

Quality in the Baby Room: A Policy Briefing on Group Size

February 2025

The research aims

This briefing is part of a three-part project titled ‘Achieving high-quality provision in the baby room of English nurseries’.

This project aims to kickstart the conversation about how we define, measure and support high-quality provision for children aged 0-2 years old in English nurseries.

The first strand of the research is a global evidence review.

What the research involved

Our global evidence review comprised analysis of 165 academic articles and 20 grey literature items, and focused on three key areas:

- Whether a definition or vision of quality is offered and, if so, in which terms
- How quality is measured
- Which suggestions are provided to support quality in the baby room

Supporting quality by regulating group size



A robust evidence base, detailed in the ‘Key literature’ section, demonstrates a strong connection between small group sizes and supporting high-quality practice in the baby room. Dalli et al. (2011) and Banghart et al. (2020) suggest a group size of no more than 6 – 8 babies as good practice.

Policy recommendation



In consultation with the sector, the government should introduce regulation of group size in the baby room which has been shown to significantly impact on process quality. This is particularly relevant as many baby rooms rapidly expand their provision.

Key literature

Banghart, P. et al. (2020) A review of the literature on access to high-quality care for infants and toddlers. *Child Trends*. https://cms.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/HighQualityCareLitReview_ChildTrends_May2020.pdf

Barros, S. et al. (2016) 'Infant child care quality in Portugal: Associations with structural characteristics', *Early childhood research quarterly*, 37, pp. 118–130. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2016.05.003>

Bjørnstad, E. and Os, E. (2018) 'Quality in Norwegian childcare for toddlers using ITERS-R', *European early childhood education research journal*, 26(1), pp. 111–127. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2018.1412051>

Dalli, C. et al. (2011) Quality early childhood education for under-two-year-olds: What should it look like? A literature review. New Zealand Ministry of Education. https://thehub.sia.govt.nz/assets/documents/41442_QualityECE_Web-22032011_0.pdf

Degotardi, S., Han, F. and Torr, J. (2018) 'Infants' experience with "near and clear" educator talk: individual variation and its relationship to indicators of quality', *International journal of early years education*, 26(3), pp. 278–294. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2018.1479632>

Helmerhorst, K.O.W., Colonnese, C. and Fukkink, R.G. (2019) 'Caregiver's Mind-Mindedness in Early Center-based Childcare', *Early education and development*, 30(7), pp. 854–871. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2019.1593076>

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For more information on the project, reports, and recommendations, visit thebabyroom.blog



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