

REPORT

EARLY YEARS REFORM

CHILDMINDERS'
RESPONSES TO
GOVERNMENT
PROPOSALS

Imogen Parker

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Imogen Parker is a researcher at IPPR.

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IPPR
4th Floor
14 Buckingham Street
London WC2N 6DF
T: +44 (0)20 7470 6100
E: info@ippr.org
www.ippr.org
Registered charity no. 800065

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IDEAS to
CHANGE POLICY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Getting early years policy right is critical. High-quality childcare supports children's development, particularly for those at risk of starting school behind. Affordable childcare supports parents (usually mothers) to be able to return to work, and accessible childcare supports parents to make decisions about how best to balance work and care responsibilities between them.

Over the last 15 years the issue of childcare has moved high up the political agenda. There has been substantial investment in both the quality and affordability of childcare through measures like Sure Start centres, the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, and the introduction of the Graduate Leader Fund to support the professionalisation of the workforce, as well as free entitlement to childcare for all three- and four-year-olds. These policy measures have led to a dramatic transformation of the sector, with a marked increase in the number of children attending formal early years care, the number of early years professionals, and the pay and qualification levels of the workforce (DfE 2013a).

Yet the job is by no means complete. The UK still has a comparatively low-paid and low-skilled childcare workforce, and there is wide variation in the quality and uptake of provision. Disadvantaged areas are more likely to have access to lower-quality care, meaning children who would benefit most from high-quality early years education are least likely to receive it. The lack of affordable childcare is cited as a crucial barrier stopping more than a million mothers from returning to work (Plunkett 2011).

While there is political consensus on the importance of childcare, with both the government and opposition creating childcare commissions, there is real debate on where attention should be focused in order to make progress on developing high-quality, accessible and affordable early years provision. This debate is only sharpened by the prospect of further public spending cuts on the horizon and the ongoing squeezing of household budgets.

In January 2013 the government published its approach to reform in *More great childcare* (DfE 2013b). This report provoked some high-profile exchanges, with several prominent campaigns calling on the government to drop the proposals. In particular, the suggestion to relax child-to-adult ratios for the youngest children was met with widespread condemnation, and led to deputy prime minister Nick Clegg publically blocking the reforms in June (see Harrison 2013).

While plans to change ratios are now 'dead in the water', there are other parts of the reform agenda to consider. By moving to deregulate on several fronts, without comparable investment in driving standards, critics are worried that the government's approach may be leading the sector down a low-quality road, prioritising cutting costs over the importance of developmental care. Even more troubling, questions have been raised as to whether the government's plans will even bring the price down of care for parents, despite jeopardising the quality (Thompson 2013).

This report contributes to the current discussion on childcare reform by considering its impact on the childminding sector. Childminders play an important role in the early years mix, especially for parents who work atypical hours. With the number of childminders dwindling, the government has identified the profession as an area for job growth, particularly for parents who want to combine caring for their own family with some form of employment (Puffett 2013). With this in mind, many elements of the proposed reforms specifically target childminders in the hope of making the profession more attractive to current providers and new entrants.

We know from various petitions and consultation responses that *More great childcare* has caused concern in the sector (Morton 2013). In order to delve deeper, IPPR conducted original quantitative research with childminders, exploring specific aspects of reform and appetite for change. This report links the findings from our survey with the wider evidence-base on child development and literature on quality. Based on the conclusions, we draw out some suggestions for policymakers on which elements of reform should be maintained and where new ideas are needed.¹

The overarching message from our research is a positive one: there is a strong desire to boost the quality and status of the profession, driven by the sector. Across almost all aspects of reform, childminders want new or increased measures in place to regulate and improve their practice. However, this motivation cuts against some specific government proposals, which have been designed with the intention of making childminding more attractive by relaxing or reducing regulation. Childminders reject several elements of reform for fear of their damaging impact on the quality of provision and the perception of their profession. As one childminder explained:

'I do want to stay [highly] regulated, because otherwise us childminders aren't going to receive the professionalism we deserve. I will not sign up to an agency, I will not take on more children, as this is an accident waiting to happen ... If it came down to being deregulated or you can't do the job, I wouldn't childmind – I have worked too hard the last five years to become a glorified babysitter.'

The desire to boost quality through strong regulatory procedures was consistent throughout the research.

- Three-quarters (73.2 per cent) of childminders want minimum requirements in place in order to be allowed to practise (like having or working towards a relevant early years qualification).
- The majority (57.7 per cent) think more regulation would have a positive impact on the sector. They also reject the suggestion of cutting regulation – 61.8 per cent thought this would have a negative impact.
- Only 7 per cent support the idea of moving away from individual Ofsted inspections (towards collective agency assessment) preferring regular inspections for each.
- The large majority (74 per cent) were against the possibility of looking after more children (despite the fact they thought it would boost their earnings) because they felt it might compromise the quality or safety of their care.

As well as worries about undermining quality, respondents doubted whether the reforms would make childcare more affordable for parents.

- 85.7 per cent of childminders thought the introduction of agencies would increase their business costs because of fees, meaning 'costs to parents would have to go up'.
- If ratios were relaxed, childminders would not pass on savings to parents. While 76 per cent believed relaxing ratios would increase their monthly earnings, 93.2 would not change the amount they charged to parents per child. Only 1.4 per cent would decrease the cost per child (as the government hoped) and 5.4 per cent would increase costs.

¹ The research was designed and conducted while ratio reform was still under consideration. The government has since decided to halt these plans, influenced in part by our survey results. We have still included some of the findings on relaxing ratios as they have broader implications for the attitudes towards quality and reform.

Based on this insight and our review of the wider literature, we urge the government to reconsider some elements of its reform agenda. We urge them instead to pursue better ways of meeting their objectives. This is a great moment to capitalise on the energy in the sector to ensure that the next steps for reform are really going to support the welcome aims of quality, affordability and sustainability.

IPPR's ideas provide a number of alternatives to current proposals.

1. Pause on the creation of childminder agencies to respond to concerns that they would undermine quality and sustainability rather than support the sector.
2. Maintain individual inspections for all childminders alongside taking forward proposals for targeting inspections on low-performing settings.
3. Place minimum requirements on all professionals delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum to have or be working towards a level 3 childcare qualification, in order to boost the quality and status of the sector.
4. Reform Ofsted criteria to ensure they reflect the best developmental practice, with the future intention that all those delivering the free entitlement have at least a 'Good' score.
5. Lastly, there needs to be more focus on driving (rather than inspecting) quality, through professional development, peer interaction and training. With the diminishing role of local authorities, there could be space for a sector body, tasked with designing qualifications and accrediting workers as well as mentoring low-performing settings.

The government should take stock. Our research indicates that if its proposals are implemented in their current form then the hoped-for outcomes – boosting quality, cutting costs of parents and increasing the attractiveness and sustainability of the childminding sector – are in doubt. Some elements of reform may even prove detrimental to these goals.

1. INTRODUCTION AND POLICY CONTEXT

Over recent decades, childcare has shifted from being a private issue to a public one. Labour market economists have been increasingly concerned with comparatively low maternal employment rates in the UK, with the lack of affordable childcare cited as a crucial factor preventing more than a million women from returning to work (Plunkett 2011). Child development research has highlighted the importance of the early years and the beneficial impact of high-quality childcare. Policy has responded through measures like the free entitlements for three- and four-year-olds (recently extended to two-year-olds in low-income households), the creation of Sure Start centres and the offer of childcare subsidies.

Alongside increasing the access and financial support for childcare, numerous measures have been introduced with the intention of raising quality. The previous Labour government developed the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum in 2006, which placed requirements on all adults working with under-fives to support their learning and development. They also implemented Ofsted inspections for early years settings, developed new qualifications, and introduced the Graduate Leader Fund to support the development and professionalisation of the workforce. These policy developments saw a comparable increase in funding: between 1996 and 2007, spending on childcare, early years and children's social services almost tripled, from £3.6 billion to £10 billion (Cooke and Henehan 2012). Together, these investments led to a dramatic transformation of the sector, with a marked increase in the number of children attending formal early years care, the number of people working in the sector, and the qualification levels and average pay of early years professionals (DfE 2013a).

But despite these important steps forward, the state of preschool-age provision is still patchy in quality, showing large variation in Ofsted scores, take-up and impact on attainment, and the workforce remains comparatively low skilled and low paid. In 2011, only 59 per cent of children were assessed to have a 'good level of development' at age five, and the proportion of providers assessed as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' varied from 64 to 98 per cent in different regions (NAO 2012). Most worryingly, children in more disadvantaged areas currently have poorer access to high-quality care (as measured by Ofsted), which undermines the potential of childcare to reduce disadvantage early in life. The Department for Education's evaluation suggests that childcare take-up is nine percentage points lower among disadvantaged three- and four-year-olds than their peers (in 2008 and 2009), and last year there was a gap of 11 percentage points between the most- and least-deprived deciles in terms of the proportion of good or outstanding providers in the area (DfE 2011, NAO 2012).

In addition to these access issues, childcare in the UK is expensive compared to other countries. The cost of a nursery place has increased by 6 per cent in the last year (Daycare Trust 2013) and a dual-earner couple on an average wage with two children will spend 27 per cent of their net family income on childcare (higher than any other OECD country except Switzerland) (OECD 2011). Despite this high cost, the childcare workforce is comparatively low paid, and profit margins are low. The average salary of childminders who look after children at home is just £11,400, and more than half have felt pressured to freeze their fees for the past two years (DfE 2013b, Boffey 2012). Last year, one-quarter of group-based childcare settings made a financial loss, and the majority of those who did profit made a return of less than £10,000 (DfE 2013a, Boffey 2012).

In January 2013 the government set out its vision for early years reform in *More great childcare* (DfE 2013b). Their proposals have the aim of boosting the quality of the workforce, improving affordability of care and, particularly for childminders, supporting the sustainability of the sector.

Summary of key government-proposed reforms

The proposals for reform outlined in *More great childcare* address four core areas: boosting quality through qualification changes, relaxing child-to-adult ratios, changing monitoring regulation, and encouraging the creation of childminder agencies.

- **Boosting quality:** The Early Years Professional Status qualifications will be discontinued, replaced by Early Years Teacher qualifications (similarly at level 6). An Early Years Educator qualification at level 3 will also be introduced. The details of these qualifications and the extent to which they will differ from current offerings have not yet been outlined by the government.
- **Relaxing ratios:** The government proposes increasing the maximum number of children allowed per adult, both in nurseries which meet a higher quality measure (as-yet undefined) and for childminders (with no higher quality requirement). After continuous pressure from the sector, these proposals have been dropped.

Table 1.1: Proposed changes to adult-to-child ratios

Age	Nurseries, current	Nurseries, proposed	Age	Childminders, current	Childminders, proposed
Under 1	1:3	1:4	Under 1	1:1	1:2
1	1:3	1:4	1–5	1:3	1:4
2	1:4	1:6	6+	1:4	1:6
3+	1:8, or 1:13 if led by a teacher	1:8, or 1:13 if led by a teacher	Maximum combination	No more than 6 children under the age of 8, 3 under 5 and 1 under 1	No more than 6 children under the age of 8, 4 under 5 and 2 under 1

- **Changing inspection requirements:** Ofsted will be made the sole arbiter of providers offering government-funded hours, as opposed to local authorities. Ofsted will also inspect childminder agencies collectively, rather than each childminder individually. Weaker providers will be targeted more often, and providers will be able to request a paid-for, early reinspection.
- **Creating agencies:** Childminder agencies are proposed to provide training and support, and to facilitate the matching of childminders with parents.

Despite the proposals' focus on boosting quality and tackling the high cost of childcare, they have been met with opposition from across the early years sector. Petitions by professionals and parents have easily gained more than 50,000 signatures (Morton 2013). Leading early years experts have criticised the plans: Cathy Nutbrown (previously commissioned by the government to conduct a review of early years qualifications) has described the proposals as 'shaking the foundations of quality' (Nutbrown 2013); Naomi Eisenstadt, Kathy Sylva, Sandra Mathers and Brenda Taggart have expressed their belief that the reforms may be detrimental to quality and unlikely to achieve the desired outcomes (Eisenstadt et al 2013).

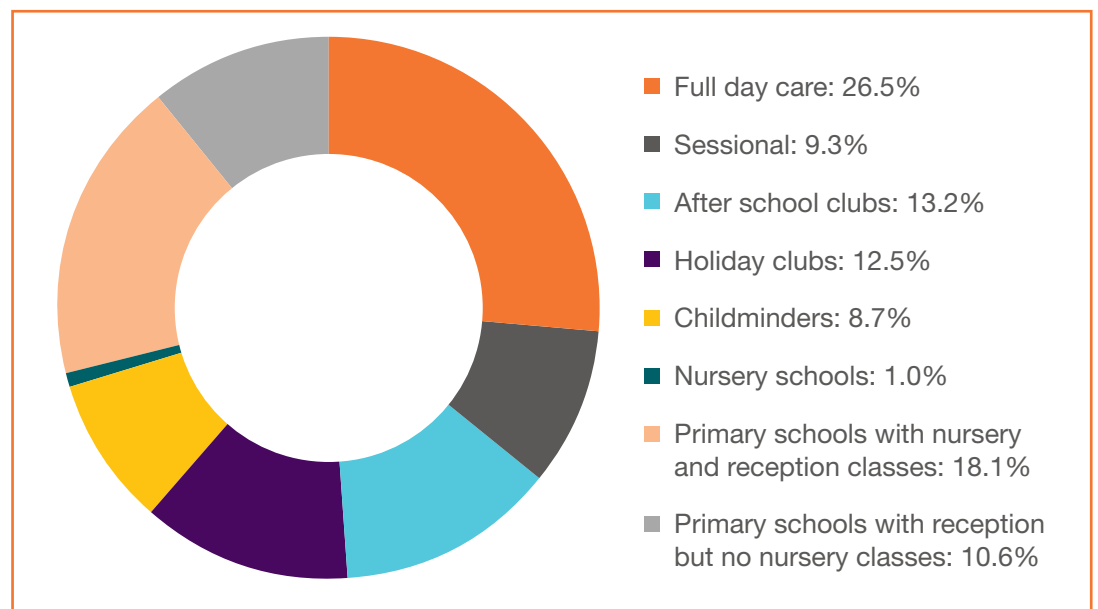
Proposed changes to ratio regulations have dominated the debate. In the wake of high-profile criticism, a review of the evidence that suggested that neither quality would be increased nor costs reduced (Ben-Galim 2013) and consultation with the sector, the deputy prime minister Nick Clegg intervened, rendering ratio changes 'dead in the water'.

While this move has been welcomed by the sector, other elements of reform and their implications need further consideration. In particular, policymakers need to assess the likelihood of their proposals achieving their laudable aims of quality, sustainability and affordability.

Childminders

Childminders feature prominently in the reform proposals. Despite providing a comparatively small proportion of childcare, childminders are a vital part of the early years mix, and especially crucial for families who work atypical or irregular hours.

Figure 1.1
Percentage of registered childcare and early years places, by provider type, 2011



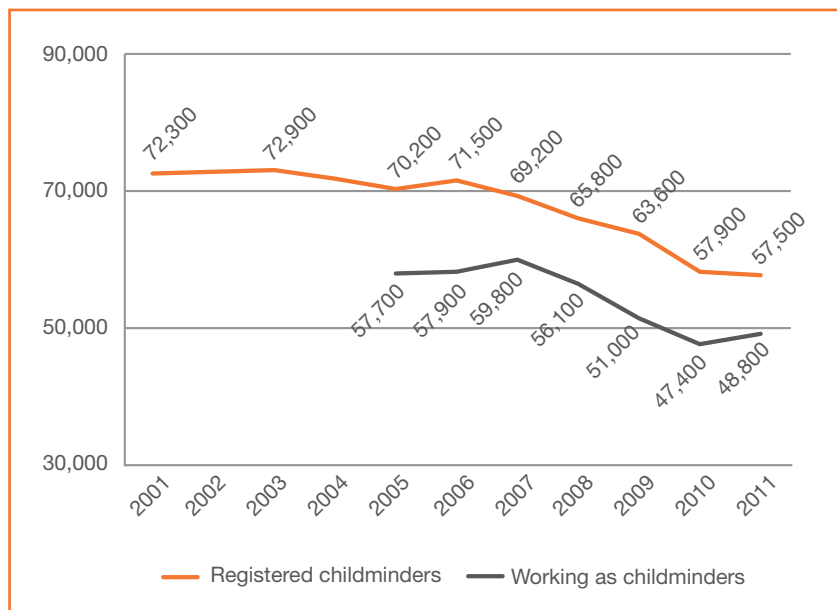
Source: DfE 2013a

Elizabeth Truss, minister for education and childcare, has led the government's reform agenda. She has raised concerns about the dwindling number of childminders – falling 20 per cent between 2006 and 2011 (see figure 1.2 over) – and identified childminding as a potential area for job growth (Truss 2013a). Previously, Truss has blamed this decline on the significant expansion of centre-based early years care between 2005 and 2010 (Truss 2012). However, detailed analysis shows that most of the decrease in childminder numbers came in provision for over-fives, coinciding with the previous Labour government's promotion of before- and after-school clubs, as part of its Extended Schools strategy.² Given the current government's interest in schools offering care until 6pm, this trend is set to continue (Watts 2013). Where childminder numbers have seen less of a fall is in provision for preschool-age children, so this is where the policy focus should be.

One of the aims of the government's proposals is to reverse this trend, making changes which attract new individuals to the profession as well as retaining current professionals (Truss 2013a). Truss wishes to raise the number of practising childminders by creating agencies and cutting local authority inspections, among other measures, in the hope that these changes will cut bureaucracy and thereby make the sector more attractive and sustainable.

² Full day care places for 0-3s rose by 229,000 as childminder places for 0-3s dropped by 8,500. However childminder places for over 5s dropped by 24,000 as afterschool places rose by 86,500.

Figure 1.2
Number of childminders,
2001–2011



Source: DfE 2013a

This paper adds new evidence to the debate, exploring how childminders themselves predict the reforms would affect their sector if implemented. We have combined original quantitative research with a review of broader academic evidence, exploring whether current proposals can be modified to better meet the needs of the sector.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND APPROACH

IPPR sought to gauge the potential impact of the government's proposals on the quality, affordability and sustainability of the childminding sector. Further than this, we wanted to explore childminders' own priorities for reform, definitions of quality and recommendations for the government.

Our research targeted childminders in particular both because of the significant attention given to childminding by the government (in light of the sector's relatively low proportion of the workforce) and because of childminders' important and continuing role in the early years education and childcare mix, particularly in catering for the youngest children and for parents who work irregular or atypical hours. More broadly, we also wanted to seek the opinion of childminders as the vast majority of literature around child development analyses group, nursery, school and centre-based provision. There simply has not been as much information on childminders as on other actors in the early years mix.

This report uses both new primary research with the sector as well as other sources, in particular from Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE), the National Children's Bureau and the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (Pacey). IPPR developed a short online questionnaire, which was disseminated through childminding networks via press releases in various sector-specific publications, Pacey's extensive childminders network, and through a targeted social media campaign. The survey was hosted on Surveytool and was open and available online 3–29 April 2013. In total, 1,030 responses were completed by childminders living in England and registered to work with children under the age of eight.

The questionnaire captured key demographic information including region, age, gender, number of children registered, general and childcare-related qualifications, years of experience, and professional network membership (see the appendix for a breakdown of this information). The survey then explored childminders' own opinions and definitions of quality concerning three of the core areas of reform outlined in *More great childcare*: ratios, agencies and monitoring. The body of this report focuses on these findings.

In interpreting the results, it is important to bear in mind that the survey took place concurrent with high-profile public discussion of these issues, particularly around ratio reform. Moreover, as might be expected, those who took part are likely to be more engaged with the issues. Childminders with high Ofsted scores were over-represented, but we have weighted the data to reflect both regional representation and the most recent Ofsted results. The weighted sample is 978, and all figures refer to weighted data unless otherwise specified. Finally, while this data can provide a snapshot picture of childminders' opinions of reforms and what they believe the likely impact of reforms to be, it does not necessarily predict their own actual behaviour.

All quotations are verbatim, edited only for sense or to ensure anonymity.

3. THE CHILDMINDER'S VOICE: FINDINGS FROM OUR SECTOR SURVEY

The overarching message of childminders is positive: the quality and status of their sector is of paramount importance, and as such standards and regulations should be protected rather than relaxed. There is a strong appetite among childminders to be seen to be on a par with other early years professionals, and many are keen to meet the same sector-wide regulatory requirements. Childminders are committed to driving up the quality and status of their workforce, preferring more-stringent requirements and monitoring processes to less.

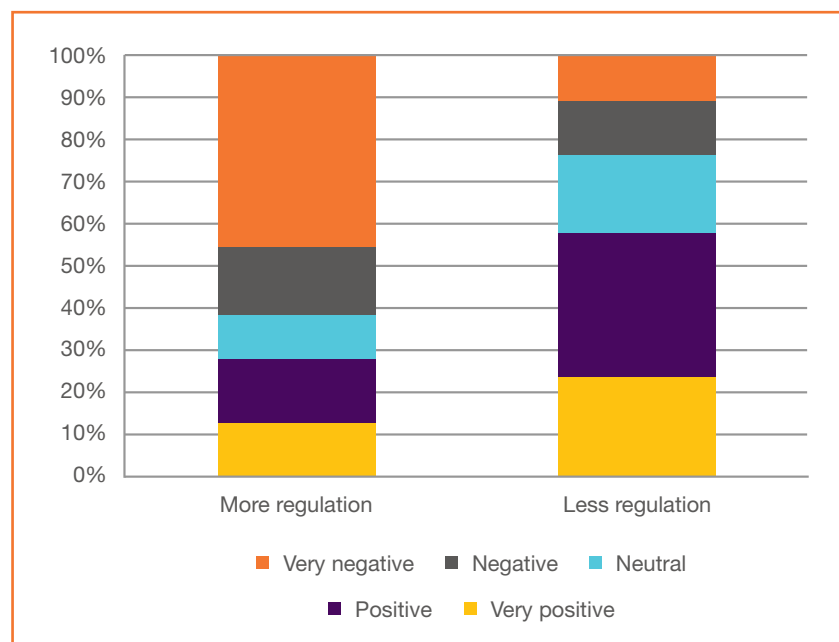
On the specific elements of reform, there are varied concerns. Many childminders believe that the proposed changes may be detrimental to the quality (and perception of quality) of care, are unlikely to lower costs to parents, and (if anything) would encourage current childminders to leave rather than remain in the profession.

3.1 Childminders are keen to drive up the quality of their profession and to be placed on a level with other childcare professionals

Across almost all aspects of reform, childminders want measures in place to regulate and improve their practice. They reject relaxing or reducing regulation, for fear of a negative impact on the quality and perception of the sector. It is particularly striking that 74 per cent of childminders would not increase the number of children they cared for (even though this would mean they were able to earn more money each month) because of the detrimental effect they felt this would have on the quality of their care. As one respondent explained: 'It's not about the income – it's about the quality of care and the safety of the children.'

When asked to consider generally the potential impact of changes to regulation, more than half of the surveyed childminders responded that more regulation would have a positive impact on the quality of childcare and early years education in their area; almost one-quarter (23.6 per cent) thought it would have a very positive impact. In contrast, 61.8 per cent believed less regulation would have a negative impact, and almost half of respondents thought the impact would be very negative.

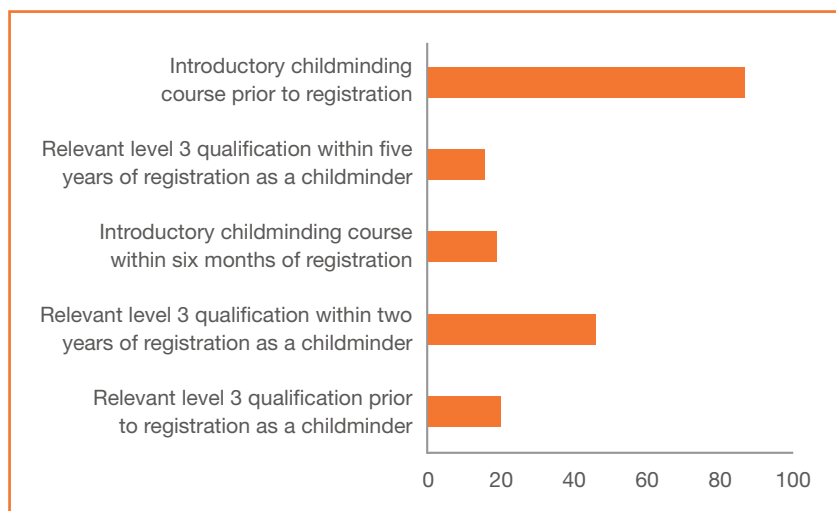
Figure 3.1
Perceived impact of more and less regulation on the quality of provision (% of respondents)



Base: All respondents

More specifically, childminders showed strong support for stricter regulation concerning qualifications. Almost three-quarters of respondents (73.2 per cent) thought there should be additional requirements placed on childminders. Of these, a large majority (86.7 per cent) felt that all individuals should be required to pass an introductory childminding course prior to registering; almost half (45 per cent) believed childminders should be required to hold a relevant level 3 qualification within two years of registration, and almost one-fifth thought they should be required to hold such a qualification prior to registering.

Figure 3.2
‘Childminders should be required to hold a...’ (% of respondents)



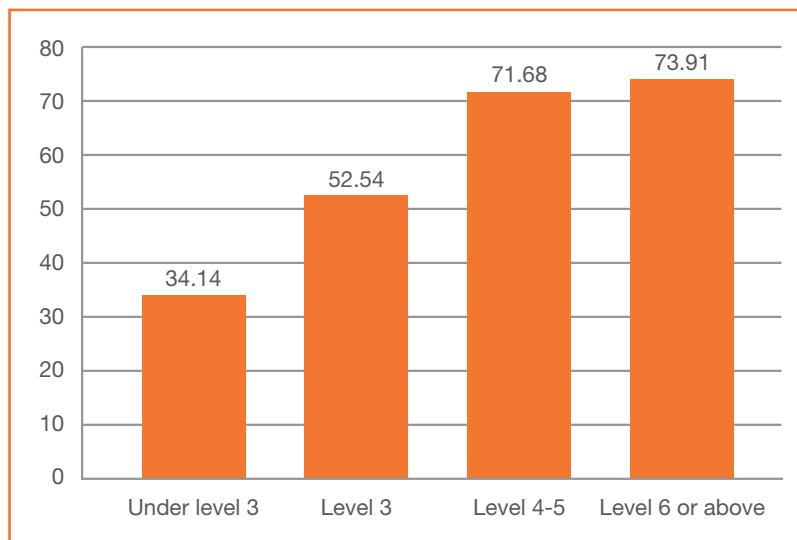
Base: Respondents who felt additional requirements should be placed on childminders (716)

And while the wish for extra requirements was most prevalent among childminders who scored highly by Ofsted or were highly qualified themselves, almost half (47.9) of childminders who scored lower than ‘Good’ on their most recent Ofsted score and did not have a relevant level 3 or higher qualification still supported additional requirements being placed on childminders.

These types of additional requirements are currently in place in Wales. All childminders providing more than two hours’ ‘rewarded’ care per day for under-eights have to register with the Care and Social Services inspectorate and explain to an inspector how they will meet the national requirements criteria. Welsh childminders also have to complete a unit of a level 3 diploma (‘Understand how to set up a home-based childcare business’) before registration, along with a paediatric first aid course.

In our survey, childminders were also keen to be treated equally to those working in centre-based provision. While the majority of childminders did not support the proposal to relax adult-to-child ratios, a narrow majority (52.2 per cent) felt if it were to be introduced then it should go alongside a higher quality requirement – as is proposed for nursery and centre-based carers. This was more pronounced among those with higher qualifications, but even in the lowest-qualified/unqualified group more than one-third of respondents supported a high quality measure.

Figure 3.3
 ‘Only childminders who meet some form of “higher quality measure” should be allowed to look after more children per adult’, by respondent’s highest level of childcare-related qualification (% of respondents)



Base: All respondents

Many of the comments from our survey highlight the importance to childminders of being seen as on a par with other early years professionals – to enjoy ‘the same level of recognition as other providers’.

‘When I registered, I was able to start without any formal qualifications. I was really shocked by that and would not want to see the same repeated. I want to see childminders respected as childcare professionals, not as the second-class group of workers that this government seems to think we are.’

This appetite for challenging standards and strict regulation is evident in the rapid professionalisation of the workforce. In recent years there has been a 44 per cent increase in the proportion of childminders with at least a relevant level 3 qualification – 59 per cent in 2011, up from 41 per cent in 2007 (see figure 3.4 over).

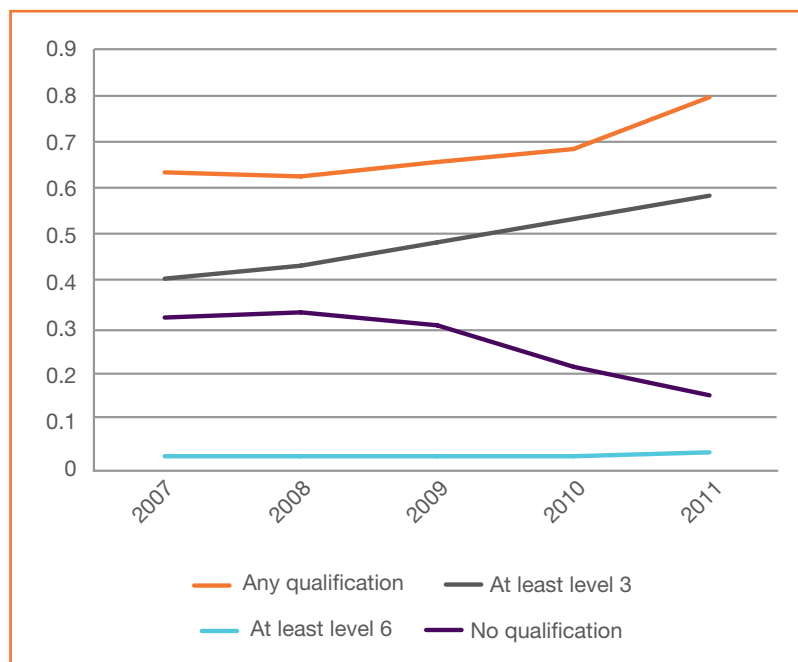
Across the early years sector there are concerns about the low status of the profession: recent Pacey research found that 62 per cent of nursery workers and 75 per cent of nannies cited lack of professional recognition as a critical concern (Pacey 2013).

While the importance of the status of early years professionals is acknowledged in *More great childcare*, some measures were felt by our respondents to be detrimental to the sector in general, and others (such as the link between relaxed ratios and higher quality requirements for nursery workers but not for childminders) to this group in particular.

Across the group, childminders repeatedly showed their commitment to driving up the quality and status of their workforce, preferring more-stringent requirements and monitoring processes to less.

‘I do want to stay [highly] regulated because otherwise us childminders aren’t going to receive the professionalism we deserve. I will not sign up to an agency, I will not take on more children, as this is an accident waiting to happen ... If it came down to being deregulated or you can’t do the job, I wouldn’t childmind – I have worked too hard the last five years to become a glorified babysitter.’

Figure 3.4
Qualifications held by
childminders,
2007–2011



Source: DfE 2013a

3.2 Childminders want individual inspections, regardless of agency membership

Similarly, childminders want to maintain individual inspections.

Research published as part of the *Individual Inspection Matters* campaign by Pacey showed members' strong support for individual registration and inspection, as well as a commitment to the EYFS framework (NCMA 2012a). Research with parents showed that registration and individual inspection helped them to feel confident in their choice of childminder and also demonstrated the sector's commitment to educational standards and safety (NCMA 2012b).

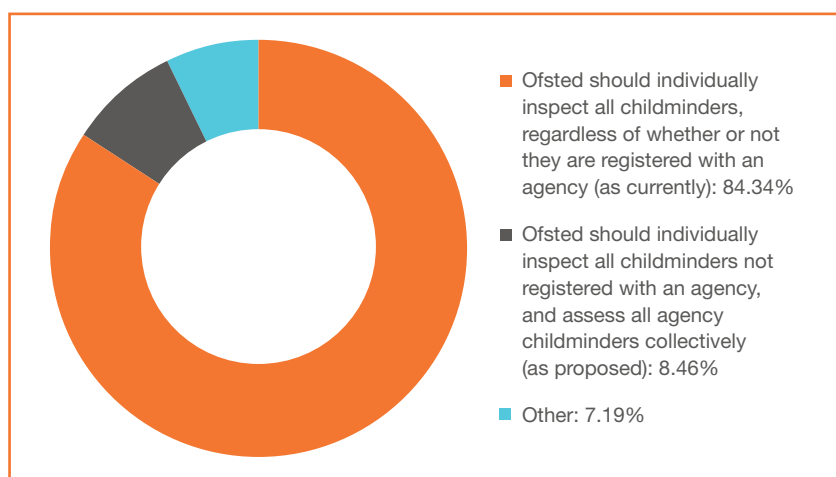
This is reinforced in our analysis. Only 9 per cent of our respondents supported the suggestion that Ofsted should inspect childminders within agencies on a collective basis. The large majority rejected the suggestion of 'streamlined' inspections (see figure 3.5 over).

Several reasons underlie this desire to maintain individual inspections, not least that childminders mostly work individually and directly with parents. Respondents were concerned about low-quality childminders getting more work under an agency-level inspection regime, which would have a detrimental knock-on impact on perceptions of the sector:

'People with weak Ofsted reports may be tempted to join an agency so that they can 'claim' the agency's overall inspection rating. You would not get a true reflection of the individual childminder's abilities and standards, which [would be] detrimental to any parent and child who is placed with them.'

‘These agencies are a very bad idea – they will promote weaker childminders because they will want to make a profit and the respect and reputation of good childminders will be damaged.’

Figure 3.5
Preference for scope of Ofsted inspections (% of respondents)



Base: All respondents

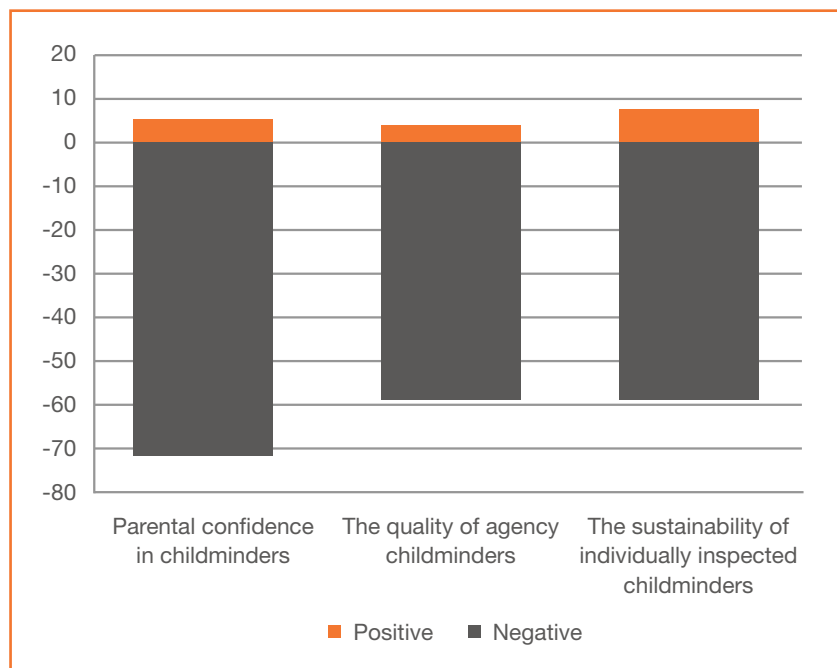
At the other end of the spectrum, those with high Ofsted scores would be reluctant to join agencies, in case their own rating was downgraded through collective assessment:

‘There would be no temptation whatsoever to join an agency ... because I would not be satisfied to have achieved the highest Ofsted grade consistently and then risk the chance that my grade would be downgraded to whatever grade the agency achieved. That would be soul-destroying.’

Rather than supporting improvement in childminding provision in the local area, as the government intends agencies to do, some thought that collective assessment would instead encourage agencies to ‘game the system’. By accepting only those childminders with high Ofsted scores to begin with, an agency would increase the likelihood of gaining a positive assessment. This would mean that those childminders and settings most in need of additional support and training were ‘left without access ... as local authority provision reduces’. (See sections 3.3 and 3.5 for more on the anticipated effect of changes on local authorities.)

A large majority of respondents thought the removal of individual Ofsted inspections for agency childminders would have a negative impact on parental confidence (71.2 per cent), quality (59.3 per cent) and the sustainability of individual childminders (59.3 per cent) (see figure 3.6 over). Overall, there is strong disagreement with the proposed move away from individual inspection.

Figure 3.6
Perceived impact of removing individual inspections for agency childminders on... (% of respondents)



Base: All respondents.

Note: Only positive and negative responses are represented in the chart.³

3.3 Childminders are concerned about the creation of agencies more broadly

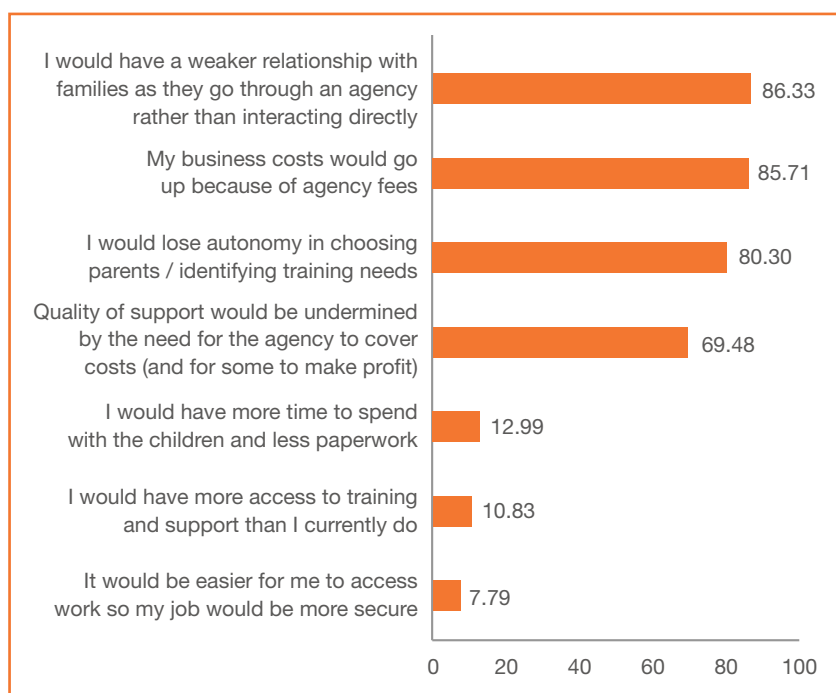
While the specific proposal to cut individual inspections was seen as cause for alarm, childminders were also worried about the negative impact of childminder agencies more broadly.

The government is planning to pilot childminder agencies in the near future, in the hope of supporting their roll-out across the country. The intention behind developing agency structures is to support the sustainability of childminding and attract new entrants to the profession. However, this is another area where there are high levels of apprehension about the potential impact on the sector, with few respondents reporting potential positives.

Key concerns in this area focused on weakened relationships with families, having to pay agency fees, and individual loss of autonomy – each of these was selected as a potential negative effect of the agency model by at least 80 per cent of surveyed childminders. Despite the intention for agencies to support childminders, only 13.0 per cent of those surveyed believed that the introduction of agencies would allow them to have more time to spend with children and less on paperwork; 10.8 per cent thought they would have access to more training and support, and just 7.8 per cent believed their job would be more secure as a result.

³ In addition, 14.2 per cent of respondents were unsure of the impact on parental confidence (and 9.3 per cent thought it would be neutral); a quarter of respondents were unsure of the impact on the quality of agency childminders (25.7 per cent), and 11.3 per cent thought it would be neutral; and one-fifth (20.4 per cent) were unsure of the impact on sustainability, with 12 per cent believing it to be neutral.

Figure 3.7
Personal impacts of introducing childminder agencies (% of respondents)



Base: All respondents

Particularly worrying is that 85.7 per cent of respondents believed that their business costs would go up because of agency fees, as this is likely to have a knock-on impact on the affordability of childcare for parents:

‘I cannot for the life of me see how another layer of bureaucracy is going to reduce fees for parents – someone, somewhere will have to foot the bill, so I can only see it increasing costs of childcare.’

Several respondents emphasised the importance of their own independence and autonomy in how they valued their profession and how they were valued as professionals:

‘I will lose my independence and be considered unable to perform as a small business and carry out my financial affairs. I will be considered “less able”.’

‘I have earned the right to run my own business and feel no need for an agency’s help or interference. One of the main enticements to being a childminder is the freedom of being your own boss and choosing the clients who fit in well with existing arrangements. Agencies could not arrange cover any better than we do already between ourselves. Parents will want to satisfy themselves that any childminder is suitable for their needs and an agency would not remove the need for individual meetings between parent and carer.’

‘My business would no longer be *my* business.’

On the question of paperwork, some childminders feared that agencies would introduce paperwork which was less relevant, and several felt that some level of paperwork was simply unavoidable:

‘The bulk of paperwork is in respect of risk assessment, registers, medication and accident recording, planning, learning journals, observations and assessment, monitoring progress, not in start-up or accounting, and this would not be taken away from us if agencies were instigated.’

Other concerns were that agencies would be poorly placed to judge successfully which parents and families a childminder should work with, this being a ‘very personal decision’:

‘Childminder–parent–child bonds [are] far more personal than similar bonds in ... other settings as we are working in our own homes. Minded children become part of our families when they are with us.’

In fact, one of the elements that childminders felt stood out in their provision was the ability to build close bonds with the parents as well as the children:

‘The whole point of childminding is to build a special relationship with each family to aid working in partnership, and to follow your own ethos and way of working which meets the needs of the families you work with.’

Childminders were even more uneasy about the potential impact of agencies on the sector more generally. A large majority thought agencies would lead to parental confusion, lower quality and safety levels, and less training and development by local authorities. More than half were worried that childminders would only be able to access the government funding that is attached to the free entitlement for three- and four-year-olds through joining an agency (see figure 3.8 over).

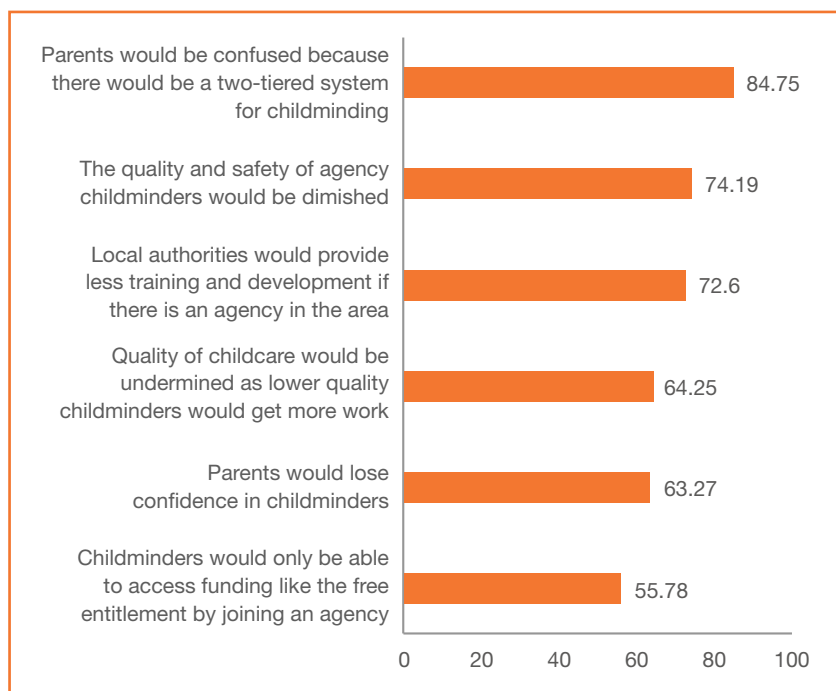
Almost three-quarters (72.6 per cent) of respondents believed the presence of an agency in the area would lead local authorities to cut the amount of training and development they offered. In their comments, several reported having already experienced cuts in this type of provision:

‘[For the] last 10 years or so childminders in my area have been able to access good training and support by the local authority network ... [and] have access to support [through] a very good network coordinator – but already the local authority has withdrawn this without any warning.’

Several childminders felt that there were still too many unanswered questions about how agencies would work, which was heightening anxiety across the sector:

‘I would be seriously worried on who would monitor the agency, who are they responsible for and accountable to, the kind of Ofsted inspection they would receive, which would be based on paperwork not childcare, the level of experience of agency staff, their remit being too big, their quality assurance is an untested area, an agency in a far-away part of the country would have no idea of local needs, unfair practice, unfair competition, barriers to recruiting parents for those who do not join, lack of aspirations for a childminder to become successful and competent, stifling small businesses, home-based childcare would never be the same, lack of aspiration to be knowledgeable on child development, restrictions and imposition by the agency.’

Figure 3.8
Wider impacts of
introducing childminder
agencies (% of
respondents)



Base: All respondents

It may be that childminders could be reassured on some fronts by, for example, a guarantee that non-agency childminders would still be eligible to deliver the free entitlement or that agencies would face stringent minimum quality requirements. However, based on this feedback, there is not currently compelling evidence to support the government's assumption that introducing agencies and collective assessments will 'cut bureaucracy without compromising quality' (DfE 2013a).

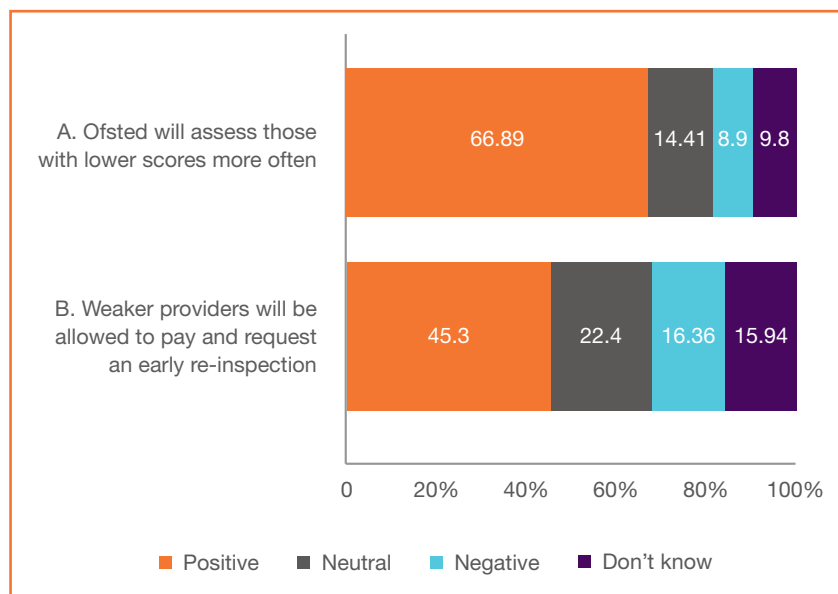
3.4 Childminders are positive about proposals for Ofsted to focus on weaker performers

Childminders were far more positive about proposals for Ofsted to assess childminders and settings with lower scores more often: 66.9 per cent thought this would have a positive effect, and only 8.9 per cent thought it would have a negative effect. Almost half predicted that giving weaker providers the ability to pay for an early reinspection would also have a positive impact on the sector (see figure 3.9 over).

Respondents with higher Ofsted scores were more likely to approve of these changes, while those with a 'Satisfactory' or 'Unsatisfactory' most recent rating were far more likely to be neutral or negative.⁴

⁴ 82 per cent of outstanding childminders felt Ofsted assessing those with lower scores more often would be a positive change, compared to just 50 per cent of those with satisfactory or unsatisfactory scores. Similarly 58 of outstanding childminders support the idea of weaker providers being able to request an early re-inspection, compared to just 36 per of satisfactory providers.

Figure 3.9
Perceived impact of changes related to inspection (% of respondents)

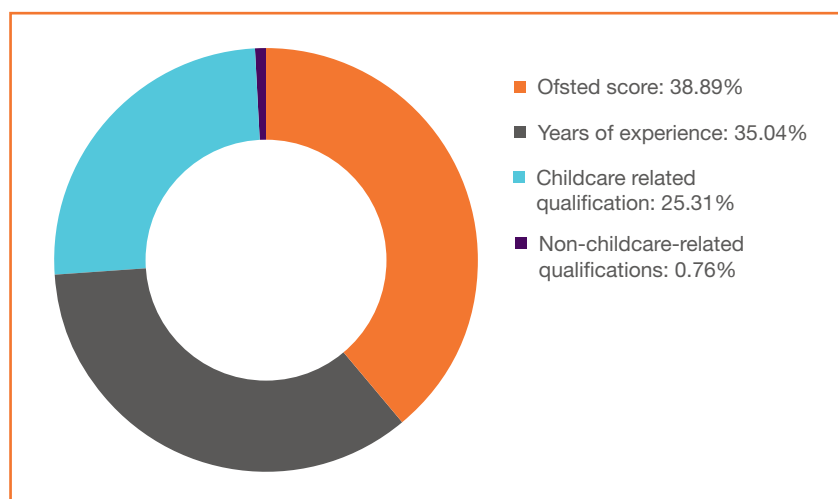


Base: All respondents

3.5 Childminders question about the validity of Ofsted judgments, particularly where the role of local authorities is diminished

As reported above, childminders valued Ofsted ratings as an important indicator of quality for parents, and are therefore keen that all childminders are individually inspected. However, while acknowledging the importance of the role of Ofsted in monitoring, childminders did not believe that it necessarily provided the most relevant or accurate measure of quality provision. When considering a hypothetical higher quality requirement linked to a relaxing of adult-to-child ratios (as has been proposed for centre-based carers), just 38.9 per cent thought an Ofsted score would be the best estimation; 35 per cent instead valued experience (in number of years) and 25.3 per cent childcare-rated qualifications.

Figure 3.10
Best measure of quality childcare provision (% of respondents)



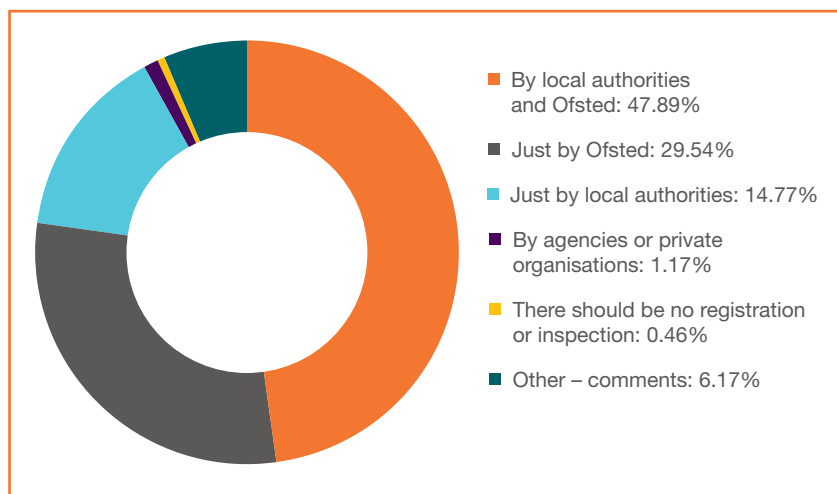
Base: All respondents

At least a quarter of respondents thought that the ‘higher quality’ measure should be based on a combination of factors (reflecting current practice quality, qualifications and years of experience). In their comments, many questioned how well Ofsted could reflect on the quality of their practice, criticising their consistency, accuracy of judgment and irregular assessments. There were other widespread criticisms about whether or not Ofsted was well-placed to conduct the inspections, because it is more familiar with centre-based settings than home-based care.

Recent research raised similar questions about how well Ofsted reflects quality in early years settings. While Ofsted ratings are a reasonably good predictor for children’s developmental outcomes at school, its grades for early years settings are less good at predicting outcomes (Hopkins et al 2010).⁵ A study published by the Daycare Trust examined the relationship between Ofsted scores and early childhood environmental rating scale (ECERS) scores, which have been formulated to measure quality and are strongly indicative of children’s developmental outcomes (Sylva et al 2006). While the Ofsted scores and ECERS scores were broadly aligned for better-performing centres for older children (aged three and up), there was a weaker correlation for lower-performing centres; moreover, there was no significant association between Ofsted grades and infant toddler environmental scale (ITERS-R) scores, which assess children under the age of 30 months. While the introduction of the EYFS resulted in better alignment between Ofsted grades and ECERS scores, the same was not the case for ITERS-R scores (Mathers et al 2012). In fact, in many cases, settings graded as outstanding by Ofsted received the lowest scores on the ITERS-R scale. This is particularly pertinent, given childminders often care for the youngest children.

In terms of who would be best-placed to conduct assessments, by far the most popular option among childminders was assessment by local authorities as well as Ofsted.

Figure 3.11
Best-placed organisation to carry out registrations and inspections (% of respondents)



Base: All respondents

⁵ Ofsted inspections framework for early years has since been revised, but not enough time has elapsed to allow for analysis of the impact.

Far from seeing this as duplicative, many comments highlighted the different nature of the relationships they had with Ofsted and their local authority. Many had a positive relationship with their local authority, praising the developmental feedback and ongoing relationship with individuals who understand the context of the neighbourhood, in contrast to the more formal ‘snapshot’ assessment by Ofsted.

The quantitative work by Mathers and colleagues found that settings that participated in a local authority-led quality assurance schemes scored more highly on ECERS, suggesting that such settings provided a higher-quality learning environment. Similarly, Ofsted found that participants involved in these schemes were better able to assess their own performance (via self-evaluation) and had a greater capacity to maintain continuous improvement (Mathers et al 2012).

One shift proposed in *More great childcare* is to cut local authority inspections and their duty to provide training, leaving Ofsted as the sole arbiter of quality. In addition to Ofsted inspections for all childcare settings, the current system gives local authorities the mandate to determine which settings can deliver the free entitlement, and can require settings that are rated satisfactory or good to meet additional quality conditions, such as by participating in local authority quality assurance schemes. They also have an obligation to ensure that there is information, advice and training available for childcare providers. Weakening local authorities will leave a gap that Ofsted does not necessarily fill.

So, there are two points to consider here: first, whether Ofsted is consistently assessing best practice, particularly for the youngest children and for childminders specifically, and second, whether stripping back the role of local authorities, rather than reducing ‘duplication’ in the system, would in fact remove a crucial support and development resource.

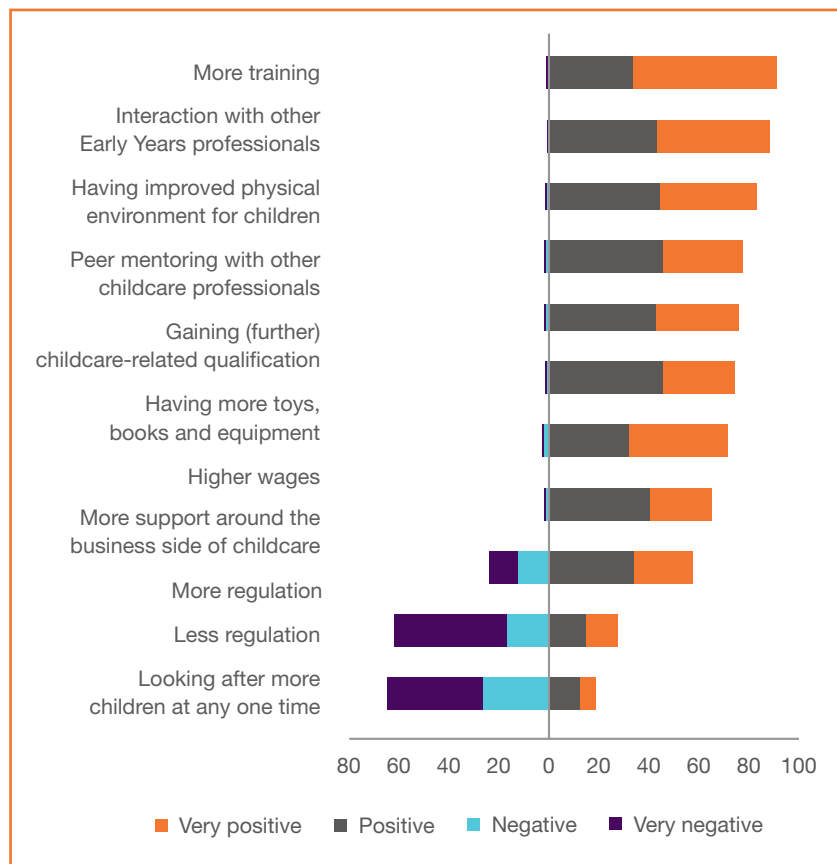
In reconsidering ways of monitoring and supporting childminders, several respondents suggested incorporating expert practitioners in assessment and driving quality, particularly if they have childminding experience.

3.6 Childminders want to develop quality through training and interaction with professionals

Childminders support the drive to develop the quality of the workforce and the increasing professionalisation of childcare. However, they largely disagree with the measures outlined in government proposals about how to get there, believing that cutting costs and administration, far from boosting quality, will in fact pull in the opposite direction.

Our survey data paints a coherent picture of how to drive quality in the sector: over 90 per cent of respondents felt that an important aspect of improving quality would be more training (91.8 per cent though it would be positive or very positive), followed closely by interaction with other professionals (88.7 per cent) (see figure 3.12 over). As already mentioned, this stands in stark contrast to government suggestions focused on driving quality through cutting regulation and relaxing ratios.

Figure 3.12
Perceived impact of potential development factors on the quality of childcare provision (% of respondents)



Base: All respondents

Note: Neutral responses have been excluded from the chart. The elements childminders felt would have a neutral or little impact were: more support for the business aspects of childcare (32.4 per cent), higher wages (25.8 per cent) and having more books and equipment (24.7 per cent).

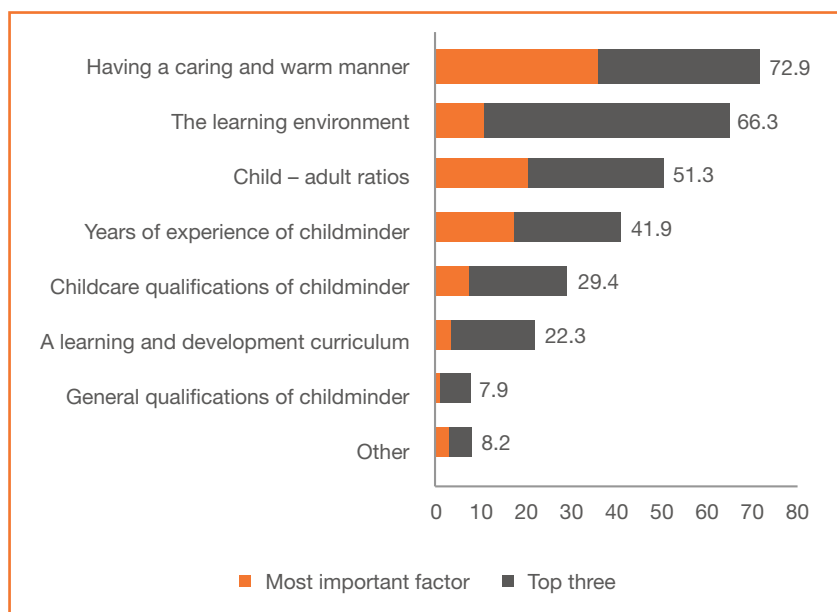
Several comments highlighted the importance of continuing professional development, ‘awareness of current practices [through] networking’ and ‘being able to do training each year to keep standards up’.

Quality in childcare is hard to define. The academic literature typically splits various aspects associated with quality into structural and process-related. Structural aspects are the stable conditions of care, like group size, adult-to-child ratio, management structure, pay, staff turnover, qualifications, centre size or equipment. Several of these aspects are associated with better child outcomes, and these are the more straightforward levers for government policy or quality improvement: it is easier to change how many children a childminder can look after than the warmth of their interactions (Parker 2013 forthcoming).

However, these factors alone do not necessarily boost quality. Process factors – to do with the way children interact with and experience care: the way activities are organised, the quality of conversations, diversity in stimulation – also have a substantial impact on child development.

Interestingly, childminders in our survey highlighted the importance of these process factors above ratios, experience or qualifications. Before the subject of childcare reforms was introduced to them, childminders were asked to rank which components they thought were important in delivering high-quality care. ‘Having a caring and warm manner’ was selected by the greatest number of childminders both as the most important factor and in their top three.

Figure 3.13
‘Rate the following in terms of enabling you to deliver high-quality childcare’ (% of respondents)



Base: All respondents

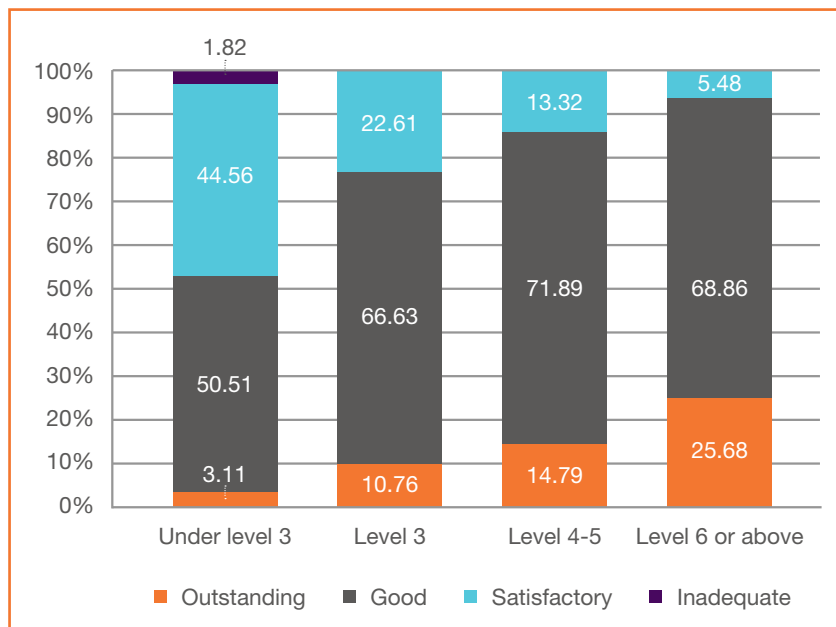
There were several comments around the importance of caring about children by ‘wanting the best for them’, building a ‘natural and giving relationship with them’, being enthusiastic, and ‘loving working with children’.

These elements are directly related to children’s development. The NICHD Early Child Care Research Network (2002) found that the relationship between carer training and ratios on one hand and children’s cognitive and social development on the other was mediated by process quality: professionals with lower ratios were more likely to conduct structured conversations, leading to better cognitive development in children. The study demonstrated that observed quality of care was a predictor of child outcomes during the first years of life. For example, language stimulation (through structured conversations) was positively related with cognitive and linguistic abilities at 15, 24 and 36 months. Process quality during the first three years of life was positively related to pre-academic skills (expressive and receptive language) at the age of three.

Given both the evidence case for the importance of process factors in child development and our findings of how highly these are valued by professionals, it is vital that these elements are not forgotten as reforms take shape. Changes in structural regulations (such as relaxing ratios or requiring minimum qualifications) can help to facilitate high-quality processes. Having fewer children to look after at any one time allows adults to engage in conversations; smaller group sizes mean that each child is more likely to be able to initiate their own activities. Low ratios (particularly for the under-threes) and childcare-related qualifications (particularly for children aged three and older) have shown to be critically important for child development (Parker 2013 forthcoming).

Our survey data also demonstrates the importance of those working with children having relevant professional qualifications. Looking specifically at this group, there is a statistically significant relationship (at the 1 per cent level) between those childminders who achieved high scores in their most recent Ofsted assessment (the best proxy we have for 'quality' in this data) and those who hold higher-level childcare-related qualifications. In other words, those with higher-level childcare-related qualifications are more likely to be highly rated by Ofsted, with more than a quarter receiving an 'Outstanding'. Conversely, almost half (46.4 per cent) of those without at least a level 3 relevant qualification were deemed to be providing only a 'Satisfactory' or 'Inadequate' level of service.

Figure 3.14
Most recent Ofsted rating, by childcare-related qualification level (% of respondents)



Base: All respondents

This link between qualifications and quality echoes other evaluations. Sylva and colleagues (2004) found similar effects when looking at qualifications in centre-based childcare in England. They demonstrated that those settings with qualified teachers (level 6) were more likely to be of high quality, and that employing someone with a high-level relevant qualification significantly improved both the warmth and quality of interactions and the language and reasoning of children. More recently, the evaluation of the Graduate Leader Fund found that settings which gained a graduate-level early years professional saw an increase in their quality of provision (Mathers et al 2011).

Despite this relationship between qualifications and quality, there were questions voiced by childminders in our research as to the validity of some childcare qualifications, which some felt did not always result in best practice. This is something acknowledged by the government and emphasised in the Nutbrown review (2012), with calls to both slim down the number of qualifications and ensure they are rigorous and relevant. While our survey did not explicitly test opinions on refining current qualifications and the introduction of new qualifications (as there is currently little detail on how these will differ from current offerings), this seems to be a positive step forwards.

In summary, it is important to consider the developmental evidence on the capacity of structural factors (like qualifications and ratios) to protect quality. However, in improving quality, process factors (encouraging developmental conversations and interactions) must not be overlooked. These can be supported through peer-to-peer interaction and continuing professional development.

3.7 Childminders believe that relaxing ratios would have undermined stability and failed to lower costs

The news that Nick Clegg has blocked proposals for relaxing ratios has been welcomed by the sector. There was no evidence that these changes would have had the desired effect of boosting quality or cutting costs for parents.

In our survey, three-quarters (74.6 per cent) of respondents planned not to increase the number of children they cared for, had the ratios been relaxed. Their main motivation was a concern that to do so would have a negative impact on the care they provided: 78.5 per cent of those who planned not to increase numbers believed it would be detrimental to the quality of childcare (and how they are perceived), an outcome which they rated as more important than raising their income:

‘It’s not about the income, it’s about the quality of care and the safety of the children in my care.’

‘Children’s outcomes and development would be seriously under threat because it would be impossible to give each individual child one-to-one educational care ... A child’s most vital early learning – personal, social and emotional development – would be seriously compromised.’

‘I can already change the conditions of my registration in exceptional circumstances ... I don’t want every childminder in my area looking after more children – it will lead to more accidents and lower standards of care, which will impact on how I’m viewed.’

These worries are justified by wider evidence. Numerous studies have found a link between lower adult-to-child ratios and quality of provision or child development. The positive impact of low ratios is particularly pronounced for younger children (under three) and where professionals have lower levels of childcare-related qualifications (see De Schipper et al 2006, Leach et al 2006, Melhuish et al 2010, TCRU 2002).

The findings from our survey also question the impact relaxing ratios would have had in terms of lowering costs for parents and supporting the sustainability of the sector.

When respondents considered the potential effects of increasing the number of children they cared for, the biggest impact was deemed to be on their income: 76.0 per cent thought they would earn more each month. However, 93.2 per cent of respondents thought that increasing the number of children they cared for would have no effect on the amount they charged to parents per child; by contrast, only 1.4 per cent would decrease the cost per child (as the government hoped), and 5.4 would actually increase their charges.

This is an important finding, given that the argument for relaxing ratios had been made on two fronts: that it would enable bring costs down for parents (which this disputes) and that it would encourage higher-quality provision (as professionals would be able to invest in training and higher qualifications) (Truss 2013c).

Another notable statistic is that over half of childminders (54.2 per cent) believed that relaxing ratios would negatively impact how much they enjoyed their job. Furthermore, more than one-third (36.5 per cent) thought it would decrease the likelihood of their continuing in the profession, despite the additional income. Responses indicated that childminders felt that taking on more children would have a detrimental effect on their own wellbeing and happiness, as well as the sustainability of the sector:

‘It would not increase safety risks as I would ensure all children were safe, no doubt, but it would increase stress levels and in turn make caring for children stressful, with little time for individual attention. It would make the job unenjoyable and less rewarding.’

One of the aims of the reforms is to ‘entice the next generation of childminders’. Again, here the evidence paints a contrasting picture – existing childminders believe that these changes could prove detrimental both to their own enjoyment of their job and the likelihood of their continuing in the profession. While the plan to relax ratios has been effectively blocked by Nick Clegg’s intervention, this evidence shows that the government’s assumptions about the driving concerns of those in the sector are not always correct.



Consistently, across many different aspects of the proposed reforms, we have found that there is widespread concern about how the ideas published in *More great childcare* could affect both childminders and the sector more broadly. In particular, our findings demonstrate that some measures may be detrimental to achieving the government’s own aims. Positively, there is appetite for driving up standards and childminders welcome those measures which they believe will support their own development and the boost the status of their profession.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The assumptions behind several government proposals aimed at making childminding more attractive, like cutting regulation or creating agencies, are in direct conflict with childminders' own beliefs about which elements of the profession they value most highly. As well as reconsidering some specific aspects of reform, the government needs to gain greater insight into the sector in order to really understand where they should focus their attention. We suggest these focal points are: ensuring childminders are treated equally with other early years professionals, supporting professional development, and moving to increase minimum standards to boost the quality and status of childcare.

This is a great moment to capitalise on the energy in the sector to ensure that the next steps for reform are really going to promote quality, affordability and sustainability. We believe there are some specific suggestions arising from our research that can support this drive for quality.

1. Pause on the creation of childminder agencies to respond to concerns that they would undermine quality and sustainability rather than support the sector

More than 80 per cent of childminders thought the introduction of agencies would be damaging to their relationship with families, lead to a loss in their autonomy, and result in additional fees. Over and above their individual concerns, childminders were also worried that it would have a detrimental effect on the sector in general. Conversely, a very small percentage of respondents felt that it would achieve the intended aims: cutting paperwork, increasing access to training and making their job more secure.

Childminders need more detail about how agencies would operate – particularly around fees, funding and quality. If agencies are introduced, this should not occur alongside any relaxation in regulation, particularly around inspection, as international examples show that this could be detrimental to quality.

2. Maintain individual inspections for all childminders alongside proposals for targeting low-performing settings

There is overwhelming support for individual inspections to be maintained. There is also support for the proposal that Ofsted assesses those with lower scores more often (and support is not limited to those with high Ofsted scores). And there is some support for weaker providers to be allowed to pay to request an early reinspection.

3. Place minimum requirements on all professionals delivering the EYFS curriculum to have or be working towards a level 3 childcare qualification, in order to boost the quality and status of the sector

While the government needs to publish more detail on the nature of the changes, we support the introduction of new early years qualifications and the attempt to slim down the number of qualifications on offer in order to improve transparency and rigour. While we did not test childminders' responses to these changes directly, many comments questioned the validity and relevance of some qualifications currently on the market.

The next step in driving quality should be to require all practitioners who have responsibility for working directly with children (as opposed to providing administrative or practical support in larger settings) to have or be working towards a full and relevant childcare-related level 3 qualification, which includes basic English language. The government should set out a longer-term goal establishing a level 3 qualification as a prerequisite for practitioners delivering the EYFS curriculum, in line with recommendations outlined in the Nutbrown review (2012). While this change would have cost implications and place a burden on childminders (as only 59 per cent currently meet that criterion), our

research shows that there is widespread support for some form of additional requirement: 73.2 per cent of respondents thought there should be stricter requirements placed on childminders; of that group, almost half (45 per cent) believed childminders should be required to hold a relevant level 3 qualification within two years of registration, while almost one-fifth thought they should be required to hold such a qualification prior to registering.

4. Reform Ofsted criteria to ensure they reflect the best developmental practice, with the future intention that all those delivering the free entitlement have at least a 'Good' score

While childminders value Ofsted scores, particularly for parents, several had questions about the validity of their assessments. Ofsted scores need to better reflect child outcomes and to be brought into line with internationally respected early childhood environmental rating scales (ECERS) by:

- assessing revised ratings against ECERS, where possible incorporating elements of these scales into Ofsted inspection criteria
- training inspectors specifically in early years practice and to develop a better understanding of different types of early years settings, in particular the differences between childminders and group settings
- providing more finely graded reports, including suggested action points as part of detailed feedback
- publishing school-readiness scores on a provider-by-provider basis.

As Ofsted inspections are developed to better assess quality and reforms are brought in to assess low-performing settings more often, government funding for providers to deliver the free entitlement should be restricted to those with at least a 'Good' score. Currently, 30 per cent children can only access their free entitlement through settings rated 'Satisfactory' – and this trend is particularly pronounced in deprived areas (NAO 2012). However, several local authorities who funded satisfactory providers in recent years did so because of a widespread belief that Ofsted assessments were not reliable, or because the provider had not been assessed for some years (Gibb et al 2011). As reforms of Ofsted practice are introduced to tackle both of these issues, the government should move to restrict free entitlement funding to high-quality settings.

5. Focus on driving quality, through professional development, peer interaction and training

As part of a revised set of reforms, there needs to be a greater focus on driving quality rather than increasing monitoring. To support an excellent early years system we believe three components which focus on quality are essential:

1. registration and inspection: best done by Ofsted (with the improvements outlined above)
2. support to raise standards and tackle poor quality: by local authorities, professional networks and membership organisations, and private providers
3. an entity with responsibility for developing a high-quality, independent profession.

This new entity could be led by a professional body or royal college, which is responsible for accrediting professionals (with links to Teach First for early years and apprenticeship qualifications), designing qualifications and course content, and providing continuing professional development. This would both improve the status and identity of the workforce, and provide a body tasked with driving quality throughout the sector.

While we support existing proposals for changes at Ofsted, policymakers need to give further consideration to the latter two of these ‘pillars’ of quality. Reforms must tackle rather than monitor poor-quality provision and support rather than regulate high-quality settings.



The government should take stock. Our research indicates that if its proposals are implemented in their current form then the hoped-for outcomes – boosting quality, cutting costs of parents and increasing the attractiveness and sustainability of the childminding sector – are in doubt. Some elements of reform may even prove detrimental to these goals.

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APPENDIX

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Table A1
Age

Age-group	%
18–25	1.02
26–35	13.3
36–45	38.04
46–55	33.41
56–65	12.27
Over 65	1.46
Would rather not say	0.49

Gender: The vast majority of our respondents (98.21 per cent) were female, which reflects the national population of childminders (99 per cent female).

Respondents were from a spread of regions, which was then weighted to reflect the breakdown of the latest DfE data on the spread of childminders.

Table A2
Geographic spread

Region	%
East Midlands	10.18
East	12.75
London	16
North East and Yorkshire and the Humber	13.43
North West	11.37
South East	18.64
South West	8.66
West Midlands	8.96

The majority of respondents had several years' experience, with over 40 per cent having over 10 years' experience. Only 2.31 per cent had less than one year of experience working as a registered childminder.

Table A3
Experience in the sector

Level of experience	%
Less than 1 year	2.31
1–2 years	10.93
3–4 years	15.3
5–6 years	11.35
7–8 years	10.16
9–10 years	7.99
More than 10 years	41.95

Of respondents, 71 per cent held at least a level 3 qualification related to childcare. However, more than one-fifth had no childcare-specific qualifications or have completed only a childminding registration course (21 per cent).

Table A4
Level of childcare-specific qualification

Qualification level	%
No childcare-specific qualifications	3.38
Childminding registration course	17.75
Level 1 (Foundational level GNVQ, Level 1 NVQ)	1.74
Level 2 (Intermediate GNVQ, Level 2 NVQ)	4.67
Level 3 (Vocational A level, Advance GNVQ, Level 3 NVQ)	50.16
Level 4 (BTEC Higher Nationals, Level 4 NVQ, eg Level 4 Certificate in Early Years Practice)	7.52
Level 5 (BTEC Higher Nationals, Level 5 NVQ, eg Diploma in Higher Education and Playwork, Early Years Foundation Degree)	5.89
Level 6 (Honours degree, eg BA Early Childhood Studies, Bachelor of Education, Early Years Professional Status)	5.65
Level 7 (Masters degree, PGCE, NPQICL)	1.51
Other	1.74

Table A5
Level of general qualification

Qualification level	%
No general qualifications	11.58
Level 1 (GCSE grade D-G, Foundational level GNVQ, NVQ)	5.25
Level 2 (GCSE grade A*-C, Intermediate GNVQ, Level 2 NVQ)	28.46
Level 3 (A level, Vocational A level, Level 3 NVQ)	23.26
Level 4 (Higher level qualifications, BTEC Higher Nationals, Level 4 NVQ – Certificate)	7.47
Level 5 (Higher level qualifications, BTEC Higher Nationals, Level 5 NVQ – Diploma / Foundational degree)	5.24
Level 6 (Honours degree)	11.29
Level 7 (Masters degree)	1.7
Level 8 (Doctorate)	0.1
Other	5.67

Respondents were weighted to reflect recent Ofsted scores. As might be expected we had an over-representation of high-scoring respondents in the original sample, which was subsequently weighted.

Table A6
Most recent Ofsted rating

Rating	%
Outstanding	10.2
Good	62.88
Satisfactory	25.98
Inadequate	0.93

The majority of carers were registered to look after six children; 65 per cent also regularly cared for children aged eight and over.

Table A7
Number of minded children

Number of children	%
1	0.45
2	1.59
3	11.24
4	11.17
5	12.62
6	57.36
7 or more	4.82
Don't Know	0.57

Professional membership: 85 per cent of respondents were a member of Pacey (formerly NCMA) and 22 per cent were a member of another childcare organisation.