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Childminding workforce trends: qualitative research report



CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS



Childminding workforce trends: qualitative research report

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Executive summary

Background

The childminding workforce has declined by 28% in Scotland between 2014 and 2020 (from 6,102 to 4,395), with annual decreases accelerating since 2017.¹ The proportion of childminders aged over 55 has been steadily increasing; in 2020 24% of the childminding workforce was aged over 55, compared with 11% in 2010.² Meanwhile, a quarter of respondents to the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA)'s 2020 members' survey said they were unlikely to still be childminding in five years' time.³ This all points to high levels of attrition in the next few years, as more childminders retire or leave for other reasons.

This study was commissioned by the Scottish Government to explore the range of factors that may be contributing to the decline in the Scottish childminder workforce in order to identify ways to better recruit, support and retain them. It involved:

- a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) to understand what is already known about trends in childminder entry and exit from the profession, and the drivers of these trends.
- qualitative research to understand the views and experiences of current, former and prospective childminders (43 participants in total).

The main findings are summarised below, along with potential actions – suggested by the authors based on the issues raised by participants – that the Scottish Government, local councils, the Care Inspectorate, and others could consider to improve the recruitment and retention of childminders in Scotland (some of which are already in progress as part of ongoing work laid out in Scottish Government's ['Our Commitment to Childminding'](#) strategy).

When interpreting the findings it is important to bear in mind that participants were self-selecting. The way the sample was structured to address the research questions (including ensuring those who had left or were considering leaving the profession were represented) may also mean it is skewed towards those that had more negative perceptions. While this does not negatively affect the quality of the data, it should be kept in mind that the findings may not be representative of the views of all childminders.

Deciding to become a childminder

Both the evidence review and the qualitative research confirmed that people are often attracted to childminding because it allows them to work in a flexible way while still being able to care for their own children, combined with the appeal of working with young children more generally. Participants often drew on both formal (e.g.

¹ [Early Learning and Childcare Statistics 2020](#), Care Inspectorate, March 2022

² [Early Learning and Childcare Statistics 2020: supporting table 33](#), Care Inspectorate, March 2022

³ SCMA, 2020: #TellSCMA 2020: Childminding and You. When asked how likely it is that they would be childminding in five years' time, 49% said likely, 26% said they don't know and 25% said it was unlikely (sample: 1463 SCMA members).

SCMA, the Care Inspectorate, local council websites) and informal sources of information (e.g. friends who are childminders) when looking for information on becoming a childminder.

The practicalities of entering childminding

The process of becoming a childminder was generally viewed by current and potential childminders as time consuming and overly bureaucratic. For some who had been considering whether to become a childminder, the perceived complexity and time it would take to register made them decide not to enter the profession.

Start-up costs and concerns about whether they could make a profitable business were also mentioned as key barriers. Financial support at the initial stages was seen as particularly important for encouraging those living in more deprived areas to consider childminding.

In general, there was limited awareness among participants of existing support options around starting a childminding business (for example, some local authorities offer start up grants, and the SCMA provides a range of resources, courses, and a helpline). Peer support from existing childminders was reported to be particularly helpful in navigating registration and the first inspection.

Potential actions (particularly for the Care Inspectorate) include:

- Consider whether the registration process can be further simplified, including: ensuring all documents for registration are as specifically tailored to childminding as possible; providing more information about what a prospective childminder needs to have in place for their service before the first inspection (e.g. checklists); and providing more information on how the registration process and qualifications compare for people who are moving to Scotland having childminded in another country.
- Further highlight the support available around registration and start-up to ensure more potential applicants are aware of the help on offer.

Administrative and regulatory demands

Existing survey data and the qualitative research conducted for this study both highlight the perception that being a childminder entails an off-putting amount of administration and paperwork.

The value of some administrative work was recognised (particularly paperwork relating to children's development). However, some childminders felt they were being unfairly asked to produce a similar level of documentation to that required of larger settings, such as nurseries.

Inspections were also viewed by current and former childminders as stressful. Some questions were raised around the perceived fairness of the process including the consistency of grades and feedback. A general desire for clearer guidance and advice on how to do well in inspections was expressed.

Potential actions (again, particularly for the Care Inspectorate):

- Continue work to reduce paperwork and administrative burden (including that related to delivering funded ELC hours).
- Review what can be done to enhance or better communicate guidance and support around inspections.

Income

Pay and income are well documented challenges for recruiting and maintaining a skilled Early Years workforce. However, participants in this study discussed several ways in which they felt childminders are worse off than their counterparts in more formal settings. The amount of administration required was seen as exacerbating the low pay issue because of the longer hours it requires of childminders, who are largely sole traders and responsible for all their own administration. The lack of maternity leave, sick leave and pensions were also mentioned, as well as the reported impact of the pandemic on financial viability.

Potential actions (for local authorities, the Scottish Government, and childminder representative organisations):

- Ensure rates for funded ELC hours reflect the costs of delivery.
- Provide more training around running a small business and/or examine barriers to completing existing training
- Consider whether there is scope for any modest flexibility around childminder-child ratios, to allow childminders to care for more children (and thus improve their incomes)
- Consider whether any action is possible to support childminders in relation to maternity and sick pay.
- Consider the pros and cons of moving to a system where local authorities employ more childminders directly.

Training and personal development

Existing evidence highlights the barriers childminders face in accessing training and development opportunities.⁴ Time and money were the key issues raised by participants in this study. Fitting unpaid training in around running their service and administrative work was viewed as problematic because it would mean eating into childminders' time off with their own families. The qualitative findings also showed a desire for clearer paths for career progression and for clearer information on what courses are officially recognised and are worth investing time and fees in.

Potential actions (for local authorities, the Scottish Government, and childminder representative organisations):

- Further raise awareness of existing training and support for childminders

⁴ [Skills Development Scotland. \(2018\). Skills Investment Plan: For Scotland's early learning and childcare sector. Glasgow: Skills Development Scotland.](#)

- Consider what financial support can be made available to enable childminders to access training
- Consider how best to support the development of more support and peer mentoring opportunities for childminders
- Consider how best to support career progression for those childminders who are looking this – including looking at options to expand opportunities to become community childminders.

Isolation

The vast majority of childminders are sole traders and working alone was therefore seen as part of the job. However, it also had the potential to have a negative impact on job satisfaction and stress levels. Participants spoke of the isolation they sometimes felt having no adult company during their main working hours.

Childminders who had received support from a Childminder Support Worker felt this had been very beneficial both in keeping them informed about training, qualifications and inspection, and for their wellbeing and confidence (this type of support is currently only available in some local authority areas).

Potential action (for local authorities, working with childminder representative organisations and others):

- Consider how best to support the development of more support and peer mentoring opportunities for childminders (building on existing work by the SCMA and local authorities, for example via more Childminding Development Officers).

Challenges relating to the expansion of funded ELC

Views on the impact of the expansion of funded ELC hours on childminding varied among current and former childminders. One view was that it had not impacted the viability of their service, as there was still plenty of demand for childminders to deliver non-funded hours. However, others reported losing business as families moved their children to funded places in nurseries. Those that were delivering funded hours had mixed views on the hourly rates paid by local authorities, and whether they were worse or better off because of them. Childminders also expressed some worries around future policy changes around funded hours and how these might impact their business.

The perceived level of additional paperwork and the training requirements and costs were mentioned as key barriers by childminders who had decided not to partner with local authorities to deliver funded hours.

Potential action (for local authorities):

- Look at ways to reduce the administrative burden with respect to childminders applying for and delivering funded ELC hours.

Challenges relating to Covid-19

Many of the day-to-day issues and challenges childminders described were seen as having been exacerbated by the pandemic. From the sudden drop in income (to no income for some childminders), to the amount of extra paperwork and administration, to the level of isolation experienced and anxieties about the wellbeing of themselves and their own families, Covid-19 had made childminders' lives considerably more difficult. While some participants were aware of support from the SCMA, their local authority and/or the Care Inspectorate during the pandemic, others felt information on what changes they needed to make had taken too long to reach them.

Potential action (for the Scottish Government and local authorities, working with childminder representative organisations and others):

- Improve the direct communication of key messages around support and guidance, particularly (though not only) during crisis situations, increasing the level of communication when necessary.

Wider societal perceptions of childminding

A wider barrier to retaining and recruiting childminders was a perception that careers in early years in general, and childminding in particular, were viewed as 'low status' among the public. There was a belief that childminding was often seen as equivalent to "babysitting" and not offering the same quality of care as nurseries. It was also suggested that policy makers do not fully understand or value childminding.

Negative perceptions and lack of understanding of childminding were seen as a significant issue contributing both to attitudes towards becoming a childminder, and to the morale of the current childminding workforce. It was also suggested that they may be a barrier to diversifying the workforce.

Potential actions (for the Scottish Government and local authorities, working with childminder representative organisations and others):

- A programme of promotion of childminding, that aims both to attract new people to the profession (including groups that may not have considered it previously) and to address any negative perceptions.

Communications with childminders

This research identified a number of gaps between the support and information childminders we spoke to were aware of, and what is actually available. A key overarching issue, therefore, is how existing and ongoing work can be supported by more effective communications to time-pressed childminders, for example through repetition of key messages about existing support, updates on actions currently being taken to tackle issues identified by childminders, and greater targeting of communications (for example, focusing on those who may be most likely to leave the profession in the near future but might be persuaded to stay with additional support and encouragement).

1. Background and introduction

Introduction

This study aims to explore the range of factors that may be contributing to the decline in the Scottish childminder workforce in order to identify ways to better recruit, support and retain them.

Background and context

The childminding workforce has declined by 28% in Scotland between 2014 and 2020 (from 6,102 to 4,395), with annual decreases accelerating since 2017.⁵ Subsequent Quarterly Care Inspectorate data indicates that the decrease in the childminding workforce has continued since late 2020 – the most recent figures show 3,998 registered childminding services at 31 December 2021, a reduction of 397 (9%) on 2020.⁶

Childminding in Scotland

Childminders are an important element of the childcare sector in Scotland and offer a unique experience of childcare for children and families. They provide care and learning in the childminder's own home, generally in small groups with no more than six children at one time. In 2020, 4,395 childminders operated professional childminding services in Scotland, providing childcare for almost 26,000 children.⁷ Childminders provide care for children of all ages; in a single setting a childminder could be caring for infants, young children under five years of age, alongside older children of school age. Often a childminder can provide flexibility for parents or carers who need to manage work commitments and may be used to provide wraparound care alongside nurseries or schools. Childminders are also consistently rated as providing high quality childcare across all quality criteria through independent inspection by the Care Inspectorate – the latest annual Care Inspectorate ELC statistics show that 93% of childminders were rated 'good' or better for all quality themes.⁸

Childminding and the expansion of funded Early Learning and Childcare

Funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) is available to all three- and four-year-olds and eligible two-year-olds in Scotland. In August 2021, the entitlement increased to 1,140 hours a year (30 hours a week if taken during term time).⁹ The main aims of the ELC expansion are to make a substantial contribution to ensuring that:

⁵ [Early Learning and Childcare Statistics 2020](#), Care Inspectorate, March 2022

⁶ [Statistical Summary Report Quarter 3 2021/22 \(Care Inspectorate\)](#)

⁷ [Early Learning and Childcare Statistics 2020](#), Care Inspectorate, March 2022

⁸ [Early Learning and Childcare Statistics 2020](#), Care Inspectorate, March 2022

⁹ The expansion of funded ELC, originally intended for August 2020, was paused in April 2020 to give local authorities the flexibility to focus on responding to the Covid-19 pandemic.

- children’s development improves and the poverty related attainment gap narrows
- more parents will have the opportunity to be in work, training or study
- family resilience improves, through improved health and wellbeing of children and parents.¹⁰

In order to ensure that the funded ELC entitlement is delivered in high quality settings, the Scottish Government published ‘Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard for ELC Providers’,¹¹ including the more in-depth ‘Operating Guidance’, on 18 December 2018. The ‘Funding Follows the Child’ approach aims to ensure that Scottish Government funded ELC is flexible to the needs of families – in other words, parents should be free to use their funded hours at any childcare provider/s who meet the National Standard, including childminders, have a place available, and are willing to enter into contract with the local authority. The National Standard is the set of quality criteria that all funded providers in the public, private and third sectors will need to meet to offer the funded entitlement. An Interim version of the Operating Guidance¹² is currently in place to reflect the effects of the pandemic. This Interim guidance gives local authorities additional flexibility over certain criteria, including the requirement for childminders to attain a benchmark qualification within 5 years.

In order to deliver funded hours, when the National Standard is fully implemented, childminders will be expected to meet the same 10 headline criteria as other types of ELC provider, although the detail of certain criteria vary depending on type of setting. The ‘National Standard Interim Guidance’ and ‘Operating Guidance’ include more information on how these criteria apply in a childminding setting and nursery settings.¹³

Subject to local availability, the ‘Funding Follows the Child’ approach also enables parents and carers to opt for a ‘blended model’, where the child’s funded hours are split between ELC providers. Blended models commonly involve a child spending part of their ELC day or week in a private or local authority nursery, and part with a childminder. Blended models can offer greater flexibility for parents and carers and a tailored experience for children, particularly those who may benefit particularly from continued time spent in a smaller, nurturing childminding environment alongside their larger scale nursery experience.

Given the value that childminding brings to the early years and school age childcare sectors, and its potential role in the expansion of funded ELC and in building a new

¹⁰ [Early learning and childcare expansion section of Scottish Government website](#)

¹¹ See [Funding follows the child and the national standard for early learning and childcare providers: principles and practice - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#) (accessed 26 October 2021)

¹² [Funding follows the child and the national standard for early learning and childcare providers: interim guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

¹³ [Funding follows the child and the national standard for early learning and childcare providers: operating guidance](#); [Funding follows the child and the national standard for early learning and childcare providers: interim guidance - update March 2021](#)

system of wraparound childcare for school age children in Scotland – which the Scottish Government is aiming to establish by the end of the current Parliament¹⁴ – the decline in workforce numbers reported above is concerning, particularly in areas of deprivation where ELC provision is already relatively low.¹⁵ A desire to better understand this decline, as a first step in trying to reverse it, provides the rationale for this research.

The Covid-19 pandemic also had a major impact on childminders in Scotland. Many services were forced to close in the March 2020 lockdown and others could only take care of key workers' children, causing a sudden drop in their income. The implications of the pandemic for childminders' businesses and job satisfaction are also explored in this study.

Research Questions

There were two elements to the research that underpins this report. The first took the form of a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) to assess existing data and trends on the childminding workforce in Scotland/the UK. The second involved primary qualitative research, using in-depth interviews and focus groups, in order to gain an understanding of the key issues as perceived by the current, former and potential childminding workforce in Scotland.

The REA aimed to answer two main questions:

- what are the **broad trends and sub-group trends** (e.g. by demographic differences, by geographic area, by type of childminding service) in entry and exit from childminding?
- what is already known about the **drivers of these trends**?

The qualitative research with childminders explored the views and experiences of current, former and prospective childminders, and their suggestions for how to overcome any barriers identified, covering:

- Views and experiences of **entering the profession**, including:
 - Motivations to become, and attractions of becoming, a childminder
 - Perceptions of the promotion of childminding as a career choice
 - Perspectives on what could be done to attract a broader demographic base into childminding (such as males, younger people and those from ethnic minority communities)
- Views and experiences of childminders **exiting the profession**, including:
 - Reasons for leaving

¹⁴ [See Scottish Government, 2021 School age childcare: progress report](#) and [overall Programme for Government 2021-22](#).

¹⁵ [SCMA \(2019\): Early Learning and Childcare Audit 2019](#).

- Perceptions of broader trends / factors in practitioners leaving
- Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on this trend
- Views on what might be done to encourage practitioners to stay in the profession.
- Views and experiences of the **key 'everyday work issues'** among childminders, including:
 - Job satisfaction
 - The impact of Covid-19 on their work and levels of job satisfaction
 - The impact the pandemic has had on the financial viability of childminding services
 - Ways in which the job could be improved
 - Perceptions of ELC funded hours
- Views and experiences of **ELC expansion**, including:
 - Views on the qualification requirement of the National Standard
 - Perceived impact of the ELC expansion on their client base (now and in the future), and
 - Perceived impact of ELC and nursery expansion on childminding services among those not planning to provide funded ELC.

Overview of the research design

Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA)

The following criteria were agreed for the evidence search for the REA:

- Research from the last seven years (since 2014 – but with the main focus on the most recent workforce data available). This is so we captured experiences since the announcement in 2014 that funded hours would increase from 600 to 1,140 hours a year.
- Predominantly evidence from Scotland, but with some searches to check for relevant literature from the rest of the UK or elsewhere.

The evidence search included studies from academic research, government reports and grey literature. Some studies on the wider early learning and childcare sector were also included, where the themes were relevant to childminding. Quality checks were applied before shortlisting for inclusion in the REA. This included checking whether appropriate research methods were used given the scope and objectives of each study (for example, looking at sample sizes and how participants were selected/recruited). The team agreed a list of 43 papers/reports that were relevant to the research and reviewed 31 that were feasible to include in the REA in the time available, based on those that most closely met quality and relevance criteria.

Qualitative research with current, former and prospective childminders

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic precluded the possibility of face-to-face research at the time this study was conducted. Telephone in-depth interviews and online focus group discussions were therefore chosen as the best way to gather in-depth, qualitative data from current, former and prospective childminders. Twenty-eight in-depth interviews were completed between July and August 2021. Interviews lasted around 45 minutes to one hour. Four focus group discussions, each lasting around two hours, were also carried out in July and August 2021 and included 15 participants in total. All interviews and groups were facilitated by authors of this report. The discussion guides used by the researchers can be found in Appendices 3 and 4.

Detailed methods: qualitative research with childminders

Recruitment and sampling

In order to address the research aims above, around views and experiences of entering and exiting the childminding profession, four groups of childminders were targeted for recruitment:

- **Group 1:** those that have **considered¹⁶ registering as a childminder (in last two years) but decided not to**. We spoke to three participants in a focus group and a further seven through in-depth interviews (10 in total).
- **Group 2:** those that had **joined the childminding workforce recently**. We targeted participants who became a childminder since May 2018 to ensure we could capture recent experiences of becoming a childminder as well as some pre-pandemic experiences (in case the pandemic had had any major impacts). We spoke to four participants in a focus group and a further seven in in-depth interviews (11 in total).
- **Group 3:** childminders that are **thinking about leaving the profession** (in the next three years, excluding those approaching retirement age).¹⁷ We spoke to four participants in a focus group and a further seven in in-depth interviews (11 in total).
- **Group 4:** those that have **stopped childminding recently**. We targeted participants who had stopped childminding in the last three years or so to ensure we could capture recent experiences as well as some pre-pandemic experiences. We spoke to four participants in a focus group and a further seven in in-depth interviews (11 in total).

Recruitment was undertaken with the support of the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA). Emails were sent out to SCMA members and contacts inviting

¹⁶ It was agreed that 'considering' means they must have at least taken some action to research what is involved, such as requested the Becoming a Childminder brochure from the SCMA, searching online, etc.

¹⁷ It was agreed that we would not focus on those that are close to retirement unless they were thinking about retiring earlier than expected

them to take part. Individuals then contacted the research team directly and answered a screening questionnaire to check eligibility. If eligible, the research team arranged a suitable time for them to take part in an interview or online focus group.

Communications provided reassurances about anonymity (see Appendices 1 and 2). To boost recruitment among particular target groups of childminders, the SCMA sent further emails and social media updates to target groups where there had been a lower response (including those who had considered childminding, and those who lived in more deprived areas of Scotland). This helped us recruit a broad mix of participants (see Table 1). Only one of the 43 people who took part was male – this reflects the gender balance within the sector¹⁸.

The aim in qualitative research is not to achieve a sample that is statistically representative of the wider population, but to include a range of participants in different circumstances in order to identify as much diversity of experience as possible. The following table shows some of the key characteristics of those recruited:

Table 1. Profile of current, former and prospective childminders interviewed

Criteria		
Whether delivered/delivering funded ELC (current and former childminders only)	Yes	14
	No	19
Rurality ¹⁹ (all participants)	Large urban	10
	Other urban	14
	Accessible small town	7
	Remote small town	3
	Very remote small town	0
	Accessible rural	4
	Remote rural	4
	Very remote rural	1
Area deprivation (SIMD ²⁰) (all participants)	SIMD 1 (most deprived)	5
	SIMD 2	10
	SIMD 3	8
	SIMD 4	13
	SIMD 5 (least deprived)	7
Local authority	Childminders from 19 different local authorities were included	
Gender (all participants)	Female	42
	Male	1
Age (all participants)	Under 30	2
	30 to 44	25
	45+	16
Length of time childminding (current and former childminders only)	3 to 8 years	4
	More than 8 years up to 15 years	11
	More than 15 years	4

¹⁸ See [Scottish Social Service Sector: Report on 2019 Workforce Data](#) (p.38)

¹⁹ [Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification](#). Based on postcode of participant.

²⁰ [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation](#). Based on postcode of participant.

Data collection

As noted, in-depth interviews took place over the telephone in July and August 2021 and were all facilitated by authors of this report. Four discussion guides were developed to ensure all relevant issues were covered – one for each of the four groups listed above (included in Appendix 4).

Focus groups took place over Zoom, again using different discussion guides for each of the four groups. Interviews and groups were audio recorded (with permission from participants) for subsequent analysis, and participants were given £30 to thank them for their time.

The research was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the international quality standard for Market Research, ISO 20252.

Analysis and reporting

Data from interviews and focus groups were summarised into thematic matrices²¹ developed by the research team and drawing on the research questions. The REA data were also mapped into thematic matrices. These thematic matrices were then reviewed to identify the full range of views and experiences on each issue, supported by analysis sessions to discuss findings and agree key points.

This report is structured thematically, with each chapter covering findings from both the REA and qualitative research, given the overlap in issues covered in each. As similar views on the key issues were generally expressed by current, former and prospective childminders, their views are discussed together rather than in separate sections or chapters. However, any differences in the views or issues that came through from different groups of participants are identified. Similarly, the reasons former and current childminders gave for leaving or considering leaving childminding overlapped to a significant degree with the key ‘everyday work issues’ discussed, Covid-19 impacts, and views on ELC funded hours. Given this, the report does not include a separate chapter on ‘reasons for leaving’, as these are covered throughout chapters 4-6.

The main chapters of the remainder of this report are:

Chapter 2: **Changing profile of the childminding workforce in Scotland.** This chapter sets the context for the rest of the report by summarising the most recent data on the size and profile of the childminding workforce in Scotland.

Chapter 3: **Entering childminding: motivations and experiences.** This chapter examines what attracts people to consider a career in childminding, views on the promotion of childminding as a career option, and experiences of the practicalities of entering childminding, including registration and start-up costs.

Chapter 4: **Day-to-day issues and challenges in childminding.** Key perceived issues and challenges in childminding are discussed, including: administrative and

²¹ Using Excel, with each column representing a theme and each row an individual interview, so that the data can be sorted in different ways for further analysis.

regulatory demands; income; training and professional development; isolation; interactions with family life; and broader societal perceptions of childminding.

Chapter 5: **Perspectives on expansion of funded ELC hours.** This chapter discusses the perceived impact of funded hours on childminding workforce trends, including impacts on demand and issues around payment rates, administration, and qualification requirements.

Chapter 6: **Perceived impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on childminding.** The specific impacts of the pandemic and the ways in which it has highlighted and exacerbated some of the issues discussed in earlier chapters is considered.

Chapter 7: **Summary and potential improvements.** The final chapter summarises key findings on issues contributing to people leaving childminding and deterring people from entering the profession. It also draws together and summarises the main suggestions for improving recruitment to, and retention of, the childminding workforce, based both on direct suggestions from participants, and the researchers' suggestions based on the barriers and challenges identified in this report.

Challenges and limitations of the research

All research is subject to challenges and limitations. Overall, our qualitative sample provides a good mix of different characteristics, experiences and circumstances. However, ideally, we would have liked to have included more male childminders, more with experience of providing funded hours, and more childminders from ethnic minority communities.²²

Participants were self-selecting – they opted into the research. They were all either current or former members of the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) or had expressed an interest in childminding by signing up to receive information from the SCMA. This may have had an impact on the types of participants recruited. However, given the majority of childminders (84%) are registered with the SCMA, this is likely to be a minor limitation.²³

The way the sample was structured to address the research questions may mean it is skewed towards those that had more negative perceptions of the profession: three key groups we were specifically interested in were those who had considered childminding but not gone ahead with this, those who were considering leaving, and those who had actually left the profession. The focus of the interviews may also have contributed to a somewhat negative skew to the findings – for example, we were specifically interested in issues affecting the profession, which may have made the research more attractive to those who were dissatisfied with their experiences as a childminder. While this does not negatively affect the quality of the data gathered,

²² We interviewed seven people who did not identify as white British or white Scottish. This included two participants from an ethnic minority or mixed background and five participants who identified as being from other white backgrounds.

²³ [SCMA, 2021: Above and Beyond, SCMA Annual Review 2020-2021](#)

since the main aim was to explore workforce challenges, it should be kept in mind that the findings may not be representative of the views of all childminders.

Qualitative research methods aim to capture diversity and depth of experience, rather than to understand the prevalence of a particular view or experience. As such, when findings are based on in-depth interviews or focus groups, rather than the survey data, quantifying language (such as 'all', 'most', or 'a few') is avoided as far as possible.

While the REA identified many papers exploring the early years childcare workforce, there were fewer papers specific to childminders' experiences and even fewer that focussed on the childminding situation in Scotland. This means that existing literature reported often focuses on the situation in the rest of the UK. Where Scotland-specific data was available, this is included and identified. The lack of Scotland-specific data on childminding also restricted our ability to investigate subgroup trends in relation to the profile of childminders entering and exiting childminding.

2. Changing profile of the childminding workforce in Scotland

In order to set the context for the remainder of this report, which focuses on views and experiences of childminding as a profession, this chapter summarises recent data on the profile of the childminding workforce in Scotland. The most recent data on the profile of the childminding workforce shows that:

- The age profile of the childminding workforce is as follows: under 25 (0.2%), 25 to 35 (12.2%), 36 to 45 (29.5%), 46 to 55 (33.7%) and over 55 (24.3%).²⁴ In 2020, the median age of a childminder was 48 years-old, compared with a mean age of 36 across day care of children services.²⁵
- The vast majority of childminders in Scotland are female. As at 31 December 2020, there were 37 male childminders (0.8% of the workforce).²⁶ This is in line with the wider childcare workforce – for example, an estimated 96% of those working in day care of children services in 2020 were female.²⁷
- Most childminders identify as White (80.3%). While ethnicity was not known for 18% of the workforce, 0.1% identified as being from Mixed or Multiple Ethnic groups, 0.7% as Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British, 0.4% as African, Caribbean or Black, and 0.1% as from another Ethnic group.²⁸
- Just under half of childminders reported working more than 40 hours a week (34% work 40 to 49 hours and 11% work 50 or more).²⁹ Data from the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) indicates that childminders report longer average (median) hours compared with Day Care of Children (DCC) workers (37.5 hours per week, compared with 35 for DCC staff).^{30 31}
- Data from the SSSC suggests that 1% of childminders have a disability (compared to 2% of day care of children workers).

According to SCMA's 2020 survey of Scottish childminders, just under half (49%) of respondents became a childminder when they were between 30 and 39 years old.³²

²⁴ Early Learning and Childcare Statistics 2020: supporting tables, Care Inspectorate, March 2022

²⁵ Scottish Social Services Council (2021) [Scottish Social Service Sector: Report on 2020 workforce data](#)

²⁶ [Early Learning and Childcare Statistics 2020: supporting tables](#), Care Inspectorate, March 2022

²⁷ Scottish Social Services Council (2021) [Scottish Social Service Sector: Report on 2020 workforce data](#)

²⁸ [Early Learning and Childcare Statistics 2020: supporting tables](#), Care Inspectorate, March 2022

²⁹ [Early Learning and Childcare Statistics 2020: supporting tables](#), Care Inspectorate, March 2022

³⁰ Scottish Social Services Council (2021) [Scottish Social Service Sector: Report on 2020 workforce data](#)

³¹ Day care of children" is defined as "A service which provides care for children on nondomestic premises for a total of more than two hours per day and on at least six days per year. It includes nursery classes, crèches, after school clubs and play groups. The definition does not include services which are part of school activities or activities where care is not provided such as sports clubs or uniformed activities such as Scouts or Guides." (From Scottish Social Services Council (2020): [Scottish Social Service Sector Report on 2019 Workforce Data](#).)

³² Scottish Childminding Association. (2020): #TellSCMA: Childminding and You Survey Results 2020.

Research carried out in England and Wales by Campbell-Barr et al in 2019 and 2020 similarly found that over 57% of new childminders were between 31 and 40 years old.³³ Childminders, therefore, tend to have had previous careers before joining the workforce: SCMA data shows 17% had worked in health and 13% had worked in a nursery.³⁴ Research published in 2015 found that, in England, only 4% had not been in the labour market before becoming a childminder; 36% had been in early education or childcare and 21% in clerical work.³⁵

Table 2.1 shows that the decrease in the number of childminding services from 2014 to 2019 was not matched by an equivalent decrease in the number of children registered with a childminder – there has been a 22% decline in the number of childminding services, compared with only a 9% decline in the number of children registered. The decrease in the number of childminders over this period did not, therefore, appear to reflect an equivalent decrease in the need for childminding services. The sharp decrease in the number of children registered with a childminder from 2019 to 2020 is likely to reflect the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, with large numbers of parents working from home and many furloughed during 2020. It is difficult to predict how these figures will change now the furlough scheme has ended and parents are beginning to move back to work, which may now include much more ‘hybrid-working’, combining home and office work.³⁶

³³ [Campbell-Barr, V., Georgeson, J., Hohmann, U., Gulliver, K. \(2020\). Childminder Sustainability in England and Wales.](#)

³⁴ Scottish Childminding Association, 2020.

³⁵ [Department for Education. \(2015\). Study of Early Education and Development \(SEED\): Study of the quality of childminder provision in England. London: Department for Education.](#)

³⁶ Establishing demand for childminding services is complex. [The SCMA Early Learning and Childcare Audit \(2021\)](#) highlights that the expansion of ELC funded hours has led to reduced take-up of childminding places in some areas. The report suggests that this may, in part, be linked with issues relating to provider neutrality – in other words, whether childminding is being equitably promoted alongside other options for funded ELC. In this context, take-up of places may not always be a clear guide to potential underlying demand – if parents are not aware of childminding as an option, this may limit informed choice. The qualitative data gathered in this study – discussed in subsequent chapters – shows views on the impact of the expansion of ELC funded hours varied among current and former childminders. While some felt it had not impacted their services, others reported losing business as families moved their children to funded places in nurseries.

Table 2.1 Number of children registered with childminding services³⁷

	Number of childminding services	% change on 2014	Number of children registered with childminding service	% change on 2014
2014	6,102		34,680	
2015	5,954	-2.4%	32,660	-5.8%
2016	5,669	-7.1%	33,440	-3.6%
2017	5,426	-11.1%	33,660	-2.9%
2018	5,108	-16.3%	32,700	-5.7%
2019	4,752	-22.1%	31,560	-9.0%
2020	4,395	-27.8%	25,800	-25.6%

Table 2.2 shows the variation in availability of childminders between urban and rural areas. Unsurprisingly, given the distribution of the Scottish population, there are more childminding services in urban areas (2,797 in large urban or other urban areas) than in rural areas (1,598, including 543 in accessible small towns, 190 in remote small towns, 633 in accessible rural and 232 in remote rural areas). All types of areas saw a decrease in the number of childminding services from 2014 to 2020, with the decrease steepest in accessible small towns.

³⁷ See [Early Learning and Childcare Statistics 2020](#), Care Inspectorate, March 2022 and [Early Learning and Childcare Statistics 2019](#), Care Inspectorate, January 2021.

Table 2.2 Number of childminding services by urban-rural³⁸

Urban-rural category	2014	2020	% change
Large urban areas	1238	965	-22.1%
Other urban areas	2267	1832	-19.2%
Accessible small towns	759	543	-28.5%
Remote small towns	246	190	-22.8%
Accessible rural	757	633	-16.4%
Remote rural	305	232	-22.1%

Table 2.3 highlights the gap in the availability of childminding services between more and less deprived areas. There are far more childminding services in less deprived areas of Scotland (1,124 in SIMD 4 and 1,078 in SIMD 5) than in the most deprived areas (505 in SIMD 1). However, the level of provision has decreased more steeply in less deprived areas in recent years – by 24% in the least deprived quintile, compared with 11% in the most deprived areas.

³⁸ [Early Learning and Childcare Statistics 2020: supporting tables](#), Care Inspectorate, March 2022

Table 2.3 Number of childminding services by deprivation quintile³⁹

SIMD category	2014	2020	% change
1 – most deprived	566	505	-10.8%
2	965	786	-18.5%
3	1170	902	-22.9%
4	1449	1124	-22.4%
5 – least deprived	1422	1078	-24.2%

The number of registered childminders also varies substantially by local authority, as might be expected. In 2020, the most recent year for which figures were available, numbers ranged from 372 services in Fife to 9 in Shetland (Table 2.4). Numbers of registered childminding services had fallen in 31 out of 32 Scottish local authorities.

Table 2.4 Number of childminding services by local authority⁴⁰

Local authority	2014	2020	% change
Aberdeen City	150	147	-2.0%
Aberdeenshire	299	297	-0.7%
Angus	183	117	-36.1%
Argyll and Bute	81	75	-7.4%
Clackmannanshire	68	42	-38.2%
Dumfries and Galloway	138	108	-21.7%
Dundee City	170	116	-31.8%
East Ayrshire	207	161	-22.2%
East Dunbartonshire	140	113	-19.3%
East Lothian	137	117	-14.6%
East Renfrewshire	154	111	-27.9%
City of Edinburgh	382	317	-17.0%

³⁹ [Early Learning and Childcare Statistics 2020: supporting tables](#), Care Inspectorate, March 2022

⁴⁰ Care Inspectorate: data accessed 24 November 2021. [See Care Inspectorate \(2021\): Early learning and childcare statistics 2019 - Supporting Data Tables.](#)

Falkirk	211	183	-13.3%
Fife	512	372	-27.3%
Glasgow City	175	157	-10.3%
Highland	325	225	-30.8%
Inverclyde	70	50	-28.6%
Midlothian	80	80	0.0%
Moray	114	101	-11.4%
Na h-Eileanan Siar	18	20	+11.1%
North Ayrshire	192	166	-13.5%
North Lanarkshire	362	302	-16.6%
Orkney Islands	40	23	-42.5%
Perth and Kinross	196	146	-25.5%
Renfrewshire	101	76	-24.8%
Scottish Borders	133	85	-36.1%
Shetland Islands	19	9	-52.6%
South Ayrshire	128	81	-36.7%
South Lanarkshire	314	249	-20.7%
Stirling	132	98	-25.8%
West Dunbartonshire	57	41	-28.1%
West Lothian	284	210	-26.1%

3. Entering childminding: motivations and experiences

This chapter considers views and experiences of entering the childminding profession. It looks specifically at what attracts people to childminding as a career option, where they get their information about it and views on how it is promoted, and views on practical issues around the process of becoming a childminder (specifically registration and start-up costs).

Why do people consider becoming a childminder?

A 2020 survey for SCMA shows that the main reason people in Scotland gave for becoming a childminder was to be able to combine caring for their own children or grandchildren with working (63%), followed by wanting to work with children (43%).⁴¹ Similarly, Reid et al's 2019 report on the ELC workforce in Scotland found that the main factors influencing childminders to join the workforce were: job flexibility (66%, compared to 16% of the DCC workforce) and a desire to make a difference to children's lives (47%). While childminders in rural areas also mentioned flexibility and making a difference to children's lives, they were more likely to say that general job availability where they live was a factor (18% compared to 9% of those in urban areas).⁴²

Findings from the in-depth interviews and focus groups conducted for this study largely reflected this existing literature. One of the main motivators was being able to combine caring for their own children with earning money. Participants described how they felt it frequently did not make financial sense for both parents to go back to their existing work because of childcare costs, especially when they have more than one child. An added benefit was that their own children would have peers to interact with while they provided care for them:

“Really, I did it because I wanted childcare for my own kids, plus [daughter] is an only child now, because of the ten-year age gap, so I wanted her to be able to socialise with other children”

(Group 4, childminders who had recently left the profession)

The flip side of this was that childminding was not necessarily seen as a profession that would appeal to people who did not have their own children or grandchildren to care for. This was also associated with a belief that childminding was not necessarily viewed as a long-term 'career' by many of those considering it:

⁴¹ Scottish Childminding Association. (2020).

⁴² [Reid, P., Hanks, J., Ferguson, A. \(2019\). Early Learning and Childcare Workforce. Glasgow: ekosgen](#)

“I haven't heard of any childminders who haven't had kids of their own. They are doing it to meet their own childcare needs, it's not because it is like a great profession”

(Interviewee ES2/05, new childminder)

The perceived flexibility of childminding appealed to participants in terms of being able to choose working hours to fit around their own childcare and family commitments, as well as flexibility around setting their own fees, marketing, and planning bespoke activities for the children. “Work life balance” was a phrase commonly used:

“I certainly I thought about it after I had [daughter], because I thought it would be quite a nice work life balance, and it would work around nursery drop offs when she eventually went to school”

(Group 1, people who considered becoming a childminder but decided not to)

Some participants mentioned being aware of the wider demand for childcare in their area. This included participants who were already caring for friends' children or their own grandchildren and had considered registering “to do things properly”:

“There is a really high demand for childminders because there is none in our area. I thought, right, okay, I would have a really good client base if I did”

(Group 1, people who considered becoming a childminder but decided not to)

Participants often began considering childminding at the end of parental leave or when children were about to start school, particularly where they did not have family members nearby to help with childcare. Redundancy was another point at which some considered childminding as an option for using their redundancy pay-out to set up their own business. For people who had considered childminding more recently, being furloughed from their previous job had acted as a prompt to consider a move into childminding.

Reflecting the survey results reported above, participants also described being motivated by working with children, either in general or in a childminding setting in particular. For example, one participant had been a teacher but switched to childminding as they wanted to work with smaller groups of children in a less structured setting. Whilst some participants had a background in ELC, childminding also appealed to people with experience in a wide range of industries including hospitality, finance, science, the arts, HR and tourism.

Promotion of childminding as a career

Participants were asked about where they had looked for or found information on becoming a childminder. Early research was usually online through search engines and social media sites. SCMA and the Care Inspectorate were also specifically mentioned as sources of information. Those who went on to register as a

childminder also mentioned accessing information from their local council and Business Gateway.

A number of participants described finding out about childminding when they had children and were looking for childcare for themselves. It appeared common, for childminding to be promoted informally, with participants describing being encouraged to register and/or given advice by a childminder friend or acquaintance. This reflects findings from the SCMA's 2020 survey, which found that 44% first became aware of childminding as a career through family and friends who had been a childminder.⁴³ Where participants did not have direct personal contacts with childminders, meeting childminders at playgroups and children's classes was also a source of information. There were examples of information sessions being held at these events to talk to parents about a career in childminding.

The quote below reflects the combination of different formal and informal information sources participants drew on when considering childminding as a career:

"I did a good old Google search of how you go about it. I think it took me to the Care Inspectorate website and also SCMA, and SCMA had a booklet of how to become a childminder...I used to join my childminder to, like, (go to) groups or anywhere she used to go...so I had like lots of people to ask."

(Group 2, new childminders)

Participants reported finding information and advice from current childminders about what it is like to be a childminder particularly helpful in the initial stages, while more formal support, such as the SCMA Induction Support programme,⁴⁴ was seen as useful if they decide to proceed:

"I found out that there was a group in the next-door village where the childminders met up on a weekly basis, so I got in touch with one of them and asked whether it would be okay to come along and just have a cup of tea with them and chat about how they had found things and what do and don'ts they would advise to a new childminder...All of that sort of thing was really helpful to hear from people who are actually doing it... So, that is where I started off, and then from there doing online searches and I did the introductory course of the SCMA, which is a good kind of overview of the more formal side of things."

(Interviewee ES2/04, new childminder)

In terms of improvements to the more formal promotion of childcare, participants felt that more advertising was needed to raise awareness of childminding as a job option, including for young people. There was a perception that childminding was unlikely to be recommended for young people by a careers adviser:

⁴³ Scottish Childminding Association. (2020).

⁴⁴ [Further information on the SCMA Childminding Induction Support Programme.](#)

“If a young person went to a careers advisor and said, I would like to become a childminder, I'm fairly confident that the careers advisor would say, ‘that's lovely, but why don't you think about a nursery or have you thought about teaching?’ It's not recognised as a viable choice”

(Interviewee ES3/04, childminder considering leaving the profession)

In addition, it was felt that offering more work placements for young people while they are at school would be helpful for overcoming perceptions that childminding is only a career option for mothers who need childcare for themselves. While young people may not be in a position to go straight into a career in childminding after leaving school or college (given the need for their own premises), raising the profile of childminding among younger people might help raise awareness or change perceptions of it as a potential future career option.

A further suggestion was that there could be more focus on promoting childminding as a ‘business opportunity’, including more detail on the importance of the role, income and training opportunities. Finally, there was a view that including more diverse images of childminders in recruitment materials and advertising might help attract a broader demographic base to the profession.

Practicalities of entering childminding

Registration process

Registering as a childminder in Scotland involves an application to the Care Inspectorate and a home assessment. Both parts of this process assess whether the childminder has the skills, knowledge and attitude required, as well as an appropriate home setting.⁴⁵ The registration process typically takes around three to six months (the Care Inspectorate have a Key Performance Indicator to register childminders within three months, provided they submit all the correct documentation). Applicants are required to read and understand a range of guidance documents including a quality framework, guidance on setting their objectives as a service, and food standards. Supporting information is provided online by the Care Inspectorate via learning resources⁴⁶ and guidance on what to expect during an inspection. The SCMA support prospective childminders in their applications in a range of ways - via their website and publications, training courses and helpline.⁴⁷ Their Childminding Induction Support Programme (the only national and childminding-specific induction

⁴⁵ Applicants do not need a specific qualification to become a childminder, but they do have to demonstrate their ability to provide for children's learning and development. If they wish to deliver funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) as a funded provider with their local authority, they need to adhere to the National Standard.

⁴⁶ [For example, the Your Childminding Journey website.](#)

⁴⁷ The SCMA Induction Support Programme includes training and one-to-one support from their Childminding & Membership Support Officers and the SCMA helpline. [See the SCMA website for more information on the support they provide for those applying to be childminders.](#)

programme, developed with support from the Scottish Government) includes resources and training to help new childminders navigate the process.⁴⁸

Campbell-Barr et al (2020) found a strong perception in England and Wales that the registration process for becoming a childminder was too time consuming (56% strongly agreed) and too bureaucratic (42% strongly agreed).⁴⁹ While there is no directly comparable data for Scotland, these findings were clearly echoed in interviews for this project. In interpreting these findings, it is worth noting that the Care Inspectorate has recently undertaken work to streamline the online registration process, which may not be reflected in the views discussed below, since those interviewed are likely to have registered prior to this work.

The registration process was viewed as “complicated” in general, with the application form described as a “telephone book arriving through your door”. One view was that it was particularly onerous for those who only intended to provide care for a small number of children. For example, a participant who had been caring for their grandchildren and was asked to care for a friend’s two children as well felt they should “do it properly and become registered” but was put off by the paperwork involved which they felt was excessive and unnecessary for someone in their situation. Another childminder, who had recently left the profession, felt that the paperwork was a significant barrier to potential new childminders:

“It is just not worth it these days because of the hoops they have to go through. I can see the value of that a lot of the time, you know, regulations, paperwork and everything to keep children safe, but I think that stops young mums coming in.”

(Group 4, childminders who had recently left the profession)

The long wait for an initial inspection of their premises was also cited as an issue. For example, one participant reported submitting paperwork in December, and being asked for additional information in January before a house inspection in April then registering in May (this was pre-pandemic).

Both these factors had daunted, and in some cases deterred, participants from going ahead with registering as a childminder:

“I think the process was quite overwhelming actually, like all this wealth of information just coming straight to you and it was a lot initially, but once you did read through it, it wasn't too bad, but it was a lot, it was a lot, and quite off putting”

(Group 1, people who considered becoming a childminder but decided not to)

⁴⁸ [The SCMA Childminding Induction Support Programme](#) (this costs £200 but can be paid for via Individual Training Account funding).

⁴⁹ Campbell-Barr, V., Georgeson, J., Hohmann, U., Gulliver, K. (2020).

Another participant, who had newly become a childminder and was also a foster carer, felt that the registration process had seemed more onerous than the process to become a foster carer.

Related concerns were expressed about the financial impact of the time it took to become registered. A single parent described the risk they saw in beginning the registration process with no guarantee of income at the end of it:

“So with the initial start of registering and the time that ... you wouldn't be making money at all...it was a massive risk to put all that money out initially and not have anything to fall back on”

(Group 1, people who considered becoming a childminder but decided not to)

There was some awareness of local authority support around registration, and participants who knew childminders were able to ask them for advice. However, there was a general desire both for the process to be simplified (for example, by shortening the form and ensuring each section was directly relevant to childminders, rather than ELC in general), and for prospective childminders to be offered more support and advice around registering, particularly where they are completely new to early years work:

“I've got a friend who doesn't have any background and a lot of it was completely alien to her, she really, really struggled..., she didn't get any extra help...if there was more understanding that not everybody comes with the knowledge and the qualifications.”

(Group 2, new childminders)

As discussed above, the Care Inspectorate's website does include details and learning resources to support registration. However, new childminders nonetheless suggested the registration process could be improved by providing clearer guidance on everything that needs to be in place before starting childminding. It was commented that childminders often felt they found out about certain aspects, such as registering as a food business and liability insurance, by chance:

“I struggled to find things like a list of what policies you need in place and what you need to update them, things like what fire regulations you need. I can understand it is difficult to keep that all up to date and keep it all in place because they change all the time, but equally it is hard for a new childminder to know”

(Interviewee ES2/04, new childminder)

Specific suggestions were raised about making it easier for people who have been caring for children informally to become registered, including a confidential helpline to make it easier and more comfortable for prospective childminders in this situation to find the information they need. The Care Inspectorate does have a contact centre that will signpost prospective childminding applicants, while the SCMA also runs a confidential helpline. However, participants did not mention these as options. It is not

clear whether this is because they were not aware of them or because they would not feel comfortable seeking advice from those sources (perhaps particularly with respect to the Care Inspectorate), if they were in that situation.

Another suggestion was that information on how to register in Scotland could be improved for people who have experience of childminding in another country. A prospective childminder who had been a childminder for around 11 years in England felt it was difficult to understand how the organisations and documents they were familiar with mapped onto equivalent organisations and documents in Scotland.

The case study below highlights a number of the perceived issues around registering, discussed above, including perceived complexity, frustration with the time taken, and negative views on the guidance or support provided.

Case study – Alison

Alison is a new childminder. She registered and began childminding in 2021. She has a background in childcare and becoming a childminder seemed to be the best way to continue working while caring for her son. She liked the idea of being her own boss, developing roots in the community and that her son could make friends. Alison found information about becoming a childminder mainly from the Scottish Childminding Association. She completed an induction course through SCMA which she did not find very useful at the time. She was told that the course was under review because of changes to the Care Inspectorate registration process, so felt that she had to find out a lot of information for herself.

She described the registration process as “frustrating” and “unprofessional”. She was frustrated that she had not heard anything back for a month after providing documentation like a Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) check and medical history. She felt that “if I wasn’t inclined to be pushy, it would just not have gone ahead”.

She had the impression that her registration officer was unfamiliar with the process and would ask her for information she had already provided. During their first meeting, the officer said she had not had time to review her documents, making Alison feel like an “inconvenience”.

“[Registration process] all been very negative mentally and have never once felt supported. Just felt I was an inconvenience and giving people work. I felt like giving up at many stages and if I’d never been in childcare before or had another option, I wouldn’t have pushed ... Could have been a much more pleasant experience, it knocks your confidence ... I knew it wasn’t me, not everyone would.”

Alison felt that the information from the SCMA was not detailed enough and that information from the Care Inspectorate was too complicated and more like what was needed for running a nursery. She has spoken to other people who say they

don't want "the hassle of registering with the Care Inspectorate". It was not clear if she was aware of the additional support available through the SCMA Induction Support Programme or helpline.

Start-up costs

Campbell-Barr et al (2020) found that 54% of new childminders in England and Wales strongly agreed that high start-up costs were a barrier to childminding.⁵⁰ Participants interviewed for this study described various start-up expenses they had incurred including: fire alarms, safety gates, car seats, home and car insurance, first aid training, child protection training, and the costs of qualifications.

A number of prospective childminders interviewed for this research said they had been informed they could access start-up grants to help establish a childminding business. However, as these participants had not gone on to register or take up this support, there were no comments on whether the available financial support had been accessible or adequate. Nonetheless, costs did appear to have been a barrier for some. For example, a participant who had considered childminding but decided against it said that they did not have enough space in their house and could not find financial support to rent bigger premises. It was felt that financial support at the initial stages would be particularly important for encouraging those living in more deprived areas to consider childminding.

"Having some sort of start-up grant...could be difference between doing it and not doing it. Luckily, I didn't have any set up costs."

(Interviewee ES2/01, new childminder)

"I had a lot of toys from likes of my own kids, but it is expensive, you know, getting that double buggy, getting a single buggy, getting car seats if you're using the car. It's just wee things that you don't think about"

(Group 4, childminders who had recently left the profession)

⁵⁰ Campbell-Barr, V., Georgeson, J., Hohmann, U., Gulliver, K. (2020).

4. Day-to-day issues and challenges in childminding

This chapter describes the key day-to-day issues and challenges associated with childminding, from the perspectives of current, former and prospective childminders. As noted in Chapter 1, participants across the four different sample groups generally raised similar key issues. These were also the main issues that contributed to some childminders considering or deciding to leave the profession, and that discouraged others from registering as a childminder in the first place. Many of these issues are interlinked and are also discussed in the existing literature.

Before considering the key challenges, however, the chapter begins with a brief discussion of the factors that motivate people to remain in childminding, and which contribute to job satisfaction for childminders.

Reasons for remaining in childminding

The existing literature indicates that many of the factors that motivate people to become a childminder in the first place (discussed in the previous chapter) are also central to maintaining job satisfaction and motivating people to stay in the profession. A 2019 survey found that, for childminders in Scotland, a desire to make a difference was the main reason for staying in the workforce (61%), followed by job satisfaction and pride (51%) and flexibility (37%).⁵¹ This aligns with the SCMA's 2020 survey, which found that the most highly valued aspects of being a childminder were 'seeing children develop in response to my care', and 'the ability to combine caring for my family with caring for other children'.⁵²

Participants interviewed for this report also cited job flexibility and seeing children develop as key positive aspects of childminding. New childminders who took part in a focus group identified "family" and "rewarding" as words that summarised their experience of childminding so far:

"The kids I take on I say that they are going to be part of my family, and it means I have so much better quality of time with my family as well."

"I think coming from like bigger settings, the smaller setting has made it so much more rewarding for me, seeing kids come on and seeing the difference I have made in small amounts of time"

(Group 2, new childminders)

⁵¹ Reid, P., Hanks, J., Ferguson, A. (2019). Early Learning and Childcare Workforce. Glasgow: ekosgen

⁵² Scottish Childminding Association. (2020).

New childminders also described enjoying making decisions on how to spend their time with the children in their care without direction from a line manager. In addition, the job had unexpected health benefits for one participant:

“I worked in a restaurant with no windows. Now I'm outside so much, even when it is raining, we are still outside. My step count is really high, and I feel like a lot healthier, I think that is a benefit that I didn't really realise.”

(Group 2, new childminders)

New childminders were asked how long they are likely to stay in childminding. For some participants, their intentions were primarily shaped by family circumstances and the age of their own children, with childminding only viewed as a convenient job option until their own children no longer require full-time childcare. Others saw it as a longer-term, family-friendly career option. However, it was also commented that there were many other more flexible job options available now, which might lead some to review their commitment to childminding:

“I am actually keeping an eye out now because there is so much more flexible working coming up and working from home options. If I could find something else that I could work from home and have that flexibility I would be quite happy to give up the childminding”

(Interviewee ES2/05, new childminder)

These views reflect Bury et al's (2020) description of three types of career journey within the early years workforce. This recognises that, for some, working in the early years is a practical decision, shaped by convenience, while others have or develop a strong interest in the early years field⁵³:

- Career professionals who “entered and remained in the sector because of an inherent interest in early years”.
- Inspired professionals who “entered the sector because it was convenient but remained because they had developed a passion for early years”.
- Pragmatic professionals who “entered and remained in the sector out of convenience.”

These three segments were reflected in recent research for the Scottish Government on perceptions of the impact of childminding on children and families.⁵⁴ That study found that, even among childminders who were generally positive about the flexibility of the job and the satisfaction they got from seeing children develop, childminders identified aspects of childminding that could be improved. These key issues and

⁵³ [Bury, J., et al. \(2020\). Understanding the early years workforce: qualitative research findings. London: NatCen Social Research.](#)

⁵⁴ [Glencross, K., Millar, C., Murray, L. and Simpson, E. 2021. Perceptions of the impact of childminding services on child, parent and family outcomes in Scotland. Scottish Government.](#)

challenges identified by participants are discussed in the remainder of this chapter and in chapters 5 and 6.

Many of these issues and challenges touch on childminders' perceptions of the support and guidance available to them. In discussing views of support, it is important to note that these may not always accurately reflect what is currently available – in some cases, there may be a perceived need for more support, when actually what is required is more awareness of the support that already exists. As discussed above, the Care Inspectorate provides guidance and advice around registration, as well as around inspection (discussed further below). The SCMA also provides support in a variety of ways, including: CPD resources; training courses; events; free online resources and a telephone helpline (including legal advice for SCMA members). The support on offer covers: registration and setting up; inspections; skills and knowledge needed to continually improve a service; how to become a Community Childminder; and how to partner with a local authority.

Administrative and regulatory demands

Paperwork and administration

Childminders are required to complete administrative work to support the smooth and safe running of their service and to demonstrate to the Care Inspectorate that certain standards are being met. This type of work cannot generally be completed while providing care for children, so childminders tend to fit this in around the hours their service is open.

The SCMA's 2020 survey found that the level of paperwork and bureaucracy was the most frequently mentioned factor contributing to childminders thinking about leaving the profession, mentioned by 59% of respondents.⁵⁵ Evidence from elsewhere confirms that this is not an issue confined to Scotland, or to childminders as distinct from the early years learning and childcare workforce as a whole. However, given the majority of childminders are sole workers, it is an issue that is likely to impact them disproportionately. According to Bury et al's (2020) research on the early years Workforce in England and Wales, some 'inspired professionals' leave because they feel that the amount of paperwork is to the detriment of spending time with the children.⁵⁶ The Social Mobility Commission also highlight that long hours can contribute to burnout in the early years workforce, particularly when paperwork is unpaid and outside of working hours.⁵⁷

Participants in this study also expressed their frustration with the amount of time childminders have to spend on paperwork, including both the documentation needed to maintain registration and written communications with parents. Participants mentioned a very wide variety of different documents and tasks they classed under the broad heading of 'paperwork and admin', including:

⁵⁵ Scottish Childminding Association. (2020).

⁵⁶ [Bury et al. \(2020\). Understanding the Early Years Workforce: qualitative research findings. London: NatCen Social Research.](#)

⁵⁷ Social Mobility Commission. (2020). P5

- Policies and risk assessments (e.g. fire safety, food safety)⁵⁸
- Permission documents for photos, sun cream, medicines, outings etc
- Care/development/personal plans
- Photo journals, observations, or learning journals for each child
- Communications with parents, including dealing with enquiries from new parents, questionnaires for parents from the Care Inspectorate, and general updates, including newsletters, parents' nights, and welcome leaflets
- Other administration connected with registration, inspection, or getting paid – including invoicing, registering for funded hours, forms for caring for children whose parents are at college (to get paid by the college), self-assessment forms, tax returns
- Generally keeping on top of best practice – reading guidance and emails from childminder representative organisations and the Care Inspectorate, etc.
- Some of these documents and tasks are required by the Care Inspectorate, either for registration or for inspections⁵⁹, while others seen by childminders as important if they wanted to deliver (and be able to evidence) 'best practice' in their service.

While the amount of time participants said they spent on paperwork and administration varied, it could be up to a day per week. Participants noted that paperwork can usually only be completed in the evening, when children have left for the day, which then impacts on the amount of time childminders are able to spend with their own family. A related frustration was that the amount of time spent on paperwork was not viewed as being compensated by adequate pay:

“I spend that much time that I have actually taken a Friday off, as of from now I no longer work on a Friday, and Friday is a day for me to sit and do paperwork”

(Group 3, childminders considering leaving the profession)

⁵⁸ There are seven core policies required for registration with the Care Inspectorate, covering: complaints; child and/or adult protection; medication; infection control; food and nutrition; promoting positive behaviour / use of restrictive practices (service dependent); and (for those that employ an assistant), recruitment.

⁵⁹ In addition to the policies above, the Care Inspectorate requires that all children have a 'personal plan' setting out how their health, welfare and safety needs will be met, which is reviewed at least once every six months ([See the Care Inspectorate website for more information on personal plans](#)). Childminders are also required to complete self-assessments and distribute parent questionnaire prior to inspections.

“You’re not making a lot of money, and (you’re) still expected to do all this paperwork”

(Interviewee ES2/01, new childminder)

Participants understood that some of the paperwork requirements are there for a reason. For example, it was suggested that it is particularly important to have documentation when there are concerns about a child’s development. However, reflecting Bury et al (2020), it was felt that the level of paperwork required could get in the way of actually spending time with the children:

“It would be nice just to welcome [children] in and have a lovely day and spend quality time together and do some fun things. But you are constantly worrying about have I done this, have I done my risk assessment, I need to do this observation. Have I done my accounts today? Have I done the register?”

(Interviewee ES1/05, participant had been a childminder in England, but decided against returning to this profession after moving to Scotland)

Childminders also felt that many parents are not particularly interested in the documentation they are required to produce for them, which added to the sense that time spent on paperwork was not worthwhile:

“My parents, I would show them the paperwork and they were not interested at all in targets and things, they were like, ‘we don't want you to do targets, you're not the school, we want them to have fun.’”

(Group 3, childminders considering leaving the profession)

There was a perception that childminders are (unreasonably, from their perspective) expected to complete the same amount of paperwork and maintain the same standards as nurseries, but as lone workers. Similarly, it was commented that childminders were expected to produce documentation for school-age children that was not required of schools:

“In a nutshell, a childminder is expected to do what many staff do together in a nursery or a school, and it is too much.”

(Interviewee ES1/05, considered becoming a childminder but decided not to)

“Schools don't keep care plans, well not even care plans your Personal Learning Journeys for your schoolies. So, why are we expected to be writing up observations for school children that have been in school learning nine till three (then) come to us to relax?”

(Group 4, former childminders)

Paperwork was cited as a key factor influencing both decisions to leave the profession and deterring new people from joining.

“When I hear people are quitting it’s because of paperwork and admin”

(Interviewee ES2/02, new childminder)

“I’m trying to get somebody in my area to start. Demand is like so high, and nobody wants to do it because of the paperwork. There is loads, loads and loads of people that could do it and would want to do it, but just won’t because of the paperwork.”

(Group 3, childminders considering leaving the profession)

It was felt that the burden of paperwork could be reduced if the Care Inspectorate produced clearer guidelines on the core documentation needed, and what this should look like. There was a sense that some childminders might actually be producing too much documentation, simply because they were not clear what was required and worried about not having enough to demonstrate good practice:

“[Care Inspectorate] sort of say, “oh, you find the method that suits you”, because I don’t think they want to dictate everything. But in the same way there is not this idiots guide of, if you did this, this and this once a week... for them to be happy with what you’re doing.”

(Group 2, new childminders)

It was also suggested that paperwork could be reduced by streamlining the number of policies required, and that the amount of documentation for school-age children could be reduced.

The case study below illustrates one former childminder’s view of paperwork, including a desire for more guidance on exactly what particular documents or records should look like, and a perception that not all the required paperwork seemed necessary to delivering a good service.

Case study – Melanie

Melanie was a childminder for over two years before stopping in 2020. Melanie became a childminder because she and her husband struggled to find childcare where they live that would cover after school hours. She decided to stop childminding because her son didn't like having other children in the house and she had some bad experiences with a parent.

Melanie felt that guidance from the Care Inspectorate is “very limited” for new childminders and that information on the website was not easy to navigate.

“The information and guidance they offer when you start out is very limited. They say you need to provide X, Y and Z but then don't give you guidance on what X, Y and Z looks like, that's not good enough.”

Melanie was surprised by the amount of daily paperwork she was doing. She described having had to get parents to sign forms: for permission for her dogs to be in the house; for the application of sun cream; to say no-one under the age of six was allowed to be on the trampoline, and then, when children reached age six, for them to use the trampoline. She would record weekly that she had checked the fire alarm, which she felt was unnecessary to always write down.

Melanie's experiences with children and parents were generally “very positive”, but she said her “interaction with the regulatory side was very negative”. Melanie felt “a lot of paperwork was for the sake of it” and that there were “hoops you have to jump through for the Care Inspectorate”. She would speak to parents at the end of the day and highlight anything important or any concerns about their child's development, so she did not see the value of keeping records for the Care Inspectorate too.

Inspections

Inspections take place as part of the initial application process. The frequency of subsequent inspections varies and depends on risk assessments made by the Care Inspectorate. Inspectors may turn up unannounced (for existing services), although generally childminders will have some warning because they will be asked to complete a self-evaluation a few weeks before the visit or they will be asked what days their service is running. Childminders are also sent questionnaires for parents and carers to complete about their experience of the service. During an inspection, the spaces used for childminding are viewed and the childminder will be asked about things like their planning, record keeping and policies and procedures. The inspector will provide feedback at the end of the visit, including any recommendations for improvement they plan to make in their report. A draft report is then sent to the childminder. They are required to reply with an action plan if there are any recommendations or requirements specified by the inspector. Final inspection reports are published on the Care Inspectorate website.

According to Campbell-Barr et al (2020), childminders in England described the inspection process as “stressful” and too paper based.⁶⁰ Participants in this study described a number of frustrations with the inspection process for childminders in Scotland, relating particularly to timing and the perceived fairness and consistency of grading and feedback.

In terms of timing, it was reported that although inspections (for existing services) are supposed to be unannounced, this was not always the case in practice, which created a perception that some childminders have more time to prepare than others:

“I have been in both positions where I have been unannounced, and (where) I know a morning that someone is going to come ... I don't think that is very fair”

(Interviewee ES3/01, childminder considering leaving the profession)

“Waiting for the knock on the door” for an unannounced inspection was also described as very stressful:

“(I) understand why they do unannounced inspections but it's your own house ... you can't be scared to answer the door in your own house”

(Interviewee LM4/03, former childminder)

In addition to perceived inconsistencies in the amount of advanced warning given about inspections, there was a clear perception was that there are inconsistencies in how different inspectors grade childminders. There was a sense that the inspection process overall felt somewhat arbitrary and unfair as a result:

“One inspector might tell you, ‘You don't need to do that’ and the other one will come out and say, ‘yes, you do’. So, there is no, there is no common ground”

(Interviewee ES3/01, childminder considering leaving the profession)

“One inspector can come out and look at your things and say, “oh, that's great,” then another inspector comes the next day, and they are like, “oh well you're missing this, this and this.” There is not consistency of what they need and what is expected like across the board of everybody.”

(Group 3, childminder considering leaving the profession)

Some participants provided specific examples of inspection decisions or feedback which they found difficult to understand or were contradicted by other authorities:

“The Care Inspectorate person said, ‘oh, lock the door and have the keys out of reach’...then when I spoke to the fire marshal or whoever it was over the phone

⁶⁰ Campbell-Barr, V., Georgeson, J., Hohmann, U., Gulliver, K. (2020). P6

they said you need to be able to get out of your house without unlocking your door, without having to reach for keys.”

(Group 2, new childminders)

“We as a group of childminders around the area, we used to share policies...then we would all have different Care Inspectorates would come out...I had one, one year that I had to make up a sun cream policy on how to apply sun cream to a child, right, but then nobody else had a sun cream policy on how to apply sun cream to a child. They just had permission to apply sun cream to the child. So, it is that sort of consistency, where do you stand?”

(Group 4, former childminders)

A particular view was also expressed that some inspectors had “less than professional attitudes” towards male childminders. In one case it was felt they had been “sexist and inappropriate” in how they spoke to a male childminder.⁶¹

These issues around the inspection process were reported to have been a significant factor in some former childminders’ decision to leave the profession:

“(I) just feel the inspections and what they wanted us to do, what they told me to do was always different to somebody else... the grading, the Care Inspector[ate] and the council was basically was [why] I decided I had enough.”

(Group 4, former childminders)

As discussed earlier, where people suggest more support or guidance is required, this may not always reflect an absence of such support, but rather a lack of awareness of where or how to access it. However, it is nonetheless important to be aware of where people feel there are gaps, in order that these can be filled either by developing additional resources, or further review or promotion of existing support and guidance. Participants’ suggestions for improving the inspection process focused on:

- **Improving the information and guidance provided to childminders in advance**, so that they are clearer on what will be assessed and against what precise criteria. A checklist to help prepare for inspection was suggested. It was also commented that it would be helpful to provide examples of what childminders need to do to achieve high grades:

“If we knew beforehand this is what gets you a five, this is what gets you a six, people would work very hard to achieve that but there is no common

⁶¹ It should be noted that the Care Inspectorate has a procedure for handling any complaints that are raised with them about the conduct of inspections – [see the 2014 Care Inspectorate publication: ‘Procedure for handling complaints about the Care Inspectorate’](#).

ground, there is no list of what the things are” (Interviewee ES3/01, childminder considering leaving the profession)

It is worth noting, in this regard, that the Care Inspectorate’s current inspection framework does give descriptors of very good practice, but as indicated by the quote above, the childminders we spoke to did not seem to be aware of this resource.

- **Tailoring inspections more to childminding**, with a greater recognition that it is a ‘home from home’ setting and that some requirements that are needed for nurseries might not be appropriate for someone’s home

“It’s our home – (you) don’t want posters up in your home” (Interviewee LM3/02, childminder considering leaving the profession)

- **Offering mentoring (by other childminders) to help people prepare for inspections** – a participant who had been a childminder in England described how “invaluable” similar support provided to them had been:

“They would ring you, and they would also come round to the house just before your inspection and say, ‘oh, have you thought about this? Have you thought about that? The inspectors will ask you about this’...getting that first-hand experience from somebody that had already been through inspections and daily life as a childminder was just invaluable.”

- **Another suggestion was that the inspection process might be improved if inspections were more frequent but less demanding.** Less formal visits from inspectors could be seen as more supportive and could address feelings that the Care Inspectorate is not a source of support for childminders.

Income

Pay and income are well documented challenges for recruiting and maintaining a skilled early years workforce. A 2020 review of the early years workforce in the UK found that low pay is a major contributor to staff turnover across the sector.⁶² With respect to childminders specifically, Campbell-Barr et al (2020) found that 67% of childminders in England and Wales who were planning to leave strongly agreed that the lack of a secure income contributed to people leaving the profession, while 57% strongly agreed that challenges in being a financially sustainable business were a factor.⁶³ Similarly, Reid et al (2019) found that more than half (57%) of childminders in Scotland felt people left childminding for a higher salary.⁶⁴

Pay was discussed throughout a 2015 review of Scotland’s ELC workforce, with the authors recommending that all practitioners should receive at least the living wage.⁶⁵ In 2019, 63% of childminders in England were paid below the living wage, compared

⁶² [Pascal, C., Bertram, T., Cole-Albäck, A. \(2020\). Early Years Workforce Review: Revisiting the Nutbrown Review – Policy and Impact. London: The Sutton Trust. p6](#)

⁶³ Campbell-Barr, V., Georgeson, J., Hohmann, U., Gulliver, K. (2020) p43

⁶⁴ Reid, P., Hanks, J., Ferguson, A. (2019). Early Learning and Childcare Workforce p20

⁶⁵ [Siraj, I., Kingston, D. \(2015\). An Independent Review of the Scottish Early Learning and Childcare \(ELC\) Workforce and Out of School Care \(OSC\) Workforce. Edinburgh: The Scottish Government.](#)

with just 25% of private nursery staff.⁶⁶ In Scotland in 2018 it was estimated that 80% of ELC practitioners as a whole earn less than the living wage.⁶⁷ Through the ELC expansion local authorities are now receiving funding from the Scottish Government to enable them to set sustainable rates for funded ELC providers that enable payment of the Real Living Wage to all workers delivering funded ELC hours. Local authorities currently have some flexibility over this criteria in the National Standard, but once the policy framework is fully in place all providers delivering funded ELC will be expected to pay the Real Living Wage to all staff delivering funded hours. However, as only a minority of childminders currently deliver funded hours⁶⁸ this does not directly impact on most childminders.

The Covid-19 pandemic has also had a major financial impact on childminders who were forced to close or vastly reduce their services in March 2020. Many also faced ongoing pressures on income and demand beyond the initial lockdown, as many parents remained on furlough or continued to work from home. As discussed in the Scottish Government's [Financial Sustainability Health Check of the Childcare Sector in Scotland](#), childminders were less likely than other types of ELC service to rate their services as sustainable even pre-pandemic. By May 2021, the proportion of childminders delivering funded ELC expressing significant concerns about sustainability increased from 7% to 20%. Among those not delivering ELC, this rose even more sharply, from 13% to 31%. Experiences of the pandemic are covered in more detail in Section 6.

Childminding was generally viewed as a low- and under-paid profession by participants in this study. While it was acknowledged that pay is an issue for the whole ELC sector, childminders were felt to be particularly disadvantaged relative to nursery staff. A comparison was made that if you get a similar hourly rate in a nursery at least you can “walk away at the end of the day”, whereas childminders then have to clean up their own home and complete paperwork and administration. The hourly rate charged by childminders was viewed as a misleading measure of the adequacy of their pay, since this does not take into account all the hours that they work outside of contact time with children.

Childminders also commented on the expenses they incurred in running their business in order to meet both regulatory and parental expectations and requirements. One former childminder said they might only make £6,000 ‘profit’ as their take-home ‘pay’ each year, after all the expenses of running their childminding business were accounted for. The cost of insurance was described as a particularly large outlay and, for this former childminder, a factor in their decision to stop childminding:

⁶⁶ [Paull, G., Wilson, C. \(2020\). Providers' finances: Evidence from the Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers 2019. London: Department for Education. p15.](#)

⁶⁷ Skills Development Scotland. (2018).

⁶⁸ [SCMA's 2021 ELC audit found that only 168 childminders were delivering funded ELC for eligible two-year olds \(4.1% of the workforce\), and 709 for three- and four-year-olds \(17.5% of the workforce\).](#)

“I think [car insurance] went from something like under £300 to over £1,000, You just think, “wow, what on earth do you think I earn here?” There is no way. £1,000 has been, some years, a quarter of net income...It just became financially not viable”

(Interviewee ES4/03, Former childminder)

Maternity pay was also cited as an issue for childminders, since they are reliant on state maternity allowance (unlike someone who is employed and may be entitled to employer maternity pay). For one childminder, this had contributed to them deciding to return to work after just six weeks of maternity leave.

The perceived low level of pay was seen as a major factor in explaining the declining numbers of childminders in Scotland, and as something that deterred younger people from entering the profession in particular:

“It doesn’t pay well, you don’t get a pension and sick pay, you don’t get annual leave. Why would you be self-employed? There are a lot more attractive ways of earning money and being a self-employed person”

(Interviewee ES3/02, childminder considering leaving the profession)

This quote also reflects related concerns about being self-employed, which were reported to have deterred some prospective childminders from going ahead with registering. One view was that childminding might be more attractive if childminders could be employed directly by the local authority. This would increase financial security (including allaying concerns about tax, pension and benefits) and reduce administration, although it was recognised that there would be questions to address around how this could actually work in practice.

It was suggested that low pay might be a particular barrier for people living in deprived communities and that childminding would not appeal to men where there are perceptions that men should be the ‘breadwinner’ unless this was addressed:

“It’s poorly paid, the hours are long... there is still very much ‘man goes out to work and provides’ and you couldn’t, in our area it would be unbelievably difficult for a man to put a roof over his children’s head running a single person’s lone trader childminding service, it just doesn’t happen.”

(Interviewee ES3/04, childminder considering leaving the profession)

One view was that reconsidering guidelines about ratios of children to adults for childminders could help improve the profitability and sustainability of childminding businesses – for example, it was suggested that changing the requirement that a childminder looks after no more than three children who are below school age to no more than three under four years-old would enable them to provide care for more nursery-age children, for whom there is more demand for childcare. There was also a perception that, in comparison with England, the rules about how childminders’

own children count towards ratios were stricter, and therefore had a greater impact on the number of fee-paying children they could take.

In addition to a desire for improved income in general, it was suggested that childminders should have access to a “proper maternity package”, and that there should be more information for prospective childminders on the financial aspects of becoming a childminder (including implications for national insurance contributions).

Training and personal development

There are no specific qualification requirements for becoming a childminder in Scotland. However, if offering funded hours of ELC, childminders are required to achieve benchmark qualifications⁶⁹ within the first five years of delivery.

Much of the existing literature comments on barriers to accessing affordable and timely training and continuous professional development (CPD) for both the ELC workforce as a whole, and childminders specifically. For example, Skills Development Scotland (2018) note that it can be difficult for ELC staff to access training because of time, costs and geographic issues in rural areas, and that these challenges may be particularly acute for childminders since they do not have employers to cover the costs and organise staff cover.⁷⁰ Campbell-Barr et al (2020) found that half of childminders in England and Wales were ‘not so satisfied’ (39%) or ‘not at all satisfied’ (11%) with the CPD opportunities available to them.⁷¹ Business training is identified as a particular gap for childminders in a number of studies.^{72 73}

Pascal et al (2020) recommends urgently reducing barriers to training and CPD for the early years workforce as a whole by increasing options for online and in person training, workforce placements, mentoring, and funding to cover costs.⁷⁴ However, other studies have noted that for childminders, a perceived lack of connection between further training and qualifications and improved wages or career progression is likely to remain a barrier. The SCMA’s 2020 survey found that 30% of childminders said not wanting to undertake benchmark qualifications needed to deliver funded hours was contributing to their considering leaving childminding.⁷⁵ The SCMA has highlighted the link between these findings and an ageing workforce. As discussed in Chapter 2, 24% of childminders are aged 55 or older. For those who have been practicing and gaining good inspection gradings for many years, the time and costs involved in studying for a new qualification may not seem worthwhile at this stage of their careers. A combination of an ageing workforce and new

⁶⁹ Achieved or be working towards the benchmark qualification (SCQF Level 7 qualification with 68 credits, to be completed within five years).

⁷⁰ [Skills Development Scotland. \(2018\). Skills Investment Plan: For Scotland's early learning and childcare sector. Glasgow: Skills Development Scotland.](#)

⁷¹ Campbell-Barr, V., Georgeson, J., Hohmann, U., Gulliver, K. (2020) p29-30

⁷² [Callanan, M. \(2014\). Study of Early Education and Development: views and experiences of childminders. London: Department for Education. p32.](#)

⁷³ O'Regan, M., Halpenny A M., Hayes, N. (2019).

⁷⁴ Pascal, C., Bertram, T., Cole-Albäck, A. (2020) p6 and p8

⁷⁵ Scottish Childminding Association. (2020).

qualification requirements thus create a risk of premature skills loss from the workforce. The debate about the balance of practical experience and formal training is also discussed by O'Regan, Halpenny and Hayes (2019) and Yarrow (2016).

Participants in this study raised many similar points to those reported in the literature. Time and money were both seen as significant barriers to accessing training, particularly for those who had gone into childminding to enable them to spend more time with their own family, who were deterred by the prospect of training outside of working hours:

“In a normal job, if you were doing training, you would be paid for your training... If it was an online training I wouldn't be as fussed about it but if I was actually having to travel and be away from my child, it kind of defeats the purpose of doing a job to be near your child.”

(Group 1, people who considered becoming a childminder but decided not to)

Participants also felt it was not always straightforward to identify which courses are officially recognised (for inspection purposes), or how much courses cost:

“I had been aiming to do my own online courses and then you think, is it official? Does it count? Is it the right information? Is this even what I'm supposed to be looking at?”

(Group 3, childminders who are considering leaving the profession)

“It's been very difficult to find out the information to get on to a course and how it is funded... nobody is going to tell you how much you have to pay until you have actually signed up and stuff.”

(Group 2, new childminders)

Comments from former childminders provide support for the view above, that requiring new qualifications may be particularly off-putting for those in the later stages of their career:

"I didn't have the SVQ and when they said you had to do it within five years, I was reluctant to do it, because I had done an NVQ before I started childminding in child behaviour and health, I think it was called, and because I wasn't sure how long I would be childminding for, I was reluctant to agree to do that."

(Group 4, former childminder)

Business advice and training was seen as something that new childminders, in particular, would find helpful. Although participants did highlight some existing sources of business advice or training (for example, Business Gateway), new childminders nonetheless described how they had initially struggled with knowing how to talk to parents about bookings and fees and suggested that specific childminding business support would be helpful:

“When I started actually some parents were just taking a little bit of advantage with the payments...you don’t really know until you start how to like deal with...but then you learn...(I) had no training to talk to parents.”

(ES2/03, new childminder)

Providing clear training opportunities was also seen as an important in encouraging more people (particularly young people) to consider a career in childminding. It was suggested that college courses focussing on setting up a business, pathways from school where you could progress from being an assistant to a childminder, foundation apprenticeships, and work placements in high school might all help in this regard. It should be noted, however, that there was also a view that qualifications are not always necessary to be a good childminder.

Participants also expressed some frustration with a perceived lack of opportunities for career progression within childminding. It was recognised that not all childminders want to ‘move up’ in their role. However, there was nonetheless a view that creating and publicising more opportunities to progress and grow as a professional might help to encourage people to stay in the childminding workforce. It was suggested this might include having the option to become a community childminder⁷⁶, or supporting better links between childminders and larger ELC settings delivering funded hours, so that childminders can gain experience and knowledge from these links:

“There isn’t really any progression really, because I’m doing this job to tide me over until I retire, just ticking for the next 13, 14 years...it isn’t really a career job is it, it is just a job.”

(Group 4, former childminder)

“Having an easy route to qualifications and training that you actually see some progress, that you can maybe have an ongoing ladder that you’re climbing kind of thing, that might be an incentive to feel that you are still growing as a professional.”

(Interviewee ES2/04, new childminder)

⁷⁶ SCMA delivers community childminding services in different parts of Scotland through contracts with local authorities. These are early interventions for families who may be one step away from crisis and in which families are referred to SCMA by social work or health visitors for family support. Specially trained childminders, in turn, deliver this specialised support.

“I would quite like the challenge of being a community childminder and...giving the support to those families who maybe need the support more, because I get a lot of families who really don't need support, they just need a babysitter really, and it can be a bit unfulfilling that way I suppose”

(Interviewee ES2/05, new childminder)

Isolation

Childminders are usually lone workers: in 2020, while there were 4,395 registered childminders in Scotland it was estimated that there were just 540 childminding assistants.⁷⁷ Campbell-Barr et al (2020) found that 45% strongly agreed that a lack of advice and support contributed to people leaving the profession.⁷⁸ Childminders interviewed in England in 2014 said that their access to support and guidance had been reduced due to cuts to local services.⁷⁹ This issue is also highlighted by O'Regan et al (2019), who found that childminders in Ireland were looking for local support workers to help with establishing and running their service and with training. There were also calls for peer support from other childminders.⁸⁰ Skipp and Hopwood (2017) suggest that a lack of formal information sharing networks for childminders had contributed to potential misconceptions about funded hours in England.⁸¹

Childminders interviewed for this study described the sense of isolation sometimes created by working alone, without other adult company, as a negative aspect of the job. A lack of peer support was seen as adding to the stress of dealing with potentially challenging situations in childminding, such as “personality clashes with parents” or supporting children with additional support needs. Childminders also missed the social aspects of working in a team – “that banter when you have a workplace”.

Where childminders had been able to access more support – for example, via a childminding support worker – this had a substantial positive impact, both on how well informed they felt about what was expected of them in terms of training, qualifications and inspection, and on their mental wellbeing and confidence. The benefits of receiving additional support are highlighted in the case study below.⁸²

⁷⁷ [Care Inspectorate. \(2021\). Early learning and childcare statistics 2019.](#)

⁷⁸ Campbell-Barr, V., Georgeson, J., Hohmann, U., Gulliver, K. (2020).

⁷⁹ [Callanan, M., \(NatCen Social Research\) \(2014\) Study of Early Education and Development: views and experiences of childminders. London: Department for Education.](#)

⁸⁰ [O'Regan, M., Halpenny A M., Hayes, N. \(2019\)](#)

⁸¹ Skipp, A., Hopwood, V. (2017). Childminders' views on funded early education.

⁸² These positive impacts are supported by the SCMA's own experience of the benefits childminders report when they receive childminding specific support via Childminding Development Officers (employed by SCMA through local authority funded contracts). However, these are only currently employed in 10 local authority areas.

Case study – Sophie

Sophie is a new childminder. She began childminding in 2019. She had experience working with children before becoming a childminder and started looking into it after experiencing her own childcare issues.

Sophie lives in an area where she has access to a Childminding Development Officer recently employed by the local authority. The CDO has been a real source of support and she feels that if she had access to them earlier it would have made the registration process and setting up much easier:

“Since we have had her I just find a lot of things so much easier to find the answers for and it is a really big support...she has been a childminder and she knows her stuff and she knows what it is about the Care Inspectorate side of things, what they expect from you. It kind of relieves any anxiety that you might have from it.”

Sophie said the CDO was “very proactive” and would inform her of any policy changes or updated guidance as well as highlight funding and training opportunities. This was particularly helpful during the pandemic:

“There is a lot of stuff you have to do when you're just not being paid, so a lot of evenings and weekends you're spending catching up on reading like your guidance, and legislation, especially during Covid there was so much stuff changing all the time, you were having to do a lot of reading, and she was very good at sending stuff out and just kind of cutting off the time you would have to spend finding it yourself, which really helps.”

Improving connections and networks with peers was seen as something that would improve practice and wellbeing, as well as supporting both recruitment and retention of childminders. It was suggested that there needed to be more focus on ensuring appropriate peer support, particularly for new childminders. A more specific suggestion was that it would help if there were somewhere childminders could approach for an appraisal:

“For new childminders being able to get them into a group with other childminders is a good idea... unless you know someone that is a childminder that can help get you into those groups, you can feel isolated”

(Interviewee ES4/01, former childminder)

Interaction with home and family life

While childminders spend time outside and in the community with the children they provide childcare for, a significant proportion of time will often be spent caring for them in the childminder's own home. Participants in this study described this impact this has on how easy it is to switch off at the end of the day – it was felt there was “nowhere to close the door and step away”. They also described the impact of their home becoming a workplace on other members of their family – something echoed in a comment from a participant who worked as a childminding assistant for their husband (commenting from their perspective as a family member, rather than an assistant):

“What I didn't expect was almost losing the house that I co-owned. So, all of a sudden when I was on holiday, I was having to share my house with all these kids... that kind of thing was quite frustrating.” ES4/03

(Interviewee ES4/03, former childminder who had worked as an assistant to partner's childminding business)

There was a perception that the impacts on home and family life had been exacerbated by increasing parental expectations in recent years, particularly around the timings of pick-ups and drop-offs:

“Parents expect you to be up insanely early to receive their kids and other clients expected you to be able to keep going until 7pm, and expectations to have a clean house, and do paperwork, it's absolutely nuts. It's a lie that you can be your own boss and set own hours.”

(Interviewee ES3/02, childminder considering leaving the profession)

Considerations around potential negative impacts on home and family life were clearly a contributing factor to decisions to leave, or not to join, the profession:

“My oldest child started acting out and he'd never done it before. He came back from nursery and wanted time with me, he really struggled...I had to put my own household first.”

(Interviewee LM4/02, former childminder)

Another participant mentioned concerns about potential wear and tear on their home, and whether they would be able to claim for any such damage under their insurance, as a factor in deciding against becoming a childminder.

While there were no obvious solutions to reducing the impact of childminding on home and family life, one potential solution was for childminders to join together and find suitable spaces they could use outside the home:

“You could maybe join another childminder and if there were like spaces or something available that you could use rather than doing it in your own house... probably would swing it a bit.”

(Interviewee ES1/01, considered becoming a child minder but decided not to)

Wider societal perceptions of childminding

Yarrow (2016) argues that burnout and staff turnover in the ELC workforce are, in part, a consequence of the perceived low value ascribed by society to early childhood work. The author stresses the importance of building a resilient workforce while recognising there are systemic issues that need to be addressed around this.⁸³ Existing research indicates that public perceptions of the sector is an issue affecting the whole early years workforce – for example, Bury et al (2020) report that the sector is not seen as attractive to those with a university degree,⁸⁴ while Pascal et al (2020) highlight the importance of changing perceptions of the sector from being primarily about childcare to being seen as a key part of the education system.⁸⁵

However, existing research also identifies specific issues around societal perceptions of childminding in particular, and the value attached to it. Siraj and Kingston (2015) found that childminders felt that they were not understood by the general public, nor recognised for the full service they provide.⁸⁶ Similarly Campbell-Barr et al (2020) found that most childminders (89%) agreed or strongly agreed that childminding not being seen as a professional role is barrier to entering the profession. Respondents felt that even other members of the early years workforce did not properly value or understand childminding.⁸⁷ Similarly, an overarching theme of the earlier *Perceptions of the impact of childminding* study, for the Scottish Government,⁸⁸ was that childminders do not feel listened to or appreciated, either by society or government.

Participants interviewed for this report also felt that childminding is not fully understood or valued by wider Scottish society. It was suggested that members of the public see childminders as akin to “babysitters” and that a childminding setting is not always viewed by parents or the wider public as being of the same quality as a nursery. These perceptions were particularly frustrating given all the regulatory and other expectations placed on childminders, discussed earlier in this chapter:

“They probably just think you play with them, they don’t realise how much paperwork, how much goes into it.”

⁸³ Yarrow, A., (2016). What we feel and what we do: emotional capital in early childhood work. *Early Years* (36:4), 361-366

⁸⁴ Bury, J., et al. (2020) p2

⁸⁵ Pascal, C., Bertram, T., Cole-Albäck, A. (2020). [p10](#)

⁸⁶ Siraj, I., Kingston, D. (2015). P80

⁸⁷ Campbell-Barr, V., Georgeson, J., Hohmann, U., Gulliver, K. (2020). P31 and 24

⁸⁸ [Glencross, K., Millar, C., Murray, L. and Simpson, E. 2021. Perceptions of the impact of childminding services on child, parent and family outcomes in Scotland.](#)

(ES3/03, Childminder considering leaving the profession)

"[The public] think we just play but we are educators and child developers. We do play but there is a structure to it"

(LM3/01, childminder considering leaving the profession)

There were similar comments that policy makers too do not fully understand or value childminding, although there was also a belief that perceptions among policy makers may have changed in recent years, in part because of the role childminders have played in sustaining ELC in Scotland since the Covid-19 pandemic:

"I think because we were opening before nurseries the value was seen in us, whereas before I think the government see us or used to see us a little bit more like babysitters, rather than actually influencing child's development."

(Group 2, new childminders)

The perceived value society attaches to childminding was clearly a factor in participants' decisions to enter or leave the profession. It was also suggested that the 'low status' attached to childminding was also a barrier to diversifying the profession. For example, it was suggested that some members of the Asian community are put off by the low status of childminding; that younger people want "high flying jobs"; and that older people who have had other jobs might feel childminding is a step "backward". It was also felt that beliefs about how society views childminding put men off considering it as a career option:

"I know so many men who would be fantastic childminders. It all comes down to how that role is respected in society, people don't appreciate how important raising children is"

(Interviewee ES3/03, childminder considering leaving the profession)

It was suggested that aspects of the role could be better promoted in order to improve public understanding of and attitudes towards childminding. This included highlighting: that childminders can have the same training and qualifications as staff in other ELC settings; that childminders work across an age range; and that there are childminders based across the whole country.

There was also some discussion in the existing literature of potentially changing the name 'childminder' to better reflect the skills involved in the role. Childminders in surveyed in England and Wales in 2020 were split on this issue, with 48% thinking there was a need to rename the profession.⁸⁹ There were similarly mixed views among participants in this study about a potential name change. On the one hand, there was concern that it might simply be confusing. On the other, it was suggested that updating the name might better reflect developments in the profession:

⁸⁹ Campbell-Barr, V., Georgeson, J., Hohmann, U., Gulliver, K. (2020). P23

“I think [childminder] is well established now, and I think it would just start confusing people. It would just get a lot of eye rolls and sarky comments.”

(Group 1, people who considered becoming a childminder but decided not to)

“Should change whole name to pre-school teacher. (Or) Something different because childminder has no authority or weight. Childminders 40 or 50 years ago didn't need paperwork or education. The title hasn't kept up with that”

(Interviewee ES2/02, new childminder)

5. Perspectives on expansion of funded ELC hours

This chapter examines the perceived impact of funded ELC hours in Scotland on childminding workforce trends. The Improvement Service reports that in August 2021, 1,249 childminders were working in partnership with local authorities in Scotland to deliver funded hours.⁹⁰ However, Audit Scotland's 2020 report on ELC expansion argued that the expansion of funded hours "poses risks to the sustainability of childminding", with childminders who were not offering funded hours reporting losing families and income to other settings.⁹¹

The SCMA's 2020 survey of childminders found that 38% said competition with local authority nursery expansion was contributing to their considering leaving the profession.⁹² It remains the case that only a very low proportion of childminders are actually delivering funded ELC – five years since they started auditing local authorities' progress in involving childminders in funded ELC delivery (on behalf of the Scottish Government), the SCMA's 2021 Audit found that just 4% of childminders are delivering funded ELC to eligible two year-olds. The figure for three- and four-year-olds was somewhat higher, at 17%, but still only a minority.⁹³

There is a dearth of existing evidence on the specific experiences of childminders who are delivering funded hours in Scotland. In an earlier qualitative study for the Scottish Government, Glencross et al (2021) found mixed views on the financial impacts, depending on whether childminders reported councils paying them more or less than their full costs or usual charges. The same study also showed that opinions were also mixed regarding the impact that childminders providing funded hours would have on child outcomes. Some participants felt children would benefit from childminder requirements to meet the National Standard, whereas others felt they were already meeting the National Standard without being a funded provider.⁹⁴

A 2017 study of childminders' views of funded hours in England found that the funding rate received was generally reported to be less than their standard fee.⁹⁵ This meant a loss of income or having to increase fees in other areas. The report concluded that childminders need clear information and advice on funded hours and how they could deliver hours in their area, as well as business advice and IT support. The SCMA's 2021 ELC Audit found that while 67% of childminders involved in delivering ELC believed delivering funded hours was important to business

⁹⁰ Improvement Service. 2021 (data accessed 27 October 2021): [See Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Progress.](#)

⁹¹ [Audit Scotland. \(2020\). Early learning and childcare: Follow-up.](#)

⁹² Scottish Childminding Association. (2020).

⁹³ [Scottish Childminding Association. \(2021\): Early Learning and Childcare Audit 2021](#)

⁹⁴ [Glencross, K., Millar, C., Murray, L. and Simpson, E. 2021. Perceptions of the impact of childminding services on child, parent and family outcomes in Scotland. Scottish Government.](#)

⁹⁵ [Skipp, A., Hopwood, V. \(2017\). Childminders' views on funded early education. London: Department for Education.](#)

sustainability, only 30% believed there was a strong match between local authority ELC offers to parents and childminders' business sustainability.⁹⁶ The Audit also found that 86% of childminders involved in delivering funded ELC reported a significant increase in paperwork, while 93% of those not currently involved in delivering funded hours believed it would result in a significant increase in paperwork.

Participants interviewed for this report discussed their perceptions on the impact of the ELC expansion on childminding businesses. While views on the impact varied, a number of key themes arose, around: the impact on their client base and the number of hours required from childminders by parents; council payments and rates for funded hours; and regulatory and administrative requirements, including training and registration.

Perceived impact on client base and demand

Among those childminders who had experience of delivering funded hours or had just become a funded provider, a key motivation was concern about losing families who might choose to use their funded hours at another setting rather than continue to pay a childminder:

“Why would they pay to have them with me once they turn three if they could get free childcare? So, that was one of the reasons I wanted to be able to do it”

(Group 2, new childminders)

Participants were asked how funded hours had impacted their business in practice. Some who were not funded providers felt they had not seen much of an impact yet, either because they were already “oversubscribed” or because the delay in the full rollout of the ELC expansion meant the impacts were uncertain:

“So, it hasn't yet, because there was a bit of delay of them coming out, but I am expecting it to. I am thinking that I won't have as many people, because I used to get quite a lot of pickups...so now that they can have a full day in nursery funded, I am expecting to miss out that way”

(Interviewee ES2/05, new childminder)

However, others commented that they had already lost work because families were using their funded hours with a nursery and only using childminders for evening hours or for drop off and pick-ups. There was a belief that parents are not fully informed about the different options for using funded hours, including the option to use them with a childminder. There was also some concern about the impact of potential future policy changes, including the possibility of extending funded hours to

⁹⁶ [Scottish Childminding Association. \(2021\): Early Learning and Childcare Audit 2021 \(Sample: 217 childminders already delivering funded hours\).](#)

more children in younger age groups, and the impact this might have for childminders:

“(They) are also trying to pass a bill to increase the funded childcare to all two-year-olds and some eligible one-year olds...which means we are going to have even less work to keep us going. So, it’s all these little things I just feel are shoving us away”

(Interviewee ES3/01, childminder considering leaving the profession)

In addition to the expansion of funded ELC, local authority hubs for babies and breakfast clubs were also mentioned as reducing parental demand for childminders.

On the other hand, there were examples where collaboration between childminders and other providers were reported to have had a positive impact on childminders’ businesses. For example, one childminder who was a funded provider recounted that a local nursery asks them if they have space for funded places when the nursery is oversubscribed:

“I’ve got a good relationship with the Head of the nursery who did contact me and say, did I have spaces to be able to help take the kids on. They were oversubscribed as well, so we kind of worked together that way which then went in my benefit”

(Group 2, new childminders)

Views on ELC payment rates

As in previous research⁹⁷, mixed views were expressed on the hourly rate paid for funded hours: some childminders said they were better off, while others said they were worse off and received less than they would normally charge:

“I found I was worse off doing the funded hours because the hourly rate was lower than what I was charging... So, there isn’t much benefit for me to look for funded hours children, which is definitely not the way the council would like it to be”

“It is different here; I get more money for doing funded childcare”

(Both Group 2, new childminders)

In addition to concerns about the amounts some local authorities were offering childminders for funded hours, frustration was also expressed about late payments and/or inconvenient payment schedules, particularly where payments were made in arrears on a termly basis:

⁹⁷ E.g. Glencross et al, 2021, op cit.

“That just does not suit childminders who are on a small budget. Some people charge weekly, bill weekly or monthly is common as well, but never termly”

(Group 4, former childminders)

Perceptions of administrative and qualification requirements

Participants raised a number of issues relating to the processes for registering as a funded provider for delivering funded hours, some of which echo concerns about the general process for registering to be a childminder, discussed in chapter 3. There was a perception that the steps needed to register were not very clear which gave the impression of a drawn-out process. The application forms were also described as “an eyesore” which puts people off applying. In common with views on the general childminder registration form, there was a perception that many of the questions were only applicable to nurseries, adding to impressions that childminders were an after-thought in the process.

It was suggested that the application form could be simplified so that childminders are only presented with the sections relevant to them, and that childminders could be provided with clear examples of how to complete the registration form. Another suggestion was that childminders could be asked to sign up to deliver funded hours at the same time as registering.

Participants who were not delivering funded hours also commented on other aspects of the regulatory and administrative requirements associated with becoming a funded provider that had deterred them from applying, including: perceived additional paperwork and local authority scrutiny; the requirement to provide meals; curriculum requirements; and, in particular, training and qualification requirements.

Both the content and costs of training requirements were seen as deterring childminders from registering to be a funded provider. One childminder described the training and qualifications needed to deliver funded hours as “a bit of a shock” and commented that the learning process was quite different to what they were used to, although their local authority had been very supportive. There was a perception that training courses did not take account of practical experience. As mentioned at the start of this section, Glencross et al (2021) showed that there were childminders that felt they were already meeting the National Standard and that did not feel gaining the qualification would result in better outcomes for children in their care.⁹⁸

In terms of accessibility and costs, one view was that council training courses had been more accessible for childminders before the introduction of funded hours, and that access to in-house council courses now appeared to be restricted to those delivering funded hours in large settings. It was suggested that, if local authorities want more childminders to register as funded providers, they may need to cover their

⁹⁸ [Glencross, K., Millar, C., Murray, L. and Simpson, E. 2021. Perceptions of the impact of childminding services on child, parent and family outcomes in Scotland. Scottish Government.](#)

training costs. However, even if costs were covered, there was a perception that barriers would remain:

“I know so many people that are just, ‘I’m just not doing it’, for various reasons ‘I can’t, I don’t do computers, I don’t do distance learning, I don’t have the time, I’m running a family, I’ve got a home at night, I just don’t want to, I don’t see why I should’.”

(Interviewee ES3/04, childminder considering leaving the profession).

Impact on decisions to leave the childminding workforce

Where participants cited funded hours as a reason for leaving, or considering leaving the childminding profession, the main issues raised tended to echo those cited above: stress caused by additional workload (particularly for those who had become a funded provider) and worries about business viability (particularly for those who had not). There was also a perception among some who had become funded providers that they had not felt valued by their local authority in the same way that they felt a nursery setting would be:

“Under no circumstances at any point in time do we ever feel that we are truly in partnership with the council...We were issued with what they lovingly call, service level agreements...We then said, well could we have some sort of service level agreement with you, whereby you promised us certain things within your service level agreement...“No, no, we don’t sign partnership agreements, you sign them.” That sort of sums it up really.”

(Interviewee ES3/04, childminder considering leaving the profession)

Another factor was a perception that some of the expectations placed on childminders as funded providers were unnecessary and detracted from the ‘home from home’ experience of a childminding setting:

“I got upset when the people came round. They were wanting me to change lots of things. I had been a childminder for a long time, I knew that my families were happy and just what they were expecting. For me it was the reason that I gave up”

(Group 4, former childminder)

6. Perceived impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on childminding

This chapter discusses childminder perceptions of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, including perceived impacts on the financial viability of childminding, and on attitudes to entering or exiting the profession.

As yet there is relatively little published research on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the childminding workforce. However, the overall experiences of childminders during the pandemic were covered earlier this year in another study commissioned by the Scottish Government examining perceptions of the impact of childminding services generally. Findings were very much in keeping with those reported below, with some childminders reporting major financial difficulties, increased workload, and stress in addition to that caused by living through such a dangerous and unprecedented world event.⁹⁹

In September 2020, the Institute for Fiscal Studies noted that “the crisis has had severe consequences for the finances of childcare providers” in the UK. Questions around future parental demand and rules on social distancing were seen as creating an unclear medium-term picture for childminding.¹⁰⁰ According to the Social Mobility Commission “the drivers of workforce instability [in ELC] are likely to persist and even worsen” in the UK because of the pandemic.¹⁰¹

Among participants in this study, the Covid-19 pandemic was described as having both exacerbated, and highlighted, many of the existing workforce challenges described in earlier chapters. It was suggested that, while not the primary cause of the decline in childminder numbers in Scotland, the pandemic may have accelerated existing trends:

“I would hate to think that in generations to come the pandemic will be blamed for the decline of this profession, but it certainly hasn’t helped. The pandemic has not caused this, what it has caused is a discussion point to discuss the decline of the profession ... It was happening before that, but it has certainly accelerated it.”

(Interviewee ES3/04, childminder considering leaving the profession)

Income and financial security

The pandemic had an uneven financial impact on participants in this study. On the one hand, there were examples where childminders described having lost families

⁹⁹ [Glencross, K., Millar, C., Murray, L. and Simpson, E. 2021. Perceptions of the impact of childminding services on child, parent and family outcomes in Scotland. Scottish Government.](#) (Qualitative research with 26 childminders and 26 parents)

¹⁰⁰ [Blanden, J., et al. \(2020\). Challenges for the childcare market: the implications of Covid19 for childcare providers in England. The Institute for Fiscal Studies.](#)

¹⁰¹ [Social Mobility Commission. \(2020\). The stability of the early years workforce in England: An examination of national, regional and organisational barriers.](#)

since the pandemic started, because the families no longer needed or could no longer afford childcare given changes in their own economic situation. On the other, some childminders reported having had more children to provide care for while the schools were closed, or simply that the pandemic had not had much of an impact on demand either way.

It was also commented that when childminders had responded to pandemic restrictions by spending more time with their children outdoors, they had incurred additional costs for which no extra funding had been made available¹⁰²:

“Nurseries and things have had loads of funding thrown at them to kind of expand their outdoor spaces, and everything that I have got, I have had to source myself and build myself...it is not financially viable for me to be buying extra play-things or buying loads of compost to do extra planting. There is a bigger financial cost of being outdoors all the time”

(Interviewee ES2/05, new childminder)

Experience of and concerns about a downturn in demand because of ongoing pandemic impacts (including worries about the impact of any future lockdowns) were cited as both reasons for leaving the profession, and for being uncertain about whether to go ahead with registering:

“We just weren't getting enquiries, normally we would get a lot of enquiries as the school started back up in the August and we got nothing...at that time, it was [husband] and I were both relying on the business for an income”

(Group 4, former childminders)

“If I had gone into that kind of business and set up on my own, I would have nothing to fall back on because I'm a single parent. You know, you do run the risk of a child having to self-isolate or you having to self-isolate, I think it would just be really, really, stressful.”

(Group 1, people who considered becoming a childminder but decided not to)

A perceived lack of pandemic-related financial support for new businesses was cited as a particular issue for new childminders:

“When I had a child that got Covid or had to isolate or somebody in my family did, I wasn't entitled to any help because I hadn't been doing it for a year, didn't have any taxes to show or anything...it seemed a bit unfair”

(Group 2, new childminders)

¹⁰² Although funding was made available for childminders experiencing financial hardship at certain points during the pandemic (July and October 2020) as described in [the Scottish Government paper 'Financial sustainability health check of the childcare sector in Scotland'](#)

Administrative and regulatory demands

Childminders also described how their workload had increased since the pandemic because of the need for extra cleaning, keeping on top of changing guidance, and other Covid-19 related requirements. One childminder estimated that they had spent an extra 12-15 hours a week on cleaning and paperwork as a result of the pandemic. Again, some childminders linked this to considering leaving or leaving the profession:

“It did get to the point of every time there was a change you were then having to redo it. So, then you would redo it and then there would be another change and then you would have to redo it again, so it did get a bit tiring... It is just kind of never ending”

(Group 3, childminders considering leaving the profession)

“I wouldn't be one of these people saying, ‘oh my children are older, I better do something else now’...I was never like that until six months ago, I loved my job... but a lot of the fun is taken over by what we should be doing paperwork wise and ... cleaning wise.”

(Interviewee ES3/01, childminder considering leaving the profession)

Alongside concerns about increased workload as a result of Covid-19 regulations, there was also a perception that guidance and support for childminders had not been a priority for the Scottish Government. Given the key role childminders were playing in ELC provision, particularly in the early stages of the pandemic, there was a belief that they should have been accorded higher priority:

“Nobody knew if we were classed as nurseries or out of school care. I think that was quite a big thing ... Eventually childminding was put in it, because I think all the childminders were hogging the helplines to try and find out where childminders sit.”

(Group 3, childminders considering leaving the profession)

There were frustrations that the Care Inspectorate had asked for additional information on Covid19 measures which it was believed had never been used, including an additional question as part of the self-evaluation procedure around how childminders were supporting children and families during Covid-19:

“[The Care Inspectorate] gave us a key question five, and they told us to get all this paperwork done... They have now turned round and said we don't need key question five anymore...I am quite peeved off to be honest, because I have all this information that I have spent time doing, and then when they eventually come out, they are not going to look at it”

(Interviewee ES3/01, childminder considering leaving the profession)

Finally, there was a perception that the pandemic had slowed down aspects of the registration process for new childminders, such as Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) checks.

Day-to-day activities and isolation

The day-to-day activities that childminders were able to undertake with the children in their care were obviously impacted by the pandemic. Indoor activities, like playing with play dough or even reading books, were affected by restrictions on sharing equipment (books needed to be 'quarantined'). At the same time, while some childminders enjoyed spending more time outside, there were both potential additional costs (as described above), and logistical challenges, such as making sure facilities were always available for washing.

There was concern that children's social skills had been affected by Covid-19 restrictions, with the play groups, libraries, community events and meet ups with other childminders they would have normally engaged in all limited. In addition to concerns about how this impacted on children, these limitations on day-to-day activities had also increased feelings of isolation and negatively affected childminders' own mental health:

"We are in level zero now and people can have visitors into the house, whereas as a childminder I can't have anybody in the house, not even another childminder to see me while I'm working...I feel this job is very isolating anyway and Covid has really highlighted that, because there has been no toddler groups open, we are not allowed to see people indoors"

(Interviewee ES3/01, childminder considering leaving the profession)

Isolation and professional support

The quote above highlights the ways in which the pandemic increased an existing sense of professional isolation for some childminders. In this context, professional support for childminders as lone workers was seen as even more important.

There were mixed views on whether childminders had received enough advice and support during the pandemic. There were examples where childminders had found their local council, the SCMA and the Care Inspectorate to be helpful, particularly in providing updates and advice on changing guidance. However, others were less positive, suggesting that information for childminders was either shared too late, long after government announcements, or that they had experienced "information overload" from numerous emails and updates from different sources. It was suggested that it would have been more helpful if information had been more focused, conveying only the key points that were applicable to childminding (as distinct from early years provision as a whole)¹⁰³:

¹⁰³ It is worth noting that the Care Inspectorate has now developed a separate Childminders' update, following similar feedback.

“The council for us were quite good because again for the funded provider thing they did help to try and just break down all the guidance and what we should and shouldn't be doing, so that was nice to know that they were there just to ask.”

(Group 2, new childminders)

“[SCMA] did a lot of sort of video updates or training courses for Covid, and I (have) done pretty much them all, and I found them really useful...they offered quite a lot of support that I found quite useful”

(Group 2, new childminders)

“It was like information overload...we were getting information from the government, from SCMA, from Care Inspectorate, and sometimes it was all different, so you didn't know what was what, or what to follow.”

(Group 3, childminders considering leaving the profession)

Impact on family life

Participants described the ways in which the pandemic had prompted them to reflect on the impact that childminding had on their home and family life. The enforced break from work at the outset of the pandemic, the changing ways in which other family members had needed to use their home for home-schooling or working from home, and concerns about the health risks of Covid-19 were all factors that might lead to childminders reconsidering their career options:

“I just wanted to get my home back...my husband has been working from home since last March, my son, God love him, has done his full second year at university working from home. So, the three of us basically cannot work from home.”

(Group 4, former childminders)

“Everybody was terrified last March... you're thinking how am I ever going to reopen these doors to six different households to come into my home when I've got my own kids, my own husband? I really do think it really psychologically affected everybody”

(Group 4, former childminders)

7. Summary and potential improvements

This report has examined in detail the issues contributing to the decline in the childminding workforce in Scotland. The data gathered from both the evidence review and the qualitative research demonstrates that there are many factors contributing to this.

As discussed in Chapter 1, it is, of course important to consider the limitations of any study and how these may affect the findings. Participants for this study were self-selecting, and the way in which the sample was structured (in order to explore challenges in workforce recruitment and retention) may have meant it was skewed towards those with more negative views of their experiences as child minders. Moreover, qualitative research does not attempt to measure prevalence of views, but to capture diverse perspectives. While neither of these limitations negatively impacts the quality of the data gathered, it should be born in mind when reading both the summary of key findings and participants' suggested improvements that these may not necessarily be representative of the views of all childminders.

Why are people leaving or not joining the childminding workforce?

Both SCMA survey data and the interviews and focus groups with potential, current and former childminders conducted for this study highlight the perception that being a childminder in 2021 entailed an off-putting amount of **administration and paperwork**. While no one type of administration or document was singled out (in this study at least) as being something that they would like to see reduced or removed, those interviewed listed the many tasks they saw as required of them outwith their childminding hours. Cumulatively, this was seen as too much.

Those considering leaving childminding and those that have left saw this problem as tipping the balance away from the attractive parts of the role – its flexibility and the joy of caring for and supporting children and their families. Those considering becoming a childminder said the **registration process appeared complex** and contributed to them not applying to register. The requirement to keep on top of paperwork, including that required for registration and good inspection grades, changes such as delivering ELC funded hours, and the new risk assessments and measures required by the pandemic have all added to the work childminders need to do when they are not caring for children. **Inspections** were viewed by current and former childminders as stressful, and a general desire for clearer guidance and advice on how to do well in inspections was expressed.

The long hours involved also contributed to childminders feeling the job is underpaid. **Low pay** was something that potential childminders said put them off pursuing it as career move, while the lack of other benefits such as holiday, maternity and sick pay were also highlighted as problems. The **lack of training (or paid-for training) and a clear path for career progression** were also raised. Other factors impacting the job satisfaction of current childminders were **feeling isolated** and finding the job is putting strain on their own home and family life.

Many of these issues were described as having **worsened during the pandemic**, from the amount of paperwork and administration, to the level of isolation experienced and anxieties about the wellbeing of themselves and their own families.

Views on the impact of the expansion of funded ELC hours varied among current and former childminders. While some felt it had not impacted their services, as there was still plenty of demand for them delivering non-funded hours, others reported **losing business as families moved their children to funded places in nurseries**. Again, additional paperwork was mentioned as a key off-putting factor by those who decided not to partner with local authorities to deliver funded hours (echoing findings from SCMA's recent ELC audit, which found that 86% of those delivering funded hours said this had led a significant increase in paperwork¹⁰⁴). Childminders also expressed some worries around future policy changes around funded hours and how these might impact their business.

Finally, the **perception that the public and/or government do not understand childminding or appreciate the skill involved in the role** was seen as a significant issue contributing both to attitudes towards becoming a childminder, and to the morale of the current childminding workforce.

Suggestions made in this chapter

The areas for consideration and potential actions highlighted in the remainder of this chapter are based both on the evidence review, suggestions of those interviewed and our analysis of the data. It is worth noting at the outset that a number of the suggestions made by participants were very much in keeping with the ongoing work laid out in Scottish Government's '[Our Commitment to Childminding](#)' strategy which was last updated in January 2021.¹⁰⁵

Potential improvements to help retain the current workforce

The following sections summarise key issues for the workforce and raises questions and suggestions as to what could potentially be done to mitigate these. This includes both direct suggestions from those interviewed (discussed in chapters 4-6), and considerations drawing on the data from this, and earlier work.

Communications with current childminders

As discussed in earlier chapters, interviews and focus groups indicated a number of gaps between the support and information childminders we spoke to were aware of, and what is actually available. This gap between what is already available or in progress and childminders' perceptions of how well supported they feel may also be connected to time pressures on childminders – in a context in which childminders' median hours are higher than those of day-case of children staff, it may be seen as unsurprising they are not fully up to date with the latest support offers, or what steps are already being taken towards things like reducing bureaucracy. Interviews for this study indicate that many of the emails and newsletters sent to childminders may not

¹⁰⁴ [SCMA research undertaken in July-August 2021 – ELC Audit 2021.](#)

¹⁰⁵ [Our Commitment to Childminding, The Scottish Government, 2021.](#)

get read or retained, not least because when they are not caring for children, they are busy fitting in essential administration.

A key question, therefore, is how existing and ongoing work can be supported by more effective communications to time-pressed childminders. Potential considerations (for the Scottish Government and local authorities, working with childminder representative organisations and others) include:

- **Is there scope to improve or communication of key messages around existing support and progress being made?** In addition to addressing the ‘support-awareness gap’, noted above, this could also help demonstrate childminders are being listened to, which may contribute to improving overall job satisfaction. A ‘you said, we did’ campaign might be an option for reinforcing this.
- **Is there more scope to target communications, both on those most likely to leave the profession, and on those subjects childminders have identified as a factor in leaving?** This might include childminders whose children are getting older and highlighting training on business development and how to improve the income and viability of childminding businesses. The literature indicates that the point at which childminders’ own children no longer need regular childcare is a key decision point for the group of childminders who originally became childminders primarily to enable them to combine work with caring for their own children. If this group could be targeted, encouraged and supported to stay in childminding, their valuable skillset would not be lost. And for those childminders whose primary motivation is more closely linked to wanting a career in early years, is there a need to develop or enhance communications around career development in childminding (as well as considering pathways for this in general)?

Paperwork and bureaucracy

Potential actions (particularly for the Care Inspectorate, but also for local authorities with respect to ELC) include:

- **Continue to try and reduce paperwork and administrative burden** – As discussed above, there was a general desire to reduce the amount of paperwork and administrative burden on childminders. The SCMA has already consulted childminders on this matter and contributed to discussions on tackling bureaucracy at the Scottish Government’s Commitment to Childminding Monitor Group. They also included recommendations of where to sensibly cut administration in a recent consultation response.¹⁰⁶ The findings in this report provide further evidence for the need for all agencies involved (particularly the Care Inspectorate and local authorities) to continue to work to understand and, where possible, reduce the administrative burden on childminders.¹⁰⁷ The findings in this report, and in the SCMA’s ELC audit, also

¹⁰⁶ [See the SCMA website for further information on their ongoing work on childminders’ workloads \(SCMA news item from 2021\).](#)

¹⁰⁷ The Scottish Government’s Commitment to Childminding Monitor Group already includes representation from the Care Inspectorate, COSLA, and ADES Early Years, in addition to Scottish

indicate a particular need to look at administrative burden with respect to childminders applying for and delivering ELC funded hours.

- **Review what, if anything, can be done to enhance or better communicate guidance and support around inspections** – Participants suggested that those applying to become childminders might need more or clearer guidance and support to help them understand the inspection process. Those that were put off applying by the amount of bureaucracy involved may not have been fully aware of the amount of help available from childminder representative organisations in this regard (this point is covered further later in this section). Similarly, existing childminders said that they would also benefit from further guidance on what is needed as a minimum and what good practice looks like – something which again, is covered in current Care Inspectorate guidance. Both points indicate a potential need to consider how existing guidance can be enhanced (for example, are more examples of good practice and what is expected at each grade needed?) and, perhaps more importantly, effectively communicated to childminders.

Pay and benefits

Participants made several suggestions to improve rates of pay and benefits, which they felt were far lower than other jobs requiring the same levels of skills, expertise and commitment. Potential actions (for local authorities, the Scottish Government, and childminder representative organisations) included:

- **Ensure rates for funded ELC hours reflect the costs of delivery.**
- **Provide more training around running a small business** (this is provided by the SCMA, but participants' responses raise the issue of barriers to completing and using such training, and levels of awareness).
- **Consider whether it would be feasible to adjust ratios slightly, to allow childminders to provide childcare for more children** (and thus increase their income) – Participants brought this up in the specific context of having to count your own children in ratios when they are at school, but it may be worth considering whether there is any scope for some modest flexibility within ratios which could be particularly beneficial in remote and rural areas where childcare options are much more limited.
- **Consider whether any action is possible to support childminders in relation to maternity and sick pay.**
- **Consider the pros and cons of moving to a system where local authorities employ more childminders directly** – One view was that childminding would be more attractive to some if they were offered a salary and associated benefits (although there would clearly be a trade-off here with the flexibility that attracts others to the profession).

Government, SCMA, Unite Childminding Branch, Care and Learning Alliance and Early Years Scotland. As such, the core agencies and organisations concerned are already involved in ongoing discussions around tackling bureaucracy.

Training and support

Potential actions (for local authorities, the Scottish Government, and childminder representative organisations) include:

- **Further raise awareness of existing training and support for childminders** – Participants’ suggestions around the training and support they wanted – particularly around the business-side of childminding – again highlight a potential gap in awareness of what is already available. These topics are covered in several SCMA courses (including a specific course on ‘the business side of childminding’), while free training modules on learning and development were made available for all early years practitioners by the Scottish Government in 2020. The Care Inspectorate has also produced free bite sized modules to support those who wish to meet the National Standard. They also produced and continue to develop an online resource support childminders’ CPD – Your Childminding Journey.
- **Consider what financial support can be made available to enable childminders to access training** – Time and costs were significant barriers to childminders undertaking more training. Participants drew comparisons with those working in nurseries and the fact that they benefit from regular training which their employers fund and they are paid to attend.
- **Consider how best to support the development of more support and peer mentoring opportunities for childminders** – There was a clear appetite for peer support and mentoring among participants. Peer support often happens informally, but it was also suggested that a more formal approach could be beneficial in terms of professional development and for general support with the challenges childminders face. As with other areas, work has already been carried out looking at peer support – for example, the SCMA delivers a childminding-specific induction support programme for new childminders and has also been exploring the potential development of a mentoring network. The Scottish Government and others could consider how best to build on existing work, to ensure that both new and existing childminders are able to access to appropriate support and networks.
- **Consider how best to support career progression for those childminders who are looking this** – including looking at options to expand opportunities to become community childminders. A lack of opportunities for career development was flagged by some participants as a negative aspect of childminding. Fostering a closer relationship between childminders and local authorities might be one route to enable more career development options.

Attracting new childminders – selling points and challenges

Retaining and supporting the current childminding workforce is clearly essential if childminding is to continue to play a key role in ELC in Scotland. However, the evidence reviewed as part of this study indicates that this is unlikely to be sufficient to address the scale of the challenge – new childminders will also need to be recruited if the current decline in numbers is to be reversed.

The interviews and focus groups conducted for this study highlighted both key factors likely to attract new childminders to the profession, as well as the general challenges that may need to be addressed to encourage a larger number of applicants, and the specific barriers that may need to be overcome to attract more diverse applicants. Key factors that draw people into the childminding workforce are: being able to stay at home and work while caring for your own children or grandchildren; a desire to work with children in the early years sector; and the flexibility of the hours. Whether someone already knows a childminder may also be an influential factor, as they often provide support and information.

Whether a person is considering childminding for the flexibility and convenience when they are already caring for young children, or whether they are motivated by a desire to work in early years, this report suggests there are things which could make childminding more appealing to both audiences. Addressing potential barriers could also help attract a more diverse workforce.

Key areas for action to attract a more diverse early years workforce (which reflect many of the issues and suggestions identified in chapter 4-6 of this report) are summarised in a 2019 report from Skills Development Scotland (SDS) on diversity in the ELC workforce in Scotland generally:¹⁰⁸

- **Training and workplace culture, and a lack of role models:** the homogeneity of the ELC workforce can be intimidating for others to join.
- **Attitudes and perceptions:** as discussed in Chapter 4 of this report, the wider public has particular perceptions about what an ELC professional looks like, which were viewed as a potential factor deterring prospective childminders, including groups that the Scottish Government might wish to attract to the profession (e.g. men, younger people, and people from some ethnic backgrounds).
- **Terms and conditions:** training costs (especially for career changers) are a barrier, as are pay and working hours.
- **Opportunities for progression:** SDS suggest that more needs to be done to highlight career opportunities in the early years, and to ensure that careers advisors have up to date information about careers in childminding. SCMA have also highlighted the need for a childminding-specific approach to highlighting career paths, rather than a generic early years route. They are currently exploring partnering with local authorities in remote and rural areas to deliver demographically targeted recruitment campaigns to attract new entrants to childminding.
- **Influencers:** those who influence potential entrants need to be able to provide helpful information and advice. As noted in Chapter 3, prospective childminders often draw on informal advice from childminders known to them,

¹⁰⁸ [Skills Development Scotland. \(2019\). Achieving Diversity in the Scottish Early Learning and Childcare Workforce.](#)

so ensuring that existing childminders know where to direct prospective new entrants for the best information and support may be important.

- **Recruitment:** perceived barriers to entering the ELC sector (including low pay/status and limited opportunities for career progression) make the early years sector less attractive and recruitment more difficult. To ensure a diverse workforce is being recruited, employers and training providers need to address unconscious bias that is likely to influence their recruitment decisions. Open recruitment policies are recommended to attract people from different backgrounds (including marginalised and excluded groups).
- **Language:** Access to ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) support may be a barrier to some people (in relation to childminding – this could be relevant to support to help people navigate registration, ongoing administrative tasks, and the inspection process).

Potential actions to help attract new childminders

Promotion

As discussed above, the evidence reviewed as part of this study and the qualitative research demonstrate that perceptions need to be shifted and new audiences reached if the current decline in numbers of childminders in Scotland is to be reversed. **These findings provide support for a substantial programme of promotion of childminding as a profession.** Such promotion could target both the easier to reach audiences (those that are typically more likely to become childminders), as well as reaching out to groups that may be less likely to have considered childminding as a career option.

The research also highlights a range of issues that will need to be considered in order for any promotional campaign to be effective:

- **How best to balance the desire to attract diverse candidates to childminding, with evidence on who may be most likely to become a childminder, when developing promotional campaigns.** Ensuring that people from a wide range of backgrounds are visible in promotional materials and available to speak about their experiences at recruitment events may help address the former. Specific communications to target those whose first language is not English (as mentioned above) may also help engage new audiences. This could involve promoting any ESOL support that is available. Promotion or awareness raising of childminding in schools may not lead to people considering it as an immediate career option but could help improve the profile of the profession and encourage a wider range of people (including both men and women) to consider it in future. However, there is also a need to recognise that the existing evidence shows most childminders enter the workforce in their 30s, and that this decision is linked to combining childcare for their own family with earning and income doing something rewarding. Recruitment campaigns clearly need to recognise the importance of this group to the profession.

- **Find ways to do more to challenge public perceptions of childminders as low skilled.** The Scottish Government has already committed to raising awareness of childminding so that parents and carers can make an informed choices around childcare,¹⁰⁹ while the SCMA’s 2021-2024 strategy ‘Changing the Narrative’ sets out its plans to help increase the value attached to childminding. Learnings from this and previous research for the Scottish Government into perceptions of the impact of childminding could help shape messages for the general public. For example, the ‘Perceptions of the impacts of childminding’ study details the key selling points of childminding for parents and for the wider public in order to shift attitudes away from the idea that childminders are simply “babysitters”.^{110 111} That study also highlighted some of the unique benefits to a career in childminding, such as the satisfaction of working with the same children for many years and becoming almost ‘part of the family’, in some cases over a decade after the child has left their care. Again, these benefits may help shape messaging both to potential childminders, parents, and the wider public.¹¹²
- **Given the importance of informal advice from current childminders, campaigns that utilise word of mouth and social media,** or incentivise current childminders to encourage others to apply may be particularly useful. At the time of writing, the SCMA was leading the development of a recruitment campaign to include a ‘Day in the Life’ video, animation, and other multi-media communications, to be delivered over social media channels.
- **Ensure that promotional materials address potential barriers to becoming a childminder.** Based on evidence from this and other research, this may include addressing the financial risks felt by prospective applicants, for example, by highlighting available support around making a childminding business successful, and providing information on demand for childcare, as well as highlighting wider support on offer (including around paperwork and administration).

Registration and set up

In addition to providing support for investing in promotion of childminding, the research also indicates that it may be worth considering again whether the registration process and support available around set-up can be enhanced to

¹⁰⁹ [See ‘Our Commitment to Childminding, Promoting childminding as a choice.’](#)

¹¹⁰ [Glencross, K., Millar, C., Murray, L. and Simpson, E. 2021. Perceptions of the impact of childminding services on child, parent and family outcomes in Scotland.](#)

¹¹¹ From the point of view of parents, the main selling points were the flexible hours, the one-to-one attention and the nurturing, home-from-home setting. A lack of knowledge about the training, qualifications and experience of many childminders, and the regulations they must adhere to, were thought to be at the root of the public’s misconceptions about childminding.

¹¹² It should be noted that there was often the view that the core part of the role was satisfying (the actual work caring for children), but that the same difficulties that participants raised in this study were also mentioned (e.g. the extra work and stress caused by the pandemic, extra paperwork for ELC funded hours).

encourage more people to become childminders. Potential actions (particularly for the Care Inspectorate) include:

- **Considering whether the registration process can be further simplified** – Although the Care Inspectorate has already taken steps to simplify the registration process and develop bespoke guidance for childminders, both potential childminders and those that were fairly new to the profession made various suggestions about changes they would like to see, including:
 - **Ensuring all documents for registration are as specifically tailored to childminding as possible.** There is already bespoke guidance and a bespoke application form for childminders, but the fact that this comment was still raised by participants may indicate a need to review either these or other supporting documents to see if any further tailoring is possible.
 - **Providing more information upfront** about what a prospective childminder needs to have in place for their service before the first inspection (e.g. checklists).
 - **Providing more information on how the registration process and qualifications compare for people who were previously a childminder in another country.**

There was a particular suggestion that simplifying the process could be helpful in attracting those who want to care for a smaller number of children.

- **Further highlight support available around registration** – Participants who did not come from a childcare background, in particular, suggested that they would have benefited from additional support with registering. As discussed, the SCMA already offer much of the support that was suggested – including a confidential helpline potential applicants can contact. However, the desire for further support expressed by participants perhaps suggests a need to consider whether awareness of this support can be increased.

Suggestions for further research

Areas for future research could include gathering data on what start-up grants for childminders are available across Scotland to identify gaps that may need to be addressed in order to encourage more people to set up childminding businesses (financial support currently differs by local authority area).

Appendix 1 - Recruitment emails

Prospective childminders

Dear _____,

Help us understand trends in the childminding workforce

Ipsos MORI are carrying out research on trends in the childminding workforce, including understanding why childminders stop childminding, and the **barriers to new childminders entering the profession**. The project aims to better understand the reasons behind a decline in numbers in the profession in order to better recruit, support and retain childminders.

The project is being undertaken by Ipsos MORI for the Scottish Government, the Scottish Childminding Association and The Care Inspectorate.

How can you help?

Ipsos MORI would really like to talk to:

- **People that considered becoming a childminder in that last two years (but then decided not to)**

If this describes you, and you would like to find out more, please get in touch with Ipsos MORI at the email below.

What's involved?

Eligible participants will be invited to take part in a one-to-one phone interview with a researcher, or an online focus group with other childminders (on Zoom). These will take place from 28th June to mid-August 2021.

During the group discussion or interview, the researchers will ask about your experiences and views on things like why you thought about becoming a childminder, what shaped your decision not to, and what might encourage more people to become childminders.

Phone interviews will last about 45mins to 1 hour and the focus groups 1.5 hours (interviews can be in the daytime or evening and focus groups will be in the evening). **You will receive £30 as a thank you for your time.**

If you would like to take part, please contact [email address].

The research team want to ensure they speak to a mix of people across Scotland. [Researcher name] will therefore be in touch to check a few details and let you know if you meet the criteria to take part.

What happens next?

Ipsos MORI will use information from the interviews and groups to write a report for the Scottish Government that will be published **but will not include anything that could identify you**. Everything you say will be confidential and your data will be stored securely. With your permission, the discussions will be audio recorded. Only the research team will have access to the recording and all data will be securely destroyed after completion of the research. **Taking part in the research is completely voluntary**. If you agree to take part, you are free to change your mind at any time without giving us a reason. We have a [privacy policy](#) for the project.

Get in touch

If you have any questions or would like to take part, please contact [Researcher name at email address] **by 12th July 2021**.

New childminders

Dear _____,

Help us understand trends in the childminding workforce

Ipsos MORI are carrying out research on trends in the childminding workforce, including understanding why childminders stop childminding, and the barriers to new childminders entering the profession. The project aims to better understand the reasons behind a decline in numbers in the profession in order to better recruit, support and retain childminders.

The project is being undertaken by Ipsos MORI for the Scottish Government, the Scottish Childminding Association and The Care Inspectorate.

How can you help?

Ipsos MORI would really like to talk to:

- **People that started working as a childminder in the last three years or so**

If this describes you, and you would like to find out more, please get in touch with Ipsos MORI at the email below.

What's involved?

Eligible participants will be invited to take part in a one-to-one phone interview with a researcher, or an online focus group with other childminders (on Zoom). These will take place from 28th June to mid-August 2021.

During the group discussion or interview, the researchers will ask about your experiences and views on things like why you decided to become a childminder, what shaped your decision, what it's like being a childminder, and what might encourage more people to become childminders.

Phone interviews will last about 45mins to 1 hour and the focus groups 1.5 hours (interviews can be in the daytime or evening and focus groups will be in the evening). **You will receive £30 as a thank you for your time.**

If you would like to take part, please contact [email address].

The research team want to ensure they speak to a mix of people across Scotland. [Researcher name] will therefore be in touch to check a few details and let you know if you meet the criteria to take part.

What happens next?

Ipsos MORI will use information from the interviews and groups to write a report for the Scottish Government that will be published **but will not include anything that could identify you**. Everything you say will be confidential and your data will be stored securely. With your permission, the discussions will be audio recorded. Only the research team will have access to the recording and all data will be securely destroyed after completion of the research. **Taking part in the research is completely voluntary**. If you agree to take part, you are free to change your mind at any time without giving us a reason. We have a [privacy policy](#) for the project.

Get in touch

If you have any questions or would like to take part, please contact [Researcher name at email address] **by 12th July 2021**.

Childminders who are considering leaving the profession

Dear _____,

Help us understand trends in the childminding workforce

Ipsos MORI are carrying out research on trends in the childminding workforce, including understanding why childminders stop childminding, and the barriers to new childminders entering the profession. The project aims to better understand the reasons behind a decline in numbers in the profession in order to better recruit, support and retain childminders.

The project is being undertaken by Ipsos MORI for the Scottish Government, the Scottish Childminding Association and The Care Inspectorate

How can you help?

Ipsos MORI would really like to talk to:

- **Childminders that are considering stopping childminding in the next three years or so.**
- **Ideally, we are hoping to reach childminders at all career stages who may be thinking about stopping (not including people who are considering stopping simply because they are reaching retirement age. However, if you are thinking about retiring EARLIER than you expected to, then the research team would like to talk to you).**

If this describes you, and you would like to find out more, please get in touch with Ipsos MORI at the email below. Also, if you know another childminder considering leaving, please do spread the word and forward this information.

What's involved?

Eligible participants will be invited to take part in a one-to-one phone interview with a researcher, or an online focus group with other childminders (on Zoom). These will take place from 28th June to mid-August 2021.

During the group discussion or interview, the researchers will ask about your experiences and views on things like why you became a childminder, what it's like being a childminder, and what factors have made you think you may want to stop childminding.

Phone interviews will last about 45mins to 1 hour and the focus groups 1.5 hours (interviews can be in the daytime or evening and focus groups will be in the evening). **You will receive £30 as a thank you for your time.**

If you would like to take part, please contact [email address].

The research team want to ensure they speak to a mix of people across Scotland. [Researcher name] will therefore be in touch to check a few details and let you know if you meet the criteria to take part.

What happens next?

Ipsos MORI will use information from the interviews and groups to write a report for the Scottish Government that will be published **but will not include anything that could identify you**. Everything you say will be confidential and your data will be stored securely. With your permission, the discussions will be audio recorded. Only the research team will have access to the recording and all data will be securely destroyed after completion of the research. **Taking part in the research is completely voluntary**. If you agree to take part, you are free to change your mind at any time without giving us a reason. We have a [privacy policy](#) for the project.

Get in touch

If you have any questions or would like to take part, please contact [Researcher name at email address] **by 12th July 2021**.

Former childminders

Dear _____,

Help us understand trends in the childminding workforce

Ipsos MORI are carrying out research on trends in the childminding workforce, including understanding why childminders stop childminding, and the barriers to new childminders entering the profession. The project aims to better understand the reasons behind a decline in numbers in the profession in order to better recruit, support and retain childminders.

The project is being undertaken by Ipsos MORI for the Scottish Government, the Scottish Childminding Association and The Care Inspectorate.

How can you help?

Ipsos MORI would really like to talk to:

- **Former childminders that left the profession in the last 3 years or so**

If this describes you, and you would like to find out more, please get in touch with Ipsos MORI at the email address below. Also, if you know someone else that stopped childminding in the past 3 years or so, please do spread the word and forward this information.

What's involved?

Eligible participants will be invited to take part in a one-to-one phone interview with a researcher, or an online focus group with other former childminders (on Zoom). These will take place from 28th June to mid-August 2021.

During the group discussion or interview, the researchers will ask about your experiences and views on things like why you decided to become a childminder, what shaped your decision to stop childminding, and what might encourage people to join or stay in the profession.

Phone interviews will last about 45mins to 1 hour and the focus groups 1.5 hours (interviews can be in the daytime or evening and focus groups will be in the evening). **You will receive £30 as a thank you for your time.**

If you would like to take part, please contact [email address].

The research team want to ensure they speak to a mix of people across Scotland. [Researcher name] will therefore be in touch to check a few details and let you know if you meet the criteria to take part.

What happens next?

Ipsos MORI use information from the interviews and groups to write a report for the Scottish Government that will be published **but will not include anything that could identify you.** Everything you say will be confidential and your data will be stored securely. With your permission, the discussions will be audio recorded. Only the research team will have access to the recording and all data will be securely destroyed after completion of the research.

Taking part in the research is completely voluntary. If you agree to take part, you are free to change your mind at any time without giving us a reason. We have a [privacy policy](#) for the project.

Get in touch

If you have any questions or would like to take part, please contact [Researcher name at email address] **by 12th July 2021.**

Appendix 2 - Participant information sheets

Prospective childminders

Childminding Workforce Research Participant Information Sheet

Thank you so much for agreeing to take part in our research on trends in the childminding workforce on behalf of the Scottish Government, Scottish Childminding Association and the Care Inspectorate.

Why do you want to speak to me?

The childminding workforce has declined in recent years. This research will look at the reasons why childminders stop childminding and **the barriers to new childminders entering the profession** to understand how to better recruit, support and retain childminders. To do this we are speaking to:

- **People who have considered registering as a childminder in the last two years but decided not to;**
- Childminders who have joined the workforce in the last three years;
- Childminders who are thinking about leaving the workforce in the next three years;
- People who have recently left the childminding workforce

What will the discussion cover?

During the discussion the researcher will ask you about your experiences and views on:

- Why you thought about becoming a childminder;
- What shaped your decision not to become a childminder;
- What might encourage more people to become childminders

There are no right or wrong answers, we are just interested in hearing your views and experiences. You do not need to prepare for the the interview or focus group.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation is entirely voluntary and if there is anything we ask about that you would prefer to not discuss, that is totally fine. The researcher can also pause the discussion if you would like to take a break, or stop if you would like to withdraw from the research. You are free to change your mind about participating at any time without giving us a reason.

How do I take part?

You will receive your appointment details from Ipsos MORI. One to one phone interviews will last around **45 mins to 1 hour**. Online focus groups will last **2 hours**. **You will receive £30 as a thank you for your time.**

If you have agreed to take part in a online focus group with three other participants you will be sent a link to join the video call using Zoom. You don't need to have a Zoom account. You will need a WiFi connection and a laptop or a PC or a tablet, ideally with a webcam (though if necessary, they can take part without using video). If you have any difficulties getting into the video call, or using Zoom, there will be another researcher on hand to help you.

How will my answers be used?

Ipsos MORI will use information from the interviews and groups to write a report for the Scottish Government that will be published **but will not include anything that could identify you**. Everything you say will be confidential and your data will be stored securely. With your permission, the discussions will be audio recorded. Only the research team will have access to the recording and all data will be securely destroyed after completion of the research. The findings in the report will be used by the Scottish Government to inform how they tackle the decline in the number of childminders.

Ipsos MORI is bound by the Data Protection Act and strictly adheres to the Market Research Society Code of Conduct. If you would like more information on how your data will be stored by Ipsos MORI, you can see our [privacy notice here](#).

Any questions?

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at: [email address].

Thank you for your help with this important research.

Best wishes

[Researcher name]

Graduate Research Executive, Ipsos MORI Scotland

New childminders

Childminding Workforce Research Participant Information Sheet

Thank you so much for agreeing to take part in our research on trends in the childminding workforce on behalf of the Scottish Government, Scottish Childminding Association and the Care Inspectorate.

Why do you want to speak to me?

The childminding workforce has declined in recent years. This research will look at the reasons why childminders stop childminding and the barriers to new childminders entering the profession to understand how to better recruit, support and retain childminders. To do this we are speaking to:

- People who have considered registering as a childminder in the last two years but decided not to;
- **Childminders who have joined the workforce in the last three years;**
- Childminders who are thinking about leaving the workforce in the next three years;
- People who have recently left the childminding workforce

What will the discussion cover?

During the discussion the researcher will ask you about your experiences and views on:

- Why you decided to become a childminder;
- What it's like being a childminder;
- What might encourage more people to become childminders

There are no right or wrong answers, we are just interested in hearing your views and experiences. You do not need to prepare for the the interview or focus group.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part is entirely voluntary. The discussion may touch on topics which are sensitive for some people (e.g. the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic). However, if there is anything we ask about that you would prefer to not discuss, that is totally fine and we will move on to the next topic. The researcher can also pause the discussion if you would like to take a break, or stop if you would like to withdraw from the research. You are free to change your mind about participating at any time without giving us a reason.

How do I take part?

You will receive your appointment details from Ipsos MORI. One to one phone interviews will last around **45 mins to 1 hour**. Online focus groups will last **2 hours**. **You will receive £30 as a thank you for your time.**

If you have agreed to take part in a online focus group with three other participants you will be sent a link to join the video call using Zoom. You don't need to have a Zoom account. You will need a WiFi connection and a laptop or a PC or a tablet, ideally with a webcam (though if necessary, they can take part without using video). If you have any difficulties getting into the video call, or using Zoom, there will be another researcher on hand to help you.

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Any questions?

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at: [email address].

Thank you for your help with this important research.

Best wishes

[Researcher name]

Graduate Research Executive, Ipsos MORI Scotland

Childminders who are considering leaving the profession

Childminding Workforce Research Participant Information Sheet

Thank you so much for agreeing to take part in our research on trends in the childminding workforce on behalf of the Scottish Government, Scottish Childminding Association and the Care Inspectorate.

Why do you want to speak to me?

The childminding workforce has declined in recent years. This research will look at **the reasons why childminders stop childminding** and the barriers to new childminders entering the profession to understand how to better recruit, support and retain childminders. To do this we are speaking to:

- People who have considered registering as a childminder in the last two years but decided not to;
- Childminders who have joined the workforce in the last three years;
- **Childminders who are thinking about leaving the workforce in the next three years;**
- People who have recently left the childminding workforce

What will the discussion cover?

During the discussion the researcher will ask you about your experiences and views on:

- Why you decided to become a childminder;
- What it's like being a childminder;
- What factors have made you think you may want to stop childminding;
- What might encourage more people to become childminders

There are no right or wrong answers, we are just interested in hearing your views and experiences. You do not need to prepare for the the interview or focus group.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part is entirely voluntary. The discussion may touch on topics which are sensitive for some people (e.g. the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic). However, if there is anything we ask about that you would prefer to not discuss, that is totally fine and we will move on to the next topic. The researcher can also pause the discussion if you would like to take a break, or stop if you would like to withdraw from the research. You are free to change your mind about participating at any time without giving us a reason.

How do I take part?

You will receive your appointment details from Ipsos MORI. One to one phone interviews will last around **45 mins to 1 hour**. Online focus groups will last **2 hours**. **You will receive £30 as a thank you for your time.**

If you have agreed to take part in a online focus group with three other participants you will be sent a link to join the video call using Zoom. You don't need to have a Zoom account. You will need a WiFi connection and a laptop or a PC or a tablet, ideally with a webcam (though if necessary, they can take part without using video). If you have any difficulties getting into the video call, or using Zoom, there will be another researcher on hand to help you.

How will my answers be used?

Ipsos MORI will use information from the interviews and groups to write a report for the Scottish Government that will be published **but will not include anything that could identify you**. Everything you say will be confidential and your data will be stored securely. With your permission, the discussions will be audio recorded. Only the research team will have access to the recording and all data will be securely destroyed after completion of the research. The findings in the report will be used by the Scottish Government to inform how they tackle the decline in the number of childminders.

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Any questions?

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at: [email address].

Thank you for your help with this important research.

Best wishes

[Researcher name]

Graduate Research Executive, Ipsos MORI Scotland

Former childminders

Childminding Workforce Research Participant Information Sheet

Thank you so much for agreeing to take part in our research on trends in the childminding workforce on behalf of the Scottish Government, Scottish Childminding Association and the Care Inspectorate.

Why do you want to speak to me?

The childminding workforce has declined in recent years. This research will look at **the reasons why childminders stop childminding** and the barriers to new childminders entering the profession to understand how to better recruit, support and retain childminders. To do this we are speaking to:

- People who have considered registering as a childminder in the last two years but decided not to;
- Childminders who have joined the workforce in the last three years;
- Childminders who are thinking about leaving the workforce in the next three years;
- **People who have recently left the childminding workforce**

What will the discussion cover?

During the discussion the researcher will ask you about your experiences and views on:

- What shaped your decision to stop childminding
- What might encourage more people to become childminders

There are no right or wrong answers, we are just interested in hearing your views and experiences. You do not need to prepare for the the interview or focus group.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part is entirely voluntary. The discussion may touch on topics which are sensitive for some people (e.g. the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic). However, if there is anything we ask about that you would prefer to not discuss, that is totally fine and we will move on to the next topic. The researcher can also pause the discussion if you would like to take a break, or stop if you would like to withdraw from the research. You are free to change your mind about participating at any time without giving us a reason.

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You will receive your appointment details from Ipsos MORI. One to one phone interviews will last around **45 mins to 1 hour**. Online focus groups will last **2 hours**. **You will receive £30 as a thank you for your time.**

If you have agreed to take part in a online focus group with three other participants you will be sent a link to join the video call using Zoom. You don't need to have a Zoom account. You will need a WiFi connection and a laptop or a PC or a tablet, ideally with a webcam (though if necessary, they can take part without using video). If you have any difficulties

getting into the video call, or using Zoom, there will be another researcher on hand to help you.

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Any questions?

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at: [email address].

Thank you for your help with this important research.

Best wishes

[Researcher name]

Graduate Research Executive, Ipsos MORI Scotland

Appendix 3 – Depth discussion guides

Group 1 – prospective childminders

Note for reviewers:

This topic guide is designed to serve as an aide memoir to the researchers, while also remaining flexible to allow for issues to be raised spontaneously.

Obvious probing and follow-up questions like ‘why?’, ‘why not?’, etc. are not included but there is no need to suggest adding these - there will be plenty of these and the researchers will automatically probe, ask for explanation/clarification, and sum up at appropriate points.

Although the guide is generally written in the form of questions or explanations that could be read out exactly as written, in reality, the researcher will amend the wording, rephrase and reorder as appropriate and to make it feel more like a natural discussion rather than a questionnaire.

Introduction

- Introduce self and Ipsos MORI
- Remind them of the purpose of the research: looking at the reasons for the decline in the childminding workforce and how to address it. The workforce has declined 22% between 2014 and 2019 and initial assessments point to more childminders leaving than new practitioners coming into the sector.
- Explain that the interview will last around 1 hour and we will give participant £30 as a thank you for taking part.
- Provide reassurances of anonymity and confidentiality. Explain that no identifying information about individuals will be used in the reporting of the research.
- Explain that participation in the research is entirely voluntary, they don't have to answer any questions they are uncomfortable with and can stop at any point without having to give a reason.
- Check if they have any questions about the purpose of the research or how what they say will be used.
- Request permission to record interview [ask permission then ask them to confirm that once the recording has started]

Background

I understand that you considered becoming a childminder at one point but haven't become one.

When did you first start thinking about it?

What prompted you to think about it?

Can you tell me a bit about your career background and qualifications? Have you worked in childcare before?

What are you doing now instead of childminding?

Exploring Childminding

I'd like to discuss your consideration of childminding in a bit more detail.

What initially appealed to you about childminding?

PROMPT IF NOT MENTIONED:

Did you consider any other kinds of childcare careers (e.g. nursery)?

How did you find out about childminding as a career opportunity?

Where did you go to find out information about what it would be like to be a childminder?

Did you look into what steps you needed to take to become a registered childminder? Where did you go for information?

Who, if anyone, did you speak to about it?

Why they didn't become a childminder

I'd now like to focus on why you decided not to become a childminder.

What are the main reasons you haven't decided to become a childminder? What concerns did you have?

Did your initial thoughts about becoming a childminder change after you looked into it? How?

Did the cost of establishing your own childminding business influence your decision?

Did the Scottish Government's ELC expansion and funded hours have an impact on your thinking in any way?

PROMPT IF NOT MENTIONED:

Did you think about the qualifications and training needed to deliver funded hours? And if so, how did that affect your decision?

Did the COVID-19 pandemic have any impact on your thinking?

What might have made a difference to your decision?

Would additional support in establishing a childminding business, such as through business advice and/or a mentoring/support network have made a difference?

Future

Compared with other childcare providers, how do you think childminding is viewed by others?

PROBE ON:

- by government and policy makers?
- by the general public?

Do you think you might consider becoming a childminder again in the future?

IF NOT: why not? What would need to change?

IF YES: what factors would influence your decision?

Do you have any thoughts on what could encourage people to become childminders?

What do you think might encourage people from a wider range of backgrounds to consider childminding? (e.g. more men, more ethnic minorities and more people in deprived areas)

Wrap up

We're just coming to the end of the discussion now, but before we do, is there anything else you would like to say about your experiences or encouraging people to become childminders?

That's everything I wanted to ask you today, thank you very much for taking the time to speak to me.

Group 2 - New childminders

Note for reviewers:

This topic guide is designed to serve as an aide memoir to the researchers, while also remaining flexible to allow for issues to be raised spontaneously.

Obvious probing and follow-up questions like 'why?', 'why not?', etc. are not included but there is no need to suggest adding these - there will be plenty of these and the researchers will automatically probe, ask for explanation/clarification, and sum up at appropriate points.

Although the guide is generally written in the form of questions or explanations that could be read out exactly as written, in reality, the researcher will amend the wording, rephrase and reorder as appropriate and to make it feel more like a natural discussion rather than a questionnaire.

Introduction

- Introduce self and Ipsos MORI
- Remind them of the purpose of the research: looking at the reasons for the decline in the childminding workforce and how to address it. The workforce has declined 22% between 2014 and 2019 and initial assessments point to more childminders leaving than new practitioners coming into the sector.
- Explain that the interview will last around 1 hour and we will give participant £30 as a thank you for taking part.
- Provide reassurances of anonymity and confidentiality. Explain that no identifying information about individuals will be used in the reporting of the research.
- Explain that participation in the research is entirely voluntary, they don't have to answer any questions they are uncomfortable with and can stop at any point without having to give a reason.
- Check if they have any questions about the purpose of the research or how what they say will be used
- Request permission to record interview [ask permission then ask them to confirm that once the recording has started]

Background

I understand that you've become a childminder within the last few years. When did you start childminding?

Had you worked in childcare before?

How many children are you currently providing childcare for?

What is the age range of the children?

Do you have any assistants working with you?

Journey into childminding

I'd like to discuss your how you became a childminder in a bit more detail.

When did you first start looking into childminding? How did you find out about it?

What was it that particularly appealed to you about being a childminder?

Did you have any concerns? What were they?

Where did you go for information about what it would be like to be a childminder?

Did you speak to anyone about it?

Where did you got for information about how to become a childminder?

What would have made the process of becoming a childminder easier?

Experiences so far

How have you found the experience of being a childminder so far?

What hours would you say you work on a typical day/week (if it varies) Is this similar to what you anticipated?

And have you found that the factors that initially appealed to you turned out to be the case?

Has anything been better or easier than you expected?

Are there any negative sides to it? Anything that you didn't expect?

Are you happy with your decision to become a childminder or do you have any regrets?

How could the day to day experience of being a childminder be improved?

Would you have found any additional support (such as business advice and/or access to a mentoring/support network) within your first few years/since you started helpful? If so, what?

Do you have any thoughts, at this point, on how long you are likely to stay in childminding?

PROMPT IF NOT MENTIONED:

Is there anything that would make you more likely to leave childminding? (e.g. changes to the profession or your circumstances)

Do you think bureaucracy/paperwork is an issue affecting childminders? How could that be improved?

PROMPT: what proportion of your time is spent on paperwork? How do you feel about that?

Views on ELC Expansion

I'm now going to ask about the Scottish Government's ELC expansion and funded hours.

How has funded hours impacted your service, if at all?

Are you delivering any ELC funded hours?

IF YES: How have you found that?

PROMPT IF NOT MENTIONED: How have you found completing the qualifications and training needed to deliver funded hours?

IF YES AND STARTED THEM: How have you found the process of undertaking the qualifications and training needed to meet the National Standard requirements for delivering the funded ELC hours?

IF NOT: Have you considered delivering funded hours?

What are the reasons you do not deliver funded hours?

PROMPT IF NOT MENTIONED: Did the qualifications and training needed to deliver funded hours affect your thinking?

Have you been able to access any professional support you might have needed?

Views on the impact of Covid-19

I'm going to move on to ask about the Covid-19 pandemic. Do let me know if there's anything you would prefer not to talk about and we can move on.

Has the pandemic affected your service, and how you support children and families? In what ways?

Have you been able to access any professional support you might have needed?

Encouraging childminding

I'd now like to ask you about encouraging more people to consider childminding.

Compared with other childcare providers, how do you think childminding is viewed by others?

PROBE ON:

- by government and policy makers?
- by the general public?

What would you say to people who are considering becoming a childminder? What are the positive aspects, what are the negative aspects?

Do you have any thoughts on what could encourage people to stay in childminding for longer?

What would encourage people to enter the profession?

What do you think might encourage people from a wider range of backgrounds to consider childminding? (e.g. more men, more ethnic minorities and more people in deprived areas)

Wrap up

We're just coming to the end of the discussion now, but before we do, is there anything else you would like to say about your experiences of childminding or the decline in the childminding workforce and how to address it.

That's everything I wanted to ask you today, thank you very much for taking the time to speak to me.

Group 3 – Childminders considering leaving the profession

Note for reviewers:

This topic guide is designed to serve as an aide memoir to the researchers, while also remaining flexible to allow for issues to be raised spontaneously.

Obvious probing and follow-up questions like ‘why?’, ‘why not?’, etc. are not included but there is no need to suggest adding these - there will be plenty of these and the researchers will automatically probe, ask for explanation/clarification, and sum up at appropriate points.

Although the guide is generally written in the form of questions or explanations that could be read out exactly as written, in reality, the researcher will amend the wording, rephrase and reorder as appropriate and to make it feel more like a natural discussion rather than a questionnaire.

Introduction

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- Explain that the interview will last around 1 hour and we will give participant £30 as a thank you for taking part.
- Provide reassurances of anonymity and confidentiality. Explain that no identifying information about individuals will be used in the reporting of the research.
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- Explain that participation in the research is entirely voluntary, they don't have to answer any questions they are uncomfortable with and can stop at any point without having to give a reason.
- Request permission to record interview [ask permission then ask them to confirm that once the recording has started]

Background

How long have you been a childminder?

How did you get into childminding?

What appealed to you about it?

And did you find that [the factors that appealed] turned out to be the case?

What are the negative sides to it? Anything that you didn't expect?

Had you worked in childcare before becoming a childminder?

How many children are you currently providing childcare for?

What is the age range of the children?

What hours would you say you work on a typical day/week (if it varies)

Do you have any assistants working with you?

Why they are considering leaving

I understand that you are considering leaving childminding in the next three years, is that correct?

How long have you been thinking about leaving childminding?

Was there anything in particular that prompted you to think about leaving?

What are the main reasons for you wanting to leave childminding?

We discussed your working hours earlier. Has that had an impact on you considering leaving childminding?

Is there something you are thinking about doing instead of childminding?

Is there anything that would change your mind about leaving childminding?

Vies on ELC expansion

I'm now going to ask about the Scottish Government's ELC expansion and funded hours.

How have funded hours impacted your service, if at all?

Are you delivering any ELC funded hours?

IF YES: How have you found that?

Has the experience of delivering funded hours affected your thinking about leaving childminding?

IF NOT: Have you ever considered registering for funded hours?

What are the reasons you are not delivering funded hours?

Have you been able to access any professional support you might have needed to deliver funded ELC hours?

Has the ELC expansion and funded hours affected your thinking about leaving childminding at all?

PROMPT IF NOT MENTIONED:

Has the qualifications and training needed to deliver funded hours affected your thinking about leaving?

Views on the impact of Covid-19

I'm going to move on to ask about the Covid-19 pandemic. Do let me know if there's anything you would prefer not to talk about and we can move on.

Did the pandemic affect your service, and how you support children and families? In what ways?

Did the pandemic affect your thinking about leaving childminding? In what ways?

Views on everyday experiences

How do you think the day to day experience of being a childminder has changed in recent years?

How could the day to day experience of being a childminder be improved?

PROMPT IF NOT MENTIONED:

Do you think bureaucracy/paperwork is an issue affecting childminders? How could that be improved?

PROMPT: what proportion of your time is spent on paperwork? How do you feel about that?

Compared with other childcare providers, how do you think childminding is viewed by others?

PROBE ON:

- by government and policy makers?
- by the general public?

Do you have any thoughts on what could encourage people to stay in childminding for longer? To become a childminder?

PROMPT IF NOT MENTIONED:

What do you think could encourage people from a wide range of backgrounds to consider childminding?

Wrap up

We're just coming to the end of the discussion now, but before we do, is there anything else you would like to say about your experiences of childminding or the decline in the childminding workforce and how to address it.

That's everything I wanted to ask you today, thank you very much for taking the time to speak to me.

Group 4 - Former childminders

Note for reviewers:

This topic guide is designed to serve as an aide memoir to the researchers, while also remaining flexible to allow for issues to be raised spontaneously.

Obvious probing and follow-up questions like 'why?', 'why not?', etc. are not included but there is no need to suggest adding these - there will be plenty of these and the researchers will automatically probe, ask for explanation/clarification, and sum up at appropriate points.

Although the guide is generally written in the form of questions or explanations that could be read out exactly as written, in reality, the researcher will amend the wording, rephrase and reorder as appropriate and to make it feel more like a natural discussion rather than a questionnaire.

Introduction

- Introduce self and Ipsos MORI
- Remind them of the purpose of the research: looking at the reasons for the decline in the childminding workforce and how to address it. The workforce has declined 22% between 2014 and 2019 and initial assessments point to more childminders leaving than new practitioners coming into the sector.
- Explain that the interview will last around 1 hour and we will give participant £30 as a thank you for taking part.
- Provide reassurances of anonymity and confidentiality. Explain that no identifying information about individuals will be used in the reporting of the research.
- Explain that participation in the research is entirely voluntary, they don't have to answer any questions they are uncomfortable with and can stop at any point without having to give a reason.
- Check if they have any questions about the purpose of the research or how what they say will be used
- Request permission to record interview [ask permission then ask them to confirm that once the recording has started]

Background

I understand that you've left childminding in the past few years. When was that?

How long had you been a childminder?

How did you get into childminding? What appealed to you about it?

And did you find that [the factors that appealed] turned out to be the case?

What were the negative sides to it? Anything that you didn't expect?

Had you worked in childcare before becoming a childminder?

How many children were you most recently providing childcare for before you left childminding?

What was the age range of the children?

What hours would you say you were working on a typical day/week (if it varies) before you left childminding?

Did you have any assistants working with you?

Why they left

I'd like to move on to discuss your decision to leave in childminding in a bit more detail. Do let me know if there's anything you would prefer not to talk about and we can move on.

How long had you been thinking about leaving childminding before you left?

Was there anything in particular that prompted you to start thinking about leaving?

What were the main reasons for you deciding to leave?

Did you feel like you needed any specific professional support while you were childminding? And were you able to access any support you might have needed?

We discussed your working hours earlier. How did you feel about the hours you were working?
PROMPT: did that affect your decision to stop childminding?

What are you doing now instead of childminding?

What, if anything, might have changed your mind about leaving?

How do you feel about your decision looking back now?

Views on the ELC expansion

I'm now going to ask about the Scottish Government's ELC expansion and funded hours.

How did funded hours impact your service, if at all?

Were you delivering any ELC funded hours before you left childminding?

IF YES: How did you find that?

Did the experience of delivering funded hours influence your decision to leave?

IF NOT: Did you ever consider registering for funded hours?

What are the reasons you did not deliver funded hours?

Did the ELC expansion and funded hours influence your decision to leave childminding at all?

PROMPT IF NOT MENTIONED:

Did the qualifications and training needed to deliver funded hours affect your thinking about leaving?
And in what way?

Views on the impact of Covid-19

IF WORKING AS A CHILDMINDER SINCE MARCH 2020

I'm going to move on to ask about the Covid-19 pandemic. Do let me know if there's anything you would prefer not to talk about and we can move on.

Did the pandemic affect your service, and how you supported children and families? In what ways?

Did the impact of the pandemic influence your decision to leave childminding? In what ways?

Views on everyday experiences

Did the day to day experience of being a childminder change in the years before you left? In what ways?

How do you think the day to day experience of being a childminder could be improved?

PROMPT IF NOT MENTIONED:

Do you think bureaucracy/paperwork is an issue affecting childminders? How could that be improved?

PROMPT: what proportion of your time is spent on paperwork? How do you feel about that?

Compared with other childcare providers, how do you think childminding is viewed by others?

PROBE ON:

- by government and policy makers?
- by the general public?

Do you have any thoughts on what could encourage people to stay in childminding for longer?

What would encourage people to enter the profession?

What do you think might encourage people from a wider range of backgrounds to consider childminding? (e.g. more men, more ethnic minorities and more people in deprived areas)

Wrap up

We're just coming to the end of the discussion now, but before we do, is there anything else you would like to say about your experiences of childminding or decline in the childminding workforce and how to address it.

That's everything I wanted to ask you today, thank you very much for taking the time to speak to me.

Appendix 4 - Focus Group discussion guides

Group 1- Prospective childminders

Note for reviewers:

This topic guide is designed to serve as an aide memoir to the researchers, while also remaining flexible to allow for issues to be raised spontaneously.

Obvious probing and follow-up questions like 'why?', 'why not?', etc. are not included but there is no need to suggest adding these - there will be plenty of these and the researchers will automatically probe, ask for explanation/clarification, and sum up at appropriate points.

Although the guide is generally written in the form of questions or explanations that could be read out exactly as written, in reality, the researcher will amend the wording, rephrase and reorder as appropriate and to make it feel more like a natural discussion rather than a questionnaire.

Introduction

- Introduce self and Ipsos MORI
- Remind them of the purpose of the research: looking at the reasons for the decline in the childminding workforce and how to address it. The workforce has declined 22% between 2014 and 2019 and initial assessments point to more childminders leaving than new practitioners coming into the sector.
- Explain that the group discussion will last around 2 hours and we will give each participant £30 as a thank you for taking part.
- Provide reassurances of anonymity and confidentiality. Explain that no identifying information about individuals will be used in the reporting of the research. Ask that no-one shares what others have said outwith the group.
- Explain that participation in the research is entirely voluntary, they don't have to answer any questions they are uncomfortable with and can stop at any point without having to give a reason.
- Request permission to record discussion [ask permission then ask them to confirm that once the recording has started]

Warm-up and introductions

Ask each participant to introduce themselves to the group saying:

- Their name
- Where they live
- Do they have children, and how old are they?
- Do they have any hobbies or what do they do to relax?

Background

I understand that you have all considered becoming a childminder at one point but haven't become one. Is that correct?

Would anyone like to start by telling us about why they started to think about childminding as a career option?

PROMPT:

- When did you first start thinking about it?

- What prompted you to think about it?

Has anyone worked in childcare before?

What are you doing now instead of childminding?

Exploring childminding

I'd like to discuss your consideration of childminding in a bit more detail. Let's start with what attracted you to childminding, and then later on I will ask you about why you didn't go down this route.

What kind of things made childminding appeal to you?

PROMPT IF NOT MENTIONED:

Did you consider any other kinds of childcare careers (e.g. nursery)

How did you find out about childminding as a career opportunity?

Where did you go to find out information about what it would be like to be a childminder?

Did you look into what steps you needed to take to become a registered childminder? Where did you go for information?

Who, if anyone, did you speak to about it?

[NOTE HOW FAR THEY LOOKED INTO IT AND RESOURCES USED]

Why they didn't become a childminder

I'd now like to ask about on why you decided not to become a childminder.

EXERCISE: Please can you grab a pen paper. Note down your **top 2 or 3 reasons for not becoming a childminder**. It will be interesting to see how similar or different your answers are.

Let's go round – tell me which reasons you noted and which was the most important one in you making your decision.

What concerns did you have about becoming a childminder?

How did you thoughts about becoming a childminder change after you looked into it? How?

Did any of the following effect your decisions:

- Did the cost of establishing your own childminding business
- Did the COVID-19 pandemic have any impact on your thinking?
- The Scottish Government's expansion of funded ELC hours

PROMPT IF NOT MENTIONED:

Did you think about the qualifications and training needed to deliver funded hours? And if so, how did that affect your decision?

What might have made a difference to your decision / what would have made you go ahead and set up a childminding business?

Would additional support in establishing a childminding business made a difference?, What type of support? PROMPT: business advice and/or a mentoring/support network have

Future

What words or phrases do you think people associate with childminders?

How do you think childminding is viewed by policy makers/general public compared to other childcare providers? e.g. do you think it is valued?

PROBE ON:

- by government and policy makers?
- by the general public?

Do you think this puts people off from becoming childminders?

Do you think you might consider becoming a childminder again in the future?

IF NOT: why not? What would need to change?

IF YES: what factors would influence your decision?

What do you think might encourage more people to become a childminder? I'm going to start with X (pick a participant) and ask you to come up with something, then come to Y then Z then W – let's see how long a list of things we can come up with.

Once generated list, share it with the participants on screen, then explore any that need more explanation

If you had to put these in priority order, what would it be?

What do you think might encourage people from a wider range of backgrounds to consider childminding? (e.g. more men, more ethnic minorities and more people in deprived areas)

Wrap up

We're just coming to the end of the discussion now, but before we do, is there anything else you would like to say about your experiences of looking into childminding as a career option?

That's everything I wanted to ask you today, thank you very much for taking part this evening.

We will be back in touch to arrange the £30 'thank you' payment.

Group 2- New childminders

Introduction

- Introduce self and Ipsos MORI
- Remind them of the purpose of the research: looking at the reasons for the decline in the childminding workforce and how to address it. The workforce has declined 22% between 2014 and 2019 and initial assessments point to more childminders leaving than new practitioners coming into the sector.
- Explain that the group discussion will last around 2 hours and we will give each participant £30 as a thank you for taking part.
- Provide reassurances of anonymity and confidentiality. Explain that no identifying information about individuals will be used in the reporting of the research. Ask that no-one shares what others have said outwith the group.
- Explain that participation in the research is entirely voluntary, they don't have to answer any questions they are uncomfortable with and can stop at any point without having to give a reason.
- Request permission to record discussion [ask permission then ask them to confirm that once the recording has started]

Warm-up and introductions

Ask each participant to introduce themselves to the group saying:

- Their name
- Where they live
- Do they have any hobbies or what do they do to relax?
- [then]
- How long they have been a childminder
- How many children they currently provide care for, and the age range

Journey into childminding

I'd like to start with how you all became a childminders.

What one word would you use to sum up your experience as a childminder so far?

Would anyone like to start by telling us about how they got into it? [ASK EACH TO EXPLAIN]

PROMPT:

- When did you first start looking into childminding? How did you find out about it?

What was it that particularly appealed to you about being a childminder?

Did anyone have any concerns? What were they?

Where did you go for information?

Did you speak to anyone about it?

Is there anything that would have made the process of becoming a childminder easier?

Experiences so far

EXERCISE: Please grab a pen and paper.

- I'd like you to note down a score out of ten for how satisfied you feel with your job now
- 1 is very low job satisfaction and 10 is very high

Now I'd like to go round and ask you to share your scores and the reasons for them.

[NOTE & DISCUSS SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN SCORES]

PROMPT:

How have you found the experience of being a childminder so far?

Has it been better or worse than you expected? Why?

What hours would you say you work on a typical day/week (if it varies) Is this similar to what you anticipated?

Has anything been better or easier than you expected?

What would make being a childminder better or more fulfilling?

PROMPT: How could the day to day experience of being a childminder be improved?

Would you have found any additional support (such as business advice and/or access to a mentoring/support network) within your first few years/since you started helpful? If so, what?

Do you have any thoughts, at this point, on how long you are likely to stay in childminding?

PROMPT IF NOT MENTIONED:

Is there anything that would make you more likely to leave childminding? (e.g. changes to the profession or your circumstances)

Do you think bureaucracy/paperwork is an issue affecting childminders? How could that be improved?

PROMPT: what proportion of your time is spent on paperwork? How do you feel about that?

Views on the ELC Expansion

I'm now going to ask about the Scottish Government's ELC expansion and funded hours.

What are your thoughts on the expansion of ELC and the impact it has had on childminding?

PROMPT: How has funded hours impacted your service, if at all?

Are any of you delivering any ELC funded hours?

IF YES: How have you found that?

PROMPT IF NOT MENTIONED: Have you had to complete additional qualifications or do you plan to do so?

IF YES AND STARTED THEM: How have you found the process of undertaking the qualifications and training needed to meet the National Standard requirements for delivering the funded ELC hours?

IF NOT: Have you considered delivering funded hours?

What are the reasons you do not deliver funded hours?

PROMPT IF NOT MENTIONED: Did the qualifications and training needed to deliver funded hours affect your thinking?

Have you been able to access any professional support you might have needed to deliver funded ELC hours?

Views on the impact of Covid-19

I'm going to move on to ask about the Covid-19 pandemic. If there's anything here anyone does not want to share or talk about in relation to this, that is absolutely fine – please just say and we'll move on.

How do you think the pandemic has impacted childminders across Scotland?

Has the pandemic affected your service, and how you support children and families? In what ways?

Have you been able to access any professional support you might have needed?

Encouraging childminding

I'd now like to ask you about encouraging more people to consider childminding.

What words or phrases do you think people associate with childminders?

How do you think childminding is viewed by policy makers/general public compared to other childcare providers?

e.g. do you think it is valued?

PROBE ON:

- by government and policy makers?
- by the general public?

Do these perceptions affect how childminders feel about their work?

If people better understood the benefits of childminding and what childminders do, do you think that would have any impact on the experience of being a childminder?

What would encourage people to stay in childminding for longer? I'm going to start with X (pick a participant) and ask you to come up with something, then come to Y then Z then W – let's see how long a list of things we can come up with.

Once generated list, share it with the participants on screen, then explore any that need more explanation

If you had to put these in priority order, what would it be?

And what might encourage more people to become childminders in the first place?

What do you think might encourage people from a wider range of backgrounds to consider childminding? (e.g. more men, more ethnic minorities and more people in deprived areas)

Wrap up

We're just coming to the end of the discussion now, but before we do, is there anything else you would like to say about your experiences of childminding or the decline in the childminding workforce and how to address it.

That's everything I wanted to ask you today, thank you very much for taking part this evening.

Group 3 – Childminders considering leaving the profession

Introduction

- Introduce self and Ipsos MORI
- Remind them of the purpose of the research: looking at the reasons for the decline in the childminding workforce and how to address it. The workforce has declined 22% between 2014 and 2019 and initial assessments point to more childminders leaving than new practitioners coming into the sector.
- Explain that the group discussion will last around 2 hours and we will give each participant £30 as a thank you for taking part.
- Provide reassurances of anonymity and confidentiality. Explain that no identifying information about individuals will be used in the reporting of the research. Ask that no-one shares what others have said outwith the group.
- Explain that participation in the research is entirely voluntary, they don't have to answer any questions they are uncomfortable with and can stop at any point without having to give a reason.
- Request permission to record discussion [ask permission then ask them to confirm that once the recording has started]

Warm-up and introductions

Ask each participant to introduce themselves to the group saying:

- Their name
- Where they live
- Do they have any hobbies or what do they do to relax?
- [Then]
- How long they have been a childminder
- How many children they currently provide care for, and the age range

Background

What initially appealed to you about childminding? Do you think that's similar for other childminders?

How did you first get into childminding?

Had any of you worked in childcare before becoming a childminder?

EXERCISE: Please grab a pen and paper.

- I'd like you to note down a score out of ten for how satisfied you felt with your job when you were 1 year into childminding
- 1 is very low job satisfaction and 10 is very high
- Then note down a score out of 10 for how satisfied you feel now about your job

Now I'd like to go round and ask you to share your scores and the reasons for them.

Tell me about how you felt / feel at each of those points.

[NOTE & DISCUSS SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN SCORES]

Did you find that the factors that initially appealed turned out to be the case?

What would you say the negative sides to childminding are? Anything that you didn't expect when you started?

Why they are considering leaving

Now I have some questions about why you may be thinking about leaving childminding, so I can understand that in more detail.

I understand that you are all considering leaving childminding in the next three years or so, is that correct?

What are the main reasons you are thinking about leaving childminding?

PROMPT IF NOT MENTIONED:

- Have your working hours had an impact on you considering leaving childminding?
- Did the pandemic affect your thinking about leaving childminding? In what ways?
- Family / partner – did they have an influence?

How long have you been thinking about leaving?

What first prompted you to think about leaving?

Is anyone thinking about a career change? PROMPT: What to and why?

Is there anything that might change your mind about leaving childminding? [PROBE FOR WHAT WOULD INFLUENCE THEIR DECISION]

Views on ELC expansion

I'm now going to ask about the Scottish Government's ELC expansion and funded hours.

What are your thoughts on the expansion of ELC and the impact it has had on childminding?

PROMPT: How have funded hours impacted your service, if at all?

Are any of you delivering any ELC funded hours?

IF YES: How have you found that?

Has the experience of delivering funded hours affected your thinking about leaving childminding?

IF NOT: Have you ever considered registering for funded hours?

What are the reasons you are not delivering funded hours?

Have you been able to access any professional support you might have needed to deliver funded ELC hours?

Has the ELC expansion and funded hours affected your thinking about leaving childminding at all?

PROMPT IF NOT MENTIONED: Have the qualifications and training needed to deliver funded hours affected your thinking about leaving?

Views on everyday experiences

Do you think the day to day experience of being a childminder has changed over the few years? In what ways?

What would make being a childminder better or more fulfilling?

PROMPT: How could the day to day experience of being a childminder be improved?

PROMPT IF NOT MENTIONED:

Do you think bureaucracy/paperwork is an issue affecting childminders? How could that be improved?

PROMPT: what proportion of your time is spent on paperwork? How do you feel about that?

What words or phrases do you think people associate with childminders?

Compared with other childcare providers, how do you think childminding is viewed by others?

PROBE ON:

- by government and policy makers?
- by the general public?

Do these perceptions affect how childminders feel about their work?

Have they effected your thoughts about leaving?

If people better understood the benefits of childminding and what childminders do, do you think that would have any impact on the experience of being a childminder?

Ideas to halt the decline in numbers

What would encourage people to stay in childminding for longer? I'm going to start with X (pick a participant) and ask you to come up with something, then come to Y then Z then W – let's see how long a list of things we can come up with.

Once generated list, share it with the participants on screen, then explore any that need more explanation

If you had to put these in priority order, what would it be?

And what might encourage more people to become childminders in the first place?

What do you think might encourage people from a wider range of backgrounds to consider childminding? (e.g. more men, more ethnic minorities and more people in deprived areas)

Wrap up

We're just coming to the end of the discussion now, but before we do, is there anything else you would like to say about your experiences of childminding or the decline in the childminding workforce and how to address it?

That's everything I wanted to ask you today, thank you very much for taking part this evening.

We will be back in touch to arrange the £30 'thank you' payment.

Group 4- Former childminders

Introduction

- Introduce self and Ipsos MORI
- Remind them of the purpose of the research: looking at the reasons for the decline in the childminding workforce and how to address it. The workforce has declined 22% between 2014 and 2019 and initial assessments point to more childminders leaving than new practitioners coming into the sector.
- Explain that the group discussion will last around 2 hours and we will give each participant £30 as a thank you for taking part.
- Provide reassurances of anonymity and confidentiality. Explain that no identifying information about individuals will be used in the reporting of the research. Ask that no-one shares what others have said outwith the group.
- Explain that participation in the research is entirely voluntary, they don't have to answer any questions they are uncomfortable with and can stop at any point without having to give a reason.
- Request permission to record discussion [ask permission then ask them to confirm that once the recording has started]

Warm up and introductions

Ask each participant to introduce themselves to the group saying:

- Their name
- Where they live
- Do they have any hobbies or what do they do to relax?
- [then]
- How long they were a childminder
- When they stopped and what they are doing now

Background to leaving

What initially appealed to you about childminding? Do you think that's similar for other childminders?

How did you all first get into childminding?

PROMPT: Had any of you worked in childcare before becoming a childminder?

EXERCISE: Please grab a pen and paper.

- I'd like you to note down a score out of ten for how satisfied you felt with your job when you were 1 year into childminding
- 1 is very low job satisfaction and 10 is very high
- Then note down a score out of 10 for how satisfied you felt with your childminding job in the end

Now I'd like to go round and ask you to share your scores and the reasons for them.

How did you feel at both of those stages?

[NOTE & DISCUSS SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN SCORES]

Did you find that the factors that initially appealed turned out to be the case?

What would you say the negative sides to childminding are? Anything that you didn't expect when you started?

Why they left

Now I'd like to focus in on deciding to leave in childminding in a bit more detail.

Was there anything in particular that prompted you to start thinking about leaving?

How long had you been thinking about leaving childminding before you actually left?

What were the main reasons for you deciding to leave?

PROMPT IF NOT MENTIONED:

- Did your working hours have an impact on the decision?
- Did the pandemic have an impact on the decision?
- Family / partner – did they have an influence?

What, if anything, might have changed your mind about leaving?

Are you glad you have left childminding?

PROMPT: Any reflections on how the decision to leave has worked out for you?

If you could turn back the clock, would you have done anything differently?

Views on ELC expansion

I'm now going to ask about the Scottish Government's ELC expansion and funded hours.

What are your thoughts on the expansion of ELC and the impact it has had on childminding?

PROMPT: How did funded hours impact your service, if at all?

Were any of you delivering any ELC funded hours before you left childminding?

IF YES: How did you find that?

Did the experience of delivering funded hours influence your decision to leave?

IF NOT: Did any of you ever consider registering for funded hours?

What are the reasons you did not deliver funded hours?

Did the ELC expansion and funded hours influence anyone's decision to leave childminding at all?

PROMPT IF NOT MENTIONED:

Did the qualifications and training needed to deliver funded hours affected your thinking about leaving?

Views on everyday experiences

Do you think the day to day experience of being a childminder has changed over the few years? In what ways?

What would make being a childminder better or more fulfilling?

PROMPT: How could the day to day experience of being a childminder be improved?

PROMPT IF NOT MENTIONED:

Do you think bureaucracy/paperwork is an issue affecting childminders? How could that be improved?

PROMPT: what proportion of your time is spent on paperwork? How do you feel about that?

What words or phrases do you think people associate with childminders?

Compared with other childcare providers, how do you think childminding is viewed by others?

PROBE ON:

- by government and policy makers?
- by the general public?

Do these perceptions affect how childminders feel about their work?

If people better understood the benefits of childminding and what childminders do, do you think that would have any impact on the experience of being a childminder?

Ideas to halt the decline in numbers

What would encourage people to stay in childminding for longer? I'm going to start with X (pick a participant) and ask you to come up with something, then come to Y then Z then W – let's see how long a list of things we can come up with.

Once generated list, share it with the participants on screen, then explore any that need more explanation

If you had to put these in priority order, what would it be?

And what might encourage more people to become childminders in the first place?

What do you think could encourage people from a wider range of backgrounds to consider childminding? (e.g. more men, more ethnic minorities and more people in deprived areas)

Wrap up

We're just coming to the end of the discussion now, but before we do, is there anything else you would like to say about your experiences of childminding or decline in the childminding workforce and how to address it.

That's everything I wanted to ask you today, thank you very much for taking part this evening.

We will be back in touch to arrange the £30 'thank you' payment.

Appendix 5 – documents reviewed for the Rapid Evidence Assessment

- Ang, L., Brooker, E., Stephen, C. (2017) A Review of the Research on Childminding: Understanding Children's Experiences in Home-Based Childcare Settings. *Early Childhood Education Journal* (45:2), 261-270.
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- [Campbell-Barr, V., Georgeson, J., Hohmann, U., Gulliver, K. \(2020\). Childminder Sustainability in England and Wales. Plymouth: University of Plymouth.](#)
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- [Department for Education. \(2019\). Survey of childcare and early years providers: main summary, England, 2019.](#)
- [Dunlop, A., Rayna, S., Garnier, P. eds. \(2016\). Childminders, home based day care and young children's transitions. In: Transitions dans la petite enfance \(Transitions in early childhood\). PIE Peter Lang, Brussels.](#)
- [Hunnikin, L., Blackburn, J. \(2020\). Survey of childcare and early years providers and COVID-19. London: Department for Education.](#)

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- O'Regan, M., Halpenny, A., Hayes, N. (2019). Childminding in Ireland: attitudes towards professionalisation. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* (27:6), 757-775.
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- [Paull, G., Wilson, C. \(2020\). Providers' finances: Evidence from the Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers 2019. London: Department for Education.](#)
- [Reid, P., Hanks, J., Ferguson, A. \(2019\). Early Learning and Childcare Workforce. Glasgow: ekosgen](#)
- [Scottish Childminding Association. \(2019\): Early Learning and Childcare Audit 2019.](#)
- Scottish Childminding Association. (2020): #TellSCMA: Childminding and You Survey Results 2020.
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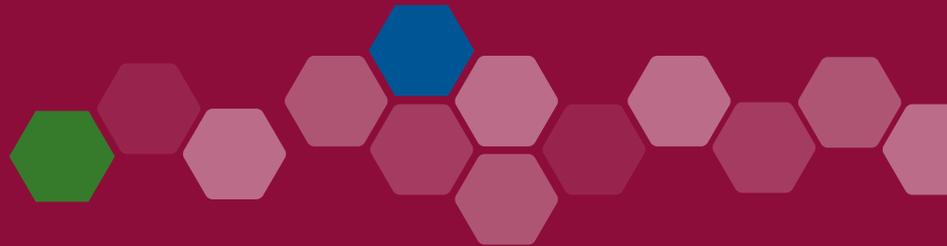
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