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Practitioner Perspectives: The mental health needs of young offenders in Scotland

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Abstract

The research is concerned with the supports available to young offenders with mental health needs within the Scottish Criminal Justice System and is based on the perspectives and experiences of practitioners who work with this distinct group. Young offenders who are diverted away from prosecution are often referred to third sector service providers for goal-based support and offence-focused programme work. By identifying practitioners' understandings and interpretations of the models of mental health and youth justice service provision available for young offenders, this will allow the research to highlight examples of good practice and determine the additional support needed for practitioners assessing and supporting complex needs. To achieve this, I have used qualitative research methods to interview six practitioners within a third sector organisation delivering youth justice support. Using thematic analysis, three main themes that transpired were; confidence and legitimacy, challenges and demands, and usefulness of restorative justice. The themes demonstrated interesting insights into the wider impact that organisational and criminal justice ideals have on practitioner's service delivery of young offenders with mental health needs. The findings intend to provide evidence-based knowledge to justice-based third sector organisations, whilst also encouraging further research of mental health policy within youth justice.

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Introduction

Research Background

As there continues to be growing research on the mental health needs of young offenders in the youth justice system, there still remains some gaps within Scotland. Prior research has illustrated significant levels of mental health needs within the youth justice population, particularly for those within the community (Harrington *et al.*, 2005), and in secure care (Kroll *et a*l., 2002). Furthermore, research has also demonstrated a lack of appropriate mental health service provision for this vulnerable group (Dyer and Gregory, 2014; Moodie and Anderson, 2015). What is particularly unclear is how services supporting these young people work together to provide effective interventions, both to address re-offending behaviour and mental health needs. The present research has been conducted during a period of significant change within criminal justice; for example, the climate of reduced funding and stretched resources (CYCJ, 2018: 13), as well as implementation of UK-wide general data protection regulation (GDPR) legislation in 2018 (Chaucer, 2018). Additionally, the Scottish Government Mental Health Strategy (2017-2027) outlined improving mental health and wellbeing as a national priority in Scotland. This arises from an action to address interventions that focus on assessing the behaviour needs of young people that relate to re-offending. This research seeks to address the gap in knowledge by researching third sector service practitioners', and, specifically, to understand their views and experiences of delivering support to young offenders with mental health needs. The research is taking an explanatory approach to focus on practitioners' views about the processes of service provision, the perception of support delivery, and opinions of services within the multi-agency system.

Situating the research within Scotland's Whole System Approach

The Scottish Youth Justice system has significantly changed and developed throughout the years. The Kilbrandon Report ethos focused on the well-being of the child and young offender (Scottish Government, 2003), identifying the correlation between troubled children and future offending behaviour, and the requirement for support to address the needs and issues of such children that deter them from the criminal justice system (McAra and McVie, 2010; McAra, 2006). A changing global criminal environment influenced more risk focused and management rationales in youth justice policy and practice (Feeley and Simon, 1992:

512). Today's youth justice system is still primarily governed by risk principles, however there is still an underlying focus of keeping the child/young person out of the criminal justice system at the earliest stage possible (through early and effective intervention) Additionally, community programmes focused on attending to the shortcomings of young offenders, however, a range of restorative justice services and programmes cause possible threat to the Kilbrandon ethos; prioritising the reparations to the victim over the needs of the offender. Prior research has highlighted that providing services and support for young offenders with mental health and additional needs requires multidisciplinary working from various distinct agencies (Macqueen and McVie, 2013; Murray *et al.,* 2015; McAra and McVie, 2010). The Whole System Approach (WSA) was introduced by the Scottish Government in 2011, it has been instrumental in introducing the priority of criminal justice professionals and organisations to address the needs of young people involved in offending. The ethos of WSA is premised on diversion; young people who offend should be diverted away from statutory processes through early intervention and community support. The evidence-based approach involves formulating standardised assessment, planning and decision-making processes for young offenders, bringing together all agencies, so that they receive support at the earliest possible stage (CYCJ, 2018). The purpose of WSA is to ensure that practitioners support young people in a multi-disciplinary and multi-agency basis; importance is placed on support being tailored to the needs and background of the individual young person. Diversion usually requires the young person to undergo assessment and programme work that aims to be independently tailored to their needs; the rationale being that having a more positive (rather than punitive) intervention will lessen chances for future re-offending (Feeley and Simon, 1992; McNeill and Weaver, 2010; McNeill, 2012). Official figures illustrate that prior to the WSA, the number of 16-17-year olds diverted from prosecution rose significantly from 142 diversions in 2010 to 642 in 2013/2014 (Scottish Government, 2015: 6). It can be contended that this rise is influenced by the WSA ethos. The efficacy of early effective intervention (diversion) can be debated. McAra and McVie's (2007, 2010) research on the Scottish youth justice system found that 'diversion 'promotes desistance amongst young offenders. The data from the 2010 study showed that the more young people received criminal justice sanctions and were labelled as 'usual suspects', the more they become deeper involved in the cycle of offending – the more criminal justice contacted was repeated, the more desistance from involvement in offending was inhibited (McAra and McVie, 2010: 198), however, some Australian researchers have contested otherwise (Weatherburn *et al.,* 2012).

What is of importance is the definitional ambiguity over diversion, and its aims and purposes in youth justice. Richards (2014) intriguingly discussed the conceptualisation of diversion, and the implications mistakes in conceptualising this has on effective intervention. Firstly, there is the purpose for diversion to divert young people away from the criminal justice system, secondly there is diversion to divert young offenders from re-offending (Richards, 2014: 129). To effectively intervene in a young person's life, the type of intervention technique requires different approaches and programmes. For example, if the aim is to limit low-level offenders from justice contact and stigmatising processes, then systems such as police cautions and referrals are useful for diverting a young person from the criminal justice system. However, for those who are perhaps more persistent offenders and prior cautions have not helped, then diverting a young person to change their offender behaviour through a conduct programme (for example, anger management) may be better suited. Such programmes are vast and vary in nature, but generally are offence focused, aiming to address the underlying causes of criminal behaviour to keep young people away from the criminal justice system. However, one could question whether such offence focused diversions have the scope to address mental health needs, which may in fact be the major contributor to the offending. Perhaps the premises of diversion to prevent crime and divert offenders should be more clearly defined – incorporating a system that focuses on diversion from crime and support to address needs may better achieve early and effective intervention. More promising is evidence-based research surrounding desistance-based youth justice, primarily goal-focused "interventions" to addressing needs and reducing re-offending (McNeill, 2006; Barry, 2013; Hampson, 2018). A consideration into the effects of this framework for multi-agency organisations on addressing criminogenic and mental health needs will be discussed in this research.

Overview of research aims and objectives

The research intends to contribute to knowledge by identifying practitioners' understandings, experiences and interpretations of the support models of mental health and youth justice service provision delivered to young offenders. This will allow the research to highlight examples of good practice and determine the additional support needed for practitioners assessing and managing complex needs. To achieve this, I set the following objectives: firstly, to explore the structure and processes of service provision; secondly, to gain an understanding of practitioners' views of the strengths, challenges, and demands of working within third sector organisations; and finally, to explore practitioners' opinions of service

support within the multi-agency framework, and its impact on service delivery of young offenders with mental health needs.

Overview of dissertation

The thesis employs a standard structure, the first chapter provides an overview of the literature – exploring the historical context of the current youth justice system and its significance to the operations of service support. The second chapter details the methodology, describing the research design, procedure and theoretical position. The third chapter analyses and discusses the findings. The fourth chapter; reflexivity, briefly outlines the influence on the research based on my unique position as former practitioner, and student researcher. The final section will conclude with a summary and discussion that brings together the significance of the findings.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

Recent coverage of news and national press has highlighted mental health issues and inadequacies of existing support services. Consequently, the government has planned to review existing policies on mental health intervention and support services (Scottish Government, 2017. While there continues to be growing research interest in mental health issues, the mental health needs of young offenders are relevant in the upcoming policy debate. Existing research has predominately either focused on those in secure care (Kroll *et al*., 2002) and/or solely identifying the prevalence of psychological diagnosis states of young offenders (Lader *et al*., 2000). However, few studies have focused on the mental health needs of young offenders in the community, especially from the perspective of practitioners who deliver care to such groups. Additionally, many studies have also limited representation of ethnic and gender variation (Harrington *et al.,* 2005). Whilst there may be barriers to conducting such studies, considering how mental health and youth justice services and resources could improve is vital for recognising the mental health needs of young offenders. Furthermore, there is considerable evidence that mental health problems of young offenders are more prevalent than those of the general population (Dyer and Gregory, 2014: 2). Yet, despite this evidence, specialised mental health services are more readily available for young people among the general population than they are for young offenders (Mental Health Foundation, 2002).

This literature review will be divided into two sections. The first section will discuss the processes that govern the justice system, and the challenges this poses on the youth justice system, further illustrating its impact on appropriate support for young offenders with mental health needs. The second section will provide an overview of available mental health service

support, and practitioners' role in this service delivery, highlighting issues and barriers for the practitioner.

1.2 The Challenge – 'criminalising, stigmatizing and marginalising' young people in Scotland

The increase in youth crime has influenced the need for effective interventions to reduce and prevent against youth violence (McAra and McVie, 2016). This perception of 'anti-social', 'deviant' and 'dangerous' youth has been perpetuated by the media, contributing to the notion of 'at-risk' groups who persistently re-offend (Haines and Case, 2008). The governmental response enforced a policy reform to 'managing the bads' and reducing crime (McAra, 2006: 132), which reinforced a new penology. This 'new penology' does not focus on reform or retributive intentions, but is primarily concerned with managing groups of offenders, or those that display criminogenic behaviours (Feeley and Simon 1992: 512). The risk-based techniques to control subsequent offending refer to a range of practices, such as; risk assessments by clinicians, practitioners, and justice-imposed monitoring tools to prevent crime, for example; electronic tag (Graham and McIvor, 2016). Criminal justice advocates and the populist media have contended that such measures (e.g. electronic monitoring, standardised programme interventions) are a moderate penal measure, because it is cheaper than prison and allows for 'freedom' outside of curfew hours (Jones, 2014: 5; Payne and Gainey, 1998). The effectiveness of such community sanction measures is widely debated (Nellis and Bungerfeldt, 2013; Jones, 2014; Hayes, 2015), with perspectives differing for practitioners (Graham and McIvor, 2016), and young offenders (McIvor and Graham, 2016).

With regard to risk assessment, the technique of actuarial assessment evolved out of a conflicting ideology between tackling criminogenic needs and implementing behavioural interventions (presented as rehabilitative – McGuire, 2003). For definitional purposes,

actuarial assessments allow a practitioner to calculate the probability of an offender to re-offend (Feeley and Simon, 1994). The assessments vary depending on the type of offence (e.g., violent, sexual, domestic), but generally are applied by practitioners aggregating a quantitative risk score by assessing individual factors (e.g. history of substance abuse, age at first offence) that have been statistically linked to the risk of re-offending (Haines and Case, 2008). The factors used to assess the level of risk are historic and largely static (i.e. offence and criminal history), negating the impact of wider societal structures (e.g. improvised housing, lower-economic social class and weakened family relations). Outcomes can include custodial sentence, or more subtle forms of punishments like 'tag' monitoring (Hannah-Moffat; in Simon and Sparks, 2012), and restorative justice (Latimer *et al.*, 2005). Whilst such techniques may seek to reduce re-offending, the practices evoke elements of 'culture of control' and crisis in welfare (Briggs, 2013). In contrast to the Kilbrandon report that promoted social welfare and child protection in the justice process (Scottish Government, 2003), and WSA ethos that promoted diversion from statutory process and community support (Macqueen and McVie, 2013), young people hindered from receiving holistic support for their needs that may in fact contribute to offending behaviours. The emerging risk-focused techniques have consequently negated prioritizing the needs of the offender, instead, the priority is the sorting of individuals into aggregate groups to control risk profiles (O'Malley 2010; Feeley and Simon 1992). As Edwards and Hatch (2003: 5) eloquently puts it, young people are:

"*depicted as vulnerable and in desperate need of protection and at other times they are characterised as thugs and potential thugs whose actions infringe on the rest of the community*".

Similarly, Goldson (2005) argues that delivering interventions based on risk intensity, where young people only receiving interventions if they demonstrate as being of a significant risk,

leads to being; 'classified, controlled and corrected'. Thus, the likelihood of vulnerable young offenders having their needs diagnosed and addressed is limited. This is not to say that risk-factors are not important in justice reform (or within early interventions), as the protection of the offender and the public should be paramount. However, in the current climate of increasing mental health in youth (Howard League Briefing 1, 2017: 5), and research evidencing impact of poor social capital (Brown and Ross, 2010) and trauma (Ford *et al*., 2008), that contributes to offending; it seems reductive to not have a risk-factor paradigm that includes scope to identify and address mental health needs of young offenders. Such a paradigm should also be inclusive of factors that promote desistance and encourages pro-social behaviour improving wellbeing (Catalano *et al.,* 2002).

The whole system approach (WSA) attempts to provide practitioners with a framework for addressing the welfare needs of young people in the criminal justice, with the intention to early diversion away from the system, however achieving this within risk-orientated frameworks is complex for both practitioners and young offenders seeking support.

1.3 Where are we now? – services, assessment and practitioners' role in supporting young offenders with mental health needs

The challenges facing of youth justice services and professionals working within the conflicting risk-focused and welfare orientated frameworks (e.g., WSA, GIRFEC) leads to differing levels of support available for young offenders. This section will detail the options and barriers young offenders in Scotland face in obtaining adequate mental health service provision, and the difficulties practitioners face in identifying and addressing needs in this group.

1.3.1 Mental Health Services

Literature has illustrated that when young offenders are diagnosed with severe mental health diagnosis (Chitsabesan *et al.,* 2006; Penner *et al*., 2011; Whittington *et al.,* 2014), there are

also many that possess mental health needs, encompassing a range of conduct disorders, such as; anxiety, attention deficit hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), depression, self-harm, psychosis, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), suicide and 'conduct disorders' (Mental Health Foundation 2002 cited in Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice CYCJ, 2018: 5). Factors correlating with mental health include; substance misuse problems, attachment difficulties, trauma, emotional disorders and attentional disorders (Moodie & Anderson, 2015). The co-morbidity rate (the presence of one or more mental health illnesses occurring simultaneously), is higher within the youth justice population, which often makes identifying the specific need more difficult to the professional (CYCJ, 2018: 5). As a result, misidentifying or confusing types of behavioural conduct disorders from more severe mental health illnesses may occur (CYCJ, 2018: 5). Whilst the general population have access to the forensic mental health service provision, vulnerable groups, such as previous offenders, have difficulty in accessing such services (Dyer and Gregory, 2014). There are currently no secure forensic adolescent inpatient beds available in Scotland; young people who require this must be placed in units in England (Dyer and Gregory, 2014). This leaves a gap in service provision for young offenders who must attempt access to a system that is not tailored to their needs.

A pressing issue is that local child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) teams tend not to consider severe conduct disorders or behaviours alike as serious as psychiatric mental state disturbances; young people seeking support often do not move beyond the initial assessment stage (tier 1). Therefore, it is rarely seen as within the remit of CAMHS teams to provide support in these situations, leaving young people without support or advice on where to be referred. Even for young people who are eligible for mental health service support beyond tier 1, waiting times for receiving such support are lengthy. For example, the Scottish Association of Mental Health (SAMH) rapid review of databases reveals that, although local

CAMHS services aim to see referred young people within 18 weeks, this is often not possible. Due to capacity and/or case complexity issues – almost 20% in a 2017 study did not receive referrals in the time frame (SAMH, 2017: 15). Congruently, Smith *et al*. (2017) examined referral forms and devised reasons for rejected referrals; findings indicated that CAMHS regarded majority referrals as not a diagnosis for mental health. Referrals for hyperactivity/ inattention were associated with longer waiting times. The impact of such shortcomings reveals the significant impact on young people's progression of mental health difficulties. A study by NSPCC (2015) Review of ChildLine, identified people discussing their problems in accessing services reported; long waiting times enabling anxiousness, and unfamiliar professionals making them feel 'alone, let down and unimportant' (SAMH, 2017: 17). This evidence highlights that, formulating risk assessment and interventions for young offenders at high risk with mental health needs requires specialist skills and varied resources (which not all local authorities have). Standardised forms of assessment used in the initial tiers of CAMHS may not be entirely suitable for young offender, meaning that many mental health needs may be misidentified or not identified at all. Additionally, the demand for such high-risk youth services is imminent, but the capacity for the service may be constrained (Dyer & Gregory, 2014: 7).

In addition to CAMHS, a further service option is IVY, a government funded pilot-project service, its purpose is to provide consultation, psychological assessment and treatment to young offenders with mental health needs. IVY aims to bridge the gap between social and psychological models of care, meeting the needs of those who may not meet the CAMHS criteria, and who present diverse psychological difficulties that are relevant to managing and supporting their violent offending behaviour (Dyer & Gregory, 2014; Moodie & Anderson, 2015). Taking advantage of the whole system approach, IVY also seeks partnership with local authority agencies, working with Forth Valley CAMHS, delivering level 2/3 services.

Usage of IVY is encouraging; 26 local authorities used IVY, with 72% of referrals made by social workers, 19% by CAMHS and majority referrals were young males aged 15 (Moodie & Anderson, 2015; pp. 9). Moodie and Anderson (2015) evaluation of IVY has revealed that staffing is limited, and issues of capacity have resulted in reduction in some specialist services (for example, direct psychological support/interventions in all local authorities' bar Forth Valley). Nonetheless, preliminary findings indicate positive and satisfactory service provision. For example, respondents to the professionals' survey felt supported by their involvement, felt that the care plans had improved as a result of the project and all of those who responded to the survey have stated they would use the service again. Essential to the ongoing success of the service is funding, short-term funding adds to workload stress and staffing issues, resulting in longer waiting times and the reduction in some specialist services.

Currently, research literature indicates that generally there is an inefficiency in addressing mental health needs of young offenders in Scotland, due to; assessment and interventions inadequacy to address mental health needs, and problems with referrals to existing community mental health services. As young offenders present as an even more vulnerable group, it is imperative that consideration is given to the implications and recommendations of mental health service provisions within youth justice as a lack of or inadequate mental health service provision only exacerbates offending behaviour (Young Minds, 2013: 8). Contributing to the current knowledge base, the present research intends to explore the impact, barriers and benefits pose on service provision of young offenders with mental health needs.

1.3.2 The role of Practitioners
The role of practitioners and social workers is generally consistent across Scotland but is dependent upon the local authority early effective intervention (EEI) processes, that deliver youth offending programmes, and work with local agencies in a multi-agency framework.

One of the roles of a social worker is to conduct assessment of all young people prior to, and during statutory processes, operating under a GIRFEC (getting it right for every child) and WSA structure. The social worker is generally the lead professional, subsequently referring to either social work supervision or third sector agency support (subject to court outcome). Assessments have different purposes for different professionals, but in youth justice it generally relates to risk and for third sector, wellbeing (CYCJ, 2018: 13-14). The two main ones include *Asset* risk assessment and SAVRY (Structured Assessment of Violent Risk Youth: Risk Management Authority Scotland). *Asset* assess the associated risk factors, criminogenic needs and 'what do you think' self-assessment (Baker, 2005). Harrington *et al*., (2005) demonstrates that a third of young offenders had a mental health need, which the *Asset* form had failed to estimate, questioning the ability of the form to assess mental health needs (Harrington *et al*., 2005: 21). Although, the assessment may be seen as necessary for operational running of youth justice services (e.g. public protection), its overly-prescribed and offence-focused use limits its ability to adequately identify and address mental health needs. Whilst criminal justice social work (CJSW) can identify social and environmental factors that may affect a young person, an increasing difficulty is the ability of CJSW involved with mental health services to assist with assessment or provide treatment (Harding, 1999: 85). This is primarily because currently in Scotland, assessing or treating young offenders with mental health needs is not within the remit of CJSW. Therefore, the mental health needs of young offenders can often not be met due to a lack of recognition of these needs (Harrington *et al*., 2005: 8).

Practitioners in third sector non-governmental support services tackle the challenges affecting re-offending and needs of young offenders, working effectively with partnership agencies and social work, they use risk assessment to guide support and practice. Whilst they also employ standardised risk assessment of potential service users, their main focus on delivering welfare

support has also initiated the introduction of the Outcome STAR assessment tool; used to assess the behaviour and attitudes of young service users and promote a 'journey of change' (McKeith, 2011). The effectiveness of the tool has been debated (Harris and Andrews, 2013; McKeith, 2014), instruments like the STAR prescribe set outcome domains in advance which may – or may not – be relevant to every individual (McKeith, 2011). The theoretical basis of the tool (collaboration, integration and empowerment', McKeith, 2011), seems more in line with welfare-focused principles than it does with actuarial assessments, the ability of the STAR tool to identify mental health needs in young offenders is not clearly known, nor are practitioners' opinions of its effectiveness.

A common feature of youth justice support in the third sector is the 'strength based' restorative justice, the service aims to bring together the person harmed (victim) and person responsible (young offender), through use of a facilitator (practitioner), encouraging the offender to take responsibility and make amends (Muncie, 2006). The theoretical basis stems from re-integrative shaming, and its apparent ability to reduce re-offending (Braithwaite, 1999; Makkai and Braithwaite, 1994). However, its ability to attend to offenders with communication needs may warrant EEI measures that are not solely verbally-mediated, as well as consideration of certain inappropriate diversions such as restorative measures, as some young people may lack the emotional consciousness that is necessary for mediating (CYCJ, 2018: 19-21).

The strengths and weaknesses of reducing re-offending interventions are widely debated in literature (Braithwaite, 1999; McGuire, 2003; Nation *et al*., 2003; McAra and McVie 2007; McNeill, 2012). However, an evaluation of these approaches is outside the scope of current research. Whilst he third sector is continually developing and providing services tailored to meet the needs of offenders, pressures including lack of long-term funding, temporary tenders and competition between third sector organisations can impact on the effectiveness of

organisations to achieve their goals (The Robertson Trust, 2012; CYCJ, 2018: 13). The current state of predominately offence-focused, short-term services can also be said to negatively impact the ability of service providers to carry out substantial and long-lasting work with young people, as well as misidentifying mental health needs. This consequently can affect the practitioner-service user support relationship; research has illustrated the importance of continuity in relationship and impact of engagement between practitioner and young people (Burnett and McNeill, 2005; Farrell, 2013; DuBois *et al.,* 2011; Cook, 2015). Walsh *et al* (2011) evidenced that young service users were weary of accessing mental health services due to their preconception that the relationship between themselves and the practitioner would be temporary. Maintaining consistent, long-term services and stable relationships is important for increased engagement. Whilst the current research does not have the scope to gain direct views from the young people in question, it is important that practitioners' perspectives are considered. Furthermore, whilst the WSA approach is considered valuable to the role of the practitioner, it is not the only approach to be explored when addressing mental health needs of youth offending in Scotland.

1.3.3 Theoretical Implications
As previously mentioned, actuarial risk assessments are delivered by practitioners (e.g. social workers), coupled with using their professional judgements and discretion to ascertain suitability for interventions and ongoing support (Briggs, 2013; Baker, 2005). Exploring the circumstances that contribute to this decision making are useful for understanding the underlying factors that influence practitioner ideals, opinions, organisational pressures that may impact on practitioners fulfilling their role in assessment and support delivery.

The conflicting ideologies of welfarism within a punitive justice system, has significantly changed practitioners' working practices and organisational contexts within the last ten years (Eadie and Canton, 2002), this almost makes it inevitable that professionals will have

differing opinions on relevant policy and assessment procedures. Research has highlighted

the relevance of understanding this organisational context in risk assessment practice

(Carson, 1994) – for example, does the introduction of standardised assessments allow for

practitioners to express sufficient autonomy within their role? And, if it does, does this leave

scope for practitioners to identify and address additional needs, such as mental health? A

study by Harrington *et al.,* (2005) study demonstrated some youth justice practitioners

believed there was 'tension' in understanding professional responsibilities whilst delivering

support centred around 'discipline and therapy', similarly practitioners perceived lack of

public support for rehabilitation ideals as also contributing to tensions (Mears *et al*., 2010:

543).

The impact of the new penology influencing managerialism of the 'bads' and 'delinquents'

appears to have not only impacted offenders, but also the professionals supporting them –

part of Michael Lipsky's theory of 'street level bureaucracy' resonates here. The theory

postulates that public workers (such as social workers, teachers, police officer's) are

employed within an environment which has stringent organisational processes, whilst

simultaneously allowing for the specialised professional to perform under discretion (Scott,

1969: 82). For example, the difficulty of practitioner's role arises when they are required to

follow a strict assessment script (promoting the organisations ideals, goals), yet at the same

time deliver care and support from the welfare perspective, treating each young person as an

individual and attending to their holistic needs. However, this in turn can create

overwhelming demands in service provision – the result being that resources are stretched

and workplace stress increases (Lipsky, 2010). The consequences of this can impact

practitioner's effectiveness to deliver true welfareist support and address complex mental

health needs. The role esteem that develops with this stressor is also relevant – Lipsky (2010)

postulates that professionals will likely attempt to be perceived as adequate and competent in

their role to validate their decision making (Lipsky, 2010 as cited in Evans and Harris, 2004). In the context of constrained support services, with practitioners facing a challenging environment, Lipsky's literature is particularly useful for revealing third sector practitioners perceived service delivery role for young offenders with mental health needs.

1.4 Summary

The operations of youth justice in Scotland and the practicalities of the multi-agency framework have alluded to the limited ability of the current system to identify and address all levels of mental health needs for young offenders. The review of literature has also highlighted substantial issues with current mental health services, and the capacity of practitioner's risk-focused assessment and interventions to address mental health needs. Although a growing body of research has indicated positive aspects of partnership working through the influence of the WSA (Murray *et al*., 2015; MacQueen and McVie, 2014), information on the effectiveness of this in addressing mental health needs in Scotland is limited. What is less certain is the perspectives of this from practitioners working within the whole system approach, this significant gap forming the basis of the current research.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will detail the way in which I conducted my research with practitioners, providing justification for my chosen methodology. The first section will outline the research objectives. Section two will discuss the theories that underpin the study, while justifying their appropriateness for the current study. The third section provides an overview of the research design and procedures. Following this, the latter three sections will detail the ethical considerations, fieldwork process and analysis process. The overall aim of the research is to understand the processes in service provision of young offenders with mental health needs – identifying gaps in service delivery and its impact on supporting young offenders.

2.1.1 Research aims

As discussed in the literature review, young offenders with mental health needs pose distinct vulnerability and are often not supported adequately (Whittington *et al.,* 2014; McAra and McVie, 2010). Whilst in the criminal justice system, diversion from prosecution is a common outcome for many young people, in the current climate of service resource constraints and changes in assessment, this poses a significant challenge for third sector practitioners to adequately support individuals (Murray *et al*., 2015). I chose to conduct interviews with practitioners at one third sector organisation delivering youth justice support and youth restorative justice support to young offenders in Scotland. The specific organisation was chosen due to their multi-agency process of working (consistent with the whole systems approach), in some local authorities the organisation were the only support providers of restorative justice. Practitioners working within this framework therefore, had in-depth knowledge about justice support processes and a range of relevant experiences worth exploring.

The current research seeks to contribute to knowledge by identifying practitioners'
understandings and interpretations of the models of mental health provisions available for
young offenders. This will allow the research to highlight examples of good practice and
determine the additional support needed for practitioners assessing and managing complex
needs. This will be addressed by the following objectives:

- To explore the structure and processes of service provision.

- To gain an understanding of practitioners' views of the strengths,
  challenges, and demands of working within third sector organisations.

- To explore practitioners' opinions of service support within the multi-
  agency framework, and its impact on service delivery of young offenders
  with mental health needs.

2.1.2 Underpinning Theories

This section seeks to discuss the theoretical approaches that justify the research design. What
constitutes valid knowledge and how we come to obtain and understand it is known as
epistemology (Bryman, 2001; Silverman, 2006). Research in essence is guided by natural
reality, but also the subjective experiences and views of individuals that should be considered
in constructing meaning about different phenomenon (De Gray, 2013). These subjective
experiences are otherwise known as a 'paradigm' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998: 26), or
'perspective' (Silverman, 2006: 3), and refers to the ontological and epistemological stances
that my research methodology is based upon. As the research is entirely qualitative, the
research paradigm will be from an interpretivist perspective. This perspective maintains that
while natural reality and social reality are different, the social reality prioritises the subjective
views of the individual to construct their own knowledge (Bryman, 2001). Grounded in
epistemology is constructivism, this is consistent with interpretivism and holds that

individuals construct their own meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon (Silverman, 2017:137).

Thus, the current research adopts an interpretivist theoretical standpoint while incorporating a constructivist epistemological stance. Both stem from the ontological view that natural reality and the subjective experiences and views of individuals should be considered in constructing meaning about different phenomenon (De Gray, 2013). The research bases its methodology on these perspectives by using in-depth semi-structured interviews with practitioners from third sector service providers. I intend for this to allow me to explore the experiences of supporting young people with mental health needs, an alternative theoretical approach, such as positivist would be unsuitable for this research as it implies that the results of research will be presented as objective facts and established truth (De Gray, 2013; Silverman, 2017: 134).

2.1.3. Research design and Procedure

The research has adopted a qualitative research methods approach as it will allow me to understand the experiences of practitioner's perspectives in supporting young offenders with mental health needs. Qualitative research is a scientific method of data collection that conveys meaning, attributes and beliefs from which inferences can be drawn. Unlike quantitative methods that use statistical analysis, qualitative method uses words (written or spoken language) as data (Braun and Clarke, 2013). The meaning behind these words and interpretations of these are generated to produce knowledge that contributes to understanding things (Kuhn, 1962; Miles *et al*., 2014), this is otherwise known as the central paradigm or framework for conducting qualitative research.

Qualitative interviews are used in the current research in an explanatory manner, allowing the interviewees to expand on their answers, expressing their experiences, values and opinions (Kuzmanic, 2009);the aim is centred around 'how and why' and is not based upon 'fact-finding' (Silverman, 2006). Qualitative interviews are 'rich and detailed' which in turn

encourage the exploration of new and varying experiences and perspectives. Given that the research into the service provisions for young offenders with mental health needs from practitioners' perspectives is limited in Scotland, I believed this method was most appropriate. As qualitative interviews are essentially 'professional conversations' (Kvale, 2007), and recognise participants as experts in their own professional area, the skilled role of practitioners can be viewed as particularly suited for this interview approach.

There are varying types of interview approaches, in-depth semi-structured interviews are utilised within this research study. In this approach, I drafted 11 questions on topics covering: structure and processes of the service provider, support delivery knowledge and opinions (See appendix 3). Semi-structured interviews are open-ended, and the questions give more scope for the participants to discuss issues and express their feelings and opinions. This also allows me to prompt participants by asking supplementary and follow on questions rather than a strict adherence to set questions, which will enable conversations to flow more freely (Crowther-Dowey and Fussey, 2013: 142; Fylan, 2005). With increasing priority of 'policy changing' research and research with impact, through engagement with society and those it affects, I believe utilising practitioners in this qualitative research technique was essential for this study to provide useful insights into current service provisions for young offenders with mental health needs. Such insights have the potential to supplement prior research aimed at improving policies on mental health within youth justice in Scotland. These improvements in practice could develop a better understanding of what resources practitioners require to support young offenders with mental health needs; thus, providing more comprehensive regional services for this group. Improvements could also increase awareness of practitioners and other legal professionals to identify the indicators of mental health vulnerability in young offenders, thus solidifying the communications with mental health services (e.g. through inter-agency training).

Prior research in similar fields has predominantly involved three data gathering methods: review of service provisions, review of literature, and structured interviews (Harrington *et al*., 2005; Dyer & Gregory, 2014; Harding, 1999; Stathis & Martin, 2004). The flexible nature of the semi-structured interview approach will allow for participants own perspectives on social knowledge and construction of meanings to reveal the perceived strengths, challenges and demands of service provision for young offenders with mental health needs. This can be considered as vital for considering what mental health resources can meet young offenders changing needs, and, how service providers can best operate to provide effective interventions to reduce reoffending and improve mental health of young offenders. As practitioners would possess varied views about different policies, the research does not intend to answer the impact of practitioners' opinion on changing policy. Instead, seeking differing perspectives can reveal the perceived effectiveness and impact of different policies and practices on youth re-offending and mental health support. Thus, the current approach still holds as the most suitable for the current study in its interpretivist approach; committing to researching participants' experiences, perspectives, and interpretations of supporting young offenders with mental health needs (Taylor *et al.,* 2016).

2.2 Ethical considerations

It goes without saying that qualitative research requires strict adherence to ethical guidelines. This does not only refer to the researcher-practitioner relationship, but also to how the research is conducted. The current research received ethical approval from the University of Glasgow, School of Social and Political Sciences ethics committee, in April 2018 (see appendix 4), and the head office of the third sector organisation on 25th of May, 2018. With regard to researcher's safety, as I was required to travel to participants' office base, it was agreed that my project supervisor would act as a key contact during the course of the interviews if necessary. During the fieldwork, there were various factors to be considered.

Firstly, researching with practitioners who are experts in their field requires careful strategy in questioning. For example, Bloor, 2004 (as cited in Silverman, 2017) illustrated that research with practitioners should allow opportunity for them to make evaluative judgements about their own practices. Therefore, I not only asked direct questions, but where appropriate I also asked supplementary questions, ensuring I maintain distance between 'probing'; encouraging further description (Kvale, 1996), and 'leading questions'; forcing the participant in a desired direction (Bryman, 2007).

Secondly, although the research was deemed low-risk, the well-being of participants is till pertinent. It is highly unlikely that professional participants would be distressed, questions were about their experiences of service delivery rather than their own mental health needs. At the most, it may be expected that some participants may be uncomfortable with answering questions based on their opinions of service delivery. Thus, I maintained awareness of how I may have been perceived, how I phrased questions, and how relevant this could be to participant (Miles *et al*., 2013). For example, the tone of how some questions are phrased can hold different meanings to the participant, e.g. judgement. In the event of this occurring, then I intended to shift the conversation by asking supplementary questions, move the topic onto more comfortable areas or take an interval.

A third consideration was whether to disclose my prior role at the organisation to the participants, I was constantly aware of my unique role as a previous practitioner within the organisation and student researcher. I was particularly conscious of the fact that the gatekeeper knew of my prior profession within the organisation, however I was not aware if this was relayed to the participants. Such disclosure could influence rapport, or encourage participants to over-disclose, creating a sense of legitimacy (Alder and Alder, 1987). Whether this is to account for the rich data gathered is unknown, however, being an 'insider' in the

study also required me to be aware of 'role conflict', ensuring I did not respond to

participants claims or opinions as a former practitioner (Asselin, 2003).

2.3 Fieldwork

The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the interviews in practice. The

interviews were carried out between June 2018 to July 2018.

2.3.1 Access and Gatekeeping

As a previous employee of the organisation, I was fortunate enough to have prior professional

relationships and gain access to the organisation to recruit practitioners for interview. I

contacted a professional from the organisation, explaining the research and its purposes. This

led to the professional acting as a gatekeeper, assisting in contacting the organisation's head

office for ethical approval request forms (which I completed and sent back), and recruitment

of participants and interview schedule. The original study aimed to interview young people

within the service and practitioners, however, the head office took some time to review this;

they sent acceptance of this via email, however, this was after the University of Glasgow

ethics committee deadline (which consequently did not include research with young people as

this would have been deemed high risk). Therefore, despite the organisation's approval of

interviews with young service users, I was required to change the direction of the research to

include only practitioners; I relayed this decision to the gatekeeper and head office via email,

to which they approved. Due to the service delivery demands of the organisation, the

gatekeeper was prioritised with organising available practitioners for interview and

scheduling interview dates and times, this was agreed via phone call and email

correspondence.

2.3.2 Recruitment Process: Researching with Practitioners

A purposive and opportunistic approach has been used to ensure that the chosen sample

possesses the desired attributes and is specific to the goals of the research (Marshall, 1996:

523). An appropriate sample size for a qualitative study is one that adequately answers the

research question (Marshall, 1996: 523). Due to the time constraints of data collection, and the importance of ensuring there was little impact on service delivery, the study employed a relatively small but sufficient sample size (6 participants). As the method uses in-depth semi-structured interview technique, the transcripts and data derived will likely be 'rich' and detailed, thus accounting for the small number of participants. Alternative sampling methods, such as random sample are unsuitable for explanatory research generally because; to adopt an alternative sampling approach (such as random), would not guarantee that the participants interviewed are practitioners working in the third sector and supporting young people with mental health needs (Marshall, 1996: 523). Practitioners can be deemed as most suitable for the study as they have experience of the operations of service delivery to young people, they can accurately give an account of their experiences in service provision, its outcomes and practice. Additionally, research methods like interviews are useful for providing policy makers with how certain practices and services are reviewed at a particular time (Silverman, 2017: 422), enabling 'rapid' responses to certain practices. Furthermore, the findings can also create a valuable resource for practitioners' training and service development (this is not the actual intention of the study, but if applicable can be an additional bonus).

As a previous employee at the organisation that the participants work for, this prior experience uniquely placed me in contact with the gatekeeper of the study as I have a professional working knowledge of the various systems, structures, and practices that interact when a young person with mental health needs has been diverted away from the Criminal Justice System and into a third sector organisation. Considerable time was spent building the relationship with the gatekeeper in order to gain the trust of both the gatekeeper and the participants (Emmel *et.al*., 2007). This knowledge has also helped to shape the interview topic guide (see appendix 3), however, I decided not to disclose my previous work experience

to participants so as not to influence the participants' responses in any way. Once ethical approval was granted, and the gatekeeper had contacted potential participants to begin the process of recruitment, I provided them with the participant information sheet (see appendix 1). If they agreed to participate, the gatekeeper then organised the interviews in the organisation's offices, at a time of the practitioner's convenience. My decision to anonymise participants within the study was expressed in the participant information sheet and consent form; the decision was based upon protecting practitioners' identities within the criminal justice and support fields – instead practitioners were referred to by their broad role titles.

2.3.3 Interviews in Practice

All data from the research was derived from in-depth semi-structured interviews that I conducted with the six practitioners. Once interview schedules had been agreed and corresponded between I and the gatekeeper, I travelled to the office place of the organisation to conduct interviews in a private meeting room. Immediately before the interviews, I spent a brief amount of time casually conversating with the participant, primarily to get to know the individual as much as I could within the limited time-frame. Following this, I opened all interviews by discussing participant information sheet with the participant, ensuring they had time to query anything prior to signing the consent forms. Once they read through the participant information sheets, I provided them with consent forms to read through and sign at their own accord (see appendix 2). Once signed, I began by describing the topic question headings and illustrated again that the interview will be audio recorded, I also expressed participants to raise if they felt they any questions were not applicable to their role. I closed all interviews by thanking practitioners for their participation, majority of participants requested a copy of the dissertation once complete, I informed them that a copy will be sent to the gatekeeper who can distribute this to them.

2.3.4 Reflections

Despite the participants busy support schedules, they were overall keen to participate and accommodating, and the interview data was predominately rich and detailed. However, access to an additional organisation proved difficult. The additional organisation specialises in assessing and treating young offenders with mental health needs; whilst access to interview psychiatric professional staff was agreed, it was later revoked due to high staff workload. Interviewing this group of professionals within the organisation would have been particularly useful for the current research as the service aims to recognise the gap in mental health service provision within youth justice, and address difficulties with multi-disciplinary working for this group – bridging the gap between social and psychological models of care. Additionally, the service is the first of its kind in Scotland to offer a specialist psychological risk assessment and social work multi-disciplinary service.

2.4 Data management, storage, and analysis

This section will detail how I managed and stored my data after the interview process, I will then describe how I examined the data. Although the sample size was small (six), the interviews generated ample data, transcriptions and audio recordings were stored on password-protected laptop. I transcribed all interviews after the fieldwork process, with the aid of my handwritten field notes taken at the time of each interview which was useful for reminding me of particular communication cues such as laughter or hesitation. All interviews were transcribed on Microsoft Word documents, collating all interviews into one large transcript document. Once this was complete, I printed this off at a university library printer and began hand-written open-coding. Handwritten fieldnotes were shredded and transcription documents were stored securely on a password protected laptop. Consistent with Data Protection Act 1998 and data protection guidelines from University of Glasgow, personal data will be securely retained for a minimum of two years after the September 3rd, 2018 research project submission, but no more than 5 years from this date. Following this, written

data documents will be destroyed via a secure and appropriate shredding service and electronic data will be deleted. Participants were not identified, other than by pseudonym (role title) in any documentation.

Each interview lasted approximately 40 to 60 minutes and the interviews were audio-recorded (with prior consent of the participant). The interviews were transcribed in full to facilitate content analysis. As there is limited research within Scotland, grounded theory is used to produce inductive inference via identification of themes. The purpose of grounded theory is for 'construction' rather than application of existing theories (Silverman, 2017: 139). This will be achieved by analysing the interview transcripts, first identifying concepts represented by statements and then later classifying the concepts into themes and thus building theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1994: 278). As previously discussed, there is limited literature exploring the perspectives of practitioners in service provision for young offenders with mental health needs in Scotland. Therefore, through an explanatory approach of practitioners' experiences, this research can generate theories that can bridge the gap in this field. An advantage of utilising this framework over alternative frameworks (such as narrative analysis or discourse analysis), is that it may highlight implications for future research into addressing service demands of that improve provision for young people with needs.

The grounded theory process involved reading transcripts three times, and then analysing them line by line, using both descriptive and interpretivist codes. This allowed for me to capture not only what the participant is saying but the importance of what the participant is saying (Miles *et al*., 2013: 298). Coding categories were analysed using open coding to identify concepts arising from thematic analysis of the interview transcripts (Miles *et al*., 2013: 297). These concepts were broken down to themes, some have been of predetermined interest, while others will emerge during analysing of the transcripts. Consistent with the

interpretive approach, themes will be identified by looking for statements that are marked in some way of having meant to the participant (Lubrosky, 1994: 196). However, thematic analysis can also illustrate some limitations. Themes are not only interpreted by what participants say, but also by how they say them, it is important for researchers to also interpret the detection of a theme in speech behaviour (Lubrosky, 1994: 202). I attended to this by keeping field notes and ensuring I engaged with the participant to elaborate on certain ambiguous or meaningful statements (Lubrosky, 1994: 202). I have attempted to be reflective of not overgeneralising themes in the study; i.e., remaining open to disconfirming evidence when it appears (Miles *et al*., 2013: 303, 313). The manual process was also time consuming, however, despite some limitations to thematic analysis in the context of the study, using thematic analysis in large data sets of structured interviews would not reserve the interpersonal and meaningful statements (Lubrosky, 1994: 205), and the manual process enabled me to immerse myself in the data.

2.5 Conclusion

Throughout this section I have outlined the theoretical and practical reasonings that shape my research study and design. As the sample size is small, the data will not be fully generalisable. However, the review of interventions with this data will aim provide valuable insights into the experiences of practitioners and realities of service provision within youth justice in Scotland. The process intends to be a reflective one for participants, giving them a chance to have their issues heard.

The next chapter will explore the findings that emerged from the interviews regarding practitioners' perspectives on service provision for young offenders with mental health needs.

Chapter 3: Findings and Discussion

3.0 Introduction

This chapter will present the findings of the research's' interviews by examining the themes identified through practitioners' narratives within a third sector organisation. This aims to gain their perspectives of supporting young offenders with mental health needs, highlighting strengths, challenges and demands in their role. Interpretations of the results will be illustrated by the researcher, as well as additional theoretical and practical comparisons and perspectives on the implications of the results.

Congruent with the whole systems approach to multiagency working, all young people were found to be referred to the organisation through one of two processes: firstly, a weekly or fortnightly offender management group meeting, with professions such as; education, police, social work, educational psychologists, it is chaired by police or a lead social worker; referrals also are received from the procurator fiscal and children's reporter on occasion. In one local authority, the young person and their family are encouraged to be present whilst deciding what service is best to support them. Secondly, email correspondence from police or social work to the organisation, highlighting young people of concern. For restorative justice services, support is voluntarily and would be determined on the young person taking responsibility.

3.1 *Theme 1* Confidence and Legitimacy

According to Lipsky (2010), the legitimacy that professionals possess in their subjective role status can be explained by 'weak forms of bureaucratic control', enabling confidence in their important role to support the 'client' (service user, 1980: 159). Additionally, Satyamurti, 1981 (as cited in Ellis *et al*., 1999) postulated the impact of 'weak bureaucratic control' and role esteem can lead to 'role making' – the act of professionals disregarding work they found disagreeable (1981: 181). This theme explores what practitioners deemed as helpful in

supporting young service users with mental health needs. To understand the wider organisation influence on support, the theme is being analysed through subthemes of 'esteem', assessment, and partnership working – these subthemes emerged through analysis of practitioner's perceptions of their role and service delivery.

3.1.1 Esteem

Building upon the notion that practitioners held esteem in their role, Organization-based self-esteem (OBSE) is defined as: *"the degree to which an individual believes him/herself to be capable, significant, and worthy as an organizational member"* (Pierce and Gardner, 2004: 593). Around 5 out of 6 practitioners had expressed positive esteem about their role and support delivery:

Youth Restorative Justice Worker: ".. *I think we have a good relationship with funder and other agencies, pretty responsive, we go see young people in our homes we don't expect them to come here, we work alongside parents, we have a good understanding of young people".*

Youth Justice Support Worker: *"...I been doing things with ***, we play basketball, building that relationship. *** seems to have come around, and had no reported incidents in the last 3 weeks, so assuming am doing something right.."*

The exerts above demonstrate practitioner's confidence in their role purpose – i.e., their support role to young offenders' matters, and the support delivery is good. The second exert in particularly has identified strength in service delivery (pro-social activity), as well as affirmation of this as a suitable method of support. This is reflective of Lipsky's (2010), in which he postulates that professionals will likely attempt to be perceived as adequate and competent in their role to validate their decision making, (Lipsky, 2010 cited in Evans and Harris, 2004).

However, when it came to exploring confidence in specifically supporting young offenders with mental health needs, the majority of practitioners felt they could only appropriately support low-level mental health needs, (e.g., ADHD) over severe mental health needs (e.g. schizophrenia). Nearly all participants expressed the use of referral to other specialised agencies as necessary for higher-level mental health needs:

Youth Restorative Justice Worker: "*There are other services that can maybe deal with some aspects of support needs better than us depending on what they are*".

Youth Justice Worker: "*..If its things like hearing voices then it's a no, a whole can of worms. I did have a case where it was like 'boom'!... everything's fine now, but I had to explain, you know 'you can't tell me these things cause am not a psychological therapist' this is when we would signpost to other agencies that can help*".

Two distinct points are relevant here, firstly, the confidence of practitioners to deliver specialist mental health support appears stunted (with regard to addressing needs). Secondly, role objectives and boundaries appear to be clearly defined, with little scope to move beyond these without structural change, and little desire too; practitioners perceived their role to facilitate support of welfare and address re-offending as part of a wider multi-agency support network. Satyamurti (1981) can be compared here; the practitioner-service user support is a personable one, allowing practitioners to exercise autonomy in their decision making, their discretion can be demonstrated through differentiating among service users (e.g., not supporting those with more severe mental health needs), this not only enables them to simplify their role tasks, but gives the impression that as long appropriate referral is made, their role is being effectively implemented. On further analysis, practitioners here also demonstrate what Lipsky (2010) defines as "creaming" – the process of client differentiation based on those practitioners deem are likely to succeed. In the present case, as the service is a

"short-term early effective intervention service", practitioners would generally base success on positive support (in accordance with an action plan) and case closure. In most cases, young service users that possess more severe and complex mental health needs, would not fit in with the service aims and targets to deliver the short-term offence focused support, in such cases practitioners felt support would be more adequately and promptly dealt with by other agencies. Thus, in attempts to fulfil the organisational goals, and public expectation of 'managing the bads', practitioners routines in support delivery affect young service users with mental health needs. However, this is not necessarily a barrier for young service users in receiving mental health support – practitioners appear highly skilled and knowledgeable to provide goal orientated support within their realms and signpost when appropriate. Even if practitioners within this third sector organisation do not feel they can address certain needs, they almost often know someone who will.

3.1.2 Toeing the Line? – Outcome Assessment

The second subtheme that emerged was based on practitioners' reflections on the use of Outcome Star assessment, the tool used to assess young service users' suitability for the youth justice services and highlight their needs for support. This is a recent development in the organisation, its implementation beginning in 2017, as a reflection of promoting 'goal-orientated' support to young service users (McKeith, 2011). Research evidence indicates the limitations of certain risk-focused assessments to highlight all types of needs of young offenders (Beck, 1992; Briggs, 2013), this is particularly relevant for those with mental health needs. The organisations adoption of a tool that aims to positively engage young service users with various needs appears helpful for identification of needs, what was particularly interesting was the unwavering similarity in responses regarding effectiveness of Outcome STAR. Rees and Wallace (1982) illustrate that professionals (social works in their study),

acceptance of organisation rules and procedures enabled staff to feel more competent and efficient in their role (1982: 127). The present practitioner's views are as followed:

Youth Restorative Justice Worker (YRJ): " *..we use outcome star, to assess what needs should be put in place, ..It covers quite a lot of topics and includes things like wellbeing, like what the young person feels about their wellbeing. What I think of it? … from my experience it opens up good discussion, it depends how you use it but opens up quite a healthy conversation on what's going on for the young person and what they might need for support".*

Criminal Justice Team Leader: "*I suppose we now use outcome star, it's quite difficult to throw that in front of somebody once you have just met them, so we wait awhile to get to know them and then try identifying their needs and where they think they are. We would then draw up an action plan and update that every 3 months to plan how we support them and their needs.. we had a young *** who had schizophrenia and through ongoing support managed to gain voluntary experience and then paid work, *** case was later closed, and I think *** doing well now".*

Youth Justice Manager: "*..we would use it to get to know them and look at key areas in their life, what areas are going well and what they might need support in.. I think it's relevant to children and young people we support, it's useful, we've created our own prompts, a whole range of questions to engage young people to support.. its visual as well if somebody's shy or not up for in-depth discussion it means you can use different methods to get the information that's required. I used it with a boy who liked using the smiley faces, it can be adapted".*

As depicted above, some practitioners expressed usefulness of outcome star to assess wellbeing of young service users, thus suggesting its capability and suitability as a tool to

identify mental health needs in service users. Whilst identification of such needs may be possible with this tool, addressing and treatment of mental health needs within the role of a third sector practitioner appears to be more complex. In terms of assessment, practitioners also tended to view the tool as a good way for working towards personal goals with young service users. Desistance research has illustrated that identifying and working towards personal goals is important for reconstructing criminal identity narratives to positive narratives for young people, this is promoted by practitioners engaging meaningfully with young people to reduce uncertainty, increase self-esteem and facilitate opportunities (Fitzpatric *et al.,* 2015; McNeill, 2006). Tailoring assessment and engaging in meaningful ways with young offenders with mental health needs is a challenging task, practitioners will face conflicts between preventing re-offending and also supporting the young person's offending and non-offending behaviour. Professional discretion is a key technique practitioners' should apply here, not only in ensuring application of approaches that contextualise offenders individual experiences, but also in not running the risk of implicit bias on certain service users (Evan and Harris, 2004; Baker, 2005).

On further analysis, the distinct similarities in responses to assessment appear consistent with Rees and Wallace (1982) findings ; in the present study, practitioners all stated similar positives and negatives about the use of assessment for young offenders with mental health needs, their depiction of the assessment as a 'strength based tool' that can be 'easily adapted', made their role in identifying mental health needs and engaging with the young person a lot easier and better. In regard to assessment, this perhaps implies that the majority of practitioner's welcome welfare ideals over that of punitive (although a lot of the support work is still offence-focused), the move to assessment procedures that are in line with 'goal-focused' rehabilitative change is also reflective of the wider organisations ethos to promote desistance through empowering individuals.

3.1.3 Partnership working

The final subtheme that emerged highlighted partnership as another positive in-service delivery. Consistent with literature evaluating whole systems approach working (Murray *et al.*, 2015), the present study illustrated that partnership working between similar agencies and joint councils has been consistent and responsive, for supporting young people with particular needs:

Youth Justice Manager*: "...we've got local support, there's other youth justice services close at hand and we're all close at hand and supportive of each other. I think that's a real strength. In addition to that in **** council and ***** council, there's real positive and strong relationship with local authority colleagues – we're based in where the children and families social work team are which is ideal where you've got an issue"*

The exert above describes the general positives of the whole system approach. Despite the climate of reductions in third sector services, practitioners still maintain that communication between agencies has remained consistent. The nature in which practitioners are required to work with multi-agencies can be deemed as a 'coping mechanism' (Lipsky, 2010) – Lipsky defined this as a shortcut to help compensate for demand in service provision, attend to organisational goals and deficit in resources. This appears to not only benefit practitioner's role working (e.g. answering of queries and solving of issues), but also is reflective of how practitioners would be adequately equipped to support those with additional support needs, such as mental health.

3.2 *Theme 2* Challenges and Demands

In line with research illustrating limited access to mental health services for young offenders (Walsh *et al.*, 2011; Whittington *et al*., 2015), imminent pressure of funding for service providers (Robertson Trust, 2012), and literature on new penology influences on 'rigid' organisational processes (Briggs, 2013), I saw it important to explore how practitioners

within the organisation viewed support delivery within the context of multi-agency working,

The second theme identified the perceived service challenges and demands that may impact on young offenders receiving support for their mental health needs. This was analysed through subthemes demonstrating; the impact of multi-agency working, impact of GDPR and constraints on service development:

3.2.1 Impact on multi-agency support

YRJ Practitioner; *"I had one young person…so *** was in the young person's department, but I got the impression (might be unfair cause it based on one person) *** went there for medication review 6 months annually from a few different consultants/doctors. And I think *** said something along the lines of *** mum/dad speaks for *** and just says everything's okay when it clearly isn't. So, I guess from that obviously the services are very stretched, and they might not have time to get a worker to get to know the family. When I contacted CAMHS regarding my concerns, they were very cooperative and assured my information would be passed on".*

Youth Justice Manager; *"I think even social work are restricted in what they can do, I think if they had capacity, the children and family's social worker could play a big part in the support of young people with mental health issues. I just think like everywhere its capacity, less and less people on the ground, some of the work they may like to do they are no able because there's bigger priorities…".*

What is evident from some perspectives is the negative consequence of resource constraints on access to timely, necessary support for young offenders with mental health needs. This not only affects the type of work practitioners can achieve, but also means fewer young people are likely to be supported. There is little third sector organisations can do about this, other than maintaining good inter-disciplinary relationships for guidance and motivation towards continued professional development regarding mental health support. A further issue worth

highlighting is the perspective that some young offenders have difficulty in engaging with mental health professionals. As illustrated in Plaistow *et al.,* (2014) young people seeking mental health service support deemed the relationship with the worker as central in having someone to talk to and to listen. The current climate of funding reductions and limited resources infringes on the important maintenance of holistic practitioner-service user relationship, contributing to less staff and thus a lack of continuity of care for young people. For example, in Plaistow *et al.,* (2014), a lack of continuity of care was perceived by young people as disruptive and unhelpful, with the negative experience of repetitive questioning, multiple assessments and problematic transitions between services. Thus, reflecting and developing on relationship-based practice should always be of priority. Again, the practitioner accounts are particularly reflective of Lipsky (2010) 'street level bureaucracy' – the practitioners have utilised the availability of multi-agency working to limit demand and make use of alternative (and in some cases more specialised resources), what makes their role complex is their motivation to deliver strength based support against a multi-agency framework that has limited resources and in some senses, a "detached bureaucracy". Additionally, according to Lipsky, 2010 (as cited in Evans and Harris, 2004), waiting for services is another example of a "coping mechanism" employed by agencies to deal with demand – whilst this is generally seen is a fair process, this can be adverse for young offenders with mental health needs.

3.2.2 Service development
The benefits of aftercare as an additional method for re-integrating offenders back into the community is known (Hazel *et al*., 2002), this is not only effective in developing positive social support networks (Bottoms *et al*., 2004: 391), but also in securing employment (Bottoms *et al*, 2004). Thus, whilst exploring the perceived strengths and weaknesses of service delivery, it emerged that the impact of funding and resources had an effect on the

organisations scope to offer additional support services, or expand on the prescribed service delivery:

Youth Justice Manager; " *…The referral source has generally been the same, in terms of year to year and changes to service delivery we can't reach has many people due to staffing cuts… We just need to be creative and utilise the organisations expertise".*

YRJ Worker; " *Well after we finish working with somebody an improvement could be follow up support, mentoring service that would continue to work with young person rather than 'that's it, it's done now'. Sometimes there could be other things that a young person might need that can't be provided at home, so I think a mentoring service could be quite useful. That's something I've been barking on about for a while".*

The exerts above illustrate practitioners desire to support more young people beyond the standard justice support role, the suggestion of an additional mentoring service highlights the awareness of aftercare as beneficial for those receiving short-term support. However, resource constraints make this difficult. One practitioner specifically suggested mentoring, the use of mentoring has proliferated in recent years as a method of addressing needs in adults, young people and more recently young offenders, research is mixed on its effectiveness (Dubois *et al*., 2011). In the context of criminal justice, Nellis (2002) defines mentoring as *"more formal than befriending but less formal than supervision"*, allowing for the mentor to guide or encourage the mentee (young service user) in the performance of a goal orientated task. In some cases, a lack of continuity of care has caused young people with mental health needs to express service dissatisfaction and withdraw engagement with professional mental health support, albeit for a number of factors relating to trust, power tensions and other issues (SAMH, 2017; Plaistow *et al*., 2014; Cook, 2015). Additionally, young offenders with mental health needs would generally be more troubled, vulnerable and

have diminished social support (McAra and McVie, 2010). Further research has indicted that young people who are most likely to survive abusive and traumatic experiences are those that externally seek strong social relationships (Keating *et al*., 2002). Therefore, mentoring in essence aims to provide people with meaningful relationship-based support, linking in with strength-based and welfare principles, mentoring has the potential to provide additional aftercare support to young service users with mental health needs; the nature of the relationship emulating 'normal' friendship can give it a certain type of legitimacy that professional-client based relationships perhaps do not (Brown and Ross, 2010). Whereas youth justice workers may see the young person on an episodic level, covering predominately offence-based work, effective mentoring involves more frequent levels of contact time between mentors and mentees, preferably in the community over a significantly longer period of time than offence-based programme work. Desistance based theories can also support mentoring to not only support those with mental health needs, but also reduce offending (the primary focus for the third sector organisation). Aspects of closely-tied practitioner-service user relationship appear to foster desistance (McNeill and Weaver, 2010). What is instrumental for this is to work is for the mentor/practitioner to genuinely believe the young person can change, i.e., a non-criminal identity, that coupled with an action plan that works towards personal goals (Hampson, 2018).

The implications of this on penal policy elicit the debate between whether third sector services should promote positive supervisory relationships, programmes or processes; or instead focus on the victim through restorative practices. However, if the question is to address mental health needs that may contribute to offending, then perhaps mentoring/desistance approaches are best to achieve this. As mentoring has emerged as a suggestion for aftercare based on resource constraint, the obvious question is how this can be implemented given the governments and local authorities limited capacity to do so. To

alleviate this concern, it can be suggested to offer mentoring to young service users as a form of aftercare, through facilitation of volunteer mentors. As resources are stretched, this may mean only offering mentoring to young service users who present the most severe mental health needs. The benefit of utilising a volunteer mentor instead of a youth justice worker already employed within the organisation lies upon the volunteer not being constrained to the same organisational pressures (work-load), or conflicting professional discretionary ideals (e.g. welfare versus punitive focused intervention). In implementing mentoring, consideration should be paid to the type of mentor matched to particular young service users, evidence suggests that matching mentor-mentee relationships based on demographic characteristics such as ethnicity/race, gender or similarities/interests may have a more significant effect on improving trust and emotional attainment ((Dubois *et al,* 2011: 70). Thus, if a positive relationship is established then the young service user will likely seek to model the values and goals set out by the mentor.

This is not intended as a replacement for professional mental health service provision, but instead can bridge the gap between referral waiting list times, easing pressures of justice practitioners, and, instead be offered as an additional voluntary support service for those who feel they need more support after the delivery of practitioner's short-term offence-focused interventions.

3.2.3 Impact of GDPR
The final subtheme that emerged as a challenge to practitioner's service provision, is the impact of GDPR. GDPR only came into force 25th of May 2018 (Chaucer, 2018), so knowledge on its effect on working processes, and especially justice support is not yet known – such insights are therefore useful in understanding practitioners perceived role-stressors. Two participants expressed GDPR as an infringement on obtaining information about young service users and carrying out support:

Youth Justice Support Worker: "*..if police don't get consent forms to share the information then we don't get to go to the meeting to discuss the individual to get them referred to us, which is quite bizarre. I think GDPR is a major problem. If police are involved then GDPR should take a back burner, because of vulnerable people and potential violent people, we need to protect communities*".

Youth Justice Worker: "*…But sometimes the parents can say we don't want **** to know why he's working with CAMHS, but to me it's an issue for risk assessment. But GDPR makes it really tough, because we only get information on a need to know basis, doesn't make our job difficult but a bit more awkward in terms of what we are dealing with – stuff that we don't know that we need to know can be challenging*".

The two issues highlighted suggest; GDPR's hinderance on gaining access to certain information, resulting in either missed referrals and support of vulnerable young people, and/or inadequate information necessary for a robust risk assessment and action plan. As the issue of GDPR cannot be eradicated, practitioners have to continue to work with this constraint, earlier comments of the benefits of partnership working are perhaps more reflective of how multi-disciplinary working can still facilitate support of young service users with mental health needs. The staff frustrations resulting from this development are still relevant, the pivotal role of providing support to young service users is inevitably more difficult by their accounts. Whether this will be a factor that will develop into impacting on role autonomy and esteem is not yet clearly known. GDPR and Data Protection does allow youth justice organisations the right to retain this kind of personal data where its retention can be justified on the grounds of reducing risk – for third sector organisations, discretion needs to be applied on whether to delete or retain information about service users, by retaining, this needs to be stored in a secure way without possibility of inappropriate access.

3.3 *Theme 3* Usefulness of Restorative Justice

The third and final theme that emerged centred around perspectives about restorative justice.

To clarify, the third sector organisation delivered youth justice support through two streams; early and effective intervention programmes to at risk youth, and restorative justice support when there could be an identifiable person harmed. Restorative justice (RJ) is the process whereby victims affected by crime and the offenders attempt to repair the damage and resolve issues (Newbury, 2011: 252). It is a process offered as an alternative to prosecution, allowing young offenders to acknowledge responsibility of their actions, promote consequential thinking to prevent future re-offending, and at the same time offer reparations to the victim (Daly, 2006; Latimer *et al*., 2005). It is not intended to be a punitive process nor one that attempts to solve systemic issues related to unemployment, class or race. It can be contended that RJ incorporates both welfare principles (focusing on inclusion and reintegration of the offender), and punitive principles (focused on making reparations to the victim and taking responsibility). There is the criticism that pure welfarism violates 'due process' (Scraton and Haydon, 2002: 311), whereas pure punitive justice forces responsibility on vulnerable young people, without consideration of the contributing crime factors (Goldson, 2002: 12). This inevitably puts RJ practitioners in an ambivalent position, where they are expected to work within a framework that puts emphasis on paternalism and personal responsibility (Muncie, 2012). Therefore, I intended to explore the experiences of practitioners using this framework, focusing on its applicability to those with mental health needs (and additional needs):

3.3.1 RJ as an effective process

YRJ Practitioner, case example*: "we had a young person referred for assaulting another *** but was charged with ** behaviour towards the police when *** was arrested for assault..*** had been through really difficult family and personal life ..We worked through the process and they're was a history of bullying from the person she assaulted, *** didn't feel it was appropriate to be in restorative process with ***. But*

*** regretted how *** acted towards the police and wanted to work on that. So we worked through the incident and used the assessment which brought up things and had a face to face meeting in one of the police officers involved and– the police felt *** really matured and that it was very mature for *** to make a formal apology, ** reflected , it could have just been ** age or maybe the process, or a bit of both".

In this case study example, the young service user voluntarily sought restorative support, which appeared to be successful. The practitioner also gives light to whether the restorative process was the reason or maturity. The latter is reflective of desistance theories which postulate maturation (ageing), social bonds or changes in perceived self-identity promote desistance (Maruna, 2001). Merely getting older is not necessarily the only factor, but an interaction between these factors as well as the significant meaning of these to the offender is what contributes to change. Whether restorative justice can facilitate this desistance process in youth has not been widely researched in Scotland. Although, in reviewing its' general effectiveness, Chapman and Murray (2015) illustrate that there were 1,014 restorative youth conferences compared to 126 court related outcomes (custody, community service orders etc). This meaning that a large proportion of young offenders preferred the restorative process despite the fact it requires commitment to various meetings and meeting the victim.

3.3.2 RJ - A process fit for all?

YRJ Practitioner: *"I and a lot of young people felt it was quite a long process, we were supposed to keep it for 3 months but often went longer than that. Sometimes it would get drawn up when both parties would want to move on and forget what has happened. I think when we got a case where it took a while to see both people or referral took long we would often get person harmed pulling out – but usually we would get circumstances where people were glad at the end of the process.."*

The second issue highlighted in the interview exerts is the longevity of the RJ process, which may in turn deter some young people and their victims from participating, but then again, the process is entirely voluntary – withdrawal from the victim does not negate the young offender from being able to receive youth justice support to address their needs. Additionally, a couple of practitioners expressed rigidness of the modules for all types of young service users. As RJ is primarily victim focused, its capability to also support offender's mental health needs or additional needs is unknown. However, the process of aiding the young offender to acknowledge responsibility and offer face-to-face reparations with the victim can elicit feelings of shame, embarrassment, perceived unfairness and power imbalances (Braithwaite, 1999). All of which may not necessarily improve mental health of those already vulnerable. Notably, within a RJ framework, imbalances can perhaps be addressed by ensuring procedural fairness, ultimately this is the responsibility of the practitioner. Furthermore, the RJ process predominately relies upon narrative language abilities, and confidence in communicating, these abilities for young offenders with certain mental health needs may be compromised. For example, for those with anxiety disorders who may experience symptoms such as hypervigilance and poor concentration, or those with depression may experience negative self-perceptions and loss of motivation to participate (CYCJ, 2018:21).

Nonetheless, in the current research, one YRJ practitioner illustrated effective adaptation of the RJ process for a young service user with learning difficulties:

YRJ Practitioner: "*..it was challenging. We had shuttle dialogue, we would explain what happened to each, even in writing and discussed parameters if they saw each other in the community. Both parties felt a lot better about themselves and each other by the end…, and the person harmed has stated ** was satisfied with what the **** had done, and the tension was diffused*".

The practitioner expresses the process of service delivery and adaptation as a challenging one, this suggests that tailoring the RJ process to those with needs (mental health or learning), serves as an additional work-stressor, adaptation of prescribed models is time-consuming. The success of the complex work conducted by the YRJ Practitioner, and efforts to adapt the programme delivered, is in fact contrary to a part of Lipsky's (2010) 'coping mechanisms' theory which states that; for professionals to ease work stressors and demand, they are likely to simplify client processing, ration services, limiting access to services for those that are seen as difficult.

Furthermore, the alternative use of shuttle dialogue proved useful in the above case. However, in cases where appropriate, practitioners should be weary of promoting material reparation (by way of a mediator, with no face-to-face interaction between parties) over symbolic reparation– research has illustrated victims' dissatisfaction with material reparation as useful only for the offender (Retzinger and Scheffs, 1996). It is therefore imperative for practitioners to be aware of the responsiveness (or lack of) of a young person's engagement during the process – creating flexible and creative ways of helping young service users and victims with particular needs to comfortably communicate and make amends.

Chapter 4: Reflexivity – from practitioner to student researcher

This chapter will give a brief overview of my perspectives whilst conducting qualitative research interviews at the third sector organisation I was once employed. To clarify, reflexivity is the process of "analysing the self recursively and critically in relation to the object, context, and process of inquiry" (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2017).

My prior experience as an adult criminal justice practitioner, and youth justice practitioner uniquely places me as I have a professional working knowledge of the various systems, structures, and practices that interact when a young person with mental health needs has been diverted away from the Criminal Justice System and into a third sector organisation. This knowledge has helped to shape the interview topic guide (see appendix 3). Whilst beginning the research process, I contacted a few service contacts within the organisation, but service delivery demand hindered arrangements from proceeding. A service manager from the organisation at a different local authority later offered to act as gatekeeper, which was instrumental in securing ethical approval from the organisations head office and facilitating the available practitioners for interview. Reflecting on my positioning as a prior practitioner, I chose to not disclose this to participants (minus the gatekeeper) to reduce the likelihood of bias interactions during interviews. I am unsure as to whether practitioners knew of my prior role, the use of jargon by a couple of practitioners suggested their assumptions that I knew of particular terminology. Additionally, practitioners were very open in their discussions, enabling the research to possess 'rich and detailed' data, whether the depth of information I received was due to my non-intimidating role as just a student, or any other reason, I am not exactly sure.

In analysing the data, the broad themes that emerged were partially reflective of my experience as a practitioner. I particularly resonated with the subthemes of 'impact on multi-

agency working', 'partnership 'and 'role esteem'. The practitioner role is challenging but being able to support young people through a difficult process to facilitate change is rewarding.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The objective of the present research was to gain practitioner perspectives of supporting young offenders with mental health needs. This was achieved through three research aims: firstly, to explore the structure and processes of service provision; this allowed me to understand the organisational context in which the service operates. Literature has shown young offenders' difficulty in accessing mental health services (Cocozza, 2000; Plaistow *et al.*, 2014), and, the limitations of solely offence/risk focused interventions to address mental health needs (Goldson, 2005). This aim was important for enabling my understanding of the available support resources available to young offenders and the practitioner role in this support. The research demonstrated practitioner's commitment to strength-based assessments and short-term offence focused work, whilst assessment measures were viewed positively for service user engagement, the overarching focus of offence-focused work made this practitioners priority, and most only feel comfortable supporting those with low-level mental health needs (referring on those with more severe mental health needs). The second aim was to gain an understanding of practitioners' views of the strengths, challenges, and demands of working within third sector organisations; in light of the first aim findings, practitioners highlighted partnership working as a key strength for service delivery of young offenders with mental health needs, as well as the use of desistance focused pro-social engagement methods in support delivery. The challenges exposed by practitioners revealed macro level structures (resource constraints, limited funding) on the perceived lack of timely specialist mental health support for young service users supported within a multi-agency framework - in some cases this made practitioners support work to vulnerable service users more challenging or counterproductive (e.g. if service users are not receiving specialist mental health support whilst also receiving crime intervention support, or if practitioners are not receiving service user case information). The motivation for the service to develop is evidenced through some suggestions of aftercare and expanding on knowledge, this

highlighted practitioner's commitment to deliver evidence-based support, and fulfil welfare principles, to address needs that perhaps justice focused interventions cannot. The final aim intended to explore practitioners' opinions of service support within the multi-agency framework, and its impact on service delivery of young offenders with mental health needs; this was evidenced through discussion of practitioners perceived challenges. An important finding reviewing the suitability of RJ as a service for those with mental health needs revealed; RJ as a process may facilitate desistance, however, its suitability for those with certain mental health needs may rely upon rapid adaptation on part of the practitioner – this was effective in the case example of the young service user with learning difficulty needs, however for the practitioner, it did not go without difficulty. Whilst it can be contended that practitioners, (and their multi-agency counterparts), strive to deliver relationship-based practice, in order for this to be effective, practitioners require to be afforded the time to deal with complex cases; however, as demonstrated, the changing nature of third sector services does not make this an easy task. Furthermore, what is particularly pertinent is the impact such wider organisational pressures and ideals can have on practitioners; not only on their personal anxieties and morale but also on their readiness to support complex cases (Ruch, 2005; Hughes & Pengelly 1997; Ward 1998).

The study was analysed through a broader theoretical framework; exploring the impact of the new penology (justice/risk and welfare) ideals on practitioners' perceptions of service delivery, whilst also comparing Lipsky's 'street level bureaucracy' to the emerging themes. The findings in essence reveal; practitioners' commitment to the organisations ideals, which also reinforces role esteem, the impact of macro level structures make practitioners role slightly more challenging and can at times limit the support to young offenders with certain mental health needs. In light of this, it is important for third sector organisations to support

practitioners in their skilled and complex service delivery role, whilst also embracing reflexivity in professional discretion, and utilising evidence-based knowledge.

Upon reflection, the study did present some limitations. Firstly, as the research approach is explanatory and sample size is small, the findings are not generalisable to all third sector practitioners, nor is their scope to provide definitive conclusions about the mental health needs of young offenders from perspectives of service provider staff in Scotland. I originally intended for a sample size of eight, but due to service delivery demands I could only interview six practitioners. Therefore, the findings revealed were personal and reflective of practitioners working within the particular organisation, the reduced sample size allowed me to have more in-depth analysis of the interview transcripts, staying in line with the constructivist theoretical framework. Additionally, in exploring the impact of multi-agency support on young offenders with mental health needs, the study could have benefited from interviewing clinical professionals that work alongside third sector practitioners – although this was initially agreed, service demand prevented the interviews from commencing.

Nonetheless, the study can provide valuable insights into the experiences of practitioners and realities of service provision within youth justice in Scotland. Such perspectives have highlighted strengths, challenges and demands of service provision and the impact this has on vulnerable young offenders. The findings can raise awareness of certain issues and once shared with management, could perhaps influence changes within the organisation and service delivery. Thus, these perspectives can supplement prior related research and expand on research focused on mental health policy change within Scottish youth justice.

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Appendix 1: Invitation to participate in a research project

University
of Glasgow

College of Social
Sciences

Invitation to participate in a research project

Project Title: Practitioner Perspectives: The Mental Health Needs of young offenders in Scotland.

Student Researcher: ********

Supervisor: Dr Caitlin Gormley (Lecturer in Criminology, University of Glasgow)

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important you understand why the research is being carried out, what it will involve, and what will happen with the results. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to discuss with others if you wish. Please do not hesitate to ask anything that is not clear or if you would like more information; contact information is provided at the end of this document.

Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the study is to identify the perspectives of practitioners of service delivery of young offenders in reducing reoffending and managing mental health needs. Firstly, the research intends to explore the perspectives of practitioners who support young offenders with mental health needs. Secondly, to gain an understanding of practitioners' views of the strengths, challenges, and demands of working within third sector organisations. Lastly, the research intends to explore practitioners understandings of Scottish Government Policy (relevant to mental health service referral criteria and criminal justice social work assessment) – and its impact on service delivery of young offenders with mental health needs.

Why have I been asked to participate?

You have been asked to participate because you are a practitioner in the field of criminal justice or your role is in the field of mental health and youth justice. Your expertise in these fields would prove valuable for identifying examples of good practice and determining the additional support needed for practitioners assessing and managing complex needs. There is no right or wrong answer; any information and opinions will be helpful for my research.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation in the research is entirely optional. If you decide to take part, you are still free to pause or withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Deciding not to take part will have **no** impact on your employment.

What will taking part involve?

If you choose to take part, you will be interviewed by the student researcher about your experiences of working with young people with mental health needs within third sector Criminal Justice settings. You will be asked about your experiences and opinions of service delivery, the organisations structure and processes and relevant policy. Interviews are expected to be carried out between June to July 2018. The interview will last no longer than one hour, and will take place in a private meeting room or office within your place of work. The questions will be open and will allow for you to discuss issues and give your opinions.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

You will never be identified from the research, and names will be allocated pseudonyms in the final research to limit likelihood of identification. All pseudonyms will be referred to by generalised job titles (for example, team leader, youth support worker), with no indication as to what organisation the participant is from. Additionally, the researcher will aim to exclude any personal details (age and gender), and any distinctive stories in the final research.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The interview will be audio-recorded by the student researcher. The audio recording will be later transcribed by the student researcher, and the audio recording will be destroyed. No one

else will hear the recording other than the student researcher. The findings from the research will be produced as a dissertation which will be submitted to the University of Glasgow. You are more than welcome to a copy of the dissertation.

Who has approved the research study?

The project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Glasgow College of Social Sciences Ethics Committee.

Contact for Further Information

Student researcher: *******, email: ********

Supervisor: Dr Caitlin Gormley, email: Caitlin.Gormley@glasgow.ac.uk

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research project, you can contact the ethics administrator for the School of Social & Political Sciences, Jakki Walsh   email: socpol-pgt-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Consent Form

Title of Project: Practitioner Perspectives: The Mental Health Needs of young offenders in Scotland.

Name of Researcher: ******
Name of supervisor: Dr Caitlin Gormley

- o I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

- o I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

- o I consent / do not consent (delete as applicable) to interviews being audio-recorded.

- o I understand that I will not be identified from the findings or any publications associated with this research project, and that any reference to me will be to the broad description of my job role.

- o I agree / do not agree (delete as applicable) to take part in the above study.

Signature Section

Name of Participant …………………………………… Signature ……………………………………………..

Date …………………………………

Name of Researcher …………………………………… Signature ……………………………………………..

Date …………………………………

Appendix 3: Topic Guide and Proposed Interview Questions

This form will be a provisional guide to the proposed interview questions and topics with practitioners. The interview is semi-structured and is seeking in-depth discussions, therefore, the questions can change depending on the flow of the interview and comfortableness of the interviewee, additionally, supplementary questions not listed could be asked.

Before interviews begin, all participants will have an initial meeting with the researcher to review the participant information sheets. This will give clarity of the participants roles and opportunity for any questions. Participants will be emailed participant information sheets in advance of the interview and can query with the researcher via email or phone.

The main aims of interviews with Sacro staff and external practitioners are:

- To explore the perspectives of those working directly with young offenders;

- To understand the structure and processes involved in Sacro and IVY Project CYCJ service provision and perceived advantages and disadvantages of provision;

- To assess the implications of government policy on service delivery for young offenders.

Proposed Questions

Structure and Process:

1. Can you describe how young people are referred to the service?
2. What are the procedures for assessment of young service users? What do you think of the these?
3. Can you describe the usual support process for service users in XXXX service?
4. How did this service come about? Has anything changed because of this service being delivered?

Support delivery knowledge:

1. Can you describe the needs service users often receive support for? (you do not need to disclose names or identifiable specifics)
2. How confident do you feel in supporting those with mental health needs?

Opinions:

1. What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the service delivery?
2. How do you think the service can improve?
3. What do you think your role should be?
4. What is your opinion on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) treatment or management of young offenders with mental health needs?
5. How do you see the role of social work services in the treatment or management of young offenders with mental health needs?

University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

Ethics Committee for Non Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects

NOTIFICATION OF ETHICS APPLICATION OUTCOME – UG and PGT Applications

Application Type: **New**   **Date Application Reviewed:** 11 June 2018

Application Number:

Applicant's Name: ******

Project Title: Practitioner Perspectives: The mental health needs of young offenders in Scotland

_____

APPLICATION OUTCOME

(A)   Fully Approved   ☐ *Start Date of Approval: Whenever permissions are received   End Date of Approval: 3/9/2018*

(*B*)   Approved subject to amendments

If the applicant has been given approval subject to amendments this means they can proceed with their data collection with effect from the date of approval, however they should note the following applies to their application:

> **Approved Subject to Amendments without the need to submit amendments to the Supervisor**
>   ☒
>
>
> **Approved Subject to Amendments made to the satisfaction of the applicant's Supervisor**
>   ☐

The College Ethics Committee expects the applicant to act responsibly in addressing the recommended amendments.

(C)   Application is Not Approved at this Time

Subject to Amendments made to the satisfaction of the School Ethics Forum (SEF)
☐

Complete resubmission required. Discuss the application with supervisor before resubmitting. ☐

Please note the comments in the section below and provide further information where requested.

If you have been asked to resubmit your application in full, send it to your supervisor who will forward it to your local School Ethics Forum admin support staff.

Where resubmissions only need to be submitted to an applicant's supervisor.

This will apply to essential items that an applicant must address prior to ethics approval being granted. As the associated research ethics risks are considered to be low, the applicant's response need only be reviewed and cleared by the applicant's supervisor before the research can properly begin. For any application processed under this outcome, it is the Supervisor's responsibility to email socpol-pgt-ethics@glagow.ac.uk with confirmation of their approval of the re-submitted application.

APPLICATION COMMENTS

Major Recommendations:

Minor Recommendations:

Since this is PGT and not PGR, on the PLS I suggest you replace the section " If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research project, you can contact the College of Social Sciences   Ethics

Officer   Dr Muir Houston   email: socsci-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk " to:" If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research project, you can contact the ethics administrator for the School of Social & Political Sciences, Jakki Walsh socpol-pgt-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk."

Please retain this notification for future reference. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact your School Ethics forum admin support staff.