# Exploring the behavioural outcomes of family-based intensive interventions

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Presentation outline

- Intensive Family Interventions and policy context
- The research: what is meant by behaviour change?
- Policy implications of non-behaviour change

Policy context: defining families as a problem
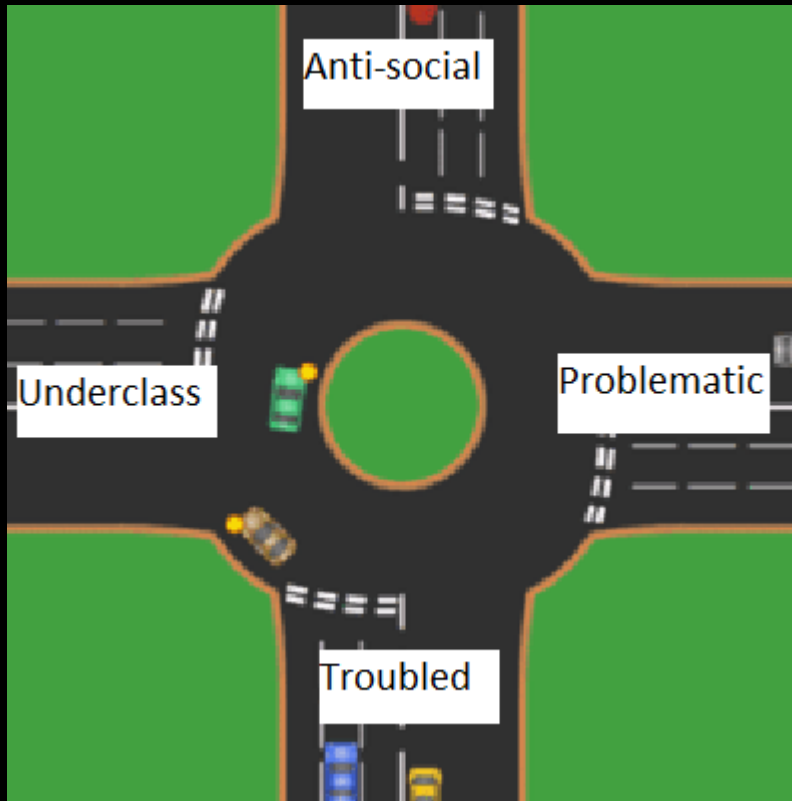
Anti-social	Purposefully excluding themselves from accepted normative values
Troubled	Families that trigger high costs to the public purse, claim benefits, have children out of school, presence of mental health issues, worklessness

See Welshman (2017)

Links to welfare conditionality

Respect agenda

- "A welfare state based on rights and responsibility where we gave opportunity to people on benefit to get into work; but demanded responsibility in return; where we came down hard on crime; but offered ways out to those committing crime" **(Blair, 2002)**

2011 riots

- "Do we have the determination to confront the slow-motion moral collapse that has taken place in parts of our country these past few generations?...Some of the worst aspects of human nature tolerated, indulged - sometimes even incentivised - by a state and its agencies that in parts have become literally de-moralised." **(Cameron, 2011)**

Family Intervention Projects and the Troubled Families Programme

FIPs (New Labour)

- "Family intervention projects work to turn around the behaviour of families and reduce their impact on their community. In so doing, they also bring stability to families' lives, prevent homelessness and improve opportunities for children. They combine intensive support with focused challenge – a twin track approach. For these projects, it is not a question of either/or - support and enforcement are systematically linked to provide families with the incentive to change." (Home Office, 2008)

TFP (Coalition + Conservatives)

- "The new programme of work with 120,000 troubled families is an opportunity not to repeat the failed attempts of the past, but to get underneath the skin of the families, and of the services that are now going to be working with them to find some lasting ways to make changes" (Casey, 2012; 3)
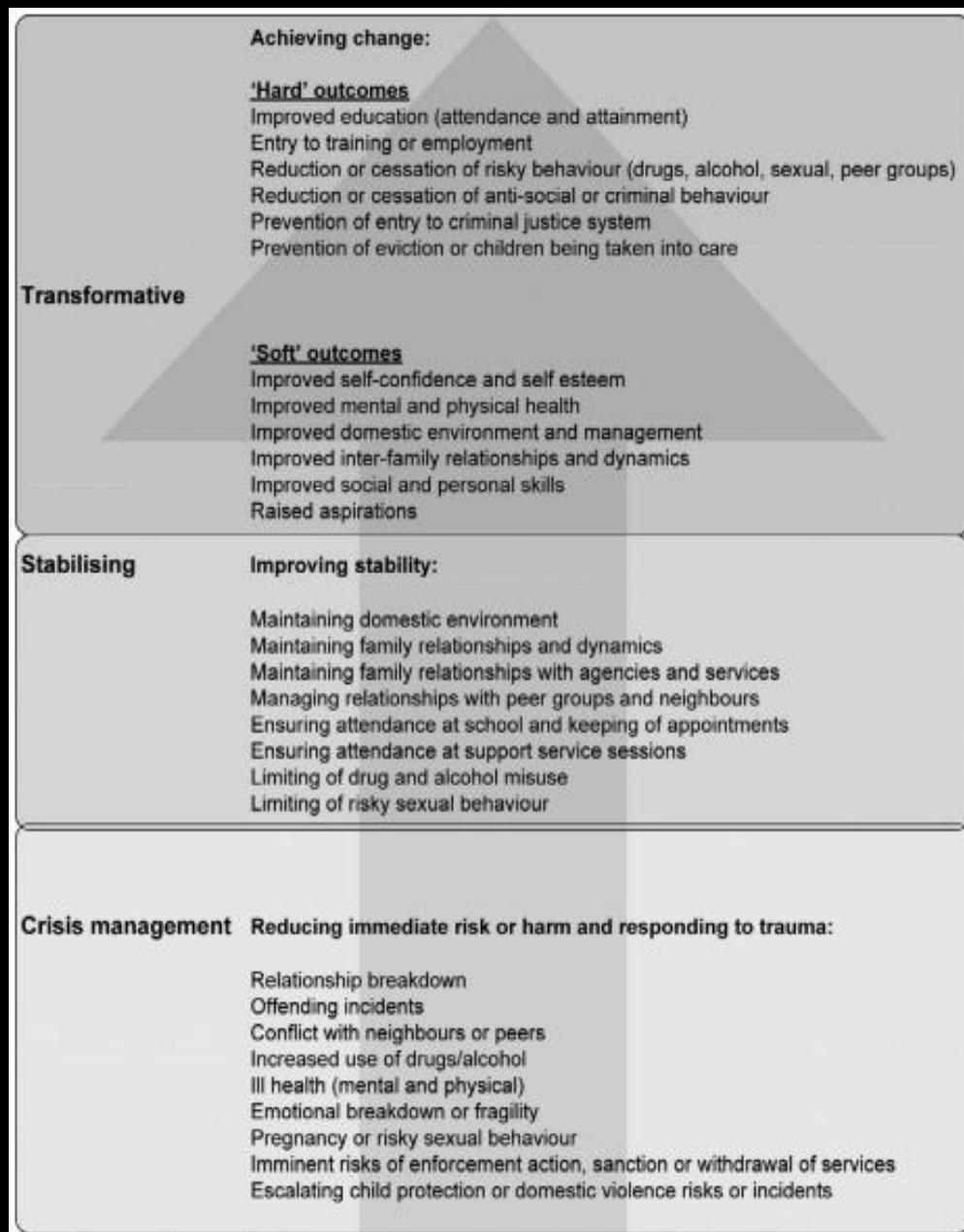
Outcomes

Positives

- The results of intensive interventions during the New Labour period are largely positive (see Nixon et al, 2006)
- Access to resources
- Social inclusion
- Empowerment?
- "a way forward" (Jones et al, 2015; 125)

Ethical issues

- Less success addressing mental health problems and sustaining positive behaviour change (Pawson et al, 2009)
- TFP national evaluation showed little impact based on TF referral criteria
- Surveillance of families
- The core unit (24 hour residential unit supervised by staff)
- Too much emphasis on the people skills of key workers
- Whether support plans are co-produced
- Families are referred from the wrong reasons
- Draconian nature of sanctioning

Batty and Flint (2012; 354) Typology of outcomes

The research

Research aims

- To explore the anticipated outcomes of behaviour change and whether these were comparable to the realities of behaviour change

- What factors influenced and/or prevented change.

- How practitioners rationalise, internalise and resist behaviour based expectations

Methodology

- Longitudinal approach

- 10 families

- 18 interviews with practitioners, policy makers and frontline staff

- Participant observation at a parenting course followed by interviews with 5 of the attending parents.

Results: types of behaviour change

- Behaviour change
- No behaviour change
- Relative behaviour change
- Temporary behaviour change

No behaviour change

- *The trouble is before I was involved, [homeless charity] were involved for six months and prior to that she had [another organisation] involved, she has never not had someone there doing things for her, picking up the pieces when she's forgotten, or failed to do things herself, and it is difficult because I have been told by [housing association] I am not to work with her, I have no one to refer her on to, cos she doesn't really fit into anybody's criteria, it is just the level of support she needs...it is frustrating when you don't see any progress cos all you want is for someone's life to improve, even if it is just small measures and every time you got a step forward it wasn't long before you were going straight back to square one again* (Key worker, Community Regeneration Charity)

Relative behaviour change

- *You can't really track progress cos they are really little steps a lot of them, it only makes sense to the person who works with that person, I have got someone who is 21 now if you are going to judge it objectively, she has not made any sort of headway but for her as a person it is a lot and it is going to be a long hard slog, so sometimes I think you have to get your point across that things are changing.* (Key worker, Housing Association)

Temporary behaviour change

- *What has always been said about Annie and Craig is that they do not maintain the interventions what they learn, they are quite capable of carrying them out but they do not maintain and it always goes back, and this is why they seem to get social care back all the time, what I have said to Annie and Craig is that this time we are aiming to maintain things. I have pointed out to the family that in the past the house has been very very dirty even though they do do the cleaning, this is the time to try and keep on top of it and with bedtimes...you are constantly challenging, and challenging and challenging and it becomes draining.* (Key worker, Family Intervention Project)

Key worker role

- Key workers have to negotiate what counts as 'successful' behaviour change :
  - 'Good enough' behaviour change
  - 'Distance travelled'
  - 'Simultaneous' Creaming and Parking
- *"This moment in time I have minimal concerns because their money issues are better than I thought they would be at this point, they are managing better than I thought and I feel we have taken them as far as they are capable of going at this point, so although there are things that could be better, we are not going to be able to take them any further at this point, they might be able to make improvements in the future but right now they are at their capacity to change."* (Key worker, family intervention project)

Policy constraints

- What was especially clear in the research was the marginalisation of mental health, trauma, and learning difficulties that could prevent behaviour change and put more pressure on the vulnerability of families.
  - ASB 'intention'
  - Avoidance behaviours
- Trauma and mental health
  - Trauma informed policy
  - *"We are taking families that are really vulnerable, some that are really damaged, we are trying to give you the skills to equip them for life, we are doing it over two years and we are still trying to equip them for life that is really hard and in short term work you go, let's do a tiny bit here and they are expecting it to last for how long and you can't."* (Key worker, Family Intervention Project)

Conclusion

- The rationale for this policy approach was based on a critique of an over generous welfare state that did not require any meaningful reciprocation from the claimant
- A common feature of intervention policy was to retrain and re-educate families often through the values of hard work, practical support and advice, underpinned by enforcement based mechanisms
- The complexity of behaviour change is complex and nuanced
- Families see aspects of support as meaningful...but sanctioning can create more pressure on already vulnerable families
- Policy needs to embed trauma based principles of care

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