

# Sustained benefits of early childhood education and care (ECEC) for young children's development during COVID-19 <sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** Davies, C., Kong, S. P., Hendry, A., Archer, N., McGillion, M., & Gonzalez-Gomez, N.

**Source:** Journal of Early Childhood Research

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 28 Nov 2023

## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

Access online [PDF] <sup>[3]</sup>

## Abstract

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings faced significant disruption during the COVID-19 pandemic, compromising the continuity, stability and quality of provision. Three years on from the first UK lockdown as pandemic-era preschoolers enter formal schooling, stakeholders are concerned about the impact of the disruption on children's cognitive and socioemotional development, especially those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. Using parent-report data from 171 children aged 5 to 23 months (M = 15 months) in March to June 2020 living in the UK, we investigate whether previously attested positive associations between ECEC attendance and the development of language and executive functions was maintained as early years settings navigated operational challenges over the first full year of the pandemic. In response to concerns about 'school readiness', we analyse the relationship between ECEC attendance and children's communication, problem-solving and personal-social development. ECEC was associated with greater growth in receptive vocabulary over the 12-month period. In children from less advantaged backgrounds, ECEC was also associated with greater growth in expressive vocabulary. Our data suggest a similarly positive association between ECEC attendance and the communication and problem-solving skills of children from less advantaged backgrounds and between ECEC and the personal-social development of all children. Overall, results suggest that ECEC had sustained learning benefits for children growing up during the pandemic despite ongoing disruption to settings, with specific benefits for children from less affluent home environments. As pandemic-era children progress to primary school, we discuss the importance of adapting their learning conditions and adjusting the expectations placed on them.

**Related link:** Childcare gave pre-schoolers' vocabulary a boost in pandemic, research shows <sup>[4]</sup>

**Region:** Europe <sup>[5]</sup>

**Tags:** child development <sup>[6]</sup>

COVID-19 <sup>[7]</sup>

disadvantaged children <sup>[8]</sup>

**Source URL (modified on 7 Aug 2024):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/24/08/sustained-benefits-early-childhood-education-and-care-ecec>

## Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/24/08/sustained-benefits-early-childhood-education-and-care-ecec> [2]

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1476718X231213488> [3] <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epub/10.1177/1476718X231213488> [4]

<https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/24/08/childcare-gave-pre-schoolers'-vocabulary-boost-pandemic-research> [5]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/region/europe> [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/child-development> [7]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/9040> [8] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/disadvantaged-children>