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How can children of imprisoned parents in the UK be supported in school?

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ABSTRACT

If not supported appropriately, children of imprisoned parents face potential adverse outcomes, including difficulties with academic progress and mental health. This systematic literature review aims to explore ways in which children of imprisoned parents in the UK can be supported in school. Research databases and publication records from third sector organisations were searched. Eleven papers were included in the review and results highlighted a number of ways in which children of imprisoned parents can be supported in schools at a systemic, familial and individual level. Implications for schools, educational psychologists and future research are discussed.

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KEYWORDS

Adverse childhood experience; ace; children of imprisoned parents; school; educational psychologist; support

Main text introduction

Having imprisoned parents as an adverse childhood experience

Parental imprisonment is one of five chronic stressors referenced as being specific adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), alongside substance addiction, witnessing abuse, family member mental illness and caregiver disappearance through abandonment or divorce (Paterson, 2017). ACEs also includes five traumatic events: sexual, emotional and physical abuse, emotional neglect and physical neglect (Paterson, 2017). Due to the negative impact on later life outcomes, including educational outcomes and physical and mental health (Bellis et al., 2015, 2013; Felitti et al., 1998; Hughes et al., 2016), ACEs are receiving increasing focus from health, education and social care services (Blodgett & Dorado, 2016; Johnson, 2018; Smith, 2018) and policy makers. The Welsh Government has recently announced that school staff in Wales will be given 'trauma-informed' training to support children who have faced ACEs (Smith, 2018), and Scottish education policy and school curriculum are underpinned by an ACE-informed approach (Education Scotland, 2018). It has been shown that children of parents in prison (COPIPs) are exposed to, on average, nearly five times more other ACEs compared

with children without imprisoned parents, regardless of demographic or socioeconomic status (Turney, 2018), yet these children often go unidentified and therefore unsupported (Kincaid et al., 2019; Roberts, 2012).

Impact of imprisoned parents

Data from 2019 suggests that the UK has the 8th highest rate of imprisonment among EU countries and the highest among western European jurisdictions (Sturge, 2020). Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service's (2019) estimates that there are between 200,000 and 300,000 COIPs across England and Wales, and a study commissioned by Crest (Kincaid et al., 2019) predicted that in 2020 there would be approximately 320,000. It is known that parental imprisonment can result in adverse outcomes, including poverty, stigma, isolation, difficulties in school and substance misuse (Department for Education, 2019; Glover, 2009; Kincaid et al., 2019; Murray & Farrington, 2008). It is estimated that COIPs are three times more likely than their peers to be involved in antisocial behaviour and more than twice as likely to experience difficulties with their mental health; approximately 65% of boys of imprisoned parents will themselves go on to offend (Glover, 2009). It has been suggested that the emotional loss felt by children affected by parental imprisonment, is comparable to that felt by children who have experienced parental bereavement (King, 2002), yet these children are likely to face a much less sympathetic response (Glover, 2009).

Landscape of in-school support for children of imprisoned parents

There is not currently a system within education, health or social care services for identifying COIPs and so the families often have to self-identify (Kincaid et al., 2019). Families of prisoners are often reluctant to identify themselves and therefore a number of children go unrecognised and don't receive the support they need (Kincaid et al., 2019; Roberts, 2012).

Schools have been recognised as having a critical role in supporting these children. This is for a number of reasons, including that all children are likely to be in full-time education and because COIPs are more likely to struggle academically (Haines, 2017; Lynne, 2017; Morgan et al., 2014; Murray & Farrington, 2008; Roberts, 2012; Tuite, 2016). Tuite (2016, p. 5) stated that education can be a 'game changer' in that it can either create another platform for 'stigmatisation and discrimination' or act as a 'champion' for them.

The Department for Education (2019) state that schools may wish to implement recommendations set out in the resources provided by The National Information Centre on Children of Offenders (NICCO). Some local authorities (LAs), including Buckinghamshire (2013, as cited in Weidberg, 2017) and Oxfordshire (Evans, 2009) have produced guidelines for working with COIPs,

which refer to the role of schools. However, it is estimated that out of 208 LAs across the UK, only 20 refer to COPIPs in their children's plan and even fewer have a specific policy for supporting these children (Glover, 2009).

As well as schools having a key role, the role of educational psychologists (EPs) has also been highlighted. The Oxfordshire guidance (Evans, 2009) was developed by an EP and the Buckinghamshire guidance recommends that schools seek advice from EPs when planning for their provision (Buckinghamshire County Council, as cited in Weidberg, 2017).

Rationale and aims of the present review

The aim of the present systematic literature review is to provide an overview of the ways in which COPIPs can be supported in school, by exploring research papers which have made recommendations relevant to UK schools and EPs. The review focuses upon research carried out, either partly or entirely, in the UK since although some difficulties faced by COPIPs may be 'universal', review implications aim to align primarily with UK educational services.

Materials and methods

Literature search and review process

For this review, The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework (Moher et al., 2009) was used to find appropriate papers. Between August and November 2019, the following databases were systematically searched for relevant studies published since 2009: ERIC, Ethos, PsychInfo and Google Scholar. Key search terms included 'child*', 'parent*', 'need*' and '\$prison*'. Hand searching of the following websites was also undertaken: National Information Centre on children of offenders (NICCO) 'directory of research', 'Children of Prisoners Europe' 'network publications' and 'Families Outside' 'research reports', following consultation with relevant professional experts in the field of Clinical and Forensic psychology and an academic specialising in Geography and Environmental Science currently carrying out relevant research. A total of 575 papers were sourced, of which 126 were excluded as predating 2009 and 38 were excluded as duplicates. A further 270 papers were excluded after screening the titles for relevance. The remaining 141 papers were screened against the following inclusion criteria by reading the abstracts or full texts and 130 papers were excluded:

- (1) Refers to the needs of COPIPs
- (2) Refers to COPIPs living in the UK
- (3) Refers to ways COPIPs can be supported by schools or educational psychologists

Data classification

The remaining 11 papers were read twice in full and reviewed using Gough's (2007) 'weight of evidence' (WoE) framework to assess the following:

- Methodological quality (WoE A)
- Relevance of focus (WoE C)

To assess methodological quality, all of the papers were coded using a structured assessment framework (see below). Moderation took place, involving approximately 25% of the papers (four papers) being read and evaluated independently by both the first and second authors. Discussions took place between the authors and a high-level of post-discussion consensus was reached (100% agreement).

For qualitative papers, an adapted version of Bond et al., (2013) framework was used. This framework assesses 12 criteria, including research design appropriateness, and well executed data collection and validity. Papers using a mixed-method design were also assessed using a University of Manchester quantitative research assessment framework, previously used in peer-reviewed systematic literature reviews (Flitcroft & Woods, 2018; Simpson & Atkinson, 2021). The 16-criteria framework assesses criteria such as clear research question, appropriate sampling and data gathering, and implications linked to research questions. Scores from the two types of evaluation frameworks were converted into percentages to allow fair comparisons and mixed-method papers were awarded the higher of the two percentages. Papers scoring 33% or less were considered low quality, 34–66% were considered medium quality and 67% and higher were considered high quality. Although three of the 11 papers were evaluated as being of low quality, resulting in their claims being less strongly substantiated, they remained in the review pool as their findings were relevant to the present review question.

Each paper was then evaluated for relevance of focus. The criterion for this evaluation related to the extent to which they referred to support from schools, or from EPs, for COIPs. Papers were rated as high relevance if they referred explicitly to support available from schools or EPs, medium relevance if they referred to it indirectly.

Data extraction and synthesis

The synthesis took a combined aggregative and configurative approach (Gough et al., 2013). Initially, using an aggregative approach, the first author extracted key findings and recommendations (see Table 1 below). The aggregation was

organised by themes and domains. Following this, using a configurative approach, the domains and themes were conceptualised into a visual representation, highlighting the interrelations of the themes across the domains (see Figure 1).

Results

Overview of findings

All 11 studies included were investigations, with the majority using a survey design (Gill, 2009b, 2009a; Jones et al., 2013; Leeson & Morgan, 2014; Morgan et al., 2013, 2014; O'Keefe, 2014; Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group, 2010; Weidberg, 2017; Women's Breakout, 2016). Four of the studies employed a mixed-method design (Jones et al., 2013; National Offender Management Service, 2009; Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group, 2010; Women's Breakout, 2016). In the research by NOMS, the specific data gathering methods were unclear so could not be ascertained, although they used a mixed-methods design and referred to case studies.

A range of stakeholders was represented, with most papers gathering information from more than one stakeholder group. Eight papers looked at the views of children affected by parental imprisonment (Gill, 2009b, 2009a; Jones et al., 2013; Leeson & Morgan, 2014; Morgan et al., 2013, 2014; Weidberg, 2017; Women's Breakout, 2016), eight papers looked at the views of family members, typically the non-imprisoned parent/carer (Gill, 2009a, 2009b; Jones et al., 2013; Leeson & Morgan, 2014; Morgan et al., 2013, 2014; O'Keefe, 2014; Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group, 2010), two papers looked at the views of imprisoned parents (Jones et al., 2013; O'Keefe, 2014) and six papers looked at the views of professional stakeholders, including headteachers, social workers, probation workers, educational psychologists (Jones et al., 2013; Leeson & Morgan, 2014; Morgan et al., 2013, 2014; O'Keefe, 2014; Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group, 2010). It is important to note that three of the studies (Leeson & Morgan, 2014; Morgan et al., 2013, 2014) included used the same dataset, although each carried out a separate analysis and so they are conceptually different. The paper by National Offender Management Service (2009) focussed on 12 prisons, and appeared to work with prison staff, imprisoned fathers and their families.

Five studies aimed to understand children's experiences and needs in order to inform support offered to them (Gill, 2009a, 2009b; Jones et al., 2013; Weidberg, 2017; Women's Breakout, 2016) and one study aimed to explore difficulties facing families with a parent in prison (Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group, 2010). The focus of two studies (National Offender Management Service, 2009; O'Keefe, 2014) centred on the importance of supporting relationships between children and their imprisoned fathers, the latter specifically with regard to school

Table 1. Data extraction.

Author, Year, country	Focus/aim	Participants	Summary/ Methods	Findings	Relevant implications/recommendations	WOE A	WOE C
Gill (2009a) England	Raise awareness of the emotional and practical impact of imprisonment on children and families and to explore appropriate support.	Families of offenders	Case studies – interviews	● Stresses on the mother, e.g. financial, emotional, stigma ● Range of family support; half received none ● Support wanted: ○ Practical (housing, visiting, childcare) ○ Emotional (group and confidential one-to-one) ● Dreams of the children, e.g. what would improve their lives, included fathers' release	● Strategy for confidential identification of prisoners' families ● Support should be offered to the parent at home ● Schools need: ○ A policy to identify COPiPs ○ Consistent procedures for addressing COPiPs needs (e.g. supporting wellbeing, absences for prison visits)	Medium	High
Gill (2009b) England	Identify the needs of COPiPs to inform local and national services/agencies.	Families of offenders	Case studies – interviews	● Impact included: ○ Mothers: emotional and financial pressure ○ Children: confusion, challenging behaviour, anxieties ● Challenges with visiting including cost and anxiety ● Very limited support provided. Families wanted practical support most, but also emotional support and advice	● Need for: ○ Services to recognise the number of families impacted ○ Increased understanding of the impact for very young children ○ Assessments of COPiPs' support networks ○ Direct therapeutic input in some cases ○ Information about prisons for COPiPs to reduce anxieties	Medium	Medium

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued).

Author, Year, country	Focus/aim	Participants	Summary/ Methods	Findings	Relevant implications/recommendations	WOE A	WOE C
Jones et al. (2013) England, Germany, Romania and Sweden	(1) Enhance understanding of COPs mental health needs. (2) Explore childhood resilience and coping strategies to plan interventions. (3) Investigate mental health problems affecting children across Europe. (4) Identify interventions to support COPs' mental health. (5) Raise policy makers' awareness COPs' needs.	COPs, their caregivers, imprisoned parents and stakeholders	Quantitative: survey and mapping of intervention Qualitative: in-depth interviews and consultations	• COPs have significantly increased likelihood of mental health difficulties • Identified factors re children's resilience: ◦ Caregiving parental support ◦ Sustaining relationship with imprisoned parent ◦ Pre-imprisonment quality of parental relationship ◦ Extended family support ◦ Communication: opportunities to discuss their experiences • Stigma was experienced but varied between countries • Although some good practice was identified, services overall are uncoordinated and not equitable for all COPs	• Need to promote: ◦ Continuous contact with the imprisoned parent ◦ Building resilience by advising and supporting parents, caregivers and COPs ◦ Parenting role of the imprisoned parent (eg, with schooling) • Schools should: ◦ Consider COPs as a vulnerable group in strategic planning ◦ Training to raise staff's awareness of COPs' emotional and educational needs ◦ Tackle stigma by awareness-raising and promoting positive, non-discriminatory environments ◦ Refer COPs to counsellors when necessary ◦ Have an open non-judgemental approach to encourage communication with caregivers • Increased public awareness and media coverage • Children's perspectives and children's rights should be considered when developing policies	High	High

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued).

Author, Year, country	Focus/aim	Participants	Summary/ Methods	Findings	Relevant implications/recommendations	WOE A	WOE C
Leeson and Morgan (2014) England	Explore the provision of a local authority for COPiPs by applying Axford's typology.	Children, families and stakeholders (e.g. headteachers, parents)	Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Application of Axford's typology	- Identified insufficient: - Awareness of COPiPs - strategy drivers, e.g. from central government - Funding - Information sharing/ coordinated approach - Identified a 'meeting need' model of service delivery but argued that too much focus is on tackling poverty and social exclusion. - Support is 'top-down', focussing on 'expert' voice, rather than family or child voice. - Minimal support focussed on 'quality of life' and 'upholding rights'.	- More synergy between the models (e.g. more equal focus on 'quality of life' and 'meeting need') - Provision should be based on children's rights and the wishes of them and their families.	Medium	Medium
Morgan et al. (2013) England	Build on work by Morgan et al. (2014) and highlight ways school can support COPiPs.	Children, families and stakeholders (e.g. headteachers, parents)	Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.	- Four main suggestions for schools to more effectively support these children: - Raise awareness of COPiPs - Focus on COPiPs and their needs on an individual basis - Consider what support is needed and when (e.g. at arrest or release time) - Support with prison visits and staying in contact - COPiPs are hidden population and experience negative effects (e.g. linked to emotions and behaviour) - Needs to be trust before information shared with school - Sharing information and identifying the children - Schools struggled to identify specific services for COPiPs and highlighted ways in which in-school support could be strengthened (e.g. designated lead, more training)	- Individual work in schools to address the difficulties - Local Authorities to develop support strategies	Medium	High
Morgan et al. (2014) England	School support for COPiPs.	Children, families, headteachers, parents.	Questionnaires; semi-structured interviews	- Increase education professionals' awareness of challenges for COPiPs - Clear school COPiPs policy and key person. - Training for education professionals. - Consult COPiPs re support needed.	- Increase education professionals' awareness of challenges for COPiPs - Clear school COPiPs policy and key person. - Training for education professionals. - Consult COPiPs re support needed.	Med	High

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued).

Author, Year, country	Focus/aim	Participants	Summary/ Methods	Findings	Relevant implications/recommendations	WOE A	WOE C
National Offender Management Service (2009) England (W. Midlands)	(1) Provide evidence of the benefit of supporting relationships between offenders and their children/families. (2) Design collaborative projects to support relationship between offenders and their families.	Prison and visit centre staff, prisoners and their families	Exact methods not specified Data capture re. visits – report sheet Developed and delivered 'Hidden Sentence' training Case studies	- Prison visit numbers are falling - Prisoners who did not receive visits reported travel difficulties (distance and cost) - Insufficient awareness of the needs of the prisoners' families 'Hidden Sentence' training partially successful - Some 'joined-up' working between NOMS and national government's Department of Schools and Families.	- Improve visitor facilities and information for families - Accredited training programmes for professionals - Develop partnerships between local authorities(schools), probation officers and prisoners. - Use the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to coordinate services.	Low	High
O'Keefe (2015) England	Systems to improve school engagement of imprisoned fathers.	Stakeholders including headteachers and parents	Semi-structured interviews	- Children of imprisoned fathers often neglected by schools. - Barriers to supporting children; more training is needed. - Fathers wished for more communication with schools.	- Department for Education to drive a coherent policy. - New teachers to be taught about COPIPs needs. - Strong school leadership and coordination with staff, including staff training.	High	High
Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group (2010)England	Explore the issues facing offenders' families and develop support recommendations.	Professionals and families of offenders	Questionnaires, interviews and consultation events	Identified the needs of COPIPs and families, Sure Start centres and primary schools. Conclusion: a lack of: - Awareness and understanding; fear to reach out to families - A strategic, multi-agency approach - Automatic needs assessment of child at the time of arrest - Support for families preparing for and dealing with release	- Relevant agencies must develop a protocol for sharing information, e.g. multi-disciplinary group. - Rapid referral and assessment of the family and child, e.g. CAF, at the time of arrest - Training for professionals to increase understanding. - Develop 'offenders' children and families champions. - Share knowledge and skills with children and families	Low	High

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued).

Author, Year, country	Focus/aim	Participants	Summary/ Methods	Findings	Relevant implications/recommendations	WOE A	WOE C
Weidberg (2017) UK	Impact of having a parent in prison on five children's lives.	COPIPs	Interpretative phenomenological analysis of semi-structured interviews	Three overarching themes: ● Coping mechanisms (factors which support resilience), COPIPs valued support from families, schools, friends, community. ● Anxieties (factors which impede resilience). Contact with imprisoned parent was valued but caused anxieties. ● Trust. Difficulties related to parents keeping secrets. COPIPs felt unable to confide in friends due to stigma.	● Remove stigma and increase awareness. ● Children need to be listened to. ● Implications for EPs (preventative work at individual, school system and policy levels) e.g.: ○ Providing information and signposting ○ 'Hidden Sentence' training ● Psychological understanding to support school staff (e.g. attachment theory)	Medium	High
Women's Breakout's (2016) England and Wales	Understand children's views, feelings and experiences following maternal imprisonment.	Children and families affected by maternal imprisonment	Analysis of Re-Unite data and consultations.	Positive outcomes for those supported by Re-Unite. Key points relevant to schools from consultation data: ● Minimise disruption ● Trusted adult ● Cooperation with children ● Trusted friend ● Preparing for prison visits	● Identification of all COPIPs. ● Training for all practitioners working with COPIPs. ● Support to contact imprisoned parent (where appropriate). ● Opportunities for children in similar situations to meet for support and to reduce shame/stigma.	Low	High

engagement. Morgan et al.'s (2014) research explored what available support in schools for COPIPs, highlighting ways in which schools and local authorities can improve such support (Leeson & Morgan, 2014; Morgan et al., 2013). Leeson and Morgan (2014) took a bottom-up approach, applying the findings onto Axford's typology (Axford, 2009, as cited in Leeson & Morgan, 2014).

Three main domains were identified during the aggregative part of the synthesis (Gough et al., 2013): support at the systemic level, the family level and the individual level. The relative contribution of the 11 studies to the domains is detailed below.

How can schools and EPs support children with a parent in prison?

Domain 1: Systemic level

Strategic planning: The need for schools to develop a strategic policy to ensure that COPIPs receive appropriate and consistent support was specifically highlighted by seven of the papers (Gill, 2009a; Jones et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2013, 2014; National Offender Management Service, 2009; O'Keefe, 2014; Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group, 2010). It is suggested that the policy should include reference to identification and monitoring of these children (Gill, 2009a; Jones et al., 2013; O'Keefe, 2014), with Gill (2009a) and O'Keefe (2014) stating that COPIPs should be identified as a specific vulnerable group. O'Keefe (2014) further recommends that Ofsted review and monitor this group in the same way as they monitor other vulnerable groups (e.g. Looked After Children). Morgan et al. (2014) states that the policy should ensure the school takes a non-judgemental approach. To ensure joined-up, coherent working Morgan et al. (2013) and Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group (2010) recommend that the policy make reference to multi-agency support, specifically through the use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group (2010) suggests that a CAF could be triggered at the time of a parental arrest, to ensure that schools are aware of what the child/children have experienced and can make adjustments accordingly. Three of the papers specifically state that a named person or persons should be identified within the policy to attend training, to ensure the support offered is up-to-date and to support the children and families directly (Morgan et al., 2013; National Offender Management Service, 2009; O'Keefe, 2014). Gill (2009a) and O'Keefe (2014) suggest that the policy should refer specifically to supporting children in maintaining contact with their imprisoned parent. Gill (2009a) states that there should include a whole-school understanding of absences for visiting an imprisoned parent, and O'Keefe (2014) says practical information should be included which encourages school staff to involve imprisoned parents in their child's/children's education.

Training/Raising awareness: Eight of the 11 papers (Jones et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2013, 2014; National Offender Management Service, 2009; O'Keefe, 2014; Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group, 2010; Weidberg, 2017; Women's Breakout, 2016) recommend that schools receive additional training in order to meet the needs of COIPs. The aim of the training is to raise staff awareness (Morgan et al., 2013; Women's Breakout, 2016), increasing their understanding of the impact of parental imprisonment (Morgan et al., 2013; National Offender Management Service, 2009; Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group, 2010) and reducing stigma (Morgan et al., 2013; Weidberg, 2017). It is also recommended that the training support staff to develop skills in building trust with the families of imprisoned parents (Morgan et al., 2014). Morgan et al. (2013) state that the training should emphasise the need to support children in maintaining contact with their imprisoned parents and the importance of prison visits, considering the practicalities of visiting and the impact visits might have on children's wellbeing and behaviour. It is recommended that the training help school staff to provide appropriate support with regard to the children's educational and emotional needs (Jones et al., 2013), for example, by helping staff provide an inclusive, understanding and welcoming school ethos (Jones et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2013; O'Keefe, 2014; Weidberg, 2017). 'Hidden Sentence' training (National Offender Management Service, 2009) aims to highlight the impact on families of having an imprisoned parent and to show how the CAF can be used to support these families' needs. In relation to the practicalities of the training, Weidberg (2017) suggests that EPs should attend 'Hidden Sentence' training in order to provide whole-school training, while Jones et al. (2013) takes a broader angle, suggesting that the training should be done in partnership with relevant non-government organisations.

Curriculum support (for citizenship and a psychological perspective): Two of the papers make reference to additional ways in which schools can take a systemic approach to supporting these children. Morgan et al. (2013) refer to using the curriculum to reduce stigma, for example, discussing imprisonment in citizenship lessons and problem-based learning to help develop understanding of these children's experiences. Weidberg (2017) suggests the importance of taking a psychological perspective to support staff, preventative work and sharing of theory and resources, making specific reference to using educational psychology support; the paper also suggests that EPs could deliver whole-school training.

Domain 2: Family

Support for parent/carer at home: One recommendation made by six of the papers relates to offering practical and emotional support to the parent/carer at home (Gill, 2009a, 2009b; Jones et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2013, 2014; Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group, 2010). One method suggested is the use of

notice boards and leaflets to promote a school's welcoming ethos, to help parents feel comfortable to discuss related issues and to share important knowledge (e.g. skills and support services) (Jones et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2013, 2014; Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group, 2010). Gill (2009a) suggests that help should include support with the potential difficulty of becoming a lone parent and with understanding their child/children's emotions.

Morgan et al. (2013) and O'Keefe (2014) highlight the importance of schools considering when to offer this support, referring to key times that support may be necessary, including the time of the arrest, during the trial, during the imprisonment, release and post-release.

Support for the imprisoned parent: Three of the papers highlight the school's role in facilitating communication with imprisoned parents, specifically fathers (Jones et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2013; O'Keefe, 2014). Morgan et al. (2013) point out that imprisoned parents have a statutory right to receive information about their children. It is recommended that school policy should include practical recommendations to facilitate imprisoned parents' involvement (Jones et al., 2013; O'Keefe, 2014). O'Keefe (2014) states that schools should engage in communication with imprisoned parents to share work and reports (e.g. by email, post, telephone) and consider arrangements for visits (e.g. sending work and reading books), while Morgan et al. (2013) emphasise that it is vital that schools authorise absences for prison visits.

Domain 3: Individual

Emotional and practical support: Offering emotional and practical support on an individual basis to children experiencing parental imprisonment is suggested in eight of the papers (Gill, 2009a, 2009b; Jones et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2013, 2014; Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group, 2010; Weidberg, 2017; Women's Breakout, 2016). Gill (2009a, 2009b) state that children may need support with their understanding of imprisonment, by being provided with practical information about what happens in a prison, and emotional support to deal with the stigma attached to the imprisonment of someone they love. Morgan et al. (2014) highlight that transitions are likely to be a particularly challenging time, so additional emotional support should be considered at transition points. It is recommended that trusted adults/pastoral staff offer this support (Jones et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2013; Women's Breakout, 2016), with some papers suggesting that some children may benefit from accessing therapeutic support from school counselling services (Gill, 2009b; Jones et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2013). Resilience is highlighted as a key factor in two of the papers (Jones et al., 2013; Weidberg, 2017); Jones et al. (2013) suggest working with parents/carers to build resilience, while Weidberg (2017) suggests that to develop resilience, EPs should promote children's social relationships through

intervention. Also considering the importance of social relationships, Women's Breakout's (2016) highlight the benefits of a trusted friend. Strong friendships should be supported and time with friends should be encouraged.

Support maintaining contact/visits: As well as '*Support for the imprisoned parent*' discussed above, the child can be supported to maintain the imprisoned parent-child relationships. Morgan et al. (2013), (2014) state children should be supported to attend prison visits during school time, though use of authorised absences and staff showing sensitivity towards them. Women's Breakout's (2016) discuss how the emotional impact of prison visits can impact on children's behaviour, further highlighting the need for sensitivity at these times and stating that information should be shared with children to support them in preparing for their initial visit to the prison.

The children's perspective: A key feature in six of the papers is the need to consider the children's perspective when planning support. This entails taking into account the children's rights and their individual views. Two of the papers (Jones et al., 2013; Leeson & Morgan, 2014) explicitly refer to the rights of the child, stating that these should be used when developing policy and provision. Both papers refer to children's rights in a broad sense, also highlighting the importance of considering the children's views. An additional four papers (Morgan et al., 2013, 2014; Weidberg, 2017; Women's Breakout, 2016) also suggest consulting with the children about the support they would like. Weidberg (2017) specifically states that the children need opportunities to develop their identities, as well as sharing their views, suggesting that this could reduce intergenerational cycles of imprisonment.

Discussion

Summary of the findings

This paper aimed to explore ways in which children experiencing parental imprisonment could be supported in schools. Identified from a systematic literature review, relevant journal articles and grey literature were synthesised to provide recommendations relevant to schools and EPs in the UK to support this group of children. To the authors' knowledge, no other systematic literature review focussing on this topic has been carried out.

The review highlights ways of supporting children experiencing parental imprisonment in school at systemic, familial and individual levels. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of awareness-raising for staff to ensure that these children are recognised and the need for emotional and practical support to be offered as part of a whole-school ethos as well as for individual families and children.

Figure 1 (below) provides an integrated conceptual representation of the domains and themes identified in this review, highlighting the overlap between the domains. For example, in the findings, 'children's perspective' is included in the 'Individual' domain, but it is also critical to inform support in both the 'Systemic' and the 'Family' domains. It is important for professionals looking to apply the findings not to limit their implementation to a specific domain.

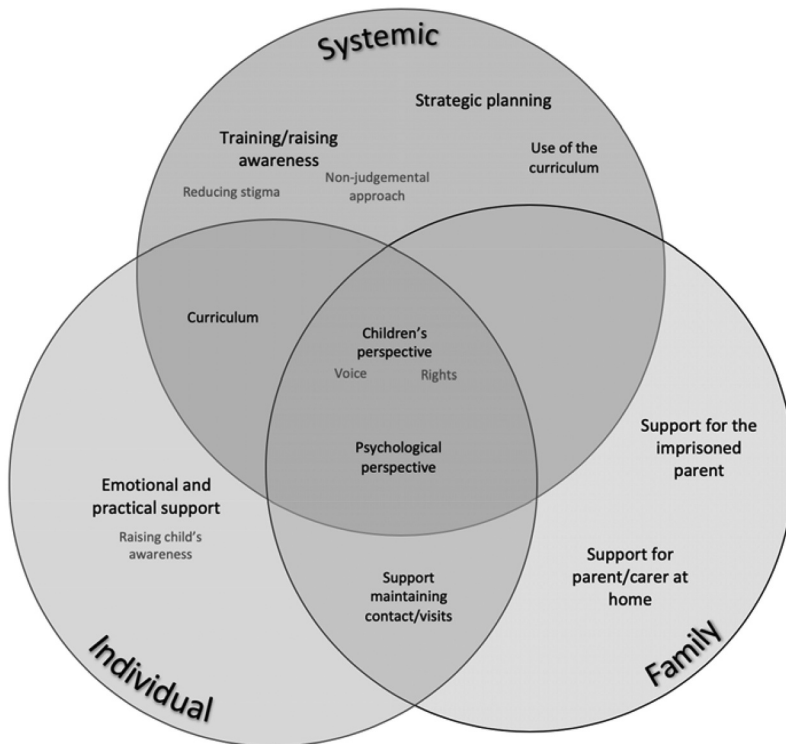


Figure 1. Venn diagram displaying conceptualisation of themes and domains.

Implications for schools

The above findings in relation to systemic support and whole-school policies are in line with existing statutory policies and procedures which schools are required to have in place for other vulnerable groups of children. For example, statutory policies include 'Child protection policy and procedures', 'Special educational needs and disability' and 'Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children' (Department for Education, 2020). One suggestion of the present findings is that a policy for COIPs should identify a named person to coordinate the support (Morgan et al., 2013; National Offender Management Service, 2009; O'Keefe, 2014). One requirement within the statutory guidance for looked-after and previously looked-after children (Department for Education, 2018a), and for safeguarding (Department for Education, 2019) is that there should be designated leads in schools and

colleges. Additional to this, by 2025 all schools and colleges are expected to have a designated senior lead for mental health (Department of Health & Department for Education, 2017). The guidance states that the reason these children need the support of a designated lead is that they are likely to have suffered emotional pressures and disrupted education as a result of their experiences (Department for Education, 2018a). It is known that, compared to children without imprisoned parents, COPIPs are more likely to suffer difficulties with their mental health and have difficulties making academic progress (Glover, 2009; Haines, 2017; Lynne, 2017; Morgan et al., 2014; Murray & Farrington, 2008; Roberts, 2012; Tuite, 2016). An example of a school policy/framework to support children with a family member in prison are available from the Prison Advice and Care Trust (Prison Advice and Care Trust, n.d.b)

There is no current system for identifying these children, meaning that the families often have to identify themselves and as families of prisoners are often reluctant to do this, many children do not receive the support they need (Kincaid et al., 2019; Roberts, 2012). For parents/carers, it is important for schools to promote their inclusive ethos to help families feel comfortable in asking for support (Gill, 2009a; Lambert & Barley, 2001). The review demonstrates how use of a CAF, triggered at the time of arrest, could facilitate multi-agency working to support COPIPs (National Offender Management Service, 2009; Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group, 2010). However it would be necessary for the CAF to be triggered by an agency/professional external to school, further highlighting the importance of joined-up working between relevant agencies such as police services, children's services and schools to ensure that the children access the support they need (Jones et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2013; Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group, 2010) .

The review highlights that COPIPs could be supported with building resilience and strengthening relationships (Jones et al., 2013; Weidberg, 2017; Women's Breakout, 2016). Largely, children are best supported by adults with whom they have a strong, trusting relationship, so schools can utilise existing members of staff (Lambert & Barley, 2001), although some children may need specific therapeutic support (Gill, 2009b; Jones et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2013). At a universal level, which also aligns with curriculum-based support suggested in the results, school staff could engage in whole-class activities such as reading stories related to COPIPs experiences (e.g. Children of Prisoners Europe, n.d.) or incorporating the topic into lessons (e.g. Prison Advice and Care Trust, n.d.a)

The review demonstrates that schools could assist with communication between children and their imprisoned parents (Jones et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2013; O'Keefe, 2014). Although it is recognised that most day-to-day communication will be with the parent/carer with whom the child lives, everyone recognised in law as being a parent has the right to participate in their child's education, and to receive information about their child, including school reports (Department for Education, 2018b). In addition, with reference to the

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child's (UNCRC), every child has the right (as long as it is in the child's best interests) to maintain relationships with both parents and have engagement of both parents in their well-being and education (O'Keefe, 2014; United Nations General Assembly, 1989).

The application of children's rights at the systemic, familial and individual level is also highlighted in the review (Jones et al., 2013; Leeson & Morgan, 2014). A Department for Education (2010) report outlines how England complies with the UNCRC by linking the rights of the child with legislation and policy. It states that Local (Education) Authorities must contribute to the mental and physical development of the local community by ensuring that primary and secondary education meet the needs of their population (c.f. Jones et al., 2013). It also demonstrates legislation which ensures that schools operate fairly, in a way that promotes social equity and community cohesion. This shows that schools are already supporting the rights of the child with regard to school policies and procedures, but the present review shows the importance of specifically considering COPIPs when promoting and protecting the rights of the child. Jones et al. (2013) reference that children have a right to stay in contact with both parents (so long as this contact does not cause them harm) (Article 9) and they discuss the importance of direct contact. This suggests that schools should therefore promote contact with imprisoned parents and support prison visits. The UNCRC General Comment Number 7 makes reference to COPIPs, stating that children, particularly those who are vulnerable, need access to appropriate services (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2005). It refers to Article 2, which states that measures should be put in place to ensure that children are protected against discrimination, for example, inadequate care and attention, including being deprived of the help and support they need. COPIPs are often unidentified and therefore unsupported (Kincaid et al., 2019; Roberts, 2012). This review suggests that schools could provide necessary resources for COPIPs and signpost their families to appropriate support services. It would be beneficial for policies and/or future research to identify the specific children's rights which are of relevance to supporting COPIPs.

Considering child views should already be common practice in schools: the SEND code of practice (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015) states that the views, wishes and feelings of children with special educational needs should be considered when planning for provision and support. This review highlights that this practice should be specifically applied to COPIPs (Morgan et al., 2013, 2014; Weidberg, 2017; Women's Breakout, 2016). Utilising child voice and creating collaborative outcomes has been shown to increase motivation, independence and self-efficacy (Harding & Atkinson, 2009; Roller, 1998).

COPIPs are often exposed to nearly five times more other ACEs when compared to children without imprisoned parents (Turney, 2018). Considering these children within an ACE-informed perspective, which is receiving an increasing focus within education and among policy makers (Blodgett & Dorado, 2016;

Johnson, 2018; Smith, 2018), it may be useful for schools to construct a risk framework for COIPs, to highlight risk and resilience factors, and to assist with within-group prioritisation, to ensure they receive the necessary support.

Implications for EPs

Weidberg (2017) states that EPs have a key role in supporting these children. EPs could ask about COIPs in planning meetings when finding out about other vulnerable groups. From this they can offer support at the individual level as needed, and equally importantly, offer support at the systemic level through whole-school training (Weidberg, 2017).

At the individual level, EPs could share knowledge and resources and help school staff offer the necessary support to these children (Weidberg, 2017). For example, EPs could support parents/carers with planning age-appropriate, honest conversations to inform their children about the parental imprisonment, whilst still taking account of familial wishes to withhold certain information (Weidberg, 2017). Additional to this, EPs have been highlighted as having an important role in providing therapeutic support for children (Atkinson et al., 2011; Farrell et al., 2006; MacKay, 2007). Some COIPs may benefit from therapeutic input (Gill, 2009b; Jones et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2013). When necessary, EP therapeutic input could be offered/utilised to support these children.

With regard to systemic support, Weidberg (2017) suggests that it may be useful for EPs to attend 'Hidden Sentence' training in order to provide whole-school training. With reference to EP work more broadly, it continues to often be at the 'systemic' level, aiming to increase capacity of schools and other organisations (Farrell et al., 2006). It may be beneficial for work relating to supporting COIPs to be incorporated into this.

With reference to consulting the COIPs as discussed above, gaining child views is a key area which EPs should promote in schools (Hobbs et al., 2000). Overall, this review has highlighted that there are a number of ways in which EP services could help schools provide the appropriate support for COIPs. EP services could create a package of support for these children, which includes training, resources and links to local services, as well as support for individual families and children.

Limitations

The present review has an extended scope by the inclusion of grey literature; only four of the 11 papers included are published, peer-reviewed articles. Additional to this, the papers largely use a survey design, using questionnaires to gather stakeholder views. This means that, although the present review presents recommendations for schools and EPs, it does not provide empirical evidence for the effectiveness of such recommendations which could be viewed as a limitation for practitioners looking to implement recommendations from the research.

This review does not consider the potential difference in experience of children who have mothers in prison compared to those with fathers in prison. Future research could investigate these differences and the ways in which support may need to differ.

Future research

The papers quoted above have largely used either stakeholder suggestions of what could be beneficial to support COPIPs or have outlined what is currently in place for these children. Therefore, it would be useful for future research to evaluate the application of the recommendations specifically in terms of how effectively they are implemented and the subsequent impact following successful implementation. For example, illustrating specific detail related to children-teacher relationships across a range of individual children and circumstances. Evaluation of impact could be carried out by an EPS and involve work with one school or a number of schools within the LA. It could focus on increased staff knowledge and on the views of children and families of imprisoned parents. It is important for these findings to be disseminated effectively in order to support future application of the recommendations.

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