

Evidence for impact: International and local perspectives
on improving outcomes for children and young people.

A ONE DAY SYMPOSIUM



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**Fellow of the Centre for Social Policy Dartington and
Curator of the R Word**

#evidence4impact



Conference partners acknowledge the
generous support of **The Creswick Foundation**

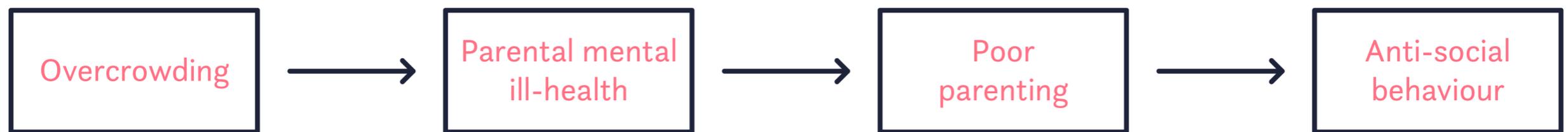


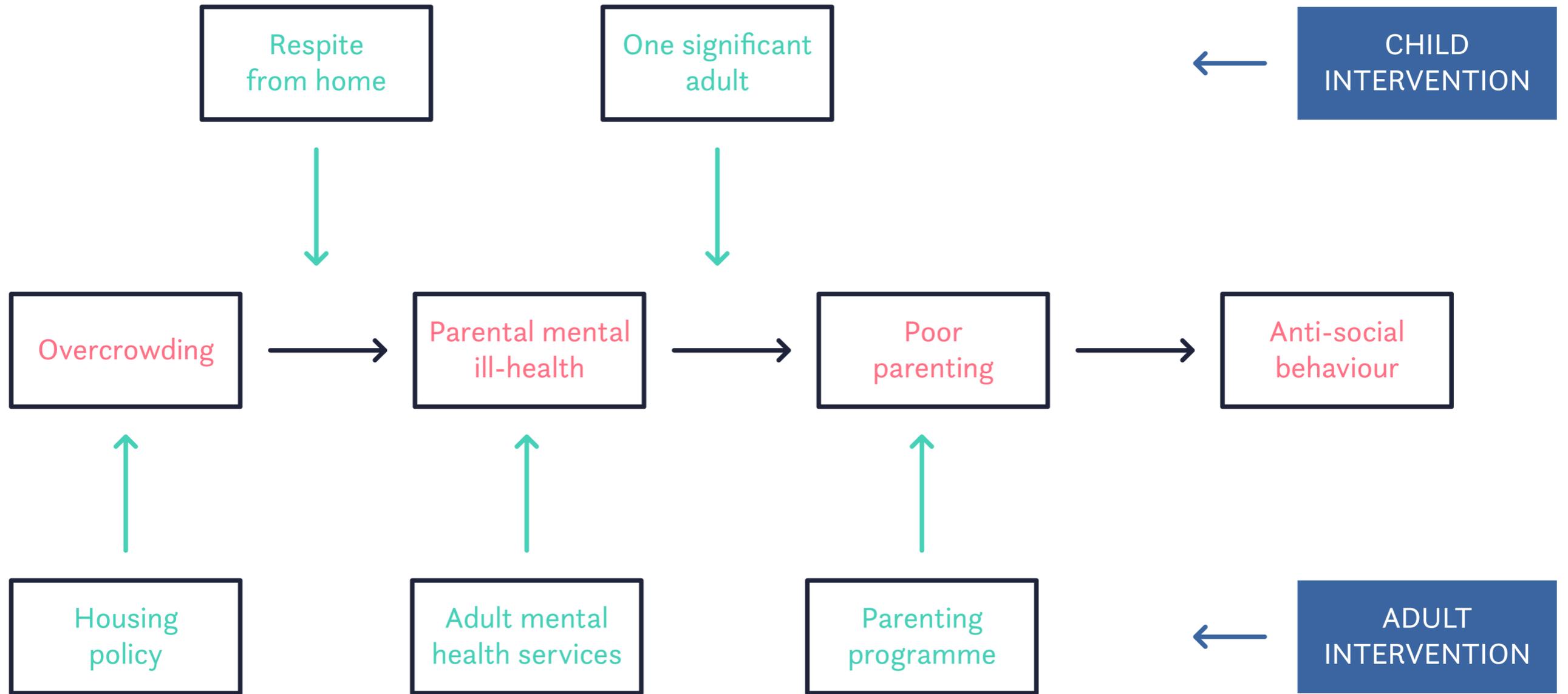
Relational Social Policy: Implications for Policy and Evidence

Michael Little

How we have thought about responding to need

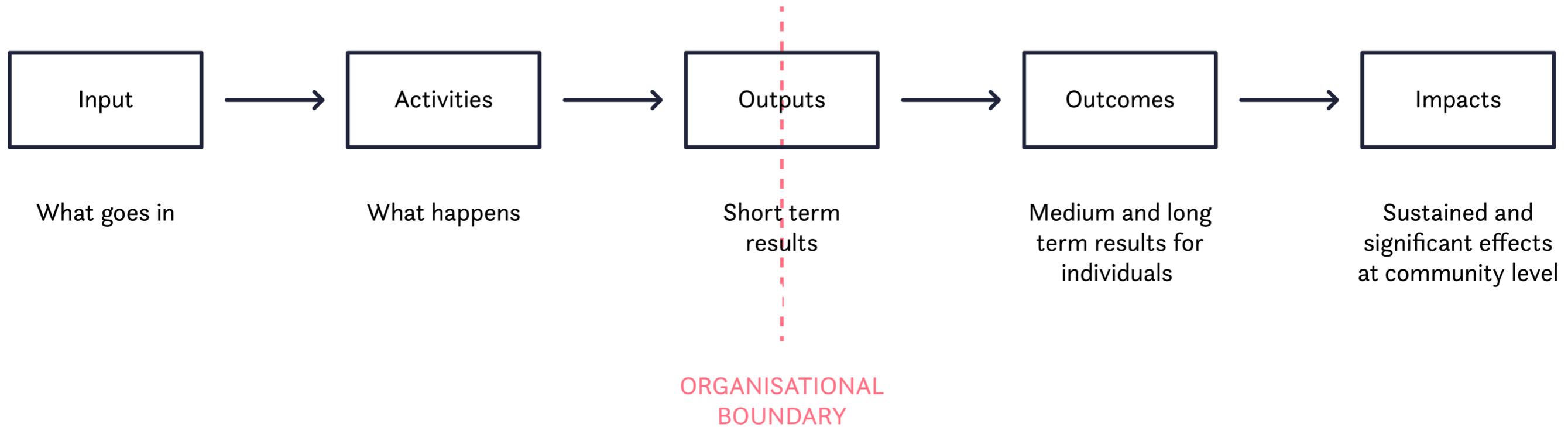






Standard Model: Focus on Children and Adults





Standard Model: New Public Management



- Norfolk 2003-2006
- Ireland 2004-2015
- Birmingham 2005-2008
- Scotland (x5) 2010-2016
- England (x15) 2013-2023

- Greater use of high quality evidence
- Clear indication of improved outcomes for children and young people
- Greater expenditure on prevention and early intervention
- Better use of scarce resources
- Greater accountability of public system leaders and practitioners



- Tests a theory: e.g. these risks lead to this outcome; e.g. this intervention reduces risk
- Includes counterfactual: i.e. what would happen in absence of intervention?
- Measures impact: e.g. $O_c = \text{Outcome}$
- Controls for other influences: i.e. would it have improved anyway?
- It is method that matters not subjective opinion: ideally independent of programme originator

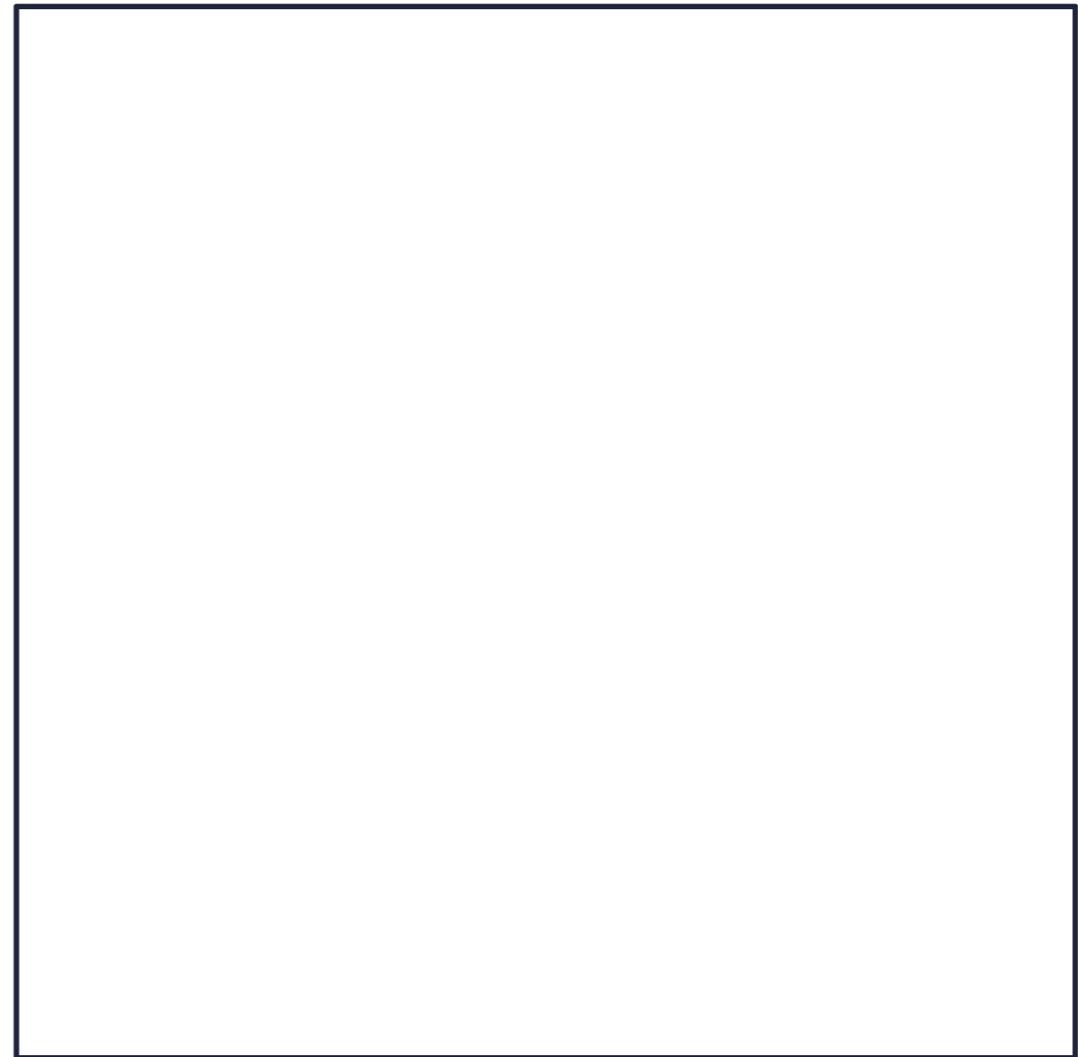


Limitations of the Standard Model

Why we have not made as much
progress as we anticipated

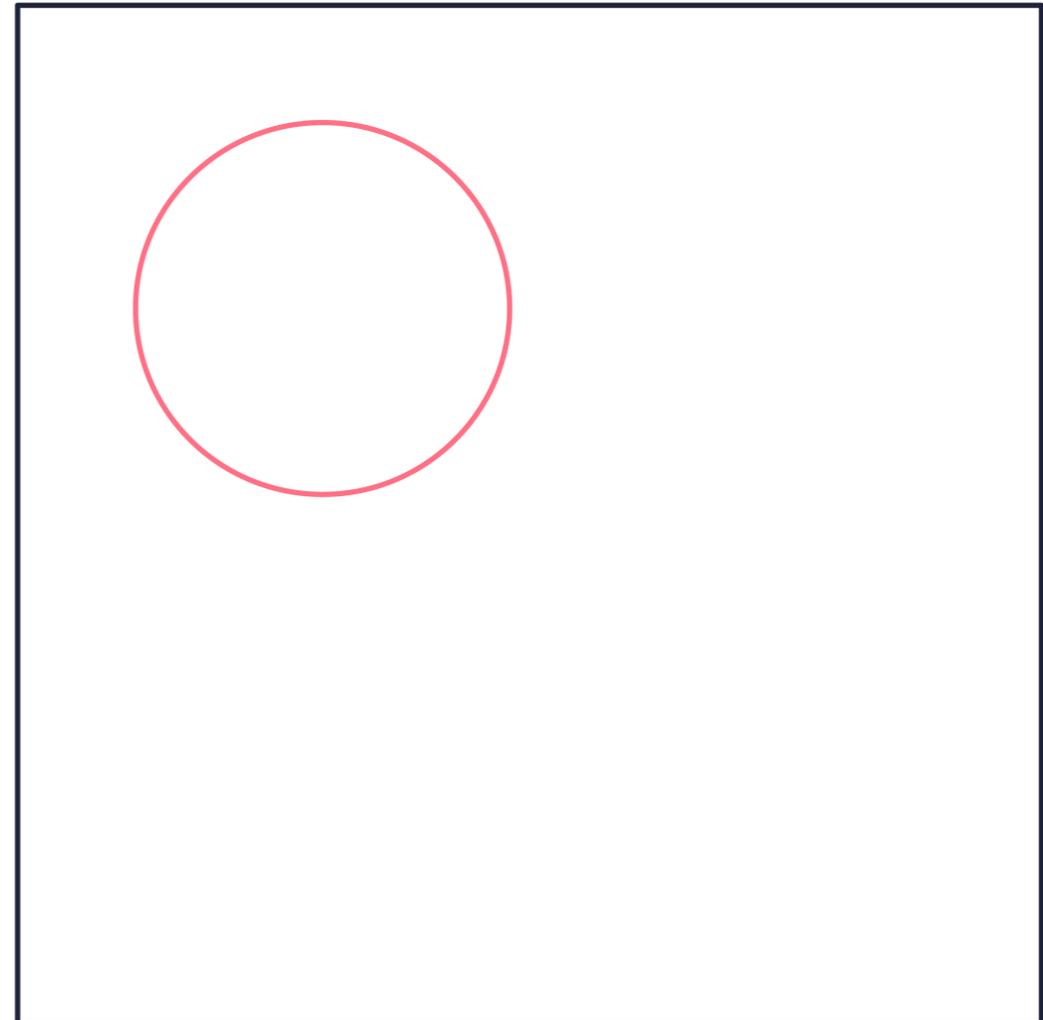
The Challenge of the Third Circle

First, we draw a box to capture all of the children and young people in a community.



The Challenge of the Third Circle

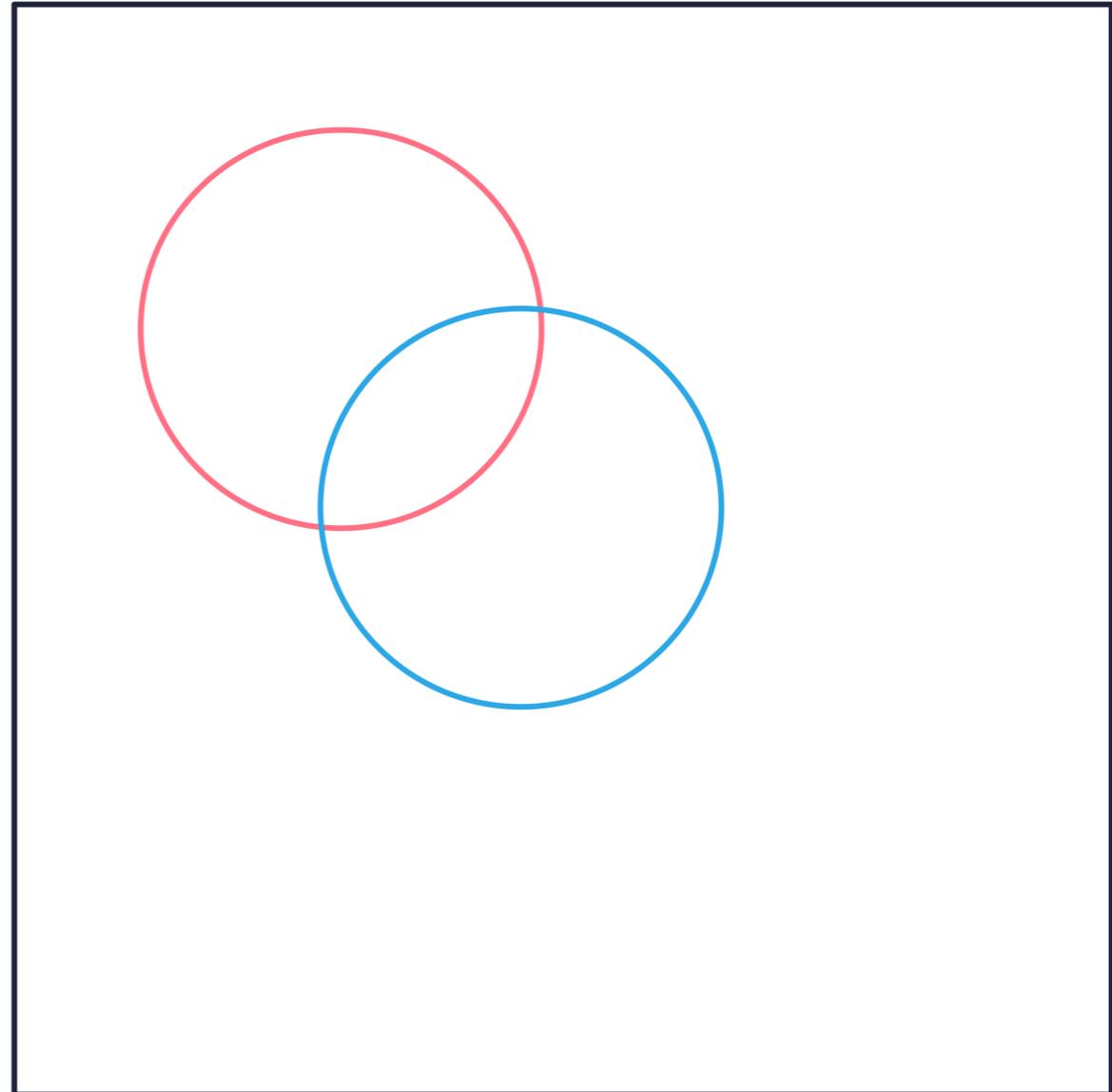
Next we draw a red circle to capture children and young people in high need - typically about 20%



The Challenge of the Third Circle

Next we add a blue circle indicating children and young people getting high end services - also typically about 20%

Note how there is very poor overlap. Most children in high need do not receive high end services; most children getting high end services are not in greatest need

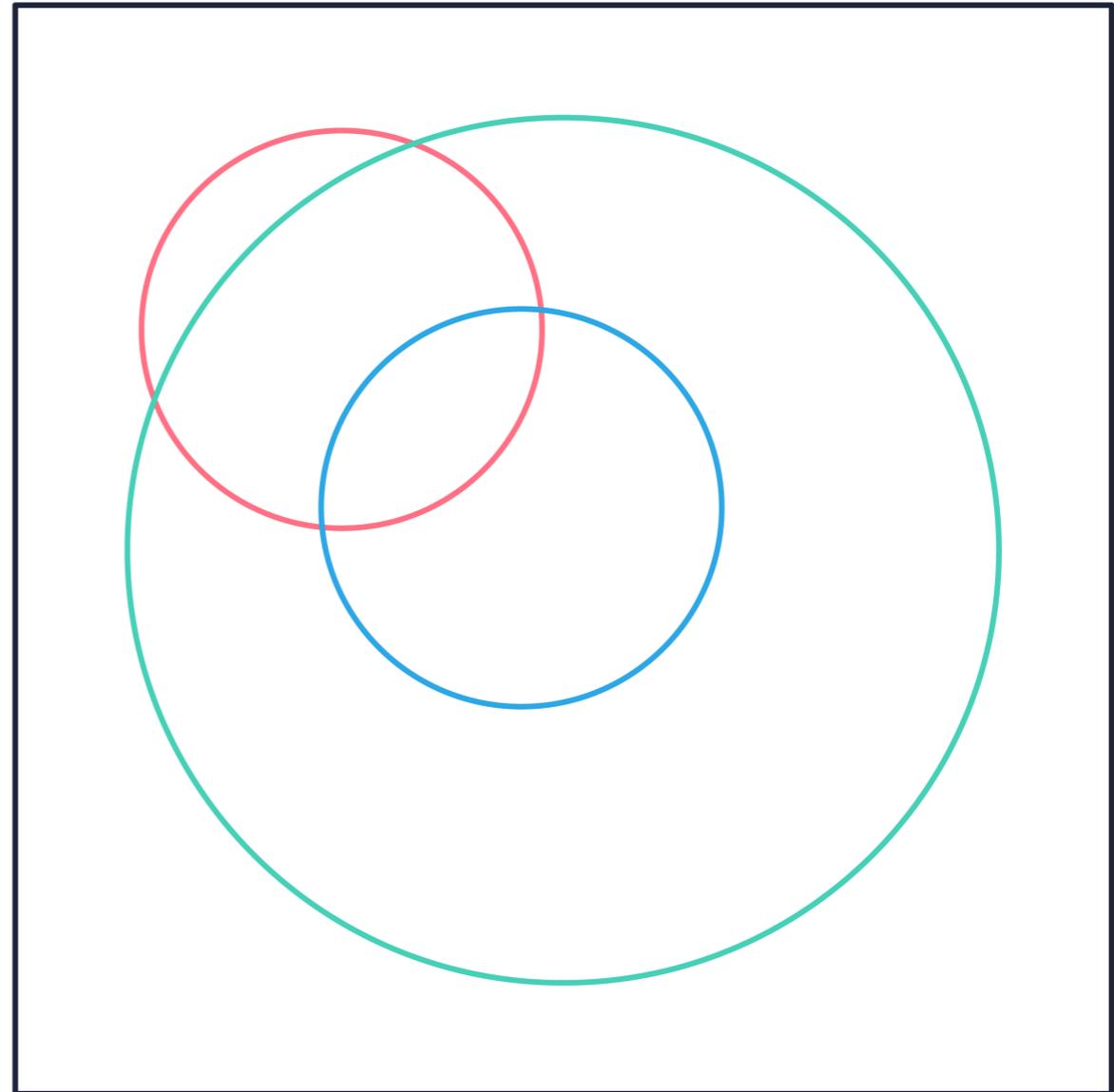


The Challenge of the Third Circle

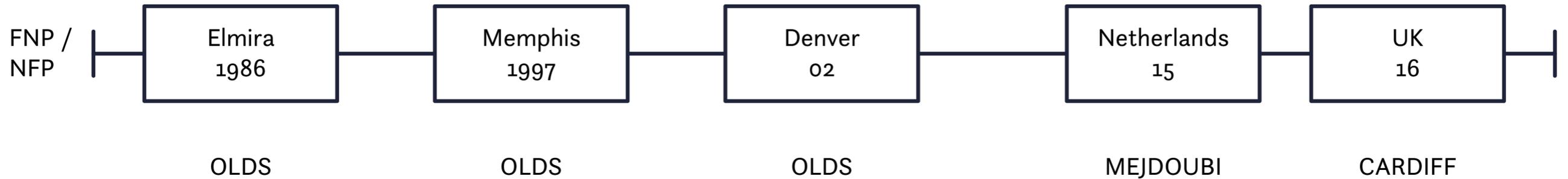
Lastly we add the third -green- circle. This captures children and young people supported by civil society - about 90%

In other words much more need is addressed by family, friends, neighbours, local activists, non-state supported NGOs than is addressed by public systems

What is going on in this civil society circle?



The Challenge of Sequential Evaluation



The Challenge of Scale

- The most scaled evidence based programme in the world is Family Nurse Partnership
- It has a 'market' penetration in the UK of about 20%
- That is more than Nurse Family Partnership in the USA (about 15%)
- But it means that the great majority of eligible young mothers do not get FNP
- And, by the way, the latest evaluation shows no impact on outcomes

- Evidence Based Programmes are clunky. They are difficult to scale
- Very high impact x very low reach = not much impact at a community level
- I will talk more about this issue of scale in other presentations here in Melbourne



What Happened to the 'L' in 'MLE'

- In the English speaking world we talk of MLE: Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation
 - We have lots of monitoring: we collect lots of information, little of which is used
 - More evaluation is undertaken than ever
 - But is there evidence that we are learning more?
-
- Data has become a reflex
 - It is used to control and to hold people and organisations to account
 - And it is narrowly focused on outputs and outcomes



Limited Effects that are Difficult to Replicate

- Evidence Based Programmes (supported by experimental evidence) have proliferated
- In the last 30 years, many hundreds have been designed and tested
- Mostly in the United States (where science and evidence is accorded more respect)
- But effect sizes are routinely modest (<0.3)
- Many do not translate well to countries with a strong welfare state
- And results are difficult to replicate

- There are exceptions: Incredible Years; Functional Family Therapy



Next Generation Models: Relational Social Policy

Where we might go next, and
what it means for evidence

Relational Social Policy

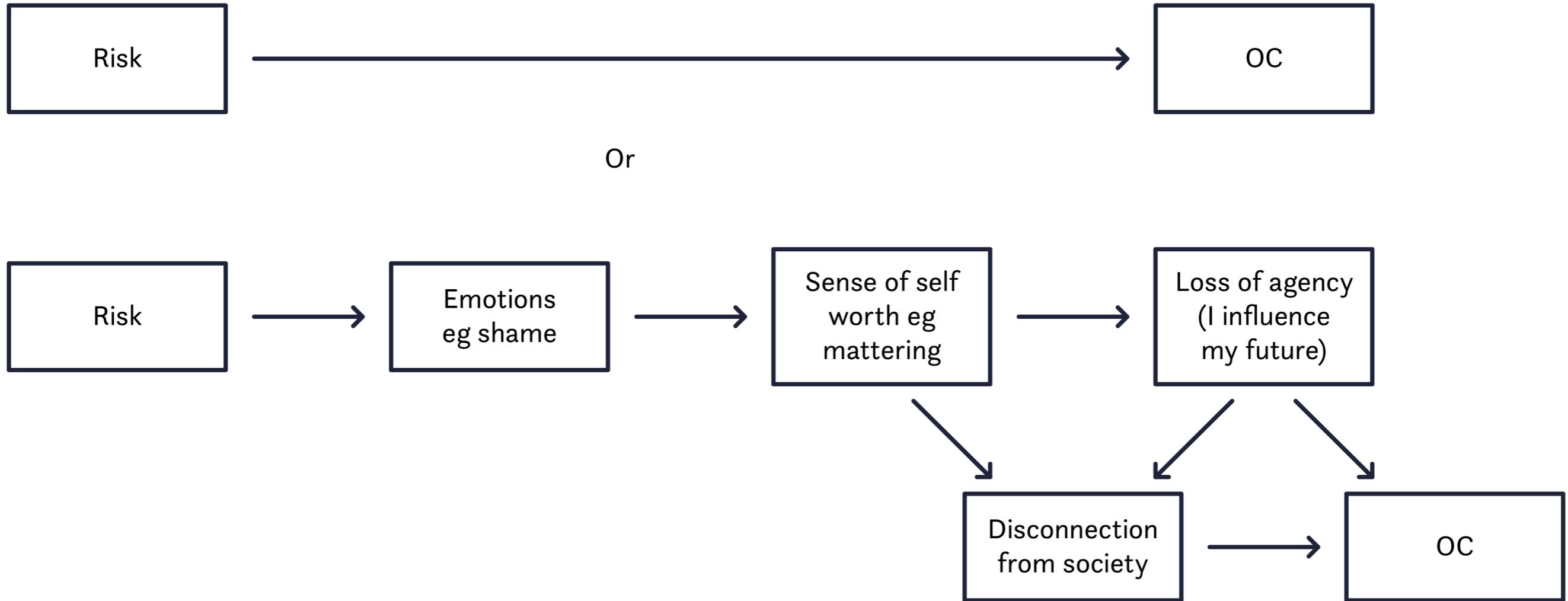
- This is not an alternative to the standard model
- There is still a need for evidence, better prevention, early intervention and more efficient public systems

Relational Social Policy addresses:

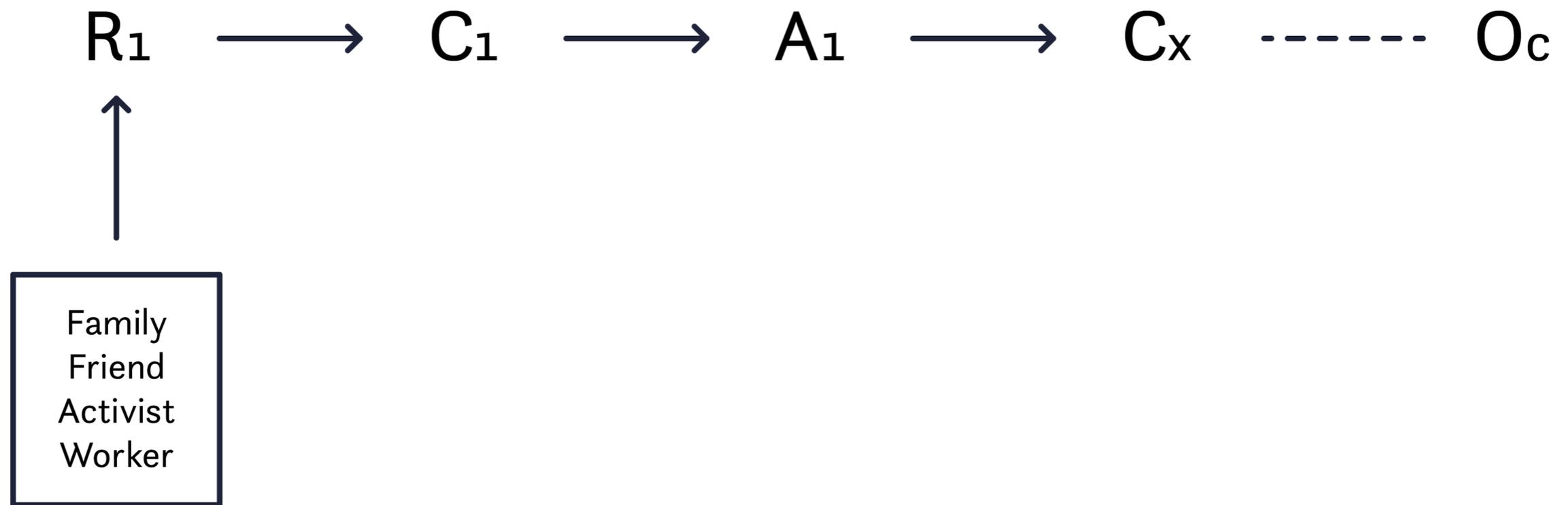
- The Third Circle of Civil Society
- The Challenge of Scale
- The L in MLE
- The Replication Crisis



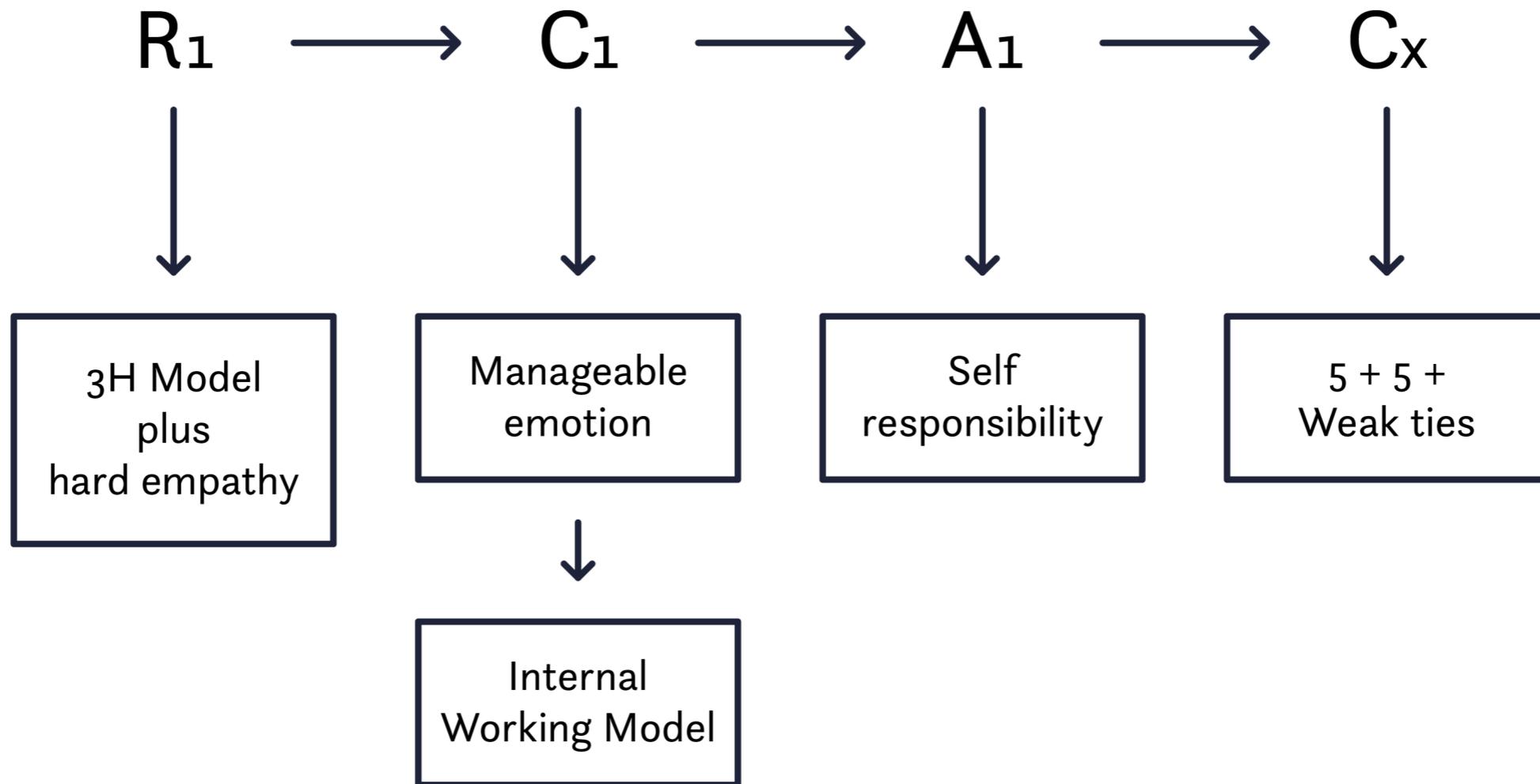
Relational Social Policy: The Source of Disadvantage



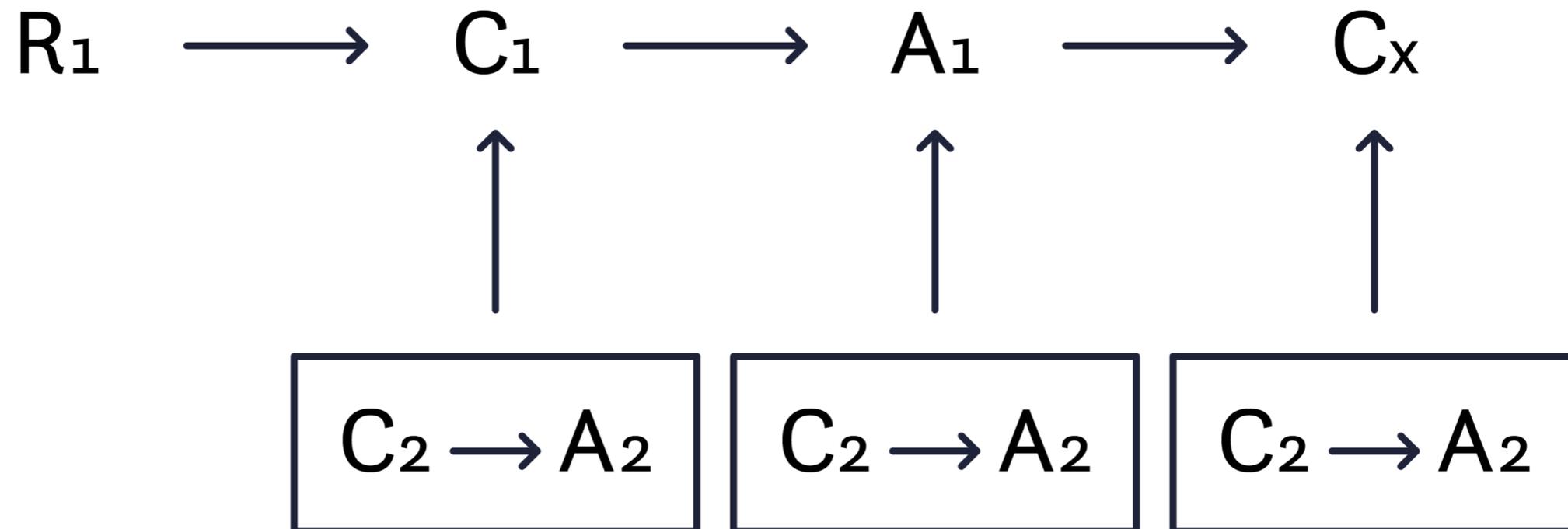
Relational Social Policy: How Relationships Make A Difference



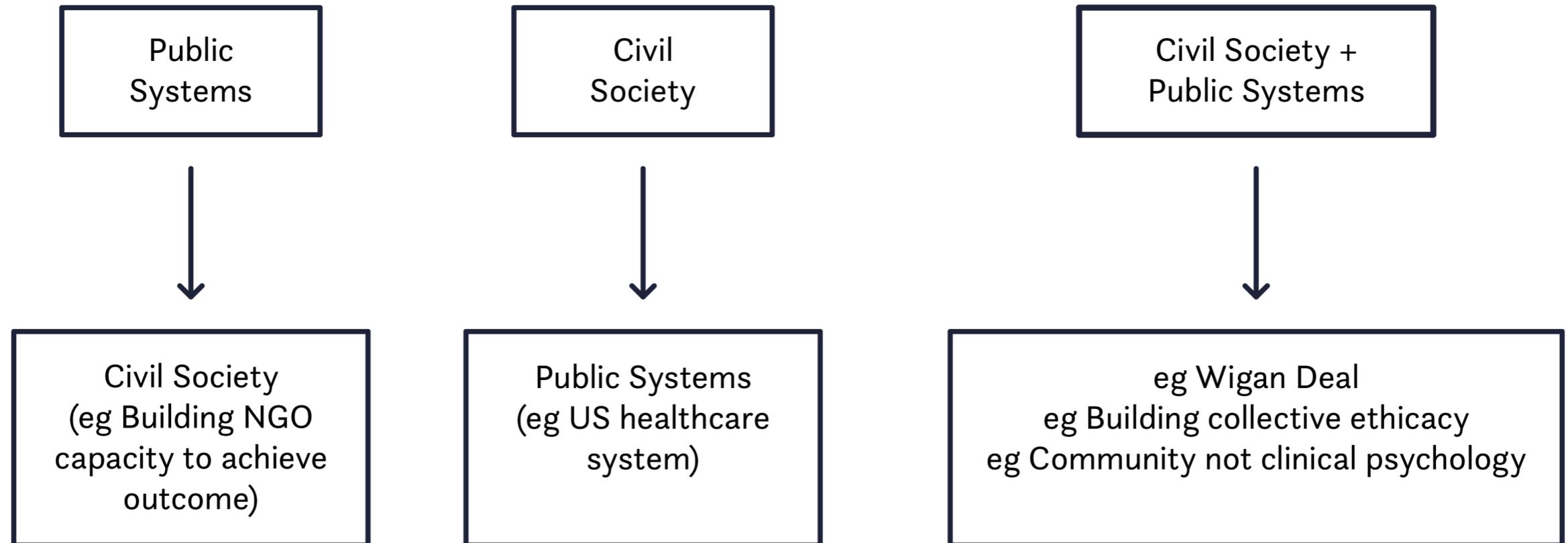
Relational Social Policy: We Can Still Measure The Impact



Relational Social Policy: Influence of Civil Society



Relational Social Policy: Public Systems and Civil Society



Relational Social Policy: Consequences

What this means for public policy

Policy and Practice Consequences: #1

- It's not an intervention!
- We are talking about relationships, not interventions
- Of course, sometimes it is both relationship and intervention
- But in civil society, it is generally a relationship, a series of conversations



Policy and Practice Consequences: #2

- It's not an intervention!
 - The standard model can get in the way
-
- The standard model with its focus on outcomes, outputs and data can get in the way
 - Hilary Cottam found that social workers in Swindon spent 30% of their time with families, and 70% of their time writing down reports about their visits



Policy and Practice Consequences: #3

- It's not an intervention!
 - The standard model can get in the way
 - The balance between public systems and civil society will change
-
- Safe Families for Children provides support for families whose children would otherwise come into state foster care
 - It provides three types of volunteer offering resources, friendship and respite (they take the children to stay in their homes)
 - The volunteers are doing what we have traditionally paid foster parents to do



Policy and Practice Consequences: #4

- It's not an intervention!
 - The standard model can get in the way
 - The balance between public systems and civil society will change
 - The role of technology
-
- West London Zone is a 'placed based' initiative focused on children and young people
 - It doesn't provide any interventions
 - It is an 'Uber', collecting small amounts of very smart data which it uses to connect children in need with community and public system resources



Policy and Practice Consequences: #5

- It's not an intervention!
 - The standard model can get in the way
 - The balance between public systems and civil society will change
 - The role of technology
 - Building relational capability in civil society
-
- 5+5+Weak Ties
 - Collective Efficacy
 - Social Capital



Policy and Practice Consequences: #6

- It's not an intervention!
- The standard model can get in the way
- The balance between public systems and civil society will change
- The role of technology
- Building relational capability in civil society
- Go beyond outcomes and impact of intervention

- How people feel matters, for example shame
- It matters that people feel that they matter!
- Young people feel responsible for their own development

- Individual workers matter
- Some have more relational capability than others
- Systems can enhance or hinder relational capability
- Often the relationship will matter more than the intervention



Relational Social Policy: Consequences

What this means for evidence

Consequences for Evidence: #1

- C matters as much as Oc
- We have spent a lot of time counting Oc = outcomes (and Ot = outputs)
- But most young people in need are disconnected from public systems
- They are out of school and out of work
- If the public system doesn't connect, it cannot help
- Five per cent of young people in greatest need are disconnected from public systems and civil society
- In Melbourne that is about 1,500 young people aged 16-18, and 4,500 young people aged 16-14 years.



Consequences for Evidence: #2

- C matters as much as Oc
 - We have to get smart about measuring C
-
- 5+5+Weak Ties
 - Use of technology



Consequences for Evidence: #3

- C matters as much as Oc
- We have to get smart about measuring C
- Consumer voice matters

- We know the factors associated with relational capability
- But they are not very useful in selecting people who have that capability
- But young people are good at the selection
- They are highly attuned to workers who demonstrate '3H' qualities



Consequences for Evidence: #4

- C matters as much as Oc
- We have to get smart about measuring C
- Consumer voice matters
- Measure impact at the community level not programme level

- It is good to know that programme A is more effective than programme B
- But what really matters is how all young people in a community are doing
- That they:
 - are connected
 - happy and healthy
 - and feel that they matter



Consequences for Evidence: #4

- C matters as much as Oc
 - We have to get smart about measuring C
 - Consumer voice matters
 - Measure impact at the community level not programme level
 - Which means we scientists have to up our game
-
- It is good to know that programme A is more effective than programme B
 - But what really matters is how all young people in a community are doing
 - That they:
 - are connected
 - happy and healthy
 - and feel that they matter



Relational Social Policy: Definition

If the previous arguments hold,
what do we mean by the term
'relational social policy'

Relational Social Policy: Definition

- It is not exclusive: it is one of several approaches to social policy
- Focuses on relationships not intervention (some interventions have strong relational components that might account for a large part of their success)
- Focuses on connection not outcomes (better connection may, in many cases, lead to better outcomes)
- Focuses on the 'third circle' of social connection (this will generally include those in the 'second' system circle)
- Assumes influence at three levels:
 - R1 -a one-to-one relationship between helper and helped
 - R2 -contexts that encourage healthy R1 relationships
 - R3 -the relationships between civil society organisations, between public systems and between civil society and public systems



Relational Social Policy: Science for Policy

- Relational social policy is hard not soft: it is enhanced by good science and evidence
- We are particularly interested in science that:
 - assumes a role for human agency in trajectories (in addition to risk and protection)
 - looks within the black box (looks inside the person, not just from outside)
 - assumes people can be both 'good' and 'bad' at different stages in their development (it doesn't see an 'outcome' as an endpoint)



The R Word

Type in the words:

- The R Word
- Medium

into Google and you will get to a new twice weekly blog about this emerging work, with contributions from scientists, designers, philosophers, young people, policy makers and practitioners.

Michael Little

Michael Little worked at and directed the Dartington Social Research Unit for many years. This work contributed to the advance of high quality evidence in public policy, and what is described in this talk as the 'standard model'.

In 2014 with Rebeca Sandu, Michael published a book called Bringing Everything I Am Into One Place. It assembled ideas on how to support the most disadvantaged young people in our societies, and set out the first semblance of the idea of relational social policy as described in this talk.

In 2017 Michael is seeking collaborations to exploit the potential of relational social policy. If you have ideas that can help shape this work, Michael can be contacted at: michael.little@me.com.

There are many groups contributing to this type of thinking. Look out particularly for Hilary Cottam, Charlie Howard, Danny Kruger, Jon Zaff at Center for Promise, Boston University, Center for Social Policy in Washington DC, Search Institute in USA.

Read more on The R Word: <https://medium.com/therword/the-r-word-ec124d4d39d7>