

user guide

Indicator 1
 Infant mortality rate:
 deaths up to 1 year per
 1,000 live births (2005)

3.70

6.56

Indicator 2
 U18 Conception Rate
 (2004)

71.80

54.44

Indicator 3
 5+ A*-C inc. English &
 Mathematics (2006)

37.60

33.27

Indicator 4
 Total absence rate at
 secondary schools
 (2005/06)

8.12

9.02

Name	"Closeness"	Infant mortality rate: deaths up to 1 year per 1,000 live births (2005)	Indicator 1
Nottingham City	Close	7.50	9.87
Sandwell	Close	7.70	9.72
Greenwich	Close	3.80	9.33
Southampton	Close	5.00	8.96
Hull	Close	4.40	10.74
Middlesbrough...	Close		10.12
Birmingham			7.69
Walsall			7.99
Coventry			8.24
Peterborough			

Children's Services Statistical Neighbour Benchmarking Tool

practitioner user guide



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The Children's Services Statistical Neighbour
Benchmarking Tool and the full report are
both available from the DfES website at:
[www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STA/t000712/
index.shtml](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STA/t000712/index.shtml)

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What are statistical neighbours?

Statistical neighbour models provide one method for benchmarking progress. For each local authority (LA), these models designate a number of other LAs deemed to have similar characteristics. These designated LAs are known as statistical neighbours. Any LA may compare its performance (as measured by various indicators) against its statistical neighbours to provide an initial guide as to whether their performance is above or below the level that might be expected.

Currently, Ofsted provide a statistical neighbour model based on census data and the Institute of Public Finance comparator councils provide a model based on deprivation and demography data. But there is now a need for a new model based on the five Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes, which embraces the key elements of the existing models and provides LAs and their partner agencies with a tool for assessing and comparing their performance with their statistical neighbours. Ideally, this new model would supersede the existing models within the context of children's services and provide a single starting point for benchmarking performance.

What is the tool?

This tool has been specifically designed for children's services authorities so that the statistical neighbours assigned to each LA are appropriate for comparing performance in terms of the five ECM outcomes.

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) was commissioned by DfES to develop this tool, to enable LAs to identify other LAs similar to themselves in terms of the socio-economic characteristics of their area. These comparative authorities are termed statistical neighbours.

How do I use the tool?

The tool has been created in Excel. In order to identify the statistical neighbours for your LA, open the Excel Tool and go to the sheet labelled 'Neighbour Finder'.



Select your LA from the box highlighted in yellow on the left hand side of the upper table.

Select Local Authority
Barking & Dagenham
Average for statistical neighbours

The lower table will automatically update and display your statistical neighbours, together with a measure of ‘closeness’ (explained below).

Closest Demographic Neighbours						The % of all children aged 10-17 living in the local police force area who had been given a final warning / reprimand / caution or convicted during twelve months ending 30 September 2005
Rank (1=Closest)	Name	"Closeness"	Infant mortality rate: deaths up to 1 year per 1,000 live births (2005)	U18 Conception Rate (2004)	5+ A*-C inc. English & Mathematics (2006)	
1	Nottingham City	Close	7.50	72.80	28.10	9.87
2	Sandwell	Close	7.70	56.60	29.60	9.72
3	Greenwich	Close	3.80	64.70	31.30	9.32
4	Southampton	Close	5.00	56.10	35.90	8.96
5	Hull	Close	4.40	25.60	25.80	10.74
6	Middlesbrough	Close	7.30	61.60	30.10	4.53
7	Birmingham	Close	7.80	51.50	40.70	7.69
8	Walsall	Close	10.20	48.70	34.80	7.99
9	Coventry	Close	4.40	52.80	37.90	5.24
10	Peterborough City	Close	7.00	53.80	38.90	7.50

It is currently possible to compare the performance of your LA to the performance of your statistical neighbours for a number of outcome measures (e.g. infant mortality rate). To select the outcome measure you wish to compare performance for, click on any of the boxes highlighted in yellow on the right hand side of the upper table (labelled Outcomes 1 to 5).

Select Local Authority	Indicator 1	Indicator 2	Indicator 3	Indicator 4	Indicator 5
Barking & Dagenham	Infant mortality rate: deaths up to 1 year per 1,000 live births (2005)	U18 Conception Rate (2004)	5+ A*-C inc. English & Mathematics (2006)	Total absence rate at secondary schools (2005/06)	The % of all children aged 10-17 living in the local police force area who had been given a final warning / reprimand / caution or convicted during twelve months ending 30 September 2005
Average for statistical neighbours	3.70	71.80	37.60	8.12	3.25
	6.56	54.42	33.27	9.02	3.99

The outcomes information displayed in the corresponding column of the lower table will automatically update enabling you to make comparisons. The last row of the upper table displays the average for the chosen outcome measures across all ten of your statistical neighbours.

Average for statistical neighbours	6.56	54.42	33.27	9.02	3.99
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It should be noted that the display of outcome information is intended as a simple starting point for viewing performance to support benchmarking work. This is not to imply that further analysis of performance information such as comparison with targets or looking at trends over time is not required.

The sheet labelled ‘Regional’ provides information on the similarity of your LA to all other LAs in the same government office region. This sheet is automatically updated to match the LA selected in the upper table of the first sheet. Each LA in the same region is listed in order of similarity. A measure of dissimilarity (explained below) is also shown.

Neighbour Finder **Regional** Metadata

Children’s Services Statistical Neighbour Benchmarking Tool

Note: This sheet automatically updates based on selections in "Neighbour Finder"

Local Authority	Region
Barking & Dagenham	London
Other Local Authorities in Region	"Closeness"
Greenwich	Close
Enfield	Somewhat close
Hillingdon	Somewhat close
Bexley	Not Close
Sutton	Not Close
Hounslow	Not Close
Havering	Not Close
Waltham Forest	Not Close
Croydon	Not Close
Bromley	Not Close
Redbridge	Not Close
Barnet	Not Close
Merton	Not Close
Islington	Not Close
Ealing	Not Close
Hammersmith & Fulham	Not Close
Wandsworth	Not Close
Kingston on Thames	Not Close
Camden	Not Close
Haringey	Not Close
Newham	Not Close
Lewisham	Not Close
Westminster	Not Close
Southwark	Not Close
Richmond upon Thames	Not Close
Harrow	Not Close
Kensington & Chelsea	Not Close
Hackney	Not Close
Brent	Not Close
Lambeth	Not Close
City of London	Not Close
Tower Hamlets	Not Close

Which outcomes can be explored using these statistical neighbours?

The tool defines a single set of statistical neighbours for each LA. These neighbours should be appropriate for use in benchmarking performance in most of the outcomes described in the ECM outcomes framework, but it does not provide a reasonable benchmark for the following outcomes:

- Re-registrations on the Child Protection Register
- % of children who have been looked after for more than two and a half years and of those, have been in the same placement for at least two years or placed for adoption
- % of pupils permanently excluded from school.

The reason for this is that the relationship between the levels of performance on these measures and the kind of socio-economic variables used to define statistical neighbours is extremely weak. Because of this, these outcomes should be benchmarked against national averages rather than the performance of statistical neighbours. The reason for the weak relationship between these outcomes and the demographic information used to define statistical neighbours is probably due to the very small numbers of children involved in these outcomes. It is expected that the statistical neighbours that have been provided would be appropriate for use in benchmarking almost any outcome based on a reasonably large number of children or young people.

It should also be noted that since statistical neighbours are largely defined by the economic characteristics of local authorities, they should not be used to benchmark outcomes concerned with levels of material deprivation, low income or unemployment.

What does 'Closeness' signify?

The third column in the lower table of the tool expresses the degree of similarity between your chosen LA and its statistical neighbours in terms of the measure defined above. The five levels of closeness are defined to match roughly the categorisation of similarity used by a previous set of statistical neighbours defined by Ofsted. Local authorities with a greater degree of similarity to your own LA might be expected to provide the best comparison in

terms of performance. However, in order to avoid undue emphasis on the performance of a few statistical neighbours, it is advised that generally speaking a comparison with all ten of the designated statistical neighbours will provide the most robust benchmark for performance measures.

How does this model compare to Ofsted's statistical neighbours?

Forty-six percent of the 1,500 statistical neighbours that have been defined in total were also defined as statistical neighbours for the same local authorities by the model devised by Ofsted in 1998. In other words for most local authorities about half of their statistical neighbours will have changed from those defined by the Ofsted model. This degree of change is to be expected as the data used to define neighbours is somewhat different in each model.

Where can I find further details?

Further details on the process of variable selection and weighting are available in the full report on the development process.



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