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The Dutch decentralisation policy: Risks for child protection and child welfare?

Knorth, Erik J.

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The Dutch decentralisation policy

Risks for child protection and child welfare?

Prof. Erik J. Knorth, PhD

Summer School University of Groningen – August 21-25, 2017

‘The Future of Child and Family Welfare Policy:
Looking through Different Lenses’



university of
 groningen



The organizers

Mónica López



Hans Grietens



Lennart Nygren



Floor Middel

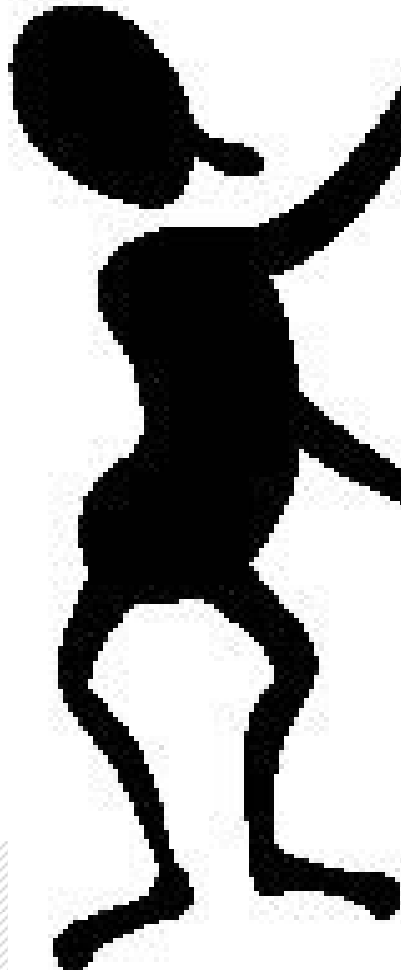


Helen Bouma





Lay-out presentation



- How many children receive support?
- Background, principles and rules new decentralisation policy and legislation
- Gateways to and types of support & care
- Support with(out) out-of-home placement
- Bottlenecks and risks decentralisation policy
- Conclusions

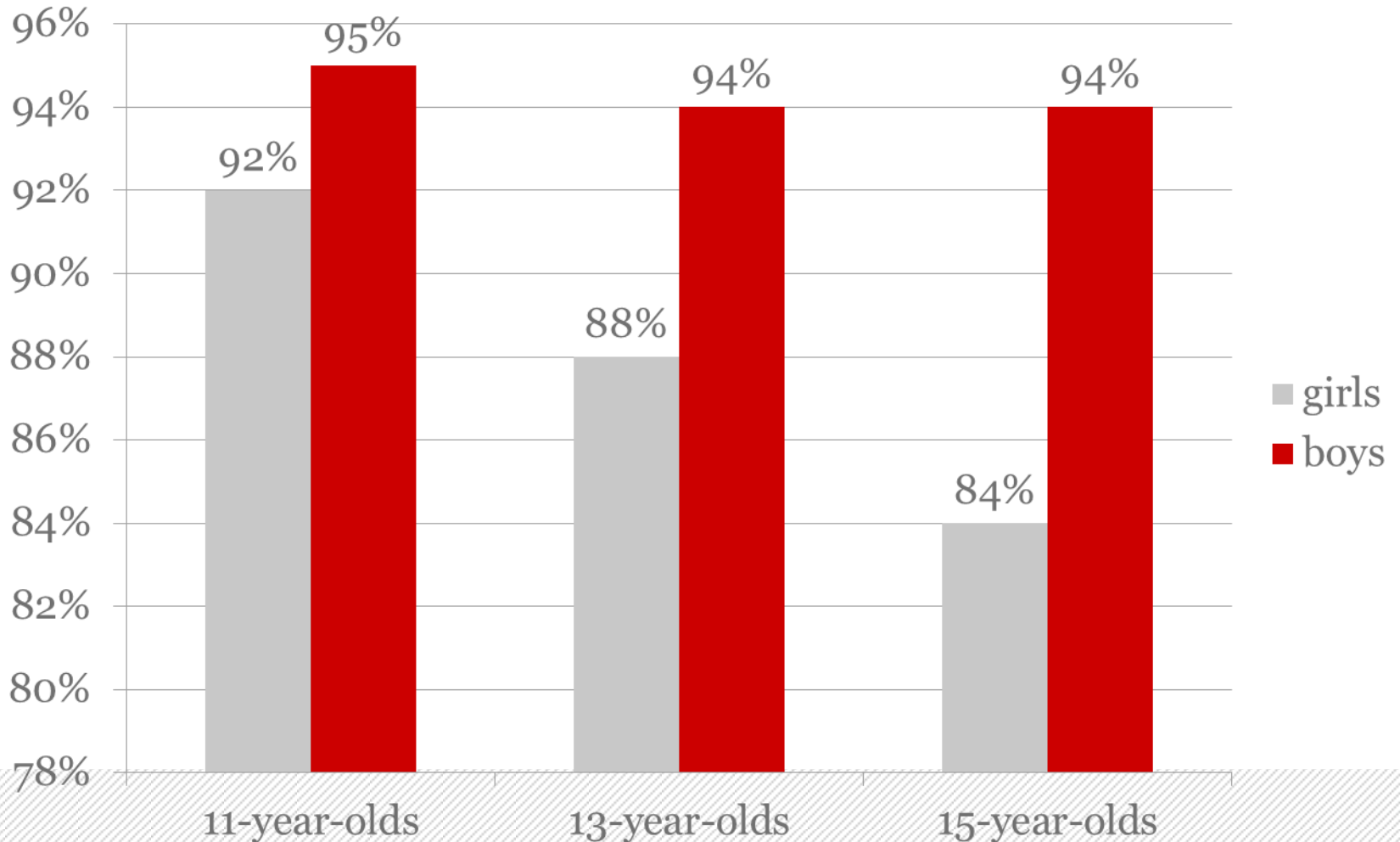


Dutch children, almost the most happy children in the world (HBSC study 2013-2014 survey)





Percentages of **Dutch children** who report **high life satisfaction** (HBSC study 2013-2014 survey, Inchley et al., 2016)





Contrast: Child maltreatment

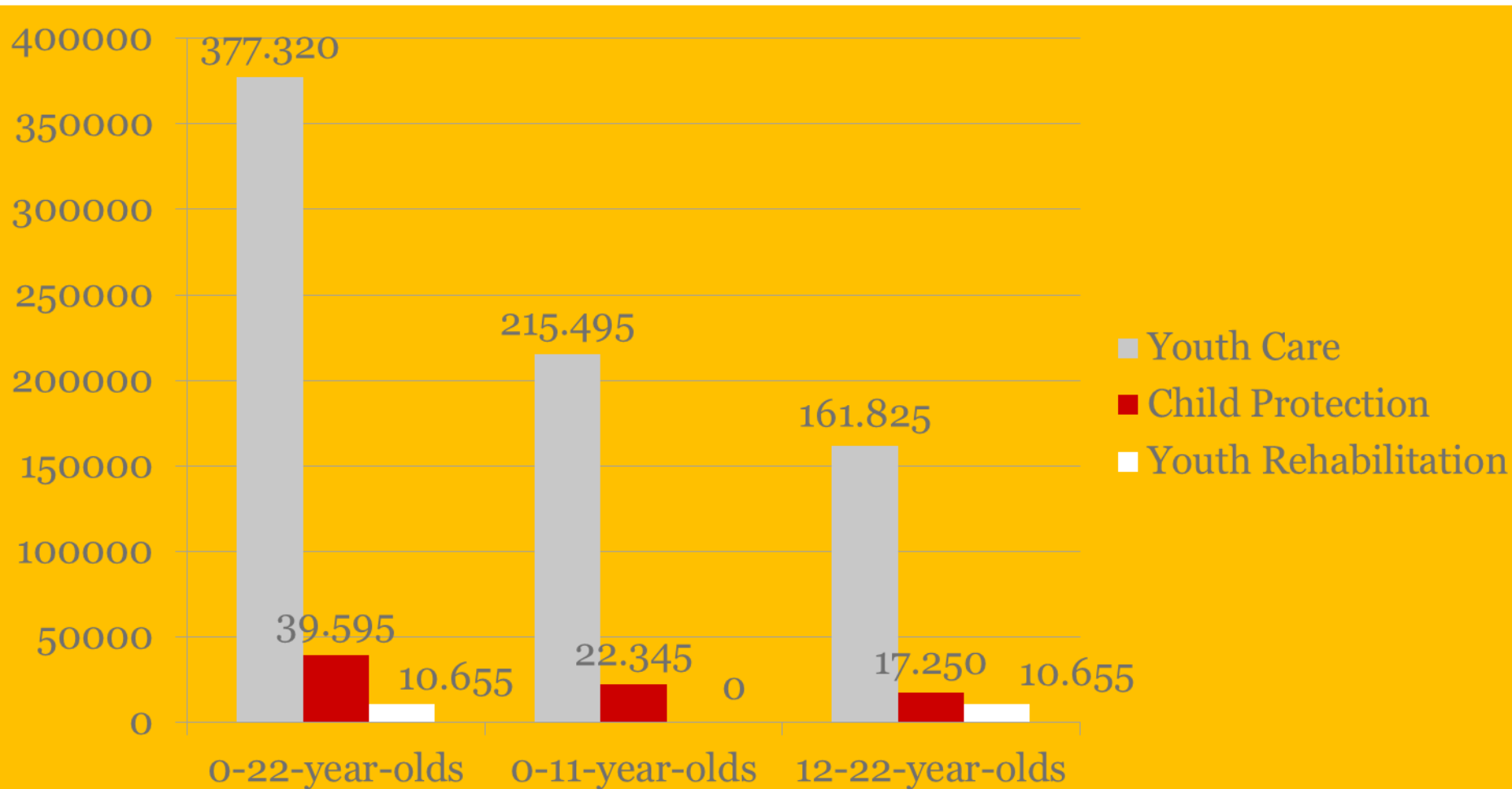
- › Family tragedies tip of the iceberg
- › Yearly \pm 120.000 children suffer from maltreatment (**3,4%**):
 - Physical and emotional neglect
 - Physical and emotional abuse
 - Sexual abuse
- › In the group of 12-17 year-olds: **9,9%** feels a victim

Sharleyne (8) † 2015



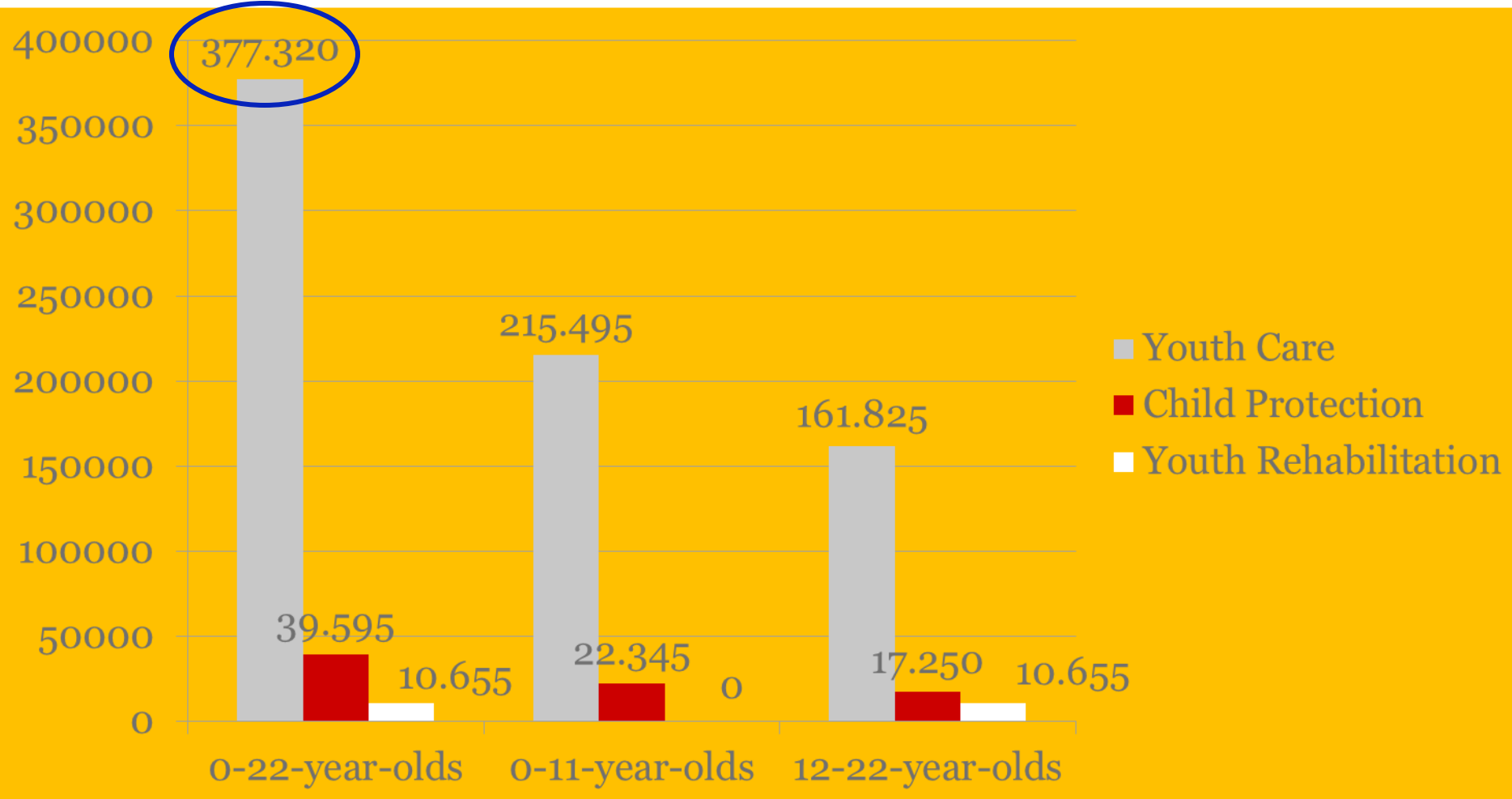


Numbers of **Dutch children** who receive youth care, child protection, and/or youth rehabilitation, 2016 (CBS, 2017)



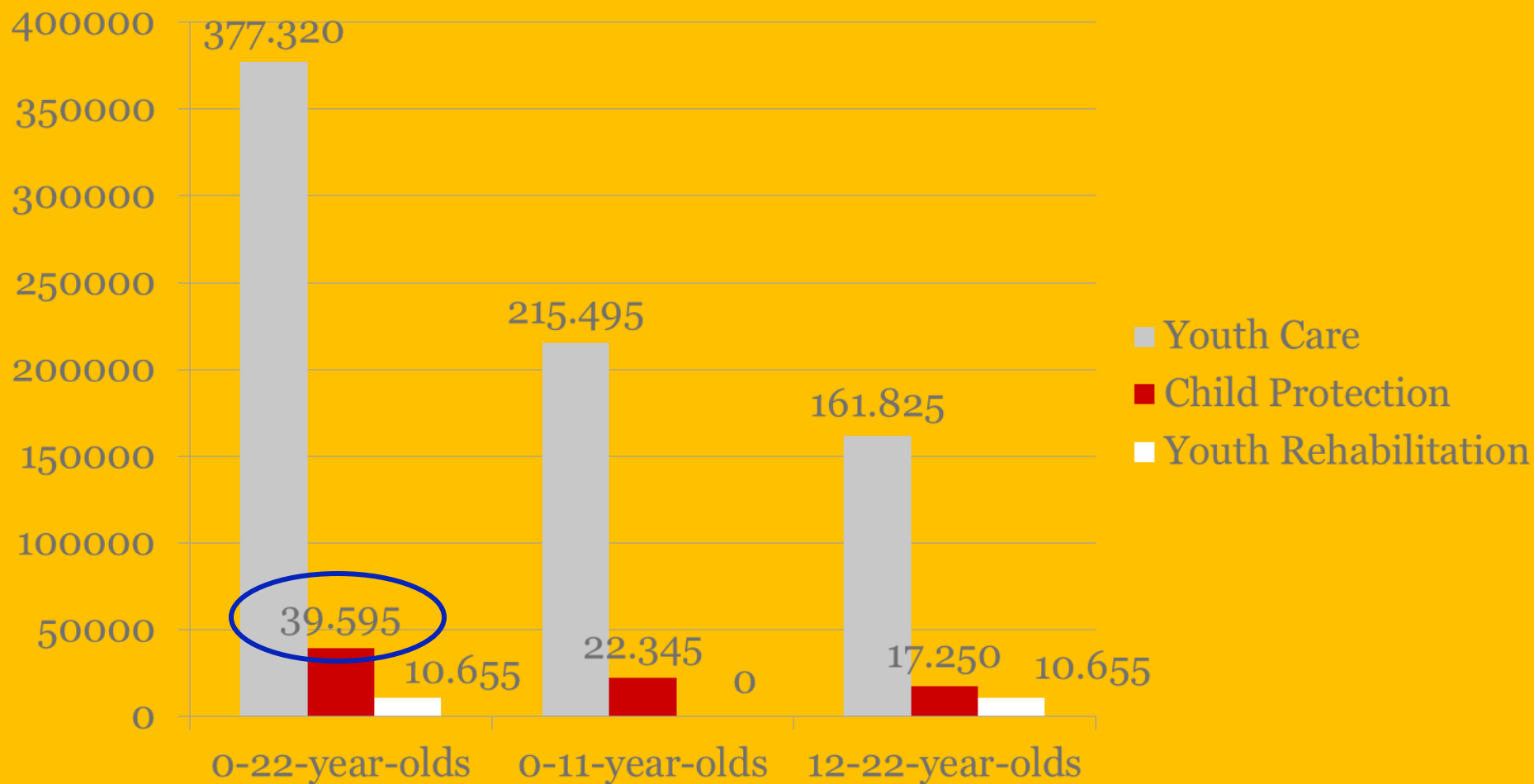


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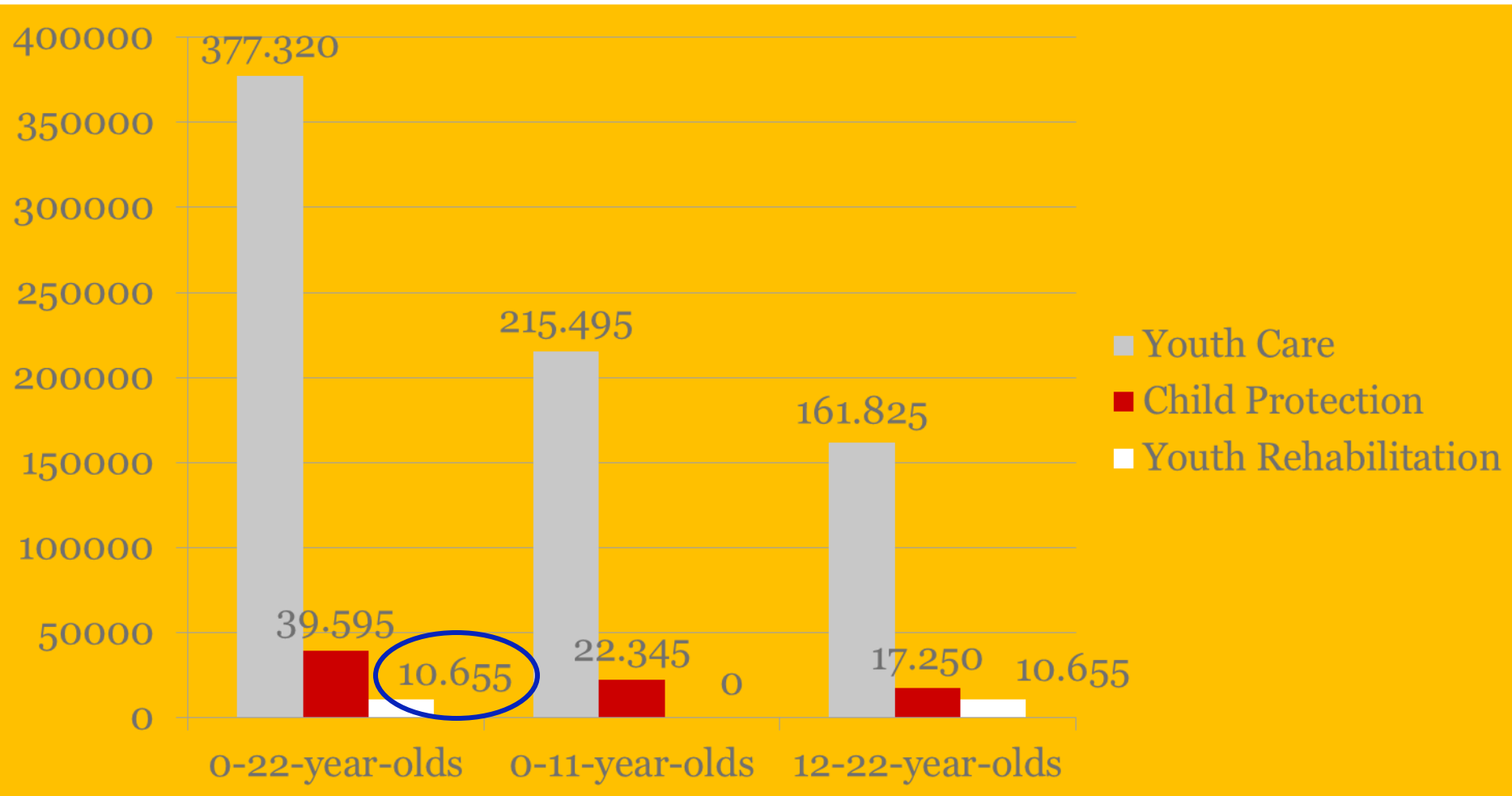


Numbers of **Dutch children** who receive youth care, child protection, and/or youth rehabilitation, 2016 (CBS, 2017)





Numbers of **Dutch children** who receive youth care, child protection, and/or youth rehabilitation, 2016 (CBS, 2017)





Background new legislation 2005-2015

- › Act on Youth Care 2005 → Youth Act 2015
- › Focus on problems
- › Fragmentation & compartmentalisation
- › Differentiation of the system at the expense of own responsibility and competence clients
- › ‘Moving / passing-on’ mechanism
- › Growing ‘consumption’ of (specialised) youth care
- › Limited knowledge on (cost-)effectiveness





Principles Youth Act 2015

- › Child and family support as nearby and as early as possible
- › Needs of the client (child, parents) are guiding
- › Children's safety is crucial and comes first
- › Normal life as much as possible (de-medicalisation, timely scaling down)
- › Empowerment and solution-focused approach
- › Engaging social network in child and family support
- › Integrated approach (cooperation between agencies)
- › One family – one plan – one director
- › Adequate and fast specialised treatment if indicated (timely scaling up)
- › Less bureaucracy; more space and training for professionals
- › Evidence-informed practice (monitoring & reflecting on outcomes)



Additional Rules re Youth Act 2015

- › **Decentralisation:** municipalities (N=388) are responsible for **all forms** of care and support for children and families, including
 - Prevention
 - Social care
 - Mental health care
 - Care for children with impairments
 - Child protection
 - Youth rehabilitation

- › Directive 1: Savings up to 15%
- › Directive 2: Reduction specialized services up to 30%

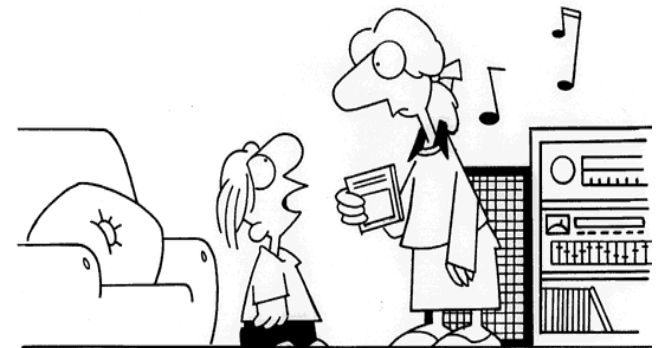




Main gateways to youth care and protection

- › Local or district social team
- › Centre for youth and family (CJG)
- › Municipal front office for youth care
- › AMHK / Safe Home *
- › Child Protection Board (CPB)
- › Juvenile Court
- › Police / Public Prosecution Department
- › General practitioner
- › (Pre)School

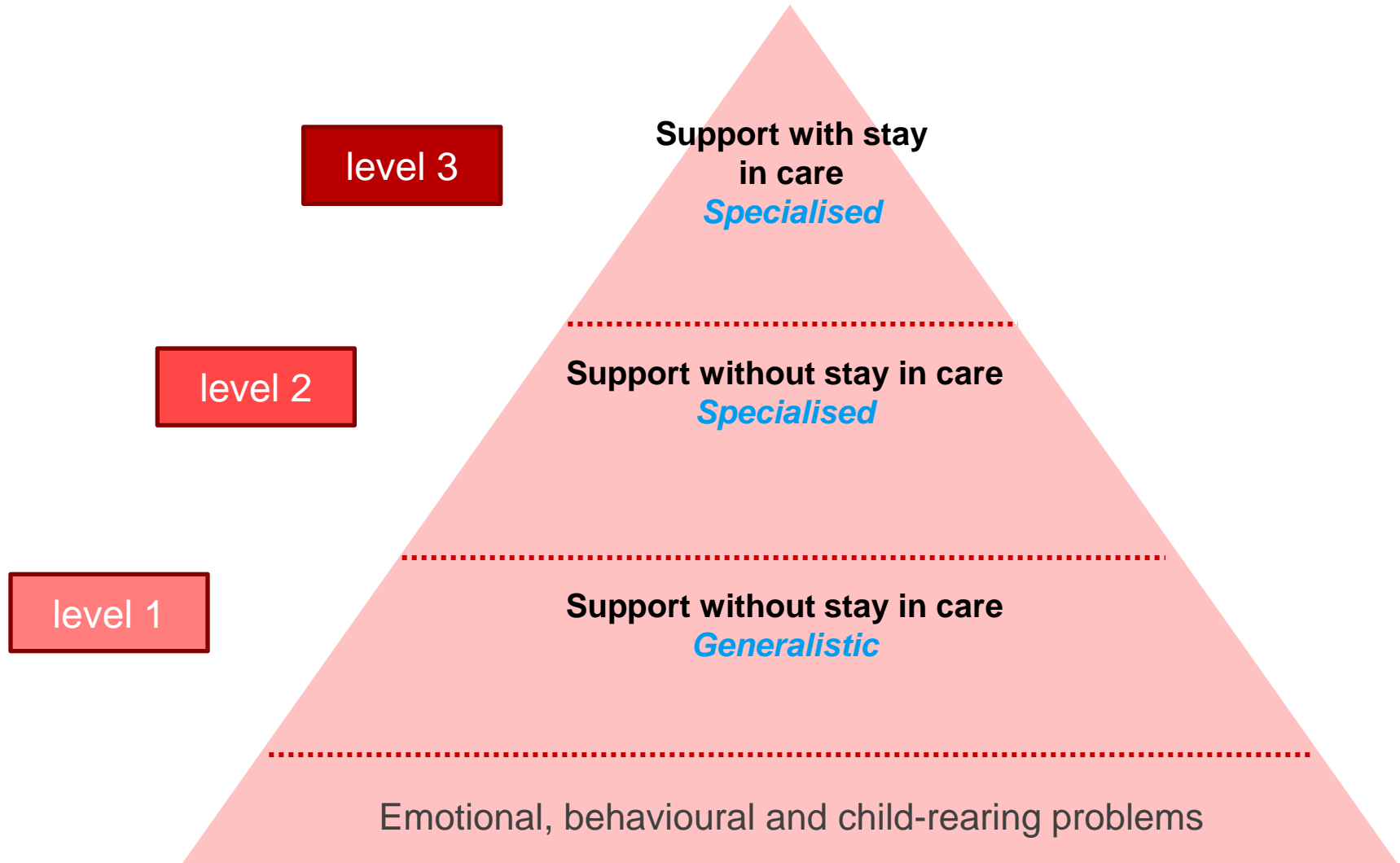
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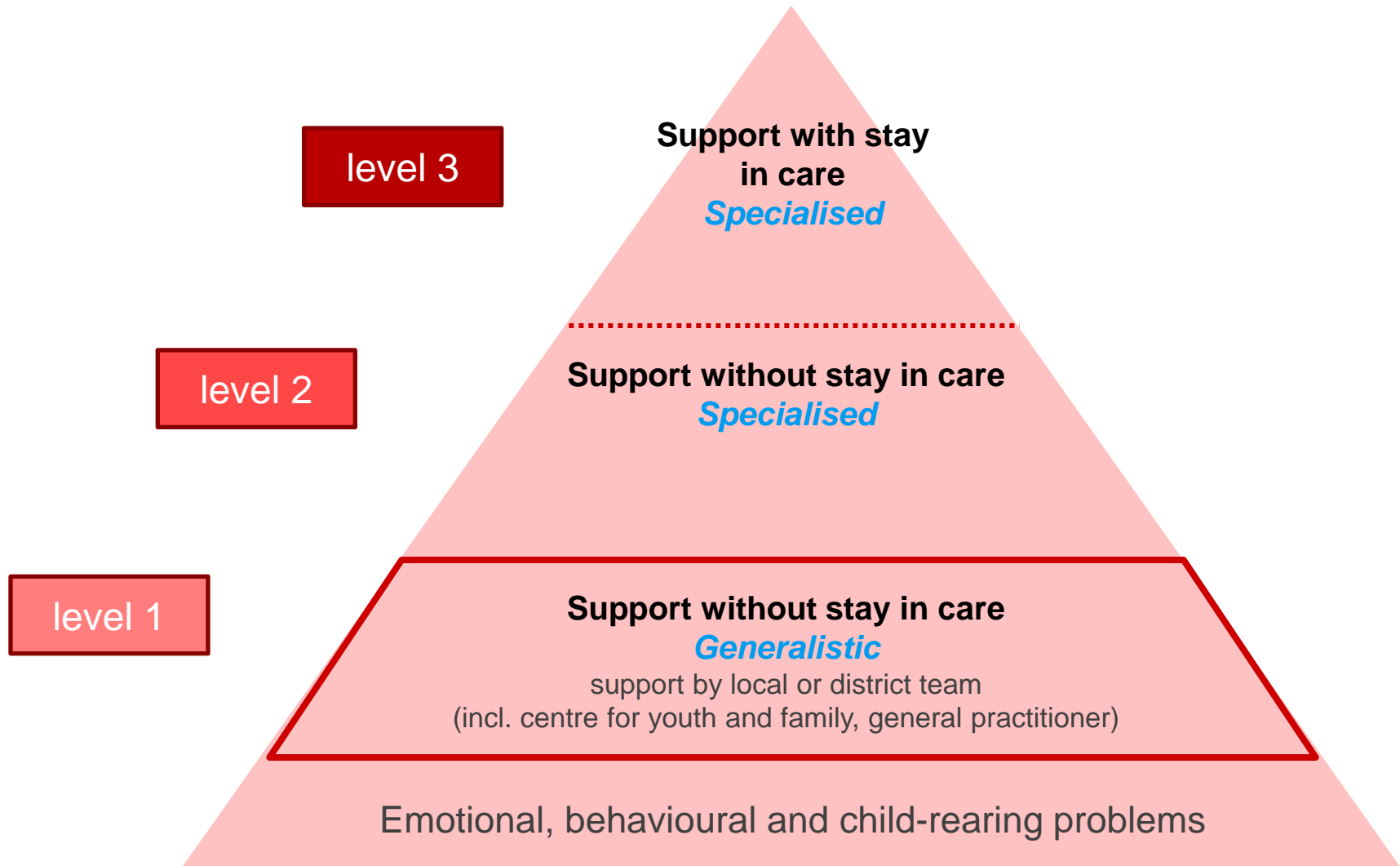
"I spoke with a social worker today. If you keep playing 70's music, they're going to put me in a foster home."

* See also: Bouma et al. (2016), Prakken (2015)

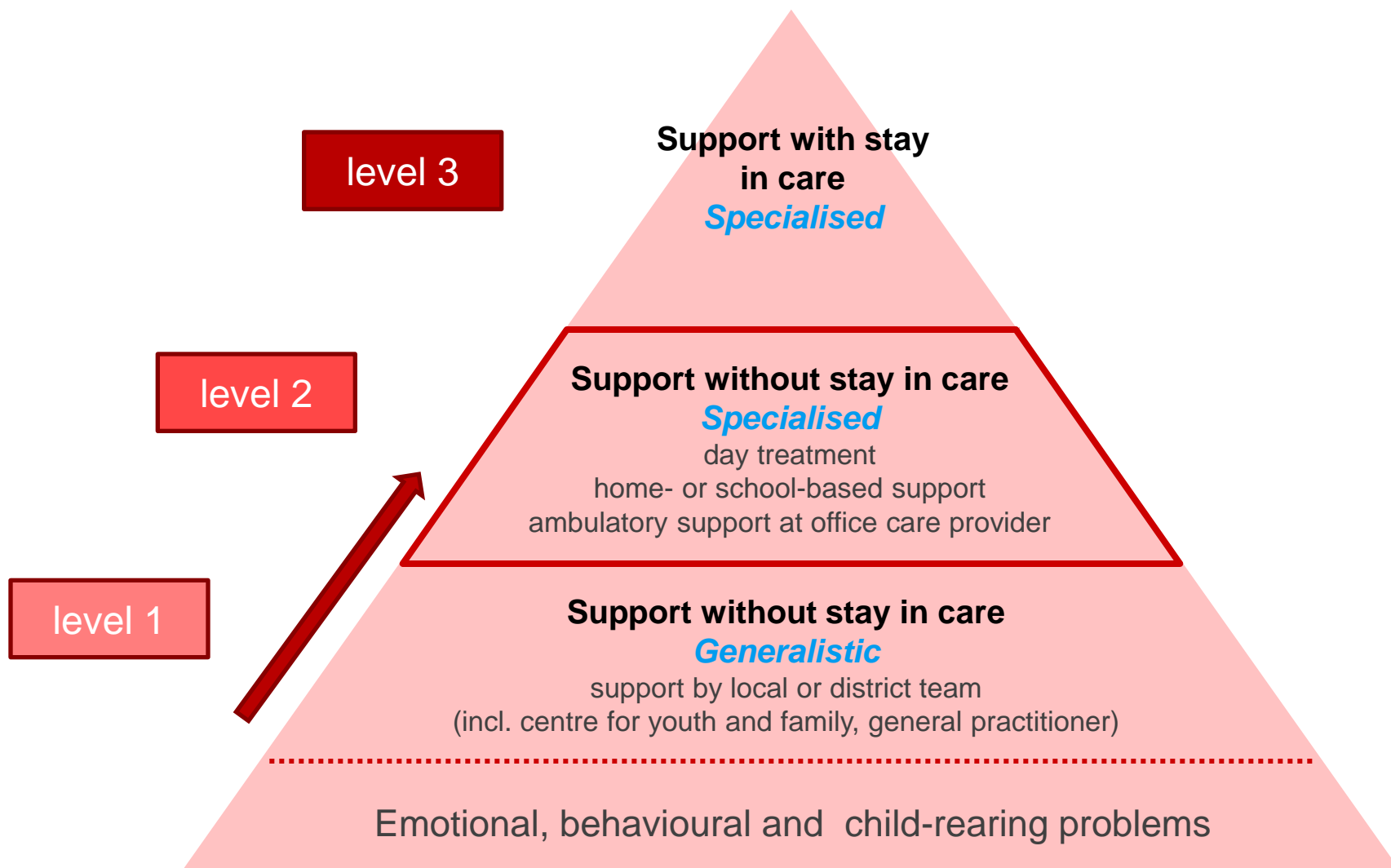
Care continuum



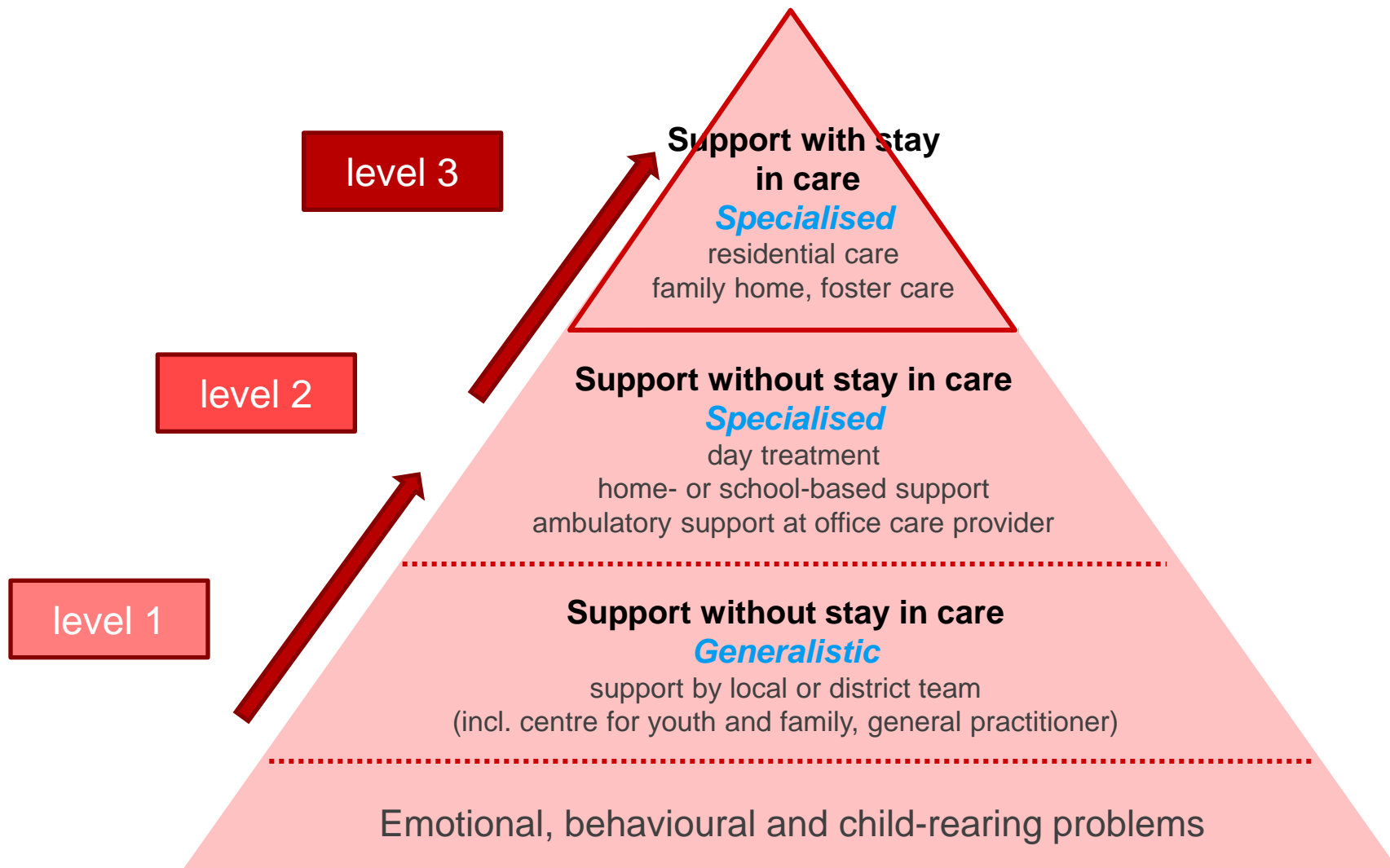
Care continuum



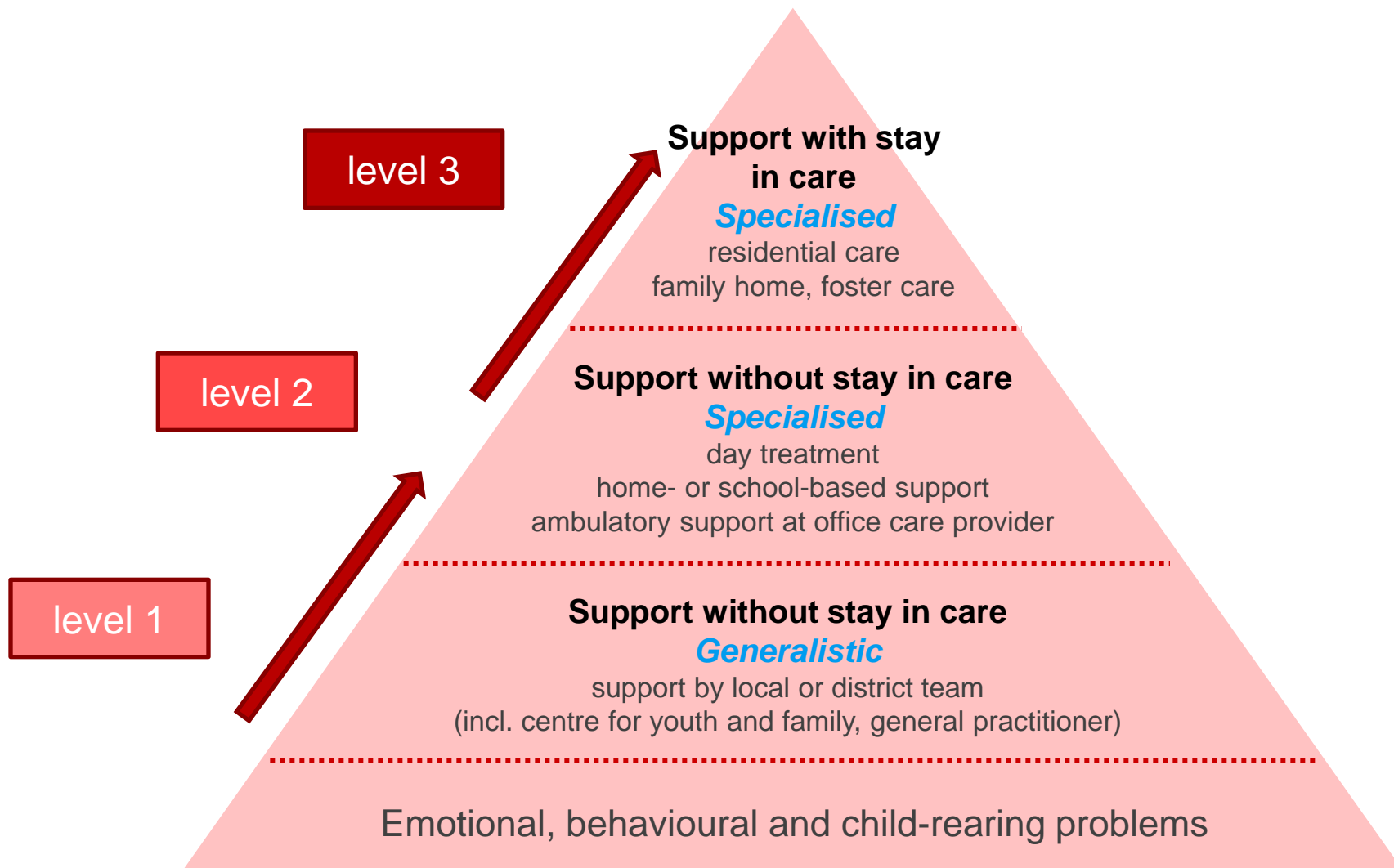
Care continuum



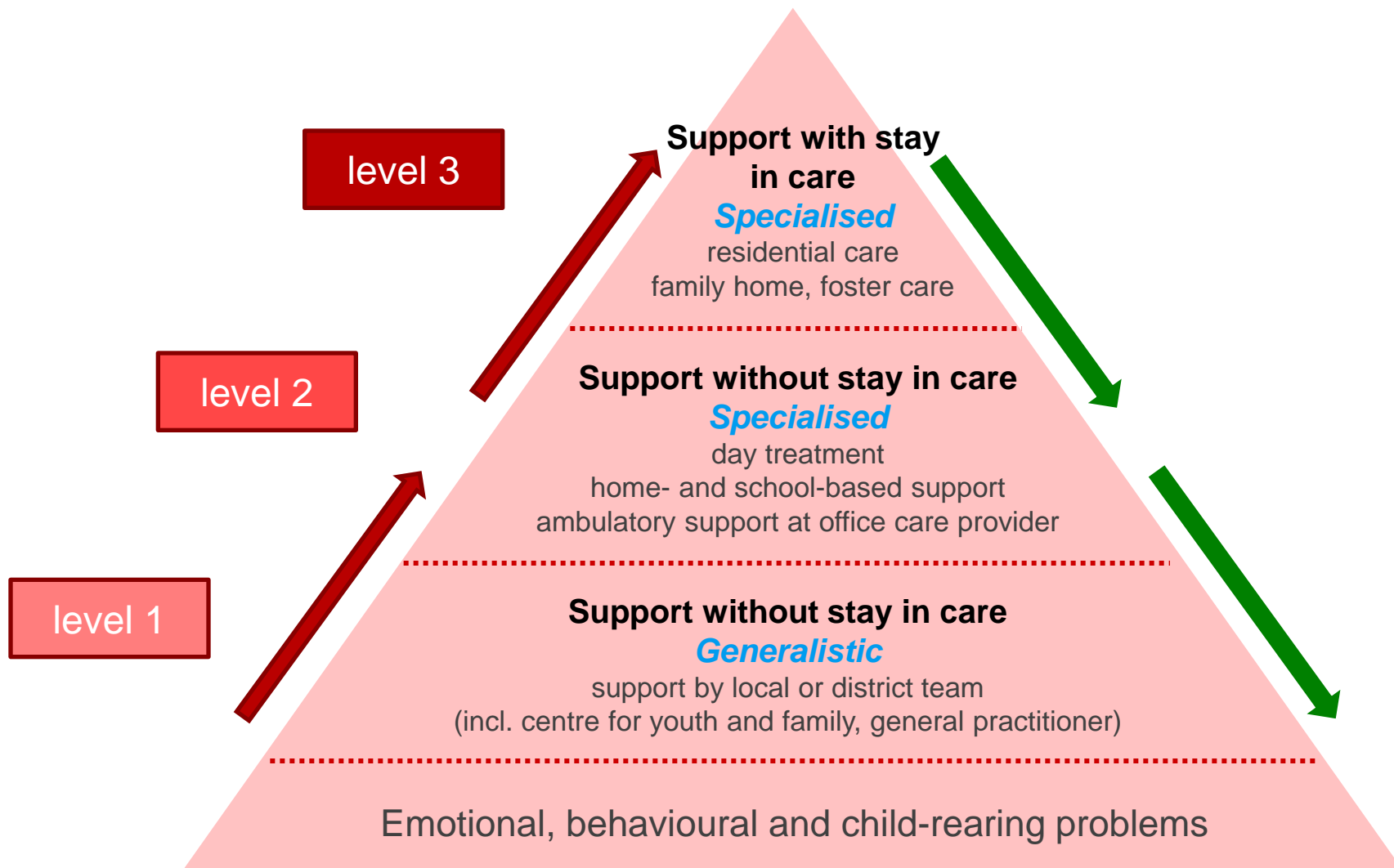
Care continuum



Care continuum



Care continuum





Number of Dutch children receiving support **without stay in care**
(in percentages of total number of children receiving youth care in 2016 [**N=377.320**])
(CBS, 2017)

Children receiving youth care without stay in care

Support receivers without stay

94,8%

Support by local or district team

16,3%

Home- or school-based support

15,7%

Ambulatory support at office care provider

71,0%

Support by day treatment centre

6,8%

0,0% 20,0% 40,0% 60,0% 80,0% 100,0%



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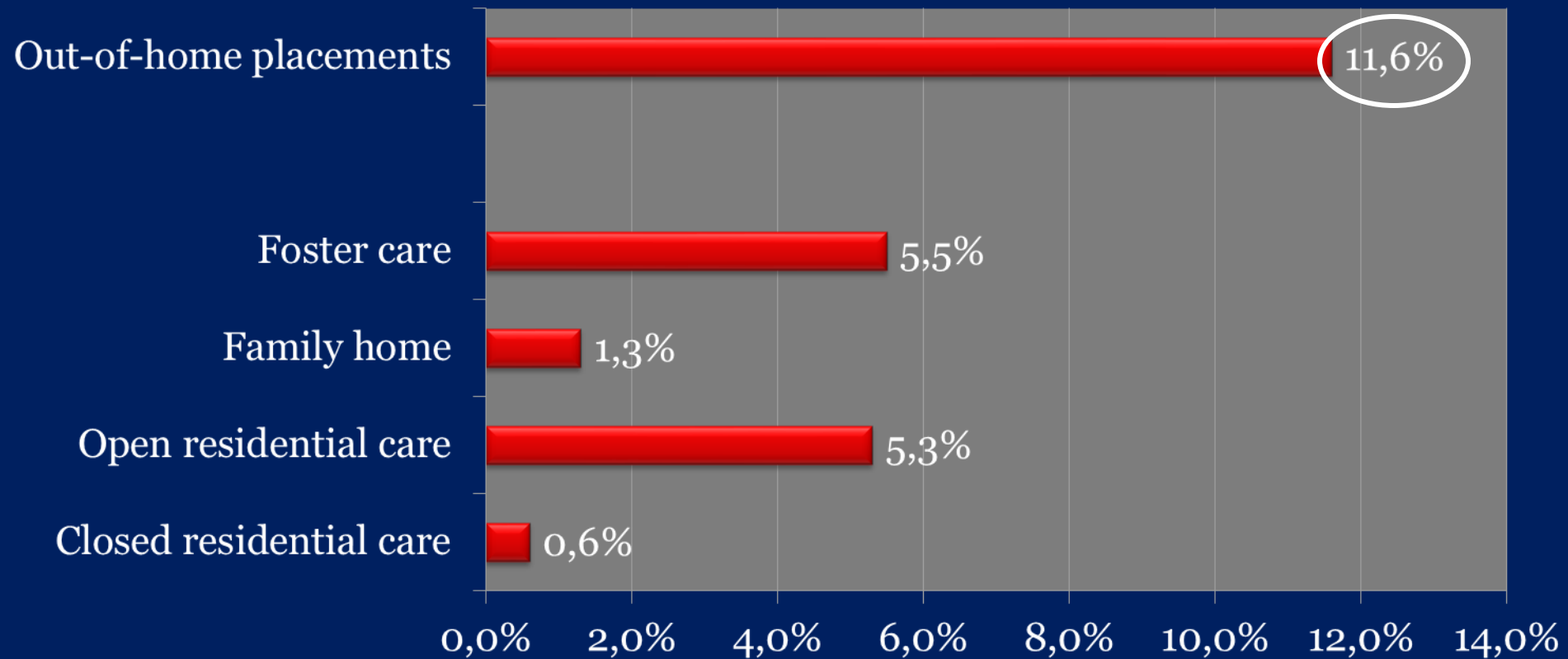
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0,0% 20,0% 40,0% 60,0% 80,0% 100,0%



Number of Dutch children receiving youth care while **placed out of home**
(in percentages of total number of children receiving youth care in 2016 [N=377.320])
(CBS, 2017)

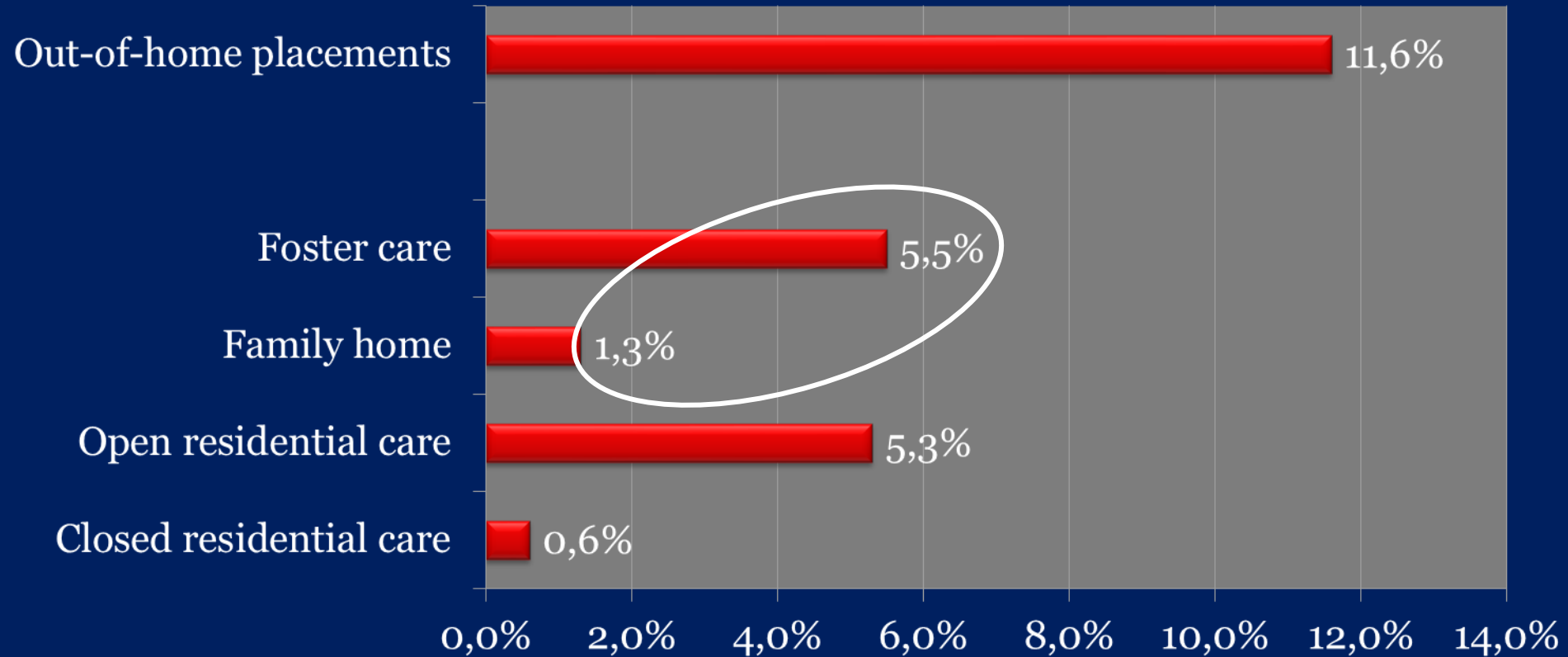
Children placed out of home





Number of Dutch children receiving youth care while **placed out of home**
(in percentages of total number of children receiving youth care in 2016 [N=377.320])
(CBS, 2017)

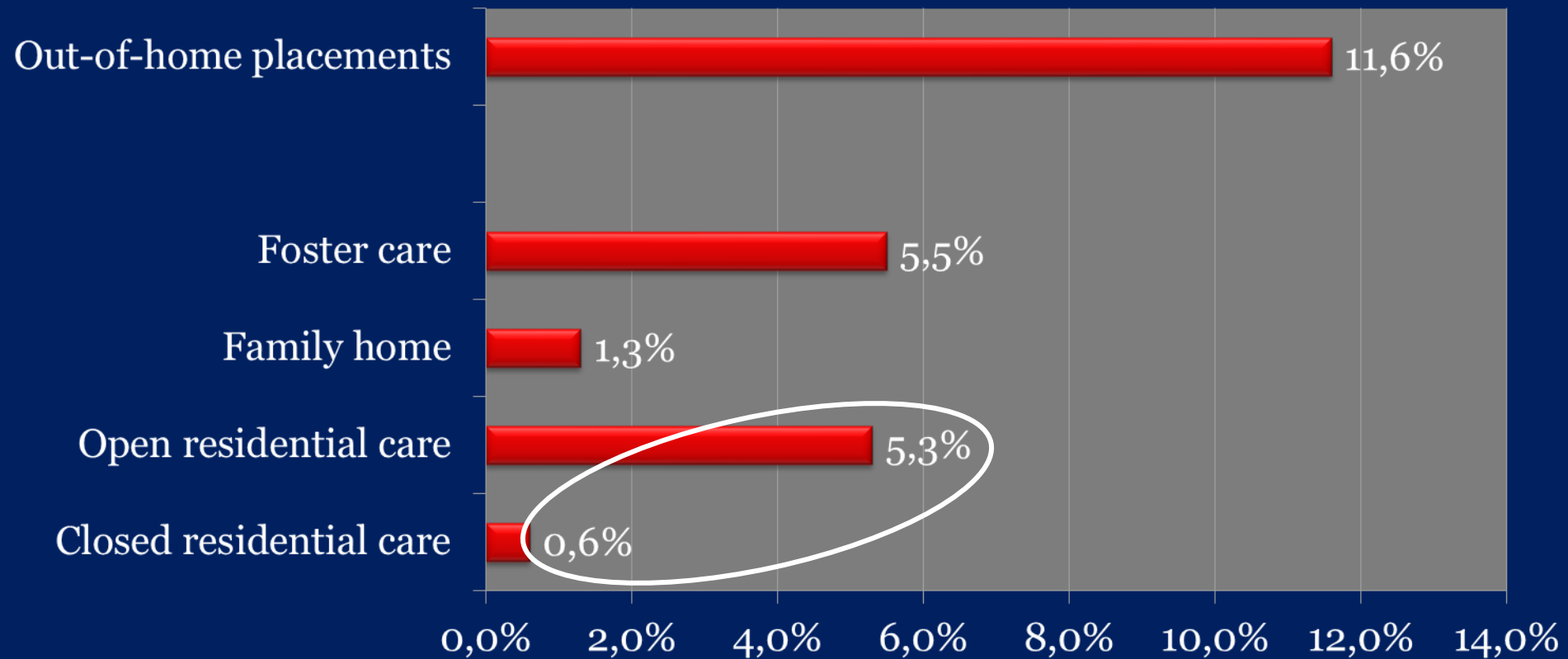
Children placed out of home





Number of Dutch children receiving youth care while **placed out of home**
(in percentages of total number of children receiving youth care in 2016 [N=377.320])
(CBS, 2017)

Children placed out of home





Rates of children in out-of-home care in some countries

- › Italy 0,38%
- › England 0,58%
- › Sweden 0,63%
- › Germany 0,76%

- › **Netherlands** **0,98%**
- › France 1,05%
- › Denmark 1,20%

- › Hungary 1,46%
- › Poland 1,47%
- › Romania 1,69%
- › Ukraine 1,94%





Significant to huge **bottlenecks decentralisation policy**,
 according to youth care providers (N=51) (Transitie Autoriteit Jeugd, 2017)



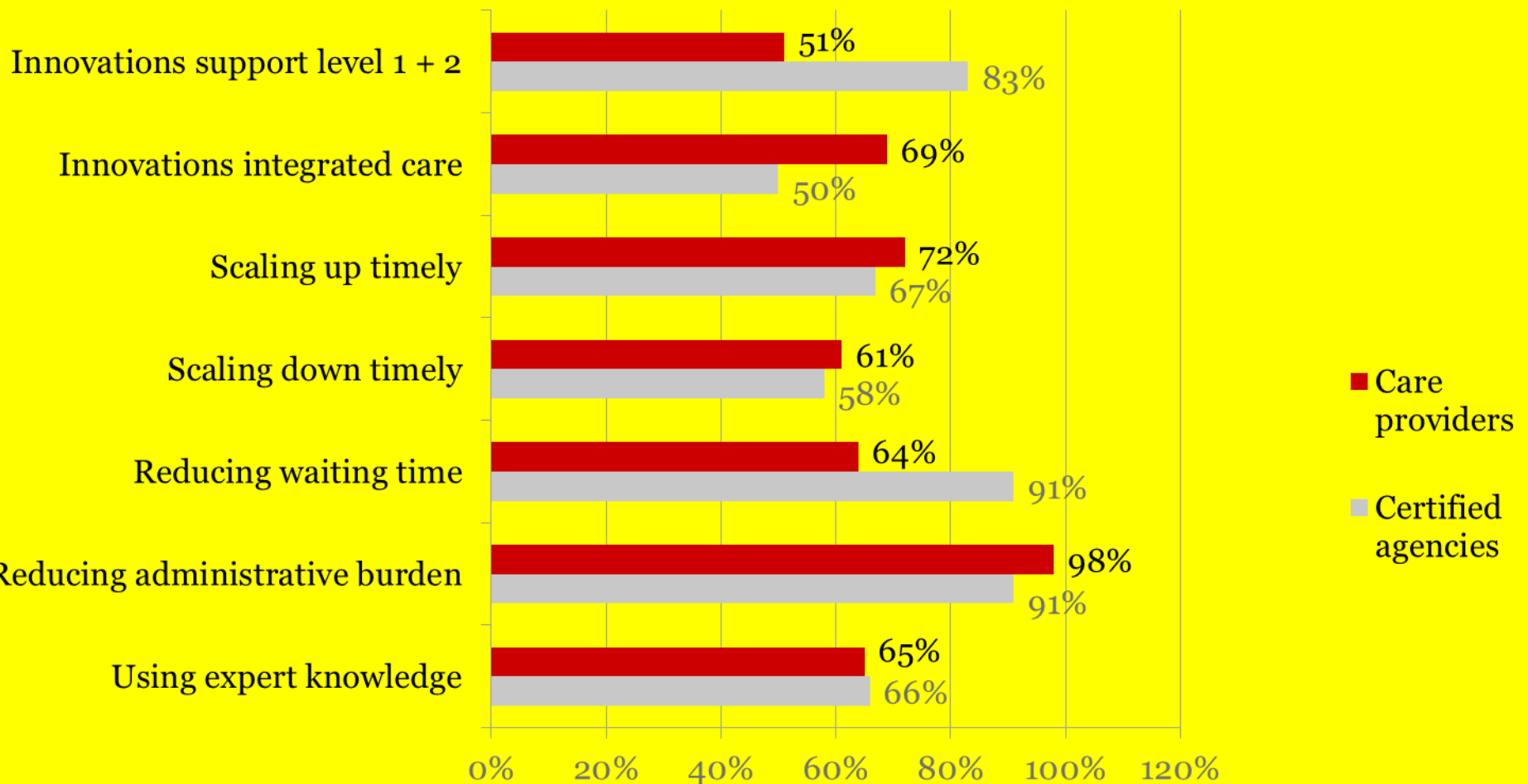


Significant to huge **bottlenecks decentralisation policy**,
 according to certified agencies for child protection and youth rehabilitation (N=12)



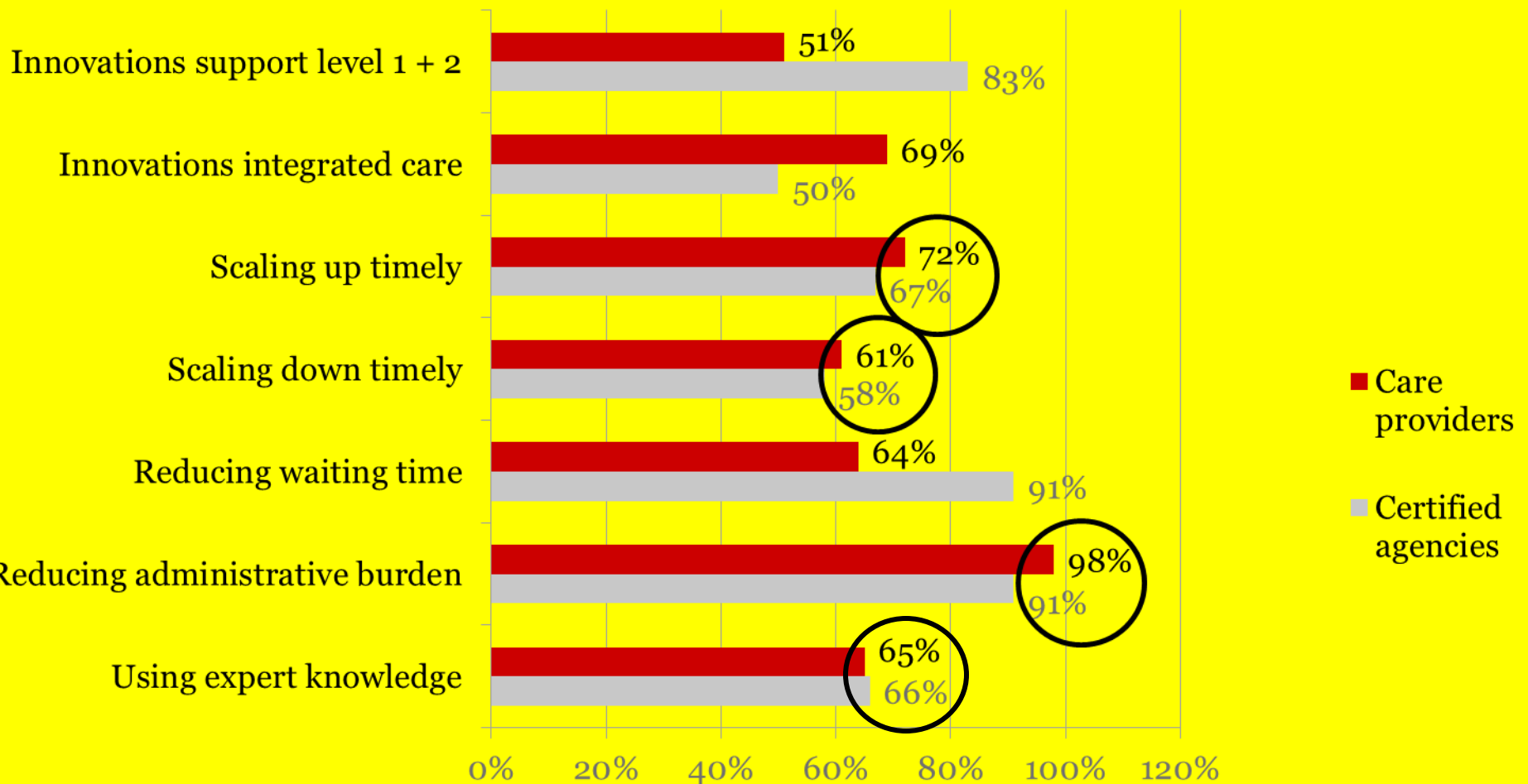


Hardly progress or no progress at all according to care providers and certified agencies on core topics new youth care policy



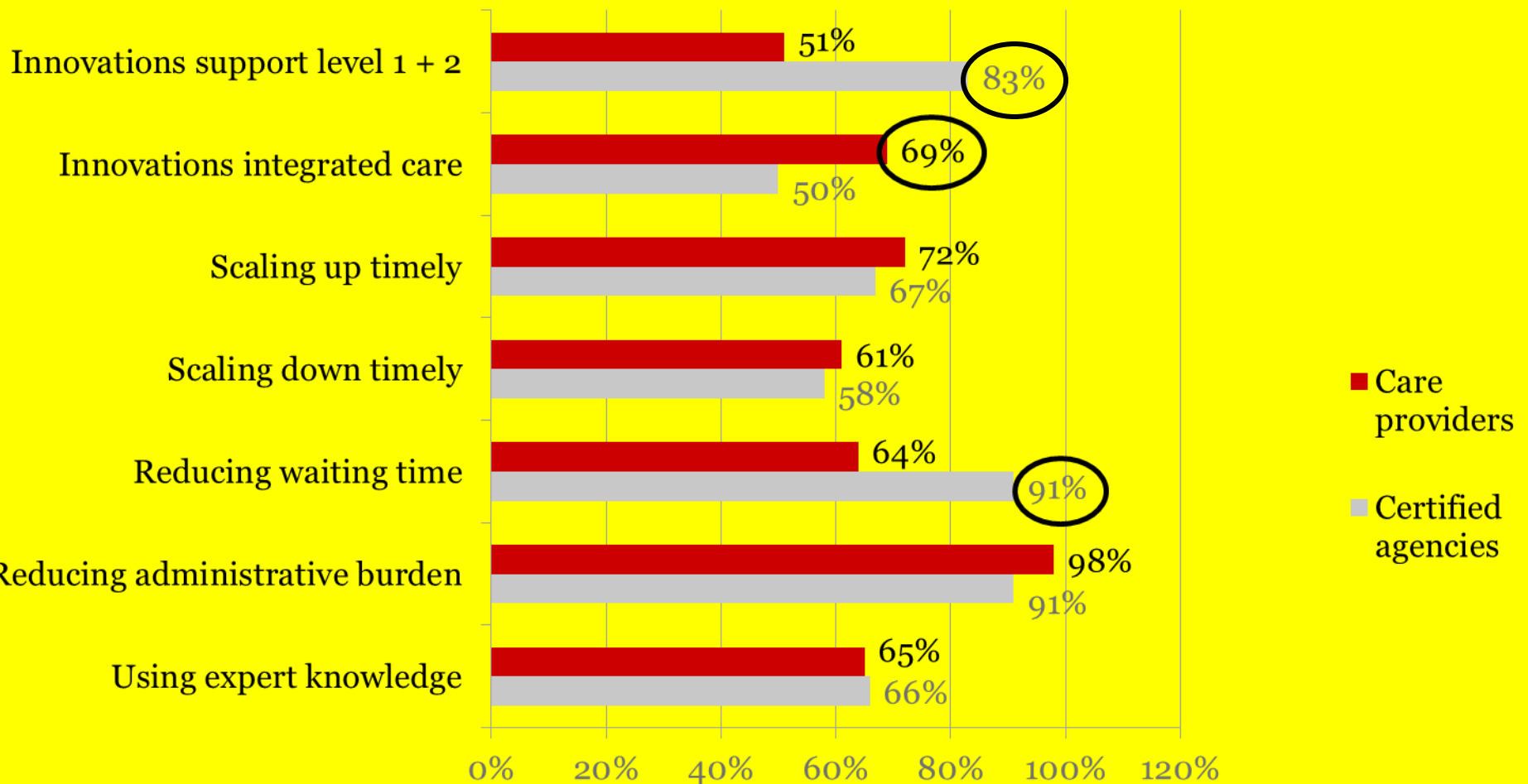


Hardly progress or no progress at all according to care providers and certified agencies on core topics new youth care policy





Hardly progress or no progress at all according to care providers and certified agencies on core topics new youth care policy





Commentary Dutch Ombudsperson for Children on the developments in youth care in 2016



- There is still too much professional incompetence re assessment of problem situations and decisions on interventions
- Not enough listening to and space for children to participate in decisions re their futures
- There are too many differences between municipalities in explaining and implementing the Youth Act 2015 (with as a result legal inequality for children and families)
- Too often children and families are assumed to be able to find solutions for their problems on their own while they are not; it takes too long before specialised support has been arranged (*untimely scaling up*)
- As a result of the previous point it happens too often that young people with complex problems end up in an emergency situation and need to be admitted into closed residential care
- Personal information re children and families should not be shared by people (for instance, at the municipality office) who are not authorised
- Social workers in municipalities should be careful in exerting (too much) pressure on children and families if there is no child protection measure that justifies doing so



Some conclusions

Nothing learned from Danish decentralisation policy*

- Implementation of new policy takes a long time
- Extra investments necessary instead of savings
- All municipalities should garantee support services



Current risks for vulnerable children and families:

- Referral to level 2 and level 3 services too late (no scaling up)**
- Specialist treatment with a stay in care less available
- Waiting time to start intervention (too) long***
- Passing-on of children from service to service continues
- Unsafe child-rearing situations persist
- Integrated support services come into being still very laboriously



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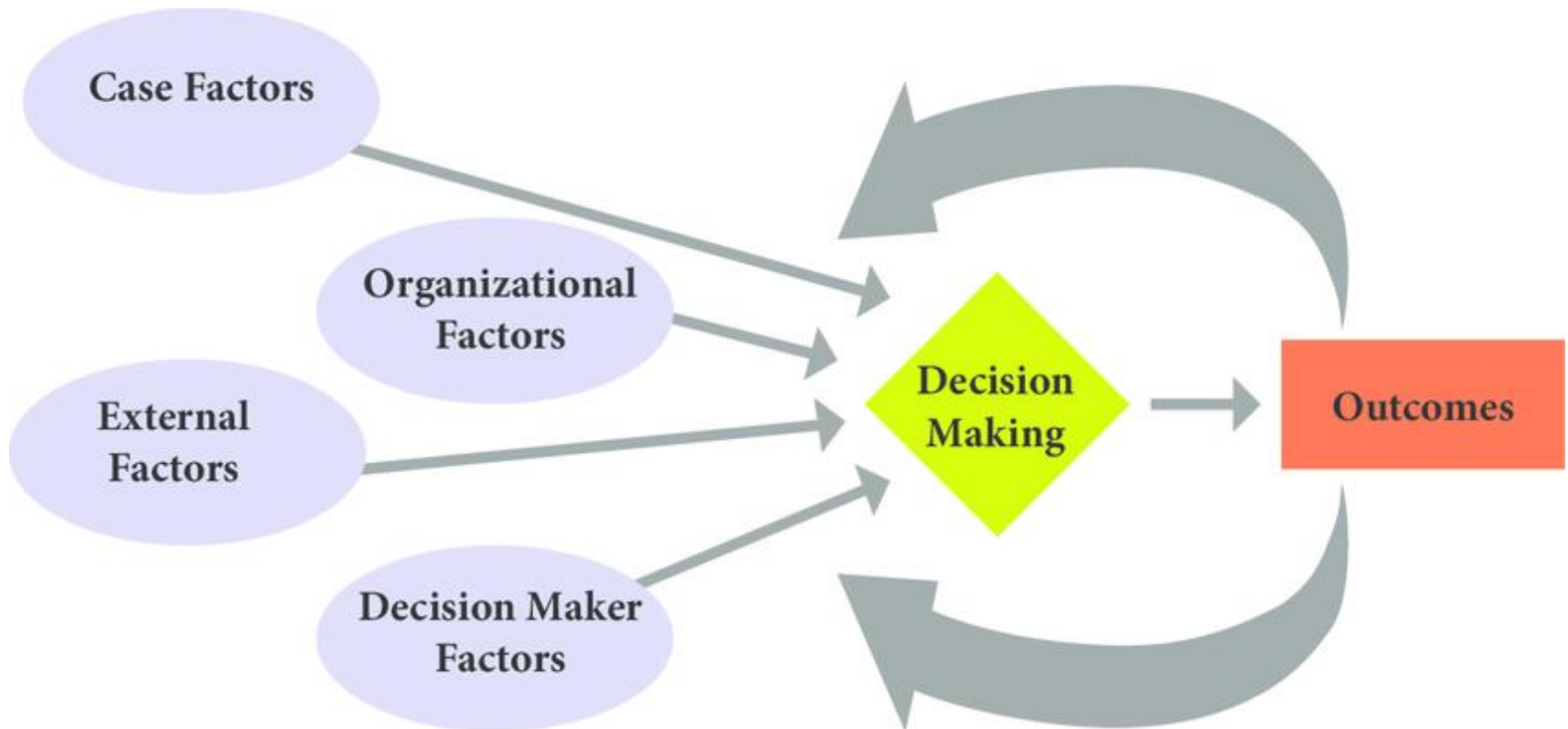
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Thanks for your attention!



Appendix: Decision-Making Ecology (DME)





Ecological frame for decision making

