Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers and COVID-19

Technical note

October 2020

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NatCen Social Research

Contents

Introduction

The Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers and COVID-19 (SCEYP COVID) was intended to assess the health of the childcare sector following the government's announcement of the temporary closure of childcare settings in March 2020 as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. The study aimed to assess the impact of COVID-19 on early years settings' opening hours, attendance, income and workforce.

SCEYP COVID consisted of a 5-10 minute web survey asked of a nationally representative sample of group-based providers (GBPs), school-based providers (SBPs), and childminders (CMs) in England.

Sample

The sample design is the same as that taken on the annual Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers in England (SCEYP). The sample for the 2020 SCEYP was drawn in February 2020. However, in March 2020 that study was postponed for 12 months in light of the COVID-19 pandemic before the sample could be issued. The SCEYP COVID study contacted a randomly selected sub-sample of providers from the SCEYP 2020 sample, the design of which followed the approach taken for SCEYP 2019.[1] The original SCEYP sample was stratified by provider and area characteristics to ensure good coverage of different providers.

The survey collected data from three distinct provider populations in England:

> GBPs: childcare providers registered with Ofsted and operating in non-domestic premises.
> A sub-sample was drawn from the 2020 SCEYP sample, which was selected from the July 2019 Ofsted register and designed to be representative of all GBPs in England.

- School-based providers (SBP): nursery provision in schools, including before- and after-school provision and maintained nursery schools;
  A sub-sample was drawn from the SCEYP 2020 sample, which was selected from the School Census from January 2019 and designed to be representative of all SBPs in England.
- CMs: Ofsted-registered childminders providing early years care.
  A sub-sample was drawn from the 2020 SCEYP sample, which was selected from the July 2019 Ofsted register and designed to be representative of all CMs in England.

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[1] See SCEYP 2019 Technical Report for further details of the sample design

Table 1: SCEYP COVID study sample sizes

Provider type:	Issued to SCEYP 2020	Issued to SCEYP COVID
GBP	15,121	8,000
SBP	5,882	4,000
CM	4,981 + 25,000[2]	8,000

Settings were eligible to take part in the SCEYP COVID study regardless of whether they were currently open or closed. Any setting which was temporarily closed or had closed since March 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic was eligible for the survey. Settings which had closed prior to March 2020 or for reasons unconnected to the pandemic were treated as ineligible.

Questionnaire

The web questionnaire collected data on:

- The current status of the childcare provision
- Number of children currently attending settings, and how this differs from what would have been expected pre-COVID-19
- Changes in staffing arrangements and finances as a result of the pandemic
- Intentions for September

Most of the questions asked in the survey were newly designed for this study. Content of the questionnaire and wording of the questions was discussed between NatCen and the Department for Education (DfE).

Respondent communication

The SCEYP COVID study employed a communication strategy that involved multiple communications across different modes and using different motivational messages to maximise impact. Table 2 summarises the respondent communication schedule.

Table 2. SCEYP COVID schedule of respondent communications

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[2] SCEYP consists of two related studies: The main SCEYP survey is a 20-minute web-CATI survey. In addition, a short 5-minute financial survey is issued to a top up sample of providers to enable financial estimates to be provided at local level. The GBP and SBP SCEYP COVID samples were drawn from the samples issued for the main SCEYP survey only. To ensure sufficient cases for the COVID study, the CM sample was topped up with 3,019 cases previously sampled for the financial survey. The top up sample was selected from among the 25,000 cases sampled for the financial survey using the same regional proportions as the main survey.

Mailing	Sample	Mailing date
Invitation letter	All providers	1st July
Email nudge	All providers with an email address	7th July
Reminder letter 1	All providers without an email address	7th July
Reminder Text 1	Non-respondents with mobile number	8th July
Reminder email 1	Non-respondents with email address	10th July
Reminder Text 2	Non-respondents with mobile number	14th July
Reminder email 2	Non-respondents with email address	15th July

Response

Fieldwork took place between the 2nd and 20th July.

In total 396 SBPs, 1,368 GBPs and 2,248 CMs completed the survey. The response rate was 10.0% for SBPs[3], 17.4% for GBPs and 29.6% for CMs.

Of the unproductive cases, 339 providers were classified as ineligible having contacted NatCen to report they were no longer open/offering childcare for reasons unrelated to COVID-19 or having indicated at the start of the survey that this was the case. As is usual with web surveys, nothing is known about the majority of unproductive outcomes. It is known that 26 providers contacted NatCen to opt out of completing the study or receiving any further communication about the study, invitation letters could not be delivered to a further 235 and 1,366 accessed the survey but did not complete it. Table 3 shows the number of respondents in each group.

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[3] Response rate = (Productive cases/ ((productive + unproductive cases) – ineligible))*100. For the purposes of calculating the response rate, it assumed that a percentage of unknown cases (other unproductives + letter could not be delivered + other unproductive) are ineligible.

Table 3. Number of responses to SCEYP and COVID-19 survey

	SBPs	GBPs	CMs	All
Complete interview	396	1,368	2,248	4,012
Ineligible[4]	13	85	241	339
Accessed survey but did not continue	171	534	661	1366
Office refusal	3	4	19	26
Letters could not be delivered	1	214	20	235
Other unproductive	3,416	5,795	4,811	14,022

Weighting

Weighting was used to ensure that the final achieved samples were representative of early years and childcare providers in England. Survey weights were designed separately for the three provider types to correct for unequal selection probabilities and non-response bias. Grossing weights were created in order to ensure that the weighted achieved samples gross up to the population of early years and childcare providers in England.

Weighting for group-based providers

Population totals

The achieved sample of group-based providers was weighted to be representative of all active group-based childcare providers in England that were eligible for the study. The sampling frame did not allow for the exclusion of all ineligible institutions prior to sampling, therefore the eligible population size and profile needed to be estimated using information about institutions found to be ineligible. Any setting which was temporarily closed or had closed since March 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic was eligible for the survey. Settings which had closed prior to March 2020 or for reasons unconnected to the pandemic were treated as ineligible. The total eligible population was estimated at 22,553 establishments – 93,7%[5] of the sample frame.

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[4] Includes settings that have closed for reasons unrelated to COVID-19 and childminders with no children currently registered.
[5] Following data cleaning, 24,055 cases were included in the modelling of the eligible population.

Weighting process

Design weights

Design weights were first calculated to correct for unequal selection probabilities arising from the fact that establishments in North East were oversampled to enable more robust comparisons between regions.

Calibration weighting

Calibration weighting was used to remove the (measurable) bias introduced through non-response to the survey and align the profile of the achieved sample to the profile of the eligible population defined by: region, register type, ownership type, and deprivation band based on IDACI.

Weighting for school-based providers

Population totals

To create a sampling frame of school-based providers the Schools' Census database from January 2019 was used, enhanced with further information from aGet Information About Schools extract. Any setting which was temporarily closed or had closed since March 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic was eligible for the survey. Settings which had closed prior to March 2020 or for reasons unconnected to the pandemic were treated as ineligible. The total eligible population was estimated at 8,929 – 96.8% of the initial sample frame[6].

Weighting process

Design weights

Design weights were calculated to correct for disproportionate sampling of different types of schools.

Calibration weighting

Calibration weighting was used to remove the (measurable) bias introduced through non-response to the survey and align the profile of achieved sample to the profile of the eligible population on the following variables: school type (main stratum), region, type of establishment, quintile of number of places registered.

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[6] Following data cleaning, 9,224 cases were included in the modelling of the eligible population.

Weighting for childminders

Population totals

The childminders' data was weighted to be representative of the eligible population of childminders in England as of July 2019. Any setting which was temporarily closed or had closed since March 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic was eligible for the survey. Settings which had closed prior to March 2020 or for reasons unconnected to the pandemic were treated as ineligible. Following the approach taken for the main SCEYP study, responding childminders were weighted to the profile of population excluding cases with zero registered places in the sample frame. The total eligible population was 36,980.

Weighting process

Design weights

Design weights were first calculated to correct for unequal selection probabilities arising from the oversampling of smaller regions.

Calibration weights

Calibration weighting was used to remove measurable bias introduced through non-response to the survey and to align the profile of achieved sample to the profile of the population. The population targets used for calibration weighting included: region, whether on all three registers (Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register and Voluntary Childcare Register), registration year, and deprivation band based on IDACI.

Coding and editing

The SCEYP COVID survey did not contain any open-ended questions requiring coding. Responses to one question (Qmanage) including an "Other (please specify)" code were coded into the existing code frame by researchers at NatCen.

Data have not been cleaned further but have been left as reported to be used at the discretion of the analyst. Internally inconsistent responses (e.g. providers saying they are open on 0 days but for 1 or more hours, providers reporting a number of fulltime + part time staff higher than the total number of staff) have been left as reported. Responses to the questions on weekly fees have not been trimmed for outliers (with the exception of one provider who recorded an amount of £111111.11, which was recoded as -1.)

Appendix A. Questionnaire

P15414 Childcare and Early Years and COVID-19 – Web Survey

A. INTRODUCTION

{ASK ALL}
CAWI Landing page

 Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers and COVID-19

Thank you for your interest in this important research for the Department for Education.

To access the survey please enter your unique access code and click 'NEXT'.

TS1 : [SET TIME STAMP HERE]

{ASK ALL}
CAWI Intro

Welcome to this <b> **Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers and COVID-19** <b>.

The survey should take around 5-10 minutes to complete.

You will be asked questions about how your setting is currently operating. You will also be asked about how your setting was operating before the government announced closure of early years provision to all but children of critical workers and vulnerable children in March 2020 (referred to here as "Before COVID-19").

{TEXTFILL IF ProvType = GBP "If your setting is part of a chain, please only answer about provision run by your branch"}

<b>Please complete the survey even if your setting is now closed<b>.

All the answers you give will be anonymised and treated in strict confidence. No individuals or settings will be able to be identified.

If you need to pause the questionnaire, you can simply click 'STOP' and log back in later using the same link you used to get here. You may need to wait 10 minutes before you can re-enter the survey. Please note that if someone else from your provision logs into the survey, they will be able to see the answers that you have provided.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, or have difficulties completing the survey online, please email childcaresurvey@natcen.ac.uk or call 0800 652 4572.

More information, including a link to the privacy notice, is also available on the project website: www.natcen.ac.uk/childcaresurvey .

Click 'NEXT' to continue.

_____

TS2: [SET TIME STAMP HERE]

B. DELIVERY MODELS

{ASK IF ProvType = GBP}
Qmanage

What type of group, organisation or individual owns or manages *{Textfill: "Provider_name"}*?

</I>If your setting is part of a chain, *please only answer about provision run by the branch that is based at {Textfill: "Address1".}*</I>

G_Single_II1

   1. A private (for profit) company (including employer-run childcare for employees)
   2. A voluntary or community group or charity (including church(es) or religious group(s))
   3. A local authority
   4. Other

_____

{ASK ALL}

QStatus

What is the current status of your early years childcare provision?

G_Single_II1

   1. Open (this may be different days/hours from before COVID-19)
   2. Temporarily closed and not offering any childcare provision at the moment
   3. Permanently closed and will no longer be offering childcare provision

NO DK

NO REF

_____

{ASK IF QStatus = 2 or 3}

Qclosed

When did {*TEXTFILL IF ProvType = GBP "your setting" IF ProvType = SBP "your nursery" IF ProvType = CM "you"*} close?

G_Single_II1

1. Before the start of the COVID-19 closure in March 2020
2. After the COVID-19 closure but for reasons unrelated to the pandemic
3. After the COVID-19 closure as a result of the pandemic

NO DK

NO REF

{ASK IF Qclosed = 1 OR 2}

IneligThanks

We are only looking for settings that are open, or that have closed due to COVID-19, and therefore you are not eligible to take part in this survey. Thank you very much for taking the time to contribute. If you have any questions you can visit www.natcen.ac.uk/childcaresurvey or email childcaresurvey@natcen.ac.uk

Press 'Next' to end the survey.
NCOutcome = 780

PAGE START

{ASK IF Qstatus=1 OR Qclosed=3}

Qdaysbef

Before COVID-19, how many days per week were you open in a typical week?

0…7

{ASK IF QStatus=1}

Qdaysnow

And how many days per week are you currently open?

0…7

PAGE END

PAGE START

{ASK IF Qstatus=1 OR Qclosed=3}

Qhoursbef

Before COVID-19, how many hours were you open on a typical day?

By this we mean the total number of hours of childcare you offer throughout the day

1…24

{ASK IF QStatus=1}

Qhoursnow

And how many hours are you currently open on a typical day?

By this we mean the total number of hours of childcare you offer throughout the day

1…24

PAGE END

{ASK IF (Qdaysnow<Qdaysbef) OR (Qhoursnow<Qhoursbef)}

QWhyReduced

Which, if any, of these reasons, explain why you are now operating at reduced opening hours compared with the period before COVID-19?

G_Multi_II1

1. Need time to introduce COVID-19-related infection and prevention control measures
2. Lack of staff available or willing to work
3. Lack of demand from parents for the hours
4. Not financially sustainable to open for more hours
5. Cannot adhere to COVID-19 related infection and prevention control measures if

open for more hours
6. Other reason

{ASK IF Qclosed=3}

QWhyClosed

Which, if any, of these reasons led to the closure of your setting?

G_Multi_II1

1. Lack of demand from parents
2. Lack of staff available or willing to work
3. Increased costs of adhering to COVID-19-related infection and prevention control measures
4. No longer financially sustainable to open
5. Cannot adhere to COVID-19-related infection and prevention control measures
6. Other reason

C. INTENTIONS GOING FORWARD

{ASK IF QStatus = 1 OR (Qstatus = 2 and QClosed =3)}

QSepdays

How many days per week do you expect to be open in September 2020?

0..7

{ASK IF QStatus = 1 OR (Qstatus = 2 and QClosed =3)}

QSephours

How many hours per day do you expect to be open in September 2020?

0..24

D. ATTENDANCE

{ASK IF Qstatus=1 OR Qclosed=3}

Qexpectage [GRID QUESTION: ONE PAGE]

In the absence of the COVID-19 restrictions, how many children would you have been expecting to attend your setting in a typical week during the 2020 summer term?

<i>Please give a number for each of the following age groups.</i> If you would have not expected to have any children in an age group please input 0 </i>

G_Estimate_ II1

GRID ROWS

1. QepectU2age	Under age two	0…999
2. Qexpect2age	Age two	0…999
3. Qexpect34age	Three and four year old pre-school children	0…999
4. Qexpectschage	School-aged children aged 4 or over	0…999

{ASK IF QStatus =1}

Qattendage [GRID QUESTION: ONE PAGE]

How many children <i>*actually*<i> attended your setting last week?

<i>Please give a number for each of the following age groups. If no children in an age group attended, please input 0. <i>

<i> Please note, this should be the number of children that actually attended, rather than any places that parents are paying for, but children are not attending <i>

GRID ROWS

1. QattendU2age	Under age two	0…999
2. Qattend2age	Age two	0…999
3. Qattend34age	Three and four year old pre-school children	0…999
4. Qattendschage	School-aged children aged 4 or over	0…999

E. FINANCIAL HEALTH

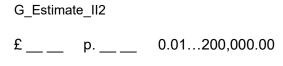## <u>INCOME</u>

{ASK IF Qstatus=1 OR Qclosed=3}

Qpropincome

Before COVID-19, roughly what proportion of your total income typically came from parent-paid fees?

0…100%

Qfeesbef

In the absence of the COVID-19 restrictions, roughly how much income would you have been expecting to receive from parent-paid fees for a typical week during the 2020 summer term?

G_Estimate_II2

£ __ __   p. __ __   0.01…200,000.00

Qfeesnow

How much income will you have received from parent-paid fees for last week?

<i> This should include any fees paid by parents whether or not their children are currently attending childcare. That is including any retention fees charged <i>

G_Estimate_II2

£ __ __   p. __ __   0.01…200,000.00

QContinue

Based on what you know about the current situation and upcoming developments (for example, changes to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme from August onwards) are you reasonably confident that it would be financially sustainable to continue to run your childcare provision:

G_Single_II1

1. For another year or longer
2. At least until Easter 2021
3. At least until January 2021
4. Only until the end of October
5. Only until the end of September
6. Only for a few more weeks

Workforce

Qpaystaff

Before COVID-19, excluding apprentices, how many paid staff were involved in the delivery of your provision at this setting?

<i> Please only include the senior manager(s) and people working with the children, not specialist staff such as accountants. <i>

1….300

{ASK IF Qstatus = 1 OR Qclosed =3 AND (ProvType= GBP or SBP)}

Qstaffbef

Before COVID-19, of these [INSERT #QPAYSTAFF] staff how many were…

Variable name	Working hours	Number of paid staff
Qstaffbefft	Working full-time (30 hours or more a week)	0…300
QStaffbefpt	Working part-time (less than 30 hours a week)	0…300
	TOTAL	**COUNTER FUNCTION** **SUM OF NUMERIC FIELDS**

SOFT: IF (TOTAL <> Qpaystaff) "You reported that there are {#Qpaystaff} paid staff involved in delivering your provision. Please check that the figures entered in the grid are consistent with the total number of paid staff."

{ASK IF QStatus =1 AND ProvType = GBP or SBP}

Qstaffnow [GRID QUESTION: ONE PAGE]

Excluding apprentices, how many of your <b> paid staff <b> are currently …

<i> Please only include the senior manager(s) and people working with the children, not specialist staff such as accountants. <i>

<i>Please make sure each member of staff is included in one box only<i>

GRID ROWS

1. **QStaffnowft**   Working full-time (30 hours or more a week)   0…300

2. **Qstaffnowpt**   Working part-time (less than 30 hours)   0…300

3. **Qstaffnowfur**   On furlough as part of the government's job retention scheme and not
currently working   0…300

{ASK IF Qstaffnowfur = 0}

Qfurlough

{*TEXTFILL IF ProvType = GBP "Has your setting" IF ProvType = SBP " Has your nursery" IF ProvType = CM " Have you"*} used the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (furloughing) at any point?

　　1. Yes
　　2. No

{ASK IF ProvType = CM)

QCMfunding

Since the government's announcement of the closure of early years provision due to COVID-19 in March 2020, have you applied for any financial support from the government due to loss of income, for example via the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme or the Small Business Grant Scheme?

　　1. Yes, applied for but not (yet) received support
　　2. Yes, applied for and received support
　　3. No

TS3 [SET TIME STAMP HERE]

[COMPUTE NCOUTCOME 110 (FULLY COMPLETE) HERE]

{ASK IF *Qstatus = 1 OR Qclosed =3 AND* ProvType =GBP or SBP}

Qcontactname

You have reached the end of the main questions.

In order to make it easier for NatCen to re-contact [TEXTFILL If ProvType = SBP "your nursery" If ProvType =GBP "your setting"] to keep in touch about this research to track the impact of COVID-19 on the early years sector, it would be useful for us to have a named contact.

If you are happy to be the named contact please enter your name in the box below.

Text [1..100]
1.Prefer not to answer
NODK

_____

{ASK IF Qstatus = 1 OR Qclosed =3}

Qcontactem

[Textfill IF ProvType = CM "You have reached the end of the main questions.

It is important that NatCen have the correct contact details for you so that we can keep in touch about this research to track the impact of COVID-19 on the early years sector"].

Can you please provide the best work e-mail address at which to reach you.

Please be assured that your details will only be used for the purpose of contacting you in relation to our research and will not be shared with anybody outside of our research team.

Text [1..100]
1. *Prefer not to answer*
NODK

_____

{ASK IF Qcontactem<>1}
Qcontacechk
Please confirm your correct email address

TEXT[100]

HARDCHECK: If answer provided does not include @ or full-stop: "Please check and amend. E-mail addresses should contain an @ character and a full stop."

HARDCHECK: IF Qcontactem<> Qcontacechk

 "The two email addresses you have entered are not the same. Please check and amend"

_____

{ASK ALL}

Qthanks

You have reached the end of the survey.

Many thanks for your help with this research. We really appreciate your time and your contribution.

_____

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Reference: DFE- DFE- RR1009

ISBN: 978-1-83870-200-7

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