

Completing the matrix 1

Preparing the grid

Because the information is reasonably complete and the risks are distributed fairly evenly across the years, the vertical grid is divided equally between each of Nigel's first 13 years. The background information (shown in **black**) is written into the appropriate places on the form. Aspects of the background information which can be considered to indicate risks are added in **orange**. The pale blue shapes indicate parts of the form referred to in the commentary.

a Ten changes of address are shown. They are considered to be risks for a series of reasons.

- High levels of movement in childhood tend to correlate with high mobility in adulthood, putting educational development and employment at risk. [But in some circumstances, the same mobility can act as a protective factor: people who are accustomed to change may cope better with transitory circumstances better than people who have experienced stability in childhood].
- Some of the separations interrupt Nigel's contact with his mother, so affecting his sense of attachment and creating risks in several domains of child development.
- Each separation is associated with return: both transitions are known to be stressful for children, putting at risk the quality of parent-child and child-sibling relationships.
- Many of the moves are associated with disruptions in schooling (noted also on the right side of the matrix) that hinder educational development.

The kidnapping move (numbered 9) is starred for the obvious stresses associated with it.

b Michael McMahon's criminal history in adolescence and adulthood is noted. It indicates two risks for Nigel: there is an association between parental and child criminality, and criminal behaviour that continues into adulthood is likely to be a consistent feature over an individual's lifespan and can be associated with violence.

c Shirley McMahon's care history is noted. This may produce risks for her own psychological well-being in adulthood and insecurities regarding the parenting task. The type of partner selected by women who have been long separated in care mediates adult outcomes; in this case the partner selected is likely to accentuate, rather than diminish, risks.

age	living situation	family and social relationships	social and antisocial behaviour	physical and psychological health	education and employment
birth	8/87 Nigel born in London	mother, Shirley, b. 6/52 Ireland father, Michael, b. 3/58 Ireland brother, John, b. 2/81 London brother, Alan, b. 2/83 London brother, Adam, b. 6/84 London	father has long criminal history in Ireland and some convictions as an adult in England (all property crimes)	maternal grandmother died when Shirley was ten mother was in care for 4 years	mother and father both left school at 14
1-	2 moves	sister, Ann, born 11/88			
2-	2 changes in accommodation				
3-	moves to Ireland with father and siblings				
4-	returns to London; mother in household				
5 years	moves from mother to father and to stepmother's home with siblings	father starts new relationship			starts primary school, London
6-	moves from mother's home with siblings	mother requests family support from social services			3 school moves during this period
7-	moves to grandmother's (paternal) home in Ireland				
8-	John, Alan and Adam to live with father				
9 years	Nigel and Ann to live with mother; weekend access to father				
10 years					
11	father kidnaps Nigel, Ann and John takes them to Ireland Ann and Nigel return to live with mother	Ann discloses sexual abuse by father to teacher (names on CP register)			
12	father reported to be in England				
day of prediction 7/00=13 years					

prediction matrix: background information

Completing the matrix 2

Other risks associated with the father and siblings are entered.

d Michael McMahon is reported to be alcoholic and to have indulged in periods of uncontrolled drinking since before Nigel's birth. Several types of risk are associated with alcoholism, including inconsistent parenting, which in turn is associated with poor psychological health and anti-social behaviour in children. There is evidence of domestic violence (another risk associated with heavy drinking); it surfaced during the first five years of Nigel's life generating additional risks to his emotional functioning. A line is drawn between the domestic violence and Michael McMahon's persistent offending, acknowledging the known associations in the research literature.

e The older boys' anti-social behaviour beginning around the time of Nigel's fifth birthday is noted because it increases the risk associated with Nigel's own anti-social behaviour. These concerns are borne out later. A line is drawn between the father's persistent property offending and the behaviour of the older siblings, acknowledging known associations in the research literature.

Some of the risks associated with mother are entered.

f Shirley McMahon's depression was diagnosed at about the time of Ann's birth, (though it may have been present for some years previously). The fact that she was hospitalised when Nigel was about two and a half indicates the severity of her depression and of the risk to the quality of her parenting, which can affect a number of aspects of child development, particularly psychological health. Dotted lines are drawn between the episodes of maternal depression and (i) domestic violence, (ii) Ann's birth and (iii) Shirley's care experience to indicate potential causal mechanisms. A line is drawn from the first use of medication to show that it continues and thus the severity of her depression and the ongoing risk to parenting.

age	living situation	family and social relationships	social and antisocial behaviour	physical and psychological health	education and employment
birth	8/87 Nigel born in London	mother, Shirley, b. 6/52 Ireland father, Michael, b. 3/58 Ireland brother, John, b. 2/81 London brother, Alan, b. 2/83 London brother, Adam, b. 6/84 London	father has long criminal history in Ireland and some convictions as an adult in England (all property crimes)	maternal grandmother died when Shirley was ten	mother and father both left school at 14
1-	2 moves 2 changes in accommodation	father alcoholic=domestic violence sister, Ann, born 11/88		mother was in care for 4 years maternal depression first diagnosed	
2-	moves to Ireland with father and siblings				
3-	returns to London; mother in household	mother hospitalised-physical and mental health problems		mother hospitalised for depression; use of medication thereafter	
4-		father starts new relationship	older siblings in and out of trouble with the police		
5years	moves from mother to father and to stepmother's home with siblings				starts primary school, London
6-	moves from mother's home with siblings	mother requests family support from social services			3 school moves during this period
7-					
8-	moves to grandmother's (paternal) home in Ireland				
9-	John, Alan and Adam to live with father Nigel and Ann to live with mother; weekend access to father				
10years					
11	father kidnaps Nigel, Ann and John, takes them to Ireland Ann and Nigel return to live with mother	Ann discloses sexual abuse by father to teacher (names on CP register)			
12	father reported to be in England				
day of prediction 7/00=13years					

prediction matrix: background information

Completing the matrix 3

Some of the symptoms of Nigel's psychological vulnerability are entered next. They are probably the consequence of risks already noted – as indicated by the additional lines – but they also pose risks to other aspects of his long-term well-being.

g The referral for enuresis just before his fifth birthday probably is a sign of some of the psychological stress suggested by previously recorded risk factors. Emotional disorders are generally relatively short-term, but in Nigel's case the suggestion of a recurrence of enuresis around the tenth birthday suggests something more severe. Enuresis and psychological distress may indicate other risks to social relationships in school which in turn may have an adverse effect on educational development. Dotted lines are drawn between the enuresis and (i) mother's depression and (ii) family and social relationships.

h Nigel's shoplifting is entered. This represents the accumulation of risks noted earlier noted and also a consequent risk of anti-social behaviour. If anti-social behaviour starts early in life it is more likely to persist into adulthood than when it is associated with adolescence (beginning at 13 or 14 years). The frequency of anti-social behaviour during one period gives an indication of its likely frequency during a subsequent period. So, in Nigel's case, three arrests for shoplifting before the age of 13 suggest a significant risk of subsequent property offending and an increased risk of violent behaviour. (As will be seen, some of these risks are offset by other risk and protective factors). A strong connecting line is drawn between Nigel's anti-social behaviour and that of his brothers, acknowledging the potential chain of effects beginning with Michael McMahon's childhood delinquency.

age	living situation	family and social relationships	social and antisocial behaviour	physical and psychological health	education and employment
birth	8/87 Nigel born in London	mother, Shirley, b. 6/52 Ireland father, Michael, b. 3/58 Ireland brother, John, b. 2/81 London brother, Alan, b. 2/83 London brother, Adam, b. 6/84 London	father has long criminal history in Ireland and some convictions as an adult in England (all property crimes)	maternal grandmother died when Shirley was ten mother was in care for 4 years	mother and father both left school at 14
1-	2 moves 2 changes in accommodation	father alcoholic=domestic violence sister, Ann, born 11/88		maternal depression first diagnosed	
2-	moves to Ireland with father and siblings				
3-	returns to London; mother in household	mother hospitalised-physical and mental health problems		mother hospitalised for depression; use of medication thereafter	
4-		father starts new relationship		referred to GP - enuresis	
5years	moves from mother to father and to stepmother's home with siblings		older siblings in and out of trouble with the police		starts primary school, London
6-	moves from mother's home with siblings	first suggestion of sexual abuse of Ann by father mother requests family support from social services		enuresis stops	3 school moves during this period
7-	moves to grandmother's (paternal) home in Ireland				
8-					
9-	John, Alan and Adam to live with father Nigel and Ann to live with mother; weekend access to father		shoplifting		
10years			shoplifting=caution	enuresis reported	
11	father kidnaps Nigel, Ann and John, takes them to Ireland Ann and Nigel return to live with mother	Ann discloses sexual abuse by father to teacher (names on CP register)	shoplifting=?		
12	father reported to be in England				
day of prediction 7/00=13years					

prediction matrix: background information

Completing the matrix 4

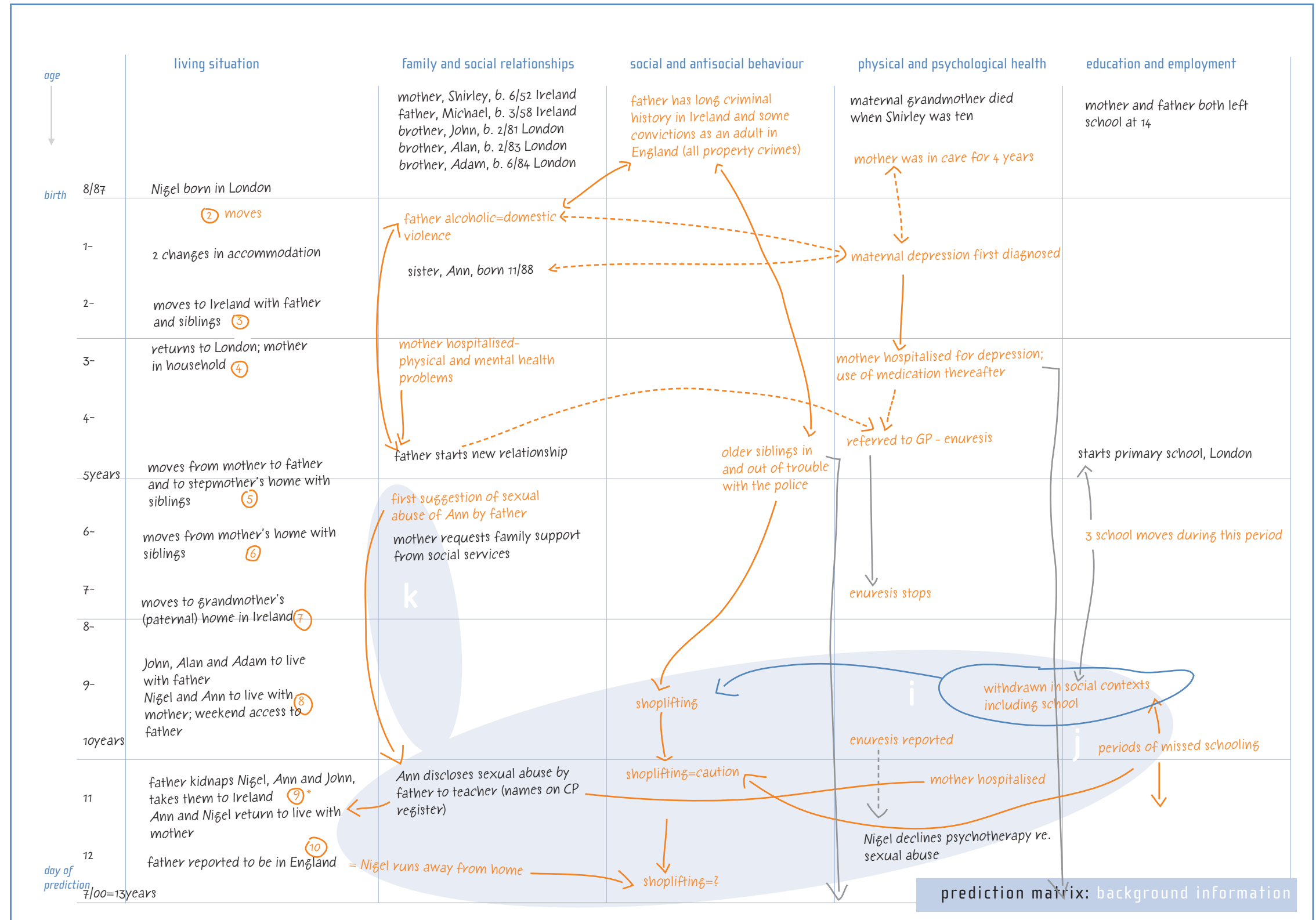
Other aspects of Nigel's emotional functioning are entered next.

i Nigel is noticeably withdrawn in social contexts, such as the classroom and the school playground. This may be read as a symptom of emotional problems, given the known risks he has been exposed to. They may indicate a continuing risk to his educational development; on the other hand, they may indicate potential risk or protection in the context of anti-social behaviour. Nigel is not offending as part of a group, as other children are more likely to do at this stage of his development. Depending on other factors, this may be a good sign. A circle is drawn around this factor with a question mark acknowledging its potential to provide protection against enduring anti-social behaviour. The entry in red indicates the risk of of behaviour problems at school.

j Long absences during the last part of the primary school period are also recorded at this stage. They represent an obvious risk to educational development and achievement and being out of school increases the likelihood of offending. A line is drawn between missed schooling and anti-social behaviour.

The sexual abuse of Ann (and possibly Nigel) by Michael is the final risk factor to be entered.

k Ann discloses sexual abuse when she is nine but there is a suggestion that it may have begun when she was about five. Nigel declines the support of a psychotherapist and so it is difficult to gauge whether or not he too was a victim or knew of his sister's maltreatment. Both conditions carry considerable risks in terms of emotional well being. The more direct consequence is Michael McMahon's kidnapping of Ann and Nigel, which has the potential to cause trauma for the children and which puts Shirley McMahon back in hospital. The children return to live with their mother under the watchful eye of social services. However, when Michael returns to England, Nigel runs away from home and offends, leading to the involvement of youth justice agencies and social services. His behaviour clearly reflects his own perception of the risk of violence from his father. Lines are drawn between Ann's disclosure and (i) the first time she said maltreatment took place; (ii) father's kidnapping; (iii) mother's hospitalisation, and (iv) between Michael McMahon's return to England, Nigel's running away from home and his most recent shoplifting offence.



Completing the matrix 5

The last step is to record potential protective factors in Nigel's life.

- l** The close relationship between Nigel and Ann has been reported by social workers and teachers. It could offset Nigel's tendency towards isolation and some of the discord and dysfunction in the family.
- m** Changes of school can be stressful but in Nigel's case it seems that the move from primary to secondary school provided a counter to his social isolation and to problems that might have followed from his long absences from primary school. The change gave him a fresh start.
- n** That he began to do well at school in turn improved Nigel's self-esteem, further countering the risks associated with isolation. The same factor may act against the risk of anti-social behaviour by taking up more of his spare time.
- o** Finally, his musical ability put him in touch with a specialist teacher who showed unusual levels of interest in him. A significant adult outside of the family, his music teacher could act against risks associated with family dysfunction.

The risk and protective factors identified in this exercise are shown on the next page using the coding sheet developed for the *Aggregating Data* tool. The guidance and menus that accompany the coding sheets are available at www.dartington.org.uk/documents. As well as recording the risks, the record also identifies many risks which might be expected in this kind of case but are absent. It is hoped that the reader will find the relationship between present and absent risks, and the interaction of variables as described in this use of the Prediction tool instructive.

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1-	2 changes in accommodation	father alcoholic=domestic violence sister, Ann, born 11/88		maternal depression first diagnosed	
2-	moves to Ireland with father and siblings				
3-	returns to London; mother in household	mother hospitalised-physical and mental health problems		mother hospitalised for depression; use of medication thereafter	
4-		father starts new relationship		referred to GP - enuresis	
5years	moves from mother to father and to stepmother's home with siblings	first suggestion of sexual abuse of Ann by father	older siblings in and out of trouble with the police	enuresis stops	starts primary school, London
6-	moves from mother's home with siblings	mother requests family support from social services			3 school moves during this period
7-	moves to grandmother's (paternal) home in Ireland	social worker indicates close relationship between Nigel and Ann			
8-					teacher reports close relationship between Nigel and Ann
9-	John, Alan and Adam to live with father Nigel and Ann to live with mother; weekend access to father		shoplifting		withdrawn in social contexts including school
10years					periods of missed schooling
11	father kidnaps Nigel, Ann and John, takes them to Ireland Ann and Nigel return to live with mother	Ann discloses sexual abuse by father to teacher (names on CP register)	shoplifting=caution	enuresis reported	change of school at 11
12	father reported to be in England = Nigel runs away from home		shoplifting=?	mother hospitalised	good school progress
day of prediction 7/00=13years				Nigel declines psychotherapy re. sexual abuse	good relationship with music teacher

prediction matrix: background information

Making the prognosis 1: Discontinuity and continuity in risk factors

This is clearly a significant moment in Nigel's life. The risks he faces are considerable, but there is also the potential for him to achieve reasonably positive outcomes. The period chosen is three years from a day close to his thirteenth birthday to a point when he will have completed his first phase of secondary schooling. A prognosis can be made in one of two ways. For the purposes of illustration, both are described on this page and the next two.

1 The risks identified on the first sheet which might be expected to persist in the period of the prediction are entered (orange).

1		living situation		family and social relationships	social and antisocial behaviour	physical and psychological health	education and employment
3 yr time period	prognosis 13 years	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	
	16 years	continuous movement	risks associated with father	running from stress	anti-social behaviour into adulthood	stresses associated with maternal mental illness	
suggested intervention							

prediction matrix: prognosis and intervention a

2 The protective factors entered on the previous sheet which might operate in the period covered by the prediction are entered (blue).

Here it has only been necessary to draw out the major themes because the risks are so significant and they relate to a period of several years. In many cases, there will also be discontinuities in risk and protective factors to describe, in keeping with the developmental stage of the child. They are not prominent here, although emotional difficulties which have been intermittent since about the age of five are likely to be lost in the consequences of conduct problems as Nigel enters middle adolescence.

2		living situation		family and social relationships	social and antisocial behaviour	physical and psychological health	education and employment
3 yr time period	prognosis 13 years	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
	16 years	continuous movement	risks associated with father	running from stress	good relationship with sister	anti-social behaviour into adulthood	music teacher is a significant adult
suggested intervention							

prediction matrix: prognosis and intervention a

Making a prognosis 2: Best and worse

The period to be covered by the prediction is entered.

1 Zero/low contact with the father is entered as the basis for a best case scenario.

1	time period	living situation		family and social relationships		social and antisocial behaviour		physical and psychological health		education and employment	
	3 year prognosis 13 years 16 years	best	worst	best	worst	best	worst	best	worst	best	worst
				zero or low contact with father							

2 The consequences of zero/low contact for Nigel's living situation and his mother's mental health are entered.

2	time period	living situation		family and social relationships		social and antisocial behaviour		physical and psychological health		education and employment	
	3 year prognosis 13 years 16 years	best	worst	best	worst	best	worst	best	worst	best	worst
		remove risks associated with father; it may be possible to achieve some stability		zero or low contact with father				removal of risks associated with father may have benefits for mother's mental health			

3 An opposite scenario in which the father plays a key role is entered, as are the consequences.

3	time period	living situation		family and social relationships		social and antisocial behaviour		physical and psychological health		education and employment	
	3 year prognosis 13 years 16 years	best	worst	best	worst	best	worst	best	worst	best	worst
		remove risks associated with father; it may be possible to achieve some stability	instability in living situation	zero or low contact with father	father plays a key role and 1 is violent to Nigel @ is violent to Shirley	will lose one significant adult and offending behaviour will persist		removal of risks associated with father may have benefits for mother's mental health	mother's psychological health deteriorates		is excluded or moves away from school

4 Some of the better scenarios are added.

Using this method, some of the connections between the risk and protective factors operating in Nigel's life become more apparent. In the best case scenario, risks associated with the return of his father are removed, allowing some of the emerging protective factors to have an effect. In both methods, the focus is on likely patterns of risk and protection in the context of what has happened to Nigel previously. Intervention is not mentioned at this stage.

4	time period	living situation		family and social relationships		social and antisocial behaviour		physical and psychological health		education and employment	
	3 year prognosis 13 years 16 years	best	worst	best	worst	best	worst	best	worst	best	worst
		remove risks associated with father; it may be possible to achieve some stability	instability in living situation	zero or low contact with father	father plays a key role and 1 is violent to Nigel @ is violent to Shirley	relationship with music teacher is maintained	will lose one significant adult and offending behaviour will persist	removal of risks associated with father may have benefits for mother's mental health	mother's psychological health deteriorates	stays in school and achieves success in school	is excluded or moves away from school

Suggesting an intervention

When Nigel was picked up by the police for his offending behaviour and they discovered that he had been sleeping rough, the situation looked pretty bleak. Initially, he was held at the police station; his social worker and his youth justice worker had it in mind to put him in care but he, his mother and sister seemed pretty determined to bring him home.

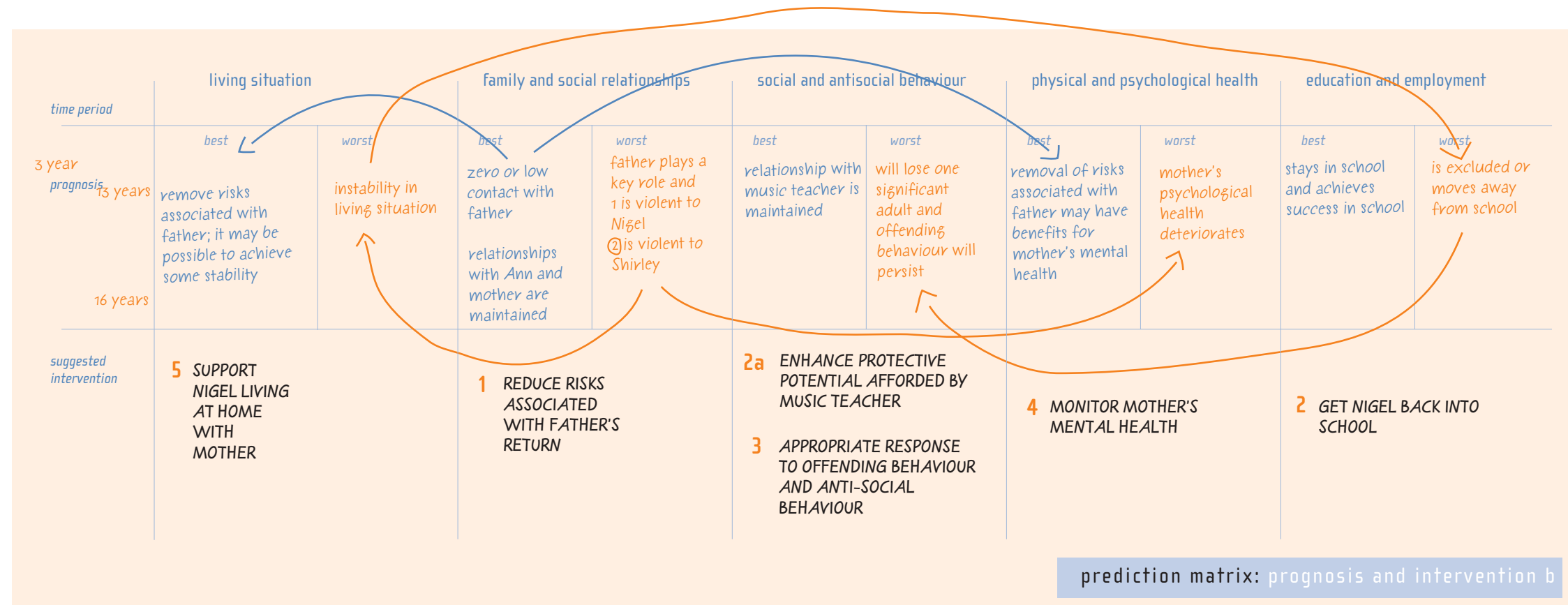
The intervention suggested here follows from the second (the best and worst) prognosis method, but both methods will lead to similar conclusions.

The prognosis led to the following interventions designed to interrupt patterns of risk and accentuate protective mechanisms.

1 The first priority was to reduce the risks associated with Michael McMahon's return. There was no quick or easy mechanisms to minimise the contact between father and son. However, shocked to learn that her son had slept rough for three days and aided by the social worker, Shirley McMahon successfully applied for a restraining order against her husband to restrict the amount of contact he could have with her (and de facto in this instance, with her children). In addition, in the aftermath of Nigel's arrest, police took an interest in his father's criminal activity – and he rapidly returned to Ireland.

2 The second priority was to get Nigel back into school since much of his potential protection was to be found there. His absence – ten days by the time he returned – was explained away as the result of a family illness and steps were taken to make sure he caught up with homework. His youth justice worker, the social worker and class teacher all played a part. The music teacher who had noticed Nigel's talents and arranged for extra lessons was also brought into the discussions, which seemed to increase the potential for her becoming 'a significant adult' outside the family and so acting as a protective factor.

3 The third part of the strategy was to deal with Nigel's criminal offences and his underlying anti-social behaviour. Under the law, the case had to go to court. It might have been dealt with simply – with Nigel or his mother paying a fine – but instead, a fairly robust package, permitting continuing support from social services, youth justice and school was recommended and approved by the court. It comprised a supervision order (enabling the youth justice worker to monitor the situation and to take appropriate steps if Nigel's father reappeared), and what were described as 'specified activities' to attend school, maintain music lessons, and apologise to the shopkeeper concerned. This legal order also permitted youth justice to provide some financial support to the school to meet the cost of the music lessons.



4 The next priority was to monitor Nigel's mother Shirley's mental health, since her stability was a necessary aspect of the available options. As it turned out, she took the initiative by seeking to have the restraining order placed on her husband. This seemed to boost her mental health and, in the event, no intervention beyond weekly visits from a social worker offering general support, was thought necessary.

5 The final part of the strategy – depending on the first four parts being in place – was for Nigel to live at home with his mother and sister. The social worker, while offering Shirley general support on a weekly basis, monitored Nigel's return and his subsequent stability.

Setting targets

What are termed output and outcome targets were set as a way of monitoring the progress of the strategy at the statutory review which was to be held after six months. (Outputs measure those things the service should have provided during the six month period; outcomes measure aspects of the child's development. They were:

Living situation

Output: social worker to visit once a week for an hour over six month period.

Outcome: Nigel living at home with mother and sister throughout the six month period.

Family and social relationships

Output: social worker and youth justice monitor father's whereabouts and encourage minimal or zero contact with family.

Outcomes: at six months, Nigel not to feel fearful about father; to have a close relationship with his sister and be happy to live at home.

Social and anti-social behaviour

Outputs: youth justice to have paid for all music lessons over six month period and, if progress is good at three months, to offer £300 for books; Nigel to make restorative visits to the shopkeeper from whom he stole; his youth justice worker to accompany the social worker on her visits to the family once a month throughout the six month period.

Outcomes: no offences during six months; close relationship with music teacher maintained.

Physical and psychological health

Output: social worker visits mother to monitor her mental health and to alert GP should the situation deteriorate.

Outcome: Nigel to be receiving adequate care at home; Shirley's mental health not to be allowed to deteriorate to the extent she cannot look after him.

Education and employment

Output: teacher to facilitate Nigel's return to school.

Outcome: Nigel to attend school daily and continue to thrive.