

Balancing numbers or addressing needs? Child to adult ratios, practitioner well-being, and quality of provision in early years settings in England ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Access online via ResearchGate ^[2]

Abstract

There is limited research exploring child-to-adult ratios in nursery settings in England since changes were made to the EYFS (DFE 2023) by the Conservative government. This article explores the findings of an online survey using qualitative analysis to provide insight to the lived experiences and perceptions of participants regarding the changes to child-to-adult ratio in England. This study involved 154 Early Years' Practitioners and explored statutory ratio guidance, adherence to it, and the impact ratios have on practitioner well-being and the quality of early childhood education. In practice, participants found that an increase in the number of children cared for by practitioners has resulted in dangerous, unsafe practices with detrimental effects on children's developmental needs. The changes to child to adult ratio for two year olds in England demonstrates a disregard for young children's rights, entitlement and needs at the national policy level-and is something that many nurseries have chosen to resist at the local practice level. This paper contributes to the debate of appropriate child-to-adult ratios in early years settings, highlighting the need for policymakers to consider the practical implications, and potentially adverse outcomes, associated with increasing ratios within Early Childhood Education.

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