Why a special system for children

Anne Lindboe, Ombudsman for Children in Norway
What is an ombudsperson for children?

• Independent institution
• Spokesperson for children
• Influencing policy makers and practitioners to take greater account of rights of children
• No formal power
Children differ from adults in their physical and psychological development, and their emotional and educational needs. Such differences constitute the basis for the lesser culpability of children in conflict with the law.”

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child
General Comment No 10
The brain develops most rapidly the first 5 years after conception.
10% of families characterized as high risk families.
Experiences from early childhood has a high influence on the development of the brain.
“When a child experience chaos, neglect, threats, violence and other adversity, their potential is stunted, distorted and fragmented”

Dr. Bruce Perry,
The Child Trauma Academy,
Houston, Texas
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Increased risk for more self-absorbed, impulsive, aggressive, violent and anti-social behaviour.
Brain research shows that adolescent brain is not adult brain
Self-control, planning and abstract thinking fully develop in late adolescence.
Who are children in conflict with the law?

- A high number of juveniles have experienced fragmented childhoods.

- High number of juveniles have serious psychological problems.
Children in conflict with the law are not born evil and cruel.
There is still hope for change
Brain research show that there is great potential, but we need to stimulate the right areas of the brain.
Punitive practices do not build new skills, good relationships or promote healthy development. It does not lead to effective remediation or rehabilitation.
Punitive practice may create new problems
We should rather have interventions focusing on the need of the specific child
Promoting relational health by increasing the quality and number of supportive, good role models around the child.
Child protection is crime prevention.
“The most important is to have people around me that I know support me and do not turn their back on me, who do not abandon me like my father did. To know that people believe in me is important.

Boy 17 years in prison
“The protection of the best interests of the child means .... that the traditional objectives of criminal justice, such as repression/retribution, must give way to rehabilitation, and restorative justice objectives in dealing with child offenders”

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