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Developing an educational psychology service's approach to supporting children affected by parental imprisonment

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ABSTRACT

Parental imprisonment is an adverse childhood experience (ACE). A review of available literature identified possible ways in which children affected by parental imprisonment (CAPI) can be supported in school and the role of the educational psychologist within this. The current study adopted an action research approach to supporting one educational psychology service (EPS) in the UK to develop its service offer for CAPI. The process and outcomes of the action research project are presented, including a "Best Practice Guide for Schools" and associated training in supporting CAPI. Strategies for disseminating the significance of these findings to other EPSs aiming to support CAPI are discussed. Implications for practice, policy, and future research, including evaluating the effectiveness of this current study, are discussed. The use of a similar process to develop EPS contributions for other ACEs is also considered.

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Parental imprisonment; adverse childhood experience; children; education; incarceration; support

Introduction

Children affected by parental imprisonment

Family member imprisonment is an identified adverse childhood experience (ACE), with research indicating an association between the presence of ACEs and later negative health and social outcomes (Bellis et al., 2013; Felitti et al., 1998; Public Health Wales, 2016). Research carried out in the USA by Turney (2018) found that CAPI were exposed to almost five times as many ACES compared to those without a parent in prison, regardless of socioeconomic status or demographic. Negative outcomes for CAPI include difficulties in school, poverty and substance misuse (Department for Education, 2019; Glover, 2009).

Estimations provided by the National Information Centre on Children of Offenders (NICCO) indicate that, each year, there are up to 310,000 children in the UK with an imprisoned parent, with 10,000 visits made by children to public prisons every week. www.nicco.org.uk. However, as there is not currently a system in place to identify CAPI, this can result in them remaining unidentified and therefore not receiving additional support, as schools are reliant on families sharing this information, which they may be

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reluctant to do due to stigmatisation (Kincaid et al., 2019; Roberts, 2012). King (2002) and Roberts (2012) liken the loss associated with parental imprisonment to the loss experienced through bereavement. Doka (1989) states that stigmatisation may lead to the loss experienced through parental incarceration not being acknowledged or supported within the child's community, increasing their vulnerability.

Pugh and Lanskey (2011) found that families of CAPI may be reluctant to access support, which they suggested could be attributed to a mistrust of services, possible feelings of shame and a lack of awareness over support available. Research indicates that, without access to support, CAPI are found to be more likely than their peers to enter the criminal justice system (Butterfield, 1999; Glover, 2009; Murray & Farrington, 2008). Roberts (2012) suggests this could be a result of "disenfranchised grief" which Doka (1989) explains is grief "that persons experience when they incur a loss that is not or cannot be openly acknowledged, publicly mourned, or socially supported" (p4) likely due to stigmatisation. Roberts (2012) notes that this is damaging to CAPI and can result in disengagement from school and/or support services, consequently increasing the vulnerability for involvement in criminal behaviour.

The educational needs of children affected by parental imprisonment

Research emphasises the important role of schools in supporting CAPI as they are typically accessing full-time education and have been identified as being more likely to experience difficulties academically (Haines, 2017; Lynne, 2017; Morgan et al., 2014; Tuite, 2016). Tuite (2016) promotes the pivotal role of schools in supporting CAPI, explaining that they have the potential to either discriminate against and stigmatise these children and young people or to support them. Specific interventions and resources which may be appropriate are referred to within the literature (Eddy & Poehlmann-Tynan, 2019; Roberts, 2012).

Effective education-based support

In order to provide a concise and accessible "knowledge resource" to educational practitioners, Shaw et al. (2022) systematically reviewed the evidence on effective education-based support for CAPI. Shaw et al. (2022) followed the Preferred Reported Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework (Moher et al., 2009) to promote a transparent process for identifying, screening, and reporting the studies included in their review. The review highlighted several potentially effective strategies at different levels of the school system or education/community interface, including: awareness raising for school staff (Morgan et al., 2013); building an inclusive school ethos (Jones et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2013, 2014); considerations in respect of the citizenship curriculum (Morgan et al., 2013); support to the home parent (Gill, 2009a, 2009b; Jones et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2014); support to the imprisoned parent (Jones et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2013; O'Keefe, 2014); practical and emotional support to the child and family (Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group, 2010; Weidberg, 2017; Women's Breakout, 2016), including supporting child-parent contact and prison visits (O'Keefe, 2014); and providing opportunities to listen to children to reduce possible shame or stigmatisation (Leeson & Morgan, 2014).

However, Shaw et al. (2022) acknowledge several limitations in their systematic literature review; notably, only four of the eleven included studies were peer-reviewed (Leeson & Morgan, 2014; Morgan et al., 2013, 2014; Weidberg, 2017), although Shaw et al. (2022) do counterbalance this by the inclusion of a comprehensive approach to critical appraisal across all of the included studies using structured assessment frameworks (Bond et al., 2013; Gough, 2007). Shaw et al. (2022) note that, when assessed using the aforementioned frameworks, three of the eleven included papers were rated as low quality (National Offender Management Service, 2009; Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group, 2010; Women's Breakout, 2016). Shaw et al. (2022) included these papers due to the relevance of their findings; however, their findings should be viewed cautiously.

Furthermore, many of the studies employed cross-sectional survey designs, which may, to some extent, limit the empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of the recommendations discussed, suggesting a need for careful evaluation of any ensuing approaches or interventions.

A role for educational psychologists

A review exploring the contribution of the EP role in relation to the Department for Education and Skills (2003) completed by Farrell et al. (2006) stated that "EPs [are] in an excellent position to work with others in identifying gaps in services for children and in the planning and evaluation of new initiatives" (p101). Notably, Fallon et al. (2010) outline a case study whereby an EPS remodelled their service delivery to extend the breadth and contexts of their work and to increase multi agency working to improve access for vulnerable groups. Fallon et al. (2010) state that the EP role will continue to evolve and that flexibility in the application of psychology is vital within the changing socio-political context, a position which, in the context outlined, has implications for CAPI.

Shaw et al. (2022) identified the role of the EP in developing the ways in which CAPI can be supported in schools. Weidberg (2017) also identifies that EPs have "a unique role" in supporting CAPI at both the individual and school levels. As an evidence-based practice initiative, Cowper (2022) explored the "transfer" of the findings from Shaw et al. (2022) into CAPI practice developments across two EPSs and developed ideas and strategies around working with CAPI. The authors noted outcomes, such as the development of school-based consultation scripts for EPs, and information sheets for signposting to services, but also noted a "research-practice gap" and a tension for local practitioners in developing support strategies based upon general research findings, whilst maintaining perspective and flexibility to respond to the varied needs of local children and their families. Though the process of the work was likely affected by social and workplace restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, Cowper (2022) also noted the importance of utilising local data and services to contextualise the practical implications of the research.

Aims of the current study

The current research aimed to extend on the previous research carried out by Cowper (2022) which explored the "transfer" of findings from Shaw et al. (2022) into practice

developments across two EPSs to support CAPI. The aim of the current research was to identify the development of EPS strategy and approaches to support CAPI in education within one EPS. This involved scoping relevant services and partners, including local and national services, to support CAPI within a community-oriented EPS at service level.

Research question

How can an educational psychology service develop their evidence-based contribution to practice in order to support children affected by parental imprisonment?

Methodology

Design

A participatory action research approach was utilised following the structure provided by the Research and Development in Organisation (RADIO) model (Timmins et al., 2003). The RADIO model offers a framework for working with the multiple perspectives that exist as part of service improvement initiatives. Table 1 outlines the RADIO model process for this research.

Action research was selected due to the focus on participatory, autonomous processes which seek "to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities" (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. 1). Action research is described as involving two interrelated processes: the changes to actions within the social world/communities; and the consideration and ongoing reflection and refinement on those actions during the process (McNiff & Whitehead, 2005).

Participant recruitment

This research was commissioned by an EP, who identified the EPS in which the research would take place and from which the participants would be recruited. All employees within the identified EPS were invited to participate in the research. EPS members had previously participated in research exploring ACEs and therefore had an awareness of the needs of CAPI. They had expressed an interest in developing service provision within their LA as, prior to this research, this did not exist. Consenting participants at the EPS were involved in both the Task and Finish (T&F) and focus group and included two EPs, two trainee EPs and an assistant EP from the same EPS. The action research process was led by the first author, a trainee educational psychologist, who supported the work of the T&F group but was not an employee of, nor otherwise connected to, the EPS.

Ethical considerations

Prior to the start of this research, ethical approval was obtained via the host institution Research and Ethics Committee (September 2023, approval number 2023–18025-31152). Given the professional status and voluntary participation, based upon an interest in developing the EPS' approach to supporting CAPI, participants were not considered

Table 1. A summary of the action research process using the radio model (Piggot-Irvine et al., 2015; Timmins et al., 2003.).

Phase	Stage	Activities
Identification of organisation's needs and development of a partnership	Awareness of need	2021/2022: EPS identified need to support CAPI
	Invitation to act	2022: EPS commissioned research project in collaboration with the University of Manchester. December 2022: Commissioner provided verbal invitation to act.
	Clarifying organisational and cultural issues	December 2022: Supporting factors and barriers to the research explored with commissioner. This included the acknowledgement of the community orientation of the EPS as a potential facilitator. January 2023: Additional factors identified in initial action planning meeting.
	Identifying stakeholders	March 2023: Potential EPS stakeholders identified and relevant information distributed to those interested following ethical approval. April 2023: Task and Finish (T&F) group established. Some consistent members of group and some where attendance was less consistent.
Agree research methodologies	Agree focus of concern	May 2023: Initial T&F group meeting to ascertain current understanding of practice around CAPI and their hopes for development in this area as part of the research.
	Negotiating framework for information gathering	July/August 2023: Researchers and commissioners met to agree on data collection methods, timescales and resources. Research strategy agreed.
	Gathering information	December 2023-July 2024: T&F group meet four times. First author created agendas for each meeting, made notes following and during meetings and audio recorded the final T&F group for transcription and data analysis purposes. (Preceding T&F group meetings were audio recorded for the first author to listen back to and support note taking.)
	Processing information with stakeholders	October 2023: First author provided a written summary of research findings to participants of the preliminary study with the offer of further discussion if useful. December 2023: Discussion around findings of preliminary study within this meeting with T&F group participants.
Reflect on the information gathered and management of change	Agreeing areas for future action Action planning Implementation/action	December 2023: Priorities for future actions agreed with T&F group. Actions identified and allocated. Identified members of the T&F group contacted CAPI support services both locally and UK wide to inform a CAPI best practice guidance document for the EPS. This was shared with the whole EPS for feedback (without the first author present) and changes made based on feedback of colleagues. July 2024: Document agreed following feedback and amendments.
	Evaluating action	July 2024: Focus group of T&F group participants facilitated by the first author. Research project and process outcomes evaluated. First author analysed data from T&F groups, focus group, guidance and training. A manuscript was produced reporting on the research. Led by first author in collaboration with third author, second author (EP) and fourth author (assistant EP).
	Final edits	Following the focus group, the EPS agreed on one version of the best practice guidance as some older children may present as developmentally younger than others and therefore it would be helpful to schools to be made aware of all resources available to CAPI.
	Monitoring of research outcomes and dissemination of research findings	Findings dissemination to: other regional EPs; DfE; the Prison Reform Trust; International School Psychology Association (via ISPA conference) September 2025-August 2027: Implementation of CAPI service developments September 2027-August 2029: Review of utility and effectiveness of CAPI service developments

vulnerable. However, within each T&F meeting, available support services were identified in case any participants required support for any reason.

All members of the EPS were sent a participant information sheet prior to providing written consent. Those who consented did so freely, signed a consent form and were not directed to participate by the service management.

Data gathering

The agendas for both the T&F group meetings and the focus group were devised by the first author and shared with the participants prior to meetings. The first author compiled notes during the meetings, as well as audio recording meetings. At the end of the action research process, a focus group was held with the T&F group where the aim was to evaluate the process, outcomes and product(s) of the research. This was audio recorded and transcribed to provide formative and summative feedback on the work undertaken.

Data analysis

Data sources for the analysis include the agenda and notes made during each T&F group meeting, the audio recordings of the individual T&F group meetings, the transcript of the final focus group and the document (Appendix A) created by the T&F group. All these data sources were subject to an inductive content analysis whereby categories were developed cumulatively from the data corpus (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Hsieh and Shannon (2005) define content analysis as "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (p.1278). Data analysis was carried out by the first author. To ensure the data were analysed credibly, peer debriefing and triangulation were utilised as part of the analysis process for the focus group, and data presentation includes representative quotations (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Manning, 1997). The framework and outcomes of each T&F meeting were "validated" by the T&F group, as the first author consulted with the participants at the end of the T&F group regarding what outcomes/next steps had been agreed.

Findings

Introduction to the findings

As noted, the project was commissioned to support an EPS approach to supporting CAPI in their local authority. Through this process, the T&F group, in consultation with service stakeholders, produced a best practice guide to supporting CAPI as a way of the EPS fulfilling their identified aims. EPs have a statutory duty to engage in evidence-based practice and to critically evaluate research and other evidence to inform their practice (Health and Care Professions Council [HCPC], 2023, SoPs 11.1, 13.10). "Best practice" guides, guidelines or protocols provide a useful means by which to gather, translate and communicate contemporary published research and evidence from practice in a usable form; they can also serve to improve consistency of care, to inform policy development and to act as a framework for service evaluation (Guerra-Farfan et al., 2023).

The findings relating to the process of the research are presented below by content analysis category, with reference to process chronology as appropriate. The four main categories are "Identifying relevant services and teams", "Promoting systemic change", "Raising awareness" and "Process". See Figure 1

Main category 1 identifying relevant services and teams

Categories within this main category include "Signposting", "Resources" and "Feedback". Within the category "Feedback" the findings are organised into subcategories "Feedback from CAPI" and "Feedback from relevant services". Resources include a subcategory "Consideration of age of CAPI".

Category 1.1 signposting

Within the initial T&F group, participants agreed that they needed "to identify local services to facilitate effective signposting for CAPI" as signposting was recognised as one of the contributions the EPS was well-placed to make to support CAPI; it was later agreed that non-local services could also be helpful. Signposting was a consistent feature throughout the research, with participants confident that this would contribute to supporting CAPI.

Category 1.2 resources

Through identifying services, the participants were made aware of available resources which they acknowledged would be helpful to share within the EPS's best practice guidance. For example, in group meeting 3, a participant shared that "resources include lesson plans for PSHE lessons (3–16 years), and jigsaw and board game around prison visits . . . . . A toolkit for CoPiPs [CAPI] in the UK is about to be published and will be shared" (cf. Prison Advice and Care Trust [PACT], 2025).

Subcategory 1.2.1 consideration of age of CAPI

Whilst reflecting within the focus group at the end of the data gathering on the contents of any best practice guidance, participants discussed whether it would be appropriate to create different versions of the document depending on whether settings were primary or secondary. Participants reflected on this in relation to the resources shared in the guidance

> "the books like 'My dad is away' [While Daddy is Away] and 'My mum is away' [While Mummy is Away] might be more relevant to primary school than high school".

Category 1.3 feedback

Participants were keen to identify services working with CAPI not only for signposting purposes but also to seek feedback from stakeholders on the work/role of the EPS.

Subcategory 1.3.1 feedback from services

Within group meeting 2, a participant fed back that "Out There" (a charity providing support to families of prisoners) was keen to support with offering feedback on the guidance and future training. Feedback was gathered in stages with it being sought initially from the T&F group, then from the wider EPS and the next step being to seek it from other stakeholders identified in group meeting 2.

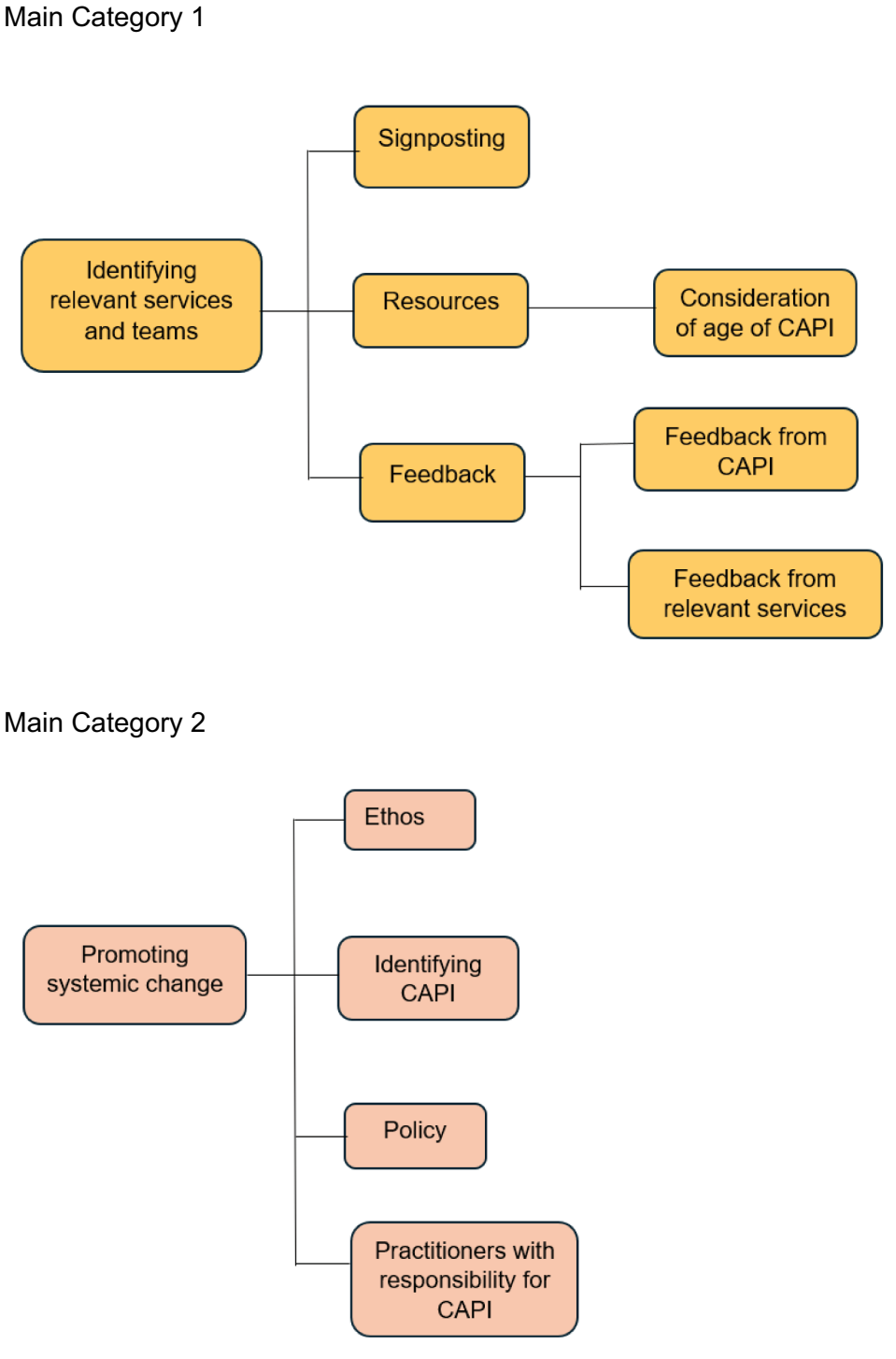
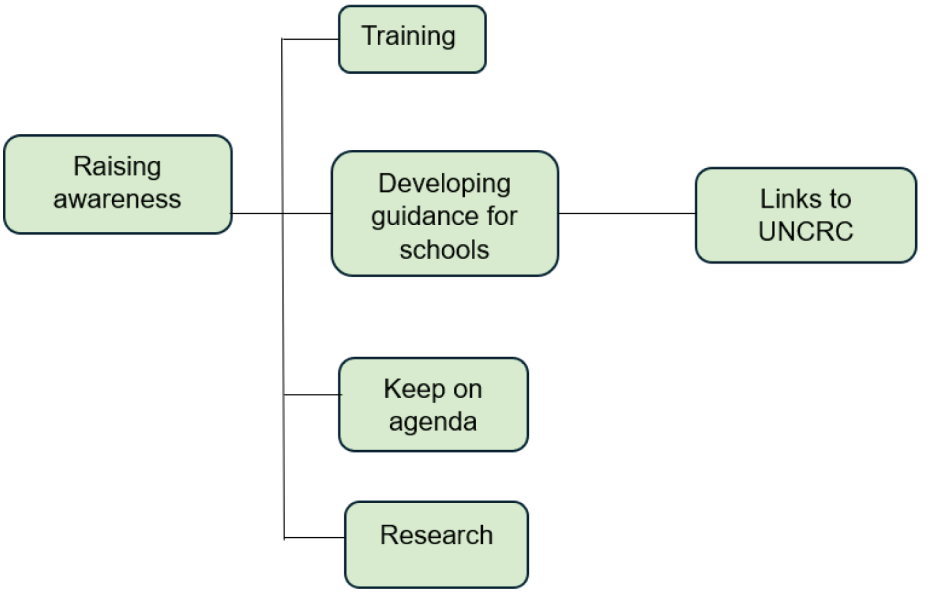


Figure 1. Category Map.

Main Category 3



Main Category 4

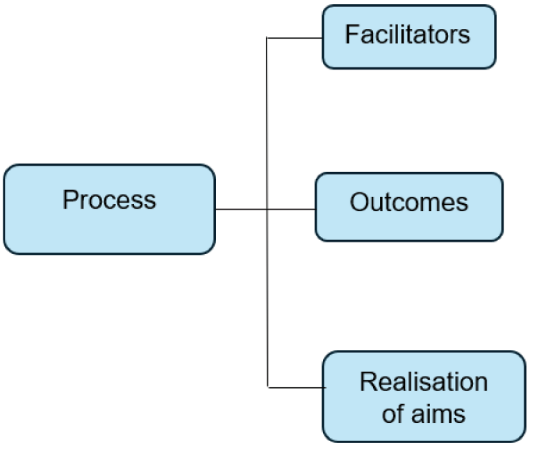


Figure 1. Category Map.

Subcategory 1.3.2 feedback from CAPI

The means of gathering views of CAPI in relation to how they would be best supported was considered as part of the discussions in group meeting 3. Part of this discussion explored who would be best placed to do this and the associated ethical considerations. A participant shared that the "contact at 'Out There'" would potentially be able to identify children and young people who may like the opportunity to be involved in the coproduction of a guide for best practice. Working collaboratively to coproduce the guidance and associated training was important to participants as a next step: "share it with young people and get their feedback [and] make any amendments to it . . . would be beneficial".

Main category 2 promoting systemic change

Within this main category, the categories are as follows: "Ethos"; "Identifying CAPI"; "Policy" and "Practitioners with responsibility for CAPI".

It was important to participants that the EPS was supporting a "whole school approach" in their contribution to supporting CAPI. This is emphasised in the EPS's best practice guidance which states "All systemic work involving CAPI in education should have the aim of creating an inclusive, understanding and welcoming ethos" (p.3).

Category 2.1 ethos

Within the focus group, a participant reiterated that it had been important to them to highlight the importance of having an inclusive ethos in the guidance:

> "One of the big things in the guidance document is having that ethos where it's okay to talk about".

Participants also considered that the school ethos would relate to whether families feel able to share information around parental imprisonment with schools.

Category 2.2 identifying CAPI

Identification of CAPI was emphasised within the focus group as important. Participants shared that this was to ensure CAPI receive appropriate support, in a sensitive way, 'to avoid "judgement" and ensure that schools offer a "supportive response". The EPS's best practice guidance highlights this: "this guidance brings to the forefront the importance of identifying CAPI and offering support through a graduated approach, involving systemic changes and individualised support where necessary" (p.2).

There was a discussion within T&F group meeting 2 as participants understood through their conversations with services supporting CAPI that they were using an alternative term to describe this cohort. Within the research until this point, the term "CoPiP" (children of a parent in prison) had been used. Participants learned that the term CAPI (children affected by parental imprisonment) was now being broadly used as a preferred term. Within this group meeting, participants agreed they favoured this term as it acknowledged children who had previously had a parent in prison as participants recognised that the impact of this would likely be long term and continue when their parent was out of prison.

Category 2.3 policy

When asking participants about their long-term hopes in relation to the EPS contribution to supporting CAPI, their response was linked to policy, both that relating to CAPI and also to the wider context. In the focus group a participant contributed "until some of the other things have changed in secondary schools, like behaviour policies … some of this guidance will … not fit into that". A participant in the focus group explained that "having a school policy to support CAPI and families affected by parental imprisonment" is a long-term hope but it is considered that this is part of a wider change. "Moving away from behaviour policies in schools and moving towards relational … relationship policies and I think this will be … a cohort that you need to consider".

Category 2.4 practitioners with responsibility for CAPI

The importance of having a designated staff member with responsibility for CAPI support in schools was highlighted by participants in relation to promoting systemic change. Within the focus group, one participant suggested that a pastoral member of staff would be best suited to this role, and this would promote an inclusive ethos for this cohort. The guidance document recommends that "The designated individual should be carefully considered within school, based on job role/characteristics" (Supporting CAPI Best Practice Guide for Schools, p.3).

Main category 3 raising awareness

Within this main category, categories include "Developing guidance for schools", "Training", "Research" and "Keep on agenda". The category "Developing guidance for schools" includes the sub-category "Links to UNCRC".

Throughout the data collection, raising awareness of CAPI and their needs to the practitioners working with them was a consistent feature. A participant explained whilst discussing CAPI in the focus group that schools need "to have more of an understanding and be supporting children in relation to their needs". There were several strategies from participants on how to achieve this. These included "in the planning meeting, we ask about this cohort", "training delivered within SENCO network meetings to raise awareness" and "if you have a piece of casework where the child or young person's parent is in prison that we then disseminate this information [*within the EPS*]", within the bounds of confidentiality.

Category 3.1 developing guidance for schools

In T&F group meeting 2, a participant discussed "developing draft best practice document and/or training offer". This linked in to identifying services and teams which participants had already began doing as something which the EPS could "share … with schools". When evaluating the guidance within the focus group, one participant shared that it could be helpful to include some specific elements such as "a script because if these young people have got … positive relationships with staff in school, then they might bring up these things anyway and you know, staff need to have a script".

Subcategory 3.1.1 links to United Nations Convention on Rights of a Child (1989)

Participants creating the guidance were keen to highlight the school's role to "discuss and promote the 'Rights of the Child' to support the understanding of CAPI and what they are entitled to". They emphasise that CAPI policies ought to "consider the rights of the child". One participant reflected on this within the focus group: "Having that link with children's rights makes it really meaningful because … a lot of schools are familiar with children's rights … . so, I think it's something that feels … useful for schools". Another participant explained that it may promote action: "in order to meet the rights of these children, you should be doing X, Y, Z".

Category 3.2 training

The discussions within the T&F groups led the participants to agree to emphasise within the EPS's best practice guidance that "whole school awareness raising is an important step in ensuring staff have an understanding of the impact of parental imprisonment, and strategies to support CAPI" (p.3). Initial steps which were agreed in T&F group meeting 1 were to "develop the current EPS offer of trauma training to include agreed information" and to create a version of CAPI training which complements the guidance. In the focus group, a participant shared that the EPS "sometimes offer … free online training to any school across [local authority] so that might be a platform to share it".

Category 3.3 research

In the focus group participants identified that, to continue to raise the profile of CAPI, ongoing research is needed as well as ensuring that existing research is utilised. One participant shared that the utility of the CAPI guidance and training (Appendix B) could be evaluated in the future: to carry on that action research type model to ensure the longevity of any resources that are created. … to keep it on the agenda and keep it developing. When asked about potential ideas for future research relating to CAPI, participants suggested research gathering "young person's views" and "longitudinal studies" to promote "developmental understanding over time".

Category 3.4 keep on agenda

The importance of keeping CAPI on the agenda was emphasised by participants within the focus group. They discussed who may be best placed to have this responsibility in educational settings, acknowledging that not all teachers may have a CAPI in their class for periods of time. Participants acknowledged that staff require CAPI to be kept on the agenda for all staff to raise awareness of the utility of relational strategies to support staff to identify that they often have the approaches needed to support CAPI due to the crossover with other vulnerable pupils. In a broader approach, the "Best Practice Guide" and associated training promote that the focus of systemic work should aim to create an "inclusive, understanding and welcoming ethos" (p.3).

Main category 4 process

Categories within this main category are "Facilitators", "Outcomes" and "Realisation of aims".

All the data within this category were obtained via the focus group where the first author asked participants about their experience being involved in this action research. One participant described the process:

> "It's been really helpful for me, being part of that policy development and seeing how . . . that kind of comes together and hopefully, we can do it in other areas".

Category 4.1 facilitators

In terms of facilitators, participants explained that "the process of having it as part of a research commission has been really useful . . . in that it's kept us . . . accountable". One participant noted that "the . . . gaps between the meetings worked well". They summarised "having the meetings tied in with you [the first author], keeping us on track, checking in with where we're up to . . . has been really useful".

Category 4.2 outcomes

Participants explained that they were satisfied with the outcomes of the action research process. One participant shared "I don't think there's anything that I would have wanted to do differently to have improved anything. I think it's worked really well".

Category 4.3 realisation of aims

Participants agreed that their aims had been realised. "I think we have met the aims. I think the main aim that we had was to create a best guidance practice document . . . I'm happy with where we're up to".

Discussion

Summary of findings

This research supported an EPS to develop their evidence-based contribution to supporting CAPI through the development of a "Supporting CAPI Best Practice Guide for Schools" and an associated training package. The guide and training follow the structure outlined by Shaw et al. (2022), addressing practice at the systemic, family, and individual levels. The headings within each section reflect the findings of this research. For example, in the systemic section, headings include "training", "school policies", and "embedded within the curriculum".

This research involved identifying services and teams which exist to support CAPI, and understanding how these services could enable them to develop their contribution to supporting CAPI, through signposting and identifying existing resources. This is likely to enable gaining the voices of CAPI in relation to the EPS offer in the future, leading in effect to co-produced guidance. From the outset, the T&F group was clear in their aim to promote systemic change for CAPI. Therefore, within the guidance document and training, a section outlines schools working to support CAPI through an inclusive ethos, developing a CAPI policy, having a key person in school responsible for CAPI and, crucially, developing

processes to identify CAPI. Raising awareness of the needs of, and support for, CAPI is described within both the guidance and training, at the individual and family levels. Reducing stigma around CAPI and ensuring that all children and the wider school community learn about CAPI circumstances are additional elements of an inclusive approach.

The guidance and training outline links between children's rights and the needs of CAPI to emphasise the importance of meeting those. The T&F group reported that the research commission had facilitated the development of the EPS contribution to supporting CAPI and was satisfied with the outcomes, agreeing that the aims had been achieved.

The present research is an example of a local EPS development group successfully utilising research to develop practice, showing EPs as effective consumers of research relevant to practice. A research-practice gap is well recognised in the field of education (for example, Guldberg, 2017; Shaw et al., 2022) and, notably, previous research by (Cowper, 2022) was only partially successful in promoting change in relation to EPS delivery for CAPI. Following the recommendations of Cowper (2022), the present research utilised local data and linked with local services to overcome some of the practical limitations identified by Cowper (2022). As highlighted in the focus group data in the current study, the process of development reported here could be adopted in other areas of EPS service delivery priority, for example, in relation to other ACEs.

Limitations of the current research

Whilst professional feedback from the research confirmed positive evaluations of the project outputs, these were informed in large part by evidence from the previous research of Shaw et al. (2022) and Cowper (2022), limitations of which are acknowledged above and which may, in turn, to a greater or lesser extent, limit the utility of the project outputs here. It will be important, therefore, that either future research or service evaluation establishes the actual utility of the specific approach developed within this research. A further limitation pertains to the research's location within one particular EPS in a specific area of the UK. Resources to develop the EPS's approach to supporting CAPI were allocated, there was internal motivation within the EPS, an external researcher was situated in a faciliatory role, and there was individual commitment to it; all of these facilitators may be present to a greater or lesser extent in other local authority settings. However, the context for the present action research report has been comprehensively described, allowing the reader to understand the degree of likely transferability to other contexts where EPs may be similarly motivated to develop their service approach. Therefore, a longer term evaluative review of the project outcomes is planned (see Table 1).

Implications for practice/policy

As outlined by Farrell et al. (2006), EPs are well placed to work collaboratively to identify gaps in service delivery and in planning and evaluating approaches to support specific groups of children. This project illustrates how a specific ACE could be addressed by an EPS which could be replicated for other identified ACEs or gaps in service delivery. This research provides a model to EPSs aiming to develop their service approach to supporting CAPI, exemplified through the creation of the best

practice guidance and training for schools. Although some of the reported guidance and training is specific to a geographical area, the majority of it might be relevant to any EPS aiming to develop their service approach in relation to CAPI. Whilst several national charities and services identified in the systemic and individual/family sections of the guide developed in this research could be utilised for signposting, other UK EPSs aiming to create something similar would need to also identify relevant local services.

Implications for future research

As noted in the limitations, future research in this area should seek to evaluate the effectiveness of the guidance and training from the current study in developing their contributions to supporting CAPI within the schools served by the EPS. Additionally, there is scope for continuing to support the EPS's mandate in developing their provision for CAPI within their local authority beyond the guidance and training. Future research could also be useful to support EPSs to develop their service delivery in relation to any other identified ACE, following a similar process.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Appendices

Appendix A: Sample of best practice Guide.

Systemic

All systemic work involving CAPI in education should have the aim of creating an inclusive, understanding and welcoming ethos.

In this section of the guidance we discuss strategies and tools that can be used at a systemic level to support CAPI and their families.

Training



Whole school awareness raising is an important step in ensuring staff have an understanding of the impact of parental imprisonment, and strategies to support CAPI. Training available includes:

- CAPI training from X EPS
- Training from Barnardo's:
    - Hidden Sentence training, a one day training course gives an overview of the imprisoned parent's journey, familial impact from arrest to release and a range of strategies and resources.
    - Understanding the impact of parental offending (Children affected by parental offending and imprisonment workshop - Booking by Bookwhen)

Visibility in school

To support families in feeling able to share when they are affected by parental imprisonment, having an open and inclusive ethos in relation to discussing parental imprisonment is important.

- Having a designated member of staff to oversee CAPI support. The designated individual should be carefully considered within school based on job role/ characteristics. (NEPACS)
- Poster– PACT have created a poster to be put around schools which highlights the designated member of staff. (https://prisonadvice.org.uk/get-help/children-young-people/)

School Policies

Having a school policy to support CAPI and families affected by parental imprisonment. The policy should be in line with trauma informed practices and **consider the rights of the child.**

For more information, PACT has created school policy guidance for schools (Toolkit - Prison Advice and Care Trust)

Embedded within the curriculum

Making reference to imprisonment within PSHE/citizenship curriculum.

- Curriculum– PACT offer a PSHE style curriculum to support awareness and understanding of the impact on parental imprisonment. Schools - Prison Advice and Care Trust

Multi– Agency Support

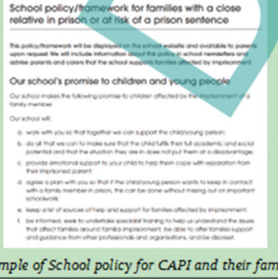
It is important that schools seek support from the relevant services when working with CAPI and their families. Holistic understanding and support is key. Some examples include:

- Referrals to the relevant charities (e.g. Out There)
- Early Help

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Individual and their family (Cont.)

- School may feel it is appropriate to complete a 'Child Impact Assessment' tool kit, created by the Prison Reform Trust) which looks at how Support for children with a mother or father who's been arrested, has a court appearance, is serving a community sentence, is in prison, or is being released from prison. ***THIS SHOULD BE CAREFULLY PLANNED AND COMPLETED WITH THE CHILD AND A TRUSTED ADULT*** (See: Child Impact Assessment for children with a father in the justice system and Child Impact Assessment for children with a mother in the justice system). For support in using the Child Impact Assessment , please see: Accompanying notes for practitioners supporting children with a father in the justice system and Accompanying notes for practitioners supporting children with a mother in the justice system
- School should have a **'CAPI policy'** on their school website that accessible to parents. In this, school should allow for reasonable adjustments, such as authorised absences for prison visits. (see: 'School Policy Framework Toolkit - Prison Advice and Care Trust)
- School should aim to **facilitate the relationship with the parent in prison and the child/young person** (where appropriate and guided by relevant professionals), e.g:
    - ⇒ Allowing time to take telephone/video calls with the imprisoned parent within the school day, e.g. allowing time out of school.
    - ⇒ Involve the imprisoned parent (where appropriate and guided by relevant professionals) in the child's education, e.g. sending reports.
- Use of **ACE- and trauma-informed practices**. *Staff should be aware that parent imprisonment is an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE).* In addition, expectations should be reduced and additional check-ins made available around the time of specific activities (e.g. prison visits).
- We encourage schools working with CYP who are affected by parental imprisonment to facilitate open conversations and transparency due to the potential negative outcomes when an alternative story is told (e.g. the other parent is away on holiday.) This can lead to the child/ young person finding out the truth in other ways and cause other implications for the CAPI, such as becoming mistrusting of others.
- Support from arrest to release, and beyond. The potential affect of parental imprisonment spans from the arrest, during their time in prison and potential probation. Frequent check ins/ reviews should be held with the child and their family. The family affected parent imprisonment should remain at the centre and should be made aware of support on offer through signposting or referrals (e.g. through Early Help)


School policy/framework for families with a close relative in prison or at risk of a prison sentence

Our school's promise to children and young people

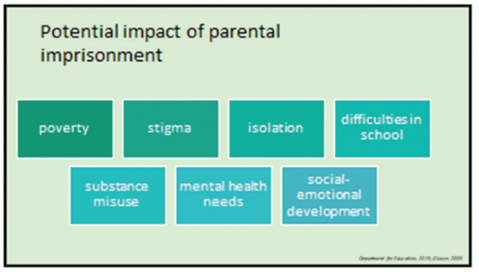
Sample of School policy for CAPI and their families


Child Impact Assessment

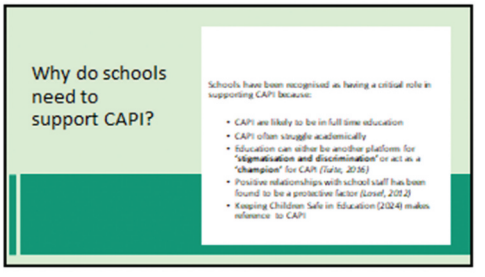
Sample of Child Impact Assessment

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Appendix B: Sample of training.



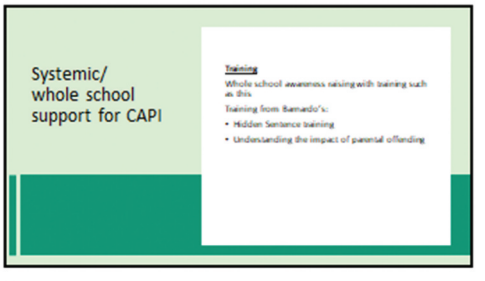
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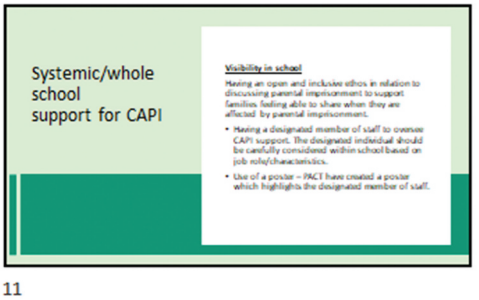
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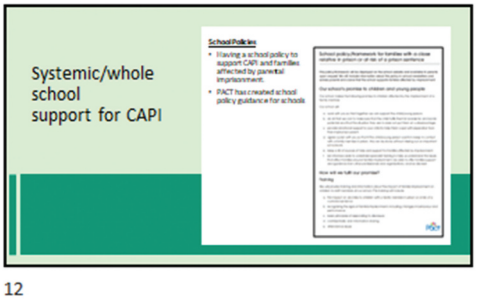
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