

Guidance

Children in need census: guide to submitting data

How local authorities should collect data from social care services to complete the annual children in need census.

Published 25 March 2014
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 From: [Department for Education](#)

Applies to: **England**

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The children in need census is an annual statutory census for all local authorities. You must complete statutory censuses by law unless there's a good reason not to.

The census covers the financial year (1 April to 31 March).

It collects data on children referred to local authority social care services because their health or development is at risk. This includes:

- children in local-authority care (in placements in a residential home, in a foster family, or with relatives)
- children who are getting support from their local authority's social care services
- children who are the subject of a [child protection plan](#)
- unborn children who will potentially need support from social care services

Important dates

2019 to 2020 census dates:

We delayed opening the 2019 to 2020 data collection to 20 April 2020 while we reviewed the department's data collection activity following the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

As the impact of the situation evolves the data collection timetable will be under review.

We will update local authorities about revised dates in the regular collection bulletins.

2020 to 2021 census dates:

- census opens: Thursday 1 April 2021
- deadline for loading data: Wednesday 30 June 2021
- deadline for submitting data: Friday 30 July 2021

Submit your data

You'll need to:

- register and log in with [DfE Sign-in](#)
- use COLLECT to submit your data

Please contact your school or local authority approver, if:

- you want to request a DfE Sign-in username or password so you can access COLLECT
- 'children in need census' is not on the list of collections you can see in COLLECT

Get help using DfE Sign-in

If you do not know who your approver is, please use the [DfE Sign-in request form](#).

If you've forgotten your password, use [DfE Sign-in](#) to reset it. You will need to click 'Start now' and then the 'I've forgotten my password' link.

Note that we'll only be able to change the status of your data submission to 'authorised' once you've cleared all errors in the data in COLLECT.

Census documents

These documents will help you complete the census:

2019 to 2020 census guides

- [census guide](#)
- [technical specification and validation rules](#)
- [COLLECT guides](#)
- [COLLECT report specifications](#)
- [XML generator](#)

2020 to 2021 census guides

- [census guide](#)
- [technical specification and validation rules](#)
- [COLLECT guides](#)
- [COLLECT report specifications](#)

Factors identified at the end of assessment

This [additional guide on the factors identified at the end of assessment](#) (PDF, 730KB, 47 pages) explains how to complete the factors identified at the end of the assessment data item.

It includes information on the new child on child and adult on child sexual and physical abuse factors which are to be collected from the 2020 to 2021 census.

Do you need help?

Submitting data

For complex questions, please use the [service request form](#). We aim to answer your question within 5 working days.

Feedback

Please use the [feedback form](#) if you have any comments about our data collection service, including COLLECT and the helpdesk service.

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