

# Childcare providers and inspections

Methodology and quality report

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted)

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## Introduction

This paper contains methodology and quality information relevant to Ofsted's official statistics release of childcare providers and inspections data, which is published three times a year. This release can be found at the following webpage: [www.gov.uk/government/collections/early-years-and-childcare-statistics](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/early-years-and-childcare-statistics).

This official statistics release reports on:

- the number of providers on the Early Years Register (EYR) and the Childcare Register
- movement within the early years sector (the number of providers that join or leave the sector)
- the number of childcare places offered by providers on the EYR
- inspection outcomes for all childcare providers in England.

This methodology and quality report should be read in conjunction with the glossary contained within the official statistics release, as it will include helpful information that is not in this report.

## Methodology

Statistics relating to inspection outcomes of providers include inspections completed by the end of the reporting period (31 August, 31 December or 31 March), where the inspection report was published as at the end of the following month (30 September, 31 January or 30 April).

The release reports on inspection outcomes in two ways:

1. The most recent inspection outcomes for all childcare providers that have been inspected and are still registered with Ofsted, as at the end of the reporting period. Inspections completed by the end of the reporting period but where the inspection report was not published at the end of the following month are not included in this analysis. In this case, the outcome of the previous inspection will be included in the analysis instead. The outcome of the most recent inspection will be included in the following release if the inspection report is published.

This information reflects the quality of provision nationally and should be used when making comparisons and examining change over time. Every registered and inspected provider is included in the data once, along with its most recent inspection outcome.

2. Outcomes of childcare inspections in the reporting period. Inspections completed in the most recent reporting period are included in the provisional data if an inspection report was published by the end of the following month. Revised data is published for inspections completed in the previous

reporting period, where the inspection report was published by the end of the month following the current reporting period. Revised data include outcomes of inspections that weren't published in time to be included in the provisional data in the previous publication. More information is provided on reporting periods included in each release in annex A.

Inspection reports of providers judged less than good can take longer to be published, so revised data tend to include weaker outcomes that aren't published in time to be included in provisional data. A higher proportion of providers that leave the sector have a less than good most recent inspection outcome, so this analysis of inspections in a reporting period tends to report a higher level of weaker provision than when looking at the sector as a whole.

This information should not be considered reflective of the quality of provision nationally, as Ofsted plans inspections in a targeted way, which affects the sample of providers inspected in any term. If a provider is inspected twice in the time period, it will appear in the dataset twice and if a provider has since closed or left the EYR, it still appears in this analysis. Data on inspection outcomes in a particular period allows users to report on work completed by Ofsted, but do not allow comparisons of overall quality of early years provision.

Under exceptional circumstances, Ofsted may withhold or withdraw publication of an inspection report. Outcomes of inspections with a report that is withheld or withdrawn, as at the end of the month following the reporting period, are not included in the release.

Data on provider type is taken at the end of the reporting period rather than at the point of inspection. As such, outcomes for EYR inspections can, occasionally, be shown against provider types that would not normally receive these types of inspection. For example, if a provider changed provider type after their inspection but before the end of the reporting period, they would be reported on as the new provider type but with inspection outcomes that related to the provider type they were when inspected.

Similarly, data for providers' locations is also extracted as at the end of the reporting period. As a result, they may have moved address, and possibly local authority, since inspection. Early years and childcare providers are allocated to local authority areas according to their postcode, using the National Statistics Postcode Directory. For a small number of providers however, local authority and region information were not available at the time of this analysis. Consequently, we have categorised these providers as 'Local authority not recorded' and 'Region not recorded' for the purposes of our statistics.

From September 2012 the process Ofsted used to record childcare places data changed; Ofsted stopped setting conditions at registration, which imposed limits on the number of places providers could offer. Instead, providers must now calculate for

themselves how many places they can offer based on the legal requirements of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Data defaults to six at registration for all new childminder registrations (the maximum allowed under EYFS guidelines for providers with no assistants:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/registration-and-suitability-handbook-childcare-providers](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/registration-and-suitability-handbook-childcare-providers)) and is updated when providers are inspected. Data for providers registered before September 2012 continues to reflect conditions of registration that no longer apply until the information is updated.

## Relevance

Ofsted regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. Ofsted official statistics are released to promote reform and improvement across government through increasing transparency of the work that Ofsted does.

The Childcare Act 2006 gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) responsibility for regulating childminding and childcare on domestic and non-domestic premises in England. It gives HMCI responsibility for the registration and inspection of providers registered on the Early Years Register and the Childcare Register and the responsibility for enforcement where it appears that legal requirements are not being met. These official statistics releases report on early years and childcare inspections under Section 59 and 60 of the Childcare Act 2006 ([www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/contents)).

The aggregation of data for official statistics allows us to communicate to users the key data and messages in inspection outcomes, for example, at different geographical levels and within sub-types of provider. The official statistics draw out the key messages and communicate these in an understandable way appropriate for a wide range of different users. Users are able to interpret and manipulate the data published for their own purposes.

Users of these statistics include the Department for Education (DfE), local authorities, early years and childcare providers and the voluntary sector. Information in this release allows users to track movement in the early years and childcare sector and monitor the provision available at a national and local level. This accurate picture of the provision influences policy decisions about the location and quality of childcare provision.

The inspection outcomes inform central government, local authorities, research institutions and the early years and childcare sector of the quality of provision available. This identifies good practice and targets areas of weak performance. This informs policy development within the DfE and local authorities and among early years providers to address issues and implement strategies to mitigate them. The inspection profiles inform Ofsted framework development and underpin policies to improve standards. The key messages within the official statistics contribute towards the findings in HMCI's annual reports to parliament.

The release reports on childminders, childcare on domestic and non-domestic premises, home childcarers and childminder agencies and reports on childcare inspections carried out since 1 September 2008, when the EYFS was introduced.

The EYFS is the statutory framework for the early education and care of children from birth to the 31 August following their fifth birthday. The Early Years Register and Childcare Register were introduced alongside the EYFS in 2008, as were new early years provider types, judgements and outcomes. All these changes mean that data on providers, places or outcomes before 1 September 2008 is not comparable with data recorded after 1 September 2008.

The EYFS was revised in September 2012, along with a number of amended regulations that set the standard that all early years providers must meet. The September 2012 revision coincided with the start of the current inspection cycle that comes to an end in July 2016.

On 4 November 2013, Ofsted revised the inspection framework to replace the previous 'satisfactory' judgement with the current 'requires improvement' judgement, with the aim to strengthen the impact of inspection and improvement through more frequent inspection and monitoring of early years provision. This framework was implemented until 31 August 2015:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/framework-for-the-regulation-of-provision-on-the-early-years-register](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/framework-for-the-regulation-of-provision-on-the-early-years-register).

A new 'Common inspection framework' across education, skills and early years remit areas was introduced from 1 September 2015:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-inspection-framework-education-skills-and-early-years-from-september-2015](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-inspection-framework-education-skills-and-early-years-from-september-2015).

The data included in the release is generated by Ofsted's regulation and inspection process and is therefore administrative data.

## Meeting user needs

A consultation was carried out in September 2014 on two early years and childcare releases: 'Registered childcare providers and places' and 'Early years and childcare inspections and outcomes'. The purpose of the consultation was to gather users' views on merging the two releases together and revising the timings, content and format of the release to ensure that it continued to meet the needs of stakeholders. The consultation included a set of proposals for revisions to the publication. We engaged with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that the revised publication took into account the needs of all those who have an interest or expertise in the early years sector.

The proposals were widely supported at consultation and the consultation response was published in February 2015. The proposals agreed during this process have been incorporated into the childcare providers and inspections official statistics release from March 2015. The inspection outcomes release (previously a quarterly release)

and the providers and places release (previously twice a year) have been combined and are now published three times a year. The consultation and response are available here: [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/early-years-providers-places-and-inspection-outcomes-statistics](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/early-years-providers-places-and-inspection-outcomes-statistics).

There was an Ofsted-wide user consultation survey in January 2012 on all Ofsted official statistics releases. A report from this consultation can be found here: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141124154759/http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/report-responses-2012-consultation-of-ofsted-official-statistics>

Ofsted welcomes feedback about our statistical releases. If you have any comments, questions or suggestions, please contact the early years team at [childcaredataqueries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:childcaredataqueries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## Coherence and comparability

Ofsted has reported on childcare providers and places information and inspection outcomes as official statistics since 2010. For inspection outcomes data, there has been a number of framework changes since 2010 and these have been reflected in the releases. As a result of framework changes, there are different key judgements recorded at inspection, although an overall effectiveness judgement has been made at early years inspections since 2008.

When these changes have occurred, users have been alerted via updates in the official statistics introduction and methodology sections of the key findings document. When framework changes have meant direct comparisons have not been possible, then breaks in time-series have been clearly added to tables and charts and explained in the text. When methodological changes have been implemented to improve the output, guidance has been added to footnotes and the key findings document for easy access.

For the inspection outcomes aspect of this release, where statements are made about whether inspection outcomes have declined or improved, they are referring to the most recent relevant outcome and refer to overall effectiveness outcomes only.

Changes that affect how comparable early years data is across time.

- Not all childcare providers are inspected with equal regularity. Ofsted will inspect all providers who were on the EYR on 1 September 2012 at least once by 31 July 2016. Providers who were not on the EYR on 1 September 2012, and have registered after this date, are required to be inspected within a three year period starting from 1 August following their registration. Ofsted will normally inspect all newly-registered providers within 30 months of their registration.
- Ofsted plans inspections in a targeted way, which affects the sample of providers inspected. Inspection outcomes in a particular period should not be considered reflective of the quality of provision nationally.

- As weaker providers tend to be inspected earlier in the inspection cycle, the rate of improvement in most recent inspection outcomes is likely to be greater at the beginning of the inspection cycle and slower towards the end of a cycle, when a larger proportion of providers previously judged good or outstanding are inspected.
- The EYFS was revised on 1 September 2012, along with a number of amended regulations that set the standard that all early years providers must meet. A new inspection framework was introduced, which reduced the number of judgements made to four:
  - overall effectiveness
  - how well the provision meets the needs of the children who attend
  - the contribution of the provision to the well-being of children
  - the effectiveness of the leadership and management.
- On 4 November 2013, Ofsted revised the inspection framework to replace the previous 'satisfactory' judgement with the current 'requires improvement' judgement, and introduced new schedules to re-inspect requires improvement and inadequate providers.
- In September 2014, childminder agencies were introduced and childminders now have the opportunity to de-register with Ofsted and join an agency. This has had little impact on numbers of providers and places.
- Since March 2015, following a public consultation, the frequency of the official statistics has changed. Releases are now published three times a year, corresponding to academic term (1 April – 31 August / 1 September – 31 December/ 1 January – 31 March). This will impact on comparisons to previous releases where time periods and therefore volumes were different.
- A new 'Common inspection framework' across education, skills and early years remit areas was introduced from 1 September 2015, with the following judgements:
  - overall effectiveness
  - quality of teaching, learning and assessment
  - personal development, behaviour and welfare
  - outcomes for children
  - the effectiveness of the leadership and management.
- The overall effectiveness judgement is reported consistently across all frameworks from September 2008 to the current framework.
- The effectiveness of leadership and management is reported consistently from 1 September 2012 to the current framework.
- The personal development, behaviour and welfare judgement is comparable with the judgement from the previous framework the contribution of the provision to the well-being of children.

- The outcomes for children judgement and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment judgement have been made since 1 September 2015 and are not comparable with any previous judgement.

The data for inspected providers at their most recent inspection presented in the official statistics release is also presented in Data View: [www.dataview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.dataview.ofsted.gov.uk).

There is no comparable data published by other producers of official or national statistics.

## Accuracy and reliability

The release reports on the most recent published inspection outcomes of early years and childcare providers and also the outcomes of inspections in a given period. Providers that have not been inspected are included in the providers and places data but are not included in the inspection outcomes data.

If an inspection report has been published but is subsequently withheld as at the cut-off date for the release, then this will not be included in inspection outcomes. Where the inspection report is published after the cut-off date given for the release, the inspection judgement will not be included. These inspections will appear in later releases, after they have been published.

This data is extracted from Ofsted's administrative systems. Errors in recording data and manual data entry may affect the quality of the source data. Technical production of the publications may also result in manual errors.

A rigorous data quality assurance procedure is adopted with the aim of minimising the risk of reporting error. If an error is discovered within the publication, then a note is placed on the website and a corrected version of the document uploaded as soon as possible.

More information on the issues relating to the use of administrative data is available here: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-standards-for-official-statistics](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-standards-for-official-statistics).

Data on the number of places a provider offers is collected at registration and recorded in the Ofsted corporate system Regulatory Support Application (RSA). It can be updated at any time and may be updated at inspection or if a provider notifies us of changes. Aggregated data relies on estimated place numbers for a small number of providers, where actual place numbers are not recorded. Estimates are calculated using the mean average for each provider type, after investigating providers with the largest numbers of places and excluding all outliers with 600 or more places. There may also be small discrepancies in total place numbers due to rounding.

Early years provision run by maintained schools and academies and independent schools may be exempt from registration on the EYR; where this provision is not required to register on the EYR, it will not be included in this release. Exempt providers will be inspected as part of the school inspection and these outcomes are

covered in Ofsted's official statistics on maintained schools and academies and independent schools.

An early years judgement is made at inspections of maintained schools, academies and independent schools that provide education to children in the early years age range. The childcare providers and inspections release does not include this or any other inspection outcomes for maintained schools and academies, independent schools, further education and skills providers or providers of children's social care provision. These are included in separate releases. Further details of these can be found at:

[www.gov.uk/government/statistics?keywords=&topics%5B%5D=all&departments%5B%5D=ofsted&from\\_date=&to\\_date=&commit=Refresh+results](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics?keywords=&topics%5B%5D=all&departments%5B%5D=ofsted&from_date=&to_date=&commit=Refresh+results).

## **Timeliness and punctuality**

Data includes the number of providers and places recorded and inspections that have taken place and been published in the relevant period. To ensure that data is as timely as possible, each release includes the most recent full month of inspections possible.

Data is published at 9.30am on the date pre-announced in the publication schedule: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about/statistics](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about/statistics). Information on any delay in publication can also be found on the publication schedule.

The average production time for this early years and childcare release is approximately four to six weeks. This time includes extracting and cleaning the data, drafting findings, quality assuring all outputs and getting the information on to the gov.uk website.

Publications are also announced on Ofsted's social media channels page.

Pre-release is given in accordance with the Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order (2008). The list of post holders granted pre-release access can be found as a separate document accompanying each release.

## **Accessibility and clarity**

Ofsted releases are published in an accessible format on the gov.uk website. The information is publicly available and there are no restrictions on access to the published data. The report includes numbers of providers and places registered with Ofsted and published outcomes from Ofsted inspections. The data is aimed at keeping users informed of progress of the inspection framework and of changes in composition and quality of the early years and childcare sector.

Supporting underlying data in an accessible format accompany each release to allow users to perform their own analysis. This underlying data consists of provider-level files in Comma Separated Values (csv) format.

## **Performance, cost and respondent burden**

There is no respondent burden in relation to this statistics release as data is a by-product of Ofsted's regulatory and inspection process. The only cost involved is the internal resource involved in collating the release.

## **Confidentiality, transparency and security**

Where sensitive or personal data is held by Ofsted, the disclosure control processes we have in place ensure that this data is not published. Personal details of childminders, domestic childcare providers, home childcarers and providers who have requested anonymity are redacted. A small number of providers of childcare on non-domestic premises also have redacted personal details due to reasons of personal and national safety.

All data releases follow Ofsted's confidentiality and revisions policies that can be found in these locations: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-standards-for-official-statistics](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-standards-for-official-statistics) and [www.gov.uk/government/publications/handling-and-retention-of-ofsted-inspection-evidence](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/handling-and-retention-of-ofsted-inspection-evidence).

## Annex A: reporting periods included in each release

<b>Month of release publication</b>	<b>Reporting period</b>	<b>Provisional data published for the period</b>	<b>Revised data published for the period</b>	<b>Inspection outcomes included if published as at</b>
March	1 Sept – 31 Dec	1 Sept – 31 Dec	1 Apr – 31 Aug	31 Jan
June	1 Jan – 31 Mar	1 Jan – 31 Mar	1 Sept – 31 Dec	30 Apr
Nov	1 Apr – 31 Aug	1 Apr – 31 Aug	1 Jan – 31 Mar	30 Sept