

# Educational Disadvantage and Prison: Re-imagining the Pathways



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## Educational disadvantage and prison

- . In Ireland we like to believe that our education outcomes can determine our station in life but it is much more true that our station in life will determine our education outcomes.
- . In general, those we choose to imprison are (often highly) disadvantaged in terms of their educational outcomes
- . Some good news:
  - . we're not doing too badly on esl
  - . And while most offenders are early school leavers, most early school leavers are not offenders
  - . There's a payoff from education and training –
    - . Canary in the coalmine
    - . Investment in the person who offends







## Multitudes of actors

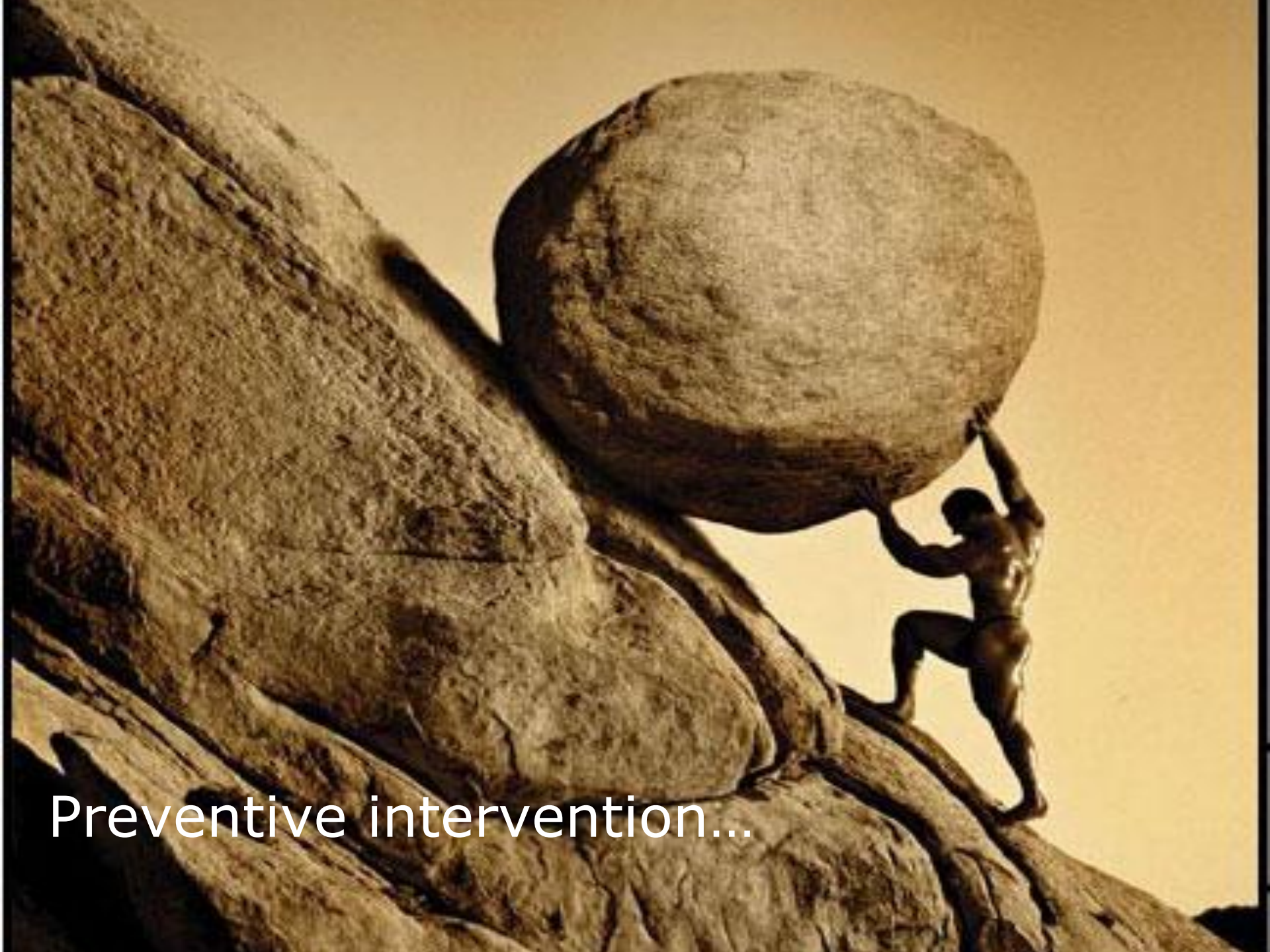
- . A child appearing before the court will have been served by
  - . Teachers, Guidance counsellors, resource teachers etc
  - . Instructors, tutors, Centre co-ordinators, Directors
  - . Youth workers
  - . Garda Juvenile Liaison Officers
  - . Youth Probation Officers
  - . Social workers, Community Care, outreach workers...
  - . Education Welfare Officers, Home-school-community liaison
  - . Family Welfare Conference Co-ordinators, FWC facilitators, FWC mentors
  - . Psychologists (NEPS, HSE), psychiatrists...
  - . Legal representatives, GALs
  - . Court officers...
  - . NGO personnel and volunteers
    - . Also possible: Advocates (FAS-funded); Mediators (LES)
  - . Etc



- . 'In one particular complaint, a parent was actively liaising with professional groups and bodies from 24 different health specialties on behalf of two children, each with their own wide-ranging complex medical needs.'

- . Ombudsman for Children 2009 report, page 30





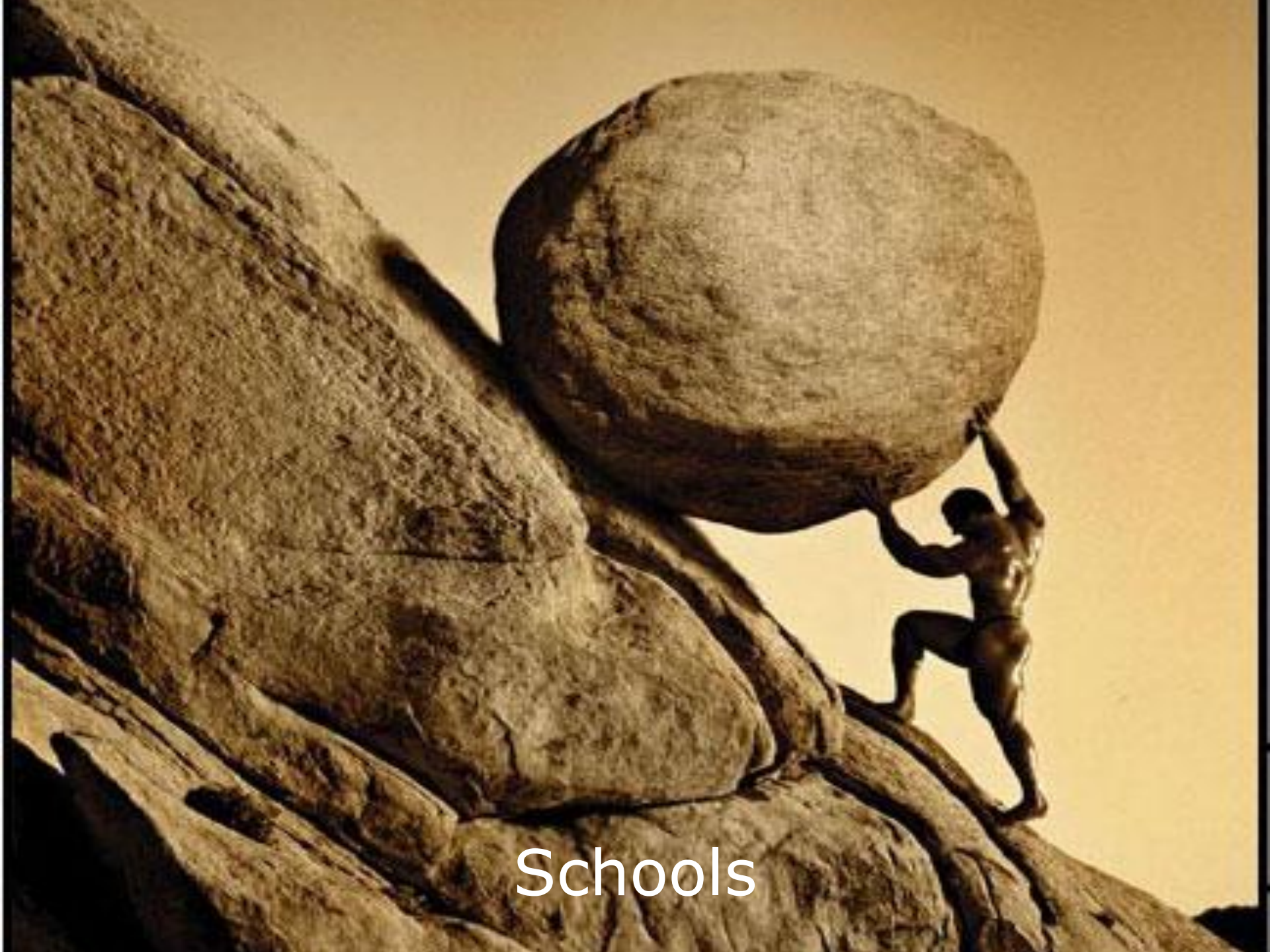
Preventive intervention...



## Education

- . Finland: Children start later and behind children in other countries yet pass them out by 15... (PISA survey)
- . How does this work?
  - . Teachers trained to Masters level in appropriate specialisation
  - . High professional status of teachers
  - . Rapid and concerted action follows their identification of a problem, often inter-agency
  - . Education is connected to all the other services, nobody is shy about entering another professional's working space...
  - . Focus is on preventive intervention and facilitation of solutions
- . In Ireland, by contrast...
- . Disconnectedness is a key characteristic of our systems
- . NB: Nonetheless, Finland has early school leavers too (figures much like Ireland's) and also offenders.





Schools





# Education – the canaries in the coal mine

- . Special Education Needs
- . Mental Health
- . Attendance: the role of the NEWB
- . Early School Leaving – prevention: the DEIS programme
- . Behaviour – the report *School Matters*



## *School Matters*

### Report of the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second level Schools

- . Highly charged debate
- . Disruption actually rare, but some very problematic behaviours, in some cases part of a spiral of individual and group offending
- . School ethos and culture
- . School community
- . School initiatives
- . Continuum of provision – on-site and off-site



## Some *School Matters* recommendations

- . Whole school approach
- . Empowerment of students
- . Transfer from primary to post-primary (Continuum)
- . Curriculum
- . Teacher education/training
- . Quality of leadership and professional competence of teaching staff
- . Parental involvement
- . Legislation
- . Behaviour support team (in school) and access to a behaviour support classroom
- . out of school provision
- . Interagency and intercollegial collaboration





# School matters - continuum

Level 8: Residential care

Level 7: centre for education/YEP

Level 6: Behaviour support classroom

Level 5: Deputy Principal/Principal

Level 4: care team

Level 3: Year head

Level 2: Class tutor

Level 1: Classroom teacher



Youthreach



## Out of-school measures

- . Education and Training:
  - . YOUTHREACH (Centres, CTCs, Justice); STTCs
  - . YEPs (5)
  - . **NOTE:** poor transfer of information from schools; also, none of the school supports transfer;
- . Very wide range of other out-of-school measures funded through myriad channels...





## Youthreach

- . the principal national response aimed at early school leavers (aged 16-20) with poor qualifications – less than 5Ds in Junior Cert
- . *Aim: to provide early school leavers with the knowledge, skills and confidence required to participate fully in society and progress to further education, training and employment*
- . Delivered in 110 *centres for education* and 43 *community training centres* - small out-of-school units, fulltime and part-time staff
- . For clarity:
  - . Early school leaving is a characteristic of all advanced economies
  - . Model is universal – system contexts differ
  - . many early school leavers do not have behavioural problems nor are they at risk of offending...



## Youthreach: Presenting difficulties

<i>Total number of participants in survey</i>	2739
Literacy and Numeracy Problems	864
Dysfunctional Family Background	1377
Substance Misuse Problems	756
Need for Sustained Psychological support	829
Specific learning needs	490
Physical disability	37
Intellectual disability	136
Poor physical health, eg. persistent illness/poor nutrition	468
Formally cautioned by police	483
On Probation	145
Two or more of any of the above	704



## International practice

- . U Arizona: Identifying High Quality Youth programmes
  - . *Physical and psychological safety* – staff create an atmosphere of physical and emotional safety
  - . *Appropriate Structure* – staff develop and provide a consistent system
  - . *Supportive relationships* – staff care and provide connections with youth
  - . *Opportunities to belong* – staff develop opportunities to instil a sense of belonging
  - . *Positive social norms* – staff reinforce positive social behaviours
  - . *Support for efficacy and meaning* – staff develop an environment where youth matter and make a difference
  - . *Opportunities for skill building* – staff engage youth in learning opportunities
  - . *Integration of family, centre and community efforts* – staff create linkages between youths' lives





# Youthreach fundamentals

- . **One centre – one plan** – the QF
- . **One learner – one plan:**
  - . Consultation, coordination, continuity, consistency, collaboration
  - . key worker model and process – listening, respect, feedback
  - . Inter-agency collaboration

Among the key elements – self-agency, taking charge of the future - *We all have choices we can make*

Also Personal, Social and Health Education and Development, including Copping On [www.coppingon.ie](http://www.coppingon.ie))



# From dependence to independence

Instability,  
disorder,  
dysfunctions,  
detachment,  
dependency

**Stability, Integration,  
independence**

**Engagement and  
attachment**

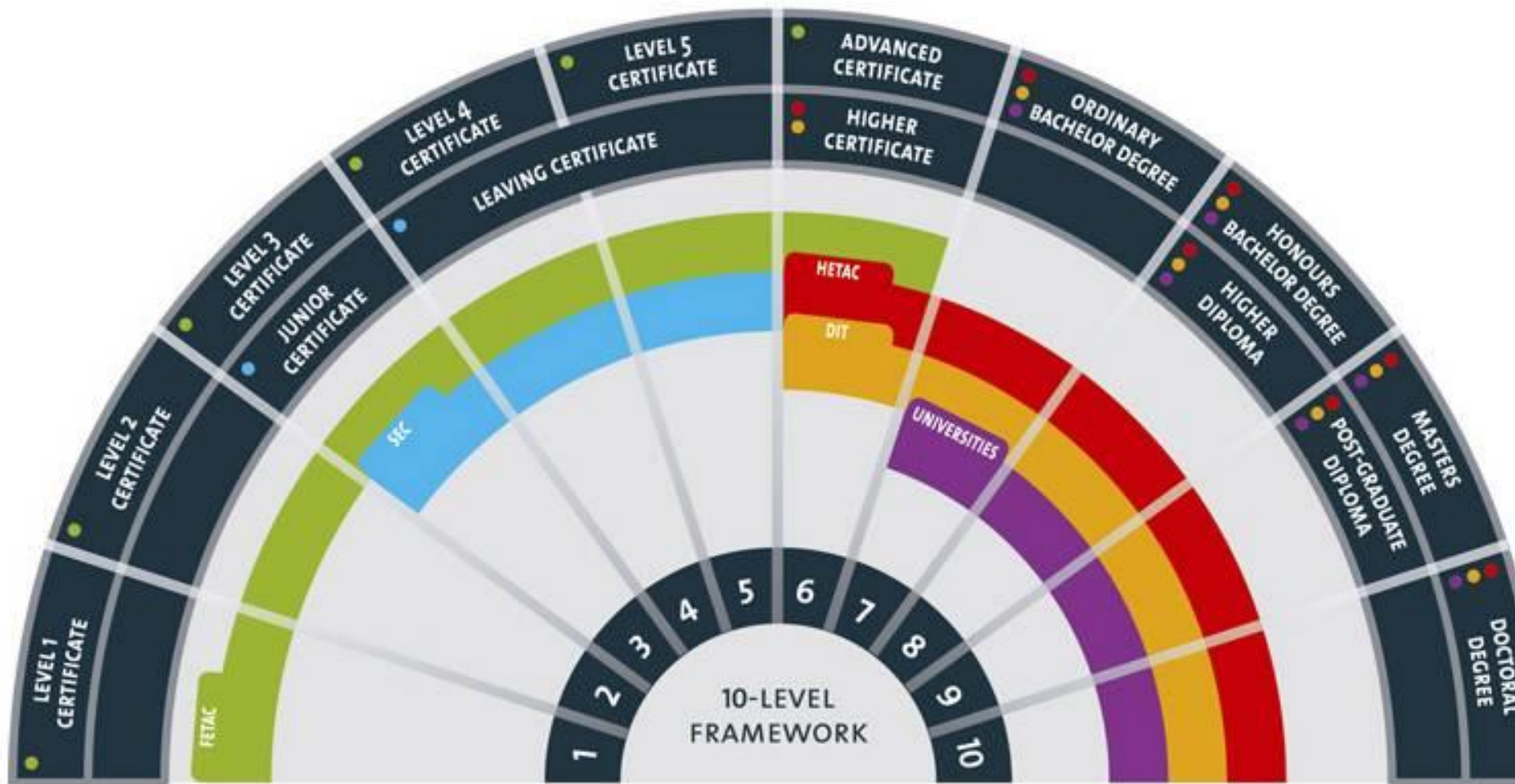
**Foundation**

**Progression**

**Transition**

# The National Framework of Qualifications award-types and awarding bodies

([www.nfq.ie](http://www.nfq.ie))

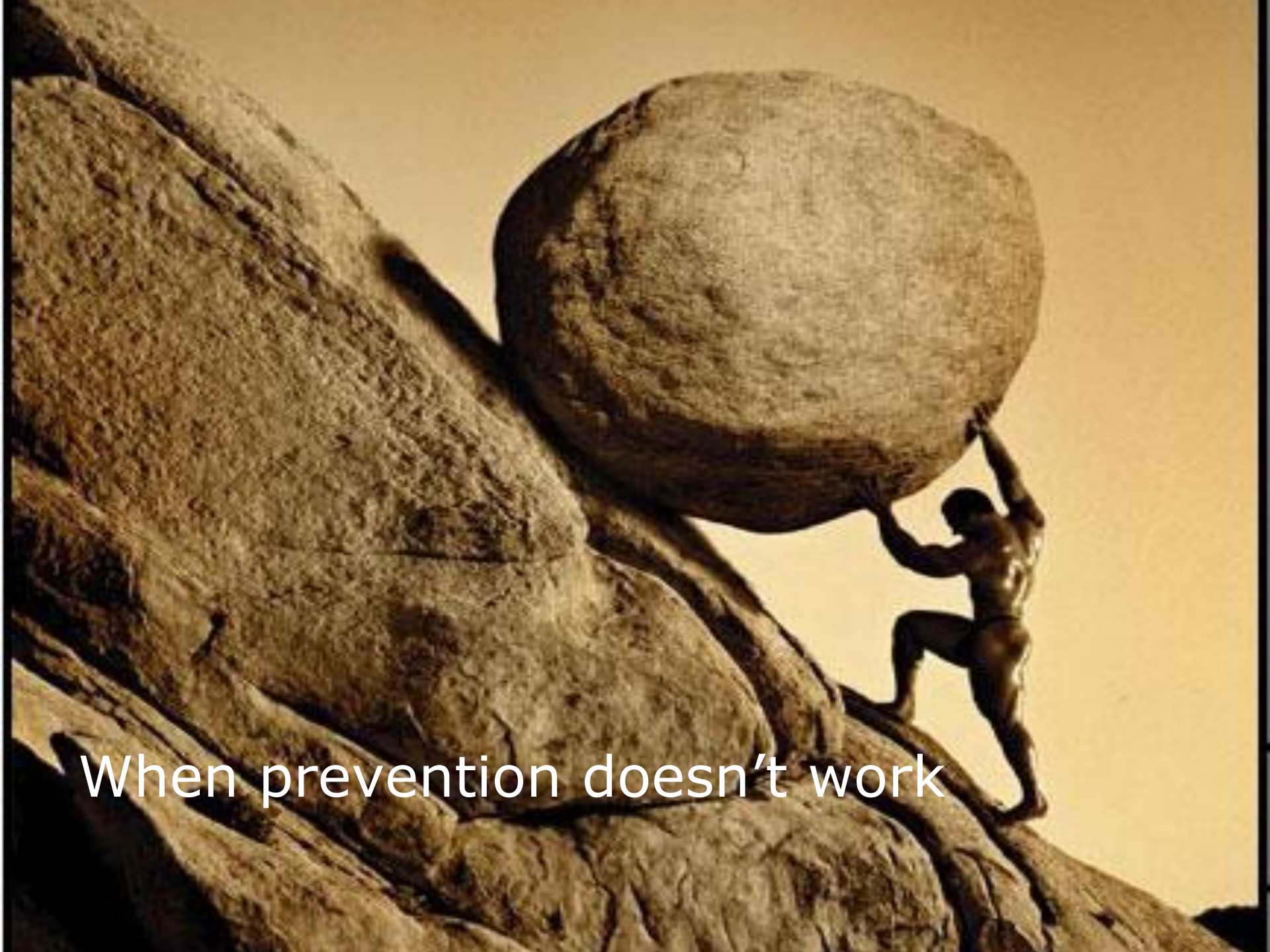






## Does it work?

- . Yes, though it can be attritional
- . 75% progression to further education, training or employment
- . Follow up after 20/15/10 years shows most people doing what they would have done had they stayed in school, including running businesses, studying to masters level, rearing families, travelling
- . Model robust and effective but need now to build its next generation with greater emphasis on challenge of literacy and numeracy



When prevention doesn't work







# The Wiesbaden approach: Key characteristics

- . Leadership (committed) and strong team buy-in by ALL staff
- . Approach:
  - . Restorative approach, listening – respect - challenge
  - . Differentiation
  - . Mentoring/key working
  - . Pathway planning
  - . Education and Vocational Training
- . Promotion of self-agency and on a sound basis for life after prison – prisoner's choice
- . Major emphasis on gaining tradeable skills and qualifications, ie ones that would allow the ex-prisoner to work after prison
- . Adaptation of education and training system to suit
- . Buy-in from local employers willing to offer prisoners work experience as part of their education and training
- . Strong emphasis on continuity of concern and transition management





Changing the pathways



## Changing paradigms

From	To
deficit	credit
passive (or inherent) risk	active need
general prevention	preventive intervention
problem identifying	problem solving
Completing case-loads	quality of outcome
Inside the box	outside the box
bounded systems	open systems
containment	continuity
project infrastructure	service infrastructure
Intra-agency (Detached)	Inter-agency (integrated...)
the age of heroism	the age of professionalism



## Case study: Mary

- . Referred to Youthreach centre by School Completion Programme
- . 15 yrs old lone parent
- . Left school when she was 13
- . No member of her family has been in school after the age of 13
- . No family support
- . Seven brothers and sisters
- . Father is dead
- . raped by her cousin last year



# An inter-agency response

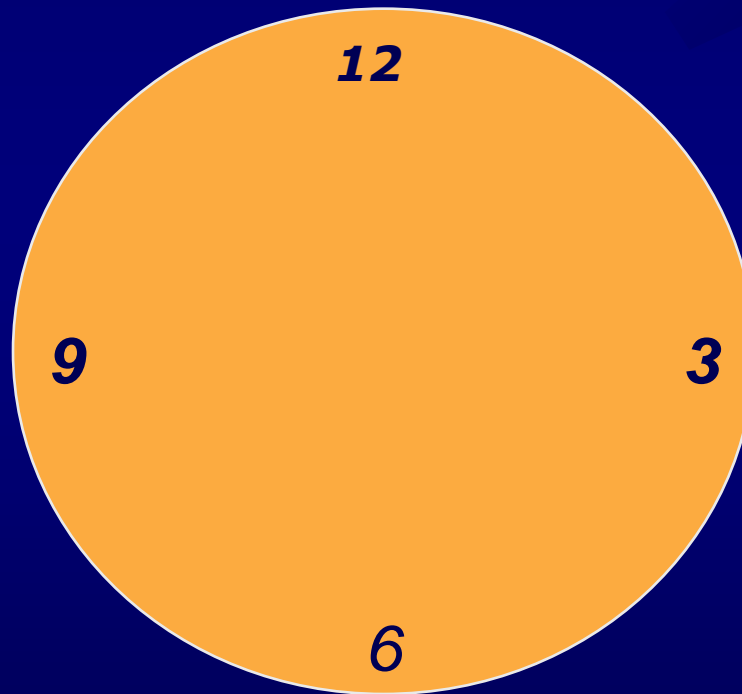
Issue		Action	Result 14 months later
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speech impediment</li> <li>• Poor diet</li> <li>• Poor living environment</li> <li>• Suffering from stress</li> <li>• Lice and scabies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Referred to speech therapist, paid for by Northside Partnership</li> <li>• Started “Cook It” programme paid for by HSE</li> <li>• Receiving Acupuncture paid for from the <b>School Completion Programme</b></li> <li>• Received eye and teeth check from <b>health nurse in centre, covered by Coolock Health Centre</b></li> <li>• Money from <b>St Vincent De Paul</b> for clothes and food for baby</li> </ul>	Mary is in good Health and so is baby. Still receiving Counselling and Acupuncture
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor Numeracy</li> <li>• Poor Literacy</li> <li>• Poor Social Skills</li> <li>• Poor attendance in school</li> <li>• Disclosed the rape</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literacy / Numeracy Assessment</li> <li>• IEP</li> <li>• Personal Development and Child Development Programme linked with <b>Parents Alone</b></li> <li>• Reward system for good attendance linked with <b>School Completion Programme</b></li> <li>• Counselling for rape, individually and with family with <b>Coolock Counselling Service and linked with Spring Board</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mary has a full FETAC qualification NFQ level 3</li> <li>• 5 subjects at Level 4 has just completed L 5 Communications v a merit</li> <li>• Her attendance is excellent</li> </ul>
Family Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a one year old baby</li> <li>• Targeted younger brother and sisters not attending school</li> <li>• Mother not working</li> <li>• Family need counselling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Given family support worker for mornings to help get children to school</li> <li>• Mother given training to help with breakfast clubs</li> <li>• Mother sent on Parenting course</li> <li>• Family receiving acupuncture for stress &amp; children with ADHD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All children attending school regularly.</li> <li>• Mother working.</li> </ul>





# Prevention and response - a continuum

## ***The Stokes Clock***





## The real last words

- . (Young) people don't usually want to find trouble – trouble finds them – they do their best to survive and find belonging and fulfilment in ways that they themselves value
- . The space within which young people can be young people is being severely compressed...
- . Caution: Germany and Finland – strong social consensus, unlike Ireland – how might this be addressed? (Need to talk to those who disagree with us as well as those who agree)
- . The bait must appeal to the fish, not the angler! IE, what we do must make sense to the users...
- . It's not rocket science
- . Common sense is not so common (Voltaire)