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Survey of Childcare and Early Year Providers 2022

Technical Report

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IFF Research

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# Introduction

The Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers (SCEYP) is important for monitoring and evaluating childcare and early years provision. Covering group-based providers (private, voluntary and school/college/LA/other unclassified[[1]](#footnote-1)), school-based providers (those offering nursery provision and maintained nursery schools) and childminders, it provides a representative snapshot of early years provision in England. It helps the Government, including the Department for Education (DfE), understand the issues that providers face, informing development of early years and childcare policy.

The survey has been running since 1998, with the latest 2022 iteration carried out by IFF Research and London Economics. There are two versions:

* The main SCEYP 2022: a large mixed-mode survey, which can be completed either online or on the telephone Topics covered include staff to-child ratios, delivery of Government policies including funded entitlements and Tax-free Childcare (TFC), children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), staff qualifications and pay, and the financial side of providing childcare such as costs, incomes and fees. There is also a number of core questions such as the number of children registered at the setting.
* The short SCEYP: delivered online or via postal entry, this a set of core questions from the main survey, focusing on fees and Government funding received, as well as areas such as the number of children registered at the setting. The purpose of this short survey is to provide robust fee and funding estimates at a local authority (LA) level by aggregating data collected across this and the main SCEYP.

## 1.1 The SCEYP timeseries

SCEYP has undergone some changes in scope and design which mean that comparisons between different survey years should be approached with caution:

* The questionnaire was fully redesigned in 2016 to reflect changes in the childcare market. These changes to the design meant that the 2016 data is not directly comparable with previous years of the survey; the 2016 data was intended to provide a new and enhanced baseline. There were some changes to the 2018 survey to improve the quality of data and to reflect new policy priorities, but otherwise it was designed to be comparable with the 2016 survey.
* From 2019, and following a user consultation on the frequency, sampling approach, mode and topic coverage of the SCEYP[[2]](#footnote-2), DfE decided to intensify the early years focus of the survey by sampling and recruiting only providers for pre-school children aged 0-4 years. Previous surveys had included reception provision as well as wraparound and holiday care for school-aged children aged up to seven. This means that figures published before and after 2019 are not comparable for “all school-based providers” and “all providers”. Any trend analysis within publications will have made adjustments to ensure figures from different years are comparable.

The SCEYP sample includes some providers registered as early years providers but not currently looking after any children aged 0 to 4. In 2022, London Economics excluded these providers from all analysis reported in the DfE publications.

## 1.2 Temporary or permanently closed settings

Fieldwork for the 2022 survey took place between April and July 2022.

To try to obtain as accurate a picture as possible of available childcare provision in 2022, providers were invited to complete the survey if they had been open and offering relevant childcare in the last 30 days, even if their setting was temporarily closed at the time of interview. Settings that were open were asked to think about their current situation, whilst settings temporarily closed at the time of interview were asked to answer with reference to the last term-time day on which they were open.

Table 1.1 shows that a minority of settings who responded to the main survey reported temporary closure.

Table . Settings that reported temporary closure

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Survey metric** | **School-based providers** | **Group-based providers** | **Childminders** |
| Total number of temporarily closed settings | \* | 1% | 6% |
| *Unweighted base* | 2,658 | *7,083* | *2,070* |

Base: All providers responding to the main survey.

Of the 136 providers sampled for the main survey who told us they had been closed for more than 30 days, 108 reported they were permanently closed and 28 said were temporarily closed.

Of those providers that were permanently closed, many reported that they had closed for reasons unrelated to COVID-19.

Table . SCEYP 2022 Reasons for permanent closure

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **School-based providers** | | **Group-based providers** | | **Childminders** | | **All providers** | |
|  | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n |
| Closed prior to March 2020 (pre-COVID) | - | 2 | 10% | 13 | 13% | 43 | 13 | 58 |
| Closed after March 2020 but for reasons unrelated to COVID-19 | - | 4 | 44% | 56 | 45% | 144 | 45 | 204 |
| Closed after March 2020  for reasons related to COVID-19 | - | 3 | 39% | 50 | 41% | 131 | 40 | 184 |
| Don’t know / prefer not to answer | - | - | 6% | 8 | 1% | 4 | 2% | 12 |
| *Unweighted base* |  | *9* |  | *127* |  | *322* |  | *458* |

Base: All providers who reported being permanently closed at the time of the survey.

Data are unweighted and are indicative only.

Those that were temporarily closed (and presumably hoping to reopen) gave a variety of reasons for their current closure (Table 1.3).

Table .. SCEYP 2022 Reasons for temporary closure

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **All providers** |
|  | % |
| Lack of demand from parents | 17 |
| Not financially sustainable to open | 16 |
| Increased costs of adhering to COVID-19 restrictions | 11 |
| Cannot adhere to COVID-19 infection control requirements | 7 |
| Difficulty recruiting or retraining staff | 8 |
| Other COVID-19 related reason | 19 |
| Other reason not related to COVID19 | 44 |
| *Unweighted base* | *161* |

Base: All providers who reported being temporarily closed for more than 30 days at the time of the survey. Providers could select more than one reason so percentages may sum to more than 100%. Data are unweighted and are indicative only.

# Sampling

As in previous waves of the Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers (SCEYP), the study comprised a representative sample of three distinct provider populations in England, each of which was analysed separately:

* Group-based providers (GBP): childcare providers registered with Ofsted and operating in non-domestic premises;
* School-based providers (SBP): nursery provision in schools, including before-and after-school provision and maintained nursery schools;
* Childminders: Ofsted-registered childminders providing early years care and operating in domestic settings (excluding providers solely on the voluntary register).

In the main Official Statistics publication for SCEYP 2022, figures were reported for five sub-groups:

* Private GBPs;
* Voluntary GBPs;
* School-based providers offering nursery;
* Maintained nursery schools (MNS); and
* Childminders.

This chapter describes the sampling approaches adopted for both surveys.

## Group-based providers sample

GBPs are childcare providers registered with Ofsted and operating in non-domestic premises.[[3]](#footnote-3) The survey collected further details about the ownership and type of childcare offered.

A request was made to Ofsted to provide information for all records in the “childcare on non-domestic premises” category (excluding those classified as inactive and those appearing on the Voluntary Childcare Register (VCR) only) from their July 2021 snapshot database. The sample was based on records from July 2021 to be consistent with the timing of sampling for previous years’ surveys. The data was provided in two stages, with stage 1 providing the variables necessary for drawing the sample and stage 2 containing provider contact details (address, telephone numbers and e-mail address). At stage 1, 24,757 records were provided.

Prior to distributing cases between the main and short surveys, records were checked for duplicates, settings that were known to have closed, or settings identified as only offering holiday care or leisure activities. In total, 1,071 records were removed from the sample.

The remaining 23,686 records were used to draw a sample for the main survey. As in previous years, a stratified random sampling approach was used. Records were selected in proportion to the regional distribution of records and stratified by local authority (LA), register type, ownership status, deprivation band based on the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), and postcode. As in previous years, it was decided to oversample the North East to enable more robust comparisons between regions. A total of 15,586 records were selected for the main survey.

The selected sample was then allocated systematically (using the same stratification variables) to one of three questionnaire variants (16/42/42% split[[4]](#footnote-4)) and, within each variant, to a specific day of the week about which to answer certain questions. All GBPs that remained in the sample frame following sampling to the main survey were treated as eligible for the short survey (7,743[[5]](#footnote-5)).

Table 2.1 Number of group-based providers issued to each survey element

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Survey element** | **N** |
| Main SCEYP | 15,845 |
| Short SCEYP | 7,743 |
| Not issued to mainstage fieldwork | 1,169 |
| *Total* | 24,757 |

## School-based providers sample

The sample of SBPs consisted of maintained and independent primary schools with nursery and reception provision, including maintained nursery schools (MNS). Although schools offering reception provision alongside nursery provision were eligible for the study, they were only asked about their nursery provision. This sample was drawn from the Schools Census published in June 2020, collected from all schools in England. The sample was complemented with further information from the Get Information About Schools (GIAS)[[6]](#footnote-6) extract. The types of schools eligible for the study were identified using the following criteria:

* **Independent schools with reception and nursery provision:** open independent schools with statutory lowest age equal to 0, 1, 2 or 3 years (according to School Census) and offering nursery classes (according to GIAS);
* **Maintained nursery schools:** open state-funded nursery schools (according to School Census);
* **Maintained schools with reception and nursery provision:** open state-funded mainstream and special schools which offer nursery classes (which have at least one pupil in nursery and with at least one pupil in reception).

A total of 8,982 eligible school-based providers were identified.[[7]](#footnote-7) After the sampling frame was checked for duplicate records and known or planned closures, 8,933 records were included in the sample.

To decide the required issued sample sizes, IFF assumed the same response rates as in the SCEYP 2021 main sample:

Table 2.2 Response rate assumptions for school-based providers by type

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **School type** | **Main survey** | **Short survey** |
| Independent schools with reception and nursery provision | 35% | 25% |
| Maintained nursery schools | 63% | - |
| Maintained schools with reception and nursery provision | 35% | 25% |

A stratified random sampling approach was used to select the samples of school-based providers. Table 2.3 presents the number of cases sampled for the main survey and the short survey. As in previous years, it was necessary to include all maintained nursery schools that were sampled in the main survey in order to ensure achieving sufficient interviews for regional analysis. The samples were stratified by school type (disproportionate sampling), region and IDACI score to ensure geographical representativeness of the sample. After stratification, there were 6,957 schools eligible for the main survey. The samples were then allocated systematically (using the same stratification variables) to one of two questionnaire variants (50/50% split) and, within each variant, to a specific day of the week about which to answer questions.

The remaining 1,838[[8]](#footnote-8) schools in the sample frame were allocated to the short survey. These were only maintained and independent schools offering both reception and nursery.

Table 2.3. Number of school-based providers issued to each survey element

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Survey element** | **Issued (n)** |
| Main SCEYP | 6,957 |
| Short SCEYP | 1,838 |
| Not issued to mainstage fieldwork | 138 |
| *Total* | 8,933 |

## Childminders sample

The sample of childminders, those offering on domestic premises, was drawn from the July 2021 monthly snapshot of the Ofsted register of childminders.[[9]](#footnote-9) Only those that confirmed they were still practicing childminders at the time of interview were eligible to be surveyed.

A request was made to Ofsted to provide information for all records of active childminders (excluding those appearing on the VCR only) from their July 2021 monthly snapshot database. The data was provided in two stages, with stage 1 providing the variables necessary for drawing the sample, and stage 2 containing the provider name, address and contact details (telephone numbers, e-mail address) for sampled childminders. After cleaning to remove childminders known to have closed, the stage 1 database included 33,800 active childminders.[[10]](#footnote-10) This database was used to select samples for all survey components.

Based on a target response rate of 35% for the main survey, IFF selected 5,556 childminders for the main survey sample. As in previous years of SCEYP, the design of the short survey sample was driven by the need to provide estimates at LA level. Therefore, IFF estimated how many interviews including data on fees would be achieved with the main survey so that either 80 or 100 interviews in each LA (from both the short and main survey) could be achieved. If there were more than 600 CMs in the sample frame for an LA, the target was 100. If the LA had fewer than 600 CMs, the target was 80. A response rate of 25% was assumed for the short survey in every region except London, where a response rate of 20% was assumed based on SCEYP 2021 A total of 27,396 childminders were sampled.

A stratified random sampling approach was used to select both samples. Smaller regions were oversampled for the main survey to enable reporting by region and questionnaire variants. The sample was further stratified by LA, register type, time elapsed since registration and IDACI score, and then checked to ensure that the selection was representative of the entire population of childminders.

The selected sample was then allocated systematically (using the same stratification variables) to one of two questionnaire variants (50/50% split) and, within each variant, to a specific day of the week to answer questions about. The sample for the short survey was stratified by the same set of variables (explicitly stratifying by LA), and then allocated to a specific day of the week about which to answer certain questions.

Table 2.4 Number of childminders issued to each survey element

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Survey element** | **Issued (n)** |
| Main SCEYP | 5,556 |
| Short SCEYP | 21,730 |
| Not issued to mainstage fieldwork[[11]](#footnote-11) | 110 |

# Questionnaire

## 3.1 Main SCEYP: Questionnaire development

As far as possible the content of the 2022 questionnaire mirrored that of the 2021 survey in order to maintain the timeseries. That said, a small number of changes were made during the script stage to improve the overall quality of the data collection. This was predominantly focused on adding or updating a range of validation checks. A handful of new questions were also added following cognitive interviews or key issues pertinent to the latest survey year.

**3.2 Cognitive testing**

The cognitive testing phase was a relatively small-scale exercise focused on questions new to the survey in 2022. These covered:

* Awareness of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework allowing providers to go below the statutory ratios under exceptional circumstances, provided the quality of care, safety and security of childcare is maintained
* What, if anything, is stopping providers from offering parents of eligible children Free Entitlement
* SEND questions including how many SEND children were registered, how many have an Education, Health and Care plan or a Statement of Special Needs, whether staff have access to a SENCO and whether this SENCO has any formal qualifications to perform the role

A handful of amendments were agreed with DfE following the cognitive testing report, predominantly focused on small working changes and the addition of clarification texts in places.

## 3.2 Main SCEYP: Questionnaire sections

Table 3.1 sets out the questionnaire structure used in the main SCEYP 2022. As in previous years, the questionnaire was split into variants in order to reduce the time burden of completing it, while still ensuring a large enough response to enable detailed analysis.

The core questionnaire for each provider type asked a series of contextual questions as well as covering capacity and attendance.

GBPs answered the core questionnaire and one of three provider-specific variants. The content of these variants consisted of questions on either funded hours and expanding provision (variant 1), staffing (variant 2) or finances (variant 3).

SBPs and childminders answered the core questionnaire and one of two provider-specific variants. One variant asked about staffing and children with SEND (variant 1), while the other comprised financial questions (variant 2).

Table .. Main SCEYP questionnaire sections

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Response rates** | **School-based providers** | **Group-based providers** | **Childminders** |
| Provider Background | Core | Core | Core |
| Attendance and Capacity | Core | Core | Core |
| Funded hours - delivery | Core | Core | Core |
| Funded hours - flexibility | Variant 2 | Variant 1 | Variant 1 |
| Staff-to-child ratios | Variant 2 | Variant 1+3 | n/a |
| Children with SEND | Core | Variant 1+3 | Core |
| Access to SENCO | Variant 1 | Variant 1 | Variant 1 |
| Provider level staff questions\* | Core / Variant 1 | Core / Variant 2 | Core / Variant 1 |
| Looped staff questions | Variant 1 | Variant 2 | Variant 1 |
| Fees and Free Entitlements | Core | Variant 1+3 | Variant 2 |
| EYPP and TFC | Core | Core | Core |
| Expansion of provision | Variant 2 | Variant 1 | Variant 1 |
| Costs of childcare | Variant 2 | Variant 3 | Variant 2 |
| Income from childcare | Variant 2 | Variant 3 | Variant 2 |
| Additional services | Core | Core | N/A |

\*Some questions in these sections were core and asked of all, some questions allocated to a specific variant.

# Survey fieldwork

The 2022 main Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers (SCEYP) was conducted as a mixed-mode survey, which could be completed either online (via Computer Assisted Web Interviewing, also known as “CAWI”) or on the telephone (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing, also known as “CATI”). Both surveys were conducted by IFF Research. Data for the mixed-mode short SCEYP was collected online and using a paper questionnaire.

### 4.1 Main SCEYP: Interviewer training and project briefings

Before starting work on the survey, all interviewers were required to attend a project briefing on the survey. Briefings were carried out using video teleconferencing and covered:

* Purpose of the study and how the data are used;
* Questionnaire content;
* Study procedures, including initial contact with respondents and reminder communications;
* Motivating respondents to take part;
* Practice interviews.

### 4.2 Main SCEYP: Fieldwork dates

The main SCEYP fieldwork took place between April 23rd [[12]](#footnote-12) and 28th July 2022. A “webfirst” design was followed, with the online survey launched first and a communication strategy designed to maximise the number of online completions (see Table 4.1 for communication dates). Telephone fieldwork ran from 3rd May to 11th July 2022.

### 4.3 Main SCEYP: Making contact

Potential respondents were sent a range of survey materials to motivate participation, increase the completeness of the data collected and reduce participant burden by helping respondents to prepare in advance. Building on previous years, IFF Research worked with the Department for Education (DfE) in order to make these materials as accessible, appealing and persuasive as possible. Key features of the mailings intended to encourage response included:

* **Contents of materials.** Increased the emphasis on the benefits of survey participation by stressing what results will be used for. They were also simplified this year, and the length reduced, to encourage engagement.
* **Using different motivational statements across the different contact attempts.** Research evidence[[13]](#footnote-13),[[14]](#footnote-14) shows that varying the messaging across different communications increases response rates by attracting participants with different motivations to take part. Initial communications focussed on the most popular motive for survey participation - altruism (by emphasising the importance of the research and making ‘your voice heard by Government’). The later reminder letter highlighted other potential motivations, such as self-interest i.e. ‘taking part will help you, your staff and the families and children you support’.
* **Design of mailings.** Efforts were made to ensure that all mailings looked professional and legitimate and would not be mistaken for junk mail or commercial marketing. The layout was engaging and concise, clearly spelling out what was being asked of participants and why.
* **‘Nudges’ for participants without email addresses.** A postcard nudge was sent out a couple of weeks after the invitation letter. This was to remind those who may not have acted immediately upon receipt of the invitation letter.

The full range of communications sent to potential respondents was as follows:

**Ministerial letter (from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families)**

In order to encourage school-based providers to take part, a letter was sent from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families, to this participant group at the outset of fieldwork. This letter was sent before with the survey invitation and highlighted the importance of the survey in providing robust and up to date evidence on the childcare and early years sector.

**Invitation letter**

All providers were sent an invitation letter. These invitations gave full details about the study, including information security, and invited the provider to take part. They also included details on how to take part online and informed providers that they would hear from an interviewer via telephone if they did not complete the survey online. Both letters and emails included either a physical preparation sheet or a link to one online to help providers prepare to take part. See [Appendix A](#_A._Main_SCEYP:) for the survey invitation letter sent to each provider type.

**Preparation sheet**

The preparation sheet helped providers prepare for the telephone interview by listing information that they might need to look up in advance, such as financial figures that they were unlikely to know by heart or the qualifications of staff members. These preparation sheets were tailored according to the provider type and the variant of the survey that they would be asked to complete. They also asked respondents to focus on a particular day of the working week (Monday to Friday) in order to get precise answers that also allowed for analysis of trends in attendance and capacity that vary by weekday. Providers were encouraged to complete the preparation sheet before their interview, but this was not compulsory. See [Appendix B](#_B._Main_SCEYP:) for the preparation sheets.

**Qualifications list**

A list of qualifications was enclosed with the invitation letter and email to help providers identify which levels of Early Years or teaching qualifications their staff members held. Telephone interviewers were able to resend the invitation email with a link to the preparation sheet and qualifications list to providers who wanted to prepare before completing the survey. See [Appendix C](#_C._Main_SCEYP:) for the qualifications list.

**Postcard /email nudge**

A postcard reminder was sent to all providers with no email address or mobile phone number available. The purpose of these postcards was to jog the memories of those who may have intended to take part, but had forgotten to, and to catch the attention of those who may not have seen the first invitation.

For providers for whom an email address was available, the postcard was replaced with an email nudge drawing attention to the invitation letter.

**Reminder emails and texts**

Up to three reminder texts and three reminder emails were sent to all non-responding providers for whom IFF Research had the relevant contact details. Each reminder stressed a different potential motivation for taking part. A final email reminder was sent only to those who had begun the questionnaire but not completed it. The email reminder contained a link to an online version of the preparation sheet.

For those providers without an email address a reminder letter was sent instead along with a copy of the preparation sheet and qualifications list.

Table .. Main SCEYP fieldwork and communication dates

| **Communication** | **Sent out** |
| --- | --- |
| Pre-invite email (GBP and CMs) | 4th April 2022 |
| Ministerial letter (for SBPs only) | 6th April 2022 |
| Invitation letter | 21st April 2022 |
| Email nudge | 27th April 2022 |
| Postcard nudge *(to those without an email address)* | 4th May 2022 |
| Reminder email 1 | 13th May 2022 |
| Reminder SMS 1 | 13th May 2022 |
| Reminder email 2 | 23rd May 2022 |
| Reminder SMS 2 | 23rd May 2022 |
| Reminder letter (to those without an email address) | 31st May 2022 |
| Reminder email 3 | 15th June 2022 |
| Reminder email 4 | 4th July 2022 |
| Reminder SMS 3 | 11th July 2022 |

### 4.4 Short SCEYP: Fieldwork dates

The short SCEYP fieldwork ran from 4th May until 28th July 2022.[[15]](#footnote-15) As with the main survey, a “web-first” design was followed, with the online survey launched first and a communication strategy designed to maximise the number of online completions (see Table 4.2 for communication dates). Paper questionnaires were sent out with reminder letters over a month into fieldwork and were supplemented with email reminders.

### 4.5 Short SCEYP: Making contact

The communication strategy for the short SCEYP mirrored that for the main SCEYP (see section 4.3). Potential respondents were sent a range of survey materials to motivate participation, increase the completeness of the data collected and reduce participant burden by helping respondents to prepare in advance. Building on previous years, IFF Research worked with DfE in order to make these materials as accessible, appealing and persuasive as possible.

The full range of communications sent to potential respondents was as follows:

**Ministerial letter (from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families)**

In order to encourage school-based providers to take part, a letter was sent from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families, to this participant group around a month into fieldwork. This letter highlighted the importance of the survey in providing robust and up to date evidence on the childcare and early years sector, and encouraged schools to take part.

**Invitation letter and email**

All providers were sent an invitation letter. These invitations gave full details about the study, including information security, and invited the provider to take part. They also included details on how to take part online. See [Appendix D](#_D._Short_SCEYP:) for the survey invitation letter sent to each provider type.

**Reminder emails**

Up to three reminder emails were sent to all non-responding providers who IFF had the relevant contact details for. Each reminder stressed a different potential motivation for taking part.

**Reminder letter and paper questionnaire**

A reminder letter was sent to all providers over a month into fieldwork. A paper copy of the questionnaire, along with a return envelope, was included for those providers who preferred to complete the survey on paper rather than online.

Table .. Short SCEYP fieldwork and communication dates

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Invitation letter | **Sent out** |
| Invitation letter | 25th April 2022 |
| Invitation email | 3rd May 2022 |
| Reminder email 1 | 25th May 2022 |
| Ministerial letter (for school based providers) | 31st May 2022 |
| Reminder letter 1 (including copy of paper questionnaire) | 7th June 2022 |
| Reminder email 2 | 13th June 2022 |
| Reminder email 3 | 4th July 2022 |

### 4.6 Contacting childcare chains

Large chains of childcare settings are a growing part of the early years sector in England. Prior to the start of fieldwork, IFF Research wrote to the directors of all large chains (10 settings or more) identifiable in the sample. The letter explained the SCEYP, signposted people to the 2021 findings, explained that head offices might be contacted during the telephone fieldwork and thanked directors in advance for their cooperation. This letter was intended as a courtesy and so that directors could assure managers in their chains that the survey request was genuine.

# Validation process

A new data validation stage was introduced for the 2022 survey. This involved identifying improbable responses using the built-in validation checks agreed in advance of fieldwork and re-contacting providers flagged as part of this via telephone, to confirm the correct response.

The aim of this exercise was to reduce the number of records that needed to be edited after survey closure. IFF programmed a series of ‘validation flags’ on key survey variables that signalled where findings were outside of expected limits or seemed implausible. IFF then recontacted providers to flag the issue and confirm correct responses.

Prior to the start of fieldwork, the following validation flags were agreed between DfE and IFF Research with advice from London Economics:

* If the total cost of delivering provision is more than 10% higher than the sum of the component costs
* If any of the component costs are greater than the total reported cost
* If the total income from delivering provision is more than 10% higher than the sum of the component incomes
* If any of the component incomes are greater than the total reported income

The validation call back stage ran from 6th June to 15th July 2022 and involved 1,754 providers in total. From these, 1,000 responses were secured.

* Childminders: 231 completes from 394 records loaded
* School-based providers: 290 completes from 324 records loaded
* Group-based providers: 479 completes from 1036 records loaded

Those flagged in the validation but not interviewed in the call backs exercise were then reviewed during data editing phase (see Chapter 8).

# Weighting

## 6.1 Weighting the main SCEYP

Weighting was used to ensure that the final achieved samples were representative of early years and childcare providers in England. Survey weights were designed separately for the three provider types[[16]](#footnote-16) to correct for unequal selection probabilities and non-response bias. Grossing weights were created in order to ensure that the weighted achieved samples gross up to the population of early years and childcare providers in England.

### 6.1.1 Main SCEYP: Weighting for group-based providers

#### Population totals

The achieved sample of group-based providers was weighted to be representative of all active group-based childcare providers (GBP) in England that were eligible for the study. However, the sampling frame did not allow for the exclusion of all ineligible institutions prior to sampling, therefore the eligible population size and profile were estimated using information about institutions found to be ineligible.

The total eligible population was estimated at 23,486 establishments – 99.1%[[17]](#footnote-17) of the sample frame.

#### Weighting process

##### Design weights

Design weights were first calculated to correct for unequal selection probabilities arising from the fact that establishments in the North East were oversampled to enable more robust comparisons between regions.

##### Calibration weighting

Calibration weighting was used to remove the (measurable) bias introduced through non-response to the main Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers (SCEYP) and align the profile of the achieved sample to the profile of the eligible population defined by: region, register type, ownership type, and deprivation band based on Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI).

##### Questionnaire variant weights

Questionnaire variant weights were calculated for the analysis of providers allocated to each of the three GBP variants of the questionnaire. The final overall weight served as a pre-weight for adjustments to the responding cases and their profiles were grossed up to the eligible population profile.

##### Day of the week weights

The selected sample was allocated systematically within each variant of the questionnaire to a specific day of the week (Monday to Friday), about which they were asked certain questions. However, providers were able to complete the survey about a different day. The questionnaire included questions ascertaining which days of the week each group was open. The profile and the overall population size for each day were estimated from the main SCEYP (weighted by overall interview weight). Subsamples of each day were then calibrated to the population profile.

##### Staff weights

In addition to calculating weights to make the sample representative of GBPs in England, weights for analysis of information on staff in such settings were also calculated. Staff weights were needed to account for the fact that settings employing more than a certain number of staff at a given qualification level were only asked to give information about one or two members of their team chosen at random. A design weight to take account of this selection was calculated and then multiplied by the provider-level interview weights to obtain staff level weights for each case. Additional calibration was applied to ensure that the weighted staff profile (by level of education) was in line with the data collected about the number of staff working.

Some data were excluded from the staff-level datasets prior to weighting. This included cases where information on the staff member was not provided (the staff loop was empty) and cases where there were concerns about the quality of the staff qualifications data used for calibration. Providers for whom the number of paid staff for whom qualifications were recorded was greater than +/- 2 the total number of paid staff reported have been excluded. Checks were conducted to ensure that these exclusions did not bias the sample with regard to the stratification variables used to draw the original sample.

### 6.1.2 Main SCEYP: Weighting for school-based providers

#### Population totals

To create a sampling frame of school-based providers the Schools’ Census database from June 2020 was used, enhanced with further information from a Get Information About Schools (GIAS) extract. During the interviews some institutions were found to be ineligible to take part in the survey: schools that had closed down and schools that did not offer nursery provision. As for group-based providers, establishments coded as “duplicates” and those that had shut down were treated as eligible on the assumption that any school that had opened in the intervening period that would therefore not be included in the sampling frame, would be roughly analogous to those that had subsequently closed. The total eligible population was estimated at 9,832 – 99.8% of the initial sample frame.

#### Weighting process

##### Design weights

Design weights were calculated to correct for disproportionate sampling of different types of schools.

##### Calibration weighting

Calibration weighting was used to remove the (measurable) bias introduced through non-response to the main SCEYP and align the profile of the achieved sample to the profile of the eligible population on the following variables: school type (main stratum), region, type of establishment, quintile of number of places registered.

##### Questionnaire variant weights

Questionnaire variant weights were calculated for the analysis of school-based providers allocated to each of the two variants of the questionnaire. The responding cases and their profiles were grossed-up to the eligible population profile.

##### Day of the week weights

As with GBPs, although respondents were allocated a random day of the week (Monday – Friday) to answer certain questions about, they were able to complete the survey about a different day. As in the previous three waves, an assumption was made that all schools were open every week day and the sample of schools which answered about each day of the week was weighted to the overall profile of the eligible population.

##### Staff weights

In addition to calculating weights to make the sample representative of SBPs in England, weights for analysis of information on staff in such settings were also calculated. Staff weights were needed to account for the fact that settings employing more than a certain number of staff at a given qualification level were only asked to give information about one or two members of their team chosen at random. A design weight to take account of this selection was calculated and then multiplied by the provider-level interview weights to obtain staff level weights for each case. Additional calibration was applied to ensure that the weighted staff profile (by level of education) was in line with the data collected about the number of staff working.

Some data were excluded from the staff-level datasets prior to weighting. This included cases where information on the staff member was not provided (the staff loop was empty) and cases where there were concerns about the quality of the staff qualifications data used for calibration. Providers for whom the number of paid staff for whom qualifications were recorded was greater than +/- 2 the total number of paid staff reported have been excluded. Checks were conducted to ensure that these exclusions did not bias the sample with regard to the stratification variables used to draw the original sample.

### 6.1.3 Main SCEYP: Weighting for childminders

#### Population totals

The childminders’ data was weighted to be representative of the eligible population of childminders in England as of July 2021. Some childminders sampled for the main survey were found to be ineligible in that they were no longer offering provision. As in the previous waves, it was decided not to redefine the population and to assume that the population was stable in its characteristics.

As in the previous three waves, providers with zero registered places were included on the assumption that at the time of the interview, information about the number of registered places might have already been outdated. It was decided, as in previous waves, that cases who reported zero registered places during the interview would be re-coded as ineligible, and responding childminders would be weighted to the profile of population excluding cases with zero registered places in the sample frame. Following data cleaning, the total eligible population was 32,107.

#### Weighting process

##### Design weights

Design weights were first calculated to correct for unequal selection probabilities arising from the oversampling of smaller regions.

##### Calibration weights

Calibration weighting was used to remove measurable bias introduced through non-response to the main SCEYP and to align the profile of achieved sample to the profile of the population. The population targets used for calibration weighting included: region, whether on all three registers (Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register and Voluntary Childcare Register), registration year, and deprivation band based on IDACI. Questionnaire variant weights Questionnaire variant weights were calculated for the analysis of childminders allocated to each of the two childminder variants of the questionnaire. The responding cases and their profiles were grossed-up to the eligible population profile.

##### Day of the week weights

The selected sample was allocated systematically within each variant of the questionnaire to a specific day of the week (Monday to Friday) about which they were asked certain questions. The questionnaire included questions ascertaining which days of the week each group was open – these were recoded into binary variables for each day of the week and the profile as well as the overall population size for each day were estimated from the main SCEYP (weighted by overall interview weight). Subsamples of each day were then calibrated to population estimates.

##### Staff weights

Respondents that answered questionnaire Variant 1 were asked several follow up questions about the assistants they employ. There were up to two loops in the questionnaire for assistants, so for respondents with more than two assistants design weighting was required to compensate for this. The final staff level weight was re-scaled so that the total weighted number of assistants was in line with an estimate of the total number of assistants.

## 6.2 Weighting the short SCEYP

Data from the short SCEYP was combined with data from the financial variant of the main SCEYP where variables were available in both, i.e., the fees and funding questions.

The weighting strategy was designed to create a weight to be used in analysis of the combined dataset comprising data from the short SCEYP and the financial variants of the main SCEYP. Three separate weights were created for SBPs, GBPs and childminders as set out below.

The weighting strategy was the same for all provider types taking part in the short SCEYP or the financial variant of the main SCEYP. Data from the two surveys were combined for use in financial analysis and calibrated to the same variables and population totals as used for the main SCEYP.

A combined weight was also created for analysis of all groups together. Combined weights for SBPs, GBPs and childminders were scaled so that the weighted profile by provider type was aligned with the percentage distribution of provider types in the population (modelled estimates).

# Response rates

## 7.1 Main SCEYP: Response

In total, 10,418 productive interviews were carried out as part of the main Survey for Childcare and Early Years Providers (SCEYP). This included:

* 6,338 interviews with group-based providers (GBP);
  + Private (4,009 interviews, 63%)
  + Voluntary (1,984 interviews, 31%)
  + School/college/LA/unclassified GBPs (345 interviews, 5%)
* 2,476 interviews with school-based providers (SBP);
  + 2,303 interviews with SBPs offering nursery provision;
  + 173 interviews with maintained nursery schools (MNS);
* 1,604 interviews with childminders.

Table 7.1 shows the outcomes achieved for each provider type. Tables 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4 show the response rates achieved for each provider type and variant. Table 6.5 shows the split of responses by mode.

Table 7.1 Main SCEYP: Outcomes by provider type

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Group-based providers** | **School-based providers** | **Childminders** | **Total** |
| **Issued sample** | **15,586** | **6,957** | **5,556** | **28,099** |
| **Completes** | **6,338** | **2,476** | **1,604** | **10,418** |
| Bad number | 920 | 38 | 547 | 1,505 |
| Other non-contact | 3,822 | 2,907 | 1,471 | 8,200 |
| **Total non-contact** | **4,742** | **2,945** | **2,018** | **9,705** |
| Unavailable | 2,786 | 1,142 | 1,046 | 4,974 |
| Refused | 1,350 | 376 | 403 | 2,129 |
| **Total contacted but unproductive** | **4,136** | **1,518** | **1,449** | **7,103** |
| Permanently closed | 122 | 6 | 320 | 448 |
| Temporarily closed (for longer than 30 days) | 24 | 1 | 105 | 130 |
| Open but not offering relevant childcare | 122 | 9 | 13 | 144 |
| Other ineligible | 102 | 2 | 47 | 151 |
| **Total ineligible** | **370** | **18** | **485** | **873** |

Table 7.2 Main SCEYP: Group-based provider response rates

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Response rates** | **Variant 1** | **Variant 2** | **Variant 3** | **Total** |
| **Achieved (n)** | **1109** | **2734** | **2495** | **6338** |
| ***Overall response rate*** | **46%** | **44%** | **40%** | **42%** |
| Refusal rate | 4% | 4% | 4% | 4% |
| Eligibility rate | 97% | 96% | 96% | 96% |

Table 7.3 Main SCEYP: School-based provider response rates

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Response rates** | **Variant 1** | **Variant 2** | **Total** |
| **Achieved (n)** | 1343 | 1133 | 2476 |
| ***Overall response rate*** | **39%** | **33%** | **36%** |
| Refusal rate | 2% | 3% | 2% |
| Eligibility rate | 100% | 99% | 100% |

Table 7.4 Main SCEYP: Childminder response rates

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Response rates** | **Variant 1** | **Variant 2** | **Total** |
| **Achieved (n)** | 865 | 739 | 1604 |
| ***Overall response rate*** | **37%** | **32%** | **34%** |
| Refusal rate | 2% | 2% | 2% |
| Eligibility rate | 84% | 83% | 84% |

Table 7.5 Main SCEYP: Response mode

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Response mode** | **Group-based providers** | | **School-based providers** | | **Childminders** | | **Total** | |
| **%** | **n** | **%** | **n** | **%** | **n** | **%** | **n** |
| Telephone | 50% | 3,176 | 57% | 1,422 | 35% | 564 | 50% | 5,162 |
| Web | 50% | 3,162 | 43% | 1,054 | 65% | 1,040 | 50% | 5,256 |

Overall, interviews were shared evenly between online and telephone (50% each). Childminders were more likely to complete via web (65% vs. 35% for telephone), with SBPs slightly more likely to complete via telephone (57% vs. 43% for online).

## 7.2 Main SCEYP: Interview length

Average telephone interview lengths and web interview lengths for different provider types and variants are provided below in Tables 6.6 and 6.7. These are based on interviews that were completed within an hour on the same day; any interviews longer than one hour were excluded from the analysis of interview lengths, as the timings for these outlier interviews are likely to be inaccurate.

Table . Main SCEYP: Average (mean) telephone interview length by provider type and questionnaire variant

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Provider type** | **Variant** | **Average telephone interview length (minutes)** |
| Group-based providers | 1 | 28 mins |
| 2 | 30 mins |
| 3 | 32 mins |
| School-based providers | 1 | 32 mins |
| 2 | 33 mins |
| Childminders | 1 | 18 mins |
| 2 | 23 mins |

Table . Main SCEYP: Average (mean) web interview length by provider type and questionnaire variant

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Provider type** | **Variant** | **Average web interview length (minutes)** |
| Group-based providers | 1 | 29 mins |
| 2 | 28 mins |
| 3 | 32 mins |
| School-based providers | 1 | 31 mins |
| 2 | 31 mins |
| Childminders | 1 | 15 mins |
| 2 | 24 mins |

## 7.3 Short SCEYP: Response

The total issued sample for the short SCEYP was 31,311; 7,743 GBPs, 1,838 SBPs, and 21,730 childminders.

In total, there were 6,566 interviews achieved; 1,805 from GBPs, 461 from SBPs, and 4,300 from childminders.[[18]](#footnote-18) Table 7.8 displays the outcomes and response rates achieved for the whole sample, and by provider type. It was not possible to estimate eligibility rates given online and postal modes of data collection, so response rates were calculated based on the whole issued sample (i.e. they assume that all sampled providers were eligible). The breakdown of completions by mode (web vs postal) is shown in Table 7.9.

Table . Short SCEYP response rates: Whole sample by provider type

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Group-based providers** | **School-based providers** | **Childminders** | **Total** |
| **Issued sample** | 7,743 | 1,838 | 21,730 | 31,311 |
| **Achieved (n)** | 1,805 | 461 | 4,300 | 6,566 |
| ***Overall response rate*** | 23% | 25% | 20% | 21% |

Table 7.9 Short SCEYP: Response mode

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Response mode** | **Group-based providers** | | **School-based providers** | | **Childminders** | | **Total** | |
| % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| **Post** | 29% | 520 | 16% | 73 | 32% | 1,389 | 30% | 1,982 |
| **Web** | 71% | 1,285 | 84% | 388 | 68% | 2,911 | 70% | 4,584 |

## 7.4 Short SCEYP: Interview length

The average web interview lengths for the different provider types are provider below in Table 7.10. These are based on interviews that were completed within an hour on the same day. Analysis of interview length excluded those longer than one hour, as the timings for these outlier interviews are likely to be inaccurate.

As Table 7.10 shows, the length of the short SCEYP ranged from 6 minutes on average for childminders to 10 minutes on average for SBPs and GBPs.

Table . Short SCEYP: Average web interview length by provider type

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Provider type** | **Average web interview length (minutes)** |
| School-based providers | 10 mins |
| Group-based providers | 10 mins |
| Childminders | 6 mins |

# Data processing

## 8.1 Coding

Both the main and short survey included a small number of questions which offered the respondent the option to choose “other” as their response code and to enter free text into the designated field. These were subsequently coded by trained coders at IFF Research. Code frames from previous iterations of the survey were used for existing questions. Code frames for new questions were devised by the same coding team and signed off by the Research Manager.

## 8.2 Main SCEYP: Data cleaning

Numeric information collected as part of the main SCEYP, such as childcare fees or opening hours, was typed in by respondents themselves (online), keyed in by interviewers (telephone) or recorded on paper and keyed in by IFF’s Data Unit (paper). It was possible for mis-keying to occur and, on inspection, a small number of answers appeared either much too large or much too small or nonsensical given other survey answers. Therefore, it was decided to implement rules whereby certain values would be removed from the data. Data were recoded to “missing” in the following scenarios:

* Number of parents paying fees using Tax Free Childcare is higher than total number of registered children: *63 records*
* Total number of registered children across all age bands was zero: *59 records*
* Where the reported number of places that were spare was the same as the total number of registered places, but the number of children booked was not zero, spare capacity was recoded to missing: *58 records*
* Where the reported number of children receiving Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) was greater than the total number of registered children: *3 records*
* Where the reported number of children with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities was greater than the total number of registered children: *3 records*
* Where the reported number of children with an Education, Health and Care plan or a Statement of Special Needs was greater than the total number of registered children: *2 records*

In addition, the total cost variables were set to missing for one case where it was determined that the amount entered for total costs was infeasibly high relative to setting size and the amounts given elsewhere in the questionnaire for itemised costs. Likewise, Where the reported rate of pay was zero, the derived variable was set to missing (as the analysis was interested in *paid* staff). This impacted 162 records in total.

## 8.3 Main SCEYP: Calculating hourly pay

Respondents were asked a variety of questions in the staff loop section to help collect data on hourly pay. First, respondents were given the choice to provide an answer about pay for each member of staff for any period (i.e. hourly, daily, weekly, monthly and annually). Hourly pay was then calculated for each member of staff, based on their answer to how many hours they worked per week and what income period was given. If they could not provide an exact answer about pay they were asked to give a banded answer from the list presented to them.

In previous iterations of the survey, retrospective data cleaning was applied to several hundred records with improbably high or improbably low derived hourly salaries. For the latest wave of the research, “live” validation checks were built into the script. As such, just three records with improbably low hourly salaries needed editing at the data reduction phase.

# Appendix

## A. Main SCEYP: Survey invitation letter

A.1 School-based providers

Text, letter

Description automatically generated

Text

Description automatically generated

**A.2 Group-based providers**

Text, application

Description automatically generated

Text

Description automatically generated

**A.3 Childminders**

Text

Description automatically generated

Text

Description automatically generated

## B. Main SCEYP: Preparation sheet

**B.1 School-based providers, Variant 1**

Graphical user interface, text, application

Description automatically generated

Graphical user interface, text, application

Description automatically generated

Table

Description automatically generated

**B.2 School-based providers, Variant 2**

Graphical user interface, text, application

Description automatically generated

Text

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Graphical user interface, application, table

Description automatically generated

**B.3 Group-based providers, Variant 1**

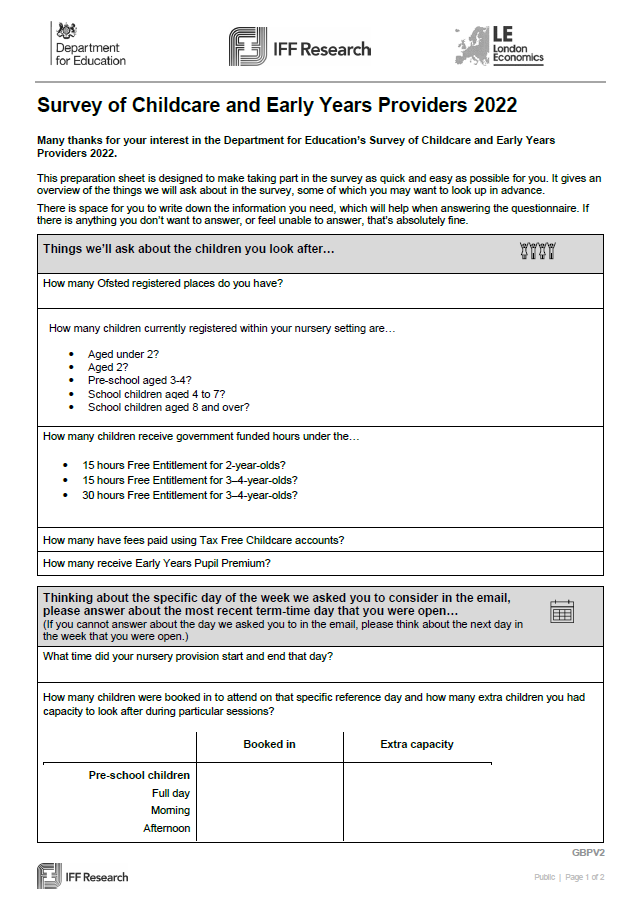
Graphical user interface, text, application

Description automatically generated

Table

Description automatically generated

**B.4 Group-based providers, Variant 2**



Table

Description automatically generated

**B.5 Group-based providers, Variant 3**

Graphical user interface, text, application

Description automatically generated

Graphical user interface, text, application

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Graphical user interface, text, application

Description automatically generated

**B.6 Childminders, Variant 1**

Graphical user interface, text, application

Description automatically generated

Graphical user interface, table

Description automatically generated

**B.7 Childminders, Variant 2**

Graphical user interface, application

Description automatically generated

Table

Description automatically generated

Graphical user interface, text, application, email

Description automatically generated

## C. Main SCEYP: Qualifications sheet

Table

Description automatically generated

Table

Description automatically generated

## D. Short SCEYP: Survey invitation letter

**D.1 School-based providers**

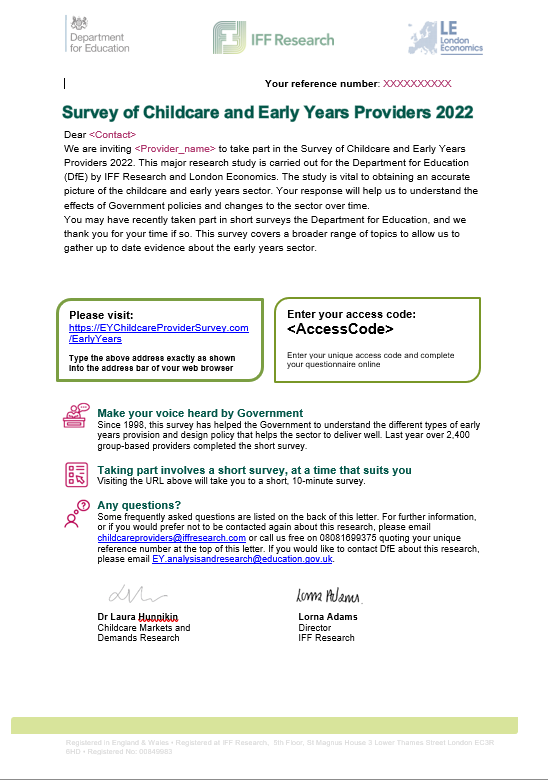
Text, application

Description automatically generated

Text

Description automatically generated

**D.2 Group-based providers**



Text

Description automatically generated

**D.3 Childminders**

Text

Description automatically generated

# Department for Education

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1. All group-based providers that are not voluntary or private have been recorded in this third category, of which most are either school run, college run or local authority run group-based providers. Although this category is included in the group-based provider total, it is not reported on in the official statistics publication. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Department for Education (2018) [Surveys on childcare and early years in England: Government consultation response](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/766419/Surveys_on_childcare_and_early_years_in_England.pdf) London: DfE [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This does not include provision in schools. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The majority of providers were split between the staffing (v2) and finance (v3) variants which were of most interest analytically. A smaller proportion were allocated to variant 1 which focused on SEND. The same split has been in place since 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The 100 remaining records were assigned to ‘pilot/cognitive testing’ status. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Get Information About Schools (GIAS) is a register of educational establishments in England and Wales. It is maintained by the Department for Education. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. During the process of fieldwork, it emerged that schools that had recorded zero pupils in their nursery but ‘had nursery classes’ on the GIAS database were included in the sample frame in 2021 but were not in 2022. This accounted for 928 providers. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 60 schools were assigned ‘pilot/cognitive testing’ status. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Childminders must register with Ofsted or a childminder agency. Only those that registered with Ofsted were included in the SCEYP sample frame. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. This continued the trend in reduction of the size of the sampling frame seen in previous years of the survey. In 2021, there were 38,186 active childminders to sample from. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. 110 records were assigned ‘pilot status’. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. This is the date of the first interview. Invitation letters were mailed on 21st . [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., Christian, L. M. (2014). Internet, Phone, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys:

    The Tailored Design Method, 4th Edition, Wiley. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Nicolaas, G., Smith, P., Pickering, K. & Branson, C. (2015). Increasing response rates in postal surveys while controlling costs: an experimental investigation. Social Research Practice Issue 1 Winter 2015. <http://the-sra.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/social-research-practice-journal-issue-01-winter-2015.pdf>

    [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. This is the date when the first interview was completed. Invitation letters were mailed on 25th April. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Survey weights were designed for the three overall provider types (group-based, school-based and childminders). In the official statistics report there are five provider types reported on separately. However, private and voluntary are sub-groups of the overall group-based provider type (and were sampled in the same way), and maintained nursery schools and school-based providers offering nursery provision are sub-groups of the overall school-based provider type (and were sampled in the same way). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Following data cleaning, 23,686 cases were included in the modelling of the eligible population. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Due to an error with the mailing of postal questionnaires, some that were returned could not be identified. Although 81% were eventually successfully identified, there were 480 unidentifiable returns and they are not included in these figures. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)