

Effects of early childhood education and care on child development ^[1]

Author:

Melhuish, Edward; Ereky-Stevens, Katharina; Petrogiannis, Konstantinos; Ariescu, Anamaria; Penderi, Efthymia; Rentzou, Konstantina; Tawell, Alice; Leseman, Paul & Broekhuisen, Martine

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AVAILABILITY

[Executive summary and report](#) ^[2]

[CARE project website](#) ^[3]

[Edward Melhuish on the CARE review](#) [video] ^[4]

Executive summary

This report considers international research on the impact of early childhood education and care (ECEC) provision upon children's development and, while not exhaustive, is an extremely comprehensive review, using studies reported from a wide range of sources including journals, books, government reports and diverse organisation reports.

Early research was primarily concerned with whether children attending non-parental care developed differently from those not receiving such care. Later work recognised that childcare is not unitary and that the quality or characteristics of experience matters. Further research drew attention to the importance of the interaction between home and out of home experience. High quality childcare has been associated with benefits for children's development, with the strongest effects for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. There is also evidence that negative effects can sometimes occur. The results of studies partly depend upon the context and ECEC systems in place in different countries, but there is sufficient commonality of findings to indicate that many results are not culture-specific.

While the research on pre-school education (three+ years) is fairly consistent, the research evidence on the effects of childcare (birth to three years) has been equivocal with some negative effects, some null effects and some positive effects. Discrepant results may relate to age of starting and also differences in the quality of childcare. In addition childcare effects are moderated by family background with negative, neutral and positive effects occur depending on the relative balance of quality of care at home and in childcare. Recent largescale studies find effects related to both quantity and quality of childcare. The effect sizes for childcare factors are about half those for family factors. The analysis strategy of most studies attributes variance to childcare factors only after family factors has been considered, and, where the two covary, this will produce conservative estimates of childcare effects.

Region: Europe ^[5]

Tags: [child development](#) ^[6]

[child outcomes](#) ^[7]

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