

Child Protection Social Work In an Open Environment in France



AEMO social workers

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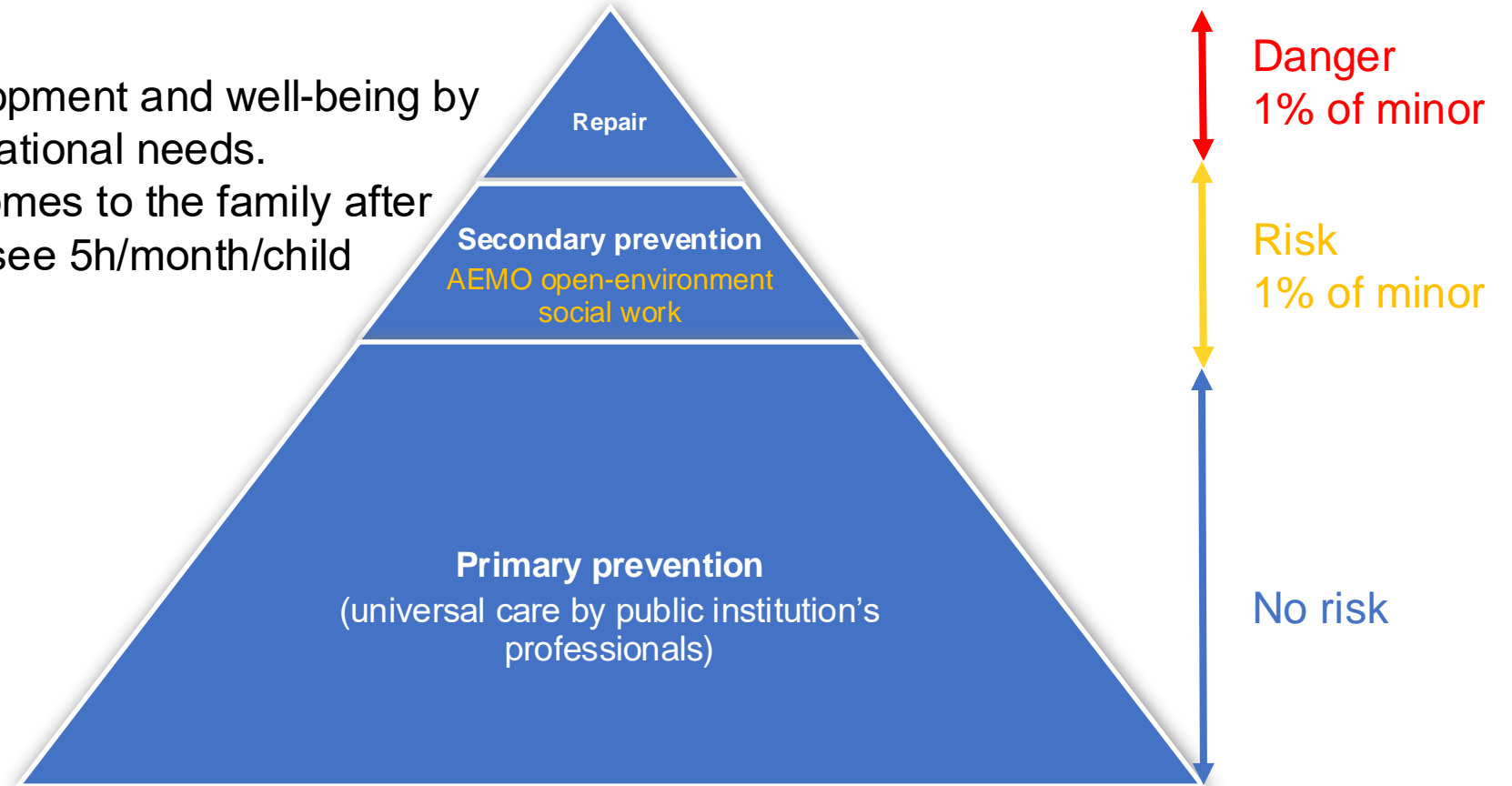
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AEMO = Aide Educative en Milieu Ouvert = In-home socialwork

➔ A judicially mandated **educative support in an open environment**, is a measure for children at risk in France

➔ It covers 1% of the minor population to prevent them from danger

➔ It aims to promote development and well-being by addressing specific educational needs.
AEMO's social worker comes to the family after children's judge's order, see 5h/month/child



What AEMO Social Work is... ?

Background

“Social control” forced norm from upper class population (Donzelot or Foucault 1972)

“Care” (Gilligan 2010)

“Social isolation” and “social bond” (Hirschi 1969)

Point of view

Beginning of AEMO - Reason of the risk

Children's family and environmental background

Children's judge's order

Changes of children's situation after 2 years

Changes of parents' situation after 2 years

Method

The study was conducted through participant observation for one month in one of Parisian AEMO structures, every 6 months for 2 years. I analyzed 37 families. For changes of situation I analyzed 14 families followed by 1 social worker. Analyze is done by professionals writings. Families was informed about this study and had accepted.



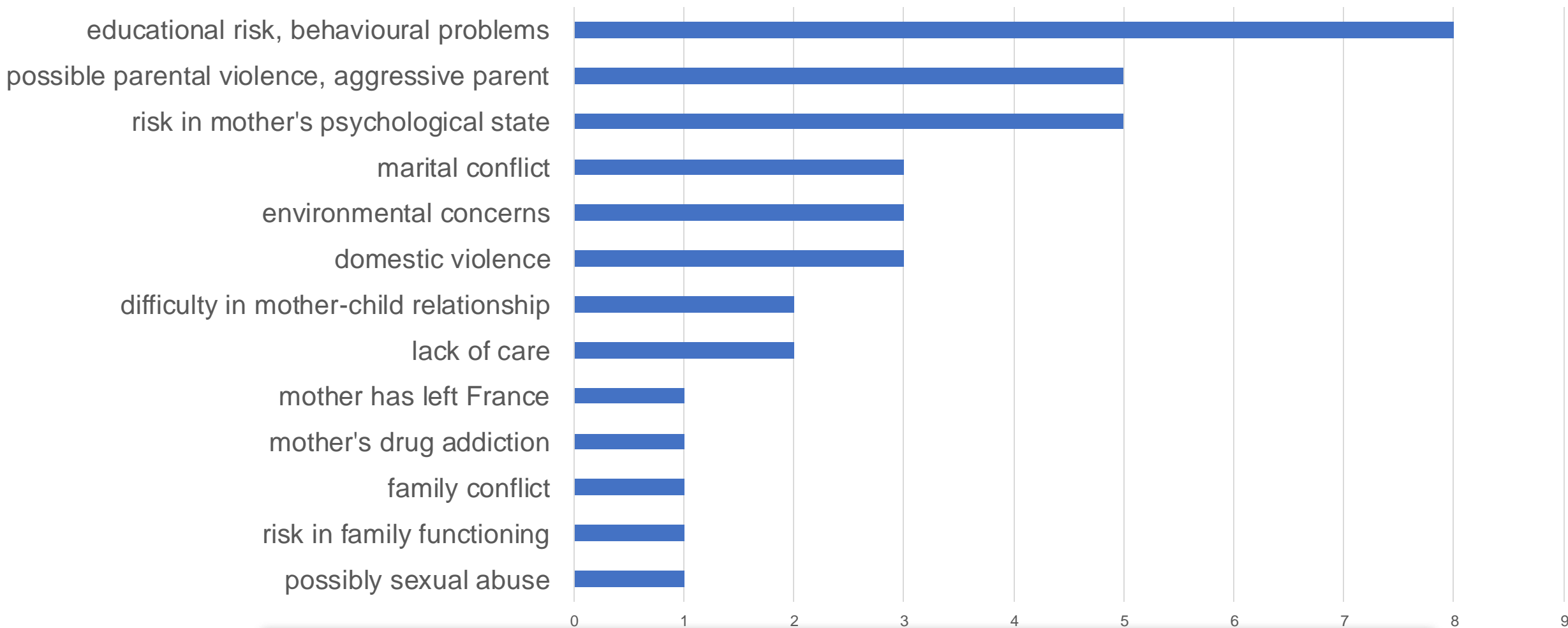
AEMO social workers

Beginning of AEMO « reasons of risk »



*Social worker and a young by AEMO documentary movie
« A tes côtés » 2019 by Bertrand Hagenmuller*

Beginning of AEMO « reasons of risk »



Most of the families received this measure when school professionals observed concerning issues regarding the child and were unable to resolve the situation.

Children's family and environmental background

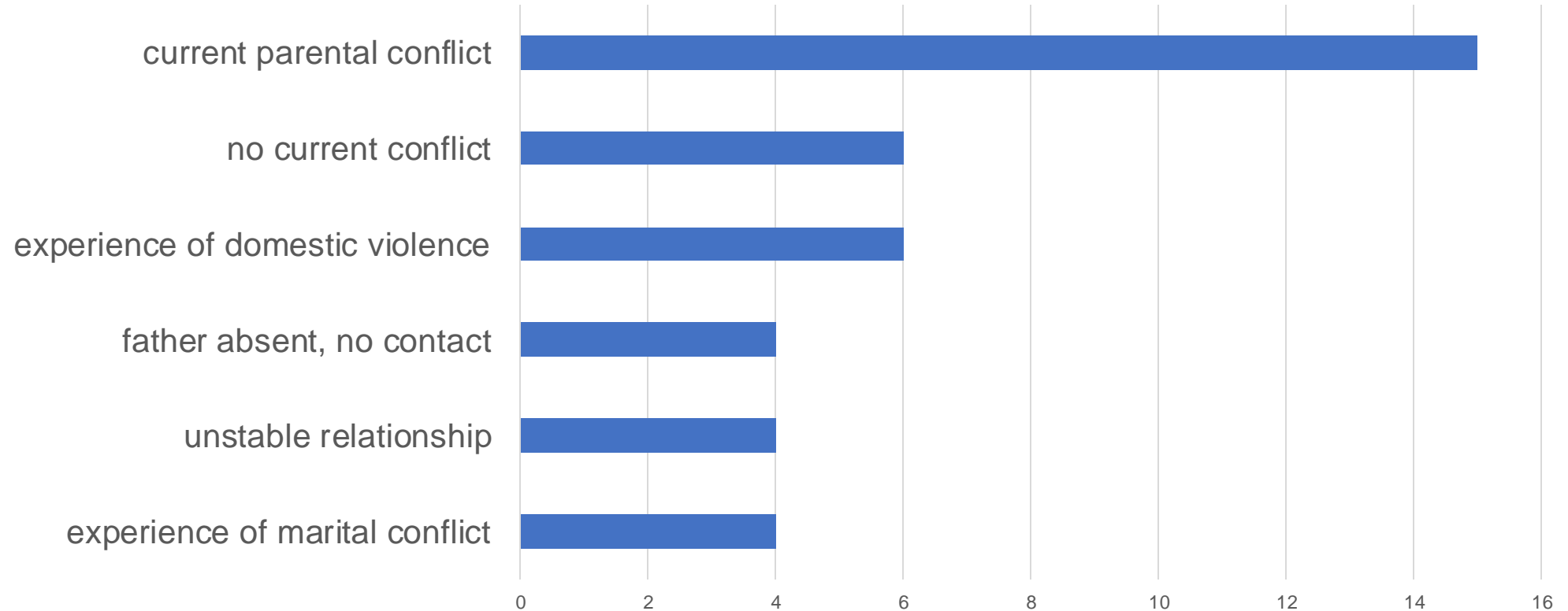
① parents' situation at the beginning of AEMO



*Social worker by AEMO documentary movie
« A tes côtés » 2019 by Bertrand Hagenmuller*

Children's family and environmental background

① parents' situation at the beginning of AEMO



Children's family and environmental background

② each parent's situation at the beginning of AEMO

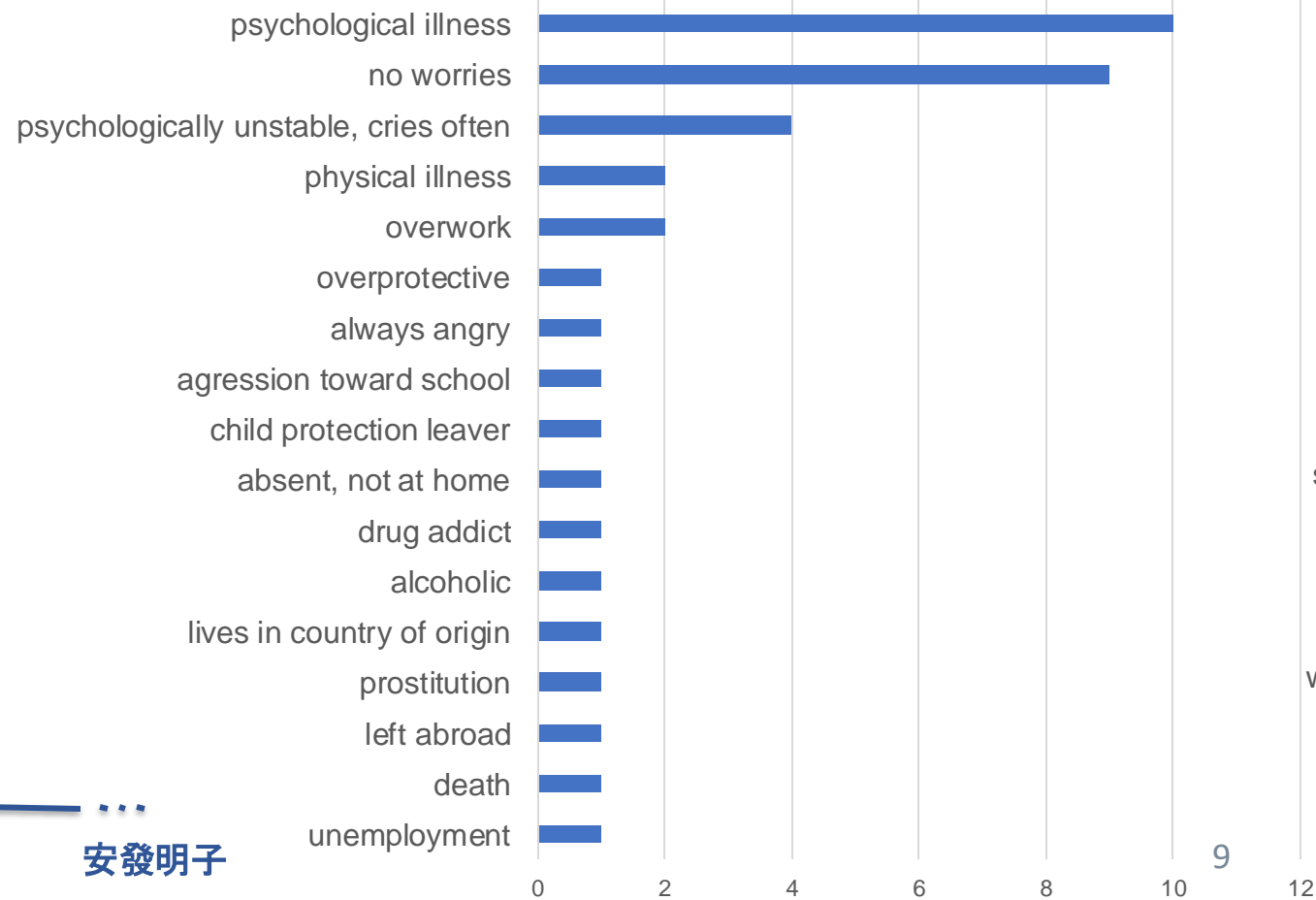


*Mother at the court by AEMO documentary movie
« A tes côtés » 2019 by Bertrand Hagenmuller*

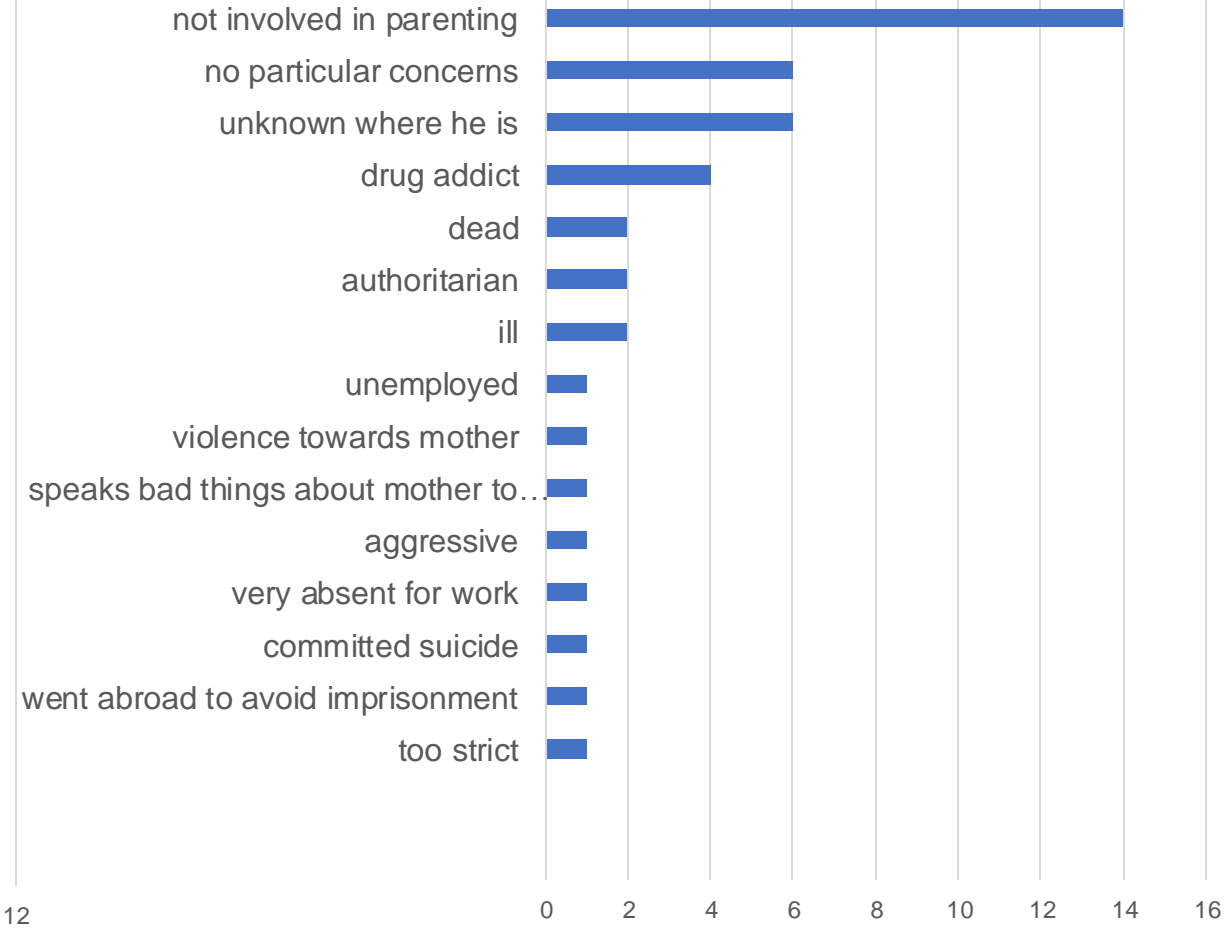
Children's family and environmental background

② each parent's situation at the beginning of AEMO

Mothers

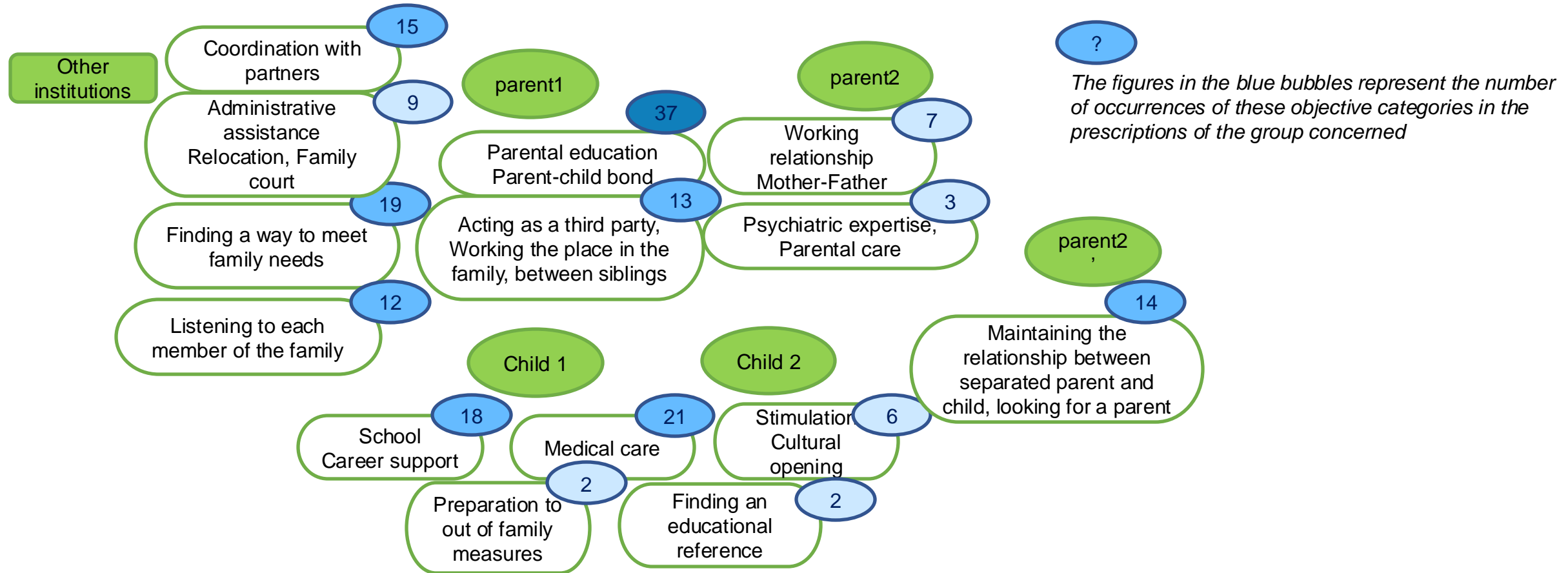


Fathers



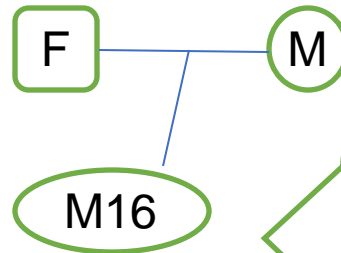
Objectives of AEMO in the judge's order

(From the judgement of 37 families 2022 October)



- Reasons of risk to start AEMO were mostly children's school problems but judge orders to help parents
- Less orders directly for children

Example of Manon, 16 years old: reason to start support (December 2020)

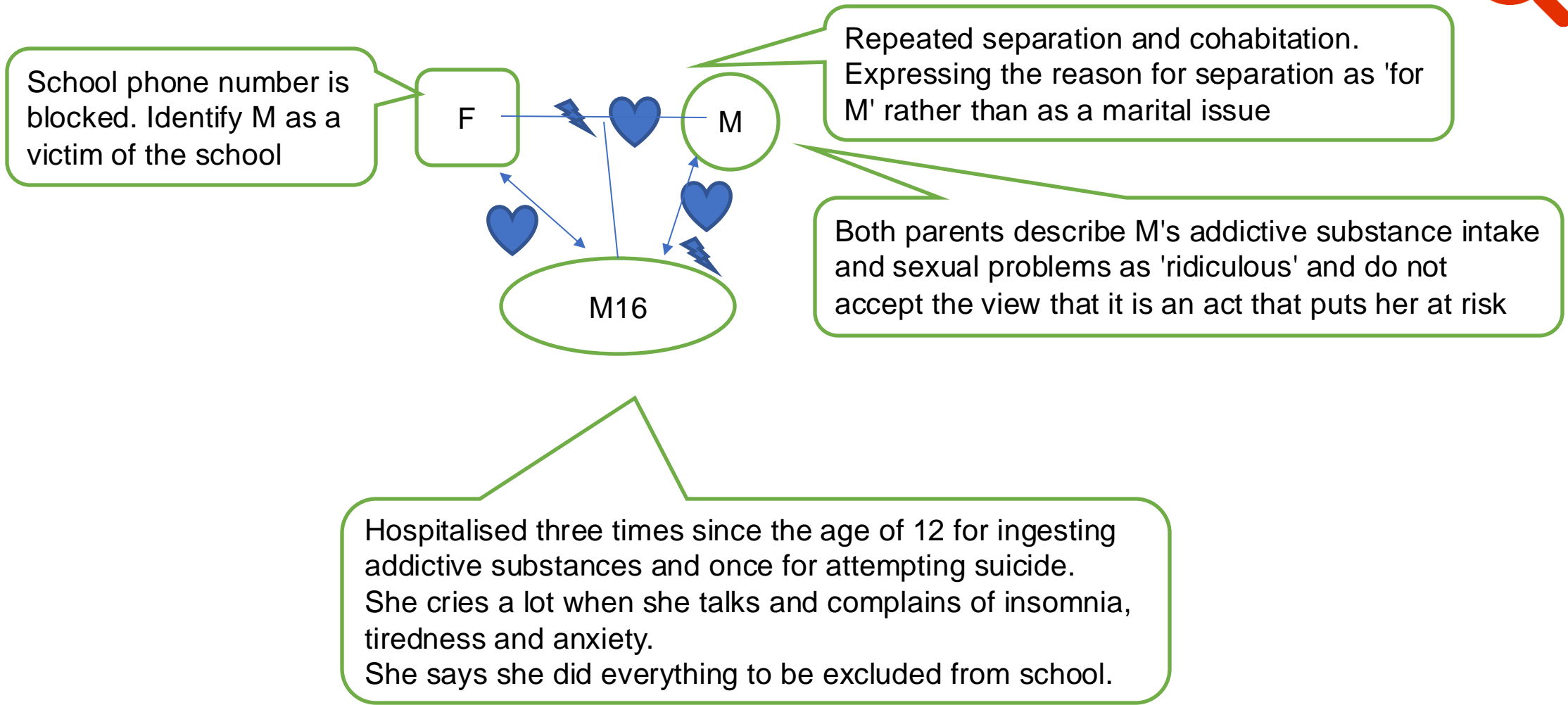


School:

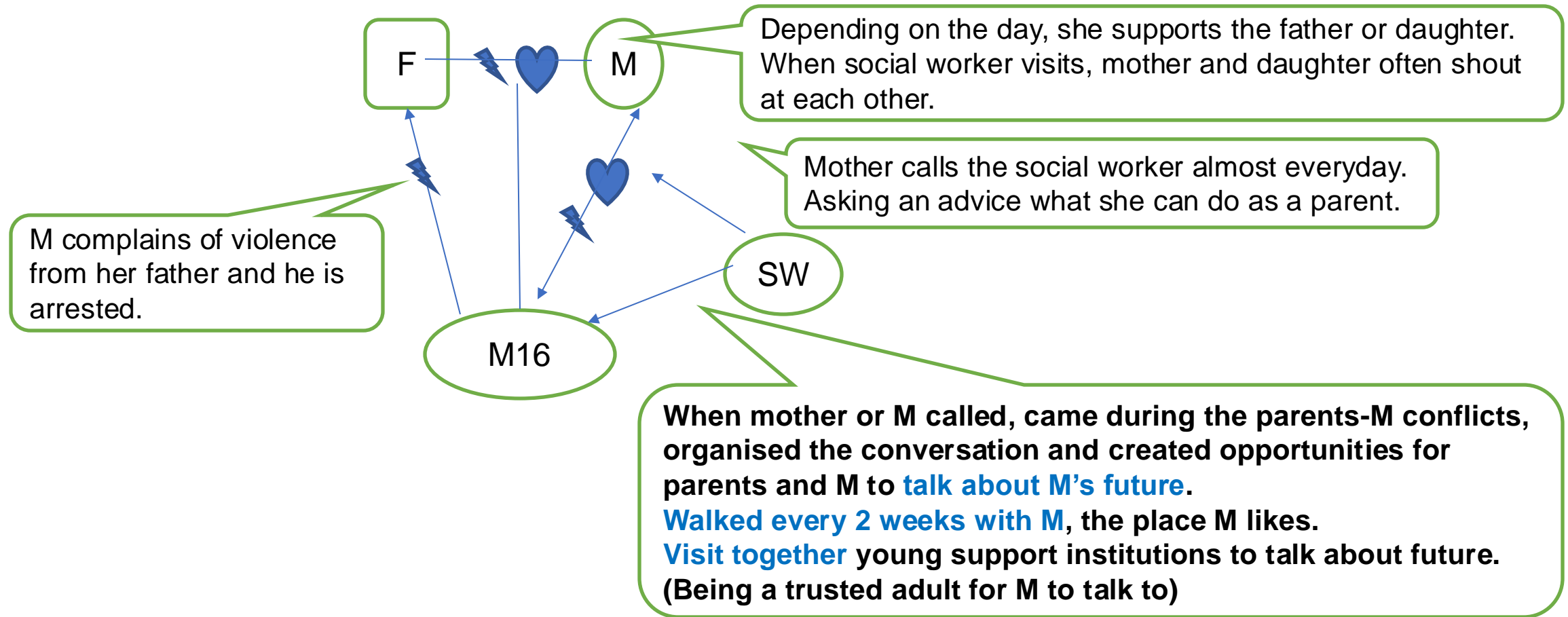
A video of violence by M on social media was informed by a student to school staff. Other students informed also about posting alcohol and smoking scenes and forging train tickets. She had sex at school and has been taken to a specialised sexual care agency.

She is frequently absent from school and when she comes, she disturbs others and interrupts lessons. Does not follow instructions, is provocative. Lies frequently. Attacks or deceives others; actively spreads rumours on social networking sites, leading to conflict between friends.

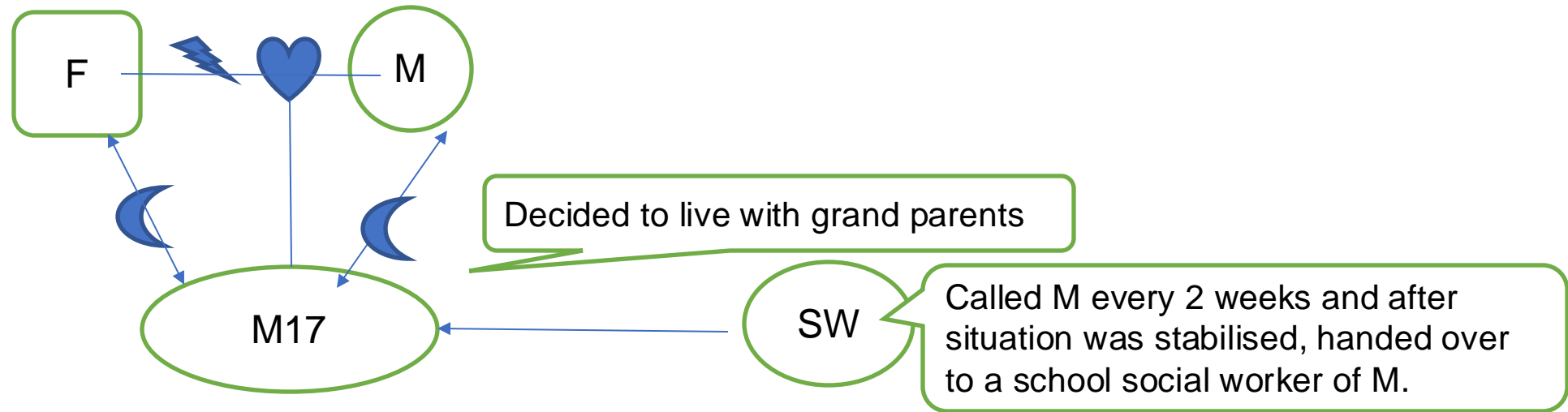
Example of Manon, 16 years old: background found with AEMO (January 2021)



Example of Manon, 16 years old: updated 6 months later (June 2021)



Example of Manon, 16 years old: end of support one year later (February 2022)



What social work did? :

- Helped to **verbalize every members' needs**
- supported **the ability to act for oneself**
- being a **third party**
- to be an adult who **believes at M's success.**

Prepare a caring environment for the child to grow and think about herself
Be or find an adult the child can refer to (Preferent = Prefer + Refer)

Changes of children's situation after 2 years

	Improvement	Maintained risk	What social worker did
A7	Could have good relationship with father who does not live with	A7 is in trouble with his mum and brothers in law	Participate at father-son meeting every month and to help mother to accept this relationship. Help mother to not to favor one child and not others.
B13, 18	There's less conflict after 2 sisters in law left from the house	B13 still often have trouble at school	Make occasion that B13 B18 can talk about what's happening at school and in their life.
C17	Could retake contact with father and mother and understand that they can't take care of her.	C17 suddenly quit school, refused to move to her own apartment and choose to live with her sister to support her.	Found C17's father. Helped C17 to understand parents' vulnerability. Found the way to live independently.
D15, 16	Moved from residential care to grand-mother's house.	Grand-mother doesn't understand that she has to refuse her daughter to come to protect grandchild.	Find school for children, explain grand-mother and uncle about D15, D16's needs .
E15, 17	E17 has a daily conflict with mother but quit apartment .	Didn't have enough time to take care of E15.	Find apartment for E17 to live alone.
F8	Could meet ancient foster family and finished to have trouble at school.	-	Explain grand-parents about F8's needs .
G13	Still doesn't feel good	Still have problem of alcohol, addictive substances, self-harm, absenteeism, suicidal thoughts	Took time so that G13 can talk about her father who quit suddenly the house.
HM6, HF6, H9	Still have lots of trouble at school.	School receives many claim of parents about 3 children's sexual trouble . H9 tried to suicide at school.	Do mother-children activities to let them talk each other, go to school each time there was a problem
I9, I11, I14	Children have less trouble at school	-	Connect to street educator
J13	Less conflict of parents let J13 to join school activities	Parents relationship still fragile and J13 is influenced	Connect to day-care-center, handicap-in-home care.
K2, K5, K14	K2 and K5 moved to out-of-home care and mother can more take care of K14.	K14 still have trouble at school .	Helped K2 K5 to move to out-of-home care . Propose activities to K14 to avoid to do game all day.
L11, L14, L15	Could talk between children and mother about their experience of violence and got better.	-	Help to talk each other about their experience of violence. Help to report damage to police.
M10, M14	School result improved and has less trouble	Still have risk psychologically	Took time so that M10 and M14 talk about themselves
N10	Moved to adapted school for his handicap.	-	Helped mother to understand N10's handicap. Find adapted school for N10.

In 10 out of 14 families, children got better

Socialwork which was behind these improvement

- ★ 5/14 Social worker **made a support network**, connected child to other services, activities, adapted school
- ★ 4/14 Social worker **took time for families to talk** about difficulties and needs
- ★ 4/14 Some of the **child quit the house** to out-of-home care or Independent appartement
- ★ 3/14 found parent or, ensured to meet regularly father or ancient foster-family
- ★ 2/14 parents considered children's needs

In 4 out of 14 of families, children still in difficulty

- ★ 2/14 **can't find/care reason of difficulty** (sexual trouble at school, suicidal thoughts)
- ★ 1/14 just started new handicap adapted school
- ★ 1/14 mother has difficulty to respond at child's needs, need more help

Changes of parents' situation after 2 years

	Changes for father	Changes for mother	What social worker did
A7	Father kept good relationship with A7.	Mother deny child's needs but accepted that A7 will keep to see his father who was violent with her.	Participate father-children mother-children meeting every month, told to parents child's needs .
B13, 18	Understood that parents conflict will affect child. But suddenly died.	Mother receive therapy, in communication with child's institutions, there's less conflict with kids.	Made occasion to talk about family's history. Listen to children who wanted to talk about father's death.
C17	Found the Father. But father refused to keep contact with the child.	Mother didn't respect C17's needs. Didn't participate at education for 1 year, lost parental authority.	Told to parents about C17's needs .
D15, 16	absent	Mother couldn't consider children's needs, she lost parental authority.	Told to grand-mother about D15, D16's needs so that she can protect them.
E15, 17	Father is most of the time in abroad. Use children to menace mother.	Mother continue to have trouble with E17. She has difficulty to consider children's needs.	Told about E17 and E15's problem at school. Tried to tell children's needs .
F8	Is abroad and never tried to come to see F8.	Addicted and suddenly died.	Tried to explain F8's needs to grand parents and to continue relationship with foster family.
G13	Father suddenly stopped to taking contact with child.	Mother doesn't consider that violence is harmful for G13.	Talk to mother that G13 is a victim and needs care. Talk about what she can do as a parent.
HM6, HF6, H9	Father replied he will not pay or help child as it's the mother who cheated him	Mother is in conflict with school. Doesn't consider that children have difficulties.	Make occasion like mother-child cooking activity so that they can talk each other.
I9, I11, I14	Father considered social workers suggestion as a guidepost, asked him to come each time there was trouble at school.	Accepted to be helped by housekeeper. Made time so that children can do homework or talk about school.	Made occasion so that each member of family can talk.
J13	Can better consider J13's needs.	Stopped to oppose automatically to father and can talk about J13's situation.	Helped parents to talk about J13's needs .
K2, K5, K14	K14 : Don't participate actively to education. K2, K5 : absent.	Mother asked K2 and K5 to be placed. Can better consider K14's needs.	Made occasion to talk about family's rule, to help parental education.
L11, L14, L15	Father tried to rebuild relationship with children but can't express affection.	Mother tried not to involve children to parental conflict. Helped children to complain to police about child abuse.	Helped parents to consider children's needs. Helped mother to rebuild family.
M10, M14	Father is rarely accessible.	Mother was occupied with 2 other sisters who were often ill but could better consider and act about M10, M14's needs.	Mother was in conflict with school so intermediate them to talk together about children's needs.

Parents had more difficulties left than children

Father

11/14 **don't participate** in education or are **absent**

2/14 **better consider child's needs**

Mother

5/14 still **difficulties to consider child's needs**

1/14 still have trouble with child

1/14 have difficulties to accept handicap of her child

5/14 can **better consider child's needs**

2/14 **can talk about child's difficulties**

AEMO **starts with issues regarding the child**, « worrying situation » of a child.

10/14 of the families, children got better, having **support network** around them,

Could **talk about their problems** with social worker.

We could see that most of the work for social worker is to **advocate needs of child to parents**. Hear child's wish and try to realize.

But we see here difficulties for parents to change things.

Conclusion

I observed that AEMO social work tries to work for better development of a child.

AEMO social work aimed to **improve child surrounding situation** and to decrease the risk. **Parents are considered as child's environment.**

Even though it has a nature of social control and risk control, in practice, social workers tried to know child and parents needs and to realize their wish.

AEMO social work shows **capacity to realize a good change in families by intervention of a third person.**

Thank you !

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Values shared by AEMO professionals, based on their written work

