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The project is funded by the Justice Programme of the European Union (2014-2020)



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"Hope
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Children"

'Child First' assessment

by Stephen Case

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Why assess 'Risk'?

- **Globalisation**, 'risk society'
- **Neo-liberalism**: responsabilisation, neo-correctionalism
- **Modernisation**: managerialism, evidence-based policy & practice
- **Misspent Youth** – risk-based early intervention
- **Political & academic arguments** - welfare & justice not working

Risk Factor Prevention Paradigm

The basic idea of risk-focused prevention is very simple: **Identify the key risk factors for offending** and **implement prevention** methods designed to counteract them. There is often a related attempt to **identify key protective factors** against offending and to implement prevention methods designed to enhance them' (Farrington 2007: 606).



Risk Factor Prevention Paradigm

‘A key advantage of the **risk factor prevention paradigm** is that it **links explanation and prevention**, fundamental and applied research, and scholars and practitioners. Importantly, the paradigm is easy to understand and to communicate, and it is **readily accepted by policy makers, practitioners, and the general public**. Both risk factors and interventions are **based on empirical research rather than theories**. The paradigm avoids difficult theoretical questions about which risk factors have causal effects’

(Farrington, 2007: 7).

Risk-based assessment-intervention

- Identify the **'risk factors'** associated with offending behaviour to inform **'effective' intervention** programmes
- **Psychosocial domains** of risk
- Risk of reoffending is **scored and categorised (risk assessment)**
- Intervention is **'scaled'** to risk category / level (**'what works'**)

Problems with risk assessment

- **Deficit-based** - identifies weaknesses to **correct**
- **Negative** or neutral focus
- **Over-simplified**
- **Criminalising**, 'offender first'
- **Adult-centric** – Childrens' voices? Children's rights?
- **Deprofessionalising**

'Child First'

- **Strategic objective and guiding principle** for youth justice
- **Redressing concerns** about past youth justice:
 - Did not sufficiently prioritise **children's rights**;
 - **Responsibilised** children beyond their capacities;
 - Relied on a **deficit model** of managing offending risk;
 - **Did not engage constructively** with children and families;
 - Ignores **criminogenic effects of system involvement**

Child First: Youth Justice Board

1. See children as children

Prioritise the **best interests** of children, recognising their particular **needs, capacities, rights & potential**. All work is **child-focused**, developmentally informed, acknowledges structural barriers & meets responsibilities towards children.

2. Develop pro-social identity for positive child outcomes

Promote children's individual **strengths & capacities** to develop their pro-social identity for sustainable **desistance**, leading to safer communities and fewer victims. All work is **constructive & future-focused**, built on **supportive relationships** that empower children to fulfil their potential & make positive contributions to society.

Child First: Youth Justice Board

3. Collaboration with children

Encourage active **participation, engagement & wider social inclusion**. All work is a **meaningful collaboration** with children & their carers.

4. Promote diversion

Promote a childhood removed from the justice system, using pre-emptive **prevention, diversion & minimal intervention**. All work minimises criminogenic stigma from contact with the system.

The evolution of Child First: PYJ as anti-risk

**'Children First,
Offenders Second'**
(Haines & Drakeford 1998)

Challenged the
'new youth justice'
of the CDA 1998

Criminalisation
through labelling
(ignoring 'child'
status)

Breaching
children's rights
under the UNCRC

Prioritising
***offence- &
offender-based***
interventions

Responsibilising
the child (&
parents)

Anti-child
strategies -
***punitive & risk-
based***

Threats to Child First assessment

- **Socio-economic insecurity:** Austerity, BREXIT
- **Government instability & uncertainty**
- **COVID** – contact, delayed justice, isolation
- **BAME disproportionality**
- Media & political **populism** (e.g. knife crime)
- **Adverse Childhood Experiences** agenda



Positive youth justice

Children First,
Offenders Second

Kevin Haines and Stephen Case

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYWPyiZIpV8>

<http://www.profstevecase.com/blog/4592945329/Children-first-justice-An-agenda-for-change/11266927>

Haines and Case (2015) Positive Youth Justice: *Children First, Offenders Second*. Policy Press

Byrne, B. and Case, S.P. (2016) Towards a positive youth justice. *Safer Communities*, 15 (2): 69-81

Facebook Positive Youth Justice group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/853804234630683/>



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ANY QUESTIONS? 😊

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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