



Department
for Education

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February 2026
Reference number: {ID}

Take part in the Children of the 2020s Survey of Provision for 4-Year-Olds

Dear Setting Leader, Head or Manager

We are writing to invite you to help us with research to measure the difference early years provision can make to children's development, by taking part in the Children of the 2020s Survey of Provision for 4-Year-Olds. You may have taken part in the age 3 survey about a year ago. If you did thank you for your help! We are keen to survey you again to ask about your age 4 provision.

Children of the 2020s is an important national study that follows the lives of around 8,500 children from birth until they are 5 years old. The study will help the Department for Education and researchers understand how children are developing and the factors that help them to be ready for school. Understanding the childcare and early education settings they attend is a key part of this.

The research was commissioned by the Department for Education. It is led by University College London (UCL) and the University of Oxford. The independent research organisation, Ipsos, is collecting the data.

Why take part?

Children's experiences in childcare and early education can have a big effect on their learning and development. The child/children listed below are part of Children of the 2020s and we understand they attend your setting at age 4 (or have attended in the last 6 months).

- {childname1}
- {childname2}
- {childname3}
- {childname4}
- {childname5}
- {childname6}
- {childname7}

By providing some straightforward information about your setting, you can help us understand more about how early years provision makes a difference to children's lives. The information you provide will be added to the main Children of the 2020s data.

It's easy to take part

For this survey, we are asking you, or any member of staff with managerial responsibilities, to complete a 20-minute telephone survey. A researcher from Ipsos will phone sometime between now and the end of May to complete the survey over the phone, or make an appointment to do so on a day and time convenient for you.

To make the survey as quick and easy as possible, please read the preparation sheet sent with this letter. It tells you the types of questions in the survey, including a few things you may need to look up in advance.

How did we get your details?

Details of your setting were provided by each child's parent/carer who took part in the Children of the 2020s: Age 4 survey during the past 6 months and gave their consent for Ipsos to invite your setting to this survey on behalf of DfE.

What about data protection?

The survey is compliant with data protection legislation, as we are only contacting providers for whom the child's parent answered "yes" to the following question:

"We would like to contact your child's current main childcare and early education provider by telephone, and if they agree, ask them some questions about the setting, for example, the number and qualifications of staff working with your child and the learning environment of your child's room. Are you happy for us to contact your child's current main formal childcare provider for the purpose of the Children of the 2020s Provider Survey?"

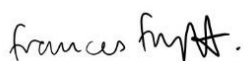
Where necessary, the parents were reassured that *"Your child will be named to the provider to understand which staff work with them and how many hours they attend. However, we will not ask any information about their development or individual learning."*

We hope that you will join thousands of other early years settings across England in taking part in this survey. The information you provide will help improve early education practice in England and add to research knowledge about what children need to support their development.

Yours sincerely,



Pasco Fearon
Study Director, UCL



Frances Forsyth
Project Manager, Department for Education

More information

What is Children of the 2020s?

Children of the 2020s is a national study of around 8,500 children born in England at the start of the 2020s. The study aims to understand how their experiences and circumstances affect early development. We surveyed families when children were around 9 months, 2 years, 3 years, 4 years and will be following them up again at age 5. This is an important time for us to understand how children are developing, and the factors that help them, eventually, to be ready for school. Find out more at <https://children2020s.ipsos.com/>

Who is running this study?

The study commissioned by the Department for Education, is led by University College London (UCL), and the independent research organisation, Ipsos, is helping collect the data. The universities of Cambridge, Oxford and Birkbeck are also partners in the study. Further information about Ipsos can be found at: www.ipsos.com/en-uk

What does taking part involve?

We will telephone your setting to complete a short telephone interview between now and the end of May. This will take around 20 minutes. If the time is not suitable when we call, we can arrange to call back at another time. A preparation sheet is included with this letter to explain the information we will ask for. We will ask for some general information about your setting and staff, and for some information about the class or room the study child/children attend(s).

What if I've been asked to take part in another survey about childcare?

DfE regularly collects information from early years providers. You may recently have been invited to take part in the Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers 2026. Please note these are different surveys, each collecting important information about different aspects of early childhood education and care. We hope that you will be able to take part in both of them. You will be able to schedule a telephone appointment with our researcher at a convenient time for you.

Your privacy

The information you give us will be held securely and will be treated in strict confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation. Data from the Children of the 2020s Survey of Provision for 4-Year-Olds will be anonymised and made available securely by the Department for Education to suitably qualified researchers' conducting legitimate research on children's development in the public interest. Personal data identifying you or your provider will never be given to these researchers. This information will be used solely for research purposes. Any information you provide during this research will NOT be used for marketing, nor will we sell or pass on your information to any third party. Please see the Privacy Notice for further information about how your data will be used, how long it will be held, and your rights under data protection laws: <https://children2020s.ipsos.com/wp-content/uploads/Early-Education-Privacy-Policy.pdf>

Do I have to take part?

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you can withdraw your consent to take part at any time without having to give a reason. You can choose not to do this survey. To withdraw please let us know using the contact information below. If you withdraw from the study any data already collected will continue to be used unless you explicitly request that we delete it.

Who has approved this research?

The Research Ethics Committee of UCL, an independent group of people to protect your safety, rights, wellbeing and dignity. To make a complaint please email ethics@ucl.ac.uk or write to Office of the Vice-Provost (Research), University College London, 2 Taviton Street, London, WC1H 0BT. Include reference number 23805/001.

Any questions?

If you would like to find out more about the study, please visit: children2020s.ipsos.com. You can also contact Ipsos at children2020s.ipsos.com or on Freephone 0800 056 8184. When contacting us please include your reference number which is at the top of the first page of this letter.