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# Considering children and young people in the youth justice system

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# Aims of presentation

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- Importance of early intervention
  - Identifying risk factors and bolstering protective factors
  
- Addressing the special needs of young people with autism in the YJS
  
- Youth Justice Liaison and Diversion
  - Catching young people with autism who have slipped through the net

## Children and the YJS

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Children in or on the edge of the YJS:

- ❑ have greater unmet health needs
- ❑ face extra difficulties
- ❑ have been disadvantaged by the system
- ❑ may be further disadvantaged in the YJS.

We need to be providing the right help at the right time and in the right place.

# Children with Autism

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- Three main areas of difficulty:
  - Social communication
  - Social interaction
  - Social imagination
- Obsessive behaviour/ fixations/ repetitive routines
  
- Higher rates of exclusion:
  - 1 in 5 excluded from school and 67% more than once.
  - More likely to be excluded than children with other SEN except for Behavioural Emotional and Social Difficulties
  - At least 20,000 children with ASD have been excluded

## Links to other complex needs = pathway to crime

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- ❑ Over 40% of children with autism have been bullied at school.
- ❑ Children with autism likely to have learning disability
- ❑ Up to 90% of children with learning disabilities have SLCN (foundation for people with LD 2000)
- ❑ Over 60% of young offenders with SLCN, (Bryan et al, 2007)
- ❑ Up to a third of children with untreated SLCN will develop mental health issues (Clegg, Hollis and Rutter 1999).
- ❑ 1 in 3 adults with autism suffer from severe MH difficulties

# Bercow report 2008

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*" If a child does not benefit from early intervention, there are multiple risks – of lower educational attainment, of behavioural problems, of emotional and psychological difficulties, of poorer employment prospects, challenges to mental health and, in some cases, of a descent into criminality. "*

# Barriers

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- ❑ Transition - Services often drop off aged 16-18
- ❑ Lack of data collected on autism and YJS
- ❑ Care pathways not well developed
- ❑ Lack of awareness
- ❑ Reluctance to label children
- ❑ Tendency to avoid looking at the bigger picture

## Addressing the needs of YPs with autism in the YJS

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- ❑ Awareness raising for all staff in the YJS
- ❑ Clear pathways to diagnosis, and intervention
- ❑ Appropriate screening, as early as possible
- ❑ Rapid assessment at point of arrest with links to engaging support
- ❑ Interagency working
- ❑ Warnings and ASBOs need to be accompanied by support or intervention
- ❑ Targeted approach triggered by non-attendance

# Youth Justice Liaison and Diversion

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- ❑ 6 pilot sites
- ❑ Screening at point of arrest
- ❑ Rapid mental health assessment
- ❑ Liaison with services
- ❑ Complex needs meetings
- ❑ Work with the family
- ❑ Support YJS decision making
- ❑ 2 year academic evaluation



## YJLD Case study, Peterborough

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- ❑ 14 year old boy arrested for sexually inappropriate behaviour with six-year-old step sister
- ❑ Previous history of domestic violence
- ❑ Left mother's care at age 9 and moved in with Dad and stepmother.
- ❑ Family had been unable to engage children's services
- ❑ Lack of friendships and social life. Isolation.
- ❑ Displaying unusual behaviour (e.g. crossing roads, dishwasher)
- ❑ Mental capacity of 8 year old
- ❑ Clear signs of autism, but never diagnosed

## YJLD Outcomes, Peterborough

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- ❑ AIM assessment completed
- ❑ Referred for full assessment for diagnosis
- ❑ Crown Prosecution Service agreed to drop charges
- ❑ Boy had opportunity to talk through previous traumas
- ❑ Referral to dedicated social worker
- ❑ Parenting support provided and counselling for family
- ❑ Given age appropriate educational support
- ❑ Joined after school club

# Key messages

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- ❑ Harnessing mainstream services
  - Role of health services, SLCN and support services
  - Role of schools
- ❑ Youth justice practice to be built on early intervention
- ❑ Awareness raising for workers in the YJS.

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**Thank you**