

ECEY5010- Research for learning Portfolio.

I have not used AI within this portfolio.

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Impact parental imprisonment has on Early Years development with a focus on multiagency working.

Literature Review.

The study is an attempt to address the impact parental imprisonment has on Early Years development with a focus on multiagency working. There is limited research available for the impact multi-agency support has on Early Years children who have a parent serving a custodial sentence. A lot of the research focuses on the impact of parental imprisonment without acknowledging support services available.

According to Buchanan, Woods, and Shaw (2025, pp. 1-17) they suggest that children impacted by a parent serving a custodial sentence feel that their voices are not heard. They suggest that Article 12 of the United Nation Conventions on the Rights of the Child need to be complied with. Article 12 of the United Nation Conventions on the Rights of the child states that the child had the right to express their views, feelings and wishes and that they are carefully considered and respected in all matters pertaining to them (UNICEF, no date).

In October 2021, the Ministry of Justice conducted extensive research which revealed that 74,275 prisoners in the United Kingdom had children under the age of eighteen, through this research it was discovered that parental imprisonment affected 192,919 children (Ministry of Justice, 2024). This issue has a wider remit internationally with more than 700,000 children affected in Europe (European Commission, 2023, para. 2) and number's rising in the United States where it is reported that approximately 65% of prisoners have children (Poehlmann et al., 2021).

The data yielded by the Ministry of Justice research provides convincing evidence of the number of children who are impacted by parental imprisonment. Early Years children who are affected by parental imprisonment are at greater risk of developing mental health illnesses and have poor wellbeing (Nylander, Kallstorm and Hellfeldt, 2018, P34-45). Early Years children affected by parental imprisonment face devastating impacts on their emotional wellbeing and face a sense of social isolation. Parental imprisonment can hinder an Early Year's child's readiness for school as it can reduce engagement and involvement with parents, and it increases the chance of the child experiencing poor mental health. Parental imprisonment is linked to

inhibited cognitive function and poor attention skills in Early Years children (Testa and Jackosn, 2021). However, it is suggested that collaboration from a multiagency approach that supporting a whole family can lower the risk of the devastating impacts and children will be able to be supported in realising their full potential (Beresford, Loucks and Raikes, 2023, para. 3-5).

Children can experience Adverse Childhood Experiences also known as ACE'S which is caused by a traumatic event such as having a parent in prison (Turney, 2018). Through extensive previous studies children with a parent in prison will have at least one ACE (Howland et al., 2025, pp. 1021-1041). According to Boodoo et al., (2020, pp. 137-145) they suggest that trauma through ACE'S and ADHD have similarities and often co-exist which could result in being misdiagnosed with ADHD as it could be trauma. During the first two years of a child's life it is suggested that this a key period of time for children to form attachment with their parents as it is during this period that the biological bond is formed through proximity and is crucial for Early Years development (Powell, Ciclitira, Marzano, 2017, pp. 790-810).

Through a multiagency approach focusing on enhanced parent and child interventions during the period of parental imprisonment it can support parental attachment and the relationships a child has with their parent (Charles, et al., 2020, pp. 171-178).

Invisible walls an agency run out of HMP Parc based in South Wales conducted extensive research on the impact of Early Years Children receiving multi-agency support as a whole family while their parent is serving a custodial sentence. This research was conducted using the triangulation method. Using various methods including semi structured interviews, focus groups, family star assessments and SDQ questionnaire data was able to be developed by gaining different perspectives. The primary qualitative data from this research suggests that a multi-agency approach has an overall positive impact on a child's wellbeing. A key finding was that parental attachment while they are serving a custodial sentence was improved and Early Years children felt closer to their parent during this detrimental period. The research findings published stated that school refusers dropped from 38% to 10%. The data from the research reflects the views of Invisible walls managers, children, teachers, and school staff. However, there are limitations to this research as only eighty-three families participated in the research which is small number within a large

prison establishment and their child had to be showing signs of behavioural and emotional challenges (Clancy and Maguire, 2017, p. 210-230). Welsh Government agree with the impact collaboration working between agencies has on Early Years children. Through their own research on the effects parental imprisonment has on children it suggests through their recommendations that all professionals that support Early Years Children play a vital role in supporting them through the period of parental imprisonment. Welsh Government have acknowledged that there needs to be clear consistent messages with multi-agencies, and they need to ensure they have a robust safeguarding policy while fostering a culture of collaboration (Welsh Government, 2025). Through all professionals playing a vital role in supporting Early Years children who has a parent serving a custodial sentence they can see the child's potential by building positive relationships with them (Beresford, Louckes and Raikes).

Similar to the research above there has been research published by Dr Jane Harris, Chloe Smith and Professor Zara Quigg in March 2024 who agree that Early Years children that are impacted by parental imprisonment face a detrimental impact to their overall wellbeing and are impacted by ACE'S. They suggest that without the effective collaboration from a multi-agency support that these Early Years children can be more likely to be affected by drug use and early death. Through the research they conducted in Merseyside, United Kingdom their main aim was to analyse the intervention prisoners with children received while actively listening to the child's perception during this period. This research was conducted over two years by using the triangulation method as the researchers' reviewed policies, monitored data, and conducted focus groups both with the child and then with their parents and carers. The data generated by this research is reported that children gained an increased confidence, and they no longer had a feeling of isolation. Children who participated in the research stated that after working effectively with a multi-agency approach, they felt they were socially accepted for their circumstances as it raised awareness within the community. McGinley and Jones (2018) agree that a multi-agency approach can reduce Early Years children in feeling the stigma associated with parental imprisonment as it addresses cultural differences from the onset.

Greater Manchester have published guidance for Safeguarding those Early Years children whose parents are custody. Through their robust guidance ensuring that

multi-agencies are working together and providing early intervention it reduces their risk to mental health issues and improve their educational achievement. However, this guidance states there no data regarding the effects of parental imprisonment is accurate as there is no way to accurately measure a child's needs being met (Greater Manchester Safeguarding, 2024).

The evidence from research studies, collectively demonstrates that children receiving effective multiagency support receive an overall positive impact on their wellbeing (Cooper, Evans, and Pybjs, 2016, pp.325-342). Based on the evidence available from the research, it suggests through the findings that by agencies working in collaboration early years children received an enhanced quality of life while showing a deeper engagement level within school (Buckley, Martin and Curtin, 2020, pp. 433-447).

Methodological considerations

Sample.

The sample selected for this research will contain perspectives from one hundred and ten participants over a six-month period. The sample will be made up of prisoners, early years children and professionals. The professionals selected for this study will incorporate external agencies that provide interventions and support to children whose parents are serving custodial sentences, social services, Welsh government policy analysts and teaching professionals. Out of the one hundred and ten participants that will be selected for the research one hundred of those will be professionals and will use the questionnaire method, five will be prisoners from a local prison and the remaining five will be their early years children who attend local primary schools these ten participants will use the interview method. The sample size for this research has been chosen with the acknowledgement of resource constraints. According to Lakens (2021) resource constraints when choosing the sample size must consider the budgetary impact the study will have and the time to conduct the research and analysis the data collected.

This sample will contain convenience sampling, according to Stratton (2021, pp. 373-374) convenience sampling is often used to support qualitative research and is based on participants available around the locality of the researcher. Convenience sampling is often a preferred method due to the simplicity of choosing and being able to access the participants when conducting research, this form of sampling reduces any costs occurring as participants are within the locality (Taherdoost, 2016, pp.22).

The participants chosen for this research will be purposefully tailored to aligned with the goals of the research, and only those participants relevant to the research goal will be included in the study. According to Andrade (2020, pp.86-85) this form of sampling also known as purposive sampling supports achieving only data that is relevant to the research goal.

However, while there are benefits to the approaches used to choose the sample there are limitations. Convenience sampling limits how the results can be generalised to support the understanding of similar situations beyond the broader demographics and outside the research (Emerson, 2021, pp.76-77). However, according to Goldberg et al., (2019, pp.3) the evidence of convenience samples

having implications on validity and generalizability is mixed due to the complexity of the findings. According to Rai and Thapa (2015, pp.10) limitations associated with purposive sampling can occur when the research is published as it can provide limitations in convincing readers that the sample was achieved by taken into consideration theoretical, analytical, and logical generalisation.

Method.

The data that will be collected throughout this research study will be gathered by the researcher. This is known as primary data as it is gathered by the researcher and does not use any research that is already available in the public domain (Newby, 2014, pp. 212-213). The data that will be collected will include mixed method approach as it will include both qualitative and quantitative data. This study will use the triangulation method to enhance the reliability and validity of the data that will be collected. The two methods that are most applicable to this study are questionnaires and interviews by utilising two methods it can produce both quantitative and qualitative data.

Quantitative data will be collected as part of this study through the questionnaire method. These questionnaires will be conducted online through Microsoft forms. According to Newby (2014, pp. 144) quantitative data is a range of data that is built up from a numerical form. Conducting the questionnaire using Microsoft forms provides the researcher with instant feedback as participants are answering the questionnaire as the data is analysed immediately (Peter, 2018). According to Bree and Gallagher (2016) Microsoft Forms is a time effective technology system to gather copious amounts of information and generate valuable quantitative and qualitative data which is deemed as reliable. Online questionnaires will be used to collate information from the one hundred professionals chosen to participate in the study. According to Cohen et al., (2018, pp. 553-554) questionnaires are a commonly used tool when collecting research as they are cost effective and can be simple to analyse the data.

According to Ball (2019) using online questionnaires when conducting research is a simple cost-effective way as it can be sent out in bulk to the participants. However, according to Lambert (2019, pp.2) questionnaires provide a surface level perspective and does not provide any depth to the questions being asked. Completion rates of

questionnaires are known to be low so this can impact data collected. However, Ball (2019) suggests that online questionnaires have a higher completion rate as the questionnaire can be conducted with flexibility of the participant and at their own pace.

Qualitative data will be collected as part of this study through the interview method. Interviews will be conducted with five prisoners and five of their early years children who attend a local school. According to Nolan, Carmel, and Macfarlane (2013, pp.88) qualitative data supports researchers in understanding the complexity of the circumstances of the aim of the study and provides a more in-depth experience to capture the perspectives of those participants.

The most appropriate form of interviews for this study is to be a semi-structured interview. According to Denny and Weckesser (2022) semi structured interviews allows the researcher to collect qualitative data through interviewing participants with pre-set questions, this form of interviewing allows further conversation to emerge to build a broader perspective. According to Karatsareas (2022, pp. 99-100) interviews are a method based on one-to-one conversation between the researcher and the participant that involves the researcher using open-ended questions to support the participant in being able to express their views from their own experiences. The semi-structured interview that this study will use will be built up from five questions to allow follow on discussions and the interview will last one hour. The questions will be differentiated to allow the parents serving a custodial sentence their perspective to be heard and also the early years child perspective to be heard. According to Adams (2015, pp.492-505) an interview should last a maximum of one hour to avoid the researcher and participant feeling fatigued, so the data collected remains reliable.

The semi-structured interviews will be recorded via a digital voice recorder and then uploaded to 'Trint.' The digital voice recording being uploaded to 'Trint' will allow an accurate transcript to be formed in an editable and collaborative documents within a few minutes (Trint, no date).

According to Karatsareas (2022, pp. 101) interviews provide the participants with a safe environment to create their narrative around their unique experiences while proving them with a sense of feeling empowered. Karatsareas (2022, pp. 101) suggests the benefits of interviews goes beyond the participant and provides the

researcher with the opportunity to have their knowledge challenged as it reveals new information. Challenges that can impact the validity and reliability of interviewing parents serving a custodial sentence can be through a cognitive bias impression, also known as The Halo effect. This occurs when the researcher uses the participants physical appearance to form a bias judgment of other attributes that are unrelated (Gabrieli et al., 2021). The five prisoners and five early years children who will be interview can all cause limitations to the study if they are impacted by the Hawthorne effect. The Hawthorne effect can change the behaviour of the participants during the interviewing resulting in them not being their true selves and giving their own views and beliefs (Berkhout et al., 2022). According to Leurent et al., (2016, pp. 1-9) participants who are impacted by The Hawthorne effect reduce the reliability and validity of the research.

However, interviewing prisoners will also occur limitations. Due to the challenging circumstances of being allowed into a prison and the devices that can be taken in to record the interview this can impact the qualitative data collected (Carbone-Lopez, 2016, pp.517-534).

Triangulation.

According to Alban and Mukeheri (2023, p. 394) triangulation is a method of research that is commonly used to strengthen mixed methods. Robert-Holmes (2018, pp. 84) states that triangulation utilizes the data collected from various methods to broaden the viewpoint to identify if the qualitative and quantitative data compliments each other or if there are gaps in the research this allows the findings from the study to be more convincing to readers. He suggests that using triangulation allows researchers to combine and compare the mixed methods to gain deeper knowledge of the research topic. The purpose of the triangulation method in research is to support researchers in building the credibility of the research, as it uses a wide range of methods, which results in the researcher being supported to explore and explain their results through a non-biased balance approach (Noble and Heale, 2019, p. 67-68). To gain the perspectives of all participants involved in the study the triangulation method will be used. According to Burton and Bartlett (2009, pp, 26) this will not only increase the validity and reliability but allow the research to see the views of all participants from different angles.

Ethical Considerations.

Carrying out research which involves Early Years Children the researcher is required to be reflective so the research that is being carried is beneficial and they are not exposing the child to any unwarranted stress or anxiety (Robert-Holmes, Levy and Harmey, 2023, p. 57-58). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child have two articles that the researcher will implement into this study. Article 12 states that all children are entitled to be listened to and supported when giving their own views. Article 13 states that all children are entitled to seek out information (Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland, no date). Finally, under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 it states that Public Authorities are obligated to release information into the public domain relating to certain activities and research. This act also permits members of the public to request information so the researcher will ensure only factual notes are taken throughout (Bell, Johnson and Waters, 2024, p.87).

Consent

Before gaining written consent from participants the researcher will provide an information sheet regarding the research. In this document it will state what the research topic is regarding and what the participant is giving consent to. The researcher will provide the information sheet in an appropriate language depending on the participants age and ability. To ensure all parties are aware about what will be expected during the research and where the data will be shared the information document will be shared with the gatekeepers, adult participants, parents, and the children. The gatekeepers in the prison environment and the school setting will then have the opportunity to discuss any concerns with the lead researcher before providing written consent. This will be the same process for adult participants and parents providing consent. However, the researcher will ensure that the gatekeepers, participants, and parents will know they can withdraw from the research at any time and the researcher will accept this. Once the researcher has received the written consent, they will also sign the consent form to show they agree to it and a copy will be given to the participants to keep along with the information sheet. According to the NSPCC Research with Children: Ethics, safety and promoting inclusion (2023) children under the age of 12 years old are unable to consent to research. However,

they can provide assent to participate in the research study. Following the NSPCC guidelines the researcher will provide an information document to the child at an age and ability level, so they understand what they are assenting to. In line with these guidelines set out by the NSPCC the researcher will monitor the child's assent before the interview and then continue to monitor it throughout the interview. If the child wants to dissent or withdraw at any point of the interview this will be accepted and actioned immediately. The child dissenting overrules any prior consent obtained from the gatekeepers and parents. Finally, while conducting the research with children the researcher will follow ERIC (2013) and show respect and respond appropriately to the child's decision if they show disengagement.

If a participant decides they would like to withdraw from the research study, the researcher will follow section 31 in the BERA (2024) guidelines and will not try to coerce or persuade the participants to engage with the study.

Protecting confidentiality and anonymity.

Confidentiality and anonymity are core principles when conducting research (UWTSD, 2022, pp. 24-25). To protect the participants the researcher will follow BERA Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (5th Edn 2024) by only sharing what the participant has consented to and will change the name of the participants. The researcher will not be filming the interviews but will be voice recording them so their voices will be changed to minimise risk of being identified.

However, if a participant does make a disclosure to the researcher that suggests that themselves or someone else's safeguarding and welfare are at risk the researcher may need to break confidentiality and anonymity. The researcher will ensure that inline with section 48 and 49 of BERA (5th Edn. 2024, pp48-49) that on the consent form given to participants and gatekeepers it states that if a disclosure is made the researcher will seek advice from their supervisor and report to the appropriate authorities.

Reducing Risk.

Participant.

There are minimal health risks in this research that can affect the participants. However, due to the sensitivity of the research topic discomfort may occur, especially

for those participants who are being interviewed. Discussing and asking questions relating to participants own experiences with this sensitive issue can potentially cause further distress and to their emotional state. This distress may be witnessed during the interview which then can affect the reliability of data collected. This distress may affect the participants after the interview and cause long term harm. Additionally, if the researcher loses any data or does not follow GDPR guidelines this can lead to the participants sensitive information being released. As part of this research study to reduce the risk to the participants the researcher will follow the guidelines published by the BERA Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (5th Edn.) 2024. According to BERA (5th Edn, 2024, pp 20) the researcher has a duty of care for the participants taking part in the study. Due to the sensitive nature of this research study to avoid potential harm the researcher will not force the participants to continue with the interview if they are showing signs of distress (BERA, 5th Edn, 2024, pp 20). Before conducting the interview, the researcher will support the participants in deciding on a way to signal to stop the interview if distress is caused and to remind the participants about their right to withdraw from the study at any moment. The researcher will prepare for any distress or further trauma that this research study may cause by following the UWTSD Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice 2022 (Appendix 1, Section 1, pp 20-21). These guidelines set out framework for the researcher to follow to ensure that they are not causing any disruption to the participant while providing the participant with an opportunity to debrief with an emotionally available adult after the interview. Preparing the participants to participate in the interview the researcher will ensure that the participant is relaxed and comfortable throughout the interview and provide any emotional support the participant requires both during the interview and after it (Westland, H. et al., 2025, pp. 448-493). To ensure the researcher is following the UWTSD Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice 2022 the researcher will ensure participants are aware that they will stay anonymous and their confidentiality will be protected at all times unless they have already given prior consent when signing the consent form to have their details shared such as their face or name in the interview.

Researcher.

There is minimal health risks associated with this research study than can affect the researcher. However, there are potential safety risks to the researcher due to interviews being conducted in a prison environment. This study only includes ten participants taking part in the interview methodology so there is a risk to the researcher in not being able to collect enough reliable information to analyse and the time constraints that are associated with conducting interviews. To minimize the risk to the researcher they will ensure that in line with UWTSD Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice 2022 (Appendix 2, pp. 23-24) they have a valid Enhance DBS barred list and this will be provided to the participants, university and gatekeepers before starting the research. The researcher to minimise the risk of legal action if loosing data collected they will follow sections 45 and 46 of BERA (5th Edn, 2024, pp. 23-24) and ensure that their data collected is stored in line with data protection guidelines and that all data is password encrypted. According to Westland, H. et al., (2025, pp. 448-493) due to the sensitivity of the research topic the researcher will need to prepare for the interviews and results from questionnaire by building their resilience and putting time aside for them to be able to reflect on the topic and offload to their mentor about the challenging topic.

University.

There are minimal health and safety risks that can cause potential harm to the university. However, if the researcher does not follow the Ethical Guidelines for Research published by the British Education Research Association and the University research policy or misplaces any personal data collected this can cause shame to the university. To minimise the risk to the university receiving legal action due to loose of data collected the researcher will follow the guidelines set out by Bera (5th Edn, 2024) and ensure that they are following the guidelines set out by the university. In the next part of the Ethical Considerations there will be a break down on how to store and collect data in line with these frameworks to ensure the University is protected.

Collecting and storing data- in line with guidelines and legislation

In line with both BERA (5th Edn. 2024) and UWTSD Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice 2022 the researcher will follow the correct GDPR legislation to ensure that data collected is stored securely. The researcher will only collect data

that is relevant to the research study and will not name the participants. All data collected by the researcher will be stored on an encrypted device and will be password protected. According to Trint (no date) when uploading a voice recording for transcript to ensure the data is secure it uses fine grained user access permissions so only the researcher has access to the.

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