

Prevention of child maltreatment

THE ROLE OF ECONOMIC MODELLING

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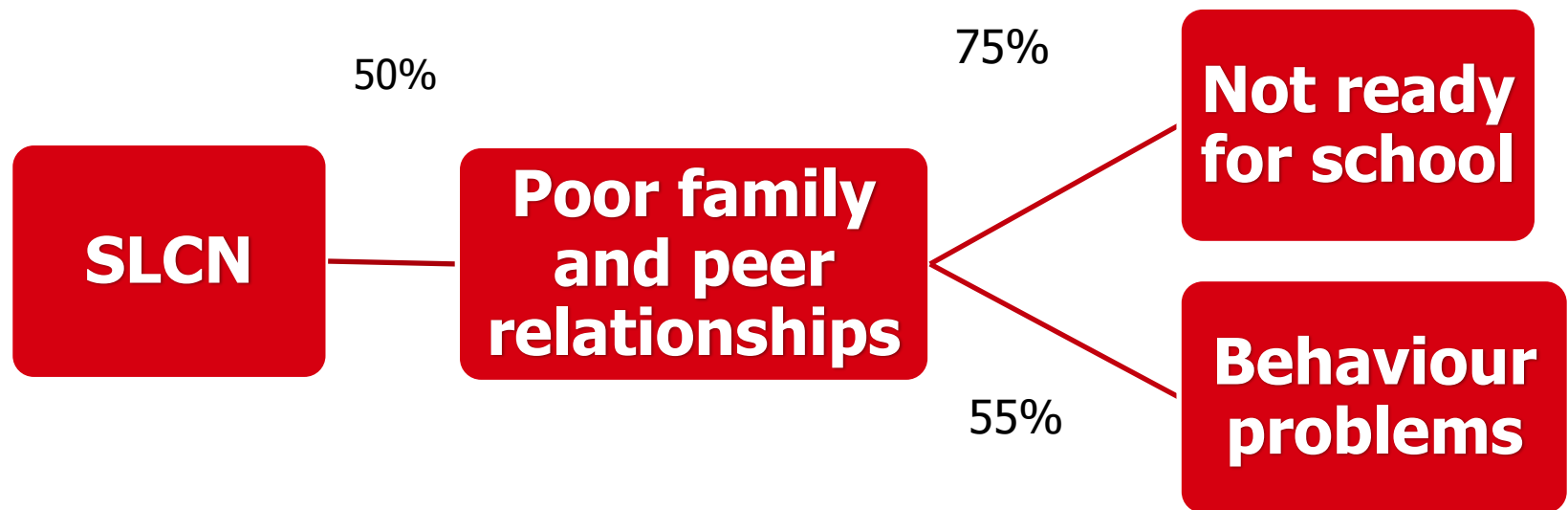
Overview

- Brief introduction to economic models and their link with psychology
- Prevention and early intervention as a 'use case' for economic modelling
- The Big Lottery Fund's "A Better Start" initiative
- An illustration: Prevention of child maltreatment
- Concluding thoughts

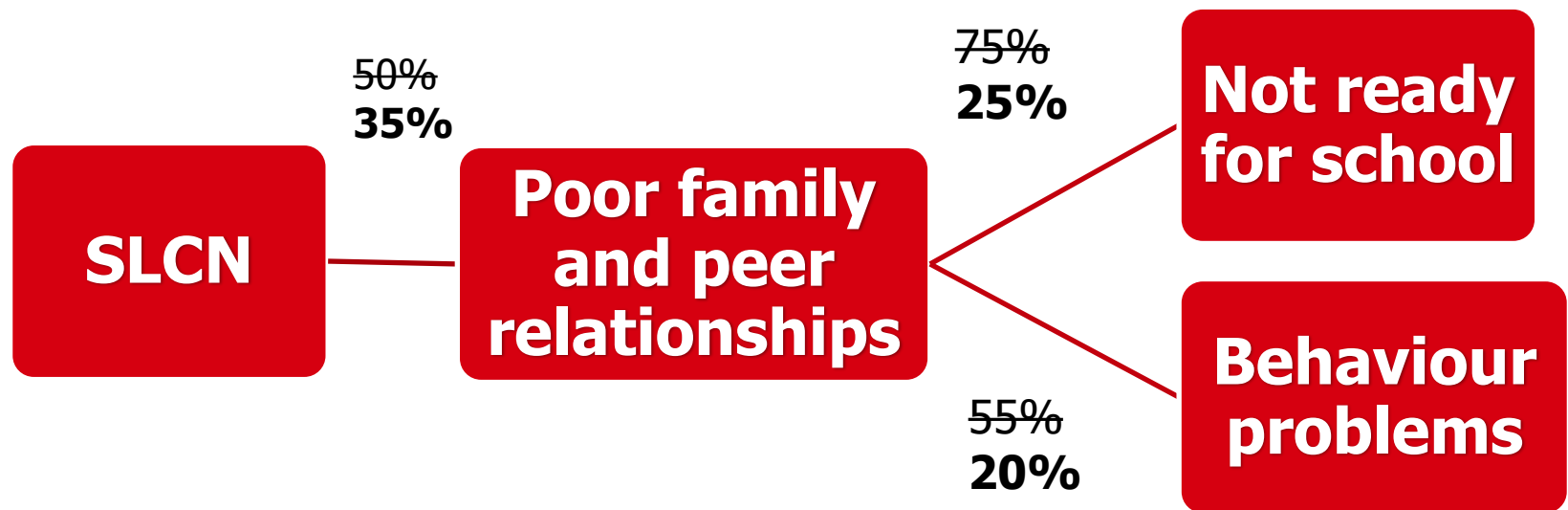
What is child maltreatment?

- Maltreatment is an *exposure*, not a disorder
- Outcomes are not exposure-specific; a wide range of symptoms/disorders are associated with child maltreatment

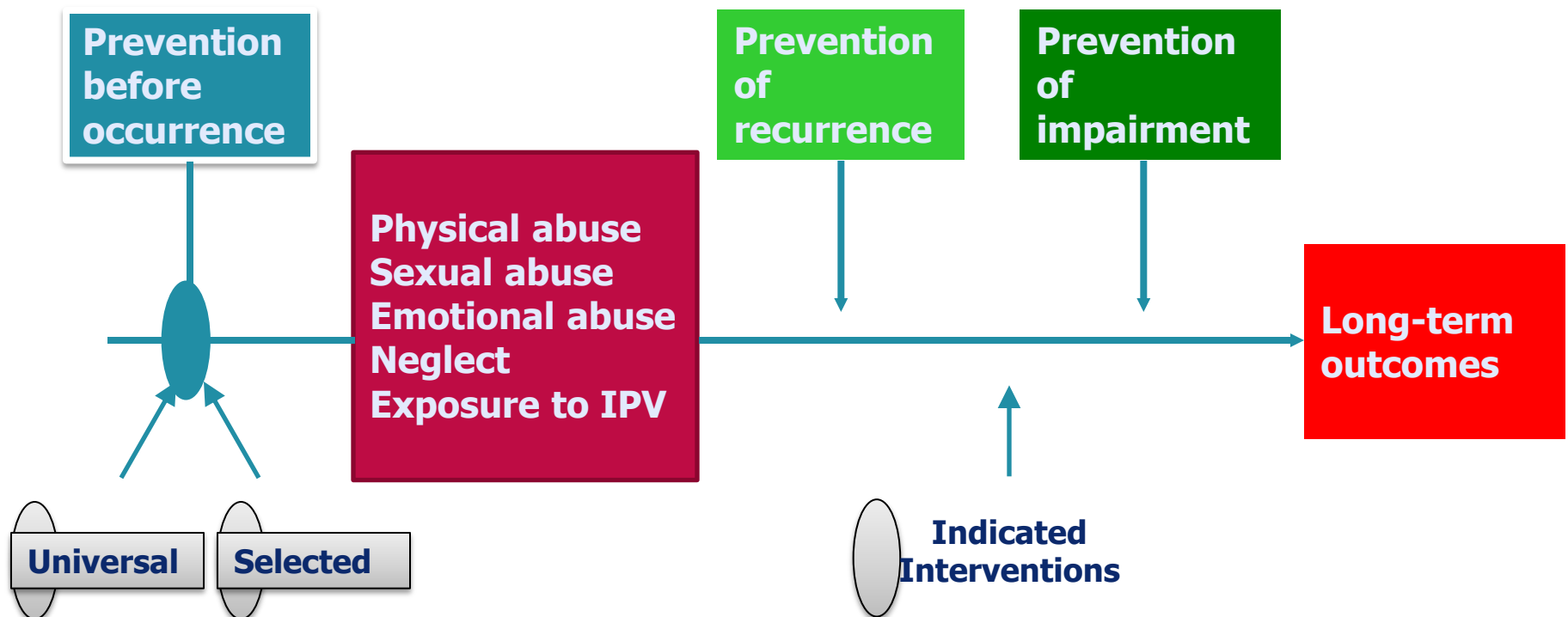
Modelling childhood problems



Intervening to change trajectories?



Child maltreatment prevention points



(MacMillan et al., 2009)

Economic modelling – use cases

Barton et al, 2004

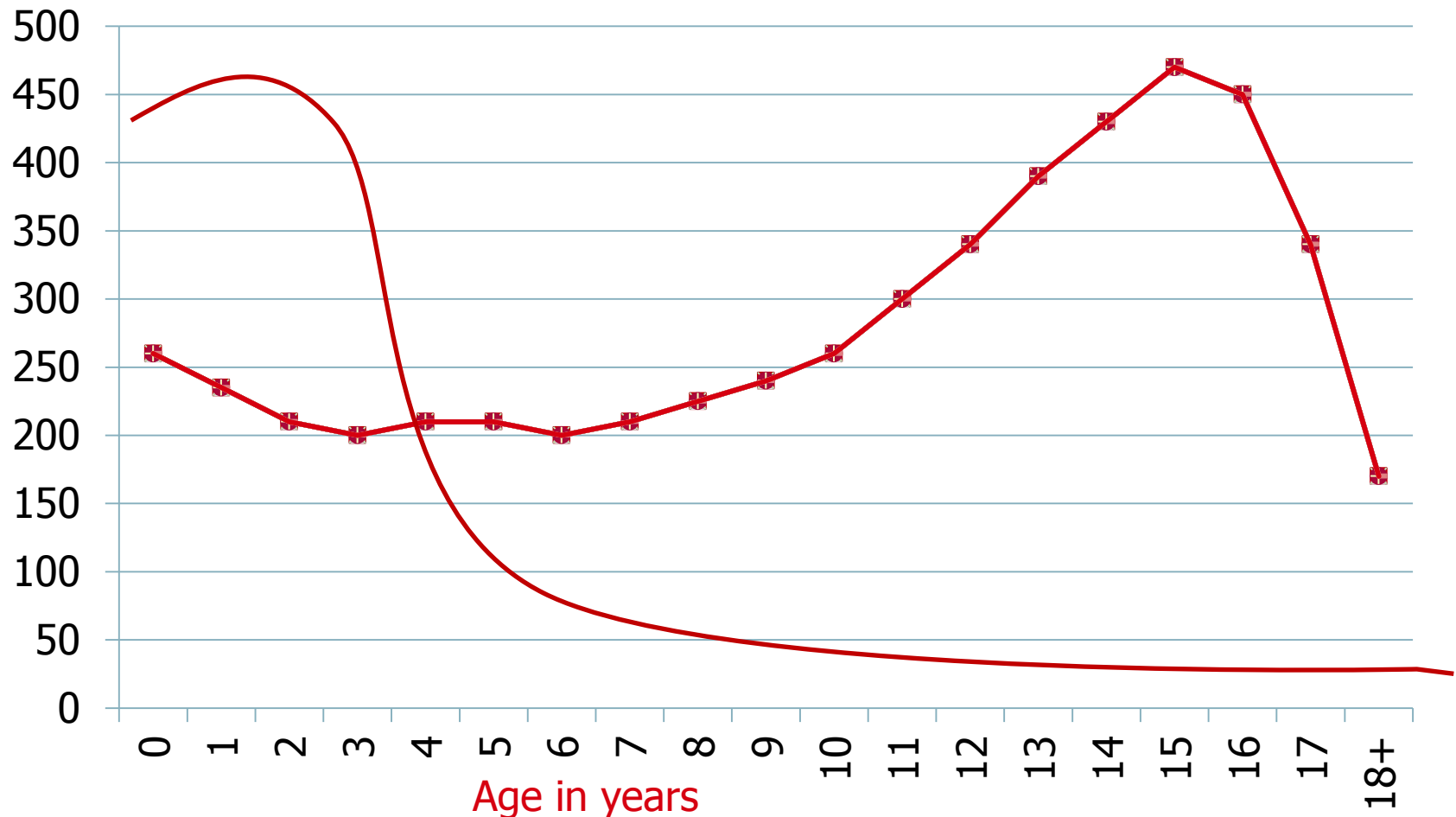
- Absence of 'hard data'
- Need for temporal extrapolation
- Need for contextual extrapolation
- Linking intermediate and final outcomes
- (Comparison of interventions)

Investing in prevention?

- Little spent in the early years

Public expenditure patterns

£ per week



Investing in prevention?

- Little spent in the early years
- Shifting funds: short term vs long term budget impacts
- Budget 'spill-overs'

→ System of public funding doesn't offer obvious incentives for spending on prevention

Lack of long-term empirical evidence

- Cohort studies / long-term follow-ups
 - Research costs
 - Drop-out
- Record keeping / information systems
- Research incentives

Recent literature review - topics

- Teenage pregnancy, unplanned / unwanted pregnancy
- Pregnancy outcome
- Mother-infant relationship and interaction
- Breastfeeding and weaning
- Nutrition, diet, eating and feeding practices
- Exercise and activity
- Obesity
- Parenting
- Conduct disorders and emotional problems
- Child maltreatment and neglect
- Family and domestic violence
- Depression and anxiety
- Speech and language development
- Educational attainment
- Executive function and control, cognitive development
- School readiness

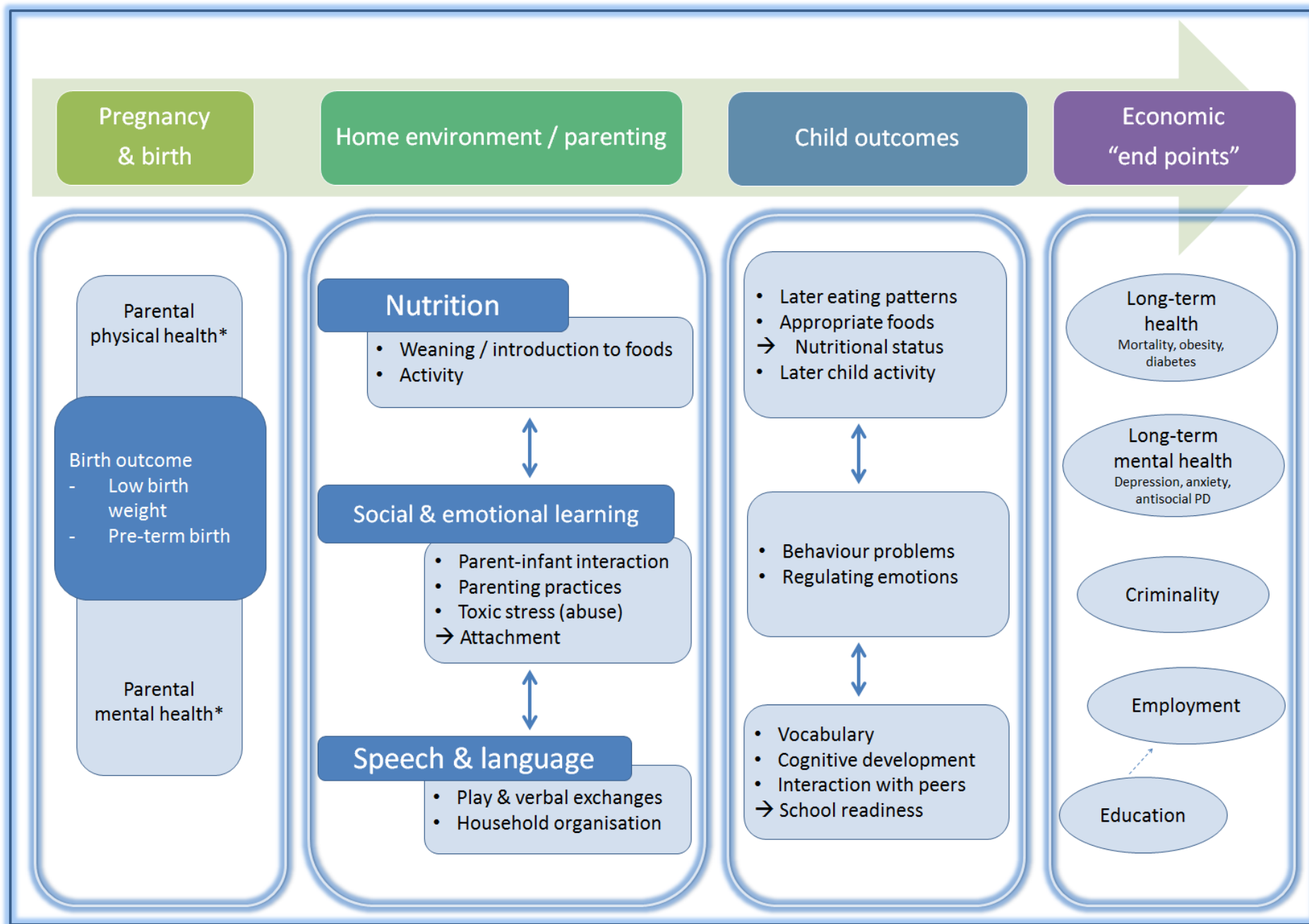
Recent literature review - findings

- 12k+ papers screened → ca. 50 included
- Economic evidence rated 'poor' in most areas (e.g. obesity)
- No area rated 'good'
- Evidence rated 'fair', e.g.
 - Costs of childhood mental health problems
 - CE of parenting programmes for behaviour problems
- Streetlight effect?
- Absence of evidence vs evidence of absence

What models can do for us

- Evidence synthesis (different sources, countries, diagnostic classifications)
- Indication of scale of potential savings
- Where will savings occur?
- 'Sense check'
- Exploring a speculative future
- But: 'Outputs' are a function of 'inputs'

→ Pragmatic tool

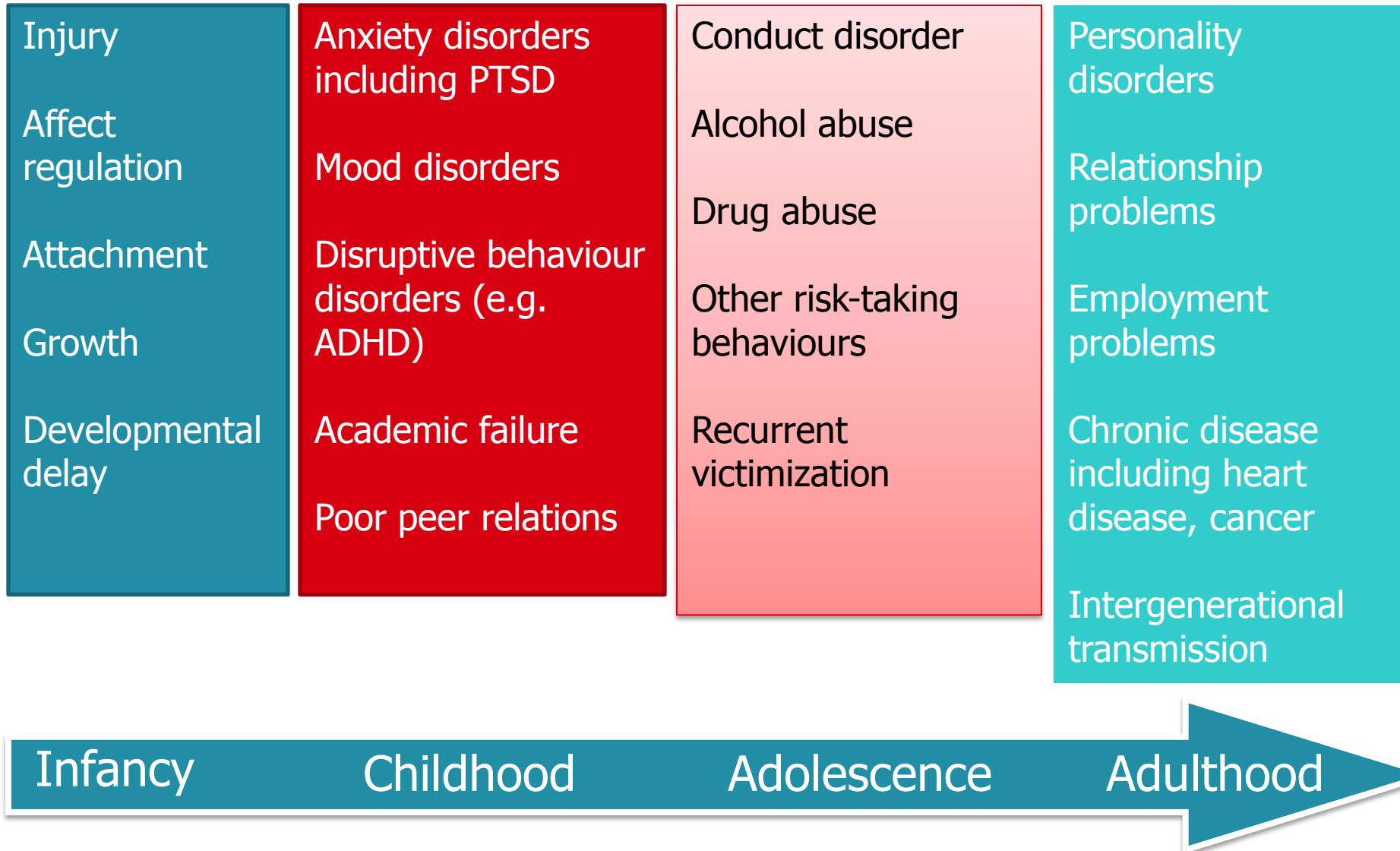


Why prevention?

- Childhood maltreatment is associated with a nested cascade of negative long-term outcomes
- Neuroscience/Developmental Psychopathology models
- Some evidence from long-term studies (IY, preschool)
- Austerity, resource constraints

→ Prevention may save money in the long run and improve wellbeing.

Impairment across lifespan



Toward an economic model of child maltreatment prevention

- Need data on
 - Immediate consequences of child maltreatment and relevant costs
 - What % of children will experience each immediate consequence? (may experience more than one – what %?)
 - Intermediate consequences and relevant costs
 - Long term consequences including intergenerational transmission
 - education, income, longer-term health / mental health

Toward an economic model of child maltreatment prevention

- The economic model mimics the trajectories of adverse outcomes of child maltreatment in the short- and long term

→ The 'Preventonomics' model

Concluding thoughts

- Dispelling 'magical thinking'
 - Assumptions vs outputs
 - Meaningful results?
- Interpreting / presenting model results
 - Accountability, transparency
 - Potential for abuse
- Moving towards standardisation
- Thinking at the margin

→ A useful tool, but handle with care

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