

The importance of Early Intervention

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What I am going to say

- Some various views on what early intervention is
- The risks of early intervention
- The importance of getting it *right*

What do we mean by *early intervention*

- The critical importance to later outcomes of the first 2-3 years of life
- Or.....intervening based on risk of poor outcomes at any time in the life cycle
- Or.....intervening during early years based on at risk population groups, eg
 - children with a parent in prison
 - Children with a parent with a severe mental health problem

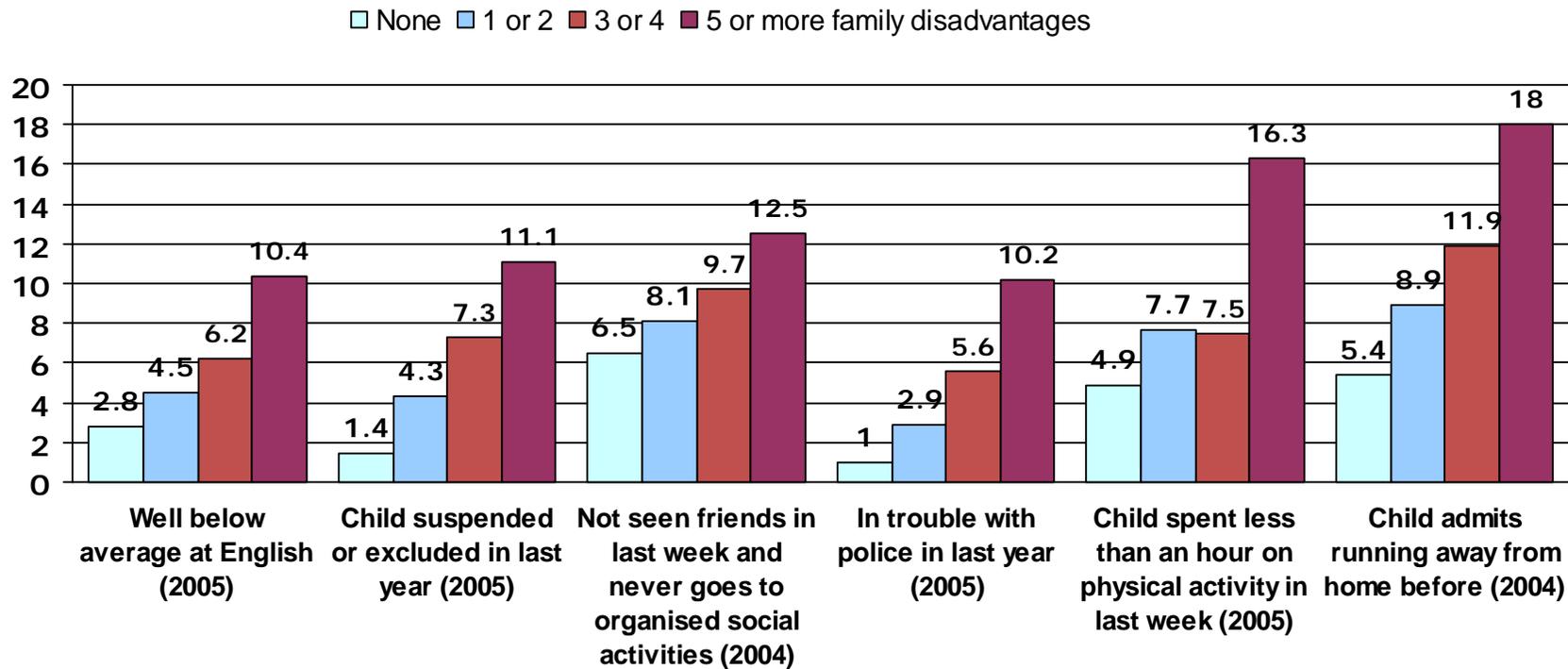
Why it matters: policy choices

- James Heckman: investment in first three years more likely to work, and better value for money (based on risk factors, not universal)
- Geraint Lewis: selective intervention with elderly based on risk assessment: real time cash savings
- Sure Start: intervening early, based on area risk factors

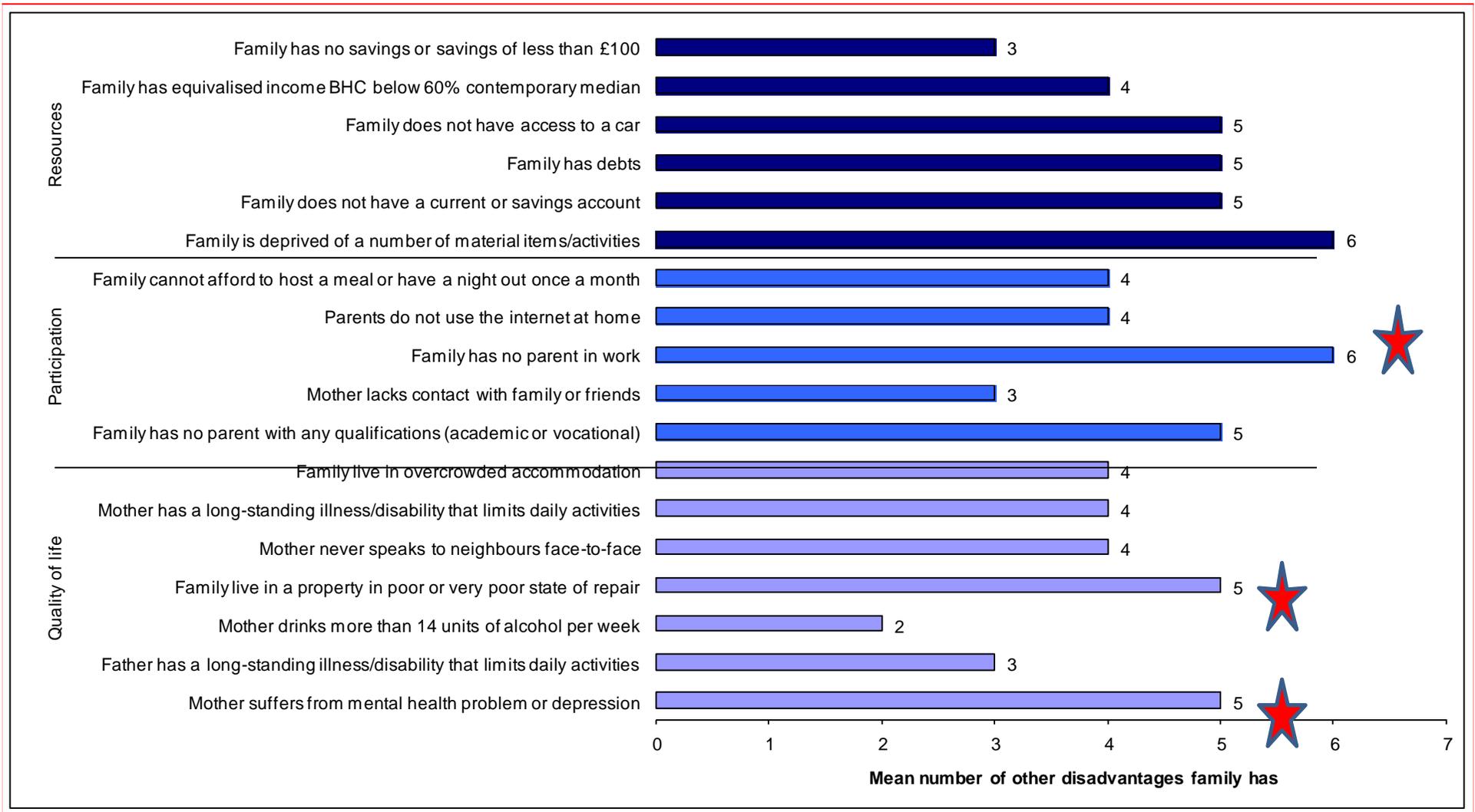
The difference between risk and likelihood



Early intervention based on risk factors



Certain disadvantages group together: money, love, health



Critical risk factors that should trigger action

- Having a parent in prison
- Having a parent, esp mother with severe mental illness
- Living in a household where no adult has had employment over a number of years
- Living in substandard or overcrowded housing

Any combination of the above

Early intervention?

- Can save money and misery later on in life
- Early years most amenable to change, for parents and for children

But:

- Inappropriate targeting can both waste money and stigmatise families
- Will only work with excellent information sharing, sensitive staff, and high quality universal services...a long way to go