

Early learning and childcare statistics 2021

The provision and use of registered daycare of
children and childminding services in
Scotland as at 31 December 2021

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HAPPY TO TRANSLATE

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Executive summary

This report and the following points relate to the provision of daycare of children and childminding services in Scotland at 31 December 2021. All services were impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic in different ways during 2021. Many services continued their provision albeit with significant adjustments, some were closed for parts of the year while many others had shorter periods of closure due to covid-19 outbreaks. As such, all of these impacts have had an effect on the statistics contained within this report.

General key points

- Compared to 2020, there are fewer early learning and childcare (ELC) services operating, but despite this, the number of places available has once again increased.
- The number of children registered in total has increased compared to 2020. The main driver in this is a large increase in the number of children registered with nurseries and a notable increase in children registered with out of school care services.
- The proportion of services that provide funded places for 3- and 4-year-olds (and eligible 2-year-olds) has continued to increase in 2021.
- Most (93.6%) local authority run nurseries offered whole day places (or a choice of whole or part day places) in 2021. This rate has continued to increase year on year.

Children registered with early learning and childcare services

- The number of children registered with early learning and childcare services increased compared to 2020. 221,200 children were registered at 31 December 2021, an increase of 3.8% from 213,140 children registered in 2020.
- The largest increase in the number of children registered was reported in nurseries (6.1% increase) and out of school care (4.3% increase), with the largest decreases seen in holiday playschemes (7.1% decrease) and playgroups (3.9% decrease).

Number of registered services and service capacity

- The overall capacity in early learning and childcare services increased by 0.6%, from 203,570 in 2020 to 204,700 registered places available at 31 December 2021.
- Although there was an overall increase in the number of places, there was a decline in the places available in most types of early learning and childcare service with only nurseries reporting an increase in capacity, as was the situation in 2020.
- There were 3,573 daycare of children services, a small decrease over the year (15 fewer services compared to 2020). However, the average size of daycare of children services has continued to increase every year. The average size of service in 2021 was 50.3 places, compared to 49.1 in 2020 and 47.4 in 2019.
- The number of childminders registered decreased by 9.0% to 3,998 compared to 4,395 in 2020. The overall capacity for registered childminders in 2021 decreased 9.4% to 24,866 registered places compared to 27,440 registered places in 2020.

Funded places and service availability

- The proportion of services reporting that they provided funded early learning and childcare has increased in 2021. At 31 December 2021, 98.0% of nurseries, 88.8% of children and family centres and 75.0% of playgroups provided funded places.
- More daycare of children services now offer whole-day sessions; 84.8% offered this as an option. This rate has been continuing to increase year on year. 95.2% of nursery services now offer whole day sessions.
- The majority of local authority nurseries (93.6%) now offer whole day sessions, or a choice of whole or part day sessions, an increase of 9.6 percentage points compared to 2020.

Quality of services

- The quality of services remained high overall with 92.8% of childminders and 87.7% of daycare of children services found to be good or better for all quality themes. This compares to 92.6% of childminders and 88.7% of daycare of children services achieving this standard in 2020. The proportion of services with all themes found to be weak or unsatisfactory remained very low.
- Overall, 89.4% of daycare of children services offering funded ELC places were evaluated as good or better in all quality themes. This is a slight decrease compared to the 90.8% reported in 2020.

Geographical variance in service provision**Urban – rural areas**

- The areas with the highest rate of funded ELC services evaluated as good or better in all themes were accessible rural areas, accessible small towns and smaller urban areas, while the areas with the lowest proportion of high-quality funded services were remote small towns.

Levels of deprivation

- There is no correlation between prevalence of good quality funded services (those evaluated as good or better in all themes) and levels of deprivation, indicating that a consistent level of good quality funded provision is available in all areas. However, the level of local authority run services that offered funded places that were graded good or better remained consistently high in all deprivation levels.

Supporting data tables

This publication is produced together with a suite of data tables in Excel format. Throughout this report these are referred to as ‘supporting data tables’. These tables are presented in a file called ‘Early Learning and Childcare Statistics 2021– Supporting data tables’ and can be downloaded from:

<http://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/statistics-and-analysis>

Definitions of the terms we use

The Care Inspectorate registers daycare of children services and childminders, which this report will collectively refer to as early learning and childcare services¹. For the purposes of this report, this includes daycare of children services only provided for school-aged children such as out of school care services and holiday playschemes.

The report also includes, but is not restricted to, information on early learning and childcare for 3 and 4-year-olds (and eligible 2-year-olds) funded by local authorities under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

In this report, we present information on early learning and childcare services, including the following information listed below.

- The number of daycare of children services and childminders registered with the Care Inspectorate on 31 December 2021, including comparisons over time and number by provider sector and type of care service.
- Children registered with early learning and childcare services, calculated as the number of children registered with services on 31 December 2021. This means the number of children enrolled with a service, even though they may not attend every day or only for part-day sessions. There is some element of double counting in the number of registered children, as children can be registered with more than one service, for example a child attending a morning nursery session and then a childminder in the afternoon. It is possible that the number of children enrolled can be larger than the service’s registered capacity, due to all children not attending at the same time, for example where services offer part-time sessions.
- Capacity, which is the maximum possible attendance in a service at any one time, measured by number of available registered places.
- Information on the quality of early learning and childcare services through analysis of grading data on 31 December 2021.
- Information on complaints in early learning and childcare services that were investigated by the Care Inspectorate between 1 January and 31 December 2021.
- Information on the number of services providing funded places under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 on 31 December 2021.

¹ When reporting on the number of children registered with early learning and childcare services, we would usually exclude crèche services, as they predominantly provide a drop-in service.

Childminding is defined by the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 as someone looking after one or more children on domestic premises for reward for a period of more than two hours in any day.

However, this does not include:

- where children are related to the carer
- the fostering of children or kinship care
- someone caring for children in the children's own home.

By law, all childminders must be registered with the Care Inspectorate. Childminding is usually provided from the childminder's home for a small number of children and includes the childminder's own children.

Childminders are self-employed and can operate in several ways.

- An individual may operate a childminding service alone.
- A partnership of two or more people may operate a single registered childminding service.
- Childminders who are separately registered may work together in the home of one of the registered childminding providers.
- A childminding service may have paid or unpaid assistants to help provide the childminding service.

Daycare of children is defined by the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 as a service that provides care for children on non-domestic premises for a total of more than two hours a day and on at least six days per year. This includes nurseries, crèches, out of school care and playgroups. These services can be run by the public, private or voluntary sector and require to be registered with the Care Inspectorate whether or not parents pay for the service.

The definition does not include services for school-aged children provided by schools where the provision is part of an educational activity. Nor does it include supervised activities where care is not provided, including sports clubs and uniformed activities such as the Scouts or Guides.

For the purposes of this statistical report, each of the registered daycare of children services has been assigned to one of the following categories of main service provision. This main service category is based on information supplied by the services in their annual returns. If a service did not respond to an annual return in a given year, then their main category of service has been estimated by using annual return information submitted in a previous year, or from information about the service, for example their conditions of registration.

Service categories

Here is a summary of the main service categories featured in this report with a brief description of each.

Children and family centre

Sometimes called community nurseries, children and family centres usually provide a full-day service for children aged 0-5 years. The majority are provided by local authorities. They usually provide services for children with the greatest needs together with a range of support services for families.

Crèche

Crèches provide drop-in care for children in order to enable adults to engage in activities such as further education, shopping or attending a meeting.

Holiday playscheme

Holiday playschemes provide care for school-aged children during the school holidays (this does not include activity-based clubs).

Nursery

Nurseries typically provide care and learning facilities for children aged under 5 years. Nurseries are normally used by parents and carers on a regular basis rather than a drop-in basis and the service is provided as a minimum during the school term. Nurseries can take several forms, such as a private nursery, a local authority nursery class or nursery school or a nursery that is part of an independent school.

Nursery providing additional childcare

As above but where additional childcare (for example, breakfast club or out of school care) is recorded as being provided

School aged childcare (sometimes called out of school care)

This service provides care for mainly primary-school-aged children after the end of the school day and sometimes also before school starts. Many also provide a full-day service during the school holidays and in-service days. This service can be provided by the public, private or voluntary sectors, with many voluntary sector out of school clubs run by parent committees.

Out of school care providing additional childcare

As above but where an additional childcare element (for example, breakfast club or holiday playscheme) can also being provided.

Playgroup

Mostly voluntary sector services run by a parent committee, often with parents taking part in a rota to assist paid staff.

Sector provider types in early learning and childcare services**Public and local authority providers**

This includes services run by local authorities and a small number of services run by health boards.

Private providers

These are private businesses run by a sole trader, partnership or a limited company. Some offer funded places funded by a local authority. All childminding is run as a private business.

Voluntary or not for profit providers

Also known as the third sector, voluntary and not for profit providers include charities.

Funded early learning and childcare

Under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, local authorities have significantly increased the amount of early learning and childcare provided. The funding for all 3 and 4-year-old children initially increased from 475 to 600 hours per year and some eligible 2-year-olds also receive this level of funding. This increased to 1140 hours per year in August 2021 (although some local authorities had implemented this increase during 2020, meaning that some children will have received increased funded hours before 2021).

Other types of funding for children to attend early learning and childcare services can be made by local authorities. However, most funding is under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (2014) and therefore this publication only covers this type of funding, described as 'funded early learning and childcare' or 'funded places'.

1. Children registered with early learning and childcare settings in Scotland

Overall, there were 221,200 children registered with an early learning and childcare setting on 31 December 2021. This is higher than the 213,140 children registered in December 2020.

Of the total registered, 196,320 children (88.8% of the total) were registered with daycare of children services and 24,880 (11.2%) were registered with childminding services. Compared to 2020 this represents an increase in the number of children registered with daycare services and a continued decline in the number of children registered with childminding services.

These totals are summarised by type of care provision in Table 1 below and in more detail in supporting Table 1.

Table 1: Number of children registered with early learning and childcare services by main type of service on 31 December 2019, 2020 and 2021.

Care Service main type	December 2019	December 2020	December 2021	Change in number of children registered compared to 2020	% change compared to 2020
Childminding	31,560	25,800	24,880	-920	-3.6%
Children and Family Centre	10,430	8,480	8,160	-320	-3.8%
Holiday Playscheme	4,690	4,070	3,780	-290	-7.1%
Nursery	145,970	132,360	140,420	+8,060	6.1%
Out of School Care	53,260	38,810	40,480	+1,670	4.3%
Playgroup	4,650	3,620	3,480	-140	-3.9%
All care service types	250,560	213,140	221,200	8,060	3.8%

- Overall, compared to 2020, the number of children registered with early learning and childcare services has increased by 3.8%.
- Nurseries and out of school care services both saw an increase in the number of children registered compared to 2020.
- Other types of early years services reported a decline in the number of children registered compared to 2020, however these decreases were smaller than the decline seen in last year's report when comparing 2020 to 2019.

Number of children registered with childminding services

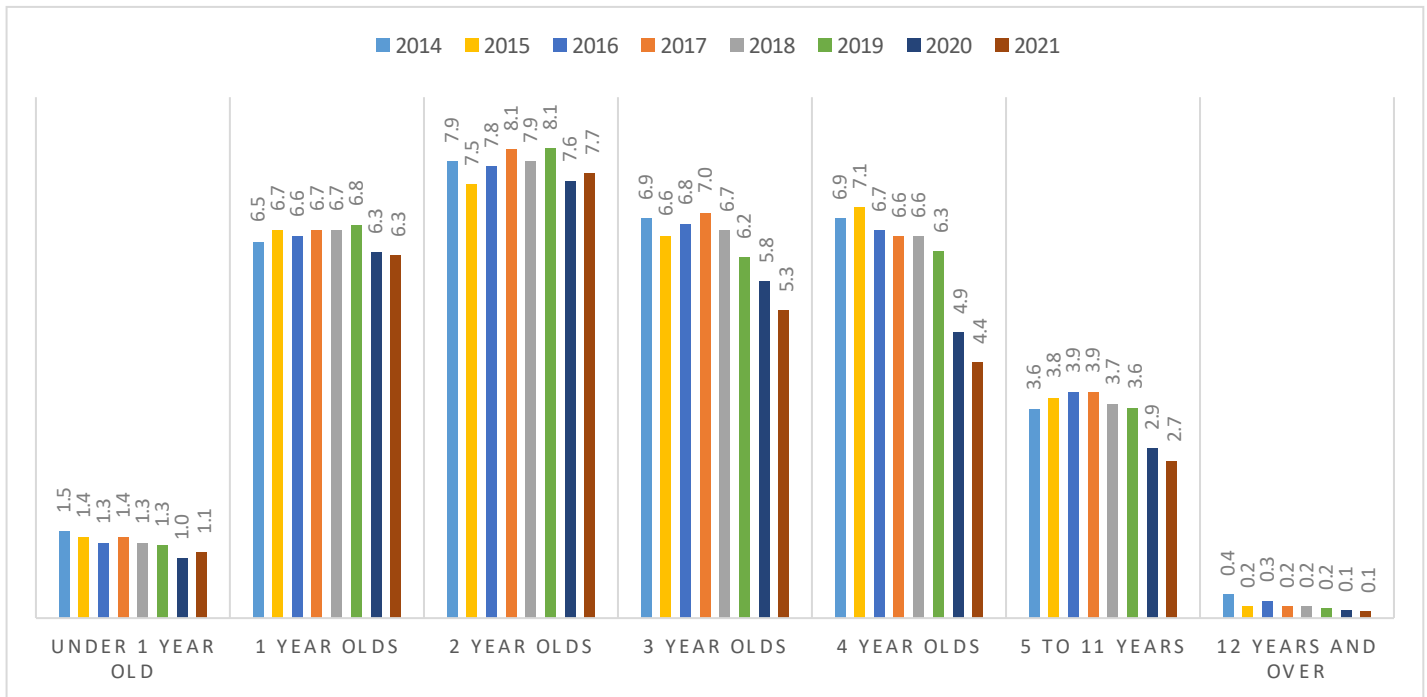
Overall, there was a 3.6% decrease in the number of children registered with childminding services in 2021. This is a smaller decrease compared to the 18.3% reported last year, which was thought to be driven mainly by the covid-19 pandemic. This year's decline is similar (in percentage terms) to that reported in our 2019 report, comparing December 2018 to December 2019. Therefore, while there is continued decline in numbers of children registered in childminding services this year, the rate at which it is declining is now similar to the situation pre-pandemic.

In terms of the rate of children registered with childminding services (per 100 population), the largest decline in children registered during 2021 was in the 3- and 4-year-old age groups. The 2-year-old age group saw a slight increase, with 7.7 children registered per 100 population, up from 7.6 per 100 population in 2020.

The average number of children registered per childminding service on 31 December 2021 was 6.2 children per service. This is an increase compared to the rate of 6.0 children per service at the same point in 2020, however it is lower than the rate of 6.6 children per service reported in 2019.

The variation in the rate of children registered (per 100 population) with childminding services between 2014 and 2021 is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Rate per 100 population children registered in childminding services

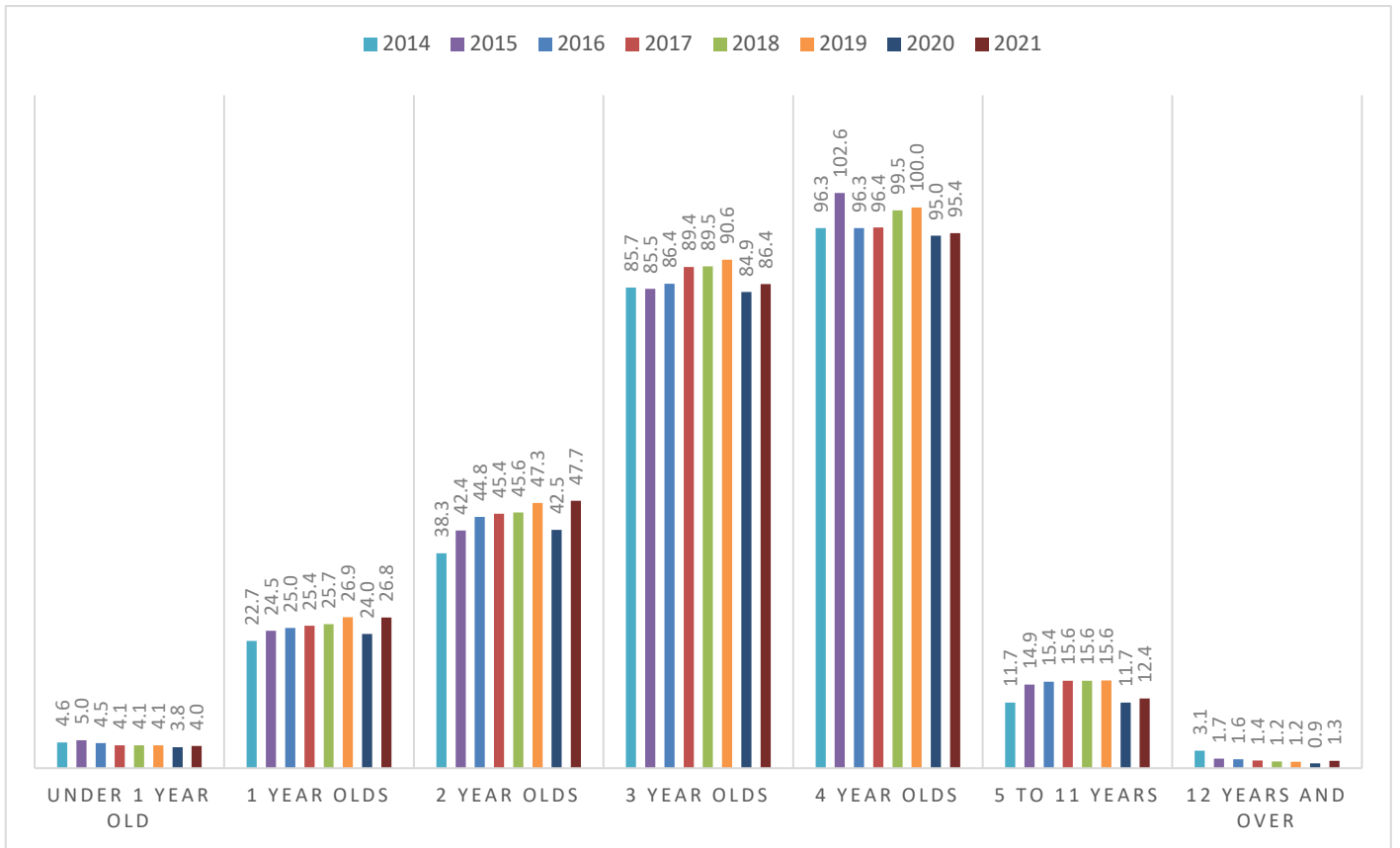


Number of children registered with daycare of children services

Overall, there was an increase in the number of children registered with daycare of children services (196,320 children registered in 2021 compared to 187,340 in 2020, an increase of 4.8%). In terms of the rate per 100 population, the increase was seen across all age groups- with the largest increase reported in the 1- and 2-year-old age groups. This contrasts with the situation last year when there was a 14.5% decline in the number of children registered with decline seen in each of the age groups.

The variation in the rate of children registered (per 100 population) with daycare of children services between 2014 and 2021 is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Rate per 100 population children registered in daycare of children services



2. Number and capacity of early learning and childcare services in Scotland

On 31 December 2021 there were 7,571 early learning and childcare services in Scotland with a total combined capacity of 204,710 places.

Of this total, 3,573 were daycare of children services providing a total of 179,840 places. Compared to 2020, the number of daycare services has fallen by 15 services, however the available capacity has increased by 3,700 places (capacity is defined as the maximum potential attendance at any one time, measured by the number of registered places available according to each service's conditions of registration).

The increase in the number of places comes mainly from a large increase in the number of nursery places available. The capacity in nurseries overall has increased by 5,120 compared to 2020 (a 4.0% increase), with the vast majority of these additional places coming from local authority nursery services. Table 2 below shows the increase in the number of nursery places year on year (compared to the previous year reported since 2018).

Table 2: Increase in number of registered places in nursery services compared to previous year 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021

Year	Increase in nursery places compared to previous year
2018	+2,480
2019	+4,530
2020	+5,830
2021	+5,120

Overall, capacity in nursery services increased by 5,120 places in 2021. Capacity in local authority operated nurseries has increased by 4,470 places compared to 2020, accounting for 87.3% of the total increase in capacity in 2021.

Compared to 2014, the number of places available in nursery services has increased by 24.3%, from 108,440 to 134,740 places. The number of places available in local authority nursery services has increased since 2014 by 20,370 places.

The number of childminding services has continued to decrease in 2021. There were 3,998 childminders operating at 31 December 2021, providing a total of 24,870 places. There has been a 9.0% decrease in the number of childminding services and a 9.4% decrease in the number of places available in childminding services compared to 2020.

Comparing with 2014, there were 2,104 fewer childminding services operating, which is a 34.5% decrease in the number of services resulting in 33.8% drop in the number of places available. Overall, there has been a net increase in capacity across the whole early learning and childcare sector (childminders and daycare of children) compared to 2020.

On 31 December 2021, there were a total of 204,700 places, which is an increase of 1,130 more places (a 0.6% increase) compared to 2020. Compared to 2014, there were 9,400 more places available, which is a 4.8% increase. Table 3 below illustrates the numbers of services operating and number of places available in daycare of children and childminding services over time.

Table 3: Number of services and total capacity, 2014-2021 (all services, daycare of children and childminding services)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
All ELC services								
Number of services	9,859	9,726	9,402	9,127	8,754	8,395	7,983	7,571
Total capacity	195,300	196,400	200,190	199,870	200,110	202,100	203,570	204,710
Childminders								
Number of services	6,102	5,954	5,669	5,426	5,108	4,752	4,395	3,998
Total capacity	37,540	36,700	35,180	33,610	31,650	29,480	27,440	24,870
Daycare of children services								
Number of services	3,757	3,722	3,733	3,701	3,646	3,643	3,588	3,573
Total capacity	157,760	162,700	165,010	166,260	168,460	172,620	176,130	179,840

The number of childminders registered decreased by 9.0% compared to 2020. In part this was due to fewer new services registering, with only 151 new childminders registering in 2021 compared to 220 new registrations in 2020 (and 302 in 2019).

Most childminders are registered for a maximum of six children, which is the most they can care for at any one time on their own, including the childminder's own children. A small number of childminders are registered for more than six children. The average number of places in childminding services has remained consistent with previous years at 6.2 places per service.

The average number of places in daycare of children services has continued to increase year on year and has risen again in 2021 from 49.1 to 50.3 (see table 4 below). This increase is accounted for mainly in the large increase in the number of places in nursery services.

Table 4: Average number of places per service available in childminding and daycare of childcare services on 31 December 2014 – 2021

Average number of places	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Childminding	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.2
Daycare of Children	42.0	43.7	44.2	44.9	46.2	47.4	49.1	50.3

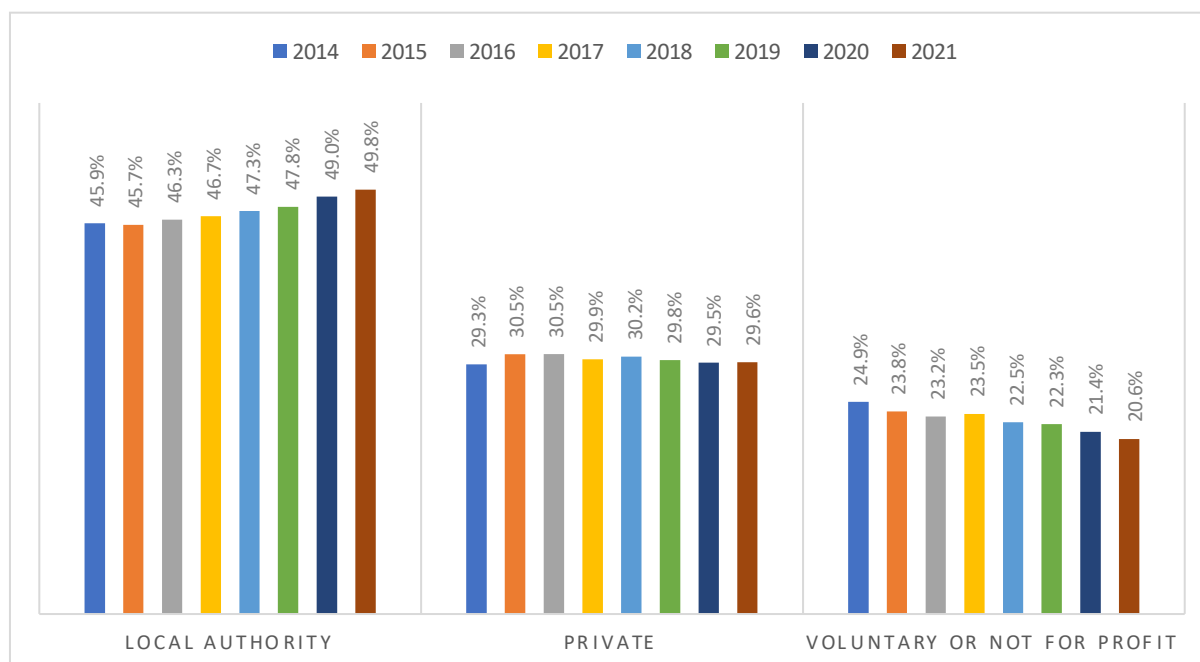
Services by provider sector

All childminding services are privately operated, while daycare of children services are operated by a range of private, local authority and voluntary or not for profit service providers.

For daycare of children services, 49.8% were provided by local authorities (which includes 3 nursery services run by health boards). 29.6% were privately operated services while 20.6% were voluntary or not for profit services.

Figure 3 below illustrates the proportion of services operated by each sector over time.

Figure 3: Percentage of registered daycare of children services by provider sector on 31 December 2014-2021



Numbers of services and capacities by service categories

Daycare of children services cover a wide range of different areas of care provision, the largest of which is nurseries followed by out of school care and playgroups. It is also possible that a service may offer a number of different types of care and learning. For example, a nursery may also provide out of school care in the form of a breakfast club, or a children and family centre may also offer a holiday playscheme. In this report we have categorised services according to what they reported to be their main area of care provision. A summary of the number of services operating between 2014 and 2021 by service type is presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Number of registered services by main service type on 31 December 2014-2021

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	% change 2020 to 2021	% change 2014 to 2021
Childminding	6,102	5,954	5,669	5,426	5,105	4,752	4,395	3,998	-9.0%	-34.5%
Children & family centre	139	149	161	151	136	131	119	107	-10.1%	-23.0%
Creche	83	78	73	75	63	56	43	32	-25.6%	-61.4%
Holiday playscheme	50	48	44	43	39	45	39	35	-10.3%	-30.0%
Nursery	2,443	2,449	2,468	2,475	2,467	2,493	2,516	2,556	1.6%	4.6%
Out of school care	703	726	739	738	748	738	716	711	-0.7%	1.1%
Playgroup	291	272	248	219	193	180	155	132	-14.8%	-54.6%
No single service type*	48	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a
Total	9,859	9,726	9,402	9,127	8,754	8,395	7,983	7,571	-5.2%	-23.2%
Total (not inc. Childminding)	3,757	3,772	3,733	3,701	3,646	3,643	3,588	3,573	-0.4%	-4.9%

Table 6 below, and supporting table 2, compare in detail the total capacity and average number of places in 2014, 2020 and 2021.

Table 6: Total capacity and average number of places at 31 December 2014, 2020 and 2021

	2014		2020		2021	
	Total Capacity (reg'd places)	Average capacity per service	Total Capacity (reg'd places)	Average capacity per service	Total Capacity (reg'd places)	Average capacity per service
Childminders	37,540	6.2	27,440	6.2	24,870	6.2
Children and family centre	7,380	53.1	7,340	61.7	7,250	67.8
Creche	3,100	37.3	1,380	32.1	1,000	31.2
Holiday playscheme	2,030	40.6	1,330	34.2	1,180	33.6
Nursery	108,440	44.4	129,620	51.5	134,740	52.7
Out of school care	28,510	40.6	32,800	45.8	32,470	45.7
Playgroup	6,800	23.4	3,660	23.6	3,200	24.3
Other services	1,500	31.3	-	-	-	-
Total	195,310	-	203,570	-	204,710	-
Total (not inc. Childminding)	157,760	42.0	176,130	49.1	179,840	50.3

3. Early learning and childcare funding in Scotland

Funded early learning and childcare (ELC) is available to all 3 and 4-year-olds and eligible 2-year-olds in Scotland. In August 2021, the entitlement increased to 1,140 hours per year for each child.

Most funded places are offered through nurseries. In addition, some local authorities offer funded places through other services like playgroups or childminders. The proportion of services offering funded places has increased in nurseries and children and family centres compared to 2020. The proportion of services providing funded places between 2014 and 2021 is presented in Table 7 below and in more detail in supporting Table 3.

Table 7: Proportion of services providing funded early learning and childcare on 31 December 2014-2021

Care Service type	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Nurseries	92.0%	92.6%	93.9%	94.1%	94.5%	96.1%	97.5%	98.0%
Children and family centres	76.0%	84.0%	72.0%	75.5%	84.6%	86.3%	86.6%	88.8%
Playgroups	69.0%	72.0%	75.4%	74.9%	75.7%	75.6%	78.7%	75.0%

- Most services (51.9%) offering funded places provide these for children aged 3 years and older only. A further 46.8% of services offer funded places for 2-year-olds in addition to children aged 3 or older, which is an increase from 41.6% in 2020.
- Only 1.3% of services offering funded places do so exclusively for 2-year-olds.
- The majority of private and voluntary or not for profit nurseries that provide funded places offer funded places for 2-year-olds (most of these offer places for 2-year-olds in addition to 3 and 4-year-olds).
- 45.6% of nurseries offer funded places for 2-year-olds (including those offering places for 2-year-olds and 3 and 4-year-olds). This is an increase from 43.5% in 2020.

See Table 8 and Table 9 below for a further breakdown by age groups, service type and nurseries by sector.

Table 8: Proportion of all services offering funded places by age groups

Care Service type	Provision of funded places		
	funded places for 2-year-olds only	funded places for 2-year-olds and 3 and older	funded places for 3 years and older only
Children and Family Centre	8.4%	86.3%	5.3%
Nursery	0.6%	45.0%	54.3%
Playgroup	11.1%	54.5%	34.3%
All services offering funded places	1.3%	46.8%	51.9%

Table 9: Nursery services that offer funded places by age groups and sector

Sector	Provision of funded places		
	funded places for 2- year-olds only	funded places for 2- year-olds and 3 and older	funded places for 3 years and older only
Public	0.5%	32.1%	67.4%
Private	0.7%	70.7%	28.6%
Voluntary or Not for Profit	1.5%	54.7%	43.8%
All nurseries offering funded places	0.6%	45.0%	54.4%

Quality theme evaluations in services offering funded places

In 89.4% of services offering funded places, the quality was found to be good or better in all quality themes compared to 65.5% of services delivering the same type of provision but not offering funded places.

For nursery services that offered funded places in particular, 89.4% of services overall were evaluated as good or better in all themes. Compared to nursery services that don't offer funded places where 59.6% were evaluated as good or better in all themes; there is a clear distinction between services that offer funded places and those that do not.

Table 10 below shows the comparison by sector between nurseries offering funded places and those that do not.

Table 10: Quality evaluations in nursery services by sector and ELC funded places

Nursery offers funded places?	Sector	% of services found to be Good or better in all quality themes
Yes	Local authority	93.8%
	Private	79.6%
	Voluntary/not for profit	89.6%
Nurseries offering funded places		89.4%
No	Local authority	n/a*
	Private	52.9%
	Voluntary/not for profit	76.9%
Nurseries without funded places		59.6%
All Nurseries		88.8%

* note: all local authority nurseries provide funded places

Supporting Table 4a and Table 4b show the breakdown of quality theme evaluations by sector and service type.

Quality theme evaluations between 2014 and 2021

Since 2014, around nine out of ten funded services have been found to be good or better in all quality theme evaluations.

The proportion of services evaluated as very good or excellent in all quality themes has declined since 2014. However, at 34.9% this rate remains greater than daycare of children services that didn't offer funded places. The proportion of these services that were evaluated as very good or excellent was 21.8%.

Table 11 below shows the percentage of services found to be good or better in all themes and those evaluated as very good or excellent in all themes in each year since 2014.

Table 11: Proportion of services offering funded places found to be good or better and those evaluated as very good or excellent in quality theme evaluations between 2014 and 2021

	Year							
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
% of services found to be Good or better in all quality themes	93.2%	91.9%	91.4%	91.0%	90.6%	90.2%	90.8%	89.4%
% of services found to be very good or excellent in all quality themes	49.1%	48.1%	45.8%	42.7%	40.5%	38.1%	36.9%	34.9%

Quality theme evaluations by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and Urban Rural Classification

There is little variation in the quality of services across different levels of deprivation, showing that a consistent level of good quality funded provision is available in all areas. When looking at the level of services that were graded good or better in all quality themes by sector, public sector services were consistently high across all deprivation levels, with the total proportion of these services not dipping below 90%.

Table 12 and Table 13 below show the proportion of funded services evaluated as good or better in all themes by SIMD quintile.

Table 12: Quality of funded services by SIMD quintile

SIMD (2020) Quintile	% of services found to be Good or better in all quality themes
1 (most deprived)	90.8%
2	87.7%
3	89.0%
4	91.7%
5 (least deprived)	87.3%
All services offering funded places	89.4%

Table 13: Quality of funded services by SIMD quintile and sector

SIMD (2020) Quintile	Sector	% of services found to be Good or better in all quality themes
1 (most deprived)	Local Authority	94.6%
	Private	79.1%
	Voluntary or Not for Profit	87.7%
2	Local Authority	91.3%
	Private	73.9%
	Voluntary or Not for Profit	92.5%
3	Local Authority	93.0%
	Private	80.0%
	Voluntary or Not for Profit	84.4%
4	Local Authority	96.7%
	Private	84.5%
	Voluntary or Not for Profit	87.7%
5 (least deprived)	Local Authority	93.8%
	Private	78.3%
	Voluntary or Not for Profit	94.6%
All services offering funded places		89.4%

In terms of the prevalence of high-quality services by urban rural classification, there is more variation than when considering where services are located based on deprivation levels.

The areas with the highest rate of funded services found to be good or better in all themes were accessible rural areas, accessible small towns and smaller urban areas, while the areas with the lowest proportion of high-quality funded services were remote small towns. This is consistent with the situation in 2020.

In terms of sector, local authority services offering funded places were generally the best performing with the highest rate of services found to be good or better in all themes. However, there was one

exception. In large urban areas, funded services run by voluntary or not for profit providers had the highest rate of high performing services.

Table 14 and Table 15 below show the proportion of funded services evaluated as good or better in all themes by urban rural classification.

Table 14: Quality of funded services by urban rural classification

Urban-Rural category	% of services found to be Good or better in all quality themes
Large Urban Areas	86.3%
Other Urban Areas	90.4%
Accessible Small Towns	91.3%
Remote Small Towns	85.3%
Accessible Rural	92.9%
Remote Rural	89.6%
All services offering funded places	89.4%

Table 15: Quality of funded services by urban rural category and sector

Urban-Rural category	Sector	% of services found to be Good or better in all quality themes
a. Large Urban Areas	Local Authority	94.1%
	Private	73.0%
	Voluntary or Not for Profit	95.4%
b. Other Urban Areas	Local Authority	94.0%
	Private	82.7%
	Voluntary or Not for Profit	90.4%
c. Accessible Small Towns	Local Authority	95.2%
	Private	91.4%
	Voluntary or Not for Profit	77.1%
d. Remote Small Towns	Local Authority	90.7%
	Private	72.7%
	Voluntary or Not for Profit	84.2%
e. Accessible Rural	Local Authority	95.2%
	Private	89.1%
	Voluntary or Not for Profit	86.5%
f. Remote Rural	Local Authority	91.0%
	Private	73.7%
	Voluntary or Not for Profit	88.6%
All services offering funded places		89.4%

Childminders offering funded early learning and childcare places

This is the second year that we have collected data from childminders using our expanded questions on the provision of funded places. In our Early Learning and Childcare statistics 2020 report we presented figures for the first time based on these updated questions. The information below is based on the data collected in the 2021 annual returns and the 2020 data has been used to estimate where data is unavailable (i.e. non-submissions). Table 16 below shows the number and percentage of childminding services approved and delivering funded places in 2020 and 2021.

Table 16: Childminding services approved to deliver funded ELC places

	December 2020	December 2021
Number of childminders approved to deliver funded ELC at 31 December 2021	1316	1319
% of childminders operating at 31 December 2021 that were approved to deliver funded ELC	29.9%	33.0%
Number of childminders currently delivering funded ELC places at 31 December 2021	851	837
% of childminders operating at 31 December 2021 that were approved to deliver and were delivering funded places	19.4%	20.9%
% of childminders approved to deliver that were delivering funded places at 31 December 2021	64.6%	63.5%

- At 31 December 2021, there were 1,319 childminders that been approved to provide funded ELC places in Scotland. Of this 1,319, 837 childminders reported to be delivering funded places at 31 December 2021.
- Most of the childminders (83.5%) that were delivering funded provision were doing so for children aged 3 and over.

Nine services that reported that they were approved to provide funded places were services that newly registered during 2021. Furthermore, 59 of the services that reported to be approved to deliver funded places in 2020 cancelled their registrations during 2021. Over half (55.0%) of childminders approved to deliver funded places at 31 December 2021 have been registered for over 10 years. A further 28.4% have been registered for between 5 and 10 years.

At 31 December 2021 there were 2,290 childminding services that reported to have not been approved to deliver funded ELC and supplied reasons as to why in their annual return.

- Most of these had chosen not to apply to become a funded provider (76.0%).
- Around a fifth (19.6%) said that they had not applied but would consider doing so in the future.

Table 17 below shows a breakdown of the reasons given for not being a funded provider, comparing data from 2020 and 2021.

Table 17: Childminding services approved to deliver funded ELC places

	December 2020	December 2021
I have applied but was not successful in my application to become a funded ELC provider	19 (0.8%)	22 (1.0%)
I have not applied to become a funded ELC provider	1619 (69.5%)	1740 (76.0%)
I have not applied to become a funded ELC provider but would consider applying in the future	575 (24.7%)	449 (19.6%)
I was in the process of applying to become a funded ELC provider	115 (4.9%)	79 (3.4%)
Grand Total	2328	2290

4. The quality of early learning and childcare services

The quality of early learning and childcare services continued to be very high overall in 2021.

- In 43.9% of childminders the quality was found to be very good or excellent in all quality themes assessed (slightly lower than the 44.2% reported in 2020).
- The proportion of childminders evaluated as good, very good or excellent in all quality themes remains very high at 92.8% (slightly higher than the 92.6% reported in 2020).
- In 31.7% of daycare of children services, the quality was found to be very good or excellent in all quality themes assessed (slightly lower than the 33.0% in 2020).
- The rate of daycare of children services where all quality themes were evaluated as good, very good or excellent remains high, with 87.7% of services achieving this standard (slightly lower than the 88.7% in 2020).
- In particular, nursery services continued to provide a high standard of care, with 34.7% evaluated as very good or excellent in all themes, and 88.8% found to be good, very good or excellent in all themes assessed (compared to 36.2% and 90.2% in 2020 respectively).
- Services found to be weak or unsatisfactory in all themes continue to be rare, with only 0.4% of daycare of children services and 0.1% of childminders at this level.
- "Local authority-run services continue to perform well, with a higher proportion holding high evaluations in all themes, compared to the other sectors across many of the different types of daycare of children service. When considering only services that were evaluated as very good or excellent in all themes, there were some exceptions to this. For creche services, the voluntary/not for profit sector had the highest rate of services achieving this high standard, and for playgroups the private sector had the highest rate of services achieving this.

Table 18 below shows the percentage of services achieving the highest grades, comparing year on year since 2014.

Table 18: Percentage of services found to be good or better in all themes, and those that were very good or excellent in all themes, 2014 to 2021

		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
All themes very good or excellent	Childminding	49.6%	48.8%	48.7%	47.6%	45.2%	44.0%	44.2%	43.9%
	Daycare of Children	42.2%	41.5%	40.3%	37.8%	35.7%	33.7%	33.0%	31.7%
All themes good, very good or excellent	Childminding	91.0%	91.8%	91.8%	92.1%	91.9%	91.7%	92.6%	92.8%
	Daycare of Children	90.3%	88.4%	87.6%	88.3%	88.0%	87.7%	88.7%	87.7%

Comparison of evaluations of quality by provider sector

Although most early learning and childcare services continue to operate at a high standard across all sectors, a larger proportion of public sector services were of a high quality (all quality themes evaluated as good or better) compared to other sectors. With the exception of children and family centres, this is the case for all types of daycare of children service.

In terms of the services found to be of the highest standard (those evaluated as very good or excellent in all quality themes), public sector services were generally the strongest performing with the exception of crèches and playgroups. Table 19 and Table 20 below illustrate the differences in quality evaluations between sectors.

Table 19: Percentage of services evaluated as good, very good or excellent in all themes, by sector

Daycare type	Public	Private	Voluntary or not for profit
Childminding	n/a	92.8%	n/a
Children and family centre	93.0%	n/a	96.6%
Creche	88.9%	57.1%	64.3%
Holiday Playscheme	100.0%	100.0%	78.9%
Nursery	93.8%	78.3%	88.8%
Out of School Care	90.6%	81.9%	85.6%
Playgroup	100.0%	70.0%	81.0%

Table 20: Percentage of services evaluated as very good or excellent in all themes, by sector

Daycare type	Public	Private	Voluntary or not for profit
Childminding	n/a	43.9%	n/a
Children and family centre	50.7%	n/a	44.8%
Creche	11.1%	14.3%	21.4%
Holiday Playscheme	75.0%	33.3%	36.8%
Nursery	40.5%	22.4%	34.1%
Out of School Care	21.9%	21.0%	20.8%
Playgroup	0.0%	30.0%	17.2%

Services where significant improvement is needed

- Around one in nine nurseries and one in 14 childminders were found to be adequate or poorer in at least one quality theme.
- In crèches, this rate is three in ten services (30.0%), with most of these evaluated at adequate or poorer in the quality of management and leadership theme.
- Early learning and childcare services where all quality themes are evaluated as weak or unsatisfactory continue to be very rare. Table 21 and Table 22 below show the number and percentage of services where improvement is needed.

Table 21: Number and percentage of services evaluated as adequate, weak or unsatisfactory in one or more themes by sector, comparing 2021 to 2020

Daycare type	Number of services (2021)	% of services (2021)	Number of services (2020)	% of services (2020)
Childminding	257	7.2%	285	7.4%
Children and family centre	6	6.0%	2	6.1%
Creche	9	30.0%	6	31.6%
Holiday Playscheme	4	15.4%	2	11.1%
Nursery	270	11.2%	23	12.5%
Out of School Club	97	15.0%	48	15.0%
Playgroup	25	19.7%	27	19.1%

Table 22: Number and percentage of services evaluated as weak or unsatisfactory in all themes by sector, comparing 2021 to 2020

Daycare type	Number of services (2021)	% of services (2021)	Number of services (2020)	% of services (2020)
Childminding	3	0.1%	1	0.0%
Children and family centre	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Creche	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Holiday Playscheme	1	3.8%	0	0.0%
Nursery	8	0.3%	4	0.2%
Out of School Club	5	0.8%	4	0.6%
Playgroup	1	0.8%	0	0.0%

5. Complaints in Early Learning and Childcare services

During 2021, the Care Inspectorate actioned every complaint that it received and responded appropriately in the context of the pandemic to keep children attending services and ELC staff safe. A number of complaints were resolved quickly through direct provider action, and more were logged as intelligence. Crucially, all intelligence from complaints was assessed and used to inform and focus our work.

In response to the pandemic, we developed an enhanced risk assessment process to identify complaints that required us to visit to ensure the health and wellbeing needs of children were being met. Where a visit to the service was not appropriate, we engaged with complainants, providers and other partners to resolve issues at service level, using the alternative pathways to resolution in our complaints process where appropriate.

This is reflected in the numbers presented below on our use of the pathways to resolution during 2021.

We actioned all complaints and concerns received using the different pathways as follows.

- **Intelligence: Use the information given by the person making the complaint as intelligence about the service, to help inform future scrutiny activity:** In 2021 we recorded 450 concerns as intelligence, a total of 52 about childminders and 398 regarding daycare of children services.
- **Direct service action (previously known as front-line resolution) and investigation by the care provider:** In 2021, 87 complaints were resolved by the service directly or passed to the provider to investigate – 17 in childminding services and 70 in daycare of children.
- **Investigation by the Care Inspectorate:** depending on our assessment of risk, we may decide that we need to undertake our own investigation. During 2021 we completed investigations into 108 complaints, 30 in childminders and 78 in daycare of children services.

Through our investigations, we upheld 53 complaints about daycare of children services, which was 67.9% of all investigations completed. This is higher than the 33 upheld complaints (45.2% of complaints completed) seen in the previous year.

We upheld 14 complaints about childminders (46.7% of complaints investigated) an increase compared to the 9 upheld complaints (42.9%) in the year before.

The rates of complaints upheld in childminders and daycare of children services remain relatively low compared to most other care service types regulated by the Care Inspectorate as has been the case in previous years.

Each complaint case investigated can be about a number of different concerns.

- Of the complaints we upheld about childminders, the main reasons for complaints were: children's emotional wellbeing, exceeding the maximum number of children allowed, communication with families/carers and children's general wellbeing.
- Of the complaints we upheld about daycare of children services, the main reasons for complaints were: staffing issues, children's general wellbeing, children's emotional wellbeing, service policies and procedures, child protection and communication with families/carers.

For more detailed information on complaints investigated, see supporting Tables 5a and 5b.

6. Service Provision

Provision for different age groups

- Childminders, children and family centres and nursery services continue to be the main service types that offer places for children under 2 years old.
- Childminding services typically care for the widest range of age groups. Around four in every five childminders (80.2%) offer a service for children of all ages between 2 and 11 years old and 58.9% of childminders also offer a service for children aged 12 and over.
- Children and family centres continue to focus their provision on children up to the age of 5, while out of school care and holiday playschemes mainly offered a service for children aged 5 and older.
- Nursery provision varies depending on sector.
 - Most private nurseries (83.7%) offered a service for babies aged under 1, with around a third (31.9%) of voluntary or not for profit nurseries and 5.4% of local authority nurseries offering the same.
 - Local authority and voluntary nurseries mainly provided a service for children aged from 2 to 5 years, with a focus on children aged 3 and 4.

For further detailed information, please see supporting Tables 6a–6c.

Languages and service philosophies

The majority of childminders provided a service only in English. In 0.7% of childminders, the service is delivered using either a mix of English and Gaelic or in Gaelic only (Gaelic only in fewer than five services). 1.4% of childminding services could offer British Sign Language and 3.2% could deliver the service in another language, most commonly Polish, French or German and also communication languages such as Makaton.

The rates of services using languages other than English is higher in daycare services than in childminders. 2.1% (75 services) of daycare of children services delivered their service in a combination of English and Gaelic or only in Gaelic (Gaelic only in 28 services) and 6.4% (230 services) could provide the service in another language. The provision of languages other than English in daycare of children services is similar to that seen in 2020.

On 31 December 2021, 1.4% of nurseries (37 services) told us that they use the outdoor-based approach to provide the service. We define an outdoor-based service as one that describes itself as a specialist outdoor service and where children spend the majority of time outdoors. In daycare of children services, 1.8% (65 services) followed a Suzuki/Montessori philosophy and 0.8% (28 services) followed a Steiner philosophy. Both of these rates have decreased slightly compared to 2020.

Please see supporting Table 7 for further information.

School term and holiday availability

In term time

The number of services offering longer opening times to cover breakfast and after-school hours has remained at a similar level to 2020.

Overall, 74.1% of early years services offered care before school hours and 82.7% offered care after school hours.

- Over two fifths of local authority nurseries (43.5%) provided an early morning service. This is considerably lower than the rate in private nurseries (85.8%) however, the early morning provision in local authority nurseries has seen a 4.1% increase compared to 2020 (an increase of 70 services).
- The rate of childminders offering early morning provision decreased slightly to 92.5% this year (from 93.0% in 2020).
- The rate of out of school care services providing an early morning service was 51.3% (compared to 51.4% in 2020).
- Overall, 82.7% of services provided care after school hours, a slight decrease compared to the 82.8% seen in 2020.
- Almost all childminders (97.0%) offered their service after school hours.

For further detailed information, please see supporting Tables 8a – 8e.

During school holidays

Local authority run nurseries and playgroups (all sectors) had the lowest proportion of services offered during the school holidays. In contrast to this most privately operated nurseries (94.3%) provided a service during the school holidays.

Holiday playschemes, private nurseries, childminders and children and family centres had the highest levels of provision during the school holidays.

Please see supporting Tables 8a – 8e for more information.

Whole-day and part-day sessions

The proportion of daycare of children services that offer whole-day sessions has been increasing year on year with this trend has continuing in 2021.

- 84.8% of daycare services overall and 95.2% of nurseries offered whole-day sessions or the choice of whole or part-day sessions.

Table 20 below shows the percentage of services offering whole and part-day sessions between 2014 and 2021.

Table 20- Sessions available between 2014 and 2021 in daycare of children services and nurseries

20a- All daycare of children services

Sessions available	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Whole-day only	3.0%	3.1%	3.2%	3.5%	4.4%	6.2%	16.0%	19.8%
Whole-day and part-day sessions offered	45.7%	47.7%	51.4%	54.7%	58.3%	64.1%	63.4%	65.0%
Part-day only	50.8%	48.6%	44.5%	40.8%	37.3%	29.7%	20.6%	15.2%

20b- All nursery services

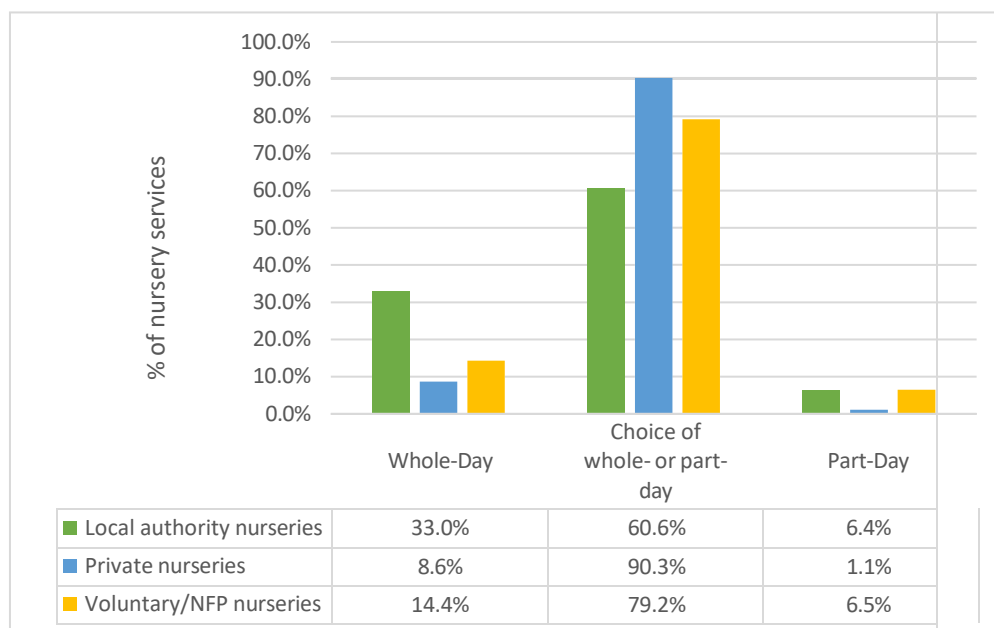
Sessions available	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Whole-day only	1.4%	1.6%	1.6%	2.4%	3.7%	6.4%	19.8%	24.2%
Whole-day and part-day sessions offered	46.4%	49.5%	54.3%	58.6%	63.8%	71.9%	69.2%	71.0%
Part-day only	51.7%	48.9%	43.8%	39.2%	32.5%	21.7%	11.0%	4.8%

In 2021, there was an increase in the proportion of services offering whole-day places compared to previous years and a large decrease in the number of services offering part-day places only. This is driven by large increases in the provision of whole-day places in nursery services.

The sessions offered in nurseries varied widely depending on the sector providing the service.

- Virtually all private nurseries (98.9%) typically offered a choice of part days or full days (a slight decrease compared to 99.1% in 2020).
- The majority (93.6%) of local authority run nurseries offered full day places only or a choice of full or part days (an increase compared to 84.0% in 2020).

Figure 4: Sessions available in nurseries by sector, on 31 December 2021



Some services also offer shorter flexible sessions in addition to the full or part day provision. In 2021, nursery services reported a decrease in the number that provide shorter flexible sessions along with full or part day provision, with some variation by sector.

- 24.1% of all nursery services offered short flexible sessions (compared to 21.7% in 2020)
- 27.2% of private nurseries (26.3% in 2020) and 22.1% of local authority nurseries (18.7% in 2020) offered shorter flexible sessions.

See supporting tables 9a and 9b for further detail.

Provision of meals and snacks

Most childminders (91.6%) continue to provide meals in their service (lower than the 92.5% in 2020). The meals were provided by the service (20.6%), or by the parents only (48.1%) or by both (22.8%). Almost all childminders (99.2%) provided snacks for the children in the services, matching the rate seen in 2020.

Around 79% of daycare of children services provided meals in the service (whether by the service alone or by parents or both). This is a continued increase compared to the 73% reported in 2020 and 64% in 2019. The increase in the provision of meals is likely linked to the increase in opening hours and the increase in whole-day sessions offered.

In 70.7% of private nurseries where meals were served, the meals were provided solely by the service. In local authority nurseries, the majority of meals served was split between service only provision (51.7%) and food provided by both the service and by parents (44.2%).

Most local authority nurseries (96.5%) served meals. This has increased from 86.2% in 2020 (and 70.2% in 2019). Meals were served in 99.6% of private nurseries and 97.2% of voluntary/not for profit nurseries (whether supplied by the service, parents or both).

Almost all daycare of children services (99.7%) provided snacks for the children.

See supporting Table 10a and Table 10b for further detailed information.

Appendix 1: Background and methodology

The Care Inspectorate is the scrutiny body for all care services for children and adults in Scotland. This includes a wide range of services for children and young people, such as fostering, adoption and residential care. This report focuses on childminding and daycare of children services, collectively known as early learning and childcare services in this report. Statistics on, for example, looked after children are published by the Scottish Government and can be found at:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Children>

This report is about the provision and use of daycare of children and childminders registered with the Care Inspectorate on 31 December 2021. Each daycare of children service can provide a range of different types of provision, for example a nursery can also provide a breakfast club and out of school care. In this report, we have only used the main type of provision, so a service that provides a nursery as main provision but also provides out of school care, will only be recorded as a nursery. This may lead to under reporting of the availability of some types of provision.

Previous versions of this report, which were published to cover the years 2010 to 2020 are available on the Care Inspectorate website:

<http://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/statistics-and-analysis>

The statistics in this report are produced using information from the latest Care Inspectorate annual returns which asked for information about the previous calendar year (1 January 2020 to 31 December 2021) and the Care Inspectorate service list (as on 31 December 2021). Figures relating to previous years are taken from our reports on early learning and childcare statistics publications for 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Our inspectors use the annual returns when planning care service inspections and carrying out risk assessments. Some of the information in the annual return is also aggregated and used by the Care Inspectorate to inform wider statistical analysis and comparisons across, for example, care service providers and geographical areas.

The Care Inspectorate requires (under the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010, section 53(6)) all providers that are registered with the Care Inspectorate to complete and submit an annual return in order to provide us with the information needed to help plan and carry out inspections effectively. Although services registered after 1 October 2021 did not have to submit an annual return for December 2021, we encouraged them to do so.

Of the 7,571 childcare services registered with the Care Inspectorate on 31 December 2021, 6,704 (89%) submitted an annual return, similar to the 88% response rate seen in the previous year. The annual return data has been imputed for those services that did not submit an annual return (see below). For this reason, some of the supporting tables contain figures that have been rounded to the nearest 10. Therefore, rounded figures may differ slightly to the overall totals. Please note that where a table contains percentages, those that are based on numbers equal to or smaller than 10 are shown in orange coloured text.

Appendix 2: Data sources

The Care Inspectorate service list (on 31 December 2021) has been used to provide figures on:

- the total number of registered daycare of children and childminding services
- whether services were run by public, private or voluntary/not for profit providers
- the registered capacity of each service (that is the total number of children that can be cared for at any one time)
- the postcode of the service, from which we have derived the local authority, deprivation category and urban-rural category of the service.

We have used Care Inspectorate annual returns (on 31 December 2021) to provide estimates for:

- the main service type (such as nursery, playgroup and out of school care)
- the number of children registered with the service on 31 December 2021
- whether childminders and daycare of children services provided funded places on 31 December 2021
- the number of children registered with services that use the services for out of school care as of 31 December 2021
- the age groups catered for and term-time/holiday-time availability of the service
- whether the service was available for full day or part day sessions
- whether meals or snacks were provided by the service or by the parents
- the languages and service philosophies used by services

The 2020 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) has been used to assign deprivation levels based on the postcode location of each childcare service. The SIMD does not reflect the locations of where children using services live. Further information about the SIMD is available here:

<https://www.gov.scot/collections/scottish-index-of-multiple-deprivation-2020/>

Scottish Government urban/rural categories have been used to assign an urban/rural urban/rural category to the postcode location of each childcare service. The urban/rural categories do not reflect the locations where children using the services live. Further information about the Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification is available here:

<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-bytheme/population/population-estimates/2011-based-special-area-population-estimates/populationestimates-by-urban-rural-classification>

The National Records of Scotland mid-year population estimates (mid 2020) have been used to calculate rates. Further information about the population estimates is available here:

<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-bytheme/population/population-estimates/mid-year-population-estimates/mid-2020>

Appendix 3: Data cleaning and dealing with missing data

Where there have been any data input errors or incomplete responses identified in relation to specific questions, these have been corrected where possible before any analysis has taken place. Not all childcare services have submitted an annual return. This means that there are some gaps in the data that we need to take account of. The percentage of services that submitted their annual return is summarised in the table below.

Summary of annual return response rates, December 2021

Main Service type	Response rate December 2021 Annual Return
Childminders	81.2%
Children and Family Centre	99.1%
Creche	96.9%
Holiday Playscheme	88.6%
Nursery	97.5%
Out of School Care	94.0%
Playgroup	98.5%
All services	88.5%
All services (excl. Childminders)	96.8%

We took the following approached to handling missing data:

A. Imputation of missing data using historic data

Where a daycare of children service did not submit an annual return for 2021, but submitted a return for either 2020 or 2019, the information submitted in the most recent historic annual return was used to impute the missing data for 2021. Where a service re-registered (for example, due to a change in ownership or service provider) and information was missing for 2020, the most recent historic information from the previously registered service was used (if an annual return was submitted in 2019 or 2018). For childminders the information from annual returns from 2018, 2019 and 2020 were used in the same way.

B. Imputation of missing data where no historic data is available

Where a service has not provided any information in 2020 or 2019 (or 2018 for childminders), or where a service was newly registered in 2021 (and not a re-registration) missing data has been estimated. To estimate missing data, we have taken into account the following variables: service size; service location (local authority area and level of deprivation) and service category (nursery, playgroup etc.). We then estimated the missing data using average values from services based on the above criteria.

Appendix 4: Changes to data items collected in 2021

There were no changes in the questions asked in the December 2021 annual return compared to December 2020.

Appendix 5: How the Care Inspectorate assesses quality themes during inspection

During inspections, we assess quality themes, which cover the main areas of a service's work. How well the service performs in these areas will indicate how good the service is.

Quality themes

- Quality of Care and Support: how well the service meets the needs of each child attending the service.
- Quality of Environment: how the service supports appropriate care and learning opportunities for children, environmental factors for example, how clean, well maintained and accessible it is, the atmosphere of the service and how welcoming it is.
- Quality of Staffing: the quality of the staff including how staff work together to support children, safer recruitment, ongoing professional development and learning, qualifications and training.
- Quality of Management and Leadership: how the service is managed and led and how it develops through a robust quality assurance process to meet the needs of the children who use it.

Each theme is evaluated using a six-point scale.

6 – Excellent

5 – Very Good

4 – Good

3 – Adequate

2 – Weak

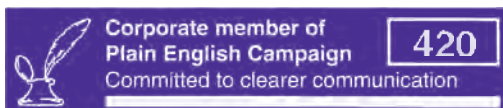
1 – Unsatisfactory

Headquarters

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY
Tel: 01382 207100
Fax: 01382 207289

Website: www.careinspectorate.com

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