



# Early learning and childcare statistics 2023

A statistical bulletin

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## Executive summary

This report is the latest in our annual series of statistics about the use and provision of early learning and childcare in Scotland. All daycare of children and childminding services which make up the early learning and childcare (ELC) sector must be registered with the Care Inspectorate in order to operate in Scotland. This report is based on ELC services on our register and incorporates our evaluations of the quality of these services, as well as additional information from annual returns completed by service providers. The statistics include longer term trends as well as a focus on changes in the most recent year to 31 December 2023.

### Children registered with early learning and childcare services

- Overall, there were 219,130 children registered with an early learning and childcare service on 31 December 2023. This is a decrease of 1.0% from the 221,290 children registered in 2022.
- In 2023, there were 197,000 children registered with daycare of children services, this is a decrease from 197,880 children registered in 2022. For childminding services there were 22,130 children registered in December 2022, this is a decrease from 23,410 children registered in 2022.
- School-aged childcare services had an increase of 1,890 children registered (4.4% increase) compared to 2022, while all other daycare of children service types had decreases in children registered.

### Number of registered services and service capacity (places)

- There were 3,444 daycare of children services as of 31 December 2023, 70 fewer compared to 2022. However, the average size of daycare of children services continued to increase, rising from 51.2 places in 2022 to 51.9 in 2023.
- The number of childminding services registered continued to decrease, falling by 8.6% in 2023 to 3,225 compared to 3,530 in 2022.
- The capacity in early learning and childcare (including childminding services) decreased by 1.4%, from 201,960 in 2022 to 199,050 registered places at 31 December 2023.
- The decrease of places in all early learning settings in 2023 was driven primarily by childminding services where capacity decreased by 1,870 places from 22,040 places in 2022 to 20,070 places in 2023.

- Capacity in daycare of children services decreased by 1,040 places (0.6%) overall in 2023. This decrease was driven by school-aged childcare services and playgroups.
- Capacity in nurseries has increased by 25.8% over the past 10 years, with an increase of 490 places in the last year.

### **Quality of services**

- The quality of services continues to be high, based on the evaluations held by services at 31 December 2023, with 92.6% of childminding and 88.3% of daycare of children services holding evaluations of good or better for all assessed themes or key questions.
- The proportion of services holding evaluations of weak or unsatisfactory for all assessed themes or key questions, at 31 December 2023, was low (0.4%).
- Overall, 89.8% of daycare of children services offering funded ELC places held evaluations of good or better in all assessed themes or key questions at 31 December 2023.

### **Funded places and service availability**

- At 31 December 2023 there were 2,649 (96.6%) daycare of children services providing funded early learning and childcare (ELC), this is an increase compared to 96.2% last year. The proportion of playgroups offering funded places increased from 76.7% in 2022 to 78.5% in 2023, while for children and family centres and nurseries, there were decreases of 0.4% and 0.3% respectively.
- The proportion of registered childminding services approved to deliver funded places at 31 December 2023 was 34.9%, an increase from 34.6% in 2022.
- The rate of daycare of children services that offer whole-day sessions has continued to increase year on year: 88.1% offered this as an option in 2023. 96.8% of nursery services now offer whole-day sessions.

### **Geographical variation in service provision**

- The areas with the highest rate of funded daycare of children services holding evaluations of good or better in all assessed themes or key questions were accessible rural areas (93.3%), other urban areas (91.9%), and accessible small towns (89.5%), while the areas with the lowest proportion of high-quality funded services were remote small towns (87.7%), remote rural (87.3%), and large urban areas (87.0%).

- There is no relationship between prevalence of good quality funded services (those evaluated as good or better in all assessed themes or key questions) and levels of SIMD, indicating that a consistent level of good quality funded provision is available in all areas. The proportion of public sector services that offered funded places that were graded good or better is consistent across all SIMD quintiles.

## 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 2023–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 childminding services, which this report will collectively refer to as early learning and childcare services<sup>1</sup>. For the purposes of this report, this includes daycare services provided for school-aged children such as holiday playschemes and school-aged childcare services.

The report also includes, but is not restricted to, information on early learning and childcare for three and four-year-olds (and eligible two-year-olds) funded by local authorities under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. Further detailed definitions are in Appendix 1.

## New name for out-of-school club services

In previous editions of the early learning and childcare statistics publications, services that were called “out-of-school clubs” or “out-of-school care”, will now be called “school-aged childcare”. The definition of the new name remains the same as before and is counted the same way as in previous years.

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

## 1. Children registered with early learning and childcare services in Scotland

Overall, there were 219,130 children registered with an early learning and childcare service on 31 December 2023. This is a decrease of 1.0% from the 221,290 children registered in December 2022 (Figure 1).

Of the 219,130 children registered with a service, 197,000 (89.9%) were registered with daycare of children services and 22,130 (10.1%) were registered with childminding services. Compared to 2022, this is a decrease in both the number of children registered with daycare services and childminding services (Figure 2).

For daycare of children service types, the number of children registered in nurseries, children and family centres, playgroups, and holiday playschemes decreased at 31 December 2023 compared to 2022, at 0.4%, 1.7%, 12.9%, and 40% respectively. For playgroups, the decrease in registered children has been a long-term trend. For holiday playschemes, due to the low number of these types of services registered overall, the decrease in registered children this year has been influenced by changes from two services. For school-aged childcare services, the number of children registered at 31 December 2023 was 4.4% higher compared to 31 December 2022. See Figure 1.

When looking at the long-term trend, the number of children registered with daycare of children services (Figure 1) increased between 2014 and 2019, dropped in 2020, increased in 2021 and 2022, and decreased in 2023. The drop in 2020 coincided with the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic and this will have contributed to the drop in children registered that year.

In August 2021, the Scottish Government expanded funding for early learning and childcare from 600 to 1,140 hours per year (30 hours per week if taken during school term time). In preparation for the implementation of this expansion, more services began to offer full time places and as a result, children may need to be registered in fewer services. Our statistics count each child more than once if they use more than one service. We expect that our statistics now include less double counting than before, and this may account for at least part of the drop observed between 2019 and 2023.

For further detailed information, please see supporting table 1.

**Figure 1: Number of children registered with early learning and childcare services by service type in 2014, 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023.**

Main type of provision	December 2014	December 2020	December 2021	December 2022	December 2023	Change in number of children registered - 2022 vs 2023
Childminding	34,680	26,260	24,880	23,410	22,130	-1,280
Daycare of children services	211,430	187,340	196,320	197,880	197,000	-880
Daycare of children by main type of service:						
Children and Family Centre	10,100	8,480	8,160	8,260	8,120	-140
Holiday Playscheme	4,460	4,070	3,780	4,170	2,500	-1,670
Nursery	142,790	132,360	140,420	139,020	138,460	-560
School-aged childcare	46,080	38,810	40,480	43,340	45,230	1,890
Playgroup	8,000	3,620	3,480	3,090	2,690	-400
<b>All care service types</b>	<b>246,110</b>	<b>213,600</b>	<b>221,200</b>	<b>221,290</b>	<b>219,130</b>	<b>-2,160</b>

Note: All figures in the table are rounded to the nearest 10, therefore totals may not equal the sum of their parts.

**Figure 2: Share of the number of children registered with early learning and childcare services on 31 December 2014, and 2020 to 2023.**

Main type of provision	December 2014	December 2020	December 2021	December 2022	December 2023
Childminding	14.1%	12.3%	11.2%	10.6%	10.1%
Daycare of children services	85.9%	87.7%	88.8%	89.4%	89.9%
Daycare of children by main type of service:					
Children and Family Centre	4.1%	4.0%	3.7%	3.7%	3.7%
Holiday Playscheme	1.8%	1.9%	1.7%	1.9%	1.1%
Nursery	58.0%	62.0%	63.5%	62.8%	63.2%
School-aged childcare	18.7%	18.2%	18.3%	19.6%	20.6%
Playgroup	3.3%	1.7%	1.6%	1.4%	1.2%

### Number of children registered with childminding services

In this section we present statistics on the number of children registered with and using childminding services, which is different to the capacity measure in Chapter 2 which focuses on registered places.

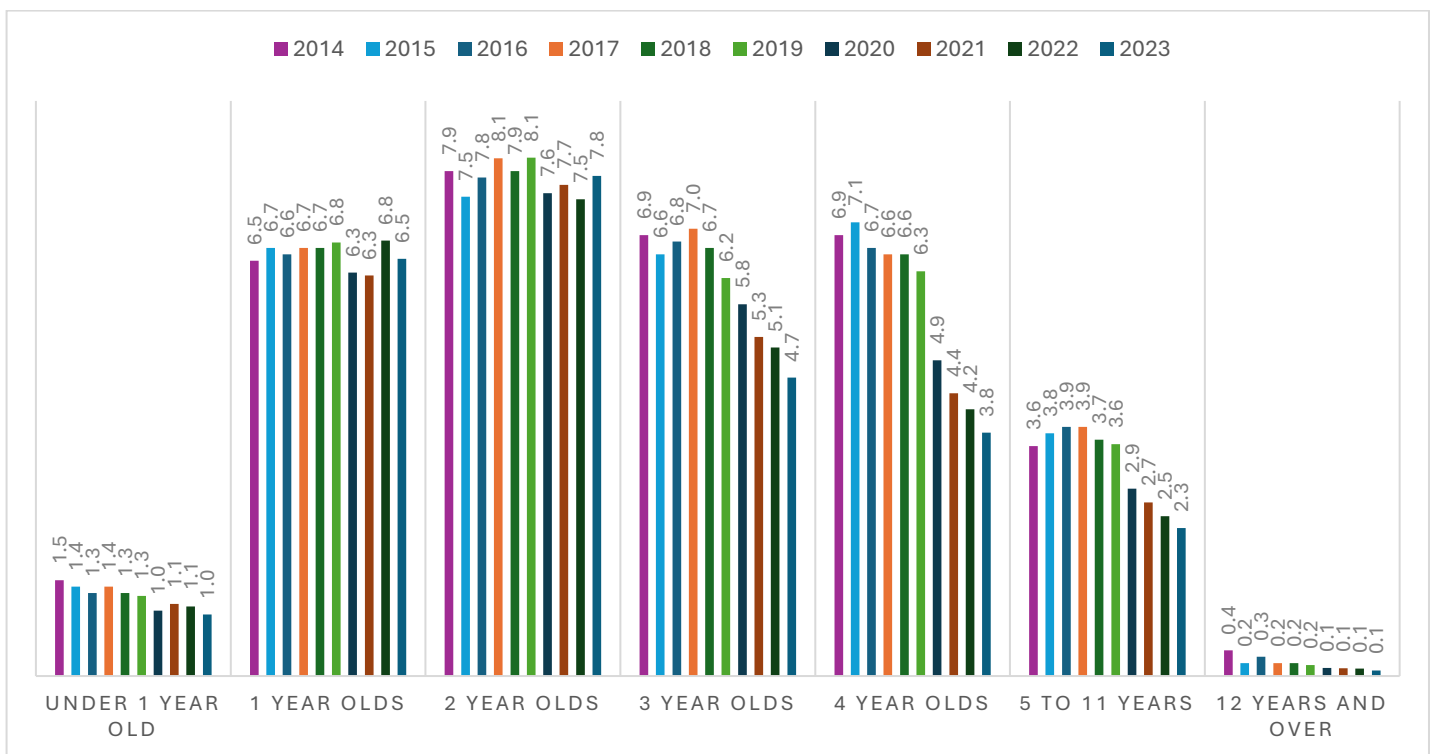
There was a 5.5% decrease in the number of children registered with childminding services between 2022 and 2023 (Figure 1).

The average number of children registered per childminding setting on 31 December 2023 was 6.9 children per service. This is an increase compared to the 6.6 children per setting in 2022.

When looking at the long-term trends for children registered with childminding services (per 100 population), the 1-year-old and 2-year-old age groups have largely maintained their levels since 2014. The rates for 3-year-olds, 4-year-olds, and 5 to 11-year-olds age groups have all been decreasing for several years (Figure 3).

As noted at the start of section 1, the recent trends may be affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and by the potential reduction in the number of children using multiple services, and therefore counted more than once, following the expansion of ELC-funded hours in August 2021.

**Figure 3: Rate per 100 population children registered in childminding services split by age group**



**Number of children registered with daycare of children services**

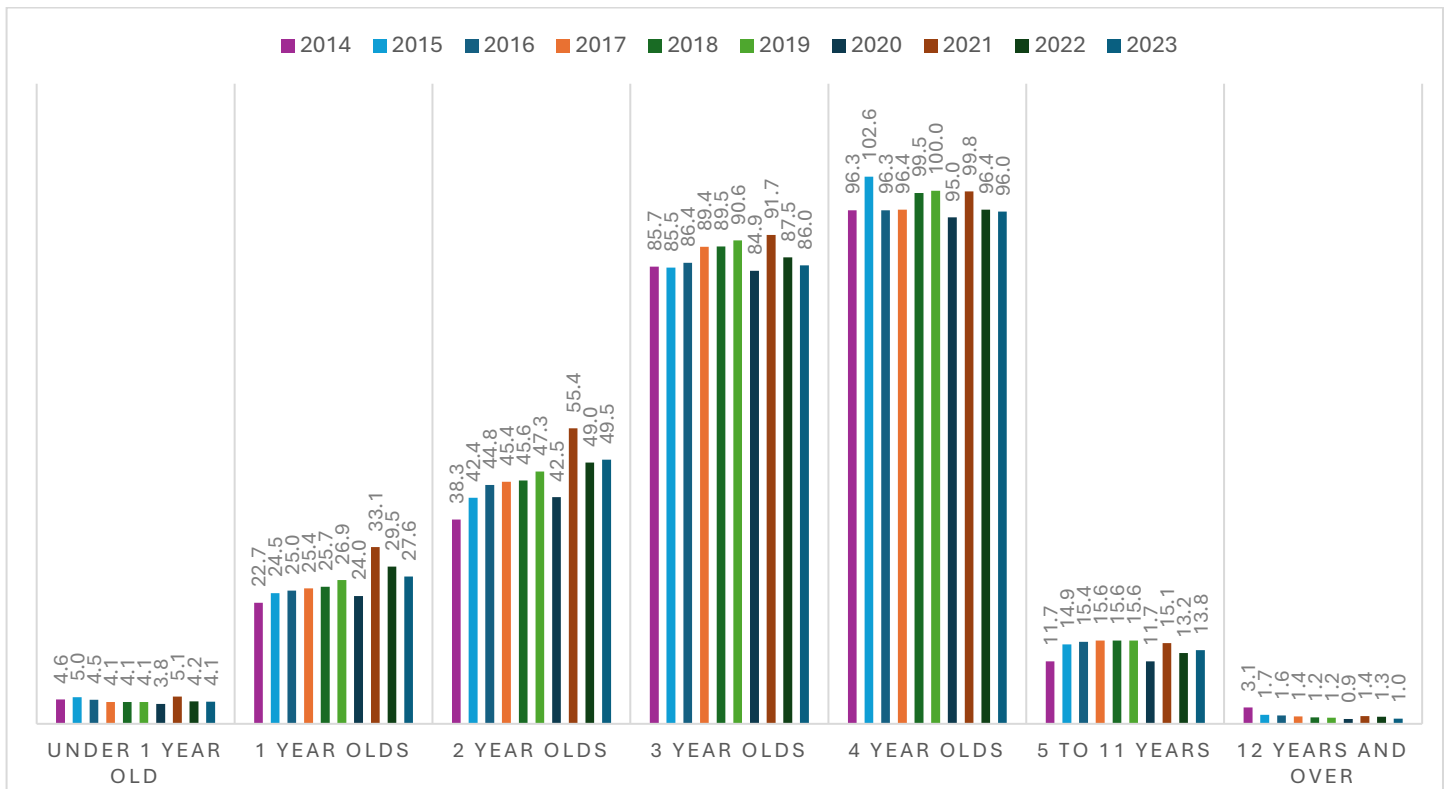
Overall, there was a decrease in the number of children registered with daycare of children services (197,000 children registered in 2023 compared to 197,880 in 2022, a decrease of 0.4% as set out in Figure 1 above).



When comparing the rate of children registered per 100 population from 2022 to 2023, there were increases in the 2-year-old and 5-to-11-year old age groups, and decreases in the rest of the age groups. As stated last year, when looking at the long-term trend for the rate of children registered per 100 population the under-1-year-old, 3-year-old and 4-year-old, and 5-to-11-year-old age groups have maintained their levels since 2014. The rates for 1-year-old, 2-year-old age groups have increased since 2014, while the rate for the 12-years-and-over age group has fallen since 2014 (Figure 4).

As noted at the start of section 1, the recent trends may be affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and by the potential reduction in the number of children using multiple services, and therefore counted more than once, following the expansion of ELC - unded hours in August 2021.

**Figure 4: Rate per 100 population children registered in daycare of children services split by age group**



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

On 31 December 2023 there were 6,669 early learning and childcare services in Scotland with a combined capacity of 199,050 places (Figure 5), which is a decrease of 375 registered services (5.3%) and 2,910 places (1.4%) compared to 2022. Compared to 2014, there were 3,190 fewer services and 3,750 more places available, which is a 32.4% decrease in services and a 1.9% increase in places over the last ten years.

### Daycare of children

Daycare of children services cover a wide range of different types of care provision, the largest of which is nurseries followed by school-aged childcare services and playgroups. It is also possible that a service may offer several different types of care and learning. For example, a nursery may also provide school-aged childcare provision 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. Figure 5 gives a summary of the number of services operating between 2014 and 2023 by service type.

Of the 6,669 early learning and childcare services in Scotland, 3,444 were daycare of children services providing a total of 178,880 places. Compared to 2022, the number of daycare services has fallen by 70 services, and the available capacity has decreased by 1,040 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 decrease in voluntary and not-for-profit capacity is the main factor behind the decrease in overall capacity in daycare of children services. See supporting table 2.

Since December 2022 the capacity in children and family centres, creches, holiday playschemes, school-aged childcare services and playgroups has decreased, while in nurseries it has increased. This reflects the longer-term trend over the past ten years as well, with nursery capacity increasing and other types of provision falling, except school-aged childcare services which have increased over the past ten years overall.

### Daycare of children - nursery services

Overall, capacity in nursery services increased by 490 places to 136,390 in 2023. Compared to 2022, capacity in public sector and privately operated nurseries increased by 980 and 100 places respectively, while capacity in voluntary sector

nurseries fell by 600 places (see Figure 6 below).

Over the longer term, compared to 2014, the number of places available in nursery services increased by 25.8%, from 108,440 to 136,390 places. The number of places available in public sector nursery services increased 40.3% in 2023 compared to 2014. Places in private sector nurseries rose by 8.9% in 2023 compared to 2014, and by 13.8% in the voluntary and not for profit sector.

### **Childminding services**

There were 3,225 childminding services operating at 31 December 2023, providing a total of 20,170 places. The number of childminding services continued to decrease in 2023 (see Figure 5), with a 8.6% decrease in the number of services and a 8.5% decrease in the number of places available compared to 2022.

This reflects the longer-term trend: compared to 2014, there were 2,877 fewer childminding services operating, which is a 47.1% decrease in the number of services and a 46.3% drop in the number of places.

### **Average places per service**

Most childminding services are registered for a maximum of six children, which is the most they can care for at any one time while working on their own, including the childminder's own children. A small number of childminding services are registered for more than six children. The average number of places in childminding services has remained consistent with previous years at 6.3 places per service.

The average number of places in daycare of children services has continued to increase year on year from 42.0 in 2014 to 51.9 in 2023 (see Figure 5). With the exception of playgroups, the average number of places per service has increased in the most recent year in all other daycare of children service types.

**Figure 5: Number of services and total capacity, 2014, 2022 and 2023, broken down by service type.**

Main type of provision	2014			2022			2023		
	Total services	Total capacity	Avg places per service	Total services	Total capacity	Avg places per service	Total services	Total capacity	Avg places per service
Childminding	6,102	37,540	6.2	3,530	22,040	6.2	3,225	20,170	6.3
Daycare of children services	3,757	157,760	42.0	3,514	179,920	51.2	3,444	178,880	51.9
Daycare of children by main type of service:									
Children & Family Centre	139	7,380	53.1	108	7,290	67.5	104	7,130	68.6
Creche	83	3,100	37.3	33	980	29.7	29	930	32.1
Holiday Playscheme	50	2,030	40.6	33	1,180	35.8	25	940	37.6
Nursery	2,443	108,440	44.4	2,538	135,900	53.5	2,527	136,390	54.0
Other services	48	1,500	31.3						
School-aged childcare	703	28,510	40.6	682	31,640	46.4	652	30,900	47.4
Playgroup	291	6,800	23.4	120	2,930	24.4	107	2,590	24.2
<b>All service types</b>	<b>9,859</b>	<b>195,300</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>7,044</b>	<b>201,960</b>	<b>28.7</b>	<b>6,669</b>	<b>199,050</b>	<b>29.8</b>

**Figure 6: Year-on-year change in service counts and capacity for nursery services only, broken down by sector.**

Sector	2014		2022		2023		2014 vs 2023 % change	
	Total services	Total capacity	Total services	Total capacity	Total services	Total capacity	change in services	Change in capacity
Public	1,494	57,060	1,594	79,080	1,601	80,060	7.2%	40.3%
Private	768	44,070	737	47,910	732	48,010	-4.7%	8.9%
Voluntary or Not-for-profit	181	7,310	207	8,920	194	8,320	7.2%	13.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,443</b>	<b>108,440</b>	<b>2,538</b>	<b>135,900</b>	<b>2,527</b>	<b>136,390</b>	<b>3.4%</b>	<b>25.8%</b>

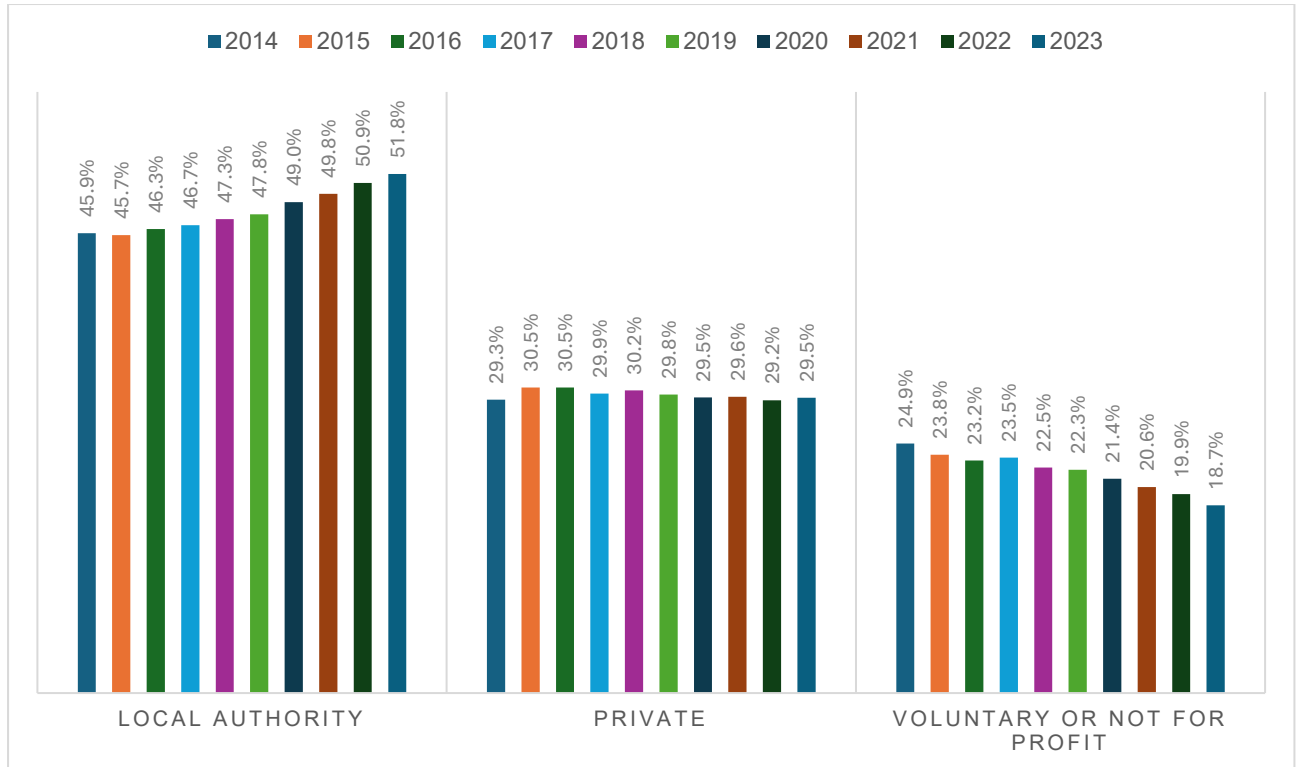
### Services by provider sector

All childminding services are privately operated, while daycare of children services are operated by a range of private, public sector (mainly local authority with a small number provided by health boards) and voluntary or not-for-profit service providers.

The percentage of registered daycare of children services provided by the public sector has followed a long-term trend and increased further in 2023 to 51.8%. Conversely, the percentage of services provided by the voluntary or not-for-profit sector continued the long-term decreasing trend and has now fallen to 18.7% in

2023. There has been little change overall in the percentage of services provided by the private sector over the past ten years (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Percentage of registered daycare of children services by provider sector on 31 December 2014-2023**



### Cancellations and registrations

This section covers cancellations and registrations that took place from 1 January to 31 December 2014 to 2023. The figures used in this section are derived from our monthly and annual Service List datasets, as well as our registration database. Please note that it can take several months for a service to go through the process of registering and cancelling, and due to those lagging effects, a small number of services are not counted during the year they cancel or register. As such, when registered and cancelled services are factored in against the number of active services at 31 December, the totals vary slightly.

For the period 1 January to 31 December 2023, there were 178 childminding services that registered, and 481 that cancelled. For daycare of children services, there were 68 new services that registered, and 142 that cancelled (Figure 8).

Since 2021, when services are in the process of cancelling, they have the option to provide the Care Inspectorate the reasons why they are cancelling.

When looking at all childminding services that provided a reason for cancelling, from when we started collecting this data in 2021 up to 31 December 2023, the reasons

relate more personally to the childminder. The most common reasons they gave were because they were either leaving the profession/sector, or because of personal circumstances (Figure 9).

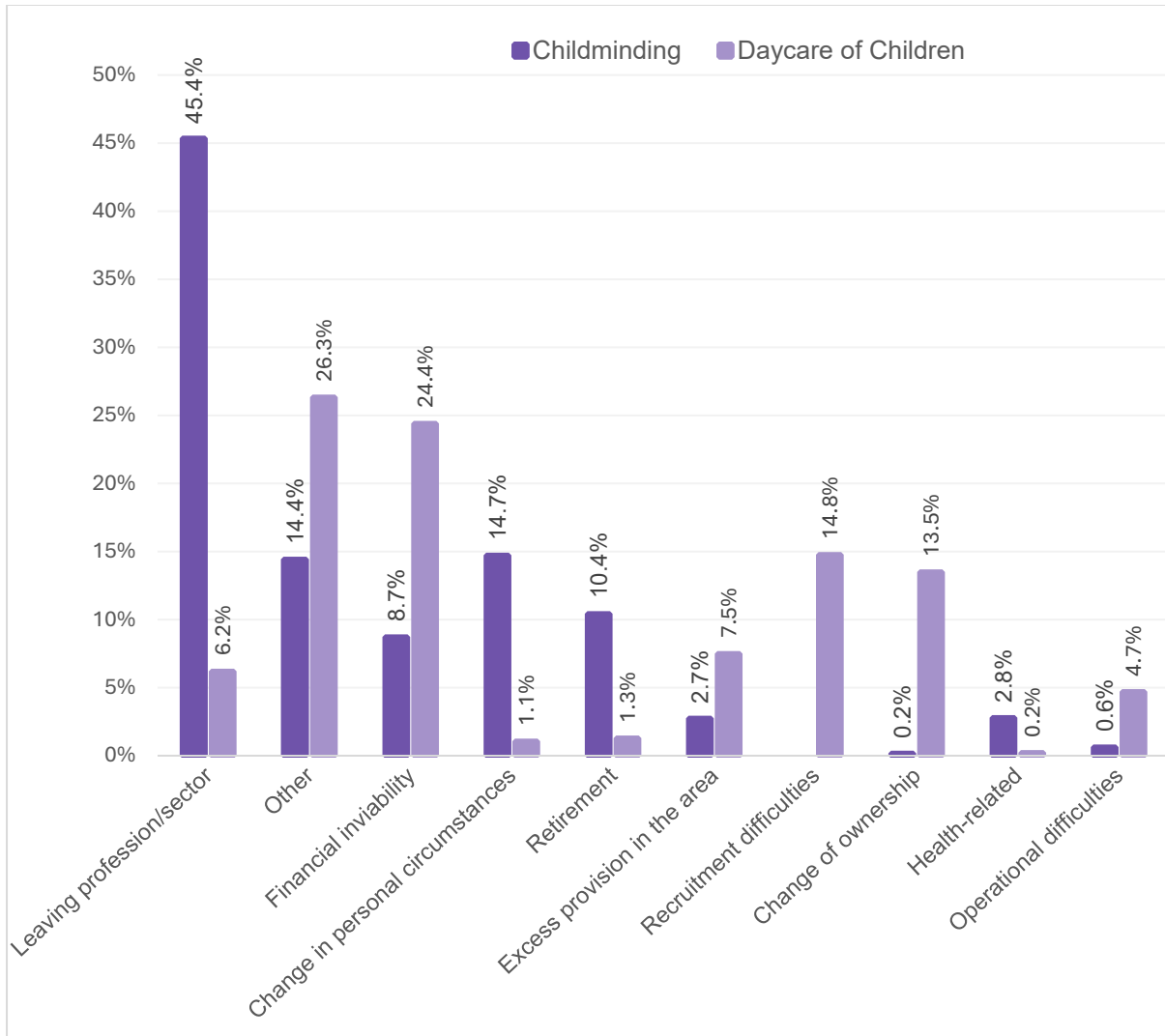
For daycare of children services, the reasons relate more to the organisation, rather than a specific person. From when we started collecting this data in 2021 up to 31 December 2023, the second most common reason they provided was because their service was not financial viable, and the third most common reason was because of recruitment difficulties (Figure 9).

For more information on cancellation reasons and how they're abbreviated into the broader categories listed in Figure 9, please refer to Appendix 4.

**Figure 8: Number of services that cancelled, registered, and were active at 31 December, from 2014 to 2023.**

Year	Childminding services			Daycare of children services		
	Services that registered during year	Services that cancelled during year	Active services at 31 December	Services that registered during year	Services that cancelled during year	Active services at 31 December
2014	627	717	6,102	126	150	3,757
2015	592	737	5,954	151	135	3,772
2016	592	879	5,669	135	177	3,733
2017	477	721	5,426	105	138	3,701
2018	406	722	5,105	104	156	3,646
2019	312	668	4,752	141	145	3,643
2020	221	635	4,395	83	136	3,588
2021	151	483	3,998	107	123	3,573
2022	164	637	3,530	70	127	3,514
2023	178	481	3,225	68	142	3,444

**Figure 9: Reason for cancellation as a percentage of all cancelled services from 2021 up to 31 December 2023, by care service type.**



Note: The above figure only includes cancelled services that provided a reason why they cancelled. Double counting can occur when a service chooses more than one cancellation reason.

### 3. The quality of early learning and childcare services

In June 2022 the quality framework used to evaluate ELC services changed. The new methodology evaluates services based on key questions rather than the old method of quality themes. Similar to the older grading methodology, services are graded on each of these key questions on a scale from one to six – one being unsatisfactory and six being excellent.

As this new inspection framework has only recently been adopted, there will be some ELC services that still have the quality themes framework evaluations, and some ELC services whose most recent inspection took place on or after 1 June 2022 and are therefore graded using the new quality framework and key questions.

The figures provided in this chapter are based on the evaluations held by services at 31 December 2023 and contain grading data derived from the old and new quality frameworks. For more information on the grading frameworks see appendix 6.

The quality of early learning and childcare services continued to be very high overall at 31 December 2023 (Figures 10 and 11).

The proportion of childminding services holding evaluations of good, very good or excellent in all assessed themes or key questions remained very high at 92.6%, which was similar to the 92.0% reported in 2022.

The proportion of daycare of children services holding evaluations of good, very good or excellent in all assessed themes or key questions remained high at 88.3%, which is similar to the 88.5% reported in 2022.

Nursery services continue to provide a high standard of care, with 89.2% holding evaluations of good, very good or excellent in all assessed themes or key questions, which was similar to the 89.5% reported in 2022 (Figure 11).

Services found to be weak or unsatisfactory in all assessed key questions continue to be rare, with 0.7% of daycare of children services and 0.1% of childminding services at this level (Figure 14).

Although most early learning and childcare services operate at a high standard across all sectors, a larger proportion of public sector services were of a high quality (holding evaluations of good or better in all assessed themes or key questions) compared to other sectors. (Figures 12 and 13).



**Figure 10: Percentage of services holding evaluations of good or better, and very good or excellent in all assessed themes or key questions, 2014 to 2023**

Year	All evaluations Good, Very Good or Excellent		All evaluations Very Good or Excellent	
	Childminding	Daycare of Children	Childminding	Daycare of Children
2014	91.0%	90.3%	49.6%	42.2%
2015	91.8%	88.4%	48.8%	41.5%
2016	91.8%	87.6%	48.7%	40.3%
2017	92.1%	88.3%	47.6%	37.8%
2018	91.9%	88.0%	45.2%	35.7%
2019	91.7%	87.7%	44.0%	33.7%
2020	92.6%	88.7%	44.2%	33.0%
2021	92.8%	87.7%	43.9%	31.7%
2022	92.0%	88.5%	41.7%	31.5%
2023	92.6%	88.3%	39.6%	30.0%

Note: Any services that have not yet been inspected are not included in the above table.

**Figure 11: Number of ELC services broken down by the quality evaluation held at 31 December 2023**

Main type of provision	Any evaluations Adequate, Weak or Unsatisfactory ( grades 1,2 or 3)		All evaluations Good, Very Good or Excellent ( grades 4,5 or 6)		All evaluations Very Good or Excellent ( grades 5 or 6)	
	Number of services	% of services	Number of services	% of services	Number of services	% of services
Childminding	215	7.4%	2,693	92.6%	1,152	39.6%
Daycare of children services	389	11.7%	2,932	88.3%	997	30.0%
Daycare of children by main type of service:						
Children and Family Centre	6	5.8%	97	94.2%	57	55.3%
Creche	5	20.8%	19	79.2%	5	20.8%
Holiday Playscheme	2	8.3%	22	91.7%	9	37.5%
Nursery	267	10.8%	2194	89.2%	793	32.2%
School-aged childcare	91	15.0%	514	85.0%	113	18.7%
Playgroup	18	17.3%	86	82.7%	20	19.2%
<b>All service types</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>9.7%</b>	<b>5,625</b>	<b>90.3%</b>	<b>2,149</b>	<b>34.5%</b>

Note: Any services that have not yet been inspected are not included in the above table.

**Figure 12: Percentage of services holding evaluations of good, very good or excellent in all assessed themes or key questions, by sector at 31 December 2023**

Main type of provision	Public Sector		Private		Voluntary or not-for-profit	
	Number of services	% of services in sector	Number of services	% of services in sector	Number of services	% of services in sector
Childminding	-	-	2,693	92.6%	-	-
Daycare of children services	1,626	92.9%	774	81.9%	532	85.0%
Daycare of children by main type of service:						
Children and Family Centre	72	96.0%			25	89.3%
Creche	3	100.0%	8	80.0%	8	72.7%
Holiday Playscheme	7	100.0%	1	100.0%	14	87.5%
Nursery	1468	93.3%	563	80.3%	163	87.2%
School-aged childcare	76	82.6%	195	87.1%	243	84.1%
Playgroup			7	77.8%	79	83.2%
<b>All service types</b>	<b>1,626</b>	<b>92.9%</b>	<b>3,467</b>	<b>90.0%</b>	<b>532</b>	<b>85.0%</b>

Note: Any services that have not yet been inspected are not included in the above table.

**Figure 13: Percentage of services holding evaluations of very good or excellent in all assessed themes or key questions, by sector at 31 December 2023**

Main type of provision	Public Sector		Private		Voluntary or Not-for-profit	
	Number of services	% of services in sector	Number of services	% of services in sector	Number of services	% of services in sector
Childminding			1,152	39.6%		
Daycare of children services	667	38.1%	176	18.6%	154	24.6%
Daycare of children by main type of service:						
Children and Family Centre	44	58.7%			13	46.4%
Creche	1	33.3%	1	10.0%	3	27.3%
Holiday Playscheme	3	42.9%			6	37.5%
Nursery	605	38.5%	132	18.8%	56	29.9%
School-aged childcare	14	15.2%	41	18.3%	58	20.1%
Playgroup			2	22.2%	18	18.9%
<b>All service types</b>	<b>667</b>	<b>38.1%</b>	<b>1,328</b>	<b>34.5%</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>24.6%</b>

Note: Any services that have not yet been inspected are not included in the above table.

## Services where improvement is needed

Early learning and childcare services where all evaluations held were weak or unsatisfactory continue to be rare. In 2023, three childminding services had evaluations of weak or unsatisfactory across all key questions, a decrease from six in 2022. And 23 daycare of children services had weak and unsatisfactory evaluations across all key questions in 2023, this was the same in 2022 (Figure 14).

In addition to these services, there are some services that have evaluations of adequate or poorer but also have one or more evaluations of good or better. Around one in eight daycare of children services and one in thirteen childminding services were adequate or poorer in at least one assessed key question at 31 December 2023.

**Figure 14: Number and percentage of services holding evaluations of weak or unsatisfactory in all assessed key questions or quality themes by service type, at 31 December 2021, 2022 and 2023**

Main type of provision	2021		2022		2023	
	Number of services	% of services	Number of services	% of services	Number of services	% of services
Childminding	3	0.1%	6	0.2%	3	0.1%
Daycare of children services	15	0.4%	23	0.7%	23	0.7%
Daycare of children by main type of service:						
Children and Family Centre	0	0.0%	1	1.0%		
Creche	0	0.0%	0	0.0%		
Holiday Playscheme	1	3.8%	0	0.0%	1	4.2%
Nursery	8	0.3%	16	0.7%	17	0.7%
School-aged childcare	5	0.8%	6	1.0%	5	0.8%
Playgroup	1	0.8%	0	0.0%		
<b>All service types</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>0.4%</b>

Note: Any services that have not yet been inspected are not included in the above table.

## 4. Early learning and childcare funding in Scotland

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

Most funded places are offered through nurseries. In addition, the public sector can offer funded places through other services like playgroups or childminding. Overall, in 2023 there were 2,649 (96.6%) daycare of children services providing funded ELC, this is similar to the 96.2% reported in 2022.

The proportion of nurseries and children and family centres offering funded places in 2023 was similar to that in 2022, and for playgroups and there was an increase from 76.7% in 2022 to 78.5% in 2023. The proportion of services providing funded places between 2014 and 2023 is presented in Figure 15 below.

**Figure 15: Proportion of children and family centres, nurseries and playgroups providing funded ELC on 31 December 2014-2023**

Year	Children and Family Centre	Nursery	Playgroup
2014	76.0%	92.0%	69.0%
2015	84.0%	92.6%	72.0%
2016	72.0%	93.9%	75.4%
2018	84.6%	94.5%	75.7%
2019	86.3%	96.1%	75.6%
2020	86.6%	97.5%	78.7%
2021	88.8%	98.0%	75.0%
2022	89.8%	97.5%	76.7%
2023	89.4%	97.2%	78.5%

In 2023, 47.6% of ELC services offering funded places provided these for children aged three years and older only, a decrease from 48.5% in 2022. A further 51.1% of ELC services offered funded places for 2-year-olds in addition to children aged 3 or older, which is an increase from 49.8% in 2022. 1.3% of services offering funded places do so exclusively for two-year-olds, this is a decrease from 1.7% in 2022 (Figure 16).

In 2023, 50.3% of nurseries offered funded places for two-year-olds. This is an increase from 49.1% in 2022.

**Figure 16: Proportion of children and family centres, nurseries and playgroups offering funded places by age groups at December 2023**

Main type of provision	funded places for two-year-olds only		funded places for two-year-olds and 3 and older		funded places for three years and older only	
	Number of services	% of funded services	Number of services	% of funded services	Number of services	% of funded services
Children and Family Centre	8	8.6%	78	83.9%	7	7.5%
Nursery	23	0.9%	1,213	49.4%	1221	49.7%
Playgroup	2	2.4%	56	66.7%	26	31.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>1,347</b>	<b>51.1%</b>	<b>1,254</b>	<b>47.6%</b>

### Quality of services offering funded places

A snapshot of evaluations at 31 December 2023 shows that in 89.7% of nursery, children and family centre and playgroup services offering funded places, the quality was good or better in all assessed themes or key questions compared to 67.1% of services delivering the same type of provision but not offering funded places. See supporting table 4 for further information.

For nursery services that offered funded places, 89.7% of services overall held evaluations of good or better in all assessed themes or key questions. Of those that did not offer funded places 61.4% held evaluations of good or better in all assessed key questions.

Figure 17 below shows the comparison by sector between nurseries offering funded places and those that did not. It shows that a higher proportion of public sector services offering funded places had all evaluations of good or better than for those services provided by the voluntary or private sectors.

**Figure 17: Quality evaluations of nursery services by sector and ELC-funded places, at 31 December 2023**

Nursery offers funded places?	Sector	Any evaluation of adequate or lower		All evaluations of good or better	
		Number of Services	% of services	Number of Services	% of services
No	Local Authority*				
	Private	14	48.3%	15	51.7%
	Voluntary or Not-for-profit	3	20.0%	12	80.0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>38.6%</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>61.4%</b>
Yes	Local Authority	105	6.7%	1,468	93.3%
	Private	124	18.5%	548	81.5%
	Voluntary or Not-for-profit	21	12.2%	151	87.8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>10.3%</b>	<b>2,167</b>	<b>89.7%</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>267</b>	<b>10.8%</b>	<b>2,194</b>	<b>89.2%</b>

Note 1: Any services that have not yet been inspected are not included in the above table.

Note 2: All public sector nurseries provide funded places

### Quality evaluations between 2014 and 2023

Since 2014, around nine out of 10 funded services have been found to be good or better in all key questions although the percentage has fallen by 3.4 percentage points over time from 93.2% in 2014 to 89.8% in 2023.

There has, however, been a more marked fall in the percentage of services with the highest evaluations (very good and excellent) for every key question. At 31 December 2023, 32.9% of funded services held evaluations of very good or excellent in all assessed themes or key questions, a drop of 16.2 percentage points since 2014.

**Figure 18: Proportion of daycare of children services offering funded places holding evaluations of good or better and very good or excellent in all assessed themes or key questions on 31 December, 2014 to 2023**

Year	% of services found to be Good or better in all evaluations	% of services found to be very good or excellent in all evaluations
2014	93.2%	49.1%
2015	91.9%	48.1%
2016	91.4%	45.8%
2018	90.6%	40.5%
2019	90.2%	38.1%
2020	90.8%	36.9%
2021	89.4%	34.9%
2022	90.1%	34.6%
2023	89.8%	32.9%

Note: Any services that have not yet been inspected are not included in the above table.

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

In 2023, when looking at the most recent evaluations for funded services by SIMD ranking, services in the 20% most deprived areas had the lowest proportion of services that had evaluations of adequate or lower, and had the highest proportion of services that had evaluations of good and better. Conversely, services in the least deprived 20% of areas had the highest proportion of services that had evaluations of adequate or lower, and the lowest proportion of services that had evaluations of good and better.

When comparing the least and most deprived areas in 2023 there was a difference of 5.3% points, with the most deprived areas having the highest proportion of good quality services compared with the least deprived areas (Figure 19).

**Figure 19: Quality of funded daycare of children services by SIMD (mid-2021) quintile, at 31 December 2023**

SIMD mid-2021 quintile	Any evaluation of adequate or lower		All evaluations of good or better	
	Number of Services	% of services	Number of Services	% of services
1 (most deprived)	33	6.7%	457	93.3%
2	50	9.2%	494	90.8%
3	73	11.6%	556	88.4%
4	65	11.6%	495	88.4%
5 (least deprived)	45	12.0%	329	88.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>10.2%</b>	<b>2,331</b>	<b>89.8%</b>

Note: Any services that have not yet been inspected are not included in the above table.



When looking at the services with evaluations of good or better in all key questions by sector and deprivation levels, public sector services were consistently high, with the total proportion of these services not dipping below 90% across all deprivation levels (Figure 20).

**Figure 20: Quality of funded daycare of children services by SIMD (mid-2021) quintile and sector, at 31 December 2023**

SIMD mid-2021 Quintile	Sector	Any evaluation of adequate or lower		All evaluations of good or better	
		Number of Services	% of services	Number of Services	% of services
1 (most deprived)	Local Authority	13	3.7%	338	96.3%
	Private	18	18.2%	81	81.8%
	Voluntary or Not-for-profit	2	5.0%	38	95.0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>457</b>	<b>93.3%</b>
2	Local Authority	24	6.3%	356	93.7%
	Private	17	15.3%	94	84.7%
	Voluntary or Not-for-profit	9	17.0%	44	83.0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>9.2%</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>90.8%</b>
3	Local Authority	34	8.0%	393	92.0%
	Private	32	21.9%	114	78.1%
	Voluntary or Not-for-profit	7	12.5%	49	87.5%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>11.6%</b>	<b>556</b>	<b>88.4%</b>
4	Local Authority	24	7.5%	296	92.5%
	Private	28	17.1%	136	82.9%
	Voluntary or Not-for-profit	13	17.1%	63	82.9%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>11.6%</b>	<b>495</b>	<b>88.4%</b>
5 (least deprived)	Local Authority	13	7.7%	155	92.3%
	Private	30	19.1%	127	80.9%
	Voluntary or Not-for-profit	2	4.1%	47	95.9%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>12.0%</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>88.0%</b>
<b>All services offering funded places</b>		<b>266</b>	<b>10.2%</b>	<b>2,331</b>	<b>89.8%</b>

Note: Any services that have not yet been inspected are not included in the above table.

### **Quality of funded services by urban rural classification**

The variation in the proportion of high-quality services between the urban rural areas with the lowest (large urban areas - 87.0%), and highest (accessible rural areas - 93.3%), was 6.3 percentage points in 2023 (Figure 21). This was a reduction in variation compared with last year (8.3 percentage points).

The areas with the highest rate of funded daycare of children services with evaluations of good or better in all key questions were accessible rural areas, other urban areas, and accessible small towns, while the areas with the lowest proportion of high-quality funded services were large urban areas and remote rural areas. This is consistent with the situation in 2022, and in 2021 before the introduction of the new inspection framework.

There was variation by sector with public sector services offering funded places generally the best performing within each urban rural category. The main exception was in remote small towns where funded services run by voluntary or not-for-profit providers had the highest rate of high-performing services, albeit the number of services that fall under this sector in this area was only 14 services.

**Figure 21: Quality of funded daycare of children services by urban rural classification, at 31 December 2023**

Urban-Rural category	Sector	Any evaluation of adequate or lower		All evaluations of good or better	
		Number of services	% of services	% of services	% of services
Large Urban Areas	Local Authority	32	7.5%	397	92.5%
	Private	63	22.0%	223	78.0%
	Voluntary or Not-for-profit	8	10.1%	71	89.9%
	Total	103	13.0%	691	87.0%
Other Urban Areas	Local Authority	25	4.7%	503	95.3%
	Private	37	15.6%	200	84.4%
	Voluntary or Not-for-profit	6	8.3%	66	91.7%
	Total	68	8.1%	769	91.9%
Accessible Small Towns	Local Authority	7	5.4%	122	94.6%
	Private	9	15.8%	48	84.2%
	Voluntary or Not-for-profit	7	21.2%	26	78.8%
	Total	23	10.5%	196	89.5%
Remote Small Towns	Local Authority	5	10.4%	43	89.6%
	Private	5	26.3%	14	73.7%
	Voluntary or Not-for-profit			14	100.0%
	Total	10	12.3%	71	87.7%
Accessible Rural	Local Authority	11	4.2%	251	95.8%
	Private	8	12.7%	55	87.3%
	Voluntary or Not-for-profit	6	12.2%	43	87.8%
	Total	25	6.7%	349	93.3%
Remote Rural	Local Authority	28	11.2%	222	88.8%
	Private	3	20.0%	12	80.0%
	Voluntary or Not-for-profit	6	22.2%	21	77.8%
	Total	37	12.7%	255	87.3%
<b>Total</b>		<b>266</b>	<b>10.2%</b>	<b>2,331</b>	<b>89.8%</b>

Note: Any services that have not yet been inspected are not included in the above table.

### Childminding services offering funded ELC places

This is the fourth year that we have collected data from childminding services on the provision of funded places. The information below is based on the data collected from the annual returns from 2020 to 2023. Where data is unavailable (i.e. non-submissions) we impute data from a previous year.

At 31 December 2023, there were 1,127 childminding services approved to deliver funded ELC places in Scotland, 93 fewer than last year (Figure 22). Of these, 750

(66.5%) were delivering funded places at 31 December 2023 (Figure 23). The proportion of childminding services approved to deliver funded ELC in 2023 was 34.9%, which is similar to the 34.6% reported in 2022.

At 31 December 2023, there were 1,907 childminding services not approved to deliver funded ELC. Most of these said they had chosen not to apply to become a funded provider (73.0%) and around a sixth (17.6%) said that they had not applied but would consider doing so in the future (Figure 24).

**Figure 22: Breakdown of childminding services and the type of funding provision offered at 31 December 2022 and 2023**

Funding Provision	2022		2023	
	Number of Services	% of services	Number of Services	% of services
Approved for funding	1220	34.6%	1127	34.9%
Not approved for funding	2037	57.7%	1907	59.1%
Not Specified	273	7.7%	191	5.9%
<b>Total Services</b>		<b>3,530</b>		<b>3,225</b>

**Figure 23: Childminding services approved to deliver funded ELC places at the 31 December 2020-2023**

	December 2020	December 2021	December 2022	December 2023
Number of childminders approved to deliver funded ELC at 31 December	1316	1319	1220	1127
% of childminders operating at 31 December that were approved to deliver funded ELC	29.9%	33.0%	34.6%	34.9%
Number of childminders delivering funded ELC places at 31 December	851	837	808	750
% of all childminders operating at 31 December that were approved to deliver and were delivering funded places	19.4%	20.9%	22.9%	23.3%
% of childminders approved to deliver that were delivering funded places at 31 December	64.6%	63.5%	66.2%	66.5%

**Figure 24: Childminding services not approved to deliver funded ELC places, at 31 December 2020-2023**

<b>Reason for no funding</b>	<b>December 2020</b>	<b>December 2021</b>	<b>December 2022</b>	<b>December 2023</b>
I have applied but was not successful in my application to become a funded ELC provider	19 (0.8%)	22 (1.0%)	10 (0.5%)	9 (0.5%)
I have not applied to become a funded ELC provider	1619 (69.5%)	1740 (76.0%)	1562 (76.7%)	1392 (73.0%)
I have not applied to become a funded ELC provider but would consider applying in the future	575 (24.7%)	449 (19.6%)	315 (15.5%)	335 (17.6%)
I was in the process of applying to become a funded ELC provider	115 (4.9%)	79 (3.4%)	38 (1.9%)	36 (1.9%)
No answer provided			112 (5.5%)	135 (7.1%)
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2,328</b>	<b>2,290</b>	<b>2,037</b>	<b>1,907</b>

## 5. Service Provision

### Provision for different age groups

Childminding services, children and family centres and nursery services continued to be the main service types that offer places for children under two years old.

Childminding services typically cared for the widest range of age groups. Around four in every five childminding services (79.8%) offered a service for children of all ages between two and 11 years old and 58.4% of childminding services also offered a service for children aged 12 and over.

Children and family centres focussed their provision on children up to the age of five, while school-aged childcare services and holiday playschemes mainly offered a service for children aged four-and-older and five-and-older respectively.

Nursery provision for different age groups varied depending on sector.

- Most private nurseries (82.7%) offered a service for babies aged under one, with around a third (26.3%) of voluntary or not-for-profit nurseries and 4.9% of public sector nurseries offering the same.
- Public sector nurseries mainly provided a service for children aged from two to five years, with a focus on children aged three and four years.
- Voluntary or not-for-profit nurseries mainly provide their services to children aged two to five years. Though around one quarter of these nurseries also offered services to children under one and one-year-olds.

For further detailed information, please see tables 5a – 5b in the Supporting Tables spreadsheet.

### Languages and service philosophies

The majority of ELC services (99.5%) provided a service in English. In 1.5%, the service was delivered using either a mix of English and Gaelic or in Gaelic only. 2.0% of ELC services could offer British Sign Language and 5.3% could deliver the service in another language, most commonly Makaton, Polish, French, Spanish, Urdu, Arabic, or Punjabi (Figure 24).

**Figure 24: Count of all services, broken down by language provision and service type, at 31 December 2023**

Main type of provision	English		Gaelic		Other Language		Sign Language	
	No services	% services	No services	% services	No services	% services	No services	% services
Childminding services	3,219	99.8%	23	0.7%	112	3.5%	55	1.7%
Daycare of children services	3,416	99.2%	75	2.2%	241	7.0%	77	2.2%
Daycare of children by main type of service:								
Children and family centres	103	99.0%	0	0.0%	15	14.4%	11	10.6%
Creche	29	100.0%	1	3.4%	6	20.7%	3	10.3%
Holiday Playscheme	25	100.0%	0	0.0%	6	24.0%	1	4.0%
Nursery	2,502	99.0%	71	2.8%	181	7.2%	52	2.1%
School-aged childcare	650	99.7%	3	0.5%	22	3.4%	10	1.5%
Playgroup	107	100.0%	0	0.0%	11	10.3%	0	0.0%
<b>All ELC Services</b>	<b>6,635</b>	<b>99.5%</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>1.5%</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>5.3%</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>2.0%</b>

**Figure 25: Count of all daycare of children services, broken down by setting format and service type, at 31 December 2023**

Service type	Montessori		Other format		Outdoor		Steiner	
	No services	% services	No services	% services	No services	% services	No services	% services
Children and Family Centre	0	0.0%	104	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Creche	2	6.9%	27	93.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Holiday Playscheme	0	0.0%	24	96.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Nursery	48	1.9%	2,433	96.3%	48	1.9%	17	0.7%
School-aged childcare	17	2.6%	629	96.5%	4	0.6%	4	0.6%
Playgroup	5	4.7%	102	95.3%	0	0.0%	2	1.9%
<b>All daycare of children services</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>2.1%</b>	<b>3,319</b>	<b>96.4%</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>1.5%</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>0.7%</b>

### Extended day and school holiday availability

Overall, 72.8% of early years services offered care before school hours and 80.6% offered care after school hours. Compared to 2022, this was a decrease from 73.3% for before school hours, and 81.6% for after school hours.

For childminding services, 92.1% offer an early morning service, and 96.0% an after school service. 54.8% of daycare of children services offer their service in the early morning, and 66.1% after school hours (Figure 26).

For further detailed information, please see tables 7a to 7d in the supporting tables spreadsheet in the provision tab.

**Figure 26: Percentage of all registered services that are available during the school term, broken down by high level service type, at 31 December 2023**

High level service type	Mornings	School hours	After school	Evenings	Overnight	Weekends	Non-operational
Childminding	92.1%	92.2%	96.0%	10.0%	1.1%	5.3%	0.5%
Daycare of children services	54.8%	80.7%	66.1%	1.1%	0.0%	1.5%	0.6%
Daycare of children by main type of service:							
Children and Family Centre	72.1%	97.1%	76.0%	1.9%	0.0%	2.9%	1.0%
Creche	10.3%	96.6%	69.0%	51.7%	0.0%	62.1%	0.0%
Holiday Playscheme	0.0%	4.0%	12.0%	12.0%	4.0%	24.0%	68.0%
Nursery	58.1%	99.7%	60.3%	0.4%	0.0%	0.3%	0.1%
School-aged childcare	50.9%	3.4%	99.2%	1.2%	0.0%	2.9%	0.3%
Playgroup	9.3%	100.0%	4.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>All ELC Services</b>	<b>72.8%</b>	<b>86.2%</b>	<b>80.6%</b>	<b>5.4%</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>



## During school holidays

Overall, at 31 December 2023, 55.7% of daycare of children services and 92.8% of childminding services operated at some point during the holidays. This was similar to 2022 (56.3% for daycare of children services, and 93.4% for childminding services) (Figure 27).

**Figure 27: Count of all registered services that are available during the holidays, broken down by service type, at 31 December 2023**

Main type of provision	All registered services at 31 December 2023	Number of services that <u>do</u> operate during holidays	Number of services that <u>don't</u> operate during holidays	% of total services that operate during holidays
Childminding services	3,225	2,993	232	92.8%
Daycare of children services	3,444	1,917	1,527	55.7%
Daycare of children by main type of service:				
Children and Family Centre	104	100	4	96.2%
Creche	29	27	2	93.1%
Holiday Playscheme	25	24	1	96.0%
Nursery	2,527	1,321	1,206	52.3%
School-aged childcare	652	439	213	67.3%
Playgroup	107	6	101	5.6%
<b>All service types</b>	<b>6,669</b>	<b>4,910</b>	<b>1,759</b>	<b>73.6%</b>

For further detailed information, please see tables 7a to 7d in the supporting tables spreadsheet in the provision tab.

## Whole-day and part-day sessions

The proportion of daycare of children services that offer whole-day sessions has been increasing year on year. In 2023 this trend continued with an increase in the proportion of services offering whole-day places compared to previous years and a decrease in the number of services offering part-day places only.

At 31 December 2023, 88.1% of daycare services overall and 96.8% of nurseries offered whole-day sessions or the choice of whole or part-day sessions.

Figure 28 shows the percentage of services offering whole and part-day sessions between 2014 and 2023. The increase in full-day sessions available means that children are less likely to attend multiple services part-time and therefore less likely

to be counted more than once in our statistics about the numbers of children registered with early learning and childcare services.

**Figure 28- Sessions available between 2014 and 2023 in daycare of children services or nursery services**

**28a- All daycare of children services**

Year	Whole-day only	Whole-day and part-day sessions offered	Part-day only
2014	3.0%	45.7%	50.8%
2015	3.1%	47.7%	48.6%
2016	3.2%	51.4%	44.5%
2017	3.5%	54.7%	40.8%
2018	4.4%	58.3%	37.3%
2019	6.2%	64.1%	29.7%
2020	16.0%	63.4%	20.6%
2021	19.8%	65.0%	15.2%
2022	20.5%	66.2%	13.4%
2023	21.5%	66.5%	11.9%

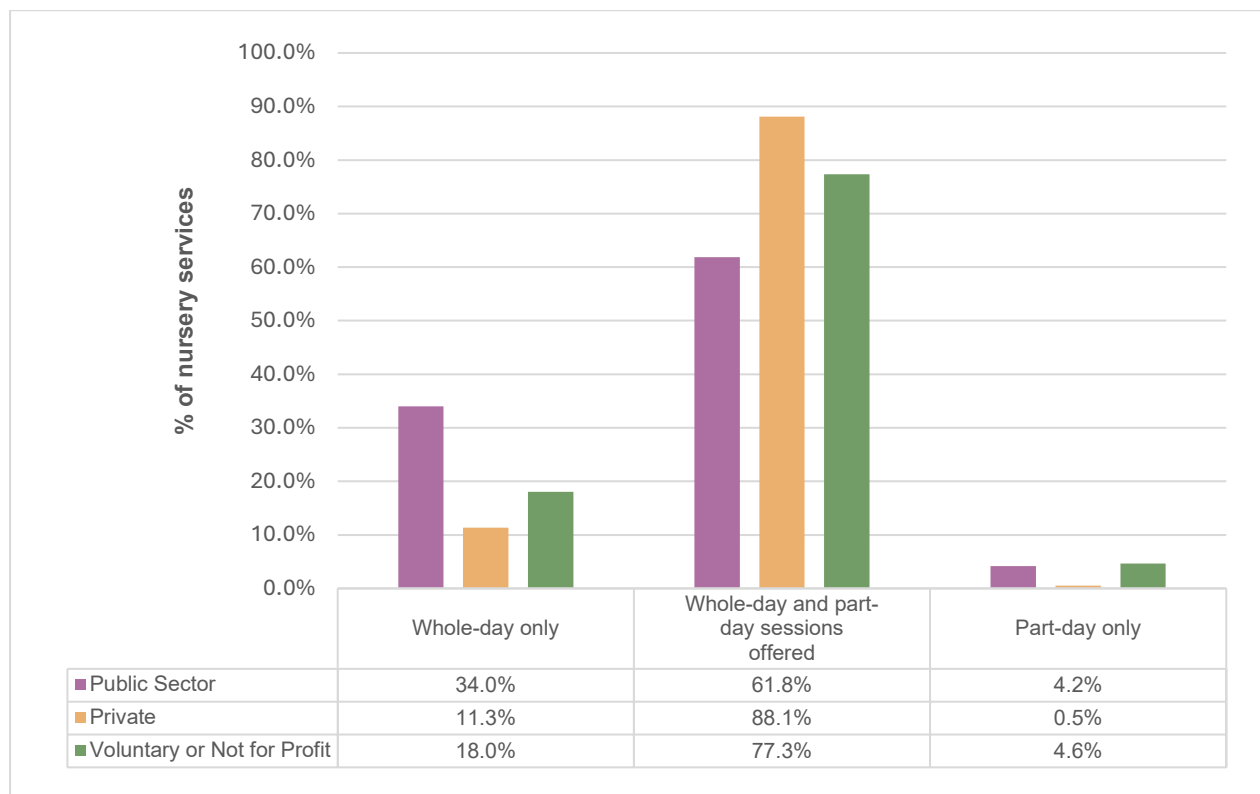
**28b- Only nursery services**

Year	Whole-day only	Whole-day and part-day sessions offered	Part-day only
2014	1.4%	46.4%	51.7%
2015	1.6%	49.5%	48.9%
2016	1.6%	54.3%	43.8%
2017	2.4%	58.6%	39.2%
2018	3.7%	63.8%	32.5%
2019	6.4%	71.9%	21.7%
2020	19.8%	69.2%	11.0%
2021	24.2%	71.0%	4.8%
2022	25.1%	71.5%	3.4%
2023	26.2%	70.6%	3.2%

The sessions offered in nurseries varied depending on the sector providing the service (Figure 29).

Almost all private nurseries (99.5%) and the majority of public-sector nurseries (95.8%) and voluntary sector nurseries (95.3%) offered whole day only or a choice of part days or whole days.

**Figure 29: Sessions available in nurseries by sector, on 31 December 2023**



Some services also offer flexible sessions in addition to the full or part-day provision. In 2023, 25.5% of all daycare of children services offered short flexible care, an increase from 24.1% in 2022.

For further detailed information, please see tables 8a – 8b in the supporting tables spreadsheet in the provision tab.

**Provision of meals and snacks**

In 2023, most childminding services (92.7%) continued to provide meals in their service (up from 92.1% in 2022). For daycare of children services, 81.1% provided meals in the service (whether by the service only, by parents only or both). This is a continued increase compared to the 80.1% reported in 2022 (Figure 30).

Nearly all early learning and childcare services (99.4%) offered some form of snack provision to their users in 2023, this was also the same percentage in 2022 (Figure 31).

**Figure 30: Percentage of all registered services that offer meal provision, broken down by service type, at 31 December 2023**

Main type of provision	Service only	Parents only	Service and parents	None	% of total services that have some form of meal provision
Childminding	18.8%	49.1%	24.9%	7.3%	92.7%
Daycare of children services	47.0%	3.4%	30.7%	18.9%	81.1%
Daycare of children by main type of service:					
Children and Family Centre	64.4%	1.9%	25.0%	8.7%	91.3%
Creche	6.9%	20.7%	6.9%	65.5%	34.5%
Holiday Playscheme	0.0%	48.0%	12.0%	40.0%	60.0%
Nursery	58.4%	1.5%	38.9%	1.1%	98.9%
School-aged childcare	4.1%	7.7%	3.5%	84.7%	15.3%
Playgroup	42.1%	9.3%	18.7%	29.9%	70.1%
<b>All service types</b>	<b>33.3%</b>	<b>25.5%</b>	<b>27.9%</b>	<b>13.3%</b>	<b>86.7%</b>

**Figure 31: Percentage of all registered services that offer snack provision, broken down by service type, at 31 December 2023**

Main type of provision	Service only	Parents only	Service and parents	None	% of total services that have some form of snack provision
Childminding	39.5%	19.2%	40.6%	0.7%	99.3%
Daycare of children services	86.5%	1.7%	11.3%	0.5%	99.5%
Daycare of children by main type of service:					
Children and Family Centre	81.7%	1.0%	14.4%	2.9%	97.1%
Creche	31.0%	34.5%	20.7%	13.8%	86.2%
Holiday Playscheme	16.0%	48.0%	32.0%	4.0%	96.0%
Nursery	91.3%	0.4%	8.2%	0.1%	99.9%
School-aged childcare	73.2%	3.5%	22.5%	0.8%	99.2%
Playgroup	91.6%	3.7%	4.7%	0.0%	100.0%
<b>All service types</b>	<b>63.8%</b>	<b>10.2%</b>	<b>25.5%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>99.4%</b>

For further detailed information, please see tables 9a – 9b in the supporting tables spreadsheet in the provision tab.

## Appendix 1: Definitions and what's covered in this report

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 childminding services registered with the Care Inspectorate on 31 December 2023, 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 2023. 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 childminding service 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 or part-week 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 a snapshot of grading data on 31 December 2023.
- Information on the number of services providing funded places under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 on 31 December 2023.
- Up until the 2021 edition of this report we provided statistics on complaints to do with childminding services and day care of children services in this report. Statistics on complaints can instead be found in our published [complaints report](#).

A **childminding service** 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 their own children in their own home.

By law, all childminding services must be registered with the Care Inspectorate. The service is usually provided from the childminder's home for a small number of children and often 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 another registered childminder.
- A childminding service may have paid or unpaid assistants to help provide the 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, family centres, crèches, school-aged childcare services, 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 zero-five years. The majority are provided by the public sector. They usually prioritise children with the greatest needs together with a range of support services for families. This also includes specialised services, such as women's aid, housing support-related services or respite care and support.

**Crèche**

Crèches provide drop-in care for children to enable adults to engage in activities such as education or training, 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 daycare facilities for children aged under five 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 public sector nursery class or nursery school or a nursery that is part of an independent school.

**Nursery providing additional childcare**

These are nurseries that offer additional types of childcare provision, for example, breakfast club or school-aged childcare services.

**School-aged childcare services (previously referred to as out-of-school clubs)**

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 school holidays and in-service days.

**School-aged childcare services providing additional childcare**

These are school-aged childcare services that offer additional types of provision, for example, breakfast clubs or holiday playschemes.

**Playgroup**

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



## **Sector provider types in early learning and childcare services**

### **Public sector 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 services operate 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, Scottish Government has significantly increased the amount of early learning and childcare provided through the public sector. The funding for all three and four-year-old children initially increased from 475 to 600 hours per year and some eligible two-year-olds also receive this level of funding. This increased to 1140 hours per year in August 2021 (although some public sector implemented this increase during 2020, meaning that some children received increased funded hours before 2021).

Other types of funding for children to attend early learning and childcare services can be made by the public sector. However, most funding of the 1140 hours 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'.

## Appendix 2: 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 childminding registered with the Care Inspectorate on 31 December 2023. 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 school-aged childcare provision. 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 school-aged childcare provision 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 2022 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 2023 to 31 December 2023) and the Care Inspectorate service list (as on 31 December 2023). Figures relating to previous years are taken from our reports on early learning and childcare statistics publications for 2014 up to 2022.

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 2023 did not have to submit an annual return for December 2023, we encouraged them to do so.

Of the 6,669 childcare services registered with the Care Inspectorate on 31 December 2023, 5,901 (88.5%) submitted an annual return, higher than the 85.2% 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.

### Appendix 3: Data sources

The Care Inspectorate service list (on 31 December 2023) 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 public sector, deprivation category and urban-rural category of the service.
- the number of services that cancelled and registered

We have used Care Inspectorate annual returns (on 31 December 2023) to provide estimates for:

- the main service type (such as nursery, playgroup and, holiday playschemes)
- the number of children registered with the service
- whether childminding and daycare of children services provided funded places
- the number of children registered with school-aged childcare services
- 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 Care Inspectorate registration database has been used to provide figures on:

- the reasons provided by services why they decide to cancel

The 2020 mid-year Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) has been used to identify 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.gov.scot/publications/scottish-government-urban-rural-classification-2020/>

The National Records of Scotland mid-year population estimates (mid-2021) 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-by-theme/population/population-estimates>

## Appendix 4: Data cleaning and dealing with missing data

Data input errors or incomplete responses identified in relation to specific questions have been corrected where possible before any analysis has taken place. Not all childcare services 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 2023

Main type of provision	Number of services who submitted annual return	Response rate
Childminding	2,596	80.5%
Daycare of children services	3,305	96.0%
Daycare of children by main type of service:		
Children and Family Centre	102	98.1%
Creche	26	89.7%
Holiday Playscheme	23	92.0%
Nursery	2,447	96.8%
School-aged childcare	609	93.4%
Playgroup	98	91.6%
<b>All care service types</b>	<b>5,901</b>	<b>88.5%</b>

We took the following approach to handling missing data:

#### A. Imputation of missing data using historical data

Where a daycare of children service did not submit an annual return for 2023, but submitted a return for either 2022, 2021, or 2020, the information submitted in the most recent historic annual return was used to impute the missing data for 2023. Where a service re-registered (for example, due to a change in ownership or service provider) and information was missing for 2023, the most recent historic information from the previously registered service was used. For childminding the information from previous annual returns was used in the same way.

#### B. Imputation of missing data where no historical data is available

Where a service has not provided any information in 2021 or 2022 (or 2020 for childminding), or where a service was newly registered in 2023 (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 (public sector area and level of deprivation) and service category (nursery, playgroup etc.).

We estimated the missing data using average values from services based on the above criteria.

### **Rounding of children registered with services**

Where a service doesn't provide figures related to the number of children registered at their service, we impute these figures instead, and round it to the nearest 10. As such, rounded figures may differ slightly to the overall totals.

### **Grouping of cancellation reasons**

Starting from the 2023 publication of the early learning and childcare statistics publication, we've included figures related to the reasons why services chose to cancel. We capture this information through the Care Inspectorate registration app at the time service is going through the cancellation process.

The below reasons are the options that services can choose from, and it's also grouped into the categories that we use for this publication.

<b>Cancellation reason/s services can choose</b>	<b>Cancellation category</b>
Leaving the care sector	Leaving profession/sector
Financial inviability	Financial inviability
Sale of business as a going concern	Change of ownership
Other	Other
Change of legal owner	Change of ownership
Change of career	Leaving profession/sector
Change in personal circumstances	Change in personal circumstances
Retirement	Retirement
Service no longer viable due to other Early Learning and Childcare provision in the area	Excess provision in the area
Problems around recruiting suitable staff	Recruitment difficulties
Premises no longer fit for purpose	Operational difficulties
Unable to maintain required standards of care	Operational difficulties
Serious illness or death of provider	Health-related
Service to be merged with another care service under the same provider	Change of ownership
Service moving to another registered company under the same ownership	Change of ownership

## **Appendix 5: Changes to data items collected in 2023**

There were no changes in the questions asked in the December 2023 annual return compared to December 2022.



## **Appendix 6: How the Care Inspectorate assesses quality during inspection**

During inspections, we assessed quality themes and now key questions, which cover the main areas of a service's work. How well the service performed in these areas indicated how good the service is.

### **Quality themes – Framework used up to June 2022**

- 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

## Key questions – Framework used from June 2022

- How good is our care, play and learning?
- How good is our setting?
- How good is our leadership?
- How good is our staff team?

Each key question is evaluated using a six-point scale.

- 6 – Excellent
- 5 – Very Good
- 4 – Good
- 3 – Adequate
- 2 – Weak
- 1 – Unsatisfactory

## Matching new key question framework to the old quality theme framework

New key questions	Previous quality themes
1: How good is our care, play and learning?	Quality of care and support
2: How good is our setting?	Quality of environment
3: How good is our leadership?	Quality of management and leadership
4: How good is our staff team?	Quality of staffing

For more information on the new key question inspection framework please see [Quality framework for ELC services \(careinspectorate.com\)](https://www.careinspectorate.com) on our website.

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