The Children's Society

Child Protection Conference
June 2009

Good Childhood
- Getting the balance right

Martin Houghton-Brown
Deputy Director, Children and Young People's Division

The Children's Society

The problem?

Parent ... anoid
abo ... ety
wa ... ent
exper ... e 10th 2009

"Our fear of risk is overblown, the big question is how we can reclaim childhood for children?"

Byron 2009

The Children's Society

A Detailed Inquiry

- **Three years work**
- **Contributions from 34,000 adults and children**
- **Lord Richard Layard as principal author**
- **Evidence based, scrutiny of research from across the world – 8 Professors!**
- **Direct input from children and young people**
- **Independent of The Children's Society**
- **Evidence available on www.childrenssociety.org.uk**

The Children's Society

A Good Childhood according to Sarah

"I think all kids should have the right to live in a happy place, where they feel safe and loved"

14 year old
From Manchester

The Children's Society

What is a good childhood?

Seven themes emerged from the Inquiry…

- Loving **families**
- **Friends**
- A positive **lifestyle**
- Solid **values**
- The right opportunities for **learning** for all children
- Good **health**, especially mental health
- **Equality** including enough money

The Children's Society

Risk and Freedom

"We need resilient children not cosseted children" **Byron 2009**

"The problem is that television and newspapers now bring us the minutest visual details of every tragic murder, so that murders are now much more salient in people's minds.

We need to restore balance."

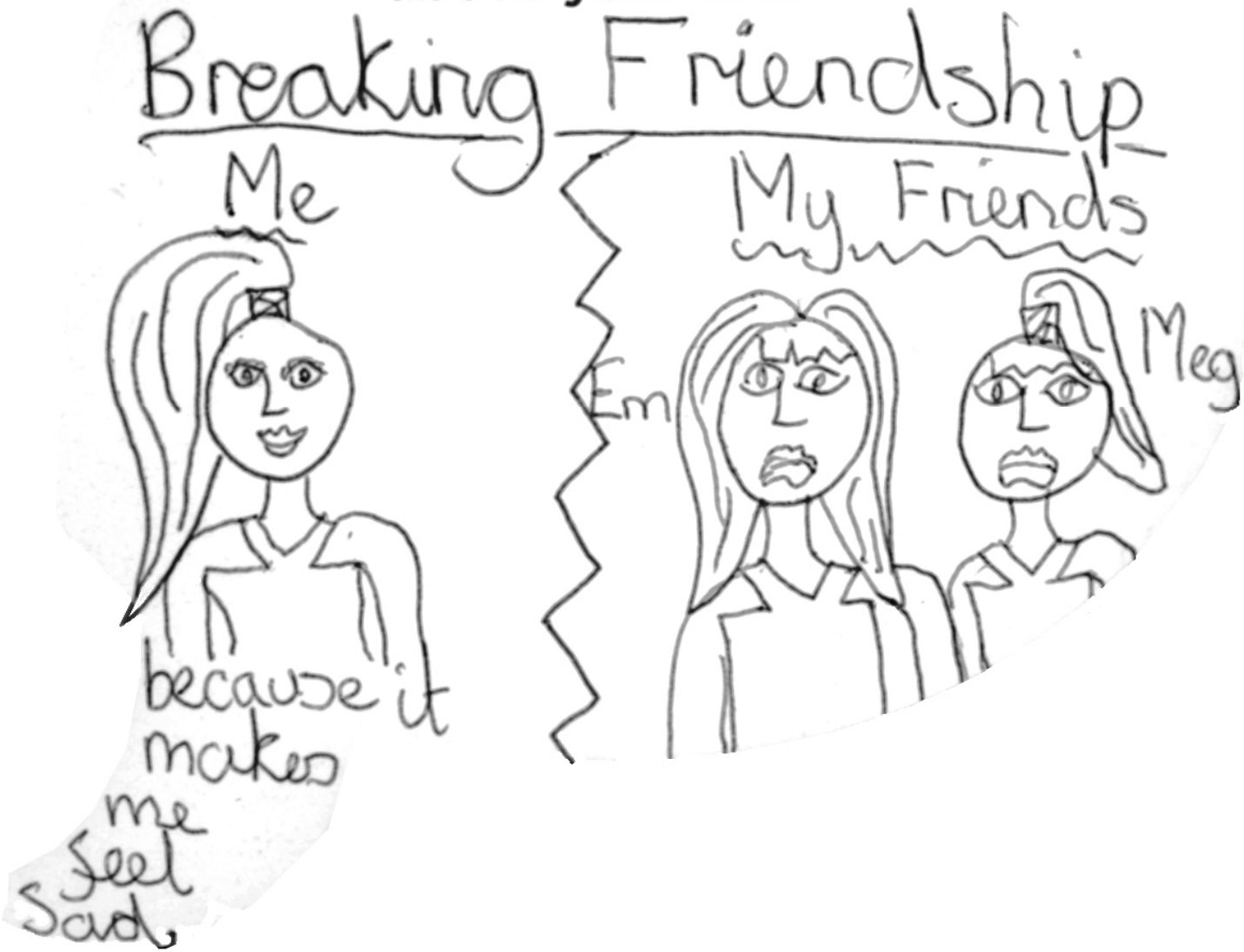
A Good Childhood 2009

Protective Factors : Friends

What would you change about your life if you could?

being bully

What are the worst things about your life?



The Children's Society

What do we know from research about bullying?

- UK came 16th out of 21 countries for 11, 13 and 15 year olds reporting being bullied in previous 2 months
(UNICEF, 2007)

- Different types of bullying e.g. relational and cyberbullying; latter may be on the increase
(Noret and Rivers, 2006)

- Children are more likely to tell a friend than a teacher (Smith, 2007). Friends are an important protective factor
(Hodges et al, 1999 Schwartz et al, 2000)

What are the
best things
about your life? love.

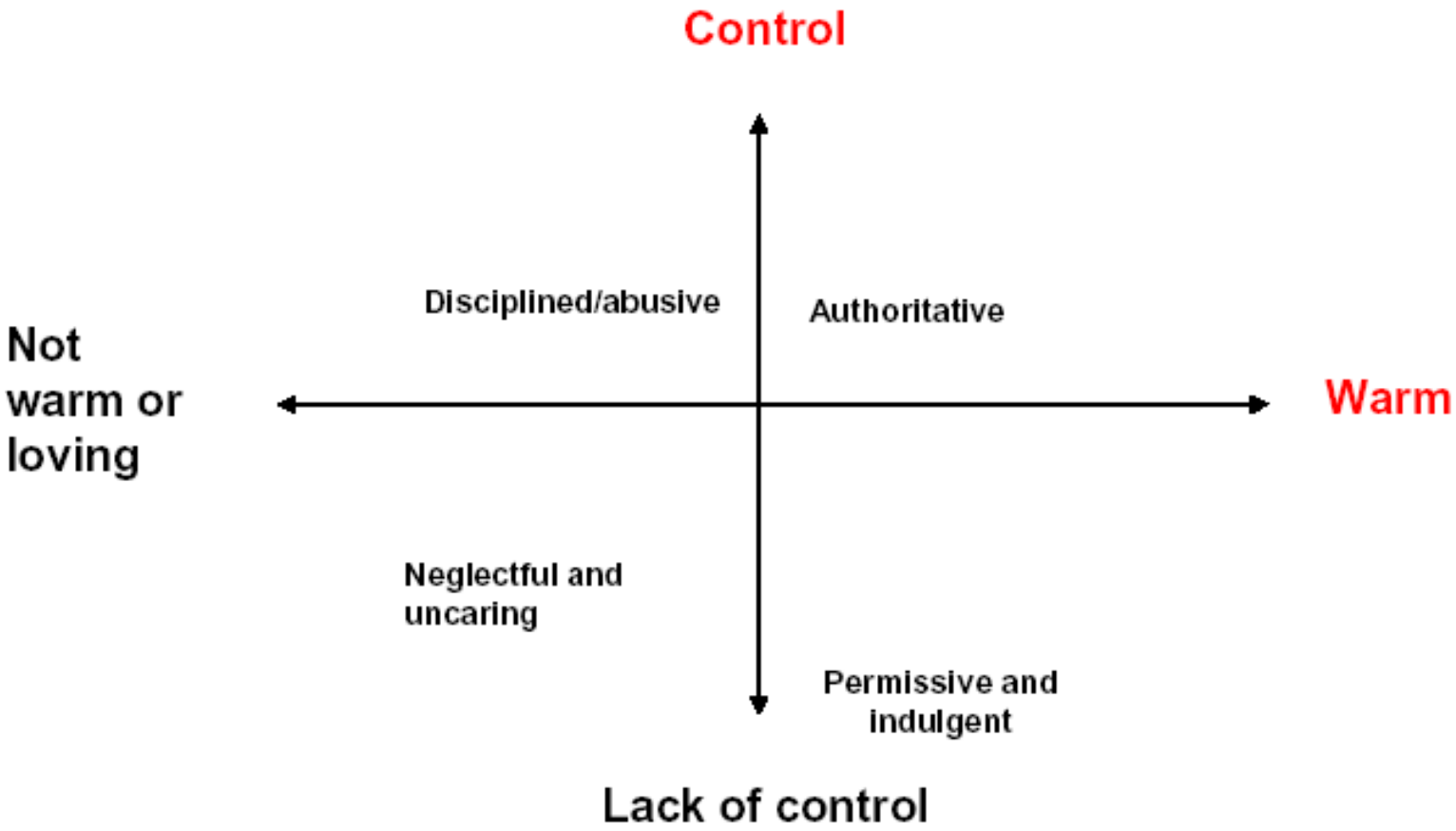
Protective Factors : Family

“Make me have a mum and dad that love me and to start my horid sad life AGAIN and not have so much sadness in my life”

Girl 8 years old

The Children's Society

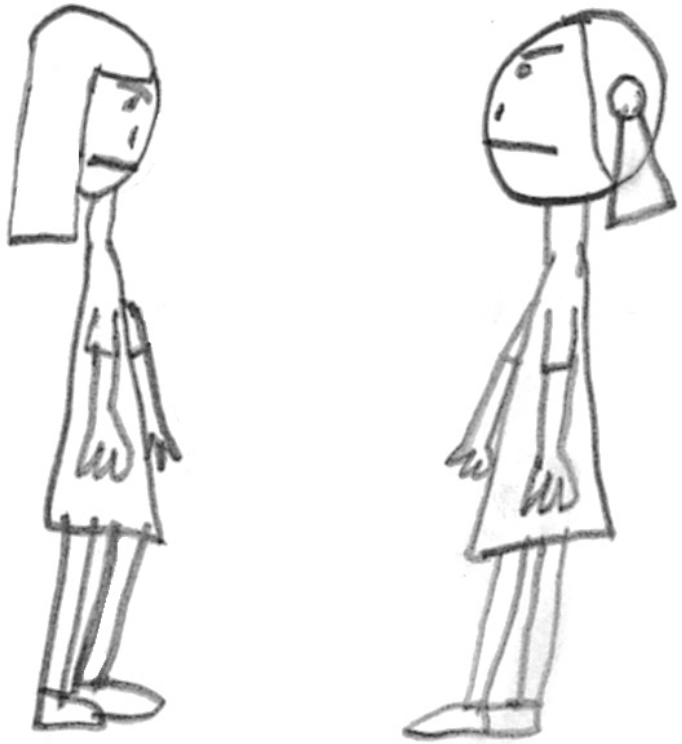
Loving families



The Children's Society

Families

What are the worst things about your life? arguments.



The Children's Society

Parenting

- Continuity in parenting
- Parents in conflict can get support
- If parents are splitting up – children's voices must be heard
- If parents separate – children fare best when they have contact with each of their parents and other important adults, except where issues of safety are involved.

The Children's Society

Child Protection Conference

Good Childhood

- getting the balance right

Martin Houghton-Brown
martin.houghton-brown@childrenssociety.org.uk