

RESEARCH  
EVIDENCE INTO  
POLICY PROGRAMMES  
AND PRACTICE



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# A Realist Evaluation of the first pilot Bail Supervision Scheme for Children in Ireland: The importance of 'buy-in'

5<sup>th</sup> September 2019  
#CAMHS2019

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# Overview

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- Bail Supervision Scheme's fit in the youth justice system
- Why realist evaluation
- What we did
- What we found

# Irish Youth Justice System

**Children Act (2001)** main legislation for youth justice

Majority of young people **Diverted** from the Justice System



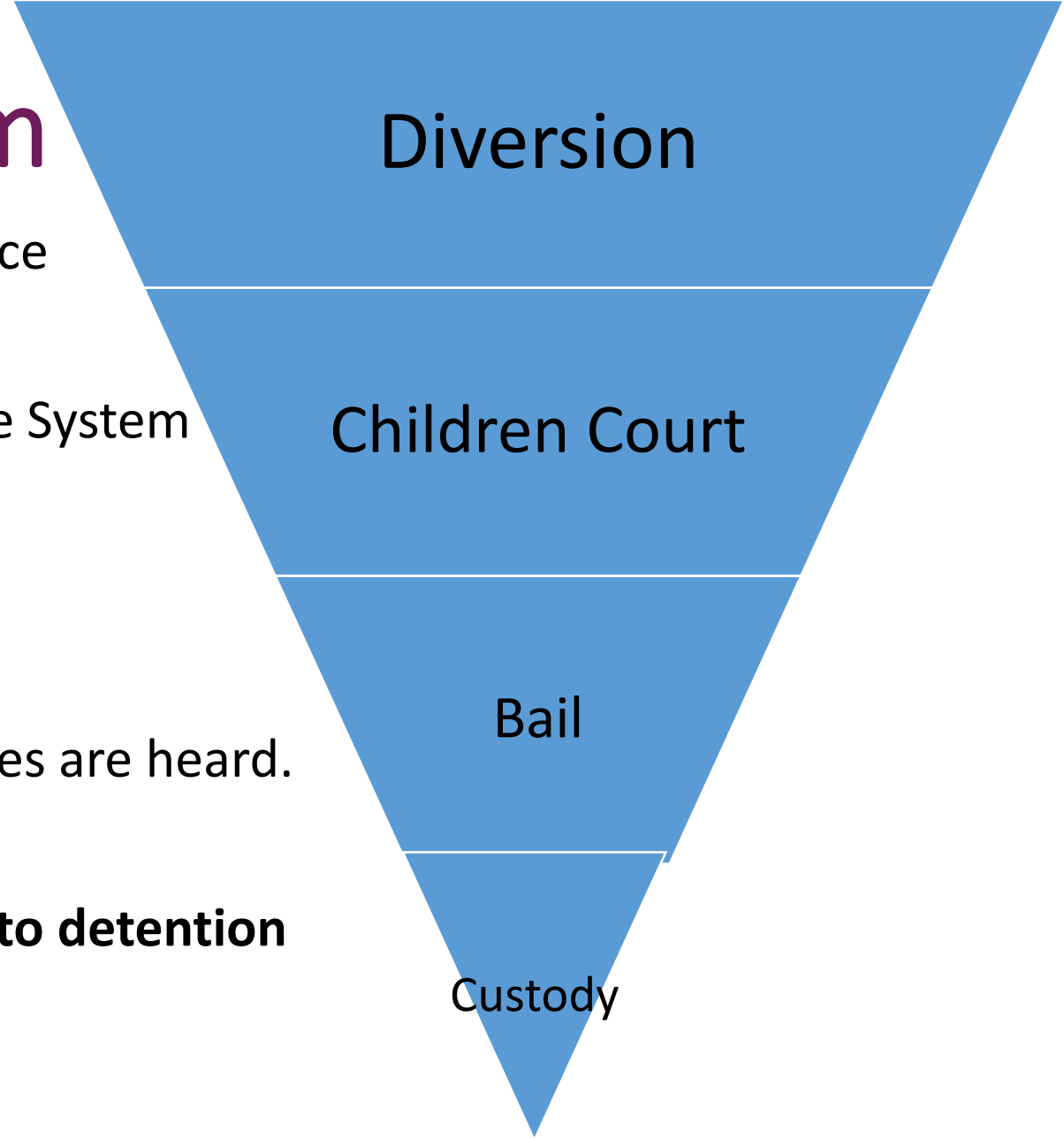
Minority – **Children's court** (District/Circuit)



Most young people are granted **bail** until their cases are heard.



A small minority of young people are **remanded into detention** until their case is heard.



- Children Act & European Convention on Human Rights [ECHR]  
*'Detention...as a measure of last resort'*
- Small number of children in detention in Ireland
- Children on-remand composed up to 50% of juvenile detainees (Oberstown Stats Q1 2017,2018)

- Remand when to Children's Detention Campus

1. Police reject to Bail

2. Persistent breaches

# Irish Youth Justice System

The solution: The Bail Supervision Scheme  
Alternative to on-remand detention  
Incorporates a therapeutic element:  
MultiSystematic Therapy  
Nested within rules and court processes  
Supported by a multi-agency advisory group

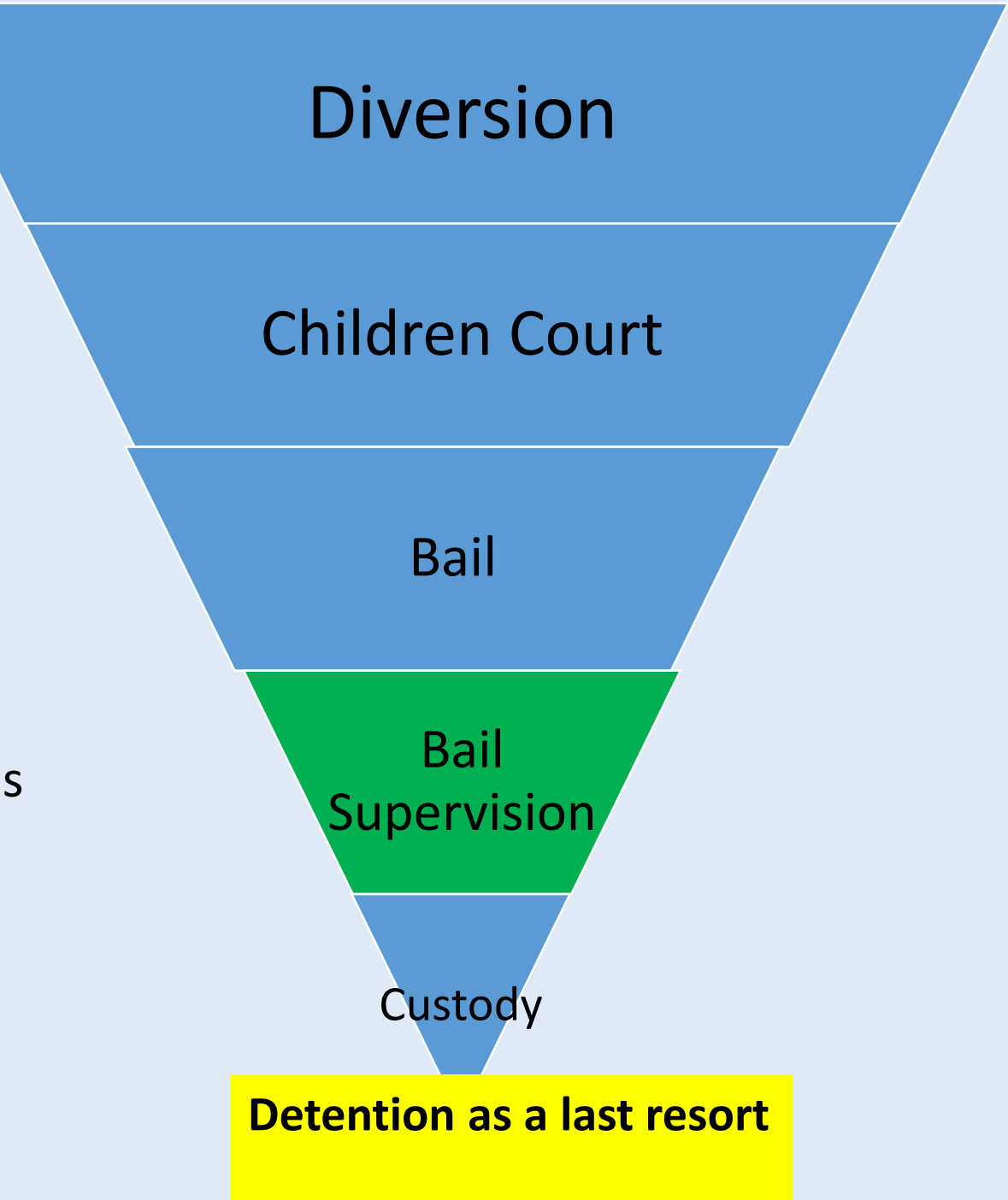
## Objectives

### Individual level

Increased compliance with court set bail conditions  
Reduce reoffending

### System level

Reduce the demand for remand places



# Bail Supervision Scheme

multi- agency



Irish Youth Justice Service

Seirbhís na hÉireann um Chearta i leith an Aois Óige



An Roinn Leanaí  
agus Gnóthaí Óige  
Department of Children  
and Youth Affairs



An tSeirbhís Chúirteanna  
Courts Service  
IRELAND



An tSeirbhís Phromhaidh  
The Probation Service



OBERSTOWN  
CHILDREN  
DETENTION CAMPUS

CARE  
EDUCATION  
HEALTH  
WELLBEING

# Why MST?

- Developed in 1970 in US, spread to over 30 countries
- Incorporates evidenced based practices
- Strengths based, identifying goals, removing barriers, applying incentives
- 24/7 support for caregiver to support behavioral change including compliance with bail conditions
  
- Based on Randomised Control Trial
- Insufficient knowledge of how it works

# Why a Realist Evaluation?

**BSS is a pilot programme-- MST embedded within a system-- Irish context**

**Small numbers**

**Realist Evaluation: gain insights into**

**What works**

**How it works**

**And why it works or not**

**Attitudes of stakeholders to BSS**

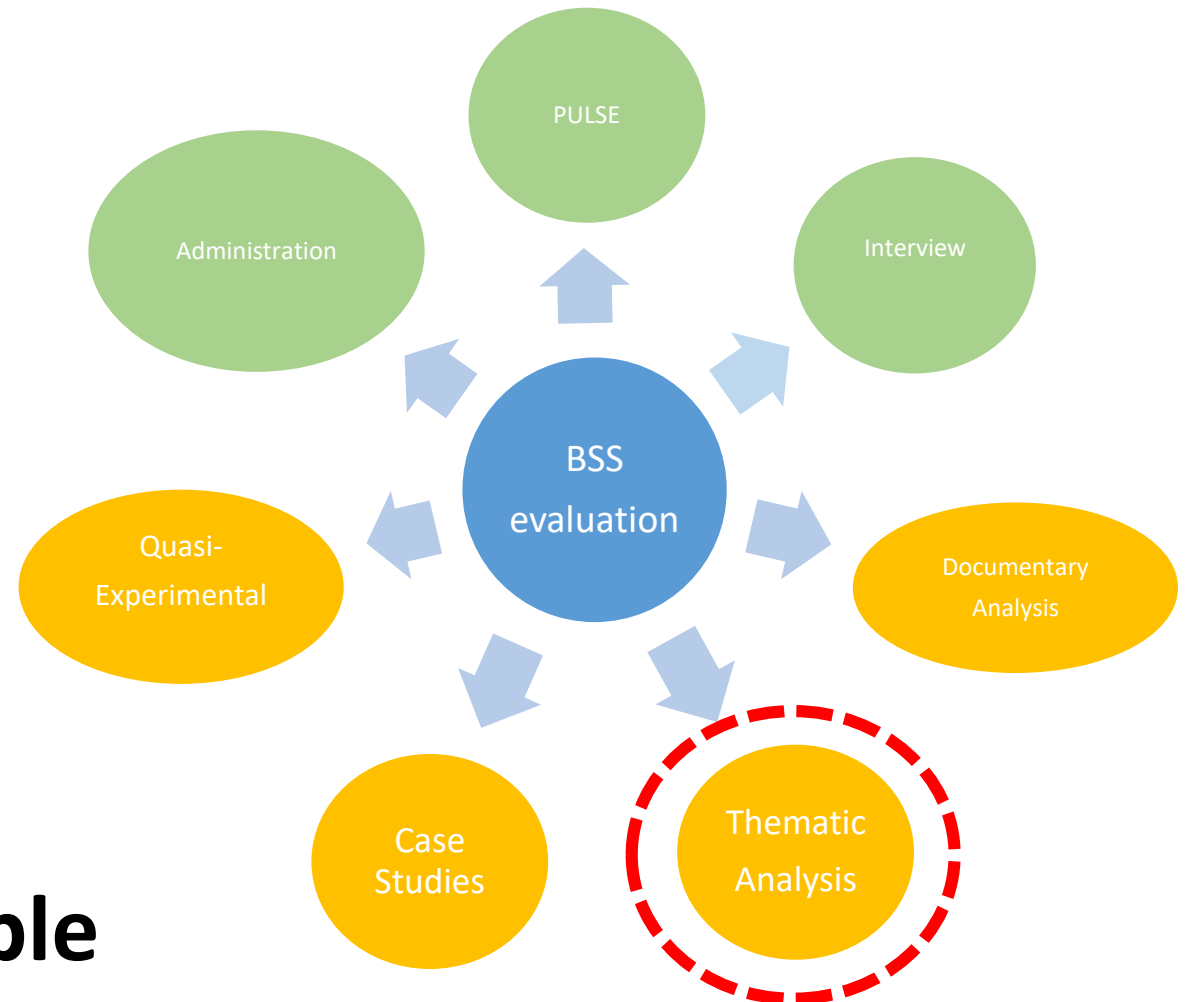
**Mining for Silver While Dreaming of Gold (Epstein, 2002).**



# How the evaluation was conducted

## Contribution analysis

- Provides plausible evidence
- Theory driven
- Incorporated multiple data sources and data types
- Triangulation of multiple methodologies
- Systematic, rigours and feasible

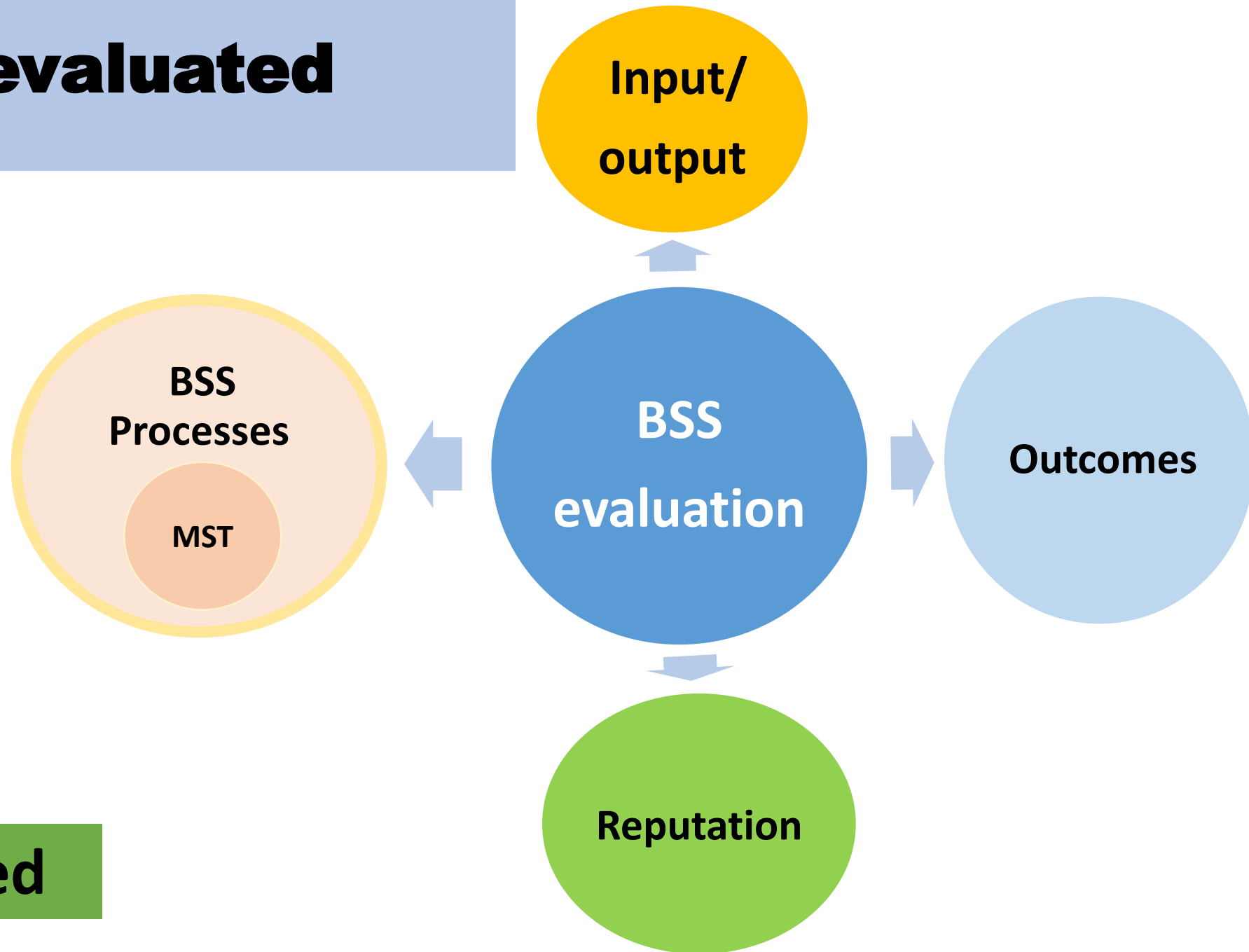


# Overarching Research Questions

1. If and how the bail supervision scheme contributed to changes in the young person's behaviour including re-offending and bail compliance
2. If and how the bail supervision scheme had gained the confidence of the judicial system

# What we evaluated

If BSS worked

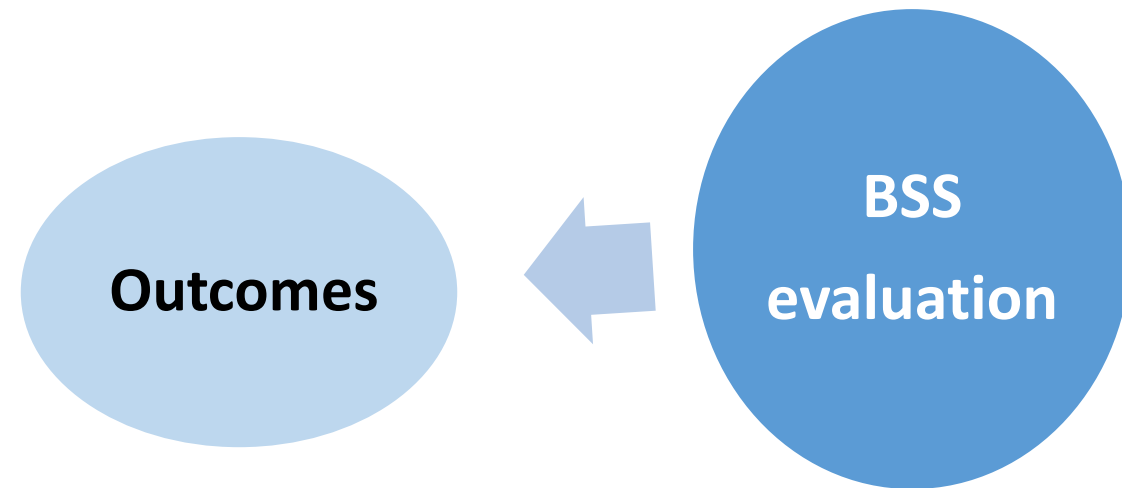


How BSS worked

# **What we found: The If question**

## **Key Outcomes**

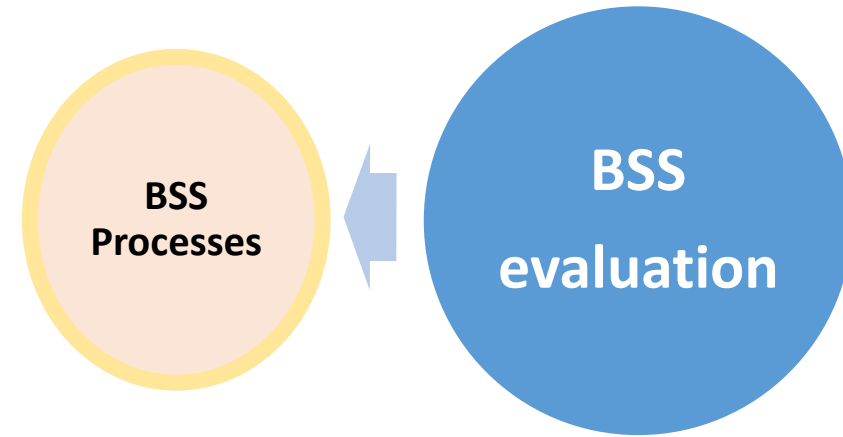
- 1. Marked reduction in levels of re-offending**
- 2. Evidence of improved adherence to bail conditions**
- 3. Majority of young people attracted non-custodial sanctions**



# The how questions: Process evaluation

## Central element: case studies

- Enabled the triangulation of multiple perspectives  
360° view of young peoples contexts  
Focused accounts of BSS processes

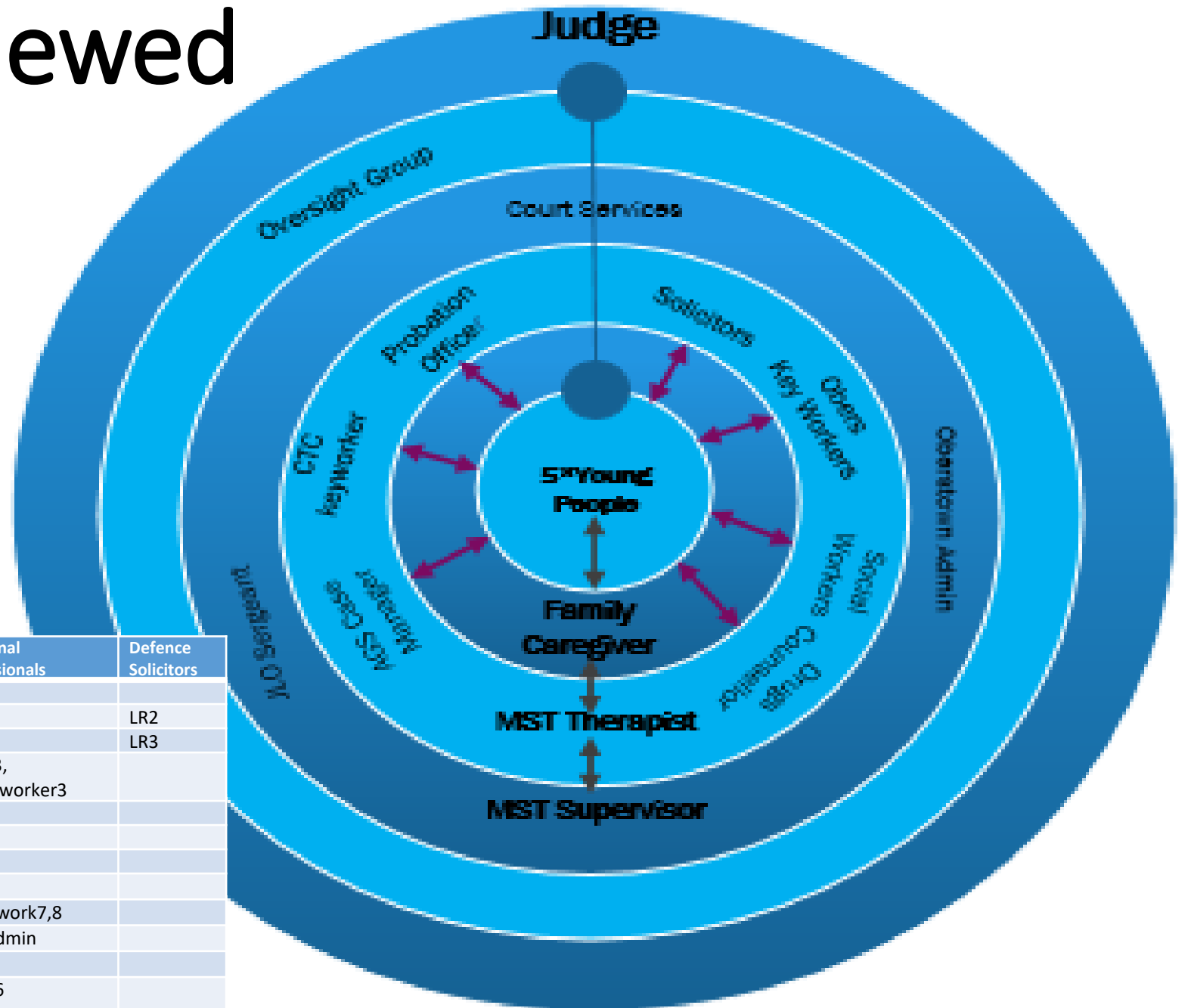


## How were the case studies chosen?

1. All (n=22) caregivers and young people invited to interview
2. Six caregivers volunteered to be interviewed
3. Described as representative of the more challenging cases  
(BSS Manager)

# Who we interviewed

- Bottom up approach

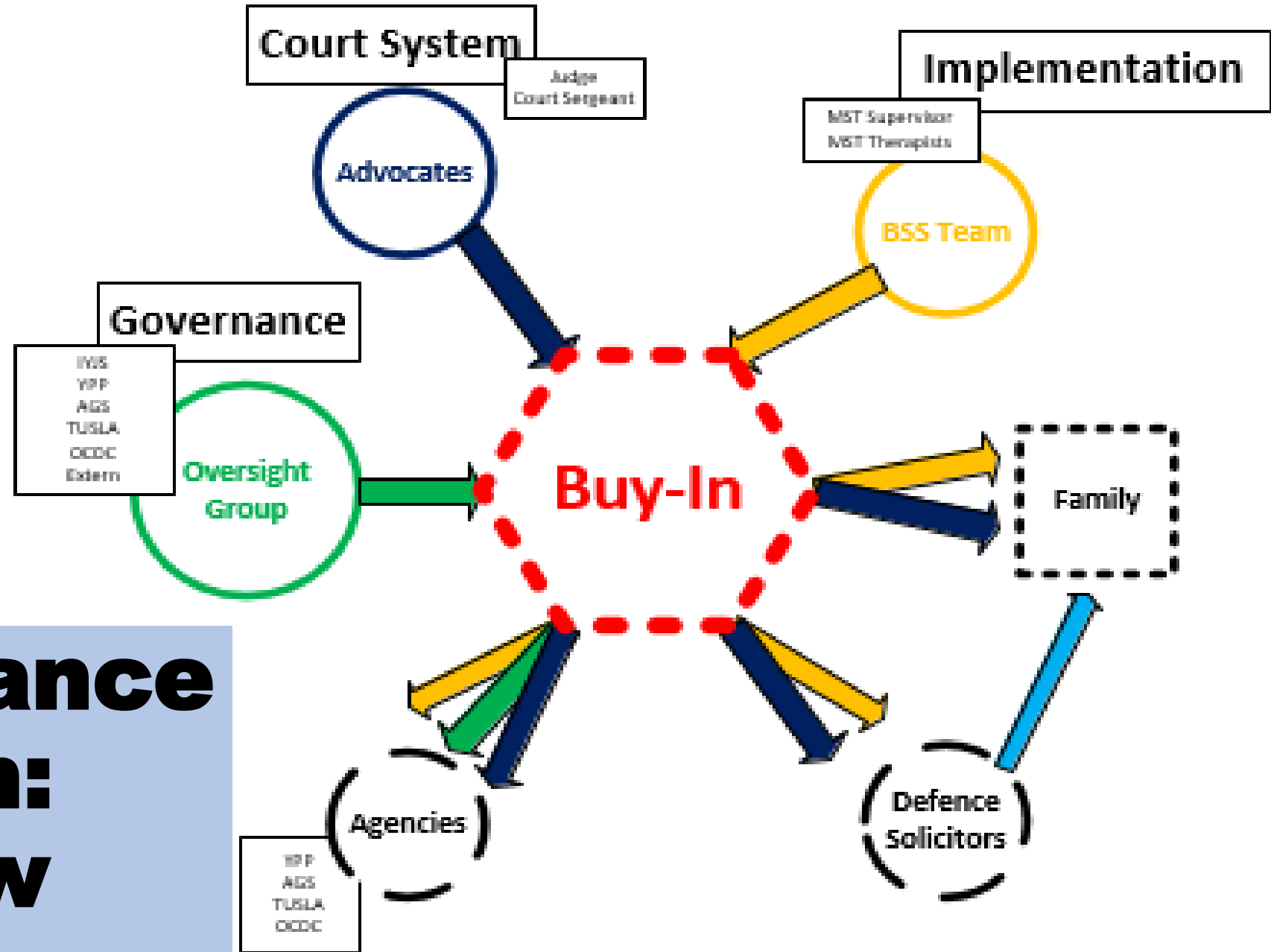
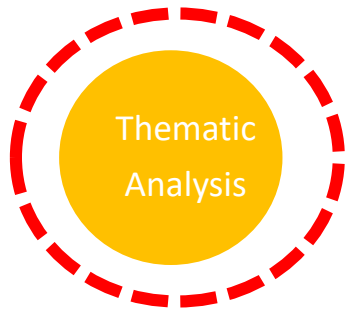


Case	Young Person	Caregiver	MST Therapist	Probation Officer	An Garda Síochána	Additional Professionals	Defence Solicitors
Kevin	YP1	CG1	MST1	PO1	AGS1	CTC1	
Max	No	CG2	MST2	PO2	AGS2	CTC2	LR2
Gareth	No	CG3	MST3	PO3	AGS3	SW3	LR3
Eddie	YP4	CG4	MST4	PO4	AGS4	DrugC3, Obkeyworker3	
Zach	YP5	CG5	MST5	PO5	AGS5	CTC5	
YP6		CG6	MST6				
			MST7				
BSS Manager			MST10				
Oberstown keyworkers						ObKeywork7,8	
Oberstown Admin						OberAdmin	
Court Sergeant					AGS5		
Focus group			MST 8,9	PO6	AGS6	TUSLA6	
Oversight group						IYJS6	
Judge						Judge	

# The Young People

**All five of them presented with  
problematic behaviour  
challenging contexts**

- **Male aged between 16 and 17 at enrolment**
- **All early school leavers**
- **Not involved in pro-social activities**
- **Part of problematic peer groups**
- **Illicit drug use**
- **For 4: Their problematic substance use linked directly to offending behaviour**
- **Families history of poor engagement with services**
- **Presence of mental health challenges**

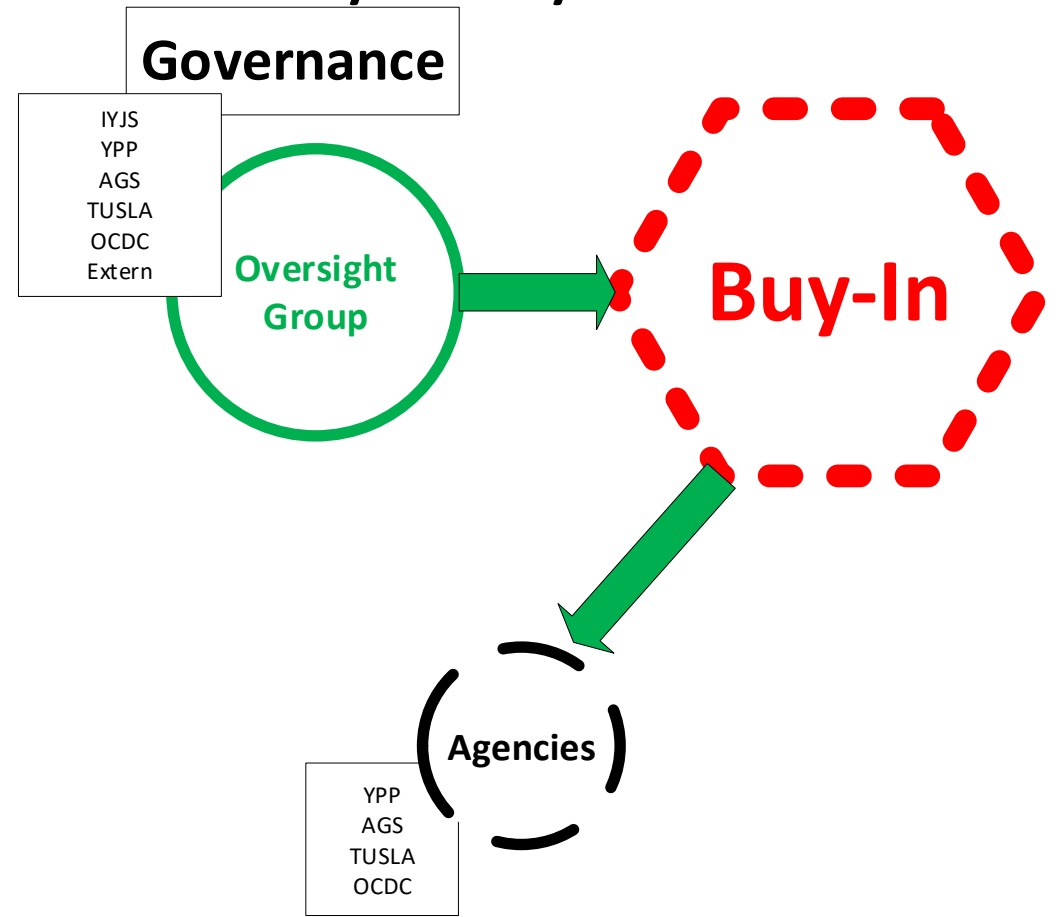


# The Importance of Buy-In: Overview



# Oversight group

- **Oversight group** provided *scaffolding* for BSS, facilitating buy-in of statutory bodies with Extern as a non-statutory body



- Sub Theme

Informal communication

between Chair and MST supervisor  
promoted timely problem solving

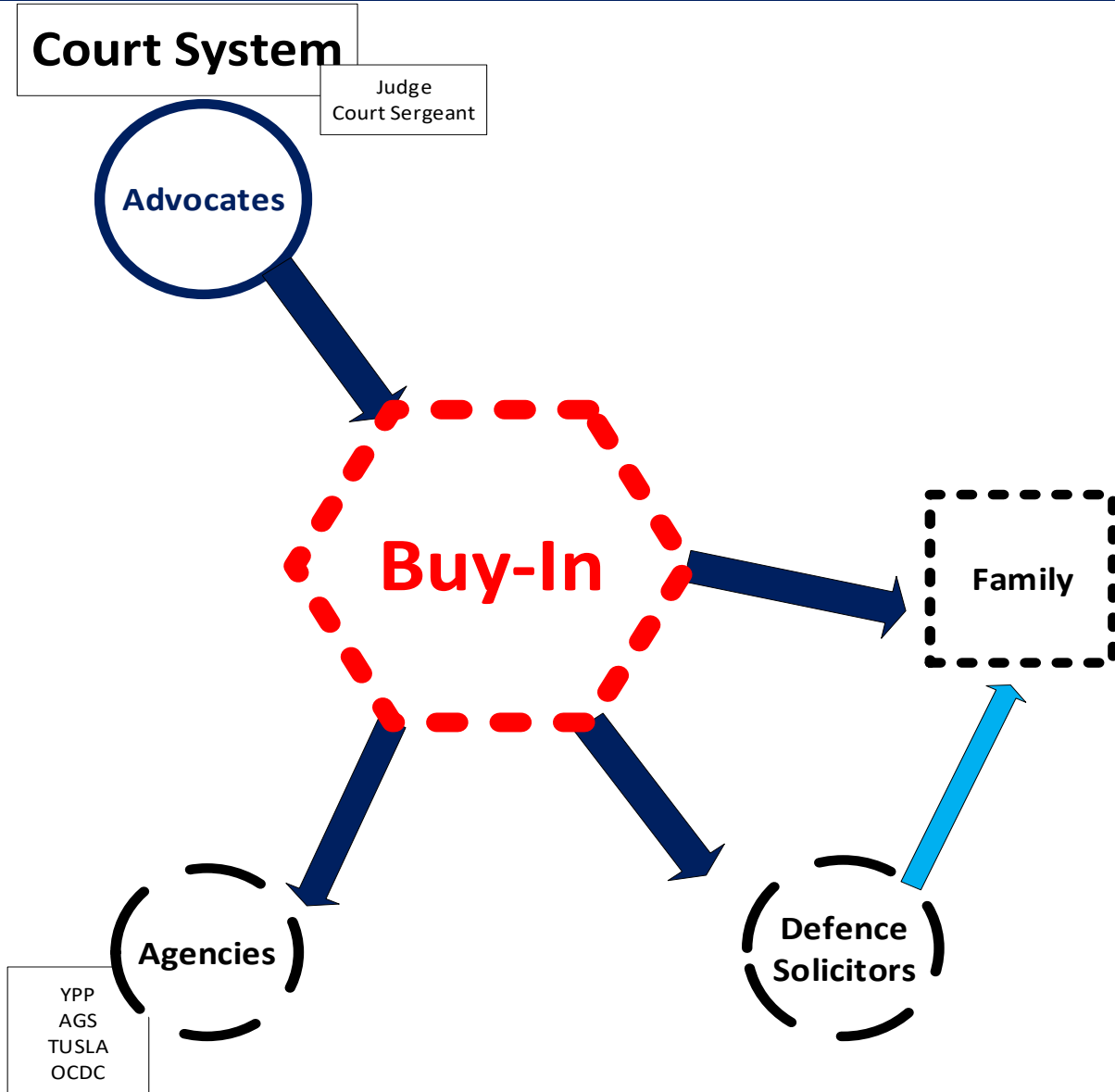
# Advocates

- **Judge**

- **Court Sergeant**

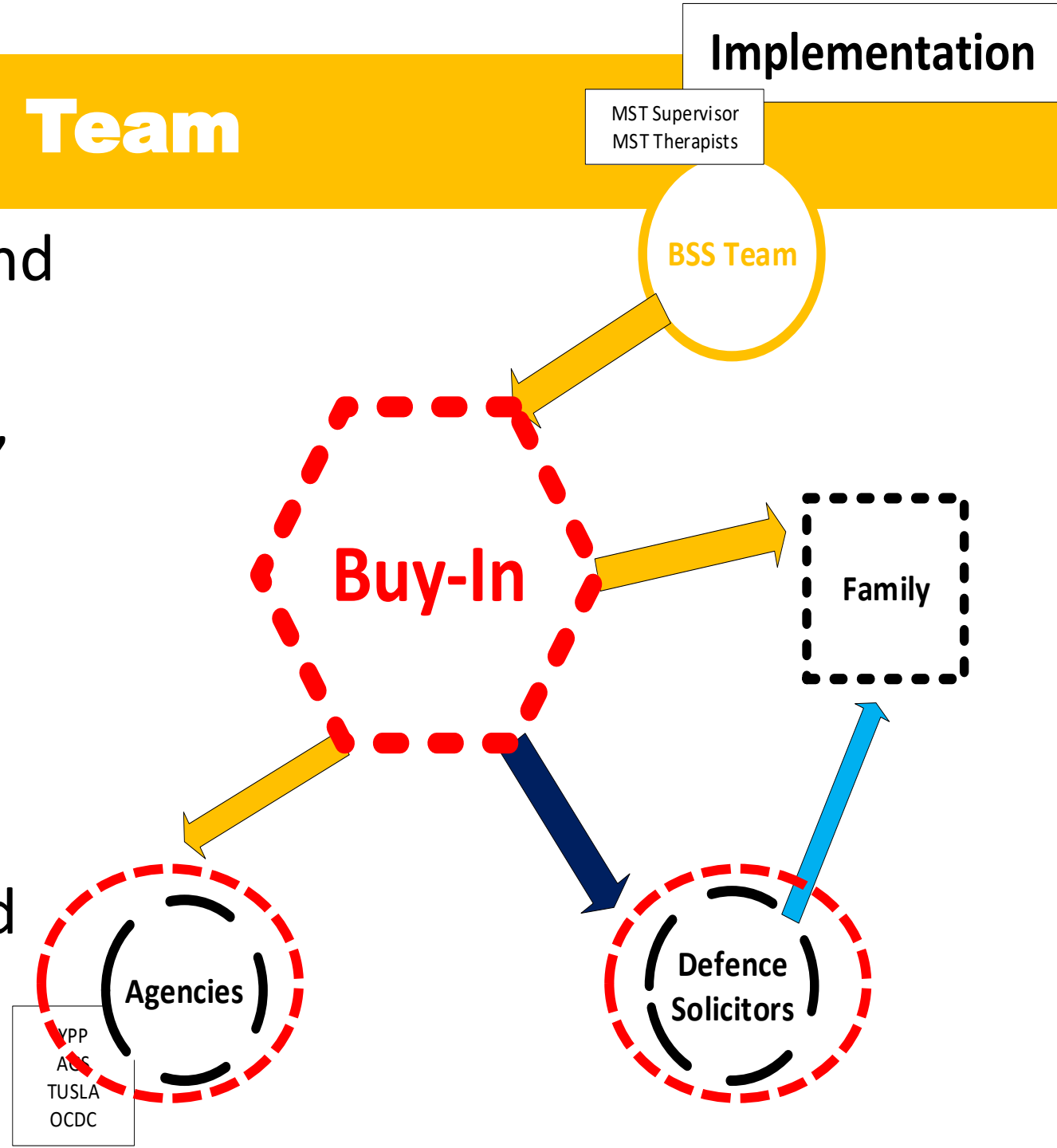
*'essential in the whole thing...  
one of the first point of call'*

Promoted, identified suitable referrals, provided information and safety concerns on referrals and identified case contacts within AGS



# BSS Team

- Excellent awareness building and communication by **BSS team in Court 55**: followed up contacts, engaged agencies, identified barriers and brokered relationships to facilitate engagement with services
- Term *'evidence based'* replaced by *'good news stories'*



## **BSS Team:** Informal communication

- Informal, open and regular communication between agencies '*a two way street*' Garda Case Manager

### Facilitated

- Effective interagency collaboration

all agencies were '*on the same page*', provided '*joint up approach*' for families

*'all of those things just all lined up together'* Solicitor

- Efficient transfer of sensitive information

# BSS Team: Family Buy-In

- *'Super saturated families with every service under the planet'* An Garda Síochaná

## Histories of poor engagement

*'If you don't have that [engagement] nothing else is going to work'* BSS Team

- **Building relationships:** Empowering families; non judgmental, *'strengths focused'*, position the family as expert
- **Collaborative:** caregivers were central to all decision making

Priority given to the *'practical things that parents can take control of first'* BSS Team

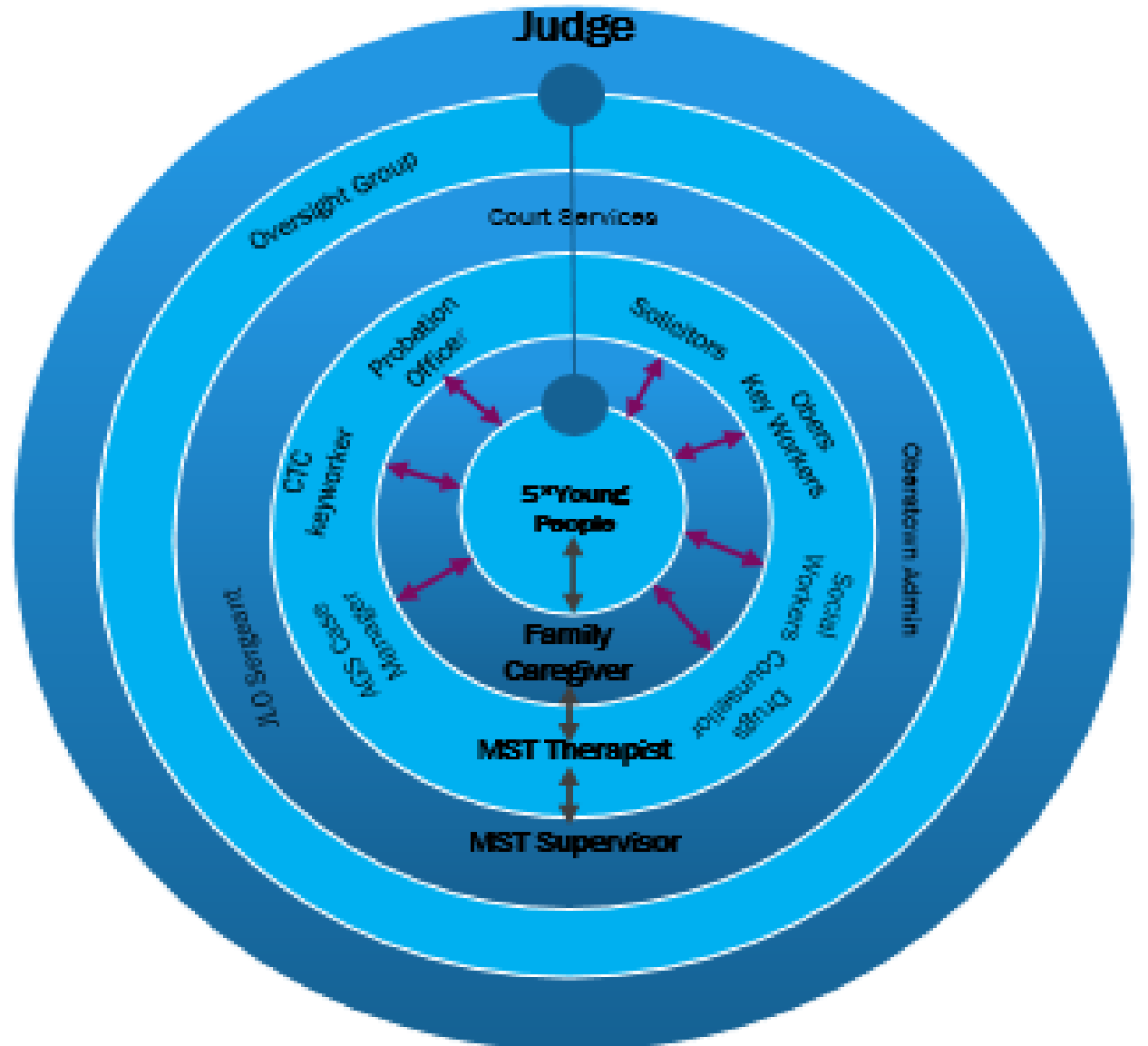
- Provided **support** at multiple levels: practical, informational and emotional  
Connected to supports in their extended family and community

*'this wasn't about wagging a finger at parents, but it was about actually real on the ground support. . . the first time ever that people have actually said how can we help'* Solicitor

# Case Studies Revisited

Synthesis of Multiple methodologies

- Thematic analysis of the interview data
- Documentary analysis of Extern's weekly case summaries
- PULSE data



# Young Person 4 : Eddie

Case	Length of BSS (Days)	PULSE Incidences			Bail compliance			Court Sanctions
		Pre-BSS	BSS	Post-BSS	Non-compliant	Context	Compliant	
YP4 Eddie	49	4	1	0	Week 7	Restricted area Restricted areas Arrest	Week 1-6	Detained to Oberstown

**Background:** Relatively stable family home, both parents employed and supportive extended family, history of family mental health issues

**Characteristics:** Developmental and mental health issues, problematic substance use linked to his peer group and offending history, assessed diversion system

**Intervention focus:** Parents developed plans for pro-social activities for Eddie.

**Outcomes:** Recommenced to court, re-offended. Remanded and detained to Oberstown. Thrived in the environment of OCDC.

**Of note:** Parents had issues with An Garda Siochana, unhappy with breaches reporting policy, hampered their engagement

**Poor Buy-In**

# Young Person 5 : Zach

Case	Length of BSS (Days)	PULSE Incidences			Bail compliance	Court Sanctions
		Pre-BSS	BSS	Post-BSS		
YP5 Zach	169	6	2	0	Restricted area Restricted peers	Probation Bond

**Background:** Chaotic home life, 'constant crisis', mother with history of difficulties engaging with services, problematic substance use, mental health challenges, family history of crime, father problematic substance use and homeless. Mother used exclusion from home as a form of punishment.

**Characteristics :** A 'likeable child with no sense of direction', easily influenced, aggressive at home.

**Intervention focus:** mental health challenges, reducing incidence of homelessness, safety, and pro-social activity

**Outcomes:** Bail compliant, ceased offending, received a probation bond

**Of note:** A threat on Zach's life/ currently fully employed on an apprenticeship

**Good Buy-In**



# **Challenges**

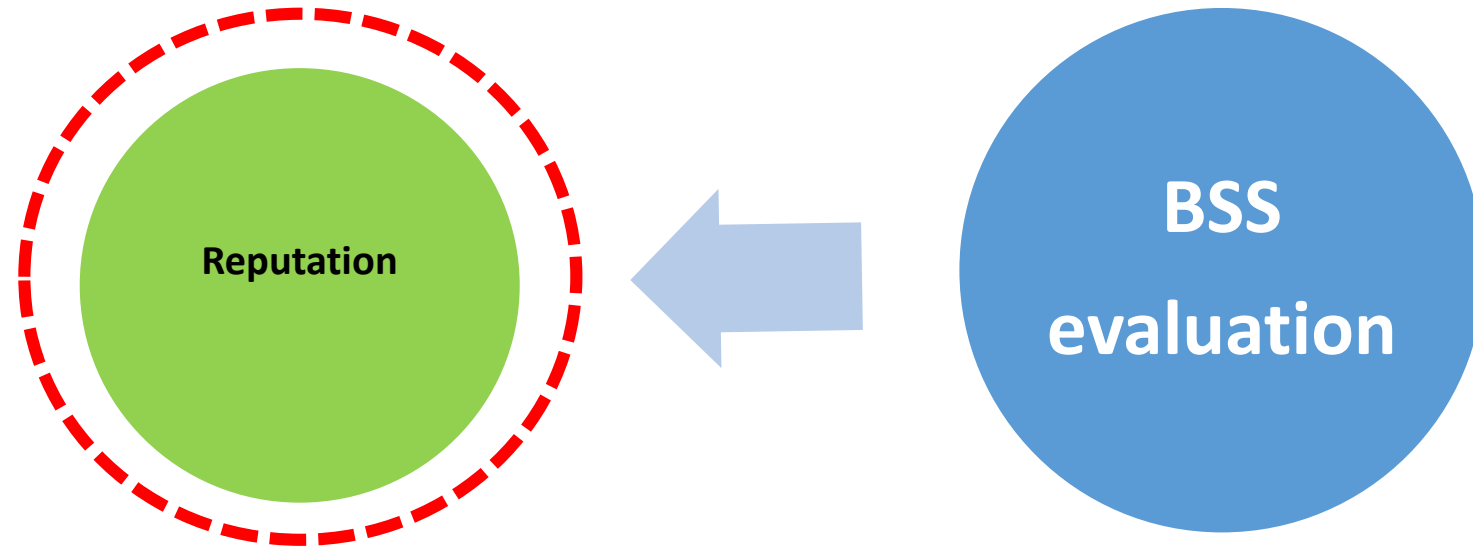
- 1. Requirement of BSS team to report breaches, hampered Buy-in**
- 2. Referral procedures and length of treatment**
- 3. Going forward: Need to look at MST exclusion criteria**

**Residential Care**

**Age**

**Mental Health**

# Reputation



# What stakeholders said

- *'it's like CCTV it's an independent witness like. . . alleviate the concerns of the Guards and also the judge'* Solicitor
- *'it was putting the whole plan in place and the **extra mile** with the bail supervision that worked'* Social worker TULSA
- *'Honestly I don't know how much more that therapist could have done without moving in with the family .....they did really amazing work and are very in touch'* Probation Officer
- *'it appeared the therapist was one of the few people who'd reached him'* AGS
- Initial concerns from AGS *'another agency, more bureaucracy' 'more do-gooders' to 'sing their praises' 'fabulous in respecting the guards and the guards duties'* AGS
- *'a really wonderful experience actually to be involved in as a practitioner'* Solicitor

# Last word to the families

- *'made me realise that he was still a child who needed his mum'* Mother
- *'wouldn't change any of it like, I got, like I got perfection didn't I like getting [therapist] as well as the all the benefits'* Mother
- *'it's the best thing that ever happened to us.'* Mother
- *'it helps with my ma. . . [therapist] was giving my ma tips on how to deal with problems . . . she picked up on it like, she did'* Young person
- *'it's worked out grand for me'* Young person

# Overarching Questions

The contribution of the bail supervision scheme to:

a) Young person's behaviour change including bail compliance and reduced re-offending



b) Gaining the confidence of the judicial system



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AND **P**RACTICE



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**Any questions  
thoughts?**

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