

Early Learning and Childcare



scma

Scottish
Childminding
Association

committed to quality childcare

Report on the current state of childminding services in Scotland to deliver funded Early Learning and Childcare to eligible two year olds.

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KEY POINTS

- ★ **30** local authorities responded to our request for information on the use of childminders to deliver funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC). East Dunbartonshire Council and Perth and Kinross Council have still to respond.
- ★ Of those 30 local authorities who provided information, only **15** have commissioned the services of childminders to deliver funded ELC.
- ★ Only **114** childminders in the whole of Scotland are delivering funded ELC to eligible two year olds.
- ★ Only **5** childminders in the whole of Scotland are delivering funded ELC to three and four year olds.
- ★ **98%** of childminders in Scotland are not included yet in the delivery of funded ELC with eligible two year olds.
- ★ **Nearly 70%** of the SCMA membership has signed a mandate asking us to lobby for change.
- ★ **Alarmingly** childminders are starting to be put out of business in Scotland as children are moved to funded provision.
- ★ **SCMA is actively campaigning for childminders to be part of local authority expansion plans.**

I. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The aim of this report is to assess the current use of childminding services in Scotland in relation to the delivery of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) to eligible two year olds.
- 1.2. This is a factual report and was originally commissioned by the Scottish Government. By contacting every local authority in Scotland to obtain data, the report draws together a national picture on the current use of childminding services to deliver funded ELC.
- 1.3. Through analysis of the information, the report explains the importance of the inclusion of childminding services in the delivery of ELC in order to protect the future of this workforce in Scotland.

2. OBJECTIVES

- 2.1. The objectives of this report are:

- ★ *To investigate and analyse the levels of commissioning of childminding services in each local authority area in Scotland in relation to the delivery of funded hours of ELC as outlined in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.*
- ★ *To make recommendations on how this could be improved in order to deliver high-quality, flexible, accessible choice to children and families.*
- ★ *To explain the importance of the inclusion of childminders in the delivery of ELC.*
- ★ *To recommend actions that can be taken to protect professional childminding services in Scotland.*

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. Currently there are 5,954 childminders in Scotland, providing places for an estimated 32,660 children. (*Early learning and childcare statistics 2015: The provision and use of registered daycare of children and childminding services in Scotland as at 31 December 2015, Published November 2016*)
- 3.2. ELC in Scotland is changing. The Scottish Government is committed to encouraging high quality, flexible ELC which is accessible and affordable for all families. It has pledged to increase the provision of funded ELC to 1140 hours per year by 2020, for children who are three or four years old, as well as for two year olds whose parents/carers are on qualifying benefits and are eligible for the 600 hours free entitlement through the Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.
- 3.3. In March 2017 the Scottish Government published *A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare 2017-18 Action Plan*. The Action Plan commits the Scottish Government to a series of actions in 2017-18 to ensure that the expansion of ELC is rooted in high quality experiences for children in order to:

- ★ Ensure a high quality experience for the child; improving outcomes for all children, especially those who will benefit most;
- ★ Support the vision of an education system which delivers both excellence and equity for all children in Scotland;
- ★ Provide a key contribution to wider work to close the attainment gap;
- ★ Support ambitions to reduce child poverty by contributing to the delivery of ambitious statutory targets set out in the Child Poverty (Scotland) Bill;
- ★ Support transitions through early years settings and into school to ensure continuity and progress through the learner journey;
- ★ Offer parents an increased choice of settings where they can access their funded ELC entitlement;
- ★ Enable a system that is provider neutral with the focus on the settings best placed to deliver quality outcomes for children;
- ★ Increase the flexibility of how the funded entitlement is delivered in order to support more parents to work, train or study, especially those who need routes into sustainable employment and out of poverty;
- ★ Provide the opportunity for an enhanced role for childminders in delivering the funded entitlement;
- ★ Help support parents to improve and enrich the home learning environment by integrating ELC with the range of family support;
- ★ Enable payment of the Living Wage and the promotion of Fair Work practices;
- ★ Be underpinned by a funding model which ensures the long-term sustainability of the system;
- ★ Provide substantial new employment opportunities across all of Scotland with a range of roles across different qualification levels, supporting local economies;
- ★ Reduce the costs that parents and carers face in paying for childcare, with total ELC entitlement providing an estimated annual saving of £4,500 per child.

3.4. Local authorities are responsible for the implementation and delivery of ELC to their local communities. To assist in planning the ELC expansion, the Scottish Government has published *A Blueprint for 2020: ELC Expansion Planning Guidance for Local Authorities*. The guidance has two main sections:

- ★ Section One focuses specifically on quality and sets out the conditions, support and investment that will drive quality experiences and ensure ELC plays a key role in addressing inequalities in child outcomes.
- ★ Section Two focuses on building structures and capacity – both infrastructure and workforce – required to deliver 1140 hours in a way that is flexible, accessible and affordable. Childminders feature in both of the two main sections, as highlighted below:

- *Is it operationally sustainable? Where operational sustainability is a concern, it is assumed that consideration will be given to other ways to meet the need and flex services, for example, use of childminders in a blended approach.*
 - *Making best use of assets developing and extending existing partnership models against a default assumption of a continued mixed economy – strengthening both local authority and other provision (including, for example, childminders and blended models). Local authorities are required to demonstrate they have made best use of their current assets: making full use of their existing childminding workforce and enhancing its use before planning to create or build new capacity, including outdoor nurseries.*
- 3.5. Across all Blueprint for 2020 publications, the quality of a child’s experience is the single most important goal driving all actions. Childminders are adept at providing quality childcare which builds confident children within a family setting. This is evidenced in the latest ELC Care Inspectorate Report¹ which details that 94% of childminders achieved a grade four or above. It is also evidenced in the Growing Up in Scotland Report² which found that children, who attended providers with a high care and support grade, as assessed by the Care Inspectorate, are more likely to show improvement in vocabulary skills by age five, irrespective of their social background and other pre-school characteristics.
- 3.6. SCMA acknowledge that funded ELC places are a big help for families. They’re good for children – giving them the chance to learn and play with other children. They also help families financially as free places can contribute towards other ELC commitments and support parents to work, train or study. It is anticipated by SCMA that for most children we will see a model of blended services being developed to meet the needs of children and families as recommended in the recent report ‘Shifting the Curve’³.
- 3.7. Despite the evidence and research (just some of which is highlighted in in 3.5 and 3.6 above) which concludes that childminders can offer unique and high quality ELC, local authorities seem to be failing to commission their services. Our records show that 98% of childminders are currently not commissioned to deliver funded ELC, even for eligible two year olds. So, whilst they are in the process of planning ELC expansion, it appears that they are not engaging with childminders to make best use of their high quality, flexible childminding services which already exist.
- 3.8. As a result we appear to be losing this vital workforce in Scotland, alongside the quality services they deliver to children to ensure their best start in life. If correct, this is broader than the pre-school places they provide. Potentially it also affects their places for babies, their large number of out of school care places and the specialist services they provide, like the SCMA Community Childminding Service. If it continues then our professional childminding workforce in Scotland may cease to exist. As a result of this position, SCMA is actively campaigning for childminders to be part of local authority expansion plans.

4. THE CURRENT STATE OF CHILDMINDING IN SCOTLAND

- 4.1. In November 2016, the Care Inspectorate published their Early Learning and Childcare Statistics which reported that, as at 31 December 2015, there were 5,954 childminders in Scotland providing places for an estimated 32,660 children.
- 4.2. Analysing Care Inspectorate data over the past three years highlights a decline of childminders in Scotland, as shown in *Figure 1: The Decline of the Childminding Workforce in Scotland*. SCMA acknowledge that further research is required to find out why but judging by the phone calls the organisation is now receiving it is emerging that perhaps an unintended consequence of ELC expansion is a decline in the childminding workforce. Childminders are advising that they no longer have a viable business as children are being moved to funded places. If correct, then in the future this will have broader implications than the pre-school places they provide. Potentially it could also affect: places for babies; a large number of out of school care places; and specialist services like the SCMA Community Childminding Service.

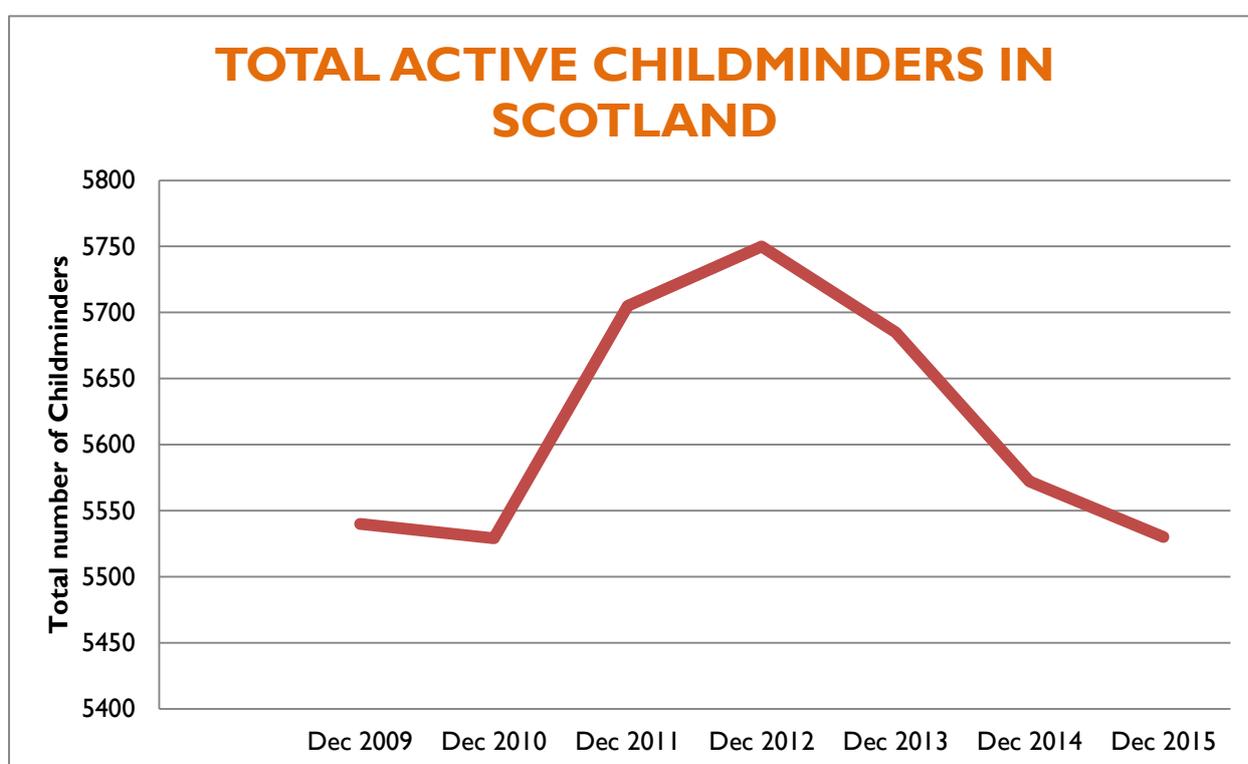


Figure 1: The Decline of the Childminding Workforce in Scotland

Figures published by Care Inspectorate: <http://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/statistics-and-analysis>

- 4.3. The Scottish Government originally commissioned SCMA to produce a report on the current state of childminding services in Scotland in relation to the delivery of funded ELC to eligible two year olds. On a regular basis, over the past two years, SCMA has contacted every local authority in Scotland to obtain figures for this report.
- 4.4. The latest information in relation to the current state of childminding services in Scotland to deliver funded ELC to eligible two, three and four year olds is displayed in *Figure 2: The Use of childminding services in relation to funded ELC*.

The use of childminding services in relation to funded ELC

Local authority area	Current number of childminders in each local authority as at May 2017	How many childminders are delivering funded ELC to eligible two year olds?	How many childminders are delivering funded ELC to three and four year olds?
Aberdeen City	164	5	0
Aberdeenshire	348	0	0
Angus (Trial)	173	0	0
Argyll & Bute (Trial)	77	21	0
City of Edinburgh	367	0	0
Glasgow City (Trial)	183	9	0
Clackmannanshire	65	0	0
Dumfries & Galloway	131	9	1
Dundee (Trial)	163	2	0
East Ayrshire (Trial)	194	2	0
East Dunbartonshire	143	No response	No response
East Lothian	129	1	0
East Renfrewshire	144	0	0
Falkirk	202	0	0
Fife	486	0	0
Highland	296	3	0
Inverclyde	62	0	0
Midlothian (Trial)	85	5	0
Moray	121	1	0
North Ayrshire (Trial)	177	49	0
North Lanarkshire	353	3	0
Orkney	30	0	1
Perth & Kinross	171	No response	No response
Renfrewshire	96	0	0
Scottish Borders	131	2	0
Shetland Islands (Trial)	16	0	2
South Ayrshire	110	2	0
South Lanarkshire (Trial)	294	0	1
Stirling	123	0	0
West Dunbartonshire	50	0	0
Western Isles	25	0	0
West Lothian	256	0	0

Figure 2: The use of childminding services in relation to funded ELC, numbers correct as at July 2017.

THE ANALYSIS

- 4.5. From analysis, SCMA is now extremely concerned about the current use of childminding services to deliver funded ELC, as detailed in *Figure 2: The use of childminding services in relation to funded ELC*.
- 4.6. Only 114 childminders in Scotland out of a possible 5,954 are delivering funded ELC for eligible two year olds. This equates to just fewer than 2% of the whole childminding workforce in Scotland.
- 4.7. Further comparison of data collected in 2016 compared with data in 2017 is shown below in *Figure 3: National comparison of childminders in relation to funded ELC*. The number of childminders delivering funded ELC in 2016 was extremely low but in real terms this number has declined even further in 2017, rather than increasing to support the expansion of funded ELC.

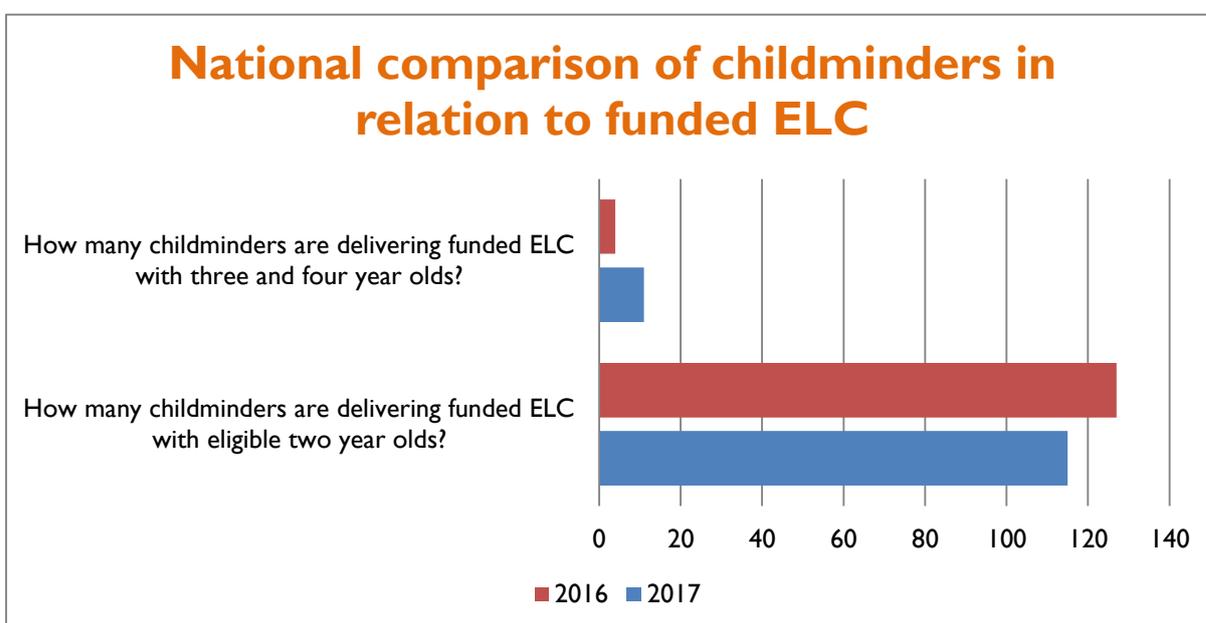


Figure 3: National comparison of childminders in relation to funded ELC

- 4.8. Implications in relation to childminding services in Scotland have yet to be fully realised. However, if it continues then the choice, accessibility and flexibility of childcare options for families will become restricted, which we would argue limits the success of providing improved outcomes for children. SCMA has already witnessed a drop in new childminders entering the sector, becoming inactive within the first year as they just can't find work.
- 4.9. It is becoming apparent that whilst local authorities expand their own provision in order to prepare for the expansion of ELC, they are not at the same time commissioning childminding services that already exist - which would ensure that their services continue in tandem with local authority provision. If this continues, then professional childminding services in Scotland will steadily decline and Scotland will lose this quality and professional workforce.

4.10. To summarise the latest information, from our data collection and statistical research analysis SCMA is able to advise that:

- ★ **30** local authorities responded to our request for information on the use of childminders to deliver funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC). East Dunbartonshire Council and Perth and Kinross Council have still to respond.
- ★ Of those 30 local authorities who provided information, only **15** have commissioned the services of childminders to deliver funded ELC.
- ★ Only **114** childminders in the whole of Scotland are delivering funded ELC to eligible two year olds.
- ★ Only **5** childminders in the whole of Scotland are delivering funded ELC to three and four year olds.
- ★ **98%** of childminders in Scotland are not yet included in the delivery of funded ELC with eligible two year olds.
- ★ **Nearly 70%** of the SCMA membership has signed a mandate asking us to lobby for change.

5. OUR EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE CAMPAIGN

5.1. SCMA is now doing everything possible to raise awareness that funded childcare is changing. Over the past year we have launched an Early Learning and Childcare Campaign, aimed at raising awareness of the plight of childminders in Scotland.

5.2. Key messages in the campaign include:

- ★ SCMA champions childminders who can offer a blended approach to childcare.
- ★ Parental choice and flexibility are vitally important to ensuring the best start in life for children.
- ★ A childminding service is the ideal setting for children to experience their funded hours.
- ★ The quality of ELC delivered by childminders exceeds other daycare services, including nurseries.
- ★ 94% of childminding services achieve a grade four or above from the Care Inspectorate.
- ★ Childminders need to support SCMA to take action help us be your voice.

5.3. To support the campaign we set up an ELC microsite (www.childminding.org/elc) targeting both childminders and parents on the forthcoming changes.

5.4. We have also developed a Parent Leaflet aimed at promoting the benefits of engaging with a childminder to parents and sent this to every member who has signed our Mandate for Change - six copies of the leaflet to distribute to parents and families in their community. A social media campaign has also been created which will run over the next couple of months.

6. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1. It is evident to SCMA that many local authorities are not yet commissioning the services of their childminders or even offering them as an option to parents. Before local authority expansion plans are submitted to the Scottish Government by 29 September 2017, we are asking the Scottish Government to confirm that:
- Professional childminding businesses operating in each local authority area in Scotland must be given due consideration in ELC expansion plans and in on-going service developments to ensure that parents who wish to do so can access a childminding service for part or all of their funded entitlement when Funding Follows the Child is introduced in 2020.***

In this statement we would like the Scottish Government to make it clear that:

- ★ The review of ELC Expansion Plans will include consideration of the proposed use of childminding services and local authorities will be provided with specific feedback.
 - ★ The ELC Delivery Team will engage with local authorities, SCMA and individual childminding businesses to identify the barriers to commissioning childminding services for funded ELC and work together to address and remove those barriers, building on learning from the national programme of 1140 hours trials.
 - ★ Funding Follows the Child means that parents already using a quality childminding service will have the right to be able to continue with that service for their funded hours of ELC from 2020 with the cost being funded by the local authority, assuming the childminding service meets the national standard for funded provider status.
 - ★ The Scottish Government commits to engaging with childminders in developing the national standard.
- 6.2. Further research is undertaken to fully analyse the state of childminding services in Scotland and exactly how both childminders and their associated families are being affected by forthcoming ELC Expansion plans.

7. FURTHER INFORMATION

- 7.1. If you require further information on this report please contact:

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References

1. Care Inspectorate: Early learning and childcare statistics 2015. The provision and use of registered daycare of children and childminding services in Scotland as at 31 December 2015. Published November 2016.
2. Tackling Inequalities in the Early Years: Key messages from 10 years of the Growing Up in Scotland study. The Scottish Government, Edinburgh 2015
3. Independent Advisor on Poverty and Inequality [Shifting the Curve](#) A Report to the First Minister

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