

Families at Risk Division Key Evidence

Families are important to their members, communities and society

- **The primary influence of family and parents is fundamental for children and young people**
- **Positive parenting is significantly linked to better or worse long-term outcomes (O'Connor, and Scott, 2007) :**
 - learning and educational attainment,
 - social skills, 'self-efficacy and self-worth'
 - behaviour problems (such as ASB and criminality)
 - Physical and mental health and risky behaviour
- **Warm, authoritative and responsive parenting is a source of resilience (Sutton et al, 2004)**

But families can also be a source of risk...

- **All families face problems from time to time**
- **Most overcome them successfully, drawing on their own resources, the wider family/friends, local community and mainstream services**
- **But some families lack the resilience, insight and capability to overcome problems or the capacity to find and use support they need**
- **Children from families with multiple problems are 10 times more likely to be in trouble with the police and eight times more likely to be suspended from school (Social Exclusion Taskforce 2007)**
- **Their parents will often have repeated involvement with children's social care about safeguarding concerns, local Police or housing officers because of nuisance or criminal behaviour or domestic violence as well as local health services**
- **In most cases adult family members will be unemployed and have little experience of life outside the benefits system**

Some parental characteristics and family circumstances are strong predictors of future problems

Substance misuse

- Parental problem drug use associated with neglect, poverty, physical or emotional abuse, separation and exposure to criminal behaviour
- 2-3% of children have a parent misusing Class A drugs
- Alcohol misuse identified as a factor in 50% of all child protection cases
- 1.3m children live with parents who misuse alcohol

Mental Health

- The children with mental health issues are twice as likely to experience a childhood psychiatric disorder

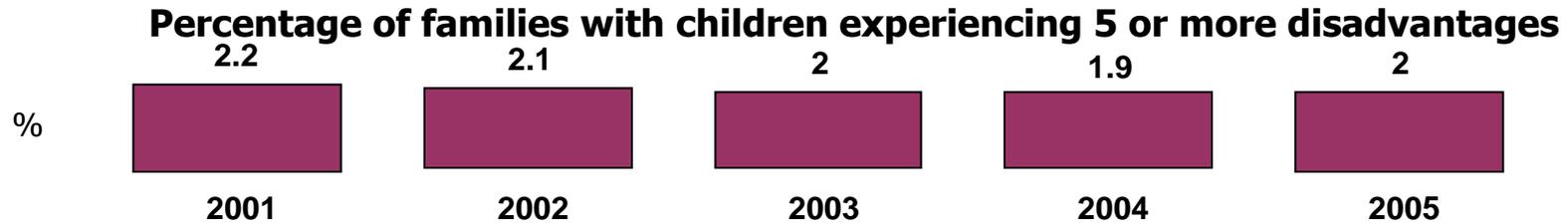
Domestic violence

- 25% children witnessing domestic violence have serious social and behavioural problems
- Estimates suggest at least 240,000 children exposed to DV

Parental offending

- 63% of boys with convicted fathers go on to be convicted themselves
- children of prisoners have 3 times the risk for mental health problems or delinquent behaviour compared to their peers
- During 2005 162,000 children had a parent in prison, Around 55% of female offenders have a child under 16

... and a small minority of families face multiple disadvantages (analysis of FACs by SETF)



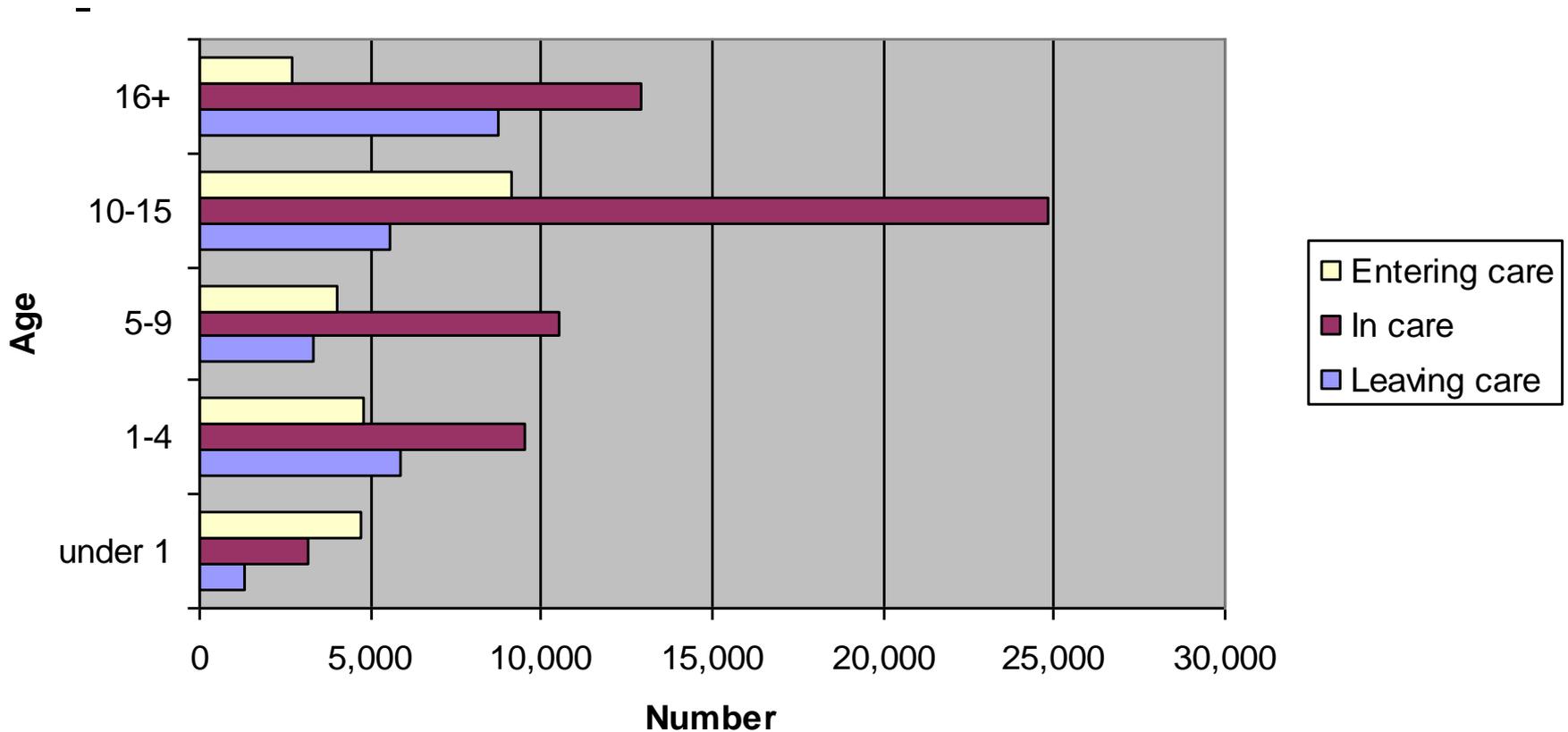
Basket of indicators of disadvantages includes:

- No parent in the family is in **work**
- Family lives in poor quality or overcrowded **housing**
- No parent has any **qualifications**
- Mother has **mental health** problems
- At least one parent has a **long-standing limiting illness, disability or infirmity**
- Family has **low income** (below 60% median)
- Family **cannot afford** a number of food and clothing items

Poverty, unemployment, parenting alone, having a large family, poor or overcrowded housing, having a difficult child, parental illness and substance misuse, can have a negative impact on parenting - the factors are linked and mutually reinforcing (Ghate & Hazel, 2002)

**And children can end up in
care**

10-15 year olds are the largest group of children in care (41% of all those in care at 31 March), entering care (36%) but only 23% of those leaving care (2008 - 09)



The case for family and parent focused solutions

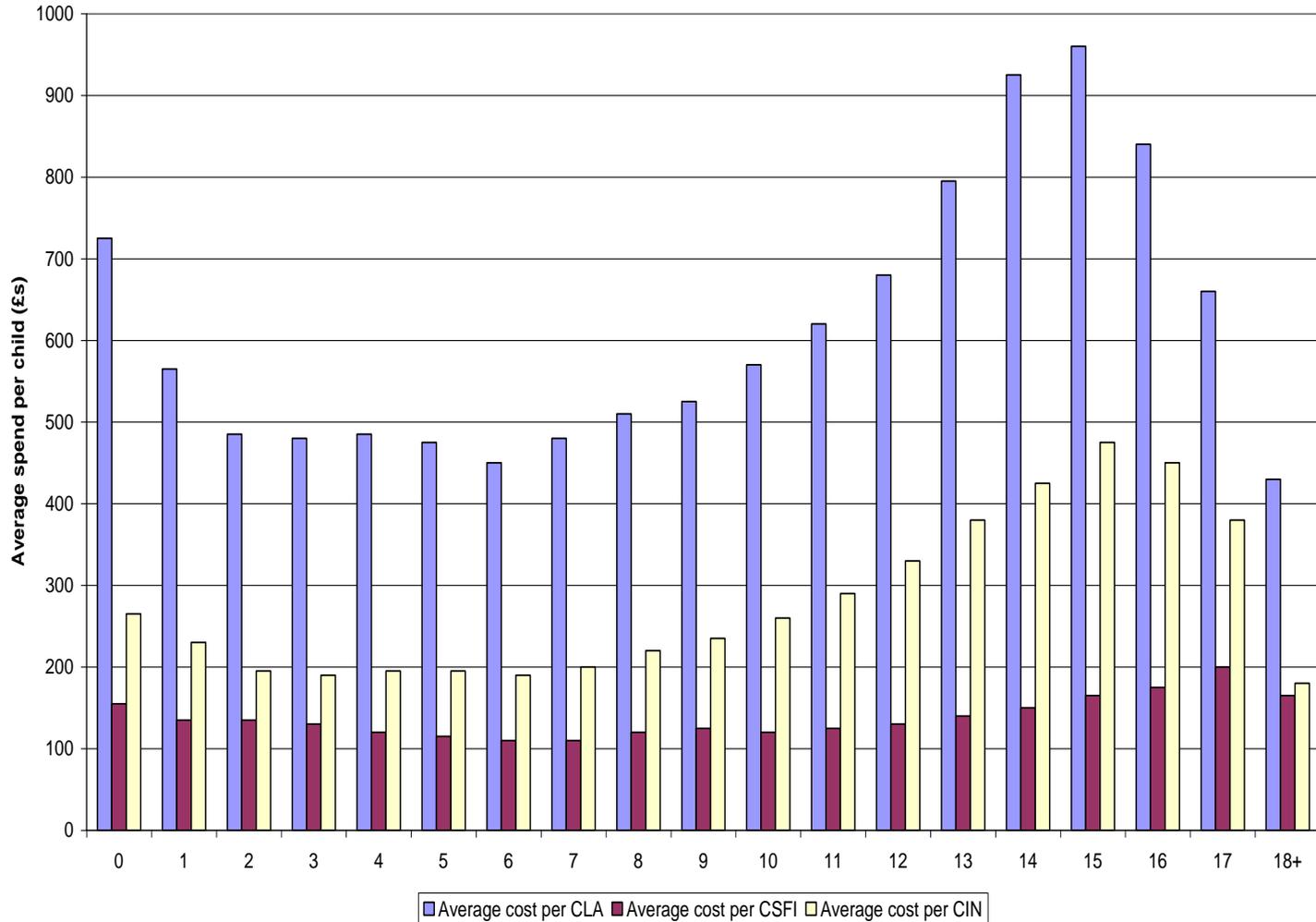
The case for intensive family and parent focused solutions

'People facing social exclusion usually have multiple issues to deal with in their lives. Also, service providers were strongly of the view that integrated services, or 'package' interventions were vital. They allowed the various difficulties facing people, to be properly identified and then addressed'

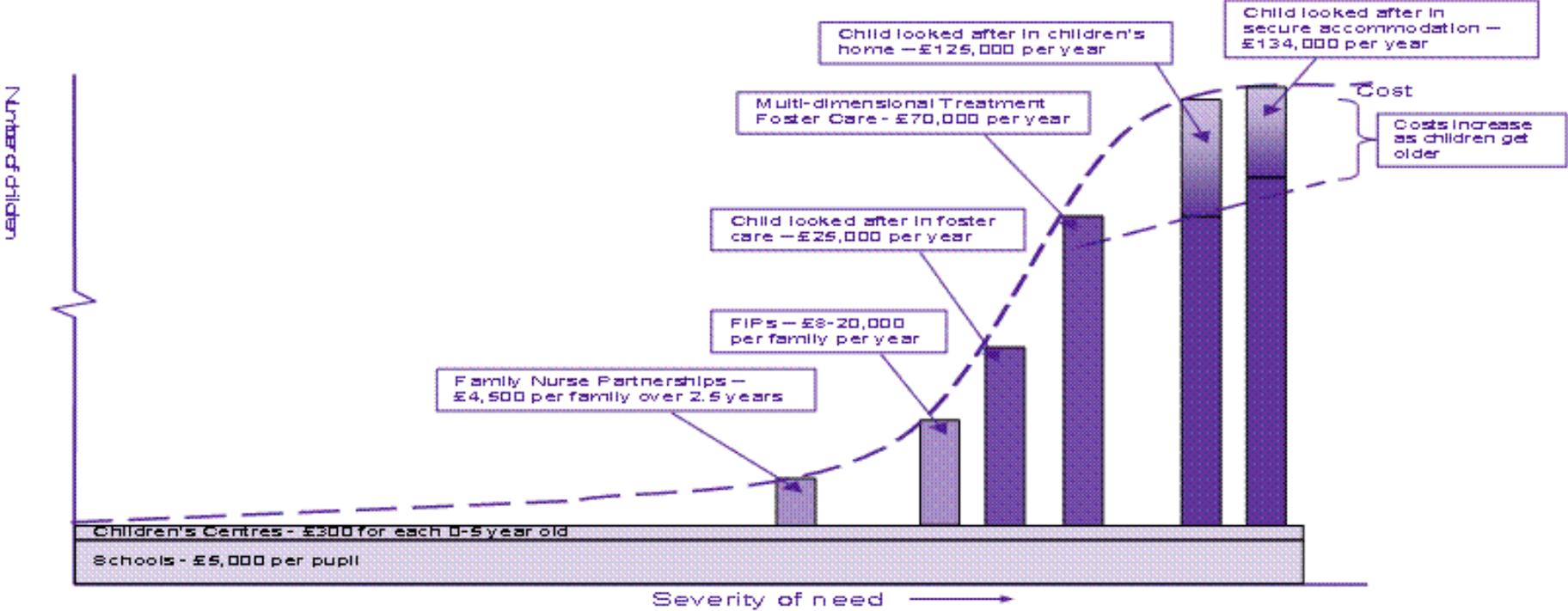
(Making a difference to disadvantaged families? Qualitative case studies. 2004)

- Children from families with multiple problems often have very poor life chances
- Families with multiple problems make significant financial demands on a wide range of local services.
 - It is estimated that a family with severe problems could be £250,000 - £350,000 in a single year (Sheffield Halam University 2006)
- Duplication and lack of co-ordination between services supporting the same family wastes money and can reduce their effectiveness.
- And contact with many different services is confusing for families with multiple problems. *'if you have different people [...] you have to go through everything you've gone through with the first one. Whereas if you've got the same one at least they get to know your family, get to know you as a person as well, and they know what help you've had, what help you haven't had, and they can just basically keep guiding you in the right direction.'* (Parent – FIPs evaluation report)

Costs of putting children into care are much higher than supporting them in their family homes



Of the options available residential care is the most expensive, although will be the only option for some children, particularly those with the greatest needs.



Family focused interventions and parenting programmes can reduce risk factors in families

- They can have lasting effects in improving behaviour even in cases where parents are initially reluctant to accept help
- They impact on a range of outcomes for children and young people, including educational attainment and prevention of anti-social behaviour, offending and risky behaviours
- Parenting interventions tend to work best when both parents are included in the intervention (or separate partner-support is provided).
- They can reduce the burden of cost these families place on local services and wider society

(Farrington and Welsh, 2003, 2007 and NICE 2006)

The way forward

- Services dedicated to improving the life chances for families at risk have grown rapidly over the last few years (encouraged by Government grants)
 - and there are strong examples of local practice
- Much of this work has been pioneered by voluntary sector organisations and generated much interest within the statutory sector too
- Government remains an enthusiast for encouraging the spread of good practice but is now seeking a new kind of relationship with local and national partners as facilitator and enabler - committed to removing barriers rather than enforcing them
- Government and local authorities have a shared goal - to achieve better outcomes for families and children at risk for less money