

Unknown children – destined for disadvantage?

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector commissioned this survey to evaluate the effectiveness of local authorities and early years providers in tackling the issues facing disadvantaged families and their young children. Her Majesty's Inspectors paid particular attention to the implementation and impact of national and local policies on the day-to-day practice of early years providers in some of the most deprived areas of England.

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Foreword

A child's earliest years, from their birth to the time they reach statutory school age, are crucial. All the research shows that this stage of learning and development matters more than any other.¹

If we get the early years right, we pave the way for a lifetime of achievement. If we get them wrong, we miss a unique opportunity to shape a child's future.

We know from the outcomes of Ofsted inspections that the overall quality of provision for this age group in England is better now than it has ever been. In March 2016, 86% of all registered early years providers (that is, nurseries, pre-schools and childminders) were judged as good or outstanding.² That is a 14 percentage point increase in just five years. We are also finding that the quality of early years education in our primary schools is at least as high.

This raising of standards means that many more parents have a much better chance of finding a high-quality provider in their local area. At the same time, there are more children meeting the government's standard of a 'good level of development' at the end of the Reception Year. In 2015, 66% of five-year-olds achieved this national expectation, an improvement of 15 percentage points since 2013.³ For many of these children, the future is likely to be promising.

The uncomfortable truth, however, is that although early education is better than it has ever been, it is still not benefiting our poorest children as much as their peers.

We know that nearly half of the children from disadvantaged backgrounds have not secured the essential knowledge, skills and understanding expected for their age by the time they finish Reception Year. Around a quarter are unable to communicate effectively, control their own feelings and impulses or make sense of the world around them to ensure that they are ready to learn.

Yet we also know that it is the poorest children who have the most to gain if they are given the opportunity to master these basic skills before they reach statutory school age – and the most to lose if they are not. By this point, the odds of these children catching up are stacked against them. In 2015, only 44% of children who had not reached the expected level at the age of five went on to securely achieve the

¹ 'Students' educational and developmental outcomes at age 16, effective pre-school, primary and secondary education (EPPSE 3–16) project', Department for Education, September 2014; www.gov.uk/government/publications/influences-on-students-development-at-age-16.

² 'Childcare providers and inspections as at 31 March 2016: key findings', Ofsted, June 2016; www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childcare-providers-and-inspections-as-at-31-march-2016.

³ 'Statistical first release: Early years foundation stage profile results: 2014 to 2015', Department of Education, November 2015; www.gov.uk/government/statistics/early-years-foundation-stage-profile-results-2014-to-2015.

national benchmark in reading, writing and mathematics at the age of 11.⁴ This compares with 77% of children who had achieved the good level of development.

One reason too many disadvantaged children get off to a bad start is that, in too many local areas, they are less likely to access high-quality early education.

In the most prosperous areas, only 8% of children are in early years provision that is less than good. For children living in the most deprived areas, this figure more than doubles, to 18%.⁵

I commissioned this survey to gain a better understanding of how local authorities, schools and registered early years providers were tackling the issue of disadvantage and lower standards for those children in the most deprived communities.

The role of local authorities is paramount. They are charged with meeting the needs of young children through the Childcare Act 2006.⁶ This places a duty on councils to improve outcomes for all young children, reduce inequalities and ensure that there is sufficient, high-quality early years provision and childcare for parents locally.

All this demands joined-up thinking. When learning, development and health are so inextricably linked for the under-fives, tackling all forms of inequality should be integrated across the range of local children's services.

This, in turn, requires strong and effective leadership at every level from the council cabinet to those leading early years provision.

When carrying out this survey, inspectors did indeed come across strong leaders who understood the importance of prioritising the early years. They were bringing services together to support disadvantaged families in a way that stood every chance of changing children's destinies for the better. These leaders were removing the existing barriers between health and educational professionals that impeded them working together seamlessly and effectively.

One council had an elected member whose single designated responsibility was to address the needs of disadvantaged children. Unfortunately, this commitment was by no means widespread. More than half the local authorities we visited did not take a coordinated, strategic approach to tackling the issues faced by disadvantaged children and their families.

⁴ 'Education in England: annual report 2016', April 2016, CentreForum; www.centreforum.org/publications/education-in-england-annual-report-2016.

⁵ 'Entitlement to free early education and childcare', National Audit Office, March 2016; www.nao.org.uk/report/entitlement-to-free-early-education-and-childcare.

⁶ Childcare Act 2006; www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/contents.

For too many councils, ensuring that pre-school children from poorer homes were being given a good start was low on their list of priorities. 'They will catch up later' was a common and complacent refrain that inspectors heard.

Even where a strategic plan was in place, around a third of those authorities did not have any specific targets or ambitions for improving the outcomes of disadvantaged children in the early years.

Inspectors encountered local authorities that were hampered by silo-working and unnecessary duplication of effort. Education and health teams within the same council did not know that the other was completing the same assessments for the same children. This poor information-sharing often stemmed from a culture of professional distrust across the different children's services.

Tens of thousands of poor children losing out as over £200 million set aside to fund free places for two-year-olds goes unspent

The government has introduced a number of recent measures to try to reduce levels of inequality and narrow the pre-school educational gap between disadvantaged and better off children. These include funded places for the most disadvantaged two-year-olds⁷ and the new early years pupil premium for three- and four-year olds.⁸

Local authorities have been handed responsibility for checking which children in their area are eligible for these different funding streams, as well as for directing the funding to early years providers in their area.

It is encouraging that there has been a 10 percentage point increase in the number of disadvantaged two-year-olds taking up the government offer of free education since I highlighted this issue in my last early years annual report a year ago.⁹

However, there were still around 80,000 children – nearly a third of all those eligible – whose families did not take up a funded place in 2015. That equates to a staggering £200 million worth of potential investment that has failed to reach the children for whom it is intended.

The situation is particularly bad in two local authority areas where the take-up of funded places for two-year-olds was as low as 34%.

⁷ The government's policy on free childcare for disadvantaged two-year-olds expanded in September 2015 to cover the 40% most deprived children and families, doubling from the most deprived 20% in previous years.

⁸ 'Early years pupil premium: a guide for local authorities', The Department for Education, March 2015; www.gov.uk/guidance/early-years-pupil-premium-guide-for-local-authorities.

⁹ 'Education provision: children under five years of age: statistical first release, Department for Education, June 2016; www.gov.uk/government/statistics/education-provision-children-under-5-years-of-age-january-2016.

I am concerned that, as things stand, no one is being held to account for this scandalously poor performance. As a result, the opportunity to directly influence the future path of thousands of poorer children is being lost.

Our survey found that the most effective local authority leaders had recognised that bureaucracy too often prevented funding getting to those that needed it most. They had, therefore, adapted national systems to make it easier for parents to access these entitlements. They were also working closely with schools and early years providers in their area to ensure that there was a sufficient number of high-quality places available in the most appropriate settings for disadvantaged children.

In other areas, however, local authority leaders said that finding enough early years providers willing to offer sufficient places for funded two-year-olds was a constant challenge. This was partly because many pre-school providers do not want to reduce the number of children whose parents pay a higher rate for their provision to accommodate a greater proportion of children on funded places that provide a lower return. Indeed, only six of the 27 nurseries and childminders we visited prioritised admission for funded or disadvantaged children.

It was also partly because not enough primary school headteachers in their area were willing to show the necessary ambition or take the necessary steps to make this happen. Just five of the schools we visited were taking two-year-olds into their early years classes, despite their premises often being situated in the most deprived parts of the borough.

This is worrying. As I have made clear before, I firmly believe that schools are best placed to lead on the necessary help needed by very young children from disadvantaged homes who are at risk of falling behind.

I say this because we know that a growing proportion of primary schools are already succeeding in reducing the disparity between poorer children and their peers in reading and other core skills between the ages of five and seven. They also have more access to specialist support and are better able to ensure a smooth transition into Reception from Nursery for those children who often find it a struggle to adapt to new routines and a new environment.

Schools have already been given the right to prioritise the poorest children when drawing up their admissions criteria. Furthermore, bureaucracy on schools has been reduced: they are no longer required to register separately with Ofsted to take two-year-olds.

However, it is clear from our survey that obstacles still remain. While in some places, school leaders are stepping up to the plate in increasing numbers, there was a notable reluctance in other areas to do so.

In some local authorities, leaders were thinking of increasingly creative and flexible ways to encourage and incentivise more headteachers to take funded two-year-olds and disadvantaged three-year-olds. One council, for example, was providing a top-up

to hourly funding as well as free training for staff and a one-off 'start-up' fee to help providers purchase new equipment or reorganise the learning environment.

It is clear from our survey that some local authorities, schools and early years settings are making effective use of the funding available to them to give poorer children the good start they so desperately need. Strong leaders at the town hall level, as well as in individual schools and settings, are demonstrably strategic, innovative and committed to making a difference.

However, there was a discernible lack of such ambition in a number of the local authorities we visited. Any potential for improving the prospects of the most disadvantaged young children was too often thwarted by weak leadership, ineffective managerial oversight, duplication and inefficiency. In these councils, government funding was not being used in a sufficiently targeted, coordinated way to make a difference.

It is clear from our findings that action is needed on a national and local level to address these variations and to ensure that the weakest places learn from the best. Early education has the potential to drive social mobility and improve outcomes for the next generation. We should not let them down.

Sir Michael Wilshaw

Key findings

- **Tackling the issues facing disadvantaged families and their children requires leaders across children’s services, health and education to have a broader understanding of what it means to be ‘disadvantaged’.** While all of the local authorities, pre-school providers and schools visited could define disadvantage in terms of a family’s finances, the most effective went beyond this basic definition. They realised that helping to improve parenting skills and the home environment went hand in hand with providing early education to develop children’s understanding and help them make sense of the world.
- **Being disadvantaged continues to have a considerable detrimental impact on children.** In 2015, just over half of those children from disadvantaged backgrounds secured the knowledge, skills and understanding expected by the age of five. By contrast, more than two thirds of non-disadvantaged five-year-olds achieved the good level of development needed to make a successful start to school in Year 1.¹⁰ Educational outcomes by the age of five are not the only deficits of being disadvantaged. A child’s health and the opportunity to access free, funded early education from the age of two can also be affected.
- **There is a lack of understanding of what success looks like in tackling disadvantage.** All of the leaders spoken to were concerned about a lack of clarity around what success looks like. In particular, leaders were not clear what ‘school readiness’ means and there was little appreciation of the wider health and social care elements that potentially contribute to educational attainment.
- **Providing a joined-up service is crucial in tackling disadvantage. Nine of the local authorities visited did not have a coordinated, strategic approach to tackling the issues faced by disadvantaged children and their families.** Weak leadership, lack of management oversight and inaction contributed to this failure. In the best local authorities, information from early identification of need was shared successfully across all children’s services to provide the right intervention. Children, parents and families were given the information, support and guidance needed to address all of their most pressing needs. In the worst cases, inspectors found professional distrust and a reluctance to share vital information about a child or family beyond the team that had initially gathered it. In these local authorities, departments targeted different children and families, unknowingly duplicated assessments and, crucially, did not even know whether a child and the family were disadvantaged or not.
- **Early assessments of children’s health, learning and development were not benefiting enough families that were in the most need of support.** Across the local authorities in this survey, around a quarter of their disadvantaged children were missing out on these crucial assessments by health

¹⁰ ‘Statistical first release: Early years foundation stage profile results: 2014 to 2015’, Department of Education, November 2015; www.gov.uk/government/statistics/early-years-foundation-stage-profile-results-2014-to-2015.

visitors. Even in local authorities where nearly all of the children had received such checks, only two of those visited had a system for knowing whether these children would then be identified as 'disadvantaged'.

- **Too few early years leaders prioritised opportunities for disadvantaged children to have access to a high-quality education.** Only eight of the 27 pre-school providers and childminders visited prioritised admission for funded or disadvantaged children, despite being located in the most deprived wards of a local area.
- **More needs to be done to ensure that additional funding has sufficient impact.** In just under half of the 43 schools and settings visited, leaders, managers and staff had often not identified the children who were entitled to the early years premium, because local authority protocols and delays in payment hindered easy identification. Five of the 16 schools visited found it difficult to account for their use of the school pupil premium in their Reception classes.
- **Leaders and managers who used additional government funding successfully had a clear rationale for their spending based on an acute understanding of the needs of eligible children.** The strategies in these schools and settings focused on improving children's personal, social and emotional development and their speech, language and communication skills.
- **The most successful local authorities visited had devised innovative ways to align national funding streams to ensure continuity of entitlement across a child's entire early education.** A common feature was to reduce the number of forms disadvantaged parents had to complete by ensuring that local systems worked on a principle of 'opt out' rather than 'opt in'.

Recommendations

Schools, settings and childminders should:

- ensure that key information, including early assessments, is shared promptly at points of transition so that the needs of the most disadvantaged children are known quickly
- review their use of the early years pupil premium to ensure that support is focused on improving the areas of development that will help a child to catch up.

Local authorities should:

- publish their strategy for meeting the needs of disadvantaged children and families so that local communities are clear about the support available and how its success will be measured
- work with schools and early years settings to ensure that there are sufficient high-quality and sustainable places available to disadvantaged children and increase the proportion of eligible children who take up the two-year-old offer

- ensure that early years pupil premium funding is devolved quickly to schools and settings with eligible children, ensuring that managers and staff are aware of who has the additional funding from the start
- ensure that the health and development checks carried out at the age of two are completed as a crucial first assessment of children's needs so that they can be used as a benchmark for progress across the rest of a child's early years
- improve information-sharing protocols so that professionals across children's services have ready access to a range of data, particularly about health outcomes, so that early assessment and identification of need lead to timely, effective support.

The Department for Education should:

- review how local authorities are held accountable for their services to disadvantaged children and families, ensuring that 'school readiness' at the end of Reception is clearly defined and used as one measure of each local area's success
- provide a common definition for 'disadvantage children', incorporating a range of economic, health and social indicators, to support a coherent approach to improving the life chances of the most disadvantaged children and families
- require schools and other settings to publish information about the impact of the early years pupil premium, where received, on their website
- align the different funding streams for disadvantaged children and families in the early years so that only one application by parents is needed for continuous funding until a child reaches the end of the Reception Year.

Ofsted should:

- ensure that the impact of additional funding on children's health, learning and development is reported clearly and consistently, including the impact of funding for eligible Nursery and Reception children in schools.

Background

1. The Chief Inspector commissioned this survey to investigate further the concerns reported in Ofsted's 2015 early years annual report about the life chances of disadvantaged children under the age of five.¹¹ In this survey, Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) evaluated the extent to which local authorities in England challenged and supported schools and registered early years providers.

¹¹ Ofsted early years report 2015, July 2015, Ofsted; www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-early-years-report-2015.

HMI also aimed to identify what strategies were making a difference for young children and their families living in the most deprived communities.

2. In January 2016, an online questionnaire was sent out to each local authority to collect information about the strategic direction they were taking to fulfil their statutory obligation to provide early childhood services. Local authority leaders were also asked to share their views of the effectiveness of recent policy initiatives, as they apply in practice on the ground.
3. In March and April 2016, HMI followed up the responses to the online questionnaire by visiting 15 local authorities across the country. These visits focused on the effectiveness of each local area's plans to tackle their specific, identified issues surrounding disadvantaged children and families.
4. HMI also visited 43 early years providers, including schools, pre-schools and childminders, in nine of the 15 local authorities to evaluate whether national and local policies, as presented by locality leaders, were having the desired impact on practice and making a discernible difference to disadvantaged children's outcomes.

Unknown children – destined for disadvantage?

What do we mean by 'disadvantage'?

5. Disadvantage is a complex issue. It can affect children from birth and, left unchecked and unchallenged, can impact negatively on every aspect of a child's life. Poverty is often the driving force, influencing the quality of parenting and home environment that children experience, which in turn shapes their outlook on life. As such, disadvantage can have a long-term grip on families and communities, holding them back generation after generation. Ensuring that the home, health and educational experiences of the youngest children are of the highest quality provides opportunities to reverse this long-term cycle of deprivation.
6. There is no quick fix to such a deep-rooted issue. We did not find a shared understanding of the term 'disadvantage' across or within the 90 local authorities that responded to our questionnaire. At its worst, the survey found that the lack of a shared definition between health, social care and education led to a confused list of priorities for helping those at risk of educational underachievement. If we are to successfully tackle disadvantage head on, everyone needs to be working towards the same goal.
7. The proxy indicator generally used in education to identify disadvantage is children's eligibility for free school meals. This provides a measure by which society can estimate the relative performance between poor children and their better-off peers in maintained schools, academies and free schools. However, this indicator is not used in all countries. Some choose a wider definition that includes the mother's level of education, employment and health.

8. All the local authorities, pre-school providers and schools that inspectors visited for this survey defined disadvantage in terms of a family's economic income. We found these definitions to be closely aligned to the eligibility criteria for additional government funding, such as whether families were receiving tax credits, income support or other benefits. In these instances, children were identified for additional support because they had secured a funded place as a two-year-old or were known to be in receipt of the early years or school pupil premium. Leaders and staff often looked to the allocation of additional monies or services as the only sign of a disadvantaged child.

One local authority we visited defined a disadvantaged child or family as those receiving free, funded education for two-year-olds, those in receipt of the early years pupil premium and those receiving the schools pupil premium at the age of four or five. They did not class any other child, parent or family as disadvantaged, regardless of where they lived or what else they knew about the wider circumstances affecting the family. In this instance, the local authority had a narrow and blinkered view of their community and the extent of the issues facing it. While leaders and staff knew that not all children and families eligible for funding and support were receiving it, they targeted their limited resources at those who were known to the system rather than seeking out and encouraging more to access their entitlement. Outcomes for disadvantaged children and families in this local authority were weak over time, showing little sign of improvement because early childhood services were being focused on only those who were known and visible.

9. Not all shared such a narrow view. The most effective schools and settings visited had a much wider definition of disadvantage. While the leaders and staff spoken to in these successful providers typically knew what disadvantaged children and families were entitled to receive in monetary terms, they went beyond this when defining what made a child, family or entire community disadvantaged. In these instances, adults used the term 'vulnerable' as a way of describing the unique circumstances surrounding an individual child, group of children or family.

One school defined disadvantage as an outcome – an over-arching term to describe what would come to be, or continue, if help and support were slow or ineffectual. The leaders in this setting understood that a wide range of circumstances could lead to a child and their family being vulnerable to lower educational achievement, poor health and well-being and a reduced chance of leading a successful and fulfilling life. In this particular community, vulnerability was seen to be particularly prevalent for children who had witnessed domestic violence in the home or were living in households where one or more parents were defined as addicts – whether this be alcohol- or drug-related. Importantly, this insight by the school ensured that they had devised, over time, a curriculum that was rooted in personal, social and emotional aspects of learning. A 'listening

ear' service and programme of more formal counselling were readily available for those children who needed it.

In terms of educational outcomes, these children were monitored closely to ensure that they felt safe and secure and had the right dispositions and attitudes to learn. Assessment information in this school showed that children identified as vulnerable made accelerated progress so that the vast majority caught up quickly with their peers and reached a good level of development by the age of five. Some exceeded this benchmark and all were fully prepared for the demands of Year 1 and a more formal approach to the curriculum.

10. In many of the 27 registered early years providers visited, a child's or family's vulnerability was not considered. For nine of the pre-schools and eight childminders visited, disadvantage was purely whether a child was receiving a funded place. These settings did not consider children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, children who speak English as an additional language or summer-born children as also being disadvantaged. To them, these factors were more about a child's level of development in comparison to the 'typical child', rather than the issues brought about by living in a deprived community. Frequently, this thinking resulted in no bespoke provision for a child to meet their potential and was in direct contrast with the schools taking funded children.
11. The most effective early years leaders could identify at least one child who they thought of as disadvantaged but whose family were not living in a deprived area nor eligible for additional government funding or support. Being disadvantaged in the eyes of these leaders could also be associated with the home environment.

One pre-school setting attached to a children's centre had an agreed policy about the circumstances in which a child and their family would be regarded as 'at a disadvantage'. This included children who were:

- showing poor speech and language for their age and stage of development
- being looked after by someone other than their parents, such as grandparents
- those whose family was known to be involved in crime
- those who had young or teenage parents
- those who had older siblings with a wide age gap between them.

This list of circumstances came from an acute understanding of the local community and was developed through strong working relationships with social workers, health visitors and other agencies, such as the police. Leaders in this setting were clear that their working relationships with a wide range of professionals made them more aware and, ultimately, more responsive to the exact needs of children in the locality.

12. Not every provider inspectors spoke to had a knowledgeable view of what it meant to be a disadvantaged child or family in today's society. For instance, managers of registered providers who did not take funded children spoke of disadvantage in terms of the vulnerability these families would bring to their businesses rather than the barriers to learning they would have to help the child overcome.
13. Indeed, for this reason, many lone workers surveyed were reluctant to accept funded or disadvantaged children, even when they lived in the most deprived areas of a local authority. Out of the 30 good and outstanding childminders living in deprived areas who we contacted to take part in this survey, only five took children in receipt of funding. Many of those who chose not to were concerned about the negative impact taking a funded child would have on their livelihood.

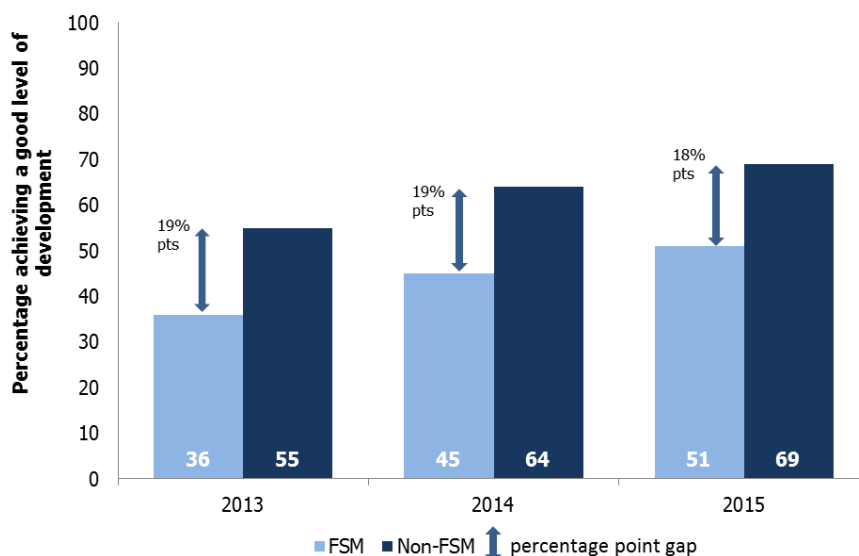
What is the impact of being disadvantaged?

14. The differences between disadvantaged children and their better-off counterparts are stark. While the attainment gap at the age of five has started to close recently, a gap in children's speech and language equivalent to 19 months¹² has already emerged for some children in the lowest income families before they have even started statutory school. As the 'Effective pre-school, primary and secondary education project'¹³ indicates, the first five years of a child's life are crucial in establishing the way that they think, learn and behave, particularly between birth and the age of three. To be behind after only 1,000 days of life predisposes some children to a long and difficult struggle throughout the rest of their formal education.

¹² 'Social mobility and education gaps in the four major Anglophone countries: research findings for the social mobility summit', London 2012, The Sutton Trust, May 2012; www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/social-mobility-summit2012.pdf

¹³ 'Effective pre-school, primary and secondary education project, December 2015', Department for Education; www.gov.uk/government/collections/eppse-3-to-14-years.

Figure 1: Proportion of children achieving a good level of development, by year and by eligibility for free school meals (FSM)



Source: Department for Education

15. In 2015, around half of all disadvantaged children had achieved a good level of development and secured the essential skills needed to make a successful start at school in Year 1¹⁴ compared with two thirds of all five-year-olds. The attainment gap between disadvantaged children and others within their class was wider still when individual areas of learning¹⁵ were taken into account. The gaps were widest in literacy, particularly reading, and mathematics. Achieving well in these areas is built on a child's:

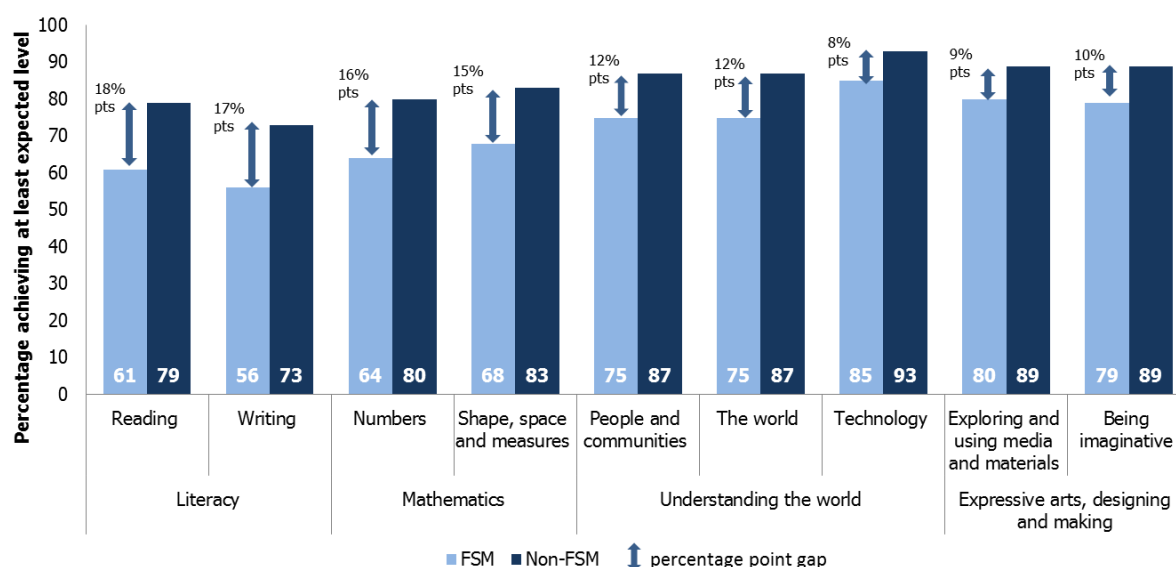
- understanding that everyone has something to say – ideas, views and opinions are what make us unique (personal, social and emotional development)
- ability to articulate these thoughts, views and opinions so that others can understand what they are communicating (communication and language)
- breadth and depth of receptive vocabulary to understand what others are saying to them (communication and language)
- gross and fine motor control so that they can hold a pencil correctly and make the small, controlled movements to form marks and recognisable letters (physical development)

¹⁴ 'Statistical first release: early years foundation stage profile results: 2014 to 2015', Department of Education, November 2015; www.gov.uk/government/statistics/early-years-foundation-stage-profile-results-2014-to-2015.

¹⁵ The seven areas of learning within the early years foundation stage are: personal, social and emotional development; physical development; communication and language; literacy; mathematics, understanding the world; and, expressive arts and design.

- ability to remember the sounds that different combinations of letters represent when reading, and the reverse when writing (characteristics of effective learning and literacy)
- ability to concentrate and maintain focus on one particular activity, persevering with something as complex as reading or writing through until the end of the task (characteristics of effective learning)
- comprehend the world around them so that they increasingly understand what they read and can write (understanding the world).

Figure 2: Proportion of children achieving at least expected level in literacy; mathematics; understanding the world; expressive arts and design early learning goals in 2015, by eligibility for FSM



Source: Department for Education

The outcomes for the most recent cohorts of children leaving the Reception Year show, over time, that more disadvantaged children are acquiring these essential skills to enable them to succeed in all other aspects of learning. However, the proportions who still lack this strong start at the age of five remain unacceptably high.

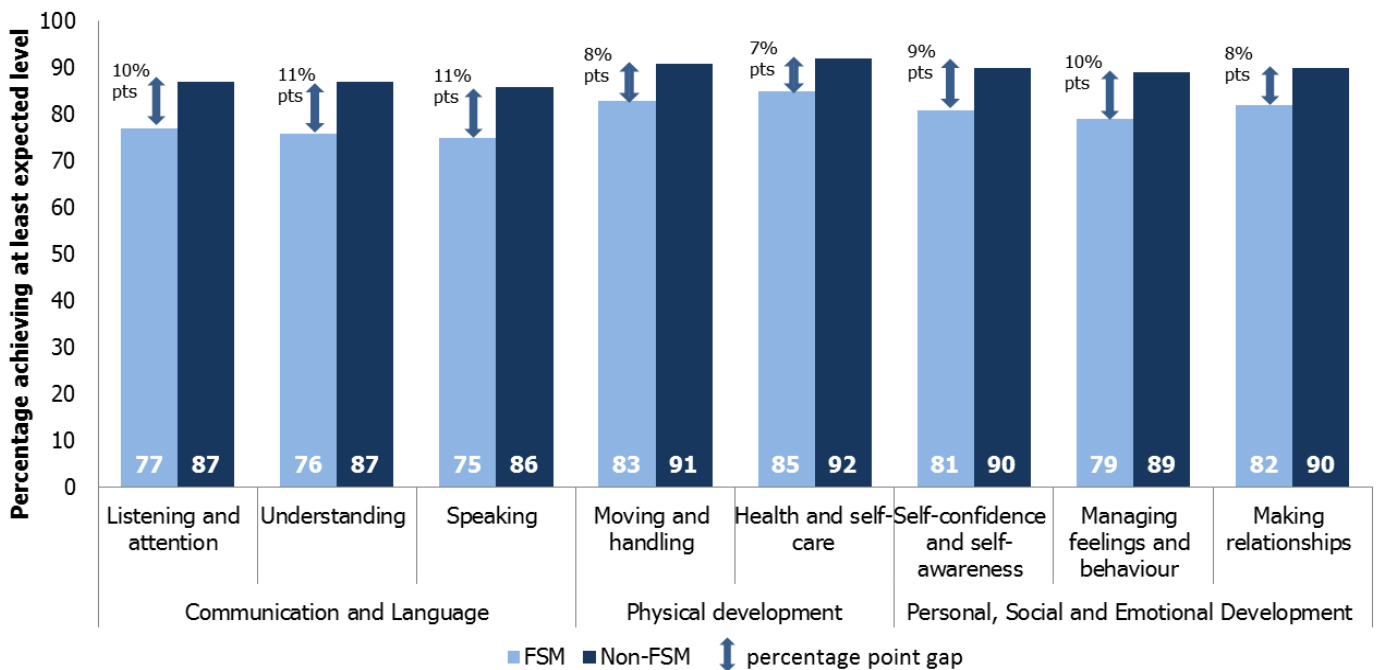
- Around one fifth of disadvantaged children¹⁶ lacked the confidence and independence needed to tackle new challenges, make new friends or understand how they were feeling so that they could control their basic impulses (personal, social and emotional development).
- Around one quarter of disadvantaged children were unable to communicate effectively because they lacked the concentration, vocabulary and listening

¹⁶ In the context of national outcomes at the age of five, as reported through the early years foundation stage profile (EYFSP), 'disadvantaged children' refers to those who are known to be eligible for free school meals.

skills to focus their attention and understand what others were saying (communication and language).

- Around a quarter lacked the experience and understanding of the people, places and environment around them to make sense of the world and their ability to interact successfully within it (understanding the world).

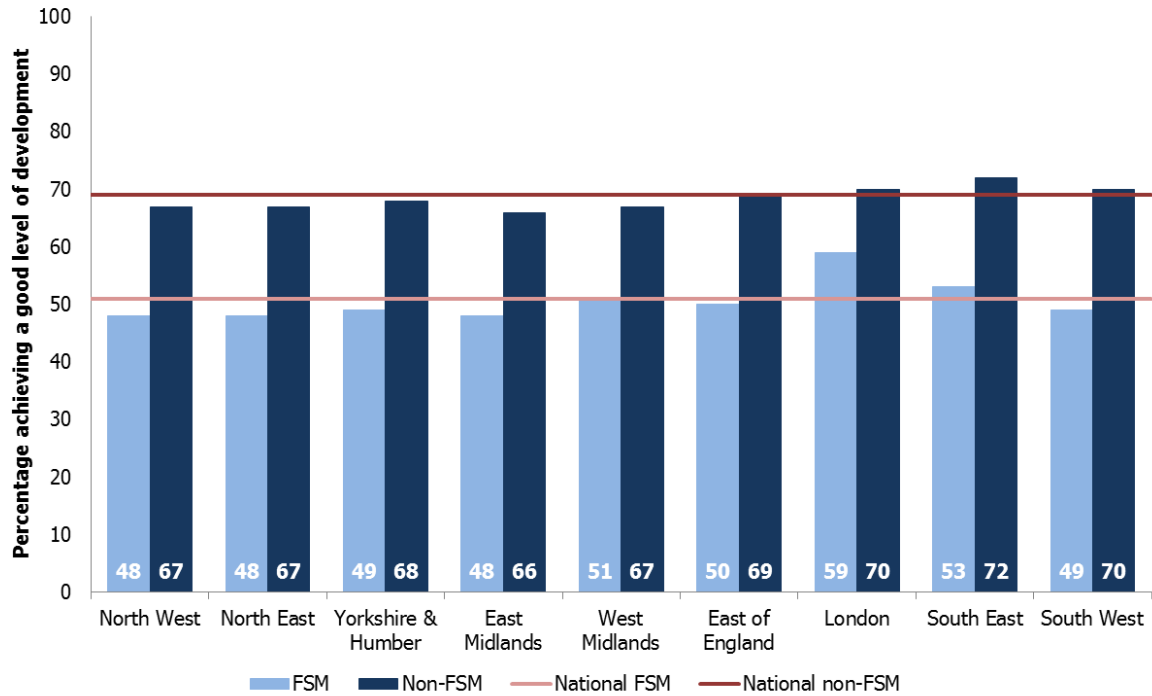
Figure 3: Proportion of children achieving at least expected level in communication and language; personal, social and emotional development; physical development early learning goals in 2015, by eligibility for FSM



Source: Department for Education

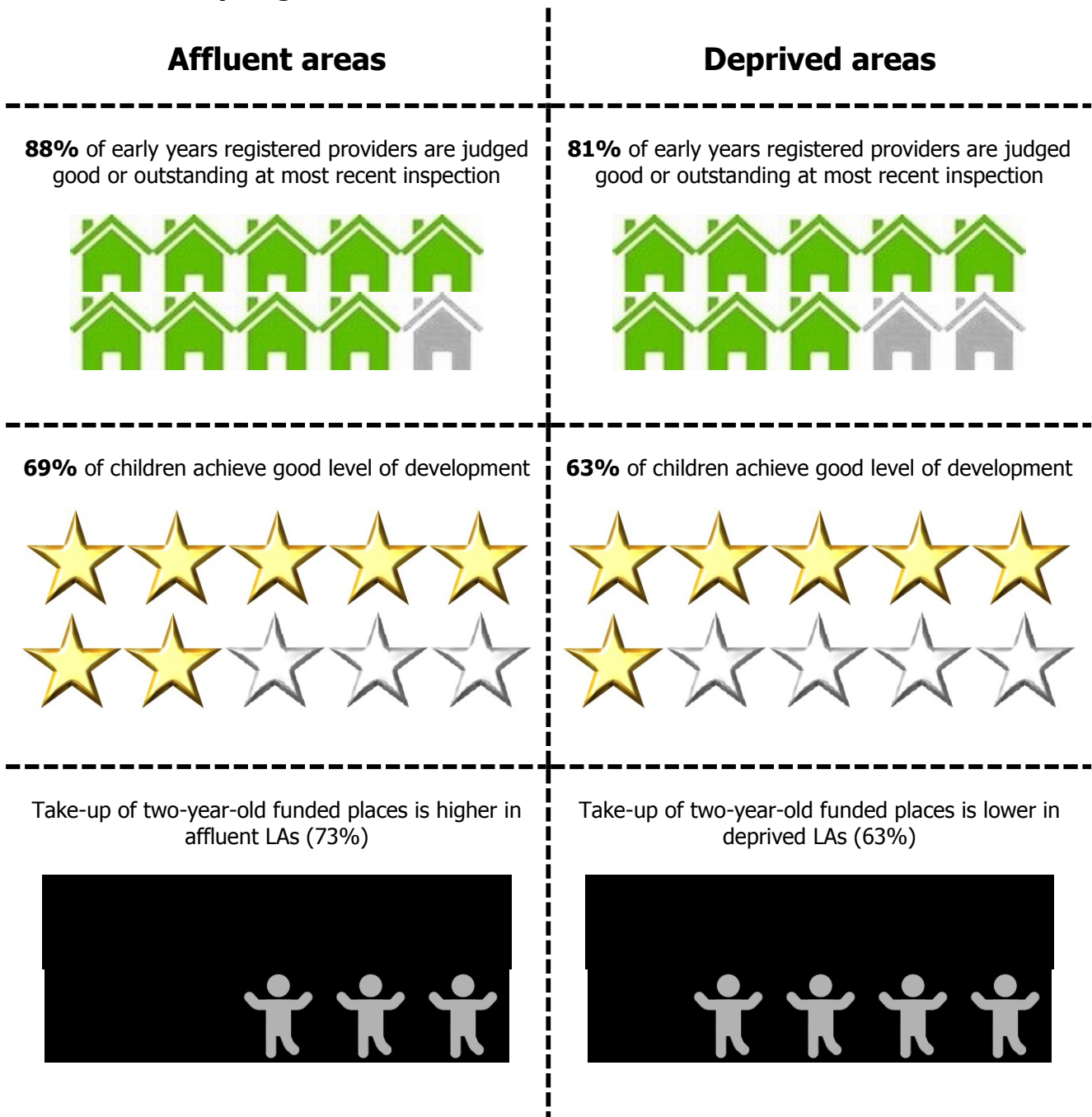
- Where a child lives in the country can also make a difference to how pronounced these gaps in learning are and how much lost ground has to be made up quickly. Regional variations are already evident by the age of five, with disadvantaged children in the north doing less well than their southern counterparts. However, even where attainment is higher, the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers remains similarly wide.

Figure 4: Proportion of children achieving a good level of development in 2015, by region and by eligibility for FSM



Source: Department for Education

Figure 5: Differences between affluent and deprived areas in educational outcomes for young children

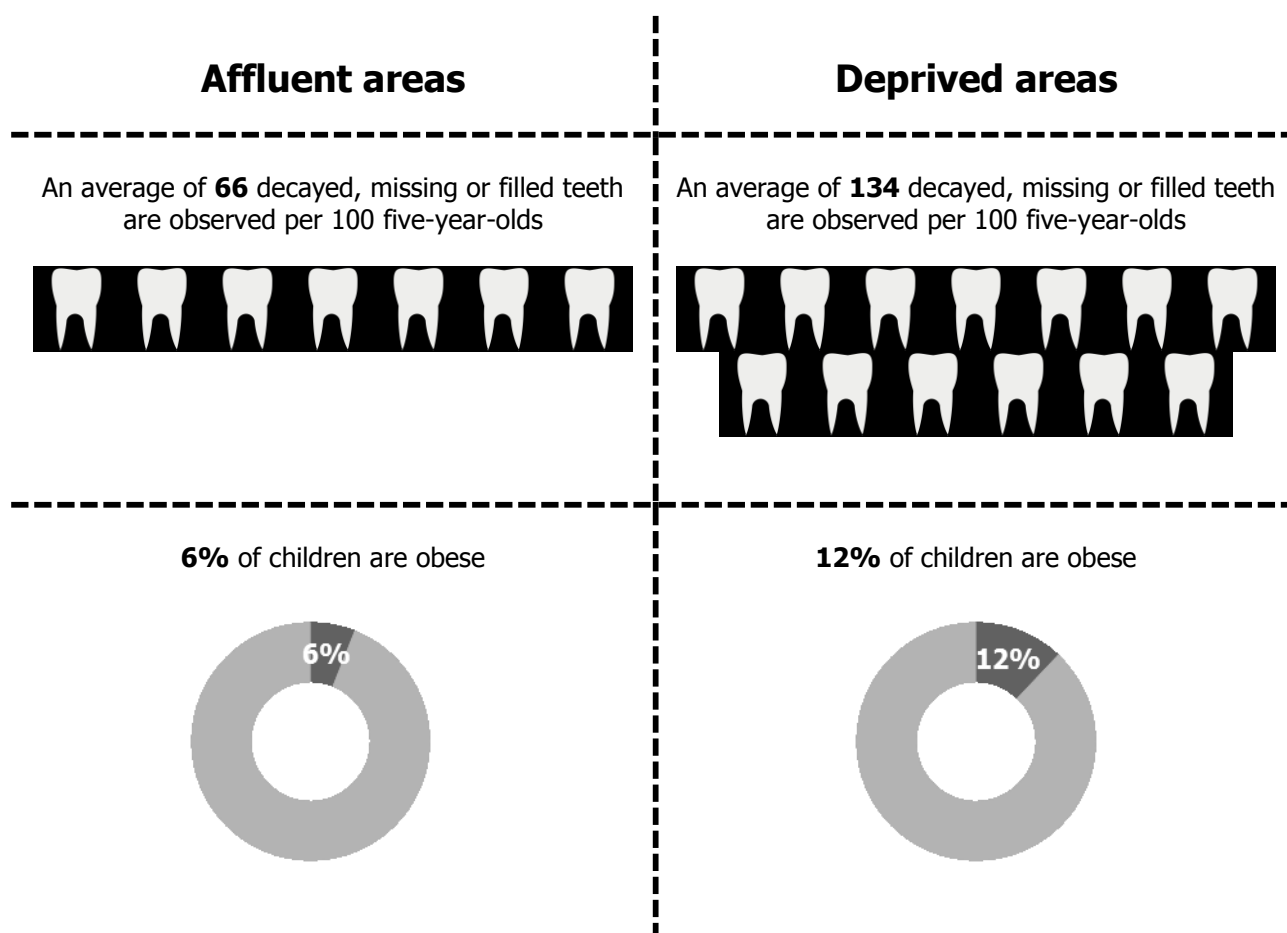


Sources: Ofsted and Department for Education

17. Educational outcomes by the age of five is only one of the measures of disadvantage. A child's health and the opportunity to access free, funded early education from the age of two play their part in determining their life chances. Comparing the most and least deprived local authorities across a range of child-centred measures reveals that:

- rates of tooth decay, indicative of a poor diet, are twice as high in the most deprived localities
- children are twice as likely to be obese in the most disadvantaged communities, with the gap widening over time due to the obesity rate falling faster in the least deprived areas
- the chance of attending a good or better early years setting in disadvantaged communities is less likely than in more affluent areas.

Figure 6: Differences between affluent and deprived areas in health outcomes for young children



Sources:

Tooth decay source: Public Health England; <http://nwph.net/dentalhealth/survey-results5.aspx?id=1>

Obesity source: Health & social care information centre;

www.hscic.gov.uk/searchcatalogue?productid=19405&q=title:%22national+child+measurement+programme%22&size=10&page=1#

18. The long-term impact of deprivation into adulthood can also be seen in a range of health and social care measures. Recent statistics show that:
- the unemployment rate in the most deprived local authorities remains more than double that in the least deprived local authorities¹⁷
 - the life expectancy of both men and women in the most deprived local areas is, on average, two to three years lower than those from more affluent communities.¹⁸
19. These distinct gaps, across both child- and adult-centred measures, between the most deprived and the least deprived areas of England have existed for many years, showing little sign of reducing. In some instances, such as childhood obesity, these measures have even increased. Nationally, there is much stated political will to make a difference. A raft of initiatives and entitlements are being developed to address the root cause of these very issues. However, the impact is far from obvious. This begs the question: who is responsible for making the difference? The connection between government policy and local action must be put under greater scrutiny.

What do local leaders need to do to ensure effective early childhood services¹⁹ for the disadvantaged?

Provide a joined-up service

20. Local authorities are charged with meeting the needs of young children through the primary legislation of the Childcare Act 2006.²⁰ This act places a duty on local authorities to improve the outcomes for all young children, reduce inequalities, and ensure that there is enough high-quality, integrated early years provision and childcare for parents locally.
21. This statutory obligation necessitates a joined-up service. When learning, physiological development and children's health are so inextricably linked for the under-fives, tackling all forms of inequality, across education, health and social care should go hand in hand. Children, parents and families need a complete package of information, support and guidance to address all of their most pressing needs. This relies on early assessment, early identification and

¹⁷ Office for National Statistics; [webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160204094311/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/subnational-labour/regional-labour-market-statistics/november-2015/rft-lm-table-li01-november-2015.xls](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/subnational-labour/regional-labour-market-statistics/november-2015/rft-lm-table-li01-november-2015.xls).

¹⁸ Office for National Statistics; www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/lifeexpectancies/datasets/lifeexpectancyatbirthandage65bylocalareasinenglandandwalesreferencetable1.

¹⁹ Early childhood services are defined in the Childcare Act 2006 as early years provision; social services, such as parenting classes and family support; relevant health services, e.g. midwifery, health visitors and speech and language therapists; Jobcentre Plus employment services - to help parents and carers into work; and children's information services to provide information, advice and assistance for parents, prospective parents and carers.

²⁰ Childcare Act 2006; www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/contents.

early intervention that are shared across a children's services department. Such an integrated and aligned approach requires strong leadership at every level of the council, so that different departments, different priorities and different ways of working are aligned for the benefit of children, parents and the locality.

22. In around a quarter of the local authorities that returned our questionnaire, there was no elected member with specific responsibility or oversight of disadvantaged children. While all the authorities surveyed ensured that there was a member of the local cabinet with responsibility for education, these roles rarely included heightened accountability, at the top tier, for disadvantaged children and families.

In one local authority visited, the accountability for tackling inequalities and addressing the needs of disadvantaged children and families touched on every layer of leadership, from the council cabinet to the early years classroom. Here, importantly, there was an elected member of the council with a designated responsibility for tackling disadvantage. This role was considered so important and wide-ranging that this individual held no other responsibilities. A standing agenda item on each executive committee meeting ensured that issues of disadvantage were never forgotten and that initiatives could quickly be followed up. The elected member also held bi-monthly review meetings with key leaders across education, health and social care to challenge them about their approaches and ensure an open forum of shared accountability. In turn, these leaders had created their own 'community champions' who they had identified from each neighbourhood. These community champions acted as the leaders' eyes and ears on the ground and as advocates for their work, communicating with those who were hard to reach from within the community itself.

23. Of the 67 local authorities that did have an elected member with specific responsibility for disadvantaged children, only 31 areas included a remit for the birth-to-five age range. Even where these leaders did have a remit for the early years age range, they indicated that this was more focused on school-age provision rather than the full range of providers within the sector.
24. It was generally acknowledged that this skewed focus on school-age provision was led by the national accountability system – measures of attainment by the age of five being the first to show the relative successes or weaknesses of a local authority. Leaders spoken to during 10 of the local authority visits had begun to devise their own system of measuring and recording children's level of development and progress before the age of five and, importantly, across the range of providers accessed by the family.

One local authority in the north of England had devised its own 'disadvantage dashboard'. This broke down the factors that staff believed important in fulfilling their statutory duty to reduce inequalities. The dashboards operated at both overall local authority level and by individual

ward or neighbourhood. These dashboards included a range of indicators, including the proportions of:

- children who had been immunised
- children deemed eligible for free early education at the age of two, against the proportion actually taking up this offer
- children deemed to be obese at the age of five
- families known to the police, including those being supported through the 'troubled families'²¹ agenda
- children reaching a good level of development and those reaching the expected level at the age of five in the prime areas of learning as well as literacy and mathematics.

The collation and analysis of this data allowed the local authority to have an effective overview of its locality and a detailed awareness of the specific 'hot spots' within communities. It allowed different teams of professionals to see how their contribution to the 'disadvantage agenda' could support others and how, together, everyone could make a difference. Analysis of these 'hot spots' acted as both a driver for improvement and an accountability measure for local authority leaders at set points throughout the year. Key to the success of this approach was the open and transparent sharing of data among professionals. While these indicators were total measures of a particular community, underneath this, for those who needed to know, was the specific details of the children and families to target for more intensive support and intervention.

Understand what success looks like

25. All of the leaders spoken to were concerned that a lack of clarity around what success looked like nationally, and the limited data available about the early years, hindered their ability to be more focused in their improvements. They were particularly concerned that they had focused on 'school readiness' as a key indicator of whether their early childhood services were working well, without a clear working definition of what this meant. Equally, leaders were worried that when the early years foundation stage profile becomes non-statutory in September 2016, there would be no mechanism at all for evaluating the effectiveness of their strategy in comparison with their statistical neighbours and nationally.
26. All of the local authorities visited confirmed that the good level of development indicator was used as a key measure when holding services to account, but

²¹ The Troubled Families programme is a UK government scheme under the Department for Communities and Local Government with the stated aim of helping troubled families turn their lives around. These families are characterised by there being no adult in the family working, children not being in school and family members being involved in crime and anti-social behaviour.

there was little appreciation of the wider health and social care elements that potentially contributed to educational attainment. Indeed, many of the leaders spoken to with an educational background lacked insight into other areas of their council's work. This prevented them from knowing what else was available, particularly from health colleagues, to design a more comprehensive approach to how disadvantage could be tackled.

27. Just over a quarter of the local authorities that responded to the questionnaire lacked the systems and processes to drive a quicker pace of improvement. The weakest localities visited had no coordinated, strategic plan to tackle the issues of disadvantage that their children and families faced. In these cases, staff were working 'blind', unaware of the ambition, direction and approaches to be taken, across the local area, to make a real difference.
28. Even where a service-wide, strategic plan was in place, around a third of authorities did not have any specific targets or actions for improving the outcomes of disadvantaged children. While these local areas often set measurable targets for narrowing the attainment gap at the age of seven (end of key stage 1) or 11 (end of key stage 2), few had the same approach to checking their ambitions for children in the early years. In too many authorities, inspectors noted an attitude of complacency among leaders, characterised by the phrase: 'there's plenty of time to catch-up once they are in school'.
29. In the six strongest local authorities visited, there was a real sense of urgency, collaboration, shared understanding and everyone working towards a common goal. Nearly all the providers visited in four of these authorities could articulate the authority's ambitions for addressing the issues of disadvantage, ensuring that more children were ready for school and narrowing the attainment gap by the age of five. In contrast, in nine of the local authorities visited and four followed up with visits to settings and schools, leaders and staff had not seen the local authority's strategic plan for tackling disadvantage in their area.
30. Typically, in these instances, the providers had a disjointed or incoherent approach to tackling the issues faced by the disadvantaged in their communities. In just over two fifths of the pre-school providers and schools visited, inspectors found a reference to improving the outcomes of disadvantaged children within leaders' improvement plans. The majority of these plans were found in schools.

Make sure there are places available for disadvantaged children

31. Local authority leaders spoken to by inspectors universally acknowledged that finding enough early years providers to ensure that there were sufficient places for funded two-year-olds was a constant challenge. Although, nationally, the take-up of funded places for eligible two-year-olds has increased by 10 percentage points in the last year, the take-up in two local areas was still as low as 34%. Leaders in the local authorities visited suggested two main reasons why this might be the case. First, pre-school providers and childminders

frequently indicated not wanting to decrease the number of fee-paying children to accommodate a greater proportion of funded children. Second, headteachers often mentioned not wanting to take a risk and take a step outside of their comfort zone.

32. Forty-two local authorities that responded to the questionnaire had devised ways to encourage early years providers to provide more funded places. In some local authorities, leaders were thinking of increasingly creative and flexible ways to encourage more headteachers to take funded two-year-olds. In these local areas, leaders knew that, to operate a flexible, free 30-hour model in the immediate future, more early years providers would have to come forward.

One local authority that submitted a response to the questionnaire cited several measures it had taken to encourage providers to take more disadvantaged two-, three- and four-year-olds. These included:

- a top-up to hourly funding, despite the huge funding pressures this placed on the council
- renting additional accommodation and space to the private and voluntary sector at below the market rate
- an offer of free training for staff and the ongoing support of an early years adviser to smooth the transition, especially for schools, to taking children at a younger age
- a one-off payment (£1,000) to new providers to help with the costs of buying new equipment or reorganising the learning environment
- a free early education deprivation supplement being paid for each three- and four-year-old who was previously accessing funded two-year-old provision, as an encouragement for settings to continue their admission.

33. In three of the local areas visited, inspectors found schools, pre-schools, childminders and a range of community services, such as Jobcentre Plus, to be working closely together as 'hubs' of support and guidance within their locality. Where these networks were found, there was often a school at the heart of its community, willing to share the additional space they could provide for others to use. In these instances, parents had a choice about the type and duration of early education and care their children received. They also had easy access to a range of adult services and support for themselves. These networks were often replicating the offer previously provided by the local authority through a children's centre.

One local hub inspectors visited was working to provide a fully flexible offer of early education and care before the roll-out of the 30-hour entitlement in September 2017.

While a school sat at the centre of this hub, as a recognisable building within the community, all of the childminders and pre-school settings

surrounding it agreed to work together for the benefit of children and parents. This included wrap-around care before and after school, as well as support for parents to manage their finances, find a job or cook a healthy and nutritious meal from scratch.

One parent had also started work for the first time as the office administrator's apprentice, having accessed a range of training through the local college to gain additional qualifications.

34. Headteachers of the schools visited often demonstrated a strong moral purpose as leaders of their local community. They frequently showed great ambition and resolve to make a difference, as early and as quickly as possible, for the people living around their school. In contrast, nine of the pre-school settings and 10 of the childminders visited worked on a purely business model of operation – giving places to those who requested the most hours.
35. While nearly all of the pre-school providers and childminders visited had clear and transparent admissions policies, only six of the policies reviewed by inspectors prioritised funded or disadvantaged children, despite their premises being situated in the most deprived areas of each local area. Only one pre-school provider out of the 15 visited stipulated a proportion of their places that they would set aside for the education and care of disadvantaged children. In general, the leaders from most of these pre-school providers told us that they were likely to reduce the number of funded children they accepted into their setting over the coming years as supporting disadvantaged children was no longer financially viable for them.
36. A greater proportion of early years leaders across schools, pre-schools and childminders must stand up and decide to serve the range of families in their community. Without this, the opportunity for disadvantaged children to receive the high quality of education they so vitally need will remain stubbornly inaccessible.

Carry out early assessments and provide advice

37. Early assessment and identification of disadvantaged children and families is crucial if local authorities are to have maximum impact on improving the life chances of those in their community. The first assessments experienced by a child and their family are conducted by health visitors as part of the 'healthy child' programme.²² This is a national public health programme that sets out the universal offer to children and parents through pregnancy and the first five years of life. In September 2015, local authorities became responsible for public health in their area for children under five.

²² 'Healthy child programme: pregnancy and the first 5 years of life', October 2009, Department of Health; www.gov.uk/government/publications/healthy-child-programme-pregnancy-and-the-first-5-years-of-life.

38. The statutory framework for the early years foundation stage²³ also requires that children receive a learning and development check against the areas of learning and characteristics of effective teaching and learning. These checks are completed when the child is around two-and-a-half years old but only where a child is accessing early education.
39. Around a quarter of the local authorities responding to the questionnaire indicated that not all children had received a health check at the age of two. Only two of the 15 local authorities visited specifically recorded whether these children were deemed to be disadvantaged. Seven indicated that all two-year-olds accessing early education were known to have received a learning and development check. Only 12 of the local authorities involved in this survey had three quarters or more of their two-year-olds receiving both a health and a learning and development check.

One local authority was trialling a fully integrated approach to the health and learning and development checks for two-year-olds. In the past, these two checks had been completed separately by a health visitor and an early years practitioner, with the information being discussed at a separate meeting between the professionals involved. Leaders felt that these meetings were not being scheduled effectively and took place too long after both assessments had been made. They also reflected that it was not an efficient use of time on the part of all those involved and, crucially, did not include the parent in the final joined-up conversation.

To address these concerns, leaders adapted their approach so that both the health visitor and the early years practitioner completed their assessments at the same time, during the same meeting. They found that this supported closer working relationships between health and education and was more useful to parents to see how all aspects of their child's development were interrelated and important. Leaders also recognised that it provided a tool for moderating judgements across remit teams, especially those related to the 'Ages and stages questionnaires, third edition (ASQ3).²⁴

40. Even where local authorities had a systematic approach to ensuring that all two-year-olds received a timely health and development check, over two thirds of the providers visited had not seen the outcomes of these checks to enable a better transition to a new setting. In these instances, they completed their own assessments from scratch, wasting valuable time and preventing them from hitting the ground running from the very first day.

²³ 'The statutory framework for the early years foundation stage', September 2014, Department for Education; www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2.

²⁴ 'Ages and stages questionnaires, third edition' (ASQ3) is a set of questionnaires used as part of the healthy child programme by health visiting teams. These are completed about a child by parents and discussed as part of the health check conducted at age two to two-and-a-half; www.gov.uk/government/publications/measuring-child-development-at-age-2-to-25-years.

41. This lack of vital information sharing stemmed from a culture of professional distrust across services. Widespread scepticism that different services would carry out the right type of assessment in the right way prevented efficient and effective sharing of vital information. This was the case in 12 of the local authorities visited. Inspectors found that where children and families might be known, assessed and supported by one service, it did not guarantee the timely involvement of others. At its worst, services within the same local authority were found targeting different children and families, or, when a coordinated approach was evident, duplicating assessments unnecessarily, wasting everyone's time and preventing as swift a response as was needed.

One pre-school provider visited described one child receiving two separate speech and language assessments in the space of a three-week window because different teams within the local authority – education and health – did not know that each were completing the same work. When the child in question was being referred for additional support due to their language difficulties, different departments wanted their own speech and language therapists to complete the assessment. Even when the manager and staff at the setting pointed out the duplication, the assessments were still carried out again as information was not being readily shared for the use of all those working to support the child and their family.

42. Around four fifths of the local authorities responding to the questionnaire did not have a mechanism for assuring the quality of the health and the learning and development checks. In most instances, leaders indicated that this would be crucial in future. However, they had yet to put the systems in place to ensure consistent judgements between one health visitor and another or between health colleagues and those working in education.

Leaders in one local authority visited made the decision to bring all of their health visitors and early years staff together to share successful approaches to working with parents. This area-wide training day also allowed professionals from different disciplines within children's services to standardise their view of 'typical' development for a two- to three-year-old.

As a starting point, local authority officers used the ASQ3, together with the 'early years outcomes'²⁵ and a range of health screening tools, such as their own speech and language screener, to agree the developmental milestones they would typically see when conducting their two-year-old checks. This provided a forum for health and education to learn from each other. It was also a first step in securing more professional trust and cooperation when conducting such important first assessments.

²⁵ 'Early years outcomes: a non-statutory guide for practitioners and inspectors to help inform understanding of child development through the early years', September 2013, Department for Education; www.foundationyears.org.uk/eyfs-statutory-framework.

43. Only two schools visited had an established policy for requesting and receiving the outcomes of the learning and development check. Even in these schools, the outcomes of the health check, despite the requests of the headteachers, would not be shared due to perceived conflicts about the confidentiality of a child's health data.

One local authority had a clear focus on transition between pre-school and school settings to ensure that the strong, integrated work they had carried out before a child started school was not wasted when moving into a Nursery (at age three) or a Reception class (at age four).

This local authority had divided the locality into clusters and held regular meetings for leaders and staff to come together and share their expertise and knowledge of children and families. The settings hosted the meetings in rotation, allowing everyone to see in practice how others worked. These meetings always involved an element of moderation to ensure that everyone was judging the same level of competency when observing a child's skills, knowledge and understanding.

When a child and their family were due to transfer to school, this meeting took the form of an official handover, sharing information about likes, dislikes, attitudes and aptitudes, as well as educational achievements to date. As part of this handover, leaders and staff discussed the accumulated evidence. This included the outcomes of the health and learning and development checks, where they had been completed.

At the time of the visit, the local authority was trialling an extension to this approach to include parents. Leaders felt this would further cement positive relationships from the very beginning. It would also provide an opportunity for school leaders to directly request any relevant health information from the family themselves.

44. One local authority visited had set up its own information-sharing protocol, verified by its legal team, to ensure that important information was securely accessible by all those professionals that needed it. Leaders in this council had ensured that the electronic systems for storing information about a child and their family were compatible across different services and accessible only by those professionals who were offering information, support and advice to the family.

Ensure that additional funding for disadvantaged children has the desired impact

45. Research²⁶ identifies that outcomes can be improved where settings and providers ensure that disadvantaged children:
- have a grasp of the basics (early literacy, language and a sense of number)
 - develop the character traits and life skills to become confident contributors to society (resilience, perseverance, dispositions to learn)²⁷
 - have their material, physical and well-being needs identified and addressed (poverty and early health outcomes, including mental health).
46. Tackling these areas and other issues faced by disadvantaged children and their parents has attracted large investment over recent years. Free, funded early education for two-year-olds was introduced in September 2014. The early years pupil premium, additional funding provided for disadvantaged three- and four-year-olds, was introduced in April 2015. Alongside this, children known to be eligible for free school meals in their Reception Year have also been entitled to the school pupil premium since April 2011. In September 2017, the government plans to offer an additional 15 hours of free early education and care for children of working families. This would bring the free early entitlement to education to 30 hours per week for eligible three- and four-year-olds.
47. These funding streams aim to improve the educational attainment of disadvantaged children – or, in the case of the 30-hour offer, get more parents back into work. They have different eligibility criteria based primarily on the finances of parents. While the Department for Work and Pensions estimates the number of children deemed eligible each year for the two-year-old offer and the early years pupil premium, it is up to each local authority to check eligibility and then direct the associated funding to the early years providers working with each child. These national systems rely on the engagement of eligible parents. First, they need to be aware of what they and their children are entitled to access. Second, they need to have the confidence to apply for and undergo the financial eligibility checks. For disadvantaged parents, this can often be a step too far, especially if they are already fearful of ‘the system’ or are worried that any eligibility check will take away some of the benefits already afforded to them.
48. Effective local authority leaders adapted national systems to make entitlements easier for parents to access. Leaders in these local areas recognised that bureaucracy got in the way of additional funding getting to those who needed it

²⁶ ‘Opening doors, breaking barriers: a strategy for social mobility’, Department for Education, April 2011; www.gov.uk/government/publications/opening-doors-breaking-barriers-a-strategy-for-social-mobility.

²⁷ ‘High achieving white working class (HAWWC) boys project’, Centre for Research in Early Childhood, March 2016; www.crec.co.uk.

most. Even where local authority officers were working well to encourage reluctant parents to apply for a funded place for their two-year-old, they had to begin this process again when the child turned three in order to access funding through the early years pupil premium. This constant form filling and checking, when the financial circumstances of the family had changed little over the year, was deemed to place unnecessary barriers in the way of a child receiving continuous funding and support throughout their early education. Leaders commented to inspectors that the funding mechanisms for early years were not organised in the same way as the school pupil premium. The school pupil premium works on the principle of 'Ever 6'²⁸ and ensures continuity of support for at least six years of a child's schooling.

One local authority decided to tackle the issue of low take-up of the various early years funding streams by employing an early years support officer. Leaders were clear that their ambition was for all eligible parents within the borough to access their entitlements, ensuring that every disadvantaged child received the additional support they needed to catch up with their peers.

The early years support officer was tasked with developing effective relationships with parents and providers to raise the profile of what was available and ease the process of application. In this authority, the early years support officer was the conduit for all of the providers in the area, conducting the eligibility checks on their behalf and liaising with managers, staff and parents to simplify the process. The early years support officer also implemented a policy of 'opt-out' rather than 'opt-in' so that once parents were known and eligible for a funded two-year-old place, they would automatically be checked for their entitlement for early years pupil premium up to one year later.

In this way, free, funded education at the age of two was built up at three and four through the early years pupil premium and, at age five, in the Reception Year, the school pupil premium. This ensured three strong and well-supported years in preparation for school.

49. In five of the schools visited, leaders were taking two-year-olds into their early years classes. The leaders of these schools were all highly positive about the advantages of taking such a 'leap of faith' and adjusting their practice for this younger age group. They recognised that it was also another opportunity to influence parents and forge earlier and stronger relationships with the families in their immediate community. When inspectors observed children learning and at play, they found that those currently in Nursery or Reception who had previously accessed a funded place as a two-year-old in their school were operating at least at a level typical for their age. Inspectors particularly noticed

²⁸'Ever 6' refers to the principle of allocating school pupil premium funding to each child who has been registered as eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

that, compared with skill levels at the beginning of their time in funded two-year-old provision, these children were:

- more willing to interact with friends and adults because they had a greater sense of confidence and had formed effective relationships with a wider range of people beyond their immediate family
- demonstrating a better quality of speech and language to enable them to communicate more meaningfully and purposefully with those around them
- developing an inquisitive approach to the world around them, asking a greater range of questions and seeking out new experiences, whether this be new equipment or different environments within the setting
- more settled and comfortable in their surroundings because they had developed a consistent routine and knew what was expected of them in simple 'right and wrong' terms.

50. Twenty-five of the providers visited were unclear about how to use the early years pupil premium when they reported that so many parents refused to allow local authorities to check their eligibility. While take-up of the funded two-year-old offer is increasing, access to this entitlement does not automatically guarantee continuity of additional funding at the age of three, four or five so that children's positive experiences can build on each other and have a cumulative impact.

One daycare setting we visited was using the early years pupil premium it received to send three members of staff on a specialised training programme to enhance their curriculum and provision for physical development.

Leaders had conducted an audit of children's skills and found that many of the children were not reaching the goals typically expected for their age in this area. This led to a fuller review of what the setting provided and they realised it was a combination of their own weaknesses and understanding in this area, as well as deficits in children's experiences at home – many families living in high-rise flats or small, one-room accommodation, preventing children from having the time and space to develop physically.

This clear rationale, based on sound analysis of children's needs, also led to rigorous accountability. Leaders were keen to measure the impact and were using regular assessment information to see if they were positively influencing a more rapid development of children's skills.

51. Five of the schools visited could not account for the use of school pupil premium money in their Reception classes. While they had accumulated the funds across the school and had plans for its use, these were nearly always targeted at improving statutory assessment outcomes in Years 2 and 6. A common view from headteachers who could not articulate the benefits being provided to early years children was that 'any deficits or weaknesses can be

fixed further up the school'. Despite an accepted body of research that shows the benefits of supporting disadvantaged children and families during the early years, too many leaders do not see the long-term gains to be had by focusing their monies and attention on the under-fives.

52. Where inspectors found the pupil premium for Reception children to be having maximum impact on narrowing the gap between disadvantaged children and their better off-peers, the additional funding was frequently being used as an accumulated 'lump sum' to invest in staff expertise and training. Money was typically used to enable attendance at professional development events, access the support of an external specialist or hire extra adults to work one-to-one with eligible children. To a lesser extent, schools also used the funding to buy resources and equipment. These purchases ranged from published materials to support the teaching of specific areas of learning, such as reading books where the words can all be sounded out, to the creation of home-school activity packs as a means of boosting a setting's engagement with parents.

One school visited was using the early years pupil premium and the school pupil premium to employ its own speech and language therapist (SALT) for one day each week.

The mornings were spent assessing and screening children's language difficulties and the afternoons were spent delivering focused and time-limited interventions to address specific children's needs. This also provided valuable professional development opportunities for the wider staff team as they could see the SALT at work, pick up on the strategies being used with children and use some of the techniques themselves at other points in the day, boosting the child's access to therapy and accelerating their progress.

Another school was using its accumulated pupil premium funds to employ its own parent support worker, with a clear remit for supporting, first and foremost, the parents in the early years. This often took the form of drop-in sessions to provide a friendly 'listening ear' but this person was also able to signpost parents to other services within the community. In this way, the school was adapting some of the elements previously provided by the local children's centre for the continued benefit of disadvantaged families.

53. The most successful schools and settings visited were clear about the need to ensure that disadvantaged children received the experiences of the immediate and wider world that other children took for granted. While leaders in these providers valued the additional funding they received for eligible children and families, they also acknowledged that they could make a difference without a cost implication. Importantly, they prioritised a broad and rich curriculum that allowed children to explore art, music, dance, drama and aspects of local heritage. They also ensured sustained periods of time for children to be both physically and intellectually active.

One pre-school provider visited believed strongly that disadvantaged children did not receive the range of experiences at home and in the wider world to support their learning.

As such, it had devised a simple checklist of activities that parents could easily do with their child at home. Leaders called these their '30 things to do' and presented them to parents on colourful posters. Activities included:

- going for a ride on the top deck of a bus
- eating an ice cream cone at the beach
- growing a plant/vegetables from seed
- feeding the ducks/petting a small animal
- blowing bubbles and bursting them before they hit the floor.

On completion of each activity, a special sticker was inserted in a child's achievement record. Leaders also encouraged parents to take photos on their phones so that they could be sent to the setting, printed out and displayed on their 'eye spy' board. This display captured children enjoying their time, both in the setting and beyond. It also acted as a considerable motivator for parents when they were confronted with the adventures of other families and realised their child was not yet represented on the display.

Conclusion

In this survey, inspectors came across strong, insightful leaders bringing services together to support vulnerable children and their families in a way that could potentially change a child's destiny. The best leaders recognised the difference that prioritising early education makes. However, this understanding was by no means widespread. Unfortunately, for too many children, early education was low on the local government's list of priorities – 'they will catch up later' was a phrase inspectors heard far too often. While almost a third of two-year-old children eligible for free early education are not taking up their places, and no one is held to account, the opportunity to directly influence a disadvantaged child's future path is likely to be lost.

Research publications feedback

We are interested in finding out how useful you have found this publication.

Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or are you just interested? We would welcome your views and ideas. Complete our survey:

www.surveymonkey.com/r/researchpublications.

Methodology

This thematic survey was carried out to investigate further the concerns raised around improving the life chances for disadvantaged children under the age of five, as reported in Ofsted's 2015 early years annual report. The intention of this study was to:

- evaluate how well local authority strategies challenged and supported individual providers within their locality
- identify what works well in narrowing the attainment gap for vulnerable groups.

For the initial phase of this work, inspectors reviewed publically available education and health data. This established that weaknesses existed in the early outcomes of disadvantaged children under the age of five compared to their more affluent peers and that such weaknesses were consistently prevalent across some local authorities. The analysis of the data helped to generate a series of additional research questions:

1. Are systems for identifying, tracking and tracing the progress of disadvantaged children in the early years effective enough to ensure that no child slips through the net?
2. How well does the local authority assess the needs of disadvantaged children and meet their needs in a holistic way?
3. What is the impact of the early years pupil premium and the two-year old additional funding in addressing issues of disadvantage? In general, how well are these and other interventions monitored and evaluated?
4. How do the most effective partnership arrangements between health, education and social care work in reality to address the universal issue of early deprivation and disadvantage?

To answer these questions more fully, Ofsted invited all local authorities in England to complete an online questionnaire. The questionnaire collected information about the strategic direction local authorities were taking to fulfil their statutory obligation to provide early childhood services. Local authority leaders were also asked to share their views of the effectiveness of recent policy initiatives, as they apply in practice on the ground. Responses were received from representatives of 90 local authorities.

The questionnaire responses and initial data work were then used to select the sample for additional fieldwork. Fifteen of the local authorities that responded to the questionnaire were visited for further discussions, including at least one local authority per Ofsted region. Typically, where two local authorities were visited per region, one was selected because it was likely to be facing challenges in improving education and health outcomes for young children. The other authority in each region had indicators that suggested more positive performance. During the visits, inspectors spoke with senior local authority leaders and members of early years services, health and education teams. Inspectors reviewed each local authority's strategic plans for tackling disadvantage in the early years and discussed the impact of chosen approaches with all those concerned.

Additionally, in nine of these local authorities (at least one per region) inspectors also carried out provider visits. Evidence was collected from childminders, pre-school leaders and school leaders to evaluate whether national and local policies, as presented by local authority leaders, were having the desired impact on practice and making a discernible enough difference to disadvantaged children's outcomes. Five of the authorities selected for this part of the investigation had evidence to suggest their disadvantaged children had generally positive outcomes. The other four had indications of more challenging circumstances. In total, 12 childminders, 15 pre-schools and 16 maintained schools with early years provision were visited by inspectors. All 43 of these providers were purposely selected to be located in areas of high deprivation across the nine local authorities. Most were also judged good or outstanding at their last full inspection. This allowed inspectors to focus on what was happening in the best provision in the most deprived areas.

During the provider visits, inspectors spoke with the headteacher, leader or manager and with staff and children. They observed disadvantaged children during their play and evaluated a range of documentation, including the most recent records of children's learning and progress, improvement planning and admissions policies.

Inspectors also gathered further evidence from discussions with representatives of the Youth Sport Trust and York local authority (an early implementer of the 30-hour offer), including a visit to one of their schools.

Annex A: Local authorities visited

Local authority	Ofsted region
Bath and North East Somerset	South West
Central Bedfordshire	East of England
Dorset	South West
Halton	North West
Hartlepool	North East, Yorkshire and Humber
Herefordshire	West Midlands
Lincolnshire	East Midlands
Newham	London
Oxfordshire	South East
Richmond upon Thames	London
Staffordshire	West Midlands
Stockton-On-Tees	North East, Yorkshire and Humber
Thurrock	East of England
West Sussex	South East
Wirral	North West

Annex B: Pre-school settings visited

Provider	Local authority
Chestnut Nursery *	Newham
Childminder	Richmond upon Thames
Childminder	Central Bedfordshire
Childminder *	Oxfordshire
Childminder	Richmond upon Thames
Childminder	Halton
Childminder	Lincolnshire
Childminder	Staffordshire
Childminder	Dorset
Childminder	Halton
Childminder *	Dorset
Childminder	Central Bedfordshire
Childminder	Stockton-On-Tees

Cleverkidz *	Central Bedfordshire
Ditton Early Years Centre *	Halton
Greenacres Den *	Richmond upon Thames
Highflyers Children's Centre *	Stockton-On-Tees
Ingelby Barwick Children's Day Nursery *	Stockton-On-Tees
Jelly Babies Day Nursery *	Dorset
Orchard House Nursery *	Staffordshire
The Ark Nursery *	Staffordshire
Yarnton Pre-School	Oxfordshire
Kids Planet *	Halton
Magical Moments Day Care *	Lincolnshire
Old Station Nursery *	Oxfordshire
Oscar Club *	Central Bedfordshire
Ruskington Rascals Preschool *	Lincolnshire

Annex C: Schools visited

Provider	Local authority
Astmoor Primary School	Halton
Bader Primary School *	Stockton-On-Tees
Bridgtown Primary School	Staffordshire
Carlton Road Academy	Lincolnshire
Churchfields Primary School	Staffordshire
East Oxford Primary School	Oxfordshire
Haxby Road Primary Academy *	York
Isle of Portland Aldridge Community Academy *	Dorset
Meadlands Primary School	Richmond upon Thames
St Gregory's Catholic Primary School	Stockton-On-Tees
St Leonard's Church of England Primary School	Oxfordshire
St Mary's Church of England Primary School	Halton
St Richard's Church of England Primary School *	Richmond upon Thames
St Vincent's Catholic Primary School	Central Bedfordshire
The Priory Witham Academy	Lincolnshire
Tithe Farm Primary School *	Central Bedfordshire

*denotes those registered early years setting and schools that were taking funded two-year-olds at the time of the survey visit.

Annex D: Reducing the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers by the age of five

Local authorities' success, over time, at reducing the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers by the age of five.

Local authority	Region	Proportion of children eligible for FSM achieving a GLD, 2015	Proportion of children <u>not</u> eligible for FSM achieving a GLD, 2015	Percentage point difference between FSM/non-FSM children achieving GLD, 2015	Percentage point change in the FSM/non-FSM difference, 2013-2015
Hammersmith and Fulham	London	68	69	1	-17
Rutland	East Midlands	52	76	24	-10
Hartlepool	North East	57	73	16	-10
Southend-on-Sea	East of England	56	71	15	-9
Sunderland	North East	51	69	18	-8
York	Yorkshire and The Humber	50	71	21	-8
Brighton and Hove	South East	53	67	14	-8
Newcastle upon Tyne	North East	50	64	14	-8
Solihull	West Midlands	51	72	21	-8
Lincolnshire	East Midlands	57	71	14	-8
Bath and North East Somerset	South West	54	71	17	-8
Swindon	South West	56	69	13	-8
Bury	North West	51	68	17	-7
Bexley	London	65	78	13	-7
Warrington	North West	47	71	24	-7
Lancashire	North West	53	70	17	-6

Kirklees	Yorkshire and The Humber	51	68	17	-6
Nottingham	East Midlands	49	61	12	-6
Camden	London	53	66	13	-6
Bedford Borough	East of England	49	62	13	-6
Slough	South East	58	66	8	-6
Trafford	North West	55	75	20	-5
Haringey	London	61	69	8	-5
Wirral	North West	54	73	19	-5
Bracknell Forest	South East	54	75	21	-5
North Somerset	South West	51	74	23	-5
South Tyneside	North East	46	65	19	-5
Salford	North West	53	64	11	-5
Peterborough	East of England	52	63	11	-5
North Lincolnshire	Yorkshire and The Humber	56	73	17	-5
Sandwell	West Midlands	51	60	9	-5
Cheshire West and Chester	North West	50	71	21	-4
Liverpool	North West	46	61	15	-4
Havering	London	53	71	18	-4
Bristol, City of	South West	50	67	17	-4
Coventry	West Midlands	53	66	13	-4
Oldham	North West	45	60	15	-4
Harrow	London	58	71	13	-3
Medway	South East	57	73	16	-3
Sefton	North West	48	69	21	-3
Lewisham	London	71	79	8	-3
Wandsworth	London	57	72	15	-3
Barnet	London	57	70	13	-3
Barnsley	Yorkshire	47	67	20	-3

	and The Humber				
Northamptonshire	East Midlands	50	66	16	-3
Staffordshire	West Midlands	54	72	18	-3
Stoke-on-Trent	West Midlands	54	66	12	-3
Worcestershire	West Midlands	46	69	23	-3
Hackney	London	68	68	0	-3
Surrey	South East	51	74	23	-3
Windsor and Maidenhead	South East	56	75	19	-3
Poole	South West	52	69	17	-3
East Riding of Yorkshire	Yorkshire and The Humber	49	71	22	-3
Birmingham	West Midlands	53	65	12	-3
Barking and Dagenham	London	59	69	10	-3
Southwark	London	64	72	8	-2
Cheshire East	North West	49	70	21	-2
Kingston upon Thames	London	54	74	20	-2
Kent	South East	59	75	16	-2
Milton Keynes	South East	51	69	18	-2
Southampton	South East	54	69	15	-2
Knowsley	North West	50	65	15	-2
Doncaster	Yorkshire and The Humber	51	68	17	-2
Rotherham	Yorkshire and The Humber	52	70	18	-2
Sheffield	Yorkshire and The Humber	52	68	16	-2
Wokingham	South East	50	71	21	-2

Somerset	South West	46	70	24	-2
Gateshead	North East	50	67	17	-2
Middlesbrough	North East	48	62	14	-2
Warwickshire	West Midlands	49	69	20	-2
Islington	London	56	68	12	-2
Bromley	London	53	76	23	-2
Croydon	London	54	67	13	-2
Hounslow	London	54	66	12	-2
Buckinghamshire	South East	47	70	23	-2
Plymouth	South West	48	66	18	-2
Wolverhampton	West Midlands	51	63	12	-1
St. Helens	North West	50	68	18	-1
Newham	London	68	69	1	-1
Greenwich	London	68	79	11	-1
Dudley	West Midlands	43	64	21	-1
Walsall	West Midlands	47	64	17	-1
Essex	East of England	51	70	19	-1
Hertfordshire	East of England	49	71	22	-1
Norfolk	East of England	51	67	16	-1
Enfield	London	56	66	10	-1
Gloucestershire	South West	47	67	20	-1
Redcar and Cleveland	North East	48	72	24	-1
Derbyshire	East Midlands	51	71	20	-1
Merton	London	55	69	14	-1
East Sussex	South East	58	77	19	-1
Durham	North East	48	68	20	-1
Leeds	Yorkshire and The Humber	44	66	22	0

Darlington	North East	53	70	17	0
Northumberland	North East	44	68	24	0
Rochdale	North West	43	60	17	0
Bradford	Yorkshire and The Humber	49	65	16	0
Wakefield	Yorkshire and The Humber	46	68	22	0
Thurrock	East of England	61	74	13	0
Oxfordshire	South East	45	68	23	0
Cornwall	South West	46	65	19	0
Tameside	North West	43	61	18	0
Telford and Wrekin	West Midlands	52	70	18	0
West Sussex	South East	44	65	21	0
Brent	London	59	64	5	0
Ealing	London	61	71	10	1
Stockport	North West	47	71	24	1
North East Lincolnshire	Yorkshire and The Humber	56	69	13	1
Waltham Forest	London	62	68	6	1
South Gloucestershire	South West	55	78	23	1
Westminster	London	55	69	14	1
Dorset	South West	46	70	24	1
Stockton-on-Tees	North East	38	64	26	1
Halton	North West	41	60	19	1
Luton	East of England	52	62	10	1
Blackpool	North West	47	65	18	1
Hampshire	South East	49	75	26	1
Kingston Upon Hull, City of	Yorkshire and The Humber	51	63	12	2
Cumbria	North West	41	66	25	2

Derby	East Midlands	44	63	19	2
Lambeth	London	50	67	17	2
Wiltshire	South West	41	69	28	2
North Tyneside	North East	44	68	24	2
Manchester	North West	52	65	13	2
Leicestershire	East Midlands	39	65	26	2
Hillingdon	London	49	67	18	2
North Yorkshire	Yorkshire and The Humber	45	69	24	2
Leicester	East Midlands	42	53	11	2
Kensington and Chelsea	London	54	68	14	3
Bolton	North West	42	65	23	3
Central Bedfordshire	East of England	40	65	25	3
Cambridgeshire	East of England	43	68	25	3
Devon	South West	53	74	21	3
Suffolk	East of England	49	71	22	3
Tower Hamlets	London	56	64	8	3
Sutton	London	46	66	20	3
Nottinghamshire	East Midlands	41	68	27	4
Herefordshire	West Midlands	40	68	28	4
Redbridge	London	51	69	18	4
Bournemouth	South West	52	74	22	4
Wigan	North West	41	68	27	4
Reading	South East	53	70	17	4
Isle of Wight	South East	56	74	18	4
Richmond upon Thames	London	45	73	28	5
Portsmouth	South East	56	72	16	5

Shropshire	West Midlands	45	70	25	6
Calderdale	Yorkshire and The Humber	43	69	26	6
West Berkshire	South East	45	73	28	7
Blackburn with Darwen	North West	40	60	20	10
Torbay	South West	50	68	18	-

¹ Figures for Isles of Scilly and City of London suppressed due to small numbers. Figures for Torbay not published in 2013.

Annex E: Two-year-old take-up in 2015 by local authority

Local authority	Region	Percentage of eligible two-year-olds taking up a funded place		Percentage point change 2015-2016
		2015	2016	
Isles of Scilly	South West	0	75	75
East Riding of Yorkshire	Yorkshire and the Humber	66	94	28
Swindon	South West	54	81	27
Newham	London	31	55	24
Solihull	West Midlands	49	71	22
Bath and North East Somerset	South West	67	88	21
Bury	North West	58	79	21
Bedford Borough	East of England	52	72	20
Stockton-on-Tees	North East	58	78	20
Havering	London	48	67	19
Darlington	North East	57	76	19
Dorset	South West	66	85	19
Halton	North West	59	78	19
Cambridgeshire	East of England	60	79	19
Rutland	East Midlands	49	67	18
Poole	South West	61	79	18
Gateshead	North East	58	76	18
Sefton	North West	68	86	18
Worcestershire	West Midlands	60	76	16
Camden	London	41	57	16
Lancashire	North West	53	69	16
Lambeth	London	43	59	16
Bolton	North West	50	66	16
North Tyneside	North East	66	81	15
Hounslow	London	46	61	15
Windsor and Maidenhead	South East	50	65	15
Dudley	West Midlands	45	60	15

Cheshire West and Chester	North West	66	81	15
Milton Keynes	South East	59	74	15
Suffolk	East of England	68	82	14
Sutton	London	50	64	14
Blackburn with Darwen	North West	57	71	14
Newcastle upon Tyne	North East	76	90	14
Buckinghamshire	South East	68	82	14
Lewisham	London	48	62	14
Devon	South West	65	79	14
Southampton	South East	52	66	14
Southwark	London	54	68	14
Northamptonshire	East Midlands	46	60	14
Croydon	London	38	52	14
South Gloucestershire	South West	67	80	13
Telford and Wrekin	West Midlands	64	77	13
Wigan	North West	68	81	13
Middlesbrough	North East	69	82	13
Tameside	North West	59	72	13
Kent	South East	52	65	13
Doncaster	Yorkshire and the Humber	60	73	13
Leicester	East Midlands	45	58	13
Sandwell	West Midlands	42	55	13
Central Bedfordshire	East of England	70	82	12
Cheshire East	North West	65	77	12
Nottinghamshire	East Midlands	57	69	12
Thurrock	East of England	58	70	12
Islington	London	53	65	12
Durham	North East	62	74	12
Salford	North West	61	73	12
Southend-on-Sea	East of England	51	63	12
Barking and Dagenham	London	63	74	11
Rochdale	North West	68	79	11
St. Helens	North West	61	72	11

Hertfordshire	East of England	57	68	11
Westminster	London	43	54	11
Ealing	London	49	60	11
Hampshire	South East	60	71	11
Northumberland	North East	65	76	11
Bristol, City of	South West	50	61	11
Leeds	Yorkshire and the Humber	56	67	11
Slough	South East	44	55	11
Warrington	North West	83	93	10
Stockport	North West	79	89	10
Waltham Forest	London	47	57	10
Isle of Wight	South East	58	68	10
Sunderland	North East	59	69	10
Redcar and Cleveland	North East	67	77	10
Calderdale	Yorkshire and the Humber	72	82	10
North Lincolnshire	Yorkshire and the Humber	68	78	10
North Yorkshire	Yorkshire and the Humber	63	73	10
Walsall	West Midlands	53	63	10
Somerset	South West	60	70	10
Haringey	London	40	50	10
Trafford	North West	83	92	9
South Tyneside	North East	73	82	9
Warwickshire	West Midlands	68	77	9
Plymouth	South West	80	89	9
Brighton and Hove	South East	79	88	9
North Somerset	South West	68	77	9
Wolverhampton	West Midlands	57	66	9
Essex	East of England	59	68	9
Harrow	London	47	56	9
Barnet	London	37	46	9
Birmingham	West Midlands	49	58	9
Liverpool	North West	54	63	9

Brent	London	45	54	9
Leicestershire	East Midlands	59	67	8
East Sussex	South East	68	76	8
Blackpool	North West	59	67	8
North East Lincolnshire	Yorkshire and the Humber	68	76	8
Enfield	London	54	62	8
Hammersmith and Fulham	London	43	51	8
Oldham	North West	54	62	8
Tower Hamlets	London	26	34	8
Herefordshire	West Midlands	55	63	8
Cornwall	South West	71	78	7
Hillingdon	London	42	49	7
Manchester	North West	64	71	7
Surrey	South East	55	62	7
West Berkshire	South East	51	58	7
Luton	East of England	55	62	7
Kingston upon Thames	London	71	77	6
Wiltshire	South West	71	77	6
Cumbria	North West	78	84	6
Hartlepool	North East	71	77	6
Kirklees	Yorkshire and the Humber	66	72	6
Kingston Upon Hull, City of	Yorkshire and the Humber	66	72	6
Lincolnshire	East Midlands	68	74	6
Bromley	London	63	69	6
Wakefield	Yorkshire and the Humber	67	73	6
Portsmouth	South East	64	70	6
Bournemouth	South West	72	78	6
Nottingham	East Midlands	52	58	6
Shropshire	West Midlands	74	79	5
Wirral	North West	66	71	5
West Sussex	South East	62	67	5

Derby	East Midlands	63	68	5
Greenwich	London	49	54	5
Torbay	South West	61	66	5
Stoke-on-Trent	West Midlands	59	64	5
Hackney	London	42	47	5
Redbridge	London	66	70	4
Barnsley	Yorkshire and the Humber	68	72	4
City of London	London	40	44	4
Derbyshire	East Midlands	57	61	4
Rotherham	Yorkshire and the Humber	72	76	4
Gloucestershire	South West	62	66	4
York	Yorkshire and the Humber	65	68	3
Peterborough	East of England	64	67	3
Kensington and Chelsea	London	52	55	3
Oxfordshire	South East	68	71	3
Staffordshire	West Midlands	74	76	2
Merton	London	53	55	2
Sheffield	Yorkshire and the Humber	59	61	2
Wokingham	South East	54	56	2
Wandsworth	London	33	34	1
Bexley	London	55	55	0
Norfolk	East of England	72	72	0
Coventry	West Midlands	64	63	-1
Bracknell Forest	South East	69	67	-2
Knowsley	North West	68	66	-2
Reading	South East	65	63	-2
Richmond upon Thames	London	85	80	-5
Medway	South East	71	66	-5
Bradford	Yorkshire and the Humber	71	65	-6

Annex F: Survey monkey questions from local authority questionnaire

- 1) Local authority:
- 2) Please tell us your role at the local authority:
 - a. DCS
 - b. Senior Leader
 - c. Team Leader
 - d. Improvement Officer/Adviser/Consultant
 - e. Research Officer
 - f. Data Analyst
 - g. Other (please specify)
- 3) Do you have a working definition that guides you in identifying 'disadvantaged' children aged 0-5 in your local authority area?
- 4) Please provide details of your definition.
- 5) How well developed would you say this system is for identifying all disadvantaged children aged 0–5 in the local authority?
- 6) What data do you regularly collect on these children? (Tick all that apply)
 - a. Pupil characteristics
 - b. Parental background
 - c. Parental employment
 - d. Take up of two-year old funding
 - e. Attendance at early years setting
 - f. Type of early years setting attended
 - g. Other If 'Other' selected please specify:

- 7) Approximately, how frequently is this data collected? (select one option)
 - a. Daily
 - b. Weekly
 - c. Monthly
 - d. Every three months
 - e. Every six months
 - f. Yearly
- 8) Does your local authority have an early years improvement team?
- 9) How many people are there in your early years improvement team?
- 10) Briefly outline the role and responsibilities of this team/person.
- 11) Is there an elected member of your cabinet with responsibility for disadvantaged children?
- 12) Does the elected member have a specific remit for disadvantaged children in the early years (0–5)?
- 13) Do you have a strategic plan to tackle issues of disadvantage in the early years in your local authority area?
- 14) Who has contributed to this plan? (please tick all that apply)
 - a. Elected members of the council
 - b. DCS/Senior Leadership
 - c. Early years improvement team
 - d. Primary improvement team
 - e. Health team, including health visitors
 - f. Social care team, including early help/prevention
 - g. Troubled families team
 - h. Headteachers
 - i. Owners/managers/leaders of early years settings
 - j. Childminders

- k. Children's Centre Leaders
 - l. Parents
 - m. Community groups
 - n. Charity groups
- 15) Does your plan include reference to disadvantaged children in the following provision or circumstances? (please tick all that apply)
- a. Infant/first/primary schools
 - b. Nursery schools
 - c. Pre-schools (PVI)
 - d. Childminders
 - e. Children's centres
 - f. Early help, prevention and intervention
 - g. The troubled families agenda
 - h. Children looked after
 - i. Children in need
 - j. Disability and special educational needs
- 16) Briefly describe how your local authority ensures there are sufficient places for funded two-year-olds?
- 17) Does your local authority offer any incentive for providers, including schools, to take funded two-year-olds?
- 18) Briefly describe how you have incentivised providers to increase the number and take-up of funded places for two-year-olds.
- 19) How much additional funding has the local authority received in relation to the early years pupil premium since April 2015?
- 20) Has this funding been allocated directly to (tick all that apply):
- a. Schools
 - b. Pre-schools (private, voluntary and independent settings)
 - c. Childminders

- 21) Have you taken an integrated approach to the two-year-old health and development check?
- 22) Briefly describe how you have integrated the health and learning and development aspects of the check.
- 23) Do you collect data on the percentage of two-year-olds who have received a health and/or learning and development check?
- 24) Approximately what percentage of all two-year-olds in your local authority had received one of the following by December 2015?
 - a. Health check
 - b. Learning and development check
 - c. Integrated check
- 25) Does the LA have any innovative approaches to tackling the issue of disadvantage in the early years that Ofsted could share with others as good practice?
- 26) Briefly describe one innovative approach you are taking to address issues of disadvantage for children up to the age of five in your locality.
- 27) Can Ofsted contact you to discuss your responses further?
- 28) Please provide your contact number and e-mail address below:

Further reading

Ofsted publications

Are you ready? Good practice in school readiness, Ofsted, April 2014;
www.gov.uk/government/publications/are-you-ready-good-practice-in-school-readiness

Common inspection framework: education, skills and early years, Ofsted, August 2015; www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-inspection-framework-education-skills-and-early-years-from-september-2015

Early years inspection handbook, Ofsted, August 2015;
www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015

Ofsted's early years report 2015, Ofsted, July 2015;
www.gov.uk/government/collections/ofsteds-early-years-report-2015

Teaching and play in the early years – a balancing act?, Ofsted, July 2015;
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The quality of assessment for children in need of help, Ofsted, August 2015;
www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-in-need-and-child-protection-quality-of-early-help-and-social-work-assessments

Unseen children: access and achievement 20 years on, June 2013;
www.gov.uk/government/publications/unseen-children-access-and-achievement-20-years-on

Ofsted videos and good practice

A number of videos focusing on the early years can be found at
www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLLq-zBnUkspOy47yEqr9-i8NLelW0qvCN

Examples of good practice can be found at
www.gov.uk/government/collections/ofsted-examples-of-good-practice-in-early-years

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