



The report of  
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education,  
Children's Services and Skills

Early years

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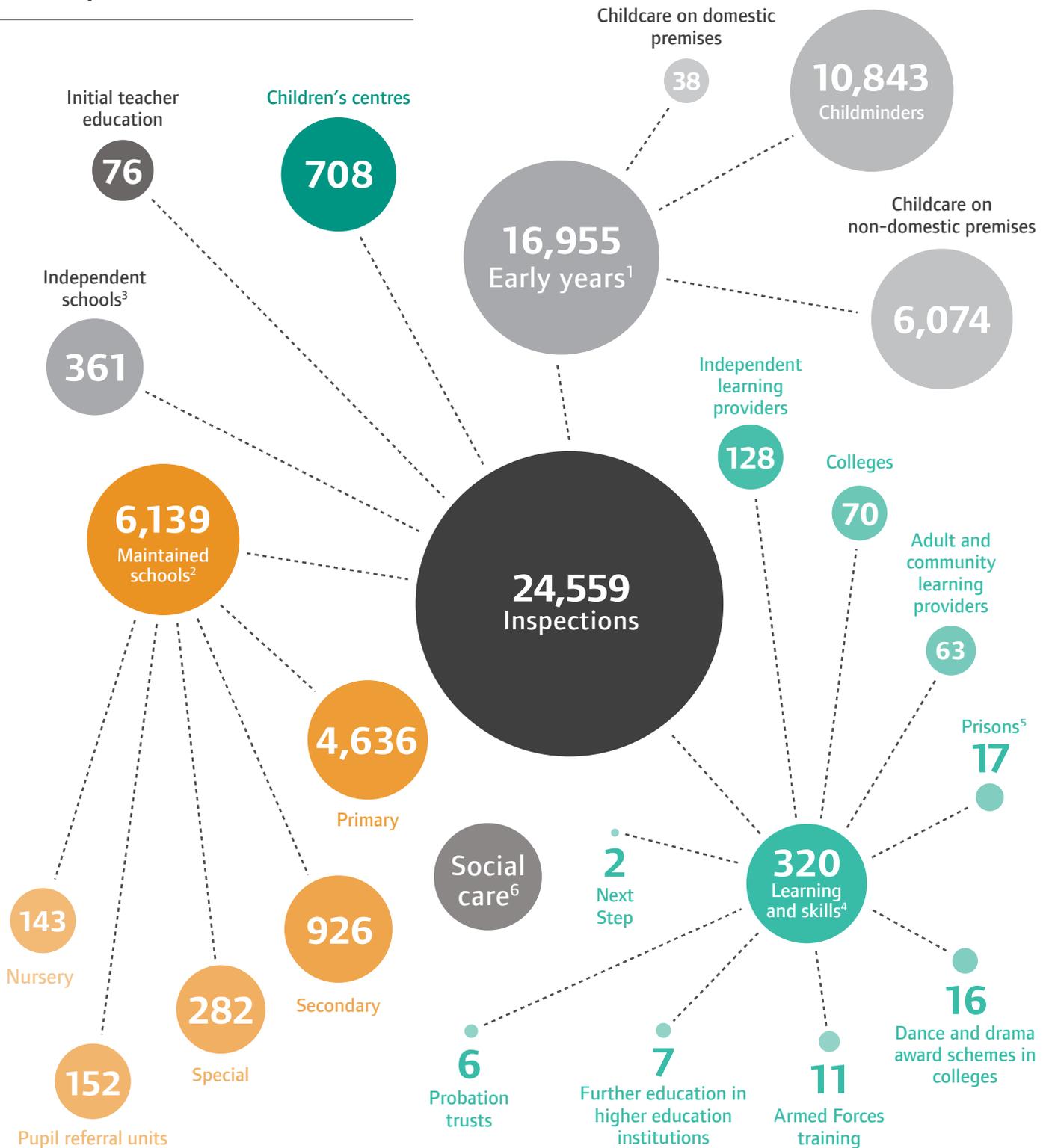
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## Inspections carried out in 2011/12



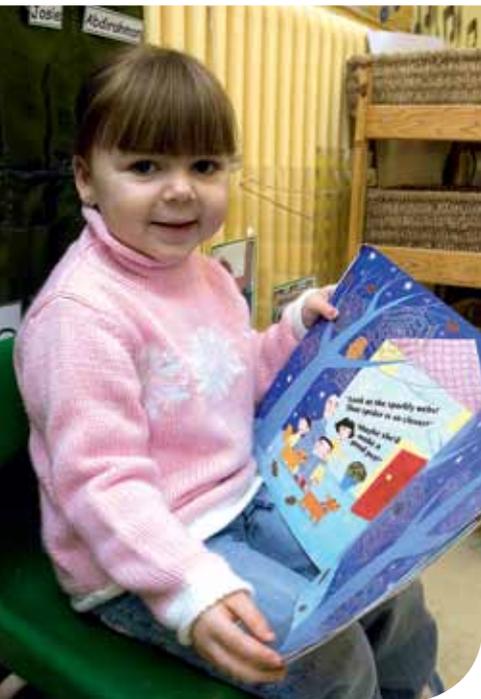
**FIGURE 1**

1. These data do not include inspections where there were no children on roll or inspections of providers only on the Childcare Register.
2. Includes Section 5 inspections and Section 8 deemed Section 5 inspections under the Education Act 2005, as amended in 2011.
3. Ofsted only inspects non-association independent schools which account for around half of the independent schools in England.
4. Data include five pilot inspections and 11 prison inspections undertaken in partnership with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons.
5. Inspections of immigration removal centres are undertaken as part of Ofsted's inspection of prisons.
6. Ofsted also carries out inspections of a range of different types of children's social care, including children's homes, and of local authorities. These inspections are not included here because the findings from these inspections will be covered in a separate remit report in June 2013



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74%

early years provision  
that is good or better



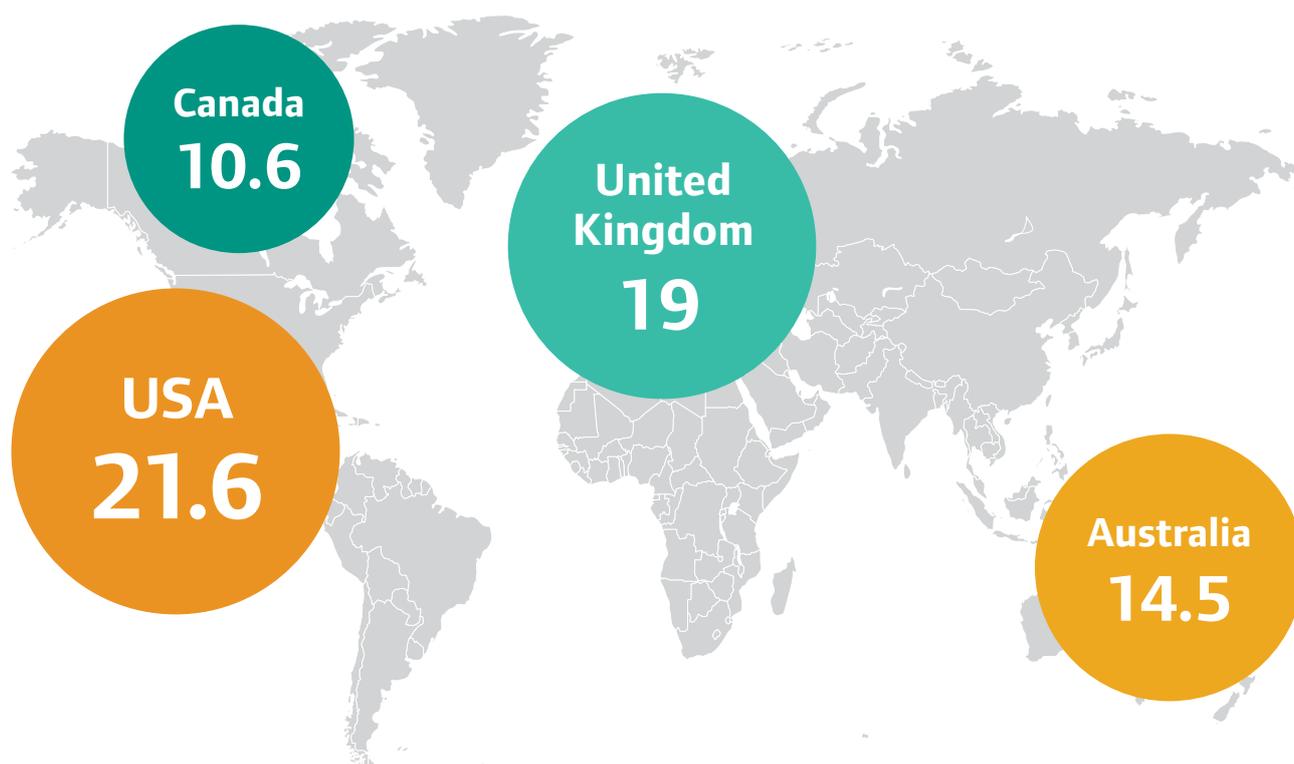
# Introduction

## Time for a change?

- 1. There has been improvement in early years provision<sup>1</sup> since 2008, when both the Early Years Foundation Stage and a new inspection framework were introduced.** Seventy four per cent of provision is good or better compared with 65% three years ago.
- 2. Provision is weakest in areas of highest deprivation.** This is particularly the case for childminders, where the gap between the quality of provision in areas of high and low deprivation is wider than for other childcare providers.
- 3. Too many children are still entering school without the basic skills they need to be ready to learn.** Although there has been some progress, in the UK tests show that children from the poorest fifth of homes are on average 19 months behind children from the richest homes in their use of vocabulary by the age of five. This is worse than the position in two of the three other major English-speaking countries.<sup>2</sup>
- 4. The importance of early education to children's subsequent educational progress and life chances is well established by research evidence.** Evidence from the Effective Provision of Pre-school Education Project (EPPE),<sup>3</sup> for example, shows clearly that good quality education in the early years has an impact on children's later learning and achievement. Our inspection evidence shows that what makes the most difference is the quality of the interaction between adults and children, which leads to them developing good early skills. In the best settings, children's interest is constantly stimulated and adult intervention is well timed so as to respond to children's curiosity and challenge their thinking.
- 5. The involvement of well qualified professionals is fundamental to achieving high quality early education.** The Nutbrown Review<sup>4</sup> recommended that those working with young children should have a relevant level 3 qualification. The 10-year timescale for implementing this is unambitious. It is longer than the time most children spend in the whole of their early years and primary school education.

1. This report refers to childminders, independent nurseries, other private pre-school provision and Sure Start children's centres; not to other maintained or academy nursery or Reception year provision. 2. Social mobility and education gaps in the four major Anglophone countries – research findings for the Social Mobility Summit, Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Sutton Trust, May 2012. 3. Effective Provision of Pre-school Education Project, Institute of Education, University of London 4. Nutbrown, *Foundation for quality – the independent review of early education and childcare qualifications*, June 2012.

## Gap in vocabulary at the start of school (in terms of months of development) between children from the poorest fifth of homes and those from the richest fifth



**FIGURE 2**

Nationally representative statistics for all children born around 2000–03, year varies slightly by country.

Source: Washbrook and Waldfogel, 2012

6. **Overall, pre-schools and nurseries are better than childminders at preparing children for the next stage.**<sup>5</sup> While most childminders provide children with a good level of care, many have found it more challenging to provide for the learning and development set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
7. **It is likely that the quality of early learning would benefit from strong links between weaker and stronger providers, including good schools.** For example, childcare provision linked with a children's centre is generally of higher quality than provision that has no such association.
8. **There is a strong case for good and outstanding providers with high quality leadership and management to operate as nuclei or 'hubs' for networks of childminders and weaker group care providers in their area.** Such hubs would drive improvement through advice, support and training. They could also take on a role in registering and overseeing smaller providers.
9. **The quality and type of local authority support for early years provision is variable.**<sup>6</sup> Often, it is not targeted effectively at those providers that most need improvement.

<sup>5</sup> Pre-schools and nurseries are defined as childcare on non-domestic premises in the Early Years Foundation Stage framework. The term childcare on non-domestic premises is used on the relevant data charts. <sup>6</sup> Based on a telephone survey of 14 local authorities about the role of the authority in early years provision.

# What does the sector look like?

## Early years

10. The early years remit is by far the largest of all the sectors that Ofsted regulates and inspects, with just under 82,000 early years and childcare providers on the Early Years Register.<sup>7</sup> The large majority of providers of early years provision are childminders, registered to provide up to six places each. However, the large majority of childcare places are provided by pre-school groups. Childminders provide less than a quarter of childcare places. There is a wide array of childcare providers offering full- and part-time day care and early education.
11. The number of childcare places in early years settings has declined slightly over time and

there continues to be a considerable turnover of registered providers, especially childminders. Our data on providers and places show that the numbers of new providers registering with Ofsted in any given period is almost the same as the number of providers who leave the registers. The sufficiency of these places is variable across the country.

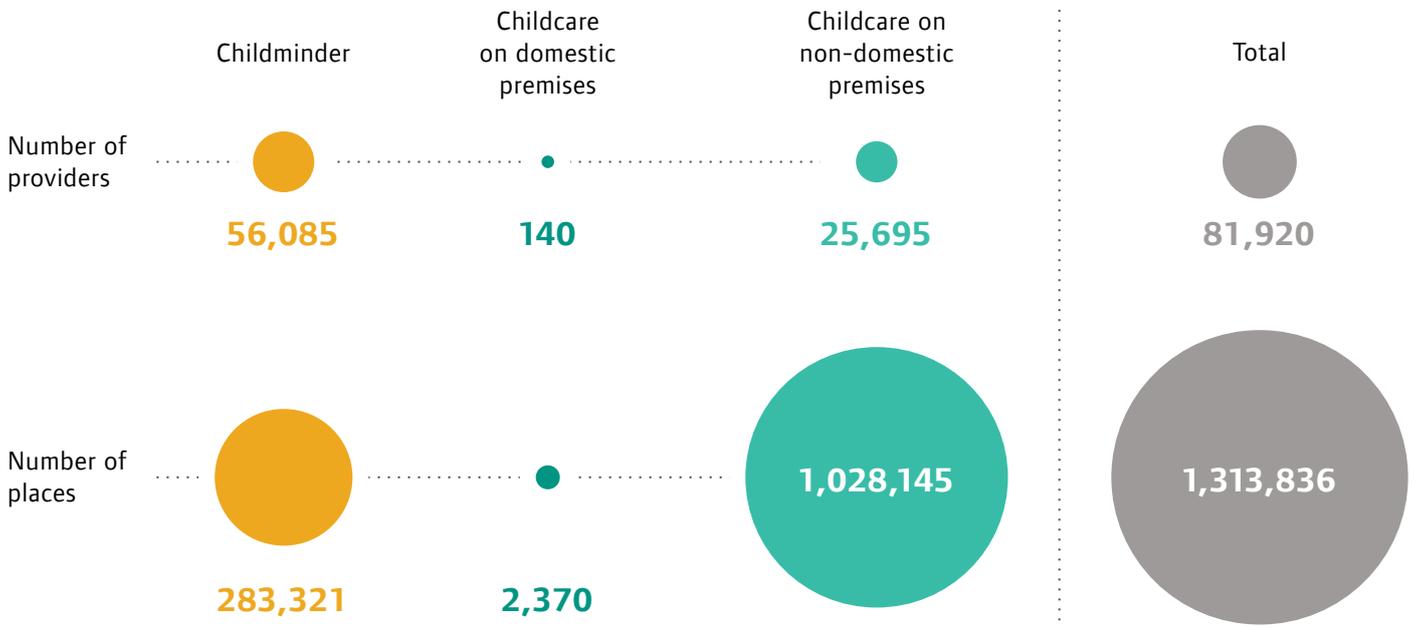
## Children's centres

12. There are now around 3,250 children's centres in England;<sup>8</sup> Ofsted began inspecting these in May 2010. Over half of Ofsted's inspections of children's centres so far have been of the longest established centres. The last 12 months



<sup>7</sup> There are two main registers: the Early Years Register records providers who look after children from birth to school age. Providers on this register must meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The Childcare Register, which is divided into a compulsory part and voluntary part, has providers who care for children from birth to 17 years. <sup>8</sup> There are around 3,250 lead or main children's centres that are subject to an Ofsted inspection. Based on data from Sure Start On and Ofsted's own data collected from local authorities.

**Number of active early years providers and places at end August 2012, by type of provider**



**FIGURE 3**

Includes providers on the Early Years Register, at the end of August 2012. Most childcare providers caring for children aged under eight must register with Ofsted unless the law says they are not required to do so. As not all providers inform Ofsted that they have ceased provision, this number is likely to be higher than the actual number of providers.

Source: Ofsted

have been characterised by change in the commissioning arrangements for children’s centres, which has resulted in centres merging or grouping together to deliver services more collaboratively across a wider geographical area. The inspection of children’s centres will change in 2013 to reflect the changing pattern of service provision across local authorities.



**1.3m**

childcare places available for children under five

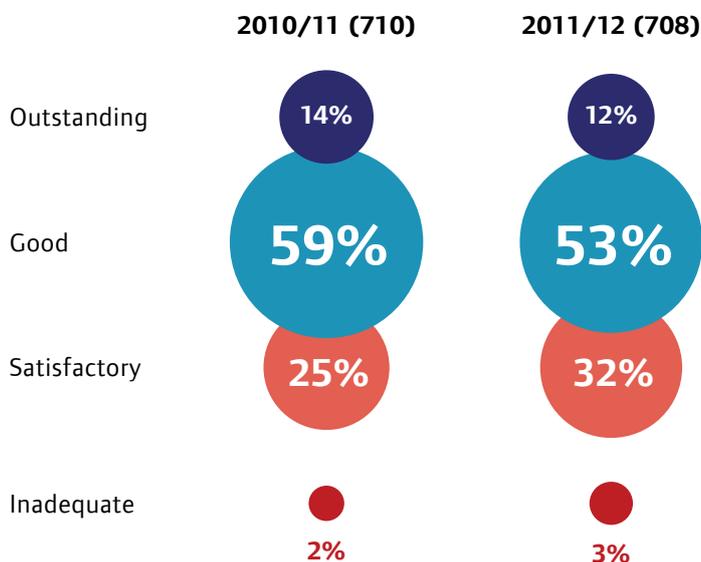
# The state of early years provision in England

Overall, early years providers are better than four years ago

13. The proportion of all providers judged to be good or better has improved since the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage (Figure 5), but this improvement is less marked for childminders than for group providers such as nurseries or pre-schools. In fact, since the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage, childcare on non-domestic premises has outperformed childminders in every year and, apart from this year, the 'quality' gap between childcare providers on non-domestic premises and childminders has grown wider since the Early Years Foundation Stage was introduced.

14. This may in part be because quality initiatives and qualifications pathways have been aimed more at group provision than at childminders. As well as introducing a single framework for the care and education of children in their early years, the government invested heavily in sector qualifications with the introduction of the Early Years Professional and a range of initiatives to improve quality. These included programmes such as the Every Child a Talker programme and the Early Years Quality Improvement Support programme. This investment has been largely targeted at group care and may have helped to promote the increases in good and outstanding provision.

## Overall effectiveness of children's centres



**FIGURE 4**

Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Excludes centres that were open but had not yet been inspected.







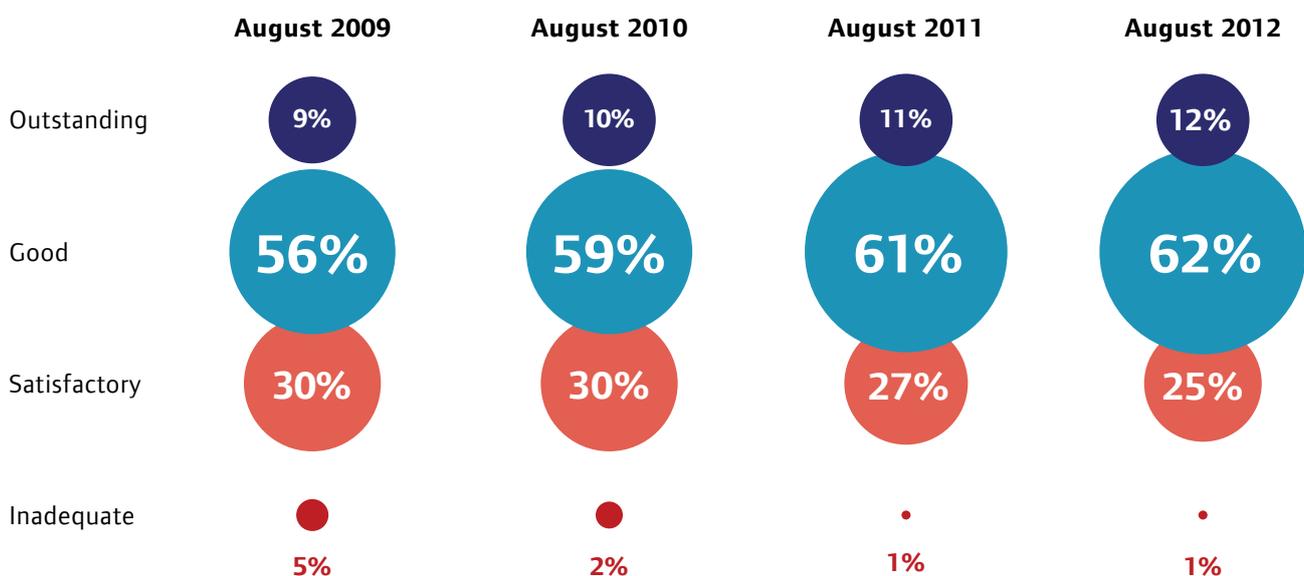
45%

childminders judged satisfactory in 2005–08 that have remained satisfactory since then

15. Almost half of all childminders who were judged satisfactory under the first inspection framework have remained satisfactory at their inspection under the EYFS framework. Few mechanisms or incentives are in place to help childminders gain qualifications and improve, especially if they are not in a network. Those childminders who work in networks, or who access quality improvement schemes, generally have higher grades than those who do not. Other factors that may account for this gap include: childminders' isolation; the lack of opportunity for them to work with, and benefit from, the experience of other early years practitioners; and the difficulty in taking time off for training and development. Each day when they do not work causes disruption to the pattern of care offered to parents, who depend on continuity of service, and to the childminder's income.

16. The picture for children's centres is different to that for providers of early years group care. Far fewer children's centres were judged as good or outstanding this year than last and there has been a corresponding increase in the number of children's centres judged as satisfactory (Figure 4). There is a clear difference in the quality of those centres that have been established longest and those established more recently. However, we also strengthened our inspection criteria for children's centres in September 2011, making it more demanding for centres to be judged good or outstanding.

### The quality of early years providers 2009–12 (percentage of providers)



**FIGURE 5**

The most recent overall effectiveness judgements for all active early years providers on 31 August 2012 compared with the most recent inspection judgement of all active early years providers on 31 August in previous years. Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Includes inspection judgements made since the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2008. Excludes providers that were active but had not yet been inspected.

Source: Ofsted

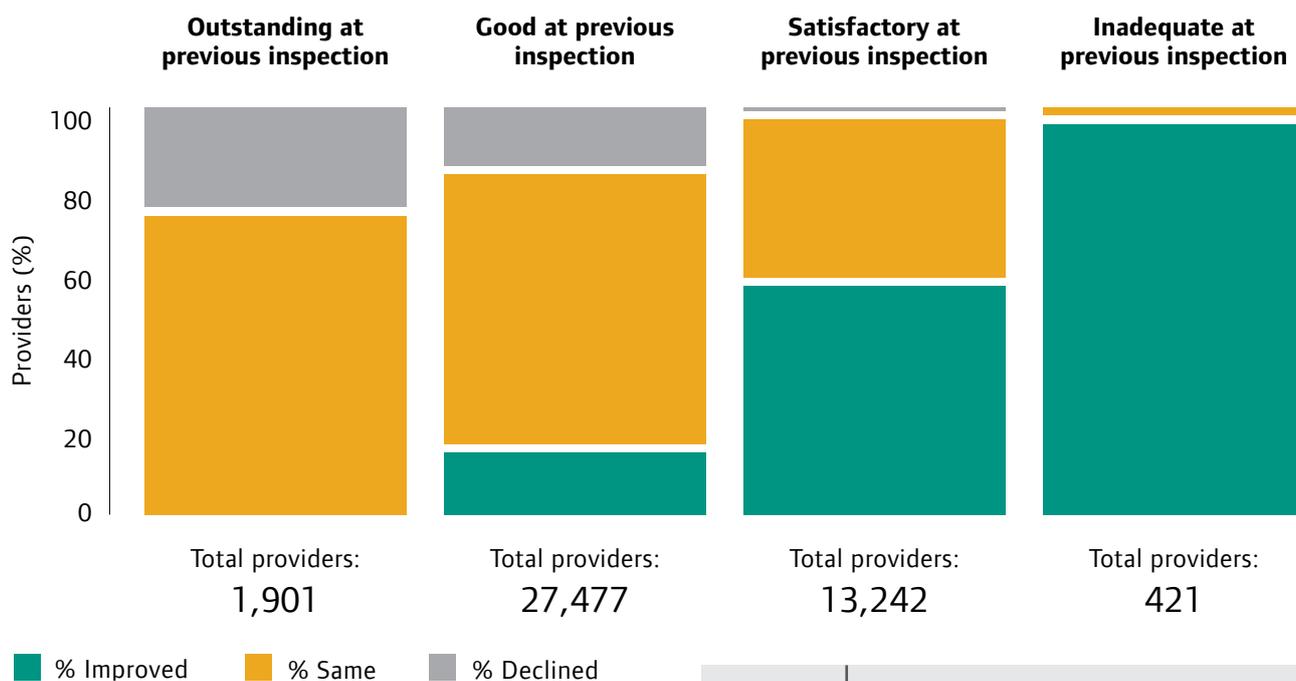
### Why has improvement tailed off?

17. There is little improvement between this year and last in terms of the proportion of early years providers judged as good or outstanding. This suggests that improvements brought about by the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2008 may now be levelling off. Further improvement may only be possible through more radical reform of the way in which early years providers are regulated and inspected. Improvements in the quality of childminding are more likely if childminders have greater access to support, advice and training from other early years practitioners who have already demonstrated that they can deliver good and outstanding provision.
18. There has been a net improvement in the quality of provision. While the large majority of the previously good or outstanding providers retained their grade in their most recent inspection, nearly half of those judged satisfactory remained the same. They are simply not improving fast enough.

In addition, for almost 4,700 providers, the quality of provision had actually declined between the EYFS inspection cycle and the previous cycle.

19. Childminders have performed consistently worse than childcare providers on non-domestic premises since the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage. This framework introduced a requirement for all childminders to deliver learning and development requirements, as well as those relating to children’s welfare. Some childminders still find it difficult to assess children’s starting points, to find ways of observing and assessing children’s knowledge, understanding and skills, and to plan for their individual needs.<sup>9</sup>
20. A system of hubs and networks for childminders and pre-schools would facilitate much more frequent evaluation of quality and support improvement. Government may also wish to consider whether it is appropriate to expect childminders to deliver all the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

### Change in overall effectiveness of early years providers under the EYFS framework compared with their inspection under the previous framework



**FIGURE 6**

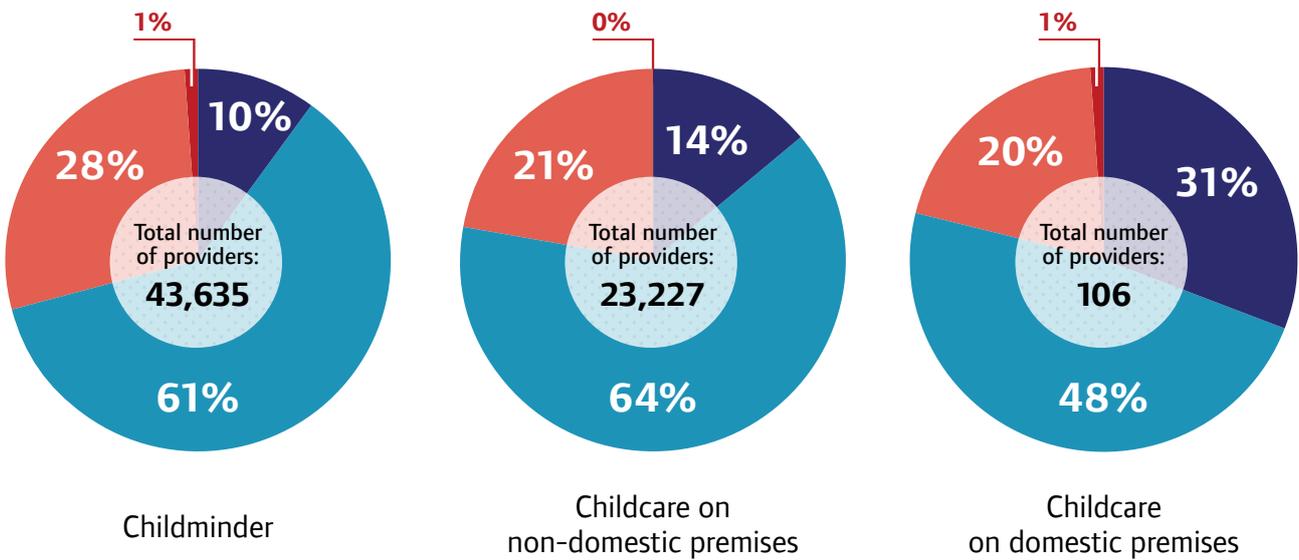
Data as at 31 August 2012 for all provision with at least two published inspections.

9. Based on an analysis of inspection reports.

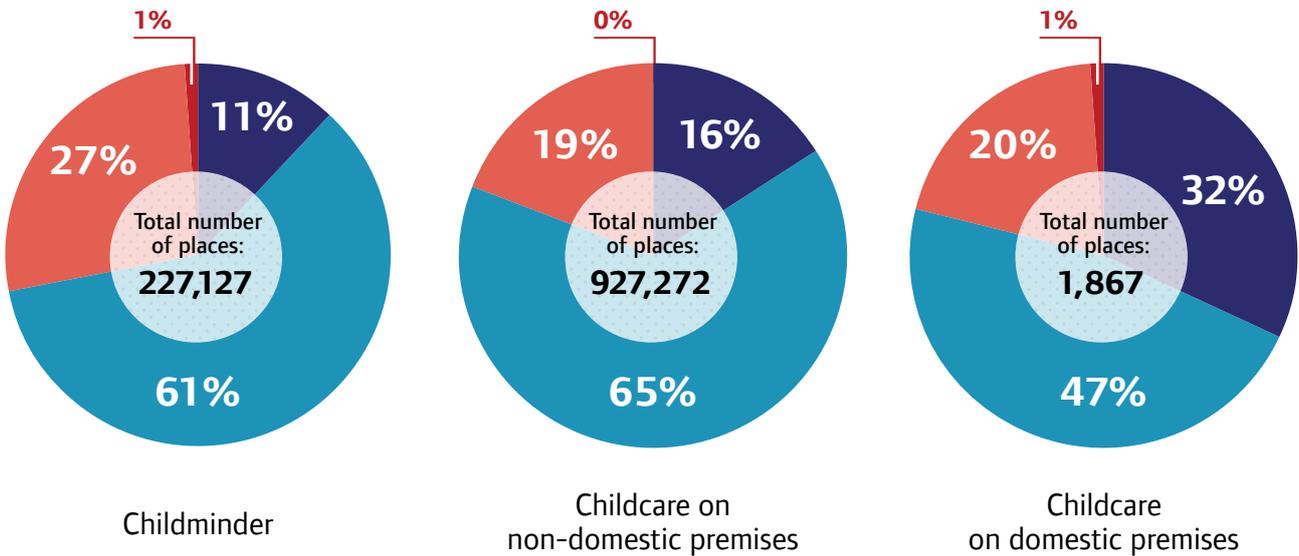
Source: Ofsted

**The most recent overall effectiveness judgements for all active early years providers on 31 August 2012, by provider type**

**Providers**



**Places**



**FIGURE 7**

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Includes inspection judgements made since the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2008. Excludes providers that were active but had not yet been inspected.

Source: Ofsted

# Challenges

## Why is quality different across the country?

21. There is substantial variation in the quality of childcare provision across different local authorities. Our research suggests that too

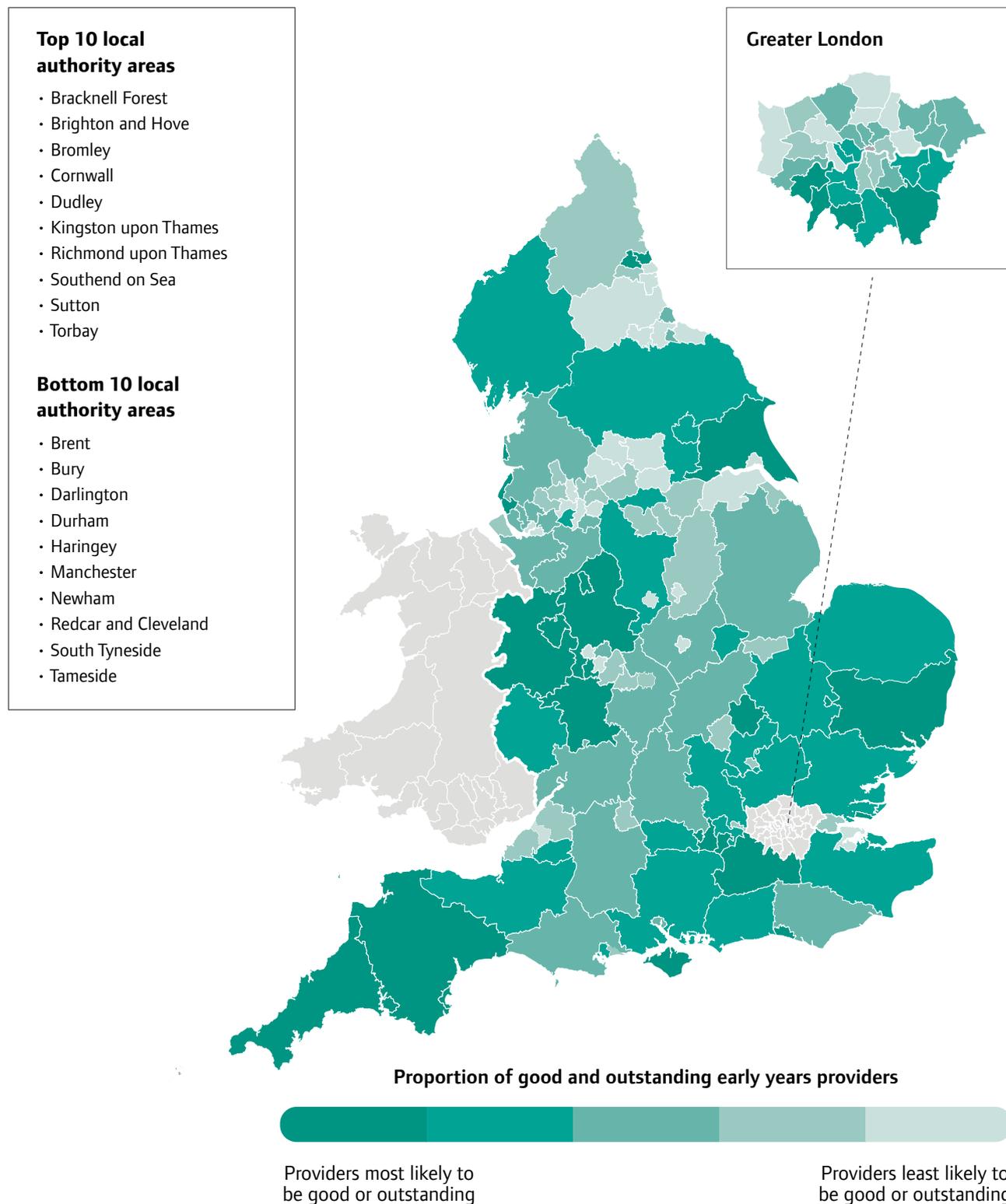
many local authorities fail to provide sufficient support, guidance and training to providers. Neither do they track and monitor improvement or decline in what is being provided. Our evidence from discussions with local authorities suggests that providers do better where the local authority is not only active in seeking out the weakest providers, but also offers tailored support to meet the needs of particular groups of providers. Local authorities with a higher proportion of weaker providers find it hardest to target support.<sup>10</sup>

**39%** childminders located in very deprived areas that are currently judged satisfactory or inadequate



<sup>10</sup>. Based on questions asked about the role of local authorities from conversations with 14 local authorities.

## Good and outstanding early years providers by local authority area



**FIGURE 8**

Latest overall effectiveness judgement of all active providers as at 31 August 2012. Data exclude the Isles of Scilly and the City of London.

Source: Ofsted



22. Local authorities have a responsibility for providing information, advice and training to existing childcare providers, as well as to those who wish to become providers, and have restructured support for early years provision in line with reducing resources. The strongest authorities have restructured and preserved the best of what they know works well. They have retained dedicated expertise and focused their reducing resources firmly on improvement. They currently offer tailored, rather than universal, support, identify and evaluate those providers that require the most intervention, and target support for them. They focus clearly on improvement, rather than offering the same service to all providers.
23. In contrast, the weakest authorities offer the same, universal service to all types of providers and do not actively seek out particular types of provision that may need additional support. This means that, often, they only intervene at the request of the provider.<sup>11</sup> The patchy picture identified here suggests that there is a case for a wider review of the funding given to local authorities in order to ensure that it is targeted specifically on improvement initiatives that help providers to become good or better.
24. As in previous years, there is a clear link between the quality of all types of early years provision and the most deprived areas. There continues to be a sharp difference between the quality of early years provision in the most and least deprived areas of the country. This is most pronounced for childminders, where 77% of provision is good or better in the least deprived areas compared with 61% in the most deprived. Early years providers judged as satisfactory in areas of high deprivation are less likely to improve between inspections than those in less deprived areas.
25. Conversely, children's centres in the most deprived areas outperform children's centres in other areas because those centres have been established the longest, have the strongest leadership and are making the most difference. In fact, our evidence suggests that the quality of early years provision that is directly linked to a children's centre is better overall than the quality of early years provision without such an association.



”  
Too many children are still entering school without the basic skills and abilities they need to be ready to learn well  
“

### How well are children prepared for school?

26. Too many children are still entering school without the basic skills and abilities they need to be ready to learn well. In the UK, tests show that children from the poorest fifth of homes are on average 19 months behind children from the richest homes in their use of vocabulary by the age of five. This is worse than the position in two of the three other major English-speaking countries: in Canada the gap is 10.6 months, and in Australia it is 14.5 months (Figure 2).<sup>12</sup>
27. The worrying lack of improvement in some early years provision is clear from the Early Years Foundation Stage profile data, which shows that too many children are not well prepared for school.

<sup>11</sup>. Based on questions asked about the role of local authorities from conversations with 14 local authorities. <sup>12</sup>. *Social mobility and education gaps in the four major Anglophone countries – research findings for the Social Mobility Summit*, Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Sutton Trust, May 2012.

This is despite the fact that, in January 2012, more than 1,264,000 children – 96% of three- and four-year-olds across England – were receiving some of their free entitlement and almost 40,000 more three- and four-year-olds were receiving free early education in 2012, compared with the previous year.<sup>13</sup> In the UK, participation rates for children aged under three in early education are over 10 percentage points higher than the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average, and over 12 percentage points higher than the EU average.

28. The Early Years Foundation Stage profile data shows that, although there has been an improvement in results across the three main assessment areas year on year, significant weaknesses remain in terms of how well providers use the Early Years Foundation Stage to prepare children for school. Government may wish to review the content and the structure of the learning and development requirements and of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile.
29. It is a concern that 34% of children are not working securely in communication, language and literacy by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Further analysis shows that ‘writing’ is the lowest of all the assessment scales, with ‘reading’ as the second lowest. The picture is much worse for boys than for girls: for example, 80% of girls are working securely in writing while only 63%

of boys are. It is also worse in deprived areas, where 41% of children are not working securely in communication, language and literacy as a whole. There is a clear link between the levels of attainment in communication, language and literacy and local authorities in the most and least deprived areas.<sup>14</sup>

30. We know that staff expertise and qualifications make a distinct difference to the richness of children’s experiences before they start school. We can see that there is a clear correlation between the quality of provision and the level of staff qualifications in the setting. Our evidence suggests that providers with a good level of qualification, to at least level 3, tend to receive better grades at inspection.<sup>15</sup>
31. These strong links between the level of staff qualification and the quality of provision demonstrate that children get the very best start in their learning and development when they are cared for by highly qualified and experienced professionals. Serious consideration must be given to the findings of the Nutbrown review and, in particular, the rigour and depth of early years qualification and the timescales for implementation. A period of 10 years until all settings employ staff with an acceptable level of qualification is too long for those children in the early years who are in settings where this does not currently happen.

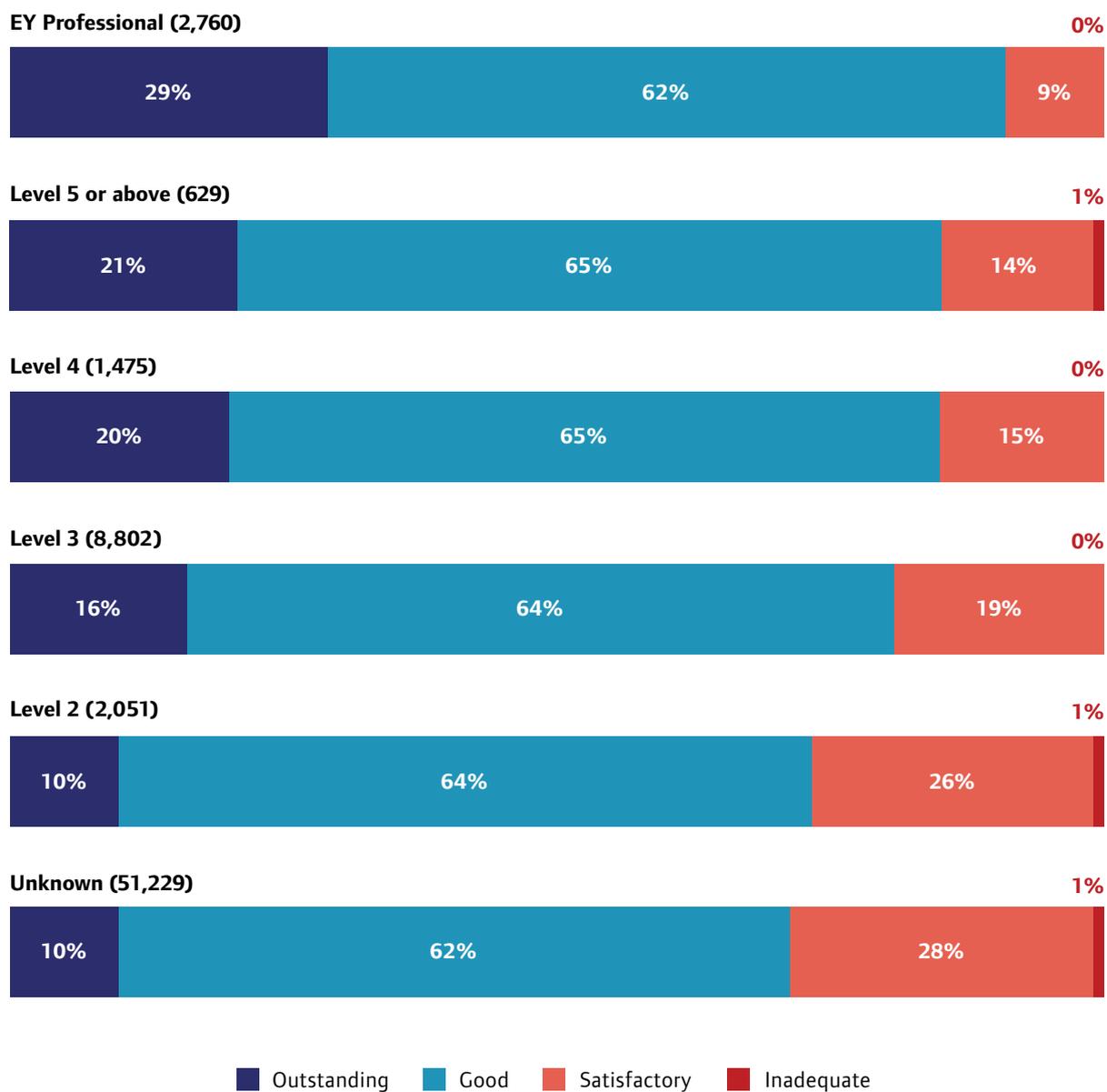
## Charnwood Nursery and Family Centre



In the Charnwood Nursery and Family Centre in Stockport, judged as outstanding at its most recent inspection, children thrive and make significant gains in all aspects of their learning and development, because all the staff are excellent practitioners. They are well qualified and undertake training to maintain and enhance their skills, and there is a strong emphasis on ‘learning on the job’. Staff share and learn from good practice by disseminating the knowledge, skills and expertise of more experienced practitioners.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup>. *Provision for children under five years of age in England: January 2012*, Department for Education, June 2012. <sup>14</sup>. 2011/12 Early Years Foundation Stage Profile, Department for Education. <sup>15</sup>. Based on an analysis of inspection reports. <sup>16</sup>. Taken from the inspection of Charnwood Nursery and Family Centre, URN 501447, May 2010.

**Overall effectiveness of early years providers at their most recent inspection compared against highest staff qualification (percentage of providers)**



**FIGURE 9**

Data as at 31 August 2012. Twenty two providers have level 1 qualifications.

Source: Ofsted

# Key statistics

**Data View:** Inspection findings can also be viewed at [www.dataview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.dataview.ofsted.gov.uk). Data View enables users to compare the performance of providers over time from Ofsted inspections across England by region, local authority and constituency area.

## Overall effectiveness of active early years registered providers at their most recent inspection as at 31 August 2012, by provider type<sup>1</sup>

	Total number inspected	Percentage of providers			
		Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Childminder	43,635	10	61	28	1
Childcare on non-domestic premises	23,227	14	64	21	0
Childcare on domestic premises	106	31	48	20	1
All provision	66,968	12	62	25	1

1. Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Source: Ofsted

## Overall effectiveness of early years registered providers inspected between 1 September 2011 and 31 August 2012<sup>1</sup>

	Total number inspected	Percentage of providers			
		Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Childminder	10,843	9	63	26	3
Childcare on non-domestic premises	6,074	16	63	18	3
Childcare on domestic premises	38	32	47	16	5
All provision	16,955	11	63	23	3

1. Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Source: Ofsted

### Inspection outcomes of early years registered providers inspected between 1 September 2011 and 31 August 2012<sup>1</sup>

	Total number inspected	Percentage of providers			
		Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness	16,955	11	63	23	3
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	16,955	12	61	24	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the EYFS	16,955	11	63	23	3
The quality of provision in the EYFS	16,955	12	63	22	2
Outcomes for children in the EYFS	16,955	12	63	22	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	16,955	15	63	22	1
The extent to which children feel safe	16,955	15	63	20	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	16,955	16	64	19	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	16,955	16	62	21	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	16,955	14	63	22	1

1. Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Source: Ofsted

**Inspection outcomes of children’s centres at their most recent inspection as at 31 August 2012<sup>1</sup>**

	Total number inspected	Percentage of providers			
		Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness	1,443	13	56	29	1
How good are outcomes for families?	1,443	13	59	27	1
The centre’s capacity for sustained improvement.	1,443	15	56	28	1
How good is provision?	1,443	16	58	25	1
How effective is leadership and management?	1,443	15	56	28	1

1. Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Source: Ofsted

**Inspection outcomes of children’s centres inspected between 1 September 2011 and 31 August 2012<sup>1</sup>**

	Total number inspected	Percentage of providers			
		Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness	708	12	53	32	3
How good are outcomes for families?	708	12	55	31	2
The centre’s capacity for sustained improvement.	708	15	52	31	2
How good is provision?	708	15	55	28	2
How effective is leadership and management?	708	13	53	31	2

1. Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Source: Ofsted