



Children's Centres: Success, Decline and Future

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Environmental Rating Scales Network: Stevenage



Part 1: Do children's centres promote better outcomes for families, parents, and children? (Sammons et al 2015)

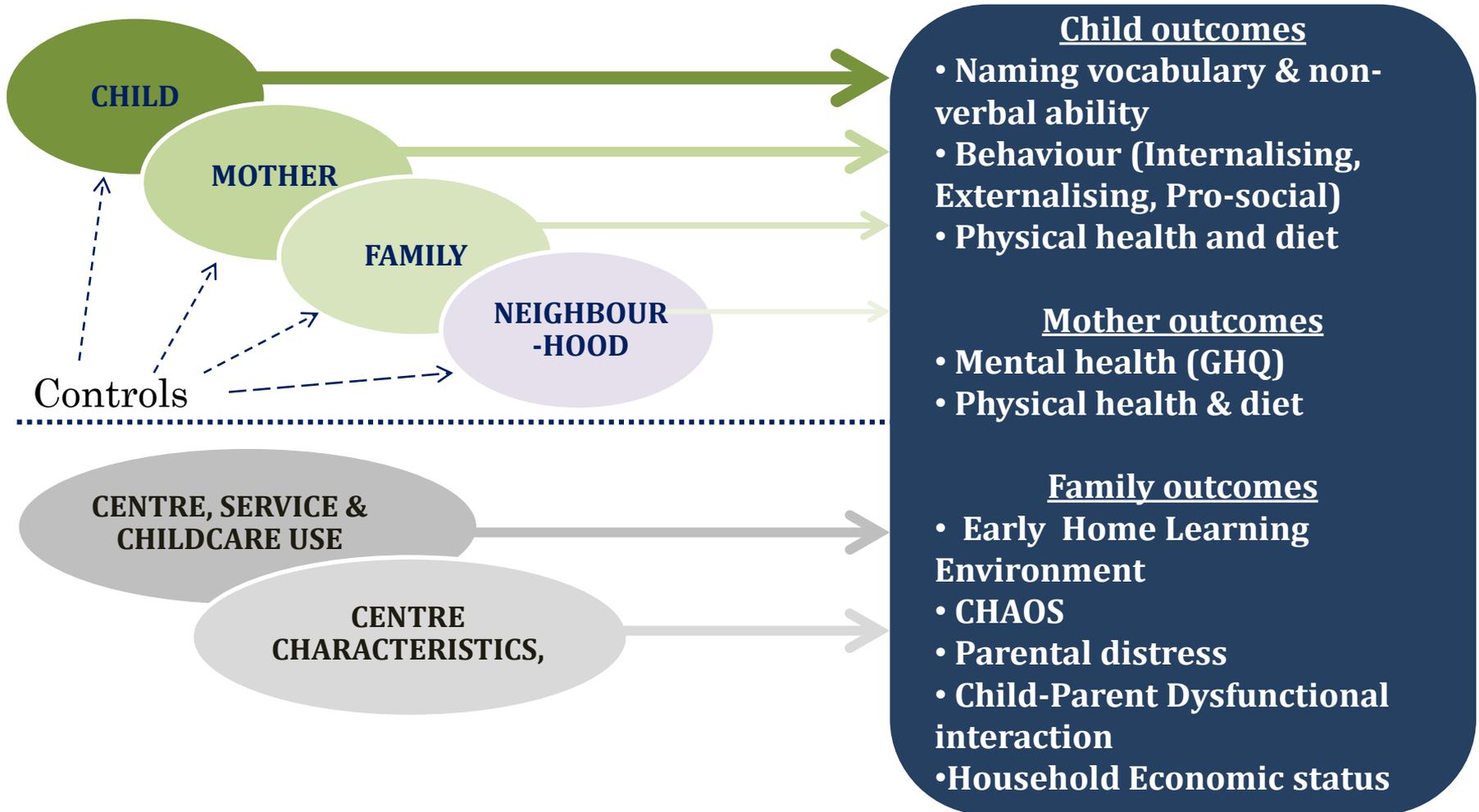
- Impact is explored using statistical models that predict child, parent, and family outcomes when children were age 3 years, after controlling for other influences such as family background or gender
- Use of different services is measured over 3 time points, around the ages of 1, 2 and 3 years



Analysis strategy for Exploring Impact

- Families recruited when children were 9-18 months.
Follow up 1, 2 years later
- N = 2,608 families registered with 117 CCs across England (nationally representative sample)
- Parents interviewed at 1, 2 and 3 years
- Children's development assessed at age 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

Outcomes at child age 3+ years

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

- *Use*
- *Duration of use*
- *Use of specific services in centre*
- *Use of outreach services*
- *Use of formal childcare in or out of centre*

Centre characteristics & services

Tested individually and in combination

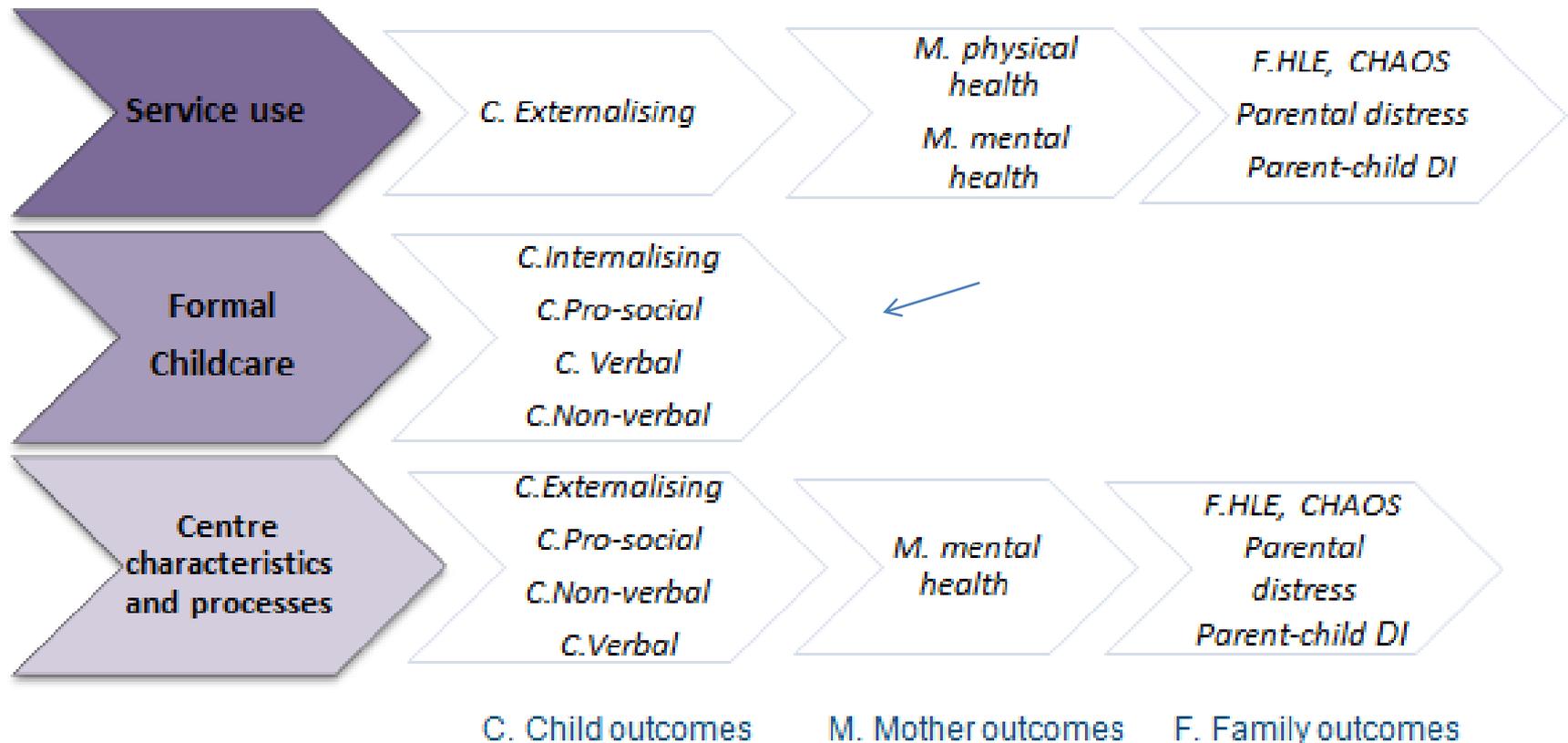
Child

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

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** (compared to none) showed lower levels of later *externalising* behaviour at age 3 years
- Higher formal **childcare use (anywhere)** predicted better cognitive outcomes, and greater *pro-social* skills
- Limited evidence that CC service use predicted improvements in children's cognitive outcomes at age 3 years (statistical trend only for non verbal reasoning and vocabulary)

Investigating impact of specific characteristics

Child outcomes

- Higher levels of *prosocial* 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					

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 (pre-school) Home Learning Environment*

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

Summary of impact of CC use: Part 1

- 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)
- A number of measures of families' service use predicted better outcomes, especially evidence based 'named programmes'
- Children's centres are targeting high need families for specialised services, in line with their core purpose
- Child cognitive outcomes were driven more by early childhood education and less by children's centre use by parents. Parent and family outcomes were driven by use of Children's Centres.

Part 2: Children's Centres 2017 Survival, decline or closure?

Survey of all local authorities in summer 2017 funded by the Sutton Trust

STOP START: Survival, decline or closure?

(G Smith, K Sylva, T Smith, A Omonigho and P Sammons - Sutton Trust website 2017/18)



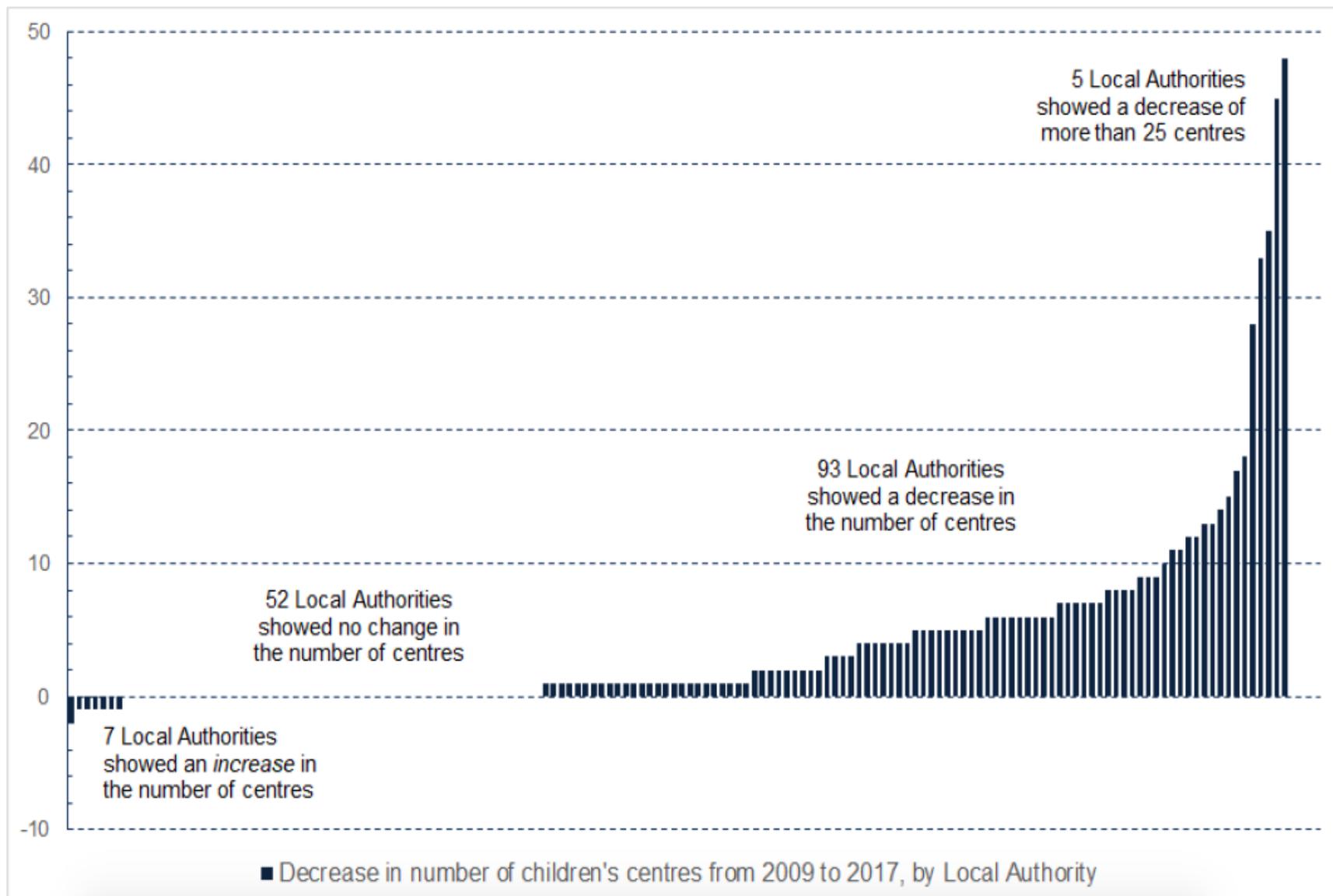
Research questions:

1. How many Children's Centres have closed or changed their services since 2010?
 2. What are effective strategies for reorganisation of CC services?
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- Aim: to compare the numbers/services of Children's Centres operating in England in 2017 with what was on offer in 2010
 - Two phases of data collection
 1. Establish current numbers in responding authorities and range of services
 - N = 124/152 centres
 2. Qualitative case studies in 6 authorities

Results

- About 1/3 of children's centres had closed since 2010
(see Figure 1 on next slide)
- As well as centres closing, many had changed their provision by...
 - ... widening age range of children whose families were served
 - ... closing open-access services and instead targeting 'high need' families

Figure 1: Total children's centre closures for each local authority, 2009-2017



Impact

- Extensive coverage by mainstream media
 - The BBC, The Times, The Guardian, Daily Mail...
 - Lead piece in the University home webpage
- Summer 2018 – Oxford MP Layla Moran engaged in a heated parliamentary debate with Nadhim Zahawi (Minister for Children and Families) on the closing and ‘hollowing out’ of services
- Kathy Sylva – interviewed on BBC Radio 4 Woman’s Hour and other local stations



For more information

- Report: <https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/StopStart-FINAL.pdf>
- Visit:
 - <https://www.suttontrust.com/research-paper/sure-start-childrens-centres-england/>
 - <https://www.suttontrust.com/newsarchive/1000-childrens-centres-closed-since-2009/>
- Sammons, P., Hall, J., Smees, R., Goff, J., Sylva, K., Smith, T., ... & Smith, G. (2015). The impact of children's centres: studying the effects of children's centres in promoting better outcomes for young children and their families: evaluation of Children's Centres in England (DfE).