

The early years – surviving or thriving?

Prevention, support and intervention



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- the importance of parenting in the early years,
- prevention, support or intervention
- prevention and support - (Bookstart ; the effects of pre-schooling)
- parenting interventions

Research now shows that:

“Many challenges in adult society have their roots in the early years of life, including major public health problems such as obesity, heart disease, and mental health problems. Experiences in early childhood are also related to criminality, problems in literacy and numeracy, and economic participation”

Final Report of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health (2008).
Geneva, World Health Organization.

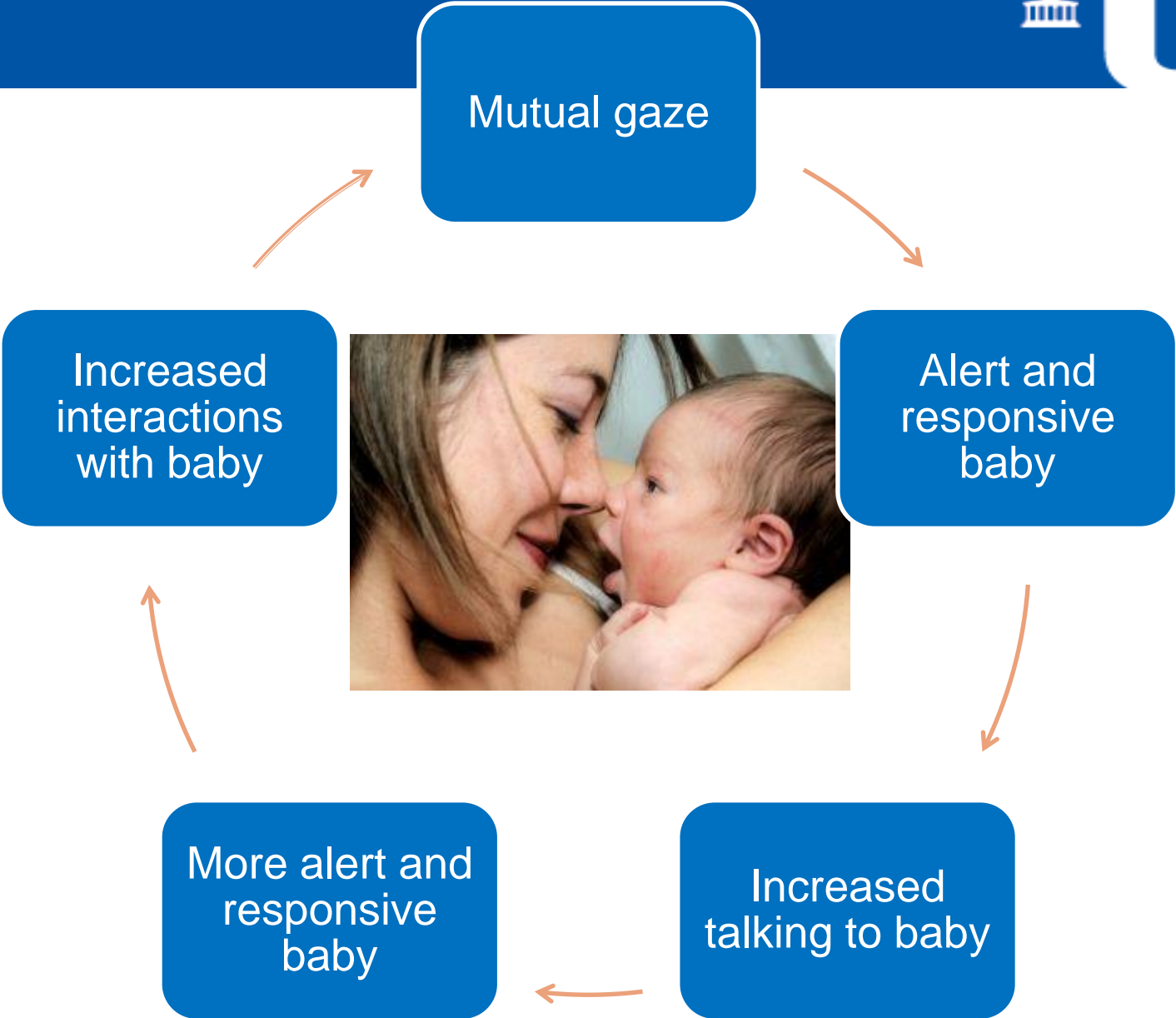
“Economists now assert on the basis of the available evidence that investment in early childhood is the most powerful investment a country can make, with returns over the life course many times the amount of the original investment.”

WHO (2008)

“Early child development is a highly complex area, and despite general acceptance of the benefits, it lacks data. Because of this, it remains difficult to reconcile with short political cycles.”

Sourovi De (UK Guardian, 16/9/15)

The importance of parenting in the early years



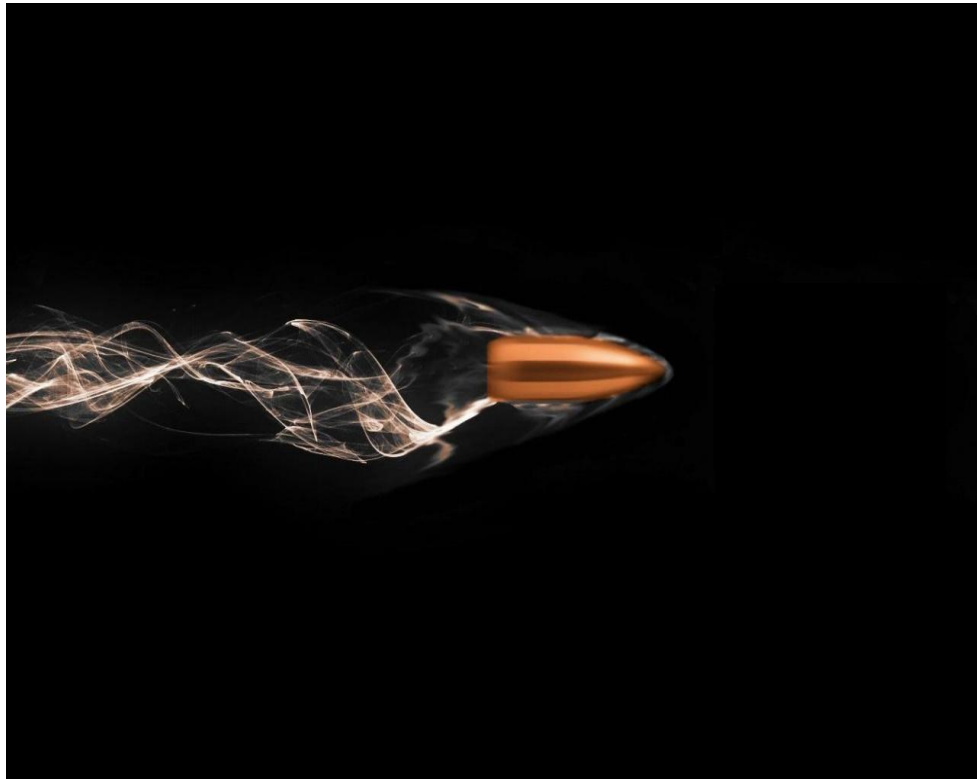
Cohort studies have demonstrated that

Quality of parenting impacts on:

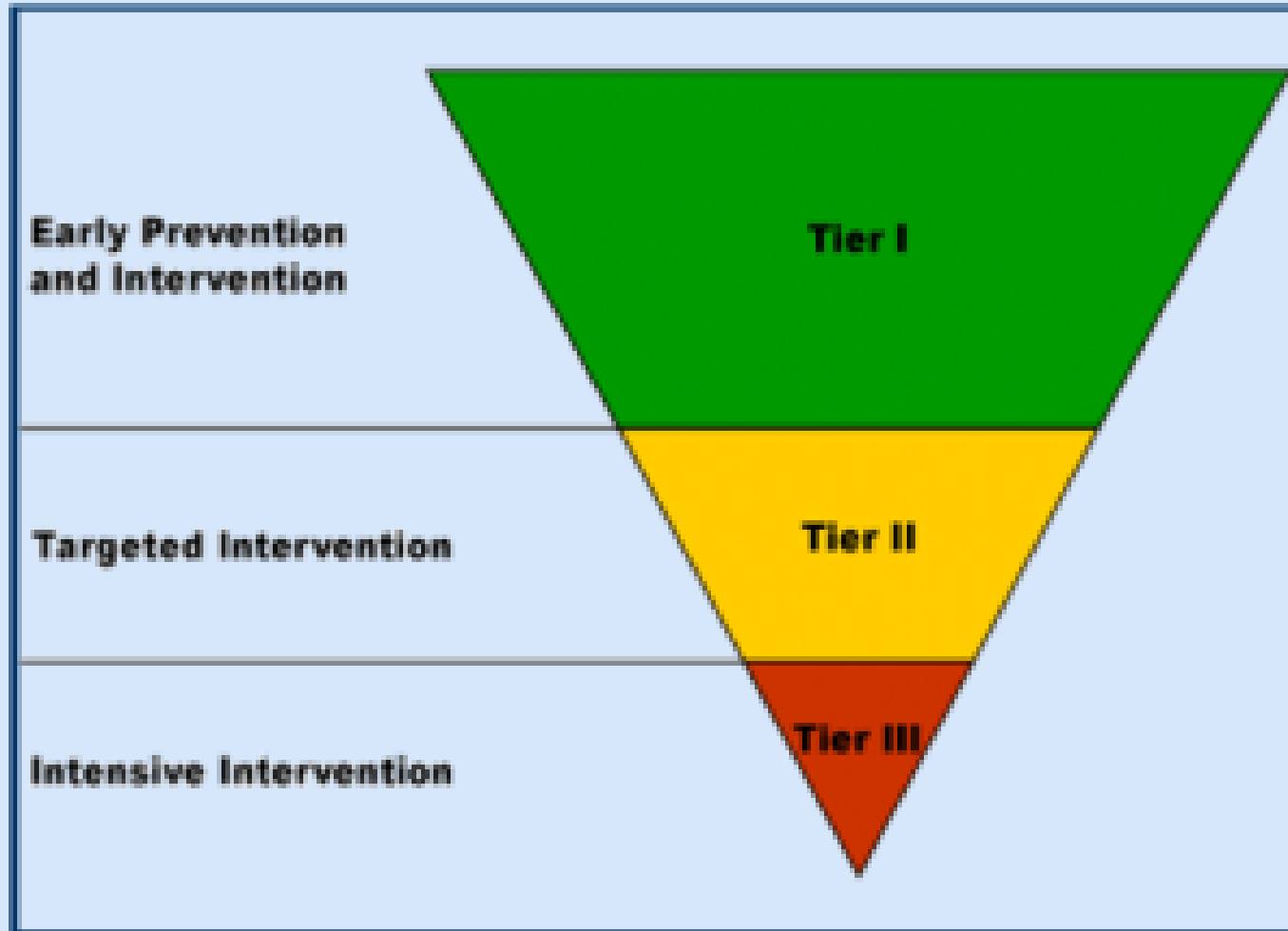
- **children's health**
- **behaviour**
- **well being (emotional health)**
- **intelligence**
- **educational attainment**

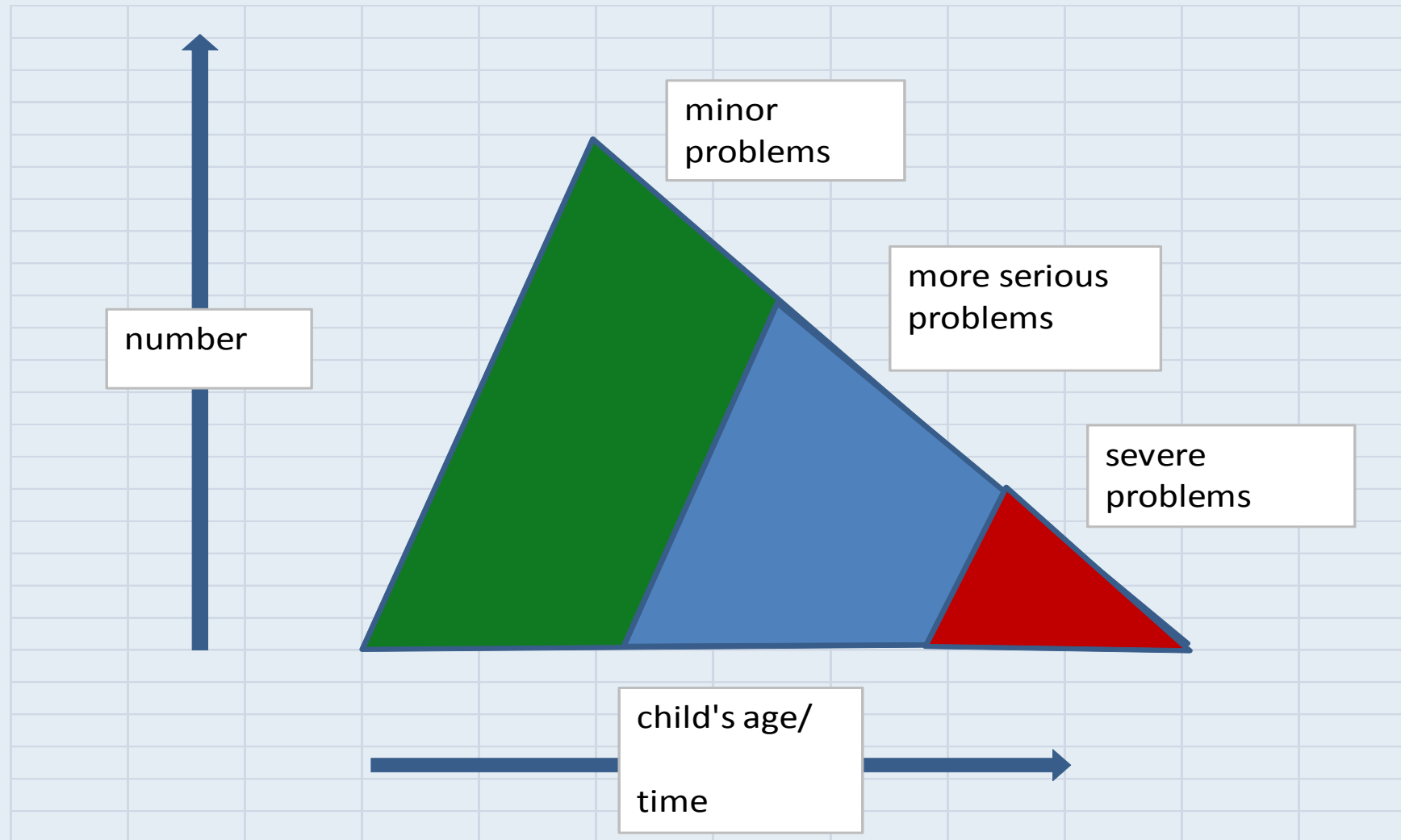
Early intervention:
prevention, support or
intervention

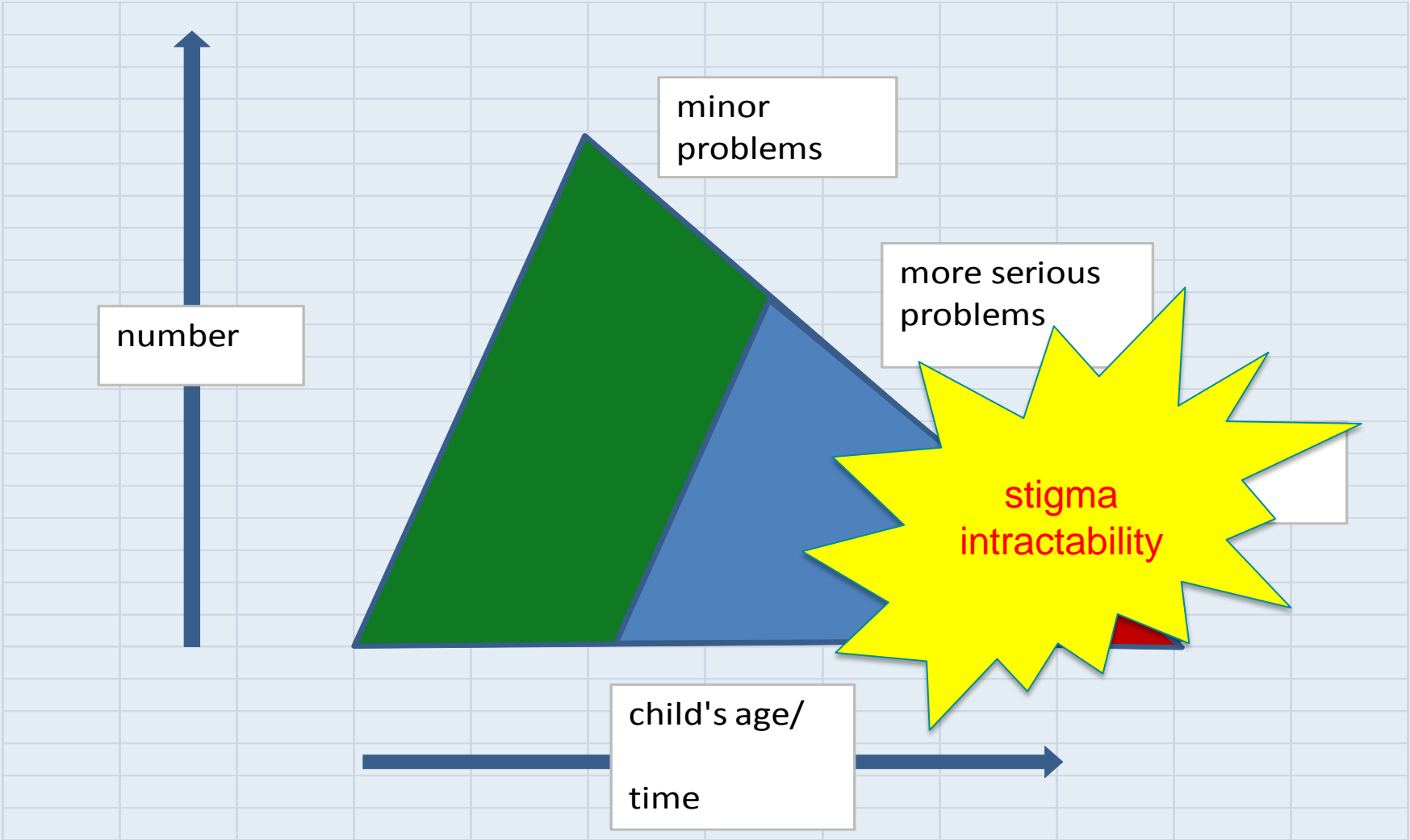
Intervention is not a magic bullet.....



- many interventions are not successful
- complexity of outcomes
- issues of timing, style and quality
- general lack of long term evidence
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Bookstart

- started in 1992 by an independent charity
- provides free books to children at two key ages (0 – 12 months; and 3 – 4 years)
- over 35m books to over 10m children
- delivered locally by public service professionals
- innovative public/private partnership

Assessing Bookstart children at 2.5 years:

- **Families** gave higher priority to books
- visited libraries more often
- spent more time in sharing books with children
- **Children** demonstrated better concentration and higher interest in books
- were more interactive orally

Independent evaluations of Bookstart show:

- At starting school assessment, children were ahead on standardised reading and mathematics (number)
- At KS1 SATS, children were ahead on 7/10 assessments (Reading, Science, Maths)

for every £1 invested by the state in Bookstart, £25 of social value is returned.

Effects of Pre-school

- Preschool experience (compared to none) enhances all-round development in children
- Gains are greatest in social development
- Duration of attendance – starting earlier – is related to better intellectual outcomes
- Quality of provision is important – particularly for disadvantaged children
- Gains remain evident into early school years

based (largely) on EPPE project findings, 2004

Results of pre schooling/early intervention

Vary:

- as a function of the domain evaluated, and
- the timescale of the evaluation
 - Effects on intellectual development often ‘wash out’
 - Impacts on academic learning (school readiness) vary with socioeconomic status
 - Findings on language impacts vary – some contradictory results

Parenting interventions

Parenting support - a real world trial

(Hutchings et al., 2007)

- children 3-5 years, at risk for conduct problems, from 11 Sure Start areas in Wales
- randomised to 'Incredible Years' parenting groups vs. wait-list.

Found large intervention effects on:

- child behaviour problems
- parenting skills
- parent depression and stress
- sibling conduct problems

Effects maintained for 1 year

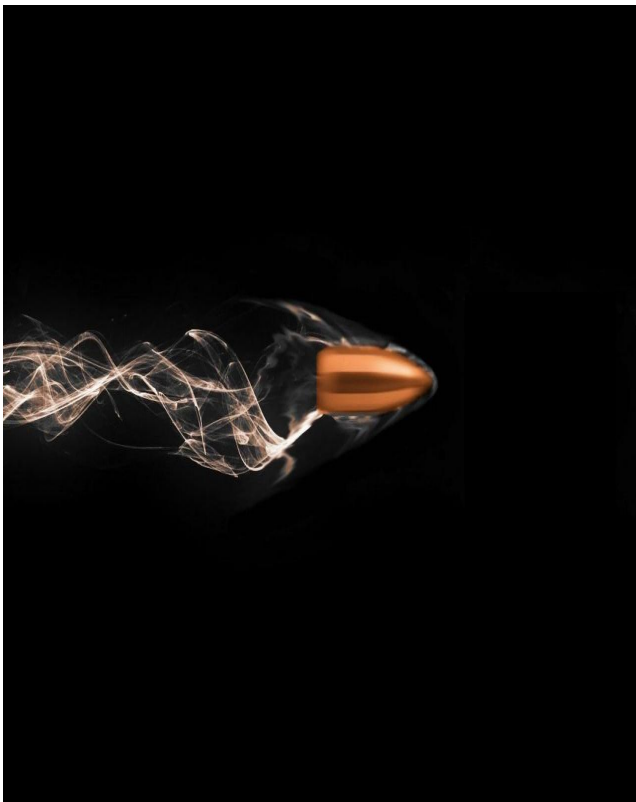
Effect Sizes impressive

Mediators: what changed?

- change in observed positive parenting in the home predicted change in child problem behaviour
- change in maternal depression also mediated change in child outcome

(Gardner et al. 2006
Hutchings et al., 2007)

Effective parenting interventions



- emphasise **principles** rather than prescribe techniques
- involve active **problem solving** by parents around own family needs
- use ‘social learning’ principles: the importance of parent/child interaction; reinforcement, clarity and consistency
- start with relationship building, praise and rewards
- later – move onto discipline strategies
- Involve parents applying principles to own situation, to change parenting behaviour

The most effective interventions:

- Appear to be effective across different service settings and cultures and in diverse families,
- Appear to be able to engage and help very marginalised families –
- Appear to be as effective –sometimes more so - with the highest risk families and
- Appear to be most effective with the most difficult children

Thank you

References

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<http://www.incredibleyears.com/Library/items/randomized-controlled-trial-parenting-intervention-06.pdf>
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