



Official Statistics

Methodology: childcare providers and inspections as at 31 August 2021

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Introduction

This document contains methodology and quality information about Ofsted's official statistics release of childcare providers and inspections data, which we currently publish 3 times a year. The publication forms the main part of the [early years and childcare official statistics collection](#).

This official statistics release reports on:

- the number of providers on the Early Years Register (EYR) and the Childcare Register (CR), both the compulsory and the voluntary part
- the number of providers that have joined or left the early years sector
- the number of childcare places offered by providers on the EYR
- the most recent inspection outcomes for all Ofsted-registered childcare providers in England
- the number of regulatory visits and registration visits

This publication reports on providers in 2 different ways:

- most recent inspections for all providers, carried out up to a specified cut-off date

- all inspections carried out within a set period

The most recent inspections data for all providers, carried out up to a specified cut-off date, provides information on the quality of providers, broken down by geographical area and by individual provider. The data is reported at the end of a specific period, where the inspection reports were published on our website by the end of the subsequent month.

The all-inspections data provides information on inspections that have taken place over a specific reporting period, broken down by geographical area. This is referred to as provisional data. In addition, we revise data for the previous reporting period with each new release, to include the small number of inspections that were not published in the month following the end of the reporting period. This is referred to as revised data.

Due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, we paused our routine inspections in mid-March 2020. We restarted CR inspections in September 2020 and resumed full EYR inspections in May 2021. We have included the EYR inspections in our provisional inspections data (1 April 2021 to 31 August 2021) and the CR inspections in our revised inspections data (1 September 2020 to 31 March 2021).

Publication schedule

Official statistics publications are currently released according to the following timetable ([see Table 1](#)).

Table 1: Childcare providers and inspections release schedule and data reporting periods

Month of publication	Information about all childcare providers registered with Ofsted on	Information about all childcare inspections within the period
March	31 December	1 Sep to 31 Dec
June	31 March	1 Jan to 31 Mar
November	31 August	1 Apr to 31 Aug

Due to COVID-19, the publication due for release in March 2021 did not go ahead.

Consultation

On 11 May 2021, we published the [response to our consultation](#) about changes to the data we publish on childcare providers and inspections. In summary, we will:

- reduce the frequency of our official statistics from 3 times per year to twice per year
- introduce new management information as outlined in the proposal and adapt the data to include additional information, where possible
- apply the proposed changes to the data tables to provide a more detailed picture of the childcare sector; we will also incorporate additional fields into the tables, where possible

We will introduce these changes from spring 2022 and will follow a new publication schedule as outlined in the response to the consultation.

Types of provider and inspection

The publication refers to 4 types of early years providers:

- childminders
- childcare on non-domestic premises – for example, pre-schools and private nurseries
- childcare on domestic premises
- home childcarers – for example, nannies

These providers are registered on 2 different childcare registers:

- EYR
- CR, which is divided into 2 parts:
 - compulsory part of the Childcare Register (CCR)
 - voluntary part of the Childcare Register (VCR)

Providers can be registered on a single register or on a combination of registers. More information on these registers is provided in the [glossary](#).

Additionally, there are 4 different types of inspection for these providers:

- full EYR inspection
- out-of-school day care EYR inspection
- no children on roll (NCOR) EYR inspection
- CR inspection

Full EYR inspections result in a judgement of outstanding, good, requires improvement or inadequate. Good, requires improvement or inadequate providers may also receive actions or recommendations to help them improve.

CR, NCOR and out-of-school day care inspections result in a judgement of 'met'

or 'not met' requirements. In instances when the provider does not meet one or more of the requirements, the inspector must either issue actions for the provider to take or consider enforcement action.

Regulatory activity

This release also details the amount of regulatory activity we have carried out during the reporting period. This activity includes:

- regulatory visits (including remote visits by telephone call)
- registration visits

We have continued with our regulatory work in early years throughout the pandemic. This involved on-site visits when we had urgent safeguarding concerns and to register new providers.

Methodology

This section details the reporting methodology used to aggregate and analyse statistics on Ofsted-registered childcare providers and inspections.

The publication reports on early years and childcare inspections that have taken place since 1 September 2008, when the [early years foundation stage \(EYFS\)](#) was introduced. This is the statutory framework for the early education and care of children from birth to the 31 August following their fifth birthday. However, the main focus of the publication is on inspections carried out during the common inspection framework (1 September 2015 to 31 August 2019) and since the introduction of the education inspection framework (EIF) on 1 September 2019.

Compiling the data

We collect data on the number of childcare places that providers offer at registration and record this in the Ofsted corporate Cygnum system. This is a live administrative data system that we use to register childcare providers and to schedule and monitor inspections.

We collate our official statistics from data in Cygnum at the end of the reporting period and provide the number of providers and places. The data is then aggregated for presentation and analysis.

There is a time delay between the end of the reporting period and the publication cut-off date of 1 calendar month. This accounts for the time required to write up,

verify and publish the inspection reports after the inspection has taken place. This helps ensure that we capture the majority of inspections completed within the reporting period within the official statistics.

Coverage

Providers and inspections

The publication reports on childcare registered with Ofsted. Most provision in the early years age range is carried out by childcare providers that are registered with Ofsted, either on the EYR or the CR. However, there are some providers of childcare that are exempt from registration with Ofsted, for example, state-funded schools, independent schools or academies providing childcare for children aged 2 and older.

These exempt providers receive a judgement for their early years provision at their [section 5](#) school inspection, but not during a [section 8](#) inspection. Section 8 inspections will confirm whether the overall effectiveness is still good or outstanding but will not provide or update a previous early years provision judgement. For more information, see our official statistics on [state-funded schools and academies](#) and on [non-association independent schools](#).

A small number (around 100) of early years providers on the site of association independent schools are registered with Ofsted but are inspected by another inspectorate: the [Independent Schools Inspectorate](#). We do not have any inspection data recorded in our administrative system for these providers but we do include them in our registration statistics.

Until recently, we inspected childcare providers on a 4-year inspection cycle. The most recent cycle ran from 1 August 2016 through to 31 July 2020. We were committed to inspecting all providers that were on the EYR at the beginning of the cycle, by the end of the cycle. However, due to the impact of COVID-19, we paused our routine inspections in mid-March 2020.

We resumed full EYR inspections in May 2021, and no longer inspect providers on a 4-year cycle. All early years providers have their own inspection window based on the date and judgement of their last inspection. We inspect all providers within a 6-year window. However, we continue to reinspect providers judged 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate' within 12 and 6 months respectively. We still aim to inspect all new childcare providers within 30 months of their registration date.

A provider's most recent inspection is either a full EYR inspection or an out-of-school day care EYR inspection for providers on the EYR, or CR inspection for providers only on the CCR and/or VCR.

The publication also provides information on most recent EYR inspections where

no children were present at the time of the inspection. These are referred to as NCOR EYR inspections. For CR inspections, or inspections of out-of-school day care providers, where no children are present, inspections will be counted as the respective inspection types. Only full EYR inspections where no children are present will be counted as NCOR in the data.

When describing the quality of the early years sector, the summary statistics and the main findings document refer to the most recent full EYR inspection, for providers on the EYR. This includes a small proportion of providers that have had a more recent NCOR inspection. However, it excludes providers that, under the EIF, are classed as out-of-school day care providers but may have previously had a full EYR inspection.

Places

Since September 2012, providers are required to give details on the number of places they offer at the point of registration. Providers must calculate this based on the legal requirements of the EYFS. The places information compiled and presented in the publication is a proxy for the size and capacity of the early years sector.

Data on places is reported only for the providers registered on the EYR, with a high proportion of these also being registered on the CR. When considering data on places, it is important to note that it covers all places for children up to the age of 8. This data includes all EYR places for children under 5 and CCR places for 5- to 7-year-olds.

Please note that when a provider that is already registered on the EYR joins the CR, existing places information will not be retained. The number of places will be updated at its next inspection.

The number of places offered by a provider is the legal maximum number of children it can provide childcare for at any one time. It is possible that different children may be looked after in the morning and in the evening by any one provider, as long as the maximum number is not exceeded at any one point in time.

The majority of childminders are registered as offering 6 childcare places because this is the maximum number of places allowed under [EYFS guidelines for a childminder with no assistants](#). However, the number of places a childminder provides or intends to provide might be lower.

Aggregated data relies on estimated places numbers for a small number of providers where actual places numbers are not recorded. We calculate estimates using the mean for each provider type, after excluding any outliers with 600 or more places.

Applying the code of practice

[The UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice for Statistics](#) provides producers of statistics with a framework based on 3 pillars:

- trustworthiness
- quality
- value

This section will discuss the 3 pillars and will provide additional information on meeting user needs.

Trustworthiness

Timeliness and punctuality

We currently produce the publication 3 times per year. The release schedule and data reporting periods are set out in [Table 1](#).

To include all inspections published 1 month after the cut-off date of the reporting period, data from the administrative system is taken on the first of the month following the end of the reporting period. It then takes 6 to 8 weeks to extract, aggregate, quality assure, analyse and produce the main findings document and supplementary products.

We publish the official statistics at 9:30am on the date pre-announced in the [statistics release calendar](#).

Pre-release is given in accordance with the [Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order \(2008\)](#). You can find the list of postholders granted pre-release access on a separate document accompanying each release.

Confidentiality, transparency and security

When we hold sensitive or personal data, we have disclosure control processes in place to ensure that this data is not published. The contact, name and address details of childminders, domestic childcare providers and home childcarers are redacted. This redaction is also applied to a small number of providers of childcare on non-domestic premises due to reasons of personal and national safety.

All data releases follow Ofsted's confidentiality and revisions policies. See our [statement on confidentiality and data access](#).

Quality

Accuracy and reliability

The official statistics data is extracted from Ofsted's administrative systems. More information on the issues relating to the use of administrative data, as well as other considerations on the quality of data, is available in the various [standards for official statistics documents](#).

Although these systems are not designed primarily for statistical purposes, the inspection outcome data taken from our administrative systems is considered of a high quality. This is due to the rigorous checks that we carry out before publishing inspection reports, the legislative and reputational importance of maintaining accurate information on childcare providers and the high level of public scrutiny to which inspection reports are regularly subjected to.

Our reporting is accurate to the administrative systems that we report from. Errors in recording data and manual data entry may affect the quality of the source data. We make every effort to ensure that the data is produced without any errors. If an error is discovered, we will publish a corrected version as soon as possible.

Coherence and comparability

Ofsted has reported on childcare providers and places information and inspection outcomes as official statistics since 2010.

The important dates that have affected the comparability of early years data over time are below.

In July 2018, we moved to a new administrative database system, Cygnum, for recording information on providers and inspections. This introduced several changes that affect comparability. The main areas affected were places data, inspection actions and recommendations, and the geography of home childcarers.

The [31 August 2018 statistical release](#) references the move to Cygnum.

Dates affecting early years and childcare data and its comparability over time

Date	Change and effect on comparability
September 2014	Childminder agencies introduced: childminder agencies are registered with Ofsted. New childminders can register directly with childminder agencies without registering with Ofsted directly. Existing childminders may also de-register from Ofsted and register with an agency instead.

The impact of this change on the comparability of data is low due to

the relatively small number of childminder agencies that have registered with Ofsted. However, while we publish information on the number of childminder agencies, these agencies are not required to provide information on the number of childminders registered with them.

**February
2015**

Ofsted publishes responses to its consultation on early years official statistics.

Based on these findings, releases are now published 3 times a year, corresponding to academic term dates ([see Table 1](#)).

**March
2015**

Small Business, Enterprise and Employment (SBEE) Act gains Royal Assent.

From this date, a single company can now register multiple providers of childcare with Ofsted on a single registration.

**September
2015**

A new common inspection framework across education, skills and early years remit areas is introduced.

The 'personal development, behaviour and welfare' judgement is comparable with the 'contribution of the provision to the well-being of children' judgement from the previous framework. The 'effectiveness of leadership and management' judgement is comparable with the 'quality of leadership and management' judgement. The 'outcomes for children' and 'quality of teaching, learning and assessment' judgements are new as of September 2015 and therefore not comparable with any previous judgements.

**August
2016**

Childminders judged requires improvement are now reinspected within 12 months when possible.

Ofsted prioritised inspections of childminders who were previously judged as requires improvement to be reinspected within 12 months.

July 2018

Ofsted introduces a new administrative database, Cygnum, to replace the previous system for early years data. This results in some structural changes to the data.

The geographical information about home childcarers is now based on the registered organisational address, instead of the primary setting where the childcare took place, as used previously. We do not publish the address, such as street or postcode, of home childcarers.

There are some slight changes to some field names. These are reflected in the data dictionaries in the underlying data files.

CR inspections are now recorded with 2 judgements where applicable. These reflect how well providers meet standards on both the compulsory and voluntary parts of the CR. When a judgement is given on both parts, priority is given to the judgement on the compulsory part in our reporting.

The number of places offered by a provider is recorded differently in Cygnum from how it was previously. This has resulted in improved coverage of places data and contributed to a rise in places numbers between 31 March 2018 and 31 August 2018.

We identified some technical issues with the mapping of the data relating to inspection actions.

This has resulted in the actions and recommendations table (Table 10) being temporarily withdrawn from the release pending further investigation.

From this investigation, we identified changes to the structure of the actions and recommendations data. As a result of these changes, the historical actions and recommendations data was not fully compatible with the Cygnum data. Therefore, to limit complexity in the published data table, we published Table 10 with effect from 1 September 2018. We selected this date to align with the first published dataset following migration to Cygnum.

As a consequence of the restructuring of the data, first-aid actions are now incorporated into the qualifications category.

April 2019 Local authority boundaries restructured in the South West.

Three existing local authorities in the South West region (Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole) have been re-structured into 2 new ones (Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, and Dorset).

As a result, there is a break in continuity for the numbers of joiners and leavers for these local authorities for the 31 August 2019 release. Because the boundary of Dorset has been re-structured, provider numbers and outcomes cannot be reasonably compared over time for this local authority.

September 2019 The EIF is introduced.

The 4 key inspection judgements changed to 'quality of education', 'behaviour and attitudes', 'personal development' and 'leadership and management'. These are not directly comparable to the previous key judgements.

Also, there are now out-of-school day care inspections. Providers on the EYR, which only offer care before and after school or during the school holidays, no longer have to meet the learning and development requirements of the EYFS. They do have to meet the safeguarding and welfare requirements. These providers do not receive grades against the 4 EIF judgements but only an overall effectiveness judgement of 'met', 'not met with actions' or 'not met with enforcement'.

Data comparing childcare providers at their most recent inspection is also presented in [Data View](#); users should select 'Early years' from the 'Remit' dropdown. Ofsted is responsible for childcare inspections in England. The following organisations are responsible for childcare inspections in the devolved administrations of the UK:

Wales:

- [Care and Social Services Inspectorate](#), for childcare inspections
- [Estyn](#), for inspections of non-school settings for children under 5

Scotland:

- [Care Inspectorate](#), for childminder inspections
- [Education Scotland](#), for all other childcare inspections

Northern Ireland:

- 5 separate [Health and Social Care Trusts](#) for different regions of the country

Value

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. Our official statistics are released to promote reform and improvement across government through increasing transparency and citizen participation.

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 EYR and the CR, and for enforcement when it appears that legal requirements are not being met.

These official statistics releases report on early years and childcare inspections under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006.

By aggregating the most recent inspection judgements of individual childcare providers, the publication presents the quality of provision nationally and in different geographical areas.

We analyse the data by region, provider type and childcare register to identify important differences, patterns and trends. The official statistics aim to draw out the main messages from the data and communicate these in an understandable way.

Accessibility and clarity

We publish our releases in an accessible format on GOV.UK. The information is publicly available and there are no restrictions on access to the published data.

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 and inspection-level files in open document spreadsheet (ODS) format. We also publish an accessible version of our 'data, charts and tables' file, which includes the same aggregated data, but in a machine-readable format.

If you have any feedback on the accessibility, clarity or any other aspect of the quality of our release, you should send your comments to childcaredataqueries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Meeting user needs

Users of these statistics include the Department for Education (DfE), local authorities, early years and childcare providers, and the voluntary sector.

The official statistics can help inform policy decisions about the quality and geographical location of childcare provision and contribute towards the findings in Ofsted's Annual Report to Parliament.

Glossary

Definitions of terms are in our [statistics 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 us

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.

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