



Report: Tackling disadvantage through childcare in Northern Ireland

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Context

- Early Learning and Childcare Strategy still overdue
- Costed options for a new Strategy in development
- Political commitment stated to progressing policy and investment in childcare
- No Executive in place to take options forward
- Widening gap between support available elsewhere in the UK and Ireland



Free childcare plan in chaos as funding for Tories' key pledge unravels

Parents face missing out on free support at eleventh hour due to funding disarray

Maya Oppenheim Women's Correspondent, Adam Forrest • 2 days ago • 130 Comments



Parents set for disappointment as applications for new early entitlement offer open, Alliance warns

Jan 2, 2024 Under 5 news

Applications for the first phase of the extended entitlement offer open today

Childcare + Add to myFT

UK childcare providers warn they will have to limit access to new 'free' hours

Fears raised that attempt to support parents will exacerbate 10 years of 'chronic underfunding'

New research: disadvantaged children miss out as the Government's childcare plans fail to level up children's chances

25 May 2023

NEARLY HALF OF CHILDREN UNDER FIVE NOW LIVE IN "CHILDCARE DESERTS"

Areas where there are more than three children for every early year's place are more likely to be in most deprived local authorities

20 NOVEMBER 2023



Government's childcare reforms 'risk worsening outcomes' for poorer children

Ministers should target funding 'more fairly towards disadvantaged children' rather than higher income families, a report has said.

Eleanor Busby • Thursday 25 May 2023 00:01 BST



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SOCIAL JUSTICE

All the ways the government's childcare plans will help richer parents and hurt the poor

The government's got big plans to expand the 30 hours free childcare scheme – but experts worry it is setting the poorest children up to fail. We explain all the concerns with the childcare proposals

ISABELLA MCRAE | 30 Nov 2023

Study finds free childcare reform has 'little benefit' to poorer families

The Institute for Fiscal Studies said the measures announced in the Budget fail to prioritise inequalities in children's development.

Jonathan Bunn • Tuesday 26 September 2023 09:08 BST



Disadvantage

- Families with dependent children: 18% living in **relative poverty**, 15% in **absolute poverty**
- Children under five at higher risk of poverty than any other age group
- In the run up to Christmas 50,000 children in Northern Ireland were living in material deprivation, going without basics like warmth or fresh food (Action for Children)
- Child poverty costs the UK an estimated £39.5 billion a year



Tackling disadvantage

- Helping families increase earnings
- Improves outcomes for children
- Early identification of special educational needs



Early Learning and childcare must be recognised as a critical pillar within a wider support system for families.

Employers For Childcare and Joseph Rowntree Foundation



A childcare system that tackles disadvantage

Five pillars

Affordable

Quality

Accessed

Integrated

Family-centred



A childcare system that tackles disadvantage

Pillars

System in Northern Ireland

Affordable

- Not affordable for families to access or for providers to deliver
- Average cost of a full-time place £10,036 p/a
 - Impacts ability of parents to work
 - Rising costs for providers
 - Parents from lower income households least likely to use childcare

Quality

- Positive rating of quality from parents and stakeholders however:
- Staff recruitment and retention challenges
 - No Workforce Strategy
 - Absence of funding for sector to invest in quality
 - Complex regulatory environment

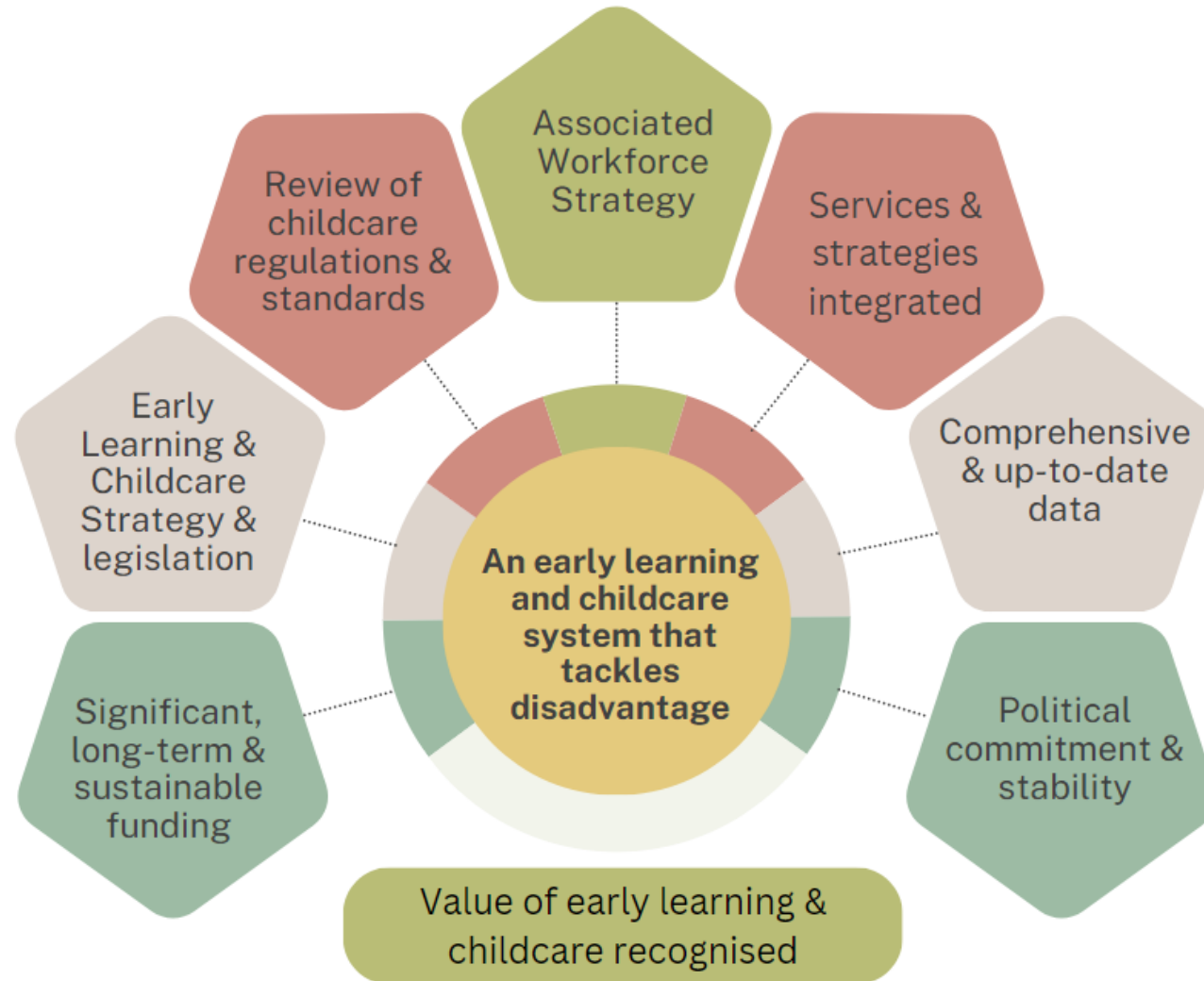


A childcare system that tackles disadvantage

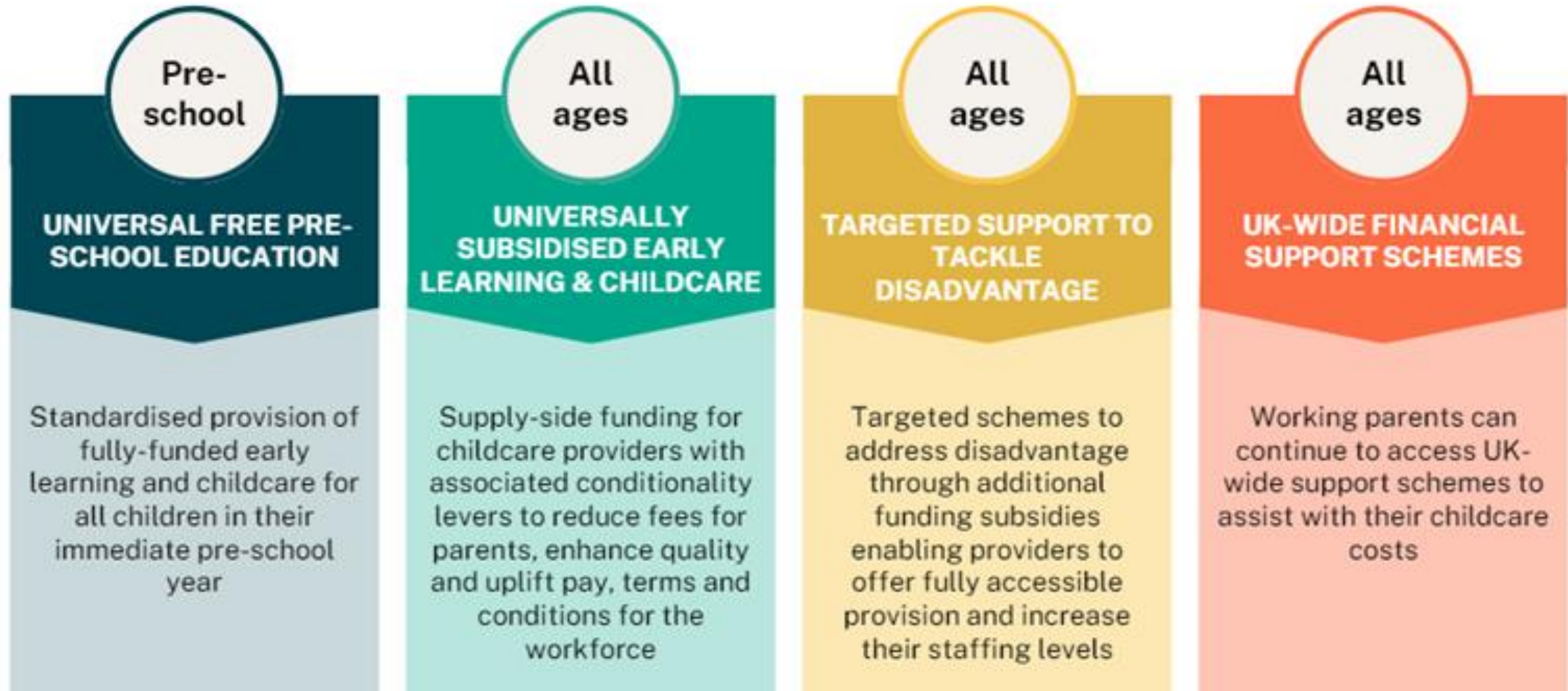
Pillars	System in Northern Ireland
Accessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No sufficiency duty• 81% of parents report insufficient local provision• Guaranteed pre-school place for every eligible child
Integrated	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• System not working as collaboratively as it needs to• Difficulties accessing support from other agencies• Challenge of a dual regulatory environment• Distinctions between statutory and non-statutory providers
Family-centred	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relationship between parents, providers and other professionals key• Many providers at the heart of the local community• However no clear role established for providers in supporting the home-learning environment



Policy change proposed

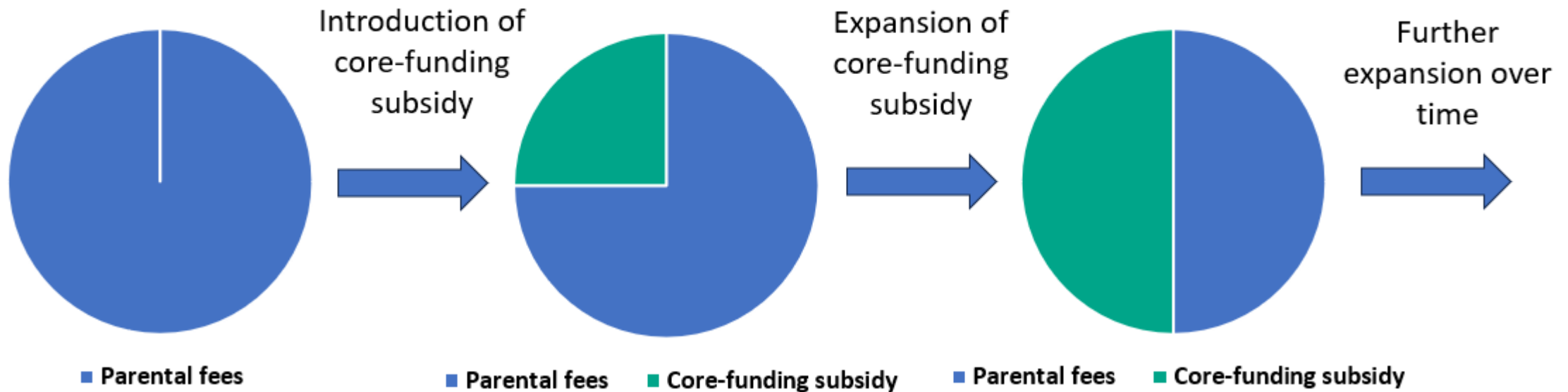


Bespoke funding model



Core funding subsidy

Re-balancing supply-side funding for an early learning and childcare place over time



What would this mean for families?

Age group	Short to medium term – outcomes for families	Longer term – outcomes for families
0 to 3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hourly/daily/weekly rates for early learning and childcare reduced. Universal Credit and Tax-Free Childcare support can be accessed by eligible parents to further assist with costs. Strengthened 2 Year Old Programme and expansion of Sure Start support for disadvantaged families. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through a means-tested co-payment model, families only pay an hourly/daily/weekly fee based on what they can afford, with some paying nothing. 2 Year Old Programme and Sure Start support for disadvantaged families.
3 to 4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All children receive one year of free, quality pre-school of 22.5 hours per week during term time. Rates for wraparound and holiday early learning and childcare provision are reduced. Universal Credit and Tax-Free Childcare support can be accessed by eligible parents to further assist with wraparound and holiday costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All children receive one year of free, quality, universal pre-school provision of 22.5 hours per week during term time. Through a means-tested co-payment model, families only pay an hourly/daily/weekly fee for the wraparound and holiday early learning and childcare they need based on what they can afford.
5 years +	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rates for wraparound and holiday early learning and childcare provision are reduced. Universal Credit and Tax-Free Childcare support can be accessed by eligible parents to further assist with wraparound and holiday costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through a means-tested co-payment model, families only pay an hourly/daily/weekly fee for the wraparound and holiday early learning and childcare they need based on what they can afford.

What now?





Thank you

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