

# 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](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/early-years-and-childcare-statistics)
2. The collection also includes an FOI spreadsheet, which is the underlying data for all the information Ofsted is able to publish about registered childcare providers. This includes, for example, the names and addresses of childminders that have given their consent to Ofsted to publish at registration.
3. 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
  - inspection outcomes for all Ofsted registered childcare providers in England
4. The publication provides and reports on providers in two different ways, with each focussing 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 as at the end of a specific period, where the inspections were published on the Ofsted website within one month afterwards.
  - **All inspections carried out within a particular 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 one month after the end of the reporting period. This is referred to as "revised data". This information should not be used to assess the quality of providers in a geographical area, as inspections are carried out in a targeted way in order to drive improvement in early years providers, and therefore do not necessarily represent a balanced statistical sample.

5. Future publications for 2017 are proposed to be released according to the following timetable (Table 1).

**Table 1** Childcare providers and inspections release schedule and data reporting periods for 2017.

<b>Month of publication</b>	<b>Information about all childcare providers registered with Ofsted as at</b>	<b>Information about all childcare inspections within the period</b>
March 2017	31 Dec 2016	1 Sept – 31 Dec 2016
June 2017	31 Mar 2017	1 Jan – 31 Mar 2017
Nov 2017	31 Aug 2017	1 Apr – 31 Aug 2017

6. The publication refers to four types of early years providers:
  - Childminder
  - Childcare on non-domestic premises (for example preschools and private nurseries)
  - Childcare on domestic premises
  - Home childcarer
7. 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)
8. Providers can be registered on a single or on a combination of registers; more information on these registers are provided in the [Glossary](#).
9. Additionally, there are three different types of inspection of these providers:
  - Early years register (EYR) inspection
  - Childcare register (CR) inspection
  - No children on roll (NCOR) inspection
10. EYR inspections result in a judgement of outstanding, good, requires improvement (RI) or inadequate. RI or inadequate providers may also receive actions and recommendations in order to help them improve. CR and NCOR inspections result in a judgement of Met or Not met requirements.
11. The publication includes information on the maximum number of places offered by early years providers. Places data is only available for providers on the early years register (EYR). For these providers, the numbers show the total places available for children under eight.

12. The publication also provides information on the number of joiners and leavers in the childcare sector.

## Methodology

13. This section details the reporting methodology used to aggregate and analyse statistics on Ofsted registered childcare providers and inspections.
14. 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: <https://www.gov.uk/early-years-foundation-stage>.
15. The key findings document also includes a section on early years provision within the schools sector. This covers maintained nursery schools and early years provision within maintained schools and academies. The data for this section is calculated from the published management information relating to 31 March 2017.<sup>1</sup> The numbers presented in the key findings are calculated from the management information as follows:
- **Maintained nursery schools:** We have taken all maintained nursery schools that have been inspected and calculated the proportion judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection.
  - **Nursery provision within schools:** We have taken all schools that have received an early years provision judgement and calculated the proportion judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection. Please note early years judgements were not made in inspections between January 2012 and August 2014 and these have been excluded from the analysis.

## Compiling the data

16. Data on the number of childcare places that providers offer is collected at registration and recorded in the Ofsted corporate Regulatory Support Application (RSA) system. This is a live administrative data system that is used to schedule, monitor and register childcare providers and inspections.

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<sup>1</sup> School inspections outcomes: management information – <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/monthly-management-information-ofsteds-school-inspections-outcomes>

17. Our official statistics are collated by taking a snapshot of this administrative system one month after the end of the reporting period and aggregating the data for presentation and analysis.
18. There is a time delay between the end of the reporting period and the publication cut-off date of one calendar month (see Table 1), to account for the time required to write up, verify and publish the inspection reports after the inspection has taken place. This helps to ensure that the vast majority of inspections undertaken within the reporting period are captured within the official statistics.

## Coverage

19. The publication reports on childcare registered with Ofsted. The majority of provision in the early years age range is carried out by childcare providers that are registered with Ofsted, either on the EYR or the CR.
20. However, there are some providers of childcare that are exempt from registration with Ofsted, for example maintained schools, independent schools or academies providing childcare for two-years-olds.
21. These exempt providers receive a judgement for their early years provision at their school inspection, and so are covered in Ofsted's official statistics on maintained schools and academies:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/maintained-schools-and-academies-inspections-and-outcomes-official-statistics>  
 and independent schools:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ofsteds-inspections-of-non-association-independent-schools>.
22. 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 that were on the EYR at the beginning of the four year inspection cycle.
23. Providers that were not on the EYR at the beginning of the inspection cycle, and have registered after this date, are required to be inspected within a three year period starting from 1 August following their registration. However, Ofsted will normally inspect all newly-registered providers within 30 months of their registration.

## Places offered by providers on the early years register

24. 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.

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. There are caveats to be aware of when interpreting places data for childminders.
26. The majority of childminders (around 70%) are registered as offering six childcare places because this is the maximum number of places allowed under EYFS guidelines for providers with no assistants:  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/registration-and-suitability-handbook-childcare-providers](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/registration-and-suitability-handbook-childcare-providers). 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. For providers on the early years register, the numbers show the total places available for children under eight.
29. 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

30. This section is broken down by the five dimensions to statistical output quality in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics,  
<https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/monitoring-and-assessment/code-of-practice/>:
  - Relevance
  - Coherence and comparability
  - Accuracy and reliability
  - Timeliness and punctuality
  - Accessibility and clarity.

There is also additional information on meeting user needs.

## Relevance

31. 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.

32. 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 and the Childcare Register, and for enforcement where it appears that legal requirements are not being met.
33. These official statistics releases report on early years and childcare inspections under Sections 59 and 60 of the Childcare Act 2006: [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/contents).
34. By aggregating the most recent inspection judgements of individual childcare providers, the publication is able to present the quality of provision nationally and in different geographical areas.
35. 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 key messages from the data and communicate these in an understandable way.

## Coherence and comparability

36. Ofsted has reported on childcare providers and places information and inspection outcomes as official statistics since 2010. Table 2 presents the key dates that have affected the comparability of early years data over time.

**Table 2** Key dates affecting early years and childcare data and its comparability over time.

Date	Change	Effect on comparability
September 2008	Early Years Foundation Stage introduced (more info in Paragraph 14).	<p><b>Comparability affected</b></p> <p>Data prior to 1 September 2008 is not comparable with data recorded afterwards.</p> <p>The ‘overall effectiveness’ judgement is reported consistently across all frameworks from September 2008 to the current framework.</p>

<b>Date</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Effect on comparability</b>
September 2012	<p>EYFS revised to include a new inspection framework, which reduced the number of judgements made to four:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. overall effectiveness</li> <li>ii. how well the provision meets the needs of the children who attend</li> <li>iii. contribution of the provision to the well-being of children</li> <li>iv. quality of leadership and management.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Comparability affected</b></p> <p>There are no comparable sub judgements in the pre- and post-September 2012 inspection framework.</p>
November 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><b>Comparability not affected</b></p> <p>All judgements of 'satisfactory' since the EYFS (2008) are comparable to judgements under the revised framework of 'requires improvement'.</p> <p><b>Comparability affected</b></p> <p>This policy only applies to childcare on non-domestic premises, not childminders, home childcarers or childcare on domestic premises.</p> <p>Therefore, childcare on non-domestic premises may have more frequent opportunities to demonstrate improvement at inspection than other childcare provider types.</p>
1 September 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><b>Comparability affected</b></p> <p>The impact of this change on the comparability of data is likely to be relatively small due to the small number of childminder agencies that have registered with Ofsted. However, while Ofsted publishes information on the number of childminder agencies, it holds no information on the number of childminders registered with these agencies.</p>

<b>Date</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Effect on comparability</b>
23 February 2015	Ofsted publishes responses to its consultation on early years official statistics (see Paragraph 53).	<b>Comparability not affected</b> Based on these findings, releases are now published three times a year, corresponding to academic term dates (see Table 1).
26 March 2015	Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act (SBEE) gains Royal Assent.	<b>Comparability not affected</b> From this date, a single company can now register multiple providers of childcare with Ofsted on a single registration.
1 September 2015	A new 'Common inspection framework' across education, skills and early years remit areas is introduced, using the following judgements: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. overall effectiveness</li> <li>ii. quality of teaching, learning and assessment</li> <li>iii. personal development, behaviour and welfare</li> <li>iv. outcomes for children</li> <li>v. effectiveness of leadership and management.</li> </ol>	<b>Comparability not affected</b> 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'.  <b>Comparability affected</b> 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.

37. Data comparing childcare providers at their most recent inspection is also presented in Data View: [www.dataview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.dataview.ofsted.gov.uk).

38. 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. <http://www.estyn.gov.wales/>

- **Scotland:** Care Inspectorate, for childminder inspections.  
<http://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/>

Due to differences in inspection policy and frameworks, it is unlikely that inspection outcomes are directly comparable between UK constituent countries.

## Accuracy and reliability

39. The official statistics data is extracted from Ofsted's administrative systems. More information on the issues relating to the use of administrative data is available here: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-standards-for-official-statistics](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-standards-for-official-statistics).
40. 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.
41. 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. Errors may be slightly more prevalent in data fields which aren't commonly used for operational purposes.
42. While we make every effort to ensure that the data is published without any errors, if an error is discovered we upload a corrected version as soon as possible.

## Timeliness and punctuality

43. The publication is produced three times per year and for 2017 the timetable set out in Table 1.
44. In order to include all inspections published one month after the cut-off date of the reporting period, a snapshot of data 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 key findings document and supplementary products.

45. 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](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about/statistics).
46. 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

47. 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.
48. 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 Data Spreadsheet (ODS) format.
49. Users are able to access the underlying data to interpret and manipulate the data for their own purposes.
50. We are looking for user feedback on how to improve the accessibility of the official statistics. 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](mailto:childcaredataqueries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## Meeting user needs

51. Users of these statistics include the Department for Education (DfE), local authorities, early years and childcare providers, and the voluntary sector.
52. 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.
53. 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](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/early-years-providers-places-and-inspection-outcomes-statistics).

## Confidentiality, transparency and security

54. Where sensitive or personal data is held by Ofsted, we have disclosure control processes in place 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, including some military bases and providers of a sensitive nature.

55. All data releases follow Ofsted's confidentiality and revisions policies that can be found in these locations: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-standards-for-official-statistics](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-standards-for-official-statistics) and [www.gov.uk/government/publications/handling-and-retention-of-ofsted-inspection-evidence](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/handling-and-retention-of-ofsted-inspection-evidence).

## Glossary

Under the Childcare Act 2006

(<http://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 through to 31 July 2016. The current inspection cycle runs from 1 August 2016 through to 31 July 2020.

- **Childcare Register (CR)**

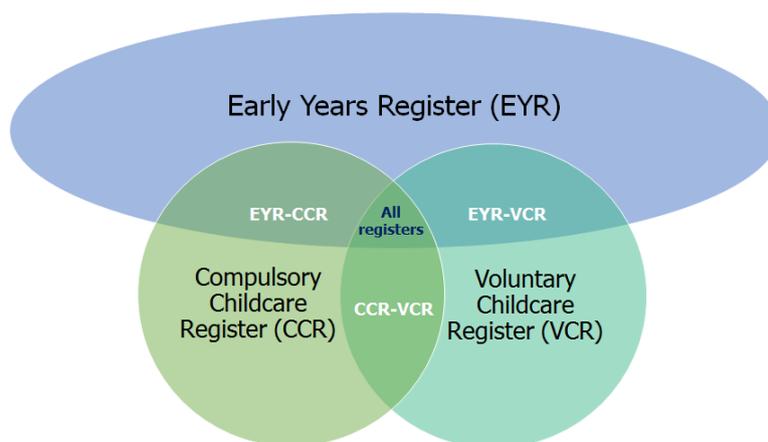
The CR is for providers who care for children from birth to 18 years. It has two parts:

- 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.

## Venn diagram showing the Ofsted registers for childcare providers



### 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:

<https://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 to care for children under the age of eight, unless under exceptional circumstances, and can choose to register to care for older children.

### Domestic premises

These are any premises which are wholly or mainly used as a private dwelling.

### 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, on a domestic premises for reward. Childminders can work with 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 option for childminders to register with. 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 - actions
- not met - enforcement action

### **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 the joiners and leavers charts and tables 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 the 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 the 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](http://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](http://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](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/framework-for-the-regulation-of-provision-on-the-childcare-register).

## **Contact for comments or feedback**

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