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Official Statistics

Main findings: childcare providers and inspections as at 31 March 2021

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This is the main findings report for the childcare providers and inspections as at 31 March 2021 release. The following are also available:

- underlying data
- methodology
- pre-release access list

Summary

This release contains:

- the number of Ofsted-registered childcare providers and places and their most recent inspection outcomes as at 31 March 2021
- the number of providers that have registered with Ofsted (since and the number that have left (leaves) between 31 August 2020 and 31 March 2021

Impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) on this release

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no routine inspections were carried out between March 2020 and March 2021 and no enforcement actions were taken by Ofsted in the Early Years Register (EYR) inspections and carried out interim visits as part of our phased return to routine inspection. Ofsted's regulatory and enforcement activity, including inspections, will be kept under review in line with government guidance. For more information, see the Inspections and regulation during September | September 2020 to 31 March 2021 section of this page.

Summary of findings

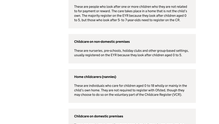
The ongoing decline in the number of childcare providers has continued. Most of this overall decrease in provider numbers over time is due to falls in the number of childminders.

The number of childcare places for providers on the Early Years Register (EYR), though, has remained broadly stable since August 2015.

The proportion of providers judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection remains unchanged (96%) (see Figure 7). There have been 14,000 EYR inspections have taken place since March 2020 due to COVID-19.

Our registration and regulatory work has continued. Between 1 September 2020 and 31 March 2021, we carried out around 1,800 registration visits and 4,900 regulatory visits to childcare providers.

Figure 1: Overall effectiveness of active early years registered providers at their most recent inspection over time



Note: numbers are rounded to the nearest 100. Percentages are rounded and may not add to 100.
Data: Ofsted's pre-accessible data format.

Introduction

The early years and childcare sector is primarily made up of private nurseries, pre-schools and childminders. There are 3 types of Ofsted-registered:

Childminders

These are people who look after one or more children who they are not related to for payment or reward. The care takes place in a home that is not the child's own. The majority register on the EYR because they look after children aged 0 to 5, but these are then able to 'to have sole rights to register on the CR.

Childcare on non-domestic premises

These are nurseries, pre-schools, holiday clubs and other group based settings, usually registered on the EYR because they look after children aged 0 to 5.

Home childcarers (nannies)

These are individuals who care for children aged 0 to 18 wholly or mainly in the home. They may also be responsible for children in other homes. Nannies may choose to do so on the voluntary part of the Childcare Register (CR).

Childcare on domestic premises

These are providers where it is more people look after children together in a home that is not the child's. The majority are registered on the EYR and some are registered on the CR depending on the age of the children they look after.

Further information about provider types is available in the glossary.

Childcare providers have the option to either register with Ofsted or a childminder agency. Childminder agencies are responsible for the quality of the childcare their childminders work there. More information about childminder agencies is provided in the childminder agencies section of this page.

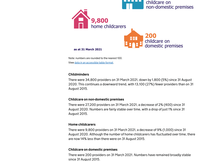
Childcare is early years also occurs in the schools sector. This takes place in state-funded schools and independent schools. For more information, see the early years provision in the schools sector section of this page.

Providers, registers and places

Number of providers

There were 72,200 childcare providers registered with Ofsted on 31 March 2021, down by 4% (3,300) since 31 August 2020 (TABLE1). Since 2 August 2010, the number of providers has fallen by 17% (15,100), which continues the decline observed over recent years.

Figure 2: Childcare providers registered with Ofsted as at 31 March 2021, by provider type



Note: numbers are rounded to the nearest 100.
Data: Ofsted's pre-accessible data format.

Childcare on non-domestic premises

There were 27,200 providers on 31 March 2021, down by 1,600 (5%) since 31 August 2020. Numbers are fairly stable over time, with a drop of just 1% since 31 August 2015.

Childcare on domestic premises

There were 200 providers on 31 March 2021, a decrease of 9% (20) since 31 August 2020. Although the number of home childcarers has fluctuated over time, there are now 14% less than there were on 31 August 2015.

Childcare on domestic premises

There were 200 providers on 31 March 2021. Numbers have remained broadly stable over time.

Joiners and leavers in the childcare sector over time

The number of active providers on our registers has been steadily rising since 2015 and reached a record high of 1,000,000 on 31 March 2020 (see Figure 3). The number of providers is due to more providers leaving than joining the childcare sector (see Figure 4).

Figure 3: Joiners and leavers in the childcare sector over time

Note: most leavers are provider registrations that have lapsed, but some will be provider closures between the 31 March dates.
Data: Ofsted's pre-accessible data format.

Looking at the net difference between joiners and leavers since 2015, the 'net 6' overall numbers was highest in 2015–16, 2016–17 and 2018–19. Between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021, there were 5,000 more joiners than leavers. It is around 2,000 more was slightly above the average across the last 6 years.

Most of this overall decrease in provider numbers over time is due to a substantial fall in the number of childminders. Childminders make up nearly half of all childcare providers. In the last 2 years we have seen a 5% (370) drop and 6% (1,200) in childminders, respectively, between 31 March 2019 and 31 March 2021. Nevertheless, provider numbers have remained fairly stable.

Although the number of childminders registered with us has been falling, it is worth noting that childcare provision in the home has been growing in recent years, with home childcarers on the rise. Home childcarers are nannies looking after children who are registered with them. More information about childminder agencies is provided in the childminder agencies section of this page.

Figure 4: Percentage change in the number of providers since 31 March 2019

Note: childcare on domestic premises have been excluded due to their relatively small numbers (around 200 providers).
Data: Ofsted's pre-accessible data format.

Across England, each region saw a fall in provider numbers between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021. London had the smallest percentage decrease (1%), while the North East (4%), Yorkshire and The Humber (3%), East Midlands (3%), East of England (3%), South East (3%) and South West (3%) had the largest decreases.

In 2020–21, most regions had a similar or higher percentage decrease in providers compared to the previous year (2019–20). The exceptions are the East of England, the West Midlands and the North West, where the percentage decrease in providers was lower in 2019–20 than in 2020–21.

Figure 5: Percentage change in the number of providers between 2018–19 and 2020–21 by region

Note: regions are ordered by the 2020–21 figure.
Data: Ofsted's pre-accessible data format.

Registers

As of 31 March 2021, 99% (56,700) of Ofsted-registered childcare providers were on the EYR (see Figure 6). The remaining 2% were only on the CR, which has 2 parts: the childcare register (childcare) and the voluntary part (home childcarers who choose to register on). More information about the different registers is available in the glossary.

Figure 6: Number and percentage of Ofsted-registered providers by the different registers for children

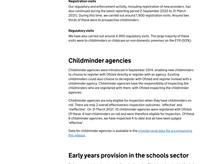
Note: numbers are rounded to the nearest 100.
Data: Ofsted's pre-accessible data format.

Places data is reported for the 56,700 providers registered on the EYR, with a high proportion of these (99%) also being registered on the CR as well.

When considering places data, it is important to note that it covers all places for children aged 0 to 5 on the EYR and children aged 5 to 18 on the CR. For example, a 2-year-old places for children under 5 and 5 to 18 years old. In 5-year-olds in three providers, for more methodological notes on place data, see the methodology and quality report that accompanies this release.

Places

Figure 7: Number of childcare places offered by providers on the EYR as at 31 March 2021, by provider type



Note: places numbers of less than one million are rounded to the nearest 100.
Data: Ofsted's pre-accessible data format.

Childcare on non-domestic premises

Providers on non-domestic premises provide 93% (1 million) of all childcare places, which is an increase of 4 percentage points since August 2015. (TABLE2) On average each provider offered 40 places.

Childminders

Childminders offered 18% (213,100) of all places, a decrease of 4 percentage points since August 2015. On average each childminder provided 6 places, down from around 8 and 7. The average takes into account childminders with specialist skills are permitted to offer more than 6 places.

Childcare on domestic premises

Providers on domestic premises offered less than 1% (5,300) of places. On average, each provider offered 25 places.

Despite decreasing numbers of childminders, the number of childcare places has remained broadly stable since August 2015. (TABLE2) This is because there is a fall in the number of places offered by each provider over time. Since August 2015, the number of childcare places decreased by around 14 400 (1%). On 31 March 2021, there were 1.3 million childcare places offered by providers on the EYR.

Figure 8: Childcare places provided on the EYR over time, by provider type

Note: places data from August 2015 onwards is recorded on an updated administration system and capture more information than previous years.
Data: Ofsted's pre-accessible data format.

Inspections and regulatory activity

Most recent inspections of providers on the EYR

On 31 March 2021, 79% (41,000) of eligible providers on the EYR had received a full inspection (TABLE4). At their most recent inspection, 96% of all providers registered on the EYR were judged either good or outstanding. This represents a substantial increase compared to 2015 (see Figure 9). This is because no full EYR inspections have taken place since March 2020 due to COVID-19.

The overall proportion of good or outstanding providers remains unchanged (96%) since 31 August 2020. This is because no full EYR inspections have taken place since March 2020 due to COVID-19.

At their most recent inspection, 98% of childcare providers on non-domestic premises were judged good or outstanding, 97% of childminders were judged good or outstanding and 79% of providers judged good (TABLE4).

The proportion of childminders who were judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection was 98%. This was made up of 9% judged outstanding and 89% of providers judged good.

Inspections and regulatory activity between 1 September 2020 to 31 March 2021

CR inspections and interim visits

Since September 2020, we resumed inspections of providers registered only on the CR. These inspections do not result in a quality (grade) judgement but a judgement as to whether the provider is meeting the EYR and CR requirements. We carried out between 1 September 2020 and 31 March 2021, we carried out around 1,700 CR inspections. Of these, we found that 83% met the requirements of registration.

Between 1 September and 31 December 2020, we carried out interim visits to registered childcare providers as part of our phased return to routine inspection. Ofsted's EYR inspectors carried out these visits to registered childcare providers on non-domestic premises (0%).

Registration visits

Our regulatory and enforcement activity, including registration of new providers, has also continued during the latest reporting period (1 September 2020 to 31 March 2021). We carried out around 1,800 registration visits. Around two-thirds of these were for prospective childminders.

Regulatory visits

We have also carried out around 4,900 regulatory visits. The large majority of these visits, around 4,700, were to childcare on non-domestic premises on the EYR (93%).

Childminder agencies

Childminder agencies were introduced in September 2014, enabling new childminders to choose to register with Ofsted directly or register with an agency. Existing childminders could also choose to be registered with Ofsted and register instead with a childminder agency. Ofsted's role in relation to childminder agencies is to inspect childminders who are registered with them, with Ofsted inspecting the childminder agencies.

Childminder agencies are only eligible for inspection when they have childminders on Ofsted's register. As of 31 March 2021, there were 1,000 childminder agencies, 1 of which is 'ineffective'. On 31 March 2021, 20 childminder agencies were registered with Ofsted, 19 of which are 'effective'. Of the 19 effective childminder agencies, 18 are rated 'effective' and 1 is 'effective'. Of the 1,000 inactive or ineffective childminder agencies, we have inspected 1 in 5 in the last 4 years.

Data for childminder agencies is available in the provider level data file accompanying this release.

Early years provision in the schools sector

Early years provision also occurs in the schools sector. This takes place in state-funded schools and independent schools. Ofsted's role in relation to early years provision in schools is an external first registration on the EYR. Nurseries (taking children aged younger than 2 yrs old) required to register on the EYR and are therefore covered in the previous sections.

In state-funded schools, other than nursery schools, early years provision is given to children aged 2 yrs old. Ofsted's role in relation to early years provision in independent school inspections and outcomes, are set out in the Independent school inspections and outcomes.

Independent schools can also provide early years provision. For more information on non-prescribed independent school inspection outcomes, see our transparency information on non-association independent schools.

Notes

An explanation about main uses of this data, further contextual information and the arrangements for quality assurance are provided in the methodology and quality report accompanying this release.

The methodology and quality report also provides information on the strengths and limitations of the data.

Glossary

Further information

Annex: data tables for figures

Education inspection framework

We carry out inspections from 1 September 2019 under the education inspection framework (EIF). The EIF supports consistency when carrying out inspections of early years and childcare providers, maintained schools, academies, non-association independent schools, and further education and skills providers in England. We evaluate the overall quality and standards of the early years provision in line with the principles and requirements of the early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework. Inspectors judge the overall effectiveness of the early years provision, taking into account 4 judgements:

- quality of education
- behaviour and attitudes
- personal development
- effectiveness of leadership and management

We were required to inspect all providers that were on the EYR on 1 August 2016 at least once by 31 July 2020. We will normally inspect providers that have registered after this date within 30 months of registration. However, due to the impact of COVID-19, we paused our routine inspections in mid-March 2020.

Common inspection framework

Between 1 September 2015 and 31 August 2019, we carried out inspections under the common inspection framework. Inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the early years provision, taking into account the following judgements:

- quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- personal development, behaviour and welfare
- effectiveness of leadership and management
- outcomes for children

Glossary

Definitions of terms are in our statistical glossary.

Further information

We publish the following information on the inspection of early years providers:

- early years and childcare statistics
- EIF
- framework for the regulation of provision on the childcare register

Contact for comments or feedback

If you have any comments or feedback on this publication, you should contact Anita Patel on 03000 130 914 or Anita.Patel@ofsted.gov.uk.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the following for their contribution to this statistical release: Lucy Conway, Richard Smith, Helen Woodley, Alison Bateman, Tim Milstead, Austen Norris and Fiona Lewis.

Annex: data tables for figures

This section contains the underlying data in an accessible table format for all figures.

Data for figure 1: Overall effectiveness of active early years registered providers at their most recent inspection over time

Date (number of providers in brackets)	% providers judged outstanding	% providers judged good	% providers judged requires improvement	% providers judged inadequate
31 March 2021 (72,000)	18	79	3	1
31 August 2020 (75,300)	17	79	3	1
31 August 2019 (76,200)	20	76	3	1
31 August 2018 (78,900)	19	76	4	1
31 August 2017 (80,700)	17	76	5	1
31 August 2016 (82,700)	15	76	8	1
31 August 2015 (87,100)	15	70	14	1

See Figure 1.

Data for figure 2: Childcare providers registered with Ofsted as at 31 March 2021, by provider type

Provider type	Number of providers as at 31 March 2021
Childminders	34,800
Childcare on non-domestic premises	27,200
Home childcarers	9,800
Childcare on domestic premises	200

See Figure 2.

Data for figure 3: Joiners and leavers in the childcare sector over time

Financial year	Joiners	Leavers
2015–16	10,398	14,545
2016–17	9,825	13,399
2017–18	9,707	11,382
2018–19	7,449	10,567
2019–20	9,254	10,788
2020–21	6,636	9,660

See Figure 3.

Data for figure 4: Percentage change in the number of providers since 31 March 2019

Provider type	Number of providers on 31 Mar 2021	Percentage change in 2020–21	Number of providers on 31 Mar 2020	Percentage change in 2019–20	Number of providers on 31 Mar 2019
All providers	72,000	-6%	75,100	-2%	76,600
Childminders	34,800	-6%	37,000	-5%	39,000
Childcare on non-domestic premises	27,200	-2%	27,600	+1%	27,300
Home childcarers	9,800	-6%	10,200	+1%	10,100

See Figure 4.

Data for figure 5: Percentage change in the number of providers between 2018–19 and 2020–21 by region

Region	% Net overall change 2020–21	% Net overall change 2019–20	% Net overall change 2018–19
North West	-4	-3	-5
North East	-5	-3	-5
Yorkshire and The Humber	-5	-3	-5
East Midlands	-5	-4	-4
West Midlands	-3	-3	-3
East of England	-5	-2	-3
London	-1	1	-4
South East	-5	-2	-4
South West	-5	-3	-4

See Figure 5.

Data for figure 6: Venn diagram of Ofsted-registered providers by the different registers for childcare

Register combination	Number of childcare providers by register combination
EYR, CCR and VCR	44,400
EYR and CCR	5,700
EYR and VCR	57
EYR only	6,600
CCR and VCR	2,700
CCR only	200
VCR only	12,500

See Figure 6.

Data for figure 7: Number of childcare places offered by providers on the EYR as at 31 March 2021, by provider type

Provider type	Places offered by providers on the EYR, as at 31 March 2021	% of all places on the EYR
Childcare on non-domestic premises	1.1 million	83
Childminders	213,100	16
Childcare on domestic premises	5,200	<1

See Figure 7.

Data for figure 8: Childcare providers and places on the EYR over time, by provider type

Date	Childminders on the EYR	Childcare on non-domestic premises on the EYR	Total number of childcare places offered
31 August 2015	46,044	25,065	1,288,184
31 August 2016	42,563	24,483	1,281,604
31 August 2017	40,827	24,382	1,290,556
31 August 2018	39,013	24,224	1,304,902
31 August 2019	36,831	24,101	1,319,465
31 August 2020	34,535	23,801	1,312,215
31 March 2021	33,004	23,518	1,297,830

See Figure 8.

1. Numbers are rounded to the nearest 100. ↩
2. Places numbers of less than one million are rounded to the nearest 100. Places numbers of more than one million are rounded to the nearest 100,000. ↩
3. A small proportion of providers may have only received a no children on roll (NCOR) inspection. These are excluded from the total number of providers on the EYR that have received an inspection. We have also excluded providers that, under the EIF, are now classed as out-of-school day care providers but may have previously had a full EYR inspection. ↩
4. The figures do not add up due to rounding. ↩

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