

Shift away from family day care ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

In Espoo, just west of Helsinki, many parents have shifted their children from home day care into day-care centres in recent years.

"If we compare this year with 2008, we have only 60 percent of the professional home day care caregivers we had then," says Espoo's early learning director Titta Tossavainen.

Letter of the law

Home day-care caregivers employed in municipal services came within the scope of labour legislation on working time a year and a half ago. That means fixed hours and guaranteed days off. Since then, there has been a decline in the numbers of children in home day care, according to Tarja Kahiluoto of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

"Inclusion under the working hours act was a good thing, aimed at promoting the wellbeing of home child caregivers. Of course, from the parents' point of view, it can cause problems if the caregiver has a day off and alternative day care has to be arranged. It is a critical matter," says Kahiluoto.

As many older home caregivers are retiring, it has been increasingly difficult to find others to take their place within the municipal system.

"Many home day-care caregivers are going onto pensions and it's hard to recruit new ones. Young women do not see this as a vocation. They want jobs where there is a work community, while caregivers work more or less alone," points out Kahiluoto.

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