

**SureStart**

# **Policy and practice in early years: From Sure Start to the Childcare Bill**

**How we started  
Evidence since we started  
The wider children's policy context**

**Naomi Eisenstadt  
Secretary of State's Chief Adviser  
on Children's Services**

# What we are here to do?

To deliver better outcomes for children families and communities by:

- Increasing the availability of childcare
- Improving the health, education, and social devt of children
- Supporting parents as parents and in their aspirations towards employment

# How we started: the 1998 CSR

- The relationship between poverty and poor outcomes for children
- Effective interventions community based, flexible, working with both children and parents
- Working across disciplines

# Govt Context

- A separate unit jointly managed across DfEE (as was) and DH
- Also at DfEE, Early childhood division (nursery education)
- Childcare Unit (employment and equal opportunities)

## Stage 2: all young children/poor young children

- Merger of Sure Start local programmes with Early Education and Childcare
- Move from alleviating poverty to eliminating poverty: strong employment and childcare agenda
- Poor children in non-poor areas
- strengthen early education focus
- Cross govt move to DWP from DH

# Stage 3: where we are now

- all children all ages: children's centres, extended schools, universal childcare offer
- Integrated delivery: Every Child Matters
- Devolution of control to Local authorities
  
- High risk, loss of community focus, but does it deliver outcomes?
- Key challenge, maintain current engagement with private and voluntary sectors

# The Every Child Matters context

Joined up services

Clear accountability

all children, but nuanced for individual needs

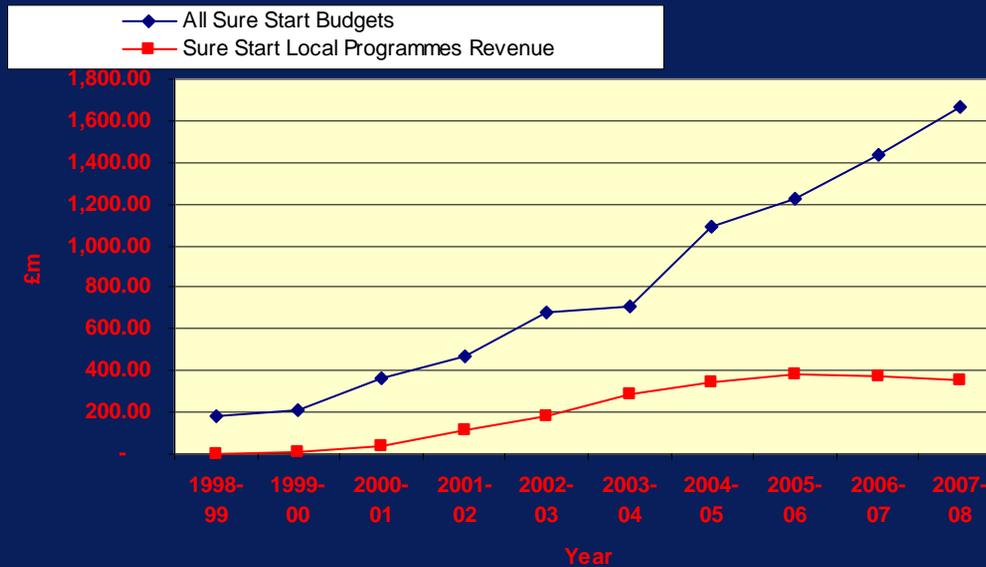
Prevention and early intervention

Key role for local authorities

# What have achieved so far:

- 524 Sure Start local programmes, now transforming into Children's Centres
- Free nursery education for all 3 and 4 year olds (12.5 hours, 38 weeks year)
- 80% increase in childcare places since 1997
  - > 82% increase in day nursery places for under fives
  - > 700% increase in out of school childcare places for over fives
  - > Bringing Extended Schools programme into Sure Start, creating new group responsible for comprehensive joined up services, -9 months – 14
  - > Spend on Early years and childcare for 2007-08, approaching £5 Billion

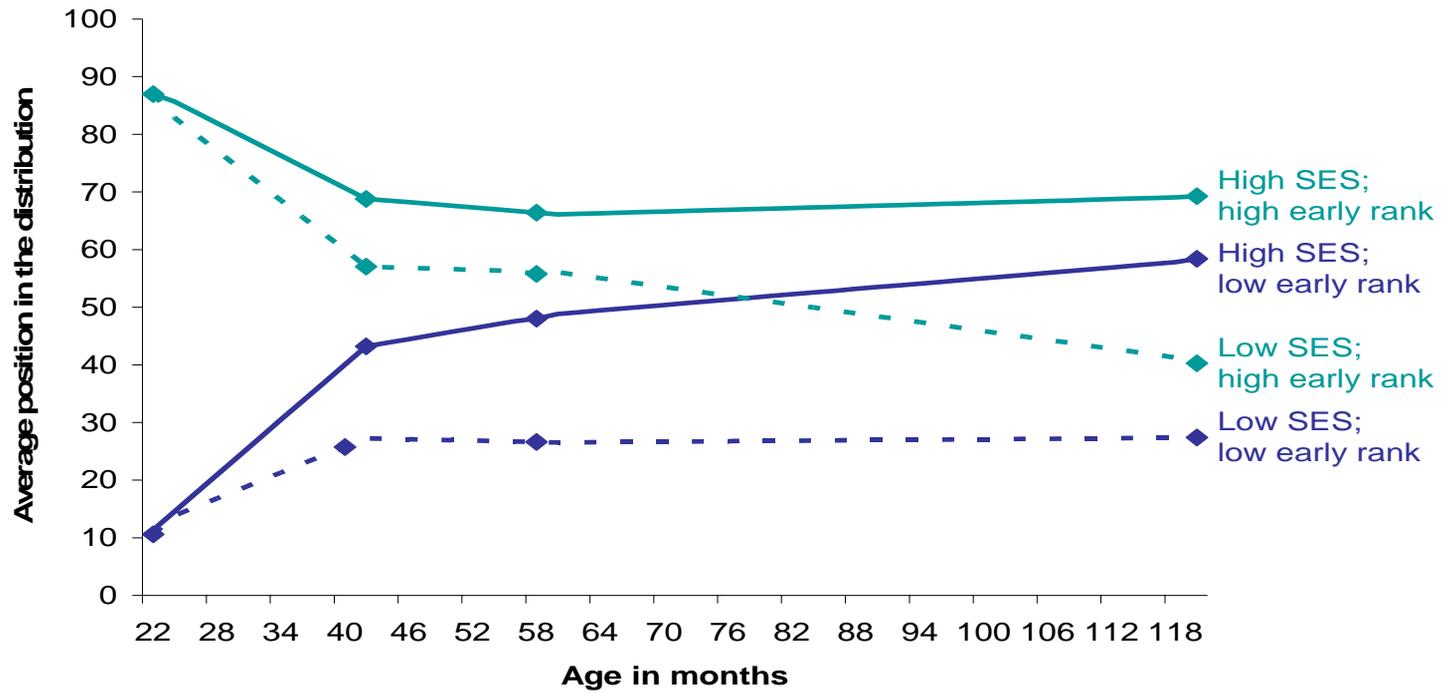
## Sure Start Programmes Expenditure 1998/99 to 2003/06 and Planned Expenditure 2006-2008



## What we have learned so far: key principles that informed ECM

- Working with parents and children
- Services for everyone, but not the same service
- Flexible at point of delivery
- Community driven, professionally informed
- Starting early
- Outcome driven

# What we know from research: start early



Source: Feinstein, *Economica* (2003)

## What we know from research: (EPPE findings)

- Pre-school exp enhances children's devt
- Quality is directly related to better outcomes
- Staff qualifications best indicator of quality
- Starting before 3 (after 2) improves outcomes
- Even poor quality group care better than no group experience before school
- Home learning environment counts the most

# What we know from research

## NESS evaluation

### **For non teen mothers (86% of sample)**

- Greater child social competence
- Fewer child behaviour problems
- Less negative parenting

### **For teen mothers (14% of sample)**

- Less child competence
- More child behaviour problems
- Poorer child verbal ability

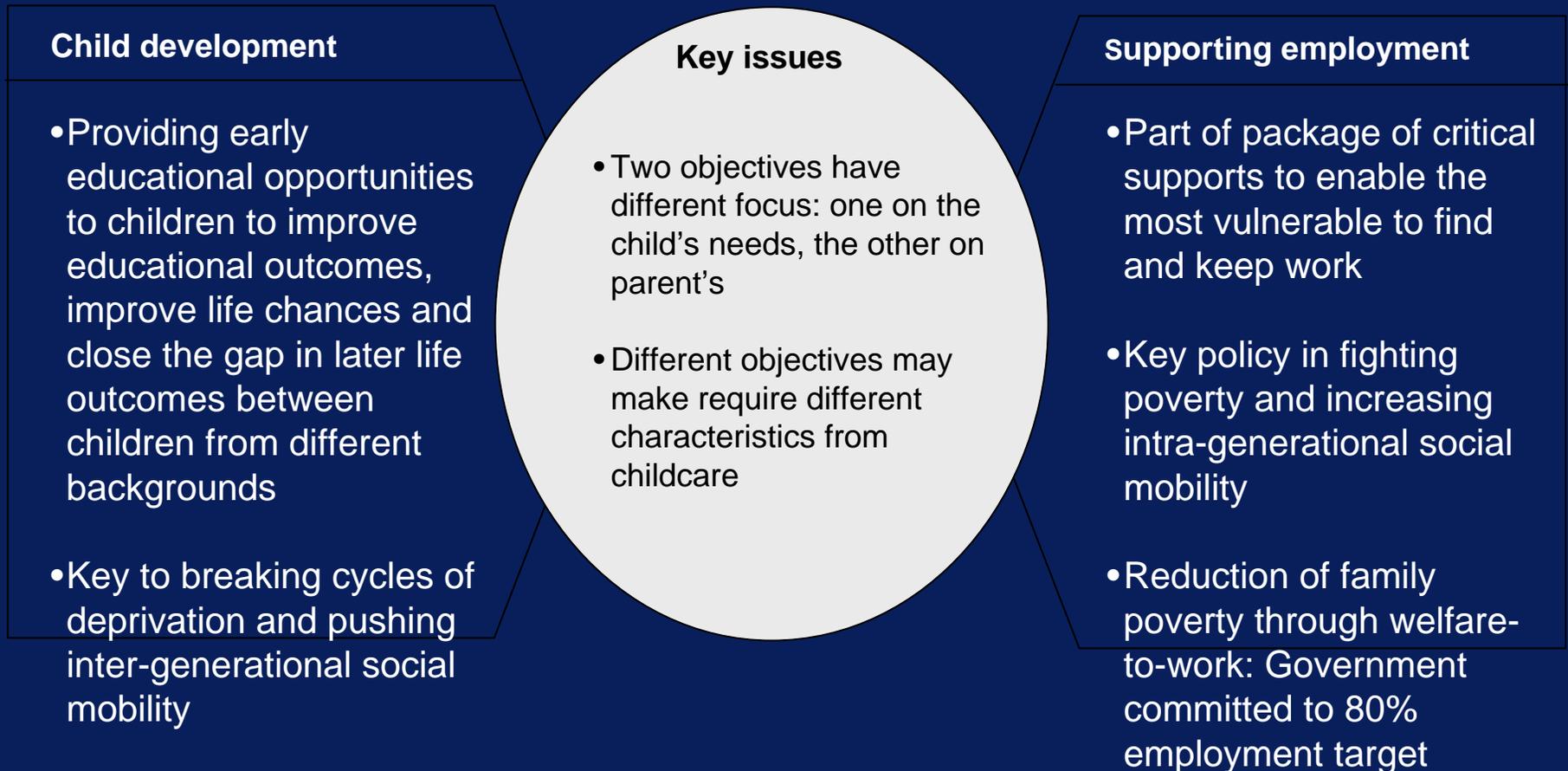
# What we know from research: parents: what works for them

- Most salient factor in child outcomes: more important than quality of group setting, school or teachers
- More powerful than class or income
- Home learning environment critical to good outcomes
- Parental aspirations more important than parental 'involvement' with school
- Interventions with clear objectives and structured activities (manualised)
- Quality of staff delivering interventions
- Persistency in encouraging participation
- Interventions sensitive to family and community context
- difficult to establish population interventions, targeting cost effective, greater impact

The next stage of reform: an integrated embedded early years and childcare system:

Choice for Parents the Best Start for Children: a ten year childcare strategy

# The childcare strategy has two central objectives



# Tensions in the system

Flexibility for employment, regular ongoing provision for quality

*Child Development: quality early education key to improving outcomes and closing the gap*

*Supporting employment: critical to enable the most vulnerable to find and stay in work*

*Employment key to reducing child poverty*

# Legislation: the childcare bill

Duty on local authority to

- Secure sufficient childcare to meet the needs of working parents, particular attention to those on low income and with disabled children
- Improve the outcomes of children under 5 and close the gap in outcomes by ensuring integrated services
- Ensure information is available for parents on childcare and wider services for parents
- Implement a reformed and simplified regulation framework, removing distinction between care and education, building a single birth to 5 framework
- Ensure provision of information on childcare and wider children's services

# Policy directly driven by evidence

- Increased maternity paid maternity leave (evidence of risk of early and prolonged group childcare)
- Children's Centres teacher requirements (EPPE evidence on quality)
- Pilot of free offer for 2 year olds (EPPE evidence on benefits of starting early)
- Stronger prescription in latest Children's Centre guidance (evidence from NESS on some families not benefiting)
- Parent support key service element in Children's Centres (evidence of critical role of parents on all child outcomes)
- Supply side and demand side support for childcare (evidence about nature of childcare market)

# The world in 10 years

- All parents have access to affordable high quality childcare
- ECM reforms embedded: early identification of problems, swift referral, integrated packages of effective services
- Schools part of the overall system, not education and children's services
- Standards continue to improve, and gaps have been reduced
- But what will be the next great challenges?