

# The Best Services Trial (BeST<sup>?</sup>): Effectiveness and Cost-Effectiveness of the New Orleans Intervention Model for Infant Mental Health



# The BeST<sup>?</sup> Study London Team:

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- Project Manager: Uditia Iyengar
- Research assistant: Barbara Jacobs
- Recruitment Coordinators: Helene Engelvin, Titibele Ncube, Ella Leavey-Bell





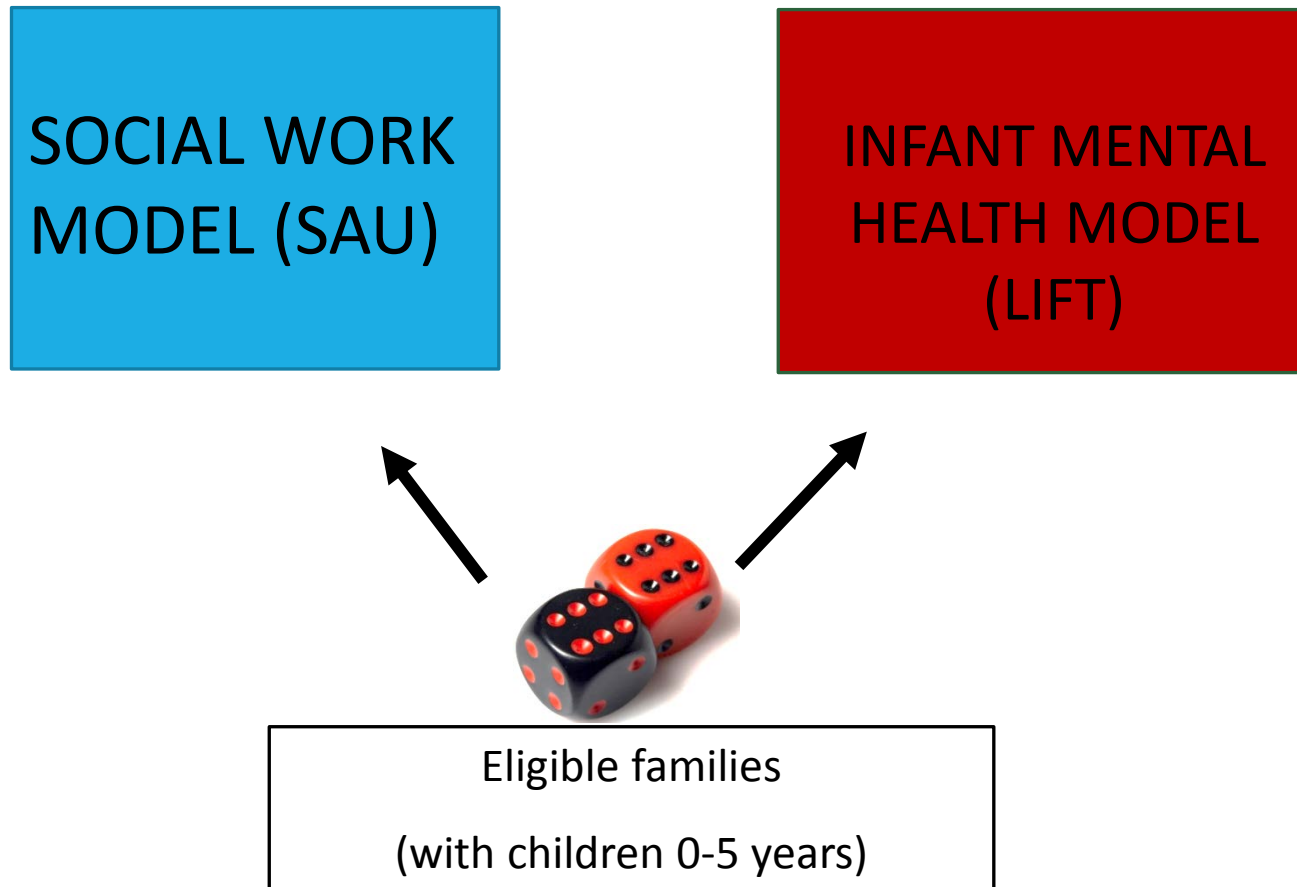
# Our Question:

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What is the best way **to improve the mental health and placement stability** of pre-school children who have come into care because of abuse and/or neglect?

Is an **infant mental health model (LIFT)** or a **social work model – services as usual (SAU)** the best way to achieve this?

# HOW TO RECEIVE LIFT OR SAU? RANDOMISED with a COMPUTER



# Who is eligible?

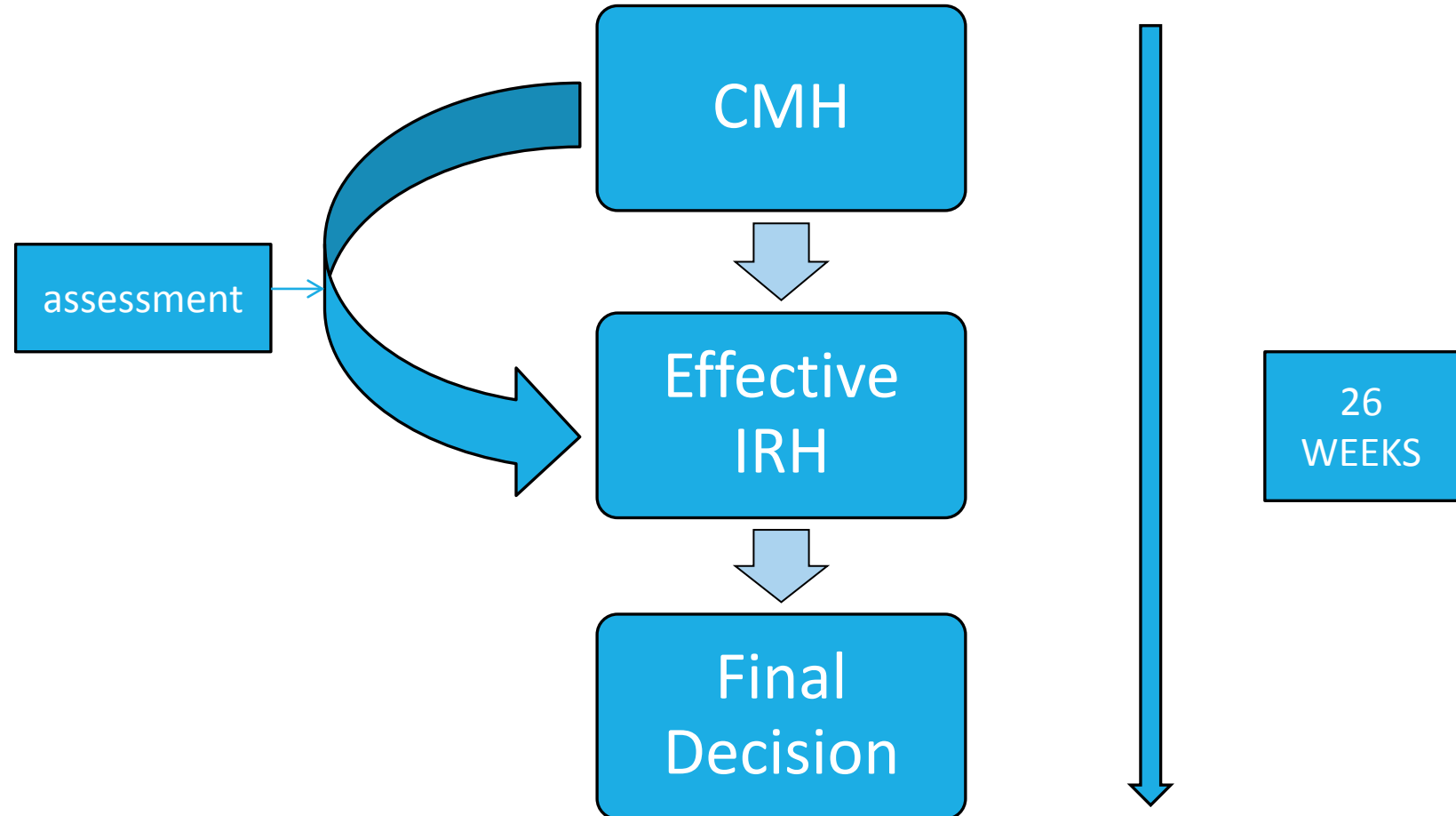
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- Family has at least one child age 0-5 entering care
- At least one birth parent is able to consent and participate in trial - **NOT** imprisoned or deceased
- At least one birth parent has capacity to consent and participate in trial
- child must be removed from family home and be living in a safe place

ELIGIBILITY DOES INCLUDE	ELIGIBILITY DOES NOT INCLUDE
✓ Section 20	✗ Child living at home with birth parent
✓ Interim Care Order	✗ Child placed in adoption
✓ Mother-baby foster placement	✗ Mother and baby together in family residential assessment
✓ Kinship care	
✓ SGO	
✓ Article 25 pre-adoption (foster to adopt)	

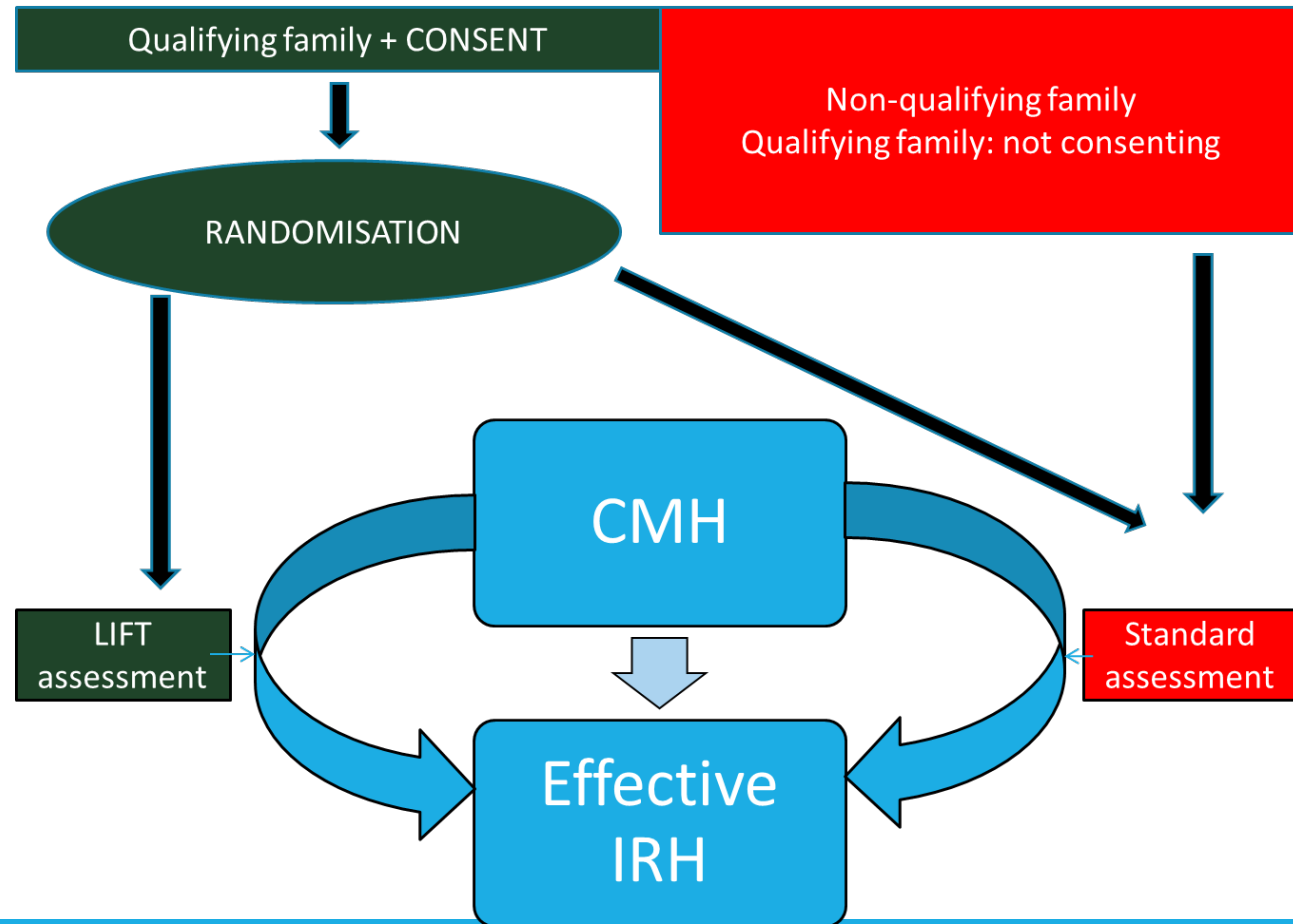
# CURRENT LEGAL PROCESS

If the threshold is met for separation, the judge requires an assessment to be undertaken to inform their decision-making about rehabilitation of the child to birth parents



# THE LEGAL PROCESS SUBJECT TO BEST? PROCESS

The LIFT assessment informs decision-making at IRH in the same way as other parenting assessments



LIFT RECOMMEND  
INTERVENTION

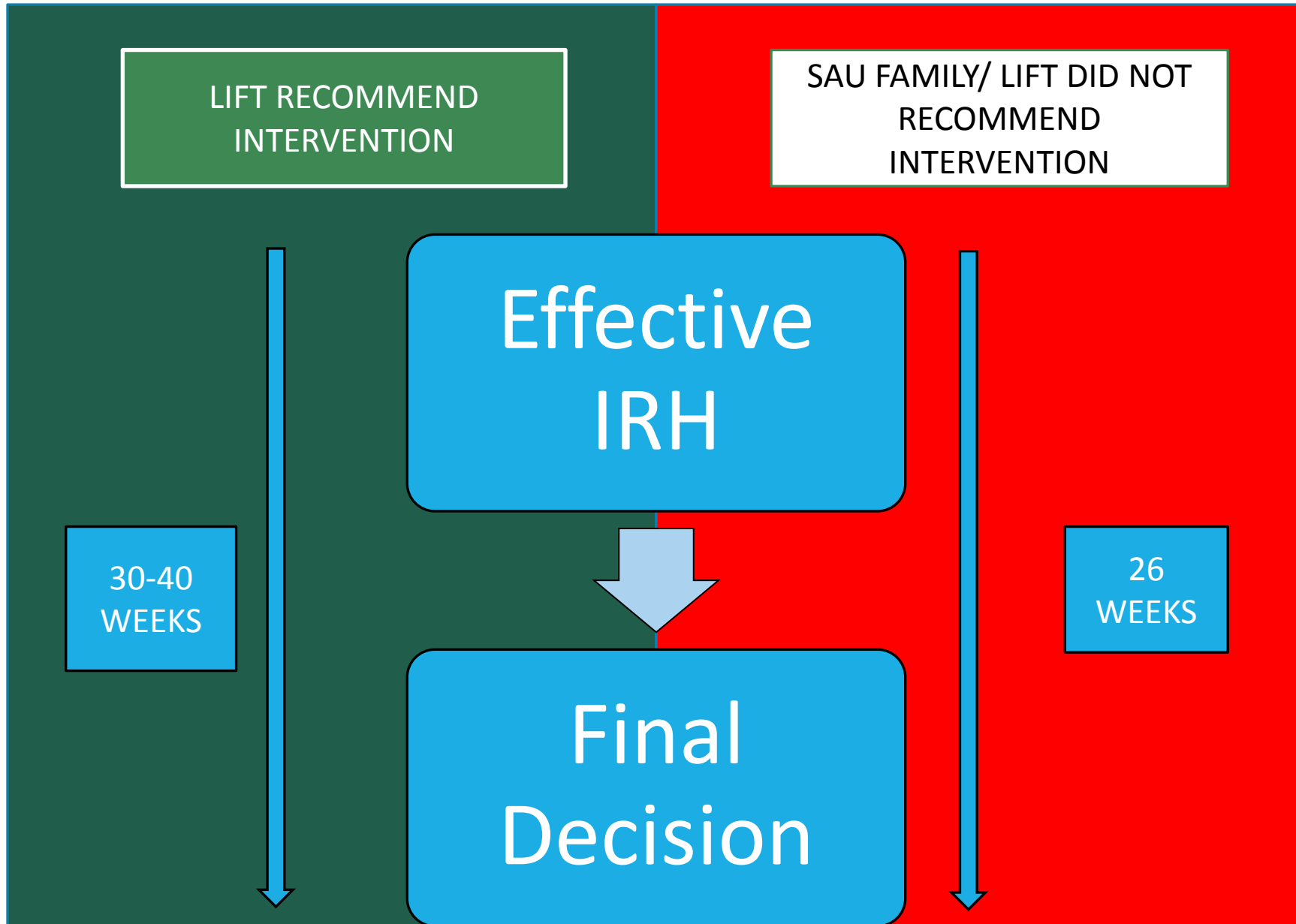
SAU FAMILY/ LIFT DID NOT  
RECOMMEND  
INTERVENTION

Effective  
IRH

30-40  
WEEKS

26  
WEEKS

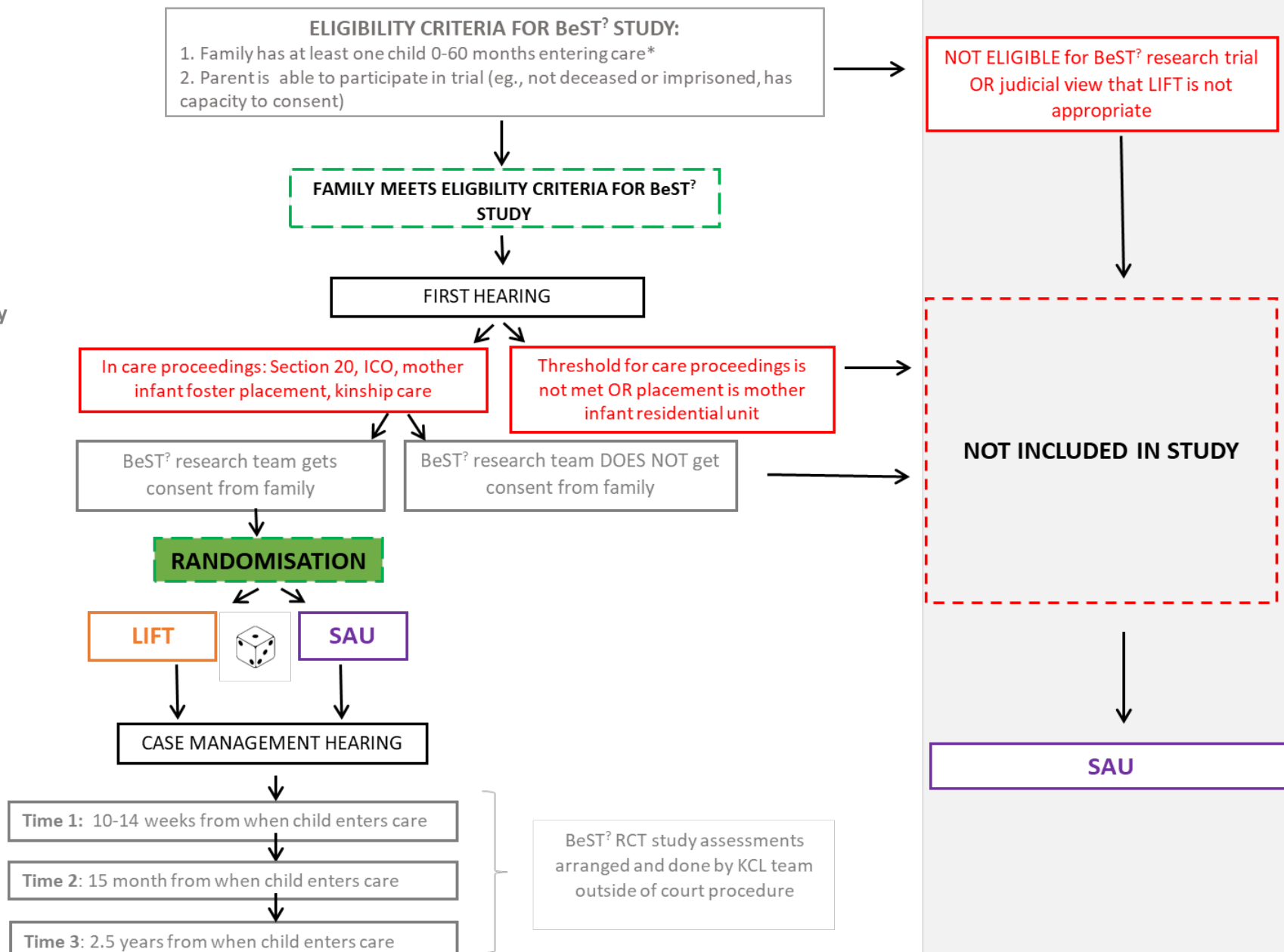
Final  
Decision





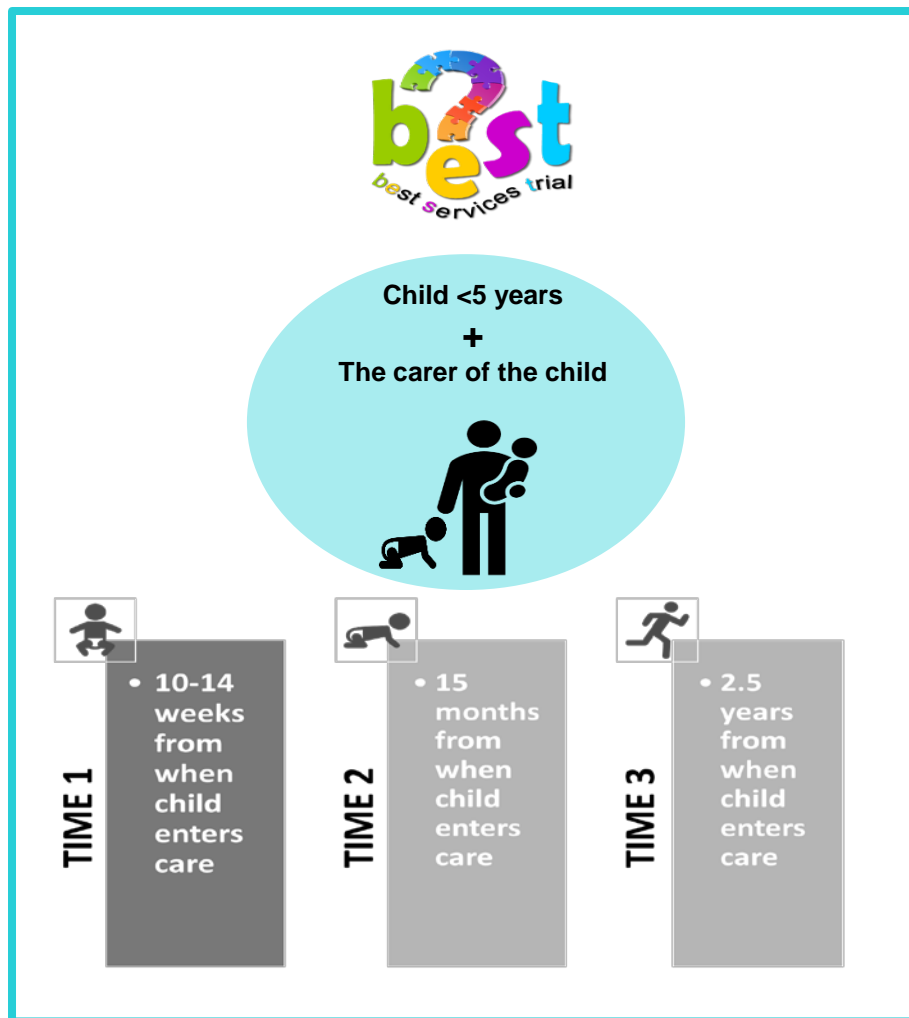
**LEGEND**

**JUDICIARY**  
**LONDON INFANT & FAMILY TEAM (LIFT)**  
**COURT-DIRECTED SERVICES AS USUAL (SAU)**  
**KCL STUDY TEAM**  
BeST<sup>2</sup>- Best Services Research Study



# How do foster carers, kinship carers, or birth parents fit into BeST? :

- carers will attend the study sessions with the child, regardless of receiving LIFT or SAU



# IMPORTANT FOR PARENTS TO KNOW

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- all information about you and your baby is kept SAFE and SECURE, no one sees it except research team
- your name and details are changed so NO ONE KNOWS it is you
- You can say NO at anytime and nothing will affect the service you get
- the judge decides if it is ok for you to be in research study
- the only way you can get LIFT is if you go through research study



JUDICIARY OF  
ENGLAND AND WALES

**FAO: FAMILY LAWYERS REPRESENTING PARTIES IN PUBLIC LAW PROCEEDINGS AT ELFC**

I hope that you are aware that in East London Family Court we are facilitating the first Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) in family proceedings. The research team, the Best Services Trial (BeST) team, are testing whether an infant mental health approach to parenting assessment, as provided by the London Infant and Family Team, is an enhancement over our current services. The infant mental health approach looks like a multi-disciplinary assessment to family lawyers. Please have a look at this short video which explains the study:

[http://media.gla.ac.uk/web/researchinstitutes/IHW/Gold\\_Standard\\_BeST\\_Services\\_Trial\\_May\\_2019.mp4](http://media.gla.ac.uk/web/researchinstitutes/IHW/Gold_Standard_BeST_Services_Trial_May_2019.mp4)

The trial is now running in the following boroughs: Croydon, Tower Hamlets, Bromley, Sutton, and soon Barking & Dagenham. I sincerely hope to extend it further.

Numbers are crucial in order to make an effective RCT. Happily, numbers entering the trial have significantly increased. However, there is still a perception that some families are not encouraged to consider entering the trial. Can I make it absolutely clear that there is no prejudice to families entering the trial so far as the process is concerned? There is nothing 'random' about decision making in cases going through the trial. The trial has been fully tested and approved by me and more importantly it is considered to be an important piece of research by the President.

With all of this in mind, can I encourage you to use your best endeavours to encourage your clients to meet with the Best Services Trial (BeST) team? This rigorous and highly innovative hopes to provide gold standard evidence about how best to provide services for families whose children come into care.

If you have questions, don't hesitate to get in touch with me directly or the research team. I cannot discuss specific cases, but I am only too happy to clarify how the trial works and how it fits into the family justice framework. Please encourage the families you work with to speak to the research team so that they can make a decision about whether or not to take part.

Thank you for joining with us in this important endeavour,

Best wishes,

*Her Honour Judge Carol Atkinson*


DESIGNATED FAMILY JUDGE FOR EAST LONDON



<http://bit.ly/BeSTgoldstandard>

# TAKE HOME MESSAGES


**BeST<sup>?</sup>** - is a study that is comparing two services to establish which is 'better' for infant mental health outcomes and placement stability



**A randomised control trial (RCT)** - is the only way we can know which service (LIFT or SAU) is better for children in care



**LIFT** – is a multidisciplinary team of professionals who deliver the **New Orleans Intervention Model (NIM)**.  
50% of families in the study will be allocated to receive LIFT services



The **ONLY** way to receive LIFT is to go via BeST<sup>?</sup>



**SAU** - is the current Case Management - Social Work Model.  
50 % of families in the study will be allocated to receive SAU



**The BeST<sup>?</sup> Services Trial**  
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2 min video:  
<http://bit.ly/BeSTmedia>  
For professionals:  
<http://bit.ly/BeSTgoldstandard>  
For parents and carers:  
<http://bit.ly/BeSTnewopportunity>

# Thank you!



<http://bit.ly/BeSTrial-London>