

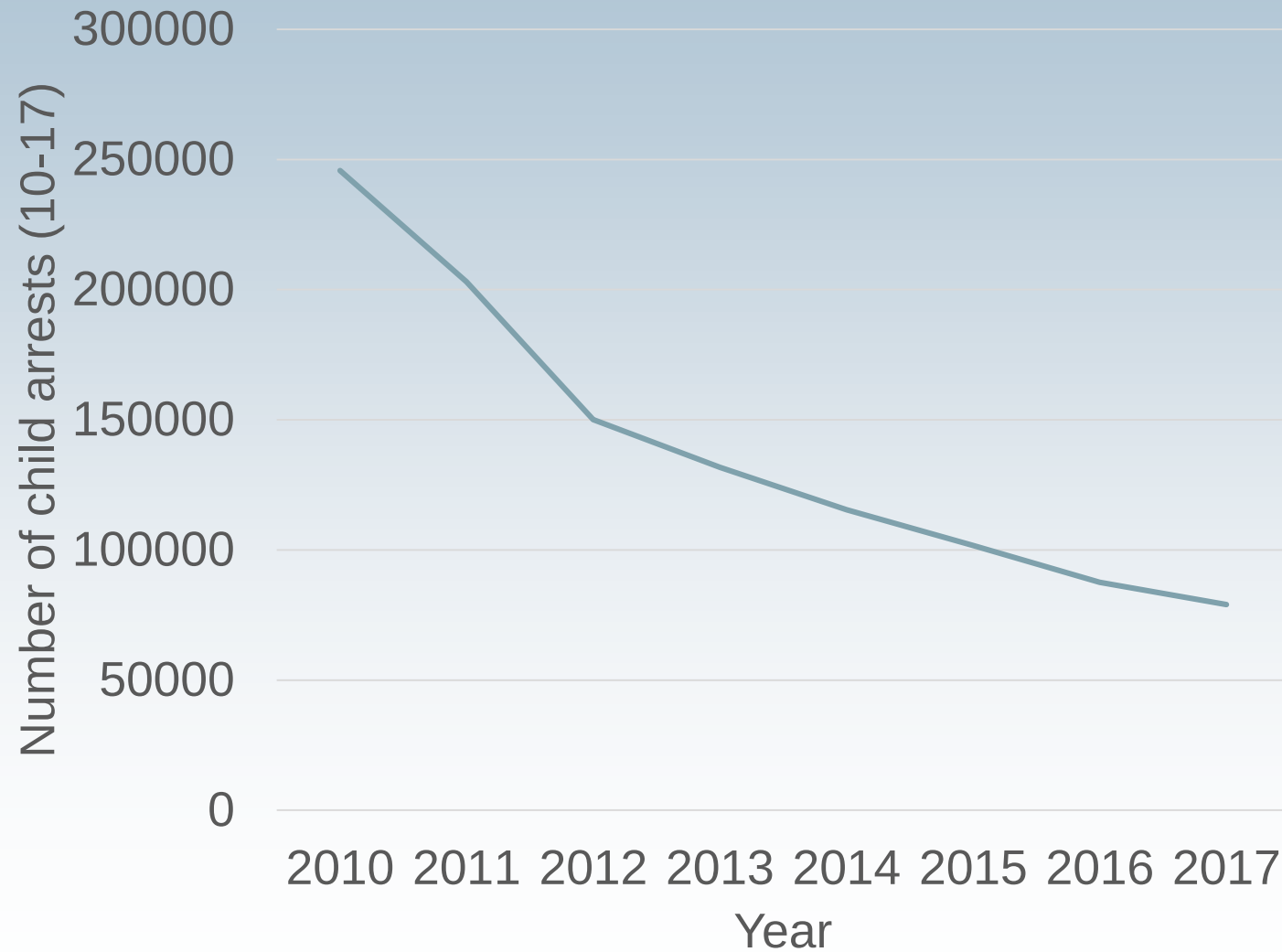
Evaluation: Purposes and methods

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Advice Services Alliance meeting 30th November 2018

“I am writing to tell you about something **extraordinary** – a change that will help to **reduce crime** and **give tens of thousands of children a brighter future**. Back in 2010, police in England and Wales made almost a quarter of a million arrests of children. ... Academics have found that the more contact a child has with the criminal system, the more entrenched they become, which increases offending rates. **So the Howard League decided to do something about it...**We have been supporting police forces up and down the country, encouraging them to adopt a different approach and to keep as many boys and girls as possible out of the criminal justice system. And it's working. Together, we have achieved a **68 per cent reduction** in child arrests in seven yearsThe number of children in prison has been reduced by 60 per cent.” (Crook 2018, emphasis in original)

The data

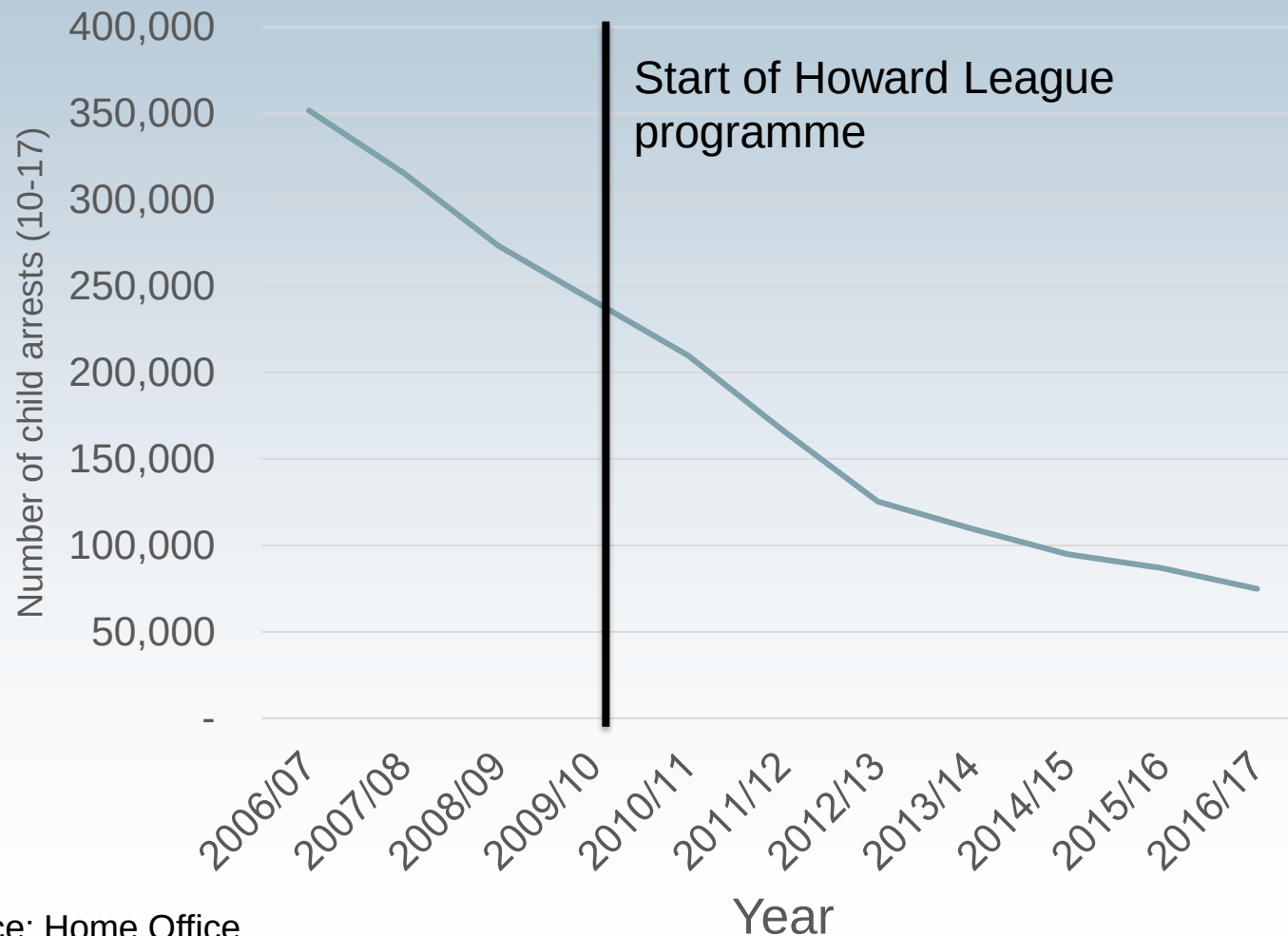


Source: police service returns to Howard League following FOI request

The stories

- The force has been proactive in educating officers about the issues some children face, such as childhood trauma (Essex)
- A range of activities has promoted a growing recognition and understanding of early intervention and prevention which is helping divert children into support services (Cumbria)
- The force informs us that the work they have done has 'nurtured officers and raised their awareness of less intrusive methods of investigation than arrest (South Wales Police)

Problem 1: longer term trends



Source: Home Office

Problem 2: reduced actual crime

- Trends 2009/10-2017, crimes against children aged 10-17
 - All CSEW crime down 38%
 - Violence down 47%
 - Robbery down 40%
- Overall trends 2009/10-2017
 - All CSEW crime (excluding fraud) down 36%
 - Violence down 26%
 - Robbery down 45%

Problem 3: international trends in child arrests/convictions

- Scotland
 - Age 17 males all crime 1989 to 2011, down 63%
 - Age 17 females all crime 1989 to 2011, down 37%
- Australia
 - Birth cohorts 1984 and 1994 property crime down 56% by age 21
 - Birth cohorts 1984 and 1994 violent crime down 32% by age 21
- United States
 - Children aged 10-17 violent crime down > 60% 1994-2012
 - Children aged 10-17 property crime down 52-80% 1988-2012
- Denmark
 - Children aged 15-17 all crime down 37% 2010-2016

Problem 4: neglected questions

- What did the Howard League do, exactly?
- What did the police do, exactly?
- How could what they did have reduced child arrests?
- Did the pattern of arrest reduction accord with expectations, given what was done and how it was expected to produce its outcomes?
- What else could have produced the overall trends?

Some uncomfortable home truths

- Programmes are complex
 - They contain multiple elements
 - They involve adjustments over time by all involved
 - They are introduced in specific conditions
 - That an intervention/programme has worked in the past is no guarantee that it will do so in the future
- Low cost/quick evaluations tend to be uninformative/misleading
 - Evaluation is technically difficult: it requires expertise
- Cognitive biases are widespread
 - Internal evaluations tend to be self-serving and to lack probity

Evaluation needs for decision-makers (EMMIE)

- **Effects**
 - Direction
 - Size
 - Unintended and intended
- **Mechanisms**
 - How the intervention works to produce its intended and unintended effects
- **Moderators (context)**
 - The conditions needed for the intervention to activate mechanisms
- **Implementation**
 - What is needed to put the intervention in place
- **Economy**
 - Costs in relation to outputs and outcomes

Getting good value from evaluation

- What's the evaluation question, exactly?
 - What decision/s is it intended to inform?
- How certain does the answer need to be?
 - A rough idea with high levels of uncertainty can be quick
- How soon do you need an answer?
 - Quick generally means dirty
- Are the evaluators competent and independent?
 - It is easy to mislead and be misled