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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

**CHILDREN'S DAY CARE FACILITIES AT 31st MARCH 2002:
ENGLAND****Introduction and Summary**

This Statistical First Release was scheduled to contain figures on numbers of day care providers and places in England at 31st March 2002. The figures for 2002 are not reliable enough for publication.

Background

Local Authorities (LAs) were responsible for the registration and inspection of children's day care facilities until these responsibilities were transferred to OFSTED in September 2001. The figures on children's day care facilities up to and including 2001 were derived from LA estimates returned to DfES by LA Social Service Departments. There is no equivalent source of data for 2002.

Figures for 2002 on numbers of childcare providers and places can be derived from the detailed individual provider data that LAs transferred to OFSTED and new registrations. However, the data that OFSTED received from LAs were of mixed quality and it will not be until the end of the transition period in March 2003 that OFSTED will have a fully quality assured register of childcare providers.

In announcing the date of publication of the figures for 2002 in advance, DfES ran the risk that the figures would not meet the relevant National Statistics quality standards; in short, they would not be fit for this purpose. The work by DfES statisticians and their colleagues at OFSTED indicates that is the case on this occasion. Not only has there been a change in the source of the data, which might be expected to introduce a discontinuity in the time series, but also OFSTED is only part way through their data-cleansing programme of the underlying database of childcare providers. National estimates of numbers of childcare providers and places could therefore be misleading if published now.

DfES statisticians are working with colleagues at OFSTED to determine as quickly as possible whether and, if so, when and how to release figures for 2002 and how these figures will relate to those for 1997-2001. The outcome of this work will be announced through National Statistics Updates and the DfES statistical web site by October 2002.

A National Statistics Quality Review of Early Years and Childcare is underway and will cover the needs of users and the extent to which these are met by National Statistics. This review is scheduled for completion in April 2003.

1997-2001

Figures for 1997-2001 were published in SFR 33/2001 "Children's Day Care Facilities at 31st March 2001: England (Provisional Estimates)", which is available through DfES's statistical web site, click here:

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/statistics/DB/SFR/s0276/index.html>