

Revealed: The nurseries failing Scotland's children ^[1]

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Excerpts:

Thousands of Scottish children are being put at risk by nurseries and childminders that are allowed to remain in business despite repeatedly failing to meet basic standards of childcare.

Reports show 224 nurseries and 111 childminders were ranked as weak or unsatisfactory in at least one category during their most recent inspection by the Care Commission.

Two nurseries and two childminders were given the lowest ranking of unsatisfactory in each of the four categories rated by the regulator.

Despite years of rule-breaking and repeated poor inspections at some institutions, it has emerged for the first time that no nurseries have been closed down directly because of Care Commission enforcement action since the organisation was established as the industry regulator in 2002.

Individual reports on dozens of failing institutions reveal nurseries that are dirty, under-staffed and laced with fire hazards, loose electrical wiring and broken toilets. Inspectors also found staff who lacked basic childcare or first-aid training, smoked around children and did not know how to safely feed or put babies to sleep.

Kate Groucutt, policy director of the childcare charity Daycare Trust, said: "It is concerning to see so many childcare providers being ranked as weak or unsatisfactory.

"It is crucial that all childcare settings follow the correct safeguarding procedures, and ensure they are providing a safe, comfortable and stimulating learning environment for the children in their care.

"It is important to remember that the vast majority of childcare providers do provide this and that there is very strong evidence about the benefits to children from receiving high-quality early-years education and care.

"Parents in the UK pay for the majority of childcare costs and it is essential the Care Commission informs parents about the results of inspections so they are able to make appropriate choices about the care their child is receiving."

The catalogue of failings at day-care centres includes instances where babies' lives are endangered by incompetent staff in unsafe facilities. Inspectors warned that, in one nursery, "infection risks to the children are reaching crisis point" while other reports describe childminders leaving open bottles of alcohol and adult medicines in children's playrooms.

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- reprinted from the Scotland Herald

Region: Europe ^[2]

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