

Early Intervention and Juvenile Justice: Key Messages from Research

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The Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime

- Longitudinal study of pathways into and out of offending for a cohort of around 4,300 young people who started secondary school (mainstream, independent or special education) in Edinburgh in 1998
- Funded by: ESRC, The Nuffield Foundation, The Scottish Executive
- Data sources used for this paper:
 - Self report questionnaires (age 11 – 18)
 - Semi-structured interviews (age 13 and 18)
 - Social work and children's hearings records (birth -18)
 - Scottish criminal records (up to age 22)
 - Geographic information system (based on census and police recorded crime data)

Four 'facts' about youth crime that any system should fit

- Persistent serious offending is associated with victimisation and social adversity
- Early identification of at-risk children is not a water-tight process and may be iatrogenic
- Critical moments in the early teenage years are key to pathways out of offending
- Diversionary strategies facilitate the desistence process.

On the basis of these facts.....

Conundrum facing policy-makers: how to develop a system of youth justice which is holistic in orientation (intervention proportionate to need) AND which maximises diversion from criminal justice?

Solution: age-graded services and support to include 'universal targeting' in the early years and more finely tuned individual targeting in the teenage years

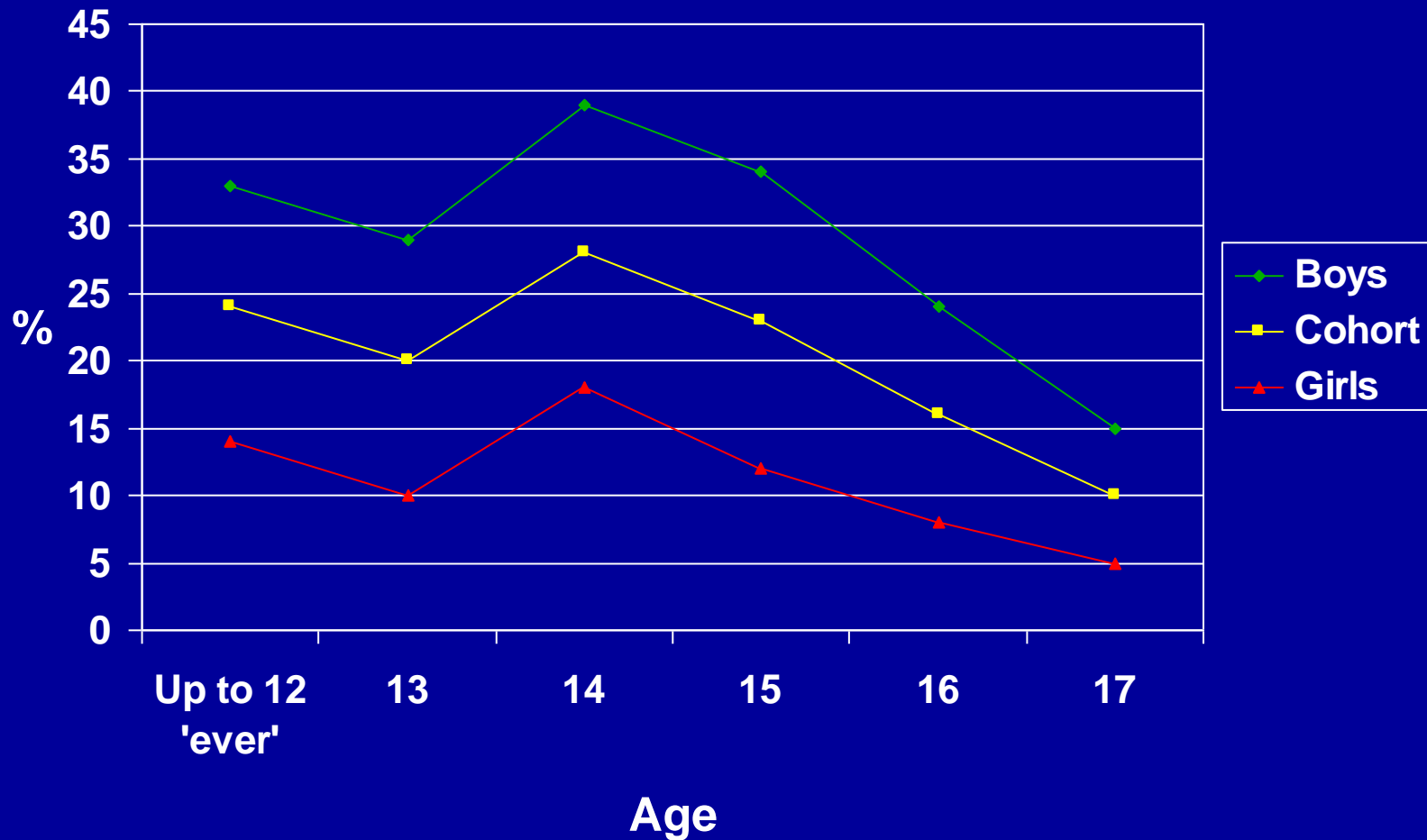
Social justice not criminal justice

Fact 1: evidence

Persistent serious offending is associated with victimisation and social adversity

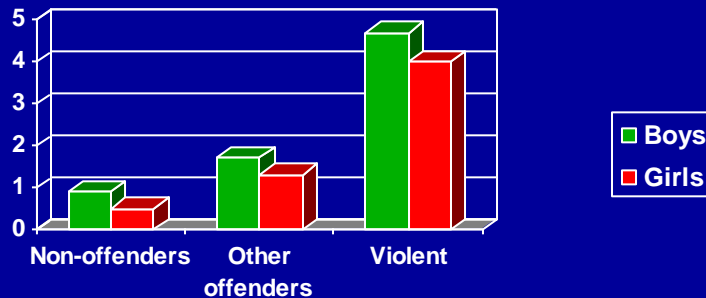
% involvement in violent offending

(Robbery, carrying weapon, 6+ incidents of assault in past year)



Violence and vulnerability

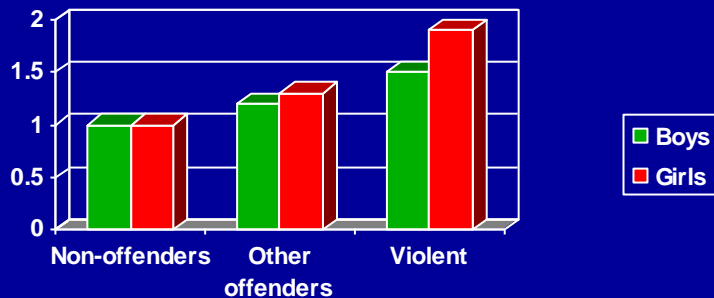
Victimization (mean)



Adult harassment (mean)



Being bullied (mean)

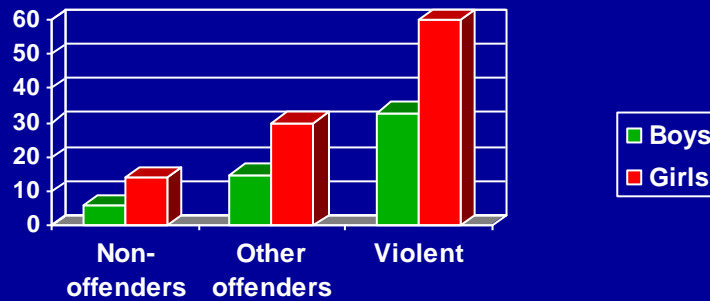


Sexual intercourse age 14 or under %



Violence and vulnerability cont.

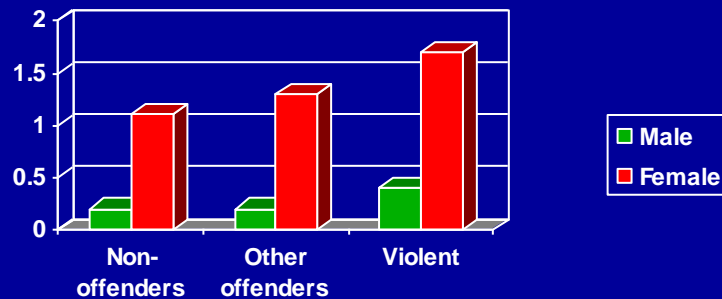
Self-harm %



Para-suicidal behaviour %



Disordered eating (mean)

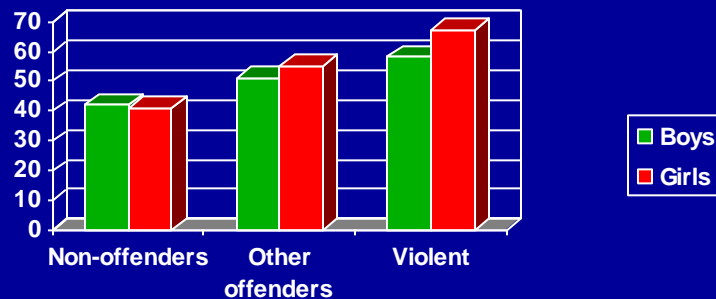


Depressive symptoms (mean)

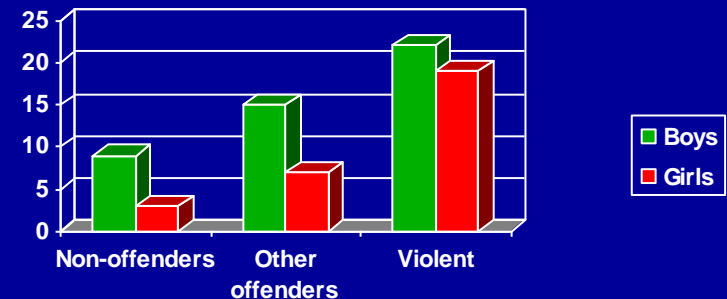


Violence and vulnerability cont.

Major family crisis in past year %



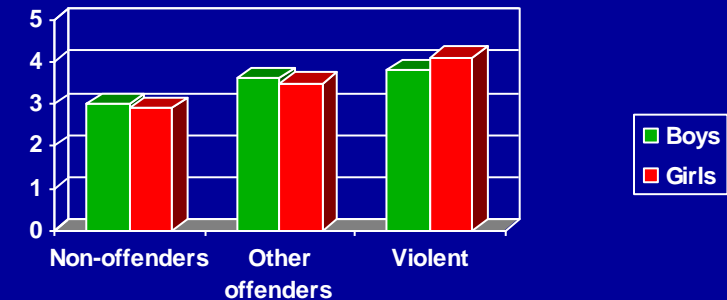
School exclusion %



Free school meal entitlement %



Neighbourhood deprivation (mean)



Fact 2: evidence

Early identification of at-risk children is not a water-tight process

Majority of serious and persistent offenders under the radar (based on self-report data)

| | Chronic high level serious offenders n=383 % | Chronic violent offenders n=213 % | Violence at age 17/18 n=352 % |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Never known to juvenile justice | 69 | 67 | 77 |
| Never known to social work | 73 | 79 | 81 |
| No convictions in criminal justice system by age 18 | 84 | 83 | 83 |

- Serious offending: 6+ incidents of assault; robbery; weapon carrying; fire-raising housebreaking; breaking into motor vehicle to steal; riding in stolen motor-vehicle;
- Chronic high level serious offenders: 11+ incidents at every study sweep
- Violence: 6+ incidents of assault; robbery; weapon carrying
- Chronic violence: admitted to at least one violent offence every study sweep

How soon can we tell? cont.

| | | Behavioural problems reported in CHS/SW files by age 5 n=105 (%) |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Institutional pathways | Referral to Reporter at age 13 | 37 |
| | Referral to Reporter at age 15 | 45 |
| | Conviction in adult system by age 22 | 46 |

How soon can we tell? Cont.

- Inability to identify the vast majority of serious and persistent (self-reported) offenders from an early age

Dunedin longitudinal study (see White et al. 1990)

- 19% wrongly predicted by age 11 (around 1 in 5 false positive rate)
- 35% wrongly predicted by age 15 (around 1 in 3 false positive rate)
- **Predictability declines in the mid teenage years as other influences become important**

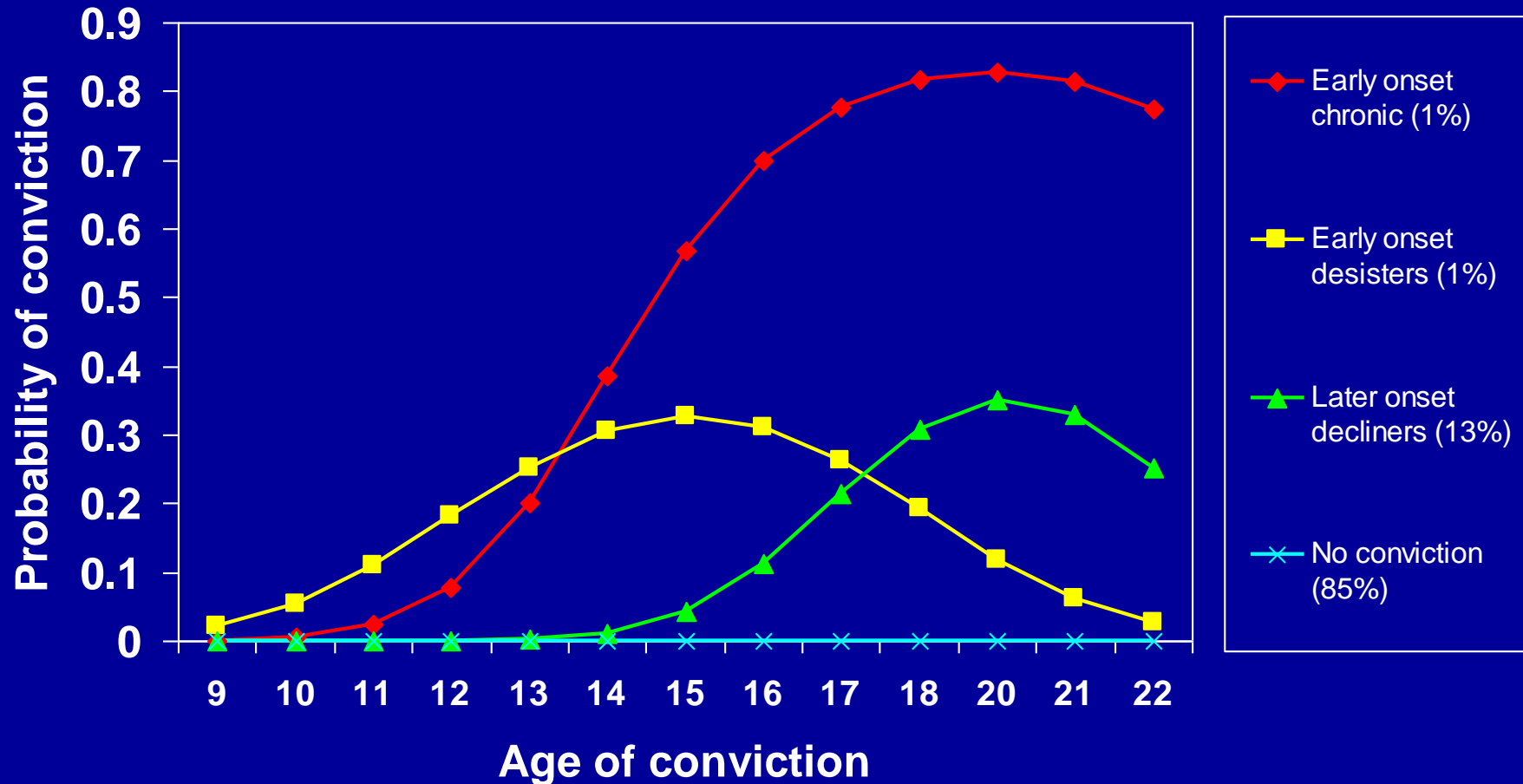
“Due to the high rate of false positives among those children predicted to have antisocial outcomes, the usefulness of preschool behaviour predictors for selecting children for intensive early intervention efforts may be limited at present” (pp 523)

Fact 3: evidence

Critical moments in the early teenage years are key to pathways into and out of offending

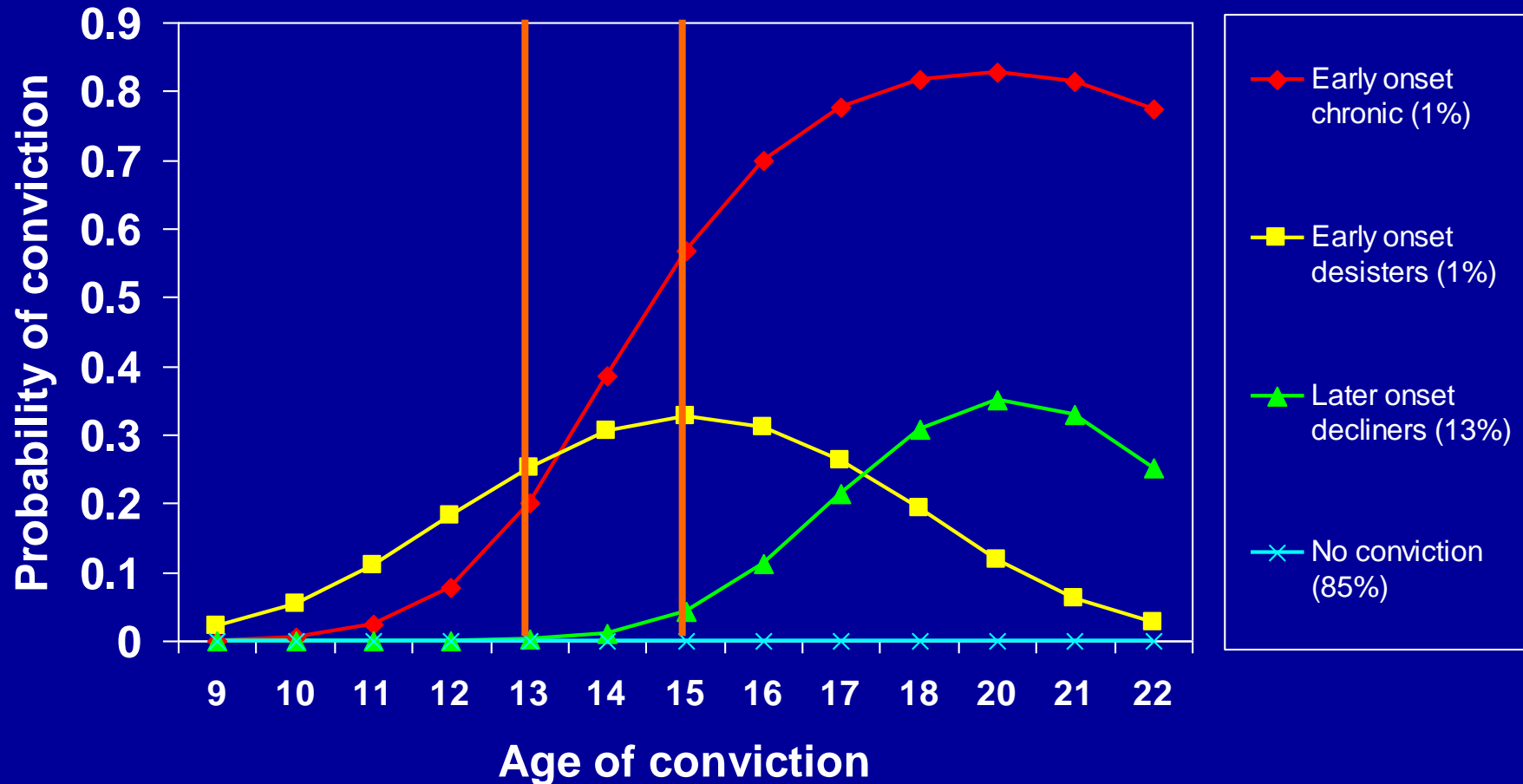
Conviction trajectories

(McAra and McVie 2010 in press)



Conviction trajectories

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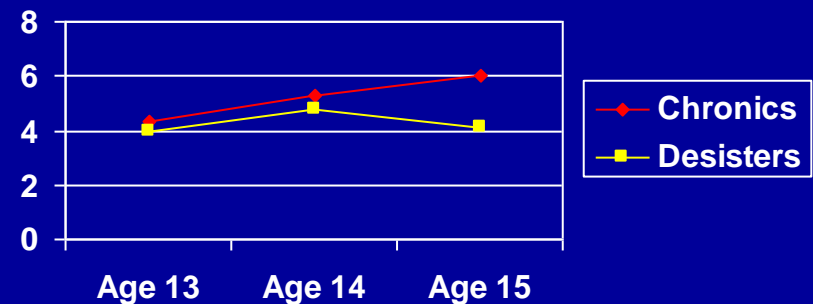
Shared characteristics: early onset groups at age 12

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <h2>Social deprivation</h2> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Free school meal entitlement •Low household socio-economic status |
| <h2>Disrupted Family</h2> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Broken family •Low level parental monitoring •High level conflict with parents |
| <h2>Offending and Substance misuse</h2> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Serious offending •Illegal drugs taken •Weekly alcohol use |
| <h2>Street-life</h2> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Hang out most evenings •Friends heavily involved in offending |
| <h2>School disconnection</h2> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •School exclusion age 12 (prevalence) •High volume truancy from primary school |
| <h2>Institutional history</h2> <p>(NB only 18% chronics and 17% of desisters known by age 5)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •High volume police adversarial contact by age 12 •Early chs/sw system contact by age 5 •Offence referral to Reporter by age 12 •Statutory supervision by age 12 |

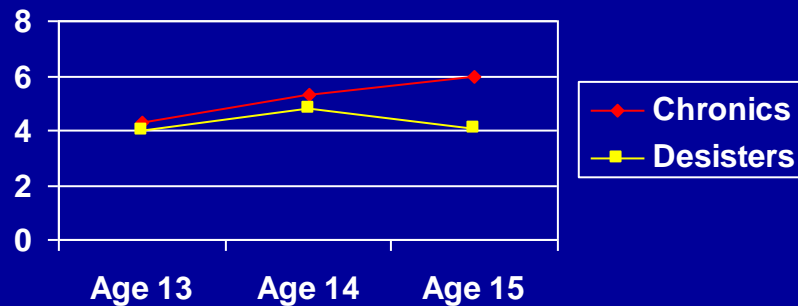
Key change in chronic group 13-15

- Significant increase in:
 - truancy
 - school exclusion
 - adversarial police contact

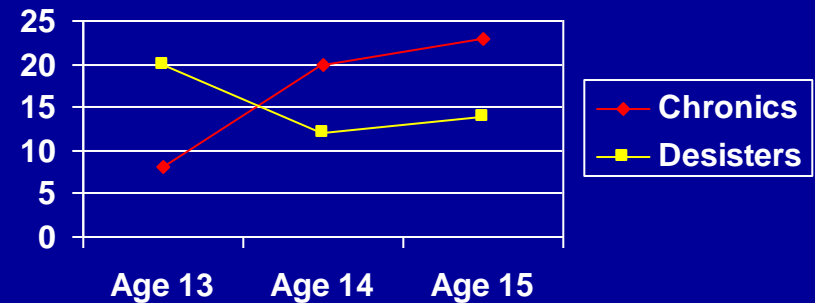
Truancy (mean)



Adversarial police contact (mean)



Sessions excluded (mean)



Comparing conviction trajectory groups: Later onset vs. early onset groups (age 12)

| Similarities | Differences |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Broken family•Low level parental monitoring•Conflict with parents•Alcohol use•Peer involvement in offending | <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Lower level of serious offending•Less social deprivation (all study measures)•Less likely to hang out daily•Less likely to use drugs•Less likely to truant•Less likely to be excluded from school•Lower volume of adversarial police contact•Less likely to be on statutory supervision (chs) |

Change linked to later onset

- Family breakdown (13-15)
- Lower parental monitoring (13-15)
- Increased peer involvement in offending (13-15)
- Moving into area of social deprivation (12-15)
- Increased volume serious offending (13-15)
- Increased drug use (13-15)
- Increased hanging out (13-15)
- Increased truancy from school (13-15)
- Increased exclusion from school (13-15)
- Increased volume adversarial police contact (13-15)

Fact 4: evidence

Diversionary strategies facilitate
the desistence process

Damaging features of system contact

(McAra and McVie 2007a)

- Compulsory measures of care appear to inhibit the normal process of desistence from serious offending that is evident from around age 14 in the cohort
- Conversely police warnings/charges (but no further action) associated with a significant reduction in serious offending one year later
- Edinburgh Study findings in tune with other international comparative research e.g. Denver/Bremen longitudinal studies, Huizinga et al. 2003

Youth to adult criminal justice transitions: up-tariffing the vulnerable (McAra and McVie 2007b)

- Of those ever referred on offence grounds to juvenile justice system
 - 55% at least one criminal conviction (by age 22) compared with 10% of those with no hearing record
 - 13% at least one period of detention (by age 22) compared with 0.4% of those with no hearing record - i.e. 33 x higher!
- Key factors predicting transition from juvenile to adult system are:
 - Excluded from school by 3rd year of secondary school
 - Early history of police warning/charges
 - Being male
 - ***Assessed as most 'needy' in official records ***

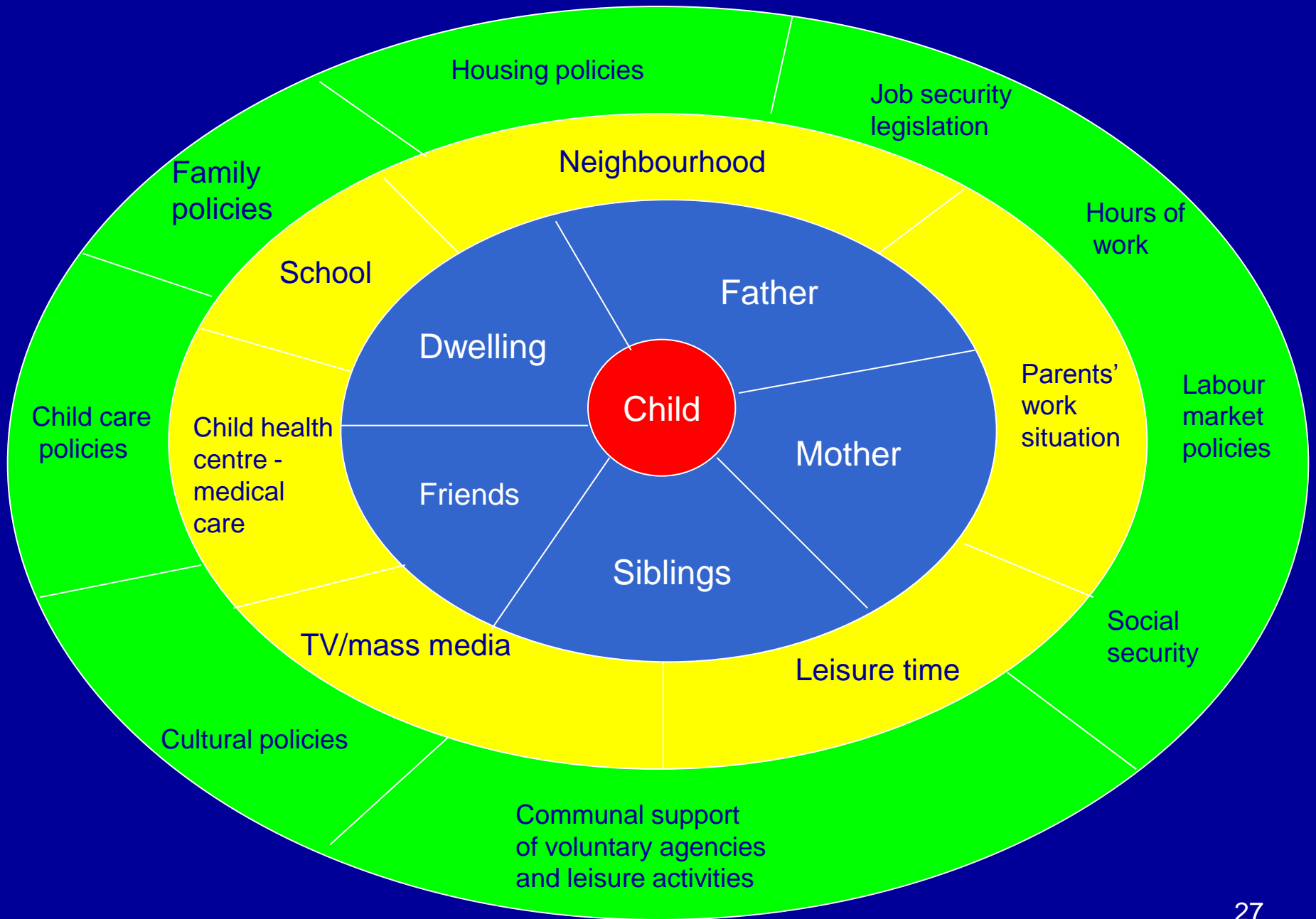
Longer term outcomes

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Residential care by 16 th birthday % criminal conviction by age 22 | 77 |
| Residential care by 16 th birthday % imprisonment by age 22 | 31 |
| Period of imprisonment by age 18 % further criminal conviction by age 22 | 80 |
| Period of imprisonment by age 18 % further period of imprisonment by age 22 | 70 |

Policy implications

How to develop a youth justice policy which is both holistic (intervention proportionate to need) and maximises diversion from criminal justice?

| Early years | Transition into teenage years | Transitions into early adulthood |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Universal targeting’ communities not individuals • Poverty • Relationships and parenting • Pre-school and early years education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach services • School inclusion • (Police) diversionary activities <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth justice intervention based on ‘desistence paradigm’ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support into further education, training or employment • Support for those leaving care system <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensive support for most vulnerable offenders known to youth justice (at point of entering adult criminal justice system) |



References:

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