



Research and analysis

# Early years complaints and notifications commentary

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**Applies to England**

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## Introduction

Our recent [2024 to 25 annual report and accounts](#) reported on the number of complaints and notifications relating to registered early years providers. This commentary discusses complaints and notifications over a 5-year period in more detail. [\[footnote 1\]](#)

We are committed to making sure children have the best possible start in life, and to promoting children's safety and welfare. Caring for young children in a safe environment helps them to develop the skills they need as they grow. The [early years foundation stage \(EYFS\)](#) framework and [Childcare Register requirements](#) set out what childcare providers must do to help children learn and develop and to keep children safe and well.

It is important to understand that we regulate providers to help them improve their practice so that they keep children safe. In many cases, providers have already acted to reduce the risk of harm and have notified us, as set out in the legal requirements they must follow.

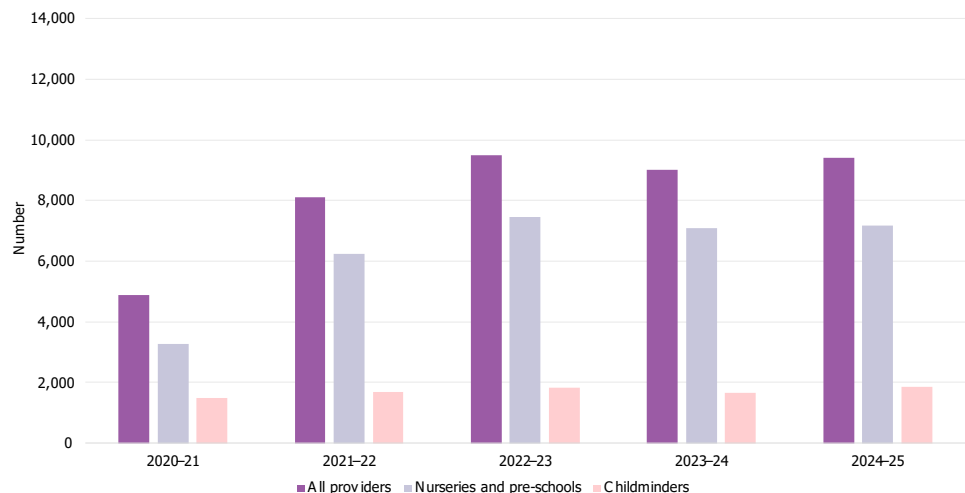
# Complaints

[Complaints about registered early years providers](#) can be from parents, members of the public, other agencies, or members of staff. When we receive a complaint, we do not investigate the concerns raised. Instead, our role is to check whether a provider is meeting the legal requirements of the register they are registered on.

During the 2024 to 2025 financial year, we risk-assessed 9,420 complaints relating to 6,370 providers.<sup>[\[footnote 2\]](#)</sup> This was 10% of all registered providers at the start of the financial year.<sup>[\[footnote 3\]](#)</sup> Around three quarters of these complaints related to nurseries and pre-schools.<sup>[\[footnote 4\]](#)</sup>

The number of complaints has increased each year since 2020–21, except for 2023–24, where there was a 5% decrease from the previous year. Between 2023–24 and 2024–25, the number of complaints about childminders increased by 11%, compared with a 1% increase in complaints about nurseries and pre-schools.

**Figure 1: Number of complaints risk-assessed, by provider type and year**



View data in an [accessible table format](#).

In Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's 2020/21 annual report,<sup>[\[footnote 5\]](#)</sup> we reported that around a third of complaints were about safeguarding or people's suitability to care for children. These continue to be the main areas of concern.

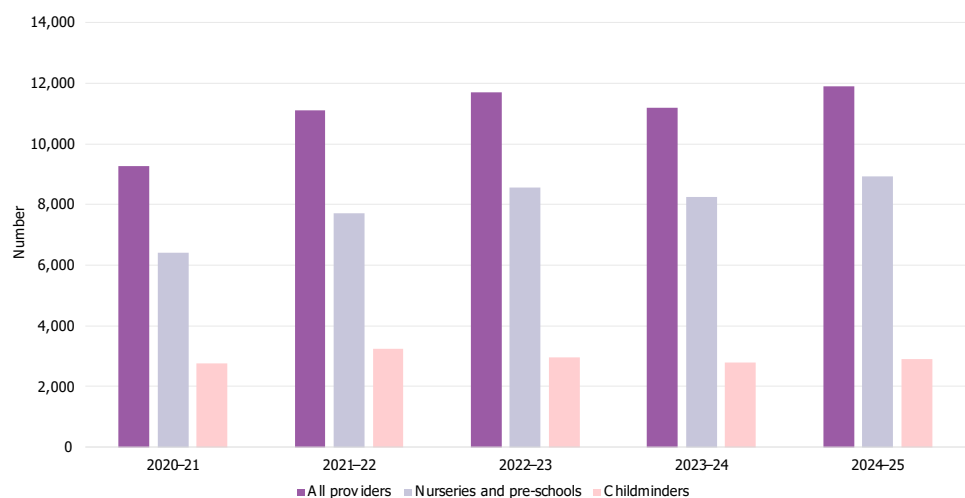
## Notifications

Ofsted-registered early years providers must [notify us of any serious childcare incidents](#) as soon as possible, and in any case within 14 days. We ask providers to use the dedicated [online notification form](#) so that information gets to the right place quickly. In February 2025, we published a blog post reminding providers about [when they need to notify Ofsted](#), which linked to our [guidance](#).

Between June 2020 and February 2022, registered providers were required to notify us of 1 or more confirmed cases of COVID-19.<sup>[\[footnote 6\]](#)</sup> This was an additional requirement at the time set by the Department of Education. This commentary does not include notifications about COVID-19; however, [data on the number of these notifications is available separately](#).

During 2024–25, we risk-assessed 11,900 notifications from 8,220 providers. As with complaints, three quarters of these were from nurseries and pre-schools. Even though there was a 4% decrease between 2022–23 and 2023–24, the number of notifications has increased in the last 5 years. Year-on-year, there is more variability in the percentage of notifications received from nurseries and pre-schools compared with childminders. Since 2023–24, there has been an 8% increase in notifications from nurseries and pre-schools compared with a 4% increase from childminders.

**Figure 2: Number of notifications risk-assessed, by provider type and year**



View data in an [accessible table format](#).

In 2024–25, nearly a quarter of notifications were about changes that providers must notify us of (24%), followed by safeguarding policies and procedures (20%) and accidents and injuries (19%).

## Outcome of complaints and

# notifications

Once we have risk-assessed the information received, we decide on the appropriate course of action. This could be having a telephone call with the provider, bringing forward an inspection or taking compliance and enforcement action. In cases that do not suggest there is a risk to children's safety or well-being, and when the provider's inspection history does not give us cause for concern, we note the information so that it can inform the next visit or inspection. We may also refer the matter to the provider for them to take appropriate steps.

In almost half of all complaints and notification cases, we determined that the most proportionate course of action is to discuss this with the provider at the next visit or inspection. This is the most common outcome for notifications from providers. As would be expected, complaints are most likely to result in further action.

Multiple complaints and/or notifications can be handled as one case. During 2024–25, we carried out 8,690 regulatory events. These included face-to-face events as well as remote events such as telephone calls with providers. This was a 19% increase on the previous year.

Where a breach in requirements is identified, we may take enforcement action. This could include raising an action, or suspending or cancelling a registration. Over the 5-year period, 12% of risk assessments handled by our regional teams resulted in enforcement action.

Although the number of regulatory events has increased each year, the number of events where actions were set reduced from 16% in 2020–21 to 13% in 2024–25. This could indicate that providers are dealing proactively with issues that arise and are complying with their legal responsibility to notify us appropriately.

We will continue to take a proportionate approach to regulation when we receive information of concern. We will continue to update our guidance and provide information in blogs to help demonstrate how settings can work with us to keep children safe.

## Annex: data tables for figures

**Data for Figure 1: Number of complaints risk-assessed, by provider type and year**

| Financial year | Provider type             | Number of complaints |
|----------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 2020–21        | All providers             | 4,890                |
| 2020–21        | Nurseries and pre-schools | 3,280                |

|         |                           |       |
|---------|---------------------------|-------|
| 2020–21 | Childminders              | 1,500 |
| 2021–22 | All providers             | 8,100 |
| 2021–22 | Nurseries and pre-schools | 6,250 |
| 2021–22 | Childminders              | 1,700 |
| 2022–23 | All providers             | 9,490 |
| 2022–23 | Nurseries and pre-schools | 7,470 |
| 2022–23 | Childminders              | 1,820 |
| 2023–24 | All providers             | 9,010 |
| 2023–24 | Nurseries and pre-schools | 7,090 |
| 2023–24 | Childminders              | 1,670 |
| 2024–25 | All providers             | 9,420 |
| 2024–25 | Nurseries and pre-schools | 7,190 |
| 2024–25 | Childminders              | 1,850 |

See [Figure 1](#).

**Data for Figure 2: Number of notifications risk-assessed, by provider type and year**

| Financial year | Provider type             | Number of notifications |
|----------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2020–21        | All providers             | 9,270                   |
| 2020–21        | Nurseries and pre-schools | 6,410                   |
| 2020–21        | Childminders              | 2,760                   |
| 2021–22        | All providers             | 11,100                  |
| 2021–22        | Nurseries and pre-schools | 7,710                   |
| 2021–22        | Childminders              | 3,240                   |
| 2022–23        | All providers             | 11,700                  |
| 2022–23        | Nurseries and pre-schools | 8,570                   |
| 2022–23        | Childminders              | 2,970                   |

|         |                           |        |
|---------|---------------------------|--------|
| 2023–24 | All providers             | 11,200 |
| 2023–24 | Nurseries and pre-schools | 8,260  |
| 2023–24 | Childminders              | 2,790  |
| 2024–25 | All providers             | 11,900 |
| 2024–25 | Nurseries and pre-schools | 8,920  |
| 2024–25 | Childminders              | 2,900  |

See [Figure 2](#).

1. We have excluded complaints and notifications that fall outside Ofsted's remit. [↵](#)
2. Numbers have been rounded.  
The providers include childminders, childminders without domestic premises, childcare on non-domestic premises, childcare on domestic premises and home childcarers.  
By the end of March 2025, some providers were no longer active. Their registration was either suspended or cancelled, or they resigned. [↵](#)
3. '[Childcare providers and inspections as at 31 March 2024](#)', Ofsted, July 2024. [↵](#)
4. The term 'nurseries and pre-schools' is used to describe childcare on non-domestic premises. [↵](#)
5. '[The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2020/21](#)', Ofsted, December 2021. [↵](#)
6. During the pandemic we paused routine inspections. Our regulatory and enforcement activity continued during this period if we determined there was a possible risk of harm to children. [↵](#)

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