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*Exploring Women's Experiences of Supported Resettlement: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*

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**Exploring Women's Experiences of Supported Resettlement: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

Jennifer Hardy

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of

Sheffield Hallam University

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

July, 2018

**Candidates' statement:**

I hereby declare that:

1. I have not been enrolled for another award of the University, or other academic or professional organisation, whilst undertaking my research degree.
2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.
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4. The work undertaken towards the thesis has been conducted in accordance with the SHU Principles of Integrity in Research and the SHU Research Ethics Policy.
5. The word count of the thesis is 70,312

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*“A woman with a voice is by definition a strong woman. But the search to find that voice can be remarkably difficult.”*

*Melinda Gates, Powerful Voices Annual Luncheon 2003*

## **Abstract**

Relatively little is known about the experiences of women within the Criminal Justice System, particularly their support needs and challenges on release from prison/custody. Within the context of the ever-increasing reliance on third-sector services to provide resettlement support, a gap in knowledge relates to the role of mentoring and peer-support services often provided by such services. Questions concern what the benefits might be for women both accessing and providing this type of support and the role this might play in their identity, resettlement, reintegration and eventual desistance. To address this gap in knowledge, an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was conducted to analyse a series of interviews with women at Key Changes, a (now closed) peer-mentoring scheme for female offenders released from two women's prisons in South Yorkshire. The research sampled both service users and peer-mentors at the service and utilised a range of participatory methods, including Photo Elicitation and repertory grids, within semi-structured interviews. Findings highlighted several Master Themes identified within both service user and peer-mentor experiences, including Stigma and Identity; Trauma, Power and Agency; Community and Capital and Mentoring and Generative Activity. Findings are critically discussed in relation to the findings and models of resettlement practice emanating from both the RNR and Desistance literatures, and a number of recommendations for practice and further research are made. All are underpinned by the need for a response to women at all levels of the Criminal Justice System and post-release, which is informed by understanding of gendered trauma.

## Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION .....	11
1.1 Background .....	11
1.2 Key Changes.....	13
1.3 Mentoring and Resettlement .....	18
1.4 The Transforming Rehabilitation Agenda: Impact and Efficacy .....	23
1.5 Women in the Criminal Justice System .....	26
1.6 Research Questions .....	28
2. OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE, PRACTICE AND POLICY .....	30
2.1 Key Statistics .....	30
2.2 Reducing Recidivism .....	31
2.2.1 The "What Works?" and Risk, Need and Responsivity Model .....	32
2.2.3 The Desistance Paradigm.....	43
2.3 Exploring Lived Experiences .....	51
2.3.1 Women’s Experiences of Prison and Resettlement .....	53
2.3.2 Peer Mentoring and the 'Wounded Healer' Phenomenon .....	55
2.4 Aims of the PhD Research .....	58
2.5 Summary and Thesis Overview.....	60
3. METHODOLOGY .....	62
3.1 Overview .....	62
3.2 Methodological Approach .....	62
3.2.1 Justification for a Mixed Methods approach .....	62

3.2.2 Rationale for a Critical Realist Position .....	64
3.2.3 A Feminist Methodology .....	65
3.2.4 Participatory Research Methods .....	66
3.2.5 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).....	77
3.3 Methods .....	80
3.3.1 Sample .....	80
3.3.2 Data Saturation .....	82
3.3.3 Recruitment.....	83
3.3.4 Inclusion criteria .....	84
3.3.5 Methodological developments.....	84
3.3.6 Procedural Information .....	86
3.4 Data Analysis Procedures.....	89
3.4.1 Sensitivity and Rigour .....	90
3.4.2 Researcher Positionality .....	92
3.5 Ethical Considerations.....	94
3.5.1 Ethical Approval .....	94
3.5.2 Conflicts of Interest .....	94
3.5.3 Participant Vulnerability.....	94
3.5.4 Informed Consent and Debriefing .....	95
3.5.5 Confidentiality and Anonymity .....	95
3.5.6 Disclosures.....	96
3.5.7 Burden.....	96

3.6 Research Reflections .....	97
3.6.1 Participants' Wishes to be Identified .....	97
3.6.2 Incentives and Gatekeepers .....	98
3.6.3 Personal Development .....	99
3.7 Summary .....	100
4. EXPERIENCES OF OFFENDING, INCARCERATION AND RELEASE .....	101
4.1 Chapter Overview .....	101
4.2 Trauma, Power and Agency .....	103
4.2.1 Pre-prison Vulnerabilities, Sentencing and Preparedness .....	104
4.2.2 Incarceration, Institutionalisation and Mental Health.....	108
4.2.3 Release as a Secondary Trauma.....	116
4.3 Stigma and Identity .....	124
4.3.1 Stigma and Self-Stigmatisation .....	125
4.3.2 Identity and Self-View .....	132
4.4 Summary .....	147
5. EXPERIENCES OF MENTORING .....	149
5.1 Chapter Overview.....	149
5.2 Community and Capital.....	150
5.2.1 Connectedness and Capital .....	151
5.2.2 Distrust of Services .....	159
5.3 Mentoring and Generative Activity.....	161
5.3.1 Group Membership and Shared Identities .....	162



5.3.2 Key Changes and Peer mentoring.....	165
5.3.3 Professional Ex's and Generative Activity.....	170
5.4 Summary .....	175
6. DISCUSSION .....	177
6.1 Research Overview: .....	177
6.2 Significance of Key Findings .....	179
6.2.1 Trauma, Power and Agency.....	180
6.2.2 Identity and Stigma.....	186
6.2.3 Mentoring and Capital .....	190
6.3 Summary .....	195
7. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS.....	197
7.1 Overview .....	197
7.2 Theoretical Reflections and Implications.....	198
7.2.1 Gender Informed Practice.....	198
7.2.2 The Applicability of Risk-based frameworks to Women's Services.....	200
7.2.3 Alternative Approaches to Working with and Researching Women Offenders.....	202
7.3 Practice and Policy Reflections and Implications .....	204
7.3.1 Transforming Rehabilitation .....	204
7.3.2 Alternate routes for Criminal Justice developments.....	206
7.3.3 Recommendations for Mentoring and Re-entry programmes .....	208
7.4 Suggested Future Research.....	210
7.5 Conclusions .....	211

Word count: 70,906.....	212
REFERENCES.....	213
APPENDICES .....	260
Table of Appendices.....	260
Appendix 1: Ethical approval documents. Service user interviews: SHU & NOMS	261
Appendix 2: Ethical approval documents. Peer mentor interviews: SHU & NOMS	264
Appendix 3: Service user interviews: Photo elicitation interview materials (information sheet, consent form, debrief) .....	266
Appendix 4: Service user interviews: Ideal Outcomes Inventory interview materials (information sheet, consent form, debrief).....	269
Appendix 5: Peer mentor interviews: Photo elicitation interview materials (information sheet, consent form, debrief) .....	272
Appendix 6: Peer mentor interviews: Repertory Grid interview materials (information sheet, consent form, debrief) .....	275
Appendix 7: Example of (blank) IOI grid with completion instructions read to participant	278
Appendix 8: Example of (blank) Repertory Grid with completion instructions read to participant	280
Appendix 9: Service user interviews: Interview Prompts .....	281
Appendix 10: Table of Master themes and related superordinate themes. Experiences of offending, incarceration and release. ....	283
Appendix 11: Table of Master themes and related superordinate themes: Experiences of mentoring and generative activity .....	285

## **List of Tables**

Table 1: Visual representation of Master Themes and related Superordinate themes

Table 2: Visual representation of Master Theme ‘Trauma, Power and Agency’, with related Superordinate themes

Table 3: Visual representation of Master theme ‘Stigma and Identity’ with related Superordinate themes

Table 4: Visual representation of Master Themes and related Superordinate themes

Table 5: Visual representation of Master theme ‘Community and Capital’ with related Superordinate themes

Table 6: Visual representation of Master Theme ‘Mentoring and Generative Activity’ with related Superordinate themes

## **Glossary of Terms**

CJS: Criminal Justice System

IOI: Ideal Outcomes Inventory

IPA: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

PR: Participatory Research

PRT: Prison Reform Trust

TR: Transforming Rehabilitation

TSO: Third Sector Organisation

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Women in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) in England and Wales have long been described as "correctional afterthoughts" (Corston, 2007; Ross & Fabiano, 1986) within a male-orientated and male-dominated system (PRT, Bromley Briefings, Autumn 2017; Van Voorhis et al, 2010). Now, in the face of questions around the efficacy of Transforming Rehabilitation (TR, as discussed in section 1.4), and an ongoing lack of sufficient response to various reviews of CJS services for female offenders, 'post-code lottery' services for women mean that they are at an increased risk of being forgotten entirely.

Since 2000, several reviews (including the Wedderburn Report, 2000; the Corston Report, 2007; the Fawcett Report, 2007; the Women's' Justice Taskforce Committee, 2011; the Angiolini Report, 2012; the Justice Select Committee Report, 2013; and HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2016, 2017) have supported findings of research which has called into question the efficacy of 'malestream' sentencing routes for females (Gelsthorpe & Morris, 1990). All the aforementioned reviews have consistently highlighted the continuing failures of the male-focused prison system to meet the multiple, complex needs of female offenders, and all have concluded that prison sentences are rarely a necessary, appropriate or proportionate response to women in the CJS (Prison Reform Trust, 2014). As stated by the Justice Select Committee report, "Prison is an expensive and ineffective way of dealing with many women offenders who do not pose a significant risk of harm to public safety" (Justice Select Committee, 2013, p.4). The Corston Report (2007) proposed a multi-agency, woman-centred, holistic approach to address the complex criminogenic needs of many female offenders with the aim of reducing reoffending (NOMS, 2012). The report emphasised that, due to funding cuts, Third Sector Organisations (TSOs) have become increasingly vital in providing these services. However, a recent review of women's services by HM Inspectorate of Probation (2016) suggests that a response to the report has been lacking:

*“Almost a decade after the Corston report, we found funding reductions and uncertainties, a lack of strategic or operational focus on outcomes for women, and no better monitoring and evaluation than when we reported in 2011.” (p.5)*

The Women’s Custodial Estate Review (Robinson, 2013) was the Coalition government’s nod of acknowledgment to the Corston Report, before their two-year “hiatus” in any action upon the recommendations made (Justice Select Committee, 2013). The report highlighted the importance of three factors in decision-making for the management of female offenders as follows: proximity to family (specifically dependent children) to allow offenders to maintain family ties; ability to access interventions; and opportunities for meaningful resettlement that can continue on release. Other factors highlighted as important factors in high reoffending rates include experiences of victimisation (Bonta, Pang & Wallace-Capretta, 1995; Van Voorhis, Wright, Salisbury, & Bauman, 2010), the short sentences typically given to female offenders (PRT, Bromley Briefings, autumn 2017; The Women and Equalities Group; NOMS, 2012), and large distances between women’s prisons and women’s homes (Hansard, 2010). Indeed, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (2017) state that the recent closure of HMP Holloway and the number of women given custodial sentences has resulted in overcrowding in the rest of the female estate, causing more women to be held at a greater distance from support networks.

Beyond the impact of systemic and political apathy, research suggests that the psychological treatment, therapies and programmes available to (some) women in prison, often in the form of Offending Behaviour programmes (OBPs), also fail to recognise and meet the differing needs of female offenders. This is due to their overwhelming basis in research around male offending (Blanchette & Brown, 2006; Hedderman & Jolliffe, 2015; Hollin & Palmer 2006a; Kascgak, 1992). For example, Martin, Kautt and Gelsthorpe (2009) conducted a multivariate analysis of national data (2006-7), which suggested that the significantly lower completion rates found among women (vs males) on OBPs were due to the male orientation of programme design and delivery, with significant variation between the sexes in the predictors of programme completion. This research suggests that the current approach for women in the CJS of “whatever works for men offenders with a few adjustments” (Worrall, 2003,

p.40), is not sufficient and stresses the need to broaden the 'what works' agenda to question whether 'what works' for men also works for women (Sheehan et al, 2007). The desistance paradigm takes an alternate approach to working with offenders within the Criminal Justice System and upon release into the community. Research here evidences a need for greater understanding of women's experiences of both prison and resettlement, in particular the process of change and desistance from crime (Carlton & Seagrave, 2013; O'Neil, 2017). The research sought to address this gap in the literature by exploring women's experiences of resettlement and desistance following a custodial sentence. The women were either service users or peer mentors at 'Key Changes', a peer-mentoring and educational presentations scheme in South Yorkshire (see section 1.2).

## **1.2 Key Changes**

'Key Changes: Unlocking Women's Potential' (Company Number: 7826305) was a not-for-profit peer mentoring and educational presentations scheme based in Sheffield. Founded in October 2011 and closed in May 2018, Key Changes was one of an estimated 20,000 Third Sector Organisations (TSOs) in England and Wales (Gojkovic et al, 2011) working to aid resettlement and reduce recidivism broadly focused around the 7/9 Pathways frameworks identified by Government (Home Office Reducing Re-Offending National Action Plan, 2004a; Women and Young People's Group, HM Prison Service, 2006; see section 2.1.2). The 7 Pathways framework (expanded to 9 pathways for women in the CJS) is based within the Risk, Need, Responsivity Paradigm (RNR; Bonta & Andrews, 2007) of offender management and outlines 7 (or 9) areas of personal and social need that can contribute to an individuals' offending behaviour (see section 2.1 for further detail). Key Changes was founded with the aim of assisting women with a range of needs, within a holistic, women-centred environment and focused specifically on the second pathway "Education, Training and Employment" highlighted as a particularly important area of need for female offenders by the Prison Reform Trust (2015). Specifically, they argue that female prisoners are approximately three times less likely to have a job to return to post-incarceration than male offenders (8.5% vs 26% of men), with less than one in ten women having a job to return to (NOMS Equalities Annual Report, 2013). The mission statement of Key Changes outlined that:

*"Key Changes is a gender specific organisation designed to empower women in or, at risk of the Criminal Justice System, to overcome barriers which they may face and unlock their true potential."*

Key Changes offered a through the gate, one-to-one, Approved Provider Standard (APS) accredited peer-mentoring service and educational presentations scheme for female offenders (aged 18+) released into Sheffield, Rotherham and Doncaster from HMP New Hall and HMP Askham Grange. Most women were under the supervision of the South Yorkshire Community Rehabilitation Company, although Key Changes also supported several women under National Probation Service supervision. Mentoring was accessible for up to six months pre-release and for up to one year in the community (extendable for prolific offenders). The service aimed to empower women and to equip them with the skills needed to deal with personal and social issues in a pro-social way. The service ran an educational presentations scheme: service users could choose to participate in presentation courses, leading up to educational presentations at schools, community venues and conferences on issues facing women within the CJS. This aimed to increase self-confidence and ownership of experiences, whilst raising community awareness about issues that could lead to offending and problems faced by women following release.

Key Changes, founded two years prior to the beginning of this PhD, developed over the course of the PhD through gaining competitive grants, sponsorship and contracts, moving to new premises and providing support and opportunities to increasing numbers of service users through staff expansion, before closing its doors in 2018. The service operated as a women's centre aiming to provide an on-going source of community-based support for female ex-prisoners, as well as providing support and services for isolated women in the community who are deemed to be at risk of offending. It developed a range of educational and training courses (becoming a college in its own right). For an overview of the development of the service, including key dates, figures and the progress of this PhD research, please see Figure 1 below. Key Changes was initially developed as a peer mentoring scheme, where women voluntarily opted to engage with the service. Women were referred to the service by statutory agencies, private agencies, third sector agencies, as well as friends and family. Women could also self-refer to Key



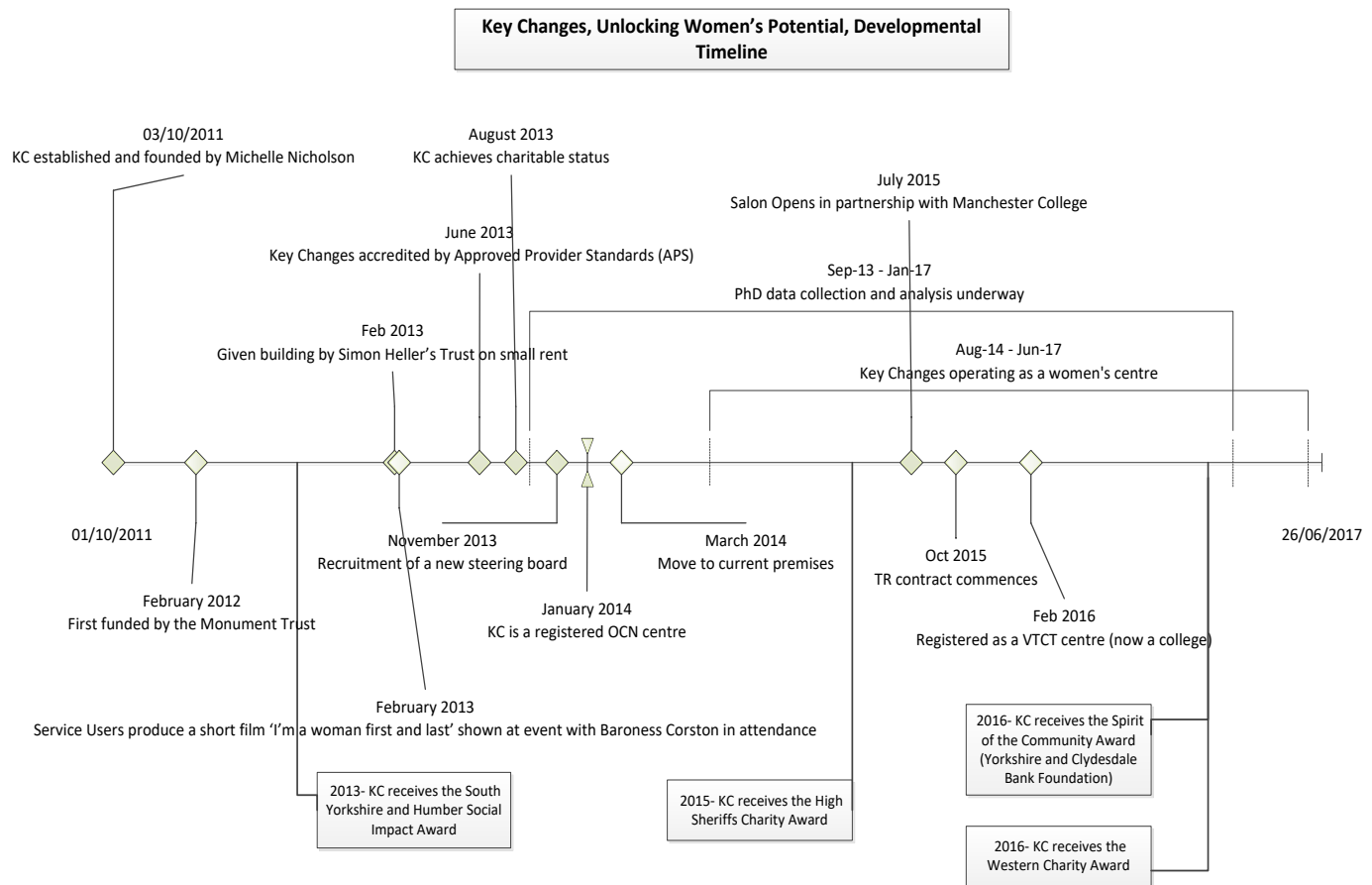
Changes a maximum of six months before their release, or when in the community. The probation service and the youth justice service both court-order attendance and encourage women to self-refer, highlighting some voluntary engagement with the service.

Following the introduction of the 'Transforming Rehabilitation (TR)' Contract (discussed in section 1.4) in October 2015, women were able to complete their Rehabilitation Activity Requirements (RARs) at Key Changes where their attendance and progress was monitored. These women did not access the peer-mentoring scheme and instead had access to project workers/hub coordinators who were paid members of staff. Unlike the peer mentors, these staff members did not have the shared experience of going through the CJS themselves, although other relevant experiences were considered during their recruitment (including family/friends with offence histories, histories of abuse, and experiences of being marginalised), with empathy being the sought skill. The contract provided more long-term financial stability for the company, but did not alter the company's ethos, in terms of the ongoing approach to tailor support to each individual's specific needs and the peer-nature of the wider service. A benefit of this contract was that women were required to spend less time at probation meetings, and due to this, Key Changes expected to see reduced recall rates, since numerous offenders had previously reported struggles with attending appointments.

This research is the first (and sadly only) project to have taken place at Key Changes and thus gained the unique perspective of women's experiences within a developing service over a period of criminal justice funding and practice upheaval and reform. In May 2018, Key Changes unexpectedly closed its doors and ceased both supervising and supporting women through the gates and in the community. The closure is an inexplicable loss to numerous women receiving peer mentoring support who have experienced an upheaval in their support system, a removal of support from vulnerable women in the community accessing women's centre services and to a number of peer mentors and women in contact with the Criminal Justice System who were forging new lives and careers from within Key Changes. I hope that within this thesis I am able to do justice to the stories of those women who

participated in the research and that these findings contribute to the drive for effective and evidence-based responses to women on release into the community.

Figure 1: Timeline of core developments at Key Changes



2012-2013:  
7 volunteer members of staff  
1741 hours worked by 13 volunteers

2013-2014:  
8 volunteer members of staff  
2064.5 Volunteer hours worked  
New sessional worker running 'Back to Work Training' in HMP Newhall  
SMART facilitator running smart recovery group

2014-2015:  
Addition of 4 volunteer counsellors

2012-2013:  
A total of 110 women accessed the service. 42 through one to one mentoring, 68 accessing drop ins, training and work type activities.  
11 completed the mentoring programme and have managed to live independently without reoffending.  
3 women (of the 42) re-offended and received ongoing support from KC

2013-2014:  
A total of 111 women accessed the service. 40 women through one to one mentoring and 71 accessing drop ins, training and work type activities. 19 women (/40) completed the mentoring programme. 3 women re-offended.  
Of the 71 women attending training courses or drop-ins, 12 women accessed the peer mentoring training, eight of whom went on to access voluntary mentoring placements (seven of these placements were provided by Key Changes UWP).

2014-2015:  
A total of 144 women accessed the service. 68 women through one to one mentoring and 76 accessing the women's centre to complete accredited and non-accredited training. 14 women have accessed the salon training. 4 have completed a full City and Guilds programme and 3 have gone on to find employment.  
Over 800 drop ins to women's centre since opening in aug 2014, with an avg of 17 women attending classes on weekly basis.  
65/69 women completing mentoring did not reoffend within the first year of release.

2015-2016:  
63 women accessed the mentoring scheme  
As a subcontractor delivering services for South Yorkshire CRC, over 150 women accessed informal women's centre classes

### **1.3 Mentoring and Resettlement**

Since the pivotal paper "Everyone Who Makes It Has a Mentor" (Collins & Scott, 1978), mentoring has been widely seen as a "silver bullet" (Newburn & Shiner, 2005) and has been reported as being widely and 'successfully' used in a variety of fields throughout the world. This includes mentoring within schools (e.g. Herrera et al, 2011) and higher education/academia (e.g. Jackevicius et al, 2014; Lothe & Bolton, 2013); for training purposes in many public-sector jobs, including teaching (Hobson, 2002; Smith & Ingersol, 2004), and nursing (Colley, 2000; Jacobs, 2018; Standing, 1999); as well as for protecting against burnout in correctional officers (Farneses, Barbieri, Bello & Bartone, 2017). It has also been used within outreach interventions, for example community HIV education in rural populations (e.g. Ndwiga, Abuya, Metemwam, Kimani et al, 2014; Salam, Haroon, Ahmed, Das & Bhutta, 2014), and as a tool for violence prevention (for a review, see Hayashi & O'Donnell, 2004). Mentoring is utilised within the CJS to encourage pro-social behaviours and to reduce violence (MoJ, 2010; Sapouna, Bisset & Conlong, 2011). It has been used as a form of resettlement support and as an addition to probation supervision. Mentoring has been used to support specific offender subgroups, including female offenders, sexual offenders, young offenders and individuals deemed 'at risk' of offending in the future (e.g. Armstrong, Christyakova, Mackenzie & Malloch, 2008; Arthur, 2004; Herrera, DuBois & Grossman, 2013; Schinkle, Jardine, Curran & Whyte, 2009).

Mentoring as a practice, has, however, been long criticised for being poorly conceptualised, praised without proper evaluation, for being based on varying principles and having weak theoretical and empirical underpinnings (Merriam, 1983; Newburn & Shiner, 2005). The term 'mentoring' can refer to a variety of different relationships; mentors can be volunteers or paid staff members, trained to a variety of standards; peer mentors or members of the community with no similar experiences (Parkin & McKeganey, 2000). The relationship can be set in informal or formal structured contexts, over a short intervention or through a more long-term relationship (Allen & Eby, 2007). Mentoring is supported by limited research, based on differing measures of efficacy and accredited by a variety of institutions with different requirements and standards. Underhill (2006) found that of 106 studies (1988-2004) included in a quantitative meta-analytic review of mentoring studies within corporate settings, only 14

provided enough data to calculate effect sizes, three were experimental and five were longitudinal. Despite a significant overall effect size of mentoring, with informal mentoring producing a larger and more significant effect on career outcomes than formal mentoring, in most cases it was impossible to tell if improvements stemmed from the mentoring relationship or from confounding variables. In response to this critique, a number of studies have sought to systematically explore the efficacy of mentoring and the experience of mentoring within criminal justice and resettlement services.

Bagnall et al (2015) conducted a mixed method systematic review of 57 studies evaluating the efficacy and cost-benefit of peer education and peer support services in adult and young offender institutions. They found peer education to be effective in reducing risky behaviours and peer support to have a range of practical and emotional benefits for both recipient and peer mentor. However, they noted that the majority of the studies reviewed were of poor methodological quality. Indeed, evaluations of mentoring programmes have consistently produced mixed results. Trotter (2011) reviewed 18 (Australian) studies of both male and female mentoring initiatives, in comparison with control groups, and found that, overall, mentoring reduced recidivism by 4-11%. However, Trotter also supports the findings of Jolliffe & Farrington's (2007) assessment, in pointing out that the more robust studies reviewed found no such significant impact, highlighting the prevalence of weak methodologies within the supporting literature. Hucklesby and Wincup (2014) produced a critical review, cautioning against the use of mentoring within the CJS, discussing its weak definition and limited evidence base, and arguing that use of mentoring within punitive carceral settings rarely adheres to the principles and values attributed to the efficacy of mentoring relationships elsewhere. This included mentees within the CJS tending to have short relationships with infrequent meetings, few of which were face to face. Hucklesby and Wincup cite the example of a resettlement project 4000 with individuals enrolled, where only 90 individuals had any direct contact with their mentor and only 22 individuals met with their mentor three or more times. These authors echoed previous literature in highlighting disengagement as a limitation to mentoring services, with Brown and Ross (2010a) highlighting 'gate pick-up' as a key approach to minimising this with those who had begun mentoring during their sentence, although stressing that many would not engage if they did not 'feel ready'.

Within the mentoring literature, research with female offenders, is again limited in comparison to research on their male counterparts, however literature here reports successes in terms of a wide range of factors, including improvements to housing, substance misuse problems, finances, personal safety, relationships and emotional, mental and physical health, as well as reduced self-reported likelihood to offend (Safeguarding Communities-Reducing Reoffending-SACRO, 2013). Furthermore, the literature suggests that women value supervision, with women serving community sentences highlighting the importance of feeling accepted by staff members who did not focus on their offence but instead adopted strengths-based and future orientated approaches (Malloch & McIvor, 2011). Brown and Ross (2010), explore the value of this acceptance through discussion of the lack of social capital many female offenders experience on release, arguing that mentoring frameworks provide a source of increased social connectedness. They argue that this is perhaps key in the success of mentoring with women, who are viewed as having greater “readiness for mentoring” (Brown & Ross, 2010, p.222) relatively based on gendered characteristics. Within this, the high levels of contact time with mentors is a high “dose” intervention in comparison with Risk, Need and Responsivity (RNR) based programmes, meaning relationships are supported with frequent interactions, allowing increased surveillance (Hucklesby & Wincup, 2014). It is suggested that the voluntary nature of mentoring relationships, along with the close friendship relationships (based on respect and support) which they emulate, may also give these mentoring relationships a legitimacy not attributed to other worker-client relationships (Tyler, 1990). Within Trotter’s (2011) findings, mentoring outcomes were most effective when mentoring involved medium-high risk offenders (as opposed to low-risk); when the mentor and mentee met at least on a weekly basis/for extended time periods; when the mentoring relationship adhered to principles of best practice, and when the mentoring initiative was part of a number of steps. This adds to the literature, which suggests that holistic, multi-modal approaches to offender rehabilitation are the most effective approach to offender reintegration (Andrews & Bonta, 2006).

The literature suggests that peer mentoring is an initiative that has filled a gap in service provision for women, moving away from male orientated programmes which stress self-sufficiency towards a more relational approach

(Covington, 2002) which allows women to build strengths based upon their relatedness and connectedness with others (Brown & Ross, 2010). Lewis et al. (2007) published an evaluation of seven 'Pathfinders' resettlement projects in England and Wales offering a holistic approach to resettlement for short-term offenders led by probation services (Hull, Durham and Oxfordshire/ Buckinghamshire) and voluntary organisations (the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders-NACRO, Crime Reduction Initiative-CRI and Supporting Others through Volunteer Action- SOVA). Results found lower reconviction rates and higher employability rates as well as decreased substance misuse post-release (drug misuse controlled to some extent in 80% of the 51 offenders interviewed) within mentoring initiatives. The author goes on to suggest that the benefits of receiving mentoring go beyond practical support and assistance, to provide social contact and a person to confide in who can be viewed as being separate from the system and therefore more trustworthy. Participants who initially cited practical support needs as their reason for enrolling on the projects, began to later refer to relational factors as the main benefit of the services; including "confidence and peace of mind" (24%) and "someone to talk to" (17%). This latter factor "someone to talk to / mentor" was listed as the joint most important type of help needed (by 28%) along with assistance with education and employment needs on release. Tolland's (2016) exploration of experiences of SACRO women's mentoring service echoed these findings, highlighting the role of mentors in providing emotional support in the face of social isolation and stigma as being particularly valued, beyond the benefits of practical support (related to welfare), increased self-confidence and increased service engagement reported. Mulholland et al's (2016) evaluation of Shine mentoring services highlighted the perception that mentors are non-judgemental, separate and different to CJS staff, provide personalised support, and are valued for a number of skills and qualities seen as relevant to building good relationships. These included listening and challenging, encouraging goal setting and consequential thinking, persistence and encouragement, sharing personal successes and treating their mentee as an equal. Their evaluation highlighted positive outcomes for both mentees and mentors, with mentees commonly demonstrating attitudinal and motivational changes such as increased social skills, problem solving and emotion management skills and mentors highlighting the rewarding nature of the role and opportunities for supervision and additional training as being of personal benefit.

Within the literature base around mentoring initiatives, many studies conclude that mentoring appears to work to some extent with some individuals (e.g. Brown & Ross, 2010; Malloch & McIvor, 2011; Tolland, 2016; Trotter, 2011), but it often fails to account for *how* any improvements are accomplished. The risk-based orientation (see section 2.1.2) of these evaluation studies mean that they are largely quantitative in nature, focusing on measuring reductions in reoffending rates. These studies are limited by a lack of matched control groups, an over-reliance on descriptive survey results and their inability to determine cause and effect between the mentoring service and ‘successful’ resettlement outcomes across measures of recidivism and other outcomes (such as well-being, employment prospects or reintegration- for review see Bagnall, South, Hulme, Woodall, Winall-Collier, Raine & Wright, 2015). However, problems with this approach to mentoring services go beyond the lack of rigorous evaluations, to a fundamental lack of understanding of the underlying mechanisms of change within resettlement and desistance from crime (see section 2.1.3) and how and why change is supported or enabled within mentoring relationships. These studies however, put forward many caveats to the applicability and success of mentoring services, highlighting, amongst others, prolific offenders and women with severe or complex needs (i.e. most female offenders) for whom they are unable to explain why the mentoring service has “not worked”. Research which has investigated these underlying mechanisms for change comes predominantly from a desistance approach (see section 2.1.3), which in contrast to the ‘What Works’ to trying to discern effective programmes/intervention to reducing reoffending, takes a more ‘bottom-up’ and service-user led form of enquiry.

It is evident that there is limited research concerning peer mentoring for women in prison, which is further hindered by a lack of consensus on the mechanisms at work within these relationships that are effective in supporting desistance from crime. The current research thus aimed to utilise a bottom up approach to explore the role of the ‘Key Changes’ peer-mentoring and educational presentations scheme in women’s experiences of resettlement, from the perspective of service-users and peer mentors



#### **1.4 The Transforming Rehabilitation Agenda: Impact and Efficacy**

*“My fear is that by transforming rehabilitation from being a moral good into a market good, something central to justice will be lost...My view is that rehabilitation is best thought of as being everyone’s concern and no-one’s business. Transforming Rehabilitation risks turning it into some people’s business and no-one’s concern”*

*(McNeill, 2013, p.85)*

During this PhD, changes made by Coalition and Conservative austerity governments have led to continual shifts in the political and economic landscape, which have influenced the direction of HM Prison and Probation Services, and ultimately the funding and resources available to Key Changes. The most influential proposals were severe public spending cuts (the 2014/2015 MoJ budget was cut by 23% in real terms; Current Spending Review, October 2010) and the Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) Agenda, which led to an increased focus on 'effective resettlement' and a continuation of the 'Payments by Results' initiative.

The TR Agenda involved a restructuring of HM prison and probation services, with wide scale privatisation. Under the Offender Rehabilitation Act (ORA), which came into force on 1st Feb 2015, statutory supervision was extended to prisoners who were released after serving a short sentence of less than 12 months, or who were considered low risk and previously not under supervision (an estimated extra 45,000 individuals /year- MOJ, May 2015). This move was based on evidence of recidivism rates being twice as high among those serving a sentence of less than 12 months than those serving a longer sentence (MOJ, May 2015). The key aim of 'effective resettlement' proposed to "reorganise the prison system to resettle offenders ‘through the gate’, with continuous support from custody to community" (MoJ, 2013, p.7) with the explicit aim of moving most prisoners to resettlement prisons close to their home address at least three months before release (MOJ, May 2015). This is not entirely feasible within the ever-decreasing female estate, with numerous closures occurring over the course of this research (e.g. HMP Holloway), and still more planned for the future (e.g. HMP Askham Grange- date not specified due to ongoing contracts). Whilst these prison closures could be viewed as a positive step towards decarceration, no increased community treatment or support alternatives have been arranged, with women who

were previously housed there being moved to other prisons at even greater distances from support networks, arguably increasing the difficulties facing these individuals on release.

The TR Agenda resulted in the privatisation of a large proportion of the National Probation Service. This involved a change from 35 distinct regional probation services who managed all medium and high-risk offenders, to the introduction of 21 regional Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) to manage low-medium risk offenders (80% of cases), and one overarching (publicly owned) National Probation Service for high risk offenders and those managed under multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA). This has led to an increased reliance on the services of Third Sector Organisations (TSOs) in areas such as employment, secure housing and access to drug and alcohol treatment (MoJ 2008, MoJ/NOMS 2008a). The current ‘payment by results’ agenda intended to increase standards and reduce public costs involves private providers and TSOs who are taking over CRC supervision being paid only to the extent that they are successful in reducing reoffending (the current target is a 3.7% reduction in reoffending; National Audit Office, April 2016).

Widespread scepticism of the new regime was voiced in planning phases by Police and Crime Commissioners and the probation officers’ union NAPO (Calder & Goodman, 2013), the House of Commons Justice Committee (January 2014), and individual researchers and experts. All voiced concern about the disruption of service delivery across other areas of need (e.g. health and housing), and across regions, and between NPS and CRC services based on changing risk levels (McNeill, 2013). TR has since been criticised for not being evidence based, with no link between payments by results and good reconviction outcomes (HM Inspectorate of Probation Annual Report, 2017). Dame Glenys Stacey’s first annual report as HM Chief Inspector of Probation states that the system is now facing “deep-rooted problems” (p.5), including the abandoning of evidence-based interventions and underfunding (largely within CRC’s) resulting in problems with resources and staffing and a two-tier system:

*Although we have found CRCs delivering well in a small handful of areas, we see clearly that there is now a two-tier and fragmented service, with individuals being supervised by the NPS*

*more effectively overall. Of course, the NPS is funded differently, and more generously... (HM Inspectorate of Probation Annual Report, 2017; pp.6)*

Basing TR's structure on risk (arguably a dynamic phenomenon) has been criticised for creating a focus on those presenting a high risk of harm, rather than a high risk of reoffending, regardless of severity (the original 'risk principle'), thus highlighting those posing high risk of harm as those requiring skilled support. This is therefore in opposition to both the key principles of the 'What Works? Research, principles, and the findings of the desistance research which has suggested that desistance is most complex for those offending persistently. TR has been criticised for providing a lower standard of supervision due to stretched workloads of probation and CRC staff and for leaving those who present a low risk of harm, but a high risk of recidivism (i.e. most female offenders) with less experienced and less skilled support (McNeill, 2013; Calder & Goodman, 2013). Indeed, Dame Glenys Stacy goes on to question the suitability of TR based on this aspect alone:

*I question whether the current model for probation can deliver sufficiently well. Above all, a close, forthcoming and productive relationship between an individual and their probation worker is key. This is where skilled probation staff add most value, by motivating offenders, working continuously with them to bring about change, and at the same time protecting the public from harm. Yet in some CRCs, individuals meet with their probation worker in places that lack privacy, when sensitive and difficult conversations must take place. Some do not meet with their probation worker face-to face. Instead, they are supervised by telephone calls every six weeks or so from junior professional staff carrying 200 cases or more (HM Inspectorate of Probation Annual Report, 2017; p.6)*

Specifically, in relation to women offenders, HM Inspectorate of Probation (2016) report stated that funding for women's centres had "virtually disappeared" (p. 4), with the loss of ring-fenced funding for women's services creating a 'postcode lottery' for service provision meaning that "these are likely to continue to wane" (HM Inspectorate of Probation Annual Report, 2017; p.12). The report highlighted issues with a lack of reliable data with which to inform CRC policy for effective practice with women; as well as a lack of training in female-

specific case management, with less than one in four responsible officers having had the correct training. This has since been supported by reports highlighting an intense decline in the quality and quantity of women's services (HM Inspectorate of Probation; September 2016). An All-Party Parliamentary Group Report (2016) highlighted issues with service provision coming from CRC. The report suggested that CRCs, responsible for the 'through the gate' provision of supervision and support for prisoners on short sentences, have shown little commendable progress:

*“None of the CRCs we visited were able to provide us with any information on the outcomes they had achieved for prisoners receiving Through the Gate services. Our sample showed concerning rates of reoffending and recall to prison and unsatisfactory initial outcomes for basic needs such as being in settled accommodation.”(HM Inspectorate of Probation & HM Inspectorate of Prisons, October 2016, p.8)*

The quote specifically highlights the lack of suitable housing for women, a key resettlement need for female offenders specifically (see section 2.1.1 for further detail). The report discusses these issues under the broader concern of a lack of strategic and operational outcome focus for female offenders thereby reinforcing the need for research that can inform best practice policies for women.

### **1.5 Women in the Criminal Justice System**

It is worth initially noting the many different terms used to refer to women in the CJS. 'Offenders', 'ex-offenders', 'people with convictions', 'felons', 'women with a history of contact with the Criminal Justice System', 'clients', 'convicts', 'reformed offenders', 'formally incarcerated women' etc. are each used to evoke a positive or negative impression of the individual concerned. It is important to note that the impact of the language chosen may have upon an individual's self-esteem and upon their resettlement (Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001; Weaver & McNeill, 2010). LeBel (2011) states that negative labels create permanency, suggesting that these individuals will not overcome their pasts. Davis (2003) considers the roles of stigma and internalised shame evoked for women, viewed as 'fallen' from moral principles assigned to womanhood. Consequently, use of the phrase "Women in

conflict with the Law” has been adopted by several researchers (e.g. Gelsthorpe, 2006; Irwin, Pasko & Davidson, 2018; Malloch & McIvor, 2013) to end the notion that once an offender, always an ex offender. For reading ease alone, I will use the term ‘ex-offenders’ throughout this thesis. When referring to women accessing Key Changes, I will use the term ‘service users’, regardless of any ongoing contact with the CJS.

### ***1.5.1 Key Statistics on Women in the CJS***

Women have consistently accounted for around 5% of the overall prison population in England and Wales (MoJ, 2011; Minson, Nadin & Earle, 2015; PRT, Bromley Briefings, autumn 2017) and currently make up 10% of those supervised in the community by probation services (MOJ, 2015). In November 2017 there were 4048 women incarcerated in England and Wales (MoJ, 2017), more than double the 1,979 incarcerated in 1993 (Table A1.2, Ministry of Justice (2017). Minority women are also disproportionately overrepresented in the prison system; 19% of the female prison population are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds compared to 14% of the general women’s population (Prison Reform Trust and Women in Prison, 2016). Data suggests that BAME individuals are more likely to be arrested, tried at a Crown rather than a magistrate’s court, receive a custodial sentence or be remanded into custody and to have recorded adjudications of prison discipline (Uhrig, 2016). BAME women are more likely to be held (and held for longer periods) in segregation (Shalev & Edgar, 2015), feel unsafe or report victimisation from staff and receive reduced access to opportunities, including prison jobs and rehabilitation interventions (HM Inspector of Prisons, 2017).

In comparison to male offenders, women in prison are disproportionately more likely to be serving a short sentence, with women being more likely to receive a custodial sentence for a first offence (26% of women compared to 12% of men). Around 80% of women receive a sentence of less than 12 months (Prison Reform Trust & Women in Prison, 2016), with nearly 60% of women serving a short sentence of 6 months or less (PRT Bromley Briefings, 2017; MoJ, 2015) compared to only a third of women serving such a sentence in 1993 (Hedderman, 2012). These statistics arguably highlight a rise in harsher sentencing policies for female offenders (MoJ Sentencing Statistics, 2007, 2014), which have been seen to be *"an unintended consequence of other policies*

*rather than a response to changes in the volume or seriousness of women's offending"* (Hedderman, 2012 p.4).

This also reiterates the prevalence of popular belief held by sentencers' around the efficacy of prison over community sentencing and the ability of incarceration to provide a 'short sharp shock' deterrent to recidivism, despite widespread evidence to the contrary (Grendreau, Goggin & Cullen, 1999; Killias, Gilliéron, Villard & Poglia, 2010). Recent figures show that 83% of women sentenced to a prison sentence have committed a non-violent offence (Table 2.4b, Ministry of Justice, 2017). This echoes evidence suggesting gender differences across the Criminal Justice System, with women committing qualitatively different crimes, which are less likely to be violent (Belknap, 2007; Javdani, Sadeh, & Verona, 2011). Criminal Justice Statistics England and Wales 2010 (Sentencing Tables A5.4) show that of all those cautioned for indictable offences, 26% were female (Ministry of Justice, 2011). This arguably reflects theories around gender role stereotypes in sentencing, where women who offend are acting outside of society's perceptions of the appropriate 'virtues' of womanhood (Lloyd, 1995). Consequently, female offenders are demonised and marginalised further (Chesney-Lind & Eliason, 2006; Pasko & Chesney-Lind, 2013).

## **1.6 Research Questions**

The research sought to address the need for greater understanding of women's experiences of both prison and resettlement, in particular the process of change and desistance from crime. It aimed to explore women's needs and experiences of trauma and the experience of providing or receiving mentoring support, building upon the desistance and desistance-supportive practice literature, which resonate with ideas around trauma and the need for trauma-informed practice and services, but have not explored this explicitly.

The research sought to address the following research questions:

- What are women's experiences of offending, incarceration and release?
- What factors influence and support women's resettlement?
- How do women (service users and peer mentors) view the role of Key Changes in relation to their resettlement and desistance from offending?
- What factors underpin successful mentoring relationships within this context?

Chapter 2 provides a review of the relevant academic, practice and policy literature. An overview of the thesis structure can be found in section 2.5.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE, PRACTICE AND POLICY

### 2.1 Key Statistics

In 2017, 71,495 individuals were released from prison into the community, which equates to an average of 195 people per day (MoJ, 2018). Prison sentences demonstrate poor efficacy in reducing reoffending. Statistics suggest that 49% of all adult incarcerated offenders reoffend within a year of their release, a figure which rises to 66% for those serving short sentences of less than 12 months (Tables C1a and C2a, Ministry of Justice, 2017), at a cost of between £9.5 and £13 billion per year (O'Brien & Robson, 2016, p.13). Reconviction rates are slightly higher for female offenders, with 48% reoffending within a year, increasing to 62% for those on a short sentence (MOJ, 2014; Hedderman & Jolliffe, 2015) and to 77% for those who have more than 11 previous custodial convictions (MOJ, 2012). In the third year of this research, the TR agenda extended statutory supervision to all short term and low risk offenders (an estimated 45000 extra 45,000 additional prisoners per year), devolving this support to CRCs. However, this has resulted in more frequent recall to prison for these individuals. Data demonstrates a large spike in recalls after release, particularly for women, with the number of recalls increasing by 68% since the end of 2014 and the introduction of TR (Table 5.2, Ministry of Justice, 2017; Prison Reform Trust, 2017). Furthermore, a concerning set of yearly statistics demonstrate the high rates of suicide in formally incarcerated people on their release into the community, which increased 7% in 2016/17 from figures of the previous year (MoJ, 2017). The literature suggests that this is a consistent finding across the Western world (Graham, 2003; Rosen et al, 2008; Zoldre & Fazel, 2012), with the first two weeks (Merrall, 2010) to a month (Pratt et al, 2006) being the most high risk period. This highlights a gap in service provision and the need for greater support on release into the community.

Many buzz words relate to 'effective resettlement' or the drive to reduce reoffending rates following incarceration, all of which relate to differing areas of practice, informed by different areas of research with distinct methodologies. All of them seek to address questions around why people reoffend, what factors cause and support an individual to move away from crime and how and where intervention can be effective. The Pathways



Framework (discussed below) encourages investigation into factors of “Risk” or “Need” which may lead an individual to offend, highlighting these as areas for support out of cyclic offending behaviour. The desistance paradigm takes the alternate approach of looking at what factors are associated with an individual ceasing offending and, most importantly, allow them to maintain that desistance; viewing desistance as a non-linear process of change. Desistance as a broad area encompasses research from psychology, sociology and criminology. This section aims to provide an overview of the relevant literature concerning resettlement ('re-entry' in the US) or reintegration. There are many debates about what constitutes ‘effective’ resettlement here, from risk-based RNR correctionalist approaches (Andrews Bonta & Wormith, 2006; Andrews Bonta & Wormith, 2011; Andrews, Zinger, Hodge et al, 1990), to the holistic and positively framed strengths-based and desistance frameworks. McNeill (2012) argues that traditional psychological approaches to rehabilitation fail to give adequate attention to aspects of legal, moral and social rehabilitation important in desistance, suggesting a need to step back from “paradigm conflicts” between what works vs desistance, RNR vs Good Lives and Risk based vs Strengths based approaches to better define and understand the foundations of rehabilitation. Whilst I broadly agree with this point, the debates between these perspectives and approaches has brought us to our current understanding and constitutes the majority of the research concerning resettlement and desistance from crime. Thus, the research surrounding these theories requires careful consideration when determining future directions.

## **2.2 Reducing Recidivism**

The Ministry of Justice’s standard measure of recidivism is ‘proven reoffending’, defined as:

*“any offence committed in a one year follow-up period and receiving a court conviction, caution, reprimand or warning in the one year follow-up or a further six month waiting period to allow the offense to be proven in court” (October, 2012).*

Many studies include this as a key outcome measure. However, this approach is criticised by McNeill et al (2008) for a number of reasons, including problems with ‘pseudo reconvictions’ (convictions occurring post release regarding historic offences); for failing to record all re-offending; and for ignoring shifts in, or steps away from offending behaviour, such as longer periods of time between offences, recalls or the commission of less serious

crimes. To account for this several studies and programme evaluations include other measures which relate to recidivism, such as missed supervision appointments (Prison Reform Trust, 2017). Most women's centres include reduced reoffending as an efficacy measure within the Outcomes Stars (for example see [www.outcomesstar.org.uk](http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk)) widely used tools to support and measure service-user progression and change (Ministry of Justice, 2013); however, this also considers progress on other factors such as living skills and self-care, relationships and community, and positive use of time.

Critically, this approach is not idiographic and fails to look at specific factors that may affect individual resettlement, with no insight gained into barriers or any changes in the lives, cognitions and identities of those attempting to reintegrate into the community. This means that little is understood about what factors are present or supported in those successfully desisting and what is missing (or not supported) in those who reoffend. Typical reconviction studies take between four and seven years for data collection alone (e.g. Hanson, Bourgon, Helmus & Hodgson, 2009; Taylor, 2000), meaning that this approach would not have been feasible within the timeframe of the PhD. Based on this, reconviction data was thus deemed to be inappropriate for the current PhD research.

### **2.2.1 The "What Works?" and Risk, Need and Responsivity Model**

The "What Works" principles outlined by McGuire (1995) first highlighted the importance of "evidence-based" practice within the CJS. Here, five overarching principles were outlined to guide effective intervention (for an overview, see Latessa & Lowenkamp, 2006), which are seen in practice within the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR; Bonta & Andrews, 2007) model of rehabilitation now widely used around the world (Andrews Bonta & Wormith, 2006; Andrews Bonta & Wormith, 2011; Andrews, Zinger, Hodge et al, 1990). The five principles are as follows:

- *The risk principle:* Knowing who to target.
- *The need principle:* Knowing what to target.
- *The treatment principle:* Knowing how to approach this (behavioural approaches, structured social learning, cognitive behavioural approaches and family therapy all highlighted as best practice).
- *The responsivity principle:* Accounting for and adapting interventions to individual differences.

- *The fidelity principle*: Commitment to deliver manualised treatment.

These principles, slimmed down to 'Risk, Need, Responsivity' within the RNR framework, widely inform assessment practices and rehabilitation approaches. The 'Risk' principle states that based on an assessment of 'dynamic' or changeable risk factors (which are amenable to treatment, Andrews & Bonta, 2010a) higher risk offenders should be allocated the higher intensity/dosage interventions. The 'Need' principle states interventions should focus on responding to the central criminogenic needs, "*attributes and/or dynamic risk factors of offenders which, if changed, are very likely to influence the probability of re-offending*" (Canton & Hancock, 2007, pg. 74). These include criminal history, antisocial personality patterns, pro-criminal attitudes, social supports for crime, substance abuse, family/marital relationships, schools / work, lack of pro-social recreational activities (Andrews & Bonta, 2010a). The Responsivity principle discusses both general responsivity referring to treatment delivery methods and specific responsivity, referring to assessment and clarification of demographic and intellectual differences between offenders. Research suggests that addressing issues of responsivity and engaging offenders in their rehabilitation reduces recidivism rates by more than 20% (Bourgon & Gutierrez, 2012).

'Risk' and 'Need' are assessed early on using clinical judgement and structured actuarial risk assessment tools. The Level of Service /Case Management Inventory (LS/CMI; Andrews, Bonta & Wormith, 2006) is viewed as the best validated measure of general recidivism due to its widespread use (Hanson, 2005). This focuses on 'gender neutral' factors and though tested largely with male adult offender populations, was suggested to consistently predict recidivism in both male and females in a range of populations (e.g. Andrews et al, 2012; Palmer & Hollin, 2007; Smith, Cullen & Latessa, 2009). Despite this, questions around the applicability of gender-neutral factors alone remain when considering female offenders, with gender neutral factors being more effective predictors for those with a more severe criminal history compared to those with a limited history of offending (Rettinger & Andrews, 2010). When looking specifically at the LS/CMI, only the financial subscale was predictive of female recidivism, whereas the financial scale, substance misuse and criminal histories were all predictive of male recidivism (Manchak et al, 2009), further suggesting that the relationship between risk factors and offending behaviour differs

based upon gender. Indeed, Rodermond et al's (2016) systematic review of female desistance showed that women experienced the same kind of lifestyle changes as men; however, they showed a more complex interaction between these factors and a greater need for multiple sources of social capital and support. This issue around the strength of actuarial risk assessment tools for predicting female recidivism has been widely noted through a range of studies with conflicting results. For example, the HCR-20 and PCL-R both have mixed predictive validity for female recidivism (Eisenbarth et al, 2012; McKeown, 2010), with the VRAG, Risk Matrix-200/V and the OGRS-II all failing to significantly predict female reoffending (Coid et al, 2009), yet adequately predicting recidivism in male samples. These findings suggest a need for greater understanding, not only of the criminogenic needs of female offenders, but of the relationship between these factors and offending behaviour within a wider personal and social context. In particular, factors that may be important for desistance must be explored. This relates to the fact that women commit qualitatively different crimes to men, that these are less likely to involve violence and that they have followed qualitatively different pathways into their offending (Daly 1992). For example, Gelsthorpe (2010) argues that women follow pathways to offending that are more "indirect" and are more likely to relate to histories of trauma, abuse and victimisation, and Vickers and Wilcox (2011) stated that women were more likely to be influenced by male power and control.

Under RNR, following a risk assessment the offender is expected to take part in an intervention. They are then assessed once more to see if the programme has 'worked'. This approach views risk as an internal element or set of deficits of the offender, which needs to be 'fixed' by 'experts' within prison and probation services, removing a sense of personal agency and understanding held by the offender around their circumstances. It also ignores the wider societal context of multiple sources of disadvantage, stigma and negative knock-on impacts of incarceration likely waiting for the offender on release from prison, impacted by the label of "offender", whether they have experienced prison or not.

The What Works literature base considered a variety of approaches and stressed the importance of multimodal interventions. However, the use of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) based Offending Behaviour

Programmes (OBPs), situated within the RNR framework became and have largely remained the orthodoxy in contemporary risk-based approaches. This has meant that within the development of approaches to resettlement practices, from voluntary aftercare and socially reintegrative approaches, the Pathways model is situated within the wider current correctionalist, risk-based approach taken to offender resettlement seen under RNR, with strengths-based desistance paradigms as alternative, lesser-used approaches. The 7 Pathways framework (set out within the Reducing Re-offending National Action Plan; Home Office, 2004a) is the top-down, 'what works', initiative which serves as the theoretical underpinning for much contemporary prison and probation policy and practice. However, as resettlement generally occupies a less 'punishment-focused' and more 'future-orientated' space (Maruna et al, 2006; Porporino, 2010), it is worth noting that the pathways framework is perhaps more socially integrative than other Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) based Offending Behaviour Programmes (OBPs), within community settings. That said, highlighting individual areas of risk/need, the framework outlines seven personal and social factors that may contribute to an individual committing a crime and enables targeted support and treatment for needs seen as affecting large numbers of offenders. These are listed below, with accompanying statistics relating to women in the CJS:

Pathway 1. Accommodation and support: Due to loss of housing benefits to those serving sentences of more than 13 weeks and resulting lack of tenancies (PRT, Bromley Briefings, autumn 2017), as many as 60% of women do not have accommodation on release (Prison Reform Trust & Women in Prison, September 2016). Women are more likely than men to lose rented housing during incarceration (Gelsthorpe & Sharpe, 2007) and are more likely to return to prison if experiencing post-release homelessness (Holland, 2017). They are also likely to have 'unstable' housing arrangements pre-conviction, with 19% of women in prison reporting not being in permanent accommodation and 10% sleeping rough (St Mungo's, 2014).

Pathway 2. Education, training and employment: Evidence suggests that people are less likely to reoffend on release if they have qualification (MoJ, 2012, 2015), or have accessed vocational training pre-release (Brunton-Smith & Hopkins, 2014; Ofsted, 2014). However, data showing over 40% of women in prison had been out of work for at least five years prior to their incarceration also highlights that in comparison to 82% of women in the general population, only 39% of women in prison had qualifications (of any level) (Social Exclusion Unit Report,

2002). In addition, women are 3-4 times less likely to find employment on release from prison than men (MOJ, Table 2b, 2012; Prison Reform Trust & Women in Prison, September 2016) and responses to a YouGov Survey (2016) indicated that 50% of respondents would not consider employing an (ex)/ offender (gender not specified).

Pathway 3. Health: Women are more than twice as likely as male prisoners to be identified as having depression, a rate over three times higher than that of women in the community (65% vs 37% vs 19%, PRT, 2015). The Office of National Statistics (O'Brien et al, 2001) surveyed psychiatric problems in a sample of women prisoners finding symptoms of neurotic disorders in 66% (v. 16% in community), a personality disorder in 50% and anti-social personality disorder in 31% of those surveyed. Data shows rates of deliberate self-harm in female prisoners' range between four times higher (Hawton et al 2014; MoJ, Safety in Custody, 2010; Women in Prison, Key Figures, 2016) and ten times higher (Hawton, Linsell, Adenjii & Fazel, 2013) than rates of DSH in their male counterparts. Following a large spike in numbers of self-inflicted deaths in custody in 2016, a PPO's investigation found a large deficit in mental healthcare provision. Findings demonstrated an absence of care for 1 in 5 prisoners with a diagnosis and a lack of referrals, with no referral made in 29% of cases of self-inflicted death where MH needs had been identified (Prisons and Probation Ombudsman, 2016). Further investigations revealed that 40% of prisons have no or inadequate training for prison officers around referring prisoners for mental health support (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2017). In addition to mental health needs, issues around poor sexual, prenatal and postpartum health care (and mental healthcare) are additional unique factors highlighted as particularly poorly and inconsistently addressed areas of need warranting additional consideration and reform within the female prison (O'Keefe & Dixon, 2015).

Pathway 4. Drugs and alcohol: The Office for National Statistics survey of psychiatric morbidity in women prisoners (O'Brien et al., 2001) found substance dependency of some sort in the year before incarceration in 54% of remand and 41% of sentenced prisoners. Data shows that women in prison are more likely to present with substance misuse problems than their counterparts in the community (drug or alcohol abuse problems reported in 48% of female prisoners; Bromley Briefing, 2014). Their substance misuse is more likely to have a stronger relationship with their offending behaviour than for male prisoners (Andrews, Guzzo, Raynor et al, 2011; Light et al, 2013). Additionally, women who have experienced intimate partner violence are more likely to be substance

dependent than those who have not (Fowler, 2007; Logan et al, 2006). With a lack of accredited alcohol treatment programmes in England and Wales, there is a reliance on third sector support for these services (Prison Reform Trust, 2004). Research has demonstrated the efficacy of gender-responsive approaches to treating women's substance abuse. This involves a comprehensive approach focusing on a wider range of needs within a safe environment, including issues related to stress, trauma, social and economic disempowerment job preparedness, trauma-recovery services, and parenting skills (Cobb, 2016; Covington, 2000; Hunter, Jason, & Keys, 2013).

Pathway 5. Finance, benefits and debt: Debts mounting during incarceration (including outstanding fines, rent or mobile phone contracts) have been shown to add to resettlement issues. However, in many cases where this issue was evident on intake, no support was provided pre-release (Criminal Justice Joint Inspection, 2017). Of (male and female) offenders surveyed post-release 71% were reliant on family and friends for financial support, with 19% needing to return to criminal activity as a source of additional income (Freudenberg et al, 2005). Twenty-eight percent of women reported that their crimes were financially motivated compared to 20% of men (Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Task Force, 2009), with 38% of mothers in prison (more likely in single mothers) attributing their offending to "a need to support their children" (Caddle & Crisp, 1997; McIvor, 2007).

Pathway 6. Children and families: An estimated 17,240 children (Wilks-Wiffen, 2011), including 3000 babies aged two years and under (Galloway et al, 2014) are separated from their mothers by imprisonment each year. Around 66% of all female prisoners (Hamlyn & Lewis, 2000) have dependent children; 33% with children under 5 years and 40% with children aged 5-10 (Liebling & Maruna, 2005). Only 5% of children remained in their own home after their mother had been sentenced (Caddle & Crisp, 1997) only 9% were cared for by their fathers (Corston, 2007) and only six prisons in England and Wales provide mother and baby units with a total of 54 places. Whilst research demonstrates the role of maintained family contact in reducing recidivism (Criminal Justice Joint Inspection, 2014), being held large distances away from court committal addresses (avg. 64 miles) causes additional difficulties (i5). Maternal separation has "*a detrimental knock on effect in terms of transmitted disadvantage and social exclusion*" (Department of Health, 2002a, p91). The risk of antisocial behaviour in children is trebled by parental incarceration, costing the state more than £17million over ten years in children not being in education, training or employment (New Economics Foundation, 2008). Beyond relationships with

children, data demonstrates that female offending is more related to relationships than male offending, with 48% of women surveyed (compared to 22% of men) reporting having offended to support someone else's addiction (Light, 2013).

Pathway 7. Attitudes, thinking and behaviour: Research has demonstrated that male and female offenders have differences in criminal thinking (Vaske, Gehring & Lovins, 2016), as well as in motivation, self-efficacy and coping styles in relation to the same offending behaviour programmes (OBPs). Looking specifically at a substance misuse program, Pelisser and Jones (2006) found that women reported greater recognition of problems, less self-efficacy in high-risk situations, and greater reliance on coping strategies, such as seeking support and accepting responsibility. However, there are few resettlement programmes focusing on other aspects of attitude change, such as identity-shifts, which have been shown to impact recidivism and desistance (Bushway & Paternoster, 2011; Farrall, 2005; Maruna, 2001; King, 2013a; 2013b; Rowe, 2011; Stone, 2015).

Criminogenic needs, or areas of 'risk', are now generally acknowledged as being vastly different between male and female offenders, with female offenders being more likely to present with a complex range of needs (Corston, 2007; Covington, 2003; Justice Committee, 2013). Reflecting the need for a more gender-responsive approach, it was suggested that the male-orientated pathways model failed to tackle the complex needs of female prisoners (Daly, 1992, 1994). As such, Baroness Corston endorsed the expansion of the pathways model for use with female offenders to include two additional pathways, introduced by the Women and Young People's Group (HM Prison Service, 2006). These additional pathways are:

Pathway 8: Support for Women Prisoners who have been victims of Abuse: A history of childhood sexual, physical or emotional abuse is reported by 53% of female prisoners compared to 27% of male prisoners (MoJ, 2012). A history of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is reported in 46% of female prisoners and sexual abuse reported in a third of female prisoners (Corston, 2007). The consequences of IPV include depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, and low self-esteem (Afifi et al. 2009; Bonomi et al. 2009; Kilpatrick 2004; Logan et al. 2006; Straus and Smith 1990) and as such the Corston report outlined coercion by male partners or relatives as a distinct route into offending for some women. In addition to historic abuse, female



prisoners are more likely to experience higher rates of officer victimisation, linking to a greater mistrust of officers than by male prisoners (Belknap, 1996; Holsinger, 2014)

Pathway 9: Support for Women Prisoners who have been involved in

Prostitution: 21% of women in prison have a history of involvement with prostitution of whom 76% linked their involvement to substance misuse and 26% to histories of abuse (Prison Reform Trust, 2014).

These pathways attempt to address the differential and more complex range of needs found within the female estate. It is worth acknowledging that gaps in service provision related to gender are not limited to the female prison estate and that the literature also highlights issues with staff training and resources for Trans and Intersex prisoners. However, this discussion is outside the parameters of this review.

#### ***2.2.1.1 Does "What Works" Work?***

As mentioned above, discussion of the efficacy of 'what works' initiatives largely concerns the evaluation of CBT based OBPs, situated within the RNR framework. Whilst OBPs have been found to reduce reoffending generally (e.g. Hanson, Bourgon, Helmus, & Hodgson, 2009; Hollis, 2007; Palmer & Humphries, 2016; Sadlier, 2010), their widespread use has been criticised and viewed as being extremely problematic, with questions raised around evaluation methodologies. Evaluations of OBPs include large amounts of missing data (e.g. 5,000 programme non-starters and 12000 non-completers compared to 8000 completers in Hollis, 2007's review of community OBPs), and failure to meet strict selection criteria (e.g. Sadlier, 2010). These high levels of attrition demonstrate little investment from offenders; research suggests that this is likely due to the 'one-size fits all' approach that ignores the individual's awareness of their own needs and relationship with offending, as well as the social context of wider life (Maruna & LeBel, 2010). Service user noncompliance is linked to dominance of practitioner-led mechanisms of treatment (Phillips 2011; 2014a; Ugwudike 2010; Weaver and Barry 2014) and linked to lack of offender engagement in goal setting and other decision-making processes (Ugwudike, 2017b). User participation is therefore a focus of strengths-based models of offender supervision, such as the desistance paradigm and the good lives model (Ward & Stewart, 2003), where it is seen as being critical within the change process (Maruna & LeBel 2010; Ward & Fortune 2013). RNR approaches are criticised for being overly focused on the offenders'

deficits and past behaviours, and the predominance of OBPs has led to the devaluation, by both prison staff and prisoners, of other aspects of individual therapy and counselling as alternate approaches to supporting rehabilitation (Clark, 2010). This has resulted in a lack of motivation and engagement with these options (Harvey et al, 2010) and a consequential lack of research into their efficacy, meaning that other (potentially effective) approaches to offender rehabilitation are not being fully explored and investigated. The overreliance of OBPs within RNR is further criticised for use with women for unfairly linking cognitive deficits with offending behaviours, teaching women that they are responsible for their problems (Trotter, McIvor & Sheehan, 2012) and for their own oppression, rather than conceding any structural inequalities present (Hannah-Moffat, 2001; Kendal, 2002).

Most resettlement initiatives are based within the RNR framework, referred to by criminologists as ‘deficit models’ of re-entry; which are either ‘risk-based’, involving increased surveillance (e.g. through tagging, drugs testing etc.) or ‘needs-based’, aiming to meet needs linked to specific offending behaviours (Maruna & LeBel, 2002). ‘Needs-based’ approaches have, however, been criticised for being simply another measure of risk, with many programmes and interventions focusing on monitoring criminogenic needs (or dynamic risk factors) and viewed as operating predominantly as a form of social control, an approach not valued by offenders (e.g. Farrall, 2002). The lack of long-term efficacy of these approaches shows that threat of detection, control and punishment alone are not effective drivers for lasting change (Canton, 2011). Additionally, this results in a method of evaluation of programmes (risk assessment > intervention > risk assessment) which gleans little understanding of what cognitive change processes have occurred for those who have positive intervention outcomes, due to the opaque 'Black box' of internal change. Based within RNR, the 9 Pathways framework is similarly critiqued. The framework supports a top-down, practitioner led approach to offender supervision which discourages service user engagement and motivation for change by failing to adequately involve the individual within goal setting and decision making and for failing to accurately explain or support desistance from crime.

The RNR model is based on research with male offenders with related assessment tools and frameworks being recognised as problematic and less relevant for women. Additionally, the risk-orientation of RNR is placed largely within punishment settings, with the pathways framework as the only attempt to reach over into resettlement practice. Due to this, there is limited research supporting the idea that 'fixing' problems around these pathways cause, or even contribute to why women stop offending. Losel (2012), a prominent "What Works" empiricist, calls for a "third phase" of 'What Works' to systematically explore "what else works", taking the culture of criminal justice practices into account: "*much more research is needed on 'what works' with whom, in what contexts, under what conditions, and with regard to what outcomes*" (p.199). This suggests a need to move beyond a focus on reconviction rates in Randomised Control Trials (RCTs) and changing levels of 'risk' within actuarial risk assessments when considering reoffending, resettlement and desistance. A recent paper by MacKenzie and Farrington (2015) reviewed what we have learnt in reducing reoffending from 10 years of RCTs, meta-analyses and systematic reviews, stating that only those interventions involving positive restorative approaches and skills training were clearly effective. Those which were overly 'risk' focused and based on avoidance goals, such as control, deterrence, surveillance or discipline were ineffective, with no clear results from programmes that provided services or opportunities only.

Looking specifically at female offenders, Trotter, McIvor and Sheehan (2012) explored the efficacy of resettlement services for female offenders, finding that women responded favourably to holistic, strengths-focused approaches where there was a collaborative and positive relationship with their caseworker; rather than a deficit or offence-focused approach. This close relationship is seen within mentoring relationships, where it is attributed as driving successful outcomes (see section 1.3).

### ***2.2.1.2 "Responsivity" and Sensitivity to Trauma***

OBPs are criticised in terms of their crippling lack of adherence to the 'Responsivity' principle, despite evidence that this is related to more successful treatment outcomes (Hanson, 2009). Research has demonstrated that this principle is critical in outcome successes as it has a substantial impact on therapeutic alliance and consequently the offender's motivation and engagement with treatment, subsequently reducing attrition rates (Andrews & Bonta,

2010b). When implemented in practice, this lack of attention to responsivity is viewed as the core problem with the RNR approach to offender management and supervision (Maruna & LeBel, 2003, 2009). Research (see Kubiak, Covington & Hillier, 2017) has recently highlighted the importance of responsivity through trauma informed and trauma sensitive services within the criminal justice system and beyond, defining trauma on a stress continuum which acknowledges the impact of cumulative stress across several domains on coping mechanisms as well as the impact of early toxic and cumulative toxic stress (such as childhood abuse) on childhood physiological and psychological development and long term physical and mental health (Shonkoff et al, 2012).

There is a general recognition within the literature of the prevalence of traumatic events and victimisation experienced by most individuals within the CJS pre-incarceration, with higher rates of incidences of trauma or victimisation consistently seen within the female estate than in the male estate (e.g. Belknap & Holsinger, 2006, MoJ, 2012). Authors have also highlighted the prison environment itself as a source of additional traumatisation, with staff and prisoner physical or sexual violence or coercion reported by both current and ex-prisoners (Beck & Johnson, 2012; Corston, 2007; Howard League for Penal Reform, 2014). Literature highlighting the efficacy of trauma-informed services, (i.e. services which deliver a strengths-based, trauma aware and responsive service which avoid retraumatising procedures and practices; SAMHSA, 2014) within correctional environments demonstrate significant positive effects, including reductions in both levels of assaults on both staff (62% decrease) and prisoners (54% decrease) and behavioural and mental health crises, including suicide attempts (reduced 33%; Benedict, 2014). Beyond this, trauma-specific treatments, which take therapeutic approaches to trauma related disorders, demonstrate efficacy with women with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) diagnoses. These approaches are often gender-specific and have shown decreases in women's PTSD and depressive symptoms (Messina, Calhoun, & Warda, 2013; Covington, Burke, Keaton, & Norcott, 2008), and levels of anxiety and anger in a cohort of women demonstrating violence (Kubiak, Kim, Fetlock, & Bybee, 2015). Saxena, Messina and Grella (2014) found significantly reduced depression rates and significantly lower substance use in women reporting histories of abuse who were randomly allocated gender-responsive substance abuse

treatment (GRT) than those reporting abuse receiving non-GRT; demonstrating the importance of gender responsiveness in provision of trauma-informed treatment.

### **2.2.3 The Desistance Paradigm**

The desistance paradigm, developed at around the same time as the 'What Works' agenda, focuses primarily on the cessation of criminal offending. It differs from risk-based, correctionalist approaches by attempting to shift the lens from 'programmes' to 'lives' (Lewis, 1990), to look at why and how some people desist and what can be done to support that process. Desistance is viewed as “a dynamic process of human development” (Graham, 2016, p.20), mediated by social context and self-redefinition (Maruna, 2004a), where the individual moves away from offending and becomes more aligned with social and legal norms (Maruna, 2016) - a process which belongs to the desister themselves (McNeill, 2006). This literature places much less emphasis on whether or not interventions “work” (see McNeill & Weaver, 2010), to instead consider offenders lives beyond just their offending behaviour. This highlights the importance of the two-way street of acceptance and support from society in this process. Furthermore, the desistance paradigm involves a shift from practitioners enforcing their own views on why an individual has offended (Katz, 1988); where RNR based approaches to offender management involve determining how interventions can reduce criminogenic risk. The desistance paradigm instead adopts a more service-user led approach to explore what might help a particular individual achieve and maintain long-term change and what practitioners can do to support this. Porporino states (2010: 80) *“the desistance paradigm suggests that we might be better off if we allowed offenders to guide us... listened to what they think might best fit their individual struggles out of crime, rather than continue to insist that our solutions are their salvation.”*

The desistance literature is broad and varied, with differing theories connecting individuals' identities with motivations for behaviours. Some highlight the role of structural opportunities for change (Giordano et al, 2002), while others focus on the role individual agency or identity change in moving away from a criminal lifestyle (Bushway & Paternoster 2011; 2014; Farrall, 2005; Healy, 2013; King 2013a; 2013b; Maruna, 2001; Vaughan, 2007; Paternoster & Bushway 2009; Rowe 2011). There are three traditional schools of thought within the

desistance literature, from the amalgamation and development of which, contemporary desistance theories have emerged. The earliest desistance approach 'maturational reform' (Goring, 1919) stressed desistance as a biological process relating to age. These ontogenic theories highlight the age-crime curve (Farrington, 1986; Kazemian, 2007), depicting the relationship between crime prevalence and age, with prevalence decreasing in adulthood for most offenders. Here, desistance from crime by most adolescent offenders is attributed to a variety of social, psychological and cognitive developments, which have led the individual away from a life of crime. On average, women have shorter criminal careers, desisting more quickly than their male counterparts (Graham & Bowling, 1995; Jamieson et al., 1999). However, rather than relating this to age, research with women links this earlier desistance strongly to key social transitions, including the formation of new emotional and social relationships and entering motherhood (McNeill, 2003). Eaton (1993) stressed that events such as marriage, employment or having children were not enough to maintain desistance, showing that structural aspects of support (with housing, health etc.) were insufficient without women feeling they had personal worth and pro-social value. Maruna (1999) among others however, has criticised maturational explanations for desistance due to their sole focus on external forces, stating that age in and of itself had no bearing on recidivism and that it is not an event (such as stable employment, family formation and leaving delinquent peer groups) which causes desistance, but the related shift in personal identity. He argued instead that narrative theories concerning the development of new prosocial narratives are the better explanation of the processes involved in desistance. Longitudinal research shows the impact of external factors, such as social or economic disadvantage upon desistance e.g. Fabio et al (2011) showed that young boys who were more disadvantaged committed more severe offences over a significantly longer period, suggesting that maturation alone does not provide a full explanation of desistance.

The critique of ontogenic theories relates to sociogenic theories of desistance, largely concerned with social capital or social bonds. Sampson and Laub (1993) detailed the bond an individual has with society, where the weakening of these bonds results in their reduced emotional attachment to societal goals, lesser commitment to prosocial achievement of goals and a lack of personal development through their pursuit of these goals, thus influencing their involvement in criminality. These theories suggest that having access to networks which provide social

capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Field 2004), or systems of social and economic support and individual skill, which empower individuals to avoid recidivism, are particularly important for desistance. These traditional sociogenic factors include the importance of education, employment and relationships, which provide opportunities outside criminality and the accumulation of resources (such as marital support), which sustain conventional goals and conformity (Laub, Nagin & Sampson, 1998; McNeill, Farrall, Lightowler & Maruna, 2012). Research suggests that connections to family and friends who provide instrumental, emotional (Leverentz, 2006; Van Voorhis, Sailsbury, Wright & Bauman, 2008), social (Thoits, 2011) and family (Valera et al, 2015; O'Brien & Young, 2006) support are believed to be especially important to women. Additionally, women are more likely to benefit from the removal of certain relationships linking to offending behaviours in maintaining a successful re-entry into society (Brown & Ross, 2010; Bui & Morash, 2010), based on co-offending or substance misuse histories with partners or family members (Daly, 1994, Leverentz, 2010) and from efforts to improve current social networks (Bui & Morash, 2010). Women are more likely to consider probation workers as helpful social network members than men (Bui & Morash, 2010; Maidment, 2006; Morash, 2010; Skee, Loudon, Manchak, Vidal & Haddad, 2009). Evidence suggests these gender differences to be particularly significant. For example, Van der Knaap et al (2012) found gender differences in the predictive validity of criminogenic needs, with a trend towards low emotional-wellbeing having a stronger correlation with recidivism for women than for men. This research supports evidence theorising social capital as being particularly important to female offenders, where general resettlement success for female offenders is linked to agencies, families and the support of friends (Brown & Ross, 2010). This idea of the quality of the mentoring relationship being important is supported by literature suggesting that mentoring works best when goals are determined with the service user in agreement (Finnegan, Whitehurst & Deaton, 2010) and in a mutually respectful environment, highlighting the importance of individualised support for women. These sociogenic theories highlight the importance of citizenship within understanding desistance, viewing desisters as "*returning citizens*" (Graham et al, 2015) and stating the question of "*not what people desist from, but what they desist to*" (McNeill, 2016, p.204). This highlights structural and social conditions affecting desistance, built upon reciprocal treatment and restorative attitudes held by all in society (Walgrave, 2008). However, when this welcoming community environment is not the reality for ex-offenders, the resulting

marginalisation has been shown to have a negative impact on desistance. This theory shows how gaining new social bonds and changing existing bonds links with maturational events (such as gaining “*meaningful employment, developing successful intimate relationships, investing in becoming a parent*”- McNeill, 2012b), as well as with subjective identity change such as gaining a more positive view of one’s own social standing (Giordano et al., 2013).

More recently, desistance theories have focused on the role of cognitive and subjective factors, such as identity change. Referred to as 'Identity and Narrative theories' (Graham, 2016, p.21). Giordano et al (2002) discussed replacement selves within their theory of ‘cognitive transformation’, stating that desistance involves a four-part process beginning with a ‘general cognitive openness to change’. Here, change is viewed as needed and desirable (a period of reflection and reassessment of goals is a common theme supported within the literature e.g. Cusson & Pinsonnault, 1986; Farrall & Bowling, 1999). This is followed by exposure and reaction to ‘hooks for change’ or turning points, i.e. having, and being able to react to, opportunities for change. The envisioning of an appealing and conventional ‘replacement self’ is then followed by a transformation in the way the actor views deviant behaviour, which demonstrates the completion of the desistance process. These theories highlight the meaning attributed to changes in identity associated with gaining and changing social bonds and with other aspects of ageing. Differences in the way meaning is attributed here results in either desistance from, or a continuation of, crime. In the instance of desistance, Stevens (2012a p.527) describes a subjective process of “*purposive and agentic reconstruction of identity and narrative reframing so that a "new" and "better" person emerges whose attitudes and behaviours cohere with long term desistance*”. The role of personal agency is stressed here, with the view of ‘strong social’ models, that “*One need only decide to change and envision a new identity for oneself in order to go straight*” (LeBel et al., 2008, p.138), being contested. King (2012) argues that desistance requires a temporal orientation of agency, which allows the individual to positively picture a successful future. Narrative reframing is thought to require a "de-labelling" process, to move beyond past or current stigmatised identities. However, research stresses the ongoing impact and prevalence of stigma on new, 'precarious' identities long after women’s desistance (e.g. Sharpe, 2015). The notion of de-labelling has empirical support, with the use of positive



identities and redemption narratives in highlighting women's moral agency in processes of change and resistance of stigmatising discourses being supported (Stone, 2015). The theme of redemption narratives within the desistance literature discusses "redemptive suffering", the need to connect negative pasts with positive, pro-social futures in order to have a coherent narrative identity, maintaining equilibrium so that the present pro-social good is the inevitable outcome (Maruna, 2001, p.87).

One example of this in practice is the reframing of a negative experience as necessary in achieving a positive current or future self: *'If I hadn't gone through that, I wouldn't be the person I am today'*. This allows forecasting of positive futures and the commitment to giving back or 'generative activity'. This in turn links to the wounded healer phenomenon (discussed in section 1.7.2). These redemption scripts differ from 'contamination' (McAdams, 2001) or 'condemnation' (Maruna, 2001) scripts, where positive or neutral episodes are transformed into negative episodes. Offenders who can successfully tell a personal redemption story can better resist damage from stigmatisation 'repair' their identities and have greater agency to act in generative and prosocial ways. Bazemore's (1999) notion of 'earned redemption' encourages strengths-based approaches to view offenders as community assets, to be utilised in prosocial behaviour which helps others and provides the opportunity to develop positive self-identities, otherwise known as 'the helper principle'. The specific roles women must reassume on re-entry into the community have been highlighted within the literature around subjective identity change in desistance. These include roles of mother, daughter, sister and partner, and all have a unique impact on facilitating and hindering the resettlement process (Brown & Bloom, 2009; Leverentz, 2011). Indeed, for women who have become mothers before or during their incarceration, relationships and bonding with children, identity shifts and practical considerations around gaining access to children in social care are key concerns. Stone (2015, 2016) however argues that internalisation of the mother identity is not automatic and is subject to both individual agency (in recognising the opportunity for change and embracing it) and structure (in the availability of resources and the recognition of that identity by others). As such, not all women who give birth will have their mother identities socially validated (McMahon, 1995; Solinger, 1992).

The contemporary, more generally accepted, explanations of desistance are thus more complex, interactionist frameworks, (e.g. Maruna, 2001; Farrall, 2005; Vaughan, 2007), which combine key aspects of the traditional theories to demonstrate the impact of social structures on factors such as levels of personal agency, discussing how these in turn determine the availability of certain identities, social roles and resources. Runggay (2004c) emphasised the social and structural opportunities in the notion of 'replacement selves' in the process of desistance, stating that opportunities need to be available and attractive to the desister. She argues that 'replacement selves' provide a pro-social 'skeleton script' for women to enact within their new identity (e.g. a good mother, a good worker). Several factors (opportunity, 'identity scripts' and resilience) are involved in this, with perceptions of how attainable a new identity 'script' is perceived being key in the resilience of its enactment and sustainability over time (Blanchette & Brown, 2006). Across the desistance theories, several key subthemes are discussed: the impact of stigma, the importance of de-labelling, the role of generative activity, and the mediating influence of agency, all of which are suggested to have a transformative effect on self-view and, in turn, upon desistance (Maruna, 2004; Healy, 2014; Rocque, Posick & Paternoster, 2014). Agency is defined by Bosworth (1999) as "the ability to negotiate power and to resist" and by Healy (2014) as "a dynamic interaction between the person and their social world that is directed towards the achievement of a meaningful and credible new self" (p874).

### ***2.2.3.1 Supporting Desistance in Practice***

Supporting desistance in practice centres around the main concept of co-producing desistance, with practitioners working with and alongside offenders, rather than 'doing' interventions on them (Weaver, 2011). Desistance is viewed as a process that goes beyond the individual, to include families, communities and the state itself, all of whom must be involved for moral, social, psychological and judicial rehabilitation to be possible (McNeill et al, 2012a). This notion of co-producing desistance suggests that multi-stakeholder involvement is necessary in providing the support, network and opportunities for an individual to enact active citizenship, to build social capital and self-esteem and to gain purpose and self-efficacy with which to develop a prosocial identity (McNeill & Weaver 2010; Weaver & Nicholson, 2012; Weaver, 2011). McCulloch (2016) highlighted the value of coproduction within justice sanctions, highlighting peer support roles within prison as most of their participants'

only experience of coproduction within the CJS. Desistance practice focuses on the use of forward-looking and strengths-based approach goals rather than avoidance goals, demonstrating the parallels between the desistance model of offender supervision and the Good Lives Model (Ward & Stewart, 2003), a strengths-based approach which views offending behaviour as maladaptive attempts to meet universal life values and goals. The GLM and desistance approaches criticise the risk orientation taken by RNR based frameworks such as the pathways model, which involve top-down practitioner focus on criminogenic need through a focus on avoidance goals (for example avoiding reoffending, avoiding antisocial peer groups etc.). The GLM argues that RNR's focus on risk factors and relapse prevention techniques are not sufficient treatment aims (Ward, Hudson, & Keenan, 1998; Ward & Stewart, 2003), with the risk-model failing to account for context, ecological variables and personal agency in recidivism and rehabilitation (Ward & Gannon, 2006). The GLM criticises the RNR approach for failing to adequately link risk management to new constructive ways of living, arguing that programmes should equip offenders with capabilities to secure important personal and social goods in a pro-social way. This is supported by evidence that suggests that 'approach goals' are more easily attained than 'avoidance goals' and are more likely to be maintained in periods of stress and crisis (Wilson & Yates, 2009).

The advantages and disadvantages of integrating features of the GLM is being continually debated in several papers (see Andrews, Bonta & Wormith, 2011; Ward, Yates & Willis, 2012) with no agreement reached by the authors. The GLM has little supporting empirical research for its efficacy across offender subtypes more broadly, with its emphasis on principles and techniques found within positive psychology being largely untested within forensic settings (Looman & Abracen, 2013). However, some research has explored its efficacy in both its original form and as the Good Lives Model-Comprehensive (GLM-C, Ward & Gannon, 2006; Ward, Mann & Gannon, 2007), an ecological, multisystemic, developmental and humanistic treatment approach for sexual offenders, as well as its application to high-risk violent offenders (Whitehead, Ward & Collie, 2007), demonstrating its clinical relevance to broader offending typologies. The GLM argues, "The process of rehabilitation requires not just the targeting of isolated "factors", but also the holistic reconstruction of the self" (Ward & Maruna, 2007, p.117),

focusing rehabilitation support and interventions within a strengths-based framework around the individual offender's aspirations and abilities. The model highlights 11 classes of primary goods as follows:

- Life (including healthy living and functioning)
- Knowledge (how well informed one feels about things that are important to them)
- Excellence in play (hobbies and recreational pursuits)
- Excellence in work (including mastery experiences)
- Excellence in agency (autonomy, power and self-directedness)
- Inner peace (freedom from emotional turmoil and stress)
- Relatedness (including intimate, romantic, and familial relationships)
- Community (connection to wider social groups)
- Spirituality (in the broad sense of finding meaning and purpose in life)
- Pleasure (feeling good in the here and now)
- Creativity (expressing oneself through alternative forms).

The strengths-based approach taken by the GLM relates closely to the foundation of desistance approaches, showing clear links between the GLM and Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943, 1954), with self-actualisation and community acceptance being key approach goals in the GLM. Eight key desistance principles have been set out to guide criminal justice practice:

- Acknowledging the complexity and difficulty of the desistance process, recognising that lapses and relapses are likely, but managing these constructively, with the knowledge that support and supervision may take time to have an impact (Farrall & Calverley, 2006; Weaver & McNeill, 2007).
- Providing individualised support: understanding that 'one-size fits all' approaches will not work (Weaver & McNeill, 2010) and that supervision must accommodate and address individualised and subjective aspects of the process.
- Building and sustaining hope: the building and maintenance of motivation and hope are key tasks for support practitioners (Farrall & Calverley, 2006).

- Recognising and developing people’s strengths: important for practitioners to support the development of both personal and social strengths and resources, which can help the individual, overcome obstacles in their desistance journey (Maruna & LeBel, 2003, 2009).
- Respecting and fostering agency- working with not on offenders: Interventions are most effective when encouraging and respecting self-determination (McCulloch, 2005; McNeill, 2006).
- Working with and through relationships (both personal and professional): supporting offenders in fostering positive relationships with those who matter to them (Burnett & McNeill, 2005; McNeill, 2006).
- Developing social as well as human capital: Developing human capital (skills and capacities) alone is not sufficient in supporting desistance, space to develop social capital (such as the opportunity to apply skills and to enact newly forming identities) is vital (Farrall, 2002, 2004; McNeill & Whyte, 2007)
- Recognising and celebrating progress: Potential and ongoing development should be praised, with the objective of 'de-labelling', avoiding identifying the offender by the behaviours or actions they are attempting to leave behind (McNeill & Maruna, 2007).

These principles aim to be de-labelling and de-stigmatising since the offender is perceived as the expert, not an object, and a human capable of choice and change, making clear links with the Good Lives principles. As such, desistance in practice tends to focus on collaboration in order to promote empowerment and engagement (Weaver, 2011) resulting in greater motivation and buy-in from offenders. The focus on the lived experience of desistance, including from those who have desisted successfully (such as peer mentors) supports the rationale for this research, which seeks to explore the subjective experiences of resettlement and desistance from crime of women receiving and women providing peer mentoring support.

### **2.3 Exploring Lived Experiences**

‘Qualia’, a controversial and contested term within philosophy, refers to the phenomenon of subjective experience and value (Dennett, 1988). Particularly important in this type of research is the knowledge argument, outlined by philosopher Frank Jackson in his 1982 article “Epiphenomenal Qualia”. This states that one can know the physical

and scientific facts regarding an experience of another, however, the knowledge gained from living that event provides additional depth from the knowledge of emotion, sensation and value. This experiential knowledge (Borkman, 1976), where the person is the expert of their own experience, has however been criticised as simply increasing the individual's abilities- e.g. to remember or imagine a sensation they had not encountered before. Daniel Dennett in "Are we explaining consciousness yet?" (2001), supports an alternative definition of qualia as idiographic, fine grained neural responses, linking emotions to aspects of personal experience (for example nostalgic feeling to seeing pictures of old friends) which are too complicated for language to capture simply.

Personal Construct Psychology (PCP; Kelly, 1955) based within 'Constructive Alternativism' (similar to social constructionism), is a constructionist approach, which states that reality cannot be directly known but can be better understood through a comparison of perspectives. It argues that our unique personal frames of reference (or personal constructs) defined as "a way in which some things are construed as alike and yet different from others" (Kelly, 1955, p.105) serve as psychological mechanisms used to help process, interpret and understand the world (Horley, 2008; Winter, 1992). It is argued that people experience and interpret events as "naïve scientists" through two opposing 'poles' of interpretation, which offer two differing pathways of action to every situation, accounting for numerous differing perspectives. PCP argues that problematic or maladaptive constructs which result in incorrect interpretations or unsuccessful predictions (and so negative emotions or states), are worked on and changed over time through ongoing hypothesis testing. This provides the basis of therapy in PCP (Badzinski & Anderson, 2012), e.g. within group work with young offenders (Viney, Truneckova, Weekes, & Oades, 1999) where it has had positive outcomes on measures relating to psychosocial maturity, psychological states, and types of anxiety (Viney, Henry & Campbell, 2001). PCP highlights the communication of individual understanding and experience (rather than the acknowledgement of these experiences as universal truths) as the focus of the research thus providing insight into how the participant views themselves, others and the wider world (Towl, 2003).

In an attempt to better understand resettlement and desistance for women, this PhD research aimed to explore valued experiential knowledge and personal constructs, an area the researcher feels has been overlooked within the

literature. Much of the research relating to 'What Works?' mentoring support services, and resettlement relates to male offenders, with a heavy focus on top-down, quantitative evaluations of initiatives, interventions and programmes. This has resulted in a literature base that questions 'What Works?' but has little understanding of how resettlement and desistance work, particularly for women, and how mentoring practices might support this. Whilst the desistance literature also still focuses largely on the experiences of men, the bottom-up approach taken provides sharp contrast to the methodologies seen within 'What Works?'. Here emerging studies (discussed below) have incorporated methodologies that seek to be engaging, person-centred and participant-led. This approach to exploring the participants' lived experiences of resettlement was judged the best approach to this PhD research, which aimed to ensure that the findings were led by the participants, rather than by the reviewed literature. This is in keeping with the feminist methodology adopted (see section 3.2.3). As discussed within the methodology section (see section 3.2.4), this more collaborative approach to interviewing is praised for reducing the power imbalance between researcher and participants, important when researching vulnerable populations such as female offenders.

### **2.3.1 Women's Experiences of Prison and Resettlement**

The prison experiences of specific subgroups of offenders, particularly minority groups, have been explored in numerous pieces of research, with the aim of providing better service and treatment options. This includes the experiences of ethnic minorities and of racism within prison (Wooldredge & Steiner, 2012; Kimmitt, 2013; The Young Review, 2014; The Lammy Review, 2016); experiences of foreign national prisoners (Prison Reform Trust Briefing, 2004); experiences of older male prisoners (Prison Reform Trust Briefing, 2008); and experiences of those with disabilities in prison (Glaser & Deane, 1999; Ware, Ruzsa & Dias, 2014). However, the experiences of women in prison are arguably far more under-researched. Literature has explored the experiences of subgroups of women in the Criminal Justice System, looking specifically at experiences of older prisoners (Aday & Krabill, 2011; Williams et al, 2006) and experiences of grief during incarceration (Ferszt, 2002; Harner, Hentz & Evangelista, 2011). The majority of the research in this area explores women's experiences of pregnancy, motherhood and loss of children in prison; looking at birth outcomes, identity shifts, grief and attachment /bonding

and mental health (e.g. Bell et al, 2004; Shaw, Downe & Kingdon, 2015; Mignon & Ransford, 2012; Rose & LeBel, 2016) which are), all undoubtedly important and prevalent issues within this population.

Whilst in short supply in comparison to the wealth of literature concerned with men in prison, findings concerned with women detail predominantly negative experiences of the Criminal Justice System. Studies highlight women in prison to struggle with the lack of privacy (Haney, 2002; Ward & Kassebaum, 1965), and agency within the prison environment (Mandaraka-Sheppard, 1986); with separation from family members, specifically children (Women in Prison, 2015) and the resulting guilt (Bloom & Chesney-Lind, 2000) and isolation (Pogrebin & Dodge, 2001) being particularly important. Very little research discusses offender's experiences of resettlement into the community, with fewer studies still focusing on the experiences of women as 'returning citizens'. La Vigne (2009) detailed that most women had high expectations of their release, expecting ease in resuming to prior roles and relationships with family members and experiencing issues with a lack of support, housing, employment and substance misuse. A key theme emerging from this literature is the isolation experienced by many former prisoners, citing strained or broken relationships, (Denov & Campbell, 2005; Westervelt & Cook, 2010). Research exploring women's experiences has particularly highlighted the detrimental impact of incarceration on mental health (Niven & Stewart, 2004; Corston, 2007). In her review of the female estate, Baroness Corston (2007) reported women's experiences of violence, self-harm and substance misuse in prison and the impact of this environment on mental health:

*“Women recounted the stress that came from newly encountering the prison environment. Crowding, noise and the threatening atmosphere were the immediate factors. They recounted their alarm and concern at finding themselves sharing cells with women with mental health problems and who self-harmed; being frightened and unprepared when confronted with women who were suffering severe drug withdrawal or seizures...A number of other women reportedly witnessed incidents where suicides had occurred.” (p. 29)*



There is little research exploring women's experiences of release and re-entry, but that which exists suggests that women feel poorly prepared for their re-entry into society, lack adequate support and battle with stigma, relationships and changes in self-view upon release (Hamlyn & Lewis, 2000; Morris et al, 1995; Seaman & Lynch, 2016). An Australian study (McIvor, Trotter & Sheehan, 2009) found that women reported mixed experiences (although predominately negative), of accessing services and support on release, but reporting positive relationships with probation officers and non-statutory bodies who made them feel valued and supported. More recent research suggests that the focus on areas of practical support needs (highlighted in the pathways framework- see section 2.2.1) is ignoring important emotional needs and the role of capital within resettlement efficacy. For example, Heidemann, Cederbaum and Martinez (2015) found that recently released women defined success beyond simply avoiding recidivism to focus on aspects of independence. This included having their own place to live, their ability to help significant others, including family members, living outside of supervision from the Criminal Justice System, recognition of their personal drive and perseverance to overcome trauma and challenges, and achieving or striving to achieve an idealised 'normal' life. These areas of concern are more in line with those highlighted by the desistance literature, wellbeing models and Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943, 1954), where these women can be seen to be striving for love and belongingness, self-esteem and self-actualisation needs. This is an important finding when considering the role of women's centres and holistic peer support services. For example, Seaman and Lynch (2016: 65) found that post-release, women's desistance 'journeys' were dominated by these "intangible issues" including shame, dealing with the notion of a new life, negotiating relationships and shifts in identity, dealing with mental health, and concerns around hope, trust and safety.

### **2.3.2 Peer Mentoring and the 'Wounded Healer' Phenomenon**

The experiences of staff working with offenders have been explored in a range of settings, largely to improve working conditions (e.g. for Black and Minority Ethnic- BAME staff in prisons; Prison Reform Trust Briefing, 2006). Staff experiences of working with specific offender sub-groups (e.g. transgendered prisoners; Marlow, Winder & Elliott, 2015) or offenders with learning difficulties/disabilities; Loucks & Talbot, 2008) have also been explored, with the research aiming to inform practice or improve treatment efficacy. Most relevant to this PhD

research is the literature relating to staff with a history of personal contact with the CJS or of vulnerabilities relating to offending (such as substance misuse or histories of abuse).

There is a long history of individuals using their experiential knowledge of needs, offending and resettlement to support others through the process of desistance or recovery (with much literature here being relevant to recovery from substance misuse), often within peer-mentoring initiatives. Widely referred to as 'wounded healers' (Arrigo & Takahashi, 2006; LeBel, 2007; Maruna, 2001; White, 2000), or 'professional ex-s' (Brown, 1991), professionals with peer-experience are viewed as part of "the solution" in reducing recidivism (LeBel & Maruna, 2015), relating to high figures of "ex's" (i.e. ex-offenders) working in resettlement and recovery services (e.g. LeBel, Richie, & Maruna, 2015; Heidemann, Cederbaum, Martinez & LeBel, 2016). Theories argue that these roles provide the individual with the opportunity to perform generative activity by helping others within a familiar context. In turn, this is said to help the individual's own desistance journey by helping to "reconcile a criminal past" (Lebel, Richie & Maruna, 2015, p.110) to strengthen prosocial attitudes, beliefs and active coping styles to support others through paraprofessional, lay therapist or counsellor roles. Roles within these services are thought to bring benefits of the 'helper therapy principle' (Reissman, 1965) including stigma management (Lebel, 2012; Maruna & Lebel, 2009), where strengths-based activities (drawing upon experiential knowledge) allows for a change in self-narrative "reworking a delinquent history into a source of wisdom to be drawn from" (Maurana, 2001, p.117). This is linked to psychological desistance literature on change in offender identity reconstruction and narrative reframing. These positions are said to provide an "earned redemption" (Bazemore, 1999, p. 770) with the ex-offender's delinquent history seen as a community asset, rather than a source of personal shame or guilt. This approach involves a 'peer support' element and is widely welcomed by offenders wishing to become mentees (e.g. Erickson, Crow, Zurcher, & Connett, 1973; Irwin, 2005; Sowards, O'Boyle & Weissman, 2006) due to assumed notions of trust, understanding and common ground; as well as providing an example of someone who has 'made it' in the community.

Relating to ‘transcendence’, the highest order need in the developed hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1970b- see Figure 2), taking on generative roles (such as that of a peer mentor) is thought to go beyond the innate drive to support others, to supporting the individual's own ongoing desistance journey. For the 'professional ex', roles within the CJS or offender resettlement services are assumed to provide "a coping strategy" (LeBel & Maruna, 2015, p. 109) to life in the community, making "acceptable, explicable and even meritorious the guilt-laden, 'wasted' portions of an Actors life" (Lofland, 1969, p.287).

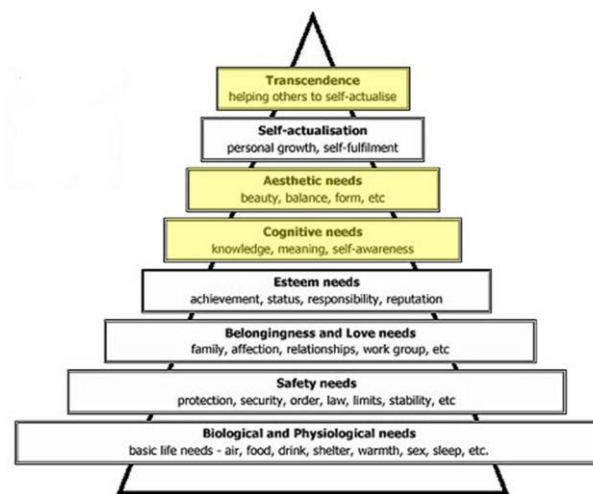


Figure 2:

Diagram depicting Maslow's (1970b)

hierarchy of needs

Whilst this notion of reframing deviant histories into positive, pro-social roles has merit, it is also likely that the role of stigma and difficulties in obtaining jobs with criminal records plays a significant part here. It is likely that valued and available posts in the CJS and resettlement services provide job openings where others may not exist, serving as "a legitimate career premised upon an identity that embraces one's deviant history" (Brown, 1991, p. 220). Attempts at "making good" and "giving back" are however mediated by reciprocity, where community recognition and reciprocation are thought to provide forgiveness, capital and moral and social rehabilitation in return (Maruna, 2001; Graham, Graham & Field, 2015; Weaver & McNeill, 2015). A lack of this may lead to isolation and set the individual up to fail.

## **2.4 Aims of the PhD Research**

This programme of PhD research explored the lived experiences of women released into the community following a prison sentence, focusing on the experiences of women at Key Changes, who were either accessing or providing peer-mentoring services. It aimed to produce participant-led data through a range of participatory research methods (including Photo Elicitation and examination of personal constructs - see chapter 3 for more detail) which contemporaneously explore the unique subjective lived experiences of women. In this way, the research aimed to go beyond an exploration of key resettlement factors as highlighted in RNR/deficit models including the 9 Pathways Framework, to gain understanding of the underlying mechanisms of change within women's resettlement and desistance from crime. An exploration of service users' current experiences of resettlement when accessing the Key Changes service as well as the experiences of peer mentors working at Key Changes and their journey to working at the service permitted a comprehensive current and retrospective investigation of their experiences of resettlement and support. Therefore, as well as seeking to address the identified knowledge gap around women's lived experiences of resettlement, support and desistance, the research sought to add to the existing literature on the role of 'professional ex's' as this relates to this group of ex-offending women.

Visher and Travis (2003) commented on how recidivism is viewed as the primary, if not the only, measure of treatment or service efficacy in offender resettlement. As such, this research aimed to add to a limited literature base by exploring the factors that the women themselves perceive to be particularly salient needs or goals, key to their desistance. The findings of this research will add to the limited literature concerning female offenders more generally, as well as their experiences of the CJS and re-entry into the community. In turn, it is hoped that this will help to inform practice and policy to support women effectively during their resettlement into the community. Heidemann, Cederbaum and Martinez (2015) were the first to explore what 'success' meant to female offenders, using a qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews (discussed in section 2.2.1). Results suggested that avoiding reoffending was only one small part of a wider picture, and highlighted aspects of human and social capital that relate strongly to the desistance paradigm, suggesting wider social and societal acceptance as important factors in desisting from crime. This PhD research and the approach taken aims to build upon this, to provide a more

comprehensive understanding of how factors viewed as salient to women influence their experience of resettlement and how the role of Key Changes as a support service helped them to meet these needs.

Key Changes was a particularly interesting service to look at due to its ethos as a bottom-up, holistic and individualistic support service which operates within the more correctional and risk-informed 9 Pathways framework and under a Transforming Rehabilitation contract which are two top-down, government led initiatives. How this service supported both its service users and staff members through the desistance process demonstrates a middle ground between the two approaches. Here, risk and accountability for actions was framed within an environment of tailored and individualised support and was delivered in an environment that aimed to foster capital and to de-label and de-stigmatise the women. Working with Key Changes in this research allowed for the inclusion not only of women accessing their services, but also peer mentors. These women have both a personal experience of the Criminal Justice System, incarceration and release as well as the experience of supporting other women through their resettlement. This means that these women are likely to have both a broad and personal understanding of a range of women's needs and goals upon their release from prison. As these women were at a later point in their desistance 'journey', their involvement in the research allowed the opportunity to further explore their experiences of 'self' change during their transition from offender to ex-offender, as well as the opportunity to improve upon the research methods used in service user interviews (developments discussed in section 3.3.5). This provided the unique opportunity to explore the desistance process from several viewpoints, from those at the start of their resettlement and those who are further on in their desistance journey.

The research sampled women receiving and providing peer mentoring support at Key Changes and no attempts are made to generalise these findings to other women re-entering the community following incarceration with the support of a different charity. It is also likely that women not accessing support services may have very different experiences of resettlement, be it positive or negative. The research does not reflect the experiences of women receiving non-custodial sentences and their perceptions and experiences of the Criminal Justice System, an important area of focus for future research. As such, although these women had a diverse range of experiences

and support needs, the findings from the research are viewed as a snapshot of these women's perspectives, at a single point within their resettlement journey.

## **2.5 Summary and Thesis Overview**

From reviewing the literature, it is evident that despite the recent upturn in interest, there is still comparatively little research on women and their experiences of resettlement and desistance. Indeed, within a fairly recent criminology text book (The Oxford Handbook of Criminology, 2017) only three quarters of a page discusses the “subtle nuances” (p.759) in women's desistance in comparison to the 19 pages allocated to discussing the desistance of men. Although many of the central ideas from the desistance and desistance-supportive practice literature resonate with ideas around trauma and the need for trauma-informed practice and services, this has not been explicitly explored or links clearly made. This was thus a focus of the research. It was therefore intended that the PhD should explore women's experiences of their resettlement into the community when accessing or providing support at Key Changes, a through the gate peer mentoring service for women (see section 1.2).

This thesis consists of seven chapters. These first two chapters have sought to provide an overview of the relevant research and current practice, policies and debates influencing the approach taken to working with women in the Criminal Justice System and on their release into the community. I hope that this demonstrates the continuing need for progress in this area, which can be led by a more thorough understanding of women's experiences of incarceration and resettlement. Chapter Three describes the methodological decisions and research developments made during the course of this PhD, outlining the researcher's personal and philosophical standpoint. Two results chapters (Chapters Four and Five) detail findings from an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) of participatory interviews with service users and peer mentors at Key Changes. Chapter Four details the findings relating to women's experiences of offending, incarceration and release, including master themes: ‘Trauma, Power and Agency’ and ‘Stigma and Identity’. Chapter Five details finding relating to women's experiences and perceptions of the role of mentoring within their resettlement and desistance journeys within the master themes: ‘Community and Capital’ and ‘Mentoring and Generative Activity’. Chapter Six provides a discussion of the

empirical findings of the research, with reference to relevant literature, discussing the limitations of the research and highlighting several suggested areas for future research. Chapter Seven, the final chapter, discusses the practice and policy implications from this research, drawing conclusions from across the research findings.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Overview

The research utilised participatory research methods within an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) framework to investigate how women within the Criminal Justice System experienced post-sentence resettlement. Studies focusing on resettlement are often criticised for a lack of emphasis on pre-prison and in-prison experiences despite their impact on reintegration ease (Mears, 2012; Visher & Travis, 2011). This research, whilst focusing on resettlement experiences, was designed to be participant-led, aiming to allow the women to focus on aspects of their resettlement which were particularly salient. The research adopts a feminist methodology in its efforts to empower and give women a voice. The research focused on women receiving or providing peer mentoring support at 'Key Changes', a through-the-gate peer mentoring and educational presentations scheme for women in South Yorkshire (see section 1.2 for more detail). The study is unique in sampling women within Key Changes and the ability to hear peer mentors' experiences allows the research to explore the distance these women have from their offences (see Farrall, Hunter, Sharpe & Calverley, 2014).

The research initially took a mixed-methods approach, which developed in practice to be largely qualitative. The methods used were developed throughout the research process (see section 3.3.5), both in response to practical and ethical considerations and to changes in the organisational structure of Key Changes. This chapter will outline the overall methodology and methods used in this research.

### 3.2 Methodological Approach

#### 3.2.1 Justification for a Mixed Methods approach

Madill and Gough (2008) discuss the term 'qualitative methods' as a broad number of heterogenous methodological approaches, unified largely for being 'not quantitative' (p.255) and for having a variety of common characteristics, such as a focus on meaning and interpretation. Qualitative approaches (especially case studies and studies lacking control groups) are consistently ranked lower than their quantitative counterparts in hierarchies of



study design; far below well-powered RCTs (Bagshaw & Bellomo, 2008; Petticrew & Roberts, 2003). However, qualitative approaches favour certain types of research question, specifically those aiming to explore new topics or gain insight into subjective experience. In addition, models which focus on 'quality of evidence' as a marker for good research (e.g. Atkins et al, 2004), have been supported, with researchers arguing that hierarchical approaches overlook the strong evidence and high level of internal validity found within cost-effective qualitative studies (Cook et al., 2008; Konnerup & Kongsted 2012). These qualitative approaches are commended for paying closer attention to underlying theories, despite fewer guidelines around what qualifies as good evidence (Nutley, Powell & Davies, 2013). As such, factors determining the quality of IPA research (such as rigour) are discussed in section 3.4.

Mixed methods approaches to research have become increasingly popular in psychological research, particularly within interpretative approaches (Hesse-Biber, 2010) due to their ability to increase confidence and validity of qualitative findings (for discussion, see McKim, 2017). Several pieces of independent research (e.g. Hazel, Wright, Liddle, Renshaw & Grey, 2012) and governmental (e.g. DWP, 2012) have utilised a mixed-methods approach in evaluating services. The use of both quantitative and qualitative methods within a research project (either through mixed methods or using triangulation) are said to provide a more well-rounded result (Hesse-Biber, Rodriguez & Frost, 2015; McKim, 2017). The majority of the (limited) research in the area of offender experiences, desistance and resettlement has tended to focus exclusively on male offenders (e.g. Binswanger et al, 2011) and the issues men face on release (e.g. Burgess-Allen, Langlois & Whittaker, 2006; Crawley & Sparks, 2006). A qualitatively driven mixed-methods approach was chosen to provide rich information about women's lived experiences of resettlement following a prison sentence. This methodological approach comes from a need to learn from an idiographic approach with an inductive (bottom-up) model of knowledge formation highlighted by the desistance literature base.

### **3.2.2 Rationale for a Critical Realist Position**

Data collection utilised a range of participatory qualitative and mixed methods as chosen by the participants (detailed in section 3.2.4) within a phenomenological framework (detailed in section 3.2.5). These methods and the analytical (IPA) approach aim to answer the research questions, within practical and audience considerations (e.g. Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Kincheloe, 2001; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). This advocates pluralism through combining ontologies in the pursuit of a more extensive understanding (Howard, 1983). The methods selected to encourage participant narratives on experiences of resettlement throughout the research are historically grounded in social constructionist epistemologies such as Personal Construct Psychology and participatory research (see section 3.2.4 for further details). This is, however, a core concept of IPA research: “IPA endorses social constructionism’s claim that sociocultural and historical processes are central to how we experience and understand our lives, including the stories we tell about these lives.” (Eatough & Smith, 2008, p.184). This acceptance of individual world views is placed under the 'Interpretative' lens provided by IPA, allowing personal experiences of the phenomenon discussed within the research to be contextualised within relevant psychological theory.

A ‘Critical Realist’ ontology and a ‘Social Constructivist’ epistemology was adopted, which acknowledge that there is a reality but that experiences of this reality are subjective for both the researcher and participant based on their personal constructs, experiences and histories. This approach therefore assumes that ‘reality’ or the ‘truth’ of occurrences are better understood by exploring multiple perspectives of the phenomena. Critical Realism, traditionally associated with Bhaskar (1978), can now be seen as a blanket term covering a range of varying ‘realisms’ (Maxell, 2012, p.4), all of which deny the objectivist view of knowledge in maintaining an ontological realism, with differing epistemologies. Here, epistemological constructivism and relativism is considered in acknowledging our own standpoint and the impact this has upon data collection and analysis.

This approach is in keeping with the rationale for using a mixed-methods, participant led approach to data collection as well as the use of IPA (discussed in section 3.2.5), based on the interest in psychological processes at

an individual level and the assumption that individual meaning making is informed by social structures. IPA can be seen to take a realist approach to knowledge production, through attempting to gain knowledge about what the participant thinks and how they perceive the research topic (Willig, 2008, p.69). It also acknowledges our own subjective (experientially developed) lens of understanding as being a requirement to understanding another's experiences (interpretivist). This highlights the importance of reflexivity throughout the research process and rejects the positivist view by making no claims about the outside world, nor questioning the 'truth' of the participant's experiences. Thus, IPA is based within phenomenology as its aim is to accurately represent the participant's conscious experiences and knowledge of the world. It is thus influenced by hermeneutics and theories of interpretation (Eatough & Smith, 2008).

### **3.2.3 A Feminist Methodology**

Burnam and Gelsthorpe (2017) provide a detailed review of the development of feminist criminology over time, from 'doing gender'- acknowledging the influence of the social construction of gender and the enactment of male power, to 'doing difference', striving for a gender-informed response to women in the CJS. They then go on to question whether sufficient attention has been paid to entwined systems of oppression, a key aspect of third wave feminism. They discuss how, due to experiences of violence, lack of access to education, and the 'feminism of poverty' (Pearce, 1978), women enter the CJS having experienced more disadvantage than men. However, Burnam and Gelsthorpe (2017) and others, also question the 'narrowing' of criminological focus to women's experiences within the CJS, with a lack of consideration of women's experiences of governance and control from other institutionalisations and other areas of their lives (Hannah-Moffat, 2011, as cited in Burnam & Gelsthorpe, 2017; Sharpe, 2016), highlighting a need for further development of the scope of criminological literature.

This PhD research therefore adopted a feminist methodology, which firstly acknowledges that women in the systemically male-orientated Criminal Justice System are likely to have a shared experience of oppression from male power within numerous settings (Comack, 2000), and to have histories of trauma, abuse and victimisation. However, it also took an idiographic approach by exploring differences in subjective experiences across the

heterogeneous sample of women who chose to participate in the research. Secondly, careful consideration was given to the context of the research process and relationships with the participants. The research adopted a heavily qualitative, mixed-methods approach involving participatory interviews (see section 3.2.4). This approach allows women to give their stories and opinions in their own terms (Raymond, 1979 as cited in Reinharz 1992), an approach which is said to empower rather than exploit the participants and is aimed to reduce the power imbalance within the interview (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). The method and analysis utilised is consistent with the advice of feminist methodologies, to involve reflexivity, deconstruction and reconstruction, and to explore women's experiences as potentially distinct from men's (Cain, 1990; as cited in Burnam & Gelsthorpe, 2017). In other words, the data should be aware of, and examine, both the data and the context the data was collected in (Presser, 2004; 2005). The approach taken was therefore participant led in order to empower vulnerable women and to provide an opportunity for their voices and experiences to be heard.

### **3.2.4 Participatory Research Methods**

#### ***3.2.4.1 Overview of Participatory Research Methods***

Led by Porporino's (2010) recommendation that practice within offender management ought to be guided by the offender themselves, a participatory research methodology has been adopted within the project. First popularised by research within health psychology, participatory research (PR) has gained support as a qualitative social research strategy in recent years (Bergold & Thomas, 2010). PR is used as a "broad umbrella under which several participatory, collaborative or inclusive research methods and approaches are located" (Aldridge, 2015 p.7); including Participatory Action Research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005), and Community Based Participatory Research (Hacker, 2013; O'Toole, Aaron, Chin et al, 2003). PR has been widely used as a method of social change within Youth Action Research (e.g. Ozer, 2016); as an approach to creating new interventions (e.g. for substance abuse, Jemal & Smith, 2015); within health research (e.g. to meet health needs of indigenous people, Ritchie, Wabano, Beardy, Curran, Orkin, Vanderburgh & Young, 2013; McDonald & Stack, 2016); and as a tool for gaining insight into experiences and understanding of specific life experiences (e.g. Poverty in Ghana, Norton,

Aryeetey, Korboe & Dogbe, 1995). These approaches use participant insight to change social realities with political or social change as an explicit goal, seeking to create *"an effective translational process that will increase the bidirectional connections between academics and the communities they study"* (Hacker, 2013, p.2).

PR is a bottom-up approach to research, which primarily aims to promote inclusion and collaboration and to provide an avenue for the voices of marginalised or vulnerable groups to be recognised. It requires a process of reflection and action and is underpinned by pragmatism and equity (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995) with the explicit objective of gaining 'knowledge for action' (Scott & Shore, 1979) rather than for understanding; often having a direct link to policy and practice. Thus, a diverse range of methods can be used within PR, with the approach being utilised within a range of disciplines and practices. Due to the approach being directed by this convergence of science and practice (Bergold & Thomas, 2012), participatory research is still a source of contention. PR studies are often criticised for being heavily qualitative and as such for being biased or unreliable (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). However, the use of mixed-methods approaches in participatory research (e.g. repertory grids) have been praised for providing additional flexibility as they incorporate a range of methods and techniques such as visual methods (e.g. digital storytelling, Photo Elicitation) in a range of formats (including focus groups, drawing and essay writing tasks, immersions, interviews, photo diaries etc.).

It is said that the main difference between PR and other research lies in its attempts to tackle issues around representation and to reduce the power imbalance between researcher and 'participant', argued to be present at all levels of conventional research processes (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). This is done through making the 'participants' a more integral part of the research (or 'knowledge-production') process, introducing a voice for locally defined goals and opinions (Rahman & Fals-Borda, 1991), thus reducing the influence of the researcher over the project outcomes. Here participants are involved in decision making at all levels of the research, including the analysis. Whilst the form of analysis for this type of research is typically a Thematic Analysis, a range of other approaches have been utilised based on epistemological and ontological orientations of the author, or personal preferences. For example, McIntyre, (2008) reports choosing to take a social constructionist based

grounded theory approach to her analysis due to her familiarity with the method. Whilst differing philosophical approaches are accepted within PR, it has been stated that there is a "need to adopt an extended epistemology which moved between and seeks to integrate several different types of knowing" (Reason, 1993 p.1259).

The idea of utilising a complete PR approach within this setting was deemed inappropriate due to the practicalities (including time required of the participant to design, run and analyse the research) and ethical implications (bearing in mind the vulnerable nature of the participants of the research and the sensitive and confidential discussions involved). Women participating in the research were typically accessing Key Changes for support with resettlement needs in varying forms and so a concern with requiring this level of involvement from the service-users was that this may have detracted from their time with mentors or programmes at the service, and subsequently negatively impacted upon their resettlement. Involvement with the Photo Elicitation option could be time consuming, and this additional level of involvement may have reduced participation further, therefore this extra time commitment was not asked of the women. Due to these practical and ethical considerations, it was decided that the main analysis would be conducted by the researcher. The research programme did not require the women to assist in the coding stage of the analysis, which would detract them from participation in Key Changes activities and in this way, may have been detrimental to their resettlement. In line with Feminist methodology, participatory research aims to empower through giving a voice to those who are in some way 'other' (Fine, 1994), and female offenders at Key Changes can be considered to be doubly 'other' for being both an offender and being female. Reinharz (1992) discusses how change occurs through empowering women to participate in the research and by disseminating research findings which can go on to influence change. The research therefore aimed to take a participatory approach in being within a participant led environment, orientated around the lived-experiences of the service users. The methodology aimed to be as engaging and accessible as possible, through giving service users a choice of participatory research tools with which to structure their interviews. This included Photo Elicitation and interviews with the ideal outcomes inventory or repertory grids. Interviews were arranged at a time and date of the participants' choosing.

The use of visual methods as a mode through which to investigate less tangible aspects of subjective experiences has become increasingly popular in the social sciences, particularly within research involving vulnerable groups in society. Elicitation is one such method, with its most popular form being Photo Elicitation, originating in anthropological research (Collier, 1957). Photo Elicitation Interviewing (PEI) has been used in a variety of fields such as in Visual Anthropology (Guindi, 1998), Sociology (Allen, 2012; Alexander, 2013), Psychology (Brown, Worrall, Davidson & Howe, 2013; Ives-Baine, 2015; Sustik, 1999; Education: Dempsey et al., 1994; Smith et al., 1999) and Organizational Studies (Buchanan, 1998). PEI research is "based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview" (Harper, 2002, p.13), where photographs or images are discussed to gain insight into the meaning attributed by the participant to various aspects of their personal, social or cultural world. This is based on the idea that photographs have the ability to "make the invisible visible" (Bukowski & Beutow, 2011, p.739) through conjuring memories and emotions in the participant. The photographs discussed are produced either by the researcher, an approach commonly used in theory-driven, top-down research methodologies; or- as in this research- they are produced by the participant for a more inductive, participant-led approach (an "auto driven" interview, Clarke, 1990; or "reflexive photography", Prosser, 1998). Photographs can be produced by the participant either using cameras provided by the researcher or on their mobile phones (e.g. Joliffe & Bottorff, 2007) which was); the latter being the approach taken during this PhD research. Photographs can also be produced by participants selecting photographs/images which they have not taken themselves or have not taken during the research. This may involve them using a search engine to generate images or bringing along old family photographs (Jordan, Adams, Pawley, & Radcliffe; 2009). Methodological developments (see section 3.3.5) incorporated these approaches in response to methodological problems experienced within service user interviews (for example some participants did not wind-on the disposable cameras etc.). Developments also aimed to allow participants to explore different avenues to producing the photographs and to reduce the time required of the participant. Improvements also involved the inclusion of examples of and discussion around effective camera use and around creative approaches to capture emotions and experience in photographic content.

The approach of using participant-generated photographs in PEI is commended for being based purely within the participant's perspective and for "*empowering [them] to bring their own voice to the interview*" (Hatten, Forin & Adams, 2013, p.3). Researcher-elicited photograph materials, by contrast, are criticised in their focus and topic for including stereotypes, emotive or "visually arresting" subjects (Orellana, 1999) and for risking missing information which is particularly salient to the participant by focusing on images which the researcher found personally striking (e.g. Clark-Ibáñez, 2004). However, introducing photographs into an interview setting has been said to increase sensory awareness and so increase reflexivity (Harris & Guilleman, 2012) leading to richer data than interview-only methods. Carlsson (2001) stated that photographs allow researchers to gain greater insight into participants' experiences through five key arguments: enhancing inquiry and reflection; enhancing emotional expression; providing a visual representation of key features of a story; providing a communication bridge between strangers in the interview setting; providing a demonstration of the photographer's relation to the topic. Additionally, PEI has been described by participants as being therapeutic, as a reason to, and a means by which, to reconnect with people and places of personal significance (Padgett, Smith, Derejko, Henwood & Tiderington, 2013).

Photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1994), is a Photo Elicitation technique which was considered for use as a methodology, but ultimately rejected due to the level of time investment required of the participants. Photovoice goes beyond basic photo-elicitation interviews to engage the participant at every stage of data collection and analysis and is experiencing a current spike in research interest across a number of fields (e.g. Alam, McGregor & Houston, 2017; Chew & Lopez, 2017; Cornell & Kessi, 2017; Sackett et al, 2017). As an approach, it is heralded with many of the compliments given to Participatory Research methods, including facilitating community engagement (Given, Opryshko, Julien & Smith, 2011) and being an empowering method of gaining insight into the experiences of individuals in the community and their self-image (Goo Kuratini & Lai, 2011). During the course of this PhD, Photovoice has been used in a number of research projects within the CJS, to provide vulnerable populations with a voice for their stories, including both probation experiences (FitzGibbon & Healy, 2017) and women's experiences of the CJS (Fitzgibbon & Stengel, 2017). Photovoice has also been used to move



away from negative stereotypes of the homeless community and to empower and educate women in rural China (Wang et al, 1996; Wang & Burris, 1994). Beyond this, it is applauded for giving the participants greater control over the themes depicted in the results by involving them in the analysis. This can be seen as in keeping with core Participatory Research ideologies through the attempt to remove the power imbalance between the researcher and 'participant' over the final outputs of the research (Barton, 2015).

Whilst this approach to using visual methods in research has been commended, it is time consuming for the participant, the practicalities of which are not necessarily feasible within a forensic setting (as previously discussed). As outlined in Palibroda, Krieg, Murdock and Havelock's (2009) "Practical Guide to Photovoice", Photovoice involves a nine-step method from connecting and consulting with the community to social action and policy change. The beginning of the Photovoice project involves 14 sessions including learning about the camera, discussing the ethics and power issues involved in photography and how these can be overcome (Wang, 1999), incorporating local photographers, practice photography sessions and finally, photo data collection. This is followed by Photovoice group meetings, data collection and data analysis in stages five through seven. Several ethical issues arose when considering this approach, the main concerning disruption to Key Changes services and a possible negative impact on their outcomes. Any service users choosing to participate in the research may have reduced their time spent at Key Changes and their engagement in accessing tailored resettlement support. For the Key Changes Staff who chose to participate in the research, prolonged engagement with a Photovoice methodology would have diverted them away from their usual job role and could negatively impact the day to day running of the centre. The methodology also suggested additional general burdens, such as extra time occupying a room at Key Changes premises. Some of the stages of photovoice, such as lessons on using the camera, were considered to be patronising and, as such, to risk disengagement with the research. Based on these considerations a traditional photo-elicitation approach was adopted. This approach does not require the women to conduct the analysis of their own interview (an extremely time-consuming process). It also permitted an IPA analysis to be conducted by the researcher.

Creative methods, such as photo-elicitation, have been suggested as appropriate and valuable approaches to research with vulnerable people, allowing participants to increase their self-confidence in relation to the sharing of sensitive emotions or personal experiences, which they may previously have been inhibited from doing due to negative educational experiences or low literacy skills (McNeill et al., 2011). This technique is also said to allow the individual to develop new skills, such as self-reflection (Palibroda et al., 2009). Evidence suggests that photo-elicitation interviews with vulnerable populations elicit rich data through reducing the researcher-participant power imbalance, providing a point of communality between researcher and participant and encouraging greater reflection on experiences (Bareham, Locke & Yeadon-Lee, 2013, Clark-Ibanez, 2004; Rose, 2008). This finding is evident in comparison with interview-only methods e.g. Padgett et al, 2013 research with homeless men and women with severe mental health problems. This approach provides a creative method of expressing emotions and experiences for women who may not feel confident talking about sensitive or personal topics without this support. It was hoped that this method would be an empowering approach which may increase self-confidence and give a sense of control, ownership and pride to the vulnerable women involved. Photo-elicitation has been utilised in several projects, both nationally and internationally to look at perceptions of probation/statutory supervision. The Offender Supervision in Europe Project (2016) is the most recent and widespread of these and includes two visual methods pilots (Supervisable and Visualising Practice). The methodology was used in five countries to view experiences of supervision to make it 'visible' and better understood, the results of which are found in 'Picturing Probation'. This concluded that photo-elicitation is a useful tool beyond traditional interviews for communicating information about supervision environments (Bauwens, Bosker, Donker, Robinson, Sucic & Worrall, 2015). In order to encourage engagement with the research, an exhibition event was planned where any of the women at Key Changes would be able to (anonymously if preferred) display their photographs, with help available with writing extracts to communicate their meaning. However, due to the unexpected closure of the centre, this exhibition could not be held.

#### ***3.2.4.2 Measures of Personal Construct and Self-Identity***

This PhD research has not sought to focus primarily on the quantitative measurement of factors associated with desistance from crime since there are many complex and interrelating factors which are difficult to accurately

'measure'. Factors associated with reductions in crime are often attributed to multifaceted cognitive, emotional and practical changes, with the 'what works' literature (see section 2.1.2) largely adopting a top-down approach to investigate which interventions effectively reduce reoffending, and the desistance literature adopting a more bottom-up approach to explore what factors and processes in people's lives in context may facilitate personal change (for more information see section 2.1.3). However, an implicit aim of Key Changes was effective resettlement into the community, and this was addressed through their focus on practical, social and emotional issues associated with recidivism as highlighted in the 9 Pathways Framework (Home Office Reducing Re-Offending National Action Plan, 2004a; Women and Young People's Group, HM Prison Service, 2006) but also, although perhaps differently framed and understood, highlighted as significant in the desistance literature. It was therefore likely that many of these factors would be highlighted as important by participants in the research. However, as identity transformation and the rewriting of life narratives are becoming increasingly accepted as a central element of desistance (see section 2.1.3), the research also aimed to assess the salience of this for the women participating in the research.

Based on an agreement with the core principles of Personal Construct Psychology (discussed in section 2.2) it was intended that the participant's frame of reference and personal constructions of their world (specifically their experiences of release and resettlement) to be the focus of the interview. This aimed to encourage participants to discuss experiences concerning the underlying psychological mechanisms of change which are highlighted within the desistance literature including changes in self-view, narrative change, and changes in personal constructs (e.g. Maruna, 2004a; Van Ginneken, 2015). A selection of tools were utilised for this purpose, aiming to empower the women to share experiences, to reduce power imbalances between researcher and 'participant', and make research accessible and engaging for vulnerable and marginalised individuals (detailed in section 3.2.4). These methods also aimed to meet practical considerations, including requiring less time with participants in the research (in comparison to other participatory methods available).

The first of the tools employed to explore such internal, subjective changes was the Ideal 'Outcomes' Inventory (see Appendix 7), an adaptation of the "Ideal Self Inventory" (Norton, Morgan & Thomas, 1995) developed as a constructivist, pedagogical measure of self-esteem (Norton, 2001a, 2001b, 2009). The inventory was adapted for this PhD research to focus the on 'outcomes' participants viewed as being particularly important in their resettlement. This linked to PCP, as a tool to assist in generating a participant-led interview within the framework of participant-generated set of dichotomous outcomes (concerning for example, behaviours or practical and emotional considerations). The interview involved discussing the generation of these outcomes before ranking their importance according to the participant and ranking how they saw their current progress on each dichotomy. This generates mixed-methods data of quantifiable rankings along with qualitative discussion around the participants' choices of outcomes and experiences concerning these. The adaptation of the inventory therefore aimed to gain insight into the participants' self-view through the discussion of change over time as well as insight into what the women view as important in assisting their resettlement. The "Ideal Outcomes Inventory" was thus an un-validated adaptation of a tool, which has not previously been utilised, however, the original Ideal Self Inventory (ISI) and the Ideal \*\*\* Inventory have been used within several settings; largely for pedagogical research in Higher Education (Tilley & Norton, 1998; Mazuro et al, 2000), as well as in business management settings for training skills and analysis and identifying training needs (see Norton, 2011). The original ISI has been used in previous evaluative research (Brookes & Lemming, 2006) comprising of a sample of thirty female prisoners (20 from HMP Buckley Hall and 10 from HMP Styal), providing some relevance for the use of its adaptation with a similar population. These studies aimed to use the ISI to investigate what factors the prisoners perceived to be instrumental to their self-esteem before these factors could be measured and targeted. The ISI was used as a numeric measurement of self-esteem following 1:1 interviews which discussed perceived 'barriers' to resettlement, however the delivery of the inventory is criticised due to researcher influence being reflected in the scoring.

In practice, several methodological problems with use of the IOI in Service user interviews (discussed in section 3.3.5), led to their replacement with Repertory Grids (see Appendix 8), a development of Kelly's (1955) Role

Construct Repertory Test. The IOI required women to rank aspects of their experience, however for many of the women, their goals and barriers to resettlement were complex and interlinked, meaning many did not feel comfortable or able to rank their 'outcomes' as separate entities, or of differing importance, e.g. *"they're all equally important. Because you're working from one goal onto the next, onto the next, right the way through"* (A4 503-506 ). This resulted in a lack of quantifiable data, highlighting the IOI as an inappropriate tool to properly explore the research questions. This coincided with the decision that the participatory tools included ought to be simply tools to encourage engagement and participant comfort within the interview, with the qualitative comments being the key output. The IOI was thus replaced with Repertory Grids, mixed-methods, structured interview tool designed to measure the relationships between constructs using an idiographic approach to gaining insight into an individual's world view (Houston, 1998). The grids were initially excluded from the research for their time-consuming nature, meaning that they did not provide participants with a significantly shorter alternative form of engagement in the research to the Photo Elicitation methodology, a key consideration in early research planning. However, following the results of Service user interviews, the grids were included in the research as a measure of personal construct and self-identity, which were highlighted as important Master themes within the analysis. They were selected due to their sensitivity to subtle changes in specific relationships and cognitions (which may be difficult to detect in forensic populations) compared to standardised questionnaire measures (Mason, 2008; Shorts, 1985).

Repertory grids have many different formats to meet differing purposes, including rating grids; implications grids and bi-polar impgrids; non-verbal grids and qualitative grids (Fransella, Bell & Bannister, 2004). Delivery need not be standardised (Davis & Cunningham, 1985) and adaptations of the original grid have been found to maintain good reliability and validity (Winter, 1992). The four component parts of the repertory grid are: the (research) topic, elements (examples of the topic, which usually take the form of people), constructs, and ratings. Constructs can be elicited by the participant, using the elements, an approach which best adheres to core components of PCP (Adams-Webber, 2003) or they can be supplied by the researcher for greater statistical comparison between cases; (Tan & Hunter, 2002) or be a combination of both. This latter approach ensures that information is focused on

aspects which are salient to the participant yet also allows for comparisons of opinions on existing theoretical items (Mason, 2008). In this PhD research, elements were used to generate constructs which are usually bi-polar concepts which fill the far right and far left columns of the grid (see Appendix 8). The research utilised the common procedure of presenting combinations of three 'elements', with participant being asked how two of these are similar, yet different to the third. For example, three 'elements' might be "me now," "ideal me," "me before arrest," and the participant might say "me now and my ideal me are similar in that we have better self-confidence than I did before my arrest". This would lead to 'high self-confidence' and 'low self-confidence' being added to the grid as constructs. When combinations of elements have produced around 11-13 constructs, or no more can be generated and the participant, then ranks how they view each 'person' detailed in an element to be on a 1-7 Likert scale (where 1 represents the construct in the left-hand column, and 7 is the construct in the right-hand column). For example, they would be asked "where would you rank 'me now' on a scale where 1 is low in self-confidence and 7 is high in self-confidence"; "where would you rank 'me before me arrest' on a scale where 1 is low in self-confidence and 7 is high in self-confidence". Discussion around the selection of constructs chosen and rankings assigned provides the qualitative data (analysed using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis discussed below. This approach results in mixed-methods data which provides insight into a participant's self-view, both in relation to others (for example measuring how different 'elements' correlate to 'self now') and changes in their self-view over time.

The grids have been used in a variety of ways in research e.g. to measure treatment change (McNair, Woodrow & Hare, 2015; Böker et al 2000), but with limited application in forensic settings. It has, however, been utilised for providing insight into cognitions and to measure psychological change and treatment efficacy in offenders (e.g. Blagden, Winder, Gregson & Throne, 2014; Horley, 2008; Mason, 2003, 2008). The ability to identify underlying patterns of maladaptive cognitions and the ability to measure small changes in these has benefits in both research and practice (Leach, Freshwater, Aldridge & Sunderland, 2001). For this PhD research, the repertory grids were designed and analysed in Idiogrid (Grice, 2001). Supervision was given by PhD supervisors

with experience of qualitative data analysis, and the researcher joined an IPA research group for additional support.

### **3.2.5 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)**

Broadly speaking, phenomenology refers to the philosophical study of conscious experience and existence (sensory, cognitive and emotional), although the field also includes study of the semi-conscious and of unconscious activity. Whilst the focal point of this PhD research is the conscious experiences of those participating in the research, it is likely that relevant literature used when discussing these may involve semi-conscious or unconscious processes. IPA (see Smith, 2009 for a review) is grounded in hermeneutic (or existential) epistemology and acknowledges that observations are always made situationally. IPA was chosen as the most appropriate form of analysis for this PhD research, as it aims to explore the lived experiences of the participants, and the meanings these hold for that individual within a broader research framework. IPA takes an idiographic approach to analysis, looking at meaning-making at the individual participant level, emphasising the role of context; as such, it has an Interpretative (hermeneutic) phenomenological epistemology. This approach does not see all accounts as truths, but as attempts at meaning-making in human experience, where self-deception is prevalent (Churchill, 2000).

The two stage "double hermeneutic" approach to analysis is essential in both 'giving voice' to the participant and in 'making sense' of that material (Larkin & Thompson, 2012), as it attempts to tap into the participant's natural proclivity for self-reflection. It recognises the importance of experiential knowledge and attempts to ensure that the approach is participant led; providing an interpretation of the data, grounded in the participant's account, but also allowing the researcher to draw upon relevant psychological theories. This interpretation allows for necessary self-reflection and self-interpretation, acknowledging the researcher's conceptions and their role within the research and the findings, and so can be seen to be a product of joint reflection of both the participant and the researcher (Smith, Flowers & Osborn, 1997). Despite being heralded as an easily accessible qualitative approach, finding the balance between these two elements is difficult and is best overcome in the context of supervision and peer support (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). Based on this, the write-up of the analysis for this thesis was closely

reviewed by the supervisory team and additional steps were taken to further immerse myself in the current research by joining an online IPA research interest group, through which access to philosophical and practice-related debate, current journal articles, and discussions about wider issues within this research framework were gained. It is argued that the actual process of writing up an IPA involves a triple hermeneutic approach due to the "consideration" which ought to be given to the reader of the research (Smith, 2010: 187). Smith (2010) claims that this highlights the importance of this third hermeneutic loop when organising themes and narratives in research, where the focus is on making take-away points clear, including emerging themes and implications for real-world practice.

IPA was considered to be the most appropriate form of analysis for this research as it complements integrative desistance theories (see section 2.1.3) which emphasise the importance of understanding the offender's "phenomenology of desistance" (Maruna, 2001, p.32, p32). This integration of offender narratives allows exploration of subjective experience, perspective and meaning-making around personal and structural factors influencing these women's resettlement into the community. An IPA approach provides a level of critique introduced by the 'Interpretative' approach. This allowed relevant theories to be applied to accounts of experiences; for example, a woman might report everything being 'fine' several times throughout her story. Using IPA here may allow discussion of theories of resilience and coping, or even theories of self-deception, highlighting the importance of context of the individual narrative. Though there is no single definitive approach to conducting IPA (Smith & Osborn, 2007), the book "Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research" (Smith, Larkin & Flowers, 2009) was used to guide the analysis. This has been praised as being the closest thing to "having an experienced qualitative researcher guide you through the process of doing qualitative research in the classroom" (Clarke, 2010, p.57). It outlines the approach's theoretical standpoint and provides detailed discussions of planning, conducting and writing up an IPA study, highlighting in-depth semi-structured interviews as the best method for IPA for the detailed reflective accounts generated by the participants. It stresses that there is no single 'method' to conducting IPA, but that it typically involves an iterative inductive cycle (Smith, 2007). This approach is subjective, but "dialogical, systematic and rigorous" (pg80), allowing the reader to reflect



upon this. The authors provide a unidirectional six step guide to conducting IPA, four stages for individual case analysis, and a further two to look for patterns across cases.

#### ***3.2.5.1 Individual Case Analysis***

Each transcript or audio file was first analysed in depth individually, following the steps outlined by Smith et al (2009). The first step involved re-reading the transcripts and re-listening to audio files, noting initial observations. The grid format (incorporating additional columns for comments alongside the transcript) allowed notes on initial thoughts to be followed by comprehensive probing comments on semantic, linguistic and conceptual aspects of the data, which allowed links to be formed with relevant literature. Stage three involved the development of emergent themes from the detailed notes made. These were listed and connections across themes were clustered through a range of approaches (abstraction, contextualisation, polarisation etc.) to create superordinate themes. The forming of superordinate themes was visualised and manipulated using post-it notes during the analysis for initial interviews and using NVIVO to complete the analysis for later interviews with peer mentors. The move to using NVIVO aimed to provide a greater level of transparency, with the rigorous nature of the data analysis evident in NVIVO outputs, showing the cycles of coding present (Bazeley, 2006). Using NVIVO also enabled analysis of the interview audio files to take place without transcription. This allowed for greater consideration of the context of the interview as well as my positioning and bias as interviewer, through use of memos, annotations and the ability to include links to relevant literature and fully integrated datasets (e.g. links to repertory grids).

#### ***3.2.5.2 Cross Case Analysis***

The final two stages of IPA (Smith et al, 2009) involve cross-case analysis to produce master themes. Stage five involved conducting the above stages of analysis on all transcripts or audio files. The final stage then involved looking at patterns that occurred across cases, clustering superordinate themes based on shared higher order concepts. Unique qualities from individual participants' interviews are also highlighted within the write-up to maintain the idiographic nature of IPA and to ensure that the varying experiences of the service users are represented in the write-up of the findings. (For a table of master themes and related superordinate themes see

Appendix 10 for findings relating to experiences of offending, incarceration and release and Appendix 11 for findings relating to experiences of mentoring and generative activity).

### **3.3 Methods**

#### **3.3.1 Sample**

A total of eleven women participated in the research, all of whom had experiences of incarceration and release. Of these participants, eight were current service users at Key Changes at the time of the research and three were peer mentor staff members. Attrition (which included failing to show up for arranged interviews, leaving the service before a scheduled interview date, and being recalled to prison) meant that a further six women, who had taken photographs and intended to participate in an interview, did not ultimately participate in the research. Some attrition was attributed to the period of unrest that these women may have been experiencing on navigating their release and new lives in the community, whilst others did not participate due to moving out of the area before their interview or because of recall to prison. Nine service-users initially participated in the research. The comments from one participant were removed from the analysis, as it transpired that she had accessed the women's centre, not for resettlement support, but as an isolated individual in the community. Of the eight interviews analysed, four of the participants had taken part in an IOI interview, and four had participated in a photo-elicitation interview. The three peer mentors all volunteered to participate in Photo Elicitation interviews, with two of these women then going on to participate in repertory grid interviews.

##### ***3.3.1.1 Sample reflections***

No demographic information was asked of the participants within the research in a conscious decision to increase anonymity of the women, who may be easily identified by such information within a small service. From our discussions it is evident that these women are broadly representative of the female prison population in terms of factors such as index offence type and age. Questions around the typicality of the sample are worth reflecting upon here. It is likely that the women broadly may be thought to have less 'chaotic' lifestyles than women who chose not to engage with the service or who may have dropped out from engaging with mentoring, who may be more

representative of the 'unsafe' or 'dislocated' lives often experienced by women in the criminal justice system (Corston, 2007). The research can therefore be considered limited in failing to incorporate the experience of women matching this profile. The women who participated in the research discussed many issues faced both pre-offence and post-release, including lacking housing and employment, as well as histories of, and/ or current struggles with abusive relationships and substance misuse; issues which are prevalent and representative of the female estate as well as women accessing mentoring support (e.g. Brown & Ross 2010a; Mulholland et al. 2016; Trotter, 2011). It is also worth noting that it can be very difficult to gain or maintain contact with women who choose not to engage with services post-release and that several of the women who participated did cease to engage at a later date. Methods of reaching these women at an earlier date, including pre-release, will be considered in future research as these women's opinions are important when assessing the utility of mentoring support. Three peer mentors participated in the research, representative of the small numbers of peer mentoring staff present.

It is worth noting that although some of the (very limited) use of Repertory Grids in forensic psychology research has involved larger samples than available for this PhD (e.g. Gunn, Watson & Gristwood, 1976; Heather, 1979; Miller & Treacher, 1981; Norris, 1977), all have utilised the RGs as a comparative tool, comparing grouped respondents on set constructs. Several studies have utilised repertory grids with smaller samples: Blagden et al (2007) used case study format to explore ten sexual offender's constructs; Lockhart (1979) sampled two boys and Smith (1990) and Smith, Hartley and Stewart (1978) both used single participant case studies. As the RGs were utilised as a participatory research tool, to encourage involvement and personal constructs, rather than a comparative tool, concerns around ratios of participants to variables (e.g. Brace, Kemp & Snelgar, 2012) were not considered relevant, with discussion around the constructs being the main focus of the analysis.

These sample sizes are in keeping with the requirements of IPA, which favours smaller participant numbers (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) and are respectable considering the small number of service users and peer mentors at Key Changes, as well as the high level of attrition experienced. Within the desistance literature, there

have been a number of studies utilising qualitative research, including narrative interviews, in-depth interviews and case studies, all with comparatively smaller sample sizes than those involved in large scale quantitative studies. The qualitative approach has been praised for allowing better context and insight into narrative, allowing greater representation of participants stories (Ferraro, 2006; Richie, 1996). The in-depth approach taken allows exploration of individual meaning making (Silverman, 2011), key to greater understanding of the underlying mechanisms of change within desistance from crime (Maruna, 2001).

### **3.3.2 Data Saturation**

Data Saturation is a key focus within qualitative and mixed-methods research, the point where data collection can cease after no new relevant information emerges over numerous additional interviews. As Saumure and Given (2008) note, this occurs when *"the theory appears to be robust, with no gaps or unexplained phenomena"* (p.195). However, conducting this research and contemplating the nature of subjective experience and personal constructs has caused me to question the notion and validity of the concept of data saturation. There are numerous problems with this approach. Even if over 100 additional interviews, no new relevant information emerged, it is possible that the next participant will have had differing experiences or insight critical to developing understanding and knowledge in this field, which is many years away from being fully explained and appropriately responded to. This is especially likely when considering its constantly shifting political and practice landscape, the instability of support service contracts and resources and Key Changes' status as a developing service within this. An additional consideration here was the sample size available within Key Changes. Whilst already sampling from a developing service (with new referrals and women being remanded into custody), sampling was hindered by high levels of attrition typical within this type of research, meaning that at least 6 women took photographs but did not participate in an interview. Numerous women engaged in informal discussions with me on the Key Changes premises, discussing their experiences of the Criminal Justice System, domestic violence, drug and alcohol dependency but also chose not to participate.

Additionally, IPA requires a homogenous group. This is difficult to define and there are obvious issues with this more broadly. Demographic information was not collected due to this making the participants identifiable within a small and developing service and information about offence histories could not be verified and may not have been reliable due to lack of access to case files. The women who participated varied in all demographic factors, including age and ethnicity, had served sentences of varying lengths for differing offences over (at least) two different prisons which reflects the variation of individuals within the prison estate. All were at different points post-conviction. It is evident that these women are not a homogenous group. The data meets the requirement for homogeneity only in that the women participating all had a criminal record or ongoing contact with the CJS, accessed or worked at Key Changes and identified as female. It was the idiographic nature of IPA which was deemed important in acknowledging the range of experiences present allowing continued links to relevant literature and theory. Whilst a homogenous sample is 'desirable' within IPA, this was not in keeping with the research question, which aimed to explore women's experiences of resettlement more broadly, rather than looking at this within specific subgroups of women based on offence types / age etc. Such a purposive sample would have limited participant numbers and understanding. Furthermore, the researcher firmly believes that there is a considerable issue with the current reductionist one-size-fits-all approach taken within the CJS.

### **3.3.3 Recruitment**

All participants (both peer mentors and service-users) were recruited from Key Changes on a voluntary basis via opportunity sampling. The research was advertised through posters displayed in the Key Changes building and interviews were scheduled at the participant's convenience during working hours on Key Changes premises. This aimed to reduce any disruption to their usual schedule (i.e. to ensure the research did not compromise the efficacy of the service). When initially recruiting service users, a volunteer spokesperson was approached to communicate basic details of the research to those who were considering participating and to answer any questions about research from other service users in informal settings. This aimed to reduce the potential influence of peer mentor involvement on participation, as well as reduce the burden of the research on Key Changes services. It also aimed to reach as many service users as possible, in consideration of small numbers of service users accessing the service

at the time of the research and high attrition rates found in offending populations. However, problems with sampling with this approach meant that this was discontinued early on, with the research being advertised through posters and any questions about the research answered by myself in informal conversations within my regular attendance at Key Changes.

### **3.3.4 Inclusion criteria**

Whilst the literature focusing on women in the CJS is extremely light on the ground, it is not uncommon for these few studies to exclude vast proportions of women from the research in a drive to achieve a homogenous sample. As the research aimed to explore women's experiences of supported resettlement at Key Changes, the research was open to all women accessing or providing peer mentoring resettlement support. All interviews took place during office hours on Key Changes premises, and a member of staff who was responsible for safeguarding was present in the building at the time of the interviews. Ethical considerations (see section 3.5) of the research were discussed with all participants prior to their engagement in interviews.

### **3.3.5 Methodological developments**

The research plan for this PhD changed significantly over the course of four years in response to a number of methodological, practical and theoretical considerations, moving from a quantitative, top-down, evaluation within a risk-based framework to a mixed-method, bottom up, exploration of the resettlement and desistance experiences of women. It was, perhaps most importantly, evident that evaluations of mentoring initiatives for women in the CJS needed to first be informed by better understanding of the underlying mechanisms of change in women's desistance, and of the aspects of mentoring relationships that were particularly valuable and supportive within this process. Changes also aimed to improve the methodologies used and to promote participant engagement.

Originally, a three-stage, mixed-methods evaluation of the mentoring service at Key Changes, with matched control groups and input from employers of ex-offenders, was planned. This aimed to add to the limited mentoring literature criticised for focusing on risk-based factors outlined within the 9 Pathways model and thus failing to base measures of efficacy within the service user's frame of reference (for a critique, please refer to sections

2.1.2.1 and 2.1.3). It also aimed to respond to the main criticism of mentoring research- the lack of comparison studies and 'weak' methodologies (see section 1.3 for overview). However, it became apparent that it would not be possible to sample sufficient numbers of service users and members of a comparison group for a quantitative evaluation, even over the shortest timeframe possible of three months. An a-priori G-Power analysis (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) indicated that minimum sample sizes required for basic independent t-tests were between 35 per group (for a large effect size of 0.8) and 88 per group (for a medium effect size of 0.5 - approximate estimates due to a lack of studies and statistics concerning mentoring comparison groups). In context, limited numbers of service-users can access Key Changes at any one time (e.g. a maximum of 30 women for up to two years under the TR contract; before which numbers were low due to the service being in its infancy). In addition, a high attrition rate was expected in the comparison group (women leaving prison without any Third Sector support), as this group of ex-offenders is often difficult to sample and maintain contact with post-release.

#### ***3.3.5.1 Changes to Methods***

The Ideal Outcomes Inventory (IOI) had failed to work as a quantitative measure as many participants struggled to rank their 'outcomes' as separate entities, or of differing importance. Following a number of technical issues with camera use, several changes were implemented, including the introduction of the use of search engines to produce photographs as well as more comprehensive information on camera use being provided. During this initial stage of the research several unexpected issues arose (e.g. not having wound the cameras on meaning a lack of photos to discuss, poor attendance rates, aggressive or disinterested attitudes) which led me to reflect on my interviewing style, the methodology and the recruitment process. The steps taken to overcoming these factors, as well as some of the more general issues with working with this sample are interesting from a research standpoint and feedback into my own personal learning curve. The photos incorporated into the research were used as a tool to support and generate conversation and were not themselves the focus of the analysis. This is perhaps a missed opportunity, where research suggests that the range of meanings theorised by viewers is an additional approach to exploring the social and cultural perceptions and understandings of others (Rose, 2011) in order to gain a multi-layered understanding of a phenomenon (Fitzgibbon & Healy, 2017). Research has shown a positive skew in focus photo choice/taking, with a lack of inclusion of negative images or topics (Padgett et al., 2013), this was not something

which was consistent within these findings, where the women included a number of photos to depict negative aspects of their incarceration and release. This was more evident within Peer mentor interviews, where the women had better engaged with and understood the purpose of the cameras.

### **3.3.6 Procedural Information**

#### ***3.3.6.1 Service User Interviews***

Participation in the research was open to all women accessing peer mentoring resettlement support at Key Changes. These women could self-refer or were referred through agencies (including probation). Women who were accessing the women's centre services alone (and not resettlement support) were not eligible to participate. This was due to their lack of experiential knowledge about resettlement back into the community following incarceration. There were no other exclusion criteria. Participants could choose their mode of participation, either an interview using a personal construct tool (the Ideal Outcomes Inventory), or one using Photo Elicitation, and in some instances both tools were used as prompts for deeper exploration. The women could choose whether to participate in a 1:1 interview with the researcher, or a group interview with other service users. In the end, there was only one group interview of comprising two service users (denoted A7 within Chapters 4 and 5); all other interviews took place on a 1:1 basis. Interviews lasted between 30 and 75 minutes and took place at the Key Changes building at a time and date of the participants choosing. Participants were read the information sheet and consent forms and two voice recorders were used to record each interview, to ensure accuracy in transcription. Participants were debriefed following the interview and had access to a booklet of helpline information and their peer mentor if they had experienced any distress (for materials, see Appendix 3 & 4).

Several of the women who had opted to participate in photo elicitation interviews experienced problems with use of the disposable cameras (including not winding the camera on between takes). This meant that few women were able to bring photographs along to the interviews. In these instances, the women had the option of rearranging the interview and recapturing the images or going ahead in the arranged slot. All of these women chose the second



option, due to the time considerations of participating. To ensure that the interview which took place was service user led and grounded in the discussion of their experiences, I spent some time with the participants before the interview to create a list of things that the women had intended to take photographs of. This then became the focus of the interview.

It was deemed inappropriate by the National Offender Management Service and Sheffield Hallam University ethics committees to give the women the funds to have photographs developed themselves, although this approach would have allowed the women to review and select their photographs without the researcher's involvement. The committee's decision related to several issues, including high prevalence of drug and alcohol addictions within this population. Instead, a method of pre-payment for photo development at a local store was used as a safeguard, and where women did not wish to develop the photographs themselves, the researcher took these cameras for development, asking for the photographs to be placed into a sealed envelope by the technician.

#### ***3.3.6.2 Peer Mentor Interviews***

Key Changes peer mentors were also invited to participate in the research and the research was open to those with any peer-mentoring role (voluntary or contracted in nature). Women were invited to participate in their choice of two interviews, with the option of taking part in both. One interview utilised Photo Elicitation and the other, Repertory Grids (replacing the IOI as a measure of personal construct).

All interviews took place on a 1:1 basis due to staffing considerations. Interviews (across both formats) lasted between 60 and 120 minutes, with additional time spent discussing the methodology in advance of the interview.

All interviews took place at the Key Changes building at a time and date of the participants choosing. Participants were read the information sheet and consent forms and two voice recorders were used to record each interview, to ensure accuracy in transcription. Participants were debriefed following the interview and had access to a booklet of helpline information if they had experienced any distress (for materials, see Appendix 5 & 6).

##### ***3.3.6.2.1 Photo Elicitation Interviews***

Interviews with peer mentors allowed the opportunity to develop the photo elicitation interview methods, where there had been some limitations in service user interviews, particularly around camera use. These interviews discussed the focus of the photographs with women in greater detail and gave more information on camera use and development. As within service user interviews, the peer mentors had the opportunity to develop their own photographs through pre-paid envelopes. However, the study moved away from focusing on participant generated photographs (e.g. Joliffe & Bottorff, 2007) to suggest alternate ways of generating the images, including the use of search engines, mobile telephones and old photographs (e.g. Jordan, Adams, Pawley, & Radcliffe; 2009). This aimed to make the research more accessible and less time consuming for the participants.

#### ***3.3.6.2.2 Repertory Grid Interviews***

Repertory Grids were utilised with the specific aim of exploring whether the women showed any identity shifts over the course of their resettlement. A personal construct approach generally explores the ways in which the participants construe themselves, focusing on any differences and similarities between how the participant construes different versions of their 'self', often over different points in time. This also related to the desistance literature which highlights pro-social identity shifts as being particularly important for female offenders (discussed in section 2.1.3). The Repertory Grid technique also allowed the comparison of the construction of the different versions of the self to other persons of interest, such as traditionally pro-social or anti-social individual roles (e.g. to police), or to people representing a specific line of scientific enquiry (e.g. offence deniers; Blagden et al, 2014). In this study, thirteen elements were included. These were adapted from Blagden, Winder, Gregson and Thorne's (2014) study, to focus more specifically on individuals relevant to the staff at Key Changes. As such the following elements were adopted from Blagden et al's (2014) study:

- Alleged victim
- Police officer
- Person you don't like
- Friend
- Spouse / previous partner

- Close family member
- Me now
- Me before arrest
- Me as I'd like to be

The three 'selves' included in Kelly's (1955) original research were included in this study to look into identity shift and aspirations. An additional version of the self was included following findings in Service user interviews relating to experiences of stigma, aiming to explore these women's perceptions of this in more depth.

- Me as others see me

The remaining elements included colleagues and service users who the participants would be working alongside or mentoring:

- Probation officer
- Key Changes peer mentor
- Key Changes service user

Two women completed repertory grids, which were administered and analysed using a computer and IDIOGRID software (Grice, 2002). Both women engaged with the task well and provided a range of constructs relevant to the topic. The two grids have been incorporated within Chapter 4, to support discussion of relevant findings. To provide additional context, relevant supporting quotes from the audio recording have been included. It is worth noting that repertory grids can also be completed in written format if required (Easterbry-Smith, 1980) and data can be analysed using a range of statistical programmes, including SPSS.

### **3.4 Data Analysis Procedures**

Interview recordings were either transcribed (verbatim) by the researcher (Service user interviews) or the audio inputted into NVIVO (Peer mentor interviews). All were analysed using IPA (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009 - see section 3.2.5). Within IOI interviews, discussion around the dichotomous characteristics given (for example "getting my self-confidence back" v "being frightened to go out") were the sole focus of the analysis. Repertory

grids were analysed using Idiogrid (Grice, 2001) where rankings chosen by the participant were analysed through several statistical tests (such as correlations, polarity analyses and principle component analyses- choosing the most appropriate approach to the amount of data and number of participants). A range of guiding materials were used to ensure the appropriate analysis of the grids, including the IDIOGRID Idiographic Analysis with Repertory Grids manual (Grice, 2006), "The Easy Guide to Repertory Grids" (Jankiwicz, 2004), "Frames and Cages: the repertory grid approach to human understanding"(Ryle, 1975), and) "A Manual for Repertory Grid Technique" (Fransella & Bell, 2004). Copies of photos taken were scanned and are included within the results (Chapters 4-5) to provide additional context.

### **3.4.1 Sensitivity and Rigour**

The analytic process was informed by guidelines for good qualitative research (Yardley, 2000; Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis and Dillon, 2003). Smith et al (2009) recommend the Yardley guidelines for IPA research, which outline four broad principles: sensitivity to context; commitment and rigour; transparency and coherence; and impact and importance.

#### ***3.4.1.1 Sensitivity to Context***

Sensitivity to context details the decisions in adopting IPA as a methodology, demonstrating awareness of the existing theory and literature, and the socio-cultural setting of the study and participants (Yardley, 1999). I have attempted to meet these requirements through discussion of theory in Chapter two, through discussion of sampling, study context and ethical considerations, as well as the consideration of factors important in the adoption of IPA. For example, whilst I intended for participants' experiences to lead the research, I did not wish to give a voice to radical views (such as racism, homophobia etc.) or for detrimental views (such as offence supportive distortions), to go unchecked within the write up. IPA allows for scrutiny of such opinions in line with relevant literature. Additionally, many approaches to participatory research encourage the participant to become the 'co-researcher', conducting the analysis of their own interview. Due to the significant time demands of this approach, and the ethical considerations associated with this; IPA was adopted to allow greater depth to the

analysis. Most significantly, I have attempted sensitivity to context of the potentially vulnerable and marginalised sample, utilising empowered participatory methods to support the interviews in following a participant led dialogue.

#### ***3.4.1.2 Commitment and Rigour***

Yardley (1999) describes commitment as thorough engagement with the participant -ensuring they are comfortable and attentive within the interview, as well as to the analysis, where research competence and skill in the method can be developed through engagement and rigour. Rigour refers to the level of detail paid to all aspects of the study and the depth and breadth of systematic analysis; from sampling, to interview skill etc. I have demonstrated both commitment and rigour throughout my research, seen in the stages of analysis. As a newcomer to qualitative research and IPA, I sought to develop my skills through the subscription to qualitative research methods modules, through extensive reading on the topic and through joining an online IPA group. Additionally, my themes and analytical process were discussed at length with supervisors experienced in qualitative research.

#### ***3.5.1.3 Transparency and Coherence***

Transparency refers to the clarity of methodological considerations and procedural information in the write up, whilst clarity refers to the coherence and logic in arguments, the themes chosen, and the ‘fit’ of the research with the principles of IPA. The finding and analysis trail were discussed and reviewed by supervisors, with chapters being worked and reworked accordingly. The role of reflexivity in increasing transparency is also discussed by Yardley and this is considered in section 3.4.2.

#### ***3.4.1.4 Impact and Importance***

The last of Yardley’s principles for good qualitative research are: Impact and Importance, which relates to the practical and theoretical value the research brings. Consideration of these issues is included in the discussion chapter alongside consideration of key findings (see chapters 6 & 7). Beyond this, the research has the potential social benefit of better understanding women’s experiences of resettlement, with possible implications for practice and policy as discussed in chapter 7.

### **3.4.2 Researcher Positionality**

Whilst I feel that it is important that the evidence base around ‘what works’ and desistance should of course inform the research, this research aims to ensure that the findings truly reflect the lived experiences of these women in the CJS, an under-researched population. There is debate around whether participatory methods go far enough towards giving marginalised vulnerable groups a true voice, in the sense of being distorted by the medium of the researcher in methodological and analytical decisions creating another power imbalance. However, reflexivity- reflecting on the impact of the researcher (Spencer et al. 2003; Yardley, 2000), can go some way in compensating for this. Qualitative research positions the researcher as the method of data collection, similar to instruments used in quantitative approaches. Therefore, it is expected that my own experiences (influenced by my gender, race, sexuality, religion, class etc.) may influence a range of research choices and my perspective in the analysis (see Bourke, 2014).

I am a white, heterosexual, cisgender female. I have not been incarcerated, although I have some research experience within the male prison estate, gained during my BSc (Hons) Psychology, MSc Forensic Psychology and throughout this PhD. I also have experience volunteering in youth justice, as well as experience volunteering for a crisis phoneline. This, along with knowledge of mental health problems, has led me to appreciate how these factors, and other support needs, can lead to isolation in the community and to cyclical offending behaviour. Due to the nature of forensic work and the multiple vulnerabilities of the service users, I expected difficulties with the ethical process (particularly when requesting incentives), and with attrition, especially when no incentives were offered. The ongoing issue with ethical bodies refusing the provision of incentives to participants in contact with the CJS is a serious one, which I have reflected upon in greater depth within section 3.6.2. Previous experience has helped me to adapt to these issues by viewing the participatory methods utilised as simply tools to support the interview process. My range of experience and work with staff in differing roles within the CJS has highlighted problems with the prison system, including a lack of standardised care during incarceration, and a lack of support on release and in the community. It appeared to me that a variety of programmes and services are running in England and Wales which are based on limited understanding of their efficacy and what elements of support or

personal change are responsible for any successes. This led to my interest in conducting qualitative research into the lived experiences of the process of resettlement, with the hope of further investigating elements of change which individuals believe have aided in their resettlement. As a woman, I am aware of the prevalence of sexism within today's society, with male as the norm and female as the 'other'. I feel that this is extremely evident within the CJS, where appropriate treatment of females often appears to be an afterthought. An issue gaining increasing interest by policy makers and activists alike. I was thus interested in gaining insight into the experiences and perspectives of women and (though it pains me to need to explicitly state this) have conducted the research and analysis through a feminist lens (see section 3.2.1), with the thought that this research and any follow up may have an impact on policy for equality of treatment of women within the CJS.

I was aware that my knowledge of certain aspects of the literature (such as those outlined within the Pathways Framework and Desistance literature) may come to influence the analysis. To try to minimise my own impact in the research, I intended for it to be service-user-led, with the interviews being largely unstructured. However, when conducting Service user interviews and focus groups I had a list of prompts (see Appendix 9) to keep discussion flowing or to get the conversation back 'on-track' to the research question. These prompts were informed by concepts of resettlement experiences and needs from the existing literature and asked whether and how each issue was linked to their previous offending behaviour, whether it was something they were receiving help from their mentor with and how they felt about that issue now. In practice, the prompts were largely unused as conversation was led by the service-user in different directions, in response, the prompts were not utilised within Peer mentor interviews. Certain contingencies had to be made to account for the novice nature of my experience with qualitative research, which may have impacted on the analysis. Close supervision with critical feedback on the procedures and outcomes, membership to an online IPA group, and access to qualitative research modules were several ways in which this was attempted.

## **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

### **3.5.1 Ethical Approval**

Ethical approval for each study was obtained from both Sheffield Hallam University and the National Offender Management Service. For supporting documentation, see Appendix 1 & 2).

### **3.5.2 Conflicts of Interest**

The researcher and supervisory team at Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) had no contact with Key Changes and its staff or service users prior to the discussions involved in the planning of the PhD post. It was deemed that there were no conflicts of interest in conducting the research. I attended frequent informal meetings as well as events at the Key Changes premises with the organisation's director, during which service-users and peer mentors were often present. This was intended to both immerse and familiarise myself with Key Changes to understand the way in which the centre was run, and to be accessible to service users who may have had questions about the research.

### **3.5.3 Participant Vulnerability**

The research involved women who may be, or have once been, considered vulnerable under the 'Agreed Definition of Vulnerable Participants and Sensitive Topics' (British Psychological Society, 2004). Many service users were likely to be under the supervision of the NPS or South Yorkshire CRC. It was possible that the women may have had a learning/communication difficulty or mental health problem and it was possible that personal and sensitive topics would arise in the interviews, which may have caused distress. Interviews may have touched upon sensitive topics, able to cause embarrassment or discomfort, relate to personal information, illegal activity (for example the discussion of events leading to their incarceration) or traumatic incidences (such as experiences of domestic violence). However, each stage of the research was designed to be led by the participant, to ensure that they could choose which experiences or opinions they wished to share with the researcher. Participation was



voluntary, and participants made fully aware of this. The researcher was cleared by a DBS check and all research was conducted within the ethical guidelines put forward by the BPS and SHU.

### **3.5.4 Informed Consent and Debriefing**

Materials, including information sheets, consent forms, debrief sheets and a range of helpline details were created for each stage of the research and underwent the appropriate National Offender Management Service (NOMS) and Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) approval processes (See Appendix 1 & 2). This was to ensure that participants fully understood the nature of the research, their right to withdraw, and sources of support if necessary.

### **3.5.5 Confidentiality and Anonymity**

Materials relating to the research (information sheets, consent forms and debriefs) detailed that the information they shared would not be confidential, however would be anonymised (by removal of identifying information). The materials stated that extracts from interviews would be quoted and copies of photographs would be used in conference presentations, the write-up of the results and publications. Any faces appearing in the photographs were blurred before any dissemination, to compensate for difficulties in gaining consent from the individuals photographed. The women were aware that these would be seen if they participated in a group interview rather than a 1:1 interview. Personal details of participants (given on consent forms) were confidential, although participants were made aware that this confidentiality would not be kept in the event of a disclosure of a safeguarding issue. It was intended that the women would have the opportunity to choose to display their photographs at an exhibition, to be held at Key Changes following the completion of the research. This was based on evidence that this increases participation and provides participants with a sense of ownership and pride (Harley, 2012; Wang & Burris, 1994). However, following the unexpected closure of the service, it was not possible to contact the women who had participated in the research and this exhibition unfortunately could not go ahead.

In the write up of findings a letter and number (E.g. A1= service user interview number 1. B1= peer mentor interview number one) identified participants in an attempt to preserve anonymity. The risks of being identified from quotes or topics discussed within their interview was discussed at length with all participants to ensure that they were happy to take part in the research. Many participants expressed a direct wish to be identified by name and position at Key Changes, both before and after their interviews. This was not possible under the ethical approval gained and I consider it a shame that research ethics bodies have deemed women incapable of making these decisions for themselves based solely on their label of 'offender'.

### **3.5.6 Disclosures**

All study materials reiterated safeguarding procedures and the events in which confidentiality would be broken. This included examples such as disclosures of an intent to harm or kill themselves or another, or an intent to commit a crime. The materials outlined that, in these circumstances, their details would be passed onto a named member of staff responsible for safeguarding procedures at Key Changes or to the relevant authorities. Disclosures concerning details about a past crime which they reported not having been prosecuted for were treated as historic offences due to a lack of access to case files.

### **3.5.7 Burden**

The main burden on participants was the time involved in the research. An interview or focus group could last up to two hours and during this time the participant would not be working (if a peer mentor) or engaging in Key Changes activities or course (if a service-user). A named member of staff, responsible for safeguarding, needed to be in the building during interview sessions and the research required the use of an assessment room as well as staff and service-user time. These burdens and their implications were fully discussed with the director of Key Changes who was content with the proposed programme of research.

## **3.6 Research Reflections**

### **3.6.1 Participants' Wishes to be Identified**

One particular 'issue' which came up within the research was participant's wishes to be identified alongside their comments. This is a frustrating issue, where there appears to be very little middle ground. This has been discussed in depth in the online IPA yahoo group of which I am a member. It is no doubt very difficult to obtain full ethical approval (in both forensic and health care settings) without demonstrating commitment to providing full and complete confidentiality (or as close as is possible); however, it is easy to argue how this removal of choice from the participant could have a negative impact. It detracts from the goals of encouraging ownership over personal experiences (an explicit goal of Key Changes; but one also linked to improved psychological wellbeing, desistence, treatment efficacy etc.) and could encourage feelings of stigma, isolation or persecution by perpetuating the notion of their very stories of offending and being incarcerated as posing some level of 'risk'. For example, participants who have been highly engaged and personally invested in the research, who want the world to know their stories, these women may have also shared sensitive or highly personal information. Several were openly disappointed when requests to be named alongside comments were refused due to ethical considerations. This may inspire feelings of judgement and interfere with processes of re-writing narratives which may lead to positive future impact. There are indeed stories of cases where researchers have removed identifying information to such an extent that that final transcribed version of events is no longer recognisable to the participant. Additionally, this goes against the ethos of participatory research (where you do not 'own' the research solely due to your role as the researcher), removing the participant (or co-researcher's) control over the data and instead injecting a level of scientific detachment from them as an individual which is hardly 'participatory'. 'participatory'. The work around of including an intention within ethics submissions to post/email a copy of the transcript to participants after the interview has been suggested as a solution which is acceptable from a data protection point of view but also allows the participant to edit the script themselves and post on a personal blog, or work with an appropriate charity/ patient advocacy group to publicise their experience. In future research, this is something that I will certainly work to include.

### **3.6.2 Incentives and Gatekeepers**

I had intended to provide participants, who had spent between one and three hours engaging in multiple interviews, with a small gesture of thanks for their participation in the research and settled on vouchers as being the most appropriate format due to a number of practical and ethical considerations relating to cash or food-based compensations. 'Love to shop' vouchers were deemed more appropriate than say, Amazon vouchers (due to potential lack of access to computers, lack of credit/debit cards and possible address considerations) and to supermarket vouchers (due to varying distances to / lack of local stores). Love to shop vouchers cover a range of outlets and provide the opportunity for the individuals to spend the voucher on something they want or need at a store of their choice. PhD students and staff members at Sheffield Hallam University frequently use these vouchers as a way of thanking individuals for their participation in research projects. Whilst many journal articles have not detailed whether incentives were given, similar research with marginalised groups have offered cash (e.g. Padgett, Smith, Derejko, Henwood & Tiderington, 2013), there are infrequent examples of researchers providing credit to prisoner's commissary, or in several cases, the participant has been allowed to keep digital cameras after the research has finished. Since this research has provided only disposable cameras, this has not been feasible nor was it deemed appropriate or proportional compensation for the time investment participants put in.

Following a lengthy, nine-month long email correspondence with the National Offender Management Service ethics committee, the use of incentives (specifically high-street vouchers) was not permitted within the research. This dispute was eventually abandoned due to the delays caused to PhD progression, suggesting that this has doubtless been an issue for many other researchers, who have also lacked the necessary time to push for any change in status quo due to funding constraints. However, it is worth noting that justification for NOMS' standpoint largely centred on ignoring previous examples of these incentives in practice, whilst focusing on issues relating to perceived risk and current practice, without reference to a relevant risk assessment or argument of why these women's time should not be valued and proportionally compensated. This also applied to women who were no longer under probation or CRC supervision. The rarity of studies providing compensation to individuals with a criminal record highlights presence of institutionalised stigma, perpetuating the devaluation of those who have

been incarcerated, viewing offenders and ex-offenders as ‘sitting ducks’ for research, without any need to account for the burden on their time. Most importantly, this ignores the current resettlement agendas and the dialogue around second chances, instead suggesting that those who have had previous contact with the CJS should accept and ignore the fact that crime may pay, whilst they struggle to gain housing and employment, safe from the ‘risk’ associated with a £10 high street voucher.

### **3.6.3 Personal Development**

As a novice interviewer conducting her first interview-based research project, there were several problems with my interviewing style. These were painfully obvious at transcription and analysis stages of early Study 1 and included leading questions, and interruptions. At one point, I challenged a participant’s point of view, which was not necessarily appropriate within a research interview, though it did result in more clarification and depth of discussion. In hindsight, some practice interviewing in a pilot study may have been beneficial as I failed to follow up on some interesting comments during the first few interviews. However, I became more confident with this over time and was more able to manage planning ahead within the interview as well as responding to unexpected or interesting things within the interview. I changed what I was wearing to be more casual following one interview where I felt too formal and too distant from the service user who was not very open. A few times there was a ‘other people/ you wouldn’t understand’ othering, where the service user judged my experiences / knowledge of the CJS based on how I looked or came across. At times I missed terminology or slang or lacked clarity within my questions. I tried to be conscious of this within interviews and personally felt there was some improvement over time. I had not conducted unstructured interviews in the past and although I had some prompts, felt like there was a lot to keep track of. I enjoyed this as an interview approach though as I felt the service users brought up what they felt to be important and then a bit of discussion developed on this and brought up related issues. In terms of analysis, my first attempt at conducting an IPA was long-winded, first conducting grids as outlines by Smith Larkin and Flowers (2009), then using post-its to create mind-maps, then creating tables of Master Themes and related superordinate themes. Based on this and my need for structure, the use of NVIVO was implemented for the analysis for Peer mentor interviews, to ensure the same level of rigour in a more efficient

manner. I feel I have made considerable development as a qualitative and mixed-methods researcher over the course of the research process and view the process as an invaluable experience.

### **3.7 Summary**

The research utilised a participatory, mixed-methods approach, which was largely qualitative in nature to explore women's experiences of resettlement into the community following a prison sentence. A variety of participatory research methods were utilised within a developing methodology over the course of the research and included Photo Elicitation and repertory grids. This approach aimed to reduce power-imbalances between researcher and participant by ensuring interviews were service user led and generated idiographic, 'bottom-up up' data. The research sampled both service users and peer mentors at Key Changes, with later peer mentor interviews seeking to improve upon methodological flaws noted above. Participants were not deemed to be a homogenous group, and this reflects the reality of the female prison estate, however this does highlight an issue with the use of IPA within the analysis. Chapter 4 details the findings of interviews relating to offending imprisonment and resettlement, with Chapter 5 discussing findings relating to mentoring and generative activity. Findings are discussed in relation to literature and theory within each of these results chapters, before an overarching discussion of the research findings, limitations and reflections are covered in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 then details the practical, practice and theoretical implications of the research findings and discusses current ongoing and future research rationale.

## 4. EXPERIENCES OF OFFENDING, INCARCERATION AND RELEASE

### 4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter details the findings from participatory interviews with service users and peer mentors at Key Changes. The findings detailed relate to the exploration of the following research questions:

- What are women's experiences of offending, incarceration and release?
- What factors influence and support women's resettlement?

A total of eleven women participated in the research, eight service users and three peer mentors. The women could choose their mode of participatory interview; either a Photo Elicitation interview or an interview involving a measure of personal construct, either the 'Ideal Outcomes Inventory' (IOI- service user interviews) or repertory grids (later interviews with peer mentors). The Photo Elicitation interviews aimed to explore women's experiences of resettlement. Women were asked to photograph their experiences leading them to accessing or working at Key Changes. The repertory grid interviews aimed to explore whether the women demonstrated changes in self-view and identity shifts over specific periods around their incarceration. The women who participated chose which approach they felt comfortable participating in and the order in which these interviews took place. The interviews were unstructured and participant-led. For full detail of methods, see Chapter 3. Of the eight service users who participated, four took part in photo elicitation interviews and four in IOI interviews. All three peer mentors participated in a Photo Elicitation interview, following which, two of the women went on to participate in a Repertory Grid interview.

An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of the transcripts resulted in the identification of two Master Themes. These were as follows:

- Trauma, Power and Agency
- Stigma and Identity

Exploration of these themes and relating superordinate themes (See Table 1) provides the basis of this chapter, supported by verbatim extracts from the interviews with reference to relevant literature and theory. Reflecting the desistance research, the women’s narratives of their offending, imprisonment and release also highlighted the role and significance of capital, or lack thereof, and this will be explored in Chapter 5 as they often spoke about this in ways that related to their experiences of Key Changes and of peer mentoring.

Table 1: Visual representation of Master Themes and related Superordinate themes

Master Theme	Superordinate Themes
Trauma, Power and Agency	Pre-prison experiences, Sentencing and Preparedness
	Incarceration, Institutionalisation and Mental Health
	Release as a Secondary Trauma
Stigma and Identity	Self-view and reframing
	Impact of Stigma
	Peer support and Shared Identities

A coding table of these themes can be found in Appendix 10. Quotes from the data are used to support the themes derived from the data. Here, missing material is detailed by dots within brackets [...], and both added and removed information is shown within square brackets [to provide context] and in an attempt to remove identifying details [place/name]. Dotted lines at the beginning and ends of quotes indicate that the participant is talking before and after the chosen quotation. Participants have not been given pseudonyms as these may have given differing impressions of demographic factors, such as age and ethnicity. An additional consideration here was the inclusion of one intersex participant, where the assigning of a pseudonym may have made him identifiable. As such, in the write up of findings participants are referred to by a letter and number (E.g. A1= service user interview number one. B1= peer mentor interview number one) and the line numbers or audio times of that quote in an attempt to preserve anonymity. Where quotes are included from the repertory grid interview, these are annotated by ‘RG’ and their corresponding interview letter and number (e.g. RG B1). Due to the focus on identity change, these grids are



most applicable within section 4.3.2 ‘Identity and Stigma’, however other relevant conversations from these interviews are discussed where relevant throughout. Several photographs are incorporated within the write up of the findings, however problems with the use of the disposable cameras meant that several women opted to participate without any images and a list of the intended topics was used instead to support the participant in leading the interview (see section 3.3.6.1).

The women who participated in interviews discussed a range of experiences that reflect the multiple sources of disadvantage present within the female prison estate. It is important to note that whilst the write up of the findings discusses aspects of shared experiences, these women are not a homogenous group since they have differing combinations of needs, differing goals and priorities, and different experiences of the CJS and release into the community. On several occasions, participants discuss similar experiences and needs and in others discuss contrasting experiences or differing combinations or reactions to their experiences. I have attempted to demonstrate this within the write-up, however it is important to acknowledge that this is but one subjective interpretation of the data. It is noted that the quotes discussed within these themes do not necessarily reflect the opinions of all participants in the research or Key Changes more broadly and are instead viewed as snapshots of individual experiences and opinions on the given day. The topics discussed by these women are deeply personal and for some reflect long lasting trauma and ongoing struggles. However, it is recognised that the women participating may have focused on different topics or framed their stories differently under a different research question and with differing methodologies.

#### **4.2 Trauma, Power and Agency**

One important master theme within the data is that of women’s experiences of Trauma, pre-prison, during their incarceration and post release. These experiences related to their lack of power and agency across these settings, for example including experiences of domestic abuse and control, institutionalisation and a lack of opportunities post-release. For the majority of women who shared their stories, their journey to offending, experiences of

incarceration and their subsequent release represented a continuing cycle of difficulties. Women reported lacking the support networks and opportunities to support themselves in the community pre-prison and a lack of autonomy, perpetuated further by prison sentences. For a smaller number, prison represented a safe space an entrenched routine, a turning point for change and a loving community to be missed on release and a supportive community of non-judgemental equals, with a criminal lifestyle providing a wealth of opportunities to make a living in the community. For reading ease, this master theme is communicated by the discussion of its component superordinate themes (see Table 2). The impact of further lack of agency caused by the prison environment, alongside the imbalances, and often misuse, of power within relationships in the criminal justice can be seen to have a re-traumatising effect on the women, who discussed entering the system with complex vulnerabilities. These experiences are written-up below in relation to key points within these women’s journeys.

Table 2: Visual representation of Master Theme ‘Trauma, Power and Agency’, with related Superordinate themes

Master Theme	Superordinate Themes
Trauma, Power and Agency	Pre-prison experiences, Sentencing and Preparedness
	Incarceration, Institutionalisation and Mental Health
	Release as a Secondary Trauma

#### 4.2.1 Pre-prison Vulnerabilities, Sentencing and Preparedness

Many of the women who participated in the interviews described complex histories of trauma, abuse and victimisation. The women discussed entering the Criminal Justice System (CJS) having numerous vulnerabilities, including struggles with mental health, controlling relationships and a lack of autonomy, for example:

*“I felt that I was in a vulnerable kind of environment; a single parent, not having many people to lean on” (B2 3.00-3.21)*

The women discussed several of these vulnerabilities as directly relating to their offending behaviour. This included substance dependency (*“Previous sentences, I’ve just got outta jail, packed myself with drugs and just*

gone back [laughter]" (A3 544-545)) and problems with mental ill health, housing arrangements and debt ("I'd say 8/10 of them are committing crimes already, just to have enough money to eat" (A3 209-211). Two of the women discussed the role of abusive partners in their pre-prison lives and their offending behaviour, for example:

*"He slowly got to me, over the years, stopping me from going out, stopping me from going to work [...] heavy drinker, drinking from dinner time all night. More he drank worse he got with his mouth and everything. erm, he asked me to be his uncle's money saver so that I could pay his bills and things like that [...] and er he drew it out and kept it himself [...] and because he it were all in my name, it were me that got done. and he begged me and begged me saying don't, don't say it were me because I've already been in court three times for conning't social and not paying his tv licence and his brother, he's been in prison three times- which I didn't know. so he says you'll only get a slapped hand so I took the full blame and I didn't, I got a 12 months prison sentence."* (A5 343-359)

These quotes demonstrate the multiple complex needs experienced by these women, pre-incarceration, many of which influenced the women's sense of agency to enact change, related to mental health, and were issues that the women had to deal with during their incarceration and on their release.

Many of the participants discussed aspects of their offence, trial and sentencing as being particularly traumatic. Women discussed the shame of having witnesses to their trial, which was highlighted as an "embarrassing" (A1 105-108) event: "you don't want everyone there to see you when you're sent down" (A1 105-108). Trials and incarceration were said to worsen rifts in family relationships, which the literature suggests are likely to be already strained or broken (Morash, 2010). For some, the abrupt nature of their imprisonment when this was not an expected outcome of their trial was particularly traumatic: "I were taken there and er nobody even knew I were going. me mum and dad, me dad and everybody didn't even know I were up at court. next thing they knew I were in prison." (A4 325-327). Women's experiences of trial and sentencing are not frequently referred to within the existing literature, though this is something that many women have discussed, with focus on the lack of opportunity to make appropriate plans, particularly around childcare. This links to broader issues due to poor legal

counsel and to cuts in legal aid, meaning many women are unable to prepare pre-incarceration and highlights the criminal justice proceedings as being a secondary form of victimisation (e.g. Cooke, 2011; Jordan, 2011; Kelly, 2002, 2005).

Whilst one woman discussed keeping her trial a secret from family and friends, two others discussed the ‘media circus’ around their cases, ‘character assassination’, shame and stigma. The findings suggest that these women’s lack of agency was perpetuated and reinforced by the Criminal Justice System and authority figures at all levels, both prior to prison and post release. For example, one woman discussed the impact of receiving a prison sentence which she was not expecting – a theme astonishingly prevalent within discussions with women at the centre and one echoing the experiences discussed by service users. This resulted in a lack of practical arrangements for this eventuality, including a lack of childcare arrangements:

*“ My house was just taken, and my mum took my daughter, [...] I think that I would have preferred her to go somewhere else [...] my mum does have mental health issues and [...]I had quite a negative upbringing from her and I would have wanted to keep my daughter safe, and it is something I did initially try, but the authorities had the power and it, you know, they just said no, she’s staying with your mum. So, I didn't even have a choice about that as a mother. (B2*

*13:46-15:06)*

It is evident that her separation from her young child caused this woman a great deal of trauma, with the lack of choice over her care causing additional stress. Her experiences highlight not only the underlying issues with poor legal advice, but also the systemic removal of this woman’s rights and identity as a mother. The desistance literature highlights motherhood as being both a pivotal point in desistance (McNeill, 2003) and an available prosocial identity for women with individual agency (Stone, 2016), for whom familial relational support is particularly important (Valera et al, 2015; O’Brien & Young, 2006). This woman’s experience echoes literature which discusses the importance women put on maintaining bonds with their children and the resulting stress, anxiety and negative adjustment (Austin & Irwin, 2001).

Despite the stress of her trial and prison experiences and the shock of her sentence, one woman discussed her sentencing as being a relief, an end to a period of intense stress and turmoil, which allowed prison to be viewed as a positive first step toward reform:

*Court was very scary, I remember when the judge, he handed me my sentence, I actually physically felt the blood go from my head down to my feet. I thought I was going to collapse[...]. Then the journey from the court to [Prison] was an experience in itself, but that was quite a positive one for me because again that sense of relief, the unknown was now known. Everything was, all the anxiety, all the turmoil, the knots had just gone. It was erm, This was the, the next stage of my journey, mentally (B3 1:31-2:37)*

Aside from this highlighting the inappropriate legal advice given to women leading them to be ill-prepared for receiving a custodial sentence, this woman's positive view links to the idea of prison as being a possible turning point for change, providing a break away from current negative circumstances, and (in this rare case) the opportunity to gain real and effective support with underlying mental health problems linked to her offending behaviour. This is like the experience of one woman within Service user interviews and relates to Maruna and Toch, (2005) work on turning points, where this woman was offered effective support at a window in her life where she was willing to engage with the notion of change.

For one woman protesting her innocence, an unexpected guilty verdict alongside the prosecutions line of argument within her case provoked a long period of self-examination:

*"I did cross examine myself, I mean I was there at the crime and you know, there was all this big thing about denial and things like that. So I've cross examined every intention, I've punished myself and called myself a coward you know, but you know it is, sometimes I just. It made the prison harder you know [...] still years later I kept remembering things, well no! I went for help, I did this, I did that. Even now I do it and I think Gosh, am I still in denial, then I remember no, you were in psychological erm you know, what could you have done? Even though you did very*

*little you did try to do something and I think about my thought processes, so I cross examine myself and really torture myself and then you know, blame myself. But I just sometimes I thought I wished I were in prison for something I'd actually done, it would have made it easier, the time"*

*(B2 11:17-12:39)*

This woman's narrative highlights the presence of incarcerated women who are innocent of their crimes and the impact of their sentence on well-being. Research discusses the moral and "social cost" of wrongful convictions as being considerably higher than of wrongful acquittals (Rizzoli & Saraceno, 2013), including the impact of wrongful convictions on reducing the deterrence of incarceration (Garoupa & Rizzoli, 2012). Data suggests wrongful conviction rates (based on DNA exonerations of rape/murder cases) to be between 3.3 and 5% (Risinger, 2007), with data from the Innocence Project highlighting the more frequent causes include forensic misconduct, eyewitness misidentification and an inadequate legal defence, again highlighting systemic class-based disadvantages. The (very limited, mainly American) literature in this area highlights the experience as being a traumatic one, citing strained or broken relationships, stress and anger (Denov & Campbell, 2005; Westervelt & Cook, 2010) as typical responses, with many exonerees becoming socially withdrawn or turning to religious or peer support (DeShay, 2016). This experience of confusion and isolation is echoed within this woman's narrative, who also discusses the importance of religion during her sentence stating, "*That it horrifies me, that people think I could actually do that*" (RG B25:19.1 - 5:42.3).

#### **4.2.2 Incarceration, Institutionalisation and Mental Health**

Women's experiences of incarceration differed, though these were largely negative, frightening and related to deteriorating mental health. For one participant, prison represented a well-known, safe and comfortable environment, relating to institutionalisation and a lack of support and joy in the community. For the majority of the women, their incarceration was a lonely experience, dominated by anxieties about the present and future circumstances, for example relating to accumulating debts: "*they saying I owe them X amount of money. but that followed me all the way through prison*" (A1 126- 127). Several women highlighted the impact the prison

environment had on their mental health and physical well-being, this is well illustrated by one woman's narration of the "scary" (A1 745) prison environment in the following quote:

*"Some of the inmates, they were a bit rough, I don't know they must see how people are vulnerable, because there was this lady, one minute- I saw her one day and next day she had big black eyes, they'd battered her with the phone. [...] And the like, the girl next to me, they were only young, she, I don't know how she- well we do get razors- and she, you could see all the cuts up their arms, on their necks [...] there was a lot of them, a lot of them doing a lot of self-harming. You could hear em at night, crying, and erm asking for the officers to come and help them [...] I think, a lot of them had mental issues" (A1 734--743)*

This quote echoes the findings of the Corston report (2007), as well as recent increases in self-harm and violence in female prisons (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2017). This links to substantial literature demonstrating higher rates of mental health problems, self-harm and suicide seen in this population (see section 2.1.2.1) and higher rates of victimisation (especially sexual victimisation) reported by female prisoners (Wolff, Shi & Schumann, 2012). This exposure to violence and self-harm has obviously been unpleasant for this participant and the literature demonstrates a link between exposure to a violent prison environment and maladjustment (Steiner & Meade, 2016), highlighting the prison environment as being responsible for exacerbating mental health problems.

Across these individual struggles, the impact of the loss of autonomy was evident across aspects of their pre-prison lives, offending and throughout their interaction with the CJS and the resulting institutionalisation was particularly evident. The women discussed the lack of choice over minute aspects of their lives within the prison gates, with their world seeming to 'shrink to fit', particularly for those with little contact with the outside world "*It's just strange, when you, when your world's inside that, that fence. it's hard to explain to someone" (A7 P1 342-343)*. This lack of autonomy and resulting institutionalisation highlighted the role of agency, and the lack thereof, within these women's lives, a factor which was exacerbated by their incarceration.



*"This photograph represents the feeling of when, especially for me- it was my first time in prison- my first experience of a prison, I almost felt mentally they strip you naked. Everything that you know and that you are used to has gone. It's very- it's designed to make you- it's a punishment." (B3; 3:01-3:42).*

Overall, the women's negative perceptions of the prison environment, were largely consistent with the literature and those who I have spoken to at the centre who did not go on to participate in the research. The women discussed the trauma of entering the sterile and dehumanising prison environment, the constant presence, vulnerability and aggression of other prisoners (from physical violence to theft of personal items, such as teabags) and their lacking basic possessions and privacy. The women discussed an overarching lack of autonomy over even minor decision-making:

*"So everything is really made for you, you know, the time that you get up, the work that you do [...] you have to eat what they say, you have to go to your room when they say. erm the only thing you have got a bit of choice on is if you want to do a bit of education [...] the choices that you've got are really limited." (B2 18.25-19.10).*

As seen in the photograph and quote above, this lack of autonomy reduced personal agency and individuality and led to institutionalisation. For several of the women, this echoed a lack of control and autonomy which reached back further to the prison environment, to their childhood, relationships and battles with mental health, identity



problems and circumstances surrounding their offence, reflecting the experiences of women in the first set of interviews.

Several women discussed the lack of mental stimulation within the prison environment, which over time, had a negative impact on mental health, cognitive functioning and confidence in performing basic tasks. The photograph below and quote below illustrate the way in which one woman struggled with this on receiving day release to go to work:



*"One time I was stood in this station and I just remember I was trying to take everything in. There was hundreds of people around me and I just felt so overwhelmed [...] I had to think of everything going on around me at one time. [...] I had to find the train, first of all, on the screen then I had to be aware that everybody, I was stood in the middle of this massive crowd and people were just walking past me [...] I just felt completely overwhelmed because I felt in prison you don't really have to think about much and you don't have to hear much and I think your senses kind of you know narrow a little bit, your brain kind of, I don't know what happens but I feel like... your thinking shuts down a lot because there's not a lot to think about and then all of a sudden you have to listen to everything. (B2; 17:14-18:31)*

This account mirrors literature suggesting the “forced” prison environment has a negative impact on decision making and executive functioning (Haney, 2002) as well as on post traumatic cognitions and trauma symptoms

(Johnson Listwan, Hanley & Flannery, 2010). For many of the women this impacted them on release, with several reporting having difficulties in basic task such as making phone calls to receive their benefits, making planned journeys and socialising.

This woman went on to describe education as being empowering and an escape from the overbearing prison environment, providing mental stimulation:

*"It kind of made my brain come to life, year after year it gets worse because you've got no mental stimulation and nothing to think about [...] nothing going on around you apart from negatives. It set me free in a way, I was taken out of the prison you know, in these textbooks and everything was coming to life and then I was learning new knowledge and it was amazing. It brought me to life a little bit" (B2; 4:00-48:41)*

This reflects the women's accounts in Service user interviews, who reflected on the shrinking of their worldview to fit inside the prison walls. This peer mentor now attempts to help her mentees become independent through education. Whilst this woman reports benefiting from access to education, gaining qualifications and escape from the monotonous environment, it is worth noting that this opportunity was not experienced by other women across the interviews. In fact, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (2017) report gave only 51% of prisons in England and Wales a positive review for purposeful activity (including access to education, jobs and rehabilitative activities), with around half of the prisons inspected not filling places despite demand and more than a quarter of people being locked in their cells during the working day. It is likely that this woman benefited from the investment of the education manager in prison, who encouraged her, found funding for her courses and believed in her potential to succeed with her studies. However, women rarely discussed gaining practical or emotional support from prison staff, who were more often referred to as being derogatory or untrained.

When discussing experiences of mental health in prison, women again echoed findings of the Corston report, discussing prevalence of mental ill-health within the prison. The women discussed how guards were untrained and unable to support them with their needs:

*“There is a lot of mental health illnesses in prison, you know, there's people that are self-harming, it's in a harsh environment, there are officers that are constantly kind of using negative banter, you know and especially to vulnerable people who self-harm, it is quite traumatic, to have to be in that powerless position, to have somebody using negative banter, you know” (B2 45:36-46:22)*

This supports the notion that very little has been done in terms of improving the prison environment or ensuring that staff have appropriate awareness and ability to respond to trauma and mental ill-health (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2016). Two of the peer mentors discussed having to keep mental health crises secret in prison, for example:

*I did actually have a break down when I was in prison. I knew I wasn't functioning properly and I ended up with psychosis [...] but obviously to get out of prison you have to have, you have to be stable, so I kind of hid it while I was in prison. And it was getting kind of worse and worse (B2 44:56-45:15)*

It was evident that the women knew that presenting with mental health problems in prison or needing additional support was commonly understood to result in negative consequences, including being labelled and moved to less desirable facilities:

*“It's kind of frowned upon, especially when I got to [Open Prison] [...] if the staff get a whiff that you're feeling a little bit- they automatically think that you're suicidal or that you're-oh yea, it's horrendous. So you kind of, well I learned very quickly, I'll keep it to myself. I had my CPN who wasn't attached to [prison] I could sit there and say to her I'm having a shit day and bla bla bla, but she was trained to recognise what I was, you know if I were suicidal or whatever, and so I was able to say things to her that I could never have said to the prison officers because if I'd have said it to a prison officer id have been locked in whatsit wing and shipped back to*

*[prison] [...] they need to be watching you, they're not staffed to be doing that, so they would ship you back to [prison] (B3 52:37-55:20)*

This quote demonstrates the distrust and fear the women held of the prison staff, who had the power to transfer them out to less desirable prison facilities if they knew the women were struggling to cope. This highlights the view of prisoners as risks to be managed rather than rehabilitated or supported and demonstrates the women's understanding of a lack of staffing resource driving a lack of care and reform within the prison. This related to the disheartening discussion of what (for some) may be accepted as basic standards of good practice or psychologically planned environments (including rudimentary physical comforts, trained staff and colours painted on the walls), which were instead viewed as a rare treat or reward for enhancing your status, rather than a whole system an approach to encourage well-being and self-efficacy. It is evident that those who gained mental health support were viewed as being "lucky" rather than this being a standard level of care and treatment in the CJS, with most women leaving prison with ongoing unmet needs in this area: *"I tried and tried and tried to get help erm and I'm really lucky that I dropped on this place because people wait years for psychotherapy" (B1- 220-222).*

Whilst the overwhelming dialogue around the prison environment and its impact on the women was negative, women did discuss some of the positive aspects of their institutionalisation. For one participant, prison was not a positive experience, but one where she was able to access support from Key Changes. This instead represented a turning point for change:

*"A lot more confident, instead of me coming home and just feeling as though I were there and now I'm there, somehow I've got to start and get myself back into life, and I know that [company director] were here to help" (A4 90-92)*

Within this quote, this woman acknowledges that, with support, she began to feel the confidence that she would be able to enact positive change, thereby demonstrating an increase in personal agency. This notion of turning points, having and reacting to the opportunity for change (Maruna & Toch, 2005), is particularly interesting, highlighted as important within the literature but not discussed within many women's narratives of their prison experiences.

For one participant, who described being in and out of prison for all of their adult life, the prison environment was a familiar and safe place where “*you haven't got a headache*” (A3 423), a stress-free environment provided by an entrenched routine and a lack of decisions or worries, evidenced in the following:

*“I don't really mind jail so, to me it's not really...I just don't mind jail. not that I wanna go, but I don't mind it if I go. just don't care [...] I don't like being released. I hate it... usually it's, you're in a set routine, you're workin and doin this and that in there. then you come out here to nothin, know what I mean... It's just everything, it's everything. You just. out here it's, I can't describe it, jail's like, d'you know like a boarding school?... You're always around people, you've got a set routine, we all do the same thing. and then you come out here and usually you get chucked out here with no place to live, no money and just on your own” (A3 23-44)*

Within this quote prison can be perceived as perpetuating cycles of crime rather than breaking them, echoing the literature base demonstrating that prison tends to have either no effect on, or increase, the individual's likelihood to reoffend (e.g. Nagin et al, 2009). This perception of prison being a safe place for some ‘other’ prisoners was acknowledged by several of the women:

*“Whilst she was in prison she was off the streets, she was away from the people that were hurting her and that were quite sad. She was a nice woman. She was, she was a nice woman. And the sad reality is that that is life for a lot of people.” (B3 7:23-7:35)*

Here it is evident that prison facilitated the distance from negative circumstances in the community, including homelessness and violent or controlling relationships. This participant also went on to discuss the regimented routine and detachment from reality as being free from worry. “*It was a very safe place, we were looked after, all our needs were met [...] You didn't have anything to think about apart from getting up and making sure you were where you needed to be at certain points of the day.*” (B3 16:58-17:32).

### 4.2.3 Release as a Secondary Trauma

Further to the expected hardships of incarceration, release was described as a secondary trauma for all of the women who participated, regardless of their experiences of incarceration. Women discussed viewing their release into the community with both excitement and trepidation with some discussing pre-release stress or ‘gate fever’, relating to worry around their ability to cope, or practical concerns, such as ongoing debt repayment and fears of stigmatisation in the community; “[I] just couldn’t sleep at night. I’m sure my hair fell out and all sorts” (A1 370-372). One woman who had described prison as a negative environment, but a turning point for change went on to describe prison as her own safe place when discussing the trauma of her release into the community:



*"The next picture that I'd selected is a dark room with a door that's opening and there's a very bright light coming through. The dark room is how I felt; the dark room is my safe place at the time which is [prison]. The bright light was very frightening, very, it was scary to be home" (B3 16:58-17:02)*

As seen in the above quote, women discussed being largely unprepared for the emotional impact of their release, despite witnessing distressing scenes of other women leaving the prison. One participant recounted seeing other prisoners being ejected by prison staff without warning, practical support or kindness:

*" I witnessed [...] I believe she'd been in for 9years [...] Erm she had no family, no support network, [...] she should have been released 12 weeks prior. And they basically gave her half an hour to get her things together and that was it, they gave her a travel warrant and she was*

*pushed out [...] That's the harsh reality and it happens. It happens frequently as well" (B3;*

*24:25-26:00)*

This demonstrates both a negative perception of prison staff as well as the situational impact on preparedness for release. The majority of participants discussed their initial release as a “*mindboggling*” (A1 169) period of time, referring to being overwhelmed by their new surroundings and unable to meet numerous needs “*I don't think people realise how hard it is and how much you have, have literally got nothing when you first get out of jail*” (A7 P1 70-71). Several women outlined experiencing issues on release that had been exacerbated by their incarceration, including debts and relationships. It was evident how disruptive serving a prison sentence was to continuing debt repayments, with the additional impact of loss of employment due to conviction. Several women struggled to keep track of the number of people involved in their case, which stretched on post-release through ongoing contact with the CJS. This was framed as being an additional stress and barrier to their ‘moving on’ in the community through using up their free time: “*every day off, every month, on me day off I'd go back to court and then it was going to the probation officer, so it was, it was an ordeal*” (A1 1070-1083).

The women talked about being released without preparation or support from the CJS: “*You get chucked out here with no place to live, no money and just on your own*” (A3 43-44). For women who had lost housing or were being released in new areas, finding safe accommodation was difficult and appeared to worsen experiences of isolation on release. For many, being unable to arrange housing pre-release caused a reliance on family and friends support, which placed some individuals back into anti-social peer networks. For one women rehoused in an unfamiliar city this struggle is described in the following:

*“P2 the jail have just found a house and that's it. You get let out of jail, you land in [city] with a ginormous heavy bag that you can't hardly carry and you haven't got a clue where this address is*

*P1 you can't even get to probation [...]*

*P2 I know [...] it's a nightmare from the second you get off the train” (A7 252-259)”*

An additional issue here was the prevalence of domestic abuse, where participants owned a house with a previous partner, where they could not return or could not afford to leave.

*“Well people say to me, ‘just leave him’. And I says ‘go where?’ my moneys all tied up there. I can’t afford to do it. d’you know what I mean? So I stuck in that for years and years and years” (A1 510-532)*

Whilst incarceration may have had the benefit of serving as a break from abusive relationships, these went on to cause difficulties in gaining safe and independent housing and the women viewed these relationships as being instrumental in their offending behaviour. The CJS further penalised women who had not yet legally left abusive relationships (i.e. divorce finalised) by placing them in more financial difficulties and causing a strain on relationships with family members through a need for support.

In addition to practical support needs, the women discussed the lack of psychological preparation for, and emotional support on their release into the community. For many of the women, release into the community was met by a period of isolation. Women referred to mental health problems and lack of self-confidence, worsened by the prison environment, as a cause of this isolation in the community and in all cases, this isolation had a further negative impact on mental health and wellbeing, related frequently to depression and anxiety:

*“You sit at home and you start to vegetate don’t you? And then you start to get anxiety attacks, you can get depressed” (A1 156-157).*

This supports existing literature that has highlighted the initial period post-release as a high-risk time for all offenders, particularly women, with suicides increasing during this period (Pratt, Piper et al. 2006). The peer mentors highlighted emotional support needs as a key area where further provision of support is required:

*“I think more should be put on also helping them and emotionally equipping them for coming back out. A lot of women spend two or three years at [prison], it’s a long time to be away from normal life, out in the big bad world. Even the ROTLS [...] that’s not enough to prepare you for*



*coming home [...] I never looked at my ROTL as a resettlement. I looked at it as coming home and being with my family, just getting that precious time that I'd missed." (B3; 46:04-47:54)*

This woman's discussion of how Release on Temporary License (ROTL) did not fully prepare her for re-entry perhaps mirrors the lack of engagement with this release option over recent years due to new restrictions, which have meant a 40% decrease in its use since 2014, despite it being completed successfully in 99.93% of cases (Table A3.7, Ministry of Justice, 2017).

It is evident that many women struggled with this lack of support in the community, with many referring to Key Changes as their sole source of non-judgemental support.

*"You don't mix you just keep yourself as a loner. Just being a loner for't rest of ye life and just feeling unwanted" (A4 185-189)*

In the above quote, isolation is seen as a barrier to identity change and reintegration with society. This suggests isolation as a barrier to desistance, with literature suggesting that the adoption of prosocial narrative (e.g. Maruna, 2001) and the sense of belonging to a prosocial community (e.g. Farrall et al, 2014) are key to maintained desistance from crime.

Several women discussed their frustration with the lack of employment opportunities available in the community, which limited their choices and autonomy by reducing the number of available options with which to sustain themselves in the community. One highlighted this within the boredom and prevalence of drug use and offending within their social circle, suggesting prison as an easy alternative. This demonstrates that additional consideration is needed to proximity to crime, where it was evident that this participant was a lot closer to opportunities to reoffend than others were on their release:

*"I've been offered already a few times off me mates, go drop this that off, got offered £180 the other day to go do a drop, and I was so close to doing it as well because I need money but I just thought, just in case there's police waiting. you never know the police when they're gonna come*

*or not and I thought I just can't risk it [...] so I told one of me other mates to go and do it. gave me £30 out of it cos put 'I'm on it [...]I've refused about three times [...]but I don't know how much longer I'm gonna be able to keep up with it (A3 317-345)''*

This highlights a clear contrast in circumstance between those who are returning to their own homes, to jobs or to support networks, as this participant goes on to highlight a need for personal fulfilment as a driver for her desistance, with her ongoing progress being related to an enjoyable training course. It is interesting to note here that prison is now a deterrent for this participant, now she has something that she is working towards, when she previously discussed how she 'doesn't mind' jail. This is further detailed in the following:

*People need a goal, like I says to you, that they want to do. that they really enjoy. I think best thing is saying to people what's your hobby? what would you do straight headed. and if they say painting. get em into doing painting. cos then you know their goal's they're straight headed because they enjoy it. know what I mean? [...] whereas nowadays even like job-wise, they're kicking you out and telling you to do any stupid job and then people are getting fired because they're off their heads or not going because they don't enjoy it'' (A3 716-724)*

This links to the discussion of willpower and motivation above as well as to Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943, 1954), as the women now has the opportunity to move towards self-actualisation- a chance that has been previously denied due to the barriers caused by her offence history. Whilst the above quote is somewhat realistic of the current job market and demonstrates some cognitive distortions around entitlement, this highlights the importance of the availability of opportunities for women that offer the potential for growth progression and fulfilment.

Within women's discussion of release into the community, it was evident that regaining autonomy was a key goal, alongside control over mental ill health, to financial independence and distance from abusive partners. For most women, this lack of agency had a negative impact on their self-confidence and decision-making abilities on release. This is a relatively common finding across the literature concerning female offenders (e.g. Loucks et al.,

2006; Malloch et al., 2008; McIvor, 2011). Several of the women discussed a need to ‘move on’ from their offence, evoking a physical distance to allow them to deal with the trauma of their offending and incarceration and to lead a successful life in the community. One participant approached ‘moving on’ and dealing with the trauma of being sent to prison, by revisiting the prison voluntarily:

*"I've been back to the prison. as a visitor [...] I I felt as though it were summit I had to do [...] I went in. I went back, though I were taken in before and this time I went in under me own steam and I went in as me, not being told you will stop there for so long. I went in as me and I walked out as me and I felt- it were something I had accomplished I knew I got to do before I could move on [...] that put some demons to bed [...] going in er feeling absolutely worthless as you were. you were a nobody, [...] you couldn't go back home and hold your head up and you couldn't get on with your life and I come out, I were released it, you, it hit you, like can I do it, can I cope. ..." (A4 282-232)*

Within this quote it is evident that she has found this an empowering experience which has positively impacted her self-confidence and self-esteem. It is particularly relevant to note that this woman feels she has regained some of the power and autonomy she lost through her incarceration. This highlights the importance of the provision of services, such as Key Changes, which can support women in addressing these emotional needs relating to their desistance. It also again highlights the need to better prepare women for their sentences and release, through better legal advice to reduce the frequency of ‘shock’ sentences.

Women discussed feeling overwhelmed by the complexities of everyday tasks, and isolation in the community was common, perhaps due to such a stretch of time without personal autonomy, which resulted in a lack of self-confidence and self-esteem. This was seen to impact relationships with probation officers, where women lacked confidence in the face of poor advice from officers:

*"I got my own house and then my probation officer didn't think I'd be able to pay the bills, so she erm allowed me to live in there 1 day a week for a month, then two days a week for the next*

*month then three days a week [...] It was really difficult, so I obviously had to pay for the rent and for all the bills [...] I couldn't kind of question her, I did try to question her and I did say you know I can pay the bills but she just say but you have been in prison for 14years, so her say is kind of final. [...] it impacted on my daughters' relationship because I was keen to move in with her [...] id spent 14years away from her, so another 6 months is eating into that time. [...] I still feel kind of upset about it. You know it's the only time we could have had and she impacted, that decision impacted on that time and made that time a little bit more stressed as well (B2, 21:54-24:30)*

Here the probation officer's use of personal judgement and misuse of power to control decision making far past release was shown to have ongoing detrimental impact on confidence, relationships and finances; all of which are known to impact desistance (e.g. Brown & Ross, 2010; Bui & Morash, 2010; Davidson, 2011). Indeed, whilst this is not standard advice given by probation officers, the structure of risk- based frameworks, such as RNR, can be seen to permit control by certain probation staff past the boundaries of their roles. Indeed, no women directly credited probation supervision with their desistance, with the most credit given to probation officers who forwarded them on to Key Changes services, where they were then able to access support addressing emotional and social capital needs (discussed in section 5.2 below).

The passage of time during the women's incarceration (particularly relevant for those serving lengthy sentences) meant release into the community represented a changed world, with changed relationships, new statutory systems and new technology to learn. This meant that several women discussed difficulties in reintegrating into the community considering these changes.



*“Here's a picture of me on a train on one of my home leaves trying to use a phone [...] I look a bit vague! And you know, I'd never used a mobile phone before and so that was a big thing where she was trying to help me use a phone again.[...] [it felt] a bit alien, you know, trying to get used to everything fast, you know everything had changed over the 14 years I'd been in”*

*(B2; 16:27-17:10)*

This links to literature discussing the impact of time-served on re-entry difficulties, however Wolff, Shi and Schumann (2012) found that increasing time served through numerous incarcerations negatively impact re-entry readiness, rather than the length of time served within one conviction. Whilst this research has not collected information on prior convictions or sentence length, it has found that women who talked about having long or life sentences believed they struggled more on release and believed other women serving longer sentences had similar, more negative experiences on release:

*“Especially those that have extended sentences or life sentences [...] say disclosing convictions and things like that, where are you supposed to say you’ve been for the last 14years? Erm you know it is a massive stigma [...] I don’t think there’s enough help for those kind of people because obviously families grow up and they’re left kind of isolated [...]” (B2; 25:50 -26:33)*

Here it is evident that this peer mentor has both experienced isolation and explaining her offence history to others and has also seen other women struggle in the same way.

### **4.3 Stigma and Identity**

Across the women’s narratives, it is clear that aspects of their identities have come under threat or have significantly altered during their offending, incarceration and resettlement into the community. Within this, the impact of stigma is particularly evident. Within their narratives, women defended certain aspects of their characters in the face of stigmatisation, whereas for others, a level of self-judgment and self-stigmatisation is present. Several women demonstrated a focus on the slow and difficult (re)building of self-confidence and self-esteem. Throughout this master theme, the concept of self and identity is evident with many links between subthemes. For ease of reading, this is detailed through description and discussion of related superordinate themes. Two peer mentors went on to participate in repertory grid interviews to explore concepts of identity in greater depth. These findings are also explored here.

Table 3: Visual representation of Master theme ‘Stigma and Identity’ with related Superordinate themes

Identity and Stigma	Stigma and Self-stigmatisation
	Identity and self-view
	Personal Constructs

### 4.3.1 Stigma and Self-Stigmatisation

Across all interviews, the women discussed their experiences of being labelled a criminal. This was shown to affect the women long after their release from prison in the form of stigma, a factor well-reported within the literature (Maruna, 2001; Runggay, 2004): *“I’ve been out of prison for eight years now but I’m still trying to deal with that label”* (B2 6.17-6.26). Women experienced stigma at both interpersonal and organisational levels and responded to and managed stigma in different ways. Most of the women discussed their offence label as an inescapable and visible entity; as in this participant’s biblical reference to public repentance *“I just felt like everybody knew where I had been, everybody knew that I was a criminal. Almost like sackcloth and ashes type thing”* (B3 19:32-19:48); whereas for a smaller minority, it served as a badge of honour. Stigma was reported to be either something that the women were unprepared for or that they had feared pre-release. The women talked about the variety of ways in which they felt stigmatised by others, from experiencing judgement from others and noticing a morbid curiosity in the details of their offences (*“some wants the story behind it. ‘did you see er in the paper? did you see what she’s done?’”* (A1 416-417)), to the severing of ties and a vendetta-style interest in their re-entry into the community. Stigma was apparent at an inter-personal level, coming from various sources including close family and friends. Stigma was also experienced at an institutional level, for example in women’s rejection for employment or training based upon their offence history and perceptions held by authority figures. As each of these sources were valued differently by each of the women, the impact of this stigma varied accordingly *“It hurt; it hurt a hell of a lot. Er certain people more than others.”* (A4 149-153). This appeared to differ based on the woman’s current circumstances, with those who had been released only recently focusing on stigma as a barrier to immediate practical resettlement needs, and those who had been in the community for longer focusing on a need to feel accepted by the community.

The impact of stigmatisation was discussed as being all-encompassing and debilitating, impacting upon the women’s mental health *“it’s even made me consider taking my own life”* (B2 28:14.6), as well as practical aspects of their re-entry *“It impacts upon your employment, obviously your housing, your family life. Everything really and it just doesn’t go away”* (B2 28:16). This in turn preventing their engagement in the community:

*"I'd probably still feel the stigma a lot more, erm I probably feel more ashamed still and as though what's the right word- not isolated but in a way kind of isolated, because you can't be open about it with people. not completely isolated in everything but like, you've got a section of your life that other people can't find out about, isolated kind of way" (B1- 676-681)*

Beyond its social and relational impact, stigmatisation was shown to be a significant barrier to several practical aspects of resettlement into the community. Several women discussed previously working in skilled professions or having good qualifications and being refused employment based on criminal records: *"I'd get to them offering me the job and I was completely open about everything and then it went to HR and the HR manager said no" (B1 82-84)*. For women focused on the practicalities of rebuilding their lives in the community, stigma which prevented them from reaching goals relating to gaining housing or employment was particularly difficult:

*"As soon as the criminal record- they don't want me. so never had the opportunity to do it [...] I find it a lot [...] they're on about giving people a chance but look at em, they can't even let me go into a college [...] it's like they want you to go back to jail." (A3 488-503)*

This quote gives an indication of the isolation and hopelessness some of the participants felt when considering their lives in the community and barriers to their goals, illustrating the participant's view of resettlement as being set up to fail, with a lack of opportunities. This experience of stigma was not discussed by all participants and was focused on more by those who had been in the community for a short period of **time**. This more institutionalised stigma which acted as a barrier to education, training or employment opportunities often resulted in a knee-jerk disengagement with services and the community:

*"Obviously horrible, but I can't do nothing about it. So I'm not just gonna sit there and get upset and not do what I'm gonna do just because they won't accept me back, nah fuck that." (A2 260-262).*

Whilst this attitude may simply be a hard front, coping strategy or unwillingness to discuss the topic further, it may be that following numerous rejections to attempts to reintegrate, she simply feels she can no longer continue



to try. This highlights a problem with the notion of community reintegration, the reality of which for many may simply be an overwhelming lack of opportunities, with crime as an interesting and profitable alternative. Women attempting to be self-employed highlighted additional difficulties, including gaining insurance within newly obtained jobs:

*"What I found very difficult was, I'm employable right, there's loads of employers out there that will employ people, individuals with criminal records. But insurance? That's a whole different ball game. Trying to be insured has been a nightmare. Key Changes have, they put me on to an insurance company that specifically deal with people with criminal records, but the quote that they came back with was still quite high, so I did a little bit of research myself and I found a company who I've been able to pass onto [name] at Key Changes" (B3 40:26-40:28)*

This quote highlights the importance of service knowledge and advice, where the contacts of the support service are vital. Here it is evident that Key Change's resources are also developing through the experiential knowledge of its staff. This woman's experience echoes findings by Bath and Edgar (2010) who demonstrated that more than 80% of the ex-prisoners surveyed reported difficulties in gaining insurance due to their criminal record, with four-fifths reporting being charged more for the cover; highlighting further barriers to accessing sources of self-employment. Several of the women discussed trouble gaining fulfilling employment and recognised structural limitations placed on women by the CJS. This included systems being in place to train women, but only to a certain level, or availability of jobs only for those who held low level or no qualifications despite consistent literature stating that these training and educational opportunities were a benefit. Women with vocational training or degrees felt these were not acknowledged and this meant these women were unable to gain fulfilling and meaningful work. For one woman, this was a key aspect of her volunteering at Key Changes, as she had been unable to gain meaningful employment elsewhere. This sheds further light on the prevalence of 'exs' within support services, demonstrating them to be a diverse group, with many holding vocational and educational qualifications.

As discussed above, the women were deeply affected by the stigma they encountered and carried this with them long after their release into the community. Many becoming isolated, with stigma negatively impacting their mental health and affecting their ability to reintegrate in the community. It was evident that stigma around their offence history was also felt by family members, causing an additional strain on these relationships. The women discussed stigma as part of their children's experiences of their incarceration, referring to bullying in school because of high profile trials.

*"I do know she was bullied at school erm you know was made to feel different, she wasn't popular. She was 6 when I when I went into prison and she was popular and it was shock, it was a small town, everybody knows about it and she was bullied and there was a couple of friends that stood up for her who she's still friends with today. You know the crime was horrific, you know so her mother was seen as mad erm and my mum didn't say one nice thing about me either, she was kind of a little bit in competition with me. yeah, so I do think she's suffered psychologically, it was a massive shock for her as well" (B2; 40:08-41:09)*

It is perhaps easy to see the ways in which this would influence self-esteem and identity as a mother as well as confidence in rebuilding relationships with family post-prison. Participants reported individuals going out of their way to make things difficult for their families, suggesting that some stigma ranged to persecutory treatment in the community:

*"when I got sent down, she went to my place of work to speak to the management to tell them what I'd done personally [...] she'd also gone round er trying to slag me name off to different people [...] so you do have some people out there that are really really bitter [...] she knew what I were going through and I were sorry what I did, but she. she's very vindictive because she even got my daughter ... she point blank told a lie on her til it even got social services involved [...] she has gone above and beyond. [...] we're not all perfect, her kids have done wrong. I could go through certain things what her daughter's doing what she doesn't know about. but we're not slagging them off. so..." (A1 430-471)*

This quote demonstrates the impact of stigma on family members and some significant lengths gone to in delivering personal punishment by an individual based on her offence history. The above quote demonstrates some 'othering' where the woman's persecutory behaviour is shown to be worse through her knowledge of the circumstances at play within her offending, particularly in reference to a controlling and abusive relationship. Her daughter's behaviour is introduced to show that she is not morally sound as she is portraying and that she is unaware of the goings on within her own family unit. This 'othering' is just one of the ways that participants demonstrated dealing with stigma, used to highlight stigma as an immoral action and thus discredit it and so protect themselves and their self-view (e.g. Presser's, 2004 work with violent offenders). This was common within the women's narratives and was used to show that their offence behaviours existed on a continuum of behaviours, where many who have not been through the Criminal Justice System have acted in similar or worse ways. Here levels of legality are contrasted where an un-convicted offence is shown to be a more immoral crime than that committed by this participant:

*"Me daughter said to her, but aunty at' end of the day, you don't know what your work colleagues' family's up to, so what me mum's done isn't as bad as some of them... for a start, that work colleague you're on about, her son's got caught with drugs, coming from Jamaica planted on his kids"(A1 393-399)*

In the above quote, the participant places herself in the moral high ground through a comparison to her colleague's 'bitterness' and inability to move on. This is echoed by another participant "*I've done, I've been- I've done what I needed to do. I'm the bigger person than you and I can get on with my life*" (A4 p6). Here stigmatising behaviours are shown as petty and preventing her from 'moving on' after serving her sentence, a view which is supported by references to police support against harassment:

*"they turned round and said 'continue with that and we're coming with the cuffs next [...] her solicitor wanted to come and take you into the station, and it's only because [participant's name] said you have had a tough life and she didn't want [to] make it any worse, but this is a final warning, a first and final warning'" (A4 225-244)*

The above quote follows abuse from a neighbour after this participant has asked for property to be returned. The participant can be seen to be kinder and more understanding by not requesting their arrest, despite the justification. In the same way, othering was used to distance themselves from others released from prison:

*“P and as they say, not everybody stays in work. I know one, she was managing the (place) shop, and she's stole [...] she's been doing it for quite a few months, but anyway” (A1 344-348)*

These comparisons place the interviewee as ‘less’ of an offender and allows maintenance of the moral high ground by acknowledging the presence of repeat offending in contrast to an offence which is framed as a one-off. The management of stigma also involved a focus on the passage of time referred to frequently as mediator to stigma *“You're today's news- you're tomorrows fish and chip paper.” (A4 672-675)*. Here time is viewed as a mediating factor of self-stigmatisation and self-acceptance:

*“I think so, things don't get better overnight and you're not going to get back what you've first, what you've actually. Your life's not going to go back to what it was and I think that's quite traumatic for any person doing a long time or a life sentence” (B2; 38:30-39:00)*

This indicates that a slight shift in perspective is evident here, between looking backwards and looking forwards- attempting to *“get [my] life back”*. Time is viewed as being critical to regaining aspects of their 'true' selves, lost before or during their incarceration. Where time assists the individual in ‘moving on’ from their offence, where the public nature of their incarceration is seen to influence their resettlement *“I think it's, it'll always be there, what I've done, in people's minds who know me” (A1 1010)*. The notion of physically moving on from or past their offence was discussed, with those who were preventing this through stigma being framed as immoral. Some links discussion of othering on moral grounds can be seen here:

*“I just want to move on and put it behind me [...] I don't think you need to go back to re, to revisit that side all the time. cos you're just like revisiting it all over again and just talking about the past. you need to move on. just get over the past and look toward the future” (A1 1017-1021)*

Several women discussed the impact of knowledge of the wider context of their offending on the delivery and impact of stigma they received. There was some recognition by service users here that perceived 'need' to offend affects others judgement of their offense, particularly where abusive partners were involved, a sort of mitigating circumstance:

*“a lot of them knew what I were going through, the relationship, the abuse... so those that knew what I were going through didn't judge me so much” (A1 418-421)*

Whilst these encounters with external forms of stigma were discussed by all of the women who participated, several women also reflected on the ways in which they internalised crime labels and were self-stigmatising. This perhaps links to the passage of time, where all of these women had been living in the community for longer and may have experienced more barriers and been exposed more frequently to stigmatised views. One women reflected upon the circumstances driving women to offend and the shame, which she said would prevent her ever reoffending:

*“Shame. It were something I were going through at that time and it's just shame. People talk about people that's been in prison like you're bad people and it's not all the time you're bad, it could be just down to situations [...] it's not something that you're practiced to do. There's some people that constantly offend and they've got their reasons behind that, you'll have to talk to them about that, but it's something that I would never want to be doing again. I don't want to go back to prison...” (A1 988-996)*

She discussed the personal shame in needing to ask for support from family *“being dependant on me daughter was bit shameful, but you know, we got through it”*(A1 383-385) showing her fear of public perceptions towards her new 'lower station' in life, as well as her difficulty accepting the reversal of their parent/child roles. This change in role is furthered by a lack of autonomy and privacy when asking for support *“you don't want them to pry too much into your affairs either if you ask family for help”* (A1 181-182). This suggests a struggle with preserving her dignity and even a need to defend her right to privacy following her time in the CJS with her personal information

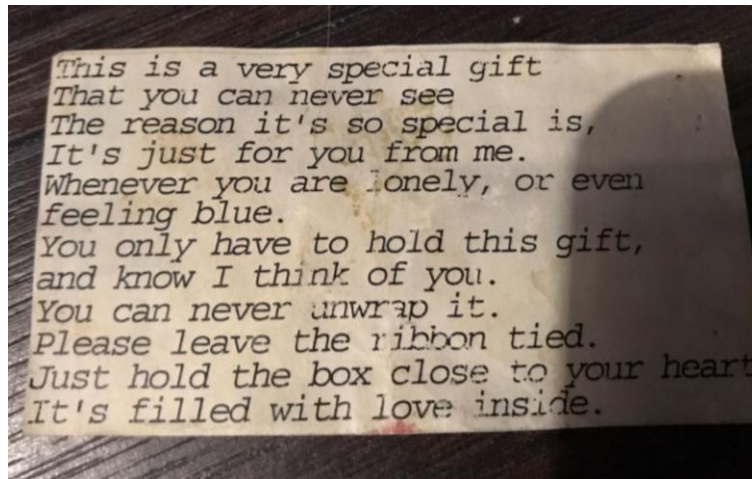
being open to family, authorities and the public. This highlights the impact of stigma as a barrier to asking for support from family members, and in turn, the provision of service support as important even for those with an assumed support network. Feelings of shame and guilt around involvement in an offence were common threads in these women's narratives. This can be seen in the following quote from a participant who had not disclosed her offending to her family members:

*"You feel as though you're walking round with this big secret and you're worried in case people find out about it. You're embarrassed, you're ashamed cos you're not really dealing with it and not accepting it, you're just trying to push it away and pretend it hasn't happened, so you're not kind of, so you're not kind of, erm you've not accepted yourself. You're just kind of walking around hating a part of yourself" (B1 340-349)*

This demonstrates the internalisation of the label of 'offender' into the individual's social identity. The inability to disclose offences was discussed by several of the women "some friends don't even fully know" (RG B2 5:44.1-5:46.5). It is interesting to see the discussion here of self-acceptance alongside that of acceptance of her offence history. Social Identity Theory positions social identity as "the internalisation of collective identification", demonstrating the impact of prolonged exposure to stigmatisation on personal identity.

#### **4.3.2 Identity and Self-View**

Many women discussed the loss of their identities (as a mother, daughter, sister, professional), through their incarceration in the harsh prison environment and within their journeys to rebuilding their lives in the community. For several women, these identity shifts were grounded in their relationships with loved ones, relating to literature highlighting the importance of social and human capital within desistance for women. For one woman, her relationship with her daughter was particularly important. The trauma of being removed from her young child is discussed below alongside her efforts to remain close to her during her sentence:



*Something that my daughter, a poem on the outside, she bought it in the shop, but the box got crushed over the 25 years but I've kept the poem. And it's just a poem she wrote to says that there's nothing inside but it's just filled with love and if ever I need her, to hold on to that. It's symbol that I was trying to hold, hold onto that relationship and I really worked hard to do that, I was phoning my daughter every day and trying to hold onto that family life, which was really important to me at the time because that's who I was. I was a really family orientated person and that was me, that was my personality, I was family orientated. (B28:03-9:01)*

This quote demonstrates her attempt to maintain her role as a mother, despite the new distance, due to this being an integral part of her identity. Based on this, criticism from her child was particularly difficult:

*I think she was just angry that I'd actually gone to prison. And she did say, you know, to me once, [...] before I got in that car, she said did I think about her. So, she said that I should have prioritised her when I was in the middle of that, trauma, and I suppose I can't answer that for her. You know, so she was left without a mother all those years, so that's what she's angry [...] I just hope one day that she will understand that I was a young vulnerable woman with no help or guidance (B2 37.30-38.29)*

This lack of understanding of trauma is particularly difficult for this woman as it undermines her motivations for being present at the time of the offence- to protect her child. This judgement from her child appears to further

evoke shame, Carlen (2002) suggests this is because she has broken the social code of putting children before oneself, somehow 'failing' as a mother.

Within the women's narratives, personal character strengths were focused on in relation to their positive outcomes in their incarceration and release. For example, one woman discussed institutionalisation as being key to her survival within the prison system, where her personal adaptability was a positive characteristic and a prized skill missing in some and the key to an easy (if not comfortable) prison experience:



*"The picture is of a fish, I'm not sure what kind of fish it is but the picture shows how the fish adapts very well to its environment and changes to blend in basically and you know, lucky for me; I'm the kind of person that can adapt easily and quickly. I think, for me anyway, I had to do that to survive [...] I believe not everybody can do that, I think some people will go kicking and screaming and will kick against the system if you like. Which, for me, I couldn't change the fact that I was in prison, I was in prison and that was it, so I might as well you know, conform is the word maybe? Do what I'm asked, do what is required of me and learn very quickly what I could do, what I couldn't do." (B3: 8:52-10:46)*

For this woman, the initial prison experience was discussed as being a shock; noisy, with a unique set of rules and protocols to learn. However, she acknowledges her adaptability as key in her survival as an unseasoned first-time prisoner and describes those who fight against the system as being poor adapters to their new environment.

Mandaraka-Sheppard (1986) was one of the first to discuss the impact of the lack of agency within the prison environment (discussed in section 4.2.2) on women's sense of self and discussed how this destabilisation for the



individual's sense of self is related to their obedience. Mandaraka-Sheppard distinguishes between "ritualistic" and "committed compliance" seen in the quotes above and "defiance or individualistic rebellion" seen in the resistance of control, breaching and recall we often see in female populations. She argues that conformity to the rules for many is simply the path resulting in least harm, rather than from a sense of remorse or respect for their legitimacy and that women's self-esteem is not down to the coercion or control experiences but to their modes and ability to adapt to the prison environment. This is a very harsh view and perhaps one which is prevalent, considering the continuation of an approach that further victimises already vulnerable individuals.

Emphasis on an individual's characteristics and vulnerabilities also took a form of 'othering' (discussed in section 5.3.1) contrasting between first time and repeat offenders was common across a number of participants and there are some interesting links to perceptions of risk, othering and identity here to be explored within future research. Othering often created distance from other prisoners by contrasting intent to offend with particular vulnerabilities "*part of mine was linked to some mental health issues*" (B161-62). However, this othering was not necessarily used to distance themselves from other women in prison within a moral hierarchy, but instead to detach themselves from their offence label and the accompanying stereotypical qualities relating to a particular subtype of offender. For example, one woman discussed being deeply affected by others who perceived her as violent:

*"I just wanted to hide, you know, because it's such a horrific crime. For anybody to even think that I'd actually done it caused me so much distress. I just wanted to hide, you now because it's a crime that's attached to me whether I've done it or not, is, you know, my name and that crime is linked and I just find I just find it horrific"* (B2; 6:27-7:19).

The women's self-view and ability to adopt a new identity was impacted by this stigma. This relates closely to labelling theory (Becker, 1963), which discusses the internalisation of a diagnosis or label (here 'offender'), which becomes a dominant part of the self-concept and may come to drive decision-making. In addition, to Social Identity theory (Turner & Tajfel, 1979) based on an ascribed group membership. Thus, an identity and social circle based around this label of 'deviance' may reinforce this status (Petrunik, 1980), as external perceptions of

capabilities and character within the wider population are altered and become stigmatised based in response (Osterholm, Nash & Kritsonis, 2007).

The ways in which the women referred to themselves in relation to their offending and resettlement is particularly interesting. For many, the subtle rewriting of life narratives appears to allow a reframing of negative experience to focus on, or overemphasise, positive outcomes or aspects. For example, several participants discussed ‘fortunate’ aspects of their incarceration and release, often in implied comparison to the perceived or known experiences of others. Areas of good fortune included coming out of prison into work. One participant discussed this at length, talking about the good fortune to work for a company in prison

*“They would employ you, it could be anywhere around the country. and it's the travelling what I was afraid of as well. could be Leeds, Nottingham, if the job was there it was up to you if you wanted to take it there... so, but as I said, I was fortunate” (A1 725-732)*

This woman may have been aware of other ex-offenders struggling to find employment, reflecting the statistics on employability after prison and women gaining fewer marketable skills during their (shorter) sentences (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2017). The same participant also expressed her fortune in her curfew and wing allocation, where being quickly moved onto an enhanced wing reduced her contact with violence and self-harm. *“...God must have been on my side all the way through...” (A1 655-656)* Here God is referred to in order to express how lucky she perceived this to be. In the community, the good fortune of being on the housing register for an extended period enabled her to have a choice in her housing where others could not *“but otherwise you could get put anywhere and you couldn't, and if you refuse it, you're not entitled to get anywhere after that” (A1 249-250)*. This ‘luck’ to not be placed in a dangerous or drug filled environments links to significant literature on redemption scripts and their importance to desistance (e.g. Maruna, 2001).

#### ***4.3.2.1 The Journey to a Previous Self***

Women focused on regaining a particular part of their identity, such as that of a parent, as well as characteristics which embodied that earlier self- such as self-pride, confidence, esteem and dignity:



*"I feel like the lie detector is the first step in getting my dignity back. it's making me feel well actually I'm still that person, you know, in that picture you saw, you know, underneath, I'm still that person not this thing, you know, that people think" (B2, 7:25- 7:50)*

This quote suggests a physical journey of returning to a prior self, a more desirable and socially accepted identity, away from the socially enforced identity of an 'offender'. It stressed the offence as being a 'one off', out of character action. This view of their offence history and imprisonment as atypical behaviour, or a deviation from their true-life course was discussed by several participants; *"Yeah I just wanna get my life back on track"* (A2 26). Here the women framed their offending 'self' as a separate identity to the 'real' version of themselves, portraying a pro-social pre-crime self with their post-release self-making a physical journey 'back' to this.

*"I just wanted to achieve going back and doing what I used to do, like I used to be a big involvement wit' local community" (A4 134-135)*

Discussions around this topic largely focused on the notion of being a 'good' pro-social person and just needing the opportunity to demonstrate this, with employment as a key goal. Several of the women discussed ways in which their offending was being outside of their conscious control or less of a rational choice and instead attributable to controlling partners and mental ill health:

*“ me before my arrest, I was quite withdrawn and didn't want to engage or interact with anybody and things like that so now I'm more like my normal self almost [...] I wouldn't say I wasn't kind or caring but I wasn't in a good place, everything was an effort I couldn't see, not that I couldn't see a future but everything was very negative” (RG B3 12:46.9 - 14:15.9).*

The women's narratives indicate an identity shift towards an 'ideal self' more in line with Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the Good Lives Model and back to a previous, non-criminal identity, relating to aspects of Maruna's (2001) findings. These descriptions and different versions of the self are discussed over time, with the identity shift having numerous benefits in a more positive self-view and greater self-confidence:

*"It's a slow, it's been a slow process. I could, at the beginning of this I didn't view myself as a very nice, likable individual. Erm but I do now believe that I'm not a bad person, which is a big thing for me. Yeah, I did a bad thing but I'm not a bad person. So yeah that's helped me" (B3: 30:04-30:33)*

*"It can be in a way, I mean I'm trying to get out of it where I'm coming into my own and empowering myself, obviously, and erm you know, I'm ok on some things, but what if I go to meetings and there's loads of professionals or and someone you know? I might think that they've got better, they've got the answers. Well actually I should trust my own decisions because I'm a specialist as well and I'm coming into my own. It's just trying to keep changing your way of thinking." (B2; 52:46-53:28)*

From these quotes it is evident that the women's adoption of, and confidence in, a positive identity has been a difficult process, influenced by social stigmas and self-stigmatisation. This lack of self-acceptance and a sense of belonging seen in the second quote relates to findings from Farrall, Hunter, Sharpe & Calverley (2014), who suggest that becoming accepted and feeling accepted (the final emotional trajectories of desistance) are difficult for those in 'professional ex' roles, who's offence history is integral to and thus ever present in their professional lives. In evidence of this, the women supported their return to a 'old' or 'real' self by the endorsement of their good character from well-respected or high-status individual as well as by family and friends. For example:

*“the officers, they were fine to be honest, erm and they can tell certain people that you know like when you go so you have an induction and then I think I were talking to one or two officers and they can see straight away, cos they go well what are you- what what- they don’t ask what you’re in for, but they’ll look at you and think you’re not run of the mill sort of person to be in here, you know what I mean?” (A1 681-686)*

*“Me son come to see me and says it’s like his old mum’s back” (A5 270-276)*

This reflects Maruna’s (2001) narrative identity theory findings which highlighted five redemption scripts, including the return to an ‘old’ or ‘real’ me, viewed as being inherently good and desistance involving the shedding or ‘killing off’ of the ‘offender’ identity. Maruna argues that desisters have an exaggerated sense of control, often in relation to a bad ‘it’, which is attributed as the cause of previous offending behaviour. This protects the core self, as deviance is attributed to an external factor, allowing the return to an ‘old’ or ‘real’ me. Research argues that the adoption of a new identity alone is not sufficient, and the individual must have this new identity acknowledged and accepted by the community.

#### **4.3.2.3 Personal Constructs**

Within Peer mentor interviews, two of the peer mentors went on to participate in Repertory Grid interviews, which aimed to further explore their self-view and identity. Repertory Grids allow the study of personal and interpersonal meaning making (Neimeyer, 2004), the method for which is discussed in section 3.2.4.2. The personal construct literature discusses the importance of understanding self-view in relation to others, suggesting that these personal constructs can serve as a barrier to reintegration with the life in the community, self-stigmatisation further reducing positive self-view and self-confidence where positive self-constructs are significantly related to better therapy outcomes (Button & Warren, 2002).

Whilst the repertory grids were primarily utilised within this research to enable respondents’ personal constructs to be explored in depth, the ratings can also be quantified, providing some interesting mixed method data. The

repertory grids allow for the production of idiographic quantitative data, which can graphically represent the 'space' between the women's constructions of key individuals within their resettlement.

As discussed within the above findings, relationships with several people, including family members, friends, police and probation services were discussed within the interviews as playing a significant role within the women's narratives. The repertory grids allow for a more in-depth exploration of the women's social constructions around these individuals by producing quantitative data such as the means and frequencies of positive or negative responses to each individual and providing a visual representation of the construction of these individuals using a principle components analysis. I have personally enjoyed the use of repertory grids within this study, which I feel complements the idiographic approach taken within the photo elicitation interviews.

The repertory grid results for each participant are discussed below in case-study format. These findings are an idiographic exploration of these two women's personal constructs, and no attempts are made to generalise these findings or to imply their representation of women's views at Key Changes or the CJS more broadly.

### **Participant One:**

Participant one engaged well with the task and came up with a number of relevant constructs. Her elicited constructs and responses can be seen in Figure 2 below

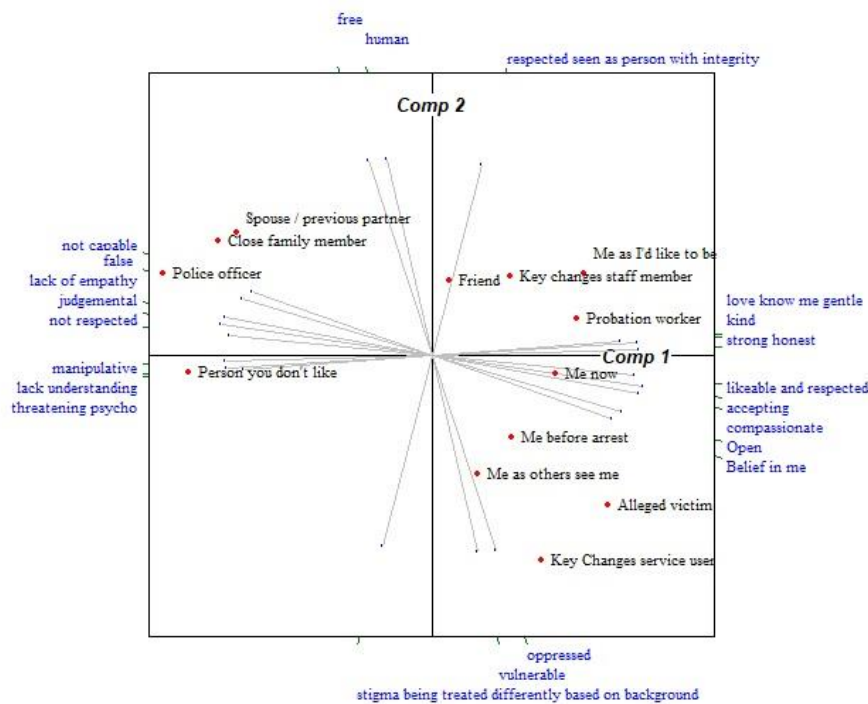
	Police officer	Close family member	Key Changes staff member	Me as I'd like to be	Alleged Victim	Spouse / previous partner	Me as others see me	Person you don't like	Probation worker	Key Changes service user	Me before arrest	Friend		
stigmatised	5	3	7	2	1	1	7	1	7	7	7	7	1	seen as having integrity
threatening	6	7	7	2	7	2	7	1	4	4	2	6	6	loved, gentle
Manipulative	7	6	7	6	7	1	7	1	4	3	2	6	4	strong honest
vulnerable	5	2	7	3	3	7	6	4	5	6	6	6	1	Human
oppressed	4	4	7	2	2	7	5	5	7	6	6	7	1	Free
Judgemental	7	5	7	5	7	1	6	1	4	1	1	6	6	Accepting
lack understanding	7	7	7	6	7	1	7	1	7	2	2	6	4	Kind
false	7	3	6	7	7	1	5	1	5	1	1	6	7	Open
not capable	5	7	7	4	7	2	7	4	4	2	3	5	7	belief in me
lack of empathy	7	5	7	7	7	1	7	1	5	1	1	7	7	Compassionate
not respected	5	5	7	5	7	1	7	1	7	2	2	5	7	likeable and respected

*Figure 2: Elicited repertory grid for Participant one*

Within this grid, the constructs on the left relate to negative constructs and those on the right their positive element. The numbers populating the grid illustrate the scores given for each 'element' listed in the columns for each polar construct listed in the rows on a Likert scale of 1-7. For example, the police officer is scored 5 out of a possible maximum of 7 for 'having integrity'. This participant completed the grid without any missing data. The mean score of her ratings is 4.67, near the midpoint of the scale (ranging 7-1), with a median of 5. Her ratings showed some asymmetry (skewness =-2.42 compared to a +/-1.96 routine cut point for z-scores), this can be seen

in the scale distribution, where the end points of the scale, particularly the ‘7’ and ‘1’ ratings have been used more often than other scale values (using the endpoints of the scale for 52.45% of responses). The non-normal distribution is corroborated by the extreme platykurtic value for kurtosis (-3.32 compares to +/-1.96). The average deviation in her rating was approximately 2 scale points (standard deviation 2.32). This frequent use of ‘7’ perhaps demonstrates an over eagerness to rate all elements positively. Looking at minimum possible value ratings (1/7), these were ascribed to ‘person you don’t like’ on 8 occasions and ‘police officer’ on 7 occasions. All other elements were rated with this minimum value 3 or fewer times. ‘Me as I’d like to be’ and ‘alleged victim’ were assigned the highest possible value (7/7) on 10 and 8 occasions respectively. In contrast, ‘police officer’ and ‘me as others see me’ were each given this most ‘positive’ ranking only twice. A principle component analysis (see figure 2) is used to visually display the distance between these rankings.

*PCA (varimax) for Elicited Repertory Grid*  
 Axis Range: -1.30 to 1.30



*Figure 3: Principle components analysis for participant 1*

Within Figure three the elements are plotted within the space as points, and the constructs are plotted as vectors with their labels arranged around the edges of the graph, allowing the relationships between the elements, constructs and components to be examined. For example, ‘me now’, and ‘probation worker’ are most highly



defined by the 'positive' aspect of first principle component, which appears to be a combination of 'gentle', 'kind', 'strong/honest', 'likeable / respectable', 'accepting', 'compassionate' vs its more 'negative' end which is made up of 'false', 'lacks empathy', 'judgemental' etc, which most defines 'police officer' and 'someone you don't like'. 'Key Changes' service user maps closest to the negative end of principle component 2, viewed as being 'oppressed', 'vulnerable' and 'stigmatised'. The vectors relating to this component also highlight 'me as others see me' within this same space.

Particularly interesting in the grids is the distance in space between the four versions of the self, with 'me as I'd like to be' scoring highest on both principle components, being judged as 'free', 'human, and 'respected' as well as 'gentle', 'honest' and 'accepting'. Whilst 'me as others see me' is furthest toward the negative end of both principle components, ranked as being more 'oppressed', 'vulnerable' and 'stigmatised' (alike Key Changes service users) as well as being ranked further towards being 'manipulative' and 'threatening'. This is very interesting and highlights this woman's view of stigma as being particularly strong, viewing her 'stigmatised self' as more vulnerable and threatening than her at arrest. Also, of note in the graph is the considerable space between 'police officer' and 'probation worker', where the police officer is viewed predominantly negatively, in contrast to the positive position of the probation worker. This relates to this woman's experience of treatment by the police working her case, and to the discussion of gendered trauma (see section 4.2.1).

**Participant two:**

Participant two also engaged well with the task and came up with a number of relevant constructs. Her elicited constructs and responses can be seen in Figure 4 below.

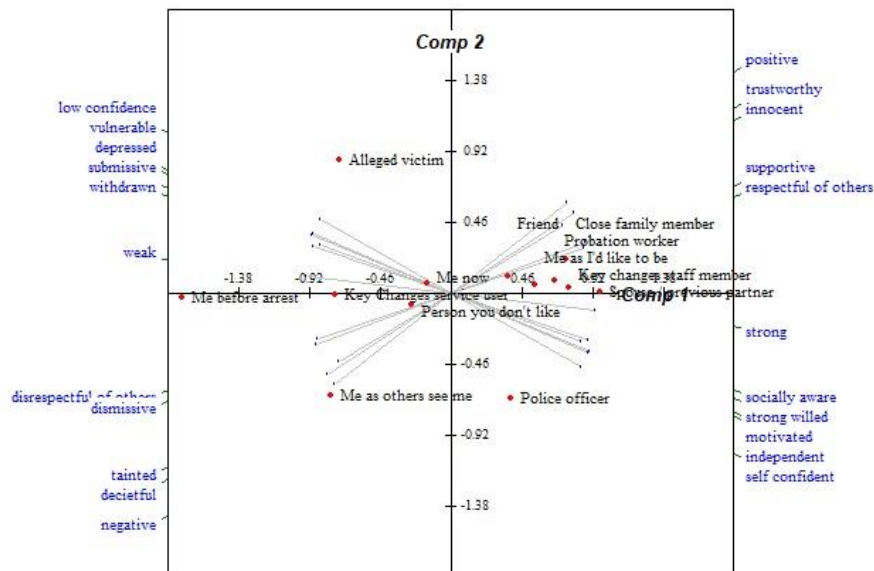
	Police officer		Close family member		Key Changes staff member		Alleged Victim		Me as I'd like to be		Spouse / previous partner		Me as others see me		Person you don't like		Probation worker		Key Changes service user		Me before arrest		Friend	
low confidence	3	1	6	5	1	7	6	4	6	7	5	6	3	self-confident										
withdrawn	6	1	6	4	2	7	6	6	6	7	6	7	4	socially aware										
Weak	5	1	6	2	2	7	6	5	6	7	7	7	4	Strong										
Negative	4	1	6	1	6	3	6	2	6	7	7	6	4	Positive										
dismissive	6	2	6	2	4	4	7	3	6	7	7	7	3	Supportive										
vulnerable	4	1	6	5	1	7	7	4	6	7	7	6	3	Independent										
submissive	4	1	6	5	3	7	5	3	4	7	6	6	2	strong willed										
Deceitful	6	1	7	1	6	4	7	6	6	7	7	7	4	Trustworthy										
Tainted	1	1	6	1	6	4	6	6	6	7	7	6	3	Innocent										
disrespectful of others	6	1	6	4	6	5	7	4	6	7	7	7	2	respectful of others										
depressed	4	1	6	4	1	7	7	5	5	7	6	7	4	Motivated										

*Figure 4: Repertory Grid for participant 2*

Within this grid, the constructs on the left relate to negative constructs and those on the right their positive element. The numbers populating the grid illustrate the scores given for each 'element' listed in the columns, for each polar construct listed in the rows on a Likert scale of 1-7. For example, the police officer is scored 6 out of a possible maximum of 7 for being 'socially aware'. This participant completed the grid without any missing data. The mean score of her ratings is 4.9, slightly above the midpoint of the scale (ranging 7-1), with a median of 6. Her ratings showed some asymmetry (skewness =-3.71 compared to a +/-1.96 routine cut point for z-scores), this

can be seen in the scale distribution, where the end points of the scale, particularly the '7' and '6' ratings have been used more often than other scale values (using the endpoints of the scale for only 37.06% of responses, demonstrating the much lower frequency of the lower rankings). The non-normal distribution is corroborated by the slight platykurtic value for kurtosis (-1.84 compares to +/-1.96). The average deviation in her rating was approximately 2 scale points (standard deviation 2.03). This frequent use of '6' and '7' perhaps demonstrates an over eagerness to rate all elements positively. Looking at minimum possible value ratings (1/7), these were ascribed to 'me before arrest' on 10 occasions, and to 'me now' on only one occasion, indicating some significant shift in the construction of the self over this time period. No other element was ascribed this low score on more than three occasions, demonstrating a particularly negative response to 'me before arrest'. In contrast, 'spouse' was rated with the highest possible score (7/7) on all 11 occasions, followed by 'close family member' on 7 occasions and 'Key Changes staff' and 'police officer' each being ranked the maximum score on 6 occasions, demonstrating a large difference in the construction of 'police officer' between the two participants. A principle component analysis (see figure 2) is used to visually display the distance between these rankings.

*PCA (no rotation) for Elicited Repertory Grid*  
 Axis Range: -1.34 to 1.34



*Figure 5: Principle components analysis for participant 1*

Within Figure Five, the elements are plotted within the space as points, and the constructs are plotted as vectors with their labels arranged around the edges of the graph, allowing the relationships between the elements, constructs and components to be examined. In contrast to the previous participant's graph, the vectors and elements within this PCA are very closely clustered around the first principle (significant) component with 'spouse' 'Key Changes staff member' and 'police' clustering around the 'positive' aspect of this component, characterised by a combination of 'supportive', 'respectful' 'strong', 'socially aware'. In contrast, 'me before arrest' is viewed most negatively of all the element, being most highly defined by the negative aspects of principle component one, characterised by 'weak', 'depressed' and 'disrespectful'.

Again, the distance in space between the four versions of the self is particularly distinct. with 'me as I'd like to be' scoring highest, being judged as 'positive', 'supportive', 'respectful', where 'me as others see me' is ranked most negatively on this component. Like the first participant's grid, 'me as others see me' is particularly negative, viewed as being more 'tainted' and 'deceitful' than 'me before arrest'. This again highlights the influence of stigma, suggesting a perceived lack of understanding of factors such as 'vulnerable', 'low confidence' and 'depressed' in this woman's view of public perceptions of women who have offended.

#### ***4.3.2.3.1 Discussion***

The repertory grids have provided a useful and highly idiographic way to further explore personal and interpersonal constructs in relation to key figures within the women's resettlement and the four versions of the self. It is particularly interesting within the grids to see the distances between these versions of the self, where both women's experiences and perceptions of stigma see them consistently ranking 'me as others see me' much lower than 'me before arrest'. Whilst both women rank 'me now' as being relatively close to 'me as I'd like to be', the difference in ranking of these versions of the self-demonstrate that these two women are still working towards personal goals, personal development and acceptance and belonging, as discussed in their earlier narratives. It is also interesting to see the visual depiction of differences in the women's perceptions of probation and police officers with police officers being viewed more negatively for the first participant. Support of probation staff echoes research finding that women are more likely to count probation workers as helpful social network members

than men (Bui & Morash, 2010; Maidment, 2006; Morash, 2010; Skee, Louden, Manchak, Vidal & Haddad, 2009).

Whilst the repertory grids produced some interesting data, they were not easy to implement, both women didn't wish to appear that they were being rude or demeaning to any of the people represented by the labels, even when considering 'someone I don't like'. In future research, I would aim to use multiple iterations of the grids over several time periods. This would allow the women to become familiar with the approach and, importantly, allow for the collection of this data at multiple points over the desistance period. This would allow exploration of change in view and construction of all of the elements within the grid, rather than the versions of the self which have been (somewhat retrospectively) explored within this study.

#### **4.4 Summary**

This chapter has presented findings which relate to women's discussions of their experiences of offending, incarceration and release, which addressed the following research questions:

- What are women's experiences of offending, incarceration and release?
- What factors influence and support women's resettlement?

The women who participated in this research demonstrated a great variation in experiences of offending, incarceration and release, demonstrating the heterogeneous nature of women in the Criminal Justice System. The women had differing backgrounds, support networks, social ties, and differing goals for the future. However, there were several commonalities running through the findings of this study around the broad themes of Trauma, Power and Agency; and Stigma and Identity. All of the women discussed experiencing aspects of gendered trauma and mental ill-health pre-prison (including mental health problems, substance misuse and abuse) which was related to offending behaviour by some of the women. They discussed the traumatisation caused by trials, incarceration and release, with contact with the Criminal Justice System, exacerbating mental health problems through a continued lack of power and autonomy. All of the women discussed factors around their release which appeared to influence their resettlement. For all of the women, release was a period of secondary traumatisation due to the isolation

experienced, regardless of the familial support network available. The women struggled with the loss and the rebuilding of relationships damaged by their offending and incarceration, with these relationships being important in the women's journeys 'back' to a positive non-offending identity, in line with the 'real me' in Maruna's (2001) findings. For many of the women, practical considerations such as arranging housing, benefits and debt repayments were overwhelming considerations upon their release and timely and appropriate support with these needs were valued as instrumental in the beginnings of the women's resettlement.

These results highlighted the importance of gendered trauma within women's offending, demonstrating the need for better support throughout the Criminal Justice System, from arrest to trial to incarceration to release. The staff at Key Changes were the only staff referred to in any depth or with any positivity throughout the women's interviews and several women discussed mistreatment by authority figures. This highlights a need for better mental health training and for the development of better staff-prisoner relationships at all stages of the CJS (Owers, 2011). The participants discussed their experiences of stigma at both an interpersonal and structural level with a level of self-stigmatisation or blame being demonstrated by women over a longer period of desistance and an increased level of self-reflection. For these women, the adoption of an 'old' or 'real' self was key here, supporting Maruna's (2001) redemption script findings, with women's offences being discussed as a deviation from their true-life course. Reflecting the desistance research, the women also highlighted the role and significance of capital, or lack thereof within their narratives of their offending, imprisonment and release. This will be explored in depth within Chapter 5, which details findings relating to women's experiences of mentoring, as capital was often discussed in ways which related to their experiences of Key Changes and of peer mentoring.

## 5. EXPERIENCES OF MENTORING

### 5.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the findings from participatory interviews with service users and peer mentors at Key Changes. The findings detailed relate to the exploration of the following research questions:

- What factors influence and support women’s resettlement?
- How do women view the role of Key Changes in relation to their resettlement and desistance from offending?
- What factors underpin successful mentoring relationships within this context?

As for the previous chapter, a total of eleven women participated in the research, eight service users and three peer mentors. Of the eight service users who participated, four took part in photo elicitation interviews and four in IOI interviews. All three peer mentors participated in a Photo Elicitation interview, following which, two of the women went on to participate in a Repertory Grid interview. An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of the transcripts resulted in the identification of two Master Themes. These were as follows:

- Community and capital
- Mentoring and Generative activity

Exploration of these themes and relating superordinate themes (See Table 4) provides the basis of this chapter, supported by verbatim extracts from the interviews with reference to relevant literature and theory.

Table 4: Visual representation of Master Themes and related Superordinate themes

Community and Capital	Connectedness and Capital
	Awareness and Distrust of Services
Mentoring and Generative activity	Group membership and shared identities
	Key changes and peer mentoring
	Professional exs and generative activity

These Master Themes are explored within this chapter, with reference to relevant literature and the corresponding photographs. A table of these themes (with relating superordinate themes) can be found in Appendix 11. Each theme is supported by verbatim extracts from the interviews. Missing material is detailed by dots within brackets [...], and both added information [to provide context] and removed information [to remove identifying details] is detailed within square brackets. As in the previous chapter, participants have not been given pseudonyms as these may have given differing impressions of demographic factors, such as age and ethnicity. As such, in the write up of findings participants are referred to by a letter and number (E.g. A1= service user interview number one. B1= peer mentor interview number one) and the line numbers or audio times of that quote in an attempt to preserve anonymity. Where quotes are included from the repertory grid interview, these are annotated by 'RG' and their corresponding interview letter and number (e.g. RG B1).

It is noted that the quotes discussed within these findings do not necessarily reflect the opinions of all participants in the research or of Key Changes staff and practices more broadly and are instead viewed as a snapshot of opinions about individual experiences. On several occasions' participants discuss similar experiences and needs and in others discuss contrasting experiences or differing combinations or reactions to their experiences. I have attempted to demonstrate this below; however, it is important to acknowledge the multiple and complex range of needs and experiences within this population. Like with all qualitative research, the subjective lens of the researcher must be acknowledged, and it is recognised that this is but one interpretation of the data. For more detail about the steps taken to ensure rigour and credibility, please refer to Section 3.4.1.

## **5.2 Community and Capital**

The women who participated in this stage of the research focused heavily upon the relationships and social ties that were important to them. For some women, this related to the avoidance of negative relationships, to the lack of familial or friendship support networks available for them on their release, to the rebuilding of damaged relationships or to detailing valued sources of support. It was evident that both their incarceration and their release into the community resulted in difficulties in maintaining existing relationships with family and friends, caused the



loss or change of existing social roles (relating to jobs, motherhood etc), and required a need to form new friendships. Thus, social and human capital are highlighted as being important factors in women’s resettlement, with women’s interaction with and acceptance by the community being impacted by disrupted social ties and relationships, feelings of lacking safety and of being isolated upon release.

Table 5: Visual representation of Master theme ‘Community and Capital’ and its related Superordinate themes:

Community and Capital	Connectedness and Capital
	Awareness and Distrust of Services

### 5.2.1 Connectedness and Capital

The women discussed the impact of institutionalisation, where they lacked autonomy and decision-making power and felt reliant on the entrenched routines and (for some) the valued support networks within the prison. For one-woman support networks in prison were bi-directional and formed out of necessity due to the distrust of staff members:

*If I was having a bad day, a particularly bad day and I felt you know, ‘id speak to the women before I’d speak to the staff [...] I think we supported and counselled each other and that’s what I mean when I talk about the community I was bereft of when I left, because that’s what we did for each other. If anyone was having- there was only, at capacity there was only 125 women at [prison] so it was a very close knit community. So we supported each other that way. (B3 52:37-55:20)*

This woman’s account was similar to that of one of the service users in Service user interviews, who also found a valued support network in prison, which made their return to prison a safe and easy option in the face of difficulties on release. For this peer mentor, this meant that she was shocked by her reaction to release:

*I wanted to be back! I never thought I’d say that! I hated- I didn’t HATE being in prison, but I wanted to be home, but when I was home I wasn’t prepared for [it] and nobody had spoken to*

*me about the possibility that I might miss what I'd had. I'd missed the structure, I'd miss the relationships, not only with the girls but with the staff as well because it, you know. It's a small place, you miss people and I wasn't prepared for that [...] it made me feel like a bad person*

*(B3; 48:04-49:54)*

It is interesting to note that this woman reflects positively here on the staff in prison, though in the previous is distrustful of staff in relation to mental health support, preferring to gain this from other prisoners to avoid the risk of being transported out to another prison. Indeed, positive views of prison itself were not consistent across interviews, despite the frequent discussion of institutionalisation, with some women describing the prevalence of violence amongst prisoners and maltreatment by staff. However, the above quote demonstrates the impact of the loss of capital through incarceration being mirrored on release back into the community. For those women missing the social capital amassed during their sentences, release again severed social ties, where women wishing to maintain these friendships must attend prison visitation, whilst also navigating their new life in the community.

Many of the service users discussed the support, or lack of, available to them on release, discussing feeling isolated in the community, even within any support networks that they had upon release. They highlighted struggles regaining old and forming new relationships in the community, a lack of understanding from loved ones and viewed relational factors within support relationships as being particularly important. One woman was surprised by her family's support: *"I didn't think they'd stick by me when I got locked up but they did"* (A6 415-416), and several women had positive relationships with family members and loved ones which they had maintained during their sentence and who provided them with much needed accommodation on their release. However, many women who did have support networks were not comfortable talking about their offending or incarceration with these family members and friends, due to a perceived lack of understanding and a fear of judgement. Beyond the support that was available to them, one participant had the additional consideration on release of needing to provide resettlement support for her partner: *"I need to stay out and keep straight so if she gets out at least she's got, at least she won't have to start off like I have, you know what I mean"* (A3 429-431). This cause additional pressure for this participant, who was attempting to desist from substance misuse:

*“the only thing I'm worried about is I know what she's like and she's, she's not strong headed like me. she's she needs drugs to motivate basically. and I know when she gets out here it'll be hard for me to keep her away from stuff. so I'm [...]trying to bid for flats in [town] so I can come here more, so [it] keeps me busy more before I end up doing summit. Then [when] she comes out she could come here.” (A3 383-392)*

This quote highlights the importance of support services, such as Key Changes, which can provide women with resettlement support over a variety of needs and reduce strain on family and loved ones. This quote demonstrates the difficulties with postcode lottery services for women, meaning that women must relocate to access needed and valued support.

All participants discussed the initial period following their release in terms of isolation and loneliness, either “shrinking away” (A4 6-8) from the world or “feeling unwanted” (A4 185-189) due to their offence label. Aspects of the women’s narratives here related to notions of belonging and acceptance, for example:



*“This is how I feel sometimes, even now on release. It's a good picture. I just feel isolated. I'm socially isolated, because although I'm on release erm a lot of people kind of- still I feel don't accept me. [...] I'm starting to get support but sometimes still I won't go out and just meet new people. I mean I could just go to the gym and people would obviously wanna talk to me and then I can't lie. You know and how much you know do you tell people? So I end up you know staying*

*at my own house most weekends and I would say I'm not generally a person that doesn't want to socialise, I'm a peoples person and this is how I feel. (B2, 24:32-25:45)*

The above quote supports the 'emotional trajectories' outlined in Farrall, Hunter, Sharpe and Calverley (2014) fifth wave of data collection in their longitudinal study, where the women are not able to progress into the final emotional phase of desistance until they feel that they are accepted by and belonging to the community. It is evident within the above quote that this woman does not feel fully accepted by the community, despite efforts to 'make good' and some increase in pride, belonging and trust following a long period of desistance. Isolation for many was a barrier to engaging in prosocial behaviour and peer groups due to a lack of knowledge of existing services and a lack of support upon release. This was further exacerbated by distances to Key Changes premises from housing (both supported housing placements and family homes) and curfews on tags, meaning for some, the service could not fill enough of their time:

*"I've got to get three busses from here" (A6 226)*

*"I only come two days so I still got another 5 days doing nothing" (A3 286-287)*

Within the women's narratives, one overarching issue is highlighted- the distinct lack of "community" evident on release (Visher & Travis, 2011). This meant long periods of stigma and isolation, negatively affecting mental health and self-view and contributing to the perception of release as a secondary trauma. This perhaps contributed to the overwhelming praise and gratitude for the support provided by Key Changes, where women were willing to travel large distances to access the centre. This highlights a need for more services, like Key Changes, which provide women with a safe place to gain qualifications and social networks. This lack of feeling connected and accepted by the community and the lack of social and human capital is interlinked with the theme of Stigma and Identity (discussed in section 4.3).

For many women who are eager to regain close relationships with family members, their release came with difficulties in stepping back into roles altered by time and circumstance. For one women, her role as a mother had changed with a grown-up daughter and role reversals as her child helped her in her resettlement:



*"This is [the] first ever time I was released out into the public [...] [it's] a picture of me holding my daughter's hand and she's actually 18years old. And I don't think a lot of 18yr olds really want to hold their mother's hand but when I left her she was 6 years old. I look a bit awkward on the picture and so does my daughter and she'd grown up and it was the first steps of trying to re-establish that relationship. Initially we were really happy, it was a good day but there were some awkward moments where I was trying to be her mum [...] but the role had changed" B2*

*(15.21-16.26)*

Within this quote the impact of sentence length on her relationship with her daughter is evident. This woman goes on to discuss how other women serving long sentences reported struggling to bond with their children on release:

*"There's some families where mothers have expected to be able to re-bond with the children and they can't re-bond with them because it's such a massive gap [...] some people [...] substance*

*miss-use or they've had a mental collapse or there's a high number of people that're getting recalled" (B2; 25.50 -27:43)*

This highlights the lack of support for women on long sentences specifically and the emotional impact of difficulties in regaining relationships with children. This supports findings suggesting women have high expectations of release, including resuming former roles and relationships with family members which is not easily possible in practice (La Vigne, 2009). The following quote shows the additional strain on these relationships caused by women's need for practical and emotional support from family members, in the absence of other support:

*"There were so many other things going on around me that I didn't have any help with and things were causing me quite a lot of stress, like not being safe in that house that I was staying in, it caused me a lot of stress and I offloaded to my daughter, which was the wrong person to offload to because we were trying to re-bond, so that impacted upon our relationship as well. Because she wanted me to go out there and be her mother, she didn't want somebody who was relying on her for help and support. So, and then I had nobody at all to go to and listen to and understand really what I was going through." (B2 29.01-30.32)*

This quote highlights the difficulties of juggling the necessity of accepting resettlement support from family members whilst adjusting to life in the community whilst trying to rebuild relationships. This in turn reinforces the need for accessible, impartial and non-judgemental support services for women, which manages women's expectations of release and provides them with space to work on rebuilding relationships. Without this, it is evident that these women's relationships with their children change from the distant mother during their incarceration, to the dependant mother on their release, with this transformation causing further strain on the relationship.

*"it was hard for me to deal with me because I'd had that big gap and I'd seen all the positive things, that's what I'd been presented with and actually my daughter had an attitude she was*

*angry you know, and you know she was a strong character and I was trying to live with her and it was difficult” (B2 37:00-37:50)*

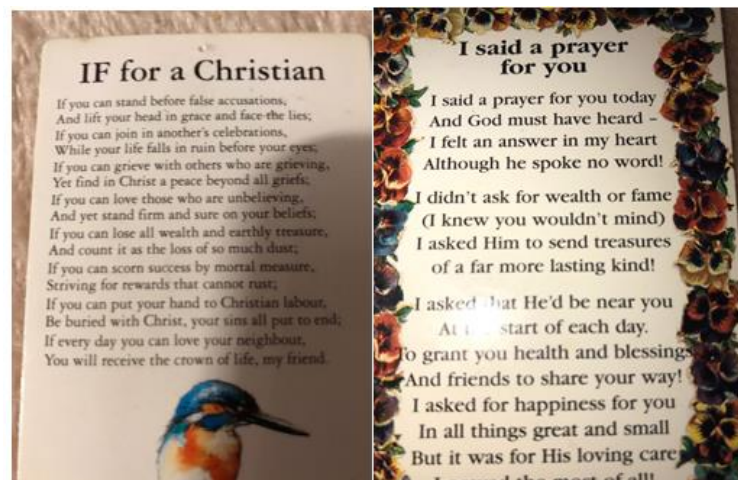
Literature and accounts from women who have resettled into the community discusses the initial (and often long-lasting) difficulties family members have in overcoming anger and resentment toward formally incarcerated relatives for whom they may have shouldered financial and emotional burdens and have suffered stigma through their association (Evans, 2007).

In addition to the importance of community and human capital, one woman touched on the concept of gaining strength through her faith. She discussed her religion as a source of comfort within a dark and lonely period of her sentence:

*“When I first was in the police cell, it's the first time I've ever prayed in my life. I just thought gosh, if there's a god up there you've gotta help me. [...] I just continually prayed and prayed and I had some people from the local church come and visit me and we prayed together and then I experienced this kind of feeling that I'd never experienced before [...] I began this spiritual journey and I continued it all the way through my sentence and I would meditate you know and kind of I went on this inner journey and I realised that I was, while I was a child my mum said some really horrible things that built up this fear inside of me I was quite afraid of a lot of things and I just meditated and meditated and then erm I was just trying to face all these negative things.” (B2 41:36-42:57)*

It is evident that this woman's spirituality supported her through a period of self-reflection, enabling her to face grief and make sense of her current situation. This experience goes beyond that discussed by the woman who discusses God 'smiling' on her as a measure of her fortune in prison. Criminology, whilst previously criticised for overlooking the importance of religion within cultures and thus within crime, has since gone on to posit religion as an important bulwark against it, “*A robust variable that tends to be associated with the lowered likelihood of delinquency*” (Jonson & Jang, 2012: 120-121). Furthermore, research has shown religion (for some) to be a

trigger for change, allowing the individual to reflect on personal priorities (Weaver & McNeill, 2014). Other research suggests religion can act as the sole motivator for desistance (Hallett & McCoy, 2014) resulting in gaining important space and identity shifts (Jang & Johnson, 2016; Deuchar et al., 2016). However, neither of these explanations for the role of religion ‘fit’ with this participant’s story, where religion appears to act more as a comfort, when she had little else. For this woman, religion also provided the support of other church members who sent letters of support and provided additional links to the outside community and thus an additional source of social capital.



*“Poems that were sent to me [...] it says "if you can stand before false accusations and lift your head in grace and face the lies and if you can join in another's celebrations whilst your life falls before your eyes" and it's a long poem and it says if you can do that you're a really strong person basically.[...] it was [from] a lady from the local church [...] she was trying to get me to hold onto something, some hope [...] that in itself, you know, was... I had nothing, so it felt it gave me little bit of hope, a little bit of strength. Then she sent me another card saying 'I've said a prayer for you' so it meant a lot that people were actually praying for me and that kind of kept me going and actually there were some people out there, despite this huge stigma, that were, you know, were actually just with me you know, kind of praying and that meant such a lot to me.”*

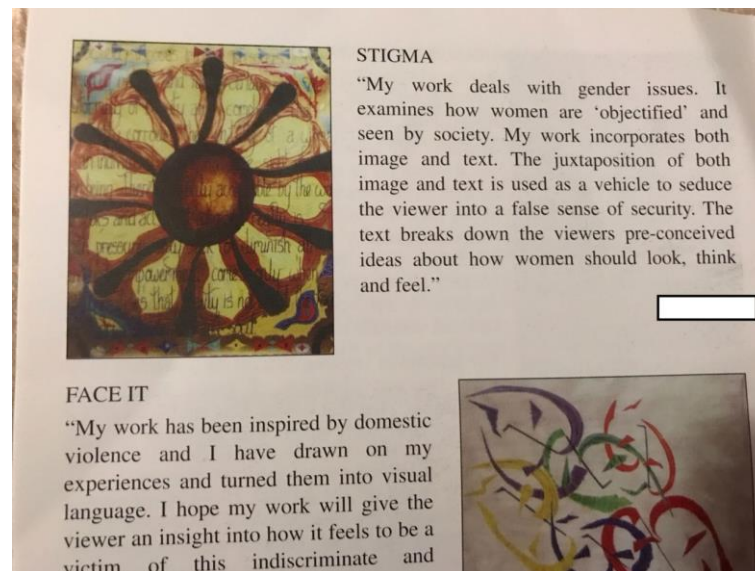
(B2 9.00-10.38)



This relates more strongly to Kewley, Larkin et al (2016) findings that, for some, engagement in religion provided comfort and enabled the creation of new ‘prosocial’ networks that act as a source of forgiveness and a sense of belonging.

### 5.2.2 Distrust of Services

The women discussed negative experiences throughout contact with the Criminal Justice system and services upon their release. This included poor legal advice, where several women were assured that they were unlikely to receive a guilty verdict or custodial sentence, resulting in a lack of subsequent practical and childcare arrangements and a negative view of prison staff. The photograph below and accompanying quote depict one woman’s relationship with the police during her case:



*"I was an attractive young woman and I'd been made [out] to manipulate this man who I had no control over [...] the police decided, or it was their kind of prosecution case that I'd manipulated this man that had kind of low to average intelligence and that he'd said he was obsessed with me. That I'd actually manipulated him. They didn't say with attractiveness, but I mean, that's all I had you know, I was kind of- I was attractive because I was young, not saying that I was- I was, I was young but vulnerable and attractive. But without saying I was attractive they just said I'd manipulated him and the only thing I could think of was my hair, because I had nice hair at the time" (B2; 3:20- 5:18)*

Here the shoe-horning of women into the role of ‘manipulator’, where Police Officers were initially viewed as a source of protection, which they failed to provide, compromised trust of police officers. This stigmatised view of females as ‘criers, liars and manipulators’ has been evidenced in probation and psychologists working with young female offenders and to be further influenced by racial/ethnic stereotypes (Gaarder, Rodriguez & Zatz, 2004) and also relates to the frequently heard notion within CJS services that it is ‘easier’ to work with male offenders.

Individual circumstances on release differed for all of the women concerning the availability and knowledge of support services. Many of the women demonstrated that release from prison without support was a traumatic experience and there was a consensus that more support was needed. However, whilst this was the case, several of the women held a distrust of these services’ existence, and doubt or disbelief of their claims to help their case:

*“They help you get jobs, so they say,” (A1 327).* The overwhelming feeling here was that many participants were uninformed of which services existed more broadly, as well as which they were eligible to access, and the processes involved in doing so. Indeed, when asked about other services, the majority of participants were unaware of any in the area: *“When you come out of prison you just don’t know where to go, who to see, what to do.” (A1 160-161)*, and viewed isolation or reoffending as their only other options. Those who were aware of alternative options, including training programmes, lacked confidence around their eligibility and employability, linking to literature which demonstrates a negative correlation between increasing sentence length and worsening employment levels, with no correlation present for sentences of less than 6 months (Remakers et al, 2014).

For some participants, this included an initial distrust of Key Changes, where participants had a ‘I’ll believe it when I see it’ attitude. This outlook may have come from previous experiences of services being unreliable. Indeed, one woman discussed the plethora of services advertised during her sentence, describing how they would no longer be running in certain areas, be accepting new clients or had lost funding by the time of her release. It may be likely that she has also seen this happen to other prisoners, or that this could be the underlying attitude towards services within prison more generally. It is also evident that some participants are not initially as willing to ask for, or accept, support from services; *“there wouldn’t have been no help, I would have had to arrange*

*everything myself if it weren't for this place” (A7 370-371).* This may come from a place of isolation and learned helplessness; this participant had been in and out of prison several times and had a lot of knowledge about the system and unfavourable changes to release grants. This hopeless view of the option’s available links to wider literature around worldview and subjectivity, where this participant holds factors relating to their resettlement under an external locus of control. This distrust of services was broad *“I don’t trust anyone” (A3 259)* and appeared to result in a greater value of services, which came through for them, personally, in a time of need. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (2015) noted prisoner preference for peer rather than formal support services due to their accessibility and availability.

### **5.3 Mentoring and Generative Activity**

The women discussed the role of Key Changes in their own resettlement journeys, where they gained peer support or provided mentoring, with one woman experiencing the service from both perspectives. The women discussed the aspects of the service they valued and the support they sought to provide. Many women particularly valued the support they gained from peer mentors at Key Changes, who went beyond simply meeting a large need in service provision, to providing a safe environment and a source of social capital, which fostered empowerment and change. The discussion of this master theme is divided into discussion of key aspects of related superordinate themes.

Table 6: Visual representation of Master Theme ‘Mentoring and Generative Activity’ with related Superordinate themes

Mentoring and Generative activity	Group membership and shared identities
	Key changes and peer mentoring
	Professional exs and generative activity

### 5.3.1 Group Membership and Shared Identities

A group membership was extended to all services users by some participants, who believed they had some core understanding of each other's experiences. A perceived lack of understanding drawn from a lack of shared experiences was a frequent form of 'othering' when interviewing the service users. This referred to me as the researcher, who they largely assumed had no personal experiences of or broader knowledge of the processes involved in everything from release to the (very generalised) lifestyle of an offender. It was interesting to see how assigning group membership to other service users allowed them to overlook core socioeconomic, family and lifestyle differences in others, who may not have classified themselves as similar.

*“they know what you've been through. Like you lot wouldn't, I'm sorry for being- but you or any other people wouldn't understand, because you've not been on tag and you've not been in jail and you've not been through that shit to like know what go on, you get me, you just think it and hear what other people have got to say and that how you know... but with some people, they already know because they've already been through that, they've been there. that's, that's the best thing, because they're here to support you. they know, they know what to do” (A2 207-215)*

Within this quote there is the assumption that she has shared ground with the other women at the service, however her being on tag is not necessarily the same as the experiences referred to by those who are resettling from a prison sentence. This is interesting as the experiences cited are so wide ranging, yet she ascribes firmly into this group membership, especially considering that several of the other participants would not group themselves with her based on differences in attitudes but would perhaps relate themselves more closely with the staff members, based on shared goals of success and reintegration. Perhaps the lack of autonomy or interaction with the CJS is the perceived unifier. Many of the women discussed a perceived shared identity and common ground with the other service users and with staff members at the service:

*“...and, you know, some of the women here have struggled their selves as well [...] so they understand don't they” (A7 407-408).*

This peer support allowed some participants to accept support and work well within the training opportunities provided. This is demonstrated in the following quote, where one participant overcame attitudinal and behavioural issues which had resulted in her being rejected for other training programmes in the community.

*“Not telling me what to do, like sit down and go do yo work now, like bla bla bla, I don’t like people -don’t nobody talk to me like that. Fuck that... But they’re nice people here, man. I’ve got right good relationship with [company director] and all that” (A2 232-236)*

This peer support was linked to increased confidence and a willingness to share their experiences within a safe and non-judgemental environment. This in turn was attributed to beginning to process and work through their issues relating to their offence or incarceration. This is demonstrated in the following quote:

*“yeah yeah, it’s interesting. you know when you hear about other people’s experiences, yours is nothing compared to theirs. And you think yours is bad, but there’s worse out there, and what they’re going through and what they’re trying to achieve. and they’re getting there as well. [...] I think you get it off your chest... or sometimes you don’t need to be reminded of it too much but yeah, it’s good... [it helps you] tolerate or cope with what you’ve got yeah” (A1 950-975)*

Participants’ goals and motivations varied significantly, with some participants having overarching goals relating to long-term self-fulfilment and others having more immediate, short term focuses. This relates clearly to the hierarchy of needs literature (Maslow, 1943, 1954) with immediate practical concerns over shelter and safety (housing, benefits, food etc.), on release, and a later focus on belongingness (including family relationships and social and human capital) and esteem needs (around reputation and identity). Some women discussed goals for fulfilment, empowerment and peace. Working on enhancing their life and gaining peace of mind were discussed as long-term emotional goals and significant achievements.

The women above appeared to identify closely with the respected staff members at Key Changes, who they admired for turning an offence history into a useful source of support for other women and distanced themselves from an “offending identity”. This included acknowledgements of ‘other’ women who were viewed as more

serious or serial offenders, or those who were not interested in life in the community. A minority of women however represented an alternate stance, appearing to actively defend aspects of their identity related to their offending behaviour, including pride in their offences and offence supportive distortions. These women discussed ongoing and unmet areas of need, which were current focuses, for example, ongoing troubles with substance dependency. Interestingly, these women had been recently released into the community and focused largely on practical support need within their interviews. Beyond employment, one participant discussed the importance of finding fulfilment within that job, where the lack of these jobs, rather than any internal factors, was viewed as the cause of drug use and lack of motivation to work.

These women who had been recently released were most likely to make broad assumptions based on a perceived group membership, believing they shared a core understanding of each other's experiences. This allowed one women to overlook core socioeconomic, family and lifestyle differences between her and other women, who may not have classified themselves as being similar.

*“They know what you've been through. Like you lot wouldn't. I'm sorry for being- but you or any other people wouldn't understand, because you've not been on tag and you've not been in jail and you've not been through that shit to like know what go on, you get me, you just think it and hear what other people have got to say and that how you know... but with some people, they already know because they've already been through that, they've been there. That's, that's the best thing, because they're here to support you. They know, they know what to do and. I were angry, they'd know. Wait, if I were angry they'd know. Wait if someone were doing that to me I'd walk away you get me- d'ya know, one of them ones... They just know wagwan” (A2 213-229)*

Within this quote there is the assumption that this participant has shared ground with the other women at the service, however her being on tag is not necessarily the same as the experiences referred to by those who are resettling from a prison sentence. This is interesting as the experiences cited are so wide ranging, yet she ascribes firmly into this group membership, especially considering that several of the other participants would not group themselves with her based on differences in attitudes and attempts to distance themselves from an 'offending'

identity. This woman also cites a shared identity as being the sole motivation for her engagement with a training course at Key Changes:

*“They’re just like you so they can work better with ya and they can understand yas and all” (A2 40-41).*

Here it is evident that the woman views the staff at Key Changes as being more competent at working with her based on this perception of common ground. To support this, she referred frequently to ‘others’, including me as the researcher and providers of non-peer services, who she assumed had no personal experiences of or broader knowledge of the processes involved in everything from release to the (very generalised) lifestyle of an offender. This highlights the importance of peer support on release, where women are more open to engaging with peer mentors based on an assumed understanding and trust.

### **5.3.2 Key Changes and Peer mentoring**

Within the service-users’ narratives, the role played by Key Changes in their resettlement to date is highlighted. For many women, discussion within their interviews consistently reverted back to praising the care and support they had received from Key Changes and their peer mentors which was viewed as being instrumental in the women’s successes *“...if I want ere, I’d be in jail. Back in jail” (A3, 12)*. The centre was viewed as a safe haven, where women could *“try get their life back on track” (A6 84-86)* and *“keep [...] out of trouble” (A3 11)*. Women valued the non-judgemental, individualised support they received and the sense of shared identity with staff members and other women at the centre. A perceived shared understanding was the most discussed characteristic of staff members and other service users at Key Changes.



*“I took a picture of a computer because I'm now doing the ECDL, which I didn't think, didn't have the confidence in using computers [...] it's a recognised qualification [...] hard work, but I'm sticking to it” (A5 47-58)*

The women valued the non-judgemental environment and the practical and emotional support given by Key Changes on their release from prison, from the basics of access to phones and computers to arrange benefits to accompanying women to solicitors' appointments or meetings with family members. The woman in the above quote valued the access to education and training, highlighting gaining her qualification in the use of computers as a key goal, demonstrating how practical support was tailored to individual need. Value was given to the personal care given by staff members who were well liked and respected and provided support that alleviated fear of release into the community, reduced isolation in the community and increased self-confidence pre-release:

*“you're just thinking the fear of coming out, it's the fear of coming out, the fear of seeing people, what people would say or anything like that. but er when I came out I were alright. and then, as I said, I spoke to [mentor] anyway so, that weren't too bad. that fear was taken away a little bit. not that much, but a little bit” (A1 476-480)*

The individualised nature of this support was highlighted by many of the women: *“she phoned them personally and [...] she really was with me hand in hand” (A1 60-67)*. Here the language used, for example the word



'personally' demonstrates how appreciated this support is and the personal value taken from this care and attention to her needs, a sentiment echoed by other participants:

*"They've helped me to more or less er think that your worth- ye not a nobody, you're worth, you are worth more or less getting back and you are more or less, there is someone there to help you and you're not alone" (A4 190-193)*

This quote demonstrates the importance placed on this support, which has been provided at a time where this woman is feeling particularly isolated and low. This is linked to increased self-worth, self-esteem and pride in personal achievements, which were demonstrated by examples such as a confidence to stand up for oneself to abusive partners or stigmatised views. The centre was valued as a safe place where they could go to keep busy and off the streets and as a "lifeline" (A7 P1 423) to those lacking resettlement support from friends or family.

Importantly, the service was praised for the autonomy given to the women over their own support, encouraging them to develop self-confidence and ownership over their decisions. The women were responsible for arranging contact with Key Changes "she said it were up to me to make that contact" (A1 39), for outlining their own needs and were empowered to decline support when they felt that they no longer needed it. This relates to notions of co-producing desistance (Weaver, 2011), highlighted within the literature as being important in promoting desistance. Participants reported valuing support tailored to individual's needs, which was constant throughout their resettlement. The peer nature of the service was viewed as being of core importance to many of those who participated in this stage of the research. Beyond benefitting from the peer mentors at Key Changes, it is evident that the service users benefitted from the opportunity to meet other women at the centre. This allowed for the discussion of shared experiences of prison and their lives in the community, which allowed the women to feel less isolated and to develop a source of social capital;

*"not feeling alone, that there's other people in the same predicament as yourself and that there's always somebody there that you can talk to" (A4 12-13)*

Participants spoke positively about this environment and the positive impact it had on self-esteem, citing the centre as the only place they were able to talk about their offence histories:

*“it's interesting. you know when you hear about other people's experiences, yours is nothing compared to theirs. And you think yours is bad, but there's worse out there, and what they're going through and what they're trying to achieve. and they're getting there as well. [...] I think you get it off your chest... or sometimes you don't need to be reminded of it too much but yeah, it's good... [it helps you] tolerate or cope with what you've got yeah” (A1 950-975)*

*“ it helps because it helps to get it off your chest, you can sit and talk and realise that you're not the only one. I'm not the first one and I won't be the last one” (A5 191-199)*

In addition, other service users also provided a source of practical and emotional support, as seen in the following exchange:

*“P2 I wouldn't have known where else to go*

*P1 I could've, we could've gone to together women or addaction and there's a place called archers that do free breakfasts*

*P2 Is there?*

*P1 and dinners, cooked dinners for £1.50. you've got a bus pass so you could go there and get a cooked breakfast every morning*

*P2 is that in town? [...] I'll have to write all these little tips down (laughter)*

*P1 mm you'll have to give me your number as well ” (A7 229-239)*

In the above quote there is evidence of peer support, with one participant within a group interview being able to help the other with practical support on her recent release into the community. This quote demonstrates an act that is rewarding to the helper and beneficial for the recipient of the new information. This illustrates the benefit of the women's centre at Key Changes, where the women are able to generate new social ties and practical support. This

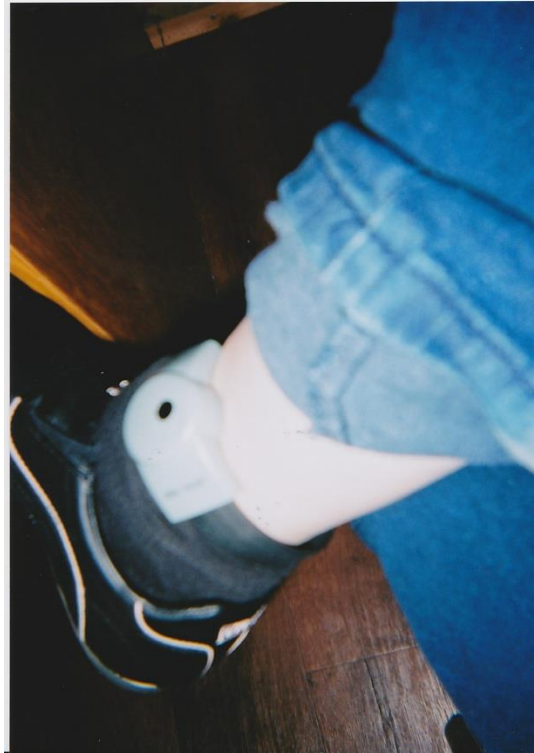
relates to literature demonstrating that relationships are particularly important within women's resettlement (E.g. Brown & Ross, 2010; Bui & Morash, 2010), as well as literature which suggests the benefits of supporting others (LeBel & Maruna, 2015; Lofland, 1969; Maurana, 2001). For those who had been engaged with the service for a longer period of time, the desire to use their experiential knowledge of resettlement to help others was a key long-term goal, where this provided the opportunity to 'give back' for the support they had received.

*“giving something back, I'm giving something back more or less for the help that I've had and people have helped me get back to being able to live, being able to live a life.” (A4 804-807)*

*“P I'm excited about it, I'm really, really. I did an erm speech in front of some probation officers and [name] and they said I were outstanding [...] and I've seen the MP, [name] and he's backing me up with the talks and everything [...] made me feel passionate about it, I really wanna talk about it. that you know, you might be getting bullied and mentally abused, but you know there is ways round it” (A5 445-455)*

Here the praise given from respected individuals is an obvious reward, relating to benefits of generative activity (LeBel & Maruna, 2015; Lofland, 1969; Maurana, 2001) as well as to literature around the feeling that adoption of a new pro-social identity has been acknowledge and accepted by the community (e.g. Farrall et al, 2014) being key within desistance.

Whilst the service users demonstrated several commonalities in their experiences, the women focused on different goals, needs and strengths in their focus for the future. It was evident that women who had been recently released were preoccupied with immediate personal needs around safety, housing and debt, where as those who had begun to settle into life in the community and were thus free to focus on relationships and 'giving back'. The women were supported by Key Changes in their attempts at “givin' somethin' back for the help that I've had” (A4 410-418), for example within the opportunity to engage in the educational presentations scheme run by the service. An example of this is seen in the following photograph and quote:



*“ I’m doing ‘Prison? Me? No way!’ [...] it’s going round talking to teenagers [...] about things and obviously I wanted to take a picture of me tags just to show em [...] when it starts so I just want to be able to show teenagers that it’s not a little ankle bracelet, that it is a big thing [...] I’ve done a few talks and I’m gonna go round with them talking, to try and keep, you know, try and give them’t negative points” (A5 426-441)*

This relates to Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs (1943, 1954), where the women who are under less threat from the lack of these provisions are free to focus on aspects of personal growth, including generative activity, seen in women helping out at the centre and becoming involved in the educational presentations scheme

### **5.3.3 Professional Ex’s and Generative Activity**

The three women came to peer mentoring with differing backgrounds; one had come to her role at Key Changes without experiencing mentoring before and another had received peer mentoring support at Key Changes and then gone on to train as a mentor herself. The third woman had begun peer mentoring other women during her sentence, through supporting others in a formal context in prison and had then gone on to found Key Changes. It was evident that the peer mentors valued and felt they personally benefitted from the peer-mentoring role and the

environment at Key Changes. They discussed it fostering a sense of community and belonging and as being a relaxing environment, without fear of judgement from others, where they could build their self-confidence.

*“Through coming here I've built up networks, I think it's helped quite a lot speaking to other women who've been in similar situations [...] seeing how [name] has really built things up and not let it stop her and worked hard and had the confidence to go out there and build this charity. I think that having a network and just knowing that other women have been in similar situations and felt similar things, is a big kind of comfort and makes you feel like you're not on your own[...] being able to be open about it as well and not feel as though you have to really keep it quiet [...] is a relief and its some kind of comfort in some way [...]. I suppose you're dealing with it yourself and accepting it” (B1 39-57)*

For this woman, the peer mentor who founded Key Changes was a positive example of success in the community. As in the quote, working at the service also provided women the place to meet with other women, serving as a source of social and human capital by enabling the women to develop networks and adopt their profession as a source of pride:

*Yeah it gives you a bit more pride, because you're kind of taking it, you try to treat it like a job. Like a paid job. You've got to really, because you can't just turn up when you want and leave [laughter] but it kind of gives you a bit more like you're working towards something and building your skills and building your knowledge and your networks. So it's good. (B1 663-668)*

This provided the opportunity to build their confidence in discussing their own offence histories, gaining support and perspective from others in a safe and non-judgemental environment, thus gaining a sense of community and belonging- additional sources of social capital. Within this quote, it is evident that this peer mentor has benefitted from the environment at Key Changes, which promoted self-acceptance and empowerment. This echoes the findings of Service user interviews, where women valued the non-judgmental peer support available. This finding supports Farrall et al (2014) emotional trajectories, where becoming accepted was characterised by a reduction of guilt and shame and an increase in positive emotions, including pride, belonging and trust.

The peer mentors' motivations to support the resettlement of other women included an urge for criminal justice reform and to provide women with better support than they themselves had received upon release:

*"I have a lot of empathy for the women that are in prison. I think they're a misunderstood group of women and I think we've criminalised a lot of women that have serious backgrounds of trauma and because of life circumstances have found themselves in that criminal erm and now they've got this label of being a criminal, and so they're further marginalised [...] I think it's having a safe environment for women to talk you know, openly about their issues because I think it's so difficult to be able to, for me having that first probation officer, I couldn't have spoken to her about any of the issues I was facing because I didn't trust her [...] if you can't trust someone in authority it's a really difficult thing to be open with them about some of the issues you're kind of facing. (B2 28.14-36.42)*

The women provided support in areas which had been particularly salient during their own sentencing, for example around the emotional considerations of release, and around education as a tool for empowerment:

*"I just think, for me it, it did actually save me, the education and training. And I think, I just think if somebody's got skills where they can get jobs, the woman can then make themselves self-sufficient in the community. And that's really what I'm trying to do to- empower them, so [they] can have skills, they can get employment, so they don't have to rely on people, they can get themselves out of negative relationships, they can finance themselves, you know, they can get their own house, and that what I want them to have. To have a quality life really" (B2 50:06-50:44)*

The women discussed enjoying their peer mentoring roles and the atmosphere at Key Changes, discussing being recruited in a non-judgemental and professional manner following periods of rejection from other posts based on their criminal records:

*"Like I say I've wanted to do volunteering for years, and I stopped trying for a couple of years because of all the rejection I was getting [...] I feel like that's reaffirmed to myself that I am capable of doing that and how much I enjoy it, how much I get out of it, helping other people. It's just something I've wanted to do for so long and because of my own issues I haven't been able to, and then because of my convictions I couldn't do it either so it just gives you so much self-confidence and self-esteem knowing that you're capable of doing that and that you can use the skills that you've got." (B1 102-114)*

Within this quote it is evident that these women perceive themselves as being capable of providing women with much needed support and that they have benefitted from their engagement in this generative activity. However, whilst the women all discussed aspects of criminal justice reform that they would like to see, one woman discussed a lack of other employment opportunities, suggesting that involvement in this generative activity was a second choice over other (paid) and personally fulfilling work. Women experienced tangible benefits of performing generative activity, both in prison (such as access to the enhanced wing) and on release (in the form of employment opportunities and a rare non-judgemental environment). Generative activity for these women can therefore go beyond a source of prosocial drive to serve as a source of escape and a way to gain physical comforts within the prison environment. It is however evident that this role was key in gaining self-confidence, autonomy, a positive and recognised identity, and empowerment. These findings support models demonstrating the positive impact on wellbeing that activity and social engagement can have (Best et al 2011), where work and social networks have been significantly associated with positive change (Trochino et al, 2013). This experience is articulated well in the following quote:

## Empower Yourself by Empowering Others



*“I’ve chosen this key as my photograph [...] it says empower yourself by empowering others, which I believe is true, because I get. It builds my confidence talking to other women, knowing I’m helping them, even if it’s just a small part of my experience that’s helped them or just enabling them to offload a little bit and just connect through shared experiences. So it’s two fold because I’m helping somebody else, plus it’s building my self-esteem and my self-confidence back up again” (B3; 38:39-40:18)*

The peer mentors discussed how they enjoyed the personal approach taken within their supporting roles. Emphasising the notion of this role providing a point in their lives at which their criminal records were not seen as a disadvantage, but a useful qualification in understanding vulnerability and disadvantage in others. Being able to view oneself as being uniquely qualified to support others backs some of the literature around ‘making good’ (Maruna, 2001) of a criminal history by utilising it as a community asset to “reconcile a criminal past” (Lebel, Richie & Maruna, 2015, p.110). Here the women’s offence histories are valuable and tradeable goods with which to begin building their lives in the community and the women engaged in this generative activity are capitalising on this as well as reacting to a prosocial drive towards prison reform, demonstrating a more complex picture than that portrayed in the literature.



## 5.4 Summary

This chapter has presented findings which relate to women's experiences of supported resettlement and mentoring and which addressed the following research questions:

- What factors influence and support women's resettlement?
- How do women view the role of Key Changes in relation to their resettlement and desistance from offending?
- What factors underpin successful mentoring relationships within this context?

The interviews demonstrated that whilst several of the women had similar support needs, they intersected with numerous other needs, goals and support systems and were experienced and reacted to differently. The findings highlighted the importance of relationships within these women's resettlement, where some received support from family and friends on their return to the community and others experienced isolation and loss of identities associated with previous roles (such as mother, daughter, sister, colleague, friend) with the breakdown of relationships during their offending and incarceration. For some women the rebuilding of damaged relationships was prioritised over more practical resettlement needs, highlighting the importance of capital within women's resettlement. This is somewhat at odds with other findings, where the women demonstrated a shift in focus from practical and safety concerns on their immediate release, to focusing on personal growth and shifts in identity, which for some women related to giving back to the community for the support they had received. These experiences generally related well to Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943, 1954, 1970b). This change in focus over time in the community relates to demonstrating the shift towards self-growth and self-actualisation, with women's examples of generative activity perhaps indicating the final stage- transcendence- supporting others to self-actualise.

Key Changes and the peer mentoring staff were viewed as positive examples of success in the community by the service users, with staff being trusted based on a perceived shared identity and the high level of individualised support provided. These shared experiences were viewed as useful in gaining knowledge from useful services to learning ways to disclose an offence to a potential employer. The service was valued for enabling women to access

training and education which would support their goals of being employed and autonomous, as well as for providing emotional and social support during their resettlement. For the peer mentors, generative activity benefited them through building self-confidence, skills and allowing the construction and validation of a prosocial identity, a key step highlighted within the desistance literature (e.g. McMahon, 1995; Farrall et al, 2014; Solinger, 1992; Stone, 2015, 2016). It is interesting to note the discussion of voluntary work as an essential stepping stone towards paid employment by one of the peer mentors, highlighting a lack of opportunities upon release for women (skilled and unskilled) as well as perhaps an over-focus in the literature upon generative activity as the sole motivation of 'professional exs'.

In response to the third research question, it is evident that the women responded well to support which was individualised and orientated to personal goals and needs. Many discussed admirations of and close relationships with peer mentors, who they perceived as being competent and trustworthy due to a perceived shared identity. The women valued support from peer mentors which they viewed as being constant, easily accessible and non-judgemental. The peer mentors discussed prior experiences of support which was detrimental to their own resettlement, including advice which placed additional financial or emotional strain or approaches to support which de-valued or dehumanised them, citing these as practices which were avoided. They also highlighted examples of positive mentoring support they had received, which they aimed to replicated within their own practice. The peer mentors recognised and discussed the barriers women faced when resettling into the community post-incarceration and stressed a need for criminal justice reform and additional support for women within the CJS.

## 6. DISCUSSION

### 6.1 Research Overview:

Throughout this PhD research, I aimed to add to the limited literature base on women's experiences of incarceration and resettlement through the exploration of a number of research questions as follows:

- What are women's experiences of offending, incarceration and release?
- What factors influence and support women's resettlement?
- How do women (service users and peer mentors) view the role of Key Changes in relation to their resettlement and desistance from offending?
- What factors underpin successful mentoring relationships within this context?

A total of eleven women (eight service users and three peer mentors) at Key Changes, a peer mentoring and educational presentations scheme (see section 1.2) took part in participatory interviews. The research used a mixed-methods approach which was largely qualitative in practice and which incorporated a number of participatory research methods, in an attempt to reduce the power-imbalance between researcher and participant and to ensure the research was participant led. Including both service users and peer mentors ensured I had the opportunity to speak to women who were receiving peer mentoring support as they began their desistance journeys, as well as to those who were providing peer mentoring services, viewed as being much further along in their desistance. An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was conducted to facilitate in-depth, idiographic analysis and to allow for the emergence of Master Themes across cases. Little existing literature has focused on women's experiences of resettlement when either accessing or working at a women-centred peer mentoring service like Key Changes. Therefore, the results were not found to be consistent with any existing theory but with specific subsets of the desistance literature, including Maruna's (2001) narrative identity theory of desistance, which identified five themes of redemptive narratives: the good 'real me', the bad 'it', empowerment by others, redemptive suffering and narrating a generative future. The findings also highlight several gaps within the desistance literature, specifically around the importance of gendered trauma and the lack of attention paid to emotional aspects of desistance.

Across the interviews, findings in relation to the first research question “*What are women’s experiences of offending, incarceration and release?*” reiterated that the women participating in the research experienced a complex range of needs and had different experiences of the criminal justice system, for example, having differing motivations to offend, or differing support networks available on release. Many of the needs identified by the women participating in the research relate to the 9 Pathways Model (Home Office Reducing Re-Offending National Action Plan, 2004a; Women and Young People’s Group, HM Prison Service, 2006). However, the women also highlighted other needs not incorporated in this model, including the impact of stigma on confidence and identity and the importance of social and human capital. Many of the women discussed the role and impact of gendered trauma in their offending, incarceration and release, which tended to result in a lack of power and agency, for example, abusive relationships and the removal of children.

The research question “*What factors influence and support women’s resettlement?*” highlighted several differences in women’s support needs and the level of support available to each individual. Several women discussed being released to new areas of the country, new addresses and the lack of knowledge and support networks which accompanied this, highlighting the practical and social support available at Key Changes as being particularly important to them. For other women, support was available from networks of family or friends, while for others, these relationships had been damaged through offending and incarceration and rebuilding these were the focus of the women’s resettlement. These differences in resettlement goals, with some focusing on shorter-term practical considerations and others on more long-term relational support needs, often differed based on the length of time women had been in the community and their level of practical support need i.e. it was rare for women to put relational or fulfilment needs before basic human needs such as shelter and food, however several did prioritise this to some extent. The peer mentors, and several of the service users who were accessing long-term post-release support, focused their discussions around generative activity and but also appeared to internalise stigma to varying degrees. In relation to networks of support, the women discussed the value of those providing effective and non-judgemental support, including Key Changes staff and service users, probation and prison staff.

Advice and treatment which was less positive or evidence of bad practice and which was seen as being detrimental to the women's resettlement was also highlighted, and related primarily to a distrust of some prison and probation staff.

Findings in relation to the research questions "*How do women view the role of Key Changes in relation to their resettlement and desistance from offending?*" and "*What factors underpin successful mentoring relationships within this context?*" demonstrated the importance and value of individualised non-judgmental support within their resettlement. Many of these women discussed gaining this only from peer methods of support, including the support of their peers in prison and peer mentors and peers on their release at Key Changes. It is interesting to note that women tended not to attribute positive and non-judgemental support from paid staff who they had formally met within the CJS, with several women describing negative interactions with staff throughout their investigation, trial, incarceration and release; from police to prison staff to probation officers. This highlights an area for further research, exploring ways of developing positive relationships at all levels of the CJS, which do not replicate or reinforce trauma. The different struggles, skills, priorities, relationships, supports and goals, which make up individual circumstance and personality made each narrative different, demonstrating that women sampled (like those in the broader Criminal Justice System and wider world) are not a homogenous group. This chapter discusses the main findings of this PhD research alongside a discussion of the methodology utilised, limitations with this approach and reflections on the findings. The findings highlight the importance of an individualistic approach to offender treatment and support more broadly, which is informed by understandings and recognition of gendered trauma. The implications of this for policy, research and practice are discussed in Chapter 7.

## **6.2 Significance of Key Findings**

The findings of this research contribute to the limited existing literature focusing on women in the CJS, as opposed to their male counterparts, providing an in-depth and idiographic account of women's experiences of release and resettlement. This is one of few studies with this population that has aimed to give emphasis to participant's voices and reduce the power imbalance between the researcher and participant. This research is the first project to have

taken place at Key Changes and thus gained the unique perspective of women's experiences within a developing service over a period of criminal justice funding and practice upheaval and reform. Researching with the service also provided the unique opportunity to include women who were at different stages of their desistance 'journey', who had served varying sentences for various offences and who had a wide variety of needs, goals and strengths.

Thus, whilst the study included a heterogeneous sample, the idiographic nature of IPA enabled the women's individual voices to be heard. Findings provide additional understanding of, and support for, aspects of theories of desistance, highlighting issues with the availability and consistency of support and of poor staff training at all levels of the CJS. The findings reflect calls for widespread improvement and reform to the current approach taken for female offenders (e.g. the Wedderburn Report, 2000; the Corston Report, 2007; the Fawcett Report, 2007; the Women's Justice Taskforce Committee, 2011; the Angiolini Report, 2012; the Justice Select Committee Report, 2013; and HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2016, 2017). Key aspects of the findings in relation to relevant theory are discussed below.

### **6.2.1 Trauma, Power and Agency**

Across participatory interviews with service users and peer mentors, the majority of the women discussed their experiences of prison and release as being overwhelmingly negative, with several describing pre-prison vulnerabilities. These experiences of trauma can largely be seen to be 'gendered', relating to the complex combinations of needs experienced by women in the Criminal Justice System (see section 2.2.1) and influenced by male power and control and a male orientated justice system. For example, several women discussed the role of controlling and abusive partners within their offending behaviour and struggles with childcare, relationships with children and mothering identities across their offending, incarceration and release. Abusive partners cause continual difficulties throughout sentencing and release, making debt repayment more difficult and reducing housing options. This highlighted the failure of the CJS to support women as victims within their rehabilitation. Pre-prison vulnerabilities were highlighted differently by the peer mentors, who acknowledged prior needs, including the presence of controlling relationships, lack of autonomy and self-confidence and struggles with

mental health as setting the context of their offending. However, peer mentors were more reflexive about these problems being commonalities across women in the Criminal Justice System. These women focused more on their ongoing issues with stigma and identity within their narratives, relating to Farrall et al (2014) notion of distance from their offence creating perspective and a shift in emotions.

Incarceration was described by most of the women as an unpleasant and unsecure environment, where women experienced mental health crises in private, witnessed other women self-harming and were subject to taunting from prison guards. Several women discussed the lack of stimulation within the prison environment over time, which reduced their cognitive functioning, with their lives shrinking to fit within the prison gates. For many women, this led to a reduced sense of agency, meaning many basic practical tasks the women were required to complete on release felt insurmountable. This supports a range of literature on this topic, suggesting that prison creates numerous deficits. These women frequently discussed mental ill health with many of the women entering prison with vulnerabilities relating to their mental health, which were exacerbated by the prison environment. Women discussed personal mental breakdown within the prison environment or witnessing deterioration and self-harm in other prisoners, supporting findings from the Corston Report (2007), within an environment where they felt that they would be penalised for asking for support. Many hid these struggles from others, especially from prison staff, where disclosures could result in penalisation for example, in the loss of enhanced status or accommodation. This highlights an ongoing stigma around mental health and reflects current concerns around the recent rise in suicides seen within the female prison estate and a lack of appropriate mental health training for prison staff. This further emphasises the importance of longitudinal research in assessing the role of mental health within women's offending, to see how far this is driving behaviour or whether this is simply a reasonable reaction to experiences of trauma.

Many of the women's experiences were viewed as being traumatic due to their lack of agency and autonomy within their environments, both pre-prison, during their incarceration and on release. This supports previous literature, which found contact with the CJS or intake into prison is often associated with the feeling of hitting

'rock bottom' (Arditti & Few, 2008; Baskin & Sommers, 1998; Giordano et al., 2002). Indeed, women discussed 'good' treatment or facilities as luxuries which could be taken away, rather than routine aspects of psychologically or trauma informed treatment or environments, which evidence good practice within the prison estate. For many of the women, lack of agency within the prison environment contributed to a shrinking world view and sense of self, and in turn led to institutionalisation and isolation on release. Haney (2002: 77) discussed the "forced" (p.77) psychological impact of the prison environment on prisoners as having a number of negative outcomes, including post-traumatic stress, social withdrawal and isolation, a diminished sense of self-worth and personal value; all of which go on to result in difficulties for women trying to reintegrate with the community. Vaughan (2007) emphasised the importance of agency over other factors and processes associated with desistance, seeing it as critical to all aspects of personal change. He argued that agency is necessary when making choices supporting desistance from crime, including committing to change and to a necessary shift in identity and perspective away an 'offender'. This is supported by theories of desistance which highlight the role of agency in the internal cognitive dimensions of change within desistance, particularly those which relate it to the envisaging of an alternative future identity (e.g. King 2013b; Paternoster & Bushway, 2009; Paternoster, Bachman, Bushway et al, 2015). Within these findings I believe it is evident that agency was a critical loss to these women on (and in many cases prior to) incarceration and was a key goal on release due to their aim to be independent, autonomous, unsupervised women with options and opportunities independent of others.

Women's distrust of staff at all levels of the CJS was evident within their narratives, where these stories highlighted police, prison and probation staff mirroring abusive or controlling relationships experienced within family or partner relationships. For one participant, this distinction between police and probation was particularly evident within her responses to the repertory grid (see section 4.2.3). This relates to literature which suggests that female prisoners are more likely to experience higher rates of officer victimisation, linking to a greater mistrust of officers than by male prisoners (Belknap, 1996; Holsinger, 2014) This supports research by Worrall and Gelsthorpe (2002) which discusses how the CJS replicates many of the power imbalances, which have led women into crime in the first place. This appears to be a common thread throughout these interviews where women report



either experiencing or fearing police, prison or probation staff exerting their power over decisions, without consulting or listening to the women in question. This supports limited literature about perceptions of probation supervision, where probation is viewed as focusing only upon short term practical support needs, rather than longer term emotional or relational support needs, criticised for ‘doing to’ the offender, rather than working with them in providing support towards salient goals. There are perhaps links here to an overwhelming workload experienced by many probation staff, an issue which has worsened under TR (Justice Committee, 2018; National Audit Office, 2016). Indeed, issues were reported by one peer mentor whose probation officer almost did not know how to support her, as she presented with housing and education already attained. There is some clear evidence of bad practice here which is hopefully down to individual staff members and not an approach encouraged in probation training and practice. Nevertheless, there is some evidence of this within the literature, where Bosker et al (2013) analysis of Dutch probation plans were critiqued by probation officer’s failure to acknowledge or incorporate the offender’s goals and values and for their focus on improving on human capital alone, and not social capital (though this is arguably better than focusing on neither). Farrall’s early findings highlighted that many probation officers were unwilling to support probationers in tackling problems relating to accommodation, employment and relationships (Farrall, 2002); however later sweeps demonstrated ex-probationers were more retrospectively positive about their probation supervision (Farrall & Calverley, 2006; Farrall, 2012). Research suggests that that trusting staff, viewed as representing ‘the system’ is difficult for prisoners during their sentences (Lafferty et al, 2016). This is particularly interesting to note, as the peer mentors participating in this research did not provide more positive accounts of their probation experiences than service users, although this was not an explicit focus of the research. These findings beg the question of how to expect reform without permitting personal agency and highlights the importance of the offender –officer relationship as a point at which to support and encourage change in a mutually respectful environment (see section 7.3.2 for discussion).

Mahoney (1994) first discussed the homogenising connection between ‘women’ and the label of ‘victim’, where women are viewed by society as being inherently vulnerable and simultaneously having reduced agency and culpability. It is argued that this view creates a dichotomous discourse where women’s agency is denied when she

experiences victimisation and her victimisation is denied when she experiences agency (Pollack, 2000; Mahoney, 1994). This is interesting to reflect on when considering women in the CJS, where the women have experienced multiple sources of trauma and present with numerous vulnerabilities, however, the women are being held responsible for their actions. I would agree that many of these women have a reduced sense of agency, however, would go further in highlighting the further impact of incarceration upon this in terms of continuing the power imbalances women have often experienced prior to their offending. Indeed, there has been very little in the way of an empowering transition in this view of women within the CJS, from victim to adaptive survivor, as we see in the literature regarding male on female violence. Instead, these women report the further reduction of agency by the setup of prison, which is then continued within probation supervision on release. Incarceration for the majority of women can therefore be viewed as detrimental to change, where agency is seen as key in choosing to desist from crime, in recognising that a change is needed, desirable and possible (e.g. Giordano et al, 2002). This sense of personal agency impacts levels of motivation to continue to work towards the completion of goals related to desistance from crime and literature highlights the importance of motivation and hope in the initial stages of desistance (Le Bel et al, 2008).

For one woman, incarceration was viewed, in part, as a turning point for change (Maruna & Toch, 2005). Here, she was given the space to decide to change and this was the place where she received effective and appropriate mental health care. However, it is worth noting that she did so via an external support service rather than through the prison, and the ability to gain external referrals was not an experience consistent across the women in this research, many of whom acknowledged their evident need for this support and their difficulties in gaining it. Indeed, this woman repeated her gratitude and 'luck' in receiving this help and in fact perceived the prison environment as being detrimental to her mental wellbeing. Sampson and Laub (1993) first discussed 'turning points' for change, referring to (often maturational) stages or events, such as marriage, a new job etc. as providing a critical time for reflection and reevaluation of previous behaviours. Whilst this study involved only male offenders, bringing questions over its generalisability to women in the CJS, the findings were presented with the caveat that these periods or events would not necessarily be 'turning points' for all. Indeed, in later research,

Sampson and Laub (2004: p.2) further stated that ‘turning points’ such as prison, cannot explain desistance alone, as this is dependent on the person’s capacity for ‘purposeful human agency’. This is indeed reflected in these findings, as this was not commonly discussed across the participants who took part in this research. This woman’s story echoes the recent literature around the traumas of offending itself, where confessing and being incarcerated is a longed-for outcome of an out of control situation and provides the opportunity for healing and repentance.

Within the women’s narratives, it is evident that education and vocational training was valued by those accessing this during their sentence, both as an opportunity to improve employability pre-release and as an escape from the monotonous prison environment. This opportunity may now be less accessible to a number of women due to changes in funding, requiring prisoners wishing to access higher or further education to obtain (and repay) educational loans (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2015). Additionally, a recent review suggests that only 51% of prisons gain positive reviews of their purposeful activities, including education, work and access to other training to aid rehabilitation HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (2017). According to data provided by the Open University, this has resulted in a 42% fall in prisoners studying Open University degrees (PRT, Bromley Briefings, autumn 2017). However, it is also worth noting that work in prison provided a routine for some, which contributed to institutionalisation and served as a barrier to resettlement.

For many, release served as a secondary trauma, exacerbated by isolation but mediated for those gaining peer support, where they felt empowered to regain control. Many were isolated in the community, which further influenced mental health problems, with the detrimental impact of institutionalisation evident across narratives. Several women discussed being on electronically monitored curfew (Tag) in the community towards the end of their sentences, highlighting the shame accompanying this and their need for emotional support with this aspect of their release. One remarked on her preference in hindsight to have seen out her sentence in prison, where she would not have suffered in the same way. Walklate (2004) discusses how the Tag is a prime example of the failure of the CJS to amend to create appropriate approaches for these women, all of whom had committed financial

offences within the workplace and thus would not be likely to reoffend at night or on the streets, making a curfew a symbolic, pointless and expensive punishment.

### **6.2.2 Identity and Stigma**

Throughout the findings, it is evident that women's identities are impacted and altered by incarceration, the removal of agency and experiences of stigma, with, echoing Maruna's (2001) findings, many of the women referring to 'old' or 'real selves' that they had deviated from since their offence(s) and to whom they were attempting to return. A common feature in the women's accounts of these 'lost identities' was the loss of roles and relationships which they had been attempting to rekindle or resume since their release. For one woman this was the role of 'mother' whereas another focused on being 'sister', 'partner' and 'daughter'. This relates to literature citing the importance of familial roles within women's identity and the impact of losing this aspect of identity through incarceration. For example, Leverentz (2014: 113) stated that *"it was important for their sense of self for women to be the good mothers, daughters, and sisters that they had failed to be in the past, even when this came into conflict with their desistance understanding and attempts."* Motherhood and other caregiving roles are key considerations for women on their incarceration and in several cases women discussed the forced removal of this aspect of their identity and their struggles to maintain it during their incarceration. Literature discusses motherhood as one of few prosocial identities available to women with limited employment options (Fawcett Society, 2012), and as a viable 'replacement identity' where the individual ceases to view themselves as an offender but as a good mother or caregiver (Giordano et al., 2002; Leverentz, 2011, 2014). The loss of these identities relates to Lofland's notion of "identity nakedness" (Lofland, 1969, as cited in Maruna, 2001), which, alongside the interweaving impact of stigma, made the women susceptible to internalising society's stigmatised perception of their offence label, rather than of their character (Tewksbury, 2005; Hudson, 2013). Thus, all of the women who participated in the research were impacted by stigma, which increased fear of release and, in turn, increased isolation in the community. The impact of perceived stigma was long reaching, affecting self-confidence, self-view and interactions long after their release. This relates to Paternoster and Bushway's (2009)

Identity Theory, which discusses the build-up of 'feared' selves in relation to dissatisfactions with current identity and highlights the importance of delabelling and destigmatising support during resettlement into the community.

It is worth noting that despite the focus of this research, none of the women discussed avoiding reoffending as an explicit goal of their resettlement, supporting the desistance literature in arguing that desistance as a goal goes beyond the reduction / absence of offending to being orientated around a 'successful' life and positive self-identity. In fact, many of the women accessing and working at Key Changes demonstrated the hyper-morality that Maruna (2001) found among desisters in his study. Whilst Maruna attributes this to atoning for previous dishonesty, it is also worth noting the additional layer of scrutiny felt by all of these women when accessing employment, with the memory of their criminal record being easily resuscitated by employers and insurance bodies. Indeed, whilst much of the desistance literature discusses a need for identity change, many of the women, who had committed singular offences, viewed their behaviour as being a deviation from their 'true' character, where mental health, abusive or controlling partners, or addictions were cited as being in control. This supports Maruna's (2001) findings around the adoption of an earlier pro-social identity, 'old me' or the 'real me' and the shedding or killing off of an offending identity.

Self-stigmatisation was much more evident in the accounts of those who had been out of prison for a longer period, particularly in the peer mentor's narratives, but also within some of the service users' stories linking to literature on tertiary desistance and increased encounters with barriers to their reintegration with the community (Farrall et al, 2014). This supports Nugent and Schinkel's (2016) findings highlighting the 'pains of desistance' within act-desistance (non-offending), identity desistance (the internalisation of a non-offending identity) and relational desistance (a recognition of change by others). Here the authors detail the ex-offender's sense of goal failure and hopelessness in their attempts to achieve identity desistance where there is little input from the community around relational desistance; meaning the women have desisted offending and have begun to adopt a non-offending identity but are not accepted in this identity by the community. Within peer mentor interviews, two peer mentors participated in repertory grid interviews which aimed to further explore self- view. The grids gave

(limited) additional information on the women's personal constructs. This highlighted women's opinions of how they were viewed by others as being significantly lower (less trustworthy, pleasant etc) than they viewed themselves as being at any point, including during their offending. For both women there was considerable distance between how they felt perceived by others ('me as others see me') and how they viewed themselves ('me now'), supporting the notion of a lack of a sense of acceptance and belongingness from the community as being key within women's resettlement and desistance (Farrall et al, 2014; Malloch & McIvor, 2011; Nugent & Schinkel, 2016).

Perceived or implied failures in valued roles (as discussed above) due to offending and incarceration was related to the notion of shame. Women's literature suggests shame to be a gendered phenomenon, with women likely experiencing shame differently to men, relating to their differing needs and the emphasis put on relationships by women in the CJS (e.g. Brown & Ross, 2010; Bui & Morash, 2010). Several of the women discussed the shame of being associated with their offender label, with some self-stigmatisation around this. Findings here do not support theories of 'reintegrative shaming' (Braithwaite, 1989) which posit the potential benefits of shame in encouraging desistance, though it is worth noting that 'reintegrative shaming' differs greatly from the shaming seen within stigmatisation. The findings within this research have demonstrated shame to have a negative impact on mental health, isolation and reduced community engagement in many of the women. There is little evidence supporting the theory of reintegrative shaming more broadly due to a lack of evidence of eventual community acceptance. Discussion in the literature distinguishes shame from guilt, stating that guilt is associated with a specific wrongdoing, and not one's self-concept; whereas shame, the 'bedrock of psychopathology' (Miller, 1996) refers to the psychological distress experienced due to a diminished self-view (Bartky, 1990; Harrison, 2013) and has been long linked with mental health in the literature (e.g. Gilbert & Andrews, 1998). Thus, the perceptions of other negative views are shown to have an influence on identity. For one woman maintaining her innocence, this also related to questioning how others could believe her guilty of the offence and a further self-scrutiny, so reflecting the notion that guilt and shame can be induced by external forces rather than just for personally blameworthy behaviour. This relates to the gendered nature of shame around female offenders, viewed as doubly deviant for

falling from the moral principles assigned to womanhood by society (Davis, 2003). It is worth noting that there is however very little research addressing the role of emotions within the desistance literature (see Hamilton, 2016), highlighting this as an under researched and poorly understood area ripe for future exploration.

Throughout their interviews, many of the women discussed the way in which aspects of their incarceration and release had knocked their self-confidence, a factor noted as particularly important for women in contact with the CJS (Davidson, 2011). Many discussed being devalued by the barriers to employment opportunities caused by their criminal record. This issue is well cited within the literature (e.g. Maruna 2014; Western et al. 2001) with one study citing a need for extreme self-reliance in the face of anticipated stigma (Ray, Grommon & Rydberg, 2016). Self-confidence is discussed within the literature as either being influential in desistance in its own right (e.g. Burnett, 2010; Myers, 2013) or as a key aspect of broader concepts such as agency and self-efficacy thought to mediate desistance (Healy, 2013; Rotter, 1966; Stajkovic, 2006). It was interesting to see how the 'self' differed between participants based on the length of time spent in the community and the number of times released. Here there was a difference in focus between giving back vs staying out, self-actualisation vs immediate practical needs. This relates to Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943, 1954) with practical considerations such as shelter, food and money being women's immediate concern on release with psychological and spiritual needs following. For several women who had settled back into life in the community, generative activity was a higher order need and focused around a need to have a positive impact on prison reform and to help other women self-actualise through living independent and fulfilling lives in the community. Many of the women were very aware of, and very articulate about, their needs. Several were quite reflective, and others demonstrated key understanding of criminal justice and resettlement procedures, including awareness of procedures of recall and supervision, court proceedings and available support services. It was interesting to note that several of the women participating viewed themselves as being very atypical, in that they did not present with numerous vulnerabilities. These women discussed issues which they knew many others struggled to manage. However, they often went on to discuss mental ill-health and family troubles, suggesting an overemphasis on the more visible needs and disadvantages.

### **6.2.3 Mentoring and Capital**

The importance of social and human capital was highlighted within the women's narratives by their focus on important relationships, valued sources of support and lack of support networks and their attempts to engage with their communities. Relationships were discussed by all of the participants in the research in their resettlement goals, or when discussing their offending and incarceration; supporting literature highlighting the importance of connectedness and relational factors for women (Miller, 1986) and the role of social networks in successful desistance (Barry, 2010; Brown & Ross, 2010; Light, 2013; Nuske, Holdsworth & Breen 2016; Rodermond et al, 2016; McNeill & Weaver 2010; Weaver & Nicholson, 2012). Incarceration, unsurprisingly, negatively influenced many of the women's relational ties (Lynch & Sabol 2001b), particularly for those serving a longer prison sentence. However, several women had made valued friendships within the prison environment, the loss of which added to the trauma of their release. For women who had lost or broken previous social ties, these were few ways for them to make new ones on their release (Barry, 2006; Wright, DeHart, Koons-Witt, & Crittenden, 2012).

The issue of a lack of "community" to be released into was evident from the interviews, where women lacked support or contact with members of their community (Visher & Travis, 2011). This caused a period of intense isolation (or self-isolation) for most women across the studies, with a lack of structure to their life on release and a lack of community options (such as community centres) to engage with. This was particularly evident for those experiencing institutionalisation from the prison environment, which reduced agency, autonomy, confidence and decision-making abilities on release. Several women discussed being released into new areas with no contacts and where no community organisations or events are funded. e.g. moving into a tower block or unfamiliar area with no community centre etc. However, for those with a support network existing in the community, including family, partners and friends, isolation was still discussed as being a barrier to their resettlement. They discussed issues with reintegrating with the wider community, fearing stigma, and struggling to get to grips with aspects of life in the community. This echoes Malloch et al's (2014) discussion of the practical difference between 'community based' initiatives and 'community' where the former refers to the sphere of support agencies available to the women, rather than the sensation of belonging to a community network. These narratives support literature



highlighting the social dimensions which determine and limit an individual's ability to build social capital. Lafferty et al (2016) discuss their findings relating to this within prison settings, demonstrating that some dimensions of social capital are not translatable to the prison environment, for example, trust, safety and civic engagement, which are viewed and valued differently than in the community. For many of the women who have participated in this research, it is likely that their ability to build new sources of social capital is similarly hindered, where women report feeling that cannot trust probation staff, are not safe or secure in housing or relationships and have limited opportunity for civic engagement. These findings stress the difficulties around the expectation of being able to go out and forge a new life, sometimes in a new community, whilst in a turbulent time of organising practical aspects of resettlement, experiencing the emotional upheaval of release and struggling to find the confidence and autonomy necessary to accomplish these things. This highlights the removal of ring-fencing for the funding of women's services as a worrying prospect (All Party Parliamentary Group on Women in the Penal System, 2016), where many women who participated discussed the women's centre as their sole source of support and social capital.

For some women, the discussion of relationships centred around the removal of negative relationships, where the role of abusive or controlling partners in their (largely financial) offending behaviour has been highlighted. These findings support literature suggesting that women are more likely to offend as a result of their partner controlling household finances (Mullins & Wright, 2003; Nuytiens & Christiaens, 2015) and that these women are more likely to maintain a successful re-entry into society after the removal of these abusive, controlling or co-offending relationships (Brown & Ross, 2010; Leverentz, 2010), leaving them open to improve current social networks (Bui & Morash, 2010). Both of the women who discussed their experiences of domestic abuse or financial control struggled to gain distance from these partners on release, with these relationships causing additional problems in relation to debts, court and housing arrangements, despite having the resolve to leave / already having left the relationship. This indicated additional ways in which the court system failed to support women as victims, despite problems around debt management and housing being strongly related to recidivism (Cabinet Office Social

Exclusion Task Force, 2009; Gelsthorpe & Sharpe, 2007; McIvor, 2007; Prison Reform Trust & Women in Prison, September 2016).

### ***6.2.3.1 Generative Activity***

The women who participated in both studies discussed benefitting from accessing Key Changes, with many highlighting the centre as their only source of non-judgemental support in the community. Many of the service users appeared to distrust statutory services' ability to provide promised support to women on release, placing additional value on Key Changes for delivering support which had been promised. Many of the women particularly valued the peer nature of the service, where peer mentors were perceived as trustworthy, assumed to have shared understanding and common ground, and provided positive examples of success stories in the community. This supported previous research highlighting similar reasons for the acceptance of peer support from offenders open to becoming mentees (e.g. Erickson, Crow, Zurcher, & Connett, 1973; Irwin, 2005; Sowards, O'Boyle & Weissman, 2006). Service users and staff valued the personal touch given to their support and ongoing training opportunities, where they were included in the planning and decision making around their own cases. In these ways, Key Changes can be seen to adhere to the five principles of trauma-informed practice: safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration and empowerment (Fallot & Harris, 2006; SAMHSA, 2014). The women felt they had personal ties with other women at Key Changes, where they felt personally valued and respected. Authors in the desistance literature link these relationships with pro-social peers as important within the desistance process in providing "cognitive blueprints" (Giordano et al., 2002) of crime free lifestyles, which reinforce their own non-criminal identity (Giordano et al., 2003). This highlights the links between valued and effective support and positive identity shift within desistance from crime (discussed in section 4.3).

Women discussed the value of shared experiences with others at Key Changes, relating this to a lack of judgement and power imbalance experienced elsewhere in the CJS. Women valued not only the practical support they received, but also the emotional support accompanying this. The peer nature of the support allowed women to gain from experiential knowledge around coping with certain aspects of their release into the community, such as navigating the best way to disclose an offence history, or cope with the emotional and practical impact of living

with an electronic monitoring system (Tag), or to rebuild relationships with loved ones. The individualised approach taken to support within Key Changes was respected and valued by the women and linked clearly to increased self-worth and self-confidence, allowing women to enact change in areas of their lives. Stories spanned from gaining the confidence to make practical arrangements around housing and finance, to making large lifestyle changes such as leaving or being confident to deal with abusive partners in a safe and supported way. Women discussed having the confidence and support necessary to seek appropriate legal counsel and gain structured debt repayment plans, to complete education or training courses directly linked to employment goals; or choosing and enabling distance from aspects of their lives which the women linked directly to their previous offending. This supported the literature around the relational and social contexts critical to service user engagement and desistance supportive practices (Weaver 2011; 2012), supporting evidence that women are more likely to engage in longer term emotional support and mentoring relationships which resemble friendships (Tyler, 1990), as well as the importance of familial and friendship relationships in resettlement for female offenders (Leverentz, 2014; Light, 2013; SACRO, 2013), linking strongly to identity. The findings highlight the importance of women's centres as somewhere safe to go, as offering an easily and frequently accessible and individualised support service where women can gain not just skills for employment, but social capital and the autonomy and confidence needed to stay in the community.

Peer mentor interviews findings detailed peer mentors experiences of generative activity, a finding which was also evident within some service user's narratives, highlighting the practical and emotional benefits of engaging in the provision of peer support, both in the prison environment and on release. Within the prison environment, taking on support roles with other women gained them enhanced prisoner status as well as time out of the monotonous prison environment, preserving self-esteem and wellbeing. Peer mentoring in the community allowed women the support and resources to continue to address personal needs, for example with family relationships or mental health problems, and work towards personal goals, including training and employment goals, or goals around supporting others. The peer mentors reported gaining self-confidence, esteem and a positive self-image from their peer mentoring roles, supporting literature that suggests that these roles facilitate identity shifts, offset stigma and

promote self-worth (Maruna 2001; Maruna and LeBel 2009; McNeill and Maruna 2008) (for an overview also see McNeill et al 2012). Women discussed their peer mentoring roles as enabling them to ‘get back’ aspects of their former lives or selves or ‘return to’ a pro social identity, with their offence being highlighted as a deviation from their true-life course. This relates to Maruna’s (2001) findings around redemption scripts, where individuals return to an ‘old’ or ‘real me’ who is not tainted by an offence label.

Of the three peer-mentors who participated in the research, two discussed their involvement in Key Changes as being driven by an intention to improve the Criminal Justice System more broadly for women. For one, this meant providing women with better support than she had received, and for the other, this was to give others the support she herself had received from a peer mentor at Key Changes. The women aimed to empower the service users to choose to live better lives, relating to ‘transcendence’ - helping others to self-actualise - within Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Based on this, it appeared that their involvement with generative activity went beyond an attempt to ‘give back’ in return for harm caused during their offending, as depicted by some in Maruna’s (2001) study, but to go further in terms of addressing service gaps and structural failures within the sector. This might demonstrate that women are more attune to structural and political inequalities than male mentees due to their personal experiences pre, during and post contact with the Criminal Justice System. The third peer mentor discussed her role at the service as being attainable employment which ‘made use’ of her criminal record. This links to literature around ‘making good’ of a criminal past, but which fails to emphasise the very real issue of a lack of alternative viable employment options for these women. The desistance literature instead highlights these generative roles as answers to the issues around a lack of appropriate support for exes on release and to supporting ongoing desistance journeys in terms of supporting identity transformation and societal acceptance. Instead of focusing on generative activity as a solely positive avenue, it is important to recognise that women need access to opportunities on release rather than having no options but to volunteer, clawing back scraps of dignity through potentially reliving their own traumatic pasts.

### 6.3 Summary

The overarching aim of this PhD research was to gain an in-depth, idiographic understanding of women's experiences of resettlement into the community following a prison sentence when supported by a Third Sector Organisation. The women who participated in the research were sampled through Key Changes, a peer mentoring and educational presentations scheme based in South Yorkshire and were either service users or peer mentors at the service. This provided an exciting opportunity to explore women's perceptions of their resettlement who were at different points along their 'desistance journey'. The research aimed to address the following research questions through an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis:

1. What are women's experiences of offending, incarceration and release?
2. What factors influence and support women's resettlement?
3. How do women (service users and peer mentors) view the role of Key Changes in relation to their resettlement and desistance from offending?
4. What factors underpin successful mentoring relationships within this context?

The analysis relating to research questions 1 and 2 highlighted master themes 'Trauma, Power and Agency' (section 4.2) and 'Stigma and Identity' (section 4.3) as typical of women's experiences of offending, incarceration and release, supporting research which stresses the ongoing impact and prevalence of stigma on new, 'precarious' identities long after women's desistance (e.g. Sharpe, 2015). Findings also supported the literature which highlights the importance of agency (King (2012) in emotional change and identity change within desistance. Exploration of research questions 2-4 highlighted the importance of community engagement and social capital, as seen in discussion of master theme 'Community and Capital' (section 5.2) and the importance of the acknowledgement and acceptance of identity change by the wider community (e.g. Farrall et al, 2014; Giordano et al, 2002; Hamilton, 2016; LeBel et al., 2008) and the role of peer mentoring support within this. The master theme "Mentoring and Generative Activity" (section 5.3) explored the women's experiences of mentoring within their desistance, highlighting the benefits experienced by both service users and peer mentors, where all emphasised the value of non-judgmental support and guidance from their peers, which allowed them to work towards personal

goals and to address ongoing vulnerabilities and needs. The women highlighted feeling valued and supported as an individual and being active within the decision making around their case as key to positive relationships, supporting previous research in this area (e.g. Brown & Ross, 2010; Lewis et al, 2007; Mulholland et al, 2016; Tolland, 2016).

The findings support a number of key studies and theories within the desistance literature, as discussed above, highlighting the complex interaction between social structures of power and control and internal cognitive mechanisms of change within desistance. The findings thus highlight a need for a two-way street of acceptance back into the community, suggesting that much work is needed to increase community investment in resettlement and alter public thinking around women in contact with the Criminal Justice System as vulnerable assets rather than risks to be managed. The findings support the role of mentoring for some women in the community, highlighting the relational and practical benefits experienced by both service users and mentors. The findings of this PhD have a number of practice and policy implications for supporting ongoing calls for criminal justice reform, emphasising the role of trauma (especially gendered trauma), and the need for services to be informed by and to be responsive to this. These implications are discussed at length in Chapter 7.

## 7. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

### 7.1 Overview

This PhD research explored women's experiences of resettlement through a mixed- methods approach with participatory research methods. The thesis has provided an overview of relevant theoretical, policy and practice literature (see Chapters 1 & 2), and a detailed exploration of the philosophical standpoints adopted and methods utilised within data collection (see Chapter 3). The findings of interviews with service users (and peer mentors at Key Changes were analysed using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, with key findings around women's experiences of offending, incarceration and release (see chapter 4) and mentoring and generative activity (see chapter 5) being discussed, positioning the findings within current knowledge. The methodological limitations of the research are described within Chapter 3, which acknowledged these findings as an in-depth snapshot of individual experience from a small sample of women in contact with the CJS, acknowledging that differences in experience will be prevalent across the estate due to the heterogeneous sample of women included and the variability in access to and efficacy of varying support services.

Within this chapter, I present the significance of these findings in terms of their theoretical and practical implications, discussing the significance of these findings for current knowledge, understanding and practice. This supports the ongoing calls for criminal justice reform, including a need to reduce the use of incarceration for high numbers of low risk women, where community-based interventions demonstrate reduced costs and increased efficacy. It cautions against the lack of ring-fencing for funding of women's services, highlighting the provision of women's centre based, holistic and peer support as valuable within through-the-gates resettlement support for women.

## **7.2 Theoretical Reflections and Implications**

### **7.2.1 Gender Informed Practice**

The findings of this research have emphasised the role of gendered trauma within women's offending, incarceration, and resettlement, highlighting a failure to respond to women in the CJS as victims, as well as offenders (see section 6.2.1 for discussion). Women discussed their experiences of abuse and victimisation and lack of agency both prior to and during their incarceration, as well as on their release. This echoes an emerging literature base highlighting trauma and mental illness within women's routes to crime (e.g. Ardino, 2012; DeHart et al, 2013), and calling for services which are responsive to gendered trauma which can adequately address mental health problems (such as PTSD) and victimisation prevalent within the female estate. In this study women's experiences of trauma went beyond individual women's experiences of abuse and victimisation, to gendered structural inequalities. Here, women were met with inappropriate sentencing and license terms which reflected the poor translation of responses to male offenders being used within the female estate. The approaches failed to consider or respond to women's roles as primary caregivers to dependent children, their histories of abuse and victimisation and the ongoing importance of these factors within their release and resettlement post-prison. For example, women were penalised through benefit sanctions or by being recalled for moving to safe housing or failing to repay debts where abusive partners were involved. The research highlighted the importance of availability and accessibility of women-only services which focus on empowering women within a positive and safe environment to reach key goals, promote agency and gain self-sufficiency. This relates to authors calling for greater focus on broader social and structural problems which isolate and marginalise women, rather than on risk based cognitive behavioural approaches which serve only to responsiblise them for these structural failures (McDermott, 2012); and for the sustainable funding of services accessible to women beyond short-term sentences (Gelsthorpe et al, 2007).

The findings of this PhD indicate that relationships are particularly influential for women, as both a driver of offending behaviour (with women referring to abusive and controlling partners and a need to protect children) and as a key focus for their resettlement and desistance. They therefore support the literature that has highlighted



relationships as being particularly important in women's offending (e.g. Rodermond, Kruttschnitt, Slotboom, & Bijleveld; 2016), as well as in the prevention of women's offending and recidivism (Salisbury & Van Voorhis, 2009), and the importance and value of social connectedness and capital for women (Lee & Robbins, 1998; Nuske, Holdsworth & Breen 2016). For several of the women, resuming specific roles, such as that of mother, sister, daughter, wife, were key drivers within their desistance. Here, resuming these roles successfully meant the return to, and adoption of, a former pro-social and family orientated identity, relating to Maruna's (2001) 'old'/'real' me, which allowed the women to view their offending as being a deviation from their 'true' self. Several of these women struggled to resume these relationships, where additional strain was added by a lack of external support within their resettlement, meaning an additional reliance on family members. Within the struggle to resume these key relationships, it appeared that guilt and shame were integral in self stigmatisation, relating to Lofland's notion of "identity nakedness" (Lofland, 1969, as cited in Maruna, 2001), which made them susceptible to internalising societies stigmatised perception of their offence histories (Tewksbury, 2005; Hudson, 2013). Within this, relationships with children are highlighted as particularly important, echoing literature stating that maternal separation via incarceration is particularly damaging (Covington & Bloom, 2003). One woman's experiences here demonstrate the trauma of unexpected long-term separation for both mother and child; highlighting the importance of appropriate legal advice and planning of child care pre-incarceration and of the strengthening of support systems on release (Travis, Solomon & Waul, 2001).

The findings also shed light on the importance of positive relationships with trusted and valued support staff. Few of the women discussed positive relationships with CJS staff, with women's stories often relating to the misuse of power from police, prison and probation staff. Most women's narratives involve decisions and actions being done to them, rather than including them, with no discussion of attempts to co-produce desistance before their engagement at Key Changes. Women valued the non-judgemental environment, the sense of community and peer learning which came from other women's stories and advice and from viewing their peer mentors and other peer mentors as positive examples of success in the community. The women were able to ask for and decline support as they wished, developing agency and autonomy and empowering them to lead in their resettlement decisions. The

findings thus support literature arguing the importance of positive relationships with support workers on release (Andrews & Bonta, 2010a; Lewis et al, 2007; Tyler, 1990) as well as that which urges attempts to co-produce desistance within sentence planning (e.g. McCulloch, 2016), to support and engage women in the desistance process at a much earlier stage.

Whilst many of the factors discussed within this thesis are significant barriers to resettlement for both female and male offenders, this research contributes to a growing body of literature which has highlighted the importance of responding specifically to women at all levels of the CJS. The findings highlight the importance of providing women with through the gate support, from external networks which reduce women's reliance on family support and thus ease the additional strain put on these relationships. They suggest a need to go beyond 'gender responsivity' as discussed in the RNR literature, to develop more positive relationships with staff members across the CJS, to develop staff training around mental health and trauma and to involve the women in their case management and planning by focusing on the women's individual goals in a collaborative and future orientated way.

### **7.2.2 The Applicability of Risk-based frameworks to Women's Services**

The focus given by Key Changes to education training and employment suggests links to Pathway 2, Education, Training and Employment, of the 9 Pathways model (Home Office, 2004a; Women and Young People's Group, HM Prison Service, 2006), with support being offered to women over a range of other needs relating to the 9 pathways through referrals, contacts and support from external agencies. In practice however Key Changes offers a very different approach, where the centre offers one-to-one mentoring and group sessions as well as informal meetings and classes where women can share their experiences and build social networks. One might argue that this demonstrates good adherence to the responsivity principle, the lack of which is a common criticism of the RNR approach (Hanson, 2009; Maruna & LeBel, 2003, 2009) due to the focus on group based manualised treatment. Key Changes tailors support to individualised need- responsivity which is proven within the literature to reduce recidivism rates by more than 20% (Bourgon & Gutierrez, 2012). However, I would argue that this

approach goes beyond the limitations of the RNR model to instead take a bottom-up, strengths-based approach to supporting women's resettlement, which is more in line with the desistance research literature and use of strengths-based approaches. The women feel that they are viewed as more than just their offence labels, to being 'returning citizens', with goals, aspirations and potential. The service takes a holistic approach to providing individualised support, aiming to empower their service users and ensuring they are actively involved identifying their own needs (Ward & Mann, 2004).

Several women I have met over the course of the research discussed how they did not 'fit in' with the pathways into crime depicted by the 9 Pathways Model. They discussed lacking many vulnerabilities, evident within other women accessing the service, including problems with housing, substance misuse and histories of abuse. However, it is worth noting that these women went on to discuss their experiences with mental ill-health, highlighting an issue both with the focus on visible needs and risk and with measuring some of the more intangible aspects relating to the 'attitudes and thinking styles' pathway. Indeed, many of the women focused on aspects of needs which extended beyond the generic categories in the Pathways framework. Women focused on self-fulfilment relating to identity and generative activity, emotional factors relating to community acceptance and belonging, struggling to cope with stigma and their confidence and ability to act on practical and relational change.

From these findings it is evident that the service delivered by Key Changes did not reflect risk-based frameworks which encourage a manualised one-size fits all approach, and tendency to ignore the role of mental health, trauma and emotions as drivers of risk. The experiences of the women at Key Changes differed greatly from the participants within Hucklesby and Wincup's (2014) study of the use of mentoring within punitive carceral settings, which found mentees engaging in short relationships with infrequent meetings, few of which were face to face. The mentoring delivered at Key Changes can instead be seen to demonstrate an accessible and individualised initiative within a holistic women's centred environment. I conclude that the pathways framework is insufficient in describing the complex interactions of needs and aspects of change within these women's resettlement, which were dominated by the less tangible underlying threads of agency, identity, connectedness, personal value and

emotions. On this note, it is therefore a concern that current practice for women's centres under CRC control are under pressure to change. The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Women in the Penal System report (2016) demonstrated how CRC's would not fund the provision of one on one case work, instead pushing for cheaper group-based delivery, undermining the aspect that appears to 'work' within women's centre models.

### **7.2.3 Alternative Approaches to Working with and Researching Women Offenders**

As discussed above, the findings of this research support several of the more bottom-up frameworks to work with offenders and resettlement efficacy. Many of the women discussed their drive for self-fulfilment in multiple aspects of their lives, finding fulfilling employment, gaining qualifications, supporting other women to become fulfilled and contributing to system reform. Many women discussed their initial focus on practical support needs, around housing and benefits and food; moving on to the focus on gaining personally meaningful employment, working on building and repairing relationships and on supporting others. This progression is well-explained by the developed hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943, 1954), where the women are moving on to higher-order needs around self-actualisation and transcendence in the case of peer mentors, who helped other women to "self-actualise". It is worth noting however that several of the women prioritised higher order relational and identity needs over needs for safety and sustenance, suggesting that this model is insufficient to explain women's motivations on release and inapplicable to guiding the formation and improvement of support services.

Perhaps some of the most relevant literature, referred to throughout this thesis, has been from the broad desistance literature base. The more recent integrated theories of desistance in particular are supported within these women's narratives, which demonstrate how macro level structures (such as changes in supervision under TR), meso level influences (including experiences of the CJS, histories of abuse and substance misuse) and individual agency (which influences an individual perceptions of their environment and circumstance) are intertwined to influence an individual's ability to reintegrate with society and desist from crime (e.g. Farrall et al, 2014, 2011). These theories highlight the social inequalities and issues affecting many women, focusing on the importance of supporting women in building agency and resilience, with literature suggesting self-efficacy is key (Bahr et al 2010), within

an integrated life course theory. The GLM (Ward & Stewart, 2003), provides a detailed framework to apply within offender resettlement and has become increasingly integrated in recent changes to ‘treatment’ delivery (E.g. from SOTP to Horizon). This model acknowledges that the absence of certain goods, including agency, inner peace and social relationships relate to dysfunctional or criminal behaviours (Ward & Mann, 2004) and links to women’s discussion around their ability to gain self-confidence and autonomy within the support they received at Key Changes. Indeed, much of the way in which Key Changes operates could be considered to fit within this model with its focus on empowerment and on approach, rather than avoidance goals, which are more in line with the Good Lives Model and more likely to be maintained in periods of stress and crisis (Wilson & Yates, 2009). The desistance model accounts for the high prevalence of ‘exs’ within support and recovery services, acknowledging several motivations to this engagement, including ‘giving back’, ‘making good’, and striving for social action, all of which were evident within the peer mentors’ narratives. However, whilst I would agree with the argument that women can have a key role in providing critical education (Sharpe, 2016) and promoting social action, this theory overlooks the importance of a lack of other viable employment options for women with criminal records. As such, I believe the ‘wounded healer’ literature is somewhat guilty for applying rose-tinted glasses to this topic, with a lack of consideration of progression in alternate employment options outside of the CJS for women who have benefited from their mentoring roles and are now ready to move on.

The findings of the research highlight a number of critical issues within the desistance literature which can be emphasised as areas for future research and development. The desistance literature focuses on many cognitive aspects of change without suggesting tangible ways of measuring or monitoring improvements in this area. It is based largely around repeat offenders, where many theories centre around the integral reworking of a criminal identity into a prosocial one. There is little here around one-off offenders and experiences of offending, incarceration and release. The desistance literature base demonstrates a relatively recent focus on women’s experiences, however the role of gendered aspects of trauma within women’s offending and desistance are relatively overlooked within theoretical frameworks. Indeed, the desistance literature largely overlooks the role of

gender and of emotions altogether, though there has been some promising recent focus on the role of emotions within identity shifts more broadly, (e.g. Farrall et al, 2014).

### **7.3 Practice and Policy Reflections and Implications**

#### **7.3.1 Transforming Rehabilitation**

*“More than three years into its seven year contracts with Community Rehabilitation Companies, the Ministry is a long way from delivering the ‘rehabilitation revolution’ it had promised.”*

*(Public Accounts Committee, March 2018, p3)*

The Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) Agenda (see section 1.4) was received sceptically by most in the field, (Calder & Goodman, 2013; House of Commons Justice Committee, 2014; McNeill, 2013). It involved the stretching of probation budgets to the supervision of 60,000 additional offenders, as well as to shareholder returns and additional levels of bureaucracy in CRC contract agencies and Payments by results; taking money away from evidence-based resources and services in the community (Public Accounts Committee, 2018). TR has not performed well over numerous reviews (see section for detail 1.4), which have highlighted issues with the half-baked” approach taken to prison reform (Dame Glenys Stacey, the Chief Inspector of Probation). HM Inspectorate of Probation (2017) highlights numerous other problems with TR, specifically for the provision of support for women, with the disappearance of funding for women’s centres, evidence of CRCs scaling back supervision to phone calls, and a lack of policy guiding CRCs in provision of women’s services. An All-Party Parliamentary Group Report (2016) highlighted issues with service provision coming from CRCs, with CRCs not paying women’s centres for services, and greater time and financial pressures from CRC contracts forcing the delivery of a lower-quality service which charities felt were unsafe, or immoral. Many CRCs would only fund group-based work, despite the fact that many services' successes were attributed to the higher dose, holistic and person-centred approach of one-to-one care.

Within a review following calls for a formal enquiry, the Public Accounts Committee (27<sup>th</sup> report, March 2018) highlighted the numerous ways in which CRCs were under-performing, with 19 out of the 21 CRCs not having met targets for reduced reoffending. The report highlights that CRCs are not yet able to link their ICT systems with HM Prison and Probation; queries the ongoing lack of information on the measurement of CRC performance in line with targets; and draws attention to a lack of investment in probation and third sector services. It argues most CRCs to be financially unsustainable and insecure, despite the additional £342million received from the MoJ without clear detail of returns expected and raises doubts over ever seeing the promised outcomes before the end of the CRC contracts in 2021/2.

In addition to lack of promised results, the move to TR has led to a redefinition of 'risk' to focus on risk of harm, rather than risk of reoffending. In the first year of TR changes to recall conditions meant that 797 offenders were recalled (MOJ, 2016a) for breaches not assessed pre-TR. These recalls largely concerned technical license breaches such as non-attendance of appointments, demonstrating the criminalisation of legal behaviour, with only a small percentage (27%) of recalls relating to a criminal charge (Prison Reform Trust, 2017). . This change in offender supervision is viewed as trapping offenders in short cycles of incarceration. For the large percentage of women recalled (a figure which has increased by 68% since 2014 and the introduction of TR; Prison Reform Trust, 2017), this means that any improvements made during their interactions with women's centres in terms of housing or childcare arrangements, employment or training positions are lost and need to be restarted when released again, causing additional distress to women and their families.

The issues with TR highlighted by a number of reviews suggest a need for greater transparency in MoJ and CRC contract dealings, with clear explanations for targets and funding. The secure ringfencing of funding for women's centre services is needed to protect those women's centres which have not yet folded under external pressure, unrealistic targets and a need to compete for CRC contracts in order to continue their service provision. More importantly, as TR continues to fail the Ministry of Justice needs to look beyond the ending (and assumed collapse) of their contracts with CRCs towards prison and probation reform which is not rushed, but evidence

based and considers and plans for how to best manage and support women post-prison. The answer here may lie in the statutory funding of women's centre services.

### **7.3.2 Alternate routes for Criminal Justice developments**

The women who participated in the research described numerous pre-prison vulnerabilities, the ways in which mental health problems were exacerbated on incarceration and by isolation in the community, as well as their loss of housing, employment and contact with children due to their short sentences. Most women lacked the confidence and agency to complete basic practical tasks around housing and financial applications on their release and discussed feeling stigmatised by family, friends, the community and employment sectors. These narratives echo numerous prison and probation reviews, highlighting the inappropriateness of prison sentences for the majority of women who do not pose a risk to public safety (e.g. Corston Report, 2007; Justice Select Committee, 2013; Prison Reform Trust). Indeed, several women received a tag as an alternative to the end of their prison sentence, an inappropriate response to those who had conducted financial crimes in the workplace (as opposed to violent or property crimes after dark, in the community); highlighting the inappropriate application of male initiatives to female offenders. In response to this, it is worth considering the viability of alternate routes within criminal justice sentencing for female offenders.

It is argued that prison is not an appropriate response for large numbers of women serving short sentences for non-violent crimes and that the answer instead lies within community alternatives (PRT, Bromley Briefings, autumn 2017 p.11). Studies have consistently found the reduced recidivism rates from those receiving community as opposed to prison sentences, with women who have served a prison sentence being more likely to reoffend and to do so sooner, than women who have served a community alternative (Hedderman, 2015). Despite this, it is evident that use of community sentencing for women has almost halved in the last decade (PRT, Bromley Briefings, autumn 2017 p 35), highlighting an urgent need for greater work with those in sentencing roles around the efficacy of prison alternatives where appropriate, working with CJS to improve advice given and sentencing alternatives for women, which enable maintenance of family relationships, employment and housing arrangements and support



women in safely leaving abusive relationships. Weaver and McNeill (2007) highlight 8 directions for policy, including building positive relationships, respecting individuality and promoting redemption. It is evident that a critical change in thinking is needed from viewing ex-offenders as risks to be managed to greater acknowledgement of individual vulnerabilities, and an emphasis on providing appropriate support. Owers (2011) review highlighted a need for a 'whole-prison approach' with a focus on building meaningful relationships between staff and prisoners, motivating prisoners in pursuing a crime-free lifestyle by supporting positive identity shifts. The review highlights the desistance process as being a social one, where prison reform delivering effective support during incarceration must be supported by social and political support at both a community and wider level. It is perhaps here where we can learn lessons from the positive aspects of holistic mentoring approaches. Whilst the desistance literature highlights the importance of the two-way street of desistance from the offender and acceptance and forgiveness from the community, it appears that our society is becoming increasingly structured against the reintegration of offenders back into the community. Housing and most significantly- employment, difficulties with finding training places, education or employment were discussed by many of the women, with issues arising in relation to self-employment schemes (e.g. around gaining insurance).

Recent plans for the future of the female estate involved the building of five, sixty-bed community prisons (National Offender Management Service, 2017) to allow women to maintain closer relational links. However, with the launch of the Ministry of Justice's 'Female Offender Strategy' (June 2018) these have recently been replaced by plans for five community rehabilitation units, residential pilots which aim to divert vulnerable women away from prison. It acknowledges three long standing arguments around the negative impacts of criminalising vulnerable women, the lack of utility of short sentences and the contrasting positive outcomes from community management options. The three objectives are as follows: reducing the number of women incarcerated, reducing the number of women sentenced to incarceration and improving prison conditions for women in custody. It also proposes an in-depth review into family ties, highlighting the negative impact of incarceration and separation from dependent children. The MoJ have also published guidance for police officers working with vulnerable women, which demonstrates a positive step towards a whole system approach. The strategy, which appears to be a

financially motivated decision, comes eleven years after Baroness Corston recommended much the same thing and has been generally positively received by Baroness Corston and a number of Third Sector organisations working with women (E.g. NACRO, Clinks). However, a number of questions have been raised about the need for this approach to be piloted when there is a wealth of research urging this reform. Clink's response to the report highlights concerns around the underfunding of the proposed changes:

*“We are, however, concerned that the financial package announced today falls way short of what will be needed to enable voluntary sector services to affect real lasting change for these women and that lack of detail on timings and responsibility will make it hard to track progress and ensure the department can be held to account”. (Clinks, 2018, p1)*

It is my hope that this opportunity for positive and lasting change in the way in which we respond to women in the CJS does not follow TR in being under planned, underfunded and rushed through without observing the advice gained over 18months of consultation with the Advisory Board for Female Offenders. I hope that positive results under the piloting of this strategy will lead to further reform across the prison estate and, eventually, the wider CJS.

### **7.3.3 Recommendations for Mentoring and Re-entry programmes**

When beginning this PhD, I had hoped to be able to begin to unpack the nuances of peer mentoring support, to suggest what aspects of the relationship have been helpful to some, and what is lacking for those who reoffend or who drop out of the relationship. However, I was unable to contact the women who did not continue with mentoring relationships meaning I am unable to shed light on why they left and what, if any, aspect of mentoring did not support them in their resettlement. Perhaps it is these women that need be engaged in the conversation about how to improve resettlement services, where exploration around different experiences and goals would be useful. Of the women who discussed their experiences of receiving and providing peer mentoring support, many benefits of their engagement with the service were highlighted and it was apparent that several women were comfortable and engaged based on the sole premise of the shared ground of their mentor also having a criminal

record. The findings support Lewis et al (2007) suggestions that mentoring provides social contact and a person to confide in, who can be viewed as being separate from the system and therefore more trustworthy, highlighting a need for individualised approaches and for the opportunity to build positive relationships. The study highlighted relational factors within a mentoring relationship as being critical, as many ranked having someone to talk to as their most important need on release (tied with access to education and employment).

For the mentors, findings appeared to echo aspects of the wounded healer literature, with generative activity allowing the space to discuss their experiences in a safe and non-judgemental environment where they could gain confidence, autonomy and respect, both from women and staff in the centre but within their interactions with the wider community. Whilst the women discussed their motivations to drive criminal justice reform, their unique ability to support others and the pleasure they gain from doing so, it does however also appear prudent to comment that this was not necessarily the ideal employment for each of these women. For one woman, her peer mentoring role at Key Changes was (initially at least) simply a job which accepted the red flags on her DBS checks, and looked beyond this to give her a chance. However, she also discussed numerous benefits from working at the service, suggesting that initial motivations to engage in generative activities do need to be prosocial to benefits from engagement. This participant did highlight the lack of other viable employment options for women with a criminal record, demonstrating this as being a critical problem for women attempting to desist from crime.

Whilst the literature has not fully evaluated the efficacy of mentoring initiatives, I would agree with the notion that a high-dose and individualised approach is instrumental in positive outcomes seen. This follows recommendations around the design of re-entry programmes highlighting through the gates approaches which are delivered intensively for at least 6 months in the community (Andrews & Bonta, 2006; Solomon et al., 2008). I would recommend caution over the pressures of CRCs to push mentoring initiatives towards (cheaper) group-approaches. Beyond the scope of this PhD research, the women's centre also catered to women who are deemed to be isolated and thus at risk of offending. It is an interesting and necessary avenue of research in the future to explore the

experiences of these women, to better assess whether the service has a beneficial impact in preventing first time offences as well as recidivism.

Unfortunately, Key Changes closed its doors and has ceased to provide resettlement and women's centre support. This is a sad loss to many vulnerable women in the area and can be attributed to the climate of competitive contracts, loss of funding and CRC constraints on practice approaches. This only heightens my concern over the futures of women's centres more broadly, especially with the removal of ring-fencing of funding (meaning providers of male services can now apply from the same pot). The current drive of CRC leadership and directives encouraging women's centres to move away from a holistic individualised approach, to a drive for group therapies brings questions around removal of effective practice. If mentoring relationships are indeed effective based on their relative 'high intensity' and individualised focus in comparison to other approaches, the move away from this may therefore dilute the quantity of intervention and as such, its efficacy. It is my opinion that the ring fenced statutory funding of women's centres is necessary if they are to continue to exist in the future.

#### **7.4 Suggested Future Research**

Several areas have been highlighted over the course of this PhD as interesting and important areas for future research. Much of the literature around mentoring highlights the lack of robust evaluation studies utilising matched control groups. This was not possible in the time frame of the PhD, and I would argue that this focus is not yet important within mentoring research. Instead, attention needs to be given to developing theoretical understanding around what underlying mechanisms of change are supported by mentoring relationships and what aspects of these relationships can be learned from and replicated in the development of stronger offender-staff relationships at all levels of the CJS.

The results have highlighted the importance of trauma informed practice. This topic is mentioned frequently in discussions with people working in practice with female offenders, yet touched on only occasionally within the literature, specifically with domestic violence and substance misuse. There is no consistent evidence of, nor guidance, for trauma informed practice with female offenders. A planned programme of future research by the

author aims to explore what examples of this are evident in current practice across the UK, exploring women's experiences of trauma more broadly to allow the development of guidelines for trauma informed practice with female offenders.

Further explorations of women's identity shift over time is an additional avenue for future research. Expanding the scope of this to instead take a longitudinal case-study approach with a number of women over the course of their incarceration and release would allow better exploration of this issue. In peer mentor interviews, Repertory Grids (Kelly, 1955) replaced the Ideal Outcomes Inventory (IOI) to rectify methodological problems evident with this approach (discussed in section 3.3.5) and to provide a mixed measure of self-view over time. This approach was incredibly interesting, however due to the small number of peer mentors available and willing to participate, the results can only be written and viewed as individual case studies, showing the personal constructs of those participants during a snapshot of time. An avenue of additional research would involve the administration of the grids to service users at several points prior to and following their release from prison. This would allow for exploration of the development of the self-construct over the course of their desistance from / persistence in offending.

## **7.5 Conclusions**

Prisons are structurally "gendered institutions" (Hattery & Smith, 2010, p.66), only recently responding to a need to treat and support female prisoners, however these findings echo the call for reduced use of prison sentencing for low-risk women, where current plans for women in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) may hold positive opportunities for effective reform. In exploring the resettlement experiences of women receiving and providing peer mentoring services at Key Changes, this research has highlighted women's experiences of trauma and re-traumatisation within the CJS, thereby emphasising the importance of gaining a greater understanding of the role of gendered trauma, a current weakness in the desistance paradigm, where gendered emotions and trauma are largely ignored. The women who participated in the research valued the individual, holistic support they received, which encouraged personal agency, and was grounded in a strong positive relationship with their peer mentor. It is

apparent that the women who participated in this research viewed Key Changes as a place where they were able to develop and feel safe within their own identities and did not feel judged and it is particularly striking that this was not replicated within any of the statutory arenas of the CJS. These findings are consistent with prior research findings that stress the importance of relational support and women's own role in driving their own processes of change and desistance. These findings have also made a contribution to the limited existing literature around generative activity for female offenders. Many of the women engaged in caring roles (e.g. over family members) but did not identify this as being generative activity. They were largely motivated to engage in these roles with the hope of providing better support to women and also driving systemic change. These roles provided the opportunity to 'make good' of a criminal past, allowing the return to an 'old' or 'real' self, thereby reflecting of Maruna's (2001) redemption scripts.

Women's experiences of reintegration are influenced by and mediated by their emotions, gender, relationships and gendered trauma, and therefore any support offered needs to take this into account. With another opportunity for criminal justice reform to be piloted within the MoJ's "Female Offender Strategy" (2018), it is hoped that an appropriate level of trauma-informed focus is given to supporting vulnerable women within a non-judgemental environment, learning from the valued aspects of peer mentoring programmes. It is hoped that Women's Centres, like Key Changes, are saved from untimely closure by protecting the funding of these services, which provide hope, security and prospects for women at all stages of the desistance journey.

**Word count: 70,311**

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## APPENDICES

**Table of Appendices**

<b>Appendix Number</b>	<b>Content</b>
1	Ethical approval documents Study 1 SHU & NOMS
2	Ethical approval documents Study 2 SHU & NOMS
3	Study 1, Photo elicitation interview materials (information sheet, consent form, debrief)
4	Study 1, Ideal Outcomes Inventory interview materials (information sheet, consent form, debrief)
5	Study 2, Photo elicitation interview materials (information sheet, consent form, debrief)
6	Study 2, Repertory Grid interview materials (information sheet, consent form, debrief)
7	Example of (blank) IOI Grid with completion instructions read to participant
8	Example of (blank) Repertory Grid with completion instructions read to participant
9	Study 1 Interview Prompts
10	Table of Master themes and related superordinate themes: Experiences of offending, incarceration and release.
11	Table of Master themes and related superordinate themes: Experiences of mentoring and generative activity

## Appendix 1: Ethical approval documents. Service user interviews: SHU & NOMS



Our Ref AM/KW/D&S-13-HAR  
8 October 2014

Jennifer Hardy  
Sheffield Hallam University  
Department of Psychology, Sociology and Politics  
C/o: [dsjh16@exchange.shu.ac.uk](mailto:dsjh16@exchange.shu.ac.uk)

### INTERNAL

Dear Jennifer,

#### Request for Ethical Approval of Research Project

Your research project entitled "Valuating the Efficacy of 'Key Changes' a community mentoring project for females with a criminal record. Stage 1: Selection of outcome measures" has been submitted for ethical review to the Faculty's rapporteurs and I am pleased to confirm that they have approved your project.

I wish you every success with your research project.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A Macaskill".

Professor A Macaskill  
Chair  
Faculty Research Ethics Committee

cc. Dr Michelle Newberry  
[m.newberry@shu.ac.uk](mailto:m.newberry@shu.ac.uk)

**Office address :**  
Business Support Team  
Faculty of Development & Society  
Sheffield Hallam University  
Unit 4, Sheffield Science Park  
Howard Street, Sheffield, S1 1WB  
Tel: 0114-225 3308  
E-mail: [DS-ResearchEthics@shu.ac.uk](mailto:DS-ResearchEthics@shu.ac.uk)



National Offender  
Management Service

Miss Jennifer Hardy  
Sheffield Hallam University  
Department of Psychology, Sociology & Politics  
Sheffield Hallam University  
40 Collegiate Crescent Campus  
S10 2BP  
Dsjh16@exchange.shu.ac.uk  
Jennifer.hardy91@gmail.com

**National Offender Management Service**  
**National Research Committee**  
**Email: National.Research@noms.gsi.gov.uk**  
**08 October 2014**

**APPROVED SUBJECT TO MODIFICATIONS – NOMS RESEARCH**

**Ref:** 2014-263

**Title:** Evaluating the Efficacy of 'Key Changes' a community mentoring project for females with a criminal record. Stage 1: Selection of outcome measures.

Dear Miss Hardy,

Further to your application to undertake research across NOMS, the National Research Committee (NRC) is pleased to grant approval in principle for your research. The Committee has requested the following modifications: Thank you for your thorough response to the NRC's request for further information. The Committee is pleased to grant approval in principle for the initial stage of your research, subject to the points below. Further approval should be sought for any later stages (and please refer to the 'NOMS Commissioning Intentions from 2014' and the accompanying 'NOMS Evidence and Segmentation' document for the required levels of evidence for outcome/impact evaluations)

- Consideration should be given to whether the research should make use of just one -to -one interview sessions rather than focus groups or one to one interviews (taking into account (i) the potential for differing responses from differing forms of engagement and (ii) that some respondents may feel uncomfortable discussing some of the issues in a focus group setting).
- For offenders under probation supervision, follow-up contact should be made through the relevant probation provider and the location of follow-up meetings agreed with the provider.
- When using recording devices, the recordings should be treated as potentially disclosive and it is recommended that devices with encryption technology are used. Recordings should be wiped once they have been transcribed and anonymised unless there are clear grounds for keeping them any longer.
- The NRC agrees that monies should not be transferred direct to the women to develop the photos themselves due to the reasons highlighted in the application.
- The following should be included in all participation information sheets/consent forms to be used with offenders:
  - o Participants should be informed that there will be neither advantage nor disadvantage as a result of their decision to participate or not participate in the research.
  - o It must be made clear to research participants that they can refuse to answer individual questions, and that this will not compromise them in any way.
  - o Participants should consent to any follow-up contact and the method of this contact.
  - o It needs to be clear that the following information has to be disclosed: illegal acts and behaviour that is potentially harmful to the research participant (e.g. intention to self-harm or complete suicide) or others.



- o The respondent should be asked to direct any requests for information, complaints and queries through their probation provider. A method of withdrawing from the research through the provider should also be provided. Direct contact details should be removed.
- In the final research reports, the limitations should be clearly set out (e.g. the use of an unvalidated inventory, small sample sizes, the potential impact from the use of differing forms of engagement with the women i.e. focus groups and interviews, the potential for a mismatch between respondents' views regarding important outcomes and those which are most important for reducing reoffending).

Before the research can commence you must agree formally by email to the NRC ([National.Research@noms.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:National.Research@noms.gsi.gov.uk)), confirming that you accept the modifications set out above and will comply with the terms and conditions outlined below and the expectations set out in the NOMS Research Instruction

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-offender-management-service/about/research>).

Please note that unless the project is commissioned by MoJ/NOMS and signed off by Ministers, the decision to grant access to prison establishments, National Probation Service (NPS) divisions or Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) areas (and the offenders and practitioners within these establishments/divisions/areas) ultimately lies with the Governing Governor/Director of the establishment or the Deputy Director/Chief Executive of the NPS division/CRC area concerned. If establishments/NPS divisions/CRC areas are to be approached as part of the research, a copy of this letter must be attached to the request to prove that the NRC has approved the study in principle. The decision to grant access to existing data lies with the Information Asset Owners (IAOs) for each data source and the researchers should abide by the data sharing conditions stipulated by each IAO.

Please quote your NRC reference number in all future correspondence.

Yours sincerely,  
National Research Committee

Appendix 2: Ethical approval documents. Peer mentor interviews: SHU & NOMS



Our Ref AM/RKT/281-HAR

18<sup>th</sup> July 2016

Ms Jennifer Hardy  
Postgraduate Researcher  
Department of Law and Criminology  
Room 1.05 Heart of the Campus  
Collegiate Crescent Campus

**INTERNAL**

Dear Ms J Hardy

**Request for Ethical Approval of Research Project**

Your research project entitled "**Exploring staff perceptions of offender resettlement within a resettlement service: An interpretive phenomenological analysis**" has been submitted for ethical review to the Faculty's rapporteurs and I am pleased to confirm that they have approved your project.

I wish you every success with your research project.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A Macaskill".

Professor A Macaskill  
Chair  
Faculty Research Ethics Committee

**Office address :**  
Business Support Team  
Faculty of Development & Society  
Sheffield Hallam University  
Unit 4, Sheffield Science Park  
Howard Street, Sheffield, S1 1WB  
Tel: 0114-225 3308  
E-mail: [DS-ResearchEthics@shu.ac.uk](mailto:DS-ResearchEthics@shu.ac.uk)

Kelly Wilson [[kelly.wilson@sodexojustice.scc.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:kelly.wilson@sodexojustice.scc.gsi.gov.uk)]

20 February 2017 15:48

Good Afternoon Jenny

My sincere apologies for the delay in getting back to you. We have had agreement that you can get on with data collection etc. What I need is a one pager that I can send out to staff and managers to get people to contact you to take part in your data collection.

Can I also let you know that we are about to be inspected by HMIP weeks commencing 6<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> March therefore those weeks will need to be avoided.

If you can send me something to send out to staff I can get this circulated for this Friday

Kelly

Kelly Wilson

Deputy CRC Director – Hub, Community Payback & Programmes

South Yorkshire Community Rehabilitation Company Limited

Unit Two

Hawke Street

Sheffield S9 2SU

T: 03456081275

M: 07341508291

E: [Kelly.wilson@sodexojustice.scc.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Kelly.wilson@sodexojustice.scc.gsi.gov.uk)

[www.sycrc.co.uk](http://www.sycrc.co.uk)

“We protect the public and make our communities safer by reducing re-offending”

Registered Office: The South Yorkshire Community Rehabilitation Company Limited, One Southampton Row, London WC1B 5HA

Company No: 08802527

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Kelly Wilson [[kelly.wilson@sodexojustice.scc.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:kelly.wilson@sodexojustice.scc.gsi.gov.uk)]

20 February 2017 16:07

If you have a poster that Key Changes have then we will also send that out to staff, as not all our staff who supervise women go up to the Key Changes offices.

I will get a letter confirming approval sorted for you

Send the information through to me

Kelly Wilson

Deputy CRC Director – Hub, Community Payback & Programmes

South Yorkshire Community Rehabilitation Company Limited

Unit Two

Hawke Street

Sheffield S9 2SU

T: 03456081275

M: 07341508291

E: [Kelly.wilson@sodexojustice.scc.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Kelly.wilson@sodexojustice.scc.gsi.gov.uk)

[www.sycrc.co.uk](http://www.sycrc.co.uk)

“We protect the public and make our communities safer by reducing re-offending”

Registered Office: The South Yorkshire Community Rehabilitation Company Limited, One Southampton Row, London WC1B 5HA

Company No: 08802527

**Appendix 3: Service user interviews: Photo elicitation interview materials (information sheet, consent form, debrief)**

**Information Sheet: Service user Photo elicitation interviews (to be read aloud).**

You are being invited to take part in an interview or group discussion using photo elicitation. This is the first stage of my PhD research which aims to evaluate the effectiveness of “Key Changes”. This first stage aims to identify what you think is important for the evaluation.

**Why are you asking me to take part?**

You are being asked to take part because your experiences of the service will help to identify measures of effectiveness which are important to you and will give greater understanding of how and why the service works.

**What Will Happen?**

You have one week to decide if you want to take part in this study. If you do you will sign a consent form.

You will be given a disposable camera 1 week prior to the discussion and asked to take pictures which represent your view of the statement “**what would be a successful or meaningful outcome of involvement with Key Changes for you**” (alternatively you may use any camera you own- e.g. on your phone).

The pictures you take must not contain illegal activity (e.g. drug abuse, weapon use, criminal activities) as they will not be developed and cannot be exhibited (should you later chose to do this).

If you consent to participate, the photos will be scanned, and a copy kept by the researcher. Although it would be ideal to gain the consent of all individuals photographed, this is not always possible. As such any faces will be blurred before they are used in the research or displayed (you can chose whether to display your photographs in an exhibition at the end of the research). The photos will be discussed and seen by the other members of the focus group before the faces are blurred out.

Development of the photos has been prepaid and can be developed within 1hr at Max Speilman (information on this is given with the cameras). You can do this yourself and select the photos you wish to bring to the discussion (**around 6-8 photos as a guideline**). Or you can drop the camera off in the marked (sealed) box outside the Key Changes office and the researcher will have the photos developed and sealed in an envelope (she will not look at them). You can then collect your photos 10minutes before the focus group is due to start and select the pictures you wish to discuss.

The discussion will involve a group of **4 or 5** other women who are involved with “Key Changes” and you will be asked to talk about your expectations of the service and your experiences as well as the photos you have taken. **The discussion will take around 1.5hours (no longer than 2hours).**

**During the discussion it is possible that sensitive topics may arise. However, if safeguarding issues arise these will be passed onto the director of Key Changes. Should you feel distressed at any point we will have a break in the discussion, change the topic or end the focus group.**

Should you consent to participate, the discussion will be audio recorded on a password protected device, which will be securely stored at Sheffield Hallam University. This is to ensure that the discussion is transcribed accurately and that you are not misquoted in any way.

**Do I have to take part?**

You decide whether you want to take part or not. You will not receive anything for taking part. You will not lose anything for not taking part.

You do not have to say things which make you feel uncomfortable. There are no right or wrong opinions. I am interested in what you have to say. Please be as honest as possible.

You can choose not to answer any questions which make you feel uncomfortable. You will not get into trouble for doing this.

If you choose to participate, you are agreeing not to talk about any topics or details of photographs which were discussed with people outside of the focus group.

**Where will it take place?**

The focus groups will take place within the Key Changes Building during business hours. Several time slots will be available and you can choose which is most suitable for you. The discussion will last a maximum of two hours

**What will happen to the results?**

I will identify themes emerging from the overall group discussion. Individual comments may be quoted, however all of your comments will remain anonymous (you will not be identified in the results). The discussion will take place only with the agreement that comments made will not be discussed outside of the focus group (this will be in the form of a group contract).

Themes identified will be used for the later evaluation of the service.

Data will be securely kept for a minimum 5-year period, in accordance with data protection legislation, and will only be accessed by members of the research team (myself and my supervisors). A summary of the anonymised findings will be shared with staff at Key Changes to allow for the ongoing development of the service. These findings are intended to be published and presented at conferences and a summary of the key findings will be available to you through Key Changes.

You will also have the opportunity to display the photos you have taken at a community exhibition at the end of research. This will allow you to display your work and to help people understand your experiences. This is voluntary- you can take part in the discussion of your photographs and choose not to display them if you wish.

**What if I change my mind during the study?**

Should you wish to withdraw yourself during the study you may do so at any time without having to give a reason. You can do this by stating that you no longer wish to participate.

Should you wish to withdraw your comments after taking part, you have two weeks from today to do this, by contacting the researcher at the email address below. Your comments will then be deleted from the transcript and copies of your photographs will be deleted. However, it will be impossible to delete your comments from the audio recording.

You will not get into trouble for wanting to do this.

**Any questions?** Please contact the researcher Jenny Hardy at [j.hardy@shu.ac.uk](mailto:j.hardy@shu.ac.uk)

### Consent Form: Photo Elicitation Interviews

By signing the consent form you are agreeing that you:

- Agree to take part in the study
- Have read and understood the information sheet about the study
- Have been able to ask questions about the study and had these answered to your satisfaction
- Agree to the session being audio-recorded
- Agree not to discuss comments made or details of photographs discussed with people outside of the focus groups
- Agree to a copy of your photo's being taken **and** included in research write ups
- Understand that members of the research team to have access to you anonymised responses
- Understand that you are free to withdraw from the study:
  - At any time up to two weeks from today
  - Without giving a reason
- Understand that safeguarding issues (e.g. intentions to commit a future crime, harm yourself or another, issues concerning child safety etc) will be passed onto the director of Key Changes (Michelle Nicholson) who may contact the relevant authorities?

I have read the above information and I consent (agree) to participate:

Signed.....

Date.....

### **Debrief: Photo elicitation Interviews**

Thank you for taking part in this research.

Your responses will be useful in evaluating the Key Changes service.

#### **What will happen to the results?**

An anonymised summary of the findings will be made available to staff at Key Changes and will be used to evaluate the service. A summary of the key findings will also be available to you through Key Changes.

Your identity will be made anonymous in the write up of the results

#### **What will happen to the photos?**

An exhibition will be held to display the photos you have taken. Your participation in this is voluntary (you do not have to do this if you don't want to) and can be anonymous if you wish (you can display the photos without saying that you have taken them).

If you wish, you may keep the photos you have taken, or we can dispose of them for you.

The photographs you have taken will be referred to in the write up of the research and a copy will be taken to include in the write up (faces will be blurred).

#### **What support is available to you?**

Some of the topics discussed may have been quite personal. If you have been distressed by the nature of the discussion please use any of the selection of confidential helplines listed below, talk to your mentor or a counsellor at Key Changes.

#### **What happens if I do not want to take part anymore?**

If you change your mind and do not want to take part any more, you have **two weeks from today** to let me know.

If you want to withdraw, the process is to email Jennifer Hardy at J.Hardy@shu.ac.uk. Computers are available in the Key Changes building.

Your comments will then be deleted from the transcript and copies of your photographs will be deleted. However, it will be impossible to delete your comments from the audio recording.

You will not get into any trouble if you do this.

**Appendix 4: Service user interviews: Ideal Outcomes Inventory interview materials (information sheet, consent form, debrief)**

**Information Sheet: One-on-one interviews completing the 'Ideal Outcomes Inventory' (to be read aloud).**

You are being invited to take part in a one-on-one interview with myself (Jennifer Hardy). This is the first stage of my PhD research which aims to evaluate the effectiveness of “Key Changes”. This first stage aims to identify what you think is important for the evaluation.

**Why are you asking me to take part?**

You are being asked to take part because your experiences of the service will help to identify measures of effectiveness which are important to you and will give greater understanding of how and why the service works.

**What Will Happen?**

You have one week to decide if you want to take part in this study. If you do you will sign a consent form.

You will meet me at the Key Changes premises and we will have a discussion focusing on completing the 'Ideal Outcomes Inventory' together. This is a short exercise which will last around 30-45 minutes (no longer than 1 hour) and aims to identify things which you would consider an important outcome of your involvement with Key Changes. In this way I hope to select things which reflect the experiences of women involved in Key Changes, rather than those based solely on the literature.

During the interview it is possible that sensitive topics may arise. However, if safeguarding issues arise (for example, issues relating to harm to yourself or another person) these will be passed onto the director of Key Changes. Should you feel distressed at any point we will have a break in the discussion, change the topic, or end the interview.

Should you consent to participate, the discussion will be audio recorded and the recording stored on a password protected device, which will be securely stored at Sheffield Hallam University. This is to ensure that the discussion is transcribed accurately and that you are not misquoted in any way.

**Do I have to take part?**

You decide whether you want to take part or not. You will not receive anything for taking part. You will not lose anything for not taking part.

You can choose not to answer any questions which make you feel uncomfortable. You will not get into trouble for doing this.

You do not have to say things which make you feel uncomfortable. There are no right or wrong opinions. I am interested in what you have to say. Please be as honest as possible.

**Where will it take place?**

The interviews will take place within the Key Changes Building during business hours. Several time slots will be available and you can choose which is most suitable for you. The discussion will last an hour, maximum.

**What will happen to the results?**

The interview will be transcribed and kept with your Ideal Outcomes Inventory form. Overall themes from the form and discussion will be identified. In the write up of the research some of your comments may be quoted, however this will be done anonymously (you will not be identified).

Themes identified will be used for the later evaluation of the service.

Data will be securely kept for a minimum 5-year period, in accordance with data protection legislation, and will only be accessed by members of the research team (myself and my supervisors).

A summary of the anonymised findings will be shared with staff at Key Changes to allow for the ongoing development of the service. These findings are intended to be published and presented at conferences and a summary of the key findings will be available to you through Key Changes.

**What if I change my mind during the study?**

Should you wish to withdraw yourself during the interview you may do so at any time without having to give a reason. You can do this by stating that you no longer wish to participate.

Should you wish to withdraw your comments after taking part, you have two weeks from today to do this, by contacting the researcher at the email address below. Your comments will then be deleted from the transcript and your IOI form will be shredded. You will not get into trouble for wanting to do this.

**Any questions?**

Please contact the researcher Jenny Hardy at [j.hardy@shu.ac.uk](mailto:j.hardy@shu.ac.uk)

**Consent Form: Ideal Outcomes Inventory Interviews**

By signing the consent form you are agreeing that you:

- Agree to take part in the study
- Have read and understood the information sheet about the study
- Have been able to ask questions about the study and had these answered to your satisfaction
- Agree to the interview being audio-recorded
- Understand that members of the research team to have access to you anonymised responses
- Understand that you are free to withdraw from the study:
  - At any time up to two weeks from today
  - Without giving a reason
- Understand that safeguarding issues (e.g. intentions to commit a future crime, harm yourself or another, issues concerning child safety etc) will be passed onto the director of Key Changes (Michelle Nicholson) who may contact the relevant authorities?

I have read the above information and I consent (agree) to participate:

Signed.....

Date.....

A participant code will be used rather than your name because this keeps your answers confidential (private). You will need this code if you later decide you would not like to take part in the study anymore.

Please write this code on the tear off slip at the bottom of this page (this is for you to keep) as well as where indicated on the top of your Ideal Outcomes Inventory form.

Your code will be the last three letters of your mother's maiden name followed by the last three numbers of your phone number.

-----TEAR HERE -----

Please write your participant code here and keep this slip.

Participant code .....

If you want to withdraw your questionnaire please email the researcher ([j.hardy@shu.ac.uk](mailto:j.hardy@shu.ac.uk)) **within one week from today.**



**Debrief: Ideal Outcomes Inventory Interviews**

Thank you for taking part in this research.

Your responses will be useful in evaluating the Key Changes service.

**What will happen to the results?**

An anonymised report will be made available to staff at Key Changes and will be used to evaluate the service. A summary of the key findings will also be available to you through Key Changes.

Your identity will be made anonymous in the write up of the results

**What support is available to you?**

Some of the topics discussed may have been quite personal. If you have been distressed by the nature of the discussion please use any of the selection of confidential helplines listed below, talk to your mentor or a counsellor at Key Changes.

**What happens if I do not want to take part anymore?**

If you change your mind and do not want to take part any more, you have **two weeks from today** to let me know.

If you want to withdraw, the process is to email Jennifer Hardy at J.Hardy@shu.ac.uk with your participant code. Computers are available in the Key Changes building.

(Your participant code is:  
.....)

Your questionnaire will then be destroyed.

You will not get into any trouble if you do this.

## **Appendix 5: Peer mentor interviews: Photo elicitation interview materials (information sheet, consent form, debrief)**

### **Information Sheet: Interview with Photo elicitation**

You are invited to take part in a one-on-one interview using Photo Elicitation aiming to explore your journey to founding / working at Key Changes. This is for the second stage of my PhD research which is looking at women's experiences of resettlement and aims to add to limited literature in this area.

#### **The Interview:**

If you wish to take part in the study we will discuss relevant issues, following which you will be asked to sign a Consent form. *You will be thanked for your time with a gesture of a £10 voucher per interview.*

The Interview will involve us discussing photographs, which you will be required to produce. You can bring your own photographs, find pictures using a search engine (e.g. google) *and /or* take photos on your mobile phone or the disposable camera provided. I can do any printing that you need and we can arrange this if you would like. I can collect and develop the photographs or you can develop the photos with the prepaid voucher. If you choose for me to develop them, they will be placed in a sealed envelope at the developers and will not be seen by me.

The photographs that you provide will be the focus of the discussion, where you will be asked to tell me why you have chosen these images and what they mean to you and I will ask you some questions. We might discuss topics around your own experiences, goals and motivations, mentoring and resettlement.

I would like you to think about your experiences of resettlement and any contact with the Criminal Justice System and experiences at Key Changes you may have had. Your photographs should represent what you think is most relevant to the photography topic:

<b>"Tell me about your experience of resettlement and your journey to working at Key Changes"</b>
---

#### **Picturing emotion and experience:**

There is no 'right' way to taking or selecting the pictures you will bring to the interview. You can take pictures of yourself, of other people, relationships, places, pictures which represent significant events, positive and negative experiences, goals, fears... anything that you think is important. You are the expert of your own experiences.

If you would like any further information, I can show you examples of photographs people have taken in similar projects.

#### **Arranging an Interview:**

The interview will take place in the Key Changes building at a date and time convenient to you and will take up to **2 hours**. Should you consent to participate, the discussion will be audio recorded and the recording will be stored on a secure university server at Sheffield Hallam University (following this the audio file will be deleted from the recorder). This is to ensure that the discussion is transcribed accurately and that you are not misquoted in any way. During the interview it is possible that sensitive topics may arise. Should you feel distressed at any point we will have a break in the discussion, change the topic, or end the interview. You do not have to answer any questions which make you feel uncomfortable.

#### **Safeguarding and Disclosures:**

It is possible that we may discuss a safeguarding issue which relates to you, a staff member or a service user of Key Changes (including an intention to harm you/themselves or another person a crime which has not been reported, an intention to commit a future crime etc.) These will be communicated to Lucy Leckenby or Michelle Nicholson, who may contact the relevant authorities or board members in line with Key Changes safeguarding policies. This information may also be passed to my PhD supervisors in the event that Lucy or Michelle cannot be contacted.

#### **Analysis and Data Storage:**

The interview will be transcribed and analysed. Only the research team will have access to raw data (myself and my supervisors). Paper documents (e.g. consent forms) will be stored in a locked office cabinet within my office at Sheffield Hallam University; digital data (including audio recordings, transcription etc.) will be stored on a password protected file on the secure university server. Transcriptions will be anonymised. All raw data will be stored for a minimum of 5 years- as required for publishing and in accordance with data protection legislation, after which it will be destroyed (audio permanently deleted, paper documents shredded etc.).

You will be referred to in the transcription and write up of results by your job role at Key Changes. Details of other people mentioned will be anonymised, though it is possible that they may still be identifiable by people who know them well. You may be quoted in the write up of the results, which are intended to be published and shared at conferences; as well as used in my PhD thesis. A summary of the main findings will be made available to Key Changes.

**Withdrawing from the study:**

*Please note that your participation in this study is voluntary and you should not feel any pressure to take part in this interview.*

You may leave the interview at any time without having to give a reason. You can withhold your responses to any questions during the interview that you do not wish to answer. Should you wish to withdraw your responses after taking part, you have 14 days from today to do this, by contacting me at the email address below. Your audio file will then be permanently deleted.

**Any questions?**

Please contact the researcher Jenny Hardy at [j.hardy@shu.ac.uk](mailto:j.hardy@shu.ac.uk)

**Consent Form: Photo elicitation interviews**

Exploring experiences of resettlement at Key Changes: staff accounts. An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

By signing the consent form you are agreeing that you:

- Agree to take part in the interview
- Have read and understood the information sheet about the study and the questions/topics which may be discussed
- Have been able to ask questions about the study and had these answered to your satisfaction
- Agree to the session being audio-recorded
- Understand that you are free to withdraw from the study by emailing the researcher:
  - At any time up to 14 days from today
  - Without giving a reason
- Understand that you don't have to answer any questions which make you feel uncomfortable
- Can request a break in the interview, a change of topic or to end the interview at any time, without having to give a reason
- Understand that if you were to disclose information that involved a safeguarding issue concerning yourself or a service user (e.g. intentions to commit a future crime, harm yourself/themselves- e.g. sharing an intention to commit suicide- or to harm another, issues concerning child safety etc.) which this information will be passed onto Lucy Leckenby or Michelle Nicholson, who may contact the relevant authorities or board members in line with Key Changes safeguarding policy. This information may also be passed to my PhD supervisors in the event that Lucy or Michelle cannot be contacted.
- I understand that I will be identified by job role in the transcription and write up of results, the information I share will not be anonymous or confidential, however information which concerns other people will be anonymised
- I consent that the researcher may quote some of the information I provide in the write-up of the results.

There are no right or wrong opinions. I am interested in what you have to say. Please be as honest as possible.

I have read the above information and I consent (agree) to participate:

*Signed* .....

*(Print name)* .....

*Date* .....

### **Debrief: Photo elicitation Interview.**

Thank you for taking part in this interview. Our discussion will add to limited research concerning resettlement needs and support for women in the Criminal Justice System, as well as give insight into journeys to working at / founding a Third Sector Organisation

#### **Data Storage:**

The interview will be transcribed and analysed. Only the research team will have access to raw data (myself and my supervisors). Paper documents (e.g. consent forms) will be stored in a locked office cabinet within my office at Sheffield Hallam University; digital data (including audio recordings, transcription etc.) will be stored on a password protected file on the secure university server. Transcriptions will be anonymised. All raw data will be stored for a minimum of 5 years- as required for publishing and in accordance with data protection legislation, after which it will be destroyed (audio permanently deleted, paper documents shredded etc.).

#### **Anonymity:**

You will be referred to in the transcription and write up of results by your job role at Key Changes. However, details of other people mentioned will be anonymised, though it is possible that they may still be identifiable by people who know them well. You may be quoted in the write up of the results, which are intended to be published and shared at conferences; as well as used in my PhD thesis. A summary of the main findings will be made available to Key Changes.

#### **What support is available to you?**

Some of the topics discussed may have been quite personal. If you have been distressed by the nature of the discussion or wish to talk to somebody confidentially, please take one of the confidential help or advice booklets, talk to your mentor or a counsellor at Key Changes.

If you later wish to speak to someone, the booklets will be available in the main hallway of the Key Changes.

#### **Withdrawing from the research:**

Should you wish to withdraw your comments from the research, you have **14 days from today** to let me know. You can do this by emailing me at [J.Hardy@shu.ac.uk](mailto:J.Hardy@shu.ac.uk). I will then delete the audio recording.

*Many thanks for your time and participation!*

## **Appendix 6: Peer mentor interviews: Repertory Grid interview materials (information sheet, consent form, debrief)**

### **Information Sheet: Interview with Repertory Grids**

You are invited to take part in a one-on-one interview using a Repertory Grid. This interview aims to explore your experiences and views using a tool which examines how you construct relationships and personal identity. This is for the second stage of my PhD research which is looking at women's experiences of resettlement and aims to add to limited literature in this area.

#### **The Interview:**

If you wish to take part in the study we will discuss relevant issues, following which you will be asked to sign a Consent form.

The Interview will involve us completing a repertory grid together, which I will explain in detail. We will talk about the decisions made during this activity and this conversation will be analysed in the research. The task will ask you to think of examples of people (for example- a staff member you work with, or a close family member). The computer programme will then give you combinations of three of these people and ask how two of them are alike and one is different. When we have a list of characteristics, you will then be asked to score how each person listed above would be on a scale where 1 is very alike to the construct listed in the left-hand column, and 7 is very alike to the construct listed in the right-hand column. I will show you an example of this at the start of the interview. The scores you give here will be analysed statistically to look at perceptions and self-view and any change in these views over time.

There are no right or wrong answers here; I am interested in your views and opinions.

#### **Arranging an Interview:**

The interview will take place in the Key Changes building at a date and time convenient to you and will take up to **2 hours**. Should you consent to participate, the discussion will be audio recorded and the recording stored on a secure university server at Sheffield Hallam University (following this the audio file will be deleted from the recorder). This is to ensure that the discussion is transcribed accurately and that you are not misquoted in any way. During the interview it is possible that sensitive topics may arise. Should you feel distressed at any point we will have a break in the discussion, change the topic, or end the interview. You do not have to answer any questions which make you feel uncomfortable.

*You will be thanked for your time with a gesture of a £10 voucher per interview.*

#### **Safeguarding and Disclosures:**

It is possible that we may discuss a safeguarding issue which relates to you, a staff member or a service user of Key Changes (including an intention to harm your/themselves or another person a crime which has not been reported, an intention to commit a future crime etc.) These will be communicated to Lucy Leckenby or Michelle Nicholson, who may contact the relevant authorities or board members in line with Key Changes safeguarding policies. This information may also be passed to my PhD supervisors in the event that Lucy or Michelle cannot be contacted.

#### **Analysis and Data Storage:**

The interview will be transcribed and analysed. Only the research team will have access to raw data (myself and my supervisors). Paper documents (e.g. consent forms and repertory grid) will be stored in a locked office cabinet within my office at Sheffield Hallam University; digital data (including audio recordings, transcription etc.) will be stored on a password protected file on the secure university server. Transcriptions will be anonymised. All raw data will be stored for a minimum of 5 years- as required for publishing and in accordance with data protection legislation, after which it will be destroyed (audio permanently deleted, paper documents shredded etc.).

You will be referred to in the transcription and write up of results by your job role at Key Changes. Details of other people mentioned will be anonymised, though it is possible that they may still be identifiable by people who know them well. You may be quoted in the write up of the results, which are intended to be published and shared at conferences; as well as used in my PhD thesis. A summary of the main findings will be made available to Key Changes.

#### **Withdrawing from the study:**

*Please note that your participation in this study is voluntary and you should not feel any pressure to take part in this interview.*

You may leave the interview at any time without having to give a reason. You can withhold your responses to any questions during the interview that you do not wish to answer. Should you wish to withdraw your responses after taking part, you have 14 days from today to do this, by contacting me at the email address below. Your audio file will then be permanently deleted.

**Any questions?**

Please contact the researcher Jenny Hardy at [j.hardy@shu.ac.uk](mailto:j.hardy@shu.ac.uk)

**Consent Form: Repertory Grid interviews**

Exploring experiences of resettlement at Key Changes: staff accounts. An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

By signing the consent form you are agreeing that you:

- Agree to take part in the interview
- Have read and understood the information sheet about the study and the questions/topics which may be discussed
- Have been able to ask questions about the study and had these answered to your satisfaction
- Agree to the session being audio-recorded
- Understand that you are free to withdraw from the study by emailing the researcher:
  - At any time up to 14 days from today
  - Without giving a reason
- Understand that you don't have to answer any questions which make you feel uncomfortable
- Can request a break in the interview, a change of topic or to end the interview at any time, without having to give a reason
- Understand that if you were to disclose information that involved a safeguarding issue concerning yourself or a service user (e.g. intentions to commit a future crime, harm yourself/themselves- e.g. sharing an intention to commit suicide- or to harm another, issues concerning child safety etc.) which this information will be passed onto Lucy Leckenby or Michelle Nicholson, who may contact the relevant authorities or board members in line with Key Changes safeguarding policy. This information may also be passed to my PhD supervisors in the event that Lucy or Michelle cannot be contacted.
- I understand that I will be identified by job role in the transcription and write up of results, the information I share will not be anonymous or confidential, however information which concerns other people will be anonymised
- I consent that the researcher may quote some of the information I provide in the write-up of the results.

There are no right or wrong opinions. I am interested in what you have to say. Please be as honest as possible.

I have read the above information and I consent (agree) to participate:

*Signed* .....

*(Print name)* .....

*Date* .....

### **Debrief: Repertory Grid Interview.**

Thank you for taking part in this interview. Our discussion adds to literature about experiences of resettlement and construction of personal identity and identity change within this.

#### **Data Storage:**

The interview will be transcribed and analysed. Only the research team will have access to raw data (myself and my supervisors). Paper documents (e.g. consent forms) will be stored in a locked office cabinet within my office at Sheffield Hallam University; digital data (including audio recordings, transcription etc.) will be stored on a password protected file on the secure university server. Transcriptions will be anonymised. All raw data will be stored for a minimum of 5 years- as required for publishing and in accordance with data protection legislation, after which it will be destroyed (audio permanently deleted, paper documents shredded etc.).

#### **Anonymity:**

You will be referred to in the transcription and write up of results by your job role at Key Changes. However, details of other people mentioned will be anonymised, though it is possible that they may still be identifiable by people who know them well. You may be quoted in the write up of the results, which are intended to be published and shared at conferences; as well as used in my PhD thesis. A summary of the main findings will be made available to Key Changes.

#### **What support is available to you?**

Some of the topics discussed may have been quite personal. If you have been distressed by the nature of the discussion or wish to talk to somebody confidentially, please take one of the confidential help or advice booklets, talk to your mentor or a counsellor at Key Changes.

If you later wish to speak to someone, the booklets will be available in the main hallway of the Key Changes.

#### **Withdrawing from the research:**

Should you wish to withdraw your comments from the research, you have **14 days from today** to let me know. You can do this by emailing me at [J.Hardy@shu.ac.uk](mailto:J.Hardy@shu.ac.uk). I will then delete the audio recording.

*Many thanks for your time and participation!*

**Appendix 7: Example of (blank) IOI grid with completion instructions read to participant**

**Ideal Outcomes Inventory Information:**

A participant code is used rather than your name because this keeps your answers anonymous. You will need this code if you later decide you would not like to take part in the study anymore. It will be written on the debrief I will give you later, which you will keep.

**Please write your participant code here (the last three letters of your mother's maiden name followed by the last three numbers of your phone number). This is so that I can destroy this inventory if you wish to withdraw from the research.**

**Participant Code:**

.....  
.....

The "Ideal Outcomes Inventory" is a semi-structured interview which will involve you completing the grid below. We will do this together and I will ask you questions about the things you choose.

- In the second left-hand column, I will ask you to come up with things which you would say were **ideal outcomes** of your involvement with Key Changes.
- Then we will talk through what the **opposite** of these things would be for you and you will list these in the right-hand column.
- These 'things' can be words or short phrases.
- The 'things' or outcomes do not have to be literal opposites; it is how you choose to describe them which is important to the research.
- After this I will ask you to rank the 'Ideal outcomes' column (1-10), with 1 being what you see as the most important outcome of your time with Key Changes and 10 being less important. You can have things which are equally important.
- Finally, we will go through each row of the grid and you will rank yourself on how close to the ideal/not ideal outcome you would place yourself now, for each of the items.
- Do you have any questions? We will complete the grid slowly and you can ask any questions at any time.



**Ideal Outcomes Inventory:**

How long have you been involved with Key Changes?

---

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Successful outcome of involvement with Key Changes</b>	<b>very close/ very true of me</b>	<b>quite close/ quite true of me</b>	<b>not sure?</b>	<b>quite close/ quite true of me</b>	<b>very close/ very true of me</b>	<b>Not successful outcome of involvement with Key Changes</b>



## Appendix 9: Service user interviews: Interview Prompts

### Interview prompts:

The interview discussions are intended to be flexible and informal discussions around the main research question (below). The following prompts are not intended to lead the discussion in any way and are to encourage discussion around topics 'likely' to arise (as indicated by the ongoing literature review).

Participants are told that they may wish to think about any personal experiences of resettlement, the Criminal Justice System, and their experiences at Key Changes, when deciding what photographs to take or bring.

- Ok, shall we start looking at the photos you've taken and if you would like to select one to start with? Can you tell me when the picture represents?
  
- Would you mind having a go at ranking them according to how important they are to you at the moment?
  
- If I had asked you to rank the pictures on the day you were released, do you think that you would have ranked them the same or differently? How have they changed?
- Would you have put a different goal as most important before?
- Is there anything that you don't think is important now but that you would have said was important when you were released?
- Can you describe how that affects you?
- So, you've taken a picture of \_\_\_\_\_. Do you think that Key Changes have helped you with that? / How do you think you've got to that place?
- Looking at the photographs you have taken, is there anything about them which you don't like or that you would maybe like to change?
- Did anyone think of that as being important but chose not to take a photo of it? Why do you think that happened?
- Do you think that relates to anything else you've talked about today?
- What has been positive/ negative about this?
- Have any particular problems/ benefits arisen from that?
- Does the picture relate to something you've done at Key Changes?
- So, you say \_\_\_\_ was a factor leading to your offending. Can you tell me a little about that?
- How did that help you settle back into the community?
- So, you say \_\_\_\_ was a factor leading to your offending. Can you tell me a little about that?
- So, you mentioned \_\_\_\_ being an opportunity which you were given. In what way has that helped you?
- How long was this a problem for you?
- Can you tell me a little about that? What did that meant for your normal routine/ for your resettlement? Is it affecting anything else?
- What happened with that? Were you given clear guidelines/ information about that? Where do you see it going in the future?
- Did you find that there were any services in prison which supported you with that?
- What sort of support have you had in the past? Has that worked for you? Why is that? Do you think others benefit / experience this in the same way?
- What sort of things supported you to make that change?/ What (if any) ongoing support did you need to maintain that?
- How would you have liked to be supported with that/ to maintain that?
- Where would you like to go from here/ what are you working towards?
- Did accessing Key Changes help you with that?
- Do you think others benefit / experience this in the same way?
  - What sort of activities can mentoring sessions focus around? If a service user wanted help with a particular thing (e.g. increasing self-confidence, substance misuse support, housing help etc.) can you give me an example of how the mentor would support with this?

- As well as the mentoring support, what courses, training and additional support can the women access through Key Changes?

Refocusing questions:

- So, going back to the successful outcomes question, you mention \_\_\_\_, is that something which you have taken a photograph of?
- Thanks for telling me about that, it sounds like it was really difficult etc for you. How important would you say that dealing with that has been for you?
- Thinking back to the time(s) you were released, was there anything that wasn't working out for you in the community? Is that something which you considered when you started taking the photographs? Is that an issue which you have had any support with?
- Sorry to interrupt, just to remind you, if you are about to disclose a safeguarding issue, I will have to pass it on to ... and she will take it from there (as I mentioned at the start of the session).
- Just to go to back to \_\_\_\_ which you mentioned before....

Rounding off questions:

- Ok so the pictures everyone has taken are really good, and I think you've captured quite a broad range of goals and things which are important to you. I know it must have been quite difficult to take pictures to represent some of those things!
- Photos aside for a minute, Did anyone have things which they would have liked to photograph, but felt they weren't ready to (or couldn't find something suitable to photograph), maybe something that you're still working towards or somewhere where there has been a setback?
  - Thanks for telling me about that
- Did you have anything in mind which you thought was important, but struggle to photograph it? Maybe a feeling or an emotion which was difficult to capture?
- In light of the discussion we've had today, if I gave you a camera again and asked you to answer the same question, is there anything which you would have photographed which you didn't before?
- Thanks for coming today and for taking part. I think that the discussion went really well and that the photos you've all taken are really good. There seems to have been quite a lot of important things which you've all achieved or are working towards which is really positive. Thanks for being honest with me and for sharing your experiences.

**Appendix 10: Table of Master themes and related superordinate themes. Experiences of offending, incarceration and release.**

<b>Master Theme</b>	<b>Superordinate Themes</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Codes</b>
Trauma Power and Agency	Pre-prison vulnerabilities sentencing and preparedness	Vulnerabilities	Mental health
			Substance misuse
			Debt
			Housing
			Isolation
		Gendered trauma	Abuse and victimisation
			Control
		Trial as -re- traumatisation	Lack of agency
			Shame
			Unexpected or shock sentencing
	Rifts in family relationships		
	Innocence		
	Removal of children		
	Incarceration, Institutionalisa- tion and Mental Health	Environmental impact and institutionalisation	Removal of decision-making power
			Shrinking of world view
			Turning point for change
			Lack of control and autonomy
			Turning point for change
			Lack of preparation for and empathy about release
			Threat to safety and space
			Missing prison on release
			Pressures on release from daily life
			Prison regime regimented
Lack of mental stimulation and access to purposive activity			
Impact on mental health		Trauma of environment	
		Witnessing violence and fears over safety	
		Lack of support and isolation	
		Loss of key relationships	
		Lack of staff training	
		Negative perceived consequences of needing help	
Prison as a safe space	Sense of community		
	Lack of 'hassle'		
	Availability of purposeful activity		
Release as a Secondary Trauma	Pre-release anxiety	Lack of preparation	
		Stress relating to practical arrangements	
		Stress relating to ability to cope	

Stigma and Identity	Personal Identity and Constructs	Readiness	A changed world- impact of time
			Reliance on family support
			Lack of emotional preparation from release
			Financial concerns: loss of employment and debt management
			Loss of housing
			Impact of institutionalisation
			Impact of abuse and control
		Isolation and control	Damage to relationships
			Isolation
			Loss of community and structure
			Police and probation control and influence
			Mental health needs
			Frustration, motivation and a lack of opportunities
			Barriers around offence narratives
Stigma and Identity	Personal Identity and Constructs	Group membership	Awareness of common troubles
			Increased openness to engage
			Perspective of experiences
			Assumed competence
			Automatic respect
			Support towards empowerment and self-actualisation
			Lack of understanding from 'others'
		Returning to an 'old' me	Crime as deviation from true self
			Return to prior self
			Resuming key identity roles
			Acknowledgement of context of vulnerabilities
			Barriers of community acceptance
			Power, control and influence of key players within resettlement
Stigma and Self-stigmatisation	Form	Visible label	
		Badge of honour	
		Structural stigma	
		Women as manipulators	
		Internalisation of crime label	
	Style	Experiences of vigilante justice	
		Stigma from family and friends	
		Shame / Barrier of self-acceptance	
	Impact	Mental health	
		Isolation	
identity			

**Appendix 11: Table of Master themes and related superordinate themes: Experiences of mentoring and generative activity**

<b>Master Theme</b>	<b>Superordinate Themes</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Code Examples</b>
Community and Capital	Connectedness and Capital	Isolation and institutionalisation	Lack of community to 'join'
			Loss of key relationships
			Barriers to reintegration
			Inability to talk about offence
		Importance of relationships	Impact of incarceration
			Strain and Reliance on family / friends for aspects of resettlement support
			Impact of providing resettlement support for loved ones
			Rebonding with key figures
			Religious capital
	Awareness and Distrust of Services	Examples of service collapse / lack of follow through	
		Lack of trustworthiness	
		Lack of support options	
	Key Changes and Peer mentoring	Safe space	Non-judgemental
			Reduced fear of release
			Increased self-confidence
Value of peer nature			
Practical support		Development of networks	
		Support offered over range of needs	
		Opportunities to complete training	
Emotional support		Access to facilities	
		Opportunity for self-development	
		Involvement and agency in case decisions	
Professional exs and Generative activity	Motivations	Goal orientated	
		Criminal Justice reform	
	Benefits	Lack of opportunities	
		Self-confidence and empowerment	
		Identity shifts	
		Self-actualisation	