



Department  
for Education

# **Provision for children under five years of age in England: January 2017**

**Technical document**

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# 1. Background

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## Overview of the data collection

The data sources for this publication are the early years census, the school census and the school level annual school census. All schools, and all private, voluntary, and independent (PVI) providers receiving government funding, are required to make (through their local authority) a child-level return. These data collections are on a statutory basis through legislation, which helps ensure complete and accurate information being returned.

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## Entitlement to funded early education places

All 4-year-olds have been entitled to a funded early education place since 1998 and in 2004 this was extended to all 3-year-olds. From September 2013, the entitlement to 15 hours of funded early education per week for 38 weeks of the year was extended to 2-year-olds meeting the following eligibility criteria:

1. They have a parent in receipt of:
  - Income Support;
  - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA);
  - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA);
  - Support through part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act;
  - The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit;
  - Child Tax Credit (but not Working Tax Credit) and have an annual gross income not exceeding £16,190 as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs; or
  - The Working Tax Credit 4-week run on (the payment someone receives for a further four weeks after they stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit).
2. Or they are looked after by a local authority

From September 2014 the entitlement to 15 hours of funded early education per week for 38 weeks of the year was extended further to 2-year-olds who met the following eligibility criteria:

- they have a parent in receipt of Working Tax Credits and have an annual gross income not exceeding £16,190 a year as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs;
  - they have a current statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education, Health and Care plan;
  - they are entitled to Disability Living Allowance; or
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- they are no longer looked after by the local authority, as a result of an adoption order, a special guardianship order or a child arrangements order which specifies with whom the child lives.

More information is included in the [statutory guidance for local authorities](#).

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## 2. Methodology

Data is loaded into the Department for Education's (DfE's) bespoke data collection system: COLLECT (Collections On-Line for Learning, Education, Children and Teachers).

### 2.1 Data cleaning

COLLECT has built-in validation rules which flag up data which is invalid or the quality is questionable. This allows local authorities to identify errors and clean the data before they submit it to DfE. Validation rules can either be errors (data is invalid) or queries (data quality is questionable but could be accurate in certain circumstances).

Local authorities are encouraged to clean all errors and double-check data where queries are flagged. Notes can be added to their return if there is a genuine reason for "unusual" data.

Guidance notes and specifications (including validation rules) for the early years census can be found [here](#) and the school census [here](#).

### 2.2 Production of Statistical First Release

When reviewing the tables, please note the following:

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**We preserve confidentiality**

The Code of Practice for Official Statistics requires we take reasonable steps to ensure that our published or disseminated statistics protect confidentiality.

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**So we sometimes suppress or round numbers**

We suppress cell counts and totals below 3 and sometimes use secondary suppression to preserve confidentiality. Because of rounding, totals in text and in tables may not always equal the sum of their component parts. Similarly, differences quoted in text may not always be the same as differences shown in tables. This suppression is consistent with the [Departmental statistical policy](#).

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**And adopt symbols to help identify this**

Symbols are used in the tables as follows:

- x below 3 (i.e. 1 or 2)
  - 0 the original figure submitted was zero
  - 1 . data not available
  - .. data not applicable
  - represents less than 0.5%
-

## 2.3 Calculated data items

The SFR contains tables which cover:

### 1. Numbers of children benefitting from funded early education

This is a count of children in receipt of funded early education. Where children received funded early education at more than one provider (of funded early education), they have been counted only once. The provider where the child took the most of their funded hours is the provider reported in the figures. For private, voluntary and independent providers, counts are taken from the early years census data. Counts for other providers are taken from the school census data.

### 2. Funded hours taken

This is the percentage of children broken down by number of funded hours taken, where the funded hours have been grouped together into bands. Children at general hospital schools have been excluded from these figures as their data is collected through the aggregate school level annual school census and individual funded hours are not reported.

### 3. Number of children benefitting by provider type

This is a count of providers by type of provider, and also the number of children benefitting from some funded early education at those providers. Special schools include maintained and non-maintained special schools and general hospital schools.

The number of children benefitting from some funded early education is calculated as the head count of children in receipt of some funded early education. Where they are receiving funded early education at more than one private, voluntary or independent provider, they have only been counted once at the provider where they take the majority of their funded hours. In the 2017 early years census there were 13,182 children who split their entitlement across more than one provider.

A child splitting their funded hours between a maintained school and a private, voluntary or independent provider may be counted more than once. This does not impact on the national take up rate.

### 4. Ofsted Inspection ratings

To report against Ofsted inspection ratings, we match the early years census data and the school census data to Ofsted inspection ratings.

Ofsted provided us with the latest outcomes of early years inspections up to 31 December 2016. Common variables between the EYC (early years census) and Ofsted's outcomes of early years inspections dataset are: LA identifier, provider name, and Ofsted unique reference number (URN). There were inconsistencies between data on provider name on the EYC and Ofsted's outcomes dataset, which made it difficult to use this variable for matching purposes. Matching was carried out using LA number and Ofsted EY URN only.

Where a match could not be found between the EYC and Ofsted's outcomes of early years inspections dataset, the relevant cases were then matched to the outcomes of school inspections dataset, again using the Ofsted URN. The outcomes of school inspections dataset was used because some EY providers return a school's URN rather than an EY URN because they are governed by a school and therefore fall under the school's Ofsted inspection. In such cases, we used the Early Years Foundation Stage inspection rating. If no Early Years Foundation Stage inspection rating was reported then we used the School's overall effectiveness rating.

Independent schools are not required to register with Ofsted; therefore many of these providers were listed under the 'No match to Ofsted' category. However, if these providers had registered with Ofsted and a match was found, we used the relevant inspection rating for these schools.

For maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special schools, school census (SC) data was matched to Ofsted school inspection data using LAESTAB, a combination of the LA number and the establishment number. Independent schools were excluded as these were already included in the EYC return. Academy converters which were yet to be inspected under their new status were included under the 'No match to Ofsted' category. The school changes its URN when it becomes an academy.

Inspections ratings from private, voluntary and independent providers were combined with those from maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special schools to produce the tables.

The percentages are based upon the total number of 2-, or 3- and 4-year olds receiving funded early education at providers rated outstanding, good, satisfactory/requires improvement, or inadequate, as a percentage of children at providers where we have found a match and an inspection rating (and therefore excluding children at providers where we do not have an inspection rating).

## **5. 2-year-old basis for funding**

Local authorities reported the reason for funding under four categories, three of which were statutory criteria in the 2016 census: 'economic', 'high level special educational needs or disability' and 'looked after or adopted from care'. Children who met any of these three criteria have been included in the figures. The fourth category reported, 'Other', was not a valid category in 2016 and any children who have been reported solely as 'Other', have not been included in the figures. In 2017, the 'Other' category was removed as a reporting option.

## **6. 2-year-old eligible population estimates**

The estimated number of eligible 2-year-olds is based on analysis of administrative data held by the Department for Work and Pensions containing information on benefit and tax credit records relating to November 2016. This estimate is therefore based on the benefit and tax credit eligibility criteria only. The following eligibility criteria are not covered: children with a current statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education, Health and Care plan; children who are looked after by a local authority; children who are

no longer looked after by the local authority as a result of an adoption order, a special guardianship order or a child arrangements order which specifies with whom the child lives.

## **7. Early years pupil premium**

Early years pupil premium (EYPP) was introduced for disadvantaged 3- and 4-year-olds in April 2015. All 3- and 4-year olds are entitled to up to 15 hours per week of government funded early education for 38 weeks of the year. Children will be eligible for EYPP if they are receiving any hours of early education and:

- meet the benefits related criteria for free school meals (please note: meals delivered as part of the universal entitlement are **not** FSM);
- are in the care of the local authority (in England and Wales); or,
- have left care (in England or Wales) through adoption, special guardianship, or a child arrangement order (formally known as a residence order).

4-year-olds benefitting from some funded early education in infant classes in primary schools are not eligible for EYPP as they would receive the school age pupil premium.

## **8. Ethnicity**

Ethnicity was collected on a mandatory basis for the first time in 2017 for all pupils in PVI settings. Prior to 2017 it was collected on a voluntary basis. It records the ethnicity as stated by the parent / guardian and / or child (in the case of a child without a parent / guardian). Ethnicity is a personal awareness of a common cultural identity and relates to how a person feels and not how they are perceived by others. It is a subjective decision as to which category a person places themselves in and does not infer any other characteristics such as religion or country of origin.

The establishment must not ascribe any ethnicity to the pupil. The information must come from the parent / guardian. Where the ethnicity had not yet been collected, 'NOBT' (information not yet obtained) was recorded. If a parent refused to provide ethnicity, 'REFU' (refused) was recorded. These categories combined are shown as 'unclassified' within the tables.

## **9. Total teaching staff**

Local authorities returned the total number of teaching staff, both paid and unpaid, at private, voluntary and independent providers, with at least one child receiving funded early education at the time of the census. This included staff working with 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds and other staff.



### 3. Notes on specific data quality issues

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<b>We're using estimates of the eligible population for 2-year-olds</b>	We provide take-up rates as a percentage of the local estimated eligible population of 2-year-olds. This uses data from the Department for Work and Pensions to estimate the number of 2-year-olds living in households claiming the relevant benefits.
<b>Not all 2-,3- and 4-year-olds in early education are covered</b>	Only those providers with children receiving some funded early education are required to make an early years census return. For example, a private provider with no funded 2-, 3- or 4-year olds would not appear in the early years census or the school census. For this reason, this publication does not provide a count of all children aged 2, 3 or 4 in private, voluntary, and independent providers. There is no data source which would provide this information.
<b>3- and 4-year-old ONS population estimates are only an estimate</b>	The population estimates are derived from mid-year estimates and projections produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Mid-year figures are pro-rated evenly by single year of age and the total adjusted to match the total population for that age from the appropriate DfE pupil projections.
<b>... these estimates only include long-term migrants...</b>	That is, a person who changes their permanent residence for more than a year. The early years census includes all children, even if they are defined as being short-term migrants. Therefore take-up percentages could be overestimated as a result.
<b>... and sub-national population estimates are subject to a greater degree of error</b>	Population estimates at lower geographic levels, such as local authority, are subject to a greater degree of error. In some cases, local authority take-up rates can exceed 100%. Therefore, take-up rates at local authority level should be treated with more caution than national take-up rates. The sources used in the calculation of take-up rates for 3- and 4-year-olds are consistent over time, allowing users to see any change in local authority level take-up rates over time. The 2017 publication included revised population estimates so take-up rates for previous years may differ from past publications.
<b>Some dual reporting across the early years and school census</b>	Analysis comparing the 2014 school census and early years census found evidence of some schools making a return on both the school census and early years census which will have resulted in a small amount of double counting. This does not affect national take-up rates rounded to the nearest percentage point, but may affect take-up rates at lower level, for example local authority or provider type breakdown. Revised guidance was included in both the early years and the school

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census guides to explain which census is used to return data on children receiving funded early education.

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**The proportion of 2-year-olds in the maintained sector has increased for two reasons**

The proportion of 2-year-olds in maintained settings has increased from 8% in 2016 to 11% in 2017. Two factors are likely to have contributed to this increase:

1. On 26 May 2015 the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act came into force. The Act removed the need for schools to register early years provision for 2-year-olds and above separately with Ofsted, where that provision is run by the school and directly managed by the governing body. Therefore, from 26 May 2015, schools that already directly provided childcare for children aged 2 and over would not need to register separately with Ofsted, but register these children attending the early years provision on the school roll. These children would be returned to the Department via the school census, whereas previously they would have been returned on the early years census.
2. In our early years census guide to local authorities we provided clearer guidance as whether children should be returned on the early years census or the school census.

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**The large increase in the percentage of children attending good or outstanding settings is due to a number of factors**

There are a number of factors which contributed to the rise in the number of settings rated good or outstanding by Ofsted. August 2016 saw the start of the new inspection cycle, with Ofsted prioritising childminders for inspection who had been previously judged requires improvement or inadequate. Looking at childminders who previously received a judgement of requires improvement or inadequate, in the last four months of 2016, 80% improved to good or outstanding. This had a double effect – the number of good or outstanding childminders increased and the number of requires improvement or inadequate childminders decreased. This is a key factor behind the recent improvement in the proportion of childminders judged good or outstanding.

Other factors that have influenced this upward trend in the longer term are: 1) new childminders are more likely to be judged good or outstanding at their first inspection than they were four years ago. 2) Childminders leaving the sector are more likely to have had inspection judgements of requires improvement or inadequate than those that remain. In addition, since August 2012, the proportion of childcare on non-domestic premises judged good or outstanding has been increasing steadily. As with childminders, part of this increase can be explained by a change in the childcare inspection policy. From November 2013, all childcare on non-domestic premises judged requires improvement must be re-inspected within 12 months. This means that non-domestic providers have had more opportunity to demonstrate improvement than they did previously.

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**We haven't published data on staff qualifications due to data quality concerns**

For the 2017 early years census, data items relating to staff with graduate level qualifications (QTS/EYPS/EYTS) were removed and replaced with data items regarding staff with Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications. The data collected on Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications was not of sufficient quality to include in the SFR and data was missing from a number of local authorities.

For the 2018 early years census, the data items for staff qualifications have been revised, following consultation with local authorities.

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**Drops in birth rates in 2013 have affected the number of 3-year-olds benefitting from funded early education**

In 2013, there was a 4.3% fall in the number of live births in England and Wales, representing the largest percentage annual decrease since 1975. This is a major contributory factor to the decrease in the number of 3-year-olds (age as at 31 December 2016) benefitting from funded early education in January 2017.

The [ONS statistical bulletin](#) from July 2014 states a number of possible reasons for this drop including uncertainty over employment and career opportunities, and government changes to the welfare system affecting benefits.

## 4. Users and Usage

### 4.1 Department for Education and Central Government

The Provision for Children under 5 years of age Statistical First Release (SFR) contains the latest information on provision of education for children under 5 in the maintained, private, voluntary and independent sectors in England. This includes:

- The number of 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds benefitting from some funded early education places;
- Local authority rates for numbers benefitting as a proportion of the population for 3- and 4-year-olds and as a proportion of the eligible population for 2-year-olds;
- The basis on which a 2-year-old has been funded for an early education place;
- The proportion of 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds in funded early education by number of funded hours received;
- The number of 3- and 4-year-olds benefitting from some funded early education by reason for claiming early years pupil premium;
- The number of 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds benefitting from some funded early education, by provider, by Ofsted inspection rating;
- The number of 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds benefitting from some funded early education places by ethnic group;
- The total teaching staff at private, voluntary and independent providers delivering funded early education by provider type;

The uses of the published statistics by DfE and the UK Government include:

<b>Funding</b>	The data is a crucial evidence base for many funding calculations including the Dedicated Schools Grant.
<b>Producing cost estimates</b>	It is also used to estimate the costs of new policies, for example, the early years pupil premium
<b>Policy development</b>	The data is also used to monitor and develop policies and plans, including underpinning projections of future demand for places.
<b>Parents and local authorities</b>	Parents may use this information when assessing the quality of provision in their area and it enables local authorities to measure their performance against similar authorities.

## 4.2 Other Users

We are less familiar with the use of these statistics made by other organisations and external parties. We have carried out external consultation through our Research and Statistics website and through our user group of known contacts to try and ascertain users of these statistics and to try and better understand how the statistics are being used. Based on the responses received we are aware of the following users and uses made of these statistics:

- Students and lecturers in the Early Childhood Studies field to keep abreast of changes and challenges in Early Years policy and practices and to support coursework;
- The Scottish Government to make UK-wide comparisons;
- The London School of Economics for various analyses on the early education sector;
- Department for Work and Pensions for numbers of children in early education; and,
- Local authorities for comparisons against the national trend and also to compare themselves to other authorities for benchmarking purposes.

Previous consultations have been carried out seeking comments on the format and contents of the publication. The general nature of the response was that the statistics were useful in their current format and no strong suggestions were received as to improvements or additions to the statistics.

We will continue to engage with users to ensure that the publication best meets their needs and welcome feedback or suggestions from any new or previously unknown users which we will take on board.

Would you like to feed in your views? If so, please see contact details on the publication page.

## 5. Related information

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Want previously published figures?	They are available via SFR links <a href="#">here</a>
Want statistics for Wales?	The 'Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales' published information on numbers of regulated settings and related activity, including children's day care (under 8s provision or early years) as part of their 2015-16 Annual Report which is available at: <a href="#">Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales</a>
Want statistics for Scotland?	A Pre-School Education Census is carried out annually to monitor the number of pre-school education providers, the number of children receiving pre-school education and the number of staff/teachers. The latest publication for December 2016 is available here: <a href="#">Summary statistics for schools in Scotland - No. 7: 2016 Edition</a>
Want statistics for Northern Ireland?	The latest children's social care statistics for 2015/16, including statistics on day care provision for children aged under 12, are available here: <a href="#">Children's social care statistics for Northern Ireland</a>
Early education statutory guidance for local authorities	The <a href="#">statutory guidance</a> from the Department for Education English local authorities on their duties under sections 6, 7, 7A, 9A, 12 and 13 of the Childcare Act 2006 is available here
Ofsted registered providers and inspection outcomes	<a href="#">Statistics from Ofsted for early years and childcare</a>
Early years census collection guidance	Information for preparing and completing the annual early years census, including the scope of the return, technical specifications and what data needs to be submitted to the Department for Education by local authorities is available <a href="#">here</a>
School census collection guidance	Information for preparing and completing the school census, including the scope of the return, technical specifications and what data needs to be submitted to the Department for Education is available <a href="#">here</a> .

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