

Closing the disadvantage gap: A focus on the first five years

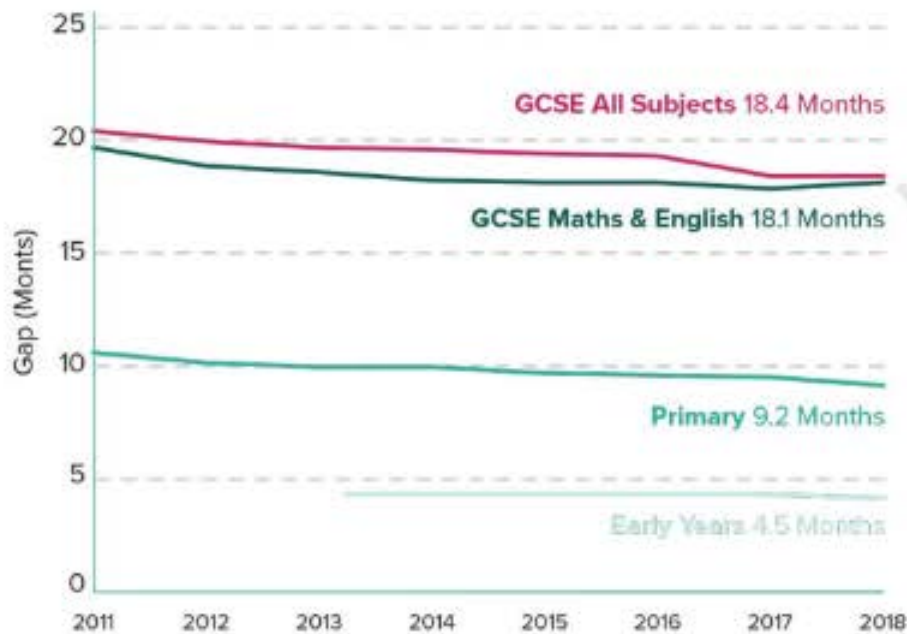
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What has happened to the **disadvantage gap** in recent years?



18.4 months

Size of the gap for disadvantaged pupils in 2018 across all GCSEs

18.1 months*

Size of the gap for disadvantaged pupils in 2018 in GCSE English & maths

+0.1 months

Increase in disadvantage gap 2017 to 2018 across all GCSEs

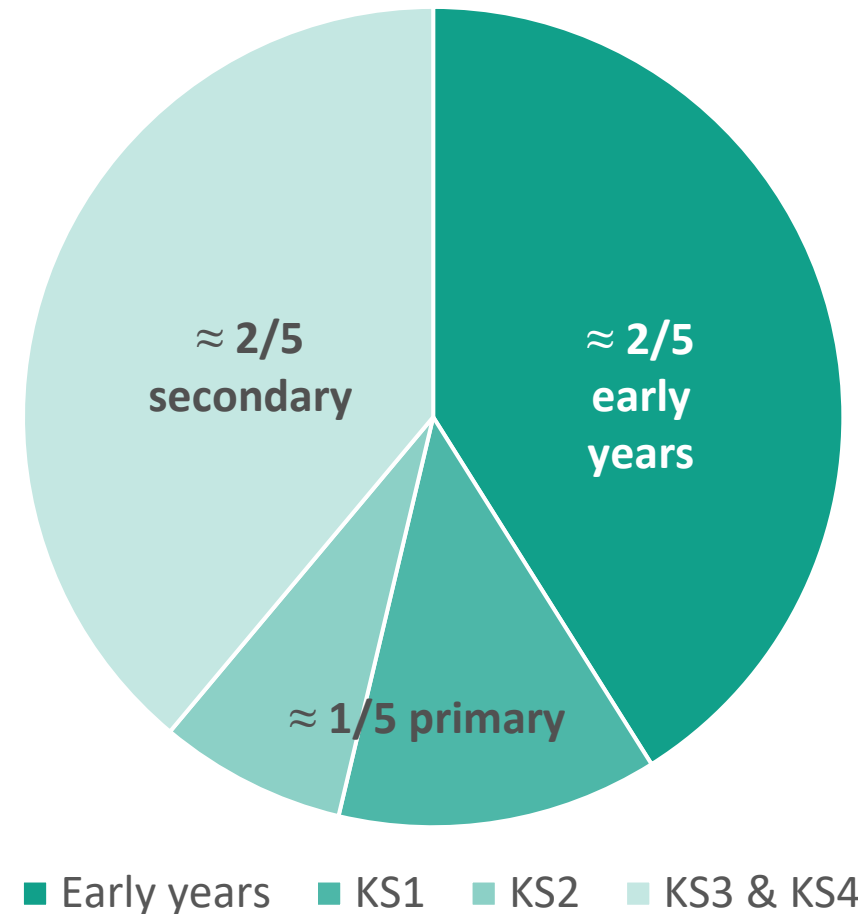
+0.2 months

Increase in disadvantage gap 2017 to 2018 in GCSE English & maths

- By the end of secondary school, disadvantaged pupils are already over 18 months behind their more affluent peers.
- In both the early years and secondary schools, progress in closing the gap is stalling.

Around 40% of the disadvantage gap is already evident by age 5

- The gap at age 5 (EYFSP) is around 40% of the total size reached by age 16 (GCSE)
- It grows less during primary school, despite this being a longer stage
- Another two fifths of the gap emerge during secondary school

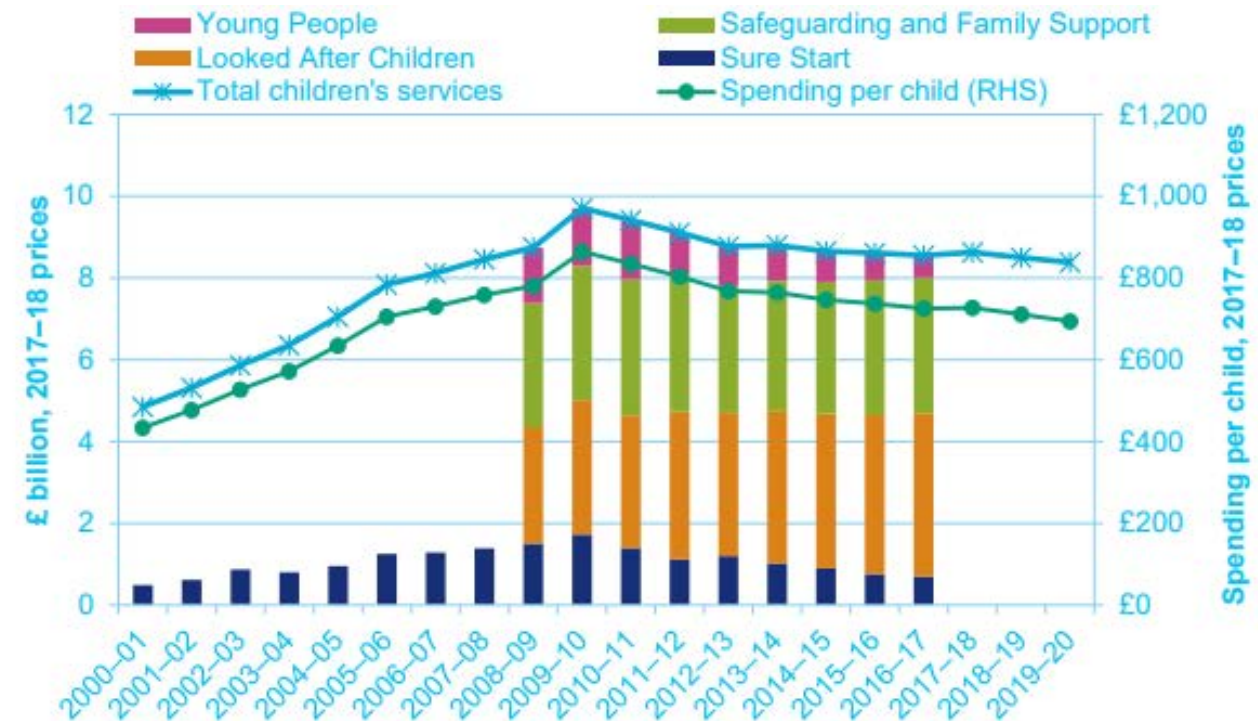


Integrated, high quality, early years services can help to narrow the gap

- **Evidence from the US (Professor Kirabo Jackson):** An additional 10 per cent in school spending leads to around an additional 4 months of education. For children from low-income backgrounds, that rises to almost half a year and impacts are greater still when coupled with investment in the US's Head Start programme – the blueprint for Sure Start.
- He also found “dynamic complementarity” approach to funding has greater impacts on later-life outcomes, including high-school graduation, wages and incarceration rates.
- **Our own Sure Start programme** found positive benefits relating to family engagement, hospital admissions, behaviour and the home learning environment.

But government spending runs counter to the evidence

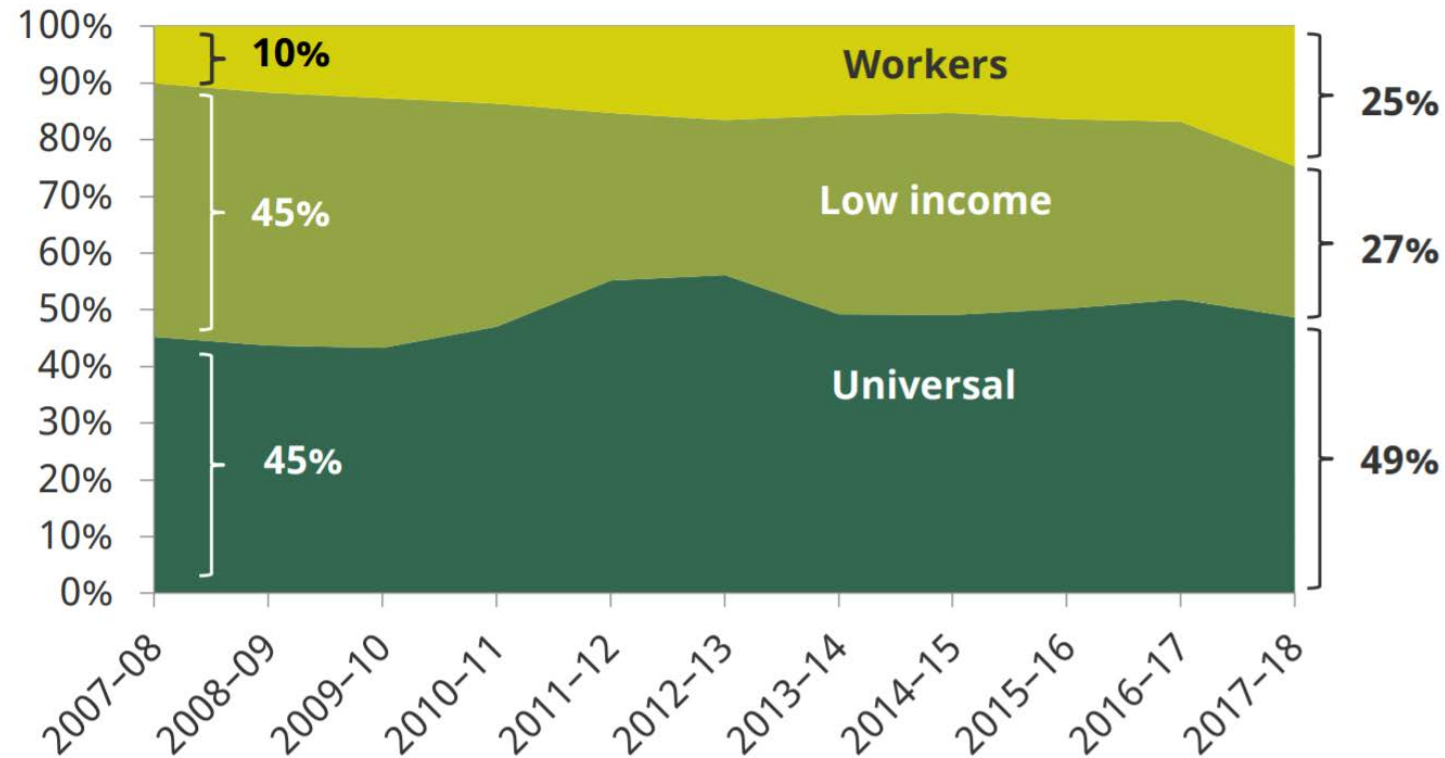
- Spending on services for children and young people has fallen by around 20% in real terms, per child over the past decade.
- In the most deprived local authorities, spending has fallen almost five times faster than in the least deprived local authorities.
- This includes a cut to Sure Start of around £1bn and the closure of around 1000 centres.



Source: Children's Commissioner, Public Spending on Children in England, 2018

And early education support has become less progressive

- While spending on early years education has increased in line with increases to entitlements, it remains below the OECD average and is less progressive than a decade ago.
- In 2007/08, 45 per cent of all government spending on the early years and childcare support was targeted explicitly at low-income families. By 2018, the share of spending on low-income families had decreased to 27 per cent.



Source: IFS, Education Spending in England, 2019

The early years workforce is also under-qualified and low-paid

- The childcare workforce earned an average hourly pay of £8.20 in 2018 – around 40 per cent less than the average female worker.
- A high proportion of workers claim state benefits or tax credits (44.5 per cent).
- The sector has suffered a pay reduction of nearly 5 per cent in real terms since 2013.
- The childcare workforce is also far less qualified than the teaching workforce and the general female working population. In 2018, 25.1 per cent of the childcare workers had completed a degree compared to around 93 per cent of teachers have a degree or equivalent.

Actions for government

- Upskill the early years workforce through more investment, clearer qualification pathways and better pay.
- Review the funding rate paid to providers of early education and childcare to make sure that it is sufficient to cover the cost of high quality provision.
- Adopt lessons from the roll-out of Sure Start and prioritise integrated early years services which are rooted in evidence and have strong governance structures.
- Flip the early education subsidies so that disadvantaged children have more access to high quality provision.