

// Foundations

What Works Centre for Children & Families

Evidence for prevention in children's services



What we will cover



Why we need What Works (and other types of) evidence

What are we learning from the research evidence which can support Council work?

What does good evidence use look like in practice?

Small group discussion: How can local authorities make greater use of evidence to drive better outcomes for children and young people?

FOUNDATIONS



**Foundations
is the national
What Works
Centre for
Children &
Families**



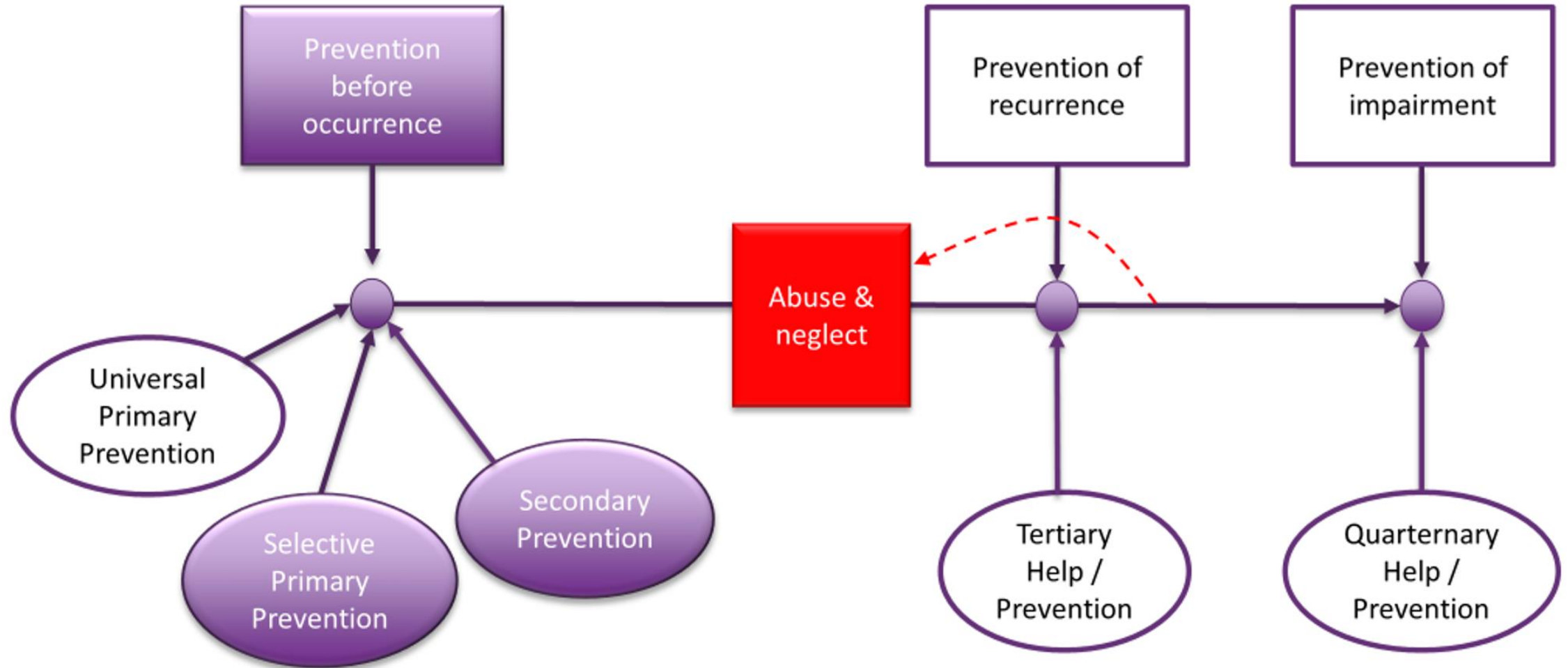
OUR VISION

Vulnerable children have the foundational relationships they need to thrive in life.

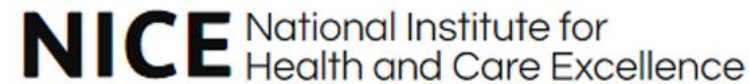
OUR MISSION

Generating and championing actionable evidence that improves services to support family relationships.

PREVENTION



What Works Centres – a culture of evidence



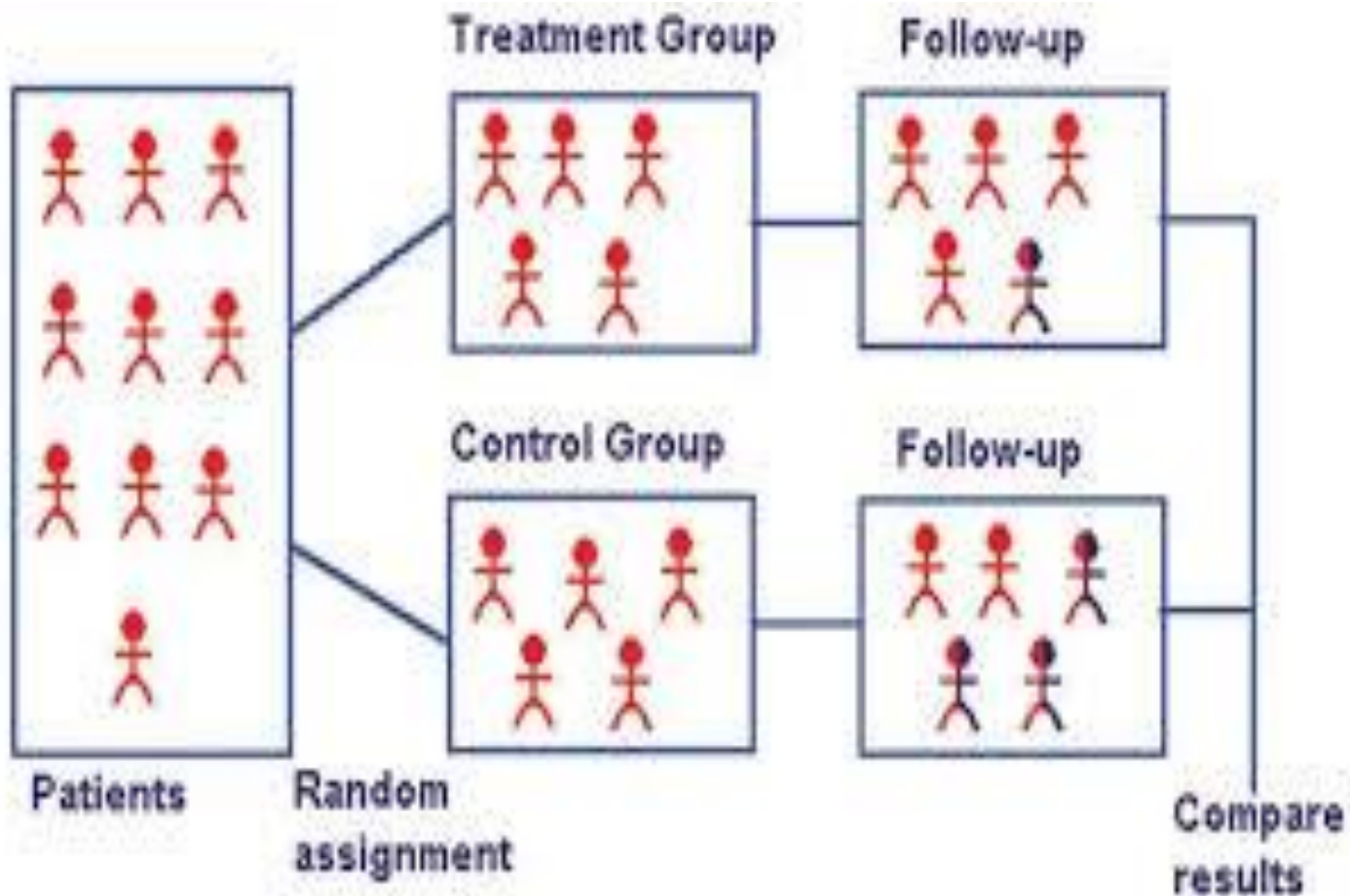
Why we need What Works evidence (1)



- Not all support for children & families is effective or has yet developed evidence of effectiveness.
- Rigorous evaluation and testing of different types of support for families tells us which types have been effective at improving child outcomes.



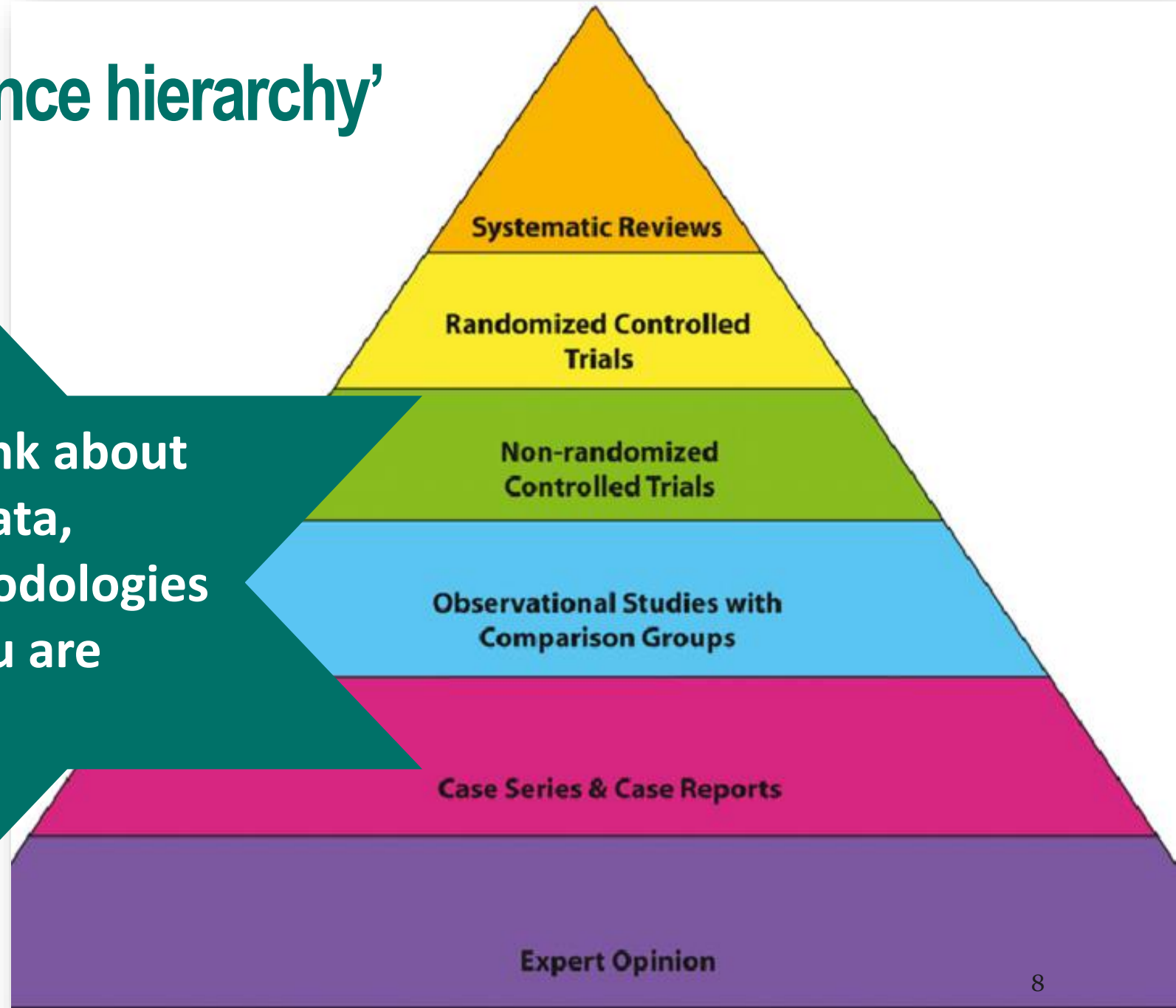
Why we need what works evidence (2)



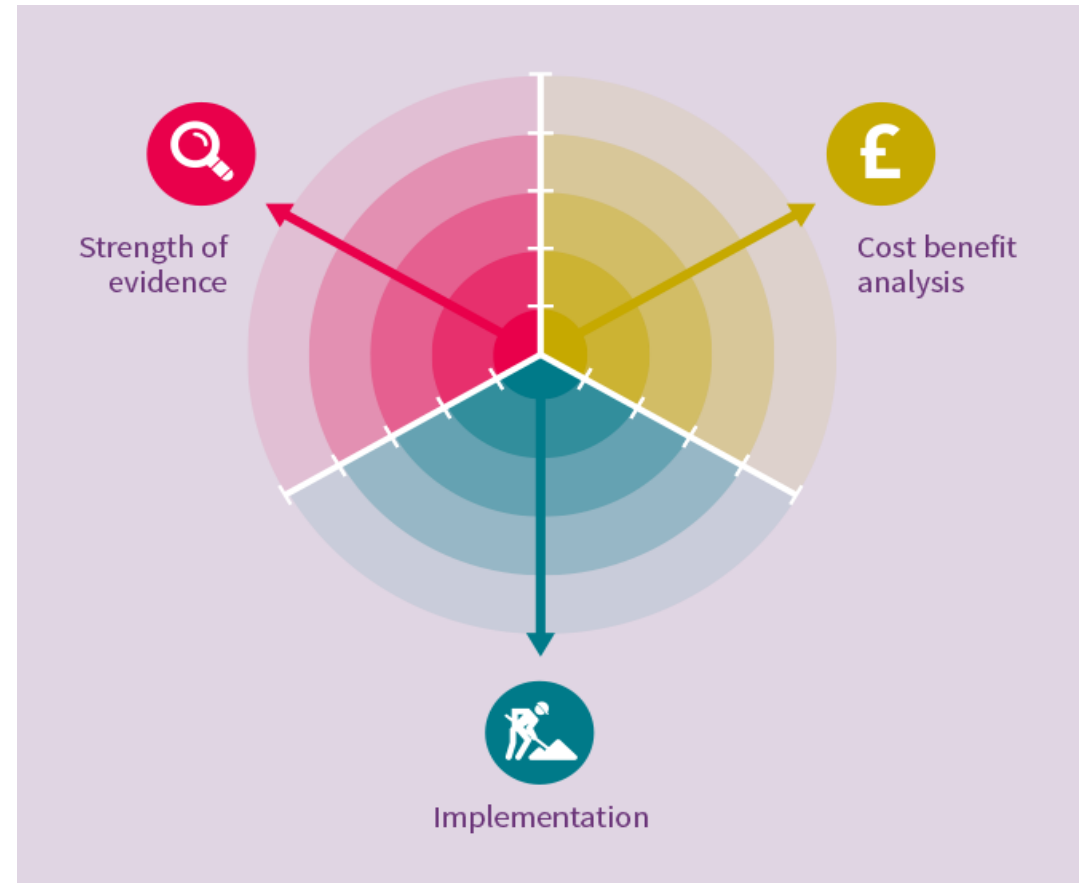
“On balance, families and children who receive interventions shown through rigorous testing to have improved outcomes are more likely to benefit, and to a greater degree, than those who receive other services.”

The fallacy of the 'evidence hierarchy'

More helpful to think about the right types of data, evidence and methodologies for the question you are trying to answer



When deciding *what to deliver*, what works evidence is one part of the jigsaw



REALISING THE BENEFITS



Despite the **availability of research evidence** there remains a **stubborn gap** between what we know is **effective from research**, and the application of that knowledge, in sustained ways, to inform **local service design and practice**.

// Foundations

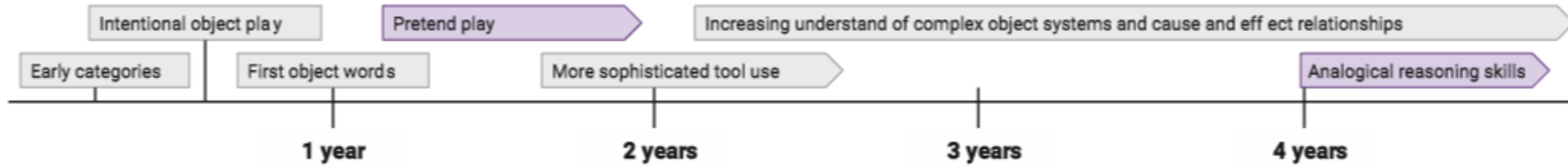
What Works Centre for Children & Families

**What are we learning
from the research
evidence which
can support Council
work?**

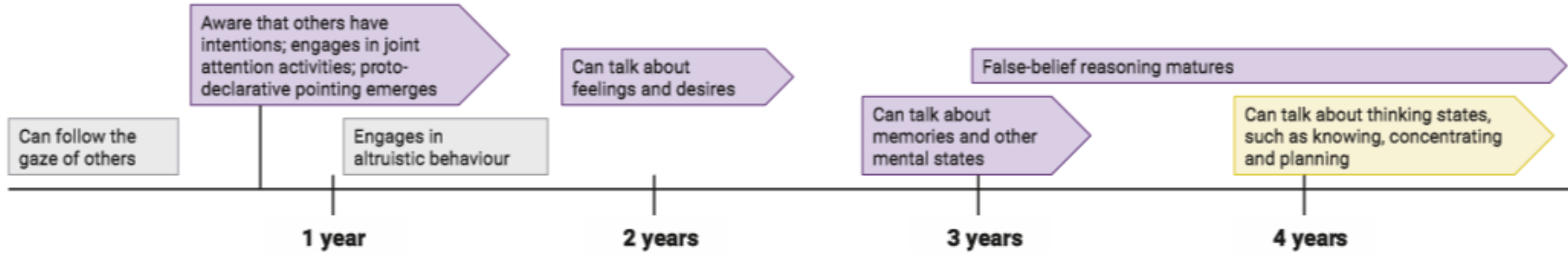




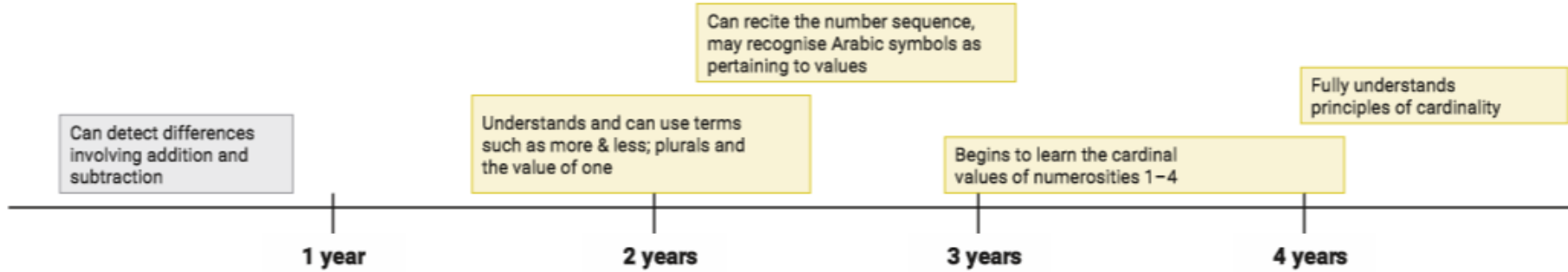
Object Knowledge



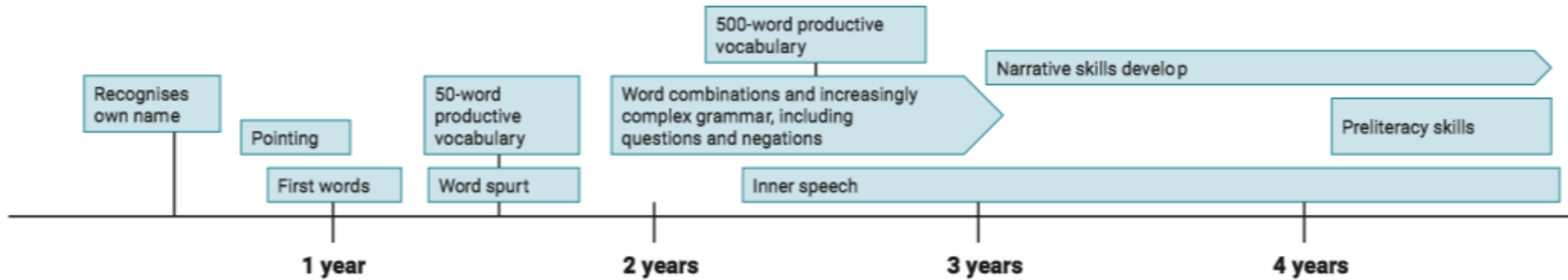
Theory of Mind



Theory of Number

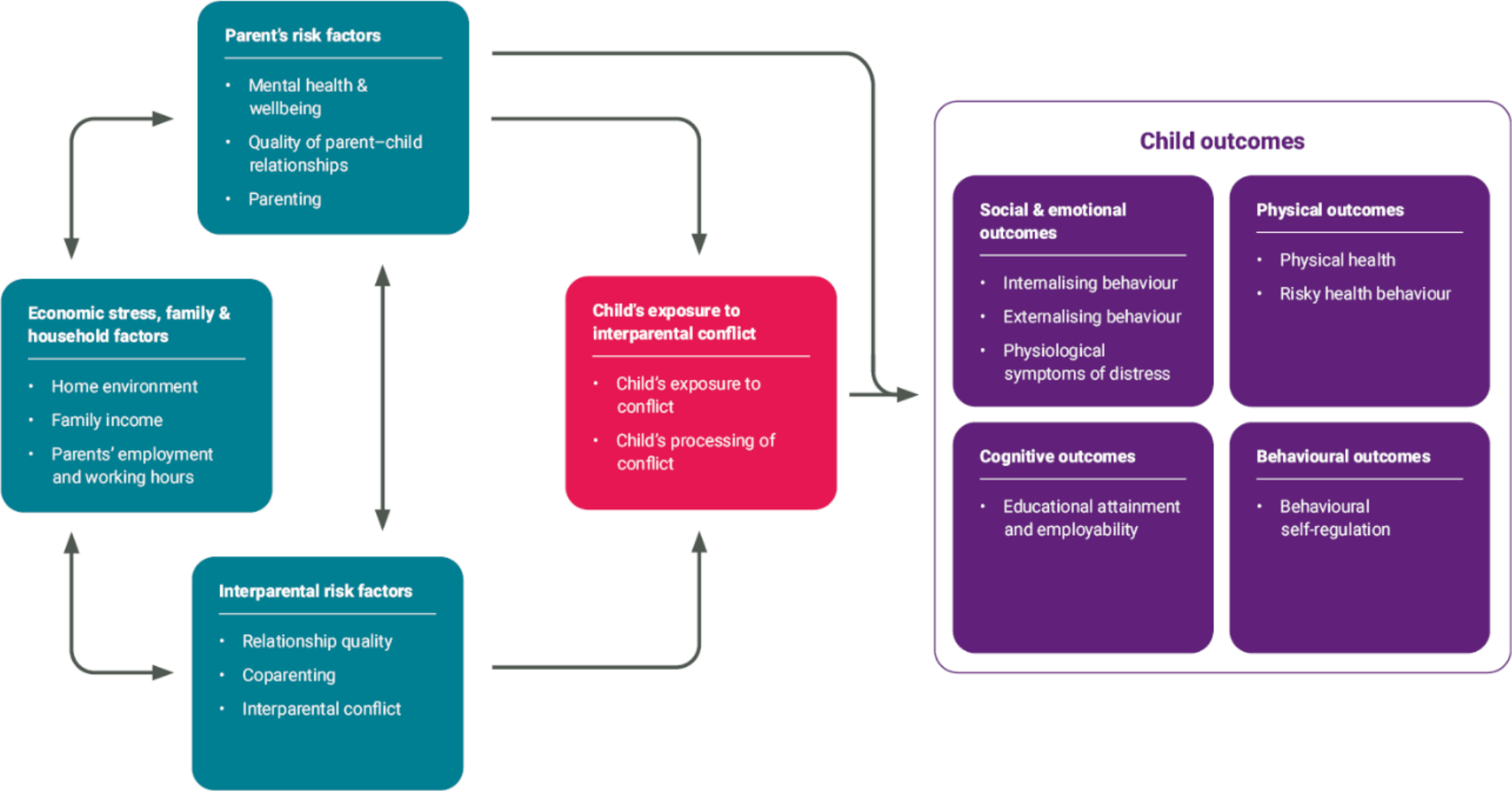


Language & Communication

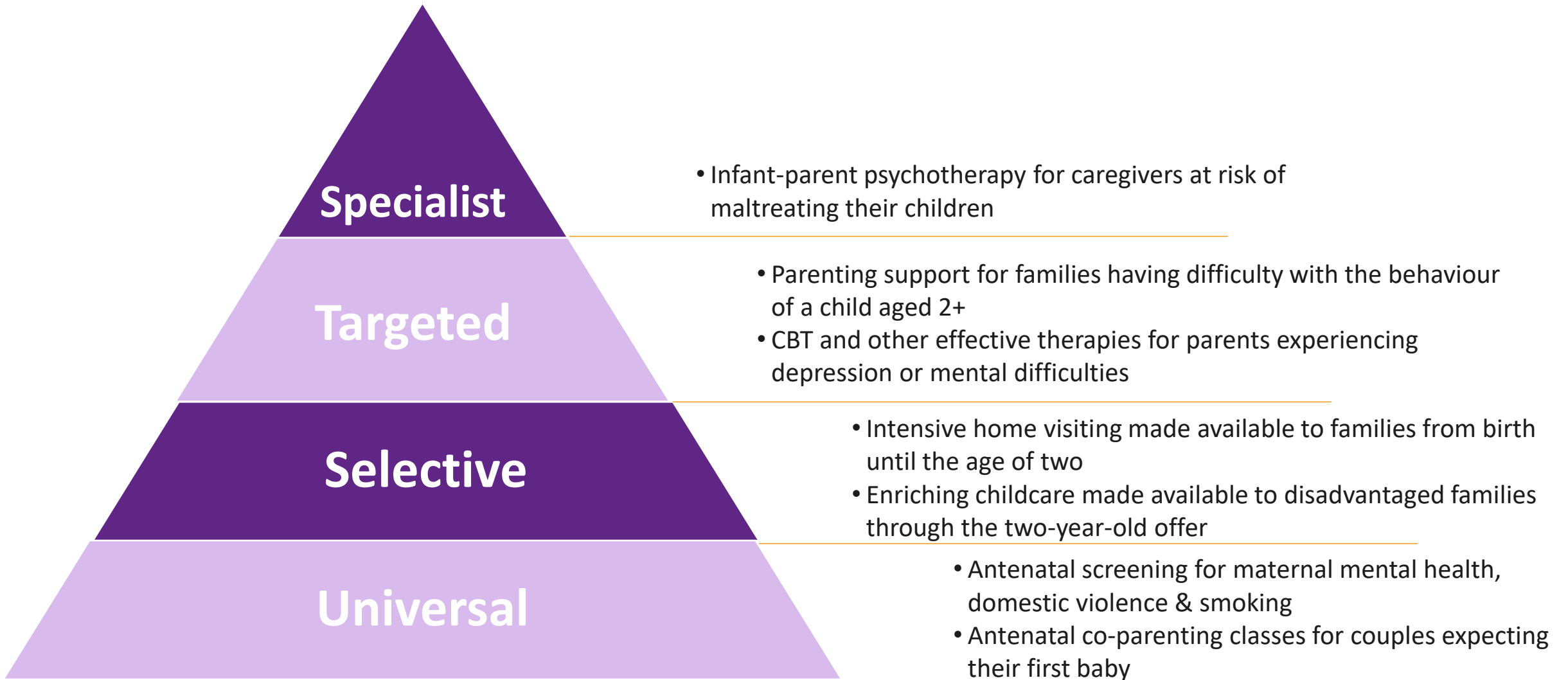


Reducing parental conflict

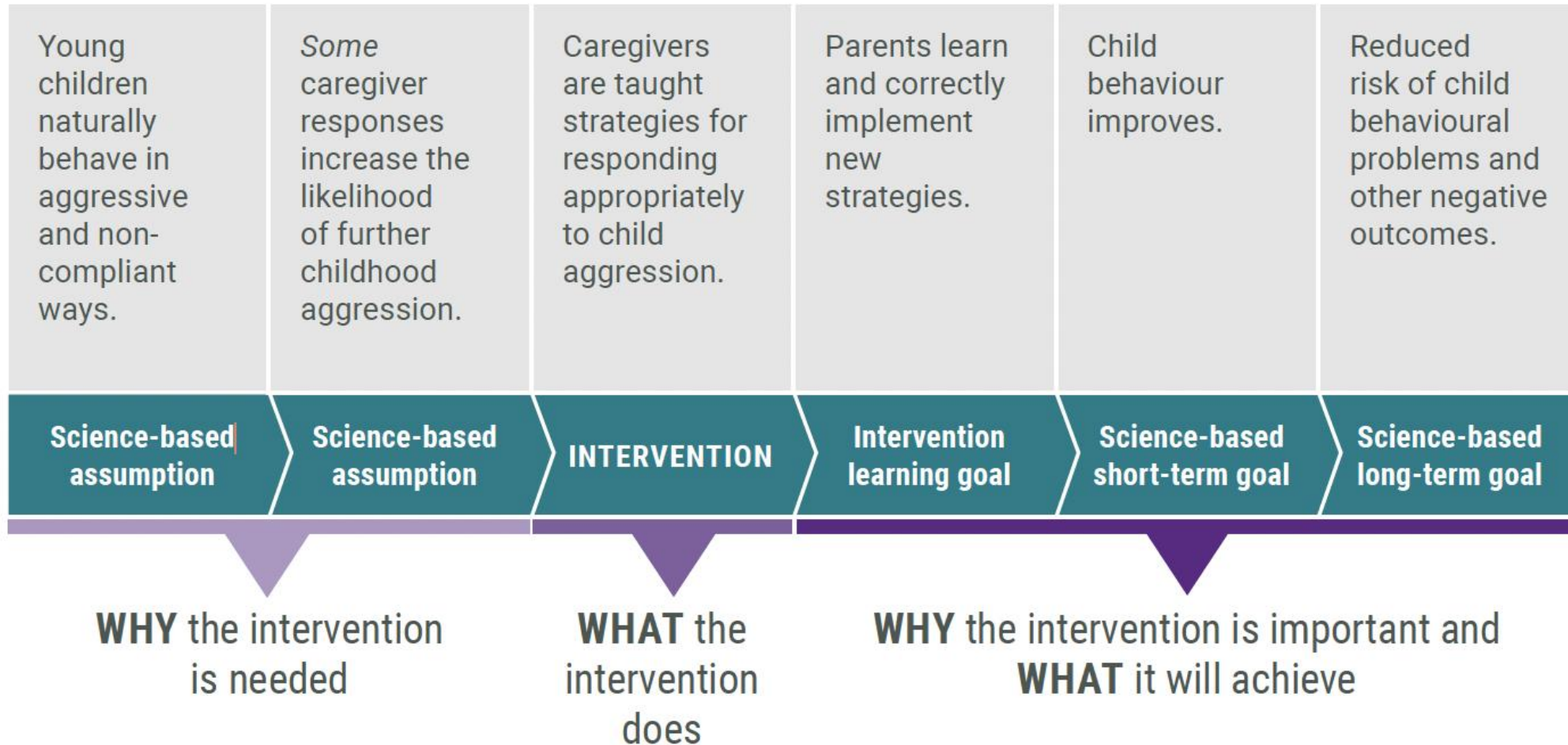
Outcomes framework



Range of types of support shown to prevent future problems.



PARENTING SUPPORT: A THEORY OF CHANGE



Changemakers



EMPOWERING
PARENTS
EMPOWERING
COMMUNITIES





Family group conferences are an evidence-based way of safely keeping children out of public care

Important new evidence from a UK trial, commissioned by Foundations, found that children referred for a Family Group Conference at the pre-proceedings stage in England were less likely to go into care than children whose families were not referred.

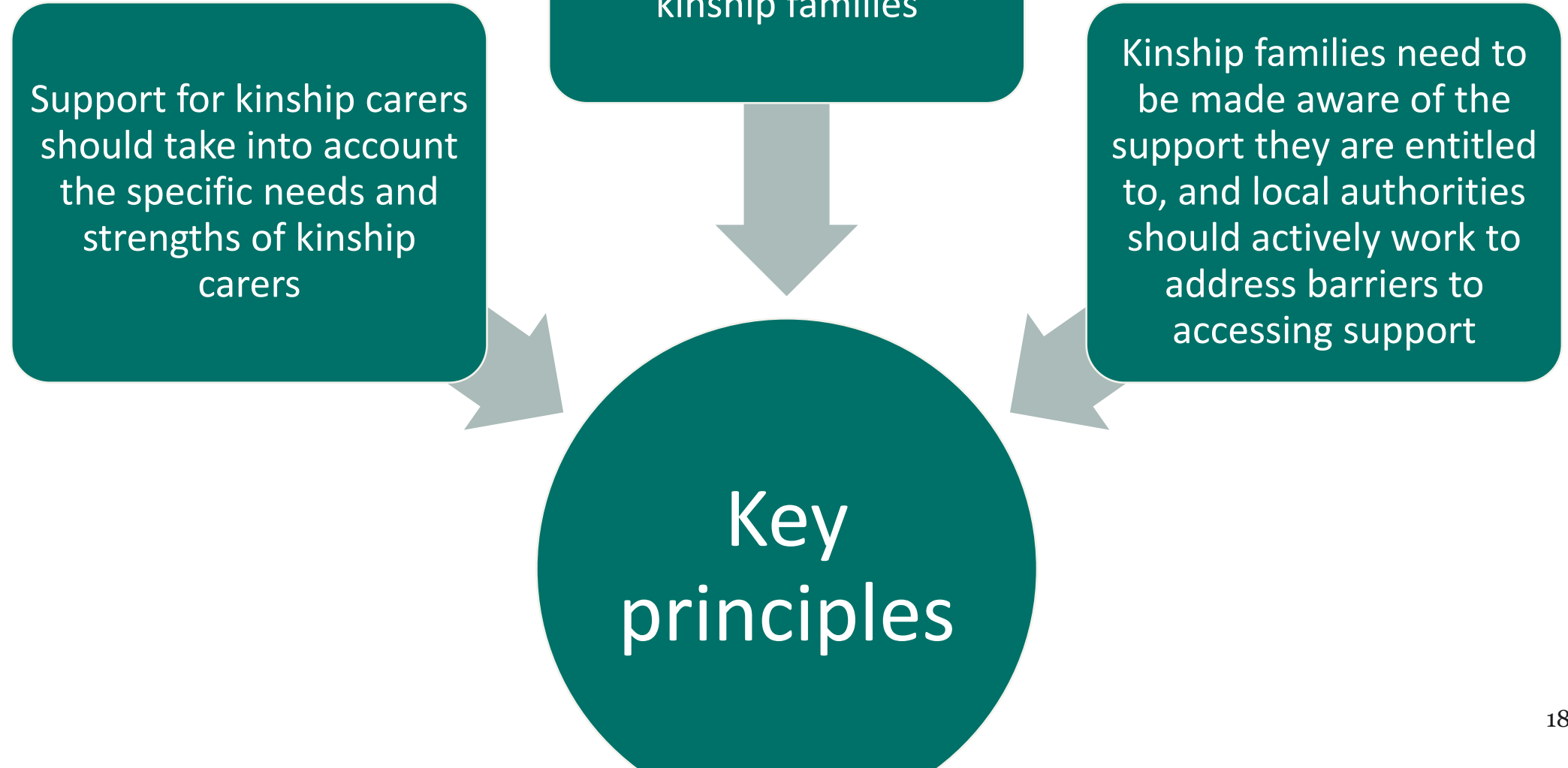
The estimated economic savings for Local Authorities are substantial.

If family group conferences were offered to every family at the pre-proceedings stage, this could mean over 2000 fewer children going into care per year with a saving of over £150 million.

Not all children at risk of going into care are offered a Family Group Conference.

There are variations in how family group conferences are delivered in the UK which affects the reach, quality and equity of the service received by families.

SPOTLIGHT: Kinship care



**Too many areas where we know far too little what works
best to support children and families**



Spotlight: Children affected by domestic abuse



- Domestic abuse has a major impact on children, is highly prevalent, and the most common reason for referrals into children's social care.
- Support for children is variable and limited - a patchwork of small scale interventions being delivered within multi-agency systems & a '*something is better than nothing*' approach to referral
- The evidence base in relation to what works best to support for children is weak.
- Services are under enormous pressure due to funding constraints and lack the means to evaluate what they do

The need for action

Whilst evaluation in this sector is difficult, it is possible



THE REACH PLAN

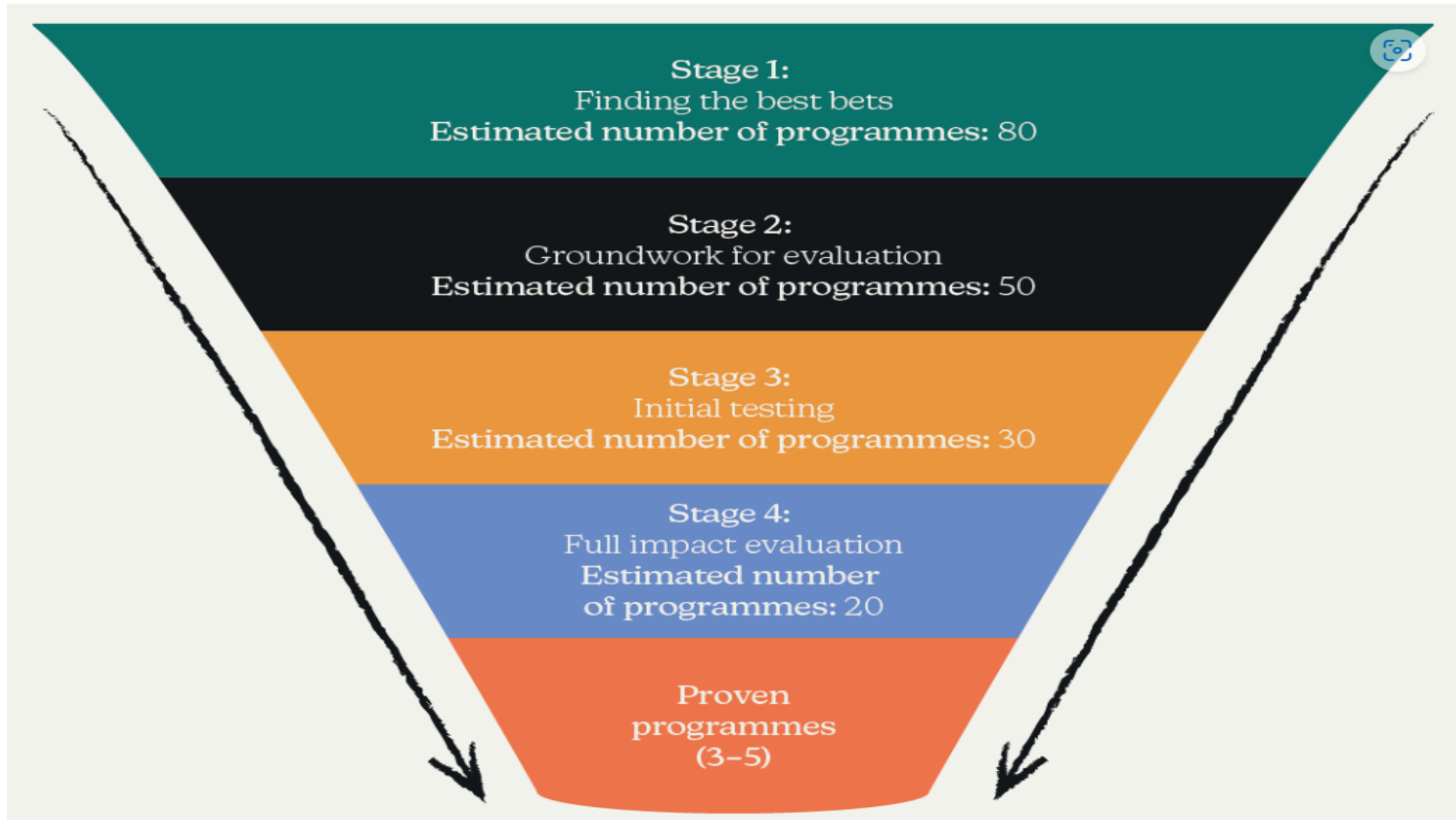
A five-year plan to find out what works to prevent domestic abuse & support child victims



Find out more
foundations.org.uk/the-reach-plan

#REACHplan

The Plan



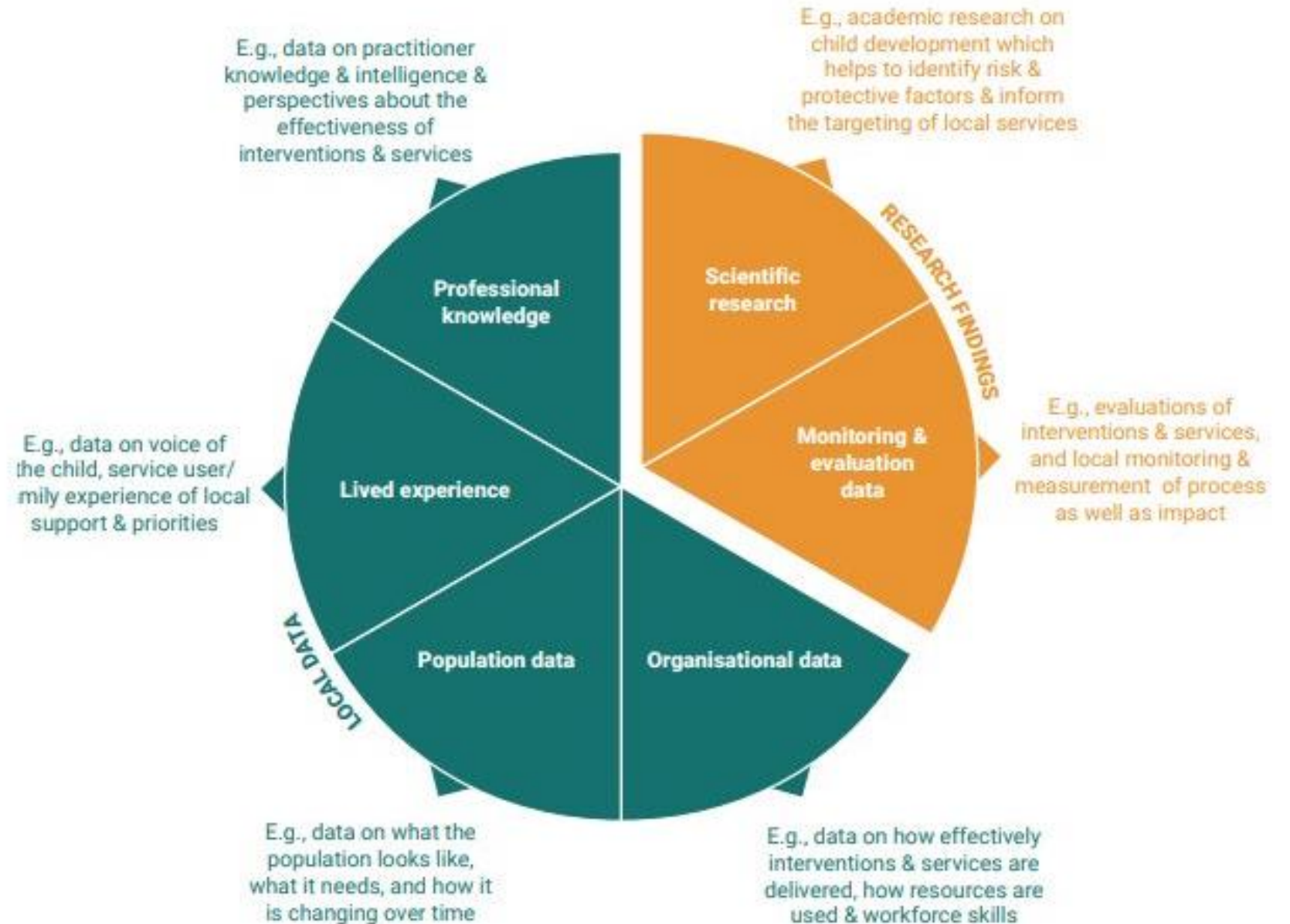
// Foundations

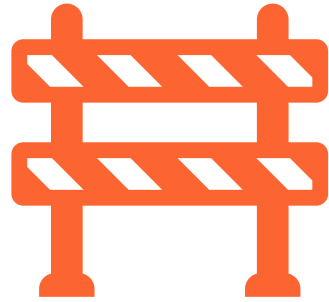
What Works Centre for Children & Families

**What does good
evidence use look
like in practice?**



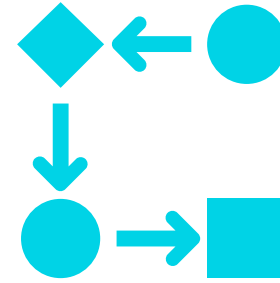
Different kinds of evidence for different purposes





Barriers

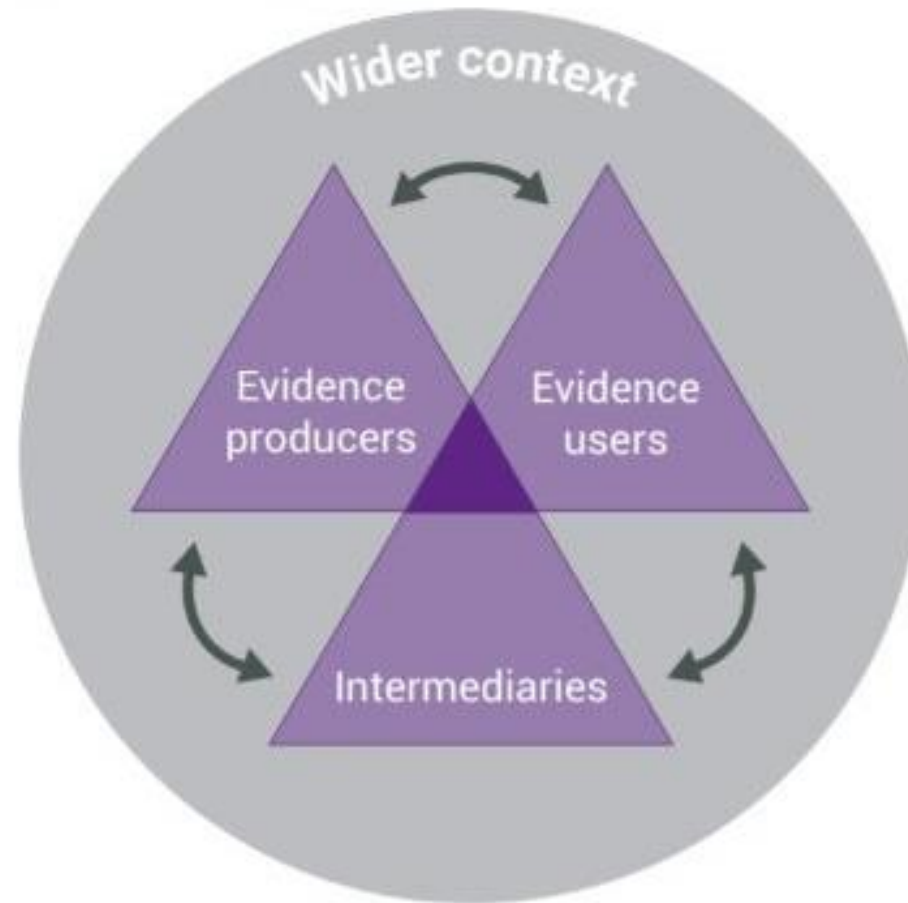
- Insufficient or insecure funding
- Lack of time and staff capacity
- Evidence-based practice not embedded in culture and leadership of their team/organisation
- Implementation challenges in their local area (e.g. recruitment and retention)



Enablers

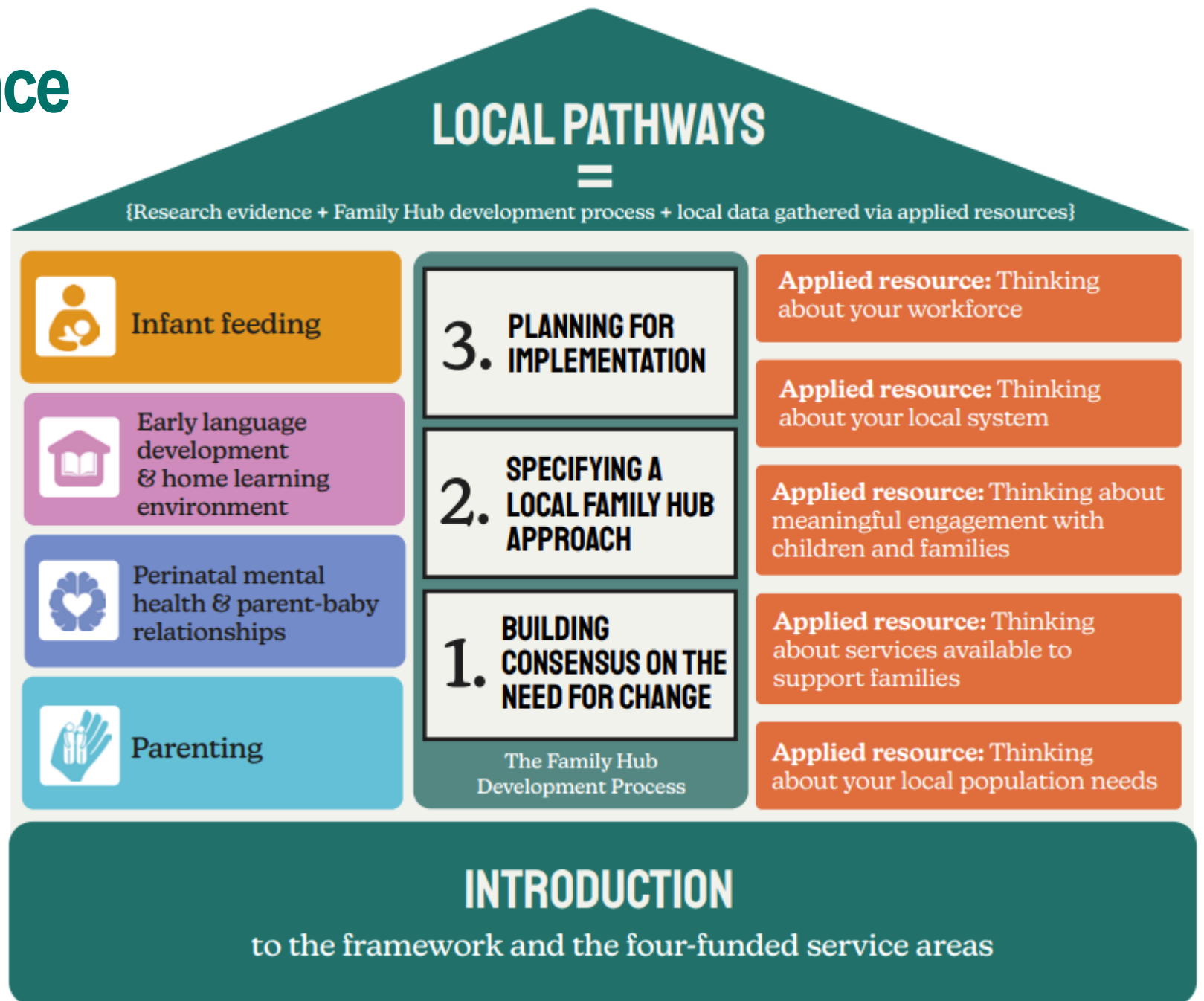
- Resources to identify and review research evidence and to implement the recommendations
- Research champions to raise awareness and guide people to the best and most current research guides and toolkits
- Leadership that promotes evidence-based culture and practice

Understanding the 'evidence ecosystem'



Conceptual framework for evidence use within the early intervention system, adapted from Campbell and Levin (2012).

Embedding evidence in local system planning



LOCAL EVIDENCE LEADERSHIP



- 1 **Champion for evidence use in the local system**, drawing on research methods and implementation science, as well as local evidence on community needs, user experience, workforce capability and practitioner knowledge
- 2 **Communicating a compelling narrative** about community strengths and needs and how an evidence-based support system can help children and young people to thrive
- 3 **Leading stakeholder engagement in evidence generation and use**, applying relational approaches to build partnerships which respond to local priorities
- 4 **Strategic lead for high quality intervention implementation**, creating the infrastructure, tools and processes required to deliver and monitor the implementation of EBIs and to understand impact
- 5 **Tailoring implementation strategies to the local context** by
 - (i) assessing implementation barriers and enablers within the local context,
 - (ii) identifying methods that will address these, and
 - (iii) building these methods into local implementation strategies
- 6 **Scaffolding the setup of EBIs** and overseeing quality assurance in the early stages of implementation



CITY OF
YORK
COUNCIL

York

Where we've been and
where we're going.



A bit about York

- The City of York Council is relatively small, our partnerships work across a footprint shared with other local authorities which are both Ofsted graded Outstanding and Good.
- Just over **202,000** people live in the city – Around **35,000** children and young people.
- Generally a great place to live – Generally great outcomes
 - We have 51 primary schools of which 90% are rated as **‘Good’** or **‘Outstanding’**.
 - We have nine secondary schools, all of which are currently rated as **‘Good’** or **‘Outstanding’**.

Challenges and enablers

Key challenges:

- Hidden disadvantage
- Very low funding base per head
- Increasing demand in children's social care
- Challenging SEND picture
- Staff turnover and use of agency
- Increasing costs pressures
- Emerging from a period of changes in leadership

Key enabling foundations:

- Stable and ambitious leadership
- Values and leadership
- Attending to good long-term decision making
- Clear strategic vision
- Practice model – **Building Brighter Futures**
- Building on '*what works*'
- WW to WWWW
- **Research school**

Working with the research school

- Started with a specific challenge
- Additional capacity with a specific focus on evidence informed approaches
- Consideration of skill, expertise and knowledge of the individual

Early Talk for York

- An evidence informed local area approach to improving speech, language and communication skills 0 – 5
- Enabled by key people being prepared to work differently together to a common issue
- Time, space and resource to model the potential
- Careful evaluation allowed us to be able to 'tell the story'
- Children's outcomes improved – and many additional service and system benefits
- Net result = positive tangible example of evidence informed improvement

Changemakers

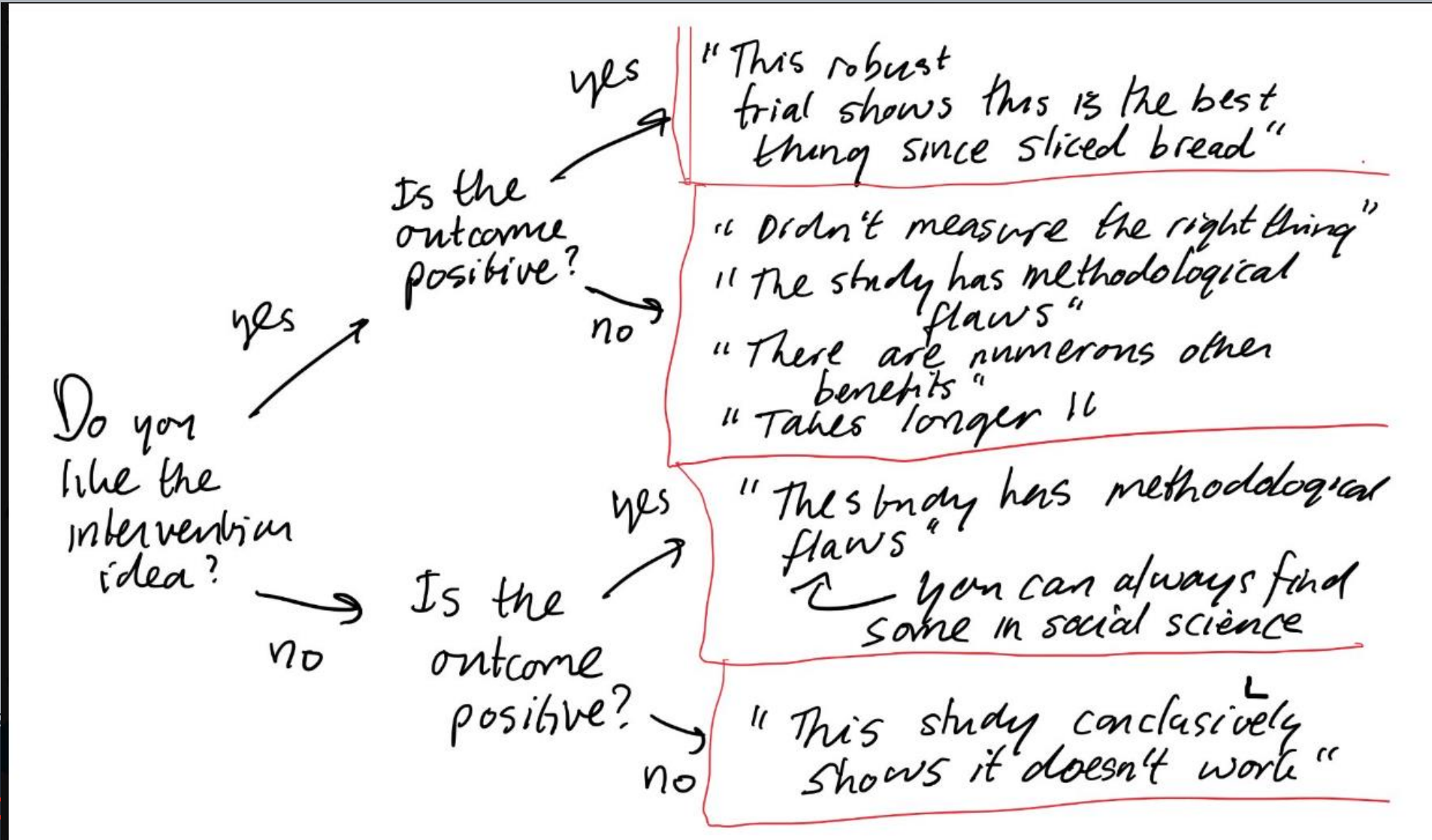
- Close the gap between evidence of what work and experience on the ground.
 - Implement two Evidenced Based Interventions
 - Build our cultural approach to evidence.
- Testing a role of Local Evidence Leader (LEL) across the children's directorate.
- LEL an associate member of our Children's Directorate Management Team

Directorate Management Team

- What does DMT perceive to be the main barriers to evidence use?
- What specific examples does DMT have of effective and ineffective use of evidence?
- How can DMT consistently model evidence use in decision making?
- What current or future workstreams would benefit from greater support on the use of evidence?

Challenges of being evidence informed

Image credit: Christian Bokhove



Final reflections

Evidence does not provide easy solutions, but evidence-informed improvement is a process that has integrity and holds greater promise than any alternative.

(Francis, 2020)

Small group discussion



How far does impact evidence influence decisions in your local area?

How can evidence be more useful to and more used by local authorities?

30 minutes

// Foundations

What Works Centre for Children & Families

Evidence for prevention in children's services

