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Desistance and Substance Use:
An Exploration of the Support in the Community for Service Users on Probation with a Particular Focus on Alcohol Use

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Abstract

This thesis is an examination of how effective support for substance use and desistance from crime, was within Staffordshire and West Midlands Community Rehabilitation Company (SWM CRC). This thesis provides insight into positive practice and identifies possible areas for change. Furthermore, with SWM CRC being a newly formed part-privatised element of the probation service at the time fieldwork being undertaken, it provides a unique insight into how support works within a part-privatised service. There is limited information from those receiving or delivering provision, on the level and effectiveness of substance use and desistance support, and the experiences of delivery, in Staffordshire and the West Midlands. Additionally, despite the legality of alcohol and its link to violent behaviour, the focus is often on generic substance use rather than alcohol. This research therefore intended to understand the service users' and practitioners' perspectives and experiences of what works, and what areas may need to change. Additionally, this thesis acts as a piece of contemporary history in acknowledging the experiences and challenges that can come from a part-privatised probation service, and therefore provide a basis for the future. The study adopted a qualitative approach, drawing on semi-structured interviews with 8 service users on probation, and 10 practitioners. The data collected was analysed using Hermeneutic Phenomenology (van Manen, 2016). There was a general positivity felt by service users regarding their probation provision, however there was a clear desire shown for less outsourcing, and development in the delivery of substance use support. Practitioners shared issues regarding the delivery of provision, particularly of supporting service users with treatment requirements, and the challenges of working within a part-privatised service.

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1. Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This thesis examines how service users on probation in Staffordshire and West Midlands with a substance use problem, particularly with alcohol, were supported to desist from offending. Alcohol is a legal substance that is widely used within society and has been known to be strongly linked to particular crimes and other social issues (Dingwall, 2015; Flatley, 2016). Furthermore, despite problem drinking being noted to be particularly prevalent within the population of service users on probation (Newbury-Birch et al, 2016), from reviewing the literature it tends to be overshadowed, and therefore this research project has put it at the forefront. Substance misuse, inclusive of alcohol, has been noted to have a positive correlation with someone continuing to offend, amplifying risk factors attached to offending and higher arrest rates (Models for Change, 2012). However, treatment for substance misuse has been argued to reduce both a person's substance use, but also their offending behaviour (Mulvey, 2011). This chapter discusses the research topic by firstly defining desistance, providing context to the time in which this research was undertaken and the way the probation service is organised, and summarising the justification for the research. The chapter will conclude with an overview of the research aim, and research questions, and an outline of the thesis chapters.

1.2 Defining Desistance

Within Criminology, the focus has often been on "why do individuals start" offending (Laub and Sampson, 2001:1) rather than why and how do they stop. To do this however, a definition and understanding of what constitutes desistance needs to be discussed. Despite the importance of this, the ability to clearly define desistance as a theory or concept is not as simple as one may originally think. Numerous researchers within the field have presented their own definitions or implied their understanding through the lens of their findings. This complicates the discussion of what the true meaning of desistance is. Longstanding authors within the field have noted that there is no straightforward and specific definition for the term desistance, and as such creating a theory of desistance is even more complex (Maruna, 2001; Laub and Sampson, 2001).

Despite these discussions starting decades ago, with desistance being considered in a

reinvigorated way during the turn of the 21st century, similar conclusions are still being derived. Maruna and Mann (2019) highlight how despite the familiarity of the term desistance in contemporary times, there is still much confusion of its clear meaning within the criminal justice system. This is not to say that there are no existing definitions of desistance, but rather that there are multiple competing definitions. The academic literature tends to split defining desistance into the consideration of desistance as a termination event, or desistance as a process. These opposing standpoints have led to confusion and lack of clarity within the field, making it even more important for researchers, as noted by Laub and Sampson (2001) to be clear within their work as to how they define desistance. As such, this section will clearly highlight the definition of desistance on which this research project has been based, and of which the thesis draws upon. To provide context to how the suitable definition was chosen, further clarity on the time period for desistance, such as whether it is before or after death will be discussed. Different definitions for desistance are based on this factor and will therefore also be discussed.

Historically the term termination has been discussed as a definition for desistance, with it said to be "the point when criminal activity stops" (Laub and Sampson, 2001:1). With this perspective, desistance theory is centred around this idea that desistance is an event, or moment in time, which concludes an individual's criminal activity (Maruna, 2001). However, Farrington (1997) argues that until someone dies then desistance can never be determined, whereas others suggest it can be when criminal activity has stopped for an extended period of time (Matza, 1964; Maruna, 2001). The length of the extended period of time to consider someone as desisting however, is up for debate (Kirk, 2012). Regardless, both perspectives reinforce the focus on their being a particular moment in time. Upon initial glance, this perspective of a person completely ending their offending behaviour is understandable, as terms such as 'cease', and 'abstain', from said action, are used within dictionary definitions (Collins, 2021). Kazemian (2007) recognised how over time, numerous studies have considered desistance in the terms of a termination event, whereby offending should arguably cease indefinitely. Hirschi and Gottfredson (1983) developed a view that supported the competing perspective of termination, arguing that desistance is when a person terminates their criminal career. The idea of termination has been critiqued by many, due to them arguing that the nature of criminal behaviour is too random for complete termination to ever be truly established (Maruna, 2001). On this basis, some have argued that until someone is deceased, then desistance can never be determined (LeBlanc and Frechette, 1989; Farrington,

1997). Although many are not as accepting of complete termination, Shover (1996: 121) referred to desistance as "the voluntary termination of serious criminal participation". This minimises the severity of suggesting that all crimes must be ceased for desistance to occur and recognises that low-level offending and deviant behaviour is not abnormal. It also places our focus upon the intentions and agency of the offender, whereas previous points emphasise the outcome of termination, and not the process through which it comes about.

Criticism has been raised in the academic literature regarding termination theories for desistance. Definitions, under the perspective of termination, imply a need for a permanent cessation of offending. Despite this point being in place, there is limited clarity as to when a person has achieved permanent cessation, and as such, when they would be classed as having reached desistance. Criminal behaviour has been described as sporadic, with individuals stopping and starting on a regular basis (Maruna, 2001). This would understandably suggest that termination is continuously taking place (Maruna, 2001). The vagueness and lack of clarity in regard to what and when is meant by a termination event, causes issues when trying to define and utilise desistance, within many contexts, including research. It has been suggested that permanent cessation can only be truly established retrospectively (Maruna and Farrall, 2004), "presumably after the ex-offender is deceased" (Maruna, 2001: 23). Furthermore, placing a focus on a final event for desistance, disregards the process that individuals take to reach that event, and in turn desist (Bushway et al, 2001).

With the critiques above in mind, alternative perspectives to how desistance is defined are present. These alternate perspectives tend to recognise the sporadic nature of desistance; moving away from considering desistance through the lens of one single event, and rather seeing it as more of a process that gradually progresses over time (Johnston et al, 2019). This is not to say that termination is disregarded within this argument altogether. For example, Laub and Sampson (2001:11) refer to termination as "the time at which criminal activity stops", whereas desistance is referred to as "the causal process that supports the termination of offending". As such, desistance is the process of maintaining law-abiding behaviour, and the journey that supports the cessation of offending. Uggen and Kruttscnitt (1998) support this perspective, by using the term 'behavioural desistance', implying that there are two key factors to desistance, a change from offending to nonoffending, and the termination of offending. Similarly, by defining desistance as the "process of reduction in the frequency and severity of (family) violence, leading to its eventual end when "true desistance" or "'quitting'

occurs" (Fagan, 1989:380), Fagan became one of the first authors to recognise the two previously mentioned factors of desistance within his research. Bushway et al (2001) conceptualise that desistance is a process whereby offending eventually drops to a rate that is indistinguishable from non-offenders. This as a concept is drawn from Cohen and Canela-Cacho (1994:368) who recognised the final termination stage as the "process by which the risk of future offenses drops to the same low trace levels that are found among non-offenders in the population. After termination, ex-offenders are no more likely to commit future offences than are non-offenders". Comparing offending behaviour to the average non-offender is beneficial, as it takes into consideration that even those without offending records are not necessarily offending-free, but rather likely on a lower scale to an individual with a prolific offending history. Therefore, even people classed as law-abiding citizens, may not necessarily be completely crime free. Following the views of these authors and noting the definition of desistance to be a process, highlights the importance of recognising causal factors that strengthen and increase the desistance process (Ezell, 2007).

Although there are benefits from defining desistance, it is worth noting one key issue, and that is that from a research perspective, what may appear as desistance during the research process (for example during the time of the interview), may in reality be more of a lull in offending behaviour (Maruna et al, 2004). It is not uncommon for those with offending histories to want to portray that they have permanently ceased offending, and as such are new reformed individuals (Maruna et al, 2004), in turn fitting with the perspective of desistance being a termination event. However, in practice, this is not necessarily feasible, and therefore by following a perspective of desistance as a process, it supports the research process, when talking to those who are gradually reducing their offending activity.

The two key arguments within the academic literature for defining desistance have been considered, desistance as a termination event, and desistance as a process. For this research project however, it is argued that considering desistance as a process is more fitting with the baseline of this research project. Laub and Sampson (2001) have highlighted that in addition to defining desistance, it is important for researchers to clarify on what basis they measure the concept. It has been noted that many studies focus on official data when determining desistance (Kazemian, 2007). This can be argued to be quite difficult when looking to measure desistance, however as Maruna argues that not all criminal behaviour will be

officially reported, and therefore self-report data is more effective (2001). Nagin et al (1995) are supportive of the latter, as in a study that compared the results of both official and self-report data, it was found that if findings were based on official data alone, 62% of the sample had desisted, whereas self-report data came back with only 11%. With this in mind, this research project uses self-report data when measuring the desistance status of participants. The measurement of desistance is considered in detail within the literature review of the thesis.

1.3 Summary of the Issue

To understand the issue that this thesis is focusing on, it is important to recognise how offending is managed, and therefore desistance is supported. Within England and Wales, there are four main types of sentences that a person can be issued: discharge, fine, community sentence and custodial sentence (Sentencing Council. 2024a). The latter two are seen as the most severe and are also the most relevant to this thesis. Custodial sentences are reserved for the most serious offences and involve the person who has been sentenced being sent to prison for a specific length of time (Sentencing Council, 2024b). This sentence can be a suspended for up to two years, if the length of time given is between 14 days and two years, subject to the person who has been sentenced adhering to requirements placed on them by the court, and managed by probation (Sentencing Council, 2024c). Community sentences combine a form of punishment, with community-based activities, such as engaging in unpaid work and undertaking a rehabilitation activity requirement (Sentencing Council, 2024d). This thesis focuses on community sentences and suspended sentences, due to these being the service users whom probation support. Individuals who have been given one of these sentences and are being supported by probation have been named service users within this thesis, to ensure that the language used aligns with that used within probation at the time of data collection.

To understand the issue further, and in turn the support that is provided by probation to assist desistance, it is important for the reasoning behind what causes offending to occur to be discussed. There are many reasons that have been discussed within existing literature regarding offending behaviour, including difficult family backgrounds, financial issues, homelessness, mental health problems; however, the key reason discussed within this thesis is substance use (Cattell et al, 2013; Light et al, 2013; Ministry of Justice, 2014a). The term *substance* has many different definitions, but for the sake of this thesis, it will be defined as a psychoactive

compound that could cause health and social problems, including addiction (McLellan, 2017). Substances can be legal and freely purchased (e.g., alcohol and tobacco), illegal (e.g., cocaine and heroin), or legal via a licensed prescription (e.g., antibiotics) (McLellan, 2017). When looking at regular substance use statistics, the trends tend to focus on illegal and legal drug use, rather than prescribed drugs. To provide some context to the scope of drug use, statistics based on trends in 'any' drug use are given below.
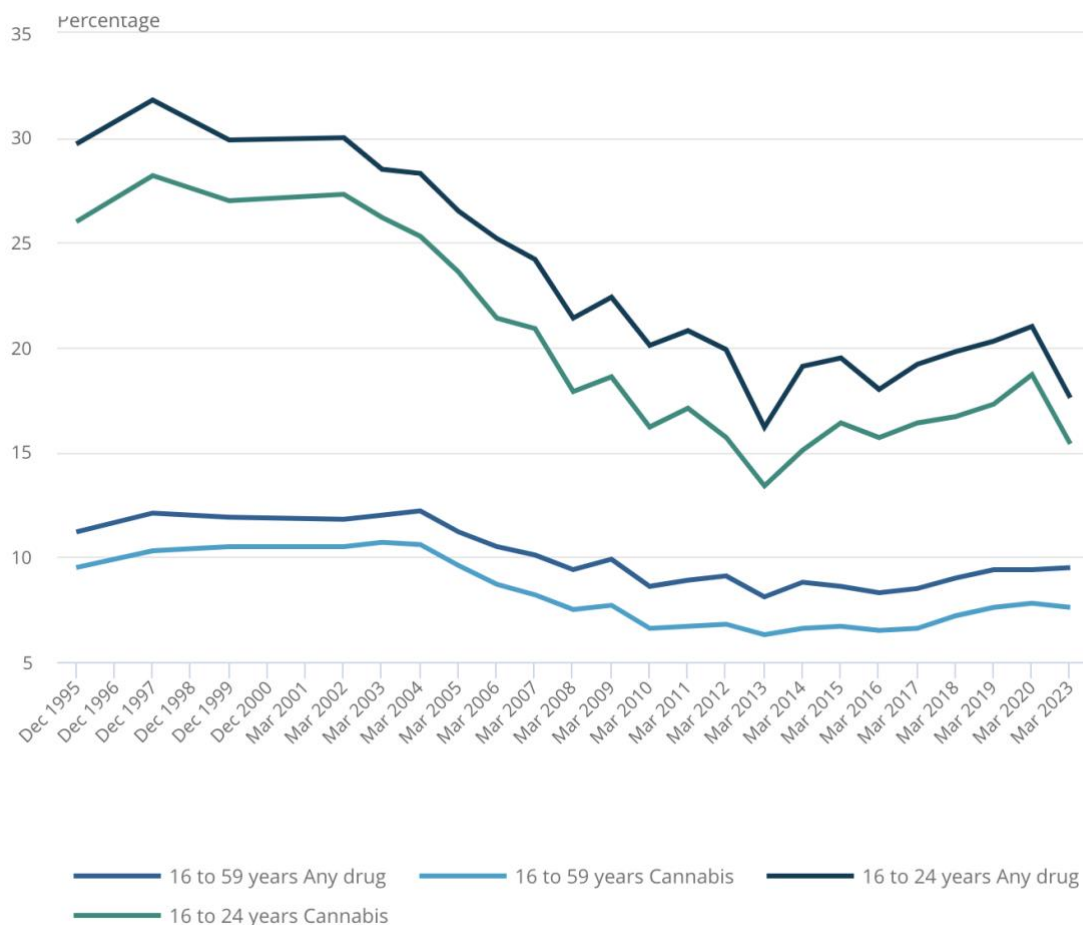
Figure 1: Proportion of people reporting use of any drug and cannabis in the last year, England and Wales, year ending December 1995 to year ending March 2023

Figure 1 above highlights how in the year ending March 2023 Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), just under 10% of adults aged 16 to 59 years old, which is approximately 3.1 million people, had taken a drug in the last year (Office for National Statistics, 2023). This mirrors the findings from 2018/19 CSEW whereby it was determined that nearly 10% of

adults aged 16 to 59 years old had taken a drug in the last year, equating to approximately 3.2 million people (Home Office, 2019). It is important to note this due to these findings setting the scene for the time when the data collection for this thesis was beginning.

Substance misuse has been recognised as having a strong influence on a continuation of offending, higher arrest rates and the ability to amplify other risk factors (Models for Change, 2012). The link between substance misuse and crime is complex, however a factor that is quite clear is that there is a significant number of people who commit crime who are also problem alcohol or drug users (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021a). It is suggested that almost half of those receiving support by probation have a problem with drugs, with Class A drug users alone costing society over £9 billion per year (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021b). It is estimated that probation services across England and Wales supervise close to 156,000 people in the community (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021c). Despite approximately 75,000 of these service users on probation in 2019/20 having a drug problem, fewer than 3,000 of them were referred by the probation service to specialist drug misuse treatment (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021c).

At the time of the research beginning, the landscape of probation provision was changing. It began during the implementation of the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' programme (Ministry of Justice, 2013a). In short, this programme resulted in the part-privatisation of the probation service, whereby those service users who are considered low-medium risk, of whom are usually more likely to be considered prolific offenders and have issues with substances, were now managed by a private company (Ministry of Justice, 2013a). The part-privatised side of the probation service was split into Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs), which were managed by private companies. This research is based in the area managed by Staffordshire and West Midlands Community Rehabilitation Company (SWM CRC).

SWM CRC collaborate with others in the community to deliver support to service users on a community license or part of a court order within the community, with substance use support being a key factor within this. Alongside specialist drug misuse treatment referrals, relevant treatment requirements can be attached to community orders or suspended sentence orders. These are "community sentence treatment requirements (CSTRs) where the person has to attend and complete treatment for a mental health, drug and/or alcohol problem" (Clinks, 2018:2). An individual can be given a Drug Rehabilitation Requirement (DRR), Alcohol

Treatment Requirement (ATR) or a Mental Health Treatment Requirement (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021a). The treatment will be arranged by the court as part of the sentence and requires the consent of the person who is being sentenced (Clinks, 2018). Although consent of the individual is required, one may say there is an element of compulsion present, as the alternative would be for them to go to prison.

Despite probation working with other agencies to provide substance use provision, there were no clear guidelines or clarity on the expectations or impact of the engagement of other agencies during the Transforming Rehabilitation programme. Furthermore, an evaluation at the time noted that SWM CRC were reported as being ineffective in reaching their targets for reducing reoffending (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation, 2017). As noted before, substance use has been considered to have a great impact on offending behaviour. However, with a lack of understanding on the type and quality of provision for a commonly used legal substance, it makes it more difficult to know how best to support a reduction in reoffending. As such, a review of substance use provision, alongside desistance practice, at SWM CRC was seen as important.

It is worth noting here that since the undertaking of the fieldwork for this research, flaws within the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' programme have been found, and the probation service is now under government ownership and is publicly-ran. This particular thesis however focuses on the time in which the part-privatisation of the probation service was in place between 2014 and 2021. This research therefore has a key place in contemporary history when discussing the part-privatised probation service. In addition to this however, the unification of the probation service has not been without its challenges. Upon the decision to unify the probation service, the Chief Inspector themself noted:

"The Government's decision to bring probation back together – though welcome – will not be without its challenges. Challenges that should not be underestimated. There are no magic bullets here: structural change needs to be backed by sustained investment for there to be true improvement. Real transformation is a long-term commitment, and unification is just the beginning of that journey." (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021k),

With this in mind, the conclusion of this thesis will provide insight into how probation has developed in terms of what practices remain from the part-privatisation and remain

problematic, of which this research can provide insight in to regarding recommendations for change. After scoping the literature, it became clear to the researcher that there was a lack of contemporary information regarding the support for alcohol misuse within probation provision, despite the recognition it has and can have on offending behaviour.

1.4 Aim and Research Questions

This research focused on providing a voice to service users on a community sentence or probation license, who had or were presently misusing substances. It also wanted to give practitioners a space to voice their own experiences in providing support for those service users. The focus of the research is therefore on their experiences rather than an organisational perspective. Considering this, this research placed service users and practitioners at the centre.

The main aim of this research is to explore the experiences of service users and practitioners in a Community Rehabilitation Company, at receiving support for, recovery from alcohol misuse and desistance.

To deliver the above aim, the below research questions were fundamental to the design of the data collection for this research:

- How do service users on probation in the community, within Staffordshire and West Midlands, feel that support services have been at assisting them to desist from offending behaviour?
- What are the experiences of service users in the community (who have, or are currently, misusing substances) of the availability and quality of treatment for their recovery?
- What are the experiences of probation officers and drug/alcohol workers in supporting service users on probation in the community, to desist from offending behaviour and reduce their substance use levels?
- Are there factors that have increased the chances of service users engaging in substance misuse (particularly alcohol misuse), and are there factors that may act as barriers to recovery?

1.5 Summary of Each Chapter

This section will provide a summary of what to expect within each chapter of the remaining thesis.

Chapter Two considers literature and research that focuses on rehabilitation, desistance, probation, and alcohol support. Qualitative and quantitative findings from academic studies and official reports have been evaluated and considered. This chapter identifies the need to conduct up to date research regarding substance use provision amongst probation delivery. Additionally, it acknowledges this as being important as it helps with gaining an understanding of how to provide effective support overall to encourage desistance amongst probation service users. Furthermore, it recognises the need for the experiences of those delivering and receiving the support to be central to the research.

Chapter Three focuses on the methodology of the research. It acknowledges the ontological and epistemological perspectives of the research and provides the theoretical background of phenomenology. It explains and evaluates phenomenology, before then explaining why the specific branch of Hermeneutic Phenomenology was then used as the chosen method for analysis. A detailed description is provided of how the data was analysed using Hermeneutic Phenomenology. This chapter also discussed the research design, participant information, research procedure and ethical considerations and limitations of the research project. The chapter ends with a critical reflection of the research as a whole.

Chapter Four and Five present the findings and discussions of the participant interviews, of which Hermeneutic Phenomenology has been used to analyse them.

Chapter Four presents the findings and discussion chapter for the interviews with service users. This chapter explores three overarching themes, which are split into additional subthemes. The first theme Factors Influencing Alcohol Use is discussed within the subthemes of Mental Health, and Social Settings and Legality. The second theme Desisting from Offending Behaviour is discussed within the subthemes of Length of Time in the Criminal Justice System and Alternative Activities, and Support from Probation Officers. The final theme Recovering from Alcohol Use is discussed within the subthemes Motivation, Abstinence and Harm Reduction, and External Agencies (in-house needed).

Chapter Five presents the findings and discussion chapter for the interviews with practitioners (probation officers, and drug and alcohol support workers). This chapter also has three overarching themes, that are split into additional subthemes. The first theme Barriers to Recovery is discussed within the subthemes of Mental Health, and Coping Mechanism. The

second theme Providing Support for Service Users Misusing Substances and Minimising Offending Behaviour is discussed within the subthemes of Service User Motivation, Treatment Requirements, and Finances. The final theme, the Changing Nature of Probation is discussed within the subthemes High Caseloads, Targets, and Lack of Funding, and Division.

Chapter Six is the final chapter and concludes the thesis. This chapter provides a summary of the key takeaway findings of the research, and acknowledges how the research adds to knowledge development, policy, and practice. It also discusses the strengths and limitations of the research and adds suggestions for how the research can be developed in the future.

2. Chapter 2: Literature Review

2:1 Introduction

This chapter will provide an overview of the existing literature that has helped establish the necessity of, and form the basis for, this research. It will capture the literature in relation to a key moment in probation history; a time where the probation service was part-privatised as a result of the Transforming Rehabilitation programme reforms that were implemented in 2014 and removed in 2021. At this time, service users who were low-medium risk were supported by private organisations named CRCs, whilst high-risk service users remained supervised by the publicly-ran National Probation Service (NPS). This literature review will also reflect on criminological desistance and substance use literature. It will start by providing a historical context of rehabilitation, and then move to address some of the key topics within desistance literature, inclusive of measuring and understanding desistance. By discussing understanding desistance, the author draws upon desistance theory, from ontogenetic, sociogenic, identity and interactionist theories, and situational theoretical standpoints. The chapter then moves on to discuss the probation service, particularly in relation to the implementation of the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' programme, and the impact this programme had on probation provision. The discussion within the chapter then moves on to place a focus on the use of alcohol, its connections with offending behaviour. Finally, the chapter concludes with discussing how alcohol misuse is supported within the probation service. Due to this thesis capturing a period in recent probation history, the literature considered is centred around the relevant timeframe up until the depletion of CRCs, rather than present probation practice. This research also took place pre-COVID-19, enabling on the ground in-person interviews to be undertaken.

2.2 Overview of Rehabilitation

2.2.1 A Brief History of Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation within the twentieth century was often concerned with individualistic, psychological treatment programmes, with a desire to *correct* one's attitudes and behaviours (Raynor and Robinson, 2009). This resulted in the twentieth century being coined with being the time of the *rehabilitative ideal*, whereby the focus was on the psychological treatment of those who offend, based on theoretical psychological theories of behaviour (Cullen and Gendreau, 2001). There was a general, engrained perspective during this time that offenders

should be both diagnosed and treated; underpinned by a narrative that those in power should be supporting the lives of its citizens, and that professionals are the best fit to do this (Hollin, 2000; Hollin and Bilby, 2007). The scientific study of crime to support offenders was seen as necessary, and there was a view that punishment was unjust and futile (Cullen, 2013). However, it is worth noting that some of the practices at the time although incorporating psychological approaches, were doing so within a more punitive system than current times. For example, the introduction of Borstals, which were alternatives to prison for young people, aged between 15 and 21 years old, who had offended. The intention was to separate young people from the adult prison estate and provide them with education and training, however this occurred whilst undergoing a strict regime based on activities such as physical drills (Bateman and Hazel, 2014). Nevertheless, the twentieth century saw a vast number of rehabilitative programmes be introduced as a result of the focus on treating those who offend, such as: "*individual and group counseling, therapeutic communities, token economies, behavioral modification, vocational training, work release and furloughs, college education, halfway houses*" (Cullen, 2013:312). Offender rehabilitation, and the vast support for it, was universally engrained within criminology, becoming, what some argue, a central part of its ideology (Allen, 1981; Cullen and Gendreau, 2001). This support however was not to last, with the 1970s, seeing a conflict emerge between advocates of offender rehabilitation, and advocates of punishment (Cullen and Gendreau, 1989; Andrews and Bonta, 1998). A conflict that widely became known as the 'nothing works' versus 'what works' debate.

As a result of these debates, a shift away from rehabilitation and towards punishment occurred (Cullen and Gendreau, 1989; Andrews and Bonta, 1998). A rise in crime rates and the number of offenders being sent to prison, resulted in discouragement amongst the public, and professions regarding the effectiveness of offender rehabilitation (Cullen et al, 2000). In addition to effectiveness, there were also questions raised regarding whether it was being soft on crime (Cullen and Gendreau, 1989; Hollin and Bilby, 2007). One of the most influential factors came about because of Martinson's (1974) 'nothing works' review, which looked in to the 231 studies of prison rehabilitative programmes, of which it was determined that offender treatment, was fundamentally ineffective at reducing or stopping criminal behaviour. This narrative was supported by other studies (Lipton et al, 1975; Brody, 1976), and widely accepted by political ideologies of the time, being Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative Party for the United Kingdom (Hollin, 2000). These series of events resulted in what Bottoms terms, the collapse of the rehabilitative ideal, on the basis of rehabilitation being considered

theoretically faulty, and fundamentally immoral due to its attempts to psychologically coerce offenders in to changing (1980). As such, this shift resulted in a general move away from rehabilitation, to a focus on punitive practices such as incapacitation and deterrence (Feeley and Simon, 1992; Garland, 2001; Pratt, 2007), via harsher penalties and just desserts (Hollin, 2000).

Despite the large-scale impact that the 'nothing works' research had on the criminal justice system, it was found to have limitations on the basis of its understanding of what inputs were being offered by different practitioners within both prison and probation and the effectiveness of the delivery (Raynor, 2018). Correctional researchers who did not accept the 'nothing works' research, were part of the next major steps within rehabilitation research. These researchers carried out meta-analyses, whereby they reviewed a large number of primary research studies, which enabled them to determine overall trends, and gain an understanding of which regimes were linked to positive outcomes for supporting rehabilitation (Hollin and Palmer, 2008; Raynor, 2018). The meta-analyses determined that understanding and describing the service that was being delivered, alongside distinguishing between effective and ineffective practice to support how services are delivered was key (Raynor, 2018). This in turn led to a series of programmes being developed that were based on cognitive-behavioural methods (Raynor, 2018), which in current times are known as offending behaving programmes.

2.2.2 Understanding Desistance: Theories and Practice of Desistance

From a rehabilitation perspective, the landscape adapted, with a focus moving to a new concept that has emerged within the last 30 years named desistance (Solomon and Scherer, 2021). Prior to the 1970s, the term desistance was essentially not used when describing the termination of offending, with instead it being described as the abandonment of the specific act that the person was engaging in (Rocque, 2017). Since its development, desistance has been a topic of great discussion within criminology, with leading and longstanding authors in the field drawing key attention to its role in criminal careers during the 1990s (Sampson and Laub, 1993; Maruna, 1997).

No single theory has been identified as the key reason as to why people stop offending (McNeill et al, 2013). As such, the academic literature hosts many theoretical explanations

and studies to address the point. Although commonalities are present among the theories of desistance, it has also been identified that differing views are present regarding "how a person comes to desist, and what supports it" (Weaver, 2019: 643). This section will now outline the key theories of desistance within the existing literature.

Ontogenetic Theories

Ontogenetic theories, also known as maturational reform theories, are the most longstanding in desistance literature and centre around the link between age and crime (McNeill, 2006). The relationship between age and criminal offending underpins desistance theory. It is argued that the propensity to which an individual commits crime, declines with age. This viewpoint is argued to be one of the only universally agreed points within criminology (Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1983; McVie, 2005; Gottfredson and Hirschi 2019). Research around criminal careers suggests that people start offending in early adolescence, hit a peak in late adolescence or early adulthood, and stop offending before they reach mid-adulthood (Blumstein and Cohen, 1987; Farrington, 1997). This concept has been portrayed through the age crime curve, of which Hirschi and Gottfredson (1983:555) notes is "one of the brute facts of criminology". When age is plotted against crime rates, the curve represents how crime rates rise during adolescence, and decrease after the early adulthood peak (Loeber and Farrington, 2014). This perspective derived as early as 1831; Quetelet (1831/1984), a trained mathematician who drew from French court records, found that crime peaks anywhere between the ages of 18 and 24 years old, and declines thereafter. From this, Quetlet derived that "among all the causes which have an influence for developing or halting the propensity of crime, the most vigorous is, without contradiction, age". Despite the longstanding nature of the topic, the most significant contribution is arguably of Glueck and Glueck (1930; 1937; 1943; 1950). Their work centred around a longitudinal study of 500 male delinquents aged 10 to 17 years old and 500 male non-delinquents, all matched based on age, ethnicity, IQ, and income, over a period of 25 years (interviewing participants three times) (Glueck and Glueck, 1930; 1937; 1943). Laub and Sampson (1993; 2003) conducted a 35 year follow up study of Glueck and Glueck's original sample, of which they found natural ageing out of criminality present.

The above enables us to now discuss ontogenetic theories of desistance, of which recognise the importance of considering the features that intervene in the process of aging (Rutter, 1966). Hirschi and Gottfredson (1983) are supportive of this perspective of maturational

reform and argue that the natural aging of the body leads to a normative process of desistance. These biological changes over the course of the aging process cause a reduction in both ability and motivation to reoffend (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). Gove (1985) supported this perspective by noting that the decline in physical strength that comes with age, can be used to explain desistance. However, it is worth recognising the flaws in this argument, such as physical strength not impacting all types of crime, such as cybercrime. Furthermore, humans tend to see a physical strength peak at the age of 30 (Adams, 1997), but the decline in strength that occurs after that, is not as steep as the decline that is seen for criminal behaviour (Maruna, 1999).

Nevertheless, contemporary research by Sparkes and Day (2016) noted the impact of the aging body, in the sense of increased tiredness and slowing down having links to desistance. Weaver (2019) drew attention to the developments that have been made in 'maturational' approaches, and the move towards a focus on neurobiological systems. The work of Shulman et al (2016) was specifically mentioned. They found that "activation of an early-maturing socioemotional-incentive processing system amplifies adolescents' affinity for exciting, pleasurable, and novel activities at a time when a still immature cognitive control system is not yet strong enough to consistently restrain potentially hazardous impulses" (Shulman et al, 2016:103). As such concluding that risk-taking behaviour is more prevalent amongst adolescents, whereby this behaviour peaks, than other age ranges (Shulman et al, 2016; Weaver, 2019). The age and crime link has been of longstanding discussion. Debates around its validity tend to be based on "whether the analysis of *individual-level* data evidence the same relationship between age and crime as the analysis of *aggregate* data" (Weaver, 2019:644). Ulmer and Steffensmeier (2014) argue that in both aggregate and individual-level data, age acts as a steady predictor of criminal activity. They note that when looking at data across countries and historical periods, crime has most often been linked to young people, particularly when considering street-level crime (Ulmer and Steffensmeier, 2014). Despite this, the age-crime connection has been subject to much debate as to whether it should be considered universally invariant. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) argue that the age-crime curve, should be considered consistent across time, place, and social conditions. Wilson and Herrnstein (1985:145) support this, by stating that "an older person is likely to have a lower propensity for crime than a younger person, even after they have been matched in demographic variables", inclusive of factors such as employment, peers, and family circumstances. With this viewpoint in mind, Maruna (1999: 2) notes that "the effect of age on

crime is 'natural', direct and invariant across social, temporal and economic conditions".
Glueck and Glueck (1974) argue that socio-structural factors do not affect desistance, but
rather that desistance is a normative, expected process, with any exceptions centring around
immaturity. This perspective however is easily critiqued by the work of Moffitt (1993) who
discussed the maturity gap in relation to the age-crime curve, noting that that adolescence
limited offenders engage in crime because they have hit biological maturity to want things
(i.e. alcohol, new things, cars) but society does not deem them as an 'adult'.

Research that is in support of the age-crime relationship has been termed by Dannefer
(1984:101) as "ontogenetic fallacy", by which one accepts "that changes in behaviour reflect
the natural and universal 'properties of the ageing organism' rather than social or institutional
processes or the age-graded structure of social roles and social controls" (Maruna, 1999:3).
This acceptance is not shared by all however, with Sutton (1994:228) stating that "to say that
age influences everything is to say nothing". For example, some researchers have placed
emphasis on the variation of crime over time, and differences on the basis of location and sex
(Greenberg, 1985; Farrington, 1986; Steffensmeier et al, 1989). Between 1938 and 1983,
Farrington (1986), as part of the longitudinal Cambridge study of delinquent development,
found differing patterns of crime rates against the age crime curve depending on sex and that
men had higher conviction levels at each age in comparison to women. Similar to other
demographic characteristics, it is not impossible to consider that behaviour can align with
one's age, however it is also important to recognise that within Western society, one's age
will also determine how they are treated (Greenberg, 1985). For example, infants, and older
people will be treated in a way that suggests they are not capable of committing certain types
of crimes due to physicality (Greenberg, 1977).

An issue with considering desistance as a natural process, that is particularly important to this
research, is the implication it can have on criminal justice agencies. Maruna (1999) notes that
the adoption of age-graded theories may lead to a decrease in public support for offender
rehabilitation and reintegration services, such as the probation service. If the assumption that
a person ages out of crime is true (Glueck and Glueck (1974), then from a rehabilitative
viewpoint, the most logical rehabilitative option would be that of time, with the assumption
that offenders will "grow out of crime" (Graham and Bowling, 1995:4).

Sociogenic Explanations: Social Control and Social Learning

The ontogenetic explanations of desistance have highlighted a relationship between age and crime yet failed to provide a meaning of age. Sociogenic explanations look to provide more possible explanations as to the reasoning behind why age might link to crime and desistance. These explanations, of which take into consideration social bonds and informal social control, are the second most influential explanations for desistance, after ontogenetic theories (Farrington, 1992). Sociogenic or social bond theories, draw on the concept that ties to society within early adulthood, such as to family, employment, and education, can explain how criminal behaviour develops over the course of a person's life (Maruna, 1999; McNeill, 2006). McNeill (2006:46) recognises that "where these [social] ties exist, they create a stake in conformity, a reason to 'go straight' [and] where they are absent, people who offend have less to lose from continuing to offend". As such, unlike ontogenetic theories that provide a generalised and universal perspective to desistance, sociogenic theories refer to the impact individual factors can have, such as employment (Maruna, 1999).

Theorists within the field imply that informal ties to 'institutions of social control' (Weaver, 2019:647), can enhance the opportunity for desistance (Laub and Sampson, 2003). With this in mind, a person's individual choices, such as getting married or entering into employment, can therefore control their own experience (Laub and Sampson, 2001). Hirschi (1969) introduced the social control theory (also known as the social bond theory), which argues that young offenders and those who commit crimes as adults, lack the bonds to society, which would traditionally control a person's behaviour and curtail their natural instincts. Bartol and Bartol note that the social control theory "contends that crime and delinquency occur when an individual's ties to the conventional order or normative standards are weak or largely nonexistent" (2011:5). Furthermore, the 'age-graded theory of informal social control' assumes that criminal behaviour is a response to a lack of informal social controls (Sampson and Laub, 1993; Laub and Sampson, 2003). A further concept that has had a strong impact within the desistance literature, in relation to control theory, is Matza's (1964) concept of 'drift'. This concept focuses on how adolescents find themselves caught between the traditional norms and social bonds of adulthood and a deviant peer subculture, without however, having a complete attachment to either side (Matza, 1964). Matza (1964) argued that crime is likely to stop once adult roles become available and the weak bonds with deviancy, that were apparent during adolescents, terminate.

As discussed with the work of Hirschi (1969) and Matza (1964), sociogenic models place a focus on stakes in conformity, opportunities for change, and turning points in one's life (Maruna, 2001). Sampson and Laub's (1993) life-course perspective, places a focus on the aspect of 'turning points'. This perspective argues that 'turning points', such as employment, marriage or having children, provides offenders with a stake in conformity, which as a result gives them a reason to move away from criminal activity (Sampson and Laub, 1993). Turning points for crime can come in the form of changes to the level of informal control by life events (Laub and Sampson, 2001). Laub and Sampson note that desistance happens as a by-product of social institution involvement, and that it often occurs "without [those who previously offended] even realising it" (2003:278). A number of scholars have looked into the impact of different 'turning points', with employment (Shover, 1985; Sampson and Laub, 1993; Abeling-Judge, 2021), education (Farrington, et al. 1996), becoming a parent (Leibrich, 1993), and marriage (Farrington and West, 1995; Rutter et al, 1990; Sampson and Laub, 1993; Craig and Foster, 2012; Skardhamar et al, 2015), all suggesting a connection with desistance from crime. Farrington and West (1995) studied the behaviour of delinquent men and found that a strong marriage had a negative correlation with offending, whereas separation from their wives was a key predictor of future offending. In support of this, Horney et al's (1995), study that encompassed a sizeable proportion of minority groups, found that informal social control can impact desistance potential. They found that "moving in with one's wife doubles the odds of stopping offending (compared to moving away) and moving away from one's wife doubles the odds of starting to offend (compared to moving in)" (Horney et al, 1995:665), suggesting that it is not just the marriage itself but the close proximity to one's significant other that is also important.

Further to social control theories, social learning frameworks look to provide an explanation for why desistance occurs. These frameworks suggest that factors that can lead to offending occurring, mirror what can lead to individuals desisting (Warr, 1998). There are a number of factors associated with desistance, for example Weaver (2019:16) noted "differential association with non-criminal peers and significant others, less exposure to, or opportunities to model or imitate, criminal [behaviour], the development of attitudes [favourable] to desistance, and differential reinforcement discouraging continued involvement in offending". Similarly, the learning of criminal definitions and having close relationships with offending peers, has been attributed to stronger chances of criminal involvement (Sutherland, 1947; Akers, 1990). Ayers et al (1999) conducted a longitudinal study with 297 males and 269

females and found a positive connection between differential association/social learning and desistance, as there was a heightened rate of predicted desistance for those who had more association with conventional peers. The link to differential association/ social learning has been supported by research from Warr (1998), who used data from the National Youth Survey, a longitudinal study of criminal involvement among youth across the United States of America. In this study, Warr (1998) examined whether desistance from criminal activity was a result of marriage, or less involvement with delinquent peers since being married. Warr (1998) found that there was a link to differential association/social learning theory, due to a reduced rate of criminal activity on the basis of a reduction of time spent with delinquent peers after getting married. The study suggests that disassociation from delinquent peers, may lead to a reduction in motivation to engage in criminal activity (Warr, 1998). Weaver (2019), however, highlights that there is a lack of confirmation as to why or how this occurs.

Sociogenic explanations of desistance, place less of a focus on the impact of biological age and move towards highlighting the importance of structural and social circumstances of offenders. Under a sociogenic viewpoint, there is an acknowledgement that age correlates with decreased levels of offending, however it looks to explain that relationship by considering an underlying 'third variable'. As highlighted above, this variable can take the form of a stake in conformity, the risk of having something to lose, new routines and changes in identity. Despite the sociogenic model having been widely accepted within criminology, there are aspects of the model that have been challenged by scholars in the field. For example, Maruna (2001) argues that the value of 'turning points' is inflated, as for a person to take up the opportunity of a turning point, they may also requite the motivation and/or capacity to make a change. This has been supported by others, who believe that 'turning points' may be more likely for some than others, due to certain people having predisposed characteristics (such as self-esteem, self-control, openness to change, stable emotions etc) that lead to them situating themselves within settings that positive turning points are present (Uggen, 2000; Uggen and Massoglia, 2003). As such, it is not clear whether these turning points act as a cause or consequence of desistance (Kazemian, 2007). As the direction of causation is uncertain, only a claim to an association between the two can be made. Further to this, challenges have been made regarding the specific types of social bonds that have been mentioned as explaining desistance under the sociogenic model. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) have argued that upon looking at the evidence, employment and the formation of stable relationships do not lead to a reduction in crime with age. Employment as a sociogenic

explanation for desistance has also been criticised, particularly due to there being crimes that exist whereby employment is required for the offending to occur, such as 'white collar' or 'corporate' crime (Hansen, 2009). It is worth critiquing what is meant by employment, as it can range from zero-hour insecure employment, to steady stable important, which can impact the employment effect, and also be considered in the remit of what employment an ex-offender is likely to get. Others have also identified faults with the focus on stable relationships, by noting that families and communities may actually lead to an increase in offending rather than desistance, particularly due to generational offending (Farrington et al, 1996).

Maruna (1999:4) argues that "essentially what seems to be missing from both ontogenetic and sociogenic approaches is the person – the wholeness and agentic subjectivity of the individual". This is echoed by Adams (1997) who focuses on the importance of individual agency and the significant involvement of the offender in actively making choices that lead them to move away from criminality. This is echoed by Weaver (2019:19) who noted that although sociogenic models explain the role of social institutions, they "fail to illuminate how social structures or institutions shape decisions, under-analyzing, if not neglecting, how the individual perceives and responds to such influences, to which interactionist theories attend". As a result, identity and interactionist theories will now be considered.

Identity and Interactionist Theories

Identity theories focus on the way that one's identity is important in guiding one's behaviour. Interactionist theories develop on this by identifying how a person's "cognitive openness to change", can interact with social structures, such as "marriage and reform" (Siennick and Osborn, 2008:169-70). Drawing from this, Lebel et al (2008:155) argued that "subjective changes may precede life-changing structural events, and to that extent, individuals can act as agents of their own change". As such, individuals can apply some level of control over the direction of their future lives (King, 2012). Oyserman et al (2012:69) acknowledge the importance of identity, stating that "identities provide a meaning-making anchor". This means that individuals are aware of who they are, and their understanding of self directs their choices, and those choices, whether they be small or large, feel aligned with their identity (Oyserman et al, 2012). As such, an individual's identity and how they perceive themselves, can guide whether a person engages in crime or not. Interactionist theories "place differing emphases on the role of individuals and their social contexts, tending to place explanatory

weight on the discovery and exercise of agency and changes in personal identity and perceptions of social identity" (Weaver, 2019:648). By doing this, social controls, such as employment, are considered in the way of how they play a role in shaping a person's personal and social identity, and in turn life choices (Weaver, 2015).

Cornish and Clarke's (1986) 'rational choice theory' is important in this argument as it argues that offenders weigh up the benefits and costs before committing a crime. Similarly, numerous studies have reported that a 'decision' is an important factor in desistance (Cusson and Pinsonneault, 1986; Leibrich, 1993; Shover, 1983). Rational choice theories argue that the decision to desist can be motivated by a future that does not include offending (Paternoster, 1989; Paternoster and Bushway, 2009). Cusson and Pinsonneault (1986:78) found that the decision to desist from crime was triggered by a shocking event and/or "delayed deterrence", however it was "voluntary and autonomous". The rational choice theory led way to Paternoster and Bushway's (2009) 'identity theory of criminal desistance', which determines that identities change as an individualistic and cognitive process. With this perspective, it notes that desistance occurs after a "crystallization of discontent", which is where the offender has become increasingly dissatisfied with their life (Paternoster and Bushway, 2009:1124). After comparing their working self (their current identity), their feared self (continuing an offender identity), and a possible self (non-offending identity), individuals can use the motivation that comes from their possible self, to decide to move away from offending, and therefore desist from crime. Unlike sociogenic theories that have been discussed before, involvement with social institutions, such as marriage or employment, will take place after the person has decided to change their identity, rather than as a justification for the change of identity. Weaver (2019:646) acknowledges that "after a decision to desist has been made, the desister engages in a deliberate and intentional realignment of their social network towards more pro-social others". Healy (2014) is supportive of Paternoster and Bushway (2009) and the importance of agency. Healy (2014:874) notes that in order for a person to see a "meaningful credible new self", of which does not desist, they must also be able to see it as achievable within their present social context. Marshall (2005: 69) also recognises the importance of agency, but also goes on to state that "any account of human action … also needs to account for the role of structure in enabling or constraining that action". Paternoster et al (2015:211) acknowledged that although the identity theory of desistance answers some theoretical questions, it "can be accused of treating actors as behaving without full human agency because of its reliance on rational choice theory". While

there is an understanding that rational choice theorists note that desistance is informed by one's social experiences, they have been critiqued for their lack of explanation for how experience and involvement with social institutions and processes may constrict an individual's decision-making or their ability to understand these intentions (Weaver, 2019).

In a similar way to Paternoster and Bushway (2009), Giordano et al (2002) highlights identity as an important factor in the discussion of desistance, however they considered the argument to be more socially oriented. In direct contrast to 'Sampson and Laub's theory of informal social control', Giordano et al (2002:990) developed one of the first identity theories within this field, a "symbolic interactionist perspective on desistance based on life history narratives .. to illustrate the perspective". From this, they proposed a four-stage theory of 'cognitive transformation', to explain the desistance process (Giordano et al., 2002:1004). These four steps are:

1. An initial motivation to change;
2. '... exposure to ... hooks for change' (ibid, 2002: 1000);
3. Changes to one's self-view;
4. '... a transformation in the way the actor views the deviant behaviour or lifestyle itself' (ibid, 2002: 1002).

These steps, have been explained by Giordano et al (2002) to work together to support a process of desistance. The first step above, which is potentially the most fundamental, places importance on the offender being open to change in order for any further developments to occur. The second step, places direct attention on the link between the offender and their environment. It is arguing that simply being open to change is not enough, but rather one being exposed to hooks for change, such as offers of employment, and in turn perceiving the availability and meaning of this hook in a positive and open way is important. The third step centres around the offender designing an appealing replacement self, that displaces the prior offending self. The final and fourth step, of which enables the desistance process to occur in full, is for the offender to change their views on deviant behaviour and the lifestyle itself, and in turn take on views that mean they no longer see the behaviour or lifestyle as positive or acceptable. Although these four cognitive transformations are agentically driven, Giordano et al (2002:999) theorised that to achieve a thorough understanding of desistance "a more reciprocal relationship between actor and environment [which] reserve[s] a central place for

agency in the change process" was required. Similarities between these cognitive transformations and the current research are apparent.

While still focusing on identities, Maruna (2001) draws an importance of prosocial identities being consistent with one's prior self., arguing that it is not that desisting offenders change who they are, but rather they conform with their current positive view of themselves. By taking a narrative perspective, Maruna (1999:9) argues that "when an individual desists from crime, s/he acts as his or her own change agent and is not merely the product of outside forces or social control or personality traits". Maruna draws from the work of McAdams (1994), in the sense of identifying three internalised personalities: psychological traits, personal strategies, and identity narratives/ self-stories. With a particular focus on the latter two personalities, due to them being "more contextualised domains of personality [that] leave open the possibility of substantial change in adulthood" (Maruna, 1999:6). By considering offender self-concepts, and personal strategies, it can help researchers to understand how desistance occurs (McAdams, 1994). Vaughan (2007) notes how individuals can put in place personal strategies to shape and as such change their life script (narrative). For example, Vaughan (2007: 391) argues that a person can "recognise [their] past as qualitatively different from present commitments yet cannot completely sever [themselves] from it".

For Maruna (2001), an offender changing the perspective of their offending to a prosocial one is a process that has been referred to as narrative rescripting. The role of narrative, one's construction of their identity, is central to the desistance process for Maruna (2001), however what is argued is that the focus should be on the less frequent secondary desistance from crime, whereby "existing roles become disrupted" and "reorganisation based on new roles occurs", rather than the regular occurrence of primary desistance (Maruna and Immarigeon, 2004: 19). For secondary desistance to be achieved, Maruna (2001) argues that one must first change their own perspective of themselves. Maruna's perspective is based on his narrative study, involving 20 persisters and 30 desisters, of whom shared similar backgrounds and environment, as well as criminogenic traits (2001). The study identified the importance of individuals stories, also known as 'scripts', in explaining their criminal career (Maruna, 2001). It is worth noting that 'scripts' is a commonly used psychological term, that then is a feature of some psychological therapies, reinforcing its prevalence within rehabilitation. Part of the process noted by Maruna, involved individuals reviewing their own subjective perspectives on how their past, present, and future shaped their life story (2001). From the

research, two common scripts derived, desisters were said to conform to the 'redemption script', whereas persisters were more conforming with the 'condemnation script'. The 'redemption script' draws on the narrative that one's 'new self' is incompatible with their previous views of their future self. They must then reconstruct their past, or re-imagine themselves, in a way that enables them to view a new crime-free future. As such, this involved those who desisted from crime, to find a link between their previous life of disadvantage and crime, and their new self that is not compatible with criminal activity (Maruna, 2001). By doing this, those who stopped offending had to re-evaluate their past in a way that was consistent with this 'new self' and as such their new identity. The redemption script, the belief that the individual is fundamentally good, with their past being a result of social isolation and disadvantage (Marsh, 2011), and of which supports the motivation for desistance, follows a process such as this:

> ".. redemption script begins by establishing the goodness and conventionality of the narrator—a victim of society who gets involved with crime and drugs to achieve some sort of power over otherwise bleak circumstances...Yet with the help of some outside force, someone who 'believed in' the ex-offender, the narrator is able to accomplish what he or she was 'always meant to do'" (Maruna, 2001:87).

Similarly, Le Bel et al (2008) note that desisters have an element of control over their own agency. They note that "desisting offenders maintain a distinctly optimistic sense of control over their future and strong internal beliefs about their own self-worth and personal destinies" (Le Bel, 2008: 136). They go on to state that 'belief in one's ability to "go straight", or belief in self-efficacy ... may be a necessary if not a sufficient condition for an individual to be able to desist from crime" (Le Bel et al, 2008: 154). Although individual agency plays a key role in this process, it is worth reiterating that within the redemption script, outside forces attribute to the lifestyle change; "usually to the generosity of some forgiving person or persons who could see past the ex–offender's mistakes" (Maruna, 1999:10). Persistent offenders on the other hand have been noted to live by a condemnation script, whereby they are "the victims of environment and social circumstances beyond their control, lack of access to decent education, poor family [and] lack of financial freedom, [which] lead [them] to crime and deviant behaviour as a method of taking back control and surviving" (Hearn, 2010:11) In Maruna's research, those who persisted to commit crime, tended to have stories that showed a lack of agency, and an enhanced level of being controlled by outside forces (2001), in the

same way that within psychology, if you believe that you have no control and that external variables are to blame for that, you have what is referred to as an external locus of control (Rotter 1966; Carton et al, 2021). The persisters were noted to "... feel powerless to change their behavior" with this perceived lack of control over their future being seen as them feeling they are "doomed to deviance" (Maruna, 2001:74). By comparing the findings of the desisters and the persisters, this viewpoint of narrative rescripting, shows that one's own perception on their ability to change, plays a key role in whether desistance occurs or not.

While rational choice theorists recognise that the decision to desist is informed by individuals' experience of, and involvement, in wider social institutions and processes, no explanation is offered as to how such processes might exert a constraint on either people's decision-making or their capacities to realise these intentions. Individual theories, often being based on rational choice theory, acknowledge that a person's experience within wider social institutions and processes inform their decision to desist or not (Weaver, 2019). Interactionist theories advance the understandings of individual theories by moving past the rational choice and cognitive explanations by "focusing on the interaction between structure and agency" and illuminating "the role of social structures in enabling or constraining agency" (Weaver, 2019:651).

Traditional accounts of desistance, as highlighted earlier, can be divided into agency-focused and structure focused theories (Farrall and Bowling, 1999). Farrall and Bowling summarise this split as:

> The empirical research on desistance from offending has treated individuals as either 'super-agents' who are free to act as they choose and can directly influence the outcome of their lives through their decision making, or as 'super-dupes' who react to wider social forces and situations rather than helping to create these situations through their own actions (1999: 258).

However, Farrall and Bowling (1999), argue that people are neither 'super-agents' or 'super-dupes', which leads on to discussions of situational theories.

Situational Theories

Despite the impact of agency-focused and structure focused theories within the desistance literature, Bottoms (2014) argues that there needs to be an outright focus on spatial and situational aspects of desistance. Situational theories have been developed as a response to Bottoms' (2014) observations, and as a way of integrating both levels of Farrall and Bowling's explanations. Situational desistance is argued to highlight how aspects of a person's social environment and situated routine activities, impact, and influence their behaviour (Bottoms, 2014). It works as "an integrated theory that takes seriously the role of context and of individual decision-making" (Rocque, 2017:160). Bottoms (2014) argues that when one or multiple elements of a person's surrounding environment is altered, then their behaviour can also change. Elements that could be altered, for example, it could be where someone lives, or detachment from offending peers (Bottoms, 2014). Desistance for some comes through making decisions that lead to social isolation for oneself, known as 'situational self-binding' (Bottoms, 2013). Bottoms and Shapland (2016) developed this approach when recognising the term *diachronic self-control*, whereby a person puts things in place in their lives with the intention of avoiding situations that may tempt them, or lead them in a direction, to engage in acts that they do not wish to be part of. Goodwin (2020:9) acknowledges that "[s]uch behaviour clearly shows intentional and deliberate action, and so should also be understood as a form of agentic behaviour", meaning it is self-beneficial.

Notably, Weaver (2015: 27) argues that "the situational and spatial dynamics of desistance have barely featured in the criminal careers literature as yet". There has been some movement within this topic, however it still remains under investigated in comparison to the alternative explanations given for understanding desistance. In recent times, one of the first accounts that has considered this is that of Farrall et al (2014:160) who provide an account of how "desistance impacts upon individuals everyday activities, including the spaces and places in which these take place", suggesting that desistance is not simply about ceasing one behaviour, but also about adopting others. In research by Farrall (2002) and Farrall and Calverley (2006), it was found that desisters and persisters engage in different social activities and inhabit different spaces. For example, desisters often engaged in certain activities that involved family and work, whereas a large amount of persisters were unemployed, and noted criminal activity within their regular routines (Farrall, 2002; Farrall and Calverley, 2006).

Situational theories of desistance, encompass the fact that some "researchers are moving

beyond either/or explanations of desistance and arguing that desistance cannot be boiled down to the environmental factors one finds themselves in, nor to deliberate choice independent of situational context" (Rocque, 2017:160). They have overall helped to "add a new dimension to interactionist theories by focusing on the situational and spatial elements of desistance" yet recognising that "attention to questions of identity and agency" are needed, in addition to "the interaction between agency and social contexts and the attendant effects on people's behaviours" (Weaver, 2019: 652).

Desistance literature provides an outlook into the varied theoretical understandings of what desistance is, and the ways and meanings behind how offenders achieve it. It is however the role of the probation service to work with offenders to try and encourage desistance to occur in a practical sense. The probation service is a statutory criminal justice agency that within current times, is responsible for supervising offenders who are subject to a community order, released from prison on a license or serving a sentence in the community (HM Prison and Probation Service, 2024). Changes to the probation service alter the service user's experience of probation, and as such can impact upon their ability to desist from crime and successfully benefit from rehabilitation.

2.3 The Probation Service in England and Wales

2.3.1 The History and Development of the Probation Service

The probation service work directly with offenders serving community and custodial sentences, whilst also undertaking work with and for the courts (DoingTime, 2024). Some of the specifics of their responsibilities involve: supervising court ordered sentences (community and suspended); providing post-release from prison supervision; offer advice and training; manage approved premises (often known as hostels), and provide pre-sentence reports, and 'fast delivery reports' for the courts (DoingTime, 2024). To understand the role and the purpose of the probation service, it is important to refer to the history and development of the probation service.

In 1876, a philanthropist, Frederick Rainer made a financial donation to enable voluntary support to be provided to people appearing before courts in London, a donation that funded the 'The Police Court Mission', which was managed by the Church of England Temperance Society (Auerbach, 2010; House of Commons Justice Committee, 2011). The Probation of

Offenders Act 1907 provided the legal basis for probation services, and in turn making it possible for Magistrates' Courts to appoint probation officers, who were paid by local authorities to "advise, assist and befriend" those under probation supervision (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2011:15). Statutory probation services were therefore established in 1907, coming under the control of the Home Office in 1938 with a series of modernising reforms, when it was determined that the increase of juvenile crime during the first world war required probation work to have more state direction, rather than being ran by philanthropic bodies and local magistrates (Hanson, 2014).

Before the Second World War, there was a gradual move towards professional therapeutic or diagnostic work with offenders and how to 'treat' them, meaning that probation practice undertook more of a psychology, casework, and diagnosis role (McWilliams, 1986; Newburn, 2013). This changed during the 1970's and 1980's as probation services began to move towards partnership working with an aim of developing schemes such as cautioning, alternatives to custody, and the introduction of 'risk of reoffending' assessment tools (The Guardian, 2007). Post the Second World War, probation continued to expand, with the 1970s seeing probation being used as a key management tool for more serious offenders in the community (Newburn, 2013). By the end of the 1970s however, the treatment model for working with offenders was heavily criticised, and the effectiveness of probation for reducing recidivism was doubted (Martinson, 1974). There was a push by legal scholars, such as Hood (1974) and Von Hirsch (1976), for proportionate justice based on the seriousness of the offence, and a move towards probation being used as an alternative to custody, rather than treatment (Newburn, 2013). A significant piece of legislation that endorsed this was the Criminal Justice Act 1991. This Act argued that an emphasis should be placed on taking a just deserts approach, meaning offenders are sentenced for what they have done, rather than their characteristics, or treatment needs (Easton and Piper, 2022).

In 1993, changes were made by the government to the training of probation officers, moving away from its previous social work identity, and towards a focus on enforcement, public protection, and rehabilitation (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2011). By 1995, the government released the Green Paper: Strengthening Punishment in the Community, which argued that more needed to be done to tackle the perspective that probation supervision is a soft option (Newburn, 2013). Following the 1997 Prison/Probation Review, it was determined that a more streamlined approach to probation was required (Mair and Burke,

2012). This was implemented and put into place as part of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2001, with the creation of a unified NPS (The National Archives, 2005). These new 42 local probation boards, which replacing the previous 54 probation committees, was fully funded by the Home Office (Hanson, 2014).

This leads us on to more recent times, where the literature to come sets the scene for many of the issues looked in to within this project's research, with the focus being on the significant developments specific to this topic. To start, a key turning point within the field came about with the production of the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) (2002) which highlighted that prison sentences, despite being the ultimate sanction of the state, were not successful at reducing reoffending, but rather reconviction rates were increasing and remaining high. The report noted that the cost of reoffending is high and can have a devastating and long-lasting impact on the victims, the offender's families, society, and communities, largely the most disadvantaged. In addition to these costs, the report established that the financial impact is staggering, with the costs soaring further, when re-offending leads to an offender being re-incarcerated. Developing on the criminological and social research, the SEU established nine key factors that they argue influence reoffending: "education; employment; drug and alcohol misuse; mental and physical health; attitudes and self-control; institutionalisation and life-skills; housing; financial support and debt; and family networks" (SEU, 2002:6). As a result, they argued that "long-term change is needed to ensure that all those dealing with prisoners and ex-prisoners make the maximum possible impact on re-offending" (SEU, 2002:10).

In line with the response of the Social Exclusion Unit report, the Home Office (2004:27) produced a National Action Plan, with key aims, such as providing "access to treatment and support from a drug misusing offender's first point of contact with the criminal justice system through custody, court, sentence and beyond". A National Delivery Plan was developed by the National Offender Management Service, laying out plans to improve the support individuals who misuse substances receive (National Offender Management Service, 2005). The National Delivery Plan acknowledged alcohol misuse as a key issue and as a result, the plan aimed "to improve treatment and support for offenders with alcohol misuse problems" (National Offender Management Service, 2005:31). Substance misuse treatment is considered to reduce both substance use and offending behaviour (Mulvey, 2011). This was supported by the 'Breaking the Cycle' report, of which the main objective was to improve public safety by breaking the cycle of crime (Ministry of Justice, 2010). One of the points raised in the report

was for a focus to be put on moving drug dependent offenders away from drugs and into recovery. It is argued that the starting point for reforming many offenders is to focus on the dependency they have to drugs and/or alcohol and as such intensive drug treatment in the community, adaptations made based on the severity of the addiction and misuse, should be provided to service users (Ministry of Justice, 2010). In addition, the Ministry of Justice 'Breaking the Cycle' report reiterated that "the right way to improve public safety and reduce the number of victims is to reform offenders to reduce reoffending" (2010:10). The report breaks down various important factors and ways to rehabilitate offenders and reduce crime. To start, taking an offender integrated approach with many organisations, inclusive of probation and local services. The aim being that the behaviour of offenders is monitored and controlled, at the same time as them having support and treatment in place. This is to ensure that offenders are aware that they are required to tackle their criminal behaviour, but also acknowledge that if they reoffend, they will be swiftly punished (Ministry of Justice, 2010).

A further implication of the National Delivery Plan was the introduction of the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' reform programme (Ministry of Justice, 2013a). This programme was constituted, to try and marry up the concerns highlighted within the 'Breaking the Cycle' report regarding offending and rehabilitation. For decades, probation policy and practice has developed in a way that intensifies and reinforces approaches used to assess and manage the risk of service users (Kewley and Brereton, 2022). Despite risk and risk behaviours changing both rapidly and unexpectedly, risk classification remains a predominant way for criminal justice agencies to determine the best way to direct public protection resources to the management of service users who have committed offences (Kewley and Brereton, 2022). This same approach was taken within the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' reform programme, which split the probation service up based on risk; it reduced the National Probation Service's responsibilities, to only cover high-risk offenders in the community (Ministry of Justice, 2013), and provided private companies with the opportunity to bid for contracts that involved the responsibility of managing low-to-medium risk offenders in the community (Home Office and Ministry of Justice, 2015). This resulted in the creation of 21 CRCs. It was argued that adding a profit motive would help reduce the prison population and in turn the cost of the CJS overall, by extending probation to those on short-term sentences (Tidmarsh, 2019), in turn making it only necessary to privatise those service users that CRCs were designed to support. Alongside the NPS, they collaborate with 'providers from the voluntary, private and social sector' to 'deliver services, reduce reoffending and protect the public' (SWM CRC,

2015). With an aim of reducing reoffending, the programme focused on: extending rehabilitation to short term offenders who are often the most prolific re-offenders; increasing the number of providers available for delivering rehabilitation; giving providers more flexibility in the delivery of their services to ensure that they are supplying the best support to service users; and as explained within the Breaking the Cycle report, use a payment by results method when funding supporting organisations (Ministry of Justice, 2013).

Payment by Results enables the government to pay providers for their services based on the outcomes the provider achieves, rather than the input or output of the service they have delivered (Fox and Albertson, 2011). This concept was openly supported by the Conservative Party in 2009, as they argued that payment by results would support the reform of criminal justice services, by incentivising criminal justice service providers, including probation, and supporting the reduction of reoffending (The Conservative Party, 2009). It has been noted that by paying providers based on their outcomes and allowing them to determine how they would like to achieve the expected targets, should increase efficiency for tackling the problem at hand, whilst also transferring the risk away from the government who is funding the service (Fox and Albertson, 2011). Despite these potential positives, it is worth noting that the ability to gain clarity on the scale of change expected is difficult, as evidence from prior payment by results programmes is low (Mulgan et al, 2010) and for those that do exist and are successful, they show small scale change (Fox and Albertson, 2011).

Nevertheless, a recommendation of the Breaking the Cycle report was for a joint commissioning approach to reduce reoffending through a payment by results scheme. The proposed approach would include paying organisations based on their results to get offenders off drugs and/or alcohol, by methods such as assessment, referral, and case management to determine how well organisations have supported the recovery of service users in the community (Ministry of Justice, 2010). Bean (2018) identified payment by results, and its concentration on incentivising performance, as a key factor of privatisation within the probation service. For CRCs, this is done by them being paid for the type of activities that they provide and the effectiveness of them, rather than how many people they supervise (House of Commons Library, 2019). It is worth noting that with this pressure, private organisations may engage in 'cherry picking', whereby those service users who are considered most likely be high achievers and easiest to support are concentrated on (Webster,

2016).

As noted, one of the aims of the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' programme was to extend rehabilitation to short term offenders, which led to the extension of "post-release licence supervision and rehabilitation support to those who had served less than 12 months in prison" (Millings et al, 2019:78). Previously those serving less than 12 months were not assisted by the Probation Service. When justifying this extension, reoffending rates of short-term offenders were explored. The Ministry of Justice (2016a) reported that nearly 60 per cent of those starting a custodial sentence in 2015 were sentenced to less than 12 months in prison. When reflecting on this group of individuals post-release, 60 per cent of them reoffended within 12 months of their release date (Ministry of Justice, 2016b). These figures reflect on the decision of the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' programme to implement a policy which saw 89 prisons in England and Wales redesigned as resettlement prisons, with the task of "establishing an integrated approach to service delivery" (Millings et al, 2019:78). As such, CRCs were granted the responsibility of delivering Through the Gate resettlement services, in order "to help prisoners maintain or find accommodation; provide assistance with finance, benefits and debt; and to support them to enter education, training and employment" (Millings et al, 2019:78). Despite the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' reform programme since being established as ineffective (HM Inspector of Probation, 2021h), it has had a significant impact on the probation service.

2.3.2 The Impact of the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' programme

The role of probation provision has been designed in a way to that is "designed to protect the public and reduce reoffending by supervising offenders in the community, overseeing their rehabilitation and ensuring that they understand the impact of their crimes on victims" (House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 2019:4). CRCs have an equal expectation to deliver these requirements. Since the implementation of CRCs however, several inspectorate reports have been written based on inspections that have been undertaken across England and Wales. The House of Commons conducted an inquiry in to the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' programme, with a desire to discover how best to support the probation service (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2018). The Chief Executive of the National Offender Management Service and the Chief Inspector of Probation had argued early on, in 2017, that the system for CRCs was not working well (Beard, 2019).

Some justifications given within the inquiry for the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' programme not being as successful as envisaged, include lack of resources and high caseloads (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021d). In fact, the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' reform programme has been noted as a key driver in the increase of caseloads for probation staff (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021d). Between 2010 and 2014 the probation caseload fell, reflecting a decrease in general crime levels and the number of individuals going to court and being sentenced (Ministry of Justice, 2019a). However, following the implementation of the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' programme, probation caseloads rose by 39 per cent since 2010, due to the introduction of the Offender Rehabilitation Act, which led to the majority of those leaving custody now requiring post-release supervision (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021d). These pressures placed on probation, particularly the privatised side (CRCs), impacted how and where resources are directed, and therefore increased the level of difficulty that service users had for accessing probation support. As such the effectiveness and impact that the Transforming Rehabilitation reform programme had on the ability to provide probation provision will be discussed.

In June 2017 it was found that CRCs had only met one third of their expected performance targets issued by the Ministry of Justice (National Audit Office, 2017). However, this may be due to the fact that unlike initial predictions, most people who are supervised by CRCs, fall into the category of medium-risk offenders rather than low-risk (National Audit Office, 2017). Furthermore, the volume of activity that CRCs were initially paid for, was below the level of activity that was expected from them when their contracts were first designed. However, the number of offenders being supervised by the CRCs increased (National Audit Office, 2017) as such highlighting the underfunded nature of CRCs for the volume of work that was required of them. CRCs were measured against two rates, the binary rate (the proportion of offenders that reoffend) and the frequency rate (the average number of repeat offences per each reoffender) (Ministry of Justice, 2021). It is important to recognise that these figures on based on whether they were recorded as offending or not. Findings released in January 2018 showed that eleven out of the twenty-one CRCs had significant reductions, nine had minimal reductions and one had a significant increase in binary rates, and only two had reduced their frequency rate (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2018). Nevertheless, CRCs were shown to be falling short in the quality and amount of meaningful support provided to rehabilitate offenders, with sufficient progress in only two in five CRC

cases (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2017). This is particularly concerning as a high number of prisoners released from prison after a short-term sentence and being supported by the CRCs to resettle into the community, had a high need for alcohol or drug use support (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2017). Furthermore, despite the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' programme placing a focus on partnership working for maximised support, in cases supported by both CRCs and drug and alcohol charities, under half of them had achieved their desired outcomes in reducing alcohol misuse (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2017). It is worth noting that the figures in relation to binary rates improved for twenty of the CRCs when looking at the final proven reoffending statistics for CRCs from January to March 2020 and 2019-20 (Ministry of Justice, 2022).

A further factor of the Transforming Rehabilitation programme was the introduction of Through the Gate resettlement. CRCs were expected to deliver core provision to prisoners in local prisons who were soon due to be released, in order to help them maintain or find accommodation, provide support with finance, education, training and employment, and co-ordinate their release (HM Inspectorate of Probation and HM Inspectorate of Prison, 2017). Upon the date of release from custody approaching, Through the Gate provision is intended to support the successful reintegration and resettlement of people in prison back into society, and "minimise the risk of reoffending by helping offenders to find employment and stable accommodation as well as helping with financial and emotional support" (House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 2019:4). Through the Gate provision however has consistently been noted to fail to deliver on its targets, and on its ability to meet the necessary quality standards (House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 2019). CRCs efforts were described as low level, with an unlikelihood to achieve the aim of resettlement, and "some distance from the original vision of a seamless service" (Criminal Justice Joint Inspection, 2016: 3). It is argued that offenders receiving support via the Through the Gate programme have been failed by poor staff training, an overfocus on targets rather than specific offender needs, lack of understanding in how to provide tailored support, and issues with providing stable and appropriate accommodation standards (House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 2019). CRCs efforts were described as low level, with an unlikelihood to achieve the aim of resettlement, and 'some distance from the original vision of a seamless service' (Criminal Justice Joint Inspection, 2016: 3).

Some concerns regarding the effectiveness of support for individuals going through the

process of release from prison have clearly been noted in the literature. This is particularly the case when looking at reoffending rates and comparing the results of short-term sentences to community sentences. It has been found that short term sentences with supervision on release, is associated with higher levels of proven reoffending, than if the offender would have been issued with a community order, or a suspended sentence (Eaton and Mews, 2019). For example, Eaton and Mews (2019) noted that the one-year reoffending rate, and the average number of reoffences per sentencing occasion, was higher following a short-term sentence of less than 12 months, than of a community order or a suspended sentence. In both scenarios, the effectiveness of probation provision is important, whether that be post-custody supervision, or whilst on a community order. This is particularly key, due to recent figures estimating that the annual total economic and social cost of reoffending is £18.1billion (Ministry of Justice, 2019b).

As seen above, evaluations on the productivity of CRCs have been conducted over recent years. What has not been noted however is that these evaluations have taken an organisational-focused approach to determine effectiveness. As such, there is limited information from a service user perspective, on the level and effectiveness of support in CRCs.

2.4 Alcohol-Related Offending

2.4.1 Understanding alcohol-related offending

Alcohol dependency refers to the strongest, often uncontrollable desire that a person has to drink alcohol and is arguably the most severe form of a drinking problem (Drinkaware, 2016). Whereas, alcohol abuse is regularly drinking to excessive limits (American Psychiatric Association, 2000), a behaviour that is somewhat accepted within public spaces, despite the harm it can cause to oneself and others (Secretary of State for the Home Department, 2012). Both alcohol abuse and dependency have been found to lead to higher levels of self-reported offending behaviour, than individuals who show no symptoms (Boden et al, 2012; 2013). In line with the terminology used within the Community Rehabilitation Company that this research was undertaken, the term problem drinking is used as a way of referring to alcohol abuse, as this is fitting with the service users interviewed. Academic explanations for why alcohol-related offending may occur have been raised above, however it is important to

consider what may cause some of the scenarios that may exacerbate the chances of alcohol-related offending occurring. From this, the support required by the probation service can be considered.
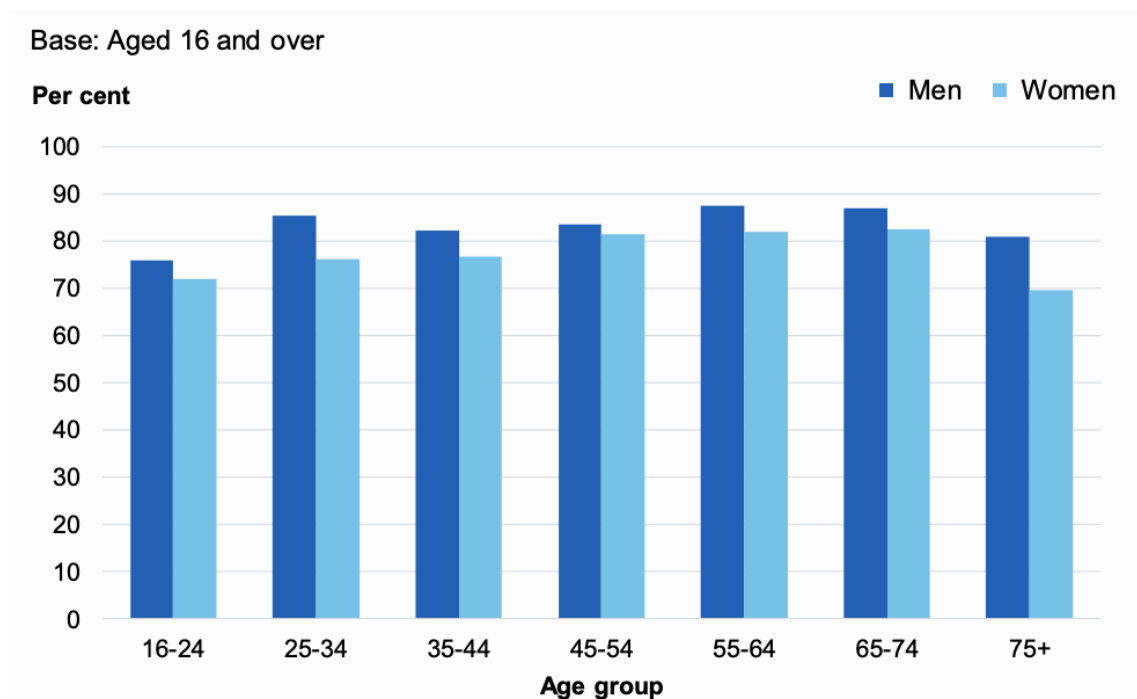
Figure 2: Drank alcohol in the past year, by age and sex (NHS Digital, 2020)

As highlighted in Figure 2, around 80% of participants reported drinking alcohol within the past year, with men being noted to drink at higher levels than women (NHS Digital, 2020). Further figures from 2019 have been taken that highlight that around 20% of adults had drank to levels of increased risk of alcohol-related harm (between 14 and 50 units per week for men and between 14 and 35 units per week for women), with 4% of adults reporting drinking units higher than this, and as such of higher risk (NHS Digital, 2020). There is a well-recognised link between substance use and criminality. This body of research has grown with the increasing amount of substance use cases going through courts, prisons, and probation (Peters et al, 2010). From the two figures above, it is clear that substance use, both through drug and alcohol use has been prevalent, inclusive of during the time period of which the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' reform programme was instated. It is notable that the trends for alcohol use are higher, quite likely due to the legality of the substance, which in itself has raised many questions within the literature regarding the general association of alcohol with crime. However, alcohol as a legal substance has been recognised more specifically for its

wide use in society and its strong links to particular crimes and other societal problems (Dingwall, 2015). Crimes related to substance use, and in this case alcohol use, include those committed by a person who is under the influence of a substance, and also those "committed in the context of the illegal selling, manufacturing, and/or trafficking of substances" (Chrusciel, 2017:5).

Goldstein (1985) developed a tripartite model whereby he argues that there are three types of crime related to drug use: (1) psychopharmacological violence, (2) economically compulsive crime, and (3) systemic violence. Psychopharmacological violence states that the psychopharmacological effects of drug use may cause psychological and physiological changes to the brain, which could then impact the body, and as such have a possible indirect or direct link to a person engaging in criminality (Goldstein, 1985). Under this perspective, it is the mental state of a person when under the influence of substances, that may lead them to commit a crime that they may not have otherwise committed (Goldstein, 1985; Boles and Miotto, 2003; Kuhns and Clodfelter, 2009). One of the common explanations of crime by those using substances, is economic need, whereby funds are needed to support a habit or fuel an addiction (Chrusciel, 2017). This is fitting with the second explanation which is economically compulsive crime, which suggests that due to the financial resources needed to fund a drug habit or addiction, users must find a way to obtain the funds to support it. As such, substance users engage in economically motivated crime to fund drug use (Goldstein, 1985), such as burglary, theft and robbery that provide that financial resource (Bennett et al, 2008). The third explanation is systemic violence, which is centred around the illegal drug market, and drug network (Goldstein, 1985). When disputes occur between rival drug dealers, or within the same drug dealing group, those involved in illegal drug manufacturing and distribution cannot turn to legal forms of law enforcement, and therefore violence or signs of power must be demonstrated by the drug dealers themselves. This in itself is said to explain systemic violence (Goldstein, 1985).

When looking at the statistics regarding alcohol and offending, it suggests that the justification tends to fall into the understandings of psychopharmacological violence and economically compulsive crime, rather than systemic violence. This is particularly the case when discussing alcohol-related offending due to the legality of alcohol use, meaning that the illegal drug market that is central to systemic violence is not required. A questionnaire published within the prison newspaper, Inside Time, established that 70% of respondents

admitted to drinking when they committed the offence they were imprisoned for (Alcohol and Crime Commission, 2014; Addaction, 2016) and 38% believed their drinking was a big problem (Alcohol and Crime Commission, 2014). Furthermore, of the recorded crimes from 2019/20 it was found that in two-fifths of violent crimes, the perpetrator was under the influence of alcohol (Office for National Statistics, 2021).

Similar to alcohol use more generally, alcohol-related offending also differs according to gender. Findings have shown 84% of women with a prison sentence have committed a non-violent crime (Ministry of Justice, 2016c) and over a third of women reported being drunk when committing the offence, they were imprisoned for (Scottish Prison Service, 2016). Similarly, studies have found 59% of women who drank in the four weeks prior to prison felt they had an alcohol problem (Light et al, 2013) and that women are twice as likely than men to report an alcohol problem on arrival to prison (HM Chief Inspectorate of Prisons, 2016). Whereas, in the combined 2012/13 and 2013/14 Crime Survey's, 80% of alcohol-related violent incidents were committed by a male offender (Flatley, 2016). Similarly, it has been argued that males have a higher rate of violent offending when consuming alcohol than females (Tedor et al, 2018). This corresponds with the greater level of crime committed by men as a whole. As such, gender should be discussed in relation to there being a disparity between men and women offenders, particularly on the basis of women committing more non-violent offences, and having higher rates of misusing alcohol, and the possible reasons why. Wealth and quality of life have been recognised as areas of imbalance between men and women (Lee et al, 2020). Many areas have been established that possibly exacerbate inequalities between men and women, such as pay gaps (Marmot et al, 2008) and higher rates of poverty (Entmacher et al, 2013). Duffus (2023) notes that when "looking at women within the [criminal justice system], they continue to be affected by some of the challenges that may come from being from a lower socio-economic background". Financial necessity has been highlighted as a common reason that has been noted as to why women turn to crime (Elonheimo et al, 2014), such as property and drug crimes (Huebner et al, 2010).

Socioeconomic status and the link to offending, inclusive of alcohol-related offending is not exclusive to women. Bryant and Lightowlers (2021:1) noted that "findings generally show lower socioeconomic groups experience higher prevalence rates of alcohol-related violence overall, and higher incidence and prevalence rates for alcohol-related domestic and acquaintance violence". Socioeconomic status, albeit not exclusive to, has been linked to

differences in social factors, such as employment, educational opportunities, and social support. As such, when it is suggested that alcohol problems have been linked to high rates of social exclusion factors, including unemployment, low educational achievement, and limited social support (Parkes et al, 2011), a possible connection between alcohol problems and socioeconomic status can be suggested in some cases. Furthermore, in their research, Chrusciel (2017:viii) found that "given the strong positive association between substance use and crime and the inverse effect of employment on offending, it is possible that drug use and employment interact in their impact on crime". It is argued that substance use can increase the chances of criminality, but social inclusion factors, such as employment can reduce offending. These findings may explain why the criminalisation of those considered homeless or socially economically deprived has been one of long-standing discussion within the field (Duffus, 2023). The management and rehabilitation via the courts and the police of those who misuse substance and those considered to be of a lower socio-economic background, is one example of this criminalisation (Irwin, 2013/1985).

2.4.2 Support for Alcohol-Related Offending

In addition to considering scenarios and reasons that may exacerbate alcohol-related offending, a key understanding of how these individuals are supported within the criminal justice system, particularly the probation service, is needed. The criminal justice system has a prime opportunity to provide support for those misusing substances, and to help individuals gain access to what is needed to help them stop (HM Government, 2017). Research into the topic indicates that treatment within the criminal justice system can reduce substance use and recidivism, with the most effective involving support within the community (Peters et al, 2010; Ministry of Justice and Public Health England, 2017). One study found that receiving treatment within the community for substance addictions led to a reduction of 44% in the number of reoffenders, and a 33% reduction in the number of offences committed in the two years post treatment (Ministry of Justice and Public Health England, 2017).

When looking at alcohol-related offending specifically, offending behaviour programmes and interventions are ways that service users are supported. Offending behaviour programmes and interventions are often based on cognitive-behavioural techniques and are used to encourage pro-social attitudes for the future and encourage the development of new skills to stop offending behaviour (Ministry of Justice and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service,

2018). These programmes can be used within prison and in the community, with substance related offending being one of the focal points of some offending behaviour programmes (Ministry of Justice and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, 2018). For example, the Building Skills for Recovery programme is a psychosocial substance misuse programme, aimed at reducing reoffending and problematic substance misuse, and promote and end goal of recovery (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021b). Although lacking in alcohol-related offending specific programmes, programmes and interventions of offending behaviour programmes have been found to help reduce reoffending for alcohol misusers (Deehan, 2001; Mosher and Jernigan, 2001; Wright, 1993; Saunders, 1998). Due to evidence-based success in rehabilitation and reducing reoffending rates, numerous OBSMPs are government accredited (Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, 2017).

Although offending behaviour programmes are used, the predominant focus within probation for those who have offended, and misuse substances, are Community Sentence Treatment Requirements (CSTRSs). Despite Drug Rehabilitation Requirements being the most common of all the CSTRs to be issued (National Offender Management Service, 2014), it is important to consider the impact of Alcohol Treatment Requirements (ATRs) due to the nature of this research focusing on alcohol. These are also the only specific support process for alcohol-related offending. ATRs are "targeted at offenders assessed as alcohol dependent, who will often have complex coexisting needs", such as mental health problems and housing issues, "and require intensive, specialist, care-planned treatment e.g., day programmes, detoxification, residential rehabilitation and integrated care involving a range of agencies" (National Offender Management Service, 2014:6).

CSTRs sentenced (as part of a CO) between 2006 and 2016 in England and Wales[2]:
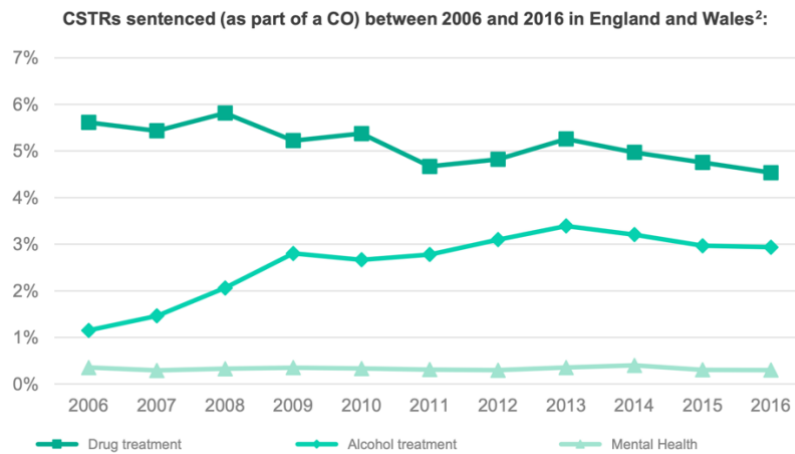
Figure 3: CSTRs sentenced as part of a community order between 2006 and 2016 in England and Wales

CSTRs given as part of Community Orders and Suspended Sentence Orders between July and September 2017 in England and Wales[1]:

Sentence	Number of Community Orders (%)	Number of Suspended Sentence Orders (%)
Mental health	78 (0.3%)	58 (0.3%)
Drug	1,250 (4.2%)	814 (4.7%)
Alcohol	861 (2.9%)	511 (3.0%)

Figure 4: CSTRs given as part of Community Orders and Suspended Sentence Orders between July and September 2017 in England and Wales

As highlighted in Figure 3 and 4, the use of CSTRs, including ATRs has been consistently low (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021a). Despite the more recent figures showing that figures are still low, there was a push in late 2017 to early 2018 to increase the use of CSTRs, starting with five testbed sites (Department of Health and Social Care, 2019), increasing to 15 in 2021 (Clinks, 2018). This push was supported by a study that reviewed the views of voluntary sector practitioners, and service users, who were supportive of the increased use of CSTRs (Clinks, 2018). Furthermore, an evaluation into the treatment files of 81 service users who were on ATRs was conducted, finding that 70 per cent of them had successfully

completed their treatment (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021a). However, the positive statistics provided within the literature for ATR use, has not translated into dramatic changes of ATR implementation; a point that is discussed within interviews for this research. Furthermore, Dame Carol Black's Review of Drugs highlighted that "cuts in funding, reduced accountability, and the loss of skills, expertise, and capacity in the third sector have all posed challenges for the availability of suitable treatment for those under probation supervision" (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021a). Research into the feedback of service users, probation staff and drug and alcohol support workers, regarding delivering and receiving support for alcohol is limited, and therefore this research is key.

2:5 Chapter Conclusions

This chapter has set the scene for the historical development of rehabilitation within the criminal justice system, noting the rise and fall of the treatment ideal. It then provided an outline of a variety of perspectives amongst the available literature regarding defining and understanding desistance. The author critically discusses ontogenetic, sociogenic, identity and interactionist, and situational theories of desistance. Ontogenetic theories of desistance focus on the link between age and crime (McNeill, 2006). Sociogenic theories however suggest that one's ties to society within early adulthood can be used to explain how criminality may develop over the course of a person's life (Maruna, 1999; McNeill, 2006). Whereas identity and interactionist theories argue that one's decision to desist is based on their view of their own identity, and in turn their openness to change (Siennick and Osborn, 2008), and situational desistance centres around how features of one's social environment and situated routine activities, impact, and influence their behaviour (Bottoms, 2014). As such, what has become evident from the literature is that there is an abundance of different opinions regarding why and how individuals move away from crime, with these understandings being central to supporting decisions on how to help people to desist.

The landscape of the criminal justice system has seen many changes over recent years, with key changes affecting probation provision. This literature review has set the scene by identifying how the probation service has developed from its missionary roots in 1876, through to the creation of the original unified NPS in 2001. Since then, many reports have been written regarding increased reoffending rates, and the need for change within the

criminal justice system to reduce this. Privatisation was one of the key changes put forward. As a result, the Probation Service in England and Wales has been impacted dramatically by the involvement of privatisation, which led to a divide between how probation provision was provided, and a variation in the level of support for service users. Although the privatised element of the probation service is no longer present, and a new different model is in place, the changes that came in place due to the Transforming Rehabilitation programme, have had significant effects, that need to be kept in mind. This chapter also determines that despite the growing body of literature into the changes in the probation service, including reports by the Probation Inspectorate, the voices of those receiving the support and delivering the service are often overshadowed by organisation-focused points. Although there has been one report which considers the views of staff and service users, it lacks several points raised within this research, which in turn highlights some of the wariness that may come when discussing challenges directly with probation representatives. Furthermore, it lacks a link between the consideration of substance use, and the provision of external support. Since the reunification, it has been apparent that challenges are still present. It is therefore important that the new unified probation service, has a further understanding of the needs and viewpoints of those on the ground, in order to help resolve the remaining issues.

The issue of substance use and crime has been acknowledged in literature with those individuals who are considered low-medium risk, and therefore supported by CRCs being most likely to be impacted by this. Substance misuse has been linked to influencing a continuation of offending, leading to higher arrest rates, and amplifying other risk factors (Models for Change, 2012). This chapter as such defined substances, noting the differences between legality and illegal substances. The focus was placed on alcohol specifically, as its legality has often caused it to have a wide-spread impact. Statistics taken from the time frame that the Transforming Rehabilitation programme was running show that there are significantly more people that drink alcohol in England and Wales, but also a decent proportion of them who have drank to excess. Alcohol abuse and alcohol dependency have both been argued to lead to higher levels of offending than an individual who shows no symptoms (Boden et al, 2012; 2013). Although the literature acknowledged some reasons behind why alcohol-related offending may occur, and what may exacerbate it (Goldstein, 1985), it has been clear that there is limited understanding on the specifics of how individuals who have a problem with alcohol are treated within the criminal justice system, particularly the probation service. There is an acknowledgement that Community Sentence Treatment

Requirements, including Alcohol Treatment Requirements are in place. However, the early on positive statistics that were provided within the literature for ATR use, have not translated into dramatic changes of ATR implementation. It is not clear from the existing literature as to why this is the case and has therefore factored into the development of interview questions for this research. Furthermore, feedback from service users, probation staff and drug and alcohol support workers are limited.

After reviewing the existing literature, it helped to establish the focus of this thesis. It was determined that there is an issue with alcohol and the link to offending. However, it has been acknowledged that the legality of alcohol often causes it to be overshadowed within the literature when discussing support needs, with the focus swaying towards drug use and drug-related offences. As such, it was determined that a focus on alcohol specifically is needed. Substance use, including alcohol misuse, was argued to play more of a role within the experiences of prolific offenders. The work of CRCs who are more likely to support prolific offenders therefore needed to be considered. From this however, it was determined that the specifics of what support is available for alcohol use within probation, and how effective it is, was not clear. Furthermore, there is a lack of literature present regarding the personal experiences of those individuals who receive or deliver support for alcohol-related offending through the probation service. These two factors were therefore seen as important to research.

3. Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological decisions made in designing this research project. To start, the theoretical underpinnings of the research, including ontological, epistemological, and phenomenological considerations will be discussed. Then, the research design and participants section will be presented. Following this is the research procedure, whereby the ethical considerations of the research project will be highlighted. Next, is the data analysis section, where a guide to how and why Hermeneutic Phenomenology was used to analyse the data is provided. The chapter will then draw to a close with recognising the limitations of the research and providing a critical reflection of the research process.

3.2 Theoretical Underpinnings of the Research Design

This section will give detail on the ontological, epistemological, and phenomenological underpinnings of this research project.

3.2.1 Ontology

Crotty (1998:10) notes that 'ontology is the study of being'. This project is underpinned by the ontological approach of interpretivism, as it recognises the differences between people (Saunders et al, 2012) and the ability to gather subjective experiences rather than placing the focus on certainty and causality (Bryman, 2012). Many interpretive researchers refer to the work of Max Weber who argues that within a field like social sciences, and as such criminology, where society is that being researched, one needs to interpret participant's social action, in order to gain a true '*verstehen*' (understanding) of the motives behind their actions (Weber et al, 1978:4). An interpretive approach, also known as a relativist approach, focuses on gathering the meanings and motives behind how people behave, such as through societal and cultural influences (Whitley, 1984; Denscombe, 2010). This approach is beneficial to the particular topic at hand, as it allows for personal perceptions to be explored and adds flexibility to the structure of the research (Carson et al, 2001). This is supported by Guba and Lincoln (1994) who argue that humans base their reactions to social environments, on their own perceived understanding. This is imperative, as the project has more of a focus on providing recommendations based on participant-focused perspectives, of their experiences

receiving or delivering support for substance use and desistance. This ontological standpoint is fitting and aligned with this project's epistemological approach.

3.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is referred to as the 'theory of knowledge' (Harding, 1987:3). Alcoff (1998:vii) refers to epistemology as 'a philosophical inquiry into the nature of knowledge, what justifies a belief, and what we mean when we say that a claim is true'. The epistemological standpoint of constructionism is the 'view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context' (Crotty, 1998:42). Those who are more supportive of an objectivist perspective believe that knowledge exists independently to individual experience (Crotty, 1998). However, due to the nature of this research, the researcher supports the requirement of a constructivist epistemological standpoint that encourages researchers to reject the idea that knowledge is objective and based on unbiased observations (Burr, 2003).

Constructionism is fitting with this project, due to the importance of focusing on how individuals understand their own interactions and experiences. Within research that is engrained within constructivism, it is understood that each participant will have their own experiences and understanding, and as such the focus of the research must be on how to gather a contextualised meaning of the various standpoints (Green, 2000). As such, the purpose Guba and Lincoln (1989) argue, is to determine a joint understanding of the participants varied realities, and in turn develop a holistic reinterpretation (Crotty, 1998).

As a researcher who stands by an interpretivist ontological perspective and constructivist epistemological standpoint, the design of this research project has been centered around the importance of participant experiences (Crotty, 1998, Guba and Lincoln, 1989). It is the understanding that the knowledge that derives from this research will be based on different individuals' objective reality. As such, this research will help determine how individual staff and service users are experiencing the probation service and help shape practice based on the truth of those directly impacted.

3.2.3 Phenomenology
Husserl (1859-1938)

The concept of phenomenology was founded by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), in his publication *Logical Investigation*s (Husserl, 1900-1901). Smith et al (2009:11) describe phenomenology as a 'philosophical approach to the study of experience'. Phenomenology provides researchers with the opportunity to diversify the way they analyse and understand the lived experience of others. Phenomenology has been described as a discipline that focuses on peoples lived experiences, by looking at individual perceptions and meanings, and how these arose from their individual experiences (Langdridge, 2007). Husserl argued that intentionality is a key characteristic of consciousness, noting that an individual's conscious will always be aware of their environment and surroundings (Crane, 2004). Husserl has noted that individuals have their own lifeworld, whereby these individual perceptions of their experiences take place (Langdridge, 2007). Husserl was critical of positive sciences and realist notions, on the basis that objective theory does not reflect reality (Heelan, 1987). By this, he is arguing that subject experience is the only possible reality, as 'all genuine and, in particular all scientific knowledge, rests on inner evidence' (Husserl, 2001:18) that has been understood by one's consciousness. It is therefore being claimed that experiences, as perceived by a person's consciousness should be the basis of scientific study (Neubauer et al, 2019).

Phenomenology has as such developed with the goal of studying 'phenomena as they appear through the consciousness' (Koch, 1995:828). This led to a focus on 'essence', and the idea that in order to truly understand a phenomenon, a fundamental understanding of what its essence is, is required. The essences of the phenomenon represent the true nature of the phenomenon (Neubauer et al, 2019). To fully explore essence, researchers should follow a process of phenomenological reduction (also known as phenomenological epoché, eidetic reduction and bracketing), whereby they identify the essential components of the phenomenon (Moran, 2000; Taylor 1994). The researcher must 'bracket off' what they perceive to be their views of reality (Crane, 2004; McConnell-Henry et al, 2009), their own personal values and experiences (van Manen, 1990), and any other prejudices that may impact how the participant describes their own experiences (McConnell-Henry et al, 2009). Once all this has occurred, Husserl would argue that the true essence of a phenomenon can be reached, and the 'life world' of the participant can be described.

Heidegger (1889-1976), Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) and Sartre (1905-1980)

Following on from the influence of Husserl, Heidegger (1889-1976), Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) and Sartre (1905-1980) have provided contributions to the development of phenomenology (Smith et al, 2009). Martin Heidegger, a student of Husserl, focused on moving from description to interpretation, with a desire to descend meaning from being (Mulhall, 1993; Moran, 2000; McConnell-Henry et al, 2009; Healy, 2011). He believed that it is not possible for humans to live lacking interpretation (Heidegger, 1962). Rather than the focus on 'essence' like Husserl, Heidegger was interested in understanding existence, and in turn, more of an existential perspective to phenomenology (Davidsen, 2013). In his book, *Being and Time*, Heidegger (1962) introduces this concept of *Dasein* (there-being), which is the experience of being in the world. Heidegger is concerned with existence itself, and with the practical activities and relationships that make up the lives of human beings. It is how the world is viewed, and by how meaning is added to that view that is important to Heidegger (Smith et al, 2009). One is not separate from the world that they live in, but rather they have their own subjective understanding of the world, based on their own reality. In short, Heidegger rejects Husserl's concept of bracketing on the basis that '[u]nderstanding is never without presuppositions. We do not, and cannot, understand anything from a purely objective position. We always understand from within the context of our disposition and involvement in the world' (Johnson, 2000:23).

From a research perspective, Heidegger notes that interpretive research cannot take place without any influence of the researcher, as people will construct their reality, based on their own disposition and experience in the world (McConnell-Henry et al, 2009). With this in mind, Heidegger would argue that for the researcher to interpret the data, they will be reliant on their own existing knowledge (Dowling, 2004; McConnell-Henry et al, 2009). Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty (2004) argues that human beings are not neutral in the way they react to people or spaces; their perceptions will be formed based on the positive or negative label that has been attached at a previous time. As such, people are always interpreting everything based on perceptions (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

Similar to Heidegger, Sartre's take falls within existential phenomenology, Sartre has a well-known expression 'existence comes before essence' (Sartre, 1948:26). This essentially means that human beings do not have in-built identities or values, but rather human beings are continuously developing values and determining meaning for their own lives (Sartre, 1948). As such, '[a]n existing individual is constantly in the process of becoming' (Sartre, 1948:26).

Sartre is also interested in this concept of 'nothingness', whereby it is not only what is there, but also what is not present, that will impact how human beings define and understand the world (Smith et al, 2009). Sartre is essentially saying that humans '*become*' through their experiences within the world – it is only by existence and behaving in a certain way that meaning is given to a person's life (Kaufman, 1975). For Sartre, human nature is centred around becoming rather than being, as such human beings have the free will to make their own choices and are in that sense responsible for their own actions (Smith et al, 2009).

Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre moved phenomenology away from the descriptive and transcendental views of Husserl, and towards an interpretive focus. They contributed to the view that individuals are embedded within the world that we live, through 'objects and relationships, language and culture, projects and concerns' (Smith et al, 2009:21). There is a focus on worldliness, and the idea that experience is unique and different to everyone based on how they have experienced the world.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Having discussed the historical underpinnings of phenomenology above and aligning this with my views as the researcher, it was clear that a hermeneutic phenomenology was more fitting. Hermeneutic phenomenological research places the focus on gaining knowledge through understanding subjective individual experiences, and from that new knowledge derives (Kafle, 2011).

Hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on this concept of the 'life world'. It acknowledges that individuals experience things in their life that they may overlook or undervalue, and as such hermeneutic phenomenology centres around focusing on those experiences to generate meaning and develop a level of understanding (Wilson and Hutchinson, 1991). This is understandable as hermeneutics itself is 'the theory of interpretation' (Smith et al, 2009:21). Phenomenological research can be used as a method or methodology when analysing the language of others to establish individual meaning (Langdridge, 2007; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2008). The aspect of analysis is imperative when distinguishing between phenomenology being used as a method, or being a philosophical perspective (Langdridge, 2007; Sloan and Bowe, 2014). When considering hermeneutics, and in essence using hermeneutic phenomenology as a research method, the interpretive aspect of the data is key. The researcher is required to read the participants personal accounts of their experiences (e.g.,

interview transcripts, as within this research), examine and reflect on the content of the text with the intention of drawing out further meaning, and then isolating the themes (van Manen, 1997).

As noted by Kafle (2011:191), hermeneutic phenomenology when used as a method 'avoids method for method's sake and does not have a step-by-step method or analytic requirements'. There are simply six basic recommendations for research activities that are made: 1) the identification of a phenomenon that will be researched; 2) investigate the phenomenon/ experience as it is lived (e.g. through interviews); 3) reflect on the essential themes that embody the phenomenon; 4) describe the experience through writing and rewriting; 5) maintain a strong focus on the phenomenon; and 6) measure the overall design of the research by considering the parts and the whole (van Manen, 1990; 1997; Kafle, 2011).

Reason and Rowan (1981) argue that the most important factor when discussing hermeneutics is the hermeneutic circle. This essentially means that in order to understand the whole phenomenon, one must examine the individual parts, but equally, in order to understand the individual parts, one must consider it in relation to the whole (Schmidt, 2006). By exploring a phenomenon in this way, it offers room for deeper and more varied understandings and perspectives. When considering this in the data analysis process, researchers must break up text, such as interview transcripts, in a way that enables them to examine it both as parts and as a whole. For example, the meaning of a word will become clearer when it is considered in the context of the whole sentence (Smith et al, 2009), Within hermeneutic phenomenological research, the researcher will often read and divide the text in to meaning units. Lindseth and Norberg (2004:149) note that '[a] meaning unit can be part of a sentence, a sentence, several sentences, a paragraph, i.e. a piece of any length that conveys just one meaning'. These meaning units are read and reflected on against the text as a whole, as part of a process to discover themes (this process is outlined with the data analysis section below).

Thematising meaning within hermeneutic phenomenology is in essence interpreting the data and involves illuminating the unspoken meanings that are hidden within participants lived experiences (van Manen, 2016). The phenomenological view of experiences is multifaceted and complicated (Smith et al, 2009), and as such it is difficult as a new researcher to hermeneutic phenomenology, to know that you have isolated the themes correctly, and

extracted the meaning of participant's lived experience accurately (Sloan and Bowe, 2014). It has therefore been important as the researcher to understand the three methods that van Manen's (1997) has advised on how to effectively attribute meaning to my research data – the holistic approach, the selective approach, and the detailed approach. The holistic approach focuses on the underlying meaning of the text as a whole; the selective approach chooses themes from individual phrases and sentences, and the detailed approach which involves looking at each sentence individually and examining them to determine their relevance to the phenomenon being researched (van Manen, 1997). All three approaches were used when determining themes for this research project to ensure the data was appropriately analysed.

With the intention of exploring individual experiences within the probation service, for both staff and service users, phenomenology was seen as the best fit for the philosophical underpinning of this study. Using hermeneutic phenomenology enabled the researcher to provide a voice to individuals (the participants) who are not always heard when decisions are made, regarding their own experiences.

3.3 Research Design

This section will provide justification for the research design undertaken within this research project.

3.3.1 Interviews

In line with the theoretical underpinnings of this research and given the importance of participants views, a qualitative approach was chosen as best suited for this research. This is particularly important as qualitative approaches allow for subjective data to be gathered (Bryman, 2012). Many academics researching desistance (e.g., Leibrich, 1993; Maruna, 2001; Farrall, 2002; Wilkinson, 2009) and substance use (e.g. Neale et al, 2005; Elison et al, 2016), accommodate qualitative research methods, particularly interviews. This may be due to the argument that although quantitative research methods can outline the impact of different interventions, it is only 'qualitative data sources that... [can] uncover how and why such interventions work (or do not work)' (Farrall and Calverley, 2006:43). As such, attention was given to the type of qualitative data collection method that would be most beneficial to answer the research questions. The decision to use interviews to obtain

information from participants was made, due to the interview process being recognised as facilitating a deeper understanding of society's behaviour (Silverman, 2000) and enabling in-depth personal experiences and perceptions to be gathered (Denscombe, 2010). As such, interviews enable participants to provide their own explanation of their personal experiences (Ng and White, 2005).

One of the key factors that has been given great consideration, is the type and level of structure that is most appropriate for the interviews. Qualitative in-depth semi-structured and unstructured interviews have been noted as the most suitable when discussing sensitive topics (Elam and Fenton, 2003). Semi-structured interviews involve participants answering predetermined open-ended questions (Jamshed, 2014), whereas unstructured interviews do not rely on preset questions and follow an informal conversational style (Patton, 2002).

The interviews, that were held during 2019 and 2020, focused on responding to the main aim of the research, which is centred around exploring experiences in probation, regarding support for substance use and desistance from future offending. By using interviews, it enabled the researcher to draw upon the participants experiences and explore what underpins these experiences (Miller and Glassner, 2004). This fits with the phenomenological nature of this research, as phenomenology places the focus on the experience of the individuals (Greene, 1997; Holloway, 1997; Maypole and Davies, 2001), rather than the perspectives of the researcher. Unstructured interviews can increase the chances of participants disclosing information in some interview settings (Dana et al, 2013) and therefore places their views at the centre of the research. However, having seen successful studies where part of the participant base includes substance using individuals (Darker et al, 2016), it shows that providing direction is likely to increase the depth of responses of service users who may originally have felt uncomfortable. Semi-structured interviews can enable the researcher to provide the guidance that some of the participants may benefit from. Semi-structured interviews have been considered the most effective interviewing format for this project, as it enables all key topics to be discussed, with room for probing for further detail, (Adams, 2015) whilst helping develop a good rapport with the participants (Noaks and Wincup, 2004; Britten, 1999). This is supported by the need for phenomenological research to be the most suitable method for the participants, by being both flexible and comprehensible (Sundler et al, 2019).

As an interviewer it is imperative to be an active and engaged listener, who does not show bias or judgement (Converse and Schuman, 1974). This is particularly valuable to this research, as it involves interviewing service users, and asking them to discuss their current or previous substance use, and offending behaviour. If judgement or bias is shown, the likelihood of accurate data being derived is low (Sterk and Elifson, 2005), as participants will likely adapt their responses to seek approval. Furthermore, it is important that service users who may consider themselves vulnerable are able to feel comfortable in their interview setting, so that they feel capable of voicing their opinion without being overly fearful of the risk. As such, semi-structured interviews may reduce excessive levels of stress that may come from other forms of interviewing.

With this in mind, this research project has taken an offender-focused perspective, as identifying the views of probationers in regard to what they argue has successfully supported them in their journey to desistance (Farrall, 2002; McNeill, 2003).

3.3.2 Interview questions

Key focus was placed on the interview questions that would be presented to participants taking part in the interviews. To ensure that the interview questions were fit for purpose, a gatekeeper, who provided access to connections within SWM CRC, reviewed the questions. Following the gatekeepers feedback, the interview schedule was adapted to reduce how restrictive the initial questions were, which therefore broadened the questions and enabled more developed responses to be possible. This initial review also enabled the researcher to familiarise themselves more thoroughly with the interview schedule, and as such be more prepared for the interviews with participants.

In addition to the interviewer feeling more prepared, consideration was also given to building a strong interviewer-interviewee relationship. To increase participant comfort with the researcher, building a rapport was necessary, so the interviews started with general introductory questions. By working to build rapport, the participants may have been more willing to explore their thoughts on the quality and level of resources available within probation (see Appendix 1 and 2). The initial interview questions were centred around the below points for service users:

1. Demographics - age, gender, and ethnicity

2. Employment status

3. Current living conditions

4. Current (and previous) offence(s)

5. Details of supervision requirements

The questions for staff members were focused on the below points:

1. Demographics - age, gender, and ethnicity

2. Job role

3. Responsibilities

4. Previous roles

The remainder of the interview questions were split in to three sections.

Due to SWM CRC responsibilities, being based on the 'Seven Pathways to Desistance' (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002), the first of these sections centred on desistance and rehabilitation, and the second on substance misuse. This is due to the 'Seven Pathways to Desistance' recognising substance use as having a strong influence on a continuation of offending and negative engagement with employment and education (Models for Change, 2012). Furthermore, it amplifies other risk factors related to continued offending (Models for Change, 2012). Additionally, substance misuse treatment has been recognised as reducing both substance use and offending behaviour (Mulvey, 2011). As a result, questions for these sections considered both the factors related to being most prevalent for desistance, but also the effectiveness of treatment. In relation to the questions regarding desistance and rehabilitation, service users were asked to reflect on how effective they feel the probation service is at supporting them to not reoffend, and what possible changes they may require. Staff members were asked to reflect on their experiences of supporting service users with desistance, what resources are available and whether any changes would be beneficial. Whereas for questions regarding rehabilitation and substance use, the key aspects were to determine what resources are available, and whether service users find them beneficial to their recovery, and if staff feel that the resources available are supporting best practice. Finally, the third section focused on discussions of future expectations, both of living a crime and substance use free life, for service users, and of how they see the probation service and their role within it developing, for staff. This is particularly relevant due to the changes that

have occurred within the probation service over recent years.

3.3.3 Interview Style

As face-to-face interviews were conducted, the location of the interviews was considered in depth, to ensure the safety of the participants and researcher. To avoid participants having to travel further than necessary and maximise safety, the researcher met with the probationers and practitioners at the most convenient SWM CRC office to the participant, during the office opening hours. By the interviews taking place in SWM CRC offices, it allowed the participants to be in direct contact of those who can provide on-hand support in situations of discomfort. Additionally, conducting the face-to-face interviews in an environment familiar to the participant, as well as convenient and private, has been argued as essential when planning these interviews (Seidman, 2006).

It is common practice to use audio-recording equipment such as dictation machines in interviews, followed by transcribing the information recorded (Bryman, 2012). An encrypted recording device, subject to permission from the participants (of which all participants agreed) was used within the interviews to help reduce researcher bias and ensure full and accurate transcription of the interview (Heritage, 1984). The ease that supports audio recording interviews, enables the interviewer to benefit from a more efficient practice, and to gather data that is richer and more precise to the specific phenomenon that is being researched (Al-Yateem, 2012). Furthermore, it enables the researcher to avoid being distracted by writing notes and rather focus on what has been said by the participant, and not miss key points.

3.4 Participants

This section explains the participant criteria, sampling methods, and the sample size and participant demographics.

3.4.1 Sampling methods

Various sampling methods were considered to determine the most suitable approach for this research. Non-probability sampling is considered the most effective for this research, as due to the project wishing to speak to service users on probation who have or do misuse alcohol, and practitioners who work with those service users, conventional probability sampling

methods would make it exceedingly difficult to reach the desired group on the basis of pure chance (Denscombe, 2010). As a result, this research used purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method that involves participants being chosen due to a specific purpose (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). There are various types of purposive sampling, of which homogeneous sampling has been highlighted as effective in achieving representativeness (Teddlie and Yu, 2007). Homogenous sampling is used when seeking a participant base that is specific to a certain sociodemographic group (Jager et al, 2017). The intention is to use homogenous sampling in this project as the specific research is based on the shared experiences of a particular sub-group of service users (Saunders et al, 2012). Smith et al (2009:48) stated that "samples are selected purposively (rather than through probability methods) because they can offer a research project insight into a particular experience". Purposive sampling is therefore effective on the basis of relevance and knowledge to the topic area (Denscombe, 2010). In addition to purposive sampling, snowball sampling also occurred, whereby current participants promoted the study and established further participants (Bryman, 2012).

Within phenomenological research studies, it is important for the participants to be from a homogenous sample, where the participants share a common factor, in order to truly understand the basis of the research topic (Alase, 2017). This study was split in to two groups: staff and service users. All participants have the common factor on engagement within SWM CRC. All staff work with low-medium risk clients to support desistance from crime and substance use, and all service users are clients with the probation service who have had involvement with substance use and crime.

It has been acknowledged that there is selection bias due to interviewing participants solely from SWM CRC. However, all people released from prison, who have been convicted of a low-medium risk offence, or who have been given a community sentence, are referred to CRCs across the country. Furthermore, for consistency, it was discussed and agreed with the supervisory team that all participants should be drawn from the same organisation, to ensure the quality and type of support is similar.

3.4.2 Sample Size

When discussing phenomenological research, Creswell (1998) refer to a sample of five to 25 being sufficient, with Moser and Korstjens (2018) and Boyd (2001) narrowing that figure to up to 10 participants. With this and the implementation of two sets of interviews, the volunteer sampling of eight service users and 10 staff were deemed acceptable due to the recommendations. Within phenomenological research, data saturation is not considered wholly relevant (van Manen, 2014) and is unlikely to occur within hermeneutic phenomenological studies (Cohen et al, 2000), due to the focus being on the depth of analysis (Langdridge, 2007). As such, rather than focusing on saturation, this research, in alignment with phenomenology, focuses on how well the study represents the phenomenon of discussion (Neuman, 2011).

3.4.3 Criteria

Further to the above, a criterion for participation within the research was set. The criteria for service users will be discussed initially. Firstly, the service users needed to be under the supervision of SWM CRC. The second requirement was for participants to have or had issues with substance use during the time of their offence. Thirdly, in order to ensure full ethical consent could be given, all participants needed to be over the age of 18 years old. For staff taking part in the research, they needed to be working within a capacity which requires them to have direct and frequent contact with service users (who fit the above criteria) through the probation service, or through a voluntary agency that provides rehabilitative support on behalf of SWM CRC. Finally, it was essential that all participants (service users and staff) were able to understand, and provide consent on the basis of, the participant information sheet and consent form (whether that be through reading or verbally) and be able to participate in an interview in English with no translator (as this project was not funded and there was no ability for this to be facilitated by the researcher).

3.4.4 Project Sample

The project consisted of two separate groups of interviews (service users and staff). Eight service users, consisting of three women and five men, ranging from 31 to 54 years old participated. Four service users were based in Staffordshire and four were based in the West Midlands, with two on a Rehabilitation Activity Requirement (RAR), four on an Alcohol

Treatment Requirement (ATR) and four on a Drug Rehabilitation Requirement (DRR). Ten staff members, consisting of seven probation officers and three drug and alcohol workers were interviewed. Six staff members were based in the West Midlands and four were based in Staffordshire. Further descriptors of each participant can be seen within Table 1 and Table 2 below.

Table 1 – Service Users Demographic Information

Name (Pseudonym)	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Probation Location and Requirement	Employment Status	Living conditions	Offence Committed
Adrian	42	Male	White British	Staffordshire, ATR	Unemployed	Rented accommodation	Harassment and Malicious Communications
Diane	38	Female	White Roman Catholic Gypsy	Staffordshire, RAR	Unemployed	Living with father	Common Assault
Leanne	54	Female	White British	Staffordshire, DRR	Full-time employed	Homeowner - Mortgage	Drink Driving
Max	51	Male	White British	Staffordshire, ATR	Retired	Renting - private	Fraud
Michael	32	Male	White British	West Midlands, ATR	Unemployed	Temporary accommodation	Religious Racial Aggravated Harassment
Sharon	36	Female	Asian British	West Midlands, DRR	Unemployed	Council Flat	Harassment
Simon	33	Male	White British	West Midlands, DRR	Unemployed	Drug-free Hostel	Theft
William	31	Male	White British	West Midlands, RAR	Unemployed	In the family house	Assault

Table 2 – Probation Staff and Treatment Practitioners Demographic Information

Name (Pseudonym)	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Location	Probation Officer or Drug/ Alcohol Worker
Charlotte	24	Female	White British	West Midlands	Probation Officer
Daniel	35	Male	Black British	West Midlands	Drug/ Alcohol Worker
Julia	30	Female	White British	Staffordshire	Probation Officer
Mason	52	Male	White British	Staffordshire	Probation Officer
Mitchell	44	Male	White British	West Midlands	Probation Officer
Nina	42	Female	White British	Staffordshire	Probation Officer
Nolan	37	Male	White British	West Midlands	Probation Officer
Rachael	43	Female	White British	Staffordshire	Drug/ Alcohol Worker
Sarah	38	Female	White British	West Midlands	Probation Officer
Zoe	45	Female	Asian British	West Midlands	Drug/ Alcohol Worker

3.5 Research Procedure and Ethical Considerations

This section will highlight the research procedures taken, and the ethical considerations of the research. This research project was designed to be compliant with the British Society of Criminology's (2015) 'Statement of Ethics', and with Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and Birmingham City University's ethics requirements. Additionally, ethical approval has been granted by Birmingham City University's Faculty Academic Ethics Committee for Business, Law & Social Sciences (BLSS FAEC; see Appendix 3), and by Her Majesty's Prisons and Probation Service (see Appendix 4). It was seen as imperative to the

research for protection and safeguarding of participants to be central to the project (Orb et al, 2000). With this in mind, measures have been put in place to reduce risk, regarding the potential ethical issues that may have arisen during the life of the research project. Orb et al (2000) note that by implementing the right ethical principles to a research project, then this can reduce or prevent harm being caused. This section will now discuss the various ethical considerations and measures that have been considered and implemented, to promote the safeguarding and protection of participants, and myself as the researcher.

3.5.1 Voluntary Participation, Informed Consent and Confidentiality

When conducting research that involves participants, it is important that informed consent is gathered. In correspondence with British Society of Criminology's (2015) 'Statement of Ethics', Birmingham City University's ethics requirements, and the Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service approved National Research Committee guidelines, I ensured all participants only take part in the research, if they have given full, informed and voluntary consent without any coercion. For consent to be informed, it is the duty of the researcher to make all participants aware of the different aspects of the research, in a way that is comprehensible for them to understand (Sanjari et al, 2014). The researcher needs to ensure that participants are informed and understanding of the nature of the study, what their role in the study involves, what the research is aiming to achieve, where the results will be published, and what the results will be used for (Orb et al, 2000). To ensure informed consent, it was important for participants to voluntarily decide to take part. A number of measures were implemented to enable this to occur.

The gatekeeper for the project at SWM CRC communicated with area managers to advertise the project to probation staff and drug and alcohol support workers. These staff members then advertised the project to the service users that they work with, which in turn maximised the number of potential participants that fit the projects criteria. In this process, potential participants were provided with exhaustive information about the nature of the project and researcher contact information, through the participant information sheets (see Appendix 5 and 6). This was to ensure that participants were given as much knowledge and time for them to make a fully informed decision as to whether they would like to participate. Due to interviews taking place with both staff and service users, the participant information sheets were designed for each group (see Appendix 5 for servicer users, see Appendix 6 for practitioners). Providing this information and making sure they are aware that it was

voluntary has been noted as essential in ensuring that the both the safeguarding and rights of the participants were respected (Fisher, 2012). If the service users were willing to take part, then it would only be after them having received the relevant information about the study. These arrangements for service users, and upon their request, were made via the relevant probation officer and via professional email addresses for practitioners.

Before any interviews were undertaken, a verbal reiteration of the information sheet was discussed, and the researcher actively encouraged participants to voice any questions they may have had. This was imperative to ensure that they were aware of the purpose of the study, the level of commitment (e.g., length of interview), interview discussion points, and the strength and limitations of the study, before the interview itself went forward. Furthermore, this provided the opportunity to remind participants of their right to withdraw at any point, including their interview responses (up until two months after the interview), and their right to refuse to answer any of the questions. Additionally, after each interview, the researcher went back to the information sheet and consent form with each participant. This enabled them to be provided with a verbal debrief, whereby the researcher referred to various factors, such as: the basis of the research, how they could withdraw post-interview, contact details of myself, the Director of Studies, and the relevant ethics committee, and prominently, services that they may need to access for support at a later date.

To evidence that participants had provided informed consent, participants were issued with a consent form for them to read (or for me to verbally read to them), complete and sign (see Appendix 7 and 8). To further ensure that consent is fully informed, both the participant information sheets, and consent forms were written in a clear and accessible language, to enable participants with varied English language literacy and reading abilities to have the maximum opportunity to understand the contents of the documents. Nevertheless, participants were offered the opportunity for the participant information sheets, and the consent form to be verbally read and explained to them, and for me to clarify any queries. Although this was not needed, the researcher ensured that if a situation arose that the participant could not give written consent, they were able to give consent through an encrypted audio recorder that can only be accessed by myself which would be transferred to a password protected drive (OneDrive) and deleted from the audio recorder. By signing the consent form, (or verbally consenting) participants were agreeing that they understood all the information they have received, including how their responses will be used, and that they

have the right to withdraw and are voluntarily agreeing to participate in the research. The information sheet, consent forms and interview schedule have been cleared by Birmingham City University's BLSS FAEC and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service.

A further factor that participants were asked to clarify when filling out the consent form was regarding whether they consented to the interview being recorded. Before the interview started and the consent form was signed, participants were made aware that information from the interviews, both experiences and at times direct quotes, would be used within the researcher's written doctoral thesis, and future publications. Additionally, all participants were reminded that any identifying information for themselves would be omitted, or adapted accordingly, from the transcript and that pseudonyms will be used. All participants agreed to their interview being recorded and to the use of their data. All the interviews were recorded on the researcher's Olympus VN-541PC Dictaphone. After each interview, the recordings were transferred on to a BCU OneDrive account, stored on BCU servers and deleted off the Dictaphone. The storage device was then accessed to allow for interviews to be transcribed verbatim on Microsoft Word. All identifying information being treated as stated above. All consent forms and documents with personal information were kept separate from recordings and hand-written notes, and in separate locked filing cabinets that were only accessible by the researcher.

The whole research project has been conducted in line the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 (Information Commissioners Office, 2018). All participants were made aware that the researcher would keep all their information confidential and anonymous (subject to duty of care issues); this was highlighted within the information sheet and consent form and reiterated verbally. Keeping participant confidentiality is essential to reduce exposure to harm (Baez, 2002) and to minimise any concerns over trust, particularly when conducting qualitative research, discussing sensitive issues, and interviewing vulnerable individuals (Liamputtong, 2007). Anonymity focuses on ensuring that no one, other than the primary researcher, is aware of the identity of any participants (Saunders et al. 2015). In this research project, participants have shared views on organisations and/or individuals, who either employ them, provide them with support or who they are responsible for supervising. It is therefore essential for the researcher to not share the identities of those they have interviewed, due to the implications that it may cause.

It is worth noting that when conducting research interviews within the criminal justice system, issues can develop when non-convicted criminal activity is shared, and what is required of the researcher in these circumstances (Wiles et al, 2006). As this project was ethically approved by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and BCU, and an ethical requirement of the BSC, it was advised that if participants were to share information of crimes that they had not been convicted of, then this information must be reported. As such, participants were made aware of this, and it was requested that they only discuss crimes that they were currently or have in the past been involved with the criminal justice system regarding.

3.5.2 Potential Risks

Due to the nature of the research discussing both personal and sensitive issues, awareness was shown by the researcher that there may be emotional and/or psychological distress as a consequence of taking part in the research. The consent forms provide information of support services that can be accessed should participants start to feel distressed during or after taking part in the research, and it is noted as a requirement for them to sign before taking part in the interview. Providing this information was important in reducing the chances of long-term harm to the participant. Researchers ensuring that they have considered how they would manage distress and emotions in their research, helps with the development of rapport between themselves and their participants (Dempsey et al, 2016). With this in mind, careful thought to the potential risks of the study was shown when organising the structure of the interview schedule. All interviews started with discussing background and demographic information, in order to ease any tension, reduce stress and build rapport between the researcher and the interviewee. Furthermore, when discussing the current or previous offence with probationers, the researcher reframed from using offender and/or ex-offender, but rather service user and/or client. Before the researcher began interviews with probationers, they made sure to liaise with probation staff, to clarify what the preferred terminology at SWM CRC was.

It is however important to recognise that this research is centred around a desire to promote good practice, which would in turn benefit the participants of this project. When participants share experiences that cause them to display distressed emotions, they may feel empowered and want to share this information, as it enables them to help others (Wiles et al, 2006; Carter

et al, 2008). This research provides the possibility for participants to feel empowered by the fact that they are supporting potential change by highlighting areas which could be changed or developed further. This project has provided a platform to share, and made central, the experiences and viewpoints of the participants. Furthermore, this information has been shared with a researcher who is truly interested in their lived experiences and is seeking for positive change to occur as a result. This has been reiterated by many participants who have highlighted how partaking in the research was therapeutic, as it enabled them to truly consider what is working, and what needs to be changed.

3.6 Data Analysis

Phenomenology was used for this project as it focuses on understanding the lived experience, and how individuals construct and present that lived experience (Langdridge, 2007). The interpretive branch of phenomenology was recognised as the most appropriate for this research project, due to its focus on how individuals interpret their own lifeworld. This research project aimed to provide probationers and practitioners the voice to express their experiences and views on the effectiveness of the probation experience, in promoting desistance from offending and substance use. The literature has highlighted how institutional change within the probation service is usually organisational focused, and as such it is imperative that their voices are centre, and not of mine as the researcher. Hermeneutic phenomenology enables this to occur, as revealing the unspoken or unknown meanings within participants lived experiences is central to the analytical process (van Manen, 2016). This approach does, however, recognise that the researcher will have their own historical and cultural knowledge of the context of which they are researching (Sloan and Bowe, 2014); this is important for this research due to the magnitude of changes and complex processes that occur within the probation service, and the outside world. As such, hermeneutic phenomenology enables movement within this 'hermeneutic circle' whereby parts of the text were analysed, and then the text as a whole, to explore and interpret truth with regards to (this project's) phenomenon (Langdridge, 2007). In other words, this process enables researchers to understand 'a text by reference to the individual parts along with the researcher's [social, cultural, and historical] understanding of each individual part, by further reference to the whole document' (Sloan and Bowe, 2014: 10).

When analysing the data, Groenewald (2004) and Moustakas (1994) provided guidance on general phenomenological analysis, and van Manen (2016) for further hermeneutic phenomenological depth. Based on this guidance, the below steps were followed:

1) During the research process, the researcher made sure to make notes after the interview using a reflective diary. This helped the researcher to be aware of their own personal experiences and as such bracket them off, prior to the analysis process (Moustakas, 1994). This step also enabled them to be aware of their social, cultural, and historical understandings, that would be beneficial in the analysis of the data. The importance of bracketing off and the ability for the researcher to use their own understanding within the analysis process was particularly important in their decision to use Hermeneutic Phenomenology. For the former, bracketing off enabled the researcher to put the voice of the participant at the forefront, which aligns with the nature of the research as a whole. For clarity, bracketing off involves the researcher withdrawing their own judgement from the analysis process, such as not drawing assumptions about a service users future alcohol consumption based on past experience. For the latter, it was important for the researcher as within alternative forms of phenomenology, such as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis or Descriptive Phenomenology, they would not be able to draw from their social, cultural and historical understanding.

2) Each interview was transcribed verbatim. Each recording was then listened to repeatedly, in order to familiarise the researcher with the words of the participant and enhance their holistic understanding of the text as a whole (Holloway, 1997, Hycner, 1999; van Manen, 1997).

3) To further enhance the holistic understanding, each interview transcript was read several times; enabling a further understanding as to the experiences and viewpoints that were being expressed as a whole by the participants to be gathered (holistic approach) (van Manen, 1997; 2016).

4) The researcher then moved on to isolate statements that are directly related to the phenomenon being researched (Creswell, 1998; Holloway, 1997; Hycner, 1999; van Manen, 2016), whilst ensuring that they consciously bracket out inappropriate assumptions (Groenewald, 2004). These isolated statements were then scrutinised for relevance, with only those that were relevant being seen as a meaning unit (Moustakas, 1994). This incorporated van Manen's (1997) selective approach.

5) These meaning units, and the sentences from which they were discovered, were then examined line by line, to determine what meaning they have within the holistic context of

the phenomenon (van, Manen, 1997; Groenewald, 2004). This incorporated van Manen's (1997) detailed approach.

6) Meaning units that occurred, often across the interviews, were then grouped together, forming clusters (Moustakas, 1994). During this process it was discovered that some meaning units overlapped clusters, which is not unusual with human participants (Groenewald, 2004). When this occurred, the meaning unit was compared with other meaning units within each cluster, to determine within which cluster it was best fit. Once this process was complete, each cluster was rigorously examined, and provided with a title, of which therefore enabled central themes for the data to be established.

3.7 Limitations of the Research Project

When conducting a large-scale research project, limitations will occur. Firstly, this project is solely based on SWM CRC. As such, the data that derives from the project is reflective of the support provided to those who are on probation within Staffordshire and West Midlands for low-medium risk offences. As the researcher, it was important to recognise that the accounts provided, by both, practitioners and service users, interviewed in this study cannot be interpreted as fully representative of all those practitioners, or all those service users who fit the desired sample group within England and Wales. Furthermore, it was necessary to be aware that by seeking participants directly through SWM CRC, this in itself can lead to bias in terms of who takes part in the research, as it may only be those who are engaging in their programmes. However, as the research is solely collecting qualitative data as part of an exploratory project, the focus is on subjectivity and gathering valuable in-depth individual responses, and it is essential to conduct the research in this way to ensure that the real experiences are reported. If anyone wanted to make any momentous claims for providing probation and substance use provision, and how to best support desistance, the research would need to be on a much larger scale and adopt differing methodologies to promote the validity of the data and to discuss generalisations, as per quantitative research. In its current form however, it provides scope to recognise issues, concerns, and positive experiences, with depth to understand the reasoning and meaning behind these points.

Due to the relatively recent changes within the probation service (2014 – 2021), there is limited research that has looked at the impact of CRCs, with the amount of research dropping significantly when considering Staffordshire and the West Midlands specifically. This

research is helpful in providing a clear historical perspective as to what good practice should be taken forward when considering probation provision and substance use support within the new unified probation service.

The area of Staffordshire and West Midlands was considered a suitable location for this research, due to it encompassing both rural and urban areas, and covering the second largest city within the United Kingdom. This broadens the lived experiences of participants and support services and provides some insight in to how a predominantly rural area and a predominantly urban area, can differ in terms of provision, despite being under the same leadership. Furthermore, the SWM CRC, being a probation service that focuses on low-medium risk probationers is beneficial as alcohol specific substance use often fits within this risk category. Additionally, gaining participants directly from SWM CRC will provide a wider selection of participants that will be less biased than if participants from smaller organisations were to be interviewed.

3.8 Critical Reflection

Critical reflection is something that the researcher has considered a key part of the research process (Polit and Beck, 2014). It is important to consider how personal identity may impact the research process, and in turn the researchers access to, and engagement with, participants. As a Black British female researcher, it has been acknowledged that many participants will have different identity characteristics and life experiences to mine. It was also important to recognise the potential harm to me that may arise from potentially conflicting views. When conducting qualitative research, my personal assumptions, and beliefs (particularly if the participants' views made me feel discomfort), can impact how I interpret the data and therefore how accurate the findings of the research may be (Poggenpoel and Myburgh, 2003). It was therefore essential for measures to be put in place, such as critical reflection, to ensure that when analysing and interpreting the data, I am placing the participant's experiences at the centre, and my own opinions and experiences separate (Hammersley, 2000).

A clear example of when I needed to do this on the basis of my ethnicity was when both interviewing and analysing a service user participant who was under probation supervision after having been convicted of committing a racially aggravated offence against a police officer. During this interview the participant was unapologetic of their offence and provided an explanation as to why they felt the offence was justified. Being from a marginalised group,

and having experienced direct and indirect racism myself, I knew that I needed to be aware of how I could have easily reacted in a way that showed disapproval towards the actions of the participant. Although in my personal view, I could see why the participant felt they had been treated unfairly, I would not argue that it was justification to racially assault another person. However, for the purpose of this research and the necessity to be unbiased, I ensured that I placed my opinions to the side, to enable the participant to present their own experiences, without feeling judged.

In addition to ethnicity, it has been important to consider how the researcher's gender can impact the research process. There have been claims that women feel more comfortable engaging in research when the researcher also identifies as a woman, as there is a higher level of mutual understanding that occurs (Devault, 1990). This is particularly important when I was conducting interviews with the service users in this study, as the criminal justice system is more male dominant, with the majority of people in prison being male (Ministry of Justice, HM Prison Service, and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, 2020). Being a female conducting research with male participants has been a topic of much challenge, on the basis of how pre-existing gender norms can impact the whole research process and the data that is collected (Lefkowich, 2019). It has been documented that males, particularly when being interviewed by a female, will use compensatory practices to assert their masculinity (Schwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001). It should be noted that within the research process, there were times when males within the research process used overfamiliar terms, such as 'love', when addressing me (Harries, 2016).

Despite this, being an 'outsider' when conducting interviews with male participants still provided a number of benefits. Due to my lack of familiarity, it enabled me to look in depth at the complexities of the research (Bucerius, 2013), and encouraged more in-depth and rigorous analysis. Furthermore, recognising the challenges that could be faced conducting these interviews, I had to ensure that I was more critical of myself as a researcher. Within phenomenological research, the researcher is supposed to 'bracket off' their own views of reality (Crane, 2004; McConnell-Henry et al, 2009), their personal values (van Manen, 1990), and any prejudices (McConnell-Henry et al, 2009). It is clear that this can be difficult to do, particularly when you have different life experiences to those you are researching. However, to promote the ability to 'bracket off', I ensured that I used a reflective diary after each interview. This enabled me to cross-reference when first starting to analyse the interview

transcripts, with the aim of ensuring that what was being interpreted was the participants experiences and not my own.

Other factors of my identity may also have impacted how participants perceived or responded to me (Langdridge, 2007); however, ethnicity and gender are the two that I knowingly had to manage throughout the research process. It is although worth discussing the capacity of which I was conducting research within a practitioner field. I have not been personally involved, or directly professionally involved, within the Criminal Justice System. As such, researching within this capacity can be perceived as a limitation, but also a strength. Although I have had volunteering experience within the criminal justice system, and involvement with research projects, I have not had the same level of awareness as I would have if I had personally been convicted or had worked within the probation service. However, being separate from the field and not being considered an 'insider' enabled me to conduct the research without bias (Mehra, 2002), or pre-assumed 'inside' knowledge that might have reduced my curiosity for further discovery (Chenail, 2011). It was imperative however for me to highlight to all participants involved that although ethical clearance from Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service was granted, this research project was not directly linked or funded by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service. This was not only important to help participants feel comfortable and support the building of rapport, but also to support any signs of power imbalance. To highlight the sincerity of the research, and the desire to reduce participants feeling exploited for academic research (as this was of no intention of the researcher) (Arber, 2006), I made sure to place the power in the hands of participants in terms of arranging the interviews around their availability, and their closest probation office. Furthermore, conducting semi-structured interviews provides further flexibility in terms of participants having scope to discuss topics that they feel are relevant.

Having volunteered for years within the criminal justice system as a New Bridge befriender, it sparked my interest in those on probation and how well supported the service is, particularly in terms of desistance and substance use. This has been enhanced by my awareness of the high reoffending rates within England and Wales, in addition to the multiple changes that have occurred within the probation service. I had, and still have, a real passion for supporting the probation service to provide the best service for both those receiving support and working within it. It has therefore been crucial for me to continuously reflect on my own research practice to enhance the accuracy of the research findings, and as such the

potential changes that could happen as a result. This was also important to ensure neutrality when speaking with research participants.

3.9 Chapter Conclusions

This chapter provided an understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of the project's research design. It acknowledged the ontological, epistemological, and phenomenological standpoints of the researcher and how this impacted the shaping of the research project. It was noted how the researcher aligns with an interpretivist ontological standpoint, which focuses on the meaning and motives behind people's behaviour (Whitley, 1984; Denscombe, 2010). It has been noted that this approach is fitting for this research due to it allowing for individual perspectives to be explored (Carson et al, 2001). This marries up with the epistemological standpoint mentioned of constructionism, whereby knowledge and meaningful reality is dependent on human beings' interactions and experiences with other people and their world (Crotty, 1998). This has been noted as aligned with the project, due to it rejecting the idea that knowledge is objective (Burr, 2003). Additionally, this chapter notes the phenomenological underpinning of this research of hermeneutic phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenological research is centred on gaining knowledge through understanding subjective individual experiences, of which in turn, new knowledge derives (Kafle, 2011).

In addition to theoretical underpinnings, the research design of the project was presented. The chapter noted that this research project has undertaken a qualitative method, which enabled subjective data to be derived (Bryman, 2012). Specifically, semi-structured interviews were used, whereby predetermined open-ended questions are asked (Jamshed, 2014), whilst allowing for follow up questions to be presented to probe for further detail (Adams, 2015) and help build a good rapport with the participants (Noaks and Wincup, 2004; Britten, 1999). This was developed further by highlighting how the questions were laid out for each set of participants and of which topics were discussed, and the style to which the interviews took place, such as with them being face-to-face.

Specific discussions of participants were also presented, such as sampling methods. Purposive sampling, specifically the form of homogenous sampling was seen as the most appropriate for this research, due to it enabling the key participant base required for the

research to be included (Teddlie and Yu, 2007; Jager et al, 2017). Snowball sampling was also identified as being used to establish further participants (Bryman, 2012). Additionally, details were provided regarding the project's sample size, the criteria for participants to take part, and a table presenting the characteristics of the final sample of participants. This was split in to two sections, making it clear on which participants took place in their capacity as a service user of probation, and which were staff members, either as CRC probation staff, or drug and alcohol support workers.

Following this, the research procedure and ethical considerations were discussed. It was noted that the research project was designed in line with the British Society of Criminology's (2015) 'Statement of Ethics', and with Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and Birmingham City University's ethics requirements. Further to this official ethical approval was granted from Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and BCU BLSS FAEC, ahead of any data collection. The chapter provided insight into how voluntary participation, informed consent and confidentiality for participants was both considered and managed. Potential risk for the participants was also discussed, with the researcher highlighting what these may be and how they would be responded to.

Context was given regarding how the data that had been collected would be analysed. The phenomenological underpinnings of this research were used when analysing the data. Hermeneutic phenomenology argues that revealing the unspoken or unknown meanings within the lived experiences of participants is key to the analytical process (van Manen, 2016), therefore making it the ideal analytical process for this project that sought to provide service users and practitioners with a voice to express their experiences. When analysing the data, the researcher followed the work of Groenewald (2004) and Moustakas (1994) for guidance on general phenomenological analysis, and the work of van Manen (2016) for further hermeneutic phenomenological depth. These steps have clearly outlined within the chapter. Finally, the chapter discussed limitations of the research project, and a critical reflection from the researcher of their experience undertaking the research.

4. Chapter 4: Service Users Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the Hermeneutic Phenomenological analysis for the service user interviews. These themes highlight the experiences and perspectives of the probationers who were receiving support from SWM CRC to reduce their risk of reoffending and misusing substances, including alcohol. Three main themes, with various sub-themes, have been established from the interview data. These themes are substance use, desisting from offending behaviour, recovering from substance use and experience on probation. The themes, subthemes, and a description for each can be found in the Table 3 below.

Table 3: Service User Interview Data Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Subtheme
Factors Influencing Alcohol Use	Mental Health
	Social settings and legality
Desisting from offending behaviour	Length of time in the criminal justice system and alternative activities
	Support from probation officers
Recovering from substance use	Motivation
	Abstinence and Harm Reduction
	External agencies (in-house needed)

4.2 Theme 1: Factors Influencing Alcohol Use

This section will discuss the first theme of Factors Influencing Alcohol Use, through the two subthemes of Mental Health and Social Settings and Legality. Participants in these set of interviews had either been convicted of an offence that was substance-related or had issues with substance use whilst they had committed the crime they were convicted for. Within this

theme, participants explain their experiences with substance use (particularly alcohol), what has increased their substance use, and what are their barriers to recovery.

4.2.1 Mental Health

The first subtheme of factors influencing alcohol use that will be discussed is mental health. Participants have either directly used the term mental health or discussed aspects of their experience that directly affect how their mental health has been, in conjunction with their use of substances. The participants have had varied effects on their mental health, but most service users highlighted having experienced a certain level of impact.

The first quote to be presented is from Leanne, who was convicted of drink-driving and sentenced to a 12-month community sentence. Leanne discloses how her mental health struggles were misunderstood by the probation court representative. She identifies how terms that she used to describe her depression were misinterpreted as her having suicidal thoughts:

"She wrote in the report that at times I am suicidal, I have never been suicidal. I have never ever wanted to take my own life. I have been in the depth of depression, but I've always just wanted things to change, not end. She couldn't grasp it, and I think at some point, one point, I said, I just drank because I wanted to go to sleep and forget it. I meant, I just wanted to go to sleep for a while, I didn't mean I didn't want to go to sleep, I wanted to go to sleep and not wake up, that was never the case. I think I had a knock-on effect to having a predisposed form of depression, it all just merges together doesn't it, it all affects each other".

Leanne explains how she felt misunderstood by her probation court representative. By the need to go to sleep, Leanne did not feel present in the world, and that she required some time and space away from living and dealing with life. For Leanne, she has a strong grasp on her depression and understands that she has challenges in life that she would like to change but this does not mean that she is suicidal. Leanne explains how her alcohol use, centred around her wanting to forget, and not that she wanted to commit suicide. It also shows that the misinterpretation shown by the probation court representative had a negative early on impact on how she felt about the service. Leanne highlights how alcohol is a substance that would help her when she felt upset and in the process of managing her depression. She explained in her interview that she was over the limit at the time of her offence, but she usually does not drink in large quantities. Leanne may have used alcohol as a coping mechanism, further

supporting the link that mental health concerns, such as depression, can encourage individuals to turn to a substance such as alcohol as a form of support. Her offence was therefore directly linked to her consuming alcohol and was also during a time where her mental health was challenged. This suggests that when discussing alcohol-related offending, that underlying factors, such as mental health problems need to be considered.

Like Leanne, William's offence took place when he was under the influence of alcohol. For William this has been commonplace for most of his offences that he has been convicted for, with William himself listing "*drunk and disorderly, criminal damage, burglary ... but mostly drunken offences*". On this occasion he was convicted of assault, which William has stated has occurred due to the depressed state that he was in:

> *"I was just like really depressed at the time, and my offence cost me a job, with like a really good company. My relationship broke down, so I was just in a really bad place, and they got CPN [Community Psychiatric Nurse] to come in then, to talk to me".*

William explains how at the time of his current offence he was experiencing severe depression. For William, alcohol as used as a way of coping with his depression, but in turn also enhanced the chance of his engaging in criminal activity. This is why the majority of the offences he has engaged in have been referred to as mostly when he was intoxicated. William highlights how the conviction that he received as a result of the offence has led to a series of negative experiences, such as losing his reputable job and causing his relationship to break down. William therefore notes how his mental health was further impacted by the repercussions of his conviction. It highlights how lack of employment, and a break down in ties with loved ones are two factors that can exacerbate poor mental health for those receiving support from probation. As such, it suggests that to support individuals, adequate mental health support is required. It also reinforces that there are certain aspects of a person's life that can be negatively impacted due to a conviction.

Michael, like William, also received external support for mental health. Michael was convicted of racial-aggravated harassment, of which he engaged in whilst being under the influence of alcohol. In his interview, Michael noted how part of the reason he was intoxicated and misusing alcohol at the time of his offence was due to his mental health. Michael has explained how receiving support for his mental health has been beneficial for

him, however the external nature of the support can cause delays and issues when it is being organised:

".. it's not just the substance and alcohol misuse, it's all to do with mental health as well. That, that plays one big major role in lifestyle, it's your mental health, so they should have something in place for that as well, like, but they do support you with the the options like, like they have done with my probation officer, like he erm, helped me get in contact with some, some healthy minds, it's like a psychiatric thing, they are helping me to get the help I need, but the probation helped me with that, so they are, regardless of, they have to go through so many peers, like on the internet or something just to, it would be good to have it here".

It is clear that Michael has benefitted from receiving support for his mental health and recognises that in addition to substance and alcohol use, this is an important part of his recovery. He also shows praise towards the probation service for getting him the supported he needed but highlighted how the support not being in-house was difficult. The probation staff having to turn to external agencies has been considered long-winded and complicated. As such in-house support for mental health provision has been recognised as being something that would be particularly beneficial.

Similar to Michael, Sharon recognised how organisations separate to the probation service were who gave her support for her mental health. Sharon was convicted of harassing her family members, which she explains was when she was in an alcohol induced psychosis. She has mentioned how her mental health problems and her psychosis caused her to engage in the criminal behaviour that she was convicted of. It was therefore important for her to not only recover from her substance use, but also receive mental health provision. She further reinforces this by highlighting the extent to which drug and alcohol induced psychosis can have on an individual:

"It was mainly my mental [health] because I was in a drug induced psychosis ... it ruins your mental health. If someone is in a drink's psychosis, drugs do the same, it's the same thing. Erm, kills loads of people, ruins many lives ... the reason I got in trouble was because of the mental health so, I started engaging with the mental health services, because my referral was meant to be made by the police to the mental health services, because I kept calling the police saying that I was seeing things, and hearing things, and they got fed up of the calls, so they

made a referral to the mental health team. I was assigned a worker from Shelter, a lead worker, and erm she basically prompted me and pushed me to go to my appointments, came with me and made sure that I went, made sure she explained the situation, because I wasn't good, like when I first come ... going from entrenched to starting to live clean without the drugs or the alcohol ... my head was pickled, I couldn't have a conversation like I'm having now, like I've come a long way from what I was to now, it's a massive difference, it's like two different people''.

Sharon highlighted that there are many serious risks related to alcohol use, particularly when an individual end up in a psychosis. Sharon draws attention to the risk of death that can occur when support is not received or taken on, highlighting the fears that Sharon has experienced after going through psychosis herself. For Sharon it was her engagement with the criminal justice system that started the process of her recovery. This support came from Shelter, which whilst not directly related to probation, she was referred to by the police, made a positive change to her life. For Sharon, it is important for her to reflect on how she has progressed since going through her process of recovery from substance use. Sharon suggests that the combination of support for both her substance use and mental health played a strong role in her ability to get better. She reflects on how she has progressed since receiving support and how she sees herself as a new person. Furthermore, she recognised how the support of Shelter and her lead worker, was essential in her progressing well and staying on track with probation and for stopping misusing substances.

Similar to Sharon, Simon experienced issues with psychosis as part of his addiction. In his interview, he highlighted how loneliness and mental health problems were linked to him turning to substance use. The offence that he was convicted of was theft, which in his interview he mentioned was due to him trying to fund his alcohol and drug problem, to cope with his mental health problems. He explains how the impact on his mental health was quite severe:

"I lost myself, getting psychosis, err, attempting suicide, and I just had enough. I would start drinking and then that would be from like four cans because it used to put me out, and then within a couple of days I was drinking 14 cans, getting really depressed, and then I'd get really suicidal thoughts, and then I'd think fucking hell, what am I doing, and then I'd go back to the crack and smack then.''.

The final quote for the subtheme of mental health is from Simon. For Simon, his psychosis and mental health problems led him to have thoughts and attempts of suicide. He also would turn to crime to fund his alcohol and drug use as a way of trying to cope with his mental health problems. This highlights the impact that psychosis, substance use and in turn loneliness may have on a person. A further factor that has been drawn upon by Simon is his polydrug use. Simon has expressed how mixing different substances, including alcohol, that have differing effects, increased some of the emotions and feelings that Simon was experiencing. Simon recognised that him turning to substances was a way of forgetting, and how that initial forgetting process, could cause his substance consumption to increase by dramatic levels and have a lasting effect on his mental health. He also noted the link that his substance use as a coping mechanism had on him offending.

4.2.1.1 Discussion – Mental Health Subtheme

This subtheme discussed how participants mental health has been affected using alcohol, how the criminal justice system has responded to mental health needs and for some, how alcohol was used as a way of supporting issues with their mental health, which in turn impacted their offending. The analysis of this subtheme has subsequently looked at how participants understood the impact that substance use has had on their lives.

Substance use disorders have been linked to heightened levels of mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression (Kim et al, 2020). When looking at the world population, it has been estimated that around two per cent of people have a substance use disorder, of which can be as high as five per cent in some countries (Global Burden of Disease Collaborative Network, 2016). Of those people who do have a substance use disorder, it has been found that at some point in their life, more than half of them will experience a mental health problem (Santucci, 2012; Burdzovic et al, 2015). Prince and Wald (2018) argue that risk factors for those involved in the criminal justice system with a mental illness has been documented, however little is known when looking at those who have a co-occurring mental illness with a substance use disorder. This is despite numerous studies highlighting that many people in the criminal justice system face both mental illness and substance use disorders, as co-occurring disorders (Ogloff et al, 2015; Peters et al, 2015; White et al, 2006). With this being the case, it is important to acknowledge the experiences of those who are service users within the criminal justice system, who are facing these co-occurring disorders, and how they

are in turn treated.

Leanne explained how she felt that criminal justice staff perceived her words to mean that she had been suicidal, of which she was not. This highlights the stereotypes and labels that can be associated with mental health and substance use. McCartan et al (2019) note that the fact that it is rare to see the criminal justice system seek out the viewpoint of those who are directly impacted by it, is particularly important to investigate. This is not only through the perspective of feedback, or providing the service user a voice, but also acknowledging that they have knowledge of their own experiences. Although service user engagement is prioritised amongst other areas of healthcare, it is virtually absent within the criminal justice system (McCartan et al, 2019). There are some signs of the service user voice within prisons, particularly within the United Kingdom (Bernasco, 2010; Clinks, 2011). However, this is usually under certain circumstances, and the same option is not commonly copied within other areas of the criminal justice system, including probation (McCartan et al, 2019). Probation, and other criminal justice services, assess service user's mental health in different ways, which can lead to gaps and inconsistencies regarding their needs, and in turn effect how service users are treated (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021e). Leanne's negative experience stemmed from her initial experience at court, which highlights the impact that each stage of the criminal justice system can have. It has been argued that court psychiatric reports should be undertaken by psychiatrists who work directly with those who have offended; who understand the needs of the courts; and who have local connections (Durcan, 2016). A lack of recognition of service user views regarding their own mental health is problematic and can lead to a lack of trust in the system, misinterpretations of a person's mental health needs, and stereotypes and labels affecting how service users are treated.

A further discussion point regarding mental health was shared by William. William experienced depression prior to his offence, of which he explained he used alcohol to cope with. He also explained how mental health was linked to his alcohol-related offending, but also how his mental health was impacted by the repercussions that came from his conviction as a result of his crimes. William noted that his crimes primarily occurred when he was intoxicated, and were for drunken offences, such as drunk and disorderly, as well as criminal damage and burglary. William has voiced that he has been a heavy alcohol user, of which supports the literature that argues this is a risk factor for individuals offending under the influence (White et al, 2002). The first repercussion William discussed was lack of

employment, due to him losing his job as a result of his conviction. Research has strongly supported the idea that employment improves mental health, and unemployment deteriorates mental health (Rueda et al, 2012), of which has been experienced by William and his mental health. Essentially as noted by Olesen et al (2013:1) mental health "is both a consequence of and risk factor for unemployment". Researchers and policy makers have supported this point even for the most serious mental disorders, inclusive of depression (Knapp and Wong, 2020), of which many of the service users reported having had at some point.

William also noted loss of ties to loved ones as a further repercussion of his conviction. For William, he reports that breaking up from his partner had a negative impact on his mental health. A recent ending of a romantic relationship has been linked to lower levels of wellbeing in comparison to those who are in romantic relationships (Sbarra and Emery, 2005; Simon and Barrett, 2010). Oliffe et al (2022) have findings that support William's experience, as they argue that the breakdown of intimate partner relationships can lead to, and at times exacerbate, mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. Research does appear to see an increased risk of this for men than women, with it being considered one of the most challenging experiences in a man's life (Stack and Scourfield, 2015). This paired with men concealing their feelings and/or self-medicating with substances, increases the risk of depressive symptoms, such as anger and risk-taking (Turner et al, 2018; Rice et al, 2020). As such a clear system that is available and suitable to support service users who have had their mental health impacted by the repercussions of their conviction is important in order to strengthen the effectiveness of probation provision.

A further point to consider has been discussed by Michael in regard to issues faced with the external nature of mental health support whilst on probation. Michael recognises that mental health provision is available under probation, however he notes that the methods to get this support, particularly the requirement to use an external agency is long-winded and complicated for staff and service users. Research has found a trend of high numbers of people with a mental health problem within probation populations (Sirdifield, 2012). As such a focus on how best to support service users who fall into this category is necessary. It has also been found that many service users on probation who have a mental health problem either have more than one (co-morbidity), or have it combined with a substance misuse problem (dual diagnosis) (Geelan et al, 2000; Melnick et al, 2008; Brooker and Glyn, 2012; Sirdifield,

2012). After looking at one county in the UK, Brooker et al (2012) found that when dual diagnosis takes place, alcohol is often the substance of choice, falling in line with this study.

There is a high level of need for support for individuals on probation with dual diagnosis, yet despite this, these individuals face many barriers, including a lack of appropriate provision (Melnick et al., 2008; Bradley, 2009; NHS England, 2016). One of the issues with this comes with determining how much knowledge probation staff have of mental health problems and identifying where the responsibility lays for support. In a recent study, Brooker and Tocque (2023) found that probation staff are helpful and non-stigmatising in their views of people with mental health problems, however their overall knowledge is on the topic is no more than the general population. With this lack of knowledge, it reduces the chances of someone who requires support being detected. A further, possibly more concerning issue, that was touched upon by Michael is the waitlists for mental health support. When referrals are made to mental health services for people on probation, service users are often having to wait over six months on a waiting list, which is likely due to the shortage of comprehensive and high-grade services available for the large variety of individuals who need it (Criminal Justice Joint Inspection, 2021). With a general lack of knowledge of mental health needs by probation staff, and a lack of responsiveness and high waitlists by external agencies that are providing the treatment, it can be argued that an internal approach with individuals specifically assigned to provide mental health support within probation services would be beneficial. Alternatively, an approach similar to 'speciality caseloads' may be appropriate. Skeem et al (2006) shared findings around 'speciality caseloads' in the USA, whereby it was found that when probation staff had smaller caseloads (around 45 cases), received regular mental health training (between 20-40 hours per year), and worked directly with external providers rather than solely referrals; positive results were found in that, increased links were made between service users and treatment providers, reduced risk of probation violation, and improved wellness of probation service users.

4.2.2 Social Settings and Legality

The second subtheme to be considered for factors impacting alcohol use is social settings and legality. Despite participants highlighting a variety of factors that contributed to their substance use, an underlying theme that spanned across many participants interviews was that of the legality of the substance and social norms.

Adrian, as the first participant to be presented here, draws attention to a drinking culture within the United Kingdom, particularly when linked to attending pubs:

"It doesn't bother me, it's not there. I've been out once in the last two months and that was only literally, I had three and a half pints and I felt physically sick, because I hadn't drank in so long and all it was, I don't know if you know, because of Liverpool and Man City in the league are so close together, I am a massive Liverpool fan. As they were supposed to be on telly that day and for some reason my Sky went down and I was like, I'm not missing the match, I'm gone, so I went up, had a couple of pints and I went home".

Adrian highlights that the majority of the time he practices not consuming alcohol. Despite this, when Adrian went to the pub to watch the football, the environment and the social activity encouraged him to partake in drinking alcohol. This highlights how certain environments and activities are often linked to alcohol, and therefore may enhance the chance of a person engaging in the drinking culture. For Adrian, going to the pub and feeling required to consume alcohol whilst he was there, shows the strong pressure to drink within a pub environment. This is particularly prevalent for Adrian, as he was convicted of sending abusive text messages to his ex-wife whilst he was under the influence at a pub, and then had his sentence extended after visiting his ex-wife to verbally abuse her in person after drinking large volumes of alcohol at the pub.

This is further reiterated by William, who recognises the impact that going to the pub had on his own drinking habits:

"See when I was drinking, I'd start with like a local pub and I'd get to the stage where, feeling drunk, and there was like a voice in my head telling me to slow down, look you've had enough, come on your drunk, and I'd just carry on. Yeah so, I knew what I was doing, but my attitude wouldn't allow me to stop".

William explained how he would go to his local pub and consume excessive volumes of alcohol, and despite knowing that he was getting drunk and should slow down, he would continue. He notes how the environment not only provides the access to alcohol, but there are not measures in place to stop high volumes of alcohol being consumed. This in turn

reinforces and normalises the consumption of alcohol within society. In his interview, William noted that most of his offences were fuelled by alcohol. He further explained how he felt that he needed to repeatedly be in trouble with the law to take the normality out of excessive alcohol consumption. He explained how this is due to the vast availability of alcohol and the normality of it within society making it more difficult for him to not continue drinking.

The implications of the social aspect of alcohol and the focus on drinking culture was reinforced by Simon. For Simon, he explains the ease of alcohol use, in comparison to drugs:

"I did drugs before I started drinking, but it is, it's more sociable init, do you know what I mean, you can go to the pub and have a couple pints, and its more sociably accepted, then going down an ally and putting a pin down your arm, sorry, but it's not acceptable is it, but yeah fucking".

Simon has experience of consuming both alcohol and drugs. Simon highlights how it is the social aspect of drinking and the easy accessibility that makes drinking alcohol more appealing. He draws on the isolating nature of drugs that are stereotypically considered 'harder'. By focusing on the use of some drugs requiring needles, Simon explains how the manner of consuming drugs can also impact how socially accepted a drug may be to society. Simon further goes on to explain the possible link between alcohol consumption and deviant or criminal behaviour:

"You should never judge others. You get drunk one night and get into a fight, or you know what I mean, it happens as quick as that. People are quick enough to watch someone else's behaviours and gossip, when really you should be looking in the mirror and being like, can you really make that call, is your life as perfect as that, do you know what I mean, none of us are saints".

Simon highlights that alcohol consumption can lead to negative implications for any person, regardless of whether they have an addiction or criminal record. As such, he explains how the overall drinking culture that is present can potentially increase the chances of violent or deviant behaviour occurring, and for that reason judgement of others needs to be avoided. In his interview, he highlighted how he had previously had a conviction for actual bodily harm

(ABH) whilst he had been intoxicated and therefore is sharing his view based on prior experience.

A similar experience is voiced by William who noted that he was getting into many violent altercations whilst he was drunk, which often subsequently resulted in him being arrested. It was these arrests that caused William to start determining that this was not 'normal' behaviour, but his initial mentality prevented him from stopping the alcohol use:

"So, in my teens, I got arrested for drunk and disorderly, and when I got older, it was more about being violent when I was drinking, and assault, yeah just assaults, erm in the space of 18 months, I got arrested four times for assault on a police officer. So, from drinking, if I'm out and about like, do you know what I mean, it just took the normality out of the situation.

William explained how alcohol and violence have been interconnected throughout his life, from when he was a teenager through to adult life. From this he feels that alcohol consumption exacerbates his involvement in violent behaviour and in turn criminal activity. He explains how he has been arrested numerous times for violent behaviour whilst drunk, including assaulting a police officer. For William, it had got to the point where he saw it as normal to engage in violent and criminal behaviour whilst drinking alcohol. William also explained how the legality of alcohol made him more accepting of continuing to consume alcohol:

"Yeah, yeah, yeah like, that's another justification, if I'm not doing nothing wrong, I love to drink and it's not illegal, that was like a justification for [it]".

William expresses how the legality of alcohol allowed him to use it as a justification for his use, and without feeling the guilt that may come with the use of illegal drugs. Furthermore, it can be interpreted that William does not feel judged when consuming alcohol, as he is not doing something that is against the law, and as such this reduces the number of questions he can receive about the behaviour. This is particularly important for William however, as he strongly linked alcohol use to his violent and criminal behaviour. As such, if he felt the shame that is sometimes related with illegal drug use, then he may not have continued to misuse it and therefore engage within offending behaviour.

Simon highlights how illegal drugs should not be withdrawn from the discussion of substance use and accessibility. He argues that it is the social acceptance of substances that can normalise behaviours:

"But you know all drugs are illegal ain't they, street drugs they are illegal, but it doesn't stop anyone else, cocaine that's illegal, but it's really socially accepted now, the amount of people, once you have a bit of awareness and you know what people are doing, you see them going in and out of toilets (makes a sniffing sound) like that. You got films and that, they err not encouragement, but they make it look good, they make it look cool, you know what I mean … drugs can be as dangerous as alcohol, people offend for that addiction".

Simon explains how despite illegal drugs not having the benefit of legality that comes with alcohol, some types of illegal drugs are seen as socially accepted and therefore the level of use for those substances is also present. In the interview, Simon highlighted how he felt it important to consider the implications of illegal drugs, as if they were to become legal, it is likely that some of them could have as much of an impact on offending behaviour, particularly in relation to theft. However, there has been a general agreeance across the participants that the social aspect of alcohol and the legality of it, makes it overall more common practice.

4.2.2.1 Discussion - Social Settings and Legality Subtheme

There were two key focal points of this subtheme, social settings, and legality. Participants shared their views on how the social environment can and has provided a space for them to consume alcohol. Additionally, they discussed how the legality of alcohol made it more easily available and as such increased the likelihood, availability, and accessibility of consumption. The analysis of this subtheme has concentrated on understanding how and why different social settings may provide a space for alcohol to be drank to excess, and the impact the legality of alcohol may have on societal views of its consumption and in turn the volume of its use.

Adrian explained how he does not drink often anymore due to it making him feel sick. Despite this, when the football was playing and he entered the pub environment, he drank. This shows that although he had a desire to not consume alcohol, football culture in addition to entering a space such as a pub, led to him consuming alcohol. This aligns with literature

that argues that there is an inextricable link between football and alcohol (Gornall, 2014), with pub's being considered, for over a decade, a central part of the football experience (Mason, 1980). Alcohol consumption can play a key part in social interactions between football supporters, with the pub environment providing a space for this to occur (Crawford, 2004). Alcohol consumption has the ability to increase social bonding and enhance confidence and rowdiness amongst supporters of sporting events (Armstrong and Hognestad, 2006; Glassman et al., 2010). Despite this, however, for those individuals who are abstaining or reducing their alcohol consumption, the alcohol heavy nature of sporting events such as football, and the entering of spaces that further encompass this, such as pubs, can be problematic.

A further factor that was noted by many participants, albeit in different ways, was the social acceptance of alcohol. In the United Kingdom, drinking has been considered part of national culture, with alcohol consumption seen as an integral part of many practices (Ally et al, 2016; Meier et al, 2018). The Global Drug Survey 2019 found that drinkers in Britain drink to the point of being 'drunk', on average 51 times per year, which is more often than all the other 29 nations surveyed (Winstock, 2019). Despite alcohol sales and marketing being highly regulated, the level of media exposure and advertisements for alcohol, helps influence social norms around its use (Sudhinaraset et al, 2016). Studies looking into targeted alcohol marketing have been found to result in people developing positive opinions about consuming alcohol, and furthermore widens the spaces that alcohol use is seen as not only socially acceptable, but also encouraged (Alaniz and Wilkes 1998; Hastings et al, 2005; McKee et al, 2011). Alcohol consumption being socially accepted in this way however can result in a person starting to drink, or encourage binge drinking, or increased alcohol use (Tanski et al, 2015).

Simon specifically discusses how alcohol is more socially accepted than other drugs, particularly illegal drugs. He notes how the easy access and legality of alcohol, compared to the secretive nature and the way in which many illegal drugs are ingested, mean that the general population are more accepting of alcohol. This perspective aligns with Allsop (2013) who argues that most people forget that alcohol is a drug, and therefore tend to sway towards discussing illegal substances, such as heroin or cannabis when asked about drug related problems. Despite it being legal and socially accepted, some argue that alcohol is cheap and freely available harmful drug, whereas there are alternatives that are considered safer yet are

illegal (Charlton, 2005). The huge popularity of alcohol use in the United Kingdom, particularly as part of a leisure activity, does indicate that an intoxicating drug that provides a state of euphoric release is desired amongst the general population (Charlton, 2005). Chaloupka and Laixuthai (1997) argue that cannabis may be a safer and less antisocial alternative to alcohol, as a legal intoxicating drug.

William mentioned how the legality of alcohol, gave him a justification for consuming it, due to it not being perceived as a negative activity. Adrian shared similar views, mentioning how freely available alcohol is, particularly within the pub environment, and the legal nature of it, meaning that he did not feel he was doing anything wrong. Literature has shown how this viewpoint has been reflected within policy development and effectiveness. Less intrusive policies that take a lighter touch approach, such as focusing on education or information campaigns have received positive responses, whereas population-level alcohol policies, such as increasing the cost, or reducing the availability, of alcohol, are less popular (Room et al, 1991). This is despite lighter touch approaches having less evidence regarding their effectiveness (Babor et al., 2010, Lancaster et al., 2013).

Simon and William, both mentioned their experiences with alcohol and deviant or criminal behaviour. They particularly focused on the violent altercations they had had whilst being intoxicated, and how certain aspects, such as fighting, can be considered a normal part of drinking culture for some. William noted that it was not until he was arrested that he realised that excessive alcohol consumption was not the norm, despite the social acceptance of drinking. MacAndrew and Edgerton (1969) argued that alcohol intoxication is sometimes used as a passport to deviant behaviour. Allsop (2013) argues that by changing societies tolerance towards alcohol-related antisocial and aggressive behaviour, then a reduction in the exposure to harm from other people's drinking may occur. This mindset is what caused William to change his behaviour because of being arrested.

4.3 Desisting from Offending Behaviour

This section will consider the second theme of desisting from offending behaviour, which will be split in to discussing the two subthemes of length of time in the criminal justice system and alternative activities, and positive support. Participants in data which these interviews derived were currently being supported by the probation service for having

engaged in offending behaviour. Within this theme, participants reflect on their experiences with the support provided to them in relation to probation for desisting from offending behaviour, and its effectiveness.

4.3.1 Length of Time in the Criminal Justice System and Alternative Activities

A discussion of the length of time in the Criminal Justice System, and access and engagement with alternative activities, such as education, training, and accredited courses, will be the first subtheme for desisting from offending behaviour to be considered. Many participants have discussed the impact that the length of time they have spent in the criminal justice system, including entering and re-entering, and the different stages from the police station through to probation support, has had on their chances of desisting. Additionally, participants often reflected on the effectiveness of the support provided to them during their time in the Criminal Justice System, particularly in relation to probation, for desisting from offending behaviour. It is with this that the effectiveness of alternative activities, and in some cases, lack of alternative activities, is discussed.

The first quote to be presented is from Michael, who discusses the link between the length of time he has been in the criminal justice system and his motivation to desist:

"I just want to be, you know, I think I just want to be back with all my kids, and back to my living my normal life, I think that's what life's been like, I spiral out of control, and I hope in the future I don't have any of these issues. I just want to be back to my, living my normal life ... I've been doing it for too long, I'm getting bored of it".

Michael has spent over a decade in the Criminal Justice System and has explained in other parts of his interview how the probation service has developed over the last ten years. Here, Michael highlights how the process of engaging in crime, and in turn the cycle of entering and leaving the Criminal Justice System, is no longer of interest to him due to its repetitive nature. Michael refers to wanting his "*normal life*" back, suggesting that he does not see committing crime and being involved in the criminal justice system as standard practice. He also mentions wanting to be back home with his children, highlighting how family ties play a strong role in his motivation and what he also considers to be part of a normal life. This response from Michael suggests that after a certain length of time, offenders seek a law-

abiding life, and therefore that can motivate their desistance. Motivation in relation to desistance has been noted to play a key role in the experiences of many service users.

Similar to Michael, Simon mentions how length of time he has spent in the criminal justice system has impacted his motivation to desist from offending behaviour:

"When I walked through that [probation office] door, I was grey, overgrown face hair, hair quite long, I was in my trainers, you know, it's mad, you know. That stigma, once a smackhead always a smackhead, or a leopard can never change its spots, I think that's just a, sorry about that. I'm just too old for this. I can't come back, I need to stop getting in to trouble".

Simon notes how the stigma attached to his actions, and the repetitiveness of him returning to probation, have left him not wanting to continue committing crime. Simon suggests that he is at an age where he does not think he should be engaging with criminal behaviour and therefore has outgrown it. By using labels that are often linked to people who misuse substances, Simon is reinforcing how engrained substance use is within his criminal behaviour. Additionally, in his interview Simon has highlighted how alcohol use has been a key reason for him offending. As such, in order to desist from offending behaviour, abstaining from alcohol is necessary. Simon has said he needs to stop, rather than that he has, which is a reflection on the fact that he is struggling to stop misusing substances.

William develops on from the point of outgrowing criminal behaviour, to highlight some of the alternative activities he has been privy to since engaging with probation:

"I just got to the point where I just thought, I'm just too old to be getting in to trouble all the time, erm I enjoyed, believe it or not, I enjoyed doing unpaid work, it gave me a sense of, because I was out of work at the time, I'd lost my job, so it gave me a sense of something to do and serving a purpose. Erm, the group I was on helped me, trying to look at things from somebody else's point of view, like the victim of my offence. Erm, and I got a chance to volunteer to be a peer mentor, so I got to work with other service users trying to complete their order successfully. All in all, it was a really good experience, life changing to be fair".

Part of William's sentence has been to engage in unpaid work, of which he has highlighted

has been a positive experience for him. He notes how although the work was unpaid, it has given him a sense of purpose, and enabled him to stay busy. This highlights the benefits that William has assigned to work, and staying preoccupied, within the desistance experience. He also recognised the importance that this experience had on him for reflecting on his offence. It enabled him to consider the point of view of the person he assaulted when he was under the influence of alcohol. In addition to this, he also had the opportunity to volunteer as a peer mentor to support other service users on an Alcohol Treatment Requirement, of which he has argued has been a very beneficial experience.

Like William, Sharon had the opportunity to volunteer as a peer mentor, and had a positive experience doing so:

"The training that I go [on] at the end of my probation was erm they offered me a peer mentoring course, and it was a 16 week course, an hour a week and erm I was willing to do it, I was willing to do it, and I got through that training and erm, because I know people who have gone through the same training, become peer mentors for probation and got jobs out of it and we were speaking to some peer mentors who had got jobs, and err, there's no guarantee of a job, it's not to say that this will happen, but erm there's always hope isn't it".

Sharon reinforces the positive response to the peer mentoring programme that is offered to some service users. For Sharon, this experience was particularly beneficial as she had been able to see people who were similar to her in terms of having committed alcohol-related offences, take part in this programme and move into employment after it had finished. Sharon was aware that there was no guarantee of employment, however seeing it happen for others, showed that it was possible despite her previous substance use and offence. Alongside William, it shows how much importance is placed on employment for Sharon in her desistance journey.

Although under different circumstances, employment has played an active role in Leanne's experience, and her focus on desisting from offending. Unlike other service users that were interviewed, Leanne remained employed and continued with her original job throughout her time on probation:

"Well, my employment is fine, because that was never under any threat. I was full-time employed before the crime and I remained full-time employed in the same employment, after it ... I told the headteacher ... what happened, he was very, he was excellent actually, his comment was if you would pardon my language 'well you're a bloody idiot then aren't you, but you're our bloody idiot, and we'll support you as best we can'. The school have been fantastic, work have been amazing, very very supportive, which is part of the reason that I was very conscious of not allowing it to impact my job, any more than it had to, because they had been so supportive. I felt I owed it to them to do my very best to not let it impact my work ... [My probation officer] did not have to have any input in to my employment ... he just gave me information, on the driver's awareness course".

Leanne highlighted how there was a lack of fear that she felt when informing her employer of what had happened, and how her employer was understanding of her offence and responded in a light-hearted manner. This shows that drink-driving offences tend to be seen as lower level to other alcohol-related offences, that have led to other service users losing their employment, such as assault. Leanne explained how by not losing her job resulted in her feeling loyal to her employer and therefore she had a desire to not allow her community sentence to affect her employment. As such the supportive nature of her manager and employer, encouraged Leanne to not want to continue with criminal activities, therefore causing her to choose to reduce her alcohol consumption in order to move towards a path of desistance.

Michael highlights that not all the current programmes are suitable for everyone on probation. As such, diversifying the support, to help more individuals take on alternative activities to crime, would be helpful in the long run for their desistance journey. Michael goes on to explain how the types of community punishment that are issued could also be supported to promote desistance:

"You probably get the litter picking, the community payback, but you know, people like to pay it back to the community too, but I don't think people like to go around with Hi-Vis' saying that they are on probation".

Although they are not activities that are separate to their punishment, Michael notes that activities that service users are required to take part in as part of their sentence, can also

impact successful desistance. Michael argues that service users want to give back to the community, but the stigma that can be associated with some of the community activities required of them, can make the process more difficult. By engaging in community payback, service users can benefit from feeling more part of the community and in turn wanting to make a change in their life so that they are not negatively impacting the community. However, some of the types of community punishments that are present can make service users feel more isolated, which may enhance their desire to use coping mechanisms such as alcohol. They may also continue to engage with people in communities that they feel more accepted within, such as other people who are offending.

4.3.1.1 Discussion - Length of Time in the Criminal Justice System and Alternative Activities Subtheme

This subtheme centred on the length of time service users spent in the criminal justice system and the impact of this on desistance, and the type and effectiveness of alternative activities towards desistance. Participants explained about the repetitive nature of the criminal justice system, and how service users can 'outgrow' criminal behaviour. Employment (paid and unpaid) have been discussed, regarding the important role they can play in the desistance process, however it has been noted that the type of work is key. When analysing this subtheme, a concentration was placed on understanding the impact that extensive lengths of time within the criminal justice system can have on desistance, and the influence employment can have on desistance.

The length of time spent in the criminal justice cycle was a key factor discussed by Michael. He noted how he no longer wanted to be part of the repetitive cycle of entering, leaving, and re-entering the criminal justice system. Multiple short or medium length sentences have been linked to increased rates of re-incarceration (Jolliffe and Henderman, 2015), resulting in them becoming trapped in a cycle of rotating through the criminal justice system. Maruna (2001) notes how substance use and misuse, can be a leading factor in the cycle of offending and incarceration. Michael stated that he wanted to return to 'normal life' and sought to live a law-abiding life after the length of time he had spent engaging in criminal activity. This aligns well with the concept of secondary desistance, whereby the ex-offender changes the way they view themselves (Maruna and Farrall, 2004), seeking a more positive identity for themselves and removing the criminal label that is quite often applied to them (McNeill and Weaver, 2010). McNeill and Weaver (2010) do argue that secondary desistance is 'more

likely to be necessary for those whose offending has been persistent and who have deeply entrenched criminal identities', as Michael does.

In a similar way to Michael, Simon discusses age and desistance. While Michael specifically discussed his length of time in the criminal justice system, Simon focuses on the idea that he has outgrown criminal behaviour. Age has been a key focal point of many theories of desistance (Maruna, 2001) and with ontogenetic theories, those which link between age and crime are the most longstanding within the field (McNeill, 2006). Literature in the field that supports this age perspective argue that offending, begins within early adolescence, peaks in late adolescence or young adulthood, and often ends before reaching 30 or 40 years old (Blumstein and Cohen, 1987; Farrington, 1997). Having taken part in the interview at the age of 3 years old and deciding to step away from crime ahead of this, Simon aligns with this age-related phenomenon. Hirschi and Gottfredson (1983) argue that this is due to the natural aging of the body, whereby a reduction in ability and motivation to offend occurs (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). In turn making it so that desistance is a natural ending to criminal behaviour (Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1983).

Rather than the length of time in the criminal justice system, William focused more on the experience of alternative activities. William expressed how he has enjoyed taking part in unpaid work. Although systematic reviews on the impact of unpaid work on reoffending rates are needed, a 2014 study by the Ministry of Justice which focused on community orders with punitive requirements, established that nearly two-thirds of service users thought that taking part in unpaid work made them less likely to commit crime (Cattel et al, 2014). William stated that he found unpaid work helpful as it gave him a sense of purpose and enabled him to stay busy. This is a common perspective with several studies that have found desisters seek to keep themselves busy, particularly during the early experiences of desistance (King, 2012; Farrall et al., 2014; Soyer, 2014; Healy, 2016). Keeping busy can be used as a strategy to help desisters stay positive and also to cope with the emotional impact that can come as part of the desistance process (Healy, 2016). Furthermore, keeping busy can be used as a way to help modify their habits (King, 2012).

In addition to his community unpaid work as part of his community sentence, William also volunteered as a peer mentor for other service users. Being a peer mentor has been positively received by both William and Sharon, who have highlighted the importance of work in the

desistance process. In a criminal justice setting, peer mentors are regularly members of the community, often with their own lived experiences of criminal justice, who work or volunteer to help people in the criminal justice system (Willoughby et al, 2013). It can encompass a diverse range of practices, such as one-to-one sessions, group work or less formal leisure activities (Buck, 2020). When recognising the lived experience that is often present for the mentor, it is often the case that peer mentoring can support the desistance journey for both mentors and mentees. Peer mentoring can help encourage self-confidence and hope for the future for the mentees (Lopez-Humphreys and Teater, 2020; Barrenger et al., 2019), as well as improve their feelings of self-worth and self-sufficiency (Lenkens et al., 2019; Pollack, 2004), by supporting them to employ care, empathy, and workable goals (Buck, 2019). These are all important factors for the desistance process which involves having positive belief and hope for the future (Maruna, 2001). The peer mentoring process is also beneficial to the mentor themselves and their own desistance journey. By helping mentees to move forward in their recovery and desistance, it helps the mentor build on their own identity through generative acts (Goffman, 1963). Rather than being subjects to be judged, of which offenders and ex-offenders tend to be, mentors are seen as human beings with real emotions and aspirations (Buck, 2016)), and furthermore, they have a rare knowledge, that those who do not have convictions cannot share. The mentoring experience supports ex-offender's desistance process, by reminding them of the reasons why they would not want to return to the criminal justice cycle and reinforcing the positive changes they have made (Giordano et al., 2007; Kavanagh and Borril, 2013). Both William and Sharon mentioned how a lot of peer mentors have got paid employment after taking part in peer mentoring, further showing the skills and opportunities that can be gained from this type of unpaid work and volunteering.

Leanne, albeit from a different experience in life, has shared the importance of employment for her desistance journey. The supportive nature of her manager, and therefore the desire to not interrupt her employer any more than has already occurred, encouraged Leanne to not want to get involved in future criminal activity. Leanne however is unlike the general probation population, in the terms of being and remaining in employment throughout her community sentence. Probation service users have higher rates of unemployment and poorer basic skills than the general population (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021f). Furthermore, employability has been noted as a key indicator for the likelihood of reoffending, with those who engage in ETE activities being more likely to be employed and therefore less likely to reoffend (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021f). Ministry of Justice (2013b) found that

offenders who entered in to P45 employment at some point in the year after they were released from custody were less likely to reoffend than those who had not. It has been noted however that chaotic lifestyles, substance misuse, including alcohol, and mental health issues, all of which many of the service users who were interviewed self-proclaimed to have issues with, can lead to barriers to engaging in ETE interventions (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021f). It has also been found that it is important for service users to have committed to a non-offending identity, for employment and external support to have a positive effect on desistance (Rhoden et al, 2022). Engaging in employment can have a positive effect by giving the service user access to prosocial networks, which can help them to feel accepted and trusted by others (Farrall, 2005) which can in turn support the beginning and maintenance of desistance (McNeill and Whyte, 2007).

Although positive comments have been made regarding unpaid work earlier, it is important to recognise that the type of work needs to be considered. This is due to, as Michael has highlighted, some service users would like to give back to the community, but some of the activities given to them as unpaid work, such as litter picking, can lead to further criminal labels or stigma being placed on them. Being labelled as a stigmatised person can have a real impact on a person's personal views, as well as their expectations on how others treat them (Link et al, 1989; Crocker et al, 1998). People with offending histories are from a highly stigmatised group, of whom are marginalised in many ways (Pogorzelski et al. 2005). By being given stigmatised jobs, such as litter picking, or positions where High Visibility jackets that make it clear someone is on probation are required, further adds to the stigmatisation and marginalisation.

4.3.2 Support from Probation

The second subtheme for desisting from offending behaviour to be discussed is support from probation. There will be a consideration of the inclusion and exclusion of support from probation in terms of effectiveness of desistance. Many participants have discussed the availability of probation staff to support service user's needs and make adaptations to better support probation's role in their life. Due to the nature of the research, the predominant discussion was around probation support, of which will be considered first.

Sharon has voiced how the groups that have been presented to her by probation and her experience with her probation officer have been positive:

"Erm, to turn up to groups, that they'd put on TAH groups, Transition and Hope. Erm, the other ones that they had me attend were, oh I've forgotten the name of them now, but they were at Mariposa, Jewellery Quarter. Err it was a Women's Probation and I did the groups there, they were mainly therapeutic, erm and I also had a probation officer that er was sort of er, I felt as if she was counselling me, and that was really helpful as well".

Sharon's comments suggest that a counselling approach by probation is valuable as it enables people to look at their attitudes and thinking, and why they are where they are. She also explains how groups such as Transition and Hope which are centred around supporting desistance and putting strategies in place to stop both offending and substance use have been beneficial to her. For Sharon, there are benefits that come from therapeutic and counselling-based approaches to support service users to desist from alcohol-related offending. It is worth noting however that Sharon is a supporter of abstinence and is explaining her experiences as someone who has stopped misusing alcohol.

Unlike Sharon, Diane has not offered a positive response to the approach taken by probation and the groups that they are directed to go to. At the time of the interview, Diane was still misusing alcohol, and was serving a community sentence for common assault:

"It's a pile of shit. No, it has been, it has been a little helpful, don't get me wrong it has, I have benefitted a little bit out of it. I didn't even assault the man, my children even confessed for assaulting the man, so I shouldn't have even been charged, I shouldn't be on probation. But anyway, I go on a women's programme, I go once a week, I go, its 2 and a half hours, each week. It's around confidence, self-esteem, a bit about anxiety, stress, depression. Do I think it helps? Listen if it helped, I wouldn't have been sectioned on the Section 2 last week that's for sure. They like to say it's helped, call it small steps, they can call it whatever they like".

By Diane starting with an expletive, it suggests that she has strong feelings regarding her probation experience. Her strong negative starting comment implies that these are her true feelings, even though she tries to soften the negativity of the comment after. There is anger

towards her not agreeing with being on probation, as she argues she did not commit the crime to which she was convicted of. In her interview she has however acknowledged that at the time of the crime occurring she had been intoxicated. Despite this, the treatment requirement she received was a Rehabilitation Activity Requirement, and not one that supports alcohol-related offending such as an Alcohol Treatment Requirement. As such the support she has been issued is more generic, and therefore the factors that Diane has noted the programme is supposed to support have not been effective for her needs. It is therefore important for the correct treatment requirement to be issued initially, and for the relevant probation staff to explore the most effective support options for the service user's needs.

Diane and Sharon have differing viewpoints on their experience of probation, it is important to note that they have also highlighted variations in terms of their need for support, and the volume of support that they also require, thus implying that probation officers need the time and capacity to vary the provision according to each service user they support.

Michael, who has been in and out of the criminal justice system for a decade, raised an interesting point regarding how probation support has changed over the years:

"I haven't been with probation for years, it's like this is my first time in years, like coming, like they give you a bit of leniency, somewhat, you know, back about ten years ago it was more strict you know, you're more likely to you know breach your thing if you were late, like if you was about 20 seconds past the time that they wanted you there, you were classed as late, and you were put down as a no show. Now they actually put it down as an authorised absence, because I've got problems with my stomach".

This change can be considered from two perspectives, firstly the challenges that can occur within service user's life, and secondly, high probation targets. By showing more leniency, service users who miss appointments for genuine reasons are given leeway that they would not have had historically, and therefore are not recalled for situations that are out of their control, or difficult for them to overcome, such as health implications. For Michael particularly, facing stomach issues, which in his interview he has highlighted are a result of excessive alcohol consumption, means that he does not fear being recalled for the impact that this health condition can have. Michael has seen this as a positive change and one that has made his experience on probation on this occasion more positive. However, the changes that

have occurred could also be underpinned by the idea of probation having such high targets that they are required to meet, that recalls, and breaches are not favourable. Michael has been open in that he still misuses alcohol, and that his offence was alcohol-related, therefore heightening his chance of re-offending. On this basis, it can be argued that more lenient policies in place due to workload is not necessarily ideal.

Max has also benefitted from more lenient processes, as the support he receives from his probation officer is predominantly remote. Despite this, in his interview, Max has explained how he has extremely valued the support he receives from his probation officer for both his alcohol use and offending. Max was convicted of fraud, and since his conviction his existing alcohol use increased severely. Due to working in the finance industry, he lost both his job and his credentials, alongside all his close relationships. He has therefore explained how this left him lonely and turning to alcohol more to cope. For Max, the positive support he has received from his probation officer, being the only constant in his present life has left him fearing losing this support when his suspended sentence ends:

"Can I be honest, the only thing I'm not looking forward to, see at the moment now, I am on a voluntary, I don't have to go and see him, and he doesn't have to come and see me, because it was only a twelve month compulsory order, but it was a two-year suspended sentence, so this year is voluntary, but [my probation officer] won't leave me, because he knows I haven't got any other form of support. So, what I am dreading, is is when my time, in the next six months, for [my probation officer] to say to me, I can't see you anymore, and that's going to really fuck me up, if I haven't got something else in place, so I've got to get my shit together, and make sure it happens".

Max has highlighted how valuable the support he has received from his probation officer is, and that he is thankful that his probation officer has continued to see him for the length of his suspended sentence, rather than simply the compulsory time frame. He has explained how the only thing he is fearful of is no longer being able to receive support from his probation officer. This reinforces the lack of support that Max has access to outside of probation. Both his offence, and alcohol use have impacted the relationships that he had prior and therefore he has resulted in relying on his probation officer instead. This shows the importance of strong social ties that are separate to probation. Furthermore, it is worth noting that although Max's

opinion is complementary to the work of probation officers, this in itself can be perceived to add another level of pressure, as if support in other ways is not found after leaving probation, it may lead to a negative light being presented on probation, and the potential of that person who has left reoffending due to lack of guidance.

4.3.2.1 Discussion – Support from Probation Officers Subtheme

This subtheme focused on the support service users on probation experience of probation officers. Participants provided their perspectives on how they found the support they received on probation. There were a variety of viewpoints, of which participants gave ideas of what types of approaches were beneficial for them. When analysing this subtheme, a focus on comparing the service user experience and view, in line with the pressures on probation staff was taken.

Sharon has shared how she appreciates the counselling approach presented to her by her probation officer and the therapeutic nature of the groups she has been directed to go to. These approaches have led her to have a positive view of the support she has received on probation. This is fitting with Epperson et al (2020) who found that probation service users were often supportive of a therapeutic approach, and the caring and collaborative nature shown by probation officers through these interactions. Positive working relationships, sometimes defined as a therapeutic relationship (Lambert and Barley, 2001), are considered to be the client and therapist working together in a collaborative way, which is a significant aspect needed when working with service users (Elvins and Greena, 2008). Consistently positive treatment outcomes have been found within the field of psychotherapy when looking at therapeutic relationships between therapist and client (Martin et al, 2000; Stewart and Picheca, 2001). Similarly, a therapeutic relationship has been found to be a key contributing factor in someone with an offending history positively changing (Rex, 1999; Dowden and Andrews, 2004; Rossa et al, 2008). A therapeutic relationship between probation officers and service users has been seen as particularly important in improving mental health and criminal justice outcomes for those with serious mental illness (Epperson et al, 2020). However, for this to occur, it is important for the time and space required to be available to the probation officers.

Not all participants were happy with the methods used by probation more generally, with Diane not supportive of the external programmes she was required to attend. Diane has differing levels of support needs to Sharon, which have not been able to be met directly by her probation officer, due to the volume of their caseloads. This has been a direct response to the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' programme, whereby a significant deterioration of the delivery of probation services was seen (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2014). One of the key issues found was excessive workloads across the probation service, including CRCs, which as a result had a corrosive impact on service users and staff (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2014; Burrell, 2022). Although the academic literature remains limited, there is evidence to show that lower probation caseloads positively reduce rates of reoffending (Fox et al, 2022). Whereas excessive case and workloads resulted in a decrease in the level and quality of supervision provided to service users, in addition to a reduction in the health and wellbeing of staff (Ball et al, 2021; Burrell, 2022). As such, if caseloads were lower, more intense probation officer support could have been given to Diane, rather than the outsourcing of some of that support, which in turn may have improved her feelings about probation. Diane's case was also more difficult, as although her offence was classed as alcohol-related, the treatment requirement she was placed on was a Rehabilitation Activity Requirement and not an Alcohol Treatment Requirement, therefore adding a further level of difficulty to her case for her probation officer.

Overall, as seen by Max, service user's generally have a positive relationship with their direct probation officer. It is often the external factors to that relationship, or the challenges placed on the probation officer, that have led to negative points by service users. A strong supportive and collaborative relationship between probation officers and service users is important for positive outcomes to derive (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2023). Service users can feel a sense of loyalty to their probation officer, preventing them from wanting to violate their probation conditions and making it so that they are more likely to be inclined to make a positive change, due to them being able to express their needs to a probation officer that they feel is reasonable, knowledgeable, and empathic (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2023). The above development in approach has been noted by Michael who argues that his experience on probation this time has been better than a decade ago, due to the increase in leniency shown. It highlights the importance of treating service users as human beings with different needs, particularly in scenarios where previously, recalls would automatically have been used. For example, when supporting service users with alcohol misuse problems, there may be health

reasons, such as stomach issues, that require probation staff to show leniency towards them when it comes to attending appointments.

Although on the whole positive discussions have been had regarding the probation officer and service user relationship, Max has noted how due to his experience, he does fear losing the support post his community sentence completion. This at one end places more pressure on probation officers to try and ensure that service users are in a positive place upon their discharge, but also means there is a place in time where service users who are not seen as a risk whilst on probation, may become at risk because they no longer have the support of their probation officer. This is particularly difficult for alcohol-related offenders as the clarity on support for alcohol is not as clear, and the risk of relapse is high, as seen by the number of service users interviewed who spoken who have returned to alcohol use after stopping for a period of time.

4.4 Recovering from Alcohol Use

The final section to discuss is Recovering from Substance use, which will be divided into three subthemes names Motivation, Abstinence and External Agencies. The service users interviewed for this research project either have in the past, or were currently recovering from substance use, whilst being supported by the probation service. This theme discusses participants experiences with the support they receive towards their substance use recovery and how effective it is.

4.4.1 Motivation

Motivation for recovering from alcohol use has been a key subtheme to come out of the interviews with service users and will therefore be the first theme to be considered. Links to family, whether that be through support or losing that access, as well as having support from probation services was discussed by many participants in terms of supporting or decreasing motivation. The impact that accessibility to support and alternative activities, including the locality of these has been noted by participants to affect their motivation for change. Additionally, some other factors that were discussed were employment, mental health and age, and the role they can play in motivating service users to reduce or abstain from alcohol use. Some participants also shared thoughts on other ways that could better support their motivation for change in terms of substance use.

To start, Adrian has shared the impact that losing access to his children has had on his motivation for stopping alcohol use:

"To get to see my kids again, because what she's told me is, as long as I am alcohol free for a certain length of time, then I can start seeing my kids again and at that point it was like well no, it's got to stop".

Adrian has highlighted how is alcohol use has resulted in not being able to see his children. Adrian has noted how the ultimatum given to him by the mother of his children, which was to abstain from alcohol use or not see his children, was the key driver in him deciding to stop using alcohol. For Adrian, seeing his children is more important than continuing his alcohol misuse and therefore he has made the decision to stop misusing alcohol. This highlights the importance that family ties can have, particularly regarding access to children, for motivating alcohol reduction or abstinence.

Like Adrian, Michael has highlighted how the desire to be back in his children's life has supported his decision to stop using alcohol:

"Yeah, that was it, yeah I just want to be, you know, I think I just want to be back with all my kids, and back to my living my normal life, I think that's what life's been like, I spiral out of control, and I hope in the future I don't have any of these issues, with alcohol, even weed, I'm hoping to come off that real quick soon. I've been doing it for too long, I'm getting bored of it ... I think once erm, once I get my mental health sorted and erm, you know a permanent place of living, a stable roof, financially stable, getting my kids back round me, all them targets need to be met, because it erm, I've just lost myself".

Michael has expressed how his motivation to change has come from wanting to be back with his children. He explains how he is ready to be back living a normal life, which he suggests involves being with his children, and not misusing substances, including alcohol. Michael is currently struggling to stop his alcohol use; however, it shows that his future goal and what is motivating him is family ties. Michael also recognises what is required for the future that he seeks to occur. He therefore also seeks to stop misusing alcohol so that he can have stability

with his finances and housing, which will allow him to have his children round.

Although family ties and links to significant others can help positively decrease substance use, some service users highlighted how it can also have the opposing affect. For example, both Diane and Sharon have been impacted in this way by domestic violence. Although Sharon expresses that her partner being domestically violent is no longer an issue in her relationship due to him being in recovery for his substance use, she has also shared how it was the domestic violence towards her by her partner that led her to taking substances to cope with the pain.

Diane on the other hand voices how she stopped using substances previously, but it is her current partner who forced her back on to them:

"I came clean [from alcohol] years ago and was clean on heroin for 16 years and then I met that man that you just seen sitting out there [in the reception area of the probation office], and that was it, full on control again, and he just fucked me up and I'm back to square one again".

Diane has noted how the control and domestic violence she is facing by her partner has caused her to be back using substances, including alcohol use. In her interview, Diane highlights how the control her partner has is extreme, and that any involvement she has with probation, he is present in some way. This was shown by him being in the reception room during the time of her visit. Diane explains how ties to those with close access to you can impact a person's ability to act on their motivation to stop using substances. Diane has highlighted that she has a desire to abstain from alcohol use, but the control she is under by her partner is preventing that from occurring. She has acknowledged that she was able to abstain from alcohol for a long time previously, but this new relationship has resulted in her relapsing. This reinforces that the process to recovery for those who have, or are, misusing alcohol is not smooth.

An alternative external factor that participants discussed was support from probation services. Max has explained how the rules of probation support, in line with his probation officer's approach, impacted his recovery from substance use journey:

"Oh without question, without question, [my probation officer] supported me ... [when] he came round and I was drunk, and he was like alright I'm going, and he was really pissed off at me, but it was an afternoon appointment, and I could tell he was really pissed off with me, but in a nice way. You know he was looking forward to seeing me, and helping and supporting me, and there I was pissed, so I spoke to him the next day and apologised, and he said, I'm not going to speak to you, or deal with you, if you've had a drink, those are the rules, so if you want my help and support, which I did, I really wanted it, and I really needed it. He said if you want my help and support, you can't drink before you meet me, and that was the rules".

Max explains how his probation officer taking a 'tough love' approach and requiring him to ensure that he had not drank alcohol in order to meet with his probation officer, and in turn to receive support from probation, helped Max reduce his alcohol consumption. Max explained how his probation officer was clear with him that if he was drunk, he was not able to meet him. His probation officer also ensured he enforced this rule and therefore when Max was drunk, his probation officer would show that he was not impressed and would leave the meeting. This approach helped Max realise how motivated he was to reduce his alcohol misuse and that the support from probation was important for that to occur.

This approach however would not work if the service user themselves did not have the motivation to change. Simon has noted that when someone is actively using substances, they are likely to not recognise when support is being given, and as such do not have it act as a motivation for change:

"I'm gonna be blunt, I used to think that they were all a bunch of dickheads, but no it is not that, it was me that was the dickhead before, so ... yeah, like, I can talk to them you know, they've been really supportive of what I've done, do you know what I mean, they've been like, not like supportive like, but you know like words of encouragement .. and it's just got me thinking, drugs were never the issue, drugs were never the issue, drugs have never been the issue, they've been a solution to stop me feeling, and feeling all that stuff that people go through, but now I've got an understanding of that, I hope it's never a problem again, do you know what I mean. Yeah, yeah, but yeah, I'm really grateful for them do you know what I mean".

Simon goes on to recognise how he initially had negative opinions about probation and the support that was being offered to him. The use of derogatory language to describe the probation staff reinforces the distaste he previously had, and potentially the narrative that many service users within that stage of the process have. He acknowledges how this mindset, alongside not recognising that probation was trying to support him, was what prevented him from being motivated. Since then, Simon has recognised that the probation officers have worked with the resources that are available to them to provide support. He notes how their support has helped him recognise that he was using alcohol as a coping mechanism, and that by understanding his behaviour, he is now motivated to not allow this to happen again.

Another factor that has been established from the interviews that is fitting under motivation is the accessibility to support for service users. A clear example is presented by Adrian:

".. my first probation [officer], instead of me having to travel all the way down here, he used to come from here [the probation officer] and used to do home visits. He said because it was easier, but ... I think that was an excuse because I was late. It was always late on Friday afternoon, late Friday afternoon, do the interview and then go home and then go to the pub and then obviously I ... that was with my first lot and then I reoffended and broke the restraining order, because my wife has got a restraining order out on me. I had to go back to court for that, and then they extended the probation and gave me a bigger fine. He said because there is not a lot, he said sending you to prison is not going to do anything is it, because it literally was because the situation".

Adrian has highlighted that accessibility to probation support has played a large role in his journey. By his probation officer visiting him, particularly with him being physically disabled, has made the process a lot easier for him. He also highlights that he respects probation officers who are considerate of issues such as lateness, when breaches could occur, suggesting that this sort of behaviour is considered helpful and supports a continued motivation for change. By reiterating the 'late Friday afternoon', Adrian highlighted that this was a particularly inconvenient time and day for him in terms of his drinking. He has suggested that this time and day exacerbated his chances of drinking, due to the social norms of drinking at the pub on a Friday evening. Adrian highlighted that despite him reoffending, which could have resulted in him going to prison, his probation officer recognised that it is

not until his mentality changed that desistance would occur, and that gaining a motivation for change would outweigh punishment.

The challenges that can come with the travel and time expectations of probation was noted by Leanne. Leanne explains how going to the probation office, and court appearances added pressure regarding time off from her job:

"So erm, obviously I had to get from Burton where I live, to Derby ... for a certain time ... so under time pressure, without a car, and also I work full-time and I was trying to limit the amount of time that I had to take of work, because I really, whilst my headteacher is fully aware of everything, and my line manager is also fully aware, I felt I really didn't want it to impact my work anymore than it absolutely had to. Of course, I had to take the first day off to appear in court, and I pleaded guilty".

Leanne has a motivation to stay on track and knows the impact that her crime and probation needs could have on her employment if she has too much time off. Leanne works in a field where having regular time off can be difficult, and although Leanne's employers are understanding, a person working in the same field but for a different employer may not have been as supported. Leanne highlighted how her offence being drink-driving led to her losing her license, and therefore relying on public transport. This was particularly difficult for her as in her interview, she noted how the locations she was required to travel to were not close. This highlights how travelling to certain locations, modes of transport, times of day, and taking time off work, can impact employment for service users on probation. This can be particularly key when discussing individuals who have misused or are misusing alcohol, due to loss of the use of a car and/or license.

In contrast, William has noted how he has tried alternative activities such as programmes, however for him, age was the key motivation for him to stop misusing alcohol:

"No, like, I've done programmes before and I always tell myself, yeah I'm going to stop and then I'd just tell myself ah I'm young, this is what people would do, and that was my justification for it and then after the last offence I just thought I'm nearly 30, I'm not a kid anymore, I've got to grow up and I just thought, if I, if I never drink again, I can never get in that situation where I'm just like, ah I'll just have one more, one more won't hurt, because,

sorry, erm that was always my justification for it, oh I'll have one more, I can't wait. I can't use that anymore, if I don't drink, I know I'll never get into that situation anymore".

William is highlighting how alcohol consumption has links to youth culture and can be used as a justification for some to continue drinking. He acknowledges that he used the excuse of being young to justify his actions, and therefore it was not until he started getting older that he decided he needed to change. He notes how when he reached his late 20's, he felt he was of an age where age could not be used as a reason to continue drinking, but instead was a sign that he should stop. William voiced that he needed to "*grow up*", suggesting he links maturity with being sober.

A final consideration for this subtheme comes from Sharon, who has shared her opinion on what more she feels could be done by probation to support service users to be motivated to stop misusing alcohol. For Sharon, a key issue has been the lack of lived experience for alcohol and drug use by those providing support:

"What I didn't like about it was that there was no one there to speak to, like there was peer mentors around, but there wasn't anyone around that I could relate to, someone who came from a background of [alcohol use]. I found that, I found that, if there was someone there, then it would be a lot more helpful .. I think like they need like erm a staff that, have some sort of lived experience, that are employed by the probation, to help those that come through probation with drug and drink problems".

Sharon feels that there needs to be more relatability in the staff team needed, which has potentially caused her to turn more towards outside agencies such as Alcoholics Anonymous for support with her alcohol use, rather than probation. Sharon is arguing that it is important for individuals to see someone who has gone through the same experience as them, reinforcing motivation. However, the demographic of staff working with probation and supporting service users tend to not have lived experiences with alcohol use, or substance use more generally. Sharon notes how it is important to have this knowledge as a way of promoting relatability. From Sharon's interview, it would also appear that this would help bring hope to service users who have or are misusing alcohol that there are employment opportunities available to them, and therefore encourage their motivation towards desistance and recovery.

4.4.1.1 Discussion - Motivation Subtheme

This subtheme focused on what motivates service users in their recovery from alcohol use. Participants provided varying answers to what has motivated them or what they feel would motivate them, such as family ties and finances. Some participants shared factors that have prevented them from either becoming or remaining motivated to stop misusing alcohol. There have also been ideas shared on how service users can be further motivated by probation to move away from alcohol use. The analysis of this subtheme centred on establishing the key factors that service users identified as motivations or drawbacks in their journey towards recovering from substance misuse, and how probation can best support service users in this journey.

For Adrian, family ties were a key driver in him wanting to move away from alcohol use. He was presented with an ultimatum by the mother of his children, whereby he was required to stop drinking to be able to see his children. The decision made by the mother can be supported by the literature on the basis of women with a male partner who has a substance misuse issue with alcohol having high levels of depression, anxiety and disruptions to work and social activities (Stanley, 2008; Tempier et al, 2006; Ray et al, 2009). Additionally, it can affect the children of a parent who misuses alcohol due to it causing a variety of psychological, behavioural, and school problems (Grekin et al, 2005; Chen and Weitzman, 2005). Furthermore, it can cause family relationships to deteriorate, health issues within offspring (Dube et al, 2001). As a response to this, studies have shown that spouses, parents, and children have been shown to promote decreased drinking (Flynn et al, 2006), with spouses being one of the greatest sources of pressures against alcohol consumption (Room et al, 1991). Social support from family and close social ties, has been noted to motivate substance misusing individuals to reduce their drinking down to non-hazardous levels, in order to improve their own life and family life (Lewis-Kulzer et al, 2023). Although these points are relevant to Adrian in some way, the literature tends to focus on scenarios where spouses are still together, rather than separated. In Adrian's scenario we are seeing how the pressure from an ex-partner, albeit the mother of his children, is providing the same effect that would occur if she were to be a current spouse.

For Max, his drive to not drink alcohol to excessive levels was more centred around the impact of his probation officer. He explained how the stern approach used by his probation officer, whereby his probation officer would not meet with him if he had drunk, made a difference to Max's drinking habits. This point is not something that has been greatly discussed in existing literature, yet it shows how the 'probation-service user' relationship can play a strong role in the motivation of service users to reduce their alcohol consumption. Max highlights how the probation officer in question was particularly frustrated with him when he once attended and was severely intoxicated. It could be suggested that this emotion-driven approach presented to Max had an impact on him wanting to stay sober for their meetings, as it showed that his probation officer truly cared and wanted to help but was unable to whilst Max was intoxicated. As such, the level of care shown by probation officers can clearly also play a role in the desire for some service users to reduce alcohol use.

Although the 'aging out' process has tended to be centred around an offender desisting from crime, William explained how it was this process that caused him to stop using alcohol. He argued that when he considered himself to be young, he could drink alcohol and have the excuse that it is linked to youth culture. However, when he entered his late 20's, he felt that this was not a justification he could give anymore, and therefore needed to stop misusing alcohol. Bachman et al (1997) noted that a common explanation for maturing out of alcohol misuse is young adults transitioning into new roles such as marriage, parenthood, and full-time employment. Although this may have been the case for William, there has been a general shift in alcohol consumption amongst young people, rejecting the premise that alcohol consumption is part of youth culture. England has seen sharp declines in young people drinking alcohol (Lee and Sher, 2018), with this figure being particularly high among males (Jackson and Sartor, 2016). Several potential reasons have been given for this decline, such as initiatives to target underage drinking (Sher et al, 2005) and alcohol being more expensive and therefore more difficult for young people to afford (Sher et al, 2005; Jackson et al, 2001; Lee et al, 2013).

In addition to motivation for stopping alcohol misuse, participants also shared factors that can prevent motivation. For Diane and Sharon, domestic violence has played a role in this, with Diane explaining how her partner has caused her to relapse and start misusing alcohol and other substances, as part of his control. Domestic violence has been noted to be significantly higher in those who misuse substances (Bhatt, 1998), a scenario that both Diane and Sharon's

partners have been in. Furthermore, substance misuse has also been noted to often be present in women, after they have been subject to intimate partner violence (Testa et al, 2003; Pallatino et al, 2021; Ogden et al, 2022), at higher rates than those who have not experienced intimate partner violence (Macy and Goodbourn, 2012), and with them also being at greater risk of their substance misuse transitioning to a substance use disorder (Mehr et al, 2023).

A further point that Sharon made that could explain why some service users are less likely to be motivated to desist from alcohol use, is due to the type of support they are receiving from probation. Sharon argues that there needs to be more staff with lived experience that she and other service users can relate to from a substance use perspective. The lack of this type of support is what has caused her to turn towards external agencies, in particular Alcoholics Anonymous. The probation service has clearly stated that they wish 'to lead by example in demonstrating the value and importance of employing people with convictions' by creating 'a system which fully integrates service user perspectives into all [they] do' (HM Prison and Probation Service, 2021a: 2). HM Prison and Probation Service (2021a:6) stated that '[p]eople who receive peer support often experience a positive impact on their attitude, engagement and behaviour - while peer led workers themselves can increase their positive self-identity, self-confidence and employability skills'. Although the literature shows supporting evidence towards the benefits of service users working with people with lived experiences, there is a lack of a focus on substance use specific, despite the strong correlation between substance use and probation service users. Whereas, for those who actively engage, peer support groups (whereby the facilitator has their own lived experience) that have a focus on substance use, have been shown to be a strong indicator of recovery (Majer, 1992; Donovan and Wells, 2007; Best and Lubman, 2012) and withstanding recovery (Vannicelli, 1978; Etheridge et al, 1999; Fiorentine and Hillhouse, 2000).

4.4.2 Abstinence and Harm Reduction

The second subtheme that will be discussed for recovering from substance use is abstinence and harm reduction. There has been a clear split between whether service users have approached their journey through harm reduction or abstinence. This section will discuss the ways that probation support service users try and encourage substance use reduction through harm reduction or abstinence, and how service users navigate their experience. Discussions of

harm reduction will be to start. Max has shared how his probation officer supported him through advising ways to go through harm reduction:

Max - "... [my probation officer] supported me when we first met obviously, and I was drinking vast amounts, and every time he saw me, every week, every time he saw me, he would ask about my alcohol, how much I've drunk, la de dah, and then he would say stop drinking vodka, and drink cider, it's better for you, it's less alcohol, you'll get bloated, and you won't drink it too much, and he kept saying that every time".

Max shows how probation officer support has been key to motivating him to reduce his alcohol consumption. His probation officer would discuss his alcohol use with him on a weekly basis, which in turn caused Max to have to reflect on how much he was consuming. This consistent care shown by his probation officer supported Max in to making changes to his alcohol consumption. He highlights how his probation officer advised him to make changes to the drinks he is consuming, by turning to alternatives that have less alcohol content in them. Once Max started making the changes, he would continue to be regularly checked on regarding his progress. By the impression Max has shown within his interviews, this consistent support and care gave him a reason to continue reducing his alcohol consumption as he did not want to disappoint his probation officer.

Like Max, harm reduction is what was presented to him by both the probation officers he has had. Adrian shared how he had mixed emotions of how the probation service and alcohol support worker supported his alcohol use:

"yeah and no, because they weren't really, [name of previous probation officer], when I was with , [name of previous probation officer], [name of previous probation officer] got me to cut down to four pints a day, so I stuck to that and then obviously with [current probation officer], I have [current probation officer]'s own personal number, I text her today and like I've not had a pint for nearly two months and she was just like, I'm so proud of you, well done. And it's like, that's what you need to hear ... with the alcohol support, it's just going in and talking to [probation, and they ask you] why do you always rely on it? Why? What are you drinking? Everyday? Erm because you always say no, and not being funny, you go around, cause I had it with the thingy, I had it with the drinks lady, stick to the four pints a day, well why can't you have Kaliber [alcohol] free [lager], and that's what I was doing in

the end. I was having me four pints and then having a couple of them, bottles or pints of the Kaliber or the Becks Blue which is alcohol free, and the problem was I was doing that in one, and then going to another pub and just carrying on as normal anyway".

This reinforces that the probation service sway towards harm reduction, and despite Adrian promoting the work of the probation service as positive, the fact that he said 'yes' and 'no' for alcohol support shows that more support could be received. The potential reason why Adrian has questioned the level of support is due to him not always agreeing that harm reduction is effective. For Adrian, he will mix alcohol free alternatives with alcoholic drinks, so that his overall volume is less, but alcohol is still consumed. Adrian believes that alcohol free alternatives may work for him when visiting one location, but it does not prevent him from continuing alcohol consumption to a high level in general. He has listened to the advice of his probation officers, and alcohol support worker, in terms of reducing the volume of alcohol he was having. However, this has not prevented him from attending numerous pubs within one drinking session and therefore drinking higher than safe levels of alcohol.

Leanne was also supported through harm reduction, but unlike Adrian, she has been an advocate for the results:

"[My alcohol support worker] was in total agreement because she went through the whole scenario of where she felt I was at with alcohol, and she said that she felt that was an acceptable halfway grounding, you know, that I'd stopped using it as a prop and a coping strategy".

For Leanne, the predominant support she experienced regarding her alcohol support was from her alcohol support worker, as part of her Alcohol Treatment Requirement. Initially Leanne had planned on abstinence, however after deciding to enable herself to drink alcohol during social events, she decided to follow a harm reduction approach. Her alcohol support worker reinforced the harm reduction approach and agreed that she felt Leanne was managing her alcohol use well. Leanne feels that as the challenges she was facing that led her to using alcohol as a coping strategy were not as severe, that she was able to maintain a good balance with alcohol and no longer misuse it, but rather enjoy it whilst socialising.

Diane noted how she was going through a harm reduction process; however, there are numerous factors that are preventing this from being successful:

"I am currently on a methadone programme, 65mls supervised, daily, but I am still misusing on top, I am still using crack, I am still using heroin, erm I smoked weed, for a lot of years. I drink, I'm reducing that but I drink. One thing I'll never give up, there's one thing I'll never give up, and that's weed. I'm prepared to give everything up but not that".

Diane recognises that she is a polydrug user, which means there are multiple drugs that she is using in conjunction with alcohol. Diane notes that she is using these substances as a self-coping mechanism for her mental health, and the challenges she is facing in life such as domestic violence. Diane is engaged in different style of harm reduction for both alcohol and illegal drugs, such as medical intervention for her illegal drug use. However, she is doing this at the same time as consuming illegal drugs and misusing alcohol. Diane has noted how she is hoping to stop misusing all substances, other than cannabis. Social norms related to cannabis, as well as the less physical impact that occurs on the body as a result of alcohol misuse, could play a factor in Diane feeling like this is a drug that she will not be able to give up. Her mindset however also shows that her end goal is abstinence, and that the harm reduction techniques she is using are not currently effective.

Like Diane, William has experienced harm reduction, however he has got to the point where he recognised that harm reduction was not for him. noted that it is not for everyone:

"Not for everyone, like not even the reduction model, I tried that like to reduce my intake, and I got to a point where, no one more, and then getting back up to the level, I was like no, abstinence works for me".

For William, a process that still enabled him to drink alcohol, even if it was lower percentage alcohol, still resulted in him drinking to excess levels, until his alcohol use returned to the same volume as previous. This shows that William sees full recovery from alcohol misuse as abstaining from it fully, rather than trying to manage it on a lower level. As such, abstinence was the approach that worked best for him and his substance use.

Although William argues that harm reduction may be effective for others, Sharon, on the other hand, is against harm reduction overall, and is more supportive of abstinence:

"It's to just maintain ya, but away from illicit street drugs or alcohol, do you know what I mean. So, I think that they are thinking of it as if they have enough Subutex or espranor, the new one, they won't use, but you do, it makes you want more and more and more and more, all the time. In honesty, controlling substance misuse is a myth, there's no such thing as controlling it, once you're on a drug, you're on it, and it's going to ruin your life in many ways. Abstinence is the way forward, not to touch a drink or drug, because we see drink as a drug, in Narcotics Anonymous, we class them both as the same, they cause the same chaos in your life".

For Sharon, she is against harm reduction as support for substance use, as the alternative drugs suggested are still addictive, and in some cases more addictive than the original drug. Sharon highlights how alcohol is also considered a drug, including within Narcotics Anonymous and therefore follows the same issues when discussing harm reduction. For example, although a drink with a lower alcohol percentage is advised during a harm reduction programme, it still has an alcohol content, and therefore is still addictive. She explains how she believes that there is no real way that an individual can control substance use, whether that be alcohol or illegal drugs, and that having them in your life simply ruins it in various ways. She also makes note to Narcotics Anonymous which is a group focused on abstinence, reinforcing the belief she has in abstinence rather than harm reduction.

Sharon goes on to explain in more detail how prescriptions for drugs that are given for people on harm reduction programmes, can be difficult, and even harder, for people to stop using:

I am clean five months; I am completely abstinent. I don't take any mind- or mood-altering drug now, and life is good, good things are happening, ... it's like a miracle, it's like, all I had to do was get clean, but it was so hard to get there, to get clean, because I was on the methadone script, it's a maintenance script for opioid users, and I was really stuck on that, and in the end, that was my drugs of choice in the end, because I'd stopped smoking the street drugs, and the methadone was the last thing in my system and I was like, how am I going to get rid of this, because the withdrawal off it is horrendous, and its long winded. Err, so yeah, for a long time I was baffled, like how the hell am I going to get off this stuff, but in the end,

by going to Narcotics Anonymous, and getting that hope from people, well so and so was on it and they're clean how many years, and erm, and also seeing people coming after me, come in to the fellowship, get clean, and sort of leave. I was like no, no, this can't happen (laughs), I need to get clean, like people are coming in after me and getting clean before me. So, no one day I just woke up, and I was sitting on my sofa, and it just hit me you know and I just made the decision, I'm not going to go to the chemist today. I'm not going to go and pick up that methadone, and I got through it.

Here, Sharon refers to abstinence to as the solution to problems with substance use, due to the addictive implications of harm reduction programmes. Although the prescribed drugs are legal, she explains how people are being issued, in some cases, equally addictive drugs, with the supplier of the drug being the chemist. This is a particularly powerful point she makes, as she is suggesting that part of the problem is engrained in a central part of society which is medical care in the form of chemists. It therefore highlights the experience that the chemist can have in a person not getting clean. At a different point in the interview, but in relation to harm reduction, Sharon mentioned that *"[she doesn't want to be addicted to a substance [but] it's like the chemist becomes your drug dealer"*. Sharon's comments suggest that she has had a negative experience with the chemist and substance use providers, due to their being too much of a focus on harm reduction, and not enough on abstinence. Sharon therefore went externally to receive support for her substance use. She notes that Narcotics Anonymous, and programmes of the sort that focus on abstinence, can be helpful in stopping people from misusing substances, including alcohol. For Sharon, this is due to it being helpful to spend time and share stories with those who are, or have been, in a similar situation regarding substance use.

Similarly, Adrian notes that he has had positive experiences taking an abstinence approach:

"I just cut it out completely. I've done it before, when I was young, well in my twenties, I was having a pint before I actually went into work, pints at lunch time and then pints on the way home and then go in the pub, so I know it would be bad, and that was with the cocaine as well. I had cut that down on my own, when I met my ex-wife, because she had two kids, so I cut that out completely on my own, detoxed myself and this time I've done the same thing, because I have got the willpower to do it … It's like if I go out this afternoon, it will be alcohol free, it will be Becks Blue or Kaliber or one of the alcohol-free ciders, Koppaberg,

Koppaberg do. I went to Derby one day and I was driving, I didn't know I was driving, but I just got stuck with the driving and my ex misses got absolutely battered and I was sat there drinking coke like yeah great and I was sat there behind the bar and said to the bloke, well have you got alcohol free and he was like well we've got Kaliber and Becks Blue, but we also do alcohol-free Koppaberg, so I was getting one of each, and it was like having a snake bite, but you weren't feeling it. You just didn't feel it and I drove all the way back from Derby to here and I'd have like 6-7 pints of it. You still felt like you were, because it was my wife's birthday when shed arranged to meet up with everybody, but you still felt like you were involved in it because I had a drink in my hand".

For Adrian, alcohol consumption and social settings have a clear link. As such, the large number of situations where he would be in contact with alcohol, alongside the family requirements, resulted in abstinence being the best fit way for him to manage his substance use. Although Adrian has noted that his experience is going well, it is also worth highlighting that this is not the first time he is working through abstinence, showing that he has fully relapsed at least once. Despite this, Adrian explains some of the ways that he manages his abstinence. For Adrian, he found that alcohol plays such a role in many social settings, that having an alcohol-free alternative is effective at helping to fit in with the social norms of drinking, whilst also enabling him to maintain his abstinence. The happiness expressed by Adrian regarding finding alcohol free options has also suggested that this has been a vital factor in enabling him to stay abstinent, whilst not feeling isolated from society.

4.4.2.1 Discussion – Abstinence and Harm Reduction Subtheme

Abstinence and harm reduction are both discussed within drug strategies for the United Kingdom, with the suggestion that approaches taken by probation officers will be adapted to the service user needs (HM Government, 2021). Most of the service users in this study have been presented with harm reduction as their main option, with differing perspectives and responses by service users to this. For Max, promoting him to take part in harm reduction was the approach taken by his probation officer. This took the form of being advised to consume alcohol that has lower percentages levels of alcoholic volume, and alcohol that causes more discomfort in the body such as bloating, with the aim of reducing the quantity he consumes. This approach was helpful for reducing Max's drinking volume, at a time where he may not have done so otherwise. Although for many, abstinence is considered the ideal goal for substance use, harm reduction through these forms can help those who lack motivation or

personal resources to reach that goal, whilst reducing the overall negative effects that alcohol consumption can have and lowering the risk of a dropout (Maremmani et al, 2015). Furthermore, some people prefer to undertake harm reduction rather than abstinence, even if they are aware of the risks, due to it being more flexible and non-stigmatising (Maremmani et al, 2015). This understanding of why people may choose harm reduction explains why despite Leanne initially looking to abstain from alcohol, she decided to focus on harm reduction due to it allowing flexibility for her to enjoy social drinks., such as at a Christmas meal with friends. Leanne was given the go ahead by her probation officer and substance support worker to focus on harm reduction rather than abstinence due to her no longer using alcohol as a coping strategy. There is numerous research evidence that highlights harm reduction to be an effective alternative to abstinence for those struggling with alcohol problems (Marlatt and Witkiewitz, 2010; Davis and Rosenberg, 2013; Vallance et al, 2016; Pauly et al, 2018; Stockwell et al, 2018). Rosenberg (1993) found that some people had better success taking a harm reduction approach to their drinking than they did with abstaining. Michael argued that he is supportive of harm reduction, albeit he prefers to monitor the process himself rather than through a specifically developed programme.

Despite the positives that have been noted about harm reduction, limited research has been conducted regarding those in a similar situation to Diane. Diane is a polydrug user, who is undertaking harm reduction for her alcohol use, however she is continuing to misuse illegal drugs. As such, further research needs to be undertaken regarding polydrug use and harm reduction when only using harm reduction for one drug, in this case being alcohol. Adrian is a further service user where harm reduction was presented to him, albeit he has decided to use harm reduction as the first stage with abstinence being the end goal. Gastfriend et al (2007) found that some people who misuse alcohol start off with harm reduction as their aim, and then progress to complete abstinence over time, with their overall goal for their alcohol use clearly changing. Taking an approach that enables people flexibility with their treatment goals such as harm reduction and abstinence, allows more sensitivity and compassion to the varying aspects of people's lives (Brown and Stewart, 2021).

In Adrian's situation, he found that there was a clear link between alcohol consumption and social settings. His lifestyle resulted in there being a large volume of occasions where he was in contact with alcohol, whereby deciding to focus on abstaining from alcohol was preferrable. This is understandable as it is found that individuals often drink more in social

settings than by themselves (Monk et al, 2020), with the volume of alcohol increasing more the larger the group size (Smit et al, 2015). Harm reduction was therefore not suitable for Adrian as he found himself still drinking large volumes, and therefore he argued that having an alcohol-free alternative was more effective at helping him to still participate in the social events without feeling ostracised, but also without consuming alcohol. In a similar situation to William harm reduction was not effective as him having the ability to still drink alcohol, even at lower percentage levels, resulted in him continuing to drink to excess. In line with this perspective, Burton and Sheron (2018) noted that any reductions in health-related harms by a reduction in alcohol level, is outweighed by the heightened risk of other health-related harms, such as cancer. The Department of Health (2016:4) goes as far as to say that "there is no level of regular drinking that can be considered as completely safe". Furthermore, Caballeria et al (2022) found that once NoLo (no and/or low alcohol percentage volume) drinks are consumed, craving and desires to drink increase; and the lower the alcohol volume percentage shown on the label, the higher the volume of consumption. This aligns with Sharon's perspective, as she argues that there is no way of controlling substance use. She claims that harm reduction programmes come with addictive implications and therefore abstinence is her preference regarding what is necessary as an end goal. Her support for abstinence-based programmes, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, has been supported by the literature that found that Alcoholics Anonymous is the most effective path to abstaining from alcohol (Kelly et al, 2020).

4.4.3 External agencies (in-house needed)

The third subtheme to be considered under substance use, is the need for external agencies to be brought in-house. Participants shared their views and experiences of external agencies who are responsible for providing support for substance use, including agencies that are specifically linked to the probation service, and organisations and charities that are completely external. In these discussions, participants reflected on the value and level of support provided by these services. Further to this, feelings regarding the lack of in-house support, and effectiveness of agencies that work alongside the probation service were shared. Participants have shared mixed experiences and emotions regarding alcohol support workers.

Max initially had a positive relationship with his alcohol support worker. This is an experience he shared with Leanne, who was happy with her experience. However, once his initial alcohol support worker was changed, he like others, had a decline in his experience:

"Err, it did help me, I had erm, when I was at One Recovery, I had an amazing keyworker, and we really connected, he was very direct, very supportive, very intelligent, I could see what he was doing, I didn't tell him about my qualifications, but I could just see what he was doing, and he was good at it, okay, and then he left and got promotion and went to another unit. Then it all went downhill from there because, because erm, I got another keyworker that I didn't connect with, so the service didn't work for me, and then I moved, and I had to change all services again, so I'm now with [new organisation], of whom I've not met yet. So, I moved in December, we are now in June, and we've been dumped by our CPN, our psychiatrist, our alcohol recovery, everything, we've been dumped, completely dumped, from December and we are now in June, and we still haven't seen an alcohol worker, or a, or a mental health support worker, we haven't seen anybody, and we are now in June".

For Max, he highlighted how his first experience with an alcohol support worker was positive, due to them taking a direct and supportive approach. Max described this particular alcohol worker as very intelligent, which is a characteristic that Max believes of himself, due to the qualifications he himself has achieved. This shows that he responds well to individuals that he can relate to, which likely played a part in him responding well to his first alcohol support worker. However, Max did not have positive comments to say about the person he was assigned after his initial alcohol support worker left and continued this negativity when explaining how due to a house move, he also changed services to receive alcohol support, of which his new service has not been supportive. As such, Max has noted how his experience with substance use support has been both positively and negatively impacted by the individual assigned to provide the support, and the organisation who was issuing it. It shows that there is a difference in the quality of the services for treatment providers, and how these issues with treatment providers can in turn put more pressure on probation staff to fill the gap. It also however shows how relatability plays a part in how well service users connect with those delivering support, and how lack of consistency can also have a negative impact on the nature and result of the care received.

In his interview, William explained how a large part of the issue was the overreliance of the probation service to outsource the support. This has resulted in many participants sharing the view that they have had a negative experience regarding external alcohol support. For example, Adrian has highlighted that he has positive interactions with the probation service, however, he has not been pleased with the alcohol rehabilitation support provided by the charity that is subcontracted out by the probation service:

"I was going to go through [name of organisation] in town, I did, I erm, ... I didn't like him, and I thought I can do this myself, so all I've been living on is, I've been eating, and I've been drinking Aldi's own water and its flavoured and its lovely".

Adrian was directed to an organisation that works alongside probation specifically for alcohol support. For Adrian, he did not connect well with the person he was assigned at the external agency, nor did he feel the support they were trying to provide effective. As such, after attending he decided that the support being provided was not any more beneficial than what he could do himself to support his alcohol misuse. In his interview Adrian has shared positive opinions regarding his probation officers and the support they have provided for alcohol use. This suggests there is a link between the familiarity of where the support is being provided, as well as the consistency and quality of support.

Similarly, Diane has shared numerous thoughts regarding her experience with an external substance use support charity that has been allocated to her by probation for her alcohol use:

"[Name of charity]? Where do you want me to start? Right from the beginning, right I'll tell you about poxy [name of charity] service. It's not as good as it makes out to be, I've been there how many months. All in all, I've been with [name of charity] about eight months. No, it isn't it will be coming up to a year, 19th June it will be a year, that I've been with [name of charity] and since I've been with [name of charity], I have seen [counting on hands] one, two, three, four, five, six different key workers, and one of those key workers I have only ever had one appointment with. Now, my new key worker, I couldn't tell you who the toss it is, I have not a clue. I don't even know. Not even my probation officer knows who my key worker is. So, all these appointments that I am supposed to have once a week, where is the help and support? Where is my help and support with my recovery?".

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Diane explains how she has been assigned to the external substance user charity for close to a year, but despite this, she has not had a consistent level of support. Diane is clearly showing distress at this point, with the use of rhetorical questions highlighting that she is in some way questioning what the external substance use charity have done to support her. It is clear that there are some issues with external treatment agencies, and that Diane does not feel supported. Diane has explained that she has had six different key workers over the space of a year, and despite this, has only had an appointment with one. She also expresses how the lack of consistency has resulted in her not actually knowing who her latest key worker is. This is despite the fact that she is supposed to see her key worker at the charity once a week. The aspect of a high turnover is really impacting the service that the substance use support charity are able to deliver. It is clear that Diane does want the support, and wants to reduce or stop her substance use, but that she is not receiving the support she needs.

Diane has been in the criminal justice system before and therefore has had previous experiences with support charities. She comments on how she feels the process has changed in a negative way to before:

"No, it's not, the service has gone downhill quite badly just lately, it is a joke. They used to have one full time worker, for here, but now, they've not got anything, but they keep sending me letters out, saying I've missed this appointment, I've missed that appointment, but when you get down there it's like 'oh sorry, your key worker is not here today', but they're not your key worker, you've got a new key worker. Why have I not been informed?".

This demonstrates that lack of funding has had a massive impact on services. The term "*lately*" suggests that Diane has been through this process in the past, and therefore can make a judgement on comparisons. Diane highlights that when there was a treatment provider internal to the service, then this was much more effective for her. She explains how she keeps receiving letters about not attending appointments, but when she visits the external agency that her key worker is not present. This made it difficult for her to try and determine a routine with her key workers. She has noted that the external agencies are not taking into consideration some of the hectic lifestyles that can be present within those who are using substances including alcohol, but also that their own organisation skills are flawed. Diane has explained within her interview that she has been successful at abstaining from alcohol in the past, which reinforces how having an internal alcohol support worker that was based within

probation is effective. This also resolves the issues that can be faced with service users trying to manage various appointments at different places and on different days.

As such, Diane states that most of the support she receives for her alcohol use is from her probation officer, rather than the agencies specifically assigned to support substance use:

"[My probation officer] is the only support that I got at the moment regarding my recovery. I mean I see the doctor once in a blue moon at [name of charity], but yeah regarding my support, for [substance use], it's discussed [with my probation officer], because he is the only constant support that I've got at the minute, regarding anything like that and my probation, because I don't have, a regular, a regular person at [name of charity] to go and see. I haven't got a keyworker. Oh, I have, but I don't know who it is, and I've never had an appointment with 'em".

Due to the issues Diane has faced with not seeing a key person within the substance use charity, that was assigned to her by the probation service, she has relied on her probation officer for support with her alcohol use. Diane has praised the probation service, and particularly her probation officer, regarding the support that they personally provide. Diane has explained how the consistency that she has with her probation officer means that she goes to him for issues regarding both her recovery and desistance. This highlights that her probation officer goes above their usual duties to provide this extra support, but also that consistency with a key person is a necessary part of support for alcohol use.

For Sharon, the focus should be on relatability, when discussing effective substance use programmes:

"I will go to Narcotics Anonymous for the rest of my life to keep my head sane. It is the magic of like-minded people being there, and being able to talk to them, and they're clean. If you want guidance or advice, you have a sponsor, so you can ring them, so if you ever come across some sort of hurdle in your life, or something you're not managing with, and your feelings are overwhelming, you can say, this is what I'm going through, and they can help you".

Sharon highlights how not all external support for alcohol use lacks effectiveness, but rather it is the type of support that is provided from external agencies that matters. She argues that a service such as Narcotics Anonymous where you are surrounded by people who have or are going through the same experiences as themselves, in terms of misusing substances, including alcohol, are more beneficial. She argues that this is due to service users being able to relate to these individuals better, and also being able to seek guidance and advice from people who know what they are going through.

4.4.3.1 Discussion - External agencies (in-house needed) Subtheme

The final subtheme for recovering from substance use is regarding the use of external agencies to deliver support for substance use, and associated issues such as mental health problems. With this subtheme it was determined that there although there were similarities between the service users in this project's feelings of discontent, and the findings of existing literature, there were differences regarding the use of external agencies to provide substance use support. Service users have shared their views regarding the volume, quality, and variation of support that they have received for their substance use, by external agencies referred to them by probation. They have also discussed a need for more streamlined internal support, for both substance use and mental health provision.

Many of the service users shared their perspectives on how the support they have been provided with for substance use by external agencies either not being too standard, or lacking consistency. For Max, he noted that the type of support for alcohol provision was not consistent, with some charities and voluntary agencies delivering a better quality of service than others. Reflecting on this perspective from Max, relying on external agencies, without a set base mark has caused some service users to be at a disadvantage. Bringing the support in-house, and therefore working towards the same expectations may reduce some of the inconsistencies that Max has discussed. Adrian and Diane have also shared their views regarding external agencies being used for substance use support. For Adrian, he decided that due to the negative experience he had with the external agency he was referred to, that he would focus on recovering from substance use by himself. Diane supports Max's narrative regarding issues with consistency. She has been given many different keyworkers by the external agency she was assigned for her substance use support, of which her latest key worker she had only met once, despite an initial expectation to meet with them once a week.

She also highlighted the lack of connectivity between probation and her substance use provider, with her probation officer not knowing who her key worker is. A key point raised by Diane is how the probation support changed, with beforehand their being an assigned worker that worked directly with the probation team she is supported with, but that was no longer the case. A clear issue raised here is the lack of consistency, which appears to come from either the variety of external agencies used for substance use support, and the lack of connection between these agencies and probation. These flaws are not isolated to alcohol support but are also present within support for those with a drug problem, with findings by HM Inspectorate (2021h) showing that few people on probation are receiving support for drug misuse, and of those referred for support, the quality of the service they are receiving is not up to standard. A study looking at 40,000 records from the Ministry of Justice's probation case management system of people sentenced to an ATR or DRR between August 2018 and March 2022, found that under half those on an ATR engaged with treatment services, of which most of that engagement occurs within the first three weeks (Ministry of Justice and Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2023). The study concluded that more work was required to enhance the links between probation and specialist addiction treatment services (Ministry of Justice and Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2023). By having the same points to which all parties who are providing support for substance use are expected to adhere to, this could possibly limit some of the issues raised. This could potentially be via integrating the external agencies into probation more effectively, and ensuring clear and thorough communication, or by bringing the services in-house in full, thereby making it easier to enforce a set standard.

William voiced how he has limited time with his probation officer specifically, and that despite the positive relationship he has with them, most of the support is outsourced. As such the level of outsourcing has not been positively received by William, who felt more in-housework would be beneficial. Although Sharon was not supportive of the experience, she had with the charity she was referred to by probation specifically, Sharon has been a strong supporter of the external agencies Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous. What this does suggest is that more variation in the type of provision promoted by probation, and/or connected on a contractual basis to probation, is needed. Service users tended to note that harm reduction had a strong theme in the types of support that is designed by external agencies that work with probation, and therefore connecting more with abstinence-based programmes may also be beneficial. This has been reinforced by recent studies that have

found that involvement in Alcoholics Anonymous plays a beneficial role in reducing alcohol consumption and abstaining, as well as positively relating to existential well-being, and in turn subjective wellbeing (Wnuk, 2022).

Despite the views of the above service users, the existing literature and practice are supportive of continuing external agency involvement. Post the Transforming Rehabilitation programme the decision to continue sourcing "all key services, such as Unpaid Work, Accredited Programmes, and other resettlement and rehabilitative interventions from the private and voluntary sector markets [was made]" (Ministry of Justice, 2019c:8). For resettlement and rehabilitative interventions specifically, the dynamic framework has been created; a system which allows approved organisations to bid for/apply for contracts and/or grants to deliver these interventions (Maidment, 2023). Amid the Transforming Rehabilitation programme, charities have noted that they have had little involvement in probation compared to the past, with the Chief Inspector of Probation noting that CRCs have not provided a sufficient range of services due to financial difficulty (Preston, 2018). It has further been argued that charities often deliver a more expansive service to the service users they support, than they are actually paid for (Preston, 2018). As such, this viewpoint contradicts the comments of many service users in this study who have critiqued their experience with external agencies. It clearly highlights however that there is a disconnect between the amount of funding external agencies are receiving to deliver services, and the quality of service that agencies are able to deliver with that funding. It suggests that a wider range of services need to be funded to support service users, a greater number of practitioners need to be available to deliver the service, and more coherence with probation is necessary.

4.5 Chapter Conclusions

The three themes of Factors influencing Alcohol Use, Desisting from Offending Behaviour, and Recovering from Alcohol Use were explored, resulting in several subthemes being found. Although participants had varied experiences and opinions, the main finding was that service users felt supported by their probation officer, but that they required better support for their alcohol use by substance use specific providers. This highlighted the depth of work being put in to support service users by the front-line probation staff, despite the financial implications that have caused a reduced volume of initiatives and a perceived lower quality of support by external agencies that provide substance use support services.

The first theme, Substance Use, has been shown through the subthemes of Mental Health and Social Settings and Legality. These subthemes demonstrated how participants experienced substance use, particularly through what increased their use of alcohol, and what barriers they felt were present to their recovery. In the subtheme of Mental Health, participants discussed how using alcohol negatively impacted their mental health, but also how their mental health reduced from using alcohol. For some misusing alcohol was a response to poor mental health, and for others, issues with their mental health developed after starting to misuse alcohol. Regardless of their pathway to poor mental health, participants agreed on the link to alcohol use, and the need for support. The second subtheme Social Settings and Legality highlighted how both the level of availability, and social acceptance, increased the chances of substance use occurring.

Due to the nature of the topic, it is understandable that the second theme of Desisting from Offending Behaviour was found. It was illustrated through the subthemes of Length of Time in the Criminal Justice System and Alternative Activities, and Support from Probation Officers. Length of Time in the Criminal Justice System and Alternative Activities focused on how the cycle of offending can lead to those who have offended entering a stage where they choose to desist. This subtheme also discussed how alternative activities such as consistent employment, and volunteering opportunities, can support the desistance process. The subtheme Support from Probation Officers showed how there is a general positive response to the work of probation officers on the ground, however adjustments have had to be made to their practice due to the pressures put on them.

The final theme presented, Recovering from Alcohol Use, was discussed within the three subthemes of Motivation, Abstinence and Harm Reduction, and External Agencies (in-house support needed). Within the subtheme Motivation, participants shared factors that would both support them in the journey towards and prevent them against recovery, with the amount of influence probation staff can have on some being an unexpected finding. For Abstinence and Harm Reduction, it appeared that harm reduction was the common theme in terms of what support probation tended to promote, with room to involve more abstinence-based organisations available. The final subtheme for External Agencies (in-house support needed) was particularly interesting, due to the literature promoting the use of external charities and voluntary organisations providing the support for substance use, but participants sharing that they have not always been happy with the service and seeking an in-house provider. This

highlighted the extra pressure that this is also placing on probation staff to cover the gaps present from issues with external support.

5. Chapter 5: Practitioners Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the findings from the practitioner interviews using Hermeneutic
Phenomenological analysis. These themes highlight the views and experiences of the
probation staff and substance use support workers who were working with service users to
reduce the risk of reoffending and substance misuse. Three main themes, with several
subthemes, have been determined from the interview data. These themes are barriers to
recovery, providing support for service users misusing substances and offending behaviour,
recovering from substance use and the changing nature of probation. For clarity, Table 4
below provides the themes, subthemes, and a description for each.

Table 4: Staff Interview Data Themes and Subthemes Theme

Theme	Subtheme
Barriers to Recovery	Mental Health
	Coping mechanism
Providing Support for Service Users Misusing Substances and Minimising Offending Behaviour	Service user motivation
	Treatment requirements
	Finances
The Changing Nature of Probation	High caseloads, targets, and lack of funding
	Division

5.2 Theme 1: Barriers to Recovery

This first theme to be discussed is barriers to recovery, through the two subthemes of mental
health and coping mechanism. Participants in these set of interviews either provided support
to service users as a drug and alcohol support worker or were probation officers that had
service users who misused alcohol on their caseload. Participants explain their experiences

working with service users who have or continue to misuse substances (particularly alcohol), explaining common factors that act as obstacles in their recovery journey.

5.2.1 Mental Health

Similar to the previous chapter, practitioners also discussed mental health in relation to alcohol use. Participants have specifically stated mental health or mentioned aspects that affect mental health when discussing experiences with the service users they support. The link between substance use and mental health has been considered amongst a variation of points, which will be discussed in this section such as there being a continuous cycle that service users go through, the impact of universal credit on their lives, and the first point that will be mentioned, the link to offending behaviour.

The first quote to discuss is from Mason, a probation officer in Staffordshire. Mason, who after mentioning that around half of the caseload he supports are misusing substances, also discusses the link between substance use, mental health, and offending behaviour:

"Err, I would say err, for my caseload, I would say it is around half. There is usually either one thing linked to it, so that's either drugs, alcohol, or mental health, something has occurred somewhere which is why they have been offending or why they have got into drugs or alcohol".

In his role as a probation officer, Mason has worked with many service users who currently or have misused substances, with around half his current caseload being in this situation. He has noted that in his experience substance use (either in the form of alcohol or illegal drugs), and mental health have links to the service users offending behaviour. He also notes how a service users mental health can also impact them entering in to misusing substances, which in turn may impact their offending behaviour. Mason argues that substance use, mental health, or both, are often linked to the justification behind the offending behaviour of service users on probation.

Similar to Mason, Daniel, who is a drug and alcohol worker from the West Midlands, noted the impact that mental health has on criminality, whilst also discussing the impact substance use can have on a person's mental health:

"Health, that would be up there, for one, that's what we deal with a lot, because obviously, impairment of health or should I say mental health through substances, that's going to be one when talking about, when we're talking more prolific factors, then that definitely impacts their criminality. People do what they normally wouldn't, and then they're here, with us".

Daniel works for a drug and alcohol support charity, of which a high number of his caseload are involved within the criminal justice system, either currently or previously. He explains how mental health problems, which can be exacerbated by substance use, for those people he has supported, often impact them entering criminality. He considers misusing substances alongside mental health problems to be one of the 'prolific' factors that leads people into criminality, and perhaps keeps them in criminality. In his interview he has highlighted the high volume of individuals misusing alcohol and therefore when he discusses substances, he is including alcohol use within this.

Alongside the impact that mental health and substance use can have on potentially increasing the chances of someone entering criminal activity and in turn the criminal justice system, most points raised by participants were regarding the challenges that come with providing support for those with mental health problems who are also misusing substances. For example, probation officer Sarah from the West Midlands, explained how a key barrier for not only misusing substances, but also for accessing support, is mental health. One of the key factors she mentioned was that medical referrals take a long time to come through for mental health support, and as such trying to provide support for the reason, they are misusing substances is also affected.

Other participants discussed the impact of service users being required to be clean from drugs before they are able to receive a mental health diagnosis. This is the case for both illegal drugs and alcohol use, as discussed by Mason:

"Err, so yeah, mental health, there is lots of local low-level things call IAPT, psychotherapy treatment things, that's like low mood interventions where they offer twelve sessions, but then if it is more of an issue or its more severe, there is a local clinics and local mental health teams. However, it can be quite difficult for those who have a drug or alcohol issue, you have to be err, addressing their alcohol first or addressing their drug use first, before we can see

them, or before we can offer them some support".

Mason has explained that there are support services available externally for low level and more severe mental health treatment. Although these resources are available however, when a service user requires a higher level of mental health support, but they also misuse substances, the ability to refer them becomes difficult. Mason explains how health issues are present among a high number of substance misusing clients, so he argues that to need them to be completely clean before being considered for mental health support is not realistic. It therefore reduces their opportunities for support. Mason explained how the issue is particularly prevalent when considering the type of drug that the service user is misusing, with those misusing mentally addictive drugs, including alcohol, being required to be clean.

Similarly, Zoe, a drug and alcohol worker within Staffordshire, gave an example of a service user she was supporting who was misusing alcohol, a physically addictive drug, and was also told that the service user needed to stop consuming alcohol before support could be provided for mental health:

"Health generally is pretty poor, because they don't really go to the doctors when they need to. If something is going on, they just medicate at home, with their drinking and drugs. Mental health is massively underreported, and very recently, I'd refer someone on to the mental health team, and they told my client that he would have had to have stopped drinking before they could address his mental health problems. It's a bit of a chicken and egg scenario".

Zoe has shared how there is a strong link between substance use and mental health, and therefore requiring service users to be substance free, regardless of whether the drug is physically or mentally addictive, before receiving mental health support is not necessarily helpful. Zoe highlights how this lack of external support due to a unrealistic request for the service user to be sober, causes them to self-medicate their mental health problems with further substance use. Zoe shows how this issue makes it difficult for her to provide the support necessary, as both the mental health and substance use challenges of her service users cannot be as effectively supported with this policy in place.

Probation officers from Staffordshire, Nina and Julia, both shared their distaste for the mental health support available, however their perspective is from the overuse of external support, rather than in house. In her interview Nina explained how this has been more of an issue since the introduction of CRCs, as a lot of resources have become external, more generic, and not as acute to the support that service users need, and therefore not as effective. Similarly, Nolan, a probation officer from the West Midlands, highlighted that there are services available, but he noted that the external nature of the support is a cause for concern:

"We can point them in the direction of counselling services, we don't have any on site, and that is the problem, we don't have a lot of it on site, there's counselling, there's bereavement, but it's kind of like, do you want us to contact them, do you want us to ring them, here's the number, do you want us to set it up, and they'll go yeah yeah yeah yeah, but it's getting them to go. Whereas if we had it, if we had a mental health worker or a counsellor on site, it's basically, right come to your appointment and you can go and see them, but when we are supposed to be signposting them to the agencies out in the community, we have no control about getting them there. Erm and 9 times out of 10, you might set up an appointment, but they just don't go, and it's the same with the mental health services, you might get them referred there, the mental health teams will write to them, they don't go, they'll write to them again, they don't go, and so they'll close it down. We can't force anyone to go to those appointments, we can only really force them to go to our appointments. So, if we could capture them when they come, hey you've come to see me today, brilliant, right here's a mental health worker, you've captured them, they are there. So ideally, you'd have a bit of a one stop shop in probation".

Nolan draws upon the issue of motivation of service users that are misusing substances and require mental health support. Although there are a lot of services available, of which service users may initially agree to do, the likelihood of them going is less due to it being an external service. With this approach, it often results in numerous appointments being organised and but being missed. This is issue spans across both substance use and mental health support, due to the external nature of the support. Nolan believes that by having everything on site at probation, and not within external agencies will help increase the engagement of service users with mental health and substance use provision. Nolan highlights how the only appointments that probation officers can force service users to go to is their appointments directly with probation. As such, having an internal provider for mental health and substance use

provision, means that the service user can be directly taken to the support they require after their probation appointment has finished.

Additionally, Nolan helps us to understand some of the aspects that can cause service users to have mental health and substance use problems, by drawing upon the chaotic nature of some service users lives:

".. there are always going to be that sort of 5% that don't care, erm, they won't engage, they won't talk, and they just do the bare minimum, or you get the odd nasty one, who you still have to treat fairly, but you're probably sort of watching them closer. And I try and be as relaxed as possible in regards to their attendance, because yes we are meant to sort of enforce all missed appointments and if there are two misses without a reasonable reason we should be breaching them, but when you've got people that are on heroin or crack, and they are waking up and having a drink, and they've got mental health problems and they've had trauma in the past etc, you can't expect these people to always be on time, to always think, oo I've got to get to probation, so I think on our team, you've got to be slightly more relaxed about that, you know there is plenty of I suppose you would class as normal people who turn up late all the time, erm miss appointments, and they don't get in to trouble, I think you've got to always bear in mind that probation isn't the most important thing for these people".

Nolan draws upon the fact that many people he supports have had trauma within the past that they are still managing. He notes that they are attending probation and possibly engaging in treatment, alongside misusing substances and facing mental health problems. It is therefore not considered realistic within Nolan's comments to expect these service users to put probation at the forefront of their mind, and therefore states that there needs to be an element of leniency when providing support. Although Nolan is taking this approach, it is not the rules that are enforced by management. Nolan is therefore suggesting that probation officers need to adapt their service to those who you are supporting as they often have chaotic lifestyles, but this does not match the requirements and targets of the CRC.

When discussing with participants about what is in place for service users with a mental health problem, Mental Health Treatment Requirements (MHTRs) was mentioned by some. Zoe helped explain what the MHTRs had been developed for:

"So recently there has been a new order put in place, that runs alongside the DRR, ATRs and it's a MHTR, which is a Mental Health Treatment Requirement, so that's very new on the scene, so we were kind of briefed on the fact that these were coming and the main focus, wouldn't be just their drugs and the alcohol, it would be their mental health issues, because we were getting quite a lot of clients that were suffering with mental health problems, and there was not much that we could do with them, so they've been created. They are based in the court and they are based in the CRC, and they address the mental health problem and will look at ways of helping them deal with, any kind of trauma and stress that they've been through previously, and then they will link into their own mental health role and put clients in for assessments and kind of further, more in-depth, treatments then we can actually access".

Zoe acknowledges how the introduction of MHTRs was a response to there being no clear mental health provision available for practitioners previously when trying to support service users with mental health problems. Zoe explains how MHTRs are designed to address the issue and find ways to support the service user to manage underlying links to the issue and refer them to necessary treatment where necessary. The explanation of what MHTRs can bring has been accepted by many participants, however the general consensus is that this support is being made available to the wrong category of service users with a mental health problem.

For example, Nolan expressed a detailed perspective on what he feels is lacking from MHTRs:

"I know the last 4-5 months, the courts, their seems to be a big push on the Mental Health Treatment Requirements, but even those aren't great because I think one of the mental health workers I spoke to, she said that they are not targeting people with the proper mental health problems, they are targeting people with the low level anxiety and depression, if they have anything more than that, which a lot of ours do, they say, well it has to be dealt with by the Community Mental Health Team, which I think is the wrong way round. For me I think we should be using this to tackle people who have got proper mental health problems, you know your schizophrenics etc, and push the resources on to those people, because pretty much yeah I'd say, I dunno but 99% of our offenders, will display some sort of depression or anxiety. Erm, I think it just comes with the territory really, they've all got these problems, you know, everyone does, everyone has a bit of depression and anxiety, so using the mental health

treatment requirements on those people I think is a bit of a waste. It should be targeted at people who have proper mental health problems and aren't in treatment because like I said, if the appointments are a court order, we can then enforce those, and in a sense make them access help. I just think they need more one stop shop places".

Nolan expresses how most service users within probation face hardships in relation to their mental health, however he argues that the level of mental health problem differs from low level such as depression and anxiety to higher risk such as schizophrenia. He notes how MHTRs are only given to service users with lower-level mental health problems, of which he does not see as a valid use. He also notes how most service users he supports have low-level mental health problems in the form of anxiety and depression, however it is those who have more severe problems he thinks that should be targeted. He states that MHTRs should be assigned to those who have higher risk mental health problems, and are not on treatment, as with MHTRs being court orders, it provides probation with the ability to enforce them. This may as a result increase the number of service users who successfully benefit from treatment.

This narrative of MHTRs being assigned to those with lower-level mental health problems has been reinforced by Zoe:

"I think it's more kind of low level, stress and anxiety, it seems like the more complex, mental health problems are just kind of still left to float about the system, and, and hope for the best really".

Despite Nolan working within probation directly, and Zoe working as a drug and alcohol support worker, they appear to share the same perspective regarding MHTRs not working to support higher risk mental health problems, and therefore leaving us without a solution for these individuals. It also reinforces that these practitioners tend to find that when they are working with a service user who misuses substances and has a mental health problem, that their it is unlikely that their mental health needs will be considered low level and therefore the provision they are provided requires more depth. Despite this, the support they have available to provide to medium-high risk mental health problems is not clear and relies on the practitioners working with these service users to hope that a solution is found.

5.2.1.1 Discussion - Mental Health Subtheme

The subtheme centred on the mental health of service users that practitioners support and how in conjunction with alcohol use, it impacts their offending behaviour, the types of support they have access to, and issues with accommodation. The analysis of this subtheme has subsequently looked at how practitioners feel these points impact service users experience and recovery.

As highlighted in the service users' chapter, substance use disorders have been noted to have strong links with mental health problems (Kim et al, 2020). Many academics have noted that there tends to be a trend between people in contact with probation and issues with social exclusion, deprivation, vulnerability, and high levels of health problems (Binswanger et al., 2016; Brooker et al, 2009; Brooker et al, 2012; Pari, et al, 2012). Brooker et al (2020) note that many people who are currently on an order that requires them to be supported by probation have at least one mental health disorder. However, a key factor within UK Criminal justice policy as a pathway out of offending has been improving health, including mental health (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). As such it is important to consider what the key challenges practitioners feel are present in terms of mental health within providing support to service users.

Mason and Daniel drew attention to links between substance use, mental health, and offending behaviour. Mason argues that mental health problems are often exacerbated by substance use, and in turn can lead to individuals entering criminality. Daniel develops from this arguing that substance use in conjunction with mental health problems is a key factor in people being involved with criminality and keeping them in criminality. Calhoun (2018) conducted a study that examined the initial factors that supported offenders with mental health problems entering criminality, of which they found mental health to not be a driving force. Despite this, there has been a clear acknowledgement made by the British Government that there is a disproportionate level of people with mental health problems that have been imprisoned (Home Office, 2006). This reinforces the point that it is the substance use and mental health dynamic that is linked to the offending behaviour. National Institute on Drug Abuse (2021) argue that substance use and mental health problems can share common risk factors, mental health problems may contribute to substance use, or substance use can play a contributing factor in mental health problems developing. If one of these pathways occurs and leads to a person both having a mental health problem and misusing substances, then it is

likely that it is the substance use aspect that exacerbates the chances. This is supported by the well-recognised link that academics have found between substance use and criminality (Peters et al, 2010).

A further issue that arose was by participants was around the barriers that come with supporting service users who are misusing substances whilst having a mental health problem. A key issue mentioned by Mason was the unrealistic need for service users who are misusing substances to be clean from these substances before they can receive a mental health diagnosis. Many academics have highlighted how mental health problems, and substance use disorders, come with substantial challenges of which often co-occur and share common risk factors (Whiteford et al, 2013; Carragher et al, 2016; Ciobanu et al, 2018). This reinforces the difficulty that is already faced by dual-diagnosis service users, of which the requirements highlighted by Mason further exacerbate this. The Recovery Partnership (2015) found that this is a common occurrence, as dual-diagnosis individuals often find it difficult to access the care that they need for both their mental health needs and their substance use needs. Furthermore, Darvishi et al (2015) explain how mental health and intoxication can cause difficulty with care being received.

Nolan drew attention to the fact that motivation for service users in this situation is even more difficult, and that although there are available services, the external nature of these services reduces the likelihood of them being accessed by service users who both misuse substances and have a mental health problem. Nolan suggests that on-site support would be more effective and reduce the number of missed appointments. It is worth noting that from the literature that has been observed, the point raised by Nolan has not been widely discussed. However, HM Inspectorate of Probation (2020a) have recognised that issues regarding provision do tend to be due to resources that are external to probation, with mental health and housing being the two most likely affected areas.

A further issue that has been mentioned by Nina, is the impact that lack of stable accommodation has on those with a dual diagnosis. She particularly notes how if someone is homeless, or without steady accommodation, then they may turn to substance use as a way of coping with the physical pressures, of which mental health issues can also be exacerbated. After looking nationally into people with severe and multiple disadvantage (substance use, homelessness, and criminal justice involvement), Bramley et al (2015) found that 55% had a

mental health problem that had been officially diagnosed, rising to 92% when self-reporting a mental health problem. Thomas (2021) highlights that people in these situations tend to be at a disadvantage care wise, due to services tending to focus on issues in isolation. This impacts probation due to the need to draw from variation of internal and external providers to meet service user's needs.

MHTRs have also been discussed by participants, with the key issue being raised by Nolan that they are only being used for low level mental health problems, and not the complex cases, which is what many of the service user's probation support have. It has therefore been suggested that MHTRs could have more of a valid use. NHS England (2024) state that MHTRs are for service users with mental health problems, such as anxiety, depression, dual-diagnosis, neurodiversity, personality disorder, social issues, and trauma. Brooker et al (2020) reported that MHTRs equate for less than 1% of all probation orders issued by the courts. Academics have found reasons such as lack of necessary guidance, limited understanding about who meets the criteria, delays with psychiatric reports, and lack of necessary service provision (Bradley, 2009; Khanom et al., 2009; Durcan, 2016; Scott and Moffatt, 2012). Although these factors support Nolan's claims, they have not been direct with the issue he has raised.

5.2.2 Coping Mechanism

Similar to when interviewing service users, the subtheme of coping mechanism has been established within the theme of service users and substance use. The practitioner participants highlighted the use and misuse of substances was a way of dealing with past and current trauma and issues. Although varying issues, some of the reasons to be discussed are mental health, and employment issues.

Sarah has drawn from her own experiences of supporting service users and given an example of someone in a position where they have their own rented property, but due to not getting extra financial support, they have fallen short of their payments, leading to financial issues. The impact of this on the individual then leads to them misusing substances to cope with the stress. Linked to this is the topic of homelessness, which Nina draws upon:

"Because if they are rough sleeping, they are going to be using drugs or alcohol to be out in the cold, so to fund their habit, they are having to commit crime, so it's just a vicious circle all the time.

Nina mentions how if a service user is homeless, and as a result sleeping on the streets, they often turn to alcohol or drugs to deal with those conditions. However, this can then result in them then committing crime as a way of funding their substance use, which in turn results in a negative cycle of events. In her interview, Nina has expressed the difficulty that practitioners feel when supporting service users in this situation, as when a service user is homeless, not only may they rely on substances more, but without a permanent address it can also be more difficult to refer them to relevant services for support, including registering them with a doctor.

A further issue that has been discussed in relation to alcohol misuse as a coping mechanism has been raised by Nolan. Nolan touches upon the impact of sexual abuse and the impact on the mental health of service users:

".. there's a lot of sexual abuse male and female, when they were younger, and that's never been really dealt with, and the mental health is very sketchy, the mental health services. We are not experts in that, I could open up that can of worms, but I'm not trained to deal with it, so often, you know, you might sort of be aware of it, but you don't want to discuss it with them, because that's not something we should be doing really, it could make matters a lot worse".

Nolan discusses how many of his service users, both male and female, have experienced sexual abuse during their childhood. He highlights how the sexual abuse within childhood has affected the mental health of the service users he supports who have experienced this. He also discusses however that despite this being the case, probation officers are not trained in how to deal with or how to respond to experiences of sexual abuse or mental health implications, and therefore he avoids the conversation in order to prevent making things any worse. In his interview, he explains how the impact of previous trauma plays a large part in his role when supporting service users who misuse alcohol, and the lack of clarity in how to support them makes his role more difficult to deliver.

In addition to childhood sexual abuse, Nolan explains how there are further issues that can occur during childhood that have an impact on service users turning to substance use to cope with:

"Erm, it's the things of, why did they start in the first place. I don't think any of mine started drinking or doing drugs because of oh I tried cannabis and went on to harder stuff, they are all trying to block out problems, that seems to me why they started, they were kicked out of school what else is there to do, they are trying to block out the pain, their family might have disowned them, foster care, the care system, so they use drugs, they use alcohol, they start offending, so it's kind of like what what, unless you tackle why they started in the first place".

Nolan recognises how issues such as being put in to care during childhood, being expelled from school, and being disowned from family, are all factors that can lead to an individual turning to substances as a coping mechanism. Nolan notes that this can then lead to service users taking a step into offending. Nolan recognises that the trauma that can come from some of these childhood experiences can stay with service users into their adulthood, and therefore offending behaviour and substance use that can occur as an adult, can be a result of experiences they are still trying to deal with from childhood. He argues that it is key to tackle the initial reason for why someone turned to substances and offending, in order to promote any change occurring.

A further point that has been mentioned by Charlotte, probation officer in the West Midlands, is the impact of sex work on service users:

"for females its sex working we look at … just females, I'd be concerned if any of my men were sex workers … also with sex workers, or people that do sex work, they often utilise substances to cope with the sex work that they've been through, or that they go through and deal with".

Charlotte highlights how substances may be used by both current and past sex workers to cope with what they have or what they continue to experience within their work. Charlotte notes how she would be surprised if any males she supports were or had been sex workers. She also notes how when being trained in the types of aspects that she should look out for regarding risk of reoffending and substance use for service users, it is only females that sex

work is considered for. With this being part of how probation officers are trained, it is therefore clear that from a service user perspective, it is females that are focused on in terms of what support they may need for dealing with misusing alcohol for past or present sex work. This may result in any males in this situation missing or not even being considered for necessary support that could be the reason for their substance misuse.

Similarly, Mitchell, a probation officer from the West Midlands, notes that there are a range of complex issues that can lead to a service user using substances as a coping mechanism:

"So many offences are often related to alcohol or drugs, but actually they are the superficial reason, underneath that, there is a whole range of stuff going on for them. Erm, and they deal with it by using alcohol, using drugs, and by using drugs and alcohol they are inevitably, almost inevitably offend, and that is where we step in".

Mitchell draws attention to the fact that substance use tends to be considered to be the reason as to why service users have offended, however he argues that misusing alcohol and drugs is the artificial reason. This encompasses what most participants have argued regarding the topic, reinforcing that substance use tends to be used as a method to cope with a deeper issue, and offending occurs as a biproduct of this substance use. Mitchell does highlight that there is a strong link between substance use and offending behaviour, noting that there is a high chance of people who are misusing substances offending. However, as noted in his interview and by others working within the field, this reinforces the reason as to why the reasons behind the substance use occurring need to be supported, so that the offending that can occur is also prevented.

5.2.2.1 Discussion - Coping Mechanism Subtheme

This subtheme focused on the reasons that have caused service users to use substance use as a coping mechanism. American Addiction Centers (2024) note that coping mechanisms are habits that develop over time, and act as a way of supporting a person through scenarios that raise stress levels. Drugs and alcohol are often used as coping mechanisms to self-medicate from experiences and/or feelings of trauma (Gezinski et al, 2021) or distress. Nina highlighted how service users who are homeless or rough sleeping may misuse substances as a coping mechanism. Nina explains how this process can also lead to a cycle of events with

service users also turning to crime to fund their substance use. Shelter (2023a) have reported that there is an estimated 309,000 people who are experiencing homelessness in England. Leading on from previous discussions, Klee and Reid (1998) have noted that substance use is used as a stress management within the homeless and non-homeless communities, however the stresses that are present within homeless lifestyles increase the chances of substance use being used as a coping mechanism when other strategies fail. Furthermore, Opalach et al (2016) argued that largely the homeless population are living on the outside of general society, and to cope with the challenges that come with it, many are suffering from advanced levels of alcohol addiction and negative effects on their mental health. Additionally, Neale et al (2022) found that the longer the history of homelessness, the higher the rate of misusing substances.

A further point that was briefly raised was the use of substances as a coping mechanism by both present and past sex workers. Many researchers have noted that sex work and substance use are connected (Cusick et al, 2003; Deering et al, 2011; Morris et al, 2013). Mann (2004) argues that sex workers use a variety of strategies to try and cope with the occupational stigma, as well as the stress that comes from the job, of which legal and illegal drug use is one of these coping mechanisms. Sex workers have been found to have significantly higher rates of drug use than non-sex workers, as a way of helping them to increase their confidence and control and decrease any feelings of guilt and sexual distress (Young et al, 2000). Alcohol use has been noted to be highly prevalent by female sex workers, with their risk of harmful alcohol use and associated health risks being heightened (Beksinska et al, 2023).

Adverse childhood experiences, particularly in the form of being put in to care during childhood, experiences of sexual abuse, being expelled from school and being disowned from family, have all been mentioned as factors that can lead to an individual turning towards substances as a coping mechanism. Adverse childhood experiences can lead to a child's ability to cope with negative or unsettling emotions being impaired, which may in turn result in children adopting unhealthy forms of coping mechanisms, such as substance use (Anda, 2018). Šulejová et al (2022) found that adverse childhood experiences can affect alcohol use specifically for both males and females in later life. Furthermore. when looking at the impact on adulthood, Leza et al (2021) note that people with adverse childhood experiences have higher rates of substance use disorders than those who do not. Sebalo et al (2023) identified

low levels of self-regulation and maladaptive coping strategies as a reason for there being a link between adverse childhood experiences and substance use.

5.3 Providing Support for Service Users Misusing Substances and Minimising Offending Behaviour

This section will investigate the second theme which is providing support for service users misusing substances and minimising offending behaviour. Within this theme, participants reflect on their experiences providing support to service users on probation in the community reduce to reduce their substance use (particularly alcohol) and promote desistance. This will be split in to the three subthemes of service user motivation, treatment requirements, and financial issues. These points will be discussed through the experiences of probation staff and substance use support workers providing care to service users. To start, service user motivation will be discussed.

5.3.1 Service User Motivation

By motivation, discussions regarding what encourages service users to want to change their substance use and offending behaviour will be discussed. One of the factors affecting this motivation, that practitioner participants have highlighted is their relationships.

Zoe draws upon the fact that many service users are estranged from their family and the impact this has on their life:

"Erm, family situations, majority are estranged, so that's either from the standard family and then a lot more who have been estranged from children, so they then just start to congregate to other likeminded people who are in the same situation as themselves".

Zoe notes that most of the service users she supports are estranged from their immediate family, and then further highlights that an even higher number of service users are estranged from their children. When talking to service users, it was clear that family ties played a large part in their motivation to change, and therefore Zoe reinforcing this shows the strength of this point. Zoe highlights how not having these close connections in their life, can cause service users to tend to navigate towards people in similar situations to themselves, which in turn makes it more difficult to be motivated to change. In her interview Zoe highlights how it is often easier when positive relationships are present in the lives of the service users she

supports.

Mason, who supports Zoe's view, develops on from this further to highlight how the type of crime that someone has committed can also impact the stability of relationships:

"[They have] difficult [relationships], nearly all of them I would imagine. You do get the low risk of harm cases, like benefit fraud, when you get a lot of cases come in for benefit fraud, or for a medium one is drink driving. So those two cases, benefit fraud and drink driving are tentatively linked to more stable family lives or stable people or first-time offenders, so they can be more stable, but yeah the violent offenders that we have, the questions about whereabouts, lifestyle, family, who lives at home, so if you have a partner or children".

Mason notes that those individuals that have committed crimes that are standardly considered non-violent, such as fraud and drink driving, will potentially have more stable home lives than those who have committed violent offences. This has been reinforced when compared to the home life of service users interviewed, and the crimes they committed. Mason argues that those service users who are considered to be violent offenders are more likely to have more hectic lifestyles, which as a result affects their relationships, and therefore impacts one of the key aspects that could encourage a person to be motivated to change. This has been demonstrated throughout Mason's interview, as he highlights the different levels of support, he is required to provide service users. He has tended to describe cases where the service user has committed a violent alcohol-related offence such as actual bodily harm as more complicated, and non-violent alcohol-related offences such as drink-driving, as the service user requiring less support.

Mitchell builds on this further by discussing how strong relationships can drive service users to decide they need stop misusing substances and offending:

"Yeah, I think so, I think you've got to have circles of support, you've got to have enough to say, it is not worth reoffending, what I've got is not worth losing. So, if you're moving around, you're on benefits, you're cold, you're homeless, you've got no relationships. No money, no opportunity, losing hope, losing belief, then what have you got to lose? If you've got someone like [one of his service users' partner] in your life, I mentioned about [one of his service users], erm well maybe you'll begin to think, she's too good to lose. I've got a guy

who came in yesterday, I'm saying to him, this license is proving totally ineffective, the only reason you are not offending is that's down to you, [he said] it's because I've got too much to lose, like my flat, and my son, so they've got to be sufficient balance for the person to say that may make the equation, they make the calculation, if I go to prison, what am I going to lose?".

Mitchell explains about service users requiring a supportive network around them that make it worthwhile for them to be motivated to change. He argues that they need to feel that what they have is worth losing, otherwise they will not have a desire to change. In addition to relationships, he draws upon financial status, housing, as well as mental and physical health. He reinforces this further by providing an example of a service user he supports who has gone through this process, and it is only due to the service user arguing that he has too much to lose, in the form of his son and his flat, that has motivated him to change and not return to misusing alcohol or offending.

Nina draws attention to the importance of motivation for service users to successfully engage with the support available to them:

"I think the services are there, it's whether they want to engage, and if they are not ready, there's no point, but you'll still refer them in, hoping to motivate them to change, but if they are not willing to then, then that's all we can do ... so there's mentoring support, mental health, erm, education and training courses, erm signpost them to the library on a Friday to do the CSCS course, there is someone from the benefits department there, there's housing and welfare there ... it's a massive life change as well, if you think someone's been using since the age of 15 and they've got to 40, and all they've known is get up, offend, score their drugs, use, drink, knocked out and that cycle for the last 15 years, what do you, how do you change, what do you do?".

Nina argues that the services are available, but service users have to be engaged and motivated to use them. She lists many of the support services that are available, such as mental health and housing, in order to reinforce the large array of opportunities. However, Nina does also recognise that in order for someone to be ready to change it requires them to go through a whole lifestyle change. Nina draws upon the fact that the service users that are supported by probation who are misusing substances, have often had a lifestyle of this and

therefore to gain the motivation to change requires them to change practices that they have engaged with for most of their life. For example, she gave the example of service users who have lived this life since the age of 15, having gone through a cycle up until 40 years old. As such Nina has recognised that it is not a simple process for service users, and she sympathises with the challenge in place for them to be motivated to change.

Like Nina, Julia reinforces that support is available to service users who misuse alcohol, in order to help them change their lifestyles. However, she draws attention to the difficult process that becoming motivated to change involves:

"all the agencies are there, it's just whether they want to go … I think we expect that, we expect them to just come into our world, and survive, but it's not that straight forward, because we wouldn't the other way round, we wouldn't do it. I wouldn't survive a day [laughs] … "I think some enjoy it, they don't want to be forced in to change, they don't want to be, obviously they commit crime which isn't good, but if they enjoy that lifestyle, they don't want to go to a bog standard universal credit and pay bills".

Julia recognises the challenge that comes with changing your life as a service user, and notes that it is important to not expect someone to enter probation and change immediately. She draws on the fact that it is a process that needs to be taken for a service user to be motivated to change, and that it is important to reflect on that process within her own role as a probation officer, as she would find it difficult herself. Julia goes on to note that service users dislike being forced to change. She highlights that even though someone is on probation, that does not mean that they want to change. Julia enforces that some service users enjoy their lifestyle, and do not want to change due to changing requiring them to turn to a more basic lifestyle. Without crime, service users will likely have to rely on funds from universal credit, and the everyday tasks of paying bills.

Charlotte follows a similar narrative, but focuses on the dislike of being forced to abide by probations rules:

"What do they dislike? Obviously, they dislike the fact that we are enforcing rules, that they potentially don't want to abide by, erm, and I think they appreciate, the support that can be offered, however, it's difficult to kind of engage with them at first".

Charlotte highlights that it is the motivation and willingness to engage that underpins whether service users would like to receive support. She highlights how in her experience service users can be difficult to engage at the start, as they have had rules forces upon them, rather than them necessarily requesting support for their alcohol use or offending. It is also clear that being expected to abide by numerous rules can be disliked by service users, and potentially overwhelming. Charlotte does note that service users tend to appreciate the support that is available, but they have to be given time to adapt to the process of probation before they will engage with the support.

With motivation being a key factor, Nolan has noted that it may not be until the service user reaches a certain age that they are then motivated to change:

"I think they are always going to use until age catches up. I think the ones that successfully stop are the ones that are like, I'm too old for this, and erm, that can be when they are in their mid-40s, some of them are like, and I think age is quite a good motivator".

Nolan highlights that age can play a key role in driving motivation. He notes how some service users will reach a certain age and feel like they cannot guarantee the habits that they have engaged in over the years such as substance use or criminality, and this acts as the key reason why they choose to stop. He argues that it is at this point that they engage with the support provided by probation. This mirrors what some of the service users who were interviewed that have been in the criminal justice system a while argued. It therefore highlights that for some service users, even when the support is available, it is not until they have decided that a life change is required due to their age, that they will decide to change.

5.3.1.1 Discussion - Service User Motivation Subtheme

The first subtheme for providing support for service users misusing substances and minimising offending behaviour is service user motivation. This subtheme acknowledged factors that both increase and decrease service users drive to desist from offending behaviour and choose to reduce or stop misusing substances. The analysis of this subtheme drew attention to these points, whilst acknowledging how aligned they are with recognitions made within existing literature.

Zoe reported that there are a high number of service users that are estranged from their family, including children. Mason highlights how the hectic lifestyles of some of his service users, tends to have a knock-on effect that affects relationships with close ones. Both Zoe and Mason noted how lacking these connections, particularly with family, can affect a service users' motivation for change in a negative way. As highlighted by Jardine (2014) service users having strong family ties can enhance their chances of being motivated to change, in addition to strengthening a, or creating a new, positive identity. HM Inspectorate of Probation (2021i) agree with this, arguing that research shows family ties can be powerful allies to service users on probation, family helping to motivate and support desistance from offending, treatment for substance use, and support probation supervision requirements. It is worth noting that literature does argue that these family ties need to be supportive of a desisting lifestyle, as Wooditch et al (2013) found that it was when probation service users reduced their involvement with family members who were involved in criminal activity that they then saw a reduction in substance use and offending behaviour. It has also been found that weak social ties have a strong connection with the probability of an individual committing crime, and also the level to which they commit crime (Patacchini and Zeno, 2008).

A further point raised by Mitchell is that when service users feel they have too much to lose, they then gain that motivation to change. This is a concept that has been highly discussed within desistance literature, with life events such as starting families, employment and marriage being noted as some of the factors that can result in a person feeling that they have too much to lose in their life to carry on committing crime (Maruna, 2001). As highlighted within the literature review, this can be reinforced by Cornish and Clarke's (1986) rational choice theory where it is argued that offenders weigh up the benefits and costs of criminal activity. Several studies have acknowledged that a 'decision' is a key factor for offenders in deciding to desist (Cusson and Pinsonneault, 1986; Leibrich, 1993; Shover, 1983), and that this decision to desist can be motivated by seeking a future that does not include criminality (Paternoster, 1989; Paternoster and Bushway, 2009).

Nina builds upon this when highlighting that for someone to be ready to turn away from offending behaviour and stop misusing substances, it requires them to change their whole lifestyle, of which some may have lived this lifestyle since childhood. This is supported by Maruna (1999:9) who states that "when an individual desists from crime, s/he acts as his or

her own change agent and is not merely the product of outside forces or social control or personality traits". Furthermore, Nolan highlighted how age can play a role in driving this motivation. The perspective of maturational reform and the idea that the natural aging of the body leads to a natural process of desistance has been raised within existing literature (Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1983). Maruna (1999: 2) argues that "the effect of age on crime is 'natural', direct and invariant across social, temporal and economic conditions". Glueck and Glueck (1974) develop this further to say that any exceptions to the natural ageing out of crime process is due to immaturity.

Julia provides her own perspective from working with service users regarding motivation to desist. She argues that some service users are not motivated to change their actions, due to them enjoying their standard of living, and not wanting to lower that by relying on funds from universal credit and being required to pay for basic amenities such as bills. Research has noted how some people who are on universal credit may turn to crime to supplement their income (d'Este and Harvey, 2020), highlighting a possible reason to prevent those people who currently engage in offending behaviour to want to desist. Additionally, it has been found that those who are experienced in criminal activity have the belief that they can succeed in their criminal career, and therefore continue to offend, even if they have had involvement within the criminal justice system (Shover, 1985). More up to date research has also noted that those who tend to be successful with their criminal activity are psychologically empowered by their criminal skills and knowledge of the criminal market, which in turn reduces their motivation to desist (Grundetjern and Miller, 2019). Further to this, in their research, Nugent and Schinkel (2016) found that their participants reported real experiences of pain within the process of maintaining their desistance. Appleton (2010:17) reported that some service users argue that they have to settle for "a menial and lonely existence", consistent of "many desperate and monotonous periods".

5.3.2 Treatment Requirements

The next subtheme of providing support for service users misusing substances and minimising offending behaviour is treatment requirements. The main treatment requirements discussed are Alcohol Treatment Requirements (ATRs) and Drug Rehabilitation Requirements (DRRs). Both of these have been discussed as some service users who are misusing alcohol and other substances will be on DRRs, and the difference in support

between the two further highlights the challenges for practitioners when providing support to service users who misuse alcohol. Participants discuss the effectiveness of these requirements, in addition to discussing the differences in support services available to those on these requirements, based on their location.

Nolan argues that neither ATRs or DRRs are up to the standards they need to be to provide the support for change:

"Well they all want to get on, if they are on heroin, they all want to get on the script, whether that's a good thing or a bad thing I'm not sure, a lot of them have talked about going to rehab, but it's expensive and it takes a long time. The DRR's used to be really good, the courts have had review sessions, kind of once a week, you would go to court and write a review for the magistrates or the judge, so they could check their progress you know, and it was very useful because the magistrates would encourage or motivate them or if they weren't engaging, the judges would warn them, if you don't pull your socks up, I will revoke this and send you to prison, but if you start giving negatives, maybe we can start looking at finishing your order early, but that's kind of dropped off because the courts haven't got the time or the money anymore. You get the occasional review at court, but that is very very rare these days, like I said, 4-5 years ago it was every week we'd have a review court. There's more for the drug users like I said, they have groups that they can go on, the foundations of rehabilitation and other things, and normally they're sort of able to take in that information and participate. Like I said with the dependent alcoholics, getting them in to a group is nigh on impossible, because they are drunk, so I think the neither the DRR's or the ATR's are anywhere as good as they used to be, but the DRR's, there is still more that we can do".

Nolan highlights how the whole process lacks the level of effectiveness it used to have. For example, he highlighted how previously the courts would support probation by either motivating or warning service users based on their level of progress at review sessions. However, due to lack of resources, this no longer occurs. He notes that for those on DRRs, there are more options available, such as groups that they can be directed to go to. He also notes that DRRs tend to be more likely to be able to take in the information that is being shared with them and participate, than those on ATRs. He highlights how for those on ATRs, it is more difficult due to the likelihood of them being intoxicated. When a service user is drunk, they will not be taking in the information or participating in activities for change, and

therefore getting them in to suitable groups is not possible. In his interview, Nolan has made it clear that particularly for alcohol misusing service users, providing them support that is specific to their ATR is unlikely to occur.

Similarly, both DRRs and ATRs have been considered not up to standards by Mitchell. When discussing how many people he currently supports that he believes will manage their substance use, he notes that "*some will [but] not many*". He does go on to highlight that the requirements are not effective at supporting this:

"*I think it's always going to be poor; we have NPS as another layer, but even before that it was poor. I mean it's a real problem isn't it, it's like alcohol now, we proportionally deal with alcohol users less in the same, so now out of my 65 cases, 9 are ATR's, erm and the rest are on DRR's, but actually the use of alcohol, because it is legal, is far more prevalent*"

Mitchell notes that the legality of alcohol is always going to play an issue and highlights how this means there is a higher prevalence of alcohol use to drug use, however despite this, the majority of his caseload are on a DRR rather than an ATR. Mitchell is therefore showing how alcohol misuse is a real issue amongst service users on probation, but those who do have an alcohol problem are not necessarily receiving support that focuses on tackling that issue.

Sarah develops on from this point by recognising that there are limited options for support available for alcohol use specifically, and argues that what is available is not effective:

"*[For ATRs practitioners] see [the service user], they chat to them, they give them drinks diaries, encourage, they might, to be fair, sometimes that does work, they might encourage them to switch from Special Brew which is like the 9% stuff to erm say they are having 4 cans of 9%, you might then have 6 cans of 5%. They'll encourage them in the sense to change what they are drinking, but generally I don't think there is anything they can do with alcohol ... For me personally, I don't think it works, I don't think alcohol treatment works ... I've not had experience with successful alcohol treatment*".

Sarah acknowledges that some factors might support change, such as providing service users with drink diaries and using harm reduction techniques, such as trying to reduce the percentage volume of the alcoholic drinks that a service user consumes. However, overall,

she argues that there are not solid effective techniques in place to support service users who are misusing alcohol, and states that she has not had a successful experience with providing alcohol treatment. Sarah is highlighting that her understanding of effective alcohol treatment would be a service user to stop using alcohol, and therefore live a life of abstinence. This is likely due to her seeing service users attempt harm reduction, and but not necessarily get to a stage where they are able to manage the volume of alcohol use to a safe limit.

Nolan agrees with Sarah's perspective regarding ATRs being ineffective:

"I'm not a huge fan of the ATRs. Erm, mainly because, there doesn't seem to be a lot that we can offer them, so it feels a bit, whereas you know, there's obviously people that are dependant, and they need the help and support, I don't think the ATR necessarily does that. Erm, so I feel like I'm kind of wasting my time, and I'm wasting their time, when they get given an ATR, so that's kind of why I don't particularly, I don't mind the people so much but it's more the, what's the point of the ATR".

Nolan argues that there is not a clear plan of how service users who have been granted an ATR can be supported. He highlights how the process itself can feel pointless for both himself as the probation officer, and the service users on the requirement. He notes that there are individuals who are alcohol dependent and require support, but he does not see how the ATRs effectively provide that opportunity. Nolan feels that if ATRs are to remain, then more needs to be done to enable them to support service users who misuse alcohol to tackle their problem.

Nolan does go on to provide some context regarding why he believes this is the case:

"... the ATR's they can have them for three years, but it's pretty much bog standard to the courts, the courts, or the report office just wack on a 6-month ATR. Erm [sighs], erm they, the drug alcohol workers ... don't have to see them that often for a start, I don't think there's any sort of minimum requirement, I mean they can choose to see them, I think they can see the just 3 or 4 times during that 6-month period if required, whereas a drug order, we are seeing them every week, and think that's probably because there's not that much work they can do, or more help they can offer. Erm, you know, drink diaries, and sort of signposting

them to the doctors or the [Alcoholics Anonymous] etc, it just doesn't seem a very good process for what they can do for them".

In addition to reinforcing that there is not much available to provide service users on ATRs, Nolan highlights that because of this drug and alcohol workers do not tend to see service users often, for example it could be as little as 3 to 4 times over 6 months. This is in direct contrast to those on DRRs who are often supported on a weekly basis due to the variety of resources available for them. For ATRs, he mentions how drink diaries and signposting to other services are used, but these haven't been successful in his experience. Nolan also discusses that ATRs are not being effectively assigned and are being treated more as an 'add-on' by the courts, rather than a clear justification.

Nolan goes on to further note that he believes a better structure should be in place if ATRs are to remain regarding providing support for service users who are on them:

"I don't think they are seen that often because it's basically they they, the dependent ones come in more often than not under the influence, so it's hard to actually do work with them, and sometimes you just have to ask them, they may turn up but you can't engage if they are under the influence, so you just have to send them home, you know you can't really put them on group work because they are under the influence of alcohol, erm, so I don't, I think ideally there needs to be much more structure behind it, this person's dependant, what are we going to get done in the first month, who can see them, what can get done for them, erm but there doesn't seem to be that pathway or process guide. Whereas with drugs its easier, are they scripted? No. Okay, book them into the doctors, get them subscribed, book them on to a group to look at their drug use. There's a lot more structure for them".

Nolan argues that a clear plan needs to be in place, where staff working with service users on ATRs know what is expected each month, and what resources are available from them to draw from to provide that support. This is something that is in place for DRRs, due to there being more options for support in place. Additionally, Nolan highlights how when someone is on an ATR there can be the risk of having people who are alcohol dependent coming to appointment under the influence of alcohol. In these situations, service users are unable to engage with the process and therefore end up being sent home.

This leads on to viewpoints shared by Daniel who explains as a drug and alcohol worker what the process would be for supporting those on an ATR:

"I'm just doing this from previous, get my own alcohol diary off the internet, I'll give them a diary, ask them to complete it, as I want to know what their usage is, as I said to you before, my background is psychology, so I'm interested in the last comments box, so what's going on rather than usage. If they're using because they are depressed, then we can do some work around that, obviously alcohol is a depressant, it is going to impact on your mood, it is going to make you lower than your already low mood, so that's a good way to find out. Sometimes it's just a load of monitoring that we'll do with clients because they may not be drinking, or they may have managed or they don't want to stop, do you know what I mean. So, the only way of getting to the bare bones, hardcore stuff, is if they wanted to go forward for a detox and be put forward for that, and we'd do an assessment with them, they'd be assessed by the nurse, they'd have to go off and get their bloods done, there would have to be an after care plan, a contingency plan, get everything set up, so that's quite a large piece of work if someone's going for a detox, and that's cool because I've done so many of them, I'm used to".

Daniel recognises that from a wellbeing perspective, there are factors that can be put in place to try and look at the root causes of alcohol use. He will tend to try and look at providing support for some of these root causes, such as seeking mental health support for depression. However, he notes that not much can be done to support the physical recovery of alcohol dependent service users, other than detox programmes, which in themselves are rare and complicated. He also states that putting someone forward to rehabilitation for a detox is also dependent on the service user being willing to take part, with some of the service users he works with not actually wanting to stop misusing alcohol. Daniel explains how he has a lot of experience going through the process of getting someone on alcohol detox programme, however he does mention that it takes many stages to achieve.

Mason also highlights that there are issues with alcohol detox support due to the many hurdles and challenges with funding:

"It's limited to get an alcohol detox in the community, you've got to jump through major hoops, you've got to properly always adhere to screening tools and have like 6 or 10 sessions

with a therapist, and then you have to do something else, something else, I know why they do it, get your blood tested, and there's all these kind of things going on, but there's hardly any support as far as I can see".

Mason explains how that in order to get a service user on a detox programme, there are a series of tasks that have to be adhered to and a set process that must be followed, which although the reasoning behind this process is understood, it is difficult to have in place when Mason feels there is a lack of options altogether. It also suggests that the overall process to support service users who misuse alcohol specifically is poor.

Amongst the practitioner interviews, there appears to be more choice for rehabilitation in Staffordshire than Birmingham. This view has been clearly shown by Rachael, a drug and alcohol worker in Staffordshire, when she mentions the options that she refers to rehabilitation wise:

"... we've got our Edward Myres Unit which is a detox centre, we've got a place called Burton Addiction Centre, in Burton, it's brilliant there, so that's one of our local rehabs. We've also got Liberty Farm, that's a rehab not too far a way. So, they are all stuff for recovery ... I, personally, I think that rehab is the way forward, like I went a bit deep before when I say about rehab building you back up again, I do think that, that is what a lot of people need, letting go of what happened in their past, and I think that is what stops people moving forward and getting well again".

Rachael mentions three key rehabilitation centres within Staffordshire that are regularly used to refer her clients to. She also then goes on to highlight the effectiveness of these rehabilitation centres and explaining that she thinks it is key to a lot of service users' development with recovery. In her interview, she has explained how beneficial she thinks rehabilitation can be to build up a person, after breaking them down in order to deal with the root causes of their substance use. She argues that this is central to supporting someone to move forward with their life and therefore make a chance to their substance use and offending behaviour.

However, although these centres are clearly apparent within Staffordshire, the volume has significantly decreased within Birmingham, as noted by Daniel:

"It's quite hard now, it used to be easier, but there's no, no rehab in Birmingham, Summer Hill is gone now. There's Park House which is detox but it's not rehab, it's only for detox and stabilisation facility. So, the aftercare now is done as day care, so you'd go there for the day and go home at the end of the day, and I don't see that as rehab to be truthful".

Daniel notes that despite Birmingham being the second largest city in the United Kingdom, the previous rehabilitation centres that were present are no longer there. They have a detox centre, but this does not provide the aftercare as an in-patient that is a large part of rehabilitation. The lack of internal aftercare support means that service users are back within the community the same day as their detox, which means they may potentially experience all the external factors that could have impacted their original substance use.

Another challenge discussed by Daniel is that some service users choose to accept an ATR or DRR, to prevent them going to prison rather than wanting to change their substance use, or substance-related offending:

"Some are happy not to go to custody, so they're happy to engage with you. Some see it as pointless, obviously they may not want to change their behaviour. Erm, some see it as beneficial, because you've got that engagement, rapport with them. So yeah, that's it really. I do find myself sometimes, when I meet a client for the first time sometimes having to explain the process of what a DRR is and an ATR. I don't feel that's my responsibility, because that should really be done by a probation officer, to discuss their license or person at court when they give them the order, erm, but that's to do with the lack of communication and how busy it is. I find that I might revisit that, for instance if someone comes and says, I don't need to be here, then my response would be, well you were in court, and you requested this instead of going to custody, so you can always discuss with your probation officer if you want it taking off and revoked and sent back to court, I don't have any control over that, I'm happy to see you, and obviously I have to see you on a regular basis because that's part of your order".

Daniel voices how there are a mixture of feelings from service users he supports regarding their requirement, with some feeling thankful for the engagement they have support wise, whilst others agree to an ATR or DRR, as it means they do not need to go to custody. As such it reinforces the importance that motivation has for a service user before any changes will be

made. Daniel notes that clarity on the specifics and seriousness of the requirement being given to service users is potentially needed by probation staff, as some service users believe that there is no legal expectation for them to attend services linked to their requirement. It could be argued that the lack of clarity shows the high workloads of probation staff.

Daniel also expresses aspects that show how the workload of drug and alcohol workers are also high:

"8 sessions, minimum of 8 sessions, err structure that, generally over 6 months ATRs, structure that over 6 months, but it doesn't always end up as 8 sessions to be truthful, it's generally more, they need a bit more, just because, like, because the first session, like, it's going to take about 2 or 3 appointments just to get all their stuff on the system that you need to do now, because of the nature of the stuff you have to complete, the assessment, the personal assessment framework, it's called the PAF. Erm, they may also present as more needy, more needy for support, so they get more appointments, or they might actually report as, I'm not drinking, haven't drunk since the event, so after a period, then I'd reduce the frequency, so they could only get 6 for instance, so they could get 4 appointments, so say 4 appointments every fortnight would take you to, what are we looking two months, and then you've got the other four months, so I'd probably move them to monthly, so then I'd look at another two appointments, so probably take them to about 8, 10, depends on the meeting, what they present with to be fair".

Daniel mentions how with the amount of paperwork required when supporting service users on ATRs makes it more difficult to provide effective support from the start. As such, the first few sessions are in essence data collection. He noted that there is a requirement to provide 8 sessions within 6 months, however with the first 2-3 sessions being data collection, alongside the fact that some service users present themselves needing more support, this often leads to more than the 8 appointments being in place. Daniel highlights how he adapts the volume of meetings with service users to their needs, but that each service user will receive a minimum of 8 appointments.

5.3.2.1 Discussion - Treatment Requirements Subtheme

This subtheme concentrated on treatment requirements assigned to service users, with the analysis particularly focusing on the effectiveness of Alcohol Treatment Requirements (ATRs) and Drug Rehabilitation Requirements (DRRs). These two treatment requirements can be attached to a community order or suspended sentence order. If given one, the service user is expected to complete treatment for their drug or alcohol problem, with the treatment being arranged by the court and requiring the consent of the service user (Clinks, 2018).

Despite DRRs and ATRs being heavily engrained within probation delivery, Nolan has stated that they are not effective. For DRRs, he has specifically focused on the lack of involvement of drug review courts, which were previously used and, in his perspective, effective. Taxman (2002) argued that the use of drug testing and court reviews as formal control mechanisms were key in helping determine the progress and compliance of an order, particularly when informal support through social bonds were weak. Additionally, Nolan argued that ATRs are not effective due to service users being intoxicated and therefore meaning they cannot attend support groups. In their work, McSweeney (2015) found that there was no connection between a service user being on an ATR and their rate of proven reoffending. This could potentially be due to the lack of ability to engage in some of the support available as noted by Nolan.

Mitchell draws attention to the fact that he sees more service users who are misusing alcohol then drugs, yet the rate of people on a DRR than an ATR is higher. Ministry of Justice and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (2022) reported that as part of community sentences in 2021 through to 2022, 5501 were on DRRs, and 5361 were on ATRs. This therefore suggests there is a mismatch between the types of community treatment requirements being issued, and the type of support required.

Even when a service user is on an ATR however, Sarah argues that there are limited options available to provide to service users on this requirement. Nolan developed on this by noting that for ATRs, they are seen as little as 3-4 times over a 6-month period. This is even though guidance suggests that a one-to-one session with a drug and alcohol support worker should occur each week, for up to six months (McSweeney, 2015). Additionally, the other type of provision that is supposed to be in place is heavily focused on group attendance (McSweeney, 2015), which as noted earlier is reliant on a service user not being intoxicated.

It is with this perspective in mind that Nolan argues ATRs are perceived as being issued as an add-on, whereas DRRs are often taken more seriously, as service users on these are seen weekly. Perhaps this is due to the types of support available to those misusing illicit drugs is clearer. For example, when a service user is on a DRR, they are subject to weekly drug testing at a minimum, with these tests being for the most commonly associated drugs to their offending, in addition to being intermittently tested for alternative drugs to help determine whether polydrug use is occurring (National Offender Management Service, 2014). Unlike those on DRRs, those on ATRs are not subject to mandatory testing (McSweeney, 2015).

Daniel notes how the official requirements for drug and alcohol support workers are to see their service users on ATRs eight times in total over a 6 month period. He notes how with the amount of paperwork that is involved in supporting service users on ATR, this process usually takes much more than the eight sessions, due to the first few sessions being dedicated to data collection to be able to fill out the necessary paperwork. This narrative is different to the probation officer views shared by Nolan earlier, however this therefore reinforces that different practices are occurring even with the same locations.

Daniel does agree with Nolan in the fact that there are limited resources to directly support alcohol dependent service users, other than detox programmes of which are rare and involve a complex process. Additionally, Mason explains that in order to get a service user on to a detox programme, there are a series of tasks that have to be adhered to and a set process that must be followed. If more were present however, the literature does suggest that outpatient detox programmes would be beneficial. Mojtabai and Zivin (2003) found that outpatient programmes are often more cost-effective that in-patient programmes, and Cummings (1991) determined that inpatient rehabilitation are not advantageous over outpatient programmes, even when inpatient detoxification occurs within a hospital setting. Despite the literature arguing positive points, Daniel has noted how the detox programmes do not offer the aftercare that in-patient programmes do. Furthermore, Rachael has noted that in-patient rehabilitation centres are key to a lot of the service users she supports recovering from their substance misuse. In a systematic review of numerous pieces of research, it was found that overall in-patient programmes are effective at providing lasting positive results for recovery, however these results were heightened for illicit drugs, and limited for alcohol (Director-General Health and Social Care, 2022).

Daniel highlights how some service users will choose to take a treatment requirement, in order to avoid going to prison. As such, even though a service user is on ATR or DRR, this alone is not always going to encourage them to be motivated to engage. It is therefore important to provide support that is going to maximise the chances of engaging the service user. When given a requirement, it is often the case that set priorities of the organisation are going to be used to underpin the success of a service user who is serving that requirement. However, Wilson et al (2018) argues that support services tend to focus on encouraging action that meets the needs of the organisation and fail to share power and responsibility with the service user, which can result in the service user feeling like they have a lack of power and that something is being 'done to them' rather than 'with them'. Baron et al (2019) argues that a strengths-based approach, which acts in a collaborative way with the service user to use their individual abilities and circumstances to develop a support plan, rather than focusing on the factors that brought them to the service.

5.3.3 Finances

The final subtheme of providing support for service users misusing substances and minimising offending behaviour is finances. Participants focused on issues such as the implementation of universal credit, impact of both employment and unemployment, and housing issues.

One of the key aspects that has been discussed by many participants is universal credit. Mason expresses his concerns regarding universal credit going directly into the bank account of service users who are misusing substances:

"So universal credit has come in, I think the flat rate is like £317 a month, but then you have to really fight for the fact that, they are looking, they brought this in to look at people that are living more dependently more, well I generally as a service we totally don't like it. So, I have a case where she'll get £317 a month for universal credit, she also gets her £450 rent, so in total she is getting £767 every month, and on that day, she has to pay the landlord £450. Now, for people like myself or yourself, that process is pretty straight forward, you do a bank transfer or you do your direct debit, but for someone going through an addiction, it's just like, it's just like going to the end of the earth and back. So basically, she spends her £767 on illicit drugs, and then after that three months, and then she's then evicted. I mean, rent money can go direct, but it is really difficult to sort it out that way. If you plead high levels of mental

health, you can do it, so I think some people start doing that, so. If you've got err, there's certain guidelines, but if you've got severe mental health issues, you can really plead with them, I think there is a certain criterion. Erm, but if you don't meet that, then that's it, you have to pay it out yourself".

Mason draws upon the fact that universal credit is sent straight to the individual who makes the claim, which in this discussion is the service users he supports. If a service user is also actively misusing substances, then there is a high chance that that money that comes in, which in essence should support covering their rent, instead is spent on substances. This in turn increases the amount of money that is spent on substances, and therefore increases the ability to misuse these substances. He explains how it is very difficult to make it so that the rent goes directly to the landlord, and that there are a series of factors that must be either followed and a criterion that needs to be met for this to occur. As a result, there is often several service users who are evicted due to them not having paid their rent. Mason highlights how a process such as paying rent, that might appear seamless to a person who is not misusing substances, can be quite difficult for those who are.

This in turn also leads to the issues of eviction which were also mentioned by Nina:

"They'd get a huge chunk of money and within days, I don't even think it would last a week and then for the last 3 and a half weeks, they've got nothing, they've got no food because they've spent all their money on drugs and alcohol, and also the fact that they were paid their housing benefit to them, and they were meant to pay the landlord, and that also impacted massively, because I had a lot of clients who were then evicted because they hadn't paid the rent and I don't think you can just put money in to someone's hands, I don't get why it didn't stay how it was where they just paid the landlords directly".

Nina explains how after the first few days of service users receiving their universal credit, they no longer have any money. This is due to a high volume of them spending the money on their substance use, which means that for most of the month, they are without money and food. Nina notes that a key impact of service users in this scenario not having money is that they do not pay their rent and therefore they are evicted from their property, which can cause issues with homelessness. In her interview, Nina has picked up on the issue of homelessness in depth, and therefore this point regarding the impact of universal credit, clearly links to how

it can affect service users losing their home. Nina argues that the previous process was better aligned with the needs of service users as there was not an expectation for the service user to pay their landlord but rather it was paid directly.

Both Nina and Julia have discussed complications with setting up universal credit for service users in the first place, highlighting how the service has changed to being predominantly online, but many service users who would be eligible to make a claim for universal credit. do not have access to the internet or a device to access the internet. Nina explains how this change further puts service users in a place of hardship, which can lead to further crimes:

" I think really it's just lack of understanding on the authorities part, because I think that they think that that's just how it should be dealt with as a cost cutting exercise, but then they are putting people at hardship and then crimes going up because they can't access the internet to make the claim".

Without access to the internet, this causes service users to go to probation to sort out any issues they have with universal credit. Nina argues that having systems in place, such as the reliance of the internet, does not take into consideration the lifestyles of some of the people it is supporting. She therefore argues that universal credit comes with issues both for the service user themselves and also probation staff, as a result of authorities not recognising the impact of some of their decisions. Nina expresses that she feels the authorities have approached it as a cost saving exercise, that has and continues to have a negative effect on the lives of service users, which in turn exacerbates criminal behaviour. A further probation officer Julia has developed on from this issue by highlighting how probation officers do not have the capacity within to spend an hour on the phone to universal credit, particularly if there are other factors that may cause a delay such as lack of an address. She recognises that the change of process may lead to a reduction in costs in one way, however she further notes that it is having a time and capacity cost on probation staff who are inadvertently dealing with the implications of the change.

In addition to the impact on probation staff, Daniel notes how it also causes an issue for service users as they then have to leave their community to go into the centre, many of whom will be required to do so at the expense of public transport:

"Err, finances definitely, universal credit is a major barrier that comes up, or lack of benefits, or err benefits being sanctioned, so clients are having to come out of their community area into the centre. There have been periods that they came here, and they can't get a travel warrant. Erm, so they are literally like, ah I'm not coming then, and I understand that, do you know what I mean, because it's like £4.50 to get on the bus, sometimes you haven't got £4.50, sometimes you haven't got £4.50, do you know what I mean".

Daniel highlights how the cost to get into the centre, which is where the probation office is based, comes at a cost for service users, which may be money they do not have, particularly if the reason for the journey is to discuss making a claim or sorting out issues with their universal credit. If service users cannot get a travel warrant to cover the cost of the journey, they may then choose not to come to the probation office due to the cost. In his interview, Daniel explains how due to his lived experience with alcohol misuse, he understands many of the challenges that are faced by those with addiction, and therefore the concerns he raises regarding finances and the cost of travel can be further validated. Overall, it appears that many practitioners have a negative view on the way universal credit has been implemented and argue that it adds to the cycle of offending and substance use.

A further issue that can occur for service users on probation is the difficulty of attending probation meetings alongside work commitments. Rachael shares her view regarding the challenges but also expectations of those who either are, or would like to work whilst being on probation:

"Erm, some of them are workers, don't get me wrong, I have got some workers on my caseload, not many, but I have got some. It's a bit more difficult for them to get a job when they've got to be seen weekly because of their order, and we do support them in getting a job, if needs be then I have been known to stay late and work late nights, so these people can go to work, and then come and see me after work, to still get support with drug and alcohol, and probation offer late nights as well, erm which is good, I work at two police stations with probation, and they both do a late night on a Wednesday, to allow the workers to be able to go to work and go there after work .. My personal opinion is you've committed a crime, you've been told by a court you need to come to probation, you get there, that is your priority, you get to probation, whether its 9 o'clock in the morning, you have to phone your

work and say, I'll be in at half past 9 because I've got this requirement by court, because ultimately, that court can send you to prison and then you're not going to have a job. And I think that some people need to get their head around that, but I do think it is very good that probation do offer the late night appointments".

Having a job, but also having a set day and time that they have to meet their probation officer every week, in addition to their treatment provider, can make it difficult work wise. Rachael has mentioned that the number of people who are on her caseload that work is low, however for those who do, she provides later appointment options. She also notes that the probation services that she works with also offer later options to support those service users who work. Despite having these options, Rachael also states that her opinion is that service users should put the requirements of their order first, even if this affects their working hours.

5.3.3.1 Discussion - Finances Subtheme

Finances is the last subtheme to be discussed for providing support for service users misusing substances and minimising offending behaviour. It noted how financial issues can impact a service users desistance and substance use recovery journey. The analysis of the subtheme highlights how policies and practices both internal and external to probation can exacerbate the financial situation for service users and in turn their ability to desist from offending and engage with rehabilitation.

A key issue that was raised by many practitioners was universal credit. Some of the key issues regarding universal credit that have been noted as problematic for substance using service users are the switch to monthly payments (Hartfree, 2014), the predominant use of online administration (Larkin, 2018), and the paying of rent to recipients rather than directly to landlords (O'Hara, 2015; Hickman et al, 2017). Mason highlighted how universal credit is now sent straight to the individual making the claim, which in his role is to the service user that he is supporting. Mason notes however that if a service user is misusing substances, then the likelihood that the universal credit money, particularly if sent in a monthly lumpsum will go on substances rather than rent is high. The process of getting this payment sent directly to landlords is difficult, with a series of factors having to be in place, including landlords having to wait for at least two months of missed rent to apply, and the outcome not being instant (Shelter, 2023b). Lump sums of money for those who are either currently misusing, or in

recovery, can trigger the consumption of drugs and alcohol in quick and large quantities (Moffatt, 2017). As such receiving the monthly sum from universal credit can cause this to occur.

Zoe furthered these comments, whilst also highlighting how with their universal credit being spent on substances, many service users spend much of the month without food, or money. One key charity, Addaction, has highlighted how service users in this situation are resorting to foodbanks, in addition to falling into housing arrears, and a build-up of debts (Moffatt, 2017). It is with these factors that it can be understood that Wickham et al (2020) found an increase in psychological distress and mental health difficulties for those who are receiving universal credit.

As mentioned before, the introduction of universal credit has also brought in the predominant use of online administration (Larkin, 2018). Nina and Julia have both noted how the digitalisation of universal credit administration has made it difficult for service users who are eligible to set up or make a claim, due to their lack of internet access. Although a non-digital process is in place, the Department for Work and Pensions have only made this available in a very small number of cases, and it is not guaranteed (Shelter, 2023c). The Department for Work and Pensions have also stated that where a claimant does not have internet access, they should visit locations where public computers are available (Shelter, 2023c). This approach however has led to comments such as that by Nina and Julia that without internet access, service users are approaching probation to sort their universal credit issues. Nina and Julia highlight that probation staff do not have the capacity to spend extra time on contacting universal credit. HM Inspectorate of Probation (2021a) noted that less than half of probation practitioners felt they had a manageable workload, with those working within CRCs feeling particularly less positive about their workload.

Daniel highlights how the probation involvement also leads to the issue of service users having to travel into the city centre to get that support with their universal credit. This is a barrier as without actively receiving their universal credit, or with the issues raised earlier, many of these service users will not have the finances to pay for public transport. As such, Daniel notes that without a travel warrant to cover the cost of this journey, service users will likely not go to the probation office, and instead turn to criminal behaviour as an alternative way to get money. Although not solely a result of service users, findings from d'Este and Harvey (2020) suggest

that universal credit has cost society around about £465 million through burglaries and vehicle crimes. Furthermore, Tiratelli et al (2023) noted how in the early stages of the universal credit roll out process, each new location saw an increase to their crime rates.

Rachael also talked about the topic of employment. She mentioned how most of her caseload are not working, but for those who do, late night appointments have been made available by both probation and her as a drug and alcohol support worker. Perhaps explaining the excessive impact of universal credit on service users; service users on probation are more likely to be unemployed than the general population, which is important to note as employment is often a key indicator of the chances of reoffending (Olver et al, 2014) and of whether a person is willing to engage in activities that are designed to make them more employable (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021f). However, when probation staff implement core correctional skills, of which promote factors such as relationship building and problem-solving, service users are more likely to not only engage, but be successful within employment promoting activities.

5.4 The Changing Nature of Probation

This final section for practitioners will look into the theme of the changing nature of probation. Within this theme, participants discuss the impact that the changes in management and inclusion of privatisation had on probation and delivering support to service users. This theme is split in to the two subthemes of high caseloads, targets and lack of funding, and division. Within these subthemes the views of probation staff and drug and alcohol workers will be shared. The first subtheme that will be discussed is high caseloads, targets, and lack of funding.

5.4.1 High Caseloads, Targets and Lack of Funding

Participants have focused on the impact that funding issues have had on the ability to deliver an effective service to those that they are supporting regarding desistance and rehabilitation. Additionally, the need to reduce caseloads and employ more staff was mentioned by many staff. Nina mentioned the latter, due to it effecting how well she can support the service users she works with:

"Employ more staff, reduce the caseloads, so we can do more intense working with people".

With the volume of service users on her caseload, Nina states that she is unable to provide the level of intensity that some service users may need to better their chances of desistance and rehabilitation. Throughout her interview, Nina has expressed her desire to deliver the best service to her service users, but also the many challenges and pressures that are being faced that prevent this from happening. Although this is a short statement, it was said with firmness, and a feeling of tiredness from the situation.

Mitchell develops from this by noting that there are no limits on caseloads (the number of service users each probation officer supports), which in turn has led to the average figure of service users per staff member to support being high:

"In theory there are no limits to how many people I can have on my caseload, as it happens, I have got 65 cases, which is pretty average here. If I was in NPS, I would have 40 and half of those would be in prison. My 65, most of them are in the community. I mean I have had a caseload of up to 130 twelve months ago, so there is a limit to what you can do".

Mitchell highlights that the average number of cases that a probation officer working for a CRC has, is 65, which is the figure that he currently has. He states how just a year ago his caseload reached 130. He notes how these unrealistic caseloads are average for CRC staff, highlighting that CRC figures are not proportionate to the NPS staff, as NPS staff average at 40 service users, half of whom are in prison. Mitchell feels like as the number of cases he has to support increases, the quality and quantity of support he can provide each person decreases.

In addition to high caseloads, Nolan identifies how the expectations for providing support for service users being supported by a CRC is also high:

"Everything, so, it's the integrated offender management team, which basically means we work closely with err the drug and alcohol agencies with the police. Err a mixture of cases, the priority of prolific cases, which is the burglaries, car crime, err in the main, and then I have a caseload, kind of half the caseload with the DRR's, the Drug Rehabilitation requirement, and the ATRs, the Alcohol Treatment Requirements. So yeah, the responsibilities are basically trying to get them through the orders, successfully, as successfully as they can, making sure they engage, making sure they attend, trying to reduce

their risk of reoffending and risk of harm basically. And breaching them or recalling them if
necessary".

Nolan explains how CRC caseloads can have a mixture of service users, of which tend to be
made up of prolific offenders, and a half and half split of service users on either ATRs or
DRRs. When discussing support for service users on ATRs and DRRs, Nolan highlights that
there are a series of expectations such as successfully getting them through the order and
reducing their risk of both reoffending and harm to themselves and others. Nolan's list
highlights the difficulties that are faced when trying to support people on probation, with him
drawing attention to a lot of the people who are on an ATR or DRR also being prolific
offenders that come with more challenges.

This is developed further when Nolan expresses how CRC caseloads are harder than NPS
caseloads:

"I think our caseload, on a day to day is much harder than the NPS. We have the most
chaotic people who really don't care if they are engaging or not, and they'll be in and out, in
and out. That sort of day-to-day management of them is really hard. Whereas if you have
someone who is deemed a high risk, they've killed someone, or rape or whatever, they will
come out halfway, two-thirds of a long sentence, and normally they will engage and comply,
because they don't want to go back in, you know, and that person, who has murdered
someone, you don't often get people repeating that. You know serial killers and whatever, but
normally it is a one off and they are on life license and they won't do it again. So, the type of
harm is essentially high, but the risk of it happening, is usually very low".

Nolan explains how the nature of crimes committed, and the lifestyles that they are living, is
often very different between those supported by NPS and those supported by CRCS. He
explains how those working with NPS have often committed higher risk crimes and have
serviced half or two-thirds of a long prison sentence. Due to the severity of their crimes, the
likelihood of them repeating such crimes is often less, but the risk of them breaching there is
higher as they will be sent back to prison and therefore, they are more likely to comply with
the requirements put on them by probation. Whereas CRC service users he notes have more
chaotic lifestyles, who are far less likely to be willing to engage with probation, and more

likely to be part of a cycle of entering in and out of criminal justice involvement. He notes how managing CRC service users for this reason can be very difficult.

Nolan goes on to mention the inclusion of a post-release supervision for short term prisoners (PSS) period:

"Whereas our clients, they've been around the system a long time, they know that if they go and reoffend, they are not going to go away for that long. The point is to try and stop this revolving door, but the situation has basically made it worse. The PSS period that was introduced when it was split, is useless, it just puts more people back in the prison system, back in the court system, err so yeah".

Nolan highlights how CRC clients tend to be part of a cycle within the criminal justice system, of which they have been part of for a long time. He notes that they tend to not be out of the system for long, and therefore a key focus of a probation officer is to try and break that cycle. However, the PSS period, which was put in place as part of the division of CRCs and NPS, increased the number of service users who now have to be supported by service users, and heightens the amount of people going through the cycle. Nolan therefore argues that it has made the process more difficult for service users and staff, and adds extra pressure to prison numbers and court waiting lists.

Another factor that Zoe has argued impacts probation staff with their high caseloads is the overcomplicated nature of breaches:

"Erm, on a personal level I would say that they are also very stretched. They have very high caseloads and time is very limited. So if they had more stringent kind of processes in place, like we have clients that are regular not attenders, they don't come in, they'll breach them, the breach goes to the breach court, and the breach court will say no, you've not kind of crossed this at this date, you've got to go back to the beginning, back to the beginning of offering appointments, so it's very tied up in red tape for what they are doing, but I do think that they could be a lot more, given a bit more of a robust system, in terms of, being able to penalise them, it doesn't feel like they can penalise them properly".

Zoe states that probation, particularly staff working within CRCs are over stretched. This is a view she also shares regarding her own experience as a drug and alcohol worker. However, in relation to probation staff, she notes that tighter processes across the sector need to be in place to enable probation to be effectively supported when breaching a service user. Many times, there will be service users who are regular non-attenders, but when they are breached, the court will argue that it cannot go through due to an issue with paperwork. Zoe notes how this can lead to probation not feeling supported when they do breach people, leading it to be perceived as pointless and potentially leads to this culture of not breaching. As Zoe works alongside probation, but not directly for it, she is able to provide a perspective that is separate to those who are attempting to breach service users. In turn, it also shows how the general lack of breaching that is occurring is clearly impacted by the barrier put in place by the courts. Zoe's comments also support views shared by service users in their interviews, who noted that there was more leniency amongst probation than previously.

Nolan expresses how probation has changed over the years in terms of what It has been focused on. He notes how CRCs had good intentions when they initially came in but that challenges have prevented this from coming into fruition:

"I mean probation has changed over the years. When I started it was the sort of advised to befriend and assist, and then through the 90s it was much more sort of public protection enforcement, crack down on people. It wasn't so much helping them, it was we will enforce you; we will send you back to prison, we will send you back to court, and it kind of switched completely. With the CRC, I think, obviously it hasn't worked because we are going back together, but I think that they started out with good intentions, because it was payment by results, it was about reducing reoffending rates, it was about well the company will make more money, so I think their intentions at the start were really good. You know, let's help those, if we can help them, then the reoffending rates should come down and then we get paid more money as a company, but obviously that hasn't worked at all. Massive cuts, officers gone, officers stressed lots of sickness, erm there isn't the resources that we should have, that's a political decision, you know".

Nolan highlights how probation has gone from a befriending process, to a more enforcement driven focus in the 1990s, to then moving towards the implementation of part-privatisation. He argued that the premise of the part-privatisation was to support service users to reduce

reoffending, with the added benefit of the organisation making more money as a result. That was the narrative that was initially intended. However, although CRCs had positive intentions, the issue with cuts and losing staff, in addition to increased stress levels causing sickness, and lack of resources, made it very difficult for it to be successful. Nolan has highlighted how what might have looked like a good idea, and been presented with good intentions, has not materialised.

Mitchell shares similar views on how CRCs had the potential to make a positive change, but processes and targets have prevented this:

"So, I think, and I think it's a great shame really because I think CRCs offer some really exciting opportunities, but because we've got bogged down in process and probably at times struggling to deliver the contract, we've lost sight of that. So, in my personal experience I have worked in probation for 30 years, public sector probation, and I've also worked in SERCO which is a private company delivering in custodial sentences, and CRC fits in between those two really and the idea that erm the Ministry of Justice had with Chris Grayling at the time was to in a sense to free up bureaucratic, public sector probation and say look, this is a market situation, here's the money, deliver the contract, that's what they want. Unfortunately, history will tell you that erm, whilst we've tried to deliver the contracts in that sort way, we have fallen foul to a number of problems really, so the government are now tightening us up, as they did with public sector probation, so we are slowly becoming more bureaucratic, more monolithic and slowly losing the original drive that happened in 2014".

Mitchell explained that he has had experience within probation for a long while, but also within a private organisation separate to probation. As such, he has seen issues present within the private sector, that have in turn been replicated on the experiences occurring within CRCs. He argues that privatisation was put into place within probation to reduce bureaucracy, however due to CRCs facing many challenges in their work to achieve the targets set, it has actually resulted in government's having to take back ownership which in essence goes against their original plan. He argues that there was the potential for CRCs to be effective, but because of the push of targets and focus on processes, it was more difficult. By stating that "*history will tell you that*", shows that he has not seen a positive result from privatisation before, and believes the same result has occurred with CRCs.

Julia has shared views regarding the pressure of targets for CRCs:

"It's a lot of stress. Quantity over quality ... We have hundreds, loads of targets, everything there is a deadline, loads of admin and paperwork, seeing people and completing things on time ... Yeah, and it's hard to try and do the work with the person when you've got a thousand targets to do in the back of your mind ... Yeah it's just hard with the deadlines ... To be fair I think what will be will be in terms of the job, it will always change, it will always, you know, there's always going to be cuts.

Julia draws attention to the high targets that probation staff are expected to achieve, and the feeling that her and other probation officers, cannot deliver the best service. This is due to them recognising the level of work that they have to complete in addition to their service user appointments, in order to achieve their targets. In relation to this, Julia is particularly discussing having additional administrative responsibilities and paperwork to do which have set deadlines, alongside the work she does to support those on her caseload. Julia notes that she has got to the point where she feels that cuts are an inevitable factor of probation, that has previously and will continue to occur.

Zoe shared her views working within a drug and alcohol charity regarding targets:

"Erm, I think the fact that its, it's very much, erm, I struggle with the payment by results kind of tag, that our team kind of operates under and you know, we do achieve our target each month, which gets our organisation each month a fat pay check, but I find that ethically kind of wrong, given that we are dealing with people. It's not a car wash and sometimes it feels like that, sometimes it feels like it should be, like we should have a star chart on the door to say we've had this many people through the door this week and we've helped this many people, when in actual fact, there's so much more going on in the background, it's not just as cut and dry as a payment by results process, that worries me. When I worked in the prisons, payment by results, we were financially penalised each month, and the pressures there were massive, and I wouldn't like to kind of be back in that environment because like I say, these are people that have got individual needs and wants, and you can't treat everyone the same".

Zoe's team is heavily focused on payment by results, which is a process that CRCs have also been going through. She highlights that her team are quite successful at meeting their targets, which causes them to achieve a strong payment each month. However, she makes a key point regarding the fact that the success they are being based on is service users, and therefore she questions how ethical it is to be praised on how many people they have helped, when there are so many other factors that are also going on in these individuals lives. She also reflects how when an organisation is not meeting their targets, as experienced by her when she worked within prison, then the organisation is heavily penalised, and the pressures put on staff are considerable. She further reiterates that when you are working with service users, these are individuals with different needs and wants, and therefore a one size fits all approach will not work, even a target has been put in place for all.

When discussing the overall experience of providing support within probation due to the change, and the impact of targets, Mitchell is wary of what he states, but urges for the inspectorate reports that present a negative view to be considered:

"Erm, it's a tricky one, I've got to be careful what I say really, because I could be critical and I am not sure I really want that to be recorded, so I would say read what the HMIP reports are saying already, so there is a series of them, Merseyside, West Yorkshire, we've just been IP'd which is the equivalent of our Ofsted and what I would add and what I would say to you is that the conclusions drawn in those reports is demonstrated here, there are significant weaknesses, there are significant strengths but there are significant weaknesses, and I think Staffordshire and West Midlands is no different".

Although Mitchell has these views, he does not want it to be known that it comes from him. It is clear from within his interview that there was a sense of nervousness regarding how critical he was willing to be of CRCs, despite him both recognising and arguing that there have been severe weaknesses. However, the inspectorate reports that he mentions show very negative views of the CRCs and note significant weaknesses across Staffordshire and West Midlands for CRC probation delivery, in addition to other CRCs.

One of the significant issues that has impacted staff, and some practitioners discussed was lack of funding. Mitchell draws attention to the reason for this by providing an insight into how CRCs implement processes:

"So, CRC, in order to make a profit, which is what they are in business for has essentially got to stack it high and sell it cheap, and you can't do that if you are dealing with complex needs".

Mitchell notes that CRCs have ended up focusing on financial gain and the best way to make profit. This has resulted in trying to sell a highly perceived serviced, but cheaply. This as such means a target heavy practice for probation staff, but with smaller budgets to deliver the service. Mitchell highlights that trying to deliver a service for cheap that is also effective, does not work with people with complex needs. Mitchell feels there is a disconnect between the expectation of supporting service users to make a positive change through reducing their alcohol consumption and desist from offending, with the expectation that this needs to be completed in a cheap and restricted manner, due to small budgets and restricted time with high caseloads.

One of the key areas that has seen a reduction in funding is for substance use services, as noted by Mason:

"... so, in 2014 the government split the probation team to privatised and err national probation, so since then, since that was sort of implemented, yeah the workload has like doubled and the funding for addiction services has gone down by like 75%, so you know all the interventions they do, the group work and the head massages, and alternative therapies, all these things have now been ceased".

Mason notes how part of the management of CRCs, enables those organisations to choose how much funding is assigned to substance use support services. Mason highlights how the number of organisations that he was previously able to reach out to in order to arrange for them to provide support for service users who misuse alcohol and drugs, reduced by 75% after the changes made by CRCs. This left CRC staff having substantially less services available for substance use support than previous, despite the targets that they are expected to achieve regarding supporting service users being high.

This narrative is shared by those working specifically within those drug and alcohol support organisations. She highlights how even those charities who have been successful at receiving

a contract with CRCs have also seen a reduction in how much they are paid to deliver the service. Rachael explains how she does not think that it is manageable to continue with the rate of funding cuts present:

"... with the amount of funding cuts that we do have left right and centre, I don't think it will continue to work the way that it is, and I worry then ... [they need to open] their eyes, stop living in a bit of a glass bubble, and open their eyes to what is actually in the world. You walk around time, anytime you go to, there's everywhere, there's drug use, there's alcohol use, its everywhere, so if anyone says the services don't need the money, they are ridiculous [laughs]".

Rachael argues that it is important that enough funding is present for the relevant organisations to be able to deliver an effective service. She argues that those who are in charge of issuing financial support need to recognise that substance use support providers are needed, due to the level of substance issues present. Rachael feels that it is laughable for any organisation working with service users who misuse substances to feel that there is not a need to provide robust provision to target those issues.

5.4.1.1 Discussion - High Caseloads, Targets and Lack of Funding Subtheme

The first of two subthemes for the changing nature of probation is high caseloads, targets, and lack of funding. This subtheme acknowledged the impact that the implementation of the Transforming Rehabilitation programme had on the effectiveness to deliver probation services. The analysis of this subtheme drew attention to the factors that reduced the effectiveness of probation delivery and substance use support and played a strong role in the Transforming Rehabilitation programme being considered a failure.

Many of the comments raised by practitioners have been repeated or reinforced by others, highlighting the true severity of the issue. For example, Nina noted the need to employ more staff so that the volume of service users on cases can be spread out, enabling a higher standard of provision. This issue is also present within charities, with Zoe commenting on how drug and alcohol workers have high caseloads, which results in the time they can spend with each client being limited and in turn the effectiveness of the support being reduced. In a press release, The Chief Inspector of Probation, Justin Russell reported concerns regarding staff welfare, in

addition to staffing levels and workloads, noting that with too many cases, there are too many life stories for probation staff to absorb and effectively support (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021j). It appears this issue developed through the implementation of Transforming Rehabilitation, as offender management statistics for 2010 until 2014 (of which the Transforming Rehabilitation programme was brought in), showed that probation caseloads fell year on year, with general crime levels and the number of people going to court and being sentenced reducing (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021a). These caseloads however began rising again from 2015 onwards, as a result of some of the changes brought in by the Transforming Rehabilitation programme (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021a). These issues appear to have been long-lasting, as even after the demise of Transforming Rehabilitation, staff shortages within probation remain high. In December 2022, the probation officer vacancy rate was 29%, highlighting severe staff shortages, and high levels of sickness absence were also present across probation regions (National Audit Office, 2023).

During the period of part-privatisation however, practitioners reported how the issue with managing cases has been particularly difficult for those working for the privatised CRCs. The NPS was responsible managed service users who were considered of high risk of serious harm, and those who were being managed under a Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangement (MAPPA) (HM Prison and Probation Service, 2021b). Nolan highlights that the service users being supported by the NPS have more at risk if they reoffend, due to them being sent back to prison, and as such they are more likely to comply. He also notes that the crimes that they originally committed are often more severe and therefore they are less likely to repeat the crime. Whereas CRCs supervise low to medium risk service users with the aim of delivering rehabilitative interventions to these individuals (HM Prison and Probation Service, 2021b). Nolan highlights how service users supported by CRCs often have more chaotic lifestyles, are more likely to engage in a cycle of reoffending, and less likely to comply with probation.

For this reason, supporting CRC service users is often more difficult for probation staff. During inspections of probation services in 2018/19, of which it was found that CRCs had a higher caseload on average than the NPS. Although the nature of the crimes can lead this to be expected, that does not take away from the complexity of CRC cases, which require high levels of case management, due to dealing with service users who have: a higher likelihood to

reoffend, chaotic lifestyles, a multitude of needs, and domestic abuse issues (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021a).

Reflecting specifically on caseload numbers, Mitchell highlights how on average CRC probation officers have a caseload of 65, with him having a caseload that reached 130 a year prior. He notes how unrealistic caseloads are the norm for CRC staff, whereas NPS staff tend to have an average of 40 cases, with half of them being prison. This is despite guidance from HM Inspectorate of Probation (2020b:17) stating that *'[a]lthough dependent on operating models and type of case carried, we do not consider caseloads in excess of 60 to be reasonable'.* Inspections have highlighted that staff across CRCs are feeling overwhelmed, and noting that their caseloads are not manageable, with reports of probation staff having caseloads of over 100, despite them seeing around 45 cases as a manageable amount (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021a). It has also been reinforced that the average caseloads for CRCs are much higher than for the NPS, with the majority of CRC staff having over 50 cases, compared to only 1 in 20 NPS staff (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2019a).

Nolan discussed how service users supported by CRCs are more likely to be part of a reoffending cycle and have been for a long time. He notes how part of his role as a probation officer is to try and break that cycle, however the implementation of the post -release supervision (PSS) period, which has resulted in more service users being on probation, has also increased the figure of reoffending rates. The PSS was brought in as part of the Transforming Rehabilitation reforms and established within legislation under the Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014 (Ministry of Justice, 2014b). It essentially means that any offender released from prison serving a sentence of under 12 months, is now required to receive community-based post-release supervision (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2018). Before the introduction of the PSS period, individuals on short term sentences under 12 months, did not receive community-based support from probation services (Cracknell, 2020). This had a direct effect on caseload figures, with a statistic that was decreasing, actually ending up rising by 39 per cent between 2010 and 2021 (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021a). The intention of the PSS period was to provide greater rehabilitation support for short term offenders, with an aim of reducing their reoffending (Downs, 2019). However, in practice, no reduction was seen to reoffending, with 64% of adults serving short term sentence of less than 12 months reoffending, and a quarter being recalled to prison (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2019b).

The service that was founded on the basis of being a befriending service (Justice Committee, 2011), according to Nolan, has lost its roots. He argues that intentions for CRCs were positive, but the multitude of flaws, particularly a lack of resources, and funding and staffing issues, have made it very difficult to be successful. Funding cuts have been particularly detrimental in Julia's experience, and she believes that this is now the norm for probation. In an official review of the Transforming Rehabilitation programme, it was determined that the rushed process to implement the Transforming Rehabilitation programme, not only resulted in the Ministry of Justice, failing 'to deliver its 'rehabilitation revolution' but it left probation services underfunded, fragile, and lacking the confidence of the courts' (House of Commons Committee for Public Accounts, 2019: 3). The design resulted in CRCs setting targets for volumes of work that were unrealistic and therefore did not materialise, particularly within the parameters of a payment by results context, which resulted in subsequent financial pressure (House of Commons Committee for Public Accounts, 2019). Overall, probation was left in a worse position post these reforms, than they were prior (House of Commons Committee for Public Accounts, 2019).

In his interview, Mitchell encouraged the inspectorate reports, both generally, and Staffordshire and West Midlands specific, to be reviewed. He argued that there are several negative views of CRCs within these reports, particularly of funding cuts, of which he agreed with. From looking at these inspectorate reports, it is clear that the red signs of how well the Transforming Rehabilitation programme was going were clear early on. In the 2018-19 summary report, it was noted that after having inspected all probation services both NPS and CRCs, no probation services were outstanding, only one CRC was considered good (five NPS), 19 CRCs required improvement (two NPS), and one CRC was inadequate (zero NPS) (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2019c). Staffordshire and West Midlands CRC was one of those CRCs that was noted to require improvement (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2018a), with the qualitative comments within this thesis providing qualitative backing for some of the issues identified within the inspector's report.

5.4.2 Division

The final subtheme for the changing nature of probation is division. Participants share how the divide of probation into CRCs and NPS has caused a series of challenges, particularly in

relation to locality of offices and the implications of that. There are also discussions of the divide between probation and substance use charities. To start, Nolan discusses how one of the implications of the split involved centralising CRC probation offices. He explains the impact that having a city centre location has on the service users he supports:

" It makes it harder obviously, getting to Birmingham City Centre is hard for some people, some people are anxious of getting on buses, a lot of the drug and alcohol have got mental health issues, which aren't being looked at, erm you know to get here on a bus and to get home its £5. If we want them to come in twice a week, that's £10 and if they are on benefits and they are also spending the money on their habits, it's extremely hard. When we were all out at the local offices, yeah you could still help people out to get the bus but you know it was, it probably wasn't as frightening for a lot of them as coming in to town, and they could usually walk there, or we could do a lot of home visits, you had your car with you when you worked in the small offices. Erm, so I think coming into the city centre, has made the situation worsen, the fact that everyone mixes with everyone else, you know you get a lot of sort of, the drinkers meet each other, the drug users meet each other, erm and I, I don't think anyone likes the city centre location, maybe the managers do because of the ease, but I don't think any of the actual officers think it's a good idea. It's an easy office to get to in one sense, but in other sense it costs a lot of money to get here, and you know there's a lot of people that just don't like coming into a busy place. Town is busy and it can be frightening for some of them. So, I, the likelihood is they will probably keep the offices even when we move back, but I much prefer the kind of local offices in the local neighbourhoods. I would prefer if things would go back to that situation, but we are where we are really".

Nolan highlights how the city centre encompasses a multitude of challenges. He notes the cost of travel for service users who often are reliant on getting the bus to probation due to the distance. Prior to the split, many service users visited a local office, of which they could walk to. When working with service users that are misusing substances, he explains how they often find travel into the city centre expensive, particularly when they are trying to manage this alongside supporting their addiction. A key issue Nolan identified was the fear and anxiety that numerous people get about entering into the city centre, for various reasons including the busyness. It also comes with the added aspect of mixing with people with similar substance use issues, which can make rehabilitation more difficult to sustain. Nolan highlights how local offices are more accessible and seen as less damaging than the city centre location. He

also highlights how this dislike for the city centre offices is shared between most service users and staff, with only management sharing a supportive view due to it reducing their travel requirements.

A further factor that Nolan has noted but has been discussed in depth by Zoe is the greater chance of issues with gangs being present within the probation office:

"One that puts people off is really gang issues. They can bump into people that they don't actually want to bump in to, and there's times when you'll come into the office and it's all kicked off and they'll be knives that have been brought in and guns. It's kind of a risky place, because they don't know who they'll bump in to when the whole of the city are coming there, and so yeah, I think that puts a lot of people off as well ... We do have two security guards that walk across the building, daily, but they are not actually allowed to touch any of the clients, so if it does actually kick off, the only thing they can do is phone the police.".

Zoe notes that issues with gangs and drug use have been more present due to the move to the city centre. Zoe highlights how some of the serious issues that have derived come in the form of fights breaking out, whereby weapons can be present within the probation offices. In his interview, Nolan noted how the points raised by Zoe result in probation officers having to spend time negotiating the days that they will see service users to avoid individuals who have gang-related issues seeing one another. He also mentioned how some of these scenarios have led to stabbings occurring. Being involved in these environments can make it even more difficult for those are considered vulnerable to attend, particularly those who are misusing substances and are not sober.

Drug and alcohol support workers, such as Daniel, have also shared their view regarding division. For them, in comes in the format of better communication being needed between substance use providers and probation:

"It's something you discuss with the client really, to be truthful, so it's more of a collaborative approach, it would be led more by myself, based on what they present with. I feel bad for the client, forcing them to come here and pay for travel, and for some their trigger is town as well, err, to come in any more than they need to. There may be a miscommunication with probation, say if they don't read our feedback that we send to them

regularly, and they are booking them say on a Monday to see them, but I'm seeing them on a Tuesday or Thursday, they struggle to get in on those two appointments, at risk of triggering the person committing crime or jumping on a bus, sneakily. So, I'll generally, if I see that they are doing well, I'll generally feedback to the probation that I feel that this person is doing okay, I'm going to give them monthly appointments, what do you think? Or I'll be saying, when is your next appointment with x, y, z, and if they are seeing them monthly, then I'm going to put that client straight to monthly as well, so we've got some continuity".

Daniel notes that there are issues with communication, between substance use support services, and probation staff, particularly when looking at booking appointments. Daniel notes that in his role as a drug and alcohol support worker, he will actively contact probation staff in order to promote consistency, such as scheduling appointments at the same time, however he argues that his messages do not tend to be adhered to. As such service users are being made to come into the city centre multiple times a week, which can increase chances of turning to further substance use or reoffending. This is particularly concerning for those who are misusing alcohol, as it means they are entering a location where alcohol consumption is promoted through the visibility of pubs and bars. Daniel notes that when communication is successful, it can make it easier for the service user and therefore increase the chance of their success.

The final yet very moving quote to discuss in regard to the divide is from Sarah:

"I think, it should never ever have been separated in the first place. I think it all sounds very good on paper, but however it was, 297 victims, as a result of this merge, so no, a lot of that could have been avoided. So, I think it has become less about people, it's more about a target, more about money, and when we do merge, I think it will be exciting, I think it will be better".

Sarah argues that the merge has caused victims of the change rather than help. It has become more about targets than support. In her interview, she has highlighted how service users who misuse alcohol have many different needs, and that a system that is focused on the organisation rather than the people it supports is unlikely to meet those needs in a way that will successfully promote reducing alcohol consumption and desistance. She is excited for the merge to occur, as she believes public ownership is a better way of working for probation,

rather than the privatised approach that is centred around profit. Overall, probation needs to be more people focused, and not solely money and target driven.

5.4.2.1 Discussion - Division Subtheme

The second subtheme for the changing nature of the probation service that was considered was division. A particular focus was drawn to the impact of moving probation offices into central locations and removing local bases. There were also discussions of the disconnect between probation, and substance use support charities. The analysis of this subtheme highlights the negative impact of central locations for both service users progress and staff case management, and the lack of communication between probation and external charities.

One of the changes made as part of the Transforming Rehabilitation programme was to move probation offices into central locations, whereas previously there was local offices. Many participants raised the issue that the new location had had on clients, due to it making it more difficult for them on the basis of central locations having heightened links to crime and substance use. One of the key issues raised by Nolan was that with everyone going to the same regional office, it increases the number of service users who are, or have been, misusing substances to mix with others in the same situation. The concept of offenders mixing within set locations tends to be discussed on the basis of differential association and most often offending behaviour. Differential association argues that by interacting with others that engage in criminal behaviour, a person will develop the same values and attitudes that come with such offending (Sutherland, 1947). Some researchers however have considered differential association through the remit of substance use, particularly drug use. Krohn et al (2016:376) refer to differential association as being important as it '*defines the main context in which the actor may observe others engaging in drug using behaviors (imitation), encounter a stimulus that increases the probability of the response in the future for continued drug use (differential reinforcement), and acquire definitions or attitudes favorable to drug use*'. Although differential association might have some weight for service users on probation attending a central location, it is worth noting that these scenarios may not be as reflective as this group due to them not meeting up on their own accord, and not necessarily regularly seeing the same people.

A key issue for service users based on the move of probation offices, is the increased access to substances that is present within a central location, for both alcohol and drugs. When discussing alcohol, central locations such as city centres have higher rates of venues where alcohol is widely used and sold, predominantly connected to the night-time economy in forms such as pubs and bars (Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, 2004; Wickham, 2012). This makes it more difficult for those trying to avoid interactions with alcohol. Additionally, for those service users who misuse drugs, there is the increased likelihood of contact with, and heightened presence of, drug dealers and gangs within central locations, that service users have to deal with. The rise in demand for drugs has resulted in the number of drug dealers within urban cities, and central spaces increasing (Densley et al, 2018). Furthermore, there is persistent evidence showing a link between gangs and drug offending, with a many arguing that gangs evolve into controlling drug markets, particularly the lower levels of the UK market (Edmunds et al, 1996; Densley, 2014; Windle and Briggs, 2015). The pressure that drug dealers and gang presence might have on service users could lead to issues of fear and anxiety. Some participants did comment on service users being afraid and having anxiety in relation to the large numbers of individuals who are present within central locations such as a city centre. Brady et al (2013) highlighted how substance use has been noted to have links with certain anxiety disorders, including generalised anxiety disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder. With all these factors in mind, local offices were seen as far more accessible for service users, and less fear inducing. This is a factor however that appears to be missing from the existing literature.

A further issue raised was in relation to the divide between probation services and voluntary agencies that work alongside them. Daniel notes how he actively contacts probation staff to try and promote consistency with service users, such as scheduling appointments on the same day and time. However, despite his communication he reports that he does not receive communication back, often resulting in increased visits into the city centre for service users, which increases their chances of not engaging, reoffending, and relapsing. Inspectors have supported the perspective of their being a poor level of delivery by probation for substance misuse and addiction cases (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2021h). Upon the implementation of the Transforming Rehabilitation programme, complaints were made regarding the contractual arrangements between probation and voluntary agencies, with them being referred to as burdensome and disproportionate (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2018b). This in itself potentially set the narrative between the relationship of these two sectors working

together. This alongside the previously mentioned issues of probation staff being overstretched may be a key reason for the lack of communication due to them not having the extra time to liaise with other organisations. Despite this however, strong partnership working between commissioners, such as probation, and voluntary agencies, such as drug and alcohol support charities, will lead to more effective outcomes (Clinks, 2024). Voluntary sector organisations support and empower service users, which can support the reduction in reoffending and improve rehabilitation provision (Millings et al, 2023).

The final point to raise is the overall discontent that formed as a result of the division of the probation service in the first place. Sarah strongly argues that the part-privatisation should never have occurred, and that it has resulted in more victims of the change, than success stories. The Ministry of Justice, has recognised many of the flaws raised, including noting that CRCs were '*too dependent on volumes of work which did not materialise and their exposure to payment by results worsened the subsequent financial pressure*', and that they had '*insufficient income to cover the cost of basic, good quality probation services, leaving them unable to deliver the innovation promised and vulnerable to outright failure*' (House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 2019:3). Perhaps the most detrimental being that the lack of planning and mismanagement of the reforms has let down service users by failing to dramatically reduce reoffending rates and increasing the average number of reoffences committed by each service user who reoffends (House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 2019).

Sarah further argued that the part-privatisation became more about targets than supporting service users. As such, it can be noted that overall, probation needs to be more people focused, and not solely money and target driven. Dowden and Andrews (2004: 205) argue that in order to facilitate respect between a service user and probation officer, there needs to be 'open, warm, and enthusiastic communication). Furthermore, Grapes (2006) argues for probation taking a human service approach, where the focus is on building personal relationships, rather than managerial or administrative. This is particularly important, as service users are more likely to be influenced by change and willing to take advice from those they respect (McNeill, 2009). Additionally, engaging service users within the planning of their goals in order for them to feel more connected with the process and in turn truly support them to desist (McNeill and Weaver, 2010).

5.5 Chapter Conclusions

In contrast to the atmosphere felt within the service user interviews, the practitioner interviews felt rather bleak. The conditions to which practitioners have been working within, whilst still providing the one-to-one experiences that have been praised by service users, was brought to light within these interviews. Three themes were focused on by practitioner participants, barriers to recovery, providing support for service users misusing substances and minimising offending behaviour, and the changing nature of probation. Participants shared a multitude of experiences and perspectives, but overall, there was a negative perspective regarding the implications that part-privatisation had had on the service. Many of the criticisms raised were of factors that had been impacted due to changes put in place by the Transforming Rehabilitation reforms. In general, there was a consensus that the service users that are considered low to medium risk, and therefore supported by CRCs, are more likely to live chaotic lives, which in turn means that providing support for them is difficult and complex.

The first theme, barriers to recovery, was discussed through the two subthemes of mental health and coping mechanism. These subthemes explained practitioners' experiences of working with service users who have or had misused substances, and the typical factors that prevented or deterred their recovery. For the subtheme of mental health, it was found that a service users mental health can impact them entering into substance misuse, which in turn can enhance the chances of them engaging within offending behaviour. Many practitioners argued that there are challenges that come with providing support for service users who have mental health problems, and misuse substances, as they note that mental health in itself can be a barrier to support. Additionally, the mental health support services that practitioners would like to signpost to, require the service user to be clean and not misusing substances, which acts as a further barrier. There was a general perspective that mental health support services that were internal to the probation service would be helpful, particularly as it may reduce the number of service users who do not attend the support, due to it being an external agency. The subtheme of coping mechanism highlighted how substances are often used to deal with past and current trauma for service users, such as issues of stress, financial difficulty, domestic violence, and childhood experiences. It was argued that generally close social ties, particularly to family, and steady employment, tended to add to stability for service users.

The second theme discussed providing support for service users misusing substances and minimising offending behaviour, was broken up in to the three subthemes of service user motivation, treatment requirements, and finances. In the subtheme of service user motivation, the perspective of relationships, and the importance of strong family ties was mentioned as a key indicator of motivation. Many service users who were estranged from family were in a situation where this tended to include their children also, which has a particularly negative effect. It was reported that without this close network, service users tend to navigate to people in similar situations, as they do not a support network to make desistance feel worthwhile. This subtheme also highlighted that service users have to be ready and motivated change, and that being on probation is not equal to service user motivation. Service users ageing out of crime, and the possibility of service users being more motivated within a prison setting, than the community, was also mentioned. A further subtheme discussed was treatment requirements, whereby on the whole ATRs and DRRs were seen as not effective. ATRs were argued to be particularly poor, due to them coming with the challenges of service users often being intoxicated and therefore being less likely to be able to attend support groups, rehabilitation, or their probation appointments. Unlike DRRs of which are monitored weekly through drug tests, there is no requirement in place for ATRs which was also critiqued. Overall, there was a perspective that there needs to be a clearer plan in place for ATRs. Although more options are available for DRRs, it was noted that the previously present court involvement is no longer which has decreased their effectiveness. There was a general narrative that being on an ATR or DRR does not mean a service user is motivated to change, with some choosing to go on one to avoid prison. The final subtheme for this theme was finances, of which the bulk of the narrative centred on universal credit. Practitioners argued that universal credit increases vulnerability, crime rates and substance use for service users. Additionally, the lack of digitalisation has resulted in the workload for probation staff increasing. Service users seeking employment was also discussed, with it being noted that it is more difficult on probation due to them needing to attend regular probation meetings, but in some locations, probation staff, and drug and alcohol workers, offer late appointments to try and accommodate this.

The changing nature of probation was the final theme discussed within this chapter, with the subthemes of high caseloads, targets and lack of funding, and division being the subthemes derived. Within high caseloads, targets and lack of funding, the predominant focus was on how the Transforming Rehabilitation programme exacerbated these three issues. CRC probation officers had high caseloads and were underfunded, to the point where they were unable to

deliver an effective service that promotes a reduction in reoffending and supporting the needs of the service user. CRCs managed low to medium risk offenders, who have been considered more challenging due to the likelihood of having more chaotic lives and higher reoffending rates, in addition to having high numbers of service users across probation as a whole, and high caseloads per probation officer. These numbers rose as a result of the reforms bringing in the PSS period. The targets set for CRCs were also not realistic, particularly with payment by results being in place. The second, and final subtheme discussed was division. The location of probation offices was of discussion, with part of the part-privatisation resulting in CRC offices being based within central locations, rather than locally as they were before. This led to a multitude of challenges, such as increased interaction with substance and offending, more drug dealer and gang presence, and enhanced anxiety and fear by service users. It was argued that the local offices were much better received.

6. Chapter 6: Concluding Chapter

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of service users on probation who were receiving support for desistance and alcohol misuse, and the practitioners delivering that support. The research focused on the experiences of service users and staff within SWM CRC. This chapter will provide a summary of the key research findings, a recognition of the strengths and limitations of this study, a discussion of the theoretical contributions, policy and practice implications, and future research recommendations, and then ending with a final conclusion. This study overall contributes to the use of phenomenological research within criminology, whilst adding to desistance, substance use and penal literature.

6.2 Key Research Findings

To fully highlight the key research findings, results from both the service users, and practitioner interviews, will be synthesised to answer the overarching research questions of this thesis, which are:

- How do service users on probation in the community, within Staffordshire and West Midlands, feel that support services have been at assisting them to desist from offending behaviour?
- What are the experiences of service users in the community (who have, or are currently, misusing substances) of the availability and quality of treatment for their recovery?
- What are the experiences of probation officers and drug/alcohol workers in supporting service users on probation in the community, to desist from offending behaviour and reduce their substance use levels?
- Are there factors that have increased the chances of service users engaging in substance misuse (particularly alcohol misuse), and are there factors that may act as barriers to recovery?

Part of the discussion with service users regarding what encourages desistance centred on what the key driving forces towards desistance were. It was from this that not only key desistance indicators were established, but also acknowledgement of how probation engage with service users to motivate them to to want to desist. From this, three key aspects were determined: a service user's length of time in the criminal justice system, their involvement

in alternative activities, and the support they have received from probation officers. The length of time service users spent in the criminal justice system, alongside having access to alternative activities tended to go hand in hand for service users when discussing desistance. There was a consensus that substance use and misuse can play a large part in the offending cycle. However, it was also determined that when service users enter a certain stage in their lives or age, and they have the opportunity to, or desire to have access to alternative activities that align with non-offending behaviour, then they tend to move towards desistance. Some of the alternative activities discussed by service users were consistent employment, and volunteering opportunities. A particular appreciation was given to the probation integrated peer mentoring programme, and the in-house options for education, training, and employment support. For those service users with previous experience of the probation service, it was noted how the inclusion of positive alternative activities that were in-house had improved probation provision. These particular findings have contributed to the differing theories of desistance present within the existing literature, such as the ontogenetic theoretical concept of ageing out of crime (Blumstein and Cohen, 1987; Farrington, 1997), the concept of secondary desistance within identity theory (Maruna and Farrall, 2004; McNeill and Weaver, 2010), and the sociogenic theoretical perspective of ties to society and stakes within in conformity enhancing the chance of desistance (Maruna, 1999; McNeill, 2006). This research has found that for some desisters, these theories work in conjunction with one another, rather than one outweighing the other.

Additionally, service users shared views regarding the support they have received from probation, with them service users generally reporting feeling positive about their relationships with their probation officer. When talking to probation officers specifically it was noted how adjustments to their practice had to be made to support the size of their caseload, such as reducing the volume of face-to-face contact with service users. An example provided within this research by a service user was that their meetings with their probation officer had been reduced down to being monthly, with them having remote support via phone calls or messaging services in between those meetings. Although caseload pressures may not have been highlighted to service users in this situation, this sort of change to probation support was well received by those who discussed it. One issue to identify is regarding the ability to stay on track post their community sentence, with some service users fearing losing the support they are receiving from the post the length of their sentence. A further critique tended to be in the form of the offender management groups that have been set up within

probation and that probation officers refer their service users to attend. As such, although positivity has been shown towards probation staff and the lengths that have been taken, there are mixed views on the effectiveness of these groups to do what they are set out to achieve, which is supporting desistance.

Less positive views were shared when discussing service users' experiences with the availability and quality of treatment for substance use. Service user participants were particularly vocal regarding the focus on harm reduction over abstinence within the treatment provision provided to them. Generally, there was a desire and suggestion made by service users for their being room for probation to involve more abstinence-based focused organisations and provision. Although many of the service users had engaged in harm reduction, comments were made regarding it being ineffective, such as service users who were encouraged to drink alcohol with a lower percentage, ended up drinking these drinks to excess. Furthermore, key support was made for abstinence-based programmes, particularly Alcoholic Anonymous. This supports the literature that argues that Alcoholics Anonymous is the most effective path for abstaining from alcohol (Kelly et al, 2020). A further issue discussed was the reliance on, and lack of consistency regarding, treatment provision provided by agencies that are external to probation. These findings are dissimilar to the existing literature whereby there is a focus on promoting the use of external charities and voluntary agencies for supporting service users with substance use. However, this study found that service users were seeking in-house provision for substance use support, and that generally they were not approving of the standard of support being provided by external agencies. There were some external agencies that were notably reported to be better than others. As noted, Alcoholics Anonymous was an external agency that received positive feedback, however it is not an organisation that was linked to probation through any contract. The discrepancies between quality of provision therefore resulted in there being inconsistencies. With this research only having findings from Staffordshire and West Midlands, and not the wider country, it could arguably be said that the inconsistencies would be further widespread if other localities were included.

The experiences of practitioners (probation officers, and drug and alcohol workers) were also discussed, in relation to them supporting service users on probation, to desist from offending behaviour and reduce their substance use levels. In line with the literature, there was a consensus that the low to medium risk service users that are supported by CRCs, are more

likely to live chaotic lives, which can result in it being more difficult and complex to provide support to them. Practitioner participants voiced their experiences of working with service users to provide support for substance use, and for encouraging desistance, with the three topic points of service user motivation, treatment requirements, and finances being key. In relation to service user motivation, participants highlighted the impact that relationships and family ties can have. Supporting existing desistance literature, this finding reinforces how life events such as strong family ties, can result in someone turning towards desistance due to them feeling that they have too much to lose to carry on offending (Maruna, 2001). It was also found that service users however have to be ready and motivated to change, therefore meaning that simply being on probation is not enough for some service users. As such if service users do not have strong family ties, and they are not in a mindset where they are open to change, then the process to support with this change is particularly difficult for probation staff. Despite this however, the performance indicators placed on probation staff do not seem to consider the impact of service user motivation.

One of the key issues raised by practitioner participants as requiring work was treatment requirements. It was raised that despite practitioners working with more service users that misuse alcohol than drugs, there are more people on a DRR than an ATR. This is reflected in the official statistics that show more service users are given a DRR than ATR (Ministry of Justice and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, 2022). This suggested that work needs to be completed early on in to court decisions regarding which treatment requirements are issued. Perhaps a deeper concern however has come from many practitioner participants arguing that ATRs and DRRs are not seen as effective, with ATRs being considered particularly poor. There are challenges that come with supporting service users on an ATR, such as them being intoxicated and therefore not being able to attend support groups, rehabilitation programmes, or probation appointments. Furthermore, unlike DRRs whereby there is weekly monitoring through drug tests, there is no requirement in place for ATRs. This could provide some insight as to why previous literature has found there to be no connection between ATR involvement and reduced reoffending (McSweeney, 2014). Similar to the service motivation point raised above, it was also noted that some service users choose to have an ATR or DRR, in order to avoid prison, rather than them wanting to change.

An additional issue that practitioner participants faced was the impact of universal credit changes, such as the switch to monthly payments of which are now sent straight to the service

user, and the focus on a digital system. They noted how the changes to universal credit increased vulnerability, crime rates and substance use for service users due to the money being more likely to go on substances rather than rent and food. It also increased workload for probation staff, as many service users did not have the financial means or access to the internet to be able to liaise, hence them going through their probation officer regarding any issues.

Finally, both service users and practitioners provided responses that helped answer whether there are factors that increase service users misusing substances, and whether there are certain barriers to recovery. Both practitioners and service users discussed the topics of mental health with service users also noting how social settings and legality play an important role for alcohol use, and practitioners discussing coping mechanisms. In relation to mental health, participants noted how substance use can both negatively impact service user's mental health, but also how mental health problems can be exacerbated by using substances. For those who started to misuse substances as a response to poor mental health, they noted how their mental health issues were either exacerbated by, or developed as a result of their conviction, such as loss of employment, or breakdown of intimate partner relationships. All participants who discussed this however did agree on their being a link between substance use and mental health, and the need for support. The type of support being provided for mental health provision however was criticised, due to its availability and practicality. For example, in order to receive support from in-house mental health teams, service users must have low level mental health problems, which was argued to often not be suitable for CRC service users. Furthermore, the external nature of the support was criticised by participants due to probation staff having to go through a long-winded and complicated process in order to engage service users with mental health support. It was therefore argued that a clearer system that is more inclusive of those on probation was needed.

Several studies have noted that substance misuse is more prevalent when someone is using it as a coping mechanism, rather than social drinking (Cahalan et al., 1969; Farber et al., 1980; Johnson et al., 1985; Cooper et al., 1988). Although this study would support this, in terms of a barrier to recovery, service users have reported how it is social drinking and the environment that comes with that, that has increased the chances of them engaging in substance use, even when they are looking to abstain. This research therefore provides a contemporary perspective on how social settings can impact service users who are receiving

support for substance use. Football culture, public houses (commonly known as pubs), alongside the social acceptance and legality of alcohol within the United Kingdom, have all been given as examples which make it more difficult for someone to abstain from alcohol or reduce their alcohol intake.

Overall, service users were positive of the experiences they were receiving from probation staff specifically in relation to supporting them with desistance. Their negative views tended to be when discussing substance use provision, and services that align with that. On the whole, they were not supportive of outsourcing rehabilitation services, and generally reported that the quality of services provided by external agencies contracted to work with probation was not of a high standard. This was not to say that all external agencies were poor, but more that the focus on harm reduction rather than abstinence, resulted in some agencies that service users felt may be better aligned, not being signposted to. There did appear to be a lack of clarity between practitioners and service users regarding the volume of work probation staff were facing, with service users relying heavily on probation staff. Alongside the challenges of Transforming Rehabilitation, of which will be summarised in more depth within the Knowledge Development section, practitioners noted that issues such as universal credit, and ineffective ATRs and DRRs, made it particularly difficult to support service users with substance use and desistance provision. Furthermore, both service users and staff noted factors that act as barriers to recovery and increase the chances of service users engaging in substance misuse. Mental health issues and substances being used as coping mechanisms were discussed as playing key roles. Additionally, the legality of alcohol particularly, alongside the culture of alcohol use within social settings in the United Kingdom was also clear.

6.3 Knowledge Development

Firstly, in terms of academic knowledge development, the research provided a greater contemporary understanding of support for substance use, particularly alcohol and desistance provision, for service users during the implementation of the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' programme. Furthermore, this fieldwork is one of the only studies that considers the views of both practitioners and service users at the same time and puts their voices at the forefront of the findings. As such, this research offers not only an insight in to positive and negative examples of probation provision, but also a look in to how 'Transforming Rehabilitation'

impacted the lives of practitioners and service users in the delivery and receiving of substance use and desistance support.

Some of the points raised by participants in relation to probation provision are lacking from literature within criminology. One of these points is the positive impact that a 'tough-love' approach by probation officers can have on service users. It was found that taking a stern approach that is driven by caring about the success of the service user, such as refusing to see a service user if they are intoxicated, for some service users, has a dramatically positive impact on them reducing their alcohol intake. This may be common practice within probation; however, the academic literature does not appear to greatly discuss how the 'probation-service user' relationship, and the level of care shown by probation officers, can play a strong role in motivating service users to reduce their alcohol consumption. A further point regarding probation provision is the fear faced by service users are losing the support they receive from their probation officer, post completing their community sentence or license. This places greater pressure on probation officers to try and ensure the stability of their service users ahead of completion, but also highlights a risk that is not commonly discussed regarding the level of support available post probation involvement.

A further point to be discussed is the need for there to be a review on the type of support service users are being offered by probation for their needs, particularly for substance use. It has been found that the type of support offered can impact a service users desire to reduce or abstain from alcohol use. For example, it was suggested that more staff with lived experiences of substance use are needed, so that they can provide a clear insight and example to service users. The lack of this type of support is what has directed some service users towards organisations such as Alcoholics Anonymous, as they provide the service that may be missing from their current probation provision. This is further reinforced with the finding that ATRs have not been seen as effective. An evaluation on the effectiveness of ATRs is rather scarce within the existing literature, and therefore this is a key knowledge development for the field. This research has received negative feedback regarding ATRs. For example, it is argued that there is a lack of provision for alcohol support, and when provision is available such as detox programmes, the process is rare and complex, and comes with several caveats of which alcohol misusing service users may not be able to adhere to, such as being sober. Furthermore, the research has noted how some service users are choosing ATRs, and DRRs, rather than a prison sentence. This highlights a challenge that probation staff may face with supporting service

users on these treatment requirements, as the motivation for service users to receive substance use support and change their substance use behaviours, may not be present or their main priority.

A further area that this research provides insight in to is what support adjustments may be beneficial within probation regarding mental health provision. When discussing MHTRs, the academic literature has found points such as lack of necessary guidance, limited understanding about who meets the criteria, delays with psychiatric reports, and lack of necessary service provision (Bradley, 2009; Khanom et al., 2009; Durcan, 2016; Scott and Moffatt, 2012) as key reasons for their not being a high uptake of them. This research however further develops this by noting that the fact that MHTRs are only available for service users with low level mental health problems, ostracises the more complex cases. This is problematic as service users who are considered low to medium risk from a probation perspective, are more likely to have more complex mental health problems, and therefore not suitable for a MHTR. It has therefore been suggested that MHTRs could be adjusted to be more reflective of the probation population.

Finally, and possibly the most impactful knowledge development, has been the impact of part-privatisation on the experiences of service users and practitioners. Probation staff working within the privatised side of the probation service during the implementation of the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' programme faced significantly high caseloads and targets. Alongside this however, it is important to highlight how the substance use voluntary agencies that were in contracts with CRCs at the time, were also facing high caseloads and targets, which is a point that is not explored in depth within the existing literature. This research found how a result of these issues, resulted in the standard of provision reducing, and adjustments having to me made, such as spending less time with each client and using more remote forms of provision. The point that this research determined that has not been considered within previous literature however is the issue that came about as a result of the physical locality of probation offices. As a result of the part-privatisation, CRC offices were moved into central locations, rather than spread locally as they were prior. This had a significant impact for service users and staff. It led to a several challenges, such as services users having an increase in interaction with substance and offending, more drug dealer and gang presence, and enhanced anxiety and fear by service users. Staff reported attempting to adjust appointments so that service users who had difficulties with one another were not in at

the same time, but this was time-consuming and not always possible. Although security officers were present, they were not able to engage when altercations within the central offices did break out, but rather had to call the police. Furthermore, there were reports of contraband being bought in to the offices. Additionally, in terms of probation provision, not all service users were either comfortable or could afford to come into the centre, due to them having to get public transport, which led to issues with service users missing their appointments. As such, the research found that a return to local offices was argued for.

6.4 Policy and Practice Implications

In terms of the policy and practice implications on this this research, it is important to note that this research was undertook during a period of great change for the probation service, which was the implementation of the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' programme. The literature review previously discussed provides context as to how the probation service has changed from then to now, but this section can provide an insight into factors that are outstanding post the unification of the probation service, and therefore still need to be considered. This will be in addition to considerations being put forward regarding substance use provision for service users on probation, with this being discussed first.

It was identified during the research that treatment requirements, particularly ATRs, DRRs, and MHTRs, were either not effective, or not fit for purpose for the service users that are more likely to be assigned them or require them. For ATRs, it would be beneficial for more clarity to be given regarding what encompasses this order, and in turn better monitoring processes, such as weekly check-ins. From both the research, and the literature, the process of supporting service users with alcohol is either not particularly effective, or overly complex. As such, having more streamlined approaches, such as alternative processes for detox programmes, that take into consideration the challenges that someone misusing alcohol may have, and also inclusion of agencies that are more aligned with abstinence, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, then this could help improve the use of ATRs. For DRRs, it was noted how previous approaches, such as the use of drug courts was effective. Since the removal, or at least very rare use of these, DRRs have reduced in how well they work. It would therefore be beneficial to consider reinforcing drug courts as part of DRRs, as a way of supporting probation to keep service users accountable. Furthermore, both service users who are given an ATR or DRR, either have or are more likely to have mental health issues that coincide

with their substance use. The research has shown how MHTR do not meet the needs of most service users on probation who mental health support would benefit, such as prolific offenders and those who misuse substances. As such, a change to both the provision and guidelines for who is applicable for would be helpful for MHTRs. MHTRs would benefit from having provision that aligns with those who have more complex mental health concerns rather than low-level, and also change the requirements to enable those with more complex mental health concerns to be provided with a MHTR. For all these treatment requirements, it has been noted from the research that there is an overreliance of external agencies, and more need for both a more streamlined and quicker, in-house process. With this in mind, a review of more internal rehabilitation processes should be considered.

Perhaps the most long-lasting impact of the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' programme which saw a massive impact on the experiences of participants within this research, but is still being seen today, is the volume of people on probation due to the implementation of post-sentence supervision for any service user sentenced to less than two years in prison. The research showed the dramatic increase this had to numbers for probation caseloads, however despite this being spread across the previous CRC/ NPS staffing body, caseloads remain high. To this day, probation overall is understaffed, and are only being impacted more by a push to release people from prison earlier due to overcrowding within the prison system. This research has also seen how stretched probation officers, impacts the communication they have with other support services, such as substance use charities, which in turn impacts the quality of provision given to service users. This research has also shown through the views of service users how much impact the probation-service user relationship can be on a service users' journey of desistance and reducing or abstaining from substance use. It is therefore suggested that a review on the post-sentence supervision should be undertaken, along with a heavy focus on reducing probation caseloads, and increased opportunities for probation staff to communicate with colleagues in other support services. More widely, large scale changes such as the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' programme, should not be rushed through, with time being seen as key to mitigate against any potential issues that may arise because of the change.

6.5 Strengths and Limitations

A strength of this research is that it was undertook at a time of great change and provides insight into the views of service users and practitioners within probation at the time they are navigating

the change. This research therefore provides a look into the real feelings and experiences of participants in their present time, rather than reflecting on, or making assumptions of. This is supported by Polkinghorne (1995) who argues that the way in which people share their experience will be shaped by their immediate environment at the time of their interview.

A limitation, and strength, of this research is the use of phenomenology. Phenomenology, particularly hermeneutic phenomenology is not commonly used within criminology, and therefore this research adds to the growing body of work within the field. However, phenomenological research does come with its own limitations, particularly due to researchers questioning whether people can truly bracket their own experiences off, when reviewing those of others (Gearing, 2004; Halling, 2012; Chan et al, 2013). Having an advisor who specialises in phenomenology was particularly helpful to ensure the researcher did not allow their own interpretation or experiences to be influenced or included within the analysis process.

A possible limitation of this research, of which will be picked up within future research recommendations, is the locality of the research. Although the research focused on Staffordshire and the West Midlands to diversify the participant base, views from alternative CRCs would have garnered further views and experiences of participants. Although the number of participants that took part was significant and aligned with the data analysis used, any considerations of other CRCs was not possible due to the coronavirus pandemic starting and therefore restrictions being implemented.

A further strength of this research is the ability it has for possible change to probation practice, by providing insight into adjustments that would be beneficial, due to measures that were implemented within the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' programme remaining. The depth of qualitative data that this research has derived, along with talking to both practitioners and service users helps to provide a well-rounded understanding of why changes would be beneficial. It also acts as a way of noting possible changes that should not be made, should part or full privatisation be considered again with probation, or the criminal justice system more widely. It therefore acts as a piece of contemporary penal history, that can be looked upon regarding the impact of privatisation on probation.

A final strength is that this research puts alcohol at the forefront of substance use discussions, as the academic literature appears to have shifted towards illicit drugs as the focal point. As

such, this research provides both positives and challenges in the receiving and delivery of substance use provision, whilst acknowledging the specific issues that are present within supporting users of alcohol.

6.6 Future Research Recommendations

Due to the key changes of probation, the key findings of this research, and the limitations of this research, there are some larger studies that could benefit from being investigated. Firstly, an examination of substance use and desistance support within the unified probation service, focusing on Staffordshire and West Midlands Probation Trust. A follow up set of interviews considering the experiences of those who work within the same locality, whilst also including the views of those who may previously have worked for the NPS in the area, will help to fully assess what has changed post-unification, and what factors are working or need further consideration within their probation provision.

Secondly, this research did not plan on providing generalisations across the country, but rather suggestions on how Staffordshire and West Midlands have been impacted, and therefore what may, or is likely, to be affecting other locations. However, in order to ensure better clarity of probation provision across the country, conducting research similar to this study, through the use of interviews of service users and practitioners, within different locations (now being probation trust's), will help clarify practice and if applicable, further reinforce the need for policy change.

Thirdly, due to the key impact of treatment requirements on probation provision, particularly for prolific offenders, a study that investigates these across several locations would be beneficial. This will help to understand how they work within different localities, enable the sharing of good practice, and highlight what changes may be needed across the country to make these requirements more aligned with supporting service users in the best way.

Finally, this research showed how there was a heavy focus on harm reduction for alcohol and drug use support. Furthermore, there were some service user participants who were polydrug users of alcohol and another illicit substance. There was however a clear lack of clarity on harm reduction effectiveness for polydrug users, whether that be focusing on all substances they are misusing or one, such as only trying to reduce alcohol intake. Aligned with this is whether abstinence can be more effective for these individuals. As such, research that adds to the

literature on providing support via harm reduction or abstinence for polydrug users would be beneficial.

6.7 Conclusion

The overall aim of this research was, to explore the experiences of service users and practitioners in a Community Rehabilitation Company, at receiving support for, recovery from alcohol misuse and desistance. The research questions mentioned at the start of this chapter were used to support this process. The experiences and views shown by participants within this thesis, alongside the reflection on current practice, show that there are positive areas within probation provision for substance use, alongside areas that may benefit from being adapted. Generally, a supportive, flexible, and caring relationship between probation officer and service user is respected and leads to positive change for service user's behaviour. A focus on in-house provision, and a look at the cultural desire to promote harm reduction more so than abstinence, has been clearly identified. Furthermore, better clarity on the make-up of treatment requirements, along with more support being in place for probation officer's and substance use support workers to ensure that they can best promote rehabilitation using the treatment requirements. Finally, a probation practice that is based on local provision, realistic targets, and manageable caseloads, not only helps support practitioners to do their job, but in the long run helps support service users in a way that encourages them to desist from crime and live a law-abiding life.

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8. Appendix

Appendix 1 – Service User interview schedule

Support in the community post-release for substance misuse related offending: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (service user)

_____

Introduction to interview

1. Right to withdraw
2. Last questions

Topic One – Background

1. Demographics - age, gender and ethnicity
2. Employment status
3. Current living conditions
4. Current (and previous) offence(s)
5. Details of supervision requirements

Topic Two – Desistance/ Rehabilitation *(link to pathways and (SWM CRC) responsibilities)*

Let's start with exploring your views on probation, what do you think the purpose of SWM CRC is for supporting your release from prison, or post-release support on licence?

How are you finding your probation experience? Please explain your likes and dislikes.

Can you explain your relationship between yourself and your probation officer?

Let's move on to your current personal and social experiences. Can you tell me a bit about your current situation? (*Prompt: education, training and employment; health; finance, benefit and debt; relationships, children and families; attitudes, thinking and behaviour*)

How has your SWM CRC officer played an active role in supporting you with any of these factors? *(Reiterate the factors for clarity).* If so, what? If not, explain why not?

Would you say any of these factors, or anything else in your personal or social life has led to you offending? If so, what?

Topic Three – Substance misuse

Have any of these factors had a bigger barrier towards your reoffending than substance use?

Can you tell me a bit about your current situation in relation to substance use? *(Prompt for types of drugs used, level of addiction/misuse)*

Would you say that substance misuse had an impact of your offence, and aids reoffending?

What do you think the purpose of substance misuse support is?

How are you finding your substance misuse support experience? Please explain your likes and dislikes.

Can you explain your relationship between yourself and anyone else who assists you with your substance misuse issues?

What types of support have you been provided with for your substance misuse?

Also, can you explain whether you feel they have been effective? *(Prompt for rehabilitative models)*

Would you say there is enough support for your alcohol use specifically?*

If not, what more support would you like?

Topic Four – Future expectations *(link to pathways, SWM CRC responsibilities and rehabilitative models)*

What are your plans for the future? *(Prompt for pathways)*

Do your feel your plans involve controlling your substance misuse?

If so, reducing it to a safe level or complete abstinence?

Do you believe that your plans will support in reducing reoffending or desistance?

Are you confident that you will be able to achieve these plans?

Do you have any concerns for the future?

Is there anything more that you feel that SWM CRC could do to help stop you reoffending?

End interview.

*Only ask question regarding alcohol, if alcohol is mentioned as a drug that is misused by the participant.

Appendix 2 – Staff interview schedule

Support in the community post-release for alcohol-related offending: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (practitioner)

BIRMINGHAM CITY University

Introduction to interview

1. Right to withdraw
2. Last questions

Topic One – Background

1. Experience
2. Job role
3. Responsibilities
4. Previous roles

Topic Two – Desistance (*link to pathways and SWM CRC responsibilities*)

Let's start with exploring your views on SWM CRC, what do you think the purpose of probation is?

How do you think service users find the SWM CRC experience? Please explain your likes and dislikes.

Can you explain your relationship between yourself and the service users you support?

Let's move on to the personal and social experiences of service users. Can you tell me a bit about the regular situations that you hear about from service users? (*Prompt: education, training and employment; health; finance, benefit and debt; relationships, children and families; attitudes, thinking and behaviour*)

Have you played an active role in supporting with any of these factors? (*Reiterate the factors for clarity*). If so what? If not, explain why not?

Would you say any of these factors, or anything else in their personal or social life leads to service users offending? If so, what?

Do you feel that any of these factors have a bigger barrier towards reoffending than substance use?

Is there anything more that you feel that probation could do to help stop reoffending?

Topic Three – Substance Misuse

Can you tell me a bit about your experience working with service users who misuse substances? (*Prompt for types of drugs used; level of addiction/misuse; reactions*)

Would you say that substance misuse has an impact of offending, and aids reoffending?

What do you think of the service users experience of rehabilitation? Please explain likes and dislikes.

What types of support are provided to service users for substance misuse?

Also, can you explain whether you feel they are effective or not? (*Prompt for rehabilitative models*)

Would you say there is enough support for your alcohol use? If not, what more support would you like?

Have you helped a service user overcome substance misuse in the past?

If so, which drug(s) and what did you do to help?

Do you feel that the service users you are currently supporting will overcome their current substance misuse?

Topic Four – Future expectations *(link to pathways, SWM CRC responsibilities and rehabilitative models)*

What are SWM CRCs plans for the future in supporting service users? *(Prompt for pathways)*

Do you feel the plans are realistic and likely to be effective in supporting substance misuse?

If so, do you advocate reducing it to a safe level or complete abstinence?

Do you feel the plans are realistic and likely to be effective in reducing reoffending or desistance?

Are you confident that you will be able to achieve SWM CRC's targets?

Do you have any concerns for the future or feel you need some further support?

End interview.

Appendix 3 - Birmingham City University's Faculty Academic Ethics Committee for Business, Law & Social Sciences Ethical Approval

BIRMINGHAM CITY University

Faculty of Business, Law & Social Sciences Research Office
Birmingham City University
Curzon Building
4 Cardigan Street
Birmingham
B4 7BD
BLSSethics@bcu.ac.uk

27th March 2018

Melindy Brown
Melindy.Brown@bcu.ac.uk

Dear Melindy,

Re: Brown #016.18 - "An evaluation of the support in the community for released offenders in Staffordshire and the West Midlands with a particular focus on alcohol-related offending."

Thank you for your application and documentation regarding the above activity. I am pleased to take Chair's Action and approve the activity which means you may begin.

I can also confirm that any person participating in the project is covered under the University's insurance arrangements.

Please note that ethics approval only covers your activity as it has been detailed in your ethics application. If you wish to make any changes to the activity, then you must submit an Amendment application for approval of the proposed changes.

Examples of changes include (but are not limited to) adding a new study site, a new method of participant recruitment, adding a new method of data collection and/or change of Project Lead.

Please also note that the Committee should be notified of any serious adverse effects arising as a result of this activity.

If for any reason the Committee feels that the activity is no longer ethically sound, it reserves the right to withdraw its approval. In the unlikely event of issues arising which would lead to this, you will be consulted.

Keep a copy of this letter along with the corresponding application for your records as evidence of approval.

If you have any queries, please contact BLSSethics@bcu.ac.uk

I wish you every success with your activity.

Yours Sincerely,

Kyle Brown

On behalf of the Faculty Academic Ethics Committee
Business, Law & Social Sciences

Appendix 4 – Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service Ethical Approval

Please find attached a research application for consideration for **Staffordshire and West Midlands CRC** only.

Research Title: An evaluation of the support in the community for released offenders in Staffordshire and the West Midlands with a particular focus on alcohol-related offending.

Ref: 2018-111

Researcher: Melindy Brown

Melindy Brown - Please take this as confirmation that your application has been sent to *Judith Sawbridge CRC Contact*, *The Staffordshire and West Midlands CRC* for consideration/processing.

Research approval criteria are as follows:

- There are sufficient links to NOMS business priorities.
- The demand on resources is reasonable.
- There are no concerns regarding overlaps with other (current/recent) research.
- The proposed methodology is appropriate and robust.
- Data protection/security issues have been sufficiently considered and addressed.
- Ethical issues have been appropriately addressed.
- The applicants possess the relevant experience and skills.

If the research is approved, the researcher should complete the attached research summary document for HMPPS (approximately three pages; maximum of five pages) which (i) summaries the research aims and approach, (ii) highlights the key findings, and (iii) sets out the implications for HMPPS decision-makers. The research summary should use language that an educated, but not research-trained person, would understand. It should be concise, well organised and self-contained. The conclusions should be impartial and adequately supported by the research findings. It should be submitted to the NRC. Provision of the research summary is essential if the research is to be of real use to HMPPS. The form should be completed and submitted once the research project has ended (ideally within one month of the end date).

Judith Sawbridge CRC Contact, *The Staffordshire and West Midlands CRC* - Please can confirmation of the decision be sent to the researcher and the NRC.

Kind regards,

NRC

From: Adrian McNulty <Adrian.McNulty@rrp.gse.gov.uk>
Date: Monday, 23 July 2018 at 16:30
To: "National Research [NOMS]" <National.Research@noms.gsi.gov.uk>
Cc: Melindy Brown <Melindy.Brown@bcu.ac.uk>, Catherine Hay <Catherine.Hay@rrp.gse.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: For Action 2018-111 - Research for Consideration

Hello both

I am happy to support but would need this to be conducted post September 2018 given we have a HMIP inspection in September.

Hope that is acceptable

Regards

Adrian

Adrian McNulty
Operations Director
Ground Floor, Centre City Tower, 7 Hill Street, Birmingham, B5 4UA | Direct: 0121 273 5060 | Mobile: 07967596679
The Staffordshire and West Midlands Community Rehabilitation Company Limited | Part of the Reducing Reoffending Partnership
www.swmcrc.co.uk | @SWMProbation | facebook.com/SWMProbation | www.rrpartnership.com
Registered office: Ground Floor, Centre City Tower, 7 Hill Street, Birmingham, B5 4UA | 0121 273 5112 | Registered number: 08802529 England & Wales
<image003.png>

From: National Research [NOMS] [mailto:National.Research@noms.gsi.gov.uk]
Sent: 23 July 2018 16:00
To: Adrian McNulty <Adrian.McNulty@rrp.gse.gov.uk>
Cc: 'Melindy Brown' <Melindy.Brown@bcu.ac.uk>
Subject: FW: For Action 2018-111 - Research for Consideration

Dear Adrian,

With regards to 2018-111 please see the email below that was sent to Judith Sawbridge on 05/04/2018. Please could you kindly tell me how long it will take to reach a decision with regards to this application? Thank you.

Kind regards,
Richard,
NRC Co-ordinator

Appendix 5 – Service User Participant Information Sheet

Support in the community post-release for alcohol-related offending. Participant information sheet: service user

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether you would like to take part, this Participant Information Sheet has been produced to enable you to understand the reasoning behind the research and what it would involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

1. What is the purpose of the research project?

This research project is being conducted as part of the researcher's PhD. This project focuses on identifying the experiences of service users, whose alcohol misuse has had an affect on their offence, and the support provided to them in the community. It intends to understand the service user's perspective on what forms of support are effective for rehabilitation and desistance, and as a result note if there are any demographic and/or gender differences.

The rationale for this research is that there is limited understanding of personal experiences of the support for service users, particularly those with an alcohol-related offence. As a result, I would like to discuss your own perceptions and experiences of the support you are receiving in the community, and place the focus on your voices rather than an organisation-led perspective.

2. Why have I been chosen?

You have been considered to take part in this project, as you have been released from prison, or are on a community sentence, and are currently receiving support for substance misuse (particularly alcohol), and/or to encourage desistance.

3. Do I have to take part?

No. This research is completely voluntary, and it is up to you to decide whether you would like to take part or not. If you decide not to take part, then this will not lead to any negative repercussions. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this Participant Information Sheet to keep, and provided with a consent form to sign. Please note that you are still able to withdraw your consent at anytime, and have up until two month's after the interview to withdraw your data from the research.

4. What do I have to do if I take part?

I shall visit you at a public place of your choosing to conduct the interview, whether that is at your local probation office, or a local library or café. The interview is estimated to take between 30minutes to 1hour. If, at the end of the interview, you feel that there is more that you would like to discuss, then if able I shall meet you again. With your consent, notes will be taken during the interview, and the interview will be audio recorded and transcribed.

5. What are any possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

It will take time out of your day, but every effort will be made to minimise any inconvenience and to ensure that you are comfortable with the interview process.

As this research is focused on your own experiences, we are aware that this may cause some distress. As a result, it will be possible to take a break or stop any point during the interview, and I will ensure that I provide you with contact details for more expert sources of support.

6. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Although this research is unlikely to be of direct benefit to you, it will give you the opportunity to talk about your experiences and express your opinion to an interested, non-judgemental listener who is not

involved in your support within the community. This research is based on service user experiences, and therefore the recommendations stated in the summary report for Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and the end PhD thesis will be focused around the perceptions of those experiencing the support.

7. What will happen if I would like to withdraw from the study?

If you agree to be interviewed, you can withdraw at any time during or after the interview. If you withdraw up until two month's after the interview date, then your data will be destroyed and not used within the project.

8. Complaints

We do not anticipate any problems arising during this study. However, if you do have a concern, about any aspect of this study or the conduct of the researcher, please feel free to contact my research supervisor Professor Brookes (contact details below).

9. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential, in locked locations and on password-protected devices only accessible by the researcher. Every step will also be taken to assure your anonymity. However, in reporting the data, and due to the demographic aspect of the research, we would like permission to refer to your ethnicity, gender and age.

10. What happens to my interview data?

The data recorded from the interview will be analysed and used for the final PhD thesis and for the HMPPS summary report. However, as noted above, all information will be kept confidential and secure.

11. What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the research study will be written up and form the basis of my PhD thesis. Parts of the study may also be submitted for publication in peer-reviewed books and journals, and be used in conference presentations. An additional short report of the research findings will be provided for HMPPS, of which can be distributed to participants.

12. Who has reviewed the study?

This section will be revised once all relevant bodies have ethically approved the study.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. If you have any further questions, feel free to contact me (contact details below).

Contact details:

Lead Researcher: Melindy Brown
PhD Student/PhD Researcher
School of Social Sciences
Birmingham City University
Birmingham
B4 7BD

Tel: 0121 331 6517
Email: Melindy.Brown@bcu.ac.uk

PhD Supervisor: Professor Michael Brookes
Professor of Forensic Psychology
School of Social Sciences
Birmingham City University
Birmingham
B4 7BD

Tel: 0121 331 6408
Email: Michael.Brookes@bcu.ac.uk

Appendix 6 – Staff participant information sheet

Support in the community post-release for alcohol-related offending.
Participant information sheet: practitioner

BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether you would like to take part, this Participant Information Sheet has been produced to enable you to understand the reasoning behind the research and what it would involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

1. What is the purpose of the research project?

This research project is being conducted as part of the researcher's PhD. This project focuses on identifying the experiences of service users, whose alcohol misuse has had an affect on their offence, and the support provided to them in the community. It intends to understand the service user's perspective on what forms of support are effective for rehabilitation and desistance, and as a result note if there are any demographic and/or gender differences.

The rationale for this research is that there is limited understanding of personal experiences of the support for service users, particularly those with an alcohol-related offence. Consequently, I would like to discuss your experiences of providing support to service users to help them with desistance and/or rehabilitation, and as a result determine whether there are any similarities or differences between your answers.

2. Why have I been chosen?

You have been considered to take part in this project, as you provide support for service users who have been released from prison or are currently on a community sentence, by either trying to reduce their chances of reoffending or help with their substance misuse (particularly alcohol misuse).

3. Do I have to take part?

No. This research is completely voluntary, and it is up to you to decide whether you would like to take part or not. If you decide not to take part, then this will not lead to any negative repercussions. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this Participant Information Sheet to keep, and provided with a consent form to sign. Please note that you are still able to withdraw your consent during and after the interview, and have up until two month's after the interview to withdraw your data from the research.

4. What do I have to do if I take part?

I shall visit you at a public place of your choosing to conduct the interview, whether that is at your local probation office, or a local library or café. The interview is estimated to take between 30minutes to 1hour. If, at the end of the interview, you feel that there is more that you would like to discuss, then if able I shall meet you again. With your consent, notes will be taken during the interview, and the interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

5. What are any possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

It will take time out of your day, but every effort will be made to minimise any inconvenience and to ensure that you are comfortable with the interview process.

As this research is focused on your own experiences, we are aware that this may cause some distress. As a result, it will be possible to take a break or stop at any point during the interview, and we will ensure that we provide you with contact details for more expert sources of support.

6. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Although this research is unlikely to be of direct benefit to you, it will give you the opportunity to talk about your experiences and express your opinion to an interested, non-judgemental listener who is not involved in your day-to-day job.

7. What will happen if I would like to withdraw from the study?

If you agree to be interviewed, you can withdraw at any time during or after the interview. If you withdraw up until two month's after the interview date, then your data will be not be used within the project findings and conclusions, and will be destroyed.

8. Complaints

We do not anticipate any problems arising during this study. However, if you do have a concern, about any aspect of this study or the conduct of the researcher, please feel free to contact my research supervisor Professor Brookes (contact details below).

9. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential, in locked locations and on password-protected devices only accessible by the researcher. Every step will also be taken to assure your anonymity. However, in reporting the data, we would like permission to refer to your age, ethnicity and gender.

10. What happens to my interview data?

The data recorded from the interview will be analysed and used for the final PhD thesis and for the HMPPS summary report. However, as noted above, all information will be kept anonymised, confidential and secure.

11. What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the research study will be written up and form the basis of my PhD thesis. Parts of the study may also be submitted for publication in peer-reviewed books and journals, and be used in conference presentations. An additional short report of the research findings will be provided for HMPPS, of which can be distributed to participants.

12. Who has reviewed the study?

This section will be revised once all relevant bodies have ethically approved the study.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. If you have any further questions, feel free to contact me (contact details below).

Contact details:

Lead Researcher: Melindy Brown
PhD Student/PhD Researcher
School of Social Sciences
Birmingham City University
Birmingham
B4 7BD

Tel: 0121 331 6517
Email: Melindy.Brown@bcu.ac.uk

PhD Supervisor: Professor Michael Brookes
Professor of Forensic Psychology
School of Social Sciences
Birmingham City University
Birmingham
B4 7BD

Tel: 0121 331 6408
Email: Michael.Brookes@bcu.ac.uk

Appendix 7 – Service User Consent Form

Support in the community post-release for alcohol-related offending.

BIRMINGHAM CITY University

SERVICE USER CONSENT FORM

We use this document to check that you have understood the information that has been provided relating to the research and that you are ok at this point in time to start the interview.

Before we begin, I would like to briefly draw your attention to some of the key things you need to be aware of. If you would like me to go through each of them with you then I will do so. Once you feel that you fully understand each of the below questions please could you circle the relevant response (or I can circle it on your behalf if you wish) before signing or marking the form at the end. Should you wish to audio record your consent then this can also be permitted. I will take Section One of the form and keep it for my records. I will give you Section Two to keep – if at any point after the interview you decide you want to withdraw your contribution, please return this to me either by handing it to me on the day of the interview or contact me by email within two months of the interview date.

SECTION ONE

Questions	Responses
Are there any questions you would like to ask me about the information in the Participant Information Sheet or have me talk through it with you?	Yes / No
I would like to emphasise that you are volunteering to take part in this research: 1) you can choose to not answer particular questions without giving a reason. 2) if you change your mind now or later you can tell me you don't want to carry on without giving a reason and I will respect this. Please note that you have the right to withdraw up until exactly two month's after the date of this interview. Is this ok?	Yes / No
With your permission, I will take handwritten notes of the interview and use an audio recording device. I will only use the notes and the recording to make sure I have an accurate version of the interview. I will dispose of the written notes using our University's confidential waste disposal service, and delete the recording off the audio recorder and move it to a password-protected device that only I have access to, after I have written up my record of the interview. Do you give permission for me to make handwritten notes and audio record this interview?	Yes / No
We will not use your real name in any of our notes and quotes from your interview that we might use in the report will be carefully considered to make sure that you can't be identified. Is this clear?	Yes / No
In some cases people getting involved in research have revealed to the researcher that they have been involved in criminal activities that could result in future prosecution. This is information that may subsequently be required by the police. I need to ensure that you are aware of this and I would ask you not to tell me about any illegal activity for which you have not already been convicted. Do you understand this?	Yes / No
If you feel distressed at all after this part of the research you might want to consider talking to someone about it. For example, you may want to talk to your Probation Officer from SWM CRC. Additionally, there are external charities: - Call Samaritans on 116 123 for counselling support. - Call Aquarius on 0121 622 8181 for support with addiction. - Call St Giles Trust on 020 7708 8000 for housing, employment and other support. - Call NACRO on 0300 123 1999 who provide variety of support for ex-offenders. Is this clear?	Yes / No

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Signature / mark of participant: _____

Signature / mark of researcher: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 8 – Staff Consent Form

Support in the community post-release for alcohol-related offending.

BIRMINGHAM CITY University

PRACTITIONER CONSENT FORM

We use this document to check that you have understood the information that has been provided relating to the research and that you are ok at this point in time to start the interview.

Before we begin, I would like to briefly draw your attention to some of the key things you need to be aware of. If you would like me to go through each of them with you then I will do so. Once you feel that you fully understand each of the below questions please could you circle the relevant response (or I can circle it on your behalf if you wish) before signing or marking the form at the end. Should you wish to audio record your consent then this can also be permitted. I will take Section One of the form and keep it for my records. I will give you Section Two to keep – if at any point after the interview you decide you want to withdraw your contribution, please return this to me either by handing it to me on the day of the interview or contact me by email within two months of the interview date.

SECTION ONE

Questions	Responses
Are there any questions you would like to ask me about the information in the Participant Information Sheet or have me talk through it with you?	Yes / No
I would like to emphasise that you are volunteering to take part in this research: 1) you can choose to not answer particular questions without giving a reason. 2) if you change your mind now or later you can tell me you don't want to carry on without giving a reason and I will respect this. Please note that you have the right to withdraw up until exactly two month's after the date of this interview. Is this ok?	Yes / No
With your permission, I will take handwritten notes of the interview and use an audio recording device. I will only use the notes and the recording to make sure I have an accurate version of the interview. I will dispose of the written notes using our University's confidential waste disposal service, and delete the recording off the audio recorder and move it to a password-protected device that only I have access to, after I have written up my record of the interview. Do you give permission for me to make handwritten notes and audio record this interview?	Yes / No
We will not use your real name in any of our notes and quotes from your interview that we might use in the report will be carefully considered to make sure that you can't be identified. Is this clear?	Yes / No
If you feel distressed at all after this part of the research you might want to consider talking to someone about it. For example, you may want to talk to your counselling support contact person with SWM CRC. Additionally, there are external charities: - Call Samaritans on 116 123 for counselling support. Is this clear?	Yes / No

Signature / mark of participant: _____

Signature / mark of researcher: _____

Date: _____

SECTION TWO

SUPPORT IN THE COMMUNITY POST-RELEASE FOR ALCOHOL-RELATED OFFENDING - WITHDRAWAL OF CONSENT

I wish to withdraw my consent in relation to my participation in the interview for the above evaluation. I request that my contribution to the research is excluded from the data and destroyed securely as soon as possible.

Date of interview _____

Today's date   _____

Please hand this form to the researcher on the day of interview or contact the researcher by email stating the above information, or attaching a scanned version of this sheet. Please note that for data analysis purposes, this sheet will need to be received by the researcher within exactly two month's of the interview date.

Appendix 9 – Worked Examples

Nina – Probation Officer

It's a massive life change as well, if you think someone's been using since the age of 15 and they've got to 40, and all they've known is get up, offend, score their drugs, use, knocked out and that cycle for the last 15 years, what do you, how do you change, what do you do?

DRASTIC LIFE CHANGE

LIST OF THE ROUTINE.
→ CYCLE OF SUBSTANCE USE + OFFENDING.

→ NOT A CLEAR PATH.

AGE + TIME = KEY FACTORS

Nina notes how big of a change recovery + desistance is.
She notes the cycle that some service users are in.
The path to recovery + desistance is not smooth or easy.

William – Service User

I just got to the point where I just thought, I'm just too old to be getting in to trouble all the time, erm I enjoyed, believe it or not, I enjoyed doing unpaid work, it gave me a sense of, because I was out of work at the time, I'd lost my job, so it gave me a sense of something to do and serving a purpose. Erm, the group I was on helped me, trying to look at things from somebody else's point of view, like the victim of my offence. Erm, and I got a chance to volunteer to be a peer mentor, so I got to work with other service users trying to complete their order successfully. All in all, it was a really good experience, life changing to be fair.

handwritten right margin: I, me, my – strong internal views

handwritten annotation: AGE.

handwritten annotation: REFLECTION

handwritten annotation (underlined): REINFORCING THE VIEWPOINT

handwritten note at bottom:
William has highlighted that it is his own motivations that have drawn him to change. The ageing process can lead to having a new mindset. The new mindset can open up experiences, such as enjoying volunteering, feels a sense of purpose.