

Hidden Injuries Beyond the Bars:  
A Critical Analysis of Re-Entry Experiences of  
Older, Once Convicted Men.

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## Abstract

The life experiences of older people are becoming an ever-increasing topic of research due to the unprecedented numbers of those living longer. The increase in the number of older men in society has been mirrored by the unprecedented number of older men in prison, which has resulted in greater numbers of these men undergoing the community re-entry process. Despite the rapidly increasing numbers there is an absence of literature from England and Wales which has focused on older, once convicted men's experiences of re-entry through gaining their individual accounts. This thesis critically analyses the pains of post imprisonment for once convicted men aged 50 and over, in the North-West of England. Through semi-structured interviews with 13 older, once convicted men, their lived experiences of re-entry have been revealed, bringing to light the hidden injuries beyond the bars.

This thesis challenges dominant perceptions surrounding older, once convicted men by situating their re-entry experiences through a lens of socially constructed stigma, pain, and social death. To understand and explore their experiences, a social constructionist framework, and a combination of critical criminological, penological and gerontological perspectives are adopted.

The findings have shown that older, once convicted men endured the pains of re-entry in four primary areas, the experiences of imprisonment, the structural barriers to re-entry, supervision following incarceration and the impacts of a stigmatized identity. The findings have brought to light the painful, once hidden,

relationship between older men and re-entry and have revealed how their lived realities, moulded by imprisonment and supervision in the community, and socially constructed by society, have led to social death. The findings contribute to knowledge and support the many calls for specific age-related policies to be implemented in the criminal justice system in England and Wales.

## Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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## Chapter 1. Re-Entry in Context: An Introduction

As long as there have been prisons, there have been challenges facing the people leaving them and undergoing the re-entry<sup>1</sup> process (Johnson and Cullen, 2015). However, re-entry has not been discussed or viewed in a way which made it a 'social problem' that demanded attention from policy makers (Johnson and Cullen, 2015: 53). In 2022 the number of those on probation was almost three times greater than the prison population (Ministry of Justice, 2022: 1), however, the re-entry process, which includes probation and supervision practices, remains relatively neglected in criminological research leading to it becoming 'relatively invisible' (McNeill, 2019a: 44). This has resulted in penal systems failing to attain the solution to effective re-entry throughout history (Maguire and Raynor, 2017), and criminological research failing to establish the 'secret formula' (Hallet, 2012: 216) of successful (re) integration.

Much of the existing literature surrounding prisoner<sup>2</sup> re-entry has originated from American studies (Williams and Abraldes, 2007; Porcella, 2007; Higgins and

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<sup>1</sup> The two dominant terms used to describe the process of leaving prison and re-entering society are resettlement and re-entry. Bain and Parkinson, (2010: 66) argued that the word 'resettlement' suggests individuals were 'settled' and successfully integrated in society before they entered prison, and after release, they will be able to return to this state. For those once convicted, they may not have been 'settled' before imprisonment so a return to a settled state may not be possible. In acknowledgment of its contested nature, this thesis will use the term 're-entry' to investigate post imprisonment experiences.

<sup>2</sup> It is acknowledged that the using the collective term 'prisoner' can have a stigmatizing effect and it does not represent the diverse range of individuals incarcerated, however this language has become common place in much prison literature. Crewe (2009: 149) argued, the term 'prisoner' can be a 'neutral, objective term', and in their research surrounding older incarcerated men, Crawley and Sparks (2005: 351) used the term 'uniform status 'prisoner' when discussing the 'disjunction' between this status of 'prisoner' and of an 'old man'. In the same vein, this research has used the collective term prisoner when discussing the men's time in prison and their experiences of imprisonment, to further stress the disjunction between the men's time in prison, when they were 'prisoners', to their lives after incarceration, where the term 'once convicted' is utilised, for the reasons highlighted in footnote 3.

Severson, 2009; Wacquant, 2010; Munn, 2011a; Visher and Travis, 2011; Scheidt and Norris-Baker, 2012; Maschi, Morrissey and Leigey, 2013; Pogrebin et al., 2014; Terranova and Bowman, 2015, and Baldry et al., 2018), leaving the specific dynamics of the criminal justice system in England and Wales relatively neglected. Undertaking research and providing data specific to the criminal justice system in England and Wales, will further support the study by Ramakers et al. (2015) who undertook re-entry research in the Netherlands as a response to the request from Frost and Clear (2012: 639) to overcome the 'Americentric tendencies in correctional research'. Further to this, undertaking re-entry research which explores the experiences of older, once convicted<sup>3</sup> men will increase knowledge surrounding the relationship between age and the criminal justice system, as there is little existing research surrounding 'the grey pains of imprisonment' (Leigey and Aday, 2022: 816) but even less on the experiences (Codd, 2020: 10) and grey pains of re-entry.

It is important to understand the re-entry process and the impact it has on older, once convicted men, because apart from those who lose their lives whilst incarcerated, all prisoners are released back into society (Harding, Morenoff and Wyse, 2019). In 2020 there were 53,253 prisoners released from incarceration in

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<sup>3</sup> There are a number of different terms used to describe those who have left prison, such as 'ex-convict' (Hallet, 2012: 214), 'ex-con' (LeBel and Richie, 2020: 172); 'ex-offender' (Johnson and Cullen, 2015: 563); and 'ex-prisoner' (Munn, 2011b: 148), which are laden with negative connotations (Farrant, 2014: 463) or the less stigmatizing 'formally incarcerated' (LeBel, 2012: 89; Harding, Morenoff and Wyse, 2019: 2). By using terms such as 'ex-offender' Willis (2018) argued that we continue to describe those returning to society by using language to describe the behaviour we aim to help them cease. Sir Howard Vincent used the term 'once convicted' (Vincent, 1883: 325). It is felt that this not only describes the position of the men but is also a forward-looking term which is not tethered to thoughts of imprisonment. It is in consideration of the power of language and the impact its use can have on the men that this study will use the term 'older, once convicted men' to describe the men who have been in prison and are now undergoing the re-entry process.

England and Wales (Ministry of Justice, 2021a). Of these, 1 in 6 people being supervised after leaving prison were aged over 50, which is a 'higher proportion than the percentage of older prisoners in the prison estate' (Cadet, 2020: 122). The re-entry process is an important area of research as in 2017, 48% of adult prisoners re-offended within the first twelve months of release (The Ministry of Justice, 2019b) or to put it another way, for almost half of all adult released prisoners, the re-entry process had failed.

This chapter will set the scene of the research, outlining how this thesis will critically analyse the pains and the hidden injuries beyond the prison bars. It will firstly discuss the issues relating to re-entry, considering why the focus of the thesis is on older, once convicted men. It will then outline the aims and objectives of the thesis, highlighting the key areas which will be explored to assist in unveiling the lived experiences of re-entry. Following this, the chapter will then turn to outline the theoretical framework within which the men's experiences will be situated, and the methods used to bring their experiences to light. The chapter will then conclude by outlining the discussions in the forthcoming chapters, acting as a road map for the thesis.

## **Foundations of the Research**

The population of England and Wales is ageing (Age UK, 2019; Office for National Statistics, 2022) with over a third of the population now being aged 50 years and over (Office for National Statistics, 2016), and there are now more people in the UK aged 60 and over, than there are aged under 18 (Age UK, 2017). The Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2018a: 2) reported that this current state has evolved

from a decline in fertility rates and an increase in people living longer. This trend is only predicted to continue as projections show that in 50 years there will be approximately an additional 8.6 million people aged 65 and over in the United Kingdom, which equates to roughly the size of London (Office for National Statistics, 2018b). Further to this, the number of older men in society is increasing at a greater rate than the number of older women (ibid) suggesting that issues relating specifically to older men will become more visible.

De Medeiros (2017: 2) asked, 'How can one possibly study something as complex, ill-defined, controversial, yet paradoxically familiar as the time of life called old age?' The first step in attempting this difficult task is to highlight the social construction of ageing, mapping its development and its place in society today. Age, it can be argued, is a 'cultural construction of a biological phenomenon' (de Medeiros, 2017: 3). The elderly were once viewed in high regard shown through how 'a traditional culture surrounded them with an almost magical mystique of knowledge and authority' (Fischer, cited in Bond, Coleman and Peace, 1993: 12). These traditional images of older peoples' position in society have since been replaced with a more negative view surrounding 'senility and senescence' (Gilleard and Higgs, 2015: 264). Older people are now viewed as a burden on societal resources and a drain on the public purse (Select Committee of the House of Lords on Public Service and Demographic Change, 2013), resulting in perceptions including 'sick, demented, frail, weak, disabled, powerless, sexless, passive, alone, unhappy, and unable to learn' (Rowe and Kahn, 1998: 12) becoming more commonplace. Bond, Coleman and Peace (1993) argued that age itself can force older people out of the most highly regarded positions, lowering their status in

society, attributing the changes to new technologies replacing the once traditional methods of working. Further reasoning is offered by Fisher (in Bond, Coleman and Peace, 1993: 12) who argued that as younger generations become highly educated, the 'mystique of age' and the respect and admiration for the elderly due to their 'superiority of knowledge and wisdom' is lost. Green (1993 cited in Angus and Reeve, 2006: 142) argued that the perceptions of what it means to be classed as an older person are socially constructed by the powerful:

"Older persons" are not part of the "we" that recognises and communicates how best to be old. They are made objects of an address from outside and above, subjected in discourse to critical concepts prescribed and delivered by others.

The life experiences of older people are becoming an ever-increasing topic of research due to the unprecedented numbers of those living longer, and the social (Tinker, 2002; Bengtson and DeLiema, 2016), economic (Vincent, 2017) and political (Bloom et al., 2015) challenges an ageing population imparts on society (Harper, 2013).

As the number of older people in the UK is continuing to grow, it is no longer acceptable to use the blanket term 'old' to describe this group. Thorson (2013) argued that as the definition of old age has evolved, we now have three categories of old people, the young old (65-74), the old old (75 and older) and the oldest old (85 and older). Further to the classifications of old age evolving, so too has the meaning:

Old age, we have suggested, has long functioned as such a social imaginary, a social position that is either loved, respected or feared; sought after or shunned; attributed power or denied it; in short, a term whose cultural

meaning is open to interpretation of what it means to be 'old' (Gilleard and Higgs 2015: 264).

The Select Committee of the House of Lords on Public Service and Demographic Change, (2013: 27) argued that 'rather than viewing ageing with horror, society should pay more attention to the large social and economic contributions that older people make'. The traditional images and stereotypes of older people are beginning to be challenged as the social inclusion of the 'old' within society is becoming more visible. Interpretations of the meaning of old age are influenced by perceptions of those in society, and although there are advocates such as the House of Lords who aim to change dominant negative stereotypes of older people, a dependency narrative is still prevalent, and this is further compounded if that person has been in prison.

The increase in the number of older men in society has been mirrored by the unprecedented number of older men in prison, this group is now the fastest growing group within the prison population (O'Hara et al., 2015; Merkt et al., 2020, Cadet, 2022; Ridley, 2022). From 2002 to 2018, the number of male prisoners aged fifty and over increased from 7% to 16% of the overall prison population (Sturge, 2018: 9). The increase in numbers led to the Ministry of Justice Prison Population Statistics having to add a new category to their reports which reflected the change in the demographics of those in prison. For the first time statistics included the age category 70 and over (Ministry of Justice, 2016). This change in reporting signalled an official recognition that the prison population is advancing in years. As a trend, official projections show that the number of older prisoners is only set to increase in the future (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2020a),

predicting that specifically the categories of those aged 60 and over, and those aged 70 and over will continue to rise (Ministry of Justice, 2018a).

Some prison establishments are beginning to recognise that older prisoners have specific needs which require additional resources and facilities (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2020a) but in many cases, they are not being implemented (Independent Monitoring Boards, 2022). HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (2021: 52) found 'few positive examples of provision for older prisoners' and examples which showed that older prisoners were 'left in degrading circumstances in some prisons'. Although an attempt has been made to address these issues through localised initiatives and the release of the 'Model for Operational Delivery: Older Prisoners' (HM Prison and Probation Service, 2018), HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (2019: 11) argued that, at best, it is a 'menu of options' from which prison governors can formulate localised responses and actions. This localised approach leads to a lack of consistency across the prison estate and will result in a geographically influenced lottery of care and support. An increase in the number of older men in prison will lead to a greater number of older, male prisoners being released, equating to a larger number undergoing the community re-entry process (Visher and Travis, 2011).

The number of older probationers has also increased in recent years, with Cadet (2022: 6) reporting that in 2015/16, 17% of those on licence were aged over 50, and in 2018/19, this had increased to 22%. Yet, unlike some establishments within the prison service who are beginning to acknowledge that older prisoners' experiences and need differ greatly with age (House of Commons Justice

Committee, 2020a), beyond the bars, no such recognition is being made. The official re-offending statistics still define all those aged 50 and over as one group (Ministry of Justice, 2022). Cadet (2020: 118) acknowledged that despite the rising numbers, research on the lived experiences of older, once convicted men is scarce. Due to their age, older men suffer additional pains of imprisonment (Crawley, 2004; Crawley and Sparks, 2005; Aday and Krabill, 2013; Munn, 2011a) and these pains of punishment do not cease when the men go beyond the prison gates (Johns, 2015). Despite this, there are no official age-related policies in place in either the prison or the community to support this diverse ageing population. There have been a number of localised responses to older prisoners introduced in prisons, however these have been sporadic and not widely implemented.

The pains of post incarceration remain under-examined (Turner et al., 2018), leading to the lived experiences of the re-entry journey being hidden. This study makes an original contribution to knowledge as it has brought to light the relationship between older men and the re-entry process. It has unveiled the pains of post imprisonment and the stigmatised double 'othering' (Drake and Henley, 2014: 143), of older, once convicted men within the community. Drawing on Crawley and Sparks', (2005: 351) argument that 'hidden injuries of elder imprisonment arise in the disjunction between the uniform status 'prisoner' and the condition 'old man'', this study will show how the 'hidden injuries' of being labelled both *once convicted*, and *an old man* in the re-entry process have created barriers to successful re-entry and have led to the older, once convicted men living in freedom in a state of 'social death' (Price, 2015: 5).

## Aims of the Research

This thesis aims to contribute to the question are we 'ready for ageing?' (Select Committee of the House of Lords on Public Service and Demographic Change, 2013: 7). In an age of austerity where older people are seen as a burden on the public purse (Bratt et al., 2018), are socially isolated (Beach and Bamford, 2014; Cotterell, Buffel and Phillipson, 2018), lonely (Broome, 2016; Sullivan, Victor and Thomas, 2016), and forgotten (Terranova and Bowman, 2015), the experiences of older men, laden with the stigma of being once convicted *and* an older person are rarely considered.

Investigating the lived re-entry experiences of older, once convicted men is important as the practices currently undertaken under the umbrella of HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) do not recognise the specific needs of older men at a policy level. Their chronological age and the social and health implications their advanced years bring, are not formally being acknowledged as requiring specific help and support. The prison service declares that they will help prisoners 'lead law-abiding and useful lives' (HM Prison Service, 2023); The National Probation Service<sup>4</sup> (NPS) stated that they would enable offenders to turn their lives around, and the array of the 21 Community Rehabilitation Companies<sup>5</sup> (CRCs) all highlighted their own versions of how they would assist once convicted men on

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<sup>4</sup> The NPS supervised high risk offenders. Since the inception of this research, those under the supervision of the NPS and the CRCs have been unified under one service, the Probation Service.

<sup>5</sup> Since the inception of this research, the involvement of the CRCs in re-entry has ceased, however, the men experienced a time where they were active in supervision following imprisonment. The CRCs supervised medium and low risk offenders.

release, yet these declarations of support do not include the acknowledgement of difference.

In order to contribute to the existing knowledge in the area of re-entry for older, once convicted men, the aims of the research were:

1. To critically analyse the formal and informal collateral consequences of imprisonment by investigating the lived experiences of re-entering society following a prison sentence.
2. To investigate how advanced age impacts on the lived experiences of re-entry.
3. To explore the lived experiences of older, once convicted men to investigate if there is a need for age related policies to be created and implemented in the re-entry process.

Johns (2015: 295) argued that much of the existing re-entry research has focused on the 'risk' of offenders returning to the community and has ignored the actual impact being in prison has had on men when they are released. In acknowledgement of this, and to meet the aims of the study, four key areas have been explored to shape the focus of the thesis:

1. The experiences of imprisonment for older men will be explored, as Valera et al. (2017) argued that the process of re-entry should begin the day the men enter prison.

2. The structural barriers to successful re-entry faced once released from prison will be investigated, to explore how the pathways to successful resettlement<sup>6</sup> are linked with the specific post pains of incarceration.
3. The implications of the continued supervision of older, once convicted men following the implementation of the Offender Rehabilitation Act (2014) will be considered.
4. The impacts of a stigmatized identity will be examined, considering internal and external perceptions of the self, and the implications of this during re-entry.

The aims of the research were met by undertaking semi-structured interviews with 13 once convicted men aged 50<sup>7</sup> and over in the North-West of England and Wales.

The men in this study have shared their lived experiences, enabling the hidden realities of community re-entry for older, once convicted men to be identified and brought to light. Gaining the men's accounts of lived experience was central to this research, as Berger and Luckman (1966: 15) argued that 'the 'knowledge' of the

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<sup>6</sup> The pathways are identified as: accommodation; education, training and employment; mental and physical health; drugs and alcohol; finance, benefits and debt; children and families of offenders; and attitudes, thinking and behaviour. Although achieving success in each of these pathways have been identified as a means by which a once convicted man can obtain social capital and become successfully (re)integrated into society, they were introduced by the Labour Government with a reduction in recidivism as their key aim (Maguire and Raynor, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> As there is no identified chronological age which defines the term 'old' in the criminal justice system (Codd, 2019), the research will draw on agencies such as the Prison Reform Trust; RECOOP; Age Concern and the Restore Support Network who advocate that there should be an acknowledgement that those aged 50 and over should be defined as a specific group. Although this is a much younger age than is used within society, Smyer and Gragert (2006: 57) argued that whilst incarcerated, prisoners are on average, physically 10 years older than their chronological age due to their previous chaotic lifestyles. The Prison Reform Trust also offer similar explanations for premature physical degeneration but add that the ageing process can be further advanced due to the psychological strains and pressures associated with life in prison (Prison Reform Trust, 2013: 48). This advancement of physical ageing follows the men after prison, creating a group in society whose needs can be seen to be greater than their age matched peers.

criminal differs from the 'knowledge' of the criminologist, and Guenther's (2013: 255) argued that 'no one can directly experience the world as an other, at the "subjective level", of his or her own experience – especially when the experience in question is an absolute loss of control over one's self'

## **The Approach**

To achieve these aims, this research is underpinned by a combination of critical criminological, penological and gerontological perspectives. Situating the research within a combination of these frameworks is crucial as the interviews with the men highlighted how imprisonment had impacted their life course, how notions of age were prevalent given their advanced years and how the pain they endured in re-entry due to a combination of prison and age-related stigma had been a catalyst for 'social death' (Price, 2015: 5). By adopting this approach, the research is 'exposing prevailing regimes of truth within official discourse' (Scruton, 2011: 35) and through bringing to light the experiences of the older, once convicted men, the thesis has enabled them to 'tell their own stories, to bear witness to their own experience, and to define themselves' (Hartman, 2000: 21). It has exposed the hidden injuries and 'the silencing of alternative accounts through condemnation and vilification' (Scruton, 2011: 36), producing a reconstructed reality. Through the process of unveiling hidden experiences by exploring a 'view from below' (ibid: 35), a reconstruction of dominant 'truths' can be undertaken, providing a platform for 'subjugated knowledge to flourish' (Ballinger, 2011: 110).

In order to unveil the knowledges from below, a social constructionist framework was adopted which was viewed through a lens of pain, stigma and social death. By

taking this approach, the research has highlighted the relationship between older men and re-entry and has uncovered how their lived realities, which have been moulded by imprisonment and supervision in the community and socially constructed by society, are permeated by barriers which impact on their chances of successful re-entry.

Re-entry is not a static process which can be worked through systematically, it is a journey with green lights, dead ends, and alternative routes. The road map that can be followed to reach the destination of successful re-entry is not straight forward, however, there are key points along the way which have an impact on the destination. It is to the roadmap of the thesis that this chapter now turns.

### **The Structure of the Thesis: Imprisonment, Re-Entry, Social Death, and the Future.**

The following chapter will consider the pains of punishment, stigma, and the resulting status of social death in existing literature. The differing pains of punishment will be discussed; the 'pains of release' (McKendy and Ricciardelli, 2021: 1), the 'pains of re-entry' (Durnescu, 2019: 1482), the 'pains of probation' (Durnescu, 2011: 530), the pains of 'community sanctions' (Hayes, 2015: 99), the 'pains of desistance' (Nugent and Schinkel, 2016: 568) and the 'pains of freedom' (Shammas, 2014: 104; Statham, Winder and Micklethwaite, 2020: 729) and their links to the literature surrounding re-entry will be made.

Chapter 3 will outline and justify the methodology and methods used to gather the research data. It will highlight the problems, purpose, and significance of the research, and discuss the justifications of a social constructionist framework being

adopted. The chapter will outline the design of the research, including the process undertaken to find and recruit the men, and the justification for the methods chosen. The ethical considerations of the research will be discussed, detailing access issues, confidentiality, informed consent, and risk mitigation practices. The method of analysing the data will be highlighted. This chapter will further the brief discussion in this introduction surrounding the epistemology, ontology, and the theoretical framework within which the research was conducted.

Following the discussion around methodology and methods, Chapter 4 'In the Shadow of Imprisonment' is the first of the chapters which will introduce the men's accounts of experience by drawing on the data gathered during the fieldwork. This, and the following three chapters will chart the men's journey, beginning here with an acknowledgement that the issues relating to re-entry begin whilst the men are still in prison (Hlavka, Wheelock and Jones, 2015). The importance of the preparations for release, who this is supported by and how it impacted on the men's experience will be discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 5 will continue to focus on the re-entry journey, moving from discussions of the experiences in prison and of pre-release planning in Chapter 4, to the next stage of their journey, physical aspects of release, focusing on the 'reducing reoffending pathways' (Home Office, 2004: 3). It will consider a number of the pathways such as accommodation; children and family; drugs and alcohol; education, training and employment; finance, benefit and debt and health. The final pathway, attitudes, thinking and behaviour will be discussed in Chapter 7. This chapter will discuss the 'unintended consequences' (Vanstone 2007: 312) of

time spent in prison. The adjustment required in the re-entry process will also be investigated. Due to their time in prison, life in society had changed for many of the men. The adjustments to an alien world (Seiter and Kadela, 2003) will be discussed. Issues ranged from noise and the speed of life to technologies and attitudes of the public. 'A Sentence After a Sentence' (Bernard, aged 55) is the title of the chapter as many of the men viewed making the adjustments required to navigate the re-entry process, as difficult, and in many situations, more difficult, than serving their sentence in prison.

Chapter 6 will discuss how the men viewed the governance of re-entry and how this impacted on their experience. It will consider changes in policy and those who are legally and charitably tasked to work with the men through the re-entry process. Issues associated with increased supervision will be discussed, including the men's relationship with the NPS and CRCs, and the involvement of different charities to consider the impact they had on the men's experience of release and re-entry. The chapter will conclude with an exploration of the idea of freedom, which will include discussions which focus on the thought processes surrounding the fear of recall to prison.

Deeper now into the men's re-entry journey, Chapter 7 will shift the focus from the men being supervised by external agents, to how they navigated re-entry internally. Chapter 7, 'Just Because the Monkey is Off My Back Doesn't Mean the Circus Has Left Town' (Jon, aged, 50) will again draw on the men's accounts of re-entry to consider how stigma and identity shaped their experiences of social death. It will consider the issue of double 'othering' (Drake and Henley, 2014: 154), in

terms of offence and age-related stigmas, how the men viewed themselves and how others responded to their past offences. Stigma and identity often framed the re-entry experiences of the men, therefore a discussion surrounding the impact of being 'once convicted' and an 'old man' will be explored. This chapter will discuss how stigma can be a catalyst for social exclusion and isolation and can lead to a 'shadowy status of social death' (Price 2015: 117). Chapter 7 will conclude with a discussion surrounding the issues relating to disclosing a criminal conviction and the impacts this can have on achieving successful re-entry.

Chapter 8, 'Indifference to Difference', will provide a deeper analysis of the findings from the previous four chapters. This chapter will discuss how supposed support mechanisms became barriers to successful re-entry due to the older, once convicted men's needs not being recognised, acknowledged, or responded to. It will consider possibilities to reduce and mitigate the pain endured, offering potential remedies to reduce the pain experienced.

The final chapter 'Living Freedom in Social Death: Conclusions and the Future' will provide an overview of the thesis. It will highlight the original contribution to knowledge, demonstrating how this research has increased understandings of the relationship between older, once convicted men and re-entry. The chapter will consider the limitations of this study and offer suggestions for further research. The chapter will conclude with a number of final thoughts, highlighting how the men's experiences impacted on their chances of 'successful' re-entry.

## Chapter 2: The Pains of Punishment

### Introduction

Literature surrounding re-entry focuses on two key areas, one which considers a reduction in criminality, desistance from crime, and the risk of prisoners returning to the community, ignoring the actual impact being in prison has had on men when they are released (Johns, 2015); and one which considers the issues surrounding social (re) integration (Wyse, 2017). Where literature has been produced which has taken lived experience into account, Visher and Travis (2011) argued that this has focused mainly on the experiences of re-entry told from the point of view of those who govern those once convicted, not from the narratives of those undergoing the re-entry process. Although the focus of these two pathways differs, they do intersect with each other and so both form an integral part of the re-entry process and will be critically explored in this chapter. It will be shown that the notions of pain and stigma penetrate all aspects of the re-entry process and will highlight the importance of situating the debates surrounding older, once convicted men's experiences of re-entering society within a framework of pain, stigma and social death.

### The Pains of Punishment

Critically analysing the pains of punishment enables an exploration of the 'social reality of penal interventions' (Hayes, 2015: 86) as the pains of punishment do not desist when a prisoner goes beyond the prison gates (Johns, 2015). The pains of re-entry can be seen to pose greater difficulties than the pains of imprisonment

(Sykes, 1958), leading to a number of once convicted men preferring the 'familiarity of life behind bars' (Johns, 2015: 304). Piper and Berle (2019: 855) argued that instances of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) for incarcerated people are over five times higher than in the general population and are significantly higher than within roles which are considered to incorporate traumatic experiences such as 'Defence Force personnel'. Dudeck et al. (2011: 415) also found that 'almost one out of six long-term prisoners had developed a PTSD because of their traumatic experiences'. Although no specific research regarding PTSD has been undertaken on older prisoners, due to their fragile nature and vulnerability, in an environment designed for younger men (Cadet, 2022), the numbers may be greater. When considering the absence of diversity in the current literature surrounding the impact of imprisonment during re-entry Piper and Berle (2019) highlighted that the older generation have been greatly ignored. They found that the association between the experiences of prison life and a resulting PTSD had not been proven, suggesting that although the men have witnessed and been part of traumatic life events, they may have developed coping strategies in order to deal with their experiences. Munn (2011a) however argued that once convicted men in the community exhibit pains which are similar to symptoms of PTSD and endure feelings of violation which can lead to emotional scars which will never leave them.

The pains of imprisonment are predominately associated with the work of Sykes (1958) however, the work of this seminal text has since been extended to consider the pains of punishment following imprisonment. The literature surrounding these pains considers the 'pains of release' (McKendy and Ricciardelli, 2021: 1), the

'pains of re-entry' (Durnescu, 2019: 1482), the 'pains of probation' (Durnescu, 2011: 530), the 'pains of 'community sanctions' (Hayes, 2015: 99), the 'pains of desistance' (Nugent and Schinkel, 2016: 568) and the 'pains of freedom' (Shammas, 2014: 104; Statham, Winder and Micklethwaite, 2020: 729). Akin to the pains of imprisonment which are classified as 'neither static nor universal, but rather, are shaped by social-structural, institutional, and person factors' (McKendy and Ricciardelli, 2021: 2), the pains of re-entry are also contextually and situationally experienced. The existing literature surrounding these pains of punishment will now be explored.

### **The Pains of Release and Adjustment**

Being released from prison is a time where the incarcerated should be hopeful about their future. Durnescu (2019: 2203) found that when anticipating release, almost all his participants expressed a 'super-optimistic view over their successful reintegration'. However, McKendy and Ricciardelli (2021) found that this time can be tainted with an underbelly of potential post-release pain. When investigating the pains of release for female prisoners in Canada, they found a number of the 'tensions' that arise at the 'intersection of incarceration and the outside world' (McKendy and Ricciardelli, 2021: 4), which included, psychological and psycho-social effects of re-entry including the sensory overload related to the speed of life on the outside, the transition from a rigid structure to the openness of freedom, and issues surrounding recall to prison. McKendy and Ricciardelli, (2021: 11) described the loss of pre-prison status and identity, and the search for a post-prison self as being in a state of 'identity void'. These pains of release highlight

that at a time where hopefulness should prevail, an array of difficulties can be faced when adjusting to a new society. Durnescu (2019: 1487) described this as the 'pain of adaptation/readjusting to the new environment', where the 'shock of release' and the adjustment required following this was felt. Adjusting to a new society poses a number of difficulties for older, once convicted men (Williams and Abraldes, 2007). Those who have grown old in prison following a long sentence have aged in an environment which becomes their reality (Munn, 2011a). Much like Diamond's (1992: 95) study which explored how older people within nursing homes take on the mask of 'patienthood' in order to adapt to life within the institutional setting, older prisoners may have adapted to prison life by wearing the metaphorical mask of 'offender hood' (Farrall, 2016: 212). The norms, values, and customs in the prison can make older, once convicted prisoners woefully unprepared for life on the outside (Stojkovic, 2007), creating 'disculturation' (Goffman, 1961: 13). When they begin the re-entry process, they are released into an alien world (Seiter and Kadela, 2003), where modern technologies such as mobile telephones and the internet, may prove to be bewildering (Tweedie, 2015). Acquiring the basic skills required for the practicalities of life can be difficult for many once convicted men after many years of having essential tasks completed for them (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2013; Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). Much like Harris, Edgar and Webster (2020) reported, Munn (2011) discussed once convicted men who had been back in the community for a minimum of five years and argued that the pains of re-entry were so great, that many contemplated returning to prison to alleviate the pressures. This illustrates that the adjustment required to be successfully (re) integrated into society can

pose difficulties which remained largely hidden and can last for a number of years. The level of adjustment required in order to successfully re-enter society can lead to 'prisonized' offenders viewing freedom as troubling (Shammas, 2014: 111).

## **The Pains of Freedom**

The pains following release are described by Shammas (2014: 104) as the 'pains of freedom'. Shammas (2014: 116) studied an open prison in Scandinavia, 'The Island', which he likened to Category D open prisons in England and Wales. Shammas (2014) argued that further to the existing literature surrounding the pains of imprisonment (Sykes, 1958; Flanagan, 1980; Crewe, 2011; Ugelvik, 2014; Warr, 2016, Bosworth, 2017), the element of freedom in an open prison imposed a new set of pains. The pains of freedom discussed by Shammas (2014: 104) when the men are 'on leave' can be considered in relation to the re-entry process as he discusses the transition from 'tight confinement to looser regulations' (ibid: 111) which offers 'a taste of freedom' (ibid: 113), much like being released from prison in England and Wales and being under supervision following release. Shammas (2014: 109) argued that 'freedom within constraint is itself the source of experienced pain'. He argued that there are five pains of freedom, 'confusion; anxiety and boundlessness; ambiguity; relative deprivation; and 'individual responsibility' (Shammas, 2014: 117). Each of these pains can be seen in the re-entry literature. Firstly, confusion relates to the 'dual and contradictory commitments' (ibid: 110) that come with being in a state of freedom, but not truly being free. Martin (2018: 675) described this as a 'situation of discrepancy between the prisonized habitus and social conditions', where 'rigid routines are

replaced by radical openness' (ibid: 673). Confusion is created by perceptions of what life would be like once released, not meeting the expectations of the men. This confusion can be borne from poor or non-existent pre-release planning. La Vigne et al. (2008) argued that in order for a once convicted man to (re) integrate into society, pre-release planning is crucial. Valera et al. (2017) also noted that support should be offered, and release planning should begin the day the men enter prison, remaining continuous throughout their time in prison and follow them through the re-entry process. Further to this, Ekunwe (2011) argued that for the planning to be successful when released, it should be included in activities which take place at specific points which include prison programming and appropriate support both at the time of release and beyond. Further to these two studies, O'Connor (2014) argued that pre-release planning is crucial for the physical re-entry journey, especially when the men are released and step through the gates, as La Vigne et al. (2008: 2) argued, this specific time can 'make or break' the chances of successful re-entry. Forsyth et al. (2015) found that release planning for older men was generally inadequate, and a number of their participants perceived it to be non-existent. Although HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (2020) found some examples of good practice, there are still many examples which concur with Forsyth et al. (2015) and show that not enough is being done to help older prisoners prepare for release from prison. However, McKendy and Ricciardelli (2021: 14) highlighted that even when pre-release planning or the 'social groundwork' is undertaken, and support is put in place prior to release, this is put in jeopardy due to the barriers encountered during re-entry.

The pain of 'confusion' (Shammas, 2014: 110) is also prevalent where once convicted men are residing in Approved Premises (APs), 'by day, the standards of ordinary working life applied, while at night, he lived by officer rules and inmate expectations'. APs are semi-penal establishments which employ a combination of regulations utilised in both the custodial and community spheres, which occupy a place 'somewhere towards the middle of the social control spectrum' (Barton, 2004: 156). Although APs are not completely secure, they do share many security procedures with the prison regime (Reeves, 2016), which can continue the institutionalisation endured whilst fully incarcerated (ibid, 2013) and increase confusion surrounding 'balancing dual and contradictory commitments' (Shammas, 2014: 110). Although the men are free, APs contribute to confusion as they are 'boarding houses marked by squalor and instability' where 'prison selves are re-enacted' (Johns, 2015: 305). The 'dual and contradictory commitments' (Shammas, 2014: 110) can cause confusion, on the one hand the men are striving to (re) integrate into society, in an environment which is designed to aid and assist the transition from prison to the community, yet on the other, their 'prisoner assemblages are thus re-established, their cultural resources, norms and tools reissued and reinforced' (Johns, 2015: 305). McKendy and Ricciardelli (2021: 14) discussed being in an AP as 'liminal zones between the worlds of incarceration and freedom', which can lead to identities being in a liminal state, as Nugent and Schinkel (2016: 573) found 'they were no longer prisoners, but had not yet fully served their sentence, or achieved a new identity'. This is further described as a pain of re-entry by Durnescu (2019: 1483) who found that 'they seem to float in a

liminal state of affairs'. Nugent and Schinkel (2016: 573) argued that this situation pertains to the pain of 'goal failure' which will be discussed further below.

The second pain of freedom, 'boundlessness' freedom (Shammas, 2014), creates an 'arena for anxiety' (ibid: 113) to flourish. For once convicted men, this anxiety incorporates the pain of 'confusion' (Shammas, 2014: 110) of their role, but also the fear that in this confusion, they cross a boundary and are recalled back to prison. Shammas (ibid: 112) described this pain of freedom as leaving the men in a state of 'permanently suspended release anxiety'. Although Shammas discussed the anxiety of being temporarily released from the open prison, this terminology could be used to describe once convicted men as whilst under licence restrictions, the threat of being returned to prison, or in the case of the open prison, being transferred to a closed establishment, is ever present. McNeill (2019a: 9) described this situation of an unknown harm being inflicted at any time, as living with 'a sword of Damocles' hanging over the men's heads. They are released, but the threat of recall is ever present and as Harris, Edgar and Webster (2020: 334) argued, this prospect of indefinite recall can provoke 'acute anxiety', increasing the pains of re-entry. The omnipresence of recall, or as Durnescu (2011: 538) categorised this pain of probation as 'life under a tremendous threat', can be attributed to the 'mass supervision' (McNeill, 2019b: 207) the men are under. The pain of mass supervision is discussed further below.

A further pain of freedom discussed by Shammas (2014) is that of 'ambiguity'. Shammas (2014: 113) argued that 'liberty is a double-edged sword that provides both pleasure and pain'. When on 'leave' from the Island, the men in his study

were given 'a taste of freedom' which can 'decarcerate' them, however it 'promises too much and leaves inmates unfulfilled' (ibid: 113-114). This argument aligns with the pre-release planning discussed above, and the perceptions of what freedom would be like. For many released prisoners, their perception of life on the outside, rarely manifests itself in reality, which is also linked to the fourth pain of 'relative deprivation', which Shamma (2014: 116) described as being facilitated by 'freedoms creating rising expectations'. This ambiguity arises as the idea of freedom brings the pleasure of not living in a cell, with the pain of attaining suitable accommodation; the pleasure of not having low paid meaningless or non-existent employment, but the pain of employment being unobtainable. The relative deprivation can be seen in released prisoners as during incarceration they have access to the basic necessities, and they perceive that on release they will be able to attain these life stabilising commodities, however, if these are unobtainable, due to the stigma attached to their criminal conviction, and their advancing age, they may feel 'worse-off the greater the access to goods and services' (Shamma, 2014: 116). This situation also lends itself to the final pain of freedom discussed by Shamma (ibid: 117), the pain of 'individual responsibility'. Harris, Edgar and Webster (2000: 334) argued that having to monitor personal behaviour made 'life harder on licence than in prison', the 'relentless pressure' increasing the pain of freedom. Shamma (2014: 117) argued that individual responsibility is 'enmeshed in broader structures that limit the reach of individual action in producing successful outcomes'. It is to two of the most prevalent areas of individual responsibility, attaining accommodation and employment, which this chapter now turns.

## **The Pains of Individual Responsibility**

### *Accommodation*

The difficulties of finding and securing stable accommodation can impact on, and filter into, all other aspects of the re-entry process. The housing options for once convicted men on release are summarised by Maguire and Nolan (2012: 147) as:

Returning to prior accommodation; temporary accommodation, with family or friends; registering as homeless to apply for social housing (council or housing association); acceptance by a supported housing scheme; leaving with 'no fixed abode' or heading for a night shelter or bed and breakfast.

It is not just finding one of these forms of accommodation which can impact on the chances of being successfully re-entered but gaining 'suitable' accommodation is crucial for those once convicted to be socially (re) integrated, therefore increasing their chances of successful re-entry (Baldry et al., 2002). Baldry et al. (2002) found that participants who identified their accommodation as unsuitable were over twice as likely to reoffend and be recalled, than those who classified their accommodation as suitable. However, this study only focused on those who had served short sentences, with 80% of their cohort having served 12 months or less, which negated the specific issues associated with serving longer term sentences. Also, the study did not specify an age cohort, therefore not taking into account the specific needs of older, once convicted men. The classification of suitability of accommodation may differ between younger and older once convicted men. The study by Baldry et al. (2002) is significant as it highlights that finding accommodation is more complex than simply attaining an address. In

acknowledgement of this, the literature surrounding the differing accommodation options will be discussed below, and the issues faced by the men in this thesis will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Issues surrounding finding suitable accommodation begin before the release from prison. Crawley and Sparks (2005) identified that many older prisoners showed signs of anxiety about where they were going to live post incarceration. Their fears surrounding accommodation were intensified by their imminent release, where they would live, who this would be with, and how they would physically get there. A decade later, Forsyth et al. (2015) highlighted the same fact, showing that the housing situation for older, once convicted men remained a continuing area for concern which had not been alleviated.

Being in prison does not only facilitate pre-release anxieties surrounding accommodation which can arise from a lack of formal guidance and result in taking advice from other prisoners, but it can also be the cause of prisoners losing their home. Crawley (2004) argued that release was profoundly more difficult for older men due to the losses they had suffered because of their prison sentence. Family and friendship networks had been lost, and for those who were living in council accommodation, their homes and possessions had been taken during the first few weeks of incarceration (Crawley 2004). Weijters and More (2015) argued that those serving a shorter sentence had a lower risk of losing their home than those serving longer sentences as the longer the prison sentence, the longer time was available to source and secure housing. However, whilst enduring a longer sentence, it can become more difficult to maintain and keep pre-prison

accommodation (Weijters and More 2015). Their study highlighted that the stability of pre-prison accommodation impacted on housing outcomes post release, with the higher the stability of the housing situation, the greater the chance of having accommodation after imprisonment (Weijters and More 2015).

Forsyth et al. (2015) argued that when older, once convicted men exhibit anxieties about accommodation this is partly due to them not being allowed to live in the area where they had committed their crime or where their victims lived, preventing them from being able to return home. This exclusion may be due to the men's licence restrictions which can dictate the locality within which they reside (Munn, 2011a). Returning home may not be an option for older, once convicted men if they have been required to live in an AP following their prison sentence. In their study of the health and social care needs of older prisoners returning to the community, Forsyth et al. (2015) stated that older prisoners experience high levels of anxiety surrounding their placement in a probation AP. Their study, however, did not discuss the reality of living in one, an issue which will be discussed further in Chapter 5. Other studies have found that the anxiety felt by many older prisoners in relation to APs, can be due to the fear of repercussions from other once convicted men they would be living with, due to the offence committed (Crawley, 2004; Mills and Grimshaw, 2012). Drawing on research undertaken by the charity RECOOP, the House of Commons Justice Committee (2013: 43) reported that older prisoners are seen as 'easy targets' in APs. Whilst incarcerated, those convicted of sexual offences are generally segregated from the 'mainstream' population, but when they reside in APs, they are integrated with perpetrators of a variety of crimes. No other form of offending provokes such

condemnation than that of a sexual nature (Roberts et al., 2003), and sex offenders provoke a 'moral revulsion' (Price, 2015: 66) leading to the fear of repercussions from other once convicted men, becoming an additional pain associated with re-entry.

Maguire and Nolan (2012: 145) argued that one in eight prisoners are released from prison with the status of 'no fixed abode', and many more are released with only emergency accommodation arranged. Those who leave prison in a state of homelessness are up to 20% more likely to reoffend (ibid). Imprisonment could be the cause of them losing their home (Crawley, 2004), or they could have been homeless when they first entered prison (Williams et al., 2010). Being homeless at an older age increases geriatric health conditions in comparison to age-matched homeless peers (Pedersen, 2016). Further to physical ailments, Williams et al. (2010) found that once convicted men who had a mental illness were more likely to experience a state of long-term homelessness. Being released to no fixed abode, can undermine any rehabilitative work undertaken whilst in prison to enable successful re-entry (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2013).

Without accommodation, once convicted men find it difficult to alleviate another pain of 'individual responsibility' (Shammas, 2014: 117), gaining employment (Maguire and Nolan, 2012; Criminal Justice Joint Inspection, 2014). This can lead to a paradoxical situation; without a secure place to live, it is very difficult to get a job; without paid employment, it is very difficult to afford somewhere to live (Criminal Justice Joint Inspection, 2014). Maschi et al. (2014) highlighted this issue in relation to older, once convicted men, as they argued that those who are doubly

stigmatised due to their chronological age and their status as an ex-prisoner face heightened difficulties in gaining employment and financial stability which can, in turn, increase the possibilities of becoming homeless. Price (2015: 117) argued that 'exclusion and discrimination in housing, employment, and education contradict the commonsense [sic] notion that people are given a second chance'. It is to the difficulties in gaining employment that this chapter now turns.

### *Employment*

Gaining employment can be seen as one of the greatest needs for a prisoner returning to the community (Pogrebin et al., 2014) and an important aspect of successful re-entry (Novo-Corti and Barreiro-Gen, 2015). Much of the literature surrounding the employment of those once convicted focuses on the impact it has upon rates of recidivism (Baldry et al., 2018) but gaining suitable employment can also yield personal benefits for older, once convicted men. Mills and Codd (2008) argued that gaining employment can increase the chances of successful re-entry by providing financial stability; increasing a sense of self-worth through acquiring new skills and a legitimate identity; gaining new friendships with those who are not involved in criminal activity; and assist with positively occupying free time. However, the pains of re-entry are increased due to the barriers to gaining these stabilising factors, which are influenced by a combination of pre-prison experiences (Criminal Justice Joint Inspection, 2014), the availability of work whilst incarcerated, the stigma of being an older, once convicted man (Lebel, 2012; Sheppard and Ricciardelli, 2020) and their chronological and physical age (Allen, 2012). It is to these barriers that this chapter now turns.

As the importance of pre-prison accommodation has been highlighted in existing literature, so too has the pre-prison employment status of prisoners as Ramakers et al. (2015: 65) highlighted that the experiences of employment before imprisonment are a 'major predictor' of being employed post release. Their study suggested that being imprisoned did not necessarily diminish the once convicted men's chances of gaining employment, as many prisoners held low status, temporary jobs prior to incarceration, therefore it was not surprising that they held these types of positions following their sentence. This highlighted that the men they interviewed had 'severe human capital deficit' prior to being incarcerated, and not because of incarceration (Ramakers et al. 2015: 80). Further to this, they found that the men's poor attachment to the labour market could contribute to the post release employment status more so than the prison experience itself (ibid). Further to the imported employment characteristics, Mills and Codd (2008) argued that imprisonment can detrimentally reduce the prospects of obtaining employment. Whilst in prison, attempts to prepare prisoners for employment on release are made through education and prison work (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2013). Many of these initiatives are aimed at the younger population, leaving older prisoners unable to participate due to incapacity or barriers such as the physical structure of the prison including the distance to travel to workshops and for education or having to negotiate climbing stairs (ibid). When skills are learnt in prison, they are not always suitable to prepare prisoners for gaining employment on release. A Criminal Justice Joint Inspection (2014: 7) highlighted that 'none of the offenders in our cohort ended

up using the vocational skills or training they had received in prison in employment after release’.

The punishment of imprisonment leaves prisoners further unprepared as it interrupts the life course and the normal stages of adult development, including participation in the workforce (Loeffler, 2013), leading to gaps in employment history (Mills, 2015). Their age-matched peers in the community may have spent many years in employment which would give them the benefit of seniority in the workplace, which is a position that older, once convicted men could not achieve due to them ‘passing time in prison’ instead of gaining employment experience (Munn, 2011b: 158). Due to the unsuitable nature of prison employment for older prisoners, they require more help when preparing to leave prison. HM Chief Inspector of prisons (2020: 147) found that for those aged 50 and over, 55% reported that they needed help gaining employment when released, however, only 31% reported receiving this.

The availability of work for older, once convicted men was another employment barrier. Munn (2011a) discussed the in-between phase that older, once convicted men can find themselves in, too young to claim a pension, so they must work to earn a living, yet too old to undertake available jobs, which mainly consisted of physical labour which they may not be physically capable of doing. If employment is difficult to obtain or does not meet the financial expectations of once convicted men, a state of being unemployed can increase levels of poverty (Kennedy and Kit, 2013), further increase social isolation, and reinforce an unwanted outsider status (Mills, 2015; Wyse, 2017). Unemployment can have a negative impact on identity

and induce feelings of a lack of purpose within society leading to a life 'without any meaning' (Wyse, 2017: 2165). Advanced age, has for many years, been viewed negatively in terms of employment, however, as indicated by the House of Lords Select Committee, this notion is beginning to be challenged by employers such as B&Q who value age and recognise the importance of aged experience (Select Committee of the House of Lords on Public Service and Demographic Change, 2013). However, even if employment at an advanced age is beginning to be accepted, the stigma of a criminal conviction can supersede any meaningful and positive experience gained, or qualifications achieved in the preparation for release from prison (Novo-Corti and Barreiro-Gen, 2015).

The stigma attached to older, once convicted men who are seeking employment, can create a number of barriers which can in turn increase the pains of re-entry. As Munn (2011b: 153) argued 'employability is an area in which the negative implications of stigma manifest'. Potential employers can react negatively to the stigmas attached to older, once convicted men (Mills and Codd, 2008; Munn 2011a; Patterson, 2013) believing that their age-related health issues may increase the level of risk as they may potentially require more time off sick than a younger employee, making them a 'dangerous person to hire' (Munn, 2011a: 240). Novo-Corti and Barreiro-Gen (2015: 453) found that the stigma attached to once convicted men also led to employers being wary of the men, but also society as a whole had a 'general distrust of prisoners and former prisoners'. Difficulties in gaining employment may not always be attributed to the stigma and age-related health issues surrounding older, once convicted men, however, they may attribute

the rejection to their status of being once convicted, not considering that there could have been a more suitable candidate for the role (Munn, 2011b).

Durnescu (2019: 1489) argued that the inability to gain employment, and a lack of stable accommodation, can lead to the 'pain of instability'. If stability is not obtained, then an already vulnerable position is heightened. The pains discussed to this point, the pains of release and adjustment, freedom, and individual responsibility, are all amplified by being under supervision in the community. It is to the 'pains of probation' (Durnescu, 2011: 530), and 'mass supervision' (McNeil, 2019a: 207) that this chapter now turns.

### **The Pains of Probation and Mass Supervision**

The management and purpose of supervision in the community has developed over time from its origins in religion to its place in society today (Raynor, 2007). Considering the history of supervision is important, as McNeill (2019a: 15) argued that a greater understanding of the emergence of 'pervasive punishment' is essential, 'not just for making sense of the past and understanding the present, but also for shaping the future'. The 19th Century saw the implementation of the Discharged Prisoners Aid Societies. These separate charitable organisations who provided help and support to recently released prisoners became a collective under the title 'the National Association of Discharged Prisoners' Aid Societies (NADPAS) in 1936 (Raynor 2007: 29). The successor to this association is the more widely known charity the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO). The support provided by NADPAS was soon accompanied by

the creation of the Probation Service in 1907, and since then re-entry supervision has gone through a number of changes (Deering, 2016).

Before the Criminal Justice Act (1991) the probation officer's role was to 'advise, assist and befriend' (Deering, 2016: 1; McNeill, 2019a: 19). This approach was not used as part of a sentence, but as an opportunity to assist the prisoners with their transition from prison to the community. However, following the implementation of the Act, a probation order was now seen as a sentence which was used as a means to deliver punishment in the community (Deering, 2016). This highlights a shift from probation being a response to the harms caused by imprisonment, to becoming a part of the harms caused by punishment. These changes were closely followed by the implementation of Automatic Conditional Release (1992) which meant that for the first time, all prisoners who had served at least 12 months in prison would undergo statutory supervision in the community. Vanstone (2007) argued that by 1995 the role of probation had again been transformed. The focus became more about supervising once convicted people to ensure they adhered to their licence conditions, rather than their previous focus, voluntary aftercare. This led to greater attention being paid to attendance records, rather than individual support with practical issues such as housing and employment which had preceded it. This shift 'emphasised control rather than welfare as a more dominant concern' (Vanstone, 2007: 307), from 'advise, assist and befriend' (McNeill, 2019a: 19; Deering, 2016: 1), to 'control, confront and curfew' (Worrall and Hoy, 2005 cited in McNeill, 2019a: 19).

Following this, a report by the Social Exclusion Unit (2002) highlighted a variety of issues which should be addressed in order to achieve successful re-entry. The recommendations from this report were heavily utilised in the implementation of the Reducing Re-Offending National Action Plan (Home Office, 2004) which contained the seven pathways to resettlement. This coincided with the creation of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) (now HMPPS) which aimed to link the Prison and Probation Services to provide a continuous management of offenders both during incarceration and whilst in the community. From this, re-entry became a growing concern with its success being linked to desistance from crime (Maguire and Raynor, 2006). This furthered the shift away from aftercare, support and advice to success being related to lowering levels of recidivism.

At this time, those who served a sentence of less than twelve months were still not included under the control of community supervision. This left considerable numbers of once convicted men with no support after release. This was addressed with the implementation of the Offender Rehabilitation Act (2014), under which virtually all offenders who left prison would undergo statutory supervision. Further to this, in 2015, Resettlement Prisons were introduced in an effort to bring prisoners closer to the communities they would be released into, and to assist the NPS, CRCs and charities in the local area to make contact with the prisoners before release. Although these changes aimed to transform rehabilitation for the better, their implementation has been deemed a failure (Taylor et al., 2017; Annison, 2018; Collett, 2019; Walker, Annison and Beckett, 2019) and the supervision contracts which were awarded to the CRCs were terminated two years earlier than agreed (Ministry of Justice, 2022).

Hedderman, (2007: 20) argued that ‘unlike prison overcrowding, probation “overcrowding” cannot be accommodated by “doubling up” or spilling over into police cells; instead, probation officers are taking on even larger caseloads’. In the same vein, Cadet (2020) argued that unlike in prison, where an increase in numbers must be planned for to physically house an increased population, no such consideration is taken within probation services. The Transforming Rehabilitation (2013) agenda has received much attention since its inception, bringing with it a much-needed focus on re-entry in England and Wales (Moore, 2019).

The justifications for punishment have been the source of debate for many researchers, however, ‘there has been surprisingly little work until recently on the normative justification of supervision’ (McNeill, 2019a: 77). Without a clear justification of why and how supervision is utilised following imprisonment, the nature of supervision remains contested (McNeill, 2019a). McNeill (2019a: 108) asked ‘what exactly is the penal character of mass supervision?’. Although supervision is ‘sold’ as a continuation of support during the transition from prison to the community, with rehabilitation as its focus, the changes brought about by TR have led to rehabilitation being reduced to “‘mere” supervision’ and as McNeill (2019b: 111) argued ‘in some cases, to not much of that’. These changes in the purpose of governance following a prison sentence have impacted on the experiences of those who undergo the re-entry journey. The focus was once a charitable venture, aiming to help those who needed it with the practicalities of re-entering society. This voluntary aftercare has now been replaced with supervision practices which are focused more on reducing risk, protecting the public, and mean a potential future of ‘greater restrictions on people’s movements

and lifestyle' (Ministry of Justice, 2019c, line 31), than helping to break the cycle of offending by successfully helping the men re-enter society (Vanstone 2007). However, Deering (2010, 2011 cited in Digard, 2014: 442) found that these changes had been 'resisted or subverted by front-line staff so that they may continue to pursue what many would consider to be "traditional" probation work'. This traditional work focused primarily on reducing the harms caused by imprisonment to enable the supervisees to successfully re-entry society. Although as Deering (2016) found, some supervisors still hold this ethos at the heart of their work, in many cases, this does not reduce the pains of re-entry.

Carr and Robinson (2021) argued that the Probation Service is a largely hidden sector of the criminal justice system with little power to assert its voice within penal policy. They also argue that the 'absence of a strong national identity' (ibid: 236) is one of the reasons that the workings of probation have been 'relatively neglected' in comparison to prison studies (ibid). McNeill (2019a: 44) highlighted that mass imprisonment is made visible through the use of depicting prison numbers through the use of graphs which make 'powerful visual statements'. However, 'until very recently, mass supervision has rarely been depicted in this or any other way' leading to it becoming 'relatively invisible' (McNeill, 2019a: 44). Supervision is a hidden world, as McNeill (2019a: 10) posits 'most people would struggle even to begin to imagine what supervision looks and feels like'. Part of how mass supervision is felt, is through pain. Being under probation supervision can be described as a 'landmine' (McNeill, 2019a: 45), a hidden, concealed, force, lying in wait for the supervisee to take a wrong step.

Codd and Bramhall (2002) noted over two decades ago that little was known about the experiences of older men on probation, and this remains the case. Cadet (2020: 130) argued that a reason for a lack of focus on older, probationers' needs is due to the ever-prevalent focus on younger offenders, which had led to 'systemic thoughtlessness', which under the Equality Act 2010, could lead to 'indirect discrimination' (ibid). Much like probation practices being hidden, those being supervised are also not visible. Deleuze (1990 cited in McNeill, 2019a: 12) argued that those under mass supervision can be seen as 'dividuals rather than individuals, allocated to standardised responses on the basis of some kind of typification, or classification, for example, through risk assessment'.

Fitzgibbon, Graebisch and McNeill (2017: 318) argued that the 'pervasive impact of supervision is experienced as being painful'. In their study of female prisoners' casefiles, McKendy and Ricciardelli, (2021: 13) reported that a combination of the barriers to re-entry and 'hyper scrutiny' or as McNeil (2019a: 207) describes, 'mass supervision', can lead to once convicted people 'walking on thin ice' (McKendy and Ricciardelli, 2021: 13). This state of being continually cautious in their actions, due to the 'omnipresent fear of returning to custody' (McKendy and Ricciardelli, 2021: 8) during the re-entry process contributes to the pains of release, re-entry and probation. McNeill (2019b: 209) discussed the 'pains of supervisory punishment', arguing that in mass supervision:

The 'Malopticon' is intended as a metaphorical penal apparatus or process through which the subject is seen badly, is seen *as* bad and is projected and represented as bad. As such, it produces experiences of misrecognition and misrepresentation that constitute significant yet poorly understood pains of supervisory punishment.

These pains are borne from the aim of the Malopticon, which is to ‘produce compliant subjects’ (McNeill, 2019a: 21), akin to the panopticon in prison.

Even when supervision is seen to be helpful and beneficial to the supervisees, it can still induce pain (McNeill, 2019a). Hayes (2015: 99-100) argued that this pain is delivered through ‘supervised community penalties’ as systems of ‘pain delivery, however benevolent the intention’. Fitzgibbon, Graebisch and McNeill (2017: 318) argued that the pain felt during probation can be caused by a ‘combination of being (continually) judged and constrained over time, and in the presence of a suspended threat’. The ‘suspended threat’ (ibid) is discussed further below in relation to being recalled to prison.

The experiences of supervision following imprisonment can greatly depend on those providing the supervisory practices. The relationships between the supervisor and supervisee are important as the supervisors hold the power and have the ability to shape the re-entry experiences, including the pain endured for older, once convicted men (Hayes, 2015). As the number of these men increases, the experience of being supervised has changed, as Petersilla (2001: 361) argued, supervisors are ‘managing more people, managing them less well’, which leads to the pain of having unmet needs. If needs are unmet, desistance from crime becomes harder to achieve.

### **The Pains of Desistance**

Nugent and Schinkel (2016) found that like release, re-entry and probation, desistance is also related to pain. They consider two studies of desistance,

comparing the pains of desistance between young people with short criminal histories, and an older population who were under licence supervision following long term imprisonment. Further to the structural issues discussed above relating to obtaining suitable housing and employment both contributing to the pains of desistance, they highlight three areas where the pain of desistance is prevalent, isolation; goal failure; and hopelessness. This chapter will now consider these three key areas of pain.

### *The Pains of Isolation*

Nugent and Schinkel (2016) found that one way for once convicted people to avoid offending behaviour was to isolate themselves from others to avoid the 'temptation' (Durnescu, 2019: 1493) to commit crime. Avoiding temptations, combined with prisonization and institutionalisation, led to those in their study becoming isolated. Although this was used as a coping mechanism to assist with desistance, it produced pain as it resulted in them living in a prison of their own creation, staying in their accommodation, much like a prisoner being kept in a cell. Nugent and Schinkel (2016: 572) found that living in this way led to a loss of the self, producing a 'sense of displacement' where they were living an unfamiliar life. Moore (2011: 131) argued that 'If being in prison is enforced exile from society, then returning to the community often constitutes involuntary exile within it'. Although loneliness and social isolation are often used in conjunction with one another and can be believed to have the same meaning, Beach and Bamford (2014: 2) argued that 'isolation is being by yourself. Loneliness is not liking it'. When isolation leads to social exclusion it can have a negative impact on the

chances of successful re-entry, as Bain and Parkinson (2010: 72) argued this further by stating that the success of re-entry depends on being socially included. Sample (2014) stated that the pain of loneliness can be likened to physical pain. Age UK (2016) also reported that for older people, loneliness can be more physically harmful than smoking fifteen cigarettes a day and caused a 64% increased chance of developing clinical dementia. Sample (2014: line 18) reported that loneliness has been linked to health-related issues such as 'high blood pressure and a weakened immune system to a greater risk of depression, heart attack and strokes'. Phillipson and Scharf (2004) identified a number of groups of older people who are more at risk of exclusion than others. This list includes those with cumulative disadvantage: persistent poverty; contracting social networks which can lead to loneliness and social isolation; area disadvantage; physical and mental ill-health; and those affected by ageist beliefs and practices. Those who have a lack of access to new technologies such as the internet and those who have difficulty accessing legal and advice services are also discussed. Although older, once convicted men could be placed in a number of the aforementioned categories, Phillipson and Scharf (2004) do not include those who have been in prison in the categories of older people who are at risk of social exclusion.

Being isolated and socially excluded can be mitigated if once convicted men have family or social connections. Support from family throughout the 'resettlement' process is the most effective 'resettlement' agency (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2014: 5), but prisons are failing to acknowledge the level of support given by families by not including them in the pre-release preparations (Markson et al., 2015). Markson et al. (2015) argued that strong family connections are an

essential feature of successful re-entry. The prison environment, however, can act as a corrosive agent in maintaining family ties and for those with fragile connections pre imprisonment, the stress and strain of incarceration can dissolve any existing connections (Wildeman and Western, 2010). Even for those prisoners who had strong family connections before being incarcerated, a prison sentence can put a strain on, and impact upon, family relationships (Brunton-Smith and McCarthy 2017; Markson et al., 2015). There are several issues which contribute to reduced levels of family contact in prison. Spouses of older prisoners may not be able to travel long distances, older prisoners may have lost contact with their family over time, or the family may have disowned them due to their offence.

One method of maintaining strong family ties, or facilitating reparation of tenuous connections, is through prison visits (La Vigne et al., 2008). Brunton-Smith and McCarthy (2017) considered if prison visits could impact on the strength of familial bonds and the impact these bonds, or lack of, have upon the re-entry process. They found that visits by family members heightened the consequences of the offence the prisoner had committed. This reminder of the impact of their offence proved too stressful for some prisoners, leading them to choose not to receive visits in order to alleviate this pain and distress (ibid). This lack of physical contact with an offender's family can negatively impact on their relationships and increase the pain of loneliness and isolation following release. However, Stearns, Swanson and Etie (2019: 163) found that visits from friend and family can actually 'ameliorate social death', by strengthening family ties.

Crawley and Sparks (2006) found that older prisoners placed a greater value on maintaining family ties than their younger counterparts and were more willing to try and repair broken ties. This could be a response to the different experiences faced by older prisoners, as they are more likely to have tenuous or non-existent relationships with family and so they have to work harder to heal damaged connections (Crawley and Sparks, 2006; Brunton-Smith and McCarthy, 2017). These familial breakdowns can be due to 'natural ageing' which brings with it a stronger possibility of the breakdown of relationships, combined with incarceration, where lengthy sentences increase the risks of lower rates of contact (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2013: 44). As prisoners grow older through a lengthy sentence, the longer they are away from their family, the more problematic it can become to maintain family connections (Boffetta and Belhumeur, 2015). A further explanation for older prisoners receiving fewer visits can be attributed to the families having disowned them due to the stigma surrounding their offence and offender status (Cochran, Mears and Bales, 2017). Older, once convicted men endure stigma both during and following incarceration, but this stigma can also negatively impact upon family members, which in turn can lead to them disowning the prisoner (Levenson and Tewksbury, 2009). Goffman (1963: 30) discussed how those related to a stigmatised person can also suffer a 'courtesy stigma'. Further to this, the Prison Reform Trust (2022: 25) highlighted that family members of offenders can undergo 'disqualification by association'.

Markson et al. (2015) indicated that supportive family networks are an essential aspect of successful re-entry due to their tangible and non-tangible support mechanisms. On release, once convicted men may go back to live with their

families. Crawley (2004) found that only men who had a family or partner to go to were enthusiastic and hopeful regarding release and their future. Although this return may be desirable, once convicted men may not be allowed to return to prior accommodation as their offence could have been against a family member (Schultz, 2014). Their offence could further diminish the chances of residing with their family if the shame and secondary stigma endured by their relatives had led them to sever their connections (Levenson and Tewksbury, 2009). The option of returning to live with their family is further diminished for older, once convicted men, especially if they have lost contact with their family due to serving long sentences (Crawley, 2004; House of Commons Justice Committee, 2013). Even if older, once convicted men do go to live with their family, it may only be a temporary measure as a Criminal Justice Joint Inspection (2014) found that a fifth of those once convicted had to move to other family or friends' homes within six months of release. This transient lifestyle could be attributed to the experience faced by families as they find it difficult to cope with an older, once convicted man due to their mental and physical health issues (Stojkovic, 2007), or because they have been used to a certain home dynamic, and this has been interrupted by the arrival of another person.

Family bonds and connections are not only strained whilst the individual is incarcerated, but when a prisoner is released, these relationships are tested further and can impact upon the chances of recidivism. Brunton-Smith and McCarthy (2017: 476) argued that the existence of strong family connections before imprisonment, do not 'automatically translate into positive resettlement outcomes upon release'. It is the maintaining and strengthening of these

attachments both during and post imprisonment which can assist in reducing the risk of re-offending (Laub et al., 1998; Brunton-Smith and McCarthy, 2017). Although families may have been supportive throughout the men's time in prison, the act of re-entry, and the change in social and emotional dynamics which it brings, can make relationships between families especially fragile (Wildeman and Western, 2010).

The pain of isolation, whether that be self-inflicted isolation as a coping strategy or an externally influenced state of being, increases the chances of being socially excluded and marginalised in society. This does not provide an arena for successful re-entry and can lead to older, once convicted men feeling as if they have failed in their attempt to be successfully re-entered, leaving them in a state of hopelessness. It is to these pains of desistance highlighted by Nugent and Schinkel (2016) that this chapter now turns.

### *The Pains of Goal Failure and Hopelessness*

A sense of goal failure was evident in the research undertaken by Nugent and Schinkel (2016) as they found that the desire to attain life stabilising goals, such as employment, when unobtainable, resulted in the notion of failure. This pain of desistance was also evident when considering identities. Nugent and Schinkel (2016: 573) found that not being able to obtain life goals, resulted in a displacement of identity, where the identity of those once convicted was in a 'liminal state'. Their sense of self did not align with their pre-prison identities, nor their prison identities, resulting in confusion as to who they should be, and how this would impact on their actions. They found that this state was eased for those

who could realign with pre-prison identities such as ‘father or partner’, however, many of the men in their study did not have this option. A combination of the pain of isolation and goal failure, led to the third pain of desistance, hopelessness, which resulted in their participants ‘giving up hope of anything other than a life of merely existing’ (Nugent and Schinkel, 2016: 574). This produced two ways of being, one where their situation led to frustration as the men strived for unobtainable goals, and another, where this situation was not framed in pain, instead, they accepted their positions and were ‘happy to (perhaps temporarily) confine their lives to the micro-level’ (Nugent and Schinkel, 2016: 574). For those who were not content with settling for a life on this level, Nugent and Schinkel (2016) argued that they may achieve some goals and begin to progress towards desistance, however, this would only happen if a significant change in the stigmatized attitudes towards once convicted men could be achieved, and the way in which the men must disclose a criminal past could be eased through policy.

This chapter will now consider how the perceptions of older, once convicted men, the issues surrounding disclosing an offence and the stigma associated with these two areas can induce further pain during re-entry.

### **The Pain of Stigma**

The stigma placed on those once convicted can adversely affect their experiences and ultimately the success, or failure of re-entry. Stigma can be endured in both physical and psychological forms, and the language used can impact on the success of re-entry (Willis, 2018). The use of labels to identify individuals and groups of people is commonplace in everyday life (ibid), yet the damage they can do, and

the harm they can cause often goes unseen. Willis (2018: 728) highlighted that labels such as 'ex-con' or 'sex-offender' can induce 'stigma, disempowerment and distress', and by applying them can create the notion that all those we label form a homogenous group. Willis (2018) argued that by placing those with similar convictions in the same labelled category, their individuality and personal needs can be lost which can have a negative impact on their chances of successful re-entry, rehabilitation and desistance from crime.

Goffman (1963: 3) defined stigma as 'an attribute that is deeply discrediting'. Stigma arises when 'interrelated components converge' (Moran 2012: 567). For stigma to be applied, firstly, a recognition of an individual characteristic takes place, and this difference is thus labelled. This is followed by those imparting the label, linking it to dominant cultural beliefs and social norms, resulting in it being conceived as an undesirable trait and a negative stereotype. This socially constructed stereotype and label are then used to create an 'us' and 'them' perception, where 'they' become the 'Other' as they do not fit with the expectations of society. Krumer-Nevo and Benjamin (2010: 695-696) encapsulate the notion of 'Othering' as:

The denial of her or his visibility and of her or his resemblance to the 'self', refusal to admit her or his uniqueness or to acknowledge her or his voice and knowledge. The oppressive power of Othering derives from the impassable barrier it draws between 'us' and 'them' and the social distancing it creates.

The 'Othering' of once convicted men denies them the power to assert their true identity (Gilleard and Higgs 2015). The stigmatisation of being 'Othered' produces dominant 'regimes of truth' (Scruton, 2011: 35) derived from socially constructed

labels, leading to a loss of social status and a life on the margins of society, which results in discrimination (Codd, 2020), social injustice, and a reduction in the chances of successful re-entry. When this process takes place, those it is imparted on become stigmatised. Goffman (1963: 123) argued that this process is socially constructed, as it is the wider society which initially conceives the difference as discrediting, and this becomes 'conceptualized collectively by the society as a whole'.

Crawley and Sparks (2005: 351) argued that the 'hidden injuries of elder imprisonment arise in the disjunction between the uniform status 'prisoner' and the condition 'old man'. This status and condition follow the men through the gates, creating barriers to successful re-entry. Older men in society, and once convicted men, as separate groups face specific stigmas. A combination of being 'Othered' due to a criminal record (Drake and Henley, 2014: 154), and then 'Othered' again due to chronological age (Higgs and Gilleard, 2014: 10) produces the double 'Othering', of older, once convicted men. Further to this, if the conviction was due to a sexual offence, the men can be Othered by a third status; they are once convicted, old men, and sex offenders resulting in 'multiple stigmatized identities' (LeBel, 2012: 67). Having a number of stigmatised identities can reduce the chances of successful re-entry as LeBel (2012: 77) argued, 'if one doesn't get you, another one will'.

Moore, Stuewig and Tangney (2013: 527) argued that stigma is a 'multifaceted construct' which is present and can be broken down into three levels in society, 'structural, social, and self'. Structural stigma can be seen in the areas where laws

and policies produce barriers to social participation, inducing marginalisation, examples being unable to attain suitable housing or employment (Moore, Stuewig and Tangney, 2013); social stigma is evident in societal attitudes and discriminative behaviour towards a group of people; and self-stigma encompasses individually perceived, and internalised stigma. The issues surrounding structural stigma in terms of housing and employment have been discussed above, therefore this chapter will now consider the further two dimensions of stigma.

As Goffman (1963: 123) argued, for a stigma to be imparted, a difference must initially be recognised by society 'as a whole'. For a difference to be recognised, it must first be known, through an unveiling by others, or through self-disclosure of a criminal background. Munn (2011b) likened the act of disclosing a criminal past to the process of 'coming out' that members of the LGBTQ+ community contend with. She argued that the disclosure of a criminal conviction can produce fears surrounding the response from others leading to a loss of friendships, employment, and the risk of physical or verbal abuse, and the risk of overall rejection and the imposition of trauma. These fears can lead to social isolation, which can make finding new friendships and positive social networks more difficult to attain (Mills and Grimshaw, 2012). Digard (2014: 433) argued that 'self-disclosure, or "confession", is shaped by the structure in which it is conducted'. Moore and Tangney (2017: 323) found that in order to avoid the possibility of trauma or discrimination resulting from disclosing a stigma, their participants utilised 'defensive behavioural strategies' by undertaking the 'extreme form of concealment' through social withdrawal. Mills (2015) also found that the

debilitating pressure of social interaction led many men in her study to avoid social circumstances which heightened their social isolation further.

When social exclusion and the resulting isolation occur, Goffman (1963: 13) argued that those who are 'lacking the salutary feed-back of daily social intercourse' can become 'suspicious, depressed, hostile, anxious and bewildered'. Mills (2015: 391) also found that social withdrawal led to 'depression and debilitating social anxiety' and Stauffer (2015: 30) found that 'social exclusion, even if it is only imagined, lights up the same part of the brain where physical pain is expressed'. Living with these negative attributes can impede successful re-entry, as those once convicted must be socially included (Bain and Parkinson, 2010: 72) for re-entry to be seen as successful.

Further to the fear of negative responses to the disclosure of a criminal conviction, Goffman (1963) argued that the stigmatized cannot be sure how other people in society will react to them, either accepting or rejecting them. He (ibid: 71) discussed how public perceptions of an individual's identity, rarely reflect their true identity, as the public image:

Seems to be constituted from a small selection of facts which may be true of him, which facts are inflated into a dramatic and newsworthy appearance, and then used as a full picture of him.

These distorted images can negatively impact upon the (re) integration of once convicted men with a conviction for a sexual offence as social interactions are laden with decisions surrounding disclosure of their offence and the repercussions this will have (Mills, 2015). These men have become the modern folk devils,

condemned for all sexual offences, albeit 'typical perpetrators' of sexual offences are 'ordinary men – husbands, fathers, uncles and lovers' (Hudson, 2011: 54-55). This scapegoating leads to older, once convicted men, convicted of a sexual offence, enduring heightened stigma compared to the older ex-prisoner 'gangster', for example the Krays who are portrayed as modern folk heroes (Fordy, 2015). If the stigma is concealable, it can cause further difficulties as Goffman (1963: 74) posits that the men are left with a choice, either to 'admit his situation to the intimate or to feel guilty for not doing so'. He (ibid: 48) argued in the attachment of stigma, 'visibility... is a crucial factor'. If a stigma is concealable, it leaves the bearer with the choice to either keep the stigma hidden or disclose the 'discrediting attribute' (Goffman, 1963: 3) to others. Mills (2015: 391) also found that the men in her study were faced with a number of quandaries when considering disclosure, 'whom to tell? When to tell? What to tell? How to do this?'. This debilitating pressure can create barriers to successful re-entry. If those once convicted try to keep a stigma secret, they will always be living under the shadow of the possibility of someone who knows their once convicted identity, revealing it to others to whom they have tried to maintain an altogether different persona. This can impact on social inclusion, as Goffman (1963: 75) argued that 'personal identification bears strongly on social identity'. Moran (2012) found that those in her study with a concealable stigma internalised the stigma associated with imprisonment. Although they had the ability to keep their stigma hidden, it still impacted on their lives. Moran reported that her participants felt that others 'could tell' (ibid: 573) that they had been to prison. The feelings of believing that others could somehow know of their concealable stigma is described as

'anticipated stigma' (Moore and Tangney 2017: 322) or 'stigma consciousness' (Pinel, 2004 cited in Munn, 2011b: 153). Having the preconception that stigma will arise if a stigmatized identity is disclosed can lead to social withdrawal to avoid the possible resulting discrimination (Moore and Tangney, 2017). This social withdrawal leads to social isolation which 'contributes to poor adjustment' in re-entry (ibid: 323).

Stigmatization reduces the chances of successful re-entry (LeBel, 2012; Moran, 2012; Moore, Stuewig and Tangney, 2013; Moore and Tangney, 2017), framing the lives of those once convicted in a social construction of 'Otherness', which lends itself to discriminative attitudes and behaviours. This can create barriers to re-entry which can lead to social injustice, resulting in those once convicted living in a state of social death (Price, 2015). However, research on re-entry and stigma has been relatively neglected (LeBel, 2012; Moran, 2012; Johnson and Cullen, 2015), particularly if like the stigma of a criminal conviction, the stigma is concealable (Galnander 2020).

Hallet (2012) argued that the most important factor in measuring successful re-entry is creating an environment within which the once convicted can move on from their socially constructed stigma, and be seen by themselves, and society, as more than the label they have been branded with. Although there may be many non-deviant acts undertaken throughout the life course which have the power to shape identity, Munn (2011b: 151-152) argued that it is a 'single deviant event that indefinitely stigmatizes the individual'. Maruna et al. (2009) highlight that this one deviant act can be enough to stigmatise a person as a criminal for life, but a

hundred non-deviant acts may not be enough to shed the stigma and become something more. However, Goffman (1963) considered the possibility of the stigmatised person making an attempt to rectify the situation that has led to their label. He argued that when such an attempt is made, the individual does not transcend into a 'fully normal status', they are viewed as 'someone with a record of having corrected a particular blemish' (ibid: 9). This would suggest that those with a criminal conviction will never truly leave behind the status of offender, they will always be seen as once convicted.

However, being stigmatized and 'doubly Othered' by society may not be an accepted notion by older, once convicted men. Resistance can be used to maintain the self against the identity which is being imposed (Goffman, 1961; Cohen and Taylor, 1972). Further to this, Appleton (2010) discussed how former prisoners use techniques to deny the stigmas relating to their criminality and contest the imposition of penal power into their lives. Many of the men in her study did not accept the socially defined status of 'ex-paedophile' or 'ex-con', they used it as a constant reminder of how their individual identities had changed and this assisted in the reinforcement of their new pro-social identities. Moore and Tangney (2017: 336) also found that those who denied the imposition of stigma believed that they could 'overcome stigma-related adversity, or re-frame negative predictions about discrimination' if they maintained a positive attitude.

Labels that stigmatize can define identity (McKendy and Ricciardelli, 2021). For Goffman, (1963), men who are stigmatised in later life are those who have been accustomed to, and have lived by, the norms and values of society, but a stigma

attached later in life brings a change in their former identity. He (ibid: 35) argued that these men must 'learn a second way of being that is felt by those around them to be the real and valid one'. Older men entering prison must become accustomed to the norms and values of the prison environment and of those who inhabit it, and outwardly show they are part of the community. They may adopt the mask of 'offender-hood' (Farrall, 2016: 212) which can lead to their identity being altered from its pre-prison status. Highlighting this change in identity, Goffman (1963: 35) comments that for those who face stigma in later life, 'the uneasiness he feels about new associates may slowly give way to uneasiness felt concerning old ones'. Due to the stigma of being labelled an older, once convicted man, they will be viewed differently by their pre-prison connections, whether their identity has been altered or not. In this view, which may not be rooted in truth, but becomes seen as reality (Goffman, 1963), it is not only the once convicted man who is viewed differently, but those around him may also endure a proportion of stigma, or as Goffman (1963: 30) indicates, a 'courtesy stigma'. Family members can also undergo a change in identity, and with this comes partial blame, with members of the family being known as a 'mother of a murderer' or 'wife of a sex offender' (Condry, 2011: 62). If the 'courtesy stigma' (Goffman, 1963: 30) is applied, the men may be disowned, leading to a state of isolation, and ultimately, social death.

The pains of freedom so far discussed, can all lead to a 'shadowy status of social death' (Price, 2015: 117), as Price (2015: 127) argued:

The vulnerability of the social dead belies the viability of this concept of freedom. The outcast lives at the mercy of the society and its members; abandoned, he or she lives not within a social order but rather in a state of socially constructed disorder.

Price (2015) argued that those who are socially dead have had their identities and place in society fundamentally changed, and this amendment of the self can be a permanent way of being. He (ibid: 115-116) summarised the impact of social death as:

The sum of a person's life, her trustworthiness, her worth as a human being, and, alas, her future prospects are reducible to the criminal act for which she was originally convicted.

The notion of social death has been discussed in relation to mental health (Reidy, 1993), older age (Gilleard and Higgs, 2015) and imprisonment (Price, 2015; Scott, 2018: 2020), yet although touched upon by Price (2015) social death has not been discussed in relation to the re-entry process in its own right. Further to this, social death has not been discussed in terms of the double (or triple) Othering of stigma, old age, and being a once convicted man. Social death is an important concept when considering the pains of re-entry as Price (2015: 127) argued that:

Living a purely negative version of freedom is to live a nightmare that approaches not the hypothetical unreality, not an imagined dystopia, but rather the state of social death lived as a concrete reality.

This concrete reality of social death is far from the social inclusion that successful re-entry demands. Social death is not only an accumulation of pain, but also the loneliness this imparts. Ethical loneliness, is described by Stauffer (2015: 1) as:

A condition undergone by persons who have been unjustly treated and dehumanised by human beings and political structures, who emerge from that injustice only to find that the surrounding world will not listen to or cannot properly hear their testimony.

Being ethically lonely, like being socially dead, can be the result of the collateral consequences of being in prison, combined with the stigma and pain of re-entry. Glaser and Straus (1966: 215) used the term 'social death', when discussing putting a dying patient into a drug induced state, a 'living sleep'. Although they discuss social death in a physical form, once convicted men could also be seen to be in a 'living sleep', they are present in society, but the ethical loneliness they endure leads to their experiences of pain being ignored or not deemed worthy of being accepted, they are present, but not seen or heard.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has considered the pains endured following a prison sentence. When these pains are imparted, hidden injuries beyond the bars are inflicted which are felt on both a structural and personal level in the re-entry process. Each stage of the journey, from life in prison, to pre-release planning, to gaining life stabilising factors and issues relating to identity, disclosure of an offence and stigma are all laden with pains which are disproportionately applied to those considered to be older, once convicted men. The existing literature has highlighted how the pains of re-entry create barriers to the attempts to be successfully re-entered, which are compounded by advanced age.

This chapter has highlighted how the existing literature surrounding the pains of punishment can further justify the need for this research, by highlighting that being socially dead, is to not be heard. This research aims to reduce these pains, by providing a platform on which the lived experiences of older, once convicted

men can be not just heard, but acknowledged, understood, and accepted as legitimate.

The pains endured when released from prison can create barriers which for many older, once convicted men can result in unsuccessful re-entry. These barriers form just one aspect of the re-entry journey. In order to investigate the experiences holistically, it is important to utilise the correct methodology and methods. The following chapter will discuss the methodological and ethical considerations that provided a framework within which the men's experiences of the hidden injuries beyond the bars could be explored.

## Chapter 3: Methodology, Methods, and Ethics

### Introduction

This chapter aims to clear the 'murky waters of epistemology and ontology' (Matthews, 2009: 356) by highlighting the justifications for using social constructionism as a conceptual framework. This chapter will firstly discuss the methodology and methods used in order to meet the aims of the research and how they have guided the data collection and subsequent analysis of the findings. The chapter will conclude by reflecting on researcher positionality and biography, considering the 'methodological self-consciousness' (Charmaz, 2017: 40) which was considered alongside the research design, data collection and analysis of the findings, and how this impacted on the stages of the research.

The review of the pains of punishment in Chapter 2. has shown that stigma and pain are the foundations of the barriers to re-entry, creating difficulties in gaining suitable accommodation, employment and being seen as anything other than once convicted. At the conception of the study, the framework of stigma was loosely applied, to ensure that any preconceptions of the men's experience were not 'forced on the findings' (Grant and Osanloo, 2014: 16). However, on completion and analysis of the data, the less structured framework became a stronger construction, reinforced by the men's words. In order to hear the men's accounts, a qualitative approach to the research had to be adopted. Grant and Osanloo (2014) argued that in order for a theoretical framework to function as intended, as a blueprint for the research, it should be closely aligned with four

areas; the problem under consideration; the purpose of the study; the significance of the research; and the questions posed, in order to guide the research design and analysis. These four areas will be woven through the discussions. This chapter will now consider the components and justifications for this chosen method.

### **A Qualitative Approach to the Social Construction of Post Imprisonment Ageing in Re-entry**

The men are the most qualified to tell their stories, to bear witness to their plights and to articulate their experiences. To uncover the men's lived experiences of re-entry, the methods chosen had to enable this to take place. A methodology was needed which would enable an analysis of individual lived experience to be undertaken, and an ability to consider how these experiences are socially constructed. Tewksbury (2009: 38) argued that within criminology and criminal justice research, considering quantitative and qualitative methods, qualitative methods are superior, a view that derives from the inadequacy of quantitative approaches. In an acknowledgement of the inadequacy of quantitative methods to bring to light lived experiences, a qualitative approach was adopted to investigate the subjective experiences of older, once convicted men through their thoughts, ideas and lived experiences.

This exploratory research is not intended to produce absolute conclusive answers to a set hypothesis. It aims instead to develop initial knowledge and highlight lived realities, as felt, experienced, and told by those most qualified to do so. As Bows (2018: 96) posited, 'qualitative methodology is rooted in a constructivist epistemology'. Utilising a qualitative methodology lends itself to the methods

being inductive, the findings are rooted in the data and need to be discovered. The research is underpinned by the ontological assumption that meanings are socially constructed, and that reality cannot exist independently of society (Berger and Luckman, 1966). It is from this ontological standpoint that the constructivist grounded theory approach was chosen as the most appropriate method of conducting the research.

### **A Grounded Theory Approach**

The birth of grounded theory laid open the path for researchers to use its methods flexibly within individual studies. This research has travelled this path, following Charmaz's (2006) approach, constructivist grounded theory. This version of the grounded theory methodology aimed to provide an alternative, flexible way of constructing and using the rigid (Charmaz, 2008) approach of Glaser and Straus (1967). Bryant and Charmaz (2007) argued that traditional grounded theory was built on four positivist assumptions, without acknowledging the participation and standpoints of the researcher '(1) an external reality, (2) an objective, authoritative observer, (3) a quest for generalizations, and (4) a treatment in shaping these data' (Charmaz 2011: 168). In order to address the aforementioned flaws of traditional grounded theory methods, constructivist grounded theory 'emphasizes multiple realities, the researcher and research participants' respective positions and subjectivities, situated knowledge, and sees data as inherently partial and problematic' (Charmaz, 2011: 168).

The methods used within the research were guided by the grounded theory methodology. Charmaz (2014: 44) sets out the framework for using this strategy, 'seek data, describe observed events, answer fundamental questions about what is happening, then develop theoretical categories to understand it'. Charmaz (2011) argued that five strengths of grounded theory make it a particularly useful tool for social justice researchers. Firstly, she argued that grounded theory can define relevant processes, establish their context, the conditions in which they occur, discuss their stationary or changeable nature and the consequences of these processes. This research explored the men's experience, but to begin to understand their experiences, knowledge of the context of the prison environment and the re-entry process within which they took place was paramount. Secondly, Chamaz (2011) argued that grounded theory can help to explain participants' meanings and actions. This was beneficial to this study as the meanings of older, once convicted men's explanations assisted in framing their experiences. Thirdly, grounded theory can challenge 'conventional explanations of the studied phenomenon' (Charmaz, 2011: 298). This aspect of the methodological approach was particularly useful due to the existing stereotypical images of what it means to be old, and once convicted. Fourthly, Charmaz (2011: 297) advocates her version of grounded theory, 'can be used to advance understandings of how power, oppression, and inequalities differentially affect individuals, groups, and categories of people'. This strength was particularly important as a number of the men's experiences were directly related to their age, and to their status of being once convicted. Due to a combination of these, they felt inequalities in a number of areas, which will be further discussed in the

forthcoming chapters. The final strength of grounded theory which Charmaz (2011: 297) believed would make it a sound approach for social justice researchers is its ability to 'reveal links between concrete experiences of suffering and social structure, culture, and social practices or policies'. The existing literature and the men's accounts of their experience highlight that the prison and the re-entry process inflict pain and suffering on those who they are supposed to rehabilitate and (re) integrate. This thesis argues that the hidden injuries beyond the bars are linked with the social structure and the lack of age-related policies in both the prison and within society, making the final advantage offered by Charmaz (2011) applicable to this research.

Further to the justifications advocated by Charmaz (2011) for the use of constructivist grounded theory, it is a good fit with this research as little is currently known about the subjective experiences of older, once convicted men (Birks and Mills, 2015; Crawley and Sparks, 2006). Bramhall (2006: 243) argued that previous research offers only a 'snapshot' of older, once convicted men's experiences in the community. The aim of this research is to increase knowledge in this area through the use of qualitative research methods which align with constructivist grounded theory. It is to these methods that this chapter now turns.

## **Research Design**

The research was designed in three stages, a review of existing literature, observations of once convicted men, and semi-structured interviews with this group. These stages are now further discussed.

### ***Review of Existing Literature***

When undertaking a classic grounded theory methodology, Glaser (2004) argued that a review of existing literature should not be undertaken before research commences, however, Strauss and Corbin (1990) argued that a variety of literature can be reviewed before the inception of data gathering. In line with constructivist grounded theory, a literature review was undertaken prior to gathering the data, however, care was taken to ensure that it did not 'stifle' or 'strangle' creativity (Charmaz 2006: 166). Existing theories were critically analysed to gain an understanding of established literature and the standpoints taken within specific contexts (Charmaz, 2012). The literature confirmed the need for further research as it highlighted the absence of studies surrounding the lived experiences of older, once convicted men specific to England.

### ***Observations Post Release***

Adler and Adler (2004: 389) argued that observations are 'the fundamental base of all research methods'. This research adopted an empirical orientation through unstructured, naturalistic, non-participant observations, to get an impartial sense of the issues that men after prison are faced with. The observations of once convicted men in the community were undertaken whilst volunteering with the Assisted Community Engagement (ACE) project, through the charity Caritas Care<sup>8</sup> who supported the men prior to, and post release. This involved attending the

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<sup>8</sup> Caritas Care are a North-West based charity who support groups in the community, ranging from fostering and adoption, to community engagement projects.

Men After Prison (MAP) group sessions where issues and concerns experienced during re-entry were raised and discussed. Although in the room at the times of the discussions, no participation in these conversations was undertaken, therefore, no influence was imparted. As Russell, Touchard and Porter (2002: 4) described, the observations were in essence "'hanging out" in order to collect observational data'. The unstructured observations were made during two-hour, weekly sessions, over a period of six months.

When choosing the location for the naturalistic observations, Angrosino (2016: 5) argued that this should be a place which could be described as a setting where 'people naturally interact'. This was the case for the men as they were in a purposefully designated space where they could speak freely to other once convicted men. The men were viewed as 'communities of interest' (ibid.) as they had the shared experience of being in prison, albeit differing lengths of sentence, different backgrounds and different experiences. The group was also not limited to older, once convicted men, but included a range of ages. By observing the men in this environment, intricacies that may not be apparent from interviews were noted. Memos were taken following these sessions in order to record what was happening, what was being observed and what the researcher understood of the situation. Taking memos formed an integral part of the grounded theory methodology as Glaser (2004: 63) argued that 'memos raise that description to the theoretical level through the conceptual rendering of the material. Thus, the original description is subsumed by the analysis'. Charmaz (2012: 9) argued that the use of memos enables the researcher to decide which codes to raise to tentative categories. The memos taken following the naturalistic observations

provided a base line understanding and shaped the formation of the semi-structured interview questions (Angrosino, 2016) to be discussed with older, once convicted men.

### ***Semi-Structured Interviews***

This form of interview was selected in order to meet the aims of the research, as semi-structured interviews are used to 'explore in-depth experiences of research participants and the meanings they attribute to these experiences' (Adams, 2010: 18). A problem that this research aimed to address is that the re-entry experiences of older, once convicted men have been largely hidden. This is evident in the lack of literature which considers their lived experiences, told from their perspective and using their own words. Through gaining actual accounts from once convicted men, Visher and Travis (2011) were able to identify that the perspectives of the re-entry process differed in important respects between the once convicted men's accounts and by those provided by practitioners, policy makers and researchers. The purpose of the study therefore was to bring to light the hidden experiences from below.

Bows (2018: 100) argued that interviews can be useful to gather in-depth data as they place the interviewee at the centre of the research and information can be inductively gathered in a 'natural setting', however, none of the men were in their natural setting as they did not see themselves as settled, particularly those in the semi-penal APs. Being in an unsettled world could have had an impact on the men's responses as they were living in a 'liminal state' (Nugent and Schinkel, 2016:

573) where they were trying to negotiate the barriers to successful re-entry alongside their post-prison identities, two areas which will be further explored in Chapters 6 and 7. However, these experiences in this liminal world helped to highlight the lived realities in the early stages of re-entry.

As Tewksbury (2009: 43) stated, semi-structured interviews are 'structured conversations'. In order to reduce the formality of the interviews, they were designed in this way, which enabled the men to tell their stories in context (Bows, 2018) and as Warren (2001: 98) described, the perspectives of the men, and the researcher's responses, could 'dance together for the moment but also extend outward in social space and backward and forward in time'. The semi structured nature of the questions allowed for this, providing an environment to 'connect with interviewees' narratives on a deep, human level' (Stanley, 2018: 322).

The men's experiences are worthy of attention as the newfound focus on the men is just that; their experiences have not until recently been seen as worthy of social attention. Older men in the prison system are often seen as 'old and quiet' (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2004: v), and this thesis argues that this invisibility follows them through the gates and throughout the re-entry process. Being old and quiet can lead to the men's specific age-related experiences being ignored and therefore remaining hidden, forcing the men and their experiences to be exiled to the margins of society. It is important to resurrect the subjugated knowledges surrounding the hidden injuries faced by older, once convicted men, as this will enable them to 'tell their own stories, to bear witness to their own experience, and to define themselves' (Hartman 2000: 21). It will challenge dominant

ideologies and expose the hidden truths and will bring about a new set of knowledge, a new epistemology concerning the lived experiences of the marginalised men. It will bring to light the 'the silencing of alternative accounts through condemnation and vilification' (Scraton, 2011: 36).

There is a lack of existing literature which considers personal accounts from older, once convicted men, therefore, the significance of this research is that it provides them with a platform on which to have their experiences heard. Hartman (2000: 21) describes the process this research aimed to undertake:

Oppressed and marginalized populations whose experiences had been described, defined, and categorized by powerful experts rose up to tell their own stories, to bear witness to their own experience, and to define themselves. Through this process, through this insurrection, they have become empowered; and as they have become empowered, their own truths and their own knowledges have begun to be validated and legitimized.

This aim is not a popular one. It is not desirable to understand the experiences of a group of old men, heavily weighted with sex offenders, who have been in prison. Digard (2014: 430) argued that the common conception that all convicted sex offenders are 'consistently mendacious in all interactions', has led to researchers being more cautious in attempting to hear their stories and experiences in 'respectful ways' (ibid). This could account for the minimal research which has been undertaken in this area. Their experiences, thoughts and perceptions are hidden, their knowledges subjugated. Foucault (1997: 7) described subjugated knowledges as:

A whole series of knowledges that have been disqualified as nonconceptual knowledges, as insufficiently elaborated knowledges: naive

knowledges, hierarchically inferior knowledges, knowledges that are below the required level of erudition or scientificity.

Digard (2014: 444) argued that the narratives of sex offenders 'should be engaged with, not dismissed'. Where an attempt has been made to understand the experience of sex offenders, this has predominantly focused on public protection and issues surrounding 'offence-specific denial' (Digard, 2014: 429). Digard (2014) argued that the voices of sex offenders need to be heard to enable a deeper understanding of how they experience supervision, and as this thesis will show, the re-entry process.

The overall aim is to give the men a platform on which they can tell their stories. It is an opportunity for them to have their experiences heard, but it is also important to consider what is done with the information shared:

It is through listening to stories that empathy becomes possible, and by experiencing the "other" in narrative form, a reversal in attitude may be provoked and new ways of seeing and being revealed (Farrant, 2014: 467).

As with any form of feedback, 'feedback isn't feedback until it is given, heard, understood and acted upon' (Palmer, 2021, personal communication, 20<sup>th</sup> January). In much the same way, listening to the men's accounts acknowledges their legitimacy, they have been 'heard' and 'understood', however, it is not until their words are 'acted upon' or in this case, used to fuel social change, will they become meaningful. As Stanley (2018: 335) argued, 'we have a duty to ensure that we respectfully establish, hear and use these stories'. The men's stories were borne from their experiences both in prison and after release, both of which

shaped their re-entry journeys. Digard (2014: 444) argued that when ‘people shape stories and stories shape people, the first thing we must do is listen’ (Digard, 2014: 444).

Thirteen in-depth semi structured interviews, lasting between twenty minutes and just under three hours, were conducted with older, once convicted men, the mean time being between 1 and 2 hours, as shown in Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1

Length of Interview	Number of Participants	Names of Participants
Less than 1 hour	3	Anthony, George and John
1 – 2 hours	6	Alf, Bernard, Clifford, David, Paul and Stuart
2 – 3 hours	4	Alec, Jon, Mark and Robert

The interviews took place at different locations, an NPS office, the offices of different charities and a coffee shop as detailed in Table 1.2 below.

Table 1.2

Location of Interview	Number of Participants
Charity Offices – Caritas Care	4
Charity Offices -	2
Approved Premises	5
NPS Offices	1
Coffee Shop	1

Four interviews were also undertaken with charity workers who supported the men in their re-entry journeys. After transcribing and analysing the interviews with those who worked with the men, the initial decision to include the perspectives of the charity workers was overturned. It was deemed that their experiences, although valid and important in their own right, would not be included due to revisiting the aims of the thesis, which provided a reminder that the men's experiences should be at the forefront of discussions, and a comparison of the two accounts would not be beneficial in achieving this. Drawing on Visher and Travis' (2011: 107) account of the difference in perspectives given by those undertaking the re-entry process, and those supervising them, and that much of the existing research on re-entry has been 'told through the eyes of service providers', this research aimed to focus not on these views, but on the views of those actually experiencing re-entry, not the perceptions of those witnessing it.

The final interview was held with John (aged 64), who had served the longest sentence of all the men. It was anticipated that due to his lengthy sentence, that his experiences would bring new areas of discussion that had not been experienced by those serving shorter sentences. However, following the interview and subsequent transcription it became apparent that the key themes and concepts that emerged, did not bring with them any new areas of experience. It was at this stage that saturation occurred, and no further interviews were arranged. An evaluation of the contested term 'saturation' is offered by Low (2019). From considering a number of studies which look at saturation, Low (2019) devised a number of questions which she believed, if answered, can determine if saturation has been reached. Each of these questions were considered when

analysing the data and it was decided that the findings did address process; they did address 'questions of how and why, not merely descriptive accounts of what questions' (ibid); that the findings did make sense in relation to prior research in this area; that categories had been generated which could be generalizable as they were 'contextualized in the broader social context' (ibid); and most importantly, that the analysis did not focus on the amount of interviews undertaken, but how the examples of experience led to the concepts that arose from the men's words. Roy et al. (2015) argued that 'the proof is in the pudding (i.e., the findings)' when considering if saturation has been achieved, such proof can be seen in Chapters, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

All the audio recordings and the subsequent transcriptions of the interviews were stored on the researcher's password protected personal computer which was only accessible to the researcher.

### ***Formation of Questions***

One of the key purposes of this research was to give the men a voice, to enable their experiences to be acknowledged as meaningful and legitimate (Adams, 2010). It was imperative that the questions posed in the semi-structured interviews allowed the men an opportunity to share their stories and have their voices heard.

The questions were derived from a combination of the observations discussed above and the existing literature on re-entry and were asked in order to investigate if the generalised experiences of re-entry witnessed during the

observation stage of all ages of once convicted men, and reported in the existing literature, were also pertinent for older, once convicted men. The interview questions were designed with the men's re-entry journey in mind. In an acknowledgment that experiences of imprisonment can affect the re-entry process (Vieraitis, Medrano and Shuraydi, 2018: 144), the initial questions surrounded the men's experiences of prison and their preparations for release and re-entry. The following questions focused on the tangible aspects of re-entry, using the seven 'reducing re-offending pathways' (Home Office, 2004: 3) as a guide for discussion. The final questions focused on how the men's time in prison and their experiences of re-entry impacted their sense of the self, and how, and if, they felt that stigma had impacted their re-entry journeys to date. At each of the stages of the interview journey, the men were asked if they felt that their experiences had been influenced due to their chronological age. The design of the questions was formulated in this way to ensure that the men could discuss their experiences chronologically, in a manner which situated their experiences as a story of a lived reality. Stanley (2018: 323) highlighted the advantages of a story telling approach by stating that it can 'rewrite social life by revealing truths that have previously been silenced, denied or hidden'. These were the very conditions the men experienced; their voices had not been heard, making the story telling approach even more applicable to unveil their lived realities. The story telling approach also enabled the men to tell their individual stories in their own words (Stanley, 2018: 323), creating their own version of their reality, free from suggestions, opinions or influence from others. No time limit was put on the interviews, which gave the men the freedom to discuss their experiences, providing as little, or as much

information as they saw fit. Discussions during the interviews did deviate from the designed pathway of questioning at times, which was in line with the semi-structured interview style, however the researcher was able to steer the conversations back to the specified areas of discussion, which was where the semi-structured nature of the interview was beneficial. There was however a relatively long interview which lasted a few minutes under three hours. Alec (aged 57) discussed his re-entry experiences but infused his discussion with personal stories and anecdotes. After the interview, he commented 'I enjoyed that'. On reflection, it was considered if there were many people that he could speak with, who wanted to hear about his life and the stories he had to share. Stauffer (2015: 32) argued that 'for those whose world has been destroyed, the absence of a willing audience is a second harm compounding the original violation'. The interview process enabled a reduction, albeit for a limited time, in the harm of not being heard. It not only gave the men a voice, but also a captive audience with which to share it.

No leading questions were asked, no jargon was used, and the questions were straightforward in format to aid understanding, and open enough to foster alternative and progressive discussions. Probing questions were used to enable a more detailed discussion, providing a more in-depth account of experience. The interviews were recorded on a Dictaphone, which enabled active listening (Louw, Watson Todd and Jimakorn, 2011). Using a Dictaphone enabled maintained focus and concentration not only on the stories the men were relaying, but also other aspects of their accounts such as the nuances in facial expressions and body language, which can be as illuminating as the words themselves. An example of this was when discussing reminders of prison, Jon, physically shuddered at the

thought of the prison vans<sup>9</sup>. Reminders of prison will be discussed further in Chapter 5. This seeming unwanted recollection of prison provoked a physical reaction which the Dictaphone would not have captured.

Although the specific offence committed did have an impact on the re-entry process, the offence committed was not ascertained prior to the interviews. The reasoning for this was twofold. Firstly, asking the men to disclose their offence prior to interview may have made the men feel uncomfortable, particularly those convicted of a sexual offence. Much like the ban the box<sup>10</sup> initiative, the researcher wanted to get a sense of the men themselves, without the shadow of conviction. Also, the intention was not to make the men to feel that there was any stigma surrounding them due to their offence. Discussions surrounding the offence did occur, however, these occurred organically during wider discussions of experience. This enabled the researcher to remain objective and not let any perceptions of their offences overshadow their experience. Complete objectivity is often a fallacy; however, it was felt that the researcher's previous experiences during employment as a prison officer enabled them to get as close as possible to this. Within this role, personal preconceptions had to be left at the prison gate, workplace induced perceptions, which were rooted in prison officer culture, left in the break room, and each prisoner had to be treated as an individual, detached from the crime they had committed. Whilst employed as a prison officer, the researcher felt very strongly that prisoner's punishment was their loss of liberty

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<sup>9</sup> The vehicles used to transport and escort prisoners to and from secure places such as court or prison.

<sup>10</sup> Ban the box is an initiative which enables the 'previous conviction' box to be removed from job applications to increase employment opportunities for people with convictions.

and not the treatment they received whilst incarcerated. In the same vein, it is believed that once a prison sentence has been served, there should not be any residual prison pain, or any collateral consequences of the time in the institution. It was in acknowledgement of the existing literature surrounding re-entry pain that the need to uncover the lived realities of the hidden injuries of re-entry was borne. However, it is evident from the men's words, which will be discussed in the following four findings chapters, that their punishment, and subsequent pain, was far from over. The semi-structured interview schedule is reproduced in Appendix 1.

### ***Gaining Participants***

The men were a hidden population, living on the margins of society. This made approaching the men directly a difficult task due to an inability to easily identify them. The participants were therefore identified by the supervising staff in the NPS and charities, which also ensured that the sample was not 'influenced by social desirability biases' (McNeill, 2019a: 112) on the part of the researcher. Participant information and consent forms and an overview of the research aims were sent electronically to local charities, NPS and CRC offices with a request for any men who would fit the inclusion criteria to be identified and approached by the staff working with them. A copy of the participant information form can be found in Appendix 2, and the consent form can be found in Appendix 3. Following the men being given the information and consent documents, and agreeing to participate, the staff then provided the researcher with the relevant contact details. The men were then contacted by telephone and interview dates, times

and locations were arranged. The same approach was undertaken with the AP and the NPS; however, the staff made the interview arrangements directly with the men, and the first contact the researcher had with them was on the day of interview. Using this method of selection and recruitment hindered the full population being represented as those no longer under supervision were not included in the research, however, due to their hidden nature, this method was deemed the most appropriate for the research. For those that were under supervision, their decision could have been impacted by the method of utilising supervisors to approach them. If the men did not have trust in the criminal justice system, they may have seen the interviews as part of the probation process and not want to jeopardise their re-entry because they feared this might lead to them being recalled, an issue which will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

Digard (2014: 431) found that it was unlikely that his sample of participants was representative of the 'full population', and due to those working with the men having autonomy over which older, once convicted men they approached, it cannot be known if any biases took place in participant selection and if the full population was represented. It is an important aim to include a representative sample when considering demographic characteristics to increase the generalisability of the findings, however given that the sampling was within the remit of the 'domain gatekeepers' (Kay, 2019: 45), this may have prevented a full representation of the population of older, once convicted men.

The men had a range of differing demographic characteristics including their ethnicity, mental and physical health, and type of offence which had the potential

to shape their experiences of re-entry. Only one participant was from an ethnic minority background, the remaining twelve men were White. Those from ethnic minorities are over-represented within the prison population (Ministry of Justice, 2020) and it could be argued that only having one participant from an ethnic minority would not provide an accurate representation of the population of older, once convicted men. However, when considering older age, Omolade (2014) found that one in ten prisoners self-identified as being from a minority ethnic group. Further to this, for those aged 50 and over, 15% are from ethnic minorities (Ministry of Justice, 2020). This highlights that when older age is included as a factor in ethnicity a lower level of over representation is evident, therefore the participant backgrounds are representative of the ethnicities of the older prisoner population, and therefore the number of those on the re-entry journey. In terms of mental and physical health, the House of Commons Justice Committee (2020a: 10) reported that when considering prisoners aged 50 and over, 90% had 'at least one moderate or severe health condition'. Mental and physical health was not an area that the men discussed in depth, with only 5 out of the 13 participants describing various ailments. Although it may appear that the sample is therefore not representative, mental, and physical ailments are more likely to be diagnosed in prison as every prisoner aged 50 and over receives a needs assessment on entry into prison (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2020a). Further to this, older people often fail to recognise mental health issues, and if they do, the stigma surrounding mental health can prevent them from disclosing such information (World Health Organisation, 2023). Due to this, it is unknown if the participant sample is fully representative of older men in relation to health. When considering

offence type, just over half of the participants, 7 out of 13, had been convicted of a sexual offence, and as Ridley (2023) found that 44% of prisoners aged 50 and over had been convicted of a sexual offence, these figures represent a more balanced representation of the population of older prisoners, and therefore older, once convicted men.

Using supervisors to identify and select participants presented further issues in achieving the aim of a representative sample. Communication with the National Offender Management Service (NOMS)<sup>11</sup> confirmed that an application to NOMS National Research Committee (Appendix 4) was required due to the initial intention being to interview those who supervised the men as well as the men themselves. This was submitted and subsequently granted with one of the recommendations being that an attempt should be made to include men who represented a 'sufficient mix of cases between NPS and CRC' (Request for further Information, 2017, Appendix 4, bullet point 3), by undertaking stratified sampling. This attempt was made through the various contacts with a variety of support and supervision providers, however two separate CRCs both responded stating that they were either too busy to facilitate the request to contact the men, 'we are unable to facilitate your request at the present time due to issues around staffing' (email correspondence from Sodexo, 08.08.2017) or had too many requests from volunteers (Telephone conversation with Shelter, 10.07.2017). CRCs not having the time to facilitate the research request could be a reflection of their increased workloads following the implementation of the Offender Rehabilitation Act (2014),

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<sup>11</sup> The National Offender Management Service was renamed Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) in 2017.

however, such pressures were not experienced, or at least not reported to be experienced, by the charity staff or probation workers, who both provided contact details for the men, and office spaces to conduct the interviews. A further barrier arose due to the intention to undertake the interviews on a one-to-one basis. One NPS office authorised access to interview men but insisted that a staff member must be present during the interviews. This would have compromised confidentiality and the validity of the men's responses could have come into question, especially if the men fostered negative perceptions of their supervision under the NPS, therefore this particular office location was not utilised. This was not the approach of all NPS offices, and a one-to-one interview was authorised at a different NPS premises.

The unwillingness of the CRCs to participate, did not make the participants balanced in terms of their supervision providers. Only two of the participants were under the supervision of a CRC, and they were recruited through a charity. The barriers and issues relating to the 'ownership' of the men will be discussed further in Chapters 6 and 8. The lack of support from the CRCs, and one probation office insisting a chaperone be present during the interview, were the only issues faced when finding participants, however, further issues arose in undertaking the interviews.

Four interviews were arranged for the same day at a NPS facilitated AP. A telephone call was made on the morning of the interviews, prior to attending the premises to ensure the interviews could still go ahead, and this was confirmed. Unfortunately, on arrival, the staff reported that one of the men had since refused

to participate; one had presented aggressive behaviour and was no longer permitted to participate; and the further two had left the premises, signing out<sup>12</sup> for the day. Further to this, an interview was arranged at the charity Langley House Trust, and when the interview commenced, it became apparent that the man had been released from prison over two decades ago, therefore not meeting the requirements of the inclusion criteria.

The inclusion criteria consisted of the participants having been to prison but released within the last five years and being aged 50 and over. The age, length of sentences served and the time since release are detailed in Table 1.3 below.

Table 1.3

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Time Served During Last Prison Sentence</b>	<b>Time Since Release</b>
Alec	57	6 years	7 weeks
Alf	63	3 years	2 years 6 months
Anthony	64	2 years	2 years, 6 months
Bernard	55	2 years	8 months
Clifford	54	27 years	2 years
David	56	1 year	1 month
George	75	10 years	5 days
John	64	33 years	4 years
Jon	50	4.5 months	2 years, 2 months
Mark	51	2.5 months	4 weeks
Paul	50	7 years	12 months

<sup>12</sup> Residents in the Approved Premises were required to sign in and out of the establishment in order to monitor their location.

Robert	50	9 years	8 weeks
Stuart	57	16 months	6 months

Further inclusion criteria included being male. The decision surrounding gender was taken as the number of once convicted women is relatively small in comparison to men (Turner et al., 2018: 162), and when advanced age is considered, this number becomes smaller, as Cadet (2022: 8) found, ‘there are under 500 women in prison aged over 50’. Codd (2020: 2) presents this as a ‘minority within a minority’. Further to this, female prisoners experience additional pains of imprisonment (Crewe, Hully and Wright, 2017), and as experiences of imprisonment impact on experiences of re-entry, women will have different re-entry experiences (Barr, 2019; LeBel, 2012; Rutter and Barr, 2021).

### ***Recruiting by Numbers***

The sample of men interviewed was relatively small, however their experiences spanned a diverse range. As depicted in table 1.3, the sentences served ranged from 2.5 months to almost 33 years, with a variety of sentences in-between. Further to this the experiences before imprisonment were varied, some men entering prison for the first time in later life, some being repeat offenders, and some having aged in the prison environment. This led to a diverse set of re-entry experiences. Accommodation following release differed, the men either had their own home to return to; they were released to NFA; they resided in an AP, or they lived in assisted accommodation. Two of the men were under supervision from CRCs, the remainder were under the NPS, and the majority of the men had support

from various charities. Some had contact with families and friends, and some did not, leading to loneliness and isolation. Some had to comprehend a life following addiction. Some were financially stable, others were not. Further to the diverse range of experiences the men had encountered, statistical data reinforced the justification for a small sample of participants.

A freedom of Information request revealed that from March 2014 to March 2015 there were 309 men aged 50 and over released from three geographically local prisons in the North-West of England. Although these numbers appear high in comparison to the number of interviews undertaken, the charity Caritas Care reported that they worked with 36 men aged 50 and over in a sixteen-month period ending in July 2015. Further to this, Circles UK<sup>13</sup> reported working with 13 men in a twelve-month period ending at the same time. A RECOOP<sup>14</sup> facilitated café in Manchester, established in February 2015 to provide support for men aged 50 and over leaving prison, had to close seven months later due to not a single referral from NPS or Lancashire and Cumbria CRC from its inception. The sample sizes reflect the small number of older, once convicted men who were visible in the community. It was hoped that snowball sampling, where already identified research participants then identify other potential participants (Davis, 2011) could be adopted in the research to increase participant numbers, therefore increasing the number of experiences of re-entry to be discovered. The use of snowball

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<sup>13</sup> Circles of Support and Accountability are charitable support providers in the community, working in partnership with Police, Probation, and local Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements to increase public protection and reduce sexual offending. Circles UK are funded by the Ministry of Justice to ensure the local providers achieve the highest standards (<https://www.circles-uk.org.uk/about-circles/about-circles-uk>)

<sup>14</sup> RECOOP are a charity who support older people with convictions.

sampling would have enabled difficult to reach 'hidden populations' such as older, once convicted men to be identified (Noy, 2008: 330; Waters 2015: 367). Snowball sampling is also beneficial where the potential participants are identified as being vulnerable and highly stigmatised, as those providing the links to other participants are generally trusted (Liamputtong, 2007). However, Waters (2015) highlighted the potential difficulties of utilising snowball sampling as a method of gaining participants, which were applicable to the men; they may not have been comfortable discussing a sensitive topic; their age could have made them less inclined to participate in discussions surrounding criminality if they had stabilising factors such as a family; they may not have trusted the researcher due to the difference in age; and there may not have been many connections between older, once convicted men, due to limited contact between them. During the interviews, it became apparent that the men were on the whole, socially isolated, and did not mix with others who would meet the inclusion criteria. This was partially due to a high number of those convicted of a sexual offence partaking, who were prohibited from mixing with those with similar convictions in the community. It was also apparent that many of the men were at the beginning of their re-entry journeys, one participant having only been released five days prior to the interview. It was not the intention of this research to increase the pains of re-entry for the men. In an acknowledgement that this was an already vulnerable time, the men were not asked for recommendations of other potential participants to contact. This did result in a smaller sample size than first hoped, however, the interviews reached a point of saturation, as discussed above, therefore the smaller sample

size was adequate and justified. Low (2019) draws upon literature which argued that saturation can be reached in as little as 6 participants to as many as 50.

### ***Data Analysis***

The analysis of the data gathered drew on existing studies conducted in the area of re-entry (Forsyth et al., 2015; Sparks and Day, 2016) utilising a constant comparison method of line-by-line analysis and coding. Although originating in grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), constant comparison of data is at the core of all qualitative data analysis where there is a requirement for different sets of data to be compared (Barbour, 2007 cited in Harding, 2013).

The data analysis began during the observation stage, as general themes became apparent from hearing the experiences of the once convicted men. These initial themes were incorporated into the semi-structured interviews. Using this framework enabled processes, actions and meanings to emerge from the inception of the research and provided a deeper understanding than simply identifying topics and themes (Charmaz, 2012). The interviews were tape recorded and following each interview, the recordings were transcribed verbatim. Inductive coding was then utilised which enabled the researcher to become familiar with the data and to create initial codes, gleaned from the transcripts. Firstly, broad initial coding was undertaken, which consisted of using structural coding which followed the key areas of the questions posed in the semi structured interviews. Each narrative was then scrutinised individually line by line, as advocated by Charmaz (2012), and open coding was used to apply further codes to the emerging

categories. Twenty-eight categories were identified. The transcripts were then compared between each other, and four areas emerged, 1. The men's time in prison and experiences of pre-release, 2. The structural barriers to re-entry, 3. The supervision of the men in the community and 4. The internal barriers faced due to stigmatisation. These areas formed the basis of the following four findings chapters. Charmaz (2012) stated that when undertaking the coding stage of grounded theory, constructivist grounded theorists look for processes, actions and meanings, which is in opposition to some users of grounded theory, who code for topics and themes.

It is Charmaz's stance on coding that differentiates her constructivist grounded theory from Galsser, and Strauss and Corbin. Charmaz (2012: 5) argued that codes do not already exist and are waiting to be discovered, and a 'prescriptive formula' should not be applied to the data. The codes identified, and the four key areas which emerged were constructed by interacting with the data gathered and the existing literature consulted.

The interview recordings were revisited many times throughout the data analysis to ensure that the researcher remained immersed in the men's words, not just through reading the transcripts, but in their tone, which at times portrayed emotion and expression which helped to situate the meaning of their reported experiences. It was in acknowledgement of the nuances in the men's spoken words that the decision was made not to use analytical software such as NVIVO. This enabled the researcher to keep the aims of the research in focus, to give the

men a voice, and for that voice to be heard. It ensured that the lived realities and the men behind the data were not forgotten.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical approval was granted by Liverpool John Moores Research Ethics Committee. Ethical considerations were paramount throughout all stages of the research, from its inception to the design and the final undertaking. Acknowledging that the men were already in a position of vulnerability, the way in which the research was conducted, aimed to mitigate any further potential harm or distress. Ethically, it was important that the men did not feel like data subjects. The potential impact of the research process on their lives post-interview, remained the main concern, and it was paramount that this was not overshadowed by the desire to extract 'data' from them (Shaw et al., 2020: 290). The first step in ensuring the research was ethically sound was to ensure that the men participated in the research on a fully informed and free willed basis. It is to this consideration that this chapter now turns.

### ***Voluntary and Informed Consent***

A participant information sheet (Appendix 2) was provided to the men prior to them agreeing to take part in the research. The purpose of the sheet was to ensure that the men were in possession of the aims of the research and what it would mean for them if there were to take part. The participant information sheet highlighted the purpose of the research, informing the men that they were under

no obligation to take part, and that they were free to withdraw at any time. It also stated that if they did take part, but then decided that they would like to withdraw their consent, they could do so, up to three months following the interview and that no information they had provided would be used within the study. None of the men withdrew. It was also confirmed that if they were asked a question that they did not feel comfortable answering, there would be no requirement to do so. Again, none of the men refused to answer a question. Being fully informed about the aims of the research ensured that if they agreed to participate, they did so from a position of knowledge and could give fully informed consent.

### ***Confidentiality***

The final part of the participant information sheet detailed issues surrounding confidentiality. The men were advised that pseudonyms would be used so they would not be identifiable. The information sheet also outlined that anything said would be treated with the strictest confidence, for example, their identity would be anonymised in any publications arising from this research and in the thesis. When this information was given, all the men stated that not only were they comfortable with their names being used, but a number of them insisted on it. They wanted their voices to be heard. Before each interview, the men were asked to confirm that they had read and fully understood the participant information sheet, and they were given an opportunity to ask any questions for clarity. Once they were happy to proceed, they signed the participant consent form (Appendix 3) in front of the researcher to ensure that they were agreeing to the interview of their own free will.

### ***Risk and Benefits – Assessing Risk***

A significant aspect of being fully informed was acknowledging that there could be a potential risk that discussing issues surrounding re-entry could induce painful memories which may cause distress. It was highlighted that if this were to happen, that, with their consent, the researcher would direct them to appropriate support. This potential pain of re-entry in the form of returning to the offence (Durnescu, 2011) and its consequences did not occur in any of the interviews, in fact the opposite took place in that a number of the men found the process to be cathartic. Alongside the potential risks associated with participation, the information sheet also outlined the potential benefits, which were that they would be given an opportunity to discuss their experiences of re-entry. As Shaw et al. (2020: 288) posit, their participants were also vulnerable, but as their research found, 'it is precisely their vulnerability and their desire to publicly articulate their experiences that makes this narrativising empowering for them and gives their stories credibility'.

Risk assessments were completed before each interview with a view to highlighting any potential harm and to protect both the researcher and all participants to ensure that any risks were adequately controlled and managed. The assessments were completed in line with Liverpool John Moores University's Code of Practice for research SCP25 Lone Working, the ESRC Research Ethics Framework and the Health and Safety Executive 'Working Alone' guidance. This risk assessment is the first step towards minimising any potentially dangerous events and putting in place adequate control measures. Risk cannot be eliminated

in its entirety, however, it must be understood, managed, and minimised. The risks included issues surrounding the possibility of coming into contact with potentially volatile or aggressive participants which could lead to harm or risk to the researchers personal safety; being unfamiliar with surroundings and, for example, being unaware of exit points in case of emergency; the once convicted men becoming distressed or upset during an interview due to the sensitive nature of discussions surrounding the release and community re-entry process; and the researcher becoming upset or distressed when learning of the older, once convicted men's circumstances and experiences whilst undertaking the re-entry process.

One of the actions taken in order to mitigate the chances of harm was to ensure that the research supervisors were made aware via email of the location, who the researcher would be interviewing and the expected duration of each interview. Once at the location, it was ensured that each interview area was set up to the researchers design prior to each interview to ensure safety. The researcher had been trained in personal protection by the Prison Service and was aware of the correct way in which to set up an interview area to ensure safety. A mobile phone was also carried which could be used in the event of an incident. In addition to this, all locations were attended prior to the interview to ensure that they were suitable, complied with the risk assessment, and also if mobile phone reception was available. In order to minimise possible distress to the men, the participant information sheets discussed above, were issued prior to the interviews. If the participants were to become distressed, the interview would be terminated. The researcher had experience of interviewing vulnerable prisoners and in particular

in discussing sensitive and sometimes distressing information. It can be difficult for vulnerable once convicted men to speak out about their issues, but experience had taught the researcher 'how' to ask questions, when to speak, when to listen and when something discussed needed further investigation. Discussing such sensitive personal accounts could have caused the researcher distress, however substantial experience of interviewing prisoners had been gained and the researcher had been privy to many upsetting and disturbing accounts of prison experience. This provided experience in coping with such information, but it was known that if distressed did occur at any time, the support of the supervisors was available. Experience gave the researcher the ability to converse with the once convicted men without feeling intimidated by their convictions. Even when sensitive data regarding a sexual offence was discussed, the researcher had been privy to many conversations such as this, so it did not have the same affect that it may have had on someone hearing such accounts for the first time. The learnt detachment from accounts which, for many, would provoke a reaction, led to considerations of positionality within the research, an area of contemplation that this chapter will now consider.

### ***Reflections on Positionality – Becoming a Criminological Butterfly***

Parson (2019: 15) argued that being able to identify positionality whilst undertaking research with marginalised groups enables the researcher to 'mitigate the pitfalls' that could potentially have an impact on the research outcomes. There are three areas associated with positionality which had the ability to impact the undertaking of the research and the results obtained during

interviews; my age, my gender, and my previous employment as a prison officer. The quandary of how these areas could impact the research was considered many times throughout the research journey from the inception of the aims to the completion of the thesis.

Considerations surrounding disclosure of my previous employment, either to be open and transparent, or to conceal it, came prior to recruiting the participants as the decision had the potential to influence their decision to participate in the research. If the men had been informed, as Nixon (2020) did in her study, this may have 'closed doors' (Stanley, 2018: 330), especially if the men did not have positive experiences with prison officers. This induced concerns surrounding the repercussions of disclosure, would the level of the men's interaction be reduced, and would the validity of their discussions come into question? These fears aligned with the men's discussions surrounding disclosure of their criminal past, which will be discussed further in Chapter 7. After much deliberation, the decision was taken to not inform the men of my previous role. Although it was felt that transparency was important, drawing on Crewe's (2009 cited in Wakeman, 2014: 709) reasoning for concealing his identity, and again revisiting the aims of the research, the study was focused on the men's experiences, and my biography, although important in terms of reflecting on potential bias, had no bearing on the men's experience of re-entry. Akin a number of the participants in this research, the decision to disclose my past was taken from me in one interview situation, as one of the participants was a resident on a prison wing I had previously worked on. I was only aware of this when meeting him as the interview has been arranged by NPS and was held at their offices, so I was only given the man's first name. My initial reaction was

one of fear. If he knew my past, would he be unwilling to discuss his? It transpired that seemingly, this did not have a negative impact, in fact it made the discussions more fluid as his recollections of his time in prison, in part, became a shared story.

My previous employment as a prison officer in a male prison which held many older prisoners, impacted my position as a researcher, arguably inflicting it with partial insider perspectives. Insight from working with the men and witnessing their daily routines, issues and concerns, and the way in which they behaved in their environment undoubtedly imparted thoughts, conceptions and perspectives surrounding older prisoners. These ideas and perceptions of what the re-entry journey would be like for an older prisoner, were rooted within the prison officer culture, which had the potential to induce bias. Stevens (2013: 49) argued that 'for prison officers, the rules on how to react, what to disclose, and where to draw boundaries are often as black and white as the uniform, for the researcher, such rules are closer to guidelines which are sometimes pertinent'. There were no set rules to follow given my unique hybrid position of both prison officer and researcher. Considering this, employment as an officer was ceased at the beginning of this research journey in order to shed the cocoon of the prison officer culture and transcend into a 'criminological researcher butterfly' (D Scott, 2013, personal communication). Once employment had ceased, I believed that the baggage of the prison officer culture would also be shed, leaving an academic researcher identity. This perceived researcher identity was felt and believed to be the 'identity standard' (Keith and Scheuerman, 2018: 578) until attending a conference on the topic of older prisoners. Whilst attending the conference in everyday attire, a comment was made by a conference delegate about my

posture, that my stance was that of a prison officer. This was surprising to hear at the time but was brushed off as residue from the prison environment that did not impact my current researcher identity. Following the conference, armed with a deeper academic insight into older prisoners and an excitement about the next stage of the research, a conversation was struck with a serving prison officer. I found myself very quickly agreeing with the officers' comments, even though they were contra to the academic teachings of the conference. This almost immediate slide back into the mindset of a prison officer and prison officer culture was both unexpected and surprising as employment had ceased over twelve months prior. This led to questions surrounding the training, and ultimately, the untraining of prison officer culture. Never before had I considered personal institutionalisation in my identity, however this encounter suggested that simply leaving the role of a prison officer, was not enough to shed the identity of one. This aligned with a number of the men's experiences, they had left the prison, but the prison had not left them. Stauffer (2015: 2) argued that 'we are shaped by the worlds in which we subsist', however when past and present worlds collide, a hybrid identity can be formed. No further encounters with prison officers occurred during the research, however, the contemplation of a hybrid identity, not being the person I was before employment, not being a prison officer, and not solely being a researcher, but having an identity infused with all three, is still something which is considered. Garrihy (2022: 982) argued that 'those who work in prisons are profoundly shaped by their role, their occupational cultures and their perceived relationship to wider society'. Reflecting the depth of this profound shaping, and akin to a number of the men who considered their identity and wondered if their true self would

forever be tainted with having been in prison, it is still questioned if my identity will forever include my experiences of working in one.

Having a partial insider perspective of prison led to a dual researcher position inflicted with both insider and outsider perspectives and standing. Like Nixon (2020) I was partially an insider as I had experienced the prison environment, although not in the way the men had, but also an outsider, having limited knowledge of re-entry, being female, and decades younger than the men. Tarrant (2014: 499) argued, it is important to consider the ways in which 'intergenerational differences shape research encounters'. Being younger than the participants made me an outsider to their world. I had not experienced the age-related health issues the men discussed, I did not know the loss felt when estranged from grandchildren, and I could not comprehend living a whole life and then being incarcerated in the latter stages of it. No comments were made during the interviews regarding my age, although at times the difference did prove to be a barrier to me understanding cultural references such as songs and television programmes from the men's youth. These instances were few as much of the discussions surrounded more recent experiences of imprisonment and re-entry. A further outsider position was evident when considering gender. When discussing younger female researchers interviewing men aged 50 and over, Russell, Touchard and Porter (2002) found that female researchers in predominately male environments could be sexualised, and Pante (2014: 70) discussed how women used techniques to neutralise this situation such as discussing their role as a 'mother or a sister'. No situations of this kind occurred, and no direct comments were made regarding my gender, however, more nuanced examples of the gender

differences were present. A number of the men apologised for using profanities during the interviews, something I was not used to, having worked in a prison environment where no such consideration was given. This further emphasised the distinction between the view of a female prison officer and a female researcher. Initially it was felt that this confirmed that my decision to conceal my past was the correct one as I was being seen as a researcher, however, on reflection, it was considered if censorship of language could also mean a censorship of experience if the experience was deemed inappropriate for a younger female researcher to hear. This led to questioning again which approach was the correct one to enable the men to share their experiences, to make known my previous role as a prison officer, or to keep it concealed. If known, experiences may have been discussed due to a shared understanding of the prison environment, however, if being perceived as nothing more than a young female researcher, the men may have felt more comfortable discussing sensitive issues given the stereotypical caring and empathetic role of females.

My positionality undoubtedly impacted the research process, and it cannot be known if being open about my concealable employment history would have produced different results. However, when reflecting on the interviews and the richness of the discussions the men shared with me, it is believed that the decision to conceal my previous role was the correct one. On reflection of the researcher and participant relationships during the interviews, they closely aligned with one of the findings of Russell, Touchard and Porter (2002: 15):

The men positioned themselves both as men and as experienced persons with authoritative tales to tell... they would dispense information and

advice to her as a younger, less experienced person. She believes this kind of relationship helped to blur her "higher" status as a researcher and led to a more free-flowing, informal interaction.

In line with this finding, concealment of my past enabled a blurring of the perceived power differentials, not only in the researcher and participant relationship, but also in the perceived 'us' and 'them' power relationship of prison officer and prisoner. Concealing my employment history enabled the interviews to focus on the men as the most qualified to tell their stories and for me, as a 'criminological researcher butterfly' (D Scott, 2013, personal communication), to bear witness and hear them.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has detailed the methodology and specific methods used to gather the research data. It has highlighted the problems, purpose and significance of the research, and discussed the justifications of a social constructionist framework being adopted. The specific methods used and the way in which these methods were undertaken has been described in detail throughout this chapter. The level of detail has been included due to the nature of the research. From the literature review, it was acknowledged prior to the interviews being undertaken that re-entry is a process infused with pain. It was not presumed that the men would be experiencing pain, or that they would be in a vulnerable state, however the research was designed in such a way, so that if this was the case, no further pain would be imparted. Consideration of the potential vulnerability of the men was taken at every stage of the research design.

The semi-structured interviews were designed to facilitate a space within which the men could feel comfortable to share their stories. It cannot be known if the stories shared were complete, or if the experiences discussed held more meaning for the men than they were willing to admit, however, the feedback following the interviews was positive. The researcher felt privileged that these men were willing to share their stories, however, from comments made, it seemed that the men felt privileged to have their stories heard.

The following four chapters will discuss the men's accounts of their lived experiences, providing a platform for the resurrection of previously hidden experiences to be brought to light. As highlighted above, the interviews were designed in such a way that the men could chart their re-entry journeys from their entry into prison, to the day of interview. The following chapter is the first of four chapters which will use the words of the men to explore their experiences, beginning here with their experiences of imprisonment and preparations for release and re-entry.

## Chapter 4: In the Shadow of Imprisonment

### Introduction

Those described as older prisoners, differ greatly from the younger prison population (Turner et al., 2018) as their experiences of incarceration are shaped not only by their chronological age, but also the physical and emotional issues associated with it. It is these, often hidden, experiences which shaped life after prison for the men in this study, their re-entry journey beginning the first day they entered the world of the prison, and followed them through the gates, persisting, like a 'shadow' (Johns, 2015: 297), in their lives on the outside. Feelings of loneliness, helplessness and a lack of support framed their post-prison lives, induced, in many cases by being in prison. Bereswill (2011) argued that one of the barriers to re-entry is prison itself. During the time the men spent in prison, changes such as staff shortages (Prison Reform Trust, 2019) not only had an impact on their experience of imprisonment and re-entry, but the increased interest in such issues shifted the focus away from the prevailing needs of the older prisoner population (Turner et al., 2018: 161).

In acknowledgement that the re-entry process should begin the day the men enter prison (Valera et al., 2017: 424) this chapter will begin by exploring the starting point of the men's re-entry journeys, their entry into prison. It will then highlight the men's experiences of their time within the institution as these experiences impacted on re-entry. The impact of 'prisonization' (Clemmer, 1940: 315), either consciously or subconsciously experienced by the men will be discussed further in

the forthcoming chapters, however, its origins are rooted in prison time, and 'disculturation' (Goffman, 1961: 13) where the men became so accustomed to the ways of living in the prison environment, that it imparted an 'untraining' (ibid) which diluted their ability to function as they did prior to incarceration. This chapter will then turn to the preparations for release and to those who provided help and support during this time. As discussed in Chapter 2, poor, or non-existent, release and re-entry planning can negatively impact the lived experiences of re-entry (La Vigne et al., 2008), and as this chapter will illustrate, this was true for almost all the men.

## **Life in Prison**

### ***Before the Storm***

The pains of punishment are not only encountered during (Sykes, 1958) and post (Durnescu, 2011; Shammass, 2014; Hayes, 2015; Nugent and Schinkel, 2016; Durnescu, 2019; Statham, Winder and Micklethwaite, 2020; McKendy and Ricciardelli, 2021) incarceration, but as two of the men recalled, can begin before being inducted into the prison world. For Alec, even the thought of being incarcerated induced pain, which had a negative impact on his mental health. Before entering prison, Alec was taken to hospital as he tried to end his life by taking a drug overdose. He stated:

I knew I was going to prison and the anxiety about going into prison. I'd never been in prison before; I'd never been in trouble before. I was thinking, ah no, I'm fifty now.

Being incarcerated for the first time later in life, Alec was so fearful of being in prison that he would rather have taken his own life, than have the prison system take it from him. His 'para-suicide' (Scott: 2020: 64) was not successful and he received a ten-year custodial sentence for historic sexual offences. The fear of the unknown proved to be overwhelming, and for Alec, his age compounded this fear.

Further to the time before prison instilling fear, so too did the moment of entry, as David (aged 56) commented, 'when you first go in, you have no control. You are terrified, you are scared'. This was mirrored by Jon's' (aged 50) experience, 'I was very frightened when I went in'. Jon's capacity to understand the enormity and complexities of entering prison was diminished as he was detoxing from alcohol, 'I was hallucinating like mad when I arrived. I thought I was in hospital'. As this was Jon's first experience of imprisonment, like Alec, he did not know what to expect. The only perceptions he had about prison were socially constructed through negative media portrayals, so his expectations made him fearful from the moment of conviction. Jon reported that following imprisonment, he had spoken with other once convicted men in his post-prison support group about entering prison, and they too felt the fear of prison entry:

Even the guys that have been in one, two or three times, they were saying your first time, I don't care who you are, how hard you are, or how hard you *think* you are; it's frightening.

Akin to a number of the participants, Jon's fear of the unknown, turned into a 'reality shock' (Santos, 2003: 159) once he stepped through the prison gates.

### ***Through the Prison Gates***

The interview phase of prison induction<sup>15</sup> was often the men's first contact with the prison staff and environment (Bradshaw, Emerson, and Haxby, 1972). This process proved to be both bewildering and severely traumatic (Jewkes, 2012), and for a number of the men, their age compounded this experience, leading to 'entry shock' (Prison Reform Trust, 2019: 27). Jewkes (2012: 46) argued that 'entry shock' is the first of many assaults on prisoners' autonomy, its purpose being to mould the men into manageable and controllable prisoners. The men's accounts concurred with Goffman's (1961: 14) argument that when an individual enters prison 'his self is systematically, if often unintentionally, mortified'. This was experienced by Robert (aged 50):

You go in, your spoken to like a piece of rubbish, you're treated like a piece of rubbish, you're stripped naked, humiliated, they strip you of every tiny little piece of dignity you have left, which isn't a lot, you're already full of self-loathing to start off with, and then they take everything away from you. They dehumanise you.

Roberts's account of being dehumanised mirrors Jewke's (2012) view that the reception process can be laden with brutality. When reflecting on this time further, and the purpose of the prison as a form of punishment and a provider of rehabilitation, Robert attempted to justify his treatment:

I understand the logic of them stripping you of everything so you can start again, but the system does not work. It's a very corrupt system from the very top to the very bottom and people come out bitter, aggrieved, there is nothing in prison for you.

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<sup>15</sup> The induction process is a time where prisoners are informed about prison life, the regime of the establishment, and their responsibilities and entitlements (Prison Service Instruction, 07/2015).

The debasing treatment that Robert encountered during his initial entry into prison followed him through his sentence, and the aim of rehabilitation as a philosophical justification for the use of imprisonment, did not prove defensible.

Alf (aged 63) had a similar experience and commented that the prison staff 'treated me like a tick in a box. That's the problem; they don't look at your face'.

The experience of not being seen by those in power was also prevalent in the re-entry process. This will be further discussed in Chapter 6.

Further to Alf's account of a lack of humanity and a focus on procedure and protocol, Stuart (aged 57) also suffered a degrading experience:

It's a cruel, twisted process, that doesn't actually treat people like human beings, you become an object, you become a money train, and that is, I think, the realisation that when you accept that you are nobody, because that's what you are treated like, prison treats you like a nobody.

Stuart's account emphasised how the prison environment can impart negative changes to the men's self-perceived identities. Issues surrounding identity and the self will be further considered in Chapter 7. When recalling his entry into prison, Stuart believed that the trauma encountered was so great, and the lasting impact had such strength, that recollection of the induction process could act as a utilitarian theory of individual deterrence:

If you could bottle the first night, up to the first week, and bottle the emotional stress, and problems and put it in a little bag and before they think about committing crime, drop it down their neck and if that memory comes back, they won't commit the crime.

Although there are convincing arguments which suggest that deterrence theory does not work (Bagaric and Alexander, 2011), furthered by statistics which highlight that almost half of all released adult prisoners reoffend within the first twelve months (Ministry of Justice, 2019b), Stuart's personal experience was so traumatic that he was convinced it could prevent others from committing crimes.

At arguably their most vulnerable time, particularly for those serving their first prison sentence, the transition from life in society to the prison world, shaped their experiences not only of the sentence to come, but their lives following incarceration. This can be more prevalent for older prisoners who have been retrospectively imprisoned for crimes committed earlier in their lives, or older men, who have committed their first crime later in life, as they have been accustomed to living in society and now, at the later stages of their life course, are introduced into an alien world. Forsyth et al. (2020) highlighted this as they argued that during the induction process, and shortly after, is the time at which older prisoners are at a greater risk of self-inflicted death. This was true for Robert as the realisation of his situation proved to be too overwhelming for him:

At the beginning I was full of self-loathing, proper tried to cut my wrists with a Stanley knife, I'd had enough; I knew I was wrong, no help from mental health. You get nothing.

The prison environment can exacerbate existing issues relating to prisoners' mental health or create new issues, both before (Alec), during (Robert) and after (Clifford, aged 54, who will be discussed further below) their sentences. Paul (aged 50) discussed how his mental health had been impacted by the lack of support and communication from prison staff on entry, 'I had already got diagnosed with

depression and anxiety and it was even worse at the time. You start going into your own world'. When asked if he was offered any support with his mental health, Paul stated 'No. they gave medication'. However, when support was offered, it was not always beneficial. Robert discussed how he had to go through the process of having a psychological assessment at the induction phase due to the length of his sentence. He stated that this consisted of 'do you want to hurt yourself? Do you want to hurt anybody else?'. He waited six hours for the assessment; the only outcome was that he was moved to a wing for vulnerable prisoners. The initial experience of entering prison was rapidly followed by a number of new issues the men had to cope with. This chapter will now turn to the most profound of these, which was accommodation.

### ***Living in a Box***

Following the initial assessments, and as the men have described, the dehumanising procedures and protocols, they were allocated a cell which would become their home. Jon found that his age impacted his accommodation. In his own words, he was 'able-bodied', however, this was not taken into consideration, 'I was on the bottom bunk because I was the oldest'. Jon stated that he was more than capable of accessing the higher bunk, but due to his chronological age, not his physical ability, at aged fifty, he was perceived to be 'old' in the prison environment and was allocated the lower bed. This misplaced institutional thoughtfulness will be discussed further in the Chapter 8.

When discussing his cell allocation Alf stated, 'they just go through it like they want to get you in'. At induction, Alf did not understand that he would be housed in a

double occupancy cell. He felt that the prison staff could have explained the situation to him in a more comprehensive manner, instead of rushing through the paperwork, simply to get him on the prison roll<sup>16</sup>. This lack of communication was discussed further by Jon, 'Nobody ever explained it to me. It doesn't matter, you're in, you do your time. You are just a number'. Jon's words resonate with Alf's dehumanising treatment during induction. The feeling of being doubly insignificant, due to a combination of their prisoner status, and older age, ran through the men's discussions of their prison experiences and will be discussed further below.

Following the allocation of the cell, the men had to adapt to living in a small, confined space<sup>17</sup>. For Clifford living in a box impacted negatively on his mental health. Staff shortages (discussed below) meant that time out of their cell to participate in purposeful activity was a rarity for some of the men. Clifford stated, 'you end up going cuckoo and talking to the wall'. Being confined to 'the box' (Clifford) with no structure to his time meant that he struggled with the daily regime. Although prisoners of all ages may encounter difficulties with long periods of time in their cells, for older prisoners, boredom can be a greater threat to their well-being than poor physical health (Moody and Sasser, 2015).

Issues of confinement were not only prevalent during the day, but as Alec described, the early 'behind your doors' and 'lights out' time impacted on his

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<sup>16</sup> The prison roll is the total number of prisoners in a prison.

<sup>17</sup> The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (2015: 1) set the minimum standards of a cell to be '6m<sup>2</sup> of living space for a single-occupancy cell plus sanitary facility and 4m<sup>2</sup> of living space per prisoner in a multiple-occupancy cell plus fully-partitioned sanitary facility', however, HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2017: 13) found that these minimum standards for multiple occupancy were rarely met.

experience, 'I thought I'm fifty odd here, I'm not five'. When recalling his experience, he felt that through being locked in his cell at such an early time of the day, he was in fact being stripped of his autonomy and infantilised. Robert also perceived his cell to have been an inappropriate place to keep people, however, this was not due to his age, but due to the moral implications of keeping men in confinement:

Putting people in a box with another human being. If you took somebody off the street and put them in a box, they would call you a criminal.

Keeping the men in a confined space, for long periods of time, would not replicate their lives in society. They were being trained to live in confinement which can have an impact on how they live post imprisonment. Alexander Paterson, Prison Commissioner from 1922-1947, observed, 'You cannot train men for freedom in conditions of captivity' (Paterson, no date. cited in Solomon and Edgar, 2004: 7). Paterson's words resonate with David's experience when he went to live with his family following his first prison release:

I would go out, have dinner, and then go back in my bedroom. Or have a shower and then back in rather than spend it with my family which you would think I would do.

He did not realise he was displaying this behaviour which was consistent with prisonization (Clemmer, 1940; Martin, 2018), until four months after his return to his home. His learnt behaviour, or training in prison had persisted in his life following prison. Issues surrounding prisonization will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Not all the experiences of living in a cell were negative and were largely dependent on the individual prison, as both Robert and Alec discussed having single cells furnished with an en-suite bathroom, one with a shower. This level of privacy was important for the men as it gave them a 'backstage' (Goffman, 1990: 246) opportunity to remove their prison masks of 'offender-hood' (Farrall, 2016: 212). The ways in which the men encountered impression management will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

The issues related to being kept in a cell for long periods of time during the day, not only caused frustration and increased levels of anxiety (Turner et al., 2018), but also led to diminished opportunities to remain active, an area of imprisonment which will now be considered.

### ***Remaining Active in Prison***

Activity theory (Betts Adams, Leibbrandt, and Moon, 2011) advocates that older people must remain active in their social and physical lives in order to maintain links with the wider society and preserve or boost their self-image and morale. However, the fabric of the prison environment and the prison regimes did not always provide the opportunities or the choice for the men to remain active or have meaningful structure in their daily routines (Mann 2012; Turner et al., 2018).

This was seen in Paul's experience:

You do a bleep test<sup>18</sup> to see if you can go to the gym and when I had done it, I knew I wouldn't be able to do it and one fella only did it once and he couldn't get round once so they said he couldn't do it. But they didn't say

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<sup>18</sup> A bleep test, also known as a 'shuttle run' is a multi-stage fitness test where participants must run between two cones within time restrictions to assess their fitness level.

that you can do anything else to help you get fit so there was nothing else at all.

Because Paul could not meet the required physical standards for the gym, he was denied entry and not offered an alternative activity to fill his time. As Jackson, Doyle and Bartels (2020) found, access to the gym was denied due to it being designed with younger prisoners in mind. Some prison establishments are beginning to recognise the need for adapted prison regimes (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2020a) however, Paul did not experience this. Purposeful activity is paramount not only to remaining active, but also acting as a coping mechanism whilst serving a prison sentence. Without this, issues relating to poor mental health can be exacerbated (Stephenson et al., 2021), causing further issues whilst incarcerated, and subsequently, during the re-entry process.

The specific prison regimes also had an impact on the chances of remaining active. Some of the men saw themselves as past the age which they could reasonably work, so education was the only other option available to maintain an active life. Clifford was grateful for the education he received, 'I've got a good education in prison. Well, I got my education in prison basically. Did a lot of good for me'. The opportunity to gain an education in prison partially rectified the lost opportunity in the community and gave him connections to the stabilising factors of the life course which imprisonment can so often disrupt (Sampson and Laub, 2004). Although Clifford was grateful for the education he received, it was questionable if the classes provided were useful on release. This was true of Bernard's (aged 55) experience:

I used to get frustrated because of the computer class and what could you do on this? You don't have access to anything, you can't do anything, spreadsheets etc. well how boring is that?

If prisoners do not have access to the internet, they will be unable to learn how to navigate the bewildering expanse of the paperless world (Reisdorf and Rikard, 2018). Many of the benefit forms<sup>19</sup>, registrations for doctors, and housing applications are all completed online. Robert explained that this was an issue for him:

Did it all but it's absolutely no good to me. Not preparing you for paying your bills on the internet, or internet banking, or doing your shopping online, or giving your details out on PayPal.

Being able to navigate the internet was a prevalent issue in the re-entry process for a number of the men. Without the knowledge of how to use connective technology, due to their time in prison, and the lack of access in that environment, the men were set up to fail. This was compounded by their age as a number of the men had not been familiar with modern forms of technology before imprisonment. Technology had moved on since a number of the men were incarcerated. This caused a twofold barrier for older men in prison, not only were their release preparations restricted due to the lack of internet access within the establishments, but they were also inhibited due to their lack of knowledge of how to navigate new forms of technology, leading to them becoming 'cavemen in an era of speed-of-light-technology' (Reisdorf and Jewkes 2016: 772).

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<sup>19</sup> Benefit forms included, Universal Credit, Housing Benefit, Jobseeker's Allowance and Pension Credit.

A further vehicle for remaining active in prison, is through employment. Being employed whilst in prison is not only aimed at increasing employment opportunities when released, it can also contribute to fostering social connections and act as a coping mechanism whilst incarcerated (Nichols, 2021). However, a number of the men reported that the employment offered was mundane and it ill-prepared them for the possibility of working on release. Anthony (aged 64) was employed to cut up Christmas and birthday cards and place them in a box. Although this job did not provide much stimulation, it was more than some of the men who were unable to work were afforded. When discussing keeping active, George (aged 75) found that the only thing he could do was 'matching'<sup>20</sup>. His inability to work, his unwillingness to attend education, 'these courses they are on about are for the young uns and that, they need it. I don't', and his inability to access the gym left him with little purposeful activity to occupy his time. Older prisoners can be left with little to occupy their time, leading to them being locked in their cells for many hours during the day (Prison Reform Trust, 2019). This does not align itself with activity theory (Betts Adams, Leibbrandt, and Moon, 2011), prepare the men for life following release, or enable them to pass the time in prison through social interactions. It is to the social interactions in prison that this chapter now turns.

### ***Social Life***

Although employment and education accounted for part of some of the men's daily interactions, the social aspect of imprisonment also contributed to their

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<sup>20</sup> Making items out of match sticks and glue.

ability to remain both physically and psychologically active. Many of the men reported that they navigated towards others of a similar age to themselves. Alf commented that when he tried to talk to younger prisoners, 'they put a mask on. I knew how to ask the question, but they couldn't answer it, as it kind of slipped their mask'. De Guzman et al. (2020: 241) argued that over a period of time, prisoners enter an 'integration' stage where they are able to make social connections based on their 'shared stories'. Although Bernard found this level of integration to be true with other prisoners of a similar age, he experienced difficulties when attempting to socialise with the younger population:

If I see an older guy come in and he said you remember, then you try and say it to a twenty-eight-year-old and they won't remember. Who the fuck is Andy Pandy<sup>21</sup>? But you know where I'm coming from. That is what drives loneliness. How can you have a conversation with someone who is twenty-eight-year-old when they are talking to you about Call of Duty or some computer?

Finding common ground between different age groups proved difficult due to a disconnection of experience (Filinson and Ciambone, 2019). Even though some of the men found that they could engage with their aged-matched peers, Bernard highlighted that even these conversations lacked the security and confidence for him to be his true 'self' which led to a state of loneliness, 'half the time you can't go to another prisoner with your problem, they'll think you are weak'. Being 'weak' in a predominately masculine environment was not an option for Bernard. Bernard's hesitation to speak freely with those around him highlighted that that even within the older prison populations, the men were still playing out a 'front'

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<sup>21</sup> Andy Pandy is a British children's television series which aired between 1950 and 1969 (BBC 2023).

stage performance (Goffman, 1990: 231) where they portrayed the persona that they wanted others to believe was their true nature. Stearns, Swanson and Etie (2019: 155) argued that when prisoners experience the loneliness of not having others to converse with, 'such inmates may experience two consecutive social deaths: a first social death from the free society, and a second social death from the incarcerated society'. The impact and management of actions which influence others' impressions are further discussed in Chapter 7.

A lack of meaningful social activity through conversation with others was just one of the driving forces behind loneliness. For Robert, feelings of isolation were exacerbated by the losses he incurred:

The experience in prison was terrible, I lost me father, me mother, me sister, no help whatsoever, didn't get to attend a funeral.

These experiences compounded Robert's feelings of separation from society and his loneliness in prison. As he was not permitted to attend any of his family members' funerals, his connections with remaining family became weakened. The issues associated with maintaining family ties will be further considered in Chapter 5.

Although Bernard and Alf found forming friendships to be a strained task, Alec had a more positive experience, 'I had some good laughs in prison, those guys kept me going'. His reliance on support from his friendship group highlighted that making positive relationships can help to reduce loneliness and increase social participation by helping to pass the time of day, keeping the men occupied in the absence of purposeful work, education or exercise and can foster a more positive

outlook (De Guzman et al., 2020). The introduction of age segregated units or whole prison establishments would provide a setting within which older prisoners could easier meet others from their age cohort, however Wangmo et al. (2017) have shown that this would not be appealing to all older prisoners.

Obtaining a strong social network could, however, be a mixed blessing, with its double-edged sword tilting more so to the pains of re-entry, as Alec acknowledged, 'I was a bit upset when I was going. Six years is a long time to know people'. For him, and others who did not have a social network of family and friends to be released into the care of, being released into the arms of isolation and loneliness was a daunting and frightening experience, so much so, that Anthony committed a further crime, to ensure he would be returned to prison to be with his friends. The issues relating to recidivism and recall will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

The difficulties in maintaining a social network in prison proved to be problematic with the younger population, however, the men reported further issues between the two age strata's which had an impact on their prison experience. It is to the age-related experiences in prison that this chapter now turns.

### ***Age Differences***

Chronological and perceived age and the behaviours associated with the two impacted on the men's experience of the prison environment. They reported issues relating to their advanced age in relation to other prisoners, and also how the age of the prison officers impacted on their treatment. When considering the differences between younger and older prisoners, a number of the men discussed that the younger prisoners, who they classed as being in their 20's and 30's, would

be furnished with their wants and needs by creating commotion through shouting and elevated visibility. This concurs with the report by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (2004) *'Old and Quiet'* which highlighted that older prisoners were a forgotten and ignored population due to their lack of noticeable presence. Alf found the younger prisoners' ability to get what they wanted to be frustrating, 'If I started shouting and bawling, I would have got everything I ever wanted'. David furthered the point made by Alf, by also stating that the actions of younger prisoners were related to their immaturity and lack of respect for the prison rules:

When you have some older person, I'm not saying they're all mature, they are more susceptible to accepting the rules or asking in a particular way in front of everyone. [the younger prisoners] had a chip on their shoulder but in doing that it seems sometimes that they get what they want because they [prison officers] don't want to hear it. Oh God he's here again!

Alf compared the way the younger prisoners approached officers, to the way the older prisoners formulated their requests:

Sometimes they will say "can you hang on an hour?" and 3 hours later you come back and say "excuse me", whereas some of the younger ones would say "I've been waiting all day".

Alf continued this point:

There are people in there that were obnoxious, shout and swear at the officers, they had a single cell. They got it easily because they [prison officers] are frightened to put them together. They told me, "We did that on purpose to get a single cell". They got everything, single cell, one lad got basic<sup>22</sup> but still had a TV because he was obnoxious and shouting.

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<sup>22</sup> The Incentives and Earned Privileges scheme had three levels, enhanced, standard and basic. If a prisoner is on the basic level, they would not be allowed a television in their cell.

Alf believed that if he was in this situation that his TV would have been taken from him, 'I just abided by the rules. I didn't mess about'. He also stated that his attitude was to 'live by the rules and keep myself to myself, which I did... I didn't get anywhere with it'. Alf's account suggests that older prisoners were further disadvantaged due to following the rules and being 'old and quiet', a point reinforced by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (2004: v). Further to finding it difficult to converse with the younger population, difficult relationships with younger prisoners was also borne from the way prison officers dealt with the two different age groups, as David stated, 'some youngsters come walking back and the guards don't say anything because they will kick off'. David's acknowledgement that prison officers treated prisoners of different ages inconsistently follows on from the discussions above regarding younger prisoners. The men felt that due to their age, they were side-lined, marginalised and forgotten due to the lower threat of them 'kicking off'.

The men reported having fraught relationships with the prison staff, with conversations predominantly surrounding the prison officers' lack of communication or knowledge of the prison system. Paul stated that in relation to release planning:

There is a lack of communication between understanding and even when you talk to prison officers, they don't understand or they just say, "go talk to probation".

Alec furthered this, 'that's the problem with the prison system, the staff. Nobody's giving them information'. He concurred with Paul that the prison officers were unable to provide any information, but he attributed this not to the disingenuous

attitudes of the officers, but because they themselves were as uninformed as the prisoners. This concurred with Stevens et al. (2018) who found that the, at times unintentional, neglect some older prisoners perceive, can be attributed to a lack of knowledge and training of prison staff with regards to the specific needs of older prisoners.

When discussing release preparations Alf stated:

There was someone designated to me but all he wanted to know was how I was getting on. It just went in one ear and out of the other, he wasn't listening. As I said, he's an officer.

Paul concurred with this and stated, 'you try talking and they won't listen'. Robert also found that communication was an issue with officers, 'you can state your case and they are not happy, even though I knew I was one hundred percent right, your word means absolutely nothing in prison, nothing'. As Filinson and Ciambone, (2019) found, the age of the prison officers could also affect the way the men were dealt with. Jon commented:

There are one or two of the younger ones who clearly felt they had something to prove. The more experienced officers were just fine.

Robert also discussed a correlation in officer age and their approachability. Robert stated that an older and experienced officer was 'the best officer you ever wish to meet'. Due to his length of experience in the prison environment, this officer had developed his 'jail craft' over time (Peacock, Turner and Varey, 2018: 1154) and Robert found him easy to communicate with. This could be attributed to two things, one, that the officer was a similar age to Robert, so they had a mutual

understanding forged through chronological age, and two, as it was towards the end of Robert's sentence, that he had aged and had come to accept that the officers were simply doing their job. Alf also saw that officers had a job to do, but this did not include help, support and advice. He stated, 'some of the officers were good. But they were only there to lock you up, get you out. They didn't have any information'. As the prison officers are the most visible authority in prison, many of the men turned to them for help and support during the preparations for release. The accounts that the men have given above in relation to a lack of knowledge and support from the officers, were also encountered at this time.

Further to the 'double burden' (Turner et al., 2018: 161) older prisoners face during incarceration, they can also endure a further disadvantage, or as Stojkovic (2007: 108) argued, an 'abuse' due to the lack of support in the release preparations compared to younger prisoners. As discussed above, the older men were subject to a number of age-related difficulties in the prison environment. These issues were compounded when it came to release planning, an issue that will now be discussed.

## **Preparations for Release**

As previously highlighted, pre-release planning is crucial for re-entry to be successful (La Vigne et al., 2008), however, the men reported a number of issues which aligned with a lack of information, communication and support. The release planning expectations set out by HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2021: point 100) state that 'prisoners are given all necessary practical support ready for their day of release'. However, the men's accounts did not reflect this statement. As Jon

explained, 'In prison, no support. Doesn't exist'. For Bernard, the time before his release induced worry and anxiety:

They [other prisoners] say, "what are you going to do when they open the door and let you out?" and you sit there and think, "what the hell am I going to do?"

The lack of information provided and the absence of clarity of release plans impacted on Paul's (aged 50) mental health, and like Bernard, increased his level of anxiety:

[it] plays on your mind when you don't know what is going to happen, you start worrying and everything like that. No one is helping you and you are trying to be on your best behaviour. Talking about it and no one wants to talk back. Felt lost.

Taking responsibility for their release and putting their own individual re-entry plans in place, proved difficult and at times impossible for the men when support from the 'controlling and care-taking institution' (Bereswill 2011: 209) was lacking in substance. The restrictions on the men's autonomy ensured that whilst they were incarcerated, they had no control over, or access to, the very support mechanisms they needed, which increased the pains of re-entry in terms of 'confusion' and taking 'individual responsibility' (Shammas, 2014: 117).

When asked if he had been told about any support pre-release, George stated, 'Yes, when I get out and everything and when I get out, I'd be cared for the lot. None of that has happened'. The initial promise of support instilled hope and optimism in George, which can reduce fears and distress (Van Ginneken, 2015) however, as nothing came to fruition in terms of help, George faced a 'double

burden' (Turner et al., 2018: 161), his hopes had been shattered, leading to the pain of hopelessness (Nugent and Schinkel, 2016) and he was left in a state of confusion. Although George's expectations were not met, he was at least furnished with some information regarding his re-entry. However, this was in opposition to Mark's experience:

They don't tell you a *damn* thing, the prison system doesn't, and neither do any of the little support agencies that they have in there, you don't get a note saying we are coming next week, you're in limbo, waiting.

This lack of communication left Mark in an abyss, not being able to formulate plans for his re-entry. Knowing that support agencies existed in prison, yet not able to communicate with them also led to feelings of frustration. Mark wanted to ensure preparations were made for his release, so he 'had to push and keep harassing them [Shelter]'. He found that even when support was discussed, it was more for the benefit of ticking boxes, than helping him with his release plans:

If I hadn't have pushed, I probably would have just been left to my own devices, although they would have continued to tick their boxes because they would say, "right we've filled in the council housing form". You need a bit more work than that for it to be actually effective.

Further to Mark's belief that the support he received from the CRC was not beneficial, the forms he was given did not help him with his planning:

The one they used was five years out of date so all that happened was that it got returned to me, along with another form to fill in which was entirely different, a lot of the bits that were important, didn't have the right place to go. I managed to sort it out and do it myself, but not everybody's like me. There's plenty that can't read for a kick-off, even those that can, there's plenty that just don't understand what they are reading. In fact, the majority of people that I've come across, are quite

nervous when it comes to filling forms. Shelter, for them, we've given him that form that's out of date which we haven't bothered to research and find out if it's up to date or not, that's a box ticked, that's his housing.

Although Mark was able to navigate the applications himself, as he acknowledges, not all older prisoners were able to undertake this task. They required further assistance in pre-release planning than simply being given a form. One of the ways to prepare prisoners for release is through the use of Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL). Being released on temporary licence gives prisoners an opportunity to gain employment, connect or reconnect with family and friends, and a chance to begin to put foundations in place upon which they can build or rebuild their lives once released. However, as the men's words will now show, ROTL was not always an option, or when it was available, it was not always beneficial.

### ***Release on Temporary Licence***

Having the opportunity to take advantage of ROTL is crucial in the planning for release, especially if, like Robert, older prisoners have not seen the outside world for a number of years. As John commented, '[h]ow are you meant to prepare if you can't prepare?'. Part of that preparation is learning how to navigate the complexities of life in society, after living in a carceral bubble for any length of time. The changes some of the men witnessed once released were life altering, and for some, proved so difficult, that they contemplated committing further crime to go back to prison. This point will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

The frequency of the use of ROTL was reduced due to a number of prisoners committing offences on their day release (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2014), therefore, the chances of the men being granted ROTL were decreased. Clifford experienced this and was disappointed as he felt that ROTL provided a good 're-introduction' to life on the outside. However, John felt that ROTL was not sufficient in preparing him for release:

You know when you go on town visits, you don't really know the fast pace of life like this because the days are exciting. It's only when you come out into the community and start living that you start seeing these changes.

The purpose of ROTL is to prepare the men for release (Ministry of Justice, 2021b), however, as John experienced, the excitement and novelty of being outside of the prison, overshadowed the official purpose of the days beyond the prison walls. Further to not fulfilling its purpose, Robert reported that applying for this time outside of prison was so difficult that it proved too much for him to navigate:

You've got to be risked assessed, then you've got to do voluntary work, then you are allowed a town visit, you do your risk assessment, and they might say eight visits, so to get your eight visits, you've got to do eight work parties, so you go out for your eight work parties and then you are entitled to your equal number of town visits. You go out with a member of staff shadowing you for half a day, then you'll go out with a member of staff shadowing you for a full day, then you can go out on your own for half a day, with a monitor thing that you have to carry with you, then you go out for a full day, tagged, so you've already done half your allocation at this point, without really doing anything, then you get your half day out on your own, free, then a full day out on your own free.

This process was long and drawn out and as discussed by Robert, gave very little time for the men to actually use ROTL as it was intended. Robert stated, 'the barriers for me just weren't worth jumping over' such as 'the risk assessments'.

Even though Robert made the decision not to apply for ROTL, John did see the benefits after serving a 33-year sentence, further to his initial town visit, he applied for home visitation. However, further to his town visit failing to prepare him for release and re-entry, neither did his applications for home visits:

What I could have done with is a couple of home visits but there wasn't the provision to be able to do that, it just never materialised and every time I put in for a town visit, I got knocked back. Basically, had to wait until I got out before I started learning to pay bills and direct debits.

John's experience highlighted that without the benefit of going out into society, he could not put essential practices in place such as basic financial arrangements. Being unable to access ROTL arrangements meant that the experiences of prison persisted in John's life after he was released as his inability to handle financial matters followed him through the gates, a point which will be further discussed in the following chapter.

Another pre-release support mechanisms that the prison service can offer is ensuring that prisoners have the correct clothing on the day of release (La Vigne, 2008; Smiley and Middlemas, 2016), either through being authorised to try on their personal clothing in the days leading up to their release, or to be provided with 'liberty clothing' (Loucks, 2000: 58). However, Alf did not receive this support:

The first time I was in, there was no helping when you got out because it was Preston prison. They just let me out with the clothes I came in. It was freezing. I came in in summer and went out in winter. I had put weight on.

Smiley and Middlemass (2016: 220) argued that '[c]lothing makes the man' in re-entry and point out that the clothes worn can hold meaning for both the once

convicted man, and those who externally view him. In re-entry, Smiley and Middlemass (2016: 220) argued that if managed correctly, clothing can even assist once convicted men in moving on from the status of 'ex-con'.

### ***Support Provisions***

The changes in the providers of pre-release support were witnessed by David who had been released twice, once when he was younger and once as an older prisoner:

First time was fine because Shelter came out and people from the employment benefits came out and a couple of other people but just to prepare you for the last 6 weeks whilst you are there to get things in order for when you come out but this time there was none of that.

Unlike David, John had only been released once, but having served 33 years, he too witnessed the changes, stating, 'it would be handy if prisoners could have pre-release units again so that they can prepare themselves to have a bit of income behind them for when they do come out of prison'. Mirroring the changes in probation services, post release support from 'advise, assist and befriend' (McNeill, 2019a: 19; Deering, 2016: 1) to tick box exercises, the prison service has also taken a step backwards, from offering the support discussed by David, to, according to the men's accounts, very little. Jon discussed taking matters into his own hands:

[The] prison service does not gear you up to life on the outside. Doesn't happen. I was lucky afterwards, but then to a degree, I make my own luck. I could see who I could push to help me, and I nudged them to where I wanted them and to be fair, they went in the direction I wanted. They then offered me some sort of olive branch, I grabbed it with both hands because I could see where it would take me. I had enough about me to use the help I was offered and make the most of it. That was down to me.

Although the prison service is supposed to help men with their re-entry preparations, at times, they proved to be a barrier. Robert discussed doing things himself, trying to be prepared six months before his release:

Being the contentious guy I am, I initiated everything early. I turn up at the job centre with all the paperwork and he said its expired, so I had to reinitiate everything. I couldn't get a bank account because you need two photo forms of ID that the bank will accept, one was photo ID driving licence etc., I did have one but it was in security and they wouldn't give me a photo copy so I couldn't use that, and the other forms I didn't have. So, I had no bank account, nothing, had to reinitiate everything with the job centre so it was 5 weeks before I got paid.

Although La Vigne et al. (2008) highlighted that some aspects of re-entry planning cannot be undertaken too far in advance, if Robert had been allowed to gain the identification he needed, he could have had much more in place before he was released from prison. He tried to initiate planning early; however, John did not even try to put anything in place before his release, 'what's the point in applying for something when you know you're not going to get it anyway. You might not get out on your parole hearing'.

Jon also found that the prison service offered no help prior to release, '[t]he only help I got at getting out had nothing to do with the prison service'. Further to a lack of support from the prison service, Jon had the same experience of the CRCs, 'I knew that these people who are coming round the prison from Shelter, were making all these noises about helping people out and no-one was getting any help from them'. The failures associated with CRCs will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

The support the men received did not come from the prison service, or the CRCs. A number of them found that they received the most support from charities in the community. This support continued through the prison gates. They maintained that they would either be back in prison or dead, without the help, support and guidance of charities. Charitable support was an important theme running through the men's accounts of the re-entry experience and will be discussed further in Chapter 6. However, for Clifford, this support began in prison. He stated that this gave him the knowledge that he would have 'some support when I was eventually released'. Paul's account resonates with this as he stated, 'no one apart from the charity asked about coming out'. Jon also had a similar experience:

Did the prison service offer any kind of help with me walking out of that door? No. The help I got was from Gareth, Pete, Liz, Foundations, completely separate entity. All helped me get back on my feet even when I failed and picked up the drink, they were all still there when I needed them, not prison. It was very much, you are here, you do your four and a half months, you behave, you won't have any trouble from us, off you go. End of.

Of all the preparations for release in the shorter term, and re-entry as a longer-term process, the biggest fears surrounded where the men were going to live. It is to the preparations for accommodation that this chapter now turns.

### ***Release to Where?***

Accommodation was an issue for a number of the men, from the initial allocation of their cell to their pre-release planning. Having somewhere to live is critical for successful re-entry (Stojkovic 2007) however, many prisoners report that acquiring post-prison accommodation was their biggest fear (Crawley, 2004). As

Paul commented, 'you want to get out but [you are] scared there is nowhere to get out too'. For those who had accommodation to go to, their fears were somewhat alleviated, although other issues replaced them. Not only did they face a lack of support, but when they tried to arrange their own housing, they were faced with barriers which prevented them from moving forward. As Alf stated:

You could go through this channel and that channel but as I said, they have all the forms and everything but you have to do it yourself but there is no support there really, but I said, "how do I go about getting a flat?" They sent me to the library because they have all the stuff in there or phone this person. You can't phone because it's not legal. I put the housing on there, but they sent a legal<sup>23</sup> back but it wasn't a legal thing so they can't do it, it has to be on computer.

As highlighted by Alf, contact with the outside world was restricted (Forsyth et al., 2015: 2017), with only authorised telephone numbers being allocated to his phone account, '[t]hey had a list there of phone numbers you can ring. But you couldn't ring them as its 0800 numbers'. This restriction was further emphasised as the men could only have access to the phones on association time, which fell outside normal office hours, therefore limiting the chances of speaking to the agencies they needed help and support from. There were a small number of phones available to each wing, and many prisoners wanting to use them at the same time. Jon's fear of being released without any accommodation, under the status, 'no fixed abode' (NFA) was so great that he that he told the prison officers, 'I am not

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<sup>23</sup> 'A legal' is a legal form which enables 'the prisoner to have access to justice through legally privileged correspondence with legal advisers and other support organisations with whom they may correspond confidentially' (Prison Service Instruction 49/2011: 4).

leaving this prison until I have got an address to go to... I will do whatever I have to, to stay in this prison.' He continued:

I don't know how serious I was, I hoped I didn't have to carry out that kind of threat but that was how strongly I felt about it because I knew I would struggle on the outside without some kind of help. I didn't have the money or contacts; I couldn't go to my family.

Like Jon, Paul also made the decision that due to his issues with depression and anxiety, which were exacerbated during his final weeks, he too would not be released without anywhere to go. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales (2019) reported that too many prisoners were being released without accommodation, which was the reality that Bernard faced:

They just open the gate, give you a bus pass depending on where you live and go to your town, go to probation and that's it. They tell you where it is and if you are lucky, they will find you a hostel too then when you go to [a] hostel you may as well stay in prison.

Alf stated that the prison service gave him 'no help whatsoever' with housing. He had no idea where he was going. Alec concurred with this, stating that, regarding accommodation, he was told 'get it yourself'. Others, such as George received no help or support, '[y]ou've got to find your own place. At seventy-five, that's no good to me'. Even when accommodation such as APs was arranged, this did not make the transition from prison any easier, as Paul was told he was going to an AP the day before he was released.

With support not being offered, the men were also deprived of important information they would need when being released. George's only reference to life after prison was through the media, 'The hardest part of it, the TV. You knew what

was going to happen when you got out'. George perceived that as his offence was of a sexual nature, he would be stigmatised on release, and this made him fearful. Perceived stigma will be discussed further in Chapter 7. His fear negatively impacted on his re-entry experience which is consistent with the findings of Moore, Stuewig and Tangney (2016) who argued that preconceptions of negativity can lead to a lower chance of successful re-entry. Munn (2011a) however, argued that a prisoner's pre-release expectations rarely manifested themselves in reality, which can pose difficulties in trying to come to terms with the life they imagined, and the reality facing them. The lack of information regarding the realities of re-entry signifies not just a lack of physical support, but also a lack of emotional support which left the men woefully unprepared. Robert discussed this, 'I think help and guidance and advice is what people need, sadly, you get none of it. It's evil'.

As Robert and Alf discussed, it is important not just to consider the physical preparations for release, but also the psychological adjustment which is necessary for successful re-entry. Having both emotional and psychological help can impact on 'one's ability to flourish in response to adversity' (Haron, Foong and Hamid, 2018: 1364). Although the authors are discussing levels of emotional support in relation to older adults with disabilities, their findings can be utilised in discussing older, pre-release prisoners as they too can be seen as being disabled, not physically, but socially disabled due to the infliction of the pains of imprisonment.

As Alf stated:

I think you need a one-to-one before you go out with someone that will ask you questions. What do you think of going out? I think you need that.

Some people don't, and some people don't care about anything... Before you get out, you need to see someone about how you're feeling, not what you are going to do.

As highlighted above, the physical aspects of release and re-entry planning are crucially important, however, having these stabilizing factors, without help for issues relating to poor mental health, greatly reduced the chances of successful re-entry. A lack of emotional support was reported by a number of the men during their time in prison, and particularly in the time shortly before release. Having emotional support pre-release can assist in reducing the trauma caused by incarceration and promote feelings of wellbeing in older prisoners (Haron, Foong and Hamid, 2018). Alf suggested that it would be beneficial if this type of support was included in pre-release and re-entry planning as older prisoners were not comfortable asking for help with their feelings, emotions and mental health, 'they want it, but they don't want to ask'.

## **Conclusion**

The men's words and their experiences have shown that they faced specific age-related difficulties, from entering prison, living in the institution, and preparing for release and re-entry. These first encounters with the Penal System highlighted that at the initial entry and the beginnings of, for some, a long sentence, the men were not treated as individuals, they were not informed of essential information, and their difference due to their chronological age, and the issues associated with this, were not recognised. This 'institutional thoughtlessness' (Crawley, 2005: 350; Cadet, 2020) throughout their time in prison, impacted on the appropriateness of

pre-release planning, as Owers (2013: 12) argued, 'what happens at the end of the sentence, though is crucially dependant on what happens during it'. A number of the men stated that a lack of preparations for release left them woefully unprepared for re-entry, and as Forsyth et al. (2015: 2023) found, this resulted in a 'discontinuity of care'. Without the correct planning, the men would have a reduced chance of being successfully re-entered into society.

The lack of communication from officers and the lack of information given to the men regarding their preparations for release negatively impacted on their chances of successful re-entry. They were unable to make plans, unable to lay foundations for their release, and unable to fully prepare for re-entry. This lack of appropriate, and at times, any support at this pivotal time, set the men up to fail.

This chapter has unveiled how the men's experiences of imprisonment were impacted by their advanced age, and how their difference in comparison to younger prisoners was not recognised, leading to them being doubly disadvantaged in the prison environment (Turner et al., 2018). Activity theory (Betts Adams, Leibbrandt, and Moon, 2011) argues that older people must remain active to ensure successful ageing, denying the men the use of the gym, or education or employment, resulted in the arrested development of successful ageing. This 'institutional thoughtlessness' (Crawley, 2005: 350) not only influenced how the men viewed their experiences of imprisonment, but it also shaped their release and re-entry planning, and their lives beyond the bars.

The following chapter will highlight how the effect and impact of prisonisation (Martin, 2018) persisted in the lives of the men, reducing their chances of

successful re-entry, making their post-prison lives feel like a sentence, after a sentence. Using the men's own words, this chapter will highlight how the persistence of their experiences of doing time, influenced the prospect of living in freedom.

## Chapter 5: 'A Sentence After a Sentence'

### Introduction

Experiences of imprisonment persisted in the men's lives long after the day they were released. The 'prisonization' (Clemmer, 1940: 315) and the subsequent 'invisible punishments' (Visher and Travis, 2011: 110) imparted, had a number of collateral consequences. The cumulative effect of these outcomes made the adjustment to life in society following incarceration more difficult for the older, once convicted men. Not only were they living in the 'shadow of imprisonment' (Stark, 2022: 278), but for some, they felt as though they were living a 'sentence after a sentence' (Bernard). The previous chapter discussed the issues the men faced whilst incarcerated, however, the men's accounts highlight that the most significant effects of imprisonment, were felt once they were released (Schnittker and John 2007).

This chapter provides the men's accounts of their experience following their release from prison. It will begin by discussing the scale of adjustment required when leaving the society encapsulated within the prison walls and entering the society beyond. It will then consider how the men experienced a number of the pathways to successful re-entry, highlighting how the pathways designed to assist in successful re-entry, were at times barriers to achieving it. The structural barriers the men faced included issues associated with gaining suitable accommodation, relationships with family and friends, addictions, education and employment, finances and the use of technology. These barriers were experienced concurrently

with the 'pain of adaptation/readjusting to the new environment' (Durnescu, 2019: 1487). The pressures of adjustment were heightened by the length of sentence, and therefore the level of disconnection from the world outside of the prison, and for all the men, their age compounded this. Adjusting to life beyond the bars will now be considered.

### **Adjusting to a New Society**

Although the men faced pains of imprisonment (Sykes, 1958), once released, they were faced with a new set of pains, the 'pains of freedom' (Shammas, 2014: 104). This was summarised by Bernard, 'you think it's hard being in prison, you are in a bubble. It's what happens when you come out of prison'. The transition was not only a 'sudden movement between different social worlds' (Martin 2018: 673), but also a 'sudden change in social position' (ibid: 671). The abruptness of these changes proved difficult for the men to comprehend. For Bernard, the difficulties in re-entry began when leaving prison and beginning his 'sentence after a sentence'; he described what he meant by this:

You are in a prison and in this bubble. Three meals a day, got everything but you have no freedom. Everything is paid for, you are protected. You come out of prison walk through the gates and free like a dog. Feel great but you don't have the prison. You have swapped one for another and the other one is that you don't have that bubble. You are exposed. You go back into your area, so you know the same robber, the same burglar, start drinking again, taking drugs. Start anything you can to get money but there is no wall to protect that. You're free to do what you want. The wall will protect you. Yes, you're in prison, but safer than out here unless you have something in place.

Being incarcerated is rarely described as preferable to being free, however, Bernard found that the protection from the painful lived realities of re-entry, could

be found in the institution. Being enveloped in the 'bubble' of the prison provided a remedy to the pain of 'temptation' (Durnescu, 2019: 1493) that being free imparted. Mark also felt the popping of the carceral bubble at the moment of release, 'if they could have put a boot up your arse as they held the door for you, they would have done'. As the Prison Reform Trust refer to 'entry shock' (2019: 27) when entering prison, the abruptness of being released produced re-entry shock for Mark.

Once released, having to adjust to, for some, an unrecognisable society, induced pain. Stojkovic (2007) argued that those who had served shorter sentences faced fewer profound issues during re-entry, yet this was not the case for Jon:

I know I was only in for four and a half months and although the time drags when you are in prison, by the same token if you have nothing planned for when you are coming out, all of a sudden, it's happening far too fast.

Although Jon's' time in prison was comparably short, like Mark, he faced re-entry shock once released. David, however, found re-entry, not to be a sudden infliction (Martin, 2018), but as more of a process to undertake:

After about 3, 4 months, you start to settle down a bit and you get to the training prison, it becomes your life, so you just adapt to whatever, and of course, when you come out, you go through the same process. This time I was expecting that.

When asked if being released for a second time, knowing what to expect made his re-entry experience any easier, David replied:

No. It didn't actually. You start to get anxious and have panic attacks. I never had them last time because I think I went back to my family and felt secure, and this is all strange to me.

When released from a previous sentence, David resided with his family, however, he had been placed in an AP following his most recent release, which created many more barriers to successful re-entry than he had previously experienced when he returned home. One of the issues David faced was only being able to go out of the AP for very short periods of time before he felt as though he had to return to his room due to his increased levels of anxiety. In prison, he had been accustomed to remaining in his cell for long periods of the day, and the greater level of autonomy and the pain of 'radical openness' (Martin, 2018: 673) he was faced with on release, combined with the fear of knowing what was yet to come along the re-entry process, acted as a barrier to successful re-entry, forcing him to revert to being behind a door.

Jon had been removed from society for a short period of time, and David knew what to expect when he was released, however, Clifford had a different starting point. He had been in prison for almost three decades and did not know what to expect, making the changes in society particularly difficult to comprehend. He stated, 'It's like we have slept walked into this world now and it's not very nice, is it? I wish I was back in the 80's.' After serving a 27-year sentence, Clifford found that the attitudes and behaviours of those around him in society had changed:

Its bloody hard now isn't it. It's like people, it's a less caring society that's my thing. It's a less caring society. The government think it's a great thing because they have bread banks and things like that, and food banks. They think that is positive. You shouldn't even need to have them, it's ridiculous.

The length of his sentence meant that the chances of the world beyond the prison walls having changed were high, however, he was not prepared for the enormity

of the changes he witnessed. Alf concurred with Clifford's description of entering a changed society, but he discussed this in terms of age:

I watch what I say now. Do you know even opening a door for somebody? If I open the door for an old woman, you get a thank you very much. Younger women say in their 20's would say, what you holding the door for me for?

Alf found that the chivalrous actions of his generation were no longer fitting with the society he returned to. Alf and Clifford showed signs of suffering from prison induced 'cultural bereavement' (Eisenbruch, 1991: 674), where the social systems and cultural meanings they once knew, had been lost during their time in prison, however, their prevailing thought processes and subsequent behaviour remained consistent with their pre-prison identities, which led to feelings of displacement in society (Nugent and Schinkel, 2016).

Further to societal attitudes and behaviours having changed, Paul experienced a difference in the pace at which everyday life was undertaken. The prison environment had not prepared him for the speed of life on the outside and he only really began to learn how to navigate the changes once released:

Because you haven't been doing anything, you try to get around, but it's all very fast paced to do it. Got to get used to speeding up and that. I find that hard to do as well because you have been used to your own space without that speed and then they want you to sort it out, the change of pace was one of the biggest things.

The idea of 'doing time' is synonymous with having too much time, where time moves slowly, however, on release, the experience of time shifts, and all at once, the pace is too fast and causes confusion. Whilst in prison, Paul had no need to

rush anywhere, he had no control over being late for an appointment as he would be escorted by the prison staff, so the onus was on the escorting officer to ensure timeliness. Ironically, whilst in prison, thoughts surrounding time can lead to prisoners wishing that time would pass quicker, yet once released, the pace of life was too fast, and Paul found this difficult to adjust to.

Further to the fast pace of life, Paul, George and John found that everyday actions, such as crossing the road, became a difficult task to navigate, 'whilst you are in prison there are no cars or things like that. You have to get used to traffic and things like that when you first come out' (Paul). John shared Paul's difficulties:

I was a bit nervous obviously and the traffic, I was vexing up with the traffic...I have never seen so much traffic before. It was like a bloody motorway (laughs) every road. I used to get frustrated because it was taking me ages to cross the road. One geezer said to me "oh bloody hell, come on" (laughs).

The fast pace of life and, in particular, issues relating to traffic, align with the pains of freedom, the sensory overload (McKendy and Ricciardelli, 2021), making adjustment more painful. Further to the immediate changes the men had to adjust to, their chances of successful re-entry were also influenced by their ability to navigate the practical adjustments they would have to make, the most influential of which was where they would be living, which will now be considered.

## **Accommodation**

Further to the analysis presented in Chapter 4, which highlighted that finding suitable accommodation was one of the men's greatest pre-release fears, with Jon

and Paul stating that they would not leave prison without having somewhere to go to, it also proved to pose the most significant difficulties in re-entry. The accommodation the men inhabited once released greatly depended on their personal circumstances, they either had their own home to return to; they were released to NFA; they resided in an AP, or they lived in assisted accommodation. As securing suitable housing is critical to achieving successful re-entry (Stojkovic 2007), the men's experiences of gaining, maintaining and residing in differing accommodation, was crucial in their re-entry journeys.

### ***Own Home***

Having a home to return to can decrease the pressures associated with accommodation both prior to, and on release from prison. Alf had his own flat when he was released from an earlier prison sentence and found that it decreased his dependency on external support mechanisms, 'I still had my flat you see. There was no problem'. However, this was not the case when he was released following his most recent sentence, having given up his flat due to it being in an area that he had been told he was not permitted to return to due to his offence.

In addition to being excluded from living in a certain area, Paul found that the location of the home he returned to, had a negative impact on his chances of successful re-entry. Living in a small cul-de-sac, in the area he committed his crime, led to the local media reporting on his return, and although his full address was not publicised, the name of his street was. Paul stated that 'people put two and two together', which led to a gate bolt being thrown through his window. For Paul to be successful in his re-entry journey, he had to be accepted by others in society,

however the victimisation he received due to his offence being of a sexual nature, indicated that some of those in his local community were not willing to accept him back into their world. This increased his feelings of loneliness and social isolation (Kitson-Boyce et al., 2019) as the media made a 'private' person into a 'public figure' (Goffman 1963: 71).

Bernard also experienced the difficulties faced by being known by people in his local area when he was released from a previous sentence. This made successful re-entry more difficult as knowing the person he previously was, and the way he behaved before his sentence, his previous acquaintances tried to draw him back into his former ways of living:

You can probably survive but if they put you back in that area, it is hard. Under pressure, friends pressure you, see you're clean and not taking drugs or a drink, looking good, going to groups, that's the pressure because they want you. They are glad, but envy you, so if they can drag you back in there, then it's hard to keep saying no.

Bernard's account suggests that he was a victim of 'systemic thoughtlessness' (Cadet, 2020: 126) as he was 'put back' into the area where his offending behaviour took place, and the pain of 'temptation' (Durnescu, 2019: 1493) was present. This had a harmful impact on his chances of successful re-entry, the proof being in a further conviction and prison sentence.

Although Paul and Bernard had negative experiences of returning home, John found that once he had finally secured his own home, he took pride in it, and it changed his prison-induced behaviour:

It's been a learning curve just sorting out your own house. I mean I was never the tidiest guy in the world but now I take pride in my surroundings. It's nice to look at what you have got and appreciate it.

Although John's behaviour changed as he began to appreciate what he had achieved, parts of his learnt behaviour from being in prison followed him when released. He compared his flat to his prison cell:

Now I feel that I have so much room. Basically, my lounge is two cells, my bedroom is another cell, I have a kitchen, bathroom, landing, you know that I can go out onto, a balcony.

John described his home in terms of the dimensions of a cell, and his balcony as a 'landing'<sup>24</sup> as this was the language he had been accustomed to. The dominance of the cell was also prevalent in David's discussion of his behaviour in his home:

I was so used to that little compartment and even when I moved into my flat, I started to realise that no matter what I brought into the front room, whether it was an ironing board or an iron, I would fold it away and put in the corner of the room, rather than take it back to the cupboard and before you know it, most things were in that front room again. Ended up living in there.

This replication of living in a cell highlights how entrenched the prison experience was within David, stealthily shaping his way of living, and this unconscious 'untraining' (Goffman 1961: 13), was difficult to move on from. It also highlights his 'sense of displacement' (Nugent and Schinkel, 2016: 572) with any other way of living than that of in a cell. David's repetition of confinement and John's reference to the size of his cell, highlights that the memory of the prison

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<sup>24</sup> Prison landings are the levels of a prison wing. The landing can also be described as the walkways that run parallel to the prison cell doors.

environment remained ingrained within the men and influenced their daily lives, long after they had left the prison. This was also true for Clifford, but his memory served as a reminder that no matter the quality of his accommodation, it would always be better than a cell. Clifford described only being able to afford to live in a complex which housed drug and alcohol addicts and 'ex-cons', yet stated, 'at least I'm not in a box'. The memory of the cell impacted on the men's re-entry experience in differing ways, for John, it acted as a reference, for David, a template for his way of living, and for Clifford, a tool of desistance. John, David and Clifford had their own homes to reside in, however, they resided there alone, without support from family. Having a home, and a family to return to can provide a different experience of post-prison accommodation, it is to these issues that this chapter now turns.

### ***Family***

As highlighted in Chapter 2, family support is a beneficial tool in re-entry (Markson et al., 2015), not only for financial and emotional stability, but also for the practical support of offering housing. None of the men went to live with their families once released; however, Bernard had the option to do so. Although he had a good relationship with his family, which will be discussed further below, he did not feel that he could burden them by residing in their homes. When asked if he was ever tempted to live with his family, Bernard replied:

I was, but I know I couldn't be able to do it. They would, but then I know I would bring my dirt to them. I know I would, plus, I wouldn't do it anyway because I know shit always follows me and I couldn't put my mum through that, I love her too much. My brothers and sisters are all in good jobs, I couldn't do that to them.

Bernard's most recent release was not the first time he had contemplated living with his family after serving a prison sentence. Not wanting to impart the negative aspects of his life on his family following a previous release from prison left Bernard having to return to an undesirable situation:

I don't bring my family into my lifestyle so when I came back now, I had to go back to the ex, now she's an alcoholic. Everyone around her is a junkie and an alcoholic. So, when I walked through that gate I went to my mates, had a few drinks and a spliff. I need somewhere to stay and so where do I go? Back to her, back to drink and drugs, selling drugs. When I was in there [prison], I set my life up to what I wanted to do, but I couldn't do it.

Prison had provided an environment where Bernard could change his life and become free of his addictions, enabling him to make positive plans for his future, however, not having a stable and suitable source of accommodation once released, meant that his plans for success did not come to fruition. This led to the rehabilitative work he had undertaken in prison being unravelled in a matter of hours, and the pain of 'goal failure' (Nugent and Schinkel, 2016: 573) being present. When Bernard was released after his most recent prison sentence, he did not want to repeat the experience he previously endured. Again, he did not want to burden his family by living with them, but he also knew that now, aged 50, he did not want to regress back into his old lifestyle. This left him being released to no fixed abode (NFA).

### ***No Fixed Abode (NFA)***

If released to NFA, reoffending rates are increased (Maguire and Nolan, 2012) and geriatric health conditions can be exacerbated (Pedersen, 2016). The House of

Commons Justice Committee (2013: 45) argued that in countries such as Wales, where legislation ensures that no prisoner is released to a status of NFA, older prisoners encounter 'marked differences' in their attempts to be successfully re-entered. Although Bernard had family and old acquaintances he could have lived with, his previous experiences of release taught him that neither situation provided a positive step on his re-entry journey. Subsequently, his best option was to reside in a temporary hostel:

To be honest I'd rather live in Iraq or Syria because you go in a hostel, you walk through the door and there is some cunt selling you drugs and when you walk in there the only difference between that, and a prison is that you can walk out of a front door when you want. It is full of drugs. If it's a mixed hostel, you have got prostitutes doing what she's doing. I can't blame the hostel people running it, blame can't be on them, all they are there for is to make sure you have a bed to come to, and to make sure you have food, but you don't know what he is doing when you go through that door.

For Bernard, the reality of residing in a hostel, and the temptations to return to his former lifestyle acted as a barrier to his pre-release hopes of a successful re-entry journey. He was the only participant to be released to NFA, with almost half of the participants residing in probation AP. The issues faced during time in an AP will now be considered.

### ***Approved Premises (AP)***

Similar to Bernard's experience, Jon also found that his accommodation hampered his chances of successful re-entry and threatened to undo the rehabilitative work he had completed in prison:

It is not a safe place for recovery. There is vodka, and everyone here has either done something really bad, be it sexually abusive, either way I do not want to spend my recovery with these guys.

The APs are designed to be a semi-penal establishment, aiming to assist the transition from imprisonment to society. However, for Jon, the AP proved to be more of a barrier to re-entry than the prison environment, as for him, like Bernard, the opportunity to succumb to temptations and fall back into old habits was too readily available (Moore and Hamilton, 2016). Jon described his post prison time, as a time of recovery; recovery from his addiction to alcohol, and recovery from the pain endured whilst incarcerated. Life in the AP induced new pains, amplifying the pain of 'temptation' (Durnescu, 2019: 1493) during a time where Jon's focus was on pain reduction.

George also resided in an AP, however the issues he faced were related to still being confined in an institution, resonating with Bernard's description of 'a sentence after a sentence'. George had been released for less than a week at the time of the interview, and the institutional nature of the AP was already having an impact on his re-entry:

I want a place of my own and quick then I can lock myself in and get on with it. I can't do it here. No way can I do it here.

George felt that he could not begin his re-entry journey until he was released from the AP. He felt that his life was on hold until he was released. This feeling was fuelled by the fact that the penal institution still had a hold over him, he was not completely free, and felt that his re-entry journey could not truly begin until he was free from the form of control exerted by the institution. He wanted to take the power over his life back without the inference of officials. Wanting to lock

himself away was a conscious choice and a method of 'disengagement coping' (Moore and Tangney, 2017: 323) as a strategy to reduce the pains of re-entry. Like Jon, George did not feel that the accommodation designed to help and assist his re-entry into society was fulfilling its purpose, instead, he saw his time there as a barrier which was preventing him from even beginning to consider life outside of an institution. Residing in a semi-penal AP offered a hybrid environment of freedom and control, its purpose to act as a transition period from prison to community, however residing in the APs increased the pains of 'ambiguity' (Shammas, 2014: 113). The 'taste of freedom' (Shammas, 2014: 113) that residing in an AP provided, was bittersweet, they were 'free but still walking the yard' (Martin, 2018: 672), they had 'progressed beyond release but not to freedom' (McNeill, 2019a: 130). For Jon and George, the APs did not provide a supportive, transitional environment.

The lack of support was also found by Paul. When he had been previously released from prison, the opportunities for support were greater in the then 'hostels' than now in the rebranded 'approved premises':

More support. More rehabilitation, like anger management and things like that in the hostel and they don't do that anymore.

Further to the nature of the approved premises having changed, a number of the men reported changes in the support now offered following imprisonment, compared to previous releases. The decreased support mechanisms, and an increase in supervision practices, will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Although Jon, Paul and George had negative experiences of residing in the AP, Alf was grateful for being allocated this type of accommodation:

You're not in prison. There are rules in here, but some people don't bother with them. I don't bother about anyone else. I like it. I don't moan.

Akin to Clifford's attitude that anywhere was better than a cell, Alf also indicated that although there were issues with APs, this accommodation was better than being in prison. Alf's adherence to the rules, which he attributed to his advancing age, replicated his actions whilst incarcerated, highlighting that his behaviour in prison had followed him through the gates.

David also found that being in an AP was beneficial as it kept him focused on re-entry,

I think because it is so far away from your family, I find it a bit easier. I would be visiting them instead of getting on with what I should be getting on with.

David's comments contribute to the discussions of the pains of 'temptation' (Durnescu, 2019: 1493) acting as barriers to re-entry, for Bernard and Jon, these were related to drugs and alcohol, but for David, the temptation to spend more time with his family would have provided a distraction from the rehabilitative practices he was required to undertake. This is in opposition to the literature surrounding the benefits of family support during re-entry. As highlighted in Chapter 2, support from family networks is essential to successful re-entry (Markson et al., 2015), however, for David, his strong family network became a

barrier to success, family connectedness being a negative rather than a positive element in his re-entry journey.

Although Alf and David found the AP provided a beneficial transaction between prison and the community, the maximum term for residing there was twelve weeks (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons, 2017) after which the men had to find their own accommodation. Although Alf was happy to be in the AP, this time-bound restriction induced anxiety and stress:

But now I'm out, I am going to call NACRO again because I am having big problems in here. I can go on a computer now to get housing, but I need someone to help me. I could have done with that in prison. Someone to come around and ask me what I wanted. That's the main thing. Finance stuff I'm alright, it's just the housing. I don't want to be on the street.

Like Alf, George was also concerned about finding his own accommodation within a set timeframe, 'I've to find myself a place. I'm seventy-five years old and I've got to find myself a place and I cannot stand it. At seventy-five, that's no good to me'. George's account resonates with Alf's acknowledgement that his age impacted on his experience in the AP. When asked if the staff provided any support in terms of finding housing, George stated, 'no cos I don't like bothering them. They have enough to do. That's the way I see it'. George was not only burdened by the prospect of having to find his own accommodation at his advanced age, but also disadvantaged due to his belief that the staff had more important tasks to complete than to help him. This highlights that not only are older prisoners thought of as being 'old and quiet' (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2004; v), but this follows them through the gates.

The offences committed by Alf and George deemed them as a high risk in the community, meaning that they had to reside in an AP following imprisonment. However, given the level of support they reported needing, they may have had a better experience of re-entry if they had been allocated a different type of accommodation, as two of the other men were. Anthony and John were allocated assisted living complexes on release, a type of accommodation which is more aligned with those of an advanced age. They both found this to be a positive experience, which assisted them in their re-entry journeys. Anthony stated, 'I had carers come in every day to see how I'm getting on and sometimes they would get my shopping'. He felt that he needed the support he received and was unsure if he would have been able to cope without it. The importance of support in alleviating the pains of re-entry (Durnescu, 2011: 2019) will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

John found that he did not rely on the support as much as Anthony, his actions being more autonomous, 'you do your own cooking, your own washing and you do everything for yourself basically. I found that interesting'. Completing these everyday tasks was a new experience for John due to the length of time he had served in prison. He was not used to looking after himself but residing in an assisted living complex gave him the opportunity to learn how to cope and manage day to day living, knowing that support was available if he needed it, which reduced the pain of 'individual responsibility' (Shammas, 2014: 117). Without the levels of support these men received, it is questionable how they would have navigated their re-entry journeys. The impacts of a lack of support will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Once released, many younger, once convicted men go 'home' to live with their parents, or spouses and children and this level of support is proven to be the most effective tool in reducing recidivism and assisting in successful re-entry (Markson et al., 2015). However, for the older, once convicted men, a number of familial issues meant that for most, this was not an option. Accommodation was only one of the ways in which family could have supported the older, once convicted men after release. This chapter will now turn to other aspects of family connections the men experienced.

### **The Ties That Bind**

Social bonds, including strong family ties, are an essential feature of successful re-entry (Markson et al., 2015). Whilst in prison, Clifford struggled to maintain ties with his brother, as he was moved to a number of different prisons across the country. When the distance became an issue, they would try to remain in contact through letters and conversations on the phone. They met on a number of occasions following Clifford's release, but their once close relationship had been altered in a permanent way, much like the society Clifford had been released into. Clifford's family connection had been diluted as the physical distance resulted in emotional distance, however, Anthony experienced how connections could be lost entirely, due to his family and friends choosing to cease any contact with him. He discussed having a sister but stated that she 'never got in touch with me, never bothered'. This feeling of being disowned was also present for George who wanted to have contact with his family, however, he stated, 'my family deserted me'. He

tried to look for them once released, but to no avail. Due to not having any contact with them whilst he was in prison, he acknowledged:

They won't even know I'm out. They know nothing about me. Never made any enquires or anything. I was looking for them. Couldn't find anything, didn't find them so that was a let-down. I mean they could have said "we don't want anything to do with you".

George's feelings of isolation and abandonment were increased due to not being aware of his family's location or their intent towards him, increasing the difficulties and pains of re-entry. George was unable to get any closure from his family, he would have preferred to have been told they did not want to see him, rather than being left to wonder if reconciliation was still a possibility. Like George, Alf also wanted to have contact with his family, but the decision was not his to make. Alf had no contact with his ex-wife and his daughters, but he did have photographs and videos of them. However, his previous accommodation had been taken from him when he was incarcerated and due to a lack of family or friends to support him, his belongings, including the physical reminders of his family, had also been taken and disposed of by the local council. Like George and Alf, Paul was also unaware of where his estranged family were living:

I don't even know how they are. Possibly my sister if she's at the same address but my son and daughter I don't know. I know I have two grandkids because I learnt to go on Facebook, and I had a look, and I had two grandkids.

Paul attributed the absence of connection with his family to the offence he had committed:

My side of the family are very Catholic and don't believe in any kind of criminal offence so there is no contact from them.

When asked if the lack of contact with his family had had an impact on his chances of successful re-entry, Paul stated, 'very much so'.

Many of the instances of familial disengagement were due to the type of offence committed, predominantly offences of a sexual nature, however, David's conviction for a sexual offence did not lead to him losing his family:

I'm lucky enough that every time something has happened, they have always been there for me and more so than you would think because quite understandably they could have turned their back on me, but I had that support.

David's account highlights that the strength of family relationships before and during imprisonment can greatly impact on the re-entry experience. This connection made him more appreciative of his life after prison, and gave him a more positive outlook on his future,

As long as I have my family, I am happy with that. Doesn't matter how small it is as long as you can sit back and say well, I have 6 kids, and I cannot say I haven't achieved anything. I have given life to 6 people. So, I'm not going out of this world thinking I haven't done anything.

When asked what the most positive aspect of release had been, David stated, 'seeing my family again'.

Like David, Bernard also placed his family in high regard. Mowen, Stansfield, and Boman, (2019) argued that during re-entry a lack of caring support from family members can increase the risk of recidivism, however, for Bernard, the caring

support he received from his family made re-entry more difficult. This was due to the level of appreciation he had for them:

I feel bad, especially with my mum. She's always there and it's like out of everything I've ever done, right up to now, my biggest reward is seeing my mum being happy and she doesn't have to worry. Nothing to worry about now and when I was in rehab she came, and was like "I can sleep soundly at night", knowing that because I had been shot five times, and I have been stabbed, in gangs and everything and when she used to come there we used to sit down and talk and she'd say to me, "I know when I go to bed I know where you are. That makes me feel good. You are locked in this room and it's not a prison cell and I know you are there, and I can see a change in you", and that's a reward for nearly 7 months in rehab. Coming out and sacrifice is like... before I made the trip [away from his family] ... I talk to my family first and they all said we know if you come back, you are going to be back into that scene.

Bernard's bond with his family was so strong that he could not return home due to the fear of relapsing into his old lifestyle, and the impact this would have on his mother. For Bernard to maintain and strengthen the emotional bonds of attachment with his family, he had to become physically disconnected from them by moving away to another area.

Being in prison not only impacted on the men's immediate relationships with family, but also their future ones. Since leaving prison, Jon had made contact with some of his children, however, he did not have a good relationship with his daughter. Being in prison gave him time to think about reconnecting. He also had grandchildren whom he had never met. He had been in contact with his daughter through his sister and they came to a mutual agreement:

Let's not screw the kid's head up. I can live with that; she can live with that and more importantly now I know that. I have been in prison for Christ's sake, I can wait. You learn patience in prison if you have something about you. The point is the kid wants to see me, but she has issues, and she is

seeing someone to get help with that. The last thing she wants is dad coming and going, trying to prove he is getting better. Is he getting better? Is he going to let me down again? Ok fine, so it's in hand. If I know she is ok and in good hands, that's all that really matters, and I know if she wants to see me at some point, I can wait.

Like David, Jon could understand why some members of his family may not have wanted to have contact with him, and like Bernard, he chose to put physical space between them. In stating 'I have been in prison for Christ's sake' Jon is normalising the family disconnection due to imprisonment. Unlike David, Jon had not committed a sexual offence, but he still believed that the status of being a once convicted man, legitimised his family's withdrawal. The disconnection from family heightened the status of living in social death, as Price (2015: 116) argued that part of social death 'involves rupturing precisely those ties to people who might otherwise accompany and support the formally incarcerated'. When connections had been lost or severed, either through their own control, or from external influences, friendships, to which this chapter will now turn, could be formed which would go some way to replacing the losses incurred.

### **The Family We Choose**

Haron, Foong and Hamid (2018) found that relationships with friends can be more influential than family connections in fostering positive effects in older people's lives. Although Bernard's experience resonated partially with their findings, in that he replaced family contact with pre-prison friendships, these social connections did not have positive effects:

Coming out of prison, the only family I had was the cons around me and you can't ask them advice. You can't talk to them like I'm talking to you and then you come out of prison and it's my drug family, the junkies, the alcoholics, the thieves, burglars, prostitutes, so what chance do you have?

Following his most recent release, Bernard had to move away from old acquaintances as he stated that he needed a 'new start, new life, new beginning'. He did not feel that this was possible if he had stayed in contact with his previous group of friends, stating, 'they are envious of you, happy that you are clean, but they want you back. You are like an outsider coming in'. Although these were people that Bernard knew well, due to his sobriety, not only did the circle of friends view him as an outsider, but Bernard himself saw how he had changed, and no longer 'fitted' with the group dynamic. He had learnt from his past experiences, knowing that if he returned to his old associates, his chances of successful re-entry would be diminished, so he made a 'conscious choice' (Wyse 2017: 2168) to withdraw from them. Although Bernard was faced with an absence of support in terms of his former associates, navigating away from those whose behaviours were still in the realms of offending proved to be beneficial for him. However, Jon found that he navigated towards those who had offended when he was released, 'my best mates are drug dealers and armed robbers and I trust them with my life'. The difference with Jon's post-prison circle of friends was that they shared his desire not to return to prison, and he found that the shared experiences he had with other once convicted men, helped him cope with the early stages of re-entry. The benefits of the shared experience, however, were not an option for Paul. Due to his conviction for sexual offences, his choice of forming friendships with others convicted of similar crimes was taken from him. When discussing

attending sex offender treatment meetings in the community, Paul stated that he was not permitted to mix with the other participants outside of the meeting, 'like you are friends but not friends outside'. This restriction meant that he was unable to glean the benefits and support that shared knowledge and experience can provide, which led to him becoming lonely and socially isolated outside of the meetings. Paul's experience can be linked with the pain of 'confusion' (Shammas, 2014: 110) as his friendships could not be continuous, they could only exist in one situational context, his social life, and therefore social support, becoming disjointed. John, however, found that continuous support from friends could also cause issues during re-entry. He did not realise how much his friends and family would be concerned about him once he was released. When he was in prison, they knew his whereabouts, however, when released, and allowed to go into the local town unescorted, John, not being used to possessing a mobile phone, forgot to take it out with him:

I had my sister phoning me every few minutes, Colin calling every 5 minutes. When I got back and noticed my phone on the side and saw the hundreds of messages, "there is still time to save yourself" and that, I was like, from what? What have I done?

Whilst in prison, John had not been accustomed to his social network having to be concerned about where he was, as he lived in close proximity to his friends. This followed him through the prison gates, as his lack of understanding and inexperience of others around him showing concern, meant that he did not think to stay in contact with them in order to alleviate their fears of him living in freedom. John believed that if he did not have the help, support, and companionship of his

friends, he would not have been able to cope with the adjustment required to be successfully integrated in society, stating, 'I would have strung myself up by now'.

This was also true for Jon who stated that without the help and support of his friends, he, too, would have been in a worse position:

I wouldn't have felt as positive as I am now. I tell you what I wouldn't have done. I wouldn't have stopped that last relapse as quick as I did. I wouldn't have nipped it in the bud as quick as I did because I did nip it pretty damn sharpish, and I got back on my feet pretty damn quick. So yes, I probably wouldn't have done it as rapidly as I did... a key factor in my pulling my finger out. Too much to lose here.

Jon refers to his 'relapse', which consisted of returning to alcohol to alleviate the pains of re-entry. This acted as a coping mechanism as it enabled him to withdraw from society and provided a respite from the difficulties he was facing. However, through the support of his social circle, Jon realised that this method of coping was not indicative of successful re-entry. Through stating 'too much to lose' he recognised the losses he could incur if he continued to drink alcohol. It is to the pain of 'temptation' (Durnescu, 2019: 1493) of addictions that this chapter now turns.

## **Drugs and Alcohol**

Only a small number of the men reported issues relating to drugs and alcohol, however, Bernard's experience shaped his re-entry journey:

I have known a few guys that have gone to prison, and they have said it's helped us come off drink and drugs but when you come back out, same area, same people. When I came out of rehab this time, I had the support. Last time they threw me out and put me back in the same area. And this time now...New beginning, new place. If I didn't have that when I came out, I wouldn't be sitting here talking to you.

Bernard's account of his past drug and alcohol infused lifestyle linked with changes he witnessed and also how these had happened over time:

Perfect example of that is a couple of weeks ago I went back, and when I did I went to the area and went to all the houses where I used to take drugs and when I went to the area on the way up on the train, I could tell you which house certain people would be in and who would be in certain bedrooms, who is going to be at that house. There are about 5 houses where everyone congregates in and when we got there, the 8 months that I was away, I went back, and it was exactly the same. Same person arguing, same person about the same thing and I was supposed to spend the weekend up there and I spent a couple of hours and jumped back on the train. Like a time-warp.

A number of the men discussed how their time in prison had felt that they were stuck in a time warp, that they had been statically living their lives, whilst the world around them had moved on, however, Bernard's account reflects the opposite. Whilst in prison he had been making changes in his life that meant once released he was now the 'outsider'. He had moved on, yet his previous associates had been the ones who were stuck in the 'time warp'. Jon also found that his new sober identity meant that he could not go back to live with his mother, as she was also an alcoholic. Like Bernard, Jon did not want to be drawn back into the lifestyle he had prior to imprisonment.

As discussed above, Jon had gained sobriety whilst in prison, yet his mother had not. Like Bernard's experience, Jon's mother had been stuck in the time warp whilst Jon progressed with his life. Although having contact with family can increase the chances of successful re-entry, for Jon and Bernard, the opposite was true. In this instance, prison time, had been of benefit to them, helping them

abstain from their addictions. The danger to their new identities became present once released, as they were continually faced with 'temptations' (Durnescu, 2019: 1493) from their accommodation, friends and family, and the pressures and pains of re-entry.

## **Education, Training and Employment**

Pogrebin et al. (2014: 394) argued that 'one of the greatest needs for persons leaving prison and returning to their communities is immediate employment', however gaining employment was not of immediate concern (La Vigne: 2008) for the men, a number attributing this to their age. They did, however, have thoughts and ideas about the type of employment they would like to do, their ability to undertake it, and the broader reaction to their applications for jobs. This included a number of potential 'community and institutional barriers' (La Vigne: 2008: 16) which could be faced when considering gaining employment. One of the main barriers for Bernard was the stigma associated with imprisonment:

For a start you are at the back of queue. To get a good decent job, you might be a brain scientist, but you are stamped as a prisoner, you don't even apply.

Clifford experienced the stamp of imprisonment first-hand when working as a volunteer in a charity shop, he found the staff to be less than accepting, 'you know, like a bit disrespectful, you know what I mean, towards you because you are a convict'.

Further to Clifford's experience of stigma, the anticipated stigma that the men believed they would encounter, prevented them from even contemplating applying for certain 'decent' jobs, as Bernard stated:

I think it depends what job it is. It depends. There are some jobs, a building site, they wouldn't give a damn because half of them will be ex-prisoners anyway. If you were to go for a job where it comes to money and anything like that, going for a job in a jeweller's shop, you aren't getting it.

Bernard did not rule out gaining employment but felt that the fact he had been in prison, and the resulting stigma associated with his status as once convicted, would prevent him gaining specific roles, 'I know that I'm intelligent enough to do a lot of jobs, I know that... but if I wanted a job I couldn't because I think it does hold you back. It does. A criminal record does hold you back'.

It was not only the perceived stigma associated with gaining employment which steered the men away from applying for positions, but also their lack of confidence in their own abilities to undertake a role. When asked if he thought his age was associated with this, David stated, 'Yes, a little bit but I suffer with anxiety anyway. I'm a little bit conscious'. Clifford also discussed how his mental health issues impacted on his expectations for working:

For me, I don't think I can do a full-time job. I just can't do it. I just, I find it a struggle. There are people doing jobs like that, working like 5 days a week and to me, I can't get my head around it properly. I couldn't do it. I couldn't mentally do it.

Clifford explained that due to the time he served in prison, that he had become accustomed to being in his cell for long periods of the day. This structure stayed

with him once released, persuading him that he could not carry out a conventional 9-5 role:

You know when you have been in jail a long time like that or you are banged up for hours and hours every day, to go out grafting, I can't get my head around it.

Although he did work whilst incarcerated, he explained that his working day did not replicate what would be expected of him outside the prison walls:

I might have cleaned the landing or put some tea bags or sugar in a bag for the prisoners you know what I mean. Then you go back for your dinner, you have a kip, I got used to that.

Unlike Clifford, David was positive about finding a job:

I've still got plenty of time in me, it's just convincing the employers that you know, I can do it. I'm not in the ground yet.

Although David was classed as old within the criminal justice system, at aged 56 he felt that he had to prove he was capable of working. However, being almost two decades older, George felt the opposite, 'I don't want to work. I'm 75, you've no chance'. Bernard also highlighted that a combination of age and a criminal conviction could play an important role when looking for employment, 'who the hell is going to give an ex-con a job at 50 years old when there are school leavers out there with qualifications and everything?'. His perception of his inability to compete against younger, more qualified people proved to be more of a barrier to re-entry, than his age and educational achievements (Moore and Tangney, 2017). Even if qualifications were gained, Paul found that a lack of experience created a further barrier to gaining employment:

I did get on the forklift truck one [a training course] but then when I put in for a job they go on experience. It's not just the qualification, bit of a Catch 22.

Paul's experience highlighted that imprisonment can negatively impact the life course, removing the stabilising factors such as employment, leaving gaps in the men's employment history, that some find difficult to explain. Having to disclose their criminal past when applying for employment increased the pains of goal failure (Nugent and Schinkel, 2016) as the stigma of a criminal conviction combined with advanced age lowered the chances of gaining employment. The issues relating to disclosing a criminal background will be further discussed in Chapter 7.

When contemplating employment, Alf drew upon his role before entering prison. He discussed his love of working in the railway signal boxes. His past employment weighed heavily on him, as the realisation of how much he, and the world around him, had changed since entering prison became part of his re-entry journey. Alf stated, 'it's not my life anymore'. The loss of purpose gained from his employment, led him to contemplate his loss of identity, which will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

Paul recognised that a further barrier, over and above age and lack of experience, was his offence:

There are a lot of restrictions on sex offenders, can't work here, under 18s etc. that's near enough all-day time jobs.

Further to the legal restrictions, Paul also felt that the stigma attached to offences of a sexual nature inhibited his chances of gaining employment:

Mainstream offences, probably easier to get a job but for sex offenders no. There's a stigma to it and I know that myself because before this had happened, I would probably think the same.

The lack of opportunity for some, the lack of experience for others, and the stigma attached to a prison sentence, and a particular offence, affected all the men in their search for employment. Without the benefit of a stable income, a number of the men found navigating the financial world another barrier to re-entry, a point to which this chapter will now turn.

### **Finances, Benefits and Debt**

La Vigne et al. (2008) argued that released prisoners should be given enough money to be able to buy necessities during the first few days following release. Robert did not believe that he had experienced this, stating, 'I got taken down to reception; given me £46 and they shut the door. I did have £46 which only helped to buy deodorant with, I smell nice'. Although the discharge grant has been increased by £30 since Robert was released, this is the first increase in over twenty years (NACRO, 2021) and it remains unsubstantial to assist with the immediate needs on release.

Further to Robert's issues with initial release, John felt ill-prepared for navigating the financial world during re-entry:

They never showed you though how to deal with bills. They talked about bills but when you are not actually paying any, there is a different lifestyle all together other than when you are paying them. Now I've got direct

debits set up but at first when I used to get my money, I would draw it out because I had been one of them, but I don't do that now. I just leave it in the bank.

When first released John handled his money as he would have done prior to imprisonment as this was his only experience of handling physical notes and coins. No physical money is exchanged whilst in prison, prisoners do not have to pay bills, navigate online banking, or worry how they will pay for their basic amenities. Not having the strain of money worries can impact on re-entry as a reliance on the basic necessities being provided in prison can leave the men unprepared for the financial world outside the gates. John stated:

When I first got a two-pound coin in a shop I thought they had given me foreign money, and little 5p's! Because I had never seen one, it was bizarre.

After serving a 33-year sentence, John found dealing with money was one of the most debilitating adjustments he had to make. He continually returned to the issues he had with bills, mainly discussing paying them by direct debit and getting into arrears. This was a combination of his inexperience with handling money, and his lack of knowledge surrounding a paperless society. He had been used to trading tangible commodities in prison, not paying with monetary currency. The adjustment needed took time for John:

I mean for a while I wasn't coping with the money; everything was going out in bills. Electric, water, phone, you don't realise how expensive life can be until you experience it for yourself.

Following imprisonment, the adjustment that John had to make was to learn how to navigate the financial system of paying bills and buying basic amenities.

However, Jon had been accustomed to these financial obligations prior to imprisonment, for him, he had to adjust to an unknown system. Jon stated that before prison he was financially stable, 'owned my own house, had mortgages, bought and sold houses, rented houses privately', but he had never experienced the benefits system, 'no knowledge of that whatsoever so all of a sudden, I am out of my comfort zone'. He had to navigate a loss in earnings and learn how to budget his now reduced income:

All of a sudden, I'm not earning £30k a year anymore. I don't have an ex-partner who is a solicitor anymore who has the same income as me coming in and living in a nice house etc. My world has changed completely. I am now an ex-con looking for help which was quite a strange scenario to be in for me.

Jon was accustomed to living a financially stable lifestyle and discussed how at times he did dwell on his past, becoming jealous of the lifestyle his previous income brought him. However, he did state that having a good income had afforded him the ability to incur 'crippling' debt, which was 'spiralling out of control'. He acknowledged that having to start again and being offered advice on how to handle his money, was a positive experience, 'there is more money in my bank account now than there was when I was earning £30k a year. How mad is that?'. Both John and Jon had to learn new ways of navigating money and financial obligations, but in opposing ways. John had to learn how to live with money, and Jon had to learn to live without it.

Bernard found that following imprisonment, he could deal with, and spend his money on more beneficial commodities than he did prior to imprisonment:

Different mind-set. It's a reality check. It's like a weird thing. I could go to the bank now and draw £100 out and appreciate spending that money which at one time, forget that the £100 would be in there anyway, but at one time that £100 would be out before I've taken it out of the cashpoint machine, I'm on the phone to a dealer. Can I have a score? Then I'm in the off-licence and before I reach back home, £200 has gone. Now I'm taking that money and going to Iceland or Home Bargains and buying my groceries, going home making sure I have my teabags and milk.

Bernard had experienced the re-entry journey following a previous prison sentence, but at a younger age, his priorities had lay elsewhere. Being older during his most recent release meant that he could see the benefit of a different lifestyle and had to make the adjustments needed for his new way of living.

The men had to adjust to handling and budgeting money, but also the process of claiming benefits had changed. Clifford stated:

When I went to the job centre you know, because at one time you get your little giro through the post, and you have a card and even the woman who was working there said "welcome to the real world" because it was like completely different now.

Clifford had not been in the 'real world' for almost three decades, making his adjustment to processes that many may see as mundane, more difficult to undertake. Adjusting financially had been a difficult task for John, a daunting, but positive step for Jon and Bernard, a reminder of his extensive length of time in prison for Clifford, but for Alf, being financially stable acted as a method of desistance. Alf had surrounded himself with material goods, which acted as an anchor to his post-prison reality. He did not want to lose the sense of accomplishment he felt by obtaining these items, goods that he had been deprived of in prison. Alf stated, 'who would want to go back in prison because that would

be all gone?'. This position impacted on his attitude to being recalled to prison, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

## **Health**

When talking about their time in prison, very few of the men discussed their physical health, but when discussions surrounded re-entry, health issues became more prominent. Anthony had severe mobility issues, so much so, that instead of being given his train or bus token when released, the prison staff drove him to the accommodation he had been allocated. Help and support had since been made available, but not to the level Anthony stated that he needed, 'I need more help, keep falling all the time. My balance has gone'.

Alf was grateful for his time in prison as like Jon and Bernard, he too was able to abstain from drinking alcohol, however, he was not allowed to have a flu jab (which he reported as having every year) in prison which led to him contacting an illness which lasted for over three months. Senior et al. (2013) highlighted that the health-related support that is available in the community, should also be available in prison, however, Alf did not experience this; he was still getting over the illness when he was released, which impacted on his first few days following incarceration. Once released, he was able to register with a doctor, and the first thing he did following registration was get his flu jab.

The prison lifestyle had negatively impacted on John when he was released. He stated:

Just having a blooming injection reminds me of self-harming, just a little sharp needle. Petrified of needles me but I need to go and get this flu jab

done and I can't go through without it. Can't breathe otherwise and I'm on a nebuliser and everything.

John did not realise how much his respiratory health had been impacted whilst in prison as he did not have to travel very far, 'you go to the landing if you are lucky', but once released, he found it difficult to travel any sort of distance, 'I'm finding it a struggle walking around at the moment because it's all hills'. Adjusting to the change in his daily routine, from walking several meters, to having to walk around a town to attend appointments proved to be a difficult task.

George also struggled with getting around, 'I can hardly even walk and I'm walking with a stick. I've got bad legs, but I made it up town. I fell a couple of times'. Unlike John who was receiving help with his health problems, George found that although the staff in the AP were aware of his impairment, he stated 'are they doing anything about it? No. not a thing'. When discussing trying to get to the Doctors, George recalled how difficult he was finding the journey, 'I've got sticks but it's a damn nuisance'. George's difficulties with his legs began in prison, and his diabetes became more severe following his difficulties with walking. This impacted on his re-entry process as he could not have his legs operated on until his diabetic levels reduced. He faced a Catch 22 situation, which began whilst incarcerated, and followed him through the gates. Whilst in prison, not having to travel any sort of distance, he was able to cope without any walking aids. Once released, his condition deteriorated, and he then had to walk with a stick. Receiving the stick from the AP was the only support he had so far received.

The men reported some physical ailments, but issues relating to mental health, which are woven through their accounts of their experiences, were also prevalent

once released. David was released twice following two different prison sentences and he encountered different experiences. When discussing the difference between coming out the first time and the second time, he stated how he felt:

Anxiety or the fact of when you go out in an open space after about 20 minutes it gets smaller and smaller, and everyone is crowding around you. They are not but the voices get louder and louder I suppose that's all part of the anxiety of it.

He did not experience this when he came out after 4 years but did have it after coming out after 10 months:

First time, the adjustment I think because I wasn't expecting it because I didn't realise it would affect me that much. This time not so much because I was expecting it but also the anxiety part of it. I wasn't expecting that either but that is the thing I find most difficult because there are a few things that I want to do but can't do it. I can nip on the train or bus or something. I will go to the bus stop or train station and turn back and come back here. That's holding me back a bit. I come back here and I'm ringing wet with sweat because of panicking and stuff. As long as I stay in a little area, I know that if it gets too much it will only take me five minutes to get back.

David's account highlights how debilitating transitioning from the prison environment to the outside world can be. He had been so accustomed to his lifestyle in prison, that now faced with the opportunity to live in freedom, he could not experience the benefits of this due to the pains of 'radical openness' (Martin, 2018: 673) which proved too much for him to comprehend. The enormity of this change led David to revert back to his prison lifestyle, remaining in one specific place for the majority of the day, rather than venturing further afield where he could connect with other people and strive to become a fully immersed member part of society. Reaching the third stage of re-entry as identified by Moore (2011)

not only meant navigating the physical space, but also the online arena. The difficulties of navigating this technological world will now be discussed.

## **Technology**

Issues relating to technological deprivation in the re-entry process, had impacted on the men's ability to find accommodation, to look for available employment, to manage bills and to communicate with others. Whilst in prison, in addition to the older men being deprived of contact with the real world, they were denied access to the virtual world (Reisdorf and Jewkes, 2016). The lack of access to the internet left them woefully unprepared for the reliance upon the internet that they face when released.

The House of Commons Justice Committee (2013: 41) argued that 'older prisoners struggle to even buy food from a shop, let alone access the internet', a finding that resonated with a number of the men's accounts of technological deprivation. Clifford stated, 'because you're not allowed anything like that in prison you know. So, you get stifled that way, it's like I got caught in 1987, so I came out a 1987 person'. Clifford used the term 'time warp' to describe being stuck in his past but being physically in the present. John also found that a lack of internet access in prison created a barrier once released, 'although you can do a computer course, you can send an email to someone else in the room. There is only so much they are prepared to teach you'. All the men had realised quite quickly that they had to adapt to new technologies if they wanted to successfully (re) integrate into society, however, even when they were willing to embrace this challenge, they were still faced with barriers. John had to rely on a hand me down phone from his sister,

and although grateful, he found that he 'had to miss out on a lot of technology in that respect' because the older phone could not download the apps he wanted. For him, it was not his lack of knowledge surrounding mobile phones, as he had seen illegal phones whilst in prison, it was his lack of disposable income that proved to be the barrier to navigating the technological world. Paul also had knowledge of mobile phones whilst in prison, but unlike John, he had not seen them first-hand, 'you saw bits of it on TV but you never used it, never seen it'.

For a number of the men, their 'digital inequality', led to feelings of 'social inequality' (Reisdorf and Rikard, 2018: 1278). Clifford described his only experience of modern forms of technology from his 'time':

Because technology moves on. I didn't know anything about mobile phones and things like that. When I first went to prison in 1987, it was like a brick thing.

Although a number of the men had used various forms of technology before their prison sentences, this still did not prepare them for the mass reliance on being able to navigate a technologically dependant world on release. The lack of technological ability led to social injustice as Reisdorf and Rikard (2018) argued that following the ruling from the United Nations (2011) that access to the internet is a human right, that it is paramount to successful re-entry and is 'fundamental to full participation in society, rather than a luxury'. Although Alf had access to the internet in the AP, he stated 'I need someone to help me', due to his lack of knowledge surrounding accessing the online housing application forms. As Moses (2007: 345) argued, it is a matter of 'public responsibility' to ensure that older

people are included and are able to participate in society, and this lack of support with his online applications led to social injustice.

## **Conclusion**

Although the majority of the men were relieved to be free of the grip of imprisonment, they encountered many barriers along the path of their re-entry journey, finding the initial release overwhelming (Kitson-Boyce et al., 2019). Maschi and Koskinen (2015) describe this time as a recovery process; however, the men's words do not reflect an experience of healing, but more of a test of endurance. It is evident from the men's experiences that they were ill-prepared for the reality of the society they were entering, and the internal and external barriers they had to face. Not only had they undergone a number of personal changes, but they were faced with a society they did not recognise. This left the once convicted men to adjust to an unrecognisable landscape, albeit a society infused with the memories and experiences of their past lives. The external changes witnessed by the men were influenced by their internal ways of dealing with the realities they had come from. They had to make changes within themselves in order to adjust to a faster way of living, a different pace of life. This can be especially difficult, not only due the inexperience of it, but also combined with older age, where change can be difficult to negotiate, making successful re-entry harder to achieve.

This chapter considered the men's experiences within the pathways to successful resettlement. It highlighted that finding suitable accommodation was a fraught task, and at the time of being interviewed a number of the men were still searching

for a stable home. A social justice perspective would argue that the men should have had access to suitable accommodation on release, however, the barriers in place meant that for a number of the men, this was not the case. Family connections were also a source of pain in re-entry. Although it has been long established that those strong social connections with family and friends are essential in the re-entry process, assisting in reducing recidivism, increasing social capital, gaining employment, and helping with mental health issues (Maschi et al., 2014; Markson et al., 2015; Mowen, Stansfield, and Boman, 2019), the issues surrounding family connections were contentious. For a number of the men, these stabilising factors could not be achieved through social and familial relationships, hindering their chances of successful re-entry. The men's accounts have shown that the notion of family, sometimes proved to be more of a barrier to re-entry, than a support mechanism to aid in successful (re) integration, not only due to their disconnection and a lack of support, but also because of enhanced connections and offers of support.

This chapter has begun to consider issues surrounding support during re-entry, and how the levels of support impacted on the chances of being successful re-entered. All the men were under supervision in the community and had a licence to adhere to, and a number of them were subject to the sex offender register, for some, this was for the remainder of their lives. The following chapter will consider the implications of increased supervision, and how this impacted on the men's re-entry journeys. It will focus on the structural barriers faced by the men and will consider how their experiences had been impacted on by the level of the supervision they were living under.

## Chapter 6: 'Life is a Recall Waiting to Happen'

### Introduction

The men's re-entry experience was not shaped by the men alone, it was moulded by the external barriers discussed in Chapter 5, internal thought processes, which will be discussed in Chapter 7, and the structural bureaucracies of the criminal justice system (Halushka, 2020). As per the regulations brought about by the Offender Rehabilitation Act (2014) all the men were under a form of supervision in the community. The supervision was provided by different bodies, the NPS, CRCs and charities; the main charity discussed by the men being the Assisted Community Engagement (ACE)<sup>25</sup> Project. Although each body projected similar aims, 'protect the public by the effective rehabilitation of high risk offenders, by tackling the causes of offending and enabling offenders to turn their lives around' (National Probation Service, 2019); 'to change lives for the better by reducing re-offending and risk of harm and improving the quality of life of those under our supervision' (CRC Sodexo, 2019); and 'giving ex-offenders chances, choices and opportunities to build a better life' (ACE Project, 2019), the way in which the fulfilment of these aims was approached, shaped the re-entry experiences for the men. The aims of the NPS and the CRCs surrounded change, to change the men in order to make them better people in society. This would suggest that their time spent in prison had not assisted in their rehabilitation, they were unfinished, and were still in need of changing when they were released. The Ace Project did not

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<sup>25</sup> The ACE project is a charity which provides support to once convicted men when they leave prison and begin the re-entry process.

look to impose changes, but was more benefit focused, aiming to provide ‘chances, choices and opportunities’ (ACE Project, 2019). The impacts of this distinction were evident in the men’s accounts of supervision and support following imprisonment.

This chapter will discuss how a state of ‘mass supervision’ (McNeill, 2019b: 207), a lack of supervision, and the wrong type of supervision (Cracknell, 2020) can shape the re-entry experiences of the older, once convicted men. The chapter will begin by discussing the variations experienced by the men when a juxtaposition, and at times, a combination of support and surveillance were experienced. It will then highlight the impacts that the different bodies had on the men’s re-entry experience, beginning with a discussion of the pains associated with supervision, and as not all the experiences were negative, it will then discuss the benefits that being under supervision following imprisonment can have. The second part of this chapter will consider the implications of constant surveillance and the impact this can have on being viewed as the ‘usual suspects’ (Hayes, 2015: 97) and the fear of recall to prison. The men’s experiences of re-entry were greatly shaped by the way in which they were supported and supervised following release; the greatest impact being influenced by those who governed them. It is to this consideration that this chapter now turns.

## **The Governance of Re-entry**

Vincent (1883: 329) argued that:

Above all things... a person taking part in work among discharged prisoners must throw all the sympathy in his nature into his intercourse with them.

He must listen to their several histories – strongly infused though many of them may be with falsehood – and must be a man to whom they will open their hearts, and who will study the peculiarities of each case.

Vincent's (1883) account of how the role of a supervisor should be undertaken, was not a description that the men could relate to. Mark found that although the aims of all three support agencies were partially aligned in their goals to provide a better life for those in their care, their approach was not. Mark was supervised by Shelter who formed part of the Lancashire and Cumbria CRC. Mark had to attend an Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) interview to make a claim for financial support. In his words he had been sent to the ACE Project charity by his probation worker to 'give me something to do'. Whilst there, he was advised that the project workers could help him with his claim and attend the interview to provide support. Mark stated:

I wanted to go with them, but I also didn't want to move off from somebody who I'd first started with... In a sense, I wanted to stay with Shelter, so I goes back to Shelter, and they said they "can't come to the ESA with you for the medical, the mentor outreach who you haven't met yet will", I said "that's no bloody good, I'll go with ACE", and this caused a whole massive stink. Between probation, Shelter and ACE, because of course Shelter get paid for it, ACE doesn't. It shouldn't have anything to do with who gets paid, what it should be to do with, is what's best for me, that's what they are there for.

Mark continued:

I'm being told I can't use ACE, I must use the mentor, I meet the mentor, and said "are you coming to this ESA thing?", "It won't be me". "Why not?", "We're not allowed to come outside the office and besides, all we're doing is giving you someone to drive you there". I don't even think that's policy, somethings gone on, whether it's just that I've got their backs up because I've gone to ACE, is it as petty as that? If they're supposed to be my mentor, fucking right they should be speaking for me. "You will get one of the

volunteers, and they will drive you, that's it" so I said, "well fuck off then, I'm going with ACE". The very next day, I got dropped by Shelter.

One of the issues highlighted by Mark's account refers to the specific support he needed:

I wanted someone to come to the medical with me. I didn't want somebody to come just to get me to the medical, I didn't want somebody to just sit down and hold my hand, I wanted somebody to recognise when I wasn't saying what I needed to say and offer me the support that I needed.

Mark was concerned that there were certain buzz words that were required to fulfil the tick box style interview for ESA and if he was not aware of them, his claim might be rejected. He found that by a member of the ACE Project accompanying him in the interview, they were able to ensure these words were used. Mark provided an example:

I said, "I have to go to my sons for a shower", he [member of the ACE Project] pipes up with the word "supervised". The word supervised is very very important in those questions, that is one of the things. That word is one that needs to be ticked, and he [member of the ACE Project] made sure of that. And he also made sure of a few others and used the correct key word and got that across.

Mark was awarded his claim for financial support; however, he reflected on the possible consequences if he had stayed with the CRC, with only the offer of transport available to him:

I would have answered things wrong because they said "how far can you walk?", "well I've walked from Aldi, it nearly fucking killed me", but you can't say that to them, what you've got to do is say "I walked less than 10 yards and had to stop, then I walked another 10 yards, and then by the time got here I was absolutely fucking exhausted".

If Mark had made the decision to stay with the CRC allocated to him and had not been advised to attend the charity by his probation officer, the outcome could have been the difference between an accepted and a rejected claim, which, if rejected, would have had a significant negative impact on him being financially supported, decreasing his chances of successful re-entry. His account aligns with the pain of 'individual responsibility' (Shammas, 2014: 117) as the broader structure of the CRC could have limited the reach of the successful outcome.

Jon also encountered support from the ACE Project with his ESA interview, as one of the workers provided him with a letter to help support his claim. Without this, Jon was sure that he would not have been able to manage the interview on his own:

I would have had to go to the interview and gleaned my case as best as I could, but without the letter from the Ace Project, I would probably not be where I am now. I still have the letter at home. Without that letter, I am confident that I wouldn't have been put on a work-related activity group which is where I am now, and where I needed to be.

Jon's account highlights that again, the charity provided a supportive service to the once convicted men, taking the time, and seemingly going the extra mile in comparison to the CRC. This help and support reduced the pain of 'individual responsibility' (Shammas, 2014: 117) as the charity made attaining a successful outcome a reality. Charitable support in re-entry was invaluable to a number of the men, as Paul stated, 'If I didn't have these guys, I would probably be, I don't think I'd be here. I'd probably be in prison'. Anthony concurred with this, stating that he too felt that he would be back in prison without charitable support. This

was also felt by Bernard, 'I'd be back. I would go back there. I do try my hardest not to, but if I didn't have this help, I would be back within 2-3 months'.

Clifford found charitable support beneficial, stating 'God bless them'. The length of time that he had served meant that this support was crucial to his re-entry journey. When asked what his life would have been like without this support, he stated:

It's not worth thinking about really, is it? When I first came out, I had nothing...I needed that support. After all those years, I really needed it.

Jon also found that the charity provided the support he needed, but he went one step further, stating that his life depended on it, 'the support is here. It's key and paramount to my survival'.

The support from charities restored Bernard's faith in people:

These places show you that there is still life out there. It might have changed but there are still people there to talk to you and give you something and an agenda for something for you to do and make a difference.

The second point raised through Marks experience is that once he had made the decision to take the support provided through the charity, he was subsequently 'dropped' by the CRC. The only explanation for this was provided by text message:

I was dropped by text, not face to face. The photo ID wasn't resolved, the dentist thing wasn't resolved. I sent a text saying, "how come you have dropped me, we still have this photo ID". I know you can't read the huff in a text, but the response was, "just ring the dentist, here's the number". That's not the fucking point, the whole reason for going to them was that I can't afford to do it on that [referring to ringing from his mobile phone].

During his interview Mark provided the text on his mobile phone. It read:

“Hi Mark, just to let you know that your case with Shelter<sup>26</sup> [part of the CRC] has now been closed, and all actions on original referral have been completed, best wishes for the future”.

Mark commented, ‘there’s only one way that reads to me, and that’s fuck off’.

Mark being let go via text, highlights the lack of a person-centred approach. No final meeting was held, no sit-down discussion, no one-to-one meeting to ensure his needs had been met, just a faceless rejection. Although he was able to navigate the use of text messages, not all the men were in this position due to their age and lack of technological ability. Mark’s account highlights that he endured the pain of ‘confusion’ (Shammas, 2014: 110) as no explanation for the cessation of support was offered.

To reduce the pain of confusion, Mark tried to make sense of his situation, concluding that his interactions with the Ace Project had directly impacted on Shelter’s decision:

It seems like it is a knock-on effect of my interactions with Ace, that’s how I feel because at each point where Shelter kicked back, was after something had been said [about ACE]. [His probation worker], got dragged over the coals for it [referring him to ACE] because Shelter weren’t going to get paid, it’s disgusting.

The third point raised by Mark’s account is that of the legitimacy of payment by results. The issues surrounding this and commodifying the pains of re-entry (Carr and Robinson, 2021) will be further considered in Chapter 8. Stuart was also under

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<sup>26</sup> Although Shelter is a charitable organisation, they formed part of the privately contacted CRC.

the supervision of a CRC. He felt that the financial implications of being supervised by an organisation who were paid for their support impacted on the length and level of supervision he received. He noted that, 'it's almost like they don't want to let go, why? Is that because of the money? Because it's beginning to look like it is'. Stuart was under supervision by electronic tag, and he felt that the longer he had the tag, the more money would be made from him. His feelings of being commodified led to a distrust in the system. If he distrusted the system, and those working within it, he was more likely not to engage with their services, which could have a negative impact on his re-entry journey (Taxman, 2012).

The way the men viewed the purpose of the NPS, the CRCs and charities related to their interactions with them, and in turn their experiences of re-entry. It is to this point that this chapter now turns.

### **Impacts of Supervision**

The accounts of support discussed by the men led to two distinctive paths, supervision was undertaken by the NPS and the CRCs, and support was offered by the charities. Of the two, charity support was described as being the most beneficial in the men's re-entry experience, the supervision of meetings and their dealings with the NPS and the CRCs, proved to be more of a barrier to re-entry.

Bernard could not see the purpose of his meetings with his probation officer:

Just go in there and sit like I'm sitting talking to you and they ask silly questions. "What are you planning on doing? Are you getting a job?" You just say "yes", and that's a tick box done. Once he's happy, I'm happy. "Come next week at such a time" and that's it.

Bernard highlighted that for him, the meetings were a waste of his time, and the probation officer was, as McNeill (2019b: 220) described, 'a cog in a wasteful machine'. He noted that, 'you tell them yes, but to be honest whatever they ask me, I say yes, just to get out'. This highlights that like Stuart, Bernard did not trust his probation officer, or respect the work they did, believing that the discussions during the meetings were fruitless. He questioned the relevance of their questions and highlighted how easy it was to tell them what they needed to hear in order to tick their boxes. This is reminiscent of the 'The Blankfaced officers of the Malopticon' described by McNeill (2019b: 224) as the probation officers 'stare at the supervisee, but they do not see him or her at all; their gaze fails to individualize him or to discern him'. Similar to older prisoners not truly being 'seen' in prison and being perceived as being 'old and quiet' (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2004: v), Mark, Bernard and Stuart all felt that they could not be distinguished from any other once convicted man, and their individual circumstances, including their age, were being overlooked. Akin to McNeill's (2019b: 220) discussion surrounding probation officers being 'a cog in a wasteful machine' Stuart found that:

You're not looking at my risk, you're not looking at me as an individual, you're using the same blanket cover that you apply to everything and apply it to me.

Mark also found an absence of an individual tailored approach, experiencing a one size fits all process:

The new thing now is we need to address your needs. But the problem with that is it's just a box-ticking exercise. There's no reality behind it, there's nothing. They have a sheet with goals on, it is pre-printed, so it's not your plan, what it is, is, this is objective one for *them*, objective two for *them*, objective three, it might include three or four things on the plan, get him

on the dole, any housing benefit needs doing, things like that, but then they go, “we gave him the phone to get in touch with housing benefit”, so that’s a tick, it’s just that they have done their bit, tick. I knew that some of the Shelter people were just going through the motions.

Mark’s account highlights that he felt that the priorities of the supervisors where not designed to help and support him to increase his chances of successful re-entry, they were not unique to his situation, they were part of a target-meeting exercise within which those undertaking them were ‘going through the motions’. These types of interactions do not foster the ‘hope and motivation’ for the future that Nugent and Schinkel (2016: 573) found were possible through positive interactions with support workers.

The deindividualization through a tick-box approach was also experienced by Bernard:

They might get you a place in a hostel and that’s it, his job is done. “You come in to see me every week”, tick that box. “I’ve got you the hostel”, tick that box. You’ve got to sort your own social out and everything. Every box to tick is ticked and it’s none of his business anymore. You haven’t seen what I have seen by being in there.

Bernard felt that his experiences of imprisonment, and the impact this has on re-entry, could not be understood until they had been lived. He needed support from those who could understand what he had been through, not someone who was paid by results, who could capitalise on his suffering. Stuart also expressed his thoughts surrounding those providing supervision never having experienced life in prison:

If you want to clean the justice system up, my suggestion is that you give everyone associated with the justice system, and that includes solicitors,

barristers, prison officers, probation officers, and whoever else is in that realm of work, everybody who's involved should experience having the door slammed in your face because only then, and having to spend the night, only then will you appreciate what it does mentally to an individual.

If all those identified by Stuart were to experience a night in a prison cell, he believed that:

They will be less likely to dish out punishments that they weren't prepared to accept themselves, and that, I think would make everybody more understanding, and use the last resort last, not first.

By understanding the pains of imprisonment, the pains of re-entry could be better appreciated, and the men's experiences could be better understood and responded to. This chapter will now consider these pains of re-entry in relation to supervision.

### **The Pains of Supervision**

David endured the 'pains of probation' (Durnescu, 2011: 530) however, he did not see his experience as such:

There is no skin off my nose, especially as it's just a year. It's not restricting me that much for me to kick up a stink or get recalled because of it or if there's an appointment I have to go to, then I make sure I go to it. Not that I'd rather be sitting there picking my nose and going over it all again.

David's account aligns with two of the 'pains of probation' discussed by Durnescu (2011: 530), the 'deprivation of autonomy' (2011: 534) in the way that he had to attend set appointments, and also the 'forced return to the offence' (2011: 537), as he had to 'go over it all again'. Although David did not view his experiences as being painful, for Stuart, the pain of probation through the discussion about his

offence was amplified by supervision. He asked, 'how can you forget when they won't let you forget?'. The role of supervision acted as a constant reminder that the men were still under the control of the State. Although they had been released from one form of confinement, they were now living in a hybrid world, there were no physical bars, yet there were barriers in place which they could not pass.

When asked if being under supervision made him feel restricted, Clifford responded:

Of course, yes. I am restricted, of course yes. If I want to go off anywhere, I have got to tell them and ask permission. I can't go abroad or anything like that. I think it's unfair that, ok, 10 years or something like that say, as long as you are behaving yourself, you know what I mean, blooming heck. It's forever, isn't it? That's a bit extreme.

His life licence meant that Clifford was always living with the 'prospect of indefinite recall' (Harris, Edgar and Webster, 2020: 334), which he found to be excessive.

When asked if lifelong supervision influenced his chances of successful re-entry, he stated:

Yes, it's a pain in the neck to be honest with you. You know, having to keep going on about probation and all that lot, you know because you are not really living your life. They want to back off a bit if you're on a life licence. It's like, give it a rest like. You know what I mean? I have been in jail twenty-seven years, you know, just leave me alone please.

Clifford's account of repeated visits to probation is described by Durnescu (2011: 534) as the second identified pain of probation, the 'pain of reorganising the daily routine around the sanction'. This was also experienced by David through going to his probation meetings:

Going to probation is a reminder, so again, society isn't allowing you to move on, it's keeping you in exactly that same position. How can you grow when they won't let you grow? How can you forget when they won't let you forget?

The pain of a 'forced return to the offence' (Durnescu, 2011: 537), was also heightened by being under supervision, for Stuart the reminders of his offence and subsequent imprisonment came in the form of a tag:

Having the tag on was a reminder. I can actually say that it affected me and I don't see how anybody wouldn't be affected when you come out of prison you think that everything's ok but because you've been in that, you've been socialised into that environment, when you come back out into society again and you're on tag, so you're still in prison in a way, and I hated that tag, that tag was just another reminder of prison.

The reminders of his offence meant that Stuart could not fully commit to attempting to be successfully re-entered. The constant supervision he was subject to, proved to be a barrier to successful re-entry:

Doesn't help the individual, it makes you feel worse because you are constantly being prodded and prodded and prodded, and I just wanted to come out of prison and just go, that's part of my life I don't want to see again, but I can't.

Stuart wanted to move on from his criminal past and leave it behind the prison gates, however, the weight of supervision prevented this from happening:

The one thing I think they need to change, not just with me, it's with everybody, when you come out of prison, you've done your time, I know you are still on licence, but you are trying to move on, move onto better things, and probation is prodding you all the time, reminding you what you've done, your like, why do you have to keep having to remind me? How can we move on if you won't allow us to move on? Anyway, "well we have to make sure", I said "no, you're missing the point, how can we move on if you keep dragging us back to where we've been?"

Although Stuart blamed being under imposed supervision for the reminders leading to his powerlessness and inability to move on, David did not need an external source, he looked inwards for his reminders:

I remind myself every day. Because if I didn't do what I did in the first place, I wouldn't have to be told what to do. A lot of people in here [approved premises], the slightest thing and they are up in arms about it. Whereas I have accepted that I am here, and I have to do what I have to do.

Being supervised in an approved premises also induced pain and an inability to move on. George wanted to be free of supervision so that, like Clifford, he could begin to live his life:

I'm not bothered about being out [of prison]. Let me get out. Let me get out of here [approved premises]. You know what I mean. Find a place of my own. Then I start my life again.

Under the restrictions of supervision, George was living his life in 'semi-freedom' (Fitzalan Howard, 2019: 191), a status which he could only shed when he was no longer under the watchful eye of the system.

According to the men's accounts of supervision, they endured multiple pains of post imprisonment. However, as can be seen in the accounts below, supervision had been beneficial for some of them.

### **Benefits of Supervision**

Alf experienced the benefit of being under supervision, 'it doesn't affect me because I know that if you do something again, you are back in. It's a deterrent'.

This shows that being under supervision was beneficial for Alf, as it aided him in

working towards successful re-entry in terms of reducing his risk of further offending. This was in part due to the fear of recall to prison, which could be imposed whilst under supervision. Although much of the literature surrounding re-entry considers desistance from crime to be the main indicator of success, Hallet (2012) argued that this alone is not enough, a change in identity must occur and the third stage of re-entry (Moore, 2011) must be achieved where the men can move on from the stigma of a criminal past.

Jon was also grateful for the deterrent effects of supervision. When reflecting on the impact of being supervised, he stated:

Have I changed from before I went inside to how I am now as a result of being on supervision for twelve months? One hundred percent. One hundred percent, definitely. I just know why I've changed. My attitude has changed. I know trouble will find me with very little difficulty and I know what will happen if it does so I know how to avoid it and I will. I wouldn't have been as disciplined as I am. Even now, I will walk away. Even though I am not under supervision, I will avoid trouble. If I see a gang of lads getting boisterous, I will, much as I can look after myself, not frightened of them. Frightened of what might happen if I react. So yes, have I learnt something from being under supervision, yes, I have. Has it changed me? Yes, it has, for the better.

Even though Jon was no longer under supervision, its presence was lingering and could still be felt in his daily discourses. For him, as Foucault (1995: 201) argued, 'surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action'. Jon furthered his discussion on how the change in him had been ignited:

Direct result of being under supervision. If I had said the wrong thing or turned up at my mums and anything happened, if I had pushed or shoved this guy in Iceland or said the wrong thing, called his wife a smelly old whore, which she was, and the lady behind the till said "that's offensive I'm calling security" who then rings the police. I am painfully aware of my circumstances. I have never lost track of the fact that yes, I've only done

four and a half months, but I could so easily do another, but next time it could be two years. That's the thing about supervision. Next time it's not four and a half months, you do it again it's two years, then five years or whatever. It's not the same again, it's more. And that will never leave me. It just doesn't go and I'm glad it doesn't go as it keeps me safe.

Mark also found the support from the CRC beneficial, but his positive experience did not come from the support they offered, he had learnt how to extract it from them:

I realised that I could use Shelter, I don't care that I word it like that, I just used the fuck out of them. As far as I was concerned, that's what they told me they were there for. I think that if like me, you understand how to use the system, then it's very, very good'.

Although he had stated that Shelter were going through the motions, and the support he received was not tailored to his individual needs, he did find the support he could glean from them to be beneficial:

It has helped me focus on what I need to do because I'm aware that I've got to kind of report to them and also, I'm one that will push them to do, once I recognise that they've got a duty of care to do something, if I need it, I'll make them do it.

Unlike Jon, Mark did not work with his supervision provider, he utilised the contradictions in the system for his benefit.

Further to the benefits of supervision, the benefits of external support from the charities was also prevalent in the men's experiences. Bernard was acutely aware of the benefits of having support. He reflected on his current situation:

Got my family back. In a town where I don't know anyone, don't know where the drugs are, don't know where the prostitution area is, I don't know anything. The only people I am mixing with are the people who drink, who invite you home and give you a cup of tea, can of pop or a sandwich

or something like that. Before I used to wake up, have my breakfast, cornflakes with a bottle of brandy. Everything is just brilliant at the moment. That is what help does.

Although the account of the benefits of supervision were limited to a small number of the men, Jon found that his positive experience with help and support was not limited to one provider:

In prison, no support. Doesn't exist. Post prison in my experience, if I have wanted it, it's been available for me and made clear where to look for it and I owe Probation, Revolution<sup>27</sup> and Ace, particularly Ace to be fair. Gratitude for that, and Foundations<sup>28</sup>. All four.

This combination of organisations proved to be the most beneficial approach. Instead of the agencies working separately and against each other, as was seen in Mark's case, if ownership of the once convicted men could be put to one side, the 'runaround' (Halushka, 2020: 234) of entangled criminal justice agencies and welfare providers could be halted, and the support and supervision providers focused, not on tick box exercises, but on the individual needs of the men, more positive experiences and outcomes, such as Jon's could be achieved.

Jon's positive experience with supervision and support was more fully felt, as he had also experienced life when this was not available. Although having their own home can increase the chances of successful re-entry, this was not the case for Jon. He initially resided in an AP, but after his allocated twelve weeks, the constant supervision was withdrawn, and he moved to his own home:

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<sup>27</sup> Revolution are a property management company.

<sup>28</sup> Foundations are a charity who work with those who have become homeless. They provide support surrounding housing.

The pressure was having to get everything sorted and do everything and the fact that all this painting needs doing and whatever and it's just too much. I've got to move everything physically and it took me 3 trips and looking back on it, pull your finger out John. Ring the lads, they will give you a lift, you'll be alright, but my head fell off. You could have sat there and been as logical as you like, it would not have made a blind bit of difference. No sense was going in. I have bit off more than I can chew. I can't cope. I have money in my bank, there's an off licence, easy. Off I went. September and October were write offs.

For Jon, this move to complete independence and the pressure of having his own home, and an absence of supervision and support, negatively impacted on his re-entry, the rehabilitative work he had undertaken whilst in prison and in the AP, was shattered as he returned to alcohol to alleviate the pains of re-entry. He experienced the pain of 'individual responsibility' (Shammas, 2014: 117) when the support he had been receiving was stopped. This demonstrates that the time-bound restrictions of residing in an AP can increase the pains of re-entry.

The pains of being under supervision led a number of the men to question which institution, the prison, or probation, posed them the greatest difficulty. John stated, 'I wasn't sure whether I wanted to be out'. This chapter will now consider the men's experiences of and thoughts surrounding a return to prison.

## **Better on the Inside?**

### ***The Usual Suspects***

Alf indicated that he would always be a victim of 'increased police oversight' (Hayes, 2015: 97) if a crime had been committed in his area. He noted that, 'they will see me first but if I've not done it I haven't anything to worry about'. Alf felt that due to the label of being once convicted, he would be stigmatized, making

him the first port of call for the police, the usual suspect. This pain of probation (Hayes, 2015) was also a concern for Paul; however, he took part in a voluntary pilot scheme in order to alleviate this pressure. He formed part of a programme where once convicted men were fitted with an electronic tag:

It's voluntary. They asked me about 3-4 months ago now if I would wear it. I think in one way it makes their life easier because they don't see me as much because they can track me and also if anything happens, they look at where I was at the time and if I wasn't near, they don't have to come and see me or anything like that.

An increase in supervision can be positive, alleviating the worry of being targeted as the usual suspect, giving the men a chance to prove they did not commit a crime; however, it is debatable if this should have to take place. Although wearing the monitoring device made Paul feel safer in the knowledge that he would not be accused of a crime, the fear of accusation was replaced with a paranoia of other people knowing he had the concealable tag:

I am used to it now but when I first got it on, it's 10pm at night, you know the beep thing as you go out of the shop, the security man on the little desk said, "you can just walk out", so I walked out, and he looked at me. I thought, "he knows". Nothing went off but I think he had a little scanner or something.

It is unlikely that the shop owner could have known that Paul was wearing the concealed tag, but due to the 'anticipated stigma' (Moore and Tangney 2017: 322) or 'stigma consciousness' (Pinel, 2004 cited in Munn, 2011b: 153), Paul could not consider this situation rationally, the fear of the shop owner knowing, and viewing him as a 'tainted citizen' (Hayes, 2015: 97) led him to believe that others could know his past and he feared the repercussions of this knowledge. Although overall,

he felt that the tag was of benefit to prevent him being falsely accused, his worry about other people knowing he had it on was always prevalent:

You can't put your leg up in case it shows or something like that. It's got a charger, quite big, I had put the charger on, and I forgot, and I went out and I felt it. I had to excuse myself, go to the toilet and put it in my pocket. It's not something you like anyone to know about.

Paul was able to remove the charger; however, he did not want to do this in front of others due to the fear of their reactions. The perceived stigma and possible resulting discrimination, described by Payne and Gainey (1998 cited in Durnescu 2011: 532) as the 'bracelet effect', made him fearful of repercussions from others. Issues relating to disclosure of offence and the repercussions of this, including the impact on identity, will be discussed in Chapter 7.

Being seen as the usual suspect, meant that actions and behaviours would be under stricter scrutiny, and innocence would only be found after the presumption of guilt had been applied. Living under supervision, and always being seen as untrustworthy (McNeill, 2019b), negatively impacted on Alf's belief in his chances of being successfully re-entered into society. He stated that 'prison is the past. I hope. Touch the wood'. Although he was optimistic about his future, he still felt that he could not tempt fate by stating that he would not return to prison, either through recidivism or recall for a breach of licence, 'it's very easy to go back but you've not got to think of that. As long as you don't do anything stupid, they can't take you back'. To increase his chances of successfully re-entering society, Alf had to push his thoughts of recall to the back of his mind. This proved to be just one of his coping mechanisms (further practices are discussed below) assisting him with

the pains of re-entry, however, the prospect and fear of recall to prison proved to be more difficult to ignore for the other once convicted men.

### ***Recall***

Anthony found that the reality of being released, and the difficulties associated with re-entry were so great, that the lure of the prison proved too difficult to ignore. When asked what offence he had committed, Anthony stated 'rape, sex. I did it on purpose to get back into prison'. He attributed his actions to a lack of support during an earlier release, leading him to commit this crime to return to the familiarity and security of life behind bars. When he was released following his recall, he was informed that support would be available, 'then they decided I needed help'. Anthony needed the same level of help and support on both releases from prison, however, this was only available to him when external agencies made the decision that he needed it. The power this had over his re-entry was great, as he stated that without the support he would be 'back in' prison, this was not a hollow assumption, as he had lived with the reality of no support previously, which did result in what he described as a conscious choice to be incarcerated.

None of the other men had committed a further offence in order to return to prison and alleviate the pains of release, re-entry and probation, however, many of them discussed their contemplation of it. For Bernard, these thoughts came early on in his re-entry journey, 'when you come out into reality, you're thinking, it's like, send me back to prison, the world has changed'. The differences Bernard

encountered on release were potent enough to make his life in prison a more attractive option than having to deal with the changes he witnessed.

Thoughts of returning to prison also formed a part of Clifford's re-entry journey, the benefits of confinement, outweighing the loss of freedom:

Sometimes, I don't want to go back but sometimes in my mind sometimes, yes, God, I think it would be a lot easier. You know, three square meals a day, doctor without bills, cleaning job, watch TV and sometimes, yes. It can get very stressful though being out. You know what I mean, sometimes, yes, a quick thought in your head "I'd be better in jail". But then it goes away because it's not better in jail really. In reality, you know.

Like Clifford, John also initially had thoughts of returning to prison to alleviate the stresses of life on the outside, 'I didn't want the headaches that were associated with life'. However, like Clifford, John did not want to be recalled. He reflected on how his life had changed, and therefore his attitude to the prospect of returning to prison:

I go to Tesco do a bit of shopping then to go to my house and chill. Last night was good because I finished about 10.50pm last night fixing the carpeting, which is so nice to sit back on my own sofa, with a lovely carpet and a nice rug in the centre, and you know you look around and think, that feels better and that is what it is beginning to feel like now. I am enjoying life. So, let's give it a go. I have no interest in going back to prison. I used to think I did but I haven't. No interest.

Once several of the barriers to re-entry had been broken down, such as acquiring his accommodation and becoming financially stable, John came to the realisation that life on the outside was better than behind bars. Although John had no intention of going back to prison, George missed it:

I just miss the place. I do. My mates are there you know. I was a bit sorry for leaving, the lads that were there, the community, I had a couple of mates that were murderers, they told me they were murderers, and I told them I want sex, they were alright with it, they were good lads. The lads that are there... It is easier.... Definitely.

George missed the social aspect of being part of a group in prison. He felt part of a community, which he shared with others who accepted him for who he was, not what he had done.

The thoughts surrounding returning to prison were fleeting ones for Bernard, Clifford and John, they realised that in reality, their lives would be better on the outside. However, Alf's coping mechanism of ignoring his thoughts about recall, were drawn from his experience, and his lack of fear of returning to prison:

I was recalled and I was in the first time for 18 months then recalled and was in for the next 3 years. Was recalled after a couple of years or it could be less, but I was recalled for 3 years and when I got in, everything was ok.

Alf did not fear the consequences of recall due to his positive experiences of being recalled previously, however, now that he was older, he wanted to avoid the possibility of this becoming a reality. Further to avoiding the thoughts surrounding returning to prison, he had adopted coping mechanisms to reduce the risk of him being recalled:

I got on the train and a school class came on the train, it was only two coaches. They all sat in front of me. I just got up and walked into the other coach.

Alf knew that due to his offence, being around young children would be a breach of his licence conditions which could increase the risk of recall. This directly

impacted on his actions, and following moving coach, he made the decision to completely distance himself from the situation by getting off the train. Further to using distance as desistance, like John with his sofa, carpet and rug, Alf surrounded himself with items he would not want to lose to help him desist from crime:

I've got a TV upstairs, blue ray, DVD. Now the things I have got there, who would want to go back in prison because that would be all gone. Where does all this stuff go if I am recalled? They just dump it, but that's why I've got it. I'm not going to lose it.

Alf resided in an AP, which he had been advised was an environment within which it was very easy to be recalled to prison. However, he had his coping mechanisms in place and stated, 'abide by the rules, do your own thing, and you won't get recalled'. The fear of being recalled was not prevalent in his thought processes, however, for Jon, and a number of the men, 'life is a recall waiting to happen' (Jon). This presumed inevitable state of being will now be considered.

### ***Fear of Recall***

Throughout the discussions surrounding supervision in the community, there lay an undertone of only partial freedom. As all the men were subject to licence conditions, the prospect of losing their freedom by being recalled to prison was ever present, lying dormant, waiting for a crime or breach of licence to occur. They were acutely aware of the fragility of their freedom, they were out, but not yet free (Ortiz and Jackey, 2019), in Martin's (2018: 672) words 'free but still walking the yard'. The underlying pressure associated with being recalled to prison dominated the lives of a number of the men, or as Durnescu (2011: 538)

categorised this pain of probation as 'life under a tremendous threat'. Paul felt the pressure of this threat:

Police cars never bothered me, but every time I hear one now, it makes me clam up. Even though you know you haven't done anything. Puts me on edge.

Although Paul was free from prison, he was not free from the fear of being returned to it. In a similar vein, being on a life licence, Clifford was wary of all his interactions:

I'm getting used to things, it's just taking time you know what I mean. Yes, I try and be happy go lucky now, but I always expect something to go around the bend with this society, there is always something. They are going to hit me in the face, you know what I mean? So, it's like I've always got to be prepared for something else.

The life licence meant that Clifford would 'never be fully 'in' and he will remain perennially vulnerable to being taken 'out'' (McNeill, 2019b: 216) of society. Being fearful of the unknown and living in a state of anticipation was also felt by Bernard, even though he felt that his life following imprisonment was going seemingly well:

Since I came out everything is perfect, my life is perfect. I have no problems. Every day I wake up and expect something to go wrong. Worried that it's too good. Every time there is something good, there is something bad around the corner. I know it's bad. That's all I know.

Bernard could not provide an explanation of what 'something bad' would be. This could be something he would do himself, either knowingly, or unknowingly, or, like Clifford, this could be something out of his control. Clifford was not fearful of behaving in a certain way which would result in recall, but fearful of the attitudes of others and their actions towards him:

There is always that period in the background that you might get recalled for something, even though I'm not doing anything, you might get upped from the probation officer and say the wrong thing or someone else says something, you know what I mean. Someone in the flat there could say, "he's got a nice flat, it's better than mine". Make a phone call, get my flat! There is always that going on in the back of your head.

Clifford was concerned that his status as a once convicted man could give others an opportunity to use this against him, they could benefit from his return to prison and the only way to prevent it would be to live in an area where his conviction was not known. However, for Clifford, as discussed in Chapter 5, he could not financially afford to live anywhere else, meaning that his life was induced with the pain of living 'under a tremendous threat' Durnescu (2011: 538).

Although a number of the men had considered going back to prison, at the time of interview, none of them discussed the immediate desire to return. Alf, however, could not guarantee he would not find himself on the inside in the future, 'hoping I'm not going back'. By using the word 'hoping', he indicated that he might not be fully in control, his experience influencing his thought process, 'I thought that was it. I'm not going back in, but beer got me again'. This account highlights that no matter how good his intentions were, he could return to prison due to external influences. In the case of his last recall, his addiction had made the decision for him. He also feared that being unaware of how to safely navigate technology, could also impact on a recall, 'I think you can get into trouble for just pressing a button'. Although he stated that he was unsure if just pressing a button could get him in trouble, he was aware of the content he should not be accessing, 'I won't go on anything I shouldn't go on'.

David was also fearful of being recalled due to undertaking an action that he was not aware of which became a trigger for recall, 'the only fear is doing something that you don't know you are doing wrong'. For example:

When I got my medication and that, I put them in my drawer, and they were in there 3 days before I came back and got some paracetamol and they saw it and that's when they said I'm not allowed to have things in my possession. If I went out and they searched my room or something then they could say look, what's all this?

David's actions were against the rules of the AP, but he was not aware of this, however, Jon feared that he might engage in a non-criminal action, which, due to his past, might lead to him being seen as a criminal. Jon had previously been convicted of assault on his neighbour, resulting in a 9-month suspended sentence. Following this he made threats to kill his sister, which resulted in the activation of the suspended sentence. He was concerned that if his mother had a fall, and he tried to help her up, that he would 'get nicked' due to his convictions surrounding violence. This fear was borne from a previous time his mother had fallen and his sister had found her:

Two paramedics tried to help her onto the bed or to her feet and she screamed holy blue murder that she was being attacked. Can you imagine? Every time I have been in trouble, it's been the neighbours that have called the police. There is history, "can you imagine what would happen if you tried to get her back in the bed and she screams". Do you know, I hadn't thought of that, and I hadn't. I literally hadn't. It made perfect sense but had not crossed my mind.

Jon had voiced his worries to workers at the charity Foundations and he recalled their opinions:

You would spend that night almost certainly in the cells. Don't get me wrong, you wouldn't go back to prison for it necessarily but would have an awful lot of explaining to do. It would be guilty, and you have to prove innocence. Not the other way round.

The fear of false allegations (Harris, Edgar and Webster, 2020) was something that the men could not control. Their past would have a bearing on their present, and possibly their future. This impacted on their identity, how they saw themselves, and how others perceived them to be. Self-perceptions and the external influences on identity are discussed further in Chapter 7.

## **Conclusion**

Being under supervision in the community meant that the men were living in a state of partial freedom. They found themselves in a state of uncertainty, they were free from incarceration, but not free from control. This state of being semi-free (McNeill, 2019a) and not being able to move on from their once convicted status, diminished their chances of being successfully re-entered, and their ability to change, problematic (Fitzalan Howard, 2019). The supervision led to the men being viewed as 'tainted citizens' (Hayes, 2015: 97) and as long as they were in this state of being monitored, they would be 'constructed as untrustworthy; as unworthy of dominion' (McNeill, 2019b: 224).

The supervision experienced by the men, shaped the meaning of re-entry, not only through the processes undertaken, but also who they were undertaken by (Lucken and Fandetti, 2019). This placed those who govern re-entry in a powerful position to impact on the men's experiences. The purpose of supervising the men came into question with the tick box exercises acting to fulfil the requirements of the

NPS and CRCs, and not to address the needs of the men. This would suggest that the purpose of supervising the men was not to support them in their attempts to (re)integrate into society, but to meet the standardised requirements of the State. This raises the question of who the intended beneficiaries of supervision work are. Carr and Robinson (2021), suggested that the answer to this would be that probation work is primarily aimed at public protection and risk management, rather than focusing on the men's individual situations and the socially constructed contexts within which they tried to navigate the process of re-entry.

Of the pains caused by, and amplified through supervision, the pain of stigma lay as an undertone in the processes the men had to undergo. As Hayes (2015) argued, supervision does little to alleviate this pain. The stigma related to attending probation meetings, or wearing an electronic tag were felt by the men, with Paul discussing this in relation to his experiences of others knowing or finding out about his past. Their lives were shaped by supervision practices, which altered their identity from their prison state to a hybrid notion of not fully under, or free from control. Further to the physical barriers the men experienced, their internal thought processes, fuelled at times by the perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of others, led to the pain of labelling, stigmatisation, and decisions surrounding the disclosure of their offence. The impact of having a concealable stigma and the repercussions of making this visible are discussed in the following chapter. Chapter 7 will consider how living a sentence after a sentence, in the 'shadow of imprisonment' (Stark, 2022: 278) can decrease the chances of successful re-entry and increase the pains of living freedom, leading to a 'shadowy status of social death' (Price, 2015: 117).

## Chapter 7: 'Just because the monkey is off my back doesn't mean the circus has left town'

### Introduction

'Incarceration's most powerful effects might emerge only after a sentence has been served' (Schnittker and John, 2007: 117). The powerful effects of imprisonment do not only consist of the physical barriers to successful re-entry as seen in Chapter 5, or the level and type of supervision by external agents highlighted in Chapter 6, but also the internal processes that largely remain hidden and unseen. This chapter will consider how stigma and identity shaped the men's experiences of pain and 'social death' (Price, 2015: 5). It will consider the notion of double 'othering' (Drake and Henley, 2014: 154), in terms of offence and age-related stigmas, how the men viewed themselves and how others responded to their past offence(s). Discourses around stigma and identity often framed the re-entry experiences of the men, and the lived reality of being once convicted, and being an older man meant that the pains of living freedom (Shammas, 2014) led to a 'shadowy status of social death' (Price, 2015: 117). Stigma can act as a catalyst for social exclusion (Aresti, Eatough, and Brooks-Gordon 2010) and isolation, acting as a barrier to successful re-entry (Moore, Stuewig and Tangney, 2013) and as social inclusion is required for re-entry to be successful (Bain and Parkinson, 2010), the impacts of stigma are greatly influential in the journey to achieving this.

Stigma can only be applied if the men have been labelled, and for this to take place, others must have knowledge of their 'discrediting attribute' (Goffman, 1963: 3). As a criminal conviction is a concealable stigma, there can be an element

of choice in disclosing this to others. However, the decision to disclose can be influenced by the perceived label this will attract, and the stigma which will come from the label being applied. The process of stigmatization discussed in Chapter 2 will form the framework for the discussions on how it impacted on the men during re-entry. As discussed in Chapter 2, firstly, the men are labelled as being different. This difference is then used as a justification to disadvantage the men, and this then results in them being seen as the 'other', they are marginalised, ignored and forgotten. In an attempt to unravel this entangled sequence of events, this chapter will firstly consider the labels which can be applied to those with a 'discrediting attribute' (Goffman, 1963: 3), considering if these labels are permanently branded, or are a status the men could shed. The chapter will then present a discussion surrounding how these imparted labels impacted on the men's identity, manifesting in either perceived or experienced stigma. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of how the process of disclosure was viewed, the way in which past identities were revealed and how this impacted on experiences of re-entry.

### **The Control of a Label**

Changes in the men's identity and behaviour following imprisonment were influenced by the stigma associated with their time in prison. This stigma led to the men being labelled which furthered the pains of re-entry (Durnescu, 2019). For the men, the label they had been branded with was that of 'ex-convict' (Hallet, 2012: 214), 'ex-con' (LeBel and Richie, 2020: 172); 'ex-offender' (Johnson and Cullen, 2015: 563); and 'ex-prisoner' (Munn, 2011a: 148), which are laden with negative connotations (Farrant, 2014) or the less stigmatizing 'formally

incarcerated' (LeBel, 2012: 89; Harding, Morenoff and Wyse, 2019: 2), or, as used throughout this study, 'once convicted' (Vincent, 1883: 325). As these labels are socially constructed (Denver, Pickett and Bushway, 2017), they are applied by the wider society and the state and can make re-entry into that society more difficult to attempt (LeBel and Richie, 2020).

For Clifford, being released from prison did not mean being released from the label:

But you're not released really. Yes. it's there, I still feel like a bit of a prisoner you know what I mean. Even though I'm out of prison.

Clifford resided in a building where most of the residents were once convicted men. When asked if he felt more comfortable being around those who could empathise with his experiences he stated, 'not particularly because I really want to step away from all that'. As Keene, Smoyer, and Blankenship (2018) argued, if men like Clifford are able to live in a stable environment, away from other once convicted men, they would have a better opportunity to leave offending pasts behind and conceal the label borne from the stigma of imprisonment. However, only being able to afford to live in accommodation with others in a similar situation as him, reinforced the notion that the label of 'ex-con' would be something he could not shed, 'I think that is going to be with me all the time'. This contributed to spatial stigma as the reputation of his accommodation influenced the view of his identity, leading to him being 'marked by the perceived characteristics' of his dwelling (Keene, Smoyer, and Blankenship, 2018: 801).

When discussing when he thought he would be seen by others as anything other than the label afforded to him, Clifford stated, 'Never is it? Which is a bit of a bummer'. In order for a label to change identity, it must be internalised (Asencio and Burke, 2011) and a belief in its power to stigmatize must be held. Clifford's acceptance that his label would last indefinitely suggests that he had both internalised and accepted the power of the label. In contrast, George did not give the label any power over his identity, not accepting its implications, 'I'm not bothered about being an ex-prisoner. I've done my time'. Although George did not let the label affect him, he did acknowledge that it existed, and he accepted its long-term presence, 'I am a paedophile; it stays with me'.

One of the differences in the men's experiences came from how they viewed themselves. When asked if he saw himself as an ex-prisoner David stated 'I think I do actually if I'm honest. I have got that stamp now and I don't think it goes, it will always be there'. In the same tone, Bernard stated 'you are stamped with that stamp, you are a prisoner'.

This metaphorical stamp led to reminders of imprisonment, inducing the pain of a 'forced return to the offence' (Durnescu, 2011: 537). Although initially discussed in relation to reminders of the offence in a probation setting, this pain could also be described as an internal forced reminder of the offence, one which is branded, yet unseen by others. The reminder of being a once convicted man was not a welcome one for Clifford as he stated, 'I just want to put that away... it's gone'. He did not want any remnants of his past identity, and reminders of prison brought back memories that he had buried, reinforcing the stigma attached to the label of

being once convicted (Moran, 2012). George also felt that he wanted to dismiss his past and the labels it had branded him with, 'I want rid of them. That's how I see it. I don't want to live with it, but I have to, I have no option'. Stuart also believed he did not have an option as he stated that he had no control over the constant reinforcement of the label of being once convicted:

Constantly pecking you on top of your head, peck peck peck peck, you are an ex-criminal, you are an ex-criminal, you did X, Y, Z, and that's what it feels like, that's the structure, the structure will not allow you to move on. How can you forget, how can you move on, how can you change your mental state if you're constantly being [bangs on the table repeatedly] pecked at?

George, Clifford and Stuart did not want the labels they had endured to act as a reminder of a time which they felt had no bearing on their present or future lives. However, for Alf, acknowledging the past was important to help him change who he was in the present and who he would be in the future. He managed his current identity by accepting and learning from his past:

I put at the beginning of the year; I have got my diary. I have put a list that long, changes. I put my past, falling drunk, divorce, alcoholic, falling. There is a list of what I have done, and it was all true. Lost my job, broke my leg, and nearly died twice. I thought when I had my detox, I could have died again twice so there is a big list and I put that in my next year's diary as well to see if anything changes next year, which it will. Arrested, prison, arrested, prison, recall in the middle of that, you know everything.

When asked if his diary entry changed the way he saw his identity, Alf replied:

In a good way, the past is the past. My age, I haven't got a long time, I've got a good few years yet, but I don't want to waste it.

Alf's perception of his advanced age and the time he had left in his life meant that seeing how much his life and identity had changed was a positive step to changing the way others perceived him. This reflective self-assessment helped him to focus on his future and strive to be successfully re-entered.

Age also factored into how Bernard felt about being labelled. As he stated, when he was younger, not only would he have accepted the label 'ex-con', but he would have been proud to have it applied to him, 'I didn't give a damn. It was like a badge of honour going in and coming out, being one of the boys'. When recalling this, he was almost nostalgic about a time where he belonged to a group who held shared values, albeit values which did not align with those of mainstream society. However, reflecting on that time, Bernard was remorseful for his behaviour, as with advancing age, came an increase in a sense of the self, and how his actions as a younger man had impacted on his current identity, and the possible repercussions for the future:

When you get older you start to see that you are throwing your life away. You see some people that have been to prison all their life then they are found in a bedsit. Either died of natural causes or something and then you go to the funeral and there are 4-5 people in there and you think all your life you have people around you all the time now they are putting you in the ground and there are five people there to see you. Your son is in debt because you haven't got the money to bury you in a decent suit. Stand up there thinking why have I thrown my life away?

He asked, 'at my age, do I want to do the same shit I have been doing for the last 50 plus years and the answer is no. That's a chapter of my life that is closed'.

The labels applied to the men reinforced their 'identity standard' (Keith and Scheuerman, 2018: 578), the 'set of meanings defining who one is in the situation' (Stets and Burke 2005, cited in Keith and Scheuerman, 2018: 578), which, if the label was internalised and believed to be true, could negatively impact on their chances of successful re-entry. For a number of the men, accepting the perceived or applied label led to a conscious concealment of their stigmatized identity. When the label was rejected disclosing their stigmatised identity became less important as the men did not believe the label to reflect their true identities. Identity, which this chapter will now turn to, was an important aspect of the men's re-entry journeys as either accepting or rejecting the label and the stigma attached to it, influenced their daily interactions and behaviours, therefore impacting on the pain they encountered and their chances of successful re-entry.

### **The Merry-Go-Round of Identity**

The merry-go round of identity is a continuous and developing loop that proved to be difficult for the men to break. Keith and Scheuerman, (2018: 578) describe this as a 'feed-back loop'. Identity becomes relevant in a given situation, the men then behave in such a way which is generated by their 'identity standard' (ibid), others then judge the way the men behave, and offer 'reflected appraisals' (Asencio and Burke, 2011: 167). This is followed by a closing of the loop, where the men then act in accordance with a combination of their own internal self, and the external influences of others, their identity becoming a hybrid of the situation, their original self, and the opinions of those around them. This 'verification process' (Keith and Scheuerman, 2018: 578) of identity continues and can change

given the situational context. This merry-go-round proved to be anything but, as the name suggests, a pleasurable experience.

Clifford summarised his feelings surrounding identity, 'the world had changed you know. To be honest with you, sitting here today, I feel out of sync. On a different wavelength'. As he had served almost three decades in prison, he had become disconnected from society (LeBel and Richie, 2020). This detachment brought about a state and pain of 'confusion' (Shammas, 2014: 110) as he was no longer his pre-prison self, nor was he the man he portrayed himself to be whilst incarcerated. However, remnants of these two, often unaligned identities, still existed on release, where ideas of how, and who, he should be, were presented to him by a society which he did not recognise. As Galnander (2020: 1304) posits, the men had 'abandoned their old way of living but not yet fully consolidated a new lifestyle as part of conventional society'. Clifford aged in an environment which became his reality (Munn, 2011a), making re-entry more difficult as the outside had become an alien world. In this abyss of the self in a societal context, Clifford and the other older, once convicted men, had to comprehend a sense of loss of their former identities, which became intensified by their advanced age (Crawley, 2011). Identity is not a static notion, it is a fluid entity which changes in different situational contexts (Diaz, 2018). David reflected on how the prison environment had changed his identity both during and after incarceration:

I've always had a very strong self-belief, I suppose in a way, an aura of confidence. It [prison] does change you, it does change your beliefs, it changes how you see other people, you start perceiving them as you are now, not how you were, I think it's because you have to keep regurgitating the issues, why you are in prison in the first place, that it's not allowing you

the freedom to return to normal life, that's not effective rehabilitation, that's the worst form of rehabilitation.

David's account highlights that the pain of a 'return to the offence' (Durnescu, 2011: 537) is not only felt during re-entry, but this pain can be initiated and instilled whilst still incarcerated. Bernard also believed that his identity had been altered by the prison environment:

You put someone somewhere where they are not familiar with and he is on his own, lonely and what's he going to do? He's going to join in and before you know it when he comes out now, what he was before he's not anymore.

Bernard's account offers an explanation for the situation that Galnander (2020: 1304) posits, where men 'abandoned their old way of living', for Bernard, this was undertaken to reduce his loneliness. His attempt to be socially included came at the cost of his previous identity.

For John, his identity post imprisonment caused an internal battle, having to comprehend his chronological age, and the age he internally identified with. He was twenty-three when he was incarcerated, and when released in his late fifties, he continued to identify with his pre-prison age. When released, John sought to undertake the activities he had known before imprisonment, 'I had a paper round in the village when I first came out, and in the end, I had two paper rounds'. Further into his re-entry journey, he still did not conform to the societal norms associated with his chronological age. At the time of the interview, shortly before his 64<sup>th</sup> birthday, he stated:

Next year I want to go to college to do music theory. I play drums in a rock band at the moment, so I have kept my hand in on the music.

Although his behaviour went against the stereotypical societal grain of the expectations of his chronological age, he could not understand why those around him found his behaviour to be abnormal. When discussing his neighbour, John was bewildered with his attitude, 'he can't understand why at my age I listen to Drum and Bass, Trance, Hard House'. His musical preference aligned with his identity at the age of imprisonment, his early 20s and it had not been altered during his incarceration, it had been reinforced by the large numbers of younger men who generally inhabit the prison environment. John's identity had been frozen in time, remaining in place until he was released. He knew nothing other than the way he had behaved prior to, and during his time in prison, and viewed others who were the same chronological age as him as being 'old folks'. Although his aspirations and behaviour mirrored that of a young adult, he was not naive to his prison-inflicted state of being. When asked how old he was he replied, '64 this year' and when asked what age he perceived himself to be, he replied, '23. You have to keep reminding yourself how old you are because I'm not a kid anymore and life does move on'.

Bernard also felt that his identity had been altered due to his time in prison, the idea of the kind of life he now wanted, was at odds with his former pre-prison thinking:

When I look at my brothers and sisters now, I thought where the hell have I gone wrong? My brother has never been in trouble. Never did drugs, never thieved, never nothing. Then some time ago, I look at him and he is

cleverer and more mature, and I thought what went wrong? Same mother, father, blood, why am I this and he's that way. It's like sometimes I am jealous of my brother. I envy him in a positive way. I would love to be like him, but I know I couldn't because when I used to look at him and the way he lives, I used to think what a boring lifestyle. Going to bed at 10pm. You're reading a book like Mr and Mrs fucking Victor Meldrew. Let's have a glass of wine before we go to bed then lights out at 11pm and get up at 8am going to work, and to me, that was a boring life. I'm going to bed at 3 or 4am waking up at 12, 1, 2pm, straight to the bookies and 2 special brews walking down the road. The money I am spending in a day, my brother is working a week for. But now I have seen that life, and it is beautiful.

Bernard attributed his change in attitude to his advanced age, 'this is the sort of thing now that four years ago when I was coming out of prison, it would have been impossible'.

When asked if he thought his re-entry experience would have been any different if he had been released as a younger man, Clifford also recognised that his identity had changed with age:

Well, I was a different person then yes. I have matured and slowed down a lot so, smartened up a lot as well. Twenty years ago, I was a little bit volatile.

David also recognised that his behaviour had become less disruptive as he age:

If I was younger, it wouldn't have bothered me because I would have been thieving or having fights, that sort of thing and you don't really give it a second thought. But once again, I am sitting here watching TV and maybe I could be out there changing something, even if it's mowing someone's garden or something like that. Some person who isn't capable of doing it on their own, at least it would change someone's life.

As David's behaviour had changed, so too had his identity. He now wanted to make amends for his actions by 'giving something back'. He wanted to 'change

someone's life', which in turn would change his life, and the way people perceived him. It is to issues surrounding how the men managed their perception of the self, and the view of others that this chapter now turns.

## **Impression Management**

Managing the way that others saw them was an important part of the men's re-entry journeys. Stuart described wearing a mask of re-entry, outwardly giving one impression, when internally he felt very differently:

I put a brave face on, and even now, you put a brave face on, but it does affect you, it affects you as you've got to accept your vulnerability.

Like Stuart, Clifford felt the weight of impression management as he acted in one way in front of people, but his 'backstage' (Goffman, 1990: 246) identity did not match the performance he portrayed to different audiences:

Have you heard the song Tears of a Clown? It's where you are sad inside, but you are happy on the outside. I laugh a lot of things off with humour, but sometimes inside I fill up a bit.

The way that Clifford and Stuart acted on the 'front' stage (Goffman, 1990: 231) was influenced by their need for others around them to view them in a certain way, a way that for the men, was felt to be the one they wanted others to see. This was also true for Alf:

I've done the crossword, I cheat a bit, I have a crossword solver. But it looks good when you finish it and I always leave it out when I finish it. If I don't finish it, I don't leave it out.

The act of leaving his completed crossword out for others to see was a public declaration of his intellectual ability. The need for others to view him as being intelligent was greater than having the knowledge that it was true. He would rather have 'cheated a bit', and have others believe that he was capable of completing the crossword, than be true to himself and leave it out uncompleted. His approach to his crossword can be likened to his path to successful re-entry. He was not finished, he was not completely settled, and so he would not put himself out there for all to see 'I keep myself to myself'. Leaving out a completed crossword would also reinforce the idea that those who are older in age, are more worldly and wise, the proof of a 'magical mystique of knowledge and authority' (Fischer, cited in Bond, Coleman and Peace 1993: 12) being seen in the completed crossword.

Bernard also found that he too wanted others to think of him in a certain way, but for this to happen he had to change his identity. He discussed that when he was a younger man, his relationship with drugs began as a method of fitting in with a woman who he wanted to 'impress' and 'keep hold of'. She took drugs, so he replicated her behaviour to impress her:

I was in a circle that I wasn't used to, but I wanted to fit in. It's the same thing with prison. You fit into it, so you go against your principles just to fit in.

Bernard's identity was influenced by the 'reflected appraisals' (Asencio and Burke, 2011: 167) of others in the friendship group he wanted to be a part of before prison. He wanted them to think of him as a drug taker, so he had to maintain his

performance to ensure he was viewed in this light. He was aiming to avoid the stigma of normality, of someone who adhered to society's norms and values, which was in opposition to the attitudes of the other older, once convicted men, and also himself, in his later life, who aimed to shed the stigma of criminality.

David did not have to contend with impression management techniques as he felt it was important to remain true to his identity, no matter what other people's reactions were:

If I was to tell someone and if they don't react like that [a positive response], say cheerio and don't see me again. I'd rather have that than say nothing. I can't help the way they react but if they react good then it's out of the way and I can get on with it without people saying, "you don't mean nothing". I'd rather someone come up and punch me on the nose about it rather than whisper behind my back.

Although impression management techniques could be used in order to influence perceptions of the men's identity, the stigma associated with imprisonment could still overshadow positive attempts to be seen in a certain way. Bernard acknowledged that those around him, once close friends, now viewed him differently:

Now the person who is your age that you want to sit down and have a conversation with and talk, he doesn't want to talk to you because whilst you have been in prison doing your time and doing that he has been at home building up his thing with his wife and kids and that. Remember when you two was young you were best friends, but you went to prison. He went that way so when you came out of prison now, the only people then that you can mix with is the old crowd that you know and are still going to drag you down. The other crowd will see you on the street and say hello but not inviting you to his house though for a drink. It's a funny world, it's hard.

Bernard's words highlight how the impact that time in prison can have on relationships with others can shape the future of friendships once released, even if those friendships were strong prior to imprisonment. Asencio and Burke (2011) highlight how a person is viewed by significant others around them is the most influential, external source of constructing an internal identity. Having been in prison changed Bernard's life course, and with this, the social circles he kept. He found this difficult to accept, how the path less travelled could have led to a different life. Goffman (1963: 35) stated that for those who face stigma in later life, 'the uneasiness he feels about new associates may slowly give way to uneasiness felt concerning old ones'.

Managing other people's perceptions led to a change in behaviour for Paul. Since being released, he no longer wanted to be around people, and he changed his behaviour in order to accommodate this, often undertaking his food shopping late at night or very early in the morning in order to avoid the crowds. When using public transport, he also preferred to sit at the very back or the very front as he wanted to be on his own. When asked what had instigated his change in behaviour following imprisonment, he stated, 'people looking at you, thinking they know'. He was fearful that people would know that he was a once convicted man, simply by looking at him. This was a constant feeling of fear that he was living with:

It's always in my mind. Almost like another sentence. I don't mind declaring it to the professionals, doctors and things but even when you declare at a centre, that feels horrible. Even though they have seen it before, you feel like you are the only one that has done it. Even though you have been in prison with others, when you come out you feel you're the only one who has done it. When you come back out of the group you are on your own again, so you feel like the only one in the world who has done that.

The 'centre' Paul referred to was a venue where an accredited programme for those who had committed sexual offences was held. As discussed in Chapter 5, he was mixing with others who had a shared experience, and he found that his feelings of isolation were, for a short time, reduced. However, this feeling did not last:

The group in a way, is support. Support when [you are] there but you can't associate when you come outside so you are back on your own again.

As those who have committed sexual offences are unable to associate with each other outside of a formal setting, Paul was lacking interaction with those who had a shared experience and could help and support him through his re-entry journey. He used 'disengagement coping' (Moore and Tangney, 2017: 323) through social withdrawal in order to avoid negative perceptions through other people knowing his stigmatized identity. This impacted on his re-entry experience as it increased the pains of loneliness (Nugent and Schinkel, 2016) and social isolation (Durnescu, 2019).

Using impression management as a method of coping with a stigmatized identity may be beneficial in avoiding prejudice and stigma, but it does not assist with changing people's attitudes. Stuart did not withdraw from society and found that by attempting to be part of society, he altered other people's perceptions of the stigma related to a criminal label:

I think because people are so entrenched in their own misguided beliefs, their attitudes alter straight away because they see you as somebody that, you know, they just automatically assume you're a bad guy. Over a period

of time, if you were round your local, they would suddenly go, “you’re nothing like I expected”, I were like, “well what did you expect?”

Members of the public have perceptions of what it means to be once convicted, and generally hold negative attitudes towards those with this label (Rade, Desmarais and Mitchell, 2016). These negative attitudes can then manifest in prejudice and discrimination which can act as a barrier to successful re-entry. As Stuart’s account shows, the preconceptions held by members of society are not always substantiated when the reality of the once convicted men’s identity becomes apparent. Re-entry outcomes can depend on the attitudes and behaviours of those around the men (Hirschfield and Piquero 2010), and this in turn can impact on the decision-making process surrounding disclosing a criminal past. If they fear the repercussions due to experiencing, or perceiving they will experience, negativity if their stigmatized identity is disclosed, this can lead to the men avoiding disclosure of their past either through conscious disclosure or withdrawing from society. It is to the difficulties surrounding disclosing a stigmatised criminal label that this chapter now turns.

### **Autonomy of Disclosure: To Tell or Not to Tell?**

“To display or not to display; to tell or not to tell; to let on or not to let on; to lie or not to lie; and in each case, to whom, how, when, and where” (Goffman, 1963: 42).

The men reported frequently considering variations of these questions, finding that their personal circumstances and the individual settings at the time of contemplation, greatly impacted the conclusions they reached. The decision to disclose their criminal past to those around them, was one which not all the men had faced, however, this lack of experience did not prevent them from considering the implications of admitting their past to others. When their criminal past was disclosed, the reactions of others, either positive or negative, were largely dependent on the way in which the disclosure took place (Camacho, Reinka and Quinn, 2020).

The men faced stigmatisation due to their age. This was not something that they could always conceal as physical aging attributes were visible to others. However, not all stigmas are visible, and having a concealable stigma can lead to a situation where the men had to make a choice to either tell people or keep their criminal past hidden. The men's experiences showed that there were a number of different ways in which others could learn of their criminal past, either through the men making a conscious decision to disclose, through the influence of external personal interactions, through necessity or through individual choice. Disclosure was not something all the men felt comfortable with, and they chose to consciously conceal their stigmatised identities. It is to the issues surrounding these decisions that this chapter now turns.

### ***Disclosure Through External Personal Interaction***

Anthony attended a day centre for older people, where the staff had been informed of his past offence, but the attendees had not. When considering sharing his past, Anthony stated:

They might take it the wrong way. You know, oh he's been in [prison], the staff say, "don't say anything about going in [to prison], that way they will get to know you as a person".

For Anthony, the fear of the reaction of others (Galnander 2020), combined with the recommendations from those in a perceived position of power, influenced his decision to keep his once convicted status concealed. Anthony's fears were that others around him might not have viewed him for who he believed himself to be, but rather for where he had been. Hirschfield and Piquero (2010: 28) argued that typical negative views of those who have been in prison, include, 'dangerous, dishonest, or otherwise disreputable' and Anthony was fearful that this preconception would influence others' impression of him. He felt that in order for those around him to know his true identity, they could not know of his criminal past, as he did not consider his offending to be part of his identity after his release from prison.

Although external personal interactions influenced Anthony's decision not to disclose, for John, the influence came from within. His time in prison had deeply shaped his identity, compelling him to disclose his past to others, 'I did used to talk too much at one time when I first got out. I don't know why I needed to tell people, but I did'. His deliberate 'self-disclosure' (Uysal, 2020: 122) aligns with self-

verification theory (Swann, 2012) which pertains that individuals have a desire for others to see them as they see themselves. Due to the length of time John had served in such a restrictive environment, where the salient identity was borne from the shared experience of committing a crime, the only 'reflected appraisal' (Asencio, and Burke, 2011: 164) of his identity had come from other prisoners, which moulded his identity to that of a person convicted (ibid: 167). Unlike Anthony, John viewed his past to be ingrained into his identity following imprisonment and he did not feel that this was something he had to keep hidden, he felt others needed to know, even though his prison-infused identity could be negatively viewed by others (Ragins, 2008). John's disclosure decision was borne from an internal thought process which influenced his necessity to tell others. However, for Alf Bernard and Jon, their accounts of disclosure came from external necessities which formed part of their re-entry journeys.

### ***Disclosure Through Necessity***

Ragins (2008) argued that those with a concealable stigma have the power to make a decision surrounding disclosure, however, not all the men had the option of making such a decision. Due to the nature of his offence, Alf had to attend a Sex Offender Treatment Programme (SOTP) in the community where a requirement was to discuss the crime committed, this increased the pain of re-entry by forcing a 'return to the offence' (Durnescu, 2011: 537). When discussing attending the SOTP course, Alf did not feel comfortable admitting his crime to other convicted sex offenders, 'the only thing I didn't like was that I had to tell them what I did'. Although declaration of an offence was a prerequisite for attending the course, for

Alf, this did not mean full disclosure. Discussing his offence in detail was a deeper level of exposure, highlighting that the type of offence can also be important when considering disclosure. This was also evident in Bernard's experience as he stated that he would be upfront and disclose his offending past, however, like Alf, Bernard would not have felt comfortable disclosing further information than this:

I would tell them and say yes, I've been in prison. Probably I wouldn't tell everything; I have to keep a bit of it. I would probably say I've been in for drugs but certain things I wouldn't.

Bernard feared the response he would receive by disclosing his full offending history, choosing to conceal the details he felt would not be freely accepted. Not only did he consider concealing certain aspects of his offending behaviour, but also another aspect of his identity, the reason behind his offending past. When he met a new group of students on a course at university following his release, the 'self-concealment' (Uysal, 2020: 122) he was practicing began to have a negative impact on his wellbeing. For him to fit in with the group, he felt that it was a necessity to disclose his addiction to alcohol:

Some of them will say, do you want to come for a drink, and I'll say "no". They say, "come on", like a bonding thing and I say "no". But then they thought I was being ignorant and one day this guy says, "do you want to come we are going to the pub down the road". I said, "no mate". He said, "if you're skint we'll buy you a drink". I could see it next time I went in the classroom, I could see them all asking each other and no one asked me and I just stand up in the group and said, "you know what it is lads and girls, the reason I haven't been for a drink with you is because I have come out of rehab and I've only been out for 6 weeks and I don't trust myself to sit in the pub". You know one of the girls looked at me and I thought she was going to cry. She said, "do you know something, we didn't really want to know because we feel more embarrassed because we thought you was just thinking you are better than us". [I said] "I just wanted you to know I'm not being ignorant it's just that I wouldn't trust myself in a pub".

Bernard's account highlights that the fear of discrimination through rejection (Munn 2011b) once the past is brought to light is not always rooted in truth. This disclosure was a positive step for Bernard, 'It made me feel good because at least it breaks the ice between me and them'. Although initially, non-disclosure and keeping secrets can be favourable, suppressing a concealable stigma can be more damaging than admission (Ragins 2008; Camacho, Reinka and Quinn, 2020). Bernard's peers presumed that he felt superior to them, when in reality, he had not disclosed his addiction to alcohol due to his feelings of inferiority. When he had concealed his addiction, his peers did not engage with him, due to them harbouring inaccurate perceptions of him, which increased the pain of social isolation and exclusion (Durnescu, 2019; Camacho, Reinka and Quinn, 2020). Although disclosing the reasons behind his offence was a positive step for Bernard, he only disclosed his alcohol addiction and not that it had led to a time in prison. Further to this, he only disclosed his past when it became an issue in his present. As prison had not come up in conversation, and it had no bearing on his ability to mix with others on his course, he kept his stigma concealed, therefore he only revealed part of himself to the group. This 'selective disclosure' (Camacho, Reinka and Quinn, 2020: 30) used by Bernard as a coping strategy was greatly influenced by the situational context.

Although Bernard did not want to initially disclose his addiction to alcohol, Jon felt that it was a necessity to be upfront when meeting new people:

It's almost the sooner it's out in the open, the better. That was, I would save you the embarrassment down the line, "would you like to go for a

drink? We can go for a meal. Would you like to join us? Have a glass of wine". I have dealt with it. It is done.

Jon's actions align with 'ecosystem' motivations for disclosure (Chaudoir and Quinn 2010: 572) which are centred around protecting others from potential embarrassment and strengthening social connections, whereas Bernard's actions were centred around 'egosystem' motivations (Ibid.) to save himself from perceived judgement and the potential for prejudice and discrimination to arise. However, akin to Bernard's account, Jon felt differently about his time in prison, if like Bernard, his criminal past had no bearing on his interactions in the situational context, he too would conceal this stigma:

Prison is not going to crop up. It's going to crop up with a job interview but not necessarily in the early days of a social relationship be it man, woman or just mates.

Alf, Bernard and Jon felt that the situation they were in meant that it was necessary for them to disclose their concealable past, if they had not made the disclosures they did, further pain could have been endured. Completion of the programmes (Alf); attending education (Bernard); and gaining and maintaining social contacts (Jon), are important pathways to successful re-entry, therefore without these, further pain could have been endured. Necessity took away their choice of disclosure, however, when not under this pressure, the freedom to choose came with a number of difficulties, which this chapter will now consider.

### ***Conscious Concealment***

'Conscious concealment' (Munn 2011b: 159) was one of the ways the men managed their stigmatized identities. Alf had not faced a situation where his past had come into question apart from in the presence of other once convicted men, however, his lack of experience in making disclosure decisions as 'no one asks', did not prevent him from considering his response if faced with the situation:

I suppose if someone did, I'd say "well it's nothing to do with you". I wouldn't tell lies and say I hit someone over the head with a hammer. I wouldn't say that, I wouldn't lie, I'd just say "nothing to do with you".

Through deciding not to lie, he negated the possibility of being doubly exposed (Goffman, 1963) as both formally incarcerated and a fabricator of truth. Alf furthered his stigma management techniques through concealment by adapting his behaviour to ensure that his stigmatized identity remained hidden, 'I don't say anything. If I don't say anything, they won't know anything'. He chose to keep his past concealed, therefore reducing the chances of encountering prejudice and discrimination (Camacho, Reinka and Quinn, 2020). His decision surrounding disclosure was due to his offence, his status was a combination of being a once convicted, older man, who had committed a sexual offence, which increased the level of stigma he may have encountered (Cornish et al., 2016).

George also felt that his specific crime influenced his disclosure decision. Akin to Alf, George had not personally encountered stigma during re-entry, however, seeing the repercussions that others faced following their disclosure of a conviction for a sexual offence, was enough to forewarn him of the possible

consequences (Ragins, 2008). For George the fear of physical repercussions was so great, that he was not willing to find out if he would be accepted by others:

I can't let them know about my offence because they'd do me in. You need to keep it quiet when you do get out because if they get to know you are a sex offender and there are kids there and you are near, they will beat you up. You have to think of these things, that's how I think about it anyway. I may be wrong I don't know.

When asked if he would ever disclose his past, George stated that he would not. He made the decision to keep his past secret, leading to him living in a state of an 'embodied otherness' (Galnander, 2020: 1309). The anticipated repercussions of prejudice and discrimination (Camacho, Reinka and Quinn, 2020) due to the offence committed were also feared by Paul, as he stated that he would not feel comfortable disclosing his offence, but not due to the fear of the reaction of the other person, but due to their internal thought processes:

You go to the job centre you don't want to talk about it especially my crime because although they aren't going to say anything you know what they are thinking.

For Alf, George and Paul, the decision to conceal their past was one they had time to contemplate. However, Jon had to make this decision when faced with an immediate situation. He saw a former acquaintance when walking through town, which triggered mixed emotions:

The second I was about to say hello, I thought, no. He doesn't know anything about who I am now, where I have been, where would I start any conversation about meeting, "we'll have to get together and go for a pint" I couldn't avoid that conversation. I haven't seen him for that long, he doesn't know I have a problem and I know I have to walk away from that one now. My first thought was, hiya. Second thought, no. Danger. Danger.

Jon employed an avoidance strategy (Moore and Tangney 2017) as self-regulation to ensure that the former acquaintance did not see him so that he could circumvent the conversation he perceived would take place. His primary fear was disclosing his issues surrounding alcohol, not imprisonment. This could be attributed to the fact that the disclosure of his incarceration was not something that he had had experience of or even considered in a social setting until the question was asked of him in the research interview:

I got no problem telling anyone I am an alcoholic. No problem with that. I don't go around saying I have been in prison. Haven't thought about that.

Alf, George, Paul and Jon made conscious decisions to keep their concealable stigma hidden for different individual reasons which they each felt would impact on their chances of successful re-entry. This coping strategy was employed to reduce the pains of re-entry; however, it was not the only method of pain reduction employed by the men. In opposition to concealment of a stigmatised past, a number of the men chose to disclose their criminal histories as a method of coping with the pain and stigma associated with re-entry. It is to the process of disclosure that this chapter now turns.

### ***Choosing Disclosure***

Like Alf, George, Paul, Bernard and Jon, David also feared the repercussions of disclosure, however, being open and honest was important to him, as the alternative of him making up an offence, then others finding out the truth was

worse, 'if I said one thing and then they found out I had a sexual offence, I would be the worst of the lot of them'. He also felt this about his family:

I have been upfront with them. Taken a deep breath and think it's going to go one way or another. I don't want to lie to them and in ten years' time tell them.

One of the main reasons the men made the choice to disclose was borne from the fear of others finding out at a later time. The weight of not disclosing the true extent of a conviction weighed heavier on the men than the repercussions of disclosure, as Bernard experienced, 'every day you are still nervous because you are thinking that someone is going to find out'.

Decisions surrounding conscious disclosure were most prevalent when the men discussed thinking about, applying for, or undertaking employment. It is in this arena that the men reported a fear of rejection, a fear of being found out, and being subjected to the prejudice and discrimination surrounding their stigmatized identities.

In terms of employment, for Bernard, the disclosure of a criminal past was not necessarily the issue, it was the type of offence that would bring about the stigma:

Say I was coming to you for a job and you was sitting there and you say, "have you got a conviction?" When I say "I have a record, yes I got done for drink driving", you might get away with it but yes for those who got done for selling crack and heroin, you are going to lie so straight away you are on edge to get that job so if you say you got done for a mass murder or you are biggest heroin dealer in England, but you say I got done for drink driving. "Have you got a problem with drink driving?", "no", "ok you got the job".

Although Bernard felt that fabricating the truth of the type of offence he was convicted for was required in order to gain employment, Mark found that, in his experience, the type of offence was not the issue, disclosing any offence at all was the problem:

I went for a job at Virgin, they got to the point of the disclosure bit and I said, "I'll be honest with you, I've just got out" [of prison], and they went, "sorry, bye". That was that. "Can't go any further because you're going in people's houses", "hang on a minute, don't you want to know what I did?"

This method of rejection can induce emotional pain, but also as Steele, Kidd and Castano, (2015: 19) reported, rejection 'elicits activation of brain areas associated with processing physical pain'. Further to this, being rejected, and particularly without the potential employers knowing the full picture, can impact on 'self-worth and identity, constituting a threat to one's sense of meaningful existence' (ibid.).

Akin to Mark's experience, David encountered stigma when he revealed his criminal past, 'one guy got a bit shirty so that made me feel a bit horrible for some time'. This impacted on David's thoughts about future employment:

I spoke with probation and the guy I was working with and we kind of worked it out to maybe rearrange the way I said it or in a way that it would be taken a bit differently. I wasn't prepared. I know it sounds like you're minimising what you have done and that but it's just trying to put it down in a certain way.

David felt that it was important to be upfront about his past and his decision to disclose this was influenced by the fear that a criminal identity being found out at a later date was inevitable:

Job wise, no I would rather have it open and above board, it's better to have it out there because you just end up with tittle tattle, because it will be discovered sooner or later, you could also risk your job at a later date if you don't disclose, even in a job where you don't have to disclose, I'd still rather disclose because I don't want anything down the line that's a problem.

Anticipating any possible repercussions of disclosure had to be weighed against gaining employment to assist with re-entry, as Bernard stated, 'It's like a cutthroat world. you want to do good, but you are frightened'. This fear of reprisals following disclosure was borne from the fear of the rejection (Mills, 2015; Mills and Grimshaw, 2012) he might have received through admitting his past offences. This was also part of Jon's reasoning for disclosure; however, his account was also entwined with his identity:

If I have gone for a job and for whatever reason it doesn't mention it [criminal past] and they don't mention it, I would bring it up, I think. I think I would so that, a. I get the job on my own merit and b. I can look them in the eye and c. it's not something that will come back and bite me on the bum down the line. I will hit them with it. That is just part of my make-up. If there is something there to be said, let's not beat around the bush. Let's hit it head on and not mess each other around. I wouldn't have a problem doing that, I would consciously bring it up because it is a need-to-know basis.

The implications of non-discourse in this setting outweighed Jon's fear of rejection. However, John did not contemplate concealment as he could not see the point of hiding his past:

It's not easy holding back information especially if I got any work or voluntary work or anything like that, there is disclosure. So, what's the point in being quiet if I'm going to have to do this disclosure?

Akin to David's presumptions, John also felt that disclosure was inevitable, so he did not see the point in not undertaking it.

Disclosure decisions were greatly influenced by the stigma the men perceived they would encounter if it brought with it a negative label which could be applied to them. The labelling, disclosure and stigma all shaped the identities of the men, and instilled changes to both their attitudes and behaviours in response. The discussions of disclosure have so far been underpinned by the fear of negative repercussions and the implications this could have on the men as individuals, however, not all decisions to disclose a criminal past resulted in negative consequences. It is to the point of positive outcomes that this chapter now turns.

### **Turning the Tables**

As the men's accounts have shown, the perceived stigma associated with a criminal past and the label applied, can lead to negative experiences. However, Jon and Stuart found that they could use their identity as older, once convicted men to help and support others, taking the negative connotations associated with 'ex-prisoner' and using them for good, making an 'ex-prisoner' identity an asset rather than a liability.

Jon formed part of a 'Men After Prison' (MAP) group in the community. He was able to use his experience in a 'peer mentoring' (Buck, 2018: 200) capacity to help and support others in a similar situation to him to reduce not just his own, but also others', pains of re-entry. The group also attended schools, colleges, universities, and community groups to discuss the realities of imprisonment where Jon acted

as a 'wounded healer' offering his experiences as 'cautionary tales' and 'hopeful stories of redemption' (McNeill and Maruna, 2007: 232). This was undertaken with the aim of reducing stigmatized attitudes (LeBel, Richie and Maruna, 2015) surrounding older, once convicted men, and also to forewarn and discourage those on the cusp of offending of the realities of imprisonment and re-entry. This also assisted Jon with his personal desistance as in this context, the pain of a 'forced return to the offence' (Durnescu, 2011: 537), was not considered a pain which would debilitate, but a gain which could help rehabilitate him, through helping others and by trying to prevent them from going through the same experiences he had.

Stuart also used his stigmatized past in a positive capacity, however, he felt that the label of being once convicted was still a dominant aspect of his identity:

I've been to university, but because of the media demonization of anybody associated with prison you're automatically part of that network that's the worst part of society, they don't know you, they don't know what you've done.

Stuart felt that his pro-social identity achieved through completing a degree was overshadowed by the label and resulting stigma surrounding his time in prison (Diaz, 2018). As Scott (2020: 55) argued, prisons can be seen as 'machines that can write over previous identities and create a new self'. David did not want his new self to be dominated by his conviction, he considered his academic background to be more dominant in his identity formation, yet others continued to view him in the 'shadow of imprisonment' (Stark, 2022: 278). He was aware that his identity had become that of an older, once convicted man, so instead of attempting to

shed this, due to its overriding power to stigmatise, he formed part of a group which consisted of once convicted men and university students to use his label positively:

Having personal experience of prison, sharing that experience, and giving them an insight into what does work and what doesn't, it will give them a better understanding if they decide to go into policy, it's a healthy environment, it's a positive environment. The people that run the course are really nice, their attitude is fantastic, complimentary, nice, open, and almost accepting, there's no stigma.

Striving to use his identity in a positive way, he wanted to use his degree in criminology, combined with his prison experience, to better inform others. This 'convict criminology' (Earle, 2018: 1499) practiced by Stuart was beneficial not just for his re-entry journey, but also to the students as they were provided with accounts of first-hand experience of imprisonment which could complement the theoretical aspects of criminology learnt in the classroom. Stuart found that he was accepted in this group, and this acceptance did not come at the cost of having to alter his identity.

If Jon and Stuart had not accepted and internalised their stigmatized identities, they would not have been able to use their experiences as a 'professional ex' (LeBel, Richie and Maruna, 2015: 108) to attempt to reduce the stigma surrounding the label of being once convicted. Although Stuart had accepted his label and was using it in a positive manner, this did not change his internalised identity. He had to manage his stigma in order to try and shed the negative implications of being once convicted.

## Conclusion

Unlike the pains of imprisonment, which followed the men into the community, the pains of disclosure that live in the 'shadow of imprisonment' (Stark, 2022: 278) relate primarily to the pains of re-entry (Durnescu, 2019). Disclosure of an offence can be an issue for men in prison, however, the impacts of disclosure were felt much more profoundly once released. The men's accounts have shown that disclosing an offence can greatly impact on the individual's notion of the self, it can change how others perceive them, how they perceive themselves and, in turn, can change how they behave and how they are treated. From the perspective of identity theory, the self and therefore outwardly expressions and behaviours are influenced by what those around them think, yet the thoughts of those around them are influenced by the outwardly performed actions of the individual (Asencio and Burke, 2011). The men found his merry-go-round of identity formulation to be dizzying, and at times, wondered when, and if, they would be able to get off the ride.

The men's experiences highlight that stigma, or the fear of stigma, can be many things: it can disable a person in their daily interactions; it can be structurally imparted or self-perceived; It can change people's attitudes and behaviours; It can influence the decision to interact with people or apply for employment; it can affect where people live; it can be negatively all encompassing or it can be the fuel under the fire of change. In essence, it can be accepted, lived with or rejected.

The men were left with mixed feelings as to where their place in society was, how they should act, who they should be, and how their behaviour should reflect this.

Their identities had become a hybrid of pre, during and post imprisonment. The men discussed how they felt that they had been stamped with prison stigma, that the labels they were branded with would last a lifetime. As Price (2015) described, their identities were reduced to the crimes they had committed, which for some, overshadowed any other identity they internally aligned with. Although Price sees this as a negative attribute, a discredited existence, Jon and Stuart found that the label of being once convicted, although discrediting in most circles, proved to be a positive influence in others.

The reference to the circus in the title of Chapter 6 from Jon, and a quote from Clifford 'tears of a clown' are apt ways of thinking about how the men played out their identities in society. A circus is a collaboration of performers, in much the same way, the men performed as their audience (society) expected them to, on the 'front' stage (Goffman, 1990: 231), however, once the performance was over and the men contemplated themselves 'backstage' (Goffman, 1990: 246), or away from the situation, the tears of a clown became visible. Jon's words 'just because the monkey is off my back, doesn't mean that the circus has left town' acknowledges, that just because the men had left the prison, this did not mean that the prison had left them. This imposition caused physical, structural, and internal barriers to successful re-entry.

This chapter has highlighted that the pains of imprisonment (Sykes, 1958) which can filter into the pains of re-entry (Durnescu, 2019) do not only take the physical and structural forms discussed in earlier chapters, but also impart an unseen pain in the form of identity change. The majority of the men were at the beginning of

their re-entry journey and had yet to experience the stigma related to being older, and once convicted, however, the fear of potential repercussions of disclosing such a stigma proved to act as a barrier to successful re-entry. A combination of the barriers faced by the men led to a number of them living in a state of 'social death' (Price, 2015: 5). Living in a state of social death is the result of not just the stigma of age and conviction but also the result of institutional and systemic thoughtlessness influenced by a failure to acknowledge difference. The following chapter will explore these failures which have led to painful experiences reported by the men in this, and the previous three chapters. It will argue that if difference is not only acknowledged, but responded to, then the pains of re-entry endured could be mitigated, and in doing so, a better chance of successful re-entry could be achieved.

## Chapter 8: Indifference to Difference

### Introduction

This chapter provides a deeper analysis of the findings presented in the previous four chapters, critically considering the men's experiences through a lens which focuses on pain reduction. It will consider differing explanations for the experiences discussed in the previous four chapters and seek to understand the origins of the pain endured. It will argue that their pain, borne from a lack of acknowledgement and understanding of their age-related differences, should be recognised and failures should be acknowledged. When assessing failure, we must 'consider not only what is going wrong, but also what is required for remedy' (Scott, 2020: 213). Once explanations are highlighted, the chapter will explore potential remedies to this pain through specific recommendations, which if implemented, could provide a potential to reduce and mitigate where possible, the pains of re-entry. Combining existing literature on re-entry and ageing, the men's accounts, external explanations for pain, and potentials for remedy, this chapter will consider the wider social aspects of the men's reality, and consider how policies, practices and societal attitudes impacted on the individual men.

This chapter will be presented in three parts, all three parts considering specific age-related pain. The first part will consider the findings in relation to the pains endured during imprisonment, the second part will discuss the findings which related to pain experienced throughout the re-entry process and the third will analyse how these pains led to living freedom in a state of social death.

## **The Prison as a Painful Place**

Crawley (2005: 359) argued that 'imprisonment is experienced, at least initially, as a catastrophe, the point beyond which nothing can be the same again'. The findings indicate that the experiences of imprisonment resulted from a lack of awareness of difference, perpetrated by 'institutional thoughtlessness' (Crawley, 2005: 350), a lack of a specific age-related policy, which led to a lack of acknowledgement of difference, and the very nature of the prison environment which led to the pain of social death.

Crawley (2005) described institutional thoughtlessness as the result of the unintentional, unequal treatment of older prisoners. She argued that the harms caused are not intended by the criminal justice system, they are a product of its failure to recognise the older men's difference. The design of the prison regimes, much like the design of the fabric of the prison itself, increased the institutional thoughtlessness as the prison environment is designed for younger, more able-bodied men (Turner et al., 2018; Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons, 2019; Jackson, Doyle and Bartels 2020). When working with older prisoners the official aim is to 'encourage a regime where older prisoners have constructive time out of their cell that enables them to work towards betterment' (HM Prison and Probation Service, 2018: 12). A failure of this aim was evident from the men's experiences, and included a lack of purposeful activity, including appropriate employment and access to the gym, and a failure to prepare the men for release and re-entry either through an absence of appropriate information or a lack of access to, and training surrounding, connective technologies such as the internet.

Subjecting older men to the same regimes as the younger population equates to 'institutional thoughtlessness' (Crawley, 2005: 330) leading to them being marginalised, ignored, and forgotten due to their advanced age. They required an age specific regime which could provide purposeful activity which would be accessible, relevant, and meaningful. This is not only evident from the men's words in Chapter 4, but also the recognition from the HM Prison and Probation Service, (2018: 12) that, 'older prisoners' needs are sometimes overlooked'. Further to these arguments, prison officers can be seen as agents of thoughtlessness as prison officer culture fosters systemic indifference, ignoring the specific age-related differences of the older prison population, acting indifferent to difference. This was shown in the findings when Alf and Paul tried to speak with officers regarding their specific age-related needs, Alf stated, 'he wasn't listening, as I said, he's an officer' and Paul concurred, 'you try talking and they won't listen'.

One way to acknowledge difference in prison would be to recognise the specific needs of older prisoners by introducing policies for working with them which are specifically tailored to meet their age-related needs. Without this, older prisoners are expected to fit in with the existing prison policies yet, much like the regimes being designed with younger populations in mind (Cadet, 2022) so too are the policies. The findings highlighted that this induced further pain as Paul could not access the gym and Bernard was frustrated by the lack of technological education. A number of the men did complete activities which were perceived to be age appropriate, with Clifford and Anthony's employment consisting of putting sugar and tea in bags and cutting up celebration cards, and George passing the time

through matching. However, these activities can be described more as purposeless, than purposeful. This would suggest misplaced institutional thoughtfulness as these activities were perceived to be suitable for the men due to their age, however, they did little to alleviate boredom, leading to social inactivity and resulting in the arrested development of successful ageing.

Dilts, (2021: 198) argued that imprisonment can be 'diagnosed as an institution of social death' and Stearns, Swanson and Etie (2019: 153) argued that 'ameliorating social death in prison is a significant public policy issue'. Without such age aware strategies, the prison service perpetrates a double imposition of social death, which results in exclusion from wider society, but also, exclusion within the prison environment (Stearns, Swanson and Etie, 2019). This was evident from Robert's words, 'that is the biggest thing. In prison you couldn't see anything'. Robert stated that he had not seen the stars for nine years. The disconnection of experience (Filinson and Ciambone, 2019) with younger prisoners led to 'social death from the incarcerated society' (ibid: 155), Bernard stated, 'how can you have a conversation with someone who is twenty-eight-year-old?'. By nature, humans are 'social creatures' (Broome 2016: 49), with a need to connect, interact and socialise with others in order to live successful lives, and for older prisoners, to age successfully. If there is an absence of interaction and social isolation becomes the norm, a loss of identity can occur making it difficult to find a stable place in any setting, having no reference by which to judge particular situations (Stauffer, 2015). Having positive social interactions with others is important, not only to remain active and help pass the time of day, but also as Kurzban and Leary (2001: 187) highlighted, 'is essential for psychological and physiological health'.

Institutional thoughtlessness and a lack of age-specific policies do not fully explain the pain experienced whilst incarcerated. From an abolitionist perspective, the prison itself is the instigator of the pain endured. Scott (2020: 34) described prison environments as:

Nothing but soul-destroying pits of human misery that can lead to atrophy, stasis and suicidal thoughts and actions. The prison place is so inherently destructive to human life because it steals time from people; estranging them, day after day, from friends, families and loved ones; destroying hope and leaving prisoners vulnerable to violence and petty humiliations on a daily basis.

From an abolitionist perspective 'the penal system creates, rather than provides solutions to, social problems' (Scott, 2011: 194). This argument highlights that the imported social problems or harms faced by the men are not addressed in prison to attempt reform, but are either hidden behind the prison walls, or are created and exacerbated there. The findings concurred with this, shown through the men's accounts of imprisonment which highlighted the dehumanising, devaluing and traumatic treatment. Jon was 'very frightened', and a loss of control led David to be 'terrified'. Robert summarised, 'they dehumanise you' and Stuart concluded, 'the experience was harrowing'. Stuart stated that in prison he was treated like a 'nobody' and not treated like a 'human being'. Being reduced to less than human, is to live in social death. Living in a state of social death followed the men through the gates and diminished their chances of successful re-entry, as Price (2015: 16) argued 'Subhumans are not conceivable candidates for social inclusion'. Without social inclusion, successful re-entry is not achievable (Moore, 2016).

## **Abolition, Policy and Culture**

The ultimate response to reducing the pains of imprisonment would be the eradication of the prison itself. However, as Foucault (1995: 277) argued over four decades ago,

So successful has the prison been that, after a century and half of failures the prison still exists, producing the same results, and there is still the greatest reluctance to dispense with it.

This reluctance is still evident, as the opposite is taking place with the continuous expansion of the prison estate. This has led to an era of a ‘prison build revolution’ (Ministry of Justice, 2022) with the construction of HMP Fosse Way to be completed in 2023 and HMP Millsike to be built and operational by 2025 (HM Prison and Probation Service, 2023). As reluctance to abolish the prison is still evident, the only way to reduce the double burden of conviction and age-related pains in prison is to mitigate them where possible through the implementation of policy and a change in the working practices of the prison. The newly built HMP Five Wells has constructed an environment aimed at reducing the pains of imprisonment, where the men are called by their first names and referred to not as prisoners, but as residents, the cells are called rooms, the windows have no bars, and each prisoner will leave with a meaningful qualification (BBC News, 2022). If this culture was also accompanied by age-specific policy, there may be a possibility to create a less painful environment for older prisoners.

A national strategy for older prisoners is now in the inception phase (Government’s response to the House of Commons Justice Committee’s report,

2020b: point 6). It has taken almost two decades for successive governments to decide that 'now is the time' (Ibid.) following numerous calls (Crawley and Sparks, 2005; Ginn, 2012; HM Chief Inspectorate of Prisons, 2013; House of Commons Justice Committee, 2013; AGE UK, 2017; 2019; Turner et al 2018; House of Commons Justice Committee; 2013; 2020b; Ridley, 2022) for older age to be considered at a national policy level . As the Government announced that they are 'carrying out fieldwork for the strategy' (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2020b: point 6), this thesis offers a voice from below. Stuart stated:

I don't think that people over 50 should be put in prison. I look at it this way, when you've got a family, and you're a part of that network within your family, if you're in that pool in the family and you drop yourself, bang, into a pool of water, those ripples aren't just ripples, it becomes a tidal wave, and the waves go bigger and bigger. Because you're at the older end, you are part of a bigger family, so it affects more people. So the cost to society, this is where, again, I think that the policy makers and those who are working towards changing policy, they need to look at the wider issue, and the wider issue is, that when you put somebody in prison, especially if they've got a business and a job, they've lost their job, they've lost their income, the family then becomes reliant on benefits and it just goes on and on and on. The children have problems, it's not just one person being affected, it's massive, it's a lot bigger than they're actually aware. It's a bit like "oh we don't want to look at that, because it might just prick our conscience", and I think politicians need be aware that this punishment doesn't fit.

Stuart's explanation of the collateral consequences of imprisonment highlights that the systemic failures of the system are not just felt by the incarcerated but have wider reaching impacts on those around them and wider society. The Ministry of Justice (2021b: 62) had stated that the national strategy for older prisoners would be 'published in 2022', yet, to date, no strategy has emerged.

Reforming the culture and introducing a national strategy for older prisoners would not automatically abolish the pains of imprisonment or avert the crisis in prisons as the institution would still exist, however, it would go some way to addressing the 'institutional thoughtlessness' (Crawley, 2005: 350) and the current policy failures that the older men in this study experienced. It would provide a recognition of difference, something which to date has been sporadically attempted through localised initiatives and the inclusion of charitable organisations. It would go some way to address the pains highlighted by the men which were imparted by current formal arrangements such as the dehumanising procedures during entry into prison, the confusing nature of the prison regime, the inappropriateness of accommodation, the debilitating and degrading treatment, the dehumanising aspect of not being seen or heard and the lack of understanding by prison staff. The findings from this thesis suggest that for these areas to be addressed, the needs of older prisoners must be recognised and their difference must be acknowledged. If age related need was included in formalised policy, and adapted prison regimes were implemented, it would no longer be a lottery of treatment for older prisoners, their time could be more productive and meaningful, and they could be more prepared for release and re-entry. It could reduce the state of 'social death' (Price, 2015: 5), therefore enabling them to leave prison, not being doubly disadvantaged due to their age, but on a level playing field, ready to face re-entry.

Stuart suggested that prison is not a place fit for those classed as older offenders,

Anybody over 50 entering prison is vulnerable, more likely to be affected psychologically because they are more susceptible and not in a physical

position to be able to fight back, and I actually do think that prison is the worst place for anybody over 50, it's a very unsafe situation to be in, a very dangerous position to be in.

As the men's accounts have shown, prison did little to prepare them for re-entry, it created new problems and made existing problems worse. Ekunwe (2011) argued that those in prison should be in a better position on the day of release, than they were on the day of entry. This was true for a number of the men, as Clifford noted, '[it]made me the person I am now. I am a lot better person than I was'. Alec also had a positive experience, '[i]t's saved me really to tell the truth, I know it's not meant to do that, it's meant to be punishment... That's what I needed; I really needed that I think'. For Alec, Jon and Bernard their time in prison had saved them from their past addictions to drugs and alcohol. Amid the negative impacts that imprisonment had on the men, it was encouraging to hear these positive accounts, however, the advancements they had made and the achievements they had gained during their time in prison were put in jeopardy due to a lack of support when released.

As the literature on punishment and the findings from the men's words have shown the prison is a painful place. When prisoners are released, they need rehabilitation, not due to the crimes they have committed, but due to the pain endured whilst incarcerated. This time of healing should be supportive, positive, and pro social, however, as the findings in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 have shown, the re-entry experience was laden with the pains of freedom.

## Living in Freedom

One of the original pains of imprisonment was losing freedom (Sykes, 1958), however, as the findings of this thesis have shown, greater pains were suffered by the men, when *gaining* freedom. Older men face 'additional burdens' (Valera et al., 2017: 426) and barriers to re-entry, the double burden encountered whilst in prison, is compounded upon release leading to those once convicted to suffer a 'double whammy' (Stojkovic, 2007: 98-99), which equates to an increase in the abuse of older, once convicted men. The lack of attention to their unique differences compared to younger populations in the re-entry process fuelled this (Stojkovic 2007: 108).

The findings indicate that the experiences of re-entry resulted from a lack of awareness of age-related difference, perpetrated by 'systemic thoughtlessness' (Cadet, 2020: 126), a lack of a specific age-related policy in supervision practices, and an unaccepting society. The final point will be discussed further below, the discussions here will consider the impacts of systemic thoughtlessness and supervision on the men's re-entry journeys.

Cadet (2020: 126) argued that older probation clients face 'systemic thoughtlessness' which she described as 'not having their daily needs and activities considered in a framework of delivering supervision'. This explanation aligns with the findings as they have highlighted that due to age related issues, a lack of structure when released left the men in an abyss of freedom, having to manage their own time, actions, and behaviours in an effort to successfully (re) integrate into society and the communities within it. The transition from a rigid

prison regime to the openness of freedom, brought challenges that the men had not been prepared for and created 'tensions' (McKendy and Ricciardelli, 2021: 4) which impacted on re-entry. The increased autonomy and the restoration of liberty should have been a positive position to be in, however this did not prove to be the case, as Bernard explained, 'you are exposed' this was exposure to freedom without the protection of the prison walls. When this exposure was combined with not having their 'needs and activities considered' (Cadet, 2020: 126), supposed stabilising factors became structural barriers to re-entry. The literature surrounding re-entry highlighted that positive family connections, gaining employment and finding suitable accommodation are all stabilising factors. Further to this, residing in an AP or being under supervision are both described as support in the transition from prison to community. The findings from the men's words indicate that when unobtainable or problematic, these stabilising factors increased vulnerability and led to the 'pain of instability' (Durnescu, 2019: 1489), becoming structural barriers to re-entry, making the adjustments to an alien world (Seiter and Kadela, 2003) more difficult to accomplish.

The level of adjustment required differed for the men and was largely dependent on the time spent in prison (Stojkovic 2007). The length of their sentences varied, and although the level of adjustment required was different, shared experiences, which led to difficulties in re-entry, were prevalent (Weijters and More, 2015). As the men felt that they had to adjust to (re) integrate into society signifies, that they had undergone a substantial change whilst incarcerated. Due to their internal changes, they had become disconnected from the societal positions they once held, in terms of their roles and place with family and friendships (Wyse 2018:

2161), and they faced a changed society which, for some, was unrecognisable. The findings have shown that although the sentence lengths differed from 2.5 months to 33 years, all the men endured pains when attempting to adjust to life beyond the bars. This is important as the length of sentence alone cannot predict need. Existing literature highlights that the longer the sentence, the more difficult the adjustment can be when released (Munn, 2011a; Appleton, 2010). Although this was the case for Clifford and John, others, such as Jon, who had served one of the shortest sentences, found that his pre-prison life was unrecognisable when compared to his life after prison.

Adjusting to a new situation can be difficult for any age of prisoner, but it can pose increased challenges for older, once convicted men (Yeager, 2012). Adjustment became difficult due to the continued imposition of the prison in the men's lives once released. The 'prisonization' (Clemmer, 1940: 315) left the men facing obstacles when negotiating freedom and as Shamma (2014) found, led to the time after imprisonment being viewed as troubling. John could not comprehend freedom before being released,

33 years inside you can't think of anything else other than being institutionalised. Your whole life revolves around prison, so I never saw a life on the outside and when my sister started telling me there was a life outside, I didn't quite believe her.

When John experienced this life, the prison remained ingrained in his thoughts and actions, and he described his flat in terms of the size of a cell. This was also evident from David's actions where he replicated living in a cell by moving all his belongings into one room. These issues arose in part, due to an absence of support

before release. O'Connor (2014) argued that pre-release planning is crucial for the physical re-entry journey, especially when the men are released and step through the gates, as La Vigne et al. (2008: 2) argued, this specific time can 'make or break' the chances of successful re-entry.

Much of the existing literature argues that supportive family connections are paramount to successful re-entry (Markson et al., 2015) however, as highlighted in Chapter 5, having a strong family bond can also be a disadvantage, increasing, not decreasing the pains of re-entry. In line with the existing literature, Jon experienced a severed family connection with his daughter due to his incarceration, and Anthony, George, Alf and Paul lost connections with all family members due to their offences being of a sexual nature. The loss of connection with those who can provide support is part of what it means to live in a state of social death (Price, 2015). Jon, Anthony, George, Alf and Paul all felt this pain due to their families choosing to be disconnected, however, Bernard still endured this pain, but this was his own choice due to a strong family bond, not a weakened one.

Friendships could replace lost family connections, however, these relationships also induced pain. Paul was given a taste of a social network when he attended the SOTP meetings, but when he left the centre, he also left his social network behind. Jon found a social network, however, this consisted of other once convicted men, which although beneficial to him, 'I trust them with my life', this network would act as a constant reminder of his time in prison. For Clifford, David, and Stuart, this would not be a positive social network as they wanted to forget

the life they led in prison, but as Jon had internalised and accepted his stigmatized identity and was using it as a positive to help others, this network, who shared his beliefs and values proved to be not an instigator of social death, but an enabler of social life.

A further support which became a barrier was employment. The existing literature highlighted that gaining employment can increase stability (Mills and Codd, 2008), however the findings show that this element of re-entry led to an arena where stigma was manifested (Munn, 2011b). The findings in Chapter 5 concurred with this as Paul found, 'for sex offenders no. There's a stigma to it'. Paul also found that 'they go on experience', and his time in prison had prevented him from gaining this required element. Issues arose due to age, as George stated, 'I'm 75, you've no chance', and the stigma attached to their status of being once convicted, with Bernard stating 'a criminal record does hold you back' all became barriers to this supposed supportive element of re-entry. Mills and Grimshaw (2012: 75) argued that 'a diminished life without opportunities to find meaningful work or form relationships cannot be considered as reintegrated'. Moses (2007: 350) argued that when considering age and employment it is important to recognise that further to providing financial stability in order to survive, it can also be 'an expression of social contribution'. Having employment would increase the men's social inclusion and their self-worth and enable them to defy the social stereotypes of being old and a burden on the public purse (Bratt et al., 2018). It would ensure that their lives would not to be framed by a narrative of dependence but seen through a socially included paradigm where they could contribute to

society. However, due to the social injustice perpetrated by applied or perceived stigma due to incarceration, the men were unable to attain this social standing.

The existing literature highlighted that gaining suitable accommodation could reduce reoffending (Baldry et al., 2002) and is crucial to successful re-entry (Stojkovic, 2007). However, attempting to gain this stabilising factor, was impeded by structural barriers. As shown by the findings, the most positive discussions surrounded having a home to go to, as Alf stated, 'I still had my flat you see. There was no problem', and the most negative reports centring around being released to NFA, and life in the AP. Residing in the APs increased the pains of 'ambiguity' (Shammas, 2014: 113) as the 'taste of freedom' (Shammas, 2014: 113) that an AP provided, was bittersweet, they were 'free but still walking the yard' (Martin, 2018: 672), they had 'progressed beyond release but not to freedom' (McNeill, 2019a: 130). The APs did not provide a supportive, transitional environment. George stated that he could not begin his re-entry journey whilst residing in the AP. Jon also found that the AP was an unsafe environment for him to begin his re-entry journey in, due to the availability of alcohol, which increased the pain of 'temptation' (Durnescu, 2019: 1493). When residing in an AP, the men were no longer in prison, however, remnants of the prison remained. For Alec, the structure that was designed to support him, added to the barriers to re-entry as he stated, 'this is still like prison. Its ok here, you get your own room, and telly, but that's the cell again, isn't it?', and Robert concurred, 'I'm ok here, I just can't wait to get out, its worse than prison'. Robert summarised life in the AP, 'I am a prisoner, I'm just being kept in a different kind of box now'. The imposition of the

rules and regulations in the AP proved to be more of a barrier to re-entry, than a support in transition.

Further unmet age-related needs were evident in the findings surrounding advancing technologies. Jon stated 'technology moves on. I didn't know anything about mobile phones and things like that'. Alec also found new technology to be bewildering, 'now everything is online, I've never used a computer in my life. A smart phone, what's one of them?' and Robert stated, 'I've never seen a touch screen phone, I'm looking for buttons'. Without knowledge or support, navigating the technological world increased the pains of re-entry. An example of this was seen when Alf tried to navigate online housing applications as he stated, 'I need someone to help me'. The absence of this support equated to systemic thoughtlessness which led to a reduction in the ability to obtain stabilising factors such as finding and applying for accommodation, navigating the benefits system, searching for employment, and being socially connected with friends and family. Reisdorf and Rikard (2018: 1280) argued that the 'digital realm could contribute to successful reentry [sic]; yet the digital realm is not currently considered in reentry [sic] practices and theories'.

A further support mechanism which did not fulfil its purpose was being supervised in the community. Although being under supervision did provide an element of routine, this did not result in stability as Alec described constant supervision as having the 'big brother effect'. Even when the outcome of supervision was positive, as in Jon and Alf's cases, the pains were still prevalent, their benefit only coming once the pain had been inflicted, as McNeill (2019a: 122) argued, 'even

when supervision is positive and productive, it still hurts'. He argued that these are 'pains associated as much with civic degradation as with penal discipline' (ibid: 224). This was seen through one of the main pains discussed relating to the opportunities to change and move on from their time in prison. Both David and Stuart felt that their chances of turning their lives around had been weakened, as supervision acted as a constant reminder of where they had been, what they had done, and an identity they were trying to leave behind. If, as claimed by the NPS and CRCs their aim was to change the men, their practices were counterproductive as they either kept the men in the 'same position' (David) as they were released in, or if they had begun to make changes, 'dragging us back to where we've been' (Stuart). This systemic failure and barrier to re-entry was summarised by Stuart, 'How can you forget when they won't let you forget...? How can you grow when they won't let you grow...? How can we move on if you won't allow us to move on?'

Due to the restrictive nature of being under supervision, Stuart felt that changes were required:

Probation and the whole structure that the MOJ, needs to reform, the criminal justice system needs to reform because it's not working. I said, "until somebody accepts that, and stops making the same mistakes". I said "it's a failing system but nobody's prepared to admit it. Until the public are made aware of the cost to them and how ineffective it is and that there are alternative ways that the government aren't prepared to look at that would mean that it would save thousands per person". I said "I don't mean that personally to you [probation officer] because you're a good guy, your hearts in the right place, but you're also entrenched in the system.

Further to Stuart's account here, he also referred to feeling like a 'money train', and that the capitalist agenda that underpinned privatised supervision was the main focus of the CRCs, and due to this, he was being supervised for longer, so that more money could be made from him. Ortiz and Jackey (2019) argued that the neoliberal practices of the privatisation of supervision had shifted the focus from rehabilitation to profit. The questions surrounding the legitimacy of commodifying the pains of re-entry (Carr and Robinson, 2021) have been partially answered by the decision to bring supervision practices back under the remit of the NPS. The CRC contacts were terminated earlier than expected due to the reports of numerous failures (Annison, 2018; Collett, 2019; Taylor et al., 2017; Walker, Annison and Beckett, 2019). However, for the men, their interactions with the CRCs and the Probation Service were framed by systemic thoughtlessness, where their age-related needs were not recognised.

Hayes (2018) found that a positive relationship with probation workers led to a more positive attitude towards successful re-entry, however as highlighted in Chapter 6, Bernard saw the only point of probation was to tick bureaucratic boxes. The NPS probation officer did not recognise his individual circumstances, and in response to this, Bernard told them what they needed to hear to complete their paperwork. His responses were not a true representation of his situation, therefore, nothing productive, or beneficial could result from the probation meetings. Probation officers who were part of the CRCs were found to spend more time meeting targets and completing paperwork than they did assessing the needs of individuals (HM Inspectorate of Probation and HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2017). Mark experienced this and found that this was one of the reasons he had

found charitable support to be more beneficial in his re-entry, 'I don't give a fuck about the politics of it, but that's all they give a fuck about, the politics, ACE cares about the person'. The differentiation made by Mark was echoed by the other men, the NPS and the CRCs existed to tick boxes with a 'blank face' (McNeill, 2019b: 224), and the charity workers provided the support the men needed during their re-entry journey.

A lack of an official policy for working with older men on probation goes some way to explaining how their difference was not recognised and their needs were not addressed. Further to a lack of official policy, was the differing and at times, conflicting policies of the CRCs and the Probation Service. When the CRC contacts were terminated, all those under their supervision and all staff working under their banner were allocated to the now unified Probation Service. Although the failures associated with the CRCs have now been abolished due to the termination of contacts, there will now be issues facing a unified Probation Service which may impact on the experience of older, once convicted men in the future. HM Inspectorate of Probation (2022: 15) noted '51% of probation staff found their workload 'not so manageable' and when surveying probation staff, it was also found that 'just over half said that they had sufficient access to services to meet the needs of people on probation' (ibid: 6). As there are no official policies that highlight the specific needs of older once convicted men, the needs described here would be the basic needs that probationers of any age would need to be met. If just over half of these are not being met it is difficult to see how any additional needs of older, once convicted men could be considered.

## **Enhanced Screening, Policy and Time**

In the absence of policy, Cadet (2022) provided a number of recommendations which, if implemented, could begin to reduce the systemic thoughtlessness of probation practices by increasing knowledge and awareness of older probationers. She (ibid: 12) further argued that there are a number of existing approaches used within the existing 'probation toolkit' which have 'clear synergies with good practice in gerontology', suggesting that the implementation of recommendations is a realistic and achievable goal.

Cadet (2020: 14) suggested an 'enhanced screening of needs', and further to this, better communication between agencies in order to meet older probationers' specific needs. The findings from this thesis support the recommendation of 'enhanced screening of need' as they have shown the very differing needs the men had, making a one size fits all approach due to chronological age inappropriate. In theory, enhanced screening and better communication would increase the probation officer's awareness of specific needs and enable more age-related practices to be implemented. However, for this to be undertaken thoroughly and effectively, more time would need to be invested by staff, and as seen since the unification of probation, this is not a realistic endeavour at present due to already unmanageable workloads. This could be partially rectified if partnerships could be developed with 'voluntary and community organisations who work with older people' (Cadet, 2022: 14). As highlighted in the findings, one of the key areas of disjunction was through the differing practices of the charitable and organisational bodies, and the discussion surrounding the 'ownership' of the men. Working

alongside and collaborating with organisations and charities who specialise in support for older people would firstly increase knowledge surrounding specific age-related issues, and secondly, could ease the burden on the already overstretched Probation Service workforce, enabling more time to be invested in providing an enhanced screening. Cadet's (2022) recommendation to create an evidence base surrounding the needs of older probationers could also be enhanced by those who have experience of working with older people such as the charities Age UK, Restore Support Network, and the ACE Project. The findings have shown how reliant the men were on support from different charities, finding them to provide more care, guidance, and practical support than the NPS or the CRCs, and a number of the men attributed the successful aspects of their re-entry to these charities. Further to this, Jon's account of support highlighted the benefits of collaboration between different specialist groups.

Adopting an 'age first' (Cadet, 2022: 14) approach should be taken when working with older people on probation which would help to acknowledge the areas where the men faced challenges due to their age. The findings from this thesis support the recommendation for an 'age first' approach but also suggest that there is a need to take 'multiple stigmatized identities' (LeBel, 2012: 77) into account, and ensure that chronological age is not solely relied upon, as this does not always indicate need. This was presented in Chapter 4 where through misplaced institutional thoughtfulness, Jon was given the bottom bunk due to his age. The perceived good intentions, or thoughtfulness of the officer, led to Jon feeling disadvantaged due to his age, not advantaged as Jon perceived it was intended. Drawing on Bramhall's (2012: 242) 'age-neutrality' argument in applying a blanket

age first approach, this thesis suggests that the 'defining characteristic' of the group of once convicted men aged 50 and over should not be their chronological age, but their difference. The men's ages ranged from 50 to 75 and although they had shared experiences, the difference within their ages led to different thoughts, behaviours and need in re-entry.

As the men's experiences of prison followed them through the prison gates, it is hoped that following the introduction of the national strategy for older prisoners, this too could follow the men through the gates, with an aim to reducing the hidden injuries beyond the bars. The implementation of policy, however, would not fully address the stigma that arises as a collateral consequence of imprisonment, or the social death that results from not being seen as fully human. These points will be discussed further below.

When assessing the re-entry needs of older, once convicted men, they must be afforded more time to complete practical elements of probation such as accredited programmes or having to leave APs. The accounts of the challenges faced by the men provides a strong argument that they cannot be expected to undertake these elements in the same timeframe as younger probationers. Being afforded more time would allow the older men the space they need to navigate the 'real world' (Clifford), not just due to the time that they had spent in prison, but also due to the more complex issues surrounding coping with change in old age (Nieto et al., 2020). John had been released for 4 years, however he stated that it was only in the 'past few months' that he had begun to 'enjoy life'.

Implementing a policy in the community for working with released older prisoners again, would not remove the pain they endured following imprisonment; however, it would be one step closer to a reduction in such pain, the final jigsaw piece being societal acceptance. If the men are not accepted by society, the harm inflicted cannot be reduced, and their chances of successful re-entry are diminished.

Even when the barriers to successful re-entry had been reduced or mitigated, the men still encountered a society which at times proved to be unaccepting of once convicted men returning to it. Over two decades ago, Codd and Bramhall (2002: 32) argued that 'an awareness of older offenders is an essential element of any probation strategy aiming at implementing anti-discriminatory practice'. Twenty years later, Cadet (2022) argued the same point. The findings of this research have shown that discriminatory and ageist practices still exist, and the stark warnings of the necessity of the probation service to address 'policies, practice and service provision' voiced by Codd and Bramhall (2002: 32) have not been heeded. As these areas had not been addressed, the men's experiences during re-entry led to them living in freedom, in a state of social death.

### **Living Freedom in Social Death**

The findings throughout this thesis, and as particularly demonstrated in Chapter 7, have highlighted that the men encountered stigma, and the resulting discrimination, abuse, pain, and social death throughout their re-entry journeys. This stigma was not always accepted and internalised, the labels they were branded with did not result in the same experiences for all the men and social

death was experienced in a number of guises. Their attitudes towards the labels differed and were dependent on the individual, situational contexts. The labels were either accepted and internalised, accepted and rejected, contested, or used as an instigator of change.

The men discussed how they felt that they had been stamped with prison stigma, that the labels they were branded with would last a lifetime. As Price (2015) described, the identities that they internally aligned with were overshadowed by and reduced to the crimes they had committed. Stuart stated, 'I don't want to live with it, but I have to, I have no option'. The men's accounts of stigma, and the resulting prejudice and discrimination, whether this was experienced or perceived, was borne from their time in prison. Price (2015: 5) argued that 'to be sentenced to prison is to be sentenced to social death'. The status of being socially dead following imprisonment was derived from the labels applied to the men, and the impact this had on their ability to live in freedom.

David wanted to give something back to society, to 'change someone's life'. Transforming his actions could lead to restoring his reputation, as the view of him would pertain more to his reformation from 'othered criminal', to being more accepted in society. If his label changed, then so too could his identity standard (Keith and Scheuerman, 2018). Stuart and Jon also found that they too could help others, however, they did not want to change their identity, they embraced their stigmatized status, using it to change the narrative surrounding the label, and the resulting stigma of being a once convicted man. Jon and Stuart used the labels applied to them in a positive way, becoming 'professional ex's' (Brown, 1991: 219)

in order to help others, and prevent them having to have the same painful experiences that they had endured.

Older age had changed a number of the men's priorities for, and their attitudes to life. Bernard spoke about how his outlook on life was unrecognisable in comparison to his thoughts, behaviours and attitudes as a younger man; how now he could see a crime free, stable life and as Bernard summarised 'it is beautiful'. Many of the priorities the men described do not align with the those of younger probationers, such as finding employment, as a number of the men were past retirement age, and connections with family, as the findings have shown that due to age and conviction, many family ties had been weakened or altogether destroyed, and this must be recognised at policy level. In order to further understand the changes in priorities due to age, Cadet (2022: 14) proposed an 'enhanced screening' for priorities when working with older people on probation. Cadet (2022: 14) considered the implementation of a 'systematic approach' for recognising and 'responding to the diverse and intersectional needs' of older probation clients. This would include an investment into further research to develop the most suitable age-related approaches. The findings from this thesis have highlighted that one way of gathering this research should be through speaking to the older men on probation themselves. This point is important, and it is essential to consider Guenther's (2013: 255) argument, 'no one can directly experience the world as an other'.

The change in attitudes and priorities was intrinsically entwined with the men's identity. They remained in a liminal state (Nugent and Schinkel, 2016; Durnescu,

2019) when released from prison, their identity neither aligning with their prison, or pre-prison selves. The 'discrediting attribute' (Goffman, 1963: 3) of conviction, coupled with the negative connotations of old age (Rowe and Kahn, 1998) led to the men being marginalised and socially excluded. Identity should be a consideration when working with older, once convicted men, and it would be sensible to heed the words of Maruna (2004: 13), 'including ex-prisoners in the physical community without re-integrating them into the moral or social community hardly seems a recipe for success'. The goal of re-entry is that the men can live in a society where they are not stigmatized, disadvantaged, marginalised and Othered due to either their time in prison, their age, or a combination of the two. An alleviation of prison and re-entry pain and an abolishment of social death would contribute to this; however, this cannot be achieved if their physical re-entry needs are met, yet the internal aspect of identity is ignored.

Price (2015: 115) argued that social death is 'permanent, or nearly permanent'. Acknowledging the 'nearly' in Price's definition, suggests that social death can be overturned if already imparted, or as social death results from needless treatment, it does not need to happen. Gordon (2011 cited in Krăvolă, 2015: 246) furthered this by stating that social death is 'something we do that can and must be stopped'. If social death is an infliction which can be remedied, the question posed by Guenther (2013: 254) 'what would it take to come back to life after centuries of social death and its avatars?' must be considered. As social death is a socially constructed concept, the first place to start would be with society. Price (2015: 140) argued that social inclusion can 'stave off' social death, however, for older, once convicted people to be socially included, they must be accepted by society.

For men to be fully (re) integrated into society, they must be accepted within it, and for them to be accepted, they must not be stigmatized, disadvantaged, and abused due to their status of being once convicted, coupled with their advanced age. The findings, however, do not show that the men felt that they had entered a society which understood either their status of being once convicted, or the difficulties that advanced age can impart. Paul was the victim of stigma infused abuse when he had a gate bolt thrown through his window following his return to his community. Paul believed that this was due to his offence, which would align with the arguments from Roberts et al. (2003) that sexual offences provoke the greatest condemnation of all criminal acts. When discussing being a prisoner, Alec stated, 'it's just normal people who have done wrong, but you can't say that to the public, it won't wash with people.' This aligns with the arguments of Novo-Corti and Barreiro-Gen (2015: 453) who state that there is a general distrust of 'former prisoners' in society. Further to this Stuart believed that:

People look down on prisoners like they are scum, they are nothing. It's a bit like your previous life is of no value, your previous opinions and your previous good behaviour, has got no bearing whatsoever, and that's society, it's not a good society that, it's a terrible society.

If challenged, dominant perceptions could be altered and an environment which provided an opportunity for older men to be accepted could be created. Codd (2020: 1) argued that age friendly communities should be 'spaces, places, and communities where people of all ages are valued, engaged, and facilitated to live active lives', and Steele, Kidd and Castano (2015: 21) argued that the 'inclusion condition' should be the default position, 'we expect to be seen, acknowledged, and included'. For the 'inclusion condition' to become a reality, a greater

understanding of the age-related needs of those once convicted must take place. This would include two elements, societal perceptions of those once convicted being overturned, and the impact of age in re-entry would need to be understood. The observation stage of this research included attending an elderly care home with the MAP group. They presented a workshop to the residents surrounding the realities of imprisonment and release. On entry, the men were viewed with caution and suspicion, seen in the hushed tones, quiet whispers, and sideways glances of the elderly residents. Following the workshop, the same residents sat with the men and discussed how they were shocked by their stories of how they came to be incarcerated, and the plights they had faced since being released. They brought the men cups of tea and offered words of condolence. This change in attitude and behaviour came with knowledge, the stereotypes of once convicted men were broken down and they could be seen beyond their convictions. This example can partly answer the question posed by Bain and Parkinson (2010: 71) ““At what point does an “offender” experience the ‘de-labelling’ which would enable them to become nothing more than a “human being”?””. This example suggests, and this thesis argues that increased knowledge and understanding of the lived experiences of older, once convicted men, could be the starting point of being emancipated from social death.

Cadet (2022: 14) recommended that when working with older people, there is a need to ‘celebrate the experiences, skills and strengths of older people on probation’ to help during the re-entry process and to ‘challenge ageist stereotypes’. This recommendation could address the challenges the men faced due to a combination of advanced age and a conviction-related stigma. The

findings in Chapter 7 have shown that issues relating to identity caused many problems throughout all areas of re-entry and in particular in decisions surrounding the disclosure of the concealable stigma of a criminal past. If the stigma surrounding this could be reduced, by celebrating older, once convicted men's strengths, rather than viewing them as a burden (Select Committee of the House of Lords on Public Service and Demographic Change, 2013) it would go some way to changing how the men saw themselves and their 'identity standard' (Keith and Scheuerman, 2018: 578), could become one of positivity rather than stigma-infused social death.

## **Conclusion**

As Codd (2020: 10) described the inclusion of older, once convicted people in age friendly communities, as an 'almost utopian vision', it is acknowledged that a reduction or mitigation of social death would not be an easy task, and to be seen completely disconnected from stigma may not be possible. Goffman (1963) considered the possibility of the stigmatised person making an attempt to rectify the situation that has led to their label. He argued that when such an attempt is made, the individual does not transcend into a 'fully normal status', they are viewed as 'someone with a record of having corrected a particular blemish' (ibid: 9).

The stigma of a criminal conviction is painful, but when this is coupled with prison time and being older, the pains of re-entry are increased. If imprisonment was experienced differently, the re-entry experience would too be different. Drawing on Shammas' (2014) discussion of open prisons in Scandinavia, the penal policies

and approach to punishment provide re-entry benefits that far outweigh those in England and Wales. They acknowledge that these types of open prison inflict 'pains of freedom', highlighting that there will always be an element of pain associated with punishment, but it is the contextual application of that pain and the outcomes it produces that are important, not the intentional or unintentional infliction of pain itself.

Living to an advanced age is an accomplishment within our society (Moses, 2007), however, if we fail to recognise the difference ageing can make during re-entry, we welcome, accommodate, and connive at the acts of discrimination, institutional and systemic thoughtlessness, social injustice, and the abuse the men in this study were subjected to. We enable the pains of re-entry to become legitimate responses as the focus on punishment prevails. If we ignore this marginalised and forgotten group, if we do not attempt to mitigate pain and therefore social death, we create a society which ignores and forgets those most vulnerable within it.

## Chapter 9: Living Freedom in Social Death: Conclusions and the Future

### Introduction

The aim of this research was to critically analyse the pains of post imprisonment for men aged 50 and over in the North-West of England. The semi structured interviews, conducted with men who were supervised by the NPS and CRCs, were undertaken to bring to light their re-entry experiences by exploring the lived realities of re-entry to expose the hidden injuries beyond the bars. The purpose of the research was twofold, to give the men a platform on which they could share their experiences and have them heard as meaningful and legitimate accounts of their re-entry journeys, and to explore the need for specific age-related policies to be implemented. Unveiling the men's experiences, which were fused with barriers to successful re-entry, such as pain, stigma, exclusion, and social death, enabled a contribution to the relatively neglected research area of the relationship between older age and re-entry and provided the evidence needed to support the call for an age-related strategy for working with older men in re-entry. As highlighted in Chapter 3, hearing the voices of those who had experienced re-entry in old age was paramount to the research as anyone who has not been through this process cannot claim to articulate the real lived experiences and the impact that they had on the chances of successfully re-entry. It was important to hear all the men's accounts, the good, the bad and the indifferent, to accurately provide evidence that their specific age-related needs required the attention and guidance that a national policy could bring. As discussed in Chapter 8, the introduction of policy

would not automatically reduce the pains of imprisonment, or the pains of re-entry, however, in the absence of prison abolition, and the building of a more accepting society, the introduction of policy is an achievable and more realistic aim which could be implemented in the shorter term.

Through the resurrection of 'subjugated knowledges' (Foucault, 1997: 7), this thesis has brought to light the painful relationship between older men and the re-entry process, unveiling how their lived realities, moulded by imprisonment, and tainted by socially constructed stigmas, negatively impacted their chances of successfully re-entering society following incarceration, which resulted in a state of social death.

### **Overview of the Thesis**

The opening chapters of the thesis provided a context for the findings chapters by firstly exploring the social construction of old age. This was a crucial starting point as the theme of identity, which was impacted by their age, was woven through the men's accounts. The literature indicated that in the current ageing society, perceptions of old age are evolving. The men's accounts aligned at times with dominant perceptions rooted in dependency, highlighting the physical ailments that perceptions of old age so often depict, however, given the heterogeneous of the men, not all thoughts, actions and behaviours aligned with this stereotype of old age.

Following discussions which contextualised the thesis, the literature surrounding the pains of punishment was explored. This included an exploration of the

meaning of social death, highlighting the appropriateness of using this lens to frame the men's experience given that it results from pain and the treatment of stigma infused identities. The methodology, methods and ethical considerations were then presented, paying particular attention to the mitigation of risk to address the vulnerabilities of the men. My positionality was also an area of importance due to the potential for my biography to impact the findings of the research.

The following four chapters depicted the men's accounts of their experience, beginning with their entry into prison and their experiences of incarceration. The men's accounts of imprisonment largely aligned with the existing literature on older prisoners, confirming many of the findings of Crawley (2004) and Crawley and Sparks (2005), however it also showed that when age is used to assess need, this can result in misplaced institutional thoughtfulness. Chapter 5 was the first chapter to present the men's lived experiences of re-entry, situating these within the pathways to resettlement. This chapter highlighted the enormity of re-entry shock, as the men contemplated a life of freedom. The term bereavement aptly described the vast arena of complexities that the men faced. Experiencing bereavement whilst living in social death led to the pain of being subject to a sentence, after a sentence. Following this, chapter 6 explored the relationship between age and supervision. This chapter provided the strongest evidence for the need for a national age-related strategy to be implemented. It highlighted the difficulties of living partially under control and partially free, however it also showed a limited appreciation for supervision, one of the few positive experiences of re-entry. Chapter 7 focused on the men's identities and showed how

debilitating the application of stigma could be. The decisions surrounding disclosure of a criminal past highlighted the difficult decisions that needed to be considered and the potential for the outcome of these decisions to shape re-entry. Chapter 8 outlined that an indifference to difference underpinned the men's experiences of imprisonment and re-entry. It did not focus solely on failure but sought to provide remedies which could go some way to reducing the pain, stigma, and social death that the men experienced.

### **Key Findings and Theoretical Implications**

It is in the nuances that this thesis has highlighted, that an original contribution to knowledge has been made. A number of the findings concur with existing literature surrounding imprisonment, re-entry and ageing, however a number of areas of the men's experience are in opposition to the existing literature. One of the original pains of imprisonment was *losing* freedom (Sykes, 1958), however, as the findings and the analysis in Chapter 8 have shown, *gaining* freedom, also meant the imposition of pain.

The meaning of re-entry lived in social death in an ageing context has not before been explored. Viewing the experiences of elder re-entry through a lens of social death has combined the perspectives of social exclusion due to a criminal conviction with the social exclusion due to advanced age and has shown that the state of being doubly dead causes pain. Existing theories of social death have considered the displacement of varying groups of people, such as the elderly, refugees, and those in slavery (Krăvolă, 2015), however, this is the first study to consider older, once convicted prisoners through this lens. Combining this with

the pain of living in freedom (Shammas, 2014) has created a perspective of the 'social death of freedom'. An underpinning theme throughout the thesis was the reality of specific need not being recognised or acknowledged. In acting as agents of thoughtlessness, those working within the prison and probation perpetrated and allowed the pain associated with freedom to transcend into the realm of social death. As social death begins whilst still incarcerated, being released, and living in freedom, could also be described as the 'afterlife of social death'. Various religions view the afterlife as a time of pleasure, or pain. The findings indicate that for the men, pain prevailed, however, this pain could be reduced if they could be seen, heard, understood, and accepted.

At present, the possibilities of reform in prison and probation practices and within society exist in the '*dream space*' (Scott: 2020: 213) where it is possible to imagine what re-entry without social death would look like. Changes in prison and probation practices could transcend this place of possibility and become a lived reality if the 'contradictions and inconsistencies between the rhetoric of penal policy and actual practice' (Scott, 2020: 53) can not only be brought to light but acted upon to reduce institutional and systemic thoughtlessness (Crawley, 2005; Cadet, 2020), and social death (Price, 2015). If knowledge was increased, the awaited national strategy for older prisoners implemented, and the recommendations by Cadet (2022) accepted, a combination of the three could decrease the painful experiences of re-entry for older men and provide a resurrection of the socially dead.

## **Limitations and the Potential for Future Research**

As research surrounding the lived experiences of re-entry for older, once convicted men in England and Wales is limited, this research has made an important contribution to the understandings of the experiences of this ignored, marginalised, and forgotten group. However, that is not to say that this research is not without its limitations.

A methodological limitation was the relatively small sample of older, once convicted men in the study, which can limit the generalisation of the findings. As discussed in Chapter 3, identification of this hard-to-reach population, combined with the reluctance of the CRC to participate meant that more experiences of those under this supervision could not be found. A number of the men were also asked to participate by those supervising them and this could have prevented them from participating. Further limitations surrounded the generalisability of the findings, as older, once convicted men who were no longer under supervision were not included in the research, and although the sample appeared to be representative of certain demographic characteristics, it cannot be confirmed that representations were made of the full population of older, once convicted men. Given that the NPS were accommodating in providing participants, it is hoped that a unified Probation Service would provide the same courtesy, enabling future researchers to have access to a larger cohort of participants.

A physical limitation was that the experiences highlighted by the men could have been shaped by the small geographical area that they were recruited from, as only one area in the North-West of England was accessed. Future research could be

conducted in different regions to assess if the post code lottery style delivery in prisons and throughout probation made a difference to the findings. Different regions also have different charities that work with older, once convicted men, which could have an impact on their re-entry experience. An example of this would be the Restore Support Network who are based in the South-West of England<sup>29</sup>. They not only help and support older, once convicted men, but they also carry out research in this field to ensure that they provide the most suitable support. This level of understanding of age-related needs was not available to the men in this study, and this could have negatively impacted on their experiences.

An intersectional limitation was that the study only focused on older, once convicted men. Future research could replicate this study, but consider the needs of older, once convicted women. As the numbers of this group are much smaller than the male cohort, being seen as a 'minority within a minority' Codd (2020: 2), the task of finding participants could be difficult, however, given women's different experiences of imprisonment and re-entry (Barr, 2019; LeBel 2012; Rutter and Barr, 2021), research in this area could add further dimensions to the findings of this study, providing a deeper insight and a more holistic explanation of re-entry as a phenomenon.

A purposeful limitation to the research was that it did not include the voices of those supervising the men, the reasons for which have been highlighted in Chapter

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<sup>29</sup> Restore Support Network are currently trialing their services in Thames Valley, with the hope to roll out these services across many regions in the future.

3. Future research, however, could include these experiences, again to provide a more holistic approach to the research surrounding re-entry as a whole concept.

The now unified Probation Service, which only came into being following the completion of the fieldwork in this study, will provide an interesting backdrop for future research on older, once convicted people and re-entry. Further to this change, research could be conducted following the implementation of the long-awaited national strategy for older prisoners. Also, as Cadet's (2022) proposals were only published in December 2022, if implemented, these too could change the landscape of re-entry for older, once convicted people. These changes are welcomed, and the research potentials for the future are exciting.

### **Final Thoughts**

This thesis has used the term 'successful re-entry' many times, however, it is important to acknowledge the subjectivity of this term. Much of the existing literature focuses on reduced levels of recidivism and risk (Johns, 2015) as a benchmark for success, overlooking the personal experiences during re-entry. However, successful re-entry meant much more than this for the men. For John (aged 64) it meant having a home he could be proud of, a close network of friends, and an opportunity to undertake activities such as studying music, which he had missed out on due to being in prison. For Paul (aged 50) it meant moving away from his stigmatised identity, and to be free from the fear of others discovering this. His voluntary participation in a scheme to wear a tag, and how he changed his behaviour to not be around people so that they would not know of his past, were just two ways he tried to achieve this. For Alf (aged 63) it meant making the

most of the life he had in front of him, by reminding himself of where he had been through his diary entries. Alf's focus on his future derived from his sadness at the loss of his former life, and he lived with the hope that he would not return to prison. For Bernard (aged 55) it meant bettering himself through education, making his family proud and striving to attain a lifestyle that he once sneered at, however, in later life, he realised the beauty of such an existence. For David (aged 56), it meant reconnecting with his supportive family, and being allowed to move on from his stigmatized identity. It also meant giving something back to society, helping those who could not help themselves. For Alec (aged 57) it also meant moving on from his status as a once convicted man. Although his experience of imprisonment was positive, a place where he forged friendships, and as he stated, the prison did him good, it was what he needed, he did not see himself as an ex-prisoner, and did not want others to either. For Mark (aged, 51) it meant having his individual needs acknowledged and appropriately responded to. He felt that the lack of a tailored approach hindered the potential progress he could make. For George (aged 75) it meant being free from supervision so he could lock himself away. He attempted to find his family, but to no avail. He missed the friendships he had formed in prison, and without these, or his family, he made the conscious decision that he wanted to be alone. For Jon (aged 50), it meant using his past to shape his present. It meant being a part of a group of other once convicted men and educating different groups in society on the pains he had suffered. His life was unrecognisable from his pre-prison life, yet he was more settled in life following imprisonment, than he had been before. For Anthony (aged 64) it meant making the most of a new life, residing in an assisted living complex where the help and

support he had needed earlier in his life was now available. It meant moving on from the stigma of conviction and concealing his past so that he could meet new people at the day centre he attended, and letting them get to know him, as he saw himself. For Robert (aged 50) it meant making the most of his time, as he felt that so much had been taken from him 'I want me time back, I do want it back, I think I've paid a terrible price'. For Stuart (aged 57) it meant a combination of shedding the stigma of a criminal conviction, moving on from the status of being once convicted, and being seen as more than the label, but also accepting his past, in the hope that it could help others. For Clifford (aged 54), being successfully re-entered was a difficult state to imagine. Being on a licence for the rest of his life meant that he was unsure if he would ever be successful in re-entry. He tried to be 'happy go lucky', but he was living in the fear that there would be something negative around the corner. It is important to consider what success looks like for the men, as their accounts of re-entry are real, lived, experiences. They cannot be reduced to a positivist application of recidivism statistics to define success. These accounts provide a reminder that there are men behind the data.

The ultimate goal of success is the mitigation of pain which was manifested in the hidden injuries beyond the bars. The men's experiences have been littered with pain, pain that was imparted by institutional and systemic thoughtlessness (Crawley, 2004; Cadet, 2020) and social injustice, perpetrated by a society with a lack of understanding of the age-related pains associated with living in freedom. This same society imparted structural barriers and psychological pains which resulted in social death. Without an acknowledgement that older, once convicted men are living freedom in a state of social death, there will be little, to no,

opportunity to enact a resurrection of the socially dead and help them recover from their painful experiences, giving them an opportunity to live their lives in acceptance and freedom. Living in a state of social death, does not need to be absolute, it does not need to be applied or lived within. Kneale (2012: 5) argued that 'social exclusion is, at least partly, a reflection of the exclusionary practices of the socially included'. This suggests that in line with De Beauvoir's (1970: 216) argument that 'it is the ruling class that imposes their status upon the old, but an active population as a whole who connives at it', that we, as society, play a leading role in the implementation of creating a society within which we allow social death to be experienced by the elderly. The only real way to prevent the pains of re-entry being inflicted lies in building the type of 'society that does not need prisons' (Waskow, no date. cited in Davis 2003: 105) a society which contains populations that do not stigmatise, abuse and disregard older, once convicted men, but view them as individuals with specific age-related needs, who have committed crimes, and subsequently require to be seen, to receive support, and to be helped.

This thesis does not claim to have discovered the 'secret formula' (Hallet, 2011: 216) of successful re-entry, however, it is hoped that by offering views and experiences from the marginalised, doubly othered, vulnerable and forgotten men, that their pain and hidden injuries can go some way to adding an ingredient to the recipe. It is the hope that the recommendations for the remedies to the pain experienced can be implemented so that the possibilities which currently exist in the '*dream space*' (Scott: 2020: 213) can become a reality.

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## Appendix 1

### **Semi-Structured Interview Questions Ex-Prisoners**

Title of Project: 'Hidden Injuries beyond the Bars: A Critical Analysis of Community Re-Entry Experiences for Older Male Ex-Prisoners'

Name of Researcher and School/Faculty: Shiobhan Rogers, Liverpool John Moores University, School of Law.

Name of Research Supervisor: Dr Lawrence Burke, Liverpool John Moores University, School of Law.

Date:

Time:

Location:

Name:

## Areas of Discussion

### Imprisonment

1. Where you released from a resettlement prison?

Areas to be discussed:

- Was it made clear that it was a resettlement prison?
- Did the resettlement status of the prison have any effect on release planning?
- Did the resettlement prison do anything for you in terms of resettlement?
- How long is it since release?
- Where you prepared for release? If not, what could have helped you?
- How did you act differently whilst in prison, to the way you are on the outside? Why the difference?

### Sentence

2. How long was your sentence?

Areas to be discussed:

- Was this the first prison sentence?
- If not, how many sentences served?

### Pre-Release Planning

3. Were you in touch with a member of the resettlement team whilst in ..... prison?

Areas to be discussed:

- If not where you made aware of the resettlement staff?

- What advice/support were you offered before your release in relation to:
  - Housing
  - Employment/education/training,
  - Healthcare/addictions
  - Finances
  - Family contact
  - Support
- If received, was this support from, the Prison Service; Resettlement Workers; or outside agencies such as charities?
- If received, was this advice/support helpful?
- Did you feel prepared for release?
- Pre-release expectations for:
  - Housing
  - Employment/Education/Training
  - Healthcare/addictions
  - Finances
  - Family contact
  - Support

### Resettlement

4. What does the word 'resettlement' mean to you?

Areas to be discussed:

- Do you feel you were settled in the community prior to imprisonment?
- Do you feel that you are resettled into the community now?
- If yes, what factors helped you achieve this?
- If no, what barriers are in place to prevent this?
- Main difficulties of resettlement?

## Current Situation

### Housing

5. Did you have accommodation arranged for release?
  - Has this changed since?
  - Hostel/ Secure accommodation/Assisted Living/Independent Living?
  - Did you encounter difficulties in gaining suitable accommodation?

### Employment/Education/Training

6. Did you have any employment/education/training arranged for release?
  - Has this changed since?
  - Did you encounter any difficulties in gaining suitable employment, education, and training?

### Healthcare/support for addictions

7. Did you have healthcare arranged for release?
  - Has this changed since?
  - Did you encounter difficulties in gaining suitable healthcare?

### Finances

8. Did you have sufficient money to 'live' when you were released?
  - Did you encounter difficulties with benefits?

### Family/Friends

9. Did you have a social network of support when you were released?
  - Has it been difficult to make new social contacts?
  - If so, what do you think causes this difficulty?

## Stigma

10. Do you feel that your age has had an effect on your 'resettlement' experience?
- Do you feel any difficulties you have encountered could be attributed to your age?
  - Do you feel that the label 'ex-prisoner' has had an effect on your 'resettlement'?
  - Do you feel that any of the difficulties you have encountered could be contributed to you being labelled an 'ex-prisoner'?

### Overall Experience

11. Resentment – do you feel resentment to the prison, the government, the system that put you into prison? Do you blame them for your current situations?
12. Did you ever feel like you wanted to go back to prison? Why?
13. Are you ever tempted to return back to crime?
14. What is stopping you from doing so?
15. How do you view supervision? Helpful/unhelpful?
16. What support are you receiving during resettlement? Who is that from?
17. What else could be done to help you at this time
18. What has been the most difficult part of the 'resettlement' process and why?
19. What has been the best part of the 'resettlement' process, and why?

Anything Else...

## Appendix 2

### EX-PRISONER PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

**Title of Project:** 'Hidden Injuries beyond the Bars: A Critical Analysis of Community Re-Entry Experiences for Older Male Ex-Prisoners'

**Name of Researcher and School/Faculty:** Shiobhan Rogers, Liverpool John Moores University, School of Law.

**Name of Research Supervisor:** Dr Lawrence Burke, Liverpool John Moores University, School of Law.

*"If you are aged 50 or over and have been released from prison within the last five years you are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you make a decision to participate or not, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it involves. Please take time to read the following information. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. You have the right to withdraw at any point in the study."*

#### 1. What is the purpose of the study?

*The purpose of this study is to analyse the experiences of older, male ex-prisoners who are now in the community. It will consider the prison release and re-entry procedures and the issues associated with re-entering the community after serving a prison sentence.*

#### 2. Do I have to take part?

*No. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do, you will be given this information sheet and asked to sign a consent form. You are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw will not*

*affect your rights and any information that has already been collected will not be included in the research.*

**3. What will happen to me if I take part?**

*The research involves you taking part in an interview which will focus on your experiences of re-entry into the community after serving a prison sentence. The interviews will take approximately between 60 and 120 minutes of your time.*

**4. Are there any risks / benefits involved?**

*There is a potential risk that discussing the issues associated with age and imprisonment may prove to be a sensitive topic for some participants and you may find taking part in the interviews upsetting. If this was to happen I will, subject to your consent, take steps to ensure that you are able to access appropriate support, for example, access to mental health workers, the Samaritans and the Salvation Army.*

*The benefits of participating in this research are that you will have an opportunity to express your views and experiences relating to release and community re-entry.*

**5. Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**

*Anything you say will be treated with the strictest confidence, for example, your identity will be anonymised in any publications arising from this research. For accuracy, I would prefer to audio record the interviews, although, if you were unhappy with this in any way, I would not record the interviews. All the data collected from the interviews will be anonymised and stored securely at Liverpool John Moores University for the duration of the research. All identifiable recordings and data collected from the interviews will be kept securely and destroyed five years after the research is completed. Anonymised data will be kept and stored securely for possible use in future research.*

**This study has received ethical approval from LJMU's Research Ethics Committee (Ref: 16/HSS/003 - obtained 16.05.16).**

***If you have any concerns regarding your involvement in this research, please discuss these with the researcher detailed above in the first instance. If you wish to make a complaint, please contact [researchethics@ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:researchethics@ljmu.ac.uk) and your communication will be re-directed to an independent person as appropriate.***

## Appendix 3

### EX-PRISONER CONSENT FORM

**Title of Research:**

*'Hidden Injuries beyond the Bars: A Critical Analysis of Community Re-Entry Experiences for Older Male Ex-Prisoners'*

**Researcher's Name:**

*Shiobhan Rogers, Liverpool John Moores University, School of Law.*

**Research Supervisors Name:**

*Dr Lawrence Burke, Liverpool John Moores University, School of Law.*

**Purpose of the Study:**

*The purpose of this study is to analyse the experiences of older, male ex-prisoners who are now in the community. It will consider the prison release and re-entry procedures and the issues associated with re-entering the community after serving a prison sentence.*

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information provided for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, or refuse to answer specific questions, without giving a reason and that this will not affect my legal rights. I understand that my consent can be withdrawn for up to three months following the interview.
3. I understand that the interview will be audio recorded and direct quotes may be used in future publications or presentations, however, these will be anonymised.

4. I understand that any personal information collected during the study will be anonymised and remain confidential.

5. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant  
Signature

Date

Name of Researcher  
Signature

Date

Name of Person taking consent  
Signature  
*(If different from researcher)*

Date

## Appendix 4



National Offender  
Management Service

### REQUEST FOR FURTHER INFORMATION – NOMS RESEARCH

Shiobhan Rogers,  
480 Preston Old Road,  
Cherry Tree,  
Blackburn,  
BB2 5LY  
s.l.rogers@2012.ljmu.ac.uk

**National Offender Management Service**  
*National Research Committee*  
Email: [National.Research@noms.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:National.Research@noms.gsi.gov.uk)

17<sup>th</sup> March 2017

**Ref:** 2017-058

**Title:** 'Hidden Injuries beyond the Bars: A Critical Analysis of Community Re-Entry Experiences for Older Males Ex-Prisoners'

Dear Mrs Rogers,

Further to your application to undertake research across NOMS, the National Research Committee (NRC) has considered the details provided, alongside the requirements set out in the NOMS research instruction (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-offender-management-service/about/research>) and has requested the following further information:

- How will the offenders be selected from those who express an interest? Aside from age, what are the inclusion/exclusion criteria?
- Are there any measures in place to recruit participants if the poster and snowball sampling do not lead to the required number of participants?
- Will attempts be made to ensure that there is a sufficient mix of cases between NPS and CRC?
- How will the resettlement workers and charity staff be sampled?
- Will the interview/questionnaire schedule be tested/piloted in the first instance to check ease of use, coverage of key issues and overall length (monitoring any respondent fatigue)?

Please send this further information (quoting your NRC Reference number) to the NRC ([National.Research@noms.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:National.Research@noms.gsi.gov.uk)) at your earliest convenience.

Please note the research must not commence until the NRC has granted full approval, and a formal letter to that effect is provided.

Yours sincerely,  
Rachel George  
National Research Committee