



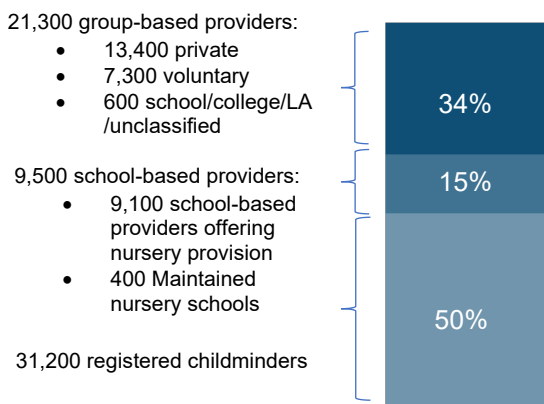
Survey of Childcare and Early Year Providers: Main Summary, England, 2021

9th December 2021, fieldwork March – July 2021

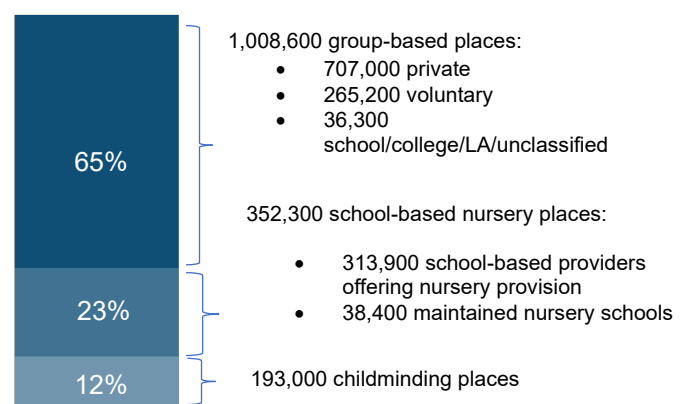
There were an estimated 62,000 providers with at least one child age 0-4 registered in England in Spring 2021. These providers were offering over 1.5 million Ofsted registered childcare places.

Note that changes to survey coverage mean comparisons with previously published figures are not possible ¹

Proportion and number of childcare providers



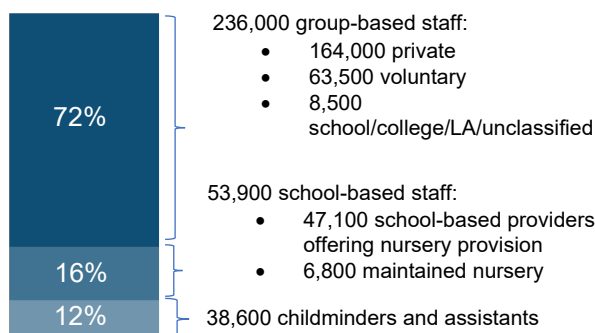
Proportion and number of childcare places



Source: Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers 2021

This Early Years' provision was delivered by an estimated 328,500 staff¹

Proportion and number of childcare staff



Source: Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers 2021

There were an estimated 328,500 early years staff in group-based or school-based settings or working as childminders or childminding assistants.

On average, group-based providers employed 11 members of staff. School-based providers had an average of six staff in their nursery provision.

16% of childminders reported having at least one assistant.

¹ 2018, 2019 and 2021 numbers quoted in this release exclude providers who did not have any children of pre-school age (0 to 4) currently registered with their setting. The number of providers, places and staff reported here will therefore be lower than the numbers reported in the 2019 Official Statistics which included some settings with these characteristics.

If providers without any children 0 to 4 are included in the total (as in the 2019 Official Statistics):

The estimated number of childcare and early years providers in England in 2021 is 67,900 compared with 72,400 in 2019.

The estimated number of childcare places is 1,674,200 in 2021 compared with 1,655,800 in 2019.

The estimated number of paid early years staff in 2021 is 349,000 compared with 363,400 in 2019.

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About this release

This bulletin provides important information on childcare and Early Years provision in England from the Department for Education (DfE)'s Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers. This includes representative survey data on: attendance and spare capacity within childcare settings; providers offering of funded places; staff qualifications and pay; and the reported costs of providing childcare.

The 2021 Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers was a mixed mode survey that could be completed either online or on the telephone. Fieldwork took place between March and July 2021 and covered: group-based providers (private and voluntary); school-based providers (those offering nursery provision and maintained nursery schools); and childminders. The sample was drawn from two sample frames: group-based providers and childminders registered with Ofsted as of July 2020 (timing consistent with previous years) and school-based providers from the January 2020 Schools Census, which was the most up-to-date sample frame for school-based providers available at the time of the survey in 2021.

Defining childcare providers

The study included:

Group-based providers (identified from the Ofsted register): childcare providers registered with Ofsted and operating in non-domestic premises. Eligible group-based provision included full day and sessional care for children below school age. The two main types of group-based providers included in this report are:

- Private group-based providers: These are private companies (both for profit and not for profit) that include employer-run childcare for employees.
- Voluntary group-based providers: These are voluntary organisations, including community groups, charities, churches or religious groups.

School-based providers (identified from the School Census). This covers nursery provision in schools. The two types of school-based providers are:

- School-based providers offering nursery provision: These are state-funded and independent schools which offer nursery classes.
- Maintained nursery schools: These are state-funded nursery schools.

Childminders (identified from the Ofsted register): Ofsted-registered childminders providing Early Years care and operating in domestic settings, not including those registered with an agency.

More information is provided in the technical report published alongside this release.

Comparison between 2021 release and previous publications

The analysis presented in the 2021 release excludes any providers who, on answering the survey, did not have any children of pre-school age (0 to 4) currently registered with their setting. Figures reported for 2018 or 2019 in this release also exclude these providers and so may differ from previously published figures for these years.

Any comparisons between 2021 and previously published data from other years, which includes some providers with no children of pre-school age, should not be made.

More information on the number of providers excluded from analysis in each year can be found in the accompanying technical report.

The 2018 and 2019 statistical releases contained a small number of errors relating to the proportion of staff qualified to different levels and staff earning below the national living wage (2018 and 2019), and proportion of early years staff by age group and average number of registered places (2019 only). These publications have been republished with corrected data.

Testing for statistical significance

This release presents time trends across 2018, 2019 and 2021 for some key measures. Reported differences in means or percentages between 2019 and 2021 have been tested for statistical significance. Where change over time is reported on in the text, these changes are statistically significant at the 5% level unless otherwise stated. Any differences observed at the 5% level are sufficiently large that there is no more than a 5% probability of them occurring by chance rather than as a result of genuine change in the underlying population.

Figures in following tables have been tested for statistically significant differences between 2019 and 2021 for SBPs, GBPs and CMs: Table 4a and 4b, Table 14, Table 15, Table 16, Table 17, Table 34, Table 35.

It is not possible to test changes in population figures (Table 1, Table 5a and 5b, Table 12) for statistical significance as these are weighted data calibrated to a known population total.

Where comparisons are made between different types of provider in 2021, for example comparing the average number of places offered by private and voluntary group-based providers, these differences between providers have not been tested for statistical significance.

A note on the estimates

Population estimates in this Bulletin have been rounded to the nearest 100. Percentages may not add up to 100% and grossed figures may not add up to the total.

The impact of COVID-19

Fieldwork for the 2021 survey took place between March 2021 and July 2021 when Early Years' settings were still experiencing some disruption as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic which began in early 2020. Although the majority of settings will have been open and operating as usual by March 2021 (following a period of enforced closure between March and June 2020), settings' operations may still have been affected. Settings may have been experiencing temporary closure as a result of COVID infection, had children or staff members who were having to self-isolate as a result of infection or being a close contact of someone who was infected or had members of staff on furlough as part of the government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme which ran until 30th September 2021.

To try to obtain as accurate a picture as possible of available childcare provision in 2021 providers were invited to complete the survey if they had been open and offering relevant childcare in the last 30 days, even if their setting was temporarily closed at the time of interview. Settings that were open were asked to think about their current situation whilst settings temporarily closed at the time of interview were asked to answer with reference to the last term-time day on which they were open. Only 1% of responding settings were temporarily closed at the time of interview.

This report highlights some instances of significant change between 2019 (before the start of the pandemic) and 2021. However, it is not possible using this data alone to determine the cause of these changes or to say to what extent, if any, the observed change is the result of the COVID-19 pandemic or other factors.

Further details of the proportion of providers affected by staff or children self-isolating, or operating with restricted opening because of the pandemic, can be found in the 2021 Technical Report.

In this publication

The following have been made available alongside this publication:

- Main tables
- LA Fees official statistics summary
- LA Fees tables
- Technical report

The data underlying this statistical bulletin will be made available for onward analysis by external third parties from early 2022. Should you wish to explore applying for access to this data, please contact data.sharing@education.gov.uk to discuss this further.

1. Number of childcare providers and registered places

Number of providers

The 2021 Survey estimated there to be 62,000 Early Years providers in total, made up of²:

- 21,300 group-based providers;
 - 13,400 private group-based providers
 - 7,300 voluntary group-based providers
 - 600 school/college/Local Authority/other unclassified group-based providers³
- 9,500 school-based providers;
 - 9,100 school-based providers offering nursery
 - 400 maintained nursery schools; and
- 31,200 childminders

In 2019, comparable estimates show there were 66,000 providers made up of:

- 21,900 group-based providers;
 - 13,200 private group-based providers
 - 8,000 voluntary group-based providers
 - 700 school/college/Local Authority/other unclassified group-based providers
- 8,900 school-based providers;
 - 8,500 school-based providers offering nursery
 - 400 maintained nursery schools; and
- 35,100 childminders

Figure 1 shows that the drop in the number of providers between 2019 and 2021 is largely driven by a reduction in the estimated number of childminders from 35,100 in 2019 to 31,200 in 2021. The number of group-based and school-based providers was more stable between these two years.⁴

These numbers of providers are based on representative survey estimates. Numbers reported here will be slightly lower than the number of group-based providers and childminders on the Ofsted register (excluding those appearing only on the Voluntary Childcare Register), and the number of schools in the School Census - the three lists from which the survey sample was drawn. This is because providers who are on the Ofsted register but do not *currently* have any children 0-4 registered at the setting have been excluded

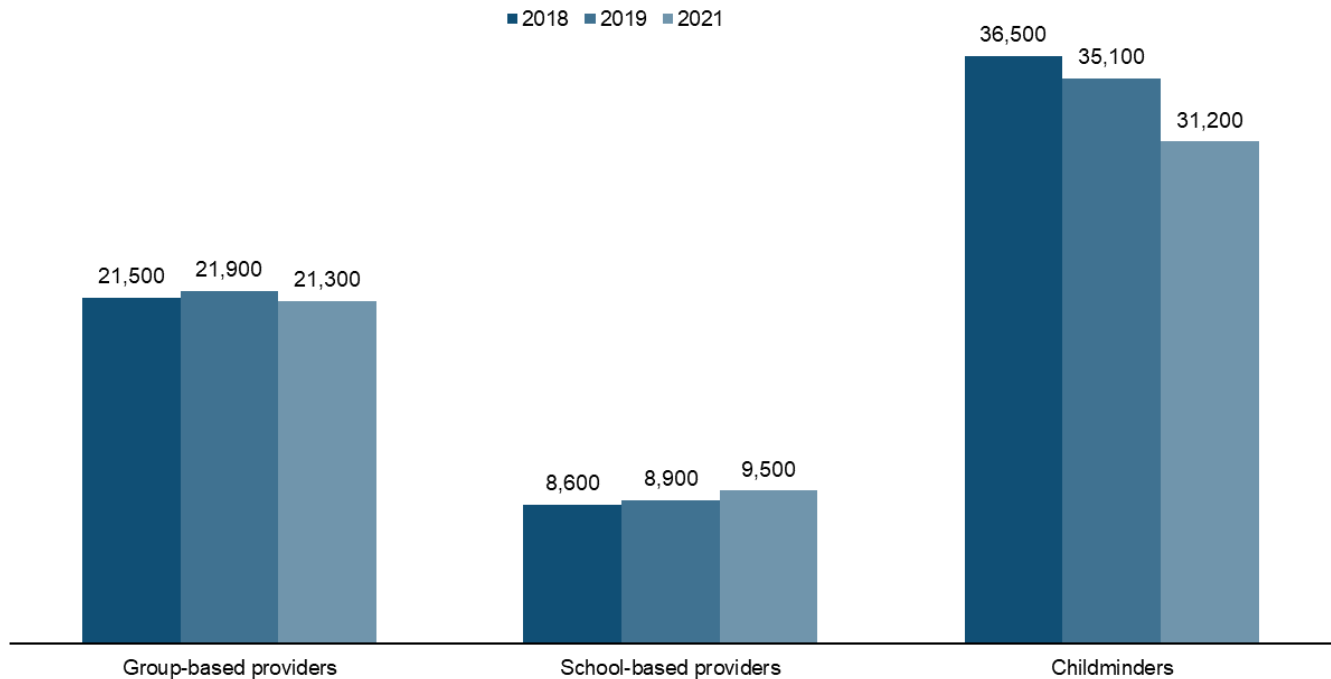
² 2018, 2019 and 2021 numbers quoted in this release exclude providers who did not have any children of pre-school age (0 to 4) currently registered with their setting. The number of providers reported here will therefore be lower than the number of providers reported in the 2019 Official Statistics which included some settings with these characteristics. If providers without any children 0 to 4 are included in the total (as in the 2019 Official Statistics) the estimated number of childcare and early years providers in England in 2021 is 67,900 (compared with 72,400 in 2019).

³ Group-based provider types included private, voluntary and school/college/LA/other unclassified. The third category is not presented elsewhere in this report but is included in the overall group-based provider total. Hence, figures for private and voluntary group-based provider types do not sum to the total of all group-based providers.

⁴ Differences between 2019 and 2021 have not been tested for statistical significance because they are estimated numbers based on known totals.

Figure 1: Number of childcare providers and Early Years providers by type

England, 2018, 2019 and 2021



(Values rounded to nearest 100)
Source: Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers 2018, 2019, 2021

Number of childcare places

The average number of registered childcare places per provider in 2021 - that is the total number of children they can look after at one time - remains broadly consistent with 2019 for all provider types (Figure 2 and Tables 4a and 4b).⁵ Group-based providers had an average (mean) of 47 registered places, with private group-based providers having 53 registered places and voluntary group-based providers having 37. School-based providers had an average of 38 registered places in 2021, with those offering nursery provision reporting 35 registered places on average and maintained nursery schools reporting 102. Although maintained nursery schools had a high number of places per setting, they represent a small proportion of the school-based provider population overall. Childminders continued to report an average of six registered places in 2021 (Figure 2 and Table 4b).

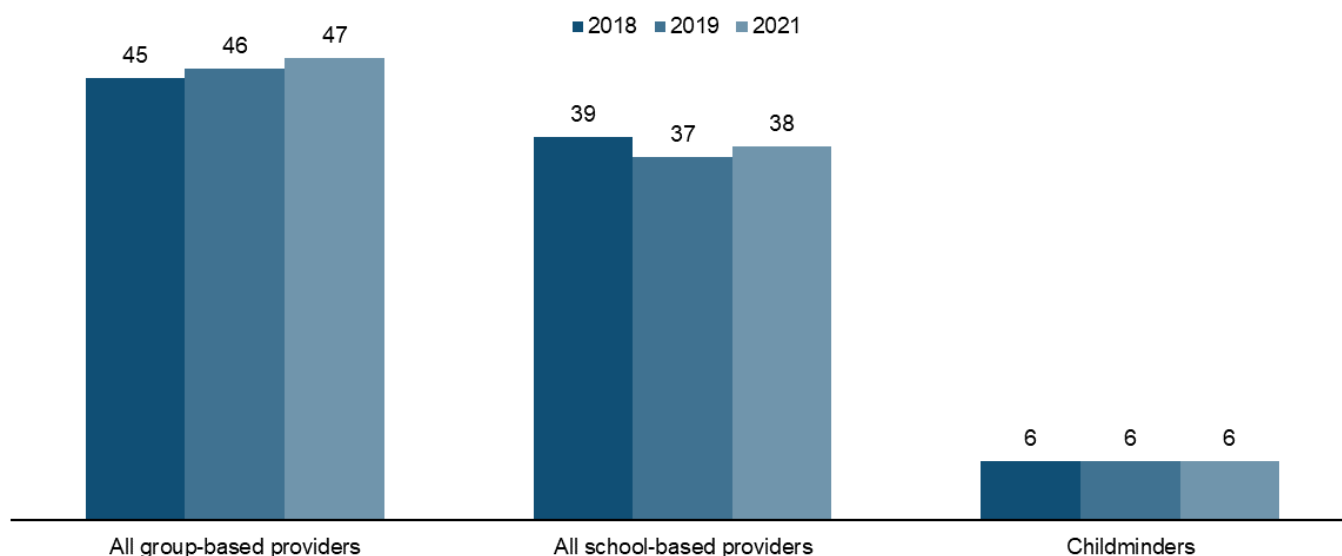
There has been a significant drop in the average number of registered before school places in school-based providers since 2019, from 35 in 2019 to 31 in 2021. The average number of after-school places also fell from 33 in 2019 to 30 in 2021 (Table 4a)⁶.

⁵ Large sample sizes mean that the increase in group-based providers' number of registered places from 46 in 2019 to 47 in 2021 is statistically significant.

⁶ The number of before and after-school places reports only on providers who currently have children 0-4 registered at their setting.

Figure 2: Average number of registered childcare places (maximum number of children that can be looked after at one time) per provider

England, 2018, 2019 and 2021



Source: Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers 2018, 2019, 2021

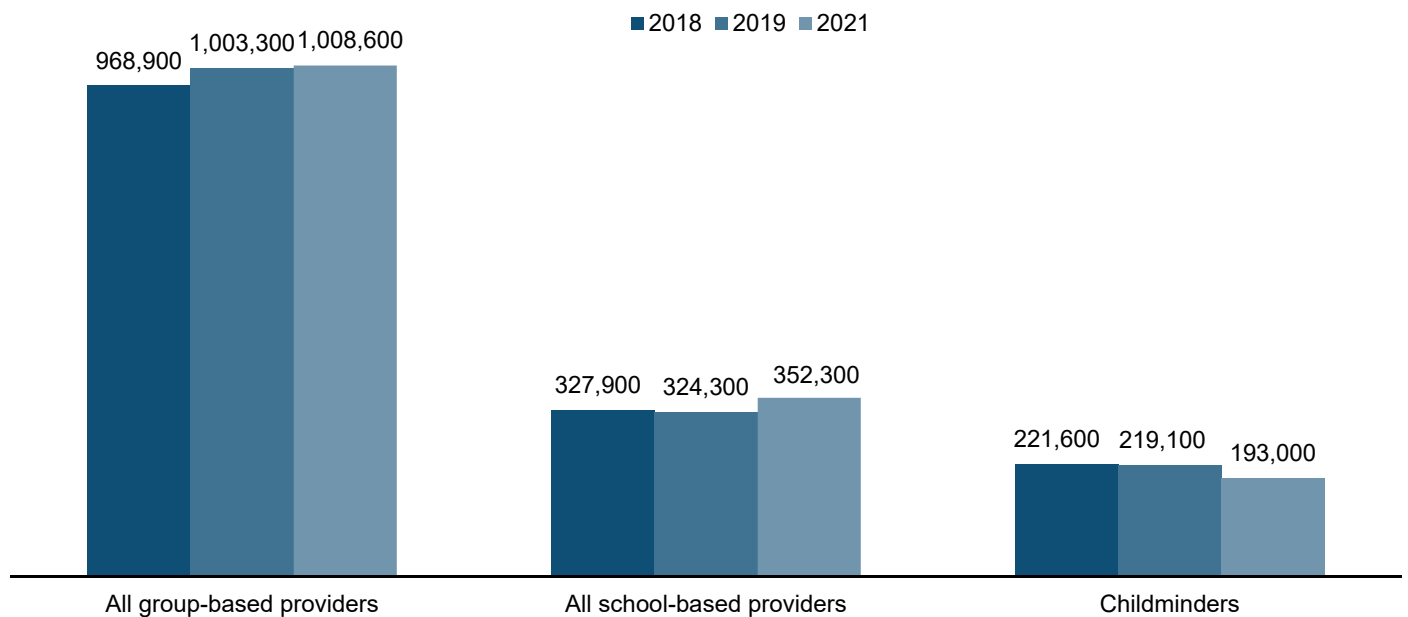
The overall number of registered childcare places in England in 2021 is similar to 2019. There were an estimated 1,553,900 childcare places in 2021 compared with 1,546,600 in 2019.⁷ As shown in Figure 3 (and Tables 5a and 5b), the overall number of childcare places has remained stable despite a reduction in the number of childminder places. The reduction in the number of childminders has been offset by small increases in the total number of places reported by group-based and school-based providers.

Please refer to Table 5a to see the total number of before and after school places by school-based provider type.

⁷ 2018, 2019 and 2021 numbers quoted in this release exclude providers who did not have any children of pre-school age (0 to 4) currently registered with their setting. The number of booked places reported here will therefore be lower than the number reported in the 2019 Official Statistics which included some settings with these characteristics. If providers without any children 0 to 4 are included in the total (as in the 2019 Official Statistics) the estimated number of childcare and early years places in England in 2021 is 1,674,200 (compared with 1,655,800 in 2019).

Figure 3: Total number of registered childcare places (maximum number of children that can be looked after at one time) by provider type

England, 2018, 2019 and 2021



(Values rounded to nearest 100)

Source: Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers 2018, 2019, 2021

2. Booked places and spare capacity

Number of booked places

As well as being asked about the total number of registered places they had, providers were also asked to report how many children were actually booked to attend each type of provision offered⁸ (full day, morning and afternoon sessions, before and after school sessions⁹) on a particular day. There was a total of 507,300 full day places booked with group-based providers in 2021, 365,400 booked morning sessions and 293,400 booked afternoon sessions. For school-based providers there was a total of 153,000 full day places booked, 177,800 morning sessions and 128,500 afternoon sessions booked. The total number of full day care places booked with childminders was 79,100 (Figure 4, Table 6a and 6c).

Group-based providers had an average (mean) of 31 children booked for full day sessions, 34 children on average for private group-based providers and 24 for voluntary group-based providers. School-based providers had an average of 21 children booked for full day sessions (20 for school-based providers offering nursery provision and 48 for maintained nursery schools). Each childminder had an average of three children booked (Tables 6b and 6d).

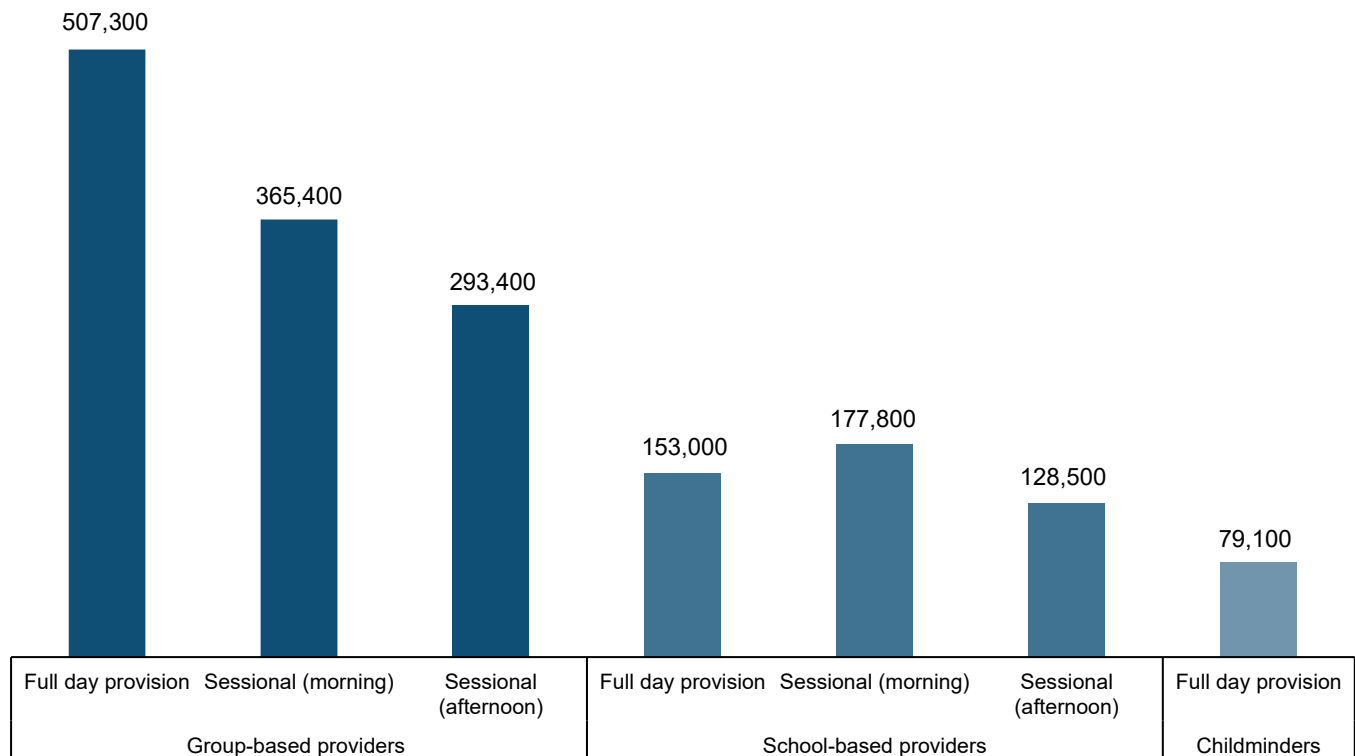
For details of the number of places booked for before and after school care with Early Years providers with pre-school age children registered, see Tables 6a – 6d.

⁸ The number of booked places includes both funded places and unfunded places.

⁹ All figures reported for group-based providers and school-based providers include providers offering those sessions on the particular day that they were asked about. Figures for childminders include all childminders offering care on that day.

Figure 4: Total number of booked childcare places (children booked to attend on a given reference day) per provider

England, 2021



(Values rounded to nearest 100)
Source: Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers 2021

Any spare capacity

Providers were also asked about the number of additional children they would have been willing and able to take on the specified day, over and above those children who were booked, that is the number of spare places they had¹⁰. Figure 5a and Tables 7a and 7b show that all three provider types had at least some spare capacity on average across the week, meaning they could have taken additional children.

Seven in ten (70%) group-based providers reported having any spare places in their full day provision, with a similar proportion having spare places in their morning sessions (69%). Slightly more providers (74%) had spare places in the afternoons. Private providers were more likely than voluntary providers to have spare capacity (see Table 7b for details).

Six in ten (61%) school-based providers had spare capacity in their full day provision. A similar proportion reported spare capacity in morning sessions (59%) but, as with group-based providers, more school-based providers reported spare places in the afternoons (68%) (Figure 4a, Table 7a). Similar proportions of school-based providers offering nursery provision and maintained nursery schools reported spare capacity.

School-based and group-based providers who had children of pre-school age (0 to 4) registered with their setting were most likely to have spare capacity for their wraparound care compared with full day or

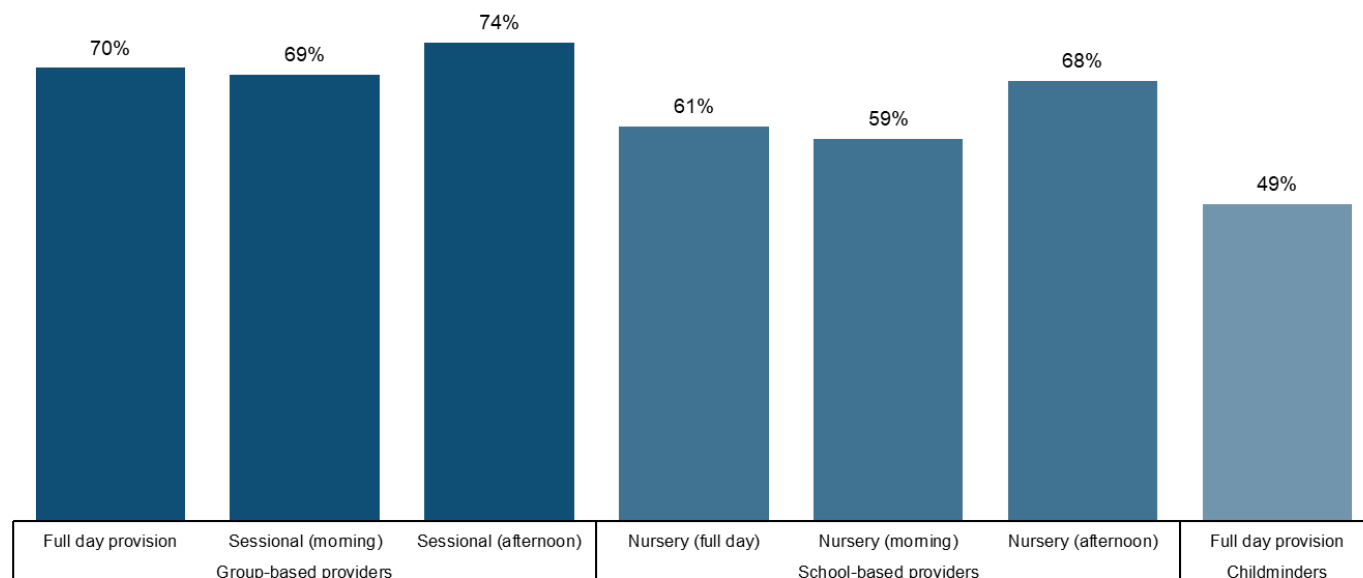
¹⁰ Providers were allocated to think about a specified weekday in the previous week, e.g. last Wednesday. Across the whole sample, the day given was randomised to give a representative spread across weekdays.

sessional care.¹¹ For full details of spare capacity in before and after school provision please see Tables 7a and 7b.

Almost half of childminders (49%) reported having spare capacity on average across the week (Figure 5a, Table 7b).

Figure 5a: Proportion of providers with any spare capacity by provider type (average across the week)

England, 2021



Source: Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers 2021

Proportion of available places that are spare

The proportion of available places that are considered 'spare' is calculated as the number of extra children the provider is willing and able to take on, divided by the sum of total children booked plus the number of extra children they were willing and able to take on that particular day. Similar to what was observed for any spare capacity for group-based and school-based providers, wraparound provision also had the highest proportion of available places being spare. This was the case for both group-based and school-based providers (Figure 5b and Tables 8a and 8b).

Focusing on full day and sessional care, group-based and school-based providers both had more spare capacity in the afternoons compared with morning sessions or spaces for full day care. On average across the week, 20% of group-based providers' available full day spaces were spare, 25% of their available morning sessions were spare and 33% of available afternoon sessions were spare. Similar proportions were reported for both private and voluntary group-based providers (See Table 8b for full details).

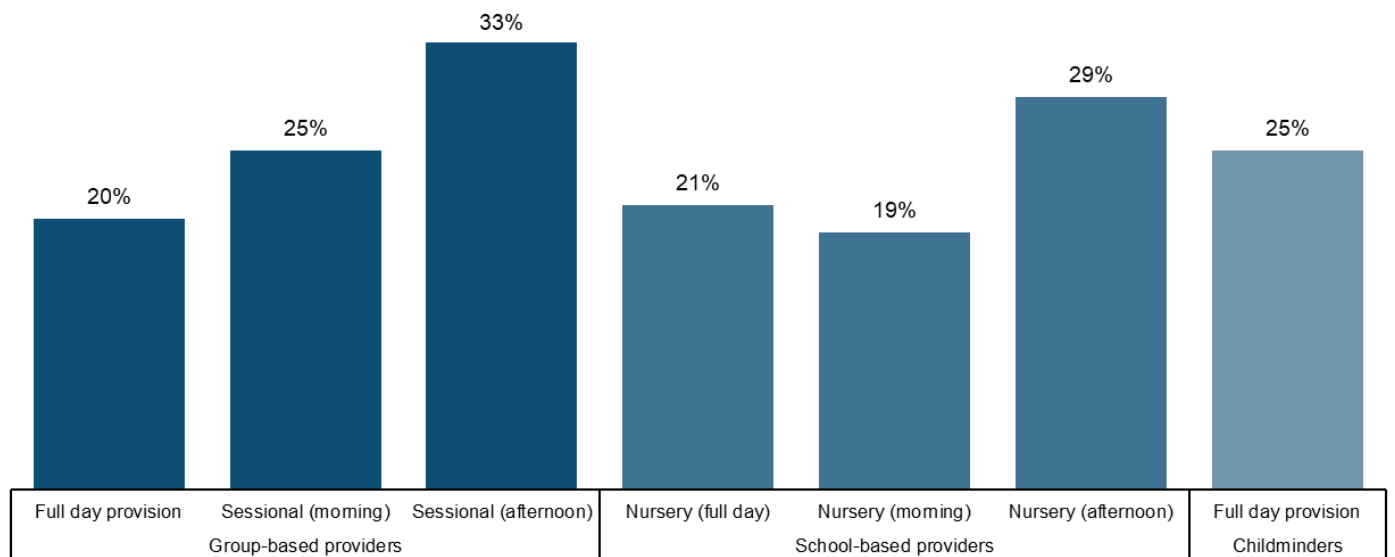
Similarly, on average across the week 21% of school-based providers' available full day spaces were spare, 19% of available morning sessions were spare and 29% of available afternoon sessions were spare. Maintained nurseries were less likely to have available spaces for their morning and afternoon sessions compared with school-based providers that offer nursery provision (Table 8a).

For childminders, on average 25% of their available places were spare (Figure 5b, Table 8b).

¹¹ Wraparound provision is defined as childcare provided outside of normal school hours, such as breakfast clubs or after-school care.

Figure 5b: Proportion of available places that are spare by provider type (average across the week)

England, 2021



Source: Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers 2021

Looking across both the proportion of providers who had any spare capacity and the proportion of places that were spare, there was no clear pattern to how reported spare capacity varied across the days of the week. See Tables 7a, 7b, 8a, 8b, 10a and 10b for further details of how spare capacity varied by day of the week.

There was variation in spare capacity by region. The pattern varied by type of provision. For full details see Tables 9a and 9b.

3. Workforce

Paid staff

In 2021 the total number of paid staff working in childcare and Early Years provision was estimated at 328,500¹² (Table 12c). This is somewhat lower¹³ than in 2019 (344,100, Table 12b) but in line with the estimates for 2018 (331,400, Table 12a).¹⁴

The average (mean) number of paid staff per Early Years settings remained similar in 2021 compared with 2019 for all provider types. School-based providers on average employed six members of staff, with maintained nurseries having on average 18 paid staff and school-based providers offering nursery provision having five. Group-based providers employed 11 members of staff on average, with private group-based providers employing 12 paid staff and voluntary group-based providers employing nine (Table 14). In 2021 16% childminders employed at least one childminding assistant, similar to 2019 (17%) (Table 15).

Included in the total number of paid staff that make up the Early Years workforce, there were 23,600 temporary staff employed across group-based and school-based providers in 2021. In total, 27% of group-

¹² The total number of paid staff excludes apprentices but includes temporary staff, those who were on furlough at the time the survey was conducted and those who were self-isolating.

¹³ Differences between 2019 and 2021 have not been tested for statistical significance because they are estimated numbers based on known totals.

¹⁴ 2018, 2019 and 2021 numbers quoted in this release exclude providers who did not have any children of pre-school age (0 to 4) currently registered with their setting. The number of staff reported here will therefore be lower than the number of staff reported in the 2019 Official Statistics which included some settings with these characteristics. If providers without any children 0 to 4 are included in the total (as in the 2019 Official Statistics) the estimated number of paid staff across childcare and Early Years providers in England in 2021 is 349,000 (compared with 363,400 in 2019).

based providers and 31% of school-based providers reported that they employed temporary paid staff (Table 23).

For details of group-based and school-based providers' use of unpaid volunteers see Table 24.¹⁵

Considering COVID-19: Use of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

At the time of the 2021 survey the government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) was still in operation. This was set up in March 2020 to support workers who were not able to continue employment during the pandemic by allowing employers to claim up to 80% of an employee's salary. Group-based and School-based providers were asked about the number of staff, if any, they had on furlough under the scheme.

Group-based providers reported a total of 3,800 members of staff on full-time furlough and a further 10,200 on part-time furlough. For school-based providers 168 members of staff were on full-time furlough and 78 on part-time furlough¹⁶ (Table 13). The number of staff reported as being on furlough (both part and full-time) declined over the course of the fieldwork period and it is likely that the number of staff still on furlough at 30th September 2021, when the scheme ended, was less than the figures reported here. It is not known what happened to staff identified as being on furlough once the furlough scheme ended, that is whether they returned to work or left employment in the early years sector.

Age, gender and ethnicity of workforce

Providers were asked about the age, gender and ethnicity of their paid members of staff. 17 Data on gender and ethnicity was collected at provider level, whereas data on age was collected at staff level.¹⁸

Twenty-two percent of paid staff employed by group-based providers were under 25 compared with just seven percent of paid staff employed by school-based providers. At the other end of the age distribution, 15% of staff in group-based providers and 24% in school-based providers were 50 or older (Table 21).

All childminders were 25 or over with 39% of childminders aged 50 or over.

The vast majority of paid staff involved in delivering childcare and early years provision were reported by providers to be female. Group-based and school-based providers both reported 97% of paid staff as female whilst 99% of childminders identified as female (Table 19).

The majority of paid staff in the Early Years' workforce were reported to be White British. Group-based providers reported that 82% of their paid staff were White British, with similar proportions reported for school-based providers (84%) and childminders (82%). For both group-based and school-based providers, White Other and Asian were the next most commonly reported ethnicity groups for paid staff, 5% and 6% respectively for group-based providers and 4% and 6% respectively for school-based providers. For childminders the next most commonly reported ethnicity groups were White Other (6%) and Black (5%) (Table 20). The most commonly indicated ethnicity groups for paid staff aligns with the overall population as reported in the 2011 Census data, whereby 81% of people in England and Wales were White British, followed by Asian (8%) Other White (4%) and Black (3%)¹⁹.

¹⁵ Unpaid volunteers are not counted in the figures quoted for the number of paid staff in the Early Years' workforce.

¹⁶ Includes only those providers who indicated they employed at least one paid member of staff.

¹⁷ Figures reported exclude apprentices.

¹⁸ Most of the information collected in the Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers relates to the provider. This includes the number of staff each provider had of different genders/ethnicities. However, a small amount of data – relating to staff age, hours worked, pay and qualifications – was collected about individual staff members employed by each provider. This was to enable analysis of how pay and conditions varied by the age and qualifications of staff members. More information on how this staff level data was collected is given in the Technical Report.

¹⁹ For further information on ethnicity facts and figures in England and Wales, see [Population of England and Wales - GOV.UK Ethnicity facts and figures \(ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/population-facts-figures)

Workforce qualifications

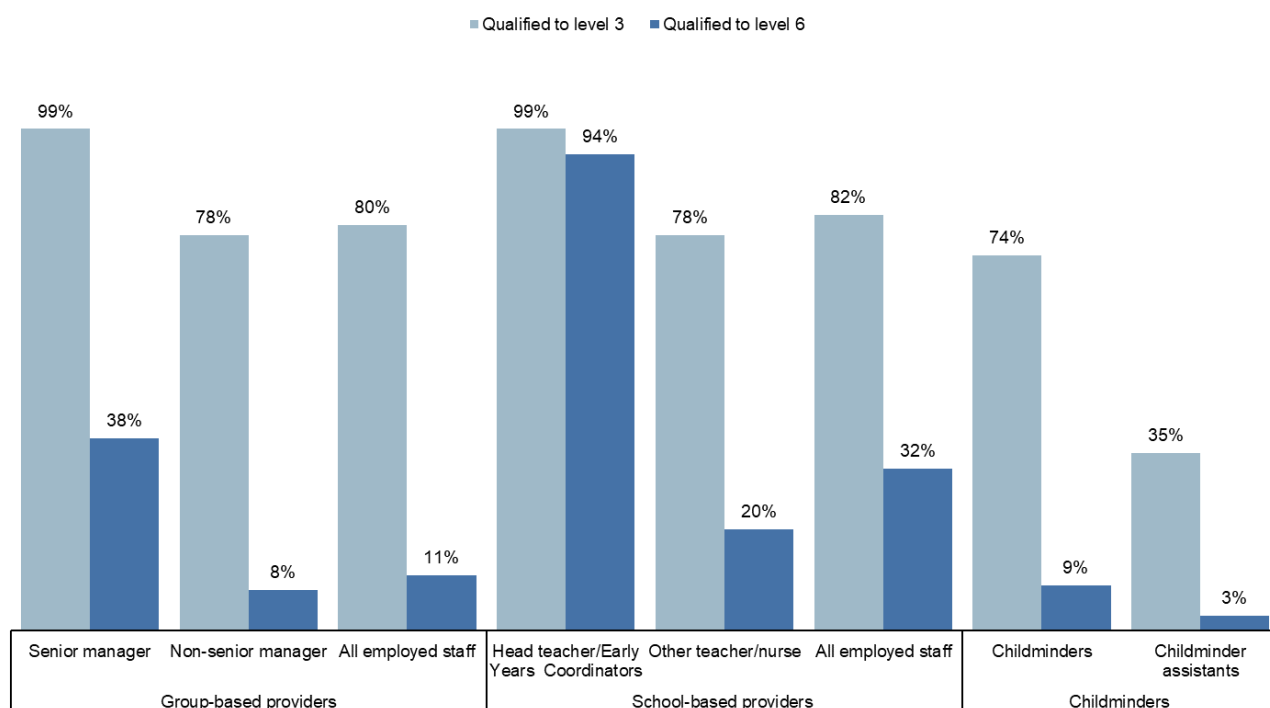
The majority of Early Years staff employed by both school-based (82%) and group-based providers (80%) were reported to be qualified to at least Level 3 (Tables 16e and 16f), consistent with the proportion reported to be qualified to at least this level in 2019 (Figure 6, Tables 16c and 16d).

Almost a third (32%) of staff in school-based settings (34% in those offering nursery provision and 24% in maintained nursery schools) were qualified to degree level (Level 6) in 2021. The comparable figure in 2019 was 33%. A smaller proportion of staff in group-based providers were qualified to Level 6; 11% of staff in group-based settings (the same proportion as in private and voluntary group-based providers) were qualified to this level, similar to 2019 (10%). Figure 6 shows that senior managers in group-based settings and head teachers and Early Years Co-ordinators in school-based settings were more likely than other staff to be qualified to degree level.

Among childminders, in 2021 just under three-quarters (74%) were qualified to at least Level 3 and just under one in ten (9%) were qualified to Level 6. This is similar to 2019 (71% at Level 3 and 10% at Level 6) (Tables 16d and 16f). Among childminding assistants, 35% were qualified to at least Level 3 and three percent to Level 6.

Figure 6: Proportion of Early Years staff qualified to Level 3 and Level 6 by job level

England, 2021



Source: Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers 2021

Early Years or teaching-related qualifications held by staff

The 2021 survey asked about the highest Early Years or teaching-related qualifications held by staff.

Level 3 qualifications

Level 3 qualifications are broadly equivalent to A Levels and practitioners must hold a qualification at this level to be included in ratios specified by the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework.

Level 6 qualifications

Level 6 qualifications are degree level and include Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS), Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), Early Years Professional Status (EYPS), and other Early Years related degree level qualifications. Of these, only EYTS, QTS and EYPS enable the holder to count towards the Level 6 staff:child ratios. Early years professionals with any other Level 6 qualification can only work within the Level 3 staff:child ratios.

Just over a third (38%) of staff in group-based providers whose highest level of qualification was level 3 also held the Early Years Educator qualification. A similar proportion of staff qualified to Level 3 with the Early Years Educator qualification was reported in school-based providers (41%) and childminder settings (38%). There appears to have been growing uptake of the qualification since it was introduced in 2014. For both group-based and school-based providers the proportion with the Early Years qualification had significantly increased since 2019 (from 27% and 34% respectively, see Table 17).

Group-based providers reported that, of their staff holding Level 6 qualifications, 57% held an Early Years Degree, 27% Qualified Teachers Status, 25% Early Years Professional and 19% Early Years Teacher status. In school-based providers, 83% of staff had Qualified Teacher Status, 18% an Early Years Degree, 18% had Early Years Teacher Status and 10% Early Years Professional (Table 18).

Apprentices

Group-based and school-based providers were asked about any apprentices they employed, as well as how many of them were on Level 2 and Level 3 apprenticeships, that is working towards Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications.²⁰ Four in ten (40%) group-based providers and 11% of school-based providers employed apprentices. It was more common for private group-based providers (51%) to employ apprentices compared with voluntary group-based providers (21%). There were an estimated 17,400 apprentices working in group-based provider settings and 1,300 working in school-based provider settings in 2021 (Table 25). Two thirds of apprentices in group-based settings (66%) were on a Level 2 apprenticeship (i.e. working towards a Level 2 qualification) along with 61% of apprentices in school-based settings. The remainder of apprentices were working towards a Level 3 qualification. For full details please see Table 26.

Staff pay

National Living Wage

From 1st April 2016 the government introduced a new mandatory National Living Wage (NLW). From 1st April 2021 the age limit for receiving the highest rate was reduced from 25 to 23. For workers aged 23 and over, the NLW as at April 2021 was £8.91. There are lower rates for young workers and apprentices²¹.

²⁰ Apprentices are not counted in the figures quoted for the number of paid staff in the Early Years' workforce.

²¹ For more information on NLW and minimum wage rates, see [National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage rates - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates)

Almost a fifth (18%) of group-based provider staff aged 23 and over received less than the National Living Wage (NLW). Just over one in ten (12%) school-based provider staff received less than the NLW. Among childminder assistants, almost half (48%) earned less than the NLW (Table 22).

4. Staff to child ratios

Staff to child ratios

The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation stage²² sets out the required staff to child ratios in Early Years and Childcare settings.

For children aged under two

There must be at least one member of staff for every three children. At least one member of staff must hold an approved level 3 qualification, at least half of all other staff must hold an approved level 2 qualification.

For children aged two

There must be at least one member of staff for every four children. At least one member of staff must hold an approved level 3 qualification, at least half of all other staff must hold an approved level 2 qualification.

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.

Group-based and school-based providers were asked to report their average staff to child ratio²³ for children aged under two years old, children aged two years and those aged three to four years. The majority of providers were operating at the statutory ratio for each age group (see Tables 27 to 29 for a full break down by provider type).

The majority of providers reported that they were working to the required staff to child ratios for each age group. Some providers reported staff:child ratios which were more generous than the statutory minimum i.e., with fewer children per member of staff. Among group-based providers, 11% reported a staff:child ratio less than 1:3 for under twos, 22% reported a ratio of less than 1:4 for 2 year olds and 39% reported a ratio less than 1:8 for three and four year olds. Among school-based providers, 33% of settings reported staff:child ratios of less than 1:8 for 3 and 4 year olds.

5. The cost of providing childcare

Costs of provision

Table 30 outlines the average annual cost of providing childcare for each provider type, as reported in the 2021 survey. For both group-based and school-based providers, the largest proportion of total outgoings was spent on staff costs, including wages, National Insurance payments and pension contributions. Staff costs accounted for 74% of total costs for group-based providers and 82% of total costs for school-based providers (Table 31).

Childminder costs were reported differently to those of group-based and school-based providers and so cannot be compared directly with costs for other providers. Staff costs only included payment for employees rather than for the childminders themselves. Only 16% of childminders employed a childminding assistant and staff costs accounted for only 10% of total costs on average. Childminder costs also did not

²² For more information on childcare ratios please visit: [Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/444242/early-years-foundation-stage-eyfs-statutory-framework-2021.pdf)

²³ Staff:child ratios as reported on the specified day providers were allocated to think about when completing the survey. This was a specified weekday from the previous week, e.g. last Wednesday. They were asked about a randomly sampled day of the week to give a representative spread of responses across weekdays.

include rent or mortgage costs. This means that other costs make up a higher proportion of total costs for childminders compared with school-based and group-based providers. For childminders the highest financial outgoing, accounting for 38% of total costs, was food costs such as meals, snacks and refreshments.

Fees

Among group-based providers, 41% had increased their fees for any age group in the last 12 months. Increased fees were more likely amongst private group-based providers (47%) than voluntary group-based providers (31%). A smaller proportion of school-based providers (13%) increased their fees for any age group in the last 12 months. For childminders 18% increased their fees in the last 12 months for any age group.

Both school-based and group-based providers were most likely to have increased fees for under two year olds (32% of school-based providers and 52% of group-based providers). Fee increases among childminders were more evenly distributed across different age groups (Table 33).

Information on the total amount of income received by providers, from all sources, is available in Table 32.

6. Funded entitlements and Tax-Free Childcare

Entitlements

All 3 and 4 year olds in England are entitled to a defined number of hours of free childcare/early education. Some 2 year olds are also eligible to access a defined number of hours of free childcare/early education, for example if their parent or guardian receives certain benefits, or they have a statement of special educational needs²⁴.

15 hours entitlement

All 3 and 4 year olds, and eligible 2 year olds, are entitled to 570 hours of funded early education or childcare per year. This is usually taken as 15 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year.

30 hours entitlement

Since September 2017, the funded childcare entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds increased to 30 hours a week for working parents that meet the eligibility criteria. Parents can usually get 30 hours of funded childcare if they (and their partner, if they have one) are in work (or getting parental leave, sick leave or annual leave), and are earning at least the National Minimum Wage or Living Wage for 16 hours a week. Parents may also be eligible if their working pattern or income has temporarily changed because of the coronavirus.

Tax-Free Childcare

Tax-Free Childcare was introduced in April 2017. Under this scheme, eligible parents²⁵ open an online childcare account. For every £8 they pay into their account, the government will pay in an additional £2, up to a maximum of £2,000 per child per year (this goes up to £4,000 if a child is disabled). Parents are then able to use the account to pay for childcare costs with a registered provider.

The majority of all provider types were currently offering 30 hours funded childcare to three and four year olds attending their setting; 92% of group-based providers, 76% of school-based providers and 85% of childminders (Figure 7a, Table 34). This proportion has increased significantly for group-based providers (90% in 2019) school-based providers (70% in 2019) and childminders (80% in 2019).

For group-based based providers the proportion offering 30 funded hours was similar for private and voluntary group-based providers (93% compared with 91%). Among school-based providers, maintained

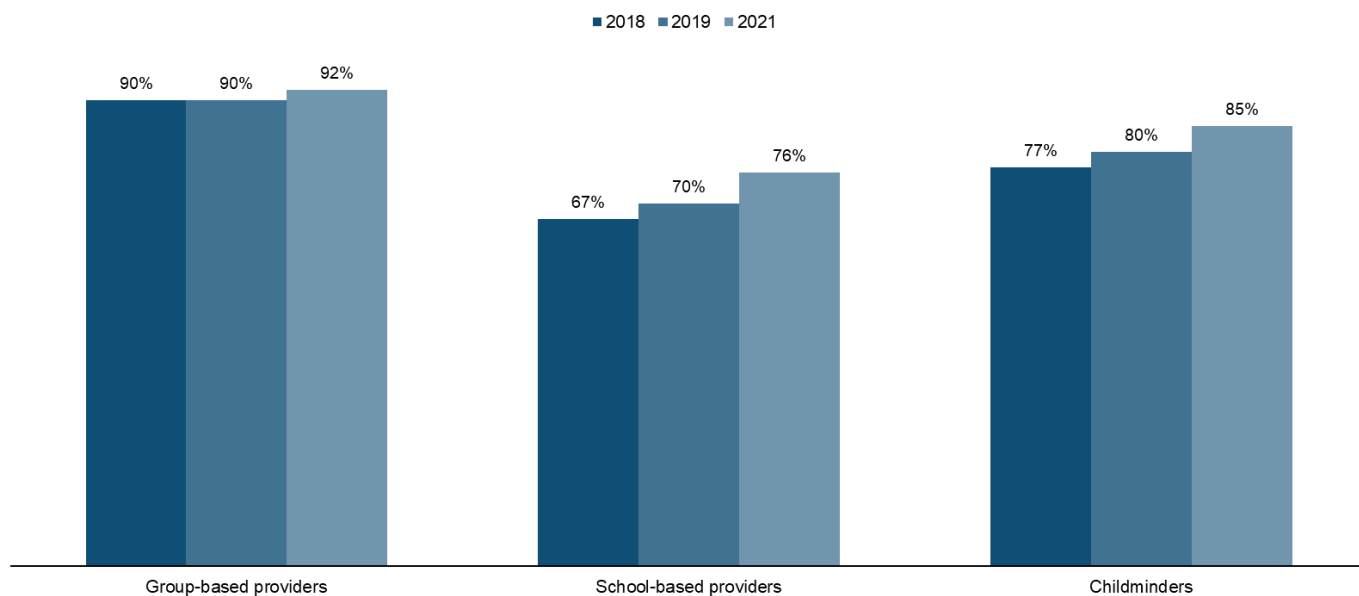
²⁴ For more information on the eligibility criteria see <https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/free-childcare-and-education-for-2-to-4-year-olds>.

²⁵ For more information on the eligibility criteria see <https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/tax-free-childcare>.

nurseries were more likely to offer 30 funded hours (99%) than school-based providers offering nursery provision (75%).

Figure 7a: Proportion of providers currently offering 30 Hours Free Entitlement:

England, 2018, 2019 and 2021



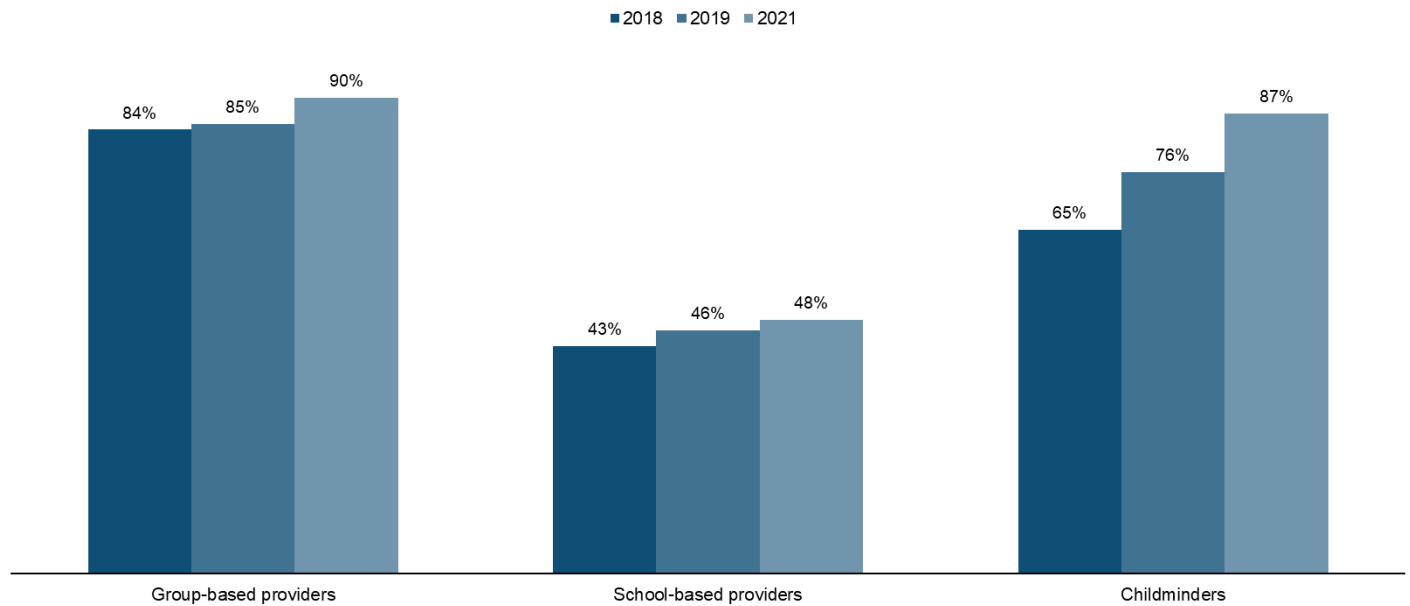
Source: Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers 2018, 2019, 2021

The 2021 survey indicates that 90% of group-based providers, 48% of school-based providers and 87% of childminders were signed up to receive Tax-Free Childcare (TFC) payments in 2021 (Figure 7b, Table 35). The proportion of group-based providers and childminders signed up for TFC payments has increased significantly compared with 2019 (when 85% of group-based providers and 76% of childminders were signed up).

Private group-based providers were more likely to be signed up for TFC payments than voluntary group-based providers (94% and 84%, respectively). Maintained nurseries were more likely to be signed up for TFC payments than school-based providers offering nursery provision (76% vs 46%).

Figure 7b: Proportion of providers signed up to receive Tax-Free Childcare payments

England, 2018, 2019 and 2021



Source: Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers 2018, 2019, 2021

7. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

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

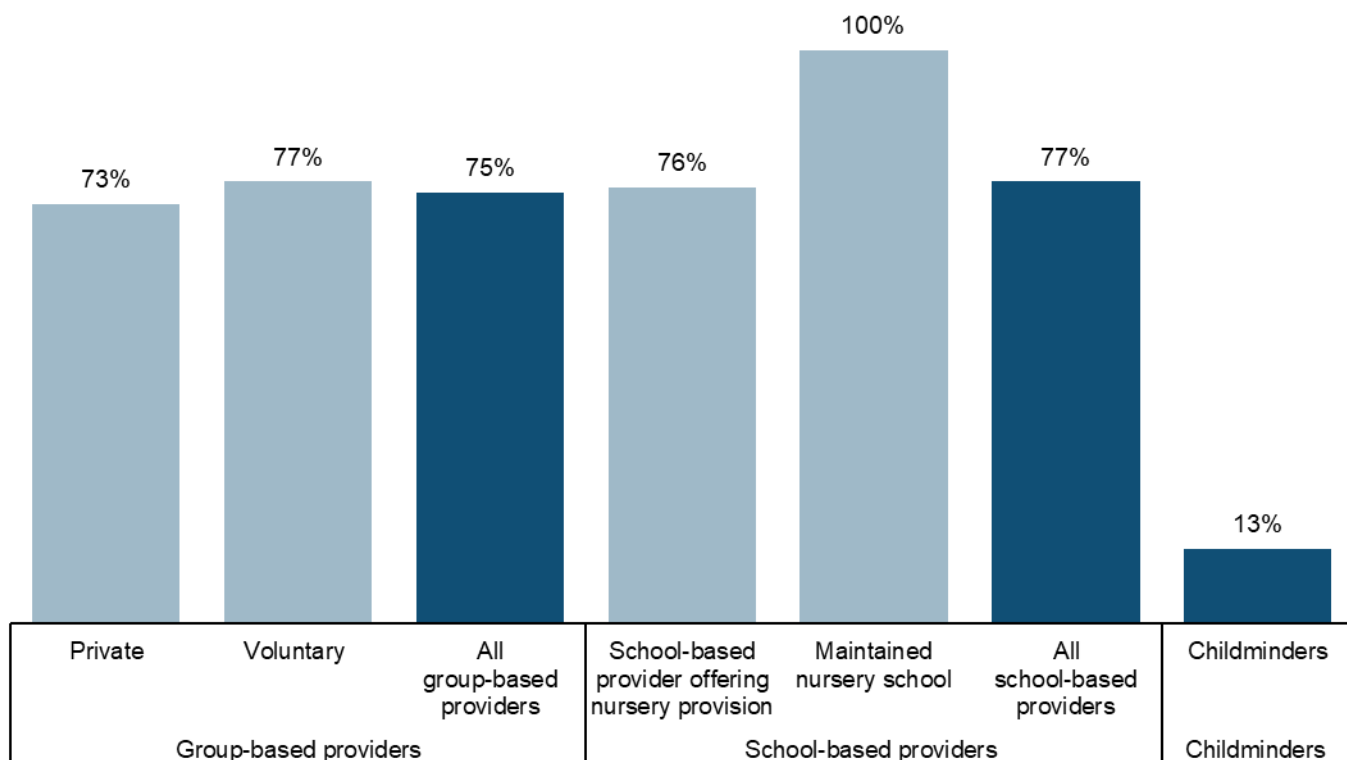
The majority of group-based providers (75%) and school-based providers (77%) and 13% of childminders reported that they had at least one child with SEND registered with their provision, which includes children with and without formal support in place and those not yet formally diagnosed. (Figure 8, Table 36).

Group-based providers had an average (mean) of three children registered with SEND; private group-based providers had an average of three and voluntary group-based providers had an average of four. School based providers had an average (mean) of four children registered with SEND, with 100% of responding maintained nursery schools reporting at least one registered child with SEND in their setting, and the average number being 18.²⁶ School-based providers offering nursery provision had an average of three registered children with SEND in their setting (Table 37).

Figure 8: Proportion of providers with children with SEND²⁷

²⁶ It is possible that some non-responding maintained nursery schools do not have children with SEND registered at their setting. These figures are based on a sample of maintained nursery schools who responded to the survey.

²⁷ It is possible that some non-responding maintained nursery schools do not have SEND children registered at their setting. These figures are based on a sample of maintained nursery schools who responded to the survey.



Source: Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers 2021

Accompanying tables

The following tables are available in Excel format on the department's statistics website (hyperlink to gov.uk collection):

Main tables

Table 1	Number of providers, 2018, 2019 and 2021
Table 2	Types of care offered by group-based providers
Table 3a	Number of registered places by region (school-based providers)
Table 3b	Number of registered places by region (group-based providers and childminders)
Table 4a	Average number of registered places, 2018, 2019 and 2021 (school-based providers)
Table 4b	Average number of registered places, 2018, 2019 and 2021 (group-based providers and childminders)
Table 5a	Number of registered places in England, 2018, 2019 and 2021 (school-based providers)
Table 5b	Number of registered places in England, 2018, 2019 and 2021 (group-based providers and childminders)
Table 6a	Total booked places in England on a reference day (school-based providers)
Table 6b	Average number of booked places per provider on a reference day (school-based providers)
Table 6c	Total booked places in England on a reference day (group-based providers and childminders)
Table 6d	Average number of booked places per provider on a reference day (group-based providers and childminders)
Table 7a	Proportion of providers with any spare capacity by day of the week (school-based providers)

Table 7b	Proportion of providers with any spare capacity by day of the week (group-based providers and childminders)
Table 8a	Proportion of available places that are spare capacity by day of the week (school-based providers)
Table 8b	Proportion of available places that are spare capacity by day of the week (group-based providers and childminders)
Table 9a	Proportion of available places that are spare capacity by region (school-based providers)
Table 9b	Proportion of available places that are spare capacity by region (group-based providers and childminders)
Table 10a	Average number of spare places by day of the week (school-based providers)
Table 10b	Average number of spare places by day of the week (group-based providers and childminders)
Table 11a	Total number of spare places by day of the week (school-based providers)
Table 11b	Total number of spare places by day of the week (group-based providers and childminders)
Table 12a	Total number of paid staff by region, 2018
Table 12b	Total number of paid staff by region, 2019
Table 12c	Total number of paid staff by region, 2021
Table 13	Total number of paid staff on full time and part time furlough
Table 14	Average number of paid staff in group-based and school-based settings, 2018, 2019 and 2021
Table 15	Proportion of childminders employing an assistant, 2018, 2019 and 2021
Table 16a	Proportion of staff qualified to different levels (school-based providers), 2018
Table 16b	Proportion of staff qualified to different levels (group-based providers and childminders), 2018
Table 16c	Proportion of staff qualified to different levels (school-based providers), 2019
Table 16d	Proportion of staff qualified to different levels (group-based providers and childminders), 2019
Table 16e	Proportion of staff qualified to different levels (school-based providers), 2021
Table 16f	Proportion of staff qualified to different levels (group-based providers and childminders), 2021
Table 17	Proportion of staff with highest qualification at level 3 who hold the Early Years Educator qualification, 2018, 2019 and 2021
Table 18	Proportion of staff with highest qualification at level 6 who hold different level 6 qualifications
Table 19	Gender of staff as a proportion of Early Years staff
Table 20	Ethnicity of staff as a proportion of Early Years staff
Table 21	Proportion of Early Years staff by age group
Table 22	Proportion of staff aged 23 and over earning below the National Living Wage
Table 23	Proportion of providers employing temporary staff and number of temporary staff (school based and group-based providers)
Table 24	Proportion of providers employing volunteers and number of volunteers (school based and group-based providers)

Table 25	Proportion of providers employing apprentices and number of apprentices (school based and group-based providers)
Table 26	Proportion of apprentices employed on each level of apprenticeship (school based and group-based providers)
Table 27	Staff:child ratios for under 2s (group-based providers)
Table 28	Staff:child ratios for 2 year olds (group-based providers)
Table 29	Staff:child ratios for 3 to 4 year olds (school-based and group-based providers)
Table 30	Average annual cost of providing childcare
Table 31	Breakdown of annual costs of childcare
Table 32	Average annual income from providing childcare
Table 33	Proportion of providers increasing fees in the last 12 months
Table 34	Proportion of providers currently offering 30 hours funded childcare, 2018, 2019 and 2021
Table 35	Proportion of providers signed up to receive Tax-Free Childcare payments, 2018, 2019 and 2021
Table 36	Proportion of providers caring for at least one child with SEND
Table 37	Average number of children with SEND

Further information is available

Information on places from the January Census collections are also available in the Provision for children under 5 years of age in England statistical release each June. This, and previous releases from the Childcare and Early Years Providers Surveys, can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-childcare-and-early-years>

Official Statistics

These are Official Statistics and have been produced in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

This can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

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

The Department has a set of [statistical policies](#) in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Technical information

A technical report on the Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers 2021 accompanies this bulletin. This provides further information on the data sources, their coverage and quality and explains the methodology used in producing the data, including how it is validated and processed.

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download [Childcare and early years providers survey: 2021 - GOV.UK](http://Childcare%20and%20early%20years%20providers%20survey%202021%20-%20GOV.UK)

Reference: Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers 2021



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