

# UNITED KINGDOM

## Country Highlights

### OECD (2009), *Doing Better for Children*



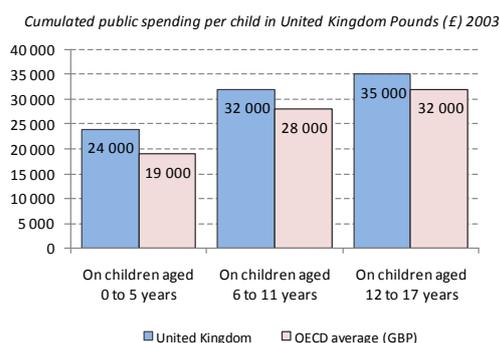
High public spending on child welfare and education in the UK is failing to produce results in many key areas. To give every child the chance of a better future, the government should continue to spend more on younger children and target spending on older children more effectively, according to the OECD.

The UK spends more on children than most OECD countries, at just over 90 000 pounds sterling per child from birth up to the age of 18, compared to an OECD average of just under 80 000 pounds.

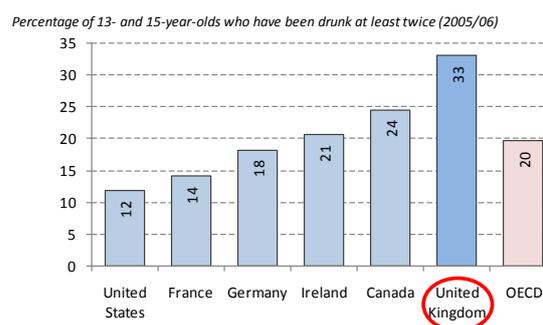
But the proportion of youth not in school, training or in jobs in the UK remains high, at more than one in ten 15 to 19 year-olds. This is the fourth highest rate in the OECD, ahead of Italy, Turkey and Mexico. Education results are also low relative to spending levels. The UK comes out in the middle of OECD comparisons of how well 15 year olds do at school and in terms of the gaps between well and poorly performing pupils.

Underage drinking and teenage pregnancy rates are high. Drunkenness is the highest in the OECD, with one in three 13 and 15 year olds having been drunk at least twice. The UK also reports the fourth highest teen pregnancy rate after Mexico, Turkey and the United States.

**The UK spends more on children than most OECD countries, 2003**



**Drunkenness is the highest in the OECD, with one in three 13 and 15 year olds having been drunk at least twice**



Big differences remain in the United Kingdom in spending between younger and older children. Spending more on young children is more likely to generate positive changes and, indeed, is likely to be fairer for more disadvantaged children. “The UK stands out as increasing early investment in recent years”, according to co-author of the OECD report Mr Dominic Richardson, “but reinforcement of this trend for disadvantaged older children is also needed”. The United Kingdom government should ensure that current high rates of spending on older children are much more effective in meeting the needs of the disadvantaged amongst them.

In other areas, the UK performs well. Children in the United Kingdom are materially fairly well-off. Average family income is higher and child poverty is lower than OECD averages. Children in the United Kingdom also enjoy a high quality of school life. The United Kingdom ranks 4th out of 25 countries for children’s school satisfaction. Rates of bullying are also relatively low.