



Department
for Education

Number of children's centres, 2003 to 2019

**Annual figures for the number of
children's centres from 2003 to 2019
Ad-hoc Notice**

November 2019

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Numbers of children's centres in England

This publication provides management information on the number of children's centres from 2003 up until 30 June 2019 ¹. The purpose of this publication is to provide transparency on data on children's centre numbers. Children's centres were rolled out across England in three phases between June 2003 and 2010 to achieve the Government at that time's target of 3,500 by 2010 ².

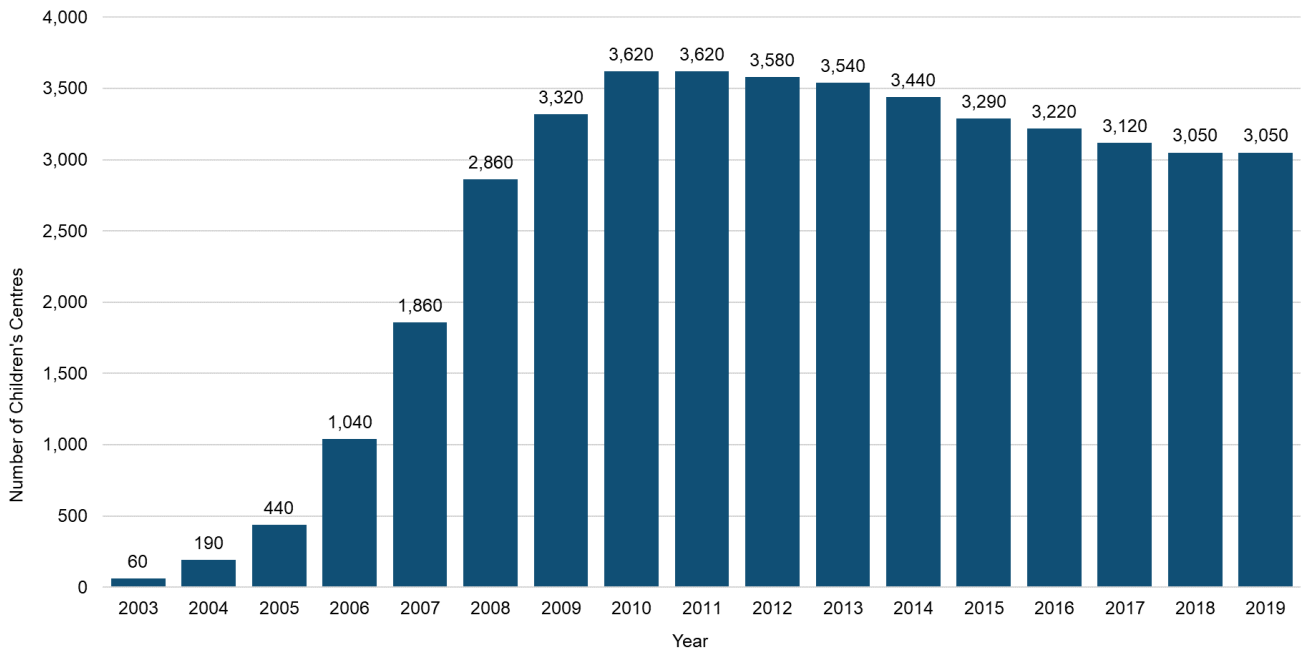
Figure 1 shows the number of children's centre sites from 2003 up until 30 June 2019. During the roll out period, the number of children's centres rose steeply and peaked at around 3,620 children's centres in 2010 and 2011. After 2011 the number of children's centre sites gradually declined to around 3,050 in June 2019, consisting of 2,350 children's centres and 700 children's centre linked sites ³. The Get Information About Schools (GIAS) database does not hold information on the date a children's centre converts to a children's centre linked site therefore, while a figure for the split between children's centres and children's centre linked sites at the point a query is made can be established, it is not possible to provide a historic breakdown of this figure in previous years.

¹ Information downloaded from [GIAS](https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/) on 1 July 2019 (<https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/>).

² In 2004, [Choice for parents: the best start for children: a ten year strategy for childcare](https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/5274/2/02_12_04__pbr04childcare_480-1.pdf) (https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/5274/2/02_12_04__pbr04childcare_480-1.pdf) set a target of 2,500 children's centres in place by 2008, and 3,500 in place by 2010. Children's centres were rolled out in three phases between June 2003 and April 2010.

³ Definitions of different types of children's centre record are at [GIAS glossary](https://www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/glossary) (<https://www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/glossary>).

Figure 1: The number of children's centres from 2003 to 2019 ⁴



⁴ Numbers rounded to the nearest ten.

Data Sources

This publication uses three main data sources in order to derive the number of children's centres in England:

- Children's centre data downloaded from GIAS: the Department for Education's current official register of educational establishments across England ⁵
- Internal management information containing the designation date of children's centres that were counted open on 30 April 2010 ⁶
- Internal management information about children's centre numbers, including information gathered in earlier data reconciliation exercises which found that some centres counted as open on 30 April 2010 had never opened or were duplicate records

As some of the above data sources have been collected manually, the numbers have been treated as estimates and rounded to the nearest ten.

Methodology and Caveats

In order to understand the number of children's centres each year several factors were considered:

- The initial figures for the number of children's centres open in each year were drawn from management information on children's centres reported as open in April 2010 (around 3,630 children's centres). The children's centre "designation date" from that dataset was taken as the opening date for each children's centre. No data is held on the number of children's centres which closed or merged prior to 30 April 2010; accordingly, there may be some children's centres which opened and then closed prior to 2010 that are not reflected in this publication
- These initial figures were cross checked against the data downloaded from GIAS. Any children's centre records that were not included in the list of children's centres on 30 April 2010 have been added to the appropriate year, based on the children's centre opening date held for the record. Around 40 children's centres were identified as being added to the children's centre database since 30 April 2010:

⁵ The data is as reported by local authorities to the GIAS as at end June 2019.

⁶ Together for Children was responsible for designating children's centres on behalf of the department. The database was a bespoke database set up to track progress during the roll out of children's centres. The Together for Children database was closed down in 2011.

- Some of these were children's centres with opening dates prior to 30 April 2010 that appear to have been missed off the original list and some were children's centres with opening dates after 30 April 2010
- Some of these were children's centres where the GIAS database did not hold the opening dates. In these cases, opening dates were derived from management information and other intelligence
- In cases where children's centre sites were included in the April 2010 count and subsequently reported closed by the local authority, the children's centre record was removed from the relevant year onwards. A total of around 590 children's centres were identified as having closed since the 30 April 2010:
 - Around 290 of these closed children's centres had a manually maintained closed date recorded by the Department of Education. This is due to the GIAS database not holding closure dates for children's centre records reported closed between April 2010 and January 2016. These 290 closures are reflected in Figure 1 from the relevant year onwards
- A number of children's centres were excluded from Figure 1 entirely:
 - Children's centres previously counted in the April 2010 publication where manual data reconciliation exercises established that these children's centres never opened (a total of around 30 cases)
 - Children's centres previously counted in the April 2010 publication where manual data reconciliation exercises established that these records were duplicate entries of children's centres counted elsewhere in the April 2010 publication (a total of fewer than 10 cases)
 - Children's centres for which the records were incomplete and appear to have been closed prior to the April 2010 count (a total of around 80 cases). These children's centres were removed for one of the following reasons:
 - A manual comparison of postcodes has established that some of the closed records were duplicates of children's centre records held elsewhere on GIAS
 - Some records were almost completely blank with no open or closed dates or address details. These were likely to be records of children's centres that local authorities planned but never opened or duplicates of children's centres recorded elsewhere
 - Some of the records had address details and postcode details but no open or closed dates. It was not possible to tell from the available data when or if these children's centres opened. Some of them could be children's centres that local authorities opened

but merged with other children's centres prior to April 2010 publication ⁷. Others could be records of children's centres that local authorities planned but never opened

Published Data

Previously the Department for Education published the [numbers of Sure Start children's centres](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/numbers-of-sure-start-childrens-centres-april-2010) (https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/numbers-of-sure-start-childrens-centres-april-2010) in June 2010. This publication cited that, as at 30 April 2010, the total number of designated children's centres in England was 3,631.

Information on the number of children's centres which are providing funded early education, broken down by type of funded entitlement, is published annually by the Department for Education. This data does not include centre's centres which do not provide funded early education, therefore this will differ to the figures outlined in this publication. Data from January 2019 was published in June 2019 as part of [the provision for children under 5 years of age in England](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-childcare-and-early-years#Provision-for-children-under-5-years-of-age-in-England) (https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-childcare-and-early-years#Provision-for-children-under-5-years-of-age-in-England) publication.

⁷ It is known from intelligence that some children's centres were merged prior to 30 April 2010. The technical notes for the publication of [numbers of Sure Start children's centres](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/numbers-of-sure-start-childrens-centres-april-2010) (https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/numbers-of-sure-start-childrens-centres-april-2010) on 30 April 2010 states that "figures take account of any mergers that were agreed by the then Department for Children, Schools and Families".



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