

Study of early education and development: views and experiences of childminders ^[1]

Research report

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AVAILABILITY

[Full report in PDF](#) ^[2]

Description:

This report presents findings from a qualitative study of childminders undertaken as part of the Study of Early Education and Development (SEED). SEED is a major evaluation undertaken by NatCen Social Research, the University of Oxford, 4Children and Frontier Economics on behalf of the Department for Education. This qualitative study of childminders was commissioned to shed light on the experiences and contribution of childminders, and aims to explore their:

- Current provision, including factors influencing capacity, fees and staffing
- Experiences of offering funded two and three-year-old provision, including views on the barriers and facilitators to providing this care
- Views of the infrastructure and support available for the sector, including the introduction of childminder agencies.

Summary of findings:

Current provision

- Childminder capacity

Childminder capacity is influenced by the physical space available (including transport capacity), their ratios and whether they employ assistants. Workload also influenced capacity with childminders limiting the size of their childminding business to balance spending time with their own families and to keep paperwork at a manageable level.

- Fees, costs and financial viability

In our sample, hourly rates ranged from £3.50 to £6.95. Childminders reflected that income from childminding could fluctuate widely throughout the year because of seasonal fluctuations and children leaving and joining. There were mixed views on the financial viability of childminding: some said that they did not make enough from childminding to run a household without a second income. Others were making a living from their childminding business and had no other sources of income.

Offering funded provision

Facilitators to offering funded provision:

- Continuity of care

A strong motivation for offering funded provision was a desire to continue caring for a child (or a sibling of a child) already in their care who had become eligible for a funded place.

- Local demand

Where childminders perceived a local demand for funded provision, this was a motivation for registering. They hoped that offering funded places would help fill vacancies and would meet the needs of local families.

- Making a difference

Childminders were motivated to offer the two-year-old funded provision because they felt they could make a difference to disadvantaged children by promoting school readiness and providing support to the families.

Barriers to offering funded provision:

- Lack of local demand

Some childminders were discouraged from offering funded provision for two-year-olds because of a perceived lack of local demand. This was attributed to the affluence of their local area limiting the number of eligible children, a lack of awareness and take-up from eligible families, and/or a perception that professionals working with eligible two-year-olds encourage families to take-up provision in group based settings rather than with a childminder.

- Ofsted rating

To be able to offer funded places for two-year-olds, childminders must be rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted, (or 'requires improvement' where the local authority believes it is necessary to ensure sufficient capacity is available locally). This meant some childminders in the study sample wanted to offer the provision but were ineligible.

- Challenges of meeting additional needs

There were some concerns raised over the challenges involved in offering two-year-old places to families with additional needs, including the potential for safeguarding concerns.

- Splitting funding with other provision

Some nurseries would not split funded places and share care with childminders. This meant childminders could not offer this option to parents.

- Accreditation

There was a perception amongst some childminders that the accreditation process to register for funded provision would be bureaucratic and costly, deterring them from registering.

- Perceived ineligibility

In one case, a childminder had not registered to offer funded places because she did not hold a Level 3 qualification. It was her understanding that this was a requirement for funded provision and she was therefore ineligible.

- Administration

Extra paperwork such as feedback on head-counts or using on-line portals to submit administrative data were identified as barriers.

Related link: [Study highlights barriers for childminders offering funded places](#) [3]

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