Early Child Development Statistics
Scotland 2018/19
An Official Statistics release for Scotland

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About this release
This release by Public Health Scotland provides an update on children’s development as assessed during 27-30 month child health reviews, and reports for the first time on child development at the 13-15 month and 4-5 year reviews. The latest information presented comes from reviews provided to children becoming eligible for review between April 2018 and March 2019.

Main Points

- In 2018/19, 12% of children undergoing a 13-15 month review, and 15% of children undergoing a 27-30 month review, had a concern recorded about at least one area of their development. At the 27-30 month review this proportion has fallen from 19% in 2013/14.
- At 13-15 months most concerns were recorded about gross motor (6%), and speech, language and communication development (5%). At 27-30 months most concerns were recorded about speech, language and communication (10%), and emotional and behavioural development (5%).

At the 27-30 month review

- Children living in the most deprived areas of Scotland (22%) were much more likely than those living in the least deprived areas (8%) to have a concern recorded about their development.

Percentage of children with any developmental concern recorded at 27-30 month review by deprivation level, Scotland, 2018/19
• Boys (19%) were almost twice as likely as girls (10%) to have a concern recorded about their development.
• Children who were looked after by their Local Authority (28%) were twice as likely as non-looked after children (14%) to have a developmental concern, reflecting the broader vulnerability, and generally poor health, of this group of children.

Background
Early child development is influenced by both biological factors (such as being born premature) and environmental factors (such as the parenting and opportunities for play and exploration children receive). Problems with early child development are important as they are strongly associated with long-term health, educational, and wider social difficulties.

Detecting developmental problems early provides the best opportunity to support children and families to improve outcomes. There is good evidence that parenting support and enriched early learning opportunities can improve outcomes for children with, or at risk of, developmental delay. There is also increasing evidence that intensive early interventions for children with serious developmental problems can also improve outcomes.

All children in Scotland are offered the child health programme which includes a series of child health reviews. Health Visitors usually provide reviews for preschool children, including an assessment of children’s development at 13-15 months, 27-30 months and 4-5 years. These reviews involve asking parents about their child’s progress, carefully observing the child, and supporting parents to complete a structured questionnaire about the child’s development. At the end of the review Health Visitors record whether they have any concerns about each area of the child’s development.

Information for parents on early child development, and promoting good development, is available through Ready Steady Baby, Ready Steady Toddler, and Parent Club.

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Further Information
Data from this publication are available from the publication page on our website and in the interactive data visualisation.

PHS publishes a wide range of information on Child Health including infant feeding, immunisations, and Primary 1 Body mass Index (BMI). Further information is available on our website.

The next release of this publication will be in April 2021.

PHS and Official Statistics
Public Health Scotland (PHS) is the principal and authoritative source of statistics on health and care services in Scotland. PHS is designated by legislation as a producer of ‘Official Statistics’. Our official statistics publications are produced to a high professional standard and comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics. Further information about our statistics.