

Childcare providers and inspections

Methodology and quality report

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Introduction

1. This paper contains methodology and quality information about Ofsted's official statistics release of childcare providers and inspections data, which is published three times a year. The publication forms the main part of the early years and childcare official statistics collection: www.gov.uk/government/collections/early-years-and-childcare-statistics.
2. This official statistics release reports on:
 - the number of providers on the Early Years Register (EYR) and the Childcare Register (CR), both the compulsory part (CCR) and the voluntary part (VCR)
 - the number of providers that have joined or left the early years sector
 - the number of childcare places offered by providers on the EYR – for these providers, the numbers show the total places available for children under eight. This number includes estimates for a small number of providers. More detail can be found in the later [section on places](#).
 - inspection outcomes for all Ofsted registered childcare providers in England.
3. The publication provides and reports on providers in two different ways, with each focusing on a specific reporting period:
 - **Most recent inspections for all providers, carried out up to a specified cut-off date**

This provides data on the quality of providers, broken down by geographical area and by individual provider. The data is reported at the end of a specific period, where the inspection reports were published on our website by the end of the subsequent month.
 - **All inspections carried out within a set time period**

This provides data on all inspections that have taken place over a specific reporting period, broken down by geographical area. This is referred to as "provisional data". In addition, data for the previous reporting period is revised with each new release, to include the small number of inspections that were not published within the subsequent month following the end of the reporting period. This is referred to as "revised data".

This information should not be used to assess the overall quality of childcare provision in a geographical area. Inspections are carried out in a targeted way to help drive improvement in early years providers. Therefore, a three- to five-month period of inspection volumes does not necessarily represent a balanced statistical sample.

4. Official statistics publications are released according to the following timetable (Table 1).

Table 1 Childcare providers and inspections release schedule and data reporting periods

Month of publication	Information about all childcare providers registered with Ofsted on	Information about all childcare inspections within the period
March	31 December	1 Sep – 31 Dec
June	31 March	1 Jan – 31 Mar
November	31 August	1 Apr – 31 Aug

5. The publication refers to four types of early years providers:

- Childminder
- Childcare on non-domestic premises (for example pre-schools and private nurseries)
- Childcare on domestic premises
- Home childcarer (for example nannies)

6. These providers are registered on two different childcare registers:

- Early Years Register (EYR)
- Childcare Register (CR), which is divided into two parts:
 - i. The Compulsory Childcare Register (CCR)
 - ii. The Voluntary Childcare Register (VCR)

7. Providers can be registered on a single or on a combination of registers. More information on these registers is provided in the [Glossary](#).

8. Additionally, there are three different types of inspection for these providers:

- Full Early Years Register (EYR) inspection
- No children on roll (NCOR) EYR inspection
- Childcare register (CR) inspection

9. Full EYR inspections result in a judgement of outstanding, good, requires improvement (RI) or inadequate. Good, RI or inadequate providers may also receive actions to help them improve and all providers are likely to receive recommendations. CR and NCOR inspections result in a judgement of 'met' or 'not met' requirements. In instances where the provider does not meet one or more of the requirements, the inspector must either issue a notice to improve or consider enforcement action.

Methodology

10. This section details the reporting methodology used to aggregate and analyse statistics on Ofsted registered childcare providers and inspections.

11. The publication reports on early years and childcare inspections that have taken place since 1 September 2008, when the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) was introduced. This is the statutory framework for the early education and care of children from birth to the 31 August following their fifth birthday: www.gov.uk/early-years-foundation-stage. However, the main focus of the publication is on inspections carried out since the introduction of the common inspection framework (CIF) on 1 September 2015.

Compiling the data

12. Data on the number of childcare places that providers offer is collected at registration and recorded in the Ofsted corporate Cygnum system. This is a live administrative data system that is used to schedule, monitor and register childcare providers and inspections.
13. Our official statistics are collated from data in Cygnum at the end of the reporting period and provide the number of providers and places. The data is then aggregated for presentation and analysis.
14. There is a time delay between the end of the reporting period and the publication cut-off date of one calendar month. This accounts for the time required to write up, verify and publish the inspection reports after the inspection has taken place. This helps ensure that the majority of inspections undertaken within the reporting period are captured within the official statistics.

Coverage

15. The publication reports on childcare registered with Ofsted. Most provision in the early years age range is carried out by childcare providers that are registered with Ofsted, either on the Early Years Register (EYR) or the Childcare Register (CR). However, there are some providers of childcare that are exempt from registration with Ofsted. For example, state-funded schools, independent schools or academies providing childcare for children aged two and older.
16. These exempt providers receive a judgement for their early years provision at their Section 5 (full) school inspection, but not during a short inspection. Short inspections will confirm whether the overall effectiveness is good or outstanding, but will not provide or update a previous early years provision judgement. For more information please see Ofsted's official statistics on state-funded schools and academies: www.gov.uk/government/collections/maintained-schools-and-academies-inspections-and-outcomes-official-statistics, and for independent schools: www.gov.uk/government/collections/independent-schools-inspections-and-outcomes.
17. A small number of early years providers on the site of association independent schools (around 100) are registered with Ofsted but are inspected by another

inspectorate. These providers will not have any inspection data recorded in our administrative system but will be included in our registration statistics.

18. Childcare providers are inspected on a four-year inspection cycle. The previous cycle ran from 1 September 2012 through to 31 July 2016 and the current cycle runs from 1 August 2016 through to 31 July 2020. Ofsted are committed to inspecting all providers by the end of the cycle (that were on the EYR at the beginning).
19. Providers registered on the EYR will normally have their setting inspected at least once within the four-year cycle. Newly registered providers on the EYR will normally be inspected within 30 months of their registration date.
20. A provider's most recent inspection is classed as their most recent full EYR inspection, or Childcare Register inspection for providers only on the Childcare Register (CCR and/or VCR).
21. The publication also provides information on most recent EYR inspections where no children were present at the time of the inspection. These are referred to as no children on roll (NCOR) EYR inspections.
22. When describing the quality of the early years sector, the summary statistics and the main findings document refer to the most recent full EYR inspection (for providers on the EYR). This includes a small proportion of providers that have had a more recent NCOR inspection.

Places offered by providers on the Early Years Register

23. Since September 2012, providers are required to give details on the number of places they offer at the point of registration. Providers must calculate this based on the legal requirements of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The places information compiled and presented in the publication is a proxy for the size and capacity of the early years sector.
24. Places data is reported only for the providers registered on the EYR, with a high proportion of these also being registered on the CR. When considering places data, it is important to note it covers all places for children up to the age of eight. This encompasses all EYR places for children under five and CCR places for five- to seven-year-olds.
25. The number of places offered by a provider is the legal maximum number of children they can provide childcare for at any one time.
26. The majority of childminders are registered as offering six childcare places because this is the maximum number of places allowed under EYFS guidelines for a childminder with no assistants: www.gov.uk/government/publications/become-

[a-registered-early-years-or-childcare-provider-in-england](#). However, the number of places a childminder provides or intends to provide might be lower.

27. It is important to note that the legal maximum number of places is for any one time, and so different children may be looked after in the morning and in the evening by any one provider.
28. Aggregated data relies on estimated places numbers for a small number of providers where actual places numbers are not recorded. Estimates are calculated using the mean for each provider type, after excluding any outliers with 600 or more places.

Quality

29. The UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice for Statistics (www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/) provides producers of statistics with a framework based on three pillars: trustworthiness, quality and value. This code is consistent with the European Statistics Code of Practice (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/quality/european-statistics-code-of-practice>), where statistical output quality is broken down by five dimensions:
 - Relevance
 - Coherence and comparability
 - Accuracy and reliability
 - Timeliness and punctuality
 - Accessibility and clarity.

This section will discuss these five dimensions and will provide additional information on meeting user needs.

Relevance

30. Ofsted regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. Ofsted's official statistics are released to promote reform and improvement across government through increasing transparency and citizen participation.
31. The Childcare Act 2006 gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) responsibility for regulating childminding and childcare on domestic and non-domestic premises in England. It gives HMCI responsibility for the registration and inspection of providers registered on the Early Years Register (EYR) and the Childcare Register (CR), and for enforcement where it appears that legal requirements are not being met.
32. These official statistics releases report on early years and childcare inspections under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006:
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/contents.

33. By aggregating the most recent inspection judgements of individual childcare providers, the publication presents the quality of provision nationally and in different geographical areas.
34. We analyse the data by region, provider type and childcare register, to identify important differences, patterns and trends. The official statistics aim to draw out the main messages from the data and communicate these in an understandable way.

Coherence and comparability

35. Ofsted has reported on childcare providers and places information and inspection outcomes as official statistics since 2010.
36. Table 2 presents the important dates that have affected the comparability of early years data over time.
37. In July 2018, Ofsted moved to a new administrative database system, Cygnum, for recording information on providers and inspections. This introduced several changes which affect comparability. The main areas affected were places data, inspection actions and recommendations and the geography of home childcarers.
38. The move to Cygnum has improved the way places data is recorded. Cygnum has simplified the recording of places data, resulting in more coverage of places in each provider and therefore less estimation. Therefore, this change resulted in a rise in the number of places recorded on 31 August 2018 (using the new system) compared with 31 March 2018 (using the previous system).
39. The statistical release referencing the move to Cygnum change can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childcare-providers-and-inspections-as-at-31-august-2018>.

Table 2 Dates affecting early years and childcare data and its comparability over time.

Date	Change	Effect on comparability
Nov 2013	<p>'Satisfactory' judgement replaced by 'requires improvement' judgement.</p> <p>Ofsted committed to re-inspecting all childcare on non-domestic premises judged 'requires improvement' within 12 months.</p>	<p>All judgements of 'satisfactory' since the EYFS (2008) are comparable to judgements under the revised framework of 'requires improvement'.</p> <p>This policy only applied to childcare on non-domestic premises, not childminders, home childcarers or childcare on domestic premises. Therefore, childcare on non-domestic premises may have had more frequent opportunities to demonstrate improvement at inspection than other childcare provider types.</p>
Sep 2014	<p>Childminder agencies introduced: Childminder agencies are registered with Ofsted. New childminders can register directly with childminder agencies without registering with Ofsted directly. Existing childminders may also de-register from Ofsted and register with an agency instead.</p>	<p>The impact of this change on the comparability of data is low due to the relatively small number of childminder agencies that have registered with Ofsted. However, while Ofsted publishes information on the number of childminder agencies, they are not required to provide information on the number of childminders registered with them.</p>
Feb 2015	<p>Ofsted publishes responses to its consultation on early years official statistics.</p>	<p>Based on these findings, releases are now published three times a year, corresponding to academic term dates (see Table 1).</p>
Mar 2015	<p>Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act (SBEE) gains Royal Assent.</p>	<p>From this date, a single company can now register multiple providers of childcare with Ofsted on a single registration.</p>
Sep 2015	<p>A new 'Common inspection framework' across education, skills and early years remit areas is introduced.</p>	<p>The 'personal development, behaviour and welfare' judgement is comparable with the 'contribution of the provision to the well-being of children' judgement from the previous framework. The 'effectiveness of leadership and management' is comparable with the 'quality of leadership and management'. The 'outcomes for children' and 'quality of teaching, learning and assessment' judgements are new as of September 2015 and therefore not comparable with any previous judgements.</p>

Date	Change	Effect on comparability
Aug 2016	Childminders judged requires improvement are now re-inspected within 12 months where possible.	Ofsted prioritised inspections of childminders, who were previously judged as requires improvement, to be re-inspected within 12 months.
Jul 2018	Ofsted introduce a new administrative database, Cygnum, to replace the previous system for early years data. This results in some structural changes to the data.	<p>The geographical information about home childcarers is now based on the registered organisational address, instead of the primary setting where the childcare took place, as used previously. We do not publish the address (i.e. street, postcode) of home childcarers.</p> <p>There are some slight changes to some field names. These are reflected in the data dictionaries in the underlying data files.</p> <p>Childcare Register inspections are now recorded with two judgements where applicable. These reflect how well providers meet standards on both parts of the Childcare Register (compulsory and voluntary). Where a judgement is given on both parts, priority is given to the judgement on the compulsory part in our reporting.</p> <p>The number of places offered by a provider is recorded differently in Cygnum from what it was previously. This has resulted in improved coverage of places data and contributed to a rise in places numbers between 31 March 2018 and 31 August 2018.</p> <p>We identified some technical issues with the mapping of the data relating to inspection actions. This has resulted in the actions and recommendations table (Table 10) being temporarily withdrawn from the release pending further investigation.</p>

40. Data comparing childcare providers at their most recent inspection is also presented in Data View (please select 'Early years' from the Remit dropdown): <https://public.tableau.com/profile/ofsted#!/vizhome/Dataview/Viewregionalperformanceovertime>.
41. Ofsted is responsible for childcare inspections in England. The following organisations are responsible for childcare inspections in the devolved administrations of the UK:
- **Wales:** Care and Social Services Inspectorate: CSSI, for childcare inspections. <http://cssiw.org.uk/?lang=en>
Estyn, for inspections of non-school settings for children under 5. www.estyn.gov.wales/
 - **Scotland:** Care Inspectorate, for childminder inspections. www.careinspectorate.com/
Education Scotland, for all other childcare inspections. <https://education.gov.scot/>
 - **Northern Ireland:** five separate Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts for different regions of the country. <http://online.hscni.net/hospitals/health-and-social-care-trusts/>

Accuracy and reliability

42. The official statistics data is extracted from Ofsted's administrative systems. More information on the issues relating to the use of administrative data, as well as other considerations on the quality of data, is available here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-standards-for-official-statistics.
43. While these systems are not designed primarily for statistical purposes, the inspection outcome data taken from Ofsted administrative systems is considered of a high quality. This is due to the rigorous checks that Ofsted carries out before publishing inspection reports, the legislative and reputational importance of maintaining accurate information on childcare providers and the high level of public scrutiny to which Ofsted inspection reports are regularly subjected to.
44. Our reporting is accurate to the administrative systems that we report from. Errors in recording data and manual data entry may affect the quality of the source data. Ofsted make every effort to ensure that the data is produced without any errors. If an error is discovered, we will publish a corrected version as soon as possible.

Timeliness and punctuality

45. The publication is produced three times per year. The release schedule and data reporting periods are set out in Table 1.

46. To include all inspections published one month after the cut-off date of the reporting period, data from the administrative system is taken on the first of the month following the end of the reporting period. It then takes 6–8 weeks to extract, aggregate, quality assure, analyse and produce the main findings document and supplementary products.
47. The official statistics are published at 9.30am on the date pre-announced in the publication schedule:
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about/statistics.
48. Pre-release is given in accordance with the Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order (2008). The list of post holders granted pre-release access can be found on a separate document accompanying each release.

Accessibility and clarity

49. Ofsted releases are published in an accessible format on the gov.uk website. The information is publicly available and there are no restrictions on access to the published data.
50. Supporting underlying data in an accessible format accompany each release to allow users to perform their own analysis. This underlying data consists of provider-level and inspection-level files in Open Document Spreadsheet (ODS) format.
51. If you have any feedback on the accessibility, clarity, or any other aspect of the quality of our release, please send your comments to
childcaredataqueries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Meeting user needs

52. Users of these statistics include the Department for Education (DfE), local authorities, early years and childcare providers, and the voluntary sector.
53. The official statistics can help inform policy decisions about the quality and geographical location of childcare provision and contribute towards the findings in Ofsted's annual report to parliament.
54. A consultation was carried out in September 2014 which merged the two separate publications: 'Registered childcare providers and places' and 'Early years and childcare inspections and outcomes' into the current publication format 'Childcare providers and inspections'. The consultation and response are available here: www.gov.uk/government/consultations/early-years-providers-places-and-inspection-outcomes-statistics.

Confidentiality, transparency and security

55. Where sensitive or personal data is held by Ofsted, we have disclosure control processes in place to ensure that this data is not published. The contact, name and address details of childminders, domestic childcare providers and home childcarers are redacted. This redaction is also applied to a small number of providers of childcare on non-domestic premises due to reasons of personal and national safety.
56. All data releases follow Ofsted's confidentiality and revisions policies that can be found here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-standards-for-official-statistics.

Glossary

Under the Childcare Act 2006 (www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/contents) childcare providers register on either or both of two registers:

▪ **Early Years Register (EYR)**

The EYR is for providers who care for children in the early years age group, from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday. Registration is compulsory for such providers and they must meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

All providers on the EYR are inspected on a four-year cycle. The last inspection cycle ran from 1 September 2012 to 31 July 2016. The current inspection cycle runs from 1 August 2016 to 31 July 2020.

▪ **Childcare Register (CR)**

The CR is for providers who care for children from birth to 18 years. It has two parts:

- Compulsory Childcare Register (CCR) – for providers caring for children from 1 September after the child's fifth birthday up until their eighth birthday.
- Voluntary Childcare Register (VCR) – for providers for whom registration is not compulsory, for example nannies, or providers who care for children aged eight and over.

Providers who are registered on either part of the Childcare Register do not need to submit their places information to Ofsted.

For providers registered on the Childcare Register, Ofsted inspects a sample of 10% of active providers per year. These inspection reports are only published on the Ofsted website for 12 months and are then removed.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

The EYFS is the statutory framework for the early education and care of children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2.

Childcare providers

Childcare providers care for at least one individual child for a total of more than two hours in any one day. This is not necessarily a continuous period of time. They must register on the CCR to care for children under the age of eight, although there may be some exceptions to this. They can register on the VCR to care for older children.

Domestic premises

These are any premises which are wholly or mainly used as a private dwelling, in other words someone's home.

Childcare providers on domestic and non-domestic premises

If four or more people look after children at any one time in someone's home, they are providing childcare on domestic premises, not childminding.

Childcare providers on non-domestic premises are people or organisations providing care for individual children in premises that are not someone's home. These premises can range from converted houses to purpose-built nurseries.

Childminder

This is a person who is registered to look after one or more children, to whom they are not related, for reward. Childminders work on domestic premises alongside no more than two other childminders or assistants. They must register if they care for children under the age of eight and can choose to register if they care for older children. They care for:

- Children on domestic premises that are not usually the home of one of the children unless they care for children from more than two families, wholly or mainly in the homes of the families.
- At least one individual child for a total of more than two hours in any day. This is not necessarily a continuous period of time.

Childminder agencies

Childminder agencies were introduced in September 2014 as an alternative registration option for childminders. Childminders who register with an agency no longer need to register or be inspected by Ofsted, although the agency itself will receive an inspection.

Childminder agencies are only eligible for inspection by Ofsted when they have childminders on roll. Childminder agencies have the responsibility of inspecting the childminders who are registered with them.

Home childcarers

Home childcarers are usually nannies who care for children of any age up to their 18th birthday wholly or mainly in the child's own home, and care for children from no more than two families. They are not required to register with Ofsted but may choose to do so on the voluntary part of the Childcare Register.

Inspection cycles

All providers on the Early Years Register which were registered before the start of Ofsted's four-year inspection cycle are inspected within the cycle. The previous inspection cycle ran from 1 September 2012 to 31 July 2016. The current inspection cycle runs from 1 August 2016 to 31 July 2020. New providers joining the EYR are normally inspected within 30 months of registration. For providers on the CCR, a sample of 10% of active providers are inspected per year.

No Children on Roll (NCOR)

If there are no children present on the day of the provider's inspection, they receive an NCOR inspection. The inspector will make a judgement on the 'Overall quality and standards of the early years provision', with three possible outcomes:

- met
- not met - with actions
- not met - enforcement

Number of places

Registered places are the number of children that may attend the provision at any one time. Registered places are not the number of places occupied, nor the number of children who may benefit from receiving places through providers offering sessions at different times of the day. Place numbers are only collected for providers on the EYR. Provider type averages are used to estimate the number of places for a very small number of providers whose place numbers are not available at the time of the analysis. There may also be small discrepancies in totals due to rounding.

Joiners and leavers

Joiners are childcare providers that have registered with Ofsted during this reporting period. Most of these are new registrations, but Tables 3–4 and Chart 1 within the 'Childcare providers and inspections charts and tables' document also include providers with re-activated registrations and those that have changed provider type or register. At local authority or regional level, this may also include providers that have relocated into a new geographical area.

Leavers are mostly childcare providers that have left Ofsted during the reporting period. Most of these are resignations, but some are also providers that have had their registration cancelled or have changed provider type or register. At local authority or regional level, this may also include providers that have relocated out of a geographical area.

Further information

Ofsted publishes information on the inspection of early years providers on the gov.uk website:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/early-years-and-childcare-statistics

www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-inspection-framework-education-skills-and-early-years-from-september-2015

www.gov.uk/government/publications/framework-for-the-regulation-of-provision-on-the-childcare-register.

Contact for comments or feedback

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