

A STUDY OF PRACTICE CULTURES AND THE
'NOT SO NEW' YOUTH JUSTICE IN
ENGLAND (AND WALES).

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INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

- ◉ Youth Justice reforms beginning in 1998.
- ◉ Rising crime to highest level in 1996
- ◉ Backdrop of rising levels of crime; Murder of James Bulger (Bateman, 2011).
- ◉ Media bred perception that young people were running around the streets committing crime with impunity.
- ◉ ‘Populist punitivism’ (Bottoms, 1995).
- ◉ Beginning of a ‘punitive era’ in youth justice provision. (Bateman, 2011).
- ◉ Very significantly, a change of government.

POLICY IMPLICATION

Audit Commission report *Misspent Youth* (1996) suggested the YJS was confused and ineffective.

“For far too long, those working in the youth justice system have been left without any clear central direction as to where their priorities should lay and what outcomes they should be aiming to achieve”.

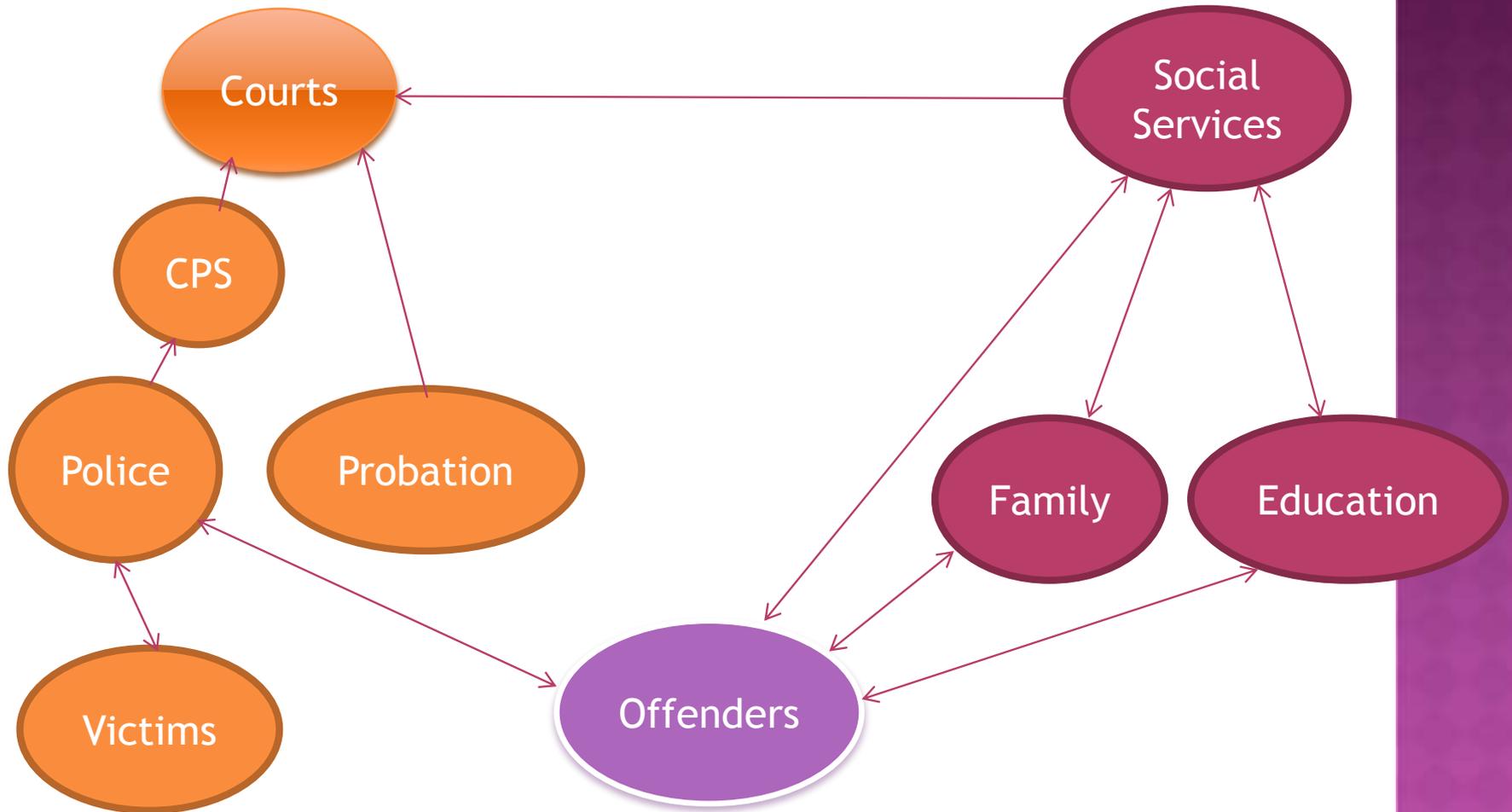
(Home Office, 1998,p.3)

REFORM AND PROJECTED OUTCOME

- ◉ *Crime and Disorder Act (1998):* S.37 “The principal aim of the youth justice system in England and Wales to be the prevention of offending (and now re-offending)”.
- ◉ Radical reform of the youth justice system (YJS). Creation of multi-agency Youth Offending Teams (YOTs).
- ◉ Motivation: Contradictory goals of addressing the welfare issues leading young people to offend in balance with other priorities such as public protection and retribution (Home Office, 1997; Field, 2007).
- ◉ Academic Prognosis: Clash of cultures; welfare marginalised; punitive outcomes.

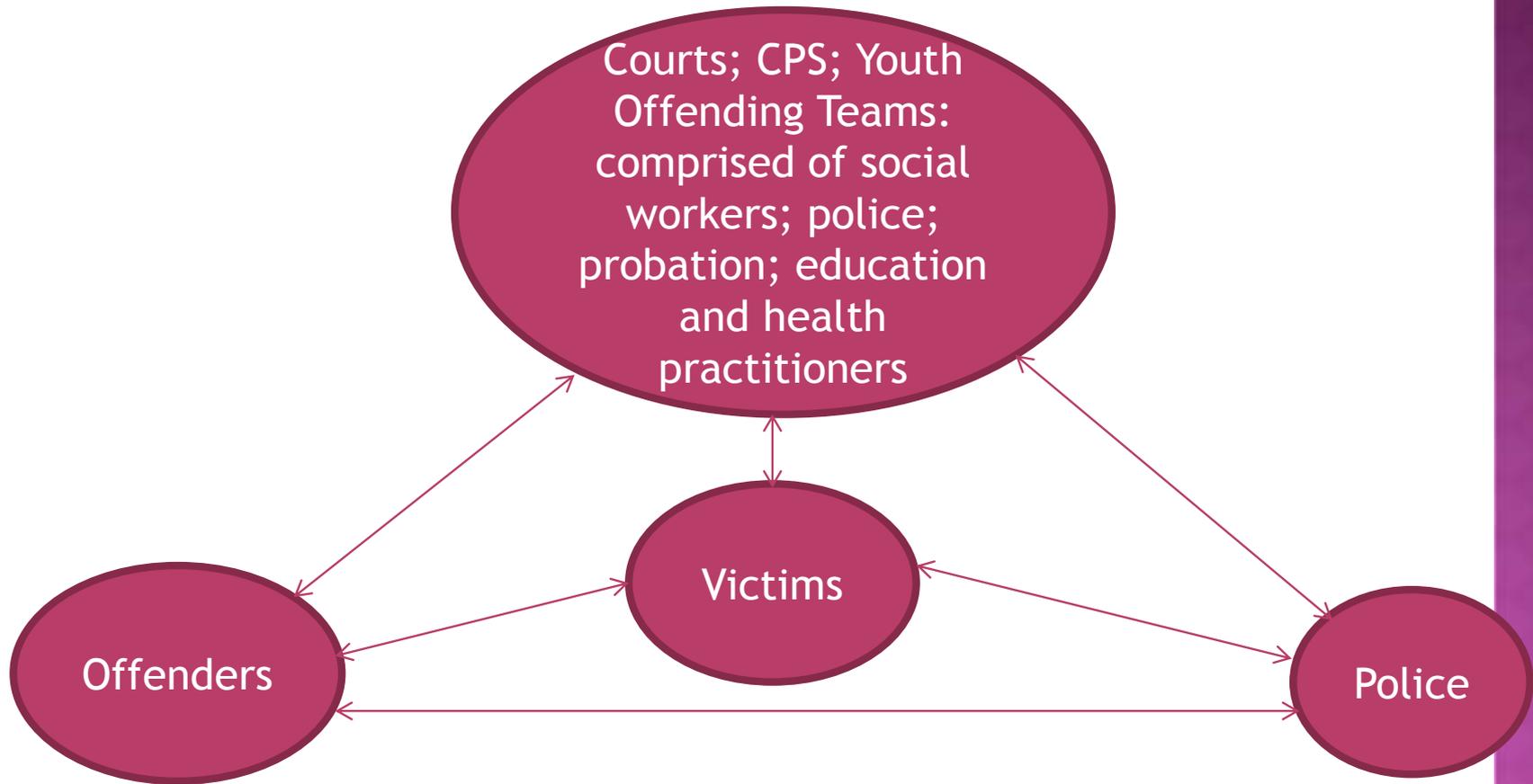
WHAT DID THEY MEAN?

PRE-REFORM: WELFARE VERSUS JUSTICE.



THE IMPACT OF REFORM

Prevention of Offending



CULTURE AND PRACTICE

- ◉ Organisational culture: clear identity; shared ideas and values.
- ◉ Sub cultural: a nexus of competing ideas.
- ◉ Generally seen as affecting practice negatively and restricting innovation
- ◉ No central direction as to how multi agency YOTS would develop a new identity
- ◉ Punitive outcomes

EVALUATION OF A STUDY BY FIELD (2007) IN WALES

- ◉ Framed in the county of Suffolk with YOTs at Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds and Lowestoft.
- ◉ Aims: to establish whether the reformed multi-agency approach to youth justice had united practitioner cultures around a common emphasis of preventing offending; whether welfare concerns have been marginalised; whether the evolving practices were evidence of a punitive turn.

COMPARISON

Field
(2007)

Qualitative methodology: 55
semi-structured interviews
with practitioners from 7 YOT
district's in Wales

Key
Findings

'Complex cultural changes'
'Get tough rhetoric'
'Welfare considerations
reconstituted'

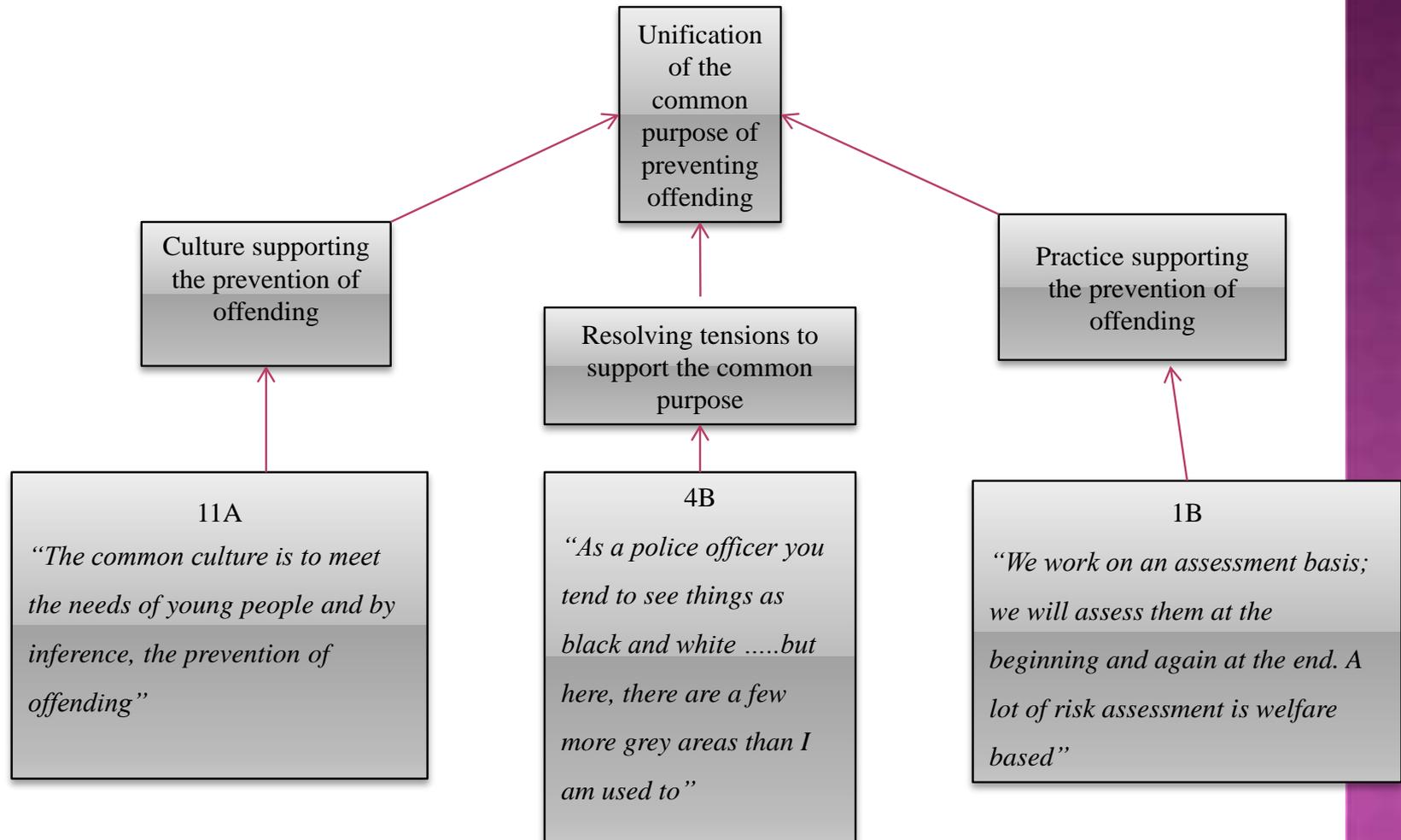
This
study

Qualitative methodology: 17
semi-structured interviews
with practitioners from 3 YOT
district's in Suffolk

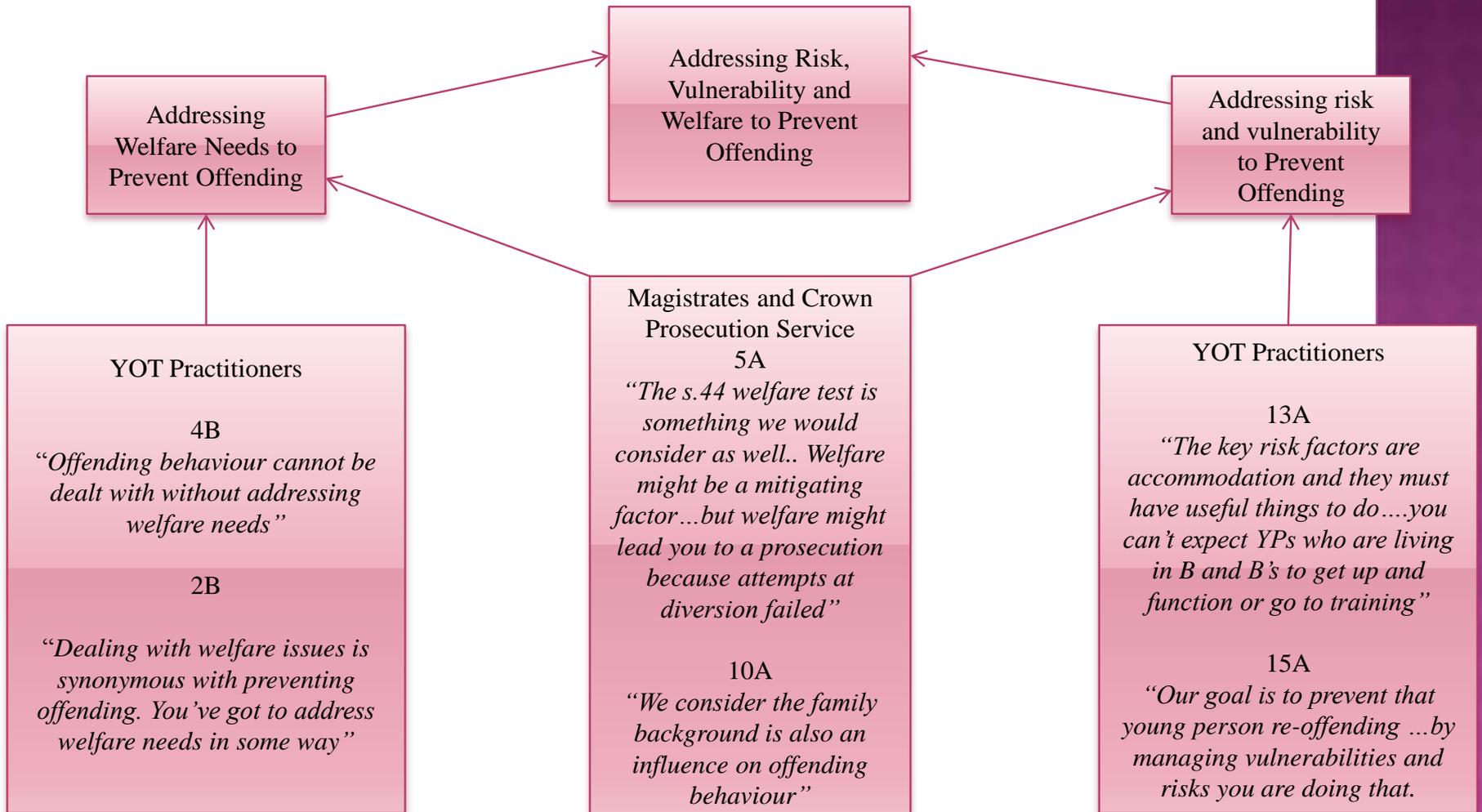
Key
Findings

Suffolk YOTs have unified in support of
preventing offending; welfare issues are a
significant factor; reversal of punitive turn

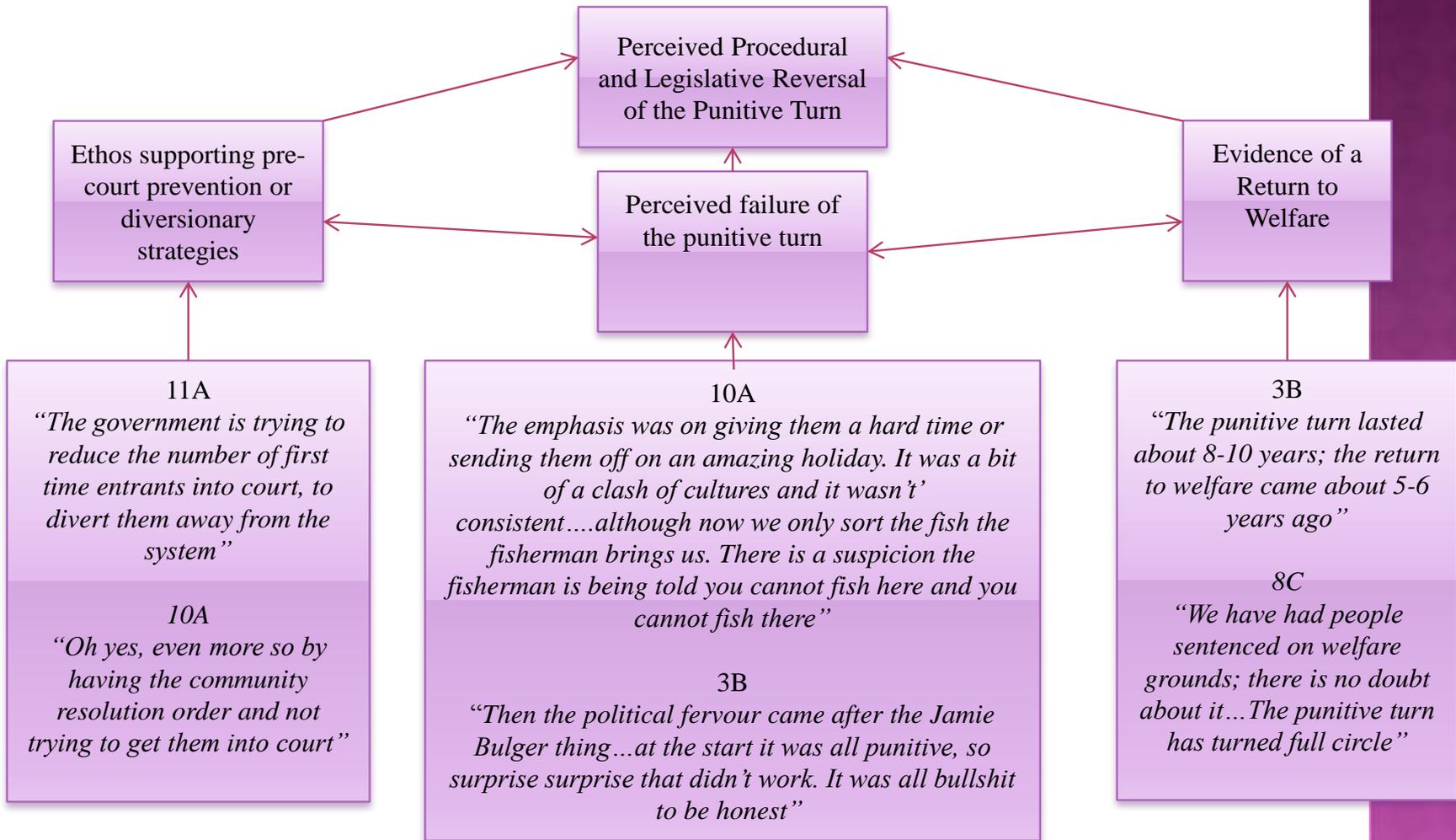
A MODEL OF PRACTITIONER'S RESPONSES DEMONSTRATING SUPPORT FOR THE UNIFICATION OF THE COMMON PURPOSE OF PREVENTING OFFENDING.



A MODEL OF PRACTITIONER'S RESPONSES DEMONSTRATING SUPPORT FOR ADDRESSING RISK, VULNERABILITY AND WELFARE TO PREVENT OFFENDING.



A MODEL OF PRACTITIONER'S RESPONSES DEMONSTRATING SUPPORT FOR A PERCEIVED PROCEDURAL AND LEGISLATIVE REVERSAL OF THE PUNITIVE TURN.



CONCLUSION

- ◉ Reform 15 years ago was intended to resolve conflict between practitioners.
- ◉ Many academics argued this would lead to punitive outcomes for young people and a marginalisation of welfare considerations.
- ◉ Empirical studies conducted since the reform produced inconsistent findings. Briggs (2013) 'risk'; Burnett and Appleton (2004) reform provided an opportunity for a consistent approach towards young people. Stahlkopf (2008) and Souhami (2012) importance of culture to underlying practices.
- ◉ Field (2007) challenging evidence of a shift to tough objectives without direct evidence of a punitive turn *per se*. Welfare concerns had been repackaged formally for political reasons.
- ◉ This study: YJS in Suffolk has united around the common purpose of preventing offending. Whether this by culture or practice remains unclear. Practitioners perceive their practices are supportive of welfare needs and that concern for the welfare of young people have not been marginalised.
- ◉ Finally, perception that the reform may have initially led to punitive outcomes. However, this is no longer the case the dominant perception is there has been a reversal of the punitive turn supported by the coalition government.

QUESTIONS

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