



Department  
for Education

# **Provision for children under five years of age in England: January 2015**

**Quality and uses of data**

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# 1. Notes on specific data quality issues

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We're using estimates of the eligible population for 2-year-olds for the first time

For 2015 we have provided take-up rates as a percentage of the local estimated eligible population. This uses data from the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) to estimate the number of 2-year-olds living in households claiming the relevant benefits. We would welcome user's views on whether or not this is an appropriate estimate or if there are other data sources we should consider.

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One LA could not confirm the reasons for funding their 2-year-olds in schools in time for publication

Redbridge local authority could not confirm the basis for funding their two year olds in time for inclusion in this publication. Subsequent data provided by them shows they had 7 funded 2-year olds in primary, secondary or special schools. These figures are not reported in the main tables of this publication.

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Not all 2-,3- and 4-year-olds in early education are covered

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 two, three or four 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.

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3- and 4-year-old ONS population estimates are only an estimate

The population estimates are derived from mid-year estimates and projections produced by the 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.

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... these estimates only include long-term migrants...

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.

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... and sub-national population estimates are subject to a greater degree of error

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 2015 publication includes revised population estimates so take-up rates for previous years may differ from past publications.

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Some dual reporting across the early years and school census	Further 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 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.  Measures are being taken to prevent this happening in future census collections.
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Issues relating to the additional tables covering special educational needs	Quality assurance checks identified unusual data for Milton Keynes and Westminster. Subsequent discussions with the local authorities concluded the submitted data was incorrect.  Therefore, the special needs provision for 2-,3- and 4-year-olds in Milton Keynes and special needs provision for 2-year-olds in Westminster have been redacted with estimates (based on the national proportions) added to the national and regional subtotals in the published tables. The calculated estimates are provided in the under lying data.
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## 2. Users and Usage

### 2.1 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 four 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 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds benefitting from some funded early education at settings with staff with Qualified Teacher Status/ Early Years Teacher Status/ Early Years Professional Status
- The number of 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds benefitting from some funded early education, by provider, by Ofsted inspection rating

For more information on the items included in the statistical release and how they have been calculated, please refer to the accompanying methodology note which has been published as a separate document on the publication page.

In 2015, the department undertook an internal review of the published tables to reduce the number of tables and focus on the key statistics. The outcome of the review was to remove the total number of 2-, 3-, and 4-year-olds taking up early education places (ie funded and non-funded children) and the part time equivalent number of funded early education places.

We are familiar with the use of these published statistics within the Department for Education and by the UK Government. These uses include:

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Funding	The data is a crucial evidence base for many funding calculations including the Dedicated Schools Grant.
Producing cost estimates	It is also used to estimate the costs of new policies, for example, the early years pupil premium

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Policy development	The data is also used to monitor and develop policies and plans, including underpinning projections of future demand for places.
Parents and local authorities	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.

## 2.2 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.
- 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.

### 3. Related information

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Want previously published figures?	It's still available via SFR links. For the latest data, visit <a href="#">Childcare and Early Years Statistics</a>
Want statistics for Wales?	This publication only covers England. For information for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, contact the departments below or access their statistics at the following links:  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 2013-14 Annual Report which is available at:  <a href="#">Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales</a>
Want statistics for Scotland?	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 (from the September 2012 census) can be found at:  <a href="#">Summary Statistics for Schools in Scotland, No.5 : 2014 Edition</a>
Want statistics for Northern Ireland?	Northern Ireland: Statistics detailed in 'Children Social Care Statistical Tables for Northern Ireland 2013/14' were published on 16th October 2014 is available at:  <a href="#">Children Order Statistics for Northern Ireland</a>
Early education statutory guidance for local authorities	This <a href="#">statutory guidance</a> from the Department for Education is for English local authorities on their duties under sections 6, 7, 7A, 9A, 12 13 of the Childcare Act 2006.
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.  <a href="#">Early years census collection guidance</a>

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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.

[School census collection guidance](#)

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