The University Of Sheffield.

Making sense of Children with Imprisoned Parents (CWIPs) and their families; A reflexive thematic analysis exploring how school staff construct their role and the support they provide.

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“..entire ways of life are built upon social consensus, all that we take for granted can also be challenged. As we speak together, we can also bring new worlds into being.” (Gergen, 2015)

The decision not to talk about something or someone is a means of power. The decision to talk about them can bring them into existence.

Abstract

There are approximately 312,000 Children with Imprisoned Parents (CWIPs) in the United Kingdom (Kincaid et al., 2019). A more accurate figure is currently unknown as there is no formal identification process within the Criminal Justice System [CJS], Education or Health. This results in CWIPs being positioned as 'hidden', 'forgotten' and 'invisible' (Argent, 2013; Glover, 2009; Knudsen, 2016; Morgan et al., 2014). Research has shown that CWIPs are more likely to experience adverse outcomes in relation to future offending, mental health and school success compared to their peers (Glover, 2009; KCSIE, 2022; Raikes, 2013; Murray & Farrington, 2008). The limited literature across Europe suggests that schools are best placed to support CWIPs (Gampell, n.d.; Long et al., 2019; Raikes, 2013; Robertson, 2012; Shaw et al., 2021). Yet it is reported by school staff that they need more support to be able to respond in an informed way (Gampell, n.d.). This study aimed to explore how four members of school staff from schools in the North of England made sense of CWIPs and their families, and how this influenced the way they construct their role and the support that is provided in school.

Focus Groups and Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) (Braun & Clarke, 2022) were utilised to develop themes in relation to the constructions developed by the participants and researcher. Several themes in relation to the dominant socio-cultural narratives which may permeate the way CWIPs/their families are made sense of by school staff were constructed. Further themes were developed which highlighted how these potential narratives influence how school staff construct their unique role and the support they provide, when working with CWIPs/their families. Suggested implications for schools, Educational Psychologists (EPs) and policy were explored, including recommendations for future research.

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List of abbreviations

ACE	Adverse Childhood Experiences
BAME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CIN	Child in Need
CJS	Criminal Justice System
CoP	Special Educational Needs [SEND] Code of Practice
CP	Child Protection
CWIPs	Children with Imprisoned Parents
CYP	Children and Young People
DA	Discourse Analysis
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
KCSIE	Keeping Children Safe in Education
LA	Local Authority
LAC	Looked After Child/Child in Care
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
P.I.	Parental Imprisonment
RTA	Reflexive Thematic Analysis
SC	Social Constructionism
SLR	Systematic Literature Review
SSCC	Sure Start Children’s Centre
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologist
TFP	Troubled Families Programme
UK	United Kingdom
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
US	United States of America

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Personal and professional interest in this research area

Social justice is one of the key reasons for me joining the Educational Psychology profession. This is particularly pertinent as I grew up in a deprived inner-city area in the North of England, where criminality and poverty was and still is, an everyday reality for many families. I feel fortunate that my educational journey has afforded me the opportunity to do what I do and potentially use my privileged position as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) to challenge oppressive and marginalising practice, rather than perpetuate and maintain it.

I believe that my journey to this research developed organically. My professional interest in this research area began as an Assistant Clinical Psychologist working within the National Probation Service [NPS]. My work within the NPS was part of an intervention for 'high risk' offenders. This work was psychologically informed and drew specifically upon relational practice, supporting individuals to develop their interpersonal skills which required relating to those who offend on a human-level. During my time in this role, working in a way which felt counter-intuitive to most, I became consciously aware of the socio-cultural narratives surrounding those who offend. Other professionals within the NPS were not supportive of relational, rehabilitative approach mainly due to their beliefs around the concept of morality and the social action they believe should follow criminal acts. I also found it challenging during formulation sessions, particularly in relation to a more eco-systemic approach. No thought was given beyond the individual, for example, there was minimal discussion in relation to the impact on the family/children. Families were often posited as a tool to reduce re-offending or their relationship was primarily viewed within the context of the person who offends, with very little thought as to their need. It was this lack of 'eco-systemic' working that led me back to the path of Educational Psychology.

During Year 2/3 of my TEP journey, I found myself working within a specific geographical area where a number of children and young people (CYP) on my caseload were Children with Imprisoned Parents (CWIPs). I am not sure whether that was truly the case or whether I

noticed this more due to my previous experience working in the NPS. However, what was clear is that schools did not appear to understand how to support or work with families and children who were experiencing parental imprisonment. I found myself having conversations where schools were disclosing this information to me, rather than the family themselves or schools not taking into consideration/dismissing/not thinking about the potential wider impact of imprisonment on the CYP. I also found myself within uncomfortable conversations reminiscent of those during my time in the NPS, where CYP were viewed solely within the relationship to their parent in prison with professionals holding what could be considered a deterministic view of their aspirations. This encouraged me to look into the research within the educational psychology profession regarding CWIPs and schools, however, there is a dearth of research.

This research was driven by my own professional experiences, particularly the desire to support others to challenge the potentially harmful and marginalising discourse regarding CWIPs and their families which may inadvertently result in oppressive social action. It is hoped that this research will extend the professional discourse and will support others to consider different ways of making sense of/working with CWIPs and their families.

1.2 Research aims and rationale

Despite the literature highlighting the importance of schools for CWIPs, there is a clear gap in the research in relation to directly obtaining how school staff make sense of CWIPs and their families, how this influences the way they construct their role and the support that CWIPs need. There have been previous studies conducted in England to ascertain how schools are supporting CWIPs, however, these focused on a diverse range of stakeholders (most of which were not school based) and their views were captured quantitatively (Morgan et al., 2013; Morgan et al. 2014).

The aim of this research is to solely consult school staff in a qualitative way, with the hopes of adding richness and depth to the existing literature as to how school staff can support CWIPs/their families. It has been highlighted by Shaw et al. (2020) that EPs are best placed to support schools at all levels (individual/family/whole school) when working with CWIPs. It is hoped that by engaging school staff directly as part of this research, it will potentially

consider and inform how EPs can begin to work with and support schools when working with CWIPs and their families. Therefore, this research proposes to explore the following research questions:

Research Question 1
How do school staff construct CWIPs and their families?

Research Question 2
How do school staff construct their professional role in relation to CWIPs and their families?

Research Question 3
What are the potential implications for schools, Educational Psychologists and policy-makers when supporting CWIPs/their families?

Through the lens of social constructionism, this research aims to explore the constructs of how school staff make sense of CWIPs/their families and the way they construct their role in relation to them. In particular, this study draws upon contemporary socio-political discourse surrounding those who offend including the specific local, historical and cultural context in which this study is located. This is viewed as key to understanding and making sense of both the researcher's and participant's constructions.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to the literature review

Within this study, children or young people with an imprisoned parent will be referred to as 'Children *with* Imprisoned Parents' (CWIPs). Currently, 'Children of Offenders' and 'Children *of* Imprisoned Parents' (COIP) is more widely used within the UK, suggesting that from the perspective of a child the predominant role of this adult (i.e. the imprisoned parent) is that of a 'parent' (Weidberg, 2017). I felt conflict in relation to using this term within my own research as I am conscious that historically, language has been used to oppress, marginalise, and dehumanise individuals and groups, particularly within education. While there is currently no research with CYP to suggest how they would like to be addressed, I believe that the term CWIP reflects the potential diversity of relationships with an imprisoned parent. However, I believe that this is something that should be co-constructed with CYP in the future.

As Scotland and Northern Ireland are distinct legal entities with their own data collection processes, the statistics I have included in this study are exclusive to England and Wales. As a researcher and Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) based in the North of England, it was felt that a focus on this could support an understanding of the context and practice in this area of the UK. I will seek to explore what we currently know about CWIPs within the literature, particularly the outcomes for CWIPs and how they are currently identified by systems including the local authority (LA), Educational Psychologists (EPs) and schools. Finally, I hope to identify some possible challenges and implications for research, policy, and practice.

Whilst this literature review is not seeking to speak *for* CWIPs, it is speaking *about* them. Alcoff (1991) argues that language is value-laden and that descriptions of others can never be value-free. Thus, in speaking about others it is part of the researcher's own interpretation is made evident. It is important to note that this literature review is not trying to claim that there are truths about who CWIPs are or what they may need but it is instead attempting to critically explore the existing literature in relation to them.

2.2 The context of Children with Imprisoned Parents (CWIPs) in England, Wales and Europe

2.2.1 Current statistics in relation to CWIPs and the prison population in England and Wales

The most current literature has approximated that there are 312,000 CYP affected by parental imprisonment [P.I.] in England and Wales (Kincaid et al., 2019). This is a significant increase from previous figures which were approximated at 200,000. It is important to note Kincaid's (2019) study is a simulation and relies upon sources from the England and Wales Household Survey (ONS, 2017). It also draws upon research from the United States (US) which should be considered with caution due to different jurisdictions, society, and culture. Consequently, the projected future prison population may not be representative of the current number of CWIPs within England and Wales as the data collected is also based on *cumulative prevalence* (i.e. the number of children with a parent in prison at a specified interval) and may therefore not take into account CYP with parents serving longer sentences. As data which may seek to identify CWIPs is not routinely collected within any of the systems they may interact with, such as the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), Local Authorities (LAs) or schools within England and Wales, an exact figure of how many CWIPs there are in England and

Wales is currently unknown. Professionals are reliant on self-identification and disclosures from families or the CYP themselves (Kincaid et al., 2019).

Although CWIPs are not currently formally identified, it is possible to highlight just how many families/children may be impacted by looking at prison population data. England and Wales possess the highest incarceration rate among Western European countries (World Prison Brief, 2024). Between July and September 2023, 19,028 people were first receptions into custody on both sentence and remand (Ministry of Justice, 2024a). As of September 2023, the prison population in England and Wales was 87,489, a 7% increase on the previous year (Ministry of Justice, 2024a) and it is projected to rise by a further 10,011 people by July 2025 (Ministry of Justice, 2021). However, this number needs to be viewed in the context of a growing overall population which is projected to increase by 2.1 million between 2020 and 2030 (ONS, 2022a). It could be assumed that the numbers of CWIPs are increasing in-line with the number of adults that are being sent to prison.

2.2.2 The over-representation of marginalised groups within the Criminal Justice System

Black and Minority Ethnic [BAME] groups are over-represented within the Criminal Justice System (CJS) in comparison with the general population in the UK. By June 2023, 27% of the prison population serving a custodial sentence were BAME groups, despite them accounting for only 18% of the general population (House of Commons, 2023). Between 2018-2022, it was found that there was a statistically significant chance that individuals who are Black or Mixed Ethnicity were more likely to receive a custodial sentence than their White counterparts (MoJ, 2024a). It is therefore expected that CWIPs from BAME groups will be overrepresented which highlights the intersectionality of race and involvement with the CJS. Interestingly, the literature surrounding CWIPs is not representative of this over-

representation within the UK and mainly centres the voices of white CWIPs (Raikes, 2013). There is also evidence to suggest that CWIPs are 41.7% more likely to be classed as a Child in Need (CIN) and 16.7% more likely to be categorised as a Looked After Child (LAC) (ONS, 2022b). It could therefore be assumed that CWIPs are among the most marginalised voices within society.

2.3 The socio-cultural narrative of CWIPs within England and Wales

2.3.1 'Children of Offenders' as a 'target group'

Historically, there have been calls to identify, label and support both families and CWIPs affected by imprisonment by both the UK government and charities. In 2013, a 'Children's Centre Inspection Handbook' for Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) Inspectors highlighted 'children of offenders' as a 'target group' (OFSTED, 2013): *"the groups and families that require particularly perceptive intervention and/or additional support"* (pg. 42). The inclusion within this guidance suggests that Sure Start Children's Centres (SSCC) were a site of support for CWIPs (Glover, 2009). SSCCs were key in the New Labour government's objective of reducing child poverty and social exclusion, targeting families and children below school age in areas of need (Glass, 1999). Despite this, New Labour's Prime Minister Tony Blair frequently made reference to an 'underclass' which is 'cut off from society's mainstream' suggesting that, although New Labour's focus was on social inclusion, it was a normative view of social inclusion, one that situates the individual/family as the site of change (Crossley, 2018). Lavelle (2015) described SSCC's as both an 'instrument and model of power' as SSCCs seek to identify those 'socially excluded' through a process of 'normalisation'. Although the intentions of the government at the time were to be inclusive, by categorising 'children of offenders' as a target group, it positioned them as 'abnormal' or 'deviant' in relation to the system. It is unclear exactly how 'children of offenders' were

ultimately identified, how their outcomes were monitored by SSCCs or whether SSCCs were successful in identifying CYP that may fit into this target group. It could be assumed that the early identification of CWIPs and subsequent intervention or support to families was severely reduced within the local community as a result of the Coalition Government's austerity cuts to LAs and the closure of SSCCs.

2.3.2 The Troubled Families Programme (TFP) and the 'responsibility deficit'

The Troubled Families Programme (TFP) was implemented by the Coalition Government in direct response to the 2011 riots in England. In contrast to New Labour's objective of reducing social exclusion and poverty, the TFP overtly placed focus on the behaviour of individual families and placed responsibility for their circumstances with them rather than systemic or structural factors (Crossley, 2018). The Prime Minister at the time stated that there was a 'responsibility deficit' and that certain families were the main source of societal problems (Cameron, 2011). Although CWIPs were not stated as a group of interest by the Coalition Government at the time, the TFP has three national criteria for identifying 'Troubled Families' across the country: *crime/anti-social behaviour, worklessness and school truancy/exclusion* (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government [MHCLG], 2016). CWIPs are likely to face multiple disadvantages due to having a parent in prison and may often be living in relative poverty (Murray, 2013). Therefore, they would likely fall into the category of living within a 'troubled family' as identified by the Government criteria (MHCLG, 2016).

2.3.3 Contemporary political discourse and its influence on policy and practice

The ways in which CWIPs and their families are viewed by society are often influenced by contemporary political discourse, particularly when a parent's behaviour is perceived as the

direct cause of their families' or children's circumstances. The perceived invisibility of these families and children across systems and lack of identification may also be considered a consequence of their circumstance or of an unspoken belief that CWIPs should also be punished for their parent's crime (Argent, 2013). Policies and practices that reinforce the stigmatising narrative of "problem/troubled" families, such as the TFP, continue to be developed to intervene in the lives of children and families. However, in doing so, they facilitate the categorisation, stratification, and division of the poorest populations, who are thought to monopolise the state's time and resources. This positions CWIPs and their families as 'abnormal', 'deviant' or 'other'. (Lambert, 2019; Parr, 2017).

Policy and practice in England and Wales has not always considered CWIPs individually beyond the family system (Glover, 2009). Culturally, there is a dominant discourse and belief surrounding what is considered socially acceptable, law-abiding behaviour and individuals who do not conform to this choose to sacrifice their rights as members of 'civilised' society (Brookes & Frankham, 2021; Comfort, 2007). The main concern is to punish offenders in relation to the severity of the crime they have committed rather than offer empathy or consider the impact this may have more widely (Argent, 2013; Brookes & Frankham, 2021; Raikes, 2013). Coalition Government policy suggested that crime is often concentrated among a small number of families within society that can be identified and remediated, there is therefore a danger that interventions involving CWIPs are focused on reducing the economic costs to society rather than recognising their individual needs/experiences (Argent, 2013).

Research commissioned by the government and police within England and Wales has frequently emphasised the role that CWIPs can play in their parents' desistence, rather than a

specific focus on the rights and experiences of CWIPs, or impact of P.I. on their wellbeing (Farmer, 2017; Kincaid et al., 2019). This is in contrast with other European countries that focus on the welfare and needs of CWIPs (Gampell, n.d.). Robertson (2007) asserts that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) apply to all CYP, including those with a parent who is in prison. These rights are particularly pertinent, including the right to not be discriminated against based on the status of their parents; the right to be heard in matters affecting them; and the right to have their best interests within decisions/actions which may have consequences for them.

Within the literature, there has been a focus on the impact that P.I. can have on non-imprisoned family members. When considered alongside some of the societal and cultural discourses above, it could be argued that this has resulted in families being positioned as ‘collateral damage’ or experiencing secondary punishment as a result of the imprisoned individual. Due to the heavy focus on the family within policy/practice and an absence of statutory response to their needs, CWIPs are often referred to in the literature as the unseen, through language such as ‘hidden’, ‘forgotten’ and ‘invisible’ (Argent, 2013; Glover, 2009; Knudsen, 2016; Morgan et al., 2014) (Ramsden, 1998). Reference is made to CWIPs ‘suffering’ as a consequence of their parent(s) criminality through labels such as ‘Orphans of Justice’ (Shaw, 2012) and ‘Collateral Convicts’ (Robertson, 2007). As CWIPs and their families are often subject to a range of exclusionary processes, they are less likely to have the political resources to advocate for themselves or call for change (Murray, 2007).

2.3.4 Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) (2023)

The most recent governmental reference to CWIPs is within statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) (Department for Education [DfE], 2023). This

highlighted to schools and colleges that early help may be required for ‘children with family members in prison’ and they should be alert to this. It does not state how schools and colleges may seek to identify these CYP and the figures within the guidance are not the most recent simulated figures. This may result in professionals dramatically underestimating the numbers of CYP with a parent in prison they may encounter which may have implications for identification. There may also be the risk that CWIPs will be viewed specifically within the realms of safeguarding and that having a parent in prison makes them inherently vulnerable, rather than taking a holistic approach to identifying strengths and need.

2.4 How does parental imprisonment impact on CYP and their families?

2.4.1 Symbiotic Harms

As described in the previous section, families are often posited as passive recipients of the punishment their family member is experiencing. Condry and Minson (2021) challenge these terms suggesting that ‘collateral consequences’ instead describe *‘the secondary effects of the punishment on the offender’* (pg. 544). They also suggest that there is no clear definition of what ‘collateral’ means and contest the use of the term ‘punishment’ in relation to prisoner’s families, as you can only be punished if you are guilty of the crime committed.

Condry and Minson (2021) coined the term ‘symbiotic harms’ to describe the ways in which *‘the negative effects of imprisonment flow both ways through the interdependencies of intimate associations such as kin relationships’* (pg. 548). As people who offend and their immediate families are usually interdependent on each other, punishment that is experienced by those in prison can have an impact on those who are not imprisoned, and this can be felt both ways. Therefore, the harms that families may experience because of this could be classified as *relational, mutual, non-linear, agentic, and heterogeneous*:

- *Relationality* suggests that relationships are maintained between the family and the imprisoned individual and both experience the punishment imposed by the state.
- *Mutuality* suggests that imprisoned individuals and family systems are closely interconnected, both impact on the other. This is an ongoing process that is dynamic and can be mitigated by the strength of said relationships.
- *Nonlinearity* describes the complexities of the harm experienced by both the imprisoned individual and the family. It highlights how individual experiences can differ from each other and change in duration/intensity over time.
- *Agency* suggests that families play an active role in negotiating both relationships and the harm they experience.
- *Heterogeneity* highlights that harms can be experienced in different ways by different families.

It could be suggested that Condry and Minson's (2021) framework, highlights the complexity of experience in relation to CWIPs. It does not appear that this relational complexity is reflected within the current research that refers to CWIPs explicitly. There appear to be two main reasons CWIPs are referred to within the literature when exploring the impact of P.I.: their impact on the desistence of a parent (Farmer, 2017) and the risk of future imprisonment for the CYP (Glover, 2009). The current outcomes for CWIPs are often situated within the realms of the individual in relation to future offending, mental health and school success. I would argue that these domains highlight the potential economic cost to society and position CWIPs as 'at risk'.

2.4.2 Anti-social behaviour and future offending

Longitudinal research has suggested that the risk of antisocial behaviour is trebled for CWIPs in comparison to CYP who do not have a parent in prison (Murray & Farrington, 2008; Wedge & Boswell, 2001) and that approximately 65% of males who have a parent in prison will offend in the future (Glover, 2009). These statistics should be considered carefully as control groups were also at risk for other reasons (i.e. parental divorce, caregivers on probation) and may refer to P.I. pre-birth. Other factors such as limited parenting skills, living in deprived areas, implications of social labelling and social learning theory, alongside parental criminality should be considered as alternative hypotheses (Murray & Farrington, 2008). The research also suggests that the behavioural response to a parent in prison is gendered, with boys' behavioural responses viewed as outward in comparison to girls' behavioural responses being considered as more internal. This could be linked to a potential increase in what is perceived as 'anti-social behaviour' in male CWIPs. Male CWIPs may also potentially struggle with the absence of male role models, in comparison to their female counterparts, suggesting that absent fathers may also increase the risk of 'anti-social behaviour' (Long et al. 2019).

2.4.3 Mental health

The literature suggests that P.I. is a strong predictor of mental health needs. Findings from the COPING project across the UK, Sweden and Germany (Raikes, 2013) suggest that CWIPs are 25% more likely to develop mental health needs. However, this research was conducted in relation to CYP who were above 11 years old and the data was collected from parent/carer ratings, missing out a significant age group of CYP. The DCSF & MoJ (2008) suggested that CWIPs are at three times more likely to develop mental health problems in comparison to their peers.

However, it has been argued that many studies citing statistics in relation to P.I. and mental health are not based on empirical evidence (Murray & Farrington, 2008). Murray and Farrington (2008) explored the results from five empirical studies in relation to CWIPs and mental health, which included control groups. They concluded that CWIPs are twice as likely as CYP without imprisoned parents to develop mental health problems compared with peers whose parents are not imprisoned (Murray & Farrington, 2008). This suggests that the statistics utilised within the literature may be over-estimating the risk for CWIPs. Only two of the studies used general population samples to investigate the link between P.I. and mental health while the other studies used matched control groups, such as CYP with absent fathers due to divorce and CYP with mothers on probation. It could be questioned as to how these studies can claim causality without a general population sample and issues with generalisability. The causal link between CWIPs and mental health should be carefully considered by professionals as there may be the risk of over-generalising risk factors and perpetuating the narrative of CWIPs as inherently vulnerable.

2.4.4 Ambiguous Loss and Disenfranchised Grief

Other literature has suggested that the emotional impact of P.I. is likened to bereavement (King, 2002) yet it could be argued that it does not elicit the same empathetic and compassionate response as parental death (Robertson, 2007). Understanding P.I. through the lens of 'bereavement' could potentially be done through the theory of Ambiguous Loss and Disenfranchised Grief (Boss, 2016; Doka, 2017). Ambiguous Loss Theory describes the loss of a relational figure without a sense of closure which can complicate the grief process (Boss, 2006). P.I. is considered a loss where a parent is physically absent yet usually has a significant psychological presence (Boss, 2016). In comparison with a loss that is clearly defined, the loss of a parent as a result of imprisonment is often less clear to CYP and

something which is beyond their control. This can result in a delay in the grieving process, creating conflicting feelings and a sense of stigma and secrecy for families (Boss, 2004; deVuono-Powell et al., 2015).

Traditional psychological models of grief often focus on situations which are considered 'socially acceptable', such as grieving for an individual as a result of natural death. A loss of a parent in this instance [P.I.] could be viewed as a warranted consequence of deviating from morality. CWIPs' response to this loss could therefore be understood through Doka's Model of Disenfranchised Grief (2017). P.I. meets the criteria for this, as outlined by Meagher (1989): grief occurs as a result of a loss which is socially unspeakable, a loss that is denied by others as if it does not exist and with an absence of social support. It could be argued that the social and cultural rules regarding grief: who society allows us to grieve for, how long society thinks we should grieve and how society believes we should grieve for the above are an integral part of the process (Doka, 2002). The disenfranchised grief that CWIPs experience as a response to P.I. could result in CWIPs and their families being hidden within systems with limited social support (Almund and Myers 2003). It could therefore be suggested that a combination of ambiguous loss, disenfranchised grief, along with the associated stigma and secrecy, is likely to have a significant impact on the mental health of CWIPs.

<u>2.4.5 Difficulties in school</u>

Some research also suggests that CWIPs are more likely to experience difficulties in school. By the age of 10, in comparison to their peers, CWIPs were more likely to have lower attainment scores and achieve less on standardised tests (Murray & Farrington, 2008; Poehlmann, 2005). The literature also suggests the link between P.I. and school success is potentially gendered and age dependent. It was found that in England, males performed less

well than their female peers which seems to support the previous findings that 65% of boys are at risk of future delinquency (Glover, 2009). It could be questioned as to whether the literature regarding school failure is heavily focused on males as a result of this. Hanlon et al. (2005) also reported over 50% of their sample of CWIPs that had a mother in prison were more likely to have behavioural problems and experience suspension from school. There is also evidence to suggest that the younger the child is when their father is imprisoned, the more likely they are to display behavioural problems and be expelled from school compared to their peers (Jacobsen, 2019). It could be argued that it is these CYP that schools tend to identify, which may support the dominant narrative of CWIPs as a 'problem', 'risk to society' and as deviating from the 'norm'. However, the COPING project (Raikes, 2013) found that CWIPs across Europe generally performed well in school despite their attendance being impacted as a result of a parent in prison.

2.4.6 Parental imprisonment as an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE)

While P.I. may possibly increase the likelihood of negative outcomes for CWIPs, it cannot be implied that there is a causal effect (Murray & Farrington, 2008). P.I. is also known to be one of the five chronic stressors linked to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) (Felitti et al., 1998). ACEs are also linked to five other events such as sexual abuse, physical and emotional neglect and physical and emotional abuse (Collingwood et al. 2018; Paterson, 2017). Literature has suggested that the more ACEs experienced in childhood, the more negative the outcomes will be in relation to physical, mental and social well-being (Larkin et al., 2014). The current research in relation to CWIPs and ACEs have suggested that they are five times more likely to be exposed to ACEs when compared with their peers (Turney, 2018). It could be argued that ACEs do not occur in silos as it is 87% more likely that if you have experienced one ACE, you will experience two or more (Collingwood et al., 2018). This

suggests that the interrelationship between P.I. and adverse outcomes is complex and therefore impossible to imply causality for CWIPs. There is also minimal research into the link between P.I. and other ACEs (Murphey, 2015).

I would argue that the literature surrounding ACEs can feel deterministic and fixed which may influence the narrative surrounding CWIPs and the professional response. Although there has been minimal research conducted in this area and relatively small sample sizes in the research which has been undertaken, it has been suggested that not all CWIPs experience negative school/life outcomes (Kremer et al., 2020; Poehlmann, 2005; Raikes, 2013). Qualitative research by Weidberg (2017) reported that CWIPs developed a range of coping strategies while their parent was imprisoned. Although P.I. increases the risk factors for these CYP, it may also develop their skills in resilience depending on their individual context (Kremer et al., 2020; Poehlmann, 2005; Weidberg, 2017).

<u>2.4.6 Country-level differences in relation to outcomes for CWIPs: UK vs. Sweden</u>

The COPING study (Raikes, 2013) also highlighted country-level differences across Europe in relation to outcomes for CWIPs. CWIPs in Sweden were more likely to be impacted by repeated P.I., however, when compared with CWIPs in England and Wales appeared to be less negatively impacted within the realms of mental health and school exclusions (Raikes, 2013). This highlights the importance of considering the cultural, socio-economic and political context beyond the individual and family and how these impact on the well-being and outcomes of CWIPs. This is particularly pertinent as the Swedish CJS takes a humanistic and rehabilitative approach which appears to influence a more empathic and supportive cultural narrative from society surrounding crime and punishment. More widely, there is also extensive social welfare support for families and child-centred policies for CYP in Sweden

which may limit the harm families may experience as a result of P.I. (Mulready-Jones, 2011). It also suggests that there is more work to do within the UK at a governmental and societal level to make a meaningful difference to outcomes for CWIPs.

2.5 Current policy and practice within Local Authorities (LAs), Schools and Educational Psychology Services (EPS) in England and Wales

Although the above would specify that there is an increased vulnerability in CWIPs and there are calls for a statutory response to these CYP (Evans, 2009; Glover, 2009; Murray and Farrington, 2008), there is a dearth of research in relation to policy and practice. CWIPs are not always viewed as needing intervention or support by professionals within education and are therefore denied certain protections under the Children's Act (1989) (Glover, 2009). It is possible that the contemporary political discourse may have permeated educational spaces and that CWIPs are not visible beyond the family system. As families do not often disclose P.I., educational professionals may not believe a response is needed within their setting (Morgan et al., 2014). Taking into account the simulated statistics of CWIPs in the UK, it is likely that educational settings will unknowingly encounter these CYP on a daily basis. Shaw et al. (2021b) suggest that more needs to be done in this area and that joined-up, multi-agency working across education, social care and the CJS is imperative to professionals within school, supporting and identifying CWIPs as much of the support for these CYP is driven by the voluntary sector (Glover, 2009).

2.5.1 Local authorities (LAs): current policy and practice in England

Four papers have explored how CWIPs are supported within the UK which are directly related to educational psychology (Morgan et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2014; Shaw et al., 2021b) and they align with the above view that CWIPs have particular needs and

vulnerabilities that should be supported by the professionals around them. It is argued that a greater level of support can only be achieved if supported at local authority (LA) level and beyond (Morgan et al., 2014). Glover (2009) conducted an audit on LAs children and young people's plans (CYPPs) in England, with 13 making reference to CWIPs as a vulnerable group and 5 proposing a strategy to meet the needs of these CYP within their LA. Interestingly, three of the LAs were externally funded by the Home Office and HM Treasury so the underlying motives for supporting CWIPs may have been different to other LAs. Consequently, this may not have translated to implementation in other LAs or longer-term implementation within the externally funded LA once funding has ceased. It could be suggested that the commitment by LAs to CWIPs is less than 2009, as despite a reduction in the number of LAs, it appears that this audit has not been followed up (Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing, 2023). I have only been able to find two LA Guidelines for Practice (Evans, 2009; Greater Manchester Safeguarding, 2018). The Oxfordshire Guidelines were developed by an EP in 2009, around the same time that LAs were granted funding for CWIPS and have not been updated since. However, both documents refer to school being a source of support for CWIPs.

2.5.2 Schools: current policy and practice

The role of the school within the lives of CWIPs has more recently been explored within the literature (Long et al., 2019; Raikes, 2013; Shaw et al., 2021b). In Western cultures, the norm is for all CYP to attend school and there is an increased opportunity to meet CWIPs needs (Robertson, 2012). CWIPs have reported that school plays an important role, particularly in relation to their well-being. This is particularly successful when home/school relationships are good, information is shared or when the CYP is able to develop relationships with a trusted adult in school (Morgan et al., 2014). School can be a place where CWIPs feel

successful in their lives but also a place where they may feel unsafe. CWIPs often feel a significant lack of control, particularly in relation to information-sharing processes, which can create a lack of trust in others due to the fear of stigma and reduces feelings of autonomy (Long et al., 2019; Weidberg, 2017). Research in the US has indicated that when information is shared about P.I., some teachers may hold lower expectations for CWIPs in comparison to their peers whose parents may be absent for other reasons (Dallaire et al., 2010). Although reflective of a different culture and schooling system, qualitative research conducted in England with CWIPs suggested that they mistrust teachers (Weidberg, 2017). It could be argued that if CWIPs feel a lack of safety in school, it creates a cycle of secrecy and suspicion, preventing schools from identifying these CYP and allowing CWIPs to fall 'under the radar'. Currently, there are very few resources for schools working directly with CWIPs and an over-reliance on the voluntary sector. The KCSIE Guidance (DfE, 2023) signposts schools to resources from The National Information Centre on Children of Offenders (NICCO) and within some LA guidance, it is suggested that schools should seek support from their EP (Evans, 2009).

2.5.3 Educational Psychologists: current policy and practice

As discussed, only four papers relating CWIPs have been published within educational psychology. Therefore, the role of the EP and how they can support CWIPs within the UK is still evolving. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was undertaken to specifically explore the role of the EP in relation to CWIPs within the UK (Shaw et al., 2021b). The SLR explores the current and existing research within the UK that directly refer to the needs of CWIPs, CWIPs living in the UK or ways CWIPs could be supported in school. The SLR highlights that EPs are often best placed to support CWIPs at a range of levels including systemic, family and individual.

Due the UK specific focus of Shaw's (2021b) research, there are only 11 papers included within the SLR and only four are peer-reviewed. I would therefore argue that the recommendations outlined within Shaw's (2021b) research should be considered carefully by EPs, especially when translating them directly to practice. It is also important to note that the papers within Shaw's SLR are not based on empirical findings but instead survey-design questionnaires from a range of stakeholders which are mainly professionals. From the inclusion criteria of the studies, it does not appear that Educational Psychologists (EPs) were included within the 'professional' category in any of the studies, however, recommendations were made in relation to EP practice. Through the lens of social constructionism, this could be problematic, as it could appear deterministic in its approach and potentially viewed as 'universal truth', particularly if translated to practice without critical reflection.

Only half of the papers within Shaw's SLR included CWIPs themselves and despite two papers directly referencing the rights of the child (Morgan et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2014), only one qualitative paper has upheld these rights by directly seeking the views of CWIPs (Weidberg, 2017). Legislation highlights that support for CYP should take an individualised approach, whilst holding CYP/families at the centre of assessment (White & Rae, 2016). EPs often consider the importance of CYP having autonomy over their own lives (Mameli et al., 2019) and obtaining the opinions of CYP has several benefits for them, such as increasing a sense of well-being (Sharp, 2014) and empowerment (Warshak, 2003). Whilst EPs generally seek CYPs views and communicate them to those working with CYP (Smillie & Newton, 2020), in line with the Code of Practice (DfE & DH, 2015) and UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989), they have often been accused of *doing things to* children, rather *than for and with* them (Burden, 1996). Rather than CYP being actively involved in the decisions made about them

and contributing to the discussion, actions are often driven by the adults around them (Tisdall, 2017). I would argue that by implementing the recommendations of the SLR without further discussions with CWIPs, EPs are not upholding their ethical and moral duty to the CYP they are working with. However, a dearth of empirical research in the area mirrors the lack of identification of CWIPs within education and, for that reason, it could be suggested that the diverse needs of these CYP have not historically been considered within the context of EP literature. It is therefore important that we continue to add to and expand on the existing literature as a profession, including the views of CWIPs, to better understand how EPs may support CWIPs in a meaningful and person-centred way.

2.6 Possible implications of the current research, for policy and practice

2.6.1 Governmentality and the pathologisation of CWIPs within research, policy and practice

I presented the argument that as a society we often target individuals and groups because they are easily identifiable or cause problems for the systems that we inhabit. This is particularly identifiable in Western cultures which are subject to 'governmentality'. Governmentality is described as an *"ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics, that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power…"* (Foucault, 2023)(p. 20). Foucault held the view that certain knowledges and the practices driven from these, were key to the normalisation process within social action and institutions such as schools and prisons (Ball, 1990).

Scientific discourse within the realms of quantitative research has suggested that as humans, there are normal and pathological ways of being which have lasting economic and social effects (Billington, 2012; Miller & Rose, 2009). It could be argued that the current research surrounding CWIPs, particularly the knowledge constructed about them in relation to

criminality and future offending, school failure and well-being, is not for the good of the CYP but as a means of governing the way that they behave for the good of society. It is this form of information that provides a level of validity for the pathologisation of CYP as part of the process of governmentality (Billington, 2012). By presenting the knowledge earlier in this chapter (particularly in relation to the outcomes of CWIPs) as a framework for understanding CWIPs, there are significant risks. By solely viewing CWIPs through a quantitative and essentialist paradigm, there is a risk of reducing the individual experience of CWIP and inadvertently creating limiting and fixed identities (Burman, 2016). This perpetuates the contemporary political discourse surrounding these CYP and the narrative of CWIPs as 'other'. More importantly, if the purpose of the research is to target support to these CYP due to the possibility they may offend in future, I would suggest that this will increase the risk of CWIPs being further excluded from society and at risk of stigmatisation (Murray, 2013).

Interestingly, this statistical information is often conveyed by professionals and charities who work with CWIPs to communicate their needs more widely to the general population. However, what is not always considered is the way in which this knowledge can inadvertently contribute to the regulation of these CYP. It is our ethical responsibility as professionals to consider the past as well as the present neoliberal and capitalist ideals of the systems we operate in. However, ranking and organising the lives of CYP have often become so embedded within Western culture that they can remain unseen, unrecognised, and unchallenged by those within systems of power, inadvertently promoting the discourse of normality vs. abnormality (Billington, 2012)(p.26). One study that sought the voice of CWIPs highlighted that risk factors should not be over-generalised, as most CYP who participated in the study were deemed fine at school and were not classified a 'risk' by educational professionals (Weidberg, 2017).

Brookes and Frankham (2021) argue that professionals often do not consider the diversity of experience that these CYP may be subjected to. Presently, I would argue there is one main narrative and understanding across the literature and within educational psychology of a CWIP: they are White British (Raikes, 2013); with a father imprisoned (Shaw et al., 2021b; Weidberg, 2017); they have lived with their parent and consider them a primary caregiver; they were there at the time of arrest; the crime has no direct impact; they are aware that their parent is in prison; and have frequent positive contact (Knudsen, 2016; Weidberg, 2017). **See Reflexive Diary Entry (*appendix XVIII).***

2.6.2 The role of schools

Although the role of schools has been highlighted as important for CWIPs' sense of well-being (Gampell, n.d.; Long et al., 2019; Raikes, 2013; Shaw et al., 2021), reports suggest that school staff believe they may need more support to be able to respond to CWIPs in a meaningful way. Currently, there are only four studies within England that have included the views of school staff, in relation to CWIPs (Leeson & Morgan, 2014; Morgan et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2014; O'Keeffe, 2015). All papers include the views of a range of other stakeholders (e.g. parents, probation service, school nurses, youth offending teams) and there is currently no literature solely seeking the views of school staff regarding their role. Most staff consulted in these papers are Headteachers and Deputy Headteachers who may not have day-to-day interactions with CWIPs and their families. Three of the papers are mixed-methods and a diverse range of roles across school staff were not included as part of the qualitative interviews (Leeson & Morgan, 2014; Morgan et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2014). I argue that for EPs to be able to offer support to schools at all levels, particularly with training

and raising an awareness of CWIPs and the issues they face, we need to begin to qualitatively explore the experiences and views of school staff independently from other stakeholders.

2.7 Conclusions to the literature review

At the beginning of this chapter, I set out to explore what we currently know about CWIPs in relation to the research and at the conclusion of this chapter, I would argue that there is a dominant pathologising narrative throughout the literature and society. This is the narrative that CWIPs are inherently vulnerable, at high risk of criminalisation with significant cost to society and does not consider the associated pre-existing disadvantages that these CYP may face. This results in current literature placing a significant focus on the risk of CYP offending and desistance of their parent, which is situated very much within the realms of the CJS, rather than taking a holistic view of the needs of CWIPs and a multi-agency response from education, health and care. Morgan et al. (2014) suggest that the predominant emphasis on future criminality may result in a significant number of CYP not being offered the support that they need from professionals as a consequence of a perception of them not fitting the dominant narrative and 'getting on with it'. There is also the risk that as families and CYP do 'get on with it', professionals may not identify CWIPs as a target area of need within their settings despite the literature highlighting school as an integral source of support. I argue that the current research does not capture the complexity of experience in relation to these CYP, including their educational experiences, and that more research needs to be done in considering how school staff make sense of CWIPs and their families. I hope to thicken the professional discourse surrounding CWIPs and add to the conceptual understanding that professionals hold of CWIPs. I believe that this holds more possibility to further support meaningful identification, understanding and interactions with CWIPs and their families

which may be of relevance to both schools and EPs. Therefore, this research proposes to explore the following research questions:

Research Question 1

How do school staff construct CWIPs and their families?

Research Question 2

How do school staff construct their professional role in relation to CWIPs and their families?

Research Question 3

What are the potential implications for schools, Educational Psychologists and policy-makers when supporting CWIPs/their families?

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Positionality of the research

When beginning to explore the positionality of my research, I began to expose the complexity of the nature of truth and knowledge. A paradigm is defined as a way of viewing the world, an overarching belief and value system that includes specific assumptions and contributes to the underlying philosophy of research practice (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Mertens, 2019). There is a clear relationship between the positionality of the researcher, the research methodology they employ and how this influences the way that they approach their research (Braun & Clarke, 2022; DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2017; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Thomas, 2013).

There are a range of theoretical paradigms that create the basis for research within the social sciences: these include *positivism, post-positivism, post-modernism, social constructionism, pragmatism and transformative*. This research is approached from a social constructionist (S.C.) worldview as discussed later in this chapter. As researcher, it was important that I guide the reader through my philosophical journey and decision-making process. It is hoped that my positionality throughout the research process is both transparent and coherent. While writing this chapter, it became apparent that the different components of the philosophical decision-making process are inextricably linked and sometimes cannot be separated. Consequently, some subsections may appear to merge into others, however, I think it highlights the overall complexity of the process.

3.1.1 Axiology

Guba and Lincoln (2005) suggest that researcher values have a key part to play in the research process, which is termed 'axiology'. Axiology is referred to as what the researcher believes to be valuable *"or considered as desirable or good for humans"* (Biedenbach & Jacobsson, 2016) (pg. 140). The inception of this research stemmed from my personal and professional experiences which have guided key decision points. It is important to highlight those that may relate to this research specifically:

- I was born and raised in a socially deprived area, where experiences of poverty, crime and criminality could be considered 'the norm'. I hold the belief that problems do not solely exist within individuals or within a political 'vacuum'.
- I have previously worked within the Criminal Justice System (CJS). The nature of my Assistant Psychologist role challenged the traditional sense-making of the system with a focus on relational practice rather than punitive. I became consciously aware of socio-cultural narratives in relation to those who offend. This was also evident amongst other professionals within the CJS. They often viewed relational work with those who offend in a negative manner, mainly due to their beliefs around the concept of morality and the social action they believe should follow criminal acts.
- I noticed how the impact of imprisonment was not considered beyond the individual by professionals. As discussed in my literature review, the family and children of those who offend were only recognised as a tool to promote desistence with very little thought given as to the impact this may have on the system around the individual.

- As a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP), my interest in this research area continued to develop as schools often brought cases of CWIPs to planning meetings but often expressed that they did not know how to support.

This strengthened my desire to explore the way CWIPs are made sense of by schools and how this may influence the way they are supported. My experiences have increased my desire to work in a way that promotes my values of social justice and it was imperative that my doctoral research was also aligned with this. I want to work in a way that is anti-oppressive, collaborative and privileges the voices of those who I seek to explore. I also wanted to be critical of traditional processes of acquiring knowledge and truth. This was one of the first reasons I explored the position of social constructionism (S.C.). Burr (2015) argues that social constructionist researchers attempt to challenge the traditional view of the research relationship. Therefore, I did my best to achieve this within the constraints of a short-term doctoral research project, which has an explicit purpose for qualification purposes.

3.1.2 Ontology

Ontological assumptions should guide the entire research process (Arthur, 2012). Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality, the assumption of what exists within the world and what can be known about it. This provides a lens through which the world is viewed and ultimately studied (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Thomas, 2013; Willig, 2013).

Those who adopt a relativist ontological position reject the idea that there is a singular, reality or truth and that this reality or truth can be universally applied (Willig, 2013). Relativism also views *“multiple realities as the product of human action and sense-making”* (Braun &

Clarke, 2022) (pg. 294), therefore, realities do not exist independent from humans. Alternatively, some researchers may assume a realist worldview. Those who adopt this ontological position assume that an objective reality exists, independent of human construction/interpretation, waiting to be discovered (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Cohen et al., 2018; Willig, 2013). Realist ontological perspectives align with 'positivist' paradigms and relativist ontological perspectives align with the 'interpretivist' paradigm (Crotty, 1998).

I chose to reject a realist ontological stance as this research is attempting to understand how a group of school staff construct CWIPs/their families, their role and the support they need [their reality]. Relativism assumes that reality is subjective and is "*dependent on form and content on the individual or group holding those constructions"* (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) (pg. 5). A CWIP is likely to be conceptualised as having a range of experiences, strengths and needs and this may differ between individuals. Individuals are also likely to consider their role in relation to CWIPs in different ways. Therefore, there will likely be multiple subjective truths and experiences that will inform the group's construction, with no truth proposed to be more valuable than the other.

It is important to note that this construction is situated within a specific geographical area and cultural context (i.e the North of England and the context of a Local Authority [LA]). Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest that a relativist stance accepts that *"constructions are socially or experientially based, locally and specifically situated (although elements are often shared among many individuals and even across cultures)"* (pg. 110) they also suggest that "*constructions and associated realities are 'alterable'"* (pg. 111). A relativist position enabled me to explore the constructions of participants through the means of a focus group

but also be open to these not being 'fixed'. For instance, constructions developing or changing through both researcher and participants constructing their reality together.

3.1.3 Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowing, this includes assumptions regarding which claims to knowledge are valid and reliable, but also how such knowledge is created (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Willig, 2013). The literature suggests that there is an explicit link between paradigm, ontology and epistemology within research practice which limits what is considered possible within the research process (Arthur, 2012; Braun & Clarke, 2022; Cohen et al., 2018). As I adopted a relativist ontological position, it was important that my epistemological approach was in alignment with this. It is important to note that the following descriptors are often posited in a binary way. However, some research may take the form of differing epistemological positions and be combined with range of ontological positions, to form a particular theoretical position.

Some researchers adopt an epistemological position of objectivism which is closely linked to a realist ontology. Objectivism assumes there is an objective external truth that exists independently of human cognition. (Crotty, 1998). Those who align themselves with this position believe that the researcher and participants are separate, and that research should be free from the influence of both. Objectivist research is value-free, which means that values and bias do not impact on the overall outcomes of what is being investigated (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Mertens, 2019).

A subjectivist epistemology assumes that the *"world does not exist independently of our knowledge of it"* (Grix, 2004, p. 83). Subjectivist research is value-mediated (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) and researchers who take a subjectivist position believe that they are not detached from the production of knowledge or research process (Saunders et al., 2016). Subjectivism assumes that the researcher(s) solely contribute to the generation of knowledge (Al-Ababneh, 2020; Crotty, 1998).

Alternatively, constructionism shares some similarity with subjectivism, that the viewpoint of the researcher is not separate from the research process. However, constructionism assumes that knowledge is brought into existence through an interactive process between both researcher and participant(s) and that both are partners in the production of meaning (Al-Ababneh, 2020; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). There is also an implicit focus on language. Although language is considered important in the construction of knowledge across other epistemological positions such as subjectivism, Braun and Clarke (2022) discuss the differences between the subjectivist view from a post-positivist perspective (e.g through the lens of critical realism). They suggest that a positivist view of *"language reflects perspectival 'realities' of individual participants"* (pg. 179) and contrasts this with the constructionist view of language. They suggest that within constructionism, language is not a neutral agent for separate truths, it is active and brings *'realities into being"* (Pg. 179-180).

I chose to reject an objectivist epistemological position as the foundational basis of my research stemmed from my values and beliefs. The research sought meaning (constructions) rather than uncovering truth or fact, this is something I believed could not be explored empirically therefore an objectivist epistemological position would not meet the aims of the

study. A subjectivist epistemological position also did not appear to align with the ontological position of the research. Although it acknowledges the researcher is not separate from the process of the research, I believe that subjectivism still privileges the researcher's position above that of the participants, which was not consistent with my values of collaboration.

I adopted a constructionist epistemological stance as it assumes that knowledge creation is an interactive process, whereby researcher and participant(s) influence each other. Constructionism also goes further than subjectivism in acknowledging the influence of the interaction between the individual perspective and the world they inhabit (i.e. the social/cultural/political context). As I explored the literature, I found that constructionism takes many forms and it is therefore important to specify your particular approach to constructionism as a researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2022). I will disclose my justifications for the choice of this specific approach in the following section.

3.1.4 Social Constructionism (S.C.)

I felt that an overall philosophical position of S.C. would meet the aims of the study. When initially engaging with literature, it appeared that the terms 'constructivism' and 'constructionism' are used interchangeably which I found to be unclear. Robson and McCartan (2016) suggest that the two terms share the underlying assumption that humans do not create meaning independently of each other. Social constructivism has a focus in relation to how individuals construct meaning in relation to the world around them, however, S.C. focuses on the collective construction of meaning between individuals (Patton, 2023). I would argue that this research embodies elements of both, particularly as the data collection methods involve both a group construction and individual approach to analysis by the

researcher. It is likely that the collective construction will influence the individual and vice versa. However, for the purpose of this research and in relation to the chosen methodology, I will be referring to the term *social constructionism (S.C.)*.

S.C. is built upon the notion that what we understand to be true and the way we construct the world is dependent on our social relationships (Gergen, 2015). Language is considered a means of constructing reality, rather than representing it (Burr, 2015). Constructions arise through a dialogic process and this process is open to anybody, it is understood that there is no generalisable account that could ever account for each individual (Gergen, 2015).

Burr (2015) suggests that there is no single approach to SC, however, it should be considered a philosophical approach that recognises one or more of the following assumptions:

- *A critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge.*
- *Historical and cultural specificity.*
- *Knowledge is sustained by social process.*
- *Knowledge and social action go together.*

(Gergen, 1985)

This research attempts to take a critical stance towards the ways in which we currently construct CWIPs, school staff's role and the support they need (Burr, 2015). As highlighted, there appears to be a dominant narrative in relation to what CWIPs *are* or *should be*. There is also a dominant, albeit limited narrative, that schools have an

important role to play in supporting CWIPs, but this does not come from the perspective of school staff themselves. Approaching this research from a S.C. perspective, provides an invitation for participants and researcher to be critical of 'taken for granted' knowledge. It does not seek to uncover truths, but instead explore the 'traditional sense-making' professionals may be drawing upon in relation to CWIPs and whether this may be influencing the way in which they are currently supported or not supported. A S.C. standpoint is not about abandoning traditional sense-making completely but to instead view it as optional (Gergen, 2015). It is hoped this research provides the space and opportunity to reproduce, challenge or consider alternative ways of thinking about CWIPs, how school staff view their role and the implications this may have for support in school.

This research also assumes that ways of understanding the world are historically and culturally bound (Burr, 2015). It is acknowledged that a CWIP may have been conceptualised differently a century ago, to what they are now and are likely to be constructed differently in the future. Views of behaviour which may have been considered a crime decades ago (i.e. homosexuality) have changed and are likely to change in the future. The literature review highlighted that CWIPs are constructed and responded to differently across Europe and how this was influenced by the nature of the CJS model (i.e. punitive vs. rehabilitative) (Raikes, 2013). The role of school staff has also changed since the beginnings of mass education and could be argued is constantly evolving in response to socio-political issues (Education Support, 2023). By positing this research as both historically and culturally specific, it encourages researcher, participant(s) and reader(s) to be critical of our current understandings of the nature of

the world and curiously consider current/alternative constructions of CWIPs both now and in the future (Gergen, 2015).

This research assumes that knowledge is sustained through a social process. As we have daily interactions, we begin to frame our understanding of the world. These present ways of current understanding but also accepts that this is a dynamic and ever-changing process (Burr, 2015; Gergen, 2015). This research is focused on developing a group construction. To the researcher's knowledge, there has been no previous sense-making in relation to this specific area, therefore it is necessary to construct one through a dialogic process.

Knowledge and social action are connected, differing constructions hold power and can sustain specific practices of social action and exclusion (Burr, 2015). This research arose from the personal and professional position that 'problems' often do not often exist within individuals but are perpetuated by wider societal influences and discourses which I believe may have permeated the education system. I would argue that the current 'knowledge' we hold about CWIPs, the dominant discourse within the literature and socio-political realm (i.e. inherent vulnerability vs. problem to society), contributes to the hidden nature of CWIPs and their families within systems. There is currently no existing literature as to how school staff conceptualise their role, therefore, it could be assumed that there is no social action, or if there is it is currently unknown. It was hoped that by holding a focus group with professionals, it may encourage them to consider alternative constructions and to think about the possibilities for social action within school systems. **See Reflexive Diary Entry (appendix i).**

3.1.5 Theories of Language and Meaning

The overall philosophical position and approach to this research was also determined by the way that I viewed language as a means of constructing meaning. Hall (2020) delineates three theories of representation: *reflective, intentional and constructionist*.

A researcher who views language as symbolic, powerful and active rather than neutral and passive, existing beyond the individual as socially produced and exchanged, takes a *constructionist* perspective of language. An *intentional* view of language assumes that language communicates a unique individual perspective which constitutes their individual reality, placing meaning within the person (Braun & Clarke, 2022). A *reflective* view of language takes a realist ontological position, which suggests that language is reflective of the true nature of something. A reflective view of language does not align with the ontological position of the study or the aims of my research question and was rejected on this basis.

From a radical S.C. approach, there is the belief that concepts and categories do not exist independent of humans and that language precedes thought (Burr, 2015; Madill et al., 2000). *"It is out of relationships that we foster our vocabularies, assumptions, and theories about the nature of the world (including ourselves), and the way we go about studying or carrying out research" (Gergen, 2015, pg. 14)*. Within the context of this study, I take a *constructionist* view of language. Constructions within the focus group will be understood as socially produced knowledge and could not be located solely within the individual as an intentional view of language would suggest. **See Reflexive Diary Entry (appendix ii).**

3.2 Research Methods

Quantitative research is often described as being interested in what can be observed by the researcher, both within the natural and social world. It captures data via the means of numbers and analysis to develop universal claims to truth. (Mertens, 2019; Robson & McCartan, 2016). Qualitative research is often characterised as being interested in how others interpret the world and the experiences of people (Willig, 2008), it seeks to capture rich descriptions through dialogic means and subsequent analysis (Smith, 2015). However, Madill (2015) argues that there is a risk of over-homogenising and to assume there are uniquely defining features of qualitative research would be limiting. It could be argued that there are varying orientations, approaches and theories within qualitative research that may sometimes oppose each other (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Madill, 2015). I will therefore attempt to explicitly define the specific characteristics that I have adopted within this study.

When adopting a research method, the research question is paramount in defining the methodology that is used (Frost, 2021; Willig, 2008). This research is centred on meaning and subjective experience. It is my belief that constructions are not an observable phenomenon, and such knowledge cannot be obtained empirically (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Robson & McCartan, 2016). It is also imperative that the methodology is aligned with the philosophical assumptions of the research which are outlined in the preceding sections.

A quantitative approach did not appear to align with the aims and positionality of my study and across the literature SC research mainly ascribes to a qualitative data collection process (Robson & McCartan, 2016). To try and address some of the complexities that Madill (2015) raised, that qualitative research can be viewed merely as ‘descriptive’, I decided to adopt a

‘Big Q’ orientation. Braun and Clarke (2022) describe Big Q research as defined by a set of values, assumptions and approaches to qualitative research. Within a Big Q approach, the researcher must have an investment in process and meaning, a level of criticality, the ability to listen to the data analytically and tolerate uncertainty. They should also situate themselves within a cultural context. This leads to a level of richness and complexity within the research itself. Conversely, ‘Small Q’ methodology utilises a qualitative approach to supplement research that may sit within a quantitative realm (Willig, 2013), which I had chosen to reject.

I explored two potential approaches. A critical qualitative approach, which is underpinned by a hermeneutics of suspicion. This is described as an *“orientation that interrogates and asks critical questions of the meanings in the data and draws more heavily on the researcher’s theoretical resources”* (Braun & Clarke, 2022) (pg. 160) or an experiential qualitative approach, which is underpinned by a hermeneutics of empathy. This is described as *“an interpretive orientation that seeks to stay close to participants’ meanings and capture these in ways that may be recognisable to them.”* (Braun & Clarke, 2022) (pg. 160). I shared the same concerns as Madill (2015), that an experiential approach to qualitative research could be interpreted merely as ‘descriptive’. However, Braun and Clarke (2022) argue that researchers should always be interpretive and theory-informed within an experiential approach.

Although this qualitative approach appeared to align more with the underpinning values of the research, which sought to elevate school staff’s construction, it did not appear to align with my theory of language: the view that language is a gateway to actively create meaning rather than mirroring reality. Therefore, the qualitative framework I employ needed to involve some level *“of interrogating and unpacking meaning”* around the research aims which a

critical framework could provide (Braun & Clarke, 2022). **See Reflexive Diary Entry (appendix iii).**

3.2.1 Reflexivity

The practice of reflexivity is often seen within qualitative research, however, the value researchers place on this can often vary (Willig, 2013). Reflexivity can be viewed as an integral part of 'humanness' or a critical methodological tool (Finlay & Gough, 2008). Reflexivity gives careful consideration to what the researcher brings to the process (Finlay & Gough, 2008), this could be personal experiences, beliefs and behaviours, which ultimately shape our research practice. By reflecting on this, transparency about the possibilities of the research or its limits can be communicated. As such, it conveys the underlying epistemological position that I have adopted as researcher, that I am not neutral or separate from the process (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Reflexivity also acknowledges the complexity of data collection with humans in real-world contexts and supports the researcher in being able to convey and make ethical decisions throughout the process (Finlay, 2002). Without reflexivity, there is a risk that the researcher's influence may have negative consequences, both in relation to the knowledge that is constructed and its impact on participants (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). Therefore, reflexivity feels key in supporting this study to feel rich, deep and nuanced in the way it explores this subject, while being as ethical as it can be which is deeply linked to my axiology. There are other considerations to be made to practice reflexivity in a robust way, such as the importance of epistemological/functional reflexivity (Willig, 2013); how methodology and design may influence what type of knowledge can and cannot be constructed within the boundaries of the

research. This allows the exploration of how the assumptions of our research and positionality may impact on the findings and limitations of the research (Willig, 2013). Reflexivity within this research enables transparency about the above which I would argue increases the validity of my study. I therefore kept a reflexive journal throughout the process (see appendices).

3.2.2 Choosing a qualitative research method

I wanted to ensure that the method I chose aligned with my philosophical position and had an emphasis on both language and reflexivity. I considered three methodologies: *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), Discourse Analysis (DA) and Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA)*. I will explore the reasons why these were initially considered or potentially ultimately rejected while providing justification for approaching this research using RTA.

IPA methodology has a dual-analytic process, it focuses on illuminating general themes across individuals but also takes an individual focus to privilege participant's individual experience (Braun & Clarke, 2021a; Eatough & Smith, 2017). An assumption of this research is that knowledge is a social process and does not exist independently of this. It seeks to explore the construction of a group rather than individuals. IPA requires there to be a level of homogeneity across participants and given the varying roles of my participants, I did not feel this method would highlight the diversity of experience or diversity of sense-making the participants may bring. I would also argue that IPA also takes a differing view of language, that it is reflective of and communicates how people think and feel (Willig, 2013). It did not feel compatible with my philosophical position or the aims of this study which requires the

exploration of something more than just personal experience and considers the influence of the social world.

Discourse Analysis (DA) specifically examines the influence of language on the construction of meaning through engagement with various discourses. (Willig, 2008). Although this research does have a heavy focus on language in line with a SC approach and would satisfy my own personal areas of interest as a researcher, I sought to centre some of the participant's experiences within their role so that the research could feel meaningful for them. I required a research methodology which could privilege both my view of language as researcher but also be accepting of the potentially diverse participant experience.

3.2.3 Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA)

RTA takes an inductive approach, whereby the researcher is encouraged to immerse and familiarise themselves with the dataset, before developing codes and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2022). It places subjectivity and reflexivity at the heart of the approach. I chose to adopt this qualitative research method as it appeared to align with my philosophical position of S.C., particularly as researcher's role is considered active throughout the meaning-making process. Researcher subjectivity and reflexivity is considered a means of supporting the commitment to transparency and rigour rather than constituting a threat to validity (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Braun and Clarke (2022) suggest that although limited by a central analytic structure, one of the key tenets of RTA is that an analysis is never 'complete', that nuance and complexity will always remain. This reflects my belief as both researcher and psychologist that human experience is complex and messy and cannot be placed into specific boxes. The aim of this research was to explore the constructs that a group of school staff hold in relation

to CWIPs, how they construct their role and the support they provide. RTA appeared to align with this aim as it is often employed within qualitative research that seeks to explore questions centred around experience and sense-making (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Since the initial framework for RTA was published in 2006, its revisions are well-documented by the authors including its criticisms. It was suggested that the approach could be used across a range of paradigms, however, more recently, it has been situated specifically within the Big Q approach with a focus on researcher subjectivity and reflexivity (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Byrne, 2022). The approach can sometimes be interpreted as atheoretical rather than posited as theoretically flexible which requires an epistemological and theoretical commitment from the researcher (Willig, 2013). Despite its popularity across the social sciences, there is still some confusion surrounding the RTA method (Terry et al., 2017). As there is no singular way of approaching RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2022), it can be viewed by those newer to qualitative research as a simpler methodology to employ (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It could be argued that this may have resulted in some researchers confusing RTA with other approaches to Thematic Analysis (TA), which may not be compatible, or not providing a rich enough description of how they have approached RTA within their study (Nowell et al., 2017). Therefore, the researcher needs to be clear about their theoretical assumptions in relation to RTA as it may bring the quality and validity of the research into question, particularly the criteria of commitment, rigour, coherence and transparency (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Willig, 2013).

Initially, I took a primarily inductive approach to RTA in an attempt to prioritise participant-based meaning. As the research is exploratory in nature, data was unlikely to fit into any pre-

existing theories in relation to the topic. Byrne (2022) contends that adopting a completely inductive approach is unattainable because researchers must make decisions regarding what information qualifies as a code in relation to the research aims. It was likely that constructs from the literature would arise, which may be relevant to participant's experiences. Initial theme generation was therefore constructed through an inductive approach; however, pre-existing literature did feed into the analysis at a later stage of code development.

Due to the underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions of the study, including a constructionist view of language, I chose to explore meaning at both semantic and latent level. In line with my axiology, I wanted to give voice to both the meanings communicated by the participants. However, this had to be balanced with the expectations of completing research as part of a doctoral thesis, with an element of interpretation as researcher.

I took a critical approach to RTA, whereby I attempted to bring to the fore the underlying meanings which may be informing the discussion and I took a relativist/constructionist stance towards RTA. Braun and Clarke (2021a) state that Constructionist Reflexive TA is *"concerned with exploring what or how 'reality' has been made, and what the implications of this are"* (pg. 183). This also aligned with my research as I sought to understand how school staff construct CWIPs/their families and their role, and how this may influence the way that they are currently responded, or not responded to, within educational settings.

3.3 Research Design and Process

3.3.1 Research Design

It is important to note that my proposed research procedure initially focused on gaining the voice of CWIPs directly. Research about CWIPs is often from the perspectives of parents and other stakeholders. This is the reason I initially wanted to work directly with YP to gain their views in relation to their school experience and what educational settings and EPs could learn from this. The initial research design focused on taking a Narrative Approach with YP, using creative arts methods over a period of three sessions (i.e. a getting to know you session, discussion and an ending session). After gaining ethical approval, during my initial recruitment phase in Spring 2023, it became evident that it would prove difficult to gain access to the voices of these YP due to issues with gatekeeping in settings. **See reflective diary entry 10 (appendix XVIII).**

This prompted me to go back to the research and look at the recruitment of other theses and papers that directly obtained the views of CWIPs and compare this against what I was proposing. It became apparent that this may need to be a longer-term project given the time limitations of my thesis. Some of the studies cited difficulties with recruitment, with recruitment taking 6 to 12 months (Long et al., 2019; Weidberg, 2017). Other studies stressed the importance of prior relationships with the CYP and their families within the recruitment process, particularly the notion of trust and feeling safe to talk about their experiences (Brookes & Frankham, 2021; Deacon, 2019; McGinley & Jones, 2018). Unfortunately, due to my unique geographical location, there are no local charities supporting CWIPs, despite four prisons located within my county. I would therefore be unable to begin to build relationships with CYP locally who may have had a parent in prison within the limited timeframe of my thesis.

As part of the ethics application process, I had proposed a ‘Plan B’ should I not be able to enact ‘Plan A’ of working with CYP. This involved working with school staff directly, as the limited research posits the school environment as important to CWIPs, however, has not consulted the views of school staff qualitatively. After discussions with my Research Supervisor it became apparent I would need to change my approach. Unfortunately, this resulted in my research timeline being significantly delayed. This impacted on what was realistically possible to achieve within the constraints of a short-term doctoral thesis and influenced the research design, such as the use of a Focus Group and Member Reflections, rather than an initial Focus Group and an additional follow-up Focus Group with the same level of analysis. The data collection procedure is summarised below:

31st May 2023	Ethical approval received from Sheffield University regarding 'Plan A', working with CWIPs directly (16-21 years old)
June 2023	Meeting with Post-16 settings within the local authority (LA). Decision made after discussions with Research Supervisor to enact 'Plan B' to ensure research could be completed within the suggested timeline.
4th August 2023	Amendments to ethics application sent to Sheffield University with 'Plan B'. The research procedure would involve working with adults in school settings, rather than CYP.
8th September 2023	Ethical approval received from Sheffield University regarding 'Plan B', working with school staff from mainstream educational settings.
September - December	Initial recruitment phase. During this time there were difficulties with recruiting participants (i.e. school staff without any previous connection to myself as TEP). Decision made to change recruitment strategy in November 2023 to include members of school staff with whom I had an existing relationship.
11th December 2023	Online Focus Group held with 4 members of staff; with 3 representatives from a Secondary School and 1 from a Primary School.

Table 1.1 – Timeline of Data Collection

3.3.2 Data Collection and Interview Schedule

Semi-structured interviews and focus groups are commonly used during the data collection process when using RTA as a method for data collection (Willig, 2013). A focus group provides an environment that is familiar to participants and is likely to feel less artificial, as

school staff engage with a range of professionals daily. It could be considered that this method of data collection increases the ecological validity of the study (Willig, 2008). However, due to the busy nature of the education profession, the current socio-political context within schools and the fact that I was recruiting across a large geographical LA, I decided to hold a synchronous online focus group. A synchronous online focus group can be defined as facilitating real-time discussion amongst participants (Boydell et al., 2014). Not only is online data collection often viewed as cost and time effective as there is no need to travel and meet face-to-face, it has also been described as 'non-threatening', in particular it can be effective at reducing feelings of power imbalance. When compared with face-to-face focus groups, the literature suggests that quality of the data collected as part of an asynchronous online focus group was comparable (van Eeden-Moorefield et al., 2008). However, there are limitations, such as requiring a level of technological proficiency to access the focus group and the danger that interactions may sometimes be difficult to follow (Boydell et al., 2014).

The focus group was held online on the platform GoogleMeet and was arranged after school hours. Due to the time-limited nature of the research process, including recruitment difficulties, prospective participants were provided with an option of three dates from which they could choose. It was decided that the most popular date across participants would be the deciding factor as to when the group could meet. This resulted in one prospective participant being unable to join and reduced the number of participants within the focus group to four. I had a conscious awareness that participation in the group was voluntary and that participants were giving up their free time, therefore, to support participation in the research procces the focus group was limited to 60 minutes with a potential 60-minute follow-up interview/focus group for member reflections once I had reached a certain point within the theme

construction/analysis process. This resulted in some limitations within the data analysis process, potentially restricting what could be achieved with data collection, this is discussed in more detail within section 6.2 of this research.

Although Joffe (2011) suggests that semi-structured interviews or focus groups can impose content and structure on participant's thinking, I would argue that this was necessary, particularly as P.I. is not a topic that is commonly considered amongst school staff. I developed some open questions for the group to consider and used these in a flexible way (see appendix IV). This means I did not use all of them or potentially asked some questions in a similar form as the discussion progressed. This strategy was employed so that the conversation would feel as organic as possible to ensure that participants would feel comfortable. Barbour (2010) suggests that stimulus materials can help to break the ice, raise issues which may be considered sensitive and stimulate discussion. Responses to questions that were more sensitive than others, such as, *"When you think of a CWIP what comes to mind right now?"* were encouraged in alternative ways. The use of a MentiMeter real-time 'Word Cloud' would enable participants to respond anonymously within the group, which I hoped may not feel as exposing and would create an openness between participants. Although this may have focused on an individual response initially, the word cloud graphic was intended to be a stimulus for group discussion including making sense of the question through a social process. However, unfortunately due to participants signing on from their phones and being unable to access the stimulus, a MentiMeter word cloud could not be used. As the participants from the Focus Groups were from different schools, there was not a pre-existing relationship between them. Therefore, I found myself summarising, prompting reflections on what people had discussed and utilising my prompts *(e.g. "What are people's*

thoughts about that? Does it resonate?") to support the flow of the discussion. **See Reflexive Diary Entry (appendix V).**

3.3.3 Participants and recruitment process

Within RTA, it is unclear what is considered a 'typical' sample size and this is usually determined by the length and scope of the study. Braun and Clarke (2013) recommend completing six to ten interviews for a small-scale research project. Having explored a range of theses within educational psychology that have adopted semi-structured interviews and Reflexive TA as a methodology, including considering the time limitations of my study, I sought to recruit 4-8 participants for my focus group.

This research took place within the context of a local authority (LA) within the North of England and I utilised contacts from an Educational Psychology Service (EPS) that I was working in. To try and create research boundaries, I initially sought participants with whom I did not have an existing professional relationship. This was to limit any misunderstanding about my position as both researcher/TEP. I did not want them to feel pressured to take part or to intensify the power dynamics already present in the relationship. I approached schools I did not have an existing relationship with via my university email, using the LA school's list and readily available contacts on their school website. I provided a recruitment email to school Headteachers and office staff which they could disseminate to staff within their settings. The email included an online link to the information sheet and consent form, with detailed explanation as to what to expect from the study (appendix VI).

Due to the current socio-political context in schools, such as levels of reduced staffing, it proved difficult to recruit. As my research was asking school staff to give up their own personal time, this was potentially a barrier to participation. The additional pressures schools are facing meant that I had to change my approach and contact schools where I had a pre-existing relationship, such as the schools I was working with directly as link EP or that I had worked with alongside other EPs within my team. Consequently, the recruitment process took much longer than expected which meant that I could not hold a pilot study and only one focus group could go ahead due to time limitations. The data collection process commenced in December 2023. The diverse range of roles and settings of the participants can be seen in Table 1.2.

Pseudonym	Role	School Context
Anthony	Head of Year	Secondary
Isla	Pastoral Manager/Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Primary
Emily	Family Liaison Officer	Secondary
Carmen	Learning Support Mentor	Secondary

Table 1.2 – participant characteristics

3.3.4 Data Analysis

RTA methodology (Braun & Clarke, 2022) has a six phase process. Although this has been interpreted as a linear model, it is suggested that analysis should be recursive and iterative, with the researcher revisiting phases as required (Byrne, 2022). The six phases should be viewed as a set of flexible guidelines and a means of responding to the data and research

question, rather than a restrictive process (Braun & Clarke, 2021a). The six phases are comprised of: *familiarising yourself with the dataset, coding, generating initial themes, developing and reviewing themes, refining defining and naming themes and writing up.* Appendix VII outlines how I approached these phases within the unique context of this research study. Please see Appendix XVIII for the focus group transcript.

3.3.5 Quality and validity

Qualitative research is interested in the sense-making and meaning that people attach to a given phenomenon. This is locally, contextually and culturally situated and is usually navigated through language, purpose and perspective (Willig, 2008; Yardley, 2017). Epistemologically, it would be unsuitable to use traditional scientific criteria often utilised by quantitative approaches, as a measure of quality and validity within qualitative research (Yardley, 2017). Measures such as reliability, generalisability and objectivity are therefore inappropriate. However, it is argued that the scientific value of qualitative research *should* be communicated by the researcher and should be informed by their epistemological position and research question (Willig, 2008). As my epistemological position is one of constructionism, that the creation of knowledge is an active process, it could be suggested that it may be difficult to communicate its scientific value in a traditional scientific way. This is particularly important as my position of SC challenges the historical notion of *truth* and *reality.* Burr (2015) argues that the conventional criteria of validity and reliability are unsuitable for evaluating the quality of SC research as constructions are not final, they are historically and culturally specific and can change.

Questions have been raised regarding the applicability of universal quality criteria within qualitative research and whether they *can* be applied to all qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2021b; Cohen & Crabtree, 2008). Braun and Clarke (2021a) suggest that theoretical knowingness and reflexivity is imperative for researchers when choosing their quality practices for RTA, which I hope I have demonstrated throughout this chapter.

There is a significant body of literature that outline guidelines for demonstrating quality within qualitative research. However, across the literature, there were four areas that were largely referenced: *sensitivity to context, sensitivity to the data, commitment and rigour* and *coherence and transparency* (Yardley, 2017; Yardley & Smith, 2008). *Sensitivity to context* should be exhibited by researchers*,* it is hoped that my choice of methodology supports this. I demonstrated *sensitivity to the data* through my approach to data analysis, for example, taking both an inductive and deductive approach to the data and engaging with reflexivity. This allowed me to stay close to and carefully consider the meanings which were communicated by the participants. It was hoped that the additionality of *member reflections* (Smith & McGannon, 2018) provided an opportunity for both participants, and myself as researcher, to explore differences in construction. This created the opportunity to report these within my final write-up, which aligned with a SC position that there are multiple perspectives and there can never be a 'final construction'. I showed *commitment and rigour* in relation to the research by regularly engaging with the topic and data over the course of the research. Finally, I showed *coherence and transparency* through reflexivity (i.e. a reflexive research diary and research supervision). I have also clearly outlined my methodology, including alternative methodologies considered, and why I believe Reflexive TA is the most appropriate for my research question including its limitations.

3.3.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was sought and granted by the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Sheffield in September 2023. This research also adhered to professional guidelines such as the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Human Research Ethics (2021a). Participants were provided with an information sheet and consent form which made them aware of the purpose of the study (appendix VI). It also highlighted their right to withdraw from the process without reason or fear of repercussion and the date up to which they could withdraw. Ethical considerations were also made to the Data Protection Act (UK Gov, 2018) to ensure the confidentiality of participants. Participants were given an opportunity to choose a pseudonym on their consent form, which could also be used as part of the online focus group to maintain anonymity. As researcher, I ensured that any email communication was sent separately to participants so that participants and their settings could not be personally identified. As the online focus group was video recorded, participants could choose whether they would like to turn their camera on or remain fully anonymous.

Chapter 4. Theme Construction and Discussion

4.1 Chapter overview

To maintain the philosophical position of S.C. and congruence throughout the research, I have termed this chapter 'theme construction and discussion'. This signifies the role of researcher as active, rather than passive, in constructing the following understanding of the focus group.

I have situated the analysis within the context of the wider literature, rather than traditionally separating the analysis and discussion across two chapters (Braun & Clarke, 2022). I have organised constructed themes in relation to the research questions this study hopes to address, which are conceptualised within two thematic maps. Themes and sub-themes encapsulate both semantic and latent level meanings as interpreted by me in the position of researcher. In line with the RTA process, reflexivity will be a central feature within this chapter with the inclusion of reflection boxes in the appendices and referred to throughout (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The intention is to make the knowledge and personal experiences that I bring to the research as clear as possible, in turn demonstrating sincerity and transparency throughout the process (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017).

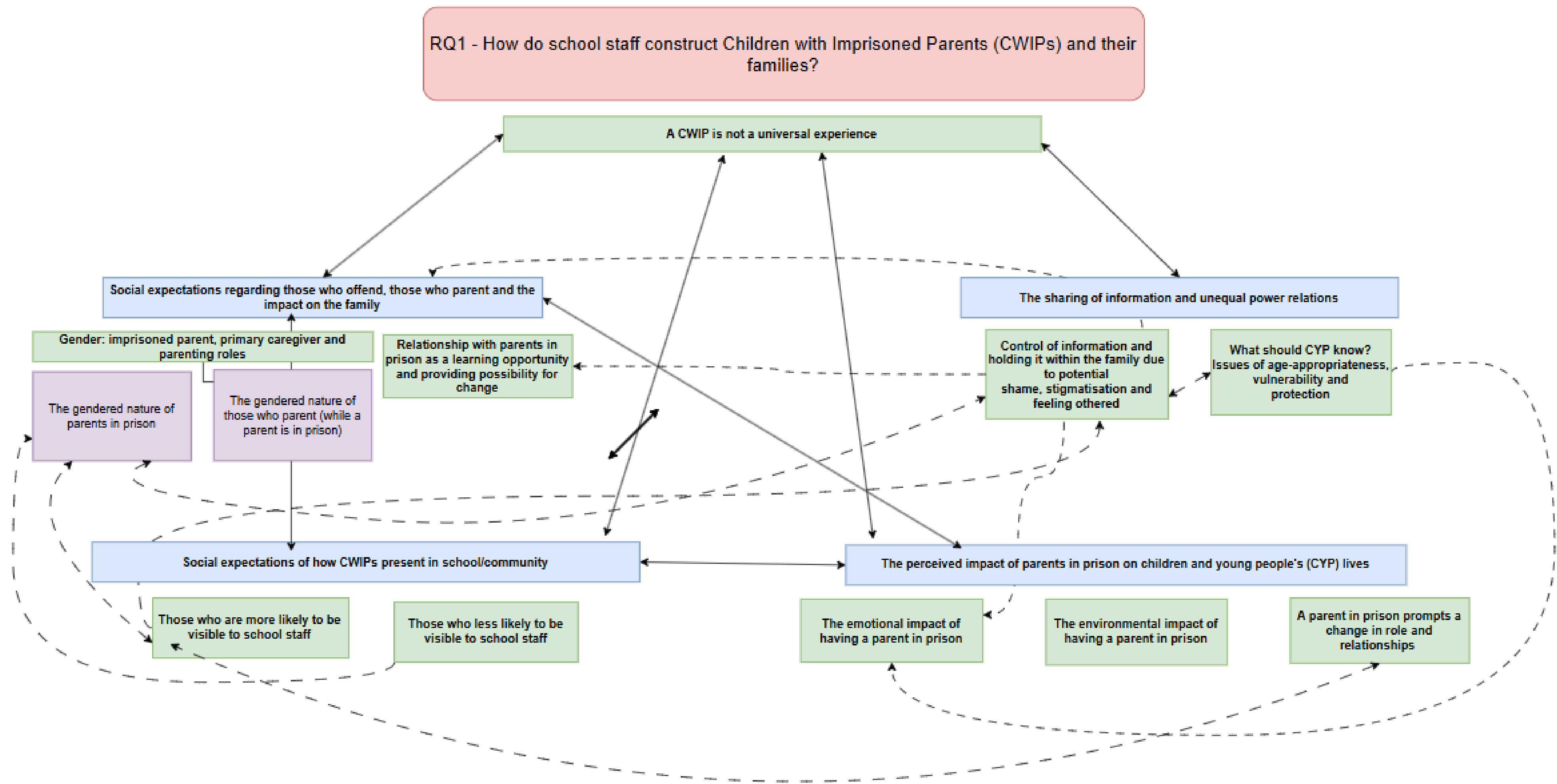
In line with a S.C. perspective, I have adopted the position that no construction is ever final and that constructions can change through repeated interaction with the data and participants. To add an additional layer of richness and address issues of quality such as dependability and credibility within 'Big Q' research (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017), I chose to adopt the practice of 'Member Reflections' (Tracy, 2010), whereby I shared my construction of the data with the participants of the research after the write-up stage of the RTA process. During this process, I

welcomed questions, feedback and critique from participants. Due to the motivations of the research for qualification purposes, my voice as researcher took precedence therefore there was a restriction on how much collaboration could happen within the traditional Member Reflection process. However, throughout this chapter you will notice orange 'Member Reflection' boxes which highlight where constructions may differ from that of my own or present additional areas for consideration. Braun and Clarke (2022) argue that member reflections are subjected to critical reflection as much as the original data itself, therefore, I will also reflect on participant's contributions to this process. Not only does this support the underpinning axiology of my research within the constraints of a short-term doctoral thesis, particularly challenging the traditional relationship between researcher-participant, it enables a more multi-faceted and multi-vocal account of the researcher's constructions.

See Reflexive Diary Entry (appendix XII) before continuing.

4.2. Thematic Map RQ1

A thematic map which depicts four over-arching themes (blue), ten themes (green), two sub-themes (purple) and how they are interlinked, which was constructed via the Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) process.



4.3 Theme: Social expectations regarding those who offend, those who parent and the impact on the family

This over-arching theme was constructed out of two themes: one which strongly related gender and one which challenged the participant's earlier constructions regarding the socio-cultural narrative in relation to societal expectations regarding parenting while in prison and absent fathers. Across the transcript, I constructed that school staff were drawing upon their past experiences to make sense of CWIPs and their families. It appeared that this potentially resulted in some gendered constructions regarding those who are more likely to be imprisoned/the primary caregiver, how this may affect the ability to parent and the impact this may have on the family. This was constructed as two sub-themes which also appeared to share links to the themes 'parents in prison prompts a change in role and relationships' and 'the control of information and holding this within the family due to potential shame, stigmatisation and feeling othered' (discussed later in this chapter).

4.3.1 Sub-theme: the gendered nature of parents in prison

When making sense of CWIPs and their families, half of the participants reflected on gender in relation to those who may offend, particularly from their own personal experiences of working with CWIPs in school. Anthony and Carmen commented throughout the transcript:

> *" I think a lot of the time it is Dad that goes to prison."*
>
> (Carmen)

> *" I think for me definitely, like for everyone I can think of now that we know a parent is imprisoned, it is the male or the Dad or a Step-Dad*."
>
> (Anthony)

They described their experiences of working with CWIPs in relation to those who have fathers in prison. Anthony noted what I interpreted to be an anomaly within his experience. Suggesting that he had worked with one child who had experienced a mother in prison.

> *"I think I might have had it once in 10-12 years where it's been the actual mother of the child [in prison], it's something that's quite… err.. it's not usual not for my own experience anyway."* (Anthony)

The UK has the greatest imprisonment rate of women in Europe (Beresford et al., 2020). However, in context, the UK prison population is made up of 4% women (Prison Reform Trust, 2023) so it is likely that schools may be less likely to experience supporting CYP with mothers in prison. This has increased by 14% from December 2022 so there is potential for this to rise in line with the increase of women within the prison system (MoJ & HM Prison and Probation Service, 2024).

I construed that Anthony was making sense of mothers in prison as something that is potentially out of the ordinary to experience when working with children and young people (CYP) in schools. However, during the focus group he became more curious about this, and it appeared that he began to critically consider the potential dominant socio-cultural narratives which link motherhood to morality. Historically, within the discipline of criminology, discussions around gender and offending were absent within the literature as it potentially challenged the narrative of women within a patriarchal society (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2012), something I believe Anthony was considering.

"...I don't know whether it's more to do with the fact that they're [CYP] open to saying it's Dad [in prison], or whether they genuinely just feel like talking about it isn't as taboo for them if that makes sense?"

(Anthony)

Research by Morgan and Leeson (2024) suggests that response from society towards mothers in prison serves as double punishment and stigma, both for their crime and maternal role. This will potentially result in CYP feeling a greater sense of stigma and shame regarding a mother's imprisonment, which may result in a *'forced secrecy/silence'* (Beresford et al., 2020) and may potentially add to the difficulties of CWIPs being identified in schools highlighted the literature review. **See Reflexive Diary Entry (appendix XIII).**

<u>4.3.2 Sub-theme: the gendered nature of those who parent (while a parent is in prison), and the impact on the family</u>

Participants regularly referred to the impact of a parent in prison on the wider family system. It appeared that this experience was also gendered, with the primary caregiver role being that of mother. Akin to the literature review, they spoke of the negative impact that a parent in prison can have, specifically on the mothers of CWIP's. Condry and Minson (2021) highlight that women are most likely to support those who are in prison and with this comes great responsibility, something which is not often taken into consideration. Families with a parent in prison are also likely to face multiple disadvantage such as poverty (Murray, 2013). In line with the literature, both Carmen and Emily positioned CWIPs mothers as potentially vulnerable. I considered this to indicate the view that family members who support parents in prison may not have a

wider support network. With this increased vulnerability, it was suggested that there was a reduction in capacity to access the community or care for their child, due to the absence of a father.

> *"Mum's got really significant mental health needs after everything that's happened. So Mum can't go out and just has panic attacks."* (Emily)

> *"…like we said the boy who went to live with his Dad after… after he came out of prison… because his Mum was an alcoholic."* (Carmen)

The above echoes the view that the role of father is to support mothers both physiologically and psychologically, including supporting with discipline (Winnicott (2013). I constructed that the absence of a father due to imprisonment potentially results in a loss of all the above, including economic resources, role models, structure, and guidance (Moynihan, 2017). Socio-political discourse surrounding children without fathers has often centred around a lack of parental responsibility as a link to societies' ills. Cameron (2011) specifically referred to 'children without fathers' in his response to the 2011 riots and a follow-up report by the Centre for Social Justice (2013) suggested that the absence of a father was 'damaging' for CYP and wider society (pg. 20).

Although Carmen did not reference the absence of a father due to imprisonment as damaging, she described the experience as the potential for something to be 'missing' in a CWIPs life. There were also correlations made between anti-social behaviour and the absence of a father, which appeared to cease once they were released from prison:

"But then when Dad came out and he went to live with Dad full time and has no contact with mum, and dad… since he's been with dad he's sort of left the anti-social behaviour… the erm… all the other stuff he was sort of doing whilst he was under mum's care".

(Carmen)

While research does suggest that P.I. may increase the likelihood of CYP engaging with anti-social behaviour, as highlighted in my literature review, control groups were also at risk for other reasons (e.g. divorce, living in areas of high deprivation and experience of social labelling) suggesting that alternative hypotheses should be explored (Murray & Farrington, 2008; Wedge & Boswell, 2001). It is understandable why links between the imprisonment of a father, the loss of a positive male role model and discipline are made, as it is so often reinforced through contemporary socio-cultural discourse.

I interpreted an alternative view from Anthony, who appeared to question whether absent fathers and their non-resident status (i.e. their physical distance) therefore lessened its emotional impact on CWIPs (i.e. their psychological presence). This could be made sense of through Ambiguous Loss Theory (Boss, 2016) and the model of disenfranchised grief (Doka, 1989). Anthony appears to acknowledge the loss some CYP may be experiencing, including reflecting on the ambiguous nature of this and potential impact. He also appeared to be drawing upon some societal rules and norms in relation to how CYP should respond, such as questioning the nature of the relationship with the parent (i.e. the frequency of contact) and potentially the CYP's feelings towards this. These assumptions may have an impact on the adjustments made for CWIPs in school, particularly if the significance of a loss is measured in relation to

societal expectation. I wondered whether CWIPs emotional needs could potentially be viewed differently if it were an absent mother. This led me to question whether the normalisation of absent fathers (Cameron, 2011) within society influences the way we do or do not respond to children who have a father in prison. However, Anthony did highlight that he understood the importance of CYP maintaining regular contact with and visiting their father in prison (Morgan et al., 2013).

> *"I think for me personally, I always initially go with is the child kind of with that parent on a daily basis. So do they live with that parent? Is it someone to spend a lot of time with it somebody that's quite external to them because obviously working a secondary we have a lot of students who are normally, it's usually dads I'll be honest and for the most part probably every time I've done it it's been a dad parent, but then it's how much do they actually normally see that parent and I think it is quite significant because we have a lot of students then that will say they need to take time out. They obviously go see them and we try and support that as much as possible. But we also try and ascertain just how much of an impact that parent has had on the child before going kind of into prison."*
>
> (Anthony)

There is a limited research base regarding the relationship between fathers and their children during imprisonment (McKay et al., 2018) and these relationships may deteriorate, stay the same or become more positive (Venema et al., 2022). It is suggested that high-quality father-child relationships can increase a sense of resilience and emotional well-being in relation to being a CWIP (Jones & Wainaina-Woźna,

2013). Therefore, it may be important for schools to consider how they can support high-quality father-child relationships within the context of CWIPs school lives.

4.3.3 Theme: relationship with parents in prison as a learning opportunity and providing possibility for change

Whilst the dominant narrative within the literature suggests that parental imprisonment has negative consequences for CYP (Murray & Farrington, 2008; Wedge & Boswell, 2001), Carmen expressed that this may not always be the case for all CWIPs, and constructed that parents may be viewed by the YP in a positive manner:

> *"I think he's learning from Dad's experience of sort of turning himself round, do you know what I mean? he's a positive male role model for his son, even though he's been to prison… it's sort of… like I said… the best thing that could have happened to him."*
>
> (Carmen)

It would appear in this case that Carmen viewed the imprisoned parent as a protective factor, particularly as his release coincided with a decrease in instances of anti-social behaviour. I wondered whether this linked with her previous understanding of fatherhood providing discipline and whether this was something she believed CWIPs need. Unfortunately, due to time constraints we could not explore this further and I was unable to make sense of whether there were any other indicators (other than behaviour) that would suggest the YP's father was a positive male role model.

Although Carmen did not provide this information explicitly, it could be interpreted that contact for this YP was consistent as she alluded throughout the focus group to the YP making phone calls to his father from home. Limited research has previously highlighted factors which may increase a sense of resilience and well-being, such as the stability of the contact with caregiver and the maintenance of contact whilst a parent is in prison (Jones & Wainaina-Woźna, 2013). I wondered whether this created the framework for a more positive relationship between parent and child upon release and therefore a more optimistic outcome and construction.

When talking about this CYP, I interpreted that Carmen found herself questioning what she described as 'stereotypes' regarding parenthood and those who are in prison. I construed that she felt conflicted by this, as despite having some evidence to challenge the dominant narrative, Carmen appeared to take a cautious and pragmatic approach, suggesting that this is potentially an anomaly:

> *"I think the stereotype is that they [parents in prison] can't look after the children, but this is one case out of loads of kids, but in his case, it's sort of the other way around Dad was the best thing really that could have happened to him in terms of his own life"* (Carmen)

See reflexive diary entry (appendix XV).

4.3.4 Summary of social expectations regarding those who offend, those who parent and the impact on the family.

The above extracts have been used to discuss the gendered nature of constructing a parent who is in prison. Whilst this highlights that participants construct parents in prison as fathers, often through their own personal experiences, the 'outlier' experience of Anthony allowed for some reflection on what may be influencing such constructs. Despite some of the literature challenging the gendered idea of those who offend, these constructs are reflective of the statistics within the prison system, that more males receive custodial sentences than women. Therefore, it is inevitable that these constructs are reproduced in wider society, including schools. What it does suggest, is that dominant socio-cultural discourse surrounding mothers in prison can have potential implications for how their children are identified by school staff, particularly in the context of self-disclosure.

The constructs regarding those who are more likely to be primary carer of CWIPs are also reflective of the statistics within the prison system, therefore, it is more likely that mothers will be the primary carer of a child with a parent in prison and main source of support for the parent in prison. I construed that the socio-political narrative regarding CYP with absent fathers may be unconsciously normalised within wider society, such as school settings, and may potentially marginalise specific groups or communities such as CWIPs. The gendered understandings of parenthood are likely to influence the way parents in prison are made sense of by school staff and assumptions could be made regarding the relationship between parent and child, which may potentially impact on the support that is or is not provided by schools.

4.4 Over-arching theme: Social expectations of how CWIPs present in school/the community

This over-arching theme appeared to link with the above over-arching theme 'social expectations regarding those who offend, those who parent and the impact on the family'. I constructed that the way school staff make sense of CWIP's families potentially influenced the way in which participants constructed CWIPs in school. Participants drew upon their previous experiences of working with CWIPs/their families to make sense of them which appeared to both reinforce and challenge the societal discourse and literature surrounding CWIPs and their families. It appeared that there were two constructions of CWIPs in school, which I separated into the below themes:

4.4.1 Theme: those who are more likely to be visible to school staff

Several participants explored the construct of risk in relation to the identity of CWIPs, they appeared to link having a parent in prison with an increase in anti-social activities such as joining gangs:

> *"**He** started getting involved in a lot of erm… anti-social activities and whilst he was out, out and about in the community, erm… and it sort of led to in being in gangs and things like that."*
>
> (Carmen)

> *"There is a very quick decline in behaviour, which then again will link to then outside of school… kind of what they're getting involved in outside of school as well."*
>
> (Anthony)

> *"I think they're a higher risk [of criminality/anti-social behaviour]".*

(Emily)

This aligns with my interpretation of the literature, the idea that CWIPs carry an inherent risk or vulnerability in relation to anti-social behaviour, as a consequence of a parent in prison (Murray & Farrington, 2008; Wedge & Boswell, 2001). Although the research does appear to support this, the link between P.I. and anti-social behaviour is potentially more complex with additional external influences (Glover, 2009; Murray & Farrington, 2006). I wondered whether this construct had arisen as these CYP are more likely to visibly present in schools or pose a problem to the system, due to the 'quick decline in behaviour' as highlighted by Anthony or affiliating themselves with gangs as noted by Carmen.

Drawing upon the above construct, links are likely to be made regarding the CYP's relationship to a parent in prison which may result in a form of unconscious stigmatisation. Phillips and Gates (2011) argue that the label of CWIP is not just a descriptor but instead implies a shared stigmatising characteristic with their parent. This is associated with labelling theory, which suggests that a label of CWIP could impact on the individual CYP's identity and potentially increase the risk of being excluded from wider society (Murray & Farrington, 2006). This form of stigmatisation supports the assumption that CWIPs are a heightened risk of future criminality and are likely to follow the trajectory of their parents, despite limited evidence and data in comparison to general population samples (Vela-Broaddus, 2011).

Carmen and Emily appeared to make sense of CWIPs within the realms of inter-generational offending and the relationships with their parents, drawing upon their experience of working with CYP:

"…we run a project at school and to do with educating young people on knife crime and we found when we've brought up topics like that a lot of them then start to open up about their experience and then that's how we found out… erm… quite a few of our kids have had either parents imprisoned in the past or are currently in prison"

(Carmen)

"I think that I've sort of noticed that there's been some kids that we've had where if parents or uncles or other members of the family might be involved in criminal activity or have been in prison in the past. For some young people, it seems that there's not that stigma around. It's almost like a badge of honour if they get arrested, so we had a young person who was arrested recently at school… and… on the face of it didn't appear to be bothered. And whether he was bothered and didn't want to show it or whether he was just like this is normal. I don't know. But yeah, it was that kind of perception of this isn't a big deal.. […] It's almost like a badge of honour if they get arrested [at school]"

(Emily)

Emily appeared conflicted when discussing the response of the CYP and whether stigmatisation existed for the CYP during their arrest. Similarly, Anthony questioned the notion of stigmatisation in relation to CWIPs and suggested that P.I. may not experience this in the same way as other ACEs (i.e. care experience):

"I find that students are quite open to say that their parents are imprisoned and way more so than, for example, to say they're in care or they live with Grandma or… you know… that maybe that there's social care involved."

(Anthony)

CYP are likely to be aware of social attitudes, from a young age, particularly towards societal groups which may be stigmatised (Phillips & Gates, 2011). When considering labelling theory and its theory of 'delinquency' (Link et al., 1989), it could be suggested that the YP in Emily's example may have simply accepted their label as a CWIP, including the stigmatisation that arose from this and adopted an identity that is expected of them from society. It also supports the idea of relationality within the concept of symbiotic harms (Condry & Minson, 2021), that relationships are intertwined with selfhood, that the relationship with a parent in prison remains significant in daily life regardless of physical presence. Therefore, *'relationships with others are mediated through their relationship with their parent in custody'* (Long et al., 2022) (pg. 1894). I wondered what the implications for Anthony's construction may be, particularly for CWIPs who have mothers in prison and the potential double stigmatisation discussed previously.

Weidberg (2017) suggests that a consequence of social labelling and stigmatisation could lead to displays of emotion such as anger or defiance, which could potentially perpetuate the behaviour adults see in school and maintain the narrative of risk. This was experienced by participants:

*"…**his** behaviour… **he'd** act out, **he'd** sort of get in trouble on purpose […]".*

(Carmen)

"So we see a lot of... sort of... anger and frustration and acting out".

(Isla)

It seems that this construct for CWIPs is potentially reinforcing societal discourse regarding those who offend, further positioning CWIPs as a 'problem', 'abnormal', 'deviant' or 'other' (Lambert, 2019; Parr, 2017). It is limiting, supporting the unchallenged fixed identity created by quantitative data (Burman, 2016). This appeared to restrict the sense-making experience for school staff during the focus group. If the sole focus is on the element of risk, it is likely to overshadow the other needs that CWIPs may have which could potentially result in negative consequences (Murray, 2013). Emily reflected on the pull towards the construct of risk and how this may narrow the lens through which she is viewing CWIPs:

"I think until I started working recently with this young person with the mum who's experienced domestic violence, and she's a young carer for her Mum. It wouldn't have occurred to me that those issues would arise I mean, it seems obvious when you think about it, but I just sort of thought about the criminal angle and kind of the risk of exploitation and heightened risk of criminality and risk-taking behaviour."

(Emily)

When drawing upon their experiences of CWIPs who were considered risky, half of the participants gave examples of male students who communicated outwardly (Jones et al., 2013). I wondered whether there is the potential for schools to make sense of the

behaviour of male CWIPs in a different way to that of female CWIPs due to the way that they present. Within the literature surrounding CWIPs, there is a potential over-representation of males in relation to risk (Glover, 2009; Jones et al. 2013), which may have implications for identifying the 'risks' to female CWIPs in the school system, meaning they are less visible and less likely receive social support.

Member reflection: Carmen, Anthony and Emily all constructed that CWIPs identity is sometimes inexplicably linked with that of their family. They spoke of how for some CYP, their family name communicates something to others and constructed that some may potentially view criminality as a 'family business' or a 'predetermined path'. It can also bring a level of notoriety and protection within their local community. Conversely, it can also bring a sense of stigma and secrecy. Participants discussed how the family name can also impact the way in which others view you, (e.g. "basing them off of their parent's mistakes") which links to labelling theory. It is clear from these discussions that work needs to be done more widely, beyond schools, regarding the socio-cultural narratives we hold about those who offend and their families.

4.4.2 Theme: those who are less likely to be visible to school staff

School staff also made sense of CWIPs through experiences of CYP who may potentially deviate from the construction of risk. Participants appeared to emphasise their difference in presentation when compared to those in the above theme. I interpreted these YP to potentially be an 'exception to the rule'. It felt important to explore a construct which was presented by 75% of the participants at different points of the focus group, despite this not being elaborated on as much as the construct of risk.

"Because without going too far into this one case this young person is really, really sensible…."

(Emily)

"…we've had a child [with an imprisoned parent] that actually is fine in school".

(Anthony)

"…sort of some kids can cope and just go under the radar."

(Carmen)

This appears to be reflective of the literature in relation to CWIPs, there is not much known or understood about CYP with a parent in prison who adults would construct to be 'sensible', 'fine' or 'coping' and it is more likely that these CYP are hidden within the systems they inhabit. As CWIPs are not formally recognised or identified at a national level, professionals are only aware of those who disclose this information and are visible within the CJS, Education or Health systems. I wonder whether this is why the participants felt more able to construct CWIPs as inherently riskier rather than make sense of them within the context of resilience or vulnerability. As highlighted in the literature review, depending on the individual context, P.I. can develop resilience skills and is not always considered a difficult experience by YP (Scharff-Smith & Gampell, 2011; Weidberg, 2017). Research with CWIPs has highlighted that some CYP may want to normalise their situation through maintaining a sense of autonomy and control and therefore choose to 'go under the radar' (Weidberg, 2017). However, there is potential for assumptions regarding those CYP who appear to be 'getting on with it' as coping, when potentially they could be 'hiding in isolation' requiring adults to take the initiative and identify need (Long et al., 2022).

4.4.3 Summary of social expectations of how CWIPs present in school/the community.

While participants made sense of CWIPs in a way which was representative of the literature, I have presented that the idea CWIPs are more likely to engage in anti-social behaviour or future offending is fundamentally flawed. Research outcomes are primarily based on CYP who present in systems such as the CJS, Health and Education. When considering the prevalence of CWIPs from the projected statistics, it appears there is a dearth of research regarding CWIPs who are not presenting as a problem or risk to society. The above constructs may potentially have implications for CWIPs in school and how they are supported, e.g. with a focus on risk rather than a holistic approach to well-being. This could potentially increase the sense of stigma that is attached to being the child of a parent in prison, leading to underlying emotions such as anger. This may be communicated through behaviour that is perceived to be 'risky' which ultimately perpetuates the contemporary social discourse regarding CWIPs as 'other'.

It also appeared that participants were unable to make sense of CWIPs who are less likely to be visible to them in as much depth as children who may present within the school system due to their perceived level of risk. This appears to be in line with the limited literature regarding CWIPs who show levels of resilience or appear to 'get on with it'. It could potentially be important to consider with school staff what could be learned from their experiences of CWIPs who appear to be 'sensible', 'fine' and 'coping' in school and how this could potentially be extended to those who may not. However, Weidberg's (2017) research highlights this this could be complex, as it would need to be explored in a way that honours CWIP's sense of autonomy and control and is sensitive to normalising the experience of P.I.

4.5 Over-arching theme: The perceived impact of parents in prison on CYP's lives

This over-arching theme was constructed as participants appeared to make sense of CWIPs through the way that CWIPs may experience P.I. They drew upon their previous experiences working with CWIPs to make sense of what I interpreted to be their potential 'need'. This overarching theme was constructed through the construction of three key themes which related to emotion, the home environment and relationships. These themes potentially relate to some of the constructs within the earlier theme *'gender: imprisoned parent, primary caregiver and parenting roles'* and also the subsequent theme *'what should CYP know? Issues of age-appropriateness, vulnerability and protection'*.

4.5.1 Theme: the emotional impact of having a parent in prison

Participants drew upon what I interpreted to be the emotional impact of having a parent in prison. I construed that Anthony and Carmen were suggesting that CWIPs are likely to have more emotional needs at certain points of the journey, from arrest to post-release:

> *"…<u>one of the parents had actually got let out of prison</u>, but had a restraining order. And his behaviour had spiked and they were a bit all over the place."*
>
> *(*Carmen)

> *"Normally what I found is kids… will kind of be more emotional during that time <u>so when the parent is on trial or things are happening or they're in on remand or something we offer a lot of support and we kind of get an emotional side</u>."*
>
> (Anthony)

The literature suggests that CWIPs may experience varying emotions at different times of their parent's journey (Weidberg, 2017). The Centre for Social Justice (2022) and Long et al. (2019) highlighted the emotional impact following the arrest of a parent and in the first few days after sentence. Morgan et al. (2014) cautions that the emotional impact of P.I. may continue beyond release, much like Carmen's experience.

CWIPs were also made sense of in relation to anger and frustration. It could be construed that these are the emotions they are most likely to exhibit towards their experience as a CWIP and that these emotions may manifest in a behavioural way:

> *"…we see a lot of… sort of… anger and frustration"*
>
> (Isla)

> *"…Erm… he would. He'd show us that something wasn't right through his behaviour. And because he couldn't verbalise his feelings about the situation… so he would… his behaviour… he'd act out, he'd sort of get in trouble on purpose to then be taken out to then for someone to be like, you know, are you okay, what's going on? And then he'd start to speak about what was going on, but he couldn't sort of think of any other emotion besides anger towards the situation".*
>
> (Carmen)

Isla constructed that some CWIPs may withdraw themselves and not want to discuss how they are feeling. It was also suggested that the emotional impact of a parent's absence has a significant impact on their learning.

"I would say that we see a lot of children that they kind of... become very closed off, they kind of... they don't want to engage with you when you're trying to support. There's a lot refusal to engage with learning, they're just not ready the mind's not there. It's not present".

(Isla)

"I was going to say that there might be gaps in learning as a result of trauma [linked to parental imprisonment]."

(Emily)

I interpreted Isla's experience to suggest that she may view some CWIPs as disengaged from academic life and the adults around them due to P.I., even when adults believe themselves to be available, supportive or safe. I constructed this as the emotional impact of having a parent in prison reduces CWIPs readiness to learn, which could be understood through a humanistic lens (Maslow, 1969). While the proposed construct that P.I. impacts negatively on CWIPs learning is representative of the literature (Murray & Farrington, 2008; Poehlmann, 2005), others suggest that this is not the case for all CWIPs. Research conducted with CWIPs in the UK suggests that academic performance was not impacted negatively during periods of P.I. (Jones et al., 2013).

Isla also appeared to construct a supportive adult relationship as a potential buffer or as means to support learning within the classroom. However, research directly with CWIPs by Brookes and Frankham (2021) found that CYP were reluctant to trust teachers with information, due to the automatic links that are made to their parent in prison. CYP described being viewed only within the context of the relationship to their

parent, further perpetuating the socio-cultural narrative of 'other'. From their perspective, they experience emotions in relation to a range of things, not just P.I.. I wondered whether Isla's construction of the *'mind not being present'* and Emily's construction of P.I. as a *'trauma',* positions CYP's emotional response to learning immediately within the context of the relationship with their parent. Isla's perception of being supportive within the classroom could also be constructed differently to that of the CYP, potentially resulting in them feeling different to their peers and further impacting on learning. Alternatively, some CWIPs may feel a sense of relief and welcome their parent's absence, depending on the nature of their offending, and not all will require emotional support or experience feelings of anger and frustration as a consequence of their parent's circumstance. (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999; Jones & Wainaina-Woźna, 2013).

It was constructed that some CWIPs are willing to discuss the impact P.I. has had on them individually, such as discussing their feelings about it. However, I interpreted that CWIPs may feel a sense of duty towards their parent, e.g. protecting them, at the potential expense of their own needs (Centre for Criminal Justice, 2022). Participants appeared to make sense of this in relation to stigma and the potential implications regarding selfhood and identity, which were described earlier in this chapter.

> *"…I don't want to talk about it if my… say it's mum… like <u>my Mum's a good person…</u>"*
>
> (Isla)

"...he's not sort of saying what it is he went to prison for but he sort of can say... you know, sort of the aftermath it's had on him and with Dad not being present and how he feels about it. Erm... <u>but you like can't say what it was, I mean, it's like he can't admit to himself what his dad went to prison for</u>..."

(Carmen)

Another interpretation could be construed as CWIPs reconciling their feelings regarding being a child of an imprisoned parent. CWIPs may find it difficult to accept that a parent can behave in ways that are both socially and not socially acceptable (i.e. good and bad), consistent with the psychodynamic theory of splitting. They potentially choose to see them within the primary role of 'parent' (Weidberg, 2017) rather than through the identity of someone who offends. By doing so, it is protective and perhaps makes the experience less threatening to their selfhood (Klein, 1946).

Carmen construed that CWIPs may find it more difficult to talk about a parent in prison when the crime has directly impact on them or members of their family, such as domestic violence.

"I find when it's domestic violence against Mum, that's when they can't say. So when it's been domestic violence against the mum and they were present. That's when they find it hard to say why Dad's in prison".

(Carmen)

Research suggests that children are unlikely to actively talk about their experience of domestic violence and may actively distract themselves, due to adult relationships feeling unsafe (Thornton, 2014). Emily also constructed that CWIPs may feel an

internal conflict, particularly the contradictory feelings they may have in relation to the parent who is imprisoned, for an offence with direct impact.

> *"I was gonna [sic] say we've got a young person whose dad is in prison for a domestic violence towards mum and she's quite conflicted. Sometimes she says I really miss him. I want, hope that it gets out of prison and the time she sort of says I'm really scared for mum. I hope he stays there."*
>
> (Emily)

This is in line with the COPING project (Jones et al., 2013), which suggests CWIPs may have conflicting emotions and may need additional reassurance that it is still okay to love their parent. In Emily's case, the YP missed her parent in prison and still acknowledged his role as father but recognised that the father she loves potentially puts her mother at risk. This could be made sense of through the theory of Ambiguous Loss (Boss, 1977), particularly the idea that a loss of a parent can lead to a unclear boundary as to who is 'in or out' of the family (Boss, 2016) and unclear family dynamics can generate ambivalent feelings, such as anger and a sense of loss (Soto, 2013).

Member reflection: Anthony questioned how CYP may be impacted by imprisonment if it is someone they consider to be a primary caregiver (who is not their parent) and whether there is any research regarding this. He highlighted that within the community he works, the concept of a 'nuclear' family is not a commonality. He described how CYP are often living with their extended family or people known to the family. I found this an interesting point as this research is specifically referencing biological parents. I wondered whether the narratives/discourse relating to disenfranchised grief had made him consider the value we

place on 'societally accepted' relationships and consider the impact of imprisonment on CYP's relationships more widely. However, we agreed that CYP who experience the imprisonment of a primary caregiver would potentially experience similar emotions to that of a biological parent.

4.5.2 Theme: the environmental impact of having a parent in prison

Participants constructed that CWIPs may experience environmental threats and they viewed this through the lens of trauma. Carmen constructed that the home could potentially be a traumatic place for CYP and their families, while Emily drew upon links to pre-existing disadvantage within communities and how this may add to the complexities CWIPs and their families may face:

> *"I think a lot of them haven't faced sort of the trauma that they've been through being in the house whilst… whilst that [domestic violence] was happening".*
>
> (Carmen)

> *"We know that in prison there is a disproportionate number of people who've had adverse experiences and been victims of violence or abuse or substance misuse […] so the chances of the child as having experienced trauma before the prison part, it's quite high. So there's likely problems within their life"*.
>
> (Emily)

Both constructions fit within the framework of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), with P.I. identified as one of the five chronic stressors (Paterson, 2017).

Trauma-informed practice within schools is often situated within the context of ACEs, which potentially suggests why school staff drew upon this.

Literature highlights the complex relationship between P.I. and the potential ACEs that precede or interact with this (Collingwood et al., 2018), it is suggested that it is likely to have a detrimental impact in relation to the well-being of CWIPs and their parents (Larkin et al., 2014) and potentially cause significant trauma (Jones et al., 2013). However, viewing all CWIPs and their families through this lens, potentially leads to a deterministic view of CWIPs. Alternatively, there has been research to suggest that individual factors can mitigate the potential impact of having a parent in prison, such as the strength of the relationship between the caregiver and CYP, the relationship between the caregiver and imprisoned parent, the role of siblings and wider family resource. These relationships support to maintain a CYP's sense of wellbeing and resilience (Jones et al., 2013). It is important to highlight that assumptions regarding ACEs and trauma may not always apply to all families who have experienced P.I.

4.5.3 Theme: a parent in prison prompts a change in role and relationships

Participants referred to a potential change in role as a result of P.I., from that of child or sibling, to a paternal or maternal figure:

> *"She's classified as a young carer for Mum…"*
>
> (Emily)

> *"I found that a lot of time when it has been Domestic Abuse against mum, they then step in to be the man of the house sort of thing. And I feel like they sort of*

then go from being a child to being grown up in the head and they have to be mature and you have to look after Mum…"

(Carmen)

Within the context of Ambiguous Loss Theory (Boss, 1977), when there is not an agreed understanding regarding a parent's family status, there can be a shift in roles and responsibilities. This construction aligns with the literature, that following P.I., CWIPs are likely to have increased concerns regarding their parent(s) well-being and take on additional responsibilities or caring roles (Morgan et al., 2014; Weidberg, 2017),:

"…the young person is in a position where she's having to parent the younger siblings and get them showered and get them dressed and support Mum and do the cooking and cleaning. It's had quite a significant impact."

(Emily)

"She says she's not really a child. She never had a childhood. She's just looks after everybody all the time. So she's really, really sensible."

(Emily)

I constructed from the above that there is a potential assumption that CWIPs have the agency and capacity to manage and accept such changes to their role, which appears to be paradoxical to previous constructions within this chapter, where they have been positioned as vulnerable. The literature suggests that young people may feel like they *have* to accept a change in role and although most are happy to support their families, they may experience a sense of grief at losing their childhood (Long et al., 2019).

Emily also reflected that she had not considered the extent this may impact specifically on CWIPs relationships.

Member reflection: Carmen extended her thoughts on the change in role for some CYP and how this may sometimes complicate things across contexts. She explained how at home, they're positioned as 'caregiver' and at school 'immature' (as a result of their behaviour). This made me reflect on whether the change in role for some CYP as 'carer' (a role commonly adopted by adults) could potentially make it difficult to adapt to the role of 'CYP' while in school. I wonder whether this links back to the concept of 'Boundary Ambiguity' within the theory of Ambiguous Loss and how this change potentially creates a lack of clarity for the CYP. Schools potentially may need to sensitively consider how to manage the transition from home to school, particularly with CWIPs who may have additional responsibilities in the home.

4.5.4 Summary of the perceived impact of parents in prison on CYP's lives.

Participants constructed that CWIPs are impacted negatively by P.I., emotionally, environmentally and through a change in family structure/role which is reflected within the wider literature. However, I would caution that the construction by school staff was centred mainly around their experience with CWIPs who have experienced domestic violence. I would argue that this limited their ability to have a broader view which captured the diversity of experience in relation to CWIPs. As discussed later in the following theme and subsequent research question, the complexities of disclosure and non-disclosure could be hindering their sense-making for offences that are not considered a safeguarding issue. Interestingly, the impact of ACEs was also discussed, which has the potential for school staff to view CWIPs through a deterministic or fixed

lens. It is therefore important that schools do not make assumptions about the impact of P.I. on CYP's, positioning P.I. as causal and potentially pathologising normal emotional responses to daily life. Therefore, a holistic view in relation to well-being needs to be considered.

4.6 Over-arching theme: the sharing of information and unequal power relations

Through analysis of the transcript, I constructed the above over-arching theme due to a heavy focus by the participants regarding the construct of information-sharing. Participants appeared to construct families as potentially holding power over what is and is not shared with school but also CWIPs themselves. Participants appeared to construct the information-sharing process as complex, with a need to strike a balance between self-preservation of the family but also the well-being of the CYP discussed within the two themes below. I believe that this over-arching theme also shares links with theme 'the emotional impact of having a parent in prison' discussed earlier in this chapter.

4.6.1 Theme: control of information and holding it within the family due to potential shame, stigmatisation and feeling 'othered'

One participant made sense of families experiencing P.I. as potentially wanting to hold information to themselves and maintaining a sense of secrecy. They drew upon previous experience and described how P.I. was not always disclosed until an informal relationship with school staff had been built. They constructed that this may be through fear of what may happen with the information that they provide and how others in society may perceive or treat them as a result. I interpreted this to contribute to the idea that families are likely to be concerned about potential stigmatisation and the negative notion of a shared characteristic with the parent in prison, discussed earlier in this chapter:

> *"…you know… we have open conversations with parents and a number of parents have said well yeah his Dad was arrested last week or two weeks ago and you don't always have that information if it's not shared… you know… for instance if it's not gone through social care because children aren't present or it's non-resident parents. You don't always have that information readily available …and then there's other parents that, you know, may be quite reluctant to share that information [about P.I.] <u>because they're worried about how, you know, what you might do with that information or how you might perceive them or… I don't know whether if it's sometimes I don't know whether they will treat my child differently</u>.*"
>
> (Isla)

Phillips and Gates (2011) suggest that families may often conceal their difference due to their affiliation with a stigmatised group (i.e. those who offend) to avoid being stigmatised themselves. They may be hypervigilant to those who show cues they may know of their difference and may face difficult decisions regarding disclosures, particularly trusting others to keep their secret which can ultimately result in social exclusion. If having a parent in prison is likely to draw a negative response from others, then it is less likely to be disclosed (Hagen & Myers, 2003). The potential ramifications regarding disclosure (e.g. community reactions) can also differ in relation to the offence committed. Therefore, families may be more likely to disclose what could be considered a 'respectable offence' compared with those that may not be as socially accepted (i.e. sexual offences) (Hextall, 2022). Previously across the literature, families who experience imprisonment were considered passive recipients of punishment which

I interpreted Isla's construct to reflect. Isla's experience working with a family experiencing P.I., highlighted the complexities that families may face in relation to both disclosure and non-disclosure (Long et al., 2019).

An alternative perspective links to the notion of symbiotic harms, discussed in the literature review (Condry & Minson, 2021). Particularly the idea that families are active agents in how P.I. is experienced. To mitigate the potential implications of disclosing a relationship with a parent in prison, this is achieved through the decisions that they make, situational awareness and what, when and who they share information with. It appears that in Isla's reflection, the disclosure happened on family's terms, providing them with a higher level of agency and the opportunity to negotiate exactly what they needed/wanted to share. Therefore, they could also be constructed in a position of power.

4.6.2 Theme: what should CYP know? Issues of age-appropriateness, vulnerability and protection

Participants referred to experiences of disclosure, non-disclosure and the amount of information that is shared with CWIPs, from both families and systems:

> *"… he didn't know dad was in prison, but he knew something wasn't right because I think Grandma used to let him call and…I think they used to just say he was away. But as he got older he sort of figured out what was going on".*
>
> *(Carmen)*

"I know parent in prison as well that won't allow their daughter to come and see him but will speak to her on the phone because he doesn't want her to see him in there. <u>So then that's another… a lot of parents will say that I don't want them to see me in here, I don't want them to see… to visit a prison</u>".

(Anthony)

"I remember one of the girls that said 'they've transferred my dad but I don't understand why they transferred him so far away because now it means I can't see him now'".

(Anthony)

I constructed that the school staff viewed the withholding of information from CWIPs families and the systems around them as protective, positioning CWIPs as vulnerable or at risk of harm due to disclosure. As a result, sometimes CYP are not explicitly provided with information about the imprisonment of a parent, or decisions are made for them in relation to contact. This is reflected within the literature regarding disclosures to CYP, which positions non-disclosure in the 'best interests' of the child. Specifically to not cause additional worry in relation to the imprisoned parent, avoid social stigma from others or even protect the imprisoned parent from judgment from their child (Lockwood & Raikes, 2016). However, this reinforces the unequal power relations between adult and child (Hagen & Myers, 2003). Ultimately denying CYP Article 17 of the United Nation Rights of the Child [UNCRC] and the Right to Access Information (United Nation Human Rights, 2015).

Carmen reflected on the impact non-disclosure had on a CWIP she worked with, constructing their feelings around this as conflicted:

"So no one told him that Dad had gone to prison and I think he sort of struggles with that because he knows his family loves him. But at the same time he was sort of like, why was I kept in the dark?"

(Carmen)

This is reflective of the literature, which suggests that non-disclosure can maintain a sense of ambiguity around the loss of a parent for a CYP, which can inadvertently increase feelings of worry. This can also result in CWIPs questioning the strength of relationships within their family and a consequent lack of trust (Lockwood & Raikes, 2016). There is also research to suggest that CWIPs feel a lack of control within their lives and are often reliant on the behaviour of others to make decisions for them, increasing feelings of injustice and frustration (Weidberg, 2017), which is potentially what the YP was conveying to Carmen. Therefore, questions could be raised as to whether non-disclosure is more harmful than protective. However, there is also evidence to suggest that parents may lack the knowledge themselves about the criminal justice system or how to live without the parent in prison, they may also not have access to information themselves from the system (Brookes & Frankham, 2021). This potentially makes it difficult for them to comfort or provide CYP with the information they need, potentially creating a sense of forced non-disclosure.

I also interpreted that school staff and parents potentially make sense of whether CWIPs are developmentally 'ready' to access information regarding their parent in prison. Many third sector organisations advocate for honest and developmentally appropriate conversations with CYP as early as possible (Children Heard and Seen

[CHaS], 2022; Prison Advice and Care Trust [PACT], 2017). However, it could be argued that the term 'developmentally appropriate' is subjective in nature and difficult to assess. It could also potentially be used by parents and professionals as a means of avoiding difficult conversations regarding the absence of a parent due to imprisonment (Lockwood & Raikes, 2016).

4.6.3 Summary of the sharing of information and unequal power relations.

It appears that participants constructed the disclosure, non-disclosure and what information is shared from and between families regarding P.I. is a complex experience. From this, families could be positioned by school staff as having a greater sense of agency and power over their experience or as reticent to provide information. This is potentially through fear of being stigmatised and judged for the relationship they hold with the parent in prison or as a means of having greater control over how others view them and mitigating the impact of disclosure. This also impacts on the information CWIPs may be privy to in relation to their parent in prison, with CWIPs positioned by families and systems as vulnerable and in need of protection. Alternatively, parents may not have access to information themselves.

Consequently, CWIP's contact with their parent may be limited, they may have little understanding regarding their parent's absence and begin to make sense of their experience with limited information. This has the potential to contribute to a CYP's sense of ambiguous loss, which can have significant consequences for their well-being. It is important for school staff to consider ways in which they could support families to maintain a sense of agency regarding disclosure but also consider CYP's capacity to access information concerning their parent in prison, in a way that maintains their sense

of well-being. The way we talk about, respond to or approach conversations regarding P.I. can distribute power and agency to families and CWIPs. It may therefore be useful to consider how Isla created a sense of safety with the families she worked with, to enable this to happen.

4.7 Theme: A CWIP is not a universal experience

Three of the participants made sense of the term CWIP in relation to their wide-ranging experiences. I constructed that, in line with the themes above, participants made sense of the term 'CWIP' as an umbrella term, which encapsulates a range of families and diversity of experience. It is a term that could potentially mean different things for different individuals:

> *"I think it's looking for some context because a child of an imprisoned parent. It could be a number of... it could be such a wide range of things. Is it a crime that directly impacts the child or does it indirectly impact them? And yeah, I think it's very vague otherwise"*
>
> (Isla)

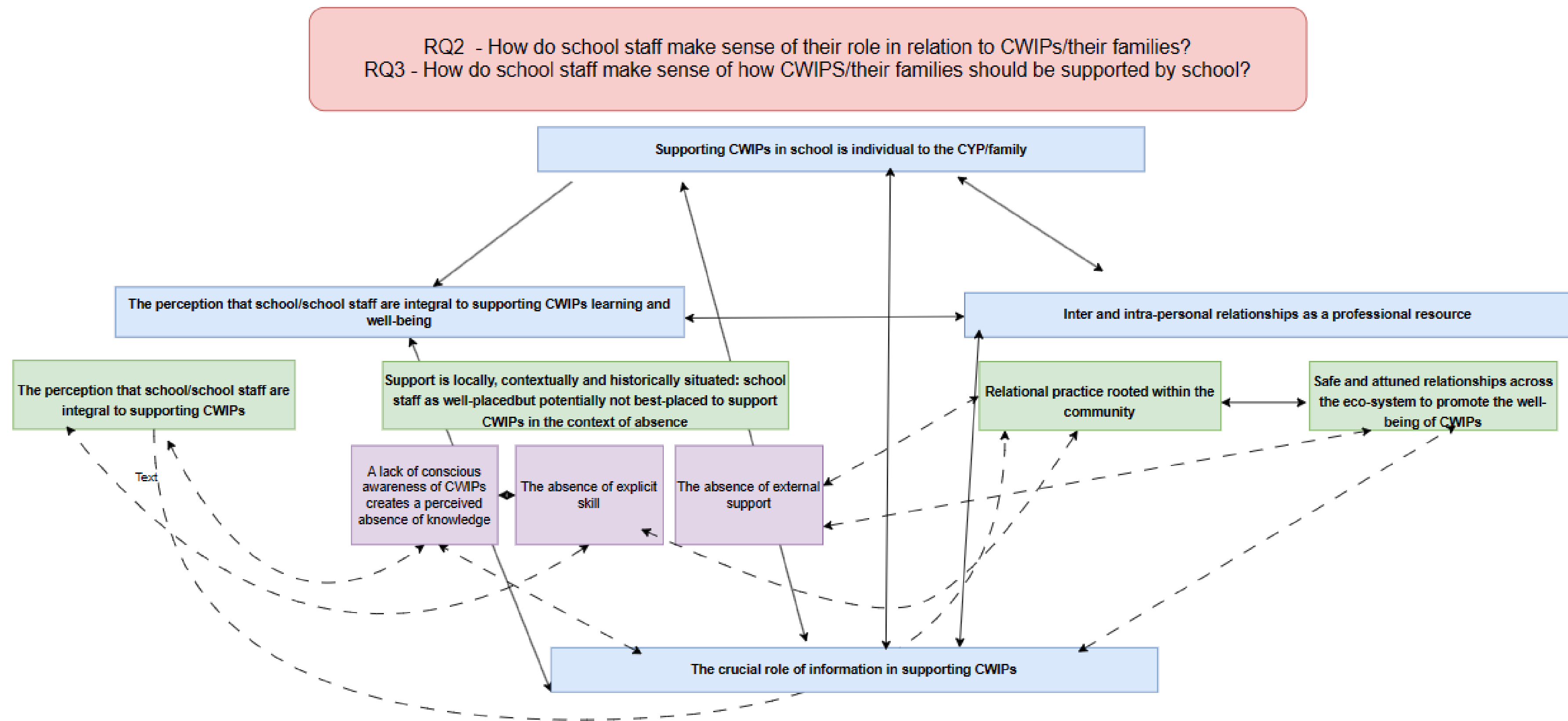
> *"...we've had parents in prison from everything from drugs to knife crime to GBH to sexual assault."*
>
> (Anthony)

> *"It's just the aftermath can look so many different ways".*
>
> (Carmen)

This is a challenge to the current discourse regarding CWIPs, as it could be suggested that there is one story told about a CWIP within the literature, some of which have been replicated within the focus group such as increased risk and potential emotional support needs (Raikes, 2013)(Shaw et al., 2021; Weidberg, 2017). Through engaging with each other as part of the focus group, participants referred to the diversity of experience that CWIPs may have through drawing upon their own experiences of working with CWIPs and their families, highlighting CWIPs who may be an exception to the above (Brookes & Frankham, 2021). More recently, research has suggested that both the nature of the offence and the gender of the parent in prison has implications for CYP's experiences, needs and the support they may require (Beresford et al., 2020; Hextall, 2022). Despite the participants making sense of CWIPs in relation to their diverse experiences, they expressed that very little is known about how to respond to the diversity of need and the diverse nature of the parent's offence, which may be why their constructions appeared limited. This will be explored through the following research questions and thematic map.

4.8. Thematic Map: RQ2 & 3

A thematic map which depicts four over-arching themes (blue), four themes (green), three subthemes (purple) and how they are interlinked, which was constructed via the Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) process. This sought to address the research questions below:



4.9 Over-arching theme: The perception of school/school staff as integral to supporting CWIPs learning and well-being

This over-arching theme was constructed through the analysis process and comprises of two themes and three sub-themes. Participants appeared to construct themselves and school as an important resource for CWIPs, which appeared to be in alignment with the wider the literature. I believe that this also has strong links to the over-arching theme *'inter and intra-personal relationships as a professional resource'*, a subsequent theme in this chapter, despite participants not consciously linking the two. There also appeared to be some conflict with the above construct as participants located themselves within a specific cultural and historic context which potentially makes it make sense of their role when supporting CWIPs. This is discussed within the following themes and sub-themes.

4.9.1 Theme: The perception that school/school staff are integral to supporting CWIPs

Participants made sense of their role through considering the function and potential importance of school within CWIPs lives. Carmen constructed that CYP spend a significant amount of time in school:

> *"I think if you look sort of a child's day it's school and home, I mean, so we're quite an important part of their [CWIPs] lives…"*
>
> (Carmen)

I interpreted this to suggest that it could be expected that school would be a place of significance in the lives of CWIPs. This is reflected within the literature as mass education is accessed by all CYP in England and therefore CWIPs are more likely to be supported in and by school (Robertson, 2012). Carmen's construction suggests that through her role as a

member of school staff, she has inherently adopted the responsibility of supporting CYP whatever the capacity.

Although not directly in relation to the experience of a parent in prison, Emily considered that school could serve as a protective psychological function for CWIPs. Particularly schoolwork:

> *"We had a student a few months ago… who… it wasn't their parent in prison, but it was their older brother and she was going to visit him in prison and she would just say on the way that she would study all the way there… just do her revision… just so she didn't have to think about it, it was the only way she could kind of cope. She just immersed herself in revision all the way back and didn't just try to sort of compartmentalise."*
>
> (Emily)

I constructed this to suggest that school could be a form of escape from familial imprisonment. This is representative of the literature, which suggests that school can be a place of hope, an escape from external circumstances and a place where an alternative identity can be created (Long et al., 2019).

Carmen suggested that school staff can play a pivotal role in supporting the well-being of CWIPs by being a pillar of certainty in a time of uncertainty:

> *"Just giving them the structure that when they come to school they know they're gonna [sic] see me on the morning and they know they've got me for this lesson*

for the day, they can come and see me at break time if they need to and they know where I am if there's… do you know what I mean."

(Carmen)

"I think a lot of what you said there kind of comes under a parenting sort of approach. You know that kind of nurturing. Do you know what I mean? that kind of an attachment person."

(Emily)

By providing a sense of structure and routine, particularly in relation to trusted adults, I construed that CWIPs felt a sense of safety, security and potential autonomy over when they may need to seek support from adults in school. This could be understood through the lens of Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969), as constructed by Emily. Attachment Theory suggests that being separated from a primary caregiver can increase the likelihood of emotional needs. Therefore, Carmen and Emily have constructed that school staff can potentially mitigate this within the school context. Interestingly, Carmen suggested that there is also a potential relational vs. authoritarian dichotomy and constructed a potential role in providing the discipline which may be missing at home. I interpreted this to link back to her previous construction that absent fathers result in a loss of discipline.

"So as much as you know, as much as you're there for them and you'll listen and everything. I think also giving them, you know, the discipline and, you know, where things might be missing at home."

(Carmen)

It could also be suggested that staff made sense of their role in relation to working with CWIPs through the humanistic paradigm of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1954), constructing that CWIPs may need an additional focus in relation to their basic needs.

> *"I think it's that sometimes those kids kind of need you to straighten out the tie and wipe down their coat for them and ask if they've had some breakfast*"
>
> (Emily)

Throughout the transcript, participants made references to the act of 'noticing'. For example, noticing when something may not be right or when behaviour appears to be different:

> *"I think there's been a number of times when I recognize that something's different with a child…"*
>
> (Isla)

> "*And because he couldn't verbalize his feelings about the situation… so he would… his behaviour… he'd act out, he'd sort of get in trouble on purpose to then be taken out to then for someone to be like, you know, are you okay, what's going on? And then he'd start to speak about what was going on."*
>
> (Carmen)

I interpreted Carmen's experience to be reflective of Isla's, the idea that school staff are noticing of when things are different for CYP. This lends itself to the function of school and the idea that CYP spend a significant amount of their time in school discussed earlier in this

theme. Therefore, school staff are potentially like to ask questions that others may not. An alternative construction may be that school staff are curious about CWIPs behaviours and potentially enable them to verbalise the internal.

In relation to other themes, not much was constructed about how school staff viewed their role explicitly in relation to CWIPs. Potentially school staff did not understand the remit of their role for them to feel able to consider their unique contribution. As described in the subsequent themes, it may be that the limited constructions and experiences they had with CWIPs limited their sense-making in relation to their unique role. This is reflective of research by Morgan et al. (2013) who concluded that school staff knew the importance of their role but did not know enough about the diverse experience of CWIPs to know how to support them in school, in a meaningful way.

4.9.2 Summary of the perception of school/school staff as integral to supporting CWIPs learning and well-being.

School staff appear to construct themselves as integral to supporting the well-being and learning of CWIPs. They positioned themselves as safe and secure attachments, meeting CWIPs basic needs and noticing when things may not be okay. I wonder whether the role school staff constructed in this research was particularly unique to CWIPs or whether this is something that they offer all CYP. As researcher, I found that the distinct role of school staff in the lives of CWIPs was not discussed as much as other constructions during the focus group, which suggests that school staff may be unable to make sense of what this may be. This is potentially due to the limited constructions staff hold of CWIPs and their families which limits their sense-making and how school staff view their role in supporting CWIPs.

4.10.1 Theme: Support is locally, contextually and historically situated: school staff as well-placed but potentially not best-placed to support CWIPs in the perceived context of absence

4.10.2 A lack of conscious awareness of CWIPs creates a perceived absence of knowledge

School staff constructed that they potentially did not have sufficient knowledge to support CWIPs in school. Emily described how she would often look for ACEs when working with CYP in a pastoral capacity but did not consciously consider P.I.:

> *"I think when I start working with a student if the student's referred to me, the first thing I would do is go on CPOMS and kind of look at the history and I always have an expectation that you're looking for adverse childhood experiences or any kind of trauma [...] but I wouldn't necessarily go 'imprisoned parents', you know, that wouldn't be my first place I'd go in my head".*
>
> (Emily)

Within the literature P.I. is considered one of the five chronic stressors linked to ACEs (Paterson, 2017) yet I constructed Emily to suggest that, in practice, they are potentially not as visible as other ACEs, such as substance misuse, neglect, emotional and physical abuse and domestic violence.

> *"I wouldn't say it's anything that is massively even offered in terms of kind of your normal safeguarding level one, two, three courses and I've done ones on supporting parents with substance abuse. I've done ones on online safety, you know, there's many different ones you can do, I've yet to really see one on that*

> *aspect despite the fact that I think that's something that's becoming more and more prevalent."*
>
> (Anthony)

This was corroborated by Anthony's construction, which suggested that P.I. was not considered in training that is provided by safeguarding agencies. I interpreted Anthony to be curious as to why training regarding P.I. was absent within the realms of safeguarding, despite it being one of the main routes to identification for CWIPs and the increase in the adult convictions within the UK.

> *"It's not something, you get lots of training offered through the EP and various other services speech and language and social emotional whatever but there's never anything specifically about imprisoned parents".*
>
> (Emily)

> *"…I think it's a very broad thing but I think, you know how we sort of have, you know how people come and talk about safeguarding training sort of what to say to kids and how to treat them and how to respond… [is what is needed]"*
>
> (Carmen)

I constructed that Emily and Carmen positioned the lack of conscious awareness of CWIPs and the subsequent absence of training as a barrier to supporting them in school. The literature surrounding how schools should support CWIPs, advocates for explicit training regarding the needs of CWIPs, particularly in the realms of increasing awareness and reducing stigma (Shaw et al., 2021a). CWIPs also advocated for school staff to be trained in

understanding the needs of CWIPs and believed that it should be part of the teacher-training curriculum, whereas parents extended this training to whole-community level (Long et al., 2019). I wondered whether the fact that no agency takes responsibility for identifying CWIPs across education, the CJS and health results in no agency having a statutory responsibility for training and increasing awareness. Currently, the only training available in England is via third sector organisations such as 'Hidden Sentence Training' via the North East Prison After Care Society [NEPACS] and Children Heard and Seen [CHaS]. However, the training provided does not have a specific focus on school.

School staff also expressed a lack of knowledge in relation to the systems surrounding CWIPs, particularly social care and the CJS. Emily specifically highlighted the language within systems as a barrier to understanding her role and where she fits in the process of supporting the CYP/family:

> *"I went to a TAF [Team around the Family] the other day and I was very bamboozled by all of the kind of legal processes and the sections and the plea hearings, all of the sort of legal stuff and I thought this isn't stuff that I normally deal with day-to-day. So there's a lot to get my head around there in terms of understanding who's involved at what point?"*
>
> (Emily)

<u>4.10.3 The absence of explicit skill and support</u>

Linking with the above theme, there appears to be a construction that school staff lack the skills to work with CWIPs. This potentially links to the previous subtheme and a lack of conscious knowledge/understanding regarding CWIPs:

> *"And I think it's really hard to deal with so many different scenarios [regarding P.I.] when I feel like I'm not equipped and as a carry on doing my job, I sort of realize how many young people have had imprisoned parents or currently do have and… […] sometimes you feel like you're on your own in terms of you don't know […] what to do at a certain point to support kids…"*
>
> (Carmen)

In the absence of explicit skill, I constructed that participants may utilise their previous experiences working with CWIPs. From this, they drew upon resources they had previously used, even if they appear unrelated. These resources appeared to be linked with domestic violence, which was something that school staff constructed in relation to P.I. I interpreted from the above that there may be certain experiences of imprisonment that school staff may feel more confident with such as domestic violence, an offence which is more likely to be linked to safeguarding processes and therefore experienced more by school staff:

> *"Sometimes it's kind of pulling on other resources. So one thing that I find really useful is the [redacted] domestic abuse partnership, so they do a lot of work with… particularly around domestic violence. I think if it was something else and potentially there's that element of you go out and kind of look for the information but yeah, I would definitely go to them with domestic violence but it's something that I definitely feel like there needs to be more out there on."*
>
> (Isla)

Anthony, Carmen and Emily highlighted that the role of school staff has changed significantly within the current socio-cultural context. I constructed that there is a sense that they are having to work beyond the remit of their pastoral role and that this is now considered an expectation within the school system:

> *"I think from my point view when you said what's the role of practitioners in school, <u>I think it's kind of the same as everything int' [sic] it now. It's just we're meant to be everything. So, that support [for CWIPs], it's not something that I would say that we are trained on specifically</u>."*
>
> (Anthony)

This change in role is evidenced within the literature, which suggests that schools are offering a much significant level of pastoral support to children and families and an increase in safeguarding responsibilities, compared to pre-pandemic levels (Education Support, 2023). I constructed Anthony's response to suggest that this was something he felt resigned to and did not necessarily appear to challenge.

> *"<u>I feel… I think… edu… like schools have taken up a lot of the sort of… what's the word? You know, sort of, taking up roles that we aren't necessarily meant to</u> […] and I think a lot of the times I think a lot of stuff would probably go amiss if schools didn't sort of pick it up and recognise what were [sic] going on which is why I just think as educators it's really important [to support CWIPs]."*
>
> (Carmen)

> *"…<u>it tends to fall to school to pick up the whole needs of the child</u>".*

(Emily)

I interpreted Carmen's construction as highlighting the internal conflict that school staff may be currently facing, particularly the challenge to their professional responsibilities and values. Research conducted by Education Support (2023) found that school staff are often committed to the CYP they work with, and it is likely these values support their sense of purpose. However, this results in the blurring of boundaries in the climate of austerity. I constructed that Carmen felt that no other professional is likely to be able to support CWIPs, which could feel like a significant moral responsibility and incongruent with her values, therefore she does the best that she can. Emily appeared to resonate with Carmen's experience, and I interpreted her statement to question what the wider role of school is and whether schools should be at the frontline of children's services, especially without adequate training, resources and funding.

4.10.4 The absence of external support

One participant made sense of their role and the support they could offer through discussing the absence of external support in relation to CWIPs. They drew upon the current issues of austerity that schools are facing in the current socio-political climate and how this attributed to potential blurring of boundaries regarding the role of school staff:

> *"There's so much [sic] cutbacks in everything whether that be social care whether that be with, you know, youth offending workers, youth workers and youth clubs… everything. There's so much that's been cut back that now school staff are picking up a lot more than that kind of external intervention or external support… they're few and far between."*

(Anthony)

"So we're doing a lot of it in-house we're using our well-being team our SEMH workers all the resources… […] …we've got in school, but kind of there isn't [sic] that much resources outside of school unless It goes through social workers or there's some sort of significant safeguarding concerns."

(Anthony)

This is representative of the current views of teaching staff, who reported that they receive very little support from outside agencies such as social workers, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and health (Education Support, 2023).

"…there's no sort of service out there that offers it any sort of intervention or support specifically for children who have got imprisoned parents, or not ones that I'm aware of within the community that I work in personally."

(Anthony)

Anthony constructed that CWIPs were lacking support, particularly at community level. Morgan et al. (2014) found that schools could not identify services which support CWIPs specifically. A decade later, this is still the case with only two third-sector organisations that directly support CWIPs in England; Children Heard and Seen and Time Matters UK.

"We kind of have to do everything don't we it's maybe we're […] not the right service, maybe as the people are telling kids what to do in the classroom we shouldn't be dealing with […] all aspects of wellness."

(Emily)

It could be interpreted that Anthony and Emily's constructions suggest that they may believe that CWIPs need support which cannot be provided at school-level or perhaps they do not feel skilled enough to meet their needs in the absence of explicit training.

4.10.5. Summary of support is locally, contextually and historically situated: school staff as well-placed but potentially not best-placed to support CWIPs in the context of perceived absence.

School staff are currently situated within a unique socio-political context, particularly a post-pandemic political context where there has been a significant increase in need. While they previously constructed school staff as well-placed to support CWIPs, they have also constructed the current socio-political context as a barrier to supporting in a meaningful and informed way. In line with the current literature, school staff do not feel that they have the explicit knowledge, skill, or support to be able to meet the needs of CWIPs and question whether they are potentially out of the remit of their role. This has potential implications for the support that is offered to CWIPs in schools and the emphasis/importance they place upon this. **See Reflexive Diary Entry (appendix XVI).**

4.11 Theme: The crucial role of information in supporting CWIPs

As highlighted in RQ 1, the nature of non-disclosure and disclosure is complex and has potential implications for school staff constructing the support that CWIPs need. School staff

constructed the role of information of key importance when providing meaningful support to CWIPs in school:

> *"I think there's been a number of times when I recognise that something's different with a child and… you know… we have open conversations with parents and a number of parents have said well yeah his Dad was arrested last week or two weeks ago and <u>you don't always have that information if it's not shared… you know… for instance if it's not gone through social care because children aren't present or it's non-resident parents. You don't always have that information readily available</u>."*
>
> (Isla)

Participants highlighted that safeguarding systems/processes are usually the means by which P.I. is disclosed and responded to:

> *"I think when I start working with a student if the student's referred to me, <u>the first thing I would do is go on CPOMS and kind of look at the history</u> and I always have an expectation that you're looking for adverse childhood experiences or any kind of trauma or any triggers anything any kind of alarm bells really looking back through their history."*
>
> (Emily)

> *"…you find out those things quite easily through <u>CPOMS and through Encompass reports</u> on the morning..."*
>
> (Anthony)

"I had one child where I read up on CPOMS before I took him on…"

(Carmen)

I interpreted this to suggest that school staff perceive the main way to obtain information regarding P.I. is through the safeguarding process (Morgan et al., 2014). This has potential implications for the CWIPs, potentially those who are directly impacted by a parent's crime (i.e. Domestic Violence), as they are more likely to be subjected to the experience of forced disclosure. The idea that safeguarding processes are the sole means of disclosure, creates potential implications for school staff, as they may be less likely to experience, work with or build the necessary knowledge/skills to support CWIPs whose parent's offence may not be considered a 'safeguarding' issue. Isla constructed the timing of information sharing as imperative to providing a more informed response, however, due to the complexities of disclosure/non-disclosure, this can be tricky for school staff to navigate:

"And I feel like at that point if you found out two weeks later, although you've been supporting, it sets you back a little bit because you've not had that information and things might have been different you may have handled things differently… erm or you know… or if you've said did you see your Dad at the weekend and they've been quiet and not answered but you don't know that's the reason… err… it can kind of set you back in that relationship."

(Isla)

Participants made sense of the experience mainly through domestic violence offences and information regarding such an offence is likely to be shared because of the safeguarding

process. These CYP are likely to be supported under the Child Protection [CP] or Children in Need [CIN] process. I wondered whether this potentially perpetuates the sense we make of CWIPs as vulnerable, 'higher level of risk' and gendered understandings regarding parents who offend, as discussed earlier in this chapter. This is consistent with the literature and has potential implications from the limited support that school can offer, as the support schools can offer is reliant on self-disclosures from families (Kincaid et al., 2019; Morgan et al., 2014).

Carmen constructed how creating the opportunity for safe spaces where CYP can have shared experiences can sometimes normalise the experience of having a parent in prison and result in disclosures:

> *"...like we run a project at school and to do with educating young people on knife crime and we found when we've brought up topics like that a lot of them then start to open up about their experience <u>and then that's how we found out... erm... quite a few of our kids have had either parents imprisoned in the past or are currently in prison.</u>"*
>
> (Carmen)

However, it could be suggested that this was only able to happen as these CYP had been highlighted 'at risk' and potentially engaging in youth violence. Therefore, the disclosures were ultimately facilitated as a consequence of safeguarding systems.

School staff also identified the importance of them sharing information as part of their role when working with CWIPs, both with professionals and CYP. I interpreted that school staff

may feel more confident sharing information with professionals, potentially due to clear guidance imparted regarding the safeguarding requirement of their role:

> *"I think it's about keeping professional records as well. Making sure that you go running log, so that other people working with them can see because there could be other agencies involved. If you've got child with a parent in prison, there could be Social Care or Child Protection or any maybe YES [Youth Engagement Service] workers."*
>
> (Emily)

Interestingly, the role of school staff when sharing information with CYP felt less clear. I construed this as potentially being considered outside of the boundaries or remit of their role, potentially due to the complexities regarding disclosure and non-disclosure:

> *"<u>Now I was aware for the reason why that was but then I'm not the right person to say that to her</u> […] …is that Mum explaining it? Does Dad really want them to know? and for her it very much… he was in X now he's in Y or whatever now, I can't go see him but why have they transferred him that far and it is kind of just that level of understanding of knowing how things work."*
>
> (Anthony)

I constructed from this that it created some conflict for Anthony, particularly his values of transparency when working with CYP, through fear of harm to both CWIP or family or potentially 'saying the wrong thing'. This relates back to the earlier theme of 'information and unequal power relations'.

4.11.1 Summary of the crucial role of information in supporting CWIPs.

The constructions participants developed are consistent with the literature. However, this has potential implications in relation to the limited support that school can offer. Support is reliant on self-disclosures from families or whether CYP are highlighted within safeguarding systems. Consequently, support often focuses on an element of risk, such as the risk of harm to CYP as a result of disclosing information regarding P.I. or the risk of CYP engage in offending behaviours. Understandably, this impacts on CWIPs who are less visible to school staff due to not presenting in systems, as they are less likely to be understood or their wider needs known (Morgan et al., 2014). As discussed earlier in this chapter, schools may need to consider how they can create a culture which enables families and CWIPs to feel safe enough to disclose which could be achieved by considering some of the constructions and recommendations from the following theme. It also appears that school staff are clear on their role in relation to sharing of information within the realms of safeguarding, however, this becomes trickier when CYP are asking for answers. School staff may require some additional support in how to approach conversations regarding P.I. with CWIPs/families.

Member reflection: Emily expanded on the role of information and how the safeguarding process can also be a barrier when working with CWIPs and meeting their needs. She expressed how staff members may also withhold information on the premise of information being shared on a 'need to know' basis. Emily wondered whether the positioning of imprisonment as a safeguarding issue potentially increases the secrecy and stigma attached to it within schools. I found this interesting as I had never really considered the safeguarding system a barrier to information sharing, however, depending on the staff

member's thoughts, feelings and experiences of imprisonment they have to make a decision as to whether to share or withhold this information. This could potentially have a significant impact on the support a CWIP receives in school.

4.12 Over-arching theme: Inter and intrapersonal relationships as a professional resource

Through analysis of the transcript, I constructed the above over-arching theme. Despite previously constructing school staff as not being 'best-placed' to support CWIPs/families, participants appeared to draw heavily on relationships as being integral to supporting CWIPs and their families which potentially had a significant impact. Interestingly, two participants constructed that their insider experience of living in the communities they work as extremely important when building relationships with CWIPs/families. Participants also drew upon their unique pastoral role, such as having more contact with CYP/families and building relationships across the eco-system, which form the basis for the two themes below.

4.12.1 Theme: Relational practice rooted within the community

In the absence of knowledge, skill and support, I constructed that staff drew upon the only resource that they believed they had when working with CWIPs; themselves. Both Anthony and Carmen reflected on their personal experiences of living in the communities that they work in and experiences of imprisonment of their own friends and family:

> *" I think from my experience personally having worked… cause obviously I come from the area… I work in the area and when I say area I mean the town itself …and it's ironic that some of the parents that have been imprisoned. I actually know them as well, which sometimes helps me […] but the students will say like…*

you know my… it's almost like it can be open about it. And I think part of… erm… a lot of the time as well is just how the students resonate. <u>So for me… a lot of the time the kids… er, parents are similar age, maybe similar interests, similar looking. similar kind of aspects of life and just kind of also drawing on, my own life experiences, which I've had a person in… a lot of my own friends have been to prison. I've had a lot of friends that have, you know, been locked up and done things and imprisoned for long stretches of time and family members as well. So for me personally, I'm able to kind of bridge a gap with my own experiences which whether that's more to do with my role or not. I'm unsure. But a lot of the things that they're talking about just in general day-to-day. I think I'm able to pitch-in with and they can kind of bounce back off me and forward and back and they can kind of see 'oh' that he understands and 'he knows'</u>. […] <u>I think a lot of the time students just know who they can go to who they can speak to and whether they'll understand it or not, and I don't know how that Is measured I don't know how</u>."

(Anthony)

"…because I grew up in the community I work in, a lot of the time I know through being in the community that a parent is in prison or has been <u>and had one student where I read up on it before I took him on and his mum sort of said to him. 'Look, Miss Carmen knows everything so you don't need to sort of say why he's there' or whatever… 'like Miss knows'</u>.

(Carmen)

I interpreted the above constructions to suggest that there is an unspoken understanding, particularly growing up and living in the communities where you work, a sense that such experiences are normalised and authentically understood. Anthony constructed this as something that felt ‘unquantifiable’. I interpreted ‘lived experience’ as one that potentially helps to create a sense of relational safety for both CWIPs and school staff when considering P.I.

> *“And what would I do? Would I want to be open with my daughter if her Mum was going down for nine years or would I want to protect her as much as possible and just tell her the bare basics. It's a… it’s quite a difficult to walk in really is as the opposite parent but also as the parent in prison.”*
>
> (Anthony)

I also constructed that Anthony used his own experiences of P.I. to potentially normalise the experience of the CWIPs and families that he works with, however, he was cautious against placing too much value on his personal experience, wondering whether it was more to do with his role in a Pastoral and Safeguarding capacity:

> *“So for me personally, <u>I'm able to kind of bridge a gap with my own experiences which whether that's more to do with my role or not. I'm unsure</u>. But a lot of the things that they're talking about just in general day-to-day. I think I'm able to pitch-in with and they can kind of bounce back off me and forward and back <u>and they can kind of see ‘oh’ that he understands and ‘he knows’</u>.”*
>
> (Anthony)

"I had a girl… her brother went to prison and I knew her brother and the only reason she was able to talk about it with me was because I went to school with her brother, do you know what I mean?"

(Carmen)

Within the literature, CWIPs highlighted relationships as a key area of support in school, particularly the ability of adults to place themselves within their shoes and have an understanding of what it may feel like for them (Morgan et al., 2014). The literature also suggests that CWIPs often feel reassured that their experiences are not unusual (Brookes & Frankham, 2021). However, I interpreted that both Anthony and Carmen were referring to something deeper than the above which could be construed as a professional duty. It represented something much more attuned. I understood their comments to suggest that they have something that is more meaningful to the CWIPs they work with, they understand what it truly means to be a member of the community and experience it. This highlights the potential importance of relational practice with CWIPs being rooted within the community they are part of. When searching for literature, it felt difficult to capture the central concept of the above. However, I likened this to the literature regarding 'insider researchers', who have similar characteristics and experiences to their participants. They can understand through their own experiences of the community and may be aware of and have a deeper understanding of the identity, language and processes within that community (Asselin, 2003). In turn, a more authentic relationship can be achieved as it creates a sense of safety, acceptance, and trust. **See Reflexive Diary Entry (appendix XVII)**.

4.12.2 Theme: safe and attuned relationships across the eco-system to promote the well-being of CWIPs

Participants constructed their role working with CWIPs and their families through the lens of their pastoral duties. They made sense of their role and highlighted the uniqueness of their role through the relationships they develop between child, home and school. The use of Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) as a framework can support how staff constructed their role and the type of support that they offer to both the young person and parent: if the systems around the CWIP are not effective or aligned, it can have potential consequences for the well-being of the CYP at the heart of the system.

> *"I think there's times when, you know, our support is extended to parents as well to support them and maybe signpost them to other agencies or even be a listening ear to parents at times because we're recognise that for the child's needs to be met that, parents need some support as well and they don't always know and get that support as part of the process."*
>
> (Isla)

I constructed from this that Isla was suggesting that all members of families affected by P.I. need to feel supported, particularly parents. She highlighted the importance of parental well-being as integral to the process. This aligns with wider research as Weidberg (2017) suggests that CWIPs tend to worry about the well-being and mental health of their caregiver. Participants did not allude to the well-being of the parent in prison; however, it is suggested that this also is a significant source of worry for CWIPs.

Carmen and Emily constructed safe and attuned relationships in the same way, however, I interpreted that even though the home-school relationship is a focus, they still show sensitivity to CYP’s needs which may be individual to them:

> *“I try to create strong relationships with home and family so that the child knows and sort of that… you know, I'm in communication with home and obviously if they want to talk about feelings and stuff and there's things that they just need to get off their chest, you know, that Mum might not need to know… they can still do that. I mean, obviously unless it's I think they’re unsafe or at risk or anything but I think just building the relationship with them giving them a safe space, giving them structure.”*

(Carmen)

> *“…it’s that thing of having time for them and them knowing that you've got the time to give them and the time to listen even when it isn't necessarily very purposeful [to adults], is important…”*

(Emily)

Both Carmen and Emily constructed support as providing the time and space for CWIPs, in a way that felt meaningful for the CYP. A trusted adult at school has been highlighted within the research as significant for CWIPs, particularly those who were willing to listen, those who did not see them just within the context of the relationship with an imprisoned parent and those who support them to problem-solve (Long et al., 2019). Carmen and Emily’s constructions potentially highlighted the importance of trusted adults over ‘key adults’ within the support CWIPs may find helpful in school,

particularly in relation to the information they share and trusting where it will go. This is consistent with the findings of the COPING project, whereby CYP expressed they would only like a couple of teachers who they trust to know about their imprisoned parent, through fear of judgement and the information being used against them (Raikes, 2013). Although the participants were all members of the pastoral team, Long et al. (2019) highlighted that some CWIPs may equate the pastoral team to be linked to behaviour management, which could impede some CYP from accessing emotional support.

4.12.3. Summary of inter and intrapersonal relationships as a professional resource.

This appears to be a novel construction of the way that school staff make-sense of the support that they can offer to CWIPs and their families. While the literature is supportive of the importance of trusted adults in school for CWIPs, this is solely from the perspective of CYP and parents, not school staff. The research does not address what makes the relationship feel authentic, trusting and safe. School staff also constructed the importance of supporting caregivers through the experience of familial imprisonment, as a means of supporting the well-being of CWIPs. Due to the limited literature regarding the insider experiences of school staff and how this can be utilised to build relationships with CWIPs/families, I drew upon the literature regarding insider researchers. Therefore, it may be important to consider whether school staff who are members of the community they work in, could be best placed to work with CWIPs and their families. It could also be important to have on-going conversations with CWIPs/families in relation to how schools can develop these relationships further.

4.13 Theme: supporting CWIPs in school is individual to the CYP/family

During the focus group, Anthony reflected on how support in schools in relation to CWIPs appears to be reactive rather than pro-active:

> *"We've noticed that kids will start getting involved in crime or their behaviour starts dipping. So **then** we put things in place."*
>
> (Anthony)

I interpreted this to have potential links to the difficulties with identification within systems and the idea that school staff tend to know about CWIPs only when there's a problem. Therefore, current support may be tailored to behaviour support or reducing the risk of harm (Morgan et al., 2014). I constructed that Anthony was suggesting that school staff should be considering CWIPs at a much earlier level and potentially trying to identify them within school systems before they present.

Participants also reflected on the diversity of experience and potential need and how this is possibly a barrier to understanding their role in relation to supporting CWIPs and their families. As a result, this reduces their confidence in what they believe that can offer to CWIPs with regards to what school staff believe to be meaningful and targeted support:

> *"I think it's a very broad field there's so many things are incorporated in that [being a CWIP] […] <u>but I guess it can potentially be a little bit of a minefield. Maybe there's a lot of information that might be relevant in one scenario but might be quite conflicted in another. So in terms of…. what crime is committed and things like that.</u> It's very potentially bespoke to the crime maybe and what the child knows?"*

(Isla)

Isla constructed this diversity of experience using the metaphor of 'minefield'. I interpreted this to suggest that there is a lot that school staff potentially do not know about this diversity of experience, there are potentially some hidden dangers and things are likely to go wrong due to a lack of knowledge and understanding. This construction potentially adds to the view that supporting CWIPs in school is potentially beyond the remit of their role and skill set.

There was also a recognition within the focus group that some CWIPs may not be presenting within the school system as a 'problem' or susceptible to increased 'risk'. This may be due to non-disclosure or choosing to align with an alternative identity within school. Within the literature, schools are identified as a place where CWIPs form a positive identity and sense of achievement (Long et al., 2019):

> *"I don't think there is so if you've got a really good student who's normally getting, you know, talking high school terms… grade sevens and eights. They're really well behaved. They're really well presented. They're coming to school they attend well, and then they've got a parent in prison. What support is there for that child?"*

(Anthony)

> *"But if there was… we've had a child that actually is fine in school. […] But, you know, they've also got that worry, where's the support coming from?"*

(Anthony)

Due to the hidden nature of these CYP and the pervasive socio-cultural narrative regarding what a CWIP is and should be, I constructed that there is the potential assumption from school staff that these CYP are 'just getting on with it', while this can be a positive thing there were also concerns that they could potentially be vulnerable to 'risk' in future, despite little evidence to suggest this. Through the current presentation of CWIPs within the literature, there is the view that all CWIPs are at risk of becoming a 'problem' and need support. Therefore, as professionals within education we may need to take an alternative approach and begin to start viewing CWIPs and their families through the lens of both risk and resilience.

4.14. Conclusion to theme construction and discussion

To summarise, this small-group study has answered the research questions of how school staff make sense of CWIPs and their families, their role in relation to CWIPs and their families and the support they need in school. This adds to the limited body of literature regarding how CWIPs should be supported in school and offers a novel and unique perspective, as it is one of the first to qualitatively explore this exclusively with school staff. The study has highlighted how the complexity of identification, including issues of disclosure and non-disclosure, can impede both the support CWIPs receive in school and the sense-making of school staff. Within this study, it appears that school staff have limited experiences working with CWIPs with a diverse range of experiences (as their sense-making appeared to centre around Domestic Violence). This limited experience consequently appears to limit their constructions. Therefore, it could be argued that school staff may unconsciously reproduce contemporary socio-cultural narratives and the wider literature regarding CWIPs, potentially viewing them through the lens of increased risk and positioning them as problem

and ‘other’. This has the potential to feed into the cycle of stigmatisation and hiddenness of CWIPs within school systems and the wider community. This research also highlights that the way that school staff make sense of CWIPs and their families may have implications for how they view their role in relation to them: despite feeling that they are well-placed to support CWIPs, they potentially do not feel best placed, positioning CWIPs beyond the remit of school support. Therefore, school staff struggle to know or understand what support could or should be. Despite not having this knowledge, school staff are still able to draw upon their personal experiences of imprisonment and the relationships they have with CYP/families as a professional resource.

Chapter 5. Implications, future research and limitations

5.1 Implications for schools and school staff

This research has several implications for schools and school staff. It also corroborates with the literature in the sense that school staff know they are important in the lives of CWIPs but feel that they need more support to respond sensitively and meaningfully (Morgan et al., 2013; Raikes, 2013).

The main finding of the research highlights the complexities of disclosure as a barrier to schools making sense of CWIPs and their family's needs, their role and the support they could provide in school. School staff mainly identify CWIPs through safeguarding process and procedures and may draw upon contemporary socio-cultural discourse (e.g. gendered understandings of parenthood/CWIPs increased levels of risk) or their limited experiences working with CWIPs/families to try to make sense of what they can offer. Consequently, the language used to actively make sense of CWIPs may unconsciously perpetuate the cycle of secrecy and stigma which feeds into the complexities surrounding disclosure. Schools should consider how they can develop an ethos that enables families to feel safe to disclose their experiences of P.I. within the school community. This should be in a way that promotes a sense of agency for CYP/their families.

This would support schools'/school staff's future understanding of need, including their unique role in the lives of CWIPs. Participants constructed ways which this could be achieved specifically through relationships, such as potentially utilising adults in school who understand the needs, language and processes of the wider community. This includes staff members who can draw upon lived experience of imprisonment or life in the community,

resulting in a sense of attunement and normalisation through an 'unspoken understanding'. Participants highlighted the importance of informal relationship building with parents and CYP, through supportive conversations and group work, where shared experience proved powerful in supporting disclosures.

The construct that P.I. was not considered as much as other ACEs was also highlighted, with participants suggesting that a more conscious awareness of this experience, through on-going discussion with other professionals, would support to keep this on the agenda. By doing so, school staff are more likely to consider the impact of P.I. more holistically and at early intervention, rather than reactive level.

5.2 Implications for Educational Psychologists (EPs)

One participant directly references EPs when constructing their role. This implies the construct that school staff may look to EPs when meeting the needs of CWIPs and potentially highlights a role for EPs in supporting positive outcomes for CWIPs and their families. This aligns with the Systematic Literature Review conducted by Shaw et al. (2021) which highlights the importance of EPs at all levels, particularly training and raising awareness of CWIPs in schools. I will consider the implications for EPs at each level of practice: *individual/family, group and systemic*. I will also make reference to how EPs can mitigate the potential harm to CWIPs and their families, through the concept of Symbiotic Harms discussed in Chapter 2 (Condry & Minson, 2021).

At an individual level, this research suggests that language and discourse have significant implications for the social action educational professionals take when supporting CWIPs/families. EPs are potentially best placed to facilitate discussions regarding individual

CWIPs and their families, particularly providing challenge in relation to the dominant socio-cultural constructions regarding offending and imprisonment which may be unconsciously perpetuated by professionals (Morgan et al., 2013). By taking a S.C. perspective and not searching for a universal truth, EPs can support school staff to widen the lens in which they view CWIPs. EPs can be curious about the language others are using to make-sense of and position CYP/their families. This supports a broader understanding of need and the support that may be required but also mitigates some of the potential harms CWIPs/their families may experience within the realms of *mutuality, nonlinearity* and *heterogeneity* as discussed in the literature review (Condry & Minson, 2021*).* By doing so, EPs acknowledge the relational link between a parent in prison/the family and but also recognise that the harms that are potentially experienced are dynamic, ever-changing, and individual to those experiencing them.

The need for EPs to draw upon the tenets of Community Psychology, particularly a focus on both risk and resilience at all ecological levels, was also highlighted within this research. This potentially diverts the attention away from individual CYP and families as the site of change to include the systems around them. Reflecting on Anthony and Carmen's experiences as staff living within the community where they work, I wondered how EPs could emulate this within their practice, particularly in relation to understanding the needs of the communities in which they work. I believe that this would start at the level of critical self-reflection, with EPs creating an awareness of aspects of their identity and how they shape their practice through frameworks such as SOCIAL GRACES (Burnham, 2018). However, the most important thing would be to consider how, as EPs, we can give ourselves permission to draw upon our identities as a means of developing 'a bridge' within practice. I believe that further research is necessary to explore this further.

At *group level*, I considered previous casework where professionals have potentially been complicit in forced disclosure, for instance providing information that a parent is in prison without the consent/knowledge of the family. Whilst professionals may believe this is in the 'best interests' of the CYP, I wondered whether the EP could utilise their knowledge of Symbiotic Harms (Condry & Minson, 2021) to construct an understanding of the vicarious impact this may have on the CYP/family, particularly the notion of *agency* and the idea that the family may be attempting to negotiate the harms of punishment. EPs have a duty to adhere to professional and ethical standards relating to their role, such as the BPS Code of Ethics (2021b) and the HCPC Standards of Proficiency (2023), with a key requirement to minimise the risk of harm to both CYP/families. EPs should also actively elicit and advocate for the voice of the CYP/families they work with (Children and Families Act, 2014). I have deeply considered how and what information should be shared in the absence of the CYP or the family and who should have ownership over this disclosure. EPs should therefore advocate for disclosures via CYP/families themselves and potentially support schools to develop an ethos that supports CYP/families to feel safe enough to disclose P.I. Through advocating for this approach, it is hoped that CWIPs are more likely to become more visible within school systems.

Ambiguous Loss and Disenfranchised Grief (Boss, 2016; Doka, 1989) also appeared to be a thread throughout the focus group. As EPs often hold a psychological understanding of bereavement and models of grief, they could be best placed to support schools to understand the emotional impact this may have more widely for CWIPs. It is acknowledged that the loss of a parent due to imprisonment can be experienced in a range of ways, however, this research suggests that educational professionals may perpetuate societal expectations in relation to grief. For example, the assumption all CWIPs may need emotional support or the

loss of a father to imprisonment should be less significant than what could be considered a socially acceptable loss (i.e. death). EPs could support an understanding of CWIPs' experience at group level by supporting school staff to understand their professional response to P.I. through the lens of Ambiguous Loss and Disenfranchised Grief as theoretical models.

At *systems level*, despite a focus on trauma informed practice (TIP) in schools and the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on long-term outcomes for CYP, participants highlighted that P.I. is often not considered in the same way as other ACEs. This has resulted in a lack of training or awareness of the impacts of P.I. on CYP/families and has potentially positioned CWIPs as beyond the remit of school staff's role. Currently, the only training available in England is via third sector organisations such as 'Hidden Sentence Training' via the North East Prison After Care Society [NEPACS] and Children Heard and Seen [CHaS]. However, the training provided does not have a specific focus on school, potentially positioning EPs as best placed to develop training in this area due to their in-depth knowledge of school systems (Shaw et al., 2021a).

Practitioner psychologists must also work effectively with others, in partnership with clients, professionals and other agencies. Building and maintaining professional relationships is considered key to the role and EPs must meet these requirements as set out by the HCPC Standards of Proficiency (2023). Participants constructed that school staff are often confused by the different professional systems that they encounter when working with CWIPs (e.g. CJS, Social Care). As multi-agency working is considered a core aspect of the EP role, the EP could be significant in helping these systems to understand each other, such as processes and language, with the aim of positive outcomes for CYP. It may be useful to consider within EP teams whether individuals have any previous professional experience within these contexts

(i.e. CJS/Social Care), with the aims of 'bridging a gap' as Anthony suggested. Therefore, EPs could be important stakeholders in multi-agency meetings regarding CWIPs.

5.3. Implications for policy

At a wider policy level, much work is being done by third-sector organisations such as Children Heard and Seen [CHaS]. Currently, they are advocating in the House of Lords for CWIPs to be identified in a statutory manner and for all schools to have both a notional budget and policy to support CWIPs and their families by Autumn 2025. Whilst this would support the visibility of CWIPs in schools significantly, I would argue that some of the issues would remain, such as the sharing of information resulting in unequal power relations and school staff not being clear on their role in relation to CWIPs. With statutory identification, some families may inadvertently be forced to disclose at the hands of the system, removing their sense of agency and causing unintended harm. Alongside a statutory requirement to identify, professionals need to begin to understand some of the implications of wider socio-cultural narratives regarding CWIPs and their families, with a particular focus on how this may impact on the way they are supported by others.

This research explored the constructions of the importance that families may place on the ownership of information that is shared about them, therefore, I believe there also needs to be further discussion by policymakers regarding how families can access support from schools in ways that honour their sense of agency. At policy level, EPs could potentially support schools to develop and action policies which outline their support for CWIPs and their families (Jones et al., 2013), with a particular focus on how language is used by schools to make sense of CWIPs and how they can create a safe and attuned space for disclosure. This

would support schools to shape and construct CWIPs in line with the diversity of need but in a way that distributes power to CYP/families.

School staff within this research also constructed that their role working with CWIPs is unclear. It could be suggested that a notional budget for CWIPs may be ineffective at supporting the needs of CWIPs in school unless this is addressed. It is likely that schools will require assistance to implement effective and appropriate support for CWIPs which the EP could support. This should also be informed and co-constructed with CWIPs themselves, as there is still limited research to identify what support they would find useful in school (Jones et al., 2013; Leeson & Morgan, 2014).

5.4 Implications for future research

Several implications for future research have been highlighted. To the knowledge of the researcher, this qualitative study is one of the first in England/Wales to directly explore how school staff construct their CWIPs and their families, their role and the support that they need in school. The exploratory nature of this research was intended to be the beginning of a discussion in this area, therefore, the recruitment criteria was broad and intended to include a diverse range of voices within school settings. Due to recruitment difficulties *(please refer to the limitation section 6.1 for further reflection*), participants that took part in this study were solely from a pastoral background. There also happened to be an over-representation of secondary voices within the research and the one participant from a primary context alluded to the idea that there may be some contextual differences in relation to how CWIPs and their families, roles and support are constructed between primary/secondary. Although their experiences working with CWIPs and their families varied significantly, further research to explore the constructions of other stakeholders within a range of school settings would

potentially diversify the understanding of how school staff make sense of CWIPs/their families, their role and the way CWIPs are supported.

One of the key barriers to supporting CWIPs and making sense of the role school staff may have was the context of disclosure/non-disclosure: the constructions discussed in RQ 2/3 regarding the intra and interpersonal self as a means of supporting CWIPs and their families highlighted a potential area for future research consideration, particularly how school staff can begin to develop safe and attuned relationships to create opportunities for disclosure and more successful home-school relationships. An interesting consideration should be given to the potential impact of insider experience (e.g. adults who are located within the communities they work in) including the voices of CWIPs themselves. This would support an understanding of how schools can begin to develop an ethos that mitigates against potential harm and stigma which may be experienced by CWIPs/families as a consequence of P.I.

This research has also further highlighted the absence of CYP's and families' voices within the literature, particularly the voices of CWIPs who are not 'presenting' or 'visible' within school systems *(refer back to appendix XVIII)*. Without these voices/perspectives, the literature regarding CWIPs/families will continue to be limiting, perpetuating contemporary socio-cultural discourse of risk and inherent vulnerability. These voices are particularly pertinent, especially in developing an understanding of potential resilience factors and how educational professionals can approach supporting CWIPs more holistically in school.

Chapter 6. Consideration of limitations

6.1 Participants

Due to the difficulties with recruitment, participants were eventually recruited using convenience sampling. Although I had initially wanted to recruit via a purposive sampling technique, a low response rate from participants resulted in having to rely on established relationships and links with the schools I am working in currently as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP). For this reason, I was drawn to participants who I knew had a vested interest in this area. However, I would argue that the pre-existing relationships I had with staff potentially resulted in staff feeling able to be more open and honest with their constructions as they were aware of my positionality as researcher and vice versa. Due to recruiting via established relationships, the participants within my research were all members of school pastoral teams (i.e. members of school staff that EPs tend to interact with), which may also skew the data slightly towards more of a focus on CWIPs' well-being and interactions with families. Three participants were also from secondary school contexts, with only one from a primary school context.

Consequently, I had an awareness of the contexts participants were working within, which also enabled me to consider the influence this may have on this research. It therefore feels imperative to highlight that the participants within this study are situated within a unique and locally specific context. Participants were drawn from a diverse Local Authority (LA) in the North of England, where the black and minority ethnic (BAME) population is >10% higher than the national average. Therefore, participants who took part in this research were representative of the local community they work within. The Index of Deprivation (IoD) (2019) highlighted the area as being within the top 100 of most deprived LA's in England and

one of the top 50 LA's in relation to criminality. Two participants within this study were positioned in an area within the LA which has been subjected to high profile criminal cases in the past two years in relation to youth and domestic violence. Participants are therefore more likely to be exposed to criminality, CWIPs and parents in prison within their daily work, which may have influenced the responses within the focus group. Participants appeared to have a vested interest in this research due to its relevance within the contexts they work. Within one of the schools, many of the staff also live locally within the community which appears to be comparatively unique to other schools across the LA. This is likely to have influenced some of the constructions highlighted within the study, particularly around relationships being rooted within the community.

Despite this, I would argue this study holds value due to the transparency created through the process of reflexivity, particularly in relation to sincerity and credibility. As Tracy and Hinrichs (2017) suggest, readers should make their own personal judgements as to whether the analysis within this study can be transferred to their specific context. Thus, readers should be cautious when interpreting the implications of this study to their own research and practice if their context differs significantly.

6.2 Data Collection

I had a conscious awareness of the current school context, particularly the difficulties that schools are facing with a reduction of resources and staff capacity. I made the decision to use an online focus group as a means of data collection. It was hoped that it would not feel as time-consuming and could be more accessible. Although this allowed for more flexibility, I experienced challenges organising a suitable time. The morning of the focus group, I also experienced a member of staff communicating that they could not stay for the entire session. I

wonder whether the flexibility of an online group made it easy to commit to but similarly easy to disengage from the process. All but one member of staff signed on from their cars or home and chose to not have their camera on, I was therefore unable to pick up on any non-verbal cues and comment on these, which potentially limited the richness of the data. Sometimes the flow of discussion was impeded by external factors, such as one participant having their child in the car. This resulted in some constructions potentially not being developed in as much detail as I would have liked, particularly as I had an awareness of the time limitations. If recruitment was quicker, I would have engaged the participants in a second focus group to build upon or explore constructions from this meeting prior to member reflections.

I also found that towards the end of the focus group, people appeared more relaxed, which I believed resulted in the engagement of all participants in the follow-up phase for analysis. I wonder whether the flexibility of the group and allowing participants to sign in from an environment of their choosing may have increased a sense of safety within the group.

6.3 Data Analysis

Although subjectivity is regarded a strength within qualitative research, it is important to note that brought my own personal/professional experience when engaging with the data. I have professional experience within the CJS and my current role as a TEP has also informed some of my constructions, particularly in relation to recent casework and the psychological theories that inform my practice. I also experienced familial imprisonment during this process, which will have influenced the way I interacted with the data and the constructions produced and disseminated as part of this study. This is potentially pertinent to the theme which explored gendered constructions of those who parent and those who offend, particularly as my

personal experience appeared to deviate from the norm. It is hoped that through reflexive boxes and diary entries this is transparent to the reader.

In line with a SC positionality, RTA allowed for the construction of multiple realities (Braun & Clarke, 2022). However, it is important to highlight that the main body of the analysis is the interpretation of the researcher (for qualification purposes). In the hopes of providing a multi-vocal account, in line with the philosophical positioning of this research, member reflections from participants have also been presented alongside the voice of the researcher. This research should not be interpreted as speaking for how *all* school staff construct CWIPs/their families, their role and the support CWIPs need but may provide a basis of exploration for future research in this area.

Chapter 7. Concluding remarks

The research undertaken as part of this doctoral thesis aimed to explore how four members of school staff in the North of England constructed CWIPs and their families, their role in supporting them and the support they need. To the researcher's knowledge, this is the first qualitative study with school staff in England/Wales in this area. This research was intended to be exploratory in nature. It was hoped that this would be the beginning of a wider discussion as to how a population of CYP, who are not currently visible within the education system, could be supported in school.

This research has attempted to show how four members of school staff have made sense of CWIPs and their families, including their professional response to this. They appear to have an awareness that the label 'CWIP' encapsulates a diverse range of experience, strengths and need, however, due to embedded social and cultural expectations including a lack of conscious awareness or identification, it has created barriers to CWIPs/families disclosing their experience. This has limited school staff's ability to make sense of what this may mean for them and their role in practice. Consequently, school staff find it difficult to know or understand what their unique contribution is when working with CWIPs, which ultimately impacts on the support they do or do not receive, in school settings.

I feel that this research has addressed an area of the literature that had not yet been considered. It is hoped that this has added value and depth to the existing body of research through an explicit focus on the sense-making of school staff, including some novel areas for consideration, particularly the importance of language and its impact on social action for CWIPs and the idea of attuned relationships with school staff being rooted within community. If schools are continued to be positioned as best placed to support CWIPs, this study has

further highlighted the need for continued research exploring the unique role of school staff supporting CWIPs to further develop practice in this area.

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Appendices

Appendix i: Reflexive diary entry 1

It took a lot of time and supervision for me to consider my positionality within this research. Taking a wider perspective beyond the research design and procedure, I found myself getting caught up within the criticisms of Social Constructionism (SC) and the commonly held view that 'nothing exists beyond discourse'. I questioned whether taking a relativist ontological stance may invalidate experiences which may feel extremely real to CWIPs, their families and school staff. Although I would argue that these structures (i.e. the Criminal Justice System, Education and Health) would not exist beyond human construction and language, I wondered whether I was ultimately denying the implications these societal structures may have in the lives of the above by taking this stance. This created some ethical tension for me as a researcher. However, Burr (2013) and Gergen's (2015) argument within the section of this chapter aligned with my ontological views. I realised that I was not denying a material reality but instead trying to highlight the 'taken for granted' knowledge that had been constructed and attempt to surface this. It is hoped that by doing so, we can begin to be critical of this and consider alternative constructions as possible. As a researcher, this felt ethical to me which lessened my concerns adopting an SC position.

I also found it difficult to unpick the differences between *constructionism/constructivism* and decide which term I would use to describe the position I was taking. From my personal perspective, the individual construction influences the collective and vice versa. I therefore

hold the belief that they are intrinsically linked, and this view has very much influenced the overall method and design of my study.

Appendix ii: Reflexive diary entry 2

It was difficult to determine whether this was in conflict with a constructionist perspective of language and whether I simultaneously accepted an intentional view of language. I also wondered whether the two could co-exist. I found myself asking questions such as how much does knowledge that is socially produced between humans influence the individual perspective and how much does knowledge that is located individually influence knowledge that is constructed between humans? After thinking further about this, I believe that within the context of this study, I take a constructionist view of language. It is likely that the socially produced knowledge within the focus-group will influence the reflections within the individual follow-up and could not be located solely within the individual as an intentional view of language would suggest.

Appendix iii: Reflexive diary entry 3

Choosing to take a critical qualitative approach initially sat uncomfortably with me, as I wondered whether this contradicted my values of collaboration. I questioned whether this would ultimately privilege the researcher voice above the participants within the data analysis process. Through research supervision, I recognised that I could not relinquish my role as 'researcher' entirely, that I am situated within the context of a doctoral thesis with certain requirements and it is expected that I will *do something* with the data collected as part of the process. Also, if considered within the context of SC, it is understood that there is no construct that could take into consideration each individual account (Gergen, 2015).

Therefore, my interpretation of the data can never be considered final or more valid than the construction of others. It is locally, contextually and culturally situated and will be dynamic, ever-changing and influenced through social processes (Braun & Clarke, 2022). In my attempt to lessen this conflict, I tried to collaborate with participants as much as I could within the constraints of a short-term thesis. I also attempted to be as transparent as possible as to what was influencing my published interpretation through the practice of reflexivity.

Appendix IV: Focus Group Interview Schedule (Guidelines only)

- What comes up for you when you think of a CWIP?
  Wordle on the screen – anonymising
  What are your thoughts now looking at this?

- If you haven't had experience working with CWIP, is it something you have thought about before? If you have had experience, is it something that you thought about before you were aware of/developed a relationship with the YP?

- Could you describe what you think is the role of the education system in supporting CWIPs?
- *What do we think together as a group is the role of the education system?*

- If you have had experience working with CWIPs, can you talk more about your experience of CWIPs? How did it come about? If you haven't had experience, how does this resonate with you? What do you think is important listening to these experiences?

  - *What did you learn from listening or talking about these experiences?*
  - *Can you think of something in particular that you've learned from these experiences that has gone on to shape practice/you've then used/ implemented that next time you had an experience?*

- What do you think your role as school staff could be in supporting CWIPs in within education? What would you like it to be? What would this look like?

- What comes up for you now, at the end of our discussion, when you think of a CWIP?
  Wordle on the screen – anonymising
  What are your thoughts now looking at this?

Appendix V: Reflexive diary entry 4

I experienced conflict as to whether I should schedule individual semi-structured interviews as it would be less exposing (and whether this would allow for a more open and honest discussion) or focus groups. Due to the hidden nature of CWIPs and previous experiences within my role as a TEP when discussing parental imprisonment, I have decided to hold the semi-structured discussion as a focus group. It is hoped that by doing so, it removes some of the barriers professionals may face when talking about parental imprisonment and it is hoped that it may reduce some of the stigma and shame regarding the topic. A focus group is also in alignment with my epistemological position of constructionism.

Appendix VI: information sheet and consent form

Would you like to support the development of practice in relation to Children with Imprisoned Parents (CWIPS) within your Local Authority?

charte1@sheffield.ac.uk Switch accounts

Not shared

Participant Information Sheet 04/07/23

What is the project's purpose?

It has been approximated that 312,000 children and young people (CYP) are impacted by parental imprisonment in England and Wales, however, an accurate figure is currently unknown (Kincaide et al. 2019). Despite this, it can be assumed that the numbers of Children with Imprisoned Parents (CWIPs) are increasing. In England and Wales, there has been a 3% increase in adults being sent to prison in comparison to 2021 (Ministry of Justice, 2022a). Therefore, it is likely that school staff will be unknowingly working with CWIPs on a daily basis. Outcomes for CWIPs are often negative within the realms of mental health, school success and future offending. However, it is important to note that these statistics are based on CYP who may be presenting in systems (e.g. the criminal justice system, health and schools) and are not necessarily representative of all CWIPs.

Research suggests that schools have an important role to play in the lives of children with imprisoned parents (CWIPs) (Morgan et al., 2013, Morgan et al., 2014, Raikes, 2013, Weidberg, 2017). However, the COPING Project (2013) found that school staff believe that they need more support to be able to respond to CWIPs. As there are no ways to formally identify whether CYP within school have a parent in prison, professionals are also often reliant on self-disclosures from young people and their families as to their individual and family situation (Kincaid et al., 2019) which may be contributing to this 'hiddenness' and limited knowledge/understanding in schools as to how they can support.

Research suggests that schools have an important role to play in the lives of children with imprisoned parents (CWIPs) (Morgan et al., 2013, Morgan et al., 2014, Raikes, 2013, Weidberg, 2017). However, the COPING Project (2013) found that school staff believe that they need more support to be able to respond to CWIPs. As there are no ways to formally identify whether CYP within school have a parent in prison, professionals are also often reliant on self-disclosures from young people and their families as to their individual and family situation (Kincaid et al., 2019) which may be contributing to this 'hiddenness' and limited knowledge/understanding in schools as to how they can support.

For this piece of research, I am interested in exploring how participants make sense of their role in relation to Children with Imprisoned Parents (CWIPs). It is also hoped that we may discuss some of the practice that may already be happening in schools. The aim of this research is to open discussion about this topic, which is something that you may have not previously considered or discussed. It is hoped that by consulting school staff directly as part of this research, it will potentially add to the research and inform future educational psychology support to schools when working with CWIPs at all levels (whole-school, individual and family).

Why have I been chosen?
You have been chosen to take part in this project to provide your understanding of how you understand and construct CWIPs including your role in relation to supporting CWIPs. This is to further our understanding from the perspective of school staff (with safeguarding responsibilities). **You do not need to have worked with children who have experienced parental imprisonment to take part in this study.**

If you decide that you would like to take part, you may want to make your Headteacher or SENCO aware of this, particularly as you may want to share whatever may come up for you as part of the project (e.g. developing practice within your setting).

Do I have to take part?
No – there is absolutely no pressure to take part in this project and it is up to you whether you take part. If you do decide that you would like to take part, you will be able to refer back to this consent form and information sheet should you need to at any point. If you do take part, you can also decide to stop taking part at any point of the project. You can also ask for part of/all of your data to be destroyed up to two weeks after the end of the interview session - you do not have to give a reason for this.

Please note that that by choosing to participate in this research, this will not create a legally binding agreement, nor is it intended to create an employment relationship between you and the University of Sheffield.

What will happen to me if I take part? What do I have to do?
You will be invited to take part in a two-stage process. It is completely up to you whether you would like to take part in both stages or just take part in the first. You can express your wish to take part in the second stage as part of the consent process. *If you initially want to take part in both stages at this time but change your mind at a later date, this is okay too. You do not have to provide a reason for this and can do so without consequence.*

Stage One: Online Focus Group (approximately 60 minutes)

Due to the large geographical nature of the LA and to ensure that as many people can participate as possible, stage one of the project will happen online. A focus group is a group interview which will consist of 4-8 professionals who identify as a member of school staff with safeguarding responsibilities. The focus group will be guided by Charlotte (Lead Researcher) to discuss a range of topics which may relate to how CWIPs are constructed and supported within a school setting. Charlotte will contact the participants via email on an individual basis. This is to ensure that participants do not have access to the personal/professional emails of other participants. Within the email, the researcher will provide a date and time for the focus group. Focus groups will be allocated on a first-come-first-served basis. The focus groups will be organised outside of working hours.

Stage Two: Individual Interview (approximately 60 minutes)

Follow-up individual interviews will be arranged and held with those who have indicated during the consent process that they would like to be contacted after the focus group to discuss the topic further. These interviews will either be in-person or online, it is up to you. Charlotte (Lead Researcher) will have completed the first stage of the data analysis process and will have developed themes from the initial focus group. It is hoped that these themes will inform the follow-up individual interviews, whereby participants will be asked to discuss these further. Charlotte will make you aware of these themes prior to individual interview. You will also be provided with the opportunity to bring any further reflections or ideas that may have arisen as a result of your participation in the focus group to discuss during this time. Individual interviews will be organised outside of working hours.

You can withdraw your data from the focus group for up to two weeks after the date of the focus group. The date and how to do so will be communicated to you by Charlotte during the interview session. Should you take part in a follow-up individual interview, you can withdraw your data for up to two weeks after the date of your interview. The date and how to do so will be communicated to you by Charlotte during the interview session.

What are the disadvantages of taking part in the study?
If you consent to take part in the study, this will be during your free time and not during work hours. As part of the semi-structured interview, you may reflect on experiences within your professional practice/personal life and there is the potential for this to elicit an emotional response. If this happens, you may wish to seek out support from your Headteacher or family/friends if this is available to you. If you feel uncomfortable at any point you can stop and withdraw yourself from the study at any time. Consent will be re-visited throughout the research process.

Here are some things that I have considered prior to the study to minimise the above:

1. It is hoped that my experience of being a Trainee Educational Psychologist, including my previous experience with therapeutic work in the NHS, will enable me to sensitively approach the focus group/individual interviews and respond to you in an appropriate way, should the project elicit an emotional response.

2. On the day of interviews, I will check-in with the group/you to ensure that you are comfortable to go ahead with the focus group/individual interview and feel able to engage emotionally with the experience. If you become upset at any point during the interview process, you will be reminded that you can take a break or stop the interview at any point and that you do not have to provide a reason for this. You will also be reminded of your right to withdraw from the process should you wish to do so.

What are the benefits of taking part in the study?
There are many benefits to taking part in this study. This may be an opportunity to consider/discuss a topic that you have not thought about previously and to share your views on how you think school staff should be supported to work with CWIPs. This will also be one of the first qualitative studies solely consulting school staff in relation to this area.

What if I have a complaint about the research?
In the unlikely event that something should go wrong during the project, you should first contact the Lead Researcher and the Research Supervisor via email:

Charlotte Harte (Lead Researcher) charte1@sheffield.ac.uk

Mary Chilokoa (Research Supervisor) m.chilokoa@sheffield.ac.uk

In the event you do not feel that this has been handled in a satisfactory way you can contact the Head of School via email:

Rebecca Lawthom (Safeguarding Lead) r.lawthom@sheffield.ac.uk

Will my information and participation be confidential?
This project is subject to ethical guidelines. Your name and any identifiable information that may have been disclosed during this process (e.g. your name, specific geographical location, education setting) will not be used during the write-up of the project. If you agree to take part in a follow-up interview, you will be able to choose when the interview takes place and whether you would like this to be in-person and online to maintain anonymity. This will be agreed between the researcher and yourself.

Will I be recorded and how will this be used?
The focus group will take place on the online application Google Meet. The Google Meet application enables the Lead Researcher to record and transcribe the session simultaneously. Unfortunately, the application does not only allow for audio recording, therefore, participants will be audio *and* video recorded during the session. The Lead Researcher will also use a Dictaphone to manually record the focus group as a back up measure.

During individual interviews, participants have the choice of meeting online and in-person. Again, if you choose to meet online this will be via Google Meet and will be audio *and* video recorded. If you choose to meet in-person, this will be audio recorded using a Dictaphone only.

The video and audio file(s) of the focus group and individual interviews will be stored on a secure Google Drive that only the Lead Researcher can access and will only be used to refer back to interviews during the data analysis process. The recordings and transcription date will be deleted 12 months after the project is finalised.

What will happen when the study is completed?
I will use some of the things you say as part of my doctoral thesis. You will not be identifiable within this report. Once the thesis is completed and approved, I will contact yourself with some of the key messages. I may send my report for publication in a psychology journal in the future, however, you will be informed of this and asked if you would like a copy of the paper.

Key messages which may be useful for professionals when working with Children with Imprisoned Parents, may be reported back to other education settings across the LA and with other Trainee Educational Psychologists within my cohort.

Who is funding the project and who has ethically reviewed the project?
This research does not have any funding. It forms part of the requirements for completion of the Doctorate in Education and Child Psychology at the University of Sheffield.

If you would like to have more information or a discussion about the project, please feel free to contact me via the email included on this form.

If you have taken your time to read this and are happy to participate, please continue to the next page for the consent form.

If you are unable to take part but would like more information on how to support CWIPs within schools, please see the following links:

National Information Centre on Children of Offenders - Resources for Professionals

Children Heard and Seen - Resources

Time Matters UK - Resources

Thank you very much for your time.

Charlotte Harte
(Trainee Educational Psychologist, University of Sheffield)

I have read and understood the information sheet that was provided to me on the last page.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

I have been provided with the time to think about and the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

I understand that I do not have to take part in the project if I do not want to. I also understand that I can decide to stop taking part at any point and withdraw my data up until two weeks after the interview session.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

I understand that my participation will be anonymised throughout the project and my information will be kept securely and confidentially.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

I am happy for the interview to be audio and video recorded. I understand that I can choose to turn my camera off if I would like to. These recordings will be stored securely and will not be viewed or listened to by anybody other than Charlotte (Lead Researcher) and members of the research team.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

I understand that the data collected during the project will be included in a doctoral thesis as part of the requirement for the Doctor of Child and Educational Psychology degree.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Should the research study lead to future publication, I would be happy for my anonymised data to be included.

- Yes
- No

I would be happy to take part in a follow-up individual interview after the online focus group.

- Yes
- No

Email address (this can be a personal or professional email, whichever feels most comfortable):

Your answer

Participant identification name for this project (pseudonym):

Your answer

What kind of setting do you work in?

- Primary
- Secondary

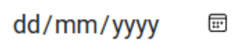
What is your current role in your education setting?

Your answer

Signature:

Your answer

Date



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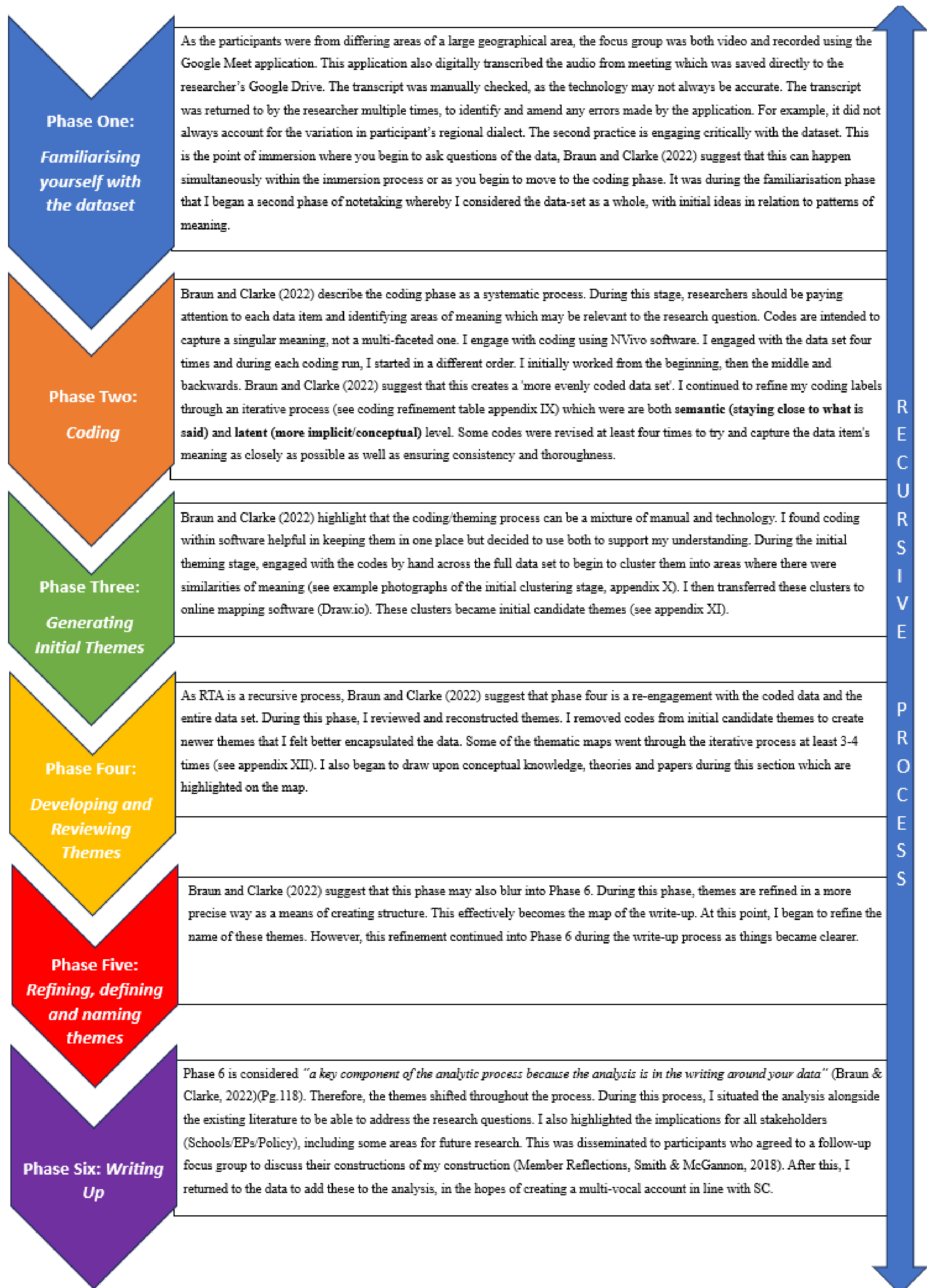
Appendix VII: Outline of Braun & Clarke's 6 Phases of RTA in the context of this research



Appendix VIII: Focus group transcript

EP Focus Group Children with Imprisoned Parents (2023-12-11 16:12 GMT) – Transcript

Charlotte: If you're on your phone, you might not be able to actually do this [Mentimeter] so that might be quite tricky, but maybe the first question we could maybe have just a bit of a think about really is. What I wanted to know is what comes up for you when you think of a child in prison parent what comes to mind straight away, what kind of things?

Isla: I think it's looking for some context because a child of an imprisoned parent. It could be a number of, it could be such a wide range of things. Is it a crime that directly impacts the child or does it indirectly impact them? And yeah, I think it's very vague otherwise.

Charlotte: Is there anything else that you can think of Isla when you think of.. when you hear that term child with an imprisoned parent. What things come to mind?

Isla: Sorry, I'm not ignoring you. I am thinking.

Charlotte: No, no, it's fine. Anybody else can say anything as well. Just throw things out there what comes to mind when you think of a child with an imprisoned parent.

Anthony: I think for me personally, I always initially go with is the child kind of with that parent on a daily basis. So do they live with that parent? Is it someone they spend a lot of time with? Is it somebody that's quite external to them because obviously working a secondary we have a lot of students who are normally… it's usually dads I'll be honest and for the most part probably every time I've done it it's been a dad parent, but then it's how much do they actually normally see that parent and I think it is quite significant because we have a lot of students then that will say they need to take time out. They obviously go see them and we try and support that as much as possible. But we also try and ascertain just how much of an impact that parent has had on the child before going kind of into prison…

Charlotte: Yeah.

Anthony: …if that makes sense.

Charlotte: …something that found really interesting there was what you said Anthony was around it usually being a father. Is that something that we tend to think about when it's a child with an imprisoned parent?

Anthony: Yeah, I think for me definitely, like for everyone I can think of now that we know a parent is imprisoned, it is the male or the dad or a step-dad. It's very… I think I might have had it once in 10-12 years where it's been the actual mother the parent, it's something that's quite… err.. it's not usual not for my own experience anyway.

Charlotte: Yeah, what are people's thoughts about that? does that tend to be other people's experience? or does that tend to come to mind when you're thinking about a child with an imprisoned parent?

Carmen: Erm, I've got a student who… his dad was in prison… whilst his dad was in prison he was living with mum. Mum was an alcoholic and he started getting involved in a lot of erm… anti-social activities and whilst he was out, out and about in the community, erm… and it sort of led to in being in gangs and things like that. But then when Dad came out and he went to live with Dad full time and has no contact with mum, and dad… since he's been with dad he's sort of left the anti-social behaviour… the erm… all the other stuff he was sort of doing whilst he was under mum's care. So I think sometimes when…

Charlotte: Yeah.

Carmen: …we see that a parent's been in prison. I think the stereotype is that they can't look after the children, but this is one case out of loads of kids, but in his case, it's sort of the other way around dad was the best thing really that could have happened to him in terms of his own life. Do you know what I mean? So I think it's interesting…

Charlotte: Yeah.

Carmen: …because I think a lot of the time it is Dad that goes to prison but I think people often think as well that if they've been in prison then there's no way they could ever look after a child again, do you know what, I mean?

Charlotte: So there's something around maybe it being dad, so when we think about that we often kind of think "Oh, is this Dad that's in prison?" because that's usually what we kind of default to. There might also be something… I picked up something there Carmen… you

mentioned something around criminality as well. That like… children with imprisoned parents may be involved in some kind of criminality themselves, maybe?

Carmen: Yeah, yeah, possibly. Yeah.

Charlotte: You also mentioned gangs, didn't you?

Carmen: yeah, cuz you sort of… you know… anti-social behaviour, carrying knives, joining gangs. And then when Dad came out because he didn't… he didn't know dad was in prison, but he knew something wasn't right because I think Grandma used to let him call and…

Charlotte: Yeah.

Carmen: I think they used to just say he was away. But as he got older he sort of figured out what was going on and…

Charlotte: Yeah.

Carmen: …and then when he went back, and to live with Dad… like now he says his Dad tells him that he loves him every morning and he tells him where to go and where not to go and I think he's learning from Dad's experience of sort of turning himself round [sic], do you know what I mean? he's a positive male role model for his son, even though he's been to prison and it's sort of like I said the best thing that could have happened to him because like… yeah… it were [sic] going down the gang route and I think he's realised it himself now as well. So yeah.

Charlotte: Do other people? What are the people's thoughts around what they're hearing right now?

Emily: I think that I've sort of noticed that there's been some kids that we've had where if parents or uncles or other members of the family might be involved in criminal activity or have been in prison in the past. For some young people, it seems that there's not that stigma around. It's almost like a badge of honour if they get arrested, so we had a young person who was arrested recently at school… and… on the face of it didn't appear to be bothered. And whether he was bothered and didn't want to show it or whether he was just like this is normal. I don't know. But yeah, it was that kind of perception of this isn't a big deal.

Charlotte: Yeah. One thing I am finding really interesting is, there's something within this discussion isn't there around… erm… young people that might have a parent in prison maybe ending up in some kind of criminal activity themselves. Like you say, maybe carrying a knife being part of a gang. Is that something that you would associate with a child with an imprisoned parent?

Charlotte: Maybe is that something that comes to mind that maybe they might be involved?

Emily: I think there are higher risk.

Anthony: Yeah, I think for my point of view… it would definitely be even if it's not in terms of criminal activity. You definitely see a change in behaviour. There's no doubt about that in schools when it happens you immediately see a change in behaviour, a change in attitude or…

Carmen: Yeah.

Anthony: a change in kind of need really… and especially if it's… erm, kind of… and I always think if it's something that's long, so if a parent for example, you know, a kid… child does find out that their parent's got seven or eight years. You see a very quick. Very quick behaviour change, often when it's maybe a few weeks a couple of months or maybe they're awaiting trial. Normally what I found is kids. Will kind of be more emotional during that time so when the parent is on trial or things are happening or they're in on remand or something we offer a lot of support and we kind of get an emotional side, but then when you get there, it's almost like right it's done now. They've been sentenced. This is how long it's gonna [sic] be. There is a very quick decline in behaviour, which then again will link to then outside of school… kind of what they're getting involved in outside of school as well. So I do think there's. Yeah, definitely in that aspect for me, yeah.

Charlotte: Yeah, does anybody else have any thoughts on that - do they resonate? What you're hearing from Anthony, does that resonate or…

Isla: Yeah, I think obviously from a Primary point of view and we don't necessarily see the criminal side of it and children becoming engaged in criminal activity, but I would say that we see a lot of children that they kind of… become very closed off, they kind of… they don't want to engage with you when you're trying to support and almost as though they don't want to talk about what the parent's done because actually, they think, well they shouldn't have

done that. I don't want to talk about it if my… say it's Mum… like my Mum's a good person… erm… and that kind of… believing that you're going to stereotype… you know… stereotype the parents. So we see a lot of… sort of… anger and frustration and acting out and a massive change in behaviour. Erm… thinking of a few children in particular in you know, Key Stage 2, maybe. There's a lot refusal to engage with learning, they're just not ready the mind's not there. It's not present.

Charlotte: Does anybody have any thoughts on that one? What Isla's just mentioned… has anybody noticed that kind of presentation?

Emily: We had a student a few months ago… who… it wasn't their parent in prison, but it was their older brother and she was going to visit him in prison and she would just say on the way that she would study all the way there… just do her revision… just so she didn't have to think about it, it was the only way she could kind of cope. She just immersed herself in revision all the way back and didn't just try to sort of compartmentalise.

Carmen: Erm… I would agree that this definitely a spike in behaviour… erm… thinking of one of my students. I know that with this certain parent, if something was unsettled at home. Erm… he would. He'd show us that something wasn't right through his behaviour. And because he couldn't verbalise his feelings about the situation… so he would… his behaviour… he'd act out, he'd sort of get in trouble on purpose to then be taken out to then for someone to be like, you know, are you okay, what's going on? And then he'd start to speak about what was going on, but he couldn't sort of think of any other emotion besides anger towards the situation, so yeah, I agree with what Isla and Anthony was saying about the behaviour… erm… definitely changing when there's something going on.

Charlotte: Absolutely, and I guess like you say, it's really interesting to hear that you all kind of resonate with experiences that you have between each other… and I was just wondering because I guess, what I found interesting is… all of you have had some kind of experience with a young person who might have dealt with imprisonment. Maybe not like you say directly with a parent and it might be in a sibling or… you know… somebody within the family and I'm just wondering. Is a child with an imprisoned parent something that you thought about before you were aware of the imprisonment. Is that something that you necessarily thought about within your role in school before you developed that relationship? Or is that something that kind of came to light as you got to know the young person or was it

information was divulged by somebody? How did you know and have the information that they were a child within imprisoned parent?

Emily: For me, I think when you start… my job is… I forgot to say what my role was. I'm Family Liaison Officer. And I think when I start working with a student if the student's referred to me, the first thing I would do is go on CPOMS and kind of look at the history and I always have an expectation that you're looking for adverse childhood experiences or any kind of trauma or any triggers anything any kind of alarm bells really looking back through their history. So yeah, I would just… but I wouldn't necessarily go 'imprisoned parents', you know, that wouldn't be my first place I'd go in my head.

Charlotte: Yeah. Any other thoughts around that…?

Isla: I think there's been a number of times when I recognise that something's different with a child and… you know… we have open conversations with parents and a number of parents have said well yeah his Dad was arrested last week or two weeks ago and you don't always have that information if it's not shared… you know… for instance if it's not gone through social care because children aren't present or it's non-resident parents. You don't always have that information readily available. So I think it can come through a means of different ways. And I feel like at that point if you found out two weeks later, although you've been supporting, it sets you back a little bit because you've not had that information and things might have been different you may have handled things differently… erm or you know… or if you've said did you see your Dad at the weekend and they've been quiet and not answered but you don't know that's the reason… err… it can kind of set you back in that relationship. I feel.

Charlotte: Yeah, yeah, and there's something there that you mentioned Isla about openness. Is that something that you could elaborate on… just that openness, maybe with parents that you spoke about?

Isla: Yeah, I think there are some parents that you have that relationship where… you know, I'm thinking of a couple of families in particular, where… you might have had attendance issues so you work quite closely together to build that relationship where parents feel comfortable sharing that information and… they kind of… they know that you're there in a non-judgemental way. Erm, and then there's other parents that, you know, may be quite reluctant to share that information because they're worried about how, you know, what you

might do with that information or how you might perceive them or… I don't know whether if it's sometimes I don't know whether they will treat my child differently.

Anthony: I think from my experience it's been the opposite. I don't know whether that's because I've mainly worked with Key Stage 4. So yeah, Year 10 and 11 kids. I find that students are quite open to say that their parents are imprisoned and way more so than, for example, to say they're in care or they live with Grandma or… you know… that maybe that there's social care involved. I think that a lot of the times where I've spoken to students and kind of said… they might have said… well, my Dad's in prison and I've said oh so how'd you feel about that? And they're quite open as if you were to say, who am I phoning? Mum or Dad? And they'll say Auntie. Okay, and why am I phoning Auntie? 'Cause I live with Auntie. Okay. They don't want to tell you why a lot of the time when I think it's things that involved actual genuine care for older kids, especially they're probably a little bit embarrassed to say, "I live with Grandma because Mum and Dad couldn't look after me or I'm in care, I'm with with Foster Carer" and especially if it involves social care. They're never really that open to saying it. You almost have to dig out of them, but normally those things come through. So I think it was like Isla said, you find out those things quite easily through CPOMS and through Encompass reports on the morning and things that have gone on. But normally, I think when a child has as imprisoned parent, they're quite open in talking about it and kind of just saying how it is. And I found that talking about them [imprisoned parent] is a lot easier than talking to them about their care on a day-to-day basis.

Charlotte: Yeah.

Anthony: They don't feel as embarrassed or as taboo about it if that makes sense, but equally as I've said the link between that is maybe that a lot of them that do feel like… well it's my Dad. Maybe I don't see Dad all the time, Dad doesn't live with me, our parents are split up so I actually live with my Mum anyways, it doesn't affect my day-to-day that much as where I think that maybe… and I've never… as I said I've only ever experienced it once where maybe it was a mum. Maybe if it was mum they maybe less open to saying, well I live with Dad or I live with Grandma because my Mum's in prison. So I don't know whether it's more to do with the fact that they're open to saying it's Dad, or whether they're genuinely just feel like talking about isn't as taboo for them if that makes sense?

Charlotte: Yeah, absolutely. Do other people have experience of it being more openly talked about?

Carmen: Erm yeah… I find I've experienced a mixture. There's kids that. I feel like… erm… I had one child where I read up on CPOMS before I took him on… but I… because I grew up in the community I work in, a lot of the time I know through being in the community that a parent is in prison or has been and had one student where I read up on it before I took him on and his mum sort of said to him. Look Miss Carmen knows everything so you don't need to sort of say why he's there or whatever… like Miss knows. And I find that with him? He then. It's easier for him to talk about it because he's not sort of saying what it is that he went to prison for but he sort of can say… you know, sort of the aftermath it's had on him and with Dad not being present and how he feels about it. Erm… but you like can't say what it was, I mean, it's like he can't admit to himself what his dad went to prison for…

Charlotte: Yeah.

Carmen: …but about finding out… erm… because I'm a mentor we get referrals. So like, one of my kids, they got referred to me because… erm… one of the parents had actually got let out of prison, but had a restraining order. And his behaviour had spiked and they were a bit all over the place so it was sort of having a key person in school to come to and to help him through what were going on. Other times. It's… you know… disclosures or like we run a project at school and to do with educating young people on knife crime and we found when we've brought up topics like that a lot of them then start to open up about their experience and then that's how we found out… erm… quite a few of our kids have had either parents imprisoned in the past or are currently in prison. So I feel like I've found out a mixture of ways and a lot of the time it's reading up on CPOMS as well. So…

Charlotte: Yeah. It feels like those key things, doesn't it? Coming out of this point of discussion around… like you say safeguarding processes are key, aren't they in kind of identifying these young people. Then also, it feels like what you are saying Carmen, Isla and Anthony, that it's about relationships as well with these young people and…

Carmen: Yeah.

Charlotte: …them feeling able to disclose… or their families as well… families feeling able to disclose and feeling safe and able to. And I'm wondering Carmen if it's… with yours more

specifically it sounds a bit more like that young person might not have had to relay that information again, it's just… you already know and that's okay.

Carmen: Yeah, yeah, because then they don't have… I find a lot of them find it hard to say why the parents in prison. And sort of admit to themself [sic], but then they can talk about the effect it's had on them and the feelings about it and stuff like that. But yeah, I agree with what you just said. Yeah.

Charlotte: I'm just wondering are there any? I'm just really curious about what you're saying because there's something, Anthony and Carmen, around young people maybe not feeling able to disclose or talk about what their parents might be in prison for, you know, they're happy to say 'yep my parent's in prison', but then it feels like maybe they might not be identifying with what that really means and I'm just wondering… I'm just curious why people think that might be happening. Why do you think it's really difficult for them to think about?

Anthony: I think for a lot of them, they might not genuinely maybe understand the ins and outs so, you know… we've had parents in prison from everything from drugs to knife crime to GBH to sexual assault and things and…

Charlotte: Yeah.

Anthony: I think a lot of the time the kids that are in high school, from my point of view are aware of what they mean, but probably not the extent to what is going on. So they won't be in court, they won't understand exactly what the charge is, so they may know in that… maybe kind of like the generic thing… but the ins and out of it, it can be quite confusing. And so unless they've got parents who are extremely honest about it or they're kind of maybe literally going to court and watching them and hearing testimonies, I think for a lot of them. It might be a struggle to kind of wrap their heads around so even that conversation of okay, they've been arrested for… err you know… a knife crime, but what does that actually mean? Was it a one-off? In a gang? and a lot of the kids maybe don't actually understand it as much as they need to… and then the flip side of that is if you do have students who are very aware of what the parents are doing, again, they probably don't want to talk about it because they're actually embarrassed of what the parents are doing and for myself if something happens, especially with a child. I know the ins and outs of it as a grown up as a safeguarding lead and knowing what that means and everything else and just even terminology. A lot of the kids probably don't understand as well.

Charlotte: Yeah, yeah.

Anthony: …when words are just getting thrown around they might not even understand really what it is. So I think a lot of it for me tends to be a level of understanding as well as just being able to openly talk about it…

Charlotte: So potentially something around shame, Carmen, and something about not maybe understanding the Criminal Justice System more generally or not maybe having the information. Is that right Anthony what you're saying?

Anthony: Yeah, because I think some of the kids will even say… like… I remember one of the girls that said they've transferred my dad but I don't understand why they transferred him so far away because now it means I can't see him now. Now I was aware for the reason why that but then I'm not the right person to say that to her. Likewise…

Charlotte: Yeah.

Anthony: …is that Mum explaining it? Does Dad really want them to know? and for her it very much… he was in X [redacted] now he's in Y [redacted] or whatever now, I can't go see him but why have they transferred him that far and it is kind of just that level of understanding of knowing how things work and have you got parents that are going to be open with 13 year old girl when her Dad's potentially going down for nine years? I don't know. And what would I do? Would I want to be open with my daughter if her Mum was going down for nine years or would I want to protect her as much as possible and just tell her the bare basics? It's a… it's quite a difficult to walk in really is as the opposite parent but also as the parent in prison, you know, so we've got… I know parent in prison as well that won't allow their daughter to come and see him but will speak to her on the phone because he doesn't want it to see him in there. So then that's another… a lot of parents will say that I don't want them to see me in here, I don't want them to see… to visit a prison. That's a big aspect as well. That's all those kind of small tangible things where I think kids' understanding is limited unless they're getting it from soaps and TV how are they supposed to know?

Charlotte: Absolutely.

Carmen: Erm… I think I agree with Anthony. I think sometimes it is a level of understanding and in a few of the cases with the children I work with. I find when it's domestic violence

against Mum, that's when they can't say. So when it's the best domestic violence against the Mum and they were present. That's when they find it hard to. Say why Dad's in prison and…

Charlotte: Yeah.

Carmen: …and it is like that, I'd say, with about three or four of the kids that I've worked with and always domestic violence against Mum and they were present when it happened and yeah, that's what I found personally.

Charlotte: Do you think there's something to do with maybe some stigma around certain offenses? That might stop young people talking, Carmen? I'm just opening this up to everybody. Do you think that could be contributing to maybe young people not feeling able to maybe talk about these things?

Carmen: Yeah, and yeah, and I think. I don't know I think sometimes it's like because it's Mum and I found that a lot of time when it has been domestic abuse against Mum, they then step in to be the man of the house sort of thing. And I feel like they sort of then go from being a child to being grown up in the head and they have to be mature and you have to look after Mum… erm… and I think a lot of them haven't faced sort of the trauma that they've been through being in the house whilst… whilst that was happening because when it…

Charlotte: So, I think what you're saying is that if it's offenses against somebody in their family it can be quite traumatic experience?

Carmen: Yeah..

Emily: I was gonna [sic] say we've got a young person whose Dad is in prison for a domestic violence towards Mum and she's quite conflicted. Sometimes she says I really miss him. I want, hope that it gets out of prison and the next time she sort of says I'm really scared for Mum. I hope he stays there. So I think it's really difficult for her to know what to think and she's classified as a young carer for Mum…

Charlotte: Yeah.

Emily: …because Mum's got really significant mental health needs after everything that's happened. So Mum, can't go out just has panic attacks. and the young person is in a position where she's having to parent the younger siblings and get them showered and get them dressed and support mum and do the cooking and cleaning. It's had quite a significant impact.

Charlotte: Absolutely, as you say, it's quite confusing time, isn't it for a lot of young people? Just generally there's lots of reasons why young people don't feel that they can disclose or families feel like they can't disclose what's going on. Sometimes you have to find out from other means, like you say, from safeguarding processes and things like that and through relationships with people. Is that kind of the sense I'm getting from the group. Is that correct? I was just gonna [sic] ask because I was gonna [sic] pick up on something you said Anthony and this kind of leads into another question because I guess this research is about how you make sense of your role in school and supporting these young people and I'm just really curious… how do you think that you can support these young people in school? What do you think you can do?

Anthony: I think from my experience personally having worked… cause obviously I come from the area… I work in the area and when I say area I mean the town itself …and it's ironic that some of the parents that have been imprisoned. I actually know them as well, which sometimes helps me and I know that sounds random, but the students will say like… you know my… it's almost like it can be open about it. And I think part of… erm… a lot of the time as well is just how the students resonate. So for me… a lot of the time the kids… er, parents are similar age, maybe similar interests, similar looking. similar kind of aspects of life and just kind of also drawing on, my own life experiences, which I've had a person in… a lot of my own friends have been to prison. I've had a lot of friends that have, you know, been locked up and done things and imprisoned for a long stretches of time and family members as well. So for me personally, I'm able to kind of bridge a gap with my own experiences which whether that's more to do with my role or not. I'm unsure. But a lot of the things that they're talking about just in general day-to-day. I think I'm able to pitch-in with and they can kind of bounce back off me and forward and back and they can kind of see 'oh' that he understands and 'he knows'. And I think we spoke about it before Charlotte just kids looking at you. I think a lot of the time students just know who they can go to who they can speak to and whether they'll understand it or not, and I don't know how that Is measured I don't know how.

Charlotte: Yeah.

Anthony: But I personally know kids can do that with me. But again, I'm from a pastoral or background kids come to me with all sorts from 'I'm pregnant' to 'I've done this at the weekend'. So they'll tell me or the Pastoral Team in general or Safeguarding Leads things

they're probably don't even tell their own parents or they come to us first. So I'm lucky in my role that I'm able to have the trust of the students and they know that obviously for teachers and teaching assistants it's probably a lot harder because of the role they do and the kind of impact they have in terms of it's more classroom based, it's more around learning. It's more interventions and…

Charlotte: yeah.

Anthony: …things. For me, a lot of the time, just dealing with behaviour and what the child actually needs and their safeguarding. You know, for the Safeguarding Leads of the school, I think they're lucky that they're able to do that. But then on the flip side you get the other side of the 'I'm pregnant' and things where you do have to really step up so from a pastoral point of view it's probably different than the people who are SENCOs and teachers in the group. I would imagine.

Charlotte: So would you? I'm just curious. As a group, would you kind of? Would you agree with Anthony in the sense… because what I am getting from that is that you think that your role is to support the wellbeing of these children and young people that might have a parent in prison and build that relationship with them. Is that kind of what other people think in relation to? What do you think your role is as school staff in supporting children who might have a parent in prison?

Emily: Yeah, I would definitely say that it's really important that they know that they've got a safe person whoever that may be and it's down to the individual who they build a relationship, could be their Form Tutor or their Maths Teacher or whoever it is, but yeah, I think it's really important that they know that they've got a safe person who's gonna [sic] make time and give them that confidentiality.

Charlotte: Are there any other thoughts around this about what your role might be? And it's okay, there might not be any thoughts. I'm really curious what people's…

Anthony: Yeah, I think one of the other things as well. For all these… from my point of view, we do a lot of the referrals as well. So because we speak to, again in a pastoral setting, we speak to a lot of Social Workers and School Nurses and MHST workers and CAMHS and everything anyway. I think the students are very aware that we do have the best interests at heart and not to say that anyone else doesn't but they're almost maybe a little bit more used to

us being heavily involved in that side of things. So maybe that's a thing that is different from for me as well. Maybe just a little bit.

Charlotte: Any other thoughts around what you think your role might be? So we've got things around supporting their wellbeing, having somebody that they know and is a safe person or a safe adult they can go to talk about things that they need to. Are there any of the roles that you think school staff might play in supporting these children and young people?

Emily: I think it's about keeping professional records as well. Making sure that you go running log, so that other people working with them can see because there could be other agencies involved. If you've got child with a parent in prison, there could be social care or Child Protection or any maybe YES workers or don't know other agencies.

Charlotte: Yeah.

Emily: So you likely to need to know the kind of the history.

Charlotte: So there is the importance of kind of record keeping and things like that in relation to the young people and making sure things are communicated with other professionals.

Emily: Yeah, and also… the… the young student I mentioned earlier. I went to a TAF the other day and I was very bamboozled by all of the kind of legal processes and the sections and the plea hearings, all of the sort of legal stuff and I thought this isn't stuff that I normally deal with day-to-day. So there's a lot to get my head around there in terms of understanding who's involved at what point?

Charlotte: Yeah, the journey of the offender almost what happened that and…

Emily: Yeah.

Charlotte: …how that might impact absolutely.

Carmen: Erm… I think… erm… giving them structure and consistency and I… with… I try to create strong relationships with home and family so that the child knows and sort of that. You know, I'm in communication with home and obviously if they want to talk about feelings and stuff and there's things that they just need to get off their chest, you know, that Mum might not need to know they can still do that. I mean, obviously unless it's I think they're unsafe or at risk or anything but I think just building the relationship with them giving them a

safe space giving them structure. So as much as you know, as much as you're there for them and you'll listen and everything. I think also giving them, you know, the discipline and, you know, where things might be missing at home. Just giving them the structure that when they come to school they know they're gonna [sic] see me on the morning and they know they've got me for this lesson for the day, they can come and see my at break time if they need to and they know where I am if there's… do you know what I mean, yeah and…

Charlotte: Yeah, absolutely.

Carmen: …transparency as well… erm…

Emily: I think a lot of what you said there kind of comes under a parenting sort of approach. You know that kind of nurturing. Do you know what I mean? that kind of an attachment person.

Carmen: Yeah. Yeah, yes. Yeah. Yeah because I think it's important and I think as well to… like I've got a student where Dad's quite absent and then step-dad went to prison for domestic violence against his Mum and he is missing a positive male role model in his life and so he's got a YES worker, who's amazing, and he's amazing and he's a proper… you know, a positive male role model and sometimes it sort of seeing where you can factor in people to sort of give what they're missing at home because someone's absent if you know what I mean.

Charlotte: Yeah, yeah, you think it could be the school's role to maybe organise some additional support for this young person?

Carmen: I think me personally yeah because I think I know some people sort of have a view of school where it's sort of just academic education, but for me and my job, it's sort of removing barriers to learn in and sometimes the barrier is emotional well-being so we've got to support,…

Charlotte: Yeah, absolutely.

Carmen: …those sort of areas. But yeah, I agree with what you've said.

Emily: I think yeah is that thing of having time for them and them knowing that you've got the time to give them and the time to listen even when it isn't necessarily very purposeful, is important and…

Carmen: Yeah.

Emily: …and I think is that sometimes those kids kind of need you to straighten out the tie and wipe down their coat for them and ask if they've had some breakfast, you…

Carmen: Yeah, yeah.

Emily: …that kind of…

Charlotte: Yeah, so meeting their basic needs. People that were working with absolutely and I was just wondering Isla do you have anything to add to that in terms of the role because I'm conscious you there, but I know you're busy as well.

Isla: No, it's okay. I just stepped out for a moment. I'm just outside the doctor so I will have to go in a few minutes.

Charlotte: That's fine. Don't worry.

Isla: And so… I think mine was from the primary school point of view. What we sometimes find is that… I know a lot of what I'm thinking has been said in terms of supporting the child's emotional well-being but we tend to find that, say it is domestic violence and it may be Mum at home and Mum's been the victim then I think there's times when, you know, our support is extended to parents as well to support them and maybe signpost them to other agencies or even be a listening ear to parents at times because we're recognise that for the child needs to be met that, parents need some support as well and they don't always know and get that support as part of the process. Sometimes it comes so much as a check-in from the police and then it's kind of like, okay that's done now. School know, Social Services know and we kind of potentially leave them to it almost so I think sometimes it's making sure they've got the right support so they've got someone and it's not impacting the children day to day.

Carmen: Yeah, I agree with what Isla said there about extending it to parents as well.

Charlotte: And I'm just curious so you've got lots of ideas around support. But where do you find your information around children with imprisoned parents? Where have you got this information to support them?

Isla: I think to be honest, it’s kind of, it's not always actually having that direct information. Sometimes it kind of pulling on other resources. So one thing that I find really useful is the [redacted] domestic abuse partnership, so they do a lot of work with… particularly around domestic violence. I think if it was something else and potentially there’s that element of you go out and kind of look for the information but yeah, I would definitely go to them with domestic violence but it’s something that I definitely feel like there needs to be more out there on.

Charlotte: Does anybody else have any thoughts around that? So Isla thinks there needs to be a little bit more out there in terms of how to support these children and young people, specifically who might have a parent in prison.

Emily: It's not something, you get lots of training offered through the EP and various other services speech and language and social emotional whatever but there's never anything specifically about imprisoned parents.

Charlotte: Are there any thoughts around why that might be?

Isla: I think it's a very broad field there’s so many things are incorporated in that and potentially not that it means I don't think there should be more information, but I guess it can potentially be a little bit of a minefield. Maybe there's a lot of information that might be relevant in one scenario but might be quite conflicted in another. So in terms of…

Charlotte: Yeah.

Isla: …of what crime is committed and things like that. It's very potentially bespoke to the crime maybe and what the child knows?

Charlotte: Yeah, so like you say it's a child with an imprisoned parent feels like very much an umbrella term. Is that what you’re saying Isla? With a range of experiences.

Isla: Yes, that's right. Yeah, and I am really sorry. I’m sat in the car waiting to go in and…

Charlotte: It’s okay.

Isla: …so I'm gonna have to go, but thank you so much. It's been really nice actually hearing in thank you.

Charlotte: Thanks. Thank you, Isla. So does anybody else have anything that they would follow on from Isla's comments there?

Emily: I think until I started working recently with this young person with the Mum who's experienced domestic violence, and she's a young carer for her Mum. It wouldn't have occurred to me that those issues would arise I mean, it seems obvious when you think about it, but I just sort of thought about the criminal angle and kind of the risk of exploitation and heightened risk of criminality always taking behaviour. It didn't really occur to me that they might have an impact on their relationships within the family within the home.

Charlotte: Yeah, so like you say you initially kind of fell towards that risk element, maybe Emily rather than…

Emily: Yeah, yeah.

Charlotte: ..thinking about actually how is that going to impact on this young person more holistically. Is that kind of what you said?

Emily: Because without going too far into this one case this young person is really, really sensible and her Mum describes her as a mother. She says she's not really a child. She never had a childhood. She's just looks after everybody all the time. So she's really, really sensible.

Emily: I suppose that could have an impact as well that could change some point. Couldn't it?

Charlotte: Is there anything that anybody would like to add to that?

Charlotte: Okay, I guess… what the final question I kind of had for the group. So we've spoken a little bit about what kind of comes up for us when we think about a child with an imprisoned parent. We've had a think about how some of that information might be shared with us as practitioners. And we've also had a think about what we think our role is a school staff within the school system in supporting these children and young people and maybe where we get some of our information from to be able to support these young people. I guess, I just want it to finish just with thinking a bit more widely and what do you think the role of education is in supporting these young people? Is there a role just generally within education for supporting children prison parents or do people think there isn't? What's, kind of, people's views around that just more generally within education.

Anthony: I think it's… No you go Emily.

Emily: What I was going to say that there might be gaps in learning as a result of trauma or non-attendance or difficulties that they've had logistically might cause gaps in learning.

Charlotte: And what would happen if there were gaps in learning Emily? I'm just wondering what your thoughts are in that area. What would that lead to for that young person?

Emily: it can lead to increased gaps in learning can't it, it can just be sort of a perpetuating thing, but I suppose you would try to address it within the school and put things in place and encourage them to attend and give them a better extra support in lessons to try and help them through it and nurture.

Charlotte: Yeah. Is there something around the achievement… are you trying to say that maybe the role of education is to help this young person achieve, is that kind of what you're saying?

Emily: I suppose when you say education. I was thinking about, you know, reaching your learning targets. Yeah.

Charlotte: …yeah, absolutely.

Anthony: Yeah, I think for my point view when you said what's the role of practitioners in school, I think it's kind of the same as everything int' [sic] it now. It's just we're meant to be everything. So, that support, it's not something that I would say that we are trained on specifically. I wouldn't say it's anything that is massively even offered in terms of kind of your normal safeguarding level one, two, three courses and I've done ones on supporting parents with substance abuse. I've done ones on online safety, you know, there's many different ones you can do, I've yet to really see one on that [parental imprisonment] aspect despite the fact that I think that's something that's becoming more and more prevalent. And we… obviously you have small amounts of training but it's the same as everything else int it now. There's so much [sic] cutbacks in everything whether that be social care whether that be with, you know, youth offending workers, youth workers and youth clubs… everything. There's so much that's been cut back that now school staff are picking up a lot more than that kind of external intervention or external support… they're few and far between so completely different example, but we had last year two students who obviously found out one of them was pregnant. We have two people that were [sic] gonna be parents into Year 11 and it was really hard to find support to get some sort of counselling or anything there. We did manage

to find it but it wasn't easily accessible and I feel like that's the problem. So we're doing a lot of it in-house we're using our well-being team our SEMH workers all the resources…

Charlotte: Yeah.

Anthony: …we've got in school, but kind of is there that much [sic] resources outside of school unless It goes through social workers or there's some sort of significant safeguarding concerns.

Charlotte: Yeah.

Anthony: I don't think there is so if you've got a really good student who's normally getting, you know, talking high school terms… grade sevens and eights. They're really well behaved. They're really well presented. They're coming to school they attend well, and then they've got a parent in prison. What support is there for that child? And I feel like that's where school are having to step in quite significantly because finding or reaching out to any sort of resource outside of it is getting more and more difficult as the weeks and months go on.

Charlotte: So are you kind of saying there Anthony that… I guess… there's a couple things that I have picked up from there. You're saying that school staff technically wear many, many hats, don't they? and they have to do lots and lots of different jobs to support these young people, but that necessarily they might not be… so for example a child with an imprisoned parent might have some specific needs and they might not have any training around that but then you're also saying as well that there might be some young people that are kind of getting on with things but still might have a parent in prison, but can't access anything. Is that kind of...

Anthony: Yeah, yeah, absolutely because I feel like if normally if there's a parent, we're talking about social care and one parents classed as, that they're under Child Protection… that child would then go live with another parent or they would find out ways in which we could support and there would be social workers involved and there are so many agencies working with that child. If one parent was doing something that was related to bad parenting, for example,…

Charlotte: Yeah, yeah.

Anthony: Or if one parent had substance abuse… does that make sense? But then if one parent then goes to prison for example, if there isn't any sort of social care aspect, where does the support come from and then? Have we got the resources available? Now I have, because of my own experience in dealing with it. Somebody new that came in might genuinely think, wait on, I don't know what am I supposed to do here? How am I supposed to deal with it?

Charlotte: Yeah.

Anthony: Where do we go for support? And I don't know any agencies that specifically deal with that or where the support would come from for that either.

Charlotte: So you're kind of saying that the children that maybe don't present as a problem within systems. So for example, not presenting in the social care system, if they're not mental health system, if they're not presenting as… I guess… within the school system as an issue, then they might not get the support that they need. Is that kind…

Anthony: Yeah, I think we've touched on it earlier.

Charlotte: …what you say? Yeah.

Anthony: We've noticed that kids will start getting involved in crime or their behaviour starts dipping. So *then* we put things in place. But if there was… we've had a child that actually is fine in school.

Charlotte: Yeah.

Anthony: But, you know, they've also got that worry, where's the support coming from? And it's purely through I would say school and… there's no sort of service out there that offers it any sort of intervention or support specifically for children who have got imprisoned parents, or not ones that I'm aware of within the community that I work in personally. So, I think that's quite a big gap.

Charlotte: Yeah, does anybody have any thoughts on that?

Emily: …and I think I'm just gonna [sic] say that I think.

Charlotte: Emily you were going to comment.

Emily: We know that in prison there is a disproportionate number of people who've had adverse experiences and been victims of violence or abuse or substance misuse or all these kind of problems. So the chances of the child is having experienced trauma before the prison part, it's quite high. So there's likely problems within their life. And then I don't know. Is there a danger of, if it's a black male who's gone to prison? Is there a chance of that kind of feeling of the systems against me, kind of perpetuating the whole cycle.

Charlotte: I guess you've made an interesting comment there as well Emily around that maybe young might have experienced lots of adverse experiences and I wonder can we necessarily always pinpoint whether it's the parental imprisonment that's causing some of the issues or whether it's more complex. I'm just curious around that as well. Are there any other comments that you'd like to make around this? I'm just conscious of the time but does anybody have any final comments they'd like to make in relation to what we've been talking about today or…?

Carmen: Erm, no. I think like what Anthony was saying I feel I think edu… like schools have taken up a lot of the sort of… what's the word? You know, sort of, taking up roles that we aren't necessarily meant to, but I think if you look sort of a child's day it's school and home, I mean, so we're quite an important part of their lives and I think a lot of the times I think a lot of stuff would probably go amiss if schools didn't sort of pick it up and recognise what were [sic] going on which is why I just think as educators it's really important because I think the relationships that we build in school… erm… reveal a lot. But I think there is a massive gap in support for and students with imprisoned parents because… like we said the boy who went to live with his Dad after… after he came out of prison because his Mum was an alcoholic. When I spoke to him, he sort of was just like no one really checked on me or knew or there was no sort of… after because he found out himself. So no one told him that Dad had gone to prison and I think he sort of struggles with that because he knows his family loves him. But at the same time he was sort of like, why was I kept in the dark? And I think…

Charlotte: Yeah.

Carmen: …until you actually invited us to this and there's not a conversation around sort of this topic. But now that I've been part of this discussion, I'm sort of realising how important it is and how much of an impact it can have because like to say you can't always identify if it's

having imprisoned parent or if it's other things going on, but I do think for a lot of young people and it's a massive thing but yeah, no, I think it's really very interesting.

Emily: I think you make a good point there Carmen that it is it tends to fall to school to pick up the whole needs of the child.

Carmen: Yeah.

Emily: We kind of have to do everything don't we it's maybe we're…

Carmen: Yeah.

Emily: …not the right service, maybe as the people are telling kids what to do in the classroom. We shouldn't be dealing with everything all aspects of Wellness.

Carmen: Cuz sometimes I feel sort of inadequate to support the child sometimes even though they come to you, you sort of get to a point with certain topics where you like… I don't know what to say to you, but then there's nothing for us to sort of refer them to…

Charlotte: Yeah… what would help Carmen? What would help you to be able to know what to say to young people who might have a parent in prison. What would help? What would support you?

Carmen: Erm… feel like… I don't know… like Isla was saying I think it's a very broad thing but I think, you know how we sort of have, you know how people come and talk about safeguarding training sort of what to say to kids and how to treat them and how to respond. I think it needs sort of some sort of training because it affects that kids in so many different ways sort of some kids can cope and just go under the radar. I had a girl… her brother went to prison and I knew her brother and the only reason she was able to talk about with me because I went to school with her brother, do you know what I mean? Other kids act…

Charlotte: Yeah.

Carmen: out and they can't control. Do you know what I mean, so it's just the aftermath can look so many different ways.

Charlotte: Yeah.

Carmen: And I think it's really hard to deal with so many different scenarios when I feel like I'm not equipped and as a carry on doing my job, I sort of realize how many young people have had imprisoned parents or currently do have and…

Charlotte: Yeah.

Carmen: because that I personally believe sort of… you know… who's in the home is so important to a child's upbringing and I think it can really affect them. So I think training and I think having more conversations with professionals and sort of networking and that even this conversations like this with other people at schools because sometimes you feel like you're on your own in terms of you don't know…

Charlotte: Yeah.

Carmen: …what to do at a certain point to support kids, but it's nice to sort of speak and know that other schools feel the same way. Do you know what I mean?

Charlotte: Because it is now five o' clock we'll have to leave it there. It's a fascinating discussion to have but I'm just conscious of time and it feels wrong for me to kind of keep you all after an hour. I'll stop the recording now. and just…

Appendix IX: coding refinement table (February 2024)

Data Item	Iteration 2	Iteration 3	Notes	Iteration 4
I don't want to talk about it if my… say it's mum… like my Mum's a good person… I was gonna say we've got a young person whose dad is in prison for a domestic violence towards mum and she's quite conflicted. Sometimes she says I really miss him. I want, hope that it gets out of prison and the time she sort of says I'm really scared for mum. I hope he stays there.	CWIPs conflict 'parent vs. criminal'	CWIP conflicted about parental relationship in relation to crime	Not entirely sure on this code. Needs further refinement or additional codes? YP views parent as 'parent' – anything that deviates from this is difficult? Potential impact of offender label? Conflict of parental status? Morality? Could this link to psychodynamic theory of splitting – seeing things as wholly good or wholly bad? Does this need a code? Also links to ambiguous loss code?	Reconciling feelings towards being a child of a person who is in prison Trying to manage the internal conflict/confusion parents vs. offender
And I feel like they sort of then go from being a child to being grown up in the head and they have to be mature and you have to look after Mum… and she's classified as a young carer for Mum… Because without going too far into this one case this young person is really, really sensible and her Mum describes her as a mother. She says she's not really a child.	CWIP as man of the house CWIP as carer CWIP as parent	CWIPs may have additional responsibilities within the home	Is this code too broad? Could the other codes also exist in relation to these data items as standalone codes?	I think this code could exist in relation to all of them.

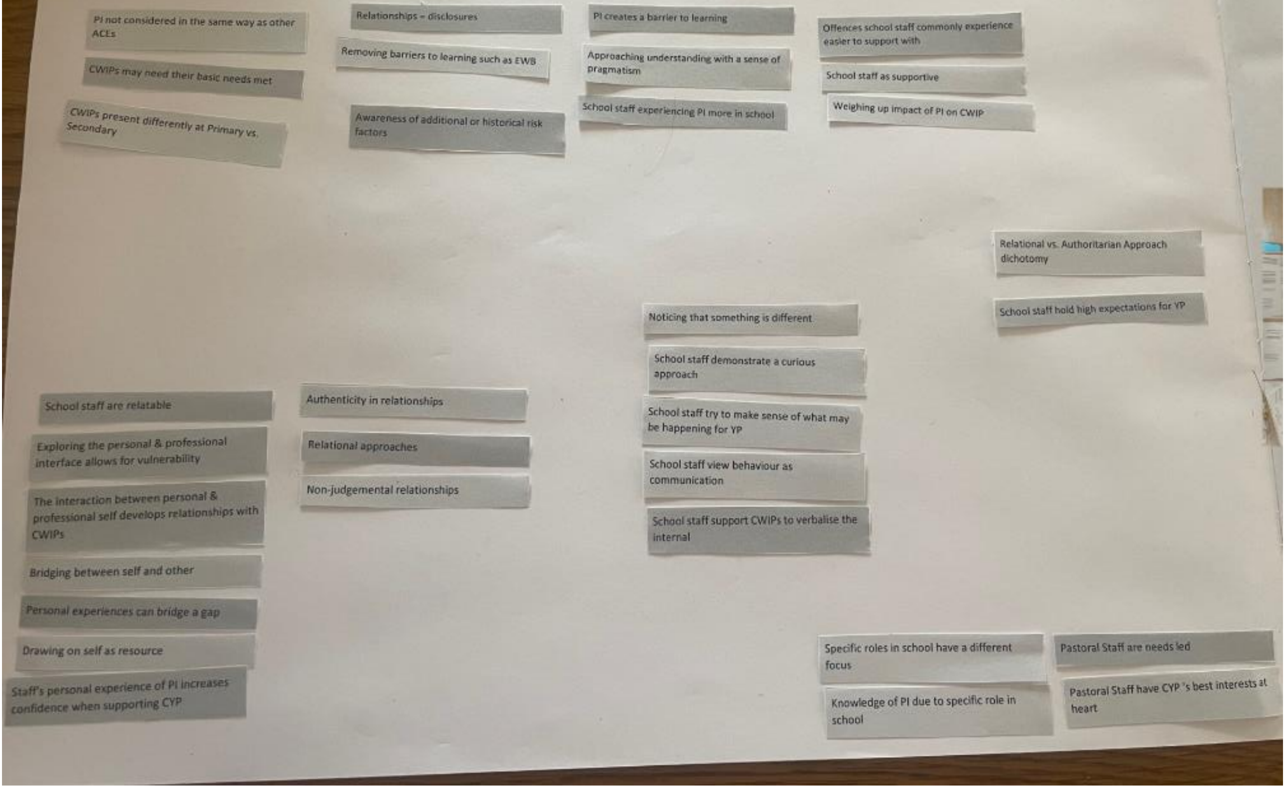
She never had a childhood. She's just looks after everybody all the time.				
Carmen: but I… because I grew up in the community I work in, a lot of the time I know through being in the community that a parent is in prison or has been and had one student where I read up on it before I took him on and his mum sort of said to him. Look Miss Carmen knows everything so you don't need to sort of say why he's there or whatever… like Miss knows. Anthony: I think from my experience personally having worked… cause obviously I come from the area… I work in the area and when I say area I mean the town itself …and it's ironic that some of the parents that have been imprisoned. I actually know them as well, which sometimes helps me and I know that sounds random, but the students will say like… you know my… it's almost like it can be open about it. And I think part of… erm… a lot of the time as well is just how the students resonate. So for me… a lot of the time the kids… er, parents are similar age, maybe similar interests, similar looking. similar kind of aspects of life and just kind of also drawing on, my own life experiences, which I've had a person in… a lot of my own friends have been to prison. I've had a lot of friends that have, you know, been locked up and done	Social GRACES	Social GRACES and Relationships	Again, does this code need refinement? I do not think that school staff had a conscious awareness that they were reflecting on their Social Graces and how this shapes their practice/relationships. Have I coded this because Social GRACES are something that I am consciously aware of in my practice? I don't know whether there needs to be a code around tensions regarding the personal and professional – can they co-exist? It feels like in the second data item, Anthony was potentially going back and forth with this? I think a lot of the time students just know who they can go to who they can speak to and whether they'll understand it or not, and I don't know how that Is measured I don't know how. – this sticks out to me and I do not know why?	Allowing personal self to interact with professional self to develop relationships with CWIPs Personal experiences can bridge a gap Drawing on self as a resource Authenticity in relationships Exploring the personal/professional interface can allow for vulnerability Bridging between self and other

things and imprisoned for a long stretches of time and family members as well. So for me personally, I'm able to kind of bridge a gap with my own experiences which whether that's more to do with my role or not. I'm unsure. But a lot of the things that they're talking about just in general day-to-day. I think I'm able to pitch-in with and they can kind of bounce back off me and forward and back and they can kind of see 'oh' that he understands and 'he knows'. And I think we spoke about it before Charlotte just kids looking at you. I think a lot of the time students just know who they can go to who they can speak to and whether they'll understand it or not, and I don't know how that Is measured I don't know how.				
Mum's got really significant mental health needs after everything that's happened. So mum, can't go out just has panic attacks. and the young person is in a position where she's having to parent the younger siblings and get them showered and get them dressed and support mom and do the cooking and cleaning. Her Mum describes her as a mother. She says she's not really a child. She never had a childhood. She's just looks after everybody all the time.	CWIP as adult	Adultification of CWIPs	Not entirely sure on this code. Needs further refinement or additional codes? Is this adultification or am I making a leap? The school staff spoke about this in relation to the change of role for some CWIPs. However, it does feel like Mum may have accepted this in the second data item and the member of staff describes them as having to be	Assumed agency and capacity to take on carer role CWIPs support the family system CWIPs may hold different roles within the family system

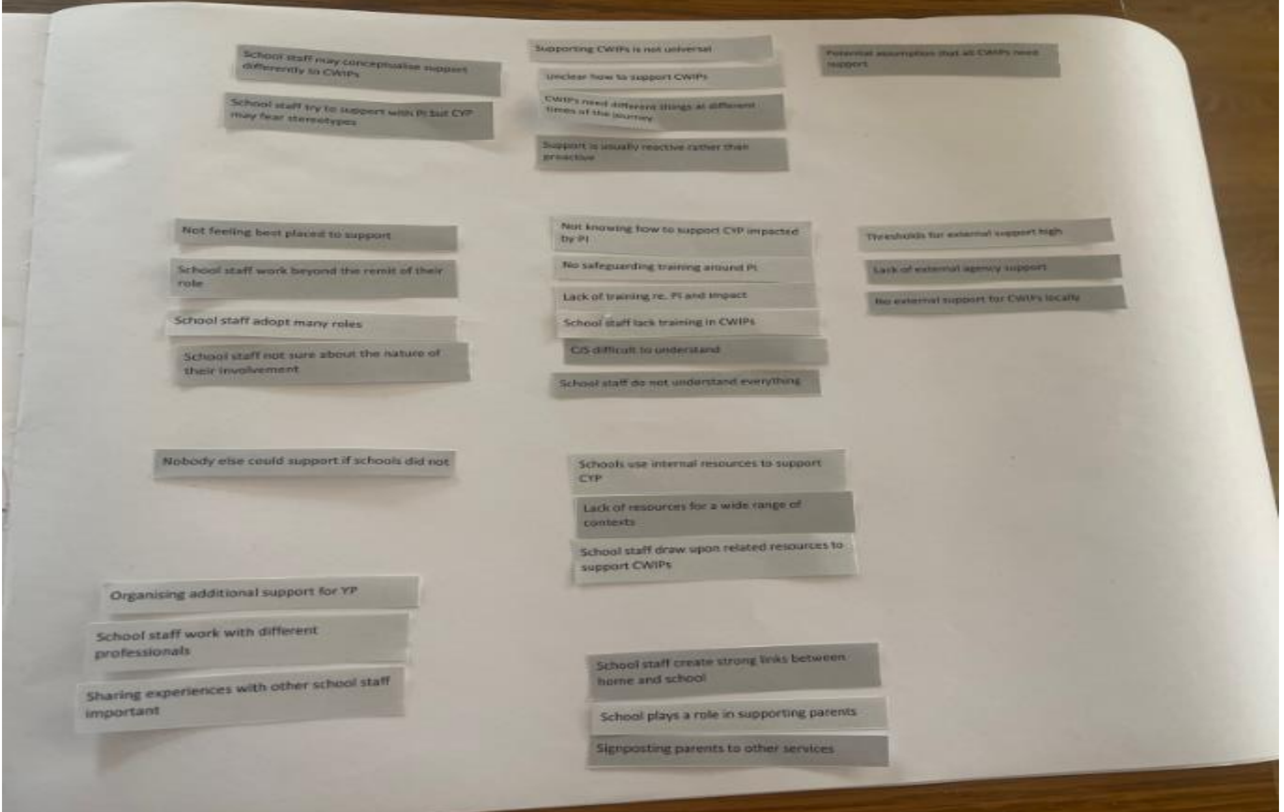
And I feel like they sort of then go from being a child to being grown up in the head and they have to be mature.			'mature'. HM Inspectorate for Probation has highlighted that experiencing DV and socio-economic disadvantage can contribute to risk of adultification in CYP. As CWIPs could be at risk of both of these things as highlighted in the lit review is there potential justification in this code? Are there some potential unconscious assumptions that CWIPs have more agency and capacity to make an informed decision around this change of role?	
	CWIPs and knife crime	CWIPs as intergenerational	Seemed like this code needed to be collapsed and merged together. The link between the psychoeducational group and carrying knives was made in relation to how many CYP had a parent in prison. Could another code possibly exist such as 'CWIPs may carry weapons'?	
I don't think there is so if you've got a really good student who's normally getting, you know, talking high school terms… grade sevens and eights. They're really well behaved. They're really well presented. They're coming to school they attend well,			I feel like this data item is extremely important but I am struggling to code it. I have a 'lack of external agency support' code which it could fall under, however, I feel that this is linked more closely to CYP who are not presenting as a problem in	Assumption because there's a parent in prison that support is needed CWIPs potentially do not always present as a problem

and then they've got a parent in prison. What support is there for that child?			systems – is it something about them being viewed as worthy of support too?	
So as much as you know, as much as you're there for them and you'll listen and everything. I think also giving them, you know, the discipline and, you know, where things might be missing at home. like I've got a student where Dad's quite absent and then step-dad went to prison for domestic violence against his Mum and he is missing a positive male role model in his life and so he's got a YES worker, who's amazing, and he's amazing and he's a proper… you know, a positive male role model sometimes it sort of seeing where you can factor in people to sort of give what they're missing at home because someone's absent if you know what I mean.	CWIPs are missing something at home	Absent fathers	Could both codes exist? The second iteration is more semantic than latent, however, ot quite sure the first code captures the full story? The data items specifically spoke about absence in relation to fathers/step-fathers being imprisoned. I wondered whether this links to other data items not included in this code currently, particularly ones where it was suggested that mother's capacity to parent reduced because of Dad's absence. Interesting that in the first data item it was suggested discipline may be missing at home. Are fathers the only ones who can provide that? Is there something to be said in relation to narratives around absent fathers and implications on psychosocial development – lots of research around this. Is this a pervasive socio-cultural narrative we hear a lot? Discussion with Mary: statistically fewer women in prison?	Absent fathers and loss Absent fathers normalised Absent fathers unlikely to be main carer Fathers in prison have less impact on CWIPs day-to-day Add *in data items*

Appendix X: photographs of the initial clustering of codes

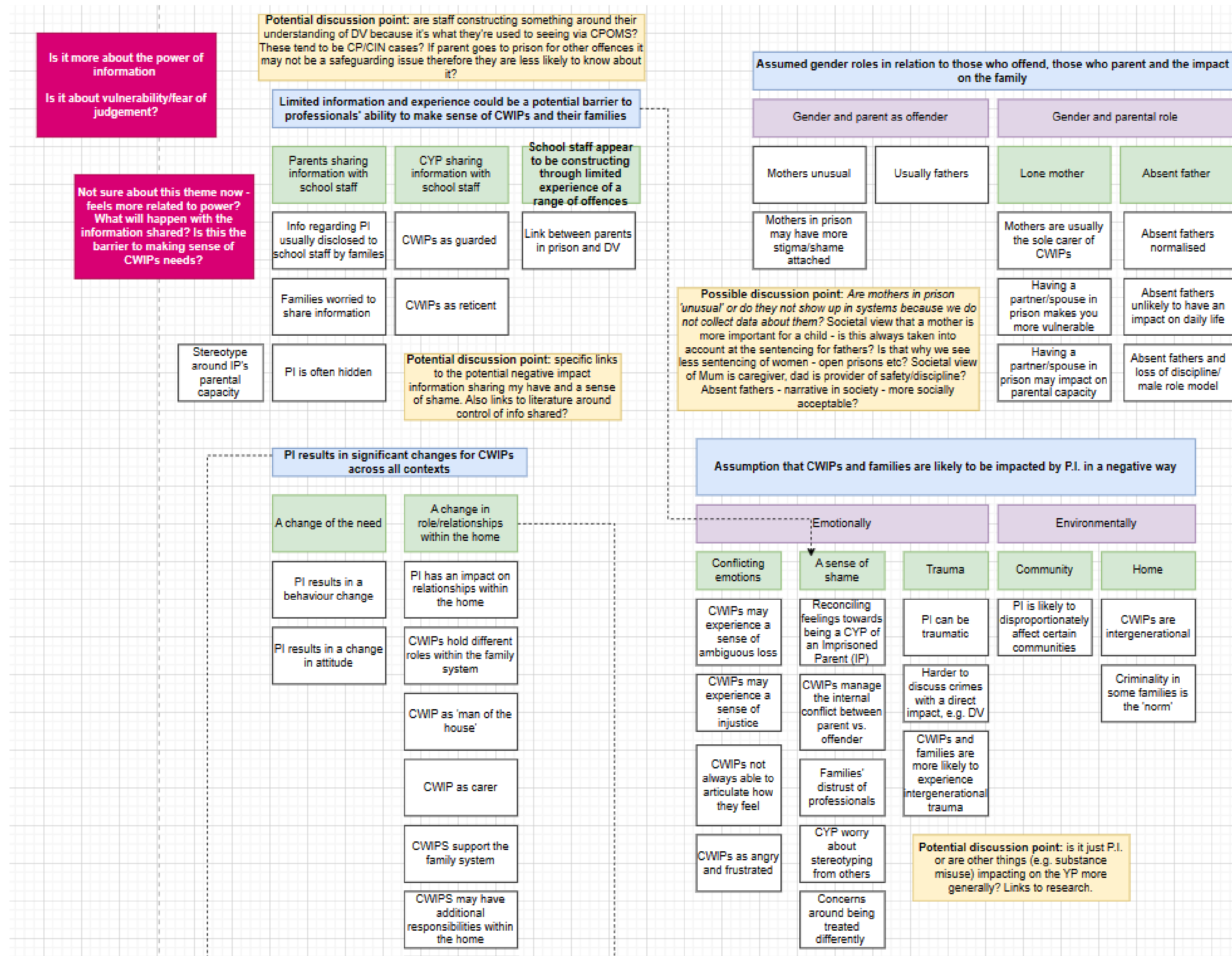


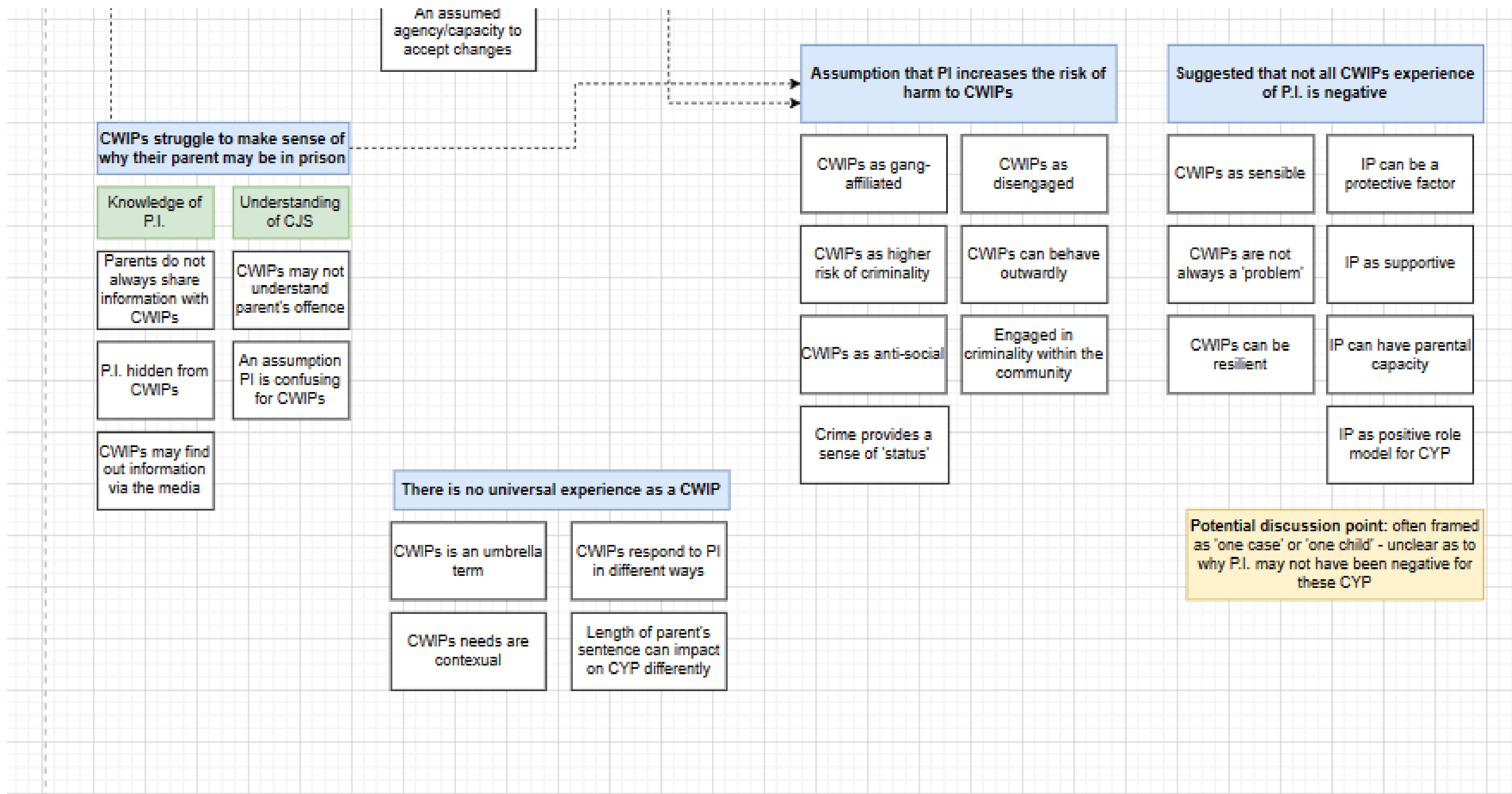
How do School Staff construct CWIPs & their families?
PI not considered in the same way as other ACEs
CWIPs may need their basic needs met
CWIPs present differently at Primary vs. Secondary
Relationships – disclosures
Removing barriers to learning such as EWB
Awareness of additional or historical risk factors
PI creates a barrier to learning
Approaching understanding with a sense of pragmatism
School staff experiencing PI more in school
Offences school staff commonly experience easier to support with
School staff as supportive
Weighing up impact of PI on CWIP
Relational vs. Authoritarian Approach dichotomy
School staff hold high expectations for YP
Noticing that something is different
School staff demonstrate a curious approach
School staff try to make sense of what may be happening for YP
School staff view behaviour as communication
School staff support CWIPs to verbalise the internal
School staff are relatable
Exploring the personal & professional interface allows for vulnerability
The interaction between personal & professional self develops relationships with CWIPs
Bridging between self and other
Personal experiences can bridge a gap
Drawing on self as resource
Staff's personal experience of PI increases confidence when supporting CYP
Authenticity in relationships
Relational approaches
Non-judgemental relationships
Specific roles in school have a different focus
Knowledge of PI due to specific role in school
Pastoral Staff are needs led
Pastoral Staff have CYP 's best interests at heart



School staff may conceptualise support differently to CWIPs
School staff try to support with PI but CYP may fear stereotypes
Supporting CWIPs is not universal
Unclear how to support CWIPs
CWIPs need different things at different times of the journey
Support is usually reactive rather than proactive
Not feeling best placed to support
School staff work beyond the remit of their role
School staff adopt many roles
School staff not sure about the nature of their involvement
Not knowing how to support CYP impacted by PI
No safeguarding training around PI
Lack of training re. PI and impact
School staff lack training in CWIPs
CJS difficult to understand
School staff do not understand everything
Thresholds for external support high
Lack of external agency support
No external support for CWIPs locally
Nobody else could support if schools did not
Schools use internal resources to support CYP
Lack of resources for a wide range of contexts
School staff draw upon related resources to support CWIPs
Organising additional support for YP
School staff work with different professionals
Sharing experiences with other school staff important
School staff create strong links between home and school
School plays a role in supporting parents
Signposting parents to other services

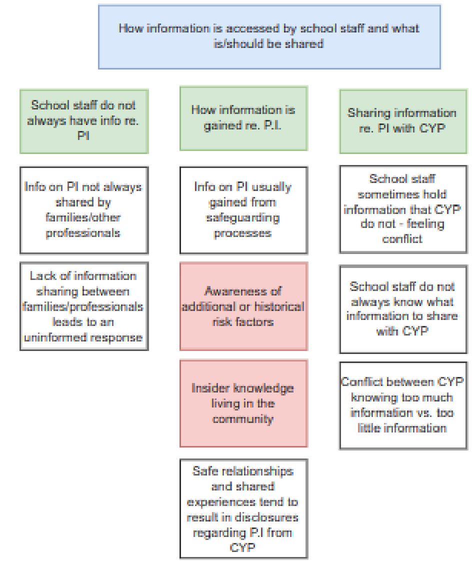
Appendix XI: initial candidate themes on Draw.io

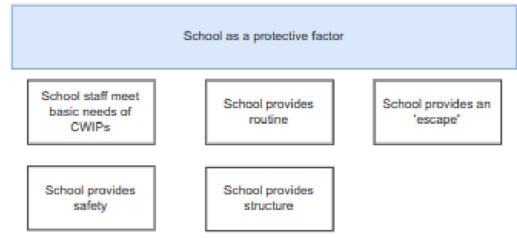


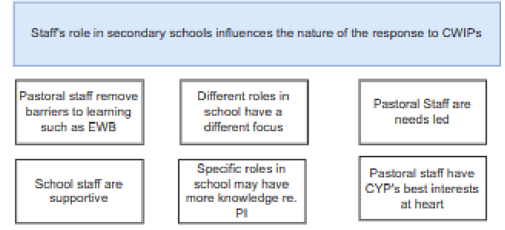


An assumed agency/capacity to accept changes
CWIPs struggle to make sense of why their parent may be in prison
Knowledge of P.I.
Understanding of CJS
Parents do not always share information with CWIPs
CWIPs may not understand parent's offence
P.I. hidden from CWIPs
An assumption PI is confusing for CWIPs
CWIPs may find out information via the media
Assumption that PI increases the risk of harm to CWIPs
CWIPs as gang-affiliated
CWIPs as disengaged
CWIPs as higher risk of criminality
CWIPs can behave outwardly
CWIPs as anti-social
Engaged in criminality within the community
Crime provides a sense of 'status'
Suggested that not all CWIPs experience of P.I. is negative
CWIPs as sensible
IP can be a protective factor
CWIPs are not always a 'problem'
IP as supportive
CWIPs can be resilient
IP can have parental capacity
IP as positive role model for CYP
There is no universal experience as a CWIP
CWIPs is an umbrella term
CWIPs respond to PI in different ways
CWIPs needs are contexual
Length of parent's sentence can impact on CYP differently
Potential discussion point: often framed as 'one case' or 'one child' - unclear as to why P.I. may not have been negative for these CYP

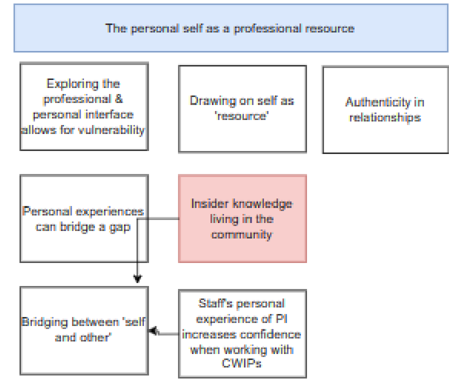
How do school staff construct their role in relation to CWIPs and their families?

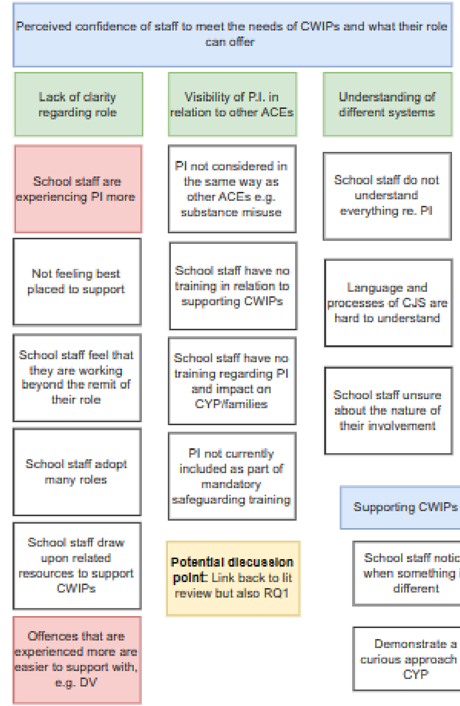


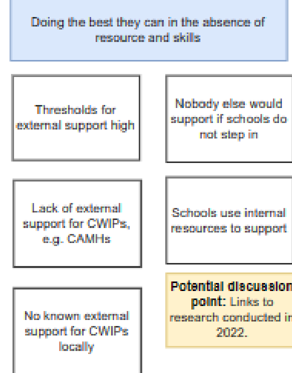


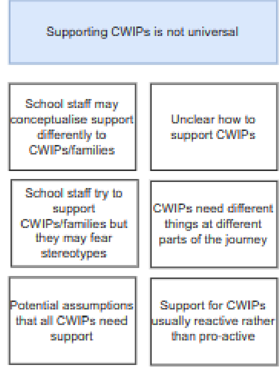


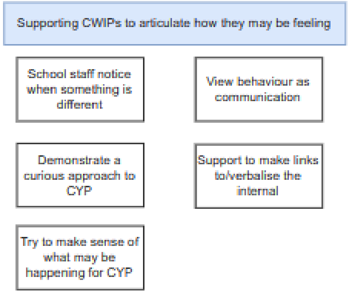
I am potentially giving this theme a lot of weight, particularly working within the current socio-political climate. School staff will often support in the absence of external support so why would CWIPs be any different?

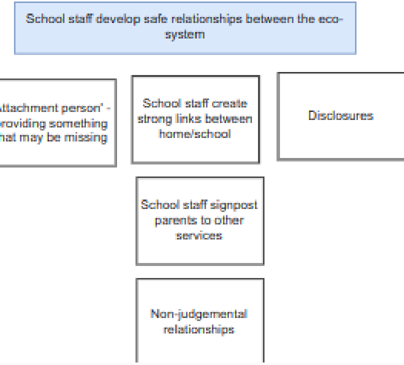










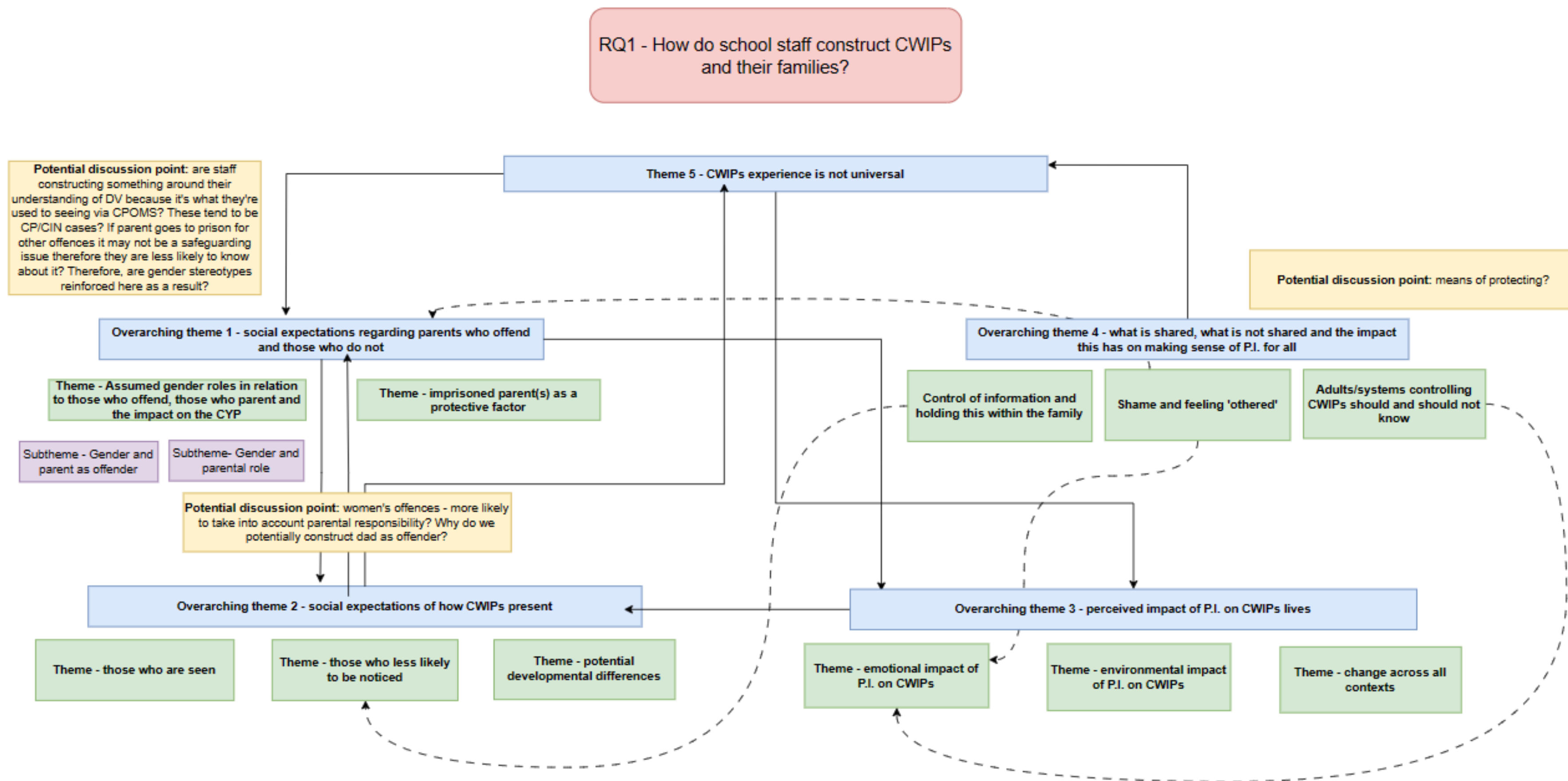


OUTLIER CODES

School staff hold high expectations for YP

Relational vs. authoritarian approach - dichotomy

Appendix XII: an example of one of the iterations of initial thematic maps



Appendix XIII: **Reflexive diary entry 5**

During the data analysis phase of my research, I unexpectedly experienced the imprisonment of a close family member. This ultimately changed my relationship with the data that I was reading and I could resonate with a lot of my participant's experiences. I also wondered whether what I was feeling was similar to that of CWIPs themselves. A sense of anger, a sense of worry and shame. I specifically felt conflict in relation to the interaction between my personal and professional self, particularly as the experience was so close to my research. Ultimately, the aim of my research was to begin to talk more openly about experiences of familial imprisonment but I found myself not wanting to disclose, share information or discuss my experience through fear of the repercussions. How would this information be used? Would people view me in a different way? How would this impact on my professional identity? It wasn't until I relistened to and reread my transcript that it highlighted that imprisonment could happen to anybody, in all walks of life. I was moved by Anthony's bravery at discussing his own personal experiences with imprisonment and how he related this to his work with CWIPs, which prompted this reflection. At this point, I decided to return to my axiology and literature review – my why. My research was founded on the basis of challenging the traditional view of the research relationship, therefore, I believe it is important to talk about how this experience may have shifted my lens from an outsider to a slightly insider perspective. I cannot ever truly understand how CWIPs feel, as my relationship is not parent-child, but I can relate to some of the feelings that are attached to a family member who may offend. I also sought to bridge the gap between self and other, that this is something we could all experience, professional or not. If I was to truly live and breathe the values of my research and to change some of the stigma associated with imprisonment, then I needed to be open about

my experience. However, how I may do this in practice, particularly with CYP, is still something that I will need to consider.

Appendix XIV: **Reflexive diary entry 6**

I wondered whether I was drawn to a potential construction regarding the gendered nature of those who offend due to my own personal experience as a marginalised voice [female] and my personal experience of familial imprisonment. However, I resonated with how the participants were constructing parents in prison. From my own personal experience as a TEP, I had only ever experienced cases where the parent in prison was a father. Therefore, through Anthony's reflections, it felt important to potentially highlight the impact of socio-cultural discourses regarding what it means to be a woman or a mother and how this may hinder potential disclosures from CYP/families due to stigma/shame.

Appendix XV: Reflexive diary entry 7

Despite few data items in relation to this, and the fact that only one participant constructed a parent in prison in this way, it felt important to include this as a potential challenge to the literature. In particular, the literature regarding absent fathers and the socio-cultural discourse surrounding the issues of morality, criminality, and parenting. If my research timeline had gone smoothly, I would have potentially like to have discussed and analysed this further in a follow-up focus group.

***Appendix XVI:* Reflexive diary entry 8**

I felt conflicted about the inclusion of this theme throughout the data analysis process. I wondered whether I was potentially giving this theme too much weight because it was so prevalent within my daily practice. During interactions with schools as a Trainee Educational Psychologist, I regularly hear how schools are struggling to meet the needs of their pupils due to the absence of internal and external resource and how school staff often feel deskilled in response to this. However, in line with my position of social constructionism, the historical and political context of which this research took place feels pertinent to discuss and provides a deepened sense of transparency and credibility within this research.

***Appendix XVII:* Reflexive diary entry 9**

The constructions highlighted above strongly resonated with my experience, particularly the experience of growing up in an inner-city community, my personal experience of familial imprisonment and the imprisonment of those I went to school with. Like Anthony, I have also felt conflicted as to whether my relationships with CYP are truly authentic and come from a place of 'unspoken understanding' or whether CYP may position me in a different way. For example, due to my title of TEP. I particularly found this interesting and valuable to include as part of my data as earlier in the chapter, school staff alluded to the fact they may not be 'best-placed', however, this potentially challenges that view and highlights the pivotal role relationships can play, which is something that all school staff can offer.

Appendix XVIII: **Reflexive diary entry 10**

I have conflicting feelings about changing my research to speak with adults supporting CWIPs, particularly colluding with the dominant narrative of inherent vulnerability, which was my initial argument for speaking to CYP directly. There are CWIPs who are not presenting within our systems, which may suggest that a lot of CWIPs are 'getting on with it'. By moving my research to experiences of professionals I felt like I was moving away from my values of autonomy, agency, and child voice. However, I believe that it is important that I do this in the safest way possible. Deacon (2019) highlighted how gatekeepers can provide some reassurance to researchers that CYP have some support following their participation in the research. Although my ethics application had initially suggested that the role of school staff are often well-equipped to support CYP in this respect, it is important to acknowledge some of the systemic pressures a lot of settings are faced with within the current socio-political climate and it would be unfair of me to assume that they have the capacity to support my research. It has also been highlighted within the research that school staff believe they need more support in relation to knowledge to be able to support CWIPs in a meaningful and informed way (Gampbell, n.d.).

This helped to change my perspective, particularly a switch to speaking with school staff as part of my research. One of the main barriers to recruitment was staff not knowing or understanding some of the issues relating to CWIPs and how to support them effectively. I believe that through opening discussions in relation to how school staff conceptualise their role, it may begin to reduce some of the 'hiddenness' CWIPs may experience. It is hoped that by adding to the literature in this way, it may provide a gateway for me in the future to explore the school experience of CWIPs directly.