Reporting year 2025

Childcare and early years provider survey

This is the latest release

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Methodologies

Methodology changes

Several changes have been made to the methodology for calculating the statistics shown in this release. These changes have led to some of the statistics from the 2024 Survey being revised in order to allow them to be directly compared with results from the 2025 Survey. The nature and impact of these changes are described in the "Methodology changes" section below.

[Childcare and early years provider survey]

Introduction

This release provides information on childcare and early years provision in England from the 2025 edition of the Department for Education's Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers.

Fieldwork was carried out between May and July 2025.

The methodology section, and Technical Report available for download from "additional supporting files" provide more details on how the survey was carried out, the response rates that were achieved, and how results were weighted in order to be representative of all childcare providers in England.

Three different types of childcare provider are covered by the survey:

Childminders: Ofsted-registered childminders providing early years childcare and operating on domestic settings. The sample of childminders was drawn from Ofsted's Early Years Register. Childminders registered with a childminder agency were not included in the survey.

School-based childcare providers: The sample of school-based childcare providers was taken from a list of school-based providers that have nursery provision, according to DfE's "Get Information About Schools" service. The two types of school-based provider covered by the survey are:

- **Maintained nursery schools**: These are purpose-built maintained schools specifically for children in their early years and with a qualified teacher present.
- **Nursery class childcare settings**: These are other maintained schools, and non-maintained schools, offering nursery provision.

Group-based providers: These are other childcare providers (such as playgroups and day nurseries) operating on non-domestic premises. The sample of group-based childcare providers was drawn from Ofsted's Early Years Register. The two main types of group-based providers covered by the survey are:

- **Private group-based providers**: These are private companies and include employer-run childcare for employees.
- **Voluntary group-based providers**: These are voluntary organisations, including community groups, charities, churches, or religious groups.

There are a smaller number of “other group-based providers” (run by, for instance, colleges, local authorities, “private not-for-profit” organisations etc.) These providers are not shown separately but are included in “all group-based provider” totals.

A bigger set of tables, and more detailed information, including sample sizes and tests of the statistical significance of differences between figures from the 2024 and 2025 surveys, can be found in additional tables available in the “supporting files” section of this release. Please read the “notes and definitions” sheet for details of how the figures in these tables have been calculated and presented.

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Headline facts and figures - 2025

Total estimated number of childcare providers in England with at least one child aged 0-4 registered with them

53,600

There were an estimated 54,400 childcare providers in 2024.

▶ Who are childcare providers?

Total estimated number of registered childcare places in England

1,620,800

There were an estimated 1,605,000 registered childcare places in 2024.

▶ What are registered places?

Total estimated number of paid childcare staff

353,700

There were an estimated 353,100 paid childcare staff in 2024.

▶ Who are paid childcare staff?

Mean hourly parent-paid fee charged by providers for children aged under 2

£7.18

Mean hourly parent-paid fee charged by providers for children aged 2

£7.09

Mean hourly parent-paid fee charged by providers for preschool children

aged 3 and 4

£6.78

Number of childcare providers

- The 2025 Survey estimated there to be 53,600 Early Years providers in total, made up of: 21,400 group-based providers, 9,900 school-based providers and 22,300 childminders.
- The **total number of providers fell by 1 per cent** between 2024 and 2025, reflecting a 5 per cent fall in the number of childminders. The number of school-based providers and group-based providers remained stable.

Number of registered childcare places

- The 2025 Survey estimated there to be 1,620,800 registered places, made up of: 1,102,400 group-based provider places, 372,700 school-based provider places and 145,700 childminder places.
- The **total number of registered places increased by 1 per cent** between 2024 and 2025. A 3 per cent increase in registered group-based provider places offset a 1 per cent decrease in registered school-based provider places and a 7 per cent fall in registered childminder places.

Number of paid childcare staff

- This Early Years' provision was delivered by an estimated 353,700 paid staff, consisting of: 265,400 paid group-based provider staff, 59,400 paid school-based provider staff and 28,900 childminders and childminding assistants.
- The **total number of paid childcare staff remained stable** between 2024 and 2025. Group-based provider staff numbers grew by 1 per cent, while school-based provider staff numbers fell by 1 per cent and the number of childminders and childminding assistants fell by 5 per cent.

Other sources:

For some of the figures in these tables, for instance the number of childcare providers and the number of childcare places, other sources of data are available.

For school-based providers, figures are collected on the Annual School Census and published by DfE on "Explore Education Statistics".

For childminders and group-based providers, figures are available from Ofsted's childcare registers and published on their website (opens in new tab).

There are slight differences between the sets of figures. Ofsted, for instance, report the number of registered childcare places recorded during inspections, which take place every few years, while the Survey asks providers for an up-to-date figure for the number of places that they have registered with Ofsted. In general, Ofsted figures refer to the number of childminders and group-based providers registered to deliver childcare to pre-school children while Survey figures refer to the number of childminders and group-based providers who reported that they actually delivered childcare to pre-school children at the time of the Survey. As a result, the number of childminders and group-based providers reported on the Survey is smaller than the number reported by Ofsted. Childminders, in particular, may be registered on Ofsted's Early Years Register (thereby allowing them to look after pre-school children) but not have any pre-school children attend them at the time of the Survey.

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Additional supporting files

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All supporting files from this release are listed for individual download below:

Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers (SCEYP) 2025 - Technical Report (docx, 329 Kb)
This report provides detailed information about how the 2025 SCEYP was administered and how the findings or the Survey have been reported.

Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers 2025 - Accompanying Main Tables (xlsx, 362 Kb)
Tables to accompany the Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers 2025 release

Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers 2025 - Accompanying fee and funding rate tables (xlsx, 250 Kb)
Fee and funding rate tables to accompany the Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers 2025 release

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Methodology changes

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Several changes have been made to the methodology for calculating the statistics shown in this release.

The two changes that have had the most impact are:

- Updating the “weighting” methodology used to estimate regional and England “group-based provider” totals - in order to compare them with results from the 2025 Survey, estimates of the total and mean number of registered and booked group-based provider places, and total and mean number of paid group-based provider staff in 2024 have been revised down.
- “Imputing” missing data where providers report that they “don't know” the number of registered and booked places that they have - in order to compare them with results from the 2025 Survey, estimates of the total number of registered and booked places at school-based providers, group-based providers and childminders in 2024 have been revised up.

The sections below provide more detail of these changes and describe the scale of revisions made to 2024 figures.

A change has been made to the design of the survey in 2025. As a result, estimates of the average fees charged by “all providers” in 2025 are slightly higher than they would have been if the 2025 Survey had been carried out in the same way as the 2024 Survey. Comparisons of average fees for individual types of providers are unaffected.

Other changes described in the sections below include a change to how “average per child” calculations have been made (these are based on the number of registered children rather than registered childcare places that providers have) and changes to the wording of several questions on the Survey, which have improved the accuracy of the information collected but had an impact on some of the time series data.

Group-based provider weighting

Results from the Survey are weighted in order to be representative of all childcare providers in England. The weighting methodology is described in detail in a Technical Report available for download from “additional supporting files”.

Briefly, this methodology gives more weight to categories of providers that are under-represented in the sample of respondents to the survey, compared to the population of childcare providers as a whole, and less weight to categories of providers that are over-represented in the sample.

Analysis of results from the 2024 Survey identified that large group-based providers - those with an above-average number of registered places on Ofsted's Early Years Register of childcare providers - were over-represented in the sample. Specifically, group-based providers that responded to the 2024 Survey had approximately 5 per cent more registered places on the Early Years Register than average. The weighting methodology used to estimate totals for all group-based providers in England did not take account of this bias. This meant that some of the statistics produced from the 2024 Survey - such as the total number of registered group-based provider childcare places, total number of children booked to attend childcare at group-based providers and total number of paid staff employed by group-based providers - were over-estimated.

In the 2025 Survey, the weighting formula for group-based providers was updated to include a measure of “provider size”. Weights from the 2024 Survey have also been re-calculated, using the same formula used in the 2025 Survey, so that results from the two years can be directly compared.

Most “percentage” measures (such as the percentage of childcare places that are spare) and most “average” measures (such as the average number of weeks that childcare providers expect to be open during the year) are unaffected by this change. Detailed results from the Survey are shown in a set of tables, available for download from “additional supporting files” - where appropriate, these show if, and how, 2024 figures differ, depending on whether the "old” or “new” weights are used.

Updating the weighting methodology for the 2024 Survey does, however, have a more significant impact on “volume” measures. The table below shows:

- Total number of registered childcare places;
- Average number of registered childcare places;
- Total number of booked childcare places;
- Total number of paid childcare staff; and
- Average number of paid childcare staff

for group-based providers in England in 2024, based on the “old” and ”new” weighting methodologies.

▶ Export options

Comparison of key statistics for all group-based providers, under the old and new weighting methodologies (2024)

	Old weighting	New weighting
Number of registered places	1,100,100	1,049,800
Mean registered places per provider	53	50
Number of booked full-day places	618,200	581,900
Number of paid childcare staff	277,900	262,900
Mean paid staff per provider	13.1	12.4

Show full screen table

Data symbols ?

Source: 2024 Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers

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Imputing missing data

Some providers either “don't know” or “prefer not to answer” certain questions on the Survey. Rather than risk them dropping out of the Survey altogether, providers are allowed to skip a question that they are unable or do not want to answer and move on to the next one.

Another important methodological improvement made in the 2025 Survey is to “impute” (or estimate) missing Survey data for important “volume” measures, such as the number of registered and booked childcare places. Not imputing these data led to England totals for previous Surveys being under-estimated.

The amount of missing data - and impact of estimating rather than excluding missing data - varies, depending on the measure and type of provider. Virtually all group-based and school-based providers, for instance, reported their "number of paid staff" so the very small amount of missing data for this measure has not been imputed.

It is more common, however, for providers to say they “don't know” or “prefer not to say” the number of registered and booked places that they have. Accordingly, estimates have been made of the number of:

- Registered nursery places;
- Before-school and after-school places for school-age children at group-based providers; and
- Children booked in full-day nursery care

in cases where it was missing. Specifically, where a provider told us they “didn’t know” or “preferred not to say” how many places they had, it was assumed, for the purpose of estimating regional and England totals, that they had the median number of places for providers of their type.

Missing data from the 2025 Survey have been imputed and the imputed figures used in estimates of England totals. Missing data from the 2024 survey have also been estimated and revised estimates of England totals produced. These are shown in the table below. This shows that, proportionally, estimates of registered childminder places have seen the biggest impact.

The reason that the mean number of registered school-based provider and group-based provider places per provider have fallen, despite the total number of registered places increasing, is that, where missing data have been estimated, “per provider” calculations are based on bigger numbers of providers.

▶ Export options

Impact of imputing missing places data on 2024 measures

	Without imputing			With imputing		
	Number of registered places	Mean registered places per provider	Number of booked full-day places	Number of registered places	Mean registered places per provider	Number of booked full-day places
All school-based providers	359,200	39.2	160,800	376,800	38.7	173,500
All group-based providers	1,049,800	50.5	581,900	1,071,500	50.4	622,600
All Childminders	143,200	6.7	78,100	156,600	6.7	82,100

Show full screen table

Data symbols ?

Source: 2024 Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers

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Childcare fees for “all providers”

Prior to 2025, there were two versions of the Survey. The “main” version asked about all of the topics covered by the Survey while a “short” version asked a “booster” sample of providers questions about fees and funding rates, so that these could be estimated at local authority level. Almost all of the providers sent the short survey were childminders.

In order to boost responses to the main survey, in 2025 all providers were sent this version of the Survey and the short version was dropped. To compensate for the short version of the Survey being dropped, instead of questions about fees only being included on certain “variants” of the main survey, in 2025 they were made “core” questions i.e. every provider was asked to answer them.

This change to the design of the survey means that average fees for “all providers” that responded to the 2024 Survey are not directly comparable to those for “all providers” that responded to the 2025 Survey. Specifically, because, in 2025, all group-based providers (rather than only group-based providers sent certain variants of the “main” survey) were asked about the average fees that they charged, and the “short” version (which was primarily sent to childminders) was dropped:

- Group-based providers account for 42 per cent of “all providers” in the 2025 sample (compared to 32 per cent in 2024); and
- Childminders account for 45 per cent of “all providers” in 2025 (compared to 52 per cent in 2024).

Calculations of the average fee charged by group-based providers, average fee charged by school-based providers and average fee charged by childminders are unaffected.

However, because group-based providers (who charge, on average, higher average fees) make up a bigger proportion of “all providers” in 2025 than in 2024 and childminders (who charge, on average, lower average fees) a smaller proportion, the average fee for “all providers” in 2025 is higher than it would have been under the old survey design. It is estimated that mean fees for 3 to 4 year olds are approximately 13p per hour higher than they would have been, mean fees for 2 year olds approximately 17p per hour higher and mean fees for under-2s approximately 20p per hour higher.

So, although comparisons are made between mean and median fees for “all providers” returning the 2024 and 2025 Surveys, it should be noted that in 2025 this calculation gives more weight to fees charged by group-based providers and less weight to fees charged by childminders. Accordingly, in the tables accompanying this release, the statistical significance of differences between mean fees fess charged by “all providers” in 2024 and 2025 has not been calculated.

Mean fees calculated for “all providers” in 2025 are considered a better measure of the fee charged by the “average” provider because in the 2025 Survey all childcare providers are asked about average fees, whereas in 2024 mean fees for “all providers” were skewed by almost all providers that were sent the “short” survey being childminders.

Unlike fees, the average funding rates received by different types of providers for “funded entitlement” hours are very similar, so the change to the design of the survey has not had an impact on average “all provider” funding rates.

Tables on childcare staff joining and leaving providers

Although the questions are designed to be consistent, school-based providers and group-based providers reported a significantly bigger number of “net joiners” (number of paid staff who joined in the last 12 months minus the number of paid staff who left) than their total number of paid staff increased by. Group-based providers, for instance, reported approximately 20,000 “net joiners” in the 12 months prior to the 2025 Survey but that their total number of paid staff had only increased by a fraction of this (approximately 2,500).

Intuitively, it is easier for providers to report how many staff they currently have than to remember how many staff have joined and left over course of the last year. Accordingly, tables showing the total number of paid staff employed by providers have been retained in the publication while tables showing the number of staff joining and leaving providers have been dropped while the discrepancy between “net joiners” and “total paid staff” is further investigated.

Tables showing staff turnover rates continue to be shown as although there is some uncertainty over the total number of staff leaving providers used in these calculations these tables show a clear and consistent difference between provider types i.e. higher "staff turnover" rates for group-based providers than school-based providers.

Changes to survey question wording

In some cases, the wording of questions asked on the Survey changed in 2025. The main changes made, and reasons for making them, are described in more detail in the Technical Report. Briefly, changes were made to make questions:

- More clear - On the 2024 Survey, childminders were asked "How much childminding income do you currently personally earn per year?" In the 2025 Survey, clarification was added to this question ("By this we mean, the income you take from the business in the form of a salary") in order to distinguish "personal" childminding income from fee income (which, in addition to paying the childminder's salary, pays for materials, equipment, the salaries of any assistants that they employ etc.);
- More consistent - On the 2024 Survey, providers were asked "How many paid childcare staff do you currently employ on a temporary basis?" In the 2025 Survey, this was changed to "How many temporary paid childcare staff are involved in the delivery of your childcare provision?" This was changed to be consistent with other questions on the survey, which ask about staff delivering childcare, as opposed to any ancillary staff such as accountants and administrators that the provider might employ.
- More precise - On the 2024 Survey, school-based providers were asked "How many children in your nursery have Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND)?" In some case, schools reported a very high number of children having SEND (more than the total number of children that they had registered in their nursery provision), suggesting that they were counting children in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, as well as children attending nursery provision, that had SEND. In the 2025 Survey, therefore, this question was changed to "How many of the […] under school-aged children registered with your nursery provision have Special Educational Needs or Disabilities?"

Although, in the long-term, changes such as this improve the quality of information collected on the Survey, in the short-term they may have an impact on time series.

The proportion of total childminder costs that are accounted for by staffing (including the "salary" that childminders pay themselves), for instance, fell from 77 per cent in the 2024 Survey to 70 per cent in 2025; the number of temporary paid staff at group-based providers and school-based providers fell by over 20 per cent, from 25,600 in the 2024 Survey to 20,200 in 2025; and the proportion of children registered with school-based providers that have SEND fell from 16 per cent in the 2024 Survey to 14 per cent in 2025 (although this fall is not statistically significant, it is different to the trend for group-based providers, where the proportion of children with SEND saw a statistically significant increase between 2024 and 2025).

Where changes to question wording may have impacted on figures in tables, this is highlighted in footnotes to tables.

"Percentage of children" measures

There are several tables in this release showing the "percentage of children" who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan and have fees paid using Tax Free Childcare. In 2024 and earlier years, these tables showed the number of children who, for instance, had

SEND as a proportion of the number of registered childcare places at the provider. In 2025, these calculations have been updated to show the number of children who have SEND as a proportion of the number of registered children at the provider. This is a more appropriate measure of the prevalence of SEND.   Figures for 2024 have been recalculated so that they can be directly compared with those for 2025.

Breakdown of group-based provider figures

The Survey asks group-based providers whether they are privately owned (and run “for profit”) or owned by voluntary, community or charitable organisations. The average “private” group-based provider has different characteristics to the average “voluntary” group-based provider - on average, “private” providers have more children registered, charge parents slightly higher fees and are significantly more likely than “voluntary ” providers to be part of a “chain” of childcare providers.

A slightly higher proportion of group-based providers that responded to the 2025 Survey reported that they were "voluntary" compared to the 2024 Survey. The weighting formula for group-based providers includes a variable relating to “ownership type”. This variable, however, separates providers into those owned by “individuals” and those owned by “organisations". This means that weighting does not correct for changes between one year and the next in the proportion of group-based providers responding to the survey that are “private” and the proportion that are “voluntary”. As a result, the breakdown of group-based provider figures between “private” and “voluntary” providers shows year-on-year fluctuation.

In this year's release, “volume” measures - such as the total number of registered group-based provider places and total number of paid group-based provider staff - only show a “total” figure for group-based providers rather than a split between private and voluntary group-based providers. In most cases, however, “percentage” and “average” measures continue to show a breakdown between private and voluntary group-based providers as these are largely unaffected by differences in response rates.

For the 2026 Survey, we will look to update the group-based provider weighting formula so that “ownership type” reflects whether providers are “private” or “voluntary”, as opposed to whether they are owned by “individuals” or “organisations”.

Feedback

The Department is proposing to continue to use the new methodologies described in this section for the next publication and explore further improvements.

Users are invited to provide feedback on these changes. Please send any feedback to EY.AnalysisANDResearch@education.gov.uk by 31st March 2026.

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Section 1 - Childcare providers and their characteristics

Hide

Introduction

This section provides an overview of the childcare market - the number of childcare providers and characteristics of the care that they provide.

Total number of providers

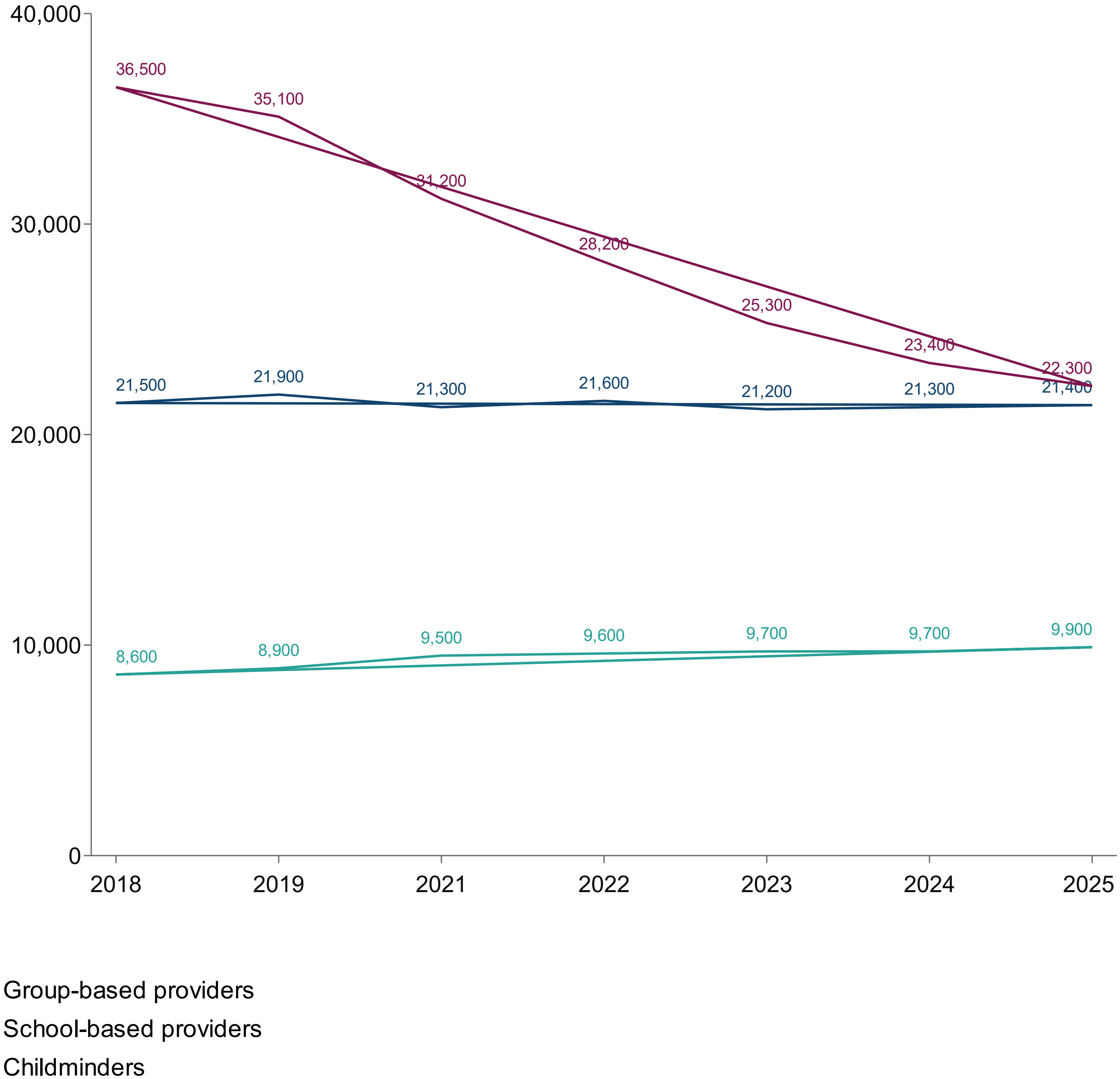
Between 2024 and 2025, the total number of registered childcare providers fell by 1 per cent, to 53,600. The number of school-based providers and group-based providers saw small increases (of 2 per cent and 1 per cent respectively). The number of childminders, however, fell by just over 1,000, or 5 per cent.

Between 2018 and 2025, the total number of registered childcare providers fell by nearly 20 per cent. Over this longer time period, the number of group-based providers has stayed almost the same, while the number of school-based providers has increased by 1,300 or 15 per cent. The number of childminders, however, has decreased by 14,200 or 39 per cent.

Chart | Table

▶ Export options

Number of providers (2018 to 2025)



Footnotes

1. All figures have been rounded to the nearest 100. They may not add up to totals due to rounding.
2. 2025 figures include 143 school-based providers who were "open, but proposed to close" at the time that the survey sample was drawn. In previous years, such schools were excluded from "total provider" figures. They were included in 2025 as checking confirmed that although these schools "proposed to close" they were set to re-open as "academy" schools.

Source: 2025 Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers

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Providers by region

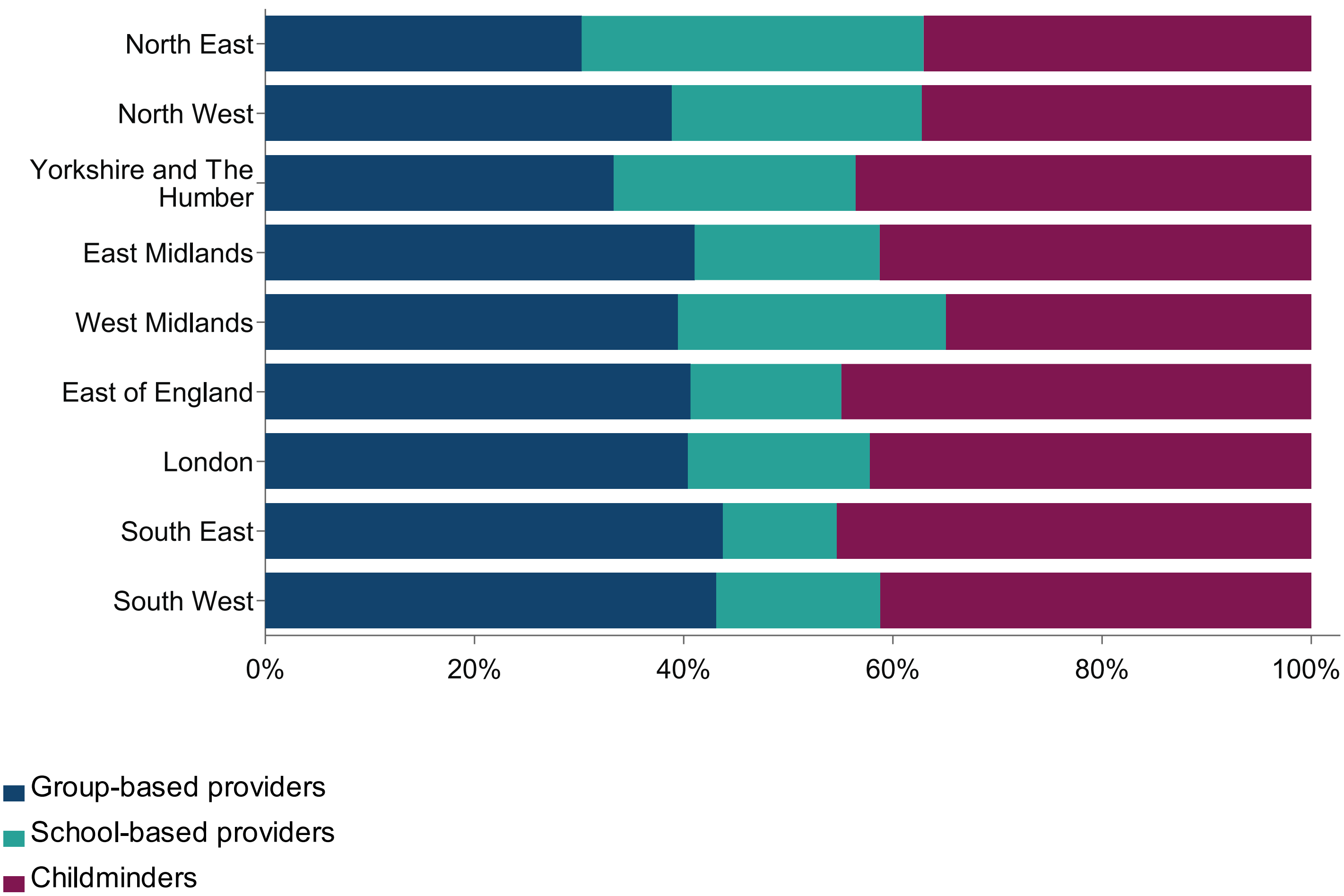
In 2024, childminders made up the biggest share of childcare providers in every region apart from the West Midlands. As the number of childminders has continued to fall, however, in 2025 there are three regions (South West (43 per cent), North West and West Midlands (both 39 per cent)) where group-based providers make up the biggest share of providers.

The proportion of childcare providers that are school-based providers varies from 33 per cent in the North East to 11 per cent in the South East,

Chart Table

▶ Export options

Proportion of providers by region (2025)



Footnotes

1. All figures have been rounded to the nearest 10. They may not add up to totals due to rounding.

Source: 2025 Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers

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Providers by area deprivation

There is a positive relationship between how deprived an area is and the proportion of providers that are school-based providers. In 2025, 29 per cent of providers in "most deprived" areas are school-based providers, nearly double the 15 per cent of providers that are school-based providers in “less deprived” and “least deprived” areas.

The proportion of childcare providers that are group-based providers ranges from 37 per cent in “most deprived” areas to 44 per cent in “least deprived” areas.

Chart | Table

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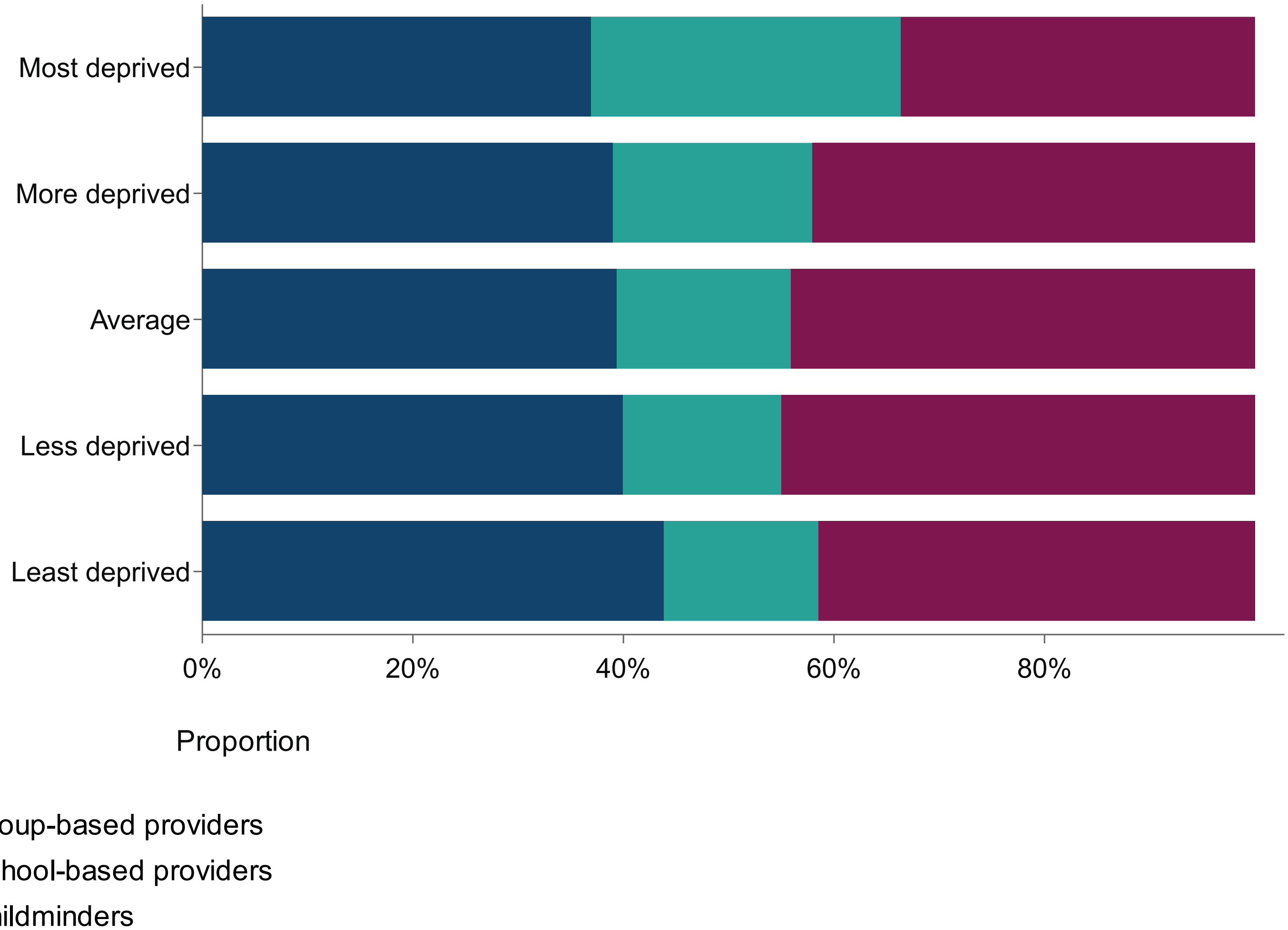
Number of providers by deprivation band (2025)



Footnotes

1. All figures have been rounded to the nearest 10. They may not add up to totals due to rounding.

Source: 2025 Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers

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Providers in a chain

Thirty-one per cent of group-based providers are part of a chain. This proportion is higher for private group-based providers (43 per cent) than for voluntary group-based providers (10 per cent).

Chart Table

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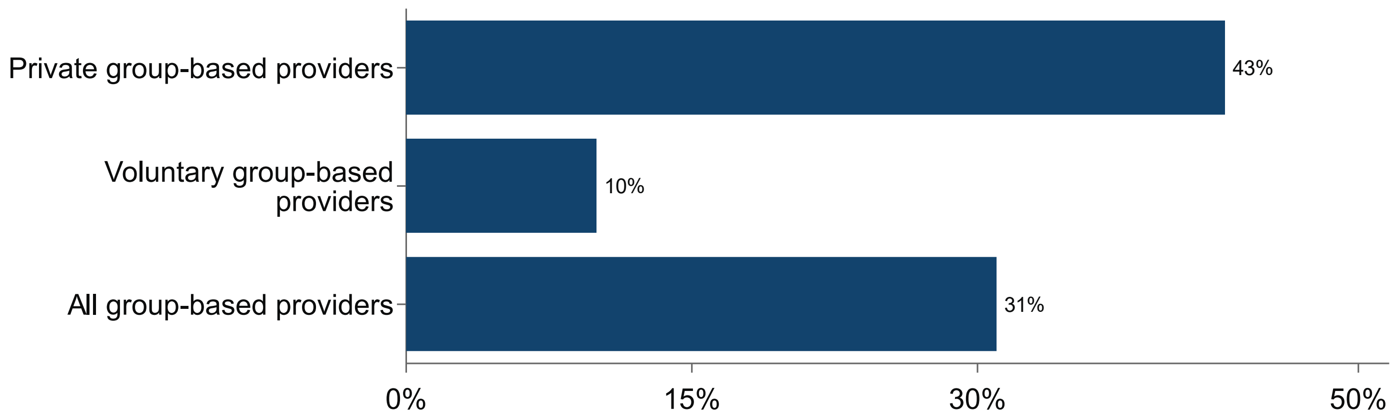
Proportion of providers that are part of a chain (2025)



Source: 2025 Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers

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Term-time only versus term-time and holiday provision

Childminders (87 per cent) and private group-based providers (78 per cent) are much more likely to be open during both term-time and holidays than voluntary group-based providers (26 per cent), maintained nursery schools (12 per cent) and nursery class childcare settings (5 per cent). (Accompanying Main Table 1-7)

Opening hours

Most private group-based providers and childminders open between 7.30am and 8.30am and close between 5.00pm and 7.00pm. In contrast, most school-based providers open later (between 8.30am and 9.00 am) and close earlier (between 3.00pm and 4.00pm). Consequently, childminders and private group-based providers are open for, on average, 10 hours per day compared with 7 hours per days for school-based providers (Accompanying Main Table 1-9).

Further information

For some of the figures in these tables, for instance the number of registered childcare providers, other sources of data are available.

For school-based providers, figures are collected on the Annual School Census and published by DfE on "Explore Education Statistics".

For childminders and group-based providers, figures are available from Ofsted's childcare registers and published on their website. (opens in new tab) (opens in new tab)

There are slight differences between the sets of figures. In general, Ofsted figures refer to the number of childminders and group-based providers registered to deliver childcare to pre-school children while Provider Survey figures refer to the number of childminders and group-based providers who reported that they actually delivered childcare to pre-school children at the time of the Survey. As a result, the number of childminders and group-based providers reported on the Provider Survey is smaller than the number reported by Ofsted. Childminders, in particular, may be registered on Ofsted's Early Years Register (thereby allowing them to look after pre-school children) but not have any pre-school children attend them at the time of the Survey.

More detailed information, including sample sizes, can be found in additional tables available in the “supporting files” section of this release. As well as the figures shown in this section, these tables show, for instance, the size of provider “chains” and the average number of weeks per year that different types of childcare providers are open.

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Section 2 - Childcare places

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Introduction

This section describes the number of childcare places that providers have registered; the number of children registered with them; the number of booked places that they have; and the number of spare childcare places that they have. The definitions are as follows:

Registered places: The maximum number of children that the provider is allowed to look after at any one time.

Registered children: The number of children “on the provider's books”.

Booked places: The number of children booked to attend the provider on an average weekday.

Spare places: A childcare provider has spare places if it is willing and able to take an additional child or children, over and above those children that are already booked.

Number of registered childcare places

The estimated number of registered childcare places in England increased by 15,800 (or 1 per cent) between 2024 and 2025, to 1,620,800.

The estimated number of registered group-based provider places increased by 3 per cent (or 30,900). This increase offset an estimated 1 per cent (or 4,100) fall in registered places at school-based providers and 7 per cent (or 11,000) fall in registered places at childminders.

Mean registered places per provider

School-based providers have a mean of 38 registered places. This number is much higher for maintained nursery schools (100 places) than it is for nursery class childcare settings (35 places). Maintained nursery schools, however, only make up a small proportion of the overall number of school-based childcare providers.

Group-based providers have a mean of 51 registered places.

Childminders have the fewest registered places, with a mean of 7 registered places each

Registered places by region

Group-based providers make up the majority of registered places across all English regions. Their share ranges from just over half (51 per cent) in the North East to almost three quarters (74 per cent) in the South East. In contrast the proportion of registered places at school-based providers ranges from 16 per cent in the South East to 41 per cent in the North East.

Childminders have, on average, fewer registered places per provider than group-based providers and school-based providers meaning they only make up a small proportion of total registered places, ranging from 7 per cent in the North West and West Midlands to 11 per cent in the East of England and Yorkshire and Humber.

Registered children by age

School-based providers look after a much higher proportion of older children than other types of childcare providers. Almost 90 per cent of children registered with school-based providers are aged 3 and 4, with only 1 per cent aged under 2.

Just over half (52 per cent) of children registered with group-based providers are aged 3 and 4. Twenty-eight per cent are aged 2 and 20 per cent under 2.

There is a more even age split of children registered with childminders - 31 per cent are aged under 2, 31 per cent aged 2 and 38 per cent aged 3 and 4.

Booked places

On an average weekday in 2025:

Group-based providers had an estimated 651,500 children booked on full-day places, an increase of 28,900 (or 5 per cent) from 2024.

School-based providers had an estimated 172,300 children booked on full-day places, a decrease of 1,200 (or 1 per cent) from 2024.

Childminders had an estimated 73,600 children booked on full-day places, a decrease of 8,500 (or 10 per cent) from 2024.

Spare places

Providers were asked about the number of additional children that they would have been willing and able to take on the day they completed the survey, over and above those children who were booked - that is, the number of “spare” places that they had.

Group-based providers (69 per cent) and school-based providers (61 per cent) are more likely to have a spare full-day place than childminders (42 per cent).

Although a higher proportion of group-based providers than school-based providers and childminders report **having** a spare place, the **proportion** of full-day nursery places that are spare is lower in group-based providers (16 per cent) than in school-based providers (18 per cent) and childminders (17 per cent). A bigger proportion of places are spare on a Friday than on other days of the week.

Further information

This section shows several measures:

Firstly, the number of places that providers have registered. This is the number of children that the provider is allowed to have in attendance at any one time.

Secondly, the number of children (as opposed to places) that the provider has registered. This is the number of children “on the provider's books” i.e. attending at any time. The number of registered children may be higher than the number of registered places, for instance if different children attend on different days, or it may be lower than the number of registered places, for instance if the provider has spare places.

Thirdly, the number of booked places at the provider. This is the number of children booked to attend the provider on an “average” weekday (providers are asked on the Survey for the number of children booked on a random day of the previous week).

Finally, the number of spare places that the provider has. This is the number of additional children that the provider is willing and able to take, over and above those children that are already booked with them. According to research with providers, “spare capacity” is not always thought of in terms of “places" (particularly where children are able to attend either in the morning-only, afternoon-only or full-day). Therefore “spare place” figures should be considered an indicative, rather than precise, measure of the amount of spare capacity that providers have.

The number of spare places varies between different days of the week. In these tables, the average number across all days is shown. Additional tables, available in the “supporting files” section of this release, show a breakdown by day of the week. They provide further additional information, such as sample sizes, and further tables to those shown in this section, such as the proportion of childcare places that are spare in different regions and the number of registered before-school and after-school places for school-age children at group-based providers.

Two methodological changes have impacted the figures in this section. Firstly, where providers reported on the 2025 Survey that they “don't know” the number of registered and booked places that they have, they have been assumed, for the purposes of estimating regional and England totals, and mean places per provider, to have the median number of places for providers of their type. Figures for 2024 have been revised using the same methodology, increasing these estimates from those published in December 2024. Secondly, the methodology for weighting group-based provider responses to the survey has changed in 2025, by adding a measure of “provider size” to the formula. Figures for 2024 have been revised using the same methodology, decreasing estimates of total and mean registered and booked group-based provider places from those published in December 2024. See the “Methodology change” section for more details of the separate impact that each of these changes has had on group-based provider figures.

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Section 3 - Workforce

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Number of paid childcare staff

There were an estimated 353,700 paid childcare staff in 2025 (265,400 group-based provider staff, 59,400 school-based provider staff and 28,900 childminders and childminding assistants), compared with 353,100 in 2024.

Mean number of paid childcare staff per provider

In 2025, group-based providers have an average of 12.4 staff and school-based providers an average of 6.0 staff.

Temporary staff

In 2025, 22 per cent of school-based providers and 25 per cent of group-based providers employed temporary paid childcare staff. In total, they employed a total of 20,200 temporary paid childcare staff. Maintained nursery schools (43 per cent) reported being the most likely to employ temporary paid childcare staff.

Volunteer staff

In 2025, 30 per cent of school-based providers employed volunteer childcare staff, a similar proportion to 2024 (28 per cent). The proportion of group-based providers employing volunteer childcare staff fell to 27 per cent, from 29 per cent in 2024.

The total number of volunteer childcare staff at school-based providers and group-based providers fell by 1,100 between 2024 and 2025, from 15,100 to 14,000.

Apprentices

In 2025, there were an estimated 29,200 childcare apprentices, an increase of 700 (or 2 per cent) from 2024.

Group-based providers (55 per cent) were significantly more likely to employ childcare apprentices than school-based providers (13 per cent).

Over two-thirds of childcare apprentices (69 per cent) are studying at Level 3, 28 per cent are studying at Level 2 and 3 per cent at Level 5. (Accompanying Main Table 3-7)

Childminders employing an assistant

An estimated 19 per cent of childminders employed an assistant in 2025, in line with 2024 (20 per cent).

Eleven per cent reported regularly working with another childminder or childminders, unchanged from 2024. (Accompanying Main Table 3-9)

Estimated turnover rates for paid childcare staff in 2025 were twice as high in group-based providers (14 per cent) as school-based providers (7 per cent).

The proportion of paid childcare staff who hold an early years or teaching-related qualification at Level 3 or above is highest (85 per cent) in school-based providers. Slightly lower proportions of paid childcare staff working in group-based providers (79 per cent) and childminders (76 per cent) are qualified to Level 3 or above.

A higher proportion of paid school-based provider staff (41 per cent) hold an early years or teaching-related qualification at Level 6 or higher than paid childcare staff working in group-based providers (11 per cent) and childminders (11 per cent).

There are marked differences in the age profile of paid childcare staff in different settings.

Only 1 per cent of childminding staff are aged under 25 compared with over a fifth of paid childcare staff employed by group-based providers (22 per cent).

Conversely, 47 per cent of childminding staff are aged over 50 compared with 16 per cent of paid childcare staff employed by group-based providers.

Staff characteristics: gender

The vast majority of paid childcare staff are female, making up 98% of paid group-based and school-based provider staff, and 97% of childminders. (Accompanying Main Table 3-14)

Staff characteristics: ethnicity

Around 85 per cent of paid childcare staff are White British (Accompanying Main Table 3-15)

More detailed information, including sample sizes, can be found in additional tables available in the “supporting files” section of this release. As well as the figures shown in this section, these tables show, for instance, the average number of hours per week that staff are contracted to work.

The methodology for weighting group-based provider responses to the survey has changed in 2025, by adding a measure of “provider size” to the formula. Figures for 2024 have been revised using the same methodology, decreasing estimates of the total and mean number of group-based provider staff in 2024 from those published in December 2024. See the “Methodology change” section for more details of the impact that this change has had on group-based provider figures.

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Section 4 - Staff-child ratios

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Introduction

The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage sets out the required staff to child ratios in Early Years and Childcare settings. Childcare providers are, however, allowed to exceed these ratios in exceptional circumstances.

For children aged under two:

- There must be at least one member of staff for every three children.

For children aged two:

- There must be at least one member of staff for every five children.

For children aged three to four:

- If a person with an approved Level 6 qualification is working directly with the children there must be at least one member of staff for every 13 children.
- If a person with an approved Level 6 qualification is not working directly with the children there must be at least one member of staff for every 8 children.

In 2025, 97 per cent of private group-based providers and 95 per cent of voluntary group-based providers reported that they were operating at, or below, the statutory ratio for children aged under 2 i.e. one member of staff for every 3 children.

Fourteen per cent of private group-based providers and 26 per cent of voluntary group-based providers had fewer than 3 children per member of staff.

In 2025, the average number of children aged under 2 per staff member at all group-based providers was 2.9, unchanged from 2024.

In 2025, 98 per cent of school-based providers and 99 per cent of group-based providers reported that they were operating at, or below, the statutory ratio for children aged 2 i.e. one member of staff for every 5 children.

In the 2023 Survey, when the statutory ratio for children aged 2 was one member of staff for every 4 children, only around 1 per cent of group-based providers were operating at ratios of one member of staff for every 5 children. In 2025, this proportion had increased to 32 per cent for group-based providers and was 37 per cent for school-based providers.

In 2025, the mean number of children aged 3 to 4 per staff member was 6.7 for group-based providers (a decrease from 6.9 in 2024) and 8.1 for school-based providers (in line with 8.0 in 2024).

Although school-based providers have a higher number of children per member of staff, they are more likely than group-based providers to employ staff qualified to Level 6 or higher, and providers are allowed to have higher child to staff ratios for 3 to 4 year olds when a member of staff qualified to at least Level 6 is present.

Exceptional circumstances

Childcare providers are allowed to exceed staff to child ratios in exceptional circumstances.

Six per cent of group-based providers and 5 per cent of school-based providers said that they had used the "exceptional circumstances" allowance at least once in the past year. However, 25 per cent of group-based providers and 38 per cent of school-based providers reported that they were not aware of the allowance. (Accompanying Main Table 4-4)

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Section 5 - Overview of provider finances

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Introduction

This section provides a brief overview of provider finances.

Findings

Staffing costs account for most of childcare providers' costs - ranging from 70 per cent for childminders to 88 per cent for school-based providers. For group-based providers, rent and mortgage are the second biggest costs (7 per cent). For childminders, the second biggest costs are food (11 per cent).

In 2025, 2 per cent of eligible paid school-based provider staff and 4 per cent of eligible paid group-based provider staff were estimated to be paid below the National Living Wage.

In 2025, the median hourly wage for school-based provider staff was £19.43 per hour and the median hourly wage for group-based provider staff was £13.02 per hour. (Accompanying Main Table 5-3)

Further details

A further report based on the 2025 Survey, looking in detail at providers' income and costs and, for instance, at the average hourly wage paid to staff qualified to different levels, will be published in 2026.

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Section 6 - Funded entitlements and Tax-free childcare

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Government-funded childcare entitlements

Entitlements before the April 2024 expansion

15 hours entitlement

All 3 and 4 year olds were entitled to 570 hours of funded early education or childcare per year. This was usually taken as 15 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year (although it was possible to take fewer hours over more weeks).

2-year-olds were eligible for the “families receiving additional support” (FRAS) entitlement (15 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year) if their parents (or sole parent) were in receipt of certain income-related benefits. They may also have been eligible for non-economic reasons including if they had an Education Health and Care (EHC) plan, received disability living allowance, were looked after by a local authority, or had left care under an adoption, special guardianship, or child arrangements order.

30 hours entitlement

All 3 and 4 year olds with working parents were eligible for a further 15 hours, to bring the total to 30 hours a week.

Parents were eligible for 30 hours of funded childcare if they (and their partner, if they had one) were in work (or getting parental leave, sick leave or annual leave), and were earning at least the National Minimum Wage or National Living Wage for 16 hours per week. Parents could also receive 30 hours funded childcare if, for instance, they were claiming Universal Credit, tax credits or childcare vouchers.

Entitlements after the April 2024 expansion

From April 2024, new childcare entitlements for children aged 9 months up to 3 years with eligible working parents started to be rolled out in stages, as follows:

i) From April 2024, working parents of children aged between 24 months and up to 36 months were eligible for 15 hours funded childcare a week for 38 weeks of the year.

ii) From September 2024, this was extended to include working parents of children aged between 9 and 24 months.

iii) By September 2025, all children of working parents, aged between 9 months and 36 months were eligible for an additional 15 hours of funded childcare per week, bringing the total number of funded hours of childcare to 30 hours per week.

At the **time of the 2025 survey (May to July 2025)** however only the **first two stages** of this expansion had been **rolled out**.

Tax-free childcare

Tax-Free Childcare was introduced in April 2017. Under this scheme, eligible parents open an online account, with payments into the account being topped-up by the government. Parents are then able to use the account to pay for childcare costs with a registered provider.

15-hour entitlements for under 2-year-olds

In 2025, 69 per cent of under 2-year-olds registered with a school-based provider, 75 per cent of under 2-year-olds registered with a group-based provider and 80 per cent of under 2-year-olds registered with a childminder received the 15-hour working parent entitlement.

15-hour entitlements for 2-year-olds

In 2024, the Survey asked how many children received either the FRAS or working parent entitlement (in total).

In 2025, the Survey asked about the two entitlements separately.

Seventy-eight per cent of 2-year-olds registered with a school-based provider, 82 per cent of 2-year-olds registered with a group-based provider and 75 per cent of 2-year-olds registered with a childminder received one of the 2-year-old entitlements.

In 2025, 56 per cent of 3- and 4-year-olds registered with a school-based provider, 40 per cent of 3- and 4-year-olds registered with a group-based provider and 40 per cent of 3- and 4-year-olds registered with a childminder received the universal 15 hours entitlement (**excluding** 3 and 4-year-olds receiving the extended 30 hours entitlement).

In 2025, 36 per cent of 3- and 4-year-olds registered with a school-based provider, 50 per cent of 3- and 4-year-olds registered with a group-based provider and 55 per cent of 3- and 4-year-olds registered with a childminder received the extended 30-hours entitlement.

Restrictions on use of entitlements

Private group-based providers are the most likely to offer entitlements throughout the year. 79 per cent offer the 15-hour entitlement for under 2-year-olds; 64 per cent offer the 15-hour entitlement for 2-year-olds; 63 per cent offer the 15-hour entitlement for 3- to 4-year olds; and 68 per cent offer the 30-hour entitlement for 3- to 4-year-olds both during and outside of term-time.

In 2025, this proportion was significantly lower for school-based providers (although these are less likely to be open outside of term-time).

School-based providers were more likely than other providers to restrict entitlements to certain sessions or hours of the day. 52 per cent restricted the 15-hour entitlement for under 2-year-olds, 45 per cent restricted the 15-hour entitlement for 2-year-olds, 55 per cent restricted the 15-hour entitlement for 3- to 4-year-olds, and 44 per cent restricted the 30-hour entitlement for 3- to 4-year-olds.

Childminders were the least likely to restrict entitlements to certain hours of the day. Nearly 90 per cent of childminders had no restrictions on when the entitlement could be used.

The proportion of parents paying for childcare using Tax-Free Childcare is higher in group-based providers (31 per cent) than school-based providers (18 per cent). This proportion is highest for childminders - in 2025, 50 per cent of parents of children registered with a childminder used Tax-Free Childcare to pay for their childcare.

Further information

More detailed information, including sample sizes, can be found in additional tables available in the “supporting files” section of this release.

Further information about funded entitlements and Tax-Free Childcare can be found at www.childcarechoices.gov.uk (opens in new tab) (opens in new tab).

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Section 7 - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

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Introduction

Providers were asked how many of the children registered with their setting had Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND). They were asked to include children with and without formal support in place, as well as those whose needs had not yet been formally identified but who their staff had identified as potentially having SEND.

Findings

The proportion of providers looking after at least one child with SEND has increased since 2019. In 2025, 84 per cent of school-based providers, 90 per cent of group-based providers and 23 per cent of childminders looked after at least one child with SEND.

On average, many more children attend school-based and group-based providers than attend a childminder. This explains why the proportion of childminders looking after at least one child with SEND is lower.

In 2025, school-based providers had an average of 5 children with SEND (an estimated 14 per cent of their registered children) and group-based providers had an average of 6 children with SEND (an estimated 11 per cent of their registered children). Childminders had the lowest proportion of children with SEND (an estimated 4 per cent of their registered children).

Providers with access to a Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO)

Reflecting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework for group and school-based providers (opens in new tab), almost all school-based providers (99 per cent) and group-based providers (98 per cent) have a colleague formally designated as a SENCO. (Accompanying Main Table 7-5)

Less than a third (29 per cent) of childminders have a colleague (or themselves) designated as a SENCO. However, 38 per cent have access to an external SENCO (either as well as, or instead of, an external SENCO). The remaining 38 per cent have access to neither an internal nor external SENCO. (Accompanying Main Table 7-5)

Further information

More detailed information, including sample sizes, can be found in additional tables available in the "supporting files" section of this release. As well as the figures shown in this section, these tables show, for instance, the proportion of providers looking after children with different categories of SEND ("minor", "moderate" and "severe") and the proportion of providers who have staff that hold, or are working towards, accredited SENCO qualifications.

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Section 8 - Provider fees

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Introduction

This section describes average fees charged to parents by childcare providers. For more details, see the accompanying “fees and funding rate” tables (available from “additional supporting files”).

Findings

Fees charged by providers to parents

Mean hourly fees charged by childcare providers decrease with age. In 2025, the mean hourly parent-paid fee charged for children aged under 2 was £7.18, for children aged 2 it was £7.09 and for children aged 3 and 4 it was £6.78.

Overall, private group-based providers charged parents the highest average fees and childminders charged parents the lowest average fees.

Proportion of providers increasing fees

In 2025, school-based providers were the least likely, and private group-based providers the most likely, to have increased fees in the past 12 months

The proportion who reported that they had increased fees in the previous 12 months, however, was around 5 percentage points lower than in 2024.

Fees charged for children aged under 2

Between 2024 and 2025, mean fees for children aged under 2 increased by between 5.1 per cent for childminders and 10.3 per cent for voluntary group-based providers.

Fees charged for children aged 2

Between 2024 and 2025, mean fees for children aged 2 increased by between 4.6 per cent for childminders and 8.2 per cent for voluntary group-based providers.

Fees charged for children aged 3 and 4

Between 2024 and 2025, mean fees for children aged 3 and 4 increased by between 2.2 per cent for maintained nursery schools and 8.2 per cent for voluntary group-based providers.

Fees charged by region and child age

In 2025, mean hourly fees were highest in London, followed by the South East and East of England. They were lowest in Yorkshire and The Humber and the North West.

Differences in fees within regions were relatively small compared with differences between regions. Within regions, fees for children of different age groups varied by up to 77p per hour. Differences between regions, however, were much larger. in London, for instance, the mean hourly fee for children aged 2 was £8.92 per hour, over 45 per cent higher than the mean hourly fee for children aged 2 in Yorkshire and The Humber (£6.14 per hour).

The following tables and charts show mean and median fees for both 2-year-olds and 3- to 4-year-olds in each local authority area.

In order to help interpret the mean, the tables show “95% confidence intervals”. Based on the responses we received to the survey, we can be 95% confident that the mean for all providers in the local authority lies between the “lower” and “upper” values.

Further information

The average fees charged by different types of providers in 2024 and 2025 can be directly compared. Average fees charged by “all providers” that returned the survey in 2024 and 2025, however, cannot be directly compared, due to a change in the design of the Survey. For more details, see the “Methodology changes” section.

Further information, including sample sizes, can be found in additional tables available in the “supporting files” section of this release.

More detailed analysis of the fees charged by childcare providers will be published in a follow-up report looking in detail at childcare provider finances,

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Section 9 - Funding rates

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Children aged under 2

From September 2024, eligible working parents of children aged from 9 months to 24 months have been entitled to the equivalent of 15-hours of funded childcare per week, for 38 weeks a year.

In 2025, the average funding rate received by providers for children aged under 2 was £10.43 per hour. With the exception of nursery class childcare settings (who, in most cases, don't have any children aged under 2 registered) different types of providers all had a very similar average funding rate.

Children aged 2

In 2025, mean funding rates for children aged 2 continued to be highest for maintained nursery schools (£8.21 per hour). This reflected the specific supplement for maintained nursery schools in the Early Years National Funding Formula (intended to compensate for their requirement to have head teachers, governing bodies and qualified teachers) as well as the relatively high proportion of their children identified with SEND.

There was relatively little variation in the average funding rates received by other types of providers.

Children aged 3 and 4

Similar to the 2 year old funding rates, in 2025, mean funding rates for children aged 3 and 4 were higher for maintained nursery schools (£6.29) than for other provider types but there was relatively little variation in the average funding rates received by other types of providers.

In 2025, mean hourly funding rates were highest in London followed by the South East and East of England. Overall, however, they varied by a lot less between regions than mean fees charged to parents.

Difference between average fees and funding rates

In 2025, the average fees charged by providers were:

- Lower than average funding rates for children under 2 (by around £3 to £3.50 per hour)
- Lower than average funding rates for children aged 2 (by between 15p per hour in London and £1.27 per hour in Yorkshire and The Humber)
- Higher than average funding rates for children aged 3 and 4 (by between 40p per hour in Yorkshire and The Humber and £2.07 per hour in London).

Further information, including sample sizes, can be found in additional tables available in the "supporting files" section of this release.

More detailed analysis of the funding rates received by childcare providers will be published in a follow-up report looking in detail at childcare provider finances,

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Help and support

Methodology

Find out how and why we collect, process and publish these statistics.

Childcare and early years provider survey

Official statistics

These are Official Statistics and have been produced in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics (opens in new tab).

This can be broadly interpreted to mean that these statistics are:

- managed impartially and objectively in the public interest
- meet identified user needs
- produced according to sound methods
- well explained and readily accessible

Find out more about the standards we follow to produce these statistics through our Standards for official statistics published by DfE guidance (opens in new tab).

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 (opens in new tab) that all producers of official statistics should adhere to.

You are welcome to contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards. Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk or via the OSR website (opens in new tab).

Contact us

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