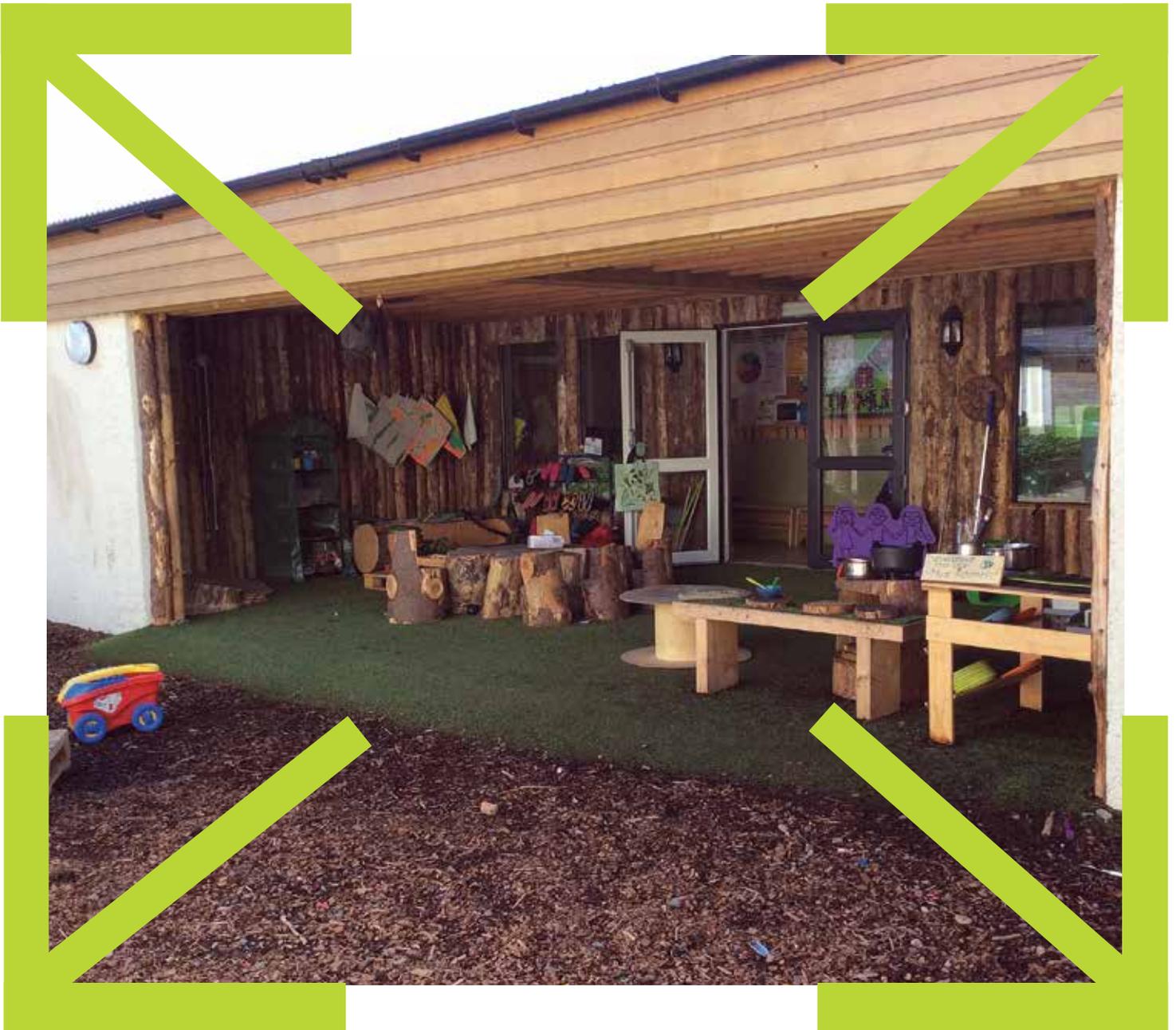


Scotland's Early Learning and Childcare – Report on the progress of expanded provision during 2015-16

Implementing parts 6, 7 and 8 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (2014)



1. Introduction

To support the Scottish Government's commitment to expand and deliver high-quality, flexible early learning and childcare for 3 and 4-year-olds and eligible 2-year-olds, provision was made under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (the Act), that from August 2014 the entitlement of free early learning and childcare increased from 475 to 600 hours. Our report, *Scotland's early learning and childcare – an initial overview of the expansion of provision during 2014-15*, provided an overview of the early progress made across the early learning and childcare sector in increasing the entitlement for children to 600 hours¹.

The Scottish Government's aim is to make Scotland the best place in the world to grow up. One aspect of achieving that aim is the further commitment to expand the free entitlement of early learning and childcare to 1140 hours for all 3 and 4-year-olds and eligible 2-year-olds by 2020.

The expansion provides challenges and opportunities for the sector. This further report takes account of the progress made across the early learning and childcare sector on the implementation of 600 hours funded early learning and childcare, and identifies some of the emerging themes from our scrutiny activity for settings providing funded early learning and childcare for 2-year-olds. It is intended to support practitioners, providers, commissioners and policy makers to achieve the Scottish Government's policy aims as fully as possible, be helpful as a resource to inform the expansion to 1140 hours by 2020.

The Care Inspectorate has responsibility to register, inspect and support improvement in all daycare of children and childminding settings in Scotland, whether or not they provide funded early learning and childcare. We can therefore provide a unique overview of progress of the expansion of provision in settings across Scotland. An element of our inspections during 2015-16 focused on key areas of provision for children aged two to three years, including assessing the quality of staffing, quality of experiences and the impact of the expansion on individual children and settings. While this report focuses on that period, we will be publishing our *Early learning and childcare statistics 2016* later this year during 2017/18; we anticipate publishing a follow-up to our triennial review report (2014/15)² on our scrutiny of services for children and babies later this year. We will also publish a report on innovative examples of childminders and local authorities working together to support expansion. Together, these reports will provide a significant evidence base about the quality and prevalence of provision across Scotland.

¹ Care Inspectorate (2016) *Scotland's early learning and childcare – an initial overview of the expansion of provision during 2014/15*. <http://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/279328/scotlands-early-learning-and-childcare-an-initial-overview-of-the-expansion-of-provision.pdf>

² Care Inspectorate (2015) *Triennial Review – Inspecting and improving care and social work in Scotland: Findings from the Care Inspectorate 2011 – 2014*. <http://www.careinspectorate.com/images/documents/2385/Care%20Inspectorate%20Triennial%20Review%202011-14.pdf>

This report is set in the context of A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland³ and Empowering teachers, parents and communities to achieve excellence and equity in education: A Governance Review⁴.

The Statutory Guidance (1) that accompanies the 2014 Act states:

“The aim of Parts 6, 7 and 8 of the Act is to improve and integrate the role of early years support in children and families’ lives by increasing the amount and flexibility of early learning and childcare as a significant step towards wider ambitions to develop a high-quality and flexible system of early learning and childcare which is accessible and affordable for all children, parents and families.”

The expansion of early learning and childcare is intended to:

- improve outcomes for all children, especially our most vulnerable children – any expansion of early learning and childcare will focus initially on those most in need
- support parents to work, train or study, especially those who need routes into sustainable employment and out of poverty in order to support their families.

Our role is not just to assess quality, but to help support continual improvement too. This report therefore highlights practice examples across settings and local authority areas that have supported good outcomes for children and their families in this context. It also identifies challenges and further developments needed to deliver the continued expansion of high-quality, accessible, affordable and flexible early learning and childcare.

³ Scottish Government (2016) A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland
<https://consult.scotland.gov.uk/creating-positive-futures/expansion-of-early-learning-and-childcare>

⁴ Scottish Government (2016) Empowering teachers, parents and communities to achieve excellence and equity in education: A Governance Review
<https://consult.scotland.gov.uk/empowering-schools/a-governance-review>

2. Key points

The initial expansion to 600 hours of funded early learning and childcare places for 2, 3 and 4-year-olds has generally been achieved across Scotland. Research⁵ indicates there has been a lower than anticipated uptake of eligible 2-year-old places.

The evidence within this report has identified 10 key points from our scrutiny activity during 2015-16 in relation to the impact of the 600 hours expansion:

1. The proportion of daycare of children settings providing funded places increased. There was an increase in children and family centres providing funded places from 79% in 2014 to 84 in 2015, and use of playgroups providing funded places increased from 69% in 2014 to 72% in 2015.
2. The quality of services providing funded early learning and childcare places was generally higher than services not providing such funded provision.
3. There is potential to support the expansion of early learning and childcare through the increase use of childminding places. To date there has been limited uptake of local authorities providing childminding as an option to parents for funded places. A learning and development resource for childminders being developed by the Care Inspectorate will help childminders to access professional learning and knowledge to support delivery of high-quality services for children.
4. The increase of funded early learning and childcare from 475 to 600 hours resulted in 845 registrations and variations undertaken by the Care Inspectorate. A further increase of an additional 540 funded-hour's provision for all eligible children will present further challenges in commissioning in the future. We anticipate a further increase in the number of registrations and variations that we will require to undertake to support the Scottish Government's expansion programme.
5. The majority of settings expanded to accommodate funded 2-year-old provision were within local authority settings. There is therefore scope to further and better involve the voluntary and private sector further in the specialist provision needed to support eligible 2-year-olds. There is also scope to ensure that more childminders, whose small-group, family-based settings may be best for some such children, can become involved in this funded provision.
6. A large number of parents when surveyed (69%) indicated that a key factor for them when choosing an early learning and childcare setting for their child was ensuring a high-quality environment. Parents will, rightly, continue to expect that quality remains high as provision expands. Space to Grow⁶, which has been developed in partnership with the Care Inspectorate,

⁵ Research by Ipsos MORI for the Scottish Government

<https://beta.gov.scot/publications/drivers-barriers-uptake-early-learning-childcare-amongst-2-year-olds/pages/1/>

⁶ Scottish Government (2017) Space to Grow – Design guidance for early learning and childcare and out of school care services <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00522564.pdf>

will support the delivery of high-quality early learning and childcare environments as part of the expansion. Further work will be needed to ensure that new services and new staff working in them are well trained and have access to appropriate experience.

7. During 2015-16, we inspected 245 settings providing funded early learning and childcare to children aged two years. The evidence from these inspections noted that while the quality of provision was good, some improvements could be made to the provision to enhance the early learning and childcare experience, particularly in relation to personal planning, quality of staff and providing supportive physical environments.
8. The quality of outcomes for 2-year-olds in services was influenced by the number of 2-year-olds being cared for in the group setting and the skills and knowledge of the staff working with them. Our inspections found that where children were cared for in small groups with well trained staff there was a more positive impact on the quality of outcomes children experienced.
9. Local authorities have generally undertaken their duty under section 6 (50) of the Act to consult and plan on delivery of early learning and childcare. There is limited evidence that local authority consultation with parents has led to an increase in the availability of childminders as a choice for funded early learning and childcare. This would suggest that local authority consultation could benefit from including a wider range of parents accessing different settings across the sector.
10. The pace of change and the resulting demands on staff has resulted in staff turnover from the private to local authority sector. There is potential for this to have an impact on the quality of care and learning for children. There is a need therefore for providers within the private sector to plan effectively to ensure staff have appropriate skills, knowledge and experience to support the delivery of high-quality early learning and childcare.

3. Provision of registered early learning and childcare

Through our independent regulation and scrutiny of 9,800 children’s settings, we are uniquely positioned to provide advice, guidance and critical challenge and identify best practice to support continuous improvement. Through evidenced-based regulation and inspection of all registered care settings across the public, private and voluntary sectors, we can provide evidence to support policy planning, development and implementation across the entire sector.

In the report *An Independent Review of the Scottish ELC Workforce and Out of School Care Workforce*⁷, reference is made to the report *Growing up in Scotland (GUS): The characteristics of pre-school provision and their association with child outcomes*⁸. In particular, the GUS report 2015 found that the Care Inspectorate’s inspection theme around the quality of care and support was associated with improved outcomes for children. Specifically, GUS highlighted that the quality of care and support in a daycare service, as evidenced by quality evaluations from inspection, had a measurable impact on children’s outcomes, particularly the critical language and communication skills. We recognise the importance of continuing to place the quality of care and support at the heart of all our scrutiny and assurance work.

Each year in February, we obtain information from providers of early learning and childcare through an annual return. Part of this exercise asks care settings to report whether they are involved in the provision of funded early learning and childcare. In November 2016, we published *Early learning and childcare statistics 2015*⁹, which provides some evidence about the expansion to 600 hours early learning and childcare entitlement. We will publish newer data in autumn 2017.

⁷ Scottish Government (2015) *An Independent Review of the Scottish Early Learning and Childcare Workforce and Out of School Care Workforce*

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0047/00477419.pdf>

⁸ ScotCen Social Research. & Growing Up in Scotland. (2014) *Growing Up in Scotland: Characteristics of pre-school provision and their association with child outcomes*

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0045/00453130.pdf>

⁹ Care Inspectorate (2016) *Early learning and childcare statistics 2015*

<http://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/505086/early-learning-and-childcare-statistics-report-2015.pdf>

Figure 1: All settings – number of settings and total capacity

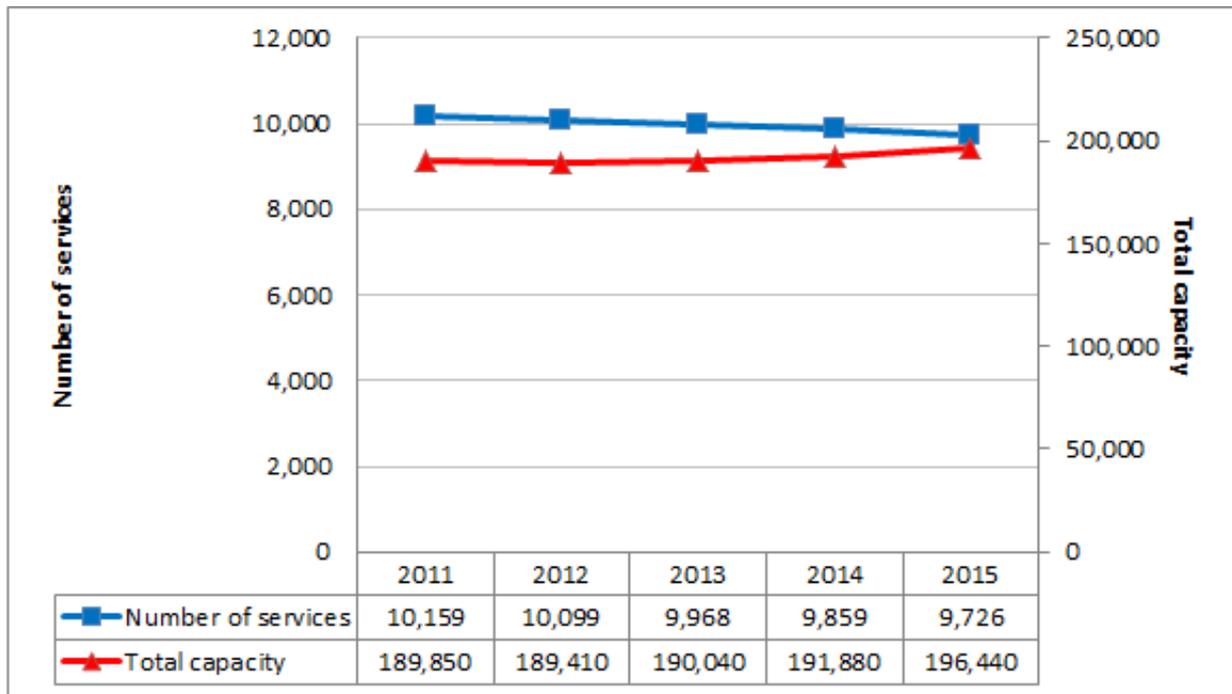


Figure 2: Childminding – number of settings and total capacity

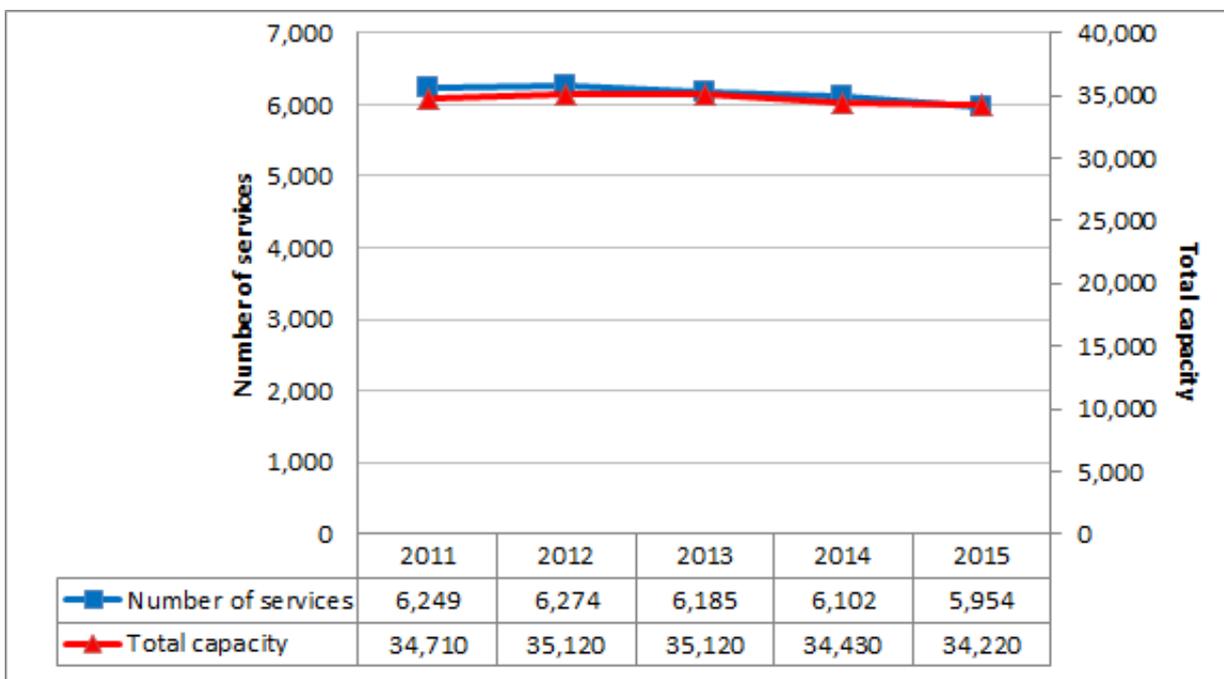
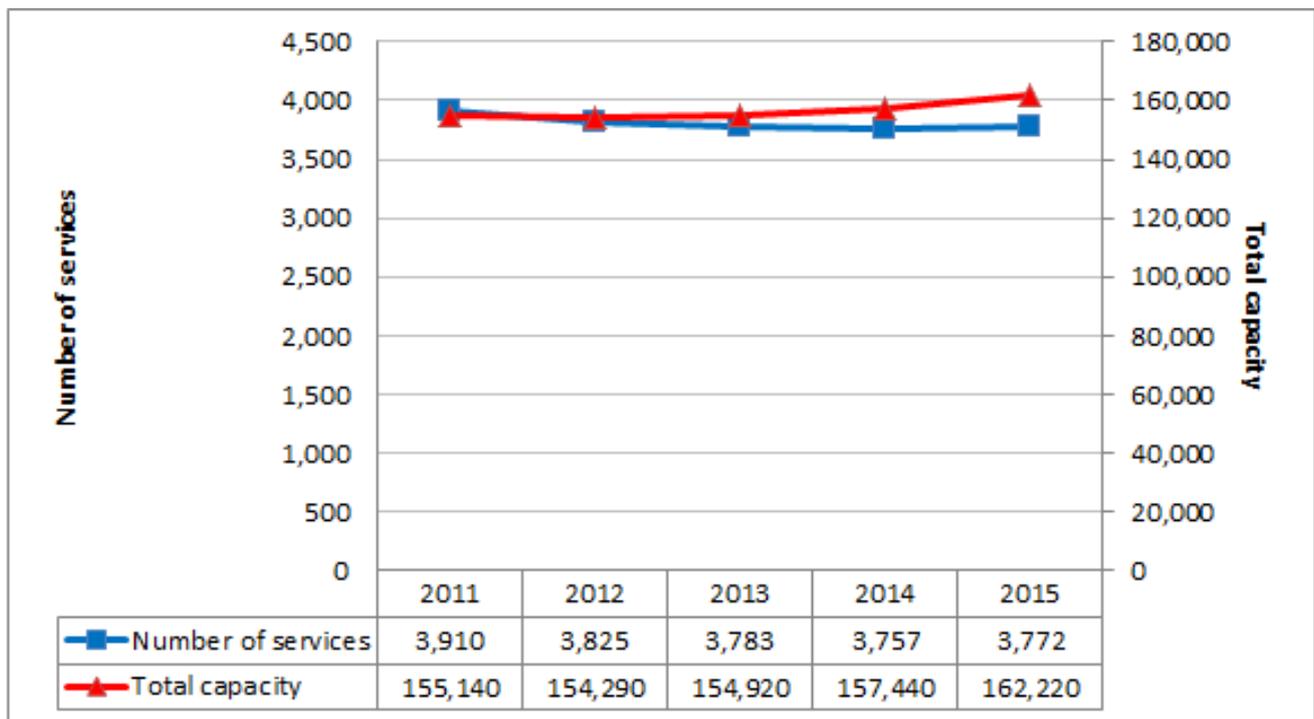


Figure 3: Daycare of children – number of settings and total capacity



During 2015, the proportion of daycare of children settings providing funded places increased: 92.6% of nurseries, 83.7% of children and family centres and 71.8% of playgroups were providing funded places. There was an increase in children and family centres offering funded early learning and childcare from 79% in 2014 to 84% in 2015, and the use of playgroups providing funded places increased from 69% in 2014 to 72% in 2015. There was a slight increase in nurseries providing funded places from 92% to 93% during 2015 (See table 1 below).

Table 1: Proportion of settings providing funded early learning and childcare as at 31 December 2013, 2014 and 2015

Sector	Children and family centres			Nurseries			Playgroups		
	2013 (x)	2014 (x)	2015	2013	2014	2015	2013	2014	2015
Local authority	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	33%	0%	0%
Private	67%	67%	67%	76%	78%	79%	62%	64%	66%
Voluntary/not for profit	40%	36%	49%	89%	90%	91%	69%	71%	74%
All funded services	79%	79%	84%	92%	92%	93%	67%	69%	72%

(x) Figures for 2013 and 2014 have been adjusted to reflect all local authority children, children and family centres providing funded places.

Our inspection activity highlighted that the quality of settings providing funded early learning and childcare was generally higher than those not providing funded places. For example, in 41.9% of private nurseries providing funded places, we found grades for all themes to be very good or excellent, compared to 17.8% of private nurseries not providing funded places. Similarly, 38.6% of voluntary/not for profit playgroups providing funded places were evaluated as very good and excellent for all quality themes compared to 19.3% of settings that not providing funded places. This indicates that local authorities are generally commissioning higher quality settings to provide funded places.

Our report Early learning and childcare statistics 2015 shows a decrease of 5.8% of children attending childminding settings across Scotland¹⁰. The number of childminders available across Scotland has also decreased by 148 during 2015, which may contribute to the reduction of places. As at 2015, there were 5,954 professional childminding settings in Scotland, providing 34,220 registered places. However, in 2015-16 very few childminders were commissioned by local authorities to provide funded early learning and childcare.

Table 2: Number of children registered with early learning and childcare settings, by main type of setting, as at 31 December 2013, 2014 and 2015 (Excluding crèches)

	2013(r)	2014(r)	2015
Childminding	33,740	34,680	32,660
Children and family centre	10,220	10,100	11,440
Nursery	140,010	142,790	143,000
of which: local authority		76,100	76,830
of which: private		56,960	56,940
of which: voluntary/not for profit		9,730	9,230
Playgroup	8,530	8,000	6,780
Total	240,960	249,110	249,400

¹⁰ Care Inspectorate (2016) Early learning and childcare statistics 2015
<http://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/505086/early-learning-and-childcare-statistics-report-2015.pdf>

4. Registration and variation work 2015-16

Our registration team has been working across Scotland to support the expansion of early learning and childcare, and the development of high-quality early learning and childcare settings. During 2015-16, we received a wide range of applications to support the expansion, including:

- a total of 143 registration applications for early learning and childcare, of which 11 registration applications were for the development of new settings by local authorities
- 702 applications for variations were for early learning and childcare settings, of which 602 were for variations to expand existing settings provided by local authorities.

The majority of variations we received were from local authorities with no existing provision for 2-year-olds. For eligible 2-year-old children, most local authorities applied for variations to accommodate this age group into existing local authority provision. The Ipsos MORI research commissioned by the Scottish Government to support the uptake of 2-year-old places found that local authorities were the main provider of eligible 2-year-old provision.

In order to facilitate the demand, registration inspectors were linked to each local authority where settings were being expanded or developed. This resulted in improved consistency of approach and effective working relationships with the local authorities.

During the assessment of registrations or variations to accommodate 2-year-olds, registration inspectors discussed the provision of high-quality early learning and childcare for children. The key themes discussed included: physical environment; appropriate resources; staff skills; knowledge and experience; meeting particular needs of this age group, including changing facilities and areas to support rest and quiet times.

The following are examples of registering settings with flexible and innovative approaches.

- In Perth & Kinross, the authority responded to a high demand from parents for an extended day, including care across lunchtimes. As a result, the authority applied for and was granted 29 variations to increase capacity. We supported this expansion development and worked with the authority to ensure the variations we approved would benefit staff and children attending the settings.
- Aberdeen City Council applied for a number of variations to increase numbers to extend current settings. They also established a new setting in Holy Family Early Learning and Childcare Centre, providing a nursery at a school in an area that had no previous provision, supporting more local settings for parents. The reduction in travel time not only has the potential to save money in transportation costs but could also enable children to spend more quality time with their families. The Holy Family Early Learning and Childcare Centre aims to be a hub for the community. The setting supports parents to establish social relationships with one another, allowing parents new to the area to build a support network. Staff told us, "Children find the setting quiet and relaxing and there are great benefits to children with additional support needs, due to the small size of the setting." One parent commented, "It has been very handy as our older child was already in

attendance at the primary school and this saved us having to do separate pick-ups for both children.”



Space to Grow

Evidence from 2015/16 inspections showed the importance of the quality of the physical environment in allowing children the space and facilities to grow, explore, learn and interact. The expansion of provision by 2020 will result in the development of new premises or adaptation of existing buildings to support the increased provision required, and it is the Scottish Government’s aim to support providers within this in a number of ways.

Together with the Scottish Government and Scottish Futures Trust, we delivered Space to Grow, a set of design principles and a resource for early learning and childcare settings, which was published on 30 June 2017¹¹. This work involved key stakeholders that included; the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA), the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES), Education Scotland, Environmental Health and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). We surveyed parents when developing the resource and asked, “Was the accommodation/environment one of the main factors for you when choosing the setting?” 69% answered yes, supporting the view that parents, as well as inspectors, value a good environment as an important factor when choosing an early learning and childcare setting for their child.

Drawing on experience from inspecting many thousands of services for children, the design principles guidance will support those responsible for developing and delivering high-quality environments for children, helping to ensure providers, planners and staff are knowledgeable about the impact of environments and the positive benefits to children’s development and learning. We will therefore be in a better position to support providers to plan quality settings that deliver high-quality environments that impact positively on outcomes for children.

¹¹ Scottish Government (2017) Space to Grow – Design guidance for early learning and childcare and out of school care services <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00522564.pdf>

Jaybees (Childcare) Limited is an example of a building design that took account of the impact of the environment for children. The original building was purpose built to provide an attractive learning environment where children were able to move freely and feel calm, motivated and welcome. Due to the continual increase in demand for places, the adjacent building was renovated, adding a link corridor. This was designed with outdoor learning at the heart, with an aim to provide a natural, yet stimulating environment. Children have free flow to the outdoor area, which includes a covered area so that the weather is not a deterrent. This innovative use of outdoor space has increased the number of children attending the setting.



The design of both the original building and the extension were carefully planned with the children at the heart of decision making. Staff, children and their families were consulted throughout the process, making it a welcoming environment for all. With an environment that provides enriching experiences for children both indoors and outdoors, it supports and encourages positive outcomes for children at each age and stage of development, allowing them to learn and develop in a nurturing, safe, healthy and invigorating environment.



Childminders' learning and development resource

Our scrutiny evidence shows that there is a close relationship between the quality of staffing and the quality of provision. The Scottish Government's commitment to expand early learning and childcare provision, including settings suitable for 2-year-olds, will increase the need to include childminders in the delivery of early learning and childcare. An Independent Review of the Scottish ELC Workforce and Out of School Care Workforce noted that, while work had started in Scotland to redress some of the inequalities and training for staff delivering early learning and childcare, there remained a lack of a requirement for qualification and continuous professional development for childminders¹². The Scottish Government identified this lack of training and development as a source of concern for local authorities in delivering high-quality childminding settings in the future. In response to this, we have been working with the Scottish Government to deliver on recommendation 13 of the report:

"Make induction or pre-registration training a requirement for registration to provide a childminding setting under the Public Settings Reform Act."

Alongside key partners, we are producing a learning and development resource for childminders. This will be accessible to anyone living in Scotland wishing to register a childminding setting and will also be available to registered childminders who wish to access further training and development to enhance outcomes for children using their childminding setting. The framework, which will be published in the autumn of 2017, will be further developed during 2017-18 to support childminders knowledge about the framework and support continuous professional development opportunities.

We anticipate that access to the framework will assist childminders where there are gaps in access to training, supporting their ability to provide care for the youngest and most vulnerable children in Scotland.

¹² Scottish Government (2015) An Independent Review of the Scottish Early Learning and Childcare Workforce and Out of School Care Workforce <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0047/00477419.pdf>

5. Impact of expansion of 600 hours for 2-year-olds 2015-16

Through our evidence-based knowledge and experience scrutinising all care settings in Scotland, we have identified that the provision of high-quality outcomes for children under the age of three years requires different considerations to be given to the care setting provision, to provide children with high-quality experiences. Such settings must take account of the different needs of this age group and provide a range of experiences specifically aimed at their developmental stages to support positive outcomes. Expanding provision for these children without appropriate focus on their needs would limit the continued quality improvement that parents, policy-makers and inspectors wish to see.

The inspection focus area during 2015-16 for childminding and daycare of children settings gathered specific evidence on the quality of provision for 2-year-old children. We gathered evidence in relation to:

- quality of the child's experience
- changes to settings to accommodate 2-year-olds
- quality of staffing.

The number of settings we inspected during 2015-16 that were providing funded early learning and childcare for 2-year-olds was 245. Of these, 69 (28.2%) were settings where provision of early learning and childcare for eligible 2-year-olds was an addition to an existing service. Nine local authorities whose services were included in the inspection programme were using existing provision to support the expansion. The new settings developed to support care for eligible 2-year-olds were spread across six local authority areas.

The analysis of inspection findings for 2-year-olds included newly registered provision, extended settings and those that had been providing settings to 2-year-olds for a number of years. There was also a variety of settings, including distinct 2-3-year-old provision, as well as those with full integration of children aged two to five years.

Table 3: Settings for 2-year olds by sector and partnership status 2015-16

Setting type	Data	In partnership	Not in partnership	Not known	Total
Local Authority	settings	112	420	13	545
	%	20.6%	77.1%	2.4%	100.0%
Private	settings	94	371	14	479
	%	19.6%	77.5%	2.9%	100.0%
Voluntary or Not for Profit	settings	39	284	5	328
	%	11.9%	86.6%	1.5%	100.0%
Total settings		245	1075	32	1352
Total %		18.1%	79.5%	2.4%	100.0%

5.1 Children's experience

Findings from inspection supported the view that the impact of the quality of care and support settings delivered was dependant on the size of the overall groups for children and the skills and knowledge of staff.

Overall, the inspections found the impact of the care provided to the 2-3-year-old children could improve in a fifth of settings inspected. These related to the size and overall groups for children and increasing the skills, knowledge and experience of staff. Inspectors noted positive comments on the quality of care and support in 26% of settings, including praising the way in which the service was meeting children's individual care needs, appropriate provision of resources and play experiences, and staff who were knowledgeable about the care and development of this age range. In over half of these inspections, the findings were neutral. This suggests that the quality of care and support for children in settings could be further improved to support better outcomes for children.

While we noted that the provision uptake was slow across some areas, there was evidence that the unexpectedly high adult-to-child ratios had a positive impact on children's experiences.

Bridge of Earn Nursery had highly skilled and motivated staff that were knowledgeable about early education and childcare. The high adult to child ratios within the nursery supported staff to work closely with the parents of very young children. This allowed them to meet children's care needs extremely well and offer very relevant experiences, enabling children to explore and investigate. This supported children to develop their confidence, extend their knowledge, and refine their skills and work together to solve problems. One parent commented, "As a new family to the nursery, I am thrilled with how my child had been welcomed and included in the nursery. My daughter is a very shy and sensitive little girl and going to nursery has been a difficult transition for her to make. The staff team have worked so hard to help her settle and help her form new friendships. It's such a happy and caring nursery, which I'm thrilled that my daughter's a part of".



Some parents had already noted the benefits of the placement to them and their child, and the good practice of sharing children’s progress with parents was noted as beneficial and having a positive impact of the experience of the placement. Where staff and parents worked closely with the setting, the inspection noted positive outcomes for children. For example, some settings had worked to deliver flexible childcare to meet the individual needs of families. There was also evidence in some settings that strong links to other professionals had enhanced the placement to meet the individual needs of children.

Bellrock Nursery School worked closely in partnership with parents. They told us that they “ensure that there is a very positive, inclusive ethos in the nursery and this helps to enhance meaningful involvement and partnership working with the parents and wider community”. Parents were involved in a variety of ways to support lifelong learning. In response to a consultation with parents, individual staff led six play sessions for parents, highlighting the links to the curriculum and their children’s play experiences in the nursery. The manager said parents were very positive about the play sessions and parents commented, “The weans are learning a lot of different things, like maths, science and their motor skills are amazing” and “It was interesting to know how the kids make the play dough and what they learn when making it. The shapes they can make and the colours and the feelings in their hands”. This reinforces our view that there are benefits to close partnerships with parents to ensure the service delivers high-quality outcomes that address the specific needs of children and families.



One service was based in a rural community where issues of isolation, health and poverty were identified. This service worked with families to support the needs of that community. For example, it provided children with an extended session over the lunch period to help develop their social skills. The resources it provided supported a nurturing and caring environment where children had opportunities to play and rest. The parents were also closely involved in the care of their children. This example demonstrates how the diverse needs of a rural community can be taken into account in service delivery and how extended provision can address specific family and community needs.

5.2 Staffing

The Scottish Government's ambition for excellence in early and learning and childcare and the aspiration that every child will have the best start in life will be dependent on the quality, skills, knowledge and experience of the workforce. There is a key role for practitioners in supporting and addressing inequalities and raising attainment through understanding the role and impact that staff can have on achieving positive outcomes for children.

Many children accessing early learning settings have needs that have not yet been identified. It is therefore essential in terms of early intervention that staff working in these settings have the skills, knowledge and experience in child development to assess children's developmental needs, so that children can access appropriate support at the earliest possible time.

Within the early learning and childcare sector, it is of critical importance that high-quality, nurturing care supports good healthy development for children progressing through their developmental milestones. Children require the very best of early learning and care experiences to help them develop interpersonal, social and cognitive skills, which then help them successfully access school learning when they reach that stage. Given the clear evidence from the Growing Up in Scotland studies showing the link between high-quality care and support in the early years and cognitive development in primary school, the potential impact of high-quality early learning and childcare is significant. The factors that lead to this high-quality care and support in early learning and childcare are numerous, but our scrutiny evidence has demonstrated that high-quality care is evident with well trained, motivated and stable staff teams.

Where 2-year-old provision was new to a setting, the quality of staffing we identified varied from service to service. Some staff were supported well to develop skills, whereas in other settings staff had less access to support and had limited knowledge or training in caring for this age range. Some settings had not yet considered using Building the Ambition: National Practice Guidance on Early Learning and Childcare¹³, or staff had a limited knowledge of Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) to support and guide staff in the provision of early learning and childcare. Not all settings had taken account of the expanded funded provision and included their 2-year-old provision within their development plan. In addition, not all settings had systems in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of early learning and childcare, or the impact of developments on the other elements of the setting.

We found that where staff were knowledgeable about the GIRFEC framework there was a positive impact on the provision. The development of individual setting's policy, environment, training and deployment of staff, was more effective when decisions or approaches took account of the wellbeing indicators of Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included. This

¹³ Scottish Government (2014) Building the Ambition – National Practice Guidance on Early Learning and Childcare – Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/08/6262/downloads#res458455>

supported children's overall wellbeing needs. This approach has the potential to increase the impact of high-quality early learning and childcare for the individual child but also support meeting a family's wider needs.

During inspections, we identified a range of views expressed about the impact of the expansion of hours, with staff in some settings raising concerns about the impact of a reduction in break times, reduced time for meetings, planning and record keeping, and a lack of time to support quality interactions and information sharing with parents. However, in settings where this transition had been planned well, we noted innovative and creative ways of planning and evaluating settings alongside children. This was done in a way that supported children's needs and promoted effective communication with parents, including opportunities across the day to make use of texting and emails to share information in an accessible way.

We know from our inspection activity that successful transitions involve all key people in the child's life, including parents and carers, when making decisions, and ensure decisions are based on all relevant information. We have identified that children's personal plans and the effectiveness of communication with parents/carers and other agencies is important. This partnership approach influences and supports positive outcomes for children's health and wellbeing needs.

Staff at Bellrock Nursery School knew their families very well and worked closely with them and other professionals. Children's needs were identified early and all information gathered from parents, other professionals, observations and assessment was used to put personal plans and strategies in place to support children's individual needs. These included wellbeing assessment plans, visual aids, adapting daily routines, flexible placements and working closely with parents to ensure a consistency in behaviour management. One parent said, "The key worker has been a pillar of support for my daughter and always keeps us up to date with her progress, if not daily/ weekly. She has given me loads of advice for my daughter at home and has worked brilliantly and the fact I can go to her and she doesn't judge me is absolutely fantastic".



We welcome the stated views of The National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) that the care of children under three requires different knowledge, environments and practice than when caring for children over three. This means particular attention needs to be placed on the recruitment, training, and retention of staff working with this sector.

While recruitment within local authority settings had been successful, it was evident that, in the expansion to accommodate 2-year-olds, local authority settings had benefited in many cases from employing staff experienced in working with this age group from the private sector. Where recruitment had been reported as difficult, the rural nature of the setting and local availability of staff were contributing factors.

Our report on early learning and childcare statistics 2015 identified some changes in relation to flexibility of opening times, with an increase in nurseries providing the option for full-day and not solely part-time sessional places. For the first time, more nurseries (51%) were offering the option of full-day sessions than the 49% providing part-day sessions. Similarly, there was a slight increase in the proportion of nurseries providing early learning and childcare during the school holiday periods, with 34% in 2015 compared to 33% in 2014¹⁴. The NDNA Scotland Annual Survey noted that losing staff from the private to the local authority sector was an increasing problem, with 46% of members surveyed finding this a challenging or very challenging issue when providing early learning and childcare¹⁵. Concern in the sector is that there is potential for settings to have increasing numbers of less experienced staff in the future. We found during our inspection activity that where qualified staff were recruited without previous experience of caring for young children, there was evidence that there was an impact on the overall quality of provision provided, which had led to poorer outcomes for children. In particular, the quality of environment and learning experiences for children within these settings could have been better.

Impact on the quality of provision was also noted where temporary or bank staff were being used. This resulted in a lack of team identity and consistency in the approach to supporting children's development. Some staff groups had not had appropriate training or development opportunities. This was compounded in a small number of settings where the manager had little experience of this age range.

In summary, findings at inspection for 2-year-olds suggested that:

- where staff were skilled and knowledgeable about the needs of younger children they provided nurturing settings that supported children's care and learning
- positive outcomes for young children were evident in settings where good personal planning processes involving the parents and relevant professionals were in place.

¹⁴ Care Inspectorate (2016) Early learning and childcare statistics 2015

<http://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/505086/early-learning-and-childcare-statistics-report-2015.pdf>

¹⁵ National Day Nurseries Association (2017) Scotland Annual Nursery Report 2017

http://www.ndna.org.uk/NDNA/News/Reports_and_surveys/Annual_Nursery_Survey/2017.aspx

We found that in most cases where new early learning and childcare settings opened there had been a good induction period for staff, with training on Building the Ambition, Pre-birth to Three, child protection and holistic play. Good quality induction and training that meet the learning needs of staff resulted in confident, motivated staff providing high-quality experiences for children.

Where there was a lack of experience of working with this younger age group, we identified that improved opportunities were needed to more fully support the children's development and learning. These needed to be appropriate to the age, experience and the individual needs of the children.

There needed to be more consideration given to supporting the effective transition of this younger age group into the nursery setting. This included planning to ensure there was enough time available to tailor the transitions to meet the specific needs of individual children. Failure to complete an assessment of additional support needs before placement had a negative impact on the quality of the setting provided overall.

The quality of support provided to staff by the management and leadership of the setting had a direct impact on whether the staff felt equipped to deliver high-quality experiences for children. This included opportunities for training and development. Where there had been an investment to support staff development and learning, staff were more confident in supporting young children's needs.

5.3 Environment

We know that ensuring safe and nurturing environments that provide the highest possible standards of care has a positive impact on the long-term outcomes for young children including improving health, including mental health and emotional wellbeing.

There was evidence in some settings that the physical environment had not been fully adapted to meet the needs of young children. We also had concerns that in some cases children did not get access to regular vigorous play, indoors or outdoors. Where indoor and outdoor environments had been developed with regard to the particular needs of young children, more positive outcomes were evidenced. Staff in these setting also benefited from working in more appropriate environments.

At Glaitness School Nursery, toddlers had their own quiet space, which although reflecting the facilities in the 3-5-years areas, was planned with the needs of this younger group in mind. The room was set up to allow children the independence to choose where to play. They had their own messy-play, heuristic, role-play, small-world, quiet and building areas. The toddlers also had their own toilet and changing area. At the beginning of each session, the children met in their area with their key worker, allowing time for parents to chat with staff and share news before leaving.



After the 3-5-year-old children had finished in their own key group times, the 2-year-old children were free to move into the 3-5-years room when they were ready, to have access to snack, free-flow outdoor play and the resources set up for all children. The children also had access to areas in the rest of the primary school such as a ball pool area, a sensory room, school library, gym halls and various outdoor spaces. The nursery staff had also considered how best to access the wider community and had developed a generic risk assessment enabling staff to take the children out of the school grounds to visit areas such as the local shops, play park or nearby wooded areas on a more flexible basis. One parent commented, "The two-year-old placement has been very successful in supporting my child and his development".



The International School Aberdeen utilised the skills and expertise of staff, children and parents when designing their extension. The design was focused on supporting positive outcomes for children and promoting children's independence. The environment had a very open plan feel, with children able to move independently between the playroom, the pod, the indoor garden room and the outdoor space. The circular pod and curved, glazed indoor garden area were created in response to the children's interest in circles. The pod, in the centre of the playroom, provided a quiet/flexible/sensory space. Large glass doors provided direct access to a very large, exciting outdoor space with a variety of levels and surfaces. This enabled children to be creative and imaginative outdoors and to freely explore their natural environment. The design of the environment allowed children to enjoy individual, small group or large group activities and provided excellent opportunities for the children to be independent.



The manager of the setting told us, "The indoor and outdoor areas are dynamic and respond to the changing needs and interests of the people who use them. This was important to us at the start of the design process and continues to be so, as children, staff and parents play, learn and grow in the space together".

6. Partnership arrangements

A wide range of voluntary, private and local authority settings provide early learning and childcare. All such settings, whether or not they are in partnership with a local authority to provide funded places, must register with the Care Inspectorate. In this sense, we act as a gateway to the market. Through appropriate regulation, scrutiny and improvement support, we provide assurance that quality is maintained, assessed and improved where necessary.

Partnership arrangements for 3 and 4-year-olds for the provision of early learning and childcare has been a well-established commissioning process across all local authorities. The provision for eligible 2-year-olds is still relatively new across Scotland, with many authorities using or expanding existing local authority provision to accommodate 2-year-olds. Increasingly, some local authorities were found to provide additional flexibility around both the timing of sessions and their own commissioning policies, such as including more private nurseries, playgroups and childminders into early learning and childcare partnerships to provide the funded 600 hours. There will therefore be further challenges in commissioning in the future with the expansion to 1140 hours requiring an increase of existing settings or the development of new settings to meet the demand.

Where settings are in partnership to deliver funded early learning and childcare, some local authorities have made their staff development sessions available to the private or voluntary sector on the same basis as provided for their council-run settings. Some partnership nurseries have noted a decrease in the visits by local authority staff to support improvements in settings. In some areas, staff support and development opportunities, previously provided through partnership arrangements, was limited, reducing the available development and support for staff. However, in other areas where there are partnership arrangements in place, there is a high level of satisfaction on the support and training provided by the local authority to both settings and individual childminders.

Childminders account for 14% of the early learning and childcare workforce, but currently only a small number of childminding settings are in partnership to provide funded places. It is anticipated that, with the implementation of the extension to 1140 hours for eligible children, additional settings will be established. This will likely involve expanded provision within existing sites, the establishment of new sites, and the creation of new providers of early learning and childcare including the potential to commission childminders to provide funded places. We will publish a report in the autumn of 2017 that will provide a range of high-quality and innovative practice examples of a range of childminding settings across Scotland.

The Care Inspectorate's current inspection methodology for childminders was introduced in 2014 and supports childminders to reflect on the quality of their service through a process of self-evaluation. Using evidence obtained from scrutiny, we evaluate how the childminder meets the needs of children and their families using the wellbeing indicators of Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included. From our inspection activity, we have identified that over 90% of childminders provide care that is good, very good, or excellent. There is potential capacity within these settings to play a much greater role in supporting the expansion of early learning and childcare.

Currently, there are some blended models where childminders not only provide early learning and childcare as a sole provider but also offer shared provision with an establishment-based, part-time placement. It is important that local authorities understand the potential of childminders in developing local commissioning approaches, recognising that childminders are registered, regulated and inspected by the Care Inspectorate in order to ensure the quality of their care and support remains high.

Childminder Gillian Ford delivers early learning and childcare flexibly to meet the needs of families. As well as collecting and dropping off children for parents who sometimes find it difficult to get to the setting, she adjusts the times of sessions to fit in with parent's needs. Inspectors noted that she provided a wide range of high-quality experiences and they saw evidence of children flourishing as they became more confident, built their self-esteem and developed friendships with other children.



Childminder Jo Mabon Childcare provides early learning and childcare as both a sole provider and a shared provision with a nursery setting. Our inspectors noted parents were able to choose where and when they used the ELC hours, which gave flexibility and enabled them to decide what was best for their child. One child had been attending Jo's setting since a baby. The blended approach provided consistency while still enabling the child to attend nursery to socialise with larger groups of children. Another child was less confident and benefited from the smaller, more homely environment provided solely by the childminder.



North, South and East Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway, Borders, Argyle and Bute, Highland, Orkney, Glasgow and West Lothian local authorities are currently using childminders to provide funded care to varying levels.

- Argyll and Bute Council offered parents the choice of using a partner childminder or a nursery setting depending on the availability. They have faced challenges within rural settings, including in relation to adaptations to small rural schools and the impact of providing longer sessions over the school day which may not meet parent's needs if they have children also attending the primary school at different times.

- In Orkney, parents can request split placements to meet their childcare needs, including blended places with a local authority nursery and private provider. Local childminders have also been invited to deliver early learning and childcare to 2-5-year olds and one childminder delivers blended provision to a number of children in partnership with a local nursery.

Some authorities had in place dedicated training to support childminders who were providing funded early learning and childcare but this was not consistent. Both Jo Mabon Childcare in Scottish Borders and Gillian Ford in Glasgow receive training to support them in delivering the early learning and childcare. Both find the training invaluable to support them in providing high-quality experiences. They also receive other support, which has included a learning visit to an outdoor nursery and support sessions facilitated by SCMA.

One local authority undertook partnership arrangements with childminders as a pilot and monitored the quality of provision for the 2-year-olds during the placements. Childminders involved in the pilot were reported to have provided a high level of care to the children. The authority has expanded the arrangements to provide for 3 and 4-year-old children receiving their early learning and childcare through childminders.

Not all childminders want to enter into partnership to provide early learning and childcare as they consider there could be an increase in the inspection of their settings. We inspect all childminders and, with a range and depth of experience with this sector, we are well positioned to develop future inspection methodologies. Other barriers for childminders include a perceived increase of bureaucracy in order to provide funded places. There is action that local authorities can take to support childminders in providing funded places. For example, Western Isles has attempted to provide incentive schemes, network meetings, support and training to encourage childminders to provide early learning and childcare.

The early learning and childcare trials currently being developed have included a number of provisions that include childminders, which are contributing to the provision of funded places for children¹⁶.

As part of the work we undertook in September 2016 to develop the learning resource for childminders, we surveyed parents and carers for their views. We received responses from 857 parents and carers, of whom 731 (85%) were currently using a childminding setting.

The survey found:

The main reasons for choosing childminding	The most important aspect of childminding
1. It's a home from home environment (65%)	1. A warm and friendly attitude
2. It's local (56%)	2. Providing a flexible setting
3. It provides the best quality of care for my children (53.5%)	3. Providing a home from home environment

¹⁶ www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/early-years/ELCTrials

Our parents and carers survey of parents already using childminders for their children found that, following the increase to 1140 hours, this group of parents valued their existing provision. Overall, 185 (25%) stated they would use childminders as the sole provider of care, 504 (68%) stated that they would prefer to use a blended model of a childminder and nursery placement. In addition, only 50 (6%) of those using a childminding setting would choose to change their childcare to a nursery-only setting.

Our report on early learning and childcare statistics 2015 found that 32,666 children were registered with childminders in 2015¹⁷. Local authorities should therefore consider how they ensure parents are consulted and informed about the choices available and how they reach as wide a range of parents as possible. We would anticipate more local authorities considering the option of working in partnership with childminders as a flexible model to meet the demand for 1140 hours.

¹⁷ Care Inspectorate (2016) Early learning and childcare statistics 2015

<http://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/505086/early-learning-and-childcare-statistics-report-2015.pdf>

7. Parental Choice and Flexibility

For the first time, outlined in Part 6 of the Act, there is a duty on local authorities to consult and plan on delivery of early learning and childcare at least once every two years. Local authorities must consult people who are representative of parents of children under school age in their area about how they should make early learning and childcare available. Under section 50(1)(b) of the Act, local authorities must have regard to the views expressed in their consultations and prepare and publish a plan for how they intend to make early learning and childcare available within their authority.

An interim survey on the uptake of 2-year-old's places, undertaken by the Scottish Government, indicates that 90% of local authorities had consulted with parents since 2014, of which 25 authorities identified changes required to their current plan. Section 50 and 52 of the Act introduced a duty for education authorities to consult, plan and promote flexibility in the delivery of early learning and childcare provision. We have found that the majority of local authorities want to work with families to provide choice and flexibility in childcare but are challenged by a number of factors. These include demands on existing resources such as building infrastructure and staffing. Expanding across the 52 weeks of the year to more flexibly meet parents' requests requires significant changes to terms and conditions of staff contracts, and as such requires time to implement.

Highland Council have adapted the model they offer taking account of feedback to provide settings that offer better quality experiences for children and also meet the needs of families. Now all schools in Highland consult with parents on a yearly basis to ask how they would like the nursery setting to be provided. Schools are providing a range of hours based on what works best for families. This varies between schools and includes traditional times, a more flexible setting and condensed hours over three or four days. It is likely parents appreciate this choice of provision, as outside of Inverness there are very few private providers who offer full-time care, due to the sparse population.

In order to implement the flexibility for parents, Highland Council consulted with staff to identify the best approach in terms of staff contracts. As a result, staff have a range of different contracts, ranging from 15 to 35 hours. Recognising that children were not always with the same staff for their time at nursery, staff have adapted how they work and have moved away from their traditional methods to provide more flexible routines that meet children's needs better.

In 2014, Orkney developed a number of different models to deliver 600 hours. Consultation with parents showed that most parents wanted to have their hours within the school day and models were developed to support this. Full-time settings adopted a six-session model, where parents can use up to six, 2.5-hour sessions each week. If two sessions are taken in the same day, children also have an extra hour for lunch and have a free school meal. Parents can choose to take sessions over two or three full days where the setting can accommodate this. Children are not allocated to morning or afternoon sessions, instead parents request the specific sessions that best fit with their family needs. Parents have found this flexible approach has met their needs very well.

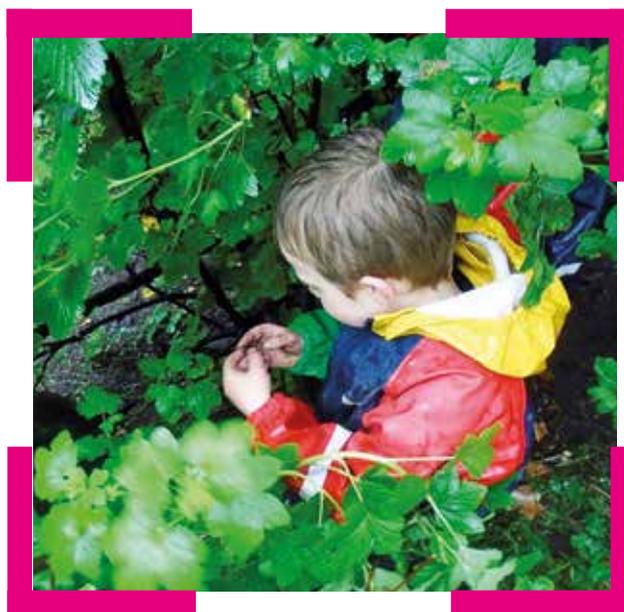
“With adjustments made throughout the year, I have found each and every session very flexible, compared to three years previously with my other child. Full days are very helpful in preparation for P1.”

Different models have evolved to suit the local context. For example, in one island setting where parents have to travel long distances, sessions run on four days a week and two of the sessions include longer days with a lunch. In another nursery, where parents need more childcare, the setting offers sessions of three hours, 10 minutes, but also offers back-to-back afternoon sessions.

West Lothian council consulted all parents with eligible children, offering a range of options to families and asking for alternative suggestions to the existing models.

Some local authorities have been proactive and tried to be flexible to meet the needs of working parents. The Ipsos MORI research found that the degree of flexibility varied, with some local authorities providing the traditional model of five sessions a week as the only option available. However, other local authorities were able to offer more options, including two full days or school holiday provisions. For example, in one island community the local authority had offered full-day sessions with lunch provided, which has enabled parents to have 2.5 full-day sessions as opposed to the traditional five half-day sessions, if this better meets the needs of families.

In the more rural areas, they have offered a different choice in providing longer sessions and lunch over four days. Some nurseries are also offering time at the beginning and the end of the day, which parents can pay for separately. This supports working families as they do not have to move the children between childcare providers. In some local authority areas, parents’ choice has been limited to extended morning or afternoon sessions. This may not fit with parent’s work patterns or older children’s patterns of attendance at school. As a result, parents may not make use of all the time available for their children. Offering an extended morning then limits the opportunities available within the afternoon session, should parents wish this option.



Each local authority will develop a plan that outlines how they will deliver the 1140 hours, including how the available resources will be used to deliver high-quality early learning and childcare that takes account of the individual needs of parents. We note and support the view of Early Years Scotland within their survey of parents, that the approach to ensuring flexible settings that meet needs of

families could be considered at a community level, rather than an individual setting, enabling settings to meet needs of children in a planned and effective approach.

We are keen to support change and innovative approaches to provision of early learning and childcare, including around the flexibility of hours provided and blended services children and families may benefit from. There are opportunities to consider a range of approaches such as family play and stay sessions that Early Years Scotland has developed. We noted the views of Early Years Scotland members that, while 51% of their members indicated they would like to provide extended hours, only 41% intended to offer additional hours. Some of the reasons for this included the inability of settings to offer extended hours due to the shared nature of the premises they used, the inability to meet additional staffing costs unless there was a significant increase in funding, current part-time staff not being able to commit to a full time role, and concerns that within some communities the uptake of children taking extended provision would not make an extended provision a viable option. There is potential for some of these perceived barriers to be overcome and it is therefore important that commissioners consider a community-based approach to a range of provision, to meet the varying requirements of parents and availability of existing early learning and childcare settings within a locality.

8. Workforce

The sector has coped well with the increase to 600 hours provision. There are 39,030 staff working across the early learning and childcare settings, including childminders, and it is acknowledged there will require a major expansion of workforce to support the future expansion to 1140 hours. As well as being a major employer in its own right, the early learning and childcare sector also enables parents and carers to work or undertake study and so plays a critical role in economic development. Skills Development Scotland's Skills Investment Plan: Prospectus - For Scotland's early learning and childcare sector sets out a clear mission statement and strategic objective that acknowledges the challenges for workforce development in the future, including the need for close collaboration across the sector if Scotland is to achieve the aim of providing every eligible child with 1140 hours free early learning and childcare¹⁸.

	Number of staff (headcount)	% of childminders and % of daycare of children services
Childminders	5,570	14%
of which: private (self-employed)	5,570	100%
Daycare of children	33,460	86%
of which: local authority	13,780	41%
of which: private	13,140	39%
of which: voluntary/not for profit	6,540	20%
Total	39,030	100%

We collect information on workforce each year, some of it on behalf of the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). A key factor in ensuring high-quality settings is having staff with the right skills, knowledge and experience working with children. Currently, 70% of the workforce has the qualification required to register with the SSSC. The level of qualified workers varies across sectors, with local authorities having 88% of their staff with the relevant qualification and partner providers having 66% of their workforce qualified. Where a private or voluntary setting is not providing funded early learning and childcare, the level of qualified staff dropped to 50%.

Understandably, the expansion to 600 hours has impacted on the numbers of staff required to deliver early learning and childcare settings across Scotland and there needs to be further consideration of how to develop and grow a competent and confident workforce for the future. One local authority increased its workforce by 25%, with the majority of staff on shorter contracts with the facility to increase in the future to a maximum of 35 hours to support further expansion.

¹⁸ Skills Development Scotland (2017) Skills Investment Plan: Prospectus For Scotland's early learning and childcare sector <http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/43127/early-learning-and-childcare-sip-digital.pdf>

¹⁹ SSSC Workforce data from 2015

<http://data.sssc.uk.com/data-publications/22-workforce-data-report/128-scottish-social-service-sector-report-on-2015-workforce-data>

Our data on staffing indicated in 2014 that 30% of daycare of children's services found it difficult to recruit staff into current vacancies. In 2015, this rose to 33% and our most recent analysis indicates that 35% of settings are finding staff vacancies difficult to fill. Many local authorities noted pressure in terms of providing a competent and confident workforce and proposed changes to working conditions and practices. Particular concerns were noted by the private sector on its ability to retain qualified and experienced staff in the sector as local authority expanded their settings. Unsurprisingly, staff were attracted to local authority settings where generally there were better terms and conditions. In some rural areas, the availability of staff is considered a real barrier to delivering future expansion.

The required increase in staffing goes beyond that needed to deliver direct care to children. An increase is also required in the availability of support settings to ensure the continued development of high-quality early learning and childcare provision. In order to support the expansion, some local authorities have therefore extended their infrastructure.

Dundee City Council has included posts to support attainment of children, demonstrating their commitment to rebalance some of the inequalities that children experience in more deprived communities. This has included family workers and development of the Eat Well – Play Well scheme. In addition, Perth & Kinross council has employed play leaders to support lunch provision in order to reduce impact on the main staff team and release them to undertake other tasks while maintaining flexible provision for families.

Downfield Early Years Centre participated in the scheme. Sessions were well attended and parents responded very positively to the advice, ideas and suggestions given to support families in achieving healthier lifestyles. The nursery staff attended the sessions and this has led to children being more involved in the preparation of snacks and the provision of more imaginative snacks.



St. Dominic's Nursery Class and Wrap-around Care, Crieff had implemented this model, which provides flexibility for children and their families. Staff had the opportunity to work for longer periods with children to deepen each child's learning experience. Children were developing their confidence and independence through a caring and nurturing approach. They had opportunities to enjoy a range of healthy food options while developing relationships with one another and key staff including the dining staff. In order for children to be part of the whole school community, consideration had been given to their needs to ensure they were well supported in this busy and at times noisy environment. Staff ensured children had the same table area each day, close to the toilets and next to the younger members of the school community. Quiet play areas were set up with the children to promote the opportunity for rest and time for their lunch to settle. Staff shared story time and small-world play areas were organised with materials and cushions for comfort and rest. One parent told inspectors that "Staying for lunch helped in developing confidence, independence, making choices, being part of a group and the social aspect".

We recognise that expansion of the ELC workforce will likely draw on sections of the population who are also being recruited to work in other parts of the social care workforce. It is therefore important for national and local workforce planning strategies to take account of this, ensuring that there is an overall increase in the ELC and wider social care workforce rather than increased competition for the same pool of potential recruits.

9. Collaborative Working

Our inspection evidence tells us that effective collaboration between professionals is essential to support a holistic approach to child development. Collaboration is more likely to take place within a culture where there is clarity of roles and responsibilities, and mutual trust, respect and understanding between all professionals and support staff.

The Care inspectorate has a duty under the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 to inspect all daycare and childminding settings in Scotland, regardless of whether or not they provide funded early learning and childcare. Education Scotland is responsible for the inspection of education settings in schools and may also inspect the provision of education in those settings providing funded early learning and childcare. Together, our organisations have developed a system of cooperating where our responsibilities interface, undertaking inspections using a shared approach which removes the need for two separate inspections of the same daycare of children setting. The report Education Governance: Next Steps Empowering our teachers, parents and communities to deliver excellence and equity for our children (June 2017) has identified that the current system of shared inspection could be further enhanced²⁰. We are committed to leading with Scottish Government, Education Scotland and other partners, proposals for a shared inspection framework that will strengthen our focus on educational attainment and reduce health and social inequalities for children and families.

The value of this shared approach is not simply to be efficient and reduce the impact of inspection on settings, but to facilitate joint working between our organisations. Intelligence about early learning and childcare settings is shared outwith inspections where necessary and, where possible, risks are identified. In 2015-16, we undertook 86 such shared inspections with Education Scotland staff and carried out a further 1,757 inspections of early learning and childcare on our own.

During 2016-17, together with Education Scotland, we carried out 54 shared inspections. In the same period we undertook 1,890 inspections in daycare of children's services. We also inspect all childminders in Scotland and have a range and depth of experience with this sector that provides a valuable resource to build upon in developing future inspection methodologies. During 2016-17, we inspected 1,881 childminders.

Moving forward, we will continue to work closely with other key stakeholders, including SCMA, the Care and Learning Alliance (CALA), the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES) and the Scottish Government, to develop scrutiny approaches for childminders providing early learning and childcare. The development of this work will be influenced by Scottish Government's commitment to a shared inspection framework for the Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland by 2018, as outlined in the report Education Governance: Next Steps Empowering our teachers, parents and communities to deliver excellence and equity for our children (June 2017).

²⁰ Education Governance – Next Steps: Empowering Our Teachers, Parents and Communities to Deliver Excellence and Equity for Our Children
<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00521075.pdf>

We have agreed with Education Scotland to do further work to develop arrangements to support the inspection, quality assurance and improvement of funded early learning and childcare in childminding settings. The project will see the development of a shared inspection framework to assess the quality of learning within the childminding setting. We will adopt this approach to support improvement across childminders. We will continue to develop in line with key policy development and national guidance including the new Health and Social Care Standards, Curriculum for Excellence (early stages), Building the Ambition and Pre- Birth to Three.

The goal of the inspection framework for early learning and childcare should be one that supports the delivery of high-quality, flexible and affordable childcare, enabling the best possible experiences and outcomes for children and, in turn, contributing to an all-inclusive approach to child development, reducing inequalities and raising attainment for all. Our inspection experience tells us that strong and effective strategic leadership and direction and effective collaboration between professionals are essential to achieve these aims and those of the early learning and childcare expansion programme.

Collaboration is more likely to take place within a culture where there is clarity of purpose, roles and responsibilities and mutual trust, respect and understanding between all professionals and support staff. Leaders at all levels should demonstrate their commitment to developing and supporting a positive culture that fosters effective collaborative working. Regardless of the provision of funded early learning and childcare, we continue to inspect all settings providing early learning and childcare, increasingly through an intelligence-led, risk-based approach.

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