

# *The changing face of early childhood*

**Where next for an effective early childhood education and care system?**



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**4 The role of early childhood education and care in shaping life chances**  
The changing face of early childhood in the UK



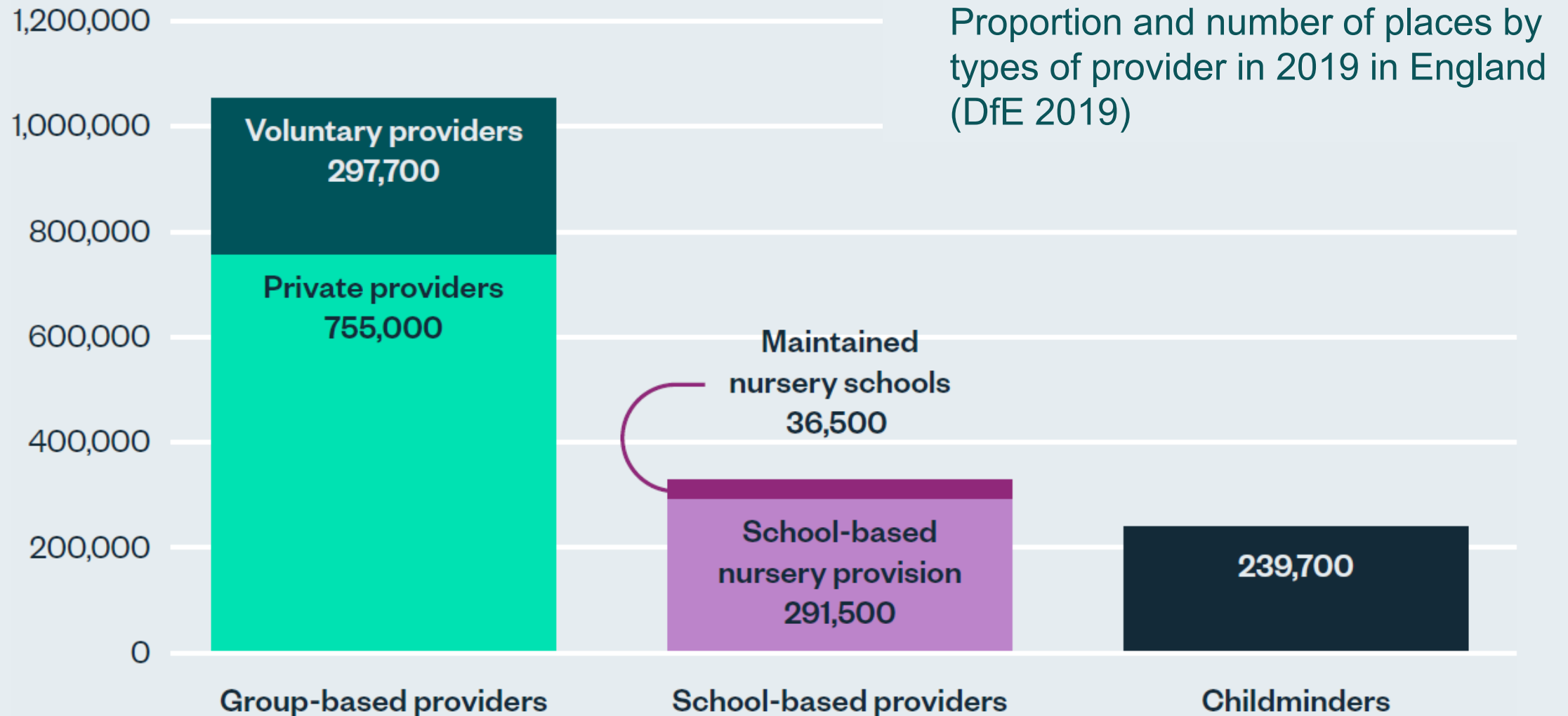
# Multiple objectives in tension

- Significant expansion of places.
- Quantity *and* quality?
- Different objectives of education and care.



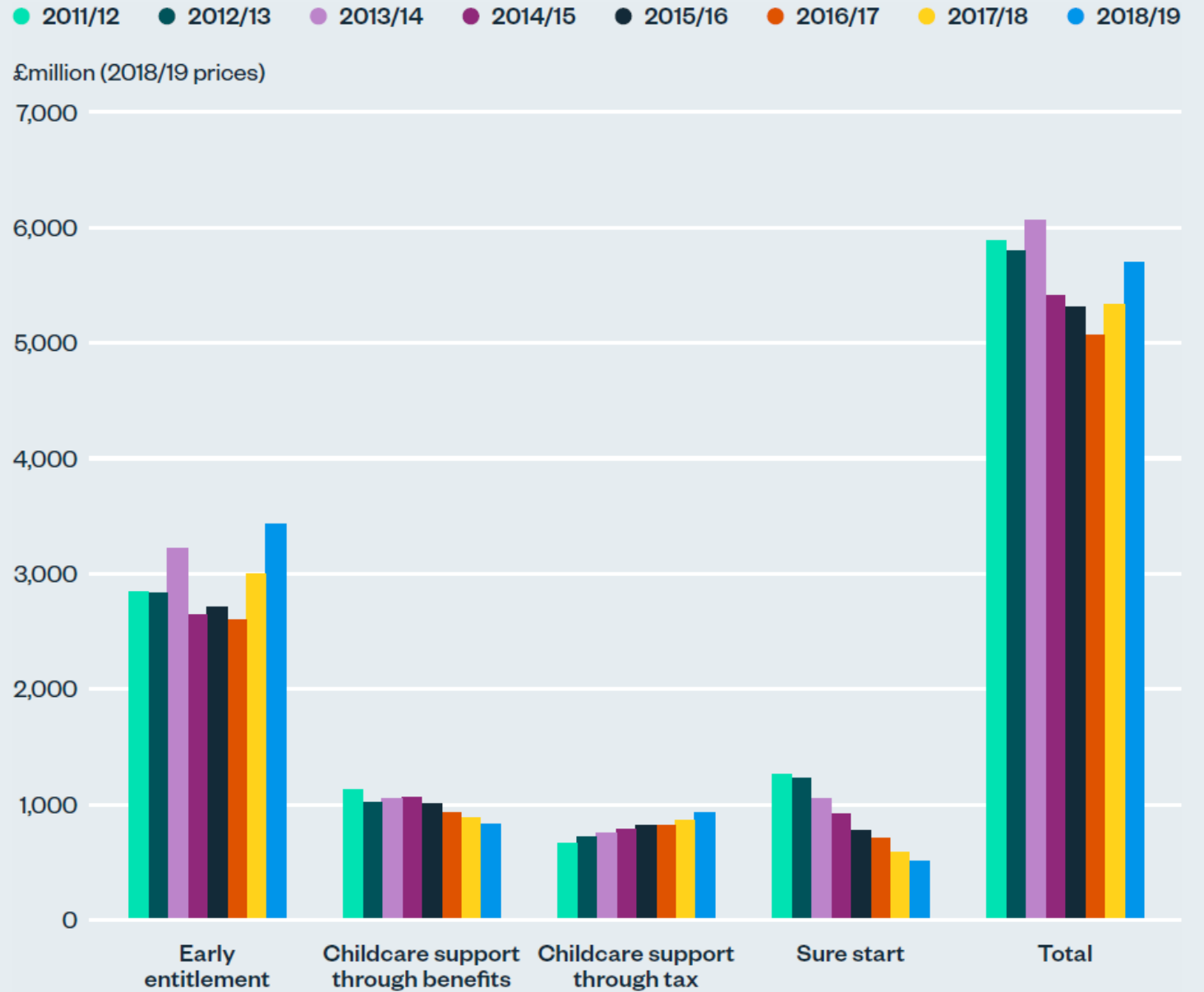
# Mapping the landscape – the make-up of the early years sector

Number of registered places



# Spending on services for the under-fives

Spending on services for the under-fives (£million, 2018/19 prices). *Source: Stewart and Reader 2021.*



# Complexity of funding

- Substantial investment.
- A highly complex funding regime with multiple conditions of eligibility.
- Underfunding of 'free hours' is having a detrimental effect on the sustainability of provision.
- Tensions between affordability and sustainability raise questions of equity of access.

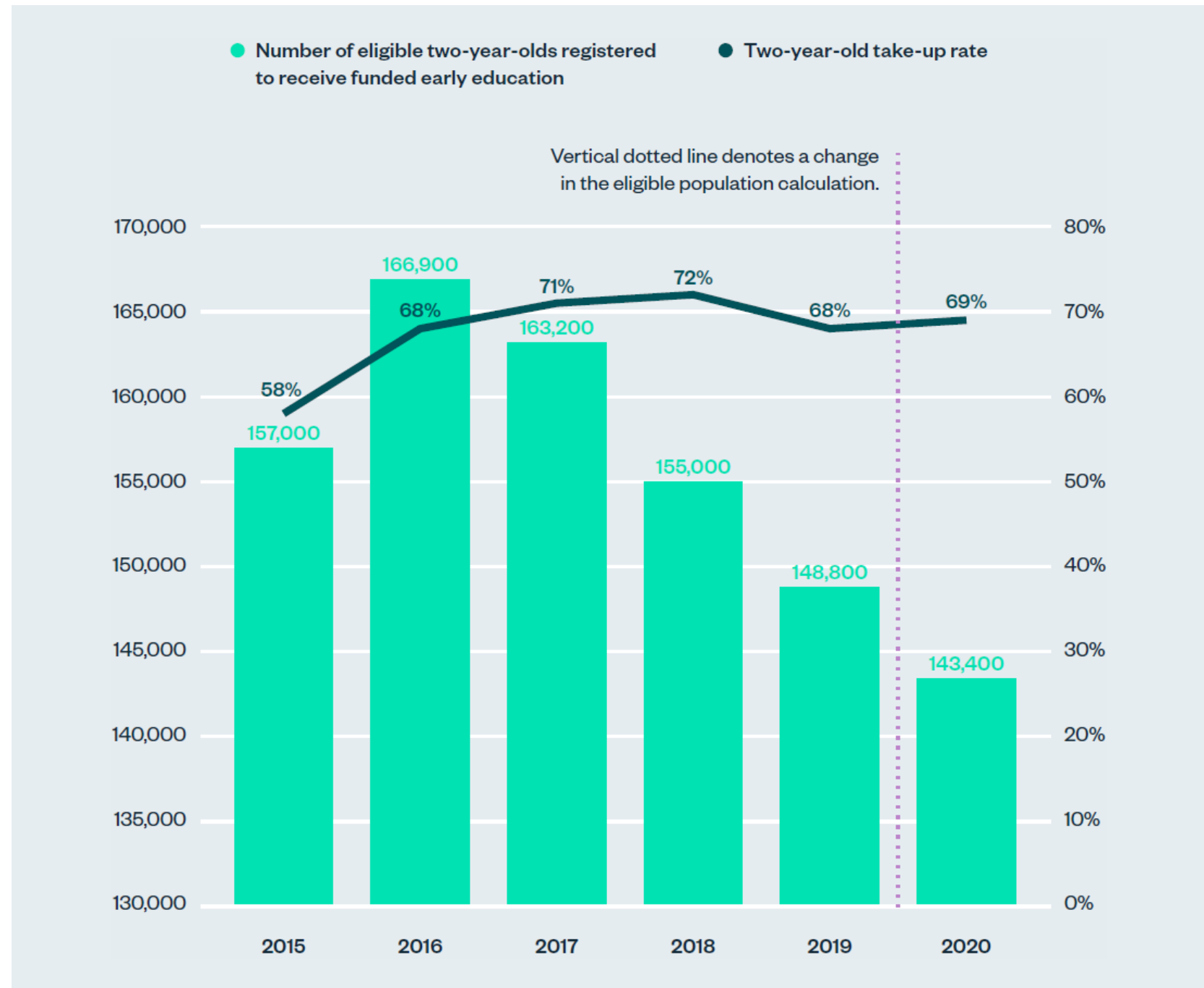
# Access and take-up

- No funded programmes of care and education for children under the age of two.
- Children from the most disadvantaged families were least likely to access their funded entitlements.
- On the expansion of 30 hours there are questions of equity of access for low-income families who are not in work or are working less than 16 hours a week.



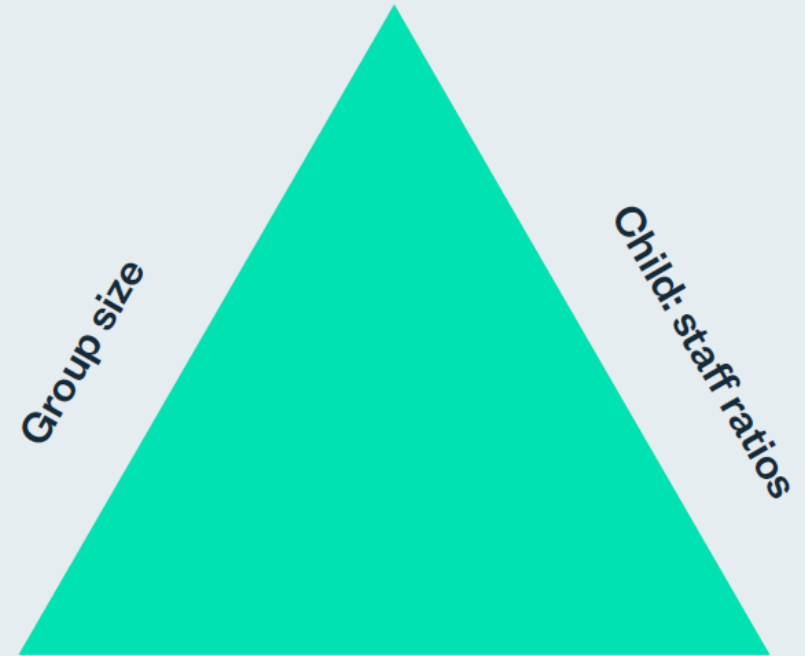
# Take-up of places for eligible two-year-olds (2015-2020)

Source: DfE (2020)



# Quality of early years provision

- Both structural and process quality measures are important.
- Measures of quality vary significantly.
- Strong relationship between staff qualification and quality.



Educator qualifications and professional development

Structural quality: the iron triangle  
*Source: Bonetti and Brown (2018)*



# Workforce challenges

- Levels of qualifications vary significantly across the sector.
- Low pay, limited progression opportunities and high workload.
- Workforce stability is a challenge with increasing staff turnover.



# Impact of early childhood education and care

- International body of research on impact of early education and care.
- Growing UK evidence base.
- Major longitudinal studies:
  - Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) 3000 children aged 3 extended to follow children to year 11 (EPPSE).
  - Study of Early Education and Development (SEED) – 6000 children aged 2-7, extended to year 11.
- Changing context and evolving evidence and methodologies.

# Headlines

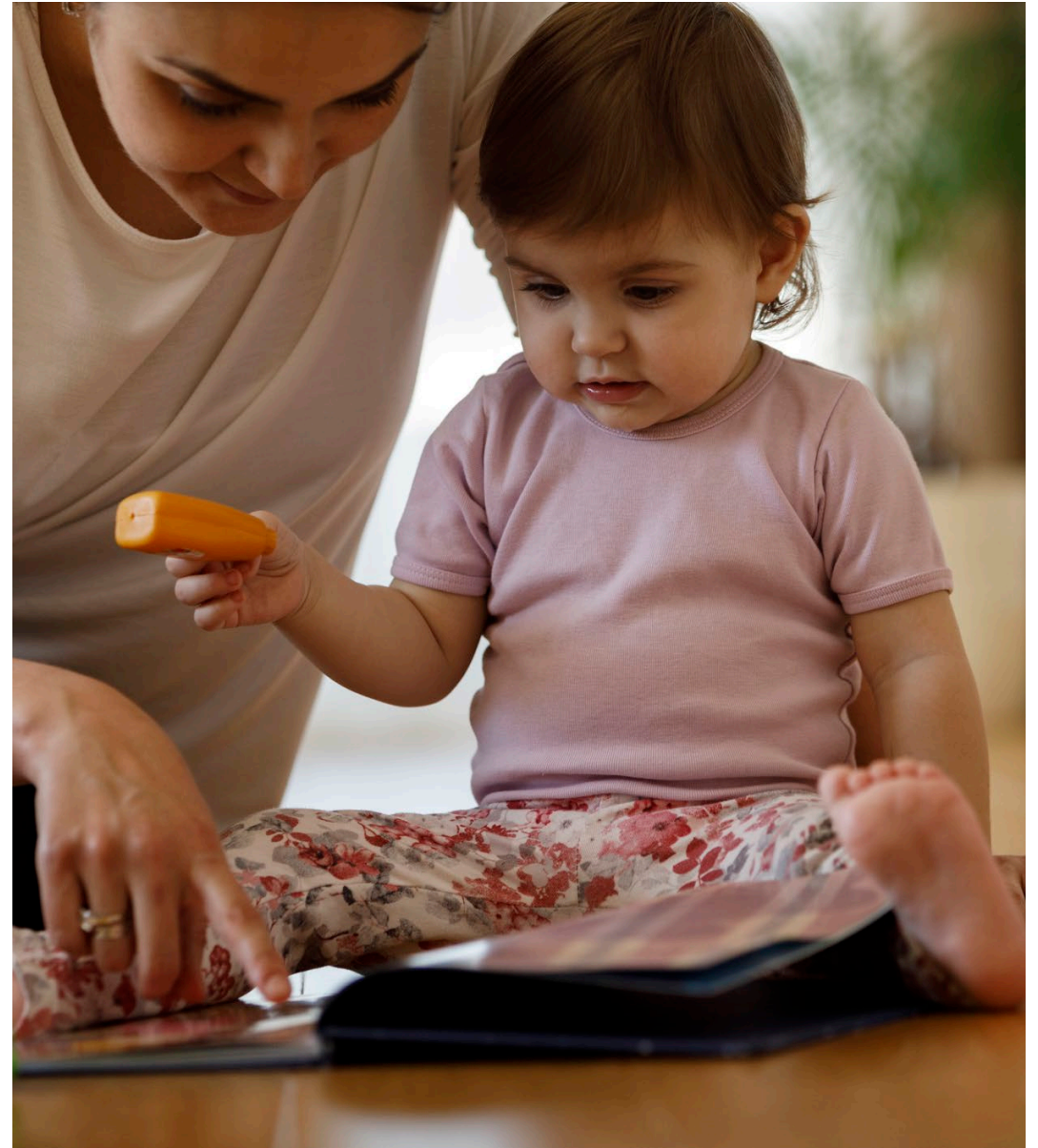
- Positive impacts in short-term, but some fade-out.
- Greater impacts for disadvantaged.
- Positive longer-term impacts – exams, jobs.
- Importance of quality.
- Longer hours can be negative for social and emotional outcomes.
- Importance of home learning environment.
- Impact of Sure Start Children's Centres.



# Long-term benefits of Sure Start – value of integrated services

- Reduction in children going to hospital into teenage years.
- Benefits longer-lasting in more disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
- Offset 31% of spending on Sure Start.
- Learning for Family Hubs and Leadsom Review.

(Cattan et al. 2021)



# Learning from specific interventions

- Nuffield Early Language Intervention
- Get ready for Learning
- Improving pre-schoolers number foundations
- Using manipulatives in the foundations of arithmetic



## Where next?

- A whole-system review
- Clarity of purpose
- Meets needs of young children and their families
- Prioritises disadvantaged children