.2% (90.1 - 90.3)
C6viii: children who were at or above the expected level in all five areas of development %	83.3% (83.1 - 83.5)	81.6% (81.3 - 81.9)	82.9% (82.7 - 83.2)	83.6% (83.4 - 83.8)	82.9% (82.7 - 83.0)

Confidence intervals are shown in brackets.

Background

From 2015 all children in England became eligible for a Healthy Child Programme development review, delivered as part of the universal health visitor service, around their second birthday. The Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3) was identified through research to be suitable for generating data for a population measure of child development outcomes and from testing with parents and professionals to be acceptable for use in practice.

ASQ-3 is not a screening tool, but does provide an objective measure of development and allows comparisons to be made helping to identify children who are not developing as expected and supporting decisions on closer monitoring of progress or targeting of services. Dimensions of development which are tested include communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving and personal-social skills.

In October 2015, the responsibility for commissioning children's public health for the 0 to 5 years' population transferred from NHS England to local authorities. To support this transfer, Public Health England established an interim data collection for a number of key performance indicators associated with these services, which it is critical to monitor and report. The strategic reporting solution hosted by NHS Digital, the Community Services Dataset, is collecting relevant data items directly from providers' systems and in time will take on reporting of these indicators. This data, which is intended to support the generation of indicators for the Public Health Outcomes Framework, is continually increasing in coverage and quality.

The information on child development outcomes in this publication has been obtained via the interim reporting system. It was submitted to PHE by local authorities on a voluntary basis. It covers Quarters 1-4 of 2020/2021. The [data tables: child development outcomes at 2 to 2 and a half years, 2020 to 2021](#) contain the full data.

The data on child development outcomes reported here are from supplementary metrics for the number of health visitor reviews completed at 2-2½ years using ASQ-3 (Ages and Stages Questionnaire):

- C6iii: percentage of children who were at or above the expected level in communication skills
- C6iv: percentage of children who were at or above the expected level in gross motor skills
- C6v: percentage of children who were at or above the expected level in fine motor skills

- C6vi: percentage of children who were at or above the expected level in problem solving skills
- C6vii: percentage of children who were at or above the expected level in personal-social skills
- C6viii: percentage of children who were at or above the expected level in all five areas of development

These metrics are presented as management information and are reported by local authority, PHE centre and England level.

The decision has been taken to publish this information as 'experimental statistics' on the basis that they are new statistics which do not meet the data quality standards required of National Statistics.

Data collection method

An interim reporting system is hosted on the Local Government Association (LGA) website to collect the data on health visiting indicators. The data collection window was open between Monday 10 May and Friday 25 June for all quarters of 2020 to 2021. In recognition of the difficulties that local authorities encountered submitting data as they responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, some submissions and amendments were accepted after the deadline so that local authorities were not disadvantaged because of current pressures where they wished to submit data.

To support local authorities in submitting data, [detailed guidance](#) was circulated to explain how analysts and commissioners in local authorities should submit data.

A dedicated mailbox, interimreporting@phe.gov.uk, was also in place to respond to questions and comments.

Once the collection window closes the data received is centrally collated, validated and reported.

Data quality

The following data relates to the whole of 2020/2021 based on the four quarters submitted. Prior to validation, a process of estimation was applied to any local authority data where numerical data were submitted for only 3 quarters in 2020/2021. An annual numerator and denominator were estimated from 'scaling up' the three supplied numerators and denominators.

Validation rules

Local authorities submitting a nil return will be classed as a non-submission.

Areas which submit DK (don't know) for any metric are classed as incomplete submissions and are excluded from the relevant metric.

All complete submissions are included in their respective PHE centre and the England aggregated calculations.

A comprehensive breakdown of the results following the application of the validation can be found in the [data tables: child development outcomes at 2 to 2 and a half years, 2020 to 2021](#).

Summary of 2020/2021 Annual Data

Indicator C6iii: percentage of children who were at or above the expected level in communication skills

The aggregate percentage of children at or above the expected level in communications skills (indicator C6iii) for England for 2020/2021 is 86.8% (with confidence intervals of 86.7% – 86.9%). This is lower than 2019/2020, based on final figures published in February 2021.

Values for percentages of children at or above the expected level in communications skills were published for all PHE centres for 2020/2021. Values ranged from 78.1% to 90.8%.

The percentage of children at or above the expected level in communications skills were published for 136 local authorities with complete submissions. Values ranged from 31.9% to 97.7 %, with the majority (113) reporting between 80% and 100%.

Indicator C6iv: percentage of children who were at or above the expected level in gross motor skills

The aggregate percentage of children at or above the expected level in gross motor skills (indicator C6iv) for England for 2020/2021 is 91.8% (with confidence intervals of 91.7% – 91.8%). This is lower than 2019/2020, based on final figures published in February 2021.

Values for percentages of children at or above the expected level in gross motor skills were published for all PHE centres for 2020/2021. Values ranged from 81.2% to 94.8%.

The percentage of children at or above the expected level in gross motor skills were published for 135 local authorities with complete submissions. Values ranged from 34.4% to 99%, with the majority of areas with complete submissions (123) reporting between 80% and 100%.

Indicator C6v: percentage of children who were at or above the expected level in fine motor skills

The aggregate percentage of children at or above the expected level in fine motor skills (indicator C6v) for England for 2020/2021 is 92% (with confidence intervals of 92% – 92.1%). This is lower than 2019/2020, based on final figures published in February 2021.

Values for percentages of children at or above the expected level in fine motor skills were published for all PHE centres for 2020/2021. Values ranged from 81.4% to 95.9%.

The percentage of children at or above the expected level in fine motor skills were published for 135 local authorities with complete submissions. Values ranged from 35.2% to 99.8%, with the majority of areas with complete submissions (123) reporting between 80% and 100%.

Indicator C6vi: percentage of children who were at or above the expected level in problem solving skills

The aggregate percentage of children at or above the expected level in problem solving skills (indicator C6vi) for England for 2020/2021 is 91.9% (with confidence intervals of 91.8% – 92%). This is lower than 2019/2020, based on final figures published in February 2021.

Values for percentages of children at or above the expected level in problem solving skills were published for all PHE centres for 2020/2021. Values ranged from 81.0% to 95.1%.

The percentage of children at or above the expected level in problem solving skills were published for 135 local authorities with complete submissions. Values ranged from 34.4% to 98.9%, with the majority of areas with complete submissions (125) reporting between 80% and 100%.

Indicator C6vii: percentage of children who were at or above the expected level in personal-social skills

The aggregate percentage of children at or above the expected level in personal-social skills (indicator C6vii) for England for 2020/2021 is 90.2% (with confidence intervals of 90.1% – 90.3%). This is the lower than 2019/2020, based on final figures published in February 2021.

Values for percentages of children at or above the expected level in personal-social skills were published for all PHE centres for 2020/2021. Values ranged from 73.9% to 93.8%.

The percentage of children at or above the expected level in problem solving skills were published for 135 local authorities with complete submissions. Values ranged from 6.1% to 100%, with the majority of areas with complete submissions (124) reporting between 80% and 100%.

Indicator C6viii: percentage of children who were at or above the expected level in all five areas of development

The aggregate percentage of children at or above the expected level in all five areas of development (indicator C6viii) for England for 2020/2021 is 82.9% (with confidence

intervals of 82.7% – 83.0%). This is lower than 2019/2020, based on final figures published in February 2021.

Values for percentages of children at or above the expected level in all five areas of development were published for all PHE centres for 2020/2021. Values ranged from 79.6% to 87.2%.

The percentage of children at or above the expected level in all five areas of development were published for 135 local authorities with complete submissions. Values ranged from 38.8% to 94.6%, with the majority of areas with complete submissions (91) reporting between 80% and 100%.

Data quality notes

When making a submission, local authorities have the opportunity to enter comments in a free text box to explain any issues with reporting. Many local authorities also used this route to make PHE aware of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the service and on their data.

During the submission of 2020 to 2021 data, comments were received from 11 local authorities related to child development outcomes. Five local authorities provided general comments, six commented on the impact of the pandemic, and one comment could not be categorised in this way.

On the impact of the pandemic, four local authorities stated that the pandemic had affected their ability to collect or report ASQ scores, with an additional comment about inability to collect ASQ scores which, from the detail given, could not necessarily be attributed to the pandemic. Two local authorities said that the delivery of reviews had reduced or been delayed as a result of the pandemic, with an impact on ASQ. Three local authorities who had described difficulties stated that they had or soon expected to be back to normal operational levels. For one local authority, the transfer of IT systems was delayed due to staff needing to prioritise Covid-19 work.

In general, three local authorities said they had had problems reconciling data, or had experienced problems with data quality, and two had experienced problems relating to implementing new IT systems.

Data quality has improved in 2020/2021 compared to 2019/2020. 136 local authorities submitted sufficient quarterly data to calculate at least one annual indicator in 2020/2021, compared to 130 in 2019/2020.

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