

Children's centres and child welfare policy since 2010

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Children's centres and child welfare policy under Labour

- Sure Start and the shift towards early intervention and preventative services
- Labour's 'progressive universal' approach to tackling child poverty: (1) income transfers (2) children's services reform (HM Treasury, 2001)
- The 'Every Child Matters' programme and the role of universal services (HM Government, 2003; 2004)

The Conservative Party's 'Broken Britain' framework

- Five 'pathways to poverty': (1) family breakdown; (2) educational failure; (3) economic dependence; (4) indebtedness; (5) addiction (Centre for Social Justice, 2006; 2007)
- Targeted early intervention to address "dysfunctional families" (Allen and Duncan-Smith, 2008)
- *"The Conservative Party is committed to keeping Sure Start because the network of children's centres is of enormous value to parents across the country. But we believe Sure Start needs to work better because the people who need it most – disadvantaged and dysfunctional families – are not getting enough of the benefit"* (Conservative Party Manifesto, 2010)

Social policy under the Coalition and Conservative Governments (2010-19)

Public sector austerity

- 49% cut to local government funding between 2010/11 and 17/18 (NAO, 2018)
- 29% cut in central government funding for children's services (Action for Children et al, 2019)

Welfare reform

- £37 billion cut to spending on working age benefits by 2021 (Butler, 2018)
- 4.1 million children living in poverty (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2018)

The Brexit Effect?

- 'Life Chances' Strategy scrapped, December 2016
- Social Mobility Commission resigns, December 2017
- "Brexit is sucking the life out of government" (Joint statement by chairs of six House of Commons Committees in Helm and Courea, 2018)

Child welfare policy under the 'Department for Education' (2010-2019)

Education policy

- 'Freedom' from local authority control
- Focus on education standards not child welfare

Child protection and social work policy

- Swifter removal of children from 'dysfunctional' families
- New training, regulation and 'learning infrastructure' for social workers
- Outsourcing of local authority child protection services

Devolution of early intervention policy

- Funding ring fences removed
- Guidance watered down
- Promised policy statements on children's centres and youth services yet to emerge

Local authority restructuring

Demand for children's social care services 2007/8 v 2017/18

- 87% increase in child protection plans
- 24% increase in looked after children (ADCS, 2018)

Spending 2010/11 v 2017/18

- 49% fall in spending on 'early' intervention
- 12% increase in spending on 'late' intervention (Action for Children et al 2019)

Impact on early intervention services

- 1,000 children's centres closed between 2009 and 2018 (Sutton Trust, 2018)
- 600 youth centres closed, over 3,000 youth work jobs lost, almost 140,000 placed for young people lost between 2012 and 2016 (Unison, 2016)

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