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Official Statistics

Methodology: childcare providers and inspections as at 31 March 2025

Published 27 June 2025

Applies to England

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Introduction

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

Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) that all producers of official statistics should adhere to. You are welcome to contact us directly at childcaredataqueries@ofsted.gov.uk with any comments about how we meet those standards. Alternatively, you can contact OSR through the [OSR website](#) or by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk.

This official statistics release reports on:

- the number of providers on the Early Years Register (EYR) and the Childcare Register (CR)
- 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 events and registration visits
- the number of childcare providers registered with childminder agencies

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, gives information on the quality of providers, broken down by geographical area and by individual provider. The data is reported as of the end of the reporting period, with a publication cut-off date of 1 calendar month. This helps to ensure that the majority of inspections carried out within the reporting period have reports that are published and are reflected within the official statistics.

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.

Publication schedule

Official statistics publications are currently released according to the following timetable.

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
June	31 March	1 Sep to 31 Mar
November	31 August	1 Apr to 31 Aug

Management information is published twice a year:

- in January/February for data as at 31 December
- in July/August for data as at 30 June

Types of provider and inspection

The publication refers to 5 types of early years providers:

- childminders
- childminders without domestic premises
- 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 be given actions or recommendations to help them improve.

CR, NCOR and out-of-school day-care inspections result in a judgement that the provider has met or not met the 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 events (including remote events by telephone call)
- registration visits

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 focus of the publication is on inspections that were carried out while the common inspection framework was in effect (1 September 2015 to 31 August 2019) and following 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. This data includes the number of providers and places. The data is then aggregated for presentation and analysis.

There is a time delay of 1 calendar month between the end of the reporting period and the publication cut-off date. This accounts for the time required to write up, verify and publish the inspection reports after the inspection has taken place. This helps to ensure that we capture the majority of inspections completed during the reporting period within the official statistics.

Coverage

Providers and inspections

The publication reports on childcare providers that are registered with Ofsted. Most provision in the early years age range is offered 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, and academies that provide childcare for children aged 2 and older.

For more information, see our official statistics on [state-funded schools and academies](#), and on [non-association independent schools](#).

A small number (around 80) of early years providers that are on the sites of association independent schools are registered with Ofsted but are mainly inspected by another inspectorate: the [Independent Schools Inspectorate](#). For more information, see our guidance on [Regulating and inspecting association independent schools with an early years registration](#). We do not have any Independent Schools Inspectorate inspection data recorded in our administrative system for these providers, but we do include them in our registration statistics.

All early years providers are inspected within a 6-year window based on the date and judgement of their last inspection. Providers that have been judged requires improvement and inadequate are reinspected within 12 and 6 months, respectively. We aim to inspect all new childcare providers within 30 months of their registration date.

Previously, we inspected childcare providers on a 4-year inspection cycle. The most recent inspection cycle ran from 1 August 2016 to 31 July 2020.

For providers on the EYR, a provider's most recent inspection where children are present at the time of the inspection is either a full EYR inspection or an out-of-school day-care EYR inspection; for providers that are only on the CCR and/or VCR, it is a CR inspection. If providers leave the EYR but remain on the CR, any previous EYR inspection history is removed from their provider and inspection data.

The publication also provides information on the most recent EYR inspections where no children were present at the time of the inspection. These are referred to as NCOR EYR inspections. CR inspections of CCR and/or VCR providers and inspections of out-of-school day-care providers will not be counted as NCOR if no children are present. Instead, they will remain listed as a CR or out-of-school day-care EYR inspection.

When describing the quality of the early years sector, the summary statistics and the main findings 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 have been required to give details on the number of places they offer at the point of registration. They must calculate this based on the legal requirements of the EYFS. The information about places that is 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 under 8. This data includes all EYR places for children under 5 and CCR places for children aged 5 to 7.

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 the provider's 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. A provider can look after different children in the morning and in the evening, as long as they do not exceed the maximum number of children 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.

Joiners and leavers

Joiners are childcare providers that were active on the relevant register at the end of the period stated, but not at the start. Most of these are new registrations, but they also include providers with reactivated registrations and those that have changed provider type or register. At local authority or regional level, this may also include providers that have relocated into a new geographical area.

Leavers are childcare providers that were active on the relevant register at the start of the period stated, but not at the end. Most of these are resignations, but some are also providers that have had their registration cancelled or suspended, or that have changed provider type or register. At local authority or regional level, this may also include providers that have relocated out of a geographical area.

Previously, the numbers of annual joiners and leavers were produced by summing the numbers of joiners and leavers from the two official statistics periods (see [Table 1](#)). From 31 March 2024, the numbers of annual joiners and leavers are calculated by comparing the beginning of the year to the end. Therefore, the numbers of annual joiners and leavers in this release may not equal those produced in previous publications.

This is because if a suspended provider has their registration reinstated, they will rejoin under the same registration. It is therefore possible for a provider to leave during one official statistics period and join in the other during the same year. Before 31 March 2024, this provider would be included in annual joiners and leavers numbers, but now they would not.

This can occur whenever joiners and leavers are summed over multiple time periods.

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 users' needs.

Trustworthiness

Timeliness and punctuality

We currently produce the publication twice a 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, we take data from the administrative system 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 and analyse the data and produce the main findings and supplementary products.

We publish the official statistics at 9.30am on the date pre-announced in the [statistics release calendar](#).

Pre-release of the official statistics is granted in accordance with the [Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order \(2008\)](#). You can find the list of postholders granted pre-release access with 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, for providers' personal safety and for national safety.

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

Quality

Accuracy and reliability

We extract the official statistics data 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, we consider the inspection outcome data taken from our administrative systems to be of high quality. This is due to:

- the rigorous checks that we carry out before publishing inspection reports
- our focus on the legislative and reputational importance of maintaining accurate information on childcare providers
- the high level of public scrutiny that 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, 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.

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

Date	Change and effect on comparability
January 2025	Actions are set at inspection under the two statutory EYFS frameworks introduced in January 2024, the EYFS statutory framework for childminders and the EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers. As provision judged as inadequate or requires improvement will usually be reinspected within 6 and 12 months respectively, Table 10a (actions set at inspection under previous frameworks) has been withdrawn. Table 10b (actions set under the current frameworks) has been renamed Table 10.
November 2024	The Department for Education introduced childminders without domestic premises . These childminders work solely from somewhere other than a home, such as a community or village hall.

They can register with Ofsted or with a childminder agency. Existing childcare providers, such as childcare on non-domestic premises providers or childminders (with domestic premises), could resign their current registration and register as this new provider type. This may affect the numbers of providers joining and leaving Ofsted registers. The impact of this change on comparability is not known at this stage, as it will depend on the number of providers that register.

In addition, the total number of people (including childminders and assistants) who can work together under a childminder's registration increased from 3 to 4.

July 2024	Parliamentary constituency boundaries changed in the UK , taking effect at the time of the general election on 4 July 2024. Some constituencies had boundaries redrawn while keeping the same name. Other constituencies were renamed or split into successor constituencies. As a result, some providers will have not changed address but changed parliamentary constituency. Some new constituencies will now appear in the data and others will no longer be present.
January 2024	Two statutory EYFS frameworks, the EYFS statutory framework for childminders and the EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers, were introduced. Table 10 was split into two tables, 10a and 10b, to report actions set at inspection under the new and previous frameworks.
April 2023	<p>Local authority boundaries were restructured in the North West.</p> <p>The Cumbria local authority was replaced by two new authorities, Cumberland, and Westmorland and Furness.</p> <p>As a result, there was a break in continuity for the numbers of joiners and leavers in these local authorities for the 31 August 2023 release.</p>
May 2021	<p>Ofsted published responses to its consultation on early years official statistics.</p> <p>Based on these findings, releases are now published 2 times a year, supplemented by the publication of 2 management information releases a year (see Table 1).</p>
September 2019	<p>The EIF was introduced.</p> <p>The 4 key inspection judgements changed to quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development, and leadership and management. These were not directly comparable to the previous</p>

key judgements.

Also, there are now out-of-school day-care inspections. Providers on the EYR that 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. However, they did have to meet the safeguarding and welfare requirements. These providers did not receive grades against the 4 EIF judgements. Instead, they received an overall effectiveness judgement of met, not met with actions, or not met with enforcement.

April 2019 Local authority boundaries were restructured in the South West.

Three existing local authorities in the South West region (Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole) were restructured into 2 new ones (Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole; and Dorset).

As a result, there was a break in continuity for the numbers of joiners and leavers in these local authorities for the 31 August 2019 release. Because the boundary of Dorset had been restructured, provider numbers and outcomes could not be reasonably compared over time for this local authority.

July 2018 Ofsted introduced a new administrative database, Cygnum, to replace the previous system for early years data. This resulted in some structural changes to the data.

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

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

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

The number of places offered by a provider was recorded differently in Cygnum from how it was previously. This 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 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.

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

August 2016	<p>Childminders judged requires improvement are now reinspected within 12 months when possible.</p> <p>Ofsted prioritised inspections of childminders who were previously judged as requires improvement, to ensure that they were reinspected within 12 months.</p>
September 2015	<p>A new common inspection framework across education, skills and early years remit areas was introduced.</p> <p>The 'personal development, behaviour and welfare' judgement was 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 was comparable with the 'quality of leadership and management' judgement. The 'outcomes for children' and 'quality of teaching, learning and assessment' judgements were new as of September 2015, and therefore not comparable with any previous judgements.</p>
March 2015	<p>Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act gained royal assent.</p> <p>From March 2015, a single company could register multiple providers of childcare with Ofsted on a single registration.</p>
February 2015	<p>Ofsted published responses to its consultation on early years official statistics.</p> <p>Based on these findings, releases were published 3 times a year, covering 1 September to 31 December, 1 January to 31 March, and 1 April to 31 August.</p>
September	<p>Childminder agencies, which register with Ofsted, were introduced.</p>

- 2014** New childminders could register with childminder agencies without registering with Ofsted directly. Existing childminders could also deregister from Ofsted and register with an agency instead.
- The impact of this change on the comparability of data was low, due to the relatively small number of childminder agencies that had registered with Ofsted.
-

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 Inspectorate Wales](#), 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:

- Five 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 His 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 that are 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 accompanies 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 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, please send your comments to childcaredataqueries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Meeting user needs

Users of these statistics include the Department for Education, 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, contact Anita Patel on 03000 130 914 or Anita.Patel@ofsted.gov.uk, or the early years data and analysis team at childcaredataqueries@ofsted.gov.uk.

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