Nuffield Foundation

Time for parents
The changing face of early childhood

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Children in Wales, Modern Parenthood

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Understanding parents and the home

- **Who** are parents?

- Understanding parenting: **care and context**

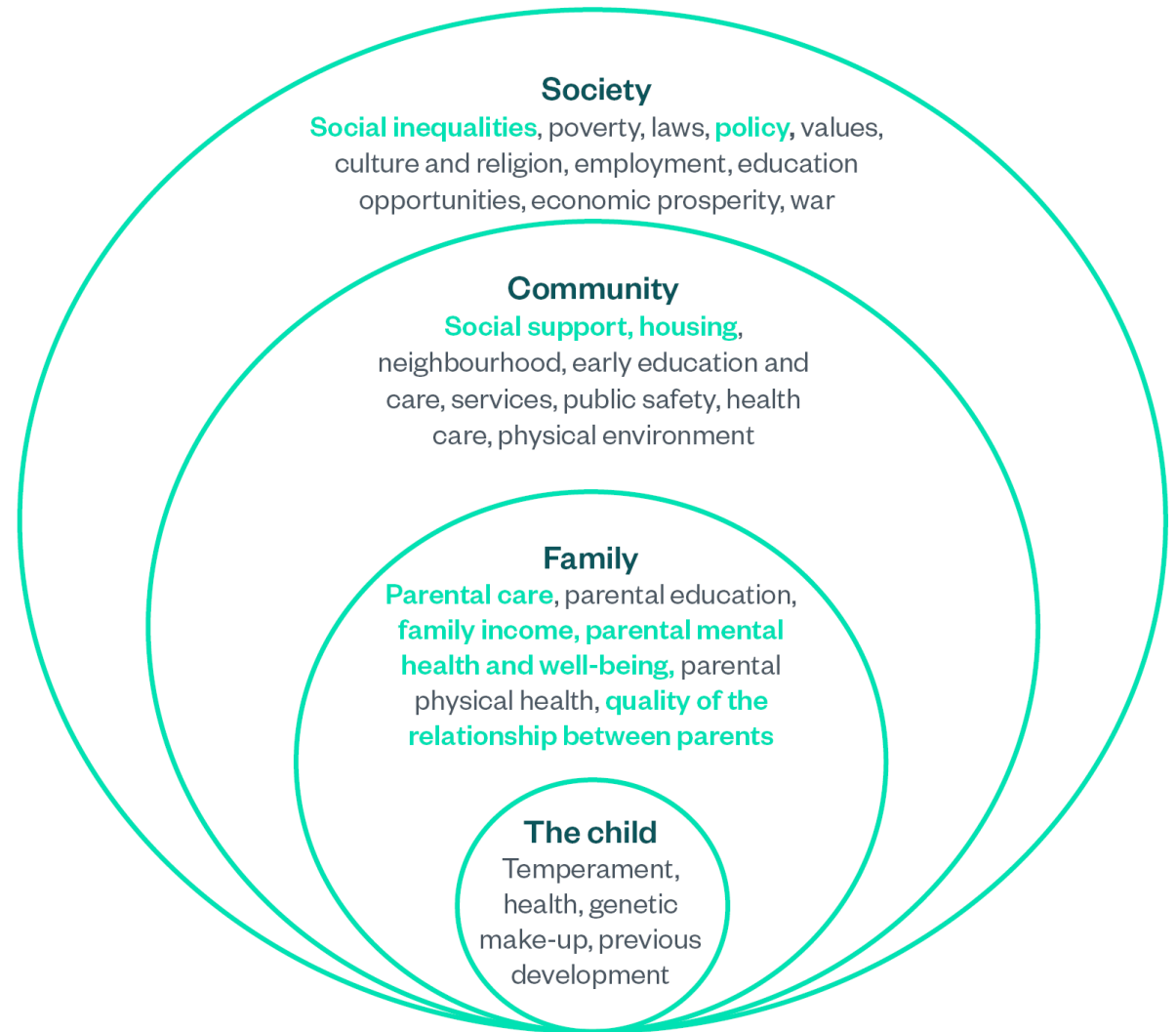- The review looks at **five proximate factors**

- **Why now?**

Figure: Adapted from Eisenstadt and Oppenheim, 2019

Society
Social inequalities, poverty, laws, policy, values, culture and religion, employment, education opportunities, economic prosperity, war

Community
Social support, housing, neighbourhood, early education and care, services, public safety, health care, physical environment

Family
Parental care, parental education, family income, parental mental health and well-being, parental physical health, quality of the relationship between parents

The child
Temperament, health, genetic make-up, previous development

Changing family forms and parenting pressures

What's changing?

- Most children living with both parents but shift from marriage to cohabitation
- Rising diversity of family forms
- Data suggests increase in parental separation/re-partnering
- Evidence of rising parental mental health difficulties

Why does this matter?

- Context for parenting
- Sliding scale of resources: family forms
- Small independent effect of parental separation on child outcomes
- Quality of relationship key
- Pressures on parents

  (Source: Kiernan et al. 2022.)

Limited data/understanding: diverse family forms, parental mental health, fathers, relationship quality.

How is parental care changing?

- Is the **quality of care** improving?

- Prioritisation of **'developmental childcare'**

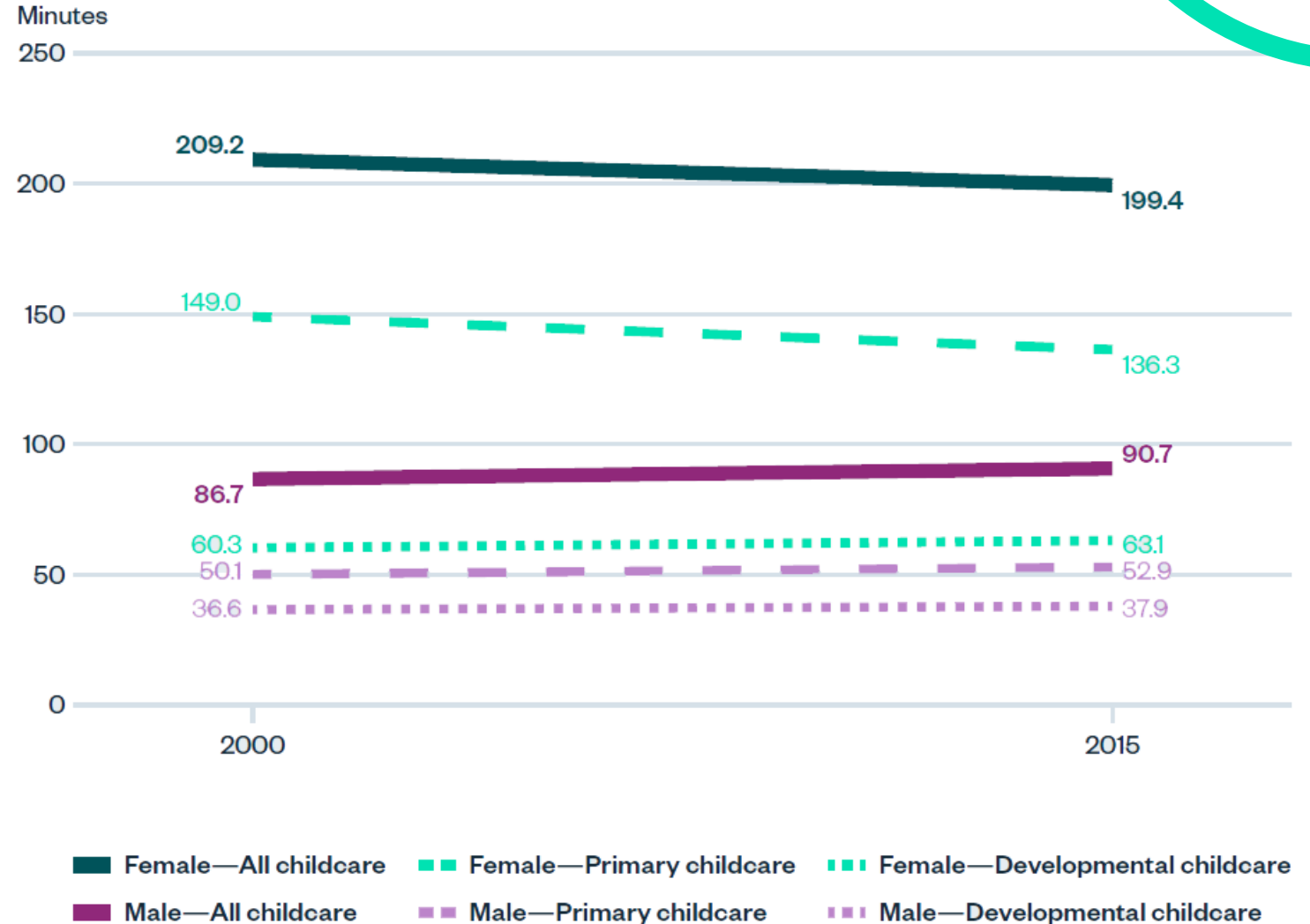- Caring for young children remains both **time-consuming** and **gendered**

Figure: Average daily minutes of (pre-school) childcare provided by gender of parent in the UK, 2000 and 2015. ONS, 2016

Minutes

	2000	2015
Female—All childcare	209.2	199.4
Female—Primary childcare	149.0	136.3
Male—All childcare	86.7	90.7
Female—Developmental childcare	60.3	63.1
Male—Primary childcare	50.1	52.9
Male—Developmental childcare	36.6	37.9

Legend:
- Female—All childcare
- Female—Primary childcare
- Female—Developmental childcare
- Male—All childcare
- Male—Primary childcare
- Male—Developmental childcare

The home

Proportion of children in households with youngest child aged 0–4 in poverty by tenure type. *Source: HBAI (DWP 2021).*

Growing proportion of families with a young child in poverty in private rental sector
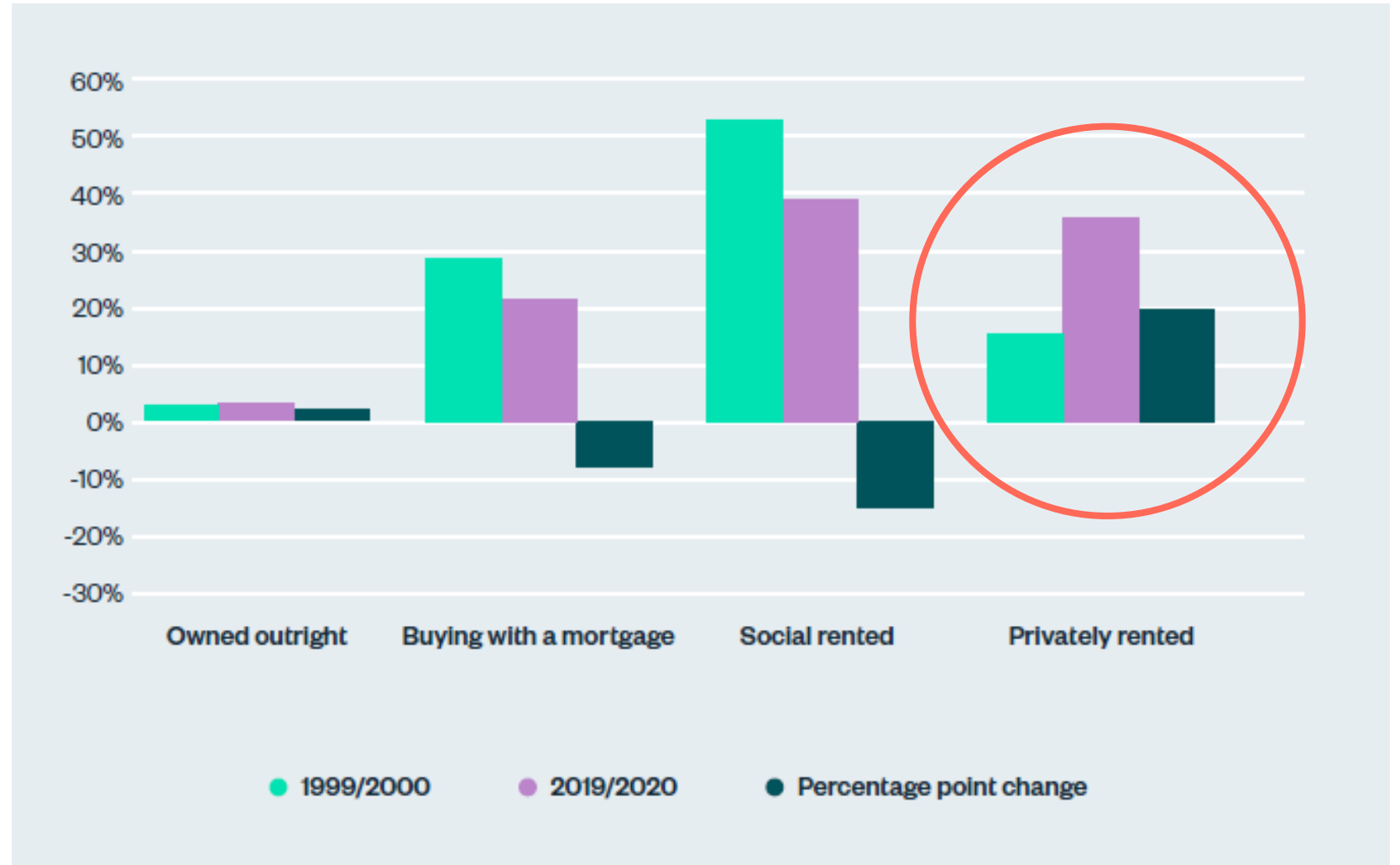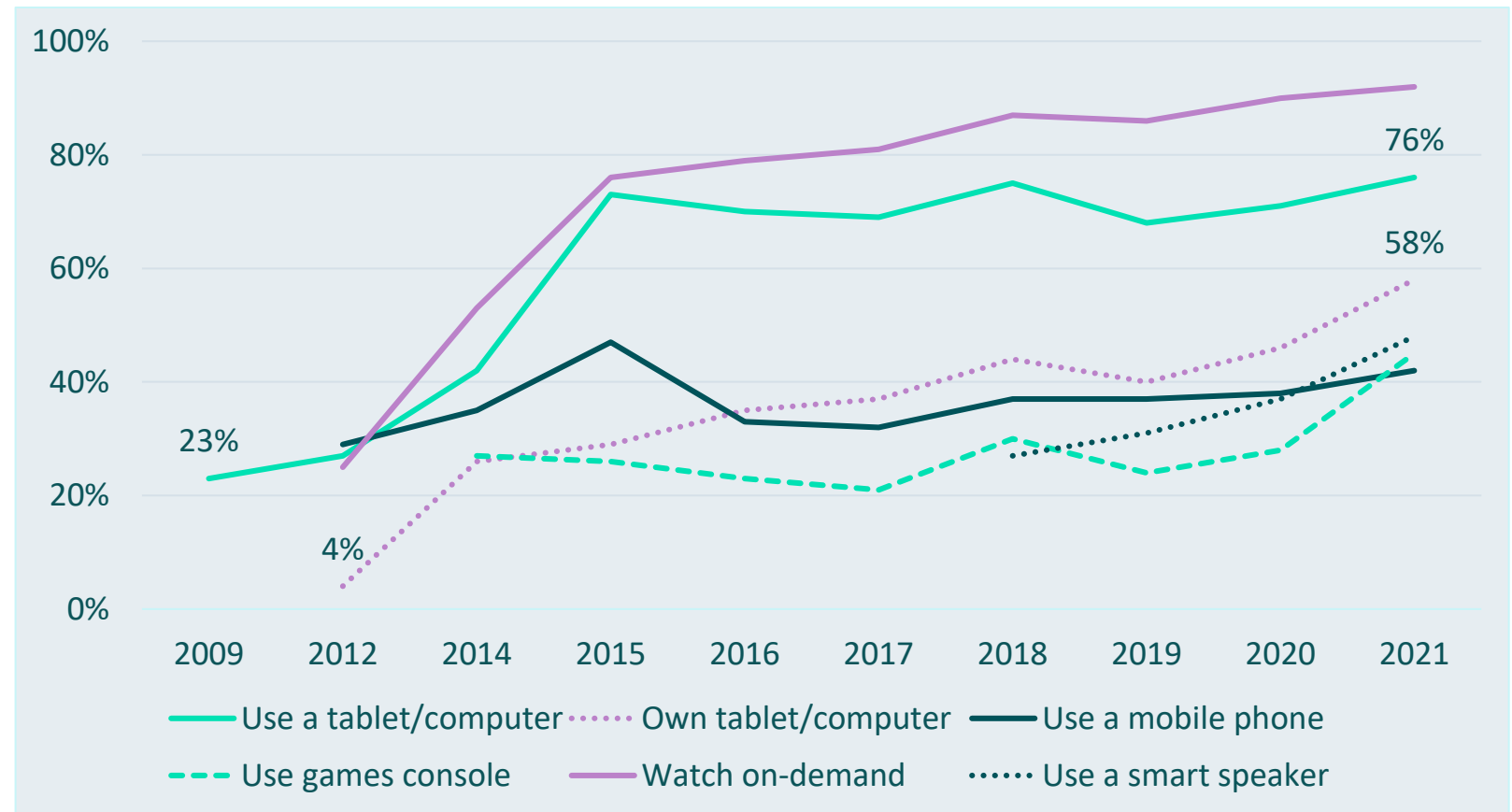
Digitalisation of the home

Sharp rise in young children's access to digital devices

In 2009 23% of under 5s had access to a PC at home, now 83% using tablet, laptop, computer or mobile phone.

Access to media (0-4 year olds), 2009-2021 UK

Legend:
- Use a tablet/computer
- Own tablet/computer
- Use a mobile phone
- Use games console
- Watch on-demand
- Use a smart speaker

Source: CHILDWISE (2021). The Monitor Preschool Report 2021: Key behaviour patterns among 0–4-year-olds. CHILDWISE.

Higher rates of relative poverty for families with a young child

In 2019/20, the proportion of children in poverty in families with youngest child under five stood at 36% - compared to 30% in 2013/14.

Relative poverty by age of youngest child in family. *Source: Stewart and Reader (2021).*
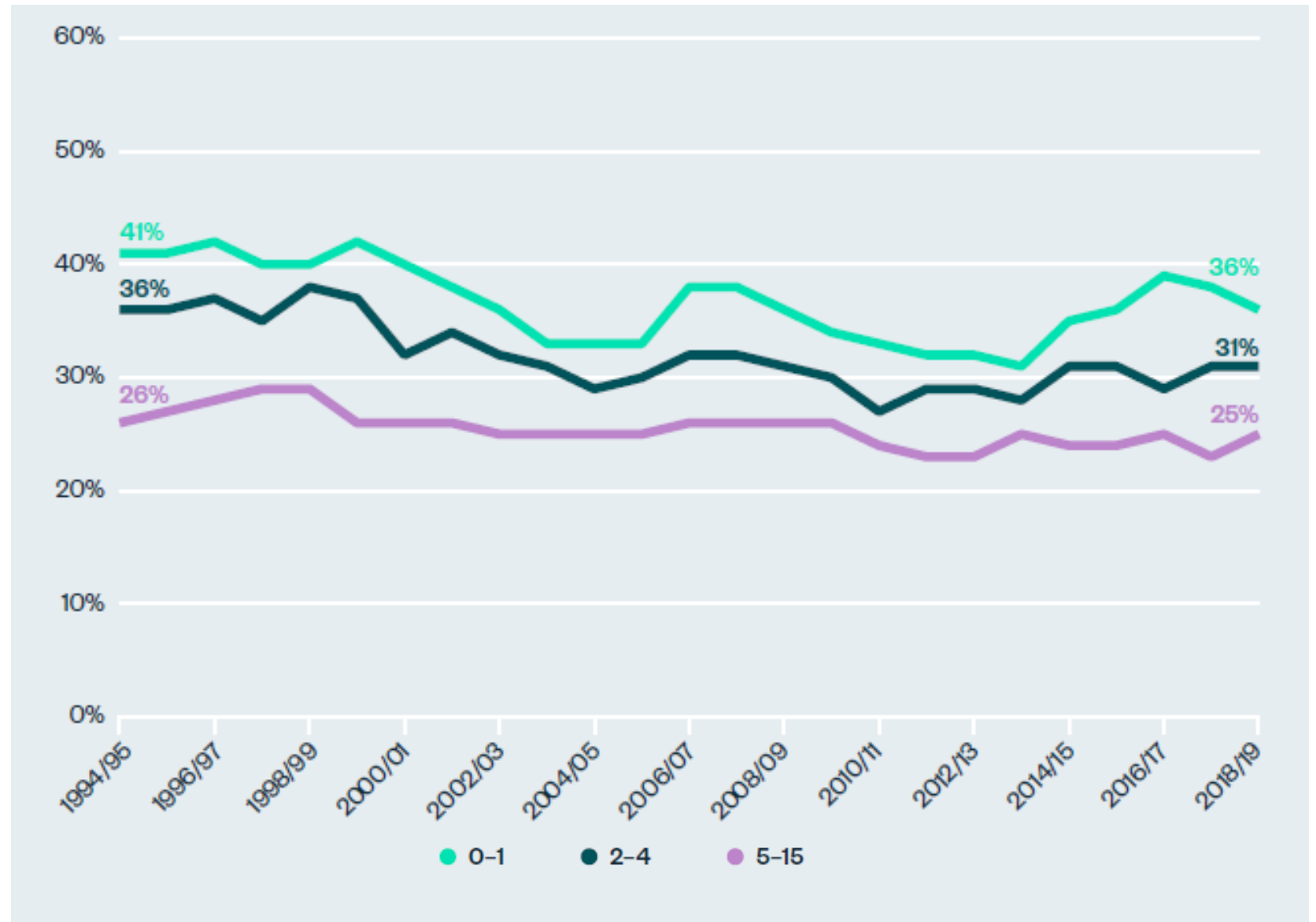
What support do parents need?

Parents need help and support with children's:

Health (36%)

Nutrition (33%)

Behaviour (24%)

Sleep (24%)
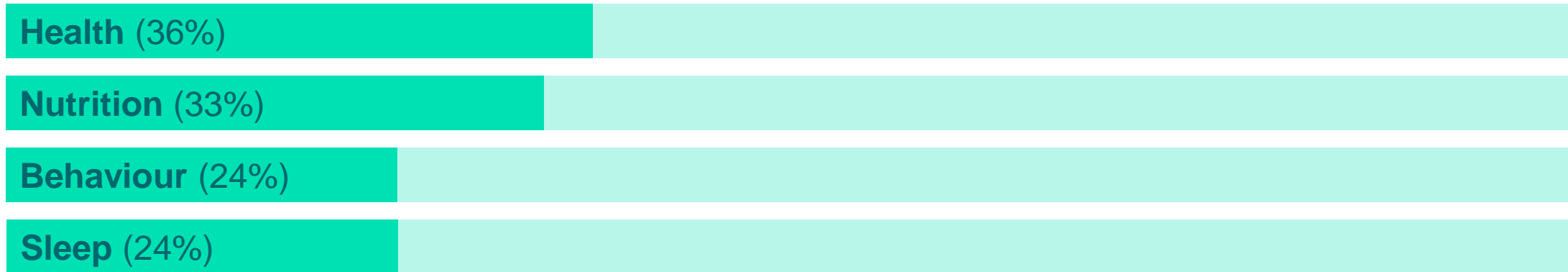
Parents turn to:

- **Family and friends**: own parents (57%), child's other parent (53%), close friends (47%)

- **NHS**: Medical professionals (42%), health visitor (39%), NHS website (38%)

- **Childcare/community**: Childcare professionals (33%), Children's Centres (27%)

- **Online**: internet searches (15%) and parenting blogs/websites (11%)

Source: Ipsos MORI 2020

Programmes for parents– what are they?

A predefined set of activities delivered by a specific provider to address a need of a particular group of parents or children. (Asmussen et al, 2016)

Type of need:

- Attachment
- Behaviour
- Cognitive development (language)
- Inter-parental relationships

Level of need:

- Universal
- Targeted-selected
- Targeted indicated

Delivered by:

- Specialists
- Trained practitioners
- Other parents/ volunteers

Location:

- 1-to1 at home
- Groups in EY settings
- Online

Programmes for parents: do they work?

Evidence of improving both parenting and children's outcomes: see EIF Guidebook

Examples of programmes with robust evidence include:

- Attachment - Family Nurse Partnerships
- Behaviour - Incredible Years Preschool
- Cognitive development – Let's Play in Tandem
- Inter-parental relationships – Enhanced Triple P

Many programmes are still under evaluation and the body of evidence is growing.

Programmes for parents

What do we need to know?

- How to make programmes attractive and accessible to parents?

- Who is best placed to deliver the programmes?

- When is the best time to provide support?

- What is the role of lighter-touch progammes?

- Where should programmes take place?

Evaluation:

- How to improve children's outcomes as well as parents' outcomes

- What is the longer-term effect of programmes with parents

Integrating support for parents

Parenting programmes are just part of the picture

Parents are in contact with a range of different services from pregnancy to children starting school – but the support system is fragmented and varied.

Integrating support?

Evidence from Sure Start Children's Centres:
- Evidence of good support offered to parents
- Positive outcomes for children in both short and longer-term
- Positive effects associated with frequency of use, inter-agency working and use of evidence based programmes

Family Hubs in England?

Thank you! Any questions?