

# Safe Uncertainty

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Essex County Council

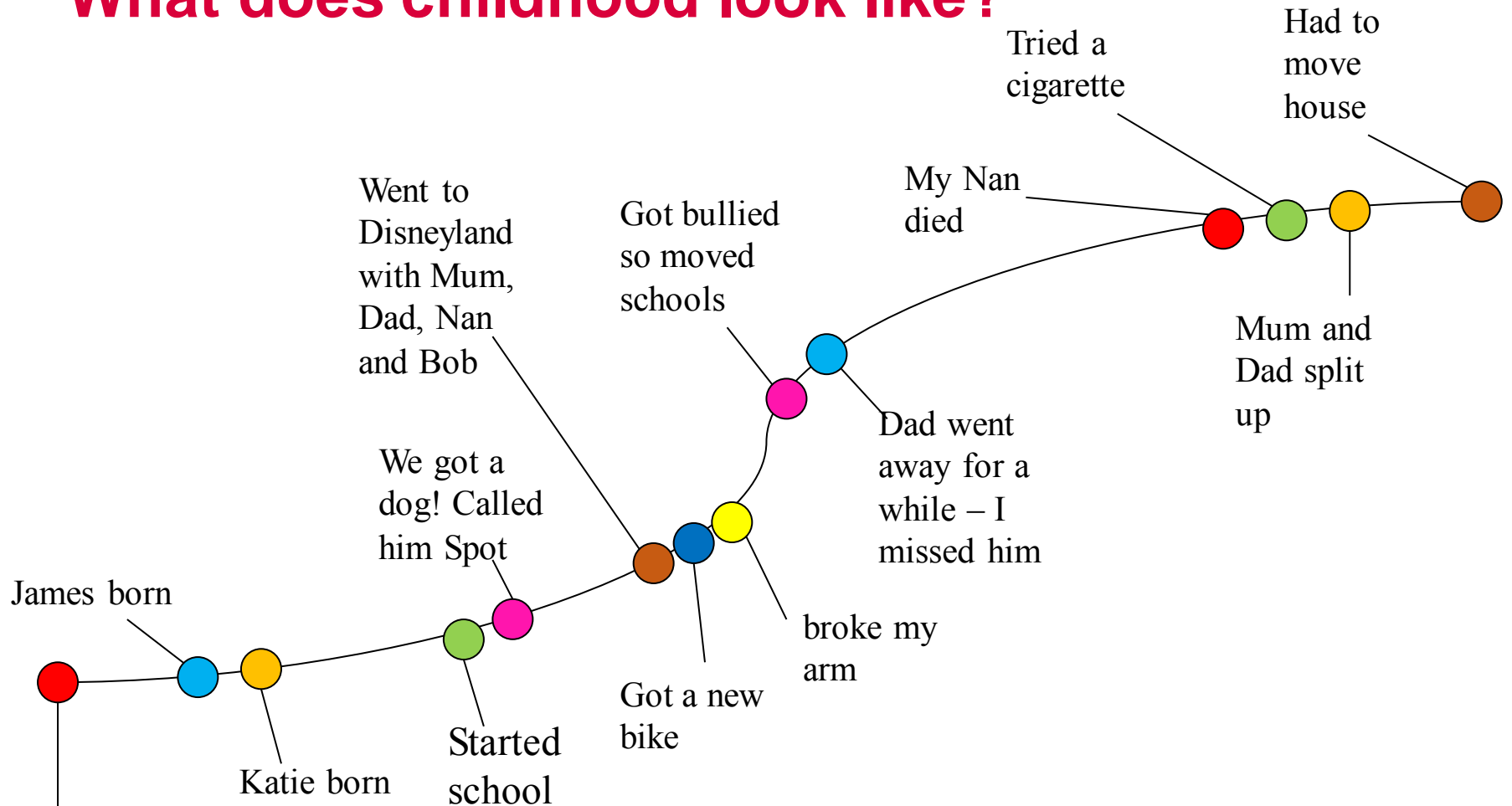
# Welcome and Introductions

**“The only certainty is that life is uncertain”**  
Susan Jeffers

# Workshop Aims

- Ups and Downs of Childhood and Parenting
- Safe Uncertainty
- Consensual support to families using Team Around the Family and Shared Family Assessments
- Tipping Points
- Family Operations Hub Consultation
- Outcomes

# What does childhood look like?



# Childhood Facts & Figures

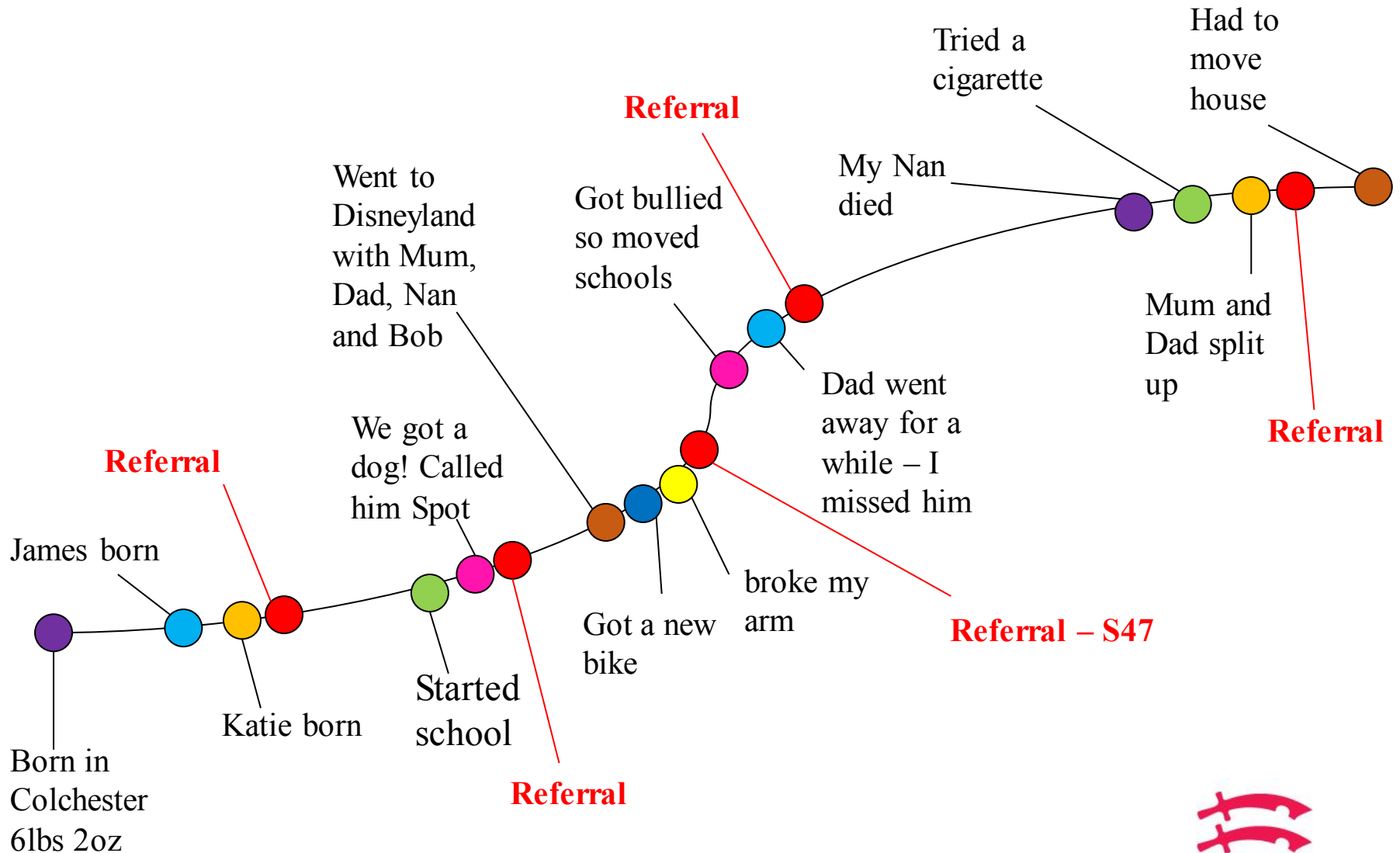
- 22% couples with children under 16 in significantly distressed relationships (Relate 2016)
- 1 in 5 children witness domestic abuse (NSPCC 2015)
- 5% children experience death of parent or sibling
- 78% death of relative or close friend
- 7% of children's fathers have served a prison sentence (PRT 2014)
- 80% children move house at least once in childhood (MRC 2012)
- 15.4% children in school have an identified special need (DfE 2015)
- 14.3% children take up free school meals (DfE 2015)
- 66% boys and 40% girls sustain a fractured bone (NSPCC)

**SERIOUS  
ABOUT  
SOCIAL WORK**

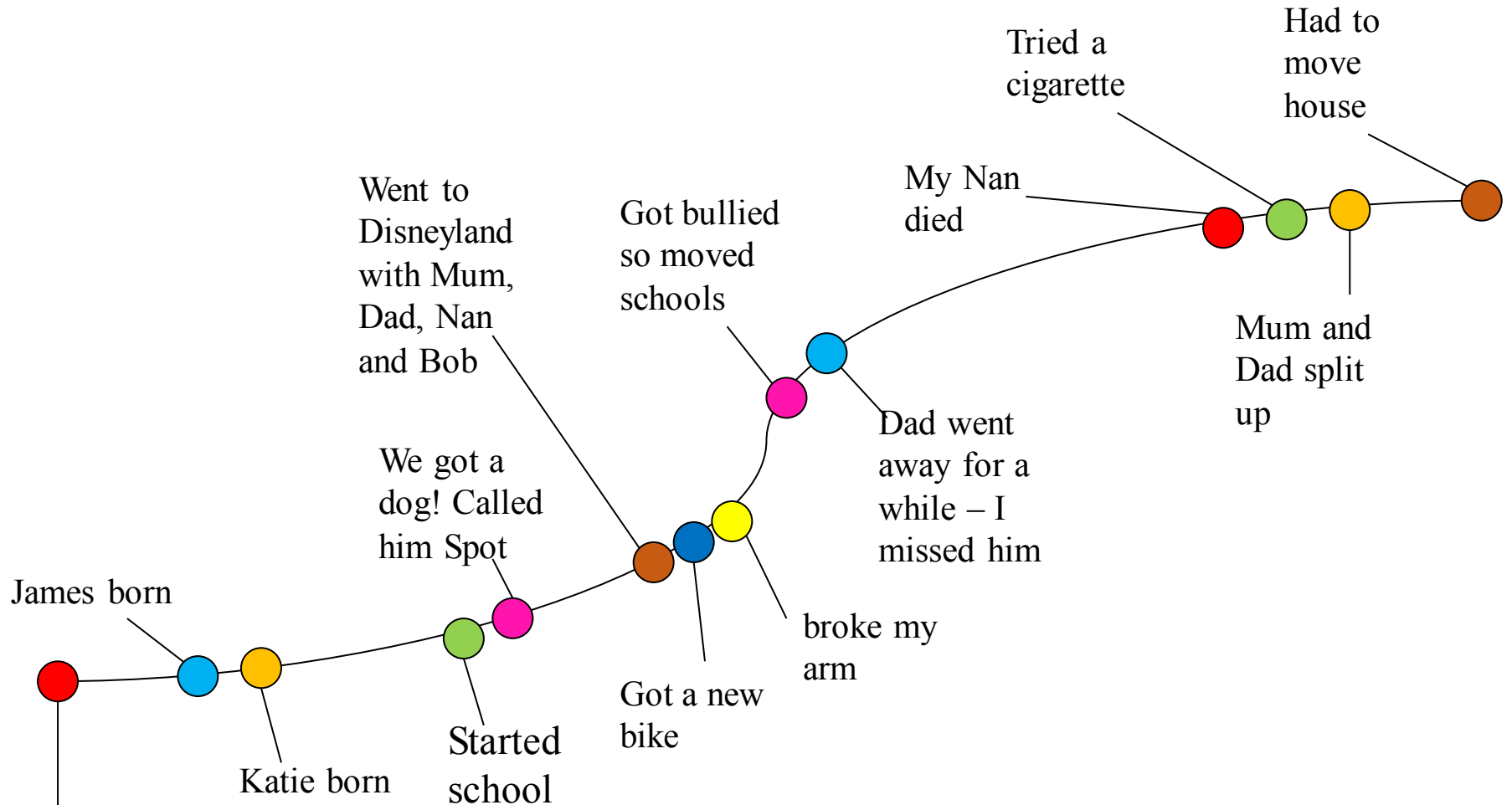


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# What could it look like for professionals?



# What could it look like for Mum and Dad?



# Rise in referrals to social services causing trauma to families

There is no way to separate out a simple request for services for a struggling family from an assessment of whether a child is at risk of abuse. “These now go hand in hand – and you’re then investigated and risk-assessed on all aspects of your family life.”

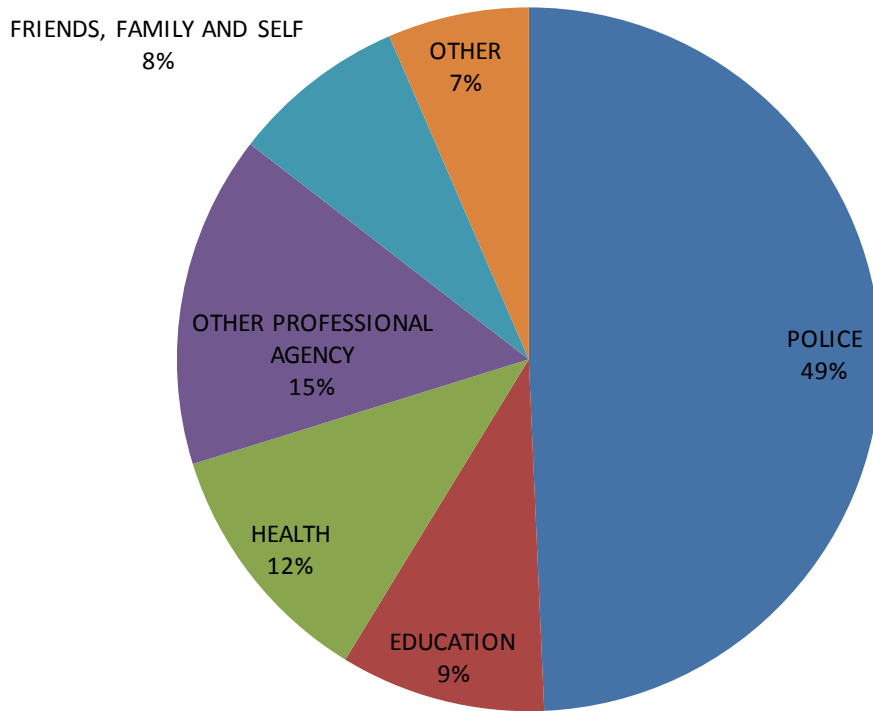
Dr Lauren Devine, Principal Investigator of the Economic and Social Research Council, 15<sup>th</sup> April 2016



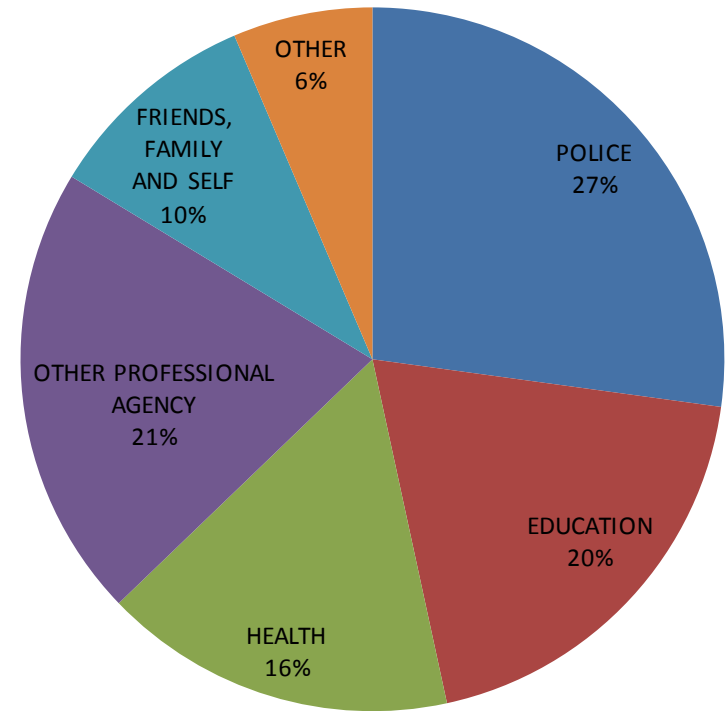


# What does this look like in Essex?

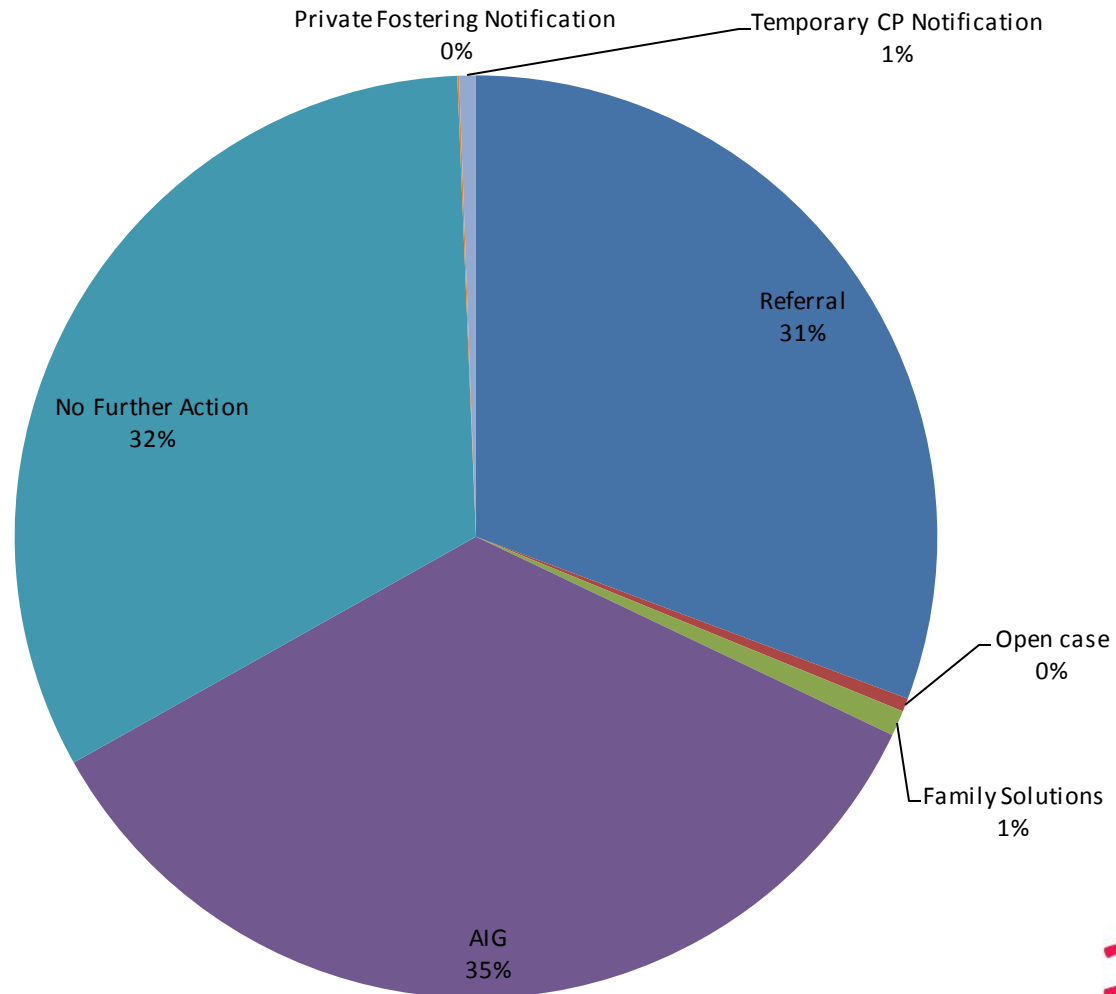
## 2015/2016 Contacts



## 2015/2016 Referrals



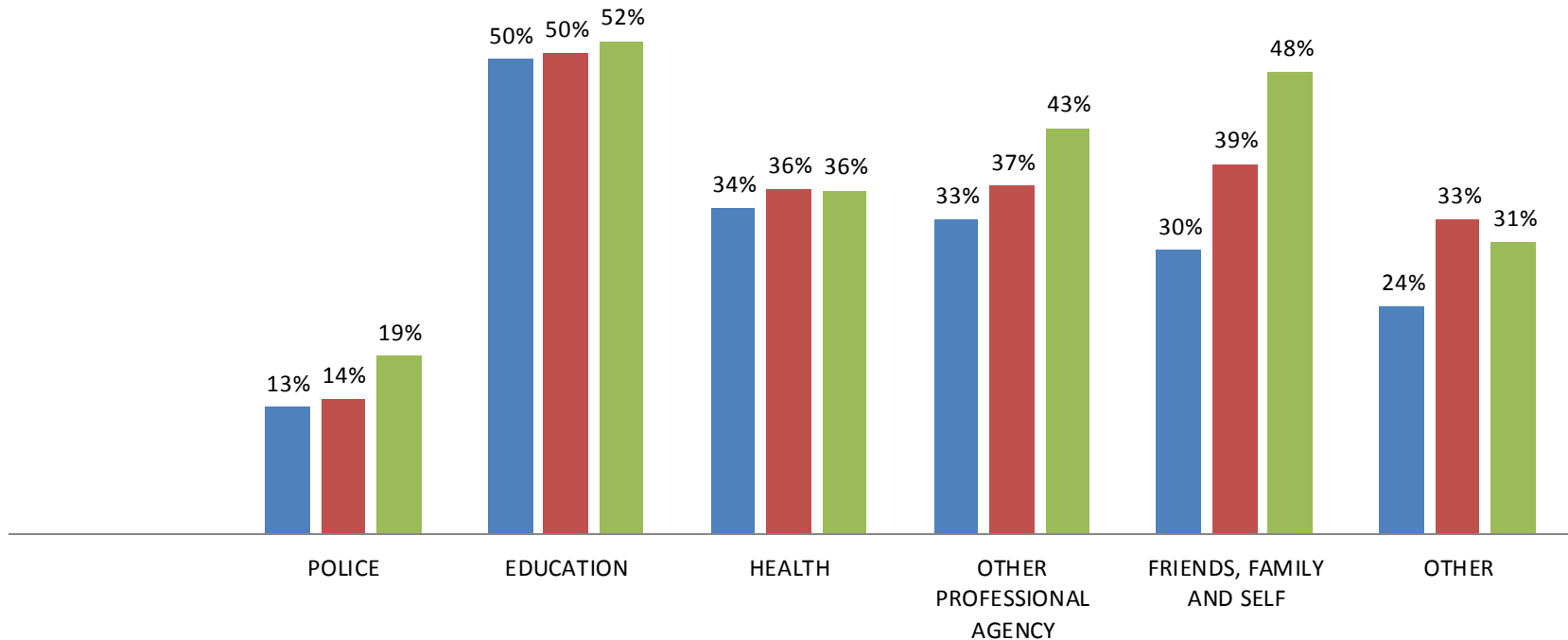
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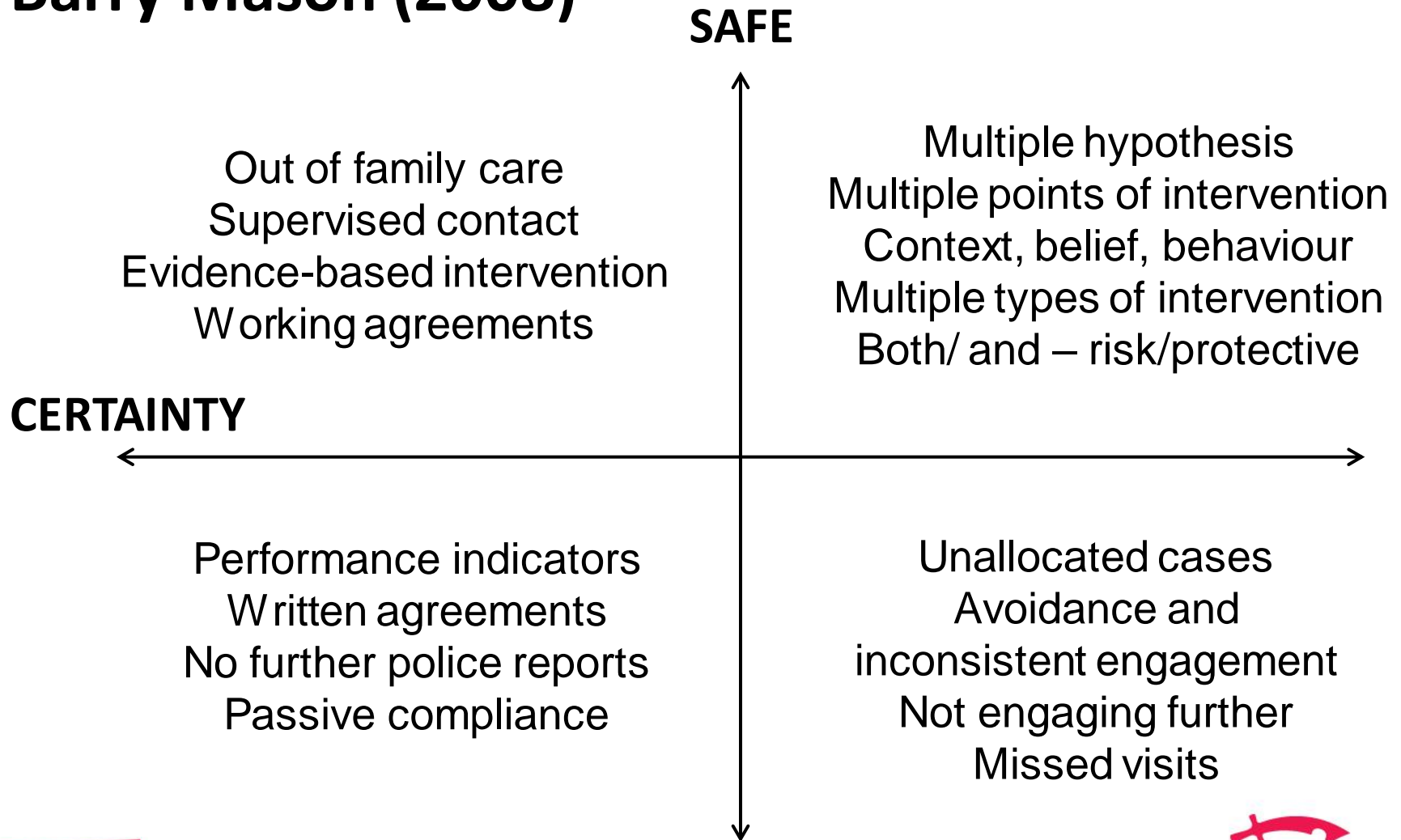
## Contact to Referral conversion

■ 2015/2016 ■ 2014/2015 ■ 2013/2014



# “Towards Positions of Safe Uncertainty”

Barry Mason (2008)



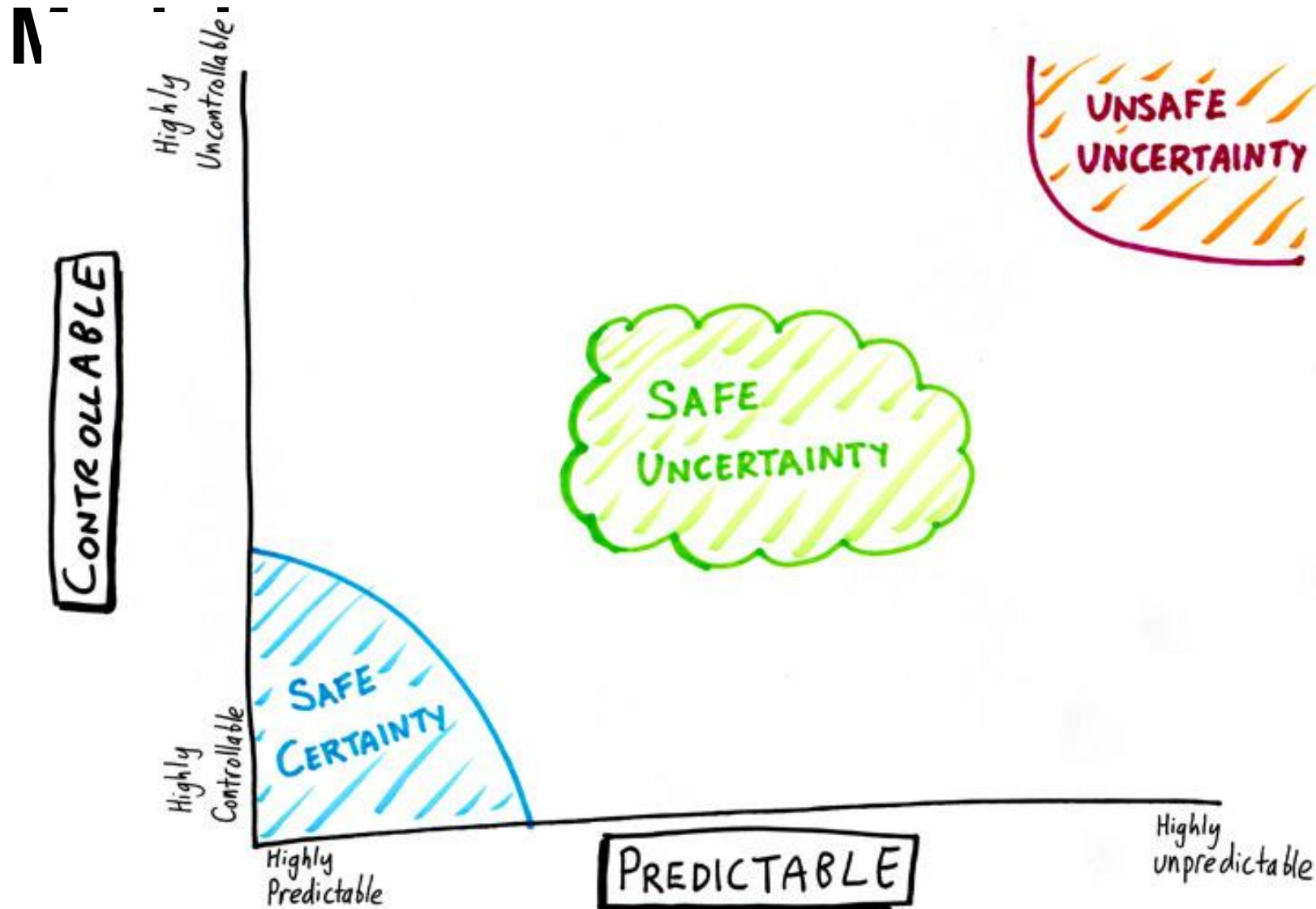
SERIOUS  
ABOUT  
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# Managing Risk - Safe Uncertainty



Adapted from the works of R.Mason, R.Stacey, P.Critchley + C.Vanstone  
13 Essex Coun

# Safe Certainty

- Seeking safe certainty when we ourselves feel unsafe within our organisational contexts
- Creating a tangible sense of security by the approach to family complexity (e.g. to over-focusing on the evidence-base of how we might meet with families)
- Limiting creativity and genuinely (emotionally) engaging with them
- Unsustainable change



# Unsafe uncertainty

- highest risk position for the child
- unresolved risk factors for the family
- Lack of professional understanding of the family functioning and patterns of behaviour
- leaves all involved in highly anxious positions.

# Safe Uncertainty

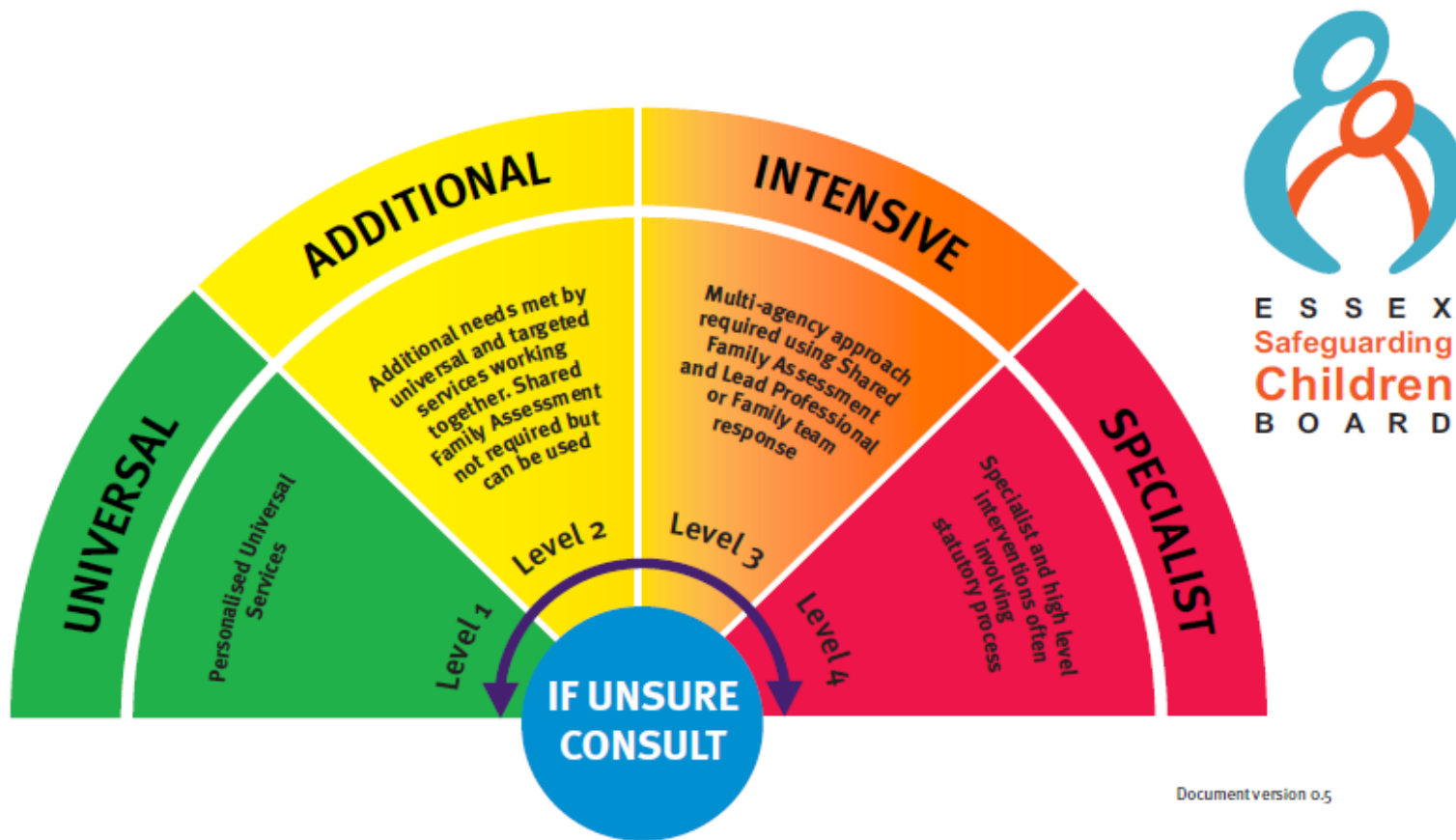
- optimal stance
- Family and professionals work together and agree changes
- Family functioning, needs and patterns of behaviour understood
- structure around intervention is present but not at the cost of stifling creativity,





# The Essex Effective Support Windscreen

Multi Agency Guidance: Working in partnership to help children and families improve their lives



All partners working with children, young people and their families will offer support as soon as we are aware of any additional needs. We will always seek to work together to provide support to children, young people and their families at the lowest level possible in accord with their needs

# Right child, Right time, Right service

- Early Help at Level 2 to resolve and de-escalate emerging issues
  - Multi-agency Team Around the Family and Shared Family Assessment (schools, health visitor/school nurse, 3<sup>rd</sup> sector agencies)
  - Family Information Service
  - Directory of services
- Family Solutions at Level 3
  - short period of intervention for lower level issues
  - up to 12 months intervention for families on the brink of requiring statutory social care intervention
  - step down for families exiting statutory social care
- Statutory Social Work at Level 4

“The state needs to intervene less in peoples lives and only intervene where it will make a difference”

“We don’t want to only be intervening when families are really in trouble.”

Dave Hill,  
ADCS President, Director Childrens Services at **Essex  
CC**



# Team Around the Family & Shared Family Assessment



# Harm & Significant Harm

“Society must be willing to tolerate very diverse standards of parenting, including the eccentric, the barely adequate and the inconsistent.... It is not the provenance of the state to spare children all the consequences of defective parenting.

The State does not and cannot take away the children of all the people who commit crimes, who abuse alcohol or drugs, who suffer physical or mental illness or disabilities”

Judge James Munby  
17 February 2015

