

International research and trends in child protection

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Child protection failings: Fears for safety of children in their homes

93

Tuesday, May 30, 2017

Cormac O'Keeffe, Fiachra Ó Cionnaith and Noel Baker

The Government is to review all emergency out-of-hours services for children amid persistent fears that large swathes of the country don't have the supports to protect minors from "barbaric treatment" in the home.



Canada's Current Child Welfare Fails Families
Updated: 10/20/2015 2:59 pm EDT

Family courts face rise in care applications

Sir James number DALLAS NEWS

THE CON Academic rigour, journalistic

Abuse and protection 'October 22, 2014 8:20pm BST

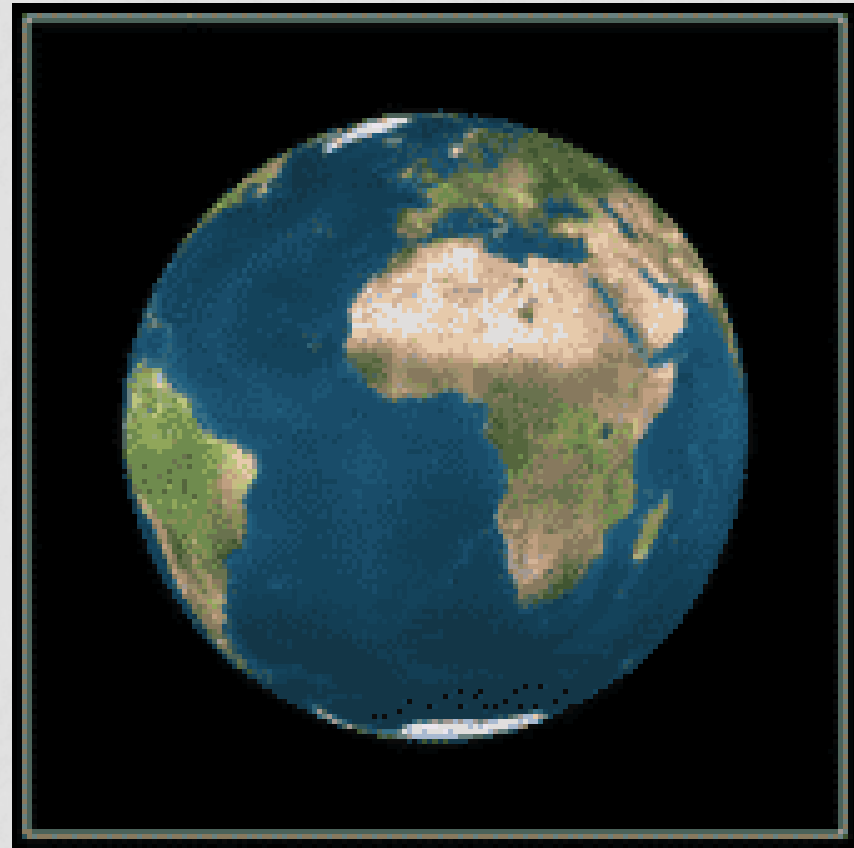
Gov. reform 'broken'

Name Oranga Tam

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRENDS IN CHILD PROTECTION

Presents international research and more detailed studies from England and Australia showing:

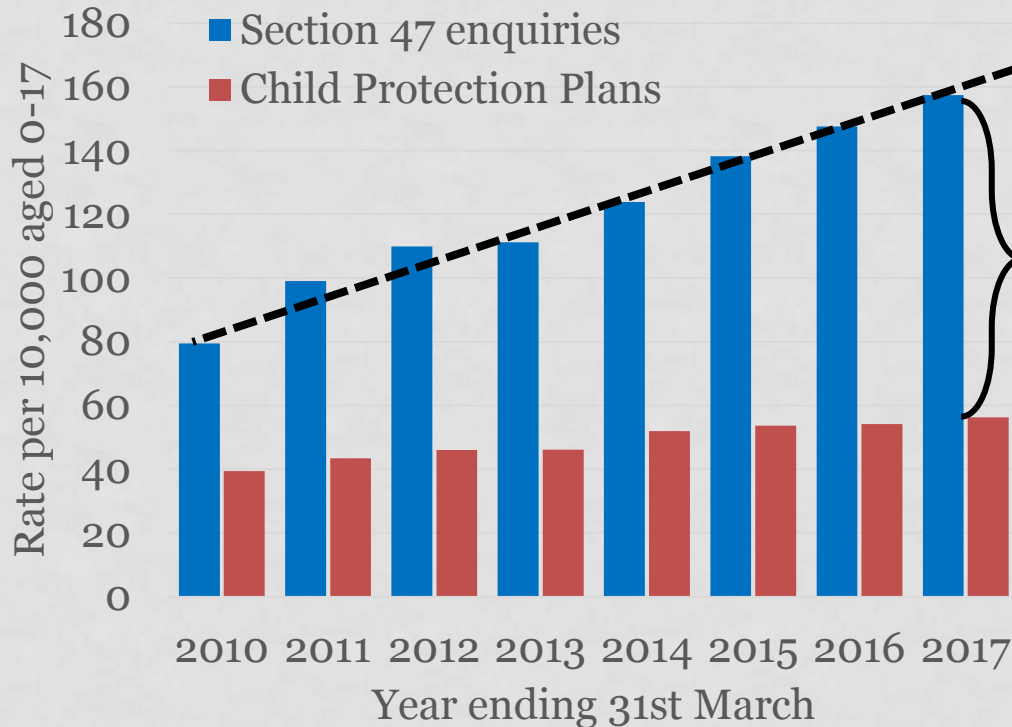
- Trends in child protection interventions
- The level of involvement of children in CP systems over time
- The level of involvement of children in the poorest communities
- Ideas for future policy and practice



THE **INVESTIGATIVE TURN** IN ENGLISH SPEAKING POST-INDUSTRIALISED COUNTRIES

- **Canada** Investigations 1998 vs 2008:
Urgent child protection unchanged Chronic doubles
- **USA** 2011-15 increases: 16.2% referrals; 9.5% investigations; 4.5% substantiations
- **Australia** 2012 to 2016 increases:
40.7% notifications; 41.6% investigations; 26.0% substantiations; 17.2% children in out of home care

The Investigative Turn in England 2009-10 to 2016-17



108% increase in investigations from 89,300 to 185,450

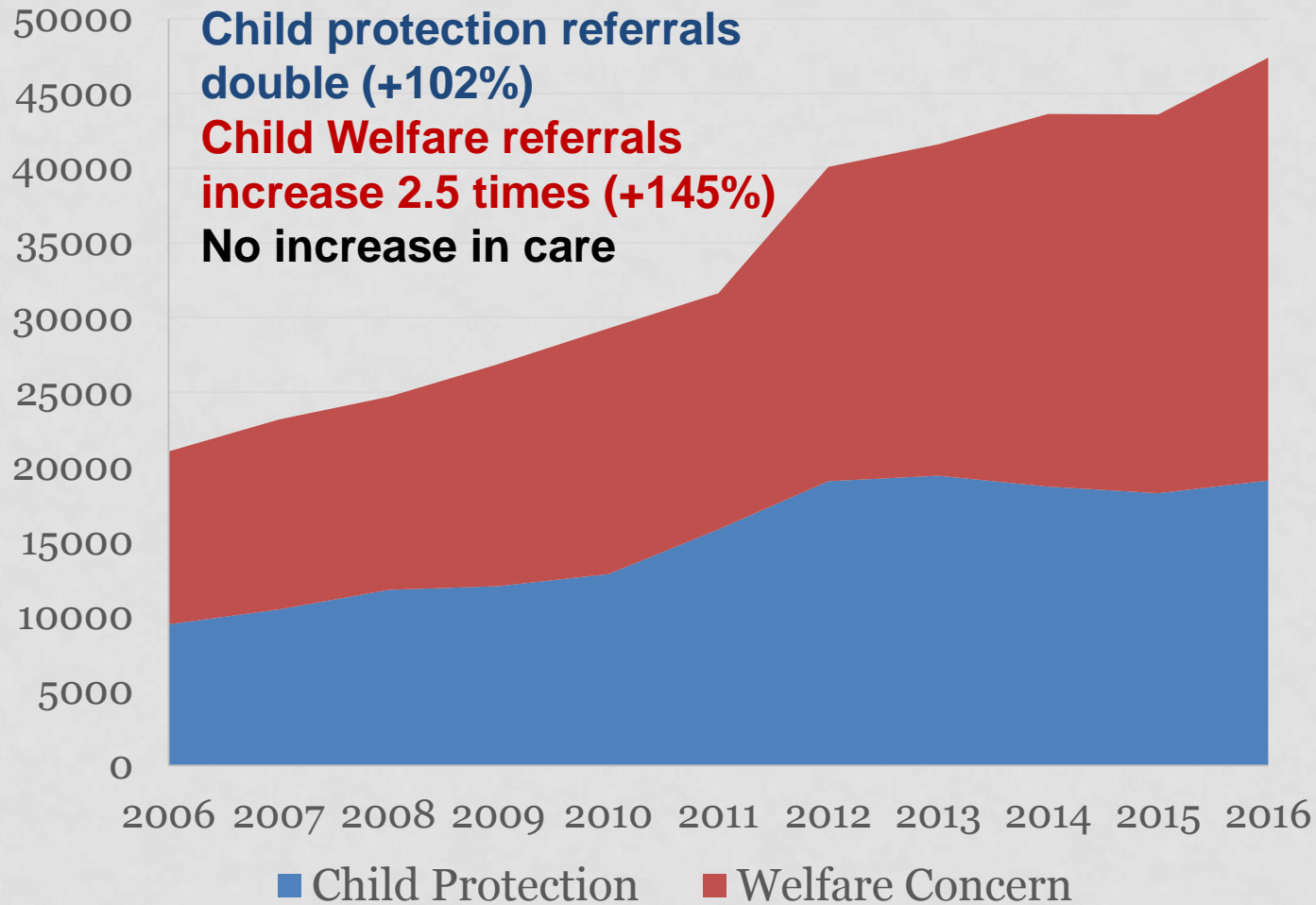
Children investigated but no child protection plan increases by 165% from 45,000 to 119,040

Rate of s47 enquiries that lead to a child protection plan falls from 50% in 2009-10 to 36% in 2016-17

Proportion of Referrals and Children in Need that were Investigated

	% Investigated	
	2009-10	2015-16
Referrals	15%	29%
Children in need	24%	46%

REFERRALS IN IRELAND

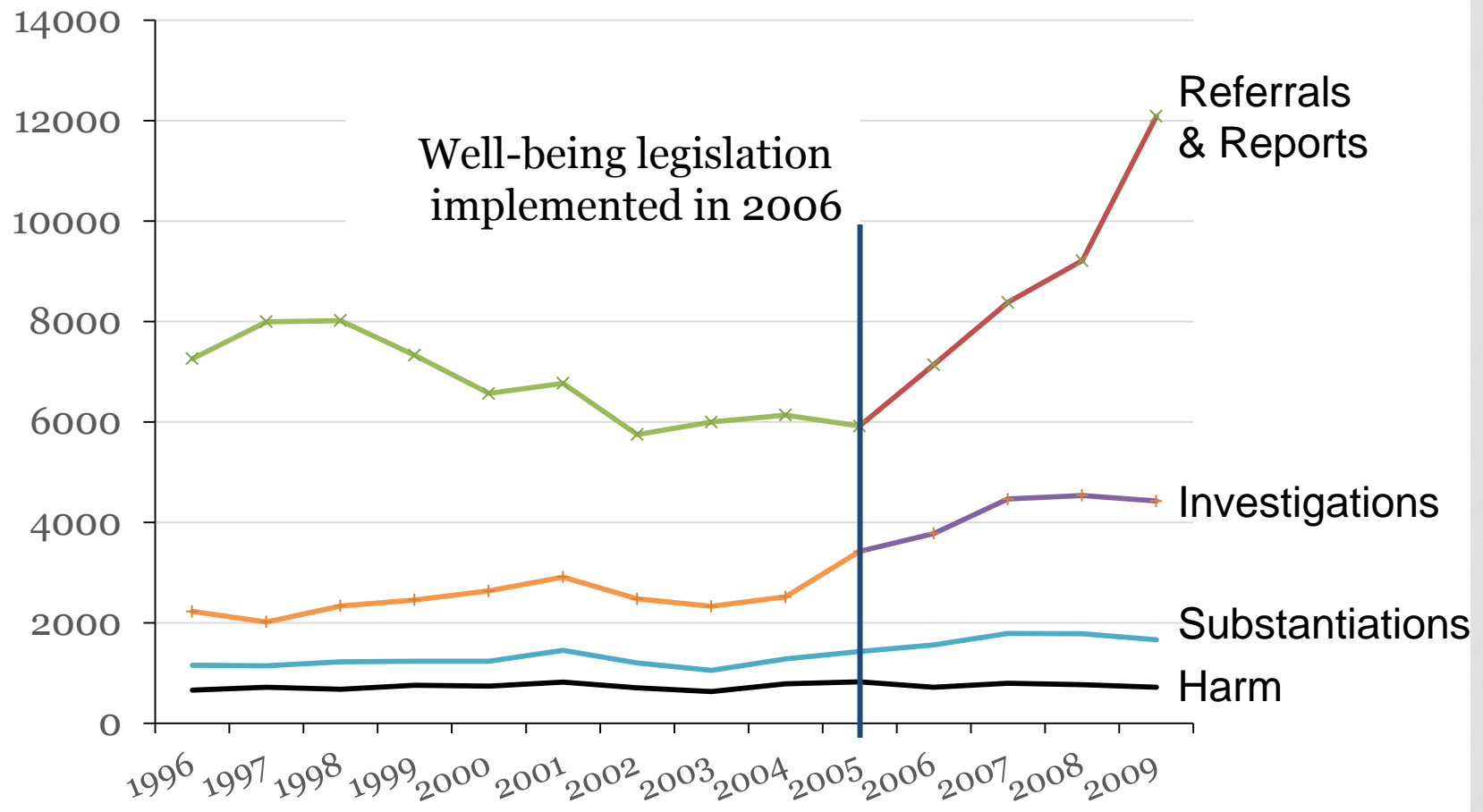


DOES CHILD PROTECTION PROTECT CHILDREN?

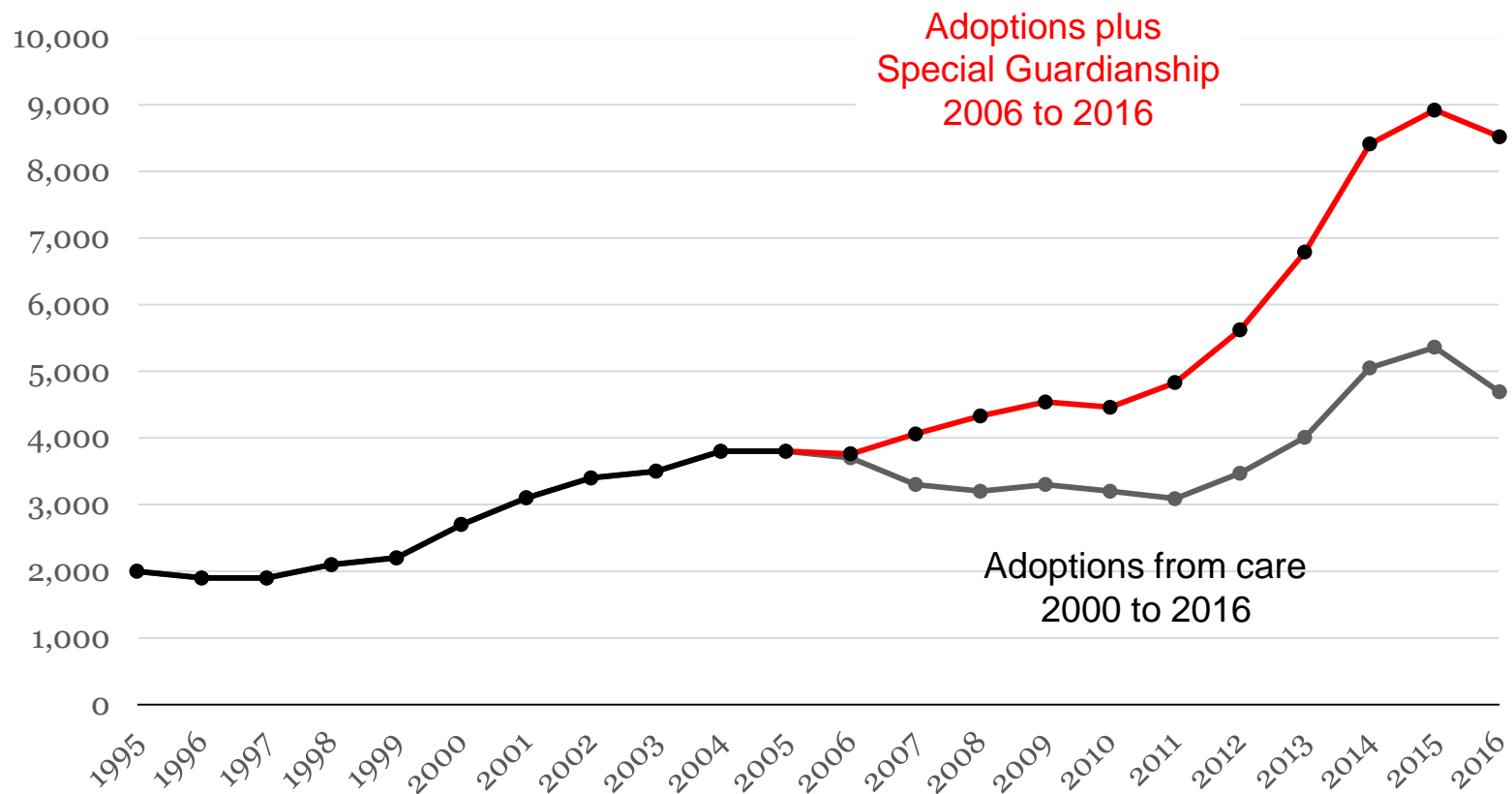
Gilbert et al. (2012a) used data in a comparison of six countries to consider trends in physical abuse and neglect in reports and outcomes focusing on children younger than eleven. Their conclusion was that:

Our results show no clear evidence for an overall decrease in child maltreatment despite decades of policies designed to achieve such reductions (Gilbert et al., 2012, p. 770).

REPORTS, INVESTIGATION AND HARM IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA 1996 TO 2009



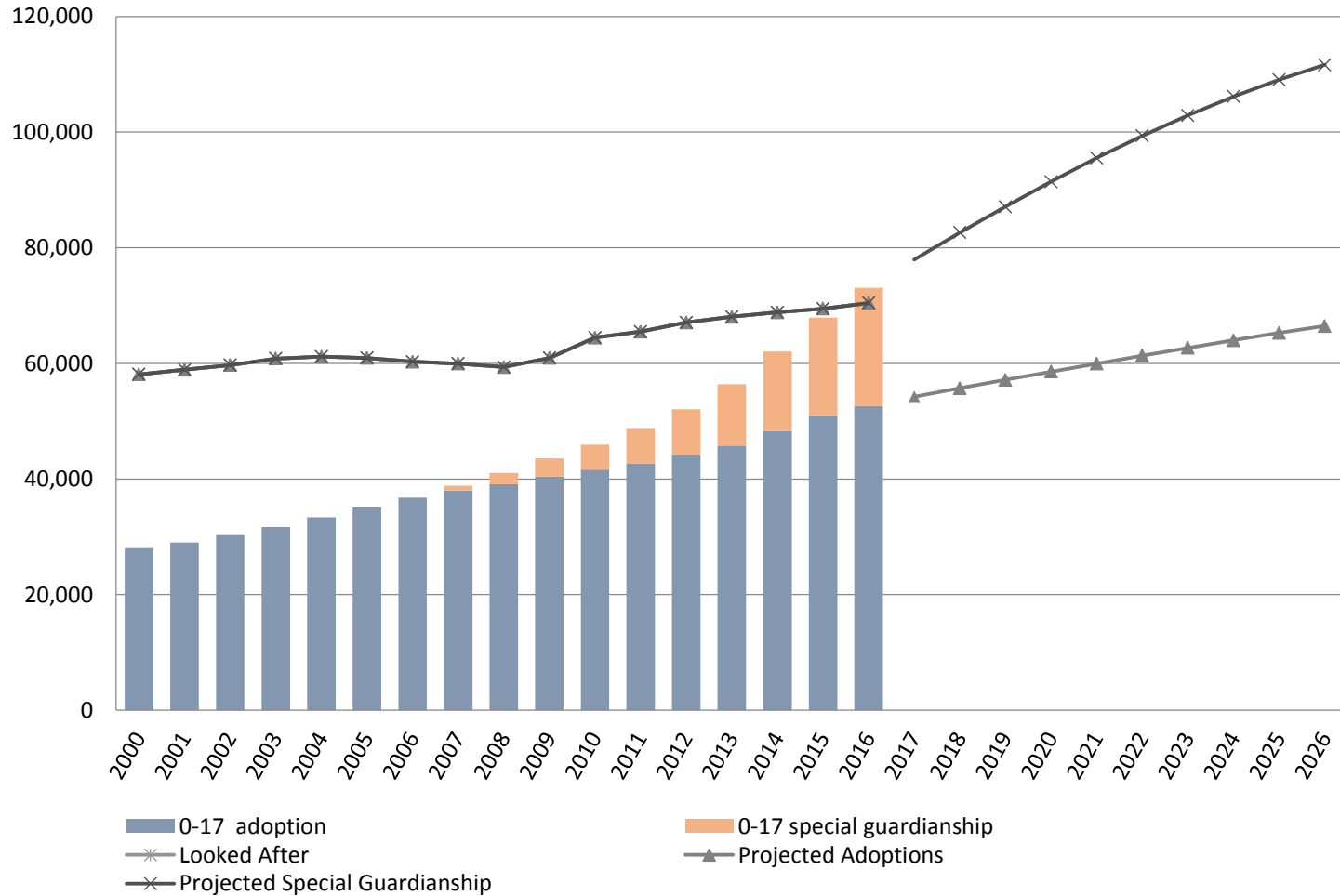
TRENDS IN ADOPTION AND SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP FOR CHILDREN CEASING TO BE LOOKED AFTER



Trends in England

Children in Care, with Adoptive Parents or Special Guardians

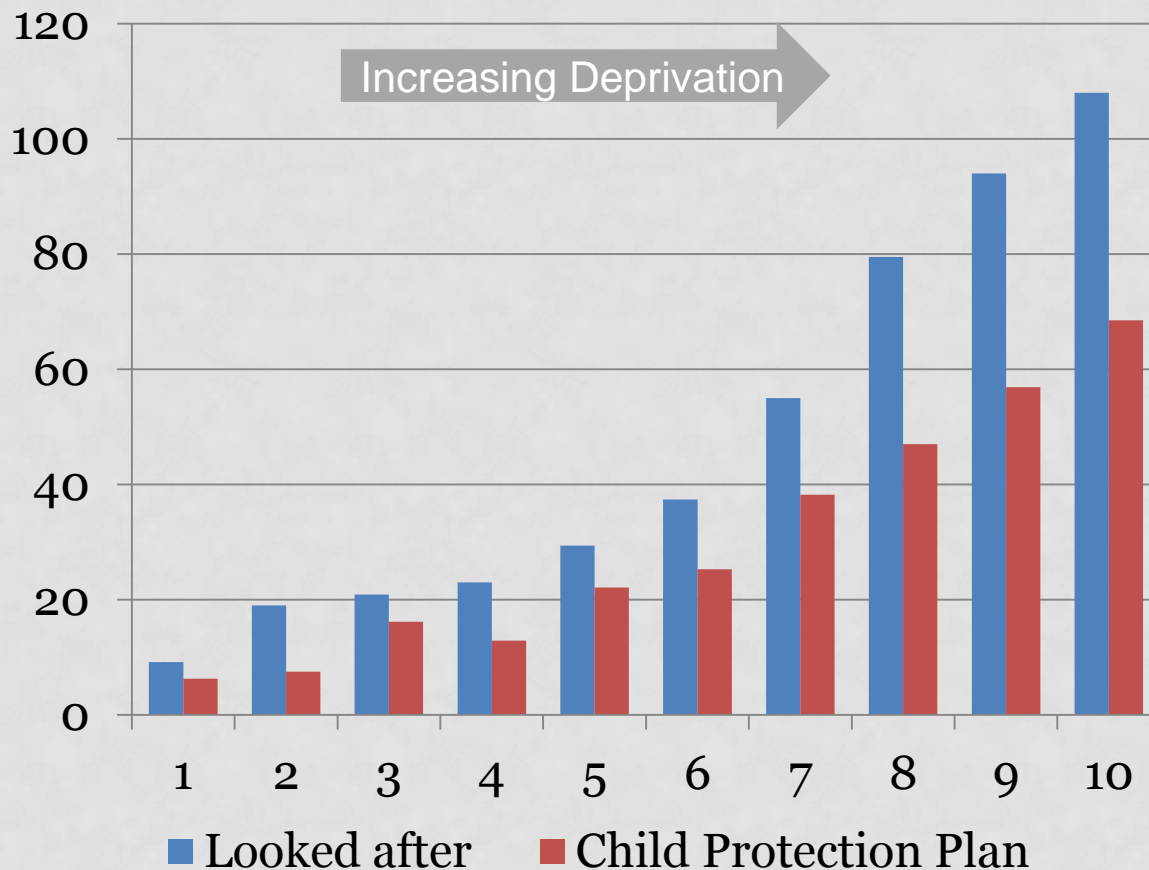
Projections to 2026 based on current level of placements



INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN IN CP SYSTEMS IN ENGLISH SPEAKING INDUSTRIALISED COUNTRIES

- **USA:** 37.4% investigated before age of 18 & 53.0% African Americans (Kim et al 2017)
- **South Australia:** 1 in 4 reported to child protection by age 16 and “between 57 and 76 per cent” of Aboriginals Delfabbro et al. (2010)
- **England:** children born 2009-10 before age of 5: 22.5% referred; 5.4% investigated; 3.5% CP plan
- **Ireland:** ?? but rate of Child Protection referrals in 2016 1.6% same as rate of s47 in England & Rate referrals 4.0% whilst 5.5% in England

CP AND DEPRIVATION IN WEST MIDLANDS AND ESTIMATES OF INVOLVEMENT IN MOST DEPRIVED COMMUNITIES

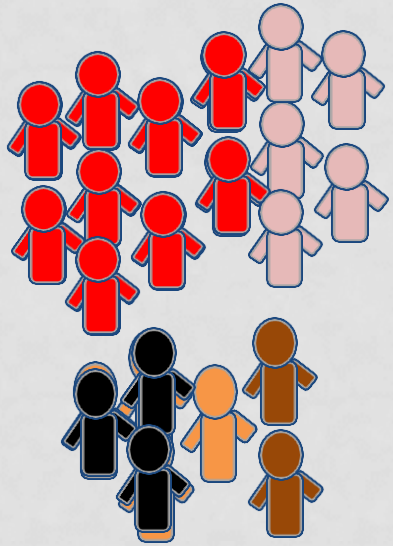


Estimated that before the age of 5 in most deprived 10%:
45% referred
29% in need
22% suspicion of abuse/neglect
11% investigated
7% had CP plan
3.5% in care

Rate of Children looked after and on Child Protection Plans on 31.03.2012 per 10,000 aged 0 to 17 by deprivation decile

Source: Bywaters, P., Brady, G., Sparks, T., & Bos, E. (2014)

**In an average class
of 30 children
aged 5 in 2014-15
from 10th Decile
of Deprivation**



**14
referred (45%)**

9 in need (29%)

4 suspected abuse or neglect

2 classified as dysfunctional family

3 Child Protection investigated (11%)

2 Child Protection Plan (7%)

1 in care (3%)



QUESTIONS RAISED

- Does the current increasing child protection intervention reduce harm to children?
- Can early intervention be introduced helpfully without a paradigm change from our 'individualised' approach?
- What is the impact of child protection's concentration on the most deprived communities and how can we reduce the shame and stigma felt by their members?
- Can information systems be analysed longitudinally and do they provide information on outcomes?

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

AN ALTERNATIVE PARADIGM

- **Social investments** that enhance capabilities including: “employment placement, childcare, adult literacy, micro-enterprise, and asset savings accounts” (Midgley & Conley, 2010: xii–xiv)
- **Advocacy oriented** to move from a narrow preoccupation with practice with families and children
- **Community oriented** to combat social exclusion
- **Strengths-based** acknowledging and focussing on family and community assets and aiming to promote resilience
- **Interdisciplinary** focus including promoting access to, for example, housing, medical care, education, and recreational facilities

ACTIVE PROGRAMME BULGARIA AND MOLDOVA

Workers assess family strengths and needs and provide support on six well-being domains:

- living conditions,
- family and social relationships,
- behaviour,
- physical and mental health,
- education,
- employment and household economy



REPORTED OUTCOMES OF ACTIVE APPROACH, MOLDOVA 2014

- **Better relationships:** between mother and child; Father and child; and between parents
- **Employment and household economy:** Households where no-one worked from 78% to 24% Families with stable monthly income up from 19% to 89%.
- **Improved Housing:** fall from 45.7% to 12.6% in temporary housing; from 75.6% to 14.2% without basic utilities/furniture
- **Safer Environment:** E.g. families verbally and/or physically aggressive behaviour fell from 67.7% to 7.1%
- **Less alcohol and illegal drug problems:** Excessive alcohol use fell from 55.1% to 16.5% and illegal drugs fell from 5.5% to 1.6%
- **Improved health and development:** from 33.9% to 14.2% families with health problem and developmental delay from 49.6% to 11.8%
- **Education:** more attended preschool care or kindergarten, more children received support for school work and less struggled with academic skills

FROM PARIAHHS TO PARTNERS



The main lessons from our experience were that to dramatically improve the child welfare system you needed parents themselves, with powerful and committed allies, to become a countervailing force to the entrenched power of the bureaucracy and care agencies. Parents organising as a collective force pressurised the system to change so they were able to secure the support they needed and access to good legal representation when their children were about to be removed.

A demonstration when 20,000 people marched on Wall Street had an even bigger impact. The event brought together diverse groups with a common interest in expanding social services – among them labour unions, grassroots advocacy organisations and Catholic charities. Subsequently **cuts in preventive services and other social service programmes were restored.**