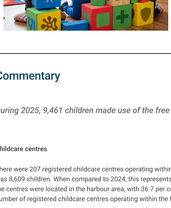
# Free Childcare Services: 2025

NR 210/2026 | Education | Release Date: 18/11/2026



News | Data | Methodology



## Salient Points

- In 2025, 207 childcare centres operated within the free childcare scheme, with a total licenced capacity of 8,609 children.
- A total of 9,461 children attended childcare centres within the free childcare scheme at some point during 2025, an increase of 2.0 per cent over the previous year.
- Average monthly attendance per child was highest in October, at 126.7 hours, and lowest in December, at 85.6 hours. These figures only cover attendance within the free childcare scheme and exclude any hours paid for out of pocket.

## Commentary

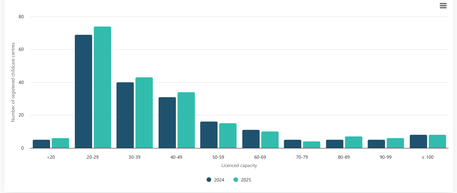
*During 2025, 9,461 children made use of the free childcare scheme across 207 registered childcare centres.*

### Childcare centres

There were 207 registered childcare centres operating within the free childcare scheme during 2025. The total licenced capacity across all the centres was 8,609 children. When compared to 2024, this represents an increase of 6.2 per cent in the number of centres and 5.5 per cent in capacity. Over half of the centres were located in the harbour area, with 36.7 per cent in the Northern Harbour and 21.7 per cent in the Southern Harbour. Gozo had the lowest number of registered childcare centres operating within the free scheme, accounting for 2.4 per cent of the total in 2025 (Table 1).

Most of the centres had a medium-sized capacity, accommodating between 30 and 59 children (44.4 per cent), while a further 38.6 per cent were classified as small, with a licenced capacity of less than 30. The distribution of centres by size remained consistent when compared to 2024. Private childcare centres outnumbered state-run centres, with 93.2 per cent of all centres in the free childcare scheme in 2025 being privately owned. In terms of capacity, however, state-run centres on average were larger than private centres with an average capacity of 70.6 compared to 39.5 (Tables 1 and 2).

**Chart 1. Number of registered childcare centres by licenced capacity**




Notes:
1. Results presented relate to centres that were registered under the free childcare scheme and that operated for at least one day during the reference year. This does not necessarily mean that all centres were in operation throughout the entire reference year.
2. For definitions of licenced capacity, average capacity and type of centre refer to methodological note 8.

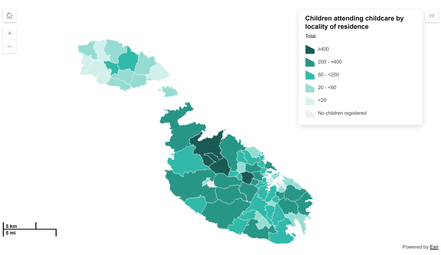
### Profile of children attending childcare

In 2025 a total of 9,461 children attended a childcare centre within the free childcare scheme, an increase of 2.0 per cent over the previous year. A little over half of the total children were boys (51.6 per cent). In terms of age at the end of the reference year, the highest share of children was aged 2 (34.0 per cent), followed by children aged 3 (31.6 per cent). The smallest share of children was aged less than 1 (7.4 per cent). The overall distribution by age has remained consistent when compared to 2024. Most children benefiting from the free childcare scheme in 2025 attended a privately owned centre (94.7 per cent), similar to that in 2024 (95.3 per cent) (Tables 3 and 4).

With regard to citizenship, the majority of children attending childcare centres under the free childcare scheme in 2025 were Maltese (73.4 per cent). 8.9 per cent of children attending childcare were other EU nationals, while a further 17.7 per cent were non-EU nationals (Tables 4 and 5).

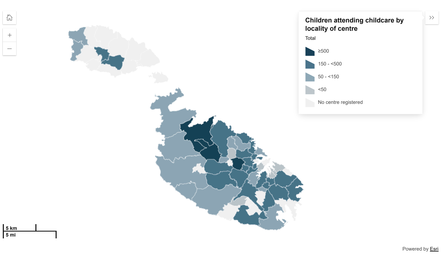
The largest share of children in free childcare in 2025 were residents of the Northern Harbour district (26.9 per cent) followed by the Northern district (21.9 per cent) (Table 4, Map 1).

**Map 1. Number of children attending childcare by locality of residence: 2025**




Not all children attended a childcare centre in the same district where they live. The highest share of children attending childcare in the same district where they live was in Gozo (98.2 per cent), followed by those residing in the Northern Harbour (89.0 per cent). On the other hand, only 57.1 per cent of those residing in the South Eastern district attended a childcare centre there. A further 29.0 per cent of those who were residing in the South Eastern district attended a childcare centre in the neighbouring Southern Harbour district (Table 6, Maps 1 and 2).

**Map 2. Number of children attending childcare by locality of childcare centre: 2025**



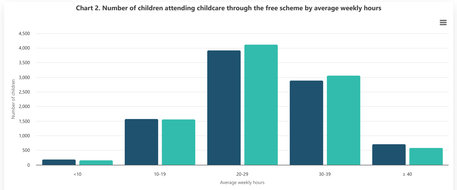

Note: In the case where a child attended more than one childcare centre during the year, the locality of centre where the child attended the highest number of hours is considered.

### Childcare centre attendance

Attendance can be classified as high or low intensity when considering the number of hours per day and number of days of attendance per year. Most children were classified as being high intensity users (66.5 per cent). This means they surpassed a threshold of two hours per day for 100 days in a year. The number of children classified as high intensity users increased by 5.2 per cent when compared to 2024 (Table 7).

In 2025, 43.5 per cent of children in free childcare were using the service for an average of 20-29 hours per week and a further 32.2 per cent were using the service for an average of 30-39 hours per week. In 2025, 79.1 per cent of Maltese children and 89.6 per cent of non-Maltese children attending a childcare centre attended for an average of 20 hours or more per week (Tables 8 and 9, Chart 2).

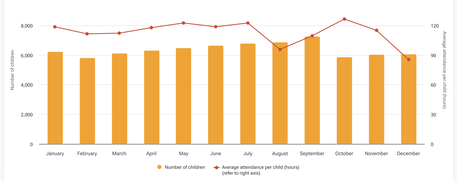
**Chart 2. Number of children attending childcare through the free scheme by average weekly hours**




Note: For more information on the calculation of the average weekly hours spent in childcare please refer to methodological note 8.

During the reference year, the number of children attending childcare was highest in September (7,264) and lowest in February (5,831). Average attendance per child peaked in October at 126.7 hours and was the lowest in December at 85.6 hours. Monthly patterns were consistent with those seen in 2024 (Table 10, Chart 3).

**Chart 3. Monthly childcare attendances through the free scheme: 2025**




Note: For more information on the calculation of the average hours attended per child please refer to methodological note 8.

In the morning, peak drop-off time was between 08:00 and 08:59 (37.0 per cent) while peak pick-up time in the afternoon was between 15:00 and 15:59 (23.3 per cent) (Chart 4)

**Chart 4. Drop-off and pick-up times at childcare centres: 2025**

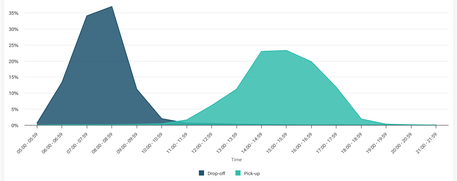


**Table 1. Profile of registered childcare centres**

| Characteristics | 2024 | | | 2025 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | Total capacity | Average capacity | No. | Total capacity | Average capacity |
| **District of centre** | | | | | | |
| Southern Harbour | 42 | 1,588 | 37.8 | 45 | 1,686 | 37.5 |
| Northern Harbour | 74 | 3,049 | 41.2 | 76 | 3,064 | 40.3 |
| South Eastern | 20 | 730 | 36.5 | 23 | 874 | 38.0 |
| Western | 22 | 1,020 | 46.4 | 22 | 1,020 | 46.4 |
| Northern | 33 | 1,588 | 48.1 | 36 | 1,690 | 46.9 |
| Gozo and Comino | 4 | 186 | 46.5 | 5 | 275 | 55.0 |
| **Licenced capacity** | | | | | | |
| Small (< 30) | 74 | 1,767 | 23.9 | 80 | 1,911 | 23.9 |
| Medium (30-59) | 87 | 3,541 | 40.7 | 92 | 3,719 | 40.4 |
| Large (≥ 60) | 34 | 2,853 | 83.9 | 35 | 2,979 | 85.1 |
| **Type of centre** | | | | | | |
| State | 12 | 810 | 67.5 | 14 | 989 | 70.6 |
| Private | 183 | 7,351 | 40.2 | 193 | 7,620 | 39.5 |
| **Total** | **195** | **8,161** | **41.9** | **207** | **8,609** | **41.6** |

Notes:

1. Results presented relate to centres that were registered under the free childcare scheme and that operated for at least one day during the reference year. This does not necessarily mean that all centres were in operation throughout the entire reference year.

2. For definitions of licenced capacity, average capacity and type of centre refer to methodological note 8.

**Table 2. Childcare centres by type of centre and licenced capacity**

| Licenced capacity | 2024 | | | 2025 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | State | Private | Total | State | Private | Total |
| | No. | | | | | |
| Small (< 30) | - | 74 | **74** | - | 80 | **80** |
| Medium (30-59) | 5 | 82 | **87** | 5 | 87 | **92** |
| Large (≥ 60) | 7 | 27 | **34** | 9 | 26 | **35** |
| **Total** | **12** | **183** | **195** | **14** | **193** | **207** |
| | Average capacity | | | | | |
| Small (< 30) | - | 23.9 | **23.9** | - | 23.9 | **23.9** |
| Medium (30-59) | 45.0 | 40.4 | **40.7** | 45.0 | 40.2 | **40.4** |
| Large (≥ 60) | 83.6 | 84.0 | **83.9** | 84.9 | 85.2 | **85.1** |
| **Total** | **67.5** | **40.2** | **41.9** | **70.6** | **39.5** | **41.6** |

Notes:

1. Results presented relate to centres that were registered under the free childcare scheme and that operated for at least one day during the reference year. This does not necessarily mean that all centres were in operation throughout the entire reference year.

2. For definitions of licenced capacity, average capacity and type of centre refer to methodological note 8.

**Table 3. Composition of children attending childcare through the free scheme**

| | Males | Females | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Total number of children attending during 2024** | **4,757** | **4,519** | **9,276** |
| - Children who exited childcare by end 2024 | 1,650 | 1,604 | 3,254 |
| + Children who entered childcare in 2025 | 1,771 | 1,668 | 3,439 |
| **Total number of children attending during 2025** | **4,878** | **4,583** | **9,461** |

Note: For more information on children who exited or entered during the reference years please refer to methodological note 8.

**Table 4. Profile of children attending childcare through the free scheme**

| Characteristics | 2024 | | 2025 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % |
| **Sex** | | | | |
| Males | 4,757 | 51.3 | 4,878 | 51.6 |
| Females | 4,519 | 48.7 | 4,583 | 48.4 |
| **Age** | | | | |
| Less than 1 | 668 | 7.2 | 704 | 7.4 |
| 1 | 2,589 | 27.9 | 2,557 | 27.0 |
| 2 | 3,046 | 32.8 | 3,215 | 34.0 |
| 3 | 2,973 | 32.1 | 2,985 | 31.6 |
| **Citizenship** | | | | |
| Maltese | 6,995 | 75.4 | 6,947 | 73.4 |
| Other EU | 858 | 9.2 | 843 | 8.9 |
| Non-EU | 1,417 | 15.3 | 1,670 | 17.7 |
| Unknown | 6 | 0.1 | 1 | 0.0 |
| **District of residence** | | | | |
| Southern Harbour | 1,323 | 14.3 | 1,369 | 14.5 |
| Northern Harbour | 2,488 | 26.8 | 2,548 | 26.9 |
| South Eastern | 1,516 | 16.3 | 1,570 | 16.6 |
| Western | 1,399 | 15.1 | 1,397 | 14.8 |
| Northern | 2,088 | 22.5 | 2,073 | 21.9 |
| Gozo and Comino | 462 | 5.0 | 504 | 5.3 |
| **Type of centre** | | | | |
| State | 433 | 4.7 | 498 | 5.3 |
| Private | 8,843 | 95.3 | 8,963 | 94.7 |
| **Attendance intensity** | | | | |
| High intensity | 5,983 | 64.5 | 6,292 | 66.5 |
| Low intensity | 3,293 | 35.5 | 3,169 | 33.5 |
| **Total** | **9,276** | **100.0** | **9,461** | **100.0** |

Notes:

1. Age is calculated as at 31st December of the reference year.

2. Children's locality of residence and citizenship is reported as recorded by Jobsplus. Please refer to methodological notes 6 and 7.

3. Intensity refers to an attendance threshold of 2 hours per day for 100 days per year, where high intensity refers to attendance above this threshold and low intensity refers to attendance below this threshold. For more information please refer to methodological note 8.

4. In the case where a child attended more than one childcare centre during the year, the type of centre where the child attended the highest number of hours is considered.

**Table 5. Children attending childcare through the free scheme by citizenship**

| Citizenship | 2024 | | 2025 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % |
| **Maltese** | **6,995** | **75.4** | **6,947** | **73.4** |
| **Other EU** | **858** | **9.2** | **843** | **8.9** |
| *of which:* | | | | |
| Italian | 376 | 4.1 | 359 | 3.8 |
| Bulgarian | 64 | 0.7 | 67 | 0.7 |
| Spanish | 47 | 0.5 | 48 | 0.5 |
| French | 47 | 0.5 | 47 | 0.5 |
| Romanian | 44 | 0.5 | 42 | 0.4 |
| **Non-EU** | **1,417** | **15.3** | **1,670** | **17.7** |
| *of which:* | | | | |
| Indian | 272 | 2.9 | 384 | 4.1 |
| Filipino | 322 | 3.5 | 383 | 4.0 |
| Serbian | 184 | 2.0 | 159 | 1.7 |
| Albanian | 118 | 1.3 | 150 | 1.6 |
| Nepalese | 64 | 0.7 | 113 | 1.2 |
| **Unknown** | **6** | **0.1** | **1** | **0.0** |
| **Total** | **9,276** | **100.0** | **9,461** | **100.0** |

Note: Children's citizenship is reported as recorded by Jobsplus. Please refer to methodological note 7.

**Table 6. Children attending childcare through the free scheme by district of childcare centre and district of residence: 2025**

| District | | Childcare centre | | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Southern Harbour | Northern Harbour | South Eastern | Western | Northern | Gozo and Comino | |
| | | No. | | | | | | |
| Residence | Southern Harbour | 1,065 | 155 | 115 | 18 | 16 | - | **1,369** |
| | Northern Harbour | 106 | 2,268 | 11 | 70 | 93 | - | **2,548** |
| | South Eastern | 455 | 140 | 896 | 62 | 17 | - | **1,570** |
| | Western | 49 | 314 | 17 | 893 | 124 | - | **1,397** |
| | Northern | 24 | 335 | 6 | 136 | 1,571 | 1 | **2,073** |
| | Gozo and Comino | - | 3 | - | 2 | 4 | 495 | **504** |
| | | % (row) | | | | | | |
| Residence | Southern Harbour | 77.8 | 11.3 | 8.4 | 1.3 | 1.2 | - | **100.0** |
| | Northern Harbour | 4.2 | 89.0 | 0.4 | 2.7 | 3.6 | - | **100.0** |
| | South Eastern | 29.0 | 8.9 | 57.1 | 3.9 | 1.1 | - | **100.0** |
| | Western | 3.5 | 22.5 | 1.2 | 63.9 | 8.9 | - | **100.0** |
| | Northern | 1.2 | 16.2 | 0.3 | 6.6 | 75.8 | 0.0 | **100.0** |
| | Gozo and Comino | - | 0.6 | - | 0.4 | 0.8 | 98.2 | **100.0** |

Notes:

1. Children's locality of residence is reported as recorded by Jobsplus.
2. In the case where a child attended more than one childcare centre during the year, the district of the centre where the child attended the highest number of hours is considered.

**Table 7. Profile of children attending childcare with high intensity[1] through the free scheme**

| Characteristics | 2024 | | 2025 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % |
| **Sex** | | | | |
| Males | 3,058 | 51.1 | 3,229 | 51.3 |
| Females | 2,925 | 48.9 | 3,063 | 48.7 |
| **Age** | | | | |
| Less than 1 | 95 | 1.6 | 96 | 1.5 |
| 1 | 1,550 | 25.9 | 1,575 | 25.0 |
| 2 | 2,524 | 42.2 | 2,732 | 43.4 |
| 3 | 1,814 | 30.3 | 1,889 | 30.0 |
| **Citizenship** | | | | |
| Maltese | 4,504 | 75.3 | 4,616 | 73.4 |
| Other EU | 553 | 9.2 | 578 | 9.2 |
| Non-EU | 922 | 15.4 | 1,098 | 17.5 |
| Unknown | 4 | 0.1 | - | - |
| **District of residence** | | | | |
| Southern Harbour | 888 | 14.8 | 920 | 14.6 |
| Northern Harbour | 1,661 | 27.8 | 1,712 | 27.2 |
| South Eastern | 953 | 15.9 | 1,051 | 16.7 |
| Western | 909 | 15.2 | 928 | 14.7 |
| Northern | 1,322 | 22.1 | 1,399 | 22.2 |
| Gozo and Comino | 250 | 4.2 | 282 | 4.5 |
| **Type of centre** | | | | |
| State | 269 | 4.5 | 302 | 4.8 |
| Private | 5,714 | 95.5 | 5,990 | 95.2 |
| **Total** | **5,983** | **100.0** | **6,292** | **100.0** |

[1] Intensity refers to an attendance threshold of 2 hours per day for 100 days per year, where high intensity refers to attendance above this threshold and low intensity refers to attendance below this threshold. For more information please refer to methodological note 8.

Notes:

1. Age is calculated as at 31st December of the reference year.

2. Children's locality of residence and citizenship is reported as recorded by Jobsplus. Please refer to methodological notes 6 and 7.

3. In the case where a child attended more than one childcare centre during the year, the type of centre where the child attended the highest number of hours is considered.

**Table 8. Children attending childcare through the free scheme by age and average weekly hours: 2025**

| Hours per week | Age | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Less than 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | |
| | No. | | | | |
| **< 10** | 30 | 41 | 43 | 46 | **160** |
| **10-19** | 131 | 450 | 478 | 492 | **1,551** |
| **20-29** | 293 | 1,129 | 1,392 | 1,300 | **4,114** |
| **30-39** | 222 | 794 | 1,110 | 924 | **3,050** |
| **≥ 40** | 28 | 143 | 192 | 223 | **586** |
| **Total** | **704** | **2,557** | **3,215** | **2,985** | **9,461** |
| | % (column) | | | | |
| **< 10** | 4.3 | 1.6 | 1.3 | 1.5 | **1.7** |
| **10-19** | 18.6 | 17.6 | 14.9 | 16.5 | **16.4** |
| **20-29** | 41.6 | 44.2 | 43.3 | 43.6 | **43.5** |
| **30-39** | 31.5 | 31.1 | 34.5 | 31.0 | **32.2** |
| **≥ 40** | 4.0 | 5.6 | 6.0 | 7.5 | **6.2** |
| **Total** | **100.0** | **100.0** | **100.0** | **100.0** | **100.0** |

Notes:

1. Age is calculated as at 31st December of the reference year.
2. For more information on the calculation of the average weekly hours spent in childcare please refer to methodological note 8.

**Table 9. Children attending childcare through the free scheme by citizenship and average weekly hours: 2025**

| Hours per week | Citizenship | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Maltese | Foreign | |
| | No. | | |
| **< 10** | 122 | 38 | **160** |
| **10-19** | 1,328 | 223 | **1,551** |
| **20-29** | 3,299 | 815 | **4,114** |
| **30-39** | 1,881 | 1,169 | **3,050** |
| **≥ 40** | 317 | 269 | **586** |
| **Total** | **6,947** | **2,514** | **9,461** |
| | % (column) | | |
| **< 10** | 1.8 | 1.5 | **1.7** |
| **10-19** | 19.1 | 8.9 | **16.4** |
| **20-29** | 47.5 | 32.4 | **43.5** |
| **30-39** | 27.1 | 46.5 | **32.2** |
| **≥ 40** | 4.6 | 10.7 | **6.2** |
| **Total** | **100.0** | **100.0** | **100.0** |

Notes:

1. Children's citizenship is reported as recorded by Jobsplus. Please refer to methodological note 7.

2. For more information on the calculation of the average weekly hours spent in childcare please refer to methodological note 8.

**Table 10. Average hours of attendance through the free scheme per child by month**

| Month | No. of children | Total hours spent in childcare | Average hours attended per child |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **2025** | | |
| January | 6,237 | 740,737 | 118.8 |
| February | 5,831 | 651,240 | 111.7 |
| March | 6,123 | 688,224 | 112.4 |
| April | 6,316 | 745,533 | 118.0 |
| May | 6,501 | 797,595 | 122.7 |
| June | 6,668 | 792,743 | 118.9 |
| July | 6,807 | 835,551 | 122.7 |
| August | 6,877 | 659,173 | 95.9 |
| September | 7,264 | 796,703 | 109.7 |
| October | 5,872 | 744,013 | 126.7 |
| November | 6,045 | 697,000 | 115.3 |
| December | 6,079 | 520,202 | 85.6 |
| | **2024** | | |
| January | 5,897 | 694,008 | 117.7 |
| February | 5,456 | 639,562 | 117.2 |
| March | 5,726 | 603,803 | 105.4 |
| April | 5,956 | 732,980 | 123.1 |
| May | 6,178 | 798,039 | 129.2 |
| June | 6,320 | 691,503 | 109.4 |
| July | 6,447 | 803,359 | 124.6 |
| August | 6,570 | 666,764 | 101.5 |
| September | 6,956 | 761,515 | 109.5 |
| October | 5,723 | 783,668 | 136.9 |
| November | 5,908 | 728,499 | 123.3 |
| December | 5,937 | 498,608 | 84.0 |

Note: For more information on the calculation of the average hours attended per child please refer to methodological note 8.

# Methodological Notes

1. Data in this news release pertains to children attending childcare centres in 2024 and 2025 through the Free Childcare Scheme. During these reference years, the Free Childcare Scheme was available to all parents or guardians who were employed or pursuing their education, and who had children aged between 0 and 3 years, or until the child became eligible to attend Kinder 1, whichever came first. Further information on eligibility can be obtained from Jobsplus.

2. Data used for this release is sourced from Jobsplus registers twice a year.

3. The reference period for the information presented is from January to December of the reference year.

4. Results presented relate to centres that were registered under the free childcare scheme and that operated for at least one day during the reference year. This does not necessarily mean that all centres were in operation throughout the entire reference year.

5. Children are counted if they attended childcare through the free childcare scheme at least once during the reference year.

6. Children's locality of residence is reported as recorded by Jobsplus.

7. Children's citizenship is reported as recorded by Jobsplus. When the child's citizenship was not available, the citizenship of the parent or guardian was used.

8. Definitions:

- **Age** is calculated as at 31st December of the reference year.
- **Average capacity** is calculated by dividing the total licenced capacity of all registered childcare centres by the number of registered centres.
- **Average hours attended per child** is calculated by dividing the total hours spent in childcare during a given month by the number of children who attended childcare in that month.
- **Average weekly hours spent in childcare** is calculated by dividing the total hours of attendance in the year by the number of weeks in which the child attended childcare.
- **Children who entered childcare in 2025** refers to children who started attending childcare during 2025 and had not attended childcare in 2024.
- **Children who exited childcare by end 2024** refer to children who were attending childcare during 2024 but did not attend childcare during 2025.
- **Intensity**: Intensity refers to an attendance threshold of 2 hours per day for 100 days per year, where high intensity refers to attendance above this threshold and low intensity refers to attendance below this threshold. This threshold is defined in the international reporting guidelines of the UNESCO OECD Eurostat (UOE) joint data collection on education statistics.
- **Licenced capacity** refers to the maximum number of children that a childcare centre is licenced to accommodate during the reference year. For more information on childcare centre capacities, please refer to the registration criteria for early childhood education and care services issued by the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education.

  For the purposes of this news release, centres are categorised into three capacity groups:

  - *Small* centres: fewer than 30 children
  - *Medium* centres: 30-59 children
  - *Large* centres: 60 or more children

- **Type of centre** refers to the ownership of the childcare centre attended by the children, categorised as either state-owned or privately-owned.

9. More information relating to this release may be accessed at:

   Spatial divisions

10. References to this news release are to be cited appropriately. For guidance on access and re-use of data please visit our dedicated webpage.

11. A detailed news release calendar is available online.

12. For further assistance send your request through our online request form.