

# Workshop H

## How to apply the evidence in Practice?

# Children Centres



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Lucy Butler, Deputy Director, Children's Social Care and  
Early Intervention, Oxfordshire County Council (Chair)

Professor Kathy Sylva, Professor of Educational Psychology,  
University of Oxford



# Opening remarks from the chair

Lucy Butler,  
Deputy Director,  
Oxfordshire County Council

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# **Children Centres & Early Intervention Services**

## **A Local Story**

**Lucy Butler**

**Deputy Director**

**Oxfordshire County Council**



# Children's Centres and Early Intervention Hubs

- The County Council funded a total of 44 Children's Centres and 7 Early Intervention Hubs.
- Services were highly regarded by children, young people and families.
- The County Council valued the important preventative work of centres and hubs.
- This is reflected the Ofsted judgements received by centres and by the County Council as a whole.



# Users views on our Children's Centres and Hubs

- “I always recommend the hub to friends and family. Through wonderful caring staff they have given time to my son without it he wouldn't be in the good place he is today.”
- “The staff are so helpful and professional they help you with things which you can't talk to others about.”
- “Completing the freedom programme at my children centre gave me the confidence to leave and build a new life for me and my children.”



# Budget pressures

- Since 2010 the County Council has needed to reduce its budget by £204million.
- Significant savings are still required as a consequence of cuts to funding from Central Government.
- Early Intervention Service is one of few areas in Children's Services that can be reduced and still meet legal duties.
- £6m (£8m) savings attached to Early Intervention Services
- Due to increases in demand we will have £3.5 million overspend on services by the end of the year.



# Our pressures on social care

- Numbers of children in need of protection has more than doubled over last 4 years.
- There are 634 children in Oxfordshire with child protection plans. This is higher than it has ever been.
- There are now 593 children in care. This is more than ever before.
- Social workers are carrying bigger, more difficult and risky caseloads than ever before.
- Recruitment and retention of workers is increasingly difficult.



# How the proposals were developed

- In May 2014 a cross-party advisory group was established to look at options for the Early Intervention Service.
- The group established agreed the guiding principles for the new service:
  - To support but no longer provide open access services
  - Target services to those in greatest need
  - To only do what is required by legislation, regulation or policy
- Pre-consultation engagement events were held across the county with stakeholders to help shape the proposals.
- The 3 options presented for consultation are based on this work.



# Cabinet report: the proposals

Eight main children and Family Centres

- Full focus on supporting the most vulnerable
- The Council stops providing any open access services
- Centres are the base for significant outreach work
- Maximising staff numbers to provide wide service coverage (at centres and via outreach working)

# Model of new integrated service

Complexity and level of need increases →

← Value of preventative interventions increases

## Universal

- Stay & play
- Youth Open access
- Etc...

*OCC will cease to provide universal services*

## Locality & Community Support

- Supports schools, health services & community & voluntary groups
- Identifies emerging needs and safeguarding concerns
- Works directly with professionals who support children, young people and families

## Family Support

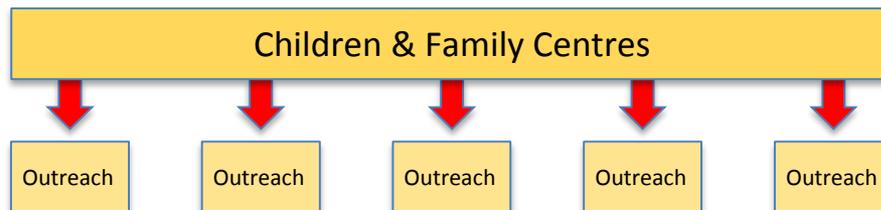
- Statutory social care for children and young people
- Support for 'Thriving Families'
- Targeted preventative programmes to support children, young people and families
- Works directly with children, young people and families

## Intensive & Specialist Support

- Looked after children
- Care Leavers
- Youth Offending Service
- Disabled children

*Specialist statutory services will continue*

*New service will be delivered through Children and Family Centres and a network of 'outreach' locations*





# Children and Family Centres

- Combine services currently provided by the Children's Centres and Early Intervention Hubs
- Centres based in areas of highest need across Oxfordshire
- OCC staff and other professionals use centres as base to work with families in need of support
- Venue for delivery of evidence based interventions for 0-19 year olds, targeted to those in greatest need, either by OCC staff or commissioned
- Evidence based interventions will include parenting programmes, domestic abuse support, early attachment, school readiness, education and training
- Outreach working in local communities for groups, families and individuals, using community spaces as well as family homes when appropriate

North Oxfordshire	Central Oxfordshire	South Oxfordshire
Banbury	Blackbird Leys	Abingdon
Bicester	Rosehill/Littlemore	Didcot
Witney	Barton/Sandhills	



# Consultation





# How they responded

- 2715 responses received to consultation
- 850 people engaged with at meetings and events

Consultation Channel	Number of responses
Paper questionnaire	666
On-line questionnaire	1575
Emails	88
Letters	36
Tweets	322
Facebook posts	28
Total	2715



# Response

- Fear of losing preventative services
- Concerns of stigma
- How do you deliver services to a rural local community from 8 main centres?



# Outcome

- Retained £2m
- Universal & preventative services enhanced
- 44 local conversations
- Use of evidence based interventions in the new model

# Revised Model

← Value of preventative interventions increases

Complexity and level of need increases →

## New Integrated Children's Service

### Universal Services

- Education
- Healthcare

### Locality & Community Support

- Supports schools, health services & community & voluntary groups
- Identifies emerging needs and safeguarding concerns
- Works directly with professionals who support children, young people and families

### Family Support

- Some open access services
- Case work for children and their families requiring statutory social care support
- Case work for some families with multiple needs
- Targeted preventative programmes to support children, young people and families

### Intensive & Specialist Support

- Looked after children
- Care Leavers
- Youth Offending Service
- Disabled children

### 8 Children & Family Centres

#### Outreach Work

- County wide locations
- Based on need
- Delivered locally in communities

#### Mobile Bus

Single bus providing additional rural coverage

#### Open Access

- Stay and play
- Drop in youth sessions

*Specialist statutory services will continue*



**OXFORDSHIRE  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

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# Children's Centres: impact

Professor Kathy Sylva  
University of Oxford

*Early Years, Parenting and Family Relationships  
Conference, Birmingham*

*12<sup>th</sup> July 2016*



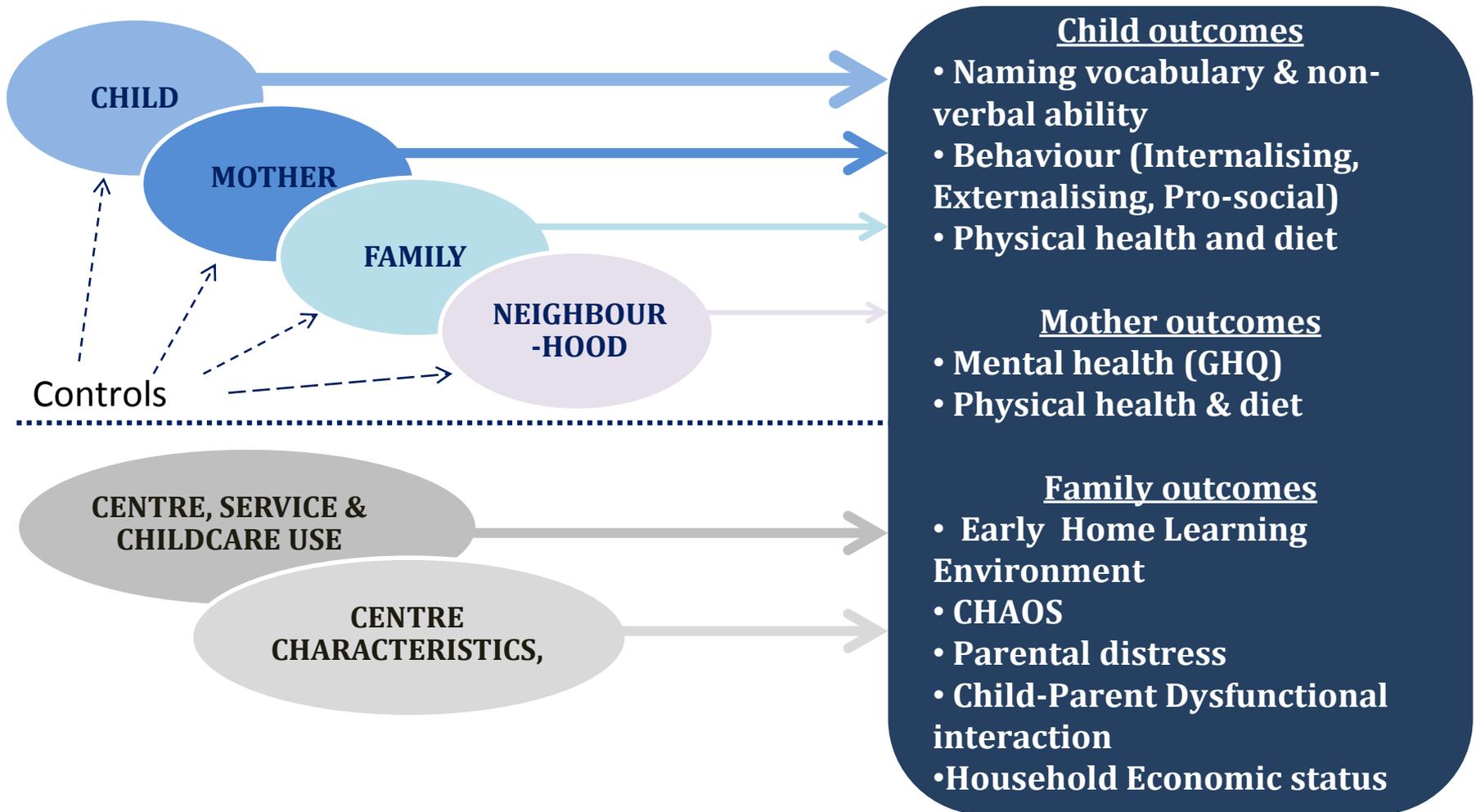
# Do children's centres promote better outcomes for families, parents, and children?

- Impact is explored using statistical models that predict child, parent, and family outcomes when children were age 3 years, after controlling for other influences such as family background or gender
- Use of different services is measured over 3 time points, around the ages of 1, 2 and 3 years

# Analysis strategy for Exploring Impact

- Families entered the study when children were 9-18 months. They were followed up one year and two years later
- The sample included 2,608 families registered with 117 CCs across England
- Parents were interviewed in homes at 1 and 3 years, and by telephone at 2 years. Children's development was assessed in homes when they were 3 years

# Modelling Effects on Outcomes



- Contextualised models (CA) for child cognitive and behavioural outcomes where no baseline measure was available
- Change models (CVA) for mother and family outcomes where baseline measures were available

# Investigating impact: CC Predictors

*Significant child, mother, family, and neighbourhood characteristics*

**Outcomes at child age 3+ years**

## **Families' use of children's centres, centre services & childcare over time**

- *Use of children's centres (registered/ any)*
- *Duration of use of registered centre*
- *Use of services and types over time*
- *Use of outreach services over time*
- *Use of formal childcare over time*

## **Centre characteristics & processes (registered only)**

- *Centre characteristics over time*
- *Services provided by centre over time*
- *Use of formal childcare over time, including outside the CC*

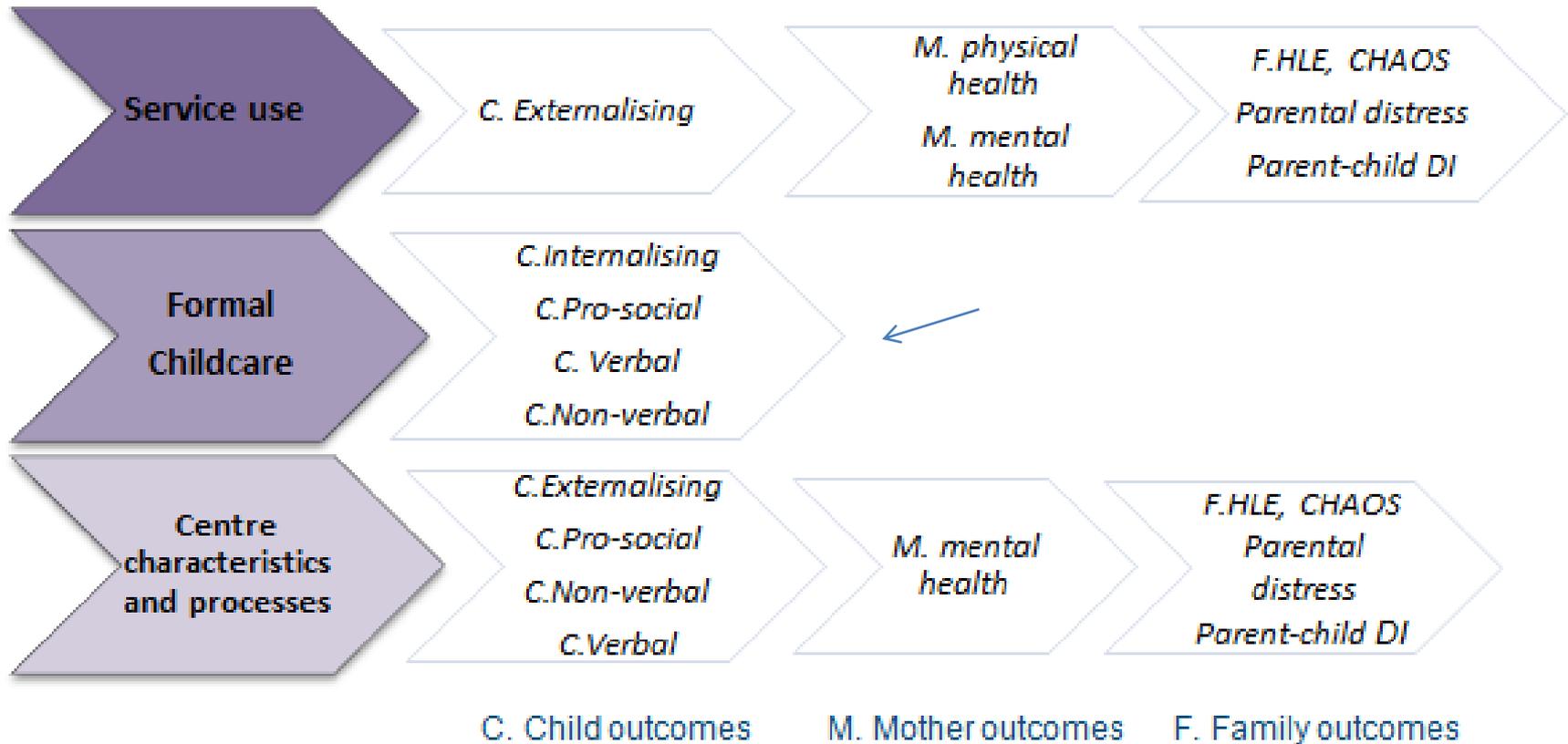
**Tested individually and in combination**

**Child**

**Mother**

**Parenting/family**

# Drawing together the Impact Findings - Overview of Positive Impacts\*



\* Note: No significant positive effects identified for change in child health or Household Economic Status (workless household).

\*\*All significant effects were small to modest in size

# Investigating Impact:

## Child outcomes and Service use

- Higher formal childcare use (anywhere) predicted better cognitive outcomes, lower levels of *internalising* behaviour and greater *pro-social* skills

Effect size	<i>Externalising</i>	<i>Internalising</i>	<i>Prosocial</i>	<i>Vocabulary</i>	<i>Non-verbal</i>
Intermittent	ns	-0.20**	0.15*	0.12#	0.10#
Long term	ns	-0.31***	0.14*	ns	0.10#
Comparison group: None		Significance values: #p<0.08 *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001			

- Children whose families used CC services at baseline (compared to none) showed lower levels of later *externalising* behaviour at age 3 years
- Little evidence that CC service use predicted improvements in children's cognitive outcomes at age 3 years

# Investigating Impact: Child outcomes

- Lower levels of *externalising* and higher levels of *pro-social* behaviour found for children at centres with more 'named' programmes at baseline and those that increased the number of named programmes for families

Effect size	<i>External-ising</i>	<i>Internal-ising</i>	<i>Prosocial</i>	<i>Vocab.</i>	<i>Non-verb.</i>
No of named programmes	-0.10#		0.13*		
Increase in named programmes	-0.12*		0.27***		
High Partner Agency resourcing (vs none)			0.16*		0.14#
School led (vs Local government)			0.13#	0.15#	
Significance values: #p<0.08 *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001 Blank cell=Not significant					

- Children registered at school-led centres showed better *pro-social* behaviour and had higher vocabulary scores

# Investigating Impact:

## Family outcomes and Service use

- Service use predicted most family outcomes in some way, but was strongest for reductions in *CHAOS* and improvements in the *Early Home Learning Environment*

Effect size	<i>CHAOS</i>	<i>Early HLE</i>	<i>Parental distress</i>	<i>Parent-Child dysfunct. Interaction</i>
Any use (Reg CC)	-0.24**			
Any services (Reg CC)	-0.15*			
Long term use of Reg CC		0.19*		
Significance values: #p<0.08 *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001 Blank cell=Not significant				

# Investigating Impact:

## Family outcomes and Children's Centres Characteristics

- Families registered at CC with moderate partner-agency resourcing (compared with none) showed reductions in *parent-child dysfunctional interaction*
- Families registered at centres not experiencing cuts (either growth or stasis versus cuts) showed consistently better outcomes

Effect size	<i>CHAOS</i>	<i>Early HLE</i>	<i>Parental distress</i>	<i>Parent-Child Dysfunction. Interaction</i>
Moderate Partner Agency resourcing (vs none)				-0.13*
Centre growing or remaining same v reducing	-0.19*	0.22*	-0.15*	-0.12*

# Changes in Resourcing

- Supported growth' centres (34%)
  - had reported little or no cuts that affected staffing or services and were adding new services;
  - Served smaller, more disadvantaged reach areas
  - Their users were more likely to: live in highly disadvantaged neighbourhoods; be financially disadvantaged; have few qualifications; show poorer mental health.
  - More likely to attract high need families from within their reach areas, which may be a function of the smaller geographical size of their reach areas.

# Conclusions (1)

- CCs have evolved over the evaluation period
- Findings show more impact on outcomes for families and mothers; fewer effects for child outcomes (especially cognitive skills and child health) and Household Economic Status (SES)
- Few children attended childcare at their registered centre (8% at Wave 3). Centres signpost families to Private/Charitable childcare provision
- A number of measures of families' service use and characteristics of CC predicted better outcomes. These effects were more numerous than expected by chance.
- Children's centres are targeting high need families for specialised services, in line with their core purpose

# Conclusions (2)

- Nonetheless, the main driver of child, mother & family outcomes is family background. The effects of financial disadvantage, mother's education and the Toddler Home Learning Environment are still strongest. Children's centre use helps to lessen but does not eliminate influence of disadvantage.
- Evidence that CCs help to improve outcomes for all, but especially important for the High financial disadvantage group
- Challenges to the analysis included:
  - variations in the services and families' use of services,
  - policy changes over time,
  - and the short term (2 year) nature of the analysis of change
- CC vary and families pattern of use varies too, thus no single intervention can be tested. It is important to recognise this 'real life' constraint on evaluation design.

# Websites

An overview of the project and its publications can be found at:

## **DfE**

Published Reports: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/evaluation-of-childrens-centres-in-england-ecce>

Evangelou et al (2014) **Evaluation of Children's Centres in England (ECCE) Strand 3: Parenting Services in Children's Centres**

Sylva et al (2014) **Evaluation of Children's Centres in England (ECCE) Strand 3 Integrated Report**

## ***University of Oxford:***

<http://www.education.ox.ac.uk/research/fell/research/evaluation-of-children-centres-in-england-ecce/>

## ***Natcen:***

<http://www.natcen.ac.uk/our-research/research/evaluation-of-children%E2%80%99s-centres-in-england/>



# Group discussion

- How much influence does and should research evidence have on practice in this transformation area?
- What are the implications of the new evidence for service commissioning and delivery?
- What can evidence be designed to better inform local practice?



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# Questions and comments from the floor with

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