



Holiday Childcare Survey 2026

Lydia Hodges, Sam Shorto,
Alicia Knights-Toomer
and Flora Jenkins



Contents

Acknowledgements	2
About this report	2
About Coram Family and Childcare	2
Executive summary	3
Areas for action	8
Introduction	9
Glossary 1 - Terms used in this report	9
Glossary 2 - Support with childcare costs	10
Section 1 - Holiday childcare costs	13
A. Costs for holiday childcare	13
B. Cost changes	14
C. Difference in holiday childcare costs between maintained and private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector provision	15
D. Holiday childcare costs compared to term time costs	16
Section 2 - Is there enough holiday childcare?	19
A. Sufficiency duties for local authorities	19
B. Holiday childcare sufficiency in England	19
C. Holiday childcare sufficiency in Scotland	22
D. Holiday childcare sufficiency in Wales	22
E. Number of holiday childcare providers and places	24
F. Holiday childcare opening times and holiday periods	25
Conclusion	29
Areas for action	30
Methodology	31

Acknowledgements

Thank you to each local authority who shared their holiday childcare data with us this year and made this report possible.

We are grateful to our colleagues at Coram for their help with messaging and reach – Carol Homden, Dominique Fourniol, Emma Lamberton and Cheryl Gallagher – and for Emily Blackshaw’s support with data quality assurance. At Coram Family and Childcare, we would like to thank Ellie Grace, Susie Gething and Tamsin Hutton.

About this report

This report is the 21st annual Holiday Childcare Survey. It is based on surveys from local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales, which were returned to Coram Family and Childcare between April and June 2026. A total of 199 local authorities returned data, generating a response rate of 97%.

In addition to the Holiday Childcare Survey, we also produce the Childcare Survey, which is published annually in the spring and covers early years and after-school childcare. Previous reports are available from our website www.coramfamilyandchildcare.org.uk

Note on terminology: holiday childcare refers to formal childcare not provided by parents or main carers that is available for school-age children in the school holidays and is registered with Ofsted in England or the Care Inspectorates in Wales and Scotland.

About Coram Family and Childcare

Coram Family and Childcare works to make the UK a better place for families, focussing on childcare and early years to make a difference to families’ lives now and in the long term. We are a leading voice on early education and childcare, carrying out research to aid understanding and drive change in national and local policy.

Our network of Parent Champions schemes reaches thousands of parents each year, with dedicated local volunteers ensuring parents are aware of their rights and entitlements, improving children’s outcomes.

We deliver the National Association of Family Information Services – the only national membership organisation supporting essential Family Information Service staff in local authorities to deliver high-quality information and advice to families.

We deliver responsive, family-focussed projects, often in partnership with other expert organisations, reaching some of the most disadvantaged families and levelling the playing field for disadvantaged children.

We are part of the Coram Institute for Children and a member of the Coram group of children’s charities and organisations. Coram changes lives, laws and systems to create better chances for children, now and forever.



Executive summary

Holiday childcare: is it the missing piece of the puzzle?

All nations in Great Britain have free childcare for pre-school children and, while the amount of free hours and eligibility criteria vary across nations, all are backed by considerable investment and focus. This is important, because without affordable childcare parents can be locked out of work and children miss out on early education.

In addition, there has been recent investment and initiatives in wraparound childcare before and after school, and free breakfast clubs are expanding to all primary school children.

Holiday childcare feels like an outlier in comparison, with much less support available for families and much less focus from policy makers.

Some support is available. For example, we were delighted when funding for the holiday activities and food (HAF) programme was continued until March 2029, giving free food and activities to children receiving benefits-related free school meals during the holidays. But in September this year, when free school meal eligibility expands to include all children on Universal Credit, HAF criteria will not change with it. Therefore, some children will be eligible for help when they are at school but not during holidays. And while current funding gives stability and certainty for now, there is no guarantee after April 2029. Unlike early education entitlements, HAF does not have the protection of being established under legislation.

The problem is not going to go away. Most parents need to work during the school holidays at some point, and not all will have support from other family members like grandparents. Many will need formal childcare for at least some of the school holidays.

The cost of that childcare continues to rise. To cover the full six week summer holiday, families in Great Britain will pay an average of £1,145 this year, per child. Parents relying on childcare support through Universal Credit will have to find and pay the full amount in advance and wait a month to receive help (up to 85% of costs), as this is paid in arrears.

To cover the full six week summer holiday, families in Great Britain will pay an average of £1,145 this year, per child.

Finding childcare may also be a challenge. As in previous years, when asked whether there is enough holiday childcare in their area, the most frequent response from local authorities (LAs) is that they do not know. 'Data not held or cannot tell' made up over half of all answers in England, and the rate of this answer was so high in Scotland that there was not enough data to report on. Only Wales had more than 50% knowledge of their sufficiency, and not for all categories of children. The absence of a statutory duty to monitor holiday childcare sufficiency is a likely driver of this in Scotland. The same is not true in England, where the duty applies equally to all ages but where much more is known about early years childcare than is known about school-aged childcare.



When information about holiday childcare is lacking, parents have the extra task of extended searches to find out what, if anything, is available near them. That is before they get to the equally important questions of whether the provision matches their work hours or whether it is suitable for their child. This is particularly crucial when children have additional needs. Only 9% of LAs in England said they have enough childcare for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and only 5% of LAs in Wales said the same for children with additional learning needs (ALN).

When searching for holiday childcare, families may find a childminder is their best chance of securing a full day as our report shows that 79% of childminders in Great Britain are open 8am-6pm, compared to only 57% of holiday clubs. Similar patterns can be seen for coverage across the full year, with childminders frequently more likely than holiday clubs to be open during each of the school holidays, particularly the Christmas holiday and teacher training days. Coverage across provision types is more even in Scotland and Wales, particularly for the summer and Easter breaks, but the biggest margin of difference is in England, where childminders are considerably more likely than holiday clubs to be open in every holiday period. That said, parents will need to be able to pay more for a childminder, with the average cost coming to £61 per week more than for a holiday club in Great Britain.

Table 1. Cost of holiday childcare per week, by nation, and changes since 2025

Nation	Holiday clubs	% change from 2025	Childminders	% change from 2025
Great Britain	£190.77	+5%	£251.48	+7%
England	£189.71	+4%	£250.96	+7%
Scotland	£179.95	+5%	£239.56	+6%
Wales	£223.59	+10%	£262.48	+6%

Holiday childcare costs

- The average cost of a holiday club is £191 per week in Great Britain, up 5% since 2025.
- Cost increases are highest in Wales this year (10%), followed by England (4%) and Scotland (5%).
- There is significant variation in holiday club costs across the English regions, ranging from £227 in the South East to £160 in the North West. The highest regional increase is in Inner London (16%).
- For the second year running, we asked about the cost of holiday childcare with childminders. The average cost of a week with a childminder during the holidays is £251 in Great Britain, up 7% since last year. This cost varies across the nations, being £251 per week in England, £240 in Scotland and £262 in Wales.
- Parents and carers pay much more for childcare during the holidays than during term time. In Great Britain, a week at a holiday club costs over 2.7 times more than an after-school club, £191 per week compared to £70.
- A family will pay £1,145 for six weeks of holiday club for a school-age child, which is £726 more than they would pay for six weeks of term-time childcare after school.

1

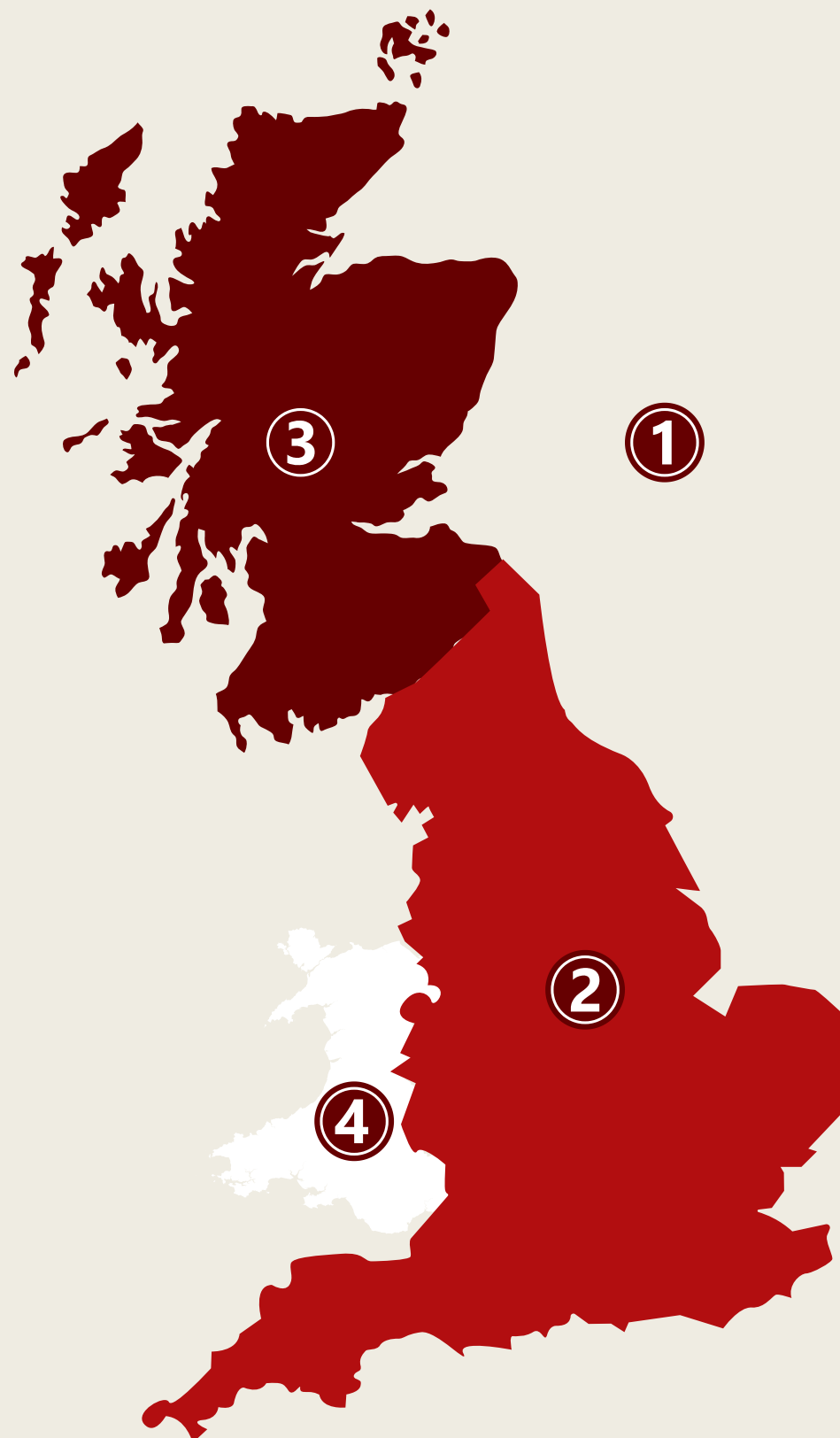
Great Britain

- Holiday clubs cost £191 per week on average, up 5% since last year.
- A week of holiday childcare with a childminder costs £251 on average, an increase of 7% since last year.
- A week at a holiday club costs over 2.7 times more than a week at an after-school club (£191 per week compared to £70).
- Six weeks at a holiday club during the summer holidays costs £1,145 on average.

2

England

- Average weekly holiday club costs range from £226.55 in the South East to £160.14 in the North West.
- A week of holiday childcare with a childminder costs £250.96 on average.
- Half or more of local authorities do not have a clear picture of whether they have enough holiday childcare in their area, responding 'Data not held or cannot tell'.
- In line with last year, the highest levels of holiday childcare provision available is for four- to seven-year-old children.
- Only 9% of local authorities report enough places for at least three-quarters of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- 53% of holiday clubs in England are open for a full day, the lowest level in Great Britain (and down from last year's figure of 78%).



3

Scotland

- Scotland has the lowest average cost of a holiday club across the nations, at £179.95 per week.
- Scotland has the highest proportion of holiday clubs open for a full day in Great Britain (81%).
- Most Scottish local authorities do not hold the data needed to assess their holiday childcare sufficiency for specific groups of children, with at least 8 in 10 responding 'Data not held or cannot tell'.

4

Wales

- Wales saw the greatest holiday club cost increases, up 10% since last year.
- A week of holiday childcare with a childminder costs £262.48 on average, an increase of 6% since last year.
- In line with last year's findings, four- to seven-year-olds experience the highest levels of holiday childcare sufficiency.
- Only 5% of LAs in Wales said they have enough childcare for children with additional learning needs (ALN).
- Wales has the highest proportion of holiday clubs open over all of the school holidays in Great Britain other than for teacher training days, where Scotland is slightly higher.

Is there enough holiday childcare?

- Local authorities (LAs) across England, Scotland and Wales were asked to report on the percentage of children for whom they have sufficient childcare across a range of categories in terms of: '100%', '75% to 99%', '50% to 74%', '25% to 49%', 'less than 24%' or 'Data not held or cannot tell'. Their responses are explored below.
- Across Great Britain, 57% of holiday clubs and 79% of childminders are open for a full day (8am to 6pm).
- The highest level of provision is over the summer holiday, with 86% of holiday clubs and 89% of childminders open during this period across Great Britain. The lowest level of holiday club provision is for teacher training days, with only 42% of clubs in Great Britain open during these days, followed by the Christmas holiday (51%). However, 78% of childminders cover teacher training days and 72% cover the Christmas break.

England

- Many local authorities do not have a clear picture of whether they have enough holiday childcare for the children in their area, with half or more responding 'Data not held or cannot tell' for all questions, for the second year running.
- Whilst last year we attributed some of this to the trade-off from updating our questions to ask for more detail, we saw data improve in the second year of similar questions in our Childcare Survey [1], which shows that more is known about childcare for under-fives than for school-aged children.
- The highest levels of sufficiency reported in England are for four- to seven-year-olds, with 31% of LAs reporting enough places for at least three quarters of children. This has fallen slightly since last year, when it was 37%.

- The next highest levels of sufficiency are for 8- to 11-year-olds (28%) and parents working full time (24%).
- Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), older children and those whose parents work atypical hours are the least well-served for the second year running, with no more than 1 in 10 LAs able to say they have enough holiday childcare for these children.
- Whilst all three of the above categories are affected by the high number of LAs unable to answer the question, it is interesting to note that the percentage of LAs able to answer the question was similar for children with SEND and children whose parents work full time, but only 9% of LAs said they had enough childcare for children with SEND, compared to 24% for children whose parents work full time.
- Inner London has particularly poor sufficiency rates this year and this was largely due to most LAs being unable to give an answer.
- The East Midlands has the highest levels of holiday childcare sufficiency in five out of seven categories, leading the way in all but 8-11- and 12-14-year-olds (where the South East reported the most provision) and children in rural areas (where Yorkshire and the Humber reported the most).
- England has the lowest proportion of holiday clubs open for a full day (53%) in Great Britain, and the lowest proportion open over each holiday other than Christmas, where Scotland is lowest.

Scotland

- The majority of Scottish local authorities do not hold the data needed to assess their holiday childcare sufficiency against specific categories of children and families, giving data only on opening patterns and changes to provider and place numbers since last year. At least 8 in 10 responded 'Data not held or cannot tell' for all specific categories of children and as such we are unable to report meaningfully on detailed holiday childcare provision in Scotland.

- Scotland has the highest proportion of holiday clubs open for a full day in Great Britain (81%).
- Scotland has a high level of coverage over the summer holiday (92% of holiday clubs and 99% of childminders), but the lowest proportion of providers open over the Christmas holiday in Great Britain, with only 2 in 10 holiday clubs and childminders open during this time.

Wales

- Local authorities in Wales have a significantly better understanding of their overall local holiday childcare sufficiency than England and Scotland.

- Local authorities in Wales report the highest level of sufficiency for four- to seven-year-olds, with half reporting enough places for at least three quarters of children, followed by 8- to 11-year-olds (36%) and parents working full time (32%). However, most of these responses fell in the '75% to 99%' category.
- The lowest levels of provision in Wales are for children and young people with additional learning needs (ALN) and those whose parents work atypical hours. However, these are also two of the areas where local authorities had the least information.
- Wales has the highest proportion of holiday clubs open over all of the school holidays in Great Britain other than for teacher training days, where Scotland is slightly higher.

Areas for action

Coram Family and Childcare calls on Government to:

- Reinforce the statutory duty to secure sufficient holiday childcare, to ensure childcare provision is understood equally for all age groups in England and Wales. Introduce a duty to monitor sufficiency for school-age holiday childcare in Scotland.
- Allow upfront payments of the childcare element of Universal Credit during school holidays to alleviate the concentration of costs.
- Encourage increased holiday childcare provision to address gaps in sufficiency, increase parental choice and increase market competition.
- Extend the inclusive practice training and coaching offer of the new Experts at Hand service (launching in England in September 2026) to holiday childcare providers, to improve access for children with SEND.
- Support an increase in childminders to ensure holiday childcare is available to fit a range of parental working patterns.



[1] Childcare Survey 2026, Coram Family and Childcare. Source: <https://www.coramfamilyandchildcare.org.uk/research/childcare-survey-2026>

Introduction

This report looks at the costs of childcare and the availability of childcare in Great Britain for children aged 4 to 14 years during the 13 weeks of school holiday per year. Data is broken down by nation and region (in England) and by types of holiday childcare provider: private, voluntary and independent (PVI) providers, the maintained sector and childminders. The report also looks at changes in costs since last year (2025).

The childcare provision covered in this report includes holiday clubs registered with an official regulator (Ofsted in England, Care Inspectorate in Scotland, Care Inspectorate Wales) run by the PVI sector or by local authorities, and childminders. The use of informal childcare (such as that provided by other parents or grandparents), or holiday camps (such as for football or drama) are excluded from this report.

The report looks at the costs of childcare before the support to help pay for childcare (Tax-Free Childcare or Universal Credit) is taken into account, as this allows us to track changes in costs over time and recognises that families can be eligible for different levels of support depending on their circumstances.

This year's survey continues with the revised questions on childcare sufficiency, introduced last year, to give a more accurate picture of current circumstances. It also continues with questions about holiday childcare places with childminders, to reflect their important place in the holiday childcare sector.

Choices about holiday childcare

Most working parents do not have enough annual leave to cover the 13 weeks of school holidays so will need to make childcare arrangements. Many families will use a combination of these approaches across the summer break and the shorter holidays throughout the year:

- Formal holiday childcare provided by the local authority, a PVI provider or a childminder.

- 'Holiday camp' type activities such as football or drama – these typically do not run for the whole holiday but may cover a few weeks and are not required to register with a regulator. If they are not registered with an official regulator, parents cannot use childcare subsidies to help meet the cost of this holiday provision (see Box 1 on pages 11 and 12).
- Annual leave to spend time with their children, either at home or going on holiday. Some parents may do 'shift parenting', where each uses their annual leave at different times. In couple families, this can mean that families do not have time off together and lone parents may not have this option.
- Informal care from grandparents, other relatives or friends.
- Flexible working agreed with their employer. This can include working from home, either at the same time as looking after children or at different times of the day (for example in the evening) and term-time only working arrangements, though this is rare outside the education sector. These options are dependent on parents' role and type of employment and will not be available to all families.

Glossary 1 – Terms used in this report

Holiday childcare – any childcare not provided by parents or main carers that is available for school-age children in the school holidays and is registered with Ofsted in England or the Care Inspectorates in Wales and Scotland.

School-age – this report looks at children between the ages of 4 and 14. Children reach compulsory school age the term after their 5th birthday but many start school when they are 4.

Childcare sufficiency – the quality of having enough childcare places to meet the needs of children and families. If a local authority has enough childcare for all its children, then it is said to have childcare sufficiency.

Private, voluntary and independent (PVI) holiday clubs – holiday clubs not run by local authorities or schools. They may be run by private companies, independent schools or voluntary organisations such as charities.

Maintained holiday clubs – holiday clubs run by the local authority, also known as public sector holiday clubs.

Childminder – a registered childcare professional who works with children for more than two hours a day in domestic premises (usually their own home) or, in England, in approved non-domestic premises (such as a community or village hall).

SEND – stands for 'special educational needs and disabilities' and is widely used in England but less so in Scotland and Wales. SEND is an umbrella term that covers a wide range of additional needs and disabilities such as autism, learning disabilities, cerebral palsy and epilepsy.

ALN – stands for 'additional learning needs' and is widely used in Wales. Like SEND, ALN is an umbrella term that covers a wide range of additional needs and disabilities.

Glossary 2 – Support with childcare costs

Support to help parents pay for childcare costs, including holiday childcare, is available to parents in some circumstances. This support is only available to parents who use childcare registered with an official regulator (Ofsted in England, Care Inspectorate in Scotland, and Care Inspectorate Wales). Many activity-based providers, such as sports or drama clubs that run for a few weeks in the summer, as well as childcare providers caring only for older children, are not required to register.

Parents who use government support for childcare costs may have a smaller choice of providers or miss out on financial help.

There is some childcare support available for parents who are in training or education, but this varies with the parent's age, the type of qualification they are undertaking, and the policies of their education provider.



Box 1. Summary of childcare cost support

Childcare support	Details
Tax-Free Childcare (Great Britain) Children aged under 12 or under 17 if child has a disability	Covers 20% of childcare costs up to a maximum of £2,000 per child per year or £4,000 for disabled children. Can only be used with ‘approved childcare’. Tax-Free Childcare replaces the childcare vouchers scheme that has closed for new applications but can still be used by families who registered on or before 4 October 2018. Parents and their partner (if they have one) must work at least the equivalent of 16 hours a week at the national minimum wage or national living wage. Cannot be used alongside Universal Credit. Take-up of Tax-Free Childcare has been much lower than the Government forecast, meaning that many eligible parents are missing out on support.
Universal Credit childcare element (Great Britain) No minimum age and up to the August after their 16th birthday, or 17 if child has a disability	Pays up to 85% of childcare costs up to £1,071.09 per month for one child or £1,836.16 per month for two or more children. Universal Credit cannot be claimed alongside Tax-Free Childcare. Parents must have an income below a certain level – this varies based on a family’s circumstances. The actual amount families get will tend to be less than 85% of their childcare costs as Universal Credit is reduced as people earn more. Families are usually required to pay childcare costs upfront, with the Universal Credit childcare element paid to them in arrears if families report childcare costs within the assessment period they paid them, or the one after. If parents or carers report costs after this, they may not get the costs paid back to them. Parents or carers may receive help paying for childcare costs upfront if they are starting work or increasing their hours.
Holiday activities and food (HAF) programme (England only) School-age children from reception to year 11 (age 4 to 16)	HAF funds local authorities to provide a range of free activities, food and childcare to children in receipt of benefits-related free school meals (FSM) during school holidays in England. From September 2026, FSM eligibility will be expanded to all households in receipt of Universal Credit. However, HAF’s eligibility will remain at the existing FSM threshold (children from households in receipt of Universal Credit with annual household earnings of £7,400 or less) and HAF provision will not be expanded to all children from households in receipt of Universal Credit. Local authorities are expected to offer the equivalent of six weeks’ HAF provision in total over the year, made up of a minimum of four days during Easter holidays, 16 days during summer holidays and four days during Christmas holidays. On 28 August 2025, the government announced a three year funding settlement of over £200 million each year for the HAF programme. The final year of this funding settlement is the fiscal year 2028 to 2029.
School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP) (Wales only) School-age children	SHEP, under the brand name ‘Food and Fun’ is a school-based scheme that provides healthy meals, food and nutrition education, physical activity and enrichment sessions to children in areas of socio-economic disadvantage for a minimum of 12 days during the school summer holidays in Wales only.
School Holiday Support Payments (Scotland only) Children and young people awarded free school meals (FSM) based on the Scottish Government eligibility criteria	In Scotland, some families in receipt of free school meals (FSM) are eligible for direct cash payments or food vouchers to support with the cost of food over the holiday period. To apply, parents and carers contact their local council.
Targeted Scottish Support (Scotland only) School-age children	Scotland offers some targeted support for some families, including: • Access to Childcare Fund: Provides free or heavily subsidised childcare, including during the holidays, for families most at risk of poverty. Available in early adopter areas. • Scottish Football Association Extra Time programme: Offers free or low cost holiday provision and food to children at greatest risk of poverty. • Childcare Support Fund: In March 2026 the Scottish Government announced a new £15million fund to provide short-term, flexible childcare through registered childcare providers, to support families living in, or at risk of, poverty.

1. Holiday childcare costs

This section outlines the typical cost of holiday childcare for parents and carers, how costs vary across Great Britain, and the percentage change over the last year.

Table 2. Average weekly cost of holiday childcare, by nation and region

Nation/region	Cost of holiday childcare per week	
	Holiday clubs	Childminders
Great Britain	£190.77	£251.48
England	£189.71	£250.96
Scotland	£179.95	£239.56
Wales	£223.59	£262.48
East Midlands	£188.18	£219.30
East of England	£190.66	£271.88
London, Inner	£217.74	£371.82
London, Outer	£190.43	£287.69
North East	£219.76	£253.16
North West	£160.14	£215.42
South East	£226.55	£278.95
South West	£180.30	£205.58
West Midlands	£167.85	£250.25
Yorkshire and the Humber	£189.22	£245.80

A. Costs for holiday childcare

Across Great Britain, parents and carers now pay an average of £190.77 per week for holiday childcare at a club, and £251.48 per week for holiday childcare with a childminder.

Table 2 shows the average cost of holiday childcare per week across different regions and nations of Great Britain. The data shows substantial geographical variation in costs and affordability:

- In line with last year’s findings, the South East has the highest costs per week for holiday clubs at £226.55, compared to the North West at £160.14 per week.
- The North West remains the most affordable region overall, with comparatively low childminder costs also.

[2] Childcare Survey 2026, Coram Family and Childcare. Source: <https://www.coramfamilyandchildcare.org.uk/research/childcare-survey-2026>

- For holiday childcare provided by a childminder, Inner London has the highest cost at £371.82 per week. The South West has the lowest childminder cost at £205.58 per week.
- One of the most expensive regions for holiday club costs is the North East, making it an exception to the regional pattern seen for pre-school childcare costs in our annual Childcare Survey [2].

Figure 1. Average weekly costs of holiday childcare, by nation



B. Cost changes

The overall 5% cost increase for holiday clubs from 2025 to 2026 for Great Britain is above the rate of inflation (3% at the time of writing[3]). Table 3 shows Great Britain’s average cost changes for holiday childcare from 2025 to 2026, by region and nation.

Table 3. Cost changes in holiday childcare in holiday clubs from 2025, by region and nation, weighted [4]

Nation/region	Difference in cost from 2025	
	Holiday clubs	Childminders
Great Britain	+5%	+7%
England	+4%	+7%
Scotland	+5%	+6%
Wales	+10%	+6%
East Midlands	+3%	+2%
East of England	+5%	+12%*
London, Inner	+16%	+8%
London, Outer	+4%	+5%
North East	+12%	+9%
North West	0%	+9%
South East	+7%	+6%
South West	+10%	+7%
West Midlands	+4%	+13%
Yorkshire and the Humber	-1%	+5%

* The childminder figure for the East of England is based on responses from fewer than half of the local authorities in the region and should be interpreted with caution.

Similarly to last year, England’s holiday club costs have risen by 4%. Within England, there are regional variations in cost changes since 2025.

- Some regions have experienced particularly sharp increases, including Inner London (16% for holiday clubs) and the West Midlands (13% for childminders).
- The North East reports considerable cost rises across both holiday clubs (12%) and childminder holiday childcare (9%).
- Notably, Yorkshire and the Humber report a 1% decrease in holiday club costs, and the North West report no change at all in this category, contrasting with other regions.

[3] Office for National Statistics. Source: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices>

[4] Weighted average (or weighted mean) takes into account that some data points should count more than others. In the Holiday Childcare Survey, this means each local authority’s costs are adjusted based on how many providers they have and the size of their population when calculating regional and national averages.

Scotland's holiday club costs increased in line with Great Britain overall (5%), while Wales reported double this with a 10% increase in costs. However, when it comes to increases in childminder costs, there is less variation across the nations. Since last year, costs for holiday childcare with a childminder have risen by 7% in England, in line with the cost rise for Great Britain. Both Scotland and Wales saw a slightly lower increase, both rising by 6%.

Wales continues to see the largest year-on-year holiday club cost increase, as has been the case each year since 2022. This may be due to its relatively low proportion of maintained sector provision (see Section C). Higher prevalence of maintained sector provision (which is usually less expensive than that delivered by the PVI sector) can help moderate costs across a region. In addition, holiday childcare in Wales is frequently provided by early years settings such as nurseries, which tend to have higher fees than activity-based holiday clubs.

It is important to note that with small numbers of holiday childcare providers in an area, a single large provider's price adjustments or entry to/exit from the market can significantly impact average local costs.

Many different factors influence childcare costs across the nations and regions, including variations in the local economies as well as local demand for holiday childcare. These fluctuations make it difficult for families to plan for the childcare they need around work and other responsibilities. This highlights the important role local authorities play in ensuring that parents, carers and families have access to clear and accurate information about the high-quality holiday childcare provision available in their local area.

C. Difference in holiday childcare costs between maintained and private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector provision

Table 4. Difference between average costs in maintained and PVI sector, by nation

Nation	Maintained sector	PVI sector	Percentage difference in cost - PVI vs maintained*	Percentage of holiday clubs that are maintained sector
Great Britain	£149.99	£206.43	+38%	10%
England	£149.00	£204.89	+38%	10%
Scotland	£164.50	£189.90	+15%	13%
Wales	£182.64	£243.20	+33%	1%

* This indicates that PVI provision is X% more expensive than maintained provision.

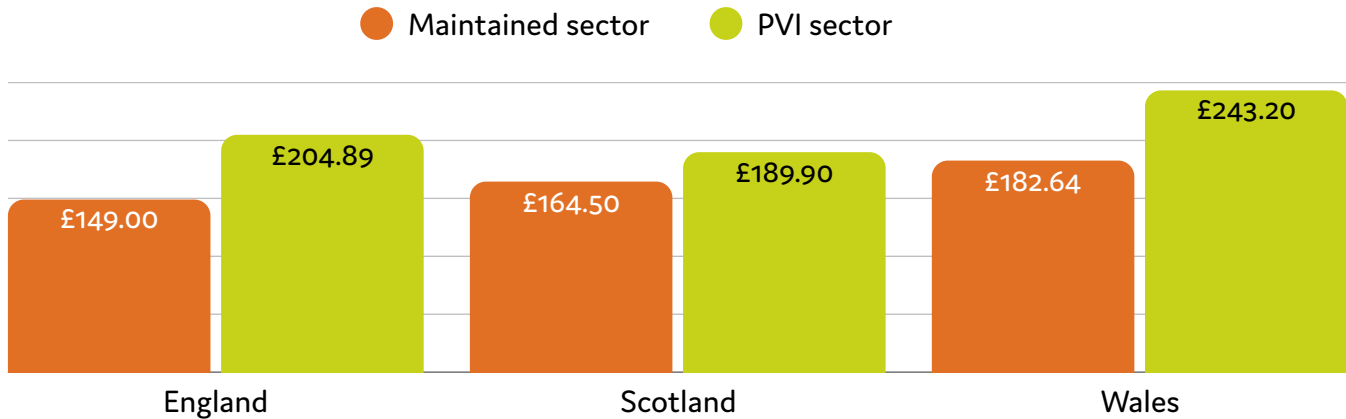
In all three nations, average holiday club costs in the PVI sector are higher than average costs in the maintained sector (see Table 4). In Great Britain as a whole, PVI holiday clubs are 38% more expensive than maintained sector holiday clubs. The cost differences between the maintained and PVI clubs may partially stem from factors like subsidies (funding from local authorities) and lower running costs for maintained sector holiday clubs which have access to buildings and equipment at reduced rates. Some PVI providers may offer more specialist activities for children, leading to higher costs.

England reports the most substantial difference in costs between sectors; PVI club costs are 38% higher than maintained sector costs on average. In Wales, PVI costs are 33% higher than maintained sector costs. In contrast to last year’s findings when Scotland had the largest difference, Scotland now has the smallest percentage difference; PVI costs are 15% higher than maintained sector costs.

Table 4 also shows the percentage of holiday childcare provision that is delivered by the maintained sector. Wales has the lowest proportion of provision delivered by the maintained sector at 1% (down from 7% last year, and 3% the year preceding that), while Scotland has the highest at 13%. In England, it is 10%. It is important to note that some of this volatility may be due to differing local authorities responding to the survey this year compared to last.

The cost of a place in a maintained sector holiday club is lowest in England (£149 per week) and highest in Wales (£182.64 per week). While the cost of a place in a PVI sector holiday club is lowest in Scotland (£189.90 per week) and highest in Wales (£243.20 per week). While maintained sector clubs are more affordable for families, parents and carers in many areas will struggle to secure a place as maintained clubs are a small proportion of provision.

Figure 2. Cost difference between average costs in maintained and PVI sector, by nation



D. Holiday childcare costs compared to term time costs

Parents and carers who need holiday childcare during school breaks are likely to need after-school care during term time. For most of the year, these families will only buy childcare for the hours before [5] and after school days; whereas during school holidays they will need to purchase childcare for the full day, meaning costs are considerably higher.

In England, Scotland and Wales, the weekly cost of holiday clubs (both PVI and maintained sector) is substantially higher than the cost of after-school clubs (see Table 5).

- Across Great Britain, families need to find an additional £726.44 to pay for six weeks of holiday childcare. This difference in costs between after-school childcare during term time and holiday childcare highlights the substantial financial burden families can face during summer.
- In line with last year’s figures, parents and carers in Wales pay three times as much for six weeks of holiday childcare compared to after-school care, with six weeks of holiday childcare costing £895.70 more than after-school provision during term time.

Despite some easing of inflation, many families continue to face financial strain and pressures from high costs of living. For families with school-age children, the substantial rise in childcare costs during the school holiday periods, compared with term time, exacerbates this financial burden, making it harder for many parents and carers to balance work and family life.

Figure 3. Holiday childcare costs compared to after-school club costs

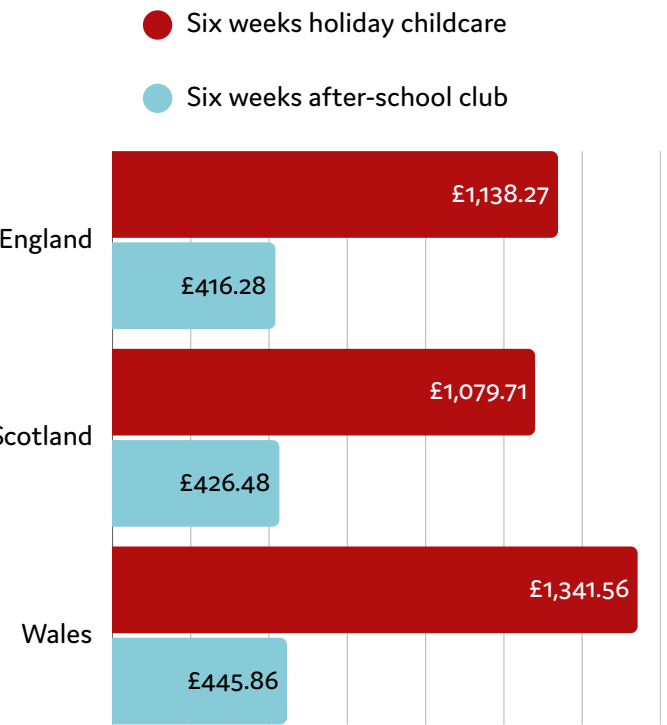


Table 5. Holiday childcare costs compared to after-school club costs

Nation	Holiday clubs (Maintained & PVI combined)	After-school club per week (from Childcare Survey 2026)	How much more 6 weeks of holiday club costs compared to 6 weeks of after-school childcare (shown as a multiple)	6 weeks holiday childcare	6 weeks after-school club	Difference
Great Britain	£190.77	£69.70	2.74	£1,144.64	£418.20	£726.44
England	£189.71	£69.38	2.73	£1,138.27	£416.28	£721.99
Scotland	£179.95	£71.08	2.53	£1,079.71	£426.48	£653.23
Wales	£223.59	£74.31	3.01	£1,341.56	£445.86	£895.70

[5] Some families will benefit from free breakfast clubs which may be available at their child’s school. The government reported in June 2026 that these are now operating in 1,250 schools in England. However, the sessions last for 30 minutes before the school day and this may not be sufficient for all families’ needs. Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/10-million-free-breakfasts-served-in-schools-across-country>

While parents using Tax-Free Childcare accounts can spread their expenses evenly throughout the year, by regularly contributing and drawing more during summer, those on Universal Credit will, in most cases, bear the higher upfront costs before they are repaid in arrears.

Government support with childcare costs, such as Tax-Free Childcare and the childcare element of Universal Credit, can only be used with provision that is registered with an official regulator (Ofsted in England, Care Inspectorate in Scotland, and Care Inspectorate Wales).

Many parents choose activity-based provision, such as sports, or drama clubs, to meet their childcare needs, particularly during the extended school holiday periods. However, activity-based providers and provision that care exclusively for older children are not always required to register with official regulators. As a result, families eligible for government-funded childcare support may face a more limited choice of providers and may be unable to access financial support for some forms of provision.

While childcare support is available for some parents in education or training, eligibility and access remain complex. Support varies according to factors such as the parent's age, the type of course or qualification being undertaken, and the policies of individual education or training providers, which can make navigating childcare support challenging.



2. Is there enough holiday childcare?

This section examines whether there is enough holiday childcare for different groups and discusses how this has changed in the last year. This is known legally as ‘childcare sufficiency’.

A. Sufficiency duties for local authorities

Local authorities are required to manage the market for childcare in their local area, which means they need to know whether enough childcare is available for key groups. The precise nature of these duties varies between the nations of Great Britain.

Because these duties vary in different parts of Great Britain, we present sufficiency data separately for the three nations. The data is based on local authorities’ assessments at the time of the survey, which may differ from their published Childcare Sufficiency Assessments if the local situation has changed since this was last published.

Table 6 – Holiday childcare sufficiency in England, measured as the percentage of local authorities in England with sufficient childcare in each category

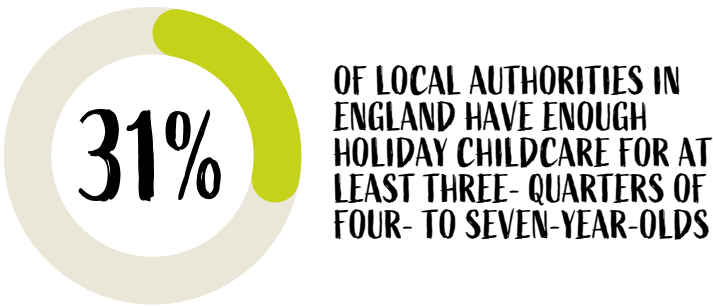
	For 100% of children	For 75% to 99% of children	For 50% to 74% of children	For 25% to 49% of children	For 24% or fewer children	Data not held or cannot tell	Total responses (out of 153 LAs in England)
Four- to seven-year-olds	8%	23%	10%	3%	3%	53%	144
8- to 11-year-olds	6%	22%	10%	4%	4%	54%	144
12- to 14-year-olds	1%	9%	8%	8%	5%	69%	144
Children and young people with SEND	1%	8%	11%	6%	8%	66%	144
Children of parents working full time (9am to 5pm on weekdays)	6%	18%	10%	1%	4%	60%	144
Children of parents working atypical hours (outside 9am to 5pm on weekdays)	2%	8%	8%	3%	8%	72%	144
Children living in rural areas	2%	10%	10%	1%	2%	73%	86

B. Holiday childcare sufficiency in England

In England, local authorities must perform an annual audit to assess their childcare sufficiency, including childcare for school-age children and young people up to age 14 (or 18 if they are disabled). This duty requires local authorities to consider the needs of individual children and families, such as children with disabilities and different types of families.

Local authorities in England report high levels of uncertainty about their holiday childcare provision; between 53% and 73% of local authorities reported ‘Data not held or cannot tell’ for each category of holiday childcare.

As shown in Table 6, more local authorities (31%) report having sufficient holiday childcare for at least three-quarters (75%) of children aged four to seven than for any other group. This is followed by 8- to-11-year-olds (28%) and children of parents working full time (24%).



It is important to note that most local authorities who answered this question did not know their sufficiency levels for these groups, with the percentage of ‘Data not held or cannot tell’ responses ranging from 53% for 4- to-7-year-olds to 60% for children of parents working full time. This high level of uncertainty partially explains why the figures are still relatively low, even for the categories with highest sufficiency.



Table 7 – Changes in holiday childcare sufficiency in England between 2025 and 2026, measured as the percentage of local authorities in England with sufficient childcare for at least three-quarters (75%) of children in each category

	75% or above (2026)	75% or above (2025)	Percentage point change, 2025-26
Four- to seven-year-olds	31%	37%	-6.4
8- to 11-year-olds	28%	31%	-3.2
12- to 14-year-olds	10%	9%	+1.4
Children and young people with SEND	9%	9%	+0.0
Children of parents working full time (9am to 5pm on weekdays)	24%	29%	-4.7
Children of parents working atypical hours (outside 9am to 5pm on weekdays)	10%	6%	+3.7
Children living in rural areas	12%	14%	-2.4

Very few local authorities say they have enough holiday childcare for at least three-quarters of children and young people with SEND (9%), children aged 12 to 14 (10%), or children whose parents work atypical hours (10%). However, it is important to note that these categories also had high percentages of ‘Data not held or cannot tell’ responses from local authorities (between 66% and 72%).

The proportion of local authorities (LAs) in England reporting sufficiency for at least three-quarters of children is similar to last year’s report for most categories (see Table 7).

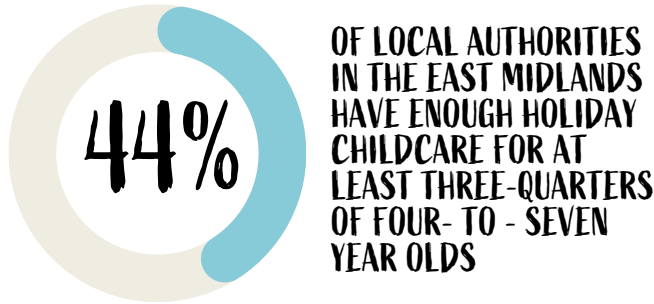
- The largest difference was for four- to-seven-year-olds, which fell from 37% of LAs reporting sufficient childcare (for at least three-quarters of children) in 2025 to 31% in 2026.
- The largest rise was for children of parents working atypical hours, where the percentage of LAs reporting sufficiency for at least three-quarters of children rose from 6% in 2025 to 10% in 2026.
- Sufficiency for children and young people with SEND remained low between 2025 and 2026, with only 9% of local authorities reporting that they have enough holiday childcare for this group. Uncertainty also remained high, with 66% answering ‘Data not held or cannot tell’.

Table 8 - Proportion of local authorities in England reporting sufficient holiday childcare for at least three-quarters (75%) of children in their area, regional

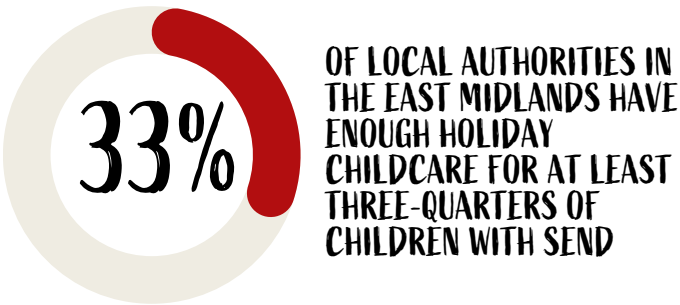
Region	4-7 year olds	8-11 year olds	12-14 year olds	Children and young people with SEND	Parents working full time (9am-5pm on weekdays)	Parents working atypical hours (outside 9am-5pm on weekdays)	Children in rural areas	Total responses
East Midlands	44%	44%	22%	33%	44%	22%	14%	9
East of England	40%	20%	10%	10%	30%	10%	0%	10
London, Inner	8%	17%	0%	0%	0%	0%	N/A	12
London, Outer	30%	20%	5%	0%	10%	10%	0%	20
North East	18%	9%	9%	0%	9%	9%	14%	11
North West	30%	30%	17%	17%	30%	13%	11%	23
South East	41%	47%	29%	12%	24%	12%	23%	17
South West	20%	13%	0%	0%	20%	0%	0%	15
West Midlands	31%	31%	0%	0%	38%	15%	14%	13
Yorkshire and the Humber	43%	43%	7%	21%	43%	7%	33%	14

As shown in Table 8, availability of holiday childcare varies widely across England and between categories of provision. This means that parents and carers may find it more difficult to access childcare depending on their location, or their child’s age or needs. It is important to note that there were high levels of ‘Data not held or cannot tell’ responses across all categories; the low levels of regional sufficiency primarily represent local authorities’ lack of information.

- Sufficiency of holiday childcare for four- to seven-year-olds is highest in the East Midlands, with 44% of local authorities (LAs) who responded to this question telling us they have sufficiency for at least three-quarters of children in their area.
- The East Midlands are closely followed by Yorkshire and the Humber (43%), the South East (41%), and the East of England (40%).

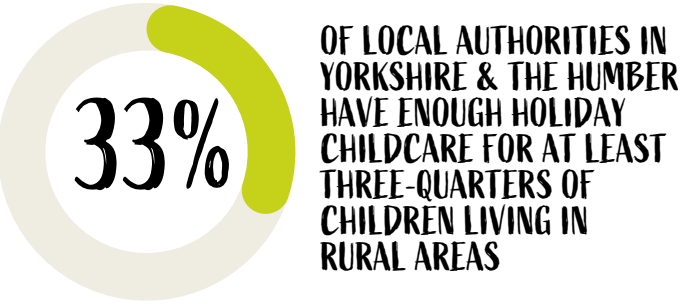


- The lowest level of sufficiency for this age group is found in Inner London, where only 8% of LAs report enough childcare for at least three-quarters of children.
- For 8- to 11-year-olds, the South East reports the highest levels of sufficiency, with 47% of LAs who responded saying that they have sufficiency for at least three-quarters of children in the region. The next highest levels of sufficiency were found in the East Midlands (44%) and Yorkshire and the Humber (43%).



- Holiday childcare sufficiency for young people aged 12 to 14 is low across all regions. Again, the South East reports the highest levels, with 29%, while no LAs in Inner London, the West Midlands, or the South West said they have enough holiday childcare for this group.

- Similarly, five regions in England – Inner and Outer London, the North East, the South West, and the West Midlands – have no LAs reporting enough childcare for at least three-quarters of children and young people with SEND. The highest levels for this category was seen in the East Midlands (33% of LAs).
- Holiday childcare sufficiency is much higher for children whose parents work full time than it is for children whose parents work atypical hours. The East Midlands report the highest levels of sufficiency for both groups



- Sufficiency of holiday childcare in rural areas is generally low. Yorkshire and the Humber have the highest sufficiency levels; 33% of LAs who responded in the region reported having enough holiday childcare for at least three-quarters of children living in rural areas.

C. Holiday childcare sufficiency in Scotland

The Scottish Government has committed to expanding access to childcare for children from 9 months until the end of primary school by the end of this parliamentary term. This will be 52 weeks a year, including holiday childcare. However, local authorities in Scotland do not have a general childcare sufficiency duty for school-age holiday childcare.

The absence of a requirement to monitor the supply of holiday childcare means that a high percentage of local authorities in Scotland often respond to the survey’s sufficiency questions with ‘Data not held or cannot tell’. This year, when local authorities were asked about holiday childcare sufficiency for different groups of children and young people in their area, between 88% and 96% of local authorities responded ‘Data not held or cannot tell’, depending on the category.

As this is a particularly high level of uncertainty, this year we have decided not to report on childcare sufficiency in Scotland, as there is simply not enough data from which to draw any meaningful conclusions about the actual availability of holiday childcare. It is important to note that ‘Data not held or cannot tell’ is not the same as low sufficiency; it is possible that there is good sufficiency in Scotland, but local authorities are unaware of it.

D. Holiday childcare sufficiency in Wales

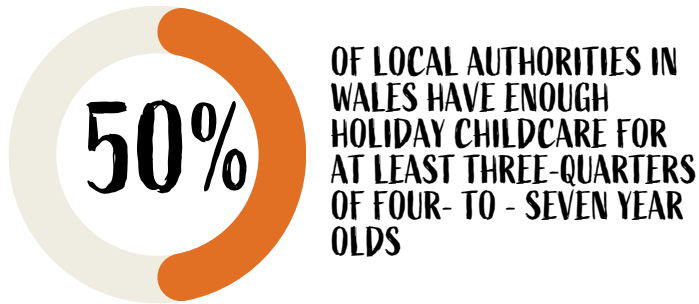
Welsh local authorities were first required to produce a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan in 2017 and every five years thereafter (most recently in 2022) and to report to the Welsh government annually through a progress update. This duty includes childcare for school-age children and young people up to age 14 (or 18 if they have a disability) and requires local authorities (LAs) to consider the needs of individual children and families, such as disabled children and different types of families.

While Wales has higher levels of certainty about holiday childcare sufficiency than both England and Scotland, many LAs still responded ‘Data not held or cannot tell’. As shown in Table 9, between 41% and 70% of LAs in Wales said ‘Data not held or cannot tell’ across the seven childcare categories. This may be partially explained by the length of time since LAs were last required to publish a full Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan. However, we were pleased to see these rates improve slightly since last year.

Table 9 - Holiday childcare sufficiency in Wales, measured as the percentage of local authorities with sufficient childcare in each category

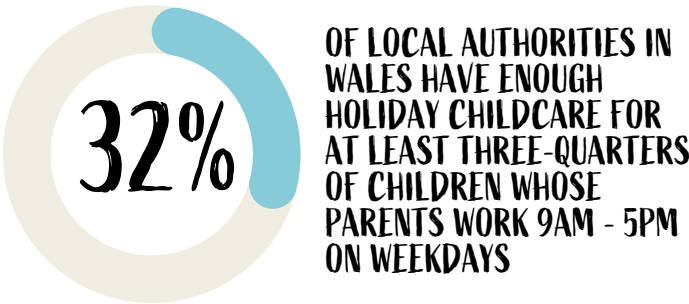
	For 100% of children	For 75% to 99% of children	For 50% to 74% of children	For 25% to 49% of children	For 24% or fewer children	Data not held or cannot tell	Total responses (out of 22 LAs in Wales)
Four- to seven-year-olds	0%	50%	9%	0%	0%	41%	22
8- to 11-year-olds	0%	36%	18%	0%	5%	41%	22
12- to 14-year-olds	5%	9%	0%	0%	27%	59%	22
Children and young people with ALN	0%	5%	18%	9%	9%	59%	22
Children of parents working full time (9am to 5pm on weekdays)	5%	27%	14%	9%	0%	45%	22
Children of parents working atypical hours (outside 9am to 5pm on weekdays)	0%	5%	5%	5%	32%	55%	22
Children living in rural areas	0%	10%	0%	10%	10%	70%	20

- The highest levels of holiday childcare sufficiency in Wales are for four- to seven-year-olds; 50% of LAs told us they have enough holiday childcare for at least three-quarters of children in this age group.
- 36% of LAs report enough holiday childcare for at least three-quarters of 8- to 11-year-olds, and 14% report having enough holiday childcare for at least three-quarters of 12- to 14-year-olds in their area.



- 32% of LAs report enough holiday childcare for at least three-quarters of children whose parents work full time.
- However, only 5% of LAs say they have enough holiday childcare for at least three-quarters of children and young people with additional learning needs (ALN) and children whose parents work atypical hours.

As with the other nations, it is important to note that there are still high levels of uncertainty about holiday childcare sufficiency in Wales across all categories, and so true levels of sufficiency may be higher than we report.



Holiday childcare sufficiency in Wales has remained relatively stable since our last report, as shown in Table 10.

- The biggest change in sufficiency was for 12- to 14-year-olds, where the percentage of LAs reporting sufficiency for at least three-quarters of children rose from 5% in 2025 to 14% in 2026.
- Sufficiency for four- to seven-year-olds also rose, from 47% in 2025 to 50% in 2026.
- For every other group, sufficiency fell slightly. The largest fall was for 8- to 11-year-olds, from 42% in 2025 to 36% in 2026.

Table 10 – Changes in holiday childcare sufficiency in Wales between 2025 and 2026, measured as the percentage of local authorities in Wales with sufficient childcare for at least three-quarters (75%) of children in each category

	75% or above (2026)	75% or above (2025)	Percentage point change, 2025-26
Four- to seven-year-olds	50%	47%	+3.0
8- to 11-year-olds	36%	42%	-5.6
12- to 14-year-olds	14%	5%	+8.6
Children and young people with ALN	5%	5%	-0.5
Children of parents working full time (9am to 5pm on weekdays)	32%	37%	-5.2
Children of parents working atypical hours (outside 9am to 5pm on weekdays)	5%	5%	-0.5
Children living in rural areas	10%	11%	-1.0

E. Number of holiday childcare providers and places

Table 11 - Proportion of local authorities reporting a change in number of holiday childcare providers since 2025 – Great Britain

	Maintained sector	PVI sector	Childminders
Increased	9%	29%	14%
Stayed the same	29%	25%	14%
Decreased	13%	22%	26%
No providers in either year	22%	1%	2%
Data not held or cannot tell	27%	24%	45%
Number of responses	197	198	195

Table 11 shows that local authorities in Great Britain report overall stability in the number of holiday childcare providers in the maintained sector. 29% of local authorities (LAs) who responded to our survey reported that the number has remained the same since 2025. 13% of LAs reported a decrease, compared with 9% who reported an increase. More than a fifth (22%) of LAs reported having no maintained providers in either year, with 27% responding 'Data not held or cannot tell'.

Meanwhile, the PVI sector shows considerably more volatility, with a similar proportion of LAs saying that the number of PVI providers in their area had increased (29%), stayed the same (25%), and decreased (22%).

Only one local authority said that they had no PVI providers in either year, while just under a quarter (24%) responded 'Data not held or cannot tell'.

The closure of settings in some areas could cause problems for families that rely on holiday childcare, and can result in longer travel time, a provision that their child does not know or enjoy, or more competition for a smaller number of places.

More than a quarter (26%) of LAs that responded to our question about childminders have seen a decrease in the number of childminders in their area. By comparison, only 14% of LAs said that the number of childminders in their area had increased since 2025, with the same percentage saying that numbers had stayed the same. There was more uncertainty around childminders than for holiday clubs, with 45% of LAs reporting 'Data not held or cannot tell'.

Table 12 - Proportion of local authorities reporting a change in number of holiday childcare places since 2025, by nation

	Great Britain	England	Scotland	Wales
Increased	26%	30%	10%	23%
Same as 2025	13%	13%	16%	9%
Decreased	16%	16%	6%	27%
Data not held or cannot tell	45%	41%	68%	41%
Total responses	197	144	31	22

Table 12 shows that across Great Britain, more LAs (26%) have reported an overall increase in the total number of holiday childcare places in their area since 2025 than have reported that places have stayed the same (13%) or decreased (16%).

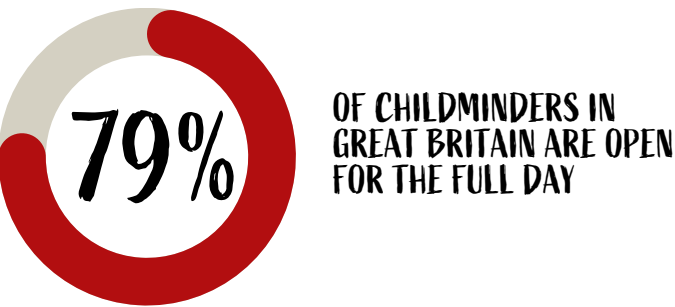
- This is largely driven by England, where 30% of LAs report an increase in the number of places since 2025, compared to 13% reporting that the number of places has stayed the same and 16% reporting a decrease.
- By contrast, in Scotland only 10% of providers report an overall increase, compared to 16% where places stayed the same. Only 6% of LAs in Scotland reported a fall in the overall number of places.
- The figures from Wales show more volatility across the country, with slightly more LAs reporting a decrease (27%) in overall number of places since 2025 than an increase (23%), and only 9% reporting that total places have stayed the same.

However, the largest proportion of LAs across Great Britain (45%) say they do not know whether or how the number of holiday childcare places has changed since 2025. Uncertainty is highest in Scotland, where 68% of LAs responded ‘Data not held or cannot tell’, compared to 41% for both England and Wales.

F. Holiday childcare opening times and holiday periods

Families may need holiday childcare to be available throughout the typical working day. Table 13 illustrates what proportion of holiday clubs are open for the full day (8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday).

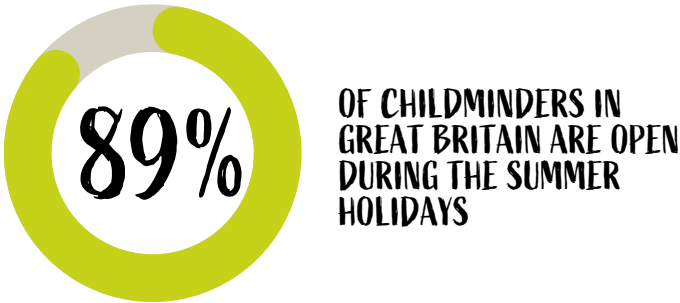
Across Great Britain, holiday clubs in the PVI sector are more likely to be open for a full day (59% of settings) than holiday clubs in the maintained sector (43% of settings), but childminders are more likely to be open for a full day (79% of settings) than either type of holiday club.



Holiday clubs in Scotland (81%) are more likely to be open for a full day than in Wales (76%), and both are much more likely to be open for a full day than in England (53%). In Wales, PVI sector holiday provision is much more likely to be open for a full day (77%) compared to maintained sector holiday clubs (25%).

Families may need holiday childcare for different school holidays throughout the year, from the long summer break to teacher training days. Table 14 shows that the availability of childcare varies significantly across Great Britain depending on the type of provider and holiday period.

- Across Great Britain, childminders are the setting type most likely to be open during all school holidays, with 89% of childminders open during the summer holidays, 87% open over Easter, 88% open for half terms, and 78% open during teacher training days. Almost three-quarters of childminders (72%) are open over Christmas, compared to just over half (51%) of holiday clubs (see Table 14).



- More settings are open in summer (86% of holiday clubs; 89% of childminders) and Easter (81% of holiday clubs; 87% of childminders) than other holidays.
- Half terms are also relatively well-catered for, with 75% of holiday clubs and 88% of childminders open in these holidays.
- Coverage is much lower during teacher training days, with only 42% of holiday clubs and 78% of childminders being open, and over the Christmas holidays (51% of holiday clubs; 72% of childminders).

Table 13 - Proportion of settings open for the full day (8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday) in school holidays, by nation and type of setting

Nation	Maintained Sector	PVI sector	All holiday clubs (maintained and PVI sector combined)	Childminders
Great Britain	43%	59%	57%	79%
England	42%	55%	53%	79%
Scotland	73%	82%	81%	91%
Wales	25%	77%	76%	80%

Table 14 - Proportion of childcare settings open in each school holiday, Great Britain

	Summer	Easter	Christmas	Half term	Teacher training days
Maintained sector	87%	76%	34%	72%	35%
Private, voluntary, and independent sector	86%	81%	52%	75%	43%
All holiday clubs (maintained & PVI combined)	86%	81%	51%	75%	42%
Childminders	89%	87%	72%	88%	78%



Opening times for providers in England are very similar to those across Great Britain as a whole, as shown in Table 15. As with Great Britain, childminders are the most likely provider type to be open across all holidays. Similarly, in England, the summer and Easter holidays have the most providers open, while teacher training days and the Christmas holidays have the least. In general, England has lowest coverage of all the nations across all holidays, other than during Christmas where more providers are open in England than in Scotland.

Scotland has very high coverage over the summer holidays, with at least 90% of all providers open, as shown in Table 16. Coverage is also high during the Easter break and half term holidays, but coverage for Christmas is very low. Childminders are more likely to be open across all holidays than holiday clubs, other than for Christmas.

Similar to Scotland, coverage in Wales is very high over the summer and Easter holidays, with at least 90% of all providers open for both (see Table 17). Coverage for half terms is also high, with Christmas being lower (but significantly higher than in Scotland). As in Scotland, Welsh providers are more likely to be open across all school holidays than in England.

Holiday clubs in Wales (both PVI and maintained) are more likely to be open in the summer and Easter holidays than childminders, while childminders are more likely to be open over Christmas, half terms, and teacher training days.

Table 15 - Proportion of childcare settings open in each school holiday, England

	Summer	Easter	Christmas	Half term	Teacher training days
Maintained sector	86%	73%	38%	70%	33%
Private, voluntary, and independent sector	84%	79%	53%	72%	32%
All holiday clubs (maintained & PVI combined)	85%	79%	51%	72%	32%
Childminders	88%	87%	73%	88%	77%

Table 16 - Proportion of childcare settings open in each school holiday, Scotland

	Summer	Easter	Christmas	Half term	Teacher training days
Maintained sector	100%	98%	2%	93%	61%
Private, voluntary, and independent sector	90%	85%	25%	84%	82%
All holiday clubs (maintained & PVI combined)	92%	87%	22%	85%	79%
Childminders	99%	98%	20%	98%	98%

Table 17 - Proportion of childcare settings open in each school holiday, Wales

	Summer	Easter	Christmas	Half term	Teacher training days
Maintained sector	100%	100%	13%	88%	25%
Private, voluntary, and independent sector	95%	93%	64%	89%	79%
All holiday clubs (maintained & PVI combined)	95%	93%	64%	89%	78%
Childminders	91%	90%	67%	91%	88%



Conclusion

The Holiday Childcare Survey 2026 finds that school holidays are an increasingly expensive time for families who rely on childcare for work, with the long summer break posing the biggest challenge.

Current government investment in childcare is higher than it has ever been, particularly in England. Most of the investment is in expanded childcare entitlements for early years children but has also included funding and initiatives in wraparound childcare for school-aged children, the expansion of school-based nurseries and the introduction of free breakfast clubs. This investment is very welcome, and parents of under-fives frequently tell us of the positive impact the entitlements have had on their childcare bills. However, this is not the experience of parents with school-aged children, whose costs are only going up every school holiday.

Again, this year we find that availability of holiday childcare places is a largely unknown quantity, with local authorities frequently unable to say whether they have enough holiday childcare. Whilst updating our questions to ask for more detailed information (in 2025) contributed to an increase in uncertainty; sufficiency information has always been low for holiday childcare. In contrast, we see much better rates of certainty reported for early years children in our Childcare Survey [6] (last published in March 2026), despite those questions being even more detailed, and contrary to the sufficiency duty applying to children of all ages in England and Wales.

Local authorities continue to report extremely low levels of holiday childcare sufficiency for children and young people with SEND. Holiday childcare providers need support to develop inclusive practice so that more children, including those with additional needs, can access high-quality holiday clubs and activities in their local area.

In our second year of including data on holiday childcare provided by childminders, we found that childminders continue to be more likely to be open during all school holidays than holiday clubs, and much more likely to be open for a full day, though they are universally more expensive.

If we are to ease the annual summer stress for families, there must be an acknowledgement that childcare is a year-round requirement, and action must be taken to ensure holiday childcare does not remain the poor cousin of early years childcare. Holiday childcare is essential for parents to take work and stay in work; and it gives children and young people fun, secure activity and opportunities while school is out.

[6] Childcare Survey 2026, Coram Family and Childcare. Source: <https://www.coramfamilyandchildcare.org.uk/research/childcare-survey-2026>

Areas for action

Coram Family and Childcare calls on Government to:

- Reinforce the statutory duty to secure sufficient holiday childcare, to ensure childcare provision is understood equally for all age groups in England and Wales. Introduce a duty to monitor sufficiency for school-age holiday childcare in Scotland.
- Allow upfront payments of the childcare element of Universal Credit during school holidays to alleviate the concentration of costs.
- Encourage increased holiday childcare provision to address gaps in sufficiency, increase parental choice and increase market competition.
- Extend the inclusive practice training and coaching offer of the new Experts at Hand service (launching in England in September 2026) to holiday childcare providers, to improve access for children with SEND.
- Support an increase in childminders to ensure holiday childcare is available to fit a range of parental working patterns.



Methodology

Note on terminology: holiday childcare refers to any childcare not provided by parents or main carers that is available for school-age children in the school holidays and is registered with Ofsted in England and the Care Inspectorates in Wales and Scotland.

Data collection

This report is based on surveys sent to Family Information Services at all upper tier local authorities in Great Britain. Respondents were able to fill in a form or reply online. The survey was initially sent in April 2026 and in the following month we sent Freedom of Information requests to those local authorities that had not responded, with a request to return within the statutory deadline. Data collection finished in June 2026.

Local authorities who responded without the need for a Freedom of Information request were promised that individual responses would not be published, with only regional/national averages provided in the report. This is consistent with previous surveys and we do it to encourage honest and accurate data reporting. When Freedom of Information requests are used, some local authorities automatically publish their own responses so we cannot make the same promise. However, we do not report these Freedom of Information individual responses in this report, nor do we say which responses were acquired through Freedom of Information requests.

Data sources

Average, maximum and minimum childcare costs are provided by local authorities rather than being calculated by Coram Family and Childcare from information directly given to Coram Family and Childcare by providers. Similarly, assessments of sufficiency are provided by local authorities rather than being based on data collected by the Coram Family and Childcare research team. Where possible, we have kept questions consistent with previous versions of the survey to allow for tracking over time.

Last year's survey introduced changes to a number of the questions that we ask. We did this to include childminders, reflecting their important place in the holiday childcare market, and to update terminology, to gather more detailed information, and to make the survey easier for respondents to complete. These changes meant that last year's survey did not include year-on-year comparisons for the changed questions. This year's survey asked the same questions as last year, and so we are able once again to compare to last year. We used slightly different surveys for local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales to reflect the different policy environments and terminology in the three nations.

Response rates

We received responses from 97% of local authorities in Britain. Regional response rates range from 89% to 100%. Some local authorities did not give data for all questions or gave data in a format that we could not use.

Data gaps and exclusions

Where local authorities have quoted their average or lowest weekly holiday childcare costs as zero or very low, these figures have been excluded. Low-cost provision is predominantly for a small cohort of children who meet eligibility criteria. Including this data would prevent us from achieving our aim to present a calculation and analysis of holiday childcare costs for the majority of families, who are not eligible for these subsidies. Where response rates for a question are particularly low and may have affected the reliability of the data, this is noted in the relevant section of the report.

Cost changes

The calculations for year-to-year changes in costs are based only on those local authorities who gave figures for both this year and last year. As a result, the overall cost figure will differ from the figure that would be reached simply by calculating the percentage change between this year's and last year's figures. These calculations also exclude cost data from local authorities where the change is greater than 50%, as this suggests an error in the data for the current or previous year. These measures are taken to provide a more representative and accurate figure for changes in cost than would be reached by simply calculating the difference between the overall figures for both years.

Weighting

In line with recent surveys, we have weighted cost data within regions and nations. This ensures that results from small local authorities that have relatively small child populations do not unduly influence overall results. Data are weighted against the age 5 to 14 population based on ONS midyear population estimates. Within local authorities, we have weighted cost data for PVI and maintained setting providers against the number of providers in that area. This is based on an assumption that the types of settings will have the same number of children on average. We have not included childminders in any weightings, as they typically have fewer places than maintained or PVI providers.





coram 
Family and Childcare

**Making change
happen and creating
better chances for
children, now and
forever.**



-  coramfamilyandchildcare.org.uk
-  [coramfamchild](https://twitter.com/coramfamchild)
-  [Coram Family and Childcare](https://www.facebook.com/CoramFamilyandChildcare)
-  [coramfamilyandchildcare](https://www.instagram.com/coramfamilyandchildcare)
-  [Coram Family and Childcare](https://www.youtube.com/CoramFamilyandChildcare)
-  [Coram Family and Childcare](https://www.linkedin.com/CoramFamilyandChildcare)

Coram Campus
41 Brunswick Square
London
WC1N 1AZ
Tel: 020 7239 7535
Registered Charity no: 1077444