

# New benchmarking tool will let providers compare data on local authority funding <sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** Gaunt, Catherine

**Source:** Nursery World

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 23 Jul 2012

## EXCERPTS:

Just how local authorities split early years funding between private and voluntary nurseries and maintained provision in schools and nursery schools has long been a bone of contention.

As a move towards greater transparency over early years funding, the Department for Education last week launched a new online resource to enable providers to compare the funding they receive for three and four-year-olds with other local authority areas.

It will enable providers, parents and local authorities to see a breakdown by area and type of provider of funding for places, as well as take-up. The data will also be updated in the next few months to include information about two-year-old places.

The Foundation Years Benchmarking tool enables users to view the amount of funding from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) that local authorities allocate to early years, so that providers can see how funding is split between PVI settings, nursery schools and nursery classes in schools, as well as how much is spent per pupil.

The spreadsheets also reveal a wide variation in the amount of early years funding held back by local authorities. Some do not appear to retain any of their budget centrally, while others keep back as much as £2,688 per pupil. Cheshire West and Chester appears to 'centrally retain' 24 per cent of early years funding.

However, when Nursery World queried this, a spokesperson said that the figure quoted of £3.016m included costs for a PFI scheme for six primary schools, which had been included in error - the actual figure was £1.019m.

Comparisons can also be made to show the percentage of providers that have outstanding and good grades by area, as well as the percentage of children achieving a good level of development at the age of five based on the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile statistics.

Nathan Archer, development manager for Lincolnshire Montessori, said, 'I think the benchmarking spreadsheet is to be welcomed as an open and transparent document. Being able to compare information on funding, percentage of Dedicated Schools Grant spent on early years and quality with neighbouring or similar authorities is important in holding our local authorities to account. I'd encourage providers to look over this information and use it with their Early Years Reference Group or Schools Forum.'

Nurseries can customise the spreadsheets and compile their own pie charts and tables.

Ken McArthur, owner of Polly Anna's Nursery in York, said that it revealed some interesting findings for his area.

'Not only does it let you know the overall spend per child in your area, which is very important as each local authority is different, it also expresses it at a percentage of the authority's DSG. There's a very interesting relationship between those two figures - for example my local authority, York, in cash terms is at the bottom of the table for Yorkshire and Humber, but as a percentage of DSG it ranges reasonably well, lying middle of the table and just short of the national average percentage - which leads to the question as to why such a percentage results in a low cash figure.'

The National Day Nurseries Association said that it would give nurseries easier access to information so that they can question local authorities about funding.

As part of school funding reforms, from 2013 local authorities will receive an early years block of funding within the Dedicated Schools Grant.

Claire Schofield, director of policy, membership and communications, said that although funding for early years is not ringfenced within the DSG, the benchmarking tool will enable providers to challenge those local authorities that underspend their early years block of funding. 'You can easily see the local authorities that spend the biggest and the least. Clearly local authorities are struggling to get a return on their budgets, but if you invest in early years then children will be in a much better place when they start school, and local authorities will save money later.'

-reprinted from Nursery World

**Region:** Europe <sup>[2]</sup>

**Tags:** funding <sup>[3]</sup>  
public management <sup>[4]</sup>

---

**Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/12/07/new-benchmarking-tool-will-let-providers-compare-data-local>

**Links**

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/12/07/new-benchmarking-tool-will-let-providers-compare-data-local> [2]  
<https://childcarecanada.org/category/region/europe> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/funding> [4]  
<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/8166>