



care
inspectorate

A REVIEW OF CARE SERVICES FOR EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE 2014-2017

Findings from the Care Inspectorate

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FOREWORD



Peter Macleod Chief Executive Care Inspectorate

I am pleased to present the Care Inspectorate's review of early learning and childcare from 2014 to 2017. The period of this review has seen a significant level of change in the policy context of early learning and childcare as well as the legislation which guides our direction in Scotland.

The passage of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 through Scottish Government began the process of expanding early learning and childcare, first to 600 hours a year and up to 1140 hours by 2020. This expansion has permeated the work of early learning and childcare settings as well as how we approach our work as an organisation. The workforce has had to adapt and change to a wide range of initiatives and have still maintained a high quality of care throughout.

Throughout this expansion, the Care Inspectorate has supported improvement across the sector, producing guidance to help services share and spread good practice as well as undertaking a vast number of scrutiny and assurance work to support services' ongoing improvement journeys. Our inspection, registration and complaints colleagues have worked hard to engage with providers, settings, children and families over the last three years and are committed to ensuring children get the best start in life. People consistently tell us that they appreciate the advice and guidance our inspectors and other colleagues in the organisation provide and we can be proud of the impact we have had on improving services throughout the country.

This review recognises the hard work and dedication of everyone working with children and families across Scotland and also provides an insight into what we can do in the future. The coming years will continue to present challenges with the continuing expansion of each child's entitlement to early learning and childcare as well as the introduction of the new Health and Social Care Standards. We will continue to build on our role to empower services to think innovatively and strive for excellence for everyone in their care. We will consider how we can increase the positive impact we have on outcomes for our children and families and plan strategically with our partners to achieve this.

I would like to thank everyone involved in early learning and childcare for the hard work and dedication they have shown over the last three years. With people who are passionate about improving outcomes for children and families and knowledgeable about what is best for them, we can work towards our ambition to make Scotland the best place in the world to grow up.

1. WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

The Care Inspectorate is the independent scrutiny, assurance and improvement support body for social care and social work across Scotland. We regulate, inspect and support improvement of care settings for the benefit of the people who experience them. We aim to ensure that people receive safe, high-quality, compassionate care that meets their needs and promotes their rights and choices. We are the only body that has a statutory responsibility for all early learning and childcare settings in Scotland.



How we provide scrutiny, assurance and support improvement in care and learning has changed over the course of this review. The focus has moved from compliance with rules to a collaborative approach that supports settings to improve, taking account of outcomes for children. We work closely with internal colleagues and our partners to ensure settings are given clear messages to support improvement. Our scrutiny interventions include inspection, registration and complaint investigations.

Inspection

The Care Inspectorate plays a critical role in ensuring that care settings in Scotland are high quality and promote positive outcomes for children. We have adapted our inspection model to ensure that it focuses on outcomes for children while being proportionate, intelligence-led and risk-based. This is so that we can target our resources into settings where we have concerns and offer support where improvement is needed to increase the quality of care for children and families.

When we inspect, we consider the principles of [Getting it Right for Every Child \(GIRFEC\)](#). This approach helps settings focus on what makes a positive difference for children and young people - and what they can do to improve. There are eight wellbeing indicators at the heart of GIRFEC; Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included. These are referred to as 'SHANARRI' and we use these indicators to assess how settings are making a positive difference for children and families. We use a six point scale to evaluate quality of care and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people within the themes of care and support, environment, staffing, and management and leadership of services.



Safe



Healthy



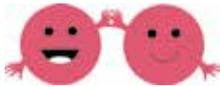
Achieving



Nurtured



Active



Respected



Responsible



Included

Registration

The Care Inspectorate is responsible for registering all care settings. We consider new applications to register new settings and change of legal entities applications to vary conditions of registration. We also have a duty to investigate any potentially illegally operating settings. As part of the registration function, we ensure that the quality of early learning and childcare settings is in place before they open.

Complaints

In addition to our other scrutiny and improvement activities, the Care Inspectorate has a statutory duty to investigate complaints.

We define a complaint as:

'an expression of dissatisfaction by a person receiving care or support from a registered care service or from one or more members of the public about the care and/or support of an individual or individuals by a registered care service.'

A complaint may relate to:

- inadequate standards of care
- failure to uphold the rights of a person using a service, or their relatives or carers
- a care service's failure to follow appropriate safe care practices
- the practice of staff, including treatment by, or conduct of, a member of staff, fitness of staff, inadequate staff training and staff numbers or deployment.

2. INTRODUCTION

Our Review of Early learning and Childcare between 2011 and 2014

In 2015, we published our findings on [inspecting and improving care between 2011 and 2014](#).

Our findings noted that children experiencing early learning and childcare were receiving a generally positive level of care and there was a trend of continued improvement over the period of the review. Settings were taking more account of outdoor play, including the development of innovative play spaces, and settings were recognising the impact this had on improving outcomes for children. The increased use of the 'SHANARRI' wellbeing indicators was promoting approaches to early intervention and playing a role in improving outcomes for children and their families. While the picture was positive overall, the review made reference to the future challenges faced by settings when increasing the number of funded hours of early learning and childcare from 475 to 600. This included provision for eligible two year olds with a specific focus on the importance of a skilled and valued workforce in sustaining high quality settings. In addition, it was recognised that not all families had access to a variety of high quality early learning and childcare settings based on where they live, especially for children living in the most deprived areas.

The Review of Early Learning and Childcare between 2014 and 2017

This review summarises the context of early learning and childcare and the Care Inspectorate's findings over the period of April 2014 and March 2017. It celebrates achievements in promoting improvement and shines a spotlight on the success of settings who have worked creatively to provide quality experiences within a context of continuous change. We examine findings from our inspection, registration, complaints and improvement work and consider what we can do to increase choices and create better outcomes for children and families experiencing care and learning settings in Scotland.

3. KEY FINDINGS

1. The number of children experiencing early learning and childcare has continued to increase over the period of this review from 254,770 in 2014 to 291,460 in 2016.
2. Overall, the quality of early learning and childcare services is good and improving. In general, children and families are experiencing a high quality of care and support across Scotland. The settings in which they spend their time are well planned and meet their care and learning needs. This is supported by staff who are well trained and motivated to offer warm and compassionate care which enhances children's development.
3. The number of fully qualified managers in early learning and childcare has decreased over the period of the review and while these managers are currently working towards the appropriate qualification required, we can see that the number of settings achieving an evaluation of 'Good' or above for the quality of management and leadership has also decreased slightly.
4. More settings have identified themselves as offering a forest philosophy, using the outdoors to provide early learning and childcare.
5. More people will need to be working towards a qualification in order to be effective and well trained practitioners as a result of the expansion. As the expansion continues, it will be important for settings to recognise this and ensure that they maintain and improve the quality of care and learning for children and families throughout this period of change.
6. The voluntary sector tended to provide nurseries to the fewest number of children aged 0 – 3, with the majority of their children being aged 3 and 4 and this has remained stable throughout the period of the review. As early learning and childcare continues to expand, it will be important for those planning and commissioning settings to understand this balance more effectively to ensure the needs of families are being met.
7. There are aspects of early learning and childcare which still require support to be the best it can be and the Care Inspectorate is committed to being a part of this improvement journey. Concentrating on improving the quality of management and leadership over the next three years and recognising the need to close the attainment gap through early intervention, we will work with services collaboratively to improve outcomes for children and families across Scotland.





4. FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW

The Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 was passed by the Scottish Government, outlining a series of provisions aimed at supporting the Scottish Government's ambition that Scotland would be the best place in the world for children to grow up.

The provisions are designed to place children and young people at the heart of the way settings are planned and delivered, complementing a number of the Scottish Government's wider policy intentions, such as the implementation of [Getting it Right for Every Child \(GIRFEC\)](#), a preventative approach to promote more effective collaboration between the range of professionals who may be supporting children and families. This aimed to ensure that everyone understood the best ways to make sure children achieve their potential and have the best start in life.

One of the main changes in the Act was to provide families with an increase in the amount and flexibility of free early learning and childcare from 475 hours a year to a minimum of 600 hours a year for each eligible child. In 2020, this entitlement will increase further to 1140 hours. The aim of this key policy is to provide opportunities for parents to return to work or access training and qualifications supported by high quality early learning and childcare.

[National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland](#) was also published in 2014 following the approval of the Act by parliament. This guidance provided a national framework within which agencies and practitioners at local level – individually and jointly – could understand and agree processes for working together to support, promote and safeguard the wellbeing of all children.

In 2014, the Scottish Government also published [Building the Ambition: National Practice Guidance on Early Learning and Childcare](#). It sets the context for high quality provision and aims to support practitioners by looking at the key areas which make a difference to a child's experiences as well as the important role that practitioners play.

From 2015, the Scottish Government began to set out the direction for the transformation of early learning and childcare. The ['Blueprint for 2020: Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland'](#) aims to ensure a high quality experience for every child, improving outcomes for all children, especially those who will benefit most. Using the findings from ['Growing Up in Scotland'](#) and the ['Independent Review of the ELC and OSC Workforce'](#) as well as other consultation and research activities, these action plans have identified a variety of ways to achieve the aims of the expansion, including to:

- support the vision of an education system which delivers both excellence and equity for all children in Scotland, including closing the attainment gap and planning for effective transitions;
- support our ambitions to reduce child poverty by contributing to the delivery of our ambitious statutory targets set out in the Child Poverty (Scotland) Bill; and
- offer parents increased choice of setting where they can access their funded early learning and childcare entitlement, including increasing flexibility to support parents in accessing sustainable employment routes, especially for those who can lift themselves out of poverty.

Alongside the work of the 'Blueprint for 2020', the Scottish Government outlined its vision and direction for education through the [National Improvement Framework](#). The current priorities for the National Improvement Framework are:

- improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy;

- closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children;
- improvement in children and young people’s health and wellbeing; and
- improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school leaver destinations for all young people.

It was recognised that, in order to achieve these aims, early intervention would be essential to ensure children have the best start in life. While undertaking our work, we have worked closely with settings to ensure they are taking account of these actions within their work and aiming to achieve the ambitions of the Scottish Government to improve outcomes for children and families.

In 2017, the new [Health and Social Care Standards](#) were published to set out what we should expect when using health, social care or social work settings across Scotland. They adopt a person-led approach, which focuses on human rights and wellbeing, and they are entirely written in the first person. For the first time, our statutory national standards set out in some detail what human rights and wellbeing look and feel like for someone experiencing care.

The Standards are underpinned by five principles; dignity and respect, compassion, be included, responsive care and support and wellbeing. These are based on these five headline outcomes.

- I experience high quality care and support that is right for me.
- I am fully involved in all decisions about my care and support.
- I have confidence in the people who support and care for me.
- I have confidence in the organisation providing my care and support.
- I experience a high quality environment if the organisation provides the premises.

An overview of early learning and childcare across Scotland – how has early learning and childcare changed since 2014?

The number of early learning and childcare settings across Scotland has decreased since 2013 from **9,968** to **9,402** early learning and childcare settings including childminders. However, the number of early learning and childcare places has increased by **10,150**. While the number of children who can attend childminders has not increased, more places are now being offered in both school-aged childcare settings and nurseries.

FIGURE 1

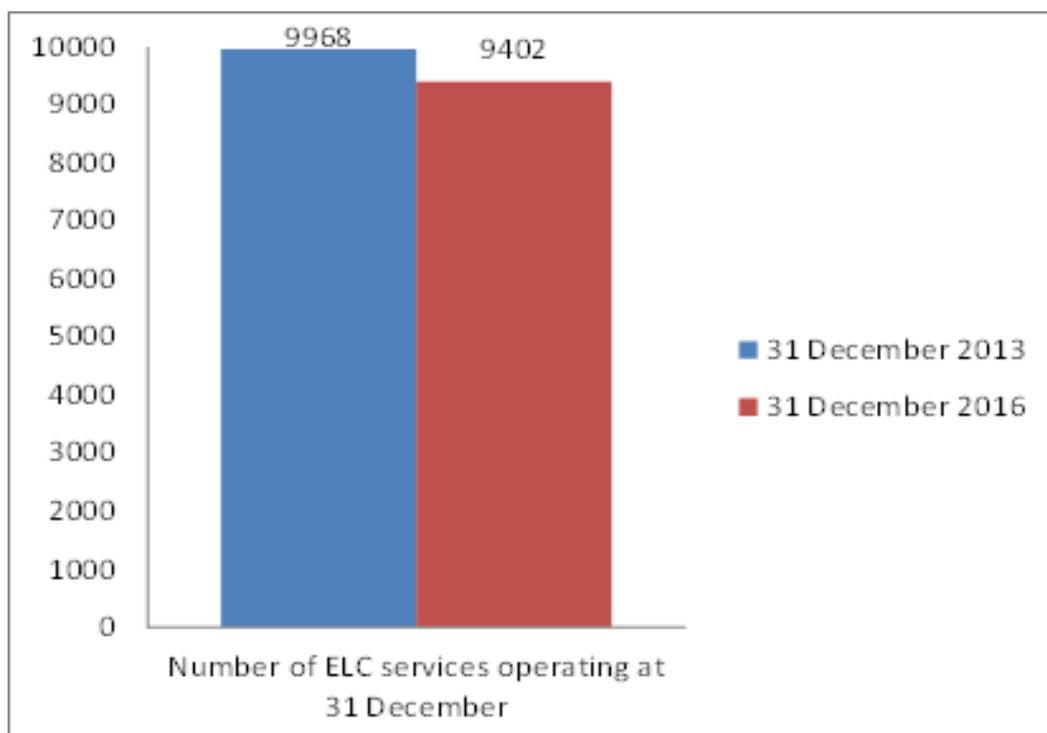
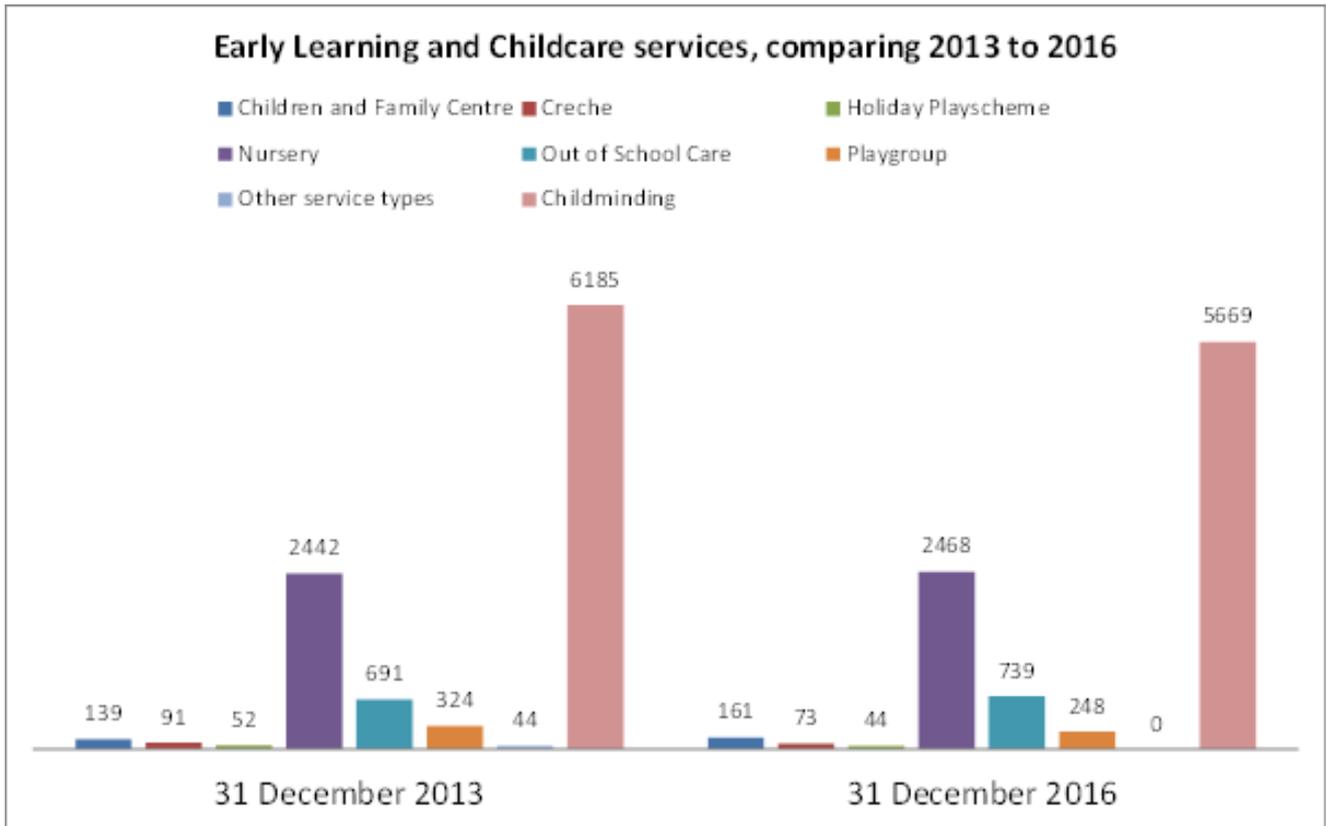


FIGURE 2



Over the period of the review, the number of children aged 0 - 5 registered in early learning and childcare settings continued to increase and the number of children aged 3 and 4 was above 100%, suggesting that many of these children attended more than one service to receive early learning and childcare. As the expansion continues, we will support settings to consider how care and learning can be provided whether within a single setting or delivered by more than one provider, ensuring that children’s needs are the priority when planning delivery models. Working with registration colleagues, we will encourage innovation which best supports the needs of children in this age group.

The number of children registered with childminders continued to increase over the review although this was in line with the general increase trend across the sector. Children who were attending childminders tend to be aged between 1 and 11 years with more children aged 2 years attending a childminding service than any other age group.

Within the early learning and childcare sector, three types of providers help to support the provision of early learning and childcare across Scotland:

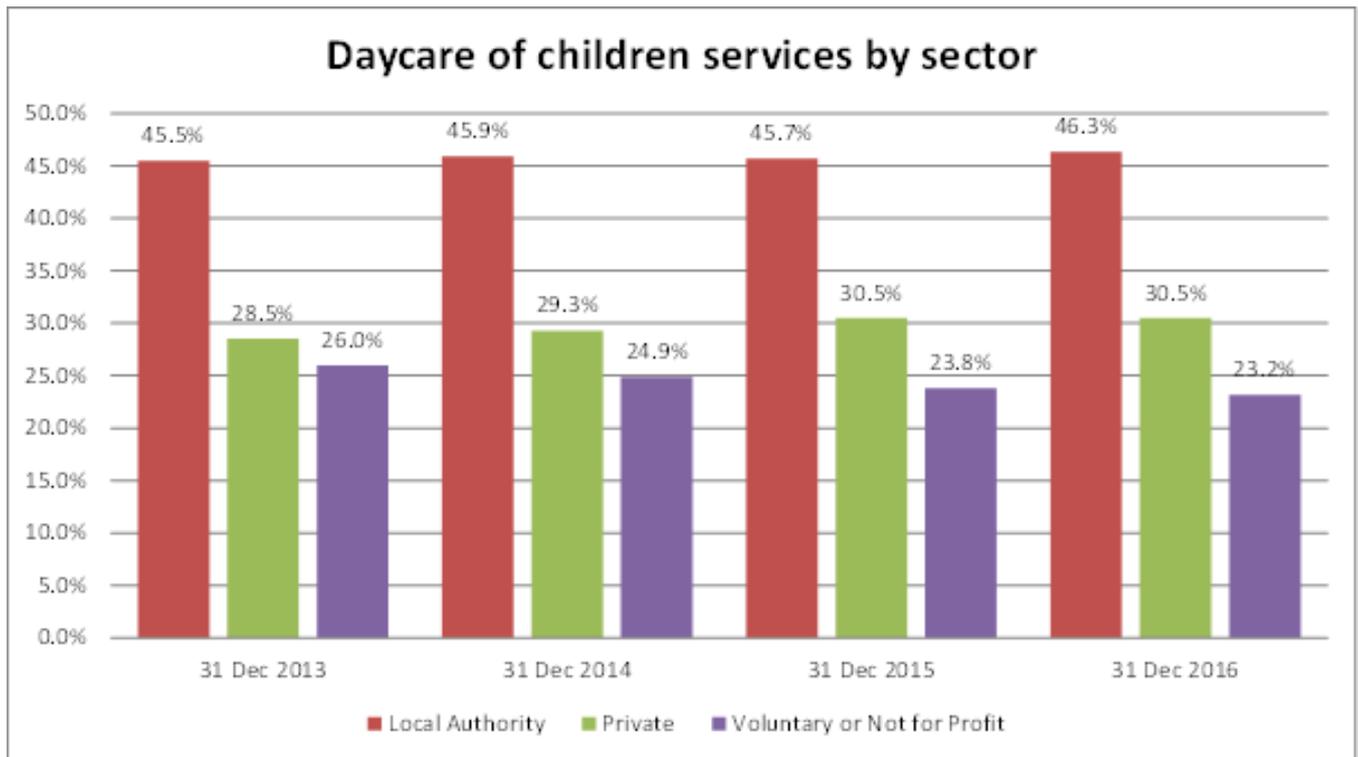
- local authority
- private
- voluntary/not-for profit (known as voluntary for the purposes of this report).

All childminders are classed as private providers and more information about this service type can be found in the next section of this review.

FIGURE 3: TRENDS IN %AGE OF DAYCARE SETTINGS PROVIDED BY PROVIDER OVER THE PERIOD OF THE REVIEW

	31 Dec 2013	31 Dec 2014	31 Dec 2015	31 Dec 2016
Local authority	45.5%	45.9%	45.7%	46.3%
Private	28.5%	29.3%	30.5%	30.5%
Voluntary or not for profit	26.0%	24.9%	23.8%	23.2%

FIGURE 4



The number of services which are provided by the voluntary sector has decreased over the period of the review, whereas private providers have shown growth with the number of local authority settings remaining fairly static. While local authorities provided a large proportion of nurseries available across Scotland, the voluntary sector provided the greatest number of out-of-school care settings for children and families. Almost half of those available were provided by the third or voluntary sector. 24,820 children attended these settings. The fastest growing provider, however, was the private sector at 2.1% growth in services operating since the last review. As we move forward, it will be important to understand the spread of providers in the sector to ensure that the Care Inspectorate supports local authorities with planning and commissioning processes during the expansion. The [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation \(SIMD\)](#) identifies specific areas where there are high levels of deprivation across Scotland. It allows effective targeting of policies and funding where the aim is to wholly or partly tackle or take account of multiple deprivation and improve outcomes for those who live there.



Children and families who lived in areas of deprivation had the fewest number of settings to choose from across all service types. Over the period of the review, the number of registered settings in these areas has decreased, although there has been a significant increase in the number of children who are registered in these settings. These settings also tended to be registered to provide a service to larger numbers of children at an average of 53 registered places in SIMD 1. An average of 71 children attended these settings many on a part time basis to receive their early learning and childcare entitlement. In addition, the settings available tended to be nurseries provided by local authorities. Voluntary providers were more concentrated in these areas, with private provision providing the least number of daycare settings here. There is a need to increase the number of settings families can choose from in areas which are classed as SIMD 1 and 2.

Scotland has a rich and diverse culture with people from across the world travelling here to live and work in our country. The Care Inspectorate recognises that it is important to value each individual's unique experiences to help them feel included as a citizen of Scotland. There were a few settings which provide Urdu, Polish, Punjab as well as communication languages like Makaton and Sign-Along. Settings usually offer this alongside their main delivery method of English. To support settings in communicating with their children and families, the Care Inspectorate can translate any of our documents into another language.

More settings identified their work in relation to particular philosophies such as Montessori and Steiner methodologies. While this still represented a small number of settings in Scotland, it is important to recognise that an additional 70 settings who registered with the Care Inspectorate over the period of the review defined a particular philosophy in their service. In addition, more settings identified themselves as offering a forest philosophy, using the outdoors to provide early learning and childcare.

Transforming the Care Inspectorate – what changes have we made in the last three years?

In 2016, the Care Inspectorate published a Transformation Plan to build a better organisation through:

- Consolidating Excellence
- Culture Change
- Collaboration
- Confident and competent workforce.

By considering these themes, we aimed to evidence how we provide public protection and assurance while supporting improvement and innovation, so everyone can understand the added value we bring to improving the lives of people across Scotland. Even against a backdrop of continuing economic constraints across the whole public sector, we have adapted and thrived, while maintaining rigour and excellence in our scrutiny, assurance and improvement work.

Changes to our methodology have included a specific inspection model tailored to childminding settings based on the impact the setting makes on the quality of experience for children using the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators and the introduction of shorter reports as well as changes to the frequency of inspection based on levels of risk and intelligence gathered. In general, more time has been spent observing children and engaging with providers about how they can improve the quality of their service to promote positive outcomes for children and families.

There have been a number of resources produced by the Care Inspectorate to support effective practice in early learning and childcare settings. Following the publication of [‘My World Outdoors’](#), other resources have been developed including [‘Getting Ready to Read’](#), [‘Your Childminding Journey’](#), [‘My Childminding Experience’](#), [‘Our Creative Journey’](#) and [‘Space to Grow’](#). The Care Inspectorate is committed to sharing examples of good quality care, helping all settings aspire to be the best they can be and have the greatest impact on children's lives. In order to maximise the impact of this work, it will be important for us to build on the strengths we have in engaging with providers, settings and those who experience care.

We aim to create a more intelligence-led and risk-based approach to our outcome-focussed scrutiny, assurance and improvement work, communicating clearly with the public about our findings and providing improvement support to achieve high quality care across Scotland.

Action

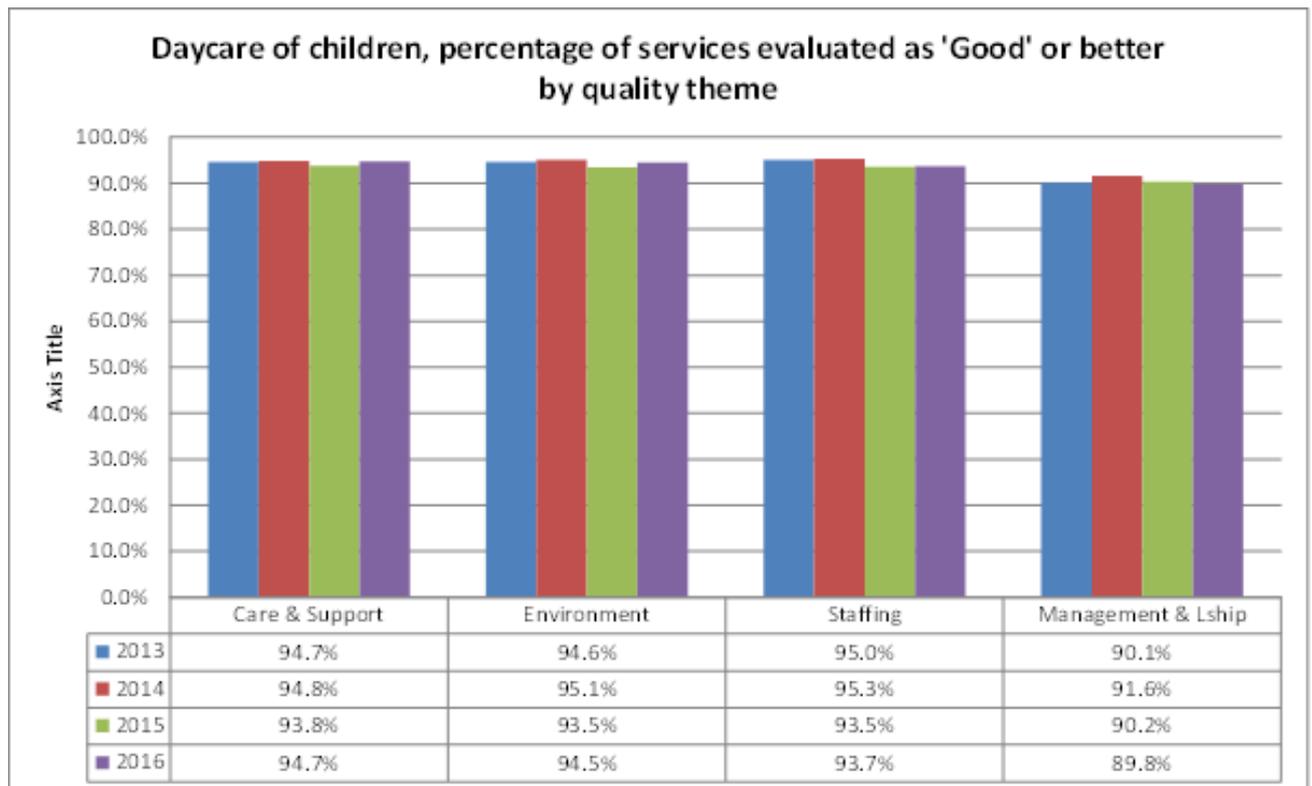
We will continue to transform the way we work with services to enable creative and innovative care services to develop and flourish. We will also continue to improve the way we inspect and evaluate quality to support improvement and innovation and to add increasing value for people experiencing care.

Care Inspectorate quality evaluations – how good are our early learning and childcare settings?

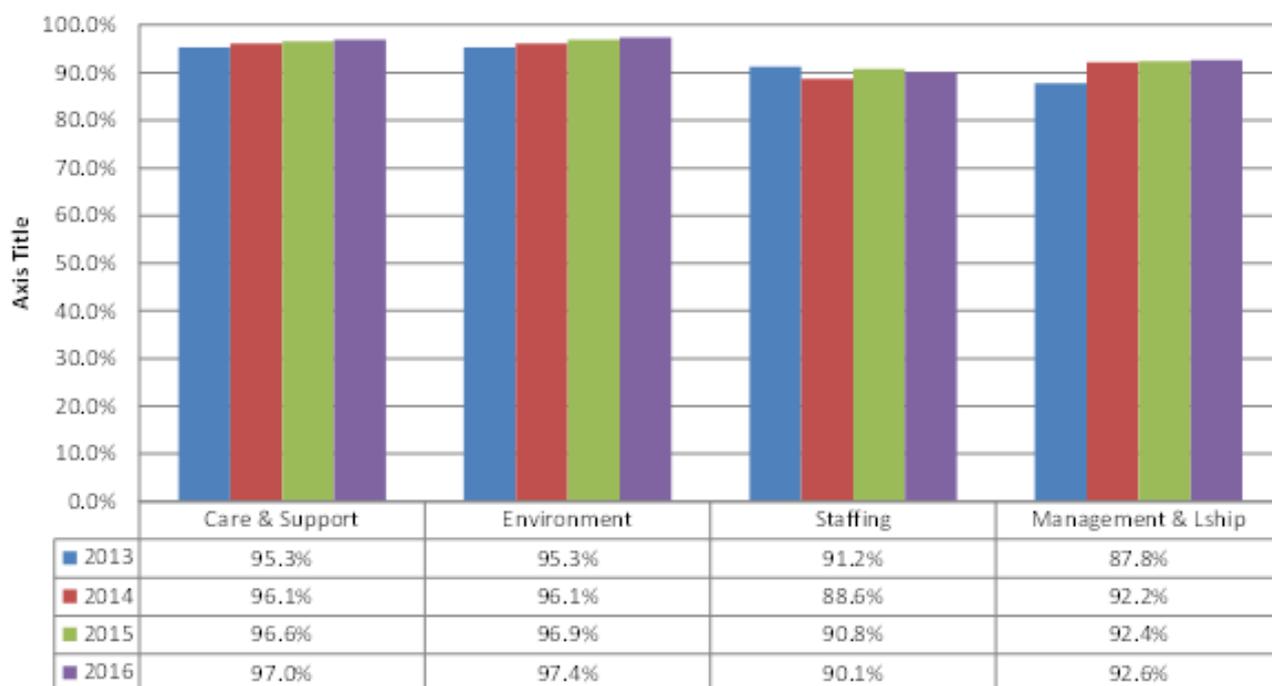
Over the period of the review, the quality of all early learning and childcare settings remained consistently high across the four themes we look at during our inspections. In the three years captured here, we have undertaken 24,776 scrutiny, assurance and improvement activities across the 9,138 early learning and childcare settings.

Childminders continued to perform well in respect of the quality of their provision in most areas with 91.8% receiving an evaluation of good or above in 2016. During the period of the review we implemented methodology changes that included introducing a measurement of the quality of management and leadership within childminding services in 2015. Previously, childminders received a grade for the quality of staffing and, therefore, the data for this theme is not comparable for the purposes of this review.

FIGURE 4: TRENDS IN DAYCARE AND CM SETTINGS OVER PERIOD OF REVIEW IN EACH QUALITY THEME



Childminding, percentage of services evaluated as 'Good' or better by quality theme



Whilst the quality of management and leadership has decreased in daycare of children settings most services attained a grade of good or above for this quality theme. The data collected from our Care Standard Questionnaires (CSQs) tells us that 60% of parents strongly agree that management and leadership is of a good quality. Additional work will be required in those services identified as performing less well in this area.

The number of fully qualified managers in early learning and childcare has decreased over the period of the review and while these managers are currently working towards the appropriate qualification required, we can see that the number of settings achieving an evaluation of good or above for the quality of management and leadership has also decreased slightly. While fewer settings now receive an evaluation of weak or below, 8.4% of early learning and childcare settings were evaluated as adequate for the quality of management and leadership. The last review also highlighted that this was an area for improvement and we will now consider how we can best support the early learning and childcare leadership workforce to improve and support children and families more effectively through their management of settings. Further analysis of the information we have about the core themes identified under management and leadership will help us to focus our work to have the most impact on improving outcomes for children. In 2017, we produced the ['Care Inspectorate Improvement Strategy 2017-2019'](#), the aim of which is to support providers to begin their improvement journey.



© Institute for Healthcare Improvement, Boston



Over the inspection year 2016/17, we began to gather information on our improvement activity outwith our normal processes. During this time, inspectors spent an additional 226 days providing targeted support to settings including sharing best practice and offering practical support and guidance to settings to improve outcomes for children. Our Inspection Satisfaction Questionnaires (ISQs) tell us that this approach is appreciated by those who provide care across Scotland and the increase in our quality evaluations across the sector shows the positive impact this work is having on improving outcomes for children.

“My inspector was very knowledgeable, supportive and had a friendly manner. They spent time with me at the end of inspection giving information that would help me improve the service.”

“We are always striving to improve and the inspection focus has once again allowed us to reflect as a team on what is going on and what our next steps are going to be. A very positive inspection where all staff felt as if they were listened to and had the chance to go about their own daily routine as it was not intrusive.”

“The inspection was very helpful. The inspector gave guidance as well as commending good practice and relationships within our establishment. We were all made to feel at ease and I wouldn’t hesitate to give the inspector a call for advice or guidance at a future date.”

SPOTLIGHT ON PRACTICE – SPARKLERS PRIVATE NURSERY LTD – AN IMPROVEMENT JOURNEY

Sparklers Private Nursery Ltd provides two early learning and childcare settings across Dumfries and Galloway.

Children who attend these settings are aged from 3 months to 10 years. Both settings have recently worked closely with the Care Inspectorate to reflect and evaluate on their provision and devise ways to improve outcomes for children and families. Through commitment to improvement, they have changed the ethos and direction of their service to promote a more effective approach to supporting the children in their care.

The company director of Sparklers Private Nursery Ltd, tells us how these settings have improved over the last three years and talks about the support she received from our inspector throughout their journey.

“Over the past three years, we have developed a new ethos which encourages children to think critically, develop language and creativity and so much more. Our once overwhelmingly busy environment is a haven of calmness and tranquillity with enhanced pockets of learning to invite exploration and investigation.

Our inspector gave me the personal motivation to focus on exactly what we were delivering and, at the time, I thought we were doing a really good job. However, when I reflected on our service, we were doing what we had always done with no real thought or theory behind it. We had always delivered early learning and childcare in the same way. Her comments were tough for me to take in initially but the advice was sound and made me take a step back and analyse myself as an owner.

It took a year to really figure out how I wanted to move forward, and after a lot of research through best practice guidance alongside some personal soul searching, we settled on the ‘Curiosity Approach’. This brings together elements from the early theorists of early learning and childcare and promotes opportunities for curiosity, investigation and discovery. The biggest change we have seen is in the environment we offer children to play in. Work started on this immediately and we began to review the resources available and started

to add lots of different authentic, real-life and upcycled resources alongside loose parts. A comprehensive training schedule helped to focus our minds on what was going to have the most impact on supporting children's development.

My team are now thoughtful educators who take a step back and really listen to children. They understand more clearly what children are presenting in their play and no longer interfere in children's play but interact to make it better. They have changed the way they work, think and plan experiences for children every day and are supported by their leaders to be constructive and reflective about what they are offering children. They are knowledgeable and constantly looking at how we can improve ourselves and our service, coming up with their own ideas. They are the backbone of the whole service, and they are also led by proactive, positive and experienced leaders who consistently challenge them to reflect and innovate. The success of the nurseries is down to the team who listen, learn and change when this is needed. They have strong relationships with all stakeholders and are able to take them along our journey too.

Our children are now more engaged in what they are trying to make, explore, investigate, create and achieve. They can lead their own learning and are encouraged to take it in any direction they choose. Children are more independent and confident and their language and communication skills are more advanced and fluid, as they chat through the activities and what they are completing with each other. Every day, we hear lots of laughter and fun and children chat with each other as they embed their friendships, with no interference from adults.

Views of families

"I love the calm atmosphere in nursery and the classical music just adds to it."

"As a parent, I love the fact that Sparklers are taking an alternative approach to learning and broadening the kids' minds. It's refreshing to know that the nursery is conscious that children learn in lots of different ways."

"I absolutely love this approach to learning and all the natural materials being used and seeing how the children progress."

Sheena Paterson (Principal Teacher, Early Years, Dumfries and Galloway)
"Wow, just wow! It just hits you when you walk in. Lovely calm colours, twinkly lights, classical music; the ambience is calm. I am amazed with the changes to the environment and how the children are all busy and engaged."

Our journey is still moving and evolving and we love it. We have come such a long way and we are constantly challenging what we are achieving and how we can be better. Our inspector has always given constructive feedback which has allowed us to refocus on what we want to achieve as well as embed our learning and changes into our practice. She has given me structure, guidance and positive feedback which has left me happy, motivated and focused on my team and the children who experience our service. I am currently studying for my Professional Development Award at Level 9 in Childhood Practice and plan to continue my learning using advice from my inspector. Sparklers will continue to improve and look for innovative ways to ensure all our children find curiosity, awe and wonder in all they do."



During the period of the review, we evaluated that local authority settings were generally offering a level of care which was good or above more frequently than the private or voluntary sectors. This was consistent across all service types, with the exception of playgroups. In addition to this, where children were not being provided with funded places to receive their entitlement of early learning and childcare, it was more likely that the quality of care for children and families would be evaluated at an adequate level. By recognising why local authority services maintain a high quality of setting, we can better understand the trends which impact on quality in voluntary and private providers.

Families have told us that particular areas where we may want to focus our work with daycare settings relate to children spending time in their local community and family involvement in their child's learning and development journey. In addition to this, parents are not confident about how staff plan, share and collaborate with families to discuss their child's development. We know that one of the best ways to improve outcomes for children is to spend time talking to families about their child's learning. We need to consider how we can support settings to improve these aspects of their care and promote best practice across the sector.

Complaints and enforcement activities – what if things aren't good enough?

We believe that children in Scotland should experience a better quality of life as a result of accessible, excellent settings that are designed and delivered to reflect their individual needs and promote their rights. Over the period covered by this review, we received 2,735 complaints. In each year of the review period, we have seen a fluctuation in number of complaints received about early learning and childcare settings, the number received dropped between 14/15 and 15/16, but has increased between 15/16 to 16/17.

1,591 complaints were investigated and ultimately 743 of these were upheld. An upheld complaint means that we have identified areas where the service can improve.

The Care Inspectorate believes that by working with providers we can encourage and influence such improvements. However, when standards of care fall short and/or are not improving, or where people who experience care settings are endangered, we will not hesitate to act. We can issue recommendations for improvement or requirements for change to make sure settings improve and to ensure the safety of those who use settings. This can be in the form of an enforcement notice which requires settings to make changes immediately to ensure people experiencing care remain safe and well cared for. During the period of the review, we used our enforcement powers on 52 occasions, 31 times to support improvement in childminding settings and 21 times in daycare of children settings.



The expansion of early learning and childcare – increasing flexibility and access to provision for children and families

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 made a commitment to increase the flexibility and number of hours children receive in early learning and childcare to 600 hours by 2017 and 1140 hours by 2020. We are mid-way through this expansion and providers are currently considering how they can best offer high quality care for children and families as they increase their provision to meet the expansion. Many have had to consider how they can offer meals and snacks where they have not needed to before. Others are considering how to use a variety of early learning and childcare settings to offer blended models of care where a child attends more than one setting to receive their early learning and childcare entitlement. Our planned work to create best practice guidance about providing meals will help settings develop practice which suits the needs of children and families in their setting. In addition, our relationship management arrangements with local authorities are supporting the strategic planning for the provision of meals and snacks ahead of the full implementation of the expansion in 2020.

Towards the end of this review, the Care Inspectorate published '[Scotland's Early Learning and Childcare – Report on the progress of expanded provision during 2015-16](#)'. This report highlighted practice examples across settings and local authority areas that have supported good outcomes for children and their families. It also identified challenges and further developments needed to deliver the continued expansion of high-quality, accessible, affordable and flexible early learning and childcare. Building on this work, supported by Scottish Government and in partnership with Education Scotland, trials were held in 12 local authorities to explore different models to meet the 1140 hour commitment. The Care Inspectorate undertook a range of variations to registrations to enable services to deliver their expanded service. Once the models were established colleagues in both organisations evaluated the success of the models and collated the findings into a report which has recently been published and will support local authorities as they develop their own approach expansion. Over the coming years, we will use our unique overview of early learning and childcare to gather and communicate information which will help support settings and providers to plan and commission high quality care for children and families.

In addition to this strategic work, settings have individually looked at how they can meet this demand and changes have been made to the variety of sessions available as well as the times when settings are open to provide early learning and childcare.

More daycare of children services provide funded places in 2016 compared to 2013



Flexibility in daycare of children opening times increased, part or whole days:

Choice of part or whole day sessions offered



2013:
44%

2014:
45.7%

2015:
47.7%

2016:
51.4%

Only part day sessions offered



2013:
51.8%

2014:
56.8%

2015:
48.6%

2016:
44.5%

More daycare of children services offer sessions during working hours during school holidays:



2013:
39.2%

2014:
41.3%

2015:
42.8%

2016:
44.2%

While the provision available is becoming more flexible to meet the needs of children and families, further work over the course of the next review will be required to identify the best ways to improve outcomes for children as a result of the expansion.

A significant role for the Care Inspectorate registration team over the course of this review has been to support the expansion of early learning and childcare provision to meet each child's entitlement to 600 hours of free early learning and childcare.

Between 2014 and 2017, 2,223 new settings were registered with the Care Inspectorate, of which 1,811 were childminders.

7,466 variations were completed between 2014 and 2017, with 1,931 variations being completed in daycare of children settings in 2015 alone. This work has been essential in ensuring that the early learning and childcare expansion has met the requirements outlined in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. We have ensured that quality has been at the heart of this process, in turn, improving outcomes for children and families. A focus on outdoor play and the registration of 'nature kindergartens' has been part of our innovative and proportionate approach to how we register settings and offer a variety of experiences for children across Scotland. In addition to these new registrations and variations, our registration inspectors have worked closely with local authorities and providers to increase the flexibility of and access to early learning and childcare. To ensure consistency, each local authority was allocated their own registration inspector who would work with them throughout the expansion. This offered continuity for the provider and promoted discussions about how settings could improve and innovate while planning the changes.

SPOTLIGHT ON PRACTICE- EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL - RELATIONSHIPS AND THE EXPANSION

Close co-operation between the Care Inspectorate's Registration Team and East Ayrshire's Early Learning and Childcare Department has helped make the authority's expansion of early years settings a smooth and well coordinated process.

Janie Allen, Senior Manager (Early Learning & Childcare) at East Ayrshire, tells us more about how this relationship helped them plan for the future.

"We're significantly expanding our early years provision. There are 11 projects on the go right now, which includes extensions to existing early childhood centres (nurseries), and new builds - primary schools with early childhood centres, and two large campuses made up of secondary, primary and early years. The preparation stage has involved early discussions with our registration inspector who has met with me and our architects to discuss the plans. It's very much a two-way process. Our inspector has been able to pass on ideas about practice her whole team have seen in other areas, while initiatives developed in East Ayrshire can be shared more widely.

We have developed a relationship and rapport with our inspector and they understand the needs of the community we're serving. Plus, there's a consistency in approach and you don't have to constantly induct new people into your way of thinking. By discussing where we want to build, how big it's going to be, how many children we will accommodate, and what age groups and so on, we're able to provide the best service we can."

She believes these types of relationships will become more critical as 2020 approaches. That's when the Scottish Government's commitment that three, four and vulnerable two-year-olds will be entitled to 1,140 hours of childcare a year is due to come into effect.

The recent publication of '[Space to Grow](#)', the Scottish Government's design guidance for early learning and childcare and out of school care settings, will continue to support this innovation and maximise positive experiences for children. The Care Inspectorate took a lead role in developing this guidance and will continue to support improvement and innovation in early learning and childcare settings in both indoor and outdoor environments. By using this guidance alongside the new Health and Social Care Standards, we aim to improve the quality of care and learning by helping providers plan the design and layout of their settings to promote the best outcome for children attending day care settings.



Staffing our settings – the early learning and childcare workforce

As part of our scrutiny, assurance and improvement support work, the Care Inspectorate looks specifically at the quality of staffing in settings to ensure that children and families have confidence in the people who support and care for them. Within the annual returns completed by providers each year, we are able to collate information on the current status of the workforce and use this to inform a national picture of people who are working in social care settings across Scotland. Using this information, we are able to understand the demographic of our workforce in daycare settings. In addition, our partners in the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) can provide us information about the levels of qualifications this particular workforce hold as well as any referrals which have been made to report misconduct.

Across Scotland, between 2014 and 2017, the workforce has continued to grow even although the number of settings registered has decreased. Since our review in 2014, the workforce has increased by 8.3% (2,980 workers) and it will be important for this trend to continue over the coming years to meet the additional flexibility and entitlement for children and families. In 2016, the early learning and childcare workforce stood at 38,950 workers, comprising 19.7% of the entire social service workforce in Scotland. With a reported increase in the average capacity of settings, additional staff have been recruited to meet the needs of the expansion in early learning and childcare across the country. The [‘Independent Review of the Early Learning and Childcare and Out of School Care Workforce’](#) by Professor Iram Siraj in 2014 highlighted the need to attract people into the workforce if the Scottish Government was to achieve its aims to increase entitlement to 1140 hours of early learning and childcare.

While the sector has attracted additional workers into early learning and childcare, it still remains that those recruited in settings will most likely be white females between the ages of 25 and 35. In 2016, only 4.0% of the workforce were male, an increase of only 0.5% since the last review. The majority of these male practitioners worked with school aged children. While some initiatives are aiming to rectify this, more work is needed to ensure we have a more diverse and representative workforce in early learning and childcare settings across Scotland. The Skills Development Scotland [‘Skills Investment Plan for Early Learning and Childcare’](#) has made recommendations to achieve this and the Care Inspectorate will support this work over the coming years by measuring the quality of training and development of staff who enter the workforce, ensuring high quality practitioners are in place within care settings across Scotland.

One of the most important aspects of providing effective early learning and childcare is having well-trained and motivated staff who are skilled at what they do. Research and good practice guidance such as [‘Building the Ambition’](#) and the [‘Growing Up in Scotland’](#) study suggest that practitioners make a significant contribution to improving outcomes for children and families. The experience, training and development of the workforce are essential components for improving outcomes for children across Scotland. It is recognised that the majority of the workforce are performing well, with 93.7% of daycare settings achieving an evaluation of good or above in quality of staffing in 2016. The revised [‘Codes of Practice’](#), published by the SSSC in 2016, helped social service workers to further understand their roles and responsibilities as part of the workforce. This practice has been further supported by the [‘Continuous Learning Framework’](#) which sets out what people in the social service workforce need to be able to do their job well now and in the future and describes what employers need to do to support them. The Care Inspectorate has played a role in sharing these guidance documents with settings to help improve the quality of staffing across Scotland. We will continue to work with the SSSC to ensure that we share our approaches to support and improve the workforce through the next period of expansion and change.

Since 2013, the number of support workers, practitioners and managers who have not yet achieved the qualification needed to fulfil their role has increased by 8.4%. By attracting more people into the early learning and childcare workforce, we can expect that an increase in the number of people who are not qualified would occur. However, further analysis may be required to recognise the specific reasons for this increase and we will work to achieve this if we continue to see this trend in the future. As people decide to change careers, enter the workforce from positive leaver destinations or take on new challenges as workers in early learning and childcare, more people

will need to be working towards a qualification in order to be effective and well trained practitioners. As the expansion continues, it will be important for settings to recognise this and ensure that they maintain and improve the quality of care and learning for children and families throughout this period of change. The Scottish Government has made the commitment that by August 2018, nurseries in the most deprived areas will benefit from an additional graduate, totalling 435 additional graduates across Scotland.

The aim of this commitment is to target resources in Scotland's most disadvantaged areas to close the attainment gap in the early stages of children's lives and make sure every child born in Scotland has an equal chance to succeed, regardless of their background. The Care Inspectorate is currently working with the Scottish Government to assess the impact that additional graduates will have on closing the attainment gap in settings who receive this additional staffing. It is hoped that by adding these practitioners into settings, we can maintain the quality of settings throughout the expansion and target areas where this is needed most.

A focus on settings

The early learning and childcare sector is made up of distinct and varied service types who all offer children and families a different choice over how they want to access early learning and childcare which meets their needs. Each service type is unique and the Care Inspectorate recognises the role they play in providing high quality care across Scotland.

Nurseries

145,440 children attended one of the 2,468 nurseries registered with the Care Inspectorate across Scotland in 2016. The number of children in nurseries has grown by 1.9% over the period of the review with the highest percentage of children attending at ages 3 and 4 years as children were entitled to 600 hours of free early learning and childcare under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

Key messages

Over the period of this review, nurseries have adapted to a broad level of change in the policy context as well as to a significant increase in the number of children and hours of provision they provide. By 2016, 93.9% of all nurseries in Scotland offered children their entitlement to 600 hours of early learning and childcare, including settings directly provided by the local authority and private and voluntary nurseries who have a partnership agreement with their local authority to provide this. Under these agreements, the local authority paid the provider a set amount per child to provide the early learning and childcare entitlement on their behalf. 98.6% of settings in remote rural areas were funded in this way with only 89.9% of settings in large urban areas receiving this. Local authorities are keen to ensure that children receive a high quality of care when in their nursery years and those nurseries who do not meet the standards set by the local authority cannot provide funded places.

A key change in the context between 2014 and 2017 was the introduction of free early learning and childcare for eligible two year olds. Some settings who

previously only offered places to children between the ages of three and five made changes to their premises to include children at the age of two. Children at this stage of development require a different approach to early learning and childcare and settings needed to adapt the physical and social environment to meet children's needs. Over the period of the review, the number of two year olds in nurseries rose by 14.4%. While other settings such as privately owned nurseries and children and family centres already offered this provision, we were able to see from the variations we received, supported and approved that a number of settings changed their registration to provide early learning and childcare to this younger age group. When consulting with practitioners as part of this review, we found that they identified the expansion of early learning and childcare as one of the main challenges of the sector over the period of the review. Specifically, more support to provide high quality provision for two year olds was welcomed as a possible way of improving upon the high quality practice we have seen over the last three years.

Children under the age of three were more likely to attend private nurseries than local authority nurseries and, at the age of three, this changed significantly to show that local authorities provide more of the provision from age three until they start school. The voluntary sector tended to provide nurseries to the fewest number of children aged 0 – 3, with the majority of their children being aged three and four and this has remained stable throughout the period of the review. As early learning and childcare continues to expand, it will be important for those planning and commissioning settings to understand this balance more effectively to ensure the needs of families are being met.

Cowgate Under Fives in Edinburgh has shown excellent practice in leading improvement and innovation in the early learning and childcare sector. The management team and practitioners within the service recognise themselves as leaders of early learning and childcare and their proactive approach to improvement ensures that children and families receive exciting and innovative care on a daily basis.

SPOTLIGHT ON SETTINGS – COWGATE UNDER FIVES – CONTINUING INNOVATIVE IMPROVEMENT

Cowgate Under Fives Centre offers a flexible all year round service for up to 57 children (aged 6 weeks to 5 years) and their families.

The service is positioned in the South-East of Edinburgh and some children are local but many children come from further afield. At the service's last inspection, the Care Inspectorate recognised that the 'excellent' staff in the service offer children and families an 'excellent' quality of care and support.

Lynn McNair, Head of Centre, tells us how they have continued to improve their service over the last three years.

"At Cowgate Under Fives Centre, we always begin with the child. Our work, therefore, is with children rather than for children. We follow a Froebelian philosophy which helps us when living with our children and working alongside them as we live our daily lives.

Visitors to Cowgate often comment on the fresh, vigorous, free and yet orderly spirit of the space and how children move freely, making their own choices. Love and respect are essential aspects of the relationships children, families and practitioners have with each other and this creates a space where everyone feels included and respected. Our core value is that young children's voices are heard, whether their voice is expressed verbally, or non-verbally through facial expressions, body language, voting with their feet, actions, play, artistic expression, stillness, silence or other ways of communicating.

One aspect of our work which we wanted to reconsider was the way we observed, recorded and extended children's learning. We believed it was urgent to review our current practice and scope the potential for developing an alternative in keeping with our own principles.

As a result, we began an improvement journey to work with our children, parents and practitioners to develop something which was meaningful for everyone and remained in harmony with our ethos.

And so, our action research project began, aiming to find out 'What do children, parents and staff think is important in how we document children's experiences in nursery?' Our practitioners worked as researchers over the project and we were able to use relevant evidence and guidance from across the world to develop our 'Lived Stories' approach, based on the 'Learning Stories' ideology from New Zealand.

Children's own perspectives on their experiences and how they prefer to tell their stories was central to the project. We wanted to go beyond assessing children in the typical sense and consider a way where our children were involved in defining their own needs and wants.

"We want to do what we want to do and we want it to be fair."

Child A

Stories are powerful and the ones we remember are the funny, sorrowful, poignant, bumpy, joyful ones that capture our hearts and minds. They connect the past and the future into the present and make us remember while letting us imagine. We have aimed to have very clear links between 'Lived Stories' rather than providing stories which stand alone. Our key focus is to allow the learner to decide what to learn, not the teacher. We create the opportunities for children to be excited, engaged, committed and then learning happens, often far beyond anything adults might set as learning goals. At this point, our practitioners think about those links and draw the threads of learning together. They try to observe what is driving the child to want to explore with energy, passion and spirit while identifying a clear link to skills and knowledge which become more complex over time.

We used a wide range of ways to find out the views of children, families and practitioners about our project such as focus groups, informal talks, drawing, storytelling and mind-mapping. Our research continues and we anticipate that this improvement project will continue for some time. We understand that the views and opinions of people experiencing care in our service will change and that is why we are passionate about continuous improvement which reflects the people who are part of our setting.

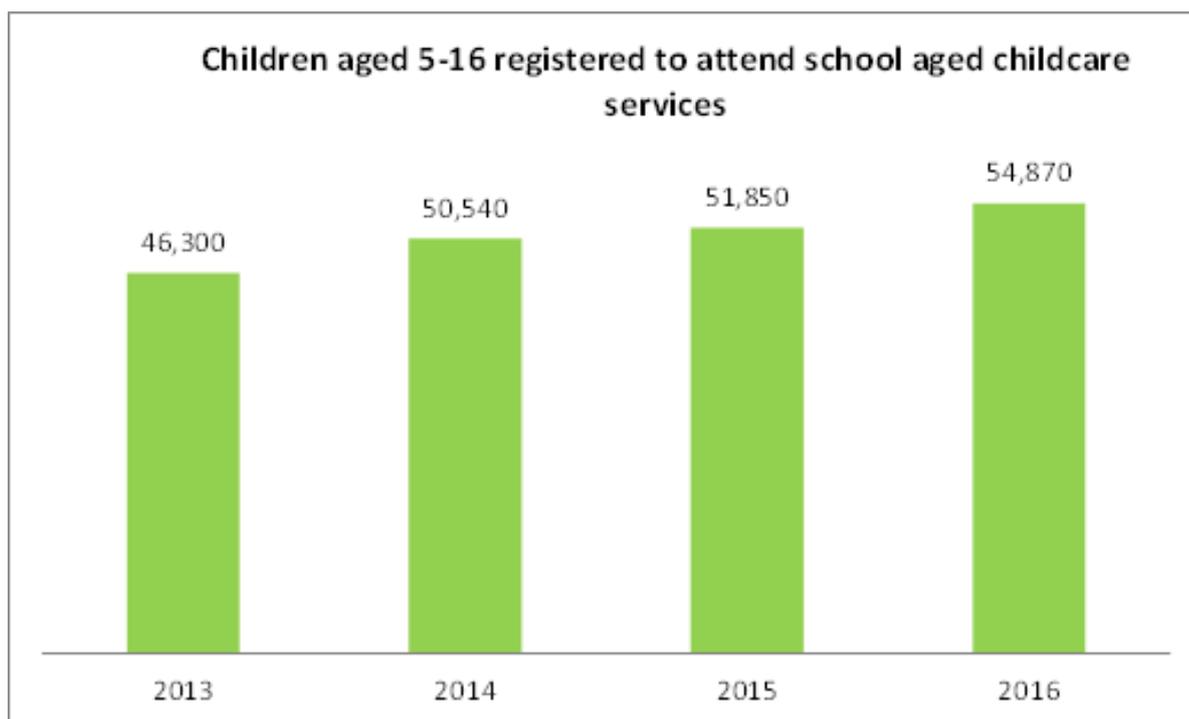
Our culture of continuous improvement is supported by our staff who are committed and dedicated to using theory and research to support our children in ways which help them to get the most out of life."



School-aged childcare including out-of-school care settings and holiday playschemes

The number of children using school-aged childcare has increased over the period of the review. School-aged child care are those services that offer care for children outwith school attendance such as breakfast clubs, after school care and holiday playschemes. While childminders also provide this type of care for families, some settings are specifically registered for school-aged childcare and they have grown in popularity. As a result of this growth, school-aged childcare provided care to the second largest group of children registered in early learning and childcare in Scotland.

FIGURE 5: INCREASE IN NUMBER OF CHILDREN REGISTERED AGED 5-16 BETWEEN 2013 AND 2017



Not all settings who offer school-aged childcare are registered as an out-of-school care or holiday playscheme. 19% of nurseries also provide other services such as out-of-school care, breakfast and holiday clubs, promoting continuity of care when children move onto school. Of the 739 settings that are registered as out-of-school care providers with the Care Inspectorate, 513 also offered additional childcare such as breakfast clubs and holiday playschemes, showing the demand from families to access childcare which meets their whole family's needs, especially when they are trying to return to work or access training.

Key messages

As we found in the last review, the quality of school-aged settings is generally high. However, out of the different early learning and childcare service types, they were the least likely to be awarded an evaluation of good and above with 20.6% of settings receiving an adequate evaluation in one of the key quality themes. In addition, very few of these settings were given funding to provide early learning and childcare places as this is usually concentrated for children between the ages of two and five under current legislation. A large proportion of school-aged childcare was provided by the voluntary sector which relies on funding to remain operational. Therefore, this may be a contributing factor to the quality of school-aged childcare across Scotland.

In the last year of the review period, the Care Inspectorate carried out a quality audit of school-aged childcare settings. This work aimed to identify how children felt about the experiences they had in their settings, listening to their views and respecting their rights as those experiencing care on a daily basis. 266 settings were included in the audit and we found that children and young people's felt nurtured and safe in their care. Access to a variety

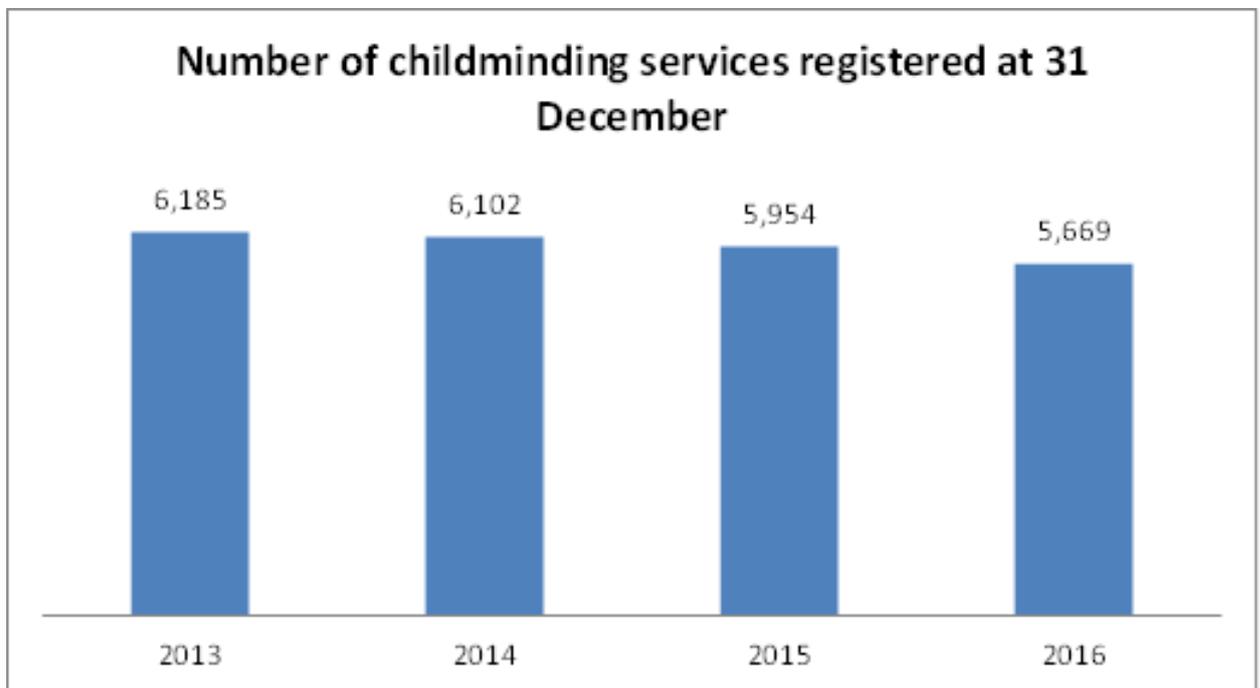
of play and learning experiences both indoors and outdoors was common and children also had opportunities to make friends and build relationships. Although there were some opportunities for children and young people to link with their local communities, this was an area where practice could be improved, especially for older children who were looking for play which was more relevant and meaningful to them and their friends. In addition, children told us that they wanted their views to be listened to and acted upon more frequently.

School-aged childcare is an essential part of the early learning and childcare landscape. Families need their support to work, train and study and we know that attending school-aged childcare also benefits children's development in a number of ways. In order to ensure that these settings can offer the best outcomes for children and families, the Care Inspectorate needs to consider how to best support settings to evaluate their own work and develop their practice to have the most positive impact on their later life.

Childminders

In 2016, 33,440 children were registered in one of the 5,669 childminding settings across Scotland. The number of childminders registered with the Care Inspectorate has decreased slightly over the period of the review.

FIGURE 6: NUMBER OF CHILDMINDERS REGESITERED EACH YEAR



Childminders have the opportunity to create a home-from-home environment in which they can support children and their families for a number of years. They play an important part in children's development and learning at crucial stages in their lives and can offer continuity throughout a child's life.

¹⁴ Blue Triangle, NAS Scotland and Stirling Council – Children's Services

Key messages

The quality of childminding settings has remained consistently high. Childminders who are nurturing, caring and attentive to the needs of children and families help to improve outcomes for children and they can offer a more individualised approach to children's experiences.

In 2016, we carried out a review of the qualification level of childminders across Scotland. Of the childminders who submitted this information to us, over a third either held or were working towards a qualification in a relevant discipline. The most common qualifications were Scottish Vocational Qualifications at Level 3 in Children's Care, Learning and Development and a Higher National Certificate in Childhood Practice. It is not a requirement for childminders to hold a qualification and those that did not were still providing a high quality of service to children. This demonstrates the approach of the childminding workforce to develop and improve their skills. We work closely with the Scottish Childminding Association to share our expectations and in this way alongside the support these settings received through our scrutiny, assurance and improvement activities, as well as through the Care Inspectorate Hub, means they have been able to stay up to date with our expectations.

The Independent Review of the Early Learning and Childcare and Out of School Care Workforce by Professor Iram Siraj detailed recommendations to invest in and build upon the childminding workforce to ensure equity of experience across all service types. To support this, in May 2016, the Care Inspectorate appointed a project lead to scope a framework for a registration induction programme and continuous professional framework for childminders.

Funding this role showed our commitment to supporting childminders as we move towards the expansion and we subsequently launched 'Your Childminding Journey' in 2017. This online learning and development resource for childminders was created to offer support for people who wanted to join childminding or as a reflective tool for existing childminders.

In August 2017, 15 local authorities were commissioning 119 childminders to support them in providing early learning and childcare to eligible children in their area. Seven of the 14 trials which were undertaken in different local authorities offered a blend of early learning and childcare between nurseries and childminders as well as some children receiving all of their free early learning and childcare hours in childminders who applied to work with the local authority. Although a number of local authorities have commissioned places with community childminders to help children who required emergency early learning and childcare or for other specific family needs, this type of relationship between the local authority and childminders is still developing. It will be important to support both local authorities and childminders through this process, ensuring that clear communication is achieved between the two providers. This will promote an equitable and consistent experience for children in their care which meets their individual needs.

Pauline Walsh, a childminder based in North Lanarkshire, has built upon the smaller nature of her service to teach children sign language from an early age, supporting their early literacy development and promoting communication between the different age groups she caters for in her service.

SPOTLIGHT ON SETTINGS – USING SIGN LANGUAGE IN A CHILDMINDING SETTING

Ochiltree Childminding is run by Pauline Walsh, a registered childminder working in Airdrie, North Lanarkshire.

Pauline has been a childminder since 2008 and she offers a 'very good' service across all of the quality themes the Care Inspectorate consider when we evaluate settings. When we visited the service in 2014, we saw that Pauline had created a warm and nurturing environment for children experiencing care. She provided opportunities for each child to choose how they spent their time, while ensuring that they respected the choices of others.

Lynne Murray, Quality Improvement Officer with the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA), explains how Pauline has used sign language to support children's communication skills.

"Pauline first learned to sign when she realised that her cousin couldn't communicate with anyone who didn't know sign language. She understood the importance of social wellbeing on a child's holistic development and wanted to make sure that everyone had the chance to make friends.

As a childminder, Pauline took this knowledge into her work with children experiencing care in her setting. She used sign language as a way of supporting children with little to no language to communicate with other children in her home as well as with their parents and the childminder herself. Pauline attended training at Motherwell and Anniesland Colleges to learn the language and she now starts the learning process with children as young as five months old.

When children are learning sign language with Pauline, the lips form the word that goes with the sign and this is done in stages. When the spoken word is learned, the sign is dropped but there is still a shared understanding between everyone about the meaning of certain actions. When children are frustrated, signing helps them to communicate and they still sign when they are older to communicate what they mean when they can't find the word they are searching for.

Pauline used sign language to break down different language barriers with a family where multiple languages were used at home. Stephen was going to be referred to Speech and Language Therapy because he was so quiet in nursery but the work that Pauline did with the family helped him to become more confident. Using sign language, he was able to communicate his needs and wants and he now has three languages under his belt at four years old – English, Chinese and British Sign Language.

Pauline has now worked within the local community to share her learning with others and help more children improve their language and communication skills. Families told us about the impact that this approach had on them and their children:

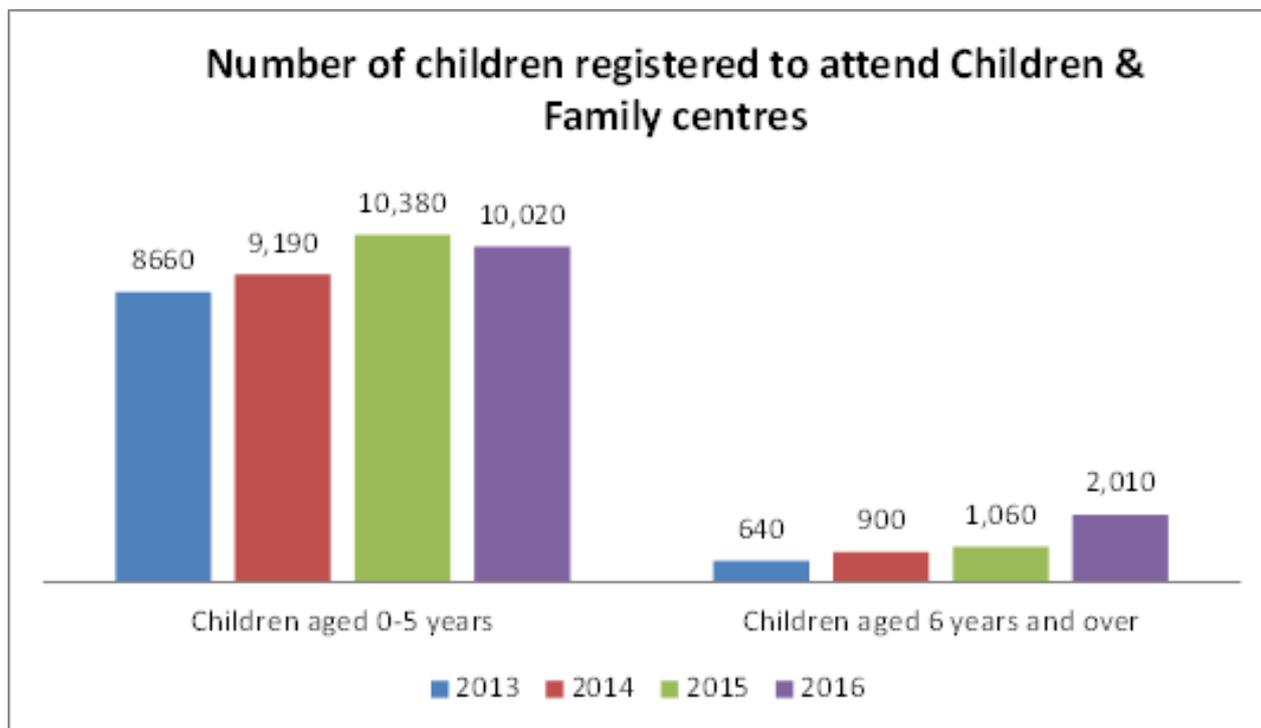
"Our whole family has benefited from 'Sing-along Signing'. It has helped both my kids by reducing frustration and improving communication between us all from a very early age. I also feel it improves the kid's knowledge and understanding hugely."

"My daughter attended 'Sing-along Signing' from ten months until she started nursery at three. In the early days she was able to communicate her wants and needs prior to speaking. I feel signing helped her massively in understanding language as she quickly progressed into the spoken word with little "baby talk", using real words and real sentences as she had a genuine understanding. She is now a very articulate three year old who can communicate with adults verbally and younger children through sign, which I owe entirely to 'Sing-along Signing'. A fantastic group with a very worthwhile purpose."



Children and family centres

FIGURE 7: Number of children in C&F centres aged 0-5 and 5-16 or 18



Children who attend children and family centres between the ages of 0 to 5 years tend to be accessing nursery provision which focuses on engaging communities in family learning opportunities. This is more in line with the provision of nurseries which has been discussed in another section of this review.

For some other children, these settings provide early learning and childcare for those who have complex additional support needs. Over the period of the review, settings who provide this type of care were re-classified to be included under children and family centres. This change more adequately reflects how these settings support and improve the lives of families, for example, providing respite care for parents and offering play experiences which are tailored to the complex needs of children who deserve equity in early learning and childcare.

Key messages

These services are among the highest quality settings offered in early learning and childcare. We have recognised the value and essential support these settings offer families to improve life at home and enhance experiences for children with complex additional needs across Scotland.

Although these settings do not care for a large percentage of children across Scotland, the impact they have on the daily lives of children and families who use them is invaluable to the wellbeing of the family unit. If we want Scotland to be the best place in the world to grow up, protecting the provision of these settings will be essential in ensuring equity for all. The Care Inspectorate plays a role in celebrating the achievements of this sector and communicating their value as part of the early learning and childcare landscape.

SPOTLIGHT ON SETTINGS – THE YARD – LEADERSHIP IN CARE

The Yard offers disabled children and young people, and their siblings, the chance to experience creative, adventurous indoor and outdoor play in a well-supported environment. It is a unique, safe space where children and young people experience truly inclusive play, and where the whole family can come and be themselves.

Rachel Mathers, Head of Operations at The Yard, tells us more about the work that they do and their bespoke leadership programme.

"We have been creating adventure play opportunities for disabled children since 1986. As well as our flagship centre in Edinburgh that operates seven days a week, we run weekend settings in Dundee and Fife. We operate family drop-in sessions, youth and respite clubs, early years settings and school sessions. Our families tell us 'The Yard' is an important lifeline that creates a sense of belonging, community, and support for parents and carers too.

In 2017, we decided to create and implement a bespoke leadership programme for the staff team. The 'Strengthening Our Leadership' Programme was delivered in partnership with the Social Enterprise Academy, and was provided over various sessions over three months, with 16 managers and team leaders taking part.

When we had our last inspection in early 2017, we were in the process of building the programme and considering how best to approach it. It was very useful to talk to our inspector about the benefits she thought a programme like this would have for the organisation, the settings and for our families. We were able to talk through some ideas then and there, which informed the overall development. It also gave us confidence as an organisation, that the programme was something that was worth investing in.

The programme was designed in consultation through bespoke design and consultation meetings with staff to ensure the programme was relevant and tailored. Taking place in the context of change and expansion for 'The Yard', a key priority was to ensure that our unique culture was maintained, understood and championed. We recognise that managers and team leaders will play a critical role in shaping and modelling the behaviours and values of the organisation during this time of growth and we wanted this development programme to enable the group space and time to explore their leadership, develop confidence and understand their contribution to sustaining the organisation in the future.

We also wanted our staff to understand their leadership role and responsibilities within their team, and recognise their strengths and how to utilise them. We wanted them to feel confident to make decisions and be comfortable delegating to their teams, as well as drawing on their creativity to address problems and seize opportunities.

At the end of the three month programme, we asked all of the participants in the programme for feedback on the process, as well as what they had learned and what they would take forward into their work. When we asked 'how have you changed?' some learners' feedback included:

"[I am] more reflective. More aware of choices and strategies."

"Much more mindful of the way I interact with people and understanding that we are different."

"I think I have more tools in order to support my team, and understand them (and myself) better."

In addition to supporting the leadership capacity of the individual team members taking part on the programme, another key outcome for us was to ensure that this increased confidence and ability had a meaningful impact on the wider organisation. When we asked the learners what they felt some impacts on the organisation might be, answers included:

"Being more conscious of what I need and others need, in regard to communication and sharing information."

"Provided some unity in the team and more awareness of what we all do and I feel more support for each other might come out of it."

"The new set of values are a good guide. The different forms of leadership offer an alternative way to respond."

The impact felt by the team has meant that we work together better, are more aware of each others' strengths and weaknesses, and use a more reflective approach. This in turn has meant that our settings have improved. The team are more confident in dealing with enquiries, and in supporting families. An increased confidence in working together has also led to small but important changes in terms of working across teams and finding better ways to support our children, young people and families, realising that we all have a part to play and different people bring different skills to the organisation.



Playgroups

Playgroups offer a unique experience to the early learning and childcare sector as they are mainly run by parents themselves and can effectively respond to the views and opinions of families using the service through the committee structure.

Key messages

Playgroups are the only service type which has decreased over the period of the review. In 2013, 324 playgroups were registered with the Care Inspectorate and this has decreased to 248 playgroups in 2016. In line with this, the number of children registered to attend playgroups has also decreased.

The majority of playgroups were run by the voluntary sector with a high number of these being run by parent committees who want to support early learning and childcare provision in their local communities. A small number of children attended private playgroups and a few attended a playgroup which was run by the local authority. It was more common to find playgroups operating in rural areas and small towns reflecting the need for provision in these areas where nurseries were less likely to be available. An increasing number of playgroups provided places for children to receive their entitlement to 600 hours of early learning and childcare, with over three quarters of playgroups receiving this funding for some of their children in 2016. In addition, playgroups tended to be smaller than traditional nursery settings which, for some parents, is preferable for meeting their child's needs.

The quality of care and support was high across playgroups with most settings achieving an evaluation of good or above in 2016 in this theme. The quality of environment was also generally high throughout the review period. As with other service types, the quality of management and leadership is an area which needs to improve. Over the coming year, the Care Inspectorate will support playgroup committees to understand their roles and responsibilities in the setting as well as improve other aspects of their provision.

SPOTLIGHT ON SETTINGS – GOLSPIE PLAYGROUP - AN OUTDOOR TRANSFORMATION

Golspie Playgroup is based in the Highlands of Scotland within a rural community. The centre, run by the Care and Learning Alliance, supports children and their families by ensuring all children have the time and opportunity to play and develop as creative, confident, successful individuals with a love of learning and a respect for others. Inclusion and diversity is embraced and celebrated within our communities, and families are recognised as full and active participants.

The Head of Centre tells us more about some of the improvement work they have undertaken in their outdoor learning space.

"The centre aims to take the lead in promoting high standards of practice to facilitate learning through play and learning experiences. Our staff are committed to providing high quality learning experiences in a stimulating environment and we reflected on how we could achieve this further in our outdoor area. Our inspector had previously advised that we should try to use more natural resources to enhance children's learning and so, we embarked on a journey with our children and families to achieve this. We noticed that there was a pond area which was not accessed by the children and they told us that they did not want the pond anymore. They wanted this space to be another area where they could play and learn and we saw the opportunity to provide new learning experiences across the curriculum.

We agreed that developing a 'mud kitchen' would offer children an interesting and exciting play space where the learning opportunities were endless. Parents donated items and a local company donated large cable reels. Another company donated money to support our work and we also had a local crofter provide us with bark to level out the pond area and make it accessible.

The versatility of this new area is wonderful and the sense of achievement from children, families and staff has been very positive. Children take great pride in telling their friends what they brought in for the area and people in the local community often comment on how inviting it looks. Our staff have recognised that change can be a positive thing, even if it entails a lot of hard work to reach the end result.

Children's views

"I like putting dirt down the drain"

"I like the kitchen. I like to cook beans in there"

"I like making food in there like strawberries"

"You can make cakes in it"

The Care Inspectorate gave us a variety of documents and articles to help us develop our outdoor space and we plan to visit other early learning and childcare settings in the area to help us as we move forward. We are proud of what we have achieved so far and excited about what we will continue to do in the future."

Crèches

Crèches offer a more flexible service to families by providing drop-in care for children in order to enable families to engage in activities such as further education, shopping or attending a meeting. In addition, mobile crèches are available and can offer a more flexible service which can meet the needs of the community and offer childcare in a variety of areas across Scotland.

Key messages

Crèches represent a small proportion of early learning and childcare services with only 73 settings operating in Scotland. This has decreased by almost a quarter since the last review, showing a decline in demand for this type of service. While there are only a few services of this type available, they are still an important part of the early learning and childcare provision in Scotland. We can see that in rural areas as well as large urban areas, these services offer care to a high number of children, showing that families and communities still value the contribution they make to their lives. Indeed, some nurseries offer a crèche service in addition to their registered service to fulfil this family need.

SPOTLIGHT ON SETTINGS – DICKS HILL CRÈCHE – COLLABORATION AND IMPROVEMENT

Dicks Hill Crèche is based in Stranraer and offers a service to support families by building resilience and breaking the cycle of poor outcomes for children in their area.

They support families who are struggling with their life at home which is impacting on their ability to provide children with what they need. Their support helps families to engage with each other as well as take time to attend appointments or training which can help them to provide a better quality of life for themselves and their families. They aim to empower families to take account of their responsibilities and support them to give their children the best start in life.

Amanda Horberry, Manager of Dicks Hill Crèche, tells us about the collaborative relationship they have with the Care Inspectorate to improve outcomes for children and families in her service.

“We have great partnership working with our inspector and this has certainly helped us to improve our service. Alongside documents such as ‘My World Outdoors’, ‘Loose Parts Play: A Toolkit’ and ‘Space to Grow’, we have worked with our inspector to review what we offer children to play with on a daily basis. Our inspector advised us to get rid of all the plastic resources we had and replace them with items which could be readily available around children’s homes. Families helped us to source our ever growing list of resources and we have worked as a team to provide a new, inspiring and fresh outlook to our environment. We have changed our environment to provide real life resources which children can recognise and be creative with. We have introduced more natural resources and provided different components to outdoor play.

By using this approach, we can see that children and families are more settled in their play. During our Stay and Play sessions, families join in and have as much fun as the children, exploring, investigating and being creative with the resources around them. Parents tell us that they are reminded of their own childhoods when they are with their children and there is a great happiness and gentle hum of engagement in our service. We have also found that, by using these real life and natural resources, there are no limits when it comes to entertaining and engaging our children. Families and children who would not normally have played together are now spending time with each other, looking out for newly made friends and this has

helped children when they are preparing to start at a nursery. Even better, our families started to realise that they did not need to spend lots of money on items their children would find interesting and which would help them to develop.

After every inspection, we have a renewed sense of energy and a 'Right. Let's go!' approach. The professional dialogue between our inspector and our team gives us the opportunity to look inwardly and outwardly to what is working well and what we could be doing in the future. We know that our inspector is there should we need to phone or email and nothing has ever been a problem. We have the Care Inspectorate 'Hub' at our fingertips and the publications we have used lead beautifully into our work with 'How good is our early learning and childcare?' I find it very reassuring to be able to discuss this with our inspector and she always gets back to us and usually on the same day."

Childcare agencies

Across Scotland, 26 childcare agencies are registered to supply or introduce to parents, a child carer who looks after a child or young person up to the age of 16, wholly or mainly in the home of that child's parent or parents. This can be provided in the form of respite care for families who need time away from their responsibilities as parents as well as in the form of nannies and sitters who look after children in their own home. It is a varied and diverse service which meets a range of families' needs, helping to support family life and wellbeing as well as supporting parents who need some extra support.

Key messages

Due to the unique nature of these types of settings, the Care Inspectorate formed a 'National Childcare Agency Team' over the period of this review to ensure we are consistent in the way we support them. Our scrutiny, assurance and improvement activities in these settings are now more targeted and consistent which means clear improvement messages are being delivered when we undertake our work. [Guidance for childcare agency providers](#) and for providers who use childcare agency staff was published in 2016. This has supported an increased understanding of the role of childcare agencies in early learning and childcare across Scotland as well as clarifying the role of childcare agencies in safer recruitment of agency staff.

Over the course of the review, childcare agencies were generally evaluated as good across all quality themes we inspect against. Their evaluations as sector were slightly lower than that of the average quality evaluations for other early learning and childcare settings in Scotland and we will now consider how we can support these settings to offer care which improves outcomes for children and families.

Childcare agencies who support families well communicate effectively with children and their families. The importance of nurturing relationships in these settings cannot be underestimated and this is supported by regular consultation with families to make sure children's needs and interests are met. Many use the local community well to enhance children's experiences and detailed, child-centred plans for children ensure their rights are respected and promoted. As in other early learning and childcare settings, well-trained and motivated practitioners are an essential part of creating a service which provides high quality, safe and compassionate care. Introducing staff to families and making sure workers understand their role and responsibilities is an important aspect of good practice in childcare agencies.

Firsthand Lothian, a childcare agency based in Edinburgh, have tailored their induction programme to ensure that all staff are able to improve outcomes for children and families before being placed in their homes.

SPOTLIGHT ON SETTINGS – FIRSHAND LOTHIAN – BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE WORKFORCE FROM THE START

Firsthand Lothian is a childcare agency operating across Edinburgh, working with families to deliver short term care which seeks to improve outcomes and sustainable change for children and families.

Over the period when children and families are experiencing care, one-to-one support is provided in the family home and this is tailored to meet the individual family's needs. They work with families with children of all ages and also provide support to children who have additional support needs. The Care Inspectorate evaluated Firsthand Lothian's quality of care and support as 'Excellent' at the service's most recent inspection and recognised the level of improvement made in inducting staff to be well-trained and motivated in their work with children and families.

Bev Read, Director of Firsthand Lothian, tells us more about their improvement journey in this area. "We offer a flexible service to children and families, delivered by staff and volunteers, which maximises the positive impact we can have. We change the times when we care for children to suit family needs and try to engage parents in local activities to reduce their sense of isolation and develop social networks. When recruiting new people, we aim to attract applicants who are flexible, able to use their initiative and have the personal attributes which enable them to build positive relationships and inspire trust and confidence with both parents and children.

We understand that the relationships between children, families and our practitioners are key to the success of our support and an essential part of this is establishing and maintaining boundaries when we are working one-to-one with people. We reflected on our approach and recognised that we needed to ensure that our support workers and volunteers were confident and competent in these situations. Before placing them into family homes, we wanted them to feel empowered to make decisions which result in positive outcomes for children and families.

After undergoing rigorous safer recruitment procedures using the guidance in 'Safer Recruitment through Better Recruitment' (2016), our staff and volunteers are invited to group training sessions where we explore a range of scenarios based on possible situations our practitioners may find themselves in when caring for children and families. These scenarios challenge and encourage people to think things through and are used to reflect on a wide range of practice issues. We encourage people to engage emotionally with the scenarios, understanding how they would feel as well as how they may instinctively react. We use an open forum to discuss how different people would have reacted and use this to reflect on the ways these scenarios can be resolved to meet the needs of children and their families.

Views of staff and volunteers about the induction programme

"I felt the induction training was thorough and I felt prepared to do my volunteering".

"I think it is really well thought through as training is provided and overall support too"

Following the group sessions, we meet with each person individually to discuss how they feel following the training and, based on this discussion, we can decide whether to offer additional support to our new staff and volunteers. Some are offered shadowing opportunities to learn in the role before being matched with a family and we use our one-to-one time to find out more about the person before introducing them

to new children. As a result of this work, our staff and volunteers are happy and motivated, which directly impacts on the time they spend in family homes and the local community. In addition, the 'real-life' nature of the scenarios helps them to confidently approach a wider variety of challenging situations, focusing on improving outcomes for children and families.

Views of staff and volunteers about working with Firsthand Lothian

"Working and volunteering with Firsthand Lothian has been a great opportunity for me to develop both personally and professionally and will stand me in good stead for my future teaching career"

"I have absolutely loved working at Firsthand - have never felt so supported and valued at a company and I can't thank you enough for this. Working at Firsthand gave me so much confidence and really inspired me to go on to further study."

As we move forward, we hope to continue improving our induction to consider the new Health and Social Care Standards and how we can support our new staff and volunteers to understand their role in improving care for people across Scotland."



CONCLUSION

This review of early learning and childcare has shared our findings and achievements from 2014 to 2017 and outlines some of the ways to improve the quality of care over the next three years. The period covered in this review has seen a significant level of change alongside the launch of a number of policy commitments from the Scottish Government. Early learning and childcare settings have risen to the challenge of expanding provision to more children for a longer period of time and maintained the quality of their settings throughout. The hard work and commitment of the workforce to improve outcomes for children and families is helping us to achieve our aim for Scotland to be the best place in the world to grow up.

The Care Inspectorate has aimed to support settings through this journey, carrying out our scrutiny and improvement support activities in more innovative and effective ways over the period of the review. We have changed the approaches we take to our work to support prevention and more effectively meet the needs of the early learning and childcare sector with an increasing focus on improving outcomes for children and families. The publication of our good practice guidance is adding to the tools settings have to reflect and evaluate their own practice, empowering them to make changes which will benefit children's development. Alongside our targeted improvement support activity with individual settings, these interventions are supporting settings to maintain and improve upon their practice, offering opportunities for early learning and childcare to develop and provide high quality, safe and compassionate care for everyone in their service.

While we recognise that further work is needed to target particular areas of practice, we are confident that early learning and childcare has improved and is promoting the holistic wellbeing of children across Scotland. Some of the actions we are undertaking in 2018 are beginning to support improvement in the areas identified in this review. In addition to guidance already published such as 'Your Childminding Journey', 'My Childminding Experience' and 'Our Creative Journey', there are a number of new publications being developed. 'Animal Magic' is a resource showing the benefits of being around and caring for animals in settings and we are also creating a publication to support healthy eating in early learning and childcare settings. Guidance concentrating on other focus areas is also planned such as nurturing practice and intergenerational work between those experiencing care across Scotland. As we move forward, the new Health and Social Care Standards will be taken into account in all of our scrutiny, assurance and improvement support activity, focusing on outcomes for children and families through collaborative relationships with provider to improve outcomes for children and families in the future.

We have developed a Professional Development Award in Scrutiny and Improvement Practice for our inspectors which began in May 2018 with the first cohort of inspectors. This award will consider the role scrutiny and improvement plays, how we undertake our work, the art of scrutiny and how this compares with other scrutiny bodies. Crucially, it will explore what difference we make to improving outcomes for people and will use related theories of scrutiny and improvement support based on human rights to reflect on the core values and practice we can offer when supporting and improving care.

We will continue to work closely with our partners to ensure we support services to provide high quality early learning and childcare for all children, especially for children under three who are increasingly being registered in our early learning and childcare settings. By promoting approaches based on effective practice, sharing the work of those who are already providing high quality services and using current good practice guidance we will empower settings to achieve safe, high quality effective and compassionate care for all.

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Firsthand Lothian

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Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC)

Sparklers Private Nursery Ltd

APPENDIX: DATA SOURCES

The Care Inspectorate service list (as at 31 December 2014, 2015, 2016) 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 postcode of the service, from which we have derived the local authority, deprivation category and urban-rural category of the service.
- evaluations of quality themes grading

We have used Care Inspectorate annual returns (as at 31 December 2014, 2015 and 2016) to provide estimates for:

- the main service type, for example nursery, playgroup, out of school care and so on
- the number and age groups of children registered with the service
- whether daycare of children services provide funded places
- the number of children registered with services that use the services for out of school care

The 2015 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) has been used to assign deprivation levels based on the postcode location of each childcare service. The SIMD does not reflect the locations of where children using services live.

Further information about the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation is available here:

<https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/SIMD>

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:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/About/Methodology/UrbanRuralClassification>

The National Records of Scotland mid-year population estimates (2015) 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/mid-year-population-estimates>

Data on the early years workforce taken from SSSC's 'Scottish Social Service Sector: Report on 2016 Workforce Data' available here:

<https://data.sssc.uk.com/images/WDR/WDR2016.pdf>

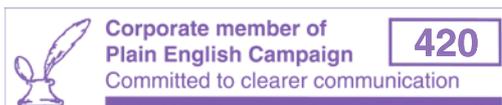
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