

# **Inspection of Early Childhood Education and care provision An International Review**

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# Abstract

## Background

In January 2022, the professional responsibility for educational and care services for children from 0 to 3 years of age was transferred from the Labor Branch at the Ministry of Economy and Industry to the Ministry of Education. Following this move, the Ministry of Education is currently in charge of all early childhood education and care services in Israel for children from 0 to 6 years of age. However, the expanded scope of early childhood education and care provision, in terms of age range and service types, involves numerous inspection challenges. In view of this, the Division for Early Childhood Education at the Ministry of Education commissioned the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute to review the policy, methods, and frameworks of inspection of early childhood education and care services in various countries.

## Goal

The goal of this review is to learn about inspection approaches to early childhood educational and care services, and the implementation of these approaches in various countries. This, with the aim of providing knowledge that will support the development of an inspection system for the early childhood education and care system in Israel – including an inspection policy (legislation, goals, and perceptions), inspection system structure, and inspection practices.

## Method

The review focused on the following countries: Australia, the UK, Ireland, Finland, and Norway. The review included up-to-date open-access sources, policy and legislation documents, publications of inspection organizations (including guides and inspection reports), websites of the inspection organizations, and academic literature.

## Findings and Insights

The structure of the educational systems in most of the reviewed countries reflects an objective to create an early childhood education and care continuum, while the reviewed countries differ in implementing various aspects of the continuum. This objective is also reflected in the inspection system, which comprises both early education and care age groups – from 0 to 3 and from 3 to 6 years of age – in the reviewed countries, except Ireland (which

has no continuum). Two main inspection models were found: (a) **inspection at a national level** – implemented in Australia, the UK, and Ireland, where the national inspection system is operated by an inspection organization under the auspices of a government ministry; (b) **inspection at a local level** – implemented in Norway and Finland, where inspection is done by the education providers themselves, under the responsibility of the local authorities. The relevant government ministry is in charge of establishing standards, monitoring local inspection (meta-regulation), and directly intervening in specific cases (through punitive measures and enforcement). All the reviewed countries are involved in developing clear, transparent quality standards or guidelines for both the education and care providers and the service recipients (the parents). While the reviewed countries share common inspection perceptions and approaches, only some of them have resolved certain related issues while others are still struggling to find solutions to issues such as the involvement of parents and children in inspection processes, development of tools and structured processes for self-inspection of the education frameworks, and training of inspectors.