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The number of private childcare providers has dropped by 362 in the last year, according to Scottish Conservative comparison of the latest Care Inspectorate data.

The figures show that the number of active childcare providers, including childminders, childcare agencies and nurseries, has dropped by 6 percent in the last year, from 6475 to 6113.

Specifically, the number of private nurseries and childcare agencies has dropped by 5 per cent, down from 1172 in 2017 to 1110 in 2018.

This comes after private childcare providers have warned the SNP that their shambolic plan to expand childcare is about to 'implode', leaving them on the brink of closure.

The Scottish Government's childcare expansion comes into force by 2020, when families will be entitled to 1140 hours per year of free early learning and childcare.

Alison Harris, Scottish Conservative children and young person spokesman said:

"The expansion of childcare cannot be delivered by the SNP without a massive increase in nursery provision, and yet private nurseries are in decline.

"This reduction in independent childcare providers totally undermines confidence that the SNP can deliver this policy.

"The SNP's shambolic approach is pushing the remaining nurseries to the brink.

"The SNP must work with independent childcare providers so that no family misses out on this crucial support.

"While the SNP might be content with headlines, families are depending on delivery."