

# Social Policies and Distributional Outcomes

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in a Changing Britain

## **The Conservative government's record on early childhood: policies, spending and outcomes May 2015 - pre-Covid-2020**

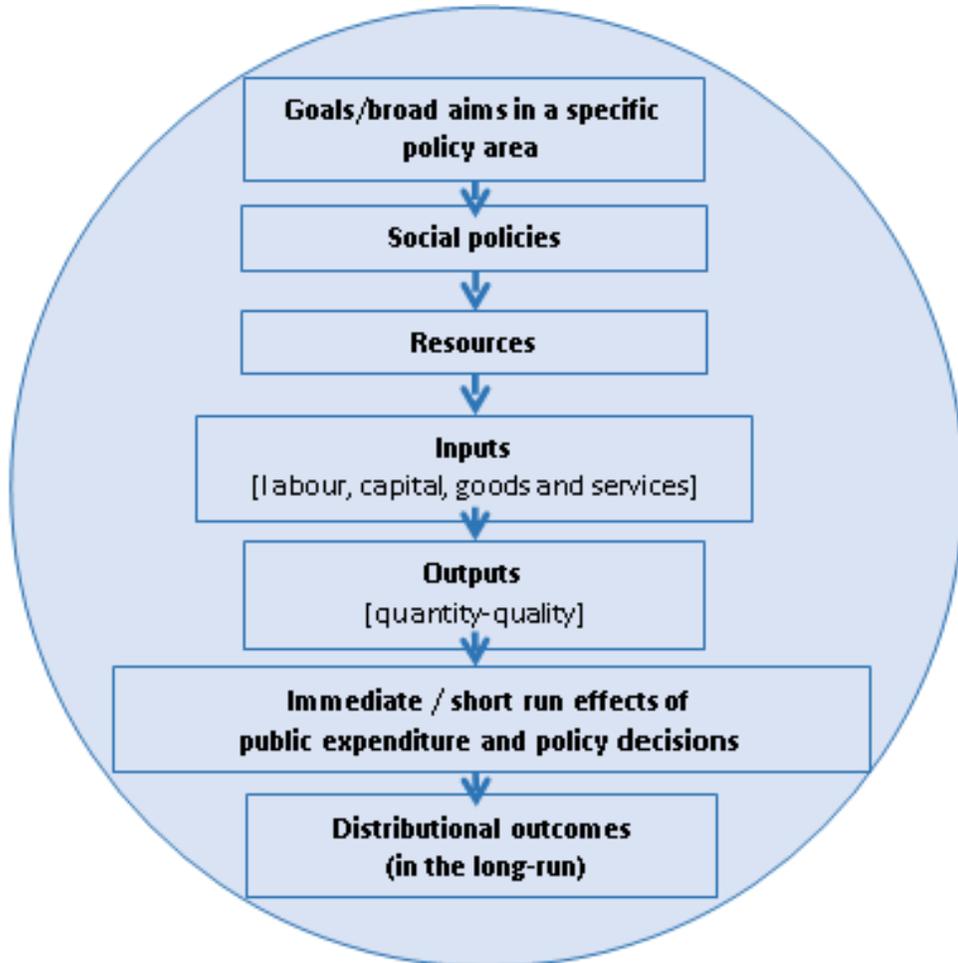
**Kitty Stewart and Mary Reader**

CASE seminar, 21 October 2020



# Background

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- SPDO: “What progress has been made in addressing social inequalities through social policies?”
- This paper:
  - Services and benefits for families with children under five
  - Focus mainly on England
  - Focus on distribution –particularly socio/economic
- Timetable:
  - Paper submitted for external review
  - After delays to access to NPD, further results to be added soon
- Today’s event:
  - Share and discuss findings to date

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# Inheritance in 2015

# Inheritance – overview

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- **Cross-party commitment in principle to the importance of the early years**
  - **Labour 1997-2010:** Steady expansion of and investment in services and support for young children & families
    - Significant growth in maternity and paternity benefits
    - Child-contingent cash benefits more than doubled
    - Spending on services for under fives quadrupled from a low base.
    - Service spending included Sure Start children's centres; introduction/expansion of free entitlement to part-time early education for 3- and 4-year-olds; some investment in reducing childcare costs for low-income households and improving childcare quality
  - **Coalition 2010-2015:**
    - Emphasis on social mobility and life chances
    - Roll-out of some high profile policies including extensions of free early education for disadvantaged two-year-olds (2010-2017); Early Years Pupil Premium (April 2015).
    - Introduction of Shared Parental Leave – more flexibility in how maternity leave is shared

# Inheritance – overview

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- But in practice families with young children experienced a 'double blow' of cuts to both benefits and services 2010-2015 (Stewart and Obolenskaya, 2015):
  - **Tax-benefit changes hit families with young children hardest**, including specific cuts to households with babies (Health in Pregnancy Grant and Baby Tax Credit abolished; Sure Start Maternity Grant reduced)
  - **Cuts to local authority budgets hit important services, especially Sure Start** and aspects of childcare quality (e.g. Graduate Leader Fund) - not helped by removal of ringfencing for both.
  - **Two-year-old places achieved within fairly stable budget** for early education, meaning squeeze per child for three- and four-year-olds
  - **Childcare element of WTC cut back** and thresholds (in practice) frozen.

# Inheritance – overview

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- A more instrumental approach to childhood 2010-15?
  - Department for Children, Schools and Families renamed Department for Education
  - Dismantling of Labour's 'Every Child Matters' (and its five broad outcomes) in favour of 'achieving two year olds'
  - "Great childcare" portrayed as key to "readying children for school and, eventually, employment" (DfE, 2013, p.5).
  - Changes to Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum to give greater focus to literacy and numeracy
- Shift away from universalism towards targeting (though not consistently)
  - New statutory guidance in 2013 on the 'core purpose' of Sure Start centres in 2013 stipulated that services should be targeted towards those with 'high need'
  - Extension of early education to disadvantaged two-year-olds, rather than all two-year-olds
  - Removal of Child Tax Credit and Child Benefit from middle/higher earners
  - BUT also cuts to targeted childcare support alongside introduction of tax-free childcare for middle/higher earners

# Inheritance – early child outcomes in 2015

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Some signs that progress in narrowing gaps under Labour was starting to stall

- Poverty was rising in households with a baby
- Progress in closing the social class gap in low birthweight was beginning to stall
- Progress in closing disadvantage gap in Early Years Foundation Stage Profile also showed signs of stalling

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# Goals and Policies 2015-2020

# Goals 2015-2020 – summary

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- Three manifestos (2015, 2017, 2019): not much attention to young children in any of them.
- Four main goals 2015-2020:
  - 1. Expanding childcare affordability:** 30 hours free childcare for 3- and 4-year-olds in working families; implementation of tax-free childcare
  - 2. Reducing spending on cash benefits:** £12bn welfare savings including large cuts for families with children
  - 3. Reducing child poverty and promoting social mobility:** 2015 manifesto promised to tackle child poverty by recognising “the root causes of poverty: entrenched worklessness, family breakdown, problem debt, and drug and alcohol dependency”. May’s ‘burning injustices’ speech and emphasis on early years in Opportunity Areas
  - 4. Tackling childhood obesity:** cited in all three manifestos, but policy commitments to provide clearer food information and reduce unhealthy ingredients were thin on detail.

# Policies 2015-2020 - overview

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- **Childcare and early education**

- **30 hours free childcare for 3- and 4-year-olds in working families** (September 2017)
  - An additional 15 hours/week free childcare where both parents earning the equivalent of 16 hours at minimum wage (but neither parent earns more than £100,000)
- **Implementation of Coalition policy of tax-free childcare** (2017)
  - Parents save to an online childcare account, for every £8 paid in, govt tops up £2, up to max subsidy £2,000/child/year (neither parent must earn more than £100,000)
- **Gradual implementation of more generous childcare support through Universal Credit**
  - 85% rather than 70% of costs covered under Child Tax Credit from 2011 (full UC rollout expected 2024)
- **School Nurseries Capital Fund**
  - £30 million made available to primary schools to create or expand a nursery class
- **Reforms to Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum**
  - revised Early Learning Goals further emphasise language and vocabulary development (rollout 2021)
- **Early Years National Funding Formula** (April 2017)
- **Early Years Workforce Strategy** (April 2017)

# Policies 2015-2020 - overview

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- **Child poverty strategy**

- Child Poverty Act 2010 became the Life Chances Act 2010 (Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016)
- All child poverty targets removed, along with requirement for child poverty strategies at national and local level. [[Scottish Parliament passes its own Child Poverty Act 2017](#)]

- **Taxes and transfers**

- 4-year cash freeze in working-age benefits (from April 2016; 2 years announced in manifesto, extra 2 in July 2015 budget)
- Axing of the family element in Child Tax Credit for families with first children born after 6 April 2017
- Lowering of the benefit cap to £20,000 (£23,000 in London) (November 2016)
- Introduction of the two-child limit in tax credits and Universal Credit (April 2017 - for new births from that date)
- BUT: Rise in the personal tax allowance from £10,000 to £12,500 and increases in National Minimum Wage

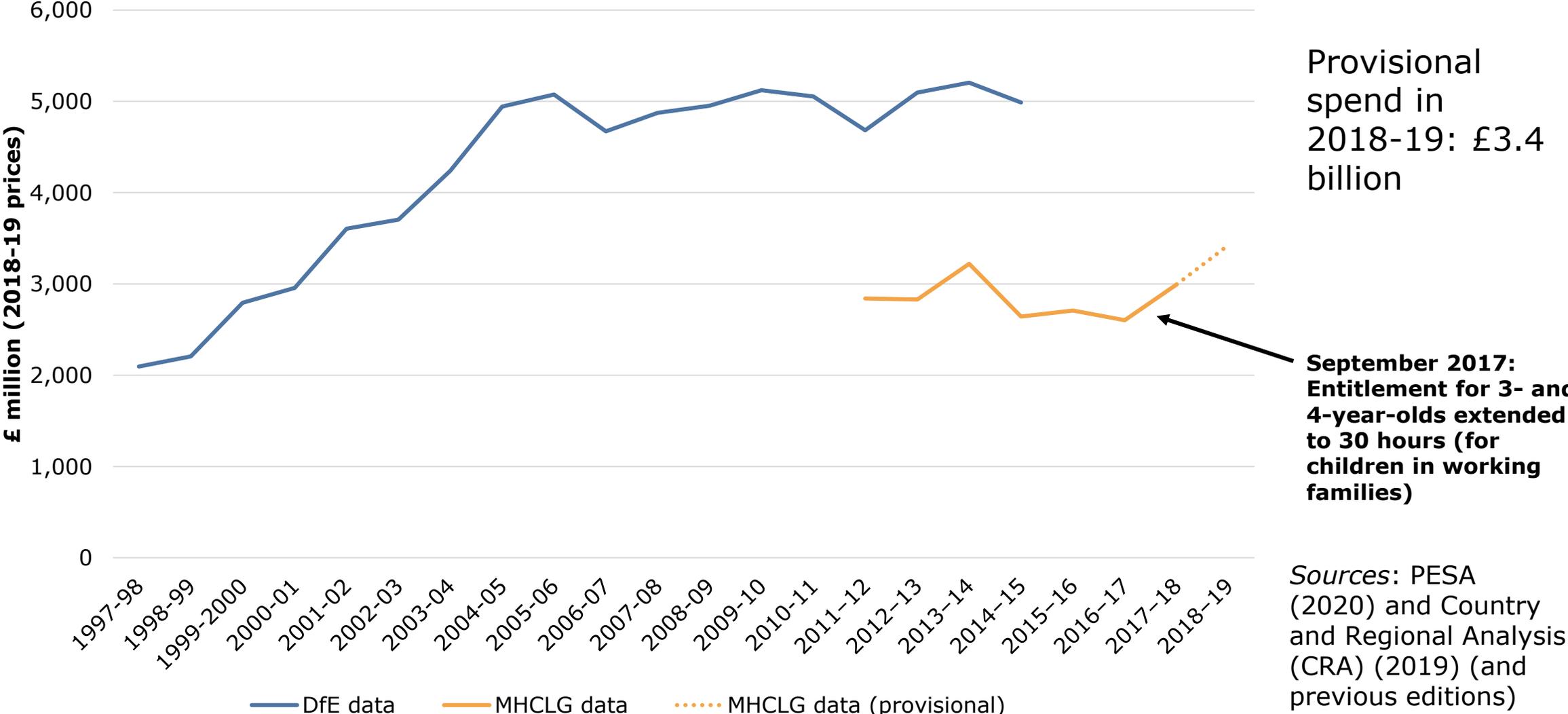
- **Increased conditionality for lone parents and second earners**

- Must be available for and actively seeking work: at age 3 (rather than 5)
- Must take active steps to prepare for work: at age 2 (rather than 3)
- Must attend a work-focused interviews: at age 1 (rather than 2)

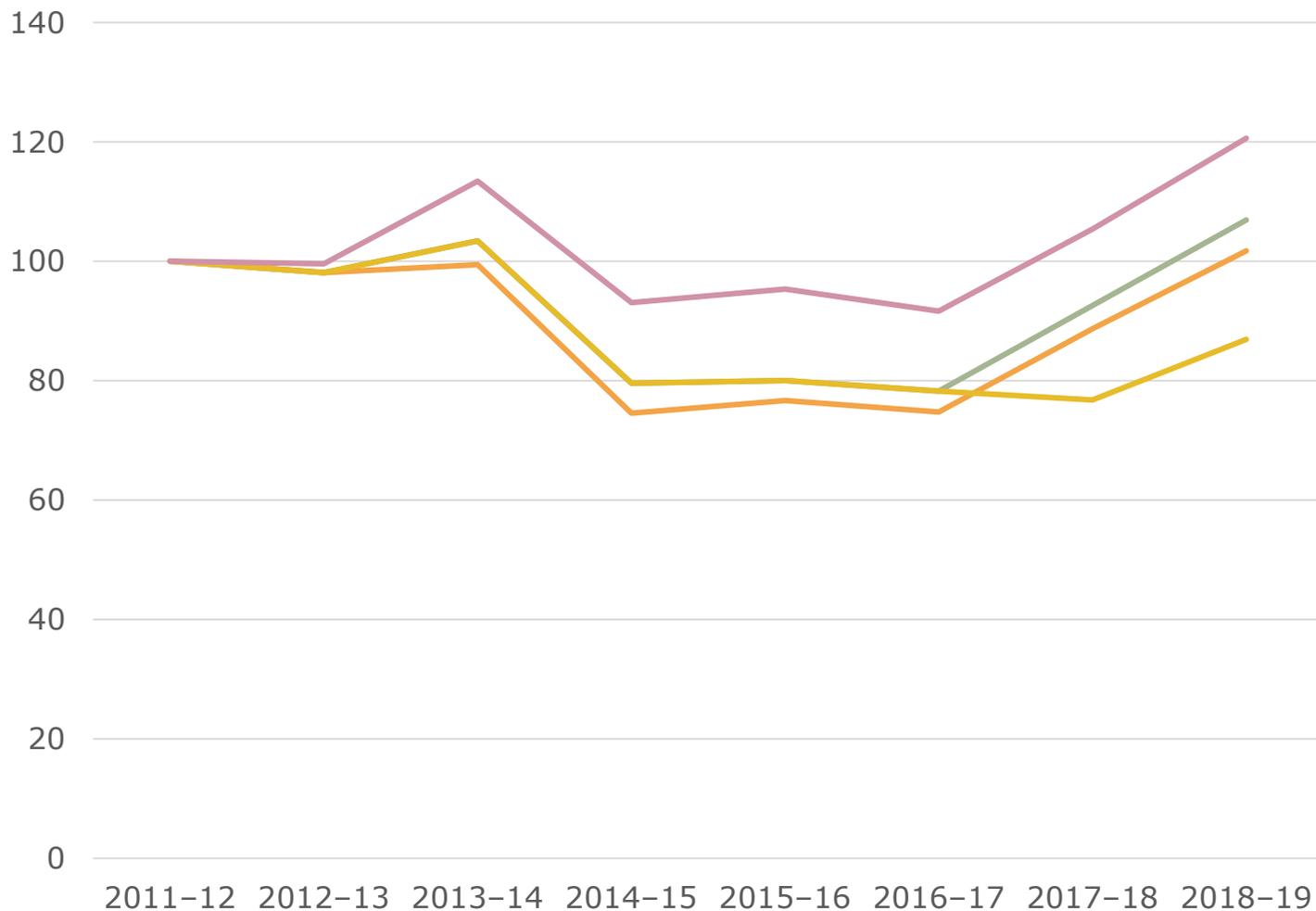
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Spending

# Spending on early education as a whole has risen since 2017



# But as free entitlements have been extended, this spending has been stretched to cover more children and more hours



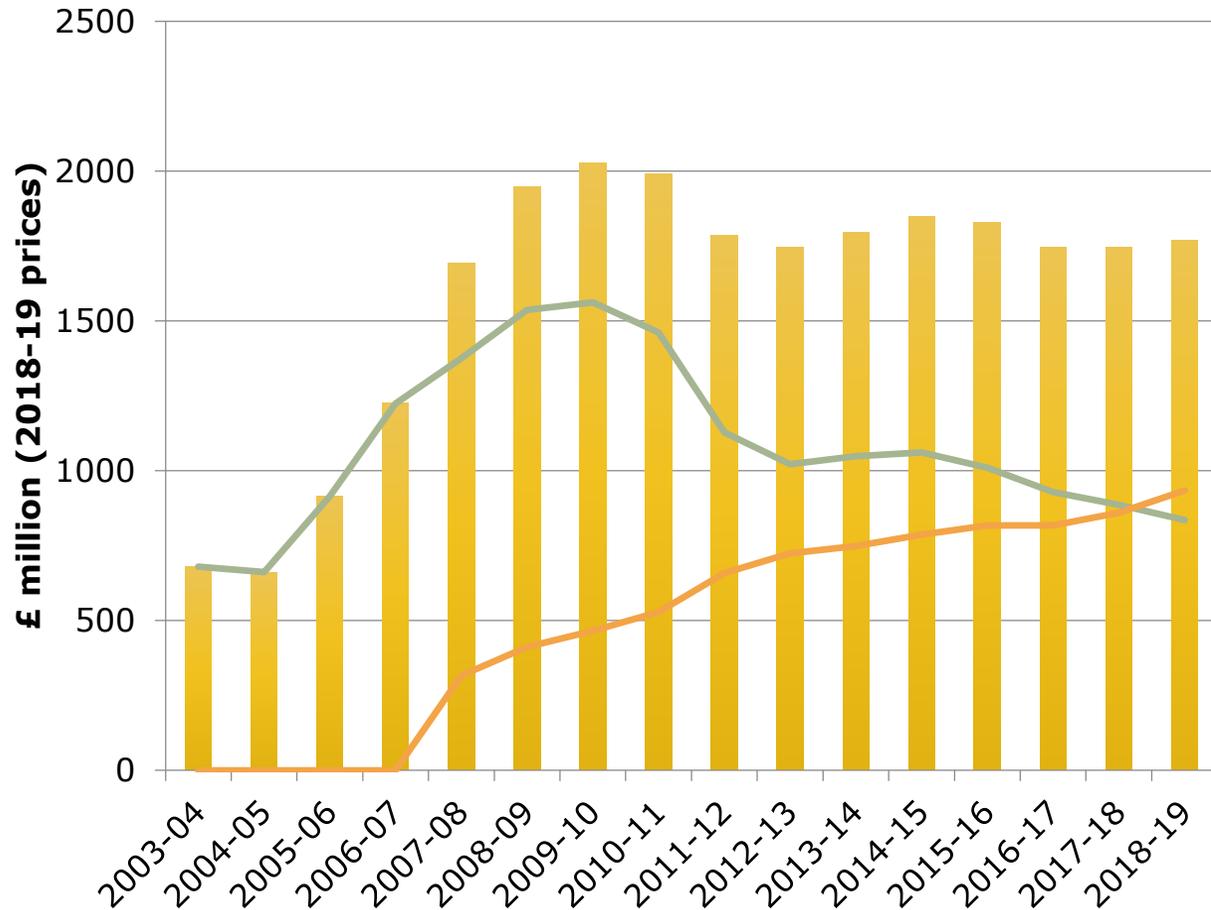
Change in real spending on the free entitlement, indexed to spending in 2011-12

- Spending per place
- Spending per child
- Spending per hour
- Total spending

- **Coalition:** slight drop in total spending, magnified when looking at per place, per child and per hour spending
- **Conservative:** total spending up by 25%, but a much smaller increase in per hour spending

Sources: MHCLG spending data reported in CRA (2019) and previous. DfE data on take-up and eligibility reported in DfE (2019a) Provision for children under five.

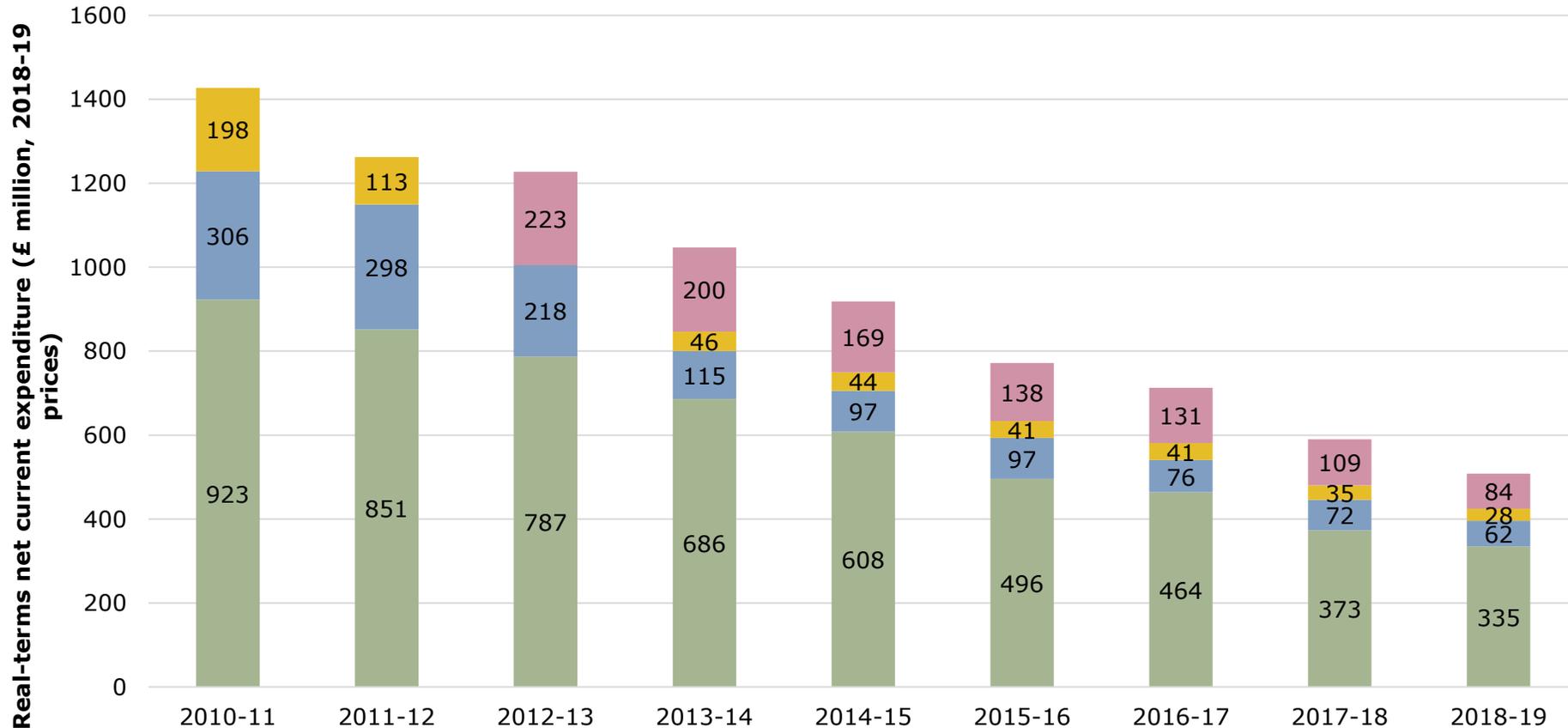
# Levels of spending on demand-side childcare subsidies have been stable, but its distribution has shifted



## Real-terms spending on demand-side childcare subsidies

- Significant growth under Labour; cuts under Coalition, stability under Conservatives
- Shift away from targeted support for families on benefits towards wider support for working families

# And there have been sharp cuts to Sure Start

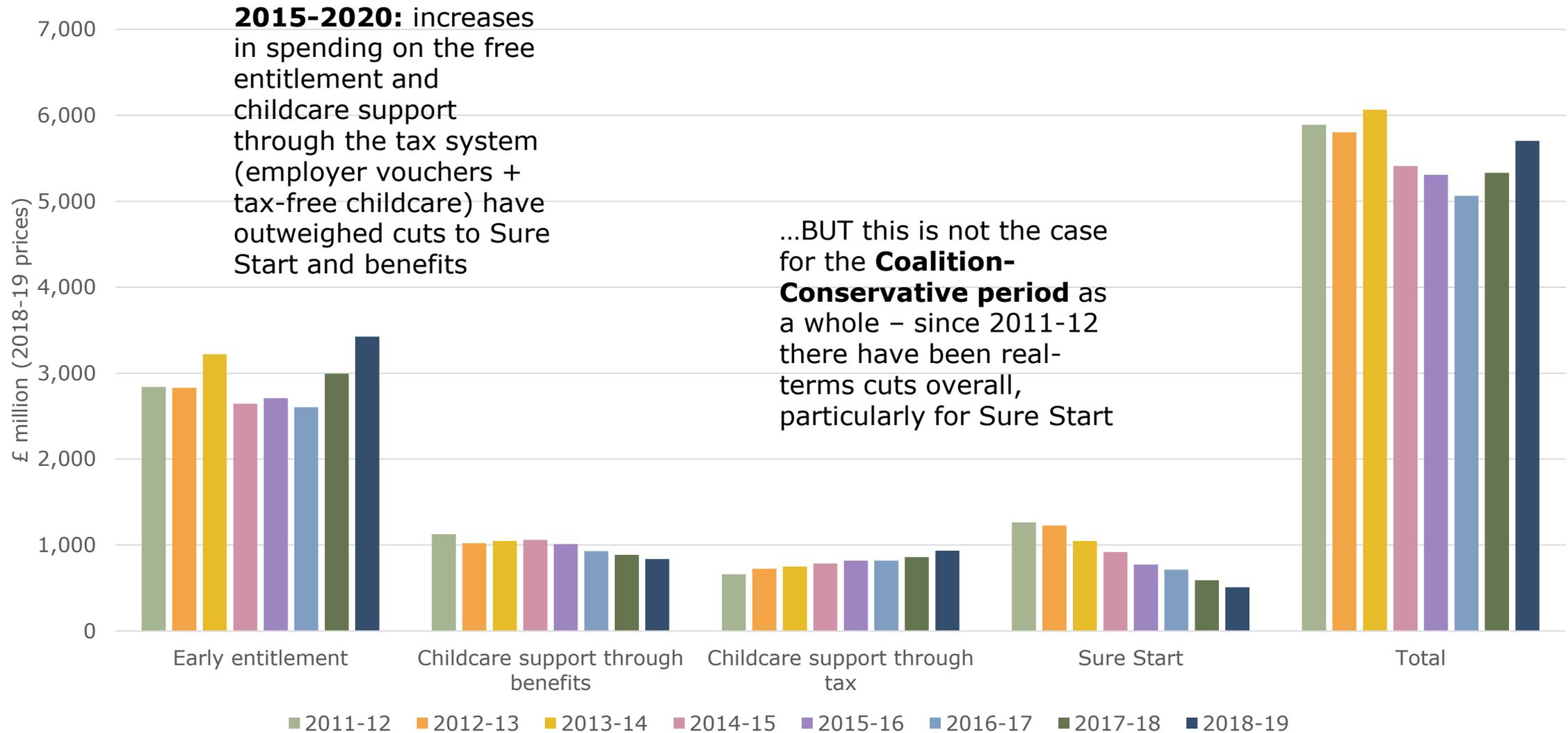


- Real-terms cuts of **64%** from 2010/11 to 2018/19
- Cuts have been faster and deeper under the Conservatives: down by **36%** under Coalition and a further **45%** under the Conservatives

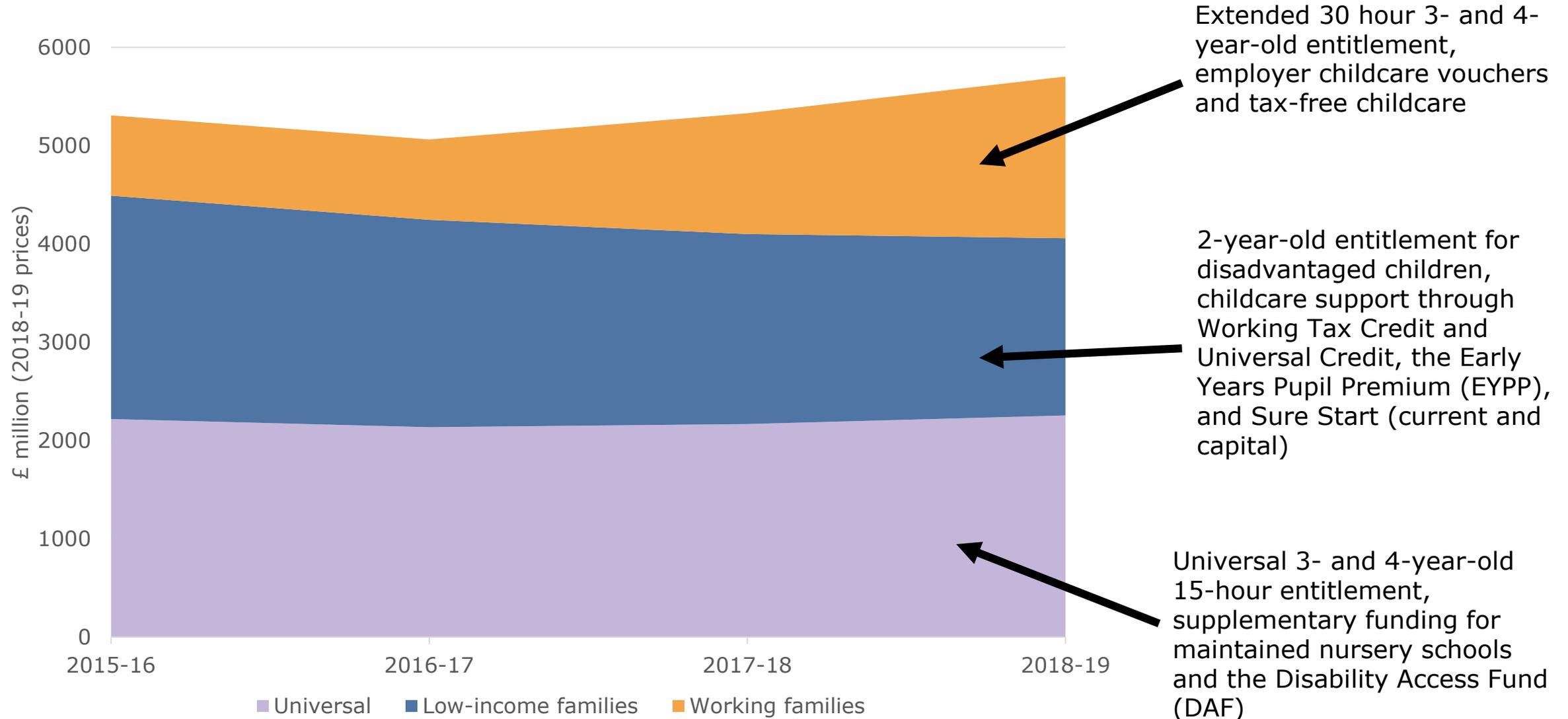
■ Other spend on children under 5 (non-DSG)  
■ Spend on local authority management costs relating to sure Start Children's Centres  
■ Spend for local authority provided or commissioned area wide services delivered through Sure Start Children's Centres  
■ Spend on individual Sure Start Children's Centres

Sources: DfE (2019) Local Authority Section 251 returns (and previous editions)

# Total spending on services for the under fives



# Services spending has shifted away from programmes targeted at disadvantaged children towards those that are universal or targeted at working families



# Spending on benefits for families with children fell dramatically under the Coalition and even more sharply under the Conservatives

- **Maternity and paternity benefits:**

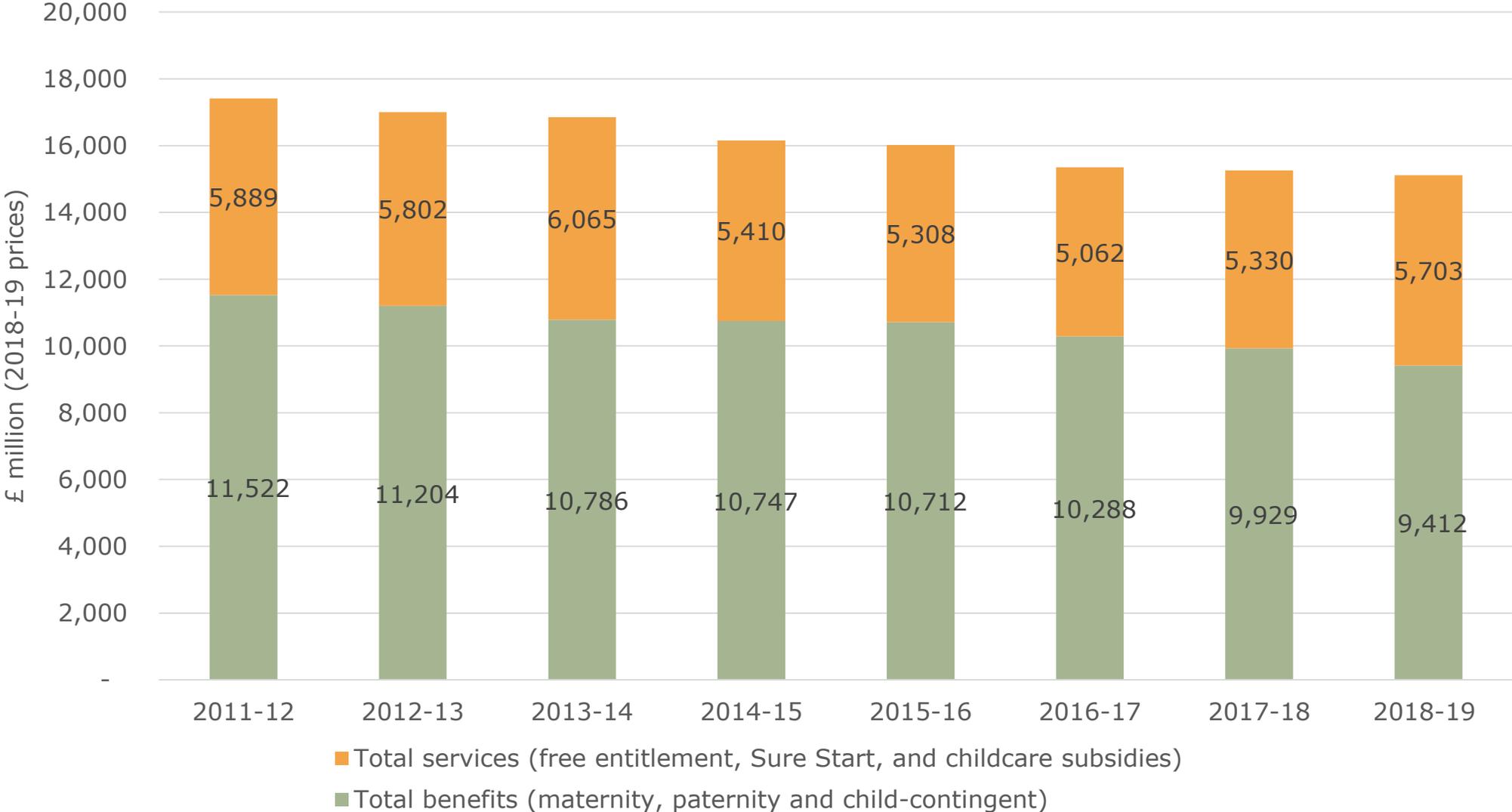
- Includes statutory maternity pay and shared parental leave; paternity, parental and adoption pay; Sure Start Maternity Grant
- Real-terms spending has been relatively **stable** since 2010, hovering around £3 billion

+

- **Child-contingent cash benefits:**

- Includes in-work and out-of-work benefits for families with children: HMRC tax credits (in-work Working Tax Credit (WTC), in-work Child Tax Credit (CTC), out-of-work CTC) + DWP-administered benefits directed at children (income support (IS), income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and Universal Credit (UC))
- Plus one-parent benefit, child benefit and Guardian's Allowance; Health in Pregnancy Grant (abolished 2011); Child Trust Fund (abolished 2011))
- Real cuts every year since 2010/11 – **fell by 8% from 2010/11 and 2014/15** and by a **further 14% between 2014/15 and 2018/19**

# Putting spending on services and benefits together, total spending on the under fives has fallen steadily since 2011-12



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# Inputs and outputs

## Inputs

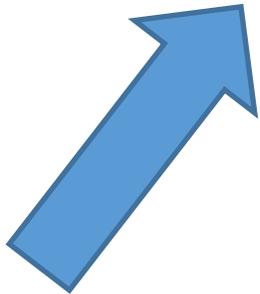


## Outputs

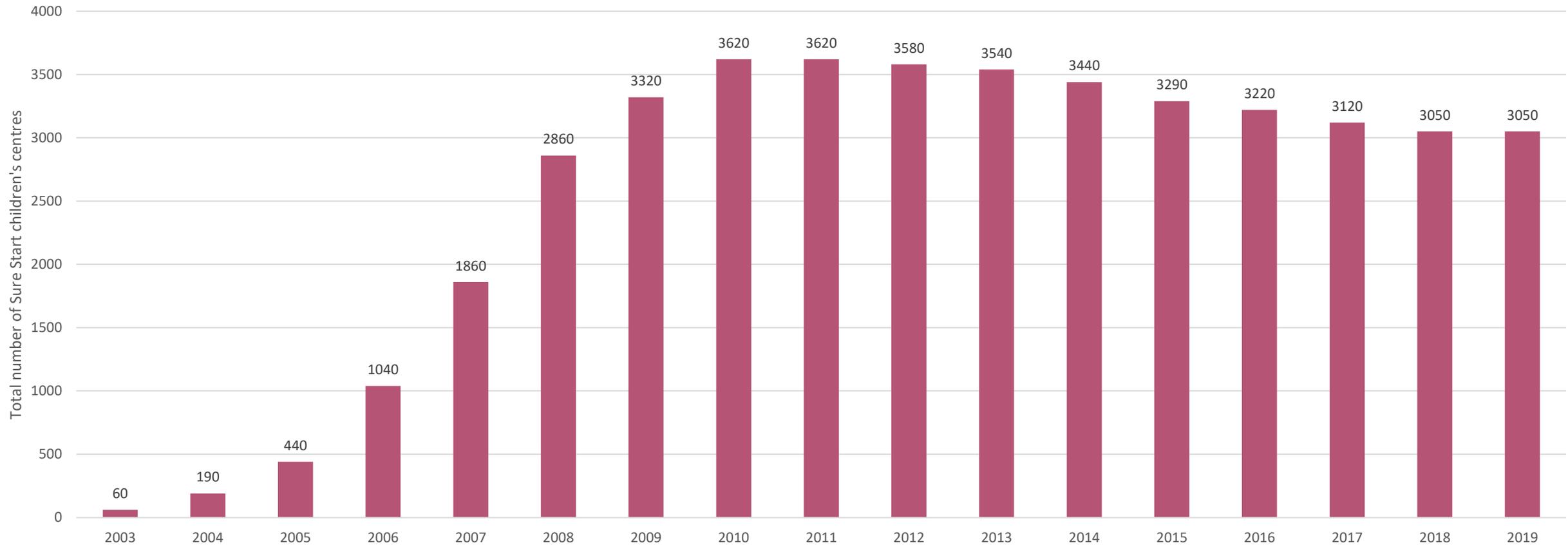
- **Number of Sure Start centres**
- **Number of providers and places** by provider type
- Staff numbers and staff qualifications

- Access, experience and impact of Sure Start provision
- **Take-up by provider type**
- **Access to high-quality childcare & early education**
- **Use of the Early Years Pupil Premium**
- **Affordability of childcare & early education**
- **Maternal employment**
- Cash benefits: **adequacy of the safety net** for families with children

Spending  
(services +  
benefits)

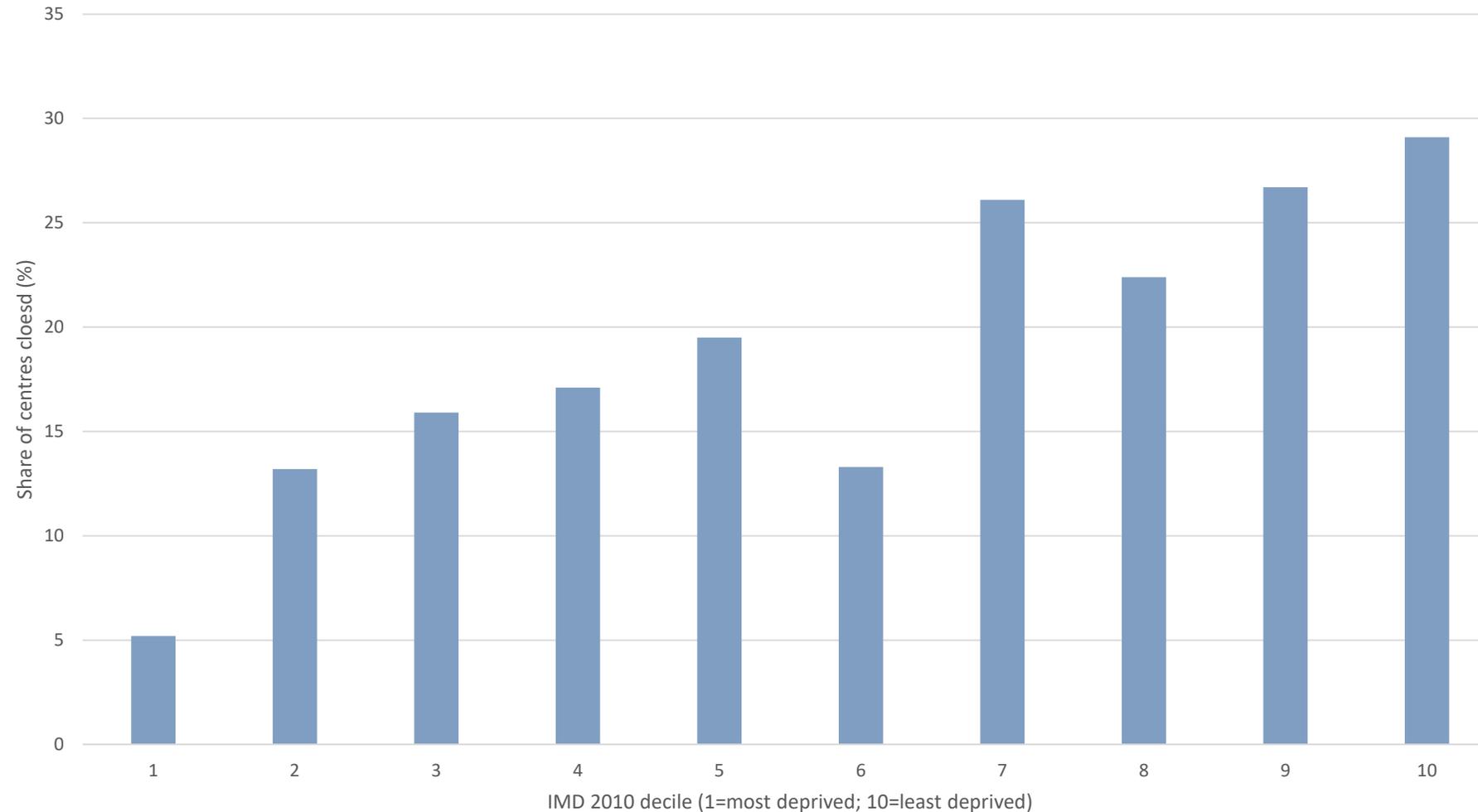


# The total number of Sure Start children's centres has fallen since 2011 due to a combination of closures and mergers



Source: DfE (2020)

# Though closures have been concentrated in less deprived areas

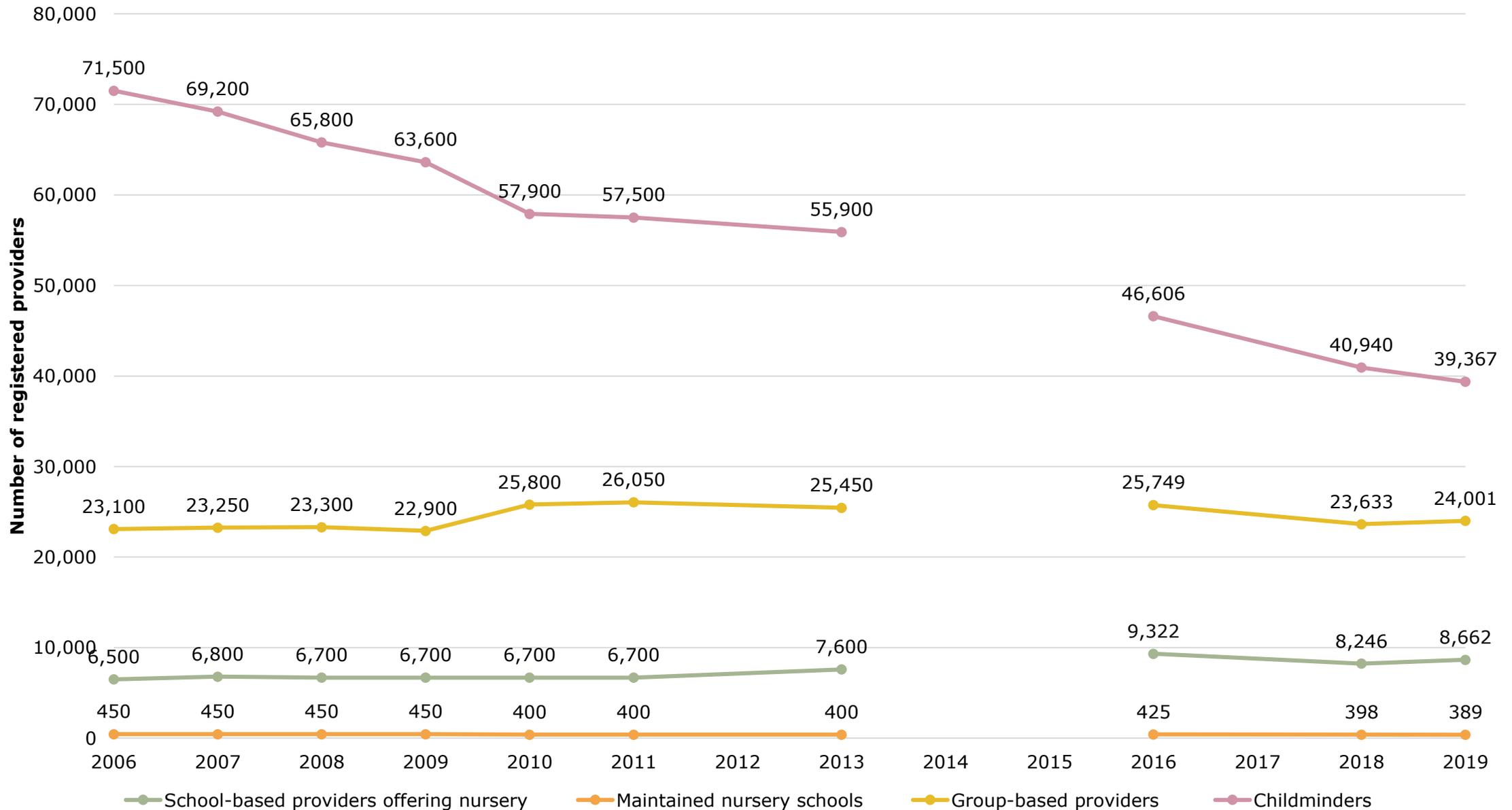


# Number of childcare and early education providers

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- Two main publicly-available data sources:
  - ❑ Ofsted: total number of registered providers, with a breakdown by childminders, domestic premises & non-domestic premises
  - ❑ DfE's Childcare Providers Survey: more useful breakdowns, with data points in 2016, 2018 and 2019. But difficult to get a consistent time series beyond 2016-2019 due to surveys not being taken in 2014 and 2015, and changes in reporting. No data on Sure Start after 2013.
- Ofsted: total number of early years and childcare providers has **reduced by 13 percent from 2015 to 2019**, mostly due to a decline in the number of childminders (Ofsted, 2020)
- Childcare Providers Survey: corroborates this trend - **total decline of 12 percent from 2016 to 2019**

# Number of registered providers of early education and childcare in England, by type of provider (Childcare Providers Survey)

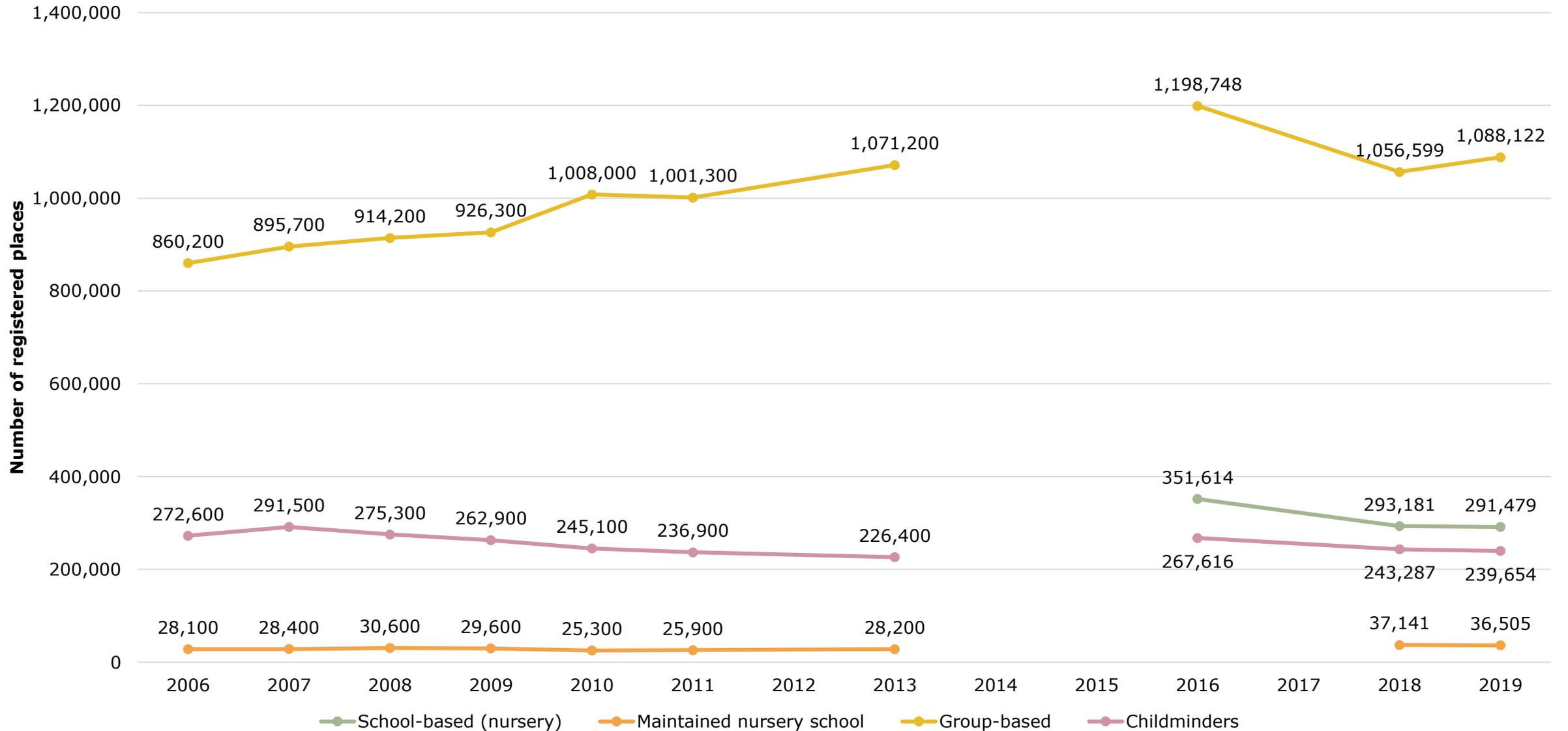


# Number of childcare and early education places

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- Same data sources available as for providers, with same limitations
- Both Ofsted & Childcare Providers' Survey suggest that total number of *places* available to children has fallen by less than the number of providers, or even (on Ofsted figures) risen slightly
- Consequently, the average number of places per setting has increased
- Childcare Providers' Survey: **8% increase in the number of places from 2010 to 2013**, driven by group-based providers
  - BUT since 2016 group-based places have fallen by 9%** - likely due to pressures on the voluntary sector (combined impact of the Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF) and the 30 hours policy)

# Number of registered places for early education and childcare in England, by type of provider (Childcare Providers Survey)



# Take-up of funded early education places: 2-year-olds

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## **Policy development:**

- 2-year-old entitlement first introduced in as a pilot in 2009 for the most disadvantaged 2-year-olds (10 hours per week for 38 weeks a year)
- Extended (alongside other offers) to 15 hours per week for 38 weeks a year (spread 3-5 days) in 2010
- 2012: Spread increased to 2-5 days
- 2013: entitlement extended to 20% most disadvantaged → 2014: extended to 40% most disadvantaged

## **Take-up:**

- Had been increasing since 2014, but in 2018 it started falling
- Take-up for 2 year olds remains much lower than for 3s and 4s
- Teager & McBride (2018): take-up among FSM children increased significantly in first 2 years of the policy - but there is significant regional variation
- Albakri et al. (2018): region, disadvantage, EAL, ethnicity, population mobility, and employment status at area level are associated with patterns in take-up
- Some LAs have reported challenges continuing to deliver the 2-year-old offer given 30 hours and EYNFF

## Proportion of 2-year-olds benefiting from funded early education 2015-2020, by provider type

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>PVI sector, of which:</b>							
Day nursery	50.3	53.0	51.9	51.5	50.6	51.6	81.2
Playgroup or pre-school	24.3	22.6	21.0	19.9	19.7	19.5	
Sure Start and linked providers	3.4	2.6	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.3	
Local Authority day nursery	6.4	5.6	4.7	4.3	3.6	3.5	
Childminders/childminding network	2.3	3.5	3.7	3.7	4.0	4.3	4.4
Other settings	10.2	8.7	8.1	7.7	7.4	6.5	na
<b>Maintained sector, of which:</b>	3.2	4.1	8.7	11.1	12.8	13.4	13.8
Nursery schools	1.7	1.9	3.4	4.1	4.8	5.0	5.1
Nursery classes	1.5	2.2	5.4	7.1	7.9	8.3	8.5
<b>Total number of children attending</b>	86,637	157,036	166,924	163,249	154,962	148,751	143,439
<b>Total attending as a share of eligible population (%)</b>	na	58	68	71	72	68	69

# Take-up of funded early education places: 3- and 4-year-olds

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## **Policy development:**

- 4-year-old entitlement first introduced in 1998 (12.5 hours per week, for 38 weeks a year)
- 2003: offer extended to 3-year-olds
- 2005: extended to 38 weeks a year
- 2010: all offers extended to 15 hours per week for 38 weeks a year (spread = 3-5 days)
- 2012: spread increased to 2-5 days
- Sept 2017: extended entitlement for 3- and 4-year-olds in working families

## **Take-up:**

- Had been stable for 3-year-olds at 93% from 2012 to 2017, but has since fallen to 92% (2019) and then 91% (2020)
- Take-up for 4-year-olds has been falling slowly since 2014, from a high of 98% (2014) to an all-time low in 2020 of 94%

## Proportion of 3- year-olds benefiting from funded early education 2011-2020, by provider type

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>PVI sector, of which:</b>										
Private and voluntary providers	57.1	57.9	58.6	59.4	59.9	59.9	59.9	60.8	60.8	61.1
Independent schools	2.6	2.4	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.1	2.0	2.0	2.0
Childminders	0.8	0.4	0.5	0.9	1.4	1.7	1.9	2.3	2.6	2.7
Other	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.5	na
<b>Maintained sector, of which:</b>	39.1	38.8	38.0	36.9	35.9	35.6	35.5	34.3	34.0	34.1
Nursery schools	4.6	4.5	4.5	4.2	4.2	4.0	4.0	3.8	3.8	3.8
Nursery classes	34.2	34.1	33.3	32.4	31.5	31.4	31.4	30.2	30.1	29.7
Infant classes	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2
<b>Total children attending</b>	604,315	625,442	625,307	641,231	646,674	660,428	632,331	628,503	625,658	621,351
<b>As a share of eligible children (%)</b>	92	93	93	93	93	93	93	92	92	91

**Proportion of 4-year-olds benefiting from funded early education 2011-2020, by provider type**

	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
<b>PVI sector, of which:</b>										
Private and voluntary providers	17.1	17.6	17.7	18.3	18.6	18.5	18.7	19.2	19.5	19.7
Independent schools	2.9	2.7	2.5	2.5	2.4	2.4	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.0
Childminders	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.7
Other	0.7	0.8	0.9	1.1	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.5	na
<b>Maintained sector, of which:</b>	79.0	78.8	78.7	78.0	77.4	77.4	77.2	76.6	76.2	77.6
Nursery schools	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.4
Nursery classes	14.5	14.0	13.5	13.5	13.5	13.0	12.9	12.5	12.3	12.2
Infant classes	62.8	63.1	63.6	62.9	62.4	62.8	62.8	62.7	62.5	62.5
Total children attending	620,150	638,974	658,190	658,677	675,223	679,003	685,327	656,129	651,479	650,193
As a share of eligible children (%)	96	97	98	98	97	96	95	95	95	94

## Further microdata analysis using the National Pupil Database to come ... watch this space!

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- Have disadvantaged pupils been 'squeezed' out in recent years due to funding changes and/or the 30 hours policy?
- How has the balance between the private and voluntary sector within PVI changed in recent years? Have voluntary and Sure Start providers been squeezed by funding changes?
- Who attends for longer hours? (are children from non-working families pushed out from 15+ hours?)
- Who attends which settings, and accesses more highly qualified staff? (more disadvantaged children were more concentrated in state nursery provision - is that pattern changing?)

# Access to qualified graduate staff in funded early education

## Notes on the data:

1. These figures are for the PVI sector only – maintained settings have qualified staff by definition.

2. Limitations to data consistency over the period:

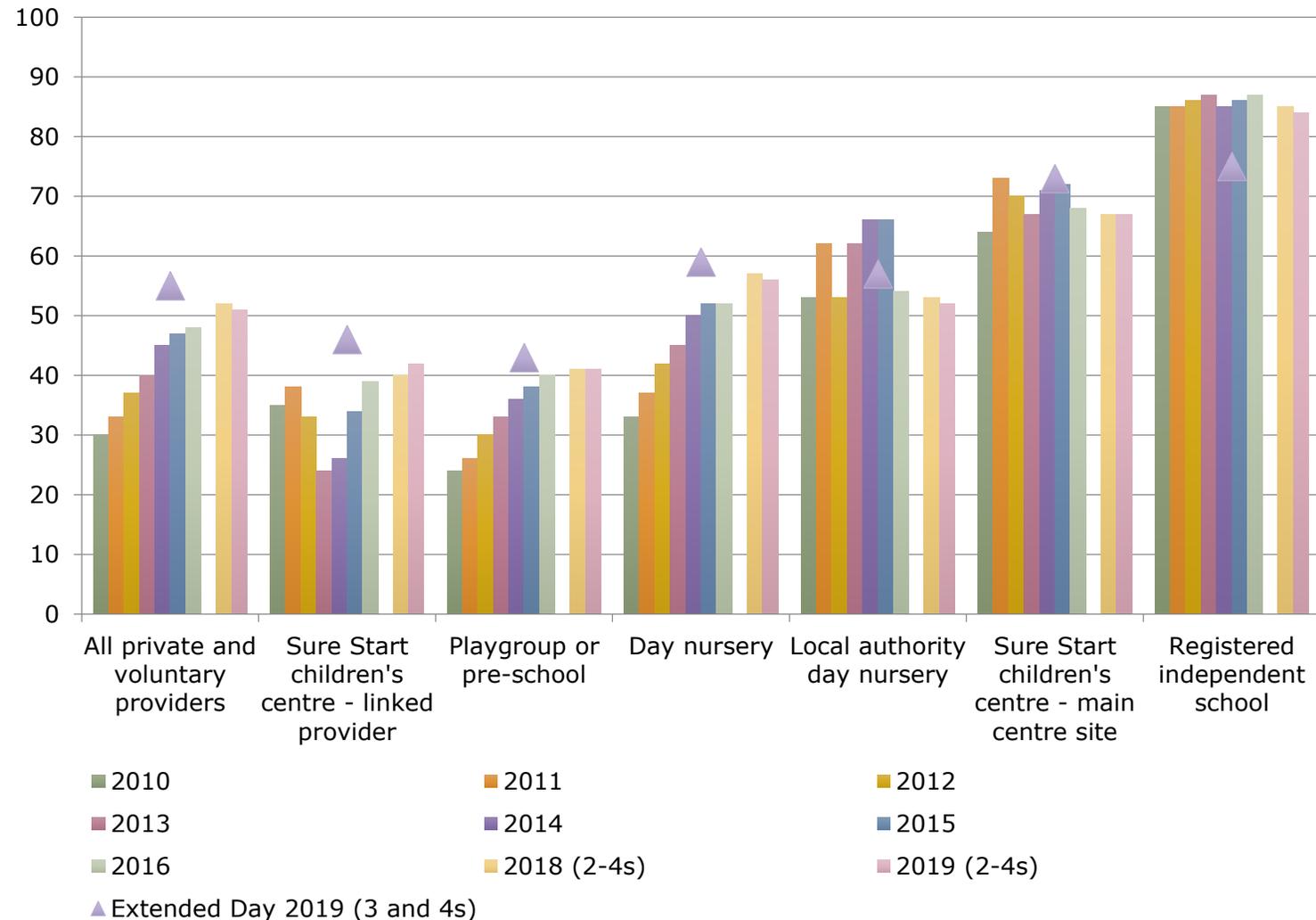
2010-2016: % funded 3- & 4-year olds attending settings where a qualified graduate (QTS/EYTS/EYPS) works directly with the children, by category of provider

2017: no qualifications data in the Early Years Census

2018-2020: % funded 2- to 4-year-olds attending settings with staff with graduate status.

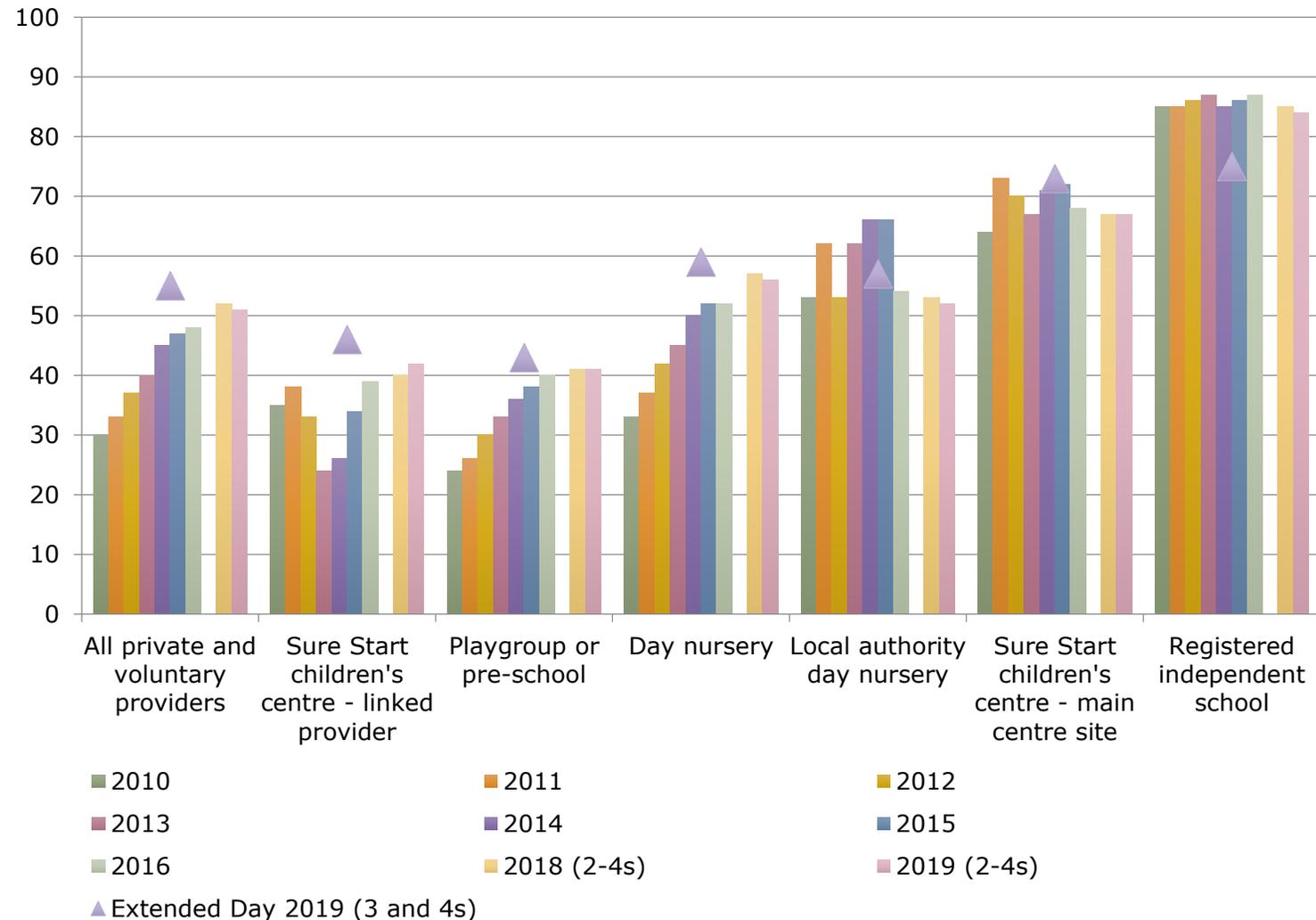
3. Fewer provider breakdowns provided in 2020 – not shown here

Source: DfE (2019) Provision for children under five (and previous editions)



# Input: Quality of childcare and early education

- Access to graduates in the PVI sector increased from 2010 to 2016 (though more erratic for Sure Start and local authority settings)
- LA day nurseries have seen big falls in graduates since 2015
- Overall graduates fell slightly from 2018 to 2019 (but back up again in 2020)
- Children who are eligible for the 30 hours policy are more likely to attend settings with qualified staff across all provider types apart from independent schools (2019 and 2020)



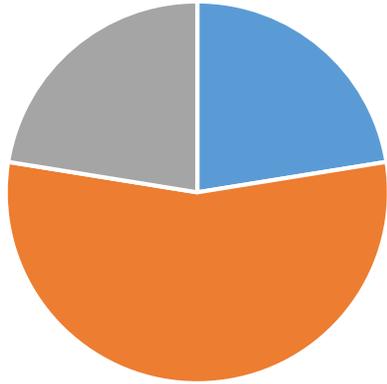
Source: DfE (2019) Provision for children under five (and previous editions)

## Emerging evidence suggests that the Early Years Pupil Premium has been a welcome targeted support for disadvantaged children, but is not sufficient

- An additional 53p per hour for each eligible child (maximum 15 hours per week), on top of an average hourly funding rate for 3- and 4- of £4.88 per hour (DfE, 2016)
- Funding rates have not increased since 2015 – amounts to a **real-terms cut in funding**
- + **Lack of parity with the school-age Pupil Premium**: disadvantaged children in Reception get £1,320 under the Pupil Premium but just £302 under the EYPP in the previous year
- Evidence so far:
  - The extra money **does tend to be spent on disadvantaged children** – on speech, language and communication needs, and encouraging play and learning in the outdoors (SEED evaluation by Roberts et al, 2017)
  - Group-based providers more likely to spend EYPP funding on **literacy and numeracy resources** (e.g. books); school-based providers more likely to use it to **help existing staff provide targeted support to eligible children** (McGinival et al, 2017)
  - DfE-funded evaluation suggests it has had a **positive impact** on children's outcomes (Early Education, 2016)
- BUT:
  - Lack of clarity among LAs about **eligibility criteria** and barriers **getting parents to apply**
  - Providers have complained that the EYPP provides an **uneven and unpredictable stream of income** throughout the year, making it difficult to plan ahead
  - 58% group-based & 80% school-based providers strongly agreed EYPP alone is **not sufficient to fund the support they offer to disadvantaged children** (McGinival et al, 2017)

# Affordability of childcare and early education has improved for most working parents

- Though not transformative, the impact of the flagship 30 hours policy on family finances appears to have been real and welcome



- had much more money to spend as a result of the policy
- had slightly more money to spend
- no real difference

Source: Paull and La Valle (2018)

*"Money feels less of a struggle now... and I can afford to buy shoes and clothes, without having to ask my mum to help out"*

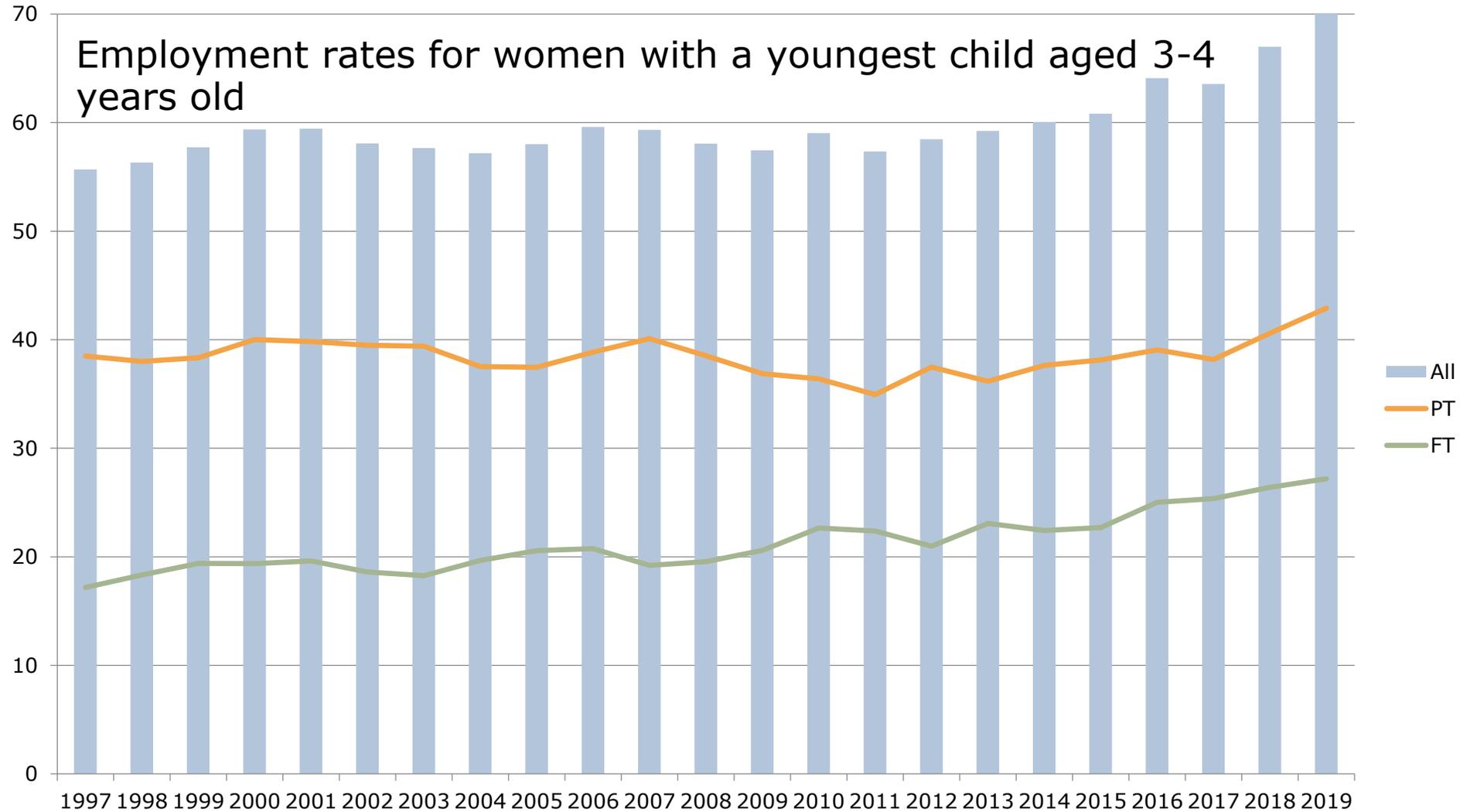


Parent who took up the extended 30 hours policy

- However, some providers have started making additional charges as part of 30 hours provision (mean weekly value = £24). 22% of parents reported that the charges were compulsory (a practice that is in theory illegal) (Paull and La Valle, 2018).
- Take-up for tax-free childcare remains low (35% in 2018-19), but parents who do use it report positive impacts on their finances (Fullick et al., 2020)

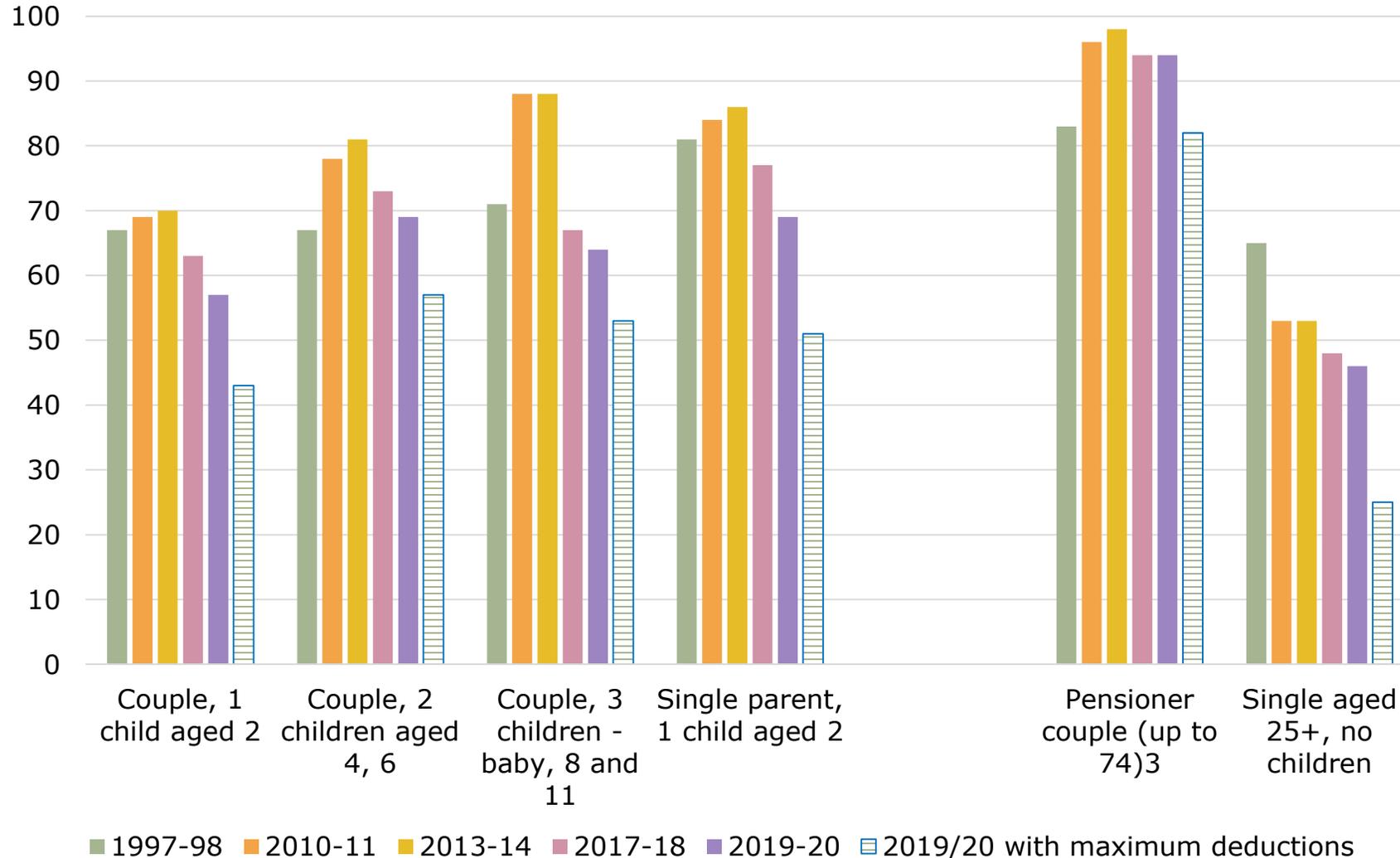
# Maternal employment has risen since 2015, likely due to a combination of the 30 hours policy and increased conditionality for lone parents

- Maternal employment increased from 61% in 2015 to 70% in 2018
- Particularly sharp increase (10%) since 2017, especially for part-time
- Increase exists for both mothers in a couple and lone parents, but slightly higher for lone parents → conditionality intensification playing a role?
- No such increase for mothers whose youngest is 0-2 year olds → 30 hours having an impact?



Source: ONS (2019) Labour Force Survey (and previous editions)

# Cash benefits: adequacy of the safety net for families with children

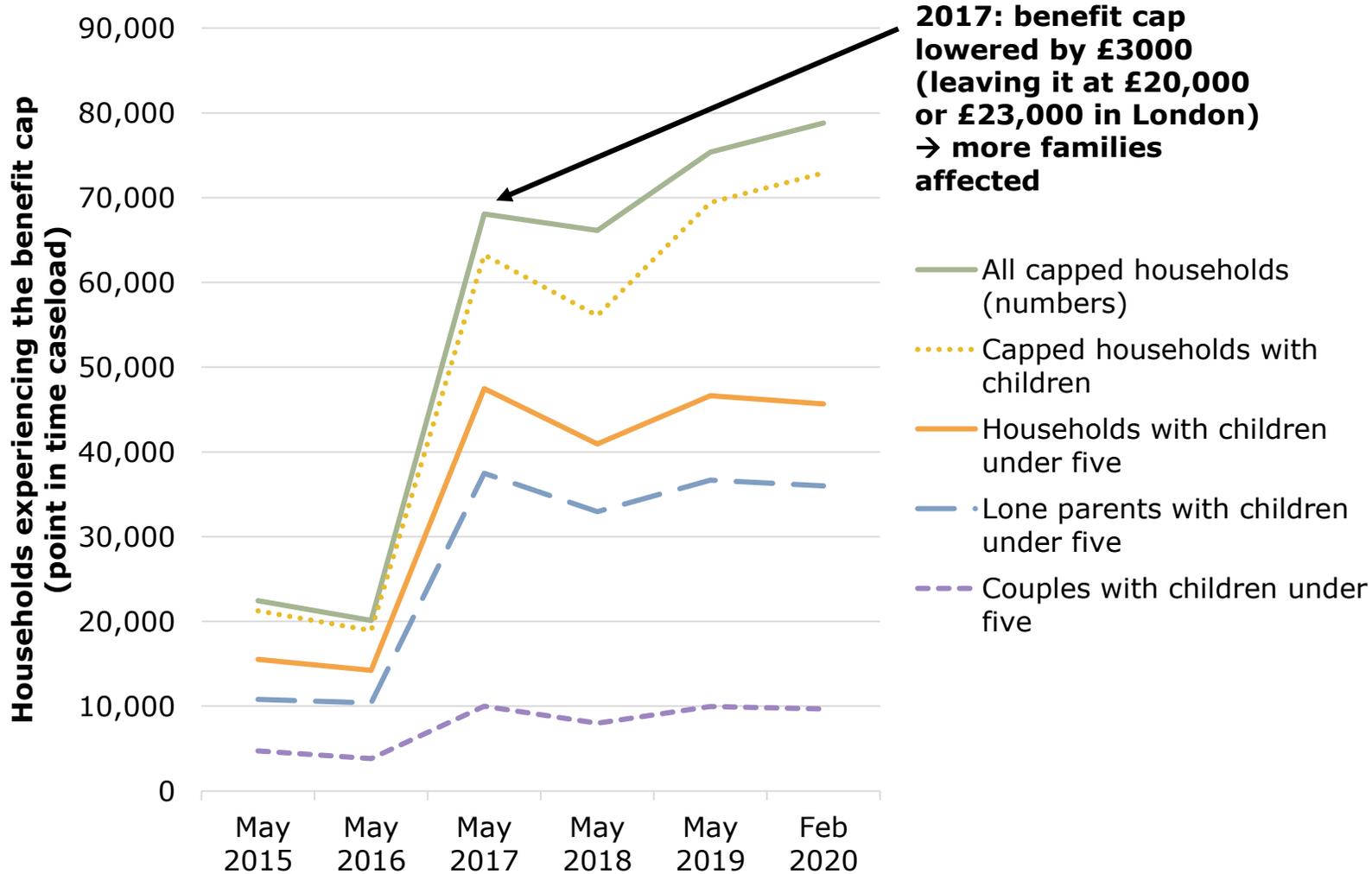


Minimum income levels as percentage of poverty thresholds by family type, 1997-98 to 2019-20, after allowing for housing costs

- All family types with children have seen **large falls in the generosity of benefits**, driven by cash-freeze on working-age benefits, loss of the family element of Child Tax Credit since 2017
- The sharpest fall is for a **couple with 3 children and a baby** - reduction from 88% of the poverty line in 2013-14 to 67% in 2017-18 (driven by two-child limit and benefit cap)

Source: Cooper and Hills (2020)

# Households with children under five affected by the benefit cap



As of 2020:

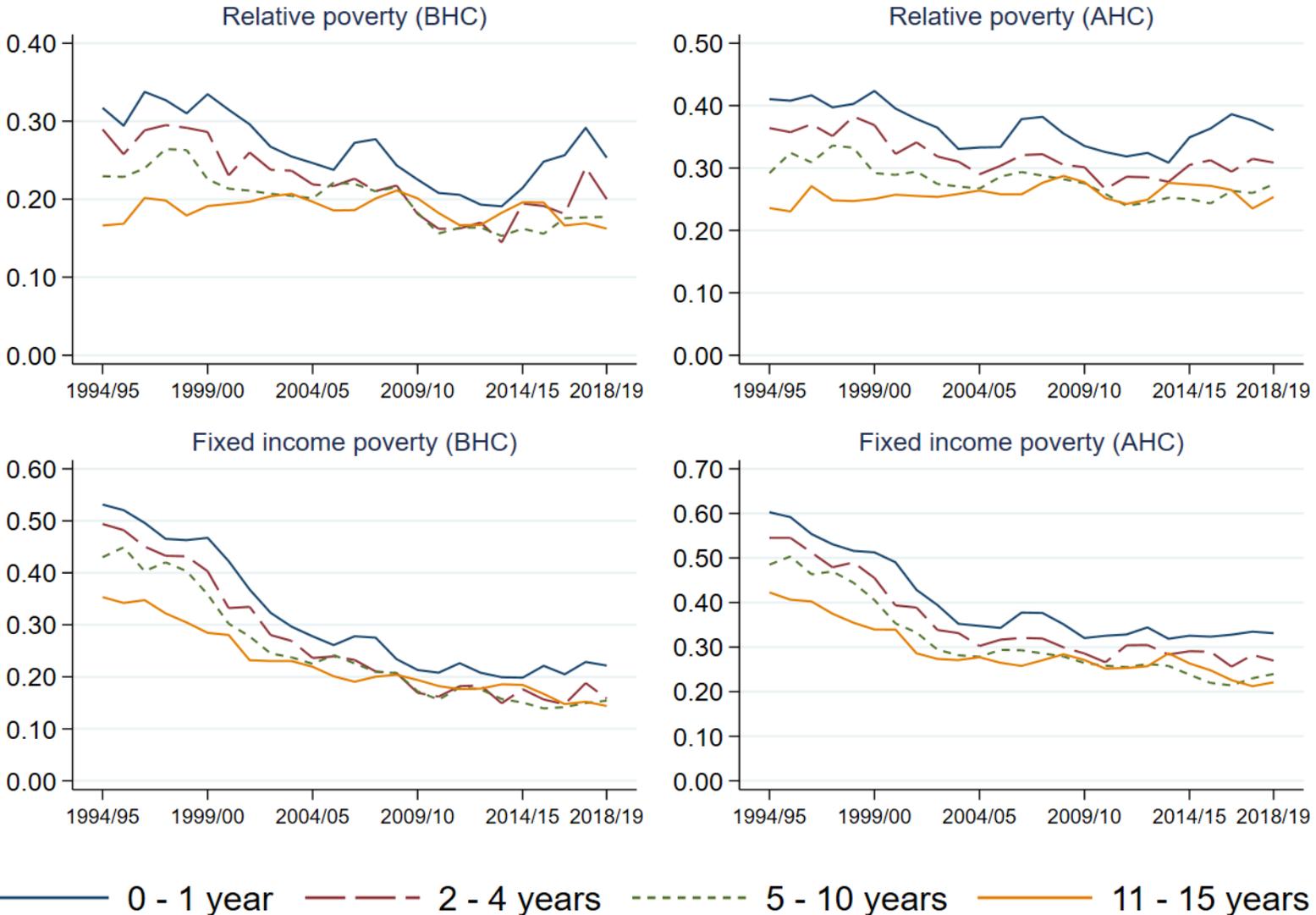
- 91% of capped households have children
- 58% have children under five
- Lone parents with children under five made up **nearly half** of all those capped
- Average amount capped per week = £52 (DWP, 2020)

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# Outcomes

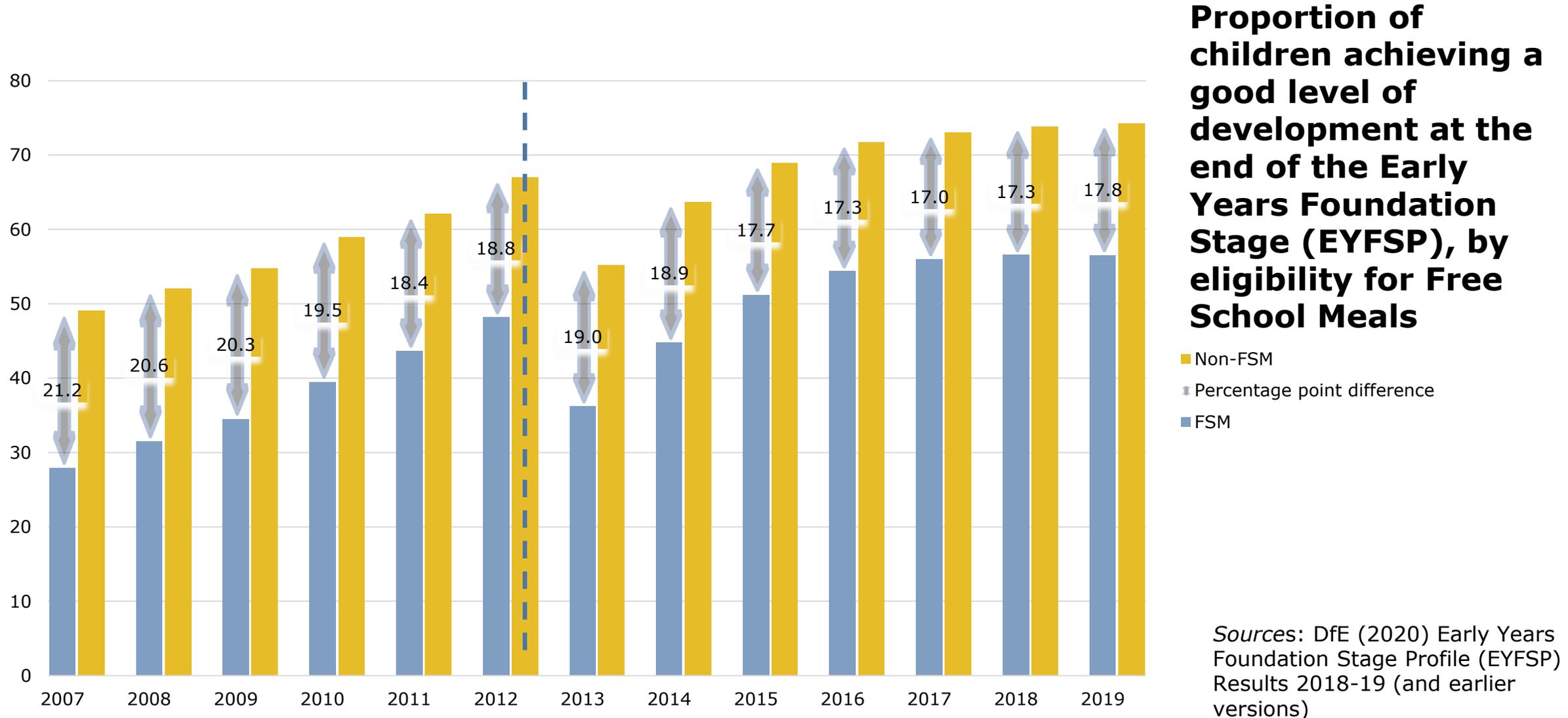
Overall child poverty has increased since 2013/14, driven disproportionately by households whose youngest child is under five (particularly a baby or toddler aged 0-1)

**Child poverty by age of youngest child**



Source: Authors' calculations from HBAI.

# The disadvantage gap in cognitive and social development at Reception has widened since 2018



# While low birthweight rates have been stable for the overall population, the social class gap has widened since 2012

Year	All	Professional/managerial/intermediate/small employers (NS-SEC 1-4)	Routine/manual/other (NS-SEC 5-8)	Gap in LBW rate between higher and lower socio-economic groups	
				Absolute	Relative (%)
2005		6.4	8.6	2.2	34.3
2006		6.6	8.2	1.6	24.2
2007		6.4	7.7	1.3	20.6
2008		6.4	7.8	1.4	21.0
2009	7.1	6.4	7.3	0.9	13.2
2010	6.9	6.1	7.2	1.1	18.0
2011	7.0	6.6	7.1	0.5	8.2
2012	7.0	6.0	7.1	1.1	18.4
2013	7.0	6.4	7.7	1.3	20.3
2014	7.0	6.4	7.8	1.4	21.6
2015	7.0	6.4	7.7	1.3	20.6
2016	7.0	6.3	7.9	1.6	25.3
2017	7.0	6.4	7.5	1.1	17.6
2018	6.9	6.1	8.4	2.2	36.3

## Low birthweight (<2500g) rates by social class in England and Wales

Sources: Stewart and Obolenskaya (2016); ONS (2020) Birth characteristics by parents' characteristics

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## Low birthweight (<2500g) rates by social class in England and Wales

- 2005-2011: social class gap narrowed
- 2012 onwards: rates rising for both higher & lower SES, but more so for the latter → widening social class gap
- By 2018, LBW rates for lower SES had regressed nearly back to where they were in 2005

Sources: Stewart and Obolenskaya (2016); ONS (2020) Birth characteristics by parents' characteristics

# After years of steady reductions and an all-time low in 2014, infant mortality rates rose for three consecutive years in 2015, 2016 and 2017

## Infant mortality rates (deaths per 1,000 live births), by social class in England and Wales

Gap in IMR rate between higher and lower socio-economic groups

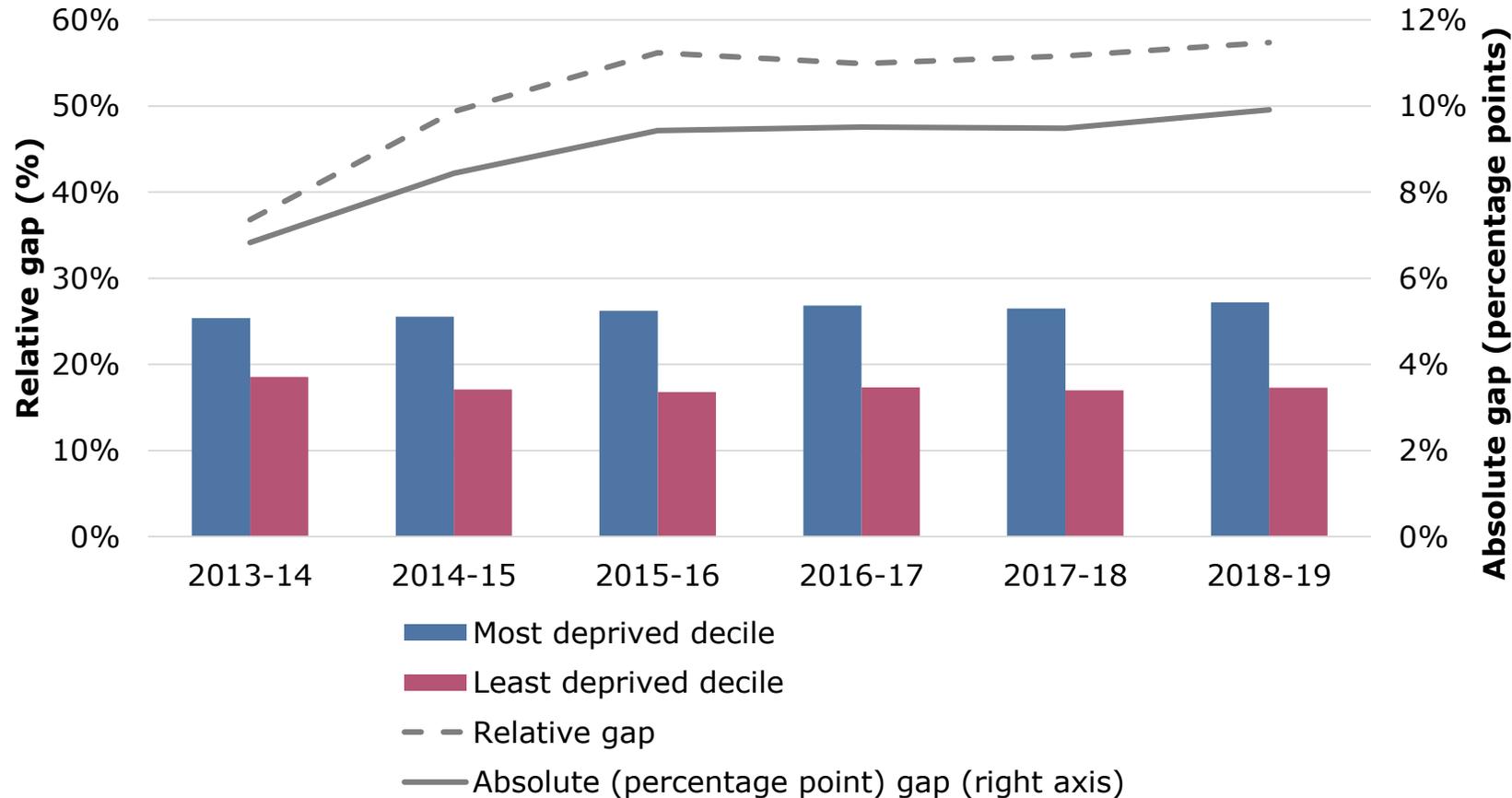
All

		Professional/managerial/intermediate/small employers (NS-SEC 1-4)	Routine/manual/other (NS-SEC 5-8)	Absolute	Relative (%)
2008	4.6	3.6	4.9	1.3	36.1
2009	4.5	3.7	4.8	1.1	29.7
2010	4.3	3.4	4.4	1.0	29.4
2011	4.2	3.4	4.9	1.5	44.7
2012	4.0	3.2	4.7	1.4	45.0
2013	3.8	3.1	4.6	1.5	48.5
2014	3.6	3.0	4.3	1.3	44.6
2015	3.7	2.9	4.5	1.6	54.6
2016	3.8	3.0	4.8	1.9	64.0
2017	3.9	3.2	4.7	1.6	49.3
2018	3.8	3.1	4.6	1.4	45.6

- First time since at least 1980 that IMR rates have risen for more than 1 year in a row
- Rise greater for lower SES from 2014 to 2016 → widening gap
- But has narrowed again since 2016 – a less clear picture than for LBW

Sources: Stewart and Obolenskaya (2016) and ONS (2020) Child Mortality (death cohort) tables for England and Wales (and earlier editions).

# Child obesity rates for the children aged 4-5 have stagnated since 2013-14, while the social class gap in child obesity has widened



## Percentage of children aged 4-5 overweight or obese by deprivation level, England

- Overall child obesity for 4-5 year olds has hovered around 22-23%
- Social class gap has grown since 2013-14 in both relative and absolute terms
- As of 2018-19, reception-aged children living in the most deprived areas were 57% more likely to be overweight or obese than children in the least deprived areas

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# Conclusions

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- One stand-out policy: 30 hours for 3- and 4-year-olds since 2017
- But it stands out because in most other regards young children have seen cuts to both services and family benefits since 2015
- There has been a welcome focus on childcare affordability, but it has been focused on working families (ie where both parents work >16 hrs at minimum wage)
- Expansion of free entitlements has come alongside very little investment in quality of childcare and early education
- The impact of a decade of cumulative cuts is starting to show up – increases in child poverty and infant mortality, and widening gaps in the EYFSP, low birthweight and child obesity

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# Future challenges

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- Covid-19 will have a significant impact on:
  - Sustainability of EY providers - many on tight margins are unlikely to survive prolonged closure
  - Developmental gaps - the withdrawal of most EY provision is likely to exacerbate existing inequalities due to inequalities in home learning environments
  - Household finances - the £20 uplift in UC takes no account of family size. No change to child elements or Child Benefit; benefit cap and two-child limit still hold
- Delivering 30 hours policy at a time when the number of providers is declining, and providers face significant funding squeezes
- Preliminary evidence that the 30 hours policy may be squeezing out access and quality for disadvantaged children
- Increased poverty and growing inequalities in early child health and development lay the foundations for widening disparities in later attainment
- Brexit - projected to have a significant impact on EY workforce, contributing towards further instability (+ possible impact on access to quality provision)

# Social Policies and Distributional Outcomes

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in a Changing Britain

## Comments and questions please!

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