



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

STATISTICS

Flying Start: April 2020 to March 2021

The report provides a statistical overview of how the programme is working for April 2020 to March 2021.

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Introduction

Flying Start is the Welsh Government early years programme aimed at improving outcomes for families with children under 4 years of age in some of the most disadvantaged areas of Wales.

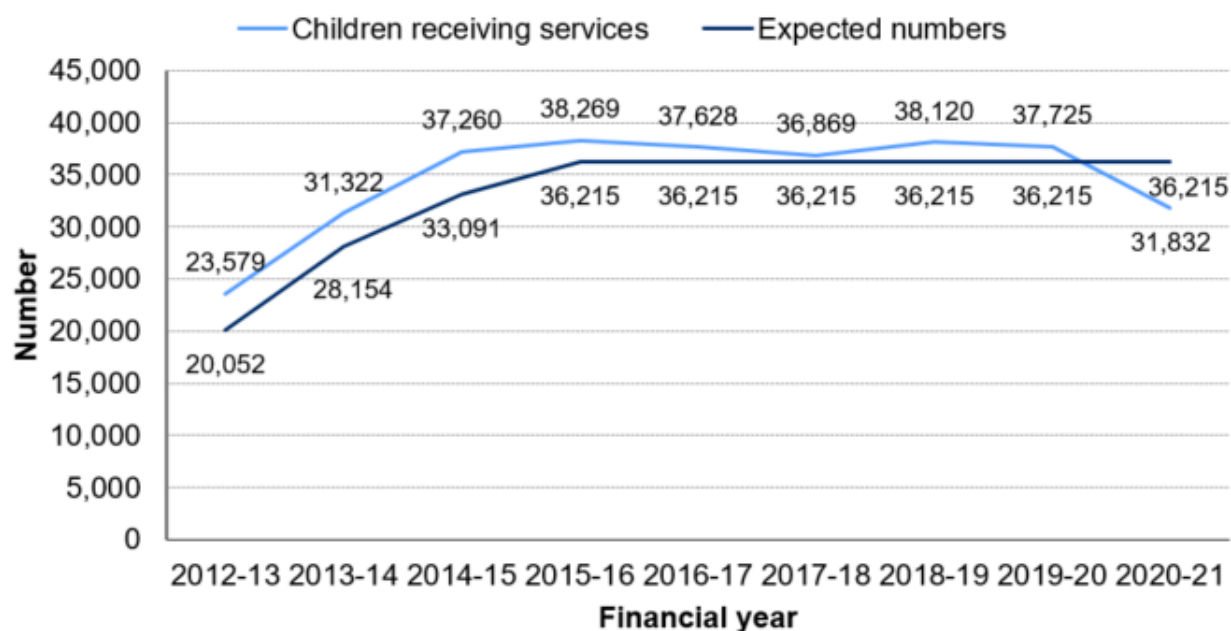
The purpose of this statistical release is to provide evidence for policy development; to allow local authorities to monitor and benchmark their service provision against other local authorities in Wales; and to inform for the public about provision of the Flying Start programme.

The main source of data used in this statistical release is management information collected via the Welsh Government Flying Start Data Monitoring Return directly from local authorities. This data collection started in 2012-13. Supplementary data is sourced from the National Community Child Health Database, the Pupil Level Annual School Census, the Child Measurement Programme, and the Coverage of Vaccination Evaluation Rapidly (COVER) report.

The financial year 2020-21 was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This led to significant changes in the way Flying Start services were offered and to data collection requirements, which were informed by Welsh Government guidance. This needs to be considered when using this year's data and caution is advised when making comparisons with previous years. More details are provided in the [quality and methodology information section](#).

Children receiving Flying Start services

Chart 1: Number of children in receipt of Flying Start services, 2012-13 to 2020-21



Source: Welsh Government Flying Start Data Monitoring Returns

Since 2015-16, the number of children expected to receive Flying Start services, as defined by the [guidance of Flying Start programme](#), has remained unchanged at 36,215. Chart 1 shows that during 2020-21, which was affected by the pandemic, 31,832 children were in receipt of Flying Start services across Wales (Table 1). This was below the expected number and a 16% decrease on the number of children in receipt of services in 2019-20.

While the pandemic has affected the number of children receiving Flying Start services across Wales, just under two thirds (64%) of the annual change was due to decreases in Torfaen, Cardiff and Swansea local authorities.

The number and percentage of children on Flying Start health visitor caseloads varies by local authority area. Table 1 shows that 41% of children aged under 4 in Merthyr Tydfil were on Flying Start health visitor caseloads (the highest in Wales), compared to 14% in Rhondda Cynon Taf (the lowest in Wales).

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The total number of children in receipt of Flying Start services will be affected by the number of children aged under 4 years in the general population of Wales, which has fallen between 1.2% and 2.5% each year since 2016.

As children may move in or out of Flying Start areas during the year, this means that the total number of children counted as receiving Flying Start services, may not actually receive services for the duration of a whole year.

Table 1: Selected Flying Start programme indicators by local authority, population and caseload, 2019-20 and 2020-21 (MS Excel)

Flying Start health visiting service

Flying Start children up to age 4 on the health visitor caseload were seen an average of 5.1 times during 2020-21 by health visitors and a further 2.1 times by members of the wider health team, an increase since 2019-20 (Table 2). Overall nearly 24,000 (or 12%) more contacts were made in 2020-21 than in 2019-20.

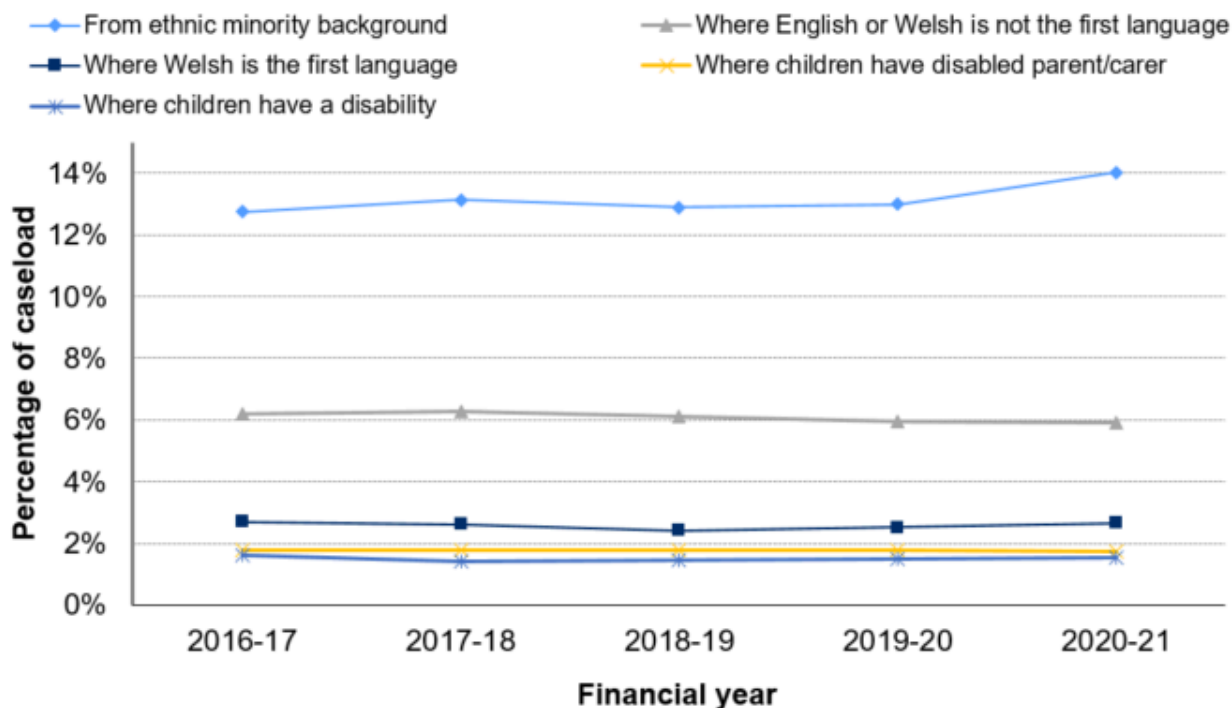
In 2020-21, this varied by local authority from 1.8 health visitor visits per child in Denbighshire to 7.5 in Gwynedd, and 0.1 wider health team visits per child in Denbighshire to 9.2 in Bridgend. Rhondda Cynon Taf are piloting a new health visiting model and data for visits per child is not comparable with other local authorities, see quality and methodology information section for more detail.

Flying Start health visitor caseloads are capped at 110 children whereas health visitors working outside Flying Start may have up to 350 children on their caseloads.

Data on some of the characteristics of the children and families of children on Flying Start caseloads are collected by local authorities and have been included in the release for the first time this year.

Table 2: Selected Flying Start programme indicators by local authority, face to face contacts, 2019-20 and 2020-21 (MS Excel)

Chart 2: Percentage of Flying Start caseload by ethnicity, Welsh language and disability, 2016-17 to 2020-21



Source: Welsh Government Flying Start Data Monitoring Returns

At the Wales level there has been little change for most categories over the last five years. The percentage of caseload from ethnic minority backgrounds has the largest increase but only has a marginal upward trend.

In Wales, in 2020-21

The percentage of caseload where children were from an ethnic minority background was 14%. This is 1 percentage point more than the previous year. For comparison, the **2011 Census** estimated that 8% of children aged 0 to 4 in Wales were from an ethnic minority. Also, data from the **National Community Child Health Database** estimates that between 10% and 11% of new-borns in Wales born between 2018 and 2020 were from an ethnic minority.

The percentage of caseload where children were from families where Welsh is the first language was 3%. Broadly unchanged from the previous year.

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The percentage of caseload where children were from families where English or Welsh is not the first language was 6%. This is the same as the previous year.

The percentage of caseload where children have a disabled parent/carer was 2%. Broadly unchanged from the previous year.

The percentage of caseload where the child was disabled was 2%. This is the same as the previous year.

Data for all local authorities is included in Table 3, and previous years' data is available in Annex Table 1.

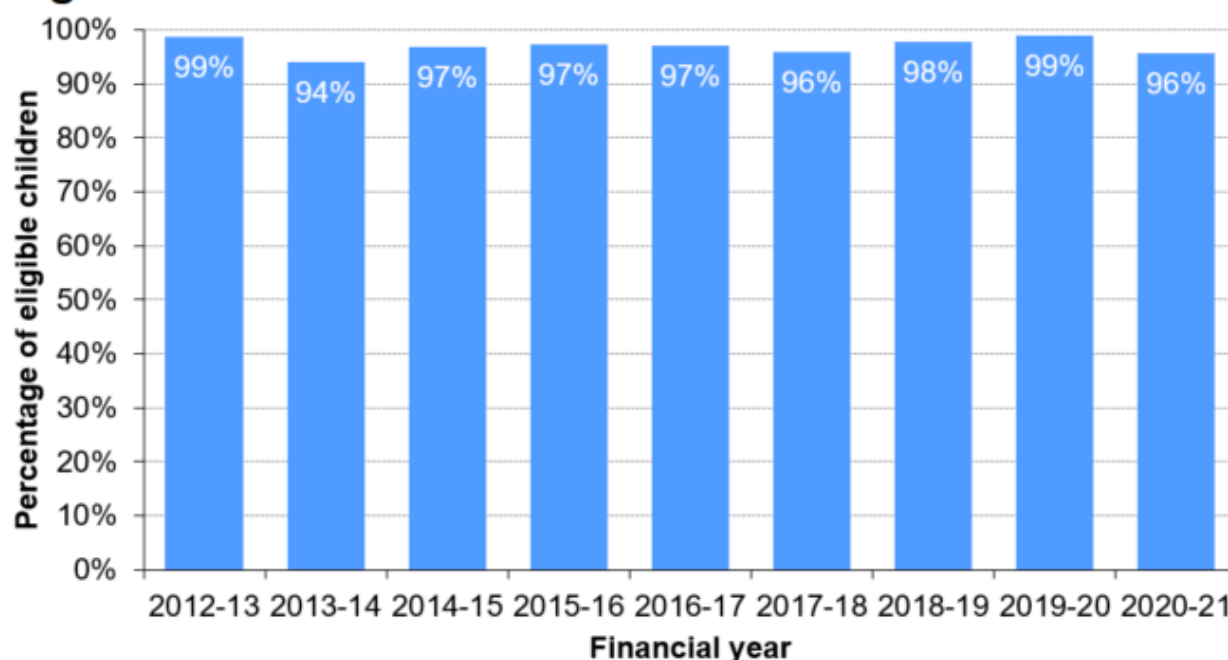
Table 3: Selected Flying Start programme indicators by local authority, caseload, 2019-20 and 2020-21 (MS Excel)

Annex tables: Selected Flying Start programme indicators by local authority, caseload, 2016-17 to 2018-19 (MS Excel)

Childcare

The core Flying Start childcare offer is that quality childcare is offered to parents of all eligible 2 to 3 year olds for 2 ½ hours a day, 5 days a week for 39 weeks of the year. In addition, there should be at least 15 sessions of provision for the family during the school holidays. A family can choose to take-up either the full offer or a reduced offer, if only some of the sessions are needed.

Chart 3: Number of full or reduced offers of Flying Start provided childcare made as a percentage of newly eligible children 2012-13 to 2020-21



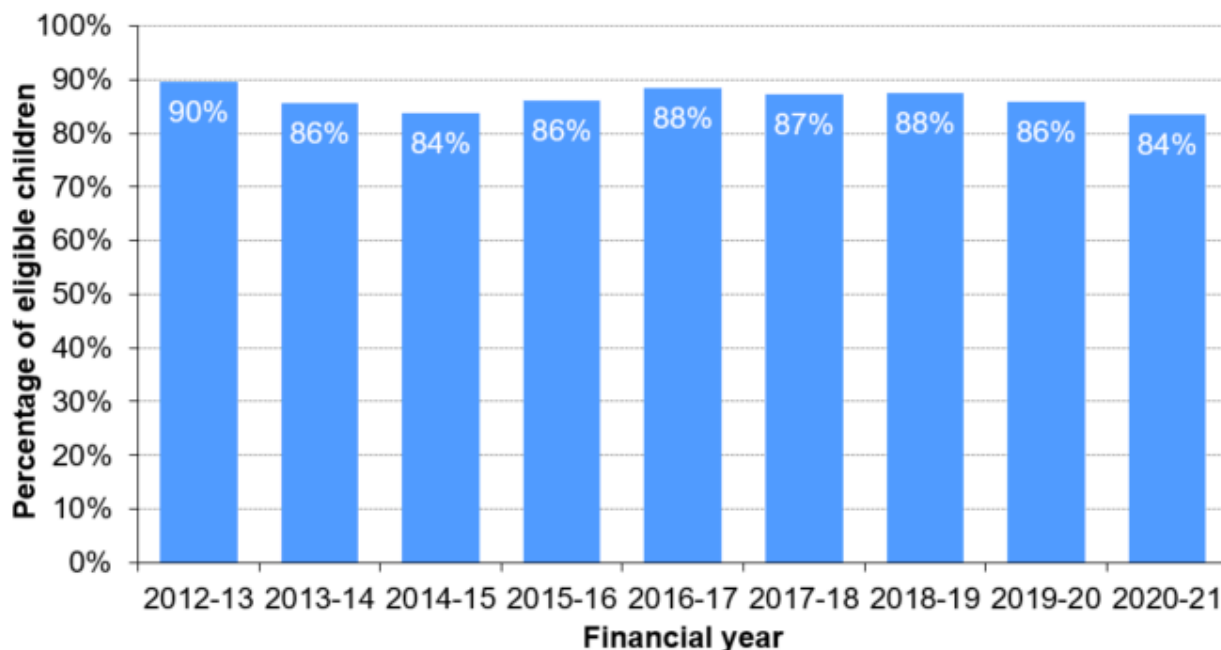
Source: Welsh Government Flying Start Data Monitoring Returns

The percentage of eligible children offered Flying Start-provided childcare has decreased since last year and was 96% in 2020-21.

Childcare offers were made to more than 95% of eligible children in 18 local authorities. This varied between local authorities with 13 local authorities offering all eligible children childcare, while 74% of eligible children were offered childcare in Newport (the lowest in Wales).

While childcare offers are made by local authorities, it is the parents/guardians' choice whether to accept the offer.

Chart 4: Percentage of children taking up Flying Start provided childcare, 2012-13 to 2020-21



Source: Welsh Government Flying Start Data Monitoring Returns

The percentage of children taking up Flying Start-provided childcare has decreased slightly over the last three years, and was 84% in 2020-21.

This varied by local authority from 100% of children taking up Flying Start-provided childcare in Conwy, Neath and Monmouthshire (the highest rates in Wales) to 49% in Ceredigion (the lowest rate in Wales).

Data for all local authorities is included in [Table 4: Selected Flying Start programme indicators by local authority, childcare, 2019-20 and 2020-21 \(MS Excel\)](#).

Parenting and speech, language and communication

Every family with a Flying Start child must be offered formal parenting support at least on an annual basis. In addition to the formal parenting offer, other

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parenting support may be delivered. This may include informal parenting support, bespoke enhanced one-to-one sessions and informal drop-in sessions, depending on need. Formal and informal structured courses are defined as those with a structured curriculum and a set start and end date.

In 2020-21 the take-up of courses offered to parents of Flying Start children was 69% for formal structured parenting courses and 79% for informal structured parenting/speech, language and communication (SLC) courses.

Local authority data is available in [Table 5: Parenting courses offered by local authority, 2020-21 \(MS Excel\)](#).

Births in Flying Start areas

In 2020, 24% of live births in Wales were to mothers who are resident in Flying Start areas, no change since 2019.

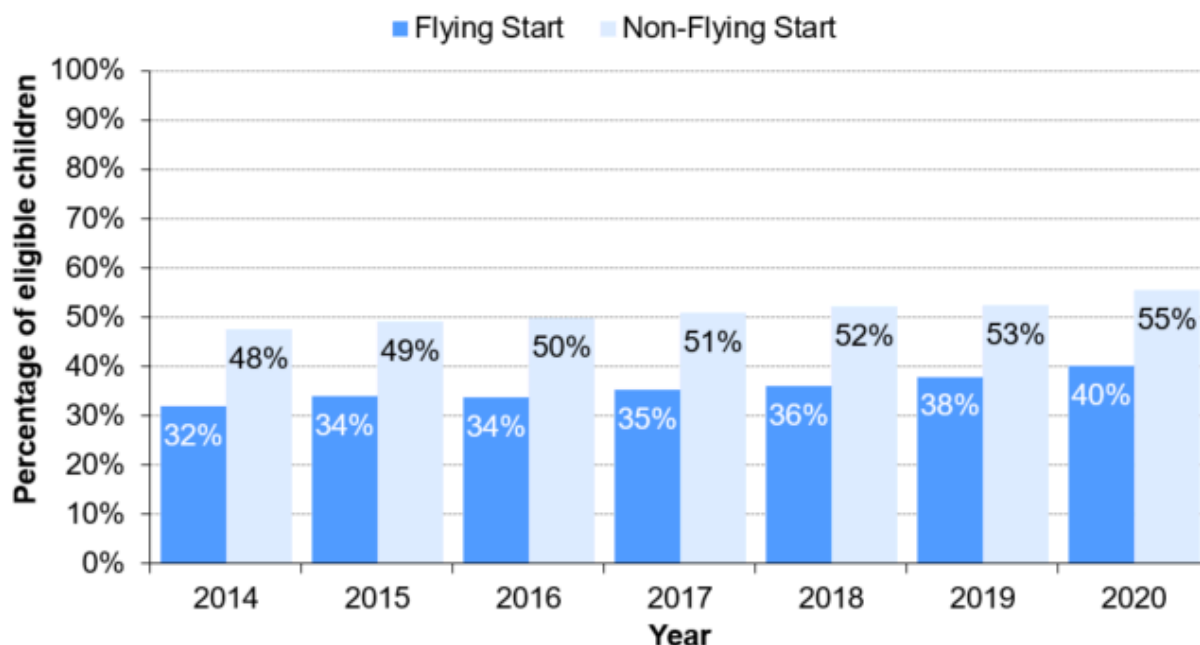
In 2020, the percentage of live births to mothers resident in Flying Start areas ranged between 39% in Merthyr Tydfil (highest in Wales) and 14% in Monmouthshire (lowest in Wales). In general, this reflects the coverage of the programme in each local authority.

Local authority data is available in [Table 6: Live births to Welsh residents in Flying Start and non-Flying Start areas, 2019 and 2020 \(MS Excel\)](#).

Health outcomes: infant feeding

Breastfeeding is recognised as being of crucial importance for the health of babies and their mothers. The percentage of babies breastfed at 10 days of age is one of the maternity indicators used to benchmark local health board maternity services.

Chart 5: Percentage of babies born to mothers living in Flying Start and non-Flying Start areas, receiving any breast milk at 10 days old, 2014 to 2020 (a) (b)



Source: National Community Child Health Database (NCCHD)

(a) The percentages are of the total live births minus births with no stated breastfeeding status: 14% had no stated breastfeeding status at 10 days in 2014, 4% in 2015 and 2016, 9% in 2017, 8% in 2018, 13% in 2019 and 13% in 2020.

(b) 'Any breast milk' consists of combined milk feeding (breast milk plus artificial milk) plus those who receive exclusively breast milk (nothing else except water).

In 2020, four in ten (40%) babies born to mothers living in Flying Start areas were fed any breast milk at 10 days old, compared to over half (55%) of those in non-Flying Start areas.

The rate of breastfeeding at 10 days has been increasing at a similar rate in babies resident in both Flying Start and non-Flying Start areas. Over the course of the seven year time series, the gap between the two groups has remained relatively stable with the rate either 15 or 16 percentage points lower in Flying Start areas.

The percentage of mothers living in Flying Start areas who were breastfeeding at 10 days varied at local authority level from 59% in Ceredigion (highest in

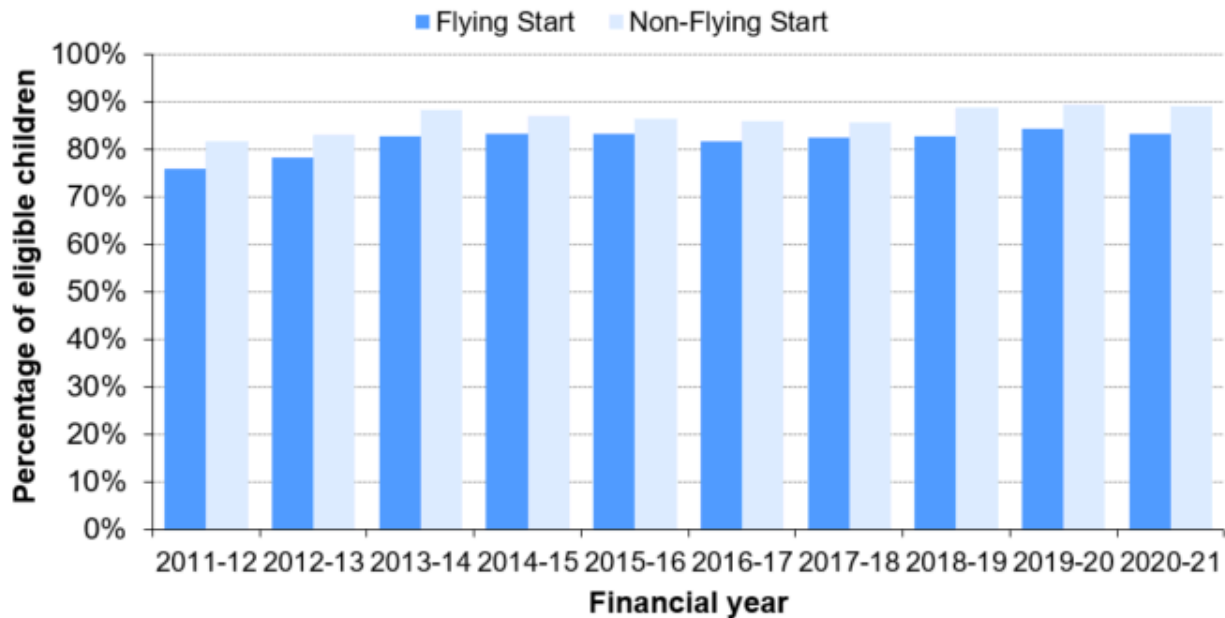
Wales) to 24% in Wrexham (lowest in Wales).

Local authority data is available in [Table 7: Number and percentage of babies born to mothers living in Flying Start / non Flying Start areas who received any breast milk at 10 days old by local authority, 2020 \(MS Excel\)](#).

Health outcomes: uptake of routine childhood immunisation

Vaccines are offered to all children, as part of the routine childhood immunisation schedule, to protect them against Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis, Polio, Haemophilus influenzae (Hib), Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Meningitis C and Pneumococcal infection (PCV). Vaccinations are given according to a routine childhood immunisation schedule starting 8 weeks after birth, and the aim is for all children to be fully immunised by their fourth birthday.

Chart 6: Percentage of children in Flying Start and non-Flying Start areas that are fully immunised at 4th birthday, 2011-12 to 2020-21



Source: Public Health Wales COVER report; National Community Child Health Database (NCCHD) (denominator)

In 2020-21, 83% of children living in Flying Start areas were fully immunised at age 4 compared to 89% of children living in non-Flying Start areas.

The percentage of children living in Flying Start areas who were fully immunised at age 4 varied at local authority level from 93% in Anglesey (highest in Wales) to 74% in Cardiff (lowest in Wales).

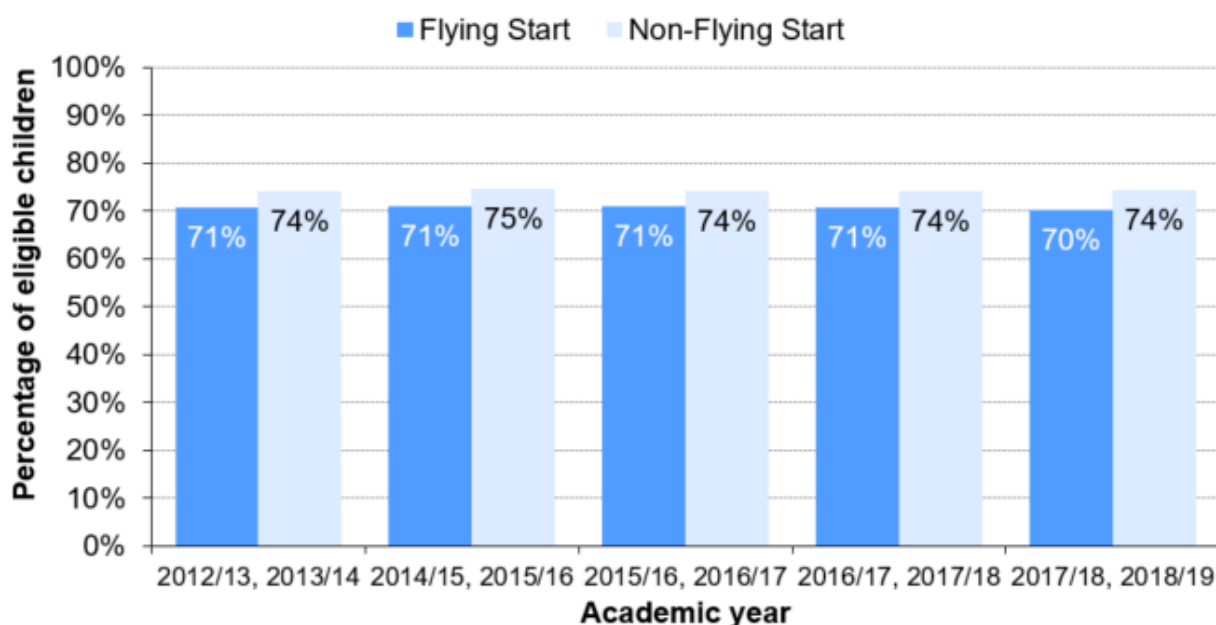
In most local authorities (20 out of 22) the uptake rates were higher for children living in non-Flying Start areas than in Flying Start areas.

Local authority data is available in [Table 8: Number and percentage of children living in Flying Start / non Flying Start areas who are fully immunised by their 4th birthday by local authority, 2019-20 and 2020-21 \(MS Excel\)](#).

Health outcomes: healthy weight

The **Child Measurement Programme for Wales** is a surveillance programme set up in 2011 when the Welsh Government asked Public Health Wales to undertake a national height and weight measuring programme for Wales, to give a better understanding about how children in Wales are growing. The programme standardises the way in which primary school children (aged 4 and 5) are measured across Wales.

Chart 7: Prevalence of children in ‘healthy weight’ categories for children aged 4 to 5 years resident within Flying Start and non-Flying Start areas, 2012/13 to 2018/19 (a) (b)



Source: Child Measurement Programme (CMP) for Wales 2012/13 to 2018/19 produced by Public Health Wales Observatory, using CMP data (NWIS).

(a) ‘Healthy weight’ includes healthy weight or underweight.

(b) Two academic years’ data are combined to increase the sample size.

Data from the Child Measurement Programme shows that the percentage of children living in Flying Start areas who have a healthy weight has been consistently lower than children living in non-Flying Start areas since data was

first collected.

Due to organisational changes in Public Health Wales in response to the pandemic, the latest data available is for 2017/2018 and 2018/19 academic years combined.

70% of children aged 4 to 5 living in Flying Start areas had a healthy weight compared to 74% in non-Flying Start areas.

The data shows that there is little difference between the percentage of boys and girls with healthy weights in both Flying Start areas and non-Flying Start areas.

Local authority data broken down by sex is available in **Table 9: Prevalence of children in 'healthy weight' categories for children aged 4 to 5 years resident within Flying Start and non-Flying Start areas, 2017/18 and 2018/19 combined (MS Excel)**.

Education: children recorded on roll at a maintained school

The numbers of Flying Start children starting Foundation Phase (the statutory curriculum for all 3 to 7 year olds in Wales in both maintained and non-maintained schools) measures the degree to which Flying Start children are taking up early years education opportunities.

In 2020-21, 91% of children at age three living in Flying Start programme areas were recorded on maintained school rolls compared to 87% of children at age three living in non-Flying Start areas.

The percentage of children living in Flying Start areas on maintained school rolls has remained fairly steady throughout the duration of the programme, varying between 91% and 94%.

Local authority data is available in **Table 10: Number and percentage of**

children aged 3, living in Flying Start / non Flying Start areas and recorded on roll at a maintained school in PLASC in January 2020 and in January 2021 (age as at previous 31 August) (MS Excel).

Quality and methodology information

A full [quality report](#) is published alongside this statistical release.

The whole of 2020-21 was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and included 24 weeks of lockdowns. Services offered and data collected were affected in various ways, including:

- some parenting and SLC programmes were not able to be completed
- some parents chose not to take-up childcare which they may have accepted prior to the pandemic
- some health visitors were redeployed to different roles to help with the pandemic
- some Flying Start staff would have been self-isolating, shielding or unwell which affected the service offered
- some contacts recorded as face-to-face contacts may have taken place over the phone or virtually
- some families did not initially have the technology available to access virtual Flying Start services
- the number of Flying Start health visitor contacts were reduced in line with Welsh Government guidance
- no home visits or clinics were allowed during lockdown periods
- general ICT issues in local authorities were not resolved during the early stages of the pandemic as resources were under increased pressure

These factors need to be considered when using data for 2020-21, and caution is advised when making comparisons with previous years.

Health visiting in Rhondda Cynon Taf

Rhondda Cynon Taf are piloting a new health visiting model which means that data for 2020-21 is collected on a different basis to previous years. Caution is advised when comparing Rhondda Cynon Taf data with previous years and when comparing with other local authorities in 2020-21. Further details are in the [quality report](#).

Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales. The Act puts in place seven wellbeing goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators (“national indicators”) that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the wellbeing goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before Senedd Cymru. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the wellbeing goals and associated technical information is available in the [Wellbeing of Wales report](#).

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local wellbeing assessments and local wellbeing plans.

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