

Supporting Parents to Strengthen Children's Early Learning:

Changing family context, the
policy environment & early years
agenda

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Changing Face of Early Childhood

4th March 2021

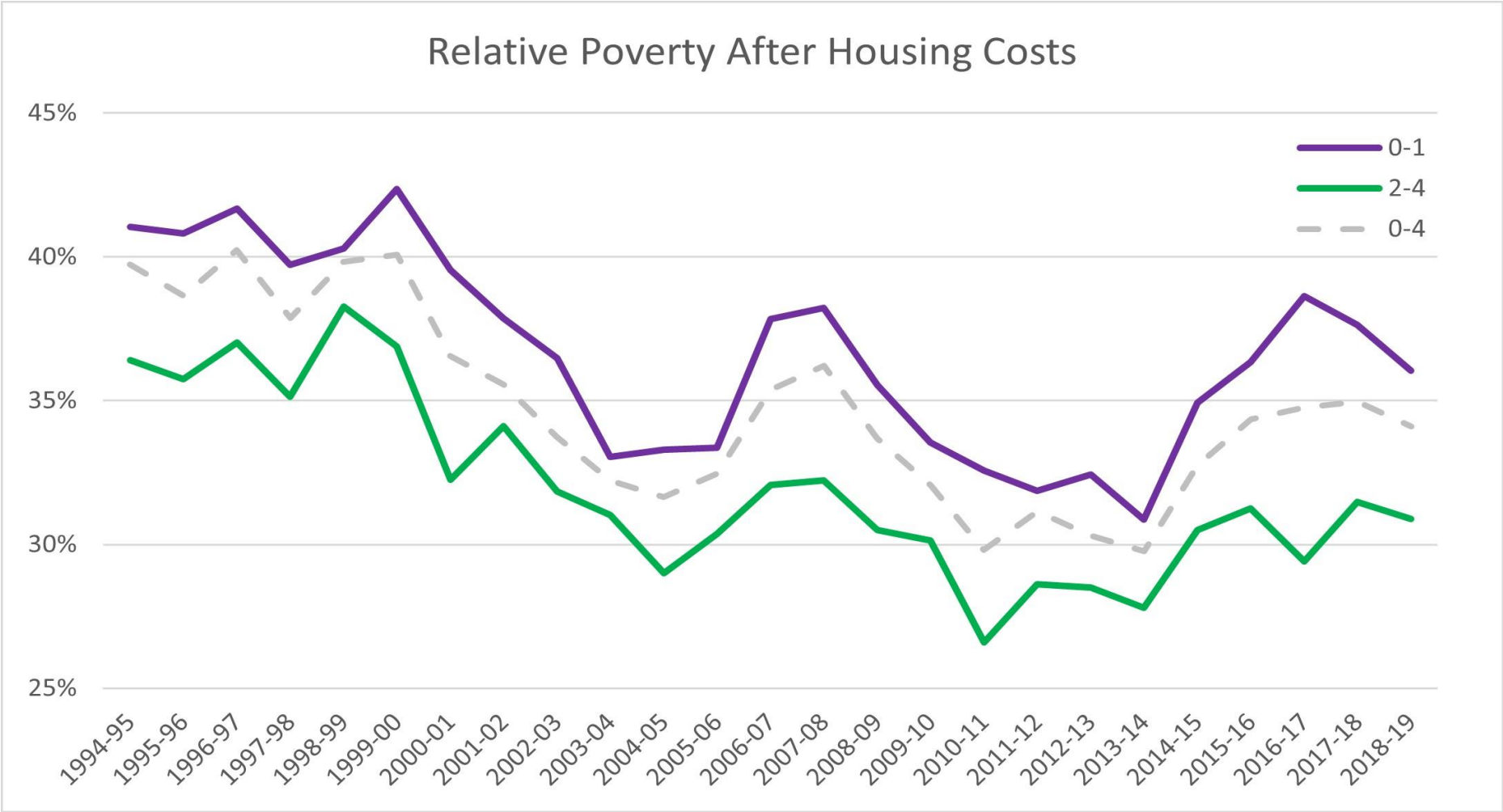
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The changing face
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Key changes in the lives of the under-fives

- Changing family context in which young children are growing up – diversity of family arrangements and parental working (60-70% women with children under 5) – inequalities running through these changes
- First generation of under-5s to spend a majority their lives in some kind of formal early education and childcare setting
- Growing poverty among families with young children since 2013/14, then stabilising pre-Covid, and now rising
- High levels of early childhood vulnerability: 557,500 under 5s in a household with domestic abuse, parental mental health problems, or parental drug/alcohol abuse (Children's Commissioner, England)

Poverty rates for children in families where youngest child is under 5 (pre-Covid) (Stewart & Reader, 2021)

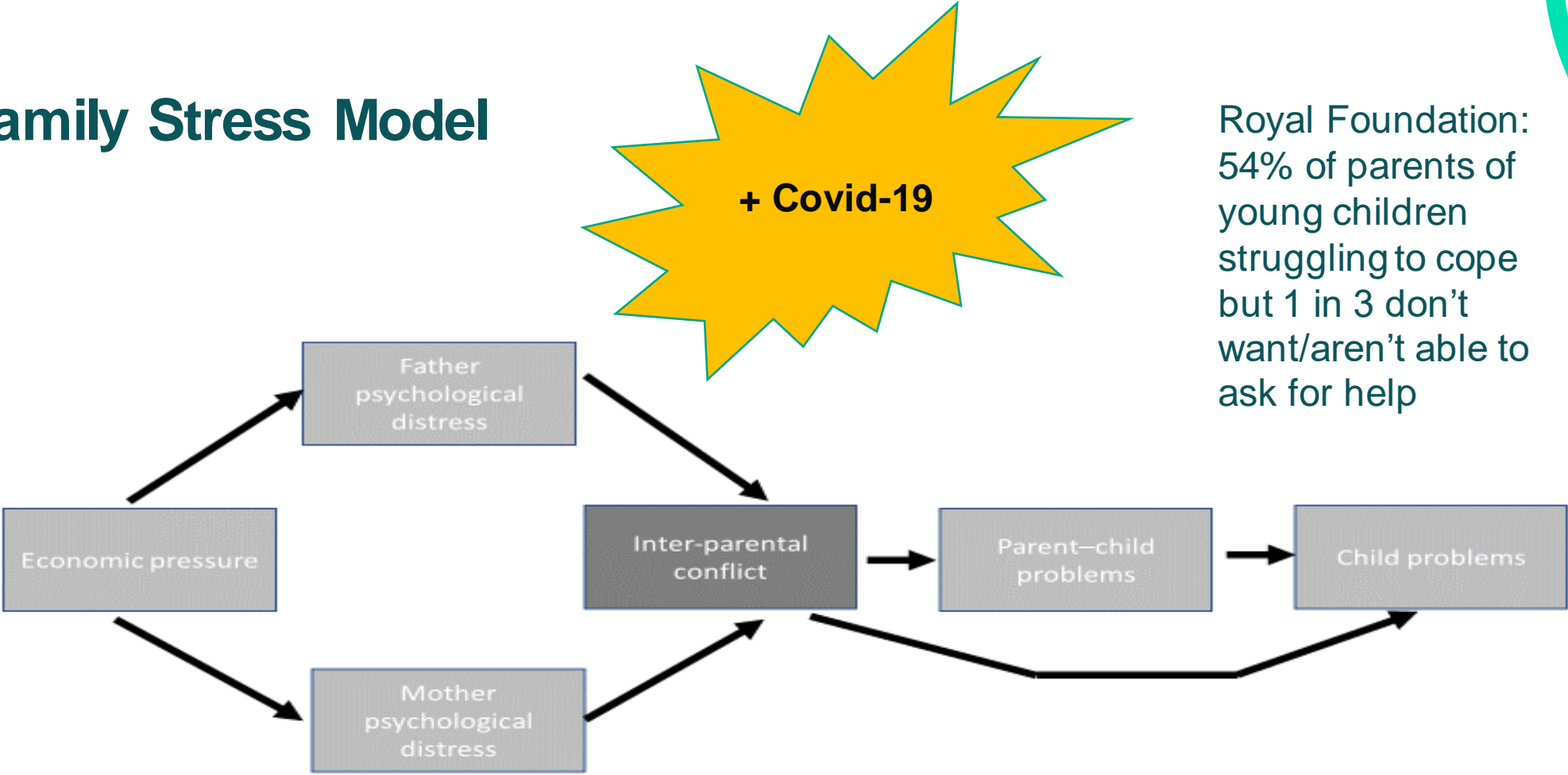


Presentation name or other key info. here

Inequalities in Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Score ‘Good Level of Development’

Year	Gap in GLD score between FSM children and non-FSM children	Change year on year
2013	19.0%	
2014	18.9%	↓
2015	17.7%	↓
2016	17.3%	↓
2017	17%	↓
2018	17.3%	↑
2019	17.8%	↑

Family Stress Model



Royal Foundation:
54% of parents of
young children
struggling to cope
but 1 in 3 don't
want/aren't able to
ask for help

Source: Acquah et al (2017)

Protective factors

- Maternal mental health
- Warm and engaged parenting
- Quality of the parental relationship
- Coping strategies, problem solving, communication skills
- The use of both formal and informal childcare
- Neighbourhood support: local friends and family and perceptions of neighbourhood safety
- Dispositional optimism

Source: Acquah (2017) and Schoon (2013)

Policy environment: opportunities and challenges

- Very challenging economic and financial context
- Increasing poverty & inequality
- Low priority attached to early childhood/years relative to other stages of education
- Sustainability of early years settings & childcare, workforce
- Lower take-up of early years provision post Covid
- Champions
- Disjointed approach at national level & fragmented services

- A great deal of practice knowledge, research, learning to build on & investment
- Signs of recognition of importance of parents and HLE (Royal Foundation)
- Lockdown – parents engaged in day-to-day care, play & learning, changing boundaries of where learning takes place
- Leadsom Review, NHS White Paper, local innovations, cross-party collaboration
- Thinking about Home in its widest sense

Key questions for the Early Years Agenda?

- What do you see as the key opportunities & challenges?
- What have we learnt?
- What would you prioritise?

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