Department for Education

Period Products Scheme

Management Information

Ad-hoc notice

January 2021

Contents

1. Summary

This ad-hoc notice provides information on the Department for Education scheme to provide free period products to schools and colleges in England. It covers the period from 20 January 2020, when the scheme launched, until the end of December 2020.

Take-up of the scheme

Almost half of eligible organisations had made at least one order by the end of December 2020. The number of organisations who had ordered increased steadily between January and March but remained constant during April and May when school and college opening was restricted due to the coronavirus pandemic. The number of organisations who had ordered began to increase again in June as schools and colleges began reopening fully.

16,698 orders had been placed by the end of December.

The total value of orders placed by the end of December was £2,791,000 which is 48% of the total spend cap for all organisations. This is lower than expected but we expect that this is largely due to school and college opening being restricted for a large proportion of the time that the scheme has been running.

Variation by characteristics of organisation

Post 16 organisations were most likely to have made an order (79%) and alternative provision organisations were least likely to have made an order (38%). Secondary schools were more likely to have ordered than primary schools (76% compared to 41%).

Larger organisations were more likely to have ordered and those with higher levels of disadvantage were slightly more likely to have ordered.

Percentage of spend cap spent

There was a wide variation in the percentage of the spend cap spent across organisations. 22% of organisations had spent less than half of their spend cap, 40% had spent between 50% and 89% of their spend cap, and 38% had spent over 90% of their spend cap.

Secondary schools, post 16 organisations and larger organisations were more likely than other types of organisation to have spent less than half of their spend cap.

Types of product ordered

Almost all organisations who had ordered bought some pads and over a third bought some tampons. Pads accounted for two-thirds of all products ordered and tampons accounted for most of the rest.

The vast majority of organisations who had ordered bought standard products and 35% bought environmentally friendly or reusable products. 70% of all products ordered were standard products and 30% were environmentally friendly or reusable products.

2. Introduction

The Period Products scheme was launched on 20 January 2020 to ensure that no learner misses out on education due to their period. It enables schools and colleges[1] in England to provide free period products for learners in their place of study.

The scheme covers all state-funded schools and 16 to 19 education organisations in England who have female learners in year 5 (aged 9 or 10 years) or above. Each eligible organisation was allocated a maximum amount of spend (a ‘spend cap’) between January 2020 and December 2020. This amount is based on 35% of the number of learners in the organisation[2] whose legal gender is female and who, based on age, are likely to have started their periods. 35% is an assumed take-up rate, reflecting the fact that not all learners will have a need for products all of the time. A minimum spend cap of £16 has been set[3] to allow all organisations to order a reasonable range of products.

The scheme is delivered by Personal Hygiene Services Limited (phs). Organisations order online from a range of products and the products are delivered directly to the organisation free of charge. Organisations can order at any point in the year and are encouraged to wait until their stocks are running low before re-ordering. Smaller organisations are expected to make up to two orders within the year, while larger organisations are expected to order more frequently.

Schools are able to select from a wide range of period products, varying in type, size and brand. They do not need to order the same products throughout the year. Products available include:

- period pads
- environmentally friendly period pads
- reusable period pads
- applicator tampons
- non-applicator tampons
- menstrual cups

We receive regular management information from phs on the number and value of orders placed and the type of products ordered. This release presents a summary of that information covering the period from 20 January 2020, when the scheme launched, until the end of December 2020.

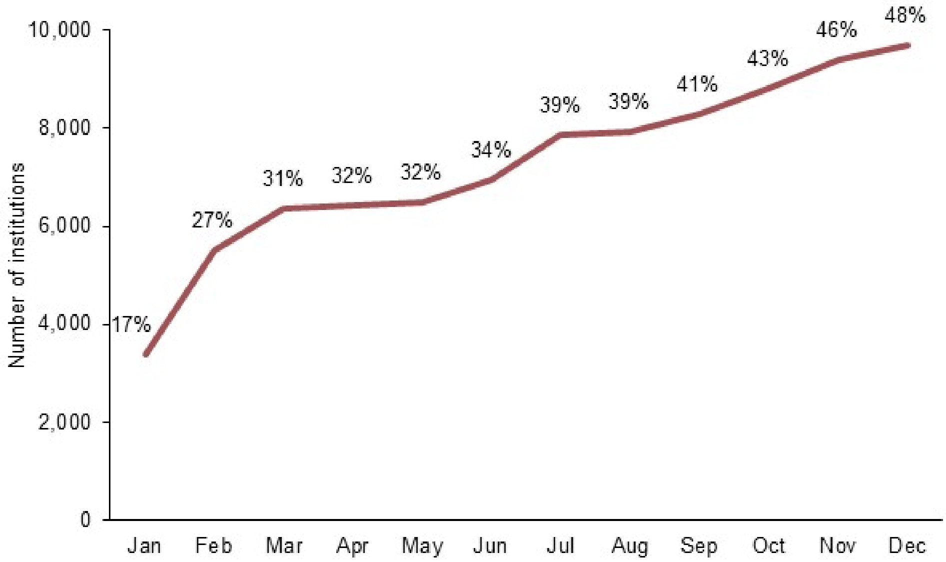
3. Take-up of the period products scheme

Almost half of eligible organisations had made at least one order by the end of December 2020 (9,702 out of 20,327 organisations). The number of organisations who had ordered

1 Referred to as ‘organisations’ throughout this ad-hoc notice.
2 Spend caps were based on learner numbers reported in the Autumn 2019 School Census for organisations that completed it and DfE forecasts of 2019-20 learner numbers for those that didn’t. We assume that 5% of 9 year olds, 10% of 10 year olds, 20% of 11 year olds, 50% of 12 year olds, 75% of 13 year olds, 95% of 14 year olds and 100% of those aged 15 or over are menstruating.
3 Any organisation with a calculated spend cap below this level will have their spend cap increased to £16.

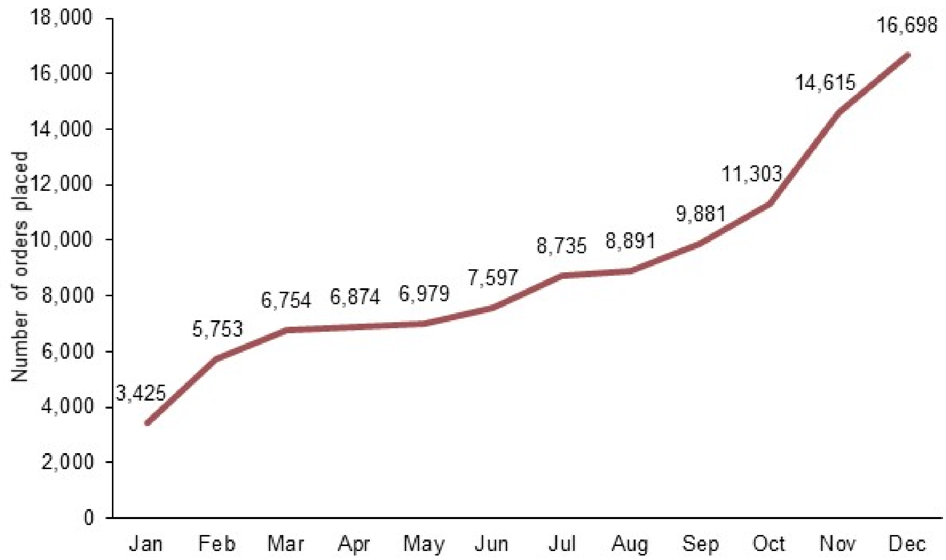
increased steadily between January and March but remained constant during April and May when school and college opening was restricted due to the coronavirus pandemic. The number of organisations who had ordered began to increase again in June as schools and colleges began reopening fully (figure 1).

Figure 1: Number and percentage of organisations who have placed at least one order, 2020



The number of orders placed follows a similar pattern (figure 2) and 16,698 orders had been placed by the end of December. This is an average of 1.7 orders per ordering organisation. Almost three-quarters of organisations (7,203 - 74% of those that had ordered) made a single order during 2020.

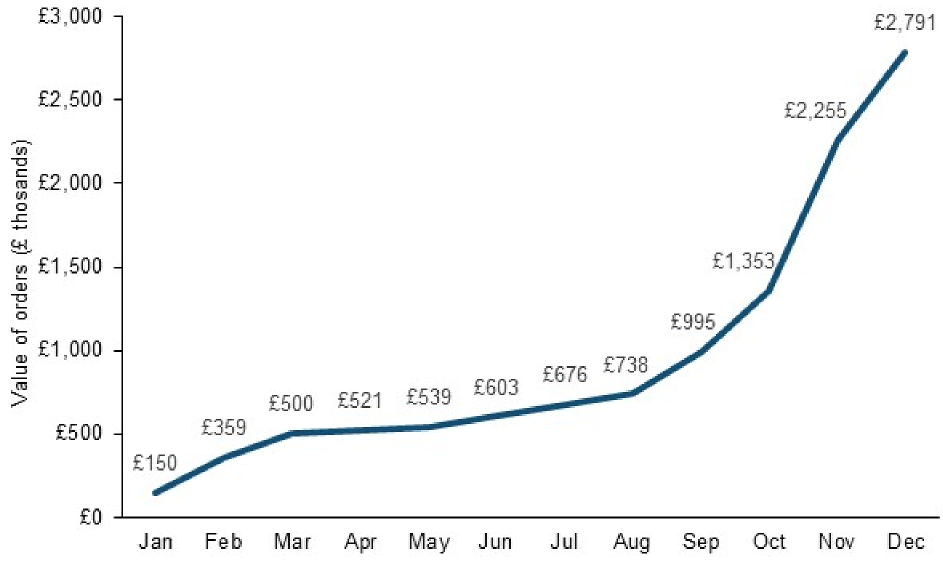
Figure 2: Number of orders placed, 2020



The total value of orders placed by the end of December was £2,791,000 which is 57% of the total spend cap for those organisations who had ordered and 48% of the total spend cap for all organisations. This is lower than expected but we expect that this is largely due to school opening being restricted for a large proportion of the time that the scheme has been running, though we encouraged organisations to support learners at home during term time.

The total value of orders increased steadily between January and March but increased much more slowly between March and August when school opening was restricted and during the summer holiday period. The total value of orders increased considerably once organisations reopened to all learners in September (figure 3).

Figure 3: Total value of orders placed, 2020



4. Variation by characteristics of organisation

Organisation type

Table 1 shows the breakdown of orders and spend by organisation type. This shows that post 16 organisations were most likely to have made an order (79%) and alternative provision organisations were least likely to have made an order (38%). Secondary schools were more likely to have ordered than primary schools (76% compared to 41%).

Table 1: Orders and spend by organisation type

	All organisations		Ordering organisations		
Organisation Type	**Number of organisations**	**Percentage who ordered**	**Average spend cap**	**Average spend**	**Spend as % of spend cap**
Primary schools	15,094	41%	£17	£13	76%
Secondary schools[4]	3,330	76%	£1,376	£796	58%
Special schools	1,085	40%	£81	£62	76%
Post-16	428	79%	£3,586	£1,917	53%
Alternative provision	390	38%	£68	£56	83%

4 Including all-through schools

Primary schools have the lowest average spend (£13) but those who have ordered have spent over three-quarters (76%) of their spend cap. This reflects the fact that most primary schools have a low spend cap due to low numbers of pupils assumed to be menstruating.

In contrast, post 16 organisations have the highest average spend (£1,917) but this represents only 53% of their spend cap. This reflects the fact that these tend to be larger organisations.

Academy status

Table 2 shows the breakdown of orders and spend by academy status for primary and secondary schools. This shows that sponsor led primary academies and primary free schools were slightly more likely to have ordered than local authority (LA) maintained primaries or primary converter academies.

However, for secondary schools, the converse is true - sponsor led secondary academies and secondary free schools were slightly less likely to have ordered than LA maintained secondaries or secondary converter academies. This may reflect differences in the average size of secondary schools of different types - sponsor led secondary academies have a slightly lower average spend cap and secondary free schools have a much lower average spend cap than other types of secondary school.

There was little difference between different types of school in the proportion of the spend cap spent for either primary or secondary schools.

Table 2: Orders and spend by academy status

	All organisations		Ordering organisations		
Organisation Type	**Number of organisations**	**Percentage who ordered**	**Average spend cap**	**Average spend**	**Spend as % of spend cap**
Primary schools					
LA maintained	9,776	41%	£17	£13	76%
Academy converter	3,750	40%	£18	£13	75%
Academy sponsor led	1,457	45%	£17	£13	77%
Free schools	111	49%	£17	£13	78%
Secondary schools[5]					
LA maintained	776	78%	£1,346	£807	60%
Academy converter	1,556	79%	£1,595	£903	57%
Academy sponsor led	740	74%	£1,153	£672	58%
Free schools	255	61%	£519	£317	61%

Spend cap

Table 3 shows the differences in likelihood of ordering and spend by spend cap. This shows a clear increase in likelihood of having ordered with increasing spend cap – 40% of

5 Three secondary City Technology Colleges (CTC) are not shown.

organisations with a spend cap of £16 had made an order compared to 97% of those with a spend cap of £2000 or more.

There is also a clear decline in the proportion of the spend cap spent as the spend cap increases – organisations with a spend cap of £16 had spent an average of 77% of their spend cap while those with a spend cap of £2000 or more had spent an average of 56% of their spend cap.

Table 3: Orders and spend by spend cap

	All organisations		Ordering organisations		
Spend cap	Number of organisations	Percentage who ordered	Average spend cap	Average spend	Spend as % of spend cap
£16	12,480	40%	£16	£12	77%
£16.01 to £25	2,224	44%	£19	£15	76%
£25.01 to £100	1,636	47%	£42	£32	76%
£100.01 to £1000	1,625	63%	£586	£372	64%
£1000.01 to £2000	1,654	77%	£1,446	£796	55%
£2000.01 +	708	97%	£3,328	£1,878	56%

Levels of disadvantage

Table 4 shows the differences in likelihood of ordering and spend by the percentage of pupils eligible for pupil premium[6] in the organisation. This information is not available for 695 organisations[7]. Organisations with lower levels of pupil premium were slightly less likely to have ordered period products than those with higher levels of pupil premium. The scheme aims to provide products to all learners who need them, including those who have forgotten products, come on their period unexpectedly, or cannot afford products so it is not surprising that we see only small differences by pupil premium levels.

There is very little difference in the proportion of the spend cap spent according to the pupil premium level of the school.

Table 4: Orders and spend by percentage of pupils eligible for pupil premium

	All organisations		Ordering organisations		
Pupil premium band[8]	Number of organisations	Percentage who ordered	Average spend cap	Average spend	Spend as % of spend cap
Very Low	3,855	40%	£278	£161	58%
Low	3,513	46%	£405	£238	59%
Medium	3,947	49%	£467	£270	58%
High	4,213	51%	£441	£261	59%
Very High	4,104	50%	£357	£211	59%

6 Based on pupil premium allocations for the financial year beginning 1 April 2020.

7 Including 404 post-16 organisations, 180 special schools, 62 alternative provision organisations and 49 mainstream schools. In most cases, information is not available because pupil premium is not available in that type of organisation.

8 Pupil premium bands are defined as follows: Less than 10% = Very low, 10% to 15% = Low, 16% to 23% = Medium, 24% to 37% = High and 38% + = Very High

5. Geographical variation

Table 5 shows the breakdown of orders and spend by region. Organisations in the East of England were most likely to have made an order (52%) and those in the North East were least likely to have made an order (44%).

Organisations in the East Midlands and South West had the lowest average spend (£260) while those in London had the highest average spend (£332). However, this difference reflects differences in the average size of schools and colleges (as illustrated by the differences in average spend cap) between these areas.

Organisations in London and the South East had spent the lowest proportion of their spend cap (54%) while those in the East Midlands had spent the highest proportion (62%).

Table 5: Orders and spend by region

	All organisations		Ordering organisations		
Region	**Number of organisations**	**Percentage who ordered**	**Average spend cap**	**Average spend**	**Spend as % of spend cap**
North East	1,053	44%	£486	£276	57%
North West	3,114	46%	£460	£268	58%
Yorkshire and the Humber	2,159	45%	£489	£289	59%
East Midlands	1,910	49%	£420	£260	62%
West Midlands	2,188	50%	£520	£312	60%
East of England	2,287	52%	£458	£265	58%
London	2,440	50%	£613	£332	54%
South East	2,969	46%	£575	£310	54%
South West	2,207	46%	£452	£260	58%

There is considerable variation by local authority. Organisations in Manchester and Enfield were most likely to have ordered (66%) and those in Hartlepool were least likely to have ordered (28%).

Organisations in Knowsley had the lowest average spend (£121) while those in Southend-on-Sea had the highest average spend (£679). However, this again reflects differences in the average size of schools and colleges between these areas.

Organisations in Bury had spent the lowest proportion of their spend cap (29%) while those in Halton and Dudley had spent the highest proportion (84%). See annex A for a full breakdown of results by local authority.

6. Percentage of spend cap spent

As seen earlier, the organisations that had ordered had spent an average of 57% of their spend cap. However, there was a wide variation in the percentage of the spend cap spent across organisations. 22% of organisations had spent less than half of their spend cap, 40% had spent between 50% and 89% of their spend cap and 38% had spent over 90% of their spend cap.

There were considerable differences in the proportion of the spend cap spent by organisation type (see table 6). Secondary schools and post 16 organisations were much more likely than other types of organisation to have spent less than half of their spend cap, though this may be because their spend caps tend to be higher.

Table 6: Percentage of spend cap spent by organisation type

Organisation Type	Number of organisations who ordered	Spent up to 49% of their spend cap	Spent 50% to 89% of their spend cap	Spent 90% or more of their spend cap
Primary schools	6,240	12%	49%	39%
Secondary schools	2,547	44%	23%	33%
Special schools	431	15%	29%	56%
Post 16	337	46%	21%	33%
Alternative provision	147	12%	30%	58%

There were also considerable differences in the proportion of the spend cap spent by size of spend cap amongst those that ordered (see table 7). Organisations with a larger spend cap were more likely to have spent less than half of their spend cap while those with a small spend cap were more likely to have spent over 90% of their spend cap.

Table 7: Percentage of spend cap spent by spend cap of those that ordered

Spend cap	Number of organisations who ordered	Spent up to 49% of their spend cap	Spent 50% to 89% of their spend cap	Spent 90% or more of their spend cap
£16	4,964	11%	45%	44%
£16.01 to £25	979	14%	66%	20%
£25.01 to £100	772	19%	41%	40%
£100.01 to £1000	1,020	35%	21%	43%
£1000.01 to £2000	1,279	49%	22%	29%
£2000.01 +	688	45%	24%	31%

7. Types of products ordered

Table 8 shows a breakdown of the products ordered by type. Almost all organisations who ordered bought some pads (only 38 organisations didn't buy any pads) and over a third (36%) bought some tampons. Only 7% of organisations who ordered bought other types of product. Similarly, almost all organisations who ordered bought standard products (97%) and 35% bought reusable or environmentally friendly products.

Pads accounted for two-thirds (66%) of all products ordered[9], while tampons accounted for most of the rest (32%). 70% of all products ordered were standard products and 30% were environmentally friendly or reusable products.

9 Note that packets vary in the number of products they contain. This does not take account of differences in number of products per packet.

Table 8: Types of products ordered

Type of product	Number of organisations who ordered	Percentage of all ordering organisations	Number of packets ordered	Percentage of all packets ordered
Pads	9,664	100%	458,023	66%
Tampons	3,487	36%	221,656	32%
Other	718	7%	9,477	1%
Standard	9,438	97%	483,551	70%
Eco-friendly/reusable	3,435	35%	205,605	30%

8. Types of products ordered by characteristics of organisation

Table 9 shows the types of product ordered by type of organisation. This shows that most organisations, regardless of type, ordered some pads. Most post-16 organisations and many secondary schools and alternative provision organisations also ordered some tampons. Primary and special schools were much less likely to order tampons. 45% of post-16 organisations and 21% of secondary schools ordered other types of product.

Similarly, most organisations, regardless of type, ordered some standard products. Post-16 organisations and secondary schools were more likely than other types of organisation to order environmentally friendly or reusable products.

Table 9: Types of products ordered by organisation type

Organisation Type	Pads	Tampons	Other	Standard	Eco-friendly/ reusable
Primary schools	100%	13%	0%	96%	20%
Secondary schools	99%	84%	21%	99%	68%
Special schools	100%	28%	4%	98%	31%
Post 16	99%	96%	45%	100%	80%
Alternative provision	97%	68%	7%	97%	29%

Table 10 shows the types of product ordered by spend cap. This shows that most organisations, regardless of spend cap, ordered some pads. The likelihood of ordering other types of product increases with the spend cap. However, this may reflect differences between types of organisation by spend cap (that is, organisations with a low spend cap tend to be primary or special schools who were less likely to order products other than pads).

Similarly, most organisations, regardless of spend cap, ordered some standard products. The likelihood of ordering environmentally friendly and reusable products increases with the spend cap. However, as above this may reflect differences between types of organisation by spend cap.

Table 10: Types of products ordered by spend cap

Spend cap	Pads	Tampons	Other	Standard	Eco-friendly/ reusable
£16	100%	13%	0%	96%	20%
£16.01 to £25	100%	17%	0%	97%	15%
£25.01 to £100	99%	29%	3%	97%	28%
£100.01 to £1000	99%	77%	15%	98%	59%
£1000.01 to £2000	99%	84%	21%	99%	70%
£2000.01 +	100%	90%	40%	100%	81%

Annex A: Orders and spend by local authority

Table 11: Orders and spend by local authority[10]

Local authority	All organisations		Ordering organisations		
	Number of organisations	Percentage who ordered	Average spend cap	Average spend	Spend as % of spend cap
Barking and Dagenham	56	50%	£895	£497	56%
Barnet	118	47%	£646	£423	65%
Barnsley	91	47%	£431	£322	75%
Bath and NE Somerset	73	34%	£622	£324	52%
Bedford	71	59%	£546	£396	73%
Bexley	79	54%	£435	£288	66%
Birmingham	398	55%	£559	£335	60%
Blackburn with Darwen	70	54%	£481	£246	51%
Blackpool	46	54%	£579	£343	59%
Bolton	131	52%	£407	£266	65%
Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole	86	56%	£681	£270	40%
Bracknell Forest	38	42%	£493	£199	40%
Bradford	208	47%	£534	£383	72%
Brent	74	54%	£519	£299	58%
Brighton and Hove	67	48%	£754	£530	70%
Bristol City of	137	55%	£422	£278	66%
Bromley	93	53%	£770	£418	54%
Buckinghamshire	193	58%	£432	£198	46%
Bury	81	36%	£755	£220	29%
Calderdale	97	56%	£428	£202	47%
Cambridgeshire	246	51%	£428	£249	58%
Camden	67	37%	£1,308	£528	40%
Central Bedfordshire	65	49%	£460	£240	52%
Cheshire East	160	40%	£522	£287	55%
Cheshire West & Chester	163	49%	£320	£188	59%
Cornwall	274	31%	£591	£372	63%
Coventry	119	58%	£434	£255	59%
Croydon	108	46%	£610	£380	62%
Cumbria	295	36%	£397	£236	59%
Darlington	41	29%	£877	£569	65%
Derby	90	59%	£486	£279	57%
Derbyshire	351	42%	£345	£181	52%
Devon	364	45%	£356	£234	66%
Doncaster	123	47%	£452	£309	68%
Dorset	127	55%	£424	£322	76%
Dudley	109	44%	£777	£653	84%
Durham	256	41%	£307	£183	60%

10 City of London and Isles of Scilly are not shown as they have a very small number of schools.

Local authority	All organisations		Ordering organisations		
	Number of organisations	Percentage who ordered	Average spend cap	Average spend	Spend as % of spend cap
Ealing	89	47%	£539	£362	67%
East Riding of Yorkshire	137	36%	£472	£248	52%
East Sussex	182	47%	£462	£291	63%
Enfield	93	66%	£438	£235	54%
Essex	513	53%	£474	£273	58%
Gateshead	82	48%	£506	£225	45%
Gloucestershire	290	47%	£394	£245	62%
Greenwich	87	36%	£607	£311	51%
Hackney	77	53%	£503	£330	66%
Halton	62	34%	£572	£481	84%
Hammersmith and Fulham	57	40%	£584	£330	56%
Hampshire	426	42%	£679	£324	48%
Haringey	80	44%	£532	£255	48%
Harrow	59	47%	£776	£515	66%
Hartlepool	40	28%	£550	£405	74%
Havering	69	58%	£477	£281	59%
Herefordshire	103	50%	£343	£268	78%
Hertfordshire	468	47%	£526	£255	48%
Hillingdon	90	63%	£577	£240	42%
Hounslow	72	54%	£692	£403	58%
Isle of Wight	53	47%	£471	£346	73%
Islington	69	39%	£327	£167	51%
Kensington and Chelsea	37	49%	£451	£216	48%
Kent	576	48%	£512	£315	62%
Kingston upon Hull	99	53%	£529	£400	76%
Kingston upon Thames	50	50%	£915	£433	47%
Kirklees	162	53%	£514	£253	49%
Knowsley	62	37%	£248	£121	49%
Lambeth	89	45%	£419	£223	53%
Lancashire	604	41%	£405	£220	54%
Leeds	279	33%	£629	£335	53%
Leicester	106	57%	£628	£400	64%
Leicestershire	279	60%	£332	£256	77%
Lewisham	85	56%	£414	£242	58%
Lincolnshire	346	50%	£382	£218	57%
Liverpool	162	54%	£439	£227	52%
Luton	57	63%	£514	£299	58%
Manchester	185	66%	£451	£336	74%
Medway	90	42%	£933	£468	50%
Merton	55	51%	£411	£291	71%
Middlesbrough	59	42%	£625	£316	51%
Milton Keynes	85	54%	£649	£359	55%

Local authority	All organisations		Ordering organisations		
	Number of organisations	Percentage who ordered	Average spend cap	Average spend	Spend as % of spend cap
Newcastle upon Tyne	90	47%	£961	£389	40%
Newham	94	52%	£732	£401	55%
Norfolk	368	47%	£388	£272	70%
North East Lincolnshire	61	41%	£557	£318	57%
North Lincolnshire	76	41%	£456	£219	48%
North Somerset	73	51%	£540	£238	44%
North Tyneside	72	57%	£329	£212	64%
North Yorkshire	358	38%	£310	£187	60%
Northamptonshire	298	42%	£485	£296	61%
Northumberland	112	59%	£332	£238	72%
Nottingham	106	58%	£547	£371	68%
Nottinghamshire	313	46%	£428	£254	59%
Oldham	106	58%	£496	£303	61%
Oxfordshire	291	38%	£503	£236	47%
Peterborough	78	51%	£603	£266	44%
Plymouth	97	56%	£426	£233	55%
Portsmouth	50	52%	£626	£358	57%
Reading	49	41%	£361	£181	50%
Redbridge	74	57%	£720	£313	43%
Redcar and Cleveland	60	42%	£409	£279	68%
Richmond upon Thames	53	60%	£461	£262	57%
Rochdale	88	55%	£456	£288	63%
Rotherham	112	49%	£580	£447	77%
Rutland	21	43%	£368	£254	69%
Salford	101	37%	£510	£172	34%
Sandwell	114	60%	£515	£247	48%
Sefton	100	46%	£519	£327	63%
Sheffield	164	56%	£487	£226	46%
Shropshire	148	48%	£336	£181	54%
Slough	46	63%	£750	£536	72%
Solihull	75	56%	£776	£398	51%
Somerset	219	48%	£433	£228	53%
South Gloucestershire	109	51%	£448	£229	51%
South Tyneside	58	53%	£396	£223	56%
Southampton	65	55%	£510	£369	72%
Southend-on-Sea	50	50%	£996	£679	68%
Southwark	101	49%	£443	£234	53%
St. Helens	71	41%	£707	£451	64%
Staffordshire	337	47%	£442	£236	53%
Stockport	107	65%	£345	£235	68%
Stockton-on-Tees	79	30%	£572	£253	44%
Stoke-on-Trent	92	41%	£597	£402	67%

Local authority	All organisations		Ordering organisations		
	Number of organisations	Percentage who ordered	Average spend cap	Average spend	Spend as % of spend cap
Suffolk	317	63%	£326	£189	58%
Sunderland	104	39%	£697	£482	69%
Surrey	320	49%	£628	£290	46%
Sutton	56	54%	£889	£477	54%
Swindon	81	53%	£428	£176	41%
Tameside	96	53%	£417	£313	75%
Telford and Wrekin	70	41%	£587	£388	66%
Thurrock	54	48%	£369	£236	64%
Torbay	44	41%	£892	£579	65%
Tower Hamlets	93	56%	£777	£293	38%
Trafford	88	53%	£561	£274	49%
Wakefield	129	47%	£476	£239	50%
Walsall	107	54%	£586	£343	59%
Waltham Forest	77	42%	£810	£467	58%
Wandsworth	79	43%	£507	£191	38%
Warrington	87	38%	£540	£209	39%
Warwickshire	217	42%	£637	£372	58%
West Berkshire	75	52%	£403	£163	40%
West Sussex	260	40%	£693	£357	52%
Westminster	59	53%	£852	£529	62%
Wigan	134	36%	£556	£262	47%
Wiltshire	232	42%	£399	£207	52%
Windsor and Maidenhead	46	37%	£888	£422	48%
Wirral	115	44%	£621	£449	72%
Wokingham	57	46%	£403	£286	71%
Wolverhampton	102	49%	£522	£313	60%
Worcestershire	197	57%	£427	£260	61%
York	63	52%	£702	£399	57%

Department for Education

About this publication:

Enquiries: Jayne Middlemas, Early years, Schools and SEND Analysis and Research Division, Department for Education, St Paul's Place, Sheffield, S1 2FJ
Email: jayne.middlemas@education.gov.uk
Download: www.gov.uk/government/publications

Reference: DFE-00012-2021