

Study highlights barriers for childminders offering funded places

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EXCERPTS

One of the first reports from the biggest Government-funded study into early years education since EPPE, published today, looks at childminders' views on providing funded places, and childminder agencies, among other issues.

As part of the Study of Early Education and Development (SEED), NatCen Social Research interviewed 20 childminders across England, with the sample made up of those offering funded places, as well as those that do not currently do so.

While funding for two-year-olds was generally felt to be sufficient and similar to the hourly rate that childminders would charge privately, funding for three- and four-year-olds was viewed as a barrier to offering places.

The childminders surveyed said that the rates - typically ranging from £3.40 to £5 per hour - were less than the fees they would charge parents privately.

Childminders reported that these lower levels of funding had an impact on their financial viability when offering funded places for three- and four-year-olds, particularly if they were employing staff.

The report concluded that more childminders might offer funded places if the funding rates for three- and four-year-olds increased.

Childminders also highlighted fluctuations in their income that can result from changing numbers on roll, with the report recommending introducing payment structures designed to minimise cash flow difficulties.

Childminders also noted a lack of demand for twos' places, which they attributed to parents not knowing whether they were eligible for places and a perception that group-based childcare was preferable.

Some childminders were also concerned that offering places for twos would be bureaucratic and costly, as well as a misunderstanding among some that they would need to hold a Level 3 qualification to offer the places.

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